END OF A COLLEGE: A STUDY IN CONFLICT

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PROLOGUE

In June 1839, 71 years after Pinto expelled the Jesuits from Malta, Padre Massimiliano Ryllo, a Polish Jesuit missionary, came to Malta on his way from Rome to Mt Libanus. His eloquent preaching during his three-week stay took the Island by storm. Ryllo returned to Malta from Syria on 23 October 1841 and stayed here till 1 September 1843. His sojourn encouraged the Maltese to hope for a college run by Jesuits, as they were not at all happy with education at the Public Lyceum and the University.

In 1842 certain Maltese citizens petitioned the Governor, Sir Henry Bouverie, to let them have the Auberge d'Italie as a seminary under Padre Ryllo's direction. The Governor refused. His decision was approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Stanley. Two years later, following his example, Governor Sir Patrick Stuart turned down another petition to establish a boarding-school (convitto) under English and Italian Jesuits.²

The files RU/1 and RT/1 in the Archives of the British Jesuit Province (ABPSJ) contain the main holdings concerning Padre Sapetti and the closure of St Paul's Convitto/College. RT/1 ff.59-70 are entitled 'The Sapetti case 1858'. The despatches from Governors to Secretaries of State for the Colonies and vice-versa are at the National Archives, Rabat, Malta, (NAR), unless otherwise stated.

- 1 In his (Separate) Despatch to Bouverie (14.iv.1842) Stanley fully recognised 'the expediency of discouraging by all lawful and prudent means every attempt which might be made to establish the Jesuits in Malta'.
 - The original petition by Antonio Zammit, Francesco Cassia and others, as well as Bouverie's (Separate) Despatch of 7.iii.1842 to Stanley are not available at NAR. For refusal of the petition cf. Greig's letter, 3.iii.1842, in Letters from Chief Secretary to Individuals (CSG), 05/2, NAR. A short time later, the Governor was authorised to sell the Auberge d'Italie (then used as a Civil Arsenal) and adjacent buildings by auction for the erection of new houses to provide additional accommodation to inhabitants of Valletta. (Bouverie to Stanley, Despatch 16/42 of 8.iii.1842; Stanley to Bouverie, Despatch of 20.iv.1842)
- 2 The 52 signatories (including Antonio and Emmanuele Zammit, and Dr Michele Parnis, M.D.) declared they wanted to secure for their children 'the combined advantages of a Religious and literary education'; and since they considered the English and Italian languages indispensable in a good and useful Maltese education, they wished to have both English and Italian Jesuits at the Convitto. (Copies of this letter, dated only May 1844, and of the Governor's reply signed by Sir Hector Greig Chief Secretary to Government dated 2.v.1844, are enclosures with Stuart's Despatch to Stanley 31/45 of 3.v.1845.) The reason that the Governor gave in his Despatch for his

At this time, the English Provincial, Fr Randal Lythgoe, applied to Lord Stanley to open a boarding-school in Malta, to be run on the lines of Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, by natural-born subjects of Her Majesty.³ But Governor Stuart expressed his total opposition to letting the Jesuits into Malta on any terms as being 'productive of much discord and mischief'; however, if the proposed *Convitto* were sanctioned, Stuart asked Stanley whether it was to be run solely by *individual* Jesuits, natural-born subjects of Her Majesty, or whether there would be any control of the Jesuits as a body, and whether all foreign Jesuits were to be totally disallowed from being employed in any way in the said *Convitto*.⁴

In April 1845 Stuart forwarded to Lord Stanley an address signed by 3702 citizens of Malta⁵ thanking him for having granted permission to establish a boarding-school for the education of youth, under the superintendence of English Jesuits, although Stuart was not aware that Stanley had given such a permission.⁶

Meanwhile, Fr Lythgoe stated that the *Convitto* he intended establishing in Malta would be employing only British-born subjects; Jesuits would be employed therein as *individual* Jesuits, not claiming any immunities as a corporation.⁷ Fr

refusal was that he considered that it would have had 'a direct tendency to introduce the Jesuits into Malta as a Body'.

In a further letter to Stuart, the petitioners expressed their disappointment and deep regret that his refusal of their 15 April petition forced them to send their children 'to a foreign land to secure for them the blessings of a Religious and literary Education'. (RU/1, ff. 56-7)

- 3 Lythgoe to Stanley, copy with Stanley's Despatch to Stuart 122/45, 6.ii.1845.
- 4 Despatch 20/45, 26.iii.1845.
- 5 The address, which was part of Fr Esmonde's strategy to overcome the hostility of Governor Stuart and Dr Tomlinson, the Protestant Bishop of Gibraltar, was printed in English and Italian and dated 29.iii.1845. It was also published in *Il Portafoglio*, 17.iv.1845. The signatories were 675 clergy (109 canons of the Cathedral and Collegiate Churches in Malta, 28 out of 29 parish priests, 438 secular and 100 religious clergy), and 3027 members of the laity (23 nobles, 96 lawyers and physicians, the rest merchants and gentry). Cf Extracts from Journal of Revd. B. Esmonde in Malta on Suspension & restoration of faculties to Padre Rillo & Establishment of the 'Convitto' of St Paul in Notabile, RU/1, f.30, ABPSJ. Copy of address, RU/1, f.78. Cf. also fn 8 below.
- 6 Despatch 29/45, 25.iv.1845.
- 7 Letter of 26.ix.1845, copy with Stanley's Despatch to Stuart 135/45 of 6.v.1845.
- 8 Fr Bartholomew Esmonde was an Irish Jesuit and the founder of the Convitto. He was sent to Malta by Fr General in June 1842 to try and get Padre Ryllo reinstated in his faculties of preaching, for Ryllo had been unjustly suspended by Bishop F.X. Caruana at the insistence of Governor Bouverie on the pretence of his having preached 'seditious' sermons. At the same time Fr Esmonde began working towards the establishment of a Convitto under the direction of the Jesuits. It was Fr Esmonde who, because of the hostility to the project of the Convitto, arranged for Maltese youths to study at the Jesuit College of Noto, Sicily, till permission was obtained to open the Convitto. (Extracts from Journal of Revd. B. Esmonde in Malta, op.cit., ABPSJ)

Lythgoe added that Fr B. Esmonde,⁸ who was his representative, had probably already applied for a licence on his behalf. Fr Lythgoe therefore trusted that Stanley would instruct the Governor to place no obstacle to opening the *Convitto* 'for the benefit of the Catholic Youth' of Malta, and added that a licence for opening schools had 'hitherto practically at least been a mere matter of form.'

Luckily for the Maltese, Stuart misunderstood Stanley's despatch with the above correspondence to mean that he had no objection and issued a licence, on 16 May 1845. The *Convitto* opened at Mdina on 4 November 1845¹⁰ to the great joy of the Maltese.

On 25 April 1846 Fr Lythgoe requested permission of William E. Gladstone, who had replaced Stanley, to employ foreign Jesuits at the *Convitto*. ¹¹ Stuart reiterated his opposition, pointing out that Fr Lythgoe was endeavouring to change the terms on which he had received permission. ¹² But on 20 August Earl Grey, who had been nominated Secretary of State for the Colonies a short time before, consented to the employment of professors of French and Italian in the *Convitto*. ¹³

The *Convitto* faced many difficulties from the start, among them great expenses and a certain amount of hostility on the part of Governor, officials and

- 9 RU/1 f.82. Stuart's Despatch 39/45, 14.v.1845. Stanley, however, had had no intention of giving him the authority to grant such a licence. But once the Governor had already issued the licence, Stanley would not ask him to withdraw it, as long as the conditions stipulated before were observed. (Despatch 142/45, 25.viii.1845)
- 10 L'Osservatore Maltese, 15.xi.1845, pp.664-5. In October the community comprised four Irish and seven Maltese Jesuits. The Convitto was the building today housing the Convent and the School of the Dorothean Sisters at Mdina. During the years 1879-96 it served as the Noviciate of the Sicilian Jesuits.
- 11 Copy of Lythgoe's letter with Gladstone's Despatch to Stuart 18/46 of 30.iv.1846.
- 12 Stuart frankly declared that he was as much adverse to the employment of foreign Jesuits as he had ever been. He considered Esmonde's 'proposition as an encroachment upon the original agreement.' In his letter of 26.iii.1845 Stuart expressed his fear that, if foreign Jesuits were once allowed to come and teach at the *Convitto*, the Jesuits' 'strict adherence to one another, as well as their general perseverance and devotedness in furthering the interests of their Order', together with the favour of the Court of Rome, and with the support of many Maltese, 'they might, through the means of Education, regain by degrees, such an influence as would in the end prove highly prejudicial to Malta's interests.' (Despatch 35/46, 25.v.1846) For Esmonde's unsuccessful attempt to rebut Stuart's interpretation, cf. Extracts from Journal of Revd. B. Esmonde in Malta, op.cit., 33v-34v. Esmonde contended that the licence had been unconditional.
- 13 Copy of letter to Lythgoe, signed by B. Hawes, with Earl Grey's Despatch 13/46 of 22.viii.1846. Earl Grey was convinced by Lythgoe's representations.
- 14 Letters and Notices (LN) ['house journal' of the English Jesuit Province] vol. 32 (Oct. 1913), p.234, ABPSJ.

others.¹⁴ The Jesuits convinced themselves that a move to Valletta would improve the situation.

On 25 April 1849 Fr Esmonde and his fellow-Jesuit Fr George Connell petitioned the Governor, Sir Richard More O'Ferrall, proposing to convert the *Convitto* at Mdina into a day-school to be opened in Valletta, and asking to have the building, then used as a female hospital, which was expected to be vacated shortly, leased to them at a yearly rent. Moreover, the petitioners asked for some assistance so that they could lower the fees charged to individuals who wanted to attend their school, which was 'devoted principally to English Education in Malta.' Nothing came of the proposal.

Governor More O'Ferrall, however, gave advice to the Provincial (?) that a move to Valletta had to start with the express desire of the Maltese themselves. The Governor suggested opening a small day school with two Jesuits on an experimental basis at Valletta, and if it were successful, to close down the *Convitto* at Mdina and open a large day school in Valletta at the end of the year.¹⁶

On 11 March 1852 a petition with hundreds of signatures was presented to the Governor, Sir William Reid, asking that the Hon. G. Montanaro's recently vacated house, No. 128, at the lower end of Merchants' Street, Valletta, be leased to the Jesuits at a low rent. ¹⁷ On 30 June 1852 the house was ceded to the Jesuits. ¹⁸

On 4 October 1852¹⁹ the Jesuits moved to Valletta; however, even here, the situation rather worsened than improved. The *Convitto* remained a heavy drain on the resources of the English Province as regards both funds and men. The number of boarders decreased, and most of the students were day-boys. The English Province had to fork out a lot of money, for the *Convitto* had no income except the meagre fees paid, if at all, by the students, fees which were too low to meet expenses, particularly for the frequent and costly journeys to and from

¹⁵ Enclosure with More O'Ferrall's despatch to Sec. of State Earl Grey 44/49 of 4.v.1849. In his despatch the Governor added that the building might be required for some other purpose. Earl Grey stated that O'Ferrall had not given his views; he suggested that the Governor might leave the question of assistance to the consideration of the Municipal Commissioners under the new Charter of Government. (Despatch 164/49 of 11.vi.1849)

¹⁶ Letter of 3.iii.1850. (RU/1, ff.123-4)

¹⁷ CSG 02/426/1852.

¹⁸ Lease Paper No.70 of 1852. Cf. also L'Ordine 6, 13, 27.iii.1852. A few years after its closure, the *Convitto* was demolished and the Camarata built on the site.

¹⁹ L'Ordine, 16.x.1852.

²⁰ LN, op. cit., p.236.

England to relieve many members of the staff who broke down. And the Church would not help, and the Government Educational Department refused any grant in aid.²⁰ The English Province was loath to close down the *Convitto* but could not see any way out unless the situation, particularly the financial circumstances, improved.

LAST ACT

The Jesuits had always been on good terms with Bishop Publio Maria de' Conti Sant, who ruled the diocese till he resigned on 3 December 1857. Mgr Gaetano Pace Forno²¹ became the new Bishop; almost immediately matters took a turn for the worse.

When Bishop Pace Forno was in Rome in October 1857, following his nomination as coadjutor, the Jesuit Father General, Fr Peter Beckx, explained to him the very difficult situation of the *Convitto*: it had no church of its own to administer and no endowment; nor did it enjoy the favour and protection of the ecclesiastical authorities. Fr Beckx pointed out that it had been kept open at great sacrifice, and only because the Society believed that it greatly benefited the spiritual good of the people. But unless the situation improved, the *Convitto* would have to close down. Fr General recommended the *Convitto* to the Bishop, who told him to keep hoping and promised to see what he could do, but he offered no concrete suggestion.²²

At the beginning of 1858 two connected incidents happened which were the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back and hastened the Jesuits' decision

- 21 Mgr Gaetano Pace Forno was born at Rabat, Gozo, on 5.ix.1807, to lawyer Francesco Pace and Lucia dei Baroni Forno. He joined the Order of the Hermits of St Augustine on 20.vii.1824; studied in Malta and Fermo, Italy. He was ordained priest at Naples on 22.ix.1832. He taught in various convents of the Order in Italy until elected Provincial of the Maltese Augustinians on 30.v.1847. On 23.x.1848 he opened a Convitto for boys in Valletta. He presided over the Convitto and was Superior of his confers in Malta. In July 1857 he was summoned to Rome to be offered the nomination of coadjutor to the Bishop of Malta. He was appointed on 25.ix.1857 and consecrated Bishop in Rome on 4.x.1857. He became Bishop of Malta (and titular Archbishop of Rhodes) on 3.xii.1857, when Bishop Sant resigned. Mgr Pace Forno was one of the backstage promoters in attempts to create a Gozo bishopric but was adamant against the proposal when he became Bishop of Malta. He died at Castellammare di Stabia on 22.vii.1874 and was buried in the Cathedral at Mdina on 23.xi.1875. Cf. Joseph Bezzina, Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony: the Gozo-Malta Story 1798-1864: Malta, 1985, pp.188ff. For character and evaluation of Bishop Pace Forno, cf. J. Bezzina, op. cit.
- 22 Beckx to McCann, Rector of the *Convitto*, 17.x.1857, RU/1, f.183. Two months later, in his letter of 11.xii.1857, Fr McCann reported to the Provincial, Fr Johnson, that they had not received any sign of favour from the Bishop and he would be surprised if he ever gave any. (RU/1, f.184)

to withdraw from the Island. The first had to do with the Jesuits' preaching to the British Catholic soldiers, the second was the expulsion of one of the Italian Jesuits attached to the *Convitto*.

Bishop Pace Forno was involved in both incidents and was responsible at least partly for the critical situation which developed soon after his assuming office and which led to the closure of the *Convitto*.

A Matter of Preaching

The English Jesuits had been taking spiritual care of the British Catholic soldiers in Malta for many years. At this time the incumbent was Fr George Collyns; he had been sent to Malta in September 1857 expressly for this. He preached to the soldiers on Saturdays and Sundays, and during December a retreat as well. His apostolate was successful and attracted the soldiers in great numbers.²³

This 'monopoly' was suddenly challenged by the Rev. Francis Gauci Azzopardi, a Maltese diocesan priest who had just returned to Malta from serving (for over two years) in the diocese of Southwark, England. He wanted to get into the act, and the fact that he was a nephew of the Bishop might have stiffened his resolve.

On Sunday, 3 January 1858, the Rev. Gauci wrote to Fr Collyns that he had been ordered by the Bishop to preach and perform other religious duties to the Catholic soldiers in the Gesù church and that he intended to begin preaching the

- 23 MLB; RU/1, f.66ff.
- 24 Gauci to Collyns, 3.i.1858, RT/1, f.84. Gauci had formerly been 'on terms of intimacy' with the Jesuits at the *Convitto*, but since his return he had kept aloof. The Rev. Gauci had made efforts to obtain an important ecclesiastical benefice under Bishop Sant, so that Fr McCann had 'reason to presume' that he had not returned to Malta 'without the certain hope of arriving at preferment,' being a close relative of the Bishop. (McCann to Provincial, 14.i.1858, RU/1, f.189)
- 25 RU/1, f.189.
- 26 Fr Henry McCann was born at Drogheda, Eire, on 15.vi.1815. He joined the Jesuits on 6.x.1823, was ordained on 24.ix. 1836. He studied Maths at Paris 1838-41. He was Vice-Rector of Calcutta College 1844-7, Rector of the Malta Convitto 1855-8, Procurator of the English Province 1859-71, Superior of St Mary's Hall, Lancs., 1871-5. He died at Beaumont College on 18.v.1888.

A fellow Jesuit wrote of him: '...few men had a kinder and more generous heart, or nourished a warmer piety than he. He was universally beloved by all who lived with him, or under him. No one could resist the charm of his guilelessness and honesty; in spite of his horror of sentiment he was full of enthusiasm for persons whom he respected or admired, and even for that most unpoetical subject, mathematics, and carried it into his teaching; he thought so little of himself that he had the highest opinion of others and saw good points in every one.' Cf. Obituary in LN vol. xix (Aug. 1888) pp. 537-544.

following Sunday: later on they might enter into some arrangement how to divide the work between them.²⁴

Fr Collyns received this 'insolent' letter²⁵ at the *Convitto* the following Monday evening. As the Rector of the *Convitto*, Fr Henry McCann,²⁶ was then away doing his retreat at St Julian's, Fr Collyns could not discuss the matter with him. He, therefore, followed the advice of the consultors (advisers) and went at once with Canon Falzon, the rector of the Gesù, to see the Bishop.

The Bishop denied 'with astonishment' having given the Rev. Gauci any order whatever to preach in the Gesù. He had indeed given him leave to preach there, he said, but never contemplated his doing so without coming to an agreement with Fr Collyns concerning the division of work. At the same meeting, Fr Collyns told the Bishop that he had started lecturing to the soldiers every day; the Bishop told him to keep on lecturing to them, as well as to preach on Sundays as usual.²⁷ Fr Collyns now thought that the matter had been settled and that he would be able to continue to preach without further interference by the Rev. Gauci. However, the Bishop said that, notwithstanding what had happened, it would be better after all that the Rev. Gauci preached to the soldiers occasionally,²⁸ when Fr Collyns was unable to do so.²⁹

The following day Fr Collyns wrote the Rev. Gauci a letter informing him about what the Bishop had said.³⁰ The Rev. Gauci replied he would not preach till he had cleared the matter with the Bishop.³¹

That same morning Fr Collyns went to St Julian's to report to the Rector about this development.³² Fr McCann asked Fr Collyns to inform Canon Falzon in person that he was fully resolved to withdraw Fr Collyns wholly from the Gesù church and of course from all preaching in it, if the Rev. Gauci preached again, even once, to the Catholic soldiers in the Gesù, and this especially because the

- 27 Collyns to Gauci, 5.i.1885, RT/1, f.85.
- 28 RU/1, f.189v.
- 29 RT/1, f. 67.
- 30 Collyns to Gauci, 5.i.1858, RT/1, f.85.
- 31 The Rev. Gauci replied to Fr Collyns, telling him that his note had caused him 'no small surprise' after what the Bishop had told him on the previous Sunday at his convent, [where the Bishop resided], and that 'very likely the affluence of business may have made it escape from his memory and brought this misunderstanding.' (Gauci to Collyns, 5.i.1858, RT/1 f.86)
- 32 RU/1, f.189v.
- 33 RT/1, f.82, in Italian; copy RU/1, f.187; English translation RT/1, f. 83.
- 34 RU/1, f.189v.
- 35 Ibid.

Rev. Gauci's letter had been most offensive to the Society. He added that since Fr Collyns had been sent to Malta 'by his Head [i.e. Major] Superiors' expressly to preach to the English Catholic soldiers, there would be no point in his staying in Malta if someone else took his place. Consequently, Fr Rector earnestly begged Canon Falzon to inform him that very day clearly and explicitly whether the Rev. Gauci would preach at the Gesù in future or not, in order that Fr Rector might make dispositions in time for the departure or stay of Fr Collyns. In the meanwhile, until Canon Falzon answered, Fr Collyns would not preach in the Gesù.³³

However, besides giving Canon Falzon the message by word of mouth, Fr Collyns also, imprudently, gave him a note, to serve as a memo. ³⁴ Canon Falzon behaved 'like a simpleton' ³⁵, for he passed the note on to the Bishop without having read it. On reading that Fr Collyns had been sent to Malta by his Major Superiors (obviously meaning the Provincial) expressly to preach to the soldiers, the Bishop became very upset, even physically unwell. He accused the Jesuits of trying by threats to obstruct him in the free exercise of his authority by claiming that Fr Collyns had higher, i.e. Papal, authorisation than his for preaching in the Gesù. ³⁶ It would seem as if the Bishop was trying to lay hold of a stick to beat the Jesuits with, ³⁷ for it was an absurd interpretation.

- 36 *Ibid.* Collyns himself, when he was later asked by the Bishop, said that the note was merely a memo for Canon Falzon (not a letter for the Bishop); it represented the sense of the Rector's communication to him and 'Head [i.e. Major] Superiors' meant simply the Provincial. (RT/1, f.67v)
 - The Bishop complained that Fr Collyns had been exercising the ministry without faculties from him. However, on assuming office, the Bishop had renewed faculties to all priests by means of a circular and had confirmed them for all the Jesuits when Fr McCann visited him on 31 December 1857. And when Fr Collyns started preaching to the soldiers, Canon Falzon had given him a free hand. (RT/1, f.66)
- 37 RU/1, 189v.
- 38 The title of Minister is given to the one who runs the material side of the Jesuit community and who acts as Superior in the absence of the latter.
- 39 RU/1, f.189v. On the morning of Thursday [letter dated only Thursday, presumably 7 January], Fr Minister sent a letter to the Rector, to tell him that the Bishop was loud in his complaints that the Jesuits were threatening him 'with a dirty piece of paper' to withdraw from the Gesù, unless he withdrew the Rev. Gauci's faculties. Fr Cooke also relayed the Bishop's message, brought by Canon Falzon by word of mouth, that he had granted faculties to the Rev. Gauci to preach and hear confessions at the Gesù, so as to have more labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, but he did not want to withdraw the faculties from the Jesuits; he wanted the two parties [Fr Collyns and the Rev. Gauci] to agree on a division of work. A note written by Sapetti was enclosed, demanding from Canon Falzon the assurance that the Rev. Gauci would not exercise his faculties at the Ges, or else Fr Collyns would be withdrawn. The advisers expressed a wish that the Rector write it out in his hand. (RU/1, f.110) The letter from the Rector to Canon Falzon, dated 7 January in the morning, reiterated his demand for a confidential answer in writing to his injunction that Canon Falzon should not allow the Rev. Gauci to preach in the Gesù. (RU/1 f.87) It seems that the Rector did not send this letter, preferring to go himself that evening to call on the Bishop.

Wind of the matter got abroad: friends and foes took sides. The most ludicrous rumours founded upon vague notions circulated everywhere. The Rev. Gauci's letter and Fr Collyns's note were the talk of the town.. Fr Minister, ³⁸ Fr Charles Cooke, sent the Rector a note asking him to come to Valletta. In the meantime, some of the most influential of the Jesuits' friends were already organising a demonstration, claiming that the Bishop's actions would force the Jesuits to leave Malta and the parents would be left without the means of properly educating their children. But the Rector dissuaded them, saying it was a dangerous thing for laymen to interfere in any way with ecclesiastical superiors. And they desisted.³⁹

On the evening of Thursday, 7 January, Fr McCann waited on the Bishop, who received him with a look of indignation. Fr McCann asked the Bishop's pardon if anything had been said or done by any member of the Jesuit community to displease him. The Bishop complained that the Jesuits had insulted him and that this higher authorization should have been produced before. Fr McCann denied having authorized anyone to write anything of the sort; until then Fr McCann was not aware that Fr Collyns's note had landed in the Bishop's hands. The Rector apologized and declared that their faculties stemmed only from the Bishop. The Bishop gradually calmed down and asked Fr McCann what objections there could be to the Rev. Gauci's preaching occasionally. The Rector replied that he judged men by their actions, and a person who could write a letter as the Rev. Gauci had written was a dangerous man, and the most painful consequences were almost sure to ensue if he allowed Fr Collyns to preach concurrently with the Rev. Gauci. He expressed his willingness to withdraw Fr Collyns altogether

- 40 RU/1, 189v-190v. When Fr McCann pointed out the Jesuits' difficult situation, having no house or church of their own, the Bishop did not refer to the church but said they should certainly not have to pay rent for a house, —'but what can you expect from Maltese; they are liberal in professions of friendship but very unwilling to part with their money'. (*Ibid.*)
- 41 The paper alleged that, because of the wrong idea that the Jesuits were not totally subject to the Bishop's jurisdiction, spiritual assistance to the soldiers had been abandoned or was insufficient and that young ecclesiastics were being discouraged from dedicating themselves to such work. The article stated that the Bishop had encouraged several priests to undertake this special ministry and that the recent unpleasant incidents had created obstacles where unexpected: Fr Collyns had the authority to preach at the Gesù on the understanding that he would do so with the help of others under the direction of the rector of the church. This was being pointed out by the author of the article so as to maintain the rights of local ecclesiastical jurisdiction, for it had been said that Fr Collyns had authorisation superior to that of the Bishop and a note had been given to the Bishop, irreverent if not minatory, trying to limit the Bishop's authority to give the Rev. Gauci the faculties to preach in the Gesù. The Bishop had, however, maintained the faculties he had already given, because he was firm in his desire to encourage those who wanted to dedicate themselves to taking spiritual care of the Catholic soldiers. (L'Ordine, 7.i.1858)

and let the Rev. Gauci preach alone, but he could not allow their preaching conjointly. The Bishop seemed somewhat satisfied. The conversation became almost friendly, so that Fr McCann took the opportunity to point out the difficulties the *Convitto* was facing. But the Bishop offered no help. The Bishop then said that the Rev. Gauci would preach only when Fr Collyns was prevented from doing so. Fr McCann bowed and took his leave, and returned to St Julian's to continue his retreat, persuaded that the Bishop did not mean to insist on the Rev. Gauci's preaching at all.⁴⁰

On this same Friday, the weekly *L'Ordine*, organ of the clerical party, published an article accusing the Jesuits of claiming higher authority for their faculties than the Bishop's, and of sending an irreverent, minatory letter to the Bishop limiting his jurisdiction.⁴¹ The following day Fr Cooke, Fr Minister of the *Convitto*, sent Fr McCann a note, urgently asking him to come to Valletta from St Julian's.⁴²

- Fr McCann believed that the editor, 'a good but needy young man', whom the bishop had recently appointed to a place of some emolument (assessore) in the episcopal curia, had been incorrectly informed of the facts and that he was probably unaware that more would be read into his comments than he intended. (RU/1, f. 190v) Fr McCann declared that the editor had always been friendly to the Jesuits and was still well disposed to them even now. (Ibid)
- 42 RU/1, 190v. Cf. also *Minister's Log Book (MLB)*, ABPSJ: 'Fr Rector forced by the state of our affairs with Monsig. to give up his retreat.'
- 43 RT/1, f.88, copy RU/1, f.188. Fr McCann reminded the editor that he had not checked the facts as he had done on a previous occasion. Fr McCann accused the editor that by insinuations, the drift of which was obvious to everybody, the Jesuits were being held up to reprobation as guilty of disrespect to the Bishop, of seeking to circumscribe the limits of his authority, of arrogating to themselves the right of exercising the sacred ministry without his sanction, and of refusing, from unworthy motives, to cooperate with other clergymen in providing for the spiritual wants of the Catholic soldiers. These imputations, added Fr McCann, were 'each and all false, utterly false,' and he expected the editor to insert this simple denial of them in the next issue of the paper. The motives for refusing to allow Fr Collyns to preach concurrently with the Rev. Gauci were different from those which the editor 'most uncharitably' attributed to the Jesuits. It was highly commendable in a Catholic journalist 'to stand forth as the champion of ecclesiastical authority', but this did not excuse his 'propagating calumny to the detriment of a Religious Community.'
- 44 The editor averred it was inapposite as the imputations Fr McCann complained of were not to be found in the published article: it was wrong to consider the article an attack on individuals or religious communities rather than a defence of the Bishop's authority; the journal's mission was to defend what belonged to the Church, especially the Bishop's authority. (L'Ordine, 15.i.1858) Cf. also McCann to Provincial, 16.i.1858, RU/1, f.191.
 - The article, construed by friends and foes alike to be a severe attack on the Jesuits, was considered a gross calumny by the friends of the Jesuits and a deserved exposition by their enemies. (*Ibid.*, RU/1, f.190v)
- 45 McCann to Provincial, 14.i.1858, RU/1, f.190v. It was rumoured that the Bishop denied having made such a proposal and that he had prohibited Canon Falzon from again communicating with the Jesuits about the matter. (RT/1, f.67v)

On the morning of Monday, 11 January, Fr McCann sent a letter to the editor of *L'Ordine*, rebutting the editor's 'utterly false' imputations, 43 but the editor refused to print it. 44

That evening Canon Falzon brought Fr McCann a 'notice' from the Bishop informing him that the Rev. Gauci would preach to the soldiers on the following Sunday. Fr McCann received the message without making any remark but told Fr Collyns to be ready to depart by the next steamer. There is no indication what Canon Falzon told the Bishop, but the next day Canon Falzon came back with another message from the Bishop, intimating that the Bishop was willing not to interfere with Fr Collyns if the Rector would consent to the Rev. Gauci's giving a discourse or an instruction every Saturday evening.⁴⁵

Fr McCann told the Canon, with whom he was on terms of perfect intimacy, that he should be conceding very much if he did consent, that he saw no reason why he should consent, and that he would give him a written answer when he had made up his mind. After reflection, however, Fr McCann thought it safer to yield a little, and on Wednesday 13 sent the Canon a letter for the Bishop in which he assented to the Bishop's proposal.⁴⁶ There was no response to this letter. Fr Collyns did not ever preach again and on 10 April left Malta.⁴⁷

Ambition, lack of courtesy, touchiness, pique, tactlessness, and probably more than a modicum of anti-Jesuitism, were the strands which wove this tangled

- 46 RU/1, ff.190v-191. In the letter to the Bishop, McCann candidly confessed that he made this concession reluctantly, for, considering the Rev. Gauci 'a dangerous man', as he had already intimated to him, he was afraid Fr Collyns would be exposed to new insults, and that from the pulpit. He was waiving his objections 'for the sake of peace', and from the assurance he felt that the Bishop would as far as possible make provision against the evil consequences that he apprehended. (RU/1, f.188v)
- 47 MLB. Pastoral care of soldiers deteriorated. (RU/1, f.174)
- 48 McCann to Provincial, 16.i.1858, RU/1, ff. 189, 191v.

 Giving Fr Provincial a full account of this 'storm', which had meanwhile subsided a little, Fr McCann also asked him to postpone the visit he intended paying the Convitto, because it might at that time complicate matters. In the Jesuits' opinion, Fr McCann wrote, the gale that was blowing was rather favourable than otherwise as it might help them off a rock (sic) upon which they had all but foundered. (*Ibid.*) Yet, he seemed to have had second thoughts later, for a time, because of the sincere friendship of many Maltese. (Cooke to Provincial, 20.iii.1858, RU/1, f.202) For Cooke's views on how to improve the Convitto's situation, cf. *ibid*.
- 49 NAR, Customs Dept, L 34.
- 50 Padre Sapetti came to Malta on 25.ix.1852. (NAR, Customs Dept, KL 102, f.777)
 Padre Sapetti was born at Alba (Cuneo) 11.ix.1815. He joined the Society of Jesus on 8.xi.1833
 in the Turin Province, took first vows on 20.xi.1835 He studied rhetoric at Cagliari and Chieri

web.

Padre Sapetti

Because of the Bishop's 'extraordinary' behaviour towards them, Fr McCann resolved, with the unanimous approbation of his advisers, to send Padre Felice Sapetti to Rome to explain himself the whole affair to Fr General and to recommend in the Rector's name the immediate closure of the *Convitto*. ⁴⁸ Presumably, the choice fell on Padre Sapetti because he did not teach at the *Convitto*, albeit he was a member of the community. Padre Sapetti left Malta on

1836-8, philosophy at Turin 1838-40, taught grammar at Sassari 1840-2, humanities 1842-4, rhetoric at Cagliari 1844-6. He studied theology at Turin, 1846-9, and was ordained on 18.x.1847. He stayed with his family and at Alba 1848-51, was private tutor at Turin, 1851. He studied 4th year theology at Laval. He was in Malta 1852-8, preacher of the Spiritual Exercises to the clergy of Turin 1858-60, was at Alghero 1860-67, Spiritual Father and preacher at Genoa, minister and preacher 1869. Padre Sapetti became professed of four vows 4.ii.1853. He was a religious of solid virtue, a learned, eloquent preacher and retreat master to clergy, nuns and laymen. He died on 9.ii.1884 at Saluzzo (Cuneo). (Obituary, Archives SJ at Istituto Sociale, Turin)

- 51 For instance, he preached Advent and Lenten sermons in St John's Cathedral on the Sacraments. (*L'Ordine* 2, 9, 16, 23.xii.1853; 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.iii.1854; 7,21. iv.1854)
 - He gave many retreats and devised a plan to ensure a more permanent basis for the Retreat House at St Venera. (Beckx to Sapetti, 17.ii.1857, RT/1, f.79, and Sapetti's memo to Provincial and McCann, March 1857, RT/1, f. 81)
 - In 1854 P. Sapetti founded the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception for young men at the Gesù Oratory. He worked hard to set it up and to make it flourish, preaching to the members with great zeal 'he pure maxims of the Gospel' and the Scriptures and giving the Sacraments not only during weekly meetings but also during various novenas and feasts in the year and giving retreats every month at the St Venera retreat house, which was founded expressly by him. At St Venera, the Sodalists did the exercises of the good death and gave religious instruction. Padre Sapetti was always 'a true and perfect model of virtue', not only to the members of the Sodality but also to all those who came to the Sodality, be they laymen or ecclesiastics. (Cf. Sodalists' protest against Sapetti's expulsion, 18.ii.1858, RT/1, f.97)
 - P. Sapetti also directed two Sodalities for ladies, that of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and that of St Vincent de Paule, (RT/1, f/105) and the 'Figlie di Maria' (Daughters of Mary)sodality for girls at the school of the Sisters of St Joseph. (RT/1, f.108)
 - P. Sapetti assumed the religious care of the Sisters of St Joseph and of their school when Père Louis Marchetti, their spiritual father, died. (*L'Ordine*, 14.xii.1855, RT/1, f.108) The school was at 5, Frederick Street, Valletta.
 - A group of laymen contributed some £40 annually to Padre Sapetti's upkeep. (RT/1, ff.75, 76, and Malta Times, 16.vi. 1857)
- 52 A masonic ball was organised at the Auberge de Provence on 25 February 1856 to which some 100 Maltese were invited, but only one, the Marquis Barbaro di San Giorgio, attended. The rest kept away 'through fear of ecclesiastical censure', for which Padre Sapetti's sermons against freemasonry from the pulpit of the Gesù were considered to blame. The English language papers (all of which were anti-Catholic) wrote that the government had good reason for requesting him to hold his tongue or to expel him, if he did not change his attitude. Cf. Malta

the evening of 16 January on board the French steamer *Pausilippe*, which was bound for Marseilles via Italian ports.⁴⁹

Padre Sapetti's departure initiated the second incident in two months. Who was Padre Sapetti, and why was he at the centre of the incident?

Padre Sapetti, an Italian Jesuit, came to Malta in September 1852.⁵⁰ He was a zealous priest and indefatigable preacher.⁵¹ His preaching against freemasonry earned him the hostility of the masonic lodges, indeed, some masons wanted to have him expelled.⁵² His relations with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition were a cause of friction with Mgr Pace Forno.

The first inkling Fr General had that trouble was brewing came from the rumour that the bishop was dissatisfied with the Jesuits at the *Convitto*, a rumour which had been confirmed by Mgr Cannella, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs.

In a letter written just before Padre Sapetti left for Rome, Fr Beckx informed Fr McCann that he had received several letters from Valletta (presumably from the Bishop) containing serious accusations against Padre Sapetti, as well as letters that Padre Sapetti himself had written to the Superior General of the Sisters of St Joseph. Some of the accusatory letters alleged that Padre Sapetti wanted to control the Sisters' community and school according to his whims. Padre Sapetti was accused of often changing the established order and causing great confusion; of having forced by his manner of behaving two of their Superiors to leave Malta; of having seen to it that a young religious, hardly 23 years old, be put in charge of the convent when a Superior, a religious advanced in years, had been dismissed; of having endeavoured to dismiss a certain novice, Elisabeth Bellucci, from the Congregation; of using strong and harsh words in dealing with the last Superior; of paying too frequent visits to the Sisters' house, so that even the newspapers⁵³ spoke unfavourably about this. All these things were most displeasing to the Bishop and caused a bad opinion of the Society.

 $\textit{Mail} \ 29.ii.1856, pp.\ 2,\ 3; \textit{L'Ordine}\ 29.ii.\ 1856, pp.\ 4673-4,\ 7.iii.1856, pp.4677-8.$

53 e.g., Malta Times, 30.vi.1857, p.2.

The Bishop was so annoyed at Padre Sapetti's doings that he abolished the Retreat House of St Venera, where females used to meet for religious meditation under the spiritual direction of Padre Sapetti, and removed the Eucharist from the convent of the Sisters of St Joseph since this entailed Padre Sapetti's presence. (Malta Times, 19.i.1858, p.2)

54 Fr Beckx to McCann, 14. i. 1858, RT/1, f. 90.

That P. Sapetti caused great confusion is confirmed by the diaries of the Sisters of St Joseph.

P. Sapetti was considered the real Superior by some of the Sisters - they no longer obeyed anyone but him, and their example was followed by the 'Children of Mary' sodalists. He

Padre Sapetti's own letters, Fr General added, showed he had got too much involved in the affairs of the convent and in this matter had failed to abide by the regulations laid down by the Jesuit rule.

Fr General asked the Rector to investigate the matter and write back how things stood, and what remedy had been applied or should be applied. He also insisted it was absolutely necessary that all Jesuits abstained from taking care of the Sisters and no longer visited the convent except perhaps once a year to give the annual retreat or to hear confessions on Ember Days. Fr McCann might also speak to the Bishop to inform him of General's views and to ask his advice on a remedy.

Fr General pointed out that the matter had been referred to the Bishop of Marseilles, [where the Congregation had its Mother House since 1852], and he had been 'deeply moved', but Fr General did not know if the matter had also been referred to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda. He himself was 'much grieved' by all this.⁵⁴

Padre Sapetti in Rome

In Rome Padre Sapetti had many conferences with Fr General, his Secretary, and the Assistants of England and Italy, regarding the internal situation at the *Convitto* and the relations with the Bishop. Fr Beckx appreciated the difficulties faced by the *Convitto* but judged severely the latest events, saying he wished that greater longanimity, patience and sweetness had been used, even though he agreed that everything had been done with a good intention.

Fr General took Padre Sapetti to see Mgr Cannella, Secretary for Extraordinary

introduced customs contrary to the Congregation's rule, he insisted that the Sisters should not teach certain subjects like literature and cosmography, he demanded a change of superior. Three of the Sisters followed P. Sapetti to Rome and on his advice entered other Congregations in Turin and in Rome. Mère Euphrasie Maraval, Assistant General, who was sent by the Mother General to assess the situation, advised withdrawal, but Bishop Pace Forno offered them the Conservatory of St Joseph in Cospicua, encouraged them to open a school and promised financial help. The Sisters left Valletta on 27.vii.1858. (From the summary provided by Sr Gemma Farrugia, Archivist of the Congregation in Malta)

It is probably about vicissitudes such as these that the Sisters remarked: 'Notre séjour à la capitale ne nous laisse que des souvenirs pénibles; passons sous silence ces cinq années de luttes, de peines et d'humiliations de tous genres, en laissant la responsabilité à qui Dieu, juste et bon, voudra la donner.' (E. Darbon, Emilie de Vialar Fondatrice de la Congregation des Súurs de Saint-Joseph de l'Apparition: Souvenirs et Documents, Marseille 1901, p. 389)

No correspondence, if extant, at the Mother House of the Sisters of St Joseph or at the Archives of the Bishopric of Marseilles, was available.

Affairs of Dioceses, who received him with great kindness and agreed that the only course to be taken was to send two letters to the Bishop, one by himself, and one by Fr General, to try and pour oil on troubled waters.⁵⁵

In his letter to the Bishop, dated 29 January 1858 and brought over by Padre Sapetti, Fr Beckx expressed his profound regret, and told the Bishop he would recommend to his subjects ever to follow the prescriptions of the Jesuit rule and the examples of their precedessors and to be in full accord with their pastors for the divine glory and for the good of souls. He hoped there would be no further motives of 'disgust and bitterness'. Fr General asked the Bishop if there were other steps he could take which the Bishop considered convenient and necessary so that he would promptly second the Bishop's intentions. He pointed out to the Bishop that the Jesuits had now been in Malta for some years helping evangelical workers for the good of the people and to provide for the literary and moral education of youth. They had done this amidst great difficulties and at great inconvenience since they had no suitable means nor what other religious families considered indispensable. In conscience the General did not want to abandon the Island which was exposed to great dangers of perversion and whose inhabitants had given so many proofs of favour and attachment. But he considered the

- 55 Sapetti to McCann, 5.ii.1858, letter written on board the Harpy, RT/1, f.78.
- 56 Beckx to Pace Forno, 29.i.1858, RT/1, f. 69.
- 57 Chief Secretary to Government [Houlton] to Sapetti, 28.i.1858. (CSG 04 / 28.i.1858, p.406) In his Despatch to H. Labouchere, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Reid wrote that in the summer of 1857 he had been strongly urged to expel Padre Sapetti because he was sowing dissension between English and Maltese; the newspaper statements about one such incident published at the time (copies of The Malta Times letter of 2 June and editorial of 16 June 1857 were annexed) were fair statements as regards Sapetti's conduct. The Governor had refrained from expelling Padre Sapetti to maintain the British Government's character for forbearance. Padre Sapetti was allowed to come to Malta only because, when the English Jesuits were allowed to open a school in Malta, the Colonial Minister of that time, Lord Grey, had waived his previous strong objection to having foreign Jesuits residing in Malta. Reid believed that Sapetti was an active agitator in the Jesuits' recent contention, disputing the authority of the Bishop, having even endeavoured to excite the 'market people' [i.e. businessmen] against him. (Despatch 14/58, Reid to Labouchere, 28.i.1858, Public Record Office, CO 158/184, 1049ff.) Reid also enclosed a precis by the CSG concerning the admittance of the Jesuits to Malta and opined that Lord Grey's despatch of 22.viii.1846 allowing foreign Jesuits to reside in Malta should be cancelled.

Labouchere approved Reid's decision, in reliance on his discretion, assuming it to be the Governor's opinion that the residence of Sapetti in Malta would be dangerous to the public peace of the Island. As to cancelling Grey's permission, the Colonial Office considered that this proposal required further consideration. In its comments on the matter, the Colonial Office considered two questions. 1) Was it proper to forbid Sapetti to return to Malta as being a troublesome alien? and 2) Should foreign Jesuits generally be forbidden the Island? Re 1) the CO considered that since Sapetti (in Reid's opinion) was an active agitator against the Bishop and had even tried to set the businessmen against him, he could very well be regarded as a

pastor's favour and blessing more necessary for a fruitful ministry and he wanted to show him reverence and obedience.

Fr General also explained the unhappy situation the *Convitto* was facing and confessed himself ready to accept all conditions which the Bishop would like to make to provide a more solid footing to the *Convitto*; however, if the Bishop considered their presence useless or harmful he was ready to leave Malta. From the Bishop's answer depended Fr General's decision, but he would not write or do anything to disgust the Bishop.⁵⁶ Any possible rapprochement, however, was overtaken by events.

Padre Sapetti's Expulsion

In the meantime, while Padre Sapetti was in Rome, the Governor, Sir William Reid, took the opportunity of Padre Sapetti's absence to prevent his return to Malta. He wrote him a letter, forbidding him to return, giving no reason, saying only he had explained his reasons to the Secretary of State.⁵⁷

On the same day the Governor also wrote a letter to R.B.P.Lyons,⁵⁸ the Chargé d'Affaires at Rome, asking him to endeavour to locate Padre Sapetti and have the above letter delivered to him, and to request the British consuls in the

troubler of the peace and, if an alien, kept out of the Island. But Reid did injury to his own case by the annexed *Malta Times* statements for 'to fight against the spiritual with the temporal sword was generally useless and always wrong. If a Roman Catholic priest (Jesuit or other) chose to do so foolish a thing as to censure one of his flock for entering into commercial partnership with a Protestant, ... to employ the law against the confessional on such an occurrence would only tend to pull down the law and set the confessional up'. Re 2) the CO said that although it seemed that the Jesuit order was in Malta by sufferance rather than legally, individual Jesuits were under the Government's protection by virtue of Grey's despatch. Citing the misconduct of a Jesuit not belonging to the *Convitto* as a reason for turning out these other Jesuits seemed singular to the CO. (Draft reply to Reid's despatch No.14 in CO 158/84. Labouchere's actual despatch is in CO 159/25.)

- 58 Richard B. P. Lyons (1817-1887), elder son of Lord Lyons, was secretary to the British legation in Florence (1856-58), but resided in Rome, and served there as an unofficial accredited agent to the Vatican. England did not permit a proper appointment, but for all practical purposes Lyons served as an official agent. He succeeded to the peerage in 1858. (J. Bezzina, *op.cit.*, p.182, fn 124 and D(ictionary of) N(ational) B(iography), vol. xxxiv, 1893.
- 59 Reid to R.B.P.Lyons, CSG 04 / 28.i.1858, p.406.
- 60 Houlton to Barbar, 29.i.1858, *ibid*. Barbar was Acting Consul at Naples from 20.xii.1856 to 3.xii.1858. (*The Foreign Office List*, Jan. 1859, Public Record Office, England)
- 61 Lord Edmund Lyons (1790-1858) served in East India 1810-11, in the Mediterranean 1828-23, in various ministerial capabilities. Created baronet 1840, made rear admiral 1850, C.-in-C. Med. fleet 1853-8. Created Baron Lyons of Christchurch 1856. (DNB, vol. xxxiv, 1893)
- 62 Reid to Lord Lyons, CSG 04 / 1.ii.1858, p.407.

Roman States not to grant Padre Sapetti a visa if he presented his passport with that view.⁵⁹ In another letter the Governor requested Lewis J. Barbar, Acting Consul in Naples, not to vise Padre Sapetti's passport should he turn up.⁶⁰ As Reid was not sure Padre Sapetti would receive his letter 'in time to stop him from returning, or having received it, he might nevertheless attempt to land in Malta again', Reid asked Admiral Lyons, C.-in-C. Mediterranean Fleet⁶¹ to have Padre Sapetti, in case he came back, conveyed back to the Roman States in any of Her Majesty's vessels which he could spare for the purpose.⁶²

R.B.P. Lyons received the Governor's letter on 4 February, five days too late: Padre Sapetti had already had his passport vised by the consular agent in Rome on 29 January and had left the following day, Saturday, 30 January, for Civitavecchia, 63 where he boarded the French steam packet *Aventin* on 31 January. He arrived in Malta on 3 February at 10.30 a.m. 64

As soon as the *Aventin* entered the Grand Harbour, the Superintendent of Ports boarded the steamer, informed Padre Sapetti of the Governor's order prohibiting him to land and conveyed him immediately to the British man-of-war *H.M. Harpy*. Since Padre Sapetti was not allowed to disembark to deliver the letters he had brought for the Bishop and the Rector, he handed them over to the Ports Superintendent to be forwarded. The Governor sent to the Bishop the letters meant for him.

Fr McCann received the letters Padre Sapetti had brought him and was informed that Padre Sapetti was already on the *Harpy*. With the Governor's permission, the Rector talked briefly to Padre Sapetti on board the man-of-war in the presence of the ship's officers.

At about 2.30 p.m. the *Harpy*'s paddle-wheels began to churn and the vessel left for Civitavecchia. ⁶⁵ Padre Sapetti was the only passenger. His expulsion was

- 63 R.B.P.Lyons to Reid. (CSG 01 / 12981 / 1858) On 11.ii.1858 Reid wrote to Lyons, giving him the latest news and telling him he had given P. Sapetti £10 as he had no money. (*Ibid.*, with above)
- 64 NAR, Customs Dept: K 129, f.210.
- 65 NAR, Customs Dept: L 34, f.43 (1858).
- 66 McCann to Reid, 4.ii.1858. (CSG 01 / 12939 / 1858)

 There were protests also from those who had benefited from Padre Sapetti's religious zeal. Over 300 signatures were collected from members of the nobility and of the various Sodalities Padre Sapetti had directed, laymen and the Sisters of St Joseph, attesting in the Jesuit's favour. (RT/1, f.97 ff.)
- 67 Houlton to McCann, 4.ii.1858. (CSG 04 / 5211 / 1858)
- 68 Pace Forno to Beckx, RT/1, 60-60v. L'Ordine of 5.ii. 1858 stated that the Bishop had taken no

final.

The ship had a stormy crossing, and at one time was in some danger. Padre Sapetti was treated well by the officers.

The very next day, 4 February, Fr McCann wrote to the Governor asking why His Excellency had had Padre Sapetti 'seized like a criminal' and 'forcibly expelled from Malta' — an 'extraordinary measure' which had seriously compromised the *Convitto*'s character. 66 The Governor replied on the same day, simply informing him that he had already explained to the Secretary of State his reasons for having taken this step. 67

The Bishop's Denial

Replying to Fr Beckx's 29 January letter on 6 February, ⁶⁸ the day following Padre Sapetti's expulsion, the Bishop admitted his displeasure with some of the Jesuits, but it seemed to him that it was then all over and the trouble would not recur. The Bishop mentioned two sources of trouble: 1) the Rector did not want to stay in Malta and had said publicly he wanted to close the *Convitto* as he had closed the *Convitto* in Calcutta, ⁶⁹ and 2) the Fathers were familiar with, not to say dominated by, dangerous laymen intent on sowing discord for private ends; one of these had a year before spoken to Mazzini. The Fathers, not knowing all this, had to be careful in choosing protectors and not lightly listen to them.

The Bishop denied any knowledge of the reason for Padre Sapetti's violent expulsion but maintained that Padre Sapetti had brought it on himself by getting mixed up with *partiti*. As a result of many petitions, the Governor had already intimated his possible departure a year before, but Padre Sapetti had not changed his ways and kept on consorting with dangerous laymen. Did Fr General believe, part in the proceedings against Sapetti, that, indeed, he was the last person in the Island to know what had taken place. (RU/1, f.196)

- 69 The closure of St Xavier's College (1835-46) meant the end of the Jesuit mission in Calcutta. Kenneth Ballhatchet mentions that various explanations of the mission's misfortunes have been suggested: clashes of personality, difficulties between Englishmen and Irishmen, tensions between regulars and seculars. He then argues that, besides these, there were also tensions inherent in the colonial situation, especially certain attitudes towards Indian society, which provided the Jesuits with a justification for abandoning their teaching role in Calcutta as less important than their missionary role in England. The English Provincial, Fr Lythgoe, who agreed with Fr McCann, recommended the closure of the College and abandonment of the Mission, and Fr General reluctantly agreed.
 - (Missionaries, Empire and Society: The Jesuit Mission in Calcutta, 1834-1846, in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. vii, Oct. 1978, no. 1, pp. 18-34)
- 70 RT/1, f. 63 and RU/1, ff. 192v, 196.
- 71 Published in The Times, 23.ii.1858, copy RT/1, f. 92.

the Bishop asked, that men who had worn masonic emblems would defend the Jesuits? Fr General should be sure that the Bishop would do all he could for the Jesuits and would protect all ecclesiastics 'in this land full of unbelievers'. Fr General should not believe rumours spread by ill-intentioned laymen, the Bishop urged, and added that in a British colony, where Governors were like kings, even Bishops had to be very prudent.

Fr McCann, seeing no satisfaction could be got out of the Governor or the Bishop, suggested that Fr Provincial, Fr Joseph Johnson, would contact Mr Bowyer, a Catholic Member of Parliament, to ask a Parliamentary Question. On 22 February Mr Bowyer asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Henry Labouchere, in the House of Commons if P. Sapetti's expulsion had really taken place, and, if so, for what reasons and under what circumstances this was done. Labouchere answered that the Governor of Malta, like the Governor of Gibraltar, had a summary power of sending any foreigner out of the Colony over which he presided, upon his own responsibility. The Governor of Malta had thought it right to exercise that power in the case of Padre Sapetti, who during his residence in Malta 'had been very active in fomenting disturbances, the object of his attacks being the Roman Catholic Bishop'.71

Fr McCann's Second Protest to the Governor

On 8 March Fr McCann wrote again to the Governor, referring to Labouchere's reply and asked how, where and when Padre Sapetti had created a disturbance and on what occasion he had attacked the Catholic Bishop of Malta. This was a very serious charge against a highly respected clergyman. Since the Bishop himself had denied any knowledge of the reasons for Padre Sapetti's expulsion, there was at least strong presumptive evidence for the Jesuit's innocence. It was therefore reasonable to expect the Governor to give the explanation which would enable Padre Sapetti, indeed the Jesuits themselves, to vindicate themselves. Justice demanded this. A would-be assassin of the Bishop would have been confronted with his accusers. Should the supposed assailant of Episcopal authority be denied this basic right? Fr McCann maintained that the Governor had been misled into adopting a measure which, in the free exercise of His Excellency's unbiased judgment, he would never have had recourse to. Fr 72 McCann to Reid, 8.iii.1858. (CSG 01/13128/1858) McCann's words for the Governor's being misled were 'imposed upon', 'led by misrepresentation'.

In a comment after this letter, the Governor wrote that his despatch to the Secretary of State had been 'a fair and true report. The Jesuits work in secret. It would be very difficult to produce such evidence as would be necessary before a court of Law when act (sic) through private influence. At the same time it might be very wrong to allow a foreigner who may have gained great influence here and who works in secret to remain in the Island. The high power given to the Governors of Malta and Gibraltar' was precisely 'to enable them to do that which the courts

McCann asked the Governor to investigate the matter: he would find that Padre Sapetti's 'real crime' was his being a 'very distinguished' Jesuit, a crime, however, which had not yet been registered on the criminal code of Malta, and which certainly could not be construed into an offence against a Roman Catholic Bishop.⁷²

But the Governor declined to enter upon any explanation of the reasons why he had deemed it proper to prevent the return of Padre Sapetti, a foreigner, to Malta.⁷³

Five days later the Governor sent Lord Stanley, who had recently assumed the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, a note written by the Crown Advocate explaining in detail the differences between the Jesuits and the Archbishop of Malta. The Governor averred that Padre Sapetti was the real leader, selected and sent to Malta for his 'insinuating address', and that he had gained an extraordinary influence over the women of the principal Maltese families, as well as of the Italian refugees; the Governor had long ago been warned - and this he believed - that Padre Sapetti was dividing Maltese from English through religious zeal, which was a very serious matter in Malta. That was why the Governor had used his authority to prevent Padre Sapetti's return, a step which had given 'pretty general satisfaction to all except a small party.'⁷⁴

Fr General - Bishop Correspondence

When he received news of Padre Sapetti's violent expulsion, Fr Beckx wrote to the Bishop on 11 March, saying that because of its method of execution and the circumstances, Padre Sapetti's expulsion had caused him great sadness. He would not have made much of it, being used to such treatment under so-called Catholic Governments, but since the matter was now public and so to say solemnly proclaimed in Europe's face, it was his duty to discuss the accusation so as to punish Padre Sapetti if he was guilty and to vindicate him publicly if he was innocent. The very serious accusations of attacks on the Bishop had been

cannot do'.

- 73 R.C. Legh (Asst Secr. to Governor) to McCann, 9.iii.1858. (CSG 04 / 5283 / 1858)
- 74 Reid to Stanley, 13.iii.1858, private despatch, in Desp. to S.of S. 1856-1859(2). The Crown Advocate's report could not be traced either in Malta or at the Public Record Office, England. Stanley had replaced Labouchere on 26.ii.1858.
- 75 Beckx to Pace Forno, RT/1, ff.69v-70. The allegedly suspect persons were well-known, excellent Catholics. (RT/1, f.63v.)
- 76 McCann to Beckx, RT/1, f.96, undated.
- 77 McCann to Provincial, 13.iii.1858, RU/1 f.121. The Bishop's reply, included in the letter, had been signed by his secretary, the Rev. S. Cumbo. Cumbo was hostile to the Jesuits. (RT/1, f.61)

made openly in Maltese newspapers. He could not believe that Padre Sapetti would have dared as much: after all, the Bishop himself had commended him to Fr General in Rome only a few months before as being a good religious, and distinguished men had given fresh testimony of his good conduct. Padre Sapetti had always talked respectfully of the Bishop. Fr General wanted therefore to know in detail in what Padre Sapetti had not been submissive, so that he could give satisfaction to the Bishop; otherwise his duty was to inform the public of the true state of the matter, so as to protect the good name of the Society of Jesus from undue accusation. Since the sole reasons adduced for the expulsion had been attacks on the Bishop and intercourse with dangerous persons, Fr General insisted that the Bishop should not give just a general indication as he had done so far: he should tell him in detail how Padre Sapetti had imprudently got mixed up with partiti, since Padre Sapetti was hated by the anti-Catholic lobby, which had never stopped denigrating him for obvious reasons. It was Fr General's duty to watch over his subjects' conduct and remove what was offensive to anyone and harmful to the good name of Religion.⁷⁵

Under Fr Provincial's orders, Fr McCann appealed to the Bishop as well, begging him to come forward and bear testimony to the innocence of Padre Sapetti, or else give evidence of his guilt, in case His Grace had anything to lay to his charge. The Bishop wrote back that he would answer no questions with reference to Padre Sapetti unless called upon to do so by the authorities in Rome. The same of the

For his dealings with the sodalities after Sapetti's expulsion, cf. RT/1, f.61v.

Another ecclesiastic hostile to the Jesuits was Mgr Filippo Amato, the Bishop's Vicar General. (RT/1, f.61) As one of Bishop Pace Forno's close collaborators, he could easily have exerted a negative influence on the Bishop. Mgr Casolani, a great friend of the Jesuits, warned the Bishop against choosing Amato as one of his Vicars. However, the Bishop did give him the post, although he had promised not to do so. (RT/1, f.61v) It was Amato who on 5 February 1858 prohibited retreats at Sta Venera. (MLB)

Mgr Amato (14.xi.1804 -19.viii.1864) was a very learned priest. He specialised in Canon law and later studied Civil law at the University. He was an elected member of the Council of Government from 15.xi.1854 till the exclusion of ecclesiastics on 31.vii.1857. (cf. Bezzina, op.cit., p.166, fn. 56). He was Secretary to Bishop Caruana from 1831, Canon of the Cathedral and Vicar General 1834 -1847. Though disliked by the clergy, he was very popular with the people.

- 78 *Ibid.* The Bishop 'appears to be in perfect understanding with the Governor'. (McCann to Provincial, 9.iii.1858, RU/1, f.196v) 'As most people believe the Bishop has had a hand in the affair, the scandal is immense'. (McCann to Provincial, 6.ii.1858, RU/1, f.192v)
- 79 RT/1, f.64. McCann, in his letter of 20.iii.1858 to the Provincial, mentions a curious, 'significant fact' reported by Sapetti: when Sapetti 'landed at Naples, on his return from Rome, [on his way to Malta,] he was accosted by a Policeman, who asked him if he was not the Priest that had been

Fr McCann commented that the Bishop's character was sadly compromised and that his silence would confirm the persuasion generally entertained that he had had a principal share in Padre Sapetti's expulsion.⁷⁸

Collusion, of course, cannot be ruled out. The Governor had found a pretext to do what he had long desired - Padre Sapetti's expulsion, whilst the Bishop must have been pleased to get rid of Padre Sapetti. In any case, the bishop did not protest against this despotic act or object to interference by the civil government in matters that were purely ecclesiastical. Nor did he utter one word of sympathy to the Jesuits in their grief.⁷⁹

Replying to Fr Beckx's letter of 11 March, Bishop Pace Forno replied that the case seemed to be assuming large proportions since it was inducing Fr General to investigate all the details: prudence demanded that the Bishop keep out of all discussion which, in his judgment, instead of bringing clarification, could easily

expelled from Malta by the Bishop. How was the Neapolitan Police made aware of what was to take place? And what put the notion into their heads that the Bishop had taken so prominent a part in the business?' (RU/1, f.201v)

- 80 Pace Forno to Beckx, 19.iii.58, RT/1, f.60v.
- 81 RU/1, f.121v.
- 82 Beckx to Pace Forno, 21.v.1858 RT/1, f.60, and MLB.
- 83 Beckx to Pace Forno, 21.v.1858. (RT/I, f.70 ff.) Fr Beckx wrote he had been deeply impressed by recent events the departure of Fr Collyns after being substituted by a diocesan priest, the prohibition of Fr Schembri and others preaching at St Venera, and especially Padre Sapetti's violent expulsion. When asked about the rumours that he had been involved in Padre Sapetti's expulsion, the Bishop had given evasive answers so as not to compromise himself. The Bishop had also declared that he could do nothing for the Convitto, and the Government would not help. The Maltese newspapers attacked the Jesuits, who were not given a chance to defend themselves.
- 84 Beckx to Cardinal Antonelli, 11.viii.1858, ARSI extern.1/70-72.

The Bishop made other accusations against the Jesuits.

- a) He asserted that the Jesuits had demanded that the income from the church of the Gesù and the House of Retreats should be assigned as endowment for the *Convitto*. Fr Beckx averred that the only thing they had done was to ask repeatedly to have the church assigned to them for the exercise of the ministry.
- b) The Bishop also claimed that the Jesuits could easily maintain the *Convitto* if, instead of indulging in luxury and grand country holidays, they lived frugally like other priests. They had also been offered £120 and had the fees from 130 pupils. Fr Beckx admitted that under the previous Rector there had been complaints about unnecessary expenses the Rector had occasionally invited benefactors to dinner and he had been removed. The same Italian Fathers now accused the present Rector of too much frugality. Since the Maltese way of life was simpler than in other countries, Maltese might consider luxury what English would consider frugal. The expense incurred to lease a house during the summer holidays was for the benefit not of the religious but that of the pupils, who needed a sufficiently spacious house. The £150 was a one-off offer made to pay the rent of the holiday house for two years, and made by those the Bishop designated Mazziniani and his most declared enemies.

distort the true state of things as they actually were. He could have given some indication if the matter had remained restricted, but now he would only reiterate what he had said to Fr McCann: "I'll reply only to the Holy See," and hoped Fr General would realise the delicacy of the Bishop's situation.⁸⁰

Fr McCann, together with the community, looked forward with a certain amount of impatience to be delivered from this situation, which had now become painful.⁸¹

The Provincial, Fr Johnson, came to Malta and visited the *Convitto* from 27 April to 8 May. 82 He then went to Rome and gave Fr General a very detailed and faithful account of the situation.

On 15 May Fr General wrote to the Bishop, communicating his decision to close down the *Convitto* immediately and withdraw the Jesuits from Malta.⁸³

Fr General had two main reasons for doing so. The first was the Bishop's refusal to substantiate or deny the accusation that Padre Sapetti had fomented disrespect for the Bishop, an accusation repeated in the *L'Ordine*, which was edited by the Bishop's assessor. In these circumstances the Society could not remain in Malta under the shadow of such calumnies. The second was the hostility of the Bishop and his Secretary: they had spoken of insults, but when pressed for particulars they had made absurd or false accusations. In such a situation the presence of the Jesuits in Malta would always cause disunity and *partiti*, and they would always be blamed for it.⁸⁴

The English Provincial returned to Malta from Rome on 2 June, 85 and two days later, accompanied by Fr McCann, he called on the Bishop to discuss with

c) The Bishop maintained that the Jesuits' precarious situation was due to the fact that in Malta things started off with enthusiasm which soon petered out. Fr General replied that the number of pupils had decreased very much from a peak of 130, especially after the Bishop had opened a school in Valletta where only modern languages, history, geography etc. were taught. Recent events had also contributed to the decrease: some parents showed too much reverential respect for the Bishop, others were afraid of displeasing the Government and closing the door to a good career. It was true therefore that the Society could not subsist without house or church or rents and yet had no hope of getting them. (ibid.)

Card. Giacomo Antonelli (1806-76) was Secretary of State from 18.iii.1852 till his death on 16.xi.1876.

- 85 NAR, Customs Dept: K 130, f.220. Cf also MLB. The Provincial left on 12 June. (MLB)
- 86 Beckx to Pace Forno, 15.v.1858, RT/1, f.60 and MLB.
 It is to be noted that relations with the Jesuits again became friendly in June 1860 when Bishop Pace Forno welcomed the Jesuits who had fled from Sicily and gave them San Calcedonio.

him the appropriate measures to close down the *Convitto* with all possible quiet and good order.⁸⁶

The boys left the *Convitto* on Wednesday, 16 June, at 11 a.m. The community spent the next two days in packing up, procuring passports and making preparations for departure.⁸⁷ But on Saturday 19 a telegraphic despatch was received from Fr General ordering the community to suspend departure till further notice.⁸⁸ What had happened?

When the news of the imminent closure of the *Convitto* came out, the Maltese appealed to the Pope to suspend all proceedings: thousands of petitions⁸⁹ were made to have the Jesuits remain in Malta. In Rome the Vatican authorities were totally against closure, considering that the difficulties mentioned by Fr McCann seemed to them superable unless fresh incidents complicated matters. But Fr General, who was convinced that it had become morally impossible to continue in the circumstances, repeatedly pleaded, personally and through others, with the Pope and with Cardinal Antonelli for permission to have the closure finalized.⁹⁰ Although conscious of the difficulties, they told him to wait: they wanted to try to remedy matters. Cardinal Antonelli wrote in the Pope's name to Bishop Pace Forno asking if he could hand over the Gesù church and San Calcedonio (the Retreat house at Floriana) to the Jesuits so that they could have some income.⁹¹

In his reply to Cardinal Antonelli on 23 July, the Bishop levelled several accusations against the Jesuits. Fr Beckx, who was shown the letter by Antonelli, rebutted all accusations and pleaded to have the matter settled.⁹²

87 MLB.

- 89 Malta Times, 22.vi.1858.
- 90 Beckx to McCann, 26.vi., 3.vii.; 26.vii.1858, resp., RU/1, ff.204, 205, 206.
- 91 RU/1, f.206.
- 92 Beckx to Antonelli, 11.viii.1858, op.cit.
- 93 McCann to Provincial, RU/l, f.207.
- 94 MLB. They were hoping to go to Santa Venera because the lease of their quarters at St Julian's would run out on 27 July. (McCann to Provincial, RU/I, f.207) Apparently they remained at St Julian's.

⁸⁸ MLB.

Meanwhile, the Jesuits in Malta went ahead with their preparations to leave. They closed the *Convitto* and sold the furniture for about £120.⁹³ They then left for St Julian's on 21 June.⁹⁴

On 3 August the keys of the *Convitto* were handed over to the Collector of Inland Revenue.⁹⁵

The Jesuits finally got their release on 25 August. It was a very hot day, with a hot sickening wind blowing and 100 degrees in the shade at 12 p.m. ⁹⁶ Most of the community left on the 29 August, and the rest, including Fr McCann, on 4 September. ⁹⁷

Although the Jesuits left Malta, the Maltese remembered them with affection and were happy to welcome them back when they opened their College of St Ignatius almost twenty years later, in November 1877. The College was one of the foremost educational establishments on the Island during the thirty years of its existence.

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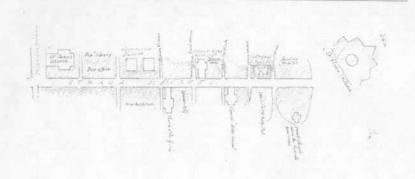
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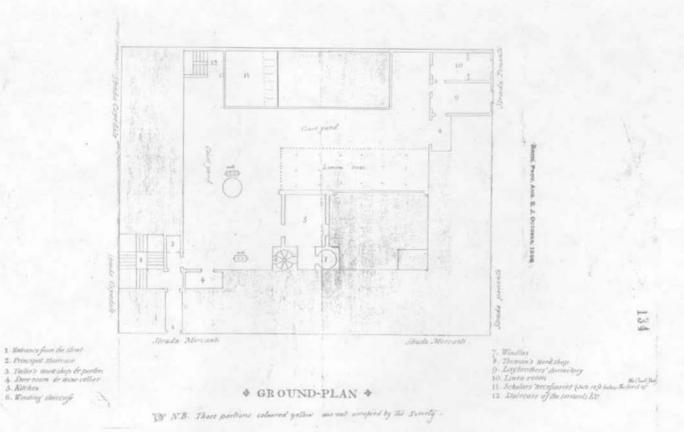
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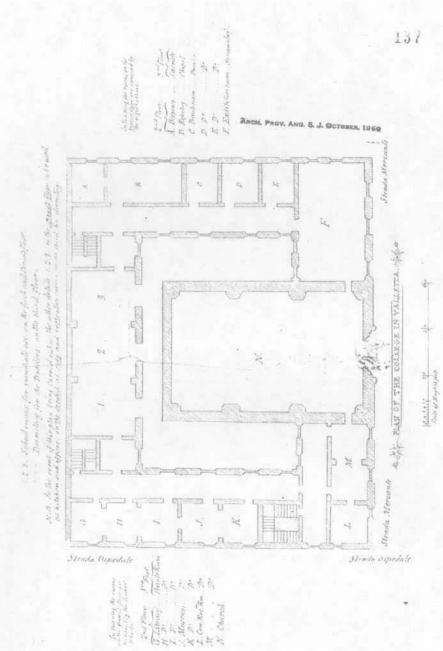
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