

## AN EVENTFUL TWO YEARS IN THE HISTORY OF MALTA AS RECORDED IN THE BRITISH PRESS

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The two eventful years in the history of Malta, namely 1798 to 1800 covering the end of the rule of the Order of St. John and the French occupation of these islands, were well represented in the British Press.

However it seems best to commence this documentary account by going back a few years, to be precise to the 21st. January 1793 where in the "Place de la Revolution" now the "Place de la Concorde" in Paris, the unfortunate King Louis XV1 of France was guillotined.

An anonymous eyewitness whose account was published in *The Times*, Saturday, January 26, 1793 describes the event. "*I have been a spectator to one of the most tragic sights that ever my eyes witnessed but the circumstance was of too much importance to allow me to be absent from the spectacle..... The Major's carriage being arrived at the place of execution it drew up close to the scaffold..... The king and his confessor*", (the Abbe' de Firmont, whose memoirs give a moving picture of the king's last hours)<sup>1</sup>, "*than got out of it. The king on mounting the scaffold instantly took off his stock himself, as well as his great coat and unfastened his shirt collar. His hair had been clubbed up close like an abbe's in order that no indignity might be offered him..... The executioner went to tie up his arms..... then took up a large pair of scissors to cut off his hair.... His Majesty then said "I pardon my enemies. May my death be useful to the nation". The executioners than placed him to be beheaded. The king recoiled, and said, "Another moment, that I may speak to the people". The aide-de-camp to the commandant, Suaterre, then said to the executioner, "Do your duty". The wedge then slipped and the head was instantly off.....*"<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of the eyewitness barely ten minutes had passed from the time of the arrival of the carriage to the execution of the king. It was evident that orders had been given to expedite the proceedings as quickly as possible, the authorities perhaps fearing a commotion by the vast crowd. The heavy military presence, which according to the same eyewitness consisted of upwards of 60,000 horse and foot, reinforces this view. This newspaper also

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gives extensive coverage to other events in Paris, publishing the contents of the king's will, reports on other members of the Royal family, and debates from the French National Convention. The whole tone of the newspaper is that of a witness to a catastrophe, as indeed it was. The death of the king spelled the final end of the *ancien régime*, and unleashed that extreme revolutionary fervour which swept over Europe toppling many an ancient monarchy and principality, including the principality of Malta and Gozo, under the rule since 1530, of the Knights of the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

It was on the 9th. June 1798 that the Grandmaster of the Order, Ferdinand von Hompesch, who was destined to be the last Grandmaster to reign over Malta, was facing the threat of invasion by a numerous French fleet escorting transports in all totalling 54,000 troops<sup>3</sup>, under the command of the young, ambitious, dynamic and ruthless General Napoleon Bonaparte, en-route, as it transpired, to Egypt, but with instructions to occupy Malta.<sup>4</sup>

The threat of invasion became a reality. In the chaotic situation which rapidly developed, resistance was to a large degree neutralised by Napoleon's spies on the spot, the betrayal of a good number of French knights, including some of the Grandmaster's closest advisors, who had apparently conspired secretly for years with the French Revolutionary Government against their own Order, and also by French sympathisers among the local population. All these elements sowed confusion and dissention among the defenders.

Dr. Carmelo Testa in his monumental work "The French in Malta" published by Midsea Books Ltd in 1997 gives a graphic description of the background of these events and the terrible situation the beleaguered Grandmaster was faced with.<sup>5</sup> Hompesch has since been principally blamed for the capitulation of Malta to the French and much odium heaped on his memory. Perhaps in retrospect it may be more correct to say that he was more sinned against than sinning.

The Sun, Wednesday, August 22 1798 reports on the taking of Malta by the French in an article dated July 13 from Corfu. *The account of the taking of Malta was published here on the 20th. of June, in a long notification addressed to the Greeks, in which among other things, it is said: "A letter from General Buonaparte, received this day by the Central Administration, announces the taking of Malta. The Republic will cover the Mediterranean with Victories. We shall soon see the Hero among us, &c."* This letter from Buonaparte was dated the 14th. of June.....It expressly directed that the taking of Malta should

*be made known to the Inhabitants of Corfu, and all the Greeks in the Morea; to which was added, that further intelligence should be sent to the Commissary of the course taken by the French Fleet.*<sup>6</sup> The same newspaper also published a short news item dated August 8 from Vienna, mentioning Grandmaster Hompesch's request for asylum there after his expulsion from Malta. *No answer has yet been returned to Baron Hompesch, the late Grandmaster, who has solicited permission to reside in Vienna, in consequence of which, Baron Hochberg, a Batavian Maltese knight, arrived here two days ago from Trieste, to support his application. According to his account, the inhabitants of Malta were in a state of revolution a few days before the arrival of the French, on which account, and the weakness of the garrison, the Grandmaster thought it not prudent to attempt any resistance.* This column ends with the comment: *It is now remarked here that the capitulation of Malta by Baron Hompesch was not signed.*<sup>7</sup>

The capitulation of Malta under the guise of a Convention was signed by Napoleon together with Commander Bosredon Ransijat, formerly the Order's treasurer and one of Napoleon's agents,<sup>8</sup> Baron Mario Testaferatta, Advocates G. Nicolo Muscat & Benedict Schembri, Bali di Torino Frisari, and the knight Filipe de Amati event on board the French Flagship "L'Orient" on June 12, 1798.<sup>9</sup> The Grandmaster did not sign this document when it was presented to him.<sup>10</sup>

Particular note should be taken of Article 7 of the Convention which categorically declared that *The inhabitants of the islands of Malta and Gozo shall continue to enjoy, as in the past, the free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Religion. They shall retain the property and privileges which they possess, no extraordinary taxes shall be levied.*<sup>11</sup> The French, to a large degree, and unfortunately for them, did not honour this clause, in consequence of which their relations with the local population rapidly turned sour. Their insensitive and high handed behaviour, particularly the sale of sacred objects from churches and convents, following the wholesale spoliation by Napoleon of numerous objects of gold, silver and precious stones from churches and other buildings formerly belonging to the Order, earned them increasing hostility from a deeply religious people. The news of Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at the mouth of the Nile (Aboukir Bay) on August 1 1798 provided an impetus which brought them to the brink of rebellion. *The Times*, Wednesday, October 3 1798 reports on this singular victory, and publishes Nelson's letter dated August 3 to Admiral

Earl St. Vincent from the "Vanguard", off the mouth of the Nile: My Lord, Almighty God has blessed his Majesty's arms....by a great victory over the fleet of the enemy....off the mouth of the Nile. The enemy was moored in a strong line of battle, but nothing could withstand the squadron....under my command. Their high state of discipline...with their valour....was absolutely irresistible.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence of the rapacity of the French was recorded in *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday, November 1, 1798 where it was mentioned that *Admiral Nelson has caused drawings to be made from the armorial bearings upon the plate brought from Malta, and found on board one of the captured French ships. These drawings have been sent to the minister of the knights at Naples, in order that it may be restored to the right owners.*<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile the knights of St. John in Russia forming part of the Russian Priory under the protection of Czar Paul 1, who was given the title of *Protector of the Order* some months before,<sup>14</sup> issued a manifesto condemning the capitulation of Malta to the French and accusing the knights in Malta and by implication Grandmaster Hompesch of betraying the honour of the Order. This same newspaper published the full text of this manifesto under the heading of "Protestation of the Grand Priory of Russia", of which the following is an extract: *We, the Baillis, Grand Cross, Commanders, Knights of the Grand Priory of Russia, and other knights of St. John of Jerusalem, at an extraordinary assembly at the Prioral Palace of the Order in the Imperial residence at St. Petersburg, obliged to turn our attention towards Malta, what profound grief must we not feel in beholding that ancient and noble theatre of our glory treacherously sold by a Convention as null in its principles as it was infamous in its effects?.... The cowards who bore the name of knights surrendered that bulwark of Christianity which the example of their predecessors and the sacred laws of honour enjoined them to defend to the last drop of their blood.....If it depends on us at the present day to wash off in the blood of traitors the crimes they committed in shamefully bartering the ancient and superb inheritance of honour which our ancestors transmitted, let us at least show with energy the just resentment, hatred and contempt with which this felony inspires us..... We solemnly disavow every proceeding contrary to the sacred laws of our Constitution. We regard as degraded from their rank and dignities all those who drew up, accepted or consented to the infamous treaty that surrendered Malta.....*

*In fine we will never acknowledge for our brethren, but those who shall manifest the conformity of their principles with ours, by adhering to the present*

*protestation, which we reserve to ourselves the power of extending or renewing..... Unanimously accepted and stamped with the seal of the Grand Priory of Russia. Dated at St. Petersburg, this day, Thursday 26th. of August 1798.*<sup>15</sup>

In Malta relations between the Maltese and their French masters steadily worsened, the flashpoint of rebellion being the sale on Sunday September 2 1798 of sacred objects at the Carmelite Church in Mdina which so angered the large crowd rapidly assembling outside. The situation became increasingly unmanageable and was not helped by the arrogant behaviour of the French commandant of Mdina, Lazzare Masson who was soon after stoned and *expired under the rain of blows from stones and sticks.*<sup>16</sup>

The same newspaper gave the news of the Maltese insurrection, although it prematurely stated that the French had already surrendered the island: *Government received intelligence yesterday, by the Lisbon mail, of the French troops at Malta having resigned the island by capitulation into the hands of the inhabitants. For some time previous to this event, the enemy, having been driven from every other part, were confined to the fortress of the capital, where they became so distressed from want of provisions, that they were at length forced to offer terms of capitulation, which after some hesitation were accepted by the people, who were in safe and quiet possession of the island..... We also understand that several transports, and one or two vessels of force, which were in the harbour, fell into the hands of a small British squadron that had for a short time before blockaded the port, and thereby accelerated the surrender of the island. This intelligence, although not received from a quarter immediately official, is not doubted by Ministers.*<sup>17</sup>

The rebellion rapidly spread, the Maltese reacting with such ferocity that the French were forced in a very short while to take refuge within the Grand Harbour fortifications, Forts Manoel and Tigne', and the walls of the Castello in Gozo, the small garrison in Fort Chambray was hurriedly evacuated by them during the night of the 16/17th. September 1798.<sup>18</sup> The Times, Monday, October 22 1798 also refers to the Maltese insurrection in several news items, one report says "An express is just now arrived from the Viceroy of Palermo, bringing an account of the Maltese having made themselves masters of all forts except one, which it was thought could not hold out. From the batteries the Maltese had sunk the "Guillaume Tell", (an incorrect statement as we shall see later on), and the two frigates which had escaped from Beguieres, and had hoisted Neapolitan colours. The whole island was in the utmost want of

*provisions. The insurgents had cut off the only supply of water which the French had in their fortress, and it was supposed to be impossible for them to hold out for any length of time*"<sup>19</sup>. It was widely thought at the time that the French garrison was on the point of surrendering, particularly when the sea approaches were already blockaded by Portuguese and British ships, commanded respectively by the Marquis de Nizza and Sir James Saumerez. This widespread belief may explain the spate of news items announcing their imminent surrender or even their actual capitulation. In fact on the afternoon of the 25th. September 1798 the allied commanders decided to issue a summons inviting General Vaubois to surrender. In his brusque reply Vaubois refused to consider the allied request.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding this defiant reply no one could imagine that the siege would last two whole years.

Another news item from the same newspaper dated Paris, October 13, reveals French anxiety about the fate of their garrison: *The last accounts from Malta are rather alarming. They confirm the intelligence of an insurrection having broken out in that island, several of our soldiers have perished. The French garrison is provided with corn for a twelve-month, but it has little wine and meat, and cannot obtain water but with great difficulty.*<sup>21</sup> French anxiety is also graphically evident in another report from the French press reproduced in this newspaper: *The "Correspondance" of this day contains the following letter from Malta, dated the 21st. Frucidor (7th. September). "The Sicilian Vespers have been renewed, and French blood has been shed by the murderous poniards of the inhabitants of this town. It was on the day corresponding with Sunday, preceding the 20th. Frucidor (2nd. September) that the insurrection broke out after the Vespers, at the signal given by the toscin, and by the two guns fired in the old city. We have no intelligence of the fate of the garrison of the island of Gozo, composed of 350 men, nor of that of the old city, which consisted of 100 men; much fear is entertained of their falling under the poniards of the assassins. The insurgents have rendered themselves masters of several batteries, which command different landing places, and of a powder mill. On the 20th. Frucidor (6th. September) the peasants appeared before the town, but were driven back by the fire of our cannon. They cannot lay siege to it, but they have numerous partizans among the inhabitants. The French force consists of some frigates and gun-boats, which keep the sea open, and render them invincible, if the ports of Sicily should be early enough shut against the English fleets.*<sup>22</sup>

Finally, elsewhere in this newspaper a report states that *General Schauenburgh has been appointed Governor of Malta,*<sup>23</sup> an incorrect statement,

probably referring to the appointment, among others, of the Knight Commander Schauenberg by Grandmaster Hompesch as his emissary to Malta. Up to that time Hompesch still had hopes of returning to Malta and re-establishing the Order's rule. From Trieste, where he was staying at the time, the Knight St. Priest wrote to the Bali de Litta in St. Petersburg that *We have heard from some merchants who have just arrived from Malta, that the Maltese peasants have risen in rebellion....and have raised the flag of the Order. If the Order had warships...The Grandmaster could go personally among the Maltese.....because now they know who had betrayed them....*<sup>24</sup>

Barely two months from the start of the rebellion the French garrison in Gozo was forced to capitulate. The Sun, Wednesday, December 26, 1798 gives prominence to this success, publishing the text of two letters, one sent by Captain Alexander Ball to Admiral Nelson reporting on this success, and the second sent by the latter to Admiral Earl St. Vincent enclosing a copy of Captain Ball's despatch. Nelson's letter praises Captain Ball's *zeal, activity, and ability* and also reveals that he *had entrusted him with the blockade of Malta* by the British fleet.<sup>25</sup> Captain Ball's letter to Nelson was dated October 30, 1798 from the "Alexander" off Malta: *Sir, I have the honour to acquaint you, that the Commandant of the French troops in the Castle of Goza, (nowadays known as the Citadel in Victoria), signed the capitulation the 28th. inst. which you had approved. I ordered Captain Creswell of the Marines to take possession of it in the name of his Britannic Majesty, and His Majesty's colours were hoisted. (As a matter of interest this was the first occasion when the British flag was flown in the Maltese Islands).<sup>26</sup> The next day the place was delivered up in form to the Deputies of the Island, His Sicilian Majesty's Colours hoisted, and he acknowledged their lawful Sovereign. (It should not be forgotten that the King of the Two Sicilies was feudal overlord of the Maltese Islands, since the Order of St. John had originally acquired Malta not in absolute ownership but in fief of the Crown of Sicily.<sup>27</sup> At the time of acquisition Sicily belonged to the Spanish Crown under the rule of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V as King of Spain). I embarked yesterday all the French Officers and Men who were on the Island of Goza, amounting to two hundred and seventeen. I enclose the Articles of Capitulation and an inventory of the arms and ammunition found in the Castle, part of which I directed to be sent to the assistance of the Maltese, who are in arms against the French. There were three thousand two hundred sacks of corn in the Castle, which will be a great relief to the inhabitants, who are much in want of that article. I have the Honour to be,*

✉ (Signed) Alex. John Ball.

To Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson.<sup>28</sup>

The military stalemate was maintained throughout 1799. The French entrapped behind the walls of the Harbour fortifications, and the Maltese insurgents and their British allies too few in number and too lightly armed to make any assault possible against such formidable bastions. The French garrison under their resolute commander General Vaubois were determined to resist as far as possible, but the blockade by land and sea was gradually starving them of essential supplies. However one memorable incident, in January of that year, deserves to be mentioned. In order to break this impasse, the Maltese leaders made secret contact with their compatriots inside Valletta, planning the infiltration into the town of troops from the countryside. Unfortunately the daring plot was discovered, and a number of the conspirators amongst whom was Father Michael Xerri who played a key role in the conspiracy *and who was a close friend of Canon Saverio Caruana, one of the principal leaders of the Maltese insurgents*<sup>29</sup> paid with their lives for their patriotism. The background of this sad event is described in detail in Dr. Testa's book.<sup>30</sup>

By the beginning of 1800 the plight of the French garrison was becoming increasingly desperate, the shortage of essential supplies including food became acute. Attempts by elements of the French fleet to break out of the Grand Harbour and run the gauntlet of the British fleet, in order to obtain help and to report on the situation in the island, nearly all failed. Similarly unsuccessful were outside attempts to land provisions and reinforcements for the beleaguered garrison. The *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Monday, March 31, 1800 reports on one such attempt: *Advices were at the same time received from Lord Nelson* (following his victory at the Battle of the Nile, Admiral Nelson was raised to the peerage as Baron Nelson of the Nile),<sup>31</sup> *announcing the capture of the "Genereux" man of war of 74 guns....and also of a large store ship, which were both going to Malta. There were fifteen hundred troops on board these two ships for the reinforcement of the garrison of Valletta. The store ship ran aground after being taken.... The "Genereux" was first engaged by the "Success" frigate of 32 guns.....and in the action Admiral Perree was killed by a raking shot which took both his legs. The "Genereux" had ten men killed and several wounded, the "Success" two killed and eight wounded. The "Genereux" attempted to escape, but Lord Nelson's fleet coming up, she struck. The French troops have been lately landed at Leghorn. Malta is now closely*



*blockaded by Lord Nelson in the "Foudroyant" of 80 guns, and by the "Audacious" of 74, The "Theseus" of 74, "Culloden" of 74, "Lion" of 64 guns, and the "Success" frigate. The garrison of Valletta is so short of provisions, as well as the ships in that harbour, that the captain of the "Guillaume Tell" had declared he must put to sea and take the chance of capture, as he could not subsist his crew any longer. There is consequently the best reason to believe that Malta cannot long hold out....<sup>32</sup>*

The "Guillaume Tell" did in fact break out of the Grand Harbour on the night of March 29, 1800. It was however sighted off Cape Passaro by units of the British fleet, chased, and after an epic three and a half hour battle was forced to strike its colours. A full report submitted by Captain Dixon of the "Lion" and subsequently presented to Lord Keith, Commander-in-Chief of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, appeared in *The Morning Chronicle*, Wednesday, June 4, 1800. An extract from this report follows:

*From the "Lion" at sea. off Cape Passaro, 31st. March, 1800. "Sir, I have the honour to inform you that yesterday morning, at nine o'clock.....the French ship of war "Le Guillaume Tell", of 86 guns and one thousand men, bearing the flag of Contre Amiral Decres, surrendered, after a most gallant and obstinate defence of three hours and a half, to his Majesty's ships "Foudroyant", "Lion", and "Penelope".....I am sorry to say that the three ships suffered much in killed and wounded, and that the loss of the enemy is prodigious, being upwards of two hundred....<sup>33</sup>*

In increasing desperation the French forces held out for most of the year, but finally on September 2, 1800 General Vaubois the French Commander held a Council of War with his officers, informing them that supplies had finally run out, and that there was no other option but to capitulate. He therefore intended to approach the commander of the English troops assisting the Maltese in order to negotiate terms of capitulation. Contact was made and articles of capitulation agreed upon. These were subsequently signed on September 5, 1800, by *General of Division Vaubois, Commander-in-Chief of the Islands of Malta and Gozo, and Rear Admiral Villeneuve Commanding the Marine at Malta on the one part, and Major General Pigot, commanding the troops of His Britannic Majesty and his Allies, and Captain Martin commanding the vessels of His Britannic Majesty and his allies before Malta, on the other part.*<sup>34</sup> One glaring omission was the unjust exclusion of any Maltese representation from being a party to these proceedings, although they bore the brunt of the fighting throughout the

entire crisis, suffering greivous loss and privation as a result.

The full text of Vaubois's Council of War appeared in *The Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Thursday, October 9, 1800, under the heading "Capitulation of Malta" dated Malta Sept. 2: *The Generals...and officers of all ranks commanding....different corps, having been convened by General Vaubois, Commander-in-Chief of the Isles of Malta and Goza, to hold a Council of War, assembled in the National Palace of the city of Malta. Having heard the report of General Vaubois, from which it appears that the magazines of provision in the place have been entirely exhausted for more than a month, that those containing liquor are equally so, that bread, the only food remaining for the garrison and the people, must fail on the 9th. The Council, considering that the garrison of Malta, reduced to a third of a ration for two years past, has filled with honour the task imposed upon it, of preserving this place to the Republic until the last extremity, that after having repulsed all the attacks made by main force upon it, it has by its energy reduced the enemy to mere perservance in a strict blockade, which no longer admits of the hope of any assistance from without, that the force which the enemy employs to secure the blockade by sea and land, leave the brave garrison of Malta no means of procuring any by courage and devotion in a country sterile in itself, and torn up by the fortifications which nature and art have multiplied to secure us by ramparts.... That it is not possible, without endangering the existence of twelve thousand men who compose the garrison, (a gross exaggeration as the total number of the French garrison at the time of the capitulation amounted to 3,227<sup>35</sup>), to postpone the advantage of entering into conference with the enemy, in order to obtain an honourable capitulation, and such a one as is due to the brave soldiers who have so long suffered for their country. That the navy has shared with honour in the labours and distress of the garrison.... That the laws of war, in short, and those of humanity, sufficiently authorise the Commander-in-Chief to begin a negotiation with the enemy. Having determined that General Vaubois shall, on the 4th. send a flag of truce to the English commander, to propose to him a capitulation and that Rear Admiral Villeneuve shall join with him in endeavouring to stipulate in favour of the seamen, in order that they may enjoy the same advantage as may be granted to the garrison.*<sup>36</sup> The articles of capitulation followed this report.<sup>37</sup> Another news item in this newspaper analyses the effect of the French capitulation on British foreign policy: *This event is of considerable moment. It removes one of the obstacles to the arrangement of a naval armistice, and will enable Great Britain to negotiate with more effect at the Congress of*

*Luneville*<sup>38</sup> where an all too brief peace treaty was eventually signed between France and the Allied Powers on February 9, 1801.<sup>39</sup>

Immediately following the capitulation of the French, General Pigot and Captain Martin respectively informed the Secretary of State the Hon. Henry Dundas, and Admiral Lord Keith, of what had happened. Copies of these despatches were brought to London by a messenger who was greeted on his arrival by the firing of guns from the Park and Tower (of London) batteries to mark the occasion.<sup>40</sup> General Pigot in a second communication similarly informed General Sir Ralph Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief of the British Military forces in the Mediterranean.

*The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800* gave full coverage to these three communications. The first to The Right Hon Henry Dundas was dated Malta, Sept. 6, 1800: *Conceiving that it may be of the utmost importance that His Majesty's ministers should be acquainted.... with the surrender of the important fortress of La Valette, I have desired Mr. Paget to despatch a messenger to England with a copy of my letter to General Sir Ralph Abercromby on this subject, and the articles of capitulation which are herewith sent you. We yesterday took possession of some of the works, and our ships entered the harbour, and I am in hopes the whole will be evacuated by the enemy tomorrow...I have the honour to be, &c. H. Pigot, Major-General.*<sup>41</sup>

The second communication dated Sept. 5 1800 was addressed to Admiral Keith from "The Northumberland" off Malta: *I have the honour to acquaint you, that the French garrison of La Valette yesterday surrendered to the allied forces serving at Malta, and to enclose a copy of the articles of capitulation. I have not been able to obtain an account of the ordnance and stores in the garrison, the moment it can be procured I will transmit it to your Lordship. I enclose a list of the ships and vessels found in the harbour. I have the honour to be, &c, George Martin.*<sup>42</sup>

The third communication dated Malta Sept. 5, 1800 was addressed to Sir Ralph Abercromby and consisted of a more comprehensive report, *I have great satisfaction in acquainting you with surrender of the fortress of La Valette.... The capitulation has been signed this day.... During the short time you were here, you must have been sensible of the great exertions which Brigadier-General Graham* (In order to provide military help and advice to the Maltese, Lord Nelson sent General Thomas Graham, the future Lord Lynedoch, to Malta, arriving there on December 9, 1799 with 800 men<sup>43</sup> of the 30th. & 89th. regiments of foot.<sup>44</sup> He subsequently formed two companies of Maltese

troops styled *I Caccatori Maltesi or Maltese Light Infantry*,<sup>45</sup> the first Maltese units to serve under the English flag<sup>46</sup> ) *must have made with the limited force he had.....he has since continued these exertions, and I consider the surrender of the place has been accelerated by the decision....in preventing any more inhabitants coming out of the fortress ....*<sup>47</sup> *I am happy to say that I have experienced every support from Brigadier-General Moncrieff, and the other officers of the British and allied troops (in April 1800 a contingent of Neapolitan troops arrived in Malta)*<sup>48</sup> *whose conduct in every respect has been most exemplary....I think it right to mention to you that Lieutenant Vivian of the Royal Artillery has been of considerable service....I have great pleasure in acknowledging the constant and ready assistance and cooperation I have received from Captain Ball of his Majesty's ship "Alexander", who has been employed on the shore during the greater part of the blockade. His name and services are already well known to his Majesty's ministers, and I am sure I need not say more than that those he has performed here do credit to his former character. I herewith transmit you the terms of the capitulation....I have the honour to be, &c, H. Pigot, Major-General.*<sup>49</sup> The same newspaper also published a list of the British ships which formed part of the blockade of Malta.<sup>50</sup>

At long last the ordeal of the Maltese and Gozitan population was over. In their spontaneous insurrection, at first mostly armed with rudimentary weapons, they managed to drive into the security of the Harbour fortifications units of an army used to the command of the first soldier of the age. Subsequently they succeeded, most of the time on their own, to keep this occupying garrison trapped behind these fortifications for two whole years. Naturally due credit must also be given to the help provided by their British Allies, in particular Sir Alexander Ball, who was always active on their behalf, and who earned the respect of the whole people. The ever vigilant British Fleet blockading the sea approaches played a vital part, and was instrumental in depriving the French garrison of vital supplies and reinforcements. General Graham too, proved to be a tower of strength to the Maltese and provided the professional military advice they lacked.

The population had suffered hardship and great privation, and was often on the verge of starvation. It was therefore apt of General Graham, whilst encouraging recruitment into his newly formed companies of Maltese troops, to pay homage to their courage in his memorable address to the Maltese people, "*Brave Maltese, You have rendered yourselves interesting and conspicuous to the world. History affords no more striking example. Betrayed by*

*your invaders, the oppression and sacrilege of your tyrants became intolerable. Without arms, without the resources of war, you broke assunder your chains. Your patriotism, courage and religion supplied all deficiencies.....*"<sup>51</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> S. Scott. Editor: *A Journal of the terror*. The Folio Society, London 1955. Chapter 2.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Times*, Saturday, January 26, 1793, page 2 column 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Dr. Carmelo Testa: *The French in Malta*. (Midsca Books, 1997), page 23.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pages 5 to 7.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, chapters 3 to 6.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Sun*, Wednesday, 22 August, 1798, page 2 column 3.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 8 August, 1798, page 2 column 4.
- <sup>8</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 9.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, page 77 & 79.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, page 76.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, page 77.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Times*, Wednesday, October 3, 1798. Page 2 column 2.
- <sup>13</sup> *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1, 1798. Page 2 column 2.
- <sup>14</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 74.
- <sup>15</sup> *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1, 1798. Page 4 column 3.
- <sup>16</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 261.
- <sup>17</sup> *The English Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 30 to Thursday November 1 1798. Page 4 column 2.
- <sup>18</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 295.
- <sup>19</sup> *The Times*, Monday, October 22, 1798. Page 2 column 4.
- <sup>20</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, pages 351 - 352.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Times*, Monday, October 22, 1798. Page 3 column 2.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, page 3 column 3.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, page 3 column 2.
- <sup>24</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 533.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Sun*, Wednesday, December 26, 1798. Page 2 column 3.
- <sup>26</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 386.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, page 75.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Sun*, Wednesday, December 26, 1798. Page 2 column 3.
- <sup>29</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 492.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, chapters 28 & 29.
- <sup>31</sup> Robert Southey: *Life of Nelson*.(The Folio Society, London 1956), page 135.

- <sup>32</sup> *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Monday, March 31, 1800.* Page 2 column 3.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Morning Chronicle, Wednesday, June 4, 1800.* Page 2 column 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thursday, October 9, 1800.* Page 3 column 3.  
C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 818.
- <sup>35</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 833 note 22.
- <sup>36</sup> *The Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thursday, October 9, 1800.* Page 3 columns 1 & 2.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, page 3 columns 2 & 3. *The French in Malta.* Pages 818 to 824.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, page 3 column 4.
- <sup>39</sup> J. Christopher Herold: *The Age of Napoleon.* Penguin Books 1963. Page 127.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800.* Page 2 column 3.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, page 2 column 1.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> Cecil Aspinall-Oglander: *Freshly Remembered.* The Story of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch. The Hogarth Press, London. 1956. Page 117.
- <sup>44</sup> Major A.G. Chesney: *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army.* William Clowes & Sons, London 1897. Page 13.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, page 17.
- <sup>46</sup> C. Testa. *op. cit.*, page 750.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, page 784.
- <sup>48</sup> *Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army.* Page 16.
- <sup>49</sup> *The Times, Monday, October 13, 1800.* Page 2 column 1.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, page 3 column 2.
- <sup>51</sup> A.G. Chesney, *op.cit.*, pages 16 & 17.