

BOOK REVIEWS

HENRY FRENDO, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*. Maltese Social Studies No. 5. Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 1979; xii-243pp.

Within the limits of this review it is not possible to do justice to the wealth of new insights offered in this book, providing so much that is new and so much that may serve as a model both for undergraduates and for fellow scholars. Frendo has succeeded not only in tracing and elucidating complicated and hitherto obscure issues concerning the complex evolution of party politics in Malta and in placing them firmly in their historical context; he has also succeeded in recreating the spirit of the age with great accuracy, the intensity beneath impulses, attitudes, tendencies and highly controversial issues with superb objectivity and thoroughness that merit "nothing ... except admiration". The publisher has produced an impressive volume, attractive too for its very well chosen illustrations.

In chapter I, "Malta in the Nineteenth Century: Fortress, Colony or Nation?", and chapter II, "The Rise of Maltese Nationalism, 1880—1888", the reader is given a skilfully conducted investigation into the historical background of the situation immediately preceding the emergence of political parties in the Maltese

Islands and the framework within which these were gradually to evolve. Positive formative agencies — unity of language, unity of religion, the free press after 1839, the occasional exercise of a limited franchise after 1849, the pervasive influence of the Italian Risorgimento — compressed in what has been termed "a small revolutionary party" spurred the Maltese, judged in 1812 as "singularly unfitted to enjoy" even a modicum of "political power", to rebel against the idea of a fortress which determined and conditioned British policy towards the island. External circumstances in 1870 favoured a decisive turning point in Maltese political development. The opening of the Suez Canal, the unification of Italy and Germany, the political dimension attained in European power politics: these, together with the fortuitous appearance on the local political scene of personalities like Salvatore Cachia Zammit, Sigismondo Savona and Fortunato Mizzi and the serious attempt on the part of the colonial administration to impose the English language on Malta with all its seriousness, repercussions and psychological, moral and cultural impact, induced the Maltese to assume a new direction towards political maturity, towards asserting their own identity. Frendo delves deep into the aims, methods, activities and 'ideology' of each of the emerging parties, providing in the process mature and sensible biographical and critical insight into key personalities round whom the parties evolved.

Chapter III discusses "Party Politics under Representative Government" during the decade following the promulgation of the 1887 constitution. The period was marked by "dramatic leadership changes", the 1891 constitutional amendments, Lintorn Simmons' mission to the Vatican and the Privy Council's judgement on the marriage question. Mizzi had retired from active political life. Count Strickland, who "had no notion, let alone vision, of Malta as a nation state", became chief secretary. Savona returned to the legislature while Mgr Pietro Pace was appointed Bishop of Malta. "Mizzi's absence," writes Frendo, "and Savona's antagonism facilitated Strickland's rise to power," to a "*de facto*" governorship. The consequences of the 1891 constitutional amendments were long lasting, strengthening the Executive Council against the obstructionism of the unofficial members and enabling Strickland to proceed unhampered (hardly ever consulting the elected members) with the revision of the customs tariff (including the obnoxious increase in grain duties and the postal ordinance). The amendments and Strickland's methods created a united opposition, a temporary alignment of rival elements to present a common front against a "common enemy". The fusion proved partly beneficial, as Frendo seems to imply: "In the inter-mixing that ensued, hidden behind a veneer of unity, one party absorbed certain qualities from the other appropriat-

ing these usefully without acknowledging the inheritance." In 1889 Lintorn Simmons was despatched on a special mission to the Vatican concerning the appointment of bishops in Malta and Gozo, the validity of mixed marriages and "the education in the English language of Maltese clergy". In Malta, the highly-strung 'marriage debate' that ensued represented "more profoundly than the language question ... a clash as to ultimate values and realities." It was, says Frendo "a more 'national' issue".

Strickland's "obsession with anglicization", his "absolute commitment to the superiority and necessity" of the English language and his strict adherence to the principle of "anglicization through systematic discrimination" re-ignited the crucial language question which, in Henry Frendo's book, is brought to life in the fullest sense of the word. At face value, the attempt to anglicize the island fortress implied the elimination of Italian and the elevation of Maltese into a decent "language of study". At a deeper level, the whole process would influence substantially the island's social structure, frame of mind and way of life; indeed, its cultural identity. The question was to become intimately connected to the principle of self-determination. Strickland's programme in this sphere was both an end in itself and a subtle means to force the legal class into submission. The language question and, perhaps, the claim on the part of Strickland's

administration of the justice and necessity of direct taxation drew the intransigent Fortunato Mizzi back into active politics. The nationalist struggle that ensued against Strickland's administration during 1888—1902, and which forms the subject of chapter IV, may be summed up in Frenzo's words: "Stricklandism was never so pronounced or so thorough as at the turn of the century; nor had nationalism ever been so strong and desperate as now." Behind Stricklandism there was another force, a third ism at work — 'Chamberlainism'. "We hold Malta," declared Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies (1895—1903), "solely and entirely as a fortress ... not as an ordinary colony ... in a fortress anything like open agitation against the Government is a thing that cannot be tolerated." Within this triangular framework discord reined supreme.

Frenzo next discusses Maltese politics and society from 1903, when both hands of the constitutional clock were turned back to 1849, to the outbreak of the *Sette Giugno* in 1919. The period was characterized in part by the adoption of *Astensionismo*, the "doctrine of total non-cooperation", and the leadership crisis within the Nationalist Party, in part by the emergence of Emanuel Dimech, associated with early socialism in Malta, the identification of the Maltese tongue "with nationhood" and the idea of "total independence from Britain", the appearance of Enrico Mizzi on the local political

scene with his federation-with-Italy proposal and the ironic re-entry of Strickland with his anti-direct taxation campaign. This wealth of historical material is dealt with in a painfully meticulous manner with occasional glimpses of the economic situation.

"The breakwater construction and dock extension for the Admiralty had created, overnight, a situation of full employment, so much so that foreign labour had to be imported; after three or four boom years there was then an economic collapse ... Wages soared, prices rose, consumer goods multiplied, tenants paid higher rents, people switched jobs, built houses, married at a younger age ... and local industry was seriously prejudiced by the scarcity and high price of labour. After 1905, suddenly, unemployment loomed ahead, there was a frantic rush to emigrate, but without assistance or plans ... standards fell, wages crashed ...".

The last two chapters deal respectively with "Old Wine in New Bottles: Political Parties and the Grant of Responsible Government" and "The Transformation of a National Culture: Toward a Two Party System". Three appendices, a detailed bibliography and index match the conscientious investigation evident on every page.

Inaccurate and faulty proof-reading, however, remains the bane of

publications in Malta. It is a pity that a book of such high calibre as *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* (which on the spine reads *Party Politics in an Island Fortress: The Maltese Experiment*) should be marred by an unwarranted amount of printing errors.

Victor Mallia-Milanes

SERAPHIM M. ZARB — MARIO BUHAGIAR, *St. Catherine of Alexandria: Her Churches, Paintings and Statues in the Maltese Islands*, edited by Mario Buhagiar for St. Catherine Musical Society (Zurrieq) and Zejtun Parish Council (Malta, 1979), pp. xiii + 244; 30 plates.

For those interested primarily in Maltese history the first part of this book which is the work of a distinguished theologian, the late Fr. Seraphim Zarb OP, is of little direct interest, though it serves as an introduction to the main section concerning the Maltese cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria. If one measures popularity by the number of church dedications, this saint out-stripped St. Paul in 1575 when Catherine took third place after Mary and Nicholas, but her earlier history in Malta is largely obscured by the insuperable lack of documents. For the later period the author surveys St. Catherine's presence in churches, paintings and sculptures, accumulating detail from the extensive local literature and archives. The many interesting insights and incidental observations include the cautious

attribution of a Madonna at Zejtun to one of the workshops of the followers of Antonello da Messina. In certain places the context seems rather narrow and some passages will require revision, as the author himself foresaw; for example, pp. 89-90 must now be recast in the light of the bone-count in S. Ramaswamy and J. L. Pace, "The Medieval Skeletal Remains from St. Gregory's Church at Zejtun (Malta)", *Archivio Italiano di Anatomia e di Embriologia*, lxxxiv (1979). The absence from Maltese libraries of standard publications, on iconographical matters for example, and of comparative studies, from Sicily most obviously, is occasionally evident, but the overwhelming impression is that of a clearly presented body of art historical and other information which will be of great value to researchers in history, sociology, folklore and allied disciplines.

Fr. Zarb protested against St. Catherine's demotion following Vatican Council II, while Mario Buhagiar sticks closely to the visual and documentary record, speculating only occasionally on his saint's Maltese *fortuna*. Very few ex-voto paintings depicted St. Catherine, but Buhagiar's analysis of street names in 1958 shows that, the Virgin apart, Catherine was still the most popular female saint, as a study of the early baptismal and other parish records would probably confirm. Why Catherine fell behind John and four other male saints; whether she was more popular among men or women;

how far she was ousted by a propaganda machine which deliberately generated a "Maltese" Pauline cult against a "Hospitalier" Catherine; and how the study of a particular cult can contribute to the understanding of that intense religiosity which has permeated so much of Malta's history — such questions await solutions.

Anthony Luttrell

CARMELO TESTA, *Maż-Żewġ Naħat tas-Swar: Żmien il-Frañċiżi f'Malta* L-Ewwel Ktieb. Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1979. vi-215pp.

This new study, planned to encompass three volumes, attempts a rewriting of one of the most important periods of transition in Maltese history, 1798—1800. Volume I, the book under review, covers from September (or May?), with Napoleon writing to the Directors "suggesting seizing Malta in order to secure control of the Mediterranean", to August 1798, when Nelson destroyed the French battle fleet at anchor in Aboukir Bay. Within a week of Malta's capitulation, Napoleon completely restructured the civil administration of the island, "applying to politics that speed that distinguished his campaigns."

There can be no doubt that this work is the result of years of industrious research. Particularly commendable is the fact that Dr Testa claims to have concerned himself especially with source material, in many cases with unprinted docu-

ments from archives. The information content of the book is exceptionally high. When completed, *Maż-Żewġ Naħat tas-Swar* is bound to have a decisive and determining influence on subsequent writings on the period. This brings up the one possible objection to the work.

It is regretted that the author has not backed up his pleasant account with any supporting references to documentary evidence. The promised bibliography at the end of the third volume, desirable and helpful though it might be, would not satisfy the inquisitive mind of the historian interested in the all-embracing evaluation as much as in the validity (or otherwise) of verdicts reached, particularly when traditional value judgements are questioned and long-held 'prejudices' abolished.

Victor Mallia-Milanes

JOSEPH MIZZI, *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the National Library of Malta*, Malta University Press 1979: vol. II, Part 5, pp. 677-1002. £M5,00.

With the publication of this volume, Fr Joseph Mizzi's first-class contribution towards a printed catalogue of the Order's official Records comes to an end (see previous review in *M.H.* 1979, p. 294). The following volumes have been published to date: vol. I, 228 pp., 1964 (in conjunction with Can. A Zammit Gabarretta); vol. II, part 1, 168 pp., 1970: part 2, 164 pp., 1973: part 3, 148 pp., 1978: part 4, 196 pp., 1978:

part 5, 325 pp., 1979; vol. III, in three parts, 788 pp., 1965 (in conjunction with Zammit Gabarretta and Mgr Vincent Borg); vol. IV, 26 pp., 1964 (with Zammit Gabarretta); vol. VII, 252 pp., 1964 (with Zammit Gabarretta); vol. VIII, 132 pp., 1967 (with Z. Gab. and V. Borg); vol. X, 110 pp., 1969; vol. XI, 206 pp., 1969; vol. XII, 176 pp., 1968; vol. XIII, 106 pp., 1967. Volumes V, VI and IX have not been issued. Fr Mizzi's work is now being continued by Fr F Azzopardi, OFM Cap. The Archives of the Order of St John are the greatest documentary asset on this Island, our most valuable historical treasure. Hence the usefulness of this Catalogue, which should be properly publicised abroad. No respectable research library can afford to do without a copy.

Giovanni Mangion

CARMEL CUSCHIERI, *Index Historicus*, Malta University Press, 1979, XVIII-151 pp., including Indices. Foreword by Godfrey Wettinger.

This is a classified index of articles which appeared in a select list of periodicals and collections of studies relating to Malta. The book includes also a most helpful and accurate Author and Analytical Index. It is neatly printed at the University Press, Malta. Practically no printing or other errors have been noted. This is a pleasant, useful publication, and a treat to the lover of *Melitensia*. A book which is solely due to the initiative, interest, and determination

of its author (who acknowledges some financial assistance). The periodicals selected for indexing and classification are: *Archivio Storico di Malta*, *Archivum Melitense*, *Bulletin of the Museum, La Diocesi*, *Institute of Hist. Research*, *Journ. of Maltese Studies*, *Journ. Faculty of Arts*, *Law Journal*, *Malta Letteraria*, *Maltese Folklore Review*, *Maltese Review*, *Mel. Historica*, *Melita*, *Rostrum*, *St Luke's Hosp. Gazette*, *Scientia*, *Storja* 78. The Collections of studies include: *L'Architettura a Malta*, *Medieval Malta*, *Hal Millieri*, *Malta and Gibraltar*, *Maltese History: what future?*, *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*, *XIII Council of Europe Exhibition (Malta 1970)*. The selections may appear to be rather arbitrary; perhaps other reviews and collections of studies may be the object of a future supplementary publication.

G. Mangion

JOSEPH EYNAUD, *Il Teatro Italiano a Malta (1630—1830)*, Malta, Lux Press 1979, 127 pp., £M2,50.

Tesi di laurea presentata dapprima all'Università di Malta, poi, con qualche aggiunta, a quella di Firenze. Scarso il valore scientifico. Lungi dall'illustrare la cultura maltese nel vasto quadro del teatro italiano del Sei e Settecento, l'autore raccoglie e mette insieme dati di carattere locale già esplorati da altri, specie da Vincenzo Laurenza (citato invero con troppa parsimonia!). Superficiale la parte critica. Il cap. V è chiaramente

fuori posto: si riferisce all'Ottocento, ma voltando pagina alla fine del capitolo, ci s'imbatte nella trita frase d'attacco: "E passiamo al Settecento"! G. Mangion

EDWARD FENECH, *Vassalli u Kitbietu*, Edizzjoni Provincja Agostinjana, Malta 1977, 188 pp.

Saggio sugli scritti linguistici di MA Vassalli (1764—1829), l'intellettuale illuminista maltese, degno ancora di ampio e approfondito studio. Fenech esamina i vari scritti e ne riporta ampi brani. Ne risulta uno studio interessante, ma forse non sufficientemente originale e approfondito.

G. Mangion

EDWARD FENECH, *Contemporary Journalistic Maltese. An analytical and comparative study*, Leiden 1978, 251 pp.

Tesi di laurea presso l'università di Leeds, basata sullo spoglio delle edizioni di tutto agosto 1973 dei giornali *l-Orizzont*, *In-Nazzjon Taghna* e *Il-Hajja*, con un corpus di oltre 5 milioni di vocaboli. La parte storica, di sfondo, è alquanto superficiale. Mancano anche riferimenti e raffronti con opere simili sul giornalismo in altri Paesi. Ma nel complesso l'analisi linguistica è condotta con competenza. Le tendenze generali del giornalismo maltese sono le seguenti: seguire l'uso popolare anziché quello letterario, il che è normale entro certi limiti; seguire la fonetica anziché la morfologia, il che sta creando notevole disorientamento e

confusione (il fenomeno è peggiorato dalla mancanza dei necessari segni diacritici — per es. il taglio trasversale della *h* aspirata — nelle comuni macchine da scrivere e nelle tipografie). L'autore, che pure elogia gli sforzi fatti dai giornalisti maltesi per affrontare alcune delle molte difficoltà che incontrano ("la maggior parte ha un attestato di scuola media, mentre pochi hanno fatto studi universitari"), elenca numerosi vocaboli e costrutti errati, o brutti o addirittura mostruosi, che si leggono spesso sui giornali nostrani, ad es. *obbvjament*, *fizikalment*, *politikalment*, *teamijiet*, *rivolvrijiet*, *gowlijiet*, *jottijiet*, *tajers*, *trejdunjons*, *kju*, *kjus*, *skripts*, *mekkaniks*, *kejk*, *siment*, *kamera tarritratti*, *esplotjtat* o *esplotjat*, *ittakilja*, *jinsab fuq vaganza*, *ħargu fuq strajk*, ecc. Il libro di Fenech serve fra l'altro ad illustrare i problemi in cui si dibatte la lingua maltese oggi — spietate interferenze linguistiche dall'inglese, anarchia ortografica, errori morfologici (perfino nei documenti ufficiali o pubblici), ignoranza di una pur intuitiva etimologia delle parole, mancanza di buon gusto e di pur elementare finezza nella sintassi e nella composizione, inesistenza di un vocabolario moderno per esprimere termini e concetti più o meno moderni (e non parlo dei termini tecnici). A causa dell'intima correlazione che esiste tra lingua e cultura, tra capacità di esprimersi e abilità cognitiva, è chiaro che la nostra condizione linguistica, risultato della lunga 'questione della lingua' ovvero della intromissione della politica

nella nostra situazione linguistico-culturale, non è certo il più piccolo dei nostri problemi nazionali.

G. Mangion

VITTORE PISANI, "Lingue Isolane (considerazioni generali su base mediterranea)", in *Bollettino Atlante Linguistico del Mediterraneo* 18—19 (1976-77), pp. 11—20.

L'illustre linguista esamina il cipriota, il maltese e il siciliano al fine di vedere "se e in quanto tali lingue isolate presentino degli sviluppi dovuti alle loro condizioni geografiche", e conclude riaffermando la dimensione storica di ogni linguaggio. Traccia un rapido schizzo della storia linguistica di Malta, ove è particolarmente interessante l'opinione del professor Pisani su Malta antica: "Malta — con Gozo e Comino — è terra di antica cultura, testimoniata da avanzi archeologici risalenti al neo- e all'eneolitico: ma non può dirsi che in seguito l'isola abbia attivamente partecipato alla civiltà greco-romana. Importante è che essa fu occupata, evidentemente come scalo commerciale, dai Fenici, indi dai Cartaginesi; dal 218 a.C. sopravvennero i Romani che l'annetterono alla provincia Sicilia. Ma non che ciò provocasse l'ingresso dell'isola nel giro della civiltà greco-romana, seppure in essa s'incontrino avanzi di ville romane; quel che negli *Atti degli Apostoli* (27 s.) si legge a proposito del naufragio di S. Paolo non dà luogo a pensare a una vita molto brillante. È probabile che

in tutta l'antichità la lingua — o almeno la lingua di cultura — di Malta fosse il fenicio, o meglio la sua variante punica; che una forma di latino volgare vi sia attecchita è poco probabile".

G. Mangion

GODFREY WETTINGER, "Non Arabo-Berber Influences on Malta's Medieval Nomenclature", in *Actes du 2me Congrès Int. ...de la Méditerranée Occidentale*, II, 1978, pp. 199—213.

Utile e originale ricerca sui toponimi e antroponimi romanzi nel tardo Medioevo maltese. I toponimi restano in massima parte di origine semitica; gli antroponimi romanzi, invece, sono in continuo aumento. Segno della progressiva europeizzazione della cultura locale. "Thus one finds examples like *Għalqa ta' Luqa*, Luke's field, 1508, *Għalqa ta' Malf*, 1585, Malf's field, *Ghar Garsija*, 1496, Garsia's cave, *Ubwar tas-Segret*, 1524, the Secreto's meadows, *Herba ta' Namrat*, 1467, Namrat's (nickname) ruin, *Dahlet Qorrot*, 1575, Corrado's sea-inlet (Gozo), *Bieb Gju-tan*, 1479, Gaetan's entrance, *Ras Għuljana*, 1419, Cape Juliana, *Wileg ta' Dinas*, 1535, perhaps Anthanasius's hill-side fields... *Ta' Bin Ramond*, 1517, (the field) belonging to Ramond's son, *Ta' Bin Grejge*, 1539, (the field) belonging to Georgina's son, *Ta' Bin Manna*, 1544, (the field) belonging to Romana's son, *Ta' Bin Xurin*, 1571, (the field) belonging to little Flore's son". Ho già scritto

altrove (*Rivista Italiana di Dialectologia*, I, 338) che questi studi onomastici di Wettinger sono di fondamentale importanza per la storia della lingua maltese, priva com'è di testi scritti antichi.

G. Mangion

ALISON HOPPEN, *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John 1530—1798* (Scottish Academic Press) xiv + 221 pp, appendix, glossary of terms, bibliography notes and index. 11 figures in the text and 12 plates. £6 stg.

This is the first analysis in depth of the evolution of the magnificent defences built in Malta by the Order of St. John. The fortifications are important because: (1) they are — in spite of neglect and ill-conceived 'developments' — a striking feature of the Maltese landscape; (2) their construction contributed significantly to the evolution of Maltese society and to the development of the economy; and, (3) they were designed by some of the foremost military engineers of the day and are some of the finest examples of bastioned fortifications in Europe.

The book consists of three parts. The first briefly traces the history and organisation of the Order and the evolution of gunpowder fortifications. Part two is the main body of the book and covers the construction of the Maltese defences under the following headings: (1) the pre-1565 defences; (2) the fortification of the Sciberras peninsula 1566—1798; (3)

the fortification of the harbour — Sta. Margherita and Cottonera lines (with St. Angelo, Birgu and Senglea) — Sta. Margherita and Cottonera lines in the eighteenth century — Fort Ricasoli — Fort Manoel — Fort Tigné; (4) Città Vecchia; (5) the coastal defences; and (6) Gozo. In part three Dr Hoppen discusses the administration of the fortifications, building methods and materials in Malta, and, the financing of the fortifications. The last two chapters deal with the surrender of Malta to Napoleon and comment, generally, on the impact of Malta's society and economy of the prodigious expenditure on defence by the Knights.

Defence played such an important part in the history of Malta under the Order — as indeed it did during the British occupation — that the serious student of Maltese history cannot afford to ignore it. This book will help him understand the scale on which the Knights built and the way in which the Maltese were affected — both adversely and beneficially.

Dr Hoppen has used major primary sources in Malta, Italy and Britain. Between them these cover the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in great detail. It is strange though that she does not refer to the important collection of original plans in the National Library of Malta. Some of the plans could have been used as illustrations. One of the weaknesses of the book is the oversimplified plans of the fortifications among the figures.

The sixteenth century is less thoroughly covered. The sources in Malta are poor and while Dr Hoppen has drawn heavily on the *Codex Laparelli* in Florence for the building of Valletta, she has not been able to search the archives of Sicily and Spain for material on the pre-siege period and for the great debate on the design of the Valletta defences.

Not everyone will agree with the way in which the discussion of the evolution of the defences on the Sciberras peninsula is structured separately from those of the harbour — both the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett. To my mind this approach produces a fragmented and sometimes confusing narrative. Points that emerge from the detailed (after 1566) narrative are the length of time some of the works took to complete — in fact some were never completed, the extent to which original designs were modified during construction, and, most extraordinary, the way in which the Order vetted the advice given to them by the engineers by inviting comment from others all over Europe.

The willingness of the Knights to undertake more and more programmes of fortification (for the schemes eventually embraced the entire coastlines of Malta and Gozo) meant that enormous amounts of capital had to be found and, also important, created an ever increasing burden on normal income for repairs and maintenance. Ultimately the very number and extent of the

defences probably contributed materially to the ignominious collapse of the Order in 1798. The coast defences, which the Knights relied on to prevent an invader from landing without great difficulty, were easily overrun in a day or so. As a result the Order lost confidence in its defences, its troops and its own leadership.

The confusing way the Order managed its finances and the relatively poor records available make it very difficult to assess the approximate expense on defence from year to year, or to estimate the proportion of the cost (in labour, kind and money) contributed by the Maltese. Certainly there were sporadic protests against the taxes and impositions levied to build some of the major works. Dr Hoppen stresses the undercurrent of opposition to the Order in Malta, which gradually built up over the centuries. However there is a positive side to the coin; the security given to country and the expenditure on defence gradually converted Malta from a poor and sparsely populated appendage of Sicily into a miniature European state with all that this implies.

Dr Hoppen's conclusion is worthy of notice in full here.

An immediately direct benefit derived by the islanders from the defence expenditure of the Order did exist in the money which it channelled into the local economy. Much of the income which reached Malta from the European estates

was spent in the islands and provided the capital on which was based the economic development of Malta during the knights' rule. The building programme not only attracted extraordinary revenue to the island, it was also a home-based industry with much of the expenditure concentrated in the islands. Builders enjoyed one great advantage denied to all other war industries: their basic raw material, stone, was found locally. The Order employed local craftsmen to build and maintain the fortifications, and the arrival of the knights led to a rapidly expanding construction industry, in answer to both civil and building contracts which the Order issued, and the building craftsmen were but one example of the growing number of Maltese who, under the rule of the Order, became engaged in non-agricultural trades and pursuits.

Roger Vella Bonavita

A.P. Vella, *Storja ta' Malta*

Vol. II (KKM Editors, Interprint Ltd., Malta) 394 pp., 138 illus., analytical index.

In this second volume of the *Storja ta' Malta*, Prof. Vella has sought to analyse the vicissitudes of the Maltese people under the knights Hospitallers. The book could be described as a concise and comprehensive study of Malta's history and each chapter is substantiated with references. In fact, it could be said that Vella has sought to provide the reader eager for further research,

with references to both primary and secondary sources. Further amplifications are also included in many of these notes.

The volume is divided into two sections. The first section is divided into eleven chapters, in which, while presenting and analysing patches and events in a historical perspective, Vella seeks to be critical and subjective, and to give due importance to the part played by various Maltese notables wherever this was possible in the light of various research material available to the author. Besides, Vella has attempted, to place Maltese history within a European background thus helping the student of History to realize that no historical development can be understood in isolation.

The book begins with a chapter about Malta's revival after the Great Siege. Great importance is given to the projects involved in the building of Valletta, consequently bringing to the fore the part played by Laparelli and Cassar, while a detailed historical description of St. John's Conventual Church is presented as if to crown the achievement of the Order in creating a monument in stone in memory of their great victory over the Turk: the building of Valletta could in fact be understood as the 'Europeanisation' of the Maltese islands.

This is the point of departure of the History of Malta for the next two hundred years: ecclesiastical development, the institution of the Inquisition, the development of

educational institutions, the religious Orders, the building of fortifications and the strengthening of the Order's position in the Island, all indicate Malta's tie with Europe and the Hospitallers' persistence in trying to defend their neutrality and independence within a Christian European context as then understood.

Mgr. Dusina's visit to the Island is another landmark in Malta's history: it doesn't simply indicate another milestone in the Order's annals with regard to its perennial squabbles with the local ecclesiastical authorities; it heralded the institution of an independent and formidable Tribunal of the Inquisition; it throws light on the educational level of the clergy during the 16th century and leads to the coming of the Jesuits to Malta and the official foundation of their college in 1592. However, it seems that more importance could have been given to the system of elementary education, even if crude, that existed in the parishes, while as far as the Court of the Inquisition is concerned, it must be realized that a 'locum tormentis' is constantly referred to in the proceedings of the Tribunal.

In another chapter, Vella analyses relations between the Inquisition and the Order: problems of ecclesiastical immunity, rights of jurisdiction, precedence and ethical questions multiplied as decades passed by and the events that were provided by the vexatious questions raised by the trinal juridical authorities in Malta

— Grand Master, Bishop and Inquisitor — must have been incidents of topical news and gossip for the Maltese. Vella had already published a monograph on this subject.

The Island's government and development are analysed in other chapters. The Grand Master was considered to be the Prince of the Island, but in Verdalle's time, his position was further strengthened with the support of papal briefs. Various Grand Masters strove to assert their position over the Order and the Island, and it seems that they sought to do so by various subterfuges as well as by attempting to leave something standing in their memory: GM Garzes instituted the Monte di Pietà and the Cumulo di Carità; GM Wignacourt legalized corsairing by establishing the Magistrato degli Armamenti and the Monte di Redenzione as well as by building a number of coastal towers; De Redin, Lascaris, the Cotoner brothers and Vilhena added various towers and fortifications. Against this background, we learn of the sufferings of the people during the various plague epidemics; the heroic achievements of naval ventures such as the attacks on the fortresses of Patras and Passavà; and the achievements of various Maltese personalities as Bishop Cagliares, Thomas Dingli, Fra Salvatore Imbroli, Nicola Mangion (who set up the Fabbrica di San Pietro), Antonio Bosio, Fra Gian Matteo Rispoli and Gian Francesco Abela.

Malta's strategic position in the

Mediterranean necessitated persistent alertness and efficient organisation for the Order's Navy which played a glorious part in the battle of Lepanto. The author in fact has reviewed the Navy's activities in the Mediterranean and distinguished its purpose, organisation and achievements from those of the notorious fleet of Maltese corsairs. The Navy became an auxiliary to the Spanish fleet, and got involved in a number of piratical raids as from the end of the 16th century. Perhaps, the single notable event in which it participated after Lepanto, however, was the War of Candia. Here Vella gave importance to the capture of a Gran Soltana together with a valuable booty and an Ottoman prince, Osman Hibrabim, who subsequently became a Dominican. The Grand Master who then ruled over the Island, Lascaris, feared a siege as a consequence. The Turks' main target, however, was the island of Crete then in the hands of the Venetians. The Order's Navy provided its aid till 1669.

Whilst particular attention had to be given to the strategic value of Malta for the sake of Christendom, the Order had to find ways and means whereby it could defend its neutrality and sovereignty. The Order's position was in fact tested several times: the diplomatic astuteness of the Order's ministers in 1674 when Malta was asked to support the Viceroy of Sicily against the Messina rebels who were supported by France, is one notable case. In an interesting chapter, with part-

icular reference to the period 1713—1743, Vella shows how, following the Treaty of Utrecht, the Order sought to safeguard its neutrality. Maltese sailors were not permitted to sail under any foreign flag (1718) and from time to time, the Order had to feign financial poverty if not bankruptcy, to escape political entanglement in European affairs. The Grand Masters Perellos, Zondadari and Vilhena, who had Malta's dependence of Sicily and the Order's neutrality much in mind, acted on the defensive on this point.

Perhaps greater research should be done to evaluate the position of GM Pinto, the founder of the Malta University. This Grand Master went on the offensive to defend the Order's sovereignty when Charles IV of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies decided to send a Royal Visitor to Malta. The Visitor was not even allowed to come to Malta, and the Sicilian monarch reacted by issuing sanctions that severely tested the Maltese. Pinto's adamant insistence and Papal intervention helped to solve the issue in favour of the Maltese; however Pinto has to bear the blame for having weakened the Island's economy. As Vella points out, by the second half of the 18th century, the Island was morally, financially and socially bankrupt. The Ximenes administration proved to be catastrophic while GM De Rohan's interlude only helped to stay the storm that was approaching over the Island and the Order itself.

These last chapters seem to be too

compact with historical data of a complexity of events which deserve extensive studies: Malta's economic development, the establishment of the Anglo-Bavarian League in 1783, the institution of Free Masonry and political clubs, and diplomatic contacts with England and Russia. Such events must have helped to draw the attention of various European courts on Malta. Somehow they paved the way for the coming of the French Expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte to occupy Malta.

Vella concludes the first part of his study by a documented analysis of the eventual years of the French occupation of the Islands: here one feels that the author's claim that Dun Mikiel Xerri and other fellow patriots deserve indeed to be remembered as Maltese heroes should be supported. The second part of the book is divided into six chapters and here the author gives a birds' eye view of social and economic aspects of the history of the Maltese people: the development of communities, building of farms and houses, cave dwelling, taverns, costumes, customs and popular superstitions are all out-

lined. The progressive attention to health, sanitation and medical study are analysed in one chapter where particular importance is given to the establishment of hospitals and the Order's Medical School. As for employment, a substantial proportion of the population depended on the Order's Navy and the Corso for which special courts were instituted; while many others were employed in the arsenal, the armed forces which included foreign recruits, the building of defensive towers, palaces and churches as well as the erection of windmills for the production of flour. It is perhaps pertinent to point out that the Hospitallers felt the need of bringing experts to help them in various ventures and projects which were then entrusted in the hands of members of the Order and trained Maltese subjects.

"*Storja ta' Malta*" deserves to be recommended to students who wish to take the study of History. It is the first attempt to present a comprehensive, analytical and scientific study of Malta's history in the Maltese language.

CGS