

# GRAND MASTER FRA FERDINAND VON HOMPESCH

and

## Postal History

By Dr. A. Bonnici, KM

Over the past three decades philately has expanded into what has become to be known as Postal History, and has developed in an interesting specialised branch, giving the individual with research inclinations, an opportunity to delve into the contents of letters, be it social-political-historical, to research the routes that the letter took to reach its destination, by means of calculating the fiscal postage rates, according to the weight of the letter, usually written in ink, and to decipher and interpret if possible the various hand stamps, and other markings on the letter. The envelope during the period of Grand Master Hompesch was not yet invented.

Letters were either folded and enclosed in a separate paper, sealed at the back with either a wax seal or a paper seal, the address being written on the front. Ambassadors, Monarchs and Grand Masters were allowed to seal their letters by folding the letter, and then holding and sealing it together, by means of a strap of paper, called *NIZZA* to allow for fumigation purposes, which at that time was compulsory, without opening the letter, and thus preserving confidentiality.<sup>1</sup>

From the various talks, lectures and papers published, commemorating the bi-centenary of GM Hompesch to his Grand Mastership, I think it would be fair, to assume, that he was the victim of the political, economic and social conditions prevailing in Europe at that time and also circumstances prevailing among the local population, and divisions inside the Order itself.

The wind of change was evident and in my opinion it could not be contained. These circumstances have been well debated, and I am not going to discuss it further, but I would like to shed light on the other side of the character of GM Hompesch – that he was a good Ambassador, a good Administrator with a positive sense of administrative direction, from the evidence we find in documents and letters .

To do this I propose to produce evidence from:

- 1) documents and letters of the period before GM Hompesch became Grand Master, when he occupied important posts within the Order, leading to the dignity of Grand Cross in 1776 and Grand Bailiff in 1770, 71, 79, 82;<sup>2</sup>
- 2) evidence from documents and letters during his reign as Grand Master from July 17, 1797 to June 18, 1798;<sup>3</sup>
- 3) and evidence from letters resulting during his exile from Malta.

# 1. Evidence from letters before he became Grand Master

As a diplomat, Hompesch showed great integrity and prudence, as shown by the following letter. During the period (1775-97) he held the influential office of Chargé d'Affairs of the Austrian Emperor Francis II.<sup>4</sup> It was in his capacity as the accredited Minister of the Austrian Emperor to the Order that Hompesch participated in the solemn funeral service, accorded by the Order to the Noble Angelo Emo, Admiral of the Venetian fleet, who died in Malta on March 1, 1792.<sup>5</sup>

M  
Monsieur

Le devoir et l'inclination ne me permettent pas de  
différer un moment de rendre compte à votre Altesse de  
mon heureuse arrivée à Gênes après un voyage de quinze  
jours. Sitôt que je serai un peu reposé des fatigues de la  
mer je continuerai ma route jusques chez le Baron  
de Hompesch mon frere, qui reside dans ses terres près de  
Coloque. ma plus vive ambition est d'y recevoir des  
ordres de V. A. a qui j'offre de nouveau le tribut de la  
parfaite reconnaissance et du profond respect avec  
le quel je suis.

Gênes le 7 de juin  
1781,

Monsieur

De Votre Altesse

Le tres humble et tres obéissant serviteur  
Le Baron de Hompesch

A. A. Mouton Le crime de l'humanité

The preceding letter was written on June 7, 1782, to Prince Wenzel von Kaunitz, Austria's influential Foreign Minister (1753-92)<sup>6</sup> informing him that he had arrived in Jena, on his way to stay with his brother in Cologne, and that he was looking forward to working and collaborating with him, signed "Le Balli, Baron de Hompesch". Apart from the information that on June 7, 1782, he was a Balli, and that he had a living brother in Cologne, it is evident that although he was passing through Austria, not in an official capacity, he felt obliged to inform the Austrian Foreign Secretary, that he was in Jena, and in transit to Cologne.



He took this opportunity to assure His Excellency of his ardent wish to work harmoniously with him: diplomacy at its best.

GM De Rohan had great faith in him, and entrusted him with the drawing up of various reports as shown by the following letter.

*Monsieur*

Les depesches dont me a honoree votre Altesse, le 16. 23. 25 0  
 maij, me sont parvenues de la fois dimanche 12 du courant.  
 La execution des ordres souverains qu'elle contienne, j'en ai  
 pas manqué d'en conformer le contenu a l'abbé Broijer  
 et par ce rapport V. A. verra ma prompte obéissance a ce  
 quelle me a prescrite a son Egard: non seulement l'abbé  
 Broijer ne sera plus employé par moi dans aucune affaire  
 qui regarde le souverain service, mais j'en ay aussi

----- pour la retraite.

Le 4 de ce mois le Grand maître a fait assembler le conseil pour lui communiquer une Note ministérielle de la cour de Naples, par laquelle le Roi approuve et ordonne l'union des trois prievés de Capoue, Braillette et Melfi avec, conformément à la demande qui lui a été faite à Sa Majesté Sicilienne par les trois prievés susdits.

Dans le même conseil M. le Brailly de Vicinago en qualité de procureur du Chapitre et prievé de Braviera, et M. l'abbé Bruno comme procureur du prievé de Pologne, ont présentée le concordat passé entre ces deux prievés, et par lequel celui de Pologne vient d'être incorporé à la langue anglo-braveroise, sous les conditions y stipulées, conditions qui ne touchent que sur le régime intérieur et économique de la langue de Braviera. Le conseil à la pluralité des voix a approuvée cette union.

Le 11 M. le chevalier Lupo a mis à la voile avec toute son Escadre pour le sud de nous avoir devant Savise; un de ses vaisseaux de 64 pièces de canon a faillit donner contre terre et se perdre en sortant du port, d'après ce qu'on a écrit; cette manière de manœuvrer sera faite qu'augmenter l'opinion qu'on a ici de part de Savise sa leurs expédition.

Le même soir les deux galères de la Religion accompagnées de deux Corvettes sont parties pour Livourne

Je supplie V. S. de me pardonner le désordre de cette première esquisse, et d'agréer aussi favorablement que par le passé les assurances du très profond respect avec lequel je suis.

Monsieur

de Votre Altesse

Malte le 16 juillet

1759

Le très humble et très obéissant serviteur

Le Brailly, M. de Thompsett

## 2. Evidence from documents during his reign as GM

Bailiff Ferdinand von Hompesch was elected Grand Master on July 17, 1797, after the death of GM Emanuel de Rohan Polduc on July 13, 1797.<sup>7</sup> From the very start he undertook the administration of the Island seriously showing leadership and a good sense of administrative direction.

One of the very first administrative decisions he took was to appoint at the end of July 1797 a commission to investigate how the Università (Council) had been previously administered, and make it accountable, as during the previous administration it had become slack and incompetent. The following document points out this clearly.<sup>8</sup>

Hospit<sup>is</sup>  
Magister Hierlem<sup>is</sup>  
S<sup>ci</sup> Sepulcri  
et  
Ordinis Sancti Antonij Siennensis.

Commemorante solleciti di contestare il nostro gradimen-  
to a questi nostri Amati sudditi per le affettuose dimo-  
strazioni date in occasione della nostra Esaltazione,  
abbiamo creduto doverci prima d'ogn' altro occupare  
dei loro pubblici, e privati interessi rappresentati in  
questa nostra Università; perlocchè essendoci necessa-  
ria un' esatta informazione dello stato attivo, e passivo  
della medesima siamo venuti nella determinazione  
incaricare di ciò il 1.<sup>do</sup> Conte Des penes, il 2.<sup>do</sup> Conte  
Cascaxares, il Barone Gregorio Donnici, ed il Baro-  
ne Francesco Gauci; Giovan Carlo Trech Delicata, ed  
il Nostro Doganiere Giuseppe Caruana Dingli; i quali  
per il disimpegno di tal Commissione impieghino ove  
bisognerà per Periti Calcolatori il G.<sup>to</sup> Giuseppe, i men-

zuli, ed il D.<sup>no</sup> Felice Rizzo.

Dovrà inoltre la medesima Deputazione attentamente esaminare l'attuale Amministrazione in tutte, e singole sue parti, compreso il numero dei Ufficiali alla medesima addetti, loro Stipendj, ed emolumenti tanto sopra la stessa Università, quanto sopra i particolari, che trattano colla medesima, e ci rappresenterà dettagliatamente i difetti che talvolta mai vi riconoscerà, suggerendo i provvedimenti che crederà opportuni: anche per precludere la via a

----- comune produce il Paese possa occupare bastantemente la popolazione di tutto questo nostro Dominio, e del calcolo prudenziale che ne avrà fatto ce ne farà degl'intero rapporto, indicandoci le basi di calcolo, e qualora dal risultato stimerà necessaria l'introduzione del cotone forestiere, ci rappresenterà le misure che crederà potersi prendere per la sicurezza, che non possa quello mai meschiarsi col cotone di Malta, e sotto il nome di questo spediti fuori del Dominio.

Precedendo intanto Noi, che attesa la molteplicità e gravità degli oggetti che abbraccia la presente Commissione non potremmo la stessa Deputazione ma grado di attenzione ed assiduità al brivaglio, che si ripromettiamo da' Ufficiali Nosri, e da' Ufficiali fedeltà de' Nostri e sudditi, terminare così presto tutto alla volta generale incarico, affine di non privare il Pubblico di qualunque vantaggio che intanto se gli potrebbe fare prom-

lamente sentire, incarichiamo la Depu-latione suddetta di farci sopra ogni oggetto che avrà compiutamente riconosciuto una separata relazione coi dettagli di somma suggeriti, affine di poter indi Noi fare le opportune providenze.

Commettiamo finalmente al Nostro 1.<sup>o</sup> Balì Senescalco di ordinare ai Giurati, ed altri Ufficiali della detta Nostra Università che riconoscano la suddetta Depu-latione; esibendole tutti i Libri, Documenti, e scritture allinenti al loro rispettivo Ufficio, e che le diano tutte le informazioni necessarie al disimpegno di questa nostra commissione.

Datum in Palatio die ultima M<sup>o</sup> Julij 1797.

Homsey

We would very much like to avail ourselves of the opportunity to show our gratitude to our beloved subjects for their loving respect shown to us on the occasion of our election. First of all we thought it would be our duty to safeguard their public and private interests in relation to the management of the Università.

For this reason it is necessary to have exact information of the income and expenditure of the Università.

Hence we are appointing the Venerable Balì Des Pennes, Balì Cascaxares, the Baron Gregorio Bonnici and the Baron Francesco Gauci, Giovanni Carlo Grech Delicata, and our Controller of Customs Giuseppe Caruana Dingli.

In order that the Commissioners can achieve their objective, they should avail themselves when necessary, of the services of Official Accountants Dr Giuseppe Camenzuli and Dr Felice Rizzo.

Furthermore the above mentioned commission should examine carefully the present administration in all its aspects, including the number of Official employees, their salaries, and bonuses, received from the Council itself, and from other sources having connection with the Council.

They will give us an itemised account pointing out the deficiencies they

*might find, and making alternative suggestions for the future, which they think are necessary, in order to stop any future malpractice.*

*They are to examine carefully the book of accounts, and to forward to us, a detailed account of their findings, accompanied with their suggestions, and pointing to us those items that have to be reconfirmed, or adjusted, or to be totally removed.*

*The same commission has to find out how to establish Officially a list of costings (scala franca), pointing out in detail, all advantages and disadvantages, which affect the public, so that after having examined everything, we can take the necessary measures which are to the advantage of the public, especially the poor, who Divine Providence has trusted them in our care.*

*Finally the same commission is expected to examine with great accuracy the cotton produced by the country every year, if it is enough to occupy the population of our domain, and having made a prudent calculation they are expected to give us a detailed account showing us the reasons of their assessments and pointing to us how they reached such conclusions. Also to let us know if it is necessary to import foreign cotton, pointing out to us the measures which can be taken, in order not to be mixed with the Malta cotton, and measures to be adopted not to re-export it as Malta cotton.*

*We foresee that this Commission has to investigate many grave and important items, and for these reasons we do not expect the Commission to conclude its investigations in a short time, notwithstanding that we know of their zeal towards our Order, and the trust of our Subjects in them.*

*As we do not want to deprive the public of any advantage which they might feel they are enjoying, we order the said Commission to produce for us a detailed, itemised report, on every subject, so that we may take the necessary measures.*

*We finally order our Senescal the Venerable Bali to order the Giurates and other Officials of our Università to acknowledge the above mentioned Commission, and to hand to them, all the accounting books, documents and other papers regarding the Università, and to give them all the information necessary to achieve our objectives.*

*Given at the Palace, the last day of July, 1798*

*Hompesch*

The above order came out only two weeks after Hompesch became Grand Master. He did not tolerate procrastination, but followed up this explicit directive with another on September 22, 1798, even more forceful, giving explicit orders, which show him as being a determined man, not prepared to allow anybody to fool him. He wanted immediately to make the Università again economically viable, above suspicion of corruption, as the following document proves.<sup>9</sup>



Hospitii

Magister . . . . . Hierusalem

Sedi Sepulcri

et . . . . .

Ordinis Sancti Antonij Niennen.

Costanti sempre più nella premura di comprovare a questi nostri fedeli, ed amati sudditi, il sommo studio con cui ci occupiamo de' loro vantaggi, ed il vivo desiderio che abbiamo di renderli, per quanto da Noi si possa, felici; conoscendo che la buona, e retta amministrazione di questa Università, a cui è appoggiata la cura della sussistenza dell'intero popolo; ed ove ancora si trova depositata la sua fortuna, sia la cosa che più principalmente interessa tutto . . . . .

----- immancabilmente fare in  
iscritto anche per via di semplice  
nota; Affine di poter Noi indi dare  
con piena cognizione) di cose i Nostri  
corrispondenti Ordini, quali ci propro-  
niamo di voler da oggi in avanti) dare  
sempre in iscritto, sottoscritti, come  
stimeremo, o da Noi stessi, o da uno de'  
Nostri Uditori; dimodochè, se darà il  
caso, che venisse riportato qualunque  
nostro Ordine in altra forma spedito  
o in voce, da qualsivoglia Nostro  
Ufficiale di qualsisia grado si fosse,  
autorizziamo la Persona a cui fosse din-  
to, anzi Le ordiniamo di sospendere  
l'esecuzione, e portarsi immediatamen-  
te da Noi, per ricevere i Nostri Ordini.  
Dat. sin Palatio die 21. M<sup>o</sup> Septembris 1791.

*Stampichy*

*We have always been more and more eager to prove to these faithful and beloved subjects our greatest care for them and our vivid desire to make them happy as much as we can. We are aware that the welfare of the whole Public depends on the good and correct administration of this Università on which depend also their financial fortune. The public look at it with special attention. Hence, from the very first days after our election, we set up a Commission to study the actual situation of the above-mentioned Università.*

*The members of this Commission are: two Venerable Bailiffs, men of respect, and well known for their integrity, understanding and zeal for the common welfare; two Barons who enjoy the trust of the public; two honest persons chosen from among the intelligent businessmen, who also enjoy the trust of the public. The above-mentioned Commission must get all the information necessary to achieve their objective, may set rules and may change existing ones. Having made clear certain points among the more essential ones, without any waste of time they are to issue opportune regulations. Hence, herewith, with all our Authority, we set and order:*

*First of all the Università must never, and, on no pretext, lend money to anybody – whether to individual persons or to any Constituted Body of any grade, and whatsoever the condition, not even on pledge, nor on pretext of gain, no matter how advantageous for the same Università. From the above-set rule the Common Treasury and the Monte di Redenzione di Pietà are exempt; we do not intend to change anything concerning their reciprocal agreement which has been in force up till now concerning such loans. But because the above-mentioned Università pays the interests at the rate of three per cent on Capital sums in hand, from today onwards, in case of any grant in advance, in money or in kind, to any of the above-mentioned bodies, the above-mentioned Università should be paid back for the interests it paid on the original. Credits to any of the above-mentioned bodies, which might actually be held without any profit, given the good faith in which it was contracted.*

*It could be likewise extended for another six months, reckoned from today, during which the loan should be paid back, but once the six months expired and once the loan had not been paid back, the above-mentioned Università should be paid back with a profit of three per cent.*

*Likewise the Università should never give grants of money in advance to buy anything or for any reason, even if it were with a pledge, except to buy cereals for the service of the public.*

*To be sure in attaining the above aim, to bring back respectability to the administration of the Università we want to set down the best possible regulations; hence we order strictly that the Giurati and all Officials and Subalterns employed with the above-mentioned Università must fulfil their task with due subordination required of subalterns to their superiors respectively, notwithstanding any interruption or abuse which might have been introduced to the contrary in the past.*

Finally to avoid misunderstandings, which might arise in the understanding of Petitions and Communications concerning the running of the above-mentioned Università, which are addressed to us in order that we might give our orders, they are to be forwarded in writing without any exception, even through the means of a simple note. Then, that we might give the respective orders with full knowledge of things, we make it clear that from this day onwards, we want to pass our orders in writing, undersigned, either by ourselves, or by one of our auditors, so that, if the case might be, that any of our orders be communicated in any other form, or by word of mouth, by whomsoever of our Officials, whatever his grade, we authorise the person to whom it is addressed to suspend its execution and to bring it immediately to us, so that we can take the necessary action.

Given at the Palace this 21st day of the month of September, 1797,  
Hompesch

These two letters show clearly the character of GM Hompesch as a strong civil administrator, giving direction determined to bring back efficiency to the Università and restore its former prestige and suffering no insubordination.

He was also a just and honest person. Although he had borrowed considerable sums of money, which helped him to secure the Grand Mastership, he did not retain profitable *Commenda* property abroad, which according to the rules, had to be passed on to other knights, once the individual became Grand Master.

This we see clearly in the document published on August 13, 1797, hardly two weeks after becoming Grand Master.<sup>10</sup> He also saw to the various allotments of pensions which were due to other knights.

Hospitii  
Magister Miclerum  
Scti Sepulchri  
et  
Ordinis Sancti Antonij Pienneri

Essendo vacata per la nostra asunzione al Magistero la  
Commenda di Kellinggen del Nostro Ven: Priorato di Alemagna,  
e spellando la Collazione della medesima alla nostra  
Magistra i premienza per il nostro corrente primo - - -

----- di 230. sulla Com.<sup>da</sup> di Pillingen la dividiamo come segue.

Al Cav.<sup>r</sup> fr. Eberardo Truchses..... 58. —  
Al Sac.<sup>to</sup> Com.<sup>r</sup> fr. Giuseppe Stricher..... „ 121. —  
Al Sac.<sup>to</sup> Com.<sup>r</sup> fr. Francesco Stricher..... „ 51. —

⊕ 230.

La pensione di 33. 11. 12. sulla Commenda di Klein Erlingen al Cav.<sup>r</sup> fr. Eberardo Truchses.

La pensione di 27. 11. 4. sulla Com.<sup>da</sup> di Gimar al medesimo Cav.<sup>r</sup> fr. Eberardo Truchses.

La pensione di scudi 159. sulla Com.<sup>da</sup> di Layen la dividiamo come segue.

Al Nob.<sup>o</sup>..... Reinach..... 89. —  
Al Sac.<sup>to</sup> fr. Francesco Stricher..... „ 70. —

⊕ 159.

La pensione di 272. 8. 10. sulla commenda di Frankfurt la dividiamo come segue.

Al Nob.<sup>o</sup>..... Reinach..... 30. 8. 10.  
Al Sac.<sup>to</sup> Borion..... „ 121. —  
Al Sac.<sup>to</sup>..... Rigand..... „ 121. —

⊕ 272. 8. 10.

E la pensione di scudi 100. sulla Com.<sup>da</sup> di S. Pio: Bafel e Worfeshein al Com.<sup>r</sup> fr. Francesco Matturino Müller.

Dat. Sin. Palatio die xij. M<sup>o</sup> Augusti 1797.

*Hompesch*

Having vacated the 'Commenda' of Villigen of our Venerable Priory of Germany as a consequence of my promotion to the Office of Grand Master, it is our right and duty to fill in the vacancy. Hence, for our first five years, we provide for it, and, in grace, grant it to the Lieutenant of the Venerable Grand Bailiff, commendatore fra Antonio, the Baron of Neveu, our Falconer, in exchange of the Commenda of Rottembourg, which he enjoys with the title of Magisterial Grace, and the pension of 250 Scudos due to him from the income of the same Commenda of Villegen. And as regards the annual Magisterial income, due to us, he is to pay immediately in our hand, or to our Controller, the sum of 15,048 Maltese Scudos and 11 grani which amounts to 16,554 Florins at the rate of 10..18..1 tari per Florin.

The Commenda of Rottenbourg, given back to us by the Lieutenant of the Grand Bailiff of Neveu, is provided for and conferred in grace to the Colonel, the Knight fra Enrico Physser in exchange of the following annual pensions, which are: 100 Scudos from the income of Mr Giovanni Bassel and Dodesheim; 272 Scudos 8 tari 10 grani from the income of the Commenda of Franchfurt; 33 Scudos 11.12 from the income of the Commenda of Klein Erlingen; 159 Scudos from the Commenda of Lagen; 336 Scudos 1.4 from the Commenda of Rottenbourg; 27 Scudos 11.4 from the income of the Commenda of Colmar; and 230 Scudos from the income of the Commenda of Neveu.

He is to agree with the above-mentioned Lieutenant of the Venerable Grand Bailiff, Commendatore fra Antonio, Baron of Neveu, concerning the Magisterial annual due from the above-mentioned Commenda of Rottembourg.

The pension of 250 Scudos, as renounced in our hand by the Lieutenant of the Venerable Grand Bailiff fra Antonio, Baron of Neveu, is granted by us and given in grace to the Priest, Commendatore fra Giuseppe Streicher.

The pension as above likewise handed to us by Colonel, the Knight Fra Enrico Physser is granted by us and given in grace as follows:

the penion of 338 Scudos 1.4 from the income of the Commenda of Rottembourg to the Knight fra Giacomo Sebastiano Truchses,

the pension of 230 Scudos from the Commenda of Villigen is divided as follows:

to the Knight fra Eberardo Truchses	Sc. 58
to the Priest, Commendatore fra Giuseppe Streicher	121
to the Priest, Commendatore fra Giuseppe Streicher	51
	230

The pension of Sc. 33.11.12 from the income of the Commenda of Klein Erlingen to the Knight fra Eberardo Truchses.

The pension of Sc. 27.11.4 from the income of the Commenda of Colmar to the same Knight fra Eberardo Truchsess.

The pension of Sc. 159 from the income of the Commenda of Lagen is divided by us as follows:

<i>to the Noble Reinach</i>	Sc. 89
<i>to the Priest fra Francesco Streicher</i>	70
	159

*The pension of Sc. 272.8.10 from the income of the Commenda of Franchfurt is divided by us as follows:*

<i>to the Noble Reinach</i>	Sc. 30.8.10
<i>to the Priest Dorion</i>	121
<i>to the Priest Vigand</i>	121
	272.8.10

*And the pension of Sc. 100 from the income of the Commenda of Mr Giovanni Bassel and Dorleskein to Commendatore fra Francesco Maturino Müller.*

*Given at the Palace on the 13th day of the month of August 1797  
Hompesch*

We find that he exercised social justice not only directed towards his fellow Knights, but also with his Maltese subjects, to whom he gave orders, and expected them to be obeyed. But at the same time he made sure that any rights that the individual had or might have in the future, were not effected by his command as the following letter points out:

During the reign of GM De Rohan, the Island of Gozo's Judiciary was in disarray, because several posts had been left vacant, and so there was a considerable number of accumulated law suits.

So on August 1, 1797 he appointed Councillor Dr Paolo Grungo as Judge for Gozo<sup>11</sup> but as can be seen from the following letter he went out of his way to safeguard Judge Grungo's present and future civil rights.

*I decided to send to our Island of Gozo Dottore Paolo Grungo, Councillor of our senior Magistrate of Justice to hold the office of Judge on that Island. Hence, we grant him leave of absence from the said office of Councillor for the whole time during which he will exercise the said Judicature.*

*Consequently, he will avail himself of the ordinary proceedings, and, in addition of a yearly two hundred scudos from his ordinary salary as a Councillor; and without any prejudice to his seniority in case of promotions. Hence we do herewith declare that, in case of any vacancy of superior grade to his, during his leave of absence as a Councillor, he shall be equally considered as if he were not on leave but as if he were actually in the Office of Councillor.*

*Given at the Palace on the first day of this month of August 1797  
Hompesch.*

Hofplis  
Maj. Hiedend

Santi Sepulcri

et

Ordinis S. Antonii Viennensis

(vengo stimolato spedire) alla nostra Pota del Gozo  
il M.<sup>o</sup> Paolo Grungo (Consigliere) del nostro Supremo  
Magistrato di Giustizia per esercitare l'ufficio di  
Giudice in quella Pota, gli accordiamo un congedo dal  
detto ufficio di Consigliere da durare per tutto il  
tempo che eserciterà la d.<sup>ca</sup> Giurisdizione, della quale  
intento ne goderà gli ordinarij proventi, e di più  
sudi due cento cinquanta annui dal suo ordinario  
spendio di Consigliere, e perche non riventa alcun  
pregiudizio ne noi usuzi nel suddetto Magistrato  
Subvariano che occorrendo nel medesimo in questo  
sultempo vacanza di qualche Consigliere di grado  
a lui maggiore sarà ugualmente considerato come  
se non fosse in congedo, ma bensì in attuale servizio.  
Datum in Palatio die prima m<sup>o</sup> Augusti 1797.

Hompesch



As far as his foreign policy is concerned, we have evidence showing him as persuing the same foreign policy of his predecessor, GM De Rohan, namely friendship with Russia. During GM De Rohan's reign the French Revolution had denuded the Order from the income of three of its most powerful Langues, that is France, Auvergne and Provence. France included Aquitaine and Champagne. Provence included St Gilles and Toulous. In other words the whole of France.

Napoleon was causing great problems to Austria, Poland, Switzerland and to Italy. England was luke-warm towards the Order and so Russia with its Mediterranean expansionist ideology was at that time the only country which could afford protection to the Order against the might of the emerging French military genius.

Although documented correspondence with Russia exists since 1543, the Order's overtures towards Russia had really started during the reign of Catherine II, Empress of Russia, during GM Pinto's reign, which increased during GM De Rohan's. In fact, she had sent De Rohan her portrait painted by Dimetriy Levitsky in 1787 which is in the Palace, Valletta.

GM De Rohan wrote a thank-you note to her on February 20, 1790.<sup>12</sup> However her relations with the Order were luke-warm. On the contrary her son Paul was very enthusiastic and responded warmly towards the overtures of the Order, which, because of the French Revolution and the emerging Napoleon felt isolated and needed protection.

Paul, on November 12, 1796<sup>13</sup>, wrote to GM De Rohan informing him of the death of his mother and his succession and on May23/June 2, 1798<sup>14</sup> O'Hara informed the Vice-Chancellor Kurakin that he had handed over the portrait of Paul to the Grand Master as a gift. This portrait is at the moment lost.

In 1788 GM De Rohan, in answer to Catherine II's request for a Knight of Malta to train a new galley squadron for the Baltic Fleet, sent Count Giulino Renato Litta de Visconti-Arese. He was soon promoted to the rank of Major-General, then Rear Admiral.<sup>15</sup>

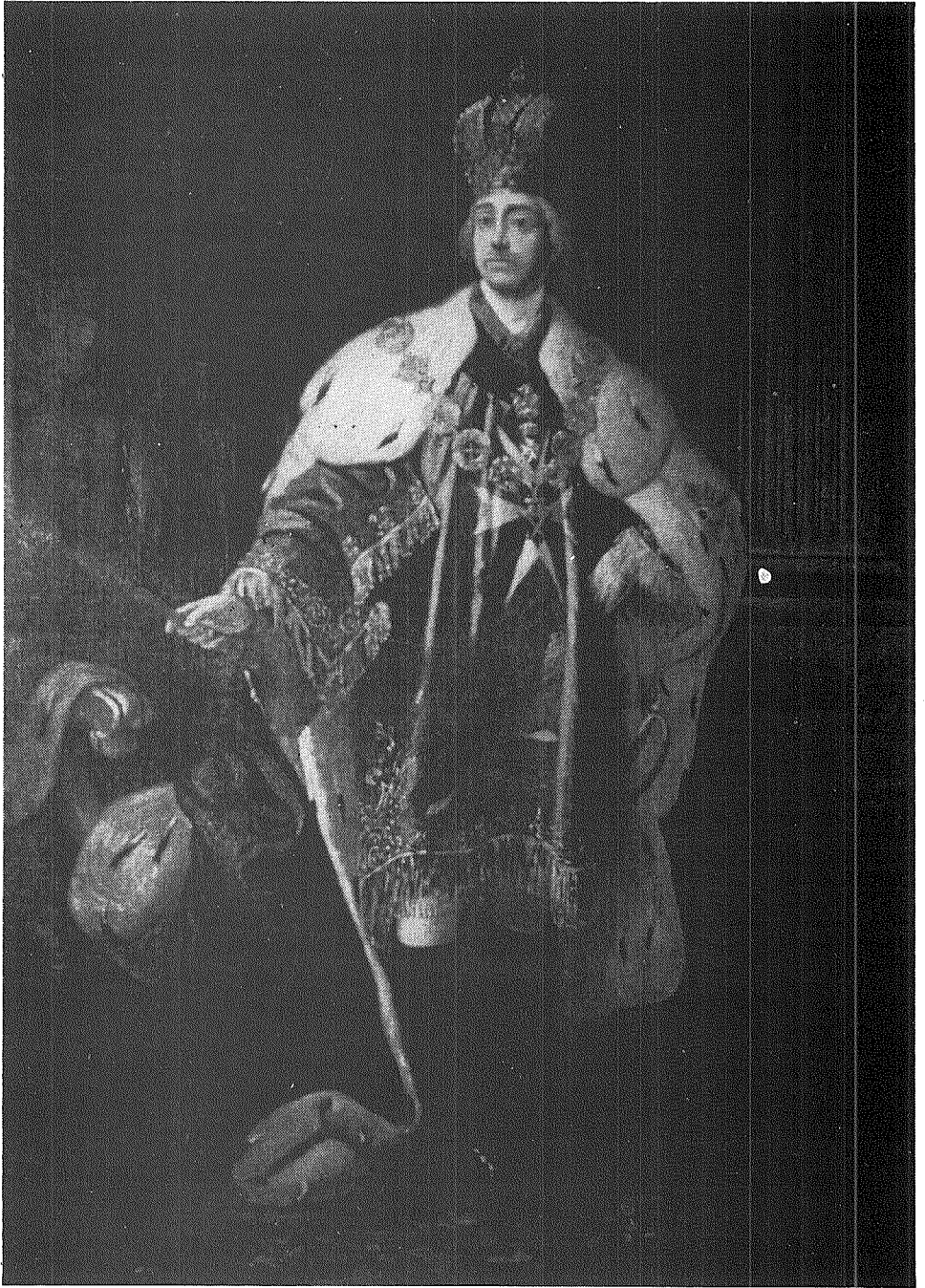
In 1790 Litta was created Bailiff, and on April 14, 1795 GM De Rohan nominated Litta Plenipotentiary, Minister of the Order to the Imperial Court of Russia.<sup>16</sup>

Following the extinction of Poland in 1795, GM De Rohan sent him to Russia to start negotiation for the establishment of a new Russian Grand Priory, and on January 4/15, 1797 in St Petersburg, Prince Bezborodko and Prince Kurakin, Chancellor and Vice Cancellors respectively on the part of the Tsar, and Bailiff Litta on that of GM De Rohan,





*Catherine II (The Great), Empress of Russia, from a painting by Levitsky*



*Tsar Paul I, from a painting by Antonio Micallef.*


signed a treaty by virtue of which the Polish Priory was to become the Grand Priory of Russia and its revenue of 300,000 florins would accrue to the Order's treasury.

The Priory was to be divided into ten commanderies, for Knights and three for Conventual Chaplains. In February 1797, the Tsar's envoy Ratchinsky, bearing the draft convention, was intercepted at Ancona by French troops and compelled to surrender all his documents. These were sent to the Directory in Paris and published. They never reached GM De Rohan who died on July 13, 1797.

These documents featured prominently in the excuse given by Napoleon for attacking the Order in Malta, whom he accused of plotting with his enemy Russia against France.

In the beginning of June 1797, another text of the Convention identical to the first was signed by the same person and sent to GM Hompesch, which this time reached Malta, and the Council of the Order confirmed and ratified the convention of January 4/15 on August 7, 1797 as results from the following documents.

As soon as he was elected on July 17 GM Hompesch wrote to the Tsar saying:

  
Sire,  
Je me fais un devoir de faire part à Votre Majesté Impériale que, Dieu ayant appelé à lui l'Eminentissime Grand Maître Emmanuel de Rohan tous les suffrages de mon Ordre s'étant réunis ----- avec bonté l'hommage des sentimens profonds ----- d'attachement et de respect avec les quels je suis  
Sire:  
De Votre Majesté Impériale  
Ores humble et très obéissant Serviteur  
Le Grand Maître.  
J. Ferdinand de Hompesch  
Malte le 17 juillet 1797. -

I feel it is my duty to acquaint your Imperial Majesty, that, God having called to him, the most Eminent Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan, all the electors of the Order having united in my favour, I have been unanimously elected to succeed him.


His greatest regret in dying was that he was unable to proceed to the solemn formalities to install a Priory of my Order in Russia, instead of the Polish one.

The loss of despatches of our Minister Plenipotentiary has caused this delay, and it will be great satisfaction for me to bring to conclusion, this great work, as soon as these copies of these despatches, of which I have been notified, are brought by Chev d'Ohara to me.

I pray in the meantime, that Your Imperial Majesty be well convinced of our warm gratitude and to continue your interest and august support for my Order, and the Neutral State at the head of which I have been placed and to accept kindly the homage of the sentiments of deep attachment and of respect, etc.<sup>17</sup>

As soon as the draft treaty reached Malta no time was lost by the Council to verify it, and promoted Litta to Ambassador Extraordinary to Russia as the following letter points out.<sup>18</sup>

Sire,



'est avec la plus vive satisfaction que je me suis enyressé  
avec le suprême Conseil de mon Ordre, de sanctionner ---  
--- de votre vive gratitude; et celui du très profond  
respect avec lequel je suis.  
Sire.

De Votre Majesté Impériale  
Le très humble et très  
obéissant Serviteur  
Le Grand Maître  
Ferdinand de Hompesch

Malte le 7. Août 1797/.

It is with the warmest satisfaction that I hasten together with the Supreme Council of my Order, to sanction and ratify the treaty which the plenipotentiaries of your Imperial Majesty have signed, in your August Name, with the Venerable Bailiff Count de Litta, our Plenipotentiary for the establishment of a grand Priory of the Order of Malta within the Russian Empire. In order to accord to this action a more agreeable solemnity for your Imperial Majesty, and to prove more appropriately our warm and profound gratitude, we have deemed it fit, to invest the Bailiff Count de Litta, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary to your Sacred Person, etc...

It is therefore in this capacity that he will have the honour to present to you the above mentioned treaty, sanctioned and ratified by us and the Supreme Council of the Order, in an irrevocable manner.

Hompesch

Malta 7 August, 1797

Sire,



Dans la même Conseil. Suprême de mon Ordre où  
l'établissement du Grand Prieur de Russie a été sanctionné et  
ratifié, où l'on s'est reposé sur moi du soin honorable de  
protéger nos desirs à votre Majesté Impériale concernant  
notre décoration, et où le <sup>Nob.</sup> Bailli de Litta a été autorisé  
à revêtir auprès de votre Personne sacrée le caractère  
d'ambassadeur extraord.<sup>re</sup>; on s'est également reposé sur moi  
du soin de prier votre Majesté Impériale, par reconnaissance  
des bienfaits signalés qu'elle vient d'accorder à notre  
Ordre, de vouloir bien procéder Elle-même dans sa haute  
sagesse au choix des premiers titulaires du Grand prieur  
de Russie et des Commanderies, qui en dépendent, -----

--- l'heureuse conclusion des arrangements définitifs ---  
concernant la Bologne, entre Votre Majesté Impériale, la cour  
de Vienne et celle de Berlin, arrangements qui prouvent à la  
fois la justice, la sagesse et la magnanimité de Votre Majesté  
Impériale. J'en avais déjà été instruit par le v. pble Bailli  
de Litta. Mais le Cher.<sup>re</sup> s<sup>on</sup> hâra Conseiller d'Ambassade  
attaché à la Légation de Russie à Malte, dont il dirige  
depuis peu les affaires en l'absence du Cap.<sup>re</sup> Sgaro, m'a  
donné ces jours passés au nom de Votre Majesté Impériale  
communication de tous les documents. Je la prie de  
croire que je prendrai toujours la part la plus vive aux  
événements qui comme celui-ci intéresseront sa gloire et la  
prosperité de son Empire.

C'est dans ces sentimens que j'ai l'honneur de lui  
réitérer l'hommage des sentimens profonds de gratitude  
d'attachement et de respect avec les quels je suis.

Sire

De Votre Majesté Impériale

Le très humble et très  
Obeissant Serviteur  
Le Grand-Maître

J. J. Ferdinand de Hompesch

Malte le 7 Aout 1797.

In this letter written also on August 7, he again mentions the ratification of the treaty and tells the Tsar to go ahead and to make the first appointments of the Grand Priory of Russia and its dependent Commandaries, including those which according to the treaty had to be nominated by the Grand Master.<sup>19</sup> "I therefore entreat your Imperial Majesty to make this choice according to your pleasure."

He also promises that as soon as he became aware of the names selected by the Tsar, he will take immediate action so that the Council will issue them the necessary Bulls which according to the custom of the Order were indispensable to them. He also congratulates the Tsar on "the successful conclusion of the definitive arrangements with regard to Poland, between His Imperial Majesty, the Court in Vienna and the court in Berlin".

Sire,



Il étoit réservé à un Prince aussi pieux, aussi sage, aussi  
 ami de l'Humanité que Votre Majesté Impériale,  
 d'établir l'Ordre de Malte dans l'Empire de Russie, et  
 d'offrir aux Souverains de l'Europe ses contemporains les  
 premiers exemples d'un Empereur revêtu de la Croix à jamais  
 illustrée par une foule de grands hommes & de héros célèbres  
 Mais Votre Majesté Impériale ne s'est pas bornée à doter  
 cet établissement utile et glorieux pour son règne, Elle doit  
 encore en être le Protecteur, et tenir de nous les mêmes  
 marques que portaient les D'Aubisson, les D'Isle-Adam  
 les La Valette. Le Suprême Conseil de l'Ordre d'une voix  
 unanime & par acclamation a décidé que le V<sup>ble</sup> Bailli  
 Comte de Sittz notre Ambassadeur Extraordinaire auprès  
 de Votre Majesté Impériale auroit l'honneur de lui  
 offrir au nom du Corps entier de notre Ordre. Il -----



--- bienfaisance nous donneit le Droit de reclamer.

Le Bailli Comte de Sator est en même tems chargé de  
présenter à Sa Majesté L'Impératrice et à Saure  
Altesses Impériales les Princes-Ducs Alexandre  
Constantin et Nicolas les Lettres & les marques de  
mon Ordre qui leur sont respectivement destinées. Mais il  
s'est plus spécialement, Sire, de Vous offrir en mon nom  
le Croix antique provenant du Grand-Maître La Valette, la  
quelle étoit conservée dans notre Eglise Cathédrale, et en outre  
ma propre Croix, que je prie Votre Majesté Impériale  
d'agréer comme un faible gage de mon très respectueux  
attachement et de ma reconnaissance personnelle.

J'ai eu devoir dans cette occasion envoyer expressément le  
Comte Trazymbski issu d'une noble Famille de la Pologne,  
et Chevalier de mon Ordre pour porter le Croix ratifié, les  
Croix et les Lettres que mon Ambassadeur aura l'honneur  
de présenter à Votre Majesté Impériale. Je L'ai prié  
d'accueillir gracieusement le Chev. de Trazymbski, qui a  
rempli ici tous ses devoirs d'une manière distinguée et qui  
me paroît à tous égards digne de Ses bontés et de Sa  
bienveillance.

Je suis avec le plus profond respect  
Sire

De Votre Majesté Impériale

Le très humble et très

Obeissant Serviteur

Le Grand-Maître

Ferdinand de Habsbourg

Malte le 7. Août 1707.

On August 7, 1797 by means of another letter he showers praise on the Tsar and to show how grateful he and the Order were for accepting to be the Protector of the Order, as a sign of gratitude he was sending his cross, and that of Grand Master La Valette which was in the Chapel of Our Lade of Philermos, in St John's Cathedral, by a special messenger, a Polish noble Knight Count Graisyntim, so that Ambassador Litta can present them to him officially, together with other documents for the Royal family.

From these letters it is obvious that GM Hompesch and the Order were most grateful to have thought that at last they had found a European power which could afford them protection against the dark clouds appearing on the horizon – the emerging Napoleon, and continuing on the foreign policy that had been planned before by GM De Rohan.

Sire.



Après avoir revêtu le S<sup>eu</sup>crable Bailli Comte de Litta,  
du caractère de notre Ambassadeur Extraordinaire auprès  
de Votre Majesté Impériale expressément pour remplir  
toutes les fonctions relatives à l'installation du P.....

..... Personne l'assurance de notre vive  
gratitude et du bien profond respect avec lequel je suis,

Sire.

De Votre Majesté Impériale,

Malte 5. Février 1798.

Le très humble et  
très obéissant Serviteur  
Le Grand-Maître  
fr. Ferdinand de Hompesch

In a letter written on February 5, 1798, the Grand Master thanks the Tsar again for accepting to be the Protector of the Order and that he was sending him documents by Ambassador Litta.<sup>21</sup> Although no mention is made of what the contents are, probably these were proposals for the incorporation of the Russian Priory into the Anglo Baverian Langue as was the intention of GM De Rohan in 1783, as on February 28, 1798 Tsar Paul wrote to the Grand Master expressing his concordance with the project of incorporating the Russian Priory into the Anglo Baverian Langue.<sup>22</sup> An act incorporating the Russian Priory into the Anglo-Bavarian Langue was actually drawn up and published by the Council in 1798.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Evidence resulting from documents, letters after his exile from Malta**

GM Hompesch was ordered to leave Malta by Napoleon Bonaparte and sailed out of Malta on a French merchantman, escorted by the *Artemise* on June 18, 1798, for Trieste, accompanied by several of his faithful colleagues, among which was the Maltese in charge of his Privy Purse and Spanish Consul Mr Emmanuel Gravagnia.<sup>24</sup>

GM Hompesch left behind him considerable debts, and had appointed Antoine Poussiègne the former Captain of the Port as his attorney to pay on his behalf his debts from the money he was supposed to receive from the French Government under the terms of the Convention. In fact, the 600,000 francs accorded to him under article 2 of that convention was earmarked to pay his debts<sup>25</sup> which amounted to 382,660 scudi.<sup>26</sup>

From this we see that GM Hompesch's intentions were honorable. His intention was that his creditors would be paid as per Article 2 of the Convention. He did not abandon them. The fact that they were never paid was not his fault as this was not done because of events beyond his control, the uprising of the Maltese a few months later.

Among these creditors we find Mr Giuseppe Caruana Dingli – Controller of Customs – who because of the revolt was never paid. The Caruana Dinglis had absolute loyalty to GM Hompesch which the Grand Master acknowledged. So, Caruana Dingli had a vested interest in seeing the return to Malta of the Grand Master. Ball, in March of 1799, ordered the arrest of Caruana Dingli as soon as he learned that he was in possession of some letters from GM Hompesch urging him to increase his activities for the Order's return to Malta with the help, if need be, of Austria. After being detained for thirteen days on board the *Alexander*, Caruana Dingli became sick and was transported to Comino, and was later transferred to Gozo and then to Sicily<sup>27</sup> where he died.

~~La tua lettera del 28 Marzo~~  
Ed il mio desiderio di sentire il tuo ristabilimento.  
ma del 11. Marzo mi scrive, essere ella tuttora nello stesso stato di  
dispiaciuto. spero, che ben presto avrò di lei migliori nuove. La esorto a  
tranquillizzarsi: si troverà ben presto il modo di poter riparo. Ed a questo oggetto  
al contenuto della summe riportata mia del 28 Marzo te ripeto, che quando una  
----- de miei debiti, in caso che ne abbia presso di se i necessary documents per  
poterlo formare: poichè almen non è conveniente fare cosa alcuna in di cui  
in Italia per procurarli. Mi ha dispiaciuto il sapere per le lettere del Cavalier  
Dienne, che i miei pacchi del mese di Dicembre, in cui vi erano delle mie  
lettere: per lei, non erano giunti in Messina. Deve essere ben convinto della propensione  
dell'animo mio a fare tutto ciò, che potrà essere di vantaggio. Con che te auguro dal Signore  
ogni bene.  
Suo Affezionatoissimo  
L'agente della Commissione, Hompesch, alla villa di Messina  
di Messina. Ed il Defunto Principe di Hompesch.

I wrote to you on March 28 to tell you how sorry I was to hear about your illness and to express my wish for your recovery. The Knight Dienne, in his last letter of 11th March, wrote to tell me that you are still in the same condition, about which we are very sorry indeed. I hope that we shall receive better news shortly. I give you advice to take heart and to keep yourself calm: that would work like a good remedy, and... To go back to the contents of the above-mentioned letter of 28th March, I tell you again that once recovered and when you can, send me a general note or an account of my debts, if you have the necessary documents, as otherwise it would be difficult to take action from here. I was sorry to learn that the letters of Knight Dienne, my packets of letters of the month of December, in which there were some of my letters to you, had not reached Messina. You should be sure that I will ever do whatever could be to your advantage. Herewith I wish you every good thing from the Lord.

Yours affectionately,

(s) Hompesch

Con senso di vero dispiacere sentimmo la nuova della morte del vostro marito  
La fedeltà sua verso la nostra Persona, ed il suo attaccamento a' favore sempre  
grati, e ne conserveremo in ogni tempo la memoria. Le circostanze non ci  
permisero di ricompensar i suoi servizi, come lo desideravamo, e come egli meritava.

Ci proponemmo di corrispondere pienamente alle premure, ed all'impegno

--- perdita, che soffrite: Assumiamo a Noi la Cura de' vostri figli:

serà tutto nostro il pensiero del loro stabilimento: e risponderemo sulla

famiglia tutto quel bene, che volevamo fare in persona del defunto

vostro marito. Siate certa dell'estensione di questi nostri sentimenti, che

vi comprovemo fra breve colla maggiore efficacia. D'auguriamoci dal  
signore ogni vero bene.

Porto di Fermo li 25. Dicembre 1801.

Hompesch

We were sorry indeed to learn the news about your husband's death. His faithfulness and attachment in our regard were always grateful to us and we shall recall them at any time. Circumstances did not allow us to repay him for services rendered, as we would have liked and as it was fit. We promised to pay back in full for his kindness and duty which he publicly has shown in regard to our Person; but the Lord God had not permitted. We share your sorrow. As much as possible we do our best to comfort you in your affliction and to relieve you in your bereavement. We take the care of your sons on us. We do everything towards their settlement in life. We do to your family all the good we wanted to do the person of your late husband. Be sure of our feeling in your regard; we shall prove them shortly with greater efficacy... We wish you and true good from the Lord.

Porto di Fermo: 25th December 1801

(s) Hompesch

These two letters prove beyond any doubt that Hompesch did not abandon the Caruana Dinglis, "*We take the care of your sons on us, We do everything towards their settlement in life. We do to your family all the good we wanted to do the person of your late husband.*"

The subsequent story as told by the family is as follows: the son of Caruana Dingli was a Professor of Law and instituted legal proceedings in Malta to recover the debt, but he lost the case. He was allowed, however, to seek redress at the Privy Council, but the ship carrying the documents sunk on its way somewhere in the Bay of Biscay and so the story ends.

The Order had also debts on the Continent. Mr Emmanuel Gravagnia, Hompesch's Privy Seal, because of these unpaid debts, was very unpopular. The Secretary up to 1799 was Sig Cavalieri Destrull but then Emmanuel Gravagnia became Secretary and a certain Giuseppe de Berta in Ancona became a money clearing agent for GM Hompesch, receiving and paying relieving Gravagna from this headache.

Two letters exist from Bali Fra Giuseppe Conte Caracciola writing from Palermo to the Secretary of GM Hompesch Emmanuel Gravagnia at Gerschach near Lubiana, one dated September 24, 1799 and the other December 13, 1799. In both letters Bali Carracciolo states that he had informed GM Hompesch former Secretary Sig Canalieri Desbriell that he was owed 1000 florins, and never even got an answer. He exhorts Mr Em Gravagnia to do his best to obtain payments for him, because he had incurred this debt on the instructions of the Council when in Trieste.

*Most Illustrious Sig Gravania. I hope that you have received a previous letter of mine in which I beseeched you to make known to His Most Eminent Sig Hompesch, that when it pleases him, he could redeem a bill of one thousand florins taken by me here on behalf of the Venda Comune Treasury and for my necessary subsidy. I wrote about this matter to the last Secretary Sig Cavaliere Desbriell but my letter was rejected because when it arrived in Trieste he had already left and the conventual representation had been dissolved. In my letter to you I suggested that this payment was to be made to His Most Eminent Cardinal Francesco Pignatelli of Monteleone, once that this Cavaliere Antonio Forcella, General Representative of the Duke of Monteleone had advanced the said sum to me in July; now I am informing you that the said Cardinal has otherwise well provided himself and not having found them still in Trieste, has also rejected my letter of credit, so that if you consider it fair to compensate me the debt incurred by me in my official capacity, and ignoring the change which followed, you could send me a bill, payable to me, and in that way refund the said Cavaliere Forcella; meanwhile may I flatter myself to think that you will pay me if possible so that I will not suffer added discomfort once that the dreadful democracy of the Kingdom of Naples has so ruined my Commende that I will not be able to extract a grain from them for a very long time. You could*

send your reply through Livorno to a worthy person, businessman or any other so that it may reach me in Palermo and from it make my decisions concerning the refund. Please give me your reply for which I am anxious, and with great esteem I remain,

Yours, Palermo 24 September 1799

Most devoted, Most grateful, Servant, Truly,  
The Balì Caracaciolo di S...

Stimatissimo Sef: Bravagna. Spera che abbia ricevuto un'altro mio lettera  
in cui la pregavo di fare inteso il Sef: Emo, che non si potesse, che se potesse,  
si fosse compiaciuto estinguere una cambiale di Mille fiorini, da me  
prestita, a conto del Vendo Comùn Tesoro, e per mio necessario di un  
Vé scrissi all'ultimo Segretario del medesimo Sef: Emo, che non si potesse  
la lettera mi è stata respinta, perchè all'avviso della medesima in  
Trieste, egli non vi era più, ed era sciolta la rappresentanza convenuta  
la, nella mia a lei, gli pareva più, che detto rimborso, dove andrebbe  
fatto all'Eminentissimo Sef: Cardinal Francesco Sforzale di Monreale,  
Leone, giacchè questo Sef: Paolo Antonio Forcella, agente  
del Regno di Napoli, ha rinviato per un pezzo le mie Commissioni, e  
mi chiede a ragione, esigere un grano, per molto tempo ancora. Dir-  
gerò però la risposta per via di Livorno, raccomandata a qualche perso-  
na di fiducia, Negoziant, o altri, perchè mi possa pervenire in Paler-  
mo, e dal tenore della medesima, prenderò le mie determinazioni,  
circa il convenientemente rimborso. Mi dia pur ricordo, ed avviso delle  
decisioni, con perfetta stima, mi raff<sup>o</sup>

Di Lei

Palermo li 24. Settembre 1799.

Il V. mo Oblig. mo Serv. vero  
Il Balì Caracaciolo di S. Bruno

All' Illre Sig<sup>re</sup>: e Principe di Gerone  
Il Sig<sup>re</sup>: Emanuele Gravagna  
presso l'Emosig<sup>re</sup>: de' Hompesch  
a Serschack presso Fubiana

Most Esteemed Sig Gravagna. Not having had any reply from you to my various requests, I feel the necessity of inconveniencing you once more with this letter, above all to beseech you to pay my respects to our unfortunate, but always respectable, the Most Eminent Signo de Hompesch, and to make it known to him that my present circumstances render me most anguished to know what I am to do about the thousand florins which I took last September in the form of a loan from the Piazza, in order to be in a position to obey the orders of the Sacro Consiglio and the Veneranda Camera, given to me last March, in the provisional Convent of Trieste; I know too well the fairness and the generous way thinking of his Most Eminence not to doubt at all that he wishes me to suffer the hardship of such a repayment, after having fulfilled my duty with all the zeal and thoughtfulness. I do not take the liberty of writing to him directly in order not to inconvenience him, but I beseech you to act on my behalf, and to ask him earnestly not to leave me in want. Concerning Malta, it is still in the hands of the enemy, but in a few days the siege will begin with Russian troops, English, Portuguese and Neapolitan numbering about 7000, besides a multitude equal if not more in number of Maltese; as far as I am informed, all your relatives are well though still confined in unhappy Valletta; one hopes, as it is being said, that freedom will come, order will return; I beseech you finally not to leave me without reply and send it to Sig Conte Pompeo Brigido in Trieste, I send a thousand greetings to your son, Sig Vincenzo and with steadfast and true esteem, I remain

Yours,

Palermo 13th December 1799



Stimatissimo Sig. Bravagna. Non avendo avuto alcuna sua risposta alle  
varie mie scrittegli, mi veggio nella necessità di nuovamente incomoda-  
la con questa mia, primieramente per pregarla di porgermi i miei ripo-  
tosi ossequj al mio infelice, ma rispettabile sempre, Erno Sig. de' Von-  
pésch, indi farmi presente, che le mie attuali circostanze, mi rendono  
unquasiatissimo nel vodiofo, che devo fare dei mille Fiorini, da me  
presi in Settembre scorso, in prestito da questa Piazza, per essere in gra-  
do di obbedire gli ordini ricevuti dal Vago Consiglio, e Vanda Camera, in  
Maggio scorso, nel Convento provvisoriale di Trieste, troppo conosco la sua  
ma equità, e generosa maniera di pensare del detto Erno, per non dubitare  
affatto, che voglia farmi soffrire il disagio di tale rimborso, dopo di ----  
----- almeno circa di 7000, oltre la metà di altrettanti, e forse  
più Maltesi, per quanto mi sono informato, tutti i suoi Parenti stanno  
bene, benchè ancora chiusi nell'infelice Valletta, vi spero, per quel che  
si dice, che li beneto vanti, l'ordine ritornera, Pregandola finalmente di  
con la ciarmi privo di risposta, e di inviarmela al Sig. Conte Pompeo Bri-  
gido in Trieste, fo mille saluti al Sig. Vincenzo suo Figlio, e con costan-  
te vero stima, mi raff.

Di Lei

Palermo li 13. Dicembre 1792.

P. S. Se potrà dirmi qual è, e quale vi crede, potrà essere la futura sorte, del  
rispettabile, ma infelice mio Erno di sopra, gli sarà obbligato.

Di<sup>o</sup>mo Obbligato del: Vero  
Il Reale Fra Giuseppe Conte Caracciolo  
di S. Spirito

I do not know if this debt was paid or not, as no records exist of what happened later.

Mio Sig.

Per la gentilezza di Lei di questo, ho segnato un debito  
di L. St. L. 1500, pagatoli per mio scritto a Lei Sig.  
Picceller, intanto ho il piacere di dirle, che due delle note  
Cambiali per Augusta furono già accolte, onde  
----- parla avvisata, onde possa esser fuori del ragione  
importo. La prego di fare i miei obsequiosi compli-  
menti a S. A. E. ed al Sig. Formano, con la stessa  
Stima mi confermo.

Di V. S. Gio: Maria

Ancona li 28. Novembre 1803

All' Mio Sig. Emanuele Gervagna

Dev. a

! Ferrugia !

Il Mio, e l'Umo, Servitor  
Giuseppe de Berto

I have examined 38 letters originating from Giuseppe de Berta to the Secretary, Mr Emmanuel Gravagnia, of GM Hompesch addressed at Porto di Fermo between January 4 and October 17, 1803; Perugia November 14-28, 1803, Città di Castello December 16-31 1803. They are all accounting letters of money coming in and money being paid to various individuals showing that GM Hompesch in exile was looking in a professional manner the Order's financial affairs.

These letters establish that during 1803, GM Hompesch was in Porto di Fermo, up to October, Perugia in November and Città di Castello up to the end of December.

The letters from Ancona to Porto di Fermo took from one to two days to be delivered. Two letters although they have on them the written words *per espresso* also took two days to be delivered. This *per espresso* was written by De Berta and not applied by the Postal authorities. It merely signified a wish for that letter to be speedily delivered. There was however no organised express service.

Two other letters have a very rare hand stamp, one exceptionally fine. Only one other has been recorded in Italy by Gallenga under Perugia.<sup>28</sup>



I have made extensive enquiries in Italy to find out the meaning of M/SS but so far nobody has been able to let me know its meaning. These letters were sent by De Berta from Ancona on July 31 and October 17, 1803, arriving in Perugia on August 2 and October 19 respectively, two days' transit.

Decrees are also documents: They were issued in the name of GM Hompesch signed by his Vice-Chancellor Pinto and bear his portrait paper wafer seal.

I have not covered the period when Napoleon granted GM Hompesch his promised pension and allowed him to go and live in Montpellier, where he died on May 12, 1805. This will feature in a later study.

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- 3 *ibid*, ff.144r, 2v
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- 7 AOM, Ms 85, p.190
- 8 *ibid*, p.169/170, r/v
- 9 *ibid*, p.186/7/8, r/v
- 10 AOM, Ms 1642, p.46/7, r/v
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- 12 R.I.F.P.A., Fonds, *Relations of Malta and Russia*, list 66/6, dossier 29, ff.1r/v
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- 14 R.I.F.P.A., *op. cit.*, list 66/6 dossier 156, ff.19-20v
- 15 *Three Centuries of Russian-Maltese Historical Connections*, p.33
- 16 AOM, Ms 274, ff.246v-247
- 17-19 In the St Petersburg Archive kindly supplied by Dr Elizabeth Zolina
- 20 *ibid*, R.I.F.P.A., *op. cit.*, list 66/6 dossier 37, ff.1-1v
- 21 In the St Petersburg Archive kindly supplied by Dr Elizabeth Zolina
- 22 AOM, Ms 2196, ff.67-68
- 23 AOM, Ms 207, ff.13v-14v
- 24 Andrew Vella, p.27; Testa, p.123
- 25 Testa, p.124, p.138 (71); Correspondence vol. 4, N° 2667 Lib 792, item 1, copy of Hompesch Power of Attorney
- 26 *ibid*, item 2, contains list of Hompesch creditors
- 27 AOM, Msc 1205, f.69; Testa p.524
- 28 Gallenca "dated 1805, a very rare item" – Paolo Vollmeir