

# CIVIL COMMISSIONER CHARLES CAMERON IN MALTA

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## THE POLITICAL SCENE

Civil Commissioner, Alexander M. Ball, in a letter dated 24 January 1801, informed Henry Dundas, the Minister of War, that the Maltese resented a purely military administration of their islands. Ball was strongly in favour of the appointment of a Civil Governor and suggested Brigd. General Graham for the post. In the same letter, Ball stated, "I have continued to act here as Civil Governor and I offered Major General Pigot to remain here so long as he thought my services useful. At present he thinks he has acquired sufficient knowledge to undertake the Civil Administration of the Government. I shall therefore in a few days resume the command of my ship and proceed to sea. Allow me to explain, Sir, that I cannot be insensible to the prevalent idea that I am dismissed for misconduct"<sup>1</sup>.

Following the armistice which was concluded at Foligno, on 17 February 1801, between the Neapolitan Government and the French Republic, the former Government made plans for the withdrawal of its troops from Malta. The British Government was also discussing the future administration of the island. Sir Ralph Abercromby favoured Captain Ball's recall from Malta.

On 6 March 1801 Captain Ball, from aboard the HMS Alexander, on which he had embarked on the 20 February, wrote a letter to Dundas. Ball expressed his wish of being created a Baronet and sought a commission in the navy. He praised the Maltese for the valour they showed during the siege operations. The Maltese suffered three-hundred men, killed or wounded and the British had not even one man wounded. The Maltese were sent to the most unhealthy and advanced posts. Most of the English troops had withdrawn from such posts, leaving the Maltese alone, to defend them. No wonder, the English had no casualties! Desertion amongst the English troops was much higher than amongst the Maltese<sup>2</sup>.

Following the departure of Ball from Malta, the Military and Civil powers were put in the hands of Pigot, pending the appointment of a new administrator, who had

<sup>1</sup> NAR., Letter of Ball to Dundas, 24 January 1801, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 6 March 1801.

to fill the post vacated by Ball. Meanwhile, Sir Ralph Abercromby died on 28 March on board the flagship *Fondroyant* and his funeral took place in Malta on 29 April, Pigot being the chief mourner. Abercomby was buried in Fort St. Elmo<sup>3</sup>.

By dispatch dated 14 May 1801, Lord Hobart informed Charles Cameron that, "... His Majesty, from a confidence in your abilities and integrity, has been graciously pleased with a view to the execution of this assignment, to make choice of you for the management of the Civil part of the service, and to direct you that you should proceed to Malta with the title of Civil Commissioner, to which will be annexed a salary of two thousand pounds per annum, to be paid out of the revenue of the island"<sup>4</sup>. Charles Cameron was instructed to acquaint himself with the sources of Revenue, Laws, Customs and Privileges and the administration systems of the Maltese, as existed at the time when Malta was ruled by the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Together with this dispatch, the Secretary of State sent Cameron a detailed memorandum, made by Ball on the administration of the islands<sup>5</sup>. The Secretary of State was of the opinion that, "... no alterations should be made in the Modes, Laws and Regulations according to which the Civil affairs and the Revenue of the Island have been heretofore managed unless the same should appear to the officer commanding His Majesty's Forces to be required for the safety and defence of the Island, or to be evidently beneficial and desirable as to leave no doubt of its expediency, or of its being generally acceptable to the wishes, the feelings and even the prejudices of the Inhabitants."<sup>6</sup> Cameron was instructed to act with the most unreserved confidence towards the Officer commanding the Forces on all points of Public Concern and to maintain a perfect good understanding with him and with the Naval and Military officers. Cameron was also told to endeavour to meet the wishes of the Maltese and to show himself indulgent even to their prejudices. The affection and the fidelity of the Maltese had to be nurtured at all cost.

Cameron was instructed that Mr W. Eton was to proceed with him to Malta to take office as Superintendent and Manager of the Lazzaretto with a yearly salary of eight hundred pounds. Eton had formerly served as Civil Commissary at Guernsey and on 28 October 1800 had applied to Henry Dundas for the post of Superintendent of the Lazzaretto, in Malta. Eton had previously resided in Malta for three months, when sent on a mission by Prince Potemkin on behalf of the Russian Government. The mission entailed the assessment of the Lazzaretto as well as the general state of

<sup>3</sup> Abercromby at the time of his death, was Commander of the British expeditionary force sent to Egypt to fight Napoleon.

<sup>4</sup> NAR., dispatch of Secretary of State to Governor, 14 May 1801, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, 11-25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, letter of Hobart to Cameron, 14 May 1801, 31.

Malta, appraisal of the disposition of the Knights amongst themselves and towards the Maltese and a study on the island of Lampedusa<sup>7</sup>. In his instructions to Cameron, Hobart had stated that, "... it will be necessary that you should so far turn your attention to the subject, as to be able to give every assistance to Mr Eton, and in some degree to judge of the expediency and propriety of the arrangement and regulations he may propose for the quarantine establishment at Malta". This gave Eton a certain independence from Cameron and he was granted permission to correspond directly with the Ministry in London. Eton was much more than the Superintendent of the Lazzaretto, as will be appreciated later on. Eton, sent the Secretary his report on the condition of the Lazzaretto and the Quarantine Regulations on 10 July, just five days after his arrival. Eton was the author of "Survey of the Turkish Empire".

Hobart instructed Cameron that all Proclamations or Public Acts of Government were to be signed jointly by him and the General Commander of the Forces. Hobart was of the opinion that the direction and superintendence of the Civil Affairs and Revenue of Malta were to be separated from the duties of the Commander of the Forces on the island and that ... "in a military position of so much importance as Malta, all measures of the former description should nevertheless be taken in concert with the persons in whose hands are placed the safety and defence of the place, and that they should be sanctioned with his concurrence and approbation, previous to their being carried into execution."<sup>8</sup>

One can easily appreciate, from Hobart's instructions to Cameron, that at the time, England had the intention of holding on to the island and assume its sovereignty. Malta's major military advantages were, (a) excellent harbours, (b) excellent geographical position especially for operations directed towards the Levant, and, (c) strong fortifications, difficult to overcome in battle. At the time, the British had sensed that many of the inhabitants were in their favour.

In late March 1801, two important events occurred, namely, the death of Emperor Paul of Russia, and the death of Sir R. Abercromby. Emperor Paul had been the Grand Master and Protector of the Order of St. John. Alexander I, who succeeded Paul, though declining the magistracy of the Order, was willing to remain Protector of the Order and therefore to stand for the protection of its rights. Henry Addington, the British Premier, established friendly relations with Emperor Alexander, who, after Bonaparte's destruction of the Venetian Republic, had become increasingly

<sup>7</sup> Hardman, A History of Malta during the Period of the French and British Occupation (1798-1815), 494-5. William Hardman died in London on 22 November 1907. He had resided in Malta for fifty years and had helped financially many charitable institutions, especially that of Fra Diego.

<sup>8</sup> PRO., Co 150N1, dispatch of Hobart to Cameron, 14 May 1801\29.

suspicious of the intentions of the French in the Mediterranean region. Alexander wished that neither England nor France would occupy Malta and was pursuing a neutral policy with regards to England and France. The Russian Orthodox Church was against Alexander's appointment to Grand Master of a Catholic military, religious Order.

On 30 June 1801, Pigot issued a Notification in which he announced the appointment of Cameron as Civil Commissioner of Malta and Gozo, and directed that, "... all persons having relations with the Civil Affairs and Revenue of Malta and Gozo, to henceforth make their Reports and pay due submission to the authority of His Majesty's Civil Commissioner, in the person of Charles Cameron Esq."<sup>9</sup>

When Cameron arrived he was given a great welcome and on Villettes' insistence, Pigot ceded the Palace to Cameron. Eton was given a house of Spanish property. Notwithstanding the clear instructions given by Lord Hobart regarding the duties and rights of the Civil Commissioner and the Officer Commanding the Troops, Pigot soon informed Cameron that all Proclamations and Public Government Acts were to be signed by both the Civil Commissioner and the Officer Commanding the Troops and all measures of a civil nature were to be also sanctioned by the Officer Commanding the Troops<sup>10</sup>. Eton, by letters dated 5 and 10 July 1801, informed Under-Secretary of State, Sullivan, that it was imperative to issue instructions as to the clear separation of the civil and military duties in order not to create any conflicts between the two authorities.<sup>11</sup> Eton was of the opinion that all passports except those of the military, were to be signed solely by Cameron. Eton also informed Sullivan that General Villettes was much liked by the Maltese unlike Pigot. Eton stated that had not Cameron arrived on the island, to quieten the otherwise faithful and brave Maltese inhabitants, an insurrection would soon have taken place because of the very bad civil administration, which Pigot had entrusted to Mr Baynes, of the Treasury. Baynes was a very despotic person who had created a New Tribunal and charged high fees for the issue of passports, thus creating discontent amongst the merchants. Baynes and Schembri of the Treasury, were soon sacked from office by Cameroon's Public Secretary Macaulay. Schembri wrote in his defence, a long letter, dated 8 July, addressed to Cameron. Satires on Baynes and Schembri were affixed and one was sent to the Under-Secretary of State. The satire read:

<sup>9</sup> NAR., Collezione Bandi, Prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo di Malta e sue dipendenze (17 July 1784-4 October 1813), 66-67.

<sup>10</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, letter of Pigot to Cameron, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Co 158\2, miscellanea, a) dispatch of Eton to Sullivan, 5 July 1801, 248-249, b) dispatch of Eton to Sullivan, 10 July 1801, 262-264 r.

Addio Schembri, il Santo  
Laureato e intero di Bontà finto  
Or che li Maltesi vi vedono  
All' Governo Inglese sono assai grati  
Tu sei O Schembri, quel che ha più gustato  
Quel animal di Baynes così malnato  
Ti consiglierai l' amico in Alessandria seguire  
Per poter ivi farti santificare  
Perché restando in finto Bacche è tone  
Finirai i giorni tuoi sotto un Bastone<sup>12</sup>.

On 15 July 1801, Cameron, ten days after his and Eton's arrival on the island, issued a Proclamation to the Maltese Nation<sup>13</sup>. The Proclamation stated that, "... His Majesty grants you full protection and the enjoyment of all your dearest rights. He will protect your Churches, your Holy Religion, your persons and your property. His paternal care extends to the hospitals, other charitable establishments, to the education of youth, to orphans, to the poor and to all those who recur to his beneficence ... Commerce being now extended, the Arts and Sciences encouraged, manufacturers and agriculture supported, and industry rewarded, Malta will become the emporium of the Mediterranean, and the seat of content... My door shall be open to all. I will hear everyone's plea. I shall be ready to render justice, to cause the law to be observed, and tempering it with clemency and to receive every information which shall have for its object the welfare of the Maltese and above all, I shall devote myself to the means of promoting the cultivation of cotton, the manufacture of yarn, and of importing and maintaining an abundance of food in these islands"<sup>13</sup>. The spirit of Cameron's Proclamation reflects very much that of the Instructions which Lord Hobart had given Cameron in the dispatch of 14 May. Many of the promises made in the Proclamation turned out to be wishful thinking and the Maltese had to stick out their cheek in many a fight for their actual acquisition. Mr Alex Macaulay was Public Secretary to Cameron with an annual salary of five-hundred pounds.

In a Notice dated 23 July, Cameron, Pigot and Macaulay, informed the Maltese that everyone of whatever description or denomination, was subject to the laws of Malta in force at the time. His Majesty had ordered to maintain in force the laws and the tribunals as had been practised henceforth, with the exception of such new laws and such regulations as have been or shall for the future be established by His

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>13</sup> NAR., Collezioni di bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo dell'Isola di Malta e Sue dipendenze (17 July 1784-4 October 1813), 67.

Majesty's Command<sup>14</sup>. This Notice was issued because rumours were circulating on the island, that an insurrection in favour of the Order of St. John, was in the air. Cameron informed Hobart of such a situation. Eton, Macaulay and spies in Messina and Trieste confirmed that a project of an insurrection was being contemplated by members and sympathisers of the Order of St. John. Cameron stated that, "... they are told by our enemies that Malta will be given up when a peace shall be made, the fear of which withholds many who would be active in our favour, as they fear the resentment of the French should they become masters of the Island"<sup>15</sup>. Cameron was of the opinion that the Bishop of Malta was to be declared Metropolitan and Roman Catholicism the Established Faith. He stated that the Bishop was a much loved and a respectable person. Mr. Eton scrutinised all the letters entering Malta. Cameron was of the opinion that foreign Baillis and Knights should leave the island for Sicily. A good pension was to be offered them. In March 1801, nearly all the parish priests and many religious Orders sent a memorial to the Pope asking him for the re-establishment of the Order on the island. A letter was also sent to Hompesh, asking him to return to re-establish the Order's rule of the Islands<sup>16</sup>. Cameron gave financial aid to the convents, many of which had been reduced to utter poverty and starvation.

In a very important dispatch dated 15 September 1801, Hobart delineated to Cameron some duties which were purely his responsibility and clearly pointed out those he had to share with the Officer-in-Command of the Troops. All public Acts relative to the Civil Administration were to be signed in his name only or by his Secretary. The admission of strangers to the island was to be decided by the Civil Commissioner. In the allotment of houses or apartments for the accommodation of the military, the opinion of the Officer Commanding the Troops was to be sought but in all other cases of allotment of buildings, the Civil Commissioner had the exclusive prerogative of choice. Whenever expenses on public buildings were to be incurred, a regular survey was to be made and had to be sent to the Secretary of State, together with a detailed estimate of expenses. Measures were to be taken to prevent Malta's trade being hampered by piracy. The *Università* was not to be granted the proposed loan of one-hundred thousand scudi, as a large supply of corn was going to be sent to Malta from Egypt and was to be paid from the Government's funds<sup>17</sup>.

The Franco-British conflict which had raged since 1793, had reached, in late 1801, a stalemate with Britain holding the mastery of the seas and Republican France looking rather unconquerable, on the Continent. On 22 July 1801, Napoleon

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, letter of Cameron to Hobart, 29 July 1801, 78-80.

<sup>16</sup> Mifsud, *Origine della Sovranità Inglese su Malta*, 436.

<sup>17</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, letter of Hobart to Cameron, 15 September 1801, 106.

dispatched Monsieur Otto with a message stating that France would agree to Malta being given back to the Order and was prepared to agree, with British approval to the destruction of the fortifications of Malta. On 7 August Napoleon consented to the British proposal that Malta was to belong neither to France nor to England. At talks held between Monsieur Otto and Lord Hawkesbury on 6 September 1801, the latter stated that Britain would renounce to Malta on the condition that the island as well as the Order, were to be placed under the guarantee of a third power, namely Russia. Otto was of the opinion that Russia would be acceptable as a guarantor, but Article VI of the Preliminaries concerning Malta, as proposed by the British, contained several clauses which could delay the formulation of a definitive treaty. The Order of St. John of Jerusalem had suffered a schism within its ranks and Hawkesbury wished to examine closely the possible policy changes resulting from such a schism and besides, Britain was to make a sacrifice in renouncing Malta to the Order and thus it had to take every precaution to prevent Malta from eventually coming under the influence of the French Government. On 22 September, in reply to a letter sent to him by Otto and Talleyrand, Hawkesbury stated that, "with regard to the agreements relative to Malta, His Majesty had only consented not to occupy the Island on the express condition of its independence from France, as well as that of Great Britain. The only means to succeed in this would be to place it under the guarantee or protection of some Power capable of supporting it. His Majesty will not persist in desiring to keep an English garrison in the island till the establishment of the Government of the Order of St. John. He will be ready, on the contrary, to evacuate it in the time which shall be fixed for taking measures of this sort in Europe, provided the Emperor of Russia, as Protector of the Order, or any other Power acknowledged by the contracting parties, will efficaciously take on itself the defence and safety of Malta"<sup>18</sup>. Further negotiations resulted in a Preliminary Treaty being signed on 1 October 1801. Article IV, concerning Malta, read thus, "The Island of Malta and its dependencies shall be evacuated by the troops of His Britannic Majesty and restored to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. For the purpose of rendering this island completely independent of either of the two contracting parties, it shall be placed under the guarantee and protection of a Third Power, to be agreed upon in the definitive Treaty. The Preliminaries were signed by Otto and Hawkesbury in London on 1 October 1801.

When the news arrived in Malta that the Preliminary Treaty of Peace had sanctioned the restoration of Malta to the Order of the Knights of St. John, there were contrasting reactions. In a letter dated 13 November 1801 sent by Cameron to Hobart, the former wrote that, "I am also told that not more than thirty knights can

<sup>18</sup> Cobbett, *Annual Register*, vol 3, 1207.

be selected from those who remain and who are not devoted to the French intent and Your Lordship may be assured that unless the most cautious arrangements are made, the French will again get possession of this invaluable island”<sup>19</sup>. Mr. Livingstone delivered the letter personally to Hobart.

Pro-French activity was present on the island, as is evidenced also by letters which were found in possession of persons entering Malta. A letter addressed to Bali’ Belmont and carried from France by a noted Jacobin, was intercepted in Malta on 17 November 1801. Part of the letter was written with lemon juice and the contents of this letter had a marked Pro-French and anti-British wording<sup>20</sup>. Another intercepted letter was written by G. Xuereb to Mr. Balbi and was sent on 15 October from Marseilles. The author of this letter was jubilant at the restoration of the Islands to the Order and especially at the protection which Russia was to afford to such an agreement<sup>21</sup>. Eton, the Superintendent of Quarantine searched persons for mail, which contents he examined.

The Article concerning Malta, embodied in the Preliminary Treaty, disappointed many Maltese and particularly Cameron and Eton. Cameron’s Proclamation of 15 July 1801, had been diametrically opposite to the wording of the Preliminary Treaty concerning Malta. Cameron’s proclamation had promised that the King would protect our Nation’s most sacred rights, churches, Religion as well as afford protection to person and property. Now Britain was ready to do away with Malta after having used it as a pawn in the discussions which led to the signature of the Preliminary Treaty. The Instructions which Hobard had given Cameron prior to the latter’s arrival on the island, contained many nice sentiments towards the Maltese Nation, but now English foreign policy chose a utilitarian solution which could lead to the end of the lengthy Anglo-French war. Nelson and Addington had decided that Malta was of little value to England. Nelson preferred Minorca to Malta because the former was nearer Toulon, where the French ships were anchored.

In England, not all were satisfied with the English policy regarding Malta. In a most informative memorandum entitled, “Reflections on Malta with a view of a Definitive Treaty”, the anonymous author stated that, “All that the Order needs at present is a residence where it may deposit and exhibit to Europe those ancient Honours which have so long survived the utility of its institution ... the Order constituted nearly as it was previously to the conquest of Malta by the French in the year 1798, retaining all its present property and preserving all its dignities, might be

<sup>19</sup> PRO., Co 1582, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 171.



distributed within the Priories of its several Tongues. The Grand Prior and Council in each Priory might constitute a subadministration for the affairs of the Order and the Grand Master with a Court and Council suitably appointed forming the Supreme administration, might reside at Rome or some other continental city, to be hereafter determined and might receive an annual rent from revenues of the island of Malta, which annuity the Island should reserve to itself the power of redeeming whenever its finances should enable it to do. In the meantime of this or some such arrangement, the Islands of Malta and Gozo might be rendered and declared an *Independent Republic*, guaranteed in their Independence by the contracting parties and placed under the immediate Protection of a third Power"<sup>22</sup>. In a similar document entitled, "Compendium of the proposed Negotiation for Malta, 1801", the anonymous writer stated that, "... should plan for rendering that Island a free and neutral Port and for removing all obstruction or constraints resulting from the antiquated constitution of the Order according to the Paper prepared for that purpose. It is probable that they may be induced to proceed one step further and to consult whether there is necessity for them to adhere to their first proposition of reinstating the Order in Malta and whether they might not be able to concert a far more simple and prudent and beneficial arrangement for all parties by withdrawing the Order altogether from there and rendering Malta a *Free Island Republic*"<sup>23</sup>. The writer of the above mentioned "Reflections on Malta with a view of a Definitive Treaty", stated that should the Order still desire to preserve its outdated constitution, then, "it would become a point of the highest moment for the reflections of the leading powers, that the locality of Malta forms no part of the original institution of the Order of St. John and consequently is in no way necessary to its integrity, since it had existed for many centuries before incidental circumstances connected it with that island"<sup>24</sup>.

In Malta, the pro-British and anti-Order faction soon began organising public meetings. On 21 October 1801, Eton sent Cameron a translation of a document containing the sentiments of distinguished Maltese, Locotenenti and representatives, on the evacuation of Malta and its delivery to the Order. That same day, Cameron, having read Eton's letter, wrote to Hobart, informing him that the Maltese were alarmed at the prospective departure of the British and the delivery of Malta back to the Order of St. John. Ball was also on his way to England to express to Hobart the sentiments of the Maltese with regard to the policy laid down in the Treaty regarding their own island. In the representation dated 19 October, 1801, made by the Chiefs of Villages, Representatives, Lieutenant governors and Chiefs of the battalions, addressed to Cameron, mention was made of the possible victimisation

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 226-227 v.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 229v and r.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 225 v.

of any pro-British Maltese, by the Order. Most of the members of the Order were French and so were keen to punish the Maltese who had opposed their occupation of the island. The appeal of the Maltese also stated that the Maltese had started to feel themselves more important through becoming part of Britain's vast Empire. Under the British, trade, the arts, sciences and manufacture were improving. Such progress would be forfeited if Malta were to be handed back to the Order. The Order was not able to maintain its independence and neutrality because (a) its revenues were depleted and France would be the only nation to stand out to help financially, (b) the garrison of Malta which was at the time made up of Maltese, would be formed of persons coming from nations which were sympathisers of the French, (c) the Maltese would be suppressed and rendered incapable of ever revolting against the Order. The appeal stated that if the British troops were to leave Malta, then the Maltese were to be permitted to run their own affairs, (d) were Malta to return under French influence, then France would try to reconquer Egypt and advance henceforth against India. Russia could be enticed to join forces with the French and annihilate British power in the Mediterranean. By retaining Malta, England would become the Mistress of the Mediterranean. Malta would become a commercial emporium and a depot for British dry goods. Malta could be developed into a grand arsenal and a granary for Europe. The appeal requested that were the Order to return to Malta, all fortifications would remain in the hands of His Majesty. The appeal was signed by F. Castagna, Dr. G. Casha, G. Abela, V. Borg (Braret, a close friend of Eton), Emanuel Gellel, Francesco Zammit, G. Bonavia, Agostino Said, Not. Pietro Buttigieg, Rev. Parish Priest Alessio Bart. Caraffa, Gregorio Mifsud, Michele Cachia, Salvatore Gafà, Enrico Scerri, Rev. Fr. Pietro Mallia, Giovanni Gafà, Ref. Fr. Fortunato Dalli, Vella (Zurrieq), M. Camilleri, Tommaso Mallia, Rev. Parish Priest Giuseppe Abdilla, Rev. Fr. Felice Calleja, Gio Massa Chetcuti, Giuseppe Montebello, Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Grima, Notary Saverio Zarb, Michele Vassallo, Alessandro Damato, Giuseppe Frendo and Pandolfo Testaferrata and his sons<sup>25</sup>.

On 22 October 1801, a representation drawn up by the deputies of Malta and Gozo was prepared for signature. The representation, addressed to the King, stated that the Maltese claimed their island by right of conquest from the French and demanded that if the island were not given back to them, all expenses incurred by the Maltese in the war should be remunerated<sup>26</sup>. Whatever claim the Order might have had to the island, had been lost on their being conquered by the French. The Maltese claimed sovereignty over their island. The people had a right to declare their own sovereign, when no one was ruling their country. The Maltese had twice purchased their island and thus bought back their independence. Following the

<sup>25</sup> Hardman, 406-409.

<sup>26</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, 200-203.

surrender of the French, the Maltese had wished to become subjects of the King rather than assert and maintain their own independence, never suspecting that they would be given up by their own allies into the hands of their former masters, the French. Granting Malta to the Order amounted to giving it to the French as the Order was to a great extent dependent on French interests and help. Malta's strategic position was vital for Britain's trade interests and the safety of Sicily. Malta was also of vital importance to British interests in India. The French wanted to have full control of the Mediterranean and once established in Malta, it would be very difficult to push them out of it. A war would put an abrupt end to any guarantee given by some Powers. The Knights could not be admitted to Malta except as a monastic fraternity, not meddling with a military or civil government. The Knights were not fit for either.

On 9 November another meeting of the village and district representatives of Malta and Gozo took place. At this meeting the election of deputies to proceed to England to present a protest to the King against any transfer of Malta to the Order, was approved<sup>27</sup>. A Notice was affixed to this effect stating that a delegation was to proceed to England, *"per rappresentare a Sua Maestà la situazione ed i bisogni degli abitanti di queste isole di Malta e Gozo e domandare gli opportuni provvedimenti, che importino una piena e perfetta indennizazione dei Maltesi di tutte le perdite sofferte coll'occasione della guerra dopo lo sbarco degli Francesi fino alla resa della Città ove ed si rimetta l'Università e riabbino le Chiese ed il Monte di Pietà ciocche ne è stato tolto, ed i depositi si restituiscano ai Tribunali ed i Privati che sono stati obbligati a degli imprestiti forzati o vendere i loro effetti, si ai Francesi si al Governo della Campagna che in qualunque danno e sian permanente risarciti"*<sup>28</sup>. Three days were granted to the people to present any critical views. Cameron, by dispatch dated 13 November, informed the Secretary of State that he had refused to defray the expenses of the projected mission of the Maltese Deputies to London<sup>29</sup>. Eton informed Sullivan, months later, that he did not encourage the Deputies to carry their petitions to London. Eton stated that in no way could he have prevented their departure<sup>30</sup>. By letters dated 23 October 1801, Eton had already informed Sullivan and Cameron of the intent of the Maltese to send deputies to the King in order to put forward their petitions. He had informed Cameron and Sullivan that the recriminations of the Maltese against Article IV of the Preliminary Treaty, were, in his opinion, just and well founded<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Hardman, 415-417.

<sup>28</sup> PRO., Co 1582, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>30</sup> a) PRO., Co 1584, letter of Eton to Sullivan, 17 May 1802, 24. b) Eton, Authentic materials for a history of the principality of Malta, 232-236.

<sup>31</sup> PRO., Co 1582, 330-335.

By letter dated 15 November 1801, Cameron informed Hobart on the personal character of each of the deputies who had proposed to travel to London<sup>32</sup>. The six deputies were, Marquis Mario Testaferrata, Philip Castagna, Don Pietro Mallia, Don Emanuel Riccard, Michele Cachia and Antonio Mallia. Marquis Mario Testaferrata was described as a person of sound judgement, well informed in Malta's ancient privileges and present day needs. He was very popular and greatly attached to His Majesty's Government<sup>33</sup>. Philip Castagna was a person of excellent character and very popular on the Island. He was of moderate ideas and wise in judgement and deeply attached to His Majesty's Government. He had displayed great courage in the siege of Valletta and in the Congress. Don Pietro Mallia and Don Emanuel Riccard were both priests who enjoyed popular confidence and who were pro-British. The latter had enjoyed great respect under Ball's administration. Michele Cachia was a military and civil engineer and a Zejtun representative. He was a person of talent and integrity and very popular with the Maltese. Antonio Mallia was the Lt. Governor and first Provost of Gozo. He was a gentleman living on his income.

The Maltese deputies arrived in London on 1 February 1802. W. Cobbett in his *Annual Register*, on 5 February 1802, reported the arrival of the deputies stating that, "... The object of the mission is to put their country under the protection and government of His Majesty. No doubt can exist, but that this overture will be accepted by His Majesty's ministers as some small equipoise to the Sovereignty of Italy, which the First Council has acquired, since peace was signed"<sup>34</sup>. On 4 February, the deputies arrived and they announced their arrival to Lord Hobart, stating, "... Happy we shall be, my Lord, in the opportunity of laying before your Lordship the truth and justice of the demands with which we are entrusted...". The Secretary of State, through Sir Alexander Ball informed the deputies that it was best for them to leave London as soon as possible as their remaining there, would irritate France and so hamper the final signature of the Definitive Treaty. Hobart agreed to meeting the deputies in his house, on 8 February. The deputies explained to Hobart

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 149, 161-162.

<sup>33</sup> Farrugia Randonb, Marquis Nicolò Testaferrata de Noto, 47, f.n.7.

<sup>34</sup> William Cobbett was born on 9 March 1763. He was the son of a farm labourer and served in the Army between 1784 and 1791. Having resigned from the Army, he repeatedly exposed corruption amongst its officers. Forced to flee abroad, he ultimately settled in the United States where he published several publications defending the British monarchy and Government. He had to leave the United States for England following his criticism of the pro-French party in the United States and after having lost a libel suit to Dr. Benjamin Rush. In England he became a radical exponent and an embarrassment to the Tory Government of the 1800's. Between 1810-1812, he was imprisoned and later went back to the United States. He started his *Annual Register* in 1802 and started recording the debates of Parliament. He died on 18 June 1835.

all the reasons for their mission to London and protested mainly against the cession of Malta to the Order, giving reasons why the Order should not be allowed to have Malta. Hobart was of the opinion that the return of the Order would prove to be an advantage to the island and the English Government would take all precautions to guarantee it. The deputies knew very well that the British Government was set on ceding Malta to the Order. On the 1st March 1802, with the approval of Alexander Ball, the deputies addressed a memorial to Hobart<sup>35</sup>. In this memorial they strongly resented the reinstatement of the Order on the Island and stated also that, "nature has so formed Malta that she is to be regarded from the point of view of her situation, and according to her strength that she is not to dictate terms of arrangement, but it is the duty of politicians nevertheless to see that her numerous population is not forgotten"<sup>36</sup>. The day after, the deputies addressed a letter to their constituents in Malta, giving them a full report of the progress made in London in their talks and correspondence with Hobart, Ball and others. The deputies were shown around London and a sum of money was given to each. Showing their desire to be introduced to His Majesty, they were taken to Windsor Castle where a casual meeting was contrived in such a manner as not to arouse any complaints from France<sup>37</sup>.

The Definitive Treaty of Amiens was signed at Amiens on 27 March 1802, while the Maltese deputies were still in London. According to Article X of the Definitive Treaty, the islands of Malta and Gozo were to be given back to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and were to be held under the same conditions which the Order had held them before the war and also under the following stipulations: (i) the knights were to return to Malta and form a General Chapter and elect a Grandmaster, if he had not been already elected following the signature of the Preliminary Treaty of Amiens, (ii) the English and French Langues were not to be instituted and no person native of either France or England could be admitted to the Order, (iii) A Maltese Langue was to be established, financed out of the revenues of the island. Such a Langue was to have its Auberge and dignitaries. No proofs of nobility were to be necessary for admission to the Langue and its members could hold every office and enjoy every privilege like the knights of the other Langues. The municipal, revenue, civil, judicial and other offices under the Government of the Island were to be filled, at least in the proportion of one-half by native inhabitants of Malta, Gozo and Comino, (iv) the British forces were to evacuate the Island within three months or soon after the exchange of ratifications. The island was to be handed to the Order provided the Grandmaster or fully-empowered commissioners, were on the Island to receive

<sup>35</sup> Cobbett, *Annual Register*, vol. 3, 680-1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 779.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 771.

possession of it and the forces furnished by the Sicilian Majesty, had already arrived on the Island, (v) Half the island's garrison was to be composed of Maltese and the rest recruited from natives of those countries having a Langue on the Island. The Maltese troops were to be officered by Maltese and the Grandmaster was to be the Supreme Commander of the garrison and was to appoint the officers, (vi) Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Prussia and Spain were to guarantee the independence of Malta and the Treaty arrangement, (vii) the Order and Malta were to be perpetually neutral, (viii) Malta's port was to be open to all nations who had to pay equal and moderate duties which would help to support the Maltese Langue as well as help civil and military establishments to maintain a Lazzaretto, (ix) there was to be a halt of hostilities between the Barbary states, the Order and the nations having a Langue on the island, (x) The government of the Order, in spiritual and temporal matters, was to be run on the same lines as that preceeding their expulsion from the island by the French, (xi) stipulations 3,5,7,8 and 10 were to be converted into laws and perpetual statutes of the Order and the Grandmaster was to take an oath as to their observance, (xii) His Sicilian Majesty was to supply 2000 men, to man the fortresses of the island and the force was to remain for a year, starting from the day of the island's restitution to the Order of St. John. The garrison was to stay longer, if within the year the Order did not manage to man a garrison of sufficient strength, as judged by the guaranteeing Powers, (xiii) Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia and Spain were invited to agree to the arrangement.

Many difficulties had been encountered in the formulation of the definitive Treaty. Russia was against the admission of Maltese to the Order and difficulties arose as to who was to finance the temporary garrison which was to be supplied by the King of Naples. The French Government had requested the demolition of all the fortifications of the island and favoured an Order of Hospitality to an Order of Knighthood. Malta, according to the French Government, could best be converted into a Lazzaretto for the nations trading in the Levant and the Mediterranean<sup>38</sup>.

Surmounting all these difficulties proved to be quite a tedious and difficult task. Some of the suggestions of the deputies of the Maltese mission in London, had been heeded and incorporated in the Definitive Treaty, namely a voice in the Government of their own nation. The great majority of their suggestions, however, went unheeded. Their main petition, that Britain would not hand Malta to the Order, had been totally disregarded, as was also the petition of war indemnity. Russia, and the knights residing in Russia, had done their best to frustrate the mission of the Maltese deputies.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1857.

In the debates held in May in the House of Commons on the Definitive Treaty of Amiens, Lord Temple asked for the papers relative to Malta and motivated by his request the change in the formation and constitution of the Order and the loss of revenues belonging to the Knights<sup>39</sup>. Lord Hawkesbury had answered Temple thus, “we have no official document on the subject”. Lords Spencer, Grenville and Holland had spoken in favour of the wish of the Maltese deputies, not to hand over Malta to the Order. In May 1803, Mr. Mackenzie, a British merchant, while in Malta, came across the memorials of the Maltese Deputies, which had been distributed widely in Malta. Mackenzie sent a copy of these documents to W. Cobbett who duly published them in his *Annual Register*<sup>40</sup>. Cobbett thus claimed that Hawkesbury’s answer to Temple’s question in the Commons had been untrue and misleading. Cobbett published, (a) Mackenzie’s letter to Cobbett, dated 3 May 1803, concerning the acquisition of the documents mentioned, (b) the translation of the Representation and Remonstrance of the Maltese, dated 22 October 1801, (c) the letter of the deputies, dated 4 February 1802, requesting an audience with Lord Hobart, (d) the memorial of the deputies to Lord Hobart, dated 1 March 1802, and, (e) the letter of the deputies to their constituents, dated 2 March 1802. The Minister had kept Parliament in the dark regarding Malta’s situation. In the 21-28 May 1803 issue of his *Annual Register*, Cobbett criticised the Definitive Treaty regarding Malta, “Such is the history of this shameful transaction, relative to which there are four points that present themselves for particular inquiry, or rather, comments for as to the facts charged against ministers very little doubt can exist: (1) The right on which the ministers proceeded in making the arrangement agreed upon in the X Article of the Treaty of Amiens, or rather, to use the expression of the Maltese, “in selling them as slaves for a political consideration. (2) The deception, which ministers practised on the parliament, by stating as they did in the debates on the Definitive Treaty, that the people of Malta were satisfied with and grateful for, that agreement. (3) The shameful pusillanimity towards France, and the more shameful injustice, cruelty and insolence, which they discovered with respect to the Maltese, in their refusal to give the deputies an official reception and hearing. (4) The deception which the ministers practised on the parliament, by refusing, as they did upon the motion of Lord Temple, to produce the information which they possessed relative to the rights and claims of the Maltese, alleging, on the ground of such refusal, that they were in possession of no official papers on the subject”<sup>41</sup>. Needless to say in Malta, the big pro-British faction was very angry at the attitude England had taken towards Malta. Malta had been treated as chattel by England, who had disposed of it politically as most convenient to her, in the existing political situation. Malta had been treated by

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 564.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, 674-682.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 771-2.

England as though she had been conquered. Nothing could have been more false, but in spite of all this, England chose to decide the future of the island, as was most convenient to her interests.

While still in London, the Maltese deputies wrote a letter dated 2 April 1802, to Lord Hobart, presenting their warmest thanks, for all that they thought he had done in favour of Malta. Cobbett had the following statement to make on this letter: "After the Definitive Treaty was signed, a frigate was prepared for their reception at Portsmouth, on board of which frigate they embarked for Malta, having on the 2 of April been prevailed to write a letter to Lord Hobart, containing such expressions as might be regarded as amounting to an approbation of the stipulations in the Definitive Treaty, relative to the Island and the people of Malta, which letter was read in the House of Commons by Lord Hawkesbury, as the sort of reply to the charges which we have on this head heretofore, preferred against him and his colleagues"<sup>42</sup>.

By letter dated 20 April, Hobart sent the Maltese deputies in London, a copy of the X article of the Definitive Treaty of Amiens and answered belatedly their letters of the 2 and 5 April, "*mi reputo felice di potermi approfittare della presente occasione per esprimervi la mia soddisfazione intorno la prudente, discreta ed onorevole condotta, che avete osservato durante tutto il tempo della vostra dimora in questo Paese*"<sup>43</sup>. I do not think that the deputies could have acted better, as all the way the English Cabinet's policy towards Malta had already been agreed upon in the best interest of England and in order not to leave the deputies empty-handed, a few changes were made in the Treaty to suit their petitions. Cobbett, in his *Annual Register*, stated that, "They were shown around London and a sum of money given to each of them ... but so far were the people of Malta, the constituents of the deputies, from being satisfied with the stipulations, that upon the publication of them, they tore down the posting bills (containing a translation of the X Article of the Treaty) from every place which they had been stuck up ..." <sup>44</sup>. Cobbett's entry makes me think that he was of the opinion that the deputies were being manipulated in some way by the English politicians in order to soften them in their stand against the X Article of the Treaty of Amiens.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 771.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., (? V. Azzopardi) *Raccolta di varie cose Antiche e Moderne utili ed interessanti riguardanti Malta e Gozo*, 248.

<sup>44</sup> Cobbett, vol. 3, 771.



On 18 May Cameron published that part of the Treaty of Amiens that concerned Malta<sup>45</sup>. Few days after, representations of Citta'Vecchia called on Eton and informed him that there was violent fomentation in the island and most of the people would not give in to the return of the Order or the formation of a Maltese Langue<sup>46</sup>. Posting bills with a translation of the X Article of the Treaty of Amiens were torn down from places where they had been stuck and some Maltese expressed openly their opinion, that it was better for them to yield their country to the French than yield to an imposed arrangement. Eton, who more than Cameron, was against England's policy of handing Malta to the Order, informed the Civil Commissioner that he had discussions with Auditor Scerri about the establishment and constitution of the former Popular Council. Eton had been convinced that even since its institution, this Council had never been abolished but had merely fallen into disuse, and so the Maltese were entitled to enjoy the status they had obtained when the first Grandmaster was declared Prince of Malta and our island given as residence, to the Order<sup>47</sup>. Marquis Pandolfo Testaferrata, in his capacity as first Senator, wrote, on 17 May, to Cameron, claiming a right to convene a Popular Assembly according to ancient custom. Cameron, by letter dated 24 May, sought the opinion of the Secretary of State on the subject<sup>48</sup>. Most of the nobility had sided with the British against the French and many of them had been rewarded in some way, by the British. A change of government was seen, by most of the nobles, as detrimental to their status and financial interests on the island.

The Maltese deputies left by frigate from Portsmouth and arrived in Malta towards the end of May or very early June. In Malta, the deputies presented their constituents with a detailed report of their stay in London, stating that, "Owing to the circumstances we have related, we found ourselves at last compelled to dwell only on endeavouring, as far as possible, to mitigate the evil and to improve the prospects of the Maltese about to be replaced under the sovereign dominion of the Order". The political circumstances of the time played against the granting of the demands of the Maltese deputies, although Article X of the Definitive Treaty was an improvement on Article IV of the Preliminary Treaty. Indemnity for damage suffered because of the siege was not agreed upon. The English Minister promised to acquire a guarantee for the independence of Malta, which was stipulated in the

<sup>45</sup> NAR., *Collezioni di bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo dell'Isola di Malta e Sue dipendenze* (1784-1813), 77-79.

<sup>46</sup> PRO., Co 1583, letter of Eton to Cameron, 23 May 1802, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 23 May 1802, 68.

<sup>48</sup> a) Ibid., letter of Cameron to Secretary of State, 24 May 1802, 63, b) Farrugia Randon, Marquis Nicolò Testaferrata, 1, 3, 21, 39.

Definitive Treaty. The deputies had also requested for measures intended to secure commerce and a pension to wounded individuals. The deputies stated that, "... we have not the slightest doubt but that Malta in the future will enjoy that good fortune of which up to the present time she has been deprived"<sup>49</sup>.

By letter dated 9 June 1802, the Secretary of State informed Cameron that Ball was to proceed to Malta to take control of the island and to supervise the restitution of Malta to the Order according to the Treaty of Amiens<sup>50</sup>. The Representatives, Deputies and Lieutenants of the villages and towns signed, on 15 June 1802, a Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the Island of Malta and Gozo. The Declaration stipulated that the King of the United Kingdom was to be acknowledged as Malta's lawful sovereign but the King had no right to cede Malta to any power and if the King chose to withdraw his protection, the inhabitants had the right to choose another sovereign. A constitution, drafted by the elected Council Congress and ratified by His Majesty was to be the backbone for government of the islands by H.M. Governor or representatives. The declaration also delineated the composition of the General Congress. It stipulated that the Maltese and their representatives in the Popular Council, had the right to send letters or deputies to His Majesty and to complain of any violation of rights and privileges or of anti-constitutional behaviour. The *Consiglio Popolare* was to decide on taxation and legislation with the assent of H.M.'s representatives. His Majesty was to be the Protector of the Religion of our islands. No other sovereign could interfere in the island's spiritual or temporal matters. The Pope or the Generals of the Monastic Orders were to be the ultimate arbitrators on spiritual matters. Choice of Religion was to be free and its practice was also to be free. There was to be toleration of religious sects and these had to desist from insulting, molesting or disturbing each other. Power resided only in the law and no person had any authority over the lives, property or liberty of another person. It appears that both Eton and Cameron were supporting the Maltese, who were protesting against Malta being ceded to the Order. Cameron had written a letter to Eton asking him to refrain from interfering in any way, in what the Maltese were up to, in the present state of affairs. In a letter dated 15 June, which Eton wrote to Sullivan, he stated that, on Cameron's initiative, he had a meeting with a Maltese deputation which had shown their concern over Malta's future. He also told Sullivan that Ball was doing his best to injure his and Cameron's reputation.

By secret dispatch dated 9 June 1802, Hawkesbury informed Sir Alexander Ball that the King had appointed him His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Ball, on his arrival on the island, was to contact General

<sup>49</sup> Hardman, 430.

<sup>50</sup> PRO., Co 1583, 81.

Ural, the French Government's Minister Plenipotentiary to the Order of St. John, and concert together the necessary measures intended to put into effect the stipulation of the X Article of the Definitive Treaty of Amiens. Ball arrived in Malta on 10 July. Government Notice of 17 July announced the departure of Cameron from Malta and the take-over of Ball as His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary to the Order of St. John. On 24 July Cameron presented all his employees to Ball and stated, "*Frattanto non può egli pensare di allontanarsi di queste Isole senza dare la presente pubblica testimonianza della sua intima gratitudine per la sperimentata fedeltà ed attaccamento della Nazione Maltese, alla cui futura prosperità della quale è si degna prender sempre il più vivo interesse*"<sup>51</sup>. Like Eton, Cameron had been against Malta being handed to the Order. France soon made it evident that it would not honour the Treaty of Amiens.

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATE OF MALTA

On 6 March 1801, Ball sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State on the Revenue from Public Property in the Islands of Malta and Gozo<sup>52</sup>. This amounted to 346,637 scudi. Most of this revenue was from Customs and Excise (158,000 scudi). Duties were low and trade, at the time, due to the political condition, was rather neglected. The excise duty on immovable property was three and half per cent on sale of real property. The revenue from lands and houses allotted for the expense of the Grandmaster's household (Beni Magistrali) amounted to 81,756 scudi and another 9721 scudi, were derived from property accrued from legacies and *spoglie* of deceased knights (*del Tesoro*). Revenue from the estate (*Collegio*) which the Jesuits possessed prior to their expulsion and which eventually passed into the Government's funds, amounted to 6189 scudi and another 28,328 scudi were derived from various foundations. The Government derived 1756 scudi out of interest of money lent by the Order on mortgages (*Partite Bollali*) and 10,884 scudi were derived from revenue of the various Langues of the Order.

In his instructions to Cameron dated 14 May 1801, Lord Hobart had instructed him that as regards Public Property, "... Lands or Buildings, as well as the different Institutions and regulations, from which a great part of the public Revenue of the Island was derived under the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, should continue to be managed and enforced upon the former footing with such alterations only as the change of circumstances by which the Right of Sovereignty, formerly rested in that Order but now exercised by His Majesty, have rendered obviously requested"<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> NAR., Collezione di Bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo di Malta e sue dipendenze (1784-1813), 79-80.

<sup>52</sup> PRO., Co 158\1, 11-25.

<sup>53</sup> NAR., letter of Hobart to Cameron, 14 May 1801, 4.

Property which formerly belonged to the Grandmaster and the Order of St. John was to pass into the hands of the Crown, subject to changes and deductions which were fair to individuals having claims on them, or for useful purposes either of charity or instruction. Hobart instructed Cameron to improve the management of the *Beni Rustici*. As regards the *Beni Urbani*, Hobart was of the opinion that Cameron should consult with the Commander of the Forces and determine which officers were entitled to have free Government accommodation and all the rest which were not eligible should be made to pay a rent or quit the housing. The warehouses on the wharf were to be used for trade purposes and not, as was being done, to house the horses of the Commissary and Quarter Master General. Hobart told Cameron that as regards the Revenue accruing from *del Tesoro, diverse Fondazioni, Lingue and Collegio*, any abuses or transactions of a doubtful nature were to be put right and reported to Hobart immediately. The customs and excise duties were to continue at the previous rate. On 5 November, Cameron sent Hobart detailed reports on, the administration of Public Property. Cameron stated that, “*i suddetti beni sono suscettibili della Amministrazione vendita di scudi 20,000 in circa*”, and (b) *dei beni delli segrezia attualmente imposte all' amministrazione generale dei Beni Pubblici*”<sup>54</sup>. Eton and Cameron were of the opinion that repairs of public buildings were to be done only in urgent and specific cases.

In the above-mentioned Report, Ball had informed the Secretary of State that the *Università* was responsible for the purchase and the selling of corn on the island. This bank was a public one, granting three per cent interest. The Order kept all the corn in Valletta and usually kept a one-year stored supply. Malta produced only for a three-month supply of its needs. The *Università* was instituted to do away with potential price speculation by merchants. Following the expulsion of the Order, corn was being bought at 45 scudi and sold at 40 scudi per salm. The selling price was still high for the average labourer. Hobart instructed Cameron to make a detailed report on the purchase and sale of corn during the last ten years of the Order and to make his suggestions accordingly. The *Università*, wrote Hobart, was meanwhile to take care of the corn supply of the island and its operation was to be closely superintended and inspected by Cameron. Cameron wrote back to Hobart on 13 November 1801 stating that the price of corn was 34 scudi, 8 tari per salm and this price was, in his opinion, too low. With Hobart's consent, he increased its price in February 1802, to 40 scudi per salm. Mr Mills was also sent to Egypt to buy corn. Cameron always did his very best to keep Malta well supplied with corn as he was aware that bread formed a significant part of the island's staple diet. The average

<sup>54</sup> PRO., Co 1582, 9-15.

<sup>55</sup> NAR., dispatch of Secretary of State to Cameron, 14 May 1801, 9.

worker's wage were very low and so the price of corn had to suit the worker's earnings.

In the 1801-1802 period, Malta's principal article of export was cotton thread. A large quantity of cotton wool was manufactured for local use. Spinning was popular especially amongst the poor. Spain was the main destination of Malta's cotton thread. When war broke out between England and Spain in 1801, Hobart gave his assurance that, "no interruption whatsoever will be given to the exportation, in neutral bottoms to the Spanish Ports of such thread as may have been made in the Island of Malta or its dependencies from cotton *bona fide* of their own growth and produce"<sup>55</sup>. In 1801-1802, the main articles which the English imported from Malta were raisins, silk and chemicals, which were used in industry, for example, sulphur. The principal articles exported to Malta from England were textiles, metals and food articles. The Valletta Port was declared a Free Port by Government Notification of 5 November 1801. This was intended to encourage commercial intercourse between Malta and the Mediterranean States. The Free Port was to serve, "*per l'importazione e l'esportazione di tutti i generi e mercanzie con bastimenti mercantili appartenenti a sudditi degli stati in amicizia con Sua Maestà qualunque carico, ed in qualunque modo siano equipaggiati...*" This Notification made our islands a very useful venue for English trade in the Mediterranean area at a time when Napoleon had declared his continental blockade policy.

Hobart instructed Cameron that alongside with the increase of trade passing through Maltese waters, it was necessary to make Quarantine easy as well as efficient and secure<sup>56</sup>. Eton, because of his considerable knowledge of most of the Lazarettos of Europe, and his extensive knowledge of the laws of Quarantine, was entrusted with the management and superintendence of the Lazzaretto. This was a very delicate job as at times, with the excuse of disinfection, many letters were opened in order to look for any adverse political correspondence. Eton had been fifty days in Quarantine in Malta, when he was on the island for three months in de Rohan's time. Hobart requested Eton to draw a report on the mode of management of the Lazzaretto under the Order and the French, and ever since the expulsion of the latter. Eton was to stipulate how the Lazzaretto could be improved and what regulations were best to be adopted and which ones were to be scrapped. Eton's report had to be sent to Cameron and the Officer Commanding the Troops and after making their remarks, the report was to be sent to Hobart. Eton sent his report on Quarantine and the Lazzaretto on 10 July 1801, stating that the Lazzaretto was in a poor state. The Quarantine regulations needed updating and the personnel of the

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>57</sup> PRO., Co., 158\2, letter of Eton to Sullivan, 262-264.

Lazzaretto had to be trained well and their wages raised. The building needed urgent structural improvements<sup>57</sup>.

When Cameron arrived in Malta, he was soon inundated by petitions from persons who had suffered some financial or occupational loss during the French occupation. Some of the petitions were from medical men who had lost their job under the French. Some doctors sought a pay increase. Various hospital administrations petitioned Cameron for financial help to keep the hospitals running, in a decent manner. Money was needed to buy the medicines, bedding, beds and other hospital equipment of primary importance. The Holy Infirmary was converted gradually into a military hospital. A naval hospital was established at Birgu in 1800, at *Strada Dietro il Quartiere*, where formerly stood the armoury of the Knights. Treatments at the local hospitals consisted mainly in bleeding, purgation, oral medication, antiphlogistic treatment and blistering. Drs. Cleardo Naudi from Ghaxiaq and Luigi Caruana were amongst the distinguished Maltese civilian doctors practising during the period under study. On 20 March 1802, the Civil Hospital regulations were issued and in this year, Surgery and Anatomy did not figure in the medical curriculum. Aloysius Gravagna and Alexander Vella were the first doctors to qualify from this revitalised Medical Faculty<sup>58</sup>.

Ball's ideas regarding the Church in Malta were, "when betrayed and deserted by the Order, they submitted to the French and would not have revolted if their churches had not been plundered and if their religious prejudices had been respected". Cameron was very keen to keep good relations with the Church authorities. In a letter dated 8 June 1802, Eton informed Cameron that, "... it is necessary to protect the clergy from the tyranny of the Bishop and to give them confidence in the protection of Bishop and to give them confidence in the protection of H.M. Government... The Bishop is in general detested by the clergy and personally hated by the inhabitants ... he interferes in the exercise of the civil authority ... In Sicily he is held as a warm partisan of Bonaparte and at Rome he is by no means well looked upon" Eton stated that the Church ought to be made more towards to the Government<sup>59</sup>. By letter dated 10 June 1802, Cameron informed Eton that he disapproved of his attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church authorities and that he intended to keep Lord Hobart informed with the whole affair<sup>60</sup>. Nevertheless, Eton kept attacking the Bishop. Cameron also dissented with Eton over the behaviour of a certain Don Giuseppe Micallef. Eton stated that this ecclesiastic was a much respected person,

<sup>58</sup> Cassar, P., *Medicine in Malta in 1800-1810*, St. Luke's Hospital Gazette, vol. vi, 1, 3-19.

<sup>59</sup> PRO., Co., 1584, letter of Eton to Cameron, 8 June 1802, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., letter of Cameron to Eton, 10 June 1802, 53.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., letter of Cameron to Eton, 14 June 1802, 77.

holding very moderate ideas. Cameron stated that the priest had been transferred from one convent to another and had been an intriguer against H.M. Government. Lately he had stated that he was a British partisan<sup>61</sup>. Knowing fully well that some priests were sympathisers of the Order and favoured their return to Malta, Cameron was very eager not to hurt the sentiments of the clergy, so as not to create clashes between the clergy and the Government as such clashes would have quickly found vent in the sentiments of the people, towards the administration.

On 29 August 1801, Cameron issued a notification on the state of the cities and of Floriana. He ordered that no building material was to be left in the streets and nobody was to throw rubbish, water, grass, etc. in the streets. Feeding of animals in public roads was prohibited. Hawkers could not obstruct roads and any cutting of wood in the roads had to be done without damage to the road structure. Nobody could leave in the streets, at night, anything that could obstruct them in any way. The street piping of the cisterns had to be installed only after inspection by Government officials. Washing the carts or calesses in the roads was prohibited. Animals could not drink from any fountain except from that in Porta Reale. No animals could be tied in the perimetry of the Church of St. John, the Governor's Palace or Conservatory. No animals could be let loose. A cart full of dung was the permitted limit of this material to be legally kept in stables etc. Water from public fountains was not to be used for cleaning vegetables, herbs or grass. No animals could be kept in the market and no fires could be lit in these places. Fishmongers could not wash their fish on the quay<sup>62</sup>. Notification dated 29 August 1801, penalised any damage to quays.

Cameron set out regulations for the buying and selling of food. All vendors had to possess a permit before selling their articles. All food had to be kept exposed in the market place, and it was unlawful to *hide* any food or sell it at a price higher than that stipulated by the Jurats. All fish caught had to be displayed openly at the fish markets of Valletta or Cospicua and it was unlawful to hide any fish caught. Fishermen from St Paul's Bay could sell personally their catch at Mdina. Fish had to be sold only up to 7.00 a.m. from April to September and up to 8.00 a.m. from October to March. Fish had to be sold by weight and according to the published Government tariffs. Fishing boats entering the port at night, had to be escorted by the guards boat. It was unlawful to use the dredge. The above regulations were published on 6 December 1801<sup>63</sup>. Soon the fish retailers were in uproar. The fishermen did not go fishing and so fish became scarce and the public started

<sup>62</sup> NAR., Collezione di bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo dell'Isola di Malta e sue dipendenze (1784-1813), 69-70.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

protesting. The retailers and fishermen wanted to have the 6 December regulations revoked. On 12 December, Cameron issued a notice on fish retail, stating that this was made illegal and fish had to be sold directly and solely by the fishermen. Each fisherman was to be given a written permit on leaving port and this had to be shown again on entering. Fishing boats were not to carry any passengers. Fishermen were not to be molested by retailers<sup>64</sup>.

Hobart instructed Cameron that the administration of Justice and Police was to be exercised according to the Laws and institutions of the former Government of the Order, subject only to emergency measures or directives from the Secretary of State<sup>65</sup>. Cameron was instructed to draw up a table of the precise legal and established fees of the Judges and officers of Justice, employed in the different Courts and to stick this table of fees to each Court. Impartial administration of Justice – was to be prevented and whenever occurring, it had to be rigorously condemned. Hobart was of the opinion that the *Consolato del Mare* was to cease functioning. This Court resembled our Commercial Court and Hobart was of the opinion that later on a Vice-Admiralty court would be established, to replace the *Consolato*.

By Notice dated 23 July 1801, Cameron and Pigot decreed that any persons present on the islands, who were not native of the islands, were subject to the jurisdiction of the Tribunals of the Islands. Noticing that many Turkish merchants were being insulted, Cameron issued a *Bando*, on 5 October 1801, declaring that such insults were to be punishable crimes. On 20 October, a Special Tribunal for the payment of credits of the administration of Public Property, was instituted. Proclamation dated 14 December 1801 stipulated the obligations and faculties of the Lieutenants of the Casals, Magistrates and Tribunals<sup>66</sup>. The *Bando* of 24 March 1802, stipulated that foreigners, resident in hotels or houses, had to be reported and registered within twenty-four hours.

In August 1801, soldier John Allary was accused of the murder of Salvatore Zammit. Pigot refused Cameron's request that Allary be tried according to the Laws of Malta. Pigot's reasons were that in such cases, it was not the custom of the service to do so, and it was also his duty to insist on trial by jury as this was the right of any English man. No such trial existed in Malta at the time. Pigot insisted on a Court Martial at which any Maltese could give evidence, under oath. Cameron was of the

<sup>65</sup> NAR., dispatch of Secretary of State to Governor, vol. 1, 14 May 1801, 3.

<sup>66</sup> NAR., Collezione di Bandi prammatiche ed altri avvisi ufficiali pubblicati dal Governo dell'Isola di Malta e sue dipendenze (1784-1813), 75-76.

<sup>67</sup> PRO., W.O.1\292.



opinion that the Articles of War did not apply to Malta where a Civil court already existed. Pigot answered that this Civil Court was not run on English lines. Cameron sent Pigot his formal protest and the letter referred the case to H.M. Government. Allary was Court Martialled at the Palace Valletta on 19 and 20 August 1801 and acquitted for want of sufficient evidence<sup>67</sup>.

Throughout his administration Cameron followed Hobart's instructions "... to use every endeavour, consistent with your Public duty to meet their wishes, to show yourself indulgent even to their prejudices and to omit no fair opportunity of conciliating their affection and ensuring their fidelity to the Government under which they are placed". Cameron did not agree wholly with the Treaty of Amiens with regard to Malta. According to him, England should not have given up Malta. England was keen to keep off France from Malta and to establish peace with the latter after so many trying and belligerent years. When, following the Treaty of Amiens, France started once again manifesting its belligerent intentions, the Treaty of Amiens fell to pieces and the British did not leave Malta and indeed came to appreciate more and more its utility, as a fortress colony in the Mediterranean. The British, having decided to retain Malta, did not live up to the good intentions which Hobart had explained in his instructions to Cameron. Malta became a mere fortress colony in British hands and the Maltese did not have any worthwhile say in the administration of their own country. When in the 1830's, the Maltese liberals, led by Mitrovich and Camillo Scerberras, put before the British Parliament the claims of the Maltese, Hobart's and Cameron's dispatches which showed a positive disposition of the administration towards the fostering of good relations with the Maltese, were amply referred to<sup>68</sup>. The British administration of the time was repeatedly reminded that Cameron's address, on arrival on the island, spoke of, "... *ricevete con gratitudine tanta bonta' d'un Re Padre de suoi sudditi, che protegge il debole contro il forte, il povero contro il ricco, sotto il cui Dominio tutti sono ugualmente protetti dalla legge*". In the 1830's all these nice words were still only futile words.

Cameron was transferred from Malta to the Bahamas where his main problem was slavery. He remained Governor of the Bahamas for seventeen years (1803-1820). He had tried hard to keep the Maltese happy while the British Parliament was deciding our country's fate, in Britain's best interest. He died on 26 June 1828 at Roydon. In Malta, a street in Casal Paola and Gzira are named after him and portraits of him are to be found at the Governor's Palace and in private collections.

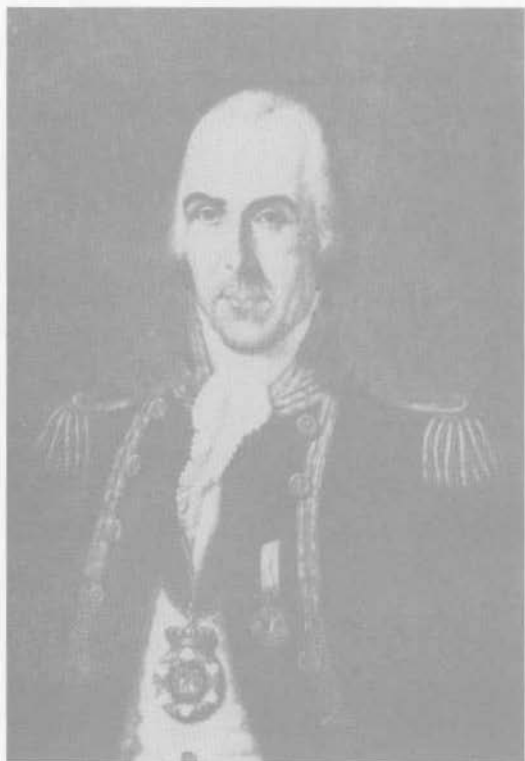
<sup>68</sup> Farrugia Randon, Camillo Scerberras. His Life and Times, 82-108.



*Charles Cameron*



*William Cobbett*



*Sir Alexander Ball*