



Oration “Senatu intercedente” of Pope Pius II (May 1463, Rome). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 4th version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 72)

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(Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 72)

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2019

Abstract

After his victory over the Malatestas in the Church State late 1462, Pope Pius II had agreed to a petition from the Republic of Venice to deal more leniently with them than he had previously intended to. In the case of Domenico Malatesta, Lord of Cesena, the pope had even accepted the mediation of the Republic in the person of one of its top diplomats. While negotiations were going on concerning the return of Domenico's cities to the papacy in case he died without legitimate male issue, the Venetians secretly bought from Domenico the salt mines of Cervia, one of the cities which would *in casu* return to the papacy. As might be expected, the pope became furious at the double-dealing Venetians. Their ambassador was summoned and given a memorable dressing down as recorded in the text of the oration "*Senatu intercedente*".

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Republic of Venice; Domenico Malatesta; Salt mines; Cervia; Renaissance orations; Renaissance rhetorics; Renaissance oratory; 1462; 15th century; Venezia; Papal States

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Foreword

In 2007, I undertook a project of publishing the Latin texts with English translations of the orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II. Altogether 80¹ orations (including papal responses to ambassadorial addresses) are extant today, though more may still be held, unrecognized, in libraries and archives.

At a later stage the project was expanded to include ambassadors' orations to the pope, of which about 40 are presently known.

I do not, actually, plan to publish further versions of the present volume, but I do reserve the option in case I – during my future studies - come across other manuscripts containing interesting versions of the oration or if important new research data on the subject matter are published, making it appropriate to modify or expand the present text. It will therefore always be useful to check if a later version than the one the reader may have previously found via the Internet is available.

I shall much appreciate to be notified by readers who discover errors and problems in the text and translation or unrecognized quotations.

12 September 2019

MCS

¹ 81 orations, if the "*Cum animadverto*" is counted as a Piccolomini-oration, see oration "*Quam laetus*" [18], Appendix

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II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context¹

After his victory over the Malatestas in the Church State late 1462, Pope Pius II had – with some reluctance - agreed to a petition from the Republic of Venice to deal more leniently with them than he had previously intended to.² In the case of Domenico Malatesta, Lord of Cesena, the pope had even accepted the mediation of the Republic in the person of one of its top diplomats.

The negotiations for a settlement seemingly went well but for the thorny issue concerning the return of a number of cities to the papacy in case Domenico died without legitimate male issue. The problem was not the return as such, which was in accordance with the general rules of feudal and vicarial possession, but how to ensure that the cities in question would actually revert to the papacy and not fall to some other lord.³

While these negotiations were going on, the Venetians secretly bought from Domenico the salt mines of Cervia, one of the cities which according to the agreement negotiated between the parties would return to the papacy. The Venetians had their reasons, but under the circumstances the sale was probably illegal, and at the same time it was highly duplicitous, in view of the fact that they were themselves acting as mediators of the negotiations.

As might be expected, the pope became furious at the double-dealing Venetians. Their ambassador was summoned and given a memorable dressing down as recorded in the text of the oration “*Senatu intercedente*”.

However, the papacy and Venice were now allied in a matter of much greater importance: the crusade against the Turks, where the Venetians had finally– though for completely self-serving purposes - accepted the papal crusade and decided to go to war against the Turks.

The affair of Cervia could not be allowed to spoil this alliance, and the Venetians got off lightly. In any case, there was not much the pope could do.

In his *Commentarii* Pius wrote about the episode:

While this discussion [the negotiations concerning the Malatestan cities] was going on, the Venetians with the good faith characteristic of barbarians or after the manner of traders whose nature it is to weigh everything by utility paying no attention to honor, bought Cervia

¹ CO, XI, 16

² See oration “*Quaecumque rogat*” [70]

³ The negotiations were not made easier by the pope’s desire to grant lands, vacated by the Malatestas, to his nephews: Venice and the other Italian powers did not favour a more direct and stronger papal presence in the Church State, see CO (Totaro, II, p. 2630, n. 156)

from Domenico, agreeing to pay 4,000 ducats yearly to him for his lifetime and on his death to those he might designate, and in addition two hundred bags of salt. There are salt mines at Cervia where the very best salt is found. It is taken to the cities of Romagna and brings in a very large profit to the Malatestas. Since the Venetians supply the Ferrarese with salt (though much against the latter's will), fearing that it might be secretly furnished them from Cervia, they resolved to lay hold upon the place in any way they could, right or wrong. It was a fief of the Church of Rome and bound to return to it if the male line of the Malatestas should fail; and the Malatestas might not in any circumstances transfer it to any other family or gens; nor had the Venetians the right to buy it without the consent of the Church ... When Pius learnt the facts about Cervia, he sent for the Venetian envoy and asked him the reason for this and what excuse he had to give. He admitted what had been done with embarrassment and shame like a man who knew a base act could not be defended but he put forward motives of expediency seeing that the Venetians' income from salt (which is very large in the territory of Ferrara and neighbouring districts) was being seriously reduced by the secret importation of salt from Cervia. The state had been unwilling to stand the deprivation and had therefore bought the place as a means of recouping its losses. The pope replied: [Here follows the oration]. When the Venetian envoy heard this he shook with terror and for a long time stood dumb but at last, having no further defense for his city's cause, he said he hoped the Venetian Senate would in the future atone for its present misdeeds by profitable services to the Church of Rome; and so he withdrew from the Pope's presence.¹

2. Themes

The oration has three main themes:

- **Venice has acted treacherously and dishonourably:**

We are in the middle of negotiations and consultations with Venice on how Cervia and Malatesta's other cities shall return to the Church after his death, and now the Venetians have grabbed Cervia. Behold a noble deed! Behold the Senate's integrity! Behold the glory of the Venetian Republic! Is this how you keep faith? Is this how you care for decency? If Jacopo Piccinino who has often sold his loyalty, or if the greatest robber or thief in Italy had accepted to mediate between Us and Domenico, he would certainly never have permitted himself the indecency of seizing a city which was under negotiation: he would have feared infamy, he would have feared the voice of the people, he would have feared the label of traitor. But the

¹ CO, XI, 16 (Gragg, pp. 744-746)

Venetians are indifferent to such things. Their republic is quite cold-blooded: it does not feel shame, it does not grow red or pale; it does not falter. It always shows the same countenance: impudent and shameless. [Sect. 1-2]

- **Venice is impious**

Your greed and ambition have no limits. You do not care whether you amass riches lawfully or unlawfully, as long as you amass them. Neither justice nor injustice stands in the way of extending your dominions. It is fine for you to have more power if only your empire grows. Honesty is less important than power. You scorn God in Heaven. The republic is your God: this is what you worship, having abandoned the Creator of the Universe. [Sect. 4]

- **Venice is doomed**

With such morals you will not last. An empire built on bad foundations must perish. You will pay the penalty for your sins and you will not be allowed to deceive the Roman Church with impunity. Now that you are powerful, you insult your Mother, arrogant while favourable winds fill your sails. But the wind will change. Do not trust in air. Those who dwell in Heaven remember good as well as bad deeds. God knows and cares about what men do. He cares for His creation and He hates iniquity. You cannot escape His hand. Just when you think that your empire stands firm, some sudden and unexpected catastrophe will occur, and it will be completely destroyed by divine justice. [Sect. 7]

3. Date, place, audience, and format

The pope's meeting with the Venetian ambassador took place in May 1463, at the Apostolic Palace in Rome.¹

Only the ambassador is known to have been present, and the format was a direct and heated reply to the ambassador's embarrassed explanation of the Cervia affair.

In his *Commentarii* the pope did not call it an oration, but simply wrote: *Cui pontifex (The pope [said] to him)*. However, two other addresses to ambassadors in private meetings in the same period (1463) were in one way or another designated as orations.

¹ CO (Totaro, II, p. 2630, n. 156)

4. Text¹

The oration was not actually delivered as a formal speech, but written later up in Latin on the basis of the pope's exchange in Italian with the Venetian ambassador, for insertion into the *Commentarii*, book 11, chapter 16. It was not included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, of which the first version had been completed in 1462.

4.1. Manuscripts

The two principal manuscripts containing the *Commentarii*,² with the oration, are:

- **Roma / Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei**
Corsinianus 147, f. 367v-368v (**S**)
- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
Reg. lat. 1995, f. 515v-516v (**R**)

Of these, the Reginensis represents the first edition and the Corsinianus the final edition, probably with a now lost intermediate edition, all produced under the supervision of the pope himself.

4.2. Editions

Some important editions and translations of the *Commentarii* are³:

- *Pius II: Commentarii rerum memorabilium que suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313) / II, p. 688-689
- Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Papa Pio II: *I Commentari*. 2 vols. Ed. Luigi Totaro. Milano, 1984 / II, pp. 2178-2186
[With an Italian translation]

An English translation of the *Commentarii* was published by Florence Gragg:

¹ For the textual transmission of Pius II's Orations, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 5

² For orations included in Pius II's *Commentarii* (1463-1464), see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, sect. 5.1.4.

³ For other editions, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 11: General Bibliography

- *The Commentaries of Pius II*. Tr. By Florence Alden Gragg. Northhampton, Mass.: 1937-1957 (Smith College Studies in History; 22, 25, 30, 35, 43) / pp. 744-746

4.3 Present edition

For principles of edition (incl. orthography) and translation, see *Collected Orations Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 11.

Text:

Though the *Commentarii* have already been edited a number of times, the text of the oration has – as a matter of principle - been collated directly from the two principal manuscripts.

Pagination:

The pagination is from the lead manuscript.

5. Sources¹

In this oration, only one direct quotation has been identified, from the Psalms.

6. Bibliography

Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt*. [1464]

- *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313)

¹ On Piccolomini's use of sources in general, see *Collected orations of Pope Pius II*, ch. 8

- Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Papa Pio II: *I Commentari*. 2 vols. Ed. Luigi Totaro. Milano, 1984
- *The Commentaries of Pius II*. Tr. By Florence Alden Gragg. Northampton, Mass.: 1937 - 1957 (Smith College Studies in History; 22, 25, 30, 35, 43)

Pius II: *Orationes*. [1436-1464]

- Pius II: *Orationes politicae et ecclesiasticae*. Ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi. 3 vols. Lucca: Benedini, 1755-1759
- Collected Orations of Pope Pius II. Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 12 vols. 2019-220

7. Sigla and abbreviations

R = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Reginensis Latinus 1995

S = Roma / Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei / Corsinianus 147

Abbreviations

CO = Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt* [1464]

HA = Eneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Austriasis*. Teil 1: Einleitung von Martin Wagendorfer. 1. Redaktion ed. von Julia Knödler. Teil 2: 2./3, ed. Martin Wagendorfer. 2 vols. Hannover, 2009. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum. Nova Series; 24)

HB = Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Bohemica*. Herausg. J. Hejnic & H. Rothe. 2 vols. Köln, 2005. (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. Neue Folge. Reihe B; 20)

MA = Pius II: *Orationes politicae et ecclesiasticae*. Ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi. 3 vols. Lucca: Benedini, 1755-1759

MPL = Migne, Jacques-Paul: *Patrologia latina*. 217 vols. 1841-1865

OO = Pius II: *Opera quae extant omnia*. Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1551 [2nd ed., 1571; Anastatic reprod. Frankfurt: Minerva 1967]

RTA = Deutsche Reichstagsakten

WO = *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Hrsg. von Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918

Decretum = *Decretum magistri Gratiani*. Ed. Lipsiensis secunda. Eds. A.L. Richter & A. Friedberg. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1879

Epistolarium = Enee Silvii Piccolominei *Epistolarium Seculare*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007

Rainaldus = *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi Card. Baronius desinit*. Auct. Odoricus Raynaldus. Tom. XVIII-XIX. Roma: Varesius, 1659-1663

Reject = *Reject Aeneas, accept Pius : Selected letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)*. Intr. and transl. by T.M. Izbicki et al. Washington, D.C., 2006

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

[1] {367v} Senatu intercedente Veneto pacem Dominico promisimus. Te vice senatus concordiae mediatorem accepimus. Inter concordiae leges illa praecipua fuit, ut moriente sine virili sobole Dominico civitates ejus, quas ab ecclesia recepisset in feudum seu vicariatum, ad ecclesiam reverterentur. Laudasti hanc legem, laudaverunt et Dominici procuratores, quamvis de modo contentio esset. Interea Cerviam ab eo, qui vendere non potest, senatus emit. Obstat natura feudi, obstat confiscatio propter rebellionem, obstat lis iam mota, obstant apostolicae litterae investiturae, quae omnem alienationem prohibent, obstat ipsa honestas. Agimus de Cervia et aliis Malatestae civitatibus, quomodo ad ecclesiam redeant illo vita functo. Cum Venetis ista tractamus et dum simul cogitamus, {368r} Veneti Cerviam sibi usurpant. En bella res! En senatus honestas! En gloria reipublicae Venetae. Siccine fidem servatis? Haec vobis cura decoris?

[2] Si Jacobus Piccininus, cujus saepe vendita fides est, si major, qui reperiatur in Italia, praedo latrove inter nos et Dominicum concordiae partes assumpsisset, profecto numquam hanc turpitudinem admisisset, ut oppidum aliquod, de quo contenderetur, sibi aripuisset: timuisset infamiam, timuisset populi voces, timuisset proditoris nomen. At Venetos nihil horum movet. Inanimis est respublica: non verecundatur, non erubescit, non pallet, non titubat. Unam semper faciem ante se fert, eamque procacem et inverecundam. Senatus decreto, non recta ratione honestum metimini. Sanctum est, quod senatui placuit, quamvis evangelio adversetur. Abrogant divinam legem consulta senatus.

[3] "Sal clanculum Ferrariensi populo Cervia praebuit, comminuit vectigalia nostra. Consulimus indemnitati. Non fraudabimur deinceps empti Cervia." En pulchra ratio! Cum alieno detrimento vestrum quaeritis emolumentum. Par vestra est et latronum furumque causa. Ab utilitate pendetis¹. Hoc pacto, quaecumque faciant homines, approbare licebit. Quis mentis compos actionibus suis non aliquid praefert utilitatis? Et leno et meretrix emolumenta sectatur. Quantum lucraretur vestra respublica, non quantum damni Romanae inferretis ecclesiae animo pensatis.

¹ pendetis *corr. ex deducta* R; pendetis S

1. Venice is treacherous

[1] At the intercession of the Venetian Senate We promised peace to Domenico. You yourself We accepted as mediator on behalf of the Senate. One of the terms of peace had special importance: if Domenico dies without male¹ issue, the cities he has received from the Church either as a fief or as a [papal] vicariate shall revert to the Church. You yourself approved this condition, and so did Domenico's representatives, though there has been some disagreement concerning the procedure.² In the meantime your Senate has bought Cervia from Domenico though he did not have the right to sell it. Impediments [to this sale] are the nature of feudal possession, the confiscation [of Domenico's possessions] on account of his rebellion, the conflict now ended, the apostolic letter of investiture which forbids any alienation [of territory], and finally honesty itself. We are in the middle of negotiations and consultations with Venice on how Cervia and Malatesta's other cities shall return to the Church after his death, and now the Venetians have grabbed Cervia. Behold a noble deed! Behold the Senate's integrity! Behold the glory of the Venetian Republic! Is this how you keep faith? Is this how you care for decency?

[2] If Jacopo Piccinino³ who has often sold his loyalty, or if the greatest robber or thief in Italy had accepted to mediate between Us and Domenico, he would certainly never have permitted himself the indecency of seizing a city which was under negotiation: he would have feared infamy, he would have feared the voice of the people, he would have feared the label of traitor. But the Venetians are indifferent to such things. Their republic is quite cold-blooded: it does not feel shame, it does not grow red or pale, it does not falter. It always shows the same countenance: impudent and shameless. You measure honesty by your Senate's decrees, not by just reason. That is holy which the Senate decides even though it is against the Gospel: the Senate's decrees abrogate the Law of God.

[3] "Cervia secretly furnished salt to the people of Ferrara and thereby reduced our tax incomes. We have just sought to be indemnified. Now that we have bought Cervia, we shall be cheated no more." Oh, what a fine reason! You seek your own gain at another's loss. You have joined cause with robbers and thieves and are only concerned with your own advantage. In that way whatever men do may be permitted. What sane person will not prefer to act in his own interest? Also the panderer and the harlot seek their own profit. You are only concerned about your own republic's gain, not about the loss which you inflict upon the Roman Church.

¹ and legitimate

² I.e. how it could be guaranteed that the cities in question would actually return to the Church

³ Jacopo Piccinino (1423-1465): Italian *condottiero* and nobleman who had been, for some years, a dangerous adversary of the pope in the Church States

[4] Nullus avaritiae vestrae modus est, nullus ambitionis. Jure an injuria cumuletis opes, nihil interest, dum cumuletis. Neque finibus imperii propagandis fas nefasve obstat. Pulchrum est augere vires, quocumque tandem modo crescat imperium. Honestas potentiam sequitur. Deum, qui est in caelo, contemnitis. Respublica vobis pro Deo est. Hanc colitis universitatis creatore relicto.

[5] Peribit hic Deus vester, peribit. Nolite immortalem credere. Majores fuere Athenienses, quam vos estis, majores Laedaemonii, majores Carthaginenses. Funditus tamen periire, cum essent injusti. Nulla potentia umquam Romano imperio major fuit. Et hoc tamen subvertit Deus, cum esset impium, sacerdotiumque substituit, quod divinae legis curam gereret. Roma sacerdotalis facta est, et major Italiae {368v} pars beato Petro, aeternae vitae clavigero, et successoribus ejus in patrimonium cessit. Cuncti reges et imperatores Romano pontifici tamquam Jesu Christi vicario caput inclinant et pedes ejus exosculantur.

[6] Et vos, Veneti, Romanam contemnitis ecclesiam ac¹ jura ejus et² possessiones invaditis, mandata contemnitis et censuras: et creditis aeternam fore rempublicam vestram? Non erit aeterna nec diuturna. Dissipabitur cito male collecta multitudo. Piscatorum colluvies exterminabitur. Non potest insana civitas diu stare. Tabescit res vestra. Non veniet ad senium quam morbi taeterrimi et incurabiles in adolescentia opprimunt. Patrum nostrorum memoria magna fuit opinio justitiae Venetae. Castam esse ferebant civitatem et abstinentem et religionis amantem. Nostra aetate abiit omnis religio, omnis moderatio, omnis justitiae cultus. Pro his avaritia, rapacitas, ambitio, invidia, crudelitas, libido, omnes³ malae artes introiere.

¹ et R

² ac R

³ omnesque R

2. Venice is impious

[4] Your greed and ambition have no limits. You do not care whether you amass riches lawfully or unlawfully, as long as you amass them. Neither justice nor injustice stands in the way of extending your dominions. It is fine for you to have more power if only your empire grows in any way possible. Honesty is less important than power. You scorn God in Heaven. The republic is your God: this is what you worship, having abandoned the Creator of the Universe.

3 Venice is doomed

[5] But this God of yours shall perish, perish! Do not believe it is immortal. The Athenians were greater than you, and so were the Spartans and the Carthaginians, but when they became unjust, they were completely destroyed. No power was ever greater than the Roman Empire, but God put an end to it when it became impious, and He replaced it with a priestly rule which would care for God's Law. Rome became a priestly city and a large part of Italy became the patrimony of Saint Peter, the Keybearer of Eternal Life, and his successors. All kings and emperors bow to the Roman Pontiff as the Vicar of Jesus Christ and kiss his feet.

[6] Yet you Venetians scorn the Roman Church, usurp its rights and invade its possessions, and defy its commands and censures: and still you believe that your republic will last forever? It will not last forever, not even for long. Your [many territories]¹ have been gathered together by wicked means and they will be dispersed quickly.² The fishermen's refuse will be destroyed. An insane city cannot stand long. Your state will waste away. It will not reach old age since it has been beset by terrible and incurable ills already in its youth. Within the memory of our fathers, the justice of Venice was highly treasured. Your city was reputed to be decent, modest, and devoted to religion. But in our time all piety has disappeared, all moderation, all regard for justice. Instead have come greed, rapacity, ambition, jealousy, cruelty, lust, and all kinds of wicked practices.

¹ "multitudo"

² The pope appears to be referring to the Venetian territories on the Italian mainland, in Greece, and in the Mediterranean

[7] Non stabitis cum hisce moribus. Ruere necesse est imperium male fundatum. Dabit poenas flagitiorum vestrorum neque impune cedit Romanae ecclesiae illuisse. Potentes modo estis et insultatis matri vestrae, superbi dum carbasa vestra secundi impellunt venti. Mutabitur flatus. Nolite aurae confidere. Incolunt caelum superi, memores fandi atque nefandi. Non negligit facta hominum Deus. Curat, quae condidit, omnemque *odit iniquitatem*. Non potestis manus ejus evadere. Cum putabitis solidius esse imperium vestrum, tunc praeter opinionem subita vos calamitas involvet delebitque funditus divina justitia.

[7] With such morals you will not last. An empire built on bad foundations must perish. You will pay the penalty for your sins and you will not be allowed to deceive the Roman Church with impunity. Now that you are powerful, you insult your Mother, arrogant while favourable winds fill your sails. But the winds will change: do not trust in air! Those who dwell in Heaven remember both good and bad deeds. God knows and cares about what men do. He cares for his creation and he *hates iniquity*.¹ You cannot escape his hand. Just when you think that your empire stands firm, some sudden and unexpected catastrophe will occur, and your empire will be completely destroyed by divine justice.

¹ Psalms, 44, 8