

Making Amends with History: A Vindication of Maltese-Portuguese Relations¹

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What do we know of Maltese-Portuguese relations? Although Malta and Portugal have had diplomatic relations since 1968, His Excellency Antonio Russio Dias is, since 2005, the first resident Portuguese ambassador, while Malta has only had a resident ambassador in Lisbon for two years. To the average person this Southern European connection still might seem a rather obscure one, at least outside of some links generally known to have existed at the time of the Knights or, in the 20th century, devotionally, the pilgrimage to Fatima.

Historiography tends to be influenced by victors and rulers. Since the 18th century, however, patriotism and nationalism have been driven by the urge to overturn such patterns, giving rise to a historiography of their own in the process, one predicated on the notion of popular sovereignty. But influence can be disproportionate, and liable to interpretation. It may depend on size, stealth or strategy as much as on economics, education or presence. At the end of the 18th century both Britain and Portugal were committed to the defence of their territorial integrity and empires against the expansionist threat posed by France.

The theory of duration in historiography posits that the meaningfulness of an event may be less related to how long it lasts than to what it has meant. In a long time nothing out of the ordinary may occur, but in a relatively short while there may be a turn of events which is of the utmost relevance and consequence. That which lasts less will thus count for more in real terms. People, however, are not always conscious of this. Time passes them by as they cope with their daily chores, and the more so if the inter-generational transmission of knowledge and of sentiment becomes removed, restrained, blurred or fades away altogether.

One such instance in history has been the role played by Portugal at a momentous time which would determine the fate of Malta and, to an extent, that of the Mediterranean and beyond it. For Europe generally, that time would be the Napoleonic era, when in the wake of the French revolution Bonaparte's armies swept across continental Europe. For Malta, more specifically, that would be the Popular Insurrection of 2nd September 1798, exactly 210 years ago today, shortly after its French takeover from the Knights.²

Many people in Malta today - less so in Portugal - will know that two of the most prominent and longest-reigning rulers of Malta were Portuguese. These were the grand masters Antonio Manoel de Vilhena and Manoel Pinto de Fonseca. The former ruled for 14 years from 1722 to 1736; the latter ruled for 32, from 1741 to 1773. There was a third Portuguese grand master, Luis Mendez de Vasconcelos, who was only in office for less than two years in the 17th century (from 1622 to 1623). These Portuguese rulers of Malta are remembered from their legacies in a collective memory which became tangible, visible, renewable, even parochial, be that by means of a fort or a rampart, a theatre, an auberge or a town identified with them, or indeed half-named after them to this day.³

At least two localities today continue to be associated directly with these two grand masters, Floriana with Vilhena and Hal Qormi as Casal Pinto. In the case of the former, the name originates from its engineer, Pietro Paolo Floriani, about whom in February this year we had a book published by the Filarmonico-Drammatica of Macerata; but the recognition of and the debt to Vilhena continues to live heartily through its philharmonic society and band club, of which I happen to be an honorary president.⁴ Moreover it is here, at the Vilhena, that every year during the feast of St Publius, the highest dignitaries of the land, the Head of State and the Archbishop, traditionally convene and deliver national messages which are invariably reported by all sections of the press and media.

But the purpose for this historic encounter at the Upper Barracca today is not to recall and to record Portugal-linked personalities and events which are the better known, but, on the contrary, to highlight and to render homage to others which are less well known. Ironically, however, from a more sensitively national, modern and post-colonial point of view, it is these latter that appear to be the more significant and consequential.

Were it not for the prompt Portuguese succour to the Maltese insurgents in September 1798, when the Insurrection was arguably at its most critical and delicate stage, it is quite possible that the back of the courageous but badly armed and hardly trained rebels would have been broken, with God knows what consequences. The French garrison would have dug in and been further reinforced, making its eviction from the walled cities and quite possibly from the rest of the country far more hazardous and prolonged, even unlikely before several more years would have passed. A strategically located and highly fortified archipelago with excellent deep water harbours in the central

Mediterranean could have been lost to Britain and her allies, among which Portugal was the most faithful, at a time of incessant, dramatic warfare lasting nearly two decades, when it would have been invaluable to the then enemy, France. Within a few months on the Insurrection, history might well have been written the other way round: an earlier Maltese surrender to the French rather than a later French surrender to the British.

The possession of Malta was coveted by other powers especially Russia, whose czar Paul I had himself elected the Order's Grand Master on 7th November 1798 and so crowned shortly afterwards.⁵ In 1798 the Russian squadron was in the Mediterranean and Nelson was in contact with its commander as he was indeed with the Ottoman fleet. It was not until March 1801 that Paul I's successor, Alexander I, adopted a neutral stance until the Treaty of Tilsit was signed on 8th July 1807, between France and Russia. The first people Bonaparte threw out of Malta in June 1798, giving them 24 hours to leave, were the Russians and the Portugese, sequestering their properties together with any British ones.

A Roman Catholic kingdom and empire, Portugal had excellent relations with the Order until its expulsion from Malta in the summer of 1798, as may be seen from the congratulatory letter sent to Ferdinand von Hompesch upon his recent accession by Dona Maria.⁶ By the grace of God Queen of Portugal and of the Algarves, on this side and across the seas in Africa, Mistress of the Guineas and of the Conquest, the Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India, she had received his election "with much pleasure and great satisfaction":

*"Holding your most notable qualities in such opinion, I cannot but praise this most excellent choice, in view of the particular esteem and respect in which I hold this illustrious Order of which you have become the Grand Master."*⁷

So far as Portugal was concerned, the wresting of Malta from the Order by France had already been distressing. In now supporting the Maltese insurgents against French rule, Portugal was thus being consistent with her earlier ties. In this case, however, there was further pressure. News of the Maltese Insurrection reached Sicily within a few days by means of fishermen acting on instructions from a Żejtun commander, but soon afterwards the Maltese leaders wrote to the King of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand IV, and more importantly to Admiral Horatio Nelson, asking for muskets, ammunition, provisions and military assistance. On 13th September 1798, just eleven days after the outbreak of the Maltese Insurrection in and around the old Citadel,

writing at sea from the *Vanguard*, Admiral Horatio Nelson, on repairing to Naples after the Battle of Aboukir, had implored Portugal's Marquis De Niza urgently to intervene in Malta:

"Being informed by Captain Hood of your return from Alexandria, I beg to represent to Your Excellency the great benefit it would be to the common cause should you proceed off Malta, and to attempt to intercept a French ship of the Line and two Frigates that made their escape from Alexandria, and which are cruising there, having been driven out of the Ports of Malta by the Maltese, who are in arms against the French, and have retaken several of their Towns... I send Your Excellency two papers with information concerning them; and by Your Excellency's cruising there for a short time it might be the means of driving the French from the island..."

"Nelson added that from the intelligence he had received, he thought De Niza would "find no difficulty in communicating with the inhabitants of Malta or Gozo."³



Admiral Antonio De Niza who commanded the Portugese squadron that came to the assistance of the Maltese insurgents in 1798 and 1799, landing officers and engineers ashore.

By the time that two Maltese rebel emissaries who had left Malta for Sicily on 5th September, accompanied by the local governor of Siracusa, had sailed out some distance to see whether they would encounter the Portugese squadron, the Portugese ships were already in Maltese waters. In his *Giornale*, Baron Azzopardi vividly depicted the scene, which the Maltese just about regarded as a miracle. The four ships-of-the-line and two frigates, which at daybreak on Wednesday 19th September 1798, were seen approaching Malta on the misty horizon, were De Niza's squadron. The Maltese thought here was the British fleet, but it wasn't; it was the Portugese one. Not any less evocative is the



day by day account given by Felice Cutajar, Ball's secretary. His entry for 18th September started thus:

"Vi fu qualche mormorio, vedendo il popolo che tutto cominciava a mancare, fin il pane e la carne, ne' alcuna vela compariva dalla Sicilia in Porto, anzi sempre piu' si accostavano verso la Citta' Quattro vele, cioe' due Navi e due Fregate, in modo di bloccare il Porto..."⁹

And in his entry for the following day, he even mentions a failed French attempt to prevent the Maltese making contact with the newly-arrived Portuguese:

"Comparvero la mattina altre due vele, cioe' un altro Vascello ed una Fregata, e conosciute erano Portughesi, alli quali non lasciarono subito i Campagnoli d'inviar loro da S. Paolo una speronara a dar contezza di tutto, come fece, benche' le barche canoniere dei Francesi tentavano col cannone impedder loro tale corrispondenza..."¹⁰

Censu Borg's sentry had the battleships and frigates spotted on the horizon from the look-out of the belfry of the Birkirkara parish church. Borg rushed to Rabat to alert Notary Manuel Vitale, a very central figure in the Insurrection. In the afternoon of that same day, Borg and Vitale together boarded de Nisa's flagship, the *Principe Real*, which carried 90 guns and 948 men. There was also a brigantine, and an English frigate, which later was joined by another Portuguese frigate. The Maltese leaders were given a warm welcome aboard as De Nisa (usually spelt Nizza in the few period Maltese texts) listened to the plight and needs of the insurgents. He gave them his solemn promise that he would not leave Maltese waters before the arrival of the British ships. He also gave them 500 muskets and gunpowder. In an act that would distinguish the Portuguese support of the Insurrection, de Nisa did not limit himself to blockading the harbours. He immediately sent an engineer, Don Antonio Consalvo Saverio Pereira, with 20 artillerymen ashore to assist and advise the Maltese on the best sighting and construction of trenches which they had erected or were building, including the one at Cottonera. In the citadel, the Portuguese flag was immediately hoisted on the tower alongside the Maltese and Neapolitan colours.¹¹ More ammunition and supplies were made available later on by a passing British squadron, which however sailed on to attend to other business.

"In the words of a biographer of de Nisa writing about the Portuguese squadron's first arrival in Malta, "logistical support is given to the local population and ten vessels are seized."¹²

Most Maltese will have heard of Admiral Horatio Nelson, and probably taken pictures of his column in Trafalgar Square, but few would know anything about his Portuguese counter-part, the Marquis de Nisa, although the latter had a

short but fast and distinguished naval career, rudely interrupted by smallpox at the age of 36. In the 1790s De Nisa had his Ocean squadron moved to the Mediterranean and was involved in various operations including Tripoli, Livorno and especially Naples, in addition to Malta. Since 1798 he was Vice-Admiral in command of Portugal's Mediterranean squadron and Inspector of the Royal Marine Brigade. By this time Portugal had one of the most powerful naval forces in Europe; in 1782 this already comprised 65 ocean-going ships, including 14 carracks, 23 frigates, three corvettes, 17 brigantines, and 8 cargo vessels, with 800 officers and 20,000 sergeants and other ranks, active not just in the Mediterranean but all the way from Brazil to India.¹³

The Portuguese would constitute a backbone of the naval blockade and at one time had as many as 400 troops ashore alongside the Maltese insurgents. They stood in when the British navy was otherwise engaged at the most crucial moments, first in the Autumn of 1798, from September to November, as the Insurrection started, and then again in the summer and winter of 1799, from August to December, as it was ending. Until the transfer of two British regiments from Messina under the command of Brigadier Thomas Graham, which comprised 800 men, towards the end of 1799, it was the Portuguese who mostly had non-Maltese fighting men ashore. At least two officers are known to have distinguished themselves in particular.

One was the already mentioned engineer Pereira, always energetic, committed and alert. Another was Xavier Mattheus, often praised by Sir Alexander Ball for his courage and promptness in leading the Żejtun and Żurrieq volunteers against the French in the latter half of 1799. A few letters of advice or instruction, including intelligence, have survived. One was addressed by Pereira to Canon F. S. Caruana of Żebbuġ, who commanded the St Joseph Camp, dated 22nd October 1798. This was about the need to reinforce the gates at Kordin and Zabbar as a great number of Frenchmen had been posted at Cospicua and the Cottonera. In another entreaty dated 13th December 1798 from Hal Tarxien, Pereira deplored the urgently needed but all too slowly executed upgrades being undertaken near the Vittoriosa battery:

*"I urge you to hurry because the time is quite near. Send everyone to work here, day and night, without any delay. I can tell you that the battery could not start firing if it is not manned by 200 men, with 1,000 in reserve at Tarxien village under the command of any one of the Neapolitan officers who, up to now, have not done anything..."*¹⁴

The French garrison comprised some 4,000 troops, but there were barely half that number among the Maltese who were battle worthy; most were

peasants, former militia men or emboldened young volunteers.¹⁵ Some of the Portuguese fighting alongside the Maltese on land laid down their lives. I do not have a roll call of honour because we lack all the details, but we do have some. For example, we know of one Portuguese called Emanuele Francisco who died in action at the age of 25 on 22nd January 1799, but we do not have his surname. He lies buried at the Tarxien parish church and listed in its *Liber Mortuorum*. Another Portuguese who died by enemy action and is similarly buried and registered at Tarxien is Don Consalvo Brago, who lost his life at the age of 28 on Kordin Heights on 8th October 1798. Another Pereira, Giocchino Pereira, died on 25th October 1799. He is listed in the *Liber Mortuorum* of the Żejtun parish church. The parish archives at Hal Qormi mention another Portugese, Joannes de Sylva, who died there on 7th September 1799.¹⁶ There are certainly others who would deserve the ultimate recognition as unknown soldiers fallen in battle. The Maltese lost many more men of course, thousands more, in a dramatic series of events, including a failed attempt to take Valletta. The British blockaded, supported and supplied, but those of them who actually died fighting on the ground were few indeed. Naples sent some men and helped in other ways but it was itself threatened by France and was in no position to intervene at all decisively.

In spite of pressure from Lisbon to return to base in the Autumn of 1799, Admiral De Niza kept the promise he had made to Vitale and Borg aboard his flagship on of 13th September 1798. He would not abandon Malta until the British arrived. He finally sailed for home on 13th December 1799, fifteen months later, just as the English troops from Messina were being disembarked. There was only a six week interruption of the naval blockade, in the early summer of 1799, at a time of alert when a combined Franco-Spanish attack was feared, a lull which allowed the French garrison to be replenished and reinforced.¹⁷ But for the rest, the Portuguese no less than the British, separately or jointly, and to a lesser extent the Neapolitans, were the ones who helped out. Such assistance on land and at sea may well have prevented a Maltese surrender and a possible rout or massacre, especially at the start of the Insurrection when the largely unequipped Maltese, however brave, resourceful and successful, were most vulnerable to French sorties. That was when Nelson's fleet was on the mend in Naples, although Nelson did visit Malta soon and he kept up the pressure throughout. Malta was, he wrote, "in my thoughts waking and sleeping."¹⁸ De Niza was the most effective and trustworthy ally he could rely on in the Mediterranean. He richly deserved the letter of thanks handed to him before his departure in December 1799 by the Maltese 'congresso nazionale'. And so did he too the mention of appreciation

from Queen Carolina of Naples. Nor was Nelson sparing in his praise of De Nisa. In a letter of thanks to him written in Palermo on 24th October 1799, he told him that his conduct in the blockade of Malta "has garnered the esteem and affection of Governor Ball, the British officers and troops, and of all the Maltese." Adding: "You can add the name of Nelson to those of your most fervent admirers, as an officer and friend."¹⁹

"In his magnum opus on the French in Malta published by Midsea in 1998, the late Dr Carmelo Testa rightly noted that it was "a deplorable fact that Malta has never commemorated by some visible sign this Portugese admiral and his countrymen and marines who had helped so much the Maltese in their hour of need."²⁰

Mr President, Mr Ambassador, Ladies and Gentlemen, this evening Portugal and Malta - and History - tangibly record and chisel out such past valour and comradeship. On so decorously evocative a day as this, the 2nd of September 2008, we finally make lasting, demonstrable amends for so long and silent a shame.

That concluded the oration. Afterwards, and as a consequence of it, I was alerted and given access to two further pertinent documents. These show that the Portugese commitment to the Maltese cause in the Insurrection was still more significant and revealing.



2nd September 1998:- On behalf of the MUHS Professor Henry Frendo lays a wreath at the foot of the 2nd September 1798 monument in what is now Piazza Indipendenza, Valletta.

The first document consists of the Marques de Nisa Diaries during the Mediterranean campaigns - the entire texts. While not solely or specifically about Malta, these permit greater contextualization of the goings-on, insights on de Nisa, and put into sharper relief the Portugese engagements in Malta under his command, which are included in it and to which I had already made some reference from other less comprehensive sources.²¹

A second document, which until now had remained largely unknown and unstudied, is still more important.²² This is a detailed report, which originally had also included a plan of battle, written by and based on the live testimony of Lieutenant-Captain Antonio Gliz. Pereira from the Royal Brigade of the Navy, who on de Nisa's instructions landed in Malta to plan and direct operations in 1798 and in 1799, reporting back to him accordingly.²³

The Pereira report and testimony is historically significant for two main reasons. First, it is a strategy, a plan of campaign, showing how best the French could be made to capitulate, organizing the defences and attack posts, warning the inexperienced Maltese leaders against resorting to certain tactics which in desperation they came to favour, such as valiantly but vainly attempting to scale the walls, which risked being self-defeating and ending, in the *rapporteur's* words, "in sorrow not in glory". Second, it gives us valuable information as to the situation on the ground, the numbers of troops on both sides, the actual or desirable composition of the Maltese battalions, the location and indeed the construction of batteries, what ammunition was available and/or needed, data about French sorties both real and potential, the delivery of Neapolitan reinforcements, even a hint as to internecine disagreements among the Maltese themselves as to how to deal or proceed.

In so far as strategy was concerned, much of this is inevitably in the nature of planning, what should or would be and if not what fall back positions were to be resorted to. What he calls the 'stone walls', meaning rubble walls (*hitan tas-sejjieh*) he regarded as *de facto* trenches, the use of which the besiegers were to exploit, even as parapets when firing against *sorties*. The distribution of men had to be better ordered. In the absence of muskets, an order had to be placed for pikes, at least eight feet long and with an iron head. Artillery was insufficient: it had to be supplanted and better positioned. At night signals would be by means of air rockets (*foguetes do ar*), in day-time by flags or streamers aloft (*a cavalo*). Security was of the essence, hence much stricter recourse to passwords, sentries and patrols were required, outlined and timed in detail:

"As soon as the inferior officer who came out of the station presents himself to his officer, the latter will order 'Present Arms!' and say 'Let the officer come forward!'. When the latter is very close, they will lay hold of their swords one against the other and, their ears close to each other's mouth, the officer of the guard will receive the first password and give the answer...."

Before between 10,000 and 12,000 inhabitants had been expelled from Valletta, Pereira had thought it best to bombard the city – “the fortified town of Valletta is one of the strongest in Europe” – believing that such an assault would provoke the inhabitants into mutiny as had happened at the Castle of Nice, at Kaiserwerth, Mons, Venlo and Menin. But that was now no longer the case. Because of the circumstances, “the only way of forcing the enemy to surrender is through lack of food supplies” for which the siege would have to be well organized and a blockade conducted at sea to prevent the entry of all provisions. The report mentions various field-works for defence and siege which had to be or were undertaken. For topographical and logistical reasons, he did not think Valletta should be attacked from its Floriana side but from the Cottonera. He had a list of required war munitions to the King of Naples and a toned down version of these arrived some time later from Naples on two frigates. They comprised 2 12” mortars, 2 8” howitzers, 400 bombs, 600 grenades, 1200 fuses, 200 powder barrels of 60 rotolos each, 2,000 infantry muskets and 100,000 musket cartridges. He refers to Ball By “the blockade commander”, Pereira means Ball, but there was also a Commander Manoel Vital engaged with the Maltese ground forces.

Writing to Ball from Tarxien on 28 January 1799, Pereira explained the unfolding situation as follows:

"Commander Manoel Vital has been speaking to me every day of an assault which the Maltese are planning on Cottonera. Inexperience has heated the brains of these people to such a point that in spite of my opposing their scheme with arguments which have seemed to me persuasive, they persevere and will not be persuaded. The walls of Valletta are not of such a kind that will admit assault without first making a breach and demolishing the defences. In consequence, I believe that the result of such a venture will be sorrow rather than glory.

A scaling of the walls with ladders was planned three times, the third time being on 16 February 1799, when 900 men assembled at Corradino, but it was not carried out. Pereira also opposed fortifying Fort Manoel because this was too exposed in relation to Valletta. By contrast, he had mortar batteries erected elsewhere mainly but not only to the south. "I had the beacon (lampo) of St Joseph entrenched", Pereira reported to de Nisa, "and two traverses built on the highway that from that station leads to Valletta, so as to prevent the enemy from using it. The erection of a 4-mortar battery before Harhar was finished and, at the same time, all the avenues on that side blocked with traverses. Meanwhile I ordered the building of the great traverse of Msida, with an accompanying ditch. Unfortunately the 'accompanying plan' is not available, but we have offensive and defensive preparations taking shape simultaneously. Valletta could not be attacked directly-

The attack must be made at Cottonera. Once the besiegers are established there... they must attack Fort St Margaret and Vittoriosa and follow by the capture of Senglea, dominating thus the harbour on which Valletta wholly depends.... Should St Angelo Castle not surrender... then an attack should be made on Fort Ricasoli..."

From an intercepted dispatch addressed by General Vaubois to the Directoire in Paris, it was known that the French garrison counted no more than 4,000 troops. On the strength of this, Pereira calculated how many men could be committed to a sortie and what should be the numbers, positions and lines of the Maltese men in wait for them. We get a detailed breakdown of the field situation in 1798 according to a distribution determined by Pereira, although the stations had already increased their arms by 500 and their men by 600. Here is his table:-

Title	Armed Men	Unarmed Men	Total
Żejtun	700	2,100	2,800
Żabbar	900	700	1,600
Tarxien	250	400	650
Corradino	700	600	1,300
Samra ²⁴	300	400	700
St Joseph	750	2,100	2,850
Harhar ²⁵	500	300	800
Total	4,100	6,600	10,700

This meant that the number of armed men were not so far apart. Victory was possible. Plans had to be devised accordingly.

Very revealing is the description of one of the failed French sorties:

"On the 21st of November 1798, the French made a sortie numbering over 500 men, at the place between Cottonera and Corradino, in order to attack the Corradino station which had given them so much cause for anxiety, as could be told clearly from the continuous fire they directed onto that place both from Valletta and from Cottonera, destroying a large wall which gave cover to the workmen, making it necessary to rebuild it three times, for as many times as it was brought down. When the attack began, the Borg battery²⁶ removed the screen that covered it and began to direct a lively fire against the enemy, forcing them to withdraw immediately in disorder, killing a few and maiming a great many, as was later confirmed by the account of a number of deserters."

These highly evocative period accounts bring closer to home what the 2nd September Insurrection truly entailed and represented. The first and only armed popular insurrection in Maltese history, it mobilized a heroic effort against a foreign rule which had grossly transgressed its supposedly liberating mission. However, they also bring to light the proximity and advice of De Nisa's Portuguese strategists and planners to the military preparations and operations on the ground, at so crucial and difficult a time. In the end, as foreseen by Pereira from the outset, it was starvation that led to surrender. Scaling the walls would have almost certainly produced a massacre.

NOTES

- ¹ This is the text of an oration delivered on 2nd September 2008 at the Upper Barracca Gardens under the patronage of the Head of State on the occasion of the unveiling of a slab commemorating Portuguese assistance to the Maltese during the Maltese Insurrection of 2nd September 1798.
- ² For a brief analytical discussion of this see H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of Maltese History* (Malta, 1989), chap. 3 "From Generals to Generals", 39-71; and *Zmien l-Ingliżi* (Malta, 2004), Vol. 1, chap. 2 "L-Insurrezzjoni Maltija u l-Intervent Ingliż", 5-26. See also A. Ganado & J. C. Sammut, *Malta in British and French Caricature 1798-1815* (Malta, 1989).
- ³ The first known Portuguese maps of Malta date back to the 1730s while some books recording Maltese naval engagements on the "famoza Ilha de Malta" were published in Lisbon during Pinto's reign. See the short entry in an article by A. Ganado, "Historic links between Portugal and Malta", *The Times*, 22 July 2007, 52-53.
- ⁴ Cf. H. Frendo, 'I Floriani di Macerata e La Fioriana di Malta', in Simonetta Torresi, *Discorso intorno a Pompeo Floriani* (Societa' Filarmonico-Drammatica di Macerata, 2008), 5-9.
- ⁵ H. Frendo, 'Czars, Knights and Republicans: The Malta Question in Paul I's Time', paper delivered in St Petersburg published in *Ruskii Vopros* (Journal of Russian History, Brno), 3, 2002, reprinted in *Storja* (Journal of the Malta University History Society), (2003-2004), 62-75.
- ⁶ Queen Maria reigned from 1777 to 1816. King Joao VI was Regent from 1792 to 1816.
- ⁷ See the textual translation from the Portuguese original in A.P.Vella, *Malta and the Czars 1697-1802* (Royal University of Malta, 1972), 50-51.
- ⁸ *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, with Notes by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas* CGMG (London, 1845), Vol. 3, Jan. 1798-Aug. 1799. For related documentary exchanges and evidence see also W. Hardman, *A History of Malta during the Period of the French and British Occupations 1798-1815* (London, 1909) and H.P.Scicluna, *Documents relating to the French Occupation of Malta in 1798-1800* (Malta, 1923), *passim*.
- ⁹ F. Cutajar, *L'Occupazione Francese di Malta nel 1798* (Malta, Valletta, 1933), from original manuscript at the Biblioteca, with a preface by Dott. Giovanni Curmi, 55.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ¹¹ See especially V. Azopardi, *Giornale della Presa di Malta e Gozo* (Malta, 1836), and also Felice Cutajar, but see also later secondary works such as V. Denaro, C. Boffa, F. Sammut, and other more important ones cited or listed below.
- ¹² Antonio Marques Espateiro, *O Almirante Marques de Nisa* (Lisbon, 1987), quoted after First Lieutenant Jorge Manuel Moreira Silva in the *Revista de Armada* (Nov. 2004). A internet rendering is *Marquis de Niza: A Portuguese Admiral between Nelson and Napoleon*, 4. I am grateful to Mr L. Zammit Munro for making this source known to me (Zammit Munro/Frendo, 21 Aug. 2008).
- ¹³ See the biography *Marquis de Niza: A Portuguese Admiral between Nelson and Napoleon*.
- ¹⁴ C. Testa, *The French in Malta 1798-1800* (Malta, 1998), 375-376.
- ¹⁵ An English source writing to Colonel Graham in early September 1799 noted that Niza's ships had returned but they would not take Valletta. "A French garrison of 4000 men is at present blocked by about 2500 half-naked, half-starved, half-armed Maltese...two of the *Alexander's* lower-deck guns are the only battering pieces... and for lack of powder they have hardly fired for two months." A.B. Roger, *The War of the Second Coalition* (Oxford, 1964), 196-197; quoted after D.Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers 1793-1815*, (London, 1996), 76. The *Alexander* was the ship captained by Sir Alexander Ball, who was the British officer in charge in Malta.
- ¹⁶ C. Testa, *op.cit.*, fn. 5, 358; fn. 6, 729.
- ¹⁷ D. Gregory, *op.cit.*, 70-77.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ¹⁹ Antonio Marques Espateiro, *op.cit.* (see fn. 12 above).
- ²⁰ C. Testa, *op.cit.*, 702.
- ²¹ These diaries, compiled and edited by Antonio Marques Espateiro, Capitano-Tenente, are entitled 'O Almirante Marques De Nisa', contain a portrait of De Nisa 'Jo Marques De Nisa', and were published as a CD by Edicoes Culturais Da Marinha in Lisbon. I am grateful to the President of the Comissao Cultural Da Marinha, Rui Manuel Rodrigues de Abreu, who was present in Valletta on 2nd September 2008, for his gracious letter and its enclosures in Rodrigues de Abreu/Frendo, Lisbon, 20 Oct. 2008.
- ²² This document, MS 15, entitled 'Sito de Malta - Antonio G. Pereira' had been acquired for the Archives and

Rare Books Department at the University of Malta Library, where it was laid to rest in peace many years ago. In his bibliography of manuscript sources, Testa does not mention it (*op.cit.*, pp. 843-846.) I was alerted to its existence by Dr Paul Xuereb, our former librarian, who informed me that the late Dr Joseph Cremona (who lectured on Romance Philology at Cambridge University) had had it translated into English by one of his students. I was granted access to both the original Portuguese text and its English translation by the current University of Malta librarian, Mr Anthony Mangion, under certain conditions (enc. M.Samut-Tagliaferro/Frendo, 13 Nov. 2008).

²³ On his second landing he was accompanied by Second Lieutenant Matheus Xavier from the same Royal Brigade. Some parts of the manuscript are not readily decipherable; nor is it clear if this is yet another Pereira or if he is the one commended by Ball, with whom he was in direct contact, and to whom I twice referred in my talk as reproduced here. The name and surname are identical but his second name he signs repeatedly as 'Glitz', so at least is it rendered in the type-written transcription in the Portuguese (as well as in the English) version of his MS. It is possible that this was his actual second name and that it was rather the 'Consalvo Saverio' (or perhaps 'Gonsalvo') which had been wrongly rendered and conveyed. Pereira is a common Portuguese surname. Our *rapporteur* Antonio G. (Glitz.) was a Lieutenant Captain, well instructed and experienced in the arts of war, and certainly no ordinary engineer. This is a curious detail; the substance of the document is what matters. There can be no doubt as to its authenticity.

²⁴ Still known as Tas-Samra (where there is a church), this was further down the road to Valletta from Hamrun; Casa Blacas (in the Little Sisters of the Poor area) served as an advance post for the Samra battery's guns. On the high ground past where there is San Gejtanu church, it was on the Hamrun side, roughly overlooking Marsa. According to Dr Joseph F. Grima, the Malta Historical Society's secretary who has written extensively about the Order's rule and Hal Qormi, in those days it formed part of Hal Qormi, and it engaged the Floriana defences. St Joseph (that is the San Giuseppe camp), is further up towards Santa Venera, near Casa Leoni (court martials and executions were carried out here), in what was part of Birkirkara. Strada San Giuseppe (still today's main road by the same name), divided Hamrun into two, Qormi on one side, Birkirkara on the other.

²⁵ This is almost certainly a reference to the well dug out and fortified battery site known as Tal-Ghorghar or tal-Gharghar, the area extending from north of Birkirkara to San Ġwann (then known as l-Gholja tal-Ghorghar). According to our colleague Charles Dalli the written version is an approximation of how the word would still have been pronounced in the late 18th century sounding the 'gh' as an 'h'. G.F.Abelo (1647) had described this area as wooded with juniper trees. San Ġwann tal-Gharghar is a name still in use.

²⁶ The Corradino emplacement was known as 'the Borg battery'.