

LETTERS BY ARCHPRIEST CASSAR TO HIS VILLAGE COMMANDERS DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF GOZO

6th September 1798 – 30th October 1798

by Dr. A. Bonnici, MD



Archpriest Saverio Cassar
(Photo J. Cremona)

The aim of this research, and its subsequent publication was to register as much as possible a complete list of letters written by Archpriest S. Cassar and his fellow village Gozo Commanders, that have come to light as of today. Letters to or by M. Hasciac/Dr G. Grima LLD, Commanders of Zebbug, Dr F Pace LLD, Commander of Rabat, and Liberato Grech Commander of Caccia, feature prominently, but there must have been also letters to the other Commanders, which so far have not yet been traced. From these letters we are able to understand the great difficulties Archpriest S. Cassar and his Commanders had to face. They show him as an able Administrator, involved in the exercise of discipline, raising of money for the 'Cassa Commune', the buying of supplies and wheat from Sicily, the distribution of bread and wheat, combatting division in Gozo 'Francophiles', and his historic meeting with Nelson on board the Vanguard, discussing terms for the eventual capitulation of the French occupation forces. From all this Archpriest S. Cassar emerges as a National Hero.

I would like to thank, Mr Edmond Micallef who helped extensively and patiently with the translations, Dr Paul George Pisani LLD, who supplied a chronological list as per source and supplying photo copies, Mr J. Bonnici of the National Library Malta, Rev Dr J. Bezzina of the National Library Gozo for the Grima pages, the Rev Mons. A. Gauci, Mons. E. Bondi for the Bondi Documents, Mr John Cremona, Secretary to the Hon Minister for Gozo, Giovanna Debono, and Mr Anthony Vella Gera.

WHO WAS ARCHPRIEST SAVERIO CASSAR?

Saverio Cassar was born on the 29th December 1746 in the neighbourhood of "Santa Cilja" outside Ghajnsielem limits of the Parish of Nadur where he was baptised. (1)

He studied at the "La Sapienza" University in Rome from where he graduated as Doctor of Divinity. On the 30th March 1771, Mons Francesco Mattei ordained him as Priest, and two years later, on the 20th April 1773, Pope Clement XIV, appointed him as Archpriest of the "Matrice Kollegiata" - Church of the Assumption - Rabat Gozo, today the Cathedral. Some time later he was appointed by Bishop C.I. Pellerano as "Provigarju" that is, his representative in Gozo. (2)

Cassar tried very hard to promote Gozo as a separate Diocese, with its own Bishop, and did his best to persuade King Ferdinand IV of the two Sicilies, to recommend this to the Pope. However this did not materialise during his life time. (3)

When the Gozitans rebelled on the 2nd September 1798 against the French occupation forces, under Lt Coloinel Lockey, he was instrumental in leading the revolt. On the 18th September 1798, he was officially appointed by Congress as Governour and Inspector General of the Provisional Government for Gozo, leading the Gozitan military forces, against the French occupation forces. Both Admiral H. Nelson, and Admiral the Marquis De Niza consulted him on the French capitulation document.

Being a strong supporter of King Ferdinand IV, of the two Sicilies, whom he acknowledged as the rightful sovereign of Gozo, did not help in having good relations with Sir Alexander John Ball, and he had to suffer various snubs by Ball. He died in 1805 a broken man.

INVASION OF GOZO BY THE FRENCH

General Jean Louis E. Rynier was ordered by Napoleon Bonaparte to land in Gozo on the 10th June 1798, at a location between "It-torri ta' Sopru u r-Ramla", today known as "L-Irdum tal-Hawt jew ta' Vnuta" and at other beaches (4), and after some brave resistance by the Gozitans, the French were soon in possession of the whole of Gozo. The capitulation was signed by Judge Pietro Paulo Grungo, a Maltese (5), who had been sent to Gozo by Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch as a Judge. (6)

On the 14th June, Napoleon ordered General Vaubois to dispatch a detachment of two hundred men to Gozo, as General Reynier stationed in Gozo was due to leave with his regiment on the 16th. (5)

As a result there were 217 Officers and men stationed within the Citadel under Lieutenant Colonel Jean Baptiste Lockey, and sixty men in Fort Chambray under General Baste, who had been transferred there from the frigate La Diane.(7)

INSURRECTION AGAINST THE FRENCH

On the 2nd September 1798 news reached Gozo, that the Maltese had rebelled against the French occupation forces capturing Mdinà, and on that same day the insurrection against the French forces in Gozo started as well. Archpriest S. Cassar was nominated member of a four man commission, convened to lead the Gozitans to victory,(8) and on the 6th September 1798, Archpriest S. Cassar informed King Ferdinand IV about the rebellion and requested aid, by way of food and arms, in the name of the people of Gozo.

6th September 1798. Letter from Archpriest S. Cassar to King Ferdinand IV requesting aid. ASP b.5222 f.187

6 Set 1798
L. C. U. I.

*Le Popolazioni delle due Isole Malta e Gozo dispiaciute
dalle tradimenti de suoi Superiori antichi e vedendogli nel caso
di non poter fare la conveniente resistenza all'improvviso
dovettero soccombere e soffrire lo sbarco dei Francesi e malvo-
lentieri anche soggiacere al loro Governo. Acciuto però la
certa notizia della perdita ed istruzione della loro Ar-
mata, il Popolo di dette due Isole contemporaneamente
si sollevò, ed dopo un lungo dibattimento, e contrasto con fa-
vione d'armi il Popolo s'impadronì di tutte le Campagne*

loro forti, non restano altro che parte della Città di Mal-
ta, il Castello del Gozo in mano della Francia:

La Villetta ne tiene dentro al più quattro mila anime
che sono agiate al vivo della Popolazione tutta, ed
il Castello del Gozo ne tiene cento in tutto.

Il Popolo del Gozo ricorre ed implora soccorso primo dei suoi
e poi munizioni di guerra si troua il Gozo attorniato da una
Fregata francese e altre navi che mostrano tentare sbarco:
credo speriamo qualche soccorso della liberalità dei Minis-
tri di S. M. Britannica, ch'è quanto il Popolo del Gozo implo-
rà, e supplica e di uero affetto e venerazione impetrerà
anome di tutto il Popolo del Gozo.

R. L. E.

oggi 6 Set 1798

Del. ed. M. L. L. L.
Arciprete dell'Isola del Gozo
anome del pud. Popolo

18th September 1798 Provisional Government formed. — NAG

On the 18th September 1798 the representatives of the people of Gozo met in Congress at the Banca Giuratale to form a PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, in order to be in a better position to fight the French occupation forces, as well as to administer the Island. They nominated and proposed the following:

Saverio Cassar, Archpriest of the Matrice, Head of the Government and Superintendent of the whole Island of Gozo.

Fortunato Spiteri, Lawyer, Secretary to Cassar and to the Government

Antonio Mallia, Commander of Fort Chambray

Antonio Mallia and Francesco Pace, Commanders of Rabat

Francesco Refalo and Francesco Zammmit, Commanders of Xewkija

Angelo Vella and Giuseppe Muscat, Commanders of Gharb

Giuseppe Grima, Lawyer and Martino Hasciach, Commanders of Zebbug

Liberato Grech and Liberato Sultana, Commanders of Xaghra
 Rev Francesco Hili, and Francesco Attard, Commanders of Nadur
 Commissioners of Health Services: Antonio Renaud, Notary for Health, Dr Giovanni
 Cassar, MD, Dr Angelo Mizzi, Physician
 Harbour Supervisors: Giuseppe Debattista, Salvatore Grima
 Judge: Dr Emmanuel Palmier, and his Notary, Ludovico Spiteri

FORMATION OF REGIMENTS

On the 4th September a regiment at Zebbug was formed. — NAG Grima Papers (9)

<u>Battaglione</u>		
<u>Di Casal Zebbug. Formato nel secondo giorno della Rivoluzione.</u>		
Mro Paolo Schembre	di Mro Carmine	1.
Giuseppe Damigia	di Gio: Maria	2.
<u>Lucilieri</u>		
Eugenio Vella	di Salvatore	3.

and troops were sent out to capture Marsalforn Tower. (9)

Dalli già descritti furono distaccati i se-
 guenti per rimettere la Torre Marsal-
 furono occupata dai Francesi, come effeci-
 vamente son stati i primi ad entrarvi
 dentro.

Marcello Vella di Francesco N. 37.
 Giuseppe Aquilina di Giovanni N. A.

Troops were also sent out to assail Colla I-Bajda Tower. (9) and Mgarr ix-Xini, (10) both of which were captured.

Garzes Tower resisted for some time but Francesco Zammit, one of the Commanders of Xewkija and Antonio Mallia, one of the Commanders of Rabat, captured it. (11)

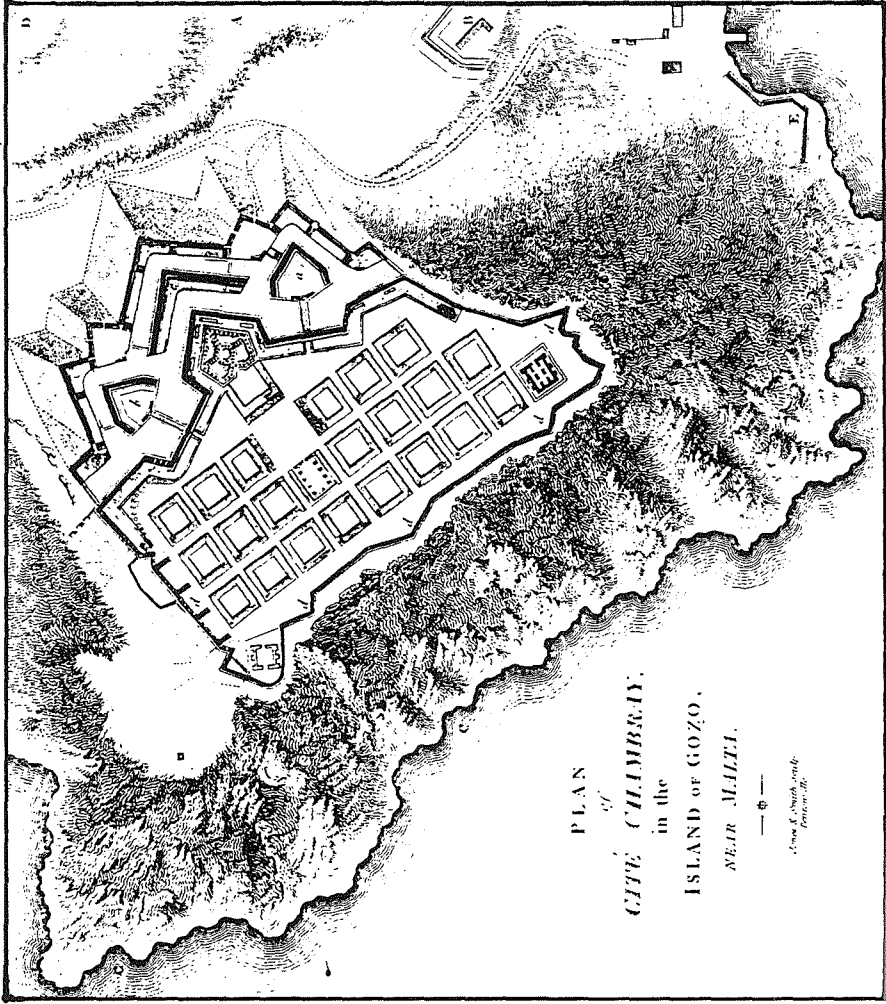
Troops of the Zebbug battery attacked Fort Chambray on the 3rd, 6th and 14th September when finally the French escaped to Malta on a speronara sent for that purpose, and troops from the Zebbug battery were able to occupy it on the 17th September, forming two companies: the first under Sgt Lorenzo Grech of Lazzaro N° 63 and the second company under Cpl Giuseppe Farrugia N° 2. (13)

Evacuato il Forte Chambray da Fran:
cesi furono mantenuti gli infrascritti e
divisi in due Compagnie come segue
Lorenzo Grech di Lazzaro
————— 1. Compagnia —————
Giorgio Cini di Michele
Fucilieri
Calcedonio Zabva di Gio: Maria = N° 8.
Francesco Mangion di Giuseppe = N° 60.

First Company

Giuseppe Cini di Michele = N° 66.
————— 2. Compagnia —————
Giuseppe Farrugia di Gio: Maria = N° 7.
Fucilieri
Carlo Mangion di Giuseppe = N° 79.
Lorenzo Farrugia di Gio: Maria = N° 9.

Second Company



Fort Chambray

Supplied by Mr J. Cremona

**RECORD OF LETTERS BY ARCHPRIEST S. CASSAR AND HIS
COMMANDERS DURING THE PERIOD
6TH SEPTEMBER-30TH OCTOBER 1798
By Dr J. Pisani, LLD.**

The Malta Study Handbook, "Malta – The Stamps and Postal History 1567-1960" mentions Three Archpriest Cassar letters, written on the 6th, 12th and 13th October 1798 and one written by Com A Mallia on the 8th October, under the heading "Letters between Maltese outside French occupied areas". (15)

Since then about forty other such letters have been discovered, and Dr J. Pisani, has tabulated them according to source. (16)

ABBREVIATIONS USED

- Attard Francesco Attard, Comandante of Nadur with Rev. Fr Francesco Hili
 Cassar Archpriest Saverio Cassar, Archpriest of Rabat, Bishop's Pro Vicar for Gozo, Head of the Government and Superintendent General of all the Island of Gozo
 Grech Liberato Grech – Comandante of Xaghra, Gozo together with Liberato Sultana
 Grima Dr Giuseppe Grima – Comandante of Zebbug with Martino Hasciac
 Hasciac Martino Hasciac - Commandante of Zebbug with Dr Giuseppe Grima
 Pace Dr Francesco Pace – Commander of Rabat; Maggiore di Fanteria of His Sicilian Majesty
 Spiteri Dr. Fortunato Spiteri, Secretary to Archpriest Cassar and to the Government
 Luzzi Principe di Luzzi – Viceroy of Sicily
 ASN Archivio di Stato Napoli – Sezione Esteri
 ASP Archivio di Stato Palermo
 NAG National Archives Gozo - Misc. Grima Papers
 NLM National Library Malta - Ms. 1053
 b. Busta/Bundle
 Bo. Bondi Documents
 AB Dr. A. Bonnici Collection
 AG Mgr Dr Anton Gauci Collection
 f. Folio
 n.d. undated letter
 King Ferdinand IV – King of the Two Sicilies
 Acton Genral John Acton, King's Minister in Palermo; Prime Minister to Ferdinand IV

Date	Sender	Adressee	Location
n.d.	Cassar	Luzzi	ASP b.5522 f.673
n.d.	Cassar	King	ASP b.5522 f.177
06.09.98	Cassar	King	ASP b.5522 f.187
n.d.	Cassar	C. Frangipane	ASP b.5522. f.225
21.02.99	Cassar	King	ASN b.4271. f.11
21.02.99	Cassar	King	ASN b.4271 f.31

Date	Sender	Adressee	Location
22.02.99	Cassar	Acton	ASN b.4271 f.32
26.02.99	Cassar	King	ASN b.2471 f.37
13.03.99	Acton	Cassar	ANS b.4271 f.47
n.d.	Pace	King	ASN b.2806 f.5
02.04.99	Pace	Acton	ASN c.2806 f.1
27.12.98	Cassar	Acton	ASN b.2806 f.7
28.12.98	Cassar	Acton	ASN b.2806 f.9
04.10.98	Pace	Grima	Bo unnumbered
19.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bo unnumbered
02.10.98	Pace	Grima	Bo unnumbered
19.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.41
19.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.42
n.d.	Cassar	Grech	Bo.43
20.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.44
20.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.45
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.46
23.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bo.47
22.10.98	Attard	Grech	Bo.48
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.49
22.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bo.50
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.51
23.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.52
23.10.98	Grech	Attard	Bo.53
23.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bo.54
12.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Mons Gauci
15.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Mons Gauci
17.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Mons Gauci
n.d.	Spiteri	Grech	Bo.55
18.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bo.unnumbered
05.10.98	V. de Piro	Cassar	NAG unnumbered
23.09.98	Cassar	Hasciac	NAG unnumbered
27.09.98	Cassar	Grima et	NAG unnumbered
28.09.98	Spiteri	Grima	NAG unnumbered
17.10.98	Cassar	Grima et	NAG unnumbered
n.d.	Cassar	Grima et	NAG unnumbered
n.d.	Cassar	Grima	NAG unnumbered
n.d.	Anon	Grima	NAG unnumbered
24.09.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.2 Ms.1053
05.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.3 Ms.1053
06.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.4 Ms.1053
17.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM f.5 Ms.1053
18.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM f.6 Ms.1053

Date	Sender	Adressee	Location
18.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM f.7 Ms.1053
20.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.8 Ms.1053
24.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.9 Ms.1053
26.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.10 Ms.1053
n.d.	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.11 Ms.1053
n.d.	Pace	CapoMastro Garzes Tower	NLM f.12 Ms.1053
24.09.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM f.14 Ms.1053
06.10.98	Cassar	Grech	AB N.1
08.10.98	A. Mallia	Grech	AB N.2
12.10.98	Cassar	Grech	AB N.3
13.10.98	Cassar	Grech	AB N.4
30.10.98	Ball	Nelson	The Sun Naval News, 06.12.98
02.03.00	Ball	Hamilton	ASN b4328 unnumbered

I have rearranged them in chronological order, as in this presentation we have a day-to-day narration of events, leading to the capitulation on the 28th October 1798.

**List of letters by Archpriest Saverio Cassar and other Gozitan leaders during the uprising of the Gozitans, against the French occupation forces during the period
2nd September - 28th October, 1798**

Date	Sender	Adressee	Location
06.09.98	Cassar	King	ASP b.5522 f.187
n.d.	Pace	Local French Commander	Handbook Malta Study Circle, UK
19.09.98 (?)	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.053 f.11
19.09.98 (?)	Cassar	Grima	NAG Grima Papers
23.09.98	Bando		
23.09.98	Cassar	Hasciac	NAG Grima Papers
24.09.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.2
24.09.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.14
27.09.98	Cassar	Grima/Hasciac	NAG Grima Papers
28.09.98	Spiteri	Grima	NAG Grima Papers
02.10.98	Pace	Grima	Bondi Doc
04.10.98	Pace	Grima	Bondi Doc
05.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.13
06.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.4
06.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bonnici Col. N° 1
08.10.98	Mallia	Grech	Bonnici Col. N° 2

Date	Sender	Addressee	Location
12.10.98 (?)	Pace	Capo Mastro/ Garzes Tower	NLM Ms. 1053 f.12
12.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bennici Col. N° 3
13.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bennici Col. N° 4
15.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Mons A. Gauci Col. N° 2
17.10.98	Cassar	Grima/Hasciac	NAG Grima Papers
17.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.5
18.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.7
18.10.98	Spiteri	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.6
18.10.98 (?)	Spiteri	Grech	Bondi N° 55
19.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 41
19.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 42
19.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bondi unnumbered
20.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 44
20.10.98	Cassar	All Commanders	NLM Ms.1053 f.8
20.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 45
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 46
22.10.98	Renaud/ Attard	Grech	Bondi N° 48
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 49
22.10.98	Pace	Grech	Bondi N° 50
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 51
22.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 42
23.10.98	Grech	Attard	Bondi N° 53
23.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 52
24.10.98 (?)	Cassar	Agius	Bondi N° 43
23.10.98	Cassar	All Commanders	NAG Grima Papers
23.10.98	Cassar	Grech	Bondi N° 54
24.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.9
26.10.98	Cassar	Pace	NLM Ms.1053 f.10
28.10.98	Pace	Grima	Bondi unnumbered
30.10.98	Ball	Nelson	The Sun Naval News, 06.12.98

POSTAL MARKINGS

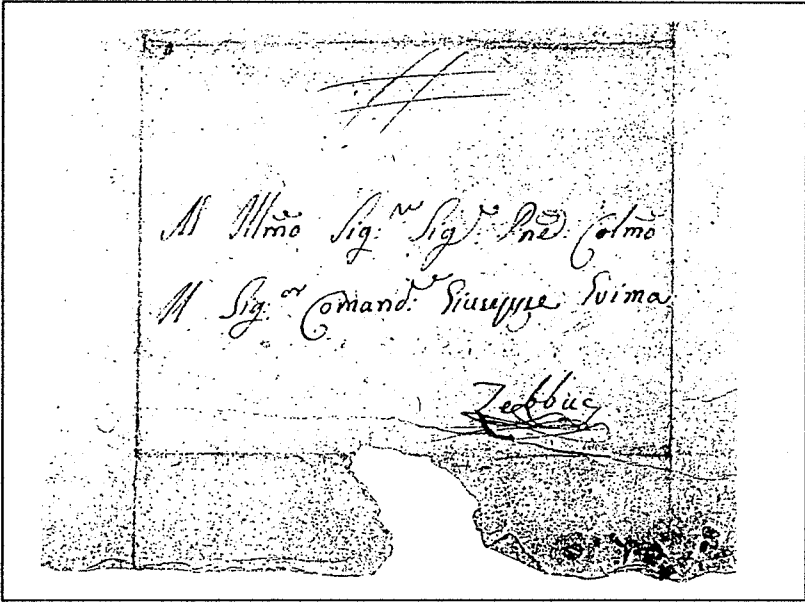
All letters are in the form of ENTIERES, folded so that the address panel measures about 9cm by 7 cm.

All letters were delivered privately by hand and so there are no postal dues or other postal delivery markings.

However, there are two entieres dated 4th and 22nd October which deserve special mention. The letter written on 4th October 1798 (Bondi Document) written by Dr F. Pace, LLD, Commander of Rabat to Commander G. Grima of Zebbug, has on the address panel

the sign '#' which denotes that this letter was to be delivered by a mounted courier. Such a sign was commonly used in Sicily.

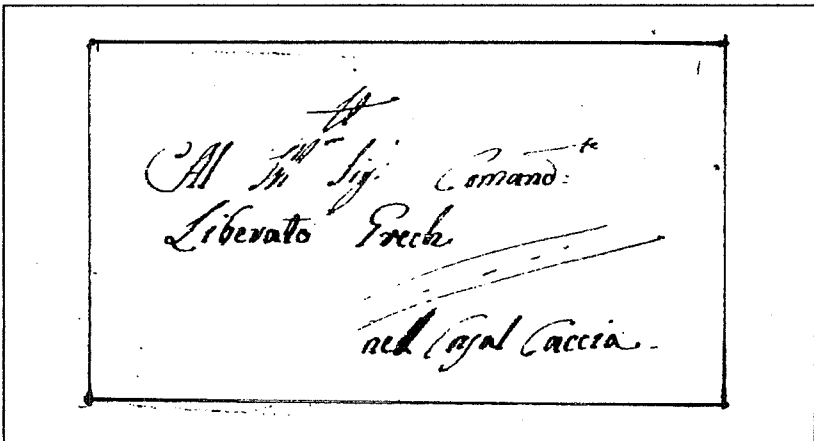
4th October 1798



Al Mmo Sig. ^{no} Sig. Pno Colmo
M Sig. ^{no} Comand: Giuseppe Lima
Zebbug

This entire written on the 22nd October 1798, by Mr Antonio Renaud, Notary of the Commander of Health, and Francesco Attard, Commander of Nadur, to Liberato Grech Commander of Caccia, is more specific.

22nd October 1798



Al Mmo Sig. Comand:
Liberato Grech
nell'isola Caccia.

Besides showing the usual sign '#', it also shows two parallel lines, signifying the road, and dashes in the middle, signifying the horse. This is the only specimen that I have seen indicating so clearly the intention of the sender that the letter to be "delivered by a mounted courier".

Other marks were used in Europe as described in the "Origin of Posts Italy - Early Fifteenth Century", by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, and by Paolo Vollmeire Naples etc.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO GOZO

On the 6th September 1798, Archpriest Cassar wrote to King Ferdinand IV of the two Sicilies requesting aid. On the 18th September 1798, the day the Gozo Provisional Government was formed, the Portuguese Squadron under the Command of Admiral the Marquis de Niza, (17) appeared off Gozo in compliance with instructions from Lord Admiral H. Nelson, to blockade Valletta. (18)

Knowing that this Portuguese fleet was in the vicinity, Archpriest S. Cassar immediately sent a messenger, Pasquale Vella, (19) with a letter to Admiral Niza asking for help, which was granted as the following letter undated, probably the 19th September sent by Archpriest S. Cassar to Avvocato Francesco Pace, Commander of Rabat, reveals.

Undated ? 19 Sept, 1798, NLM Ms 1053 fil.

Compt. Sup. Comandante

*Io um devo, ne poplo faueri questa notizia:
Seri a notte è ritornato il messo alla barca
spennato dal bordo delli Vascelli Portuguesi, il
in vstra assenza: Il Reame accollo, e tutto' agi,
fue il messo; Lesse la mia petizione, e se
dichiarò d'aver venuto seriamente per darvi
ajuto; Li faueri della polvere, delli' fucili:*

delle Suiabie, e patrone amiche con molte
altre gentili curizimi; Ringraziamo dunque
il Cielo, che ha voluto esaudirci, avviciniamo
alla nostra gente, e l'esortiamo di vegliare con
attenzione sull'inimico di cui seguono,
giacchè Dio vola con i trionfatori Cooperanti
Fratelli di Fugitive, e scadranno dal Popolo
lo spirito delle Contrasti, ed inimicizie, e
concentrato nella quiete, perche altrimenti
potremo avere del guaj' trionfanti, che all'anno
in vista una potenza straniera d'indole agaj
quinta, pacifica, e tranquilla. Tanto li dico
e all'occorrenza un po' meglio.

P.S.

Vi prego di fare una raccolta di quanti
sacchi vuoti vi poter riuscire di trovare

che saranno compiti di portare per lo
francese, che si possa di giorno questo bene
nel monte Ghelmu.

Alli Comand. del
Battagl.

Off. Cassar
Il Capitano Cassar

Alli Comand. del
Battagl.
A. Giuseppe Cassar
Battagl.

"I must not and cannot keep this news from you. Last night my messenger returned by speronara from on board the Portuguese vessels, which are in view. The General received and treated the messenger (Pasqualino Vella) (19) very well, read my petition and declared to have come in earnest to give us help, powder, rifles, swords and other help".

Cassar appeals for unity, "to eradicate from the people divisions (he is referring to French sympathisers) and anxiety, but to do it quietly", as otherwise he was afraid of more trouble.

He ends the letter by saying: "I ask you to collect all empty sacks which you find, so that they will be filled with powder, for the trenches that it was planned to set up this evening on the hill of Ghelmu".

Sig. Comand. Grima

Io sin adesso non son inteso dello
spar dei razzi, ed a vista della
sua Commisi qsto fatto al sig. Maltina
pelo indagar da lui, ed il perchè, ed
ella della risposta sarò inteso.

Fari inteso a qsto del mulet, che
io di que lo voglio parlare. Sono

Il Soprintend. Terey

Archipr. S. Cassar

Al Sig. Comand.

Orsini Grima

Terey.

In this letter Archpriest S. Cassar admits that up till then he did not understand much about the firing of rockets and says that "he was going to instruct A. Maltina to find out who and for what purpose the firing of rockets was ordered, and would let him know the reply".

Perche il Sig. Comand. di quest
Isolato vede che dalla trascura
gine degli Abitanti l'inimico a
scelto vitrae qualike sorta di pro
visione, con cui si solleva ordina
e comanda, che chiunque ha della
porci, pecore od altri animali ten
ga chiusi e ben conservati in casa
sotto pena della confiscatione di
gli animali, qualora si ritroveranno
vivere per le strade, o nei prati
vicini.

Il Comand. del Rabat
Franco Pace

Archpriest S. Cassar had to enforce discipline on the population: This Bando issued by the Commander of Rabat Dr F. Pace on the 23rd Sept clearly illustrates this.

"Since the Commander of the Island of Gozo is aware that because of the carelessness of some inhabitants, the besieged (the French) have been able to obtain some provisions, with which to sustain themselves, he orders and commands that anybody who owns pigs, sheep, and other animals, must lock them up and look after them, as roaming animals will be confiscated".



The Castle – Cittadella, Rabat – with Mount Ghelmus in the background where Archpriest Cassar had his headquarters and from where he bombarded the Castle

Sig.^o Comand. di C. Zebbar

Si compiacerà oggi all'ora di mezzo giorno
mandare almeno una ventina di
persone disarmate nella Città di S. Juan
d'Orte, avendo determinato assolutamente
il trasporto delle Cannoni.

Attendo la nota delle spese delle jolla
mi ed altro. E offerendomi.

Li 23 7bre 1798

S. Cassar

Al Sig. Comand. ^{di} S. Juan
Hasciac
C. Zebbar

By the 23rd September 1798 Archpriest S. Cassar wanted to start bombarding the Cittadella, and so in this letter to Commander Hasciac of Zebbug, he instructs him to send at least twenty disarmed men to "Città Chambray" in order to transport definitely the cannons.

He does not mention to where he wanted to transport the cannons but in view of the fact that the Cittadella was the only fort remaining in the hands of the French we may assume that he wanted to bombard the Cittadella from the hill of Ghelmus as in his letter of the 19th Sept, he wanted powder for the trenches he was digging there. Moreover receipts of expenditure mention transport of cannons to Ghelmus.(20)

Archpriest S. Cassar was also involved in administrative duties, such as the distribution of wheat.

Sig.^o Comandante.

Nel Congresso di questa sera si determinò. Primo
 che la quantità di frumento esistente nel magazzino
 del magazzino dovrà dividersi tra tutti i
 Canali ed il Rettato per uguale porzione
 ed oltre tener una riserva in favore del Popolo
 di incassa. Il Sig. ~~per~~ non aver partecipato
 la quantità avuta dagli altri Canali; ogni
 Comandante poi della sua porzione dispone
 a suo piacere cioè o vendendo, o dandolo
 alla gente del servizio come vuole; Oude.
 Ella perni domani mattina d'invia un
 consiglio garantito del vostro ordine ~~per~~
 ricevere e trasportare la porzione sua. Il ~~Restato~~
 alla città si darà per porzioni come sono.

noti di Comandante R. D. Lib. D. Franco Hilli,
Alberto Grech, ed il Sig. Giuseppe Grima. ed
in fretta mi dico.

li 24. Nov 1798.

Al Signor Comandante S. Cassar

Al Sig. Comandante
Avv. Francesco Pace
Cassar.

In this letter to Avvocato F. Pace, he informs him that "During this evening's Congress it should be decided that the wheat in the warehouses at Mgarr should be divided amongst all the villages and Rabat in equal proportions, deducting a percentage which should go to the people of Zebbug, as they had not received their share in the previous distribution. Each Commander was to dispose of his share as he thought best, and he was expecting to receive to morrow part payment for the order including transport".

Congress had on the 18th September appointed Ant Mallia as Commander of Fort Chambray, but in this letter Cassar says: "Returning to the subject of the 'Città Chambray' Francesco Hill, Liberato Grech, and Giuseppe Grima are provisionally appointed Commanders". We may therefore assume that Commander A. Mallia was relieved of this post. We shall see later on that he was put under 'house arrest'.

Questo sero prima che si faccia tardi v'aspetto
in questo monte per Comunicarvi qualche
affare d'importanza in conseguenza di una
lettera speditami oggi stasera dall'ammiraglio
marchese di Niza Portoghese, quindi mi
lusingo che non si faranno, e soner.

Togli 24. Nov. 1798.

Al Soprintendente del Forte S. Cassar.
Rabat

Al Sef. Comandante
Sr. Francesco Pace

In this letter Archpriest S. Cassar informs Commander F. Pace of Rabat that: "This evening before it becomes late I will wait for you at this mountain (Ghelmus) to inform you of some important affairs, as a result of a letter sent to me today by the Admiral Marquis de Niza Portuguese".

The Portuguese Admiral was exerting pressure on the French to surrender.

Liq^{ra} Comandanti Grima ed Hasciac
Il Capo Maestro e L'aggiuntati e tutti quelli
che si rinnovavano nel Forte di Colla
el Bajda hanno abbandonato a mo-
tivo che non li avete somministrato
né denaro, né pane, né provento
questa cosa è molto irregolare, per-
tanto bisogna provvederli o di pan-
o di provento, ed offerendovi ai Co-
mandi son.

Li 27 10bre 1798. Il Colonnello Cassar

Alta liq^{ra} Comandanti
D. Giuseppe Grima
Martino Hasciac
G. Cassar

Archpriest Cassar in this letter to Giuseppe Grima and Martino Hasciac, Commanders of Zebbug, points out that: "The Head and men in the fort of 'Colla il Bajda' have not received any pay, wheat, or bread, and so have abandoned the battery. This is very irregular and instructs them to remedy the situation immediately". This shows that he had to be constantly supervising matters, as administrative problems were arising constantly.

Sig^{to} Comand. ^{mo} *Donna amatissimo*

Il Sig. Superintendente non ritornò che al fatto
onde la risposta l'arrivò domani; Trattando le
fortezze non bisogna lasciarle senza un numero
congruente di gente per la custodia e postato
se le soldati e cannonieri non sono venuti for-
nisco della sua gente e *già* *domani* si *vedrà*. Addio.

Per
Il Superintendente
Il Secretario Spiteri.

li 28. 9bre 1798.

Al Sig. Comandante
Don Giuseppe Grima
Zebbug

From this letter we see Archpriest S. Cassar in direct negotiations with the Portuguese Admiral. His secretary F. Spiteri in this letter informs Giuseppe Grima Commander of Zebbug, that: "The Superintendent" returned at a late hour, and the reply to his letter will reach him to morrow". He also instructs him "In the meantime to make sure that the Fort (Chambray) is not left without adequate number of men, for its defence, and to make sure that the soldiers and gunners are at their posts, and not roaming outside the fort".

Sig^{to} Comand^{ante}

Per la richiesta soddisfazio-
ne contro Mifsud Sciotta com-
municherò la sua comp^{ra}ma
al Sig^{to} Com^{and} Mallia, ed assi-
eme mi coopererò a soddisfar-
la. Resti sicuro, che invigi-
lerò sugli indizii avanzatissimi
riguardo la novita dal sud^o
Sciotta comprata, e sopra la
totale sua condotta. Il cano-
ne sparato sta sera non ci
ha fatto nessun danno, intanto
mi creda
li V. V.

Mat^{to} li 1. 4bre 1798
Vn^o l. servo
Frate Pace Com^{and}

Per
Al Sig^{to} Comand^{ante} Grima
Zebbug

In this letter Dr F. Pace tells Commander G. Grima of Zebbug: "Re your request to take action against Mifsud, communicate your decision to Commander Mallia. Rest assured that I will investigate very carefully his suspicious conduct, about which I have been informed", another reference to 'Franchophiles'. He also informs him that the "cannon fired this evening had not caused any damage".

Sig. Comand.

Mi fao molta premura quelle persone
che v'hanno fatto careggiare il canone
da S. Paolo & la nuova fortessa. Queste
domandano un oncia & ciascheduno. Percio
vi fo gran premura & mandarmi cod.
denaro & poter spieciarmi dalle loro frequenti
domande, ed esibendomi a' vostri commisionari
di stima mi sottoscrivo.

Rabato & S. Paolo: g. Vostro Affez. Serv.
Francesco Pace
Comand.

M. Mmo Sig. Sig. Pno. G. Grima
M. Sig. Comand. Giuseppe Grima
Zebbug

In this letter Dr Francesco Pace Commander of Rabat complains to Commander G. Grima of Zebbug: "that he was being pressed to pay the men who had transported the cannons from Fort St Pauls to the new fort (at Ghelmus). This was causing him embarrassment, and begs him to send him money so that he can pay them".

He also informed him "that the cannon fired by the French did not cause any damage"

The new Fort he is refering to is the one on the hill (mountain) of Ghelmus, opposite the Cittadella (castle), were trenches where dug up as per letter of the 19th September (Cassar to Pace). Cannons were also transported there from Fort Chambray as per letter of the 23 September (Cassar to Hasciac). Reference to the transportation of these cannons to Ghelmus, can also be found in the official receipt manuscript. (21)

This letter was dispatched by horse courier as already pointed out.

~~Sig. Comandante Campese~~

Al Sargente Francese prigioniero in Calat. Ciuda
 spiamo, che qualora gli si accordasse di poter
 parlare colli Soldati suoi Compagni del castello
 riportarcelle la loro resa, e si crede, che il
 Comandante non abbia comunicato il Tenore delle
 ultime nostre lettere, anzi che averci dato
 alla stessa lettera un aspetto contrario, e ciò
 l'argomento da quella parte del castello usita
 che la nostra lettera non sia inumana; Ma
 a' miei sensi non potrebbe succedere, mentre
 questi Sargenti francesi son portati nello
 stesso giustale custodito dalli Soldati nostri, e
 da sul termine ne poter parlare colli stessi
 Compagni, che si saranno sulle Costioni; onde
 Ello partecipi ciò al Sig. Comand. Genl.
 Muller, e se è di questo sentimento questi
 son istigati al tardi si portori al luogo.

questo Sargento, e in sua compagnia avran
dei Motti non tra i figliuoli Neglecti
che intendo bene d. Francia; questi e questo, e
un altro...

N. 15. Li 5. 8to 1798.

M. Superiori^{te} Ereci
Avv. d. Cassar

Al. A. Comandante
N. Francesco Pace
Cassaro

In this letter Archpriest S. Cassar informs Dr F Pace, Commander of Rabat, that: "The French Sergeant held prisoner in Casal Caccia (Ghaxaq), believes that if he is allowed to speak to his compatriots, he will persuade them to surrender.

"However according to information received by him from inside the castle, the French Commander has wrongly interpreted their request, and interpreted their suggestion as constituting inhuman treatment of the Sergeant.

"This is not correct as the Sergeant would be brought to the Banca Guratale escorted by soldiers, and from the balcony he will be able to speak freely to his companions on the bastions.

"He was to pass this order to Commander Mallia, and to see that when the French Sergeant was brought to the Banca Giuratale that evening, he would not be subjected to any rude remarks".

This order was passed on to Commander L. Grech of Caccia by Commander Mallia as per letter of the 8th October.

Sif Comandante

Le participo che di queo a mezzo on
dasi principio a battere il Castello, che
e questo e lo
Ri V.

Il 6. 8. 1798.

aff. S. Cassar
Arcip. S. Cassar

Al Sif Comandante
Dr. Francesco Pace
Rabat

Archpriest S. Cassar in this letter informs Dr F. Pace, Commander of Rabat, that "he was as agreed, going to bombard the Cittadella (Castle) immediately up to noon".

Sig. Comandante Liberto Grech

Io sono a pregarla di farmi mandare dalla
 Torre di Manafortna due barili polvere, mentre
 la quantità che ho non mi serve p' fare
 due giorni di fuoco, cioè oggi, e domani
 trovandomi avere soli otto barili ogni picciolo;
 domani spedirò la barca all'ammiraglio
 Portogheze per portar la polvere; Io mi
 trovo sul monte Ghelmus dove aspetta sette
 due barili polvere.
 Farò al Sig. Parroco di fare l'espugnazione
 domani mattina almeno p' due ore, offrendo
 nell'occasione il Popolo fare la sua purgazione
 p' espugnare, e un disp. Il Segretario S. Cassar
 L. 6. 8^{mo} 1798.

Al Sig. Comandante
 Liberto Grech

Caccia

In this letter Archpriest S. Cassar informs Commander Liberto Grech of Caccia that “he had only eight very small barrels of gun powder left, which were not enough for two days firing from the mount of Ghelmus”. This confirms that the request for the transfer of cannons in earlier letters were intended for Ghelmus.

He was also requesting gun powder from the Portuguese and was sending a boat tomorrow for such a purpose.

Sig.^{ro} Com.^{te}

Uno a pregarla di mandarmi con carissimo
Dai suoi, e nostri soldati il Sargente France-
se, il quale s'offerì di parlare con i soldati
che stanno nel Gran Castello, per fargli avve-
dere - Spero ch'ella mi lo mandi d'un subito,
avendo anche questo il sentimento del Sig.^{ro} Ab-
bate, giacchè tanto mi significò per mezzo
di sua lettera. Quest'è quanto, e nell'affare
mi mi dico

Di V.S.

Rabatto S. Ebro 1798

M. Com.^{te} Generale
Antonio Mallia

All.
Alli. Sig.^{ro} Com.^{te}
di Casal

Caccia

In this letter Antonio Mallia co Commander of Rabat, requests from Commander L. Grech to send him under arms from Rabat the French Sergeant who wished to speak to his companions as per instructions of Archpriest Cassar".

Sig. Comandante

Rispondo alla vostra lettera, ed intorno
al fatto del Sig. nat. Pace soltanto che
dico, che io non ho dato ordine alcuno
per la sua cattura, ma nel momento
che passavo nei dintorni, che fui in
Monte vostro ed andato nella montagna
adducendo il motivo di volerlo catturare, che
la lettera presentata dalla stessa persona Pace
non era quell'istesso, che aveva sottoscritto
Da Clemente, Io nulla dirò alla vostra

gente abitato gli d'igni, che era arbitrio
della Comandanti loro dia fratture al detto
noto Paes contro cui Io nulla fu adesso
ho di sospetto. Ordinaj si alla vostra gente
che gli sia posta sotto di cadunore a Dio:
avviso Pubblica D. al. avv. Luigi Paes
figlio di detto notaro quando questa ma:
infatti rivoluzionari ed e' agej buono di
mettere in prigione nella Torre D'Arce, per
non commuicarsi la loro cattiva intenzione
con altri. Coda sempre al Milita mi:
posteriormente e ad altri. Luigi Paes
Luigi Paes figlio di detto notaro
Avv. S. Capra

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. The text appears to be "Al. Pace Grech" with a flourish underneath. The signature is somewhat faded and has a grainy texture.

One of the great problems Archpriest S. Cassar had to solve was how to combat Gozitans sympathetic to the French Francophiles. In one of his early letters probably written on the 19th September to Avvocato Francesco Pace Commander of Rabat, he points out that "they must work hard to do away with divisions among Gozitans", a reference to Francophiles.

On the 2nd October Commander Avvocato F. Pace of Rabat had informed Commander G. Grima that "He was going to investigate the suspicious conduct of Mifsud"

The Malta Study Circle handbook mentions a letter in 1798 (day/month not quoted), written by Franco Pace Grech from Rabat, to the local French Force Commander "asking permission to form a regiment to safeguard the beleaguered Castle at Rabat. (22)

Archpriest S. Cassar in this letter of the 12th October tells Commander Liberato Grech of Caccia, that, "I am replying to your letter, and regarding the case of Notary Pace I only tell you that I have given no order for his arrest, but at the time when I was dining I was told that he was taken to the mount by your soldiers bringing as reason for such arrest, that the letter presented by the same notary Pace, was not the same one which he had received from Clement. I gave no orders to your men. I told them only it was at their Commanders discretion to deal with Notary Pace, against whom till now I have no suspicion. I did order your men if possible to arrest Gio Andrea Pullicino, and Advocate Luigi Pace, son of the said Notary, as they are overt revolutionaries, and it is a very good thing to put them in prison in Garzes Tower, so that they may not communicate their evil intentions to others".

"The Pace's" referred to in this letter have no connection with Avvocato Francesco Pace Commander of Rabat.

Antonio Mallia who had been appointed Commander of Fort Chambray, and Co Commander of Rabat by Congress of the 18th September was also under suspicion. In his letter of the 24th September Archpriest S. Cassar informed Dr Francesco Pace Commander of Rabat that "he had appointed Provisionally as Commanders of Fort Chambray Francesco Hili/ Liberato Grech/ and Giuseppe Grima."

Moreover we shall see in letters of the 23rd, and 24th October, that "Mallia was put under house arrest, and not to live in Rabat, Sannat or Xewkija."

Archpriest S. Cassar in his letters to Commander L. Grech, orders the arrest "of Two or (?) Three Canons", and "wants to arrest Avvocato Luigi, and Daniele Pace known revolutionaries."

Sig. Comandante Liberato Grech

Vi raccomando di fare una raccolta di danaro dal potere
delli Ecclesiastici Comodi per unirlo coll'altro danaro
da porsi nella Cassa pubblica stabilita per la compra
delle provvisioni per il Popolo; Facendoli intesi, che
tale danaro gli sarà restituito doppo fatta la li'terona
del Paese, e terminata la parte indigena; che e
quanto em calor vi raccomando, e mi affetto. Oggi li
17- Ottobre 1798

M. Soprintendente Generale.
A. P. S. Cassar

No doubt another great difficulty Archpriest S. Cassar had to face was how to raise money to pay for food supplies bought in Sicily.

In this letter he instructs Liberato Grech Commander of Caccia "to raise loans from well-to-do priests to be deposited in the special fund (Cassa Publica) set up for such a purpose to buy provisions for the people. These loans to be repaid once the situation comes back to normal".

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- 4 Ghawdex taht il-Francizi, Dr J. Debono, p.17
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- 7 Ghawdex taht il-Francizi, Dr J. Debono, p.17
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(TO BE CONTINUED)