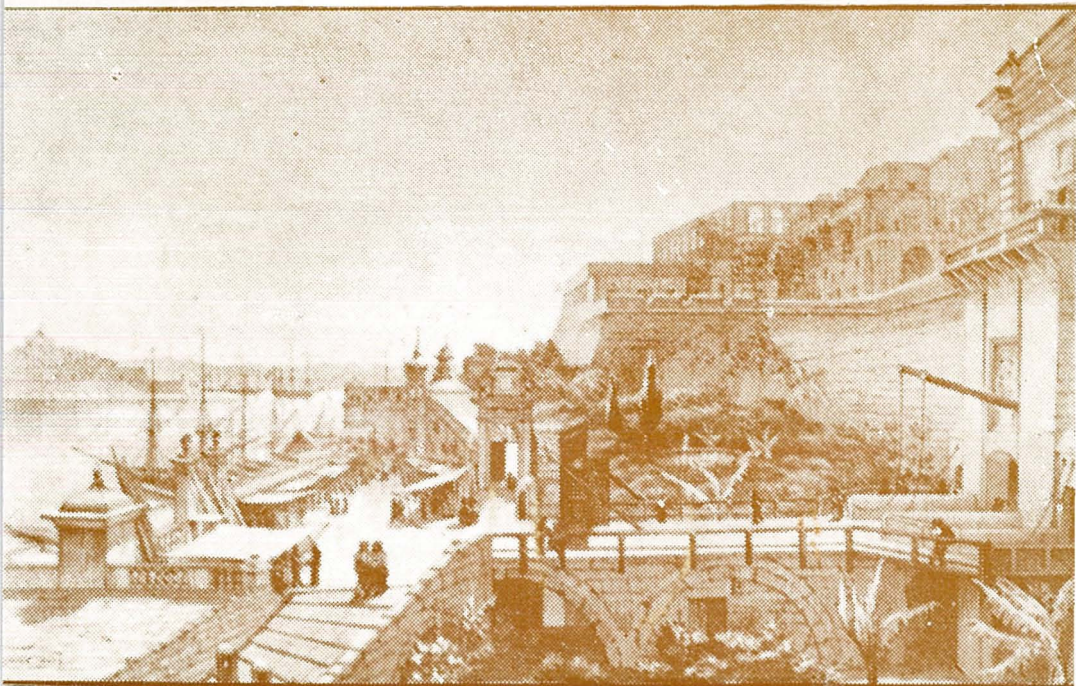


# ARCHIVUM

THE JOURNAL  
OF  
MALTESE HISTORICAL RESEARCH



NUMBER I

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# ARCHIVUM

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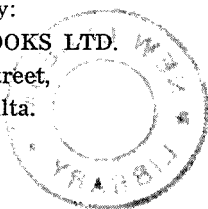
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### EDITOR'S NOTE

*Archivum* will be published annually. Its purpose is to promote study, research, discussion and publication on all aspects of Maltese History.

Manuscripts, embodying the results of original research, together with books for review, should be addressed to the Editor, 135, Zabbar Road, Paola, Malta, by not later than March of each year.

All intending contributors are kindly asked to obtain from the editor a copy of the Journal's 'Guidance for Contributors' which lists the main literary and typographical conventions followed.

319415

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REFERENCES

AC	Archives of the Cathedral, Cathedral Museum, Mdina (Malta)
AIM	Archives of the Inquisition, Cathedral Museum, Mdina (Malta)
AO	Atti Originali
AOM	Archives of the Order of Malta
ASCJ	Archives of the Superior Courts of Justice, The Palace, Valletta
Bosio	Iacomo Bosio, <i>Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill.ma Militia di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano</i> . Parte III. Rome 1602
Braudel	Fernand Braudel, <i>The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II</i> . Translated by Sian Reynolds. London 1972-73
CDM	Consolato del Mare
CSP	Calendar of State Papers
Libr.	Library
MD	Military Despatches, The Palace Archives, Valletta
Misc.	Miscellanea
NAV	Notarial Archives, Valletta
NLM	The National Library of Malta
Not.	Notary
PAV	The Palace Archives, Valletta
PRO	Public Record Office, London
Proc.	Processo
RAO	Registrum Acta Originalia
rub.	rubrica
TREAS.	Treasury MSS, The National Library of Malta
WO	War Office

# ARCHIVUM

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## The Abolition of Slavery in Malta\*

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A few years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Emperor of Morocco began to ransom Moslem slaves from Malta on a large scale. This throws a curious side-light on the eighteenth century, the age of enlightenment, though it is doubtful whether there was any connection at all with such a peculiarly European climate of opinion: it is unlikely that similar ideas could have penetrated into Morocco which, with Ethiopia, then ranked among the most xenophobic countries of Africa. The first reference to an exchange of slaves between Malta and Morocco occurs in a letter of Grand Master Pinto, sent to his ambassador in Rome on 4 September 1769:

Led by the desire to be merciful, the Emperor of Morocco has decided to free thirty-seven Christian slaves from Tuscany, wishing to make their freedom a present to Us, whom he considers the Father of Christians. He also wanted to make the present in a becoming way, by sending us one of his Secretaries with six attendants on a proper ship. When he presented us with the credentials of his Sovereign, of which we send you a copy, and, by means of an interpreter, he assured us of the most human sentiments of his Master towards Christians, and of his esteem and respect towards our Person. In return for this politeness we have

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\*[This article is an extract from *Some Aspects of Slavery in Malta, 1530-1800*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The University of London, 1971].



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lodged the Envoy and his suite in a most decent house, and are providing them with all they need at our expense, neither shall we omit to reward the said Emperor in a proper way, having decided to send him as a gift some subjects of his who are slaves here, in addition to various delicacies produced by the island.

The Tuscans were lodged in the empty college of the Jesuits — who had just been expelled from the island (another example of enlightenment?), and were given a free passage to their country.<sup>1</sup> A letter, sent a few days later to the Order's Receiver in Florence, in addition, stated that the Order had chosen forty slaves to be sent to the Emperor of Morocco in return for his courtesy — twenty-one of them, none old, were Moroccans, including the Cadi who had once promised to pay a ransom of 1,000 scudi. They had to be sent to the port of Saltee nearest the town where the Emperor then happened to be residing.<sup>2</sup> A letter, sent two days later to the Order's ambassador in Rome, informed him that the ship which was to take the envoy, with his suite and the freed slaves, to Morocco lay ready for departure, and that the envoy was happy and quite overcome with the courtesies shown him by the whole Convent. "We can likewise say that he has borne himself with wisdom, circumspection, and like a man of good sense."<sup>3</sup> In distant London, the *Annual Register*, after a complete translation of the Emperor's letter to Pinto, said that it trusted that the Grand Master had really sent every single slave from Morocco that there was in Malta, and ended with the comment that "a few generations of such princes might civilize the most barbarous nation."<sup>4</sup>

Early during the magistracy of De Rohan (1775-97), the same Emperor of Morocco — Mahmet bin Abdulla — sent another envoy to Malta, son of the previous one. This time his object was to discover whether a Ragusan ship captured by the corsairs of Saltee was really carrying a cargo belonging to Maltese merchants. This was not at all unlikely, in view of the frequency with which Ragusan vessels visited Maltese harbours.<sup>5</sup> He carried detailed instructions

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about the method of obtaining depositions from the aggrieved merchants, and transmitting his findings back home. Apparently, his only direct connection with the Moslem slaves on the island was the distribution of 2,000 piastres among them.<sup>6</sup>

Not long afterwards began the large scale ransoming of the Moslem slaves in Malta by the Emperor of Morocco, a scheme which persisted, off and on, for the rest of the Order's stay in the island. It is not clear when it began, but on 19 June 1782 the Treasury registered the receipt of 61,515 scudi from the Knight Commander Fontani, received through him from the ambassador of the "King of Morocco", in payment for 199 slaves — obviously implying, in the circumstances that that number of slaves belonging to the Order had been ransomed by the ruler of that country.<sup>7</sup> The table on page 439 of my Ph.D. thesis shows that, round about that time, fully 539 slaves were liberated, 306 of them belonging to private owners. This is an extraordinarily large number, and it is certain that most of them must have been freed with Moroccan money. That this was so is further proved by a contemporary decree of the Treasury, which mentions the sum of 1055 scudi as the *diritti* "of the Turkish slaves already ransomed by the ambassador of Morocco, who belonged to private-owners."<sup>8</sup> One of the *prodomi* of the prison himself testified to the delight with which the slaves greeted their unexpected freedom.

Further information is provided by a letter that Inquisitor Chigi Zondadari wrote to the Secretary of State at the Vatican on 22 June 1782. An ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco, Mahamud bin Hotman, *Gran Cancelliere*, was then visiting Malta on his way to Naples and Rome with a retinue of twenty-five persons and much money. Zondadari was informed by the ambassador's Algerine dragoman and by the Cadi of the slaves in Malta, that his mission was to ask for a permanent peace, to arrange the ransoming of slaves, and obtain other easements for commerce — to attain which he carried letters written by his sovereign in his own hand for presentation to the Pope.

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His letter to the Grand Master contained an offer of friendship and a request for the ransom of the slaves. Verbally the ambassador expressed Morocco's desire that the Order of St. John should agree to a perpetual peace, enabling subjects of each to trade freely together. Morocco would force Algiers to accept a stable peace or, at least, be satisfied with plundering the goods and not the persons found on the ships captured by her corsairs — leaving the captives to be exchanged for Moslems on a one for one basis as Christians did with their prisoners-of-war. These views agreed well with those expressed a few days previously by the son-in-law of the Bey of Tunis when he called at Malta on his return from Mecca. It was, however, felt by the Grand Master that the momentary intentions of the Barbary States were hardly to be trusted and even less were those of the fierce military government of Algiers. He therefore answered that, while he was himself well pleased with the proffered friendship of the ruler of Morocco and could certainly see the advantages that would accrue, he could not — owing to the peculiar constitution of the Order — sign a perpetual truce until the same had been done by all the states of Europe, even the very smallest, especially those in Italy.

That the ambassador did ransom innumerable slaves is made clear by the Inquisitor who adds that, instead of awaiting the arrival of a couple of Moroccan frigates which had to carry him and the freed slaves away from Malta, he ordered the latter to depart immediately for the various ports of Barbary. The frigates in fact were never sent and he had to hire a Venetian ship on 18 July for his own journey to Naples.<sup>9</sup>

The next large ransoms of slaves took place in 1786-89. In 1785 His Catholic Majesty of Spain expressed a desire for a "competent number of Moroccan slaves so that he might send them to the Emperor of Morocco." The Grand Master and his Council decided that they should be given as a free gift to His Catholic Majesty, leaving the actual execution of the matter to the procurators of the Treasury.<sup>10</sup> There cannot be much doubt that the great revival of

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slave-ransoms from 1786 onwards was due to money from Morocco. In 1787 Commander Fontani paid the Treasury for a hundred slaves bought from it by Scolaro. There cannot be any doubt that they were being redeemed by the Emperor of Morocco. In fact, in that year the Moroccans are known to have ransomed 333 of the slaves of Malta, one hundred of them belonging to the Order (presumably those "bought" by Scolaro), the rest to private owners.<sup>11</sup>

However, by far the greatest redemption of slaves that is known to have been carried out in Malta by the Emperor of Morocco occurred in 1789, when the Order allowed all its slaves to obtain their freedom and return to their own country. No doubt, this did not include the baptised slaves, who could have no claims of any sort on the generosity of the Emperor nor could they have received permission from the Grand Master to return to a Moslem country because, for most of them, it would mean an inevitable relapse into Infidelity. But it is just as certain that no other slaves of the Order remained unredeemed. In fact, thirteen other slaves had to be purchased from private owners to make up the stipulated number of six hundred.<sup>12</sup> As a result principally of this great liberation, the Treasury was able to boast the princely income of 548,680 scudi from the ransom of its slaves for the year beginning on 1 April 1789 — an extraordinary amount, totally unique in the history of slavery in the island.<sup>13</sup>

The transaction had taken a long time to mature. On 2 February 1789 the Treasury resolved that, once an assurance had been received from the Court of Spain that the ransom-money for the six hundred slaves could be taken freely out of that country, it would bind itself to transport them to Cadiz or Tangier — after their exact number had been verified by "the Envoy of His Majesty, the King of Morocco, at present living in Malta."<sup>14</sup> The slaves left the island on, or immediately before, 18 September 1789. On that day, the Vice-Chancellor of the Order had, at the command of the Grand Master, registered the following declaration of the Moroccan Envoy in the records of the Council:

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Having been sent to this port of Malta by my Sovereign the Emperor of Morocco to ask the Grand Master of Malta for the remainder of the six hundred slaves who had been bought by my Sovereign, I the undersigned declare that five hundred and thirty-three of them have been delivered to me, thus completing the said number of six hundred, whom I have embarked on two French ships hired by me in this port in order to take them to Constantinople, and in proof of this I sign myself, etc. Servant of my Sovereign, Great after God — Mahmet bin Abdalla Alzuir.<sup>15</sup>

Inquisitor Gallarati Scotti declared that trouble had arisen among the high officials of the Treasury who were perturbed that the exact terms of the agreement with Morocco and Spain had not been adhered to. It was alleged that the ambassador had not, in fact, received any commission from his sovereign concerning the slaves. He had called at Malta only because the Ragusan ship on which he was taking passage to Constantinople entered port to replenish her water supply. It had been originally agreed that the slaves were to await the arrival of some Spanish frigates or other vessels which had to transport them to Constantinople for presentation to the Grand Signior. According to the Inquisitor the ringleader in the affair was "the well-known Lorenzo Fontani, his (i.e. the Grand Master's) *guardiamancia*," who was supposed to have had some interest in the new arrangement. The King of Spain had been mainly instrumental in negotiating the original agreement.<sup>16</sup>

It was at first intended that most of the great sum of money obtained — amounting more than half a million Maltese scudi, in addition to the substantial sums paid in fees to various officials<sup>17</sup> — should be devoted to the liquidation of the outstanding portion of the debt 250,000 scudi which had been contracted by the Order in 1785. When, however, the sum of 66,000 scudi had been thus spent, it was decided that the balance should be sent to the Royal Treasury of the King of France as the Order's Pa-

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triotic Contribution — which had been fixed by the National Assembly at 366,000 scudi, or one-fourth of the Order's revenue from that Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

The year 1789 marks, therefore, an important stage in the gradual disappearance of slavery from Malta. For the first time ever, the Order of St. John did not possess any Moslem slaves for its galleys and shore installations. The government even had to increase the salaries of the agozzini and their subordinates on a temporary basis, because their meagre pay could not be asked out any longer with the variety of perks they levied with government approval on the slaves. But there was no intention of abolishing slavery altogether. The officials were told that they would lose their increase of pay as soon as the Order had replenished her stock of slaves.<sup>19</sup> Even then, there were still the baptised slaves who could be used to meet the demand for slave labour.

Not surprisingly in the circumstances, the ships of the Order were soon bringing in their fresh hauls of slaves. On 15 April 1793 the Order's frigate, the *Santa Elizabetta*, brought in a total of 134 Moslems from three ships she captured.<sup>20</sup> In the same year the Order's last remaining ship-of-the-line, the *San Zaccaria*, added 124 captives — and another nine in 1796.<sup>21</sup> In 1795 the two galleotes of the Order whose main job was to guard the harbour's entrance, captured forty slaves,<sup>22</sup> and two of the galleys, the *San Luigi* and the *Magistrale*, another thirty-eight.<sup>23</sup> These captures, it will be observed, do not include those made by the vessels equipped by the corsairs. Between 1790 and 1798 (both years included) the corsairs themselves added another 1,023 slaves. Altogether, therefore, these final years saw the capture of some 1,463 Moslems and Jews. In the same period some 994 slaves were set free, so that the slave-prisons had a net gain of 470 slaves.<sup>24</sup>

The end of slavery in Malta came from an unexpected quarter. On 9 June 1798 Napoleon's Armada on its way to Egypt arrived off Malta, and within a day or two Napoleon was able to enter Valletta in triumph. The Order's long and not unfruitful rule over the Maltese Islands came to a

final, abrupt, and inglorious end. On 13 June, Dupuy, one of Napoleon's officers, reported that he had, in pursuance of instructions, visited the prisons and the galleys of the Order to find out the various grievances of the Neapolitan convicts kept in them. Several of them, he reported, had already served their sentence and would have been freed had they remained in their home-country — but, having got themselves implicated in the plot of a Chevalier Medichy in 1795, they had been forcibly transported to Messina and Malta, five hundred to each place. Dupuy said that the galleys and prisons of Malta contained some 700 Sicilian convicts — that is, men from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies — together with some 500 Turkish or Moorish slaves:

These men merit attention, and several of them can be put to useful work. They have asked me earnestly to have them employed as matelots. Their request is natural, because the place where they are kept is frightful. I have given orders to make it more salubrious, and to furnish them with all the things they lack.<sup>25</sup>

Two days later, Napoleon wrote to the French consuls at Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers, telling them that they should inform the Beys of each place that the army of the Republic had captured Malta and that, consequently, Maltese persons were to be respected by them as they were now subjects of France. He asked them to demand liberty for all the Maltese slaves in those places, because:

He had given an order for more than 2,000 Turkish or Moorish slaves kept by the Order on her galleys to be set free. Let it be understood by the Bey that the power which has taken Malta in three days will be able to punish them if they neglect even for a moment the regard due to the Republic.<sup>26</sup>

An *arrete* of the next day (16 June) declared:

*Second article.* Slavery is abolished. All the slaves

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known as bonavogli are set free, and the contract they made, dishonourable to human-kind, is destroyed.

*Third article.* In consequence of the preceding article, all the Turkish slaves belonging to private persons are handed over to the General Commandant for them to be treated as prisoners-of-war and, in view of the armistice existing between the Ottoman Porte and the French Republic, they will be sent back home, when the General-in-chief commands, and when it is known that the Beys have consented to send to Malta all the French and Maltese slaves in their possession.<sup>27</sup>

Admiral Brueys was commanded by the General-in-chief to direct his officers to find out which slaves could be profitably embarked on his ships bound for Egypt. Orders were then given for all these Turkish slaves to be placed at the disposition of the Admiral who had to repartition them among the various ships. Once more, it was stated that some 500 men were involved.<sup>28</sup> In actual fact, a list of the slaves embarked on 17 June gives 520 names altogether. They originally came from every part of the Moslem shores of the Mediterranean: about 175 from Tunis alone and 35 from Morocco itself.<sup>29</sup> On the arrival of expedition in Egypt:

Napoleon ordered that all the Turkish matelots who had been slaves in Malta and had been set free, who were natives of Syria, the Greek Archipelago, and the Beylikdom of Tripoli, be set free at once. The admiral will make them disembark tomorrow at Alexandria, from which place the Etat-Major will give them their passports back home, with proclamations in Arabic.<sup>30</sup>

Sixty-six Maltese slaves are known to have been set free, as a result, in Tunisia alone, at the cost of 2,855 scudi.<sup>31</sup> In 1801 two hundred and fifty Maltese were officially reported to have been freed in Algiers and, a year later, an-



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other 200 were similarly set free at Constantinople, of whom 164 had their names recorded in an official broadsheet.<sup>32</sup>

How many Moors and Turks did Napoleon really set free in Malta? Did they amount to 2,000 as Napoleon claimed in his letters to the French consuls in Barbary or just the 500 who were officially reported in the prisons and on the galleys? It is known that 520 left Malta on 17 June 1798, another seventy — mostly Tunisians — on 24 August, and seven women — also from Tunisia — on 27 September, a total of 597. The Christian slaves of the Order in 1796-97 numbered 87 kept in the Prison, 84 who were released from prison, as well as seven others who served in the Conventual Church.<sup>33</sup> One is still very far from a total of 2,000 freed slaves. The number becomes credible only if one included not merely all the above as well as the privately-owned slaves but also the galley-convicts and *buonavoglia*, who should not really be regarded as slaves at all, technically.

There is no doubt that the decree of 16 June 1798 freed the privately-owned slaves as well as those who belonged to the Order. When the Commission du Gouvernement ordered the publication of the decree of 16 June abolishing slavery in the Maltese Islands it added explanatory notes showing what had been done to put it into execution. It claimed that it had been put fully into effect, forcing a large number of private owners to surrender their slaves and lose the money they had spent on their purchase. While it was not possible, on the one hand, to compensate them for this because of the lack of money, it was impossible, on the other, to break the sacred principle proclaimed by the general-in-chief, Napoleon. When they arrived in Barbary, all the Maltese there were also set free and allowed to return to Malta, except for those at Algiers and Constantinople. Most of the freed Maltese, however, promptly joined the Maltese in the countryside who had risen against French rule.<sup>34</sup>

It is doubtful how far these claims are to be accepted. The brave but ill-fated Captain Guglielmo Lorenzi claimed

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three months later that a female slave of his had been captured by the rebels in the company of an adopted daughter when two boats fell into their hands at Pietà Creek.<sup>35</sup> It would appear that months after the decree of 16 June 1798 at least some of the privately-owned slaves had been unable or unwilling to break their association with the previous owners. After all, they were often extremely well treated by them — to whom they might have belonged since infancy. In all probability neither were they eager to leave their master's house nor did they have anywhere else to go to. This is one explanation for the curious fact that as late as 11 March 1814 Michellina Briffa was still able to refer to *her two slaves* Paolo and Tomasa, to whom she left a gold necklace and a daily allowance of four tari a head for the rest of their life.<sup>36</sup> It will be noticed that both were Christians for whom a return to North Africa was impossible.

In law such persons cannot possibly have been slaves, whatever their description in private or notarial documents. The government that succeeded that of the French fully accepted the implications and consequences of Napoleon's liberation decree. This much is made clear by the proclamation issued by Captain Alexander Ball, R.N., "Chief of the Maltese", on 15 May 1800, several months before the final surrender of the French garrison of Valletta but at a time when the whole countryside of Malta was already in the hands of the rebels.

The proclamation stated that some private slave-owners had petitioned Captain Ball for permission to regain possession over their former slaves. The petitions were referred to the representatives of the people and discussed at the sitting of the National Congress that was held on 12 May 1800. It was then pointed out that any doubt in matters of personal freedom was to be exercised in favour of greater liberty: once a slave had been freed he could not again be deprived of his freedom by mere process of law. It was also recalled that the Moslem governments had also freed the Maltese slaves in their dominions and

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would retaliate in kind if the Maltese government reimposed slavery on freed slaves in its jurisdiction. It would harm the good relations that had been established between the two sides to the great advantage of Malta. It was therefore unanimously decided by the representatives of the Maltese that all those who had once been in a condition of slavery in the islands of Malta and Gozo and had been freed "during the change of government" were still completely free and able to enjoy all the effects of liberty and should not be molested in any way by those who had once been their masters.<sup>37</sup> A glance at the minutes of the Congress confirms the contents of the proclamation word for word. The Congress attributed the emancipation of the slaves by the French to their "abominable principles of liberty and equality."<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly in the circumstances, however, this was not to be the absolute end of slavery in the social life of Malta, whatever it was in terms of law. Michelina Briffa was not the only Maltese or other inhabitant of Malta who still thought they had rights of ownership over "their slaves" as late as the second decade of the nineteenth century. For a full understanding of the place in Maltese history of Napoleon's emancipation decree, the history of slavery in Malta during these later years had to be reviewed, if only lightly.

On 22 June 1812 a certain Mr. G. Macintosh sent the following letter to Mr. Zachery Macaulay, then Secretary of the African Institution:

Sir,

I have taken the liberty to address you upon a subject which appears to me to be connected with the objects of the society which has born so active a share in the enforcement of the laws enacted against the slave trade. What I allude to is the circumstance of slaves being brought from Alexandria to Malta and then sold to the Maltese Inhabitants and to British subjects and employed by the latter as domestic servants. These slaves

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are generally negro children who have been brought from the countries on the higher Nile to Alexandria as captives. Some months ago I saw a cargo brought into Malta in a vessel under English colours, and when I made enquiry respecting the circumstances I learned that not less than a hundred slaves of both sex are sold every year in the island.

The copy at the Public Record Office, London, is docketed: "Received from Mr. Peel in Mr. Wilberforce's of July 1812. Copy sent to General Oakes, July 1812."<sup>39</sup> The abolition of slavery in Malta by Napoleon was being vindicated and bolstered up by the British anti-slavery stalwarts of the time.

Partial confirmation of Macintosh's allegations is provided by the entries in the quarantine registers of Malta.<sup>40</sup> Though they never refer to the importation of slaves into the island — except for one unrelated incident<sup>41</sup> — they contain numerous suspicious references to negroes, negrettos, and negrettas, who were brought into Malta generally on ships coming from Alexandria, Tripoli, Gerba or Tunis.

At least twenty-nine vessels are known to have brought negroes of either sex to Malta, beginning with the Austrian *Celere* in March 1809. Only on one recorded occasion, however, were as many as eight negroes carried to Malta from Alexandria on one vessel and four on another. Usually it was merely a matter of the odd one or two. For those carried on ships from Tripoli and other ports of Barbary it was, however, a very different affair. A Tripolitanian corvette in July 1808 carried no less than 200 male and female negroes together with 17 Tripolitanian merchants. and in 1804 a Turkish ship carried 66 from Gerba. On other occasions ships from Tripoli carried 21, 20, 26, 35, 46, and 48 negroes; others from Tunis carried 20 and 34 negroes, and from Gerba 21, 16 and 20. Sometimes, the negroes are not distinguished from the rest of the passengers, being included in a combined total of Turks, Moors and negroes. On other occasions still passengers described as Turks or

Moors were, in part at least, negroes. In fact, the seven "Turkish" passengers brought to Malta on 2 November 1811 were expressly said to have included three male and one female negroes, and the eleven "Turks" brought in on the previous 16 July included four negresses. It is, however, obviously impractical to make a list of the hundreds of vessels which entered Malta with passengers described merely as Turks and Moors.<sup>42</sup> The figures arrived at on the basis of those described expressly as negroes or negresses should therefore be regarded at best as minimum ones.

There is also another difficulty. The registers make it clear that several, if not all, of the larger parties of negroes were not destined for Malta at all, but were merely on their way from Barbary to European Turkey or Asia Minor. It is probable that several of the others had similar destinations. However, it must be admitted that, in spite of all considerations, the registers show that the days of slavery in Malta were not quite over.

That some of the negroes were, in fact, landed in Malta and treated as slaves is proved by three entries:<sup>43</sup>

24.x.1810: a black woman for Signor Levistone

4.iv.1811: a negress girl for Signor Levistone

16.vi.1812: two negro girls belonging to the said captain (i.e. Captain Giovanni Battista Schembri, a Maltese).

Further light is thrown on the circumstances surrounding the importation of negroes into Malta by the letter that General Sir Hildebrand Oakes, the British Civil Commissioner in Malta, sent to Earl Bathurst, his immediate superior in London, on 12 December 1812:<sup>44</sup>

My Lord,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Lordship's dispatch (No.5) under date of the 11th of August transmitting the copy of a letter which had been addressed to the Secretary of the African Institution, and directing enquiry to

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be made into the circumstances therein mentioned in the view of putting stop to the practice which the writer alleges to have obtained here.

Having complied with your Lordship's directions, it is with much satisfaction I can now assure you that the whole number of negro servants residing in this Island and its Dependencies has never exceeded from one hundred to one hundred and fifty. The information therefore conveyed to the African Institution, your Lordship will observe, is far from being correct, and I know not how to account for the error into which Mr. Macintosh has been led otherwise than by supposing that the cargo of negroes to which he alludes may have been composed of persons of that description destined for the services of the Barbary States, or passing (as frequently happens) to some parts of Africa from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

It appears indeed that in consequence of the unprecedented rise in the price of labour, the wages of servants have of late years increased to such a degree as to have induced some individuals to employ in the service of their respective families negro servants from Alexandria, but although they may originally have been purchased, as I believe to have been the case, I am not aware that they have ever been considered or treated as slaves here; and certainly no attempt has on any occasion been made to transfer such persons by Public Sale, or otherwise.

The practice, however, even in this modified shape, your Lordship will readily believe I could not approve, and it was with peculiar satisfaction I found myself authorized to put an end to what was otherwise sanctioned by the Laws and former usages of the Island.

I beg leave to enclose a copy of the Proclamation which I judged it necessary to issue on the

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receipt of your Lordship's dispatch, and which, from the peculiar circumstances under which the Government of these Islands is at present carried on, it was necessary to express, as your Lordship will perceive, with some degree of caution.

So, fourteen years after Napoleon's decree there were still some one hundred to one hundred and fifty coloured "servants" in Malta who had been *bought* in foreign countries, over whom ownership, according to the government, was not transferable by public sale or otherwise.

There certainly was a great scarcity of domestic servants in Malta at the time. On 20 July 1811 General Oakes himself stated that several of the most respectable inhabitants of Malta were pointing out the "great public utility which would result from permitting, as heretofore, a certain proportion of the prisoners-of-war to serve in their respective families," a measure "well calculated to keep down the enormous rate of wages demanded by the Maltese servants in consequence of the high price of labour."<sup>45</sup>

One may, perhaps, be permitted to end by quoting in full the government proclamation of 30 September 1812:<sup>46</sup>

Notification

Whereby it is declared that negroes cannot be considered as objects of trade. Whereas the introduction of negroes into this Island has been observed to have become frequent for some time past, arousing suspicions that there are those who live in the supposition that the same can, independently of their own will, be acquired or transferred into the possession of others with complete security, activities which are so contrary to the maxims of the government of His Majesty. His Excellency the Royal Civil Commissioner has ordered that it be brought to everyone's notice that such import of negroes will not in future be permitted into this Island, and that the negroes actually there should not be regarded as objects of trade or transferable under any title

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whatsoever. Those with whom the same negroes are serving should make due report of them to the Magistrate of Police and observe in their regard all the rules regarding foreigners, and it shall be the duty of the Magistrate himself on petition to make sure that the said existing negroes conduct themselves as good and faithful servants, otherwise — if incorrigible — they were to be sent out of the Island.

The later quarantine registers do not contain any further references to negroes. One must believe that Napoleon's decree was now being observed more closely both in the spirit and in the letter. However, Michelina Briffa's reference to two slaves of hers on 11 March 1814 suggests that even then it was not going to be easy to eradicate the institution from the mentality of the people.

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to be worked out from the statement that Vincenzo Gellè was the sotto-agozzino at the time, and that by 1793 he had held the post for seven years: subtracting seven from 1793 one gets 1786. But it is only in 1787-88 that the number of freed slaves is sufficiently large for it to have included this transaction: see Table 8.

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  33. NLM, AOM 795, fols. 1rv and 2rv.
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  37. Bando, 15 May 1800: *Collezione di Bandi ...*, Malta 1840, pp. 54-55.
  38. AC, MS 136, fols. 52v, 53rv.
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## The Siege of Cyprus in Bosio's *Istoria*\*

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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 Ali'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

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\*[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, "*opportunissimum 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

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

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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 Philip 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



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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-

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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-

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tions "in a state of good defence."<sup>79</sup> While Mustafà 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>

Mustafà 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 Mustafà.

"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-

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 premotivated 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

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 Fiambertio, 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

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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-

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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

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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

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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...

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### 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.

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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 necessities 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 Nono" (*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.*

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39. "una crudele e eccessiva carestia, la quale era tale ch'a memoria d'Huomini non si ricordava, che i grani a così 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 Repubblica 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.

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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 profectione 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

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- 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. Benzoni (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. "Perilchè 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 Candioti, 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-

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- cumenti per la guerra maritima cavar si possono; e dalla quale si comprende la vera cagione perche quel'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 gia tanto innanzi scorsa si che le borrasche dell'Autunno gia 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.*



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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 particolar 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 preventionione, 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*

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*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.

## Crime and Punishment in the Court of the Inquisition 1600-1640\*

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This article is a synoptic treatment of some of the most typical crimes which fell under inquisitorial jurisdiction in Malta during the period 1600 — 1640. Cases of violence, rape, duelling and homicide are not to be found in the inquisitorial court which only deals with crimes connected with faith and heresy. The first part deals with the inquisitorial manuals and the theory of procedure. The second part is based on the bulk of material available, formed of numerous trials brought before the Inquisitor. Emphasis has also been placed on the uniformity, or conversely, the contrast existing between punishment as stipulated in the inquisitorial judicial manuals and that actually delivered to the guilty.

### I

#### *Heresy*

This crime is analysed at great length in the inquisitorial manuals.<sup>1</sup> "Positive" heretics included those who were born in "heretical" countries where the Catholic religion was not even practised.<sup>2</sup> The Inquisitor was to adopt a policy of "mercy" with those heretics as it was not their fault that they embraced such "distorted" ideals.<sup>3</sup> "Negative" heretics were those who, despite sufficient evidence proving their guilt, still refused to confess the whole truth.<sup>4</sup>

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"Spontaneous" heretics were those who presented themselves to the Inquisitor, before any accusations had been made against them.<sup>5</sup> In such cases, the punishment imposed was generally of a spiritual nature.<sup>6</sup>

The harshest treatment was delivered to those who, after having formally abjured their crime, had relapsed into heresy. These were handed over to the secular arm so as to be sentenced to death.<sup>7</sup>

The punishments imposed on heretics were not really dealt with coherently in the manuals, but were often left at the judge's discretion.

### *Bigamy*

As opposed to heresy, the punishments inflicted on bigamists were not left so vague. In this particular case therefore, the Inquisitor was provided with a sounder guideline in his attempt to eradicate bigamy.

After being tortured and thoroughly cross-examined, bigamists were sentenced to five, and at times, seven years on the galleys.<sup>8</sup> If a bigamist had tried to provide false evidence, the sentence was extended to seven and even ten years on the galleys.<sup>9</sup>

### *Blasphemy*

Blasphemy could either be "heretical" or "non-heretical."<sup>10</sup> Certain expressions such as *Puttana di Dio*<sup>11</sup> were not termed heretical unless repeated for several times.<sup>12</sup> If such words were uttered in a mad gust of passion or rage, as was often the case during gambling or fighting, the punishment imposed was generally extremely mild.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, even if the accused could prove that he had uttered certain blasphemous words only after being provoked into it, he was still punished harshly if various witnesses could testify to his previous bad conduct.<sup>14</sup> The punishment which could be imposed on those found guilty of swearing without anger or provocation, as opposed to those who swore in moments of uncontrollable passion, could be extremely harsh. It included wearing an inscription on the chest indicating one's crime, penal flagellation, exile and at times, imprisonment.<sup>15</sup>

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*Spiritual Punishments*

When the crime was not so serious or when the evidence provided was not sufficient to condemn the accused, the Inquisitor could inflict spiritual punishments.<sup>47</sup> These could either be carried out privately or in public. In the actual trials, the Inquisitor often ordered the accused to fast on certain days, to confess once a month, to hear Mass four times a year and to recite some prayers, usually the rosary.<sup>48</sup> Such a "punishment" could be carried out privately without attracting public attention. On the other hand, when the accused was ordered to kneel at the church's door with a candle in his hand during the Sunday Mass, wearing the dress of penitence,<sup>49</sup> such a "public" manifestation of his repentance could easily lead to social ostracism. At times, when such a punishment was imposed on married women in particular, appeals were made to the Inquisitor asking him to change the sentence. The reason given was that such outward manifestations could not only humiliate the woman in front of the other villagers, but it could also arouse the contempt of her entire family.<sup>50</sup> These public spiritual punishments were not common only in Malta. G. Pitre describes in great detail the ceremony which used to take place in Sicily at the church's door and which was highly similar to that performed in Malta. The guilty person was ordered to stand at the church's door, on a Sunday, during High Mass, with bare feet, a rope hanging around his neck and a lighted candle in his hand.<sup>51</sup>

Spiritual punishments form the bulk of penalties imposed, and therefore, the Inquisitor in Malta was quite lenient. Spiritual punishments were also combined at times with other penalties, such as flogging and exile.<sup>52</sup>

## II

*Torture*

Torture played an important role in the investigation of crime that fell under the Inquisitor's jurisdiction. The study of torture reveals the way in which the Inquisitor in Malta modelled his trials on Sicilian judicial procedure.<sup>53</sup> In the inquisitorial trials which occurred in Malta, torture could be inflicted only for two successive days.<sup>54</sup> The most

common form of torture was the "corda."<sup>55</sup> If the accused was unable to withstand such torments, a lighter form of torture was adopted.<sup>56</sup> In fact, one comes across references in the actual trials referring to the substitution of the "corda" with lighter forms of torture. In 1624, for example, a Greek, Michiforo Metaxi, was accused of having uttered heretical words.<sup>57</sup> Since his right arm was extremely weak, the torture inflicted was not the "corda" but the "stringitore."<sup>58</sup> When the accused confessed his guilt under torture, he had to ratify his confession twenty four hours later, while no torments were being inflicted on him.<sup>59</sup>

An interesting characteristic typifying inquisitorial procedure in both Sicily and Malta was formed by the way in which every single word uttered under torture was meticulously written down by the notary or clerk. Every single tremor, sigh or exclamation was put on paper because it was held that such expressions constituted vital clues in the Inquisitor's search for truth.<sup>60</sup> In fact, in numerous cases that can be found in the Inquisitorial Archives at Mdina, one can find similar details described at great length. For example, in 1612, a Genoese, Alessandro Tazzano, was accused of having married a Maltese woman while his first wife was still living in Italy.<sup>61</sup> Each time that he was tortured, the notary wrote all the words that he screamed out because of the pain. For this reason, the case abounds with paragraphs in which the word "oyme" expressing pain, was repeated several times.<sup>62</sup> Twenty four hours after his confession had been extracted under torture, Alessandro Tazzano, this time free from any torments, was made to repeat his confession.<sup>63</sup> Through this case and various others to be discussed, one can see how torture could continuously transform radically the accused's testimony. When tortured, the accused also often imparted new details which helped to confirm, rightly or wrongly, his guilt. This happened, for example, with Alessandro Tazzano,<sup>64</sup> Berto de Gasman,<sup>65</sup> Anibale Fracasso<sup>66</sup>, and in numerous other cases.

Torture was frequently used not only in serious cases but also in minor trials, on both males and females. In 1618, for example, no less than thirty-two women were accused of sorcery.<sup>67</sup> It was basically through torture that evidence

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was extracted and that a complex and intriguing web of suspicion and insults gradually took shape.

*Sorcery*

It is important to distinguish between learned and rationalized concepts of crime as expounded in the judicial manuals, and the crimes which were actually committed, as revealed through the inquisitorial trials. This distinction between popular and learned notions of crime is best exemplified through the analysis of witchcraft, which forms one of the most common crimes dealt with by the Inquisition.

This distinction between theory and fact forms the central theme of Richard Kieckhefer's study on European witch trials:

The general problem that confronts the historian of witchcraft is a familiar one: it is notoriously difficult to glean the beliefs of illiterate masses when the only sources are texts on literate elite.<sup>68</sup> Literary texts, treatises on witchcraft, judicial manuals, . . . cannot qualify as faithful sources for the beliefs of the illiterate masses . . . the historian has practically no assurance that they present folk tradition in a pure form, unmixed with instinctively learned notions.<sup>69</sup>

Studies about foreign witchcraft are of vital importance to the study of witchcraft in Malta. In Malta, as abroad, one can discern a striking discrepancy between learned and popular notions of witchcraft. In his book, Kieckhefer holds that although fifteenth and sixteenth century judicial manuals might give the impression that diabolism or the actual worship of the devil was the most common form of witchcraft, in reality, during this period, diabolism played little or no role in popular belief.<sup>70</sup> This striking contrast is similar to that which emerges in the early years of seventeenth century Malta. Despite all the various details expressed in the inquisitorial judicial manuals, diabolism did not play a central role on a popular level. The very allegation of diabolism was often vague and peripheral: the

accused was first charged with sorcery and then asked whether he had ever indulged in diabolism. It was precisely the judge himself and not the accused, who through a list of leading questions first mentioned devil-worshipping. For example, Margarita Muscat was accused of having adopted "unorthodox methods" so as to cast off an evil spirit which was possessing her.<sup>71</sup> When asked whether these "unorthodox methods" included deliberate invocation of the devil, she immediately gave a negative reply. The charge of diabolism was immediately dropped. Cases which are highly similar are to be found in practically every volume of the inquisitorial trials which occurred during the period 1600 — 1640. For example, in one volume which covers the period 1605, out of fourteen cases connected in some way or another with witchcraft, not one single person was found guilty of indulging in diabolism.<sup>72</sup>

Although it was very rare that the accused, even under torture, admitted to having deliberately worshipped the devil, one still comes across isolated accounts of diabolism in Malta. Madalena Bonnici, a forty-year-old woman,<sup>73</sup> was found guilty of having invoked three demons:<sup>74</sup> a "big" one, a "medium-sized" one, and a "little" one. These three devils helped her acquire the love of her "carnal" friends.<sup>75</sup> She was exiled for five years from Malta and Gozo.<sup>76</sup> In 1626, thirty year old Serafina Daniela was accused of an endless number of crimes.<sup>77</sup> She was charged of having performed over twenty different types of sorcery, ranging from sympathetic magic<sup>78</sup> and magical healing<sup>79</sup> to invocation of the devil.<sup>80</sup> Under torture, Serafina admitted that she had committed these crimes.<sup>81</sup> For her "devious" crimes, Serafina Daniela was publicly flogged and perpetually exiled from Malta and Gozo.<sup>82</sup> The same punishment was inflicted on another woman in 1631<sup>83</sup> who frequently invoked the devil by throwing bread out of the window.<sup>84</sup>

Public flogging followed by perpetual exile was once again the punishment inflicted on Angela La Giacchetta in 1630.<sup>85</sup> She used to invoke the devil's help by saying her prayers on black rosary beads without a cross. With each "granello" (bead) she used to call out "St. diavolo viene".<sup>86</sup>



Similar cases offer insurmountable problems. As C. Hole observes:

It is probable that numerous confessions described as voluntary in contemporary records, were in fact procured by leading questions put to confused and terrified prisoners, or were the fruits of delusion, hysteria, and the melancholy induced by long confinement in dark and insanitary prisons.<sup>87</sup>

In reality, such cases did not occur frequently during the years 1600 — 1640. In fact, while seventeenth century Europe saw the complex development of the idea of a witch with the introduction of the devil in their rites,<sup>88</sup> what existed in Malta was practically a sporadic folklore of "superstitious beliefs."

*Methods Most Commonly Adopted by Sorcerers*

The methods which were commonly used by sorcerers included image magic, evil eye, maleficent or beneficent charms. At times, even the Eucharist was used as an implement of sorcery.

Before turning to study these various forms of sorcery, one should note that the majority of the cases dealing with sorcery are characterized by an alarming lack of evidence and are often built completely on suspicion and personal spite:

Witchcraft, because of its secret and almost unprovable nature was considered a crime apart... suspicion alone was sufficient ground for accusation;...<sup>89</sup>

However, although even in Malta, as abroad, suspicion was sufficient for the Inquisitor to press charges, the accused was rarely sentenced until concrete evidence proving his guilt was found. In fact, the inquisitorial volumes abound with unfinished trials that could not really be solved. In 1633, for example, a villager informed the In-

quisitor that during Sunday Mass a priest played the organ so violently, that he seemed to be possessed ("un'anima indannata"). The Inquisitor did not even press charges.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in 1627, Marius Zammit denounced the lawyer Antonio Torrence of the criminal court of Mdina to the Inquisitor.<sup>91</sup> Zammit accused the lawyer of selling his soul to the devil so as to help him win his cases. Even through these two cases, one can see how suspicion flared up on the slightest pretext.<sup>92</sup>

Gleaning from the numerous accounts pertaining to the years 1600 — 1640, it is possible to construct various complex webs of accusations that could be utterly unfounded. Sorcery provides a unique insight into the social conditions of the time, particularly medical backwardness.<sup>93</sup> Where medical knowledge fell short, then sorcery was often immediately used as an explanation. Several individuals, particularly women, complained that common ailments such as headaches were due to evil eye and image magic.<sup>94</sup> In such cases, the only item of evidence could be "a wax image impaled through the breast with a great number of nails."<sup>95</sup> Needles were also often struck into the head of dolls.<sup>96</sup>

A strong fear of maleficent magic is revealed through the assertion of various individuals who held that they were bewitched. Philippus Graneo of Valletta, for example, informed the Inquisitor that he was bewitched by a prostitute, simply because he felt an unnatural attraction towards her.<sup>97</sup>

Even though most of these trials are steeped in an aura of mystery, at least one important feature emerges with striking clarity. Whether maleficent magic was commonly practised, or whether it was the result of the neurotic fantasies of the accuser, fear of bodily harm and disease was particularly acute during the period studied. Wherever genuine belief in the effectiveness of witchcraft existed, there was always a sharp fear of magical injury, which in turn engendered a ready suspicion that often resulted in unfounded accusations of sorcery.<sup>98</sup> The inquisitorial trials abound with similar accusations of maleficent magic.<sup>99</sup>

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*Beneficent Magic*

An ardent belief in the effectiveness of magic, as well as medical backwardness, often induced the Maltese to practise magical healing.

The standard treatment for healing diseases was the fumigation of the patient with burnt ingredients,<sup>100</sup> healing by touch,<sup>101</sup> or also by bathing parts of the body.<sup>102</sup> In a large number of cases those inculpated actually believed that they could attain supernatural powers and magical qualities which they exercised for their neighbours' welfare. This was the case with Angela La Giacchetta<sup>103</sup> and Serafina Daniela<sup>104</sup> as well as Catherine Maiorchina.<sup>105</sup> The nature of the crime was aggravated when beneficent magic was combined with religious practices, as this often directly involved abuse of the sacraments. For this reason, in 1610, Agostina La Bruna was not simply acquitted with only a severe admonishment, as was often the case, but she was given spiritual punishments for having successfully persuaded a minor cleric to place some herbs on the altar while celebrating Mass.<sup>106</sup> Cases of this type, dealing with the direct abuse of Holy Water, prayers or even the sacraments applied for medicinal or other purposes, occurred quite frequently.<sup>107</sup>

Another extremely common form of sorcery was love magic, performed mostly by women. A considerable proportion of cases dealing with love magic within the Island was often strongly motivated by jealousy. A highly interesting case which clearly proves this assertion occurred in 1619 when no less than thirty two women, mostly from Valletta, were accused of having indulged in sorcery.<sup>108</sup> As each of these women, mostly prostitutes, testified against the others in a futile attempt to exonerate herself of the blame, an intriguing network of rivalry and jealousy slowly took shape. A complex web of local suspicion intermingling injuries with tension renders this case highly colourful as well as illuminating on the mentality of women at the time. Various statements uttered during the trial clearly bring to the fore this jealousy. Helionora Rilbino

states, for example, that the "donne cortigiane" at Valletta "hate each other to the extent that they could easily scratch each others' eyes right out of their faces."<sup>109</sup> Marietta Caruana stated that the prostitutes were extremely jealous of each other and always tried to concoct devious plots against one another.<sup>110</sup> Countless witnesses, both males and females, testified as to who was the "carnal friend" of each individual prostitute. The evidence given was often conflicting.<sup>111</sup> Nearly each prostitute confessed under torture that she had practised love magic only because one of the other thirty-one women had instigated her to do so.<sup>112</sup>

At times, the Maltese tried to acquire the help of slaves<sup>113</sup> in their attempt to arouse the love of others,<sup>114</sup> as well as to acquire help against the evil eye,<sup>115</sup> and to be relieved of physical ailments.<sup>116</sup> In 1633, for example, Giacobina Attard spontaneously confessed to having paid a slave who aroused the love of a priest towards whom she felt greatly attracted.<sup>117</sup>

#### *The Punishments Inflicted on Sorcerers*

The way in which sorcerers were prosecuted greatly conformed to the methods expounded in the judicial manuals. The accused received a harsh sentence only if concrete evidence proving his guilt was provided.<sup>118</sup> If the evidence proved insufficient, then the accused was either severely admonished or he was given no punishment at all.<sup>119</sup> On the whole, the sentences passed cannot be considered to have been too harsh, because the accused was rarely punished on flimsy evidence.

As has already been pointed out, when the accused was found guilty of diabolism, the punishment consisted of penal flogging and exile.

One can therefore notice a certain mitigation distinguishing the punishments actually imposed from those laid down in theory. For in the manuals, it was stipulated that those found guilty of diabolism were to be handed over to the secular arm.

This mitigation can also be seen in the punishment im-

posed on those found guilty of having practised love magic. Ignorant persons, such as Giacobina Attard<sup>220</sup> and another woman named Giuseppa<sup>221</sup> were only given spiritual punishments.

When love magic was combined with religious practices, or when false evidence was provided, the sentence did not merely consist of severe admonishments and spiritual penalties. Many of the thirty-two women already mentioned, who had been accused of love magic, were for this reason publicly flogged and exiled. Some of them received instead fiscal punishments.<sup>122</sup>

When priests were found guilty of having combined sorcery with religious practices, they could either be suspended from their order,<sup>123</sup> or they were even imprisoned.<sup>124</sup>

Taken in their entirety, when compared with penalties imposed abroad, the punishments inflicted for sorcery by the Inquisition in Malta, were relatively mild. Compared to the rest of Europe with the more extravagant charges of diabolism, one of the most significant characteristics of prosecution in Malta was the mildness of allegations and leniency of penalties that were inflicted.<sup>125</sup>

### *Blasphemy*

The crime of blasphemy reveals the interrelationship existing between the punishments stipulated in the judicial manuals and those which were actually inflicted. Swearing, like witchcraft, forms a substantially high percentage of the crimes dealt with in the Inquisitor's court. The sheer abundance of "voluntary" confessions of swearing can perhaps be accounted for through at least one salient feature of the mentality prevailing in early seventeenth century Malta. Fear of damnation was a potent reality and acted as an effective deterrent to crime.<sup>126</sup> Yet, perhaps more important than this fear of damnation was the fact that most swear words were uttered in the presence of others. Consequently, a blasphemer would consider it safer to "spontaneously" confess his crime, as there was always the risk that somebody might report his crime to the Inquisitor.

As laid down in the manuals, the punishment inflicted on those who "voluntarily" confessed to having blasphemed in moments of passion, usually consisted either of severe admonishments or spiritual punishments.<sup>127</sup>

The punishment became harsher when it was found out that the accused often swore. For this reason, Alosio de Gasman, who was found guilty in 1614 of having blasphemed whilst gambling, was given both spiritual and fiscal punishments (forty *scudi*).<sup>128</sup>

The punishment became even more severe when the person did not voluntarily confess his crime but was brought forward to the court by the Inquisitor's officials. In 1612, Octavio Malavolta, a soldier from Calabria, was denounced for having blasphemed on several occasions.<sup>129</sup> Through the testimony of several witnesses, it became evident that the accused often swore, even when unprovoked. Different witnesses said that among Octavio's favourite "heretical sayings" was one through which he proudly declared that he was destined never to see God; even if he were given the opportunity to see God "he would prefer to keep his distance from Paradise's door."<sup>130</sup>

At first Octavio denied these accusations and tangible information was extracted only after the accused was tortured on three different occasions. The Inquisitor ultimately imposed spiritual punishments on Octavio, who was also exiled for ten years from Malta and Gozo.

Although one might feel that this was too severe a punishment, in reality, Octavio's appeal to mitigate the sentence clearly proved that the accused was most probably a hardened criminal: in his appeal Octavio begged the Inquisitor to modify the sentence as he had already been exiled "for some other crimes," which were not specified, not only from Sicily and Naples, but from all the states governed by the King of Spain.

Given his previous conduct, the concrete evidence provided by several witnesses and the constant modification of the accused's testimony under torture, one might even have expected, as stipulated in the manuals, penal flagel-

lation and perhaps imprisonment.

Studied, therefore, as a whole, the punishments delivered to those found guilty of blasphemy were generally quite mild during the period 1600 — 1640. In fact, though it is clear that the judicial manuals were closely adhered to,<sup>131</sup> particularly in the case of "spontaneous" confessions, the sentences generally inflicted were even more lenient than those laid down in theory.

### *Bigamy*

Bigamy could generally arise from three different situations. The accused could either be a foreigner who abused of the inadequate means of information created by Malta's isolated position and who therefore remarried. This was the most common type of bigamy prosecuted by the Inquisitor in the period 1600 — 1640. Other bigamists included Maltese who did exactly the same as such foreigners when they themselves were abroad. At times, Maltese women whose husbands were away for a long period, remarried.<sup>132</sup>

Unlike sorcery or blasphemy, bigamy did not constitute one of the most common crimes prosecuted by the Inquisitor. Still, even the relatively few cases that did occur show how in inflicting a punishment the Inquisitor often adopted a more lenient approach than that prescribed by the judicial manuals.

In 1612, Alessandro Tazzano from Genoa, was charged with having married a Maltese girl while his first wife was still living in Italy.<sup>133</sup> The evidence provided by the various witnesses was conflicting. Out of the jumbled skein of conflicting evidence, only Cesar Carincione gave the real version of the story, as was to be found out at the end of the trial. He stated that the accused was separated from his wife who still lived in Genoa.<sup>134</sup>

The accused himself provided conflicting evidence. He first insisted that he had never been married. Yet under torture, he stated that he had been married but he had actually assisted at his late wife's funeral. On further tor-

ture, Alessandro Tazzano confessed that he was actually separated from his wife whom he had frequently ill-treated.

In the light of this changing evidence, one would expect Tazzano to have been sentenced, as laid down in the manuals,<sup>135</sup> even to ten years on the galleys. Still, despite this false evidence, Tazzano was condemned to only five years. In other words, the punishment inflicted on him was the one that should have been applicable to those cases in which the accused immediately revealed the truth.<sup>136</sup>

Such a mitigation in the punishment inflicted can also be seen in another case occurring in 1614.<sup>137</sup> Anibale Fracasso from Siena, who provided false evidence, proving that he had only married once, was sentenced to merely two years on the galleys. In 1632, Francesco Farlata, a Neopolitan bigamist who had given false evidence when interrogated, was sentenced to three years on the galleys.<sup>138</sup>

#### *Apostasy*

Apostasy forms one of the most common crimes dealt with by the Inquisitor during the period 1600 — 1640. This crime can be subdivided into two different categories. Those accused of apostasy included Christians who had been taken as slaves into Moslem countries and who were forced to renounce their faith. At times, one also comes across cases in which Moslem slaves who had become Christians tried to escape from Malta. This case was prosecuted by the Inquisitor as it was held that on their arrival to non-Catholic countries, these slaves would renounce their Catholic faith.

Those found guilty of apostasy belonging to the first category were generally treated quite mildly as the denunciation of the Catholic faith was not voluntary. The accused was simply made to abjure his crime or he was given spiritual punishments.<sup>139</sup> The penalty imposed became harsher when the accused was a "converted" slave who had attempted to escape from Malta. In such cases, the punishment imposed often consisted of public flogging followed, at times, by a sentence of two or three years to the galleys.<sup>140</sup>



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20. J. Sprenger and H. Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, (London, 1968). This fifteenth century treatise is notorious for its efforts to extend the boundaries of the definition of witchcraft. For a summary and analysis of *Malleus Maleficarum*, see also G. Bonomo, *Caccia alle streghe*, (Palermo, 1959), pp. 187 — 200.
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25. *loc. cit.*
26. *ibid.*, p. 31.
27. See the section "The Punishments inflicted on Sorcerrs" in my "Aspects of Crime and Punishment in the early decades of seventeenth century Malta" (unpublished B.A. dissertation kept in the University Library).

28. A.I.M., Misc. 2, p. 34.
29. *ibid.*, p. 39.
30. *ibid.*, p. 30.
31. *ibid.*, p. 40.
32. *ibid.*, p. 41.
33. *ibid.*, p. 42.
34. *loc. cit.*
35. A.I.M., Misc. 2, pp. 65 — 68.
36. See the section "The punishments inflicted on sorcerers".
37. A.I.M., Misc. 2, pp. 46 — 47.
38. *ibid.*, p. 44.
39. *ibid.*, p. 45.
40. *ibid.*, p. 46.
41. *loc. cit.*
42. *ibid.*, p. 44.
43. *loc. cit.*
44. *ibid.*, pp. 45 — 46.
45. *ibid.*, p. 79.
46. *loc. cit.*
47. *ibid.*, p. 81.
48. A.I.M., Proc. 32B, case No. 262. A.I.M., Proc. 42D, case No. 212. A.I.M., Proc. 43D, case No. 156. A.I.M., Proc. 45A, cases Nos. 156. 218. A.I.M., Proc. 45B, case No. 44.
49. A.I.M., Proc. 43D, case No. 156. A.I.M., Proc. 44A, case No. 12. A.I.M., Proc. 49B, case No. 153.
50. A.I.M., Proc. 30A, case No. 95.
51. G. Pitre, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
52. A.I.M., Proc. 44A, case No. 6; A.I.M., Proc. 44B, case No. 100; A.I.M., Proc. 48A, case No. 42.
53. A.I.M., Misc. 2, pp. 77 — 78.
54. *ibid.*, p. 78.
55. *loc. cit.*
56. *loc. cit.*
57. A.I.M., Proc. 44A, case No. 10, ff. 133 — 135.
58. *ibid.*, f. 15. "Siamo venuti contro di te al tormento volgarmente chiamato lo stringitore essendo tu inhabile alla corda per esser difettuofo della mano destra."
59. A.I.M., Misc. 2, p. 78.
60. G. Pitre, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
61. A.I.M., Proc. 30A, case No. 1, ff. 1-42.
62. *loc. cit.*
63. *loc. cit.*
64. *loc. cit.*
65. A.I.M., Proc. 35A, ff. 99 — 122.

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66. A.I.M., Proc. 35A, ff. 252 — 281.
67. A.I.M., Proc. 40A, ff. 144 — 412.
68. R. Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials. Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300 — 1500* (London, 1976), p. 2.
69. *ibid.*, p. 27.
70. R. Kieckhefer, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
71. A.I.M., Proc. 23A, case No. 307.
72. A.I.M., Proc. 23A, cases Nos. 286, 287; 302; 303; 305; 307, 308, 309, 310, 313, 317; 321, 324; 327.
73. A.I.M., Proc. 47A, ff. 3 — 89.
74. *ibid.*, f. 68: "tre Diavoli, grande, mezzano e piccolo."
75. *loc. cit.*
76. *ibid.*, f. 69.
77. A.I.M., Proc. 44B, case No. 100.
78. *ibid.*, f. 913.
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80. *ibid.*, f. 910.
81. *loc. cit.*
82. *ibid.*, f. 918.
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84. *ibid.*, f. 455.
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86. *ibid.*, f. 379.
87. C. Hole, *op. cit.*, pp. 182 — 183.
88. Edgar Peel and Pat Southern, *The Trials of the Lancashire Witches — A Study of Seventeenth Century Witchcraft* (Great Britain, 1969), p. 107.
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92. *ibid.*, f. 718.
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95. *loc. cit.*
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97. A.I.M., Proc. 36A, case No. 105, f. 29.
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102. *ibid.*, p. 85.
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105. A.I.M., Proc. 29, case No. 36.
106. A.I.M., Proc. 30A, case No. 95.
107. A.I.M., Proc. 23A, case No. 305. A.I.M., Proc. 23A, case No. 321.
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121. A.I.M., Proc. 48B, case No. 43, surname illegible.
122. A.I.M., Proc. 40A, ff. 144 — 412.
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130. *loc. cit.*
131. A.I.M., Misc. 2, pp. 42 — 44.

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132. Alexander Bonnici, "Aspetti della vita cristiana nell'isola di Malta verso la metà del Seicento", *Maltese Folklore Review* I, 4 (Malta, 1973), p. 323.
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138. A.I.M., Proc. 49B, case No. 152.
139. A.I.M., Proc. 23A, cases Nos. 282, 296, 329, A.I.M., Proc. 30A, cases Nos. 90, 98, 101. A.I.M., Proc. 43D, cases Nos. 156, 157. A.I.M., Proc. 43D, cases Nos. 156, 157. A.I.M., Proc. 44A, case No. 3. A.I.M., Proc. 49B, cases Nos. 101, 104, 105. In all these cases the punishment imposed did not exceed a spiritual penalty.
140. A.I.M., Proc. 49B, cases Nos. 153, 155.

## British Fortification and Defence of Malta 1800-1960

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### I 1800 — 1815

Justifiably, when the British first came to Malta, they were overawed by the massiveness of our fortifications. Unlike the Knights, however, they did not allow themselves to be deluded into a state of false security by the conspicuously deterrent though inanimate presence of those mighty complexes of defence works which practically surround the whole of the Maltese coast. What chiefly overawed the British commanders and military engineers were the enormous problems attending the structural restoration and remodelling of those defence works and, above all, their re-animation with operationally trained gunners and up-to-date armament. Thorough-going professionals as they were, they knew full well that the mere overinsurance with formidable stone fortifications, as an end in itself, can never constitute a credible, let alone impregnable, defence of an island-fortress!

From the excellent periodic reports, staff papers and other seemingly inexhaustible correspondence relating to the garrison of Malta from 1800 onwards, preserved at the Public Record Office in London and to a much lesser extent at Regimental Museums such as those of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, we can follow the development of the vast and costly rearmament programmes, the progressive build up of new fortifications and the continuous flow of essential administrative backing and highly trained manpower, which, in combination, transformed the ailing

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defences into that unified and invincible fortress, so much desired and laboured for but never realized by the generous, heroic, though power-limited Knights of St. John.

The very first British fortification on Malta was an improvised heavy Mortar Battery, erected during the first days of January 1799 for the purpose of "bombing" the three French warships which had taken refuge in the Grand Harbour after escaping destruction at the battle of the Nile. That Battery was erected by the small artillery detachment under Lt John Vivion RA, who had arrived at Marsaxlokk Bay on 20 December 1798 with a 10" and 13" mortar on HM Bomb Ship *STROMBOLO*.<sup>1</sup> The next fortified works built by the British were the field Batteries, manned by the Ships' Marines, which formed part of the semi-circular investing front stretching from StRocco to Sliema raised against the French troops who had entrenched themselves within the Harbour defences. Those Batteries were commanded by Captain James Weir of the Marines who was later appointed to raise and command the first Maltese unit of the British Army — The Maltese Light Infantry.

Following the capitulation of the French on 5 September 1800 and their eviction from Malta, the British became immediately concerned with the defence of the Island. On 10 December 1800, Lt-General Sir Ralph Abercromby, the CinC British military forces in the Mediterranean, issued a special directive to Maj-General Henry Pigot the GOC Troops Malta, wherein he asserted "Great Britain takes the Maltese nation under its protection. Maj-General Pigot will not permit the pretensions of any other Sovereign or body of men to be brought forward or discussed."<sup>2</sup> Outlining his defence policy, the CinC went on to say that the Harbour fortifications "chiefly the Cottonera, Ricasoli, StAngelo, StElmo, Tigne, the two Cavaliers and the interior parts of the works on the Floriana side" and those at St. Paul's Bay and Marsaxlokk, were to be immediately repaired and manned. Furthermore, Maj-General Pigot was "to pay great attention to the re-arrangement of the artillery, which are of various calibres, so that each piece of ordnance may have its just proportion of ammunition allotted to it, and at hand."

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That was all very well for a start. But even that limited commitment was not as inconsiderable as might appear. Indeed, to meet it, "no less than six Companies of Royal Artillery were promptly brought over to man the guns of the defences, five from home and one from Gibraltar."<sup>3</sup>

The first technical report on the defences emanated from Captain Gordon, the first officer to command the Royal Engineers in Malta. He advised the blocking up of many of the embrasures which were sited too low to the ground and not wide enough to allow the guns an adequate arc of fire, also the raising of the height of the parapets so that heavy guns could be mounted 'en barbette' on high traversing carriages. He requested the urgent construction of traverses along the Harbour entente; the reconstruction of the land front of Fort StElmo and other important requirements. He even raised the old unresolved problem of the Corradino heights, which, in their undefended state continued to jeopardize the whole defence system of the fortress.

Captain Gordon was succeeded by Major W. McKerras who, on inspecting the StPaul's Bay defences on 24 November 1800, reported that in spite of their high military importance, they did not have a single serviceable gun between them! Two days later he inspected the even more important Marsaxlokk anchorage and although the state of the armament there was not as bad, it was far from satisfactory. The following month McKerras produced a comprehensive report on the Harbour defences in which he assessed their tactical strength and made recommendations for their improvement. He also singled out the Margerita Lines as being "so very unfinished, in some parts without a ditch, the escarp not more than 10 or 12 feet in height, particularly the prolongation of the right face of StHelena's bastion, which together with the adjoining curtain and flanks on its right are entirely exposed and uncovered; and many of the flanks and curtains without any rampart whatever ....."

The historical importance of those early reports is two-



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fold: they show the state in which the fortifications were left over by the Knights, and secondly, how the British set about repairing, remodelling and completing the works to bring them up to the requisite operational standards.

Perhaps in those early years no one contributed more to the rehabilitation of the Fortress than Captain (later Lt-Colonel) G.J.Dickens, who commanded the Royal Engineers in Malta from 1803 until 1814. Consider, for instance, the following few extracts from two of his numerous reports on the defences of Malta. The first is dated 15 November 1803<sup>4</sup> and the other 15 March 1811.<sup>5</sup> Starting with Valletta, he points out that "some of the terrepleins and Ramparts will require to be lowered in consequence of the inhabitants having formerly been allowed to deposit and spread the rubbish of the Town upon them ... considerable reforms will be necessary to the parapets of the land and sea fronts. The embrasures are in general ill constructed and composed of small materials; as well as the stone platforms: either they must be done away and the high traversing platform substituted or the embrasure and platform must be reconstructed of larger materials. Several of the escarps of the land and sea fronts are in want of considerable repairs ... and many of the front courses of the masonry forming the upper part of the escarps will require to be replaced and others pointed and repaired."

The same, in general, applied to the Floriana works. In particular "The Horn and Crown works may be said to be in a state of ruin, the escarp and the interior and exterior walls of the parapets being much decayed and mouldered away; the gates and barriers are in the same decayed state and the covertways and glacis which are partly countermined are without palisading."

Regarding the Cottonera Lines the CRE stated that "notwithstanding their formidable and good state, they are liable from want of a glacis or outworks, to be effectively breeched in a few days after their investment ..." He then went on to stress "the necessity of a work on the Coradin, without which, the right of the Cottonera, Santa Margerita and Senglea can never be considered as secure."<sup>6</sup> Describing

the Senglea land front, he pointed out that "considerable portions of its escarp walls, parapets and platforms are in a mouldering and decayed state and will require considerable repair." Fort Tigne was assessed as being in complete order and repair but "not sufficiently covered by its glacis which should be raised, particularly as the masonry of which it is constructed is ill composed."

The later report<sup>5</sup> begins also with a review of the Valletta fortifications. The two Cavaliers, he stated, were each mounted with eight 24 pounder (pdr) guns and that "there are capacious bombproof casemates in both Cavaliers and powder magazines for 2000 barrels, lately fitted with new doors, windows, shutters, stanchions etc but powder has not yet been lodged in them, the inhabitants having petitioned against it ..." The covertway and glacis were reported to be in a good state but were neither palisaded nor countermined. With some obvious satisfaction he was able to say that "the stone platforms of the sea line as well as the land front have been all relaid or repaired and are now in a serviceable state ..."

Progress was also made at Floriana. "Some additional stone platforms and repairs to the parapet and ramparts of the body of the place are still requisite although a great deal has been done to both since the year 1800. The two great Ravelins [St Francis and Notre Dame] which are sufficiently spacious to be retrenched with a redoubt in each of their gorges have been put into complete order, viz: parapets repaired, platforms relaid and expense magazines and artillery storehouses built as well as the Fausse Braye, or exterior enceinte in their front. A great deal of repair has likewise been done to the Horn and Crown works which were in a ruinous but now nearly in a complete state of repair."

Dealing next with the Cottonera, Dickens reported that Fort Salvador had lately been restored and "put into complete order." He then refers to the types of guns mounted in the salient angles and flanks of each bastion and the construction of banquettes in all the flanks "the whole of which has been done since the year 1800, previous to which,

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even during the Blockade a musket could not have been made use of from the flanks except through the embrasures for want of banquettes." As for the ditches, these existed only partially, were irregularly excavated and without any covertway and glacis and "consequently liable to be breached immediately after their investment."

The Margerita Lines were still in a very imperfect state "though several completions have been made to them particularly laying three stone platforms on each flank, two of which were without any kind of rampart and have been within these six or seven years formed of stone or rubble from the back of the Firenzuola and Windmill curtains, the ramparts to which it is proposed to form by building ranges of bomb proof casemates." The ditch to the right face of StElena's bastion "has likewise lately been excavated and the miners are now employed completing that of the left face of the same bastion at present in a very imperfect state as are also the ditches in front of the StHelena curtain and the left face and flanks of the Almoner bastion on its right. The Firenzuola and Windmill curtains are without any kind of rampart and are proposed to be casemated." As for the covertway and glacis, these extended no further to the right than near the salient angle of the StElena bastion and the glacis itself was in very imperfect and unfinished state.

The report goes on to assess the state of other fortifications and the progress achieved in each case, but we need not pursue the matter further; enough has been quoted already to enable the general reader to form some idea of what the British Army had to contend with in its first attempts at transforming the Knights' outdated fortifications, with their obsolete armament, into a professionally projected defence complex worthy of a first rate naval base.

## II 1816 — 1857

"Napoleon had financed his campaign by his own conquests; the Napoleonic wars had cost Great Britain some seven hundred million pounds in cash. 'It will be hard,'

wrote Edward Cooke, 'if France is to pay nothing for the destruction of Europe and we are to pay all for saving it.' The Prussians were even more insistent in their demands for reparation; they asked that Prussia should be repaid the sums which Napoleon had extracted from her in 1812. The French delegate replied that sooner than pay over these monies Louis XVIII 'would submit to be arrested and kept a prisoner in his palace.' This argument appears to have much affected the Allied plenipotentiaries who did not possess that acute financial acumen which was manifested by the Reparation Commission of 1918. They decided that the new France should start with a clean balance sheet; they did not even demand, as they had every right to demand, the repayment of sums spent on the maintenance of French prisoners of war, of whom 70,000 had been supported for years in England alone."<sup>8</sup>

But somehow, Great Britain had to make good that enormous war debt! As was to be expected, the Government resorted to the long practised expedient after the end of very major war of slashing its Armed Forces' budget. How did that affect Malta? By 1820, the Royal Artillery establishment was reduced overall from 112 Companies to 72, and in the reorganization which followed, the RA presence in Malta was reduced to a mere two Companies for the manning of the Harbour defences with detachments of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment manning coast Batteries and Towers and guarding against smuggling operations and contraventions of the quarantine laws.

Eventually, when France in 1837 introduced the Paixhans gun into her Navy — the first gun to fire shell instead of the traditional solid round shot, and later started to replace her wooden sail ships of the line with steam engined, screw propelled warships; Britain, aware of the significance of those innovations was moved, at last, into seriously reassessing the defence requirements of her vital overseas bases.

In 1844, Colonel Harding produced a plan for strengthening the tactical role of the combined Cottonera — StMargerita Lines by means of a new fort (Verdala) to be sited within the core of those defences and a strongly

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fortified retrenchment (StClement's) linking the two Lines.<sup>9</sup> The project, approved and completed by 1860, was the first original major fortification erected by the British in Malta.

Fort Verdala provided additional fire power to the Margerita front, it also provided garrison accommodation and served as headquarters for the Commander and Staff responsible for the defence of the area. StClement's Retrenchment consisted primarily of two strongly fortified lines stretching south eastwards from each end of the Firenzuola Curtain to the southern flanks of the StClement's and Notre Dame bastions with an internal irregular frontage of 365 and 430 metres respectively: it was designed to break up the vulnerable open ground between the Cottonera and Margerita Lines into three sectors so as to contain and prevent an enemy, in the event of his breaking through the Cottonera Lines, from spreading out and widening his attack on the Margerita Lines. Along their length, the two arms of the Retrenchment were protected by a ditch, both their inner flanks were mounted with casemated gun positions supported by mortars and their receding central curtains were pierced with loopholed musketry galleries from which the Infantry would defend the Retrenchment itself, if attacked.

Another contemporary original British fortification was Fort Lascaris. This fort, in unison with Fort StAngelo commanded the entrance to the Grand Harbour. Its role was to destroy enemy vessels infiltrating into the harbour and at all costs to deny them access into Dockyard and French Creeks which led straight to the Dockyard and naval base installations.

The 1840s also saw the expenditure of considerable sums of money on maintenance and reconstruction of existing works and even additions to some, notably the Cottone-ra and StElmo, to accommodate the heavy guns and their traversing platforms which were being despatched from England to replace the 24 pdrs of the Harbour defences. Thus, when in January 1841, fourteen 68 pdrs arrived in Malta followed by four 56 pdrs eight months later, it seemed that the re-armament programme was really

on its way: but that was not to be, for the next consignment of heavy guns did not reach the Island before 1852!

By the end of those first four decades the defence situation was not good. Whilst a good deal of reconstruction work had been carried out on the fortifications few of the heavy guns had arrived and the manning detail was below strength. But although it was no secret that the garrison was generally unequal to the role assigned to it, not too many people seemed to have been overperturbed by the fact because through some understanding (or misunderstanding!) it had been fundamentally assumed that as long as Britain held the undisputed mastery of the seas, Malta need not fear for her safety: the Fleet would always be there to provide the decisive first line defence.

When, therefore, the Fleet was temporarily withdrawn from Malta and sailed to Tangiers "to show the flag" during the Moroccan crisis of 1844, the Governor, Lt-General Sir Patrick Stuart, was quick to represent to the Colonial Office the precarious state in which the Island had been placed as a result of the Fleet's sudden departure. The reply was furnished by the Admiralty on 5 July 1845.<sup>10</sup> The security of naval bases, it asserted, must not be dependent on the Fleet's supremacy, since the predominant roles of the Fleet must always be the maintenance of Britain's sea communications and the seeking out and destruction of the enemy's main fleet. These roles, as well as others which may be dictated by political exigencies of the moment, were liable to require the Fleet's presence elsewhere at short notice and it was therefore vital that Malta should be self-reliant for her own defence, for that of the Royal Naval Dockyard and other base installations on the Island. That statement of policy, which basically was to stand unchanged until the end of British rule in Malta, achieved three far reaching results: it confirmed the spheres of responsibilities for the defence of Malta as between the Royal Navy and the Garrison; it highlighted the Army's commitment to the defence of the naval base; it enabled the Army (in order to fulfil that commitment) to acquire the means with which to build up and rearm the land defences.

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Meanwhile, the recommendations in Colonel Harding's report were taken in hand and it would seem that considerable progress had been achieved by October 1848, when the Inspector-General of Fortifications, Sir John Fox Burgoyne inspected the defences of Malta. The General was impressed by the strength of the Ricasoli — StElmo — Tigne sea line and considered it as near impregnable against frontal attack; consequently, in the event of the Fleet being called away from Malta, no enemy was likely to attempt an attack on the Grand Harbour, although it was possible that in those circumstances, an enemy availing himself of the temporary command of the sea, might try and capture the Island by blockade.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, could we not add to that opinion — that, for such a blockade to succeed it would have had to be a long one, and would not the enemy have had to reckon with the returning British war-ships?

The new Governor, Sir William Reid, did not quite share Burgoyne's optimism. "When I saw Malta for the first time in 1851, it appeared to me to resemble a disarmed fortress. On enquiry I learnt that Gibraltar had been re-armed but not Malta. A correspondence on my part of considerable length with the different Secretaries of State followed and the result was that the re-armament of Malta was commenced, but has been suspended in consequence of the war with Russia. In the correspondence here alluded to, I pointed out that the power of Steamships with their present armament, when they could close with fortresses as may be done against Malta, has been overlooked."<sup>12</sup> That last observation applied in large measure to Ricasoli — StElmo — Tigne, the three main sea forts constituting the front line defence of the Grand Harbour: each one could be approached by the largest ships afloat to within a hundred yards and bombarded at point blank range. It was for that very reason, to force the enemy to keep his distance, that those forts had to be equipped with guns and howitzers of the heaviest calibre.

From the start, Reid was absorbed in overhauling the fortifications and seeking approval for new armament and new works. No point of detail escaped his notice — listen,

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for instance, to what he has to say in one of his earliest despatches to the Secretary of State:<sup>13</sup> "My Lord, I find here piles of French shot on the Batteries by the side of English guns, just of a size to render the guns unserviceable if one of these shot were to be, by mistake, put into one of the English guns. I am informed that it is intended to remove all the French cannon and shot here, but year passes on after year and this is not done. I hope therefore that Your Lordship will remind the Master General and Board of Ordnance of this fact."

On 9 October 1852, Reid submitted the first of his comprehensive reports on the fortifications stressing the need for new heavy guns with which to rearm the Harbour defences. His recommendations were only partially accepted but that did not deter him from renewing his pressing requests. At about that same time, Reid was concerned with another defence matter and in 1853 produced his report on "The bad state of the Gates of the Fortress."<sup>14</sup> He pointed out that the 2914 troops of the garrison were insufficient for manning the Valletta, Cotto-nera and outer defences, some 25 miles of fortifications comprising 54 gates. Some of those gates were in need of repair, others were without guardrooms and the majority were undermanned. Gates, by their nature, breach a fortification and consequently weaken it.<sup>15</sup> Unless, therefore, they are kept structurally sound with their drawbridges and other devices in good working order and manned by trained soldiers, they become a serious menace to the defence: through such poorly manned gates, enemy storming parties could take the fortifications in the rear. As a result of Reid's report, the main gates of Valletta and the three Cities were repaired and secured with additional men and guardroom accommodation.

The Crimean War brought the rearmament of Malta to a halt: more so, the Island was depleted of most of its heavy cannon then urgently wanted for the Field Army.<sup>16</sup> But that war had also brought out the true strategic value of Malta as a supporting base and transit centre without which Britain could not assert her policy in the Mediterranean. When, therefore, at the end of hostilities, Reid resumed his



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demands on the Colonial Office, the Government went out of its way to convene an extraordinary interdepartmental Committee to study his recommendations.<sup>17</sup>

The Committee agreed with the Governor on all major counts. They expressed concern over the possibility of distant bombardment of the Dockyard by mortars, from ranges of 4200 yards, without the enemy vessels being necessarily seen or covered by the shore defences. It was to counter that eventuality that the Committee accepted that "to the present extent of front might be added with advantage, a detached battery or two, on each side." Later, those "detached batteries" would materialize in the form of Forts StLeonardo, StRocco, Sliema Point and Pembroke. The Committee further agreed that "all these sea Batteries should be of the heaviest calibre, mounted, and covered, and with appurtenances, on the most approved principles that are from time to time promulgated." The Committee having then dealt with several other matters ended by asking for yet another assessment from Malta "for the improvement of the defences."

Reid, in conjunction with his naval and military experts produced another, his last, major report. His tour as Governor was coming to an end and although he left Malta without having realized those schemes for which he had striven so hard and for so long, his resolute and persistent efforts had not been in vain; they laid the foundations upon which his successors were able to develop a defence system of extraordinary strength which feared nought and scared all.

### III 1858 — 1869

Major-General Sir William Reid GCMG, KCB, was succeeded by another outstanding administrator Major-General (later Lt-General) Sir John Gaspard Le Marchant GCMG. From the start the new Governor devoted his inexhaustible energy to the reorganization and strengthening of the defences of Malta. In a despatch to the Adjutant General dated

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1 December 1860, he recounts how, between 1 October 1859 and 30 November 1860, no less than 200,000 men, were employed in carrying out, *inter alia*, the following tasks:

- “ — Above 900 guns have been mounted, dismounted, and removed to complete a revised classification of the Armament.
- 30,000 barrels of powder and ammunition have been removed and placed in suitable localities throughout the works.
- 521,753 shot and shell have been brought up into the several Batteries to complete their Armament (of these 300,000 new from store, the remainder exchanged from superior to inferior Batteries or from reserves on to the works. Exclusive of Grape).
- Besides the removal of many hundred tons of War Department stores, into proper Storehouses within the works.
- The fine Siege train left after the Crimea has been put together, brought into Valletta, and is in immediate readiness for use.”

However, in spite of all his exertions, Le Marchant left Malta before the new coastal forts on the flanks of the Grand Harbour had begun to take shape. But that was not his fault. Even defence apart, for the greater improvement of which he had striven hard, Le Marchant's administration substantially benefited Malta in other spheres as well and on the basis of his long term achievements he must rank as an outstanding Governor.

It will be recalled that the Crimea had finally established the supremacy of steam over sail: steam propelled vessels did not have to depend on the wind for movement and tactical manoeuvring in battle! Experience of that war had also asserted the supremacy of the shell over the spherical solid shot and demonstrated the need for armour protection to warships. Here again, the French took the initiative and in 1858 launched the first ironclad warship, the frigate *La*

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*Gloire*. Britain replied the next year with *HMS Warrior*. But the first of the large British armoured warships to entirely dispense with sails was not completed before 1871.

The appearance of the ironclad upset the 'Gun vs Armour' balance of power! From then on an unbridled and very costly neck to neck escalation race for supremacy developed between them. In 1859, the *Warrior* with its 4½ inches of wrought iron armour was capable of resisting the 68 lb shell; twenty years later, the *Duilio* with its 22 inches of steel plating could resist every projectile fired from the forts of Malta including the 785 lb shell of the 12.5 inch (35 ton gun). Only the 2000 lb shell of the 100 ton gun, from a range of 1000 yards could have penetrated the *Duilio's* armour;<sup>18</sup> but then, we did not have that type of gun.

France and Italy were soon off the mark fitting out their warships with increasing thicknesses of armour and bigger guns. Malta viewed that build-up with anxiety, for in the absence of the British Fleet those warships, thus armed, could have taken up positions beyond the range of our shore guns and bombarded the Dockyard and Valletta with impunity; they could even have attacked the forts individually and silenced their guns, after which the road to invasion lay open!

At last, in 1866, the Treasury was ready to allocate funds for the construction of new works and the further strengthening of the old fortifications. This followed the Jervois report of 23 June 1866,<sup>19</sup> most of which was eventually implemented, though his scheme for the protection of the Dockyard and harbours against a land attack, by means of a girdle of six detached forts sited on commanding ground within a radius of about a mile outwards from the existing Harbour fortifications, was shelved. However, delays still crept in to slow down the initiation of the various projects and it was not until three years later, when Malta's key position as a port of call, coaling station and naval base in the centre of the Mediterranean was strategically focussed by the opening of the Suez Canal, that the Admiralty and War Office succeeded in hastening the start of those urgently awaited defences.

## IV 1870 — 1899

For Malta, the golden age of Coast Defence had arrived. From 1870 onwards, Britain spent millions towards maintaining a credible defence of Malta based on the eventuality that the Mediterranean Fleet might have to be called away from its base at short notice.<sup>20</sup> Armament technology continued to develop extensively and fast and the evolutionary changes which emerged were becoming more difficult to keep up with and expensive to implement. Thus, no sooner would a battery of guns be installed in a fort than it would have had to be replaced by a yet more modern version of those same guns or by a completely novel type of armament. But it was not just a question of replacing one type of gun by another! In many instances the siting of an existing work was tactically unsuitable for the new armament and therefore a brand new fort would have had to be built for it: even when a new gun was earmarked to replace its older version on site, the emplacement would have had to be completely remodelled at great expense, as evinced, to quote just one example, by the 1870 rearmament of Forts St Angelo, Manoel and Tigne.

In 1871, work began at last on the Corradino feature.<sup>21</sup> Different from the previous layouts proposed by the Knights' engineers, Lt-Colonel Dickens and others, this work was aptly named "The Corradino Lines." It enclosed in a continuous but irregularly fortified line the area Ghajn Dwieli to Ras Hanzlir. Bounded by a dry ditch along its front, its elevated parapet was laid with banquettes for Infantry and its four salient angles were strengthened with a series of two storied casemated positions for guns and musketry. Corradino Lines were completed on 31 March 1880 at a cost of £17,634.

Replacement of the old armament of Fort St Elmo started in 1871, and soon afterwards, whilst remodelling the bastions for the new 10 inch (18 ton) guns, the Royal Engineers laid bare the vault containing the remains of Sir Alexander Ball, who had been buried there in 1809, and, a few weeks later, that of Sir Ralph Abercromby, buried in the adjacent bastion in 1801. Both coffins were recased

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and laid in a new vault within the same bastions.

From a very interesting report compiled by Brigadier-General John Adye CB, in December 1872, we are brought up to date on the details of the vast reconstruction plan for re-equipping with heavy rifled muzzle loading guns of 11" (11 inch), 10" and 9" calibre the Valetta fortifications and Forts Ricasoli, StAngelo, StElmo, Manoel and Tigne. With regard to the new forts the report stated:

“ — Sliema Point: This work has just been commenced and if the shields arrive it will be completed in about 18 months.

— StRocco: Arrangements now being made for purchase of land.”

Thus, it was not before the end of 1872 that the first pair of sea forts had begun to take shape: they were built in pairs so as not to allow any bombarding vessels to close in on the harbours from any unguarded angle.

Sliema Point lay one kilometre NW of Tigne and was designed for an armament of two 12.5" (38 ton) and two 10" (18 ton) guns, while StRocco lay a kilometre SE of Ricasoli and was being equipped with three 12.5" (38 ton) guns each capable of launching a 785 lb pointed shell over a distance of 6100 yards at maximum elevation of 9° 56': the shell was propelled by a muzzle velocity of 1575 feet per second and at 1000 yards could penetrate 18" of wrought iron armour plating. The 10" (18 ton) gun could be elevated to 12½° and in that position had a range of 5800 yards; its common shell weighed 390½ lbs and at 1000 yards penetrated 12" of armour.

Concerning the land defences of Valletta and its suburbs we are informed that “the only work at present in progress is that on Corradino Hill, which is about ¼ completed. The cost of the land was about £1600 and that of the work when completed will be £15,000.” In fact, as stated earlier, the final bill for the Corradino Lines was £17,634.

The report then dealt with the Jervois plan of 1866

which had proposed the erection of six detached forts on commanding ground immediately surrounding the harbour area to secure the defence of the Dockyard and harbours against a land attack. Having pointed out the inapplicability of that plan to current conditions, Adye put forward his alternative proposal to construct an outer line of land defences along the line of cliffs formed by the great geological fault which crosses the Island from East to West (Madliena to Fomm ir-Riġ) — “a few detached forts on this line would cut off all that westerly portion of the island where there are good bays and facilities for landing. This line of fortification would retain the resources of the greater part of the country and the water on the side of the defenders; and the ground would be much cheaper than that in the immediate neighbourhood of Valletta.” Adye’s project was approved by the Defence Committee in 1873, commenced two years later and completed in 1897; however, as and when parts of “The North-West Front” (as it came to be called) were finished, they were placed at the disposal of the troops for land exercises. The fact that the whole position was finally completed in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, was fortuitous and it was to commemorate the double event that it was renamed “The Victoria Lines.”<sup>22</sup>

But soon those prestigious Lines would come under fire — not from enemy bullets, but from within! As early as 1901 their operational viability was being queried and by 1907 it was rightly decided that the land defence of a small island like Malta must be conducted from its very shores to prevent an enemy gaining a foothold on its soil: it would be most difficult to evict him afterwards. The Victoria Lines were consequently abandoned and the two major forts of Madliena and Bingemma assigned to the coast defence role.

We must now look into that masterly report produced by the Inspector-General of Fortifications Sir J.L.A. Simmons, on 22 February 1878.<sup>23</sup> He restated the Government’s policy “that the defences should be local and self-contained, that is, independent of naval means, so that HM’s fleet may be free to act, and the Admiral in command relieved of all

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anxiety as to the security of the Dockyard and ships, whether war or commercial, that may be in its harbour."

He remarked that although much had been achieved yet "during the progress of the works the power of artillery had been greatly developed, as well as the thickness of the armour plates of the ships, to the attacks of which they may be exposed." Therefore, whilst "the sea defences may be considered equal to the requirements of the present day ... within a few months the condition will be changed and the works will be exposed to attack from ships of the *Duilio* class, protected by 22" of steel and armed with 100 ton guns. The heaviest gun now mounted will be powerless to pierce the protected parts of these ships, even at the shortest ranges, whereas their shields will not afford protection against the guns of these ships at their longest ranges ... it is therefore of the utmost importance that no time be lost in providing four guns to be placed in position on the sea front, capable as a minimum, of piercing ships of the *Duilio* class at a range of 3000 yards. Unless the step is taken, considering the proximity of Italy and other maritime powers on the shores of the Mediterranean, Malta cannot be considered secure."

The persuasiveness of that argument was beyond dispute. Four 17.72" (100 ton) guns were produced but they had to be shared with Gibraltar. Each of our two guns was mounted in a separate fort specially built for it — Cambridge in 1880 and Rinella in 1884. The barrel of this gun actually weighed 102.25 tons and its length measured 32.65 feet. Its common shell weighed 1921½ lbs and its powder charge 450 lbs. At 1° elevation its range was a mere 900 yards but at its maximum elevation of 9°56' the distance was increased to 6000 yards. At 1000 yards it penetrated 23" of armour, reduced at 2000 yards to 21".<sup>18</sup> It was a formidable showpiece but as a weapon of war it was severely limited by its slow rate of fire of one round every four minutes. In defence of a straight sea line like Malta's, its chief value would have been in deterring the enemy from approaching closer than the 6000 yards area imposed by its arc of fire.

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From the start, Cambridge and Rinella Batteries regularly took part in Garrison firing practices. The last time they participated together was on 27 June 1904 and then both were short of common shell — out of a complement of 100 shells, Cambridge held only 28 and Rinella 81! Station practice was discontinued at Cambridge after that shoot “on account of liability to damage of new buildings erected in the vicinity.”<sup>24</sup> Rinella, however, took part in the next year’s firing practice on 5 May 1905. The following year both were struck out of the Approved Armament for Malta.

To return to General Simmons’s report. The construction of the new sea forts was progressing very well. It will be recalled that only Sliema Point had been started by December 1872 (Brigadier-General Adye’s report) whereas just over five years later the position was as follows:

Sliema Point — Work completed and armed with two 10” (18 ton) guns “and in which two 38 ton guns will be mounted almost immediately.”

StRocco — Fort completed with two of its three 12.5” (38 ton) guns already mounted.

Pembroke — Fort completed with its three 11” (25 ton) guns on site but not yet mounted.

StLeonardo — “designed for three 25 ton guns, which is at present incomplete, but will be finished this year.”

StLucian — The fort was remodelled during the years 1874-78 and armed with three 10” (18 ton) guns in case-mated emplacements. At that time it was the only major work protecting the entrance to Marsaxlokk Bay.

Delimara — This fort “near the entrance of the Bay is a self defensible work, which will be armed with six 12.5” (38 ton) guns protected by iron shields. It is hoped that it may be completed by the end of the year.”

Tas-Silġ — “Not yet commenced, but is to be proceeded with at once.” In fact it was started in 1879 and completed in 1883.



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With regard to the new land defence forts the situation was as follows:

Bingemma — Complete and ready for its armament.

Madliena — Land acquired and the work had just commenced. The fort was eventually completed in 1880.

Mosta — "will be commenced shortly." It was completed in 1885.

Other reports followed annually, sometimes even more frequently; meanwhile, new fortifications emerged and the variety of guns continued to increase: Zonqor Battery was erected (1882 – 86) for the defence of Marsaskala Bay, and StPaul Battery (1882 – 85) for the defence of StThomas Bay. The flanks of the Grand Harbour were further strengthened by:

Delle Grazie Battery (1899 – 94). Two 10" (18 ton) Rifled Muzzle Loading (RML) and two 6" Breech Loading (BL) guns. Cost £16,344.

Spinola Battery (1889 – 94). Two 9.2" BL and two 6" BL. Cost £15,793.

Garden Battery (1890 – 1). One 9.2" BL and two 6" BL. The Inner Harbour defences were reinforced by the addition of a new work:

Tryon Battery (1896 – 98).<sup>25</sup> Erected on the rocks below the Old Knights' Hospital directly covering the Grand Harbour entrance and mounted with six 12pdr QF guns.

Along the "Victoria Lines" five new works were built between 1882 – 89:

Għargħur Right Battery, Għargħur Left Battery, San Giovanni Battery, Targa Battery and the important Dwejra Lines complete with ditch, artillery positions and infantry loopholed defensible walls flanking the main approaches.

The long-drawn-out battle between the adherents of the BL and ML systems, which had started in 1859 when William Armstrong produced the first breech loader, ended in 1885 with the adoption of the BL system on the grounds

that it offered greater accuracy, range, power and rate of fire. Muzzle loaders were thus rendered obsolete from that instant and ships and coast defences had all to be rearmed.

As guns increased in size and firepower a new problem arose with regard to their handling and that of their massive shells. Eventually, all equipment became electrically operated, but as a first step gun movement and shell loading was effected by means of the hydraulic gear. Another major issue was fire control, that is, how could the gunner hit a distant target moving at fast speed unless he knew the range and bearing of that target? The invention of the Position Finder (PF) and the Depression Range Finder (DRF) by Captain H.S. Watkins RA, provided just the answer needed to sink that target. The other serious problem of how to deal with enemy craft attempting to force an entry into a harbour under cover of darkness was resolved, after the discovery of electricity, through the installation of Defence Electric Light (DEL) which could illuminate the target and the area of operations for the guns to open fire and destroy the attacking craft — as we did on 26 July 1941.

Until the Second World War the DEL was operated by Fortress Companies, Royal Engineers (RE), who in that role, formed an essential part of Coast Defence since the gunner could not engage his guns by night without DEL illumination. The RE, of course, were integrated with us in other aspects of Coast Defence: they manned and operated as additional obstacles to the open entrances of the Grand and Marsamxetto harbours — torpedoes, submarine mining, sea mining and the Boom defence installations.

With the end of the century drawing near, the Royal Artillery could look back with satisfaction on the eminence into which its Coast Defence branch had elevated itself by its technical achievements of those last few decades; however, under pressure of prolonged action certain details tend to be overlooked! For as long as anyone could remember, few were the occasions when overseas garrisons had returned obsolete equipment to the U.K., with the result that over the years garrisons had amassed a motley combination of guns of all types, the bulk of which were

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obsolete. By the 1890s the situation was growing administratively chaotic and proving terribly wasteful in manpower. A radical standardization of equipment was urgently called for.

#### V 1900 — 1960

Once undertaken, that standardization of armament was carried out quickly and effectively. An accurate assessment was first made of the probable forms of attack to be expected, followed by a choice of guns most suitable for combating those attacks, namely:

- a. Bombardment at long range by battleships or heavy cruisers.
- b. Bombardment at medium range by light cruisers.
- c. Attempt to break down naval obstructions or block the entrance to port or harbour.
- d. Attack by torpedo craft at night.<sup>26</sup>

Against those four threats, four types of guns only were to be retained as follows:

- a. 9.2"BL gun Mk (Mk) X on carriage garrison barbette Mk V. Elevation 15°, range 17,400 yards, weight of shell 380 lbs.
- b. 6"BL gun Mk VII on carriage garrison Mk II. Elevation 16°, range 16,000 yards, weight of shell 100 lbs.
- c. 4.7"QF Mk III on carriage garrison Mk IV. Elevation 20°, range 11,800 yards, weight of shell 45 lbs.
- d. 12pdr, 12 cwt Quick Firing (QF) on carriage garrison Mk II. Elevation 20°, range 8,000 yards, weight of shell 12 lbs.

All forts were to be rearmed with the above guns as applicable to their role, and all other types of guns were to be ruthlessly scrapped.

For Malta, the outcome of that policy could only mean another major rearmament of the coast defences. All those hundreds of obsolete guns were dismantled and many forts closed down; new forts had to be built to meet the technical

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requirements of the new armament, which, with all its complexities had to come from England. All in all it proved a very costly operation indeed, but that was the price, even in those days, that had to be paid from time to time to keep up the defences in a high operational state of readiness. It need hardly be pointed out, however, that such was the superiority of the new armament in accuracy, range and rate of fire, that just a few of those modern guns were enough to render the defences incomparably more effective and secure than they had ever been before. When it came to applying the new policy to Malta, two deviations stood out. In the first place, the 4.7" gun was not employed as a coast defence weapon but as moveable armament, that is, in a landward defence role.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, the need for a high-angle Battery to cover the water area from St. Paul's Bay to Sliema and the corresponding land area fronting the Victoria Lines, called for the erection of a completely new work armed with guns which did not form part of the Approved Armament. Thus emerged, in 1900: Gharghur High Angle Battery — armed with six 10" High Angle guns.

The rearmament of our coast defences was backed by the strong support of the Colonial Defence Committee. It was spread over several years being completed only shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, as shown below:

<i>Year in which Fort or Battery erected (E) or reconstructed (R) for mounting Approved Armament</i>		<i>Type and number of guns mounted</i>		
		9.2"BL	6"BL	12pdr QF
1899 — Wolseley Battery	(E)		4 (QF)	
„ — Fort StLeonardo	(R)	2		
„ — Fort Ricasoli	(R)			2
„ — Pembroke Battery	(E)	2		
1902 — Fort Ricasoli	(R)		3	2
1904 — Fort Benghajsa	(E)	2	2	
„ — Fort StRocco	(R)	3		
„ — Fort StElmo	(R)		6	
„ — Fort Tigne	(R)	2		
„ — Fort Bingemma	(R)	1	2	
1907 — Fort Madliena	(R)	2	2	
1909 — Fort StElmo	(R)			8

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„ — Garden Battery	(R)	1	
„ — Madliena Tower Bty	(E)		2
1913 — Fort Delimara	(R)	2	
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		16	20
			14
		<hr/>	<hr/>

On the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, our coast defences were deployed as above and manned by eight Companies of the Royal Garrison Artillery and three Companies of Royal Malta Artillery. Only one new Battery was erected in Malta during that war — Wardija Battery, overlooking StPaul's Bay. Early in 1916 it was equipped with two 6" guns transferred from Wolseley Battery, which was dismantled at the same time.

A passing reference must be made to the historic presence — operationally insignificant though it then was — of Anti-Aircraft artillery in Malta during the First World War. That presence must be regarded as a historically noteworthy beginning in view of the later formidable developments of A.A. artillery and its decisive achievements in the defence of Malta during the Second World War.

In between the wars, the coast defence layout of Malta was again changed, mainly owing to three fast developing threats: air attack, the improved fire power of warships and the high speeds of the modern Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB).

The air menace had reached such proportions as to require the build up of AA defences on a scale which plunged Coast Defence into second priority. Pembroke and Wardija Batteries were closed down; Forts Delimara, StRocco and Tigne were reconstructed for the change over of their 9.2"BL for 6"BL guns; Forts Bengħajsa, Ricasoli, StElmo, Madliena, Bingemma and Garden Battery had their 6"BL guns dismantled. On the other hand, the new Fort Campbell was completed just in time to take over from Wardija the wartime role of Examination Battery for the StPaul's Bay anchorage.<sup>28</sup>

The answer to the long ranging guns of modern warships was provided in the form of a specially designed new

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mounting which allowed the coast defence gun a higher arc of elevation thereby substantially increasing its range. In Malta, however, only the three 6"BL guns of Fort StRocco were so modified and re-equipped with the MK V, 45° elevation mounting, and their range was stunningly increased from 12,600 yards to 24,600 yards (14 miles!).

Against the fast MTB, the 12pdr could no longer compete. A new gun was produced for the defence of harbour entrances, the anti-MTB 6pdr QF double-barrelled gun which could fire a standard rate of 72 rounds per minute.<sup>29</sup> Three of these were installed at Ricasoli and six at StElmo and it was these very guns which were to elevate the prestige of Coast Artillery to a new peak with their memorable performance against the Italian E-Boats' attempt to break into the Grand Harbour on 26 July 1941, to destroy the ships of a newly arrived convoy.

By the outbreak of the Second World War the coast defences had been reorganized and redeployed as shown below, the 9.2"BL guns being manned by 4 Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery, and the other guns by the Royal Malta Artillery:

	9.2"BL	6"BL	12pdrQF	6pdr,twin QF
Fort Benghajsa	2			
Fort StLeonardo	2			
Fort Madliena	2			
Fort Bingemma	1			
Fort Delimara		2		
Fort StRocco		3		
Fort Tigne		3	2	
Fort Campbell		2		
Fort Ricasoli			2	3
Fort StElmo			2	6
	7	10	6	9

In considering that layout, however, it should be borne in mind that unlike the First World War, throughout which Malta had remained operationally static, the outbreak of the Second heralded a vast expansion of Coast, Anti-Aircraft

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and Beach Defence artillery and Infantry units and soon the Island began to resemble some gargantuan hedgehog bristling with weapons of every description. Furthermore, in addition to the Fleet, this time the Defence had also the Royal Air Force on its side! Then it could really be called impregnable and it proved it.

Another major rearmament was planned after the war and a start was actually made when the two formidable 5.25" dual purpose (Coast and Anti-Aircraft) Batteries were installed, at a cost of millions, at Forts StRocco and Bengħajsa (renamed Balbani). That was in 1950. But by then, the death knell was about to be sounded for all conventional forms of Coast and Heavy Anti-Aircraft artillery.<sup>30</sup> The emerging missile armed warship had rendered our Defence Schemes archaic and obsolete. By 1960, our Forts and HAA positions were dismantled and closed down and their guns — those same war guns which had defended Malta so decisively only a few years before — were soon afterwards cut up and sold as scrap iron.

It is incontestable that the days of those guns were over. An up-to-date defence system was needed and, as with past rearmaments of the fortress, Britain would have made available such a system for a Class "A" strategic base, as Malta then was, irrespective of the huge costs and manpower involved. But with Malta on the threshold of independence, the political climate was both unreliable and inexpedient for Britain alone to undertake a long term defence commitment of that magnitude.

Thus ended a significantly long era of our history. The building and rearmament of our fortifications had been going on unremittingly since the Knights first set foot on the Island in 1530, for the same fundamental reasons which still apply today: Malta's defences must be on Maltese soil; Malta is too small and too isolated to be defended from a proxy base. It is logistically impossible to prevent an invasion of Malta unless the means of defence are already prepositioned on the Island and are in every way ready for immediate use to repel an invader before he lands. Unless Malta has the capability to defend herself on each and every

occasion she is threatened, she can never consider herself secure against invasion and occupation by a foreign power. All said and done, help, however well intentioned it might be, is of little use if it arrives too late to save the patient.

Yet, survival in war, demands from us much more than the prepositioning of equipment on our soil in peacetime! Above all, we would need to be reciprocally, though completely, linked through an active and mutually benefiting Defence Treaty with the kind of Allies who, in return for our strategic and logistic co-operation in peace and war, would credibly undertake to deliver the vital convoys to Malta in wartime — at a cost, if necessary, of millions of pounds in shipping losses and the sacrifice of thousands of their countrymen's lives. For unless our supply lifeline can be kept open in wartime the Island could not hope to survive the rigours of a future war. Food, to a blockaded garrison, is as vital, at least, as war matériel. Without food there can be no defence. In the annals of war no leader or general has ever been able to find an answer to starvation — except through the enforced capitulation of his forces and the surrender of his civilian garrisons to the enemy.

We must choose our Allies wisely so that the vital armament for our defence and the food for our survival are always available to us at the right time and the right place.

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  15. A.Samut-Tagliaferro: "Gateways through our Fortifications", Armed Forces of Malta Journal No.22/23 (April/July 1975).
  16. This loss was later made good by ships of the Royal Navy returning from the Crimea being ordered to leave some of their heavy armament at Malta.
  17. Three important reports from Sir William Reid were despatched to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that year (1856): on 4 February (PRO,CO 158/178); on 22 April no.17) and on 31 May (PRO,CO 158/178) enclosing recommendations from Capt G.Spratt RN "HMS Medina," Capt G.Ryder RN "HMS Dauntless," Capt J.Dalrymple Hay RN "HMS Hannibal" and Capt W.R.Meads RN "HMS Royal Albert."
  18. G.Phillips: "Text book on Fortifications", London 1892, p.26.
  19. PRO, WO, 33 Volume 18: "Report on the defences of Malta, 23rd June 1866."
  20. Conversely, so long as the Fleet was in or around Malta, the Island would have never been attacked, let alone invaded. The Fleet's powerful presence assured the Island's security.
  21. War Office, Malta 2372 dated 27 December 1871.
  22. "The position hitherto known as the North-West Front will in

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- future be described as THE VICTORIA LINES." War Office, Malta 5/21572/77 dated 30 November 1897.
23. PRO, WO. 33 Volume 32: "Memorandum on the Defences of Malta, 22 February 1878," General (later Field-Marshal) Sir John Lintorn Arabin Simmons was Governor and Commander-in-Chief Malta from 13 June 1884 until 27 September 1888. Lintorn Barracks (redesignated BELTISSEBH in 1972) were named after him.
  24. CR Malta N/7870/1 dated 7th December 1904.
  25. Named after Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon KCB, Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Fleet (1891-93), who went down with his flagship HMS VICTORIA when she sank off the coast of Syria after colliding with HMS CAMPERDOWN on 22 June 1893.
  26. K.W.Maurice-Jones: "The history of Coast Artillery in the British Army," London 1959, p.171.
  27. The coast defence role of the 4.7" Quick Firing (QF) gun was absorbed by the 6" BL gun, additionally to its own primary role, i.e. "bombardment at medium range by light cruisers."
  28. Coast Artillery Training, Volume 1, (1938), p.2, defines the Examination Service as follows: "An organization designed to identify and to ascertain the character and intentions of vessels ... seeking entry into a defended port. Its function is to ensure that the defences prevent a suspicious or unfriendly ship from entering the port." The Battery specially detailed to support the Examination Service was known as the "Examination Battery." The same authority defines Examination Anchorage as: "the area of water covered by the guns of the Examination Battery in which vessels which cannot be identified, and admitted to harbour without examination, will lie. Detailed examination of such ships is carried out in the anchorage."
  29. I well remember one or two exceptionally keen 6pdr twin detachments under my command at Fort Ricasoli in 1939, attaining a rate of fire of 80 rounds per minute during competitive training.
  30. Coast Artillery was abolished from the British Army in 1956 and Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery two years later.

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## The Cotton Trade of Malta 1750-1800\*

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By the end of the eighteenth century most of the available land in Malta had been given over to the cultivation of cotton, then the main cash crop for the island. Cotton was cultivated at the expense of other products: vines, wheat, barley and cumin, the latter being also exported in small quantities. Land covering one or two tumoli sown with cotton could provide a means of livelihood to a family. It was advantageous at the time to buy foodstuffs from Sicily instead of growing them at home.

Areas fit for the cultivation of cotton were spread throughout Malta and Gozo; Rabat, Mosta, Siggiewi, Zebbug, Zabbar and Żurrieq being the most important areas. Generally, land cultivated with cotton belonged to the Government, to the Church, to the Municipal Authorities or to the large land owners, very little of it belonging to small holders. Land was leased to tenants generally for four or eight years, occasionally for longer periods. The tenants were subjected by their landlords to several onerous conditions.

The raw cotton required various industrial processes before it could be woven into yarn. It was first dried and then husked in a special machine between two rolling cylinders. Beating was the next step, mostly done by men by means of strings. Carding and spinning was a major occupation in Malta in the eighteenth century. This is revealed by the many letters sent to the Municipal Authorities

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\*[This is an extract from *Aspects of the Cotton Trade in Malta 1750-1800*. Unpublished B.A.(Hons.) Dissertation, 'The University of Malta, 1976.]

## THE COTTON TRADE OF MALTA

asking for a system of public weighing to be installed in the various villages so that spinners would not be cheated by greedy merchants.

Most of the cotton yarn produced in the Maltese islands was exported, mainly to Barcellona and Marseilles. Merchants provided the capital necessary for the financing of this trade. A sea-exchange was drawn up; merchants obtaining the money from various money-lenders and promising to pay back the creditors, with some interest, at the end of the venture. The money-lenders were of various social origins: people of the professions, housewives, priests and farmers; those who saved 100 scudi frequently lent it to the cotton merchants. Rates of interest were rather high even for those days and never less than 12 per cent, proving the success of the cotton trade in the eighteenth century. Insurance played its part too. Loans and loads of cotton were insured against all sorts of risks, except plague. The insurance premium was generally fixed at four per cent.

Bankruptcies in the export of cotton occurred at times, but these were few when one considers that so much money was at stake. It seems that bankruptcies were the result of mismanagement rather than fraud. Fraudulent merchants did not go unnoticed; laws against them were harsh.

The cotton trade received much public attention in the late seventies. In 1776, the Chamber of Commerce submitted to the Grand Master a report stating that Malta should not import Levantine cotton because its importation affected employment in Malta and the balance of payments.

### I THE EXPORT OF COTTON

The exportation from Malta of cotton yarn and to a much lesser extent of locally produced cotton textiles in the eighteenth century helped considerably to reduce the balance of payments deficit caused by the Island's heavy reliance on the importation of foodstuffs.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly therefore, the Government gave the matter a considerable amount of attention.

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*Expanding Exportation*

In 1737 Grand Master Despuig created a subsidiary to the Università of Valletta named the '*Camera di Negozi*'.<sup>2</sup> Its duty was to regulate the cotton industry and foster cotton exports to Barcelona, Cadiz, Lisbon and Marseilles. Lisbon had stopped the importation of Malta cotton at the insistence of England in 1743.<sup>3</sup> In 1776, the officials of another institution, perhaps a successor to the '*Camera di Negozi*' and known as *Camera di Commercio*, asserted that Spain, realizing the good quality of Maltese cotton yarn, stopped other Levant cotton from reaching its coast even though manufactured in Malta.<sup>4</sup> It must be remembered that Malta exported cotton yarn only as it was forbidden to export cotton in its raw state.<sup>5</sup> Even Ball, in 1800 emphasized this obligation.<sup>6</sup> In 1800 seeds of red cotton could not be shipped. Confiscation and a penalty of 50 onze were imposed on defaulters.

From the scanty surviving records of the customs duties, it is possible to trace a steadily ascending curve. In 1776, a total of 6,112 quintali was exported,<sup>7</sup> an average of 500 quintali per month. Between January and April 1777, exports amounted to 2,822 quintali,<sup>8</sup> an average of 700 quintali per month. From July 29, 1797 to December 1797, the figure was 3,939 quintali 26 rotoli,<sup>9</sup> an average of 800 quintali. From January to 4 July 1798, Malta succeeded in exporting 4,873 quintali 56 rotoli,<sup>10</sup> an average of 800 quintali. Cavaliero gives the figures in tons.<sup>11</sup>

Much had been done to develop further cotton exports to Barcellona. For since 1750 this city had awakened to the influx of industry and within 10 years just one producer had 350 looms providing work for 10,000 people in the cotton industry.<sup>12</sup> The Maltese merchants who supplied most of the raw material availed themselves of the opportunity to raise their prices.<sup>13</sup> Catalonians were angry at the action of the Maltese and tried to search for other sources of raw material. Still there is no evidence that the supply of cotton from Malta had decreased in quantity;<sup>14</sup> some 2,500 bales were consumed in Barcellona and 800 bales in Marseilles.<sup>15</sup> Another Spanish historian observed

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that from the 1740s "Maltese cotton came regularly and in quantity to Catalanian shores."<sup>16</sup>

Capital invested in the cotton trade was earning between 11 and 17 per cent on each venture.<sup>17</sup> It seems that the inhabitants of the cities around the harbours were more inclined than the country people both to advance and borrow money.<sup>18</sup> The cotton industry in Barcellona itself expanded at a quickening rate; 25 producers had 741 active looms that consumed 741,000 pounds of spun cotton each year.<sup>19</sup> By 1771 output varied between 80,000 and 90,000 pieces of calico and employment exceeded 50,000 persons by 1775. Spinning cotton in their homes occupied a substantial number of these workers. In turn this must have had a direct effect on Maltese farmers and investors.

### *Against Adulterated Export*

In these commercial transactions some merchants resorted to unfair practices. It so happened that a few of them adulterated local cotton with inferior Levant cotton as the demand for Malta cotton was not diminishing.<sup>20</sup> This necessitated proclamations on both sides against this nasty habit; locally, because it debased the name of the cotton and, abroad, because the cotton would not suit the burgeoning calico industry. A proclamation of 1777 had forbidden as well that Gozo cotton be mixed with either local or foreign cotton and for the same purpose.<sup>21</sup> In December 1761 Charles III of Spain freed all Maltese cotton from import duties, provided it arrived properly "wrapped and sealed."<sup>22</sup> He tried to excuse American cotton from all import duties in 1766 in an attempt to stimulate cotton cultivation in America, but this bore little fruit in the 18th century;<sup>23</sup> indicating how Malta cotton yarn was being prized for its quality.

When in 1775 it was argued whether Malta should import Levant cotton for spinning and subsequent export to Spain, the Chamber of Commerce declared that this was illegal in Spain.<sup>24</sup> Levant cotton was prohibited entry into Spain; moreover importation could serve as a bait to mix both sorts and thus lower the prestige of local cotton. But

in 1760 Spain just allowed 2,500 quintali of Levant cotton duty free.<sup>25</sup> If Malta tried to re-export Levant cotton she would be acting *ultra vires*; besides, the Levant cotton reaching Malta would be more expensive than the Maltese cotton due to the duties imposed.

In Marseilles, the Chamber of Commerce lodged the same protest against the adulteration of Malta and Levant cotton.<sup>26</sup> This habit had occurred also earlier in the thirties.<sup>27</sup> Malta cotton was relieved of the 20 per cent tax which foreign goods paid to the French Treasury, and Maltese merchants found it expedient to mix local and Levant cotton to declare more weight.<sup>28</sup> By 1753 cotton exports from Malta to Marseilles had increased considerably, exceeding 1,500 bales weighing about 4,000 quintali,<sup>29</sup> hence the importance of the proclamations which reminded the cotton merchants of the harm done when adulteration occurred.<sup>30</sup> Francesco Inquanez and Giuseppe Amaira took up a sea-exchange of 2,000 scudi to buy 6 bales of cotton yarn from Andrea Decelis.<sup>31</sup> The cotton weighed 1,272½ rotoli and cost 87 scudi 4 tari per quintale. From Salvatore Cassar they bought 2,046 rotoli at 97 scudi 8 tari per quintale, and spent 422 scudi 10 tari 17 grani on other cotton from Pietro Vella, weighing 433¾ rotoli at 97½ scudi per quintale. One notes the different prices due to the difference of quality. On arrival at Marseilles, the customs house checked upon the imported cotton and found fraud.<sup>32</sup> Confiscation ensued. Even the vessel was sold to cover expenses. The proclamation of 1747 laid down that every merchant had to present his bales for inspection and marking by the Superintendent of the packing shed — *Magazzino dell'Imballagio*.<sup>33</sup> Merchants had to tie the bale once lengthwise and once crosswise for easy inspection. The cotton thread was to be of the same length throughout. Merchants who defaulted lost all their cotton.

To export cotton overseas, merchants hired ships flying a neutral flag — *bandiera franca*.<sup>34</sup> Thus they hoped to minimize risks of depredation or destruction by marauding pirates. The expression '*con una bandiera franca*' was stipulated by contract when merchants borrowed money to build up capital for the purchase of cotton. Two cotton

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merchants borrowed 3,000 scudi to buy cotton, and sell it in Barcellona.<sup>35</sup> They had promised to leave Malta on a ship flying a neutral flag and stay in Barcellona for one year.

### *Maltese Cotton Merchants Overseas*

After unloading their cotton, Maltese merchants did not leave Spain or Marseilles empty handed. Such products as: coffee, sugar, cocoa, flavours, medicines, iron, nails, glass, paper, lead, tables and others were bought for eventual sale in other ports: Genoa, Livorno, Naples, Messina, Catania, Alicanti, Valenzia, Malaga or in Malta itself. For example the following goods were imported from Genoa:<sup>36</sup>

- 16 pairs of stockings made of silk for men
- 24 pairs of stockings for women
- 3 dozen sets of scuffle of different colours
- 12 pieces of cotton
- 192 pieces of stockings

Malta, Spain and France had strong friendly ties and in the same way as Maltese cotton merchants visited these countries for business activities<sup>37</sup> so foreign merchants from them visited Malta for similar reasons. Foreign merchants did business here without getting Maltese citizenship and sold to their own best advantage.<sup>38</sup> Also in times of cotton prosperity, Barcellona employed numerous aliens in her factories. A census of 1791 uncovered over 20,000 living permanently and over 5,000 living temporarily.<sup>39</sup> The 'aliens' included Maltese citizens. Giuseppe Attard, an agent for Saverio and Palmo Frendo lived in Barcellona.<sup>40</sup> Attard had sold cotton to Antonio Pongen, a manufacturer of calicoes.

Spain favoured Maltese cotton merchants.<sup>41</sup> It was enacted that foreigners setting up business at Barcellona had to settle there with their family. However Maltese cotton merchants were excluded through the insistence of



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the local government that voiced their misgivings to the Consul, Giuseppe Mifsud in Madrid. When Maltese merchants arrived there they rented one or two rooms both for storage of cotton and for their own personal residence. Angelo Attard and Baldassare Carwana lived in the village of Aquila.<sup>42</sup> On the other Raffaele Zerafa had spent 7 months in Malaga while his partner, Benedetto Catarina was in Barcellona.<sup>43</sup> They had formed a partnership to do cotton business in Spain. Before division of profits Zerafa would not allow Catarina to account for subsistence allowance, hence litigation ensued. Catarina claimed 8 *piastre gorde* per month and a *passetta* per day, the former for lodging and the latter for board.<sup>44</sup> In view of the fact that rent had already been established by the 'court of Malaga', the local court could only oblige.<sup>45</sup> Another Maltese merchant, Giovanni di Nicola claimed that some Maltese cotton merchants were imprisoned by the order of the *Reale Tribunale della Loggia del Mare* in Barcellona.<sup>46</sup> These cases show how Barcellona provided an important trading centre for the Maltese cotton merchant.

Maltese cotton merchants and agents settled in Marseilles too, as they had done in Barcellona. Giovanni Galea, Lorenzo Abela, Francesco Inguanez, Domenico Dalli are mentioned by name in lawsuits regarding their business and sojourn in that city where they could also acquire immovables.<sup>47</sup> One must not assume that sojourn there was always happy. Lorenzo Abela and Giovanni Abela contracted a sea-exchange to buy cotton yarn for sale in Marseilles.<sup>48</sup> Giovanni was a bad tempered man and ill-treated his brother. Salvatore Abela claimed that Giovanni threw something hard at his brother, and he persuaded them to wind up their business.<sup>49</sup>

France was more advanced technologically in the cotton industry than Spain.<sup>50</sup> She imported English technology and entrepreneurs to improve the industry. Malta availed herself of the situation and Gaspere Zarb who owned a factory for Indianes in Floriana sent Maltese workmen to France to acquire skills in the various processes of the cotton industry.<sup>51</sup>

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### *Should Malta Import Cotton?*

When in 1776 it was suggested that Malta should import cotton from the Levant, the Chamber of Commerce disagreed. The bulk of the Maltese population was employed in the cotton trade; much farm land was devoted to its cultivation and much money earned.<sup>52</sup> When questions were put to merchants about the matter, they asserted that besides the quantities consumed in Barcellona and Marseilles, there remained some 300 bales of cotton unsold; hence it was fallacious to import foreign cotton. Furthermore if 600 quintals of podded cotton were imported, Turkey, the common enemy, would benefit to the tune of 36,000 scudi.<sup>53</sup> Malta should rather supply more cotton and more varied materials at the Sicilian Fair so that her name would be duly publicized. The Chamber argued that it would help Malta's financial position better if farmers could grow another 600 quintals of cotton and sell them at 83 scudi each to the foreigner. They argued well for in 1770 Charles III of Spain provided a temporary and partial extension of the yearly quota of 2,500 quintals free of tax.<sup>54</sup> In 1771 he again taxed imports of bulk cotton by 20 per cent but in 1772 the calico merchants of Barcellona persuaded him to withdraw the duty completely on Maltese cotton for one year, apply it only to one-third of the imports in the second year, to two-thirds of the imports in the third year and to all imports in the fourth year. After that partial exemption, the tariff remained in effect for the remainder of the century, except during brief periods.<sup>55</sup> Were Levant cotton to be imported in Malta, only some twelve merchants would benefit.<sup>56</sup> The Government rather wanted that more citizens would be gainfully employed.

Importation of foreign cotton could create a glut in the market with subsequent business failures. However, it was only very sparingly that foreign cotton was allowed to be imported to Malta.<sup>57</sup> Business failures occurred through war upheavals and mismanagement of business rather than importation of foreign cotton. In 1782, Ignazio German, a cotton merchant, had gone to Barcellona for business.<sup>58</sup> On return he was able to pay his creditors only 40 per cent

of the sum borrowed. This failure occurred due to some mismanagement of the business. Also in 1794-95, Vincenzo Farrugia and Lorenzo Spiteri went to Barcellona to do business in cotton yarn; their business failed due to war in the Mediterranean.<sup>59</sup> Business failures of this sort occurred both in Barcellona and in Marseilles. In 1752, Michele Cammilleri and Aloisio Frigeri, partners, had borrowed money to create a sea-exchange of over a thousand scudi and buy cotton yarn to sell in Marseilles.<sup>60</sup> It was the Seven Years' War, these partners failed in their transactions, they could pay back only 80 per cent of their invested sums.<sup>61</sup>

The importation of Levant cotton depended on the several proclamations issued in particular years. In 1755 Giacomo Xuereb imported 2,875 scudi worth of husked and podded cotton — *cottone in grana e cotone in cocca* — from Mr. Nasser, a Greek merchant who lived in Acre.<sup>62</sup> However, in 1757 it was forbidden to import cotton from Acre.<sup>63</sup> Though in 1769 another order repealed the importation of foreign cotton from the Levant,<sup>64</sup> just a few months later Leonardo Gognidi imported cotton from Smyrna.<sup>65</sup> One cannot be sure why at times proclamations prohibited the importation of foreign cotton while on the other hand some merchants imported it; it might be that the authorities were reluctant to allow it because of adulteration with local cotton fibre that could ruin the export market. It may be noted here that the importation of Sicilian cotton into Malta was permitted provided that it was marked as Sicilian when spun and earmarked for sale.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Tolls and Port Dues*

Although for many years between 1750 and 1800, Maltese cotton was exempted from royal taxation, yet cotton merchants had to pay several tolls and port dues.

The *Diritto Manoel* ordered that Maltese exports belonging to either local or foreign merchants should pay 3½ per cent duty.<sup>67</sup> Imported goods paid 3½ per cent duty if they belonged to local merchants and 6½ per cent if they belonged to foreign merchants. The *Diritto De Rohan* stipulated that local merchants should pay a duty of 3½ per

cent on both exports and imports.<sup>68</sup> Foreign merchants paid  $3\frac{1}{3}$  per cent on exports and  $6\frac{1}{3}$  per cent on imports. Thus a merchant on 774 scudi 4 tari worth of goods imported paid 25 scudi 9 tari 15 grani at  $3\frac{1}{3}$  per cent.<sup>69</sup> Goods, mainly manufactured textiles, stockings and headcaps came from Genoa. Another merchant on exports worth 9,193 scudi 7 tari 4 grani of cotton yarn to Barcellona paid 306 scudi 5 tari 8 grani in customs duty in 1783.<sup>70</sup> In 1795 *basini* of cotton were exempted from duties.<sup>71</sup> Yet cotton yarn still paid customs duty according to weight and value. Imported cotton that needed quarantining paid 1 scudo per cent on the total value at the Lazzaretto.<sup>72</sup>

In Barcellona government taxes consisted of fixed sums levied on ships entering or leaving harbour for anchorage, wharf facilities, harbour pilots, quarantine, security besides other prevailing levies. Each tax was moderate but when added together they were considerable. The following are the expenses collected in 1788 on 37 bales of cotton yarn costing about 10,354 scudi and exported to Spain:<sup>73</sup>

	Sc	— tari	— gr
Customs Duty	345	1	15
Dritti Di Doganella e del Piombo	36	5	14
For Porters and Storage	13	0	5
Insurance	17	0	0
For Sacking of bales and weighing	159	7	0
Fees to the Notary	11	9	0
Insurance Contract	1	0	0
To the Custom's Clerk	1	0	0

Another instance occurring in 1769 can be quoted whereby 34 bales of different cotton yarn were re-exported from Malta after originally being bought from the Levant:<sup>74</sup>

	Sc	— tari	— gr
Customs Duty	257	5	0
Doganella	18	4	13
Visita	18	4	13
For the ship to leave harbour		7	5
For the Custom's Officer	2	9	11
Trade Mark and Sealing	1	5	0

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To the Public Weigher	6	16
Legal Fees	2	10
Dues to the Spanish Consulate	1	0
Port Tolls	3	9
For Loading	8	10
Watchman fees	1	0
Sack cloth and tying	150	6
Licence for the Ship	2	5

The ports of Marseilles, Genoa, Livorno and Messina were open to the flags of all nations — *la franchigia del porto*.<sup>75</sup> So it was suggested that Malta should imitate them; adding to her prestige, increasing revenue from tolls and the variety of goods on the market.

## Tradesmen

Cotton trade was not monopolised in the hands of a few merchants. So many names are mentioned though a few of them appear more often than others. The gentlemen who had signed the report entitled 'Should Malta import Levant cotton'?

Giuseppe Asciack, Lorenzo Galea, Giovanni Francesco Dorel, Francesco Alessi, Giuseppe Cornelio, Gioacchino Savron, Giorgio Faurmier, Conte Baldassare Sant, Nicolo Formosa , Agostino Formosa Doganiere, Giuseppe Fenech, Giocchino Arena, Console Giuseppe Abela, Simeone Prepaud, Lazzaro Alberi, Marc Antonio Muscat and Agostino Marchese

were themselves cotton merchants, businessmen and financiers, directly or indirectly concerned with the prosperity of the cotton trade.<sup>76</sup> It was only in the importation of foreign cotton that a few businessmen were engaged;

Gioacchino Isouard Xuereb, Emmanuele Pizzuto, Angelo Rutter, Pasquale Principiato, Luigi Arniaud, Antonio Poussielgues, Ludovico Mirabella Leonardo Cognidi, Francesco Bertis, Emmanuele La Hoste, Desiderio Laferla, Stefano Eynaud and Filippo Pulis besides others.<sup>77</sup>

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The '*Camera di Commercio*' itself stated that only twelve people benefitted from the importation of foreign cotton.<sup>78</sup>

### *Size of Exports*

The precise amount of the export trade in cotton yarn is hard to assess. Different authors suggest different amounts. According to De Boisgelin, exports of cotton yarn between the years 1788 and 1789 were worth 2,750,000 livres — and that the gross product of Malta was valued at three million;<sup>79</sup> which is equivalent to 1,250,000 scudi.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, De La Platiere quotes an annual customs revenue of between 150,000 and 200,000 livres, the export duty being 3½ per cent.<sup>81</sup> If De Boisgelin's estimate is correct, this amount of revenue should be reduced by half, to 100,000 livres. The figures show that on a revenue of some 200,000 livres equivalent to 83,333 scudi an export value in cotton of 2,400,000 scudi was expected. Though this export value is roughly double the sum of that quoted by De Boisgelin, it is close to the figure of three million scudi found in another source.<sup>82</sup> Badger maintains that in 1801, the value of raw cotton produced in the Maltese Islands amounted to about half a million sterling<sup>83</sup> — equivalent to six million scudi. Even though this amount refers to the total production it would seem to be somewhat inflated. The figure of three million scudi is more acceptable and reasonable.

## II THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TRADE

Cotton yarn enjoyed a reputation both in Malta and overseas where most of it used to be exported.<sup>84</sup> By injecting the Chamber of Commerce with new authority the government was taking a step in the right direction.<sup>85</sup> No sooner had this body examined the organization of the business than it lamented that Maltese cotton merchants were generally illiterate.<sup>86</sup> They fared well in their business but more cultured merchants of other countries fared even better. It suggested the opening of five schools for the training of existing merchants and their children in the

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basic subjects: reading, writing and arithmetic. Such schools could be erected in Senglea, Cospicua, Vittoriosa, Żejtun and Żurrieq, the places where most of the cotton merchants lived. It also suggested that a *Cathedra di Commercio* be set up at the University so that knowledge of book-keeping, bills of credits and the function of business could be studied.

### *The Necessity for Education*

In the 1770s cotton business was prospering but dealers had a lot of prejudice;<sup>87</sup> if they could be educated, such prejudices could be removed. Diffusion of knowledge is always helpful, more so then, when the use of a clerk was paramount due to the prevailing illiteracy. The clerk used to write letters, draw up bills, send orders and quotations. At times even the court reprimanded the merchant for the way he presented his books. He had recorded his transaction in a most careless way, on a scrap-book made of paper four inches squared.<sup>88</sup> Priests sometimes acted as procurator because of their higher education. Don Salvatore Attard was procurator of his family dealing both in cotton growing and cotton spinning.<sup>89</sup> He used to write bills and presented himself at court when necessity arose. So the setting up of schools was an urgency, whereby the cotton industry could be better organized.

### *The Middleman*

In the cotton organization, the importance of the middleman asserted itself. The middleman saw to it that the cotton yarn and other cotton products reached their destination. The role of the middleman was not necessary in the local consumption of cotton but only in its export. The farmers cultivating cotton wanted both to satisfy their family needs and to have extra quantities for sale. Middleman used to visit farmers, both Maltese and Gozitan to inquire about harvest prospects and try to affect an immediate purchase. Felice Barsia, a middleman, bought 56 rotoli of raw cotton from Pietruzzio Vella, a Gozitan farmer, in order to sell it to spinners.<sup>90</sup> When he came to pay for the cotton, he refused stating it was wet, unfit for spin-

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ning.<sup>91</sup> The court did not accede to his claims stating that once the cotton was seen beforehand complaints were useless now.<sup>92</sup> Herein lay the importance of the middleman. If he wanted to succeed, he had to be attentive and cautious on what to buy. Before a transaction could be declared final, the middleman had to pay ten per cent of the deal to the farmer.<sup>93</sup>

It seems that middleman would do anything to procure an immediate purchase, much before the cotton was ripe for harvest. The government took precaution against this habit. In 1764 it was declared illegal to purchase or to sell cotton before it was actually harvested.<sup>94</sup> Both in 1774 and in 1786 this decree was re-issued with more amplification: to combat usury; to avoid lawsuits between farmer and middleman accusing the former of foul play; to give ample time to the farmer to sell to the best advantage; to avoid speculation harmful to both vendor and buyer. Hence, the proclamation ordered that sale of cotton was to take place after the harvest was done and such sale was to be regulated by the current prices of the market. Moreover, it was stipulated that there were to be no promises of rewards during bargaining — a farmer and a merchant or middleman were to be left at liberty to do the best bargains. It must not be assumed that the provisions of the proclamation were always obeyed. Notary Saverio Bonanno of Żebbuġ sold to Battista Magro also of Żebbuġ the future cotton which was due to be collected on the 11th November from the area known as "Ta Ramel" for 40 scudi.<sup>95</sup> In the contract, Magro states that he had seen the cotton growing in the field. Evidently abuses were taking place in spite of the heavy fines.

### *Various Roles*

A middleman at times played the role of an agent or of a merchant. Francesco Casimeri was a middleman from Livorno.<sup>96</sup> He imported manufactured articles into Malta and exported cotton yarn. In November 1762 he succeeded in collecting 117 bales from various cotton merchants in Malta to take them overseas.<sup>97</sup> He was to get five per cent com-



mission after the sale was affected. The case proves that there was no ban on foreigners becoming middleman. The opposite held true as well. Giorolamo Cassar lived in Barcellona.<sup>98</sup> He was a middleman for Vincenzo Farrugia and Lorenzo Spiteri trying to affect sales for his employers. He used to send manufactured articles: printed cotton material, blankets, woollen cloth and caps.<sup>99</sup> In the year 1794, he failed to comply with the order sent to him, perhaps due to the war. Farrugia and Spiteri protested at court that they would refuse goods sent over by him as they had obtained them elsewhere. This shows the importance attached to the middleman in the trade.

The middlemen could not keep the goods themselves nor could they keep the money.<sup>100</sup> Their function was to bring both parties to an agreement. Middlemen could receive their fees only after a transaction was successful. Lorenzo Borg sold to Giuseppe Scicluna a middleman, 2 quintali 66 rotoli on behalf of Antonio Gusman,<sup>101</sup> Borg, unaware of regulatory law claimed the money from the middleman who in turn asked Gusman to pay back for the cotton. Gusman was unable to meet the account there and then and matters were brought to court. Meanwhile the cotton was left impounded at the Customs House where it had taken for weighing purposes. It took a month for the release of the cotton and for the decision of the issue. In the end it was Gusman who had to pay both for the cotton and for the middleman's fees.<sup>102</sup>

Middlemen helped merchant-capitalists to sell their products: fustians, sail-cloth, material for clothes, handkerchiefs, stockings besides local yarn.<sup>103</sup> The middleman used to help the merchants to borrow the necessary money for sea-exchanges, buy the goods from the artisan-producers and take it overseas. Guglielmo Castaldo was a middleman to Francesco Gazzara, he helped him load five vessels with cotton goods and cotton yarn for export to Barcellona where Gazzara went on business trips.<sup>104</sup> He sent 48 bales between January 1764 and June of the same year. From here Gazzara sent various amounts of money to his middleman in payments both for the cotton and the commis-

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sion. The value of cotton yarn exported amounted to well over 72,000 scudi and these yielded a profit of nearly 4,000 scudi.<sup>105</sup> Evidently the middlemen were essential in the organization of the cotton trade.

For the better organization of the cotton business even the law recognized the role of the middleman. It bound him to keep a book, numbered throughout its pages and sealed by the Commercial Court or *Consolato Del Mare*.<sup>106</sup> It had to contain all transactions undertaken with details concerning time, price, buyer, seller, weight, measurement and pacts. He had to describe the way money was paid and other clauses undertaken by the parties. In case of default, the middleman could be fined 10 oncie.

### *The Customs House*

All cotton bales intended for export were to be examined and weighed at the customs house for the customs duty to be calculated.<sup>107</sup> Cotton exporters were not allowed to deal in cotton yarn of different fibre qualities.<sup>108</sup> The Superintendent of the packing office was vested with the power to mark the cotton bales in order to see that they contained cotton of a similar quality to that shown on the vouchers.<sup>109</sup> Besides, no fibre should be wet or humid. After that, the bales had to be sealed and those without this seal could not be exported. The leaden seal had to contain the number assigned to the bale, its weight, its quality and the owner's name. This information was necessary to prevent abuse and to protect the trade between Malta, Barcellona and Marseilles. Merchants could also have a proper personal mark stamped or painted on their bales.<sup>110</sup>

The signature of the storekeeper at the Packing Shed was at times asked for at the Commercial Court to verify what litigants were asserting. Giuseppe Abela had ordered a bale of cotton from Francesco Alferan, an agent.<sup>111</sup> Alferan, presenting the Customs Invoice, said that Abela had already received his cotton, two quintali twenty-nine roto-li.<sup>112</sup> The court agreed with him — Abela had already received his due.

Duty paying merchandise, such as cotton, could only be weighed at the packing office or Customs House.<sup>113</sup> Only quantities under five quintali could be weighed elsewhere. This law jeopardised the livelihood of some district public weighers. As merchants and agents always had more than five quintali for export so they resorted to the packing office for the necessary vouchers. Gio Battista Decelis, having got the appointment of public weigher, wrote to obtain permission to weigh other objects besides cotton as directed by the appointment.<sup>114</sup> He had a wife and six children to maintain but by weighing just cotton only, he could not make a decent living. He added that large quantities of cotton were weighed at the Customs House to his detriment.

Cotton awaiting despatch overseas could be stored in the packing shed, which must therefore have been appreciably large. Cotton bought by Filippo Curmi was impounded at these stores for his failure to pay creditors of a previous venture.<sup>115</sup> He owed several thousands of scudi to the partnership of Francesco Curmi and Francesco Ellul. At the packing office several persons had different jobs: the watchman at the Customs yarn store, the Public Weigher at the Customs and Clerks. In 1799 Captain Ball reinstituted these posts: three public weighers, two watchmen and two clerks.<sup>116</sup> Ledgers were kept for details regarding sales, purchases and names of people connected with these transactions.<sup>117</sup> When token payments were made for future purchase and sales, these were to be entered too.

When a merchant sued a fellow partner for deceit, he was to be ready with a licence from the Chief Customs Officer to show the amount of cotton weighed for export. Francesco Garsin was owed the sum of 250 scudi 11 tari 4 grani by Gerolamo Bonnici who had bought four bales.<sup>118</sup> Garsin maintained that Bonnici had bought two bales at 101 scudi per quintale and another two bales at 91 scudi per quintale. The first bales consisted of cotton yarn while the others of cotton yarn partly of Levantine fibre. G. Grognet, Chief Customs Officer, sent in his receipt. On 1 June 1753 both Garsin and Bonnici came to an agreement with the latter paying the sum involved.<sup>119</sup>

*Chartering*

For the export of cotton, ships were chartered from private shipowners if the cotton merchant himself did not own a vessel. Sometimes several merchants teamed up together to charter the same vessel when the latter was too large for the quantity supplied by a single dealer. In 1763, the vessel of captain Tomaso Haidebre was chartered by Guglielmo Gilestri for eight bales, Gio Maria Carwana for twenty-five bales, Francesco Cini for thirty bales, Felice Briffa for eight bales and Francesco Attard for thirty-five bales paying a freight of 1 scudo 11 tari per quintale.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand Gioacchino Ross from Senglea was both a ship-owner and a cotton merchant.<sup>121</sup>

In chartering there did not prevail a fixed system of hiring. At times a fixed sum was paid for the whole load; at others the vessel was chartered at so much per quintale; still at others the ship was hired for a certain stipulated period of time. Giuseppe Depares, owner of a pink, was hired by Gaetano Bugeja to do a voyage to Civita Vecchia carrying 11 bales of cotton yarn and one box of cotton stocking for 40 scudi.<sup>122</sup> A Tuscan pink was chartered to load five quintali thirty-seven rotoli of cotton yarn and 301 quintali 57 rotoli of ashes, the former at two scudi eight tari per quintale and the latter at nine tari per quintale.<sup>123</sup> Note the discrepancy between rates charged, due perhaps to bulkiness and importance of the material. Anastasio Leopulo chartered a ketch for six months with the opportunity to opt for another two months at 289 *piastre veneziane* per month.<sup>124</sup>

Though a middleman was usually employed to effect sales and purchases of cotton, at times he helped arrange the chartering of a vessel too. Thus in 1763, Michele Borg acted as the middleman in the hiring of a Maltese vessel to be loaded with cotton.<sup>125</sup>

*Freight*

The freight rates reflected in general the movements of prices and services, and also varied according to nu-

merous technical, economic and political contingencies, notably risks from the sea and from men.

Freight Charged per Quintale		
Year	Destination	Freight charged
1756	Marseilles	1 scudo 4 tari <sup>126</sup>
1758	Marseilles	2 scudi 8 tari <sup>127</sup>
1758	Barcellona	4 scudi 6 tari <sup>128</sup>
1759	Barcellona	3 scudi 6 tari <sup>129</sup>
1760	Barcellona	3 scudi 3 tari <sup>130</sup>
1762	Marseilles	1 scudo 10 tari <sup>131</sup>
1762	Barcellona	2 scudi 2 tari
1763	Marseilles	1 scudo 6 tari <sup>132</sup>
1782	Marseilles	1 scudo 10 tari <sup>133</sup>

In freight contracts the usual five per cent surcharge was paid — *la solita cappa di cinque per cento* — besides the freight charge itself. Three merchants chartered a vessel for the transport of cotton to Barcellona.<sup>134</sup> Freight for bales was two scudi eight tari per quintale and the usual five per cent surcharge was exacted as well.

When cotton merchants chartered a vessel they often stipulated that they themselves would travel freely to and from the trading centre. Thus when a group of four merchants chartered a ship these partners in the venture received a free passage for themselves and their personal belongings.<sup>135</sup>

The chartering of vessels and payment of freight were carefully regulated by law. If a merchant was cheated into chartering a vessel which was legally impeded from sailing, he could refuse to pay the freight charge when he realized

the fact.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, merchandise laden on a vessel was always hypothecated in favour of the captain so that if the merchant failed to pay the freight charges, the captain could always be paid from the sale of the same goods. When captain Antonio Barbarossa was refused payment for freight of cotton sent overseas by two merchants, a sum amounting to 175 scudi 1 tari, the judge immediately ordered the merchants to pay the money.<sup>137</sup>

The full freight was not paid when a vessel was wrecked at sea but was charged as per mile of transit from harbour to the place of the wreck.<sup>138</sup> Yet again if a hired vessel was paid per period and the ship was wrecked, the captain could only ask for freight payment for the time between loading and wreck.<sup>139</sup>

If a captain failed to honour his side of the agreement he could be summoned to court. Giovanni di Nicola sent a court protest against captain Giorgio Piccioli who with his Venetian ketch failed to transport eight bales of cotton yarn out of a total of 28 bales.<sup>140</sup> The merchant added that he be allowed for extra expenses involved in storage ashore for eventual loading on another ship.

### *Risks*

Captains lost no time in sailing with their cotton cargoes as soon as agreement about freight charge was finalised. The sea ventures were risky through inclemencies of the weather, storms, ill luck and piracy; so much was at risk, the sea-exchange, the interest involved, the load of cotton and its after profit. Two partners who had borrowed 1,500 scudi for their business were able to transport three bales and one sack of cotton yarn from Malta to Marseilles.<sup>141</sup> Due to inclement weather their chartered vessel foundered. The usual testimony regarding the loss was given both at Marseilles and in Malta on 10 January 1750 and 19 February respectively. The testimony helped the merchants not to be molested by the creditors for their money.

In those days, though not on a large scale, acts of piracy still occurred in the Mediterranean Sea, disturbing commerce between one nation and another. Antonio Vella

hired a vessel from Joseph Mallia to set sail to Barcellona laden with cotton.<sup>142</sup> The vessel was insured against risks of sea, fire, wind, storms, Turks and enemies, indeed all mishaps except fraud and confiscation. When the ship left harbour, it was attacked by the Turks, a Barbary galeote, in the vicinity of Tripoli. The cargo of cotton was looted and the sailors were carried into slavery. The French Consul did his best to obtain their freedom later. When the crew and the captain returned to Malta they claimed their dues as per contract signed on 12 July 1798.

In those days when vessels relied on sails rather than anything else, storms carried a major risk and were a cause of quarrel. The merchant, Leopulo Anastasio, used to hire a vessel for fixed periods.<sup>143</sup> On one occasion he refused to pay the freight stating that the ketch had suffered damages in a storm and was rendered unseaworthy. At court, he claimed, that hiring this vessel would endanger both his life and his cotton; he asked for experts to examine it. Preto, the captain, would not admit the charge, stating that the ketch had been on the sea for seven years only. He maintained that he had other vessels similar to it, hired to other merchants, without anybody ever complaining as Leopulo had done. He rather thought that Leopulo wanted to forfeit the freight contract.<sup>144</sup> The court called several witnesses including the carpenter that had repaired it and two sailors; the former opined of its seaworthiness, the latter rebutting it. The court declared that the captain should hold responsibility for any damage caused to the cotton in its transport while Leopulo had to pay the freight charges. The court also took into consideration the terms of the agreement between the cotton merchant and the captain and it enforced them exactly.

A vessel could be hired to carry cotton and other merchandise only with the consent of all its owners or at least with the consent of the greater portion of them.<sup>145</sup> Thence after the signing of the agreement nobody and nothing could stop the vessel from departing on its voyage, except war and plague. Even rumours of war must have been well founded otherwise the owners were liable to incur cost of

damages to goods on board. In 1758 when a state of war existed in the Mediterranean, a cotton merchant, Pasquale Cini, chartered a ship to transport cotton yarn to Marseilles.<sup>146</sup> During the voyage the vessel was forced to Livorno by a British man-of-war. In 1754 similar litigation arose between two other cotton merchants and another captain.<sup>147</sup>

Fear of depredation made some partners who had bought 431 quintali 14 rotoli of cotton yarn and laden it on the Ragusan pink present a court protest to force the captain unload the cotton.<sup>148</sup> Agreed freight was three scudi per quintale and five per cent surcharge duty. They were ready to defray half the freight charge because they thought that the Ragusan flag was subject o depredation.<sup>149</sup> On the captain's behalf, Antonio Poussielgues, Consul for Ragusa in Malta, explained that for the last two months no Ragusan ship was known to have been depredated.<sup>150</sup> He claimed that even Barcellona law did not admit the charterers' views, and so they were to pay the full freight and the full surcharge duty. The court declared that a full freight and one-half of the surcharge should be paid. The consul succeeded through his arguments in convincing the court that there was no depredation implied by using the Ragusan flag. Hence once a vessel had been hired a captain must be paid his dues.

In 1792 because of rumours of war a charterer took a long time to bring his cotton to the quay for loading.<sup>151</sup> Captain Francesco Buera complained at court for having to wait throughout September, idling in the harbour. The court made the merchant, Paolo Bartolo, pay the agreed freight even though he was not yet ready with his cotton bales. The contract had to be adhered to.

#### *Invoice of Lading*

When the freight charge was agreed upon between cotton merchants and captain, the latter could set sail with cotton. However before departure he had to leave at the *Consolato Del Mare* the bill of lading.<sup>152</sup> This was filled in either by the captain himself or his clerk and it was recognised as a legal document. It contained a description of



the cotton or other goods, the quantity involved, the name of exporter and importer and the places where the ship had to call in its itinerary for loading and unloading. Even the charge of freight, certificates of packing and other various licences obtained were inserted. Contraventions were punished. These documents were necessary to show that these were not smuggled goods.

Once the itinerary was inserted in the bill, it could not be changed according to the whims of the captain.<sup>153</sup> It was argued that damage could be caused to the cotton or perhaps it would not fetch a good price leading to claims for damages. Changes in itinerary could be agreed upon by captain and merchants and specifications of these changes were to be left at the *Consolato Del Mare*. Rough weather however could compel the captain to change course without any loss of freight. Captain Durbeck and two cotton merchants, Luigi Azzopardi and March Antonia Attard, had signed a contract whereby the ship was hired to carry cotton from the East to Malta.<sup>154</sup> Freight charge agreed upon was 550 scudi per month and five per cent surcharge. The merchants protested that the captain had changed course and so they were not bound to pay the freight charge. The captain claimed at court that rough weather had made him do so, and his testimony was corroborated by that of other members of the crew.<sup>155</sup> He won his case, and besides the agreed sum, the cotton merchants had to pay as well for the extra days at sea.

When captains met storms during their voyages with loads of cotton, they had to sign a testimonial to that effect.<sup>156</sup> The testimonial contained details of the voyage, for the information and satisfaction of those who had lent their money for the purchase of cotton. Filippo Ruggiero, a cotton merchant had bought cotton for export.<sup>157</sup> He hired a pink piloted by captain Lorenzo Stafrace. The vessel was foundered in a storm but still Stafrace and members of the crew including Ruggiero rendered a sworn testimonial which would not hold them responsible for the loss of cotton. On the 1st of March the pink left Malta, and on the following day it arrived at the port of Augusta. Due to rough

weather they had to stay there up to the 22nd. They then set sail but had to return to the port of Della Bruca because of contrary winds. When the rough winds abated on the 28 they sailed to Plaia di Mascari where they loaded some wine. They left the port of Mascari on 31 and at 6 p.m. light winds continued to blow up to 1 April when they became fresh again. The winds remained high and the resulting high seas compelled them to remain in the Gulf of Taranto. Here the pink foundered, having been unable to withstand the storm. The sailors invoking the help of Santa Maria, escaped by swimming but nothing could be salvaged from the pink. The winds changed direction from North-West to South-East scattering to the shore some of the merchandise. In the end the captain could only sell the pink for scrap wood at whatever price he could get. Such testimonies gave exact dates, times, directions of wind, stoppages and other details.

Again, after the bill of lading was signed, captains could not be prevented from leaving harbour, even when sought for debt.<sup>158</sup> Creditors had to take action up to 48 hours before the signing of the bill of lading. Don Vincenzo Tanti summoned Vincenzo Ventura for the sum of 150 scudi lent to him by his late father for the purchase of cotton yarn and presented with an impediment of departure dated 14 September 1779 by the court, well within the stipulated time.<sup>159</sup> Ventura was the owner of a vessel plying regularly between Malta and Marseilles with cotton yarn.

#### *Responsibilities of Captains*

The quantity of cotton to be taken on board was indicated in the bill of lading and vessels could not be overladen.<sup>160</sup> Nor could captains expose cottons to other merchandise that could damage it. Captain di Mauro was accused of exposing some cotton yarn to the bad weather on his vessel and it got damaged.<sup>161</sup> Another captain, Giovanni Neretich refused to carry linseed oil, wine and other liquids unless these were well packed because he was afraid that they could spoil the cotton already laden on his ketch.<sup>162</sup> He also declared in court that he was holding the owner of these liquids responsible for any damages done to the cot-

ton on its journey to Marseilles. By way of contrast, captain Giuseppe Segond was not careful enough.<sup>163</sup> He was carrying cotton to Marseilles when his vessel sprung a leak. Some of the cotton got damaged and realising the unhappy situation he bought 17 quintali of tow to repair the vessel. Still the court declared against him and he had to pay 68 scudi to the cotton merchant.<sup>164</sup>

Maltese cotton enjoyed a wide reputation overseas, and locally everything was being done for its safeguard by careful organization of the role of the middleman, the public weigher, the packer, the customs officer and the ship captains.<sup>165</sup>

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4. NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
5. "...e per sostenendo fu proibita per tutte le Spagne qualunque manifattura di cotone ecceto i filati di Malta necessari ad alimentarle. L'ordine Regio permissivo i filati di Malta esclude in chiari termini il cotone di Levante manufatturato da noi": *Ibid.*
6. Suit cases expressly mention cotton yarn — *cottone filato*.
7. NLM, Libr. Ms. 430, Vol. 1, f. 70, published in *Collezioni di Bandi*, p. 54.
8. NLM, Libr. Ms. 628b.
9. *Ibid.*
10. NLM, Libr. Ms. 628c.
11. NLM, Libr. Ms. 628c and 628d.
12. "In 1776 the cotton thread shipped from Malta weighed roughly 4,166 tons; by 1779 it was 825 tons; in the first six months of 1792 it was 684 tons and in the last eight months before the arrival of Bonaparte the total tonnage was 658, and that when the French market had ceased": R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders*, London 1960, p. 85.
13. J.C. La Force, *The Development of the Spanish Industry 1750 — 1800*, California 1965, p. 14.
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14. *Ibid.*, Footnote 41, p. 14.
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18. As per contracts of the period.
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28. Letter from the Chamber of Commerce at Marseilles to Rouille dated 25th May 1753.
29. *Ibid.*
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34. Notaries used such words when drawing up contracts of hiring of vessels.
35. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 93 (1788), Pro Don Antonio Xiberras a Sanctum Vella., ff. 5 — 6.
36. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 91 (1785 — 86). Pro Antonio Agius a Joannes Zahra., f. 7.
37. Aloisio Principiato, Giuseppe Audibert, Agostino Magrin, Giuseppe Fenech, Giovanni Spiteri, Aloisio Abela, Francesco Mizzi, Felice Frendo, Giuseppe Depares are mentioned in lawsuits as merchant settlers in Barcellona.
38. "L'Introduttore Straniero vende a suo arbitro ed il Nazionale è soggetto a metà": NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
39. La Force, p. 86.
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41. NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
42. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 71 (1767), Pro Angelo Attard a Baldassare Carwana., ff. 64 — 66v.

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43. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 110 (1798), Pro Benedetto Catarina a Raphaele Zerafa., ff. 1 — 7 .
44. 1 Passetta was equal to 5 tari 3 grani or 5 reali.
45. *Ibid.*, ff. 87 — 88.
46. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 94 (1798), Pro Joanne Farrugia a Joannem di Nicola, ff. 3 — 5v.
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61. "Intrapresero per Marseglia e fin per Malta ebbero da soffrire grosse perdite su gli effetti e loro mercanzia, più che questi principiarono con la guerra in tempo che li prezzi di detti cottoni furono molto cari": *Ibid.*, f. 7.
62. NAV, Not. A. Marchese, Ms. R 19/342, ff. 6v — 7.
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68. "Per le robe soggetto a dogana, le quali s'estraggono da questa Isola per fuori regno, tanta da cittadini, quanto da forestieri si paghi alla cassa tari una per oncia": Codici De Rohan, p. 287, Articles 23 and 24.
69. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 91 (1785-86), Pro Antonio Agius a Joannes Zahra., f. 8.
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84. "L'annuo consumo di Barcellona, non eccede le balle 2,500. Ed in Marseglia comprese quelle, che transitano per Barcellona si spediscono circa balle 800": NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
85. *Ibid.* See also NLM, AOM, 578, ff. 347 — 347v.
86. NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
87. "Impedirà tutti arresti pregiudiziali al commercio interno dei detti cottoni e filati...": NLM, AOM, 579, ff. 372 — 373.
88. Maruzo Dalli was the clerk. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 96 (1790), Pro Salvo Damato a Joseph Briffa., f. 78v.
89. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 86 (1781), Pro Salvatore Attard a Francesco Cortis., f. 1.
90. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 49 (1755). Pro Petruzzo Vella a Felicem Barsia., f. 1.
91. "Il cotone è bagnato": *Ibid.*
92. *Ibid.*, f. 15.
93. "La onde qual'ora il compratore in grazia del venditore somministra qualche somma d'anticipato a conto del prezzo potrà di tale somma avanzata... il lucro sino li 10 per cento scudi". NLM, Libr. Ms. 429, Bandi 1784 — 1794, ff. 96 — 98.
94. *Ibid.*, f. 96.
95. NAV, Not. A. Brignone. Ms. 32/614, f. 733.
96. NAV, Not. A. Carnisi, MS, 16/681. ff. 46 — 47.
97. Merchants included Natale Cammilleri, Pietro Mannarino, Archangelo Carwana, Antonio Mizzi, Giuseppe Abela, Antonio Barassa, Pasquale Delceppo and Giovanni Cammilleri: *Ibid.*
98. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 102 (1794), Pro Vincentio Farrugia a Gerolamo Cassar., f. 1.
99. *Ibid.*, ff. 2 — 7v.
100. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Malta 1784, Libro VII Capo X, Articles 4,9 and 11.
101. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 76 (1770), Pro Laurentio Borg a Josephus Xicluna., ff. 1 — 5.
102. *Ibid.*, ff. 23 — 24v.
103. These articles for export are mentioned in NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.
104. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 73 (1768), Pro Guglielmo Castaldo a Francesco Gazzara., ff. 1 — 29.
105. *Ibid.*, ff. 59 — 62.
106. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VII Capo X, Article 1.
107. NLM, Libr. Ms. 429, Bandi 1744 — 1756, f. 51.
108. See below.
109. NLM, Libr. Ms. 429, Bandi 1744 — 1756, f. 51.

110. "Signor Francesco Policano di Citta Vittoriosa ha sulle quattro balle cotone filato segnato con li Numeri 1, 2, 3, 4 e con la marca \*": NAV, Not. F.S. Zammit, Ms. 17/1134, f. 91.
111. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 41 (1751), Pro Giuseppe Abela a Francesco Alferan., ff. 1 — 5.
112. *Ibid.*, ff. 9 — 15v.
113. "Nessuno possa pesare fuori della Dogana mercanzie soggette à diritti di quella, senza licenza del doganiere, sotto pena di pagare once venti al fisco": *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VII Capo IV, Article 2.
114. "di degni accordare la facolt' all' oratore di poter pesare qualisia cosa": NLM, AOM, 1193, f. 244, dated 16 December 1779.
115. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 91 (1785-86), Pro Francesco Ellul a Francesco Curmi., ff. 1 — 5v.
116. NLM, Libr. Ms. 1118, pp. 14 — 29.
117. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VII Capo IV, p. 256.
118. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 46 (1753), Pro Gerolamo Bonnici a Franciscum Garsin, ff. 1 — 14v.
119. *Ibid.*, ff. 21 — 23v.
120. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 18/681, ff. 187 — 188.
121. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 16/681, f. 26, dated 12 December 1758.
122. *Ibid.*, f. 85.
123. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 61 (1762), Pro Pasquale Cini a Michalem Delia et Societa., ff. 1 — 2v.
124. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 40 (1751), Pro Anastasio Leopulo a Raffaele Preto., ff. 1 — 2.
125. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 18/681, ff. 130 — 131.
126. NAV, Not. A. Marchese, R. 19/342, ff. 452v — 453v.
127. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 61 (1762), Pro Pasquale Cini a Michaellem Delia et Societa., ff. 1 — 2v.
128. NAV, Not. A. Marchese, R. 19/342, f. 11.
129. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 16/681, ff. 117 — 118.
130. *Ibid.*, ff. 68 — 69.
131. NAV, Not. J. Savron, Ms. 2/1052, f. 451
132. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 18/681, ff. 136 — 137.
133. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 87 (1782), Pro Lorenzo Frendo e Bartolomeo Mannarino a Salvatorum Bartolo., ff. 7 — 8v.
134. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 96 (1789), Pro Salvatore Bartolo a Saverio Portelli., ff. 3v — 4.
135. The four merchants were Tomaso Abela, Giuseppe Abela, Giovanni Abela and Lorenzo Carwana. NAV, Not. G. Carnisi, Ms. 16/681, contract dated 12 December 1758.
136. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VI Capo VIX Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, p. 116.



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137. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 93 (1788), Pro Antonio Barbarossa a Angelo Fenech et alios., ff. 1 — 5v.
138. "Se il nolo sarà fatto a scascio, è sempre obligato a pagare il nolo a rata per miglio contandosi dal luogo da dove segui la miglio contandosi dal luogo da dove segui la partenza, sino al luogo del naufragio": *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VI Capo VII Article 11, p. 117.
139. "Se il bastimento era stato noleggiato a salorio, è sempre obligato a pagare il nolo per tutto quel tempo che il bastimento avrà servito": *Ibid.*, Article 12, p. 117.
140. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 85 (1780), Pro Giovanni di Nicola a Capitano Georgum Piccioli., ff. 1 — 3.
141. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 37 (1750), Pro Francesco Filippone e Felice Cachia a Diversi., ff. 1 — 10v.
142. PAV, Miscellaneous Packet No. 5, case starts on 1 March 1799.
143. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 40 (1751), Pro Anastasio Leopulo a Raffaelo Preto., ff. 1 — 23v.
144. John Dodsworth, the British Consul in Malta; Giovanni Guerini and Giulio Gatt two experts testified that the ketch was unseaworthy. *Ibid.*, ff. 35 — 38.
145. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VI Capo VII, Articles 1 and 2, pp. 114 — 115.
146. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 61 (1762), Pro Pasquale Cini a Michalem Delia et Societa., ff. 1 — 5v.
147. Again Maria Cammilleri and Pietro Mallia chartered a maringale, piloted by captain Francesco Lombardo who was to transport five bales of cotton yarn and some cotton stockings. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 50 (1755), Pro Capitano Francesco Lombardo a Giovanni Maria Camilleri, ff. 1 — 7v.
148. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 63 (1763), Pro Salvatore Bianchi et Pasquale Cini a Capitano Matteo Aisovich., ff. 1 — 2v.
149. "E soggetto alla depreddazione de Turchi quando che prima era franca": *ibid.* f. 2.
150. *Ibid.*, ff. 7 — 12v.
151. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 98 (1792), Pro Francesco Buera a Paulum Bartolo., ff. 1 — 4.
152. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro VI, Capo VIII Article 3, p. 120.
153. *Ibid.*, Libro Sesto, Capo II Article 21, p. 93.
154. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 101 (1793), Pro Joseph Dorbech a Aloysio Azzopardi et alios., ff. 1 — 5v.
155. *Ibid.*, ff. 7 — 15v.
156. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro Sesto, Capo II Article 38, p. 99.

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157. PAV, CDM, Testimonialia Contestati, Vol. II (1771 — 1780), folios not numerated. The testimonial was given on 6 April 1792.
158. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro Sesto, Capo II Article 14, p. 90.
159. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 85 (1780), Pro Don Vincenzo Tanti a Gaetano Formosa., ff. 1 — 7v.
160. *De Rohan Dritto Municipale di Malta*, Libro Sesto, Capo II Articles 30 and 39, p. 96.
161. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 85 (1780), Pro Vincentio Versin a Gaetano di Maino., ff. 1 — 8.
162. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 86 (1781), Pro Giovanni Neretich a Mercanti., ff. 1 — 5.
163. PAV, CDM, AO, Vol. 80 (1773), Pro Giuseppe Segond a Giacomo Grech., ff. 1 — 15v.
164. *Ibid.*, ff. 20 — 24.
165. NLM, Libr. Ms. 1020.

## The Duties of the *Secreto* during the period of the Hospitallers\*

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When Malta was given to the Knights Hospitallers, the office of the *Secrezia* fell under the direct and personal control of the Grand Master.<sup>1</sup> The *Secreto* was appointed by the Grand Master from among the Maltese noble gentlemen who were serving the Order in the administration of the Islands.<sup>2</sup> Hence the Office carried with it honours, prestige and particular duties which made the Office one of the best positions which men of ability and ambition hoped to achieve.

In order to administer his office the *Secreto* required to have his own staff. For this purpose he had the authority to appoint a judge, an assessor and a registrar, a *Capo Maestro* or land surveyer sometimes referred to as *perito* for public affairs, a *Capo Maestro Ribuccatore* or Head Leveller, a *Capo Maestro Falegname* or Master Carpenter, an official known as *Visconte* who acted as a senior officer over the man-servants who were known as the *famuli* of the Magistral *Secrezia*. With regard to the last mentioned, the *Secreto* was expected to have at least two for each *casale*. They acted as messengers and supervisors over fields but could be asked to do any other work required by the *Secreto*.

The Office of the *Secrezia* had its Tribunal to deal with

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\*[This article is an extract from *The Office of the Secrezia in the Maltese Islands*. Unpublished B.A.(Hons.) dissertation. The University of Malta, 1971.]

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the valuation of rents and leases of magistral lands. The passive cases and all cases related with scisa were dealt by the judge of the Secrezia. Thus the debtors concerned with property were made to appear in the Tribunals which were held in Notabile and in Gozo. In Gozo civil cases were also dealt by the Office. All passive cases concerned with tenants of magistral lands were dealt with by the Judge who received a salary of 500 sc. per year during the XVIIIth century. The principal registrar received a salary of 360sc. per year, while the assistant registrar received 120sc. The Office also held its own 'bank' or rather depository where fines and dues were collected. The person in charge of this depository was sometimes referred to as the Chancellor of the Secrezia.<sup>3</sup>

The Secreto had to ensure that such offices of employment with the Secrezia were also to be filled separately in Gozo. He had to appoint two soldiers and a chaplain for the Tower of Comino. Each of these employees received a letter of appointment known as *patente* directly from the Secreto.<sup>4</sup>

Though such employees reflected more than anything else the administration of the land revenues, there were also others which indicated particular rights. Some chaplains were also employed by the Secrezia. The Secreto had to appoint a chaplain for the church of the Assumption found in Ceppuna, Marsa, and another chaplain for the church of St. Nicholas at Boschetto. These chaplains also received their *patente* obliging them to fulfil their ministerial duties and to celebrate festivities in their respective churches whenever the Secreto instructed them.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the Comino Tower, the Secreto also required a *Castellano* or Keeper, who had to be a Bombardier employed with the Order. This *Castellano* was sometimes referred to as Capo Maestro and his appointment had to be confirmed by the Grand Master and certified with a *patente*. Other places which came under the jurisdiction of the Secreto and required particular officers, were the Boschetto, the Bordonari of the Magistral Palace and the Magistral fiefs. At the Boschetto he had to keep two

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Guardians were also given the *patente* to define their duties: one had to work in the Boschetto and had to take care of the animals that were kept there, cultivate the gardens of the Secreto, and fulfil other general services; the other had to take care of all the work that was required to take place around the Boschetto. Another Guardian had to be employed for the Bordonari of the Palace, and he had to be approved by the *Signor Cavallerizzo*<sup>6</sup>.

From among the famuli and sometimes from among local farmers, the Secreto had to appoint a *Castaldo*, that is a custodian for each magistral fief he had in his care in Gozo. This Castaldo had to care after the fief during such occasions as reviews and false alarms.<sup>7</sup> From the time of Grand Master Ximenes the Secreto also started to appoint famuli who were given the rank of *Ufficiale* or *Custode* of particular villages and nearby areas such as Kirkop, Lia, Zebbug and other casali.<sup>8</sup>

The Secreto's terms of reference seem to have been extensive and precise. It was his duty to issue licences to permit the demolishing or the rebuilding of walls over the same foundations in the country, to permit the opening of doors, windows, to permit the cutting of stones found in public spaces, and to permit the collection of white or red soil. Those who requested to collect more than twenty five loads (*vicggi*) of soil had to make a petition to His Eminence by presenting a relation to the Secreto and, permission granted, they had to pay 25tr. for each 100 loads. The money that was collected was to be applied for the repair of roads in the service of His Eminence. Before issuing a licence the Capo Maestro had to go to examine the area to ensure that what was going to be done was not to be of any prejudice or inconvenience either to the public in general or to private individuals. The Capo Maestro was paid 4tr. for each licence whenever he had to go to examine the place personally.

Sometimes Maltese householders or tenants made requests to get some part of the public space near their property to straighten up the walls. Such applications had to be made to the Secreto who taxed the applicants not less

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than 28tr. according to the concession. Those who wished to occupy a large measure of public space were required to make a 'memorial' to the Grand Master which had to be noted by the office of the Secreto and examined before the request was granted.

When trouble arose between neighbours because of doors, windows, public spaces, and such other related matter, which projected onto the public streets, it was the duty of the Secreto to examine the differences and act as judge. In making such examinations or inquests, the Secreto had the right to 1sc. and the Capo Maestro to 4tr. per examination.

Those who wished to improve the outward appearance of their houses by building balconies '*alla romana*', by adding a room upstairs or columns near the front doors, also had to obtain the Secreto's licence. His permission was also necessary for the making of shelters, defences or supporting walls called '*dolfini*', covered staircases and steps, including those leading to cellars, pavements or kerbs, and covered canals to conduct water to private houses.<sup>9</sup>

Besides being concerned with landholdings and building improvement, the Secreto was also expected to take charge of the provisioning of barley and straw for the Magistral Stable. When the month of May arrived, he had to ask the *Signor Cavallarizzo* to inform him of the amount of barley and straw that was required. Having obtained this information the Secreto had to send two officials to collect as much straw and barley as was required, and these officials had to take decisions in public in front of testimonies. The Secreto was expected to establish the required quantity and to give a reason for the collection. He then had to ensure that the barley would be consigned from the various territories of His Eminence. The carrying of the straw and barley was usually made by the *famuli* of the *Secrezia*. However no mariner or boat-owner could transport barley from Gozo before first having obtained the *polizzino* or permit from the Secreto addressed to the notary of the *Secrezia* in Gozo. It was the duty of this

notary to send barley every now and then with trusted boatmen. Such boatmen were to be given a certificate to show the quantity they had loaded on their boats. On their arrival in Malta, they had to present it to the Gran Visconte or another person who was well known by the Secreto.

During the earlier period of the Hospitallers' administration and up to the first two decades of the XVIIth century, the Secreto had another interesting duty. At the time when wheat (*grani*) was to be reaped and other fruits collected from the lands, the Secreto was expected to go with thirty or forty estimators whose duty it was to examine the lands on the same day. Each estimator was given a particular plot to examine and calculate the possible production per salmo and to tax them for the *dritto reggio* or the Grand Master's right to an annual *canone* and for the *massaro* or farm-hand at *ratione laboris*. The products examined included barley, mixed barley (*mischiato*), wheat, peas, beans, cotton and other industrial fruits. The collection of the tax in kind, in tumoli, used to be made by the Secreto on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul.

This right was not to be exacted unless the taxable lands did produce enough industrial fruits. When a scarcity happened, the farmers were not expected to pay anything; but they could not leave their lands unsown. They were expected to sow their fields for three years, and on the fourth year they were to leave the fields fallow and were then to be taxed. Moreover the patrons of such lands who set up a vineyard or a garden had the privilege of being freed from the tax in kind if they paid a carlino per year.

In 1625-28, during the times of De Paule, the patrons of taxable land felt aggravated by this annual estimation and they besought the Grand Master and his Chapter General to re-arrange the situation. A Commission of Illustrious Persons studied the problem by holding discussions to see how this could be changed and reduced into money-tax which could be paid annually. A notice or *bando* was issued, calling the patrons of the lands concerned to reveal at the office of the Secrezia their lands which

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they knew to be subject to this *canone* under pain of confiscation if they did not turn up.

They were expected to report the quality of their lands and state how much grain they could produce and how much tax they used to pay every year or *interpollarium*. To ensure justification, the Commissioners went to examine the lands together with experts to see with their own eyes and then they presented their report.

It was agreed that if farmers or land patrons wanted to pay their tax in kind, the tax was to be valued in the following way: the mixed barley was to be taxed at 3sc. for each tumolo, and other fertile land at 16oz. per salma per *salmaria* per year or *interpollarium*, was known as *ticherin* whilst the sterile land, which was taxed at 8sc. per salmaria per year or *interpollarium*, was known as *gimen* because of the fact that it was not sown.

To ensure the collection of this tax a notice was to be issued to all interested. It was to be read in all the chapels and churches of the Islands. Within eight days they were to appear at the Office of the Secrezia, and since many turned up, it appeared to the Commissioners that they could raise it (*sbassarla*) from the 13th to the 14th of the month, and once again to give notice to those interested as before so that within eight days they were to appear if they found themselves aggravated. But on this occasion the majority reported that it was happy and that the tax was well made; only 14 persons out of about 500 wished to maintain the old system and so their plots were re-estimated. As a result it seemed to the Commissioners and those who had appeared to make another rebate (*ribarcio*) of 14tr. 7gr. per salmo, and in this way they had reached this *ius*, which had been collected in kind, to the value of 264sc. per year.<sup>10</sup>

In March the Secreto was expected to despatch licences for the manufacture of salt along the shores of Malta. It seems, however, that this depended on the conditions of lease that were made for the gabella regarding the Saline.<sup>11</sup>

Another interesting aspect of the Secreto's office was



the public auctioning of leases for the magistral property. This had to be done a year before the end of the previous lease or rent. The Secreto was expected to issue a circular for each parish priest of the country fifteen days before the occasion so that the list of property to be leased would be made public. Another circular to which used to be attached further information used to be affixed to the walls of each village. During the days of Pinto such auctions, sometimes were held in a house at Floriana.<sup>12</sup>

Various conditions were laid when the magistral lands were leased.<sup>13</sup> Particular attention was given to conditions regarding the Boschetto portions where vine trees and citrus trees were found in abundance.<sup>14</sup> One particular and different lease was, however, that regarding concessions for tunny fishing. It seems that conditions made in 1564 served as a basis for those made later as those of 22nd April 1758.<sup>15</sup>

Now in order to help him ensure his will, the Secreto had the authority of imprisoning anybody who contravened his orders or jurisdiction, either in Malta or in Gozo, and he had the power of arresting debtors.<sup>16</sup> The magistral gabellotti and their pledges as well as the various officials employed in the Secrezia also received special protection. Together with the famuli they were protected by the Court of the Office of the Magistral Secrezia in civil cases. Moreover those who became debtors to the magistral gabellotti and to other creditors regarding the *finanze regie* as the *Diritto di Dogana* and the *Diritto di Scisa*, could be called to explain their behaviour.

To the drudgery of the office of the Secreto, honours were added in the sense that the Secreto was given his dues by being granted places of honour in such activities as meetings of the Popular Councils, the Procession of *Corpus Christi*, the annual visit to the Hospital of Notabile, and the solemn entry of a Grand Master elect or Bishop elect into the city of Notabile.<sup>17</sup>

The meetings of the Consiglio Popolare were held once in the Palace of the Jurats at Notabile and once in the Mu-

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nicipal House of the Jurats of Valletta, once the latter had been built. The Secreto was expected to attend and to sit in the first place to the left side of the table where the Seneschal would sit.

Once the relation of the counsels of the notary was read, the Secreto was expected to vote by casting the vote in which there would be inscribed the name of the person to be elected, into the jug (*boccale*) on his side, at the same time as the Capitano della Verga of Notabile, who would be sitting to the right side of the table.

Every year in June the two Magistrates of Notabile and Valletta, used to meet in the Municipal House of the Jurats of Valletta to discuss the *Mete delle Vettovaglie*. The Secreto had to be informed to attend these meetings to discuss the victuals. Having established the matter in the morning, he was expected to give a relation to the Seneschal in the afternoon, and to take note of the *Mete* to the Grand Master. During the discussion with the Magistrates, he also held a place of honour: he sat in the middle at the head of the table in the Jurats' Hall while the Jurats of Notabile sat on the right and those of Valletta on the left.

The Procession of *Corpus Christi* was always a pageant. Various notables of the Island were expected to participate, and they seemed to have guarded their right of precedence with some jealousy. The Secreto had to participate in the procession that was held in Notabile. He had to accompany the *conducenti* or celebrants holding a torch until they arrived at the door of the Church. From then onwards he had the right of holding the front left staff of the canopy while the Capitano della Verga held the right one.

That the person of the Secreto was held in high esteem may be seen by the honorary position that he was granted on the occasion of the visit of the Magistrate of Notabile to the Hospital of Santo Spirito, and the official entry of the Bishop of Malta into the old city. The Magistrate of Notabile was expected to visit the Hospital on Holy

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Saturday once every year. For such occasion the Governor of the City and the *Secreto* had to be invited.<sup>18</sup> The *Secreto* had to be treated with the same formality as the Governor, however, while the Governor sat on the right, the *Secreto* sat on the left of the table that was brought for the occasion. When the Bishop made his solemn entry into *Notabile*, the *Secreto* was also expected to accompany him by walking on his left while the Governor stood on the right and the *jurats* marched in front. The procession traditionally started from the Dominican Priory of Rabat where the Bishop elect used to welcome the distinguished personages.<sup>19</sup>

If the *Secreto* happened to go on board a galley he had the honour of being saluted by three gun salutes. This salute used to be repeated also when the *Secreto* was disembarking.<sup>20</sup> Whenever he was on his way to Gozo, he received a nine gun salute, five of which were *con palla*, from the Tower of Comino, where the flag had to be hoisted as soon as the *Secreto's* boat was perceived. The same thing had to be done when he was returning to Malta, and the same formality of salute had to take place as soon as he approached the Tower of Mgarr.

When the *Secreto* arrived in Gozo he was expected to pay a visit to the Governor in the Castle and he had to inform him beforehand of his visit by sending a messenger. Arriving at the Castle, the bridge had to be lowered and the guards had to present arms and salute him. Every time he passed in front of them, they had to salute him by presenting arms — *presentandosi con le armi in ispalle*. The Governor was expected to repay him his visit in the same manner, and if the Governor happened to provide him with a dinner the *Secreto* was expected to do the same! As long as he remained in Gozo, moreover, the *Sergente dal Castello* was expected to visit the *Secreto* every evening to tell him the password '*ossia il Santo*' that was issued by the Governor for the guards.

While he was staying in Gozo the *Secreto* could extract anything for his personal use without requiring li-

cence. He could go hunting for such game as hares and partridges in the island of Comino which was also a magistral reserve.

In Malta the Secreto was expected to move about the Island to inspect public spaces and magistral fiefs. For this purpose he had a cab or calesse of the *Cavallerizza* of the Grand Master completely at his disposal. This cab was to be daily at his service according to his own wishes.

But perhaps the job which entailed much flattery was connected with the solemn entry of the Grand Master into the city of Notabile. A day before such occasion the Secreto was to invite the Governor, and the Jurats of Notabile for a dinner on a table provided for the occasion by the *Cavallerizzo Maggiore* of the Grand Master. He was also expected to invite for another dinner, the Judges *Capitanale*, *Fiscale*, and *Tesoriero*, and those gentlemen who could turn up with a horse to meet the Grand Master in the morning. This dinner used to be held in the Palace and for this purpose the Grand Master used to provide a table that would accomodate every guest.

On the day the solemn entry was to take place, the Secreto could accompany the Grand Master with his own cab from Valletta instead of coming on horseback. And when the procession that used to leave the Cathedral to welcome the Grand Master used to arrive at the Gate of the City, the Secreto was expected to appear dressed in black to hold the front left staff of the baldacchino.

When the Grand Master reached the Palace he used to be provided with a present by the Magistrate. The present was then handed to the Secreto to divide it among deserving citizens. The Secreto used to give 10 zecchini as gratuity to the men who would have carried the present and this used to be distributed among them by the Treasurer under the Supervision of the Governor.<sup>21</sup>

The present consisted of a dozen basins of black sweets, four calves, six rams, twelve piglets, twelve big cocks, two dozen chickens, a dozen ducks, forty-eight pigeons, and a dozen hens.

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Having received the present, the *Secreto* was expected to distribute it thus: two basins of sweets for the Pages of the Grand Master; ten basins of sweets and a calf were presented to the Cathedral Chapter; a calf, four piglets and four ducks were given to the Jurats; four big cocks, two chickens, two ducks and a piglet were sent to the Governor.<sup>22</sup>

The chaplains of the Grotto of Rabat received a calf; the Monastery received six cocks, four chickens and a ram. The Dominican Priory and the Franciscan Friary as well as the Friars Minor (*P.P. Soccollanti*) received one ram each, while the Augustine Fathers were given a ram and six ducks. The Carmelite Friary also received a ram. The Treasurer of the Università of Notabile received a cock and a chicken, as did the Chancellor of the Magistrate. The youth who recited the oration during the ceremony received a calf, while the Master of Ceremonies was awarded two chickens and a piglet for his pains. The rest of the present, that is, two capons, twelve hens, twenty four cockerels and forty eight pigeons were sent to the Procurator of the Hospital of Santo Spirito to provide some good dishes for the sick.<sup>23</sup>

The *Secreto* could well dust his robe and go to take a rest after fulfilling his commissions in the services of his master and employer, the all-powerful Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers and Prince of the Maltese Islands.

### APPENDIX I LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT

- (1) **Appointment of a *Secreto***  
[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, ff.1-1v.]

FRATER EMMANUELE PINTO dei gratia Sacra Domus Hospitalis Sancti Joanni Hierosolimitani Militari Ordinis Sancti Sepulchri Dominici Magister humilis pauperumque Jesu Christi Custos Nobili Comiti JOANNI FRANCISCO PRETIOSI fidei vassallo nostro nobis dilecto salutem in Domino et prospero ad vota successus virtutem tuorum me-

rita, alique preclara talenta, quibus personam tuam ornatam novimus, promerentur, et nos hortantur, ut ea tibi conimittimus, que sub tua cura, ut confideamus, susceptura sunt incrementum cum igitur proviso officium SECRETIAE insularum nostrorum Melite e Gaudisii ad nos spectare dignoscatur. Hinc est quod confidentes de tua fide, et sufficientia, serie presentium de nostra certa scientia, et speciali gratia dictum officium Secretie Civitatis et Insularum nostrorum Melite, et Gaudisii tibi nobili comiti Joanni Francisco Pretiosi ad nostrum beneplacitum concedimus, committimus, et fiducialiter commendamus, cum salario solito, et consueto, et cum prerogationis preeminentiis, auctoritate, et facultate ad ipsum officium spectantibus, et pertinentibus, beneficiendo in eodem, teque Secretum dicturum Insularum nostrarum Melite e Gaudisii constituimus et ordinamus. Proviso tamen, quod prius duramentum consuetum de benefideliterque te gerendo in manibus eius, ad quem legitime spectat prester. Precipientes, et mandantes omnibus et quibuscumque officialibus, et hominibus dictarum Insularum Melite, et Gaudisii in vim fidelitatis, et homagii, quo nobis, et Religioni nostre sunt ustricti, ut et pro Secreto, ut premittitur, habentes in possessionem dicti Officii Secretie inducant et in ductum conservent, ac de fructibus, et emolumentis, sique sunt, honoribusque dictum officium concernentibus respondeant, responderique faciant. Taliter ergo in premissis to exhibere curabis quaternus in primis Deo sit satisfactum, et opinio, quam de to concepimus nos minime salat. In cuius rei testimonium Bulla nostra Magistralis in cera nigra presentibus et impressa.

Dat. Melite in Conventu nostro die xviii mensis Januarii 1740 Ab.Inc. juxta stylum nostre cancellarie, Secundum verò cursum ordinarium 1741.

= Registro. in Cancell. =

Fra Rochus de Tavera, Vice Cancell.

= Locus ꝛ sigilli.

(2) **Note of Appointment of a Judge**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act. Orig., Vol.II, f.159v.]

Comparavit paenes acta huius Off. Mag. Secretiae Illus.

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D.D. Caietanus Bianchi Melitensis Patritius anconitanus, et comes de Veterana Secretus Suae Celis Ser.ma Principis Nos.i dignissimi, et Magistralis Secretiae harud Insularum Melite et Gauli Procurator Generalis et pris. elegit, et nominavit in Judicem huius Off. Mag. Secretiae, Perill.rem. V.E.I.D. CAIETANUS BONAVIDA praerogativis, praehe-

minentis, antelationibus, honoribus quoque, et onoribus quibus eius antecessoris et memere pato. hactenus gravisi sunt Unde. S.

xii nov. 1775

**(3) Appointment of a Surveyor**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.161.]

Noi Conte Gio F. Preziosi Secreto di sua A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque che Mro. Filippo Pace di Casal Birkirkara è stato da noi eletto per Capo Maestro e Perito della Mag. Secrezia in questa Isola di Malta che per ordiniamo di volerlo ogni uno riconoscere, a stimare per tale con renderli quella ubbidienza che si deve per l'esecuzione dell'ordini nostri concendendo ai simili Cap Maestri ed altri famuli della Mag. Secrezia in questo Dominio di Malta obbligandolo d'intervenire prontamente ad ogni mo. comando in caso d'occurenza. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnta. sotto scritta di mo. proprio pugno e sugellata col sugello della Mag. Secrezia.

Data in Città Valletta di quest'Isola di Malta li 15 Maggio 1750.

Pretiosi. Locus ✕ sigilli.

R.to Not. Fran. Alfano, Off.Mag.Secretiae, Magr. Not.

**(4) Appointment of a Head Carpenter**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.9.]

Noi Conte Don Gio. Francesco Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque che Mro. Giuseppe Galea della Valletta è stato da noi eletto per Capo Maestro Falegname della Mag. Secrezia per quest' Isola, che però ordiniamo di

volerlo ogn'uno riconoscere e stimare per tale con rendergli quella ubbidienza, che si deve per l'esecuzione delg'ordini nostri concedendo al medesimo tutte quell esenzioni, e prerogative, che sin oggi hanno goduto simili capi maestri e altri famuli della Magistral Secrezia in questo dominio. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnte. sottoscritta di nostro proprio pugno e suggellata col sugello della nostra Magistral Secrezia.

Dat. Melite in hac Civ. Valletta. hac die Prima Feb. 1741.

Il Conte Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S.

Locus ✠ sigilli.

R. Not. F. Alfano, Mag. Secrezia Mro. Not.

**(5) Appointment of a Famulo**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.5.]

Noi Conte Gio. Francesco Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque, che Giovanni Grech di Birkirkara e stato da noi eletto per Famulo della Magistral Secrezia in quest'Isola di Malta, che pero ordiniamo di volerlo ogn'uno riconoscere e stimare per tale, con rendergli quella ubbidienza, che si deve per l'esecuzione de gl'ordini nostri, concedendo al medesimo tutte quel esenzioni, e prerogative, che sin oggi hanno goduto simili Famuli obbligando intervenire ad ogni nostro comando in caso d'occorenza. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnte. sottoscritta di nostro proprio pugno, e sugellata col sugella della nostra Magistral Secrezia.

Dat. Melite in hac Civ. Valletta, hac die xxxi Jan. 1741.

Il Conte Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S.

Locus ✠ sigilli.

R. Not. Fran. Alfano, O.M.S., Mag. Not.

**APPENDIX II**

**GENERAL CONDITIONS OF LEASES**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, ff.621-633]

Die xxiiii Feb. 1768

Per l'affitti delli Beni Magistrali

Patti Generali ed Universali



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1. Che in tutti li beni magistrali non possa secondarsi il seminario, cioè non possa da gabellotti seminarli per due anni consecutivi fromento primitivo detto volgarmente fromento forze, orzo, meschiato nella medesima porzione di tali beni.
2. Che non possa seminarli in detti beni da gabellotti erba di cenere se non nelle parti aride, ed incoltivabili ad altro, e con licenza espressa dal Signor Secreto.
3. Che non possa seminarli in detti beni da gabellotti nell'ultimo anno dell'affitto cumino, ne lente.
4. Che saranno tenuti di mantenere le terre, orti, o giardini nello stesso stato in cui si troveranno in tempo, che li sarà stata concessa tale gabella, ne potranno senza previa licenza del Sgr. Secreto cambiar la coltura delle rispettive porzioni di terre, cioè continuando a coltivare in orti le porzioni, che erano coltivate orti, in giardini li giardini; e non dovranno permettere per colpa propria il delizzionamento de beni, altri sarà lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto non solamente obbligarli al risarcimento dei danni, mà potra espellere subito li gabellotti dalla gabella, il tutto senza formalità giudiziaria.
5. Che saranno tenuti li conduttori di tali gabelle pur anche durante li quattro anni di gabella fare li piccoli ripari, val'à dire, risarcere li muri, e catene per l'altezza di palmi cinque, innalzare le brescie cadute, che non oltre passeranno in lunghezza una canna, risarcire le terrazze con ribuccare le crepature, ad oggetto di impedire li spordenti dell'acque, ripulire li canali, e ribuccarli come pure di fare il risarcimento de legnami, sia in porte grande rustiche per la di cui spesa non oltre repassará rispettivamente li tari' sei.
6. Che succedendo per qualsisia accidente danno notabile nelle terre, e beni sudetti saranno tenuti di farne subito partecipe al Sgr. Secreto, e mancando di farlo, dovranno soggiacere incontrastabilmente al risarcimento di quei danni maggiori, che in seguito ne diveranno appurtata dal detto Sgr. Secreto potrà la verità del fatto, senz'alcuna formalità di giudizio.

7. Che restando debitori della gabella, o di parti di essa per un'anno, o più, non solamente il Sgr. Secreto potrà agire per il pagamento contra li gabellotti, e suoi pleggi, ed obligati in solidum, ma gli sarà permesso ancora d'ingabellarli à danni e spese de gabellotti debitori e suoi pleggi, ed obligati in solidum, senza altra formalità di giudizio, ma con farne semplice nota nell'immargine del quatterno di gabella.
8. Che saranno tenuti di dare un idonea pleggeria coll'obbligo solidale benvista al Sgr. Secreto quale si farà nell'istio di gabella e non dandosi sarà lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto di nuovamente ingabellarli ad altri à danni, e spese dei gabellotti, senza, che sia tenuta d'interpellarli giudizialmente e fare nessuno formalità giudiziaria.
9. Che se nel decorso della gabella il pleggio, ed obligati in solidum si scopriranno non idonei, saranno tenuti li gabellotti à semplice richiesta del Sgr. Secreto dare altri pleggi idonei, ed a lui benvisti, e mancando di farlo tra terne di ogni quindici, da contarsi dal giorno che il Sgr. Secreto richiedera nuova pleggeria, di cui farà nota in margine dell'istro. di gabella, gli sarà parimente lecito d'ingabellarli ad altri senza nessuna formalità giudiziaria a spese danni, ed interessi dei gabellotti.
10. Che in caso di qualunque notabile guasto, o danno, che sopravverrà in detti beni in tempo della gabella, come se per mancanza di pioggia, o che l'annata sarà stata sterile, è non avrà prodotto, o per abbondanza di pioggia, grandine, tempesta, innondazione, e qualsisia accidente mancasse la sostanza degli'effetti agabellati, verrà l'uso di detta gabella in tutto, o in parte impedito i suoi prodotti, profitti notabilmente diminuiti, non sarà al gabellotto accordato defalco, se non quello solamente secondo la disposizione solita darsi dalle leggi in casi di danni gravissimi, avuto riguardo a tutto il tempo della gabella.
11. Che durante la gabella di quelli di detti Beni che si troverranno saranno mai compensati al gabellotto qualunque danni, guasti, che soffrirà a cagionativi dall'ani-

mali di caccia, che si tratengono in tali riservati, o' per causa di loro conservazione.

12. Che non sara permesso ai gabellotti durante l'affitto svellere alcun albero, o' sia verde, o' pure secco, che possa trovarsi nei giardini, o territorii magistrali da loro tenuti a gabella, ma occorendo farcio, devono parteciparlo prima al Sgr. Secreto quale rincosciuta la necessita, farà svellere tali alberi, e la legna appartiene ad esso Sgr. Secreto, e contravenendo ai tali patto nelle forme sopre espresse, li gabellotti, saranno tenuti a pagare in pena quel tanto, in cui saranno condannati dal semplice ordine del detto Sgr. Secreto senza alcuna appellazione.
13. Che li gabellotti a' cui saranno liberate le gabelle di qualsisia bene magistrale esistente in quest'Isola di Malta, saranno tenute pagare al Sgr. Secreto oltre la gabella, li soliti carnaggi da regolarsi a' un scudo per cento sopra la totale gabella da pagarsi il giorno quindici Agosto d'ogni anno.
14. Che li gabellotti a' cui saranno liberate le gabelle di detti beni, non possan' ammettere altri compagni, ne rinunciare, subaffittare o' il totale, o' parte di detti beni avuti a' gabella, senza aver avuto prima il consenso ad espressa licenza dal Sgr. Secreto, senza di che sarà nulla la compagnia, rinuncia, o subaffitto fatto e sara lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto di spogliare il subaffittavolo dal subaffitto avuto, anche doppo fatto il contratto di esso.
15. Che il gabelletto a' cui saranno liberati le gabelle di detti beni saranno tenuti pagare l'annua pensione convenuta per tale concessali gabella in tre paghe uguali, la prima nel di quindici Agosto, la seconda a' Natale, e la terza a' Pasqua d'ogni anno.
16. E finalmente che detti beni si gabellano presentamente e sempre sotto tutti li altri patti, con cui sono stati soliti gabellarsi, benché ora non nominiamo, ma s'intendano nominati perche sono più che notori.
17. Sarà lecito al medesimo Sgr. Secreto durante la gabella,

migliorare il territorio, terre, e giardini in tutto, o in parte, con doversi poi far regolare da comuni periti da parte ammigliorata in riguardo al maggior fruttato, che sarà per rendere, ed il gabellotto sarà tenuto pagare nell'anni consecutivi dopo fatto tal miglioramento quel tanto di più averanno giudicato detti periti.

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#### SOURCE REFERENCES

1. D. Miede, *Histoire de Malta*, Tome II, p.353; NLM, Libr. 388, p.14 para.3 notes this formality and adds "eleto dal S.E. il Secreto, otterà dal Cameriere Maggiore di S.A. un polizzino diretto al Secretario della Cancelleria, il quale in vigor di detto li spedirà le solite Bolle, ossia diploma essendo incominciato tal uso dai 18 Gennaio 1741...". It should be added that letters of appointment were sent to the Secreto since the days of L'Isle Adam, however. The legal terms of reference of the Secrezia were embodied in the Laws of the Islands, see *Del Diritto Municipale di Malta* (Malta 1784) Cap.XVII-XVIII.
2. The income of the Grand Master came to him as Head of the Order and Prince of the Islands; it was directed by the Office of the Ricetta Magistrale. The Receiver, the president of this office, presented information to the Grand Master of his administration for every semester. In consequence of the Cession of the Islands, the emoluments of the fiefs and leases which in the past belonged to the 'Regia Secretia', and of those which the Grand Master acquired by means of sale or confiscation. The fiefs and benefices became to be known as "Della Secrezia". With the income of the Secrezia was included the right of Scisa (tax) which was paid 'in occasione della translazione dei beni stabili'. The collection of the rights of the Dogana which formed a principal article in the Income of the Grand Master were channelled into the Ricetta Magistrale. An example of this is the Scisa on wine which had been imposed by Ferdinand of Aragon in 1507 in favour of the Università of Notabile. In 1595 it was transferred to the Grand Master 'coll'obbligo dell G.M. di pagare l'Unità un compenso stabilito di 625sc'. TREAS. B. 289 Gionta, p.1, notes that from time immemorial the Kings, and when the Islands were handed over to the Knights, the Grand Masters, had the royal right called 'canont' on certain lands annotated in a *quinterno* known as Juliana which used to be preserved by the Secrezia.

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3. A.O.M. 6405, Div. Scrittura D, f.43.
4. Copies of *patente* are found in Reg. Act. Orig. Vols. I & II (A.S.C.J.) examples of which are given in APPENDIX I.
5. A.S.C.J., Reg. Act. Orig. Vol. I (1740-70), f.8, notes the appointment of Rev. Carlo Hagius of Curmi as chaplain of Ceppuna Church on 25 Feb. 1741. He had to celebrate Mass, and fulfil liturgical functions and others requested by the office of the Secrezia.
- A.O.M. 6535, f.66 notes that the chaplain of Ceppuna used to get 73sc. per year for Masses while that of Boschetto used to get 122sc. 10tr. 8gr. from the Treasury.
6. NLM. Libr. 388, p.19f., under 'Autorita del Secreto'.
7. *Ibid.*, p.21, last paragraph states that this was made 'in vigor di sovrano decreto emanato li 8 Maggio 1723, registrato nell'Ufficio della Magistral Secrezia del Gozo: come apparisce anche dal formula di simili patenti'.
8. A.S.C.J., Reg. Act. Orig., Vol. II presents various appointments issued by Secreto Muscat Sceberras and his successor Secreto Stanislao Xara Cassia.
9. NLM, Libr. 388, p.10 notes 'se però il balcone sarà con sagliature, si deve fare supplica a S.A. che vien rimessa al Secreto, appartenendo a lui conoscere ogni incidente che riguarda lo spazio pubblico'. And in the section 'Ufficio del Secreto nelle Isole di Malta e Gozo', last paragraph adds 'E' offizio del Secreto relatare le suppliche di coloro che vogliono fare in istrada canale coperti per condurre le acque dalla fontana, che vien in città, per i propri lor beni: nel che non dovrà altro riconoscere se non l'appartamente allo spazio pubblico, che non resti pregiudicato, come anche i vicini, niente ingenerendosi del gius della fontana, essendo altro ispezion'.
10. TREAS. B 289, Gionta, pp.1-4. It seems that the Secrezia intended to levy this tax on ecclesiastical lands as well — Bishop's, Convent's, Abbatial Houses' and individual religious persons' — but the persons concerned neither revealed their property output nor did they consent to accept the innovation. The Bishop was ready to excommunicate anybody who dared infringe ecclesiastical rights and other ecclesiastics pointed out that the licence of the Pope was required for the collection of royal tithes from the property: 'excommunicamus omnes eos, qui in terris suis nova pedagia seri gabellas faciunt ... nel cap.27.26L ... per bulla di P.Pio V la 2a. juxta eos: qui collectas decimas ... et alia onera clericis personis — eorum bonis — ...'. With the same Gionta there are attached pages of a *Quinterno del canone*

## THE DUTIES OF THE SECRETO

- dovute alla Magistral Secrezia dal anno 1625-26 et 1627-28.* The total given is 258sc. 7tr. 2gr. and the word *pago* is written four times along the right hand margin.
11. A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.514. Fishing in the Salina area was a reserved right of the Secreto.
  12. NML, Libr. 388, p.10 sqq.
  13. See Appendix II: General Conditions of Leases.
  14. A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.513, & Vol.II, f.209-210.
  15. A.O.M., 562, ff.166-167v.
  16. NLM, Libr. p.19 paragraph 8.
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 14 under "*Onori e funzioni del Secreto di Malta*". The statement '... dal diciotto Gennaio 1741, essendo stati noi, per somma bonta di S.A. eletti per secreto dell'Emm.Emmanuel Pinto felicemente regnante', indicates that this MSS is a transcription of a monograph of the Secreto Count G.F. Preziosi.
  18. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15a; P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta* (London 1964), p. 30.
  19. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15 sq. mentions the entry of Mgr. Alferan during the reign of G.M. Vilhena when Count G. Preziosi was Secreto; A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig. Vol.II, f.14 provides a declaration made by Pietro Paolo Pace Testaferrata on the 16 December 1770, that concerns the solemn entry of Mgr. Bartolomeo Rull (1757-1769) which occurred in June 1758. It says that the jurats led by the Governor on the right and the Secreto on the left went on horseback to meet the Bishop elect at the Dominican priory. The Bishop received them at the door and then sat on a throne for the reception during which two jurats and the Governor sat on his left. Afterwards they moved to the Barracca in the following order of precedence: the grand cavalcade of the Bishop's court headed the procession followed by gentlemen after whom walked the four jurats followed by the Bishop with the Governor on his right and the Secreto on his left; *See also*: P.Galea, O.P., "The New Bishop of Malta with the Dominicans at Rabat on the eve of their solemn entry into the Cathedral," *Scientia*, X, 3, pp.125-144 which also notes that the first bishop known to have done this, according to the *Juliana*, Vol.V, 2, n.611, kept at the Dominican Priory of Rabat, was Mgr. Balaguer Camarassa. Galea adds information about the entry of Mgr. Rull which occurred on 27 June 1758 and of Mgr. Pellegrano in November 1770; NLM, Libr. 5, p.484 notes the antiquity of the custom while on p.238 it refers to the solemn entry of Bishop Alpheran. On p.486 it gives some particular information regarding the entry of Mgr. Fra Gaspare Gori Mancini which

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occurred on 13 September 1722: it says that the Capitano della Verga was invited to accompany the Bishop from the Dominican Priory to the Barracca on horseback and then under canopy to the Cathedral. The Secreto *showed new pretensions* for he wanted to go on horseback with the Capitano della Verga although this was against custom. The Grand Master ordered that if his Secreto wished to go to accompany the bishop, "non potere ne dovesse in conto alcuno precederli, ne prender la mano a' verreno de ss. giurati con che queste" while on p.491, para.11 it says that the Secreto stayed with the Bishop even at the Barracca where they had to wait for the Cathedral Chapter to arrive. See further: P.D.M. Callus, "Tradizione Ospitalità Dominicana al novello Vescovo di Malta" *ARCH.MEL.*, Vol.III. p.3-11, and E.B. Vella, "Solemn Entry of Mgr. Rull. Grand Master Pinto present at the Cathedral", *Scientia*, X,4, pp.180-184. pp.180-184.

20. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15 notes that Secreto Count G.F. Preziosi received this honour from General Bali Denin, in Mgarr, Gozo, when he was on the *Galera Capitana* in August 1748. The same happened when he was on the ship *S. Nicola* in St. Paul's Bay in June 1750 and when he was on the same ship later in August of that year in Mgarr, Gozo.
21. *Ibid.*, p.16 notes the frivolity of G.M. Pinto who ordered the Secreto to distribute 20 zecchini instead of 10.
22. *Ibid.*, the present for the Cathedral Chapter had to be sent to the house of the Dean, 'come dignita Magistrale per dividue con i colleghi'. At the solemn entry of Pinto an ethical error was committed: it was sent to the Canon Precentor. The Jurats' share was forwarded to the First Jurat who then divided it among his colleagues.
23. *Ibid.*, f.16a; P. Cassar, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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GRECH, CHARLES B.

### **Umbrellel fuq Tas-Sliema**

Book of the Month. No. 114/115

Malta, KKM, 1979. 196pp. Illustrated.

*Umbrellel fuq Tas-Sliema* is much more than a recollected lad's-eye-view of the war in his native town. It is a work of art: naive, it is true, but a work of art nevertheless. No amount of niggling criticism can rule out the rhythmic qualities of the prose, the poetic rendering of carefree youth in a tortured era, the stylistic economy of the dramatic passages. Of course, the work is far from being faultless, but the intelligent reader accepts the faults after having finished the book, his sense of gratitude for the better things proving stronger than any possible irritation.

Charles B. Grech had one great advantage in writing his book: he is not a writer, not a professional. Being a photographer he wrote without the shackling fears, anxieties, cautions and cares of the professional writer, and produced a work of admirable spontaneity. Normally, such a man would require the services of a ghost-writer to improve his prose; it is only on rare occasions that a naive and informal frame of mind produces excellent results. This is the case with *Umbrellel*. The simplicity of the prose is its strength, because it renders the book limpid and direct. *Umbrellel* has the cadences, tones and expressions adoped by the contemporary educated gentleman, and is thus universally appealing. Because it is so simple and so immediate, it is consequently also vivid. Can there be greater praise for a book than to say that the present critic, at its close, felt that the experiences recounted had become part of him, a quasi-personal memory? This is recorded with the



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utmost sincerity, and is due to any personal predilection for the genre.

It would be most unfortunate if any intelligent reader were to classify *Umbrellel* in the same fashion as the librarian. It is not a war-book in the sense that it deals with the technological or tactical appraisal of war-time incidents. It is not a moronic glorification of heroism, personal or national, nor an arid evaluation of events. It is a delicately-written description of the journey of a tender soul across a weird landscape wherein all the normal constituents, are strewn into perplexing angles and positions. It is a human chronicle.

Literature deals with the elegant expression of durable sentiments, and *Umbrellel* is Literature. Literature can never bore, and *Umbrellel* entertains. Of course, the word 'entertains' begs qualification, because the book recounts some most painful episodes. The reader derives a spiritual and refined entertainment even from passages replete with pain and drama because sharing another man's pain is noble as well as ennobling: It is only possible if the other man expresses his anguish, and the better the expression, the greater is the magnitude of both empathy and sympathy. Without artifice or artificiality, Grech conveys the drama, the pain and the humour.

Grech displays a Dickensian technique for portraying adults through younger eyes, but he is not consistent in it, reserving this Dickensian caricature for persons in the foreground. This, one feels, produces some unevenness, and is one of the book's faults.

Where, however, the book proves most disappointing is in its anti-climactic structure; it tends to dwindle toward the end, mainly because it concentrates more on furnishing a chronology of the war (and this is more or less platitudinous) rather than on delivering this same chronology through personal anecdotes, as was the case earlier. His style is still good, but it is now weakened and hurried. This is where his lack of professionalism starts to show, but it does not spoil the book.

Grech's narrative style is at its best when he recounts moments of greatness or drama, as when he discovers his young friend dead near the Sliema post-office, or when his mentor, the admirable Father Alexander, is found crushed under the rubble. The incident which most impresses, however, is the one wherein Grech and his mother witness (unwittingly at that moment) the releasing of a stick of bombs which kills his brother, his mother uttering words which turn out to be so sadly prophetic. The way he handles this very difficult passage pays tribute to his skill.

The book is well rounded-off with very good photographs (some of them previously unpublished) and some appendices which are more interesting to a war-historian than to the general public.

Charles B. Grech's *Umbrellel* is a delightful book, satisfying beyond most expectations, and it appeals to a wider range of readership than any other book dealing with the way. The greatest compliment I can pay Mr. Grech is to repeat the words of an author friend of mine:

It's a book I wish I'd written myself.

C. CARUANA CARABEZ

LUTTRELL, ANTHONY (Ed.)

**Hal Millieri: A Maltese Casale, Its Churches and Paintings**

Maltese Social Studies, No. 1.

Malta, Midsea Books, 1976. 144pp. Illustrated.

The recorded history of the small *casale* of Hal Millieri spans almost 300 years. The *casale* itself is first mentioned in 1419 and it seems to have been abandoned around 1700. Indeed the last recorded birth there took place on 14 July 1711. Since then it, together with its churches, lay relatively unnoticed in the rolling plain in the south-eastern corner of the Island.

The church of the Annunciation is the best surviving

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example of the typical Maltese countryside church, of which no less than 430 were registered during Dusina's Pastoral Visitation of 1575. Its stylistically striking frescoes, priceless examples of late Medieval Maltese art, contain some unusual iconography and whose importance had been amply demonstrated by Gervaise Mathew in the late sixties.

Anthony Luttrell, the editor of the excellent *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights* (London, 1975), has again assembled an array of experts whose contributions make up *Hal Millieri: A Maltese Casale, its Churches and its Paintings*, the first in the series of Maltese Social Studies published by Midsea Books.

Dr Luttrell's concise topographical and historical introduction to the Hal Millieri complex provides an indispensable and comprehensive framework for the other studies and traces the vicissitudes of the *casale* and its churches right up to the present.

Godfrey Wettinger's *The Village of Hal Millieri: 1419-1530* is a most solid and precious piece of historic detective work and perfects the technique he had previously used in his study on the lost villages of Malta published in *Medieval Malta* by restricting his attention to just one of the sixty villages that were to be found then on the Island. Dr Wettinger's indefatigable research in notarial and parochial archives, militia rolls and angara lists enables him to draw up a fascinating portrait of a homogeneous peasant community where the growing of crops and animal husbandry seem to have been the main concerns; indeed the author has only managed to find one solitary reference to a craftsman in the *casale*.

Amongst Dr Wettinger's other contributions, his *Artistic Patronage in Malta 1418-1538* particularly stands out. His study of wills and financial records help him to throw much needed light on the method of artistic patronage in late Medieval Malta. This period marks the emergence of the first native painters one of whom, Giovanni de Saliba married the sister of the famous Sicilian artist Antonello da Messina.

The frescoes at the Church of the Annunciation are described in detail by Genevieve Bautier Bresc, an expert in late Medieval Sicilian painting. Dr Bresc discusses these outstanding exemplars of Maltese art in their Sicilian and continental contexts. This study is beautifully complimented with the integral text of the restorer of the frescoes, Paola Zanolini.

Mario Buhagiar's *The Annunciation Church at Hal Millieri* includes a meticulous description of the surviving structures and the clearance of the site. The third and longest part of his study puts the Church in the context of Medieval Maltese Church Architecture and is a particularly useful contribution.

Tony Mangion in his paper *Religious Life at Hal Millieri 1575-1975* comprehensively treats of the population of the *casale* and its decline. He also analyses the architecture of the churches of the Annunciation and the Visitation and their liturgical furnishings, the cemeteries and their precincts together with the incomes and expenditures of the chapels. Mangion also provides three interesting appendices: The Churches of St John and St Michael, Births at Hal Millieri: 1567-1711 and a List Of Pastoral Visitations.

The present volume is a substantial social and economic study of a particular Maltese *casale*. It succeeds admirably in testing broad theories on a narrow front through a deep and detailed case-study. It certainly meets the editor's declared aim of providing fresh insights and suggesting new materials and methods of approach to Maltese history in the Late Middle Ages particularly in the face of the comparative dearth of local records.

Hal Millieri informs the scholar and entertains the intelligent reader. It does for this *casale* on a small scale what le Roy Ladurie was to do in 1978 for Montaignou, that is bring a dead, abandoned community back to life. The book itself is an all too uncommon example of a collection of learned papers, distinguished in their own right, but where the sum of the total happily exceeds that of its precious parts.

LOUIS J. SCERRI

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MIZZI, LAWRENCE

**Għall-Holma ta' Hajtu**

Malta, KKM, 1980. 102pp. Illustrated.

In 1942 the Germans were planning the invasion of Malta and Carmelo Borg Pisani, a Maltese living in Rome, volunteered to land on his native Island, gather and transmit vital information and, possibly, be picked up again. Since 1937 he had studied art in the Italian capital and on the start of hostilities had joined the Italian army.

What actually made him embark on such a difficult mission is not too clear. Physically — probably even psychologically — he was the last man for the job and, indeed, failed miserably in his task. Dr. Tommy Warrington, a former childhood neighbour then serving as a Colonel with the British Army, recognised him and within six months he was tried and hanged.

*Għall-Holma ta' Hajtu* is about this attempt which in itself has no importance at all in the annals of World War II. The episode would actually have passed into oblivion even among the Maltese had it not struck the imagination of Laurence Mizzi, then still a boy of twelve.

Mizzi started researching for his book some years ago. Official and family channels were of little or no help and the only substantial documentation available was Guido Puccio's *Vita di Carmelo Borg Pisani* (Florence, 1943) and a special edition of *Malta*, a paper published in Rome by a number of Maltese who believed that Malta's fate lay with Italy; both sources were heavily biased.

Borg Pisani shared this belief and it seems that in his book Mizzi is primarily concerned with placing the Spy's tenets and actions in a proper context and thus, in a sense, rehabilitating "a traitor" who, in the ordinary course of events, could have made a name for himself as a painter.

Mizzi opens his book with the historical background of the strong links Malta had with Italy since time immemorial. It is a concise exposition, but also one of the clear-

est, of a thorny question which bedevilled Maltese politics in the first part of the 20th century and had an adverse effect on Great Britain's relations with the Italy of Mussolini.

Malta formed part of the Two Sicilies till the arrival of the Knights of St. John who, being of European stock, further strengthened the island's cultural connections with the continent. The influence of important Italians living in exile in Malta at the time of the Risorgimento buttressed claims to the island which were later to be stressed by Mussolini and his Fascists.

In Malta irredentism did not make much ground but it did boost the pro-Italian tendencies of the *Partito Nazionale* in its struggle to contain the British onslaught on Malta's cultural links and traditions.

British influence on the Maltese mind and way of life is of fairly recent origin in spite of the fact that the British era in Malta opened in 1802 (it was to last till 1964). By the end of the 19th century it had made so little impact that British administrators were forced to adopt measures to impose a wider use of English. The *Partito Nazionale* reacted vigorously and its stance was only defeated by direct legislative measures from London in the 1930s.

Borg Pisani was born in 1915. He was educated at the "Umberto Primo", a school financed by the Italian Government and as a young man frequented the Fascist club. In 1937 he was given a scholarship by the Italian Government to pursue in Rome the study of painting which he had begun under the famous Maltese artist Caruana Dingli.

Mizzi's account of Borg Pisani's Roman sojourn shows how it strengthened the student's Fascist beliefs. It therefore sounds quite logical that he should have joined the Italian Army and, later on, subscribe to a mission which, he must have thought, could lead to the fulfilment of his "irredentist" dreams.

The second part of the book deals with the arrest of Borg Pisani, his trial and his death at the hangman's rope.

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Again Mizzi was hampered by official silence but through sheer patience he succeeded in interviewing a sufficiently large number of eye-witnesses to be able to provide a complete story and prove wrong the Fascist version of the spy's death.

Among the author's primary informants are Dr. Warrington himself, Mr. Vivian de Gray, a police officer (later Commissioner of Police) who was involved in the case against Borg Pisani, and Fr. F. Bilocca, one of the two Capuchins who assisted him in the final days in the death cell.

Mizzi also engages in an interesting discussion on the trial's outcome in the light of later legal action taken by the British against Maltese colleagues of Borg Pisani who had joined the Italian army during the war.

*Għall-Holma ta' Hajtu*, now in its second Maltese edition and due to be translated into Italian, puts in a novel perspective facts which prejudice and ignorance might have obfuscated. The passage of time has led to an objective assessment of Borg Pisani's "dedication" to his country.

JOE FELICE PACE

## CASSAR, PAUL

### **Early Relations between Malta and the United States of America**

Maltese Social Studies, No. 2

Malta, Midsea Books, 1976. xi-129pp.

When in April 1753 the Liberty Bell cracked for the second time, the State House of Philadelphia turned to the firm of Pass and Stowe for a third, and hopefully better, example to be cast. Little is known of this John Pass, though we have the unimpeachable evidence of the Speaker of the Philadelphia Assembly that he was 'a native of the Isle of Malta'.

This, however, is not the earliest connection between the American States and Malta. As far back as 1719, the Order of St John had suffered considerable losses after an

ill-advised speculative investment in the so-called Mississippi Scheme.

Dr. Paul Cassar's *Early Relations between Malta and U.S.A.* traces the establishment and growth of relations between the two states right up to 1906. It is obvious that such a relationship had to be mainly maritime in character and though it was not exceptionally solid or profound, Dr Cassar's careful research principally in the Consular Despatches for Malta from 1801 to 1906 has enabled him to write a highly readable and informative account of life on the Island insofar as it touched upon the American Republic.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 17 December 1796, making Malta one of the first countries to have a United States consular officer accredited to it. Relations reached an early and welcome climax soon after the British took over the Island; during the Tripolitan War of 1801-5 Malta proved its strategic value by allowing itself to be used as a depot for the supply of arms and men to a navy that was fighting a war three thousand miles away from its home base. Maltese sailors made up a considerable number of the sailors in the fleet that succeeded in ridding the Mediterranean of the Barbary Corsair menace.

Dr. Cassar's analysis of the consular despatches could not fail but bring out the characters and personalities of the various consuls who held office during the period. Of the ten consuls Dr. Cassar considers, the one who dominates the period is surely William Winthrop Andrews who held office for 35 years from 1834. Winthrop served his country well; his despatches betray an eager personality trying to please his American masters by sending a veritable flood of information. He reports on political developments, economic measures, social customs, military measures and so on, with the obvious intention of trying to upgrade his local office. Indeed his complaints about the expenses needed to make ends meet are the leit motif of his correspondence. It was fitting that it was during his term of office that the United States decided to make the Malta consulship a paid one in 1866.



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Dr. Cassar also writes about famous American visitors to the Island in the nineteenth century. It was an American, Andrew Bigelow, who wrote one of the earliest nineteenth century accounts of life in Malta. His book, *Travels in Malta and Sicily*, was published in 1831 and was based on what he saw and experienced in the course of a six week visit in 1827. His colourful and interesting narrative provides a most interesting commentary on Malta and the Maltese. Another well-known American visitor to Maltese shores was General W.T. Sherman, the Commander in Chief of the United States Army. Sherman was the Civil War general best known for his march from Ohio to the sea.

Another chapter deals with the repeated attempts to encourage Maltese migrants to settle in America. This migration never really appealed to the Maltese until the destitution brought about by the collapse of the war economy in 1919 forced many migrants to consider new countries instead of the traditional ones on the North African littoral.

Dr. Cassar's achievement lies in his serendipitous discovery of these consular despatches and their re-working in a highly readable and consistently interesting narrative that is attractive at various levels. The author's medical background is often betrayed by his careful annotation of medical facts and figures. Indeed he often goes slightly of his way to include such details.

The present volume, the second in the excellent series of Maltese Social Studies published by Midsea Books, is attractively produced, only just marred by the handful of misprints that seem to be the bug bear of local publications. This should however in no way detract from the merits of a book that has broken new ground as far as source material for modern Maltese history is concerned. Dr. Cassar assuringly indicates to other historians that there are many other fresh woods and pastures new ready to give up their riches to the patient and diligent researcher.

LOUIS J. SCERRI