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THE CLAIMS OF THE MALTESE TO
SELF-GOVERNMENT.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

HER MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE COLONIES.

BY

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OF MALTA.



LONDON :

1887.



To the RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR H. T. HOLLAND, BART., M.P.,
G.C.M.G., *Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the
Colonies, &c., &c., &c.*

LONDON,
20th June 1887.

SIR,

When, in June, 1880, I accepted the office of Director of Education, I did so under the impression that the Authorities at the Colonial Office had decided upon making such substantial modifications in the Government of Malta, as would give the representatives of the people an efficient control over the administration of their own local and domestic concerns, and the expenditure of their own local revenue, in conformity with the demands that had been made in the Petition which was presented to the House of Commons on the 11th August, 1879, and on which I commented in the Letter addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 31st January, 1880.

2. In that letter I strongly insisted on the necessity of so reforming the Constitution of the Council of Government, "that no law affecting local and domestic interests be enacted, no imposition of any tax, or any alteration in the existing fiscal system be effected, no expenditure of any portion of the public revenue, and no alienation of public property be authorised, otherwise than by the vote of the majority of the people's representatives in Council assembled." The Petition referred to also contained a prayer "that the administration of the affairs of the civil population might be entrusted to an able and experienced Civilian Administrator."

3. Unfortunately, no notice whatever was taken of that Petition by Her Majesty's Government, though it had been approved at a most numerously attended public meeting, and had been signed by 8,661 inhabitants, including all the then elected members and most of the clergy, the nobility, the professional, and the commercial classes. The Constitution remained unaltered; the affairs of the civil population continued to be administered by a military Governor; the officers responsible for the evils exposed by the three Commissioners who had been appointed by the Secretary of State to enquire into the several Government Departments, were entrusted with carrying out some of the reforms recommended by those Commissioners, with what result is too well known to require comment; and the public discontent went on increasing, with the tacit, though not less significant, approval of those amongst the chief officials who were only too glad to be able to point out that they alone knew how to govern Malta, and that any interference on the part of the Secretary of State in the affairs of Malta could only be productive of dissatisfaction and discontent.

4. One of the recommendations made by Sir P. Julyan and Mr. (now Sir Patrick) Keenan was seized upon by the malcontents as a fit basis to found upon an united attack against Her Majesty's Government. Sir P. Julyan proposed that a period of twelve or fifteen years (from 1879) should be fixed by law, after which, English should be the only language allowed to be used in the Law Courts,

except in taking the evidence of witnesses, and in securing to those Maltese, who speak no language but their own, a full and satisfactory administration of justice (par. 316); whilst Sir P. Keenan suggested that English—and English only—taught through the medium of the Maltese, should be the future language of the primary schools, from the 1st January, 1881; that all future pupils of the Lyceum should be taught their lessons through the medium of English, and Italian, if they choose to learn it, to be studied as an extra branch; whilst, in the University, the language of instruction was to be changed to English in every Faculty, except the Theological, from October, 1880 (*vide* page 106).

5. Though it was well known that the proposal made by Sir P. Julyan could not be carried into effect, except by an Ordinance, to be voted by the Council of Government, and that Mr. Keenan's suggestions could not be, and had not been, acted upon, all those who friends of the system censured by the Commissioners, all those who feared lest their own prospects or those of their friends might be injuriously affected by any of the reforms proposed by the Commissioners, more particularly the members of the legal profession who took the lead in the movement, combined in organising the so-called anti-reformist agitation against the party of reform, which had apparently triumphed, and whose leaders were therefore most violently and most unjustly assailed. The anti-reformist party was joined by a small but noisy clique, led by Dr. Z. Roncali, who bitterly hated all that was English, and whose sympathies were all for the Italian language and the Italian nation. The cry around which all the malcontents rallied was that the British Government had resolved upon abolishing the use of the Italian language in the public schools, the Courts of law, and the Council of Government, with the view of forcing the English language in its stead. Unhappily, the 9th paragraph of the letter addressed by Sir A. Dingli, now Chief Justice, then Crown Advocate, to Mr. Keenan, and published in the Appendix to that gentleman's Report on the Educational System of Malta, appeared to justify the position taken up by so many of his intimate friends and acquaintances. "Admitting," wrote the then Crown Advocate, "that community of language tends, to a certain extent, "to bring about community of feeling, and by that additional link, to "increase mutual attachment, it is to my mind the worst public course, "for the attainment of this desirable consummation, to resort "to compulsory measures, in a place like Malta, where the effects "would be disastrous to the immediate personal interests of the "professional classes, and thereby injurious also to other classes. "The attempt would be resisted by all lawful means, and by all "classes of the population, whose feelings would naturally go with "their suffering countrymen; perseverance in it might engender an "acrimonious feeling, which the rising generation would share in, "and which might continue long after its origin would be forgotten; "and, on the very first movement in that direction, the question "would be raised on all sides, Is there an adequate reason for such

“ an imperious measure? Is it essentially just? Is it consistent with “ former expressed or implied promises?”

6. No doubt Sir A. Dingli could not have foreseen the use that would have been made of the above-quoted portion of his letter, by the party hostile to the British Government. But the views expressed therein by the late Crown Advocate and present Chief Justice were repeatedly quoted by Dr. Roncali and his friends, as a justification of the position they had taken up. They said that Italian was the language of the Maltese; that the Maltese were Italians; that they were an Italian people not united to its nation; that the Italian language should, therefore, be the language of instruction in the primary Schools, the Lyceum, and the University, the language of the Courts of Law and of the Council of Government, to the exclusion of the English. And though the Secretary of State repeatedly declared that there was no intention to force the substitution of the English for the Italian language in the Schools, the Courts of Law or the Council of Government,—though the study of the Italian language was, in the same manner as that of the English, made obligatory in the primary schools, the Lyceum, and the University,—Dr. Roncali and his friends persisted in opposing the educational policy of the Government, till their ultimate views were revealed on the 8th September, 1885, when Dr. Roncali publicly called upon the people assembled in St. George’s Square, in commemoration of the defeat and expulsion of the Turkish invaders from these islands in 1565, to expel the English from Malta, by telling them, “ Malta belongs to “ the Maltese, and not to the English, away with the Foreigner ” (*Malta è dei Maltesi, e non degl’ Inglesi, Fuori lo Straniero*).

7. It was but natural that this and other pronounced acts of disloyalty on the part of one of the most prominent members of the anti-reformist or nationalist party, should have induced the British Government to place little confidence in a party led by such men. But the seditious cry uttered by Dr. Roncali on the night of the 8th September, 1885, found no echo among Her Majesty’s most loyal and most faithful Maltese subjects, and from that day Dr. Roncali and his immediate followers began to lose ground, until they completely forfeited the confidence which the electors had been persuaded to repose in them.

8. But though the clique led by Dr. Roncali has lost ground; though the great majority of the intelligent classes have become convinced that there never was any intention of forcing the substitution of the English for the Italian language in the Schools, the Courts of Law, and the Council of Government; the movement in favour of a reform of the constitution of the Council of Government, a movement which may be said to have begun soon after the publication of Her Majesty’s Letters Patent of the 11th May, 1849, by which the present constitution was granted to the Maltese people, has been gradually gaining strength, and has become all but general all over Malta and Gozo.

9. The modifications made by Lord Derby and those sketched out

in your despatch of the 16th April, last, could not and did not satisfy any numerous or influential section of the community. The election of infamous and ridiculous candidates, though greatly to be regretted, has abundantly shown the estimation in which the electors who voted and those who abstained from taking part in those elections, hold the present constitution. Of course, no intelligent, right-thinking Maltese could recommend or approve the election of ridiculous, much less that of infamous candidates; but the fact that the direct appeals made by the Governor and other influential persons, as well as by the press, calling upon respectable candidates to come forward to oppose those whose intention evidently was to discredit and disgrace the Council of Government, remained unheeded, shows that no class of the inhabitants thought it worth their while to do anything to save an institution which had not been productive of any substantial benefit to the public at large.

10. I can assure you, Sir, that the Constitution sketched out in the despatch you addressed to the Governor of Malta on the 16th April last, will, if embodied in Letters Patent, meet with the same fate. No members are likely to be elected to serve under that Constitution, except, perhaps, to protest against it, and then resign. There is, I must say, one most creditable feature in that despatch: it rejects *in toto* the recommendations made in the Governor's despatch of the 24th December, a despatch which seems to have been written principally with the view of minimizing Dr. Roncali's notorious disloyalty, and preparing the way for his employment under the Government. As I stated in a paper which, I have reason to believe, was laid before you in March last, "a reform based on the suggestions made in that despatch would make matters ten times worse, and would greatly intensify the existing crisis. By depriving the elected members of the power of legislation, which they have enjoyed since 1849; by reducing their number from *eight* to *six*, whilst Lord Derby, in his despatch of the 8th March, 1883, offered to increase that number to *nine*; by restricting their power to a mere consideration of the estimates which must pass, whatever might be their opinion, since the unofficial members of the Supreme Council, or a majority of them, together with the six official members, must previously have agreed to pass those estimates, and the elected members would, therefore, be in an assured and pre-arranged minority; that scheme would deeply irritate the discontented, and would, at the same time, be an insult to the educated and well-to-do classes, among whom there is a strong desire for such a change in the Constitution, as would give their representatives a greater and more real control over the administration of the Government. The promulgation of a Constitution founded on that scheme would satisfy no one, except, perhaps, its authors, and would unite all classes of the population in a strong and, I am afraid, violent opposition to the Government; no elected members would ever be returned to the Council, and no intelligent and independent Maltese would accept the position

“ of nominated members, which would naturally be looked upon as “ most odious.”

11. With the view of preventing such a catastrophe, which would increase the prevailing dissatisfaction and plunge the country into a state of chronic discontent, I ventured to make some suggestions which might be accepted by the authorities at the Colonial Office, and perhaps also by Count Strickland and Dr. Mizzi; for I was clearly of opinion that, unless the changes to be effected in the Constitution proved acceptable to Dr. Mizzi and his friends, the latter were in a position to prevent the return of respectable candidates to the Council. Those proposals I beg to submit once more, in the hope that they will be carefully reconsidered, for I am fully persuaded that less than that no section of the people of Malta will accept as a satisfactory settlement, for the present, at least, of the question of reforming the Constitution; and that the longer that satisfactory settlement is delayed, the more will the conviction gain ground that the only remedy for the evils complained of is Responsible Government, due provision being of course made for the security of the Fortress and the most ample protection of all really Imperial interests connected therewith.

I.—EXECUTIVE POWER.

(a.) The Executive Government and Authority of and over Malta and its Dependencies to continue and be vested in the Queen. The Governor, as Her Majesty's Representative, to have the power of disallowing any law or resolution passed by the Legislative Council. The Crown retains the appointment and control of all public offices.

(b.) There shall be an Executive Council, to aid and advise the Governor, to be composed of an equal number of official and elected members, and to be presided over by him.

(c.) This Council to introduce all money votes, to prepare estimates, and initiate all Government measures.

(d.) The Governor to consult this Council in all cases, as directed by Her Majesty's Letters Patent of the 24th May, 1881.

II.—LEGISLATIVE POWER.

(e.) There shall be a Legislative Council, composed of *twenty* members, of whom *five* shall be the heads of the most important public departments, and capable of taking part in debate; *five* shall be nominated by the Crown, on the recommendation of the Governor, in the Executive Council, and to be selected from among the most enlightened and most independent of the Clergy, the Nobility, the Professional and the Mercantile Classes; and the remaining *ten* to be elected by as many electoral districts of about 15,000 inhabitants or 1,000 electors each.

(f.) This Council to be presided over by a Speaker to be selected by the Governor, from among the members thereof. The Speaker to understand thoroughly the English and Italian languages, without

which knowledge it would be most difficult for him to maintain order and to regulate the debates.

(g.) The Civil List to include all the salaries now on the fixed establishment.

(h.) All questions which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, affect Malta principally as a fortress or naval station, to be beyond the control of the Legislative Council.

(i.) In all questions of finance or of purely local or domestic concern, when a majority (*eight*) of unofficial members vote together, the official vote is not to be counted.

12. Considering that the few immediate followers of Dr. Roncali have entirely collapsed, with the utter collapse of their leader, who now finds favour with no party and no section of any party, except with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor who are evidently disposed to befriend him; considering the numerous safeguards provided against any injurious or injudicious action of a majority of the fifteen unofficial members; considering the ample provision made for the security of the fortress and the protection of all truly Imperial interests connected therewith; I submit that Her Majesty's Government can have no well-founded reason to refuse the concession demanded in (*i*), viz. :—That all questions of finance or of purely local concern should be decided by a majority of the *fifteen* unofficial members.

13. It will be observed that, under the proposed Constitution, the Governor will have the power of vetoing any law or resolution passed by the Legislative Council, whilst the Crown retains the appointment and control of all public offices, and also that of legislating by Order in Council. The salaries of all persons now permanently employed under the Government will be included in the Civil List, so that it will not be in the power of the unofficial majority to deprive any public servant of his salary or of any allowance to which he may become entitled for length of service or other reasons agreed upon between him and the Government. This provision has evoked some unfavourable remarks from certain quarters; but, on reflection, it will, I am sure, be admitted that the salary of public servants must be assured to them by the head of the Government, and cannot be suspended or curtailed by any other authority. If it were otherwise, the public employés would no longer be under the control of the Sovereign, represented by the Governor, but would look up to the unofficial members for instructions, as to the performance of their several duties. Besides the safeguards above mentioned, it will be for Her Majesty's Government to decide which questions affect Malta principally as a fortress or naval station, and should, therefore, be withdrawn from the control of the Legislative Council; and though this may appear to be granting too much power to the Secretary of State, there can be no doubt but that it will be most scrupulously and most generously exercised. I think the granting of such power ought to be agreed to by the people, as a proof that neither the electors nor their representatives have ever contemplated any interference with

the security of the fortress or with any really Imperial interests connected therewith. But should there be any one who might think these safeguards insufficient protection against the fancied extravagance of the unofficial members, it ought to be remembered that, as a last resort, there is in Malta a permanent garrison of five thousand men in the fortified towns, that are amply sufficient to protect the fortress.

14. But the strongest, surest and most efficient element in the security of the fortress will most undoubtedly be the contentment of the population and the affection which cannot but be produced by the liberal concession which, I earnestly hope, will be made to the people of Malta by the Queen, on your recommendation, in this year of Her Majesty's Jubilee. If my suggestions concerning the Executive Council should be accepted, that institution, instead of being utterly powerless to control the action of the Government, as it has been since its establishment in 1881, will become the most useful and most efficient aid to good government. Unless the Governor is bound to comply strictly with the instructions conveyed in the 7th paragraph of Her Majesty's Additional Instructions of the 24th May, 1881, viz.: that he shall in all cases, including the appointment to situations of trust and emolument, consult the Executive Council, it would be far better to abolish that institution altogether, than to let it be used as a sham to deceive the public by making it to believe that all the measures of the Government are fully considered by the Executive Council, when, in reality, the Council is consulted only concerning the most trifling matters, whilst questions of the highest importance are deliberately withdrawn from its consideration. If the Executive Council had been consulted on the increase of salary to certain high officials, the appointment of Mr. Hoare's and Judge Pullicino's successors, the nomination to the Deanery of the Cathedral Church and to other benefices in the gift of the Government; the petitions of Mr. Monreal, the late Controller, of Dr. Grech, of Mr. V. Sacco and others; the action of the Governor would most assuredly have been vastly different. The same may be said of the iniquitous proposals made by Drs. Roncali and Magri for amending the Constitution of the Government of Malta: the Executive Council would never have approved either the suggestions made by Drs. Roncali and Magri, or the amendments made thereto by the Lieutenant-Governor.

15. But if Her Majesty's Instructions of the 24th May, 1881, should be strictly adhered to, then the Executive Council will become the most important institution under the Government of Malta. By consulting with it, the Governor will have the benefit, not only of the advice freely tendered by four of the ablest official members, but also of that of the more independent and, consequently, more free spoken elected members. No Governor would be so unwise as to disregard the unanimous opinion of the four unofficial members of the Executive Council, and their consent to any measure would greatly facilitate its passage through the Legislative Council; whilst

any proposal made by the Governor and opposed by those members, or by a majority of them, would have to be so modified as to meet their views, or withdrawn.

16. In the Legislative Council it will be observed that the majority is not made up exclusively of elected members. In times of great popular excitement the constituencies might elect a majority of members hostile to the Government. To obviate this, the Crown reserves to itself the appointment of five unofficial members, who will be independent of all unreasoning popular passion or excitement, and will calmly and dispassionately examine all Government measures. It is this majority of *eight* out of the *fifteen* unofficial members so selected that will have to decide all questions of finance or of purely local and domestic concern.

17. And where, may I ask, where is the danger of making such a concession to so loyal and so faithful and so law-abiding a population, as the Maltese must be admitted to be, a concession for which they have been asking for more than eighty years? As to the security of the fortress and the protection of Imperial interests, the great bugbear that is constantly paraded before Her Majesty's Government to prevent them from making so just and reasonable a concession of what, after all, is but the right of all British subjects wherever they may reside, I submit that the most ample and most effective provisions are made in the suggestions which I have ventured to propose, even if the most bitter enemies of the British Government were being dealt with. But if these provisions are considered inefficient or inadequate, surely they can be made as adequate and efficient as may be considered necessary, bearing in mind, however, that the great bulk of the population has always been most faithful and most loyal to the British Crown. Let Her Majesty's Government remember "the noble confidence which," in the words of a great English Minister, "the Maltese people reposed in the honour and good faith of Great Britain at the period when, having nearly achieved their independence by their own gallant efforts, they placed their dearest interests, almost unconditionally, at the disposal of Her Majesty's predecessor," and make a corresponding, though long delayed, return for that noble confidence and that unswerving loyalty. The Maltese do not seek, they never sought, to interfere with, or jeopardise in any way, the safety of the fortress. What they have been claiming for many years, what they claim now, is simply the right of exercising a real and effective control over the administration of their purely local and domestic concerns, and the expenditure of their own revenue.

18. In your despatch of the 16th April last, two reasons are assigned for refusing Responsible Government to the Maltese: first, because it would be incompatible with the position of Malta as an Imperial Fortress; and, secondly, because it is unsuitable to the circumstances of the island and to the political capacity of the people. In reply to the above, it might be stated that the Maltese do not now ask for responsible government, or they ask for it in a considerably

mild form. As to the statement that a form of government which would give the Maltese a real and effective control over the Civil administration would be incompatible with the position of Malta as an Imperial Fortress, I beg to submit that no attempt has been made to prove such incompatibility, due regard being had to the safeguards proposed, and to the readiness of the Maltese to strengthen and improve those safeguards, if it should be considered necessary. As to the political capacity of the people, I submit that they have shown themselves far more capable than the inhabitants of much larger, wealthier and more thickly-peopled colonies; for, though I cannot approve the means that have lately been resorted to, they have brought the Government to a dead lock, and compelled both the Local and Imperial Authorities to amend the Constitution, which has been shewn to be unsuitable to the times in which we live, and to the political progress made by the population. And, feeling it to be my duty to speak plainly and frankly, it is as well that Her Majesty's Government should know that the Maltese are firmly determined to obtain a fair measure of real and effective self-government, or to throw the whole responsibility of governing the Island on the Military Governor, whom Her Majesty may be advised from time to time to appoint to the command of the Fortress. They will take no part whatever in sham Executive, Legislative or Financial Councils. They are willing to make any sacrifice, within certain limits, to promote and insure the security of the Fortress and the real Imperial interests connected therewith; but their inalienable rights to local self-government, as men and as British subjects, they are not prepared to surrender to any party and for any purpose whatsoever.

19. The Maltese may, under the proposed constitution, perhaps during the first years, fall into errors, as has been the case with many great and powerful nations,—with immensely larger, wealthier and more thickly peopled British dependencies. But, Sir, how great soever may be the errors and the blunders which the representatives of the Maltese people may fall into, in their first attempts at self-government, I submit that it will be impossible for them to surpass or even to equal the economical and administrative blunders perpetrated under the auspices of British military rule in Malta. The tax of ten shillings on every quarter of wheat imported for local consumption, and the other taxes on the food of the people were not imposed by the Maltese. These taxes were imposed by British Commissioners in 1837, and have since been most scrupulously fenced round and defended against all attacks by a long succession of British military governors, guided and advised by British civilian administrators. The fiscal system by which the poor are made to contribute towards defraying the public expenditure more than the rich and well-to-do,—by which the lighting of the streets of the fortified towns, the maintenance of the roads and streets, and all necessary and unnecessary expenditure, which in other countries is paid for out of local rates, is in Malta defrayed out of the revenue raised for general purposes, is not of Maltese, but of British, growth,—it is a

system that has been allowed to grow and to take deep root in the mind of the people of Malta, under the fostering care of British Military governors and their British Civilian advisers. I am sure, whatever the Maltese may do in their endeavours to govern themselves, they will never allow the education of the people to be so grossly neglected as it was neglected under British Military rule. If the Imperial Authorities were at last roused to the necessity of reconsidering the fiscal system and of improving the state of our educational institutions, this was due not to Englishmen, but to those very Maltese who are now said to be incapable of taking a more important part in governing themselves. The Maltese will certainly never be guilty of the crime of expending the proceeds of a heavy tax on the bread of the poor on the erection of a gorgeous opera house, out of all proportion to the resources of the Island, at a cost of nearly £100,000. Such an enormity could be perpetrated only by an irresponsible British Military Governor and his British Civilian advisers.

20. But if the Maltese are politically incapable, who, may I be permitted to ask, who has been governing Malta ever since these Islands were placed under the protection of the British Crown? Who but Maltese, whilst the British Governors, Chief Secretaries and other heads of departments have been drawing large salaries and, as a rule, doing very little, if any portion, of the hard work? For how many years was Sir A. Dingli, the present Chief Justice, the *de facto* Governor of Malta, under the fancied direction of the British Military Governors and their British Civilian *alter ego*? And even now, with the exception of the British Military Governor and his British Civilian Lieutenant-Governor, by whom is the work of administering all the public departments carried out, if not by Maltese, many of whom have grown grey in the service of their country, though their work finds but little recognition at the hands of their British superiors, who, in most cases, look down upon their Maltese subordinates as belonging to an inferior race, perhaps because whilst the Governor draws, or drew until quite recently, £5,000, and the Lieutenant-Governor £1,600 a year, out of the local treasury, the Maltese heads of departments receive only £500 a year?

21. I trust, Sir, we have heard the last of the incompatibility of a fair measure of self-government for 150,000 Maltese citizens, with the position of Malta as an Imperial Fortress, or of the political incapacity of the Maltese people. The Governor was made to sign the despatch of the 24th December, 1886, in which it is stated that the Government must retain in its hands the ultimate power of shaping the local legislation according to its will, because the sole value of Malta, as a British possession, is that it is a fortress and naval station in a commanding position in the Mediterranean. But that is not the real reason why the British Military Governor and his Civilian Lieutenant-Governor wish to retain the ultimate power in their hands. They want to retain that power in order to be able to lord it over the heads of all the civil departments, to treat them as inferior beings, and to compel them, either directly, or indirectly

by means of packed committees, to do their bidding in all things, even in matters with which they declare themselves to be incompetent to deal. They want to retain that ultimate power in order to be able to remove from the service the heads of important public departments, by simply declaring them to be incapable, as they did with Mr. Monreal, in violation of the Colonial Rules and Regulations. They wish to retain that power to be able to dismiss from the service such men as Sacco, without trial, without even being informed of the cause of their dismissal, though the Colonial Regulations expressly declare "that in every such case the grounds of dismissal must be definitely stated in writing and communicated to the officer, that he may have full opportunity of exculpating himself, and the matter must be investigated by the Governor with the aid of the head of the department." They wish to retain that power in order that, in the appointment to offices of high trust and emolument, such as judgeships, they may recommend for appointment their favourites, or the favourites of their friends, to the exclusion of the far superior merits and attainments of gentlemen who may be obnoxious to them or to their friends. The exclusion of the people's representatives and of heads of departments from all substantial power and influence is wanted, for the purpose of nominating to the highest ecclesiastical benefices in their gift, priests who have no other claim than that of flattering them and rendering them private service, to the exclusion of men eminent for their learning and their piety from the highest dignities of the Cathedral Church. These are some of the reasons why the Governor and Lieutenant-Governor wish to retain in their hands the ultimate power of shaping the local legislation according to their will.

22. As to the effects of the prevailing system, and the baleful influence exercised by military rule on the government of the civil population, I shall quote one other instance of grievous injustice and oppression, which has been for some time before you, and for which the Governor has assumed the whole responsibility. I allude to the case of Dr. Grech, an M.D. of the Malta University and a practitioner of considerable ability, who, in consequence of an altercation which took place between him and a police inspector, was illegally arrested at 8 p.m., on the 29th December, 1886, on the false charge of "having insulted the police in the discharge of their duties, and having impeded the discharge of the same duties." He was illegally tried on that same night by a magistrate of judicial police, who refused to postpone the trial to the following morning, that the accused might provide himself with counsel and have time to summon the witnesses which he considered necessary for his defence. The postponement asked for was refused, and the trial was proceeded with, the prisoner having been denied the right of summoning such witnesses as he thought necessary for his defence, and of being defended by counsel; for although two friends of his arrived some time after the trial had begun, they knew nothing whatever about the case, and were directed to plead without having had time to confer with the accused. The

Magistrate himself declared that the charge was false and Dr. Grech's arrest illegal, because he found him guilty only of having insulted the Police Inspector by addressing to him indeterminate reproaches, and not of having prevented him from discharging his duties. Nevertheless, he was there and then sentenced to four days' imprisonment, and the next morning he was conveyed to the Carradino prison, was made to strip and to put on a felon's dress, to mix with the vilest scoundrels, and to partake of the common convicts' fare, for in the Malta prison perfect equality has been recently introduced, no difference whatever being made between the gentleman who for some offence similar to that which Dr. Grech was charged with having committed is condemned to a few days' imprisonment, and the assassin guilty of the most atrocious crimes. And the Magistrate was fully aware of this fact when he sentenced Dr. Grech to four days' imprisonment. So far, it appears to me that both the Superintendent of Police who ordered Dr. Grech to be arrested, and the Magistrate who tried him at that advanced hour of the night, and denied him the right of being properly defended by counsel and of summoning necessary witnesses, were guilty of gross abuse of power. As Dr. Grech had not impeded the Inspector of Police in the execution of his duties, his arrest was undoubtedly illegal. But even supposing that Dr. Grech had been lawfully arrested, what necessity was there for his being tried in the middle of the night, for his being refused the proper assistance of counsel, for his being refused the time required for summoning necessary witnesses? Why, if he had committed not one, but fifty murders; if each of those murders had been aggravated by circumstances of time, of place and of person; the police could only have arrested him and proceeded to try him in conformity with the rules explicitly laid down by the Criminal Code, Arts. 351 to 437. So that, even if Dr. Grech had been accused of murder, his trial a few minutes after his arrest would have been in direct violation of the law; and it should have been the Magistrate's duty to refuse to try him at that advanced hour of the night, and under all the circumstances of the case. Such things do not happen even in Russia. The Nihilists who attempted the life of the Czar of all the Russias on the 13th March last, and were caught in the very act, were not tried before nearly two months had elapsed, and had the benefit of counsel, and were permitted to call such witnesses as they deemed necessary. But, Sir, in the opinion of the Governor of Malta and of his legal adviser, the Superintendent of Police who ordered the illegal arrest of Dr. Grech, and the Magistrate who proceeded to try and condemn him illegally were not in any way to blame; for a petition having been addressed to His Excellency on the 30th December—the day after Dr. Grech's illegal arrest, trial and condemnation—in which petition all the facts of the case were briefly, but clearly stated, the Governor, through the Lieutenant-Governor, answered on the 31st, after he had considered the subject during a whole day, that he could not interfere with the due course of law in the case submitted to him; which,

being interpreted, evidently means that the Governor, having carefully examined all the facts of the case, and sought the advice of the Crown Advocate, had fully approved all that had been done by the police and by the magistrate. This, Sir, is the way in which the liberty of the subject is protected by those whose duty it is to protect the life, the property and the liberty of Her Majesty's Maltese subjects in Malta, under the Military Governor who wishes to retain in his hands the ultimate power of shaping the local legislation according to his will. The people of Malta, and, I venture to say, also the people of England and the British Parliament, are anxiously awaiting your decision on the appeal laid before you by Dr. S. Grech; and I can have no doubt but that Her Majesty's Government will express in no uncertain or hesitating terms their condemnation of such high-handed, illegal and tyrannical proceedings, even though they have been sanctioned by Her Majesty's Representative in Malta.

23. I have tried for seven long years to induce the Authorities at the Colonial Office to reform the Constitution and to prevent the perpetration of acts of injustice similar to those quoted above,—acts of injustice which, though suffered principally by persons natives of, or residing in, Malta, caused untold harm to British interests, because they associated the Government of England with those who were guilty of such deeds, and placed a strong argument in the hands of those who were trying to persuade the Maltese to look elsewhere than in England for justice and for the redress of their grievances. Finding that my endeavours proved useless; that I was accused by the people of approving in the Executive Council measures which were never submitted to that illusory institution, and which I strongly disapproved; that I was under the necessity of voting in favour of measures which I inwardly condemned; that I received but little support in the arduous task of improving and developing the public schools placed under my charge, and that I was indirectly thwarted and my authority was undermined by the action of the Lieutenant-Governor; I resolved, after careful deliberation, upon resigning the office to which Her Majesty's Government were pleased to call me in June, 1880, together with the seat in the Executive Council to which I was appointed by Her Majesty's Warrant, in March, 1883, in order that I might again be free to plead the claims of my countrymen to a better and more liberal form of government, and to defend the honour and the dignity of the Professors and Examiners of the University from the undeserved charge of incompetency and unfairness preferred against them by no less a personage than the Lieutenant-Governor of Malta, whose duty it should have been to uphold and defend that noble institution, more particularly after the high testimony borne in its favour by your predecessor, the Right Honourable Lord Stanley of Preston, in his Despatches of the 16th December, 1885, and 18th January, 1886.

24. Before concluding, I hope I may be permitted again to appeal to Her Majesty's Government, and to ask that the just and

reasonable claims of the Maltese to a fair measure of Self-Government,—claims which have been put forth ever since my forefathers placed the dearest interests of Malta and its Dependencies under the protection of the British Crown—may at last be satisfied. Some of my friends in Parliament have advised me to join the movement for Self-Government which is about to be made by all the Crown Colonies, under the auspices of the great and venerated Statesman who is now struggling to obtain Self-Government for Ireland. Before placing such a proposal before my countrymen, I shall await your decision and that of Her Majesty's Government on the suggestions which I have made for the reform of the Constitution of the Government of Malta. By satisfying the just and reasonable claims of the Maltese, you will be providing for the security of the fortress and of all Imperial interests connected therewith, far better than by doubling the garrison; for, as Lord Kimberley stated not many years ago, in discussing Maltese affairs, the most important element in the security of the Fortress of Malta is the contentment of the population. Nothing can be more erroneous and more unjust than the statement that by permitting a majority of the representatives of the people of Malta to control their own local and domestic concerns and the expenditure of their own local revenue, the security of the Fortress might be jeopardised; and I sincerely trust that, on a calm review of the whole question in all its bearings, you will be persuaded of the justice and the necessity of recommending to Her Majesty's Government that the year of the Queen's Jubilee may long be remembered by Her Majesty's loyal and faithful Maltese subjects, as that in which they obtained from Her Majesty's Government a real and effective control over the administration of their own purely local and domestic concerns.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

S. SAVONA,

*Late Director of Education and Member
of the Legislative and Executive
Councils of Malta.*



S. Savona