

Charles II, Louis XIV and the Order of Malta

In the current historiography of seventeenth-century Europe, the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem or Knights of Malta receive scant mention. Partly this is in consequence of general neglect by historians of both the old and the new military Orders in early-modern Europe. Dr L. P. Wright's pioneering article about the military Orders in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish society is now twenty years old and still stands on its own. Besides, its focus was the Spanish military Orders of Calatrava, Santiago and Alcántara rather than the international military Order of St John of Jerusalem.¹ There exists no modern account of the Spanish and Portuguese Knights of St John in the early-modern period. These comprised the *langues* of Aragon and Castile within the Order of St John and coexisted uneasily with the *langues* of Italy and Germany and the three French *langues* of Provence, Auvergne and France. Until its dissolution in 1540 there had existed also an eighth *langue* within the Order of St John, which was known distinctively as the Venerable Tongue of England.

It is a vast subject of historical inquiry to examine how these constituent *langues* of the Order of Malta reflected throughout the early-modern period the social and political values of aristocratic society in their respective countries of origin. Since many Knights of Malta spent their mature years outside Malta, by serving either their Order or their own monarch, it makes no historical sense to separate the history of the Order from the wider history of Europe north of the Alps. Yet this separation has occurred, and historians of early-modern Europe continue to overlook Valletta as an exchange of diplomatic intelligence which was provided by the Order's ambassadors at the Catholic courts of Europe. Certainly the voluminous archives of the Order in Malta have been con-

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sulted by Maltese historians in illustration of their island's economic and social condition under the Knights. Much of this interesting work has been published by the Malta Historical Society in its journal, *Melita Historica*. Its focus, not surprisingly, is Malta and the Mediterranean, where the Knights of St John existed between 1530 and 1798 as an institutional embodiment both of the medieval, crusading tradition and of chivalric Christianity.

These traditions were held especially dear by the French Knights of Malta. They were proud to recall that in the two Sieges of Rhodes of 1480 and 1522, as well as in the Great Siege of Malta itself in 1565, a French knight had commanded the Christian defences as Grand Master of their Order, namely, d'Aubusson, de l'Isle Adam and de la Valette.² During the seventeenth century the French monarchs and their ministers took a keen interest in the Order of Malta and in whichever arena its diverse affairs might be transacted: France, northern Europe, southern Europe and the Mediterranean, or *Nouvelle France* and the French Antilles in the New World. Many examples of this royal and ministerial interest at the Court of France could be quoted from the reigns of Henry IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV, as well as from the ministries of Richelieu, Mazarin and Colbert. Within France, where admission to the Order of Malta was eagerly sought by noble families, a royal letter of recommendation to the Grand Master was a signal favour, such as the letter sent down to Malta by Louis XIII in November 1638 in favour of his Treasurer, who was then trying to secure the admission of one of his sons into the Order.³ Also at the French court, whenever there came news of the death of some senior dignitary in one of the Order of Malta's *langues* of Provence, Auvergne or France, whichever knight would succeed to this vacancy needed support as much from the Crown as from the Grand Master in Malta. So in July 1646 the young Louis XIV as well as the Queen Mother combined with Grand Master Lascaris to deny the pretensions of a particular Knight of Malta to succeed to the Grand Priory of France.⁴

Like his father before him, Louis XIV took seriously his role as 'Protector' of the Order of Malta. Just as Louis XIII had never succumbed to the temptation put before him by the Order's critics of appropriating its possessions in France, so too Louis XIV promised Grand Master Lascaris that he would ban the publication in France of pamphlets hostile to the Order.⁵ Both Louis XIII and Louis XIV were anxious that the French Knights of Malta should

take the lead in defending Malta and the Mediterranean against the Turkish menace at the same time as they required the presence in both the French army and the nascent French navy of certain senior French Knights of Malta. Sometimes, however, the French monarchs of the seventeenth century took a wider view of their responsibilities as 'Protectors' of the Order of Malta. Henry IV, for example, had protested to Clement VIII, in March 1603, after that Pope's appropriation of four commanderies belonging hitherto to the Italian Knights of Malta. Henry IV was asked to make this protest by the French Grand Master of the time and all the French knights from the *langues* of Provence, Auvergne and France, who were anxious for their own commanderies.⁶ Similarly, in August 1663, Louis XIV represented to the Venetian Republic his displeasure at its exclusion of the customary Maltese galleys from its new armada against the Turks.⁷

The individual who sought to remind the French monarchs most often of their wider responsibilities as 'Protectors' of the Order of Malta was the Order's ambassador in Paris. 'It is of the first importance that there should be at this Court some good friends of Your Eminence and of our Order, in order to overcome all the obstacles which have been put in our path', was how Souvré expressed this political reality to Grand Master Nicholas Cotoner.⁸ Souvré was Grand Prior of France and his Order's ambassador at the court of Louis XIV. Highly esteemed by both the king and the Queen Mother, Souvré represented the latter, when he paid his respects in Paris to Charles II, who was then in exile after his recent flight from Jersey. From this time on, July 1646, until about 1669, Souvré played his part from Paris in the triangular relationship between Louis XIV, Charles II of England and the Order of Malta.

I

Unlike his father, Charles I, or his brother, James II, Charles II was not so attuned to the chivalric virtues represented still in the seventeenth century by the Order of Malta. Although Charles II enjoyed his role as sixteenth Sovereign of the Garter, the symbolic world of chivalry was as closed a book to this sceptic as the Book of Revelation. In this sense Charles II was 'modern' and James II 'medieval'. Yet the Order of Malta had hopes of winning over

Charles II to its long-cherished dream of reviving the Venerable Tongue of England, the *langue* of their English knights dissolved by Henry VIII in 1540. This was all of a piece with the Order's persistent but frustrated negotiations of 1623, 1639, 1650 and 1686–90 with the Stuart monarchs and with a variety of English Catholics.⁹ Although Souvré had warned his Grand Master from Paris never to tangle with monarchs so powerful as Charles II and Louis XIV, he suggested that Grand Master Cotoner should open diplomatic channels with Lord Arlington, Charles II's Secretary of State. So in 1669, 129 years after Henry VIII's dissolution of the Venerable Tongue of England, the Order of Malta sent a secret envoy to Charles II to ask for the restoration of its former possessions in his three realms. These had been the priories of England and Ireland as well as the preceptory of Torphichen in Scotland and the commanderies of Slebech, Dinmore, Halston and Dolgynwal in Wales. Charles II was now assured that all decisions taken by the Order's council in Valletta were still null and void without the adherence of the Turcopilier and the Priors of England and Scotland. Within the Order these former dignitaries of the Venerable Tongue of England were still current as titular benefices of grace and so were often conferred by the Grand Master upon knights from among the remaining seven *langues* of Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Castile, Aragon and Germany. The envoy emphasized to Charles II that the difference in religion between Protestant England and the Catholic Order of Malta was unimportant because the Order already possessed lands in Germany, a country where Protestants lived alongside Catholics. Such lands – so the envoy continued – sustained the Knights of Malta in their fight against the common enemies of all Christian princes. And Charles II was thanked for having supported the Order's successful campaign for compensation from the United Provinces of The Netherlands, where its former possessions had similarly been confiscated.¹⁰

Like so many of his diplomatic conversations, Charles II's reply to this request from the Order of Malta has gone unrecorded. Although only nine years previously the Restoration had restored seemingly lost causes, it could not entail the restoration of their British estates to the Knights of Malta. Even so, Charles II respected the knights not only because they represented the values of an older Europe, but also because they were now being courted by his cousin Louis XIV. The armies of the French king were

often officered by Knights of Malta and in 1674, for example, about two-thirds of Louis's *Corps des Galères* were commanded by Knights of Malta. Similarly, many Knights of Malta served as administrators in overseas colonies such as *Nouvelle France* and the French Antilles.¹¹ Since Charles II preferred, if possible, to align England with France, he had followed Louis throughout the 1660s in supporting the Order of Malta's demands for compensation from the Dutch Republic in respect of its former properties there which had been confiscated in 1649. This complaint of the knights enabled both Louis XIV and Charles II to deploy a further diplomatic weapon against the Dutch Republic during the 1660s. This Maltese detail of the tripartite diplomacy between France, the United Provinces and England never figures in the secondary sources of seventeenth-century history where, in any case, the Knights of Malta are treated – to adapt Disraeli's phrase – like suppressed characters of history. Utterly irrepressible, however, was the Knight of Malta who filled the indictment against the Dutch Republic during the years 1649–67, namely Prince Friedrich, Cardinal Landgrave of Hessen-Darmstadt, Knight of St John Grand Cross, Grand Prior of Germany and one-time Captain-General of the Order's galley squadron.

Appealing to both Louis XIV and Charles II as guarantors of international law, the Cardinal Landgrave (as Prince Friedrich's titles were commonly abbreviated) exhibited all the righteous anger of a nobleman who had been robbed by merchants. Pride of birth and military service in the Order of Malta moulded his confident, sometimes violent, behaviour. Born a Lutheran, he had been converted to Rome at the age of twenty-one during visits to Malta in 1636–7. After the young German prince's conversion and reception into the Order, Pope Urban VIII had persuaded the Grand Master to honour him with a Grand Cross and with the coadjutorship of the Grand Priorate of Germany. By granting these concessions, Urban VIII had tried to induce other members of the German nobility to return to the Catholic Church.¹² The lands which supported the dignity of the Grand Priorate of Germany had included several commanderies in The Netherlands before their confiscation in 1649. As the Cardinal Landgrave was an aristocrat and by nature impetuous, his self-respect had little connection with what his contemporaries thought of him. This accounts for the risks he often took in affronting the diplomatic protocol of his day. Experienced at chasing Barbary corsairs in

the Mediterranean, this Cardinal Landgrave pursued with equal vigour the Dutch burghers who, in 1649, had confiscated the Order of Malta's lands in the towns of Utrecht, Haarlem and Nijmegen as well as in the provinces of Zeeland, Friesland and Gelderland.

When appealing in 1662 both to Louis XIV and Charles II, the Cardinal Landgrave emphasized that his Order's cause was a private rather than a public matter. He grounded his plea upon Article 23 of the Treaty of Union concluded at Utrecht 117 years previously, in 1579. This particular article had bound signatories of the treaty to keep and observe all articles therein:

... that in case of contravention or of non-performance of the same and all dependencies thereof, they shall stand liable to be arrested, seized and molested in all places and by all princes, lords, judges and justices where they may or shall be found, renouncing to that effect all exceptions, graces, privileges, releases and generally all other comfort of leave which may anyways avail them to the contrary thereof.

By citing this 'catch-all' article of the Union of Utrecht from 1579, the Cardinal Landgrave was able to bring the Order of Malta's case against the Dutch Republic before the obliging jurisdiction of Louis XIV and Charles II. With his plea thus entered before sympathetic judges, the Cardinal Landgrave argued that the United Provinces had violated, by their confiscation of his Order's property in 1649, the twentieth article of the Pacification of Ghent of 8 November 1576, which had permitted the Order of Malta peaceably to enjoy its estates in the said provinces, and which article had itself been confirmed by the States General in 1577, 1579 and 1581. The Knights of Malta had been spared the confiscation of their lands in the sixteenth century – so the Cardinal Landgrave argued – because their Order had been recognized by the States General as being 'so useful to all Christendom in their constant opposition to the Turks'. Therefore the confiscation of 1649 was both radical and illegal.¹³

Confident that his Order's cause was thought to be just by both Louis XIV and Charles II, the Cardinal Landgrave was tempted to take reprisals against the Dutch Republic. The Convent in Malta was unwilling to endorse such aggression, although since 1649 it had provided its Grand Prior of Germany with the necessary brief to negotiate either the restitution of or an indemnity for the Order's confiscated property in the United Provinces.¹⁴

This brief was similar in kind to that promised for Lord John Somerset and his likely associates, when this English nobleman proposed to the Grand Master of Malta the restoration of the Venerable Tongue of England in 1650–1.¹⁵ If recovered, such property (whether in The Netherlands or England) might have been enjoyed by the successful Knight of Malta during his own lifetime without payment of the customary *responsions* or annual charges to the Convent in Malta. The Cardinal Landgrave therefore had every inducement to hurry, but the Convent in Malta would go no further than to deny the use of Malta's harbours to all ships flying the Dutch flag. They were reluctant to countenance reprisals in the North Sea or in The Netherlands. During the 1650s this had been an inadequate response in the eyes of the Cardinal Landgrave, who was to benefit from the new diplomatic circumstances of the 1660s by winning the co-operation of both Louis XIV and Charles II.¹⁶

In February 1661 the Chevalier du Boulay arrived in Whitehall with letters of credence from the Cardinal Landgrave at Heitersheim. Du Boulay was received well enough by Charles II, Clarendon, many privy councillors and the Admiralty judge, all of whom left him with the impression that they accepted the justice of the Order of Malta's case against the United Provinces.¹⁷ Even more, in August 1661, Charles II and Louis XIV expressed their common view of this matter in their respective letters addressed to the States General. Translations and copies of these and related documents have been preserved among the Clarendon papers in the Bodleian Library and are themselves proof of how well informed Charles II's chief minister was about this 'business of Malta'. In his letter of 27 August 1661, Louis used persuasion of the stick-and-carrot type, suggesting that a speedy resolution of this long-outstanding dispute might eventually prove very profitable to the United Provinces, adding his praise for the Order of Malta 'which rendereth daily such considerable services to Christendom and to the traffic of all nations'.¹⁸ In that same week Sir George Downing, England's representative at The Hague, came to know with some irritation of a related letter which Charles II had written to the States General, 'for the restitution of the lands of the said Order which are within these Provinces'. This letter from his royal master was delivered to Downing not in the customary diplomatic manner, but by the Cardinal Landgrave's agent at The Hague, one Reyner Kemping. He now produced another letter from Charles

addressed to Downing, which ordered the English ambassador to present the king's original letter to the States General on behalf of the Order of Malta. It irked Downing, a past master of intelligence-gathering, to be thus outwitted by the superior diplomatic channels of the Order between Heistersheim, The Hague, Paris and Whitehall. So he complained to Clarendon: 'Now truly it were much to be desired that the said Order had their lands, and the king's letter to me is very precise, but it is not subscribed by any Secretary [of State] as all the king's letters should be . . .'¹⁹

This 'business of Malta' was indeed a copy-book example of how Charles II conducted his foreign policy. For though all the English ministers or diplomats who needed to know about this ended by knowing something, none of them ever knew everything. It is debatable whether Charles II connived at the Chevalier du Boulay's seizure in May 1662 of six Dutch ships then lying in the Port of London. Certainly this reprisal by the Cardinal Landgrave's agent in Whitehall was accepted by the Judge of the Admiralty Court. And the Lord High Admiral's secretary, Sir William Coventry, let the cat out of the bag when he wrote to Downing at The Hague:

. . . and truly I do not think there is any great harm that they (viz. the Dutch) should see that, with a word speaking, the King can let loose others (viz. the Knights of Malta) against them, which, though they are not very potent, yet they may have some influence on their traffic in the Mediterranean, and perhaps the example of such a permission as this in England (which is Protestant) would make the Catholic countries ashamed not to permit those of Malta the same liberty, which would soon bring the Dutch to their bent.²⁰

The Dutch authorities reacted to this reprisal by posting five guards around the house of the Cardinal Landgrave's other agent, Kemping, at The Hague.

In their official reactions to this astonishing event both the English government and the Convent in Malta now distanced themselves from the Cardinal Landgrave. These disclaimers were rather in the manner of the Grand Master's customary disowning of any Maltese corsair detected in having misapplied the Order's licence to plunder Muslim vessels in the Mediterranean by seizing Christian ships instead. So the Convent in Malta held the Cardinal Landgrave personally liable for any damages which the Dutch might have demanded from the Order in compensation for his attack on their ships in London.²¹ In Whitehall itself, Charles II

and his brother James, the Lord High Admiral, and Clarendon all hastened to assure the Dutch ambassadors that the seized vessels had been released and that Dutch ships were welcome to use English harbours as freely as before.²² As Sir William Morrice, then Secretary of State, explained in a letter to Downing at The Hague, the English government could not condone the Cardinal Landgrave's action because

the example was of dangerous consequence and pregnant with much mischief, for, on like account, they (viz. the Knights of Malta) might have arrested our (viz. English) ships in France or Spain, since we detain much of their land also, and perchance the other Orders might with as much reason and justice have taken the same courses for their lands which, at their dissolution, were here seized . . .²³

The Dutch ambassadors were then in London ostensibly to negotiate an Anglo-Dutch treaty, which was eventually signed in September 1662, with as much cynicism on either side as had marked the signing of a defensive Franco-Dutch treaty earlier that same year. Before the signing of this Anglo-Dutch treaty, Clarendon rejected the Cardinal Landgrave's suggestion that Charles II should have raised the Order of Malta's cause in the treaty negotiations. Yet Clarendon could still write to the Cardinal Landgrave, in October 1662, of '*les justes prétentions de votre Ordre qui mérite l'estime de tout le monde*'. From the same period there is preserved in the Public Record Office, London, a fragmentary letter from Clarendon to the Grand Master of Malta which is endorsed 'that Sir George Downing shall mediate for the Knights of Malta to the States General'. Clarendon wrote Downing how 'Mr de Witt would have had too much reason to call it war', had the English government not pulled back from endorsing the Cardinal Landgrave's action in London 'as some would have had it'.²⁴

II

By the time the Order of Malta was actually paid an indemnity by the United Provinces in respect of its former possessions in The Netherlands, both Charles II and Clarendon had themselves experienced war with the Dutch Republic and with France.²⁵ Thereafter Charles II's relations with the Order of Malta were to

centre not so much on the North Sea as on the Mediterranean and its particular ports of Genoa, Livorno and Malta itself. All this was in consequence of the Levant Company's commerce in the Mediterranean and for which it sought protection from the Royal Navy against the Barbary corsairs. The whole subject of this English trade to the Mediterranean and its rivalry with the French there during the seventeenth century remains neglected by historians, though certain of its aspects have been well examined by Sir Godfrey Fisher, Peter Earle and Christopher Lloyd.²⁶ Since the Restoration was an age of scientific experiment, the Royal Navy and the Royal Society of London had a mutual interest in improving the design of ships. 'Every distinct use requires a different shape', was how the shipwright Sir Anthony Deane answered the question 'What is the best ship?'.²⁷ Since the galley rowed by galley-slaves had long been the traditional naval weapon in the Mediterranean, it made experimental sense for the Royal Navy to commission two such galleys in 1669-70 to complement its frigates on patrol in the Straits. The estimated cost of building two such galleys was £23,090 and the job was given to the dockyards of Genoa and Livorno, even though Charles II's government was then at odds with the authorities in both ports. The number of salutes required to be given by English ships at the entrance to Genoa was in dispute at the same time as there was dissatisfaction in Whitehall with the new Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III, who had revised the practice of his predecessor and now ordered fewer salutes to be given from Livorno to English men-of-war.²⁸ Building galleys for the king of England enabled both the Republic of Genoa and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany to mend their diplomatic fences with Charles II. Once built, of course, these galleys were still to be armed, officered and manned, but from where? Pepys was the first to admit that the Royal Navy had no experience of managing a galley.²⁹

'Consider the Knights of Malta their great doings at sea, who are nevertheless men of quality.' So wrote Pepys in his unfinished history of the Royal Navy and at a time when the Knights of Malta were teaching the French navy how to manoeuvre its galleys in the Mediterranean.³⁰ It was a Frenchman related to a Knight of Malta who now came forward to command Charles II's new galleys from Genoa and Livorno. Jean Baptiste Duteil was an adventurer who made the most of his family connections with the Order of Malta. Whilst Duteil's kinsman wearing the Maltese cross

had been a nobleman from lower Normandy, Duteil himself was neither 'Seigneur' nor 'Sir', though he often took such titles to himself. The servile tone of his letters to Lord Arlington, Charles II's Secretary of State, does not suggest the self-confidence of a fellow aristocrat. Duteil knew little English and even less about English law and politics. Marseilles and Toulon had provided him with his points of reference, and the experience he now offered Charles II was of command in Louis XIV's *Corps des Galères*. Duteil advised Arlington to request Parliament to approve legislation which would empower judges to condemn for ever to the new galleys from Genoa and Livorno certain English convicts for whom hanging was then the customary penalty. Another detail of the French experience which Duteil suggested should be reproduced in Charles II's galleys was that he and his fellow officers should be paid according to the custom of the French navy. Of course neither of these French suggestions could be accepted by the English government, even though the problem of manning the English galleys remained. 'Captain' Duteil's pay and victuals were easier to settle and Pepys noted the decision of the Admiralty Board: Duteil would be paid the same as one of His Majesty's commanders of a second-rate. And the wages and victuals of other officers and company of Charles II's galleys should correspond 'with the practice of the Great Duke of Tuscany in galleys of the like quality with those of His Majesty's'.³¹

It is clear from the Pepys papers in the Bodleian Library that Pepys had first to teach himself about the nature of Mediterranean galleys in order to advise the Admiralty on this unfamiliar contingency. So he took note of the galleys commanded by the Knights of St Stephen (whose Grand Master was the Grand Duke of Tuscany) as well as of Spanish and papal galleys and the galleys commanded by the Knights of Malta. 'In the Levant seas', wrote Pepys, 'the captains of galleys are of so great esteem that they are preferred before commanders of ships.' If one of the English galleys could operate out of Tangier with the assistance of two small frigates, the consequence for the Algerian corsairs would be the same 'as to have a fleet lie before their port'. So Pepys prophesied, but the problem remained of first finding the necessary human muscle to row just one of those English galleys.³² Since English convicts could not be condemned to the oar in the French manner, galley-slaves would have to be found elsewhere. Captain Duteil requested from Charles II a letter of introduction

to all the Christian powers in the Mediterranean, asking them to permit himself to buy slaves within their dominions for service in the English galleys. For the king of England's galleys were making ready to 'serve against the common enemy of Christendom'. This was a form of words copied from the Knights of Malta, who often used it in justification of their actions at sea. At this time in the Christian Mediterranean galley-slaves could be bought most accessibly in the slave markets of Livorno and Malta. Duteil therefore requested Admiral Sir Edward Spragge, Charles II's commander of the Mediterranean squadron, to send him at Genoa and Livorno for service in the royal galleys all such Turkish slaves as he might have captured already. Furthermore, Duteil expected the Grand Duke of Tuscany to hand over to Charles II's galley at Livorno, the *Margaret*, all the slaves which Spragge's predecessor, Admiral Sir Thomas Allin, had already sold to the Grand Duke for that purpose. In this way there might be provided a pool of galley-slaves for manning both English galleys, though the *Margaret* at Livorno was being armed before that at Genoa. Since the *Margaret* would be operating out of Tangier, Duteil also requested the English authorities there to build him a dock for the galley and to adapt the Deputy-Governor's house for use as a *bagnio* or slave prison.³³

Nothing if not imperious, Duteil quarrelled with the Grand Duke of Tuscany when he found that there were no slaves to be bought in Livorno. From there, in 1672, Duteil sent to buy slaves in Malta though he was to receive no welcome from the Grand Master, who had been warned about his reputation by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. In any case it would have been exceptional at this time for the Order of Malta itself to sell or give slaves to Christian princes; in 1669, for example, the Order had refused to sell or give slaves to the Papal States, protesting that there was an overall shortage of slaves. So Duteil had to buy privately in Malta from among the prizes brought in by the corsairs licensed by the Grand Master. In this Duteil was helped by Jean Bardou, a French merchant resident in Malta, who dealt discreetly with the competition posed by a French commander who was also in Valletta buying slaves for the French galleys. Duteil had the equivalent of £6000 to spend on fifty-one slaves.³⁴ Charles II was later to complain to Grand Master Nicholas Cotoner that the collector of customs at Malta had exacted the sum of 25 *scudi* as *diritto della porta* or exit-fee for every slave bought for manning

the English galleys. This was a standard charge and from it the officers of the urban militia in Malta were paid their salaries. Sometimes, however, Louis XIV exerted pressure on the Grand Master to forego the tolls on the slaves bought in Malta for service in the French galleys. Charles II therefore asked to be treated similarly when he was buying slaves in Malta, but the Grand Master refused to extend to the English king a privilege he had been reluctant to grant at all to the French king. This was invariably the manner of Charles II's relations with Mediterranean powers: he claimed from them the same treatment they accorded the king of France, the king of Spain and the papacy.

From France itself Charles II expected no special recognition in the Mediterranean. In 1674 he instructed Duteil, when commanding his galley the *Margaret* in the Mediterranean, not to expect or require any salutes from the galleys or ships of Louis XIV.³⁵ By then the *Margaret* was carrying, besides its slaves chained to their oars, fifty or more English soldiers from Tangier and also a number of able seamen. However, its commissioning had always been experimental and by April 1676 it was discharged. Unlike its sister galley from Genoa, which because of the war between Genoa and Savoy was never made ready for effective service, the *Margaret* from Livorno did operate in the summer months out of Tangier and in support of Charles II's frigates against the Barbary corsairs. In the summer of 1675 the *Margaret's* command passed to Captain Hamilton, previously commander of the *Mary Rose*, and Duteil vanished from the historical record. In December 1676 Pepys drafted for the Admiralty his 'memorial touching the slaves lately belonging to the galley at Tangier'. These seventy or so slaves were made over to the engineer Henry Shere to do construction work on the Mole at Tangier but were otherwise still confined to their *bagnio* there.³⁶

So far we have argued that Charles II took his cue from Louis XIV in his own dealings with the Order of Malta: witness the English king's support through the 1660s for the Order's cause against the Dutch Republic as well as Charles II's purchase of slaves in Malta for service in the English galleys a decade later. But in one respect Charles II took some time to imitate Louis XIV, namely, in the use of Malta as a forward base for the Royal Navy in the eastern Mediterranean. Traditionally the merchant ships of the English Levant Company and their protective convoys operated out of Livorno (or Leghorn, as they liked to call this

Tuscan port). In contrast, the French merchant marine preferred Malta as its forward base to the Levant. This is not to say that English ships were unfamiliar with or unwelcome at Malta. Ever since Elizabethan times the ships of the English Levant Company had been unloading at Malta their cargoes of coal, charcoal, lead, tin, iron, pikes and English cloth – all of which commodities were welcome imports into the Knights' barren fortress in the middle of the Mediterranean.³⁷ Sometimes the Order of Malta itself chartered English ships for coastal trading in the Mediterranean, a frequent example of which was the carrying of coal to Malta from Sicily.³⁸ Even so, the French rather than the English were conspicuous in Malta at this time, just as the English dominated the Livorno trade.

This general picture began to change as the result of Admiral Sir John Narbrough's punitive expedition against Barbary corsairs in the years 1674–7.³⁹ Although the Royal Navy's show of force in the Straits produced a fragile 'amity' between Charles II's government and the rulers of Algiers and Tunis, the Tripoli corsairs remained recalcitrant. In preparing to face the Tripolitans, Admiral Narbrough had to choose a base in the Mediterranean where his ships could be overhauled and refitted and his stores steadily conserved. Livorno was out of the question because it was too far from Tripoli; moreover, the Grand Duke of Tuscany's current sulkiness towards the English government had led him to deny dockyard facilities to Narbrough's ships. Although Cosimo III was always to speak well of his visit to England in 1668 – 'cotesto bel Paradiso dell'Inghilterra' – his relations with Charles II's government were often tense, once he had returned to Tuscany.⁴⁰ With Livorno out of commission, the Venetians were asked whether Narbrough might use Ithaca as his base, but the Admiralty was unhappy because Ithaca lacked a secure harbour. Messina was considered more suitable by some in the Admiralty but it was currently unavailable because of the war between Spain and France. This left Malta as the most appropriate base for the Royal Navy's squadron. Tripoli, after all, had once belonged to the Order of Malta and the Knights themselves knew the stations where the Tripolitan corsairs lurked in expectation of plunder. Malta's only drawback, as the Duke of York pointed out, was that its provisions had all to be imported; Pepys estimated the cost of providing stores in Malta to be £4712. Even so, Malta's secure harbours and its dockyard facilities alike induced Admiral

Narbrough to choose the island for his base against the Tripolitan corsairs.⁴¹

At first the punctilious question of salutes was to be an irritation between Grand Master Cotoner and Admiral Narbrough, who had written in English (Charles II usually wrote in Latin to the Grand Master) from aboard the *Henrietta*: 'I did and do expect a salute to be given by Your Highness to my master's flag (which I carry) correspondent to the salutes which you give to the flags of the king of France and the king of Spain, which are carried in the same place, it being the expectation of the king my master.'⁴² Once this had been settled to their mutual satisfaction, Narbrough directed his fleet from Malta against Tripoli, as was noted by a member of his squadron: 'Never were there so many English frigates together in that harbour before.'⁴³ Narbrough's successful imposition of a treaty with Tripoli entailed some success also for the Knights of Malta since seventy or so Maltese subjects were redeemed from slavery in Tripoli through the English admiral's mediation. Pepys took pride in the letter of thanks sent from Grand Master Cotoner to Charles II, for it was proof of some affinity between a distinguished Order of sea-knights and the Royal Navy. Pepys regretted the absence from England of any comparable corporation of native noblemen who might have won glory for Charles II on land and sea. This lament was one more variation by Pepys on his customary theme of how the English aristocracy and gentry were 'scandalous' in their ignorance of service at sea: 'England has taken a knight-errant, St. George, for its guardian saint, and not any of the Apostles and other fishermen that would have had more relation to the sea.'⁴⁴

In truth the affinity between England and Malta was more apparent than real and was obscured by the later history of Britain's rivalry in the Mediterranean with France – a power which claimed justifiably to have an even greater affinity with the Order of Malta. In the eighteenth century Britain was to covet Malta for itself if only to prevent France from possessing the island.⁴⁵ So the history of Malta during the period of the French and British occupations, 1798–1815, was the resolution of a long process started in the reigns of Charles II and Louis XIV. For the French king had taught the English king how to esteem the Knights of Malta and their central island in the Mediterranean. As for the Order of Malta itself, it learned this lesson from its sometimes paradoxical relations with Charles II and Louis XIV. Precisely

because it was so dependent on its revenues from the French commanderies and priories, it was tempted to widen its financial base by asking Charles II to revive the Venerable Tongue of England. Although this request was unrealistic in post-Reformation Europe, the Order was grateful none the less for Charles II's assistance in its campaign to secure an indemnity in respect of its former possessions in The Netherlands. But in the end the Order of Malta depended upon its Catholic 'protectors', namely the papacy and the kings of France and Spain. This truth had been confirmed by the blunt words addressed to Louis XIII of France in February 1641 from the Convent in Malta:

Italy provides us with nothing much; Bohemia and Germany hardly anything, and England and The Netherlands for a long time now nothing at all. We only have something to keep us going, Sire, in your own kingdom and in Spain.⁴⁶

'Though they are not very potent' – to repeat Sir William Coventry's remark about the Knights of Malta – they continued to transact their diverse business all over Europe until their subsistence from France and Spain was terminated, respectively, by the French Revolution and Charles IV of Spain.

Notes

1. Wright, L. P. (1969), 'The Military Orders in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spanish Society', *Past and Present* 43: 34–70.
2. Cf. Brantôme, Pierre de Bourdeilles (1665–1666) *Vies des hommes illustres et grands capitaines français et étrangers* (Paris 1869), 215–39.
3. National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of Malta (A.O.M.) 58 fo.65. I remain grateful to the Librarian and his staff for their unfailing courtesy.
4. A.O.M. 58 fos. 118–19; 383–6.
5. A.O.M. 58 fo.119.
6. A.O.M. 58 fo. 37.
7. A.O.M. 58 fo. 344.
8. A.O.M. 58 fo. 360.
9. See Allen, D. F., 'Attempts to Revive The Order of Malta in Stuart England', *The Historical Journal* (forthcoming, 1990).
10. A.O.M. 58 fos. 381–2; 1767 fos. 107–8.
11. Bamford, P. W. (1964), 'The Knights of Malta and the King of France, 1665–1700', *French Historical Studies* 3: 429–53.
12. Borg, V. (1967), *Fabio Chigi, Apostolic Delegate in Malta* (Città del Vaticano), 60–6, 249.

13. P(ublic) R(ecord) O(ffice), SP. 81/56 fo. 14; Bodleian Library, MS. Clarendon 92 fo. 58. Cf. Kossman, E. H., and Mellink, A. F., eds. (1974), *Texts Concerning The Revolt Of The Netherlands* (Cambridge), 172; *Proposition de M. de Thou Comte des Meslay, Ambassadeur de France, faite en l'Assemblée des Etats-Généraux et de M. le Cardinal Landgrave de Hesse, Grand-Prieur en Allemagne . . . le 8 Décembre 1660* (La Haye 1660).

14. A.O.M. 1647 fo. 217.

15. Cf. Allen, op. cit.

16. A.O.M. 260 fo. 133; P.R.O. SP. 86/1 fo. 3.

17. Bodleian Library, MS. Clarendon 77 fos. 43–4.

18. MS. Clarendon 105 fo. 8.

19. MS. Clarendon 104 fos. 249–50.

20. B(ritish) L(ibrary). Add. MSS. 22919 fo. 219.

21. P.R.O. H.C.A. 4/9; H.C.A. 3/92; A.O.M. 260 fo. 133.

22. P.R.O. P.C.2.55 fo. 32b; P.C.2.56 fo. 8; Bodleian Library, MSS. Clarendon 76 fos. 279–80; 77 fos. 3–6, 43–4, 62–3; 104 fos. 71–2; 106 fos. 174–83.

23. B.L. Add. MSS. 22919 fo. 221.

24. P.R.O. SP.81/56 fo. 35; SP.86/1 fo. 2.

25. In February 1667 an indemnity of 300,000 florins was agreed between the United Provinces and the Order of Malta in respect of the Order's former possessions in Haarlem and Friesland – A.O.M. 261 fos. 42, 90–2. Cf. Bodleian Library, MSS. Clarendon 107 fos. 139–42; 108 fos. 98–104.

26. Fisher, G. (1957), *Barbary Legend* (Oxford); Earle, P. (1970), *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London); Lloyd, C. (1981), *English Corsairs on the Barbary Coast* (London).

27. *Samuel Pepys's Naval Minutes*, ed. J. R. Tanner, Navy Records Society LX, 1926, 163.

28. P.R.O. SP. 79/1 fos. 372, 378, 381. Cf. *Lettere di Carlo Ottone, Proconsole Genovese in Londra, 1670–1671*, ed. F. Poggi, Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, XLV, Genova 1915, 179, 132.

29. *Samuel Pepys's Naval Minutes*, 354.

30. *Ibid.*, 83.

31. Bodleian Library, MSS. Rawlinson A477 fo. 65; A214 fo. 11.

32. MS. Rawlinson A180 fo. 191.

33. MS. Rawlinson A477 fos. 61–3, 65; *The Journals of Sir Thomas Allin*, ed. R. C. Anderson, Navy Records Society LXXX, 1940, II: 240–3.

34. MS. Rawlinson A187 fos. 365, 369; Wettinger, G., 'Some Aspects of Slavery in Malta, 1530–1800' (Ph.D dissertation, London 1972), 297, 308–9. I remain grateful to Dr Wettinger for sharing with me his considerable knowledge of Malta under the Knights.

35. Wettinger, op. cit., 178–9; MS. Rawlinson A214 fo. 77.

36. *Catalogue of the Pepysian Manuscripts*, ed. J. R. Tanner, Navy Records Society, 1904, 1909, II: 207; III: 69, 88, 181, 348.

37. See Mallia-Milanes, V. (1975), 'English Merchants' Initial Contacts With Malta: A Reconsideration', *Melita Historica* IV: 342–61.

38. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, SS. Malta 38 fo. 72. I remain grateful to the Cardinal Prefect of the A.S.V. for permission to consult the manuscripts of the *Inquisizione di Malta*.

39. For background, see Fisher, op. cit., 249–69.

40. Crinò, A. M. (1957), *Fatti e Figure del Seicento Anglo-Toscano* (Florence), 191; *Catalogue of the Pepysian Manuscripts*, III: 48, 132.
41. *Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1673-1675*, 408; *Catalogue of the Pepysian Manuscripts*, III: 39, 51, 71.
42. A.O.M. 57 fo. 30.
43. *The Diary of Henry Teonge*, ed. G. E. Manwaring (London 1927), 128-9.
44. *The Tangier Papers of Samuel Pepys*, ed. E. Chappell, Navy Records Society, LXXIII, 1935, 319; P.R.O. SP.86/1 fo. 63; *Samuel Pepys's Naval Minutes*, 167, 358.
45. Cf. Godechot, J. (1951), 'La France et Malte au XVIII^e Siècle', *Revue Historique* 206: 67-79.
46. A.O.M. 58 fo. 277.

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