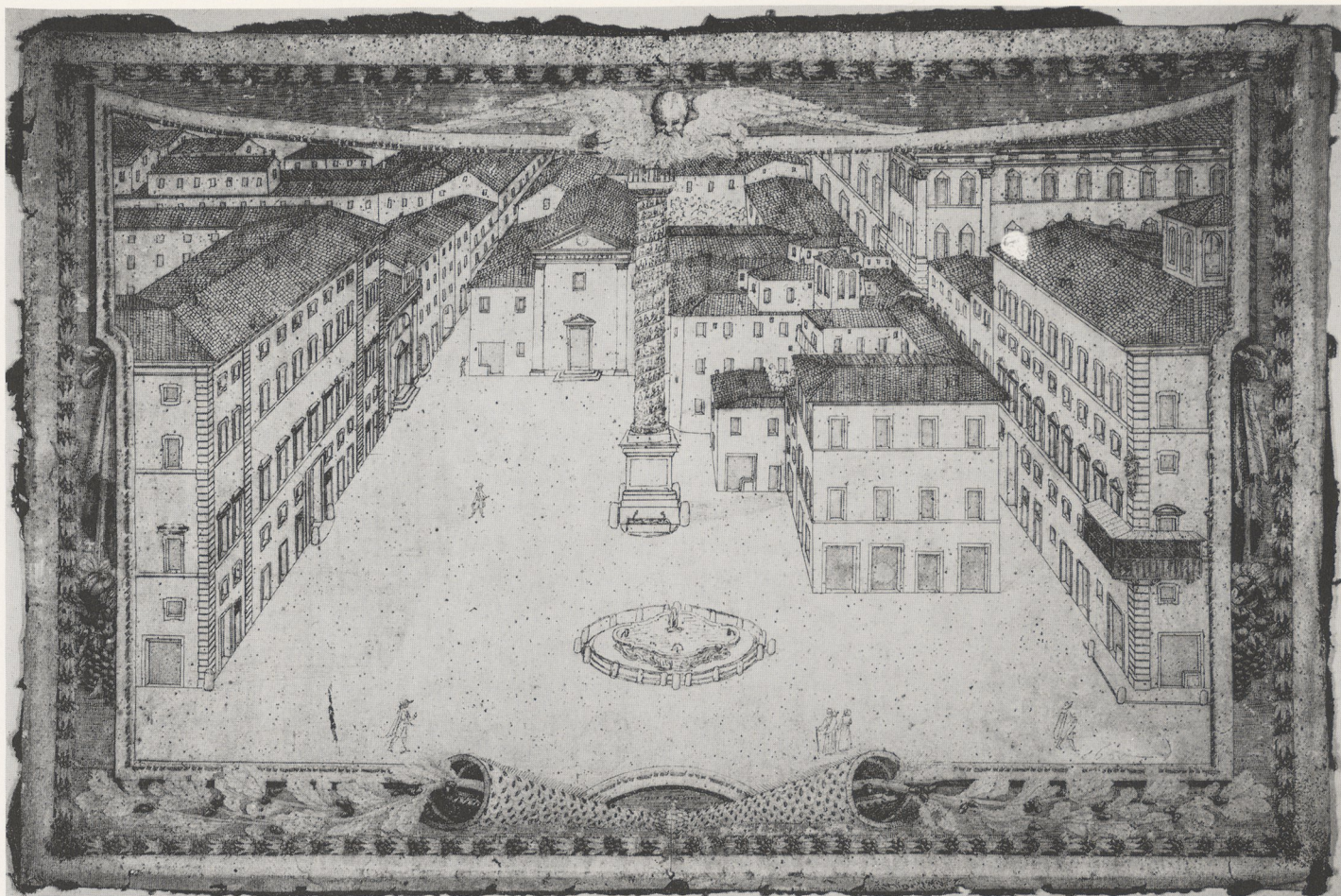


RICHARD KRAUTHEIMER

ALEXANDER VII AND PIAZZA COLONNA



1. View of Piazza Colonna as of 1658, Felice della Greca, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Chigi Castella III, 1, 159*

From the first days of his pontificate Alexander VII set out to present to the world the image of a New Rome, purged of the *difformità* left by earlier ages, with wider streets, modern churches and palaces and impressive squares¹. Within this program the Corso, “the first sight to present itself to foreigners [of distinction] upon their entry”, was a key element² and along it Piazza Colonna stood out (fig. 1). The piazza sheltered the Column of

Marcus Aurelius, the first major monument of Antiquity the visitor would encounter. Ever since the late sixteenth century the square had been the starting point for the eastward expansion of the urban fabric towards S. Andrea delle Fratte, Piazza Barberini and the Barberini palace, and it had been marked as such by a fountain set up in 1576/77 near the Corso and opposite the eastward streets. By the mid-seventeenth century it had grown into the focus of a fashionable quarter, witness the palaces built or begun near or around the square: on its southeast corner Palazzo del Bufalo-Ferraioli; on the northeast corner Palazzo Aldobrandini; facing it across the Corso, Palazzo Giustini-Spada; towering over the northwest corner Palazzo Ludovisi on Montecitorio; and on the northward stretch of the Corso, the palaces Verospi, Peretti-Fiano and Caëtani-Ruspoli³. But much by the

1 R. KRAUTHEIMER and ROGER S.B. JONES, “The Diary of Alexander VII”, *RömJbKg* 15 (1975) 199ff., esp. p. 203, no. 1, August 1655, and *passim* (henceforth quoted as *Diary*, number and date); also P. SFORZA PALLAVICINI, *Della Vita di Alessandro VII ...*, II, Prato, 1840, 263f.; N. BAROZZI and G. BERCHET, *Relazioni ... dagli ambasciatori Veneti*, ser.III, *Relazioni di Roma*, II, Venice, 1879, 218ff.

2 (Alexander) “... procura anco di abbellirla nel temporale, facendo hoggi levare tutte le difformità della strada del Corso acciochè i forastieri a quella prima vista che si presenta Loro nell’Ingresso non vedano alcuna di dette difformità ...”, *Bibl. Vat.*, *Barb. lat.* 6367, cc.795v.; see also, *Chirografo* Sept. 29, 1657 [ASR, *Mappe*, I, cart. 80, 251]; diary Cervini [*Bibl. Casanat.* 5006, c. 7v, January 26, 1658] and *Bibl. Vat.*, *Barb. lat.* 6367, cc. 795v, 796r, both published E. ROSSI, “Roma ignorata”, *Roma* 11 (1932) 272].

3 *Via del Corso*, ed. U. BARBERINI, Rome, 1961, 181ff. (G.C. Incisa della Rocchetta) and *passim*; *Il Palazzo di Montecitorio*, ed. F. BORSI and others, Rome, 1968; F. BORSI, M. DEL PIAZZA and others, *Montecitorio, Ricerche di Storia Urbana*, Roma, 1972, *passim*; G. SPAGNESI, “Palazzo del Bufalo-Ferraioli ...”,

beginning of Alexander's reign remained unfinished or unimpressive. Palazzo Giustini-Spada was a patchwork; Palazzo Aldobrandini a fragment. Planned as large as today and built by fits and starts from the late sixteenth century on, along the main façade towards the Corso ten of fifteen bays were completed, along the façade towards the square only nine of the projected fifteen. On the groundfloor, below an impressive *piano nobile*, mezzanine and second floor, a row of botteghe continued a sixteenth century utilitarian Roman tradition of palace building; eastward a group of insignificant houses adjoined the unfinished façade. Likewise, across the square a rabbit warren of houses, the insane asylum and its church, S. Anna dei Pazzarelli, leaned against Palazzo del Bufalo, pierced by an arch leading to Piazza di Pietra.

Of Bernini's colossal Palazzo Ludovisi on Montecitorio only the corner projections and part of the connecting wings had been built by 1654, when Prince Niccolò Ludovisi fell into disgrace⁴. A ruin for another forty years, the palace faced across the narrow Via Montecitorio a cluster of houses, sheds, and gardens, covering an area roughly 250 *palmi* north to south and 300 *palmi* east to west, and which extended eastwards far into Piazza Colonna⁵. The westward third of the block was of diversified ownership, including at the northern end a stable and fountain of the Ludovisi. Housing in the larger, eastward part, except for one large house, property of the Marchesa Muti, belonged to the Barnabites whose church, S. Paolo alla Colonna, and convent formed its eastward façade. Composed of structures varying in height and width this front projected irregularly into a narrow alley. Across it another, L-shaped block crowded east and north against the Column and was separated on the north by a narrow lane from the unfinished façade of Palazzo Aldobrandini. Like the 'Barnabite block', this L-shaped block was composed of houses, large and small, sheds and courtyards, all grown together in the course of centuries. A plan, attached to a Chirografo of Alexan-

der's, dated Spetember 29, 1657⁶, (fig. 2) and the view drawn by Felice della Greca, probably shortly thereafter (fig. 1)⁷, depict the square as it then presented itself: a crowded area, with the great Column and the palaces, unfinished in large part, rising from a clutter of mean houses, workshops and stables. It was not a sight to impress the visitor coming from Porta del Popolo upon his first entry into Rome. To Alexander it was a blemish to be removed as fast as possible. Clearing away the unsightly houses on the square, so a diarist wrote on February 2, 1658, would ennoble that Piazza no end⁸.

A second motif intertwined with Alexander's wish to see Piazza Colonna cleaned up. His relatives in 1656 had descended on Rome and were looking for appropriate accommodation. In January 1657, Don Mario Chigi, the pope's brother, and Don Agostino, his nephew, had leased the palace on Piazza SS. Apostoli opposite the church⁹. But the place was apparently unsatisfactory, the more so since Don Agostino early in 1658 became engaged to Virginia Borghese. In view of the impending marriage, the Chigi in the spring of that year were again in the market, eying Palazzo Pamphili on Piazza Navona as a prospective home for the young couple and pressuring unsuccessfully Monsignor Mancini, Mazarin's relative, into ceding his palace on the Corso, adjoining in the rear the palace on Piazza SS. Apostoli¹⁰. But as early as February it was also rumoured that they "were going to live on Piazza Colonna, were to buy the palace of the Marchese del Bufalo, take over the entire block and to move elsewhere the insane asylum. Also they were to bring to the *piazza* all the Trevi waters, make sumptuous fountains and a great demolition of houses"¹¹. In the end

6 ASR, *Mappe* I, cart. 80, 251.

7 Bibl. Vat., Archivio Chigi, III, 1, 159.

8 (Alexander) "... inoltre fa demolire tutta quella piccola isola di case che sta in Piazza Colonna; il che nobilitarà ... fuor di modo questa piazza" (Casanat. 5006, c. 7 v, Feb. 2, 1658, quoted by E. Rossi, "Roma ignorata", *Roma* 11 (1932) 272; also Bibl. Vat., Barb. lat. 6367, cc. 801 v, 802 r, as below, note 11.

9 E. Rossi, *op. cit.*, 268f. as from Casanat. 5006, under Jan. 20, 1657, but there is no such entry. See however, V. GOLZIO, *Documenti artistici sul Seicento nell'Archivio Chigi*, Rome, 1939, 22, the confirming Chirografo, June 7, 1657.

10 Bibl. Vat., Barb. lat. 6367, c. 825 v, April 20, 1658 and c. 831 v, May 4, 1658, both unpublished.

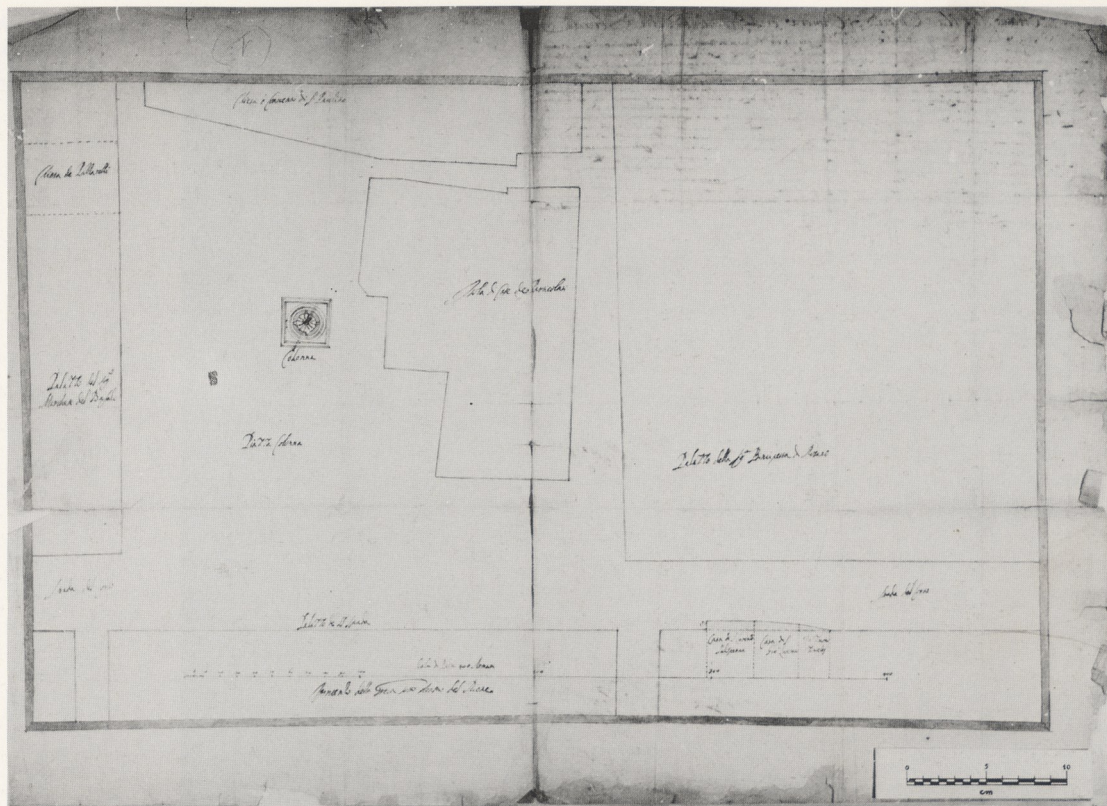
11 "Anche si seguitano i già scritti gettiti di case in varij luoghi più cospicui della Città per abbellimento di essa, benchè condoglianza di chi per tal effetto è tassato in grosse contribuzioni e così si dice che la Casa Chigi verrà ad habitare in Piazza Colonna comprando il Palazzo del Marchese del Bufalo del quale pigliano tutta l'Isola ponendo l'Hospitale de' pazzi in altra parte, e sopra detta piazza si farà venire l'acqua tutta di Trevi e gran gettito di case." (*Ibid.*, c. 801 v, 802 r, February 16, 1658; quoted E. Rossi, *op. cit.*, 272).

Palladio 13 (1963), 143 ff.; R. LEFEVRE, "Gli Aldobrandini in Piazza Colonna", *Studi Romani* 11 (1963), 417 ff., 646 ff. (henceforth: Lefevre, 1963); *id.* *Palazzo Chigi*, Rome, 1971 (henceforth: Lefevre, 1971).

4 F. Borsi, M. del Piazza and others, *op. cit.*, 59 ff., 67; *Il Palazzo di Montecitorio*, ed. F. Borsi and others, as previous note.

5 Measurements of Piazza Colonna and the adjoining buildings in the seventeenth century are provided by the coted plan Bibl. Vat., Arch. Chigi, Cart. III. 1, 25085 (fig. 13) and by the *chirografi* plans of September 29, 1657 (ASR, *Mappe* I, Cart. 80, 251); of February 5, 1659 and March 6, 1659 (*ibid.*, 252); and of December 31, 1659 (ASR, *Notai acque e strade*, 88, c. 375) – all provided with scales in *palmi*.

2. Plan of Piazza Colonna,
29 September 1657.
Archivio di Stato di
Roma, Mappe e
Disegni I, cartella 80,
no. 251



they did settle on Piazza Colonna. But instead of Palazzo del Bufalo, they bought from the heiress, the Princess Rossano (and incidentally through her first marriage, mother-in-law to Don Agostino) and her husband Don Camillo Pamphili at a bargain price the unfinished Palazzo Aldobrandini: a mere 41,314 scudi, 6,134 of which were to be counted against the tax owed by the sellers for having the square cleared of the unsightly houses¹². The purchase was concluded September 25, 1659 and Don Mario and Don Agostino moved in¹³, while the Cardinal *Nepote*, Flavio Chigi, took over the lease and in 1661 bought the palace at SS. Apostoli¹⁴. Projects for terminating Palazzo Aldobrandini-Chigi and their execution were entrusted to Felice della Greca; completion of the palace dragged on into the 1690's. But some time before the fall of 1659 Felice della Greca had submitted his proposals to the Chigi. Indeed, negotiations for the Aldobrandini palace were well under way by January 1659, when Alexander had the title deeds looked up¹⁵,

and apparently the purchase was seriously discussed as early as the summer of 1658, when Don Agostino showed the pope two drawings by Felice della Greca "of the palace to be finished"¹⁶; and presumably also "the new design for the house"¹⁷ as well as the one inspected by Alexander, Don Mario and Don Agostino "to work out the partitions for their house"¹⁸ should be referred to the palace on Piazza Colonna.

Felice della Greca's view of the square (fig. 1) likewise would have been done in the summer or fall of 1658 for the Chigi¹⁹ to demonstrate the need to clear the square, if the family intended to settle there. Such clearing was necessary for obvious reasons: to clean up a grand sight off the Corso; to create a monumental frame for the Column of Marcus Aurelius; to turn the square into a decorous spacious forecourt fronting the palace of the Chigi family; and, a practical aim, to make it into a commodious parking site. Parking, indeed, was one of the traffic problems that had plagued Rome ever since the late six-

12 Lefevre, 1963, 119 and 127, note 14; *Diary*, 346, Sept. 23, 1659 (I apologize for the misprint 4314 instead of 41314 *ducati*).

13 Lefevre, 1963, 650ff.

14 Golzio, *op. cit.*, 22.

15 *Diary*, 270, January 27, 1659.

16 *Diary*, 229, August 16, 1658.

17 *Diary*, 228, August 13, 1658.

18 *Diary*, 199, June, 5, 1658.

19 Not only is the drawing in the Chigi Archive, but the framing foliage is interspersed with acorns – a Chigi device.

3. Plan of Piazza Colonna, February 1659, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Mappe e Disegni I, cartella 80, no. 252



teenth century, when coaches had become both a necessity and a status symbol. The 883 coaches, registered in 1594²⁰, had multiplied by 1650. No person of quality would show himself except in his coach; and ambassadors on official business had to go in a coach at four or six. But streets were narrow and crooked, and space in front or in the courtyards of palaces was scarce for parking or turning about when visiting. The inconveniences listed fifty and sixty years before²¹, by Alexander's time had increased and were a major preoccupation of his: on Piazza della Pace, he worries about access, manoeuvrability and parking for coaches²²; Piazza S. Pietro was laid out, so his biographer says, among other things with an eye to providing parking space and a commodious protected approach for coaches²³; and a drawing from Felice della Greca's shop compares the surface and height of the planned Aldobrandini-Chigi courtyard with those of

Palazzo Farnese, the Cancelleria and Palazzo Bonelli, both for airiness and parking space, one suspects²⁴. Clearing Piazza Colonna was essential, the more so once the Chigi were to settle there.

Nonetheless, the removal of the houses, rumoured as early as February 1658, took some time. In July Domenico Jacovacci, Alexander's right-hand man among the *Maestri di Strade*, submitted him the drawing²⁵; during the winter, the pope twice wrote impatient reminders to himself about it²⁶; on February 5, 1659, he signed the *Chirografo* authorizing demolition²⁷; and work started a week later²⁸. At that point, however, it was no longer the L-shaped block near the Column alone that was to be torn down; the irregular front of the Barnabite church and convent, too was to be cut straight, "to square off the

20 W. Lotz, "Gli 883 cocchi della Roma del 1594", *Studi offerti a Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta (Miscellanea della Società Romana di Storia Patria, XXIII)*, Rome, 1973, 247 ff.

21 *Ibid.*, 248 f.

22 H. Ost, "Studien zu Pietro da Cortona's Umbau von S. Maria della Pace", *RömJbKg* 13 (1971) 231.

23 Sforza Pallavicini, *op. cit.*, II, 181 f.

24 Bibl. Vat., Arch. Chigi, Cartella III, 1, 25084.

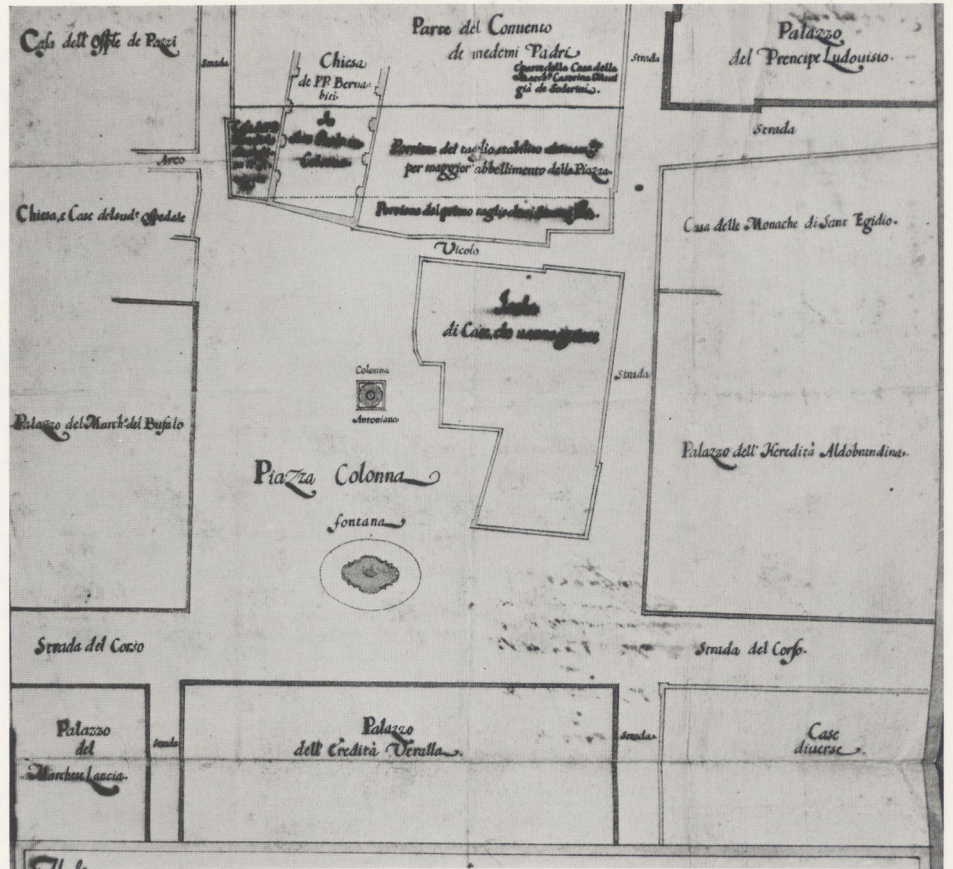
25 *Diary* 218, July 9, 1658.

26 *Diary* 246, November 12, 1658; *Diary* 272, January 28, 1659.

27 *ASR, Mappe*, I, cart. 80, no. 252; *Diary* 277, February 13, 1659. The text of the *Chirografo* has been published by C. FEA, *Dei diritti del Principato sugli edifici pubblici*, Rome, 1806, *Annotazioni, Appendice*, 59 ff.

28 Casanat. 5006, c. 9 v, February 18, 1659, quoted by E. Rossi, *op. cit.*, 272.

4. Plan of Piazza Colonna, March 1659, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Mappe e Disegni I, cartella 80, no. 252



piazza, for the greater beauty of this our city” (fig. 3)²⁹. Whether any provisions to hide the scar were envisaged, is doubtful. The cut, as projected, was unsatisfactory anyhow. Thus a second Chirografo a month later ordered a much deeper cut, as marked on the attached plan “Portione del taglio stabilito ultimamente per maggior abbellimento della Piazza” and comprising, according to the text, not only the entire church and convent of the Barnabites, but also part of the house behind the latter, belonging to the Marchesa Muti (fig. 4)³⁰. Hence, as shown by the plan, the new cut lined up with the southeast corner of Palazzo Ludovisi-Montecitorio, making the condemned area 251½ *palmi* wide and 96 *palmi* deep, and, so

the text of the Chirografo, not to be built over³¹. Indeed, that area was to become part of the piazza, which thus gained its present regular aspect and size, not counting the later colonnaded portico of the present building on the west boundary – a near square, 296½ *palmi* wide by 290 *palmi* deep. In the weeks following, the church was desecrated and demolition started³². Beyond, that is west of the cut authorized by the new Chirografo, the ‘Barnabite block’, including a number of houses owned by the order remained to be disposed of and to this end a map was prepared detailing the property and listing the rentals³³. Finally, authorized by a Chirografo dated December 31, 1659, the Barnabites, meanwhile transferred to S. Carlo ai Catinari and “unable to bear the expense of a structure proportionate to the others” bordering the square, sold the site to Prince Nicolò Ludovisi for a *paruum palatium*, to house the employees, the

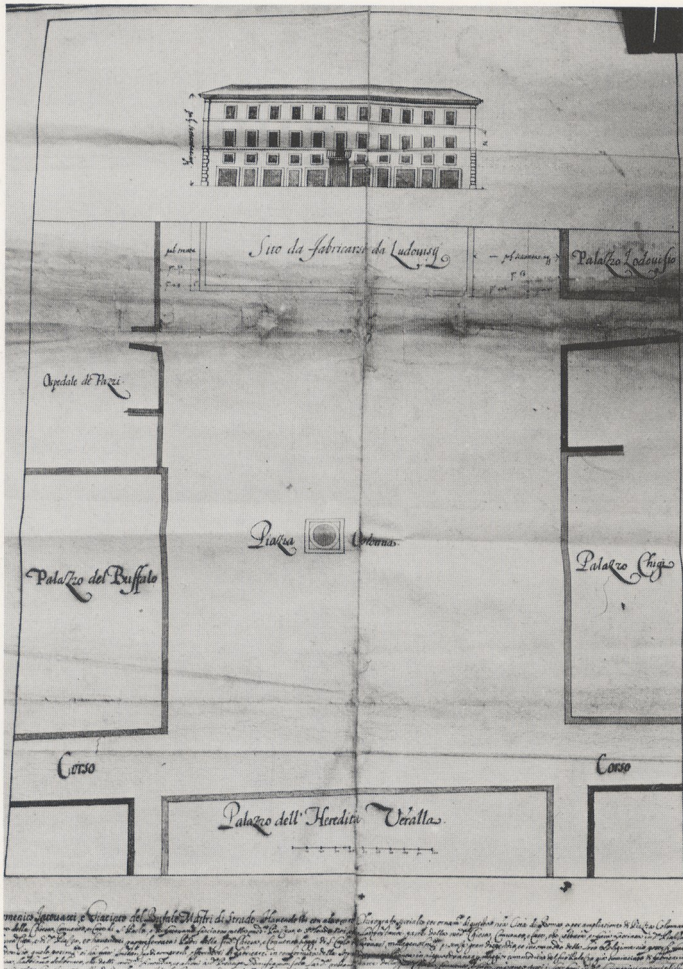
29 “... et anco tagliare et addrizzare la facciata della Chiesa et convento de’ PP Barnabiti ... per retta linea ... e per quella portione che sarà necessario per riquadrar detta Piazza” (ASR, Mappe, I, cart. 80, 252, Chirografo February 5, 1659, see C. Fea, *loc. cit.*).

30 “... avendo Noi considerato per maggiore abbellimento di detta Piazza ed ornamento di questa Nostra Città esser necessario far gettare e demolir maggior parte delle suddette Chiesa, Convento, e case delli suddetti Padri et anco una Portione della casa spettante alla Marchesa Catarina Muti ... in conformità della Pianta qui di sopra delineata ...” (ASR, Mappe, I, cart. 80, 252 [sic: both chirografi of February 5 and March 6 bear the same number]; published C. Fea, *op. cit.*, 62f.).

31 “Con far gettare la suddetta portione di Chiesa Convento e case delli suddetti Padri ... et anco la portione della ... casa della Marchesa Muti ... con lasciar il sito aperto ...” (as previous note).

32 Casan. 5006, cc. 9v, 10r, March 17 and April 21 respectively, quoted by E. Rossi, *op. cit.*, 272.

33 Bibl. Vat., Chig. P. VII 10, fol. 6.



5. Plan of Piazza Colonna with elevation of proposed Ludovisi palace, 1659, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai delle Acque e Strade, vol. 88, cartella 375

famiglia, of his unfinished palace³⁴; the deal was perfected April 13, 1660³⁵. An outline plan and elevation of the proposed façade, incorporated in a plan of the piazza and lined up with the corner of the Ludovisi palace, provided with a scale and partly coted, accompanies the December Chirografo (fig. 5). Also, as expressly stated in the text,

34 "... volendo noi che la restante parte della medesima Chiesa, Convento e case che resterà e farà facciata in detta Piazza sia ornata con fabrica proportionata ad altri edifizii adiacenti per decoro ... di detta Piazza ... et havendoci rappresentato i Padri ... senza gran dispendio ... no potersi fare ... ma che inclinerebbero ... a vender dette case e sito al Principe Nicolo Ludovisi quale parimente ci ha fatto Istanza di comprarli offrendosi di fabricarci in conformità della sopradisegnata Pianta ... e con dichiarazione che detto Principe sia tenuto fabricare a conformità della detta Pianta e ordine al Prospetto ... in detta Piazza (lacuna) all'arbitrio di detto Principe fabricare o non fabricare a suo modo e volontà e come meglio li parera bastando di adempire l'obbligo della facciata sua ..." (ASR, Notai Acque e Strade, vol. 88, c. 375, Chirografo Dec. 31, 1659).

35 ASR, Notai Acque e Strade, vol. 87, cc. 360ff.

Prince Ludovisi was required only to follow the façade design. The interior layout and westward extension of the building were left entirely to him. Thus the structure along the western edge of Piazza Colonna remained essentially unchanged until in 1839 the portico with the Veii columns was added; the building now houses the newspaper *Tempo* and other offices (fig. 6). A survey plan dated 1815 shows what appears to be its original lay-out (fig. 7).

The plan of December 31, 1659, however, placed limitations on the new Ludovisi building not spelled out in the text, by stipulating a frontage far shorter than the cut through the 'Barnabite block' ordered in March of that year. Of the 254 *palmi* of the latter six *palmi* to the southwest went into widening Via della Colonna Antonina from 24 to 30 *palmi*, the present width³⁶; to the north a broad strip, measuring fully 40¹/₄ *palmi*, was ceded so as to replace the narrow lane which led to Via Montecitorio, by an open passage, 65 *palmi* wide, skirting the south façade of Palazzo Ludovisi-Montecitorio³⁷. Thus the *parvum palatium* of the Ludovisi *famiglia* rose, shifted slightly south of the center axis of the square and slightly north of the Column of Marcus Aurelius. Hence the effect was somewhat unbalanced: 75 *palmi* high and therefore low both as compared with the 106 *palmi* height of the del Bufalo and Aldobrandini palaces and in proportion to its own length; with *botteghe*, mezzanines and two plain upper floors; utterly undistinguished and certainly not "a structure proportionate to the other buildings bordering (the piazza) to beautify this our city and the said square" – as the Chirografo required.

The weak Ludovisi building was not the first structure competing for the site. Twenty years ago Karl Noehles identified a famous project by Pietro da Cortona as having been intended to occupy the western face of Piazza Colonna³⁸. The project exists in three versions, two of

36 Vat. lat. 11257, cc. 153v–154v., a coted plan possibly prior to 1658, gives Via della Colonna Antonina only 18 *palmi* the same width scaled off on ASR, *Mappe* I, cart. 80, 251, Sept. 29, 1657. ASR, *Mappe* I, cart. 80, 252, February 5, 1659 scales to 24 *palmi*; the figure quoted also on the *chirografo* of December 31, 1659; presumably six *palmi* had been shaved off on the south side of the street.

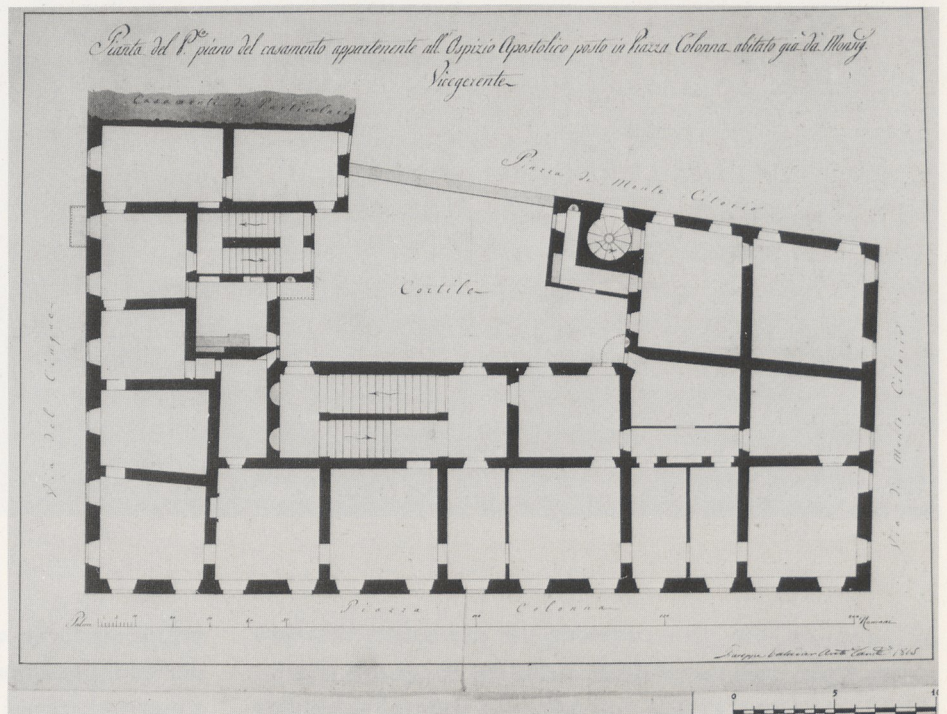
37 The width of the ceded strip, 40¹/₄ *palmi*, and of the former street, 24¹/₄ *palmi*, have been rounded up to 65 *palmi* on ASR, *Notai di Acque e Strade*, 88, c. 375.

38 K. NOEHLES, "Die Louvre-Projekte des Pietro da Cortona", *ZKg* 24 (1961) 40ff., esp. 50; *id.*, "Architekturprojekte Cortonas", *MüJbBK* 26 (1969) 171 ff., esp. 196f.; *id.*, *La Chiesa dei SS. Luca e Martina*, Rome, 1969, *passim*; R. WITTKOWER and H. BRAUER, *Die Zeichnungen des Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, Berlin, 1931, 148, had suggested the south side of the Piazza as the site intended for the Cortona project.

6. Late nineteenth century photograph of Piazza Colonna



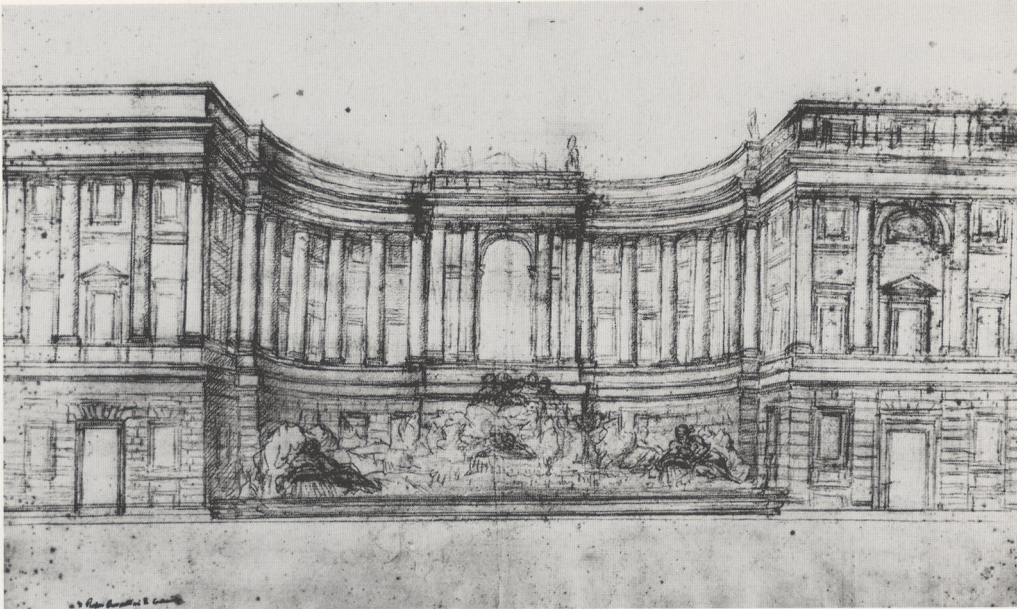
7. Survey plan from 1815 of the Ospizio Apostolico (parum palatium) along the western edge of Piazza Colonna, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Mappe e Disegni I, cartella 80, no. 253



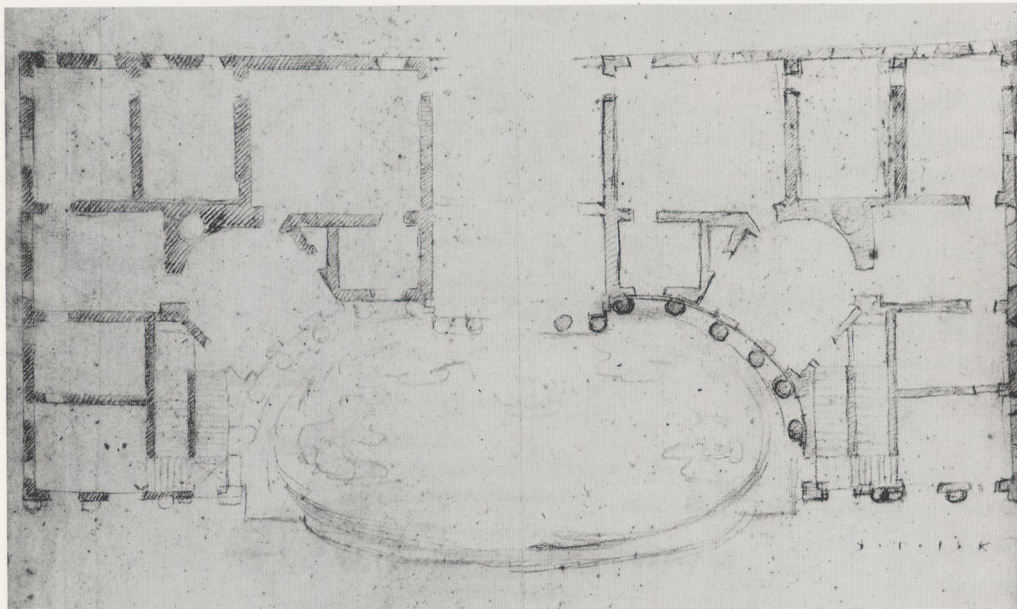
them with two variants in elevation – the differences being minor – all contained in the Chigi volumes and presumably presented to Alexander³⁹. Of the most impressive version both plan and façade drawing survive (Figs. 8, 9): monumentally conceived, the concave center embraces as the dominant motif a huge oval fountain,

39 Bibl. Vat. Chig. P. VII, 10, fol. 10–13.

filled with rocks and seagods, and is flanked by powerful corner projections; above a rusticated groundfloor, a colossal order of applied columns and corner pilasters, surmounted by a strong entablature and attic, holds in place the two upper floors; progressively projecting towards the middle, the colonnaded order opens in a triumphal arch on to a passage which pierces the entire depth of the building between comparatively small rooms. A scale of



8. Pietro da Cortona, project for western face of Piazza Colonna, façade, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. P. VII, 10, f. 11



9. Pietro da Cortona, project for western face of Piazza Colonna, groundplan, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. P. VII, 10, f. 10

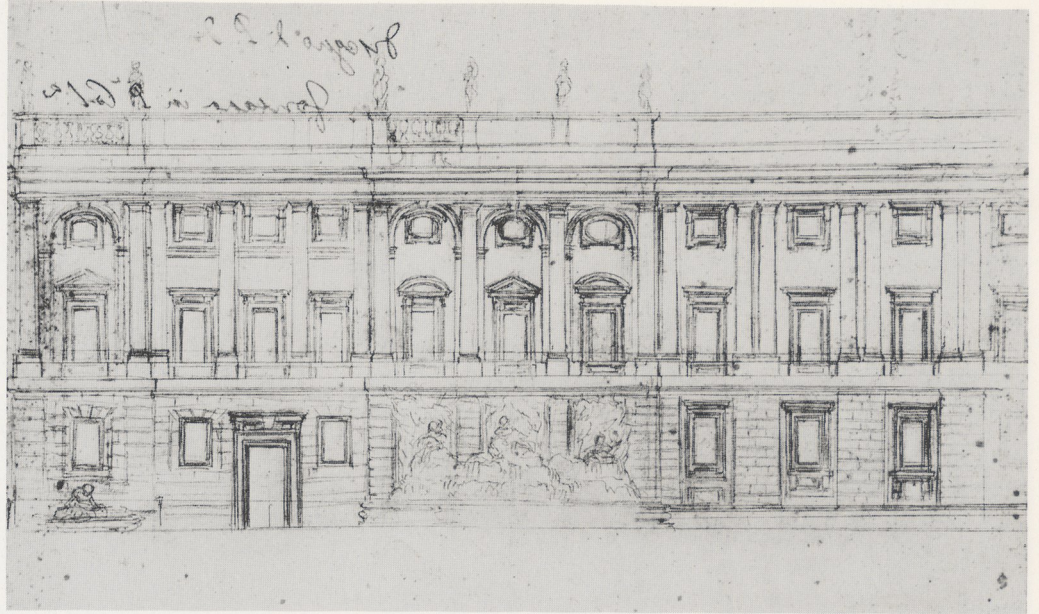
30 *palmi* on the plan provides the measurements: 255 *palmi* wide, 127 *palmi* deep including the projection of the fountain oval (116 *palmi* only the body of the building), and 100 *palmi* high. A groundline along the length of the façade marks the slope of the *piazza* from north to south on this as on the other two elevations⁴⁰. Both of these show façades, more conventional, if advanced in Rome prior to the last third of the century, articulated as they are by colossal orders and projecting end and center sections. But only fol. 13 shows fountains attached to the

center and, in one variant, the end sections, though decidedly subordinate (fig. 10). On fol. 12 no fountains appear whatever; maybe they were to be placed elsewhere on the *piazza* (fig. 11). On the verso of fol. 13, a scrawl in thick pencil “Disegno di P. da C. per fontane in P^a Col^a” – the hand closely resembles Alexander’s⁴¹ – identifies the author, location and, as far as the writer was concerned, the function of the project (fig. 12). Cortona, to be sure,

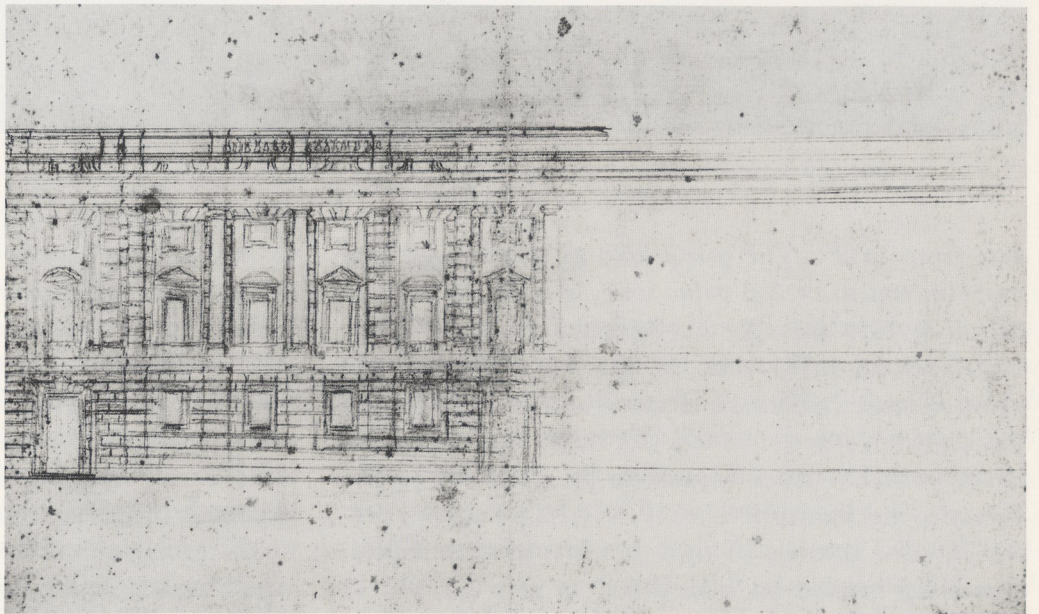
40 Mr. Dan Burley, in a seminar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in 1970 pointed out this feature.

41 Compare the autograph list of his achievements, Chig. J VI, 205, cc. 361 ff. and the marginal notes, Chig. H III 57, c. 159. C. D’ONOFRIO, *Acque e Fontane*, 538, identifies the hand as Alexander’s.

10. Pietro da Cortona, project for western face of Piazza Colonna elevation, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. P. VII, 10, f. 13



11. Pietro da Cortona, project for western face of Piazza Colonna, elevation, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. P. VII, 10, f. 12



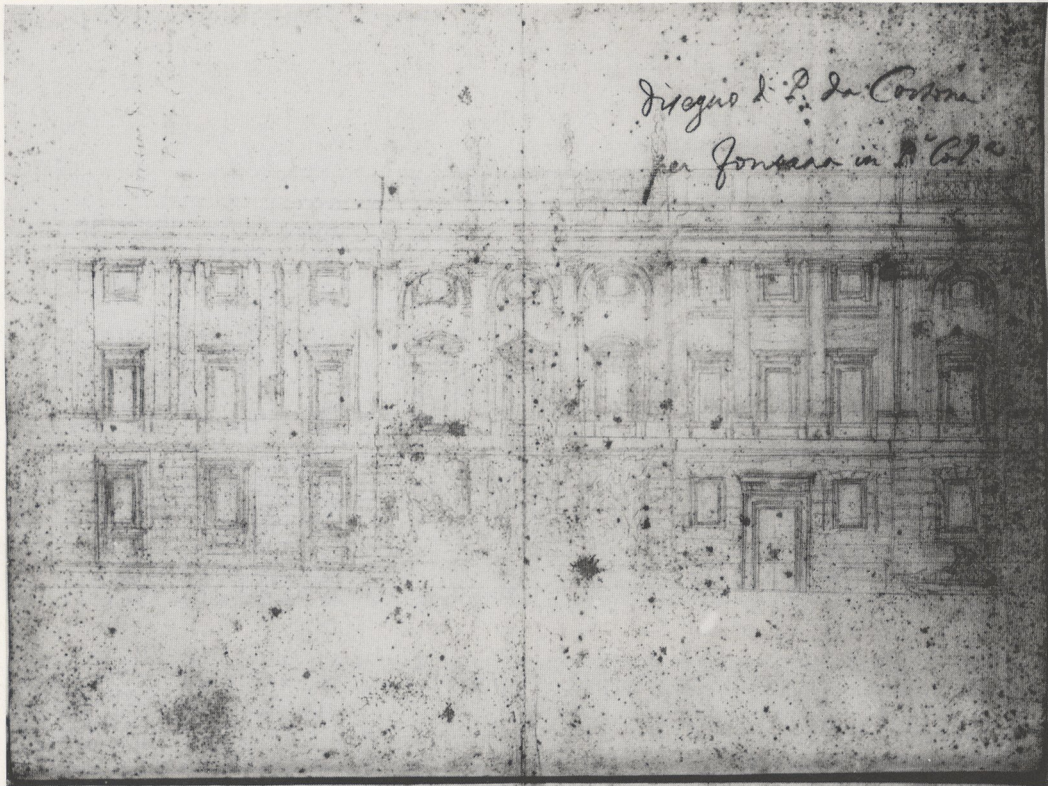
may have started out thinking primarily of a palace. But by the time he designed the oval fountain building, the palace had become merely an envelope for the water display: incommensurate, with small rooms, narrow stairs and no space for a courtyard.

The drawings have always been related to an autograph note of Alexander's listing architectural undertakings on his mind⁴², among them two correlated items: "La fontana di Piazza Colonna metter in q^{ta} di S. Marco"; and "Portare la mostra della fontana Trevi in Piazza Co-

lonna"⁴³. Since the final items on the list concern last minute details on Piazza S. Pietro, in fact carried out in 1667, the note has been dated, rightly I think, to Alexander's last year. But "to bring all the Trevi waters (to Piazza Colonna) and make sumptuous fountains" was discussed as early as February 1658; and Alexander rarely dropped a project. In fact, the Cortona drawings must

43 Bibl. Vat., Chig. H II 22, c. 223, first published L. v. PASTOR, *Geschichte der Päpste*, XIV, 1, Freiburg, 1924, 524, note 2. An abbreviated list with changes appears in *Diary*, 939, September 9, 1666; at that time the fountain from Piazza Colonna was to go to Piazza SS. Apostoli and the Trevi *mostra* was omitted.

42 See above, p. 200, note 38.



12. Annotation on verso of project shown fig. 11, hand perhaps Alexander VII

date from 1659⁴⁴. The palace embracing the huge oval fountain was to be 255 *palmi* long, like the cut ordered March 5, 1659 through the Barnabite property; hence December 31, 1659, when the site was reduced to 208 *palmi* in length, offers the *terminus ante* for the Cortona project, while March 5 of that year seems to be a *terminus ad* or *post*. The latter appears to be confirmed by the survey of the 'Barnabite block' P. VII. 10, fol. 6, done presumably for the sale of their property after March 6; somebody marked on it in pencil an area 255 by 130 *palmi*, and thus the size of Cortona's palace, with its oval fountain (Fig. 8, 9). Spring or summer of 1659 would then be the date of the Cortona projects; a strange time in view of the Chigi negotiations under way for the Aldobrandini palace. But apparently Cortona felt that a counter project might still be on time, the more so since at least two of his proposals (figs. 10 and 12, left hand) provided for two entrances and thus possibly separate apartments for Don Mario and Don Agostino on either side of a central salone

in one, a central passage in the other version. Be that as it may, the version with the curved and colonnaded façade embracing the oval fountain seems to have been for a while under serious consideration: a guidebook in 1666 mentions the removal of the Barnabite church of S. Paolo alla Colonna "because of the construction of the colonnade"⁴⁵; and it seems plausible to identify the colonnade, otherwise inexplicable, with Cortona's design⁴⁶.

The project would have made a grand *Teatro* to terminate Piazza Colonna, but it was too late. The Chigi were decided to buy Palazzo Aldobrandini and Cortona's proposed palace would have been too small for their needs; moreover, the project with the oval fountain lacked a courtyard; it was incommodious as a family

44. After finishing the manuscript I see from M. and M. FAGIOLO DELL'ARCO, *Bernini*, Rome 1969, 267, note 9, that a date for the Cortona Project "after 1656-1658 and prior to the purchase of the site by the Ludovisi in 1659" has been proposed already by O. CAPASSO, *L'Urbanistica di Piazza Colonna dall'Antichità ad Alessandro VII*, a *tesi di laurea* at the University of Rome, 1966, unpublished and of which I have not found a copy so far.

45 *Le Cose maravigliose dell'Alma Città di Roma*, Rome (MANCINI), 1666, 41: "Detta chiesa ultimamente è stata levata per ragione della fabbrica del colonnato", repeated verbatim in the edition of 1669. I can only guess that the quotation goes back to the first edition, 1661, of which L. SCHUDT, *Le Guide di Roma*, Vienna-Augsburg, 1930, 214f., no. 114, listed a copy then in the University Library at Breslau-Vroclav. (The 1666 edition of which a copy is now in the Bibliotheca Hertziana was unknown to him.) Jan Bialostocki kindly found out that the Breslau copy is no longer there. So far I have been unable to locate another copy in any of the Roman libraries I have checked.

46 This suggestion was made by Mrs. Trude Krautheimer-Hess.

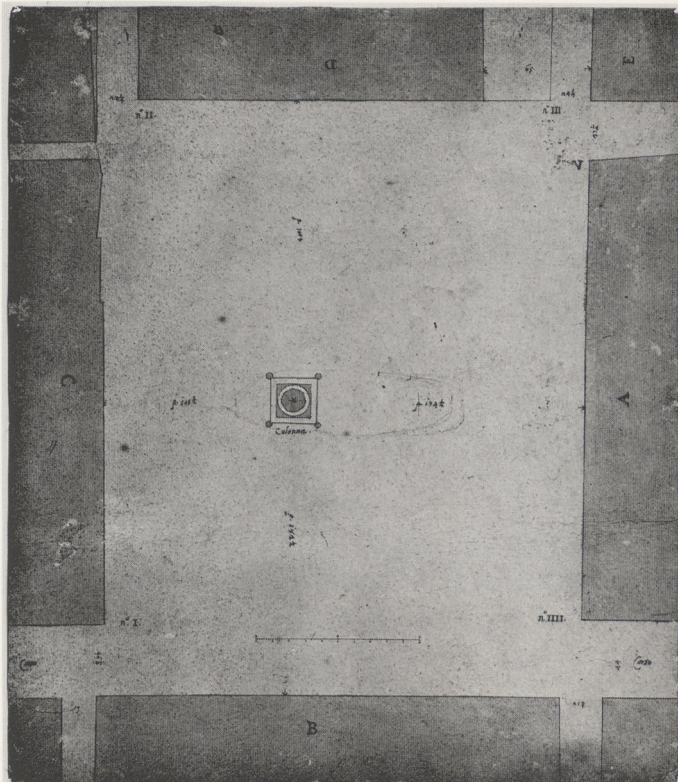
palace; and, as a mere fountain project, it was too expensive. Thus the site, curtailed in length, went to the Ludovisi; and this curtailment brought a new element to the planning of Piazza Colonna. It opened a wide passage leading towards the unfinished Palazzo Ludovisi-Montecitorio; an opening which made sense only if construction of that palace were terminated and another large *piazza* laid out in front, as was done seventy years later. By 1659–1660, the passage still issued into the narrow street fronting the Montecitorio palace; it did not facilitate coach traffic. But at least it pulled visually into the panorama of Piazza Colonna the grand corner projection of Palazzo Montecitorio and thus strengthened the north-west corner of the square. But the Trevi waters had not been brought to the *piazza*, nor had a grand backdrop been provided. The building for the Ludovisi *famiglia*, too weak anyhow for that purpose, was dwarfed further by the new closeness of the Montecitorio palace. Thus attention, rather than on the feeble backdrop, had to be focussed on the key monument of the *piazza*, the Column of Marcus Aurelius.

Alexander seems to have entertained at first a simple solution, as proposed nearly a century earlier by Giacomo della Porta. The *Marforio* was to be brought from the Capitol to Piazza Colonna, while the fountain from the *piazza* was to go to the Capitol⁴⁷. In view of this latter move it is doubtful whether, as projected by Della Porta, the statue was to be placed on a rocky base atop a fountain against the foot of the Column. To be sure Della Porta's drawing was retrieved for the pope and placed among his papers⁴⁸; but Alexander and his principal adviser, Bernini, are likely to have thought of a more dramatic presentation. In any event, removing the L-shaped block and the Barnabite buildings from the square had brought out two unpleasant surprises: a downward slope of one *palm* from the southeast to the southwest corner and an upward slope of three *palmi* from there to the northwest corner, recalling the sloping groundlines on the Cortona elevations; and the position off-center of the Column, 115½ *palmi* from the south boundary as against 174½ *palmi* from the north boundary of the square. Both the slope of the terrain and the eccentric siting of the Column were brought out in two interconnected drawings: one, from the Chigi archives, giving the exact distances of the Column from the boundaries of the *piazza* (fig. 13)⁴⁹; the other, a *Piano del declivio di Piazza*

47 *Diary*, 584, July 21, 1662.

48 Bibl. Vat., Chig. P. VII, 10, l.c. 14; see D'Onofrio, *op. cit.*, 174ff.

49 Bibl. Vat., Arch. Chig., cart. III, 1, 25058.



13. Plan of Piazza Colonna, 1661 or after, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. III, 1, no. 25085

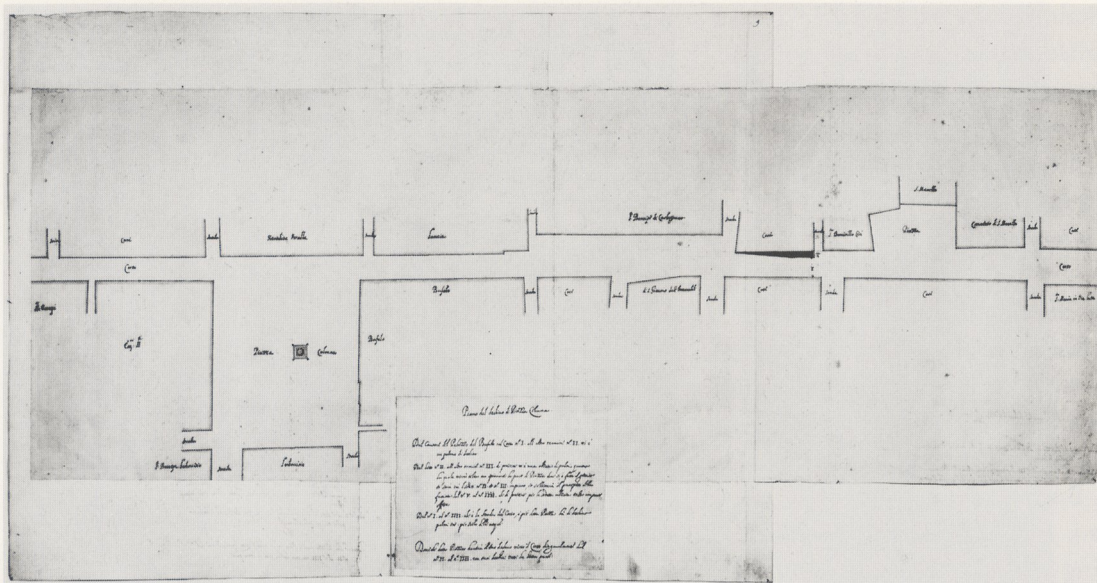
Colonna (fig. 14), provided with explanations⁵⁰. The drawings are apparently contemporaneous – the Roman numerals referred to in the legend of the *Piano del declivio* appear not on this, but on the Archive plan – and they seem to date after spring, 1662: façade corrections on the Corso commanded by a Chirografo of October 23, 1661⁵¹, were carried out beginning March 1, 1662⁵² and were under way or terminated by the time the *Piano del declivio* and hence the corresponding Archive plan were drawn.

The slope, as pointed out in the explanatory notes to the *Piano del declivio*, would be easily remedied by leveling and thus allowing the western end (not yet built) of the façade of Palazzo Aldobrandini to be seen full height – “*che di presente per la sodetta alzata resta in parte offesa*”. Hiding the eccentric position of the Column of Marcus Aurelius represented far greater difficulties.

50 Bibl. Vat., Chig. P. VII, 10, fols. 8v and 9r.

51 ARS, *Notai acque e strade*, vol. 89, c. 567.

52 Casanat. 5006, c. 20v, March 1, 1662: “*Datosi principio a buttarsi a terra le case a Piazza Sciarra per slargare la strada del Corso li primi quelli del Signor Iacinto del Bufalo proseguendosi fin al Cantone et altri per incontro in uguale filo sin al Palazzo habitato da Mons. Bevilacqua . . .*”.



14. Piano del declivio di Piazza Colonna, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. P. VII, 10, f. 8v-9r

Somebody, however, found an ingenious solution, so far unpublished: the Archive plan shows, sketched in pencil, the outline of a ship enclosing the Column as its mast (fig. 15). The short bow points south, the long poop extends north towards Palazzo Aldobrandini-Chigi. Thus the distances from the boundaries of the square are made equal, roughly 75 *palmi* on the scale of the plan. Clearly, it is a ship fountain of a type well-known from Antiquity and revived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁵³. Thus the plan, first mentioned in 1658, would have been carried out and the Trevi waters brought to the *piazza*. At the same time the Column, the mast of the ship which would occupy the square, would no longer appear off-center either. The sketch at first glance might have been done by anybody. But it is drawn with such sureness; the distances north and south are put down freehand with such unflinching accuracy; and the solution is so extraordinary as to suggest a professional hand, and not a minor artist's either. Nor can any date be suggested except the *terminus post* provided by the date of the Archive plan itself, October 1661 and probably a year or two later. Indeed, in November 1662 a fountain on Piazza Colonna was again discussed by Alexander and Bernini⁵⁴ and it is unlikely that they talked of the old sixteenth century fountain.

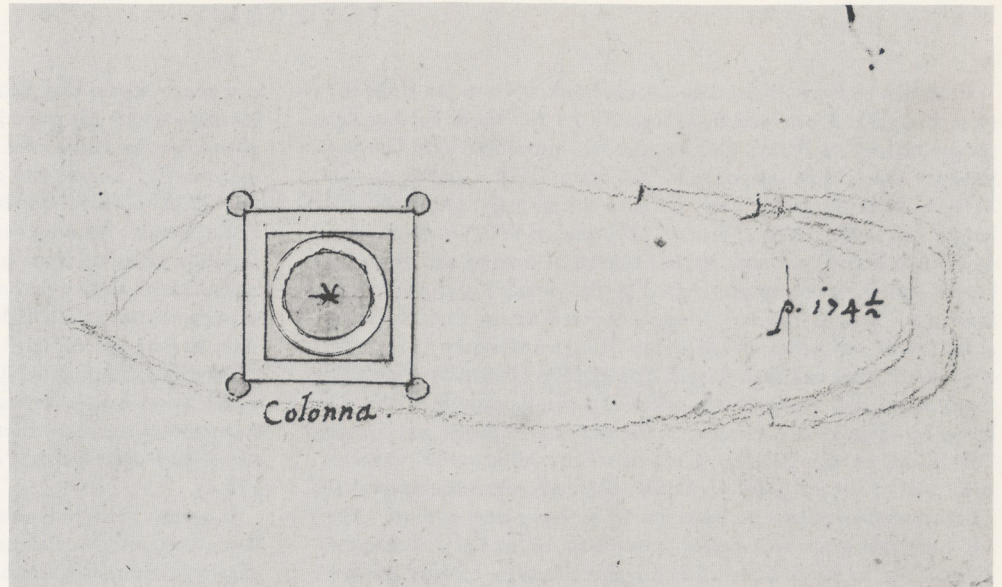
In fact, the ship fountain sketched on the Archive plan inevitably brings to mind a project Bernini twice mentioned in 1665 to Monsieur de Chantelou⁵⁵: he had proposed to the pope, so he said, to bring to Piazza Colonna the Column of Trajan and to place both columns in huge fountains; he had in fact guaranteed to the pope that the Column of Trajan could be safely moved there.

Bernini's proposal, like Cortona's fountain palace or the ship-fountain, would have fulfilled Alexander's dream. It would have brought the Trevi waters to Piazza Colonna; and it would have given a grand accent to the square on which the Chigi had settled. Still, it differs from the earlier projects. Whether or not executed, they had all been in the realm of realization: the clearing of the *piazza*; the squaring of its boundaries; the grand fountain as its western terminus; the Ludovisi *parvum palatium* and the broad passage to Montecitorio; the ship-fountain. Bernini's twin-Column project, imaginative as it is, lacks the element of 'concrete imagination' which Goethe insisted on. Granted that the transfer of the Column of Trajan, an engineering problem, had been worked out in detail, where would it have been placed? Piazza Colonna was too small for two such giants, each inside a fountain

53 K. Lehmann, "The Ship-Fountain ...", in: PH. W. LEHMANN and K. LEHMANN, *Samothracian Reflections* (Bollingen Series, XCII) Princeton, 1973, 179ff.

54 *Diary*, 634, November 26, 1662.

55 *Journal du Voyage du Chevalier Bernin en France*, ed. L. LALANNE, Paris, 1885, June 26 and October 19; I am using the German translation by H. ROSE, *Tagebuch des Herrn von Chantelou über die Reise des Cavaliere Bernini nach Frankreich*, München, 1929, 32, 340.



proportionate in size. Possibly, as has been suggested⁵⁶, Bernini meant to set it up in front of the Ludovisi palace on Montecitorio, on a *piazza* planned there from the very moment he designed the palace⁵⁷. Possibly, too, he intended to see the new Ludovisi building bought back and together with the houses still attached to its rear removed so as to have one huge *piazza* extending from the Corso to the front of the Montecitorio palace⁵⁸; a project perhaps linked to the offer of the Chigi, reported in the spring of 1665 to purchase the palace from the Ludovisi heirs⁵⁹. For the chronically empty coffers of the Chigi and the papal administration all such projects were out of reach⁶⁰. Even if they could have been financed, the

technical obstacles could only have been overcome with the greatest difficulties: the slope from Montecitorio to Piazza Colonna stood in the way of feeding a fountain at that level; and the subtraction of 150–180 ounces of the Trevi water in 1645 to provide for the fountains on Piazza Navona⁶¹, would have left hardly enough to feed two huge fountains on Piazza Colonna-Montecitorio. In brief, one has the impression that Bernini's twin-Column proposal, rather than a serious project, was a fancy. It appealed to his papal patron's fertile imagination, ever appreciative of feats of showmanship and of vast dramatic vistas; vistas, as they became attractive to the draughtsmen of the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries: to Specchi who in his view of Piazza Colonna from Montecitorio actually omits the incommensurable Ludovisi building; and to Panini and Piranesi who both pushed it out of the way to the edge of their views.

But this is speculation; and for once I meant to present only information – useful to some.

56 O. Capasso, *op. cit.*, as quoted by M. and M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Bernini*, Rome, 1967, scheda 102, fig. 47; also F. BORSI in: *Il Palazzo di Montecitorio*, 36.

57 Brauer-Wittkower, *op. cit.*, 149.

58 As above, note 56.

59 (The Chigi) "... *volendola proseguire* (i.e. construction of Palazzo Ludovisi-Montecitorio) *non apportino pregiudizii o soggettione al loro contegno, dicesi che pensino farne essi la compra non senza speranza die conclusione, parendo che gli heredi del defunto Principe Ludovisi per essere troppo dispendiosa l'impresa, e, per haver già comprato il Palazzo del fù Cardinal Montalto, siano per disfarsene volentieri ...*" (ASV, Avvisi di Roma, vol. 38, c. 109B, March 1, 1665, quoted *Montecitorio, Ricerche Storiche*, ed F. Borsi, M. del Piazzo and others, Rome 1972, 69; also F. Borsi, in: *Il Palazzo di Montecitorio (Storia e Nobiltà Numero Speciale)* ed. A. CALANDRIA, 1971, 11f.

60 N. BAROZZI and G. BERCHET, *Relazioni degli ... Ambasciatori Veneti ...*, ser. III, *Italia, Relazioni di Roma*, II, Venice, 1879, 246ff. on the finances of the Papal States: 39 million scudi debts

on the Monti, interest rates lowered from 5 and 6 to 4%. See already Bibl. Vat., Barb. lat. 6367, c. 812, March 23, 1658: "... *penuria de' viveri sempre più cresce, i negotii non corrono, i forastieri non compariscono, Ambasciatori delle Corone è gran tempo che non se ne vedono, ne altri Personaggi qualificati che spendono gagliardamente come questa Città di altri tempi è sempre assueta d'havere talmente che la necessità ... apre l'animo humano per il più a malvagi costumi ...*"

61 ASR, Camerale I, Registro Chirografi, vol. 163, c. 131, quoted by C. D'Onofrio, *Acque e Fontane di Roma*, Rome, 1977, 459, note 13.

POSTSCRIPT

Recently I have come across a source unknown to me at the time of writing this paper which both confirms and sheds further light on the history of Piazza Colonna under Alexander VII. The fragmentary diary of Monsignore Neri Corsini (Bibl. Corsiniana, cod. 2116, Corsini Neri sen., parti di diario autografo) discusses at some length (cc. 156r–160r, february 12 – march 5/1659; erroneously dated february 5) the successive projects of cutting the ‘Barnabite block’ and the negotiations regarding the transfer of the congregation to S. Carlo ai Catinari. It appears that Corsini, then *Presidente delle Strade* and hence *ex officio* involved, on february 12 (c. 156r.) after submitting to the pope the *Chirografo* of february 5 ordering the first cut (fig. 3) suggested to Monsignore Bandinelli it would be better to do away altogether with the Barnabite church and convent “dal Cantone del Palazzo Ludovisio sino all’arco de’ Pazerel”. Informed of the proposal Alexander decided on this the deeper cut; Corsini presented him on february 19 with the new plan (c. 158v.) and the *Chirografo* was signed march 5 (c. 160r.; fig. 4). Except the role played by Corsini in initiating this decision, all this confirms what we know anyhow.

However in recounting the events Corsini makes several remarks worthy of note. First, in suggesting the deeper cut of the ‘Barnabite block’, he points out how this would result in the Column’s becoming equidistant from the east and west edge of the square; and, so he continues, although it would remain off center as to the north

and south edges, that could be corrected by adding to it the Trevi fountain which the pope intended to bring there “... e se bene dall’altra linea dal Palazzo del Bufalo a quello Aldobrandino non vien in mezo nulla di meno con aggiungervi la fontana di Trevi che S. S^{ta} intende di portarvi tra luna e l’altra occuperebbe, giusto il mezo della Piazza.” Second, on february 19 persuading the Barnabites to abandon their convent he told them the deep cut of their block would be of greater ornament to the square the more so if the pope should intend to place there the Trevi fountain “il taglio sarebbe stato di maggior ornam^{to} tanto piu se (the pope) haveva intentione di metterci la fontana di Trevi ...” (c. 159r. and v.). Finally, Alexander upon being shown the new plan with the deep cut of the Barnabite property, ordered a plan to be made by the same architect (Felice della Greca) “di tutte le strade vicine al d. to Gettito” (c. 158v.).

It seems, then, that as early as february 1659, the three solutions later attempted for Piazza Colonna were being ventilated, however vaguely: adding a fountain to the column – the ship fountain; substituting the Trevi fountain for the ‘Barnabite block’ – Cortona’s project; and possibly, widening the approach to Montecitorio – hence Alexander’s demand for a plan of just that area.*

* I want to thank Derek Moore for transcribing for me the Corsini manuscript.