



Grand Master Fra Ferdinand von Hompesch (1797-1798). Photo: Kevin Casha

Ferdinand Von Hompesch (1797-1798)

by Dr. A. Bonnici

The election of **Bailiff Ferdinand Von Hompesch (1797-1798)** took place on the 17th July 1797, after the death of Grand Master *Emanuel de Rohan Polduc (1775-1797)* who died on the 13th July, 1797 at 10.30pm¹ after suffering a paralytic stroke. When G.M. *E. de Rohan Polduc* became Grand Master on the 12th November 1775, Bailiff Ferdinand von Hompesch was amongst the candidates contesting that election.² G.M. *E. de Rohan Polduc* held Bailiff Hompesch in very high esteem, and had hinted several times to his colleagues that Bailiff Hompesch would be an ideal successor.³

This was the period of great financial losses to the Order. On the 19th September 1792, the French Assembly decreed the Order to be extinct within French territories and its possessions were annexed to the domain of France.^{3a} Soon within the Order a 'Republican group' was born, which included very prominent Knights amongst whom, were Commander Bosredon Ransijat, Treasurer of the Order, who later played an important part in the handing over of Malta to Napoleon, Deodat de Dolomien, who later left Malta and came back accompanying Napoleon, Bailiff Prince Camille de Rohan, Chevalier St Priest, Engineer Roussard who was in charge of the fortifications, etc.

Louis XVI had been executed on the 21st January 1793, and when the revolutionary ideas were implemented later, the Order lost all its revenue from France. The French Assembly had withdrawn the citizenship of all those Frenchmen who were members of any Order of Chivalry based outside France. Thus it brought to an end the three French Langues (Provence, France, Auvergne) of the Order in Malta.^{3b} Because of a land tax imposed by the King of Sardegna, the Order was now obliged to pay tax on its property there, thus reducing considerably its revenue (see Decree on page ??).

Moreover Free Masonry which had been sown way back in 1730 by the Bali of Brundenburg, Wolfgang Philip Guttenberg, who had donated a considerable sum of money for the building of a "Masonic Lodge" in Msida, where the "Ghajn tal-Hasselin" is⁴ and had left in his will the sum of one hundred fifty scudi per year for maintenance⁵ had by now established itself on a firm footing. In fact it is alleged that the Baverian Count Kollowrat who was a Free Mason knew the names of the Free Masons in Malta which included G.M. *E. de Rohan Polduc*, and passed important correspondence to him, and to the then Vice Chancellor F. von Hompesch.⁶

10 luglio 1763

Com. F. C. Conte
Fuffen

ricevuto dal N. Ferdinando Giuseppe Barone de Hompesch 15 scudi
quindici e sono p. scritto dovuto alla casa di nobilita. e per
ricordo di aver ete in grado di lavaglie di giustizia nelle Priori
d' Alemagna Dio

1/5: - - -

Fig. 1

Received from the Noble Ferdinand Giuseppe Baron de Hompesch 15 scudi which are the fees due to the Nobility [Proofs] Account for having been received at a young age in the Priory of Alemagna (Fig. 1)

28.	Hessen Reinfels	N. Ernesto Langravio	16. Sett. 1776.
29.	Hompesch	N. Ferdin. Giuss. ^{Re}	7. Sett. 1778.
30.	Magfeld.	N. Con. Fran. Lodov.	16. Sett. 1776.

Fig. 2

Apart from this internal intrigue and grave financial problems, the Order's ideal of fighting the "Turkish Infidel" in the name of Christ and Christendom, did not exist any more. A new political mentality was emerging in Europe, and the French Revolution with its army being led by Napoleon Bonapart threatened all Europe.

This was the precarious situation which the Twenty-Eighth Grand Master of Malta – Ferdinand von Hompesch – inherited.

Family Origins

Between Dusseldorf and Aachen, there is a small village on the outskirts of Julich, consisting of about 300 inhabitants called "Hompesch", and the von Hompesch family derived its name from this small village in Germany.⁷ The word "Hompesch" is derived from *hohenpesch* meaning "the high meadow".⁸

In 1723 Baron von Hompesch-zu-Bollheim built a castle in Bollheim, and on the 9th November 1744 Ferdinand was born there.⁹ Ferdinand's uncle was married to **Isabella von Byland-zu-Rheidt**, and when Ferdinand's mother died he became very close to his Aunt **Byland**. In fact when he was asked by the people of Zejtun to raise the status of Zejtun to a Città he gave the name **Città By(i)land** in remembrance of his Aunt and not his mother as is commonly supposed.¹⁰

In the Archives of the Order of Malta, Manuscript N°2246 (unpaginated) we find that his father had to pay 15 scudi on the 10th July 1761 into the *cassa della nobiltà* so that his noble credentials could be examined, and be enrolled as a Knight 'of Justice' *in minor età* in the Priory of Germany.¹¹ (Fig 1 & 2)

He was therefore engaged as one of fifteen Pages to Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca, at a very young age¹² and on the 30th June 1770 Pope Clement XIV wrote a letter to Grand Master Pinto recommending Ferdinand to be enrolled as a Knight of Justice which was read to the Council at its meeting of the 11th July 1770, when he was admitted as a Knight of Justice *in minor età*.¹³ (Fig 3 & 4)

As a Knight he held several important posts which established him as a great diplomat with European Courts. Among his various responsibilities we find:

- Councillor of the German Langue – 1767
- Castellian or President of the Courts – 1768-70
- Commissioner of Armaments – 1774-76
- Commissioner for Galley cruises – 1775
- Commissioner of Fortifications 1775,

and was raised to the dignity of Grand Cross on the 6th February 1776.¹⁴ This entitled him to have his own private residence, and used to live at N° 153/157 Old

Receptio
 Cum dispne. M. At.
 Nob. Ferdinando
 Bine de Hompesch
 S. Hadl. p. 270.

Die xiv. Julii 1770. Fuit expedita Bulla Receptionis cum dispen-
 satione Minoris Aetatis pro Nob. Juero Ferdinando Barone de
 Hompesch, Nobilius Francisco Baronis de Hompesch, et Antonette,
 seu Antoniae Baronissae de Hack conjugum Nato, in form. Militum
 de justitia Sen. Linguae, et Prius Alemanniae, cum antianitate ab
 hodie, et termino annorum duorum ad solvendum Passagium rigore
 hvarum Apostolicarum in forma Brevis Vni. Dni. Nri. Dni Clemen-
 tis Div. Prov. 22. xiv. Romae, apud S. M. Marianam Majorem, sub
 Annulo Piscatoris Die xxx. Junii, p. p. expeditarum; Et extensa
 in forma §

The acceptance of Ferdinand Baron Hompesch with dispensation at a young age.
 14 July 1770. The Bull of reception with dispensation was sent in favour of the young Ferdinand of Hompesch, son of the Noble
 Francis Baron of Hompesch, and Antonia Baroness de Hack, is being accepted as Knight of Justice of the Venerable Langue and
 Priory of Alemagnia, with seniority as from today, and allow him to pay the fee of entry (passagium) in accordance with the
 appostolic brief of Pope Clement XIV. Given in Rome at St Mary Major, on the 30th June 1770

Clemens LXIV.

AOM 5741.270r

Dilecte Pater omnium votis libenter animus, quos Felix, in
Vobis teneri cognoscimus. Exponi siquidem Nobis nuper fecerunt — Nob. Ferdinandus
Dilectus filius Franciscus Baro de Hompesch, et dilecta in Christo — De Hompesch.
filia Antonetta, seu Antonia Baronia de Stark (Suzges Nobiles
Clemensi, quod ipse pro eo, quem equa istud Hospit. Sibi. Suis sermo.
limitari gerunt devotionis affectu. Fructum ex. filium Ferdinandum
Baronem de Hompesch omnium naturam naturalem, et legimum, qui
intra (Limes & Linguae) et Pater (Germaniae dicti Hospitales, ut asse-
ritur, natus est, inter fratres Milites de justitia Linguae Pater, et An-
tonetai pater nomen dare plurimum desiderant. Verum, quae dictus
Ferdinandus Minoreni adhuc exstitit, desiderii sui huius comites fie-
ri nequeunt idem (Suzges atque spechi. Nra) et huius sanctae. S.
dis (dispositione), seu indulta. Nobis propterea Nos igitur & meli-
nati. Sibi eandem Ferdinandum, licet ipse Minoreni sit, ut pater,
nihilus. est in sua à (Cantu. Hospitales absentia in frater Militem de
justitia Linguae, Pater, et Hospitales praedictorum auctoritate Nostra
Apostolica recipiendi, et admittendi, seu recipi, et admitti facienti;

Inique Ferdinando, ut a die cum eo super praemissis vigore potitum
dispensandum duceris, antiamitate, aliisque oibus, et singulari iuribus,
praerogativis, privilegiis, praerogativis, gratiis, et indultis, quibus ab
in fides Milites de justitia dicti Hospitii, praerogativa super defectu abatis
ad id requirunt dispensatione recepti iam de jure, iure, et consuetudine,
quam alias quomodolibet utantur, fruantur, et gaudent ac uti, frui, et
gaudere possunt et poterunt in futurum, et alias usi, potiti, et gaudi:
si fuerint seu uti, frui, et gaudere poterunt et defuerint pari modo uti
frui, et gaudere habere, et hinc possit, et valet, d. auctoritate concedendi,
et indulgendi ac cum eo desuper oppne dispensandi plenam, et amplam
facultatem, eade auctoritate potitum tribuimus, et imperimus, ea tamen
lege, ut d. Ferdinandus Nobilitatis suae, et aliorum requiritorum
probationes tempore debitis facere, nec non intra tempus a se praec:
figendum Ladragium per secepti, praerogativa super defectu abatis
dispensatione Labri consuetum Cui Arario Hospitii huius pervenire, et
statimque xxv. abatis suae annum compleverit ad Contum scriptum,
ut Novitiatum perveniat, et Professorem regem emittat, personaliter
accedere omnino teneatur. Non obstantibus & = Dat. Romae apud Sancti
Mariam Majorem Sub Annulo Ducatoris Die xxv. Junii 1770. Pon:
tificatus Nri Anno Secundo = A. Card. Nigrinus = A. Tergo = Dilectis

Clement XIV

Beloved in Christ.

We do willingly accede to the pious wishes of those whom we know for their religious zeal. In fact our beloved son Francis Baron of Hompesch and his wife, our beloved daughter Antonia Baroness of Hack, both noble Germans, have recently explained to us, that because of their devotional love towards the Order of St John of Jerusalem, they would like very much to enrol their beloved, natural and legitimate son Ferdinand, Baron of Hompesch, born within the boundaries of the Langue of Germany as a military Knight of Justice of the said Langue, Priory, and Hospital (Order).

Yet, whereas the said Ferdinand is still of minor age and such a desire of the said couple could not be fulfilled without a special dispensation from the Holy See which we have been asked to give. We therefore are inclined to grant this to the said Ferdinand, although he is still in minor age, as petitioned, and while still outside the Convent we do hereby with our Apostolic authority receive and admit the said Ferdinand as a military Knight of Justice of the said Langue, Priory and Hospital (Order) in such a way that, in virtue of this present dispensation, he may enjoy from the day of such a dispensation, his seniority and all privileges, honours, benefits etc, enjoyed by right and by common use by other military knights admitted with such dispensation, now and in the future, freely and legitimately. So we do hereby give and bestow full, ample (wide) faculty accordingly, under the proviso that the said Ferdinand, in due time, should present his nobility proofs and other required documents, also, at the agreed time, on reaching the required age of 25, he should pay the 'passagium' (admission fee) established for those admitted in the Convent with a dispensation, to the Common Treasury and also in duty bound to enter the Convent in preparation for his novitiate and profession of the Convent.

*Given in Rome at St Mary Major under the seal of the Fisherman
on the 30th June, 1770 in the second year of our Pontificate.*

A. Cardinal Nigronus to our Beloved Nobleman

Bakery Street, Valletta (1787-1798) which was destroyed during the last war by enemy action. St Albert the Great College was later built on this site.¹⁵

From 1783-1788 he served as Prodomo or Administrator of Justice.¹⁶

He was elected Lieutenant to the Grand Bailiff four times. In 1770, 1771, 1779, 1782.¹⁷ and became Grand Bailiff on 10th December 1796, a post he held until he became Grand Master in 1797.¹⁸ Meanwhile by title of Magisterial Grace, Hompesch held the Commanderies of St John of Bassel, Lothringen, Dorlisheim (Elsass) 1774, Laghen and Hervorderen (1783, Salz, Colmar and Mulhausen

(1786), Rottenburg and Reichardsroth (1786), Villingen (1796).

He was also Commander of Lage between 1786-1797 and had taken over the Commandery as successor to Fidelis Joseph Baron von SchonauWehr, which on his election to the Grandmastership in 1797 was succeeded in the Commandery by Jahannes Baptista Baron von Pfurdt Karspach.¹⁹

For twenty-two years (1775-1797) Hompesch was the *Charge d'affaires* of the Austrian Emperor Francis the Second. Because of this post, he had participated in the solemn funeral service accorded by the Order to the noble Angelo Emo, Admiral of the Venetial Fleet who died in Malta on 1st March 1792.²⁰

He developed a good reputation of being a clever Diplomat, which endeared him to European Heads of State. Letters of congratulations received by Hompesch, from European Kings and other Heads of State, when he became Grand Master, are being reproduced in part two of this journal.²¹

During his brief Grandmastership, Hompesch did his best to endear himself to the Maltese. It was not easy as he had inherited a decadent Order. The ideal of fighting the Moslem aggressor was no longer there, and so with their *raison d'etre* gone, the three hundred Knights in Malta began to lead an idle life, giving them time and opportunity to gratify their unbridled passions. Their vows of chastity and obedience were completely ignored.²²

William Hardman, in his 'History of Malta' states:

"They made no secret of keeping mistresses, generally married women and mothers of a family, a practice which became so general etc".²³

Samuel Taylor Coleridge who had been private secretary to Sir Alexander Ball (1800) states:

"Every Knight attached himself to some family as their patron and friend, and to him the honour of a sister, or a daughter, was sacrificed as a matter of course. But why should I disguise the truth? Alas! in nine instances out of ten, this patron was the common paramour of every female in the family".²⁴

Bosredon Ransijat, the Treasurer of the Order, and later President of the French Government in Malta, in his publication about the siege wrote:

"The Maltese shut their eyes to the seduction of their wives and daughters".²⁵

With this type of moral decadence, coupled by the social and economic predicament in which the Order had found itself, it was no wonder that the Maltese spurred on by Mikiel Anton Vassalli concocted a plot to overthrow the Order in 1797. The plot failed and Vassalli and the ring leaders were arrested. A

Criminal Commission, consisting of four Bailiffs assisted by three Maltese lawyers, was set up to inquire into the conspiracy and bring to trial the conspirators. Bailiff Ferdinand von Hompesch presided over the proceedings.²⁶ On the 12th June 1797, Vassalli was sentenced to life imprisonment in Fort Ricasoli.²⁷ The other conspirators were exiled from the island. One month, on 17th July 1797, later Ferdinand von Hompesch became Grand Master.

Bearing all the above in mind, Hompesch did his best to bring a semblance of respectability back to the Order, and did his best to endear himself to the Maltese. Not one single opportunity to appear in public, or attend some function was missed. He accepted every invitation to attend, when invited, to local Church celebrations.

Inter-village rivalries always existed in Malta, and the Maltese village people led by their clergy, were quick to take the opportunity to request Hompesch, as Zebbug had done during the last days of G.M. de Rohan, to raise the status of their village to one of **Città**.

This was done by **Zabbar, Siggiewi and Zejtun**.

So to endear himself to the population he accepted to attend the High Mass on the Feast of Our Lady of Graces at Zabbar on 10th September 1797; the Feast of St Catherine at Zejtun on 25th November and the Feast of St Nicholas at Siggiewi on 6th December.

Soon after attending these feasts he received the requests from the respective clergy of these villages to raise their status to **Città** which he accepted to do immediately.

He named after his surname the village of Zabbar giving it the name **Città Hompesch**. He named the village of Zejtun **Città By(i)land**, the surname of his aunt with whom he was very close, and the village of Siggiewi he named after his own first name **Città Ferdinand**.

Napoleon on his way to Egypt was sighted off Gozo on 6th June 1798,²⁸ and on 10th June 1798 Bosredon Ransijat, Secretary of the Treasury, wrote to G.M. Hompesch that he was resigning from his Treasury post, as he had problems with his conscience in fighting against the forces of his native country, and desired to play a neutral role.²⁹ Pressure was applied by way of a Maltese deputation, consisting of Don Mario Testaferrata, Councillor Bonanni, Torregiani and Guido.³⁰ on the Grand Master in Council. The petition read as follows:

“Owing to the present critical circumstances, we have been appointed Deputies of the Maltese Nation to present and read to this venerable Council the Petition

Altesza Serenissima
 C. Opo. lo della Terra Zabbar, Ser. Utmo, e Valle dell' A. V. S.
 Felicitato dalla grazia impartitagli dall' A. V. S. nella Dome-
 nica scorsa 10. del corrente in cui si degnò onorarla colla
 Sovrana sua presenza, ed incomparabile munificenza,
 ed insieme ansioso di tramandare a posteri la gloriosa
 memoria di d' giorno con un perenne, ed indelebile
 monumento. Si fa lecito supplicare ardentemente
 l'omonivale benigno Cuore dell' A. V. S. affinché si com-
 piaccia decorare la Terra sud. Zabbar col titolo di gra-
 ziosa Città Hompes, erigendola così in Città, e regiam-
 dola col Sovrano, e grazioso suo nome, ed auore ando
 a suoi abitanti tutti quei privilegi che da rispettivi
 Antecessori dell' A. V. S. si attribuireno a quelle terre
 di quest' Isola erette in Città, col loro nome, onde in tal
 modo il Nome venerabilissimo dell' A. V. S. già impresso
 ne cuori di tutti gli abitanti del Zabbar per tante
 grazie ricevute, sia ancor impresso alla Terra, e si
 perpetui in tutti per sempre la memoria delle sue sovra-
 ne beneficenze, e della grazia

In hac
 Terram de qua in precibus in Civitatem erigi-
 mus, eique nomen gratiosae Civitatis Hompesch
 de nostro gentilitio nomine imponimus.
 Dato in Aul. die xj. Julii 1797.
 Com. se Cajet. Bruno Aud. sc.

Petition by the people of Zabbar

Serene Highness

The People of Zabbar, humble subjects and vassals of Your Venerable and Serene Highness, happy with the honour Your Venerable and Serene Highness has bestowed upon us, by your kind and gracious visit of the 10th of last month, desiring to record for posterity in an everlasting method the glorious memory of this day, strongly appeal to your generosity, to be kind enough to promote the land of Zabbar to that of a city and to decorate it with Your Sovereign and Gracious name of Hompesch, granting its inhabitants all the privileges which the predecessors of Your Venerable and Serene Highness used to grant to those places promoted to a city in these islands, which were named after them, so that in this manner the Most Venerable and Serene name of Your Highness already engraved in the hearts of all the inhabitants of Zabbar because of the many blessings received, will be re-engraved in their country and remembered forever by all, for Your Highness' blessing and help.

Authorisation by the Com. Fr. Cajetano Bruno, Aud., on behalf of the Grand Master

*The place mentioned in the petition we promote (to a City) and we give this land the gracious name of our family Hompesch.
Given in the Palace on the 14th September, 1797*

Petition by the people of Siggiewi

Serene Highness

The People of Siggiewi, humble subjects and vassals of Your Venerable and Serene Highness, happy with the honour you bestowed upon us, by your kind visit of the 6th December, dedicated to the Feast of San Nicola of Bari, and desiring to record for posterity in an everlasting method, the glorious memory of this day, strongly appeal to your generosity, to be kind enough to elevate Siggiewi to a city and to decorate it with Your Sovereign and Gracious name of St Ferdinand, and granting to its inhabitants all the privileges which the predecessors of Your Venerable and Serene Highness used to grant to those places elevated to a city in these islands, which were named after them, so that in this manner the Most Venerable and Serene name of Your Highness already engraved in the hearts of all the inhabitants because of the many blessings received, will be re-engraved in their country and remembered forever by all, for Your Highness' blessings and help.

Petition by the people of Zejtun

Altezza Serenissima

Il Clero e il Popolo della Terra Zejtun servi e vassalli Fedelej.
dell'Altezza V. Sereniss. con ogni ossequio espongono d'esser la
loro patria una delle più antiche Barocchie, e per la
popolazione di sei mila anime incirca, e per lo commercio
la più fiorita, e d'esser nella Militia Urbana in grado
di Colonnella: priegano perciò umilmente l'Altezza Vo. Serena
di erigere la loro patria in Città con un titolo ben visto
~~all'Altezza V. Sereniss.~~ ^{all'Altezza V. Sereniss.} e ciò per aver l'onore di eternare nella
loro patria la memoria dell'Altezza V. Sereniss. e della guerra

fiat prout petunt sub nomine, Biland

Serene Highness

The Clergy and People of Zejtun, faithful subjects and vassals of Your Venerable and Serene Highness, with due respect, submit, that Zejtun is one of the oldest parishes with a population of 6,000 inhabitants, a commercially viable economy, and the right to have a colonel in the Urban Militia — humbly beseech Your Venerable Serene Highness to elevate their country to one of a city — with a suitable name so that, we will have the honour of remembering the blessings of Your Venerable Serene Highness forever.

Altezza Serenissima

Il Popolo della Terra Siggieu Seru uno
e Vassallo fed.^{mo} di V. A. Serma felicitato dalla
grazia impartitagli dall' A. N. S. nel giorno 6.
del cadente Dicembre dedicato alla Festivita
di S. Nicola di Bari, in cui si degno onorarlo
della sovrana sua Presenza, ed incomparabile
Munificenza, ed insieme ansioso di tramandare
a Posterì la gloriosa Memoria di detto giorno
con un perenne, ed indelebile monumento, si è
lecito supplicare ardentemente l' Amorevole

Il Chiamato

benigno Cuore di N. A. S. affinché si compiacca
decorare la Terra suddetta Siggieui, erigendola
in Città, e fregiandola col Sovrano glorioso —
suo Nome di San Ferdinando con accordare —
a suoi abitanti tutti quei Privileggi, che —
da rispettivi Antecessori dell' A. N. S. si attribuirono
a quelle Terre di quest' Isola erette in Città
col loro Nome. Onde in tal modo il nome venerabilissimo
dell' A. N. S. già impresso ne Cuori di
tutti gli abitanti del Siggieui per tante grazie
ricevute, sia ancor impresso alla Terra, e si
perpetui in tutti per sempre la memoria delle sì
sovrane beneficenze, e della grazia S. S. &.

Int. prot. 17. 17. 17.

Mag. Hospis ^{Hiedem}
Fiat h. petitus sub nomine
Miland. Dat. in lat die
xxx.bris 1797.

J. Jammit Aud. 6

Mag. Hospis ^{Hiedem}
Fiat h. petitus sub nomine Sanchi
Ferdinandi. Dat. in lat die.
xxx.bris 1797.

J. Jammit Aud. 6

Authorisation by S. Zammit, Aud., on behalf of the Grand Master

*I hereby accede to the petition granting the name Biland
Given in the Palace on the 30th December, 1797*

which I hold in my hand. We therefore ask for the necessary permission, whilst we at the same time declare our most profound respect for the person of Your Highness and the members of this venerable Council”.

Permission having been granted, the Petition, to the following effect, was then read:

“That the Maltese had felt glorified whenever called upon to sacrifice their fortunes, their liberty, nay, even their lives, in the service of the Order and Grand Masters, when it had been a question of fighting against their natural enemies the Mohamedans, but today they see themselves attacked by a Christian Power without knowing the reasons why, and with forces against whom the Order would be powerless to resist, because already the country districts have been invaded by numberless troops who might even this very night take the city by assault, and subject it to pillage.

“The inhabitants had consequently desired their humble deputies, most respectfully to supplicate the Grand Master, and sacred Council to prevent this terrible misfortune, by asking the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army for an armistice until we have heard from him for what reason the French Nation, who had always been friends of the Order, and of the Maltese, had declared war against them”.

He concluded with this special address to the Grand Master:

“I appeal to the equity of your Highness, and to your paternal heart, and supplicate with joined hands that you would deign to look with compassion upon this unfortunate country, which has always prayed for your prosperity and that of the Order”.

The Grand Master assured the deputation that their Petition would be taken into consideration and they left the Chamber.^{30a}

Authorisation by S. Zammit, Aud., on behalf of the Grand Master

*I hereby accede to the petition granting the name Ferdinand
Given in the Palace on the 30th December, 1797*

This petition must have influenced Hompesch and the Council in their decision, as on the 11th June, the G.M. requested Monsieur de Fremeaux, the Batavian Consul, to be the bearer of a letter to Napoleon, but he refused on the grounds of ill health, but instructed one of his official staff, Monsieur Melan, to take his place, granting him for the occasion the official title of Chancellor of the Consulate.³¹

So Melan arrived on the *Orient* at 9.00am on the 11th June, requesting on behalf of the Grand Master a suspension of arms. Melan on this occasion also delivered a letter to the ex-Knight Dolomieu (the Dolomites in Italy are named after this ex-Knight) written by Miari, the secretary of the Grand Master, requesting him to intervene on their behalf with Napoleon.

From now on the negotiations started leading to the capitulation which was signed on the 12th June, and Napoleon entered Grand Harbour. Hompesch left the Island on the 17th June, 1798 on board an Austrian merchantman bound for Trieste, arriving there on the 27th July 1798, 39 days after leaving Malta³² where he provisionally established the Convent.

However, in spite of all the protests made by Hompesch, and no matter how much he tried to defend his honour, Czar Paul I of Russia, together with the help of the Russian Priory and the help of other Knights who blamed Hompesch for their predicament, assumed the title of Grand Master of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

In September Hompesch moved his headquarters to Laibach.³³ From now on considerable pressure was being exerted on Hompesch to abdicate, in favour of the Czar. Prevot Maffei in a letter to his brother the Austrian Consul in Trieste said: "Whilst the Grand Master should formally declare his abdication to our Sovereign the Emperor of Germany, it is necessary that he should in like manner inform the Emperor of Russia. If he delays, or endeavours to evade the fulfilment of the desire of our Sovereign and the Ministry, he will then have to be treated as a prisoner of state."³⁴

On the 6th July 1799, a broken Hompesch resigned, sending letters of resignation to Czar Paul of Russia, and Emperor Francis II of Austria.

Hompesch's appeals to Napoleon for financial assistance as had been agreed in Malta fell on deaf ears, until 1804 when on the insistence of M. Cacault, the French Ambassador in Rome, Letizia Bonaparte, mother of Napoleon, Cardinal Joseph Fesch, uncle of the Emperor and French Minister in Rome, Pope Pius VII and Charles Talleyrand, the French Foreign Minister, Napoleon agreed to give Hompesch a pension of 300,000 livres³⁵ and was invited to take up residence in Montpellier, which he did on the 13th December 1804.

Hompesch did not enjoy this pension for a very long time, as nearly five months later – on 12th May, 1805 – he died of an attack of asthma, aged 61.³⁶

- 1 AGM, Ms85, p.190
- 2 Panzavecchia F., *L'Ultimo Periodo della Storia di Malta*, p.363
- 3 AGM, Ms 85, p.191
- 3^a Boisgelin 26
- 3^b *Hospitaller Malta 1830-1798*, V Mallia Milanese, p.667
- 4 Andrew Vella, *Storja ta' Malta*, vol 11, p.189
- 5 AOM, 1187, p. 227
- 6 Bradly, AM, *The History of Freemasonry in the District of Malta*, London 1880, p.5
- 7 Carmel Bonavia, *Malta's Last Grand Master*, Sunday Times of Malta, Sept 3, 1995
- 8 *ibid.*, (Gerhard Markens *Die Ortsnamen des Kreis Jülich*, 1953, p.23)
- 9 *ibid.*, Carmel Bonavia, *op. cit.*
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- 12 Carmel Bonavia, *Malta's Last Grand Master*, Sunday Times of Malta, Sept 3, 1995
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- 21 Michael Galea, *Ferdinand von Hompesch*, p.135
- 22 AOM, MNL, 221, f.4
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- 32 *ibid.*, p.57
- 33^a Hardman, *History of Malta*, p.57
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- 38 Giuseppe Terrinoni, *Memorie Storiche della Resa di Malta ai Francesi*, 1867, pp.72-73, 87, 188-189
- 39 Carmel Bonavia, *op. cit.*

Fr. Ferdinandus de Homperch
 D. E. I. grā, Sacrae Domus Hospitalis S. Joſe Sacer.
 Militaris Ord. S. Sepulchri Dominici, et Ord.
 S. Antonii. Vicarior. Mag. humilis, Laupe:
 rumque Jesu Xpti Custos: Universis, et in:
 gulis fontēs nris lris, visuris, lectoris, et —
 auditoris Salutē; Notum facimus, et in verbo
 veritatis attestamus. Quod Infrascriptum
 Decretum extractum fuit ex libro Conciliorum
 in Cancell. nra conservato, quod quidem
 in hanc publicam formam extrahi, et eligi
 iussimus, ut ubique tam in Sud; quam extra
 eadem plenā, et indubitata fides adhibea:
 tur. Cuius tenor est, qui sequitur Vob.

Die 22. Novembris 1797. Quando stato letto
 il Chirografo delli V.lli Procuratori del
 Commun Tesoro del tenore seguente cioè:
 Emō Sig.^{le} Il Commend. Birago Nostro -
 Ricevitore in Torino nel parteciparci

con sua Lettera degli 11. dello scorso Mese
d' Ottobre la disgustosa nuova, che i Nostri
Beni in Piemonte, a tenor d' un nuovo
editto di Sua Maestà Sarda. degli 6. di d.^{to} —
Mese si trovavano soggetti, come tutti i
Beni del Clero Secolare, e Regolare —
in quel Regno al pagamento della Rata che
li spettavano, dell' ingente somma di Cinquan-
ta Milioni di Lire Piemontesi, e nella medesi-
ma Lettera il detto Comm.^o Pirago mostran-
do un fortissimo desiderio di non avere —
nessuna ingerenza in quelli maneggi, ed —
operazioni relative al disbrigo di quest'
affare, Crediamo del Nostro dovere d' aver
l' onore di rappresentare a Vra Em.^a e —
questo Sagra Consiglio, che stante le
gravi conseguenze per il Nostro Ordine
d' un simile editto, divenne indispensabile
l' intervento del Nostro Ricevitore —
in tutto quello occorrerà fare per la sua

esecuzione, in conseguenza) considerando
d'una parte l'impossibilità di poter —
dispensare il Comm^o Birago, di prestare
la sua assistenza in un affare così scabroso,
e dell'altro volendo aderire all'istanza del
già detto Commend.^o; al quale, vogliamo —
dimostrare il Nostro sommo gradimento, —
del Telo, che ha sempre manifestato —
nel disimpegno della sua Carica, proponia-
mo di nominare in sua vece per Riceritore
in Torino il Comm^o Fr. Felice D'Osasco —
da noi già molto conosciuto per la sua
intelligenza, e Telo col quale amministrò
interinamente la sud.^a Pracetta per il
tempo d'un anno nel 1792. e 1793; —
Pimettendoci però sempre a quanto
sarà per ordinare l'Em.^a Sua, alla
quale facciamo profondo inchiso. //

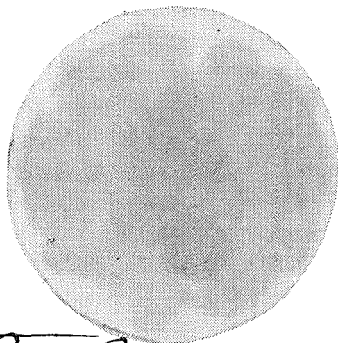
Dal Tesoro li 17. Gbre 1797. //

Bosredon de Pransijat Seg.^o del Comun —

Decreto di nomina di Ricev.
delli 22. g^{to}. 1797.

Tuoro.
Sua Altezza Em^a, ed il Sag.^o Com.^o aderendo
al sud.^o Chirografo con lo scrutinio delle
palle hanno nominato per Ricevitore
in Torino il Com.^o Fra Felice Cacherano -
D'Orasco per cominciare da oggi a tutto
Aprile venturo, e poi per tre Anni.
Et quia ita se habet veritas. Ideo in huius Rei
Festim.^m Bulla n^{ra} Magistralis in cerz
nigra p^{ri}ntibus est impressa. Dato Melitae
in Coenaculo mo die, 14. et Anno suprad.^o

Regist^o in facie



Per Sebastianus et Hieronimus de familia Dⁿⁱ Vicom^{tes}

Translation of the decree given on the 17th November, 1797

Ferdinand Hompesch by the grace of God Grand Master of the Hospitalier Order of St John of Jerusalem, of the Holy Hospitalier of St John of Jesus, of the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord, of the Order of St Anthony of Praga, humble and Poor Guardians of Jesus Christ – presents to all those who see, read hear – health. Let it be known and in all truth we testify, where as the undersigned decree has been extracted from the official records book preserved in our Chancellory, we order that this same document be published in this form, so that both in Legal form, and even outside the law, it should be given total and full acceptance.

The following is what follows:- that is,:

The 22 November 1797. Having read the document of the procurators of the Common Treasury as follows:- Your Eminence, the Commendatore Biagio our receiver in Turin in communicating to us by his letter of the 11th Octobe last, the bad news that our property in Piemonte, in accordanc with the new edict of His Majesty King of Sardegna of the 6th of the same month are being subjected, like all other proprty of both clergy and secular in that kingdom, to the payment of a relative tax, to the amount of fifty million Lire Piemontesi, and in the same letter the said Commandante Biagio, expresses a strong desire not to be involved in these matters and operations relating to these events.

We believe it is our duty to put for your Eminence and the Sacred Convent's consideration, that notwithstanding the grave consequence to our Order, because of such a decree, it is imperative the intervention of our receiver in all that should happen for the execution of the decree;

As a result of this, notwithstanding the difficulty to relieve Commendatore Biagio from his duties in the delicate circumstances, and on the other hand wishing to adhere to the request of the Commendatore, to whom we want to express our great gratitude, for the zeal he has always shown in the execution of his duties, we prefer to nominate in his stead, as a receiver in Torino the Commendatore D'Osasco, to us alrready known for his intelligence and zeal, with which interests he administered the interim arrangements for the year 1792-1793. Notwithstanding all this we submit ourselves to whatever your Eminence would desire and order, which we profoundly respect.

*For the Treasury 17 November 1797
Bosredon de Ransijat Sect of the Treasury*

His Eminent Highness and the Sacred Council adhering to the above mentioned decree, having taken the vote, have nominated as receiver in Torino the Commendatore Fra Felice Cacherano D'Osasco, to start immediately up to April next for the next three years and beacuse this corresponds to the truth,

therefore as witness of this, we apply our Magrestral Seal in Wafer Seal, on black....on the document.

Given in our Convent day month and year as above stated.

Registrat in the Cancellory

Hibernio Fr Ferdinand Carvallo Pinto

Vice Cancellor

Translation of the decree given on the 12th October, 1797

Ferdinand Hompesch by the grace of God Grand Master of the Hospitalier Order of St John of Jerusalem, of the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord, of the Order of St Anthony of Praga, humble and Poor Guardians of Jesus Christ – presents to all those who see, read hear – health. Let it be known and in all truth we testify, whereas the undersigned decree has been extracted from the official records book preserved in our Chancellory, we order that this same document be published in this form, so that both in Legal form, and even outside the law, it should be given total and undevoted acceptance.

The following is what follows, that is, to the noble Julia Countess Branca Doro nee Masi, dear to us, wishing everlasting health in the Lord.

Your noble generosity and way of life and your inclination and devotion towards our Order, make us respect your most honorable person with loving feeling. We hereby in due consideration of the above, accede to your request and in virtue of Apostolic faculty we accede to your wish so that you may wear the golden eight-pointed cross with the chain devoutely.

We lavishly grant you full licence and faculties to share in all our spiritual blessings and indulgancies enjoyed by our Order — both temporary and spiritual, and in all our good work in defending the Christian faith on land and sea.

We do hereby order to all and every member of our Order in any dignity or office present and future, in virtue of their holy obedience, that they may not interfere with these orders which are being conferred and granted.

They should be observed fully.

In testimony of the above we attach our Magisterial seal to this document.

Given in Malta at the Convent on the 12th October 1797.

This being a true extract. In witness of the truth we impress our Magisterial Wafer Seal on black wax on this document.

Registered in the Chancellory, Fra Ferdinand Carvallo Pinto, Vice Cancellor

*F. Ferdinandus de Hompesch, DEI
grā, Sacrae Domus Hospitii S. Joſ. Jeruſolimi
Militaris Ord. S. Sepulchri Dominici, et Ord. S.
Antonii Vienenſis. Mag. humilis, Pauperumque
Jeſu Xpi Custos: Universis, et ſingulis prius
nris lras viſuris, lecturis, et auditoris Salū, Noti
facimus, et in verbo veritatis attestamus, quod
Inſcripta Bulla extracta fuit ex libro Bullarii
in Cancell. nra conſervato; quam quidem in
hanc publicam formam extrahi, et ledigi
juſſimus, ut ubique tam in ſud, quam extra
eidem plena, et indubitata fides adhibeatur. Cujus
tenor eſt, qui ſequitur Videlicet.*

*F. Ferdinandus de Hompesch, DEI
grā, Sacrae Domus Hospitii S. Joſ. Jeruſolimi, Milita
ris Ord. S. Sepulchri Dominici, et Ord. S. Antonii
Vienenſis. Mag. humilis, Pauperumque Jeſu Xpi
Custos: Nobili Juliae Comitissa Brancadoro
Natae Maſi Nobis dilecta Salū in Domino
ſempiternam. Generoſa tua nobilitas, morum
ſuavitas huiusque erga Ordinem Noſtrum animi
propenſio, ac Devotio, quibus apud Nos ſummopere
commendarii nos hortantur, ut ornatiſſi
mam Perſonam tuam ſingulari benevolentiae*

significatione complectamur. Ceteris itaque
tuis precibusque pro parte tua Nobis porrectis
libenti animo annuentes de nostra certa scien-
tia tenore pntium vigore litterarum Apostoli-
carum Tibi ut Crucem Auream ad figuram
Habitus Ord. nri formatam Colla appensam,
devotionis causa gestare, et deferre valeas, —
indulgemus, plenamque licentiam, et facultatem
concedimus, et largimur. Teque omnibus indul-
gentiis, ac gratiis spiritualibus, quibus vigore
privilegiorum Nostrorum a Sacrosancta Sede
Apostolica Nobis, et Ordini nostro concessorum
Fres Nri, aliisque Ord. Nostro addicti utuntur,
fruantur, et gaudent, uti, frui, et gaudere
decevimus, et declaramus: nec non omnium
Misarum, Orationum piarumque Hospitalitatis,
et Militie pro catholica Fidei tuitione operum
que in dies a Fratribus Nostris Terra, marique (Deo
largiente) fiunt, participem in Domino facimus,
et omni meliori modo esse volumus. Recipientes
universis, et singulis S. Domus nre Fratribus
quacumque aucto Dignitate officioque fungen-
tibus pntibus, et futuris in virtute Sic Obed.
ne contra pntes nras concessionis declarationis
et participationis lras aliquat. facere vel venire

