

STORJA '98



Joseph Abdilla

André Plaisse

Yosanne Vella

Charles Savona Ventura

Anthony Vella Gera

Arnold Cassola

Desmond Gregory

Evelyn Pullicino

Mario Ellul

Stefan Cachia, Kenneth Gambin, Henry Frendo

STORJA '98

Editor

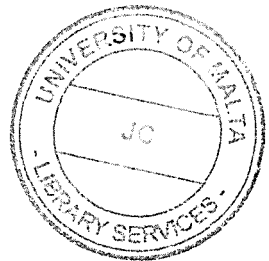
Prof. H. Frendo,
B.A., B.A. (Hons.), M.A., D. Phil (Oxon.)

Assistant Editors

Dr. C. Cassar,
B.A. (Hons.), M.A., Ph.D. (Cantab.)
C. Dalli,
B.A. (Hons.), M.A.

Members:

Marica Mifsud,
David Rossi,
Stefan Cachia,
Evelyn Pullicino



442239

Published by
Malta University Historical Society

Printed by
Bonnici Press,
Malta

Designed by
Claude Vella,
Cyan Ltd.

© Malta University Historical Society, 1998
(on behave of the authors)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced in any form or by any means without the permission in writing from the publishers

STORJA '98

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Editorial: The Malta University History Society's Activities and Prospects</i>	2
<i>Malta and Levantine French Commerce - Joseph Abdilla</i>	5
<i>A Sword and a Helmet for De Vilhena - André Plaisse</i>	23
<i>Earthly Madonnas? 18th century Women trouble-makers - Yosanne Vella</i>	33
<i>Nicolo' Isouard in Paris - Arnold Cassola</i>	41
<i>Human Suffering during the Maltese Insurrection - C. Savona Ventura</i>	48
<i>British Press Reports of the Insurrection and Blockade - A. Vella Gera</i>	66
<i>Britain's Presence in Mediterranean Islands - Desmond Gregory</i>	80
<i>"Take off your Hat!" - Evelyn Pullicino</i>	86
<i>Maltese Imperial Mentalities - Mario Ellul</i>	95
<i>Book Reviews</i>	115
<i>History - related Theses and Abstracts</i>	124
<i>Overview of Melitensia books published in 1988 - 1990</i>	136

THE MALTA UNIVERSITY HISTORY SOCIETY: ACTIVITIES AND PROSPECTS

The Malta University History Society, which used to be so active in Professor Andrew Vella's time, was successfully relaunched two years ago. In 1996 it published *Storja '96*, an update of *Storja '78*. Intended mainly for undergraduates and graduates in history and history-related disciplines, *Storja '96*, a labour of love with no university financial support so far, was well received by students, the press and media, and interested members of the general public. In addition to a set of researched articles it will also serve as a source reference on Melitensia books as well as university dissertations and theses.

The MUHS attracted an intelligent, energetic group of undergraduates who, working closely together over the past two years, held a number of activities. Many of these were featured in the MUHS stand during the University of Malta's 'Open Day', which was set up and coordinated on a shift basis by MUHS committee members. Starting with an unusual debate on the Yugoslavia problem in which members of the different nationalities took part, MUHS has now held the second of the annual Andrew Vella Memorial Lectures. Like the first one, delivered by Dr. Carmel Cassar [on migrant communities in Malta] in 1995, this was held at the Green Lounge of the Phoenicia Hotel, to coincide with the launching of *Storja '96*. In 1996 this lecture was delivered by Professor Henry Frendo and dealt with language, religion and politics mainly during Lord Strickland's tenure of office as prime minister. The 1997 Memorial Lecture was delivered by Dr. Carmelo Vassallo on aspects of Maltese-Spanish relations.

The publication of *Storja '96* led to a one-and-a-half hour informal 'round table' discussion with the prime minister, Dr. Alfred Sant, in his office at the Houses of Parliament, about various research aspects, ideas and prospects with special reference to history and historiography. We explained to the prime minister that the purpose of the Society and its publication was to move away from conventional, detail-ridden, antiquarian-like approaches to historical studies and writings, and to seek instead more critical, contextual and comparative analysis from the sources. History was not simply about records, it was about meanings. The prime minister also took note of complaints about the state of affairs prevailing in some library and archival quarters where documents got lost or risked being put away, and a

climate of indifference and want of professionalism seemed to reign. Professor Frendo and the Public Relations Officer of the Society, Mrs Evelyn Pullicino, were interviewed on television and on radio about *Storja '96*, which was reviewed in all sections of the press and even earned the written commendation of the prime minister, who promised us his support. A public lecture on Russo-Maltese relations was delivered by Ms Elaine Micallef Valenzia, for which several colleagues attended, including a number of Russians resident in Malta. As the Society cannot afford the fees charged by the University of Malta for use of its Aula Magna in Valletta for extra-curricular academic activities of this genre, we had recourse this time to the Junior Common Room in Msida, with drinks and sandwiches courtesy of the Society's members.

We were also pleased to have the opportunity to meet Professor Leontsinis from the University of Athens and to attend her lecture for the MUHS on the intellectual origins of the Greek independence movement in the early nineteenth century. Other activities include lecture tours of the various archives, and the occasional outing.

The Society is concerned that the University Library has been keeping only English language newspapers published in Malta, even now that space should no longer be the problem that it may have been in the past. We strongly believe that Maltese language papers are an indispensable source for a full and comprehensive understanding of what goes on in independent Malta; it is intolerable that these should be regularly discarded by a public-funded higher education body such as the University of Malta Library. And should that splendid collection of the London *Times* not be more readily accessible? The MUHS is also concerned at the Bibliotheca's relatively high price for xeroxing documents for research students and at what seems to be the irregular depositing of theses, including history and history-related theses, in the University Library where these may be listed and consulted in the normal way.

It is no less galling to see the discrimination being practised by the university authorities, presumably as a consequence of government policy, against historians who opt to do a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in the Education Faculty. History is one of the subjects for which, so it had been decreed, no stipend should be given. This leading some of our best history graduates to seek a PGCE in a subject other than history, although their preference naturally would be to teach history, their subject

of specialization. We feel it is important to give due recognition to the historical discipline. Before one gets a pedagogical certificate relating to teaching theories and methodologies, it would be far, far better for the person concerned to have first absorbed and internalised the discipline in question through an Honours degree in the subject.

Without going into the merits of the stipend system controversy, we would hope that equal treatment be given to students from all disciplines and areas of study. A university ought to exist in order to promote the pursuit of academic excellence. What matters most is quality of mind and the respect for it in practice, not the conferment of titles, appointments or a collection of certificates, pertinent though these may be. As Professor Jeremy Boissevain recently noted, undergraduates should not be expected to spend their time madly chasing multifold credits. Should they not have more time to read, to think and to talk over matters with peers, or even [particularly as graduates] to have the opportunity to assist at least their senior professors through tutoring, research work and otherwise, as is common overseas, where tutors and senior tutors assist lecturers and professors alike, while research assistants are habitually attached to the holders of Chairs, or at any rate to the professoriate? And should their academic programmes at Malta not be more stable, coherent and research-based, less exposed to 'optional' chops and changes in the credit-collecting race?

A CONVENIENT CLEARING-HOUSE FOR FRANCE:
MALTA AND LEVANTINE FRENCH COMMERCE: 1723-38*

Joseph Abdilla *

By the early decades of the eighteenth century, France held a very strong position of influence in Malta vis-à-vis the powers of Western Europe. French Mediterranean commerce had acquired high stakes in Malta which was increasingly seen as indispensable for the commerce of France with the Levant and Barbary. This quasi-natural link between Malta and French Levantine interests at this time was clearly recognised by the French themselves, and it found utterance later on in the century when the Order was threatened by the Revolutionary era. In 1790, "a Languedocian gentleman" wrote:

All political bonds bind us to Malta, and to its present organisation; its geographical position will always be imposante; ... its Knights are armed for the common cause; Malta cannot become a colony of a single power without upsetting the balance which all cabinets of Europe have an equal interest to maintain. It must be in the hands of a neutral state...; it is the key to the waters of the Levant... With Malta *cette Puissance* [Russia] could dominate the Mediterranean and the Levant and ruin French trade.

The existence of an Order which protects her (France's) commerce, that ever active nerve of a state, is far more necessary to France than to the other *confédérés*¹.

Another *mémoire* of that time repeated the same point:

...The order of Malta is the only Sovereign that can suit all the powers interested in the commerce of the Levant... The position of Malta is such that two vessels cruising to the east of the Island, up to Sicily, and two vessels to the west, up to Barbary, would intercept all the commerce of the

* With slight changes, this is the final chapter of the author's unpublished B.A. (Hons.) thesis which he submitted at the then Royal University of Malta, in 1972, in part fulfilment of the degree requirements: "Aspects of the Relations between Malta and France during the Grandmastership of Vilhena 1722-36." The thesis was chosen for publishing in 1976, but it never was because the History Department and its dynamic Head, Rev. Fr Andrew Vella, O.P. both suffered a fatal stroke. * Joseph Abdilla, a history graduate and a former history teacher, is assistant head of Carlo Diacono Junior Lyceum, Zejtun.

Mediterranean and of the Levant².

The French historian Jacques Godechot has also convincingly shown that in his conquest of Malta Napoleon was not so much driven by his youthful idealism for emulating Alexander the Great, as by a compelling necessity to safeguard this "key to the Levant" for France³. Decades before Godechot, Paul Masson has also argued that to understand fully the keen competition for the possession of Malta at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "the role of her port in the (commercial) wars of the eighteenth century" must first be grasped. "The neutrality of the Order was quite friendly to France and Malta rendered inestimable services to our (French) commerce"⁴.

This article aims mainly to emphasise that these commercial services were not only sought in the second half of the eighteenth century, as the published material seems to indicate, but even in the early decades. The years of Vilhena's grandmastership (1722-36) actually coincided roughly with a very decisive era in the emergence of French commercial preeminence in the Levant. In consequence Malta was increasingly used by French vessels trading with the Levant and North Africa.

To trade successfully with the Ottoman lands in the Mediterranean basin, a lot depended on a country's standing with the Porte. The outstanding position France held at Constantinople was a fact of European diplomacy ever since the sixteenth century. Kheireddin Barbarossa had granted Marseilles the right of entry into Algerian ports in 1520, but actually it was the 1535 friendship treaty between France and the Sultan which gave a strong impetus to the eastern Mediterranean commerce of France⁵. Then the May 1604 treaty between Henry IV and Achmet II confirmed French Levantine preeminence. All nations, except Venice and the English, had to fly the French flag to trade with the Ottoman empire. The beginning of Louis XIV rule, however, marked a bad period for the relations between France and Constantinople. The other European potential rivals, especially the English, Dutch, Livornese and later even the Genoese, succeeded in ousting the French from their important position. Even Colbert's commercial companies were not much successful in redressing the balance.

The situation improved somewhat with the Capitulations' renewal in June 1673, after eight years of negotiations. The concessions were limited and the rupture in Franco-Porte relations widened further by the wars of Louis XIV. In 1697 Louis even abandoned his Turkish allies in his war against

the League of Augsburg and signed the Ryswick Treaty without them. It was the English who were playing the tune at the Porte and in the Levant. French Levantine interests appeared doomed, especially with the Ottoman defeat at Belgrade in 1717 without France lifting a finger. But, towards the end of Marquis de Bonnac's embassy to the Porte (1716-23), France's position at Constantinople improved steadily. Then, following the successful mediation of the next French ambassador Villeneuve in the Russo-Turkish war and his decisive part in the Belgrade Treaty of 1739, the Capitulations were renewed in 1740⁶.

This reconsolidation of the French position in the Levant was accompanied by the noticeable decline of the principal rivals. The English, who had established their fourth consulate at Salonica as recently as 1719, did not remain a menace by the early 1730's. In 1715 they had some twenty trading-houses in Smyrna and each year four big ships visited them regularly. In 1735 only three houses remained and the same was true for Aleppo. By 1715 even the Dutch had already fallen to third place in Levantine trade, ousted from all the *échelles* by the French, who by 1735 completely took over the Dutch cloth eastern market. The Venetians were also passing under the protection of French consuls in almost all of the main Levantine *échelles*. Venice itself, once dominant in the Levant, was visibly in decline.

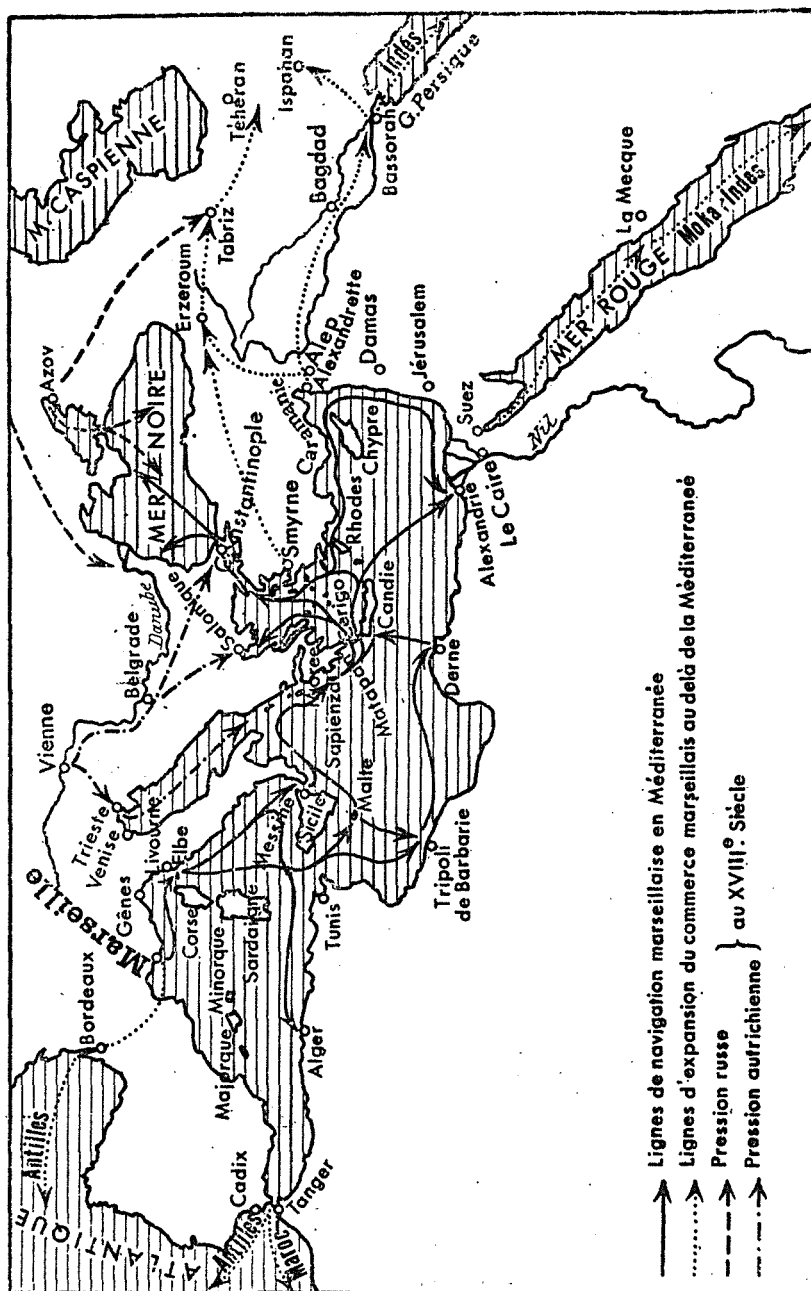
France, therefore, predominated in the Levant by the early 1730's, a fact which was mirrored also in the increased French activity in Malta's harbour during Vilhena's years. In fact, in 1723, the French Minister of Marine, Comte de Maurepas, already insisted with the Grand Master that "there is no place in Europe where France has more need of a consul than in Malta because of the great number of French vessels that call there..."⁷.

Malta itself had long been developing as a convenient clearing-house, especially since the second half of the seventeenth century. Grand Master Lascaris had begun fronting the Grand Harbour with spacious warehouses. He built the wharf off a tunnel which still bears his name. Succeeding Grand Masters, Nicholas Cotoner, Gregorio Carafa and Ramon Perellos, continued the building and expansion of the stores. Vilhena himself expanded the storage facilities by building up the Floriana front of the Grand Harbour. Besides, at Marsamscetto, Malta also provided excellent quarantine facilities which were of the best in the Mediterranean. Enjoying these advantages in the middle of a frequented trade route, Malta was increasingly looked upon as a sure entrepot centre, notably by French merchants. Strictly speaking,

this development belongs more to the second half of the century, especially, after the election of Pinto to the magistracy⁸, but it did not happen overnight. In 1713 Grand Master Perellos had been presented with a project for the setting-up of a Maltese company of six merchants to establish close trade with France (9). By the early years of the century, the Order had already established relations with the French *Compagnie d'Afrique*¹⁰. In 1728, under Vilhena, a French Knight, Chevalier Choiseul, wrote from Dijon to Bailly de Mesmes, the Order's ambassador in France, forwarding two projects for the Grand Master's consideration. One envisaged the formation of a 12-vessel squadron, provided by European Christian powers but based in Malta, against the Barbary corsairs. The other project proposed making Malta a general entrepot for Levantine commerce. Three commercial companies would be formed under the protection of the Emperor, the French King and the English crown, as well as the Dutch Republic, with their centre in Malta¹¹. This was obviously too grand and idyllic to be practicable. Vilhena simply answered that times were not propitious¹².

By 1728, France, however, needed no such castles in the air. It was already making almost exclusive use of Malta's commercial facilities. Malta held an important place in the Mediterranean trade itinerary of French vessels. Like the English, French merchants could use the free port of Leghorn and Genoa's harbour¹³. They could also enter Messina's free port in Sicily. But, situated in an area where Barbary pirates were usually very active, Messina was besides subject to Sicilian and Italian political vicissitudes. So, the availability of a 'neutral' Malta, hundreds of miles closer than Marseilles to the African coast and the Levant, was jealously appraised. Moreover, though the route from Marseilles to the east was shorter through Messina's strait, that through the Malta channel was preferred because of the protection afforded there. Like another Candia in the crossroads of the central Mediterranean, in Malta French vessels could gather, repair, careen and victual at will.

During war years, Malta was especially valued. For instance, when the *petite guerre* between France and Tripoli was concluded on 9 June 1729, the French Court was to deliver two brigantines to the Order in recognition for help rendered. But, realising that the North African Regencies would charge France of helping their enemies, King Louis XV eventually donated a self-portrait to Vilhena¹⁴. During the first Seven Years' War (1741-48), in a single month of 1744, 28 French vessels coming from the Levant were



ITINÉRAIRES DE NAVIGATION EN MÉDITERRANÉE

seized by the English Admiral Matthews; the cause: Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce did not manage to forewarn the captains to wait in Malta¹⁵. When during the Polish Succession War the Grand Harbour was declared officially closed to French armed vessels, the Foreign Secretary Chauvelin could well accuse the Order of wanting to wage war on France¹⁶. Such was Malta's indispensability in the French ministers' evaluations.

Unfortunately, however, the quarantine registers are the only locally available means to substantiate statistically Malta's true place in French Mediterranean commerce, since the registers of the French consulate here had been transported to France. The quarantine registers do not offer a complete picture of the total shipping touching at Malta. But they are a fairly good source for the ships coming from the Levant and Barbary. All vessels coming from the ports of those areas, or which simply had some contacts with vessels in those quarters, were obliged for quarantine. Consequently, its registers offer a more or less good record, though by no means complete, of the number of French vessels that used Malta on their way from the eastern to western waters. The only extant register covering the years under review (1723-38) is Ms. 820 of the Royal Malta Library, labelled as "*Registro degl'Affari concernenti alla Sanità*"¹⁷. The entries are registered fairly regularly, though gaps of 15 to 22 days without any entry, though not frequent, are not rare. Besides, in 1729 in almost seven weeks only three entries are registered¹⁸.

Despite these obvious limitations, the information in the manuscript is very revealing. From the table of the annual total entries for 1723-38, the proportion of French vessels using Malta is immediately striking. The French total is almost always above 65% of global total. The high percentage of French entries, ranging from 86 % to 65% of total¹⁹, arouses some misgivings regarding the genuine nature of the entries. But no plausible criteria can be imagined for their supposedly selective or inflated nature. The fact that most of the vessels referred to in correspondence are generally found listed in the register is in favour of its inclusiveness. The intense French presence in the register substantiates what has already been affirmed earlier on, namely, that Villhena's magistracy coincided with a very decisive and formative moment in French commercial activity in Levantine and North African waters, an activity mirrored clearly in local harbours²⁰.

The figures in Table 1 show that the annual average number of French entries for 1723-38 is eighty-eight, a very significant steep increase from the

	French	Dutch	English	Genoese	Greek	Imperial	Maltese	Neapolitan	Ragusian	Venetian	Others**	Total	French % of Total
*1723	90		1		1		4				8	104	86
1724	125		2				5			4	12	148	84
1725	144		9	1	1		5	1		1	16	178	81
1726	85		5		1		3	3		1	8	106	80
1727	71		2			3	1	4		1	12	94	75
1728	84 ^a	1	4		1	11	2				12	115	73
1729	129 ^b	2	3			16	1				9	160	80
1730	86	1	4			25	3			3	6 ^c	128	67
1731	74		1			13	1				5	94	78
1732	56		2			11				2	9	80	70
1733	44	1	3			8	2			1	9	68	65
1734	71 ^c	1	8		2	5	5			1	14	107	65
1735	64 ^a	2	8		2		8			3	8	95	66
1736	68 ^d	3	9 ^d	1	2		2			1	10 ^e	96	71
1737	98	2	16 ^c						1	2	15	134	73
1738	131	3	15				6				11	166	79

TABLE 1 — Annual Total Entries Registered for 1723-1738

* 1723 begins as from 22nd May.

** These include entries flying the flags of the Order or the Grand Master, or the Tuscan, Sardinian, and Spanish flags, or else they may be prize.

^a Three are armed vessels.

^b Eight are armed vessels.

^c Two are armed vessels.

^d One is an armed vessel.

^e Two of these fly the Swedish flag.

^f A galley squadron of the Order is not included.

last years of the previous century. An examination of the entries for the years 1681 to 1693, registered in the only seventeenth-century quarantine register available, gives the following salient figures²¹:

Year	1681	1682	1683	1684	1685	1686	1687	1688	1689	1690	1691	1692	1693
Total	61	60	78	67	49	45	60	77	43	61	87	67	59
French	11	24	17	15	13	20	33	31	20	34	28	17	21
English		1	3	15	7	4	5	5	1	1			

TABLE 2 — *Entries Registered for 1681-93*

The proportion of English to French entries for these thirteen years is only 1:6, while for 1723 to 1738 it is 1:17. The estimated proportion for the eighteenth century would be one English vessel to ten or fifteen French²². The average yearly entries for 1681-93 are only 22, a far cry from the 88 for 1723-38.

Since similar figures are lacking for the intermediate period of 1694 to 1722, the leap from 22 to 88 appears too sudden. The increase was presumably progressive over those 29 years. Besides, those years were bedevilled by wars up to the first decade of the century. For the second half of the eighteenth century, the annual average would be over 62 entries, if an estimate can be drawn from the five-years' samples examined by Godechot²³. It is clear that the era more or less coinciding with Villhena's grandmastership is in this sense a watershed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries²⁴.

If the annual French entries are analysed monthly (see Table 3), it becomes obvious that, at least during the reviewed years, French vessels coming from the Levant or Barbary used Malta more in winter and autumn than in summer^{25, 26}.

However, though Malta was generally used more as a wintering place by western-bound French shipping, in practice, like all Mediterranean shipping, they did not follow a constant calendar. Though winter and spring were unpopular sailing seasons because of the stormy Mediterranean weather, it was news of the whereabouts of corsairs or the exigencies of commerce which actually regulated the departures. Hence, sometimes French vessels were caught in a gregalata in Maltese waters. On 18 November 1724 a French pollacca on its way from Tripoli of Barbary to Scio and Smyrna,

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1723					3	5	8	12	17	9	10	13
1724	26	6	11	3	9	3	5	8	4	24	17	3
1725	49	10	4	2	6	11	6	13	24	10	5	3
1726	2	15	16	5	10	7	7	5	7	4	4	3
1727	2	11	4	5	7	2	5	3	5	7	11	6
1728	2	10	10	4	3	1		2	2	2	23	16
1729	20	7	1	28	4	4		7	2	10	13	23
1730	14	1	4	10	8	4	4	3	8	2	13	13
1731	22	11	8	8	1	7	1		1	4	3	4
1732	14	3	2	5	3	1	5	2	4	2	7	6
1733	5	3	8	7	2	1	2	2		4	3	6
1734	11	3	15	8	3	5		5		8	8	2
1735	10	3	8	7	5	5	1	1	2	10	3	4
1736	3	3	1	10	5	5	3	4	3	14	8	8
1737	6	13	7	7	7	2	3	10	5	16	7	11
1738	9	11	19	14	7	5	12	8	11	18	9	7

TABLE 3 — *Monthly French Entries registered for 1723-38*

with 234 Negroes slaves on board, was thrust aground at Miggiaro in Gozo and wrecked²⁷. Sanitary precautions were implemented immediately: the negro slaves were transferred to Marsamscetto²⁸. In February 1725, a French martingale foundered near Malta²⁹, and in December a pinca battered by bad weather was forced to Malta on its way from Tunis³⁰. Another French pollacca coming from Napoli of Romalia (Neapolis) with some 23 Turks ran aground at Marfa in November 1729³¹. On 22 February 1733, a French vessel coming from Saida ran aground in Mellieha Gulf. Its merchandise destined for Marseilles was suspect because of plague reports in Saida. It could not be admitted into the Lazzaretto. But Bailly de Boccage, the *homme du roi* in Malta, protested to the Grand Master because a 1% duty was

exacted on the transfer of the merchandise on to another French vessel. According to Vilhena, "that duty was always exacted, with the difference that it was 6. and 1/3%. We have reduced it to 1% in order to facilitate commerce." Vilhena was prepared to concede that right for this instance if the King desired it, but not to renounce it³². The court did not appear to have pressed the matter any further³³.

As for the cargoes aboard the French vessels registered for quarantine, it is difficult to be exact, simply because Ms. 820 itself rarely gives detailed figures. As can be expected, the cargo varied immensely from bulls to rams, wool and spun cotton to linen and hides, cheese to tobacco, wax to tallow, carpets, honey and a variety of other commodities. Sometimes the merchandise, or part of it, is registered as belonging to Maltese merchants³⁴. But the large majority of French vessels coming from the eastern Mediterranean carried cargoes of wheat whose destination, however, is rarely stated, though it can be assumed that normally it was bound for Provence, especially Marseilles. In fact, during the 1720's and 1730's the Levant and Barbary were almost exclusively the sole source of wheat arriving at Marseilles, as Table 4 illustrates³⁵.

At times, this Levantine wheat brought by French vessels helped to alleviate scarcity in Malta, as well as in France itself. At the beginning of the century, Grand Master Perellos, unable to have wheat supplies from Sicily, had forced several French vessels to leave their wheat cargoes in Malta³⁶. In 1728-29, mainly owing to a bad harvest failure in Sicily³⁷, Vilhena was complaining of a grain dearth in the Islands. "More than a thousand salme of grain" were bought from French merchant vessels early in 1728³⁸.

In June he wrote to the Order's agent at Palermo that, with the Sicilian ministers refusing to issue the usual *tratte*, there was only a two-months' provision left in Malta³⁹. On 25 July he wrote that the people were "almost destitute, and by now would have experienced an extreme scarcity were it not that we succeeded in authoritatively taking some quantities of grain from some vessels coming from the Levant bound for France"⁴⁰. Vilhena wanted Maurepas to help Malta in this contingency. But Provence itself was suffering from a similar wheat shortage, and the King, though reported to be "touched by reports that the Maltese are finding it difficult to get wheat", could not offer any significant assistance⁴¹. It was in January 1730 that he gave his permission allowing French ships to leave their wheat cargoes in Malta, though they were expected to return immediately to the Levant to bring new consignments for France⁴².

	Espagne	Levant et Barbarie	Piémont et Savoie	Italie	Hollande	Nord
1725		3.568	305			
1726		14.727				
1727		16.52				
1728	25	26.65	10			
1729		11.982				
1730		951		30		
1731		9.29				
1732		420				
1733		3.058				
1734						
1735		10				
1736		200				
1737		55.221				
1738		1.52				
1739	497	29.784				
1740		32.703				
1741	105	81.435				
1742	30.331	50.451		24.829	466	

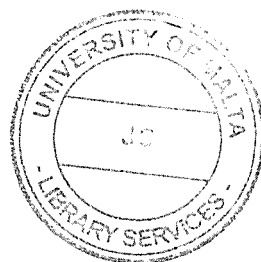


TABLE 4: Sources of Wheat for Marseilles

Similar difficulties for wheat supplies were to arise again during the Polish Succession War when Malta was not only suffering from wheat shortage, but risked losing Sicilian supplies because of the ease with which French armed ships were allowed in harbour⁴³. In Paris De Mesmes had to contact some merchants of the Compagnie d'Afrique for terms to transport suggested wheat supplies from southern Brittany and North Africa⁴⁴. But ultimately prospects of supplies from Cape Negre came to nothing, because

owing to a bad harvest the Company found it impossible to meet its commitments with Marseilles itself⁴⁵. However, purchases of wheat and rice were effected from French merchants touching at Malta⁴⁶.

Another important commercial commodity, besides wheat, was certainly cotton. An old staple crop of great importance for the farmers' subsistence, cotton, particularly spun cotton, became by the eighteenth century the Islands' chief export. Much of the crop found its way to Marseilles and its Chamber of Commerce often lodged numerous complaints against abuses committed by Maltese merchants. By a special licence, these were allowed to export their cotton to Marseilles without paying the customary 20% duty imposed on all foreign imports. The Maltese, however, used to buy noticeable quantities of Levantine cotton wool, and then they sold it at Marseilles as if it were locally grown in Malta, thus avoiding the 20% duty. Despite repeated complaints, this abuse persisted. By 1753 such illegal cotton exports increased tenfold, exceeding 1,500 bales, weighing about 4,000 quintals or 100 kilos⁴⁷.

The Marseilles Chamber of Commerce often protested also against the inferior quality of spun cotton from Malta, not matching the stamp on the bales. Trying to avoid this discredit, Vilhena, "having always to heart the good of our subjects", on 29 December 1733 issued a bando ordering strict inspection of spun cotton packed for export. Bales not found marked by the official superintendent were to be confiscated⁴⁸. In April 1735, a similar bando decreed that spun cotton bales were henceforth to be tied with a single band in the middle to facilitate inspection. All bales tied otherwise were liable to confiscation⁴⁹. However, it was difficult to eradicate abuses, and complaints from Marseilles did not stop⁵⁰.

These incidents apart, commercial relations between Malta and France were generally amicable during the period under study. Besides the friendly facilities French ships had in the Island, a fairly large French mercantile community established itself mostly in the harbour area. A dip through the marriage register of the Parish of Porto Salvo in Valletta may serve of some indication. From 1700 to 1740, the male partners of over 75 marriages are specified as of French parentage, mostly from Provence — a fact significant in itself⁵¹. Several of these locally-settled Frenchmen often requested the Admiralty of Marseilles for permission to trade under the French flag. The royal declaration of 21 October 1727 decreed that:

In foreign countries, French vessels cannot be addressed but to Frenchmen settled there and born in the Kingdom. Those married there to

foreign wives cannot have any addressed to them.

In 1729 Vilhena wrote for an exemption from this decree in favour of Frenchmen naturalised in Malta. The Marine Minister, Count de Maurepas, replied that the King would have liked to treat Malta differently from other foreign countries, but

It is not to the benefit of the commerce of his subjects, who require His Majesty to prevent the abuse of his flag, to allow indefinitely to all Frenchmen now settled in Malta and married to foreign wives to have French vessels addressed to them⁵².

The King agreed to grant the privilege to a limited and selected number of Frenchmen in Malta, though he was still frugal in granting such dispensations. He "did not want to increase the number of Frenchmen settled and married in Malta who had the permission to sail with his flag"⁵³. Unable to obtain a general exemption, Vilhena himself presented individual merchants. Messieurs Aillaud and Prepaud, for instance, were granted the French flag early in 1730. Two other French merchants, however, Nicolas Guerin and Joseph Mestre, had to wait over a year for such permission; then only Guerin actually obtained it in September 1731⁵⁴. Similar demands to the French King were to continue beyond Vilhena's grandmastership⁵⁵.

By Vilhena's death on 10 December 1736, it was unmistakably clear that the use France was making of Malta in her Levantine commercial interests was bound to increase. After Vilhena, French omnipresence in the Island was increasingly manifest. In 1750 Pinto could well write:

It is equally well known to the whole world that France is able to profit more than any other country from the Order's services, and that Malta renders her those services with zeal. In the Island of Malta France has advantages which grudge the Order with the enemies of that crown, who say of Malta's harbours that they are always neutral and are never neutral...⁵⁶

By 1791 it was asserted that the Levantines regarded the French "as the proprietors of the Island"⁵⁷. The loss of Malta in 1800, after the brilliant coup of Napoleon in 1798, meant therefore a lot for France. The early nineteenth-century French consul in Malta, Monsieur Miège, seems to have expressed the general French sorrow when he wrote: "Undoubtedly, it is allowed to a Frenchman to regret the loss of an Island whose position rendered her mistress of the commerce between East and West..."⁵⁸.

NOTES

¹Rapports Politiques de l'Ordre de Malte avec la France et la nécessité de maintenir les Traités respectifs entre ces deux Puissances, par un gentil-homme Languedocien [MacCarthy-Levignac], (1790), pp. 13-16.

²Essence de l'Ordre de Malte. Extrait des Mémoires de M. le Chev. de [Mayer], publiés en 1879, 1790, 1791, 1792. Pour la défense de l'Ordre en France, p. 99.

³J. Godechot, "La France et Malte au XVIII^e siècle", *Revue Historique*, vol. CCVI (July-Sept. 1951), pp. 67-79.

Following the French conquest, the Citoyen Capitaine Honoré de Brès enumerated the advantages France expected to derive from the taking of Malta. Inter alia he writes: "In giving the Island commodious ports and a fortunate position, nature appears to have destined her to be the key to the Levant and the arbiter of the Mediterranean": *Recherches historiques et politiques sur Malte* (Paris: Cramer, an VII [1798], p. 96. In the book *The Policy and Interests of Great Britain with Respect to Malta*, summarily considered (London: J. Hatchard, 1805), Malta's commercial importance for France is also given prominence in the considerations of the conquest.

⁴P. Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), p. 320.

⁵For details of this summary reconstruction see E. Levasseur, *Histoire du Commerce de la France*. Vol. I: Avant 1789 (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1911); Masson, *op.cit.*; R. Paris, *Histoire du Commerce de Marseille*. Vol. V: De 1660 à 1789 le Levant (Paris: Plon, 1957). The February 1535 treaty and others are reproduced in J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*. Vol I: A Documentary Record: 1535-1914 (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1956).

⁶R. Romano, *Commerce et Prix du Blé à Marseille au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1956), p. 30, says that Marseilles' commercial life experienced the beginning of "a new century" towards 1725. However, for the wheat trade Romano puts 1741 as the decisive year: pp. 38-43.

⁷AOM 1219, *Mémoire*, in De Mesmes' letter to G. M., pp. 597-601, 24.5.1723. On this important matter of the appointment of a French consul in Malta and on the difference between the consul and the homme du roi, see the author's thesis, pp. 226-36.

⁸Godechot, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁹A. Mifsud, "L'Approvvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle passate Dominazioni", *Archivum Melitense*, vol. III, no. 5 (July 1918), p. 193.

¹⁰Romano, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹¹AOM 1220, pp. 146-49, Choiseul to De Mesmes, 5.5.1728.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 222, De Mesmes to Grand Master (G.M.), 22.8.1728.

¹³Masson, *op.cit.*, p. 384.

¹⁴AOM 1220, pp. 565-66, De Mesmes to G.M., 4.6.1729; p. 622, 21.7.1729. The portrait took long in coming: AOM 1221, p. 419, 18.6.1732. It was reported finished in August 1732: *ibid.*, p. 472, 9.8.1732. See the author's article, "The Story behind a Portrait. An episode in 18th century Franco-Maltese relations", *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 1.10.1972; p. 10.

These services for the protection of Marseillan commerce were remembered later on in the century. The Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce brought them to the notice of the Revolutionaries in the National Assembly in the "Observations de la Chambre de Commerce de Marseille sur diverses Questions qui lui ont été faits par un Député de l'Assemblée Nationale relativement au Decret de cette Assemblée concernant les Biens de l'Ordre de Malthe". It said that, "The board of trade at Marseilles will never forget the services rendered to France by the Order of Malta in 1728, when the state of Tripoly had the insolence to declare war against the French Nation" - translated after Louis de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta* (London: Richard Philips, 1805), vol. I, p. xlii.

¹⁵Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 184; see also pp. 168-69, 186-87.

¹⁶AOM 1221, p. 886, De Mesmes to G.M., 16.12.1733.

¹⁷It largely consists of a "Registro dei Bastimenti, Mercanti, e Passeggeri ammessi alla quarantena, e di diversi altri Affari concernenti alla Sanità, Principiato alli 22 maggio 1723," till September 1739. Only this part of the manuscript is paginated: 447 pp. Sanitary Commissioner was Cavaliere de Margou. The year 1739 is not included here; but from September to December is registered in AOM 6527.

¹⁸RML ms. 820, pp. 184-85, 1 July to 20 August included. These 'gaps' can be explained as usual secretarial slips, or as a true representation of the facts — and, therefore, no gaps at all.

¹⁹The 86% is for 1723 whose registration begins only on 22 May. It would most probably have been higher had the whole year been registered. On the other hand, it must be observed that in 1723 several French vessels coming from the ports of Provence entered for quarantine, which was not usual, because of the plague raging there since 1720. It was only on 30 June 1723 that a royal order put an end to the exceptional quarantine measures prevailing in Marseilles: Masson, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

²⁰According to M.A.Sant, "Vilhena's accession as Grand Master in 1722 ushered in an era during which foreign currencies found in the Island a most fertile field." He also says that during Vilhena's last years gold pieces from the Barbary states were circulating here: "Coinage Problems Facing the Order of St. John in Malta" (unpublished M.A. thesis, presented to the Royal University of Malta, 1967, p. 318 and p. 321).

²¹AOM 6526, Arrivi di Bastimenti posti in Quarantena 1654-94. The year 1694 is only covered up to 20 April. English vessels are included for comparison. The nationality of the entries is not always specified, which is a serious handicap to an accurate estimate. The volume itself is very disorganised, without any ordered chronology and

the pagination is unsystematical. In 1681 it is only on 15 August that the first specified French entry is listed — the 36th for the year. But from internal evidence, from comparison of type of ship, name and captain, it can be deduced that, for instance, the entry for 22 June, a tartana named *Il Salvatore del Mondo*, is French, though not specified. So is that for 24 October, and the entries of 30 Nov. 1681 / 2 April 1682; 30 Sept. / 29 Aug. 1682. All French vessels registered as coming from western ports are excluded from Table 2.

²²R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders. The Knights of St. John in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1960) p. 48. He does not give any sources for his estimate.

²³Godechot, op. cit., pp. 72-74. He gives the following figures: for 1764 - 48 entries, 1770 - 57, 1775 - 75, 1780 - 18 (which he considers exceptional), 1788 - 44.

²⁴The above figures can be compared with the following data: In 1670 some 50 to 60 vessels have been estimated to have left annually from French ports for the Levant, together with some 20 boats from Candia or the Morea. About 1683, the number was 90 departures annually. But at about 1720, the yearly average soared to 263 departures and from 1722 to 1742 the average remained around 270. In the second half of the century it oscillated between 240 and 300 departures annually: Paris, op. cit., p. 158.

²⁵Unlike Table 1, Table 2 does not include French vessels registered as coming from western ports; nor does it include the armed vessels. It covers only the mercantile ships coming from Levantine or N. African waters.

²⁶Since 1723 is only partially covered, it has been ignored in estimating a monthly average for 1723-38. So, the total entries for each month of each year were divided by 15. The exclusion of 1723 figures does not affect the ultimate result except by a margin of one or even less here and there.

²⁷RML ms. 820, p. 48, 22.11.1724.

²⁸AOM 1485, To Gozo Governor, 18 and 19.11.1724. In 1725 Maurepas complained to Vilhena for keeping 40 Negroes and two Tripolitan merchants as security for the payment of the custom duties for the negro slaves' transfer. The Marine Minister held that the Grand Master had no right to exact such duties because the Negroes were not destined for Malta and were under the French flag. He protested also that the 6% duty demanded was higher than usual and not proportionate to the cost price of the Negroes which was said to be about 40 to 50 piastras : AOM 1202, ff. 310r-13v, Maurepas to G.M., 29.8.1725.

²⁹RML op. cit., p. 63, 8.2.1725.

³⁰Ibid., p. 90, 8.12.1725.

³¹Ibid., p. 191, 5.11.1729.

³²AOM 1566, pp. 2054-56, To De Mesmes, 12.3.1733. RML, op. cit., p. 275, 4.5.1733.

³³AOM 1221, p. 721, De Mesmes to G.M., 19.4.1733; p. 804, 10.8.1733.

³⁴See for instance: RML ms. 820, p. 30, 11.5.1724; p. 34, 20.7.1724; p. 64, 18.2.1725;

p. 109, 7.8.1726.

³⁵The table is part of one provided by Romano's study, *op. cit.*, p. 134: "Tabl. 13 — Arrivages de Blé dans 'les Ports de Mer et Bureaux de Terre de la Direction de Marseille.' Répartis selon l'Origine." The whole table covers from 1725 to 1779. The years after 1738 are included here for comparison. The above quantities are in "charges de 240 livres poids de marc", i.e. about 120 kilos: *ibid.*, p. 14; pp. 43-44.

³⁶AOM 1561, p. 773, To Com. D'Aubignos, Receiver at Marseilles, 10.3.1707; p. 890, To M. Simon, 25.8.1710.

³⁷D. Mark Smith, *A History of Sicily. Modern Sicily after 1713* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), p. 278. He describes how wheat export from Sicily was becoming increasingly difficult because of a few brokers who were unscrupulously manipulating the grain market: pp. 271-73.

³⁸AOM 1489, To D. Galea Feriolo, Licata, 22.7.1728. AOM 1490, To B. de Spinola, Genova, 14.2.1729. AOM 1231, ff. 281r-82v, Chev. Doppede to G.M., 24.3.1729.

³⁹AOM 1490, To Gioacchino Napoli, Palermo, 1.6.1729.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 25.7.1729. In a letter from Aix, it was observed to the G.M. that it was hard to believe that he had held up twenty vessels with wheat destined for Marseilles, "while we are reduced to little short of famine": AOM 1231, f. 399v, 16.7. 1729. Incidentally this explains the unusually high figure of 28 French entries for April 1729: see Table 3, under April.

⁴¹AOM 1202, f. 438r, Maurepas to G.M., 8.10.1729.

⁴²AOM 1203, ff. 3r-4v, Same to Same, 25.1.1730.

⁴³AOM 1567, p. 2255, To De Mesmes, 16.3.1734; p. 2307, 24.6.1734.

⁴⁴AOM 1222, p. 178, De Mesmes to G.M., 6.8.1734.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 259, Same to Same, 13.12.1734. AOM 1567, p. 2401. To M. Simon, 31.12.1734.

⁴⁶AOM 1491, To Com. Petrucci, Lighorn, 29.5.1734. AOM 1567, pp. 2473-74, To M. Simon, 7.6.1735.

⁴⁷Masson, *op. cit.*, p. 390. See John Debono, "The Cotton Trade of Malta 175-1800", *Archivum. The Journal of Maltese Historical Research*; ed. V. Mallia-Milanes and A. Sammut (Malta: Midsea Books, 1981), Nr. 1, pp. 94-125.

⁴⁸RML ms. 429, Bandi, vol. I, f. 256 r+v.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, f. 284r, 2.4.1735.

⁵⁰AOM 1222, pp. 491-92, De Mesmes to G.M., 14.2.1736; p. 535, 9.5.1736.

⁵¹RML, *Indici di Sponsalizi... di Porto Salvo...*, vol. I, pp. 680-925; vol. II, pp. 1-166. Only the specified French partners were added, though if those whose surnames testified to their French nationality were included, the number would well be over 75.

Ersilio Michel refers to a series of documents which covers this period and deal with marriages between French and Maltese nationals: "Documenti Maltesi dell'Amiragliato di Marsiglia," *Archivio Storico di Malta*, vol. IV, anno IV (1934), pp. 143-44.

The Inquisitor has this to say on the activities of northern and Baltic ships in

Malta: "On the shores and in the ports of the Island also disembark English and Dutch vessels, from the Baltic sea and from other parts of the North, full of heretical sailors, soldiers and merchants, who sometimes carry with them preachers of their sects and once disembarked they use their wicked rites and the Calvinistic suppers...": ATM, Memoire: Stoppani, vol. I, f. 5r, "Istruzione a Mons. Stoppani destinato Inquisitore di Malta."

⁵²AOM 1202, ff. 429r-30r, Maurepas to G.M., 4.10.1729. AOM 1220, p. 696, De Mesmes to G.M., 12.10.1729.

⁵³Ibid., p. 933, Maurepas to De Mesmes, 5.10.1730.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp 880-81, De Mesmes to G.M., 16.7.1730; pp. 916-17, 17.9.1730. AOM 1221, pp. 11-12, Same to Same, 20.1.1731; p. 175 Louis to G.M., 4.9.1731.

⁵⁵On the related but different issue of the double nationality, see Alain Blondy, "La France et Malte au XVIIIème siècle: Le Probleme de la Double Nationalité", Malta. A Case Study in International Cross-Currents; ed. S. Fiorini and V. Mallia-Milanes (Malta: Univ. Publications, 1991), pp. 175-86.

⁵⁶Godechot, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 75.

⁵⁸M. Miège, Histoire de Malte (Paris: Paulin, 1840), vol. I, p. 35.

A SWORD AND A HELMET*

André Plaisse *

(Translated into English by Carmel Vella)

For centuries, the Popes of Rome felt the need to encourage the spread, and to sustain the supremacy, of the Christian faith in the states of Europe and in those of the Mediterranean basin. This concept brought about the birth of the Crusades, and stirred up many a king and emperor, in obeisance to the papacy's aims, to take up arms against the Moslem infidels who occupied and held the Holy Land.

A SWORD AND A HELMET

Moved by feelings of gratitude, the Supreme Pontiffs naturally sensed the obligation to recompense all those who had distinguished themselves in the implacable and bloody struggles on the frontiers of Christianity and also those who, within their countries, had contributed to the triumph of the Catholic faith.

Among such rewards, one may mention the insignia of the 'Tuck and Casque' solemnly blessed by the Pope, which had at one and the same time a symbolic value and the repute to ensure victory to the soldiers of the Holy Cross.

The Tuck was a silver gilt sword, about five feet long. The Casque was a helmet of purple velvet embroidered with gold and adorned with the dove of the Holy Ghost in pearls.

From the beginning of the 14th to the end of the 16th century, about fifty monarchs and princes received this prestigious emblem. To mention a

* In this write-up we relate, with brief comments, the account of the solemn ritual of the Sword and Helmet conferred, by Pope Benedict XIII, on Don Anton Manoel de Vilhena, Grand Master of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, as it appears in the memoirs of the Bailli Jean-Jacques de Chambray.

* Influenced by Marc Bloch and the *Gedde des Annales*, Dr. Andre' Plaisse taught economic and social history at the University of Caen in Normandy for many years. He is the author of several works, including one on Bailiff Chambray (Rennes 1991) and has won a number of prizes and research awards.

few of the recipients: In 1514 the Emperor Maximilian I and in 1532 Charles V and his brother Ferdinand, the King of Rome; also in 1514, before breaking with Rome and founding his proper church, Henry VIII of England, and King Manuel I of Portugal who had banished the Jews and the Moors from his kingdom; and in 1674 the King of Poland, John Sobieski, many times conqueror of the Turks.

Other famous persons who received the Sword and Helmet included war leaders who had distinguished themselves in the field of battle such as, in 1535, Andrea Doria, "renowned for his victories at sea against the infidels", in 1567 Don Juan of Austria who, four years later routed the Turkish fleet at Lepanto, in 1569 the Duke of Alba, general of the king of Spain and Flanders who fought against the heretic Prince of Orange and, in 1690, the Prince Eugene of Savoy, general of the Imperial armies.

THE ORDER OF MALTA

Glancing through the list of Sovereigns and eminent generals, it is surprising to note the absence of the Order of St John of Jerusalem whose essential *raison d'être* was precisely to protect Christians and to strike incessant blows at the Turks — a role which they never ceased to play so gloriously even after the transfer of their Convent to Malta in 1530.

In 1565, when the Order forced the Turks to raise the siege of Malta, and became itself the bastion of Christianity in the Mediterranean Sea, Grand Master Jean de La Valette, in deference to the heroism of his knights, deserved a hundred times to be conferred with the Sacred Arms; but at that same instance, Vienna, another rampart of Christianity, was equally threatened by the Turks and similar feats of arms were being unrolled beneath its walls.....

It was therefore proper and timely to make amends for the unfortunate oversight; and this was exactly what the Supreme Pontiff did in 1725. An austere Dominican, elected Pope in 1724 at the age of sixty-six after having served as archbishop of Benevento, Benedict XIII could not avoid being sensible to the legendary virtues of poverty and humility of the intrepid Knights, as well as to their acts of bravery made widely manifest in the previous years.

Indeed, it is probable that the news of the capture of the *Patrona di Tripoli* in May 1723 had gone beyond the Vatican walls, considering that

the event was reported in numerous newsheets in Europe. This *Sultana*, or galleon of the Grand Turk, armed with fifty guns, had seized many Christian vessels. It was discovered sailing in the Straits of Sicily and, after a fierce battle, it was captured by the "illustrious captain Fra Jacques-François de Chambray" and brought triumphantly to the port of Valletta with 270 Turks destined for slavery and 33 rescued Christian slaves. Once more, the Knights of Malta had vanquished the enemies of the Faith to the great admiration of their Grand Master who, eventually, came in person with all his court on board the victorious galley to congratulate publicly its fortunate captain.

Elected Grand Master for life by the Knights of Justice in 1722, the Portuguese Manoel de Vilhena, assumed the title of Eminence with all its attributes of sovereignty. Like all his predecessors he was entitled to strike coins and to establish diplomatic relations. He was, in a way, an absolute monarch but he avowed the supremacy of the Pope.

He was elated that through his mediation, a number of Christians, imprisoned as slaves in Turkey, had obtained their freedom. He was doubly pleased when, in February 1725, he learned by letter from his ambassador in Rome that His Holiness the Pope had decided to bestow on him the consecrated *Tuck and Casque*; and that His Holiness had chosen l'Abbé Olivieri, a Knight of Malta and nephew of Cardinal Olivieri, to travel to Malta as an Ablegate, i.e. envoy, for the presentation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONIAL

Great emotion and unanimous joy were felt at the Magisterial Palace, and all the members of the Order eagerly strove to be involved in the unique celebrations. After conferring with his Council of State, His Eminence nominated four Grand Bailiffs to work out the ceremonial for the great occasion. As one would have expected, all the research made at the Chancellery to find a precedent proved unsuccessful, as this was the first instance, since time immemorial, that a Grand Master had received this time-honoured papal award. The commissioners were therefore constrained to improvise their proper method how to pay due tribute to the Papal envoy, to the Grand Master and to the island of Malta. To receive the Ablegate in full accord with "the holy intention" of the Pope and to set the programme for the ceremony was indeed a restless task!

After boarding a French galley at Leghorn, the Pope's Ablegate arrived



Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena

at Valletta on the 19th April at five o'clock in the evening. He was welcomed with his retinue on the landing place by Commander de Chabrilan, His Eminence's Master of the Horse, and by four Knights of court who had taken their place on the cutter of the state galley, which was "magnificently decked" for the occasion.

"He came ashore on the quay beside the limestone kilns and immediately stepped inside a carriage drawn by six horses, followed by several others. He alighted at the Main Gate where he was received by the clergy of the conventual church of St John and by all the religious Orders of the city. To the cheerful chimes of church bells and the echoing thuds of artillery fire, the procession led the prelate to the conventual church, where he knelt in worship before the Holy Sacrament and rendered thanks to God for his safe arrival. After expressing his gratitude to the clergy, he again boarded the carriage and, under escort of the Grand Master's equerry, he proceeded to his quarters to the incessant sound of bells and musketry.

Official receptions and presentation of credentials traditionally implied the offer of gifts which, in the case of high church dignitaries, usually consisted of sacred objects. So, the next morning, after due rest in the wake of his sea voyage, the Ablegate ordained the presentation, on his behalf, to His Eminence of three big *Agnus Dei*, a miniature crystal cross holding a bit of the True Cross, and a small gold reliquary containing relics of St Elizabeth, of St Anthony of Padua, of St Paul and of St John. Soon after, being anxious to accomplish his commission, he beseeched his first audience with His Eminence who, on his part, fixed the appointment for eight o'clock the following morning.

The Ablegate arrived at the Palace in a six-horse carriage and was received pursuant to the protocol earlier set down for the first audience of Monsignor the Inquisitor. Sentiments of respect and of mutual veneration were exchanged during the meeting. Two days later another audience was held for the presentation of a brief and a papal bull bearing a general confirmation of the privileges enjoyed by the Order and the concession of additional favours.

The date for the bestowal of the sacred Sword and Helmet was fixed for Thursday 3rd May, quite a symbolic moment, as on that day the church celebrates the feast of the Invention of the Cross. The Order was gratified with the choice of that festivity, considering that it had committed all its glory to fighting under the banner of the Cross. "To stress the solemnity of

such a glorious event and to mark the sense of universal joy, all the bells were rung after sunset, all the guns were fired and the entire city was lit up" on the vigil of the propitious day. That was repeated for the next two nights.

At last the great day had arrived and the Maltese people had the privilege to watch the colourful processions, which brought to the admiration of one and all the Sword and Helmet blessed by the pope on Christmas Eve of the previous year. Mounted on a horse in splendid harness, in the midst of the retinue, the Secretary of the Ablegate carried the insignia. In his hand he held the sacred sword whilst the helmet sat majestically on its point.

From the Ablegate's temporary home to the Magisterial Palace a company of mounted soldiers and their commanders, with kettledrums and trumpets, opened the cortège. Behind these troops, in a six-horse carriage, followed the Papal Ablegate, the Grand Master's equerry, and the Ablegate's Secretary holding the consecrated emblem. A detachment of magisterial guards and their carriages marched at the rear. From the Palace to St John's church the Ablegate marched on foot wearing the red robe, lined with ermine, which papal chamberlains usually wear on such occasions. He took his place to the left of the Grand Master, a step behind, and was followed by the Commanders of the Grand Cross in ceremonial attire, whilst militiamen from the town regiment and sailors from the galleys formed rows along the roadway under the eyes of their officers, dressed in leather jerkins. His Eminence was given the salute by a general salvo of musket fire.

In the vicinity of St John's church, the cortège marched with more solemnity. At that spot it was welcomed by Monsignor Melchior Alpheran. Under a canopy carried by four Grand Crosses of the Order the Prior, wearing the mitre, held the precious relic of the Holy Cross. The Ablegate's Secretary followed behind him carrying the consecrated Sword and Helmet. The Grand Master came next followed by the Ablegate and all the Order's dignitaries, to the sound of bells and artillery fire from all the fortresses.

Inside the church, the Ablegate took the seat reserved for him on the bishop's throne, which was overlaid with rich cloth and cushions of red damask. The mass was then celebrated "pontifically and with excellent music", and at its end the congregation was addressed in turn by the Ablegate, by the Prior and by His Eminence.

THE ABLEGATE'S DISCOURSE

Escorted to the lower step of the altar by the Master of Ceremonies, the Papal envoy expounded the purpose of his commission "in a very elegant speech" some of which deserves to be here highlighted.:

"Most Eminent Prince, I come to bestow on you, in the name of His Holiness, a magnificent present. The whole world is aware that this is a token of the esteem which Benedict XIII feels towards your Eminence. The gift is also an evidence that our Sovereign Pontiff, solicitous about our salvation, as well as for the reward of virtue, has put his trust in your prudence and your bravery which both are a safeguard against barbarian invasions....."

(....) "Now that you are armed with this Sword and this Helmet, your own heart and that of your knights, will nourish a sense of greater valour and zeal to help you vanquish all your enemies...."

"....Every time you draw this weapon, Your Eminence will be regarded as a new Gideon and everyone will look at the sword as a sure pledge of the new victories which lie in his way...."

In conclusion, the Ablegate spoke of the joy he would feel when reporting to the Holy Father the spirited ardour of the Grand Master as a defender of the Faith. Lastly, the Ablegate enjoined his Secretary to read aloud the papal brief.

THE PAPAL BRIEF

"To our dear Son, Manoel de Vilhena, Grand Master of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, Benedict the thirteenth of the name.

Dear Son, greetings and apostolic benediction.

The great and remarkable deeds, which you and your Order have rendered to Christianity, and the zeal with which you defend the faith, demand that we publicly express our esteem as a solemn testimony of the worth of your exploits....."

"....We have, in conformity with old procedure, solemnly blessed on Christmas Day this Sword and this Helmet. The Popes, our predecessors, have always conferred them on the most worthy Princes and on the most distinguished defenders of Christendom.....

".....All the world knows that if the Knights of your Order fight so gloriously they do not owe their victories to their sole strength and their sole tenacity. They

owe it mostly to the Arm of the Almighty and to the prayers of the church.....”

“.....It is our intention that, after the celebration of the mass, the Sacred Arms will be presented to you by the Prior of your conventual church.....”

“.....Given in Rome at the Vatican under the Ring of the Fisherman on 27th February 1725, the first year of our Pontificate.”

THE GRAND MASTER'S ADDRESS

Here follow the opening and closing passages of the Grand Master's address in which he expressed his gratitude to His Holiness and to the Ablegate.

“We receive the consecrated Sword and Helmet which His Holiness graciously awarded to us. We receive, the Order and myself, a glorious mark of goodwill from our Sovereign Pontiff. He could not confer on us a more august present, nor a more proper one for our Order.....

“.....I beg you to put at the feet of our Holy Father our pledge of deep respect and profound affection, which the Order and myself owe to His Holiness....”

In conformity with the set ritual, the Grand Master walked to the altar and bent on one knee on a cushion in front of the church Prior. The Pope's Ablegate then took the Sword from his Secretary's hands, drew it from its scabbard and returned it naked to the Prior who, holding it in his hands, began his oration in eloquent words, which we report here in brief summary:

THE PRIOR'S ORATION

“Supreme Pontiffs are accustomed, on Christmas Eve, to consecrate in the name of the Lord a sword and a helmet (.....) This holy and ancient usage of the Roman Church is suitably linked to the feast of the birth of Jesus Christ as it reminds us how the only Son of God made man has joined in combat for our deliverance.....”

(.....)It is therefore appropriate, Most Excellent Prince,that you receive from my hands, with a sentiment of joy and devotion, this consecrated sword, the sword of the Almighty”

(.....) Accept also this helmet, that it may be for you the casque of salvation and of strength so that in all your struggles you will always be led by the light of heaven.....to help you vanquish the enemies of the faith”

END OF THE CEREMONIES

A solemn *Te Deum* was intoned by the Prior and sung, accompanied with music, to the sound of pealing bells. This was prolonged to allow enough time to His Eminence to reach his Palace, where “a sumptuous meal” was offered to all the assistants and to the Venerable Bailiffs of the Order.

“A toast to the health of His Holiness was drunk by the Grand Master and by all the guests to the cheerful sound of fanfares, beating of drums and the echoing rumble of artillery and musket fire. And so the celebrations came to an end.”

Afterwards, the Sword and Helmet were displayed for three days in one of the Palace apartments to satisfy the curiosity of the island's population. The attendance was considerable. At the expiry of the three days, the Grand Master ordained that the insignia be kept in the sacristy of the church of St John, in the same place reserved for the holy relics, as no other locality was deemed suitable to house them, nor more proper to preserve for ever this precious token of His Holiness' paternal benevolence to the Grand Master and his Order”

Having accomplished his mission, the Ablegate could now take leave in the traditional form, which he did on 7th May, at eight o'clock in the morning, after attending another audience graciously accorded to him by the Grand Master on that same day. Then, the same procession, the same ceremonies and the same rendering of thanks as on the day of his arrival. The only difference was that presents were exchanged the other way, this time it was the turn of His Eminence. The Prince presented to the Pope's Ablegate a jewel-studded Maltese Cross, a diamond ring, the warrant for a pension valued 238 Neapolitan ducats on a priory, several rare curiosities from the Indies and a medal depicting on one side the figure of His Eminence and on the other Fort Manoel. Even the envoy's Secretary received tokens of the Prince's generosity.

Soon after, the Ablegate and his retinue embarked on the galleys of the Order., and were eventually conveyed to Naples.

THE ANNEXES

The annexes that follow contain extracts from the inscriptions which hung on the portals of the conventual church and of the Magisterial Palace in Valletta during the celebrations. They proclaim, in a more effective way than the verbal orations, the virtues of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Grand Master in their holy struggle against the infidels.

REFLECTIONS

Beneath the trappings of all the pageantry, the eulogies and the pompous words, it now remains for us to find out the real motives underlying such occasions. To what extent, at the beginning of the 18th century, were the Romans, the Maltese and the whole community of Christians, within their national and social environment, involved in the warlike concepts of the Pope and the Grand Master? How was the Infidel really perceived by the European society of the time? One must admit, that only deeper and more extensive research can provide the answer.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Extraits des Mémoires du Bailly de Chambray, Nat. Library of Malta, MS Arch 262, pp.279-317.

André Plaisse, *Le Rouge de Malte ou Les curieux mémoires du bailli de Chambray* (Eure), Préface de Michel Mollat du Jourdin, Membre de l'Institut, Rennes, Editions Ouest-France Université, 1991, pp 286 et 85 illustrations.

Musée National de la Légion d'Honneur et des Ordres de Chevalerie, *L'Ordre de Malte et la France de 1530 à nos jours*, 1988-89, Catalogue de l'Exposition.

EARTHLY MADONNAS? WOMEN TROUBLEMAKERS IN 18TH CENTURY MALTA

Yosanne Vella *

In the criminal reports and court proceedings of the eighteenth century one comes across a large number of women, almost equal to the number of men, getting into all kinds of trouble. In many cases women were the victims of injustices and criminal acts. However at other times it was the women themselves who were personally involved and committed the crimes. Although their own legal rights were limited, women regardless of marital status, could be sued in the same way as men. For example, court records show that women were sued in civil law in such matters as the non-payment of debts and illicit gambling in their taverns. Accusations against women both from Valletta and the villages included those of abusive and blasphemous conduct, drunkenness, theft offense, smolesting, fighting and beating up people. Punishments took the form of fines, warnings as well as imprisonment, incarceration in a *conservatorio* and even exile to Gozo.

From the large number of instances of imprisonment of women found throughout the eighteenth century, the population in the women's prison must have been impressive. Unfortunately it is impossible to check the actual figure, since no published records of the prison population of the eighteenth century exists. One need not, in fact be too surprised at a huge number of women prisoners in the eighteenth century, considering that for example a mere 76 years ago in 1921, there was a total of 480 women prisoners in Malta.¹ This figure is relatively high for Malta's 1921 population of 210,000, especially since for the past twenty years the average number of women prisoners has been in the region of 10!

One explanation for a large number of 18th century prisoners might be that women were imprisoned for reasons which we would today consider minor offenses.

* Yosanne Vella graduated from Malta's University in 1989 with a B.Ed(Hons) and in 1990 obtained a Masters Degree in 'History in Education' from the Institute of Education, London University. She obtained her MPhil research degree in pedagogy of history from London University in 1996 and is presently an assistant lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta.

Margerita Crocco² was caught by the Court Sergeant with a hen which did not belong to her. As she was very poor it was assumed that she had stolen the hen, while on the other hand she insisted that she had found it on her doorstep and was just about to return it to the owner. Nevertheless she was found guilty of the crime and imprisoned for three months in the prison of the Castellania.

In Malta the Roman Catholic Church was a very dominant factor which tended to view 'decent' and 'honorable' women as primarily being mothers and wives and strongly condemned those who failed to adhere to this prevailing view of women. With this background the authorities and the Maltese themselves held a particularly stern view of women who committed the slightest act which was considered immoral. A woman's reputation and public image were crucial factors in labeling her guilty or not. Even when not quite relevant to the case, one finds various statements by parish priests and neighbours praising the accused woman in question as being a virgin, an honest woman of very good moral character or denouncing her of having very low moral standards.

On the other hand one cannot hold too rigid a view over what was accepted or not of women's behaviour in eighteenth century Malta. Surprisingly, some things which we would not tolerate today seem to have been taken for granted by the people living in Malta in the eighteenth century. Although prostitutes were frowned upon they seem to have been accepted as part of eighteenth century society. In court cases women openly refer to themselves as prostitutes, apparently without any embarrassment and it is interesting to note that not one example was found of an unmarried woman being imprisoned for the sole reason that she was a prostitute.

Claudio Bonnici³ in 1749 was very friendly with Giuseppa Lave, a Sicilian woman. This did not prevent him from referring to her as a public prostitute. He reported to the Inquisitor that while visiting her on one occasion he found her very ill. To ease her suffering he started praying to the church and to some saints. He reported Guiseppa that he had overheard her cursing the Church and the saints. He reported her cursing but not that she worked as a prostitute which was only briefly and casually mentioned at the beginning of the case. Perhaps the reason for this was because the jurisdiction of the Inquisition was limited solely to matters of a religious nature, prostitution would fall under the jurisdiction of the Castellania.

In 1715 Albimo Vassalli⁴ repeatedly took men to Maria Mizzi's house

for them to have sex with her. What prompted Maria to bring a case against Vassallo was the fact that she could not refuse anyone, for Albimo forced her every time even against her wishes. When answering the charge, Vassallo the accused pleaded, "but Maria is a public prostitute!" To him this reply justified everything he had done.

A frequent charge brought against women in the eighteenth century was that of theft. Women were charged not only with petty thefts, mainly foodstuffs, household goods and clothing but also with stealing gold, silver and jewellery. Many women used to work as servants in private households and were trusted with the running of the house. This offered them a golden opportunity to steal in an unperceived way by slowly putting things aside in the hope that they would not be missed. Amongst the servants who stole from their employers one finds Rosa Galdes⁵ who was accused in 1793 of stealing from the house of Christina Seychell where she worked as a maid. In 1787, Theresia Valvo⁶ was robbed by her servant Giuseppa. In a long list which included over fifty stolen items, Valvo mentions silver earrings, silk stockings, mantles, ladies' shirts, hats, white handkerchiefs, napkins, towels and linen. One thief who struck not one house but several was Maria Vella.⁷ She stole clothes and linen from all the different people she worked for. Amongst her employers was Giovanni Damico who had employed her for thirteen months. Signora Enriona and Antonio Levon both from Zebbug, who employed her - the first for thirteen months and the second for fourteen months accused her of being a thief. Vella, a Gozitan, was apprehended in 1701 before she could steal any more goods. As a punishment she was exiled to Gozo and prohibited from ever returning to Malta again.

When it came to robbing and stealing, women at times worked with accomplices. In 1794 Joannes Mamo⁸ of Valletta found the doors of his house open and on entering the dining room he realised that he had been robbed of four silver posate (kitchen utensils), four silver spoons and four silver forks. A neighbour told how she had seen a man dressed in white and two women open and enter Mamo's house. Caruana, a Valletta jeweller, recalled how two women had come to his shop and tried to sell two silver posate to him. He had refused them since the wares were not the type he dealt with. Apparently the women were never caught, Caruana's description of them having been of little help.

Women sometimes executed their thefts with great skill and cunning. They achieved their aim by fairly elaborate plans and one might call them

the female counter part of 'con-men'. Such a woman was Paulica Demicoli⁹, who in 1744 managed to steal various objects from Thomas Mifsud of Bormula. Amongst the many things which were stolen there were: four walking sticks, men's and women's silk stockings of various colours, an Indian blanket, a white embroidered sheet, thirteen Maltese cotton caps, two pieces of Indian curtain and a cutting of bed hangings made of green wool.

Paulica managed to do this by going to Mifsud's house while there was nobody there except his young daughter Maria. Paulica tricked Maria Mifsud into handing over all these objects by giving her a scudo. Paulica then talked to Maria for quite a while telling her how she appreciated what she had done for her. She also gave Maria another scudo to keep personally while telling her that a good young man named Felice was interested in her. Having been so nice to Paulica her marriage with him had been secured. When Maria's father returned home he was not amused and filed a case against Paulica demanding that all his goods be returned.

Such acts of theft demanded both daring and wit. However in a number of cases, if one believes what the women said, their actions were motivated quite simply by poverty. For example, Theresia¹⁰ of Valletta who lived in a mezzanin near the soldiers' quarters in 1788, admitted that she had made a mistake by stealing from Vincenzo Agius. But she said she had no choice since she had a hungry five year old who had not eaten for three days.

The social conditions which existed in the eighteenth century constrained many women to borrow money in order to be able to make ends meet. Unfortunately a large number of these women, who were often widows, got into serious trouble when they were unable to repay their debts. Examples of women who had debts are many, for example in 1768 Carmina Brincat owed Maddalena 9 tari and 10 grani¹¹ in 1732 Eugenia Mifsud¹² owed a certain Gratio 17 tari, and also in 1732 a woman called Paolina¹³ owed Teresa Abdilla 20 tari for a set of cotton socks which Teresa had worked for her. It was not only money which women borrowed. In 1791 Maria Zarb¹⁴ complained that Francesca, a neighbour, had not returned a gold necklace which she had lent her. Other women like Carmela La Rosa¹⁵ in 1772 could not pay the rent something which she had in common with several other women.

Court cases involving debts were often settled by the debtor being obliged to repay the borrowed sum slowly at a stipulated rate per month.

The mentioned Paolina and Eugenia Mifsud had to repay their debts at two tari per month. The Monte di Pieta was in fact set up precisely for the purpose of helping people who wished to borrow money and many were the Maltese women who made use of its services and pawned their jewellery there. In some cases certain women are referred to as 'impegnatrice Monte di Pieta' and it would appear that these women took care of the arrangements involved when someone, often other women, wished to pawn anything. One such *impegnatrice* Clara Darmanin¹⁶ got into trouble when a woman from Vittoriosa accused her of stealing her silver sideplate which she had given to her in order to have it pawned for 4 scudi.

One major way in which women caused quite a bit of trouble in the community was through fighting and arguments. These often led to violence and to people getting beaten up as a result. In 1787, Evangelista Gauci¹⁷ was attacked and beaten up by Theresa Seychel. Apparently Evangelista was hurt quite seriously. Theresa was obliged to pay for all the damaged which included the medical expenses for an injured eye, all the damage done to Evangelista's property and the loss of income Evangelista suffered because she could not work at her "Rotella" (spinning wheel) for 26 days.

One particularly vicious quarrel occurred in 1738 between Theresa Borg and Maria Gulieimo.¹⁸ It all started when Teresa remarked that Maria's six year old son was a bastard.. Apparently wanting to start a fight Teresa went on shouting and banging on Maria's door repeating what she had said. Maria and her mother came out and a vicious fight occurred with the mother being pushed to the ground and Teresa being bitten by Maria.

There were many factors which helped to instigate and fuel these types of quarrels. Some women like Maria Schembri¹⁹ behaved in a disorderly way after drinking too heavily. In 1793 she was accused of punching Fidele Giordomaina in the face while in a drunken stupor. Many of the quarrels which did not involve men, are characterised by insults, the favourite being calling the other woman a prostitute and her husband a weakling and a cuckold. These insults were often taken seriously and there seemed to exist the idea that a woman had to retaliate to save her and her family's honour.

The overcrowding of families in one building helped to create a tense atmosphere with women ready to jump at each other's throat. One area in Valletta which produced quite a few vicious quarrels and fights was the Manderaggio. Thus in 1724 Mattheola Casha²⁰ and her daughter Teresa

quarrelled with Maria known as La Basusla. La Basusla went over to the other's house, threatening to break down the door of Casha. Mattheola and her daughter came out with two "castre" (flower pots stands). Eventually it was Basusla's husband who came out and broke up the fight.

Actual violence sometimes arose on the merest trifle. Maddalena²¹, wife of Joseph gave Giovanna Bellini of Senglea a rotolo of cotton to be worked for her, plus two tari. Later Maddalena angrily insisted that a quarter was missing from the rotolo she had given Giovanna. She then attacked Giovanna with her hands. Maddalena also injured Giovanna's daughter Rosaria Saladina on the head with a stone which she produced from the pocket of her dress.

Many of these cases involve women alone. However examples can easily be produced of women taking the initiative and quarrelling with men other than their husbands. In 1724 Gio Maria Gafa²² sought refuge in the church of Santa Lucia in Valletta because he was afraid of the consequences of a quarrel he had had with a woman called Maria Giordan. He pleaded that he had never touched Maria wife of Aloysio. He had met her in a street in Valletta and she rudely demanded to know what he was doing there. He told her to leave him in peace and raised his arm as if to strike her. He was later advised by Carlo Farrugia, a sailor, that for his own good he should give himself up or seek refuge.

Some women were labelled as trouble makers. Liberata Said²³ was accused in 1793 of possessing a vicious tongue always ready to spread malicious gossip on her neighbours. Another woman who caused a bit of trouble was Catarina

Muscat²⁴. In 1787, amongst other things she was warned by the court under threat of heavy punishment not to molest Don Lorenzo Mifsud and his family. She was also prohibited from entering the shop of Francesco Schembri.

Some women disturbed the neighbourhood so much that they were evicted from their house. This happened to Liberata Vassallo²⁵ from Valletta in 1781. She lived in Strada Stretta and her house faced one of the windows of a hall of the Sacra Infermeria. The Principal of the hospital complained that Liberata and her women friends were disturbing the sick with their noise, singing, shouting, dances and scandals. The Principal demanded that the sick must enjoy perfect quiet and in fact Liberata was forced to move out within 8 days. In 1784 Anna Maria Vella²⁶ and her daughter Rosa

were also evicted from their house and prohibited from living in Valletta, after the father of a young man named Vincenzo complained that Vella had introduced his son to her house and seduced him.

In 1715, an Italian buonavoglia, Giuliano Tarchi²⁷ was stabbed with a knife by Rosa Bugeja. Giuliano recalled how Rosa, who lived in Vittoriosa, invited him to her house together with other buonavogli, one Italian and one Corsican. Giuliano said that they were all fooling about and having fun when he went over to Rosa and started joking with her by touching her face and hands. Rosa became very angry when he did this and suddenly taking out a knife she gave him a blow. She was detained in prison for twenty days.

Women like Rosa show that some Maltese women did not shirk from using weapons or violence if annoyed. These women together with the thieves, con-artists, drunks etc drift away from the stereotyped image of women which the majority of people have. Far from being timid and passive they show that they were real flesh and blood characters who definitely knew how to take care of and protect themselves.

There is no doubt that women are less deviant than men according to various criteria such as crime statistics. They tend to be more conformists than men. Yet, still, as one can see from these cases, women can at times be just as aggressive, especially since in some places in Malta's eighteenth century society, the environment in which these women lived demanded that one had to be tough in order to survive.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Campbell, Anne, Women and Crime: Girl Delinquents, Oxford, 1981.

Luttrell, Anthony, "Eighteenth Century Malta: Prosperity and Problems", Hyphen, vol.3, no.2, Malta, 1982

NOTES

¹ Malta Annual Report 1921 - 1922

² Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.41: Margarita Crocco 1776

³ Cathedral Museum Mdina, Inquis. Arch., Processi 121c, f.1155.

⁴ Palace Archives, Ms. Misc.1: De Vulnere Dictum Maria Mizzi Cro Albimo Vasssallo

⁵ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.42: Dictum de Christina Seychell Cro Rosam Galdes

⁶ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.28: Dictum Theresia de Valvo 1787

- ⁷ Palace Archives, Ms. Misc.15: Processum Crim.Cro Maria Vella de Furto 1701.
- ⁸ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.32:Dictum Joannij Mamo commiji noc Maria Azzopardi de Furto
- ⁹ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.35:Dictum Thomas Mifsud Cro Paulam Demicoli 1744
- ¹⁰ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.27:Dictum Vincentz Agius Cro Teresiam 1788
- ¹¹ Palace Archives, Ms. Misc.12 Supp.Carmina Brincat 1768
- ¹² Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.70:Sup.Cro Eugenia Mifsud 1732.
- ¹³ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.70:Pro.Bambiosa Cassar 1732.
- ¹⁴ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.17:Dictum Maria Zarb 1791.
- ¹⁵ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.9:Pro d.Carmela Larosa Ca Joannem Rosam 1772.
- ¹⁶ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc. 41:1748 una femmina il Broccola.
- ¹⁷ Palace Archives, Ms. Misc.28:Per Evangelistam Gauci Cro Teresia Seychel.
- ¹⁸ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.19:Theresia Borg Cro Mariam Guglielmo
- ¹⁹ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.42: Pro Maria Schembri Cro Fidele Giordomaina
- ²⁰ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.20:Mattheola Casha Cro Mariam (Uxorem).
- ²¹ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.35: De Vulnere Dichi Rosariae Saladino Cro Magdalenam 1714
- ²² Palace Archives,Ms.Misc.20:Angeli Bonici Cro Maria & Aloisio Giordan 1725.
- ²³ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.42:Int Liberatam Sayd et Theresiam Mamo
- ²⁴ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.Palace Archives, Ms. Misc.28: Pro Catarina Muscati Cro Don Laurentium Mifsud 1787.
- ²⁵ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.70:Dictum Liberata Vassallo.
- ²⁶ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.71:Dictum Anna Maria Vella
- ²⁷ Palace Archives, Ms.Misc.31:Juliani Tarchi Cro. Rosam Bugeja

NICOLÒ ISOUARD'S LAST YEARS IN PARIS:
TWO NEW DOCUMENTARY SOURCES¹

Arnold Cassola*

The University Library of Amsterdam houses various collections of manuscripts. Amongst these, one finds the *Diederichs Collection*. The collection belonged to Pieter Arnold Diederichs (1804-1874), who gathered together around 35,000 pieces dating from the 16th to the 19th Centuries and coming from different countries, including England, France, Germany and Italy. This collection, which is mostly made up of letters, poems and official documents, was donated to the University Library in 1875 by W. G. A. Diederichs, Pieter Arnold's son (Defraïpont 1983: 59-60).

Amongst the letters contained in the Diederichs Collection, one finds two which are related to Nicolò Isouard (1773?-1818),² the celebrated Maltese composer who spent a good part of his life in Paris. Though the dates on both letters are missing, the first one reproduced hereunder could not have been written earlier than the year 1814, and certainly not later than 1816, even though the most probable date should be somewhere around September-October 1814. This letter, which is catalogued as nr. 46 Cg, was sent to Nicolò Isouard by the French opera singer Jean Baptiste Sauveur Gavaudan, who was born in Salon on the 8th August 1772 and died in Paris on the 18th May 1840.

As can be gathered from the contents of the letter, Gavaudan, who was a tenor who had made his debut on the Parisian scene in 1791 in the *Théâtre du Monsieur*, was preparing for the production of Isouard's *Jeannot et Colin*, an "opéra comique" in three acts, which was premiered at the *Opéra-Comique* on 17th October 1814 (Azzopardi 1991: 85). Gavaudan had become a member of the *Opéra-Comique* in 1794 and he was to go through quite a successful period as a singer and actor in this theatre. This fruitful period basically came to an end in 1816, when Gavaudan left Paris for some

* A well known author, Dr Cassola is a senior lecturer at the university of Malta.

eight years later, in May 1824, that he reappeared on the Parisian scenes, at the *Opéra Comique*. However, his star was on the wane and he retired definitely from the scene in 1828 (*Nouvelle Biographie General*, Tome XIX-XX: 738-739).

The letter to Nicolò Isouard is addressed:

A Monsieur
Monsieur³ Nicolo
rendu fille d'Thomas

and the full text in French goes:

Monsieur Nicolo, je suis toujours très enrhumé, je crains de ne pouvoir reprendre les répétitions de ton ouvrage avant Lundi, mais je ne perds point de temps, je travaille à force et ne retarderai pas d'un jour Jeannot et Colin. Je te prie d'en taire par à Etienne, et de persuader le camarades qui se donnent la peine de repeter en mon absence, que je serai prêt aussi qu'eux. Mme. Gavaudan va mieux, et pourroit jouer son rôle dans deux jours si elle étoit en Etat rentrer à present.

Bien le bon jour, ton ami
Gavaudan

[To Monsieur Nicolo sent through Thomas's daughter

Monsieur Nicolo, I have still got this very persistent cold and thus I believe that I cannot resume with the rehearsals of your work before Monday; however I am not wasting any time, I am endeavouring to work hard and I will not delay by a single day Jeannot et Colin. I beg you not to mention anything to Etienne, and to persuade my colleagues, who are taking the trouble to continue rehearsals in my absence, that I shall be prepared as well as them. Mme. Gavaudan is better, and she should be able to play her part in two days' time if she will be in a state to recover.

I wish you a good day, your friend
Gavaudan]

In this letter, although he signs himself as "your friend" and makes use of the familiar form "tu", one can sense Gavaudan's feeling of insecurity. The impression he gives is that he feels threatened, because of his persistent cold, that he might lose his part in Isouard's comic opera, which, by the way, was written as a fruit of the rivalry that existed between Isouard and François-Adrien Boïeldieu, who in 1812 had returned to Paris, after an eight year stay in Russia (*Nouvelle Biographie Général*, Tome XXXVIII: 8). Gavaudan's insistent plea to Isouard not to reveal anything to the author of

the libretto, Charles Guillaume Etienne (1778-1845), and to persuade the other members of the troupe to carry on with rehearsals in his absence is, I would believe, not only indicative of his eagerness to be part of the cast of *Jeannot et Colin*, but also of his lack of self confidence in a period of his life when the climax of his career had already been reached.

Gavaudon also mentions his wife in this letter. It seems she was also sick at the time of writing but was on her way to a full recovery. Actually, both Gavaudan and his wife acted and sang regularly in Isouard's works at the *Opéra-Comique* (*Nouvelle Biographie Général*, Tome XXXVIII: 8). Alexandrine Marie Agathe Gavaudan was born in Paris on 15th September 1781 and died in Passy on 24th June 1850. She made her debut in 1798 at the *Théâtre Favart* and was considered to be amongst the best comediennes of the *Opéra-Comique*. She retired in 1822. She was mainly renowned for the part of Colette in Isouard's *Jeannot et Colin*, together with that of Margot in *Diable à quatre* by Jean-Pierre Solié and Euphrosine, Rose d'amour in Boiëldieu's *Petit chapeau rouge* (*Nouvelle Biographie Général*, Tome XXXVIII: 8).

* * * * *

The second letter, reproduced hereunder, was written by Isouard himself and is catalogued as letter nr. 53y in the Diederichs Collection. Even here, although Isouard is so meticulous as to highlight the fact that he is writing on the 2nd of May at 8 o'clock in the morning, the year is not specified! Internal evidence, however, definitely restricts the dating to between 1814 and 1818.

The full text of this letter, whose addressee remains unknown, goes:

Je suis au desespoir mon cher confrere que vous vous soyez donné la peine de venir chez moi. Je comptais avoir le plaisir de vous voir ce soir a la reunion; en vous ayant pas voit vous pouviez croire que le tout étoit arrangé, car je ne vous aurais pas laissé dans l'embarras puisque vous et moi sommes les directeurs des concerts de notre societé. Tulou viendra et jouera un Andante suivi de Variations sur la flûte avec accompagnement de Piáno. Mr. Seinitchoëffer tiendra le Piáno. Voici ce qu'il faut pour le programme et je desire que cela suffise pour m'excuser aupres de vous.

Mille amitiés,

Nicolo

le 2 May, a 8 heures du matin

p. annoncer voici les titres

M. Tulou première flute de l'Accademie Royale de Musique executera un Andante suivi de variations de la Composition (avec accompagnement de Piano).

Mr. Seinitchoëffer, Artiste de l'Accademie Royale de Musique tiendra le Piáno.

[I am desperate, my dear colleague, that you have had to bother to come to my house. I was counting on having the pleasure of seeing you this evening at the meeting; not having seen you, you could have well imagined that everything had been fixed, because I would not have left you in an embarrassing situation since both you and I are the conductors of the concerts of our Society. Tulou will come and play an Andante followed by Variations on his flute, accompanied by piano. Mr. Seinitchoëffer will play the piano. Here is what is needed for the programme and I trust that that's enough to excuse me with you.

A thousand friendships,
Nicolò
the 2nd of May, at 8
in the morning

In order to be able to announce them, here are the titles

M. Tulou, first flute at the Accademie Royale de Musique, will play an Andante followed by variations on this composition (accompanied by a piano).

Mr. Seinitchoëffer, an artist at the Accademie Royale de Musique, will play the piano.]

In this letter, Isouard is writing about the organization of a concert for "notre société" to another person who must have been joint conductor with him of these concerts. It would be quite interesting to try and discover who this other music conductor was. What seems quite clear is that this person is not a very close friend since Isouard utilizes the formal "vous" when addressing his "cher confrere". As for the unspecified "notre société", I would be led to believe that this had to do with Isouard's involvement with the *Opéra-Comique*. This seems to be confirmed by Isouard's references to artists from the *Académie Royale de Musique*, considering that such *Académie*

was in fact attached to the Opera theatre.

The reference to the *Académie Royale de Musique* is also important since it gives us a decisive clue as regards the dating of the letter. In fact, this "principal opera company of Paris underwent several changes of title as the result of political events". From 1791, it was called *Théâtre de l'Opera*; in 1794 it changed its name to *Théâtre des Arts*; in 1804 it became the *Académie Impériale de Musique* and, finally, from 1814 onwards, barring a very short parenthesis, it was called *Académie Royale de Musique* (*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 14: 211). It is obvious, therefore, that Isouard must have written this letter after the change of name of the Academy from *Académie Impériale* to *Académie Royale*, in 1814, and before 1818, the year of his death.

These were the years when the renowned flutist Jean-Louis Tulou, who is mentioned in the letter, was in strong competition with his rival Louis Drouet (1792-1873). The two flutists divided the opinions of the Parisians, but eventually Tulou got the upper hand. Tulou, who was born in Paris in 1786 and died in Nantes in 1865 was, at the age of 15, already considered by many in France as the major flutist of the country. In 1804, at the age of 18, he held the first of his professional appointments. In his letter, Isouard refers to him as the "première flute" of the *Académie Royale*. Which goes on to confirm that he was still at the apex of his career in the period around 1814-1815 and still very active as a performing artist. It was only later, in 1829, that "Tulou received the long-desired chair at the Conservatoire which he held till his retirement in 1856" (*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 19: 251).

* * * * *

From this short letter, one can note Isouard's concern for his colleague, who had bothered to visit the Maltese composer at his home. Whether it was sincere concern or not, is still to be ascertained. It would seem that Isouard had not completed the preparations for the planned concert, according to the deadline that had been fixed by the two of them. And this is what had made Isouard's colleague go and visit him at home. Our composer seems to come up with the excuse that he had been expecting to refer everything to his colleague on that same evening at a meeting which both were supposed to attend and he stresses the fact that he would certainly not

have left his friend in an embarrassing situation. There would seem to be a feeling of uneasiness on Isouard's part in this letter, and a certain sense of guilt. That is why he may be so eager to stress that the programme had been taken care of by him.

The tone of justification of this letter could be reflecting Isouard's sense of guilt at not having done his duty properly with respect to the organization of the concert, but it could also be something more. One must keep in mind that Isouard was extremely disappointed and angered at the nomination (at his expense!) of his rival Boiëldieu as a member of the *Institut de France* in 1817. Slightly later sources, such as F. Fetis in his 1840 article on Isouard in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (as quoted by *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 9: 355) and the 1862 *Nouvelle Biographie Général*, Tome XXXVIII: 8, clearly state that during the last years of his life Isouard let himself go to the "abus de plaisir", the dissipation of his wealth and the total abandonment of his work and other duties.

Now, if Isouard was spending the last years of his life in a dissolute and reckless way, it was only natural that his frame of mind was not the right one and that he could have felt a certain amount of remorse for his irresponsible behaviour! Remorse which can hardly be hidden in this letter and which would, therefore, restrict the dating to the years 1817-1818, as from the date of Boiëldieu's appointment until Isouard's death.

* * * * *

Apart from their intrinsic historical value, I find the two letters interesting for another much simpler reason: they highlight the inner feelings of two well known figures in moments of weakness. It is quite a sad sensation for all us human beings to feel neglected by others during certain periods of our life-time. I believe, however, that this feeling is perceived rather more tragically by public figures and other celebrities, who spend most of their lives being in the limelight, praised, adulated ... and envied by their contemporaries, only to find themselves one day no longer the centre of attraction. The psychological impact of such a new reality must certainly be a devastating one.

In these two letters, the famous singer Gavaudan and the renowned composer Nicolò de Malte stand out as two personalities who have passed

the peak of their professional life and who, in their subconsciousness, are desperately fighting against the oblivion that is normally reserved for people who have lost the fame, power and glory of their better days once and for all.

This pitiful battle against the merciless flow of time is inevitably destined to be a losing one. Being doomed to succumb to the tyranny of time, the simplest but most consistent of the rules of life, Gavaudan and Isouard in their letters indicate that, apart from having been great artists during their life-time, they were also normal human beings like all of us, with their fleeting moments of joy and, alas, much more persistent periods of depression.

REFERENCES

Azzopardi, J. (ed.), 1991. *Nicolò Isouard de Malte*. Malta: The Friends of the Cathedral Museum.

Defraïpont, J. R., 1983. *Catalogus Catalogarum*. Amsterdam: Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam.

Nouvelle Biographie Général. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, fils et cie., Editeurs. Tomes XIX-XX (1857); Tome XXXVIII (1862). Reprinted - Copenhagen: Rosenkilde et Bagger, respectively 1966 and 1968.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (Sadie, S., ed.). London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd. Vols. 9; 14; 19 (1980).

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank my colleague of the Department of French, Carmen Depasquale, for having revised my English translation of the letters.

² Nicolò Isouard was a famous Maltese composer. Despite being oriented by his parents towards commercial activity, his love and predisposition for music immediately stood out. His first work, *Avviso ai Maritati*, was premiered in Florence in 1794. In 1795 he wrote *Artaserse*, which was premiered in Livorno. His success earned him the protection of Grand Master of the Order of St. John, De Rohan, who nominated him organist of St. John's Co-Cathedral in Malta. When Napoleon conquered Malta in 1798, Isouard lost his job. The French governor of Malta, General Vaubois, took Isouard to Paris with him in 1799, as his secretary. Here, he became one of the most famous opera writers of the period. Amongst his best known works one finds *Cendrillon* (1810), *Le Billet de loterie* (1811), *Joconde* (1814) and *Jeannot et Colin* (1814).

³ This second *Monsieur* is obviously repeated by mistake.

HUMAN SUFFERING DURING THE MALTESE INSURRECTION OF 1798

C. Savona-Ventura*

INTRODUCTION

The advent of war in any country heralds a total upheaval in the social and demographic characteristics of the community through “war casualties” and changes in the reproductive patterns in the population. War and epidemics are two factors which influence population growth directly by increasing the mortality rate in the population and indirectly by influencing reproductive function. Deaths from medical causes during the war must often be considered “sick war casualties” since the adverse situation in health conditions during the conflict may be contributory to these deaths. The Maltese Islands prior to the advent of modern warfare of the twentieth century have been ravaged by a number of conflicts, an important event being the rising against the French at the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte ousted the Knights of St. John from Malta. After only a few months, the Maltese rose against their French rulers and blockaded the garrison in the Grand Harbour fortified towns. The latter event disrupted civil life in Malta and resulted in marked changes in population structure, growth and reproductive performance. The civil strife and blockade lasted two years. Because the Maltese were poorly armed, they set out to starve the French. However the Islands were short of food and the conditions of the besiegers were little better than those of the besieged. The outcome of the struggle hinged on the food supply and the health of the two parties. Meanwhile disease and malnutrition took a toll of Maltese lives. This mortality is reflected in the population registered before and after the conflict.

POPULATION CHANGES

In 1797, before the rising, the *status animarum* for the diocese of Malta and Gozo estimated the population to number 96,534 individuals,

* Dr Charles Savona - Ventura, a practising doctor, has published a book and various articles on Maltese medical history.

excluding the Order and its followers, with 3,629 recorded baptisms. The live birth (sive baptisms) rate thus approximated 37.65 per 1,000 civil population. During 1798, the population was estimated at 114,000 total inhabitants. In 1807, the population numbered only 93,054, a drop of 18.4% over the previous decade¹. This population drop was not due to direct war casualties, but due to famine and disease mitigated by a proportion of the population emigrating abroad with the departure of the Knights. A similar drop was registered in Gozo in spite of the fact that the strife in the sister island lasted only until October 1798. The population in Gozo in 1798 has been estimated at 16,000 inhabitants. This figure fell by 19.8% over the subsequent decade so that the population in 1807 was estimated at 12,829². It has been estimated that during the strife, out of a population of 100,000 souls, some 2,000 perished through sickness and hunger, while direct war casualties amounted to just more than 300 men killed and wounded, some being killed prior to the uprising. Further Maltese war casualties occurred in the fortified towns, including the executed 45 rebels of January 1799, the pharmacist from Senglea executed in February 1799 for possessing a sword, and the death of Michele Caruana from Senglea in January 1799 as a result of injuries sustained after his house collapsed after bombing³.

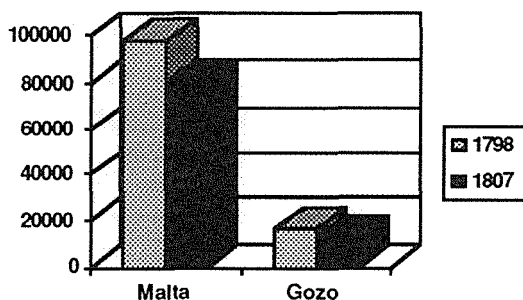


Figure 1: Population Counts

Prior to the conflict there was little difference in the number of civil events registered annually. During the year of the conflict, there was a marked decrease in christenings from: 3597 in 1798 to 2237 in 1799. The number

of baptisms in 1800 rose to 3318. A greater proportion of the registered baptisms were illegitimate during the period 1799-1800. This reflects the decrease in the number of marriages recorded in 1798-1799. There was subsequently a surge in marriages in 1800. The death rate was also markedly raised in 1799 (Table 1)⁴. Under French rule, it was made obligatory by decree of 24th August 1798 for the doctor or midwife assisting at a birth to present certificates of birth within 24 hours to the municipality under penalty of suspension of practice and the infliction of a fine and imprisonment. Declaration of death also required registration with the municipal authorities. These enactments were the first attempt to introduce civil registration in Malta, registration being previously the sole domain of the ecclesiastical authorities⁵. The health laws for Malta were brought into line with those applicable at Marseilles, while quarantine precautions were maintained. The quarantine service was to be entrusted to an inspector (Antoine Poussielgue) aided by two sub-inspectors (Segond, John Baptist Poussielgue), a chancellor (Joseph Renaud), a clerk (Stephen Renaud), a doctor (Emanuel Locana, supplemented by Grech), a fumigator (Matthew Pulis, supplemented by Philip Pulis). This quarantine system started functioning on the 18th August 1798 but came to an abrupt end because of the onset of hostilities. After the naval battle at Aboukir in August 1798, lodgings and a large barrack were constructed at the Lazzaretto in case Bonaparte and his troops returned to the Island. The Maltese rebels were also concerned with isolating the sick during epidemic episodes. Thus when febrile illness, possibly typhus, appeared on board the captured French ships - the *Genereux* and *Ville de Marseille* - the sick prisoners were isolated to Comino after being made to strip off their clothes and washing in the sea, and later with vinegar⁶.

Year	Baptism s	Illegitim ate	M arriages	Burials
1796	3449	208 (6.0%)	722 (20.9%)	2276
1797	3629	214 (5.8%)	726 (20.0%)	2138
1798	3597	207 (5.8%)	465 (12.9%)	3030
1799	2237	167 (7.5%)	486 (20.7%)	8199
1800	3318	246 (7.4%)	844 (25.4%)	3869

Table 1: Civil Events Registration in Malta: 1796-1800

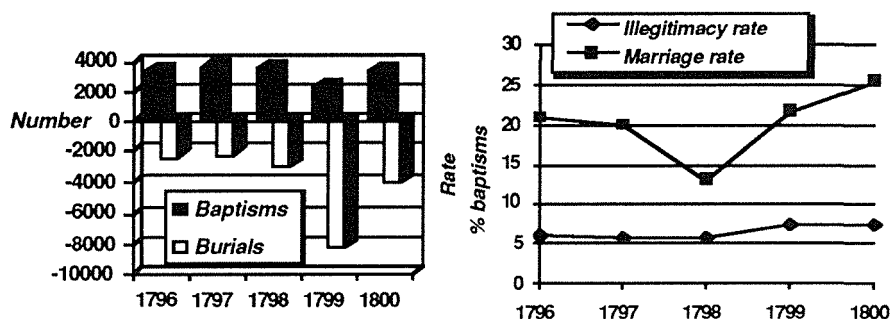


Figure 2: Population Change and Social Parameters: 1796-1800

The mortality rates in both Valletta controlled by the French (St. Dominic & St. Paul Parishes, French troops) and the countryside towns controlled by the insurgents (Tarxien, Qormi, Zebbug, Zabbar, Siggiewi, B'Kara) followed overall similar patterns throughout the two years of the strife (Figure 3). The total number of deaths from the city and countryside towns suggest a significant increase in mortality rates, the rise starting in December 1798 and peaking during March-July 1799. The peak was apparently similar in both the fortified towns and in the countryside, and was the result of an infective epidemic which affected all the population. A marked difference between the city and the countryside mortality is evident after May 1800, when the number of deaths in the countryside started to rise again in contrast to the pattern in Valletta. The rise in mortality in the countryside also affected the British troops. The mean mortality rate in Sept-Oct. 1800 was 2.23 per 1,000 troops, in contrast to the 1.27 rate in the previous months of Jan-Feb 1800. The low mortality in the city may be due to the fact that the remaining population in the city after the 1798 epidemic and the exodus of inhabitants to the countryside was a relatively young one who could withstand the ravages of disease and famine better. By the end of the strife the population in the fortified towns had decreased from 40,000 to 7,500⁷.

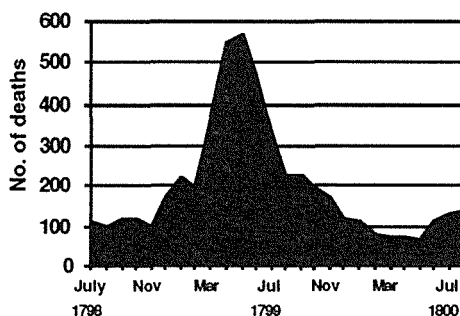


Figure 3: Death Registrations in various cities and towns

MEDICAL SERVICES

On the first day of the French occupation of Malta on the 12th June 1798, the French commanders established their first hospital at Mdina selectively reserved to deal with sick or injured troops⁸. The sick troops, which numbered 300, were transferred four days later to the Sacra Infermeria at Valletta which was converted into a military hospital and renamed the Grand Hopital. A full account of the Sacra Infermeria during the French occupation is given by the Physician-in-chief Dr. Claude Etienne Robert who published a book in 1802. Only a few wards were considered fit to accommodate patients, while the pharmacy, the laboratory and the storerooms were inadequate. Dr. Robert carried out a number of modifications to improve sanitation, ventilation and lighting, but he condemned the Sacra Infermeria as a hospital saying "Ainsi, si l'hôpital de Malte étoit si vante du temps de l'ordre, ces louanges ne peuvent tomber que sur la manière avec laquelle il étoit administré". The wards were cleared of all incumbent objects including pictures on the walls, the bed canopies and curtains. The Falanga, previously reserved to treat venereal patients, was modified with the provision of large windows and connected to the Great Ward to increase the number of beds available for febrile patients⁹. The administration of the hospital was entrusted to four individuals, two of whom were Maltese physicians (Dimech resigned and was replaced by Joseph Camenzuli; and Joseph Grech). The lay administrator was Emanuel l'Hoste,

who after resignation was replaced by Agius and John Francis Gauci. The principal hospital was staffed by two French army doctors (Robert and Kenyales), an army surgeon (Sagaiere), two senior civil doctors (Dimech and Agius), three junior doctors (Joseph Grech, Gravagna and Joseph Ciaja), two senior surgeons (Angelo Ventura and Micallef), three junior surgeons (Emanuel Gonzi, Benedict Montanaro and Chalres Grech), two barber surgeons (Anthony Delicata and Joseph Marin), and four priests. These were entrusted to draw up an inventory of the hospital's holdings and also to provide the patient's necessities. The administration proved inept at providing for the basic necessities of the patients. Within two months, the French civil governor Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angely commented about the lack of clothing and absence of drugs in the hospital¹⁰.

The situation deteriorated markedly after the Maltese rose against the French in September 1798, so that provisions to the hospital became seriously low. At the time of the insurrection, there were 700 patients in the hospital. In April 1799, General Vaubois commented that "Rien n'est si affreux. Les salles sont mal-propres. Le jardin livré à l'hôpital est de toute nullité,...." In June 1799, Vaubois found it necessary to exhort the soldiers to come to the hospital as before, and to defend the medical staff at the hospital. He also contradicted the rumor that no drugs were to be had at the hospital. He also advised the soldiers to maintain personal hygiene by frequent baths and to safeguard their health by eating vegetables¹¹.

Food provisions became markedly reduced. During the first year of the blockade each patient received an average of one ounce of beef or mutton per day. This was substituted by the same quantity of horse or ass meat during the second year. Rice, beans and fish were available, but eggs were a rarity. During most of 1800 the hospital authorities had nothing to give their sick except beans¹². With the increasing malnutrition and an increase in the number of cases of scurvy, the number of sick troops increased so that the Grand Hôpital had proved inadequate to care for the number of diseased men, and other hospitals had to be improvised. By February 1799 there were 800 sick French in two hospitals. By June 1799, the hospitals were augmented to four. The hospitals in Malta and Gozo on the 13th July 1798 as enumerated by Dr. Vincenzo Caruana included: the hospital for males in Valletta - Sacra Infermeria (400 beds - males), the women's hospital in Valletta called Ospidaletto or Casetta (160 beds - females) with the Casa delle Alunne for illegitimate children, the hospital at Rabat - Santo Spirito (40 beds),

Saura Hospital at Rabat (80 beds- males and females), Zebbug Hospital (15 beds - females), hospice at Floriana (280 beds - males and females); Male Hospital in Gozo (20 beds), and the Female Hospital in Gozo¹³. When the French surrendered in September 1800, the sick troops who were unable to travel were transferred to Fort Manoel in charge of a French physician and surgeon, and were cared for until they were fit enough to return to France¹⁴.

The advent of the French in Valletta required the transfer of the sick male civilians out of the Sacra Infermeria to alternative accommodation. The Commission of Government appointed a sub-committee of three members to report on the suitability of transferring the male civilian patients to the Women's Hospital. The committee proposed that modifications were to be made to the Case delle Alunne, situated next to the Women's Hospital, and towards the end of 1798 about 70 civilian patients were transferred to the new wards. This arrangement was short-lived, and alternative accommodation was arranged by January 1799 at the Convent of St. Catherine in Valletta. The convent was renamed Hôpital Civil, and was subsequently extended by adapting a de-consecrated church as a casualty ward, while the choir was converted into a dispensary. The upper floor of the monastery was used for fever cases, while the lower rooms were used for surgical cases and as stores. Part of the basement housed mental patients. A mortuary was built in the yard. The professional staff consisted of two Senior Physicians and two Senior Surgeons, three Junior Physicians and three Junior Surgeons, and two Barber-surgeons¹⁵. The Women's Hospital continued to function as previously, though not without incidents. On 28th April 1799, the hospital authorities complained to Vaubois that a number of French soldiers had attempted to forcefully enter the hospital. The administrators first proposed that the female door-keeper should be replaced by a male one, but later proposed that the sentries attending the Grand Hôpital across the road could also guard the Women's Hospital. These suggestions were not acted upon and on the 7th June, another incident resulted in the abduction from the hospital of an orphan girl by a French soldier¹⁶. Because of the exodus to the countryside, medical practitioners were not evenly distributed within the three cities. In Cospicua, six doctors had left the town - including Bruno, Renò, Angelo Pace, Abela, Frangisk Scicluna and Adriano. To remedy the shortage, the Council of Health gave its permission to the surgeon Anton Cutajar to practice medicine in the locality. Similar provisions were made for Senglea and Floriana¹⁷.

The Maltese rebels outside the fortifications, together with the British re-enforcements, similarly required the establishment of a number of hospitals to deal with the sick and injured personnel. The previously established hospitals - Santo Spirito Hospital (40 beds) and Saura Hospital (80 beds) both at Rabat - proved insufficient to cater for the medical needs of the insurgents. Churches at Rabat and Mdina were taken over for use as hospitals. These included St. Dominic Church at Rabat called the Great Hospital, St. Francis Church adjoining Santo Spirito, the Bishop's Seminary, St. Sebastian Church and St. Agata Church. In the country, the sick inhabitants were often treated in private houses. Thus at Birkirkara, Vincenzo Borg, helped by Dr. Leopoldo Bernard, converted his house into a small hospital to care for the town's residents which had increased by about 6000 refugees from the cities. Other sites which served as hospitals for the inhabitants of the countryside were St. Joseph Hospital at Zebbug and St. Gregory Church at Zejtun¹⁸. The strife resulted in an acute shortage of medical practitioners in the countryside, so much so that instances of individuals posing as doctors and prescribing medicines were reported. On the 1st November 1799, Ball warned that anyone caught practicing medicine without qualification would be fined. The fine money was to be split between the accuser and the hospital at St. Dominic's Convent. Because of the shortage in medical practitioners, the National Assembly arranged for the return of three doctors - Drs. Bjagju Consoli, Lawrenz Cassar and Frangisk Scicluna - who had been exiled to Gozo after exiting from the city. It also exempted doctors leaving the city for the country from being exiled to Gozo¹⁹. A number of Maltese doctors gave their services to the troops, including Dr. Francesco Caruana with the Tarxien Battalion, Dr. Ludovic Balbi with the Zabbar Battalion, and Dr. Nicola Bezzina with the Zejtun Battalion. The Birkirkara Battalion had 23 doctors engaged with it, some giving a combatant service. A number of Maltese doctors were eventually awarded commemorative medals for their contribution during the strife. These included Dr. Enrico Xerri awarded a gold medal for representing the village of Kirkop on the Maltese National Assembly, and Dr. Paolo Borg awarded a silver medal for contributing funds towards the upkeep of the Birkirkara Battalion²⁰. Many of the medical practitioners gave their professional services to the poor sick and the men of the Maltese battalions without receiving any salary or any other remuneration. The financial losses suffered by the various established hospitals in the countryside as a result of the prolonged strife and the previous depletion of

equipment by the French were felt long after the capitulation of the French in 1800. In the early years of the nineteenth century, frantic appeals for financial help were made by hospital administrators since their bequests and revenues could no longer be counted upon to provide sufficient income for the hospital maintenance. These appeals included those made by St. Joseph Hospital for men in Gozo, St. Joseph Hospital at Zebbug, and Santo Spirito Hospital at Rabat who presented appeals in 1801 and 1802. In the early decades of the nineteenth century because of their anxiety to establish popularity, the British took over the responsibility for the Charitable Institutions, including the hospitals, asylums and alms distributions, which had been formerly financed by the Order. By 1815, these became the heaviest item of civil expenditure amounting to about £20,000 annually²¹.

Temporary general and regimental hospitals were also established for the British and Portuguese/Neapolitan forces aiding the Maltese. The General Hospital was established in July 1800 at the Zejtun residence of the Dutch Consul, Count Agostino Formosa de Fremaux. A house belonging to Manuel Farrugia at Luqa is known to have served as a regimental hospital for the 48th and 89th British Regiments. Compensation for the use of the site was only affected in 1824. Other hospitals were set up in the Zabbar residence of Bishop Labini, while Saura Hospital also served the British regiments²². The medical staff attached to the General Hospital included the Assistant Inspector of Hospitals Alexander Jamieson, Edward Tegart who served as Surgeon to the Forces, Joseph Gunson serving as Deputy Purveyor, W. May as Acting Apothecary, and Mr. Norman and Mr. Anderson as Hospital Mates. The British physicians in charge of the troops included Henry Reid and P. Cambell for the 89th Foot Regiment, Henry Grasett and William Hill for the 48th Foot Regiment, Jonathan Cotgrave, Alexander Thom, Alexander Baxter, William Robertson and George Peach for the 35th Foot Regiment. The 30th Foot Regiment were served by Edward Tegart being replaced by Ebenezer Brown and John Price²³.

A temporary hospital was set up in 1799 to treat sailors of the British Navy who were aiding the Maltese uprising against the French by blockading from the sea the French troops besieged in the fortifications around the Grand Harbour. The company of the *Goliath* was attacked by a fever. The sick, numbering about 40 individuals, were landed at St. Paul's Bay and placed "in a large castle....where the whole recovered". The large castle in the vicinity of St. Paul's Bay may be considered the first temporary British

Naval Hospital in Malta. Another temporary hospital was set up in a house on the shore by Captain Ball in March 1799 to house the sick sailors on his ship²⁴.

MEDICAL DISORDERS

The two-year siege resulted in a total upheaval in the social circumstances of the population on both sides of the fortifications, an upheaval that brought on a number of related disease states attributed to causalities, famine and infective epidemics. In addition, a number of other disease conditions not attributable to the strife have been recorded. A number of deaths of apparently elderly individuals living in Senglea have been recorded, one aged 80 years dying a few days after an apoplectic attack. One of the French officers stationed at Valletta was taken to the Grand Hopital suffering from peritonitis resulting from a acute appendicitis. The condition was managed conservatively by the physicians. After a very tremulous course, the condition of the officer improved and he was subsequently discharged from the hospital in good health. Two French soldiers were reported to have been treated for quaternary fever or malaria. One contracted the disease in Malta, while the other had contracted the illness in Italy or France²⁵. The arrival of foreign troops - both French and British - on the Islands apparently resulted in an epidemic of Malta Fever or brucellosis in these individuals. Dr. Robert, when commenting that the wards at the Grand Hôpital were unsuitable, forwarded as evidence the fact that cases of acute fevers admitted to the hospital progressed into continuous fevers and subsequently into putrid ones. The fevers generally responded to quinine, but many progressed into malignant forms or changed into tertian or double tertian fevers. The British troops were in December 1799 described as suffering from a "country fever (a kind of intermittent), many of these are convalescent but with the least irregularity of fatigue they relapse and die"²⁶. This progression from an acute fever to a more chronic one with relapsing episodes is typical of brucellosis. It was only during the early twentieth century that brucellosis was found to be transmitted by the goat via its milk, and effective treatment only became available just prior to the Second World War. Another infection which occurred in the French troops was phthisis or tuberculosis which was responsible for a number of fatalities. The onset of tuberculosis in the French troops was ascribed by Dr. Robert to the prevailing climatic conditions.

Tuberculosis was apparently not uncommon in Malta towards the close of the eighteenth century, and this high prevalence in the civil population may have helped infect the French troops with acute forms of the disease²⁷. Venereal disease also became evident soon after the arrival of the French troops. It reached such significant proportions that the monastery of St. Scolastica and the Anglo-Bavarian Auberge were converted into a venereal hospital to treat the French troops. In the attempt to control the spread of this disease General Vabois banished all known prostitutes to the countryside²⁸.

While there was little direct conflict during the two year siege, the strife resulted in a number of direct war casualties, particularly in the earlier months. A few French soldiers and Maltese insurgents died as a result of their wounds²⁹. The siege conditions of the French garrison and the Maltese inhabitants living in the fortified cities brought on a number of disease states related to nutritional deficiencies and infective conditions. The insurrection of the Maltese and the blockade resulted in severe restrictions in the diet of the inhabitants in the Grand Harbour city and towns, even though the grain stores for the whole Islands were located in Valletta. It was estimated that at the beginning of the insurrection, the besieged had provisions which included "corn for eighteen months, plenty of oil, very little cheese". There was "scarce the smallest taste of anything else"³⁰. The prolonged siege conditions resulted in the development of specific disorders caused by vitamin deficiencies. Scurvy, caused by vitamin C deficiency, soon made its appearance among the troops. Dr. Robert appeared to have been familiar with the prevalent theories regarding the aetiology of this disorder. It was known that the disease was due to lack of vegetables and fruit in the diet, while the administration of lemons and oranges were known to cure the disorder. Dr. Robert left a full description of the natural history of the disease as it manifested itself in Malta, including the findings of a number of postmortems which he conducted. His therapeutic efforts included the administration of lemon and orange juice, and while these fruits were available no deaths from scurvy were reported. After 22nd December 1799, all the wine available in the fortified cities was requisitioned for hospital use, and quantities were converted into vinegar since this was reputed to be an antiscorbutic³¹. Scurvy similarly affected the civil population in the fortified cities, and citrus fruits were greatly in demand and commanded high prices. To meet the demand, unripe green lemons started to be sold.

On 29th July 1799, General Vabois ordered that anyone picking or selling green lemons was to be fined and given a prison sentence. On the 11th August 1799, another order stated that no French soldier of whatever grade could pick lemons from any garden, while all lemons were to be reserved for the sole use of the hospitals³². Another vitamin disorder which effected the French troops was vitamin A deficiency causing night blindness. While not fatal, this disorder precluded those affected from performing night guard duties, since they could not distinguish objects in the dark. Dr. Robert associated this disorder which he termed "catarrh of the retina" with undernourishment, and tried to cure it using fumigations with animal liver and aromatic plants. He apparently obtained good but temporary results with this management³³.

The civilian population in the countryside was also affected by food shortages which promoted the spread of disease. The Maltese countryside had long become insufficient for the needs of the population, and the Islands had become dependent on regular grain imports from the continent. Most of the corn of the Island at the beginning of the revolt was stored in the granaries inside Valletta, so that the countryside was practically denuded of all food. Appeals for food supplies from Sicily were made regularly during the two years of the strife with variable response. High-handed piracy had to be resorted to on one occasion³⁴. However in spite of the fact that the countryside population were living on a meagre starvation diet, there is no definite record of specific nutritional disorders affecting the Maltese or the foreign troops assisting them. Besides the regular efforts made to obtain food supplies from abroad, local individuals also supplied citrus fruits to combat the problem of scurvy among the troops. The Furnaru Battalion is recorded to have during 21-24 January 1799 received 650 dozen oranges picked from the garden belonging to Countess Bologna-Bonici³⁵.

When Dr. Robert first took over the clinical direction of the Grand Hôpital, the infective cases included only a few cases of "acute fever" and some "gastric-bilious fevers". These were managed favorably using iced-water, though a few cases progressed into putrid fevers. The concepts of micro-organisms in the aetiology of infective disease were unknown in the late eighteenth century, and infections (generally termed fevers) were classified into a form describing the progression of the disease. Management of fevers was supportive with nursing care, quinine medication to combat fever, purgation, and bleeding. The aetiology of the fevers was ascribed to various

causes. Thus the infections affecting the British troops during the earlier months of 1800 were ascribed as "originating from the bad air of the marsh at the head of the harbour, though from several instances there is reason to consider it likewise infectious"³⁶.

With the onset of winter, augmented by the food shortages, the French soldiers started developing respiratory related infections including catarrhal and rheumatic disease. Rheumatic fever is an infectious disorder which originates as a throat infection and progresses to affect and damage the heart with short and long term debilitating effects³⁷. By September 1799 the pattern of disease in the French troops changed with the advent of nutritional deficiency disorders, though febrile conditions continued to affect the troops. Between June 1798 and September 1800, 4046 cases of fever out of a garrison of 6000 men were treated at the infirmary with a case fatality rate of 13%. A further 300 soldiers died from scurvy, while many others died as a result of phthisis (TB) and diarrhea³⁸. The enforced use of stored water after the insurgents stopped the water supply reaching Valletta via Wignacourt Aqueduct resulted in the development of intestinal disorders with diarrhea and dysentery, probably resulting from bacterial contamination of the cistern water supplies³⁹. After October 1799, the majority of the military and civilian population in the fortified cities were affected with intestinal worms of extraordinary size and volume belonging to the species *Ascaris lumbricoides* which required purgatives and emetics. General Vaubois and Dr. Robert were similarly affected and ascribed the infestation to under-nutrition. Some cases resulted in death as evidenced by postmortems performed by Dr. Robert. The epidemic declined the following spring⁴⁰.

In the early months of 1799, a fever epidemic with a high mortality affected the population in the countryside and the fortified cities. The high mortality caused by this infection is evident from the number of burials registered in the parochial registers during that year compared to the figures in the proceeding and subsequent years (Figure 3). Thus the number of burials in 1799 amounted to 8199, while the figures in the previous and subsequent years were 3030 and 3869 respectively. The epidemic first made its mark in December 1798 and peaked during March-July 1799. The mortality rates apparently returned to pre-epidemic levels by about December 1799⁴¹. The cause of this epidemic cannot now be identified, but it has been suggested to have been an epidemic of typhus fever "having its origin in bad and deficient food, anxiety of mind, fatigue, filth and poverty"⁴².

Epidemiological considerations mitigate against the epidemic being caused by typhus. This infection, transmitted by the rat flea, was not yet endemic on the Maltese Islands, and only became endemic with regular annual registration of cases after the Second World War. The introduction of typhus in the late eighteenth century would have left a focus of infection in the rat population and cases of typhus would have been reported during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries⁴³. While typhus was very common on British ships, the infective epidemic of the Maltese population during the strife does not appear to have been introduced by the British sailors, even though it is reported that the sailors were similarly affected. It appears that the epidemic was first noted in the Maltese population while the British sailors became diseased after landing on the Islands. Thus in May 1799, the company of the *Goliath* was attacked by a fever "similar to one then prevalent on the Island" after the ship's crew had landed for the purposes of watering at Marsacala Bay. The fever started in these men a few days later and eventually spread to affect about forty of the ship's company. The most prominent symptoms were nausea and vomiting, headache, thirst and delirium, while in two or three cases the fever was complicated by suppuration of the parotid glands. The malignant fever also spread to the *HMS Alexander* to affect 27 of the ship's company "from having frequent communications with the inhabitants"⁴⁴. The population and troops in the fortified cities controlled by the French were also affected by the epidemic which carried a similar mortality pattern (Figure 3)⁴⁵. Other descriptions of the course of the disease in the civilian population mention a "tertian fever that became malignant", a "grave fatal epidemic of malignant fever" and a "mortal contagious influenza". A diagnosis was claimed by a non-medical person Clemente Mifsud Bonnici. None of the descriptions are helpful in identifying the exact diagnosis, even though typhoid and malaria have been proposed⁴⁶.

For a period lasting two years, the outcome of the struggle hinged solely on the food supply and the health of the two parties and very little direct fighting was involved. While direct war casualties were few, disease and malnutrition took a heavy toll of lives depleting the Maltese population in both Malta and Gozo by about 20%. The situation came to a head on the 4th September 1800 when the food stores for the troops and the civilians in the fortified cities had dwindled to only three days scanty bread rations. General Vaubois was thus forced to abandon his tenacious fight against hunger and disease, and capitulate to the besiegers. The effects of the two

year civil war on Maltese social and demographic characteristics continued to be felt in the early decades of the nineteenth century, receiving another setback by the introduction of the plague epidemic of 1813 when the population was further reduced by about 4-5%.

NOTES

¹ B. Blouet, *The Story of Malta*. Progress Press, Malta, 1989, p.75; *Parish Archives*. In: F. Ciappara, *Marriage in Malta in the late eighteenth century*. Assoc. News Ltd, Malta, 1988, p.126; C.O.S., *Census '85: Vol.1 - A Demographic profile of Malta and Gozo*. Central Office of Statistics, Malta, 1986, p.9

² J. Bezzina, *Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony. The Gozo-Malta Story 1798-1864*. Bugelli Publ., Malta, 1985, p.47

³ *The humble Representation of the Deputies of Malta and Gozo, unanimously elected by the peple, at the foot of the throne of His Britannic Majesty dated 22nd October 1801. C.O.R. Malta, No.3*. In: W. Hardman, *A History of Malta during the period of the French and British Occupations 1798 - 1815*. Longmans, London, 1909, p.410; *Dispatch from Captain Alexander Ball to Hon. Henry Dundas dated 6th March 1801. C.O.R. Malta, No.2*. In: W. Hardman, p.345; X. Baldacchino, *Memorie Diverse, Archivum Paroeciae Senglea, 1783-1816*. In: S. Fiorini: *From the diary of a priest in Senglea during the French Blockade. Melita Historica*, 1982, 8(3):246-247; C. Testa: *The French in Malta 1798-1800*. MidSea Publ., Malta, 1997, p.49,141,475-516

⁴ *Parish Archives*: In F. Ciappara, *op. cit. note 1*, p.126,128

⁵ *Registers of the Government Commission Session of the 30th July 1798, 24th August 1798*. In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.94,98; *Collezione di bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati del Governo dell'Isola di Malta e sue dipendenze. Dal 17 Luglio 1784 al 4 Ottobre 1813*. Government Press, Malta, 1840, p.41-43

⁶ *Enactment by Commander-in-Chief dated 16th June 1798*. In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.81; *Report received by the Neapolitan Government dated 12th September 1798*. In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.112; C. Testa, 1997: *op. cit.*, p.237; W. Bonnici: The "Very Long Hiccup" and the emergency of the Army Medical Services in Malta. *J. R. Army Med. Corps.*, 1997, 143:p.127

⁷ C. Testa, "L-Identita' Nazzjonali Maltija fi Zmien il-Franczi, ". In: T. Cortis (ed.), *Oqsma tal-Kultura Maltija*. Ministry of Education & Internal Affairs, Malta, 1991, p.168; Robert, *Memoire sur la topographie physique et medicale de Malte, suivi de l'histoire des malades qui ont regne dans cette ville parmi les troupes francaise, sur la fin de l'an 6, et pendant les annees 7 et 8*. P. Didotlaine, Paris, 1802, p.76-77; W. Bonnici: *ibid*, p.126; P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*. Wellcome Hist. Libr., London, 1964, p.525-526

⁸ H.P. Scicluna, Documents relating to the French Occupation of Malta in 1798-1800. *Archivum Melitense*, n.d., V:p.129,142

⁹ Robert, *op. cit. note 7*, p.32-37; P. Cassar: Claude Etienne Robert (1770-1847). A French military physician in besieged Valletta - 1798-1800. *The Sunday Times*, 26 July 1998, p.48-49

¹⁰ H.P. Scicluna, *op. cit. note 8*, p.196; B. Azzopardi, *Giornale della presa di Malta e Gozo*. Malta, 1864, p.42; *Notes sur les Ressources de la Division de l'Armee et du Port du Malte. Dispatch by Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angely to Directoire Executif dated 12 Fructidor an 6 (29th August 1798)*. In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.105; C. Testa, 1997: *op. cit.*, p.185

¹¹ *State of the Islands of Malta and Gozo on the 12th Day of October 1798*. *Arch. Nat.*, AF III.73. In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.132; *Dispatches by General Vaubois to the Commissaire Ordonateur de Terre dated 30 Germinale (19th April 1799) and 6 Messidor (24th June 1799)*. In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.607,612

¹² Robert, *op. cit. note 7*, p.78

¹³ *Intelligence from People who came out of Valetta the 23rd Febraury 1799*. *Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34909*, fol.282. In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.197; *Dispatch Lieutenant Vivion to Lord Nelson dated 25th June 1799*. *Brit. Mus. add. MSS 34940*. In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.215; Robert, *ibid*, p.43; The hospitals in Malta and Gozo on the 13th July 1798 as enumerated by Dr. Vincenzo Caruana included: the hospital for males in Valletta - Sacra Infermeria (400 beds - males), the women's hospital in Valletta called Ospidaletto or Casetta (160 beds - females) with the Casa delle Alunne for illegitimate children, the hospital at Rabat - Santo Spirito (40 beds), Saura Hospital at Rabat (80 beds- males and females), Zebbug Hospital (15 beds - females), hospice at Floriana (280 beds - males and females); Male Hospital in Gozo (20 beds), and the Female Hospital in Gozo. C. Testa, 1997: *op. cit.*, p.180-183,387

¹⁴ *Articles of Capitulation. C.O.R. Malta*, No.1. In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.320

¹⁵ P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 7*, p.77-78; C. Testa, 1997: *op. cit.*, p.184

¹⁶ C. Testa, *Maz-zewg nahat tas-swar*. Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta, 1982, vol.3:p.533-534

¹⁷ C. Testa, *ibid*, vol.3:p.601-602

¹⁸ P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 7*, p.522; P. Cassar, "Medicine in Malta in 1800-1810. Contrasts, Concepts and Personalities." *St. Luke's Hospital Gazette*, 1971, 6(1):p.5; C. Testa, *ibid*, vol.3:p.509,604; A. Mifsud, *Origine della sovranita' inglese su Malta*. Malta, 1907, p.259

¹⁹ C. Testa, *ibid*, vol.3:p.509,604

²⁰ P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 7*, p.521; J.C. Sammut, "Maltese Blockade Medals," *Proc. History Week 1992*, 1994, p.83,86-87, footnotes 21,44

²¹ P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 18*, p.4-5; P. Bartolo, "British Colonial Budgeting in Malta: the first formative decades 1800-1838". *Melita Historica*, 8:p.7-8

²² C. Testa, *op. cit. note 16*, vol.3:p.525,716

- ²³ W. Bonnici: *op. cit.* note 6, p.127-128; *Dispatch Lieutenant J. Vivion to Captain Ball dated 1st July 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS.34940.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p.218; *Dispatch General Thos. Graham to Lieut.Gen. Fox dated 1st February 1800. C.O.R. Malta, No.1.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p.268
- ²⁴ W. Burnett, *A Practical Account of the Mediterranean Fever as it appeared in the Ships and Hospitals of His Majesty's Fleet in that Station during the years 1808, 1811 and 1813 and of the Gibraltar and Carthage Fever.* Callow, London, 1816; C. Savona-Ventura, *Malta and the British Navy: The Medical Connection during the nineteenth century. Part 1: The establishment of the Naval Hospital at Bighi.* *J. R. Navy Med. Serv.*, 1992, 78:p.171-176; *Dispatch Captain Ball to Admiral Nelson dated 31st March 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34910, f.114.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.206
- ²⁵ X. Baldaccino, *op. cit.* note 3, p.237-260; Robert, *op. cit.* note 7, p.58,69-72
- ²⁶ Robert, *ibid*, p.35,78; *Dispatch General Thos. Graham to Lord Kieth dated 16 December 1799.* In: W. Bonnici: *op. cit.* note 6, p.127
- ²⁷ Robert, *ibid*, p.27,38,61-63; P. Cassar, *op. cit.* note 7, p.218
- ²⁸ P. Cassar, *ibid*, p.63
- ²⁹ *Dispatch Sir William Hamilton to Lord Grenville dated 29th September 1798. Foreign Office Records, Sicily, 11.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 114-115; *Dispatch Captain Ball to Nelson dated 30th November 1798. Brit. Mus. add. MSS 34908, f.209.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p.153; *Dispatch Lieutenant Vivion to Captain Ball dated 1st July 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34940.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p.217
- ³⁰ *State of the Islands of Malta and Gozo on the 12th Day of October 1798. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34907, f.408.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.132
- ³¹ Robert, *op. cit.* note 7, p.43-54; *Orders dated 14 Fructidor (31st August 1799) and 30 Frimaire (21st December 1799). Journal du Siege de Malte.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.616,627
- ³² C. Testa, *op. cit.* note 16, vol.3:p.571
- ³³ Robert, *op. cit.* note 7, p.55-57; *Dispatch Lieutenant Vivion to Lord Nelson dated 25th June 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34940.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit.* note 3, p.216
- ³⁴ *Address from the Deputies of the Maltese people to Lord Nelson dated 12th September 1798. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34942, f.234.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.113; *Brief statement of the Present Situation of the Maltese dated 25th October 1798. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34950, f.188.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.136; *Appeal from Canon Caruana to Lord Nelson dated 5th February 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34943, f.145.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.179; *Dispatches from Sir. T. Troubridge to Lord Nelson dated 5th-6th January 1800. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 34916.* In: W. Hardman, *ibid*, p.254-255
- ³⁵ *Papers of the French period. Manuscript in possession of the Strickland family.* In: G. Muscat Azzopardi, *Nazju Ellul. Grajjja ta' Malta fi zmien il-Francizi.* G. Muscat, Malta, 1909, pg.170:footnote 1
- ³⁶ Robert, *op. cit.* note 7, p.38; *Dispatch Thos. Graham to Lieut.Gen. Fox dated 1st*

February 1800. C.O.R. Malta, No.1. In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.268

³⁷ Robert, *ibid*, p.40

³⁸ Robert, *ibid*, p.76-78

³⁹ *State of the Islands of Malta and Gozo on the 12th Day of October 1798. Brit. Mus. add. MSS 34907, f.408.* In: W. Hardman, *op. cit. note 3*, p.132; Robert, *ibid*, p.40,60-61

⁴⁰ Robert, *ibid*, p.63-67; C. Testa, *op. cit. note 16*, vol.3:p.711,714; P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 7*, p.526

⁴¹ C. Testa, *op. cit. note 16*, vol.3:p.508,529; C. Testa, *op. cit. note 7*, p.168; N.H. Nicholas, *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*. Henry Colburn, London, 1845, letter dated 17 April 1799; *Parish Archives*. In: F. Ciappara, *op. cit. note 1*, p.126,128

⁴² J. Hennen, *Sketches of the Medical Topography of the Mediterranean*. London, 1830, p.501; W. Bonnici, *op. cit. note 6*, p.126

⁴³ C. Savona-Ventura, "Malta and the British Navy: The Medical connection during the nineteenth century". (Part III: Medical and other problems), *J.R. Navy Med Serv.*, 1993, 77:p.102; C. Savona-Ventura, "An outbreak of Cerebrospinal fever in a 19th Century British Mediterranean Naval base". *J.R. Army Med. Corps*, 199*, 140:p.157

⁴⁴ C. Savona-Ventura, 1993, *ibid*, p.103; W. Burnett, *op. cit. note 24*; *Dispatch Captain Ball to Admiral Nelson dated 31st March 1799. Brit. Mus. Add. MSS.34910, f.114.* In: W. Hardman: *op. cit. note 3*, p.206

⁴⁵ Robert, *op. cit. note 7*, p.59-60,76-77

⁴⁶ P. Cassar, *op. cit. note 7*, p.523; A. Mifsud, *op. cit. note 18*, p.264; C. Savona-Ventura, 1993, *op. cit. note 43*, p.103

AN EVENTFUL TWO YEARS IN THE HISTORY OF MALTA AS RECORDED IN THE BRITISH PRESS

Anthony Vella Gera*

The two eventful years in the history of Malta, namely 1798 to 1800 covering the end of the rule of the Order of St. John and the French occupation of these islands, were well represented in the British Press.

However it seems best to commence this documentary account by going back a few years, to be precise to the 21st. January 1793 where in the "Place de la Revolution" now the "Place de la Concorde" in Paris, the unfortunate King Louis XVI of France was guillotined.

An anonymous eyewitness whose account was published in *The Times*, Saturday, January 26, 1793 describes the event. "*I have been a spectator to one of the most tragic sights that ever my eyes witnessed but the circumstance was of too much importance to allow me to be absent from the spectacle..... The Major's carriage being arrived at the place of execution it drew up close to the scaffold..... The king and his confessor*", (the Abbe' de Firmont, whose memoirs give a moving picture of the king's last hours)¹, "*than got out of it. The king on mounting the scaffold instantly took off his stock himself, as well as his great coat and unfastened his shirt collar. His hair had been clubbed up close like an abbe's in order that no indignity might be offered him..... The executioner went to tie up his arms..... then took up a large pair of scissors to cut off his hair.... His Majesty then said "I pardon my enemies. May my death be useful to the nation". The executioners than placed him to be beheaded. The king recoiled, and said, "Another moment, that I may speak to the people". The aide-de-camp to the commandant, Suaterre, then said to the executioner, "Do your duty". The wedge then slipped and the head was instantly off.....*"² In the opinion of the eyewitness barely ten minutes had passed from the time of the arrival of the carriage to the execution of the king. It was evident that orders had been given to expedite the proceedings as quickly as possible, the authorities perhaps fearing a commotion by the vast crowd. The heavy military presence, which according to the same eyewitness consisted of upwards of 60,000 horse and foot, reinforces this view. This newspaper also

* A banker by profession, Mr Vella Gera is a keen Melitensia collector.

gives extensive coverage to other events in Paris, publishing the contents of the king's will, reports on other members of the Royal family, and debates from the French National Convention. The whole tone of the newspaper is that of a witness to a catastrophe, as indeed it was. The death of the king spelled the final end of the *ancien régime*, and unleashed that extreme revolutionary fervour which swept over Europe toppling many an ancient monarchy and principality, including the principality of Malta and Gozo, under the rule since 1530, of the Knights of the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

It was on the 9th. June 1798 that the Grandmaster of the Order, Ferdinand von Hompesch, who was destined to be the last Grandmaster to reign over Malta, was facing the threat of invasion by a numerous French fleet escorting transports in all totalling 54,000 troops³, under the command of the young, ambitious, dynamic and ruthless General Napoleon Bonaparte, en-route, as it transpired, to Egypt, but with instructions to occupy Malta.⁴

The threat of invasion became a reality. In the chaotic situation which rapidly developed, resistance was to a large degree neutralised by Napoleon's spies on the spot, the betrayal of a good number of French knights, including some of the Grandmaster's closest advisors, who had apparently conspired secretly for years with the French Revolutionary Government against their own Order, and also by French sympathisers among the local population. All these elements sowed confusion and dissention among the defenders.

Dr. Carmelo Testa in his monumental work "The French in Malta" published by Midsea Books Ltd in 1997 gives a graphic description of the background of these events and the terrible situation the beleaguered Grandmaster was faced with.⁵ Hompesch has since been principally blamed for the capitulation of Malta to the French and much odium heaped on his memory. Perhaps in retrospect it may be more correct to say that he was more sinned against than sinning.

The Sun, Wednesday, August 22 1798 reports on the taking of Malta by the French in an article dated July 13 from Corfu. *The account of the taking of Malta was published here on the 20th. of June, in a long notification addressed to the Greeks, in which among other things, it is said: "A letter from General Buonaparte, received this day by the Central Administration, announces the taking of Malta. The Republic will cover the Mediterranean with Victories. We shall soon see the Hero among us, &c."* This letter from Buonaparte was dated the 14th. of June.....It expressly directed that the taking of Malta should

*be made known to the Inhabitants of Corfu, and all the Greeks in the Morea; to which was added, that further intelligence should be sent to the Commissary of the course taken by the French Fleet.*⁶ The same newspaper also published a short news item dated August 8 from Vienna, mentioning Grandmaster Hompesch's request for asylum there after his expulsion from Malta. *No answer has yet been returned to Baron Hompesch, the late Grandmaster, who has solicited permission to reside in Vienna, in consequence of which, Baron Hochberg, a Batavian Maltese knight, arrived here two days ago from Trieste, to support his application. According to his account, the inhabitants of Malta were in a state of revolution a few days before the arrival of the French, on which account, and the weakness of the garrison, the Grandmaster thought it not prudent to attempt any resistance. This column ends with the comment: It is now remarked here that the capitulation of Malta by Baron Hompesch was not signed.*⁷

The capitulation of Malta under the guise of a Convention was signed by Napoleon together with Commander Bosredon Ransijat, formerly the Order's treasurer and one of Napoleon's agents,⁸ Baron Mario Testaferatta, Advocates G. Nicolo Muscat & Benedict Schembri, Bali di Torino Frisari, and the knight Filipe de Amati event on board the French Flagship "L'Orient" on June 12, 1798.⁹ The Grandmaster did not sign this document when it was presented to him.¹⁰

Particular note should be taken of Article 7 of the Convention which categorically declared that *The inhabitants of the islands of Malta and Gozo shall continue to enjoy, as in the past, the free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Religion. They shall retain the property and privileges which they possess, no extraordinary taxes shall be levied.*¹¹ The French, to a large degree, and unfortunately for them, did not honour this clause, in consequence of which their relations with the local population rapidly turned sour. Their insensitive and high handed behaviour, particularly the sale of sacred objects from churches and convents, following the wholesale spoliation by Napoleon of numerous objects of gold, silver and precious stones from churches and other buildings formerly belonging to the Order, earned them increasing hostility from a deeply religious people. The news of Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at the mouth of the Nile (Aboukir Bay) on August 1 1798 provided an impetus which brought them to the brink of rebellion. The Times, Wednesday, October 3 1798 reports on this singular victory, and publishes Nelson's letter dated August 3 to Admiral

Earl St. Vincent from the "Vanguard", off the mouth of the Nile: My Lord, Almighty God has blessed his Majesty's arms....by a great victory over the fleet of the enemy....off the mouth of the Nile. The enemy was moored in a strong line of battle, but nothing could withstand the squadron....under my command. Their high state of discipline...with their valour....was absolutely irresistible.¹²

Evidence of the rapacity of the French was recorded in *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday, November 1, 1798 where it was mentioned that *Admiral Nelson has caused drawings to be made from the armorial bearings upon the plate brought from Malta, and found on board one of the captured French ships. These drawings have been sent to the minister of the knights at Naples, in order that it may be restored to the right owners.*¹³

Meanwhile the knights of St. John in Russia forming part of the Russian Priory under the protection of Czar Paul 1, who was given the title of *Protector of the Order* some months before,¹⁴ issued a manifesto condemning the capitulation of Malta to the French and accusing the knights in Malta and by implication Grandmaster Hompesch of betraying the honour of the Order. This same newspaper published the full text of this manifesto under the heading of "Protestation of the Grand Priory of Russia", of which the following is an extract: *We, the Baillis, Grand Cross, Commanders, Knights of the Grand Priory of Russia, and other knights of St. John of Jerusalem, at an extraordinary assembly at the Prioral Palace of the Order in the Imperial residence at St. Petersburg, obliged to turn our attention towards Malta, what profound grief must we not feel in beholding that ancient and noble theatre of our glory treacherously sold by a Convention as null in its principles as it was infamous in its effects?.... The cowards who bore the name of knights surrendered that bulwark of Christianity which the example of their predecessors and the sacred laws of honour enjoined them to defend to the last drop of their blood.... If it depends on us at the present day to wash off in the blood of traitors the crimes they committed in shamefully bartering the ancient and superb inheritance of honour which our ancestors transmitted, let us at least show with energy the just resentment, hatred and contempt with which this felony inspires us..... We solemnly disavow every proceeding contrary to the sacred laws of our Constitution. We regard as degraded from their rank and dignities all those who drew up, accepted or consented to the infamous treaty that surrendered Malta.....*

In fine we will never acknowledge for our brethren, but those who shall manifest the conformity of their principles with ours, by adhering to the present

*protestation, which we reserve to ourselves the power of extending or renewing..... Unanimously accepted and stamped with the seal of the Grand Priory of Russia. Dated at St. Petersburg, this day, Thursday 26th. of August 1798.*¹⁵

In Malta relations between the Maltese and their French masters steadily worsened, the flashpoint of rebellion being the sale on Sunday September 2 1798 of sacred objects at the Carmelite Church in Mdina which so angered the large crowd rapidly assembling outside. The situation became increasingly unmanageable and was not helped by the arrogant behaviour of the French commandant of Mdina, Lazzare Masson who was soon after stoned and *expired under the rain of blows from stones and sticks.*¹⁶

The same newspaper gave the news of the Maltese insurrection, although it prematurely stated that the French had already surrendered the island: *Government received intelligence yesterday, by the Lisbon mail, of the French troops at Malta having resigned the island by capitulation into the hands of the inhabitants. For some time previous to this event, the enemy, having been driven from every other part, were confined to the fortress of the capital, where they became so distressed from want of provisions, that they were at length forced to offer terms of capitulation, which after some hesitation were accepted by the people, who were in safe and quiet possession of the island..... We also understand that several transports, and one or two vessels of force, which were in the harbour, fell into the hands of a small British squadron that had for a short time before blockaded the port, and thereby accelerated the surrender of the island. This intelligence, although not received from a quarter immediately official, is not doubted by Ministers.*¹⁷

The rebellion rapidly spread, the Maltese reacting with such ferocity that the French were forced in a very short while to take refuge within the Grand Harbour fortifications, Forts Manoel and Tigne', and the walls of the Castello in Gozo, the small garrison in Fort Chambray was hurriedly evacuated by them during the night of the 16/17th. September 1798.¹⁸ The Times, Monday, October 22 1798 also refers to the Maltese insurrection in several news items, one report says "An express is just now arrived from the Viceroy of Palermo, bringing an account of the Maltese having made themselves masters of all forts except one, which it was thought could not hold out. From the batteries the Maltese had sunk the "Guillaume Tell", (an incorrect statement as we shall see later on), and the two frigates which had escaped from Beguieres, and had hoisted Neapolitan colours. The whole island was in the utmost want of

provisions. The insurgents had cut off the only supply of water which the French had in their fortress, and it was supposed to be impossible for them to hold out for any length of time"¹⁹. It was widely thought at the time that the French garrison was on the point of surrendering, particularly when the sea approaches were already blockaded by Portuguese and British ships, commanded respectively by the Marquis de Nizza and Sir James Saumarez. This widespread belief may explain the spate of news items announcing their imminent surrender or even their actual capitulation. In fact on the afternoon of the 25th. September 1798 the allied commanders decided to issue a summons inviting General Vaubois to surrender. In his brusque reply Vaubois refused to consider the allied request.²⁰ Notwithstanding this defiant reply no one could imagine that the siege would last two whole years.

Another news item from the same newspaper dated Paris, October 13, reveals French anxiety about the fate of their garrison: *The last accounts from Malta are rather alarming. They confirm the intelligence of an insurrection having broken out in that island, several of our soldiers have perished. The French garrison is provided with corn for a twelve-month, but it has little wine and meat, and cannot obtain water but with great difficulty.*²¹ French anxiety is also graphically evident in another report from the French press reproduced in this newspaper: *The "Correspondance" of this day contains the following letter from Malta, dated the 21st. Frucidor (7th. September). "The Sicilian Vespers have been renewed, and French blood has been shed by the murderous poniards of the inhabitants of this town. It was on the day corresponding with Sunday, preceding the 20th. Frucidor (2nd. September) that the insurrection broke out after the Vespers, at the signal given by the toscin, and by the two guns fired in the old city. We have no intelligence of the fate of the garrison of the island of Gozo, composed of 350 men, nor of that of the old city, which consisted of 100 men; much fear is entertained of their falling under the poniards of the assassins. The insurgents have rendered themselves masters of several batteries, which command different landing places, and of a powder mill. On the 20th. Frucidor (6th. September) the peasants appeared before the town, but were driven back by the fire of our cannon. They cannot lay siege to it, but they have numerous partizans among the inhabitants. The French force consists of some frigates and gun-boats, which keep the sea open, and render them invincible, if the ports of Sicily should be early enough shut against the English fleets.*²²

Finally, elsewhere in this newspaper a report states that *General Schauenburgh has been appointed Governor of Malta*,²³ an incorrect statement,

probably refering to the appointment, among others, of the Knight Commander Schauenberg by Grandmaster Hompesch as his emissary to Malta. Up to that time Hompesch still had hopes of returning to Malta and re-establishing the Order's rule. From Trieste, where he was staying at the time, the Knight St. Priest wrote to the Bali de Litta in St. Petersburg that *We have heard from some merchants who have just arrived from Malta, that the Maltese peasants have risen in rebellion....and have raised the flag of the Order. If the Order had warships...The Grandmaster could go personally among the Maltese.....because now they know who had betrayed them....*²⁴

Barely two months from the start of the rebellion the French garrison in Gozo was forced to capitulate. The Sun, Wednesday, December 26, 1798 gives prominence to this success, publishing the text of two letters, one sent by Captain Alexander Ball to Admiral Nelson reporting on this success, and the second sent by the latter to Admiral Earl St. Vincent enclosing a copy of Captain Ball's despatch. Nelson's letter praises Captain Ball's *zeal, activity, and ability* and also reveals that he *had entrusted him with the blockade of Malta* by the British fleet.²⁵ Captain Ball's letter to Nelson was dated October 30, 1798 from the "Alexander" off Malta: *Sir, I have the honour to acquaint you, that the Commandant of the French troops in the Castle of Goza, (nowadays known as the Citadel in Victoria), signed the capitulation the 28th. inst. which you had approved. I ordered Captain Creswell of the Marines to take possession of it in the name of his Britannic Majesty, and His Majesty's colours were hoisted. (As a matter of interest this was the first occasion when the British flag was flown in the Maltese Islands).²⁶ The next day the place was delivered up in form to the Deputies of the Island, His Sicilian Majesty's Colours hoisted, and he acknowledged their lawful Sovereign. (It should not be forgotten that the King of the Two Sicilies was feudal overlord of the Maltese Islands, since the Order of St. John had originally acquired Malta not in absolute ownership but in fief of the Crown of Sicily.²⁷ At the time of acquisition Sicily belonged to the Spanish Crown under the rule of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V as King of Spain). I embarked yestarday all the French Officers and Men who were on the Island of Goza, amounting to two hundred and seventeen. I enclose the Articles of Capitulation and an inventory of the arms and ammunition found in the Castle, part of which I directed to be sent to the assistance of the Maltese, who are in arms against the French. There were three thousand two hundred sacks of corn in the Castle, which will be a great relief to the inhabitants, who are much in want of that article. I have the Honour to be,*

✍ (Signed) Alex. John Ball.

*To Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson.*²⁸

The military stalemate was maintained throughout 1799. The French entrapped behind the walls of the Harbour fortifications, and the Maltese insurgents and their British allies too few in number and too lightly armed to make any assault possible against such formidable bastions. The French garrison under their resolute commander General Vaubois were determined to resist as far as possible, but the blockade by land and sea was gradually starving them of essential supplies. However one memorable incident, in January of that year, deserves to be mentioned. In order to break this impasse, the Maltese leaders made secret contact with their compatriots inside Valletta, planning the infiltration into the town of troops from the countryside. Unfortunately the daring plot was discovered, and a number of the conspirators amongst whom was Father Michael Xerri who played a key role in the conspiracy *and who was a close friend of Canon Saverio Caruana, one of the principal leaders of the Maltese insurgents*²⁹ paid with their lives for their patriotism. The background of this sad event is described in detail in Dr. Testa's book.³⁰

By the begining of 1800 the plight of the French garrison was becoming increasingly desperate, the shortage of essential supplies including food became acute. Attempts by elements of the French fleet to break out of the Grand Harbour and run the gauntlet of the British fleet, in order to obtain help and to report on the situation in the island, nearly all failed. Similarly unsuccessful were outside attempts to land provisions and reinforcements for the beleaguered garrison. The *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Monday, March 31, 1800 reports on one such attempt: *Advices were at the same time received from Lord Nelson* (following his victory at the Battle of the Nile, Admiral Nelson was raised to the peerage as Baron Nelson of the Nile),³¹ *announcing the capture of the "Genereux" man of war of 74 guns....and also of a large store ship, which were both going to Malta. There were fifteen hundred troops on board these two ships for the reinforcement of the garrison of Valletta. The store ship ran aground after being taken.... The "Genereux" was first engaged by the "Success" frigate of 32 guns.....and in the action Admiral Perree was killed by a raking shot which took both his legs. The "Genereux" had ten men killed and several wounded, the "Success" two killed and eight wounded. The "Genereux" attempted to escape, but Lord Nelson's fleet coming up, she struck. The French troops have been lately landed at Leghorn. Malta is now closely*

*blockaded by Lord Nelson in the "Foudroyant" of 80 guns, and by the "Audacious" of 74, The "Theseus" of 74, "Culloden" of 74, "Lion" of 64 guns, and the "Success" frigate. The garrison of Valletta is so short of provisions, as well as the ships in that harbour, that the captain of the "Guillaume Tell" had declared he must put to sea and take the chance of capture, as he could not subsist his crew any longer. There is consequently the best reason to believe that Malta cannot long hold out....*³²

The "Guillaume Tell" did in fact break out of the Grand Harbour on the night of March 29, 1800. It was however sighted off Cape Passaro by units of the British fleet, chased, and after an epic three and a half hour battle was forced to strike its colours. A full report submitted by Captain Dixon of the "Lion" and subsequently presented to Lord Keith, Commander-in-Chief of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, appeared in *The Morning Chronicle*, Wednesday, June 4, 1800. An extract from this report follows:

*From the "Lion" at sea. off Cape Passaro, 31st. March, 1800. "Sir, I have the honour to inform you that yesterday morning, at nine o'clock.....the French ship of war "Le Guillaume Tell", of 86 guns and one thousand men, bearing the flag of Contre Amiral Decres, surrendered, after a most gallant and obstinate defence of three hours and a half, to his Majesty's ships "Foudroyant", "Lion", and "Penelope".....I am sorry to say that the three ships suffered much in killed and wounded, and that the loss of the enemy is prodigious, being upwards of two hundred...."*³³

In increasing desperation the French forces held out for most of the year, but finally on September 2, 1800 General Vaubois the French Commander held a Council of War with his officers, informing them that supplies had finally run out, and that there was no other option but to capitulate. He therefore intended to approach the commander of the English troops assisting the Maltese in order to negotiate terms of capitulation. Contact was made and articles of capitulation agreed upon. These were subsequently signed on September 5, 1800, by *General of Division Vaubois, Commander-in-Chief of the Islands of Malta and Gozo, and Rear Admiral Villeneuve Commanding the Marine at Malta on the one part, and Major General Pigot, commanding the troops of His Britannic Majesty and his Allies, and Captain Martin commanding the vessels of His Britannic Majesty and his allies before Malta, on the other part.*³⁴ One glaring omission was the unjust exclusion of any Maltese representation from being a party to these proceedings, although they bore the brunt of the fighting throughout the

entire crisis, suffering greivous loss and privation as a result.

The full text of Vaubois's Council of War appeared in *The Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Thursday, October 9, 1800, under the heading "Capitulation of Malta" dated Malta Sept. 2: *The Generals...and officers of all ranks commanding....different corps, having been convened by General Vaubois, Commander-in-Chief of the Isles of Malta and Goza, to hold a Council of War, assembled in the National Palace of the city of Malta. Having heard the report of General Vaubois, from which it appears that the magazines of provision in the place have been entirely exhausted for more than a month, that those containing liquor are equally so, that bread, the only food remaining for the garrison and the people, must fail on the 9th. The Council, considering that the garrison of Malta, reduced to a third of a ration for two years past, has filled with honour the task imposed upon it, of preserving this place to the Republic until the last extremity, that after having repulsed all the attacks made by main force upon it, it has by its energy reduced the enemy to mere perservance in a strict blockade, which no longer admits of the hope of any assistance from without, that the force which the enemy employs to secure the blockade by sea and land, leave the brave garrison of Malta no means of procuring any by courage and devotion in a country sterile in itself, and torn up by the fortifications which nature and art have multiplied to secure us by ramparts.... That it is not possible, without endangering the existence of twelve thousand men who compose the garrison, (a gross exaggeration as the total number of the French garrison at the time of the capitulation amounted to 3,227³⁵), to postpone the advantage of entering into conference with the enemy, in order to obtain an honourable capitulation, and such a one as is due to the brave soldiers who have so long suffered for their country. That the navy has shared with honour in the labours and distress of the garrison.... That the laws of war, in short, and those of humanity, sufficiently authorise the Commander-in-Chief to begin a negotiation with the enemy. Having determined that General Vaubois shall, on the 4th. send a flag of truce to the English commander, to propose to him a capitulation and that Rear Admiral Villeneuve shall join with him in endeavouring to stipulate in favour of the seamen, in order that they may enjoy the same advantage as may be granted to the garrison.*³⁶ The articles of capitulation followed this report.³⁷ Another news item in this newspaper analyses the effect of the French capitulation on British foreign policy: *This event is of considerable moment. It removes one of the obstacles to the arrangement of a naval armistice, and will enable Great Britain to negotiate with more effect at the Congress of*

*Luneville*³⁸ where an all too brief peace treaty was eventually signed between France and the Allied Powers on February 9, 1801.³⁹

Immediately following the capitulation of the French, General Pigot and Captain Martin respectively informed the Secretary of State the Hon. Henry Dundas, and Admiral Lord Keith, of what had happened. Copies of these despatches were brought to London by a messenger who was greeted on his arrival by the firing of guns from the Park and Tower (of London) batteries to mark the occasion.⁴⁰ General Pigot in a second communication similarly informed General Sir Ralph Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief of the British Military forces in the Mediterranean.

The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800 gave full coverage to these three communications. The first to The Right Hon Henry Dundas was dated Malta, Sept. 6, 1800: *Conceiving that it may be of the utmost importance that His Majesty's ministers should be acquainted.... with the surrender of the important fortress of La Valette, I have desired Mr. Paget to despatch a messenger to England with a copy of my letter to General Sir Ralph Abercromby on this subject, and the articles of capitulation which are herewith sent you. We yesterday took possession of some of the works, and our ships entered the harbour, and I am in hopes the whole will be evacuated by the enemy tomorrow.... I have the honour to be, &c, H. Pigot, Major-General.*⁴¹

The second communication dated Sept. 5 1800 was addressed to Admiral Keith from "The Northumberland" off Malta: *I have the honour to acquaint you, that the French garrison of La Valette yesterday surrendered to the allied forces serving at Malta, and to enclose a copy of the articles of capitulation. I have not been able to obtain an account of the ordnance and stores in the garrison, the moment it can be procured I will transmit it to your Lordship. I enclose a list of the ships and vessels found in the harbour. I have the honour to be, &c, George Martin.*⁴²

The third communication dated Malta Sept. 5, 1800 was addressed to Sir Ralph Abercromby and consisted of a more comprehensive report, *I have great satisfaction in acquainting you with surrender of the fortress of La Valette.... The capitulation has been signed this day.... During the short time you were here, you must have been sensible of the great exertions which Brigadier-General Graham* (In order to provide military help and advice to the Maltese, Lord Nelson sent General Thomas Graham, the future Lord Lynedoch, to Malta, arriving there on December 9, 1799 with 800 men⁴³ of the 30th. & 89th. regiments of foot.⁴⁴ He subsequently formed two companies of Maltese

troops styled I *Caccatori Maltesi* or *Maltese Light Infantry*,⁴⁵ the first Maltese units to serve under the English flag⁴⁶) *must have made with the limited force he had.....he has since continued these exertions, and I consider the surrender of the place has been accelerated by the decision....in preventing any more inhabitants coming out of the fortress*⁴⁷ *I am happy to say that I have experienced every support from Brigadier-General Moncrieff, and the other officers of the British and allied troops* (in April 1800 a contingent of Neapolitan troops arrived in Malta)⁴⁸ *whose conduct in every respect has been most exemplary....I think it right to mention to you that Lieutenant Vivian of the Royal Artillery has been of considerable service....I have great pleasure in acknowledging the constant and ready assistance and cooperation I have received from Captain Ball of his Majesty's ship "Alexander", who has been employed on the shore during the greater part of the blockade. His name and services are already well known to his Majesty's ministers, and I am sure I need not say more than that those he has performed here do credit to his former character. I herewith transmit you the terms of the capitulation....I have the honour to be, &c, H. Pigot, Major-General.*⁴⁹ The same newspaper also published a list of the British ships which formed part of the blockade of Malta.⁵⁰

At long last the ordeal of the Maltese and Gozitan population was over. In their spontaneous insurrection, at first mostly armed with rudimentary weapons, they managed to drive into the security of the Harbour fortifications units of an army used to the command of the first soldier of the age. Subsequently they succeeded, most of the time on their own, to keep this occupying garrison trapped behind these fortifications for two whole years. Naturally due credit must also be given to the help provided by their British Allies, in particular Sir Alexander Ball, who was always active on their behalf, and who earned the respect of the whole people. The ever vigilant British Fleet blockading the sea approaches played a vital part, and was instrumental in depriving the French garrison of vital supplies and reinforcements. General Graham too, proved to be a tower of strength to the Maltese and provided the professional military advice they lacked.

The population had suffered hardship and great privation, and was often on the verge of starvation. It was therefore apt of General Graham, whilst encouraging recruitment into his newly formed companies of Maltese troops, to pay homage to their courage in his memorable address to the Maltese people, "*Brave Maltese, You have rendered yourselves interesting and conspicuous to the world. History affords no more striking example. Betrayed by*

*your invaders, the oppression and sacrilege of your tyrants became intolerable. Without arms, without the resources of war, you broke assunder your chains. Your patriotism, courage and religion supplied all deficiencies....."*⁵¹

NOTES

¹ S. Scott. Editor: *A Journal of the terror*. The Folio Society, London 1955. Chapter 2.

² *The Times*, Saturday, January 26, 1793, page 2 column 1.

³ Dr. Carmelo Testa: *The French in Malta*. (Midsea Books, 1997), page 23.

⁴ Ibid, pages 5 to 7.

⁵ Ibid, chapters 3 to 6.

⁶ *The Sun*, Wednesday, 22 August, 1798, page 2 column 3.

⁷ Ibid, 8 August, 1798, page 2 column 4.

⁸ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 9.

⁹ Ibid, page 77 & 79.

¹⁰ Ibid, page 76.

¹¹ Ibid, page 77.

¹² *The Times*, Wednesday, October 3, 1798. Page 2 column 2.

¹³ *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1, 1798. Page 2 column 2.

¹⁴ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 74.

¹⁵ *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1, 1798. Page 4 column 3.

¹⁶ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 261.

¹⁷ *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1 1798. Page 4 column 2.

¹⁸ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 295.

¹⁹ *The Times*, Monday, October 22, 1798. Page 2 column 4.

²⁰ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, pages 351 - 352.

²¹ *The Times*, Monday, October 22, 1798. Page 3 column 2.

²² Ibid, page 3 column 3.

²³ Ibid, page 3 column 2.

²⁴ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 533.

²⁵ *The Sun*, Wednesday, December 26, 1798. Page 2 column 3.

²⁶ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 386.

²⁷ Ibid, page 75.

²⁸ *The Sun*, Wednesday, December 26, 1798. Page 2 column 3.

²⁹ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 492.

³⁰ Ibid, chapters 28 & 29.

³¹ Robert Southey: *Life of Nelson*. (The Folio Society, London 1956), page 135.

- ³² *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Monday, March 31, 1800.* Page 2 column 3.
- ³³ *The Morning Chronicle, Wednesday, June 4, 1800.* Page 2 column 1.
- ³⁴ *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thursday, October 9, 1800.* Page 3 column 3.
C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 818.
- ³⁵ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 833 note 22.
- ³⁶ *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thursday, October 9, 1800.* Page 3 columns 1 & 2.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, page 3 columns 2 & 3. *The French in Malta.* Pages 818 to 824.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, page 3 column 4.
- ³⁹ J. Christopher Herold: *The Age of Napoleon.* Penguin Books 1963. Page 127.
- ⁴⁰ *The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800.* Page 2 column 3.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, page 2 column 1.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Cecil Aspinall-Oglander: *Freshly Remembered.* The Story of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch. The Hogarth Press, London. 1956. Page 117.
- ⁴⁴ Major A.G. Chesney: *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army.* William Clowes & Sons, London 1897. Page 13.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid*, page 17.
- ⁴⁶ C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 750.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*, page 784.
- ⁴⁸ *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army.* Page 16.
- ⁴⁹ *The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800.* Page 2 column 1.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*, page 3 column 2.
- ⁵¹ A.G. Chesney, *op.cit.*, pages 16 & 17.

THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN MEDITERRANEAN ISLANDS, 1793 - 1815.

Desmond Gregory

Between 1794 and 1815 Britain occupied no less than eighteen islands in the Mediterranean, though several were very small indeed (Capraja, Lampedusa, Camino, Cerigo and Ithaca, for instance). Most were held until the wars ended, though some were given up earlier : Corsica in 1796, Elba in 1797, Minorca in 1802, Capri in 1800 and Ischia and Procida in 1809.

Can any common purpose or purposes be discerned in this amazing dispersal of effort? First, there was the quest for a sovereign base from which the navy could operate to safeguard trade in the Mediterranean. Second, there was the wish to save Italy from falling into the grips of France and, when this became impossible to attempt a recovery of that peninsula in cooperation with Austria and Russia. Third, there was the determination to preserve Egypt, the route to British possessions in India and ultimately the whole Turkish empire, from conquest from Napoleon, by the occupation of strategically placed islands.

Soon after the outbreak of the war with France, a British fleet under Admiral Hood was sent by Pitt to the Mediterranean. Hood's instructions were to bolster morale of states bordering on that sea who were already at war with France or seemed to be threatened by her aggression; give them such naval and military assistance as the fleet and a small British army could afford; disrupt all French seaborne trade, while protecting that of the allies; and attack the French fleet when occasion offered.¹

After the allies were forced out of Toulon in December 1793 - the base having been surrendered to Hood by the French royalists during the summer - Hood and his forces seized Corsica, at the invitation of the Corsicans. Corsica provided the British with harbours, a base well placed from which to watch Toulon and the remnant of the French republican

¹ Desmond Gregory is the author of various works on Britain's presence in Mediterranean Islands in the 18th and 19th Centuries, including Malta, Britain and the European Powers 1793-1815 (London 1996).

fleet, and support the armies of Austria and Sardinia on the mainland of north Italy. Capraja and Elba were also seized. But in October 1796 the British were forced to withdraw from Corsica and Capraja, and from Elba in April of the following year, due to Napoleon's victories in Italy.

The Corsican episode had been unpopular in Britain. An experiment in granting a constitution (liberal by the standards of the time) and the creation of a joint kingdom under a British Viceroy (and not the Corsican leader Paoli) had not appealed to the Corsicans as a whole, and their refusal to pay taxes led to a widespread and successful revolt. This failed venture in colonial rule was to colour the views of British statesmen when, in 1812, they had to decide on Malta's future form of Government.

In November 1798, after the British fleet had again entered the Mediterranean (having been absent for two years) and Nelson had destroyed the French fleet at the battle of Aboukir Bay, the British occupied Minorca (Spain now being an ally of France). Minorca, which had been a British colony for much of the eighteenth century, until it was returned to Spain at the end of the American War, has a fine harbour at Port Mahon. It was much valued by British admirals who were given the task of watching Toulon, though with France and Spain both at war with Britain it remained a liability, needing the constant presence of the navy to ensure it remained inviolate. Though its repossession was clearly important in the war to dominate the Mediterranean, now that Corsica was lost, the reason for its capture was not (curiously) naval. Dundas, the secretary of state for war in William Pitt's administration, wanted to distract the attention of Spain from a projected invasion of Portugal, whose harbour Lisbon, at the mouth of the Tagus, was of vital importance to British trade.² The island was given back to Spain at the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. By that time the much finer harbour of Valletta had been in British hands for eighteen months.

Naval opinion differed sharply on the relative importance of Minorca and Malta for the performance of the navy's tasks in the Mediterranean theatre of war. Captain Alexander Ball and Admiral Lord Keith both strongly favoured Malta, as did General Sir Ralph Abercromby, as being more easily definable and a place where good water was more plentiful and the cost of provisions notably cheaper.³ The island was given back to Spain at the treaty of Amiens in 1802. By that time the much finer harbour of Valletta had been in British hands for eighteen months. Nelson however thought Malta useless for his purpose. He told the prime minister in 1803 that

"Minorca may have its inconveniences, but its conveniences are so great, that trust at the moment a Spanish war is certain, that we shall be able to secure it." Malta, on the other hand he considered "a perfectly useless place to refit in" or one from which to procure refreshments, owing to its distance from the waters off Toulon and the prevalence of unfavourable winds.⁴ Pitt, in 1805, pressure from the Tzar to give back Malta to the Knights, toyed temporarily with the idea of advised him strongly against. When in 1808 Spain rose in revolt against the occupation of the French, and offered the facilities of Port Mahon once again to the British fleet, Minorca, though not occupied by the British, became an important British base. Admiral Cotton, commanding the fleet wrote to the admiralty in 1811 that it was vital to retain the use of Minorca. "The fleet in Toulon cannot be efficiently watched, or the blockade at all kept, without the advantage of this island".⁵

Malta came into British hands at the surrender of General Vaubois of the port of Valletta in September 1800. In giving naval and military assistance to the Maltese in revolt against the French, Britain was primarily interested in denying the island to France. It had been discussed by Napoleon, who seized it, as "the watch-tower of the Mediterranean". During the course of the siege, Britain had agreed with the Tzar that, at the peace, the Maltese islands would be handed back to the knights of St. John, the Tzar being by then elected as their head. Grenville, Pitt's Foreign secretary, had been responsible for this arrangement, having no very great opinion of the importance of Malta to Britain, though Dundas, the secretary of state for war, profoundly disagreed on this point.⁶ In 1802 the new ministry under Addington honoured the previous British commitment at the Peace of Amiens in 1802. The settlement was intended by the government to keep the island in neutral hands and prevent them falling to the French once again. Once it became clear that Napoleon had not relinquished his designs on Egypt, to which Malta was a necessary stepping-stone, and so to designs on the British in India, Britain decided to renege on the treaty. Her continued occupation of Malta was a purely defensive measure.

It was only after 1806 (Napoleon's Berlin Decree) and the intensification of the economic war, that Britain looked at Malta in a new light - a base for smuggling her manufactures and colonial produce through Napoleon's blockade. The prosperity that Malta then began to enjoy as a result of pursuing this plan induced the British government in 1812 to annex Malta as a crown colony. Not only was Malta a colony that looked

able to pay its way (a consideration of importance to the Westminster Parliament), but "a place of eminent importance as the central point of a great commerce, and the seat of English influence in the Mediterranean" (words of the Under Secretary of State to Sir Thomas Maitland, the new Governor of Malta).⁷

Malta and Sicily were interdependent. The latter was occupied by the British in February 1806 with the consent of the king of Naples, after a small British army had been forced to evacuate the kingdom of Naples. It had been hoped that, with Russian assistance, the French could be driven of Italy, but Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz had effectively put paid to all that. By agreement with Ferdinand the king of Naples (then in exile in Palermo) to whom the British paid an annual subsidy, Britain retained in Sicily a force of never less than 10,000 and sometimes as large as 20,000 troops. The aim was to keep a military base from which to launch attacks on Italy with the assistance of the Austrians and Russians, and to be able to exert influence on policy of the Ottoman Empire. Little ever came of the formed alliance, save a brief occupation of several islands situated in the Bay of Naples, though Capri was held for two years, as a kind of listening-post on Europe. The latter aim led only in 1807 to two highly successful expeditions - a military one to Egypt, and a naval one to the Dardanelles.

Sicily, like Malta, was useful to Britain as a base for trading contraband to the mainland; it was also vital as a source of supply of essential food and drink for Malta. If Sicily ever fell to the French, the British could not have remained in Malta. The British government in 1806 were right to refuse Napoleon's offer to recognize British possession of Malta if they handed over Sicily. Sicily also had useful ports, and both Collingwood and Cotton, the officers who successively commanded the British fleet in the Mediterranean from 1805 to 1812 used Sicily's harbours extensively during the middle years of the war.

In 1809 Collingwood arranged for the occupation of the southern five Ionian Islands - the sixth followed in 1810. The aim was to safeguard the mainland of Greece, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Napoleon had obtained these islands from Russia at the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 and had strongly fortified Corfu. His occupation of the province of Illyria, taken from Austria in 1809, seemed to Collingwood to pose a series threat to Constantinople. The British command in the Mediterranean would like to have gone on to assault Corfu, were reinforcements made available, but the

government in London was opposed, stressing that nothing must compromise the continued retention of Sicily and Malta.⁸

Once it became obvious that Britain's main effort on land against Napoleon must be made in the Iberian peninsula, and that Napoleon's attentions were now focused on Spain and Russia, not the Mediterranean, the government in London lost interest in its islands and their garrisons, save as sources of reinforcements for Wellington. Troops were sent to him from Sicily and Malta in 1811 and 1812. The fear of a French attack on Sicily had subsided after 1810 and Murat's abortive assault on the island, while Malta was never considered imperiled, save by a revolt of the Maltese themselves.

Due to the exigencies of war, all the Mediterranean islands occupied by Britain were governed as military fortresses (save only Corsica), and although civil commissioners were appointed to head the islands' administration, those civil commissioners were in fact generals or, one case, a naval captain/Rear Admiral. Sicily was not a British possession but its king was persuaded, against his wishes to adopt a British-style constitution. It did not work and, by 1812, the British minister, who was also commander of all land forces in the Mediterranean, found himself in a position of having to act as an Oliver Cromwell.

There was never any long term government strategy during the course of the wars against France between 1793 and 1815, to enlarge Britain's empire in the Mediterranean, though there were individuals who favoured such a policy. One was Henry Dundas who died in 1811; another was the writer Francis Gould Leckie who, in his Historical Survey of the Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, published in 1808, advocated Britain annexing the principal islands of the Mediterranean;⁹ and Lord William Bentinck, the commander in Sicily and British minister of the court of Palermo, when disillusioned by the Sicilians' failure to work the constitution he had wished on them, suggested at one stage that Sicily should be made a part of the British Empire, though he shortly after disowned his plan.¹⁰

When the war with Napoleon finally ended, only Malta was retained as a colony, for reasons already mentioned. The Ionian Islands became a British Protectorate, but only because the Allied Powers were unable to agree a better solution. The Admiralty never favoured Corfu or developed it as a naval base. It was in Malta alone that they were interested, as was the British government, and so remained for a century and a half.

NOTES

¹D. Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock* (London and Toronto, 1985) p. 51, citing Dundas to Admiralty 18 May 1793 PRO/CO 173/4.

²D. Gregory, *Minorca The Illusory Prize* (London and Toronto, 1990) p. 196, citing J. Fortescue *History of the British Army* vol 4 p. 606.

³D. Gregory, *Minorca* pp. 204, 259 n26, citing Keith Papers vol 3 pp 214 - 16; Abercromby to Dundas 9 December 1800 PRO/WO 1/344, 565; Ballis Memorandum 1801 PRO/WO 1/83/17.

⁴D. Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers 1793 - 1815* (London, 1996) pp 256 citing Nelson to St. Vincent and Nelson to Addington 27 September 1803 *Nelson's Dispatches and Letters* vol 5 pp 214 - 15.

⁵C. Gregory, *Minorca* p 261 n25 citing Cotton to Yorke 26 December 1810, 17 July 1811 BM.Add MSS 37292 ff 260, 262.

⁶D. Gregory, *Malta* p 67 citing Dundas to Grenville 20 April 1800; Grenville to Dundas 23 April 1800 *Dropmore* vol 6 p. 200.

⁷D. Gregory, *Malta*, p.192, should be citing Bunbury to Maitland 6 June 1815 PRO/CO 159/5/6. The reference given in this book is incorrect.

⁸D. Gregory, *Sicily the Insecure Base*, p78, citing Liverpool to Stuart 29 November 1809 BM ADD MSS 38245 f 295.

⁹D. Gregory, *Malta*, p 193.

¹⁰D. Gregory, *Sicily* p 120 -125. Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh deploring Benedick's idea: 'You know other Powers are more jealous of our obtaining power in the Mediterranean than in any other quarter. Circumstances have made it necessary for them to accept our retaining Malta, but the idea of our possessing Sicily could not fail greatly to revolt them'. C. Webster *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1813 - 1822* vol 1 p 526.

TAKE OFF YOUR HAT!

The banishment of Rev. Giuseppe Cortis, 1824 - 1825

Evelyn Pullicino *

Francis Rawdon, the seventy year old Marquis of Hastings and second Earl of Moira, was chosen as the Governor of Malta after the death of Thomas Maitland.¹ This General who had started his long military career as an ensign in the 15th Foot, had returned from India where he had been a Governor General for ten years just a few months before arriving in Malta.² Hastings assumed the duties of Governor when he took his oath of office on 7 June 1824.³ His was a short governorship for he died two years later on 28 November 1826.⁴

No sooner had he arrived in Malta, that the new governor had to deal with an incident which had occurred prior to his arrival - an affair that was to irritate the British because of the way the Vatican judged it. The culprit at the centre of this incident was a priest of St. Paul's Collegiate Church in Valletta. While a procession with the Holy Sacrament was passing through the streets of the city on 18 January 1824, Rev. Giuseppe Cortis, the Master of Ceremonies of this Church, approached a British officer of the Royal Artillery in uniform, a Mr. Matthias. Cortis asked the officer to take off his cap as a sign of respect towards the Holy Sacrament as was usually done by all the Maltese. Then the priest 'violently uncapped him twice.'⁵ Matthias does not seem to have reacted to this offence surrounded as he was by the devout congregation participating in the procession. He did, however, report the event to his superiors. Since the incident took place only the day after Maitland's death, the authorities did not take any measures at first. When news of what had happened reached him, Ferdinando Mattei, the Bishop of Malta, sent for Rev. Cortis and admonished him without allowing Cortis to state the case in his defence:

*senza entrare nel merito delle ragioni che forse avrebbe potuto addurre in suo favore il Prete, fu acremente rimproverato, ed ammonito, e precettato a regolarsi per l'avvenire con tutta prudentiale maniera.*⁶

* Evelyn Pullicino, P.R.O. of the MUHS, holds a B.A. (Hons) and M.A. degree in History. She now teaches history at San Anton School.

This would have been another insignificant incident similar to those which sometimes ardent Catholic devotees indulged in against Protestant ministers or functions⁷ had not the British authorities given the affair a great deal of attention and importance. On 3 February 1824, the Lt. Governor, Manley Power, wrote to Mattei about what had happened asking for strict measures to be taken against the guilty priest.

Power's letter is important for two reasons. It showed that the British administrators saw the religious freedom that the Maltese had and the respect that they themselves showed towards the dominant religion, as great concessions on the part of a colonial power. On their part the Maltese believed this to be their inalienable right and certainly never thought of their religious freedom as a 'gift' from the British sovereign. Secondly, this letter amounts to a declaration in an official document that deplorable incidents between Catholics and Protestants on the Island did occur. Officially, however, these clashes were rarely, if ever, mentioned.

In his letter, the Lt. Governor explained that the British had always supported the dominant Catholic Religion:

*.....and that it has always shewn Itself most anxious to punish any infraction of such Orders, and to cement the Bonds of Union and goodwill betwixt His Majesty's Catholic and Protestant Subjects in these Possessions.*⁸

This was on the whole true. Such a statement, however, certainly jarred at the time. The Maltese Bishop was still coming to terms with the Mortmain Law enacted by Maitland in 1822, about which he had not been consulted at all.⁹ Worse still, the Lt. Governor was ready to point a finger at him as 'Head of the Catholic Church' advising him to:

*take the most efficient measures for securing His Majesty's Protestant Subjects from insult and outrage on the part of the Catholics, and more especially of the Clergy who ought so well to appreciate the benefits they enjoy in the free exercise of their religion and their religious Rites under the mild Government of the Island in which they live.*¹⁰

These 'benefits' were seen by the majority of the Maltese, and not only by the likes of Cortis, as their fundamental right and, therefore, certainly not as a gift which the British Sovereign could grant or withhold. They believed that theirs' was the only true religion. Other people, be they of another domination or wielding worldly power, had to respect it!

Then, Lt. Governor Manley Power explained that he wanted to 'bring this case forward as I understand it is by no means a solitary one.....'.¹¹ This reference to the case not being the only one of its kind certainly indicates that the British were aware of the general displeasure of the Maltese when viewing the British presence as a Protestant one. Manley Power was therefore going to use the Cortis case as an example to other detractors.

As we have seen, Mattei's immediate reply was that he had already scolded Cortis. It seems that the Lt. Governor and the Bishop had spoken about the matter before they corresponded between themselves about it. The Maltese prelate had suggested to the British Lt. Governor various measures that they could take against the culprit. At the same time, however, Mattei was not too eager to have the priest punished too harshly:

*io per vari riflessi, e singolarmente per quello che specialmente m'incombe di intimare certe vertenze piu' da Padre e buon Pastore che da Giudice, proposi all'Eccellenza V(ost)ra Onorabile diversi e vari progetti.*¹²

Despite the Bishop's suggestions, Rev. Giuseppe Cortis appeared on the 9 February before the Ecclesiastical tribunal.¹³ As a priest Cortis could not account for his 'misdeed' in front of a Civil Court; the Crown Advocate had to accuse him before the Ecclesiastical Court.¹⁴

Cortis was found guilty. The Court suspended him from the office of Master of Ceremonies for six months. He was imprisoned in the Convent of the Dominicans in Rabat for fifteen days and interdicted for ten years from asking for any 'ecclesiastical benefice, pension or other emolument'.¹⁵ So tough was the sentence that Cortis understandably appealed to Rome. After some time however, he gave up the case and presented it to the Vatican for consideration extra-judicially. At Rome the Canons of St. Paul's Collegiate Church used their influence to tarnish the Bishop's image. The Vatican decided that Cortis was only guilty of being too zealous, and this had led him to imprudent actions; a totally different verdict from that of the

Ecclesiastical Tribunal in Malta. This, however, seems to have been quite a realistic appraisal of the whole incident, although one should assume that at Rome, Cortis did his utmost to minimize his guilt.

When the new governor, the Marquis of Hastings arrived in Malta in June 1824,¹⁶ he immediately made contact with the Vatican's Secretary of State, then Cardinal della Somaglia, about this matter. Once more it was the British Governor who defended the Maltese Bishop in his letters to Rome: 'Je puis attester à Votre Eminence que la procede de Mons. l'Archeveque à été én tout parfaitement Sage et Equitable.' Hastings officially stated more than once that this was to serve as an example to all other members of the clergy who might be tempted to act in the same way as Cortis had done. Here was another indication that the British were trying to make the most of this case and tending therefore to blow up the whole issue.

The way the Vatican had judged the actions of this individual priest had not pleased the British at all. How could the British make an example (or rather a scapegoat) of someone who was only guilty of being too keen about his religion in a place like Malta, and considering that the individual concerned was a priest? Cortis would have become a martyr for his religion and the British cruel persecutors. The British did not need the image of a saint but one of an irresponsible person who, through his actions, highly risked to ignite a useless disturbance which might have cost the lives of innocent people. The portrayal of audacity and guilt would have acted as an example to other detractors. That of innocent zeal could have been dangerous. It would have simply encouraged other Catholics, whether priests or lay, to act similarly. It would also have given the impression to the Maltese that the British had acted incorrectly towards a Catholic priest. The British knew the importance with which the Maltese held their religious beliefs and the great influence that the clergy had in Maltese society. Therefore, they knew the danger of such a notion. It would certainly not have induced the islanders to view the colonialists in a friendly way as they had generally done up to now.

Consequently, Hastings could not but protest to the Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal della Somaglia, for classifying Cortis' motive in performing his action simply as 'zele Imprudent,' when, according to him, the incident could have led to bloodshed! In February 1825, Hastings explained to Somaglia that the British officer could have brought upon

himself the wrath of the crowd had he not remained calm. Had he reacted to the insult the outcome would have been different. In such a case the use of force would have been indispensable to re-establish law and order: 'le Feu des Troupes aurait pu être trouvé indispensable pour réprimer l'errante.'¹⁷ Hastings informed Somaglia that although Cortis in Rome had claimed that he had taken off the officer's cap in a polite way, the Ecclesiastical Court in Malta had not believed his witnesses, for all the other disinterested spectators had affirmed the contrary. So the British Governor accused the priest of having spurred his witnesses to commit perjury in Rome: 'Cortis n'a qu'ajouter à son premier délit le crime d'avoir instigué la Parjure.'¹⁸ Besides, he claimed that Rev. Cortis had tried to convince Sir Richard Plasket, the Chief Secretary to Government, to abandon the case. When Plasket refused, Cortis decided to abandon his appeal in Rome, allegedly, because he had realized that all the details of his offence would be revealed. According to Hastings, Cortis made it seem that he had submitted entirely to the Maltese Ecclesiastical Court's sentence, but he secretly went to Rome and presented his case under 'a false oath'.¹⁹ The Governor finished his letter with a serious warning to Somaglia: Somaglia's approval of the priest's conduct could encourage similar incidents. Hastings attested that he was ready to have the guilty ecclesiastic tried by a *Conseil de Guerre* (a Court Martial) for an attempt against the Peace of the Garrison, if this happened. He had informed Mattei about his reproach to Somaglia in order to warn all his clergy that this would be the way that similar detractors would be treated.²⁰

One of the misfortunes of Cortis was that he was connected to St. Paul's Collegiate and aspiring to become one of the Canons of that Church. The rebellious Canons who had been at loggerheads with their Bishop for some years presented his name to Mattei when there was a vacancy in March 1825.²¹ The Bishop refused the nomination and instead another priest was given the vacant canoncy. It was here that the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal della Somaglia, intervened again and asked the Bishop to grant the first vacant canoncy to Cortis whether in the Cathedral Chapter or at St. Paul's Collegiate Church.²² The Vatican was following the policy that its decision had superseded that of the Ecclesiastical Court in Malta which had established that the priest was not to be entitled to any sort of emolument for ten years. Mattei does not seem to have accepted the Vatican's decision and resorted to the tactics he had mastered so well in Maitland's time: he had the letter sent to the British Governor who at the time was in London.²³

The Bishop was relying on Hastings's reaction to solve the problem that Somaglia had raised for him in the diocese. If the first vacancy was to occur in the Cathedral Chapter, Mattei certainly would never have agreed to have a priest from St. Paul's Collegiate Church as one of his Canons.

The Marquis of Hastings had to use very strong language in communicating to Somaglia the British Government's displeasure at the Vatican's decision. He accused the Holy See's Secretary of State of basing his praise for Cortis on unreliable information, mainly Cortis' own testimony and other witnesses whose evidence could not be well scrutinized. According to Hastings, His Eminence was not taking into account the grave consequences that the priest's actions could have induced. Like Maitland before him, the Governor expressed his wish to be informed of the Vatican's expectations. After all he was in charge of 'the executive power' at Malta. Had Somaglia consulted him about the Vatican's decision beforehand, he would have helped to limit the priest's punishment. The British government considered the fact that the Vatican had ordered Mattei to grant a canoncy to Cortis as a lack of respect towards it: 'Il a échappé à la perspicacité de votre Eminence, combien une intervention si arbitraire manque d'égards vers l'autorité de la Majesté Britannique.'²⁴ He even remarked on the inconvenience for the Vatican, of having incurred the displeasure of the British Government: '.....je supplie V(otre) E(mminence) de réfléchir sur l'inconvenient immanquable en perseverant à donner de tels degouts au Gouvernement Britannique.'²⁵

Once again Hastings insisted that the Holy See's attitude could encourage similar incidents and that this was a serious threat to public security. He informed Somaglia that Cortis was being deported from Malta and that similar offenders would receive the same treatment. Of course, according to the governor, this could not be classified as forced deportation for the priest was free to choose his destination!

Il est libre de devisir son demeure partout ailleurs; et même l'argent necessaire pour les frais de son voyage lui serait fourni, en le prevenant toujours que son retour à Malte serait penui commeente forfeit.²⁶

At this point the Marquis of Hastings resorted to negotiations for he informed Somaglia that he would intervene for Cortis with the British

Ministers as a sign of respect towards His Eminence if the latter revoked his order to Mattei to grant the first vacant canoncy to the priest. Despite this suggestion, Hastings did not hesitate to assure Somaglia that he had treated the Catholic Religion on the Island with respect for he felt not only a political but also a moral obligation to treat the cult of the Maltese people 'reverentially' (*une déférence révérentielle*).²⁷ Was Cortis, at this point, just a pawn between the British Government and the Vatican?

Earl Bathurst, the British Secretary for War and the Colonies, had already given the necessary orders to the Officer Administering the Government in Malta to have Cortis sent to Rome.²⁸ Bathurst also gave instructions not to allow the priest back on the Island unless Mattei informed the Government that Somaglia's order had been revoked. A few days later it was decided to offer Cortis the option 'of proceeding to Sicily or elsewhere if he should prefer it to going to Rome.'²⁹ The British hoped in this way not to make the 'removal' of Cortis look like 'banishment'!³⁰

To make sure that Cortis did not receive any emolument, they asked Mattei to inform them about every vacant canoncy at St. Paul's Collegiate Church and the Mdina Cathedral. The Bishop of Malta was also to inform them to whom he intended to grant the vacant canoncies.³¹ Mattei refused categorically, showing that when he chose he could take a firm stand. In his letter to the Government, the Bishop stated clearly that this would have diminished the Ecclesiastical liberty of the Church and he did not feel authorized to accept such a new procedure.³² At the same time, Mattei assured the British that he would not confer any Ecclesiastical Benefice to persons whose conduct was not acceptable to the government: 'a persone, la di cui condotta conosco essere sospetta al Governo.'³³ Since Cortis was one of this category, Mattei was confirming his intention to disobey Somaglia!

In the meantime, Somaglia seems to have yielded to the pressures made by the British government for in November 1825 he did revoke his first decision. He never informed Mattei himself but made Cardinal De Gregorio write to Mattei to inform him of the new decision.³⁴

Despite the changing views of the Vatican's Secretary of State the Revd. Cortis however did not return to the Island. It was only in 1828, during Ponsonby's governorship, that he was allowed back to Malta and that after his mother Evangelista had written to the Bishop in April of the same year.³⁵

The case of Cortis was of great significance. The British became aware that a section of the population was beyond their jurisdiction: there were

some 1000 diocesan priests in Malta at the time, 839 in Malta and 127 in Gozo.³⁶

It became imperative to eradicate this privilege of clerical immunity if they were to administer the Island's judiciary. The great influence of the Church in Malta lay in its having this continual link with the common people through its clergy. The Maltese Catholics, most of whom were illiterate, still considered the priests as the most important persons in their villages. What the priests upheld was practically as sacred as the Gospel they preached to their villagers. If these priests, therefore, decided to be against the ruling colonial power, the consequences could be dangerous. The British would be in no position to deal with clerical upstarts for they could only be tried in an Ecclesiastical Court. They had effectively banished Cortis. Banishment, however, was no solution if a number of priests decided to protest at once. The case of Rev. Giuseppe Cortis had been dealt with by the Episcopal Court in Malta as they had desired, but he had been greeted as 'zealous' by the Vatican. If this is what Britain could expect, dealing with the problem of immunity acquired priority. It became clear that negotiations with Rome depended on diplomatic transactions and therefore, on the individuals in key positions at any given moment. Previously, Maitland had always managed to convince Consalvi, who was the Vatican's Secretary of State at the time. Hastings had found that more pressure was needed with a Secretary of State like Somaglia. At the same time the British realized that if they put the right kind of diplomatic pressure on Rome, they could get the results they wished for, without stimulating any unwanted reactions on the Island. This technique was to be used a few years later by the British in order to eliminate the judicial advantages that the Catholic Church had in Malta.

Mattei does not seem to have been aware of the long term repercussions that his reliance on British governors could induce. When he had informed Hastings of the Vatican's decision to grant a canoncy to Cortis, he was trying to safeguard his position, especially, against the wishes of the Canons of St. Paul's Collegiate Church. He had however resisted informing the British about all the vacant canoncies as they had asked him to do, for Mattei rightly pointed out, this was beyond their jurisdiction. Cortis was connected with St. Paul's Collegiate Church so he could not expect Mattei to go out of his way to help him. His only guarantee of safety was the fact that he was a priest. Had he been a lay person he would have been dealt with by the British in the civil courts and no intervention from Rome would have been possible.

NOTES

- ¹ Laferla, op.cit. 125, N.A. MGG 16-3-1824, 3857
- ² A. E. Abela, Governors of Malta, (Valletta 1991), 10
- ³ N.A. MGG 7-6-1824, 3933
- ⁴ Laferla, op.cit. 131
- ⁵ N.A. GOMR 1025
- ⁶ N.A. CSG 03/970
- ⁷ Cf. Chap. 4,
- ⁸ N.A. Letters to the Archbishop 1815-1848 Power to Archbishop dd. 3-2-1824 f88
- ⁹ Cf. Chapter 4,
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² N.A. CSG 03/970
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ N.A. GMR 1025 f166
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ J. Bezzina, Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony (Valletta 1985), 337
- ¹⁷ N.A. Letters to Archbishop 1815-1848 Hastings to Somaglia dd.22-2-1825 f102
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. f103
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ N.A. GMR 1025, 166
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ N.A. Letters to the Archbishop 1815-1848, Hastings to Somaglia dd.22-10-1825, 328
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 329
- ²⁷ Ibid., 330
- ²⁸ N.A. Ecclesiastical Despatches 1817-1870, Bathurst to Officer Administering the Govt. of Malta dd.19-10-1825,53
- ²⁹ Ibid., Hay to Woodford dd.22-10-1825, 57
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ ACM Misc.26, 296
- ³² N.A. CSG 03/978
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ ACM Misc.26, 303-304
- ³⁵ N.A. GOMR 1025, 167
- ³⁶ Borg, V., op.cit., Appendix A, (no pagination)

MALTESE IMPERIAL MENTALITIES:
SUBJECTING THE MALTESE MIND TO IMPERIAL RULE

Mario Ellul*

By the inter-war period the political considerations at the Colonial Office together with the naval and military requirements in the Mediterranean had come to dictate the fortunes of an ever growing number of families on the island. The demise of the commercial and local manufacturing sectors in the immediate pre-World War I years, checked the development of serious alternatives to the Dockyard or the fleet as employment centres¹ and the majority of the population came to be fully dependent on the ability of the imperial authorities to provide direct and indirect employment or its living.

This growing dependence on military spending was even more significant to the inhabitants of the Cottonera, especially after the final consolidation of the naval base in French Creek. With the construction of docks four and five and their ancillary facilities (completed in 1907), the last vestiges of a commercial harbour disappeared² and the origins of the daily livelihood of nearly all the families in the Three Cities could almost invariably be traced to the presence of the Royal Navy in Maltese waters. From the dockyard worker or naval rating, to the dghajsaman or the washerwoman scrubbing away at the coarse sailor uniforms, the control over the fortunes of these people was absolute and so was the control over their minds.³

As long as the British remained committed to the naval base, a wide cross section of the population remained largely loyal to the imperial cause or if not, to the continued British permanence on the island. This trend was even noticeable among the ranks of the so called 'pro-Italian party' and foreign observers somewhat cynically noted that 'I maltesi vogliono la religione di Roma, la lingua di Dante e la sterlina inglese'.⁴ As long as the British presence guaranteed a living, the bulk of the population was perhaps more wont to see them as generous benefactors rather than as usurpers of

* Mario Ellul, a member of *Storja's* editorial board, holds a first class honours degree in history from the University of Malta; he now teaches at De La Salle College.

sovereign or constitutional rights.

Indeed, as long as the political struggles centred on constitutional issues, the language question and resistance to the British authorities, the national debate remained 'not just alien but under certain aspects antagonistic to urban working class interests'.⁵ Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici himself, an erstwhile supporter of Italian culture in the island, declared that the squabbles over the language question had hindered the solution of a host of problems which afflicted the lower classes.⁶ Though the speech came at a point when 'il-Gross' was trying to justify his defection from the Nationalists' to the Government's side, it is surely very fair to note that the problems of infant mortality, unemployment, sub-standard housing, the minor outburst of plague in 1936, were more real to the population at large than the issues of nationhood.

PATRONS AND CLIENTS

The forces in a distant metropolis which underwrote the Maltese worker's scanty living were unfathomably detached from the prevailing social realities on the island, at least as much as the Maltese were ignorant of the workings of Whitehall or Downing Street. Moreover, on going through the correspondence which flowed between Malta and London, one is bound to notice that many a time the vision at one end was not necessarily shared by the other. The unrealistic Maltese expected too much of the rich and mighty British Empire,⁷ noted the Colonial Office. While the Governor's reading of the Italian situation was not necessarily shared by London, especially the Foreign Office. One solid reality bridged the two sides - that the security of the fortress depended very much on the loyalty of the inhabitants.

In the context of detached rule, patronage flourished and developed into a prominent trait of Colonial Malta. It has been pointed out that a true patron 'must have monopolistic control over some scarce or desired resource'.⁸ Indeed, as the local representatives of that distant power in London, a whole class of officers ranging from the Governor to the local foreman at H.M Dockyard came to be the ones who in the absence of formal institutions, guaranteed access to such rare commodities as steady employment. In return, as in a typical patron-client relationship, the imperial authorities and their subordinates obtained prestige, power and most

important of all loyalty. In the colonial context, Malta itself has been described as a 'client state'⁹ and there was no lack either of patrons or of clients. Appeals were made to anyone who possessed a hint of power and status, from village level to the Governor at Valletta. Nor were the Secretary of State or the King spared requests ranging from pleas for the abolition of the N.A.A.F.I., to letters begging intercession with Oxford University examining boards for good pass marks.¹⁰ A system of institutionalized begging which placed all subordinates in the same relation to a paternalist overlord.

The local dispensers of patronage were of course quite conspicuous figures and their activities often verged on the limits of corruption, especially if they controlled access to the most precious commodities available. One of the most notorious cases, often quoted¹¹ and common knowledge to many a Cottonera inhabitant who still remembers those years,¹² was a recruitment racket organized by one of the Dockyard Heads of Department and led by his sister. The case, which has passed in history as that of 'is-Sinjura tal-Birgu', was exposed by The Dockyard Worker¹³ newspaper in its March 1937 edition. Under a thin veil of fiction, the editor told the story of a 'mysterious sorceress' who worked miracles 'at a price':

A price is not a bribe. Everybody in the yard knows that. Only it is the price that does the trick ... I would charge you £60 if you insist to be too wise. I would charge others different prices ranging from £10 to £50. It is for you to choose¹⁴

The existence of such a racket was a too well known secret, which until it was exposed was tolerated by all and sundry. After all, the crowds of unemployed workers standing at the Dockyard's Cospicua Gate did not even bother to rush up to the 'sorceress' if the occasion for employment at a price arose out of there.¹⁵ Mr. Joe Mizzi, of Cospicua remembers very clearly that his father obtained employment in the yard in this way, standing at Cospicua Gate where he was approached by a Dockyard employee. The latter, a Maltese chap with an English surname, instructed Mizzi senior to report to a certain foreman 'u ghidlu li bghattek jien', at a price of course. It is generally believed that this employee was well known to the Admiral Superintendent of H.M. Dockyard: 'l-Ammirall kien iħobbu hafna lil dan it-tali ... forsi għax kellu kunjomu Ingliz'.¹⁶

Those dockyard workers who were more licitly enrolled, especially the young apprentices who had passed the highly competitive Dockyard

Examination had a lifetime sinecure opened up for them:

Jekk xi hadd ikun dahal apprentist id-Dockyard, kulhadd kien imur jifrah lil ommu. Qisu sar xi professur ghax dahal id-Dockyard, allura ghandu l-hobza ta' kuljum ghall-familja zgur. Anke t-tfajliet, lil dak kienu jkellmu, ghax dak ghandek futur mieghu.¹⁷

The unskilled drafts or the casual workers were in a much more vulnerable position. For these, holding on to their dockyard job was a costly affair since their permanence on the yard's rolls often depended on their ability to pay bribes. During the periodic dismissals or spells of long leave, those who did not pay were the first to go. Other workers hung under the menacing shadow of the 'Shoal Lists': a system whereby workers were graded by their chargemen, supposedly according to their performance. Those at the bottom of the list would be the first to go in times of reduced work at the yard.¹⁸ Dr. J. Saliba still remembers the anxiety which reigned at home when the rumours of approaching dismissals started circulating in the Dockyard. The intercession of a patron had to be bought off and Saliba senior would have to buy a seven shillings' worth bottle of eau de cologne for the Maltese chargeman in his section to ensure his retention. No mean price to pay out of a weekly salary of about thirty shillings which had to go into supporting a family of six and two grandparents. These 'voluntary' contributions were a very common practice at H.M. Dockyard and collections of a customary five shillings were held regularly for the buying of gifts to chargemen or supervisors. Failure to comply, normally spelled the inclusion of your name in the foreman's black book. It was even customary to pay something like half a crown to be selected for work in confined space (for which a special allowance was paid) or overtime.¹⁹

DIVIDE ET IMPERA

The consolidation of a class of 'go between' in the dockyard is very symptomatic of the emergence of a new pro-British middle class on the island. The British connection opened up the way for a group of people who otherwise would have found it difficult to step up the ladder through the more traditional avenues of titles, landed wealth or university education. Taking as an example the Dockyard employee who had just been promoted:

As a first step ... he puts on his festa dress for daily use ... he insists on being called 'signor' by his former mates. He will not answer unless they

address him so. He is ashamed to call himself workman ... Comparing himself with the clerico-legal-commercial classes, he rents a costly house and buys a new set of furniture ... he keeps a servant because without a servant neither he will be called 'signor' nor his wife 'signora'²⁰

As a class, this group of people owed their existence to the British connection and could thus be counted upon as prime supporters of the imperial authorities on the island. As such, this class even managed to penetrate one of the purely British strongholds on the island: the Sliema branch of the Union Club, where the only Maltese whom one could come across were 'a sprinkling of the nobility and those holding minor posts at the Dockyard'.²¹

As a matter of official policy, the higher ranks in the yard were not open to 'natives' and as long as the Dockyard remained under the direction of the Admiralty, the highest post open to a Maltese was that of 'local supervisor'.²² However, the newly arrived engineer or officer from England was more often than not ready to throw himself into the hands of this class of Maltese subordinates and act on their advice especially in matters which involved relations with other workers in the yard.²³

The privileged position of this class of intermediaries was clearly resented by the lower class of workers in the Dockyard, who gradually became even more dependent on the British as their only means of redress. It is surely very interesting to note for example that the general tone of the Union of Dockyard Employees through The Dockyard Worker, was more often than not ready to lay the plight of the workers' lot at the feet of the Maltese 'agitators who fooled the English officers into accepting their guidance'. According to the same newspaper, those Englishmen little understood the petty jealousies and bias of these locals who 'caused great harm to more Anglo-Maltese understanding in the yard'.²⁴

This class of 'go between' was even accused of being behind the 'unnecessary' demands for higher wages by inciting 'the ordinary workman who lives a frugal life against the authorities'.²⁵ According to The Dockyard Worker, these men were living beyond their means and simply needed the increase in wages to finance such extravaganzas as a new car or a new set of furniture. The Unions urged moderation among the disaffected ranks of workmen and even the officers of the Dockyard and Imperial Workers Union professed their intention of clearing misunderstandings between the workmen and the authorities which are liable to be exploited to the detriment

of the workmen themselves and to the detriment of the Empire.²⁶

The Union claimed to be making:

A genuine endeavour to cooperate with the Authorities, and the Admiral Superintendent has invariably been most courteous and kind whenever we had occasion to meet. Quite recently the local Italian newspaper attacked the spokesman of the Dockyard and Imperial Workers Union as being servile to the authorities because in speeches delivered in a public meeting, we carefully refrained from stressing unduly the workers' grievances. I would submit that this educative effort of my managing committee might receive wider appreciation.²⁷

The only source of protection for the poor workman and his family against the abuse of his fellow countryman was the Admiral, or perhaps better still a whole handful of them who held command ashore and afloat. In the Cottonera, this officer was nearer to the people's hearts than the Governor because to a great extent he was more closely linked with their pockets than the general across the harbour could ever be. Admirals were freely described as 'Christian' if the fleet was kept long enough in harbour for many people to keep their families in bread and that something extra more.²⁸ A particularly long Summer Cruise or a fleet deployment were the causes of major concern for the tens of thousands who depended on a strong fleet's presence in the harbour. It should come as no surprise therefore that in the popular imagination, the Admiral C-in-C's or the Admiral Superintendent's figures developed into those of a bemedalled, blue clad St. Francis who kept the fleet in harbour for the exclusive welfare of the Maltese and distributed alms in shape of employment.²⁹

It is surely very interesting to note that even today, when the Cottonera people speak of 'the' Admiral, most of them are normally referring to the Admiral Superintendent, the executive head of H.M Dockyard. This officer was particularly popular with the Cottonera people. For one he lived 'on their side' in a 17th century palace on the Vittoriosa Marina and perhaps more significantly, for the resources he had at his disposal. The Admiral's patronage was most thoroughly striven for, especially by such bodies as band clubs and scout groups and the gratitude and respect of the people showered on him like rain:

Għall-festi per ezempju, lil min ser tistieden? Lill-Ammirall tad-Dockyard għax dak ser jagħmillek unur. Gej l-Ammirall! ... stedint lill-gran alla meta jigi l-Ammirall jonorak bil-prezenza tiegħu u kienu jagħmlulu t-

tapiti homor u kulhadd jinkinalu.³⁰

The sense of permanence personified by the office of the Admiral Superintendent left a strong imprint on the minds of the population at large. That the mighty British Empire would one day have to reduce its world wide commitments was a possibility which no one dreamt of and while the absence of the fleet may have spelled reduced work in the yard, the Dockyard could not sail off on a Summer Cruise. Even after the savage pruning carried out after the end of the First World War, the Admiralty remained the largest employer in the island and its employees the best paid of the whole lot. No other employer could ever challenge its standards of employment.³¹ Consequently, the workforce at the yard was reckoned to be the most loyal in pro-British terms, a loyalty which arose out of the simple yet very powerful axiom of 'not biting the hand that fed them'.³²

THE DOCKYARD AS A CENTRE OF PRO-BRITISH FEELING

Employment conditions at the Dockyard were far from ideal. Indeed, it has often been pointed out that the unfair conditions prevailing there brought about the birth of a proper trade union on the island, a full scale strike in 1917 and that the dockyard workers were among the most prominent of disaffected people in the events leading to the Sette Giugno.³³ However, in spite of this, employment in the yard remained among the most envied occupations of all and a cursory glance at the salaries of the various categories of workers in 1936³⁴ ought to show immediately why.

In this period the Dockyard workers were engaged in a struggle for the remittal of salary and bonus cuts which had been imposed on the yard in the wake of the Great Depression. The earlier part of the 1930s had been one of great hardships for a host of dockyard employees who were put on forced leave, placed on a 4 day week or simply dismissed. In 1931, prior to the cuts, the lowest basic rate of pay for a locally entered employee (a polite euphemism for the Maltese worker at the Dockyard, which distinguished him in terms of lesser pay and treatment from the worker enrolled in England) was fourteen shillings per week, which together with a weekly bonus of nine shillings, brought the weekly salary to a grand total of twenty three shillings.³⁵ In October 1931, a reduction of one shilling was made in the bonus, while in January of the following year there was a further reduction of one shilling (more in the case of employees with higher wages). This still left the lowest

paid worker in the yard with a weekly salary of around £1, no mean thing considering that the majority of the islanders were lucky enough to manage a few shillings in one week. Domestic servants for example, were paid 10-15 shillings per MONTH³⁶ and the washerwoman in the laundries not more

TRADE	WEEKLY WAGES		
Dockyard Workers	£	s	d
Boiler Maker		2	2 0
Assistant Boiler Maker		2	0 0
Shipwright	1	17	6
Engine Fitter		2	1 0
Ship Fitter	2	2	0
Electrical Fitter		2	2 0
Assistant Fitter		1	16 2
Rigger		1	10 0
Others			
Field labourer		1	2 0
Field labourer		1	15 0
Tailor	1	14	0
Fisherman	1	10	0
Fatiguan	1	7	0
Shoemaker	1	11	0
Labourer	1	3	0

than two shillings per week.³⁷ For the majority of the lower class people across the island one pound was the dream of a lifetime.³⁸

Statistics compiled in 1936 during a campaign which lobbied for the retraction of the Dockyard cuts, show that the average weekly salary across the island was in the region of 31s/6d (£1. 11s 6d). The majority of the dockyard workers represented in the survey were above this but a host of others were well below that figure. The relation of the wages with the prices of basic commodities ruling in the open market³⁹ will confirm that relatively speaking, the Dockyard worker was indeed having a much better deal than the average worker on the island.

A trip to the Cospicua market with just two shillings would almost invariably end with a basketful of merchandise for the housewife whose husband worked at the Dockyard.⁴⁰ Not so for the others, who in spite of

the rock bottom prices could only gaze at the shop windows or stalls and live on a monotonous diet of minestra, salted anchovies and bread, many a time bought on credit from the shop next door: 'kollox kien irhis, imma flus fl-idejn ma kienx hawn wisq'.⁴¹

ARTICLE	UNIT	£	s	d
Bread	Rotolo			3
Tomato Paste	do		5	
Rice	do		4	
Sugar	do		2	
Coffee	do		9	
Cheese	do	1	8	
Oil	Nofs		8	
Paraffin	Gallon			6
Soap	Rotolo			7
Beef (fresh)	do	1	6	
Vegetables	do		2	
Eggs	Dozen		2	
Milk (condensed)	Tin		5	
Lard	Rotolo		1	
Tea	do	2	4	
Butter	do	2		
Wine	Kwarta		2	

In November 1936, the 1931 Dockyard salary and bonus cuts were repealed. In soliciting this move, Governor Bonham-Carter stressed the need for removing the grievances from 'so large a section of the population as the Dockyard employees and the political expedencies which in a fortress like Malta warranted to be sufficient to justify better conditions for maintaining the loyalty of the Yard's hands'.⁴² The fortress formula has always been a very powerful device in the history of colonial Malta. At least, it comes as a breath of fresh air to find it used in furthering the interests of the Maltese.

IN THE NAVY

Service aboard H.M Ships was another comfortable sinecure which guaranteed good pay and a relatively comfortable living. The rates of pay

were far more advantageous in the Navy than in the Dockyard, but the stints of service in distant waters may have discouraged many from joining up.⁴³ Here again conditions were far from ideal and largely discriminatory. Right up to the post Second World War years for example, the Maltese recruit could only join up as a steward (officers' valet/ servant) or as a cook.⁴⁴ There were periods when even these openings were closed up. When this occurred the population's general consternation was great especially that 'of a considerable number of men whose employment with the fleet had long been usual'.⁴⁵

Eventually the recruitment of Maltese cooks, stewards and carpenters took off again and during the crises of the thirties (eg Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War and Munich), volunteers were enrolled as shore service seamen for the duration of the emergencies.⁴⁶ Only Englishmen of 'pure stock' could join up as regular seamen for service afloat and the unstable service conditions as emergency drafts were a particular cause of annoyance to the children of mixed marriages who wished to join the navy as Able Seamen.⁴⁷ However, the Maltese cook, steward or his dependents, rarely found a cause for complaint and they certainly endeared themselves with the Service and all it stood for:

Ma nistax nahbi l-fatt li lejn il-flotta Ngliza kelli gibda kbira ... kif kellhom hafna Maltin ohra. Missieri kellu paga ta' hmistax -il lira fix-xahar, li dak iz-zmien kienu jiswew hafna, u bis-sahha taghhom zammni ghaxar snin l-Universita'. Kien igib minn abbord fliexken tal-whisky ...; pakketti tas-sandwiches bl-ahjar perzut u butir; bicciet tal-cake u fil-Milied kien igib ukoll Christmas pudding. Kultant il-kuxjenza kienet tippermettilu jgib xi bott zebgha biex nizbghu l-bieb ta' barra u l-gallarija⁴⁸

The Maltese serviceman had a very good reason to attach himself so strongly to the Navy. The chance of finding another employment was very slim indeed and so he did his very best to impress. His British counterpart behaved somewhat differently, since more often than not he left the Navy after a customary stint of three to five years and had better prospects of finding a job back home. As one ex-steward has it: 'Ahna konna sefturi tal-fizzjali ... Konna naghmlu minn kollox biex ninghogbu u lill-fizzjal tieghek kont kwazi tasal biex tilghaqlu z-zarbun'⁴⁹ Nonetheless, as in the Dockyard, the Maltese serviceman received a treatment inferior to that of his English mates: 'gatt ma konna stmati daqshom, anke jekk jiena bahri bl-istess rank tieghek, jien fuqek. Hekk kienet il-procedura u Malti ma kienx jista' jilhaq

aktar minn Petty Officer'.⁵⁰

The pay of the Maltese serviceman compared very well with the rest of the wages on the island and there was always that something 'extra' which found its way into the sailors' home:

Kulhadd kien jiehu, anke l-Ingliz ... Il-kit bag dejjem mimli hadtu mieghi id-dar, speċjalment meta konna nservu Ta' Xbiex fil-blokk tar-WRNS. Gamm, butir, hobz, cornflakes, laned. Konna nohorgu mimlijin mill-pantry u flok ifittxulna kienu jghidulek "good night" ... Darba kont niezel l-iskaluna tal-bastiment u nqatali l-handle u l-basket baqa' niezel. Kien hemm fizza u gabaruli hu stess!⁵¹

It is very reasonable to suppose that the authorities were very much aware of the pilfering from the military stores, which went on across the island on a grand scale. Service property bearing the crown's marks could even be found for sale in the open markets,⁵² while the Occurrences Books of the Water Division show that the Police Force had a busy time in controlling the illicit traffic between ships, naval establishments and the shore. Ropes, canvas, metal sheets, provisions and a host of other items were very precious commodities either for sale on the market or for use at home⁵³. It is surely very indicative to note that prosecution of these cases was in the hands of the Malta or the Dockyard Police Force and that the majority dealt more with the infringement of customs regulations rather than theft. If it was the case of the latter, British servicemen would many a time be found in collusion with the accused.⁵⁴

It is an open secret that to a certain extent the Naval authorities tolerated an amount of pilfering. Leading Steward Mizzi, remembers very clearly the day when he was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (which was awarded after 15 years of continuous service with a spotless conduct certificate). The Captain read the citation in front of the assembled crew and pinned the medal, getting near enough to whisper 'you're lucky you've never been caught.' Today the steward is still blessing 'the Admiral' for providing so generously to his family and the extra pounds which the Good Conduct Medal has added to his service pension.⁵⁵

SERVICES TO THE SERVICES

For those who could neither join the Navy nor H.M Dockyard, there were several other methods which could come in handy to make ends meet.

There were the washerwomen, tailors and seamstresses, 'dghajsamen', bar keepers, prostitutes, gashin dealers (the gash, or what remained of the food aboard ships' galleys was customarily sold for consumption). Though not directly dependent on the British Exchequer, the loyalty of this class of people still remains very impressive (though to the logical mind, the woman who spent sleepless nights sewing buttons on sailors' uniforms for a few pennies, is more justified in cursing rather than blessing the Navy). Perhaps, the precarious existence of these people made them even more grateful for small mercies than their mates in the relatively stable world of the Dockyard or the Naval vessel.

The boatmen for example, more popularly known even within the Services as dghajsamen, were a class of people whose living depended exclusively on the fleet's fickle presence in the harbour. Nigh on 1300 boatmen were registered in the Grand Harbour alone in 1936⁵⁶ and hundreds of boats flocked like ducks after bread crumbs around every merchant and warship that entered the harbour.⁵⁷

Since the Royal Navy ships in the harbour were in an absolute majority, the boatman hung on tenaciously to his connection with the fleet and proudly flaunted the passes issued by particular captains in His Majesty's service. The boat itself was a clear indication of where its owners sympathies lay. The spalliera (a sort of back support on the boat's stern seat), on the majority of the boats in the Grand Harbour would almost inevitably sport a carving portraying Britannia or St. George. Dghajjes attached to a warship's company showed the vessel's name and sported the ship's crest and other Admiralty symbols as general decoration. Certainly these symbols were none too effusive as symbols of loyalty, considering that even the choice woods and metal pieces used in the construction of the dghajsa itself were more often than not pilfered from the Dockyard stores.⁵⁸

For the boatmen, the Royal Navy's patronage became even more crucial when in 1928 the office of the Commander-in-Chief issued an order prohibiting personal trading on board H.M Ships.⁵⁹ This measure provoked quite a stir. The Admiral declared that he was simply applying an order which had been in force in home waters since 1911, however the Nationalist press argued that it was aimed at furthering the N.A.A.F.I's interest against that of the local traders. Lord Strickland welcomed the order as due in curtailing the activities of Italian barbers 'who have had many opportunities to get aboard [and] may in future be used as spies on such ships as the new

aircraft carrier'.⁶⁰

Until the enforcement of this order, a wide class of tradesmen carried out their business directly on Royal Navy ships. Then all barbers, bootmakers, curio vendors, tailors, photographers, were prohibited from boarding Naval vessels, spelling the end of a very lucrative trade indeed. Dghajsamen who carried a ship's pass were however exempted and continued to carry goods, laundry and stores on board.⁶¹ Many a time, that 'little something' would surreptitiously end up in the boat too, either down the gangway or else down the gash chute. This way, the boatman could supplement his meagre earnings with choice items from the ship's mess, which either ended up on his table or up for sale at the market. The gash trade was particularly lucrative for the boatman who was lucky enough to be contracted to clear the ship's messes or the galley.

Following the general pattern which had set in during the Great Depression years in the island, the dghajsamen fell into hard times too, so much as to attract the attention of the Governor himself. On the 16 November 1931, awaiting the publication of the Royal Commission's Report and anticipating 'political excitement', General Campbell expressed particular concern about the plight of the boatmen, those 'old servants of the Navy' who were reduced to 'absolute penury and starvation. Campbell believed that the 'political agitators would have a pretty good field in which to work during the Winter' and that disgruntled dockyard men and dghajsamen combined could have given a lot of unwanted trouble. He therefore appealed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet to encourage further the use of dghajsas by Naval personnel in order to relieve 'these very good fellows imbued with a fine patriotic spirit'.⁶²

Harder times were yet to come and when the Royal Navy left off for Alexandria during the Abyssinian Crisis, the fleet of dghajjes fell into dire straits. Out of the 600 boatmen who served with the fleet or with an occasional tourist ship, 400 usually took up alternative work as stevedores or coalheavers, the remaining two hundred and their dependents were left to feel the pinch.⁶³ The situation of these destitute boatmen and their families seems to have been so precarious as to attract the attention of Admiral Sir William Fisher at Alexandria. In an appeal to the fleet, Fisher instituted a fund for the relief of the boatmen and claimed that an occasional five shillings could 'tide a Maltese family for over a week of almost complete starvation'.⁶⁴ Considering that a passage from French Creek to Bighi Bay cost 4d⁶⁵ and

that those four pennies were the maximum which the boatmen could charge on any of the longer routes, the Admiral must have gone pretty near the mark, especially when one keeps in mind the hundreds of boats plying daily the same places. Eventually, Sir William's appeal raised around £100 and three hundred and eighty one boatmen were singled out for aid. The fleet's gesture was described by Governor Bonham-Carter as

Both timely and beneficial to the recipients and I need hardly assure you of the deep gratitude, not only of the boatmen themselves but also of the inhabitants of these islands who see in this gesture a further example of the practical interest which the Royal Navy takes in all that concerns their welfare.⁶⁶

BARS AND PROSTITUTION

Throughout the hey day of the British period, Valletta's Strada Stretta, better known to the jolly Jack Tars as 'the gut', managed to preserve its primacy in the field of sailor entertainment, however the Cottonera had its fair share of the trade too. Of the Three Cities, Senglea's open shore was the best location for establishments catering for the entertainment of sailors of the Mediterranean fleet since both Vittoriosa's and Cospicua's waterfronts were occupied by Admiralty property.⁶⁷ However, the trade was so lucrative that it also flourished 'inland', away from the shoreline of the Grand Harbour.

In an outward manifestation of pro-British sentiment (and an eye to attracting the sailor with things that sounded like home), the majority of these establishments displayed signs like 'England's Glory', 'The Union', 'King George V', 'Duke of York', 'Malaya', 'Benbow', 'Nelson', 'Coronation', 'Come Home'.⁶⁸ Some of them even took to flying the White Ensign or the Union Jack in windows, balconies or doorways.⁶⁹ These signs were also indicative of the Maltese partiality for the Navy and in the Harbour area the sailor was certainly much more popular than the soldier.⁷⁰ For one, the army was in the minority in numerical terms and the sailor was more of the type to dish out good money for a glass of 'coloured water' and the company of a prostitute who more often than not happened to be well past her prime.⁷¹ The prostitution phenomenon has been interpreted within the Maltese colonial context as a manifestation of the population's own dependent status and 'inability to control their own lives'.⁷² The strict code of conduct

professed by the Roman Catholic Church was ever present in the lives of the Maltese, yet the practical realities of widespread poverty made of prostitution one of the many ways of earning a living, especially for single women.

Though prostitution was not practiced in the bars, these establishments provided the ideal venue for barmaids and artistes to meet prospective clients.⁷³ According to the Police Regulations, barmaids had to be licensed and no women, other than those registered under the regulations and issued with a badge were permitted to loiter inside the bars. The White Slave Traffic Act had outlawed the brothels, however prostitution remained rampant⁷⁴ and the existence of certain houses was well known both by the clients and authorities alike.⁷⁵ Some of the more notorious prostitutes were known through fame, while some of those who preferred to avoid the bars were sometimes driven into cars, 'soliciting the attention of the passers by.' The latter were of particular cause of alarm since it was assumed that their taking to the streets was mainly due to their reluctance of submitting themselves to the medical test which preceded the issue of the licence. They were thus considered to be potential carriers of venereal infection.⁷⁶

The incidence of venereal disease among the members of the garrison and the fleet, especially the soaring rates among the naval ratings, was a cause of major concern for the imperial authorities. Facilities for free treatment were provided for the prostitutes as an important corollary to the prevention of sexually transmitted disease among the servicemen. However, tragic as it may seem, many women were simply loath to undergo treatment since their period of detention in hospital would have deprived them of earnings which they could scarcely afford to forgo.⁷⁷

The bar with the name of home or his ship continued to be a veritable magnet for 'Jack' and an even greater one for the owner's loyalties. In one typical example, Mr. Lino Bonnici, a Cospicua veteran remembers that the 'Union', the bar kept by his father in Strada Nuova was always full of sailors. Like a considerable number of Cospicua families, the Bonnicis were Nationalist Party supporters (or perhaps better still, to use Bonnici's terminology, Grossisti) on both parents' sides. Not so Bonnici senior however, who was a staunch pro-British 'Striklandjan': a loyalty which according to his son, was bought by the crowds of sailors who always filled the bar.⁷⁸

THE BRITISH COMMUNITY

The resident British community in the Cottonera area constituted another major source of influence in nurturing the perception of Britain as 'the provider' and as such worthy of praise rarely short of adulation. The higher representatives of the Services, together with their families kept very much to themselves and the life at their club or in their homes was pretty hard for the newly arrived English officers and their ladies to infiltrate, let alone for the lowly 'Malts'.⁷⁹ It would seem for example that the only Maltese whom Major Ponder (an infantry officer sent in with the re-enforcements during the Abyssinian Crisis) came into contact with throughout his seven month stay on the island, were the kindly guide at the museum, discourteous shopkeepers and servants who were singularly

Unintelligent, lazy and ... most independent ... Much of the trouble can be traced to the fact that their employers are heretics and only to be worked for because they pay well.⁸⁰

The Imperial authorities higher up the ladder were very much aware of the hostility aroused by the proverbial British arrogance and with an eye on reducing this animosity, Governor Bonham-Carter encouraged the newly arrived officers to cut down on their exclusiveness. According to Sir Charles, this could help in making the Maltese enthusiastic supporters of anything British.⁸¹

If the traditional Maltese upper middle classes of the inter-war period never quite got into the frame of mind desired by Bonham-Carter, the lower levels of the population certainly made deeper inroads. In the major points of contact between the two peoples, the Maltese families interacted at work and at play with the English Dockyard workers, Servicemen and their families. At this level mixed marriages occurred more frequently and friends were made much more easily. The standard of living of the English rankers and Dockyard hands, though relatively higher than that of the Maltese was not that lofty as to inhibit contacts. When even this proved to be impossible, even the host of beggars could hope to scrounge a penny or two:

L-Inglizi kienu jiehdu gost jaraw hafna tfal jigru warajhom u kienu jhobbu jifghulhom xi sitt habbiet. Konna nhobbuhom hafna ... ma konniex nistghu naraw Ingliz. Kulhadd jigri warajh u jghidlu "give me penny Joe". Konna mmorru nghumu hdejn xi bastiment u kienu jifghulek xi sitt habbiet

jew xi sold ... u kulhadd joghdos ghas-soldi. Kulhadd kien hadha f'halqu l -"give me penny Joe". Mindu kelli ghaxar snin kont nahdem ma' hajjat. Dan kien ihallasni bis-soldi, ghalhekk is-sold li kien jaghtina l-Ingiliz konna narawh deheb ... jien kont immur nigri naghtih lil ommi'⁸²

To a family of ten, living in a casemate within St. Nicholas' Bastion, a group of English Dockyard employees and their families (who occupied a block of flats a mere two hundred yards away), were the living embodiment of that benevolent but mysterious hand at London which fed them. The gift of a second hand rag doll for a twelve year old girl who played at mummy with a stone wrapped in a rug in lieu of the doll which she could never even hope to have, was heaven sent. Her mother could not even afford to buy her brood of children a half penny worth of sweets and even ran into debts to buy the basic necessities and here were these Englishmen who rewarded the odd errand with cakes, sweets and dolls: 'Kienu jhobbuna hafna ... qatt ma kienet tghaddi minn rasna li qeghdin jahkmuna u ahna konna nhobbuhom'.⁸³ One can just imagine the significance which this gleaming block of flats, full of 'kbarat tad-Dockyard' had in the lives of people living in a hole of a room in a 17th century bastion. After receiving a near hit in the Second World War, the block of flats was demolished and its stones transported to build aircraft pens in the airfields:

Kien bini sabih, b'zewg sulari, arjuz u kollu arkati. Kienu gew is-suldati jwaqqghuh ... konna thassarnieh. Ghalina kien ifisser li daqshekk rajna affarijiet.

In the days when there was no reason to suppose that the Empire would not go on forever, no instrument was more valuable in forging loyalty and attachment than the feeling of helplessness instigated by the mere thought of having to do without 'big brother'. The colonization of the mind may be said to have been total and absolute!

NOTES

¹S. Busuttill, 'An Overview of Malta's Economic Development' in The British Colonial Experience ed. V. Mallia-Milanes (Mireva, Malta 1988), 161

²J. Bonnici & M. Cassar, The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard (Gutenberg Press, Malta 1994), 117

³E.L. Zammit, A Colonial Inheritance (Malta University Press, 1984), 11

⁴Ugo Ojetti, Corriere Della Sera correspondent. Quoted in H. Ganado, Rajt Malta

Tinbidel, Vol. II. (Interprint, Malta 1977), 101.

⁵D. Fenech, 'Birgu during the British Period' in Birgu, a Maltese Maritime City eds. L. Bugeja, M. Buhagiar & S. Fiorini (Malta University Services, 1993), 178

⁶N.A.R., L. G. O. File no. 2772/1936, Speech delivered by Dr. C. Mifsud Bonnici at Cospicua on 27 September 1936, Police transcript, 13

⁷E.L. Zammit, op. cit. 13

⁸J. Waterbury, 'An attempt to put patrons and clients in their place' in Patrons and Clients eds. G. Gellner and J. Waterbury (Duckworth, London 1977), 330

⁹E.L. Zammit, op. cit. 17

¹⁰see for example N.A.R., Desp. from the S. of S. to the G. 17 Aug. 1936

¹¹See for example D. Fenech, op. cit. 151; and K. Ellul Galea, L-istorja tat-Tarzna. (Aquilina & Co. Malta 1973), 156

¹²Interviews with Dr.J.Saliba, M'Scala 24.10.95 & Mr. J. Mizzi, Cospicua 13 Oct. 1995

¹³The Dockyard Worker was the official organ of the Union of Dockyard Employees.

¹⁴The Dockyard Worker, March 1937, 4

¹⁵K. Ellul Galea, op. cit. 113

¹⁶Interview with Mr. J. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995

¹⁷Interview with Dr. J. Saliba, M'Scala, 24 Oct. 1995

¹⁸The Dockyard Worker, May 1937, 4

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰ibid.

²¹S. Ponder, Mediterranean Memories (Stanley Paul & Co.Ltd, London, undated), 114

²²K. Ellul Galea, supra, 146

²³Interview with Mr. L. Bonnici, Paola, 1 Nov. 1995

²⁴The Dockyard Worker May 1937, 2

²⁵ibid.

²⁶N.A.R., L. G. O. File 1119/1936. Letter from Mr. J. Olivieri Munroe, President of the Dockyard and Imperial Workers Union to Mr. G. Shakespeare, Parliamentary and Financial Secretary at the Admiralty, 19th September 1938

²⁷ibid.

²⁸H. Ganado, Rajt Malta Tinbidel Vol. I (Malta 1977), 34

²⁹See for example The Dockyard Worker August 1937, 2

³⁰Interview with Dr. J. Saliba, M'Scala, 24 Oct. 1995

³¹N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1119/1936. Correspondence between the Dockyard and Imperial Workers Union and the Admiralty, 19th September 1938.

³²D. Fenech, op. cit. 136

³³See for example M. Sant, Sette Giugno (S.K.S. Malta 1989), 58-65

³⁴N.A.R., Despatch from the G. to the S. of S. 30th October 1936

³⁵ibid.

³⁶H. Ganado, op. cit. Vol. I, 26

- ³⁷Interview with Mrs. R. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995
- ³⁸A. Buttigieg, Mill-Album ta' Hajti, Vol II, L-Ghazla tat-Triq. (Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1980), 180
- ³⁹N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1725/1936. Prices ruling in the open market at Valletta, November 1936
- ⁴⁰Interview with Mr. John Brincat, Cospicua, 13 Jan. 1996, whose father was on the higher scale of storekeepers at the Yard
- ⁴¹Interview with Mrs. Rita Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995, one of the eight children of a cartman
- ⁴²N.A.R., Desp. from the G. to the S. of S., 30th October 1936
- ⁴³Interview with Dr. J. Saliba, M'Scala, 24 Oct. 1995
- ⁴⁴T.O.M., May 25 1937, 10
- ⁴⁵N.A.R., Desp. from the G. to the S. of S., 16th Feb. 1923
- ⁴⁶T.O.M., 25 May 1937
- ⁴⁷T.O.M., 17 October 1938
- ⁴⁸A. Buttigieg, op. cit. 161
- ⁴⁹Interview with Mr. J. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995
- ⁵⁰ibid.
- ⁵¹ibid.
- ⁵²N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1434/1921, Prosecution of persons found in possession of Crown Property
- ⁵³N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 142/1929, Suggested legislation against pilfering
- ⁵⁴ibid. letter from Rear Admiral, Commanding at H.M.S Egmont I, 24 Oct. 1928 and Water Police Occurrences, Vol. 11, Case no. 2414; Vol. 31, Cases nos. 3262, 157; Vol. 25, Case no. 2945
- ⁵⁵Interview with Mr. J. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995
- ⁵⁶N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1056/1936. Report by the Captain of the Ports, 4th February 1936
- ⁵⁷See for example J. Muscat, 'The Dghajsa - in Memoriam', The Mariner's Mirror, vol. 77 no.4 (Nov. 1991) 389
- ⁵⁸Information supplied by Mr. J. Muscat (ex-Maritime Museum), Rabat
- ⁵⁹N.A.R., L.G.O. File No. 170/28, 4 June 1928
- ⁶⁰ibid. Handwritten note from the Head of the Ministry, 2 June 1928
- ⁶¹Information supplied by Mr. J. Muscat, Rabat
- ⁶²N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 501/31. Confidential report re. use of dghajsas by Naval personnel, 16 November 1931
- ⁶³N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1056/1936. Report by the Captain of the Ports, 4th February 1936
- ⁶⁴⁶⁴ ibid. Appeal by Sir W. Fisher for the relief of dghajsamen, 1 January 1936
- ⁶⁵Guida Generale 1939, (Malta Herald, Valletta), 354
- ⁶⁶N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 1056/36 Letter from Sir Charles Bonham-Carter to

Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, 25 April 1936. (My emphasis)

⁶⁷D. Fenech, op. cit. 154

⁶⁸L. Bugeja, 'Birgu during the Second World War' in Birgu, A Maltese Maritime City. eds L. Bugeja et. al. (Malta University Services 1993), 191 and information given by Messrs. Bonnici, Mizzi, Saliba.

⁶⁹N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 159/26

⁷⁰H. Ganado, op. cit. Vol. I, 331

⁷¹A. Buttigieg, op. cit. 159-168

⁷²G. Dench, The Maltese in London (Routledge, London 1975), 107

⁷³N.A.R., Confidential Desp. from the G. to the S. of S. 30 December 1937

⁷⁴N.A.R., L.G.O. File no. 54/1930

⁷⁵A. Buttigieg, op. cit. 167-168

⁷⁶N.A.R., Confidential Desp. from the G. to the S. of S. 30 December 1937

⁷⁷ibid.

⁷⁸Interview with Mr. L. Bonnici, Paola, 1 Nov. 1995

⁷⁹S. Ponder, op. cit. 89

⁸⁰ibid. 88

⁸¹V. Bonham-Carter, In a Liberal Tradition (Constable, London 1960), 207

⁸²Interview with Mr. J. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995

⁸³Interview with Mrs R. Mizzi, Cospicua, 13 Oct. 1995

BOOK REVIEWS

WITCHES AND INQUISITORS

Carmel Cassar : *Witchcraft, sorcery and the Inquisition. A study of cultural values in early modern Malta*. Mireva Publications, Malta, 1996, xiv + 121pp. Illus.

Magic pervaded all strata of society and culture in early modern Europe. The present work by Carmel Cassar is an attempt to study its uses, cultural significance and social implications in the Maltese, and at the same time, in a wider Mediterranean and European context.

Cassar uses an interdisciplinary approach, using historical, sociological and anthropological concepts so as to cover various aspects of life. The Inquisition archives have proved themselves to be a mine of information for the ethno-historian, as they provide unique insights and a richer view of human experience than most other manuscript collections. A fine example are some unique references to antique Maltese verse, which will surely be a delicacy to local scholars on the development of the written Maltese language.

Maltese scholarship was still far back in works of this type. Up till now studies on the Holy Office tended to concentrate on the Tribunal as an institution for itself, or else of descriptive nature with little or no interpretation. Here precisely lies the merit of this work. Indeed the subtitle, *A study of cultural values*, is perhaps more important and revealing than the first title. For this is a study on the perceptions, values and collective behaviour of the Maltese people and on how and why they reacted to the various adversities of life by resorting to what they considered to be an effective remedy - magic in all its various forms.

Such studies generally ignore a strictly quantitative approach and are deliberately qualitative. Concentrating on specific case studies enables one to obtain greater depth as well as more colour and life. In this case the two magnificent case studies of Betta Caloiro and Vittorio Cassar are perhaps models of how the individual can be used to elucidate broader structures while at the same time avoiding the abstractness of much social history.

After a general introduction on the Tribunal of the Inquisition and religion in Malta, the book is divided mainly in two parts. The first part discusses magic and healing rituals. The chief concern of the Inquisition was to reform popular witchcraft beliefs and making them conform to the

official theological notions of religion as put forward by the Council of Trent. The Church taught that she alone had the power to combat sorcery, which was interpreted as being the devil's work. The only remedy were the sacraments, which had to be administered by the clergy. However this was not enough for early modern folk who wanted a more spontaneous access to the supernatural. With this end in mind they often made recourse to 'superstitious' means - brilliantly disguised by prayers and invocation to saints - to overcome all sorts of misfortunes. The devil rarely appears in these rituals, and when he does, as the case of Farfarello points out, he is always figured as the mischievous trickster of folklore rather than as the source of all diabolic power as envisaged by Trent. Popular magic complemented, rather than competed against, the role of the Church in society.

The second part of the book deals with learned or elite magic. There was no clear demarcation line between popular and elite magic. Both sought to bring order in one's life by addressing the power of the sacred. Popular magic was a primarily female occupation which was transmitted orally, especially healing methods. Learned magic, on the other hand, was an entirely male phenomenon, practised by the educated sectors of society, including the clergy. It was taught, and it exploited the magical resources of literacy. Hand in hand with learned magic went prohibited magical texts which were fundamental for the carrying out of these rituals. Those who practised elite magic, in fact, claimed a scientific method, and employed all the resources of their knowledge in magic and astrology in their experiments. Potentially, therefore, it was a much more serious affair for the Church, as it had a more elaborate cosmology which established it as a rival to organized religion. The case of Fra Vittorio Cassar explains these concepts in more detail.

This study shows that religion mingled with magic in a struggle against daily afflictions and the onslaught of climate and mortality. 'Official' and 'popular' religion interacted and borrowed from each other, as did 'popular' and 'learned' magic. Satan never enjoyed an important part in these rituals. The post-Tridentine Church, by means of the Inquisition, was at least partially successful in making the people conform outwardly to its official doctrines. But its aim at eradicating what it labelled as 'superstition' had the least impact on society in general. While learned magic underwent a steady decline in front of the advance of science, popular magic beliefs linger on

until the present day.

Witchcraft, sorcery and the Inquisition by Carmel Cassar sheds light on a period when Malta was forming itself as a state with an identity of its own. It is hoped that this book gets the publicity it deserves abroad so that foreign scholars may finally get to know something about Malta and start to include it in their studies. It is also hoped, as the author points out, that this study encourages further research in the history of cultural values and beliefs, so that the Maltese people could understand better his origins.

Kenneth Gambin

THE POST-WAR TREASON TRIALS

Laurence Mizzi, the biographer of the war-time Maltese pro-Italian 'spy' Carmelo Borg Pisani - an artist and dreamy idealist and irredentist - has now documented for us the basic goings-on in the so-called 'treason' or 'sedition' trials of 1946-47. His book is entitled: Mixlija b'Kongura u Tradiment [P.E.G., 1996] and contains 223 pages of text, including a name index.

It is important for this story to be told because of the many and varied ramifications of 'italianita' we have had over the decades. In war-time, sympathies and sentiments take a different turn, not less because they risk being caught up in an almost uncontrollable web of emotions, militarism, survival and intrigue. No sooner had Italy surrendered and the Allies' advance was assured that senior members of the Malta police force - Axisa, de Gray, Calleja - were despatched to Italy by British Field Security to ferret out Maltese nationals who had supported the Italian war effort. They netted in all seventeen Maltese who were in Italy during the war, and dragged them to Malta for trial on grounds of disloyalty to the British king. In the case of eleven of them, the Maltese prosecuting officers, who served the Crown, asked for death by hanging. In four jury trials, however, all the accused were acquitted, many of them returning to Italy.

The biggest catch of all would have been Dr Carlo Mallia, a former Nationalist minister who like some other Nationalists suffered at British hands in the mid-1930s; he went to Italy and became a confirmed Fascist official, who pressured the Maltese in Italy to hand in their British passports in return for a monthly allowance and, more importantly, being saved from the POW 'concentration' camps. However, Mallia escaped the net - he stayed in Italy and was never tried.

Practically all those who were Italian scholarship holders in universities would automatically have been regarded as members of the GUF [Gioventu' Universitaria Fascista] while those Maltese who had traded in their passports rather than go to jail out of loyalty to the British king, ended up members of the CAM [Comitato d'Azione Maltese], led by a Foreign Ministry official, Prof. Umberto Biscottini, aided however by Dr Mallia and some others. Some Maltese, like Dr Carlo Liberto and Dr Camillo Bonanno, had taken Italian citizenship before the war, so they were free to serve the regime as they liked, and as they did, but they could not be arrested for it. A few

were genuinely pro-Fascist, but most weren't that keen on Fascism, and of those arrested some would have been sceptical if not opposed to it. One or two even rallied 'underground' to the allied cause, especially it seems Giuseppe Gonzi, who was in Rome on behalf of the Banco di Roma, which had a branch in Valletta before the war. Another, Willie Apap, was one of Malta's leading painters and did not shirk from taking on commissions or exhibiting his paintings at the quarters of the Regia Deputazione per la Storia di Malta at the Palazzo Antici Mattei, the same building where the CAM was lodged – and where now the Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea is housed, in Via Michelangelo Caetani.

As the Maltese 'collaborators' knew English they were useful as interpreters and translators, even as broadcasters, but several were sent on field training and some saw battle. None were particularly enthusiastic to fight for Italy, or for anyone: their enthusiasm to serve the Fascist cause may be evenly counter-weighted by their reluctance to suffer for the British one. To a large extent, most of them were caught between two stools. Some had not been born in Malta and had direct familial Italian connections – for example Edoardo Frendo and Manoel Mizzi - so of course they could hardly have supported the British. But there was a fine line to be drawn between sympathy and forced support, or even membership of some action committee, or attending a Sette Giugno commemoration, or the unveiling of a bust to the PN founding father Dr Fortunato Mizzi [d.1905] at the Pincio Gardens in Rome, or an odd, touched-up article for the Rome Malta newspaper, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the necessary proofs at law of outright sedition or treason: that is the act of willingly wanting and actively seeking to overthrow the government of His Britannic Majesty. [As it happened, several of the accused got their Maltese-British passports back once the war came to an end.]

And least of all, the Maltese jurors must have felt, was there much scope in splitting hairs about all that in the wake of a devastating war, which had by then not even landed Malta with a promised self-government constitution, while discharges from the dockyard by the thousand were on the way.

Mizzi's text is based almost exclusively on reports of the trials in the Progress Press newspaper *Il-Berqa*. His book is well illustrated, including some telling Willie Apap sketches, drawn even in the court-room. The war years and the immediate post-war need a proper academic job done on

them from archival and even oral sources, in Rome as much as in Valletta, so that a more comprehensive account can result, but Mizzi's book is certainly a good starting-point for that.

One of the greatest and perhaps saddest ironies in this story is that it was none other than Carmelo Borg Pisani himself who, once under British hands, had squealed much of the information on which British Intelligence later acted to try and round up his fellow 'traitors'. He paid for his deeds with his life, but those whose names he had revealed were acquitted.

As Albert Ganado notes in an introduction to Mizzi's book, whereas Maltese nationalists suspected of disloyalty were deported without charge and risked their lives and their health in the bomb-infested seas, those who actually aided and abetted the enemy somehow or other in Italy itself ended up scot free.

The main prosecutors were Dr [later Sir] Anthony Mamo, who became Malta's first President and Head of State in 1974; and Dr William Buhagiar, the son of Dr Francesco Buhagiar, who had served as Malta's second [Nationalist] prime minister in the early twenties. Buhagiar later joined the Colonial Service as a Judge and went on to become President of the Courts in Emperor Selassie's Ethiopia, before retiring in Geneva where he died.

Henry Frendo

MALTA: THE COMING OF THE BRITISH

DESMOND GREGORY: MALTA, BRITAIN, AND THE EUROPEAN POWERS, 1798-1815 [Associated University Presses, London, New Jersey & Toronto, 1996, Lstg. 39.50]

Desmond Gregory, the author of this empirically and meticulously researched conventional history volume on Malta in the Napoleonic era, is no newcomer either to the region or to the period under review. More perhaps than any other living British author, he has concerned himself with Franco-British and other interests in strategically-placed Mediterranean islands, especially Corsica [1985], Sicily [1988], Minorca [1990], and now Malta, before the Congress of Vienna settlements. In this most recent work Gregory, an octogenarian, draws easily for comparative purposes on information from his earlier writings, and in this respect the Malta book be the most 'mature' of the lot. Britain's overriding objectives were to contain, neutralise or defeat French naval and maritime exploits in the Mediterranean. Doing this by means of territorial acquisition or control was a rather experimental process. Except in Malta's case, it was neither a particularly successful nor indeed a lasting one. In Malta too, however, much uncertainty prevailed as to long-term objectives. Malta with its harbours in the central Mediterranean, between Sicily and Egypt, needed to be freed from French rule; but other than that, would Britain then wish to stay there itself, as a colonial power? Initially, in London, there was every intention to finish the job and get out, Minorca being generally regarded as a more feasible location from which to watch and guard the French fleet in and off Toulon. In spite of persistent advice to the contrary from some British officials on the spot, most notably Captain Alexander Ball, who had been involved on the side of the Maltese anti-French insurrection since 1799, the British intention to leave Malta was made amply clear by article 10 of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. Not only would Britain leave: the Order of St John, whom Bonaparte had expelled on his way to conquer Egypt in 1798, would return! Malta's neutrality would be guaranteed by the Great Powers, including Britain, France and Russia, whose Czar Paul I was fascinated by the Knights of Malta. There would also be a Maltese representation in the government of the islands. What Britain sought to achieve by such an accommodation was above all peace - an end to the Second Coalition against France. Whether that was merely wishful thinking or not time would soon tell. The Maltese

insurgent leaders, who had seen thousands of their compatriots lose their lives until a British naval blockade of Valletta finally forced the French commander to surrender, were not impressed at all. In an historic Declaration of Rights signed by the town and village representatives in June 1802, they held that they had never empowered the British to dispose of their country to third parties: they had sought British protection and assistance to fight off the French, but if the British wished to depart, sovereignty would revert to them as citizens. That was their understanding of the Anglo-Maltese pact which had seen British intervention, at their very request, and after due permission had been obtained from their then lawful sovereign, the King of the Two Sicilies. Moreover, they could not understand how a popped up Order would ever be able to defend their islands against a renewed French attack, it having so miserably failed to do so in 1798. Gregory's account is essentially about how the British came to stay: how they sought to assume control preferably without antagonising those who had asked them over; when protectors became overlords how could governance be reconciled with loyal allegiance. By the time Valletta surrendered [on 5 September 1800 after a two year siege, in which Neapolitan troops had also participated] 'the British government had decided that, while hostilities lasted, British sovereignty in Malta must be proclaimed,' Gregory writes. 'The relevant claims by the King of Sicily were to be ignored and set aside.' The explanation that Britain could not have allowed Sicily's flag to be raised without offending the Russian czar was 'palpably false'. The Maltese themselves were completely excluded from the capitulation and in no way consulted. Yet on 9 June 1802 London informed its civil commissioner in Valletta that the islands were to be restored to the Knights and Capt. Ball would be coming to Malta shortly as minister-plenipotentiary to the Order. But when less than a year later, Britain finally severed diplomatic relations with France, even the Neapolitan troops were instructed to depart. Napoleon's exploits in Parma and Piedmont, his continuing presence in Holland, fears of renewed French interests in Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean including the Ionian Islands and Turkey, gave Britain cold feet. Bent on a volte face over Malta, she asked Bonaparte for 'compensation', the First Consul told her ambassador in Paris that he would rather see the British in the Faubourg Saint Germain, in the outskirts of Paris, rather than acquiesce in Britain's retention of Malta. Nelson became equally convinced that Malta 'must never belong to France', and

Pitt thought like Gregory describes in considerable detail various aspects of life in Malta during the early British occupation, especially before and after 1803, until the matter was decisively settled by international treaty in 1815. He treats of the different administrations, civil and military aspects, commercial and economic developments particularly during the Continental Blockade when Malta's importance as an entrepot centre soared and corporate banking came into being, relations with the church, hospitals, quarantine and the plague, and the reforming, despotic zeal of the first governor, 'King Tom' Maitland. He then looks at Malta as a British naval and military base during this formative period when the islands were being incorporated as a Crown Colony. In his concluding chapter entitled 'the price of protection' while trying hard not to sound patronising although relying mainly on British sources, Gregory sums up and apports the odds in the early British occupation from both a British and a Maltese viewpoint. This book [which also includes an appendix on the island of Lampedusa which at one point might have been annexed to Malta] is probably the most comprehensive and detailed account on Malta during this agitated period in English; it is also quite useful for purposes of local history. And it is timely, because September 1998 marks the bicentenary of the Maltese insurrection against French rule. Other parts of Europe, such as the city of Verona in April 1997, already duly commemorated similar uprisings.

Henry Frendo

HISTORY-RELATED THESES AND ABSTRACTS

Mariella Zammit Mangion : Culture in Malta in the eighteenth century (B.A.Hons 1979)

This thesis aims at providing a synthesis of cultural activity in Malta between 1730 and 1798, and placing it within a European context. It argues that various works published on the subject fall short : studies which deal with isolated topics tend to departmentalize, while the more general histories give a popular, but over-simplified, view of cultural decadence.

This thesis attempts to give a broader and deeper study by juxtaposing such diverse aspects as (amongst others) the arts, architecture, education, academies and books. By focusing on eminent Maltese and Knights, by revealing the types of books they read and wrote and other cultural activities they indulged in, and by assessing the extent of these influences, it shows that Malta was aware of, and participated in the mainstream of European cultural development of the time.

Of particular interest, perhaps, is the evidence that the works of the philosophes and other avant-garde writers were not only available in Malta, but also read and discussed. There is also a chapter describing the various books written by locals in the eighteenth century and published either in Malta or abroad.

Yvonne Micallef Stafrace : Reggie Miller and the post-war socio-political challenges (B.A.Hons. June 1993)

This study attempts to analyse some salient points of Miller's General Workers Union from its foundation in 1943 to his retirement in 1958. This is done in the context of the conflict of interests between Britain and the islanders seeking to enjoy and maintain a good standard of living and an acceptable constitutional status for their island home.

Soon after its foundation, the G.W.U. was instrumental in the reorganization and the revitalization of the Labour Party that then led to the establishment of the Labour Front. As a trade union embracing all classes and sectors of workers, the G.W.U. was distinct from all previous trade unions both in character and scope. The welfare of the mass of the workers it embraced could not be attained without the Union's total involvement in

the general economic and constitutional progress of Malta. Inborn cooperation between the G.W.U. and the Labour Party was inevitable and in the National Assembly they had their first training in unity, collaboration, and mutual support. Miller, however, always insisted on keeping the Union's identity intact - a task sometimes difficult in view of the majority support enjoyed by the Labour Party in the G.W.U.'s membership.

The 1949 split in the Labour Party over the ultimatum issue may be said to have deprived the worker's movement for five years of an effective say in the running of the country. The G.W.U., after initially trying to keep equidistant from the two factions, slowly moved towards supporting Mintoff's M.L.P. and the Labour Movement reappeared as a united and solid front whose efforts were crowned by an overwhelming success at the 1955 elections. This success was taken to mean that the Labour Government had a clear mandate to insist on Integration.

In Reggie Miller the Union had a founder who was a staunch supporter of Malta's right to an enhanced constitutional status that would give the island both dignity and economic prosperity. When in the fifties the M.L.P. proclaimed that Malta's constitutional future lay either in integration or self-determination, with an option for the first alternative, Miller's G.W.U. found it naturally easy to give wholehearted support to the M.L.P. For the Maltese workers Integration meant parity with their British counterparts and Miller had proposed union with Britain at a G.W.U. rally in Paola in May 1943. The Union's loyal support was not affected when the Catholic Church opposed Integration.

Britain's reappraisal of its international commitments after the Suez crisis led to discharges at the dockyard and a general rundown in employment as a result of diminished Defence spending. This posed a threat to Malta's future, and created problems for the G.W.U. and the Government. The defence workers were heartened by the national support, particularly when the Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted the historic 'break with England' resolution. This was followed by the resignation of the Labour Government, a general strike called by the G.W.U., and anti-British manifestations. The Integration proposals were no longer possible and the struggle for Independence was set in motion.

Miller retired from his position as General Secretary of the G.W.U. in the same period. By this time the workers he had led were organized in a strong union. They had attained both self-respect as a class as well as vastly

improved social and working conditions.

Yvonne Micallef Stafrace: The growth of Trade Unionism in Malta 1943 - 52 (M.A. May 1996.)

A study in the development of industrial relations with special reference to the role of the general workers' union

The supply and quality of 'labour', the satisfaction it creates or the disappointments it causes and the particular problems encountered are all important aspects of the socio-economic history of a country. This dissertation analyses this aspect of Malta's history between 1943 and 1952, primarily from the regulation aspect.

The dates chosen are of particular significance. By 1943 Maltese workers employed by the imperial and civil governments, after having struggled for a suitable war bonus, continued to unite to obtain better working conditions. A strong Trade Union mentality was increasingly developing and this led to the founding of the general workers' union. A general union that organised the working masses.

The period analysed was introduced by an examination of the several steps taken earlier, to provide for labour matters starting with letters patent 1921 which provided for two labour representatives (to be elected by a then non-existent Trade Union council) to sit in the senate in a bicameral self-government. Efforts to develop a Trade Union Movement were hampered by political intrigue and the late acceptance of basic principles on which to establish a bona fide Trade Union Movement. When the general workers' union was founded workers started to enjoy the benefits of having competent Trade Union leaders and well organised unions. Wages were improved, emigration was regulated and assisted while landmark legislation was enacted. This contrasted with earlier days, when workers were only offered help through benefit societies, and the Trade Union Movement was rudimentary and fragmented. Sometimes it was dominated by politicians and engulfed by political intrigue.

Up to 1943 labour legislation was limited: a proposed 1925 legislation only provided for the election of two Trade Union representatives in the senate through the Trade Union council and the definition of what constitutes a Trade Union was still unclear and benefit societies were allowed to register. Though the 1929 act technically barred benefit societies from registering actually benefit societies were accepted for registration. The 1937 ordinance effectively barred benefit societies from registering as Trade Unions. This

measure was in line with modern european thought. Strikes were, however still forbidden.

By contrast, the Trade Union act 1945 recognised the right to strike and protected Trade Union funds. The conciliation and arbitration act 1948 provided a machinery for the solution of industrial problems amicably and Trade Unions received an important encouragement through the provision that workers had to be represented by a Trade Union before the tribunal. Year 1952 culminated with the enactment of the conditions of employment (regulation) act. this act regulated employment in private industry. This act enhanced Trade Unions. It also provided for the adequate protection of non-unionised workers through wages councils as well as an elaborate system of labour inspectorate.

Development in Maltese legislation during the period under review is partially to be attributed to the growth in importance of Trade Unions and the need to acknowledge the development of industrial relations on an international basis. By 1943 the international labour organisation through conventions and recommendations gave workers extensive protection but Maltese labour legislation was still inadequate. The emergence of the general worker's union and its international contacts gradually changed this situation and increased the bargaining strength of Trade Unions.

The change was so radical that while up to 1943 Maltese legislation was generally late in complying (if complying at all) with the target dates established by the conventions and the recommendations issued by the international labour organisation. In the case of the Trade Unions and trade disputes act 1945, the conciliation and arbitration act 1948 and the conditions of employment (regulation) act 1952, Maltese legislation actually became operative before the recommended date.

Malta was still a British colony and after 1947 it enjoyed self-government. Labour was in the hands of the Maltese government but the british government controlled 'defence' as a 'reserved matter'. This led to a conflict of interests that sometimes created problems. Still, Trade Unions while protecting the workers' interests were a factor that significantly helped the orderly solution of labour problems.

The increasing strength and prestige of Malta's Trade Union Movement particularly that of the general workers' union can be gauged by the fact that miller the general secretary of the general workers' union was elected secretary of the 1945-47 national assembly. In 1947 miller was included in

the king's honours list and made a member of the british empire, thus joining the ranks of commonwealth Trade Unionists honoured by the crown. In 1952 miller was offered an assignment in turkey by the international confederation of free Trade Unions. These honours besides being a tribute to Miller's personal qualities and achievements also reflected the importance attached to the Maltese Trade Union Movement.

William Zammit : Fra Thomas Gargallo, Bishop of Malta : A study of the Bishop's relations with the various authorities in Malta (B.Ed.Hons 1987)

This dissertation attempts an analysis of Bishop Gargallo's relations with the three main authorities on the island, that is the Order of St John, the Inquisition, and the local ecclesiastical establishment. Particular emphasis is put upon the various conflicts occurring between the Bishop and these three authorities. Such conflicts have been studied within the context of the Order's impact upon the Maltese Church, as well as that of the Catholic Reformation.

William Zammit : A Bibliography of works printed in Malta during the Order's rule : (Dip. Lib. Inf. Stud. 1988)

The work consists of an annotated retrospective bibliography of works printed in Malta during the rule of the Order of St John. A brief history of local printing during that period is also included, based upon a number of hitherto unpublished sources.

Raymond Camilleri: Teacher training and teacher education in Malta: an historical perspective (M.Ed. 1994)

The aim of this dissertation is to give an account of the history of teacher training and teacher education in Malta. The first chapter traces the development of education in Malta starting from medieval times and progressing right up to the nineteenth century. The near total absence of teacher training is a hallmark of the period. The work of canon P. Pullicino in the field of teacher training is brought out in the second chapter. The post-Pullicino era forms the basis of the next chapter. Foremost among the innovative measures introduced during this time were the sending of teachers to study in England, the setting up of the monitorial system and the establishment of the Training School. Chapter four deals with the reforms

instituted by Dr A. V. Laferla which included the opening of the Central Schools. The development of the Training Colleges run by religious orders is traced in chapter five together with their eventual closing down. The birth of the Malta College of Education is also described in this chapter. Chapter six tackles the radical changes in teacher education in the seventies and eighties which eventually resulted in the recognition of the teacher as a professional.

Vincent Cauchi : Government and People in Malta 1722-1736
(B.A.Hons 1995)

The whole idea behind this dissertation is to try to understand the difficulties under which the Order's government had to operate when trying to keep law and order in these islands. The period chosen is that which stretches from 1722 to 1736, the fourteen-year rule of Grand Master Monoele de Vilhena. His *bandi*, or proclamations, are a sure indicator of the problems with which the Maltese society was afflicted, and inform the historian of what the authorities' response was. These proclamations also reveal the reforming zeal of the Grand Master whose drive to eliminate abuses and corruption is discernible in all his legislation. All this legislation has also to be viewed in a socio-political context to try and understand who or what stood in the way of the Grand Master's drive to reform the island's institutions and to keep law and order.

Chapter one discusses the rival local jurisdictions of the Grand Master, the Bishop and the Inquisitor in Malta. A comparison is drawn with other European states especially France, which not only illustrates the limits of the Grand Master's jurisdiction, but also refutes the idea of the Grand Master as an absolute monarch.

Chapter two discusses the measures which the Grand Master took in expectation of a Turkish invasion and the general unpreparedness of the islands for such an eventuality.

Chapter three deals with the Grand Master's efforts in trying to curb the abuses of the merchants, the University and the Dogana.

Chapter four deals with daily problems of the Maltese as seen through the proclamations and efforts of the Grand Master to remedy them through new legislation. This chapter is followed by the conclusions which I have drawn and ends with the bibliography which was used to produce this work.

Martin Debattista : The Maltese Newspapers during the Second World War (B.Comm. 1995)

The idea behind this dissertation is to present as complete a picture as possible of the experience of local newspapers during the Second World War. This topic has been generally overlooked by researchers of twentieth-century Maltese journalism.

The period deserved a close study because it was an important transition phase in modern Maltese history. The cultural clash between the Italian culture of the local elite and the British culture of the rulers, called the Language Question, was solved conclusively by the outbreak of war in the Mediterranean in June 1940. The few Maltese newspapers that outlived the Second World War were born during the 1920s, when Malta was granted self-government for the first time under British rule.

Chapter one traces the beginning of the Language Question and the emergence of that section of the press that played a dominant role during the Second World War. This was instrumental in giving the final blow to the pro-Italian movement in Malta.

Chapter two describes the importance of the pro-British Allied Newspapers Limited and the other protagonists of the press during this period, in a wider social context.

Chapter three gives an account of the local censorship set-up and the difficulties that the press encountered during the hard months of the siege.

Chapter four deals with the activities and the publications of the Information Office, the official public relations office of the Government. Its functions and role are examined.

Chapter five analyses the propaganda themes in the press and their effects on the local population.

The Appendices put the experience of the local press in a wider military context, and offer selections of cartoons and front pages from the most important newspapers published during wartime.

Anthony Camenzuli: Inquisition and society in mid-eighteenth century Malta, 1767-1771 (B.A.Hons 1996)

This dissertation attempts to examine five years of criminal proceedings, together with some other primary sources, from the Inquisition Tribunal of Malta. The case studies provide useful insights into the social development of middle eighteenth century Malta. It is not my intention to

look at the Inquisition with its one separate jurisdiction, but rather to try and understand the social reality, the popular religious beliefs, the mentality and values of those who appeared in front of the Tribunal during the inquisitorship of Giovanni Mancinforte between 1767 and 1771.

The introductory chapter deals partly with the social situation in Malta during the mid-eighteenth century, focusing attention primarily on the everyday cultural life of all social classes involved. The latter part of this chapter tackles the role which the Inquisition Tribunal played upon common folk. This helps to formulate an understanding of how far the Tribunal's influence was felt among these people, if it was felt at all, and what was the effect it left on these individuals in such a 'fervent-Catholic society'.

The second chapter discusses popular magic and witchcraft as existing realities in Maltese society. A thorough definition and classification of such occult practices is offered. This presents us with a Catholic society that still randomly resorted towards the various levels of occultism, basically for reasons of productivity, protection, and even destruction.

Chapter three deals with popular healing practices and beliefs among the Maltese. Basically this chapter follows on the same lines of the preceding one, with the difference that the use of rituals here, more often than not, complemented with Catholic forms indicating that healing was mainly sought for supernatural protection and security during unexplained critical moments.

Chapter four deals with aspects of heresy and unethical behaviour. These are also encompassed in popular culture as they show the popular religious beliefs of people in a given society. Moreover, such doctrinal errors indicate that they were also sought for self-interest rather than as a means of social conflict against the existing Catholicism.

The conclusion amalgamates all these factors discussed above in a more subordinate way such that it tries to formulate a true cultural reality that really experienced such modes of thought and belief in a time when the true Christian values were severely in question.

Mario Ellul: Making Imperial Mentalities The Process of Imperial Assimilation in the Cottonera 1920 - 1939 (B.A. Hons. 1996)

This work discusses the British efforts during the inter war period at bringing the Maltese closer to feeling part of the Empire. It explores also the reaction of the population, especially the inhabitants of the Three Cities, to

the experience of domination and their adaptation to it. The processes described in this work are both formal and informal, ranging from the classroom to football. All these can be seen unfolding both as a reaction to externally induced factors (such as the Italian threat or the crises of the thirties) and to such internal circumstances as the growing bonds of economic dependence on the British overlord.

This dissertation is divided in four chapters. The first chapter discusses imperial propaganda within the educational framework while the second discusses the work done by the Boy Scout Organization in bringing the Maltese boys closer within the imperial fold. In the third chapter the economic dependence on the British is discussed as another crucial factor in imperial propaganda while in the last chapter items of popular culture such as football, radio and band clubs are analysed from the same viewpoint.

An attempt at gauging the post imperial consequences of this acculturation process is made throughout the course of the work and particularly in the conclusion. Here one can see that certain processes have been so powerful and pervasive as to outlive the passing of the Empire itself. As the public's reaction to the state visit of Queen Elizabeth II has shown five years ago, the embers of Empire, if not quite raving hot, are still glowing.

Charles Farrugia : Rural Village Politics in Malta : The case of Mqabba 1898-1940 (B.A.Hons 1996)

The main aim of this thesis is the study of the interrelations between national politics and village politics. The educational and occupational formation of Mqabba's population is analysed in order to establish any relations which might have existed between village leadership, upward mobility and education. *Partiti tal-festa* are considered as an integral element of village life and politics. The link with national politics is also underlined throughout this thesis. Crime, intolerance and other social aspects are also discussed with relation to Mqabba between 1890 and 1940. Several situations are described as a direct or remote effect of the geological position of the Mqabba area. The richness of *franca* (globigerina limestone) in the area conditioned to a great extent the inhabitants and the sort of lifestyle they adopted.

Apart from giving a realistic picture of village life in Mqabba, this thesis tries to concentrate on the political, economic and social environment and the extent to which this physical environment conditioned the lifestyle

of its inhabitants. National political issues are referred to, especially the way they were being presented at the national level as distinct from the village level. Amongst these issues one can mention the Sanitary Ordinance (1898), the Marriage Question (1890s), the introduction of electricity in Malta (1896), the politico-religious conflicts during Strickland's time and the Language Question.

Throughout the thesis some comparisons are made with other villages both in Malta and abroad. Among these one can mention Cinisi in Palermo, Peyane in France, and Qormi and Qrendi in Malta. These comparisons aim at viewing village politics in a Latin Medierranean context rather than in isolation.

Ephron Abela : Propaganda in the Maltese Press 1932-1940
(B.A.Hons 1996)

This dissertation examines the position occupied by propaganda in the sphere of Maltese journalism during a period of growing political tension. However, it has not been intended to tackle just the dissemination of opposing ideologies but a propaganda that is tied to cognition and makes use of existing popular attitudes and beliefs like Catholicism. The dissertation is intended to uncover behavioural traits, cognition and perceptions of existing circumstances in the media and the political scene through the study of propaganda. It also aims at illustrating the actual impact of propaganda on events, in an age when propaganda is becoming increasingly important.

The first part of the dissertation takes into consideration the general form of propaganda in the Maltese press, with special emphasis on the source of the propaganda and the press organs it had at its disposal. Social and financial factors affecting the source and source credibility are examined as well.

The second part consists of three case studies that illustrate the actual output of propaganda and the behaviour of the press in its dissemination. British attitudes towards opposing propaganda and the measures taken by the British authorities to control it are taken in consideration.

Ivan Grech : The Hospitaller Commandery of San Giovanni di Prä in Genoa. Aspects of its Historical Development in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (M.A. 1996)

The present study, divided into eight chapters, spans the history of

the Hospitaller commandery of San Giovanni di Prä in Genoa, from the Middle Ages up to the end of the eighteenth century. As indicated by the title, the focus is on the commandery's history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The first two chapters have been dedicated to the medieval genesis and subsequent development of the settlement stemming from the early contacts between Genoa and the Hospitallers. This was an imperative overture for a better understanding of the dominant themes discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Particular attention has been focused on the commandery's financial development, perhaps the most dynamic aspect of the benefice. This has been substantiated with studies on isolated attempts by certain commanders to break the commandery's close ties with the land it possessed. The study is concluded by a step-by-step account of the events which led to the confiscation of San Giovanni di Prä.

Anthony Quintano : The Establishment and Organization of the Order of St. John's Sailing Ship-of-the-Line Squadron 1701-1741 (Master of Arts 1996)

Naval historians have somewhat neglected the eighteenth century naval history of Hospitaller Malta for reasons discussed in the preface. The present dissertation tries to fill a gap in the Order of St. John's naval historiography by discussing the origins, establishment and the organization of both the administrative and executive branches of the ships squadron. The causes for the introduction of the squadron are treated in a wider frame than the local circumstances permit us to perceive at first glance, by treating the origins of the sailing-ship-of-the-line, and its early inroads into the Mediterranean and Malta of the seventeenth century.

The main aspects discussed in the present dissertation include the work of the commission of sailing-ships; the political quarrel between the Grand Master and some bailiffs which developed over it; the description of its ships and problems of replacement; the attributes and disadvantages of the new shipyard at the Cospicua-Senglea area; the quantitative analysis of the economy, finance, provision and consumption of the ships; and the social implications of the working conditions of the crews.

The general approach from political to administrative to executive aspects followed in the dissertation may be considered to be the result of the

attempt to treat the establishment and organization of the squadron from a thematic and analytical standpoint, rather than from a purely narrative approach to events. Wherever possible, a comparative analysis with the Order's galley squadron and with other European naval establishments has been made in all aspects discussed.

OVERVIEW OF MELITENSIA BOOKS 1988-1990

compiled by Stephan Cachia

1986

Chesney A. G. (ed.): *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army*; Midsea Books.

1987

Bonnici Cali'R: *Kitbiet imzewqa: Twemmin, storja, arti, folklor Vol 1*; Lehen is- Sewwa Publications 180pp.

1988

Architecture in Malta: Historical Aspects; Society of Architecture & Civil Engineering Students; University of Malta.

Abela A.E. : *The Order of St. Michael and St. George in Malta and Maltese Knights in the British Realm*; Progress Press Co. Ltd.; xvii 206pp.

Al Shidyaq & Ahmed Faris: *El Wasita: Tgharif dwar Malta fis-seklu 19*; Translated by Francis Xavier Cassar; Centru Kulturali Islamiku; 99pp.

Association of Aircraft Enthusiasts: *Luqa Aviation Yearbook* Guttenberg Press. (includes an article on aircraft in Malta in the 1920s).

Attard Joseph: *The Story of an Era*; PEG; ix 122pp.

Attard Joseph: *The Battle of Malta: An Epic True Story of Suffering and Bravery*; Progress Press Co. Ltd.; 222pp.

Azzopardi F. (ed): *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in the National Library of Malta Volume II Part 7 Archive 1000*; Malta University Press 130 pp.

Pioneers of Maltese Natural History; Natura Publications.

Azzopardi Gerald: *Ir-Rieda tal-Kotra: il-hsibijiet ta' Censu Bugeja f'gheluq il-mitt sena minn twelidu*; Dipt tat Taghrif Partit tal-Haddiema; 144pp.

Battistino Vincent: *L-Istorja ta l-Ghaqda Muzikali Maria Annunzjata, Hal-Tarxien. 1862 - 1987: 125 Sena ta' Storja Muzikali, Socjali u Kulturali*; Ghaqda Muzikali Maria Annunzjata; 83pp.

Bezzina Joseph: *Gozo: A Historical Glimpse*; Bugelli; 48pp.

Boisgelin Luis de: *Ancient and Modern Malta (London 1804)*; Midsea Books.

Bonnici Fr.Alexander: *Giuseppe de Piro 1877 - 1933: Founder of the Missionary Society of St. Paul*; Missionary Society of St. Paul.

Bonnici Fr. Alexander: *In-Nadur isir parrocca fis-sena 1688*; Religjon u Hajja; 32pp.

Bonnici Joseph & Cassar Micheal: *The Malta Railway / Il-Vapur ta' l-Art*; The Authors; xiv 154pp.

Bonnici Joseph & Cassar Michael: *Tifkira tal-Kungress Ewkaristiku Internazzjonali Malta 1913*; The Authors; vi 72pp.

Bonnici Joseph & Cassar Michael: *Malta Then & Now / Malta Dari w Illum*; The Authors; 64pp.

Buhagiar Mario: *The Iconography of The Maltese Islands 1400 - 1900*; Progress Press Co. Ltd 201pp.

Buttigieg A.: *Fejn saret il-parocca fis-sena 1688: fil-Qala jew fin-Nadur; Gozo (sn)* 66pp.

Calleja Philip & Buttigieg Charles: *Nazju Falzon: Alla ghadu jfejjjaq; Vicipostulazzjoni Nazju Falzon*; xv 151pp.

Calliari Paolo: *Amiamo l'amore - profilo biografico di madre Margherita de Brincat, fondatrice delle Suore Francescane del Cuore di Gesù: 1862 - 1952; Suore Francescane del Cuore di Gesù*; 215pp.

Cassar Paul: *The Castellania Palace: From Law Courts to Guardian of the Nation's Health*; DOI ix 62pp.

Ciappara Frans: *Marriage in Malta in the Late 18th Century (1750-1800)*; Associated News (Malta) Ltd.; 144pp.

Ciarlo' John: *Vittmi tan-Nazi*; KKM. 128pp.

Depiro Nicholas: *The International Dictionary of Artists Who Painted Malta*; Said International Ltd 207pp.

Ellul Joseph S: *Malta's Prediluvian Culture at the Stone Age Temples with special reference to Hagar Qim, Ghar Dalam, Cartruts, Il-Misqa, Il-Maqluba, and Creation*; The Author; iii 94pp.

Ellul Michael: *St. Elmo: A Brief History*; Progress Press Co. Ltd; 71pp.

Farrugia Randon Robert: *The Maltese Cardinal Fabrizio Sciberras Testaferrata*; Mid Med Bank; xvi 108pp.

Fradkin Anati Ariela & Anati Emanuel: *Missione a Malta: ricerche e studi sulla preistoria dell' arcipelago maltese nel contesto mediterraneo*; Milano: Jaka Book; 241pp.

Galea Fredrick R: *Air War Over Malta: The Allies*; Modelaid International; 40pp.

Galea M: *The Palace of The Grandmasters & The Armoury*; M. J Publications 64pp.

Galea Micheal (ed): *The Church of St Paul Shipwreck Valetta*; (sn).

Galea Scannura Charles et al.: *Funtani fil-Belt / Fountans in Valetta*;

Water Works Dipt.

Galea Scannura Charles: *L-istorja tal-banda ta' Bormla*; (sn.) 144pp.

Gambin Maria: *Oscar Testa pittur Malti 1909- 1979*; (sn).

Grech Grazjo Anton: *Grazja tas- Socjeta Filarmonika Leone, Ghawdex L-ewwel ktieb*; (sn); 87pp.

Grech Leonard: *Distinguished Forefathers*; Veritas Press; 36pp.

Griffiths George (ed.): *Ritratt: Maltese Migration in Focus*; Sydney (New South Wales): Maltese News and Information; 123pp.

Giles Ash Stephen &. Edwards Ash Frank M: *The Testaferrata Family: A Re-appraisal of the Family's Early History*; Classic press; iv 136pp.

Giles Ash Stephen &. Edwards Ash Frank M: *Malta's Nobility and the Winds of Change 1888 - 1988: An Analytical Study of the Rules and Regulations Governing the Assembly of Nobles and the Committee of Privileges of the Maltese Nobility*; PEG. vii 108pp.

Giles Ash Stephen &. Edwards Ash Frank M: *The Nobility of Malta: An Analytical Study and Re-appraisal of the Royal Commission of 1877*; PEG. x 142pp.

Hogan George: *Malta: The Triumphant Years 1940-43*; Progress Press Co. Ltd.; 208pp.

Joughin John: *Island Fighter: A Tribute to his Father, J.C. Joughin CBE RCNC*; UK: Jane Joughin; viii 75pp.

Kemp Paul J: *Malta Convoys 1940 -1943*; London: Arms and Armour Press; 64pp.

Licini (Bologna 1631): *The Great Siege of Malta*; Philip Aalbersberg (a photolithographic reprint).

Mahony Leonard: *A History of Maltese Architecture from Ancient Times up to 1800*; Veritas Press; 360pp.

Mallia Milanes Victor (ed.) : *Descrizione di Malta Anno 1716- A Venetian Account*; Bugelli; xvi 119pp.

Mallia Milanes Victor: *The British Colonial Experience 1800 - 1964; The Impact on Maltese Society*; Mireva Academic Publications; xxiii 422pp.

Mason F.A: *The Last Destroyer: HMS Aldenham 1942 - 1944*; London: Robert Hale 206pp.

Mintoff Dom: *Din hi l Istorja*; Noticeboard Publications.

Musu' Anna A (ed): *A Catalogue of Printed Works by Maltese Composers at the Music Library of the Cathedral Museum*; Foundation for international studies, University of Malta; 32pp.

Neubert Sigrid: *Die Tempel von Malta: das Mysterium der Megalithbauten*; Bergisch Gladbach: gustav Lubbe; 159pp.

Parker Rowland, Rubenstein Michael & Trump David: *Malta's Temples and Ruts*; Tunbridge Wells Kent: Institute for Cultural research.

Sant Alfred: *It-28 ta' April 1958, il-hobz u l-helsien: kronaka u analisi*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 460pp.

Spiteri Alfred: *De La Salle College Vol. II: Life at the Cottonera 1939 - 1971*; De La Salle College; 206pp.

Spiteri Stephen C: *Discovering the Fortifications of the Order of St. John in Malta*; Said International Ltd.

Sultana Donald: *The Journey of William Frere to Malta in 1832*; Progress Press Co- Ltd; xix 178pp

Taffolo Julia: *Image of a Night; Portrait Prints and Drawings of the Knights*

of St. John in the Museum of the Order of St. John; Order of St. John of Jerusalem 101pp.

Williams Raymond and Maureen: *The Defenders of Malta*; UK: The authors; 166p

Zammit Fr. Raniero et al. *Il-Madonna u Tas-Sliema*; PEG.

1989

F'għeluq il-mitt sena mill-ftuh tal-iskola primarja fil-Qala 1889-1989; Qala Skola Primarja; 47pp.

Gorg Borg Olivier: *gabra ta' kitbiet dwaru*; Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza; viii 99pp.

Meeting of Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush in Malta, December 2 - 3 1989, Documents and Materials; Moscow: Novosti Press Agency; 31pp.

Abela A.E: *Malta's George Cross and Gallantry Awards*; Progress Press Co. Ltd.; xvi 100pp.

Abela Joe: *Ħz- Zejtun: mitt sena Arcipretali 1889 - 1989*; Kunsill Presbiterjali u Kunsill Lokali Zejtun.

Azzopardi John (ed.): *The Order's Early Legacy in Malta*; Said International Ltd; xv 124pp.

Azzopardi John (ed): *Giorgio Pullicino 1779-1851: Architect and Painter*. Friends of the Cathedral Museum.

Baldacchino Carmel: *Goals, Cups and Tears, A History of Maltese Football Vol. 1, 1886-1919; The Golden Age of Maltese Football*; Bugelli; xviii 427pp.

Bestler Anita: *Soziale Bedingungen der politischen Partizipation von Frauen in Malta*; Ausburg: Lehrstuhl für Soziologie und

Komunikationswissenschaft der Universität Augsburg; xv 156pp.

Bezzina Joseph: *Sannat fi grajjiet Ghawdex*; Parrocchia tas-Sannat; 572pp.

Bezzina Joseph: *Marian Shrines in Gozo*; Bugelli.

Bonnici Fr. Alexander: *Dun Gorg Preca 1880 - 1962: hajja, xiedha, documenti: Vol 3 il- Bniedem t' Alla 1918 - 1962*; M.U.S.E.U.M.; 520pp.

Bonnici Joseph & Cassar Michael: *The Malta Busses*; The Authors; viii 208pp.

Bonnici Joseph & Cassar Michael: *Malta Then and Now 2*; The Authors; 64pp.

Borg Paul P: *Selmun u l-inhaw*; Bugelli; xvi 224pp.

Bradford Ernle: *Siege Malta 1940 - 1943*; Anstey Leicestershire: F.A. Thorpe; 570pp.

Briffa Joseph M: *Periodicals and Newspapers in Malta*; Central Public Library 48pp.

Brincat Giuseppe(ed.): *Incontri Siculo Maltesi: Atti del II convegno su Malta - Sicilia: contiguita' e continuita' linguistica e culturale Malta 4 -6 Aprile 1986*; University of Malta; vi 210pp.

Buttigieg Anton: *Mons. Mikiel Buttigieg: l- ewwel Isqof ta' Ghawdex*; (sn); 52pp.

Calleja J: *L- Imsida, il- bierah u llum Vol. 1: il- hajja religjuza tar-rah*; Veritas Press; 250pp.

Caruana Dingli Mario J.: *Caruana Dingli Artists*; Progress Press Co. Ltd; 235pp.

Cassar Pullicino Guze: *Studi di tradizione popolari maltesi*; University of

Malta; x 202pp.

Castone della Torre di Rezzonico Carlo: *Viaggi di Malta 1793*; Joseph Eynaud (ed.); Midsea Books; 72pp.

Ciarlo' John: *Dun Alfred Gatt 1873 - 1937*; Peresso Printing Press; 34pp.

Cortis Toni (ed.): *L-Identita' kulturali ta' Malta*; DOI.

Cutajar Dominic: *History and Works of Art of St John's Church Valletta*; MJ.Publications; 112pp.

Dauber Robert L: *Die Merine dis Johanniter - Malteser - Ritter - Ordens: 500 Jahre Seekrieg Verteidigung Europas*; Graz: H. Weishaupt Verlag; 368pp.

Ellis Richard & Barlow Ben: *The Royal Navy in Malta Vol 1: The Victorian Era 1865 - 1906*; Maritime Books; 130pp. (A photographic collection).

Farrugia Randon Philp: *Caravaggio in Malta*; Mid Med Bank; viii 143pp.

Filletti Joseph: *La polemica nella stampa maltese per la visita di Giuseppe Garibaldi a Malta nel 1864*; Misdea Books; 29pp.

Fiorini Stanley: *Santo Spirito Hospital at Rabat Malta: The Early Years to 1575*; DOI; x 199pp.

Frendo Henry J.: *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of History*; Valletta Publishing 282pp.

Frendo Henry J.: *Lejn Stat Sofran: L-Izvilupp konstituzionali Maltin (wirja organizzata fliemkien mall-ministeru ta' l'educazzjoni* 16pp.

Frendo Henry J.: *Storja ta' Kuragg: il-Poplu numru 14, Settembru 1989*, 50pp.

Galea Joseph: *Bibliography of the French Rule in Malta 1798 - 1800*; Edam Publishing xvi 31pp.

Galea M: *Gorg Borg Olivier mill-qrib*; Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza.

Galea Paul G: *San Fulgenz u l-Agostinjani f'Malta: fehmiet u fehmiet*; Media Centre 143pp.

Grossjohann Wilfred: *Malta: ein poltisches Reisebuch*; Hamburg: VSA Verlag; 256pp.

Kaminarides John, Brigulio Lino, Hoogendonk Henk N. (ed.): *The Economic Development of Small Countries: Problems, Strategies and Policies*; Deft Eburon.

Luttrell A. et al.: *The Order's Early Legacy in Malta*; Canon John Azzopardi (ed.); Said International Ltd; 124pp.

Mangion A. & Zerafa K: *Santa Katerina: il-festa u s-socjeta muzikali taghha fiz Zurrieq*; Socjeta Muzikali Santa Katerina; 346pp.

Marini Maurizio et al.: *Mattia Preti*; Erminia Corace (ed); (Trans. Isabelle Butters Caleffi); Roma: Palombi; 188pp.

Mason Bert & Squires Dick (ed.): *Malta Images: Maltese Defences WW II*; UK: George Cross Island Association; 80pp.

Mason Roger, Willis Pamela: *Maps of Malta in the Museum and Library of the Order of St. John; A Short Catalogue*; London: St John Supplies Dept; 40pp.

Micallef Paul I.: *Mnajdra Prehistoric Temple: A Calendar in Stone*; The Author; 48pp.

Mizzi J.A.: *Massacre in Malta: The Hijack of Egypt Air Flight MS648*; Technografica; vi 63pp.

Mizzi J.A.: *An Illustrated History*; The Author viii 505pp.

Naudi Herbert: *Il-Banda Stella Maris tas-Sliema; djarju u hjiel tal-istorja taghha*; The Author; iv 79pp.

Obenfuss Max J.: *The Travel Diary of Peter Tolstoi; A Muscovite in Early Modern Europe*; De Kalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press; xxix 359pp.

Prins A.H.J.: *In Peril on the Sea: Marine Votive Paintings in the Maltese Islands*; (sn); xii 206pp.

Rodel Walter G.: *Der ritterliche Orden St. Jonannis von Spital zu Jerusalem ein Abriss seiner Geschichte: Handreichung für Mitglieder und Freunde des Ordens und Seiner werke*; Nieder: Wiesel.

Said Godwin: *Malta Through Postcards 1900 - 1910*; Said International Ltd.

Sammut Frans: *Ir-rivoluzzjoni Franciza: il-grajja u t-tifsira*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal-Haddiema; 128pp.

Sant Michael A.: *Sette Giugno 1919: tqanqil u tibdil*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 224pp.

Spiteri Stephen C.: *The Fortifications of the Knights*; The Author.

Steed Gordon W.: *A Small Leaf Upon a Sea: A Small Ship in the Mediterranean 1941 - 1943*; University of Vancouver: Columbia Press; xiv 185pp.

Testa Carmel: *The Life and Times of Grandmaster Pinto 1741 - 1773*; Midsea Books; xiii 350pp.

Vella Mario: *Lejn Gvern Laburista 1944 - 1949*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal-Haddiema; 187pp.

Villain-Gandossi Christiane, Busuttil Salvino, Adam Paul (ed.): *Medieval Ships and the Birth of Technological Societies Volume 1: Northern in Europe*; Foundation for International Studies; 222pp.

Wismayer J.M.: *The History of the King's Own Malta Regiment and the Armed Forces of the Order of St. John*; Said International Ltd; xiii 376pp.
 Zammit Karmenu: *Għad- demokrazija u l- helsien: analizi storika tar-relazzjonijiet bejn il- Knisja, l- kleru u l- poplu Malti u Ghawdx*; Dipt. tat Tagħrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 112pp.

Zammit Maempel G.: *The Folklor of Maltese Fossils*; Midsea Books; 29pp.

Zammit Maempel G.: *Għar Dalam: Cave and Deposits*; The Author; 74pp.

1990

L-ewwel hamsin sena tal-Legjun ta' Marija f'Malta: barga kommemorattiva f' għeluq il- hamsin sena mit- twaqqif tal-Legjun f'Malta 23-4-1940 - 23-4-1990; Regia ta' Malta tal-Legjun ta' Marija 176pp.

Pietru fil- Gzira ta' Pawlu; Vol 1/2/3; Media Centre; 119/79/72pp.

Graber deutscher Ritter des Johanniter\ Malteserorders in dr St. Johannes Kirche in Valletta auf Malta; Pater Born. 114pp.

Malta and the EEC: Economic and Social Aspects: Reports and Documents; Dipt. tat Tagħrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 268pp.

360 sena' kollegata: Birkirkara 1630 -1990; Dun Filippu Borgia; x 95pp.

In Search of St. Paul; Specialist Archeological Systems; 28pp.

Attard L.E.: *The Great Exodus (1913 - 1939)*; PEG; ix 141pp.

Aquilina Sunny et al.: *Il-pijunieri tal- futbol Malti*; St. George's F.C. xvi 198pp.

Azzopardi John(ed.): *St. Paul's Grotto, Church and Museum, Rabat, Malta*; Progress Press Co Ltd; xvi 558pp.

Baldachino Carmel: *Goals, Cups and Tears, A History of Maltese Football Vol. 2 1919 - 1934; The Great Amateur Era*; Bugelli; xviii 593pp.

Bezzina Joseph: *The Popes and Gozo: St. Peter to John Paul II*; Bugelli 48pp.

Blogg T.F.C., Bonanno A., Luttrell A.T.: *Excavations at Hal Millieri, Malta: A Report on the 1977 Campaign Conducted on Behalf of the National Museum of Malta and the University of Malta*; Malta Univ. Press; xi 152pp.

Bonanno Anthony et al. Gozo: *The Roots of an Island*; Charles Cini (ed.); Said International Ltd; 211pp.

Bonnici Fr. Alexander: *Storja tal-Inkizizzjoni ta' Malta - Vol 1: mill-Inkizizzjoni Medjevali sa mitt senata Inkizizzjoni Rumana 1433 - 1653*; Religjon u Hajja 336pp.

Bonnici Fr. Alexander: *The Ursuline Sisters of Malta*; Religjon u Hajja 40pp.

Bonnici Guze': *Storja tal- Partit tal- Haddiema*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 168pp.

Bonnici Joseph and Cassar Michael: *The Royal Opera House, Malta*; The Authors; 104pp.

Borg Joe: *Bandiera Hamra: l-Ewwel ta' Mejju f' Malta, Vol 1 (1926 - 1933)*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 166pp.

Buttigieg Anton: *L-isbah zmien ta' hajti*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal- Haddiema; 127pp.

Calleja Fr. Joe: *L-Imsida il- bierah u llum Vol 2: Il- hajja ta' rahal*; Veritas Press; 311pp.

Camilleri Fr.Frangisku: *Il-Kapuccini f'Malta: 400 sena ta' hidma*; University of Malta 24pp

Caruana Richard J.: *Airwar over Malta: The Axis*; Michael Bonello (ed); Modelaid international; 40pp.

Cassar Paul: *St. Luke's Hospital: Foundation and Progress 1930 - 1990; Parliamentary Secretary for Health*; 19pp.

Cassar Pullicino Guze': *L-imghoddi tal-gens taghna: bejn storja u folklor*; Media Centre; 93pp.

Cauchi Maurice N.: *Maltese Migrants in Australia*; Maltese Community, Council of Victoria; x 170, 95pp.

d' Angelo Michaela: *Mercanti inglesi a Malta 1800 - 1825*; Milano: Franco Angeli; 287pp.

Gauci Fr. Gino (ed.): *Sacred Art in Malta 1890 - 1960*; Said International Ltd.; xv 96pp.

de Vertot Mgr l'Abbe: *The History of the knights of Malta*; Midsea Books. (Photoithographic reprint).

Douglas Hamilton James: *The Air Battle for Malta: The Diaries of a Fighter Pilot*; Shrewsbury: AirLife; 150pp.

Espinoza Rodriguez Antonio: *Paintings at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Malta*; Said International Ltd.; ix 164pp.

Frendo Henry J.: *Lejn Guvern Responsabli: ir-rieda għall helsien. Vol.2 (1905 - 1921)*; Charles Dalli (trans); Publikazzjonijiet Indipendenza; xiv 155pp.

Frendo Henry J. (ed): *The Epic of Malta :A Pictorial Survey of Malta During the Second World War*; Valletta Publishing; vi 128pp.

Gabriele Mariano: *Operazione C3 Malta*; Roma: Ufficio storico della Marina; x 328pp

Galea Biagio: *L-Imdina ta' tfuliti*; Bugelli; xvi 200pp.

Galea Frans: *Ma' sebh is-seklu: il-hidma ta' Gulierrmu Arena*; Dipt. tat Taghrif Partit tal-Haddiema; 215pp

Galea Joseph: *Il- Konfraternita tal Bumbardieri fil- knisja ta' Santa Barbara*; KKM 87pp.

Galea Joseph: *Malta's Timeline: A Handbook of Maltese Chronology*. Raymond M.Cassar (ed): Laga; 195pp.

Galea M.: *Nerik Mizzi: Tifkiriet*; Publikazzjonijiet Indipendenza; ix 94pp.

Ganado Albert & Sammut Joseph: *Malta in British and French Caricatures 1798 - 1815*; Said International Ltd; ix 164pp.

Gauci G. (ed): *Sacred Art in Malta 1890-1960*; Said International Ltd., xv + 96pp

Leaver Arthur J.: *History of Waterpolo in Malta 1910 - 1988*; Progress Press Co Ltd; 177pp.

Locket Frank: *The Maltese Penguin: Stories from the Background Fog of War 1942 - 1943*; London: SG Books.

Mangion Giovanni (ed.): *Maltese Baroque*; Ministry of Education & The Council of Europe; 176pp.

Mifsud Roger (ed): *John Paul II in Malta*; Progress Press Co Ltd; 93pp.

Mizzi J.A. (ed): *The Malta Summit December 2 - 3 1989*; Technografica 48pp.

Mizzi Lawrence (ed.): *Meta faqqghet il-Gwerra: antologija ta' tifikiriet*; Bugelli; 228pp.

Pace Roderick: *Malta u l- Komunita' Ewropea 1961 - 1990*; Publikazzjonijiet Indipendenza xii 121pp.

Powell Geoffrey: *Plumer, the Soldiers' General: A Bibliography of Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer* London: Leo Cooper; 362pp.

Sammut Felix: *St. Paul in Malta: The Bible, Documents, Tradition*; Religjon u Hajja 31pp.

Schembri Giuseppe: *The Malta and Russia Connection: A History of Diplomatic Relations between Malta and Russia (XVII - XIX cc) based on original Russian Documents*; Grima viii 90pp.

Schiavone Michael J.: *X' fissret l-ghaqda tal-GWU mal-MLP għall-haddiem*; Publikazzjonijiet Indipendenza; xiii 174pp.

Spiteri Raymond, Alfred Massa: *Twelid ta' Stat Indipendenti: Malta 1964*; Guga 190pp.

Vella Apap Nikol: *Il-Madonna fl-istorja tal-liturgija u fl-arti*; The Author; 99pp.

Xuereb David (ed.): *Architecture in Malta: Evolution of Architecture*; Society of Architecture & Civil Engineering Students; University of Malta; 76pp.

York Barry: *Empire and Race: The Maltese in Australia 1881 - 1949*; New South Wales, Kensington: NSW University Press; ix 229pp.

Zahra W.R.: *The Old Parish Church of St. Cathrine at Zejtun, Popularly Known as St. Gregories: Description and Comments*; (sn); 29pp.

Zammit Vincent: *Il-Granmastri gabra ta taghrif dwar l-Istorja ta' Malta fi zmienhom*; Valletta Publishing.

Zammit Maempel George: *Pioneers of Maltese Geology*; Mid Med Bank.

Joseph Serracino: *It-tigrija tad-dghajjes nhar il-Vitorja 1906 - 1989*; The Author; 77pp.

A SELECT LIST OF HISTORY-RELATED DISSERTATIONS IN THE HUMANITIES (1996)

Kenneth Gambin

Bachelors in Education (Hons)

Matthew Aguis, Christopher Attard:

Dokumenti mill-gazzetti għall-istorja edukattiva f'Malta (1931-1945)

Dorianne Attard:

L-edukazzjoni fil-gazzetti 1916-1930

Rosanne Azzopardi:

Children of returned migrants: their experience of foreign and Maltese primary schooling

Shoran Portelli:

Land use development at Mgarr Harbour Gozo

Romina Barbara, Mary Louise D'Amato:

Nistharrgu l-imghoddi: Malta u t-tieni gwerra dinija

Maria Pace:

Settlement patterns in the Maltese islands: Zurrieq (a case study)

Irene Farrugia:

Il-Poezija religjuza ta' awturi Ghawdxin

Master of Education

Mario Callus :

'Fundamentalism', pluralism and education: a Euro-Mediterranean perspective

Karen Mugliett:

Policy making trends in education 1987-1997

Simone Galea:

Emancipatory education and political action

Bachelor of Arts (Hons)

Therese Ellul B.A.Hons (Communication Studies):

Melita: Roman monuments in Malta

Celia Callus B.A.Hons (Communication Studies):

Through the looking glass: a comparable study of advertising as a mirror image of social realities

Andrej Vujicic B.A.Hons (Communication Studies):

The new media and art in modernism

Ivan Bugeja B.A. Hons (Economics):

A study of tourism exchanges between Malta and Sicily in the context of commercial exchanges in the Mediterranean

Adrain Bartolo B.A. Hons (Art):

Maltese still life painting 1600-1945

Felicity Bianchi B.A. Hons (Art):

Devotional free standing limestone statuary in Malta

Theresa Zammit Lupi B.A. Hons (Art):

Portrait painting in Malta from the late 19th-century to 1950

Cynthia de Giorgio B.A. Hons (Art):

The Madonna of the Rosary in Maltese art

Donald Camilleri B.A. Hons (Art):

The parish church of St. Bartholomew, Gharghur: history, architecture and works of art.

Catherine Anne Galea B.A. Hons (Art):

Edward Lear (1812-1888): his connection with Malta (1848-1866)

Anna Baker B.A. Hons (Art):
The Monastic church of St. Peter's, Mdina

Mark Anthony Falzon B.A. Hons (Anthropology):
An encounter with the Maltese-Indian community

Jannet Bonnici B.A. Hons (Maltese):
Emilio Lombardi: hajtu u hidmietu

Elena Maria Peresso B.A. Hons (French):
Litterature de voyages sur Malte (XVIIe-XVIIIe siecles)

Master of Arts

Josette Attard:
Antologija kritika ta' xoghlijiet estetici Maltin

Matina Caruana:
L'Isle Adam liturgical choral books and other illuminated liturgical and devotional codices in Maltese collections

Mario Galea:
It-teatru bil-Malti: mill-bidu tat-tieni Gwerra Dinijija

Stephen Zammit:
'Giornale Maltese' di Ignazio Saverio Mifsud

Malcolm Borg:
British Colonial Architecture (Malta 1800-1900)

Ph.D.

Charles Briffa:
Rhythmic patterns in Maltese novels

"Storja fih artikli tassew interessanti, ricerka gdida dwar il-grajja ta' pajjizna. Iddiskutejt ma' Henry Frendo u r-ricerkaturi zghazagh li kellu mieghu, dwar problemi li jiffaccjaw l-istudju ta' l-istorja. M'hemm l-ebda dubju dwar l-importanza li ghandhom jinghataw ir-ricerka u l-għarfien storiku f'pajjizna."

Prime Minister Alfred Sant's comment on Storja '96
It-Torca

"The return of Storja, the journal of the Malta university history society, after a long eighteen year absence, is more than welcome.....Storja 96 deserves every attention"

Louis Scerri, The Sunday Times

"Il-progett Storja ried jighor u jagħsar kemm jista jkun daww il-kitbiet kollha ta' sustanza, specialment forsi daww li ma kienux publicati - studji li kienu jsiru mill-istess studenti u gradwati ta' l-Universita, bħal tezijiet u xogħolijiet bħal dawn."

Henry Frendo, In-Nazzjon

"Storja was recently relaunched, and fittingly, during the Andrew Vella Memorial Lecture. This is a veritable encyclopaedia both because of variety of subjects treated, and because of the vast information....."

Norbert Ellul-Vincenti, The Times

"Storja is the annual digest deserving the function of a journal of Maltese history and providing also a "workshop" section, for readers to focus attention on historical events, personalities, publications and problems. Viewing history as essentially the attempt to understand and interpret man in time, Storja aims to encourage history-writing that is as interdisciplinary and problem oriented as possible. In this way, Storja should help to promote the gradual evolution of a Maltese school of historiography, according to which the appreciation and indeed the value of history will depend on the methodical attempt to reconstruct and to judge past human experiences fairly and imaginatively, bringing unknown truths to life by extracting meaning from the documents and so evoking not merely an exotic interest, a nostalgic curiosity or a self-centred knowledge, but concern, dialogue and commitment. Storja therefore will avoid the publishing chronicles or records of "dead" happenings, unless such useful evidence as these may contain is immediately intelligible in a comparative or contemporary sense, or is particularly useful as source material for a future historian's talents.

Editorial, Storja '78

"Storja fih artikli tassew interessanti, ricerka gdida dwar il-grajja ta' pajjizna. Iddiskutejt ma' Henry Frendo u r-ricerkaturi zghazagh li kellu mieghu, dwar problemi li jiffaccjaw l-istudjanti ta' l-istorja. M'hemm l-ebda dubju dwar l-importanza li ghandhom jinghataw ir-ricerka u l-għarfien storiku f'pajjizna."

Alfred Sant, It-Torca

"The return of Storja, the journal of the Malta university history society, after a long eighteen year absence, is more than welcome.....Storja '96 deserves every attention"

Louis Scerri, The Sunday Times

"Il-progett Storja ried jigħor u jagħsar kemm jista jkun dawk il-kitbiet kollha ta' sustanza, specialment forsi dawk li ma kienux publikati - studji li kienu jsiru mill-istess studenti u gradwati ta' l-Universita, bħal tezijiet u xogħolijiet bħal dawn."

Henry Frendo, In-Nazzjon

"Storja was recently relaunched, and fittingly, during the Andrew Vella Memorial Lecture. This is a veritable encyclopaedia both because of variety of subjects treated, and because of the vast information....."

Norbert Ellul-Vincenti, The Times

"Storja is a digest serving the function of a journal of Maltese history and providing also a "workshop" section, for readers to focus attention on historical events, personalities, publications and problems. Viewing history as essentially the attempt to understand and interpret man in time, Storja aims to encourage history-writing that is as interdisciplinary and problem-oriented as possible. In this way, Storja should help to promote the gradual evolution of a Maltese school of historiography, according to which the appreciation and indeed the value of history will depend on the methodical attempt to reconstruct and to judge past human experiences fairly and imaginatively, bringing unknown truths to life by extracting meaning from the documents and so evoking not merely an exotic interest, a nostalgic curiosity or a self-centred knowledge, but concern, dialogue and commitment. Storja therefore will avoid the publishing of chronicles or records of "dead" happenings, unless such useful evidence as these may contain is immediately intelligible in a comparative or contemporary sense, or is particularly useful as source material for a future historian's talents."

Editorial, Storja '78