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# THE BUILDING OF THE COTTONERA FORTIFICATIONS: A Maltese protest against taxation

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On 28 March 1673 Mgr. Pallavicino informed the Cardinal-Inquisitors that he had withdrawn the patents of some officials of the Holy Office. This decision was connected with the collection of tax which Grand Master Cotoner desired so much to impose in order to finance the construction of the new Cottonera fortifications around the harbour.<sup>1</sup> The resulting crisis that erupted as a result provides insight into the method taxes were levied in Malta and the part played by Rome in determining and influencing local affairs. At the same time bringing to the fore one other perennial problem that characterised local history till the end of the eighteenth century, namely, the question of ecclesiastical immunity.

Even before Mgr. Pallavicino had been appointed Inquisitor, Grand Master Cotoner had indicated that he expected assistance but Pope Clement X could not help the Order financially. Nevertheless, he permitted Cotoner to levy a tax on *beni commestabili* which the Grand Master soon desired to have commuted into another one on *beni stabili* or immovable property. This met with opposition mainly from the ecclesiastics. Canon Ristri petitioned the Pope against it but he was not supported by the Bishop, the Vicar and the majority of the clergy, 530 of whom declared their disapproval of his memorial.<sup>2</sup> Ristri also appealed to the Congregation of Immunity in Rome,<sup>3</sup> but the Pope intended to empower the Inquisitor to carry out the valuation of the *beni stabili* and establish the amount of taxation to be paid. Cotoner, however, wanted this to be done only by the Order and the Jurats of the Università of Mdina.<sup>4</sup> The Inquisitor, according to Cotoner, could do the valuation of the property of his officials and patentees only.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Bibl. Casan., Rome, Ms.2112, f.28. For a historical analysis of the building of the Cottonera Lines see A. Hoppen, *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 78 - 90.
  2. National Library of Malta, Libr. Ms. 647, Lib. xvii, n.p.
  3. N.L.M., Libr. Ms. 438, ff. 71-77, 77v-80 and 193-204.
  4. A.O.M., Ms. 1444, Cotoner to Verospi 7 June 1670.
  5. *Ibid.*, Cotoner to Verospi 17 October 1670.

The Brief for the commutation of the tax was signed by Clement X on 22 November 1670.<sup>6</sup> The Inquisitor, Mgr. Tempi, was authorized to give the Grand Master the necessary faculty to impose the tax on *beni stabili* and this was duly registered by the Council of the Order.<sup>7</sup> A Commission was appointed by the Grand Master and it also included D. Fabritio Testaferrata, the *Depositario* of the Holy Office,<sup>8</sup> to ensure the execution of the Brief.<sup>9</sup> The Grand Master was to levy a tax of 100,000 sc. on *beni stabili*, so by February 1671 he published an edict which soon met with protests especially from the ecclesiastical side. Canon Ristri even gained the patronage of the advocate, later cardinal, De Luca in his protests.<sup>10</sup> Yet declarations of property were made in 1671 and as far as the Holy Office is concerned, they indicate that the Office and its ministers had an aggregate total property valued at 20,923 sc. 5 tr. 13 gr. in *beni stabili*, 2,410 sc. 9 tr. 18 gr. in *censi bullali* and 23,334 sc. 3 tr. 11 gr. in *introito*.<sup>11</sup>

However this tax was again commuted to another one on *beni commestabili*, a decision that gave rise to a turbulent period, which has not yet received due attention. This period was much influenced by the

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6. A.O.M., Ms. 261, f. 172v.
  7. N.L.M., Libr. Ms. 4, p. 320; A.O.M., Ms. 261, f. 173v.
  8. A(rchivio) S(ecreto) V(aticano), Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 53, When Testaferrata was confirmed in this position, it was remarked: "Si considera e si loda qui come atto di prudenza non meno di giustizia la deputazione fatta da V.S. di legittimare Esattore e Collettore della Decima in persona di D. Fab. Testaferrata".
  9. N.L.M., Libr. Ms. 4, pp. 321-323. For a full list of the members of the Commission see W.L. Zammit, *Malta Under the Cottoners 1660-1680* (Malta, 1980), p. 12.
  10. A. Mišsud, "Papi Fortificazione e Tasse", *Arch. Melitense* III, (1919), p. 425.
  11. N.L.M., Libr. Ms. 672, f. 44. The following is a comparative table:

	<i>Stabili</i>	<i>Bullali</i>	<i>Introito</i>
Beni della Segrezia			
Magistrale Sacra			
Religione e suoi			
ufficiali	41345sc.8tr.12gr.	7454sc.6tr. 6gr.	48800sc. 2tr.17gr.
Delle persone			
Ecclesiastiche			
e Religiose	76749sc.5tr.12gr.	18712sc.6tr. 9gr.	95461cs.11tr.18gr.
Habitanti			
della Valletta	55787sc.8tr.12gr.	8542sc.9tr.13gr.	64330sc. 6tr. 5gr.
Habitanti della			
Vittoriosa,			
Senglea e Cospicua	20847sc.0tr.11gr.	4010sc.9tr.18gr.	24857sc.10tr. 9gr.
Notabile e parte			
dell' Casali	37450sc.5tr.18gr.	5744sc.5tr. 4gr.	43294sc.11tr. 2gr.
Deg'altri Casali	31089sc.0tr. 5gr.	6583sc.8tr. 4gr.	37972sc. 8tr. 4gr.
Del Sant'Ufficio			
e suoi ministri	20923sc.5tr.13gr.	2410sc.9tr.18gr.	23334sc. 3tr.11gr.
Totale	285625sc.5tr.4gr.	53922sc.6tr. 6gr.	339647sc.11tr. 0gr.

diplomatic dexterity and prudence of Inquisitor Mgr. Pallavicino. For Canon Pietro Ristri was not the only one who protested vociferously. On 16 January 1672 it was noted that the Procurator of the *Mensa* of the Holy Office, Santoro De Cos, had appealed to the Cardinal-Inquisitors to order the Inquisitor not to introduce any innovations with regard to patentees of the Inquisition for both such patentees and also ecclesiastics were not prepared to accept the new imposition.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the Papal Brief of 5 February 1670, when explained to the Inquisitor, was understood as implying that all patentees of the Holy Office as well as the ecclesiastics of Malta and Gozo were to contribute towards the tax for the new fortifications. Only the property of the Holy Office was to be freed and preserved from every imposition and service and to be held in possession of their exemption.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile Mgr. Tempi was recalled and substituted by Mgr. Pallavicino who, once appointed Inquisitor, sought to make contacts with the Order's Ambassador, Verospi, whom he informed that he had not yet received precise orders for the execution of the Brief conceded for the imposition of the tax on the *beni stabili*, so Cardinal Borromeo was requested to issue such orders. The Pope, remarked Verospi on 28 May 1672, desired that the Brief be fulfilled, but before giving his orders he wished that Mgr. Pallavicino would forward him a report about the situation (in Malta) particularly about the pretensions of the ecclesiastics on their contributions.<sup>14</sup> It was argued that the fortifications were considered useful for Italy and Christianity and both Cardinal Altieri and Cardinal Borromeo indicated the Pope's clear intentions. However, representations were already being made against this tax even though it was declared that ecclesiastics were not going to be taxed unduly.<sup>15</sup> It was hoped that no difficulty would be met<sup>16</sup> and that the requests of the ecclesiastics would have no effect.<sup>17</sup>

In fact the tax on *beni stabili* created a commotion. The Inquisitor was besieged by malcontents and he feared the possibility of a revolution against the Grandmaster. Angry protests together with threats against the Order were heard in every square and drinking shop and it required great circumspection to calm the hundred and fifty priests from the countryside who on 2 July 1672 invaded the Inquisitor's Palace shouting and claiming privileges and exemptions based on what they said were awards of Charles V to the Maltese. They desired to be given audience as a group and it was only after much exhortation that the Inquisitor

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12. Archives of the I(nquisitor) M(alta), Corr., Ms. 12, f. 158.

13. *Ibid.*, f. 176; A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 36v.

14. A.O.M., Ms. 1289, Verospi to Cotoner 28 May 1672; A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 34v.

15. A.O.M., Ms. 1289, Verospi to Cotoner 18 June 1672.

16. *Ibid.*, Verospi to Cotoner 13 August 1672.

17. *Ibid.*, Verospi to Cotoner 27 August 1672.

quietened them and gained their trust. Their appeal was also forwarded to Rome while the Inquisitor was praised for the way he dealt with them.<sup>18</sup> The Inquisitor seems to have been determined on ensuring obedience: on 9 October 1672 Giacomo Muxi was deprived of his patent for his disobedience regarding the Brief on the tax for the collection of funds for the fortifications.<sup>19</sup> Whilst facing these protests the Inquisitor also had the delicate job of settling a question with the Grandmaster over the selection of persons deputised to collect the tax.

Cotoner had deputised the tax-collectors following the reception of the Pope's edict permitting the collection of the tax, but the Pope did not approve the assumption by the Grandmaster of a power normally reserved for the Bishop and the Inquisitor in matters affecting ecclesiastics and patentees of the Holy Office.<sup>20</sup> Cotoner had been informed by Mgr. Tempi that the Pope had not accorded him such faculty. Mgr. Pallavicino therefore had to tell him to abstain from deputising such exactors as only the Inquisitor could choose those who had to collect tax from the patentees of the Holy Office. As far as ecclesiastics were concerned, Cotoner was to wait for instructions from the Secretariat of State and the Congregation of Immunity.<sup>21</sup> In fact the Grandmaster had acted in good faith because Mgr. Tempi had been ambiguous in his communication — he had not reserved the deputisation of exactors and treasurers to the approval of the Inquisitor. To solve the problem, Mgr. Pallavicino issued a new deputisation for D. Fabritio Testaferrata while the Bishop was to be allowed to appoint his own deputy as far as ecclesiastics were concerned.<sup>22</sup> By so doing the Inquisitor was able to please his superiors and to ensure that no act prejudicial to the liberty of the Tribunal of the Holy Office be made.<sup>23</sup>

However, protests against this tax continued. In January 1673 Gregorio Bonnici went to Rome to present protests on behalf of ecclesiastics and patentees. For the Order, he was one of many seditious men.<sup>24</sup> Another person who presented an appeal before the Cardinal-Inquisitors was the Consultor of the Holy Office. Cirillo Portelli, who found that the Grandmaster was so ill-disposed towards him that he could not even return to Malta without endangering his own life. In-

18. Bibl. Casan., Rome, Ms. 2112, ff. 223-223v, the people's anger was described as "le rabbiose istanze di quegl'Affricani tumultuanti" while the priests' loud protests at the Inquisitor's Palace as "con strepiti di natural ferocia". The Inquisitor's dexterity was praised as "per sedare gli animi commossi ed haver luogo e tempo di procurar la concordia con sodisfazione delle parti", see, A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 48.

19. A.I.M., Ms. Memorie No. 12, Salvati Vol. I, f. 311.

20. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 43v.

21. A.I.M. Corr. Ms. 12, f. 188.

22. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 54 - 55.

23. A.I.M. Corr., Ms. 12, f. 202.

24. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cotoner 7 January 1673; Bibl. Casan., Rome, Ms. 2112, f. 223v, describes him as "ardito, inquieto nemico scoperto del Magistero."

directly he was being denied the income of payments due to him by his debtors because he could not sue them in the Civil Courts for the ministers of justice were hardly favourable to his cause as they were dependants and subordinates of the Grandmaster.<sup>25</sup> Portelli seems to have been a persistent opponent to the tax even though he was told bluntly in Rome that he could tell his followers that their request for exemption was not going to be favoured by the Pope.<sup>26</sup> He was told threateningly to restrain his tone and also not to make his correspondents hope for a commutation of the tax, even though he had promised to present a memorial to the Pope through a certain Mgr. Bottini. Referring to Bonnici's presence in Rome, on 1 January 1673, Mgr. Pallavicino opined that he should be forcibly impeded from giving the Maltese the impression that they could resist further the imposition, and that Gregorio Bonnici should also be made to tell the truth to avoid the possibility of revolution.<sup>27</sup>

Another indication of commotion in the Island was the convocation which the Cathedral Canons wanted to hold to discuss the issue. The Order feared this could incite the people and lead to a rebellion, and in this circumstance Cirillo Portelli was indicated by Verospi as one of the leaders.<sup>28</sup> However, Bishop Astirias sought to avoid catastrophe by prudently prohibiting and impeding the convocation.<sup>29</sup> In view of these circumstances, the Inquisitor sought to make a number of suggestions to help the Grandmaster whilst at the same time trying to appease the people. He proposed to have the *moneta di rame* removed and to commute the tax to one on *beni commestabili*. But on 5 November 1672, he was instructed to sustain the Brief and to help the Grandmaster who was facing the opposition of the people and disunity among the Grand Crosses.<sup>30</sup> As far as exemptees of the Holy Office were concerned, he was to take away the patent of those who showed repugnance or opposition towards the payment of the tax. This was meant to help the Grandmaster to constrict and force whoever was deprived of the habit in a manner best decided by his prudence and justice.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, a memorial prepared on behalf of the ecclesiastics and the people of Malta had been presented to the Pope. It was also forwarded to Mgr. Pallavicino on 3 December 1672 to solicit his opinion. The memorial accused the Grandmaster of violating his magisterial authority by intending to extort an exaction of 100,000 sc. of gold imposed on the

25. A.I.M. Corr., Ms. 12, f. 199.

26. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 62 - 62v; A.O.M., Ms. 1289, Verospi to Cottoner 15 October 1672.

27. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, f. 5.

28. A.O.M., Ms. 1289, Verospi to Cottoner 17 December 1672.

29. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 66.

30. *Ibid.*, ff. 58 - 59v.

31. A.O.M., Ms. 1289, Verospi to Cottoner 19 November 1672.

32. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 63 - 65v.

*beni stabili* of the Maltese Islands and pointed out that about 400 representatives had appeared before Mgr. Pallavicino to oppose this exaction. In their demand, these were supported by 10,000 laymen. It was alleged that much money had been taken in various ways from the people for the financing of the fortifications of Floriana, Santa Margerita and what later became known as Ricasoli. It was also claimed that since 1651 a new tax of 110,000 pieces of eight royal of Spain had been imposed and preordained for the effective extinction of the *moneta di rame*. But in spite of the fact that this tax was collected, the copper coins concerned were not removed so as not to deny the Order an annual profit of 180,000 sc. to the detriment of the people. For this reason they proposed to have the tax substituted by another one consisting of personal service or *neuba* and the payment of 1 tr. per head, including ecclesiastics.<sup>33</sup> In arguing for this system of taxation, Bonnici, Portelli and others who preferred it to one on *beni commestabili*, pointed out that in such a system the poor would gain through employment and the rich would pay without difficulty 1 tr. per head and the Order would get an annual subsidy of 36,000 sc. It was calculated that there were 18,000 persons in Malta able to work, and at the rate of two days each per month and each paying the value of 1 tr. per day, they would give 36,000 sc. But the Order thought otherwise for, as Verospi pointed out to the Grandmaster on 3 June 1673, the *neuba* had already been introduced at the beginning of the building of the fortifications at the rate of four days work per year per person. In other words, the Order required nothing less than 100,000 sc. of gold as quickly as possible.<sup>34</sup>

Opposition to the tax on *beni stabili* persisted, but as the fortifications were considered necessary for the security of the Island, on 17 December 1672, the Inquisitor was informed that the Pope was ordering him to assist the Bishop to force ecclesiastics to pay their tax without further delay. To make his position more efficacious, the Inquisitor was empowered to threaten deprivation of benefices, suspension and any other punishments he deemed fit. He was also instructed to issue a precept to make insubordinate clerics appear personally before him within a given time. Patentees who did not wish to co-operate and pay the tax could be deprived of their patent and even be suspended from their duties. But it seems that the protests were making way, for the Inquisitor was also asked to give his opinion on whether it was better if the tax was commuted to one on *beni commestabili*. If this was considered practicable and he agreed, a Brief could be prepared and forwarded to him.<sup>34</sup>

While having such power to make all ecclesiastics pay their dues, the Inquisitor seemed, according to the Grandmaster, to be slow in executing the orders given to him to check those who protested

33. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cottoner 3 June 1673.

34. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 67 - 68.

against the tax and to force them to pay. So he instructed his Ambassador in Rome to appeal to the Pope and to Cardinal Altieri to make the Inquisitor accomplish his commission.<sup>35</sup> It was further implied by the Order that many Maltese were taking refuge in Churches or fraudulently taking the clerical habit to avoid payment. When the Bishop affixed copies of letters on the said tax for public view, many priests complied but there were still others who remained obstinate.<sup>36</sup> Yet the Inquisitor was not considered to be procrastinating by his superiors: the Pope praised him for his vigour while on another occasion (within a week) he was praised for having managed to calm the people and ensured respect towards the Grandmaster.<sup>37</sup> Although public peace was being ensured, there was still opposition to the tax and the Inquisitor proposed to the Grandmaster on 27 August 1672 to commute the tax into another one on *beni commestabili*. To try to ensure further peace, the Inquisitor also proposed the removal of the *moneta di rame* and thus it was hoped that malcontents would be turned into demonstrators of gratitude.<sup>38</sup>

In other words the Grandmaster was being made to change his decision in favour of the tax. Early in 1673 a resolution was taken to Rome to prepare a new Brief to enable the Grandmaster to impose this new tax. For this reason Cardinal Altieri informed the Order's Ambassador through the Prior De Vecchi that this was being proposed by the Inquisitor and that it had been approved by Cotoner.<sup>39</sup> At the same time the Inquisitor was informed that the Brief was going to be prepared in such a way as to appear that it was being required by the Grandmaster to ensure peace and obedience among his subjects.<sup>40</sup> Mgr. Pallavicino was further advised by Mgr. Casanate, who knew Malta well, on how to proceed to calm the people.<sup>41</sup>

While these diplomatic concerts were going on, some Canons still persisted in their opposition even to this commuted tax. The Inquisitor hoped to call on the Bishop to advise him to submit the defaulting Canons to his orders that they may serve as an example to other ecclesiastics.<sup>42</sup> On 16 January 1673, Bishop Astirias wrote to the Inquisitor telling him that he had informed his Canons about the Pope's mind and intentions regarding the tax concerned and emphasized obedience. However, he felt that his word was not enough and therefore requested the assistance of the Inquisitor who quickly replied that he

35. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cotoner 18 February 1673.

36. *Ibid.*, Verospi to Cotoner 25 February 1673.

37. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 74v., 78v.

38. *Ibid.*, ff. 49, 51.

39. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cotoner 4 March 1673.

40. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 82v.

41. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cotoner 18 May 1673.

42. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, "Stimai d'inisnuare a' questo Mons. Vescovo la chiamata de suoi Can. contumachi per farli ravveduti accio dall'esempio loro gi'altri ecl. s'arrendessero".

was ready to give all the help necessary.<sup>43</sup> The situation, however, was rather irksome for the Inquisitor for, because of Cardinal Altieri's orders regarding those priests who did not submit to the imposition of tax, by 25 January 1673 he found himself being criticised by both the Grandmaster and the Bishop. On 18 January 1673, the Bishop had written to him indicating that the Canons had often declared him suspect, and that therefore help was required to make them submit to his authority. The next day Bishop Astirias noted that the principal leaders were Canon Alessandro Bologna, Canon Matteolo Xeberras, Canon Antonio Testaferrata, Canon Domenico Attard and Canon Girolamo Piscopo besides the Archdeacon and the Cleric Ferdinando Vassallo, who, together with Dr. Pietro Perdicomato Bologna and Dr. Domenico De Bono, pretended to be the advocates of the clergy which was threatening to refuse to submit to the Apostolic See.<sup>44</sup> Mgr. Pallavicino quickly made these Canons submit to order by making full use of the power vested in his authority. With the approval of Cardinal Altieri, he issued an order on the 5 February 1673 threatening with suspension, deprivation of dignity and ecclesiastical benefices, Canons Bologna, Xeberras and Testaferrata and ordering them to present themselves within ten days and to appear before the Roman Court.<sup>45</sup> Once handed to the Canons concerned, this note helped to change the attitude of the reluctant clergy: on 25 February 1673, an apology was presented to the Inquisitor who was kindly asked to intercede for them to ensure the Pope's pardon whilst they promised total obedience.<sup>46</sup> Their attitude was so changed that the Grandmaster himself interceded on their behalf before the Inquisitor.<sup>47</sup> Mgr. Pallavicino appeared to be adamant in his decision as he wanted to reserve the granting of pardon to His Holiness.<sup>48</sup> In fact it was the Pope himself who, through his Cardinal-Inquisitor, informed him that since the Canons had shown obedience to the Bishop and the Grandmaster, it was being left to the Inquisitor's will to exempt them from surrendering themselves to the Roman Court within a prescribed time and the cumbersome and expensive voyage to Rome. The Pope wanted him to admonish them and to tell them to be more careful and obedient in the

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43. *Ibid.*, ff. 46 - 46v.

44. *Ibid.*, ff. 59 - 60v.

45. *Ibid.*, ff. 78 - 78v.

46. *Ibid.*, f. 104, "Li Canonici infrascritti della Catedrale di Malta umilissim suditi servi et ob. di V.E. riverentemente e con ogni dovuto ossequio la supplicano a' scusarli, ed ad intercedere a' loro il perdono da S.S. per non havere ciecamente e senza replica ubbedito a' gl'ordini di V.E. intorno al pagamento della tassa prima d'esser stati spignati, sequestrati li beni di alcuni di loro, et altri citati per andare a' Roma e genuflessi a' suoi santissimi piedi supplichano per la continuatione del Suo Clementissimo patrocinio verso tutto il clero ..."

47. *Ibid.*, f. 106v, "dopo la sudetta intimazione sono stati collo loro obbedienza d'esempio alli pertinaci mentre tutti questi Isolani concorrono presentamente alla volontà del Sommo Pontefice."

48. *Ibid.*, f. 110, "quale però non volle liberarli affatto, ma' riservare il compimento della grazia a' Sua Santità".

future.<sup>49</sup> On 18 March 1673, the Inquisitor received a congratulatory despatch for his vigorous assistance to the Bishop and the Grandmaster in ensuring peace and respect towards authority. It was felt that the Grandmaster, the Bishop and the Holy See itself would express their gratitude for his services, while he was encouraged to make the Maltese more loyal towards him and to make them obedient subjects of the Holy See. It was also felt opportune to commute the tax and to encourage the Order to suppress the *moneta di rame* and thus a well-founded stimulus for a possible revolt in Malta could be removed.<sup>50</sup>

While this storm abated, the Inquisitor waited for the Brief that would empower the commutation of the tax to one on *beni commestabili* as this was considered essential to pacify the Island completely.<sup>51</sup> In April 1673, Ambassador Verospi informed Cotoner that though he had met Cardinal Altieri and thanked him for his help and for the action the Inquisitor in suppressing the troublesome Canons, he had got no information about the expected Brief.<sup>52</sup> On 24 April, Mgr. Pallavicino confirmed that he had pardoned the disobedient Canons<sup>53</sup> and that he was anxiously awaiting the publication of the Brief to ensure peace and tranquility in the Island. He feared that procrastination would provide an opportunity for some disaffected Grand Crosses to foment opposition against the Grandmaster.<sup>54</sup>

In May 1673 the Council of the Order was convened at the request of the Inquisitor. It agreed to condescend to his desire and to the wish of Maltese exemptees to commute the tax for the fortifications into one on *beni commestabili*. The official record of the Order notes that this was done for the benefit of all the people and to conform with the sentiments of the Pope.<sup>55</sup> The Brief of Clement X approving commutation was issued on 1 July 1673.<sup>56</sup> The Pope desired that deputies were to be chosen to keep record of bills which were to be collected daily, and that among these deputies there was to be someone selected to take care of dues collected from ecclesiastics and exemptees. Moreover the Inquisitor was instructed to send an annual report on the quantity collected and respectively applied in financing the fortifications, while he was to register such instructions at his Chancery.<sup>57</sup> The declaration of the quota

49. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, ff. 83 - 83v.

50. *Ibid.*, ff. 83v - 84.

51. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, f. 182, "per toglier ogni sospensione d'anime in questi Isolai, che dopo un'grandissimo strepito, et tempesta s'ingelosiscono hormai da tanta calma; il Cauchi Vicario, e Bologna Can. fattionarii tra' preti, e nemici, Dio m'ha', permesso d riconciliarli, perche non habbia in pregiud. di clero a' fomentarsi nove scissure ..."

52. A.O.M., Ms. 1290, Verospi to Cotoner 19 April 1673.

53. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, f. 206.

54. *Ibid.*, ff. 239 - 239v.

55. *Ibid.* f. 241; A.O.M., Ms. 262, f. 12.

56. N.L.M., Libr. Ms., 1209, ff. 493 - 501.

57. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 94v - 95.

which was to be imposed proportionately on every item, was to remain at the will of the Grandmaster and the Inquisitor together while accounts were to be kept to ensure that the sum of 100,000 sc. would not be exceeded. At the same time, the Inquisitor received two letters, one which had to be presented to the Grandmaster empowering him to execute the new Brief and the other, with the date left blank, to be made use of by the Inquisitor to stimulate the Grandmaster to suppress the *moneta di rame* at an opportune time.<sup>58</sup> A copy of the Brief was also handed to the Ambassador to be forwarded to the Grandmaster at the same time. This was received on 26 August 1673.<sup>59</sup> So the new tax was levied on concessions of monopolies for brandy, tobacco, playing cards and other articles which the Grandmaster could decide. To avoid evasion, the Grandmaster and the Inquisitor nominated officials to check the accounts with the help of the Jurats of the Università while a balance sheet was to be presented annually to the Inquisitor to be forwarded to Rome.<sup>60</sup> The Grandmaster also granted monopolies for leather, soap, paper and coffee. The deputation in charge of the collection of the tax included Gio Andrea Cangialanza who represented the Grandmaster, and Fabritio Testaferrata who represented the Inquisitor. The deputation started its work, while the Inquisitor was informed by the Cardinal-Inquisitors that now he was to see that everything was executed punctually.<sup>61</sup> The Inquisitor duly conformed with these orders and, on 1 April 1675, forwarded a note of exactions made as required by the Brief.<sup>62</sup>

But it seems that problems still existed for the Inquisitor who had constrained officials of the Holy Office to pay the tax. The patentees

58. *Ibid.*, ff. 95 - 95v.

59. A.O.M., Ms. 262, f. 16.

60. N.L.M., Libr. Ms. 740, ff. 108 - 108v.

61. A.I.M. Corr., Ms. 12, f. 223.

62. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 C, ff. 90 - 90v, reports on 1 April 1675

"Gio Batta Vella gabellotto delle carte		
affittate li a sc. 800 l'anno deve dal		
1 Nov. 1673 sino l'ult. Feb. 75 (16 mesi):		1066 sc. 8 tr. 0 gr.
suddetto: gabellotto dell'acquavita a 2001 sc. l'anno		2668 sc. 0 tr.
Luigi Cassia gabellotto della carta a 705 sc. l'anno		883 sc. 3 tr.
Antonio Leone gabellotto de tabacco a 5580 l'anno		6976 sc. 8 tr.
Natale Grech gabellotto de sapone a 2305 l'anno		2883 sc. 0 tr.
Desiderio Xuerep gabellotto de caffè a 630sc.		787 sc. 6 tr.
Marcello Revers gabellotto de corame a 1671 sc.		278 sc. 6 tr.

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15545 sc.10tr.

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Till 31 May 1680 these monopolies had ensured the following balance:

Tobacco	37424sc. 7tr. 0gr.
Soap	13607sc. 4tr. 0gr.
Leather	11772sc.11tr. 0gr.
Brandy	8541sc. 8tr.14gr.
Playing Cards	3962sc. 6tr. 0gr.
Paper	4926sc. 6tr. 0gr.
Coffee	2552sc. 1tr. 0gr.

of the Holy Office, usually protected by the privilege of immunity, now found that property belonging to them was being taken as required for the fortifications. They felt aggrieved as they suspected that they would not get what was due to them for their lands. So they requested the Inquisitor to intercede on their behalf. The price of the expropriated land, was ensured by the Inquisitor by 13 May 1673, but this did not mean that Order's officials readily and promptly paid them their value.<sup>63</sup> One of the patentees who was gravely affected was Domenico Bonnici who had always been among the leaders who opposed the Order. According to the Inquisitor he lost what was probably the most beautiful garden in Malta and which was valued at 15,000 sc. though when it was evaluated by the Order's officials, it was evaluated at 6,000 sc. only. The Inquisitor could not ensure the price Bonnici desired as he had no jurisdiction over active cases of his patentees who were always badly treated by lay judges. He could only intercede for him before the Grand Master.<sup>64</sup> But Bonnici was not even ready to accept the decisions of the lay court and so he soon lost the Inquisitor's protection and his patent. He had become troublesome even to the Inquisitor and it was noted that when he was offered payment for his property, he proceeded to occupy sites other than those assigned to him and these included streets and coastal areas.<sup>65</sup> Though Bonnici was unreasonable in his demands, it was an admitted fact that many patentees suffered because although the Grand Master showed good intentions, nothing happened in fact and no prompt justice was done to the patentees.<sup>66</sup> For this reason in May 1674, the Inquisitor had to draw the attention of the Grand Master during one of their meetings.<sup>67</sup> His demands were soon strengthened with a letter which Cardinal Altieri forwarded to him to show to the Grandmaster if necessary.<sup>68</sup> By January 1675, the Inquisitor was able to report that one other victim of the lay court's indifference to requests for payments for expropriated lands, was a widow, Vincentia Castelletti, but he had managed to get indemnity for his *famigliari*.<sup>69</sup>

The Grandmaster's desire to impose tax for the fortifications and the ecclesiastics' and patentees' pretention to be singularly protected by ecclesiastical immunity on the other hand, were the cause of what would now be described as a political question on what type of taxation should be imposed and whether the Prince of the Island had the right to impose

63. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27, f. 89.

64. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, f. 175.

65. A.I.M. Corr., Ms. 12, f. 244; A.O.M., Ms. 1445, Cotoner to Verospi 22 August 1675; A.O.M., Ms. 1292, Verospi to Cotoner 21 September 1675 where it is indicated that Bonnici's petition to get back his patent was being opposed even by the Ambassador.

66. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 B, f. 61.

67. *Ibid.*, f. 77.

68. *Ibid.*, f. 136.

69. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 C, f. 12.

it. Within the circumstances, it is clearly seen that the Inquisitor, Mgr. Pallavicino played an important part first in quietening the so-called rebels and then in bringing about a commutation in the tax whilst at the same time, under the guidance of the Cardinal-Inquisitors and the Roman Court, he managed to save face for the Grand Master who thus appeared as a benevolent prince who was ready to commute the tax as the people desired. One problem that Cotoner had to face unwittingly was the security of the funds that were being collected: on 12 March 1673 a thief had entered into the house of Canon Colonia, the *Depositario* of the tax that was being levied on ecclesiastics, with the intention of stealing the amount then so far collected. The thief was only stopped by the shouts of a slave woman.<sup>70</sup> In such circumstances, Cotoner had to ensure full security for the collection of tax so much needed for the building of the massive walls around the harbour.

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70. A.S.V., Fondo Malta, Ms. 27 A, f. 123v.

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