

= Golden Ambrosian Republic =

The Golden Ambrosian Republic ( Italian : Aurea Repubblica Ambrosiana ; 1447 ? 1450 ) was a short @-@ lived government founded in Milan by members of the University of Pavia with popular support . With the aid of Francesco Sforza they held out against the forces of Venice , but after a betrayal Sforza defected and captured Milan to become Duke himself , abolishing the Republic .

= = History = =

= = = Foundation = = =

When Filippo Maria Visconti , Visconti Duke of Milan , died on 13 August 1447 , the city was thrown into confusion by the unexpectedness of the Duke 's expiration and the quick way in which the claimants to the title acted . Filippo Maria had no heir through male bloodlines , but the day before his death had written a will dedicating the Duchy to Alfonso V of Aragon . Among the other claimants were Charles , Duke of Orléans , nephew of Filippo Maria through his mother Valentina Visconti , Filippo 's cousins Albert and Sigismund of the House of Habsburg , great @-@ grandsons of Bernabò Visconti , and Frederick III , Holy Roman Emperor , who declared that the Duchy reverted to the Holy Roman Empire on the extinction of male heirs . But the two most prominent candidates supported by the Milanese population were Alfonso of Aragon and Francesco Sforza , the Duke 's son @-@ in @-@ law by marriage to his illegitimate daughter , Bianca Maria Visconti . The Bracceschi , supporters of the King of Aragon , seized the Castello on the night of the 13th , almost before Filippo Maria died , forcing the captains to swear allegiance to Alfonso .

Despite the general support for either Alfonso or Sforza , other influential citizens believed that the old republic could be restored . Learned bodies , such as the College of Jurisprudence in Pavia , painted the days of the old republic as a golden age . The merchants , seeing the prosperity of Republican Venice , were behind this idea . On the morning of the 14th , Republicans stirred the populace to rise against the Bracceschi , led by Antonio Trivulzio , Giorgio Lampugnano , Innocenzo Cotta , and Teodoro Bossi , members of the College of Jurisprudence . A Republic was declared behind the Palace of the Commune , and the captains abandoned their oaths to Alfonso in favor of the Republic . The Bracceschi were driven from Milan , and the new republic was called the Golden Ambrosian Republic , named for St. Ambrose , the 4th century bishop of Milan , who was taken on as the Republic 's patron . They took the old constitution and revised it that same day as suited their needs , electing twenty @-@ four Capitani e difensori della libertà , or " Captains and Defenders of Liberty , " to frame laws , elected regularly and later reduced to twelve .

= = = Early existence = = =

The idea of a radical renovation of liberties in the cities did not suit the powers of North Italy , who had been in league against the Visconti territorial gains in a decades @-@ long series of wars interrupted by truces , most recently the Peace of Cremona of 20 November 1441 . Venice was already at war with Milan , and the Republic was struck a sore blow as previously Milanese cities including Pavia , Lodi , and Piacenza defected or declared their independence . Besides the loss of support and defensive locations , the drop in revenue also caused a brief financial crisis resolved by the imposition of new taxes . Venice , now occupying Lodi and Piacenza , refused to listen to Milan 's pleas for peace . Milan turned to Francesco Sforza , the greatest military leader of his day , offering him the position of Captain @-@ General and the city of Brescia . Although he wished - and indeed , planned - to succeed his father @-@ in @-@ law as Duke , he decided to accept the position and promised rewards . A draft was declared in Milan on 13 September .

Sforza quickly captured independent Pavia when his mother @-@ in @-@ law persuaded the city 's ruling condottiero to relinquish it to him , and the Republic grudgingly allowed him to keep it with the title of Count , fearing that the Pavians and their large arsenal might instead offer themselves to

Venice if they refused . Sforza promised the Pavians no new taxes , respect for the old laws , payment for his hired officials , and to repair the city bridges and walls . He kept these promises faithfully and so won over the people of Pavia , establishing his rulership . Pavia was previously almost a second capital to Milan , and gave Sforza his own seat of power . The city was also in a strategic location on the Po River , situated where it could block the Venetians from coming to the relief of the beleaguered Piacenza via water . Returning to this siege and finding the city not likely to crumble by starvation , he resolved to storm it . Employing cannons in an almost unheard @-@ of manner , he opened up a breach in the walls and sacked the city . The news of this sack was greeted by three days ' rejoicing in Milan . Meanwhile , Milanese Captain Bartolomeo Colleoni captured Tortona which had previously proclaimed Sforza as its lord , stealing it from the now dangerously powerful Sforza . This caused further and even greater rejoicing , for the Milanese feared Sforza .

In January 1448 , the terms of the previous Captains and Defenders ended , and in the following election the Guelphs rose to political prominence . Being especially adverse to Sforza , they entered peace negotiations with Venice , which , also threatened by Sforza 's growing power , was willing to come to terms , albeit dictated by herself . Two of the Ghibellines who helped to found the Republic , namely Lampugnano and Bossi , stirred the populace against the Guelphs in a massive demonstration before the Court of Arengo . The Council of Nine Hundred was forced to abandon its plans for peace , and Sforza was given the go @-@ ahead for his next campaign to seize the Adda River . Sforza 's plans were voted down by the Republic in favor of more traditional tactics , namely besieging Lodi directly . While this happened , the Venetian fleet under Andrea Quirini assaulted the bridge of Cremona . However , Sforza 's wife Bianca was there , and led the defense until her husband relieved the city . The Venetian fleet withdrew and entrenched while it waited for the arrival of the Venetian army . Sforza trapped the fleet behind its defenses and , with his unorthodox use of artillery , utterly destroyed or captured every one of the seventy ships . This victory was celebrated in Milan , but the leaders of the Republic still feared Sforza , and sent him off to occupy him with the Ghiarad 'adda while Lodi and Caravaggio were besieged , hoping that their fall would end the war .

But ultimately the forces were brought together at Caravaggio , and both Sforza 's Milanese and the Venetian army under Micheletto Attendolo gathered there . The siege remained unbroken throughout July and until 15 September , when Attendolo launched a surprise @-@ attack on Sforza , so rapid that he did not even have time to buckle on his armor . What might have been a rout Sforza turned into a great victory as he set the example for his troops on the front line and utterly defeated the Venetian army , capturing three generals . Caravaggio fell , and despite rejoicing in Milan , little gratitude was given by the government to the architect of the victory , and the Republic sent him on to Lodi , determined to end the war . It was here , when a satisfactory end to the war seemed imminent , that the Milanese took a fatal misstep .

= = = Sforza 's defection and the Guelph @-@ Ghibelline feud = = =

In Milan , Sforza 's enemies worked continually against him . The Piccinino brothers , sons of famous condottiere Niccolò Piccinino and former Captains @-@ General before being replaced as supreme military commanders by Sforza , convinced the suspicious Republic to work secretly against Sforza . Rumors were spread among the troops about not receiving payment at the end of the war if they remained with Sforza , and Sforza himself was ordered back from the siege of Brescia , the city promised to him , while the citizens were secretly told to hold out until peace , already in the works , was signed . Sforza learned of this treachery and defected to the Venetians for 13 @,@ 000 ducats and the Duchy of Milan in return for the Ghiaradadda , Crema , and his service . The treaty was signed on 18 October 1448 , and Sforza now undid everything he had labored for over the past year . With such a powerful man on the Venetian side , it was the beginning of the end of the Golden Ambrosian Republic . Public opinion , despite the government 's position , was generally pro @-@ Sforza , and only an impassioned , patriotic speech from Giorgio Lampugnano subdued it at last . The Piccinino brothers became Captains @-@ General once more , but were not as capable as the brilliant Sforza .

This was reinforced by the internal dissention that was prominent in Milan . Crime and mob violence were rampant , and the harsh but empty measures against it only served to further divide the populace . Members of the government were filled with suspicion against one another . In an attempt to resolve the situation , the podestà was given absolute power . Financial problems were also grave ; fines , confiscations , and a state lottery were instituted to try to alleviate the deficit . Moreover , Guelph aristocrats continued to be regularly elected over the Ghibellines , and began to make the Republic far less democratic . Carlo Gonzaga , Captain of the People , lived luxuriously as an autocrat with his will as law . He was supported by Giovanni Appiani and Giovanni Ossona , tradesmen @-@ turned @-@ politicians , who were prominent in government affairs . Gonzaga began replacing his officials with his unambitious supporters , and the Ghibellines saw the ideals of their Republic crumbling before their eyes . Lampugnano and his Ghibelline friends conspired against Gonzaga and the Guelph regime , but were exposed by a letter intercepted by Gonzaga from Lampugnano to his friend Bossi . Gonzaga kept this knowledge secret , knowing that Lampugnano and Bossi were two of the most influential citizens since the formation of the Republic , but with the support of the vengeful Guelph Captains and Defenders conspired to have them slain . Lampugnano and Bossi were sent as envoys to Frederick III in February 1449 , but on the road were caught and imprisoned . Lampugnano was beheaded without a trial , and Bossi was tortured until he gave the names of his fellow conspirators . Following the execution of the leaders there was a massacre of leading Ghibellines within the city , from which only a few , such as Vitaliano Borromeo , escaped to safety in Arona , Piedmont and elsewhere . The heads of the slain were placed upon pikes in the Piazza of the Broletto .

Meanwhile , the other claimants to the Duchy began to see that Sforza would be a greater threat than the Ambrosian Republic . Louis of Savoy invaded in spring of 1449 , and Sforza sent Colleoni ( who had earlier defected ) to defeat him at Borgomanero , leading to an uneasy peace . Sforza also faced treachery within his own ranks , added with the fact that he rashly accepted the defection of his great enemies the Piccinino brothers , who , upon gaining access to Monza , promptly returned it to Milan .

Lampugnano , unfortunately for the Guelphs , was considered a martyr for the Republic . This was made worse by the fact that the Guelphs in leadership refused to run elections in April , until in June they were forced by the populace . Ghibelline families took the reins of Milan in this election , and the Guelphs were defeated . However , the reprisals against the Guelphs , including the imprisonment of Appiani and Ossona who had been blamed ( probably unjustly ) for the massacre , led the populace to violently depose the Ghibellines and reinstall the extremist Guelphs . Gonzaga , however , whose friend Galeotto Toscano was killed in the uprising , departed Milan to Crema , hoping to make peace with Sforza .

= = = End of the Republic = = =

Sforza was coming close to Milan itself in his conquests , and decided that since it was too powerful to be taken by force , he would surround it and starve the populace into surrender . With the loss of the outer cities by conquest or defection , Milan underwent famine . Gonzaga offered Crema to Sforza , hoping he would be tempted to take it himself and betray the Venetians . But Sforza remained staunch , and instead offered Gonzaga the city of Tortona if he would abandon Crema . This was accepted , and Crema , without support , quickly capitulated .

To the Milanese , Sforza 's victory now seemed certain , but he found his Venetian allies beginning to have doubts about their Captain @-@ General . They decided that Milan run by Sforza would be far more dangerous and detrimental to their interests than if it were run by a weak Republic . The last of the territory claimed by Venice , namely Crema , was now captured . Venice went behind Sforza 's back and signed a peace treaty with the Republic . They conceded conquered land to the Republic in return for peace , and let Sforza keep only Pavia , Cremona , Piacenza , and a narrow strip of land . They ordered him to accept the treaty or find Venice his enemy . The Republic rejoiced , and the citizens were confident the war was over and their future was secured . But Sforza could not accept the conditions of the treaty , and decided to persevere in the struggle . He was already

very powerful , and moreover was close to Milan . The Milanese in their assurance of peace had nearly exhausted their resources to plant crops and return to the old way of life . He was confident that Milan would quickly fall to him . After reinforcing his peace with Savoy with the concession of a few unimportant castles , he defeated the Venetians under his rival Sigismondo Malatesta and continued the siege .

Sforza chose for his headquarters the Borromeo castle of Peschiera , south @-@ east of the city . Starvation and suffering were rampant in Milan . At last Gaspare da Vimercate engineered a coup on 24 February 1450 . The next day the citizens met , but the suggestions and opinions were of great variety , save that all condemned Venice for its apparent apathy . Da Vimercate convinced the people to surrender to Sforza . Sforza had made himself very popular for his generosity while fighting for Milan . He had abstained from ravaging the countryside as was so common among commanders of his day , and after some debate the public was convinced . The following day terms were offered to Sforza , who accepted them . Sforza earned the city 's devotion by distributing food to the starving people . On 22 March 1450 , he had himself declared capitano del popolo , and by right of his wife , the Duke of Milan . He secured his popular support by letting many office @-@ holders keep their positions and being very lenient in his reprisals . The leaders were briefly imprisoned or relegated to their estates , but were generally pardoned soon after , even knighting some of his old enemies at his coronation . Ghibellines were allowed to return in safety and were restored to favor .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Sforza remained at war with Venice for years after the downfall of the Ambrosian Republic . Venice allied herself with the kingdom of Naples , previously a contender for the succession of Milan . Sforza , however , allied himself with his friend , Cosimo de ' Medici of Florence against Venice and Aragonese Naples . The continued war was finally closed by the peace of Lodi in 1454 with the House of Sforza as the established rulers of the Duchy of Milan

During its three @-@ year existence , the Ambrosian Republic won two major battles . The Lombards defeated the French at the Battle of Bosco Marengo in 1447 and the Venetians at the Battle of Caravaggio in 1448 . It was those victories that ensured the Republic all the territory of the former Duchy .

Of the Republic , Niccolò Machiavelli remarked

In order to create a Republic in Milan it would be necessary to exterminate all the nobility . . . . For there are , among the nobles , so many exalted personages that the laws do not suffice to repress them , and they must needs be kept under by a living voice and a royal power .

= = First capitani e defensori = =

The leading magistrates of the city , the capitani e defensori ( " Captains and Defenders " ) , were in charge of the government , elected every six months beginning in August 1447 . They were originally numbered twenty @-@ four but were eventually reduced to twelve .

= = = Porta Orientale = = =

Giovanni Marliani  
Giovanni Moresini  
Rolando or Oldrado Lampugnani  
Giovanni Olgiati

= = = = Porta Romana = = = =

Bartolomeo Visconti  
Giovanni Omodei

Giacomello Trivulzio  
Antonio Visconti , perhaps Antonio Trivulzi

= = = = Porta Ticinese = = = =

Giorgio Piatti  
Giovanni Crotti  
Ambrogio Lomazzo  
Giovanni Caimi

= = = = Porta Vercellina = = = =

Vitaliano Borromeo  
Guarnerio Castiglione  
Giacomo Coiro  
Simone Meraviglia

= = = = Porta Comasina = = = =

Giacomo Dugnani  
Giorgio Lampugnani  
Luisino or Luigi Bossi  
Francesco Casati

= = = = Porta Nuova = = = =

Bartolomeo Morone  
Pietro Cotta  
Dionigi Biglia  
Galeotto Toscani