

**Garrisoning the military 'fief':  
The Maltese Corps and the Troops  
(1800 – 1860s)**



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**Garrisoning the military ‘fief’:  
The Maltese Corps and the Troops  
(1800 – 1860s)**

**James Baldacchino**

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Malta, in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History.

May 2014

*To*

*Joana*

*without whom*



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA  
FACULTY/INSTITUTE/CENTRE: ARTS

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(1800-1860s)

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# PREFACE

It has to be said that this work contains little that is original. Rather than being an in-depth study of a much-known subject in Maltese history, the aim of this dissertation is to make a contribution to a topic about which has already been written a great deal.

The first official Maltese Corps as part of the British Army was raised in 1800 with the advent of British rule. The end point chosen was the 1860s as this was the era in which the changes which had characterised the period under study ceased and led to the Islands being regarded as a bastion and an integral part of the imperial military chain. Following this decade, the Corps saw no worthwhile changes and only two major military units managed to serve in the following century and up till the end of British rule.

The research undertaken is mainly based on official government correspondence which took place between the Governor of Malta and, more often than not, the Secretary of State for War [and the Colonies]. These sources are housed at the National Archives and were further complimented by secondary sources which are found at the University of Malta Library and elsewhere.

The first chapter of this dissertation deals with each and every Maltese Corps that was formed and disbanded in the aforementioned time period. The second chapter provides the uniforms of the men and an account as to how the Colonial and Imperial governments sought to regulate the salaries given to the troops, while the third chapter brings to light certain themes which the High Command and the authorities felt were of a sensitive nature to warrant significant attention.

As a final note, I would like to express my deepest gratitude towards a multitude of people who have aided me in the final chapter of the attainment of this degree. I am extremely grateful to my tutor, Prof. John Chircop, without whose help, cooperation and patience, I would not have succeeded in compiling this dissertation. Words of gratitude also go to all the lecturers of the Department of History who have jointly contributed to making my three-year stay at university an enjoyable one and a great learning

experience.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Patrick Micallef, Chairman of the King's Own Malta Regiment Association, for making me feel most welcome in his home numerous times for hours on end and for willingly providing sources, especially the illustrations in the second chapter which have come in very useful. Thanks also go to Lt. Col. Albert Brincat, President of the Officers' Mess at Luqa Barracks, Armed Forces of Malta, for taking the time to show me around the Mess Hall.

I cannot fail to mention several librarians and archivists for their constant assistance: Mr. Joe Mizzi and Ms. Maria Chircop of the University of Malta Library Melitensia section, Mr. Donald Briffa and Mr. Louis Curmi of the National Library and finally, the staff at the National Archives, particularly Mr. Joseph Amodio, who helped me in the laborious task of translating relevant documents which were otherwise illegible.

Finally, my sincere appreciation must certainly go to friends and family. Thank you to Nickolas Pace, a good friend and colleague, who has been with me every step of the way; to my family, especially my brother Julian, who, notwithstanding his own dissertation commitments, obliged to assist me nonetheless. Last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude has to go to Joana who spurred me on the most when I believed the impossible could not be attained.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CO	Commanding Officer
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
GOV	Correspondence to/from the Governor of Malta
Lib.	Library manuscript volumes
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
M.F.	Malta Fencibles/Royal Malta Fencible Regiment
Ms.	Manuscript
NAM	National Archives of Malta
N.C.	Non-commissioned [officers]
NLM	National Library of Malta
Regt.	Regimental
UMLA	University of Malta Library Archives
W.I.	West Indies

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# INTRODUCTION

*'All nations must, at some period or other of their history, incur the kind of necessity ... of either basely sinking into a conquered province, or of becoming warlike and ambitious.'*

C. W. Pasley<sup>1</sup>

The misfortune of the Maltese Islands has always been to be wanted more than they are loved. The logic of History and the vagaries of geography have jointly inflicted millennia of contact with greater powers<sup>2</sup>, all seeking to make use of the key to the whole of the Inland Sea. These outsiders generally came not to displace the native population but to utilize the Islands as a base; as a result, government often took the nature of a ruling minority with a majority native population.<sup>3</sup>

The archipelago's historical role as a coveted stepping stone from North to South and from West to East led, particularly from the period of the Knights Hospitallers, to the Islands being transformed into an armed and fortified military base.<sup>4</sup> However, in the span of two years, these Islands changed hands three times; in 1800, ultimate control came to rest with Britain and her forces. The new overlord had inherited a nation whose men were well accustomed to the profession of arms and with the Army securely *in situ* and in need of manpower, it took to recruiting from among these local fighters who did not show aversion to military discipline.

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<sup>1</sup> C. W. Pasley, *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (Third edition) (London, J. Innes, 1811), 114.

<sup>2</sup> Godfrey A. Pirota, *The Maltese Public Service 1800-1940: The Administrative Politics of a Micro-State* (Malta, Mireva Publications, 1996), ix.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Castillo, *The Maltese Cross: A Strategic History of Malta* (Westport, Praeger Security International, 2006), 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> Mario Vassallo, *From Lordship to Stewardship: Religion and Social Change in Malta* (The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1979), 45.



Under their new masters, the Islands took on the role of another fortress, a role to which they had long been inured. Thousands of men were needed to hold on to this possession. It was thus realised that the advantages accrued from enlisting among the local soldiery would be two-fold: apart from being more financially-viable than posting British soldiers to Malta from far away Britain, the raising of local military units would have entailed the forging of a link with the inhabitants – a ‘bond of union’<sup>5</sup>, as aptly described by Sir Alexander Ball – by which the latter would be given a share of the military duties alongside British soldiers. Over time, this intermingling – which nonetheless took a long time to happen – led to a pro-British workforce and a pro-British local military force, not so much because this group agreed with Colonial and Imperial politics, but as a result of the fact that thousands of jobs were secured at a rate of pay which was not any worse, often rather better, than that paid to workers in private enterprise, on the farms, or indeed in the lower ranks of the Civil Service.<sup>6</sup>

As simple as this aforementioned plan may have sounded, this policy had an ulterior motive. As an agent of social change, military forces have a highly selective influence, both in the content of what they transmit and in their influence on the indigenous population.<sup>7</sup> Assimilation and submission to British rule was deemed of the utmost importance, notwithstanding that, far outnumbering the British personnel of the army and the navy, the inhabitants of the fortress were also a potential liability.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in 1813, Governor Sir Thomas Maitland felt the danger most probable of taking place was not an invasion by France but that of a rebellion not dissimilar to the anti-French uprising of 1798. He made himself clear that the Sicilian Regiment, a foreign Corps of the British Army then stationed in Malta, was not enough to ‘wit...any Commotion in the Island.’<sup>9</sup> Therefore, estrangement from the local population – ‘European peasants

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<sup>5</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807.

<sup>6</sup> Edward L. Zammit, *A Colonial Inheritance: Maltese Perceptions of Work, Power and Class Structure with reference to the Labour Movement* (Malta, Malta University Press, 1984), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Vassallo, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Hull, *The Malta Language Question: A Case Study in Cultural Imperialism* (Malta, Said International Ltd., 1993), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Maitland to Bunbury, NAM, GOV 01.8/0, 29 Oct. 1813.

strongly imbued with local patriotism<sup>10</sup> – would have had serious consequences were it not for the raising of these fighting formations.

Nevertheless, government correspondence dating to the early colonial era portrayed most Governors of the Islands as looking favourably upon the Maltese Corps, along with their rank and file. So this begs the question: why were these native soldiers accorded different rates of pay to those of their British counterparts? And why did these men attach themselves so zealously to the British military establishment at the turn of the new century? This dissertation's design is to tackle these questions.

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<sup>10</sup> Vincent Harlow, 'The New Imperial System, 1783-1815', in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Growth of the New Empire, 1783-1870*, J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1940, 172.

# CHAPTER I

## The Maltese Corps in the Garrison 1800 – 1860s

*'To frustrate the Near Eastern ambitions of Napoleon was the great British purpose in holding the central Mediterranean. For this we held Malta and broke the terms of the Peace of Amiens. ... Were England's fears exaggerated?'*

Piers Mackesy<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 The Maltese Light Infantry

In June 1798 the Bonapartist takeover of the Maltese Islands dispossessed the Knights Hospitallers of their home-fortress, whose base it had been for generations. The French military government, whose policies and methods were anathema to the country folk, had made itself wildly unpopular, resulting in the inhabitants – clergy, peasants and gentry<sup>2</sup> – in rising violently in what a contemporary described as an 'unrelenting rebellion.'<sup>3</sup>

By early 1800, Maltese irregular militias – along with professionally-trained British and Neapolitan forces, aided substantially by the Royal Navy – were jointly besieging the French who had successfully sealed themselves within the perimeter of Valletta and

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<sup>1</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean 1803-1810* (London, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1957), 391.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Frenco, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* (Third Edition) (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 2013), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Joe Scicluna, *Blockade, Malta 1798-1800: The Diary and Memoirs of a French Knight During the Occupation of Malta* (Malta, Malta University Press, 2013), 15.

the Three Cities. Captain Alexander Ball<sup>4</sup>, in whom civil and military control of the Islands had been vested, had, since February 1799 asked his superiors for authority to 'take Maltese regiments into British pay.'<sup>5</sup> Despite his insistence, his proposal remained unapproved.

Notwithstanding the repeated attempts by the anti-French coalition in trying to force the capitulation of the defenders, the landward siege and the naval blockade were not sufficient in tilting the balance of the conflict. Since his arrival in December, Brigadier General Thomas Graham<sup>6</sup> had repeatedly pressed for more troops to be diverted to the Island. His requests, just like those by Ball before him, failed to move the top brass and were bluntly refused.

On the twenty-second of February 1800, Graham apprised his superiors of his plan to increase his armed force on the Island by a levy of Maltese.<sup>7</sup> This project would have had to be shelved had potential Russian reinforcements not sat out the blockade and siege while in Corfu. Thus Graham decided to go ahead with his plan for raising the Maltese battalion as 'a levy of independent companies entirely at my own risk for the expense of raising, clothing and arming them'<sup>8</sup>, without prejudice to the village battalions of armed peasants.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Captain Alexander Ball had first emerged on the scene during the Blockade of 1798. In October of the same year, he was sent ashore by Admiral Horatio Nelson with instructions to liaise with Maltese forces and to continue blockading the Maltese ports, while in early 1799, he assumed full direction of the Islands' civil and military affairs, thus making himself *de facto* Governor. In 1801, the Captain was recalled from Malta and returned to naval duties, handing over the reins to Sir Charles Cameron, the first British-appointed Civil Commissioner. The following year, Ball, now Rear-Admiral and knighted, returned to Malta and was given Cameron's post, which he held until his death in 1809. Until recently, his record was still sufficiently contested to be the subject of lively letters to *The Times of Malta* on the bicentenary of his death in 2009. Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London, Penguin Books, 2013), 17. See also *The Times of Malta*, 27 October 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Brigadier A. Samut-Tagliaferro, CBE, *History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Volume 1 (1800-1939)* (Malta, Lux Press, 1976), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Brigadier General Thomas Graham was transferred to Malta from Messina along with the 30<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Foot in early December 1799. During the Blockade, he was reputed to have secured the affections of the Maltese to such an extent, that Ball had recommended the general as an acceptable candidate for the office of 'Civil Governor', as when he (Graham) took his leave of Malta, the inhabitants 'regretted extremely his departure'. Ball to Dundas, NAM, GOV 01.2/30, No. 2, 24 Jan. 1801.

<sup>7</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 13; for an extract of the letter, see Appendix I.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> A. V. Laferla, *British Malta, Vol. 1 (1800 – 1872)* (Malta, A. C. Aquilina & Co., 1946), viii.

In effect, Graham was actively pursuing an idea which he had long harboured and the result of which he was in dire need: that of forming an Anglo-Maltese battalion to be directly attached to the British Army. This was to be the precursor in a long line of locally-raised units for service to the British Empire; units which were to be raised and disbanded throughout the British period almost with 'monotonous regularity'.<sup>10</sup>



Fig. 1: Thomas Graham, later Lord Lynedoch

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<sup>10</sup> C.L. Borg, *Salute to Maltese Infantrymen* (Malta, Valletta Publishing, 1990), 3.

In a proclamation issued on the twenty-eighth of March 1800<sup>11</sup>, Graham called for volunteers for the first two companies of the would-be infantry battalion, henceforth to be styled the Maltese Light Infantry.<sup>12</sup> Each village was expected to provide from fifty to a hundred men for each company.<sup>13</sup> Their ages had to be between fifteen and thirty while every individual had to enlist for two years.

The response from the Maltese was adequate as the end of May saw the unit complete with its eight companies, its own establishment and terms of service, while under the overall command of Major James Weir of the Marines. The battalion was employed in the siege operations alongside both regular forces and the irregular Maltese insurgents and played an active part towards the capitulation of the French garrison, which, finding its position untenable, surrendered on the fifth of September 1800. After the negotiations had been agreed upon – in which the Maltese rebels and their leaders were not allowed to participate – the French troops were allowed to depart with full honours. Writing from Trieste, on the twenty-eighth of November, Graham told Secretary of State for War Henry Dundas:

With regard to Malta, I am well convinced from all that I have heard since I left, that my opinion that the benefits to be derived from such a levy as I made was well founded. I therefore hope that the battalion will be confirmed.<sup>14</sup>

The Maltese Light Infantry was then absorbed into the garrison strength alongside other British regiments which had been shipped to Malta during the Blockade. However, no sooner had the dust settled that it was made aware that urgent

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<sup>11</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 430, Vol. 1, p. 72, *Il Colonello Generale Graham, 28 Marzo 1800*; for the full text of the proclamation (written in Italian), see Appendix II.

<sup>12</sup> Even though this was the official name used by the British commanders in Malta, the Italian name of *I Cacciatori Maltesi* – translated into The Maltese Chasseurs – was more widely used among the Maltese. Denis Darmanin, 'The Maltese Army Corps: I Cacciatori Maltesi', in *Heritage: An Encyclopedia of Maltese Culture and Civilization, Volume 4*, Paul Mizzi (ed.) Midsea Books Ltd., Malta, 1983, 1188.

<sup>13</sup> Marthese Camilleri, 'Dawn of an Epoch, 1798 – 1805: Sir A. J. Ball, RN', unpublished B.A. honours dissertation (Department of History, University of Malta, 1975), 42.

<sup>14</sup> By 'confirmed', Graham was referring to the unit's (hopeful) retention as a British Army corps. Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 19.

reinforcements were needed at the besieged capital of Elba, Porto Ferrajo, then under British occupation. In August 1801, a detachment of three hundred volunteers from the Maltese battalion joined an expeditionary force of about another one thousand men, even though Graham's aforementioned proclamation had clearly stipulated local service. The men of the Maltese Light Infantry remained for a year holding their posts and then returned to the Islands in 1802 upon completion of their successful mission.

This battalion has been erroneously considered the first Maltese unit to be formed on the British strength while on local soil. Contrary to popular opinion, this was in fact the second, after the so-called Maltese Canoneers had been covertly raised during the final decade of Hospitaller rule.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.2 The Maltese Pioneers

During his sojourn in Malta, Abercrombie<sup>16</sup> planned his future course of action in Egypt. Before departure in late December, he instructed Lieutenant Francesco Rivarola to enlist five hundred Maltese to act in the capacity of pioneers to the expeditionary force, while officers were also at liberty to hire them as servants.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The first such unit to be indirectly attached to the British Army was the Maltese Canoneers. The men constituting this company-sized formation had been secretly recruited during the reign of Grand Master De Rohan by a certain Chevalier De Sade on Sir Gilbert Elliot's orders, the then-Viceroy of Corsica. De Sade had been sent to Malta in December 1794 to procure ordnance requirements, while simultaneously raising a company of artillerymen for the British service. In May 1795 he returned to Corsica with two hundred and thirty half-barrels of powder along with a hundred and forty military artificers and engineers. Elliot was most impressed with the men, remarking 'they prove a most valuable acquisition. The artificers are extremely good and they are all obedient, laborious men, likely to be good soldiers in any service they may be attached to.' The Maltese Canoneers served in Portugal up to June 1802 and were disbanded two months later at East Cowes, Isle of Wight. Roger Vella Bonavita, 'Britain and Malta 1787 – 1798', *Hyphen*, No. 1, (1977), 12-13; See also 'The Maltese Canoneers (1794 – 1802)' in Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 1-4.

<sup>16</sup> Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercrombie was the C-in-C of British forces in the Mediterranean. He later fell mortally wounded at the Battle of Alexandria on 28 March 1801, while personally directing the battle. His remains were brought over to Malta for burial and interred beneath the salient of St. John's Bastion at Fort St. Elmo, which still bears his name to this day.

<sup>17</sup> UMLA, B/2/6, Sir Robert Thomas Wilson, *The British Expedition to Egypt. Containing a particular Account of the Operations of the Army under the Command of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, with a retrospective view of the Political Importance and present State of Egypt, and the Proceedings of the French previous to the Arrival of the British Army, 1803*, 2.

Given the title of the Maltese Pioneers, these troops were attached to the Ordnance Department and were tasked with cutting wood and loading fuel transports for the army. This force was initially not constituted for combat but it nevertheless saw action in March and April 1801. Coincidentally, the French, whom the British were so determined to oust from Egypt, had in their midst around two thousand Maltese soldiers, the majority of whom Napoleon had forcibly recruited back in June 1798.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned five hundred pioneers, a third corps of artificers was also raised and accompanied the army to Egypt. Lieutenant Aeneas Anderson, who had later published a journal describing the expedition, reported that:

The Maltese appeared to be very well acquainted with mechanical trades, and formed the major part of our Corps of Artificers, in which situation they proved themselves equal to the nicer and more difficult branches of their respective professions...<sup>19</sup>

Little else is known about this corps. What is certain is that upon expiration of their terms of engagement the Maltese Pioneers were allowed to depart Egypt and returned to the Islands in late 1801, a full year after their enlistment.

### **1.3 The Maltese Militia and the Maltese Militia Coast Artillery**

The winter of 1800-1801 saw a deficiency of British troops in the Islands. Most regiments which had landed during and in the immediate aftermath of the successful Blockade were sent to Egypt. Realizing that his only solution lay in forming another local corps alongside the Maltese Light Infantry – as the High Command was far from being able to send further reinforcements to Malta – the C-in-C of British forces in Malta,

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<sup>18</sup> This force was called *La Légion Maltaise*. Captain J. M. Wismayer, *The History of the King's Own Malta Regiment and the Armed Forces of the Order of St. John* (Malta, Said International Ltd., 1989), 91.

<sup>19</sup> Major A. G. Chesney, *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army* (London, William Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1897), 25-26.



General Henry Pigot<sup>20</sup>, was given authority to raise a force of Maltese militia consisting of a battalion of infantry and two companies of coast artillery. He followed Abercrombie's directive – issued the previous December – to raise:

A body of Maltese canoneers<sup>21</sup> and militia [to] do duty at St. Paul's and Marsa Scirocco, and a few non-commissioned officers and private men from the British artillery will be stationed at these bays to instruct the canoneers and to take charge of the guns and ammunition.<sup>22</sup>

He envisaged the village peasant battalions, already partially trained, being built up into an establishment of militia similar to that in existence in England.<sup>23</sup> In a national proclamation he issued on first January 1801<sup>24</sup> – but which was read out in the villages nine days later – Pigot appealed to:

All those brave men, who had served during the late war in the village battalions and whose courage and general efforts had contributed to such an extent to the liberation of their homeland<sup>25</sup>

to join the new militia to be composed of nine hundred men.<sup>26</sup> The response was more than welcomed by the new authorities. Before long both the Maltese Militia and the

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<sup>20</sup> Major General Pigot had first come to Malta in mid-July 1800 along with one thousand five hundred men to reinforce the besieging troops. He was not an easy man to deal with, yet nevertheless was appointed land commander succeeding General Graham; in addition, he more than ruffled a few feathers as his command inspired resentment and disgust. Later on, Pigot took the liberty to inform Alexander Ball, his civilian counterpart, that, 'this Island is to be considered purely military', a declaration which Ball was 'extremely apprehensive' about, lest this measure create 'disgust and distrust among the Maltese'. Ball to Dundas, NAM, GOV 01.2/30, No. 1, 25 Dec. 1800.

<sup>21</sup> These bore no relation to the aforementioned Maltese Canoneers which were raised during the Knights' rule.

<sup>22</sup> Denis Rollo, *The Guns and Gunners of Malta* (Malta, Mondial Publishers, 1999), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 31.

<sup>24</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 431, Folio 46, *Il Sig. Maggior Generale Pigot, 1 Gennaro 1801*; for the full text of this proclamation, see Appendix III.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Maltese Militia Coast Artillery were up to full strength. The Militia consisted of three divisions split into three companies<sup>27</sup> while the artillery portion consisted of two companies. The men were enlisted under the following conditions<sup>28</sup>

- Age limits were from sixteen to fifty years, preference being given to men who had served throughout the Blockade.
- The terms of enlistment were for five years.
- Drills were to take place on Sunday afternoons.
- The Commandants, who were required to inspect their companies frequently, were empowered to stop the pay of men for misconduct and unjustified absence from parades; in certain instances they could also discharge men from the force with ignominy.
- The force was placed under the General Officer Commanding in Malta, but was subject to military law only in the event of invasion of these Islands.
- The men were provided with musket, bayonet and pouch and wore a jacket and trousers woven from cotton grown in Malta, with a leather shako and sash (blue for the coast artillery and red for the infantry). The arms, ammunition and clothing were kept at Company headquarters under the charge of the quartermaster-sergeant.

Officers' ranks were duly given to men drawn from the nobility – people whom the British were very keen to conciliate. Not long after, Pigot felt it expedient to issue yet another proclamation on thirtieth January<sup>29</sup>, detailing certain privileges for recruits.

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<sup>26</sup> Themistocles Zammit, *Malta: The Maltese Islands and their History* (Third Edition) (Malta, A. C. Aquilina & Co., 1971), 274.

<sup>27</sup> The First Division (Central) consisted of the Valletta Company, the Burmola Company and the Senglea Company; the Second Division (East) consisted of the Zeitun and Gudia Company, the Żabbar and Tarxien Company and the Zurrico and Siggieui Company; while the Third Division (West) consisted of the Notabile and Naxaro Company, the Birchircara Company and the Żebbug and Casal Lia Company. Chesney, 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>29</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 430, Folio 108, 30 *Gennaro 1801*; see Appendix IV.

These privileges shed light on how the commander sought to draw the country people closer to the new government:

- Exemption from the tax on carts of eighteen *tari*, then payable to the Municipality.
- Exemption from the tax on straw which during the time of the Knights was payable to Colonels but which was then being paid to the Government.
- In the event of it becoming necessary to arrest a militiaman, he was to be apprehended by his own comrades and not by the civil authorities.
- In the event of it becoming necessary to try a militiaman for civil offences, the permission of his commanding officer would have to be obtained in advance.
- Finally, militiamen were to be allowed to go out shooting without a licence.

From the very beginning of the occupation, it was realised that support from the local population was the best guarantee of the Islands' security, lest general discontent degenerate into another rebellion.<sup>30</sup>

#### **1.4 The Maltese Provincial Battalions, the Malta Coast Artillery & the Maltese Veterans**

The Treaty of Amiens<sup>31</sup> was supposed to have signalled the termination of Britain's overt military role in Malta, but it would not have led to the winding down of its strategic interest in the Islands. Indeed this interest would be aggressively pursued and protected.<sup>32</sup> Withdrawal of British forces was expected to commence three months after

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<sup>30</sup> Desmond Gregory, *Malta, Britain, and the European Powers, 1793 – 1815* (London, Associated University Presses, Inc., 1996), 267.

<sup>31</sup> The Treaty of Amiens was signed on 27 Mar. 1802.

<sup>32</sup> Lord Hawkesbury outlined the terms of Ball's mission thus: '...subsequently to the evacuation of Malta by HM's troops, and to the permanent reestablishment of the Government of the Order in the island...recommend to you generally that you endeavour, by all means in your power, to ensure the attachment of the native inhabitants of Malta to HM's Government, and that you will employ your utmost exertions to frustrate the attempts of any foreign power to acquire a predominant influence over the

the treaty's ratification, while the reinstatement of the Knights Hospitallers as overlords of the Islands was to proceed unmolested.

Both the rulers and the ruled were dead set against the Knights' return. Britain, well aware that 'possession was nine-tenths of the law'<sup>33</sup>, decided to stand its ground, though, in compliance with the treaty it accepted to readjust the Malta garrison. At least half of the post-treaty garrison had to consist of two thousand native troops led by Maltese officers.<sup>34</sup> Civil Commissioner Ball proceeded to raise this new force forthwith, but not before the three units then extant were disbanded.<sup>35</sup>

The manpower which was to fill the ranks of this new Corps was to be made readily available from the disbanding of the three aforementioned units.<sup>36</sup> The late Alfred Samut-Tagliaferro had stated that this straight transfer and recruiting of men from the 'old' Maltese corps constituted the first direct link of succession between the earliest units and those battalions of 1802.<sup>37</sup>

Ball's plan advocated the Corps' constitution to stand at two battalions each consisting of a thousand men.<sup>38</sup> However, this plan would have meant the complete omission of the artillery and the watch towers, which were strategically placed around the Islands' important anchorages. Another plan was drawn up in which two infantry battalions emerged of seven hundred each, while three hundred were selected for the artillery – 'who will be required at the different towers round the three Islands'<sup>39</sup> – and another three hundred were chosen for guarding military and government offices and

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inhabitants, or over the Government of the Order.' Patrick Staines, *Essays on Governing Malta* (Malta, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 2008), 144.

<sup>33</sup> Quentin Hughes, *Fortress: Architecture and Military History in Malta* (London, Lund Humphries, 1969), 233.

<sup>34</sup> Along with having native troops as part of the garrison, the King of Sicily was to despatch two thousand of his men which Britain had secretly agreed to pay their cost to the tune of fifty thousand pounds. Desmond Gregory, *Sicily, the Insecure Base: A History of the British Occupation of Sicily, 1806-1815* (London, Associated University Presses, Inc, 1988), 26.

<sup>35</sup> These were the Maltese Light Infantry, the Maltese Militia and the Maltese Militia Coast Artillery.

<sup>36</sup> There was also the probability that volunteers from the Maltese Pioneers and the Maltese Canoneers could have enlisted due to the discontinuance of service in their former units.

<sup>37</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 36.

<sup>38</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/6, No. 3, 15 Aug. 1802.

<sup>39</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/9, No. 13, 8 Feb. 1803; see Appendix VII.

public spaces. These Corps became known, respectively, as the Maltese Provincial Battalions, the Malta Coast Artillery<sup>40</sup> – both raised in 1802 – and the Maltese Veterans<sup>41</sup> – raised in 1803.

The Veterans, who were considered ‘absolutely necessary’, were recruited from ‘among the oldest and most steady’ men for the aforementioned purpose.<sup>42</sup> Besides providing employment to these old men – some of whom had served under the Knights and had then been pressed into service during the French interregnum – this corps had the dual aim of also serving as an ‘encouragement to young men to enlist when they may hope for such an asylum in their old age’.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding the two Provincial battalions’ leadership, two members of the Maltese nobility were appointed to command a battalion each, while Ball assured Hobart that he had selected only pro-British officers. To discredit the charge he had violated the terms of the treaty – by which officers were to be appointed by the Grand Master himself – Ball did not grant commissions. He instead had assured the officers in question that they would eventually be commissioned. The following extract shows Ball’s method:

In so doing I have judged it expedient to keep within the strict letter and spirit of the Treaty by leaving the appointments of the Officers and the organisation of the Corps to the Grand Master. I have hitherto only enlisted men and dispersed them over the different levels to be handy to be embodied. They are neither clothed nor armed yet the French minister has thought fit to addressed [sic] a note to me in which he remonstrates in very strong terms against the adoption of this and every other measure without his co-operation.<sup>44</sup>

Understandably, General Vial – the French Minister plenipotentiary – was vehemently against these developments and considered them to be in breach of the

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<sup>40</sup> The Malta Coast Artillery took over the roles of the disbanded Maltese Militia Coast Artillery.

<sup>41</sup> The Maltese Veterans were also referred to as the Corps of Invalids.

<sup>42</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/9, No. 13, 8 Feb. 1803.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/7, No. 10, 11 Dec. 1802.

peace treaty.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Ball was assured by Hobart that he (Ball) would only be carrying out the terms laid down by that same treaty which made it incumbent on Malta to provide the agreed two thousand men, irrespective of the occupying power then raising and equipping said force.<sup>46</sup> When, in May 1803, war against France was re-ignited, Ball ordered the expulsion of the Neapolitan garrison, along with Vial, and was instructed to take steps for the defence of the Islands.<sup>47</sup> Shortly thereafter, Britain and France were at each other's throats once again.

The formation of a new infantry regiment in 1805 – the Royal Regiment of Malta – posed problems to the balance of manpower in the Islands. Members of the Provincials<sup>48</sup> resigned with immediate effect with the intention of joining this new unit. As a result, in 1806 the Corps of Provincials had to be reduced to one battalion while a year later, plans were being drawn up for its disbandment, as the soldiers' terms of service agreed upon had been for a maximum of five years.

Ball subsequently pleaded with Castlereagh for the battalion to be spared. The reason being not for the sake of the Islands' defence but, as he explained, the Maltese were generally flattered by the confidence reposed in them by the authorities.<sup>49</sup> Added to this, the retention of the corps would have been sufficient to secure the object of defence whilst the government would 'continue to retain the attachment of the inhabitants which may safely affirm has been hitherto encreasing' [sic].<sup>50</sup> This was the beginning of a 'bond of union'<sup>51</sup> between the native troops and the British military, and one that would last well into the following century. The Provincials were given another lease of life for five years and in 1812 were given a further five years in recognition of the service they had rendered.

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<sup>45</sup> Gregory (1996), 268.

<sup>46</sup> Hobart to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, 'Duplicate Secret', 6 Nov. 1802; see Appendix V.

<sup>47</sup> Zammit, 276.

<sup>48</sup> The Maltese Provincial Battalions will be referred to as the Provincials.

<sup>49</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807; see Appendix XI.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1813, a plague ravaged the Islands. Starting in Valletta, the city was thrown into disarray and the Provincial Battalion was called in to assist the civil authorities in trying to curb its circulation.<sup>52</sup> In the foreign Regiment de Rolle three deaths and four cases of sickness were reported, two men from among the Third Garrison Battalion were afflicted and another man belonging to the Royal Artillery had been attacked with the disease.<sup>53</sup> The destruction which this malady wrought on the islanders was chiefly confined to the 'lower classes', meaning the social pool from which the majority of men could be expected to enlist in the event of a huge loss in numbers of able-bodied men.<sup>54</sup> Months after, the numbers of the Provincials were depleted to such an extent – due to men refusing to enlist lest they be ordered to spend their days policing the infected streets of Valletta and due to the increased price of labour – that General Hildebrand Oakes<sup>55</sup>, Ball's successor as Civil Commissioner, deemed the reduction and ultimate disbandment of the battalion by the end of 1813 as inevitable.<sup>56</sup> This task was to fall to that 'rough old despot'<sup>57</sup> General Thomas Maitland, Oakes' successor and the first official governor of the Islands.

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<sup>52</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 54.

<sup>53</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 17, 31 July 1813.

<sup>54</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 22, 25 Sep. 1813.

<sup>55</sup> Major General (afterwards Lieutenant General Sir) Hildebrand Oakes had been the General Officer commanding the British troops in Malta at the time of Ball's death. Samut-Tagliaferro surmised the general was 'well-versed in Maltese politics' due to having served in Malta since 1808 and during the period between 1802 and 1804. Yet Staines portrayed the man as a reluctant commissioner in light of his (Oakes') surprise at the appointment. In a letter to Undersecretary Sir Henry Bunbury Oakes expressed his uncertainty: 'You...know very well that my views and studies have all my life been purely devoted to the military profession; the civil branch of government is what I never sought or wished for, and have hitherto but little considered. I have therefore a great deal to learn. How I shall perform the arduous and difficult task I have now to encounter God only knows! I enter on it with diffidence and awe...' Oakes was later offered the post of first official Governor but declined due to ill health. Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 51; Staines, 493-494.

<sup>56</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 22, 25 Sep. 1813.

<sup>57</sup> A. E. Abela, *Governors of Malta* (Malta, Progress Press Company Limited, 1991), 9.

## 1.5 The Royal Regiment of Malta

The valour shown by the Maltese peasant soldiers throughout the Blockade had never been in any doubt. Both Ball and Abercrombie had praised the perseverance shown by these irregular troops. The commander of the besieged French garrison had been forced to do so as well.<sup>58</sup> Three years later, Hobart, ruminating on the Maltese Light Infantry's past service at Porto Ferrajo, had thought it advantageous to British interests if the martial qualities of the Maltese were put to use in overseas expeditions. His letter to Ball shows thus:

The Military qualities evinced by the Maltese during the late War while acting with His Majesty's Troops, especially at Porto Ferrajo, render it in every point of view important that the Services of the Maltese Regiments should not be restricted by their Capitulation to the Islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino, but that His Majesty should be able to avail himself of the benefits of those Corps for further Service should the circumstances of the War render it desirable.

You will therefore take such measures as you may judge to be most advisable for extending the capitulation to general Service; ...<sup>59</sup>

Due to the constraints resulting from the Treaty of Amiens, the Provincial Battalions were not allowed to serve outside of the Islands' littoral. Strictly speaking, the Maltese Corps were not banned from overseas service but were tied to the defence of Malta, Gozo and Comino.

In 1805 it was decided to recruit for such a regiment: the Royal Regiment of Malta, with the officers being British, German and Maltese.<sup>60</sup> Its formation proved to have undesired and unforeseen consequences. The regiment was put on the establishment of the British Army and was accorded a higher rate of pay: the financially-attractive terms proved calamitous to the organisation of the Provincials. As previously stated, most soldiers already forming part of the aforementioned Corps had flocked to

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<sup>58</sup> General Claude-Henri Belgrand de Vaubois wrote: 'We had to combat enraged lions, no trace of their former docile character appeared!' Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 9.

<sup>59</sup> Hobart to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, 20 June 1803; see Appendix VIII.

<sup>60</sup> Chesney, 49.



enlist in this new regiment, thus forcing the reduction of the Provincials in the following year to a single battalion.

As with all the previous corps, barring the Provincials, this regiment was not destined to a long life. It proved extremely unfortunate that a regiment with such promise was to be disbanded amid a wave of negativity. The conditions of service for this regiment were drawn up at the Horse Guards<sup>61</sup>, the first Article of which ran as follows:

Each recruit is, if possible, to be enlisted for unlimited service both as to time and place; should this, however, not be possible, the men are to be enlisted for ten years. The men to receive the same amount of pay, clothing and other advantages as the English troops of the line.<sup>62</sup>

One hurdle which had to be overcome, however, was the general service clause. Soldiers of this regiment were liable to overseas service, but not restricted to the Mediterranean. General William Villetes<sup>63</sup> had pleaded with the home authorities of the difficulty in obtaining the last remaining recruits unless service beyond the Islands was limited to the Mediterranean. He asked to be allowed to make up the numbers by enlisting Sicilians or Spaniards; one hundred Sicilians were agreed upon and by the joint efforts of Villetes and Ball, the regiment was completed.<sup>64</sup>

In 1807, the regiment was transferred to Sicily and in the following year, was ordered to garrison Capri along with other British-led troops. Marshal Murat, the French king of Naples, had cast his envious eyes on the small island and set himself the task of dislodging the British menace from his own doorstep.

On fourth October 1808, about four thousand picked troops embarked at Naples and Salerno, and came out to Capri convoyed by a frigate and corvette and nearly forty

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<sup>61</sup> The Horse Guards served as the offices of the C-in-C of the British Army up till 1904.

<sup>62</sup> Chesney, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant General William Villetes was commander of the Malta garrison from 1801 till 1807.

<sup>64</sup> Chesney, 50.

gunboats.<sup>65</sup> Beaten off from the centre of the island, the French succeeded in landing, after which fierce fighting ensued: three-quarters of the regiment fell in the futile defence of Capri and the surviving two hundred and fifty men surrendered with full military honours after having exhausted all of their powder.<sup>66</sup> The commanding officer of the regiment, John Dalrymple, was at pains to try and explain to Ball that his (Dalrymple's) unit's ultimately unsuccessful defence of Capri – along with other British forces – could not be solely blamed on the Maltese soldiers:

You will readily conclude that I allude to an unfavourable report which has been circulated as to the bravery of the Maltese soldiers; and, as I was not there myself, you will give me credit for no other motive in begging your attention to the following statements, than an earnest desire to rescue the character of brave men from the mouths of traducers... From each of these sources [the enemy who opposed them and the officers who led them in action] I have received the most unequivocal testimony of the bravery and good conduct of the Maltese soldiers during the attack of Ana Capri, and I trust in your goodness to give the weight of your sanction to the contradiction of the malicious reports which have been circulated, and which I humbly conceive must have wounded the national pride of the whole people.<sup>67</sup>

The remainder of the regiment returned to Malta in 1809, when new colours were presented, as proof that the corps was considered by the authorities to have acted bravely.<sup>68</sup>

That said, in their respective works, both Chesney and Laferla somewhat succeeded in portraying the soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Malta in an ever-positive light, free from any wrongdoing. Gregory, on the other hand, had written that this locally-raised force proved to be a liability while it remained stationed on Maltese soil.<sup>69</sup> Its

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<sup>65</sup> Mackesy, 290.

<sup>66</sup> Dennis Castillo, *The Maltese Cross: A Strategic History of Malta* (Westport, Praeger Security International, 2006), 127.

<sup>67</sup> Chesney, 62-63.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Gregory (1996), 271.

members took to thieving, contributing to a crime wave on the Island that did Ball's reputation at the time no good; this was partly the reason for its transfer to Sicily.<sup>70</sup>

After the Capri episode, recruiting for the regiment had halted to a standstill. Liverpool had considered the regiment 'inefficient since the capture of the Main Body' at Capri and ordered Hildebrand Oakes to disband the force.<sup>71</sup> Given the leeway by which he could finally rid himself this troublesome band of men, Oakes was only too happy to comply.

The latter had encountered problems affecting the final reduction of the regiment. The men were naturally reluctant to transfer to another corps when it meant accepting a lower rate of pay. Another stumbling block was that enlistment in the Provincials was open to the natives of Malta, whereas many of the troops of the Royal Regiment of Malta were in fact foreigners. Oakes' despatch of the twenty-fifth of April 1811 contains his harsh yet critical assessment of the constitution of the regiment:

It may be proper to add that I have in some degree swayed on the occasion by knowing that the Maltese, of whom the Royal Regiment in question is composed are of the very worst description of men. Of those now here upwards of a Hundred have at different times been guilty of desertion, and most of them have been punished for that crime. Many of them, too, are old and unfit for Soldiers; and no good could be expected from persons of this description compelled to serve contrary to their inclination. I am convinced, indeed that the relentless would rather prove a detriment to His Majesty's Service, and injurious to the Corps of Provincials which though not composed of Soldiers of the first rate is still very respectable in relation to the orderly and good conduct of the men.<sup>72</sup>

Oakes finished off by declaring that should a cadre of men refuse to transfer their services, they were to be forcibly discharged. Among the foreigners who took their leave

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*; The Royal Regiment of Malta had already amassed a discreditable record of desertions during its stay in Sicily. A month before it left Milazzo for Capri, Brigadier General Oswald – the officer then commanding the garrison of Augusta which included the Royal Regiment of Malta amongst its units – had sent a detailed report about the state of the regiment to General Headquarters at Messina. This report can be read in Appendix XII. Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 52.

<sup>71</sup> Liverpool to Oakes, NAM, GOV 02.1/4, No. 24, 21 Feb. 1811.

<sup>72</sup> Oakes to Liverpool, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 8, 25 Apr. 1811; see Appendix XIII.

of the regiment, several Spaniards were to be delivered to the Spanish consul to be sent to their own country.<sup>73</sup>

## **1.6 The Maltese Military Artificers, Sappers and Miners**

Ever since British forces were lodged in the Islands, scores of locals had been employed as civilian labourers, usually under the direction of the Royal Engineers. The commander of the Royal Engineers at the time had categorically praised the Maltese artisans as very capable in their respective fields of work:

The Maltese masons, stonecutters, miners and plasterers are remarkably good and expert... The stone-cutters are very useful people, they move the rough blocks out of the quarries and carry the squared stones up gangways and scaffolds with great dexterity, slung upon poles and ropes, the way the Jew and Genoese porters carry butts of wine at Gibraltar.<sup>74</sup>

A decision was then taken to enlist the services of these men. In 1806, two companies of skilled tradesmen, carpenters, smiths and labourers were formed for service in Malta and Gozo, while their employment was for a term of ten years.<sup>75</sup> After their completion, an additional company of artificers was required for overseas service, mainly borne out of the inefficiency espoused by the drunken habits of Englishmen at Gibraltar, to which Maltese and Sicilians were almost always preferred<sup>76</sup>. This third company was to be called the Mediterranean or War Company and was raised for general service throughout the Mediterranean.

A mutiny considered a threat to the British hold over Malta broke out on the fourth of April 1807. Soldiers of a foreign mercenary regiment stationed at Fort Ricasoli

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Chesney, 76.

<sup>75</sup> Even though these were not combat troops, they were required to be under arms if the island were to be attacked.

<sup>76</sup> Chesney, 78-79.

ganged up on their officers – who more often than not resorted to corporal punishment to overcome their subordinates – and massacred them. The mutineers of the Froberg regiment tore down the British flag and in its place the Russian flag was hoisted. After a tense stand-off lasting a number of days a party of thirty Maltese military artificers scaled the walls of the fort at night and captured it on the eleventh April, resulting in the mutiny's suppression.<sup>77</sup> Throughout this ordeal, the Maltese, along with the Royal Regiment of Malta, the Provincials, the Malta Coast Artillery and the Maltese Veterans, including 'not less than one thousand French Prisoners on the Island'<sup>78</sup>, did not align themselves, or rather, chose not to align themselves with the mutineers. This course of action greatly pleased and relieved Ball, as can be deduced from his despatch to London about the grisly episode.<sup>79</sup>

From mid-1807 to their eventual year of disbandment the three companies did their duties throughout the Islands and the Mediterranean. The War Company operated in Sicily, the Ionian Islands, Spain and the Italian Peninsula, while its strength was sustained from time to time by transfers from Britons, Maltese, Sicilians and Italians seconded from British regiments in the Mediterranean.<sup>80</sup>

In 1813, these companies were re-designated the Royal Maltese Sappers and Miners, foreshadowing the eventual, and official, takeover of the Maltese Islands in the following year.<sup>81</sup> Two years later the Malta and Gozo companies were reduced while the War Company followed suit two years afterwards, thus bringing an end to this corps of labourers and tradesmen.

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<sup>77</sup> Anton Quintano, *Ricasoli, Malta: History of a Fort* (Malta, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 1999), 165.

<sup>78</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Chesney, 92.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

## 1.7 The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment

The strategic situation immediately after the Napoleonic threat had been tackled for the second and final time was that Britain had acquired a number of naval bases which strengthened its hold of the overland route to the East.<sup>82</sup> The Maltese Islands were one such base in which British forces had securely established themselves before the territories were officially incorporated into the Empire, as had been done in 1814.

After 1815 – specifically Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo – the need for military operations in the Empire and the periphery diminished, while the responsibilities of colonial consolidation increased.<sup>83</sup> Starting from the year of his assumption of his new obligations (1813), Maitland<sup>84</sup> sought to reorganise the garrison, paying particular attention to the Maltese Corps. Early in the year he resolved to disband the Maltese Provincial Battalion, the Malta Coast Artillery and the Maltese Veterans and to raise instead a new regiment to be styled the ‘Regiment of Royal Maltese Fencibles’ in which would be united all the functions of the Civil Police and the Coast Guards against smugglers and breaches of quarantine.<sup>85</sup>

The governor gave the task of raising the new regiment to Lieutenant Colonel Francesco Rivarola<sup>86</sup>, who fifteen years previously, had enlisted the Maltese Pioneers for the Egyptian campaign. Rivarola lost no time in complying with the governor’s

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<sup>82</sup> W. C. B. Tunstall, ‘Imperial Defence, 1815-1870’, in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Growth of the New Empire, 1783-1870*, J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1940, 806.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> A hard-drinking Scottish soldier, Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Maitland was an ex-Governor of Ceylon and a known tough administrator. In Staines’ words, the reforms the general imposed in the Islands gave a ‘firm sense of personalized central direction.’ Henry Frendo, on the other hand, wrote that Maitland’s governorship (up till his death in 1824) ‘set the seal on a method of rule which...constituted a precedent for future governors or for their Lieutenants.’ He was the most absolute of British governors. Staines, 556; Henry Frendo, *Malta’s Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of Maltese History* (Malta, Valletta Publishing & Promotion Co. Ltd., 1989), 54.

<sup>85</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 66.

<sup>86</sup> Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General Count) Francesco Rivarola was a Corsican by birth and was to be the first commanding officer of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment. Chesney portrayed him as an ‘excellent soldier’, yet bore the reputation of being ‘a great martinet’. It became quite a common expression at Malta in this period, when speaking of one with strict disciplinary principles, to say, ‘He’s a regular Rivarola.’ This officer was, for a number of years, inspector-general of police and inspector of Maltese and foreign troops. He died in the island of Zante in October 1853. Chesney, 100.

directive. By the eighteenth of February 1815, copies of his recruiting poster giving details of the conditions of enlistment had been printed and distributed throughout the Island, and three days later he issued warrants to officers serving in the Provincials empowering them to start their recruiting campaign immediately.<sup>87</sup> The terms drawn up by Rivarola were: that non-commissioned officers and soldiers were to serve solely in Malta and its dependencies for a period of five years, or at least three and no volunteers over thirty six years were to be accepted.

The troops making up the three then-extant corps were released from their positions and encouraged to enlist into the new fencible<sup>88</sup> regiment, which was then in course of formation. Over the previous years, the three corps had experienced an exodus of their manpower. Since the new establishment called for more men than the Maltese units could have provided, the balance was made up by the enlistment of new recruits who, though predominantly Maltese, included also a sprinkling of foreigners amongst the earliest enlistments – men who had served in Dillon’s Regiment, the Sicilian Regiment of Light Infantry, the Royal Sicilian Volunteers, the Chasseurs Brittanique and de Watteville’s Regiment.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 66.

<sup>88</sup> A ‘fencible’ was a soldier liable for defensive duties only, which in this case meant the Maltese Islands. Their role was confined to garrison and patrolling duties, with the intention of freeing other regiments for overseas service.

<sup>89</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 69; service records of a select number of Maltese and foreign individuals can be seen in Appendix XIV.



Fig. 2: Undated portrait of Francesco Rivarola

The Regiment was deployed and spread over a wide area with the aim of fulfilling the previous corps' duties. Due to Malta being a naval post of the utmost importance in the imperial military system, these detachments were posted in and around the Harbour area and around Malta's littoral while making use of the Knights' coast watch towers to prevent smuggling.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The regiment was divided and quartered thus: the right wing was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Count de Gatto with four companies at Zeitun and Zabbar Gate Barracks, whence they moved to Fort Ricasoli; the left wing was under the command of Major Baron Testaferrata with three companies in the Grand Prison of the Order in Valletta, one artillery company at St. Julian's with a detachment at *Kaura* (Qawra), one artillery company at *Marsa Scirocco* (Marsaxlokk) and another artillery company at St. Paul's Bay with a detachment at the Red Tower at Mellieha. Chesney, 96-97.



In October 1836, John Austin – a celebrated Jesuit<sup>91</sup> – and George Cornwall Lewis – a future Chancellor of the Exchequer – arrived in Malta at the head of a commission to study and analyse the workings of the colonial administration and its expenses. The commissioners advocated a series of modifications, but what interests us here, is their report concerning the Royal Malta Fencibles.

These men bluntly advocated the dissolution of the Regiment. In its place, a newly-formed Police Corps and Coast Guard of a semi-military character was to be set up. Their reasons were that apart from being costly to support, the Fencibles<sup>92</sup> were doing the exact same jobs assigned to the police: patrolling Valletta during day and night and, most of all, guarding convicts during daytime, who, while in chains, were looked after well enough with drawn bayonets at the ready, something which both men abhorred and made reference to in their final report.<sup>93</sup> To make matters worse, certain ranks such as musicians and pioneers were most of the time unavailable in carrying out their policing duties. This was a direct consequence of Maitland's prescribed order over two decades previously which relegated and devalued the corps' standing amongst other elements of the garrison.

The Commission had reached its conclusion purely on the assumption that the Fencibles were functioning as a Police Corps and did not form part of the military garrison.<sup>94</sup> Though, unbeknownst to Austin and Cornwall Lewis, the Regiment had other commitments to fulfill. Apart from assisting the police in patrol work and the guarding of convicts, the Fencibles' obligations included night patrols both in the towns and country, the controlling of crowds during a trial by jury to keeping the ground during horse racing and fireworks displays at village *festas*.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the Regiment

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<sup>91</sup> Arthur James Leaver, 'Sir Agostino Portelli (1780-1854): Lawyer, businessman and patriot', *The Sunday Times*, Oct. 2, 1994, 28.

<sup>92</sup> The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment will be referred to as the Fencibles.

<sup>93</sup> Cornwall Lewis, George and Austin, John, *Copies or Extracts of Reports of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Affairs of the Island of Malta and of correspondence thereupon*, Part III, 27 Mar. 1839.

<sup>94</sup> In their 'Third Report on the Police of Malta', the Commissioners reported: 'We made the recommendation on the assumption that the Malta Fencible Regiment was considered by Her Majesty's Government as a Police Corps and not as forming part of the Garrison of Valletta.' Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 123n.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

furnished detachments around the coasts of Gozo and Comino to enforce contraband regulations, as well as to stop communication with vessels trespassing in Maltese waters.<sup>96</sup> In late 1836 the commanding officer, Marquis Giuseppe De Piro had asked for new accoutrements as well as Regimental Colours, all of which were approved. However, he also disclosed that the rank and file felt neglected at being thought of as a mere Police Corps and a much lesser military unit than other regiments<sup>97</sup>, a pretension to which he felt they were well justified in holding.<sup>98</sup>

Governor Bouverie<sup>99</sup> had felt the measure proposed by the two commissioners to be grossly unpopular with the locals. At first, he did not think much of the potential disbandment of the local Regiment. Yet, he conceded it would be desirable that such a 'Military Native Establishment' be kept in case of an emergency for the Island's defence, while acknowledging its retention would alleviate British regiments of the garrison, whom he considered 'barely sufficient in the most quiet times to furnish the ordinary detail of Garrison duties.'<sup>100</sup> Notwithstanding that hundreds of families depended on the regiment for financial stability and subsistence, the total reduction of the corps would have severed a long-established link between the Maltese and their British masters, the loss of which would have led to further estrangement from the local population. This had apparently already been noted by visitors to the Island.<sup>101</sup>

Bouverie's interest towards the Fencibles' predicament underwent a gradual change to ultimately acquiescing to the Regiment's retention. The representations by De Piro, who had been aided in his efforts by Agostino Portelli<sup>102</sup>, and Bouverie finally

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<sup>96</sup> A. Samut-Tagliaferro, *The Coastal Fortifications of Gozo and Comino* (Malta, Midsea Publications, 1993), 233.

<sup>97</sup> The accoutrements issued in 1829 had been previously manufactured for 'the Spanish Guerillas [sic.] or Portuguese Ordinaries early in the first period of the Peninsular War' and were so unserviceable that only the pouches were taken into wear. Bouverie to Glenelg, NAM, GOV 01.2/15, No. 134, 27 Dec. 1836.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Major General Henry Bouverie had arrived in Malta only a few weeks after the Commission had assembled and begun their enquiries. Abela, 18.

<sup>100</sup> Bouverie to Glenelg, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/47, No. 6, 8 Jan. 1838.

<sup>101</sup> 'Little intercourse exists between English and Maltese families, the one or two exceptions proving the rule. [...]. In part, I should say, we are to blame.' Adolphus Slade, *Turkey, Greece and Malta (Volume 1)* (London, Saunders and Otley, 1837), 124.

<sup>102</sup> Agostino Portelli – at that time the president of the Malta Exchange – reported to the Commissioners of Inquiry in 1836: 'It is odious to see a regiment of natives, incomplete, considered hitherto unworthy of

proved successful as the Regiment – now exempted from police and coast guard duties – was spared and its upkeep became the responsibility of the Imperial Government.

On the fourteenth of November 1838, the Colours were presented to the Fencibles at the Floriana parade ground amid mass jubilation<sup>103</sup>, with Bouverie later remarking to Glenelg: 'I never witnessed more unequivocal marks of the interest taken by the Maltese in their National Regiment than appeared upon this occasion.'<sup>104</sup> Afterwards, British officers gave a ball to the Marquis De Piro and other officers from the Fencibles.<sup>105</sup> The Regiment then settled into garrison duties and saw no worthwhile changes.

An arrangement was bruited in the late 1840s in which it was proposed to send a regiment of Maltese 'soldier-farmers' to Bermuda<sup>106</sup>, while a few years later the colonial government was in plans to form a battalion which would be sent to bolster the garrison at Hong Kong. Both plans came to nought, mostly due to – among other things – potential home sickness, lest these soldiers should have spent too many years away from their beloved islands.

With the outbreak of the Crimean War, the Islands became the headquarters and rear base of the expeditionary forces which were to venture out against Russia. Troops poured into the islands; at one point, three regiments of the Guards and fourteen line regiments were stationed in Malta.<sup>107</sup> The CO of the Fencibles, Colonel Simcoe Baynes, had applied to the Secretary of State for War to have the Regiment appointed to join the

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belonging to the Line, but held in abasement, as if its devotion to H.M. and his Government were doubtful; detached always on coast service, like a civil militia, guarding penal labourers.' Hilda Lee, *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development* (Malta, Progress Press, 1972), 75-76.

<sup>103</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 21 Nov. 1838; for a contemporary report of the Presentation ceremony, see Appendix XV.

<sup>104</sup> Bouverie to Glenelg, NAM, GOV 01.2/17, Duplicate No. 124, 14 Nov. 1838.

<sup>105</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 28 Nov. 1838; see Appendix XVI.

<sup>106</sup> These 'soldier-farmers' were intended to strengthen the Bermuda garrison against threats of invasion and convict revolt with the added aim of pumping 'new blood and a larger supply of non-convict agricultural labour.' Assimilating the inhabitants and the Maltese migrants would not have been as rapid as officials had initially hoped. The scheme was eventually abandoned. Charles A. Price, *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (Melbourne, Georgian House Pty Ltd., 1954), 121.

<sup>107</sup> Salvino Busuttil, 'Malta's Economy in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, iii, 1, (1965), 54.

British Army in the theatre of war. His offer was rejected on the grounds that the native regiment was primarily a garrison contingent and would not have been suitable for actual combat by virtue of the ranks' age and training.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the garrison had already been reduced very considerably by the departure of several British units. The posting of the Fencibles overseas would have entailed their replacement by British troops which were then engaged elsewhere. What the imperial government could (and maybe would) have welcomed was the offer of a Maltese regiment of volunteers additional to and independent of the Fencibles.<sup>109</sup> But this was not to be expected owing to the pitch of activity and the prosperity then prevailing in the Islands, which had been brought about by the war itself.

## 1.8 The Royal Malta Fencible Artillery

The British '*Pax in the Mediterranean*'<sup>110</sup> signified a new era for Britain and its imperial hegemony. It also led to an irrevocable shift in naval doctrine and subsequent strategic policy. Within twenty five years of the bombardment of Acre, British warships were being built of iron, protected by steel armour plating while their guns were firing elongated shells fitted with high explosives.<sup>111</sup> In this age, artillery was thus matched against armour in a continuous competition necessitating further experiments and invention.<sup>112</sup>

In 1852, Governor Sir William Reid<sup>113</sup>, opined on the need for the introduction of artillery with regards to the defence of Malta. On twenty-fifth May, he let it be known, that:

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<sup>108</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 174.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Holland, 68.

<sup>111</sup> Tunstall, 821.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Major General Sir William Reid (1791-1858) was a career British soldier and administrator who served as Governor of Malta between 1851 and 1858. Abela, 25.

The defence of Malta, like that of Gibraltar, now, more than ever, depends upon its Artillery. The invention of steam navigation, together with the powerful armament given to ships, makes a formidable Artillery indispensable in the defence of Malta.<sup>114</sup>

In 1860, Reid's successor, General Le Marchant<sup>115</sup>, was busy completing the heavy gun re-armament. In a dispatch addressed to the C-in-C of the Army, the Duke of Cambridge, Le Marchant declared that the Islands' defences were in need of a revamp, while also singling out 'the importance of a large Artillery Force in a Fortress' such as Malta.<sup>116</sup> He deemed the significance of artillery as a most 'obvious'<sup>117</sup> component in the retention of the Islands, and went on to stress that:

The advantage of such an auxiliary assistance to the Royal Artillery would be very great indeed, not only for the working of the guns in time of war, but during peace in keeping in proper order the vast artillery material which requires incessant attention and for the labour of which the present strength of the Royal Artillery is wholly inadequate.<sup>118</sup>

The Governor was forthright in his approach. Le Marchant was essentially proposing the conversion of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment into a Corps of artillery. He disclosed that he had the compliance of the commanders of the Royal Artillery and the Fencible Regiment to carry out this change.<sup>119</sup> In making the proposal he said he was:

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<sup>114</sup> Rollo, 25.

<sup>115</sup> Lieutenant General Sir John Gaspard Le Marchant became Governor of Malta in succession to Reid in April 1858, and ruled for over six years. In contrast to Reid, Le Marchant tended to be somewhat flamboyant and bombastic. Abela, 30.

<sup>116</sup> Le Marchant to Newcastle, NAM, GOV 01.3/9, Military "Separate", 12 June, 1860.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

satisfied that a very great economy of the public stores would result from this measure by protecting them from the deterioration that now takes place in consequence of their unavoidable neglect.<sup>120</sup>

On the tenth of September, Le Marchant was notified of the approbation of the plan but without an increase in establishment.<sup>121</sup> He was certain that the Regiment to a man would 'cheerfully transfer their services to the proposed Artillery Corps if it be affected without delay.'<sup>122</sup>

From the private diary of Lieutenant Joseph Speranza, we are informed that the Governor inspected the Fencible Regiment at the Floriana Parade Ground at ten o'clock in the morning on the twentieth November 1860, and on that occasion, he announced the plan for converting the Fencibles into an Artillery Corps.<sup>123</sup>

The General Order of the fifteenth of January 1861 – which Samut-Tagliaferro depicted as 'important' – laid down that all soldiers of the Fencible Regiment who did not on, or before the twenty-fourth of January 1861, signify to their Commanding Officer their unwillingness to serve as artillerymen, were to be considered as having given their consent to serve in that capacity for the remaining time yet unexpired for which they had originally enlisted, provided their services should be so long required.<sup>124</sup> Two men only chose not to continue serving as artillerymen.

Finally, on the twenty-fifth of January 1861, the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment started bearing the title of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery. The change in the constitution of the Regiment was further decreed in the London Gazette of the same day: 'Her Majesty has been pleased to approve of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment being converted into an artillery corps and being in future designated "The Royal Malta Fencible Artillery".'<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Fortescue to Le Marchant, NAM, GOV 02.1/57, No. 104, 10 Sep. 1860.

<sup>122</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 196.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

## 1.8 The Malta Militia<sup>126</sup>

It has been deduced that a militia force had been a near-constant presence in the Islands' defensive system since the pre-Hospitaller period. By tradition, the Maltese had long been obliged to perform militia duties both as coastal guards and – in the case of the better-off – as mounted troops, the *dejma*.<sup>127</sup> Upon its establishment in the Islands, the Order maintained the force. After the disbandment of the Maltese Militia in 1802, no such force was officially embodied by the government of the day until the mid-nineteenth century.

However, in 1806 Windham approved proposals by Villettes to make arrangements for a militia system with the intention of having 'Corps or companies of militia' at the different villages to be used at the shortest notice and to cooperate with H.M. troops in defence of the Islands.<sup>128</sup> Ball was to complete a register of all men aged between sixteen to fifty years who were liable for service and to select at least two thousand of them. The latter were to be formed into companies, trained on two Sundays a month or when Ball and Villettes required and always ready to support the batteries of coast artillery.<sup>129</sup> As the years rolled by this country militia fell into disuse and was all but forgotten.

In 1851, General William Reid landed in Malta to assume the role of Governor. After surveying the Island's defences, he found the fortifications impressive yet lamented the absence of a militia which he felt was necessary in defending the two harbours on either side of Valletta inclusive of the villages and the outlying countryside.<sup>130</sup> He convinced Secretary of State Pakington that a large number of men

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<sup>126</sup> This was at times called the Maltese Militia.

<sup>127</sup> Alison Hoppen, 'Military Priorities and Social Realities in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Malta and its Fortifications', in *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798: Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St. John*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.) Mireva Publications Limited, Malta 1993, 412.

<sup>128</sup> Windham to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, No. 10, 3 Sep. 1806.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 31, 26 Feb. 1852

were necessary to defend the two harbours if under attack. Reid mistakenly believed this measure would be agreeable to the Maltese.<sup>131</sup>

In February 1852, the Council of Government promulgated an ordinance, whereby, with certain exemptions, all men above sixteen years of age had, by order of law, to serve in this force and 'efficiently share in the defence of the Islands, along with Her Majesty's Regular Forces' without any pay.<sup>132</sup> Any individual refusing to serve in the militia, refusing to obey orders or choosing to desert during an actual invasion of the Islands would incur harsh penalties.<sup>133</sup>

Throughout the first half century of British rule, the locals had shown their masters that they (the Maltese) were amenable to military discipline and made able soldiers, provided they enlisted voluntarily; naturally, they were forcefully vocal about their opposition to conscription, something which the majority of the Islanders were not going to be forced into accepting. In his official correspondence to his superiors in London, Reid had confided that it was insisted by the elected members that refusal to serve in the militia be made dishonourable<sup>134</sup>, while Castagna reported that members of the Council of Government who voted in favour of this force<sup>135</sup> were vehemently jeered and insulted in public.<sup>136</sup> The Maltese were so incensed that they duly petitioned Reid to withhold his assent to the Militia Ordinance then under the consideration of the Council.<sup>137</sup>

To get the ball rolling – and apparently owing to the unpopularity of this scheme – training was confined to those who enrolled themselves willingly. These belonged solely to the town companies, with their numbers being chiefly made up by government

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 27 Feb. 1852; for the full text of the Ordinance, see Appendix XVII.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 2, 8 Apr. 1852.

<sup>135</sup> The Militia Ordinance passed the Council with a majority of eleven to one. *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Pietro Paolo Castagna, *Lis Storia ta Malta Bil Gzejer Tahha (It-tieni darba)* (Volume 2) (Fascimile Edition) (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 1985), 457.

<sup>137</sup> The public also petitioned for the Council to be dissolved and another constituted of more 'popular elements.' Pakington to Reid, NAM, GOV 02.1/48, No. 7, 22 Apr. 1852.



employees, who were encouraged to attend the drills as a good example to the remainder.<sup>138</sup>

Initially, the structure of the Militia stood at six companies: two companies at Valletta – one assigned to the Grand Harbour's defence, while the other one was given Marsamuschetto Harbour – while the remaining four were detailed to Floriana, Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua.<sup>139</sup> After the fortress, it was proposed to extend the enrolments to the villages in Malta while simultaneously raising a company for the militia in Gozo.

Concerning the uproar surrounding the Ordinance, Reid came to acknowledge the locals' hostility and realized how counterproductive such feelings were to the maintenance of the garrison:

In such a Militia it is not the number of men which constitutes real force but the spirit with which these men can be brought to defend their own island and fight in conjunction with the British Garrison. In fact the value of a Militia here in aiding the British Garrison to defend the place will depend upon the satisfaction of the Maltese with our Government.<sup>140</sup>

No attempt was made to carry out the original plan of compulsory service into effect and it was finally abandoned in 1854<sup>141</sup>; though a fair amount of efficiency seems to have been attained as consenting volunteers were left to fill the ranks: young, old, married and unmarried.<sup>142</sup>

By 1857 militiamen grew weary of drills, training and of the militia itself. Reid was certain the primary cause for the diminishing numbers of volunteers all boiled down to one thing – money. No pay or remuneration was ever issued to the militiamen during the five years in which the Maltese Militia operated. He cautioned:

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<sup>138</sup> Chesney, 144.

<sup>139</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 15 May 1852, see Appendix XVIII.

<sup>140</sup> Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 29, 24 July, 1852.

<sup>141</sup> At this time, the number of men in the Militia amounted to one thousand. *The Malta Government Gazette*, 27 Oct., 1854.

<sup>142</sup> Castagna, 457.

Unless the Maltese be paid for days of Military exercises, there can be no useful Militia system in Malta. To pay and properly organize the Militia I look upon as one of the most important subjects connected with the defence of the Island.<sup>143</sup>

Chesney summed up the disembodiment of this corps quite succinctly: the Maltese Militia 'steadily decreased, until in 1857 the Corps was allowed to dwindle away and die a natural death'.<sup>144</sup>

## 1.9 The Malta Dockyard Battalion of Artillery

In the mid-nineteenth century, Malta's paramount role as a British fortress in the imperial network had by then been well-established. Its military role as a 'transit and holding station'<sup>145</sup> was fundamental in projecting British force anywhere and anytime, though, it was, more importantly, a naval station and a dockyard. Adolphus Slade portrayed Malta through the eyes of a naval officer: as 'a valued naval station'.<sup>146</sup> Long before him, Abercrombie declared the harbour as 'perhaps the best port in the Mediterranean'.<sup>147</sup>

In May 1852, Governor Reid was made cognizant of the Board of Admiralty's plans, in which a Dockyard Battalion 'to consist of all the Servants of the Naval Establishments' was to be set up for defence purposes.<sup>148</sup> Greatly satisfied at this measure<sup>149</sup>, Reid in turn assured Pakington that Dockyard personnel had already been made exempt from the Militia, especially in light of their fundamental task of ministering to the fleet.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Reid to Labouchere, NAM, GOV 01.3/9, No. 12, 25 July 1857.

<sup>144</sup> Chesney, 145.

<sup>145</sup> Joseph Bonnici and Michael Cassar, *Malta and British Army Infantry Regiments* (Malta, BDL Publishing, 2009), 6.

<sup>146</sup> Slade, 66.

<sup>147</sup> Rollo, 8.

<sup>148</sup> Pakington to Reid, NAM, GOV 02.5/2, No. 7, 4 May 1852.

<sup>149</sup> '...I cannot but rejoice at the determination come to, that all persons employed in the Dockyard shall assist us in defending it.' Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 17, 19 May 1852.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

Formed in 1853, this force numbered around three hundred men and consisted of three companies: the Dockyard Company, the Victualling Company and the Factory Company. This Corps, trained in artillery duties, used to drill at Fort St. Angelo and chiefly on Saturday afternoons.<sup>151</sup>

As a major result of the war in Crimea, emphasis shifted overnight from the importance of Valletta as a fortress to the necessity of securing the Maltese harbours.<sup>152</sup> Reid had pressed the necessity of guarding the security of the harbours:

'It is constantly said, and with reason, that islands like Malta must fall into the possession of whatever power commands the sea in which they are situated. They must be lost again through the neglect or ill-judged confidence of the possessors...'<sup>153</sup>

However, during the Crimean War, this battalion was felt to have hindered the execution of duties of dock workers who, while carrying out their duties in the Dockyard, had to simultaneously devote sufficient time to the military training of this Corps. It was deemed advisable to disband the force, which was accordingly done in 1864.

### **1.10 The Royal Malta Fencible Pensioners Company**

In 1854, an offshoot of the Fencibles was formed. Somewhat similar to the Maltese Veterans of 1803, this force was composed of elderly men and pensioned soldiers who were to be enrolled for garrison duty whenever a reduction of troops on the Island was felt, so that 'in cases of emergency, this company, might prove of considerable use' to the Fortress.<sup>154</sup> Starting in 1854, enlistment in this company was for seven years<sup>155</sup> and its regulations were promulgated later that year.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Chesney, 148.

<sup>152</sup> Rita Grima, 'Malta and the Crimean War (1854-1856)', Unpublished B.A. (Hons) History Dissertation (Malta, University of Malta, 1979), 8.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>154</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 161.

Due to the departure of so many British units for the Crimean peninsula, the company started operating during and as a result of the subsequent war. Before long Malta became the hub of British forces in the Mediterranean and the garrison was reinforced once again. The services of the Pensioners thus became redundant and were disembodied in February 1855.

Urgent necessities relating to the Crimea flared up. Regiments in Malta were sent off to the East and once again, the Pensioners Company was required to aid in the garrison permanently. It was called up on Monday nineteenth of May with the order becoming effective in the following two days.<sup>157</sup> The posts allocated to the men were those of St. James Cavalier, the Marina Gate and the Valletta fortifications looking over both harbours on either side of the peninsula.

The commander of British troops in Malta had occasioned to praise the soldiers' service<sup>158</sup>, but this did not prove sufficient in saving them from disembodiment. With the Crimean War over, British troops flooded the Islands: there was no further scope for keeping the Company on full time service. For the next six years, the unit was held together and exercised once a month, until the following announcement was made public on the nineteenth of October 1861: 'The periodical assembly of the Pensioner Company of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery<sup>159</sup> will be discontinued until further orders.'<sup>160</sup> This meant the final and permanent dissolution of the Company.

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<sup>155</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 25 Aug. 1854.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 Dec. 1855.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 May 1855.

<sup>158</sup> On eighth August 1855, the General Officer-Commanding reported on the Pensioners in the following terms: 'Again he has much pleasure in recording his unqualified approbation of the good, steady and exemplary conduct of these old soldiers, whilst performing the duties appointed to them.' Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 163.

<sup>159</sup> As has been previously explained, the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment had been converted into an artillery corps earlier that year.

<sup>160</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 164.

## CHAPTER II

### Circumstance and pomp

*Imperialism moved forward, not as a result of commercial or political pressure from London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, or even Washington, but mainly because men on the periphery, many of whom were soldiers, pressed to enlarge the boundaries of empire... Imperialism, therefore, was essentially a military phenomenon...*

Douglas Porch<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1 Uniforms

Uniforms are a means of identification among a particular group of persons forming part of institutions; they group individuals who in turn may be susceptible to certain influences.

The uniforms given to men of the Maltese Corps were usually provided by the British Army and re-issues to the troops would be yielded every number of years.<sup>2</sup>

##### 2.1.1 The Maltese Light Infantry

The Maltese Light Infantry (also referred to as the *Cacciatori Maltesi*) were uniformed locally with funds made available by General Thomas Graham. The winter

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Porch, 'Imperial Wars: From the Seven Years' War to the First World War', in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, Charles Townshend (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, not every uniform could be unearthed. Little is known as to the exact dress of the Maltese Pioneers. Records, though scarce, show that the corps was attached to the Ordinance Department and might have worn the department's uniform with slight alterations. Denis Darmanin, 'Maltese Regiments: The Maltese Pioneers, 1800-1802', in *Heritage: An Encyclopedia of Maltese Culture and Civilisation, Volume 4*, Paul Mizzi (ed.) Midsea Books Ltd., Malta, 1983, 1275.

dress consisted of a blue-grey serge coat with red facings and gold lace; Non-Commissioned Officers wore yellow or gold-fringed epaulettes. The collar straps were red while the buttons were made from wood and covered with red cloth.<sup>3</sup> The summer dress consisted of a nankeen cotton coat with shoulder straps and epaulettes. Black cross belts carried the cartridge pouch and a brass, basket-hilted, hanger of early vintage, on the left side. Around the waist was worn the Maltese style broad cloth sash in red, tying off behind.<sup>4</sup>



Figs. 3 & 4: Winter uniform of a non-commissioned officer of the Maltese Light Infantry (left) and summer uniform of an unidentified rank of the same corps (right).

<sup>3</sup> Bob Marrion, 'Regiments of Malta', *Military Modelling*, iv, 20 (1990), 214.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.1.2 The Maltese Militia and Maltese Militia Coast Artillery



Figs. 5 & 6: A Private of the Maltese Militia Coast Artillery (left) and a Private of the Maltese Militia (right).

Personnel of the Maltese Militia wore a home-spun cotton jacket, probably short-waisted and similar in fashion to the British fatigue jacket, or waistcoat, of the period, and white cotton trousers.<sup>5</sup> The headdress was the Maltese native nightcap or the omnipresent round hat, similar to the one worn by the Maltese Light Infantry. A sash of red cloth was reputed to have been worn about the waist and equipment comprised a pouch belt, musket and bayonet.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, reconstructions of pictures of the Maltese Militia Coast Artillery's uniform are hard to come by. This unit would have been

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

clad in a similar fashion, except a blue sash was worn around the waist, as opposed to the infantry's red.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1.3 The Maltese Provincial Battalions



Figs. 7 & 8: A Colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Maltese Provincial Battalion (left) and an unidentified rank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maltese Provincial Battalion.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



These two battalions were the first to be uniformed after the fashion of regular British troops. Each man joining was issued with a white cotton jacket, a pair of pantaloons, black gaiters and shoes; a red cloth jacket, cloth sleeved waistcoat and cloth pantaloons, leather stock, regimental hat, or cap with feather, greatcoat, and knapsack, annually.<sup>8</sup> The First Battalion had blue sky facings, with silver lace for officers; the Second Battalion green facings.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.1.4 The Maltese Veterans



Fig. 9: Officer of the Maltese Veterans.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

These four companies of old men usually wore bicorn hats with a white over red feather plume, with a long tall grey coat, with red lapels, collar and cuffs, laced with silver.<sup>10</sup> White breeches were worn along with black Hessian boots or black cloth gaiters.

### 2.1.5 The Malta Coast Artillery



Fig. 10: Gunner of the Malta Coast Artillery

This artillery contingent wore the same uniform as the British Royal Artillery, which consisted of dark blue coats with red facings.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Chesney, 36.

## 2.1.6 The Royal Regiment of Malta



Fig. 11: Unidentified soldier of the Royal Regiment of Malta

This Regiment was raised and clothed as a 'Royal' regiment with blue facings, meaning, that it was allowed to wear the uniform of regiments of the Line.<sup>12</sup> The head dress would have been the leather stovepipe shako introduced in 1802.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.1.7 The Maltese Military Artificers and Sappers and Miners



Figs. 12 and 13: Company of Military Artificers and Sappers and Miners in ceremonial dress (left) and working dress (right).

The three companies of this corps were dressed in blue jacket with black facings, yellow lace and brass buttons.<sup>13</sup> The white hat was usually worn in hotter climates whereas the black hat was worn during the colder months.

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<sup>13</sup> Marrion, 216.

## 2.1.8 The Royal Malta Fencible Regiment



Figs. 14 & 15: Officer, Royal Malta Fencibles c. 1829 (left), and Private c. 1856 (right)

The picture on the left shows a scarlet, officer's coatee, the high Prussian collar with two gold loops and button on each side.<sup>14</sup> While the one on the right shows the 'new' single breasted tunic and the 'French' pattern shako with the double peak and the rear of the shako being higher than the front, giving the head dress a forward tilt to its appearance.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bob Marrion, 'Regiments of Malta', *Military Modelling*, v, 20 (1990), 268.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

### 2.1.9 The Royal Malta Fencible Artillery



Fig. 16: Officer of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery, c. 1861.

In 1861, the Fencibles were converted into an Artillery regiment, with all ranks of the former regiment being given the option to stay on and train as gunners. The new regiment was provided with the same uniform as the regular British Army Royal Artillery, Regiment, except for the design: the fur busby was the official head dress - and must have been quite irritable in the hot summer climate – until 1875 when officers were ordered to provide themselves with a helmet.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

## 2.1.10 The Malta Militia



Fig. 17: Officer and Militiaman of the Malta Militia.

In this corps, the officers had to provide their own uniform, whereas the non-commissioned officers and other ranks were given a free issue to last seven years.<sup>17</sup> According to Marrion, the uniform had a rather 'Italian look' about it, which came as no real surprise since the officers were responsible for securing their own uniforms.<sup>18</sup>

The officers' uniform consisted of a black cocked hat with white over red feather plume. The coat and trousers were blue with red collar, cuffs, turnbacks and piping with

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<sup>17</sup> Chesney, 143-144.

<sup>18</sup> Marrion, 269.

both collar and cuffs being highly embroidered.<sup>19</sup> On the collar was a large flaming grenade in silver and on either shoulder was placed a large silver boxed fringed epaulette. There were silver stripes on the trousers and the officer had to have a gilt-hilted sword with a silver sword strap and acorn, carried in a black leather scabbard fitted brass.

The Militiaman's uniform consisted of a blue cloth cap piped with red around the crown and above and below the blue cap band. On the front a white metal monogram 'MM' was placed with a crown above, which stood for Malta Militia.

### 2.1.11 The Malta Dockyard Battalion of Artillery



Fig. 18: Officer, Malta Dockyard Battalion of Artillery, c.1853

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*



This battalion's dress consisted of, firstly, a long double-breasted tunic ending just above the knee with a tall red Prussian collar and pointed red cuffs.<sup>20</sup> As can be seen, the coat had two rows of eight buttons, while the trousers were blue and had a red stripe. Officers had their collars decorated with a silver grenade on either side, like the Malta Militia, and wore gold lace epaulettes similar to those worn by the Royal Navy, to signify a strong link between the two forces.<sup>21</sup> The officers carried a Royal Navy pattern sword with gilt hilt and gold and blue sword strap in a black and gilt scabbard, while their subordinates wore red epaulettes on each shoulder and carried a short carbine and sword bayonet.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

### 2.1.12 The Royal Malta Fencible Pensioners Company



Fig. 19: Private of the Royal Malta Fencible Pensioners Company.

The cap is blue with a red cap band and a yellow metal crown worn at the front of the upper part of the cap.<sup>23</sup> The coat is double-breasted, and the collar and cuffs and

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

piping is red. The collar was laced with white, as was the fashion in uniforms during the Crimean War period.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2 Salaries

An issue of great consternation and discontent among the local soldiery was that of emolument. From the beginning, the policy of establishing different, though most of the time, lower rates of pay and allowances for the Maltese Corps in relation to those of British regiments, caused much dissatisfaction to the Maltese.<sup>25</sup> A higher rate of pay for the British soldier<sup>26</sup> was based on the principle that owing to his general service liabilities, not only had he to bear more demanding commitments but that he had to bear them while under difficult circumstances than his Maltese and Gozitan counterparts, who more often than not, were enlisted for service in the Maltese Islands only.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the latter, along with their supporters, vied that British soldiers in the Malta garrison were only carrying out the same tasks asked of the native troops; by default, the Maltese should have received equal rates of pay. These conflicting points of view remained irreconcilable throughout this period.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.2.1 Pre-‘Amiens’

The subject of remuneration given to Maltese soldiers dated to pre-British times. During the Blockade, General Graham haggled with the members of the National Congress about the proposed pay given to the Maltese ranks of the Maltese Light Infantry. In a strong letter addressed to the Maltese leaders, he was quoted as saying,

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 129.

<sup>26</sup> Along with British troops, the Maltese officer class, which included members of the Maltese nobility, was deemed to have such an influence that it was not uncommon for governors to suggest an increase in their salary, while ignoring the plight of the lower ranks.

<sup>27</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 129.

<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, no rates of pay were unearthed for the Maltese Pioneers, the Royal Regiment of Malta and the Malta Dockyard Battalion of Artillery. In addition, the troops of the Maltese Militia of 1852 were not granted financial reward for their services.

'Is there a Maltese at the present moment, who is expecting to be paid to fight for his own country?'<sup>29</sup> He exhorted all leaders to fight and forget about what were termed 'mercenary gains.'<sup>30</sup> A deal seems to have been struck, however, as the peasants-cum-soldiers were granted equal pay to their British counterparts during the Maltese Light Infantry's short lifespan. The wages accorded to soldiers of the Anglo-Maltese battalion were expounded in Graham's famous proclamation of the twenty-eight of March 1800.<sup>31</sup>

It seems likely that wages granted were left unaltered for the three hundred volunteers' foreign service in Elba, as attested by General Villette's two years later.<sup>32</sup> The monthly wages given to the militiamen of 1801 were as follows<sup>33</sup>. Each of the three division headquarters held:

	£	s.	d.
One Commandant	1	13	14
One Adjutant	0	5	15
One Division Clerk	0	9	2

And each of the nine companies was composed of:

One Captain	1	0	0
Two Lieutenant	0	10	0
One Quartermaster Sergeant	0	9	2

<sup>29</sup> *The Times of Malta*, 9 July 1951.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 430, Vol. 1, p. 72, *Il Colonnello Generale Graham, 28 Marzo 1800*; see Appendix II.

<sup>32</sup> In 1803, General Villette had told Lord Hobart how difficult it was to get the Maltese to serve outside the island: 'We managed to get only 200 of the last Corps [the Maltese Light Infantry] to volunteer for Elba and then only with British pay and they were mostly young lads...' Desmond Gregory, *Malta, Britain, and the European Powers, 1793 – 1815* (London, Associated University Presses, Inc., 1996), 332n.22.

<sup>33</sup> Major A. G. Chesney, *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army* (London, William Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1897), 28-29.

Four Sergeants	0	0	10
Four Corporals	0	0	8 4/12
One Drummer	0	0	8 4/12
Ninety Six Privates	0	0	6 8/12

The gunners of the artillery component of the militia – the Maltese Militia Coast Artillery, of which there were two companies – were tied to a separate rate of pay, which was given every month<sup>34</sup>:

	£	s.	d.
One Captain	5	0	0
Three Subalterns	3	15	0

And the following were paid at the daily rate of:

Six Sergeants	0	0	10
Six Corporals	0	0	8 4/12
Seventy five Privates	0	0	6 8/12

## 2.2.2 Resuming the Occupation

Due to the circumstances emerging from the Treaty of Amiens, all Maltese Corps were required to be disembodied while a force of two thousand native soldiers were to be raised in their stead. The men making up the Provincial Battalions started being raised in November 1802 and their first major organization was during the following February. Each battalion was allowed an established strength of thirty six officers and one thousand and two other ranks with wages authorised at the following daily rates<sup>35</sup>:

<sup>34</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 34.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

		s.	d.
One Lieutenant Colonel – (commanding)		8	0
One Major		6	0
Eight Captains	(each)	4	0
Ten Lieutenants	(each)	3	0
Ten Ensigns	(each)	2	6
One Surgeon		4	0
One Paymaster		4	0
One Adjutant		3	0
One Quartermaster		3	0
One Assistant Surgeon		3	0
One Chaplain		3	0
One Sergeant Major		2	0
One Quartermaster Sergeant		2	0
Forty Sergeants	(each)	1	2
Forty Corporals	(each)	0	11
Twenty Drummers	(each)	0	11
Nine Hundred Privates	(each)	0	9

However, in August 1802, Alexander Ball set the seal for the colonial *modus operandi* in relation to the dichotomy of pay which would not be uncommon during the British era; for the first time, the ones affected would not be the Maltese. Ball pitched his

plan to Hobart, in which the lowliest soldier in the Maltese Corps (Private) would receive more income than his Neapolitan equivalent, which were then forming part of the treaty-imposed garrison.<sup>36</sup>

Just after the formation of the Maltese Veterans and the new Artillery contingent<sup>37</sup>, in November 1803, Colonel William Henry Clinton's<sup>38</sup> despatch to General Villettes notified the latter of the plan to extend the soldiers' wages of the Provincials to the new two Corps. Clinton also reiterated the institutionalized inequality in income when he declared that:

...it having been judged expedient by His Majesty's Ministers that the two Corps already formed in Malta should be placed on the footing of Provincial Corps, and that the whole of the officers should be Foreigners [Maltese] and allowed only an inferior pay to that of the British Army...<sup>39</sup>

Ball, not being one to let things pass unnoticed, had surmised that the 'respectable families' making up the majority of the officer class, somewhat needed - yet did not in any way deserve – an increase in their wages. Nevertheless, he would allow an increment in their respective pay on condition of their making themselves available to foreign service.<sup>40</sup> This would, most probably, not have occurred, but even if service beyond Maltese shores was not adhered to, 'Governor' Ball still recommended an increase of pay to these officers<sup>41</sup>, so as to further 'secure to us men to be relied on for the Forts and Garrisons in the Islands themselves.'<sup>42</sup> Two years had passed when again Ball reverted to the same pleas while 'beg[ging]' for the increase of pay to these same

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<sup>36</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/6, No. 3, 15 Aug. 1802.

<sup>37</sup> The Malta Coast Artillery, in force between 1803 and 1815.

<sup>38</sup> Colonel Clinton was Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces.

<sup>39</sup> Clinton to Villettes, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/13, 30 Nov. 1803.

<sup>40</sup> Ball to Camden, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/12, 26 Nov. 1804; see Appendix IX.

<sup>41</sup> The increase of pay entailed three shillings per day to the Colonels, two shillings to the Captains and eighteen pence to the Subalterns. *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

officers as what he considered their “very small pay” was insufficient ‘to maintain their rank in society.’<sup>43</sup>

The following year, the Provincial battalion was to be taken apart. The Civil Commissioner recommended for this plan to be shelved and be done away with completely, as whilst the Provincials remained part of the garrison, a British regiment of the Line would have been spared for service elsewhere but most importantly, due to the differences in earnings, considerable saving of expenses still accrued to the colonial government.<sup>44</sup>

In 1812, the Provincial Battalion had reached its purported end once again. Oakes had taken it upon himself to save the corps due to the unwanted burden of having to deal with unemployment if the plan were to be effected. Apart from extolling the merits of the inhabitants<sup>45</sup> he advised that the native officers be put on nearly the same footing as the Militia soldiers in Britain due to the ‘encreased [sic] article of everyday life.’<sup>46</sup> Bathurst assented to the plan but expressed his strong opinion that:

...the Pay and allowance of all Provincial Corps of Foreigners should not be equal to those of our Native and most valuable Troops. The great Increase in the prize of all articles of necessity and comfort, which you represent to have taken place at Malta within the last ten years, might unquestionably to be considered, and affords a fair Reason for making a moderate Augmentation in the Pay of the Provincial Corps; but if the Decrease in the relative value of money be so enormous as to render it necessary to double the Pay of the officers, and to place both them and their Soldiers upon a footing at least equal to that of our Regular Troops, it will become a serious question, whether it be advisable to maintain a Corps so limited in its size, and so expensive in its nature.

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<sup>43</sup> Ball to Windham, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 4, 6 Nov. 1806; see Appendix X.

<sup>44</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807.

<sup>45</sup> ‘On this subject I beg leave to observe that independently of the general expediency of confiding a share of the Military Defence of the Island to the Native Inhabitants who have hitherto shown themselves highly deserving of the Trust reposed in them...’ Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.2/1, No. 13, 3 Oct. 1812.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



Moving on to the Maltese Military Artificers and Sappers and Miners, the establishment and rates of pay (per day) of the two local companies were thus<sup>47</sup>:

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
One Adjutant	3	(also received 5 s. per day engineer pay)
One Sergeant Major	3	0
Two Sergeants	1	6
Four Corporals	1	3
Sixty Privates	1	1
One Drummer	1	1
Ten boys	0	6

On the other hand, the men occupying the ranks of the War Company were given a better income, due to their overseas service:

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
One Adjutant	3	(also received 5 s. per day engineer pay and 3s. a day extra)
Four Sergeants	2	6½
Four Corporals	2	2½
Hundred Privates	1	2½
1 Drummer	1	2½
Ten boys	0	7½

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<sup>47</sup> Chesney, 78.

## CHAPTER III

### Imperial Triumphalism

*'After all, natives were natives – interesting, no doubt, but finally...an inferior people...'*

George Orwell<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Language

Joseph Brincat specified that 'the military and political conquest of a territory usually promotes the language of the victors'; in spite of the fact that the Maltese Islands were not conquered from the Maltese themselves, it was only a matter of time until the English language would be imposed on the locals.<sup>2</sup> The language barrier was one of the obstacles which Britain had to find a way of overcoming if it intended to have an effective rule. This condition was prevalent in every facet of society and, by extension, the armed forces. In practice, however, the Anglicization process, proved almost impossible to implement, at least in the first decades of British rule.<sup>3</sup>

During and after the Blockade of 1798, the British came to realize that the majority of locals spoke Italian (and Maltese) to a man.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the proclamation that led to the formation of the *Cacciatori Maltesi* had to be issued and read throughout the villages in Italian. The same applied to Pigot who was forced to do the same when raising the Maltese Militia barely a year later.

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<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1951), 118.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph M. Brincat, *Maltese and Other Languages: A Linguistic History of Malta* (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 2011), 270.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Hull, *The Malta Language Question: A Case Study in Cultural Imperialism* (Malta, Said International Ltd., 1993), 8

<sup>4</sup> Quentin Hughes, 'Early Days of British Rule: The Garrison Defending Malta', *Treasures of Malta*, No. 16, vi, No. 1 (1999), 38.

Over the years, the complications arising from this drawback in the relations between the coloniser and the colonised doubtlessly influenced other decisions. British officers not acquainted with the Maltese language – most, if not all – could not exert their control and properly communicate their orders to their Maltese subordinates; in essence assimilation proved harder than expected, something which Ball was well aware of and complained about.<sup>5</sup> The authorities had to delegate the tasks of command of the Maltese Corps to the natives themselves, subject to working alongside an English Inspector, lest problems would arise:

...the frequent changes which the appointment of British Officers would create, and their probable ignorance of the Maltese Language, would lead to difficulties which it might be almost impracticable to remedy or prevent.<sup>6</sup>

With the establishment of British control, English started creeping into use in daily life, especially in trade matters and the civil service.<sup>7</sup> Yet the language still failed to make substantial inroads in the locally-raised military forces, at least until 1836, as Britain had made only half-hearted efforts towards securing this goal.<sup>8</sup> When raising the Royal Malta Fencibles, Maitland and Rivarola set out the conditions for enlistment in Italian [refer to picture in the following page].

After the Fencibles had been saved from complete disembodiment in 1838, as has been previously discussed, Governor Bouverie duly presented the Colours to the Regiment on the Floriana parade ground on the fourteenth of November of the same year. While the Governor addressed the assembled men in English, the Marquis De Piro, commanding the Regiment, chose to reply in Italian, it being the language used for official purposes in the Regiment.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ball to Windham, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 4, 6 Nov. 1806.

<sup>6</sup> Windham to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/2, No. 14, 7 Jan. 1807.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Frendo, *Storja ta' Malta: Żmien l-Ingliżi – Is Seklu Dsatax* (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2004), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Godfrey A. Pirota, *The Maltese Public Service 1800-1940: The Administrative Politics of a Micro-State* (Malta, Mireva Publications, 1996), 166.

<sup>9</sup> *The Malta Government Gazette*, 21 Nov. 1838; see Appendix VII.

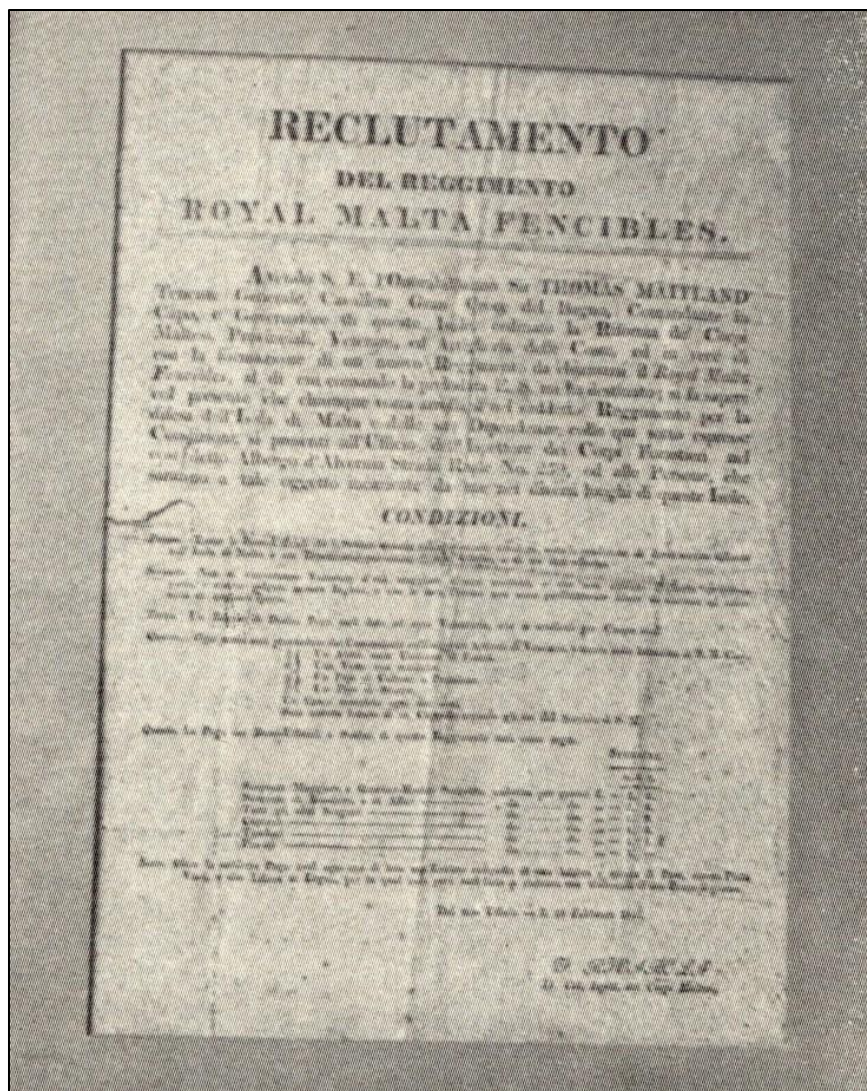


Fig. 20: A recruiting poster for the Fencibles, written in Italian.

Following the governor's routine half yearly inspection of units in the garrison, he directed that from the first of May 1840, all orders and reports were to be written exclusively in English and Regimental Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry held by the Fencibles were to be conducted and recorded in the same language.<sup>10</sup> Five days later,

<sup>10</sup> Brigadier A. Samut-Tagliaferro, CBE, *History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Volume 1 (1800-1939)* (Malta, Lux Press, 1976), 107.

the 'radical'<sup>11</sup> newspaper *Il Mediterraneo* – which had customarily defended the Italian language<sup>12</sup> – gave its fullest support to the measure:

...since it tends to assimilate the officers and men the more to their English bretheren in arms, and it has been a matter of surprise to strangers visiting Malta that a corruption of the language of Italy which is so much more foreign to and difficult to be attained by the Maltese should have been cultivated in Malta to the total neglect of that of the mother country and government of the place, notwithstanding positive enactments to the contrary.<sup>13</sup>

Twelve years had passed since the change was affected and Governor Reid had noted that only a very small number of soldiers of the local regiment had taken to speaking English. He found this vexing, considering Malta had been in British hands for half a century:

Very few of the N.C. Officers or Soldiers speak English, which is a great disadvantage and which might by degrees be remedied. For this end I would teach English in the Regt. school, where it is not taught at present, and enlist only boys between 14 and 16 years of age, for 10 years and ultimately enlisting none who cannot speak our own language. Their Regt. School is susceptible of great improvement, and they should have an infant school. In the island of Saint Lucia, in the W.I., I found English taught in the Infant schools, as in the nursery, and this system I recommend for the school of the M.F.<sup>14</sup>

A considerable advantage was to be gained by enlisting boy soldiers. This plan was akin to hitting two birds with one stone: apart from spreading the language amongst the older elements in the Regiment<sup>15</sup> – soldiers who were too old to readily learn and

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<sup>11</sup> Frendo (2004), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Brincat, 276.

<sup>13</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 107.

<sup>14</sup> Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 15, 24 Apr. 1852; see Appendix XIX.

<sup>15</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 152.

acquire a new language – these (very) young soldiers would also unwittingly be spreading the language outside of the military establishment, thus accelerating cultural imperialism throughout the colony.

The teaching of English was so important a matter that, in the early fifties, a Maltese Sergeant from the Fencibles was sent to England for training as future Schoolmaster to the Regiment. That Maltese was none other than Sigismondo Savona<sup>16</sup>, later a Director of Education and a member of the Council of Government. Upon his return, Savona replaced the army school's English schoolmaster on the grounds that no elementary instruction in language could be imparted by a teacher who was not conversant alike with the language he taught (English) and the pupils to whom he imparted it (Maltese).<sup>17</sup> Severing his links with the Regiment in 1865 (by then functioning as an Artillery component), he established the best English language school in Malta.

It could be argued that Savona's exposition to British ideals during his time in the Regiment helped pave the way for a degree of assimilation to the governing race<sup>18</sup> which undeniably led to the first glimmerings of a struggle over language that was to define a great deal of Maltese politics.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Savona was described by Frendo as 'a representative of the pro-British school and a product of the colonial society'. Henry Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* (Third Edition) (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 2013), 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> He once quoted in a public lecture in 1865: 'The History of England is emphatically the history of progress...the greatest and most highly civilised people that ever the world saw; have spread their dominion on every quarter of the globe;...have created a maritime power which would annihilate in a quarter of an hour the navies of Tyre, Athens, Carthage, Venice and Genoa together. *Ibid.* 17.

*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London, Penguin Books, 2013), 55.

## **3.2 The Officer Class**

If the official correspondence between the Colonial and Imperial governments is anything to go by, the selection and appointment of officers in the Maltese Corps – both British and Maltese – had, from the outset, been somewhat a crucial issue tied with its own political implications. In the early British period, both governments had made it imperative to tread with care and promote native men who were felt to have fulfilled the most basic of requirements: that of having pro-British tendencies. If these individuals happened to have amassed considerable influence in society, the advantages to be reaped from their services would have been two-fold. As always, there was such a social class present to be exploited: the Maltese nobility. The politically educated had hoped that they would come into their own after both the Knights and the French had been got rid of, but they began to lose their footing in this new brash and materialistic world.<sup>20</sup> These men were linked to the new government by having them appointed officers. In the process, their allegiances were secured as senior rank brought along a respectable and privileged position in this new society. Nevertheless, the local government did not intend to forego much of the influence it had already accumulated by way of conciliating the natives. Whenever British officers were not put in command of the native Corps, they were instead installed as Inspectors, thereby effectively avoiding the risk of arousing jealousy on the score of rank between the two peoples whilst also keeping a close eye on the constitution of the forces.

### **3.2.1 'A very deserving class of men'**

The first batch of officers to command Maltese troops during the Blockade (and nascent British rule) was indubitably British. The lack of discipline then pervading the ranks of the village peasant battalions made it incumbent on the British High Command to temporarily attach officers of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup> Regiments to the companies of the

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<sup>20</sup> Holland, 17.

Maltese Light Infantry upon formation while under the overall command of Major James Weir.<sup>21</sup>

Graham, we are told, was accorded no control as to whom commissions were to be given, with the exception of the assistant-surgeon; a certain Mr. Giuseppe Fabri. The latter was appointed to that post on the sixteenth of May 1800. The following year, however, authority having been received to commission Maltese, Fabri was duly appointed Ensign on August twenty-sixth and Mr. Giuseppe Camilleri succeeded him as assistant surgeon.<sup>22</sup> Fabri is considered to have been the first native officer to hold commissioned rank during the British period.

The practice by which members of the nobility were given the highest posts could be said to have commenced with the formation of the Maltese Militia in 1801. With his proclamation of the first of January of the same year, Pigot pronounced that the Maltese were to be officered by their fellow countrymen drawn from the upper class; 'Maltese and of good families' as Chesney had put it.<sup>23</sup> These 'idle rich'<sup>24</sup>, for whom the only opening were the law and the church were part of a calculated plan by which the population could be conciliated and British influence extended over a most fundamental social *stratum*.

As discussed earlier, Ball, while acting as minister to the Grandmaster of the Order, during the period of peace between 1802 and 1803, raised the three Maltese Corps which were to remain in operation until immediately before Napoleon's One Hundred Days. Initially, these corps were to be commanded by Major Weir and Captain Vivion<sup>25</sup>, while the residue of the officers necessary for completing the establishment

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<sup>21</sup> On landing in December 1799, Ball notified Graham that the blockading force only consisted of two thousand Maltese volunteers, most of whom were carrying on their civil avocations during the day. Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, *Freshly Remembered: The Story of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch* (London, The Hogarth Press, 1956), 117.

<sup>22</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Major A. G. Chesney, *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army* (London, William Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1897), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Bonnici and Michael Cassar, *Malta and British Army Infantry Regiments* (Malta, BDL Publishing, 2009), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Captain Vivion was a Royal Artillery officer who had been Ball's deputy throughout the Blockade and was later appointed military secretary to Hildebrand Oakes. His residence in the Island from the



were to be taken principally from among the Maltese.<sup>26</sup> Hobart also requested that Ball include in his despatch the names of such persons which he thought 'deserving' of being recommended to His Majesty upon that particular occasion.<sup>27</sup>

However, it was later decided that these commandants be appointed Inspectors instead. The extract below sheds light on Ball's reasoning:

With respect to the appointment of Captain Vivion and Major Weir to command these Corps I beg leave (with the concurrence of Major Gen. Villetes) humbly to suggest to Your Lordship whether it would not be advisable that instead of being commandants, these Gentlemen should hold the situation of Inspectors.

The Corps would thus derive equal advantage from their professional abilities, whilst the risk of exciting that jealousy on the score of rank which might otherwise be apprehended would be effectually avoided. Captain Vivion at present acts as Inspector to both regiments, an office which is perfectly compatible with his staff appointments in the Garrison.<sup>28</sup>

The Provincial Battalions were then poised to each be commanded by a member of the Maltese nobility, one by the Marquis Parisio and the other by Count Luigi de Gatto; the Maltese Veterans were to be commanded by Marquis Pandolfo Testaferrata; the Malta Coast Artillery by Vivion. Hobart was assured that only pro-British officers were selected, though Villetes was not too satisfied with the latest developments, nor was he trustful. He had been apprehensive about the doubtful efficiency of the Corps if officered entirely by Maltese and on the ninth of September 1803 had written to his superiors in London expressing his concern over the rather delicate situation.<sup>29</sup> Apart from Weir and Vivion, the adjutants were to be British. After forcefully insisting on this

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commencement of the Blockade had given him, in Oakes' words, 'a thorough knowledge of the Maltese character.' Oakes to Liverpool, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 8, 25 Apr. 1811.

<sup>26</sup> Hobart to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, 20 June 1803.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/10, No. 27, 14 Sep. 1803.

<sup>29</sup> Samut-Tagliaferro (1976), 40.

proviso, Villettes was assured that the appointments of said adjutants met with His Majesty's approbation.

Apart from the supposed defensive value of the Corps, the political aspect of the Maltese battalions in relation to the needs of the government had been well realized by Ball:

Regarding this corps as an important means of serving the attachment of the respectable Maltese Families most of whom have sons or near relations among the Officers and likewise as a strong instance in proof of the important uses to which the excep[tion] of the quick population in these Islands may hereafter be convertible...<sup>30</sup>

After the two Provincial battalions were reduced to one in 1807, a plan for final disembodiment had been in the pipeline. In a despatch to Castlereagh, Ball submitted his opinion as to the utility of the continuation of the Corps. He revealed that, while discarding other relevant issues, the battalion should not suffer the same fate as other native military bodies had and should be continued as a provision was thus afforded to the sons of several of the most 'respectable families in the Island'.<sup>31</sup>

In 1812, when the period of engagement of the Corps was nearing expiration once again, Oakes came close to begging for a further five years which, after consideration, he duly got. He outlined the causes of such a plea to Bathurst:

Your Lordship is probably aware that the Maltese Nobility, reaping fewer advantages from the Commercial prosperity of the Island than the other classes of Society, may be supposed to appreciate less highly the benefits which their Country derives from being under His Majesty's Government; and, under these circumstances it is conceived that to conciliate the attachment of a class of men possessing considerable influence, but precluded by local prejudices from entering into other Professions, no expedient is likely

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<sup>30</sup> Ball to Camden, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/12, 26 Nov. 1804.

<sup>31</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807.

to prove more effectual than that of holding out to them the means of employment in a respectable Department of the Military Service.<sup>32</sup>

Before the ravages of the plague had been extirpated, Oakes was more than certain that the Provincial Battalion could not be re-instated to its official and proper establishment. Men were not enticed into enlisting. Naturally, a reduction was on the cards. Oakes deemed the officers – nobles and non-nobles – ‘a very deserving class of men’ – and recommended that they be able to retire on half-pay.<sup>33</sup> He depicted the final suggestion as of the utmost importance. Several ‘respectable’ inhabitants had zealously attached themselves to the government and it was in the British interest, he claimed, to cultivate said attachment.<sup>34</sup> These people were precluded from devoting themselves to commerce due to local prejudices while some of them were too old to enter other professions.

However, an episode which cannot be failed to mentioned was the *annus horribilis* of 1811 for a few of the officers of noble stock. For daring to sign the petition of 1811, Oakes sought to punish the Maltese dissidents who lent their names to the memorial. Paolo Parisio, the commander of the Provincial Battalion was placed on the supernumerary list and resigned his commission in disgust<sup>35</sup>; the Marquis Pandolpho Testaferrata was placed on half-pay (yet permitted to retain his small pension); while the leader of the dissidents, the Marquis Nicoló Testaferrata lost his captaincy in the country militia.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.2/1, No. 13, 3 Oct. 1812.

<sup>33</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 22, 25 Sep. 1813.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Parisio was later offered and accepted the office of a Lord Lieutenant by Sir Thomas Maitland. In 1831 he despatched a memorial to the ‘General Commanding in Chief’, ‘praying’ for the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Maltese Fencibles. His request was denied on the grounds that the command of the Regiment was not vacant and also because recommendations for commissions rested with ‘the Governor or Lieutenant Governor of Malta, a circumstance of which the Cavaliere cannot be ignorant...’ Goderich to Ponsonby, NAM, GOV 02.1/24, No. 20, 14 Sep. 1831.

<sup>36</sup> Desmond Gregory, *Malta, Britain, and the European Powers, 1793-1815* (London, Associated University Presses, Inc., 1996), 178.

The policy which had been laid down by Hobart earlier on was still in force by the time General The Marquess of Hastings's tenure as Governor. Soon after taking office, Hastings recommended an increase in the establishment of the Fencibles and got the approval of the government to increase the number of officers, subject to increasing the number of the Other Ranks. He was further notified:

And as it is intended that the Corps should be officered by Natives of Malta alone who have claims to the consideration and favour of Your Excellency's Government, I have to desire that you will notify to me from time to time the names of the individuals whom your Excellency may think proper to recommend for Commissions in the Corps for the purpose of my intermitting them to His Royal Highness the Commander in Chief.<sup>37</sup>

Even though the Corps, in essence should have been led by 'Natives of Malta', overall control of the Regiment still lay with the Corsican Rivarola. Due to the financial burden his rank and appointment had imposed on the government's revenue<sup>38</sup>, Bouverie called for the Secretary of State's attention on the matter.<sup>39</sup>

As time passed, members of the nobility saw their influence gradually wane. This can be instanced in two despatches sent by Governor Bouverie to Lord John Russell, forwarding a memorial by the *Marchese Apap*<sup>40</sup> and a petition by Count Francesco Sant.<sup>41</sup> Among other things, both these men requested commissions; the *Marchese* for his son while Count Sant requested one for himself. These requests were refused. Though Bouverie felt 'very happy' to bring the *Marchese's* son's name 'under your Lordship's favourable notice' he was not appointed to his preferred position as two other individuals had to be accommodated before himself: Cadet Mr. de Piro and Mr. James Laznarini, 'the latter of whom particularly has strong claims for consideration, for

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<sup>37</sup> Bathurst to Hastings, NAM, GOV 02.1/12, No. 28, 21 Jan. 1825.

<sup>38</sup> Rivarola's appointment as Colonel Commandant of the Corps included an allowance of twenty shillings per day. This was reduced to ten shillings a day with effect on 1 June 1838.

<sup>39</sup> Bouverie to Glenelg, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/47, No. 6, 8 Jan. 1838.

<sup>40</sup> Bouverie to Russell, NAM, GOV 01.2/19, Duplicate No. 38, 11 Apr. 1840.

<sup>41</sup> Bouverie to Russell, NAM, GOV 01.2/19, Duplicate, No. 5, 27 Jan. 1841.

services rendered by his Father and Grand-Father in a Military capacity to this Government.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bouverie to Russell, NAM, GOV 01.2/19, Duplicate No. 38, 11 Apr. 1840.

# CONCLUSION

*'No acquisition could have proved so valuable to England.'*

Adolphus Slade<sup>1</sup>

The Maltese Corps had a checkered history. Most of these, the British government took to disbanding with 'monotonous regularity'<sup>2</sup>, leaving no thought about the men who filled the ranks and obediently obeyed their government.

Before 1815, various corps were raised to counter the Napoleonic threat. After this had subsided, there was only need for one such native military unit.

Apart from the defensive dimension of the Corps, these were essentially a practical and political tool. The Corps served as a form of employment to the unemployed lower classes and also provided employment to the 'idle rich'<sup>3</sup> – the nobles who did not benefit from trade and who were too old to enter into other 'liberal professions.'<sup>4</sup> These persons wielded considerable influence and had to be assimilated lest they foment trouble in the colony.

. According to Edward Zammit, 'military efficiency partly depends upon civilian cooperation.'<sup>5</sup> The Army only exists because individuals enlist. However good these native soldiers served their colonial masters obediently and willingly, this can and will be construed as a form of collaboration. Colonialism can only flourish with the help of the colonized.

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<sup>1</sup> Adolphus Slade, *Turkey, Greece and Malta* (Volume 1) (London, Saunders and Otley, 1837), 56.

<sup>2</sup> C. L. Borg, *Salute to Maltese Infantrymen* (Malta, Valletta Publishing, 1990), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Bonnici and Michael Cassar, *Malta and British Army Infantry Regiments* (Malta, BDL Publishing, 2009), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Oakes to Bathurst, NAM, GOV 1/1/7, No. 22, 25 Sep. 1813.

<sup>5</sup> Edward L. Zammit, *A Colonial Inheritance: Maltese Perceptions of Work, Power and Class Structure with reference to the Labour Movement* (Malta, Malta University Press, 1984), 10.

Nonetheless, it is easy to condemn such men: men who allowed themselves to be shaped into weapons within the harness of uniform. But we should beware of self-righteous cant. These individuals were products of their own society; a brutal society who espoused hardship, hunger and destitution. When men born into such conditions are offered a comprehensible system of reward and punishment, clearly defined tasks and a sense of collective self-esteem, they could be shaped into any weapon, however indiscriminate it would be.<sup>6</sup>

Maltese and Gozitan troops formed part of a force whose aim and objective was to garrison a colony on behalf of a foreign power; to garrison a military fief.

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Windrow, *Our Friends Beneath the Sands: The Foreign Legion in France's Colonial Conquests, 1870-1935* (Great Britain, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2010), 34.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

**An extract from a letter sent by Brigadier General Thomas Graham from his headquarters in Gudja, to Lieutenant General Fox, dated 22 Feb. 1800.<sup>7</sup>**

...As I am well convinced the enemy will make other efforts for the relief of that fortress, which it is evident they set a true value on, I have determined to increase our armed force on the Island by a levy of Maltese.

At first I thought of raising a regiment of 1,000 men, but Colonel Stewart of the 89<sup>th</sup> Regiment declining to undertake it, I mean to become answerable myself for all expenses, and to raise independent companies, each to be under the command of a British officer, appointed to do duty with it, from these two regiments [the 30<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup>]

... if we keep our footing in this Island, and should ever be fortunate to get possession of La Valetta, there can be no doubt of the necessity of such a corps, and therefore I should hope the voluntary services of the officers would be a strong recommendation in their favour.

...Governor Ball assures me that this levy may be carried to a considerable extent, without at all interfering with the battalions of armed peasants furnished by each village, or at least without diminishing their numbers, and there can be no doubt of their being much more useful and manageable than these are. I imagine that the rates of pay, including the ration, or value of it, must be fixed at 8d.; the armed peasants received 40 ounces of bread, valued at an average at two *taris*, and one *tari* in money; it will be

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<sup>7</sup> Brigadier A. Samut-Tagliaferro, CBE, *History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Volume 1 (1800-1939)* (Malta, Lux Press, 1976), 13.



necessary to give one *tari* more and clothing to induce them to submit to the restraint of discipline and being absent from their families.

...Arms, accoutrements, and clothing may be got immediately from the prizes; the material article is that of their not serving out of the Island – at present an indispensable one for the success of a hasty levy.

It may eventually expose me to severe responsibility.

But being well aware of that, it is at least a strong proof of my conviction of the urgency of the case, and it is the only means in my power for increasing our force, and providing for our security in case the enemy should be enabled to act offensively...

## Appendix II

**Brigadier General Graham's proclamation calling for the first two companies of a Maltese levy, dated 28 Mar. 1800.<sup>8</sup>**

### IL COLONELLO GENERALE GRAHAM

Riflettendo alti migliori mezzi di accrescere la forza de Maltesi, e di sollevare nel tempo istesso i Poveri, proponiamo di formare due Compagnie di Soldati Maltesi, de quali ciascuna sarà composta di

*Un Capitano*<sup>9</sup>

*Un Tenente*

*Un Insegno*

*Un Ajutante*            il soldo di 7 al giorno

*Quattro Sergenti*    ... 5,10 ...

*Cinque Caporali*    ... 4 ...

*Due Tanburri*        ... 3...

*Cento Soldati*        ... 3 ...

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<sup>8</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 430, Vol. 1, p. 72, *Il Colonello Generale Graham, 28 Marzo 1800.*

<sup>9</sup> The ranks of Captain, Lieutenant and Ensign of every company were occupied by serving British officers.

Altre al la qual paga, su menzionati Ajutante, Sergenti, Caporali, Tanburri, e Soldati Maltesi avranno un Lane di venti quattro oncie al giorno essendo acquartierati una sufficiente quantità di Legna per cuocere a Loro parimenti ti darà nelli due anni d'ingaggiamento competente Vestuario consistente in due abiti uno di Lanno, e un altro di Cottone composti di Giacchetta, e Pantalone, due Cappelli, e due Coperte per Dormire.

In'oltre nell'atto dell'ingaggio cadauno di loro sarà delegata di due Camigie, due para diL, un Grovattino, una Barretta, un sacco, e qualche cosa in Denaro non accedon alla Somma di Scudi cinque.

Ben'inteso che tutte le su menzionati Robe a Loro una volta date, dovranno ben conservarle, e mantenere in buon'essere durante tutto il tempo del loro ingaggio, accomodandole, e rinovando le bisognando a proprie spese

Il quale ingaggio sarà per anni due, prometteri Loro nella piu` sollevarle, ed' efficace maniera, che non saratino mai forzati d'uscir'a servire fuori di questi Isole.

Avranno finalmente riguardo allo Spirituale, un Cappellano Maltese per tutte le Compagnie. Chiunque intanto vorra` riclutarsi nelle su menzionati Compagnie, quanto all'eta` bisogna che non sia minore di quindici, ne maggiore di trent'anni, e che sia alto di statura cinque piedi, e tre pollici, se avra` compiuti i dieci otto anni, quali pero` che non saranno ancora gionti a tal eta, basta che siano alti di soli cinque piedi ed'un pollice.

Adi 28 Marzo 1800. E` stato letto, e pubblicato nei luoghi soliti e consueti della Citta` Notabile e suo Borgo in presenza di più persone a suono di tamburro.

## Appendix III

**Major General Pigot's proclamation calling for volunteers to join the new Militia, dated 1 Jan. 1801.<sup>10</sup>**

### PROCLAMAZIONE

Sua Eccellenza il Sig. Maggior Generale PIGOT Comandante nell'Isole di Malta e Gozo, informa i bravi abitanti di Malta, che dall'esperienza ch'egli ebbe del loro coraggio, e buona condotta, come soldati, e per maggiormente renderli capaci di opporsi a qualunque attacco, che i loro nemici potessero tentare contro quella pace e felicità, ch'eglino presentemente godono, ha creduto necessario per questo effetto di levare e incorporare, come Milizia, un certo numero di detti abitanti; ed ha confidato il comando della Divisione delle quattro Città al Sig. Conte de Gatt, quello della Divisione de' casali verso Ponente al Sig. Marchesi Parisi, e quello della Divisione de' casali verso Levante al Sig. Simeone Spiteri Gana. Ha pure nominato i Sig. Marchese Depiro, Barone Bonnici, ed.

Capitani della Divisione della Città; I Sig. Cavaliere Nicolò Testaferrata, Vincenzo di Borg, e Antonio Cilia Capitani della Divisione del Ponente, li Sig. Giuseppe Abela, Agostino Said, e Gaetano Balzan Capitani della Divisione di Levante.

Questi Signori hanno ricevuto da parte di SUA ECCELLENZA il Sig. Generale Comandante la piena autorità di far volontarj per questo servizio, ed eglino spiegheranno a'detti volontarj i vantaggi ch ne raccoglieranno, oltre l'opportunità che avranno di aggiungere delle nuove prove di quello amore per la loro Patria, per il quale i Maltesi sono talmente distinti.

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<sup>10</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 431, Folio 46, *Il Sig. Maggior Generale Pigot, 1 Gennaio 1801.*

Finalmente SUA ECCELLENZA, il. Sig. Generale Comandante invita al servizio tutti quei bravi uomini, che durante l'ultima guerra, servivano ne' Battaglioni dei casali, il coraggio e i magnanimi sforzi dei quali ebbero una così gran parte alla libarazione della loro Patria.

Dato nel primo Gennaro 1801.

## Appendix IV

**Proclamation setting out certain privileges for recruits joining the Militia units, dated 30 Jan. 1801.<sup>11</sup>**

### MALTA

**30 GENNARO 1801**

Privilegi che dovranno godere tutti quelli che si iscriveranno nel Corpo d'Infanteria, e Artiglieria per la difesa dell'Isola di Malta.

1. Saranno esenti dalla tassa dei diciotto trarì, che si vogliono pagare all'Università per i Carettoni.
2. Pizi del diritto della Paglia, che altre volte apparteneva alli Colonnelli, e che al presente appartiene al Governo.
3. Nè casi che dovranno carcerarsi saranno calturati non da Ministri della Giustizia, ma dai loro Compagni medesimi.
4. Dovendo essere chiamato qualche duno di detti ascritti in giudizio sopra cose civili bisognerà ottenere il permesso del suo rispettivo Comandante.
5. Finalmente i sudetti ascritti potranno con'ogni libertà andare alla Carcia nè sono soggetti a ricercare il permesso.

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<sup>11</sup> NLM, Valletta, Malta, Ms 430, Folio 108, *30 Gennaro 1801*.

## Appendix V

**Despatch dated 6 Nov. 1802 from Lord Hobart to Sir Alexander Ball, approving of the latter's plan in the setting up of a Maltese Corps.<sup>12</sup>**

Duplicate

Secret

Downing Street

6 Nov., 1802

Sir,

I have had the honor [sic.] to lay before the King your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> August, together with the Plan therewith transmitted, for raising a Maltese Corps, to be formed into two Regiments, each to consist of one thousand men.

That plan having received His Majesty's Approbation, I am now to convey to you His Majesty's Authority to take the proper measures for carrying it into effect, with as little delay as possible; and I have no doubt of your using every degree of Circumspection in the selection of the Individuals of whom the Corps may be composed.

It cannot be expected that you will be able to take any steps for executing these orders without foreknowing some observations and Remonstrance, on the Part of General Vial; in replying to these it may be sufficient for you to observe, that you are only accelerating the object of the Treaty, which expressly requires, that the Garrison to remain in Malta shall "at all times consist at least one half of Native Maltese."

In the mean time you will adhere, with the utmost vigilance, to the injunction continued in my Secret Despatch of the 17<sup>th</sup> ultimo<sup>13</sup>, to direct your conduct in such a manner, as "to do nothing that may have the effect of weakening your authority and influence under any circumstances".

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<sup>12</sup> Hobart to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, Duplicate Secret, 6 Nov. 1802.

<sup>13</sup> Last month.

I have enclosed to Major General Villetes, by this Conveyance, an Extract of that part of this letter which transmits His Majesty's Orders for raising the Maltese Corps; directing, him, at the same time, to afford you every assistance in his Power, for carrying those orders into effect.

I have the honor [sic.] to be

(Signed)

Hobart



## Appendix VI

**Despatch dated 28 Jan. 1803 from Sir Alexander Ball, informing Lord Hobart that 800 men are already recruited in the new Maltese Corps.<sup>14</sup>**

28 Jan. 1803

To Lord Hobart

My Lord

I have the honor to acquaint Your Lordship that in pursuance of your instructions I have proceeded in raising a Maltese Corps. The number of men now enrolled amounts to 800. I have not accepted indiscriminately of such so/as have offered but have only enlisted those who have brought a certificate of their good character and of their never having been convicted of any offence before the Criminal Court. This selection of men as well as officers will I trust inspire an *esprit de corps* which will be [sic.] the islands of maintaining its respectability.

The French Minister and his party (amongst whom may now be reckoned the adherents of the Order) have propagated a report that it is the intention of Govt to send these two regiments out of the Island. And I am well informed that several persons influenced by this summons have been withheld from enlisting. Others have been determined from coming forward by the idea of them being turned over to the service of the Grand Master. Were these objections obviated the Corps would have been soon completed.

(Signed) A. Ball

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<sup>14</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/8, No. 11, 28 Jan. 1803.

## Appendix VII

**Despatch dated 8 Feb. 1803 from Sir Alexander Ball, forwarding suggestions about the deployment of the two regiments when completed to Lord Hobart.<sup>15</sup>**

8 Feb. 1803

To Lord Hobart

My Lord,

In my letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> last I had the honor [sic.] to inform Your Lordship of the number and description of men I had then enlisted for the purpose of forming a Maltese Corps.

I now beg leave to suggest to your Lordship that it would be very desirable when the Corps is completed to 2000 men to select 300 for the service of the Artillery who will be required at the different towers round the three Islands and as the service of the invalid native guards is absolutely necessary at the different offices and public places, I would recommend the selection of 300 more from among the oldest and most steady for this purpose, thus leaving two effective battalions of 700 men each.

The formation of the Corps into your intent of two divisions as was at first intended would so far from being attended with any additional expenses to Government, be the means ultimately of a considerable saving; as the invalid Corps will hold out a provision for superannuated or infirm soldiers who would otherwise require pensions, besides an encouragement to young men to enlist when they may hope for such an asylum in their old age.

There is now in the Island a considerable number of old men who served as soldiers under the Government of the Order. They are inveterate against the French from the maltreatment they received from them on their arrival here, many of them having been forced into their service and carried off to Egypt. These men must be supported either by pensions or otherwise and should Your Lordship approve I would select from this number a certain proportion for the Corps of Invalids.

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<sup>15</sup> Ball to Hobart, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/9, No. 13, 8 Feb. 1803.

/sa/ A. Ball

## Appendix VIII

**Despatch dated 20 June 1803 from Lord Hobart to Sir Alexander Ball regarding the transfer of two British officers sent to take command of the Maltese Corps.<sup>16</sup>**

Downing Street

20 June 1803

Sir,

The State of Public affairs in Holland having finally led to the recall of His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary from the Hague, and His Majesty having in Consequence ordered letters of Marque and Reprisal to be issued against the Ships and vessels of the Batavian as well as against those of the French Republic, I have received The King's Commands to communicate to you the earliest Intelligence of this event, and at the same time to transmit to you a copy (herein inclosed [sic.]) of His Majesty's most gracious Message there upon to both Houses of Parliament.

In order to enable you to complete the two Maltese Battalions, His Majesty has been pleased to direct Major Weir and Captain Vivion to proceed immediately to Malta to take the Command of those Corps. The residue of the Officers necessary for completing the establishment will be taken principally from among the Maltese, according to the original Plan, subject to His Majesty's approbation and you inklose [sic.] no time in transmitting to me the names of such Persons as you may think deserving of being recommended to His Majesty upon this occasion.

I am persuaded that it is unnecessary for me to enjoin you to the whole of this measure with the fullest and most confidential Communication with the Officer Commanding the British Troops, as I am well convinced that you will obviate with particular conviction everything that might tend to Sow the Seeds of Jealousy on difference not only with the officer in the Chief Command, but also between the Officers and Men of the British Regiments, and those of the Maltese Corps.

The Military qualities evinced by the Maltese during the late War while acting with His Majesty's Troops, especially at Porto Ferrajo, render it in every point of view important that the Services of the Maltese Regiments should not be restricted by their

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<sup>16</sup> Hobart to Ball, NAM, GOV 02.1/1, 20 June 1803.

Capitulation to the Islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino, but that His Majesty should be able to avail himself of the benefits of those Corps for further Service should the circumstances of the War render it desirable.

You will therefore take such measures as you may judge to be most advisable for extending the capitulation to general Service; and, in the event of your succeeding, it will be necessary that you should arrange a Plan for reviving the ancient Militia Force of Malta and Gozo, in order that, on any emergency, the absence of any part of the Regular Maltese Force may be readily supplied.

I have the honor...

(Signed)

Hobart

## Appendix IX

**Despatch dated 26 Nov. 1804 from Sir Alexander Ball to the Earl of Camden, on the satisfactory conduct of the Maltese Battalions and suggesting wages and status.<sup>17</sup>**

To the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Camden

Malta 26 Nov. 1804

My Lord

It is not without the highest satisfaction that I have inclosed [sic.] copies of a public declaration of Maj. Gen. Villetes containing his high approbation of the military appearance, conduct and steadiness of the Maltese Battalions, which as instanced in the least review would have reflected honor [sic.] on any Corps whatever.

To this well merited praise, I have only to add that there is every reason to be equally satisfied with the loyal attachment of these battalions to the interests of His Brittanic [sic.] Majesty and sufficient grounds for believing that they are disposed to receive with cheerfulness or ever to volunteer an extension of their services.

Regarding this corps as an important means of serving the attachment of the respectable Maltese Families most of whom have sons or near relations among the Officers and likewise as a strong instance in proof of the important uses to which the excep[tion] of the quick population in these Islands may hereafter be convertible, I think myself justified in recommending to His Majesty's Ministers with every sentiment of deference the propriety of putting them on the same footing with the other foreign corps in his Majesty's service; This however to depend on the condition of their making themselves liable to Foreign Service in the Mediterranean and to take place from the time of their being embarked. But even if they should not be used for the Foreign Service I should still recommend an increase of pay to the Officers, out of 3 shillings per day to the Colonels, of 2 shillings to the Captains and of eighteen pence to the Subalterns, which will at all events additionally secure to us men to be relied on for the Forts and Garrisons in the Islands themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> Ball to Camden, NAM, GOV 01.2/30/12, 26 Nov. 1804.

In the company of Coast Artillery I should submit the propriety of adding to the present pay of Captains 2/. a day and 1/. to that of the Subalterns. And in the Invalids in which there are only 1 Captain and 2 Lieutenants instead of the usual establishment of 3 Captains, 3 Lieutenants and 3 Ensigns and in which of course each Officer performs what is the business of three in other similar Corps. I should recommend an increase of 3/ a day to the Captain and of 2/ to the Lieutenants.

After all these augmentations there will still remain a saving of £8000 a year in favor [sic.] of these Battalions compared with the expenses of the Battalions of the same name on the British establishment.

If anything would add to the present disposition of the Maltese to prove themselves worthy of the protection of Great Britain and to their habits of feeling and acting as subjects of His Britannic Majesty, this measure would not fail to do it, it being not only a great encouragement to the individuals who receive the honor [sic.] and advantages, but a mark of regard as confidence to the Maltese people at large.

I have

/sa/. A. J. Ball

## Appendix X

**Despatch dated 6 Nov. 1806 from Sir Alexander Ball addressed to William Windham about the revision of the militia system in Malta.<sup>18</sup>**

Rt. Hon. William Windham

6 Nov. 1806

Sir,

I am honoured with your dispatch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> September conveying to me His Majesty's commands to revive in concert with Lt. General Villetes, the present Militia System of these Islands, and form such a number of Corps or Companies of Militia at the different villages as shall be judged proper with a view to bringing forward such a force of this description as may be always ready, at the shortest notice, to co-operate with His Majesty's Troops in defending the Islands.

To facilitate this desirable measure the plan communicated to me by General Villetes, of which I have the Honor [sic.] to transmit a copy, appears extremely well calculated as embracing the objects in view with as little inconvenience to the Inhabitants, and at as moderate an expense to Government as could be expected. It coincides indeed so much with any sentiments that I have suggested only one deviation as necessary vizt. [sic.] that, in the event of an Enemy *effecting* a landing, the Militia should be placed exactly on the same footing with the regular troops, as I conceive that, under such circumstances, any possible ground of jealousy or dissatisfaction should be avoided.

With much satisfaction I have received His Majesty's commands to consolidate the Two Provincial Battalions both as the measure will render these troops more effective, and as it affords reason to hope that it is the King's gracious intention to continue the existence of a Corps which I regard as a most important mean of conciliating the attachment of a large proportion of the respectable Maltese families most of which have sons or other near relatives amongst the officers, or at least, look forward to their admission.

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<sup>18</sup> Ball to Windham, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 4, 6 Nov. 1806.



I beg leave to add, however, that the present very small pay of the Officers of that Corps having now become insufficient to enable them, with the utmost economy, to maintain their rank in Society, I should humbly recommend that it be increased in the moderate proportion specified in the enclosed scheme.

The extra expence incurred by this increase including the addition of a Major, would not exceed £912.10 currency or £821.5 Sterling and comparing the total expence of the Corps with that of a British Regiment on the same establishment (whilst the former will supply the place of such Regiment for the purposes of Garrison duty) a saving will accrue to Government of several Thousand pounds. In regard to the establishment of this Corps in other respects I am humbly of opinion that no alteration should take place and I should particularly recommend that the command continue to be rested in a Native Officer, as, under any other arrangement, the greatest inconvenience may be apprehended. With respect to the discipline of the Regiment I conceive that that object may be fully attained under the present arrangement more especially as the Corps will probably always form a component part of the Garrison and will, therefore, be under the immediate view of the General.

Without insisting upon the predilection which every provincial Corps (and especially a Corps of Maltese) must naturally feel for a Commander chosen from amongst their own Countrymen, I should apprehend many difficulties to arise from a frequent succession of British Lt. Colonels probably unacquainted with the language, and therefore unable to communicate with, or to conciliate Corps. I should recommend, however, the continuance of an English Inspector, and I conceive that no one is better qualified for that situation than the Gentleman who has hitherto held it, as Captain Vivion from his long residence on the Island is thoroughly acquainted with the Inhabitants.

No enlistments having been made for the Provincial Corps during the raising of the Royal Regiment of Malta, it may be advisable to desist until the latter be compleated [sic]; but as it may be hoped that that event is not distant, I should wish to be instructed in regard to the term of years for which those who may hereafter enlist for the Provincial Corps shall be enrolled. Probably it may be advisable to fix it at five years as has hitherto been the case and I am well persuaded that were their services required elsewhere during the period of their enrolment they would unanimously volunteer to extend them to Sicily or any part of the Mediterranean.

I avail myself of the present opportunity to recommend a similar increase of pay to that suggested above to the Officers of Coast Artillery visibly to Captains 2/. per day and to Subalterns 1/6. And for the Invalids in which there is only one Captain, and 2 Lieutenants instead of the usual establishment of Three Captains,

Three Lieu. [Lieutenants] and 3 Ensigns I should recommend an increase of Three shillings per day to the Captain and of Two shillings to the Lieutenants.

I have the honor to be with the greatest respect, Sir ... [Alexander Ball].

P.S. Should it be the opinion of His Majesty's Ministry that a British Lieut. Colonel be appointed to the command of the Provincial Corps I beg leave to say that no one is better qualified for that appointment than Major Hamill<sup>19</sup> of the Royal Regt. of Malta a Gentleman whose professional abilities are very highly estimated by Lt. General Villetes and who is highly respected by the Maltese.

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<sup>19</sup> Major Hamill would later fall in the defence of Capri in October 1808. Writing years after the event had taken place, Castagna placed the blame solely on this officer and insinuated that the latter had been a drunkard. Pietro Paolo Castagna, *Lis Storia ta Malta Bil Gzejer Tahha (It-tieni darba)* (Volume 2) (Fascimile Edition) (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 1985), 416.

## Appendix XI

**Despatch dated 22 Aug. 1807 from Sir Alexander Ball presenting a plan for the continuation of the Provincial Battalion to Viscount Castlereagh.<sup>20</sup>**

L. Viscount Castlereagh

22 Aug 1807

Mr Lord,

As the service of Five years for which the Troops composing the Maltese Provincial Battalion were engaged to serve will expire in the course of the months of December, January, and February next, I beg leave to submit to your Lordship my opinion with respect to the expediency of continuing this Corps according to the plan I have now the honor [sic.] to enclose.

Of the popularity of the measure there can be no doubt as a provision is thus afforded to the Sons of several of the most respectable families in the Island, and the Maltese in general are flattered by the confidence reposed in them, but independently of the good effects which naturally result from such a Bond of Union I do not hesitate to recommend the continuance of this Corps on the ground of utility. Whilst the Provincial Corps remains, a British Regiment of the Line may be spared for other services, and, from the difference of pay considerable saving of expence will accrue to Government.

With respect to the defence of the Island, I humbly conceive that three British Regiments with the Maltese Provincial Corps, the Coast Artillery and Invalids, and Two Thousand Militia (to be called in to Force on any emergency) will be amply sufficient to secure that object whilst we continue to retain the attachment of the Inhabitants which may safely affirm, has been hitherto increasing [sic.]. Of the loyalty, indeed, of the Maltese, and of their attachment to His Majesty's Government a striking proof was afforded during the late services mutiny in the Regiment of Froberg. At that period there were only two British Regiments, with a few Companies of Artillery in the

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<sup>20</sup> Ball to Castlereagh, NAM, GOV 01.1/2, No. 23, 22 Aug. 1807.

Island, the remainder of the military Force having been composed of the Regiment of Dillon, the Royal Regiment of Malta, the Provincial Corps, and the Maltese Artillery and Invalids; and I am assured that there were then not less than one thousand French Prisoners on the Island. Had there been the smallest degree of dissatisfaction, therefore, amongst the inhabitants it is natural to suppose that it would under such circumstances have manifested itself; but I can, with equal pleasure and confidence assure Your lordship that Lt. Gen. Villettes and myself had the satisfaction of witnessing, on that occasion not only the zeal and order displayed by the Maltese Troops, but the anxious solicitude which pervaded all ranks and degree of the Inhabitants to testify their attachment to His Majesty's Government I have the honor [sic.] to be with the greatest respect...

A. B.

P.S. As the period will soon arrive when a part of the soldiers composing the Provincial Corps will be released from their engagement may I beg leave to request that Your Lordship will be pleased to honour me with early instructions on the subject.

## Appendix XII

### **Brigadier General Oswald's report concerning the desertions of men of the Royal Regiment of Malta, dated 15 Aug. 1808.<sup>21</sup>**

After having repeatedly stated the improvement which had taken place in the Malta Regiment together with my expectation that it arose from causes likely to render it permanent, it is with sentiments of mortification that I again report fresh and numerous instances of desertion having occurred in that corps. This disposition will I fear be the more difficult to overcome because it proceeds from none of the motives that commonly urge men to this offence. The discipline and interior economy is now good and the situation of the Maltese soldier is in every respect more comfortable.

This predisposition to desertion arises I have no doubt from the strong national attachments of these people nourished and supported by their proximity to their Island superadded to the conviction that Malta affords an asylum from whence no deserter is brought back and where it is said they shew [show] themselves under the apprehension under the eyes of the local civil and military authorities of its villages.

But whatever the inducement is, a powerful one it must be to impel no less than eleven men in a few days to abscond under all the dangers and difficulties attending it, one was sentry swam off from his post under fire of the Guard, all of them are obliged to take the water, and have to land on spots where every means has been adopted to prompt the country people to pursue them, of the late absentees two only have been secured, those not Maltese, amongst the latter are men of hitherto unimpeached characters.

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<sup>21</sup> Brigadier A. Samut-Tagliaferro, CBE, *History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Volume 1 (1800-1939)* (Malta, Lux Press, 1976), 52.

Upon a reference to the Casual Return no less than one hundred desertions are recorded since the Regiment came to Sicily, and I have consequently thought it my duty to call his Excellency's attention to this great and unsubdued evil.

## Appendix XIII

### Despatch dated 25 Apr. 1811 from Sir Hildebrand Oakes notifying Lord Liverpool as to the final reduction of the Royal Regiment of Malta.<sup>22</sup>

The Earl of Liverpool

Malta 25 Apr., 1811

No. 8

My Lord, I am honoured with your Lordship's dispatch of the 21<sup>st</sup> of February last informing me that it had been determined by His Majesty's Government immediately to reduce the Royal Regiment of Malta and directing that measures might be adopted to induce the Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates still belonging to the Regiment to transfer their services to some of the Foreign Corps now serving in the Mediterranean; and Your Lordship adds that such men as may be disinclined to volunteer for the regular Regiments should be attached to the Maltese Provincials.

I now do myself the honour to acquaint your Lordship that measures have been taken for the reduction of this Corps; but as I have judged it necessary for political and prudential reasons to deviate, in some measure from the Instructions communicated to me I have only to hope that when Your Lordship is fully apprised of the motives and circumstances by which I have been actuated on this account you will not withhold your sanction and approbation.

When the order arrived the Regiment was at Gozo in guard over a number of French Cruisers. The Commanding Officer was immediately ordered to repair [sic. report] to Head-Quarters; and from him I learned that a Report having previously reached the Corps relative to its intended reduction the Non-Commissioned Officers and men had unanimously deprecated the idea of being transferred to any other Corps asserting that they had enlisted for the Royal Regiment of Malta alone, and testifying a total disinclination to volunteer with any other.

The Regiment, having been relieved and brought hither I sent Captain Vivion my military Secretary (whose residence in the Island from the commencement of the Blockade in 1798, and whose situation as Inspector and Superintendent of all the

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<sup>22</sup> Oakes to Liverpool, NAM, GOV 01.1/7, No. 8, 25 Apr. 1811.

Provincial Corps has given him a thorough knowledge of the Maltese Character) to communicate officially to the regiment the Instructions I had received for its reduction, and to propose to the Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates to Volunteer into other Regiments. But although a small bounty was offered by way of inducement they unanimously declined to accede to the proposal; nor did they seem less averse to be attached to the Maltese Provincials; not however, from any disaffection to His Majesty's Service but rather I believe, from the comparative displeasing in regard to the Establishment of the latter Corps and from other considerations which I shall beg leave to detail to your Lordship.

Under these circumstances there remained but one alternative, and I judged it expedient to abstain from every appearance of aversion hath as the object to be attained was not in itself of essential moment, and as such a measure might have been no less impolite than it would certainly have been unpopular. Besides it is unnecessary for me to remind your Lordship that as His Majesty's Civil Commissioner I am directed to use every endeavour consistent with my public duty to meet the wishes of the Inhabitants, to show myself indulgent even to their prejudices, and to omit no fair opportunity of annulling [sic.] Their affections and assuring their fidelity to the Government under which they are placed.

I, therefore, determined not to agitate the question of right; and I am happy to add that Lt. General Sir John Stuart, who was here at the moment, perfectly concurred with me in opinion as did also the Senior Officers of the Garrison when I thought it right to consult on such an occasion.

With respect to the Maltese Provincials they are considered as Militia and are upon a totally different footing and establishment from any of the Regular Regiments. The Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates receive considerably less pay, and provide themselves with rations, nor have they the same advantages of being provided for in case of discharge from infirmity and as those of the Royal Regiment of Malta were entitled to by the capitulation which expresses that they shall be treated, in such instances, as British Soldiers. Under such circumstances of inequality a transfer would be deemed unjust and, independent of this consideration, an idea prevails amongst the Soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Malta that by such a measure they would be lowered in a military point of view. It is besides, understood (and the regulation is highly essential) that none but Native Maltese are admissible to the Corps of Provincials, so that a considerable proportion of the Soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Malta would necessarily be included.

It may be proper to add that I have in some degree swayed on the occasion by knowing that the Maltese, of whom the Royal Regiment in question is composed are of the very worst description of men. Of those now here upwards of a



Hundred have at different times been guilty of desertion, and most of them have been punished for that crime. Many of them, too, are old and unfit for Soldiers; and no good could be expected from persons of this description compelled to serve contrary to their inclination. I am convinced, indeed that the relentless would rather prove a detriment to His majesty's Service, and injurious to the Corps of Provincials which though not composed of Soldiers of the first rate is still very respectable in relation to the orderly and good conduct of the men.

Enclosed I have the honor [sic.] to transmit a copy of the order which I have given not on this occasion; and should the non-commissioned officers and men persist in their refusal to volunteer their services, they will all receive their final discharge, excepting a detachment of about 40 men who are doing duty on board of the Gun-boats in Sicily and when Lt. Gen. Sir John Stuart has finished to send over here.

I have only further to observe to Your Lordship that a considerable saving will accrue to Government in consequence of the Regiment being thus considered as no longer in existence in any shape; for the women and children (305 in number) belonging to the men who are Prisoners of War who have hitherto received rations in consequence of an order from Lt. Gen Sir Charles Green (which from nature Of policy and humanity was sanctioned and continued in force) will no longer continue to do so. As, however, the sudden privation of an allowance so long enjoyed was likely to excite some degree of discontent amongst the individuals, and might be considered as an act of inhumanity I have judged that at necessary, on the scare [sic.] of policy, to direct that the women, on the day on which their rations shall cease to be issued, shall each receive a gratuity of four dollars, and I am happy to say that the measure affords universal satisfaction. The amount I have directed to be paid by the Dep. Commissary General and charged to the extraordinaries of the army; and I trust that Your Lordship will sanction the measure by your approbation.

I have the honor to be with the highest respect,

My Lord

(signed)

H. O.

P.S. I have the satisfaction to inform your Lordship that since writing the above, sixteen of the better of the Maltese after being discharged, volunteered for the Provincial Corps; and I am confident that without coercion, we shall still have every man who is worthy of

being received. Among the Foreigners are several Spaniards whom I have made a merit of delivering over to the Spanish Consul, to be sent to their own country.

I deem it right to apprise your Lordship that be this opportunity I address a similar letter to the Commander in Chief.




N<sup>o</sup> 2.

RECORD of the Services of *Feliciano Calleja*

First Enlisted into the Army, for the *Cacciatori Maltesi* Reg<sup>t</sup>. of *Foot*, on *about* of *March* 1800

Attested for the said Regiment on the *about* of *March* 1800, at the Age of *about* *Twenty one* Years and *Three* Months.

Reg <sup>t</sup> .	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank	Period of Service in each Rank		Amount of Service	
			From	To	Years	Days
<i>Cacciatori Maltesi</i>		<i>Drummer</i>	<i>March 1800</i>	<i>March 1802.</i>		
	<i>Discharged</i>		<i>March 1802 in consequence of Disbandment.</i>			
<i>Maltese Provincials</i>	<i>Re enlisted</i>	<i>Drummer</i>	<i>14<sup>th</sup> 1802.</i>	<i>July 1805.</i>		
	<i>Royal Regt of Malta</i>	<i>Re enlisted - Corporal</i>	<i>July 1805.</i>	<i>Aug<sup>r</sup>. 1805.</i>		
<i>"</i>	<i>Promoted</i>	<i>Lieutenant Drum Major</i>	<i>Aug<sup>r</sup>. 1805.</i>	<i>19 Sept<sup>r</sup> 1814.</i>		
			<i>Discharged 19 Sept<sup>r</sup> 1814 in consequence of Disbandment.</i>			
<i>Royal Malta Fencibles</i>	<i>Re enlisted</i>	<i>Lieutenant Drum Major</i>	<i>25 Feb<sup>r</sup> 1815.</i>	<i>24 Feb<sup>r</sup> 1817.</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>Removed on the Reduction of Establish<sup>t</sup></i>	<i>Lieutenant</i>	<i>25 Feb<sup>r</sup> 1817.</i>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1828.</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>311.</i>
<i>do</i>		<i>Sergeant</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1829.</i>	<i>29 Feb<sup>r</sup> 1836.</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>60.</i>
					<i>35.</i>	<i>19.</i>



*St. Denis Major Genl<sup>l</sup> d. 1815.*

Fig. 22: Service record of Feliciano Calleja



N<sup>o</sup> 16

RECORD of the Services of Giovanni Quintano

First Enlisted into the Army, for the Dillon Reg<sup>t</sup>. of Foot, on 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1805

Attested for the said Regiment on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1805, at the Age of Twenty two Years and ----- Months.

Regt.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank	Period of Service in each Rank		Amount of Service	
			From	To	Years	Days
<u>Dillon</u>		<u>Private</u>	<u>6<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1805</u>	<u>24 Feb<sup>y</sup> 1806</u>		
"	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Corporal</u>	<u>25 Feb<sup>y</sup> 1806</u>	<u>24 Oct<sup>r</sup> 1806</u>		
"	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	<u>25 Oct<sup>r</sup> 1806</u>	<u>10 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1815</u>		
<u>Discharged 10 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1815 in consequence of disbandment.</u>						
<u>Royal Malta Fusiliers</u>	<u>Re enlisted</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>12 Dec<sup>r</sup> 1815</u>	<u>24 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1816</u>	"	<u>44</u>
"	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Corporal</u>	<u>25 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1816</u>	<u>24 Feb<sup>y</sup> 1816</u>	"	<u>31</u>
"	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	<u>25 Feb<sup>y</sup> 1816</u>	<u>31<sup>st</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1828</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>311</u>
<u>Malta 1828-1829</u>						
<u>de</u>		<u>Sergeant</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1829</u>	<u>30<sup>th</sup> Septem<sup>b</sup>er 1828</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>273</u>
<u>de</u>	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Colonel</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> October 1828</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Septem<sup>b</sup>er 1844</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>350</u>
						<u>22 290</u>
<u>Dum. Coer</u>						



Fig. 24: Service record of Giovanni Quintano

11.  
N<sup>o</sup> 23

RECORD of the Services of *Litterio A valle*

First Enlisted into the Army, for the *Royal British Volunteers* Regt. of *Foot.*, on *25<sup>th</sup>* of *Sept<sup>r</sup>* 1806

Attested for the said Regiment  
on the *Sept<sup>r</sup>* 1806, at the Age of *Eighteen* Years and *---* Months.

Regt.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank	Period of Service in each Rank		Amount of Service	
			From	To	Years	Days
<i>Royal British Volunteers</i>		<i>Private</i>	<i># 25 Sept 1806</i>	<i># 5 Nov 1806</i>		
<i>British Regiment</i>	<i>Re-enlisted</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1806</i>	<i>24 Sept 1814</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>322</i>
<i>Discharged 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1814 having finished the period of his service</i>						
<i>R. Malta Fencibles</i>	<i>Re-enlisted</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i># 20 Aug 1815</i>	<i># 24 June 1828</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>309</i>
	<i>Promoted</i>	<i>Corporal</i>	<i># 25 June 1828</i>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> Oct 1828</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>M. W. G. M. J. 7/27</i>						
		<i>Corporal</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1829</i>	<i>30<sup>th</sup> April 1837</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Discharged 30<sup>th</sup> April 1837 in consequence of being Invalidated by a Military Board and put on the Pensioned List</i>					<i>28</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>Making a Total Service on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1837 Twenty Eight Years and Two Hundred and Fifty Three Days including Nineteen Years and Three Hundred and Eight Days as Private and Eight Years and Three Hundred and Ten Days as Corporal</i>						
<i>We Certify that the above is a Correct Statement of the Services of Corporal Litterio A valle to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1837</i>						
<i>M. W. G. M. J. Commanding Officer</i>		<i>P. Collet Capt Commanding Company</i>		<i>Levickly Adjutant</i>		

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1911

Fig. 25: Service record of Litterio A valle [1]





258. N°64

RECORD of the Services of Salvatore Micallef

First Enlisted into the Army, for the Maltese Veterans Reg<sup>t</sup>. of 1004, on 1 of August 1844.

Attested for the said Regiment on the 1 of August 1844, at the Age of Sixteen Years and \_\_\_\_\_ Months.

Reg <sup>t</sup> .	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank	Period of Service in each Rank		Amount of Service	
			From	To	Years	Days
<u>Maltese Veterans</u>		<u>Private</u>	<u>Aug<sup>t</sup> 1844</u>	<u>24<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1845</u>		
<u>Royal Maltese Fusiliers</u>	<u>Transferred - do -</u>	<u>do</u>	<u>25<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1845</u>	<u>24<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1847</u>		
	<u>Discharged 24<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1847 on reduction of Establishment.</u>					
<u>do</u>	<u>Re Enlisted</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>16<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1820</u>	<u>31<sup>st</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1828</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>
	<u>Signature</u>					
<u>PMF</u>		<u>Private</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1829</u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1830</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>248</u>
<u>"</u>	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Corporal</u>	<u>6<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1830</u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup> October 1834</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>"</u>	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Serjeant</u>	<u>6<sup>th</sup> October 1834</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Novem<sup>r</sup> 1851</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>43</u>
	<u>Died in Hospital on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1851</u>					

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Fig. 27: Service record of Salvatore Micallef

No. 68.

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**RECORD of the Services of Tomaso Aquilina.**

First Enlisted into the Army, for the Royal Malta Fencible Reg<sup>t</sup>. of Foot, on 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1820

Attested for the said Regiment  
on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1820, at the Age of Nineteen Years and Two Months.

Regt.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank	Period of Service in each Rank		Amount of Service	
			From	To	Years	Days
<u>Royal Malta Fencibles</u>		<u>Private</u>	<u>12<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1820.</u>	<u>31<sup>st</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1826</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>324</u>
<u>do</u>	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Corporal</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1826.</u>	<u>31<sup>st</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1828.</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>122</u>
<u>Total Service is Eight years &amp; Eighty one days including as Corporal Two years &amp; one hundred &amp; twenty two days.</u>					<u>8</u>	<u>81</u>
		<u>Hot Salutaris</u>	<u>President.</u>			
		<u>18<sup>th</sup> of F. Major</u>	<u>Member.</u>			
		<u>M. M. M.</u>	<u>43<sup>rd</sup> Lt.</u>			
<u>R.M.F.</u>		<u>Corporal</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1829.</u>	<u>29<sup>th</sup> February 1826</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>60</u>
<u>do</u>	<u>Promoted</u>	<u>Serjeant</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> March 1826.</u>	<u>18<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1853</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>171</u>
					<u>22</u>	<u>312</u>
<p><u>Subscribed the 18<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1853 with Consent</u>  <u>the King's total Service the 18<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1853, of Eighty two</u>  <u>Years and 81 Days</u>  <u>I do Certify that the above is a correct Statement of the Service</u>  <u>of Serjeant Tomaso Aquilina to 18<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup> 1853</u></p> <p><u>Comms. Lt. Colonel</u> <u>Comms. L. Honaire</u> <u>Adj. Genl.</u>  <u>Officer</u> <u>Captain</u> <u>the Company</u></p>						

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Rabat, Malta  
1103

Fig. 28: Service record of Tomaso Aquilina

## **Appendix XV**

### **Presentation of Colours to the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment**

#### **The Malta Government Gazette**

**No. 1459**

**Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1838**

Malta, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1838

#### **Presentation of Colours to the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment**

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> instant, being the day appointed by Lieutenant General Sir Henry F. Bouverie, commanding the forces in this garrison, for the presentation of the colours, which have recently been received from England for the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment, at half past 10 o'clock the corps was draw [drawn] up on the Florian [Floriana] parade in review-order, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel the Marquess De Piro, and at 11 precisely His Excellency with his staff arrived on the ground, followed by six colour serjeants of the Regiment, escorting the colours cased. Sir Henry Bouverie was received with a general salute, after which he proceeded down the line, followed by nearly all the Officers of the Garrison in full uniform on horse-back; the concourse of people was great, and the ceremony from this moment became one of a really interesting character, from the desire which every one manifested to see and hear all that was to take place. After proceeding down the line, the General, accompanied by his splendid retinue, resumed his place at the saluting point. The Regiment then formed three sides of a square, took open order and stood in readiness to receive their colours.

His Excellency having advanced and entered the square, an immense crowd of spectators were allowed to approach, and the colours being uncased, were delivered by His Excellency to the two senior Ensigns (Rizzo and Gouder), with a few words of admonition, expressing his satisfaction at placing in their hands these pledges of confidence conferred upon them by Her Majesty, which it would be their duty to defend with their lives.

The colours being now unfurled and fully displayed, and the Officers bearing them having faced about, proceeded to their proper place in the battalion, the Regiment presenting arms, the band playing *God Save the Queen*, drums beating a point of war, and when the soldiers had ordered arms they gave three cheers.

Sir Henry Bouverie then addressed the Regiment in the following terms.

*Officers and Soldiers of the Malta Regiment*

*The Colours which have been granted to you by our Gracious Queen are presented to you by me with great satisfaction. Receive them from me as a mark of my entire confidence. Let them be to you a renewal of your pledge of honor, of fidelity, and of loyalty to your Sovereign. Prove yourselves worthy of the trust by a strict adherence to order and discipline. Be good citizens in peace; and should you ever be called upon to meet the enemies of your Country in the field, let these standards be seen in the foremost ranks of honor and of victory.- You have already given three cheers for your colours, let us now give three cheers for Malta and the Queen.*

Lieutenant Colonel the Marquess De Piro then standing in front of the regiment replied in the Italian language to the following purport.

*On this solemn and memorable occasion, the celebrity of which Your Excellency has been pleased to enhance by your interesting and kind address, it becomes my sacred duty to offer to your Excellency, united in one voice, the thanks of all ranks of the Royal Malta Fencibles – Yes! With the most lively enthusiasm we receive these standards from Her Majesty, as objects of the most noble ambition; and our transports of joy are the greater, at receiving them from the hands of so distinguished an Officer of the British Army as Lieutenant General Sir Henry Bouverie.*

*The Royal Malta Fencibles are proud to have been thought worthy of receiving these standards from Royalty, which they will defend to the last drop of their blood in the faithful support of the rights of the Crown. With sentiments of the highest gratitude they pray for the preservation of our August and Most Gracious Sovereign, her Government, the British Empire, and for the happiness of our country. May our gratitude to Sir Henry Bouverie long live in our hearts, as well as our brotherly feeling and attachment to the noble, well disciplined, and distinguished garrison with which we have the high honor of serving. May God, who always protects a just cause, confer happiness on all of us.*

The colours were then trooped in the usual manner, and having resumed their station in the centre, the regiment again saluted with presented arms, after which, breaking into open column, they marched by the General in slow and quick time, and the ceremony was closed with an advance in line, with open ranks in slow time, and a

general salute,-all which was done in very good style, and called forth the approbation of the General commanding and many officer of the line who were present.

The ceremony of presentation being thus completed, the Regiment conducted their colours fully displayed through the streets of Valletta, to the Church of the Jesuits, where the Most Reverend the Archbishop Bishop of Malta performed the ceremony of benediction. As they passed through Strada Reale, the crowds from all parts of the town and a number of persons in gay attire at the windows (the day being extremely fine), rendered the sight of the British colours now confided to the loyalty of Maltese soldiers, and their reception by the people of the principal city of the island, the most gratifying. Not only was the general satisfaction visible in the countenance of every native inhabitant, but it was equally shared by their fellow-subjects the English; and from the balcony of Mr Mae Gill, one of the oldest British residents, a shower of roses were strewed upon the colours as they passed,-a compliment which was well received as it was appropriately fancied, and forceably [forcibly] illustrated the sentiment of a united and harmonious feeling which generally pervaded all classes on this joyous day.

The scene within the church, which was crowded to such excess that there was scarcely room for the soldiers when they arrived, was very imposing, particularly at the impressive moment when the Marquess De Piro, and the Ensigns bearing the colours, kneeled before the altar. Here the Archbishop is [in] an elevated attitude of grace and dignity pronounced the solemn formula of benediction, while the regiment presented arms, and the band played *God Save the Queen*,-an anthem always appropriate, but particularly so on this solemn occasion. The two Ensigns afterwards received separately the Episcopal embrace and blessing.

At one o'clock the soldiers of the corps sat down to an excellent dinner, which was provided for them in their barracks by their Officer; and at 3 o'clock the Non-Commissioned Officers were also regaled by a sumptuous dinner, to which a number of the Serjeants of the British regiment of the line had been invited, and of which they partook with the best feeling and cordiality.

But all the glories,-all the honors of a military life,-the silken banners, decorations, and pomps, that reward the military career, would be as nothing without the smiles of the fair:

“Nor ribbons nor stars would soldiers prize,-

“Such baubles would never inspire them;

“Were the ribbons not lov'd for the band that ties,

“And the stars for the eyes that admire them.

The Marquess De Piro and the Officers of the Royal Malta Fencibles, had therefore issued cards of invitation to more than 700 persons, including several distinguished foreigners now in this island, for a ball which was given by them at the *Auberge de Provence* in the evening; and the Union Club having granted the use of their rooms for the occasion, the whole suite contained in this noble building was tastefully decorated and splendidly lighted. At the upper end of the ball-room were placed two figures of real armour holding the newly presented colours displayed, and at their feet were placed some small pieces of ordnance with arms, shields, spears, and military trophies of all sorts, ancient and modern, grouped around them: the colours of the Royal Regiment of Malta, which since the close of the war have been carefully preserved in the armoury of the palace, were also arranged in the back-ground. Above was placed a gilded crown and a likeness of her Majesty sitting in a chair of state, and a crimson damask drapery hanging in graceful folds against the wall threw the whole out in bold relief. At the other end of the room, the front of the orchestra presented the name *Bouverie*, in letters formed of various coloured natural flowers, which was a happy invention and much admired. The windows and sides of the room were hung with crimson curtains, and mirrors at regulated distances, and the entrance and staircase with flags furnished by the Naval Departments. Altogether the taste of Lieut. Calleja of the Royal Malta Fencibles, under whose directions the decorations were placed, was exerted with a very successful effect.

His Excellency the Governor with his staff, honoured the ball with his presence, and was received by Lieutenant Colonel the Marquess De Piro, and the officers of the Regiment as had been appointed to act as stewards. The rooms were already crowded with native beauty and loveliness, amongst whom shone with their usual elegance the daughters of the Marquess De Piro, adding grace to the festivity by their amiable manners. At 10 o'clock dancing commenced, which was kept up with a great animation throughout the evening. About 12 o'clock the doors of the supper room were thrown open, which presented a table profusely covered with a substantial repast and every luxury of the season, and an abundance of the choicest wines were served without reserve throughout the evening. The merry dance was afterwards resumed with great spirit, and the guests did not retire until near 5 o'clock in the morning, so greatly were they pleased with the hilarity of the entertainment, and with the unceasing attentions of the Officers of the Royal Malta Fencibles to everything that could possibly contribute to their enjoyment.

On Sunday last the Regiment marched to church with their colours. After divine service a *Te Deum* was chaunted [chanted], in which the congregation all united.

## Appendix XVI

**An account of the ball given to officers of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment by their English counterparts in light of the successful retention of the Regiment.**

### **The Malta Government Gazette**

**No. 1460**

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1838**

On Thursday last the English Officers of this garrison gave a ball to Lieutenant Colonel the Marquess De Piro and the Officers of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment., and the ladies of Malta. The rooms of the *Auberge de Provence* were decorated with armour and arms, and presented a military appearance, which was heightened by the display of the colours of all the Regiments, now here, namely, the 47<sup>th</sup> 59<sup>th</sup> 77<sup>th</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup>, whose glorious services in Europe, Asia, and Africa, entitle them to bear the names of the principal battles fought under the British ensign during the last war. The staffs of the old colours of the 80<sup>th</sup>, which were brought across the Egyptian desert from India, in the expedition commanded by Sir David Baird in 1801, and are now an honorable deposit in the armoury of Malta, were also produced on this occasion, while the colours of the Royal Malta Fencibles were placed in the foreground. The Lieutenant General commanding attended, with his staff. The good harmony and general satisfaction observable throughout the evening, at the jovial supper table, as well as in the joyous dance, was indicative of the universal gratification at seeing the colours of the Malta Regiment grouped with those of such distinguished British Regiments, whose deeds they will no doubt emulate should the opportunity offer, with the same steadiness and loyalty to the British Crown they have always manifested since their connexion with the British nation. Indeed the late festivities, called forth by the gracious act of Her Majesty, in bestowing upon the natives of Malta so great a mark of her confidence, as the honor of maintaining the glory of the British name under the national standards, has

raised the people in their own estimation, no less than in that of their fellow-subjects, and of surrounding nations.



## Appendix XVII

### The Militia Ordinance of 27 Feb. 1852

#### Malta Government Gazette

No. 1726

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1852

*Council Office, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1852*

THE following Draft of an Ordinance, which has been proposed to the Council of Government for enactment, is published in accordance with Her Majesty's Instructions and the Standing Rules of the Council of Government.

( DRAFT. )

AN ORDINANCE enacted by the Governor of Malta, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government thereof,

*For the formation of a Maltese Militia Force.*

WHEREAS it is expedient to train Her Majesty's Subjects resident in Malta and its Dependencies to the use of Arms, so as to be able, in case of need, efficiently to share in the defence of these Islands along with Her Majesty's Regular Forces; and whereas, for the same object of the defence of these Islands, it is expedient to form a Militia Force, consisting of Her Majesty's Subjects resident in these Islands;- it is ordained and enacted by His Excellency the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government, as follows:-

1. In such office as shall be appointed by the Head of the Civil Government, Registers shall be kept, wherein all Her Majesty's male Subjects, resident in these Islands, above sixteen years of age, shall be registered, in order to be instructed and trained in the use of Artillery and small Arms, and to be enrolled as a Militia Force, which shall be formed and organized at the time and in the manner that shall be determined by the Head of the Civil Government, with the exemptions and incapacities mentioned in the following articles.

2. Exemption from the Militia service is granted,
  1. To the Members of the Council of Government;
  2. To Her Majesty's Judges;
  3. To the Magistrates of Judicial Police;
  4. To the Superintendent of Executive Police;
  5. To Clergymen in holy orders, to professed monks or novices of the Catholic Church , and to all clergymen or Ministers of other religious Communities;
  6. To Catholic Clergymen in minor orders until they shall have put off the clerical garb, or come to the full age of twenty five years;
  7. To Physicians, Surgeons and other persons attached to the service of the Government Charitable Institutions;
  8. To Persons above the age of sixty years;
  9. To all those who at the time of the promulgation of this Ordinance, or (being then exempted) at the time of the expiration of their exemption, shall have the full age of thirty years.

It shall be lawful to the Head of the Civil Government to exempt also other persons for infirmity or other just causes

3. All persons are incapacitated from being enrolled in the Militia, and, if enrolled shall be erased there from, who shall have undergone the punishment with hard labour, except it be a special order of the Head of the Civil Government otherwise directed.
4. The Militia shall be under the orders of the Head of the Civil Government, or of any other Authority to whom he shall transfer the Command thereof; and it shall be employed in the defence of these Islands along with Her Majesty's Regular Forces, on any occasion when its aid shall be deemed necessary by the head of the Civil Government.
5. Proper Regulations shall be made by the Head of the Civil Government, according to the circumstance, for the training of the Militia in the use of Artillery and other Arms; for its regular exercise; for its discipline; and for any other object that shall be necessary or expedient for maintaining its efficiency; and such Regulations, being published by a Government Notice, shall be obeyed and executed as though they were part of this Ordinance.
6. Every person liable to serve in the Militia who shall refuse or omit to obey or execute the orders of his superiors in the Militia, when he shall be required to serve, or when he shall be in actual service, in the defence of these Islands against any invasion of the part of her Majesty's enemies, shall incur the following penalties:

1. He shall be expelled from the Militia, and shall be incapacitated from being again enrolled therein;
2. He shall be dismissed from any Office or employment, whether for fixed or temporary service that he may hold under the Government; or in case he shall not hold any such Office or employment he shall be incapacitated from being appointed thereto;
3. He shall forfeit any Government warrant or license for exercising any profession, art or trade or for bearing arms for any purpose whatever; or in case he shall not be in possession of any such Warrant or License, he shall be incapacitated from obtaining it;
4. He shall be postponed to any person who not having violated the present law in the same manner, shall offer equal terms, in any competition for leases of Government property, or for contracts for provisions, or works required for the public service; And he may also be postponed notwithstanding he shall offer more advantageous terms;
5. He shall be incapacitated from bearing any title of *honor* dependent upon any grant, permission or tolerance of Government;
6. He shall be incapacitated from serving as a Juror, or from being nominated Consul of Her Majesty's Commercial Court or of the First Hall of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal.

7. Every person liable to serve in the Militia shall also incur the penalties indicated in the foregoing article, if he shall abscond, or if he shall without leave of his Superiors in the Militia quit these Islands when invaded by Her Majesty's enemies or when by Proclamation from the Head of the Civil Government they shall have been declared to be in immediate danger of such invasion.

8. Whoever, being liable to serve in the Militia shall commit any violation of discipline, or of Militia regulations, short of the cases contemplated in articles 6 and 7, shall be punished with detention for any time not exceeding ten days, or by a time not exceeding twenty five Shillings Sterling.

In cases of "relapse", it shall be lawful to extend the detention to twenty days, and the fine to two pounds and ten Shillings Sterling.

9. The penalties indicated in Article 6 and 7 shall be declared to have been incurred, and the punishments named in Article 8 shall be inflicted, by the Court of Judicial Police by way of the procedure established for other contraventions within the jurisdiction of that Court, at the demand of any public Officer, provided that every other punishment, to which the offender shall have become liable, shall be applied according to law by competent authority.

The Court of Judicial Police in the cases aforesaid shall be composed of One Magistrate and of one or more Superior Officers of the Militia to be nominated for the purpose by the Head of the Civil Government.

R. C. LEGH

*Clerk to the Council*

## Appendix XVIII

### The Militia Ordinance of 15 May. 1852

The Malta Government Gazette

No. 1733

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1852

No. IV

Proclamation

By His Excellency SIR WILLIAM REID, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Colonel in the Army and Lieutenant Colonel of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Governor and Commander in Chief in and over the Island of Malta and its Dependencies.

The Governor is pleased hereby to promulgate the following Ordinance No. 11 of 1852, enacted by the GOVERNOR OF MALTA, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government thereof, passed on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1852, *For the formation of a Maltese Militia Force*, to be observed as law in these Possessions from the day of the date hereof, Her Majesty having been graciously pleased to allow and confirm the same.

Palace, Valletta, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1852

By Command of His Excellency,

HENRY LUSHINGTON

Chief Secretary to Government

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

(L.S.) *W. Reid*

*Governor*

ORDINANCE No 11 of 1852

AN ORDINANCE enacted by the GOVERNOR OF MALTA, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government thereof,

*For the formation of a Maltese Militia Force.*

WHEREAS it is expedient to train Her Majesty's Subjects resident in Malta and its Dependencies to the use of Arms, so as to be able, in case of need, efficiently to share in the defence of the Islands along with Her Majesty's Regular Forces; and whereas, for the same object of the defence of these Islands, it is expedient to form a Militia Force, consisting of Her Majesty's Subjects resident in these Islands; - it is ordained and enacted by His Excellency the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government, as follows:-

1. In such Office as shall be appointed by the Head of the Civil Government, Registers shall be kept, wherein all Her Majesty's male Subjects, resident in the Islands, above sixteen years of age, shall be registered, in order to be instructed and trained in the use of Artillery and small Arms, and to be enrolled as a Militia Force, which shall be formed and organized at the time and in the manner that shall be determined by the Head of the Civil Government, with the exemptions and incapacities mentioned in the following articles.
2. Exemption from the Militia Service is granted,
  1. To the members of the Council of Government;
  2. To Her Majesty's Judges;
  3. To the Magistrates of Judicial Police;
  4. To the Superintendent of Executive Police;
  5. To Clergymen in holy orders, to professed monks or novices of the Catholic Church, and to all Clergymen or Ministers of other religious Communities;
  6. To Catholic Clergymen in minor orders until they shall have put off the clerical garb, or come to the full age of twenty five years; and all persons collected together in a house for purposes of Ecclesiastical or Secular Instruction, until they shall have attained the abovementioned age of twenty five years;
  7. To Physicians, Surgeons and other persons attached to the internal service of the Government Charitable Institutions;
  8. To Persons above the age of sixty years;
  9. To all those who at the time of the promulgation of this Ordinance, or (being then exempted) at the time of the expiration of their exemption, shall have the full age of thirty years.

It shall be lawful to the Head of the Civil Government to exempt also other persons for infirmity or other just causes.

3. All persons are incapacitated from being enrolled in the Militia, and if enrolled shall be erased *therefrom*, who shall have undergone the punishment of imprisonment with hard labour, except it be by a special order of the Head of the Civil Government otherwise directed.
4. The Militia shall be under the orders of the Head of the Civil Government, or of any other Authority to whom he shall transfer the Command thereof; and it shall be employed in the defence of these Islands along with Her Majesty's Regular Forces, on any occasion when its aid shall be deemed necessary by the Head of the Civil Government.
5. Proper Regulations shall be made by the Head of the Civil Government, according to circumstances, for the training of the Militia in the use of Artillery and other Arms; for its regular exercise; for its discipline; and for any other object that shall be necessary or expedient for maintaining its efficiency; and such Regulations, being published by a Government Notice, shall be obeyed and executed as though they were part of this Ordinance; Provided that such Regulations shall be in accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance; and Provided
  1. That no persons shall be compelled to attend or take part in more than 90 drills, excepting in the case contemplated in the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph of this Article;
  2. That no person shall be compelled to attend or take part in more than 18 drills in one year, until he shall have filled the number of drills indicated in the preceding paragraph;
  3. That no person shall be compelled to attend or take part in any of the drills indicated in the two preceding paragraphs beyond the boundary of the district in which such person may be domiciled;
  4. That when any person shall have completed such aforesaid number of 90 drills or any other number, which may be prescribed in the Regulations for drilling, he shall not be compelled to attend or to take part in any other drill or review more than three time in any one year;
  5. That no person shall be compelled to attend or take part in any drill or review, as contemplated in the preceding paragraphs of this Article, any

day in the months of July August and September, or on any working day of the other months of the year.

6. Every person liable to serve in the Militia who shall refuse or omit to obey or execute the orders of his superiors in the Militia, when he shall be required to serve, or when he shall be in actual service, in the defence of these Islands against any invasion on the part of Her Majesty's enemies, shall incur the following penalties:
  1. He shall be expelled from the Militia, and shall be incapacitated from being again enrolled therein;
  2. He shall be dismissed from any Office or employment, whether for fixed or temporary service that he may hold under the Government; or in any case he shall not hold any such Office or employment he shall be incapacitated from being appointed thereto;
  3. He shall forfeit any Government warrant or license for exercising any profession, art, or trade or for bearing arms for any purpose whatever; or in case he shall not be in possession of any such Warrant or License, he shall be incapacitated from obtaining it;
  4. He shall be postponed to any person, who not having violated the present law in the same manner, shall offer equal terms, in any competition for leases of Government property, or for contracts for provisions, or works required for the service of the Civil Government;
  5. He shall be incapacitated from bearing any title of *honor* dependent upon any grant, permission or tolerance of Government;
  6. He shall be incapacitated from serving as a Juror, or from being nominated Consul of Her Majesty's Commercial Court or of the First Hall of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal.
7. Every person liable to serve in the Militia shall also incur the penalties indicated in the foregoing article, if he shall abscond, or if he shall without leave of His Superiors in the Militia quit these Islands when invaded by Her Majesty's enemies or when by Proclamation from the Head of the Civil Government they shall have been declared to be in immediate danger of such invasion.
8. Whoever, being liable to serve in the Militia shall commit any violation of discipline, or of Militia regulations, short of the cases contemplated in articles 6 and 7, shall be punished with detention for any time not exceeding ten days, or by a fine not exceeding twenty five Shillings Sterling. Provided that no person



shall be punished for not having attended any drill or review, which may have taken place during his absence from these Islands.

In cases of “relapse”, it shall be lawful to extend the detention to twenty days, and the fine to two pounds and ten Shillings Sterling.

9. The penalties indicated in Article 6 and 7 shall be declared to have been incurred, and the punishments named in Article 8 shall be inflicted, by the Court of Judicial Police by way of the procedure established for other contraventions within the jurisdiction of that Court, at the demand of any public Officer, provided that every other punishment, to which the offender shall have become liable, shall be applied according to law by competent authority.

The Court of Judicial Police in the cases aforesaid shall be composed of One Magistrate and of one or more Superior Officers of the Militia to be nominated for the purpose by the Head of the Civil Government.

10. All *preexisting* laws and regulations regarding Militia and Military service, including those contained in the compilation of Municipal Laws commonly called the *Code de Rohan*, are hereby repealed.

March 31<sup>st</sup> 1852

Passed,

R.C. Legh

Clerk to the Council

### **GOVERNMENT NOTICE**

In pursuance of the power vested in the Governor by the Ordinance No. 11 of 1852, *For the formation of a Maltese Militia Force*, His Excellency is pleased to publish the following Regulations.

The Organization of the Militia shall be by Companies, and according to localities, without regard to equality of numbers; and the training will be confined to exercises suited for defence, without extending to Battalion movements.

The Town portions will consist of six Companies of Artillery enrolled according to the places of residence, namely:

Companies of Valletta two,  
One of the Great Harbour,  
One of the Marsamuscetto Harbour:  
To be divided by Strada Reale.

Company of Floriana;  
Company of Vittoriosa;  
Company of Senglea;  
Company of Cospicua.

The Country portion of the Militia will consist of Infantry formed into Companies according to Districts or Casals. But in Notabile and in Gozo there will be a portion of Artillery.

When the Companies shall contain a sufficient number of individuals, they may be commanded by Captains having under them a Lieutenant and Ensign, all Officers being selected and appointed by the Governor.

The training at present will be confined to those who voluntarily enrol themselves, and who may be approved by the Governor.

The words of command are to be, as in the Royal Malta Fencibles, in English.

The enrolment will for the present and until further notice be limited to Valletta, Floriana and the three Cities on the other side of the Great Harbour,

Books for enrolment will be opened.

For the two divisions of Valletta and Floriana, at the Castellania;

For the three other Cities aforesaid, at the Police Office in Cospicua.

Palace, Valletta, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1852

By Command of His Excellency

HENRY LUSHINGTON

Chief Secretary to Government

## Appendix XIX

**Despatch dated 24 Apr. 1852 from Sir William Reid to Lord Pakington giving proposals about the CO of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment and the teaching of English.<sup>24</sup>**

15

April 24/52

Sir,

I have now the honour to reply to your despatch, No. 4 of the 15 March 1852 marked 'Military', on the subject of the Maltese F. Regiment.

2. I shall in the first place state my opinion that an English Officer ought not to be put at the head of this Regiment. The command of it is the highest Military prize the Maltese have to look to, and to take that away, even for a year or two, would have in my opinion, a very injurious influence with the Maltese Generally. Nor is it correct to say that there is no officer of the M.F. fit to command the Regiment, for there are several. (General Ellice in his memorandum confines this opinion, of unfitness to command, to the senior officers of the Regiment.)

3. Instead of superseding all by bringing in one English officer, after providing for the retirement of the present Lieut. Col. And Major, I recommend, that without regard to seniority, the Capt. Most fitted for command be made major. The evils attendant on promotion by strict seniority is a subject I have long attentively considered. By this system the Crown cannot avail itself of the services of those of its servants ablest for command.

Energy and talent go for nothing, whilst promotion is ensued to the dull or the indolent. The difficulty in altering this system in Corps composed of British Officers, would not extend to the M.F., for I am sure there can be no doubt but that the fittest man amongst the M.F. officers would always be selected by the General in command, uninfluenced by family connexions here. To promote the ablest Captain, without regard to seniority, as a reward for merit, would I think be at once productive of good effect. And believing the

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<sup>24</sup> Reid to Pakington, NAM, GOV 01.3/8, No. 15, 24 Apr. 1852.

principle to be the best for the M.F., I recommend that Capt. Saverio Gatt<sup>25</sup> be appointed Major, (and to command the regiment) until it be thought fit to promote him to the higher rank of Lieut. Col. Captain Gatt was for some years Adjt. of the corps, and if a selection be made from amongst the Captains, he is the officer whom Gen. Ellice also recommends for the command.

4. By not filling up, for the present, the Lieut. Colonelcy, the pay of but one extra Major would have to be provided for on the pension list, which may in this instance, be charged against the £100 reserved for Contingencies, until by death it can be transferred under the head of Pensions, which will probably be within a year.

5. I think enlisting must continue to be voluntary, and the service of the Regiment should remain as at present, for the defence of Malta and Gozo only – we attach the Maltese to us just in proportion as we consider their interests; and these interests are centrated [sic] in their own islands.

6. Very few of the N.C. Officers or Soldiers speak English, which is a great disadvantage and which might by degrees be remedied. For this end I would teach English in the Regt. school, where it is not taught at present, and enlist only boys between 14 and 16 years of age, for 10 years and ultimately enlisting none who cannot speak our own language. Their Regt. School is susceptible of great improvement, and they should have an infant school. In the island of Saint Lucia, in the W.I., I found English taught in the Infant schools, as in the nursery, and this system I recommend for the school of the M.F.

7. In order to keep down the pension list, I would only reenlist, after their 10 years service, selected men. The remainder being liable to annual training under the Militia Ordinance, if that Ordinance be confirmed, might receive a bounty like British Pensioners, and be paid for those days on which their services were required. By rejoining the Fencible Regiment annually for the period of Militia training, they would be ready at once to augment its members in case of hostilities.

8. I concur with Lt. Gen Ellice that the rate of pay is now too low, for everything has of late increased here in price with increasing commerce, and I agree with him that this might be met by giving the ration without deduction, the worth of which nation is shown by the enclosed statement.

9. With reference to Col. Baynes, whose name has been brought forward as a candidate for the command of the R.M.F., I enclose an opinion by the crown advocate

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<sup>25</sup> Captain, later Major General 'Saver' Gatt served for fifty-two years in the British Army. He was described by Herbert Ganado as ' a general who had never seen action other than perhaps a quarrel between brother officers in the mess. Nevertheless he wore a general's uniform...' Michael Refalo, *My Century, Volume 1 (Herbert Ganado: Rajt Malta Tinbidel)* (Malta, Be Communications Ltd., 2004), 117.

which will show that naturalisation cannot be obtained merely by residence here. An Englishman however requires no naturalisation.

I have...

(Signed)

Wm. Reid

Governor

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