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COUNCIL  
OF  
GOVERNMENT  
IN  
MALTA.

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BY G. MITROVICH.

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CORRESPONDENCE  
BETWEEN  
G. MITKOVICH AND HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT,  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
THE PRESENT  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT  
IN  
MALTA,  
AND OF A REFORM IN THE SAME.



*To The Right Honorable Lord Stanley, Secretary of  
State for the Colonies, &c. &c. &c., Downing Street.*

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2, TORRINGTON SQUARE, W.C.,  
22nd May, 1858.

MY LORD,

Knowing the excellent qualities with which your Lordship is endowed, I hailed with delight Her Most Gracious Majesty's selection in the person of your Lordship to act as Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies; indeed I consider the choice of so good and meritorious a man to be entirely for my country's welfare, being convinced that a due consideration will be given by your Lordship to the sincere and candid statements which I, now, take the liberty to submit to you.

I beg to be allowed to say that I am a native of Malta, a merchant by profession, established in that island for a period of fifty years, having a large family consisting of twelve persons, of whom one son is in London, another in the Cape of Good Hope, both as merchants.

I have served my country as a Member of the Council of Government in Malta, and gave my assistance to the British Government in that Island, as attested by the Right Honorable Richard More O'Ferrall, who, in writing to your Lordship's predecessor, the Right Honorable Henry Labouchere on the 15th January last, he therein stated, "Mr. Mitrovich  
" is an intelligent enterprising man, and I found him



“ most useful on several occasions during my Govern-  
 “ ment of Malta, and I would be glad to oblige  
 “ him.”

In the year 1830, or thereabouts, seeing the liberties of my country completely destroyed, with evident bad prospects for the future, I united myself to other citizens for the purpose of bringing the Maltese grievances before the Government.

Not having had a satisfactory answer to our applications and endeavours to attain the object we had in view, I thought proper, in the year 1835, to come over to England, when I brought the Maltese claims before the then Government, and the Imperial Parliament, and presented in the latter place, through Mr. William Ewart, the then Member for *Liverpool*, a popular petition signed by the clergy, nobles, and people generally of Malta, in great numbers.

In consequence of this step so taken by me, a Royal Commission was, in the year 1836, sent to Malta, and upon the Commissioners' Reports, several reforms were effected in the local Government's administration, and the liberty of the Press was granted and established in the island.

The Right Honorable Richard More O'Ferrall having been, afterwards, sent over to Malta as Governor thereof, obtained permission to form a new Council in the island; consequently this Institution, in the year 1849, was established under the name of “The Council of Government of Malta,” composed of eighteen Members, ten of whom (including the Governor) were to be nominated by the Crown,

and the remaining eight to be selected by the people—the Governor, or other presiding Member, in the event of the original votes being equally divided, having the power of giving the casting vote.

Before the formation of this Council the said Governor did me the honor to consult me thereon, by asking whether the Maltese would be satisfied with such a form of Council as mentioned above, and in answer to such inquiry, I told him that the elective Members being in the minority I had very good reason to fear they would not be satisfied therewith; but as he thought it would, perhaps, be best for the moment, as a trial, to adopt this form of Government, as great opposition then existed in high quarters to its establishment at all, the Council was therefore installed with an assurance made to me on the part of the Governor, that by degrees and after my countrymen had given proofs of our good conduct and good behaviour in that assembly, we might apply to Her Majesty's Government for an amelioration in the same, and he was confident it would then be granted to us.

Nearly nine years have now elapsed since its formation, which I most humbly submit to your Lordship is a sufficient time to enable Her Majesty's Government to form a correct estimate of the good character and conduct of the elective Representatives in that assembly, and that the Council for the reasons I at first feared and anticipated have proved defective; inasmuch as it is not formed according to the wishes and the wants of the people; so much so, that I myself, after having been on the 24th of May, 1855, elected a

Member in the Council, thought proper, on the 19th June, 1856, to resign my seat, and the reasons for my doing so will, perhaps, be better ascertained from the following extract of a letter addressed by me to the said late Governor the Right Honorable Richard More O'Ferrall.

“ You are well aware that the elective Members are  
 “ in the minority. On several occasions and on  
 “ matters of the highest importance, as for instance—  
 “ Public Health—some necessary alterations in the  
 “ Civil List, &c., &c., I had to witness much irregu-  
 “ larities on the part of the Government Officials.  
 “ Without bringing forward any argument in answer  
 “ to our remarks, they range themselves to a man with  
 “ the Crown Advocate, and being in a superior num-  
 “ ber to the popular Members, they oppose themselves  
 “ with success to the most reasonable and convincing  
 “ measures to be adopted. One of the Official Mem-  
 “ bers now dead, an Englishman, had told us once,  
 “ that he would have voted with us, because the  
 “ matter was reasonable and just, but when he came  
 “ to the point he had not the moral courage to do it,  
 “ and he voted with the Government against his own  
 “ conviction. Our Civil List is very disproportionate  
 “ —profusion on one side, and misery and starvation on  
 “ the other ; we thought that a revision might be made,  
 “ but we could not get it as all the Official Members  
 “ voted against us. It is clear that the Official  
 “ Members are afraid of losing their situations, and  
 “ have not the moral courage to make the least  
 “ opposition to the Government.

“ Having observed such a course of proceedings,  
 “ and seeing that I could not be of any use to my  
 “ Country whilst the people were expecting some-  
 “ thing through my exertions, I thought proper, not  
 “ to deceive them, to retire, waiting for some improve-  
 “ ment in the constitution of the Council. If you  
 “ recollect, Sir, when I had the honor to be called  
 “ by you, and on the occasion of a very long conver-  
 “ sation we had together on the subject of the Council,  
 “ you had the kindness to tell me that by degrees  
 “ we would have had some amelioration in that  
 “ legislative body. Nine years are now elapsed—I  
 “ think it is enough for an experiment. My country-  
 “ men are complaining for the delay, and I am bound  
 “ to represent how the things really are, &c.”

In this state of things your Lordship will not, I  
 feel convinced, be surprised at seeing me again coming  
 forward and humbly submitting to your Lordship  
 a most plain and sincere statement of facts regarding  
 the present Council of Government in Malta. The  
 object of my so doing is only to procure, if possible,  
 a complete feeling of contentment on the part of the  
 people of Malta under the British crown, and that  
 they may be the more truly and firmly united toge-  
 ther for ever, having the former, a form of government  
 suitable to their wishes and their wants. It is very  
 clear that as things now are the people are not  
 satisfied—they grumble—they say “that their interests  
 “ are not protected as they should be!” that “they  
 “ are in the hands of a few officials sitting in that  
 “ Council, who are afraid of making the slightest

“ opposition to the will of the Government on account  
 “ of their situations !” And I would humbly remind  
 your Lordship that Malta is not a conquered country,  
 and in proof of this fact I refer your Lordship to the  
 observations of Lord Glenelg, the then Colonial  
 Minister, who said in the House of Lords on the 30th  
 of April, 1836, “ We possess Malta not by conquest,  
 “ but by treaty. We have the weight of our decla-  
 “ rations, and of the promises made when the Maltese  
 “ adopted our protection.” The Maltese gave them-  
 selves up spontaneously to the English, and in return  
 freedom was promised to them, and on several occa-  
 sions they have worked hardly for it—their history  
 fully attests it. They are faithful and loyal subjects,  
 and deserve great consideration and respect. The  
 island of Malta, situated as she is in the centre of the  
 Mediterranean, ought to be the pattern of good  
 government to the neighbouring countries,—the glory  
 of England, showing to all nations how happy she is  
 under the British rule, possessing a liberal and pa-  
 ternal government, in honor of the British standard  
 flying on the ramparts of the mighty fortress, and in  
 the stupendous harbours she possesses. What can be  
 the reason of so much opposition in allowing the  
 truly loyal Maltese to enjoy a form of government  
 similar to that enjoyed by so many of Her Majesty’s  
 Colonies, they are at a loss to know ! Is their fidelity  
 or loyalty to the crown inferior to that of other faithful  
 subjects ? Have they not on all occasions shown their  
 sympathy and attachment to Great Britain, particu-  
 larly at the time of the Peace of Amiens, when they

had shown a firm determination of never separating themselves from her? Or are they, perhaps, considered unfit to administer their own affairs? If so, their admirable conduct during the two years' siege in the year 1798 to 1800 under the greatest deprivations and sufferings, will give an answer to this inquiry. Why then, I humbly ask, are such difficulties raised to granting them a Council to their satisfaction? In ancient times they had their Consiglio Popolare. During the said blockade, when they had revolted against the French, they had their Congress. When deprived despotically of a national representation, they have always asked for its return—they have always protested themselves against usurpations of their rights and encroachments.

Not to trespass any longer upon your Lordship's valuable time, I beg leave to conclude by observing that a considerable time has already passed in which an experiment, as it is stated, was to have been made of the present Council of Government, and the Maltese having conducted themselves properly, and to the satisfaction of the Government, they are entitled to a favorable reform in the same, and consequently have come to the determination of petitioning Her Most Gracious Majesty to that effect.

Having had the honor of managing the principal part of their political affairs in this Country for several years, they have entrusted me with this noble task, but before taking any formal steps on the subject, I have thought it but proper and respectful to submit this letter for your Lordship's consideration, comprising as

it does, to the best of my ability, the present statement of facts, in the hope that in your Lordship's wisdom and liberal sentiments, a remedy might be given to the existing evils and complaints, and that by establishing in the Island of Malta, without waiting for any Petition, a Council freely elected by the people, under the presidency of the Governor, with a constitution adapted to the place and to the exigencies of its inhabitants, it will be received by that warmth of gratitude so great a boon would merit; and that by so doing, I assure your lordship, you will render an equally great service to the crown in the establishment of a real liberal Government in that important British possession, whereby you will increase the attachment of the Maltese towards this mighty country, and by augmenting the number of the elective Members, you will afford greater opportunity to the English residents in Malta of being chosen Members in the Council.

I shall at all times be most ready and willing to give to your Lordship any further explanation and dilucidation you may require on the subject, and feel myself honored by replying to any request you may make of me in this respect.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and humble servant,

G. MITROVICH.

DOWNING STREET,

3rd June, 1858.

SIR,

I am directed by Lord Stanley to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd ultimo, containing a statement of your views in regard to the introduction of free Institutions into Malta, and apprizing his Lordship that the inhabitants of the Island propose to address a Petition to the Crown on the subject; and I am to state in reply that any such petition which may be received from Malta will be fully considered by Her Majesty's Government.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

CARNARVON.

To G. Mitrovich, Esq.,

2, Torrington Square, W.C.