

## The Siege of Cyprus in Bosio's *Istoria*\*

---

The aspect of Veneto-Maltese relations which forms the subject of this study, as deduced from Giacomo Bosio's account of the siege of Cyprus, has two elements. The first element is that of delineating Malta's role in Venice's most decisive event in the sixteenth century, that forms the narrative backbone of the war of Cyprus as related by Bosio. The second is more ephemeral, but unquestionably important since Bosio, in his capacity as official historian of the Order, is writing extensively about a foreign State. This in itself creates an academic relationship distinct, by its historiographic nature, from the actual content of Bosio's account. It is therefore the present intention to evaluate Bosio's account in order to establish its validity as a hitherto neglected primary source, which is in itself a precious contribution to Venetian historiography. Bosio's originality as a narrative source is here being considered exclusively with reference to Venetian historiography.

On 1 May 1570 the Order's four-galley squadron returned to Malta<sup>1</sup> after having been unintentionally<sup>2</sup> engaged for over four months in the defence of the Spanish fortress of La Goletta,<sup>3</sup> threatened by Euldj Alli's unexpected reconquest of Tunis early in January that year.<sup>4</sup> Its original mission on leaving the island on 29 December had been to

---

\*[This article is the Appendix to *Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Relations from the War of Cyprus to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Malta, 1980.]

seek from the Sicilian Viceroy fresh *tratte* and supplies of cheese, meat and other provisions.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the Council of the Order had given Fra Francesco de Saint Clement, the new Captain General of the Fleet,<sup>6</sup> secret instructions to seize, and direct to Malta, all grain-laden vessels he would come across.<sup>7</sup> The Order had to resort to these violent methods in retaliation against Turkish corsairs and galley squadrons lately despatched from Constantinople to distract Christian states from their defensive preparations.<sup>8</sup> For Malta, since late 1569, had been in a state of impending siege. Selim II's real intentions and his military designs for the Turkish armada during the winter of 1569-70 were not known with any certainty or precision. The international reputation which the Porte had lost by the humiliating defeat suffered at Malta in 1565 and at Szigeth in 1566 had not yet been regained. If La Goletta and Cyprus were, as it was being rumoured, the object of the heavy preparations under way at the arsenals of Constantinople, so too was Malta.<sup>9</sup>

Speculations like these could not be dismissed in an island where the slightest development in the Mediterranean, the smallest shift in the international balance of forces, was immediately reflected. All necessary precautions had to be taken. The fortifications of the new city of Valletta had reached a sufficiently advanced stage to allow it to withstand any major attack,<sup>10</sup> to prove its worth as, in Pius V's own words, "opportunuissimum adversus Turcos et predones Afros totius Christiani populi propugnaculum."<sup>11</sup> Grand Master Del Monte therefore issued orders to begin having the city well-equipped and fully provisioned with all the necessary food supplies, "without which," writes Bosio,<sup>12</sup> "any great fortress renders itself vain and useless". 1800 troops were recruited in Naples and Sicily. Agozzini *reali* were appointed. Help was sought from the Pope, while a general summons recalled all Knights Hospitallers to their headquarters in Malta.<sup>13</sup> However, ten days after the arrival of the galley squadron, Fra Giovan Battista Vivaldo returned from the Levant,<sup>14</sup> "portando aviso certissimo, che l'Armata Turchesca contra il Regno di Cipro indubitatamente s'indirizzava."<sup>15</sup> By that time the Turkish war on the

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

Venetian "jewel,"<sup>16</sup> the most advanced Christian outpost in the eastern Mediterranean, had already begun.<sup>17</sup>

As soon as the imminent danger of a threatened attack on Malta was over, precautionary measures were discontinued.<sup>18</sup> The island could breathe again; at least temporarily, for it was perennially plagued with similar rumours. Was not the situation of 1569-70 an almost identical replica of those of 1566,<sup>19</sup> 1567<sup>20</sup> and 1568<sup>21</sup>? This was a costly experience which involved the Order in extraordinarily exhausting expenses and completely monopolised the resources of the Common Treasury.<sup>22</sup> Absorbed in these difficulties and in the heavy responsibility of directing the Order in these hard times, Del Monte seriously entertained the idea of relinquishing the magistracy and retiring to Monte Cassino.<sup>23</sup> It was an opportune moment now that the Ottoman forces were concentrated entirely on Cyprus. At least he would not be accused of cowardly behaviour.<sup>24</sup> A papal brief expressed the Supreme Pontiff's "desire" for him to retain his post.<sup>25</sup> He was still needed at the helm of the Order.

Bosio's main concern in the third part of his *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill.ma Militia di S. Giovanni Hierosolimitano*, published in Rome in 1602, was to leave for posterity "a true narrative" of the "heroic and virtuous deeds" of the Knights Hospitallers during their turbulent odyssey from the moment they were evicted from Rhodes in January 1523 to March 1571 when, on the eve of the much celebrated victory of Lepanto, and after a long and unhappy sojourn at the Borgo in Malta, they migrated to the new city of Valletta. Towards the end of his narrative,<sup>26</sup> Bosio gives a fairly clear picture of the first campaign of the siege of Cyprus which led to the fall of Nicosia in 1570. His version is interesting. Though incidental to his main theme, it provides more insight into the situation than one would normally expect in such a context, for although the positive contribution to the campaign of the Order's galley squadron was more tangible than either Gian Andrea Doria's or Colonna's, the role it actually played was a minor one.

It is moreover particularly interesting to Venetian

historiography. We have here another contemporary Christian view of one of the most outstanding landmarks in Venetian history, based almost entirely on non-Venetian, first-hand documentary sources — Bosio had complete access to the Order's archives. It is marked with a host of minute details on the situation leading up to the siege, the conditions under which the fragile triple alliance evolved during the actual naval operations, the motives, ambitions, mutual hostilities of the leading personalities, the state and movements of the allied fleets, the hardships and brutalities suffered by the unaided Nicosians during and after the fall of their capital, and lastly, with frequent, often valuable, cross-references to the Ottoman side. These and other aspects, like the not altogether unfounded rumours of Venice's attempt to negotiate secretly with the enemy during the winter of 1570-71, are approached by the sixteenth century chronicler with accuracy and seeming detachment, and are presented — as is to be expected — within the framework of the Religion's participation in the whole episode.

In the course of his intelligence mission to the Levant, Giovan Battista Vivaldo had had occasion to discuss the state of affairs in the Turkish empire with various governors and other officials of Corfu, Zante and Cefalonia.<sup>27</sup> Bosio confessed to having based parts of his narrative on the substance of Vivaldo's report to the Council at the end of his mission.

In 1540 Venice had concluded peace with the Porte.<sup>28</sup> In 1567, shortly after Selim II's accession to the sultanate, the treaty was reconfirmed<sup>29</sup> in rather unhealthy circumstances.<sup>30</sup> It is to these changed circumstances, which bore the mark of Selim's character and ambitions, that Bosio attributes the cause of the breaking-off of Veneto-Ottoman relations after nearly thirty years of peace. Selim II's personality lacked the stature and grandeur of his father's.<sup>31</sup> Given excessively to wine and debauchery, Selim at forty-three was "coarse, undersized and corpulent."<sup>32</sup> His ruling ambition when he came to the throne was to have an *imaret*, a new urban complex,<sup>33</sup> constructed near Adrianople as an expression and symbol of great luxury,<sup>34</sup> to emulate Suleyman in magnificence, and to mark the beginning of his reign

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

by some outstanding feat against Christendom that would similarly surpass his elders in military achievement. Bosio gives a detailed description of the *imaret*,<sup>35</sup> which he calls "almarat."

*imarets* are hospitals after the Turkish fashion, with a mosque and schools to train children in Mohammedan Law, around which many dwelling places are usually built, in the form of rotundas, with leaden roofs, to house the priests and doctors of the above-mentioned Law and also to provide shelter and hospice to travellers and pilgrims of all nations and religions. Here they are freely accomodated, together with their servants and horses, for three days for the love of God; and here handsome alms is given, providing the neighbouring poor with all the bread they need and an asper a day. And since these *imarets* cannot be endowed with lands that have already been acquired for the Empire, nor with money from the *Casna*, the Treasury of the Grand Turk, they can only be subsidized with the citizens' revenues and kingdoms [originally] belonging to, and [lately] reconquered by the Grand Turk.

The conquest of Cyprus would satisfy Selim's double ambition admirably. The revenues accrued from this Venetian colony would go towards the erection of this "charitable"<sup>36</sup> institution. Besides, would not the conquest of Cyprus erase for ever the bitter memories of Malta and give powerful strategic advantages to the Ottomans? Time too was in his favour. In September 1569 the Venetian arsenal had been destroyed by fire, and the "damage sustained," writes Bosio,<sup>37</sup> "was imagined to have been much worse than it actually was." In fact, Selim believed that the Venetian fleet too had met the same fate in the conflagration.<sup>38</sup> To compound the situation, Venice was simultaneously suffering a scarcity of food, precipitating into the abyss of famine, with exorbitantly high, indeed unprecedented, prices of wheat.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the western countries were totally absorbed in internal dissensions — the war in Granada, the revolt in the Netherlands, the civil

and religious wars in France, divisions in Germany. They were also too divided among themselves to be able to distract the Porte from seeing its grand designs realized or to offer any material help to isolated, distrusted Venice.

In Selim's view these conditions materially handicapped the Republic beyond any hope of immediate recovery.<sup>40</sup> On 1 February 1570<sup>41</sup> the *cavus*<sup>42</sup> Cubat Parvana was despatched from Constantinople to Venice with "una suberba e orgogliosa lettera."<sup>43</sup> He arrived late in March.<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, he claimed, Cyprus belonged by right<sup>45</sup> to the Ottoman empire; on the other, Venice was guilty of a double breach of faith: first, for having fortified Nicosia without having previously sought, as feudatory of the *Grand Seigneur*, authorization from the sultan; and secondly, for having contravened the terms of the capitulation by giving "shelter to diverse western corsairs" to prey on Turkish lands and have their booty sold "in that same island."<sup>46</sup> The sultan, concluded Cubat, was now determined to have that kingdom back. To this "ingiusta e barbara dimanda," the Senate retorted with equal firmness and resolution. For fear of the masses,<sup>47</sup> Cubat was escorted to the shore from where he sailed to Ragusa, and thence by land to Constantinople. The Republic's bellicose intentions were anticipated. For hardly had the *cavus* arrived in Venice, towards the end of March, than Amurat Rais sailed out of Constantinople with twenty-five galleys, with instructions to proceed to Rhodes to prevent any aid from reaching Cyprus. The entire Ottoman fleet and army were ready to set out by the middle of May.<sup>48</sup>

"With haste," remarks Bosio,<sup>49</sup> seemingly unaware of the illusory nature of the Republic's impressive deployment of forces, "the Venetians proceeded to make the necessary provisions for war and defence ... to arm and launch their armada which they planned to assemble at Corfu." Pius V was solicited to intercede for aid, on their behalf, with the other Christian powers, particularly Phillip II of Spain. But it was Turkey which was better prepared for war, not Venice. The Republic's immediate<sup>50</sup> approach through Rome for a European anti-Ottoman alliance, and Michele Soriano's

## VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

insistence during his mission to Pius V upon immediate help,<sup>51</sup> betray an urgent political move to counterbalance her deficient technical and economic preparedness — deficient by her enemy's standards — to make good the shortcomings inherent in her entire structure.<sup>52</sup>

Within the context of the current European political situation, amid pressure and interests which drew the Republic, and the principle of liberty for which she stood, away rather than towards the 'continental system,' hers was merely a political gamble, an unknown quantity of great moment.<sup>53</sup> Was not coherence among the Christian forces noteworthy for its absence in 1560 in face of adverse political developments in the Barbary cantons? Had it not also been wanting during the siege of Malta in 1565? It was most unlikely to emerge now over the question of Cyprus. The Veneto-Habsburg ideological<sup>54</sup> rift was too wide, the two mentalities too far apart to bridge so quickly, Did not the defence of the eastern Mediterranean fall outside Habsburg responsibility? Was not that solely Venice's problem?<sup>55</sup> Don Luis de Torres, on behalf of Pius V, requested Philip II, according to Bosio,<sup>56</sup> to offer "the Venetians all the help he could instantly afford," to which appeal "His Majesty willingly" responded. Bosio's narrative avoids any reference to the delaying tactics employed by Spain and to the mounting mutual suspicion among the contracting parties which at times paralysed diplomatic communications.

There were divisions in the government of Malta over the question of the Religion's participation in the war of Cyprus. The Council of the Order was divided between three parties, almost equally balanced,<sup>57</sup> on which line of policy to adopt. In May 1570 the Order had promised the Venetian Republic its galley flotilla, together with "a squadron of knights and valiant soldiers" which could be "disembarked and maintained on land" if necessary.<sup>58</sup> For this purpose on 30 May the galley squadron, under the general command of Fra Jean Francois de St. Clement and accompanied by the Venetian patrician Pietro Giustiniani,<sup>59</sup> Prior of Messina and *Capitano Generale in Terra*, sailed for

Sicily to fetch munitions, armaments and other provisions. They returned to Malta on 13 June "very well supplied with arms and provisions" for the coming war.<sup>60</sup> The 'Venetian' party in the Order's Council held that the fleet should proceed immediately and independently to Corfu, thereby honouring the promise made to the Republic.<sup>61</sup> The 'papal' party wanted the squadron to proceed to Otranto to meet Marcantonio Colonna in line with the expressed wishes of Pius V.<sup>62</sup> The third pressure group — the 'Spanish' — insisted that Philip II's instructions should be adhered to. The Sicilian Viceroy, the Marchese di Pescara, on behalf of his king, had requested the Religion's galleys to join Gian Andrea Doria's squadron "to venture on an expedition against the Infidels," making no reference to either Cyprus or the Venetian armada. Its object was (intentionally?) vague. Would it be another expedition to Tunis to reinstate its exiled king?<sup>63</sup> The Council of the Order would have found itself in a very difficult situation but for the arrival of a second papal brief in June which solved the delicate question of allegiance. The Religion's galley squadron was now being ordered to combine with Gian Andrea Doria's and the papal squadron under the supreme command of Colonna.<sup>64</sup> On 21 June 1570 the Council accordingly issued instructions<sup>65</sup> to St. Clement to proceed to Palermo on 26 June with the four-galley squadron to meet Doria.<sup>66</sup> The squadron, according to Bosio,<sup>67</sup> was "well equipped with *ciurme* and fully armed with soldiers and sailors." On board each galley was "a select company of 40 to 50 knights."

On the night of 14-15 July 1570 the wilful negligence<sup>68</sup> of St. Clement, which in the end was to cost him his life, caused one of the worst disasters the Order's navy had ever experienced.<sup>69</sup> The loss of the *Sant'Anna*, the *San Giovanni* and the *Capitana* to the Christian renegade Euldj'Ali deprived the Order of her instrument of political and military might at a very critical moment in time. Early that month the Turks had landed in force on Cyprus.<sup>70</sup> Pressed as he was for time and with a depleted treasury and a very restricted source of man-power, the dejected Grand Master had only one alternative left, if he wanted to remain faith-



VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

ful to his mission, and that was to seek immediate help from abroad.

From the arsenal of Messina, says Bosio, two or three galleys, "in prestito" or "in rendita," were sought; money, slaves, and authorization to recruit oarsmen in Sicily from the *Regia Corte*. Similar appeals were made to the Pope<sup>71</sup>. In the end, three galleys and 10,000 *scudi* were donated by Philip II,<sup>72</sup> while the Viceroy of Sicily supplied 70 convicts and all adequate provisions and equipment necessary to have two of the galleys launched at once.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, over 200 Maltese oarsmen were recruited locally after "having been offered a good pay and promised they would not be kept in service against their will once the six-month period for which they were being engaged expired."<sup>74</sup> The emergency was met. However, the new galley squadron, now reduced to three,<sup>75</sup> did not leave Sicily until 17 October,<sup>76</sup> proceeding directly to the Levant. Fra Pietro Giustiniani was appointed Captain General of the Fleet.<sup>77</sup>

By that time the Turkish armada under Piali Pasha had managed to transport the Janissaries, the *sipahis*, ammunition and other necessary equipment for the siege safely from Anatolia to Cyprus. Sections of the army and the artillery had already been disembarked at Limassol and other parts of the island "without the slightest opposition" from the Venetians.<sup>78</sup> The Christian islanders, as Bosio calls them, having had no cavalry to impede the enemy from landing, resolved desperately to pull their available forces into the inland capital of Nicosia and into the key port of the powerfully fortified Famagusta, "e in queste due città solamente difendersi." The Turkish army under Mustafà Pasha, having overrun the entire island except for these two cities, focused attention on Nicosia.

Bosio, in a manner typical of the sixteenth century chronicler, describes very concisely the metropolis, giving in a nutshell a perfect picture of its threadbare state of defence. Only as late as the previous year, he says, had the Venetians begun to fortify the city "con otto Baluardi reali non però ancora incamisciati." Nor were the fortifica-

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

tions "in a state of good defence."<sup>79</sup> While Mustafâ Pasha was launching a massive assault on Nicosia, Piali Pasha sailed with the entire fleet in the archipelago to deprive the battered city of any hope of relief.<sup>80</sup> Nicosia fell on 9 September, after a siege of forty-five days, and was overwhelmed and pillaged.<sup>81</sup> The fate of about eighty thousand inhabitants<sup>82</sup> is best described by Bosio himself.<sup>83</sup>

Mustafâ Pasha, having vehemently besieged the city of Nicosia for many days, finally launched a general assault from four sides. On 9 September he violently conquered it, putting to the sword all the Christians that were found there and, when the barbarians were almost tired of this great massacre, they took the rest slaves by order of Mustafâ.

"Only a full-scale counter-invasion of the island" would have saved the city.<sup>84</sup> Given the condition of the combined Christian fleets, paralysed by "inter-allied dissension," this was well-nigh impossible not only to achieve but even to attempt.

In July 1570 the Venetian armada, under the command of Girolamo Zane, was stationed at Corfu, waiting for the impending arrival of the Spanish and papal forces. Bosio's portrait of Zane<sup>85</sup> — "Senatore prudentissimo, e Personaggio di grand' esperienza" — is at best too generous, at worst biased, almost misleadingly inaccurate. Would a more faithful picture of the Venetian admiral have been cautiously censored by the Order? It is only on one occasion, when the Turkish armada was known to have been in the island of Stampalia in the Aegean, that Bosio makes a passing reference to Zane's painful state of indecision.<sup>86</sup> When the 75-year old admiral, one time aspirant to the dogeship,<sup>87</sup> was dismissed from office on 13 December 1570, the great historian of the Order records coldly the bare facts, and leaves it at that.<sup>88</sup> Girolamo Zane was no man of the sea; nor had he matured through the grades of a naval or maritime career. Gian-Andrea Doria was for once right in denouncing him as wanting in experience in this particular field.<sup>89</sup> The Venetian historian Ugo Tucci calls him "techni-

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

cally inexperienced ... irresolute and with no will-power."<sup>90</sup> This objective description of him was richly justified by events. But if this was the true image of the man, why did the Venetian Senate in the first place entrust *him* with that exacting task? Secondly, to what extent were the results of the chain of events or non-events, from the moment he sailed down the Adriatic to his dismissal, his entire responsibility? There is ample room, it seems, for further research on the subject.

After waiting for the western fleets for over a month at Corfu,<sup>91</sup> the Venetian armada, decimated by a heavy loss of life on board and handicapped by newly recruited crews and galley slaves "unaccustomed to the hardship of the sea,"<sup>92</sup> left for Crete in order to have a number of ill-equipped galleys refitted and reinforced. It was at this juncture, on 31 August 1570, that Gian-Andrea Doria and Marcantonio Colonna arrived at the Cretan port of Suda, a convenient place to rendezvous "but short of supplies."<sup>93</sup>

Doria's objective, at cross purposes with the Venetian's,<sup>94</sup> is clearly spelt out from the first moment we encounter him in Bosio's narrative. He had hardly arrived when he publicised his pre-motivated designs in such a way as to make them seem spontaneous to his allies. The state of the Venetian armada seemed a reasonable pretext. It would not be wise to approach the enemy with a fleet "molta zoppa e molto mal ridotta per la gran mortalità che in essa era regnata."<sup>95</sup> The Venetians were not in a position to fight. Doria estimated, according to Bosio, that the outbreak of sickness had caused the loss of about twenty thousand lives.<sup>96</sup> But what if the entire fleet were to be reinforced with suitable crews and infantrymen, as in fact it was?<sup>97</sup> The chronicler does not hesitate here to state the whole truth: the allied Christian forces were hampered by lack of harmony ("assai mal d'accordo"), even on the very *raison d'être* of their mission in the Levant, the liberation of Cyprus.<sup>98</sup> Or was it the means of achieving that end that caused discord? From the port of Suda, the allied armada sailed to the port of Sitia, the farthest Cretan port towards the Levant.<sup>99</sup> Should they then proceed to Cyprus or should

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

they divert the Turkish forces by attacking other parts of the Ottoman empire? On 17 September the Christian armada left the bay of Sitia and sailed in the direction of Cyprus. On approaching Rhodes, Luigi Bembo reported that Nicosia had fallen and been ransacked on 9 September.<sup>100</sup> On 22 September the armada anchored at Port Vasi, between the fortress of Ruggia and Finike. This was the remotest point at which the combined Christian forces had arrived, two hundred miles short from Cyprus. It was not practical to proceed to Famagusta instead. The port capacity there did not allow more than 15 galleys at a time.<sup>101</sup> So it was decided to return to Crete. On 26 September the armada harboured at Scarpanto. The Spanish Admiral's plans thus came to be realised.

At Sitia on 12 September, Gian Andrea Doria wrote down a detailed account of the Allies' situation, starting from Otranto, a copy of which was later forwarded to the Grand Master of Malta by Fra Paolo Fiamberto, the Order's receiver in Genoa.<sup>102</sup> Bosio considers this document of the utmost importance<sup>103</sup> and reproduces it in full.<sup>104</sup> Through various high-sounding pretexts and skilful tactical precautions that would outfox the other two admirals, Doria attempted to justify his otherwise "inexcusable behaviour." Given that the state of the Venetian armada was a "mutual misfortune"<sup>105</sup> to the Allies, not only was he not prepared to expose his Spanish squadrons to risk, but he was determined on his pre-selected course of action. "A me non pare," he wrote, "che si possa vincere."<sup>106</sup> He would not stay a day later than 30 September, and that was generous of him.<sup>107</sup> The return voyage was long and the imminent autumn storms were too risky.<sup>108</sup> His entire Spanish fleet rather than the Venetian colony was at stake! Towards the end of that month Doria sailed westward, arriving with all his galleys<sup>109</sup> in Messina on 18 October<sup>110</sup>. Nothing had been accomplished. The combined Christian force, though far short of the ideal, had consisted of 180 galleys, 11 galleasses, 40 heavy ships including Fausto's galleon,<sup>111</sup> besides other craft,<sup>112</sup> together with 1300 cannon and 16,000 troops.<sup>113</sup> Braudel believes that with such a naval force, "a successful action could have been fought,"<sup>114</sup> had it not

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

been partly for Colonna's want of real leadership and partly for Doria's unwillingness to fight.<sup>115</sup> It is here, more perhaps than elsewhere, that Zane's manifestation of *abulia* is seen at its worst. What was it that had kept him from attempting alone the relief of Cyprus, as he had been instructed to do?<sup>116</sup>

The three-galley squadron of Malta arrived at the port of Khania in Crete on 26 October,<sup>117</sup> eight days after the Spanish fleet had anchored at Messina. Bosio records Pietro Giustiniani's impression after his first review of "what was left of the Venetian armada."<sup>118</sup>

It was really very pitiful to see such a large Armada, which had been fitted out so magnanimously by that Republic, reduced to such a poor state due to the sickness that still persisted as a result of the spoilt meal, bad food and the long, inactive stay in those ports, and especially in that of Suda which is surrounded by many marshes.

To make better use of his arrival in Khania, and lest galleys "would rot of inaction at that port," Giustiniani was on 7 November assigned to participate in the organisation of the relief forces about to be sent to Famagusta.<sup>119</sup> That day Angelo Soriano<sup>120</sup> reported that Piali, stationed on the Aegean island of Stampalia (Astipalaea), was preparing an attack on the Venetian fleet in the port of Suda itself. This piece of news, which turned out to be a false alarm, once more diverted Zane's plans.<sup>121</sup> During its sojourn in the Levant, the Religion's squadron suffered from a severe outbreak of sickness, with "alcuni Cavalieri e Huomini morti e infermi per tutto."<sup>122</sup> On 12 November Colonna began his homeward voyage. He chose to be escorted as far as Corfu by Giustiniani's squadron than by the best twelve of the Venetian galleys, as the Order had at its disposal the services of highly experienced pilots, especially a certain Cicco Pisano, "famoso e praticissimo."<sup>123</sup> The three galleys of the Order were back in Malta on 22 January 1571.

Freed from the defeatist attitude of the Allies, which benumbed all Christian sense of duty, the old Venetian ad-

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

miral made his first, and only, serious attempt to relieve besieged Cyprus, after seven whole months of patent masterly inactivity in the Levant. On 16 January 1571 Marco Querini, *Provveditore dell' Armata*,<sup>124</sup> with 13 galleys and 4 ships set sail from Crete to Famagusta. He found the situation there less precarious than had perhaps been expected. Mustafâ Pasha, having realized that the storming of Famagusta would prove more difficult than Nicosia, "retired with his army to the most agreeable parts of the island for the winter."<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile Querini managed to surprise two heavy Turkish galleys fully laden with Turks, ammunition and foodstuffs. His mission to Famagusta is faithfully reported by Bosio.<sup>125</sup>

And while the ships were unloading, he carefully brought down the bastions and filled the trenches which Mustafâ had constructed around Famagusta, and destroyed the forts on the rocks of Gambella, together with the mole and the ridout at Costanza, which the Turks had built for the galleys. Querini spent twenty-two days on these deeds ... ; in order to alleviate Famagusta and empty it of those mouths and useless persons, he carried on his ships and galleys women, children, old people and all others in that city unable to wield arms.

On this note of hope ("Indi lasciata havendo a Famagostani buona speranza di maggior Soccorso della Lega"<sup>127</sup>), Bosio ends his narrative of the first phase of the siege of Cyprus.

Bosio attached exceptional importance to the siege of Nicosia. The attention he accorded it in his *Istoria* is second to no other, equally dramatic, contemporary event in Europe — whether the rebellion of the Moriscos in Granada,<sup>128</sup> the civil and religious wars which set drifting France into complete anarchy<sup>129</sup> or the revolt of the Netherlands.<sup>130</sup> The writer's approach to the episode in Cyprus betrays the attitude, interests and qualities of a historian rather than those of a chronicler. His narrative is more than a mere train of events, factual and dry, reflecting the changing style of sixteenth century history writing. His task appears

to have been one of probing the complex motives of man's actions, of tracing causes with a modicum of objectivity and in a rational way, and establishing in a descriptive, if not analytic, fashion the consequences of this tumultuous event, even though his official terms of reference were restricted to the glory and performance of the Order of St. John, of which he was himself a member. His is a historian's vision. If the Order's *raison d'être* was still to fight the infidel, the Calvinist of the North was no less heretical than the Ottoman of the East. If the potential supremacy of the Turkish power in the Mediterranean threatened the very existence of this medieval institution, the ideological and material consequences of the eruption of the widespread popular upheaval in the Netherlands were not less ominous. Bosio only "hints succinctly" and "with every possible brevity" to the latter occurrence<sup>131</sup> but digresses at leisure to "narrate" the siege of Nicosia with sequential coherence.

Bosio's enthusiasm for the early phase of the war of Cyprus is not incomprehensible. The disappointing outcome of the autumn campaign was to have an immediate and profound impact on the Order of St. John. Negotiations for the League were delayed, at times suspended; at best they proved most discouraging. It seemed almost an unattainable ideal.<sup>132</sup> Bosio's very concisely drawn image of Venice during the winter of 1570-71 confirms her "reputation for duplicity."<sup>133</sup> Her apparent disposition to promote an early settlement of the League, professed by her ambassador in Rome, was counterpoised by her attempt to negotiate secretly with the Turk.<sup>134</sup> Awareness of this attitude embarrassed Del Monte and caused consternation in the Council.<sup>135</sup> Would not a successful outcome of Giacomo Ragazzoni's mission to Constantinople<sup>136</sup> encourage Selim II, psychologically and morally fortified by the early victory of Nicosia, to redirect his mighty armada towards Malta?<sup>137</sup> The disengagement of the troops in Valletta the year before rendered the new city defenceless and more liable to attack.<sup>138</sup> Ever since the very first days of his magistracy<sup>139</sup> Del Monte had wished to transfer the Order's headquarters from the Borgo<sup>140</sup> to Valletta. Nor was his desire to breathe fresh life into the otherwise desolate city devoid of self-glory. He

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

was conscious that the migration of the Convent across the Grand Harbour would give him no less repute, no smaller title to fame "than that earned by his predecessor" who had laid the first stone.<sup>141</sup> These personal considerations had been momentarily subordinated to the tumultuous events of 1569-70. But now, reflection on the gravity of the situation in the Mediterranean, the emergence of new indications of a possible Turkish threat to Malta and the advanced stage the fortifications of Valletta had reached, induced the Grand Master to seize the opportunity of realizing his aspirations. In these circumstances no safer precautionary measure<sup>142</sup> could be taken than the transference of the entire body of the Religion to Valletta. This would necessarily mean hardship and sacrifice on the part of the knights,<sup>143</sup> but there was no alternative: so thought and decreed the Grand Master. On Sunday, 18 March 1571 the Order of St. John moved to its new headquarters on the Sceberras peninsula, which was converted into one of the "most impregnable" fortresses "of the world, second to no Italian city for beauty."<sup>144</sup>

The triple alliance constituting the Holy League was not to be finalized before 20 May 1571.<sup>145</sup> But by the time the allied armada set sail from Messina on 16 September, not only had Famagusta capitulated and the whole island passed securely into Turkish hands, but the theatre of war had shifted further westward towards the Morea and the Ionian islands. The Cyprus question receded into secondary importance. When on 7 October the combined Christian forces wreaked havoc upon the Ottoman armada, it was at the gulf of Lepanto that the action took place. In the combined Christian force of 208 warships,<sup>146</sup> Malta was only represented by a three-galley squadron<sup>147</sup> under Giustiniani, entrusted with the extreme right wing of the expedition. Augusta Drane<sup>148</sup> describes in a somewhat romantic fashion, the valour performed by the knights and Maltese galleys at Lepanto.

[The *Capitana di Malta*] was posted in the very centre of the line of battle, the place of honour being granted without opposition to the banner of St. John; but the



## VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

other galleys were attached to Doria's division, and received the first attack of Ouloudj Ali. In spite of their heroic defence they were outpowered by numbers: the *St. Stephen* was assailed by three Turkish vessels at once and was in the utmost danger of being taken, when Giustiniani, perceiving the danger of his knights, hastened to their assistance and forced two of the enemy's vessels to strike. The third was on the point of doing the same when Ouloudj Ali brought up four other galleys, and then ensued one of the most desperate and bloody combats that was witnessed throughout the day. Every man on board the prior's vessel was slain with the exception of himself and two knights who were all however severely wounded ... Giustiniani himself was wounded in fourteen places; and his galley, not without defenders, fell into the hands of the Turks...

---

### SOURCE REFERENCES

1. Bosio, III, 848.
2. *Ibid.*, 846.
3. *Ibid.*, 847.
4. Braudel, 1066-1068.
5. Bosio, III, 846.
6. AOM 92, f. 182.
7. Bosio, III, 846.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See AOM 92, ff. 183v, 185v. Braudel, 1077 n.302.
10. Bosio, III, 846.
11. L.F. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* (London 1952), XVIII, 356 n.3.
12. Bosio, III, 846.
13. AOM 92, f. 185v. Bosio, III, 846 47.
14. For his mission to the Levant and for his Instructions, *ibid.*, 847.
15. *Ibid.*, 848.
16. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 362.
17. Braudel, 1078-1079.
18. The "Compagnia di Soldati", under the command of Vincenzo Ventura in Valletta, was at once disengaged and replaced by a number of Knights under Fra Christofano de Montgauldri. Bosio, III, 868.

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

19. *Ibid.*, 724-26. *CSP. Foreign* (1566-68), *rub.* 34, Preparations at Malta to receive the Turk, Venice, 19 January 1566. *Ibid.*, *rub.* 79, Succours of troops and money sent by different potentates to Malta, Venice, 8 February 1566. *Ibid.*, *rub.* 83, Intelligence from Madrid, 24 January 1566, from Rome, 9 February 1566, and from Constantinople, 9 January 1566, chiefly about the Turk's armament and the preparations made at Malta to resist him. *Ibid.*, *rub.* 401, "It is reported that the Turk will besiege Malta with a greater Power than last year." 20 May 1566.
20. Bosio, III, 802 *et. seq.* "The Grand Master has sent to different places for munitions and other necessaries for the defence of Malta." February-March 1567. *CSP. Foreign* (1566-68), *rub.* 979.
21. Bosio, III, 806, 814.
22. Bosio makes a passing reference to the depleted Treasury in 1570 and to the "gravissime spese, che fin' all' hora fuor di modo aggravato l'havevano." *Ibid.*, 852-53.
23. *Ibid.*, 852.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, 870-71.
26. The last parts of "Libro Trentesimo Nonno" (*ibid.*, 848-50) and "Libro Quarantesimo" (*ibid.*, 851-73).
27. *Ibid.*, 848.
28. *Ibid.*, 190-1.
29. "che così frescamente fermata e giurata haveva". *Ibid.*, 848.
30. R. Cessi, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia* (Milan 1968), II, 128.
31. "...non era in considerazione d'esser di gran lunga così valoroso e bellicoso com'era stato il sudetto Solimano suo Padre..." Bosio, III, 785. Braudel, 1045-46.
32. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 361. Pastor's source in Badoer's *relazione* to the Venetian Senate. Bosio's description of the man stresses the same features: "Huomo dato al vino e alla lussuria" and "severo aspetto, e quasi formidabile a riguardanti; di pelo rosso e tanto grasso che pareva corto di collo." Bosio, III, 785.
33. See H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London 1973), 140 *et seq.*
34. "di ricchissime entrate". Bosio, III, 848.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Bosio calls it "opera pia." *Ibid.* Braudel defines it as a "religious institution." Braudel, 518.
37. "il qual danno avenga che grandissimo stato fosse, gli fù nondimeno predicato e dipinto per assai maggiore di quello ch'egli fù in effetto." Bosio, III, 848. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 362.
38. *Ibid.*

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

39. "una crudele e eccessiva carestia, la quale era tale ch'a memoria d'Huomini non si ricordava, che i grani a cosi alto prezzo montassero." Bosio, III, 848.
40. "onde giudicava che impossibile stato sarebbe a Venetiani, il poter per quell'anno metter insieme Armata che bastevole fosse ad impedirgli i disegni suoi." *Ibid.*
41. The date of 4 February in Bosio (*ibid.*) is incorrect. See Pastor, *op.cit.*, 362 and Braudel, 1079.
42. "an official of the Palace, often sent to the provinces to convey and execute orders." Inalcik, *op.cit.*, 218 *sub voce*.
43. Bosio, III, 848.
44. Braudel, 1079. Bosio says "nel principio d'Aprile." Bosio, III, 848.
45. Bosio reproduces in detail Selim's version of these rights to his claim of Cyprus: "...nell'anno mille quattrocento e ventisei Teucitez Soldano d'Egitto, venuto essendo a battaglia con Giano Re di Cipro, l'haveva vinto e fatto prigionie; e poi rilasciatolo con patto, che pigliando da lui l'Investitura di quel Regno, gli pagasse ogn'anno Tributo; e che nel mille quattrocento cinquanta nove, haveva il Soldano investito e coronato del medesimo Regno di Cipro sotto Tributo di cinque mila Scudi d'oro l'anno, Iacomo Lusignano, Nepote bastardo del sopradetto Giano; ha vendogli con l'Armata sua acquistato e postolo in possesso di quel Regno, scacciandone il Re Lodovico di Savoia. Dalla Moglie del quale Iacomo Lusignano, Caterina Cornara, trahevano Venetiani l'origine delle pretese ragioni loro all'utile Dominio di quel Regno. E c'havendo Selim suo Avo con giusta guerra vinto e debellato Tomombeï ultimo Soldano e estinte in tutto l'Imperio de' Mamalucchi, il dominio e le ragioni del Soldano devolute erano alla Casa Ottomana, della quale essendo egli Capo e legitimo Erede; per conseguenza era Signore del diretto dominio del Regno di Cipro." Bosio, III, 848-49.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 849.
47. "temendo di qualche affronto e oltraggio popolare (perciocchè il Popolo contra di lui grandemente fremeva)." *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. By mid-March 1570 Venice had already begun to sound European courts. Braudel, 1080.
51. The Pope, therefore, granted at once "alla detta Republica cento mila scudi sopra le Decime Ecclesiastiche del Dominio Venetiano." Bosio, III, 849. This 'tenth' was to be used only for the defence of Cyprus. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 368.
52. Cessi, *op. cit.*, II, 126.

THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

53. *Ibid.*
54. The term is here used in its widest sense, including their different mentalities.
55. Cessi, *op.cit.*, II, 127.
56. Bosio, III, 849.
57. *Ibid.*, 852.
58. *Ibid.*, 851.
59. "Petrus Giustiniani electus est in Praefectum auxiliarem in proxima profectioe triremium contra Turcas atque in favorem Reipublicae Venetorum et totius Christianitatis," 12 May 1570, AOM 92, f.193v. Bosio, III, 851.
60. *Ibid.*, 852.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. The Instructions are reproduced in *ibid.*, 853.
66. The squadron was made up of the 'Capitana' under fra D. Federico Moca, the 'Padrona' *Santa Maria della Vittoria* under fra Prospero Pignone, the *San Giovanni* under fra Pietro de Mentauban Veguedemar and the *Sant'Anna* under fra Salvador La Batta. *Ibid.*, 854.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Three independent sources — the French corsair from Marseilles, Gamba di Bosco, the Bishop of Nazzaro, Giacomo Lomellino, and the viceroy of Sicily — had each advised St. Clement not to leave harbour at Licata. *Ibid.* 855.
69. For a detailed account of the whole episode, *ibid.*, 855-60 and Ubaldino Mori Ubaldini, *La Marina del Sovrano Militare Ordine di San Giovanni di Gerusalemme di Rodi e di Malta*. (Rome 1971), 258-62.
70. Braudel, 1082.
71. Bosio, III, 860-1.
72. *Ibid.*, 862-63.
73. *Ibid.*, 863.
74. *Ibid.*
75. The 'Capitana' under fra Michele Montalto, the *San Giovanni* under Malaspina and the *San Pietro* under Saint Aubin. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, 864.
77. "Fra Petrus Giustiniani, Prior Messanae, electus est Praefectus triremium". AOM 92, f.208v.
78. Bosio, III, 864.
79. *Ibid.* "Cipro," writes Roberto Cessi, "era stata trascurata e abbandonata alle sue risorse; tardivo l'invio di Giulio Savorgnan

## VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

- per organizzare maggiori difese." *Op.cit.*, II, 129.
80. Bosio, III, 864.
81. *Ibid.*, 867.
82. *Ibid.* Pastor gives the figure of 2,000. *Op.cit.*, 391.
83. Bosio, III, 864.
84. J.F. Guilmartin Jr., *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford 1974), 236.
85. Bosio, III, 849.
86. "non sapendo il General de' Venetiani Girolamo Zanne in tanta tribolazione qual partito pigliare si dovesse, standosi l'Armata Turchesca alla Stampalia." *Ibid.*, 867.
87. U. Tucci, "Il processo a Girolamo Zane mancato difensore di Cipro," *Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del '500 alla luce di Lepanto*, ed. G. Benzioni (Florence 1974), 412.
88. In Crete "trovò egli lettera del Senato di Venetia ch'avisavano d'haver privato Girolamo Zanne del Generale dell'Armata, e c'havevano creato nuovo Generale Sebastian Veniero, e Proveditor della detta Armata il medesimo Marco Quirini." Bosio, III, 870.
89. Tucci, *art.cit.*, 413. For Zane's early career, *id.*, *Lettres d'un marchand vénétien Andrea Barbarigo* (Paris 1957), letters 95 and 188.
90. Tucci, *art.cit.*, 414.
91. Bosio, III, 864.
92. "con gran mortalità delle sue Genti, e della ciurma nuova, non anco ben avezza a' disagi del Mare." *Ibid.*
93. Braudel, 1086.
94. He had never had "la minima intenzione di affrontare l'armata nemica". Tucci, *art.cit.*, 427-28. Cessi, *op.cit.*, II, 130-31. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 391.
95. Bosio, III, 864.
96. *Ibid.*
97. "Perilhè il Generale Zanne, ch'era desiderosissimo che s'andasse innanzi, fece imbarcare sopra la detta Armata da quattro mila Fanti, cavati da diversi Presidij di quell'Isola, gente pagata e Italiana; e con essi circa ottomila Balestrieri Candiotti, Huomini avezzi alla guerra maritima, chiamati Sfacchiotti." *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*, 867.
101. *Ibid.*
102. *Ibid.*, 864.
103. "Ch'essendo scrittura molto sensata, dalla quale molti utili do-

## THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

- cumenti per la guerra maritima cavar si possono; e dalla quale si comprende la vera cagione perche quell'Armata non andasse risolutamente a soccorrere Cipro, e a combattere la Turchesca; e per qual cagione l'istesso Giovan' Andrea da detta Armata cosi tosto si partisse poi." *Ibid.*
104. See *ibid.*, 865-67.
105. "commune disgratia." *Ibid.*, 865. "Ogni giorno m'andavo facendo più certo che 'l mancamento delle genti nella Venetiana era notabilissimo." *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*, 866.
107. "Io diedi ... di buonissimo animo." *Ibid.*, 865.
108. "a manifestissimo pericolo di fortuna," and later, "esser la stagione già tanto innanzi scorsa si che le borrasche dell'Autunno già cominciavano a spirare."
109. Braudel, 1087.
110. Bosio, III, 867.
111. The great galleon constructed by the humanist Vettore Fausto in the 1550s. It was launched in connection with the siege of Cyprus in 1570, but was little used thereafter. F.C. Lane, "Naval Architecture, about 1550", *Venice and History* (Baltimore 1966), 182.
112. Bosio, III, 864, 867 (figures given at different intervals).
113. Braudel, 1087.
114. *Ibid.*
115. *Ibid.*
116. *Ibid.*, 1086.
117. Bosio, III, 867.
118. *Ibid.*
119. *Ibid.*, 868.
120. Angelo Soriano and Vincenzo Maria Priuli had been earlier sent to gather information about the Turkish armada. Priuli did not return; his galley "era stata presa da cinque galeotte Turchesche, contra le quali havendo valorosamente combattuto, dopo haver fatto gran danno a Nemici, furono le genti sue, insieme co'l Priuli tagliate a pezzi". *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid.*, 869.
122. *Ibid.*
123. *Ibid.*
124. Querini, together with the other *Provveditore dell'Armata* Antonio Canaletto, are described by Bosio as "ambidue nobili Venetiani, e nelle cose del Mare praticissimi". *Ibid.*, 849.
125. *Ibid.*, 870.
126. *Ibid.*
127. *Ibid.*

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES

128. See *ibid.*, 817.
129. See *ibid.*, 442-43.
130. See *ibid.*, 652, 786-89, 798-99.
131. Referring to developments in the Netherlands, Bosio writes: "Le quali cose con ogni possibile brevità, succintamente da noi più tosto accennate, che narrate saranno; per non divertirci soverchiamente dalla nostra Istoria, rimettendo chiunque avesse desiderio di più particolarmente e minutamente intenderlo, alla lettione di quegli Autori che per propria professione e particular impresa l'hanno tolte a scrivere." *Ibid.*, 786.
132. Braudel, 1089 *et seq.*
133. The phrase is Braudel's. *Ibid.*, 1089.
134. Bosio, III, 871. For France's role in these negotiations, A. Tenenti' "La Francia, Venezia e la Sacra Lega," *Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del '500 alla luce di Lepanto*, ed. G. Benzoni, 393-408.
135. The Order enjoyed the service of paid spies at Constantinople. Bosio refers to "lettere in cifra dalle sue (=La Valette's) Spie, ch'ordinariamente stipendiate teneva in Costantinopoli." Bosio, III, 817. Elsewhere he calls them "amici di Costantinopoli." *Ibid.*, 871.
136. Secretary to the Venetian Senate. "Mandato s'era in Costantinopoli ... con secreta commissione di trattar unitamente co'l Bailo e di stringer quella Pace." *Ibid.*, 871.
137. *Ibid.*
138. "ella non istava bene così vota di Difenditori, in pericolo d'esser di notte rubbata e da gli Infedeli sorpresa." *Ibid.*
139. *Ibid.*, 828-29.
140. Called after 1565 Città Vittoriosa. *Ibid.*, 872.
141. "Stimando che nel dar egli gli Habitatori e l'anima a quella Città, non minor gloria s'acquistarebbe di quella che 'l Predecessor suo Valletta acquistata s'haveva co'l darle principio." *Ibid.*, 871.
142. "per all'hora nessun'altro miglio rimedio e nessuna più sicura preventione, contra ogni dubbio della nemica Armata." *Ibid.*
143. W. Porter, *Malta and its Knights* (London 1871), 162-63.
144. See Bosio, III, 871-72.
145. *Ibid.*, 849. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 404. Braudel, 1088.
146. *Ibid.* 1108. Pastor, *op.cit.*, 419.
147. The 'Capitana' *Santa Maria della Vittoria* captained by fra Rinaldo Naro, the *San Giovanni* under fra Alonzo de Texada, and the *San Pietro* under fra Pietro de la Rocquelaure de Saint Aubin. Ubaldini, *op.cit.*, 270.
148. A. Drane, *The Knights of St. John: with the Battle of Lepanto*

THE SIEGE OF CYPRUS IN BOSIO'S *ISTORIA*

*and the Siege of Vienna* (London 1858), 223-24. For the Order's role in the battle, B. Dal Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta* (Verona 1703-15), I, 9-30; A. Guglielmotti, *Storia della marina pontificia* (Rome 1886-93), VI, 198-246.