

# VIRTUAL DISPLAY NO 103

## BY UK MALTA STUDY CIRCLE

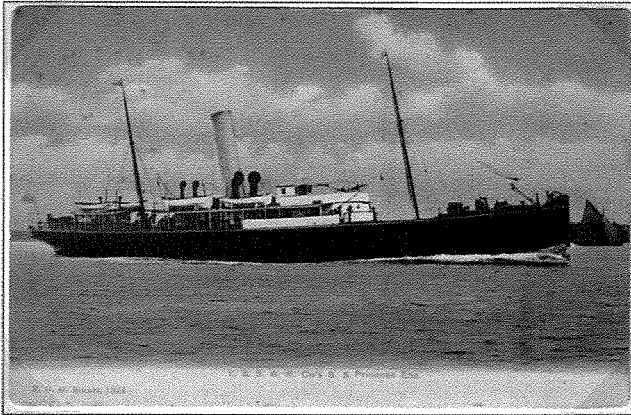
by Alan Green



### Turkish Internees in Malta



An Armistice was signed with Turkey on 30th October 1918 and during November, Allied troops moved into the Dardanelles and Constantinople. Following a period of internal unrest, in March 1919, the Government of Ferid Pasha started arresting the organisers and persons of influence. On 28th May 1919, with the situation deteriorating, the British took custody of 67 arrested persons and placed them on board the HMS Princess Ena. The 12 highest-ranking were landed at Mudros, with the remainder and a further eleven prisoners from the troubles at Kars, despatched to Malta.



PPC of the "Princess Ena" depicted here in her pre-war London & South-Western Railway livery. Used on cross-channel ferry routes pre-war, the "Princess Ena" was impressed into wartime service by the Admiralty. The ship was used for general transport duties.

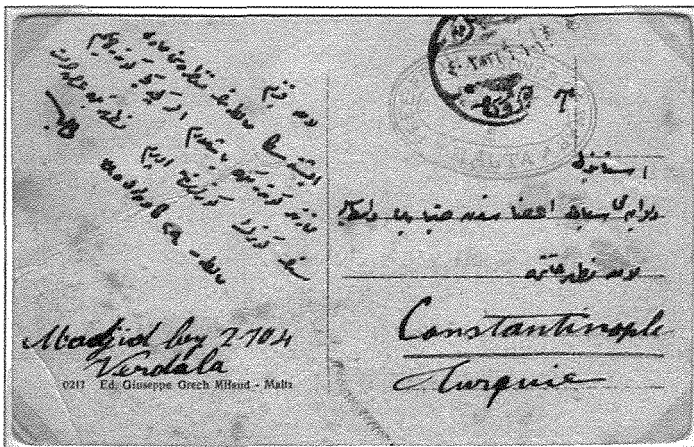
The "Princess Ena" arrived in Malta on 2nd June 1919 and the 66 prisoners were interned in the WW.I Prisoner of War camps. These 66 were allocated PoW numbers #2675-2740 and were accorded the same privileges & restrictions as wartime PoW's.



## Turkish Internees in Malta



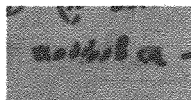
The Turkish Internees arriving in June 1919 included 41 ex-ministers, politicians and ex-*valis* of regional government and 14 officers accused of offences against British PoW's, as well as the 11 prisoners from Kars. They were joined in July and August by other Turkish Internees, who had been held in Egypt prior to transfer to Malta. As a number of the PoW's from the Great War were still in Malta awaiting approval to leave, the influx of Turkish Internees could not be readily accommodated in one place and were dispersed to the camps at Verdala and at Polverista.



1919(29Dec) PPC from Madjid Bey #2704 in Verdala Camp to Constantinople with PC5 handstamp. Although a bit grubby, this card shows a Turkish receiving mark of 16Jan1920 which probably indicates it was sent through the normal postal route. Madjid Bey was the Chief of the Courts of Finance in Turkey.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp  
'Free From Prisoners of War/PC5'.



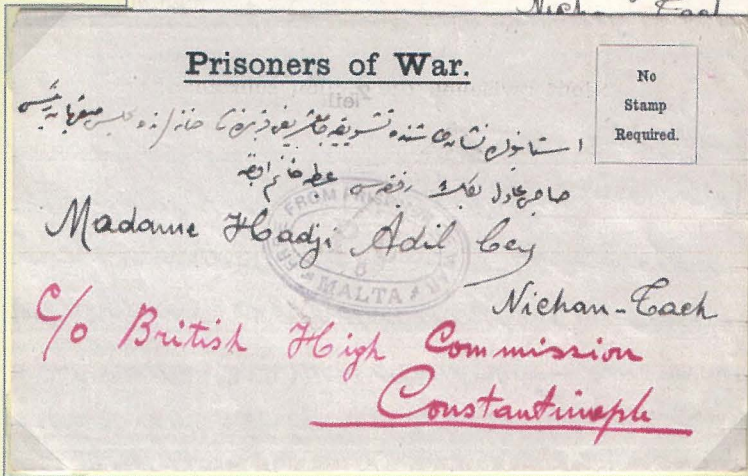
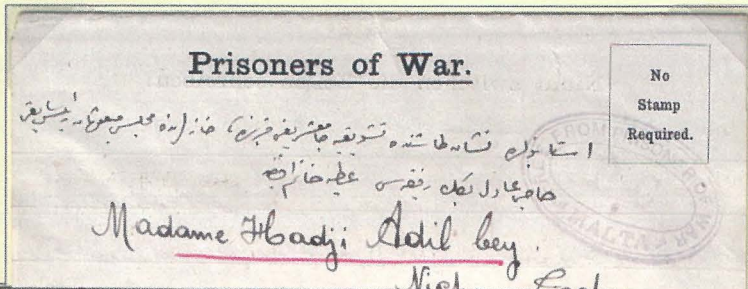
PPC shows this date under the message.  
Probably the date of writing, as it translates  
as '335 Kanun-ı-ewel 29' or 29Dec1919.



# Turkish Internees in Malta



On 21 Sept. 1919, the 12 deportees at Mudros were transferred to Malta. These were high-ranking members of the Turkish aristocracy and of the defeated armed forces. They were allocated PoW #2754-2765 in Malta. Supplies of PoW postal stationery left from World War I continued in use.



1921 PoW Lettersheets (in German) from Malta to Constantinople with oval 'Free from PoW/PC5'. These items were sent by Hadji Adil Bey, who was the former President of the Turkish Parliament and one of the 12 from Mudros.

1227  
کارت پستی  
24

The date on upper item is written in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 24 Kanun-i-sani 1337 in the Rumi calendar. This is 24Jan1921.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp 'Free From Prisoners of War/PC5'.

1227  
کارت پستی  
21

The date on lower PPC is written in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 21 Mart 1337 in the Rumi calendar. This is 21 March 1921.



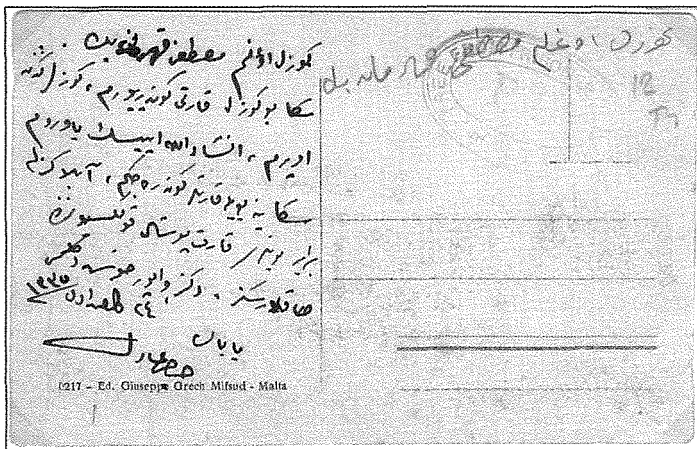
## Turkish Internees in Malta - Outgoing Mail



When the first batches of Turkish Deportees arrived in Malta during the latter half of 1919, they were accorded the privilege of free mail. This mail was validated in Malta with the application of an oval Free From Prisoner of War handstamp. Existing handstamps were utilised and continued to be used until the final repatriations in late-1921.



The vast majority of outgoing mail from the Turkish Deportees was validated by oval handstamps with PC 2 or PC 5. Letters written in Ottoman Turkish were censored and approved using PC 5. For other languages, PC 2 was usually used by the censor.



1919 (Dec24) PPC of Grand Harbour sent to Turkey and validated with a poor strike of PC 5. Erasure of the address has removed half the oval handstamp.



Oval handstamps with PC or PC 1 were used for a short period in 1919 on outgoing Turkish mail, and withdrawn by the year-end.

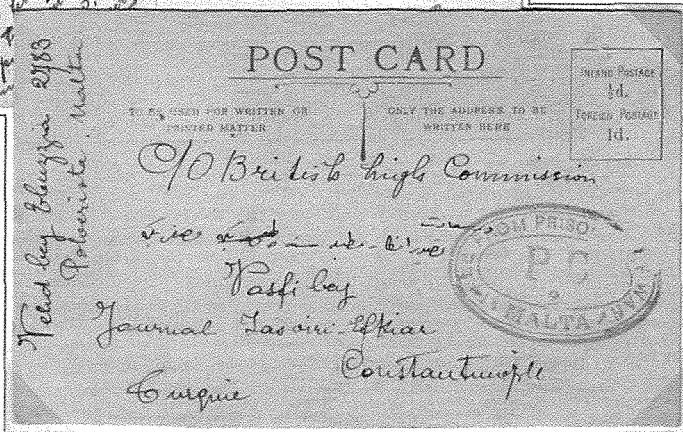


# Turkish Internees in Malta

## - PC 2 handstamp



During the 1920-1921 period, most of the mail from Turkish Internees carries the Malta PC5 PoW handstamp. On some items, however, a PC2 PoW handstamp has been used. From the limited number of recorded items, it appears that the PC2 handstamp from the earlier WWI period was utilised and applied when the language was not Ottoman Turkish.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp  
'Free From Prisoner of War/PC'2'.

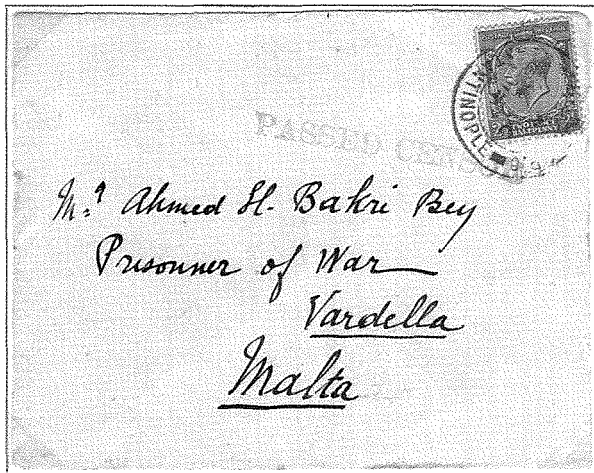
1920 (8Mar & 8Oct) PC's from Malta to Berlin and Constantinople with oval 'P C 2'. The cards are written in Italian and French, by a Slovenian PoW and a Turkish Internee respectively. Note that by this time, all the PoW's are at Polverista.



## Turkish Internees in Malta - Incoming Mail



Examination of PoW mail in London ceased on 21st September 1919 and the P.W. Branch was disbanded. In Malta, however, the presence of Turkish Internees required these examinations to continue locally. Incoming mail from 1919 to 1921, mainly from Turkey or Italy, is usually handstamped with a straightline 'PASSED CENSOR' marking. This marking has also been recorded in isolated instances from 1916, but always on mail that had not been transmitted via the P.W. Branch in London for one reason or another.



1919 (250C) Cover from Constantinople to Malta with 'PASSED CENSOR' handstamp. It was sent to Ahmed H. Bakri Bey (#2708), an Army Major (Reserve) from Konia. The cover has a Cospicua arrival backstamp of Nov 1st.

Use of the PASSED CENSOR handstamp increased after Sept. 1919, however it was damaged and subsequently repaired. The last recorded date of use was in July 1921.

**PASSED CENSOR**

Original State  
(23 Apr 1918)

**PASSED CENSOR**

Damaged State  
(16 Jan 1920)

**PASSED CENSOR**

Repaired State  
(12 Feb 1920)



## Turkish Internees in Malta - Incoming Mail



A significant proportion of mail to PoW's was registered, mostly coming from Constantinople in Jan/Feb. 1920, and censored on arrival in Malta.



1920 (17.1) Registered cover from Lausanne to Malta, addressed to Prince Said Halim, formerly Grand Vizier (Malta PoW 2755). Backstamped Malta JA30 1920, with broken 'PASSED CENSOR' handstamp on the front.



1920 (25FE) Registered cover from Constantinople to Malta, addressed to Fethy Bey, formerly Minister of Interior (Malta PoW 2689). Backstamped Malta MR5 1920, with repaired 'PASSED CENSOR' handstamp on front.



## Turkish Internees in Malta - Censored E.S. handstamp



The PoW Camps were in close proximity on the outskirts of the Three Cities. As other nationalities gradually left, the Turkish internees were concentrated in the camps at New Verdala and Polverista Barracks.



1920 (20May) PPC from Malta to Constantinople with oval 'P.C.5' and 'Censored/E.S.' handstamps. The card shows New Verdala PoW Camp. It was sent by Ahmed Bey #2724, former Governor of Sivas.



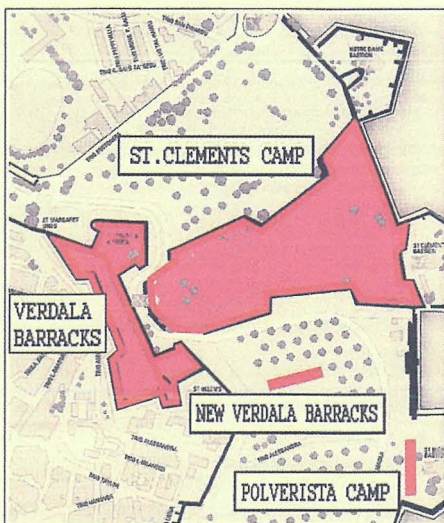
The date (picture side) is written in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 1336 Mayıs 20 in the Rumi calendar. This is 20 May 1920.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp 'Free From Prisoners of War/PC/5'.

**CENSORED  
E.S.**

Two-line Censor's handstamp used in Constantinople(?) - probably at the British High Commission. Recorded dates of use are between May 1920 & October 1920.





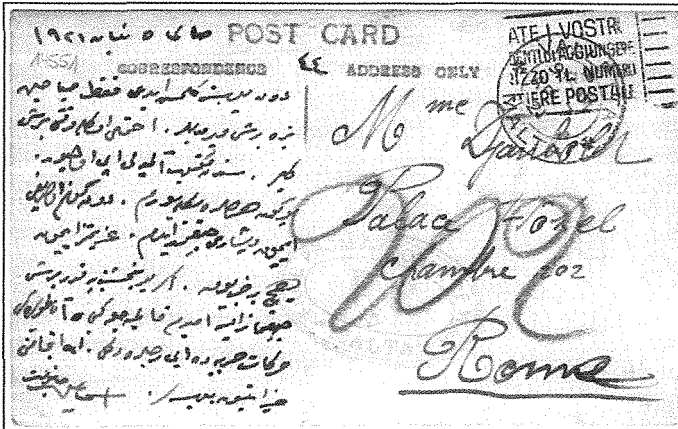
## Turkish Internees in Malta



After the German PoWs left in December 1919, there was an extensive rationalisation of the PoW Camp locations. By mid-February 1920, all remaining 124 internees were housed in St. Nicholas Married Quarters (Polverista camp). Around two-thirds were post-war Turkish deportees.



1921 (AP7) PPC from Malta to Rome with oval 'PC.5' handstamp. The card shows Polverista PoW Camp, in the former St. Nicholas Married Quarters building, taken from the New Verdala veranda.



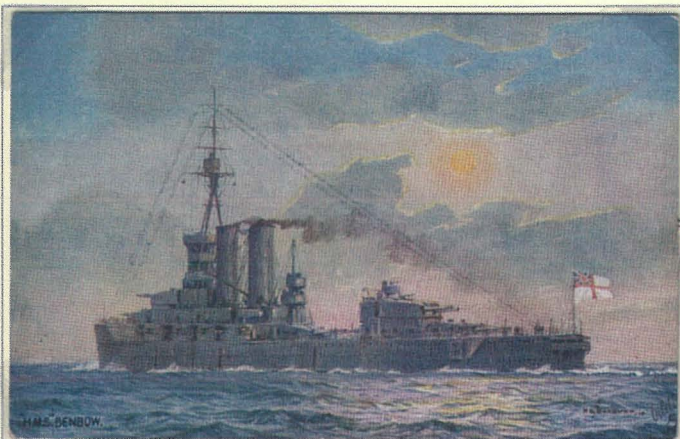
Reverse of card showing a faint PC.5 handstamp and Valletta datestamp. It was sent by Ismail Djanbolet, with his serial 44.



## Turkish Internees in Malta



In March 1920, the British Govt. considered the pending Peace Treaty was likely to lead to unrest and as a result, on 16th March, the Allies occupied Istanbul. The Ottoman Parliament was suspended and martial law imposed. Nationalist deputies were arrested and deported to Malta on HMS Benbow.



*Mr Howard L. S. Pentlow  
A. R. S. Benbow  
c/o G. P. O.  
Malta*



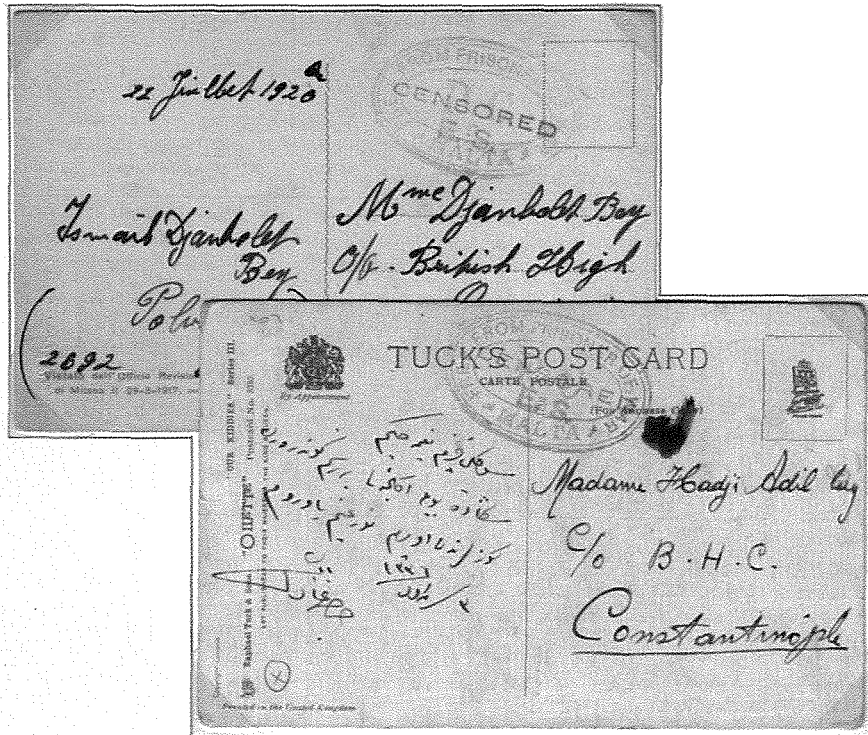
1921(23SP) Registered cover from Constantinople to HMS Benbow at Malta and a photo of Deportees embarking on 22nd March 1920. On arrival at Malta, they were allocated PoW numbers 2771 to 2781.



## Turkish Internees in Malta - Censored E.S. handstamp



Martial law was imposed in Constantinople in March 1920 and afterwards, mail from Internees in Malta is found with a two-line Censor handstamp. The mail is usually addressed c/o British High Commission. This system appears to have been operated for about six months - until October 1920.



1920 PPC's from Malta to Constantinople with oval 'PC5' and 'Censored/E.S.' handstamps. The PC5 mark was applied first.



The date on lower item is written in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 1336 Teshrin-i-ewel 3 in the Rumi calendar. This is 30Oct1920.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp 'Free From Prisoners of War/PC/5'.

**CENSORED  
E.S.**

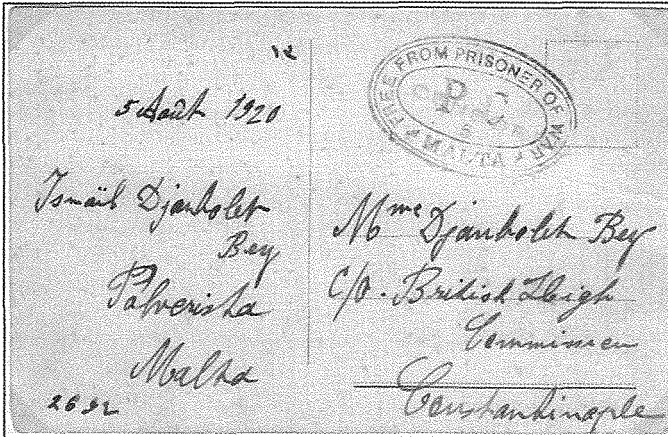
Two-line Censor's handstamp used in Constantinople(?) - probably at the British High Commission. Recorded dates of use are between May 1920 & October 1920.



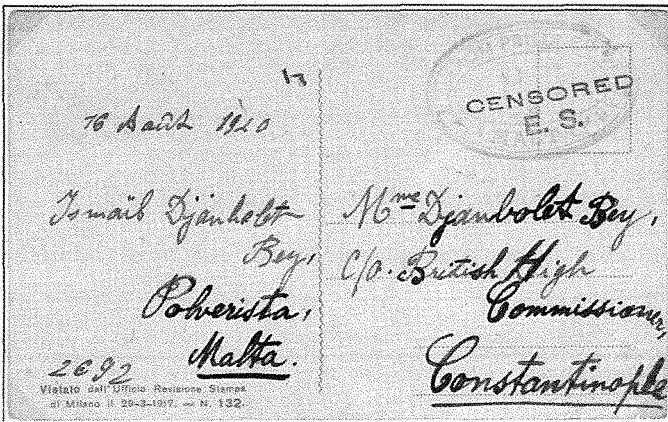
## Turkish Internees in Malta - Censored E.S. handstamp



On 16 Mar 1920, all official buildings in Istanbul were occupied by the Allied forces and prominent Turkish Nationalists were arrested. Their deportation to Malta prompted Mustafa Kemal Pasha to order the arrest of 20 British officers in Anatolia. This complicated the situation and added to the reluctance of the Allies to proceed with war-crime trials.



1920 (5 Aug) PPC from Malta to Turkey with oval 'PC 5' handstamp and 'Censored E.S.' marking applied at the British High Commission in Istanbul. Sent by Ismail Djanbolet (PoW 2692) with his serial 13.



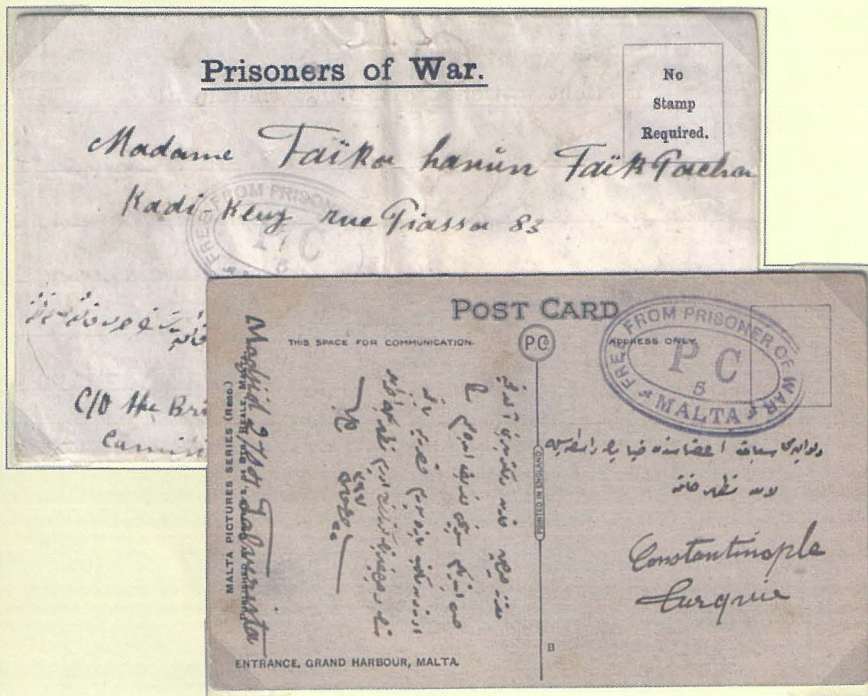
1920 (16 Aug) PPC from Malta to Turkey with oval 'PC 2' handstamp and 'Censored E.S.' marking applied at the British High Commission in Istanbul. Sent by Ismail Djanbolet (PoW 2692) with his serial 16.



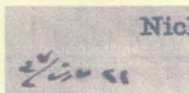
# Turkish Internees in Malta



Later in 1920, censorship markings on Turkish Internee mail simply consisted of the Malta oval marking - usually 'P C 5'. It appears that the 'CENSORED E.S.' marking ceased to be used from about October 1920 and subsequently, mail is found with normal Turkish addresses instead of 'c/o British High Commission'. This change broadly aligns with a growing pressure within the U.K. Government in mid-1920 to resolve the situation with the Internees - either release or prosecute!



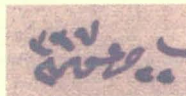
## 1921 Mail from Malta to Constantinople with oval 'Free from PoW/PC5'



The date on the upper lettersheet is in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 113137 Mart 21/21 March 1921 From Suleyman Falk Pasha #2807, one of the last Turks to be interned.



Oval treble ring Censor handstamp 'Free From Prisoner of War/PC/5'.



The date on lower PPC is written in Ottoman Arabic and translates as 113137 Kanun-i-sani 22 In the Rumi calendar. This is 22Jan1921.

*Mr. Langhorne*

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT).

SECRET.

C A B I N E T.

3

P. 1649.

POSITION OF TURKISH POLITICAL PRISONERSINTERNED AT MALTA.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

I circulate to the Cabinet a long list of prominent Turkish politicians, ex-Ministers, Generals, Deputies and others whom we are still keeping as prisoners at Malta. It seems to me that this list should be carefully revised by the Attorney-General, and that those men against whom it is not proposed to take definite proceedings should at the first convenient opportunity be released. They are a burden and a cost to us while they are on our hands, and I am not at all clear how long we are expected to go on holding them.

(Initialed) W. S. C.

War Office,  
19th July, 1920.



## Turkish Internees in Malta



Following the March 1920 deportation to Malta of his close collaborators, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, the Leader of the Turkish Nationalist Movement, ordered the arrest of some 20 British officers in Anatolia as a reprisal. In August 1920, implementation of the Treaty of Sèvres created tensions in Turkey that developed into war against Greece. Throughout this period, the deportations to Malta continued, with the total rising to approx. 140.



1921 Incoming mail from Rome, addressed to Ismail Djanbolet Bey, one of the original deportees (#2692). Both cards have the straightline 'Passed Censor' mark - probably applied in Malta.

**PASSED CENSOR**

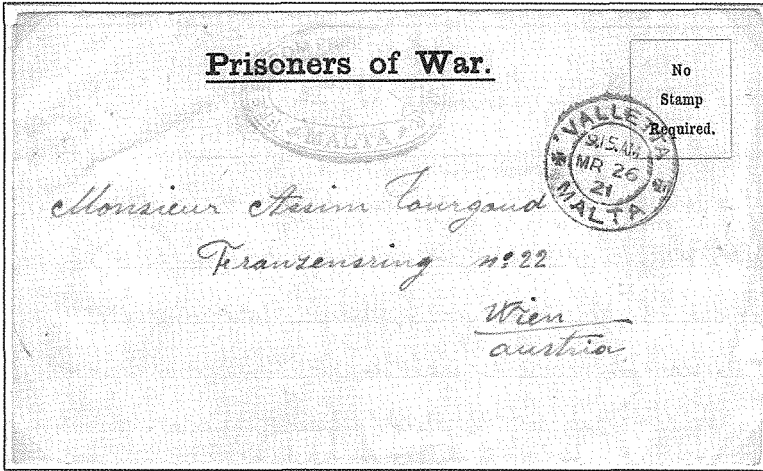
56x4mm straight-line censor mark applied in violet. It is believed to have broken in 1920, as examples after that time show some degree of misalignment.



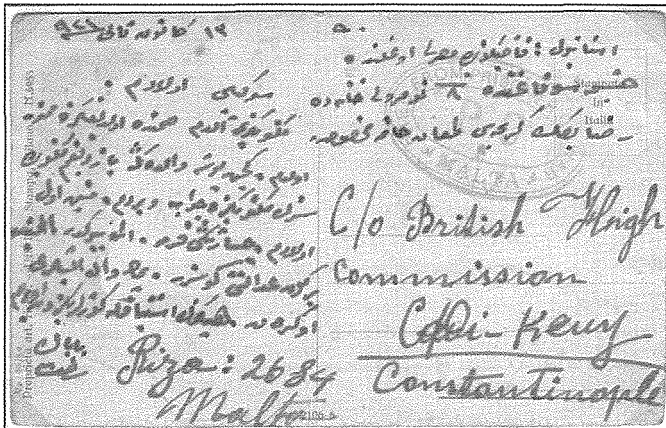
# Turkish Internees in Malta



A few more arrests were made later in 1920, with the final two Turkish deportees arriving in Malta on 20 November and given PoW numbers 2819 and 2820. This brought the total number of deportees to 146. In January 1921, 116 remained in Malta, interned in the Polverista camp.



1921 (MR26) PoW lettersheet to Austria with oval 'PC 5' handstamp. Sent by Dr. Essad Pasha (PoW 2775), formerly Chief Medical Officer.



1921 (13Jan) PPC from Malta to Turkey with oval 'PC 5' handstamp. Sent by Youssef Riza (PoW 2684), a retired major and nationalist.



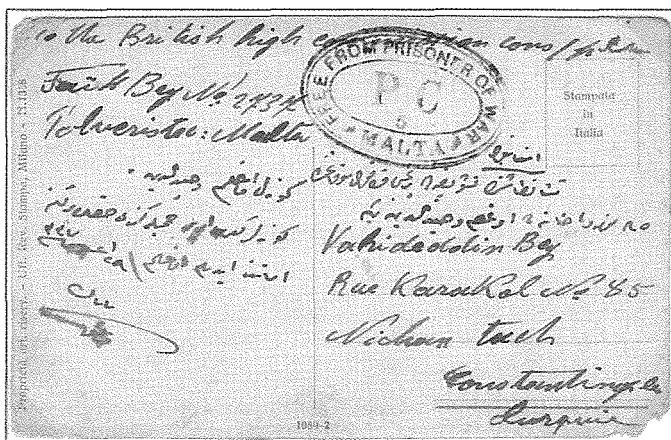
## Turkish Internees in Malta



On 6th September 1921, there was a mass escape, organised by Turks in Italy. A ship was chartered and sixteen Turkish Internees broke parole, embarking in Malta's Grand Harbour. Once safely in Italy, exit visas were issued to them, with six electing to travel to Anatolia and ten to Germany.



Faik Bey was one of the 16 escapees on 6th September 1921. He arrived in Malta on 2nd June 1919 in the first batch of Turks deported on SS *Princess Ena*. He was allocated PoW number 2737 in Malta and photographed soon after arrival.



1921(29Aug) Postcard written by Faik Bey a few days before the mass escape. Annotated with his PoW number and showing a late use of the PC5 handstamp.

عثمانی  
تاریخ

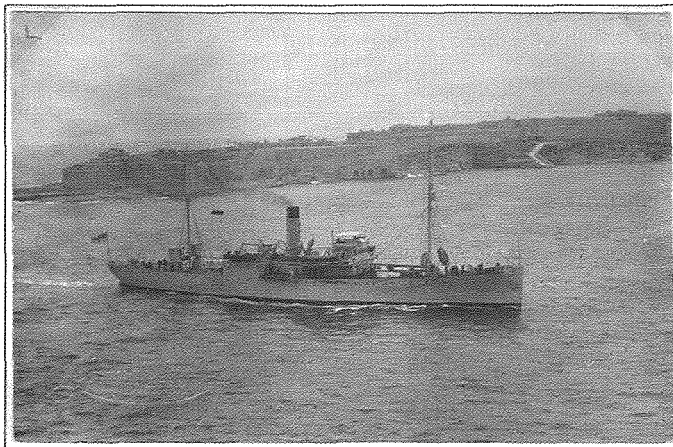
Ottoman Turkish date  
(11337 Augustos 29  
or 29 August 1921.



## Turkish Internees in Malta



During 1921, the British Government concluded that there was not enough evidence to bring charges against the deportees in Malta and a political settlement was brokered with the Turkish Nationalist Govt. This resulted in an 'all-for-all' prisoner exchange in October 1921. The departure of the Turkish Internees from Malta brought an end to the use of the WW.I PoW Camps and associated censorship handstamps.



The final contingent of 59 Turkish Internees were embarked at Malta on 25th October 1921. Two ships were used - a Royal Fleet Auxiliary fleet oiler RFA *Montenol* (image below) with 42 Internees and with the remaining 17 accommodated on RN sloop HMS *Chrysanthemum* (PPC above). They arrived at the Turkish Black Sea port of Inebolu on 31st October 1921 and were exchanged for five British survivors of 20 arrested.

