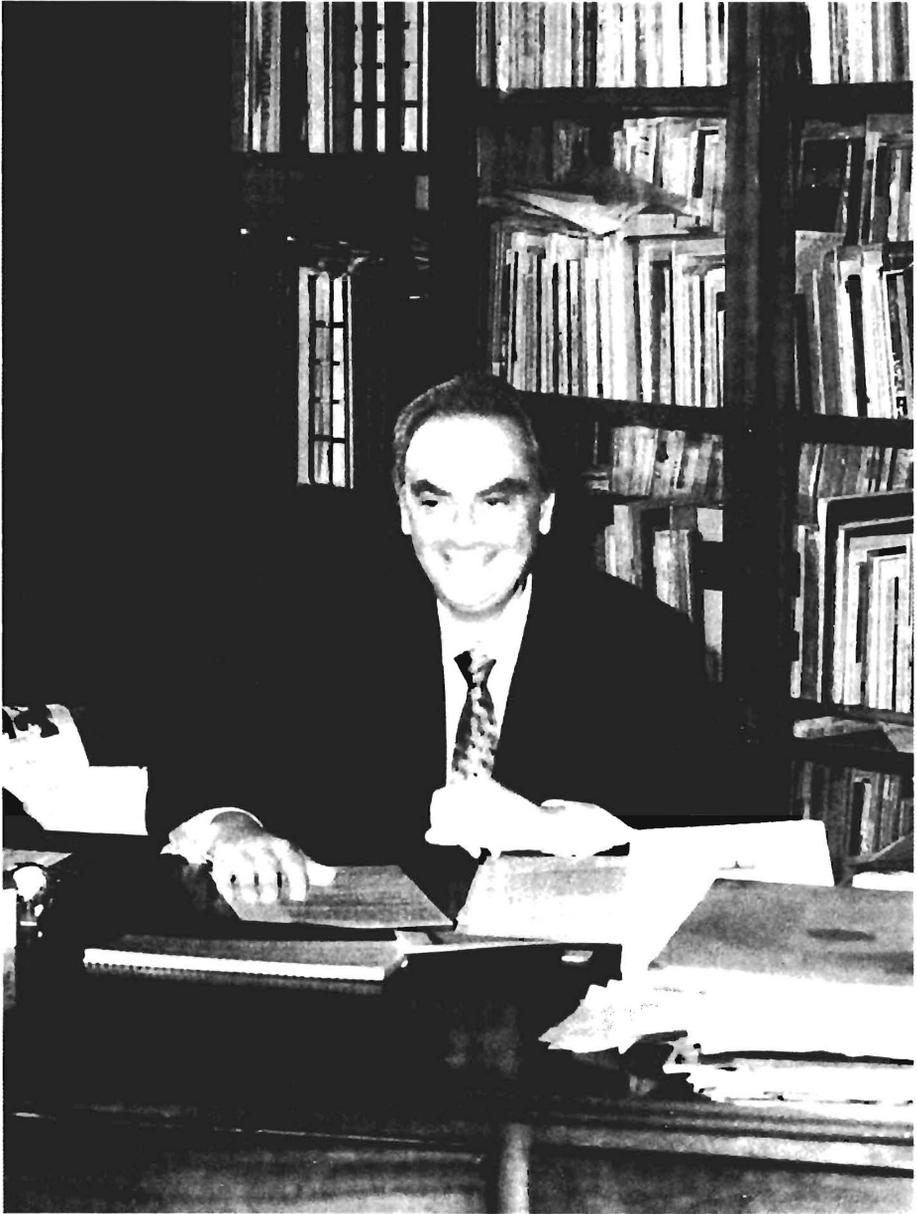


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IN HONOUR

OF

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# Printing in Malta during the British Protectorate

WILLIAM ZAMMIT

The rapid political changes and general instability prevailing in the Maltese Islands between June 1798 and May 1814 were unparalleled in modern Maltese history. The succession of three radically diverse political entities must have resulted in significant social implications for the Maltese, requiring considerable mental adjustment.<sup>1</sup> Each new order resulting from political change was consciously and effectively passed on to the population through the output of the government press which enjoyed absolute monopoly over local printing since its establishment in June 1756.<sup>2</sup> Administratively, French rule had brought about two major developments regarding the press in Malta: the end of diocesan, inquisitorial and, if only in theory, of government press censorship and the publication of the first local gazette, the intensely pro-French *Journal de Malte*.<sup>3</sup> Strict political control was maintained during the Protectorate, justifiable perhaps by war; not so its perpetuation down to 1839. The few alternative presses allowed were not available for use by the general public.<sup>4</sup>

## PRINTED OUTPUT: THE 1804/1805 PRESS ACCOUNTS

In the absence of a comprehensive bibliographic description of works printed in Malta during the British Protectorate, the survival of the register of the government press' accounts covering the period 25 July 1804 to 24 July 1805 is of the utmost importance.<sup>5</sup> The register provides information regarding both the press' administrative organisation and, much more important, the local publishing situation in terms of what was being printed – and thus passed on for public consumption – by government and private individuals or institutions. Such data, moreover, makes possible a comparison with the printing situation during the last years of the rule of the Order of St. John.<sup>6</sup>

### *Government printing orders: July 1804 to July 1805*

Printing orders were registered separately in two sections: government (fol. 1–4) and private (fol. 4<sup>v</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>), with a brief description of the item and monthly cost totals. This marked a change from the practice under the Order when, throughout 1756 to at least early 1794<sup>7</sup> such separation was not adhered to and orders were listed according to date of execution, excepting works printed throughout the year which were entered at the end.<sup>8</sup> While the cost of every

government order was worked out and entered in 1804/05, this was rarely the case during the Order's rule, when such publications were simply denoted as printed free of charge (see Table 1). On rare instances more than a single publication was listed under one order, these usually consisting of *Bandi* on different subjects. Extraordinarily high costs (578.9.-, 161.-, and 144.5.-) reflected the printing of book-type publications (6, 16 September 1804) or unusual gazette expenses (10 May, 11 June 1805). Government printing orders were of three major types (see Table 2):

#### Minor items and administrative ephemera

The most substantial government printing requirements consisted of a wide variety of small items required for the various branches of government such as the law courts, health and harbour authorities, and by high-ranking officials, including Alexander Ball.<sup>9</sup> Other material comprised official notices, *Bandi* and passports. Printing in English was still considered a novelty as evidenced by the fact that such works were specifically described as being so, even though the press had produced them since at least 1801.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, this was reserved for strictly practical requirements, with all books and gazettes being printed in Italian. Miscellaneous ephemera included invitations for celebrations held in honour of the king and queen (fol. 2<sup>v</sup>) and a notice regarding the troughs newly erected at Pietà (fol. 4).

#### Book-type publications

Two books were printed at government expense during 1804/05. The first, entered on 6 September 1804, was volume one of the two-volume *Rivoluzioni della Repubblica Veneta*. This was published anonymously in 600 copies at a cost of 450.6.-, and consisted of a 168-page anti-French account of the overthrow of the Venetian republic, by Vittorio Barzoni, an ardent anti-Napoleon writer from Brescia who had found refuge in Malta and who had close connections with the local press.<sup>11</sup> The book's place of imprint was given as 'Filadelfia' as was that of the second volume printed in the second half of 1805. Anonymous authorship and false place of imprint may, in this case, have been deemed prudent measures by the local authorities so as not to turn French attention to Malta. The other book, entered on 16 September 1804, was described as '[un] libretto sopra il Miele', 250 copies being printed, costing 50 scudi. Most probably this refers to an 18-page pamphlet entitled *Le Api nell'Istoria naturale sono una specie d'insetti, il domestico mele[sic!] de' quali merita ogni particolar attenzione*. This work, traced in the National Library of Malta, lacks date or place of imprint or indeed any reference to Malta. However, typographical evidence does point towards its local printing.

Table 1

Monthly number and cost of government and private printing orders

Each month is reckoned from the 25th of the previous month to the 24th of the current month

Year and month	Government printing orders		Private printing orders	
	No. of orders	Cost Sc. T. Gr.	No. of orders	Cost Sc. T. Gr.
1804 August	2	25. --	17	312. 6.-
1804 September	11	578. 9.-	14	111. 4.-
1804 October	10	76. --	23	112. 6.-
1804 November	16*	100. --	22	107. 1.-
1804 December	6	40. --	12	215. 3.-
1805 January	11	72. 9.-	24**	390. 11.-
1805 February	10	102. 6.-	21	167. 1.-
1805 March	11	117. 6.-	20	214. 1.-
1805 April	9	94. --	21**	373. 7.-
1805 May	12	144. 5.-	21	220. 11.-
1805 June	15	161. --	21	206. 7.-
1805 July	5	31. --	9**	118. 3.-
Totals	118	1,542. 11.-	225	2,550. 1.-
Monthly averages	10	128. 6.18	19	212. 5.-

Here, as elsewhere, the monetary unit is the *scudo*; a *scudo* was equal to 12 *tari*, and a *tari* was divided into 20 *grani*.

\*Last order, costing 2.6.-, was dated 26.11.04 and thus entered in the wrong month.

\*\*Comprising five sales in all, totalling 154.1.-.

(Source: NLM Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 1-9<sup>v</sup> and 12)

Table 2  
Government printing orders by type of publication

Type	Number of orders	Cost		%
		Sc. T. Gr.		
Minor items and administrative ephemera	93	542. 5.-		35.2
Book-type publications	2	504. 6.-		32.7
Gazettes	23	496. --		32.1
Totals	118	1542. 11.-		100.0

(Source: NLM Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 1-4)

The gazettes: *L'Argo* and *Il Cartaginese*

Of particular interest is the otherwise unavailable data concerning the printing of newspapers during the period (Table 3).

References from the press register have been related to issues of *L'Argo* and *Il Cartaginese*, both edited by Barzoni and Gavino Bonavita, the latter being at the time overall in charge of the press.<sup>12</sup> *L'Argo* had succeeded the first newspaper of the British period, the *Foglio d'Avvisi*, and continuity between the two is evident by similarity in dimensions and in the number of pages. In contrast with *Foglio d'Avvisi*, however, *L'Argo* concentrated exclusively on foreign news. *Il Cartaginese* succeeded *L'Argo*, again consisting usually of eight pages and devoted entirely to news from Europe. All three were pieces of anti-French propaganda (See Table 3).<sup>13</sup>

It thus emerges that 400 copies of the last two issues of *L'Argo* were printed, at a cost of 12 grani each. Unfortunately, the paper's selling price is given only for foreign subscriptions, preventing the calculation of profit or loss from the paper. All 15 issues of *Il Cartaginese*,<sup>14</sup> except number 10, are entered in the register. The 400 copies of issues 1 and 2 were topped up to 600, with the figure stabilizing at between 500 and 600 copies for later issues. Issue 5 had two additional reprints resulting in a total of 1000 copies.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, it had two supplements of 400 and 300 respectively.<sup>16</sup> Even issues 8 and 10 had supplements, both regarding the outbreak of war between Britain and Spain. In contrast with the situation under the Order, the gazette replaced the *Bolla della Santissima Crociata* as the single most costly government printing requirement. Pious – though financially profitable – printing had thus given way to outright political propaganda.

*Private printing orders: July 1804 to July 1805*

The amount and cost of private printing commissions came close to double that of government (see Table 1). Also listed among such orders were occasional sales to private individuals, contrary to the practice during the Order's rule when these were listed separately under miscellaneous receipts. The printing of minor items constituted the bulk of private orders with regard to amount as well as to value (Table 4):

Minor items and ephemera

A great variety of minor items were commissioned by the general public. These included sale announcements, book catalogues, product labels, diocesan requirements, and miscellaneous notices such as those for the tracing of lost dogs.<sup>17</sup> Other similar orders came from such branches of the administration as the foundry, the law courts, customs and the civil and military hospitals.

Table 3  
The printing of *L'Argo* and *Il Cartaginese*

fol.	Date of entry	Copies printed	Cost		Description of issues
			Sc.	T. Gr.	
1	4. 8.04	400	20.	--	Gazette no. 8 [issue 8 of <i>L'Argo</i> , dated 4.8.04; 8 pp.]
1	4. 9.04	400	20.	--	Gazette no. 9 nella carta piccola mandata dalla Tesoreria [last issue; 4.9.04; 8 pp.]
1	20. 9.04	400	15.	--	Gazette nel carattere Silvio e nella carta fina [issue 1 of <i>Il Cartaginese</i> , 20.9.04; 8 pp.]
1 <sup>v</sup>	10.10.04	400	15.	--	Gazette no. 2 [issue 2; 10.10.04; 8 pp.]
1 <sup>v</sup>	15.10.04	200	7.	6.-	Gazette nella carta fina per il no. 2 ordinati di più
1 <sup>v</sup>	23.10.04	200	7.	6.-	Gazette per il no. 1 rifatto
1 <sup>v</sup>	4.11.04	600	20.	--	Gazette del no. 3 [issue 3; 5.11.04; 8 pp.]
2	7.12.04	600	20.	--	Gazette no. 4 [issue 4; 2.12.04; 8 pp.]
2 <sup>v</sup>	17. 1.05	600	20.	--	Gazette no. 5 [issue 5; 2.1.05; 8 pp.]
2 <sup>v</sup>	17. 1.05	400	6.	--	Supplemento [to above; 2.1.05; 8 pp.]
2 <sup>v</sup>	17. 1.05	300	15.	--	Secondo supplemento a foglio [to no. 5; 20.1.05; 6 pp.]
2 <sup>v</sup>	1. 2.05	200	22.	6.-	Gazette consistenti in un foglio e mezzo rifatti dall'autore [issue 5 presumably]
2 <sup>v</sup>	9. 2.05	200	15.	--	Gazette rifatte dall'autore [as above]
3	4. 3.05	500	45.	--	Gazette no. 6, 7 e 8 [issues 6, 7 and 8; 20.2.05, 2.3.05 and 10.3.05; all 8 pp.]
3	19. 3.05	500	22.	6.-	Gazette no. 9 e supplemento [issue 9; 15.3.05; 8 pp.; supplement of no. 8; 15.3.05; 4 pp.]
3	5. 4.05	NDA	20.	--	18 quinterni carta per il supplemento della gazzetta no. 10 [supplement of no. 10; 30.3.05, 12 pp.]
3	9. 4.05	500	20.	--	Gazette no. 11 [issue 11; 4.4.05; 8 pp.]
3	9. 4.05	500	20.	--	Altre di detto rifatte
3 <sup>v</sup>	1. 5.05	500	20.	--	Gazette no. 12 [issue 12; 25.4.05; 8 pp.]
3 <sup>v</sup>	1. 5.05	500	60.	--	Detto no. 13 in 3 fogli di carta, e composizione [issue 13; 10.5.05; 21 pp.]
3 <sup>v</sup>	1. 6.05	500	20.	--	Gazette no. 14 [issue 14; 1.6.05; 8 pp.]
3 <sup>v</sup>	11. 6.05	600	50.	--	3 [risme] per la gazzetta no. 15 [issue 15; 16.5.05; 18 pp.]
4	18. 6.05	NDA	15.	--	14 quinterni e 10 fogli per una gazzetta e mezzo rifatta no. 11

(Source: NLM Lib. Ms. 1207 fol. 1-4)

Table 4  
Private printing orders by type of publication

Type	Number of orders	Cost		%
		Sc.	T. Gr.	
Minor items and ephemera	213	2,139.	6.-	83.9
Book-type publications	7	256.	6.-	10.1
Sales	5	154.	1.-	6.0
Totals	225	2,550.	1.-	100.0

(Source: NLM Lib. MS. 1207, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>)

Table 5  
Book-type publication orders for the general public

fol.	Date of entry	Copies printed	Cost		Description of work
			Sc.	T. Gr.	
5	21. 9.04	NDA	36.	-.-	1 risma e 5 quinterni carta per un libretto di S. Ivo in due fogli e mezzo [Costituzioni, regole, e statuti della sodalità di Sant'Ivone . . . Malta, 1804, 19 pp.]
6 <sup>v</sup>	2. 1.05	NDA	80.	-.-	8 risme carta per l'Ordinario di S. Paolo [diocesan calendar for 1805]
6 <sup>v</sup>	8. 1.05	1300 +300	80.	-.-	Pronostici a libretto e a foglio [Diario, lunario e calendario . . . per l'anno 1805, Malta, n.d.]*
7 <sup>v</sup>	1. 3.05	NDA	10.	-.-	10 quinterni carta per una Lode per S. Maestà.
9	31. 5.05	500	20.	-.-	Libretto in un folgio per il Marchese Testaferrata [La musica: poemetto in verson toscano sciolto . . . Malta, 1805, 30 pp.]
9	6. 6.05	NDA	7.	6.-	5 quinterni carta per un Prologo
9	12. 6.05	NDA	23.	-.-	17 quinterni carta per un libretto della SS. Eucaristia [L'Eucaristia o sia breve colloquio con Dio in verso toscano sciolto . . . Malta, 1805, 20 pp.]

\* Title page reproduced by G. Gatt in 'Kalendarji u almanakki ta' Malta', *Il-Berqa*, 24.12.1952, p. 6.

(Source: NLM Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>)

The printing of theatre tickets occurred fairly regularly, at times indicating performances not only in English but also in Maltese.<sup>18</sup> Substantial orders by the Commisariat department indicate that the latter did not as yet have its own press as it certainly did by 1836.<sup>19</sup>

#### Book-type publications

No substantial work was ordered from the press during 1804/05 by the general public. Of the seven book-sized works printed, copies of three have been traced in local public collections (see Table 5). Almanacs had been printed in Malta since 1756, diocesan calendars since 1757.<sup>20</sup> Testaferrata's two works reflect the Maltese political uncertainty, being dedicated to George III and to Maria Carolina of Naples respectively.

#### Press sales

Five instances of sale of items from the press were recorded. Such sales, totalling 154.1.-, comprised the sale of *Donati* (100 scudi, fol. 7), presumably being those printed and sold during the Order's rule. Proclamations were also sold (4.7.-, fol. 8). Other sales consisted of cardboard (43.-, fol. 7), ink (-.6.-, fol. 9<sup>v</sup>) and of disused founts (6.-, fol. 8).<sup>21</sup>

#### *Press expenses and balance sheet*

Expenses comprised routine press requirements such as the purchase of paper and ingredients for the production of ink, as well as for general maintenance. The relatively high expenses for the first three months of 1804 resulted from paper buying, the binding of 500 books, being mostly Barzoni's *Rivoluzioni*, and the payment to the English printer for 15 books on wine.<sup>22</sup> From the balance sheet at the end of the accounts it emerges clearly that the 1,542.11.- government printing costs were not paid to the press. The 2,550.1.- income from private orders was, on 25 July 1805, passed over by Bonavita to Luigi Schembri, paymaster of the Treasury.<sup>23</sup> This indicates that both government expenses and salaries to press staff, the latter not even being listed in the register, were borne by the public exchequer.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE PRESS OF THE SICILIAN REGIMENT

The earliest known other-than-government press in Malta was that belonging to the Sicilian regiment. This regiment, in existence between 1808 and 1813, was one of a series created by the British for foreigners. A number of small works were printed at the regiment's press by Gaspare Sevaglios, a sergeant of the regiment. Traced works from this press are described below:

1. Egloga pastorale per la fausta elezione di sua eccellenza il generale maggiore Hildebrand Oakes nuovo regio civile commissionario delle isole di Malta, Cumino, e Gozo: omaggio spontaneo / dell'impresario Filippo Scovazzo. — La Valletta, à dì 14 maggio 1810 : dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. — 10 p. ; 19 cm.

Private collection

2. Corona di sonetti con egloga per accademia sulla passione di N.S. — In Malta, MDCCCX : dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. — 28 p. ; 20 cm.

NLM

3. Notizie, proclami, e relazioni autentiche molto interessanti, estratte dalle gazzette e dai fogli di Spagna, tradotte e pubblicate dal suo console in Malta, il cavaliere D. Alberto de Megino. — In Malta, 1810 : dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore.<sup>25</sup> Title-page reproduced in *Don Alberto de Megino, un ilustrado Zaragozano de la epoca de Fernando VII* by Francisco Asin Remirez de Esparza (Zaragoza, 1979).

4. Osservazioni sul modo di allevare i bambini in Malta fatta da uno straniero che in quest' isola ha soggiornato per varj anni : traduzione dall'inglese. — Seconda edizione. — In Malta, MDCCCXI : dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. — 21 p. ; 21 cm.

NLM

5. Giornale di Malta

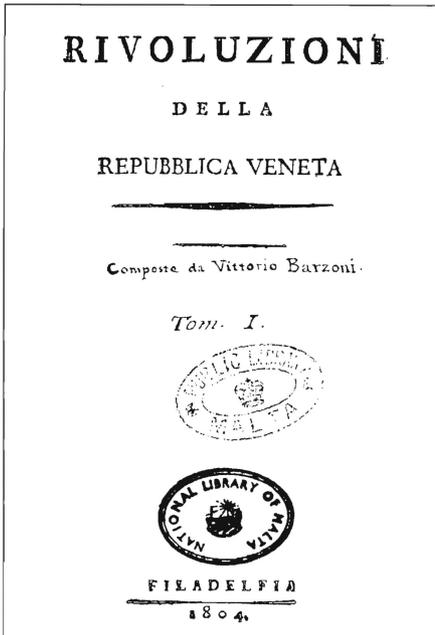
The first 46 issues seem to have been printed at the Sicilian regiment's press; the following issues (47–94) were printed at the government's press.<sup>26</sup>

NLM

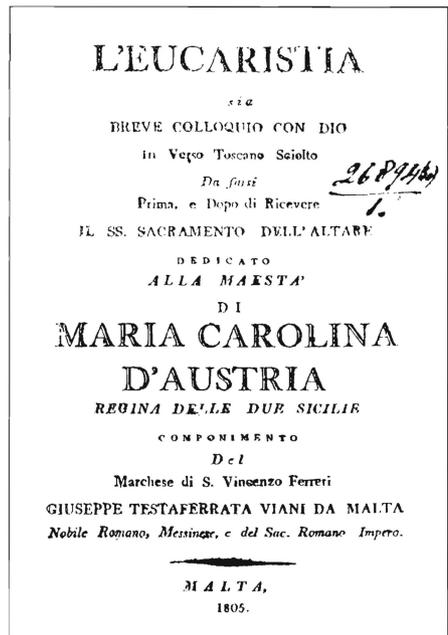
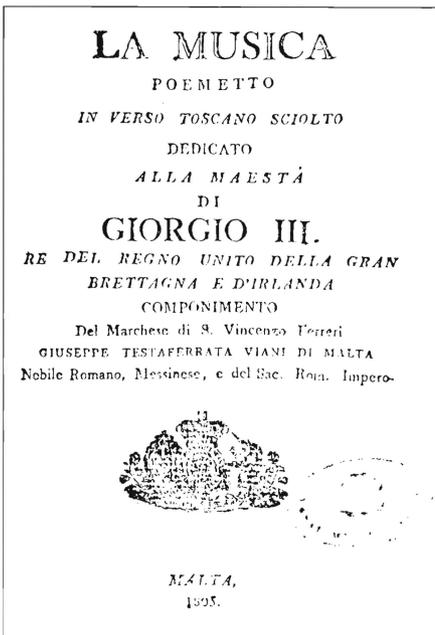
6. Ordini permanenti per il reggimento siciliano di fanteria leggiera nel servizio di Sua Maestà Britannica. — Seconda edizione. — Malta : dalla stamperia reggimentale, presso G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore, 1813. — iv, 146, [11], 16 p. ; 19 cm.

The first edition was published in 1808. The work contains references to, and facsimiles of, other items regarding the regiment which were also printed by the regiment's press.

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Left: Note false place of imprint (author's name and *Tom. I.* are handwritten additions).  
 Right: *Costituzioni, regole, e statuti della sodalità di Sant'Ivone* . . . , Malta, 1804.



The two works by Giuseppe Testaferrata Viani: *La Musica* and *L'Eucaristia*.

## Notes

- 1 For a discussion of this aspect see V. Mallia-Milanes, 'The Genesis of Maltese Nationalism' in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964*, ed. V. Mallia-Milanes (Malta, 1988) 1-15.
- 2 W. Zammit, *Con Licenza de' Superiori: Printing in Malta during the Order's Rule 1642-1798* (Malta, 1992).
- 3 J. F. Grima, *Printing and Censorship in Malta 1642-1839* (Malta, 1991), Chap. 5.
- 4 *Ibid.*, Chaps. 6 and 7. *Rapporto dei Regj Commissionarj d'Inchiesta . . . sull'utilità d'introdurre la libertà di stampare e di pubblicare in Malta . . .* (Malta, 1838).
- 5 NLM Lib. Ms. 1207: *Stamperia: Da Luglio 1804 sino Luglio 1805*, fol. 12.
- 6 For a detailed description of the surviving press registers pertaining to the Order's rule, see *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the National Library of Malta*, 13: *Archives 2038-71*, compiled by S. Fiorini and W. Zammit (Malta, 1990).
- 7 The last surviving register of the Order's press covers February 1793 to January 1794. However, there is no reason to believe that serious changes in the press' functioning occurred prior to June 1798.
- 8 Comprising mostly the printing of *Patenti di Sanità* and of the *Bolla Crociata*.
- 9 fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, 'Biglietti di conversazione per S. E. il Sig. Ball'; fol. 2, 'Biglietti sopra cartone dorato per invito per S. E. Ball'.
- 10 *A description of Malta with a sketch of its history . . .* (Malta, 1801); title-page reproduced in C. Clair, *Malta* (The spread of printing, 7.) (Amsterdam and London, 1969) p. 19.
- 11 L. Schiavone, 'Barzoni Vittorio (1767-1843)', in *Heritage* No. 10 (1978) 187-190. Also the article on Barzoni in *Dizionario Biografica degli Italiani*. His intimate relation with the Maltese press is manifested by his editorship of the Protectorate gazettes as well as by substantial anti-French publications in 1808 and 1811.
- 12 Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>.
- 13 For a description of these newspapers see B. Fiorentini, 'Il Giornalismo a Malta durante il Risorgimento italiano', in *Echi del Risorgimento a Malta*, 2da ed. (Milano, 1982) 24-27.
- 14 Complete sets of *L'Argo* and *Il Cartaginese* are available at the NLM.
- 15 Main heading: 'La Russia, l'Inghilterra e la Svezia'.
- 16 Entitled 'Lettera del D. d'Enghian [i.e. d'Enghien]' . . . and 'La Russia e la Francia', respectively.
- 17 Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>.
- 18 *Ibid.*, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>-8, references to 'Biglietti per la Commedia inglese'; fol. 8<sup>v</sup>-9, 'Biglietti per la Commedia maltese'; fol. 8 'Un avviso teatrale'. Opera libretti for the Malta theatre were also printed abroad at the time as evidenced by *L'Apparizione della Croce . . . da rappresentarsi nel R. Teatro della Valletta in Malta la quaresima dell'anno 1805* (Messina, 1805), photocopy in the University of Malta Library.
- 19 fol. 6<sup>v</sup> and 8, two orders for 'Diversi biglietti', totalling 143.9-
- 20 AOM 2068, fol. 2<sup>v</sup> and 17.
- 21 The first recorded importation of founts in Malta from Britain occurred in 1814, when £20 worth were imported. See M. D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Malta 1800-1825* (Milano, 1990), p. 236.
- 22 Lib. Ms. 1207, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>. It is not clear where and when this book was printed.
- 23 *Almanacco delle isole di Malta e Gozo per l'anno MDCCCVI*, p. 17.
- 24 For details regarding press staff see the almanacs for 1806 and 1807 in the NLM collection.
- 25 Item kindly indicated by Mr. Antonio Espinosa Rodriguez.
- 26 E. Parnis, *Notes on the first establishment, development and actual state of [the] printing press in Malta* (Malta, 1916), p. 8; no source indicated.