



Let's do HISTORY

A reader on the socio-political history of Malta and Europe from the Renaissance to Modern Times

Gabriel Farrugia & Evelyn Pullicino

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Foreword

The publication of this history book takes place at a time of significant shifts in both education and society at large. The omnipresent Artificial Intelligence technology and related discourse urges educators to reconsider and sometimes reclaim the process of knowledge construction. In addition, the dominance of instrumental reasoning – often well-hidden behind terms such as ‘21st century skills’ - which prioritises economically driven, utilitarian “free choices”, as well as a general lack of educational vision, have accelerated the descent down the ladder of priorities of humanities subjects and the arts.

In this milieu, it is becoming increasingly evident that educators must counteract superficiality, misinformation and a growing tendency towards collective forgetfulness. One concerning consequence of this is the steady decline in secondary school students opting for History. The erosion of historical understanding, often replaced by nostalgia or oversimplified interpretations, threatens to weaken our collective ability to critically engage with the past and its implications for the present.

In various ways, Gabriel Farrugia and Evelyn Pullicino’s book represents a response to these challenges. It resonates with Michael Young’s concept of ‘Powerful Knowledge’, which seeks to balance the focus on ‘transferable skills’ with a commitment to deep, subject-specific discipline. Simply put, Young describes powerful knowledge as the knowledge students gain from different academic subjects, helping them to make more sense of the world around them. From this perspective, history education becomes a valuable tool that enables educators and students to make meaningful connections between historical events, their own experiences, and contemporary global issues. Through the study of history, educators and students are equipped to move beyond their immediate world, developing the ability to form a critical consciousness (rather than the diluted ‘critical thinking’ which is currently being used° by all and sundry), interpret evidence, and participate actively in democratic societies.

In this regard, this reference book offers a comprehensive yet accessible account of both European and Maltese modern history, providing students with a well-structured framework of essential historical knowledge. The book has been conceived not just as a repository of facts but as an interactive learning tool that encourages students to consider contexts, draw connections, question narratives, and develop their interpretations. While recognising that a single textbook cannot serve as a sole source of information, especially in today’s hyper availability of material at one’s fingertips, this book complements a range of other learning materials while maintaining its role as a reliable and well-researched point of reference.

This book’s other strength lies in its pedagogical and epistemological considerations. It incorporates inclusive design elements that enhance accessibility, ensuring that many students, regardless of background or ability, can engage meaningfully with the content. Furthermore, it weaves together historical knowledge with cultural and artistic expressions, illustrating how history is deeply intertwined with various cultural elements such as literature, art, architecture, and music, which might resonate even further with the students’ own experiences. By making these connections explicit, the book fosters a more holistic appreciation of history as a discipline that extends beyond politics and wars, encompassing the broader human experience.

Thus, this book may serve as both a foundation and a catalyst for further historical inquiry. It is an important resource that not only has the potential to inform but also to inspire: providing a counter-discourse which brings history education to the foreground. It has the potential to encourage students to see history as a discipline that shapes their understanding of the present and actively engage with it as agents rather than as passive observers.

Bernard Cauchi

General Introduction

The past has always been pursued, yet the reasons for wanting to know the past have been in continuous transformation. Rulers, institutions, knights, peasants and revolutionaries had all deemed it necessary to know and use evidence of their past in order to justify claims to their rights in society. The right to rule, the right to privileges, the right to property and the right to work, have always been considered as based on a knowledge of the past.

On the one hand, politics often looked to the past and paralleled current events to historic moments, stressing on the need to recall the past through celebrations that commemorated victories, the miracles of saints, the sacrifice of patriots, or the victims of violence.

On the other hand, the scientific study of the past creates a historic conscience which maintains a certain emotional distance between the past and the present. This objectivity becomes necessary in order to analyse historic contexts and the causes and effects of historic moments. In this way, one learns to distinguish between knowledge and fact. Therefore, this is a book which presents, discusses and structures a basic socio-political history of Malta and Europe according to what one needs to know at a secondary school level of education. It aims to guide, teach, and inspire young history students in their studies.

The past doesn't simply exist in old things, such as buildings, books or broken pots. The past exists everywhere around us and forms part of our way of doing things. The landscape, for example, preserves a past that reflects a relationship with mankind who worked it, defended it, and travelled through it. In the same way, a language is the perfect example of how valuable history is to any culture. The letters, sounds, words, idiomatic expressions and gestures we use to communicate, are historical. Food, eating and taste,

from its production to its presentation, also have a millennial history that define our culture today. Festivals and other forms of entertainment, together with religious rituals and commemorations, are embedded in our culture of celebrating past events in a way that give meaning to the present. Furthermore, in all the spaces dedicated to gatherings, there is a continuous use of symbols which are familiar to us only because they are historical and form part of a collective memory which was passed on to us as a culture.

This book comprehensively lays out facts, causes and effects of social movements, religions, technologies, wars, discoveries and people in power from the Renaissance to modern day. Importantly, it places Malta as part of a

larger Mediterranean and European history. While admittedly the text is euro-centric and has a linear narrative, it

does not wish to present history as a 'civilizing process' – that is, as though the present is any more enlightened, civilised, or less violent than the past.

The chapters offer exciting perspectives of integrated historical narratives for early-stage history learners. It follows the SEC history syllabus diligently to act as a reader, bridging gaps that one might struggle with if one had to attempt the history exam as an independent candidate. This book is also aimed for history teachers who have little support when teaching the vast number of themes included in the syllabus. What this book does not do is replace the need for personal research or the need to go deeper into the topics. It also does not present model answers to exam questions. It does not directly

analyse individual primary sources such as letters, maps, speeches and political cartoons but simply presents the learner with contexts and facts, that may be used as tools to understand and discuss the subject and the significance and relevance of primary sources.

This book is structured in six chapters that identify facts, explain events, and discuss their consequences to help readers trace changes through time. The first chapter tackles the happenings in Malta and continental Europe during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The Renaissance and its impact on European society, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the explorations, early colonialism and slavery, that are intertwined with intellectual and technological

developments, are discussed chronologically together with Malta's transformation during the rule of the Order of St John. Chapter

“The 'place of memory' is filled not only with objects, but with gestures, images, sounds, and smells.” – Michel De Certeau

Two focuses almost entirely on the second half of the 18th century, particularly the French Revolution with its indirect and direct causes and its impact on the rest of Europe and Malta. Chapter Three presents the first half of the 19th century, discussing Malta's constitutional, economic and social development under British rule, the Napoleonic wars in Europe, the much yearned for peace in Europe and the increasing popularity of socialism and nationalism on the continent. Chapter Four describes the second half of that century explaining how nationalism and industry laid the ground for the emergence of new states that reshaped political borders and the international equilibrium, while impacting lands beyond the European continent with the new colonies they gained. Chapter Five chronologically

comments and discusses the first decades of the 20th century with the two world conflicts that characterise this period. Malta's role and its constitutional development are embedded within Britain's international role. Finally, Chapter Six deals mainly with the Cold War, the fall of Communism and European integration, besides Malta's post-war political and constitutional development.

This book is illustrated with images from primary source material: objects, maps, paintings, photographs and newspapers to prompt students and history lovers to delve deeper through further research and discussion. It is supplemented with century-based timelines, biographies and suggestions for places to visit, books to read, music to listen to, recipes to cook and topics to discuss. Such activities celebrate aspects of the past that give meaning to the present, especially if students are accompanied by their history teachers who have a pivotal role in imparting this knowledge. It also contains a list of definitions as well as two indexes, to facilitate research and revision. In this way, this book ensures that the learner's knowledge is rooted firstly, in the understanding of historical evidence, secondly, in the interpretation of primary and secondary sources, and thirdly, in the ability to contextualise, order and communicate historical narratives.

“How fascinating it is to consider this variety in human events.” — Natalie Zemon Davis



Allegory of Vanitas, Antonio de Pereda y Salgado, c.1634

The authors of this book, therefore, wish to accompany the history student at this stage, inspiring him/her to pursue a career in archaeology, anthropology, archival studies, curatorship, diplomacy, journalism or tourism, for as students and alumni from the History Department at the University of Malta recently promoted: *History takes you places*. The authors of this book are not alone in stating that the interest in history in Maltese schools is on a worrying decline, therefore concrete action must be taken. School visits to museums and historic sites are necessary at younger stages, not simply to learn or to appreciate heritage, but to inspire. Later in their school years, these same students are faced with their first big choices. The fact that many post-university History students are finding interesting and rewarding posts, confirms the fallacy of the misguided advice younger students often receive, that studying History does not lead to a successful career. We believe that the historical

background that these students master offers a sound cultural foundation for any employment they are willing to undertake. Besides, their scientific pursuit of the past helps them construct a historical and cultural conscience that enables them to develop into fulfilled individuals and citizens.

Let's Do History was envisaged as a reader to help students acquire the basic knowledge required for the SEC History examination. However, it is suitable not only for teachers and students. Those who wish to have a basic knowledge of the subject and understand the various historical relationships that made Europe and Malta what they are today may find it a useful addition to their library.

Gabriel Farrugia
Evelyn Pullicino

MALTA

EUROPE

1400

1453

Fall of Constantinople
that transformed the politics
of the Mediterranean

1436

Completion of Florence Dome
by Brunelleschi

1455

Invention of printing

1492

Columbus' first expedition
to the new continent

1500

1522

Siege of Rhodes

1530

Arrival of
Knights in Malta

1551

Loss of Tripoli

1565

Great Siege

1571

Battle of Lepanto

1574

Dusina first Inquisitor
of Malta

1521

Excommunication of Martin Luther

1545

Commencement of
Council of Trent

1572

St Bartholomew's Day Massacre

1600

1614

Building of the
Wignacourt Aqueduct

1607

First English Colonies
in the Americas

1618-1648

Thirty Years war

1645-1669

War of Candia

1675

Plague in Malta

1693

Earthquake in Malta

1687

Publication of Isaac Newton's
*Mathematical Principles of
Natural Philosophy*

1700

Chapter One

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Renaissance, Discovery and Early Modernity

Introduction

The medieval period (c.500-c.1500) encompassed a thousand years of rupture and continuity from the era of the Roman Empire. Art, commerce, urban planning and the way war was waged, proved how life had changed from classical times. Yet the legacy of the Roman Empire lived on, as kings sought to gain imperial titles and Rome remained the capital of Christendom. Roman ruins in Rome and other areas that had formed part of the Roman Empire were still visible. The Byzantine Empire, or what was left of the old Eastern Roman Empire, survived until 1453. In those thousand years, the Mediterranean saw the rise of the Arabic Empire in the Middle East and its expansion in North Africa and Spain, the zeal of the Crusades, the rising power of independent port cities, while the European continent experienced the establishment of the feudal system, the founding of monasteries as learning centres, the setting up of universities and the decimation of Europe's population through the Black Death.

For a long time, historians sought to define clearly when eras began and ended, but this proved a hard task since people's lives continued to adapt to the changes brought about by discoveries, wars or inventions without categorising their past. Moments of great crisis could have led to a new era, but gradual change was often not seen as indicating a breaking point with the past or denoting a fresh start. The past simply formed part of a collective memory. So the process was more gradual, diverse and complex than we might notice if we study the past as a sort of evolutionary timeline of human advancement that undermines past societies.



View of St Peter's Square, Rome, 16th century

Some historians consider the fall of Constantinople (the capital of the Byzantine Empire) to the Muslim Turks as marking the end of the medieval period. Others look at the flourishing of universities and the spread of knowledge through printing as contributors to the changes that ended the medieval period. The changes in the style of art and architecture during the 15th century also indicated that the European continent was entering a new phase.

The same may be said for the early modern period or the 16th and 17th centuries. What made historians look at these centuries as showing signs of modernity were characteristics in history that could still seem recognisable to the 21st century such as reading from a printed book, being part of a standing army, stock exchange, knowledge of statehood, learning through scientific research, and the will to travel across the globe for work and adventure; in other words, ways in which the world became more connected and globalised.

Renaissance and Humanism

The late medieval period saw a renewed interest in Roman and Greek art, architecture and the Greek philosophers ushering in

an age of discovery in all fields.

This period of keen interest in classical culture is referred to as the Renaissance, from the Italian word *rinascere* meaning to be born again – a word indicating change and a new beginning.

The intellectual movement that developed during the Renaissance is called Humanism. Humanism did not challenge the God-centred mentality, but it considered that reason should guide human achievements in faith, politics, war, art and science. This concept guided artists and their commissioners to paint, sculpt and build the way they did, by drawing inspiration from the ancient classical styles as they sought to portray an idealised reality.

Humanists began to question and discuss issues without accepting any statements or established knowledge at face value, often by reflecting on the studies of classical philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Ptolemy. European universities established in the 12th and 13th centuries teaching theology, civil and canon law, medicine and philosophy gained more importance with the 15th century Humanistic movement.



Madonna with Child Enthroned, Giotto, c.1310

The earliest humanist is considered to be the Italian Francesco Petrarca in the 14th century. For him, the end of the Roman Empire had ushered in what he termed the 'Dark Ages', a term which unfortunately continued to be used up to this day. Petrarca received minor religious orders and became a diplomat of the Catholic Church as he did not want to pursue the legal profession. With his knowledge of Latin and of ancient texts, Petrarca was also a scholar, philosopher, university professor and poet. He also created a new poetic genre, the Petrarchan sonnet, a poem of fourteen verses. Petrarca is considered to be the father of the Renaissance and the Humanist movement due to his interest in classical literature.

Up to the 16th century, the Catholic Religion held a monopoly on education and social morals in Western Europe. The Catholic Church, with Rome as its capital, was also a political entity as it had its territory on mainland Italy. The Pope was, therefore, not only the head of a religious institution but also the ruler of the Papal States, as the lands he governed were known. The papacy also claimed superiority over other monarchies since it represented Christ on earth - an authority that had been challenged several times by different kings and emperors. During the Middle Ages, the founding of many religious orders served as a spiritual revival for the Church and the community of Catholics as a whole. Religious orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines and Augustinians promoted particular devotions while emphasising the need for charity, communal living, and education. These religious orders all worked within the church and did not break away from their loyalty to Rome, although individuals like Padre Savonarola did criticise the Pope.

Renaissance Masters

Italian artists took centre stage: Giotto, Botticelli, Leonardo and Michelangelo are the world's most celebrated Italian Renaissance



Sacra Famiglia "Tondo Doni", Michelangelo, c.1507

masters. Giotto's works in Italy's basilicas and cathedrals show the first break from an iconographic style of flat subjects, with elements of perspective in his figures and backgrounds portraying cities, forests and valleys in the distance. Born outside Florence, Giotto is believed to have learnt how to paint from another great artist, Giovanni Cimabue. His realistic and soft rendering of the faces of his Madonnas as well as his use of bright colours and populated biblical scenes made him well known. His frescoes may be seen in Padova, Assisi and Florence.

Botticelli was one of Florence's esteemed painters in the mid-15th century. His subjects are religious, like the famous *Adoration of the Magi*, or based on classical mythology, such as *The Birth of Venus*. He lived at a time when Florence was influenced by the teachings of Savonarola, which led him to burn some of his works. However, during this period, Florence had just benefitted from the works of Donatello and Brunelleschi. The next wave of Renaissance masters active at the end of the century included Leonardo Da Vinci, Raffaello and Michelangelo.

Leonardo Da Vinci was trained as a painter but is



Persius beheads Medusa, Benvenuto Cellini

known as a Renaissance genius. His interest in anatomy allowed him to experiment with ideas beyond his time. He was born in Vinci outside Florence and later became an apprentice to the painter Verrocchio. When he had his own workshop in Florence, he began working on grand projects that mostly remained unfinished. He later moved to Milan receiving commissions directly from Duke Ludovico Sforza. The Duke employed him as a military engineer to design and strengthen Milan's defences and create new weapons. One of his most renowned art works is the *Last Supper* fresco in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan which was also commissioned by Sforza. He then returned to Florence and left behind him the world-famous *Mona Lisa* (now at the Louvre Museum in Paris) before leaving to settle in France.

Michelangelo Buonarroti took the limits of artistic accomplishments to new heights. He was a master painter and sculptor who had also begun his career in Florence. However, his greatest works as a sculptor and painter are to be found in Rome. He was commissioned by Pope Julius II to decorate the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican. He covered the ceiling with scenes from the Old Testament, among which the famous Creation of Adam. Michelangelo also sculpted the beautiful *Pietà* which can today be admired at St Peter's Basilica in Rome. He later returned to Florence to continue to work for the Medici family, especially on their family mausoleum. He once again returned to Rome where he completed the Sistine Chapel with the Last Judgement scene and then succeeded Bramante and Raffaello as the architect of St Peter's Basilica, the monumental project that would only be completed in 1590, long after Michelangelo's death.

"I assert that the art of sculpture, among all the arts connected with design, is at least seven times greater than any other." – Extract from *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*

Famous works by Sandro Botticelli, 1445 - 1510



The Birth of Venus, c.1485



Spring, c.1482



Depiction of motion in the arrival of the Angel Gabriel, tiles showing perspective

Idealised landscape in the distance showing perspective

Posture in motion, dressed in iconic symbolic colours

Annunciation, showing movement, perspective and depth



Venus and Mars, c.1485

Famous works by Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475 - 1564



Frescoes on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, Rome

Details of muscles and veins, hand slightly larger to look proportionate from a distance

Strong and youthful David with eyes focused ahead



Moses, Tomb of Julius II, Vatican Basilica, Rome, 1505

A sculpted trunk for support, calm but firm posture, ready for action



David, Florence Accademy of Art, sculpted from a single block of marble, c.1504



The Pietà, Vatican Basilica, Rome c.1497



Procession in Piazza San Marco, Venice, Gentile Bellini, 1496

Why Italy?

There is a reason why the Renaissance and Humanism began in the Italian peninsula. Most religious orders originated in Italy and created a strong foundation for education, the spread of knowledge and artistic movements. The archaeological remains in Rome reminded them of the great Roman Empire and its civilisation. It became fashionable for people to dig up Roman remains, readily available in the area around Rome, to flaunt their nostalgia for classical times. Another reason was found in the much-visited major port cities of Ancona, Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi. The merchants travelling from these ports not only brought new products but also new ideas from the lands they visited. Their frequent transactions created the necessity for complex banking and insurance systems. New routes were opened to the East and the new Europe was enriching itself and spreading its connections far beyond its Christian borders. In medieval Italy, the feudal system had failed, while society was changing thanks to the increasing number of merchants, travellers, and mercenaries. The safe Mediterranean Sea routes also boosted trade in the late Middle Ages so that the new class of merchants and traders made more profits. In Northern Italy, the ruling families modelled the cities according to the ancient Greek model of Republic city-states and started rediscovering classical

art, architecture and literature. This richer society now had enough funds to invest in artistic projects. Governments, rich families and the Church could now support and commission artists for aesthetic works that enhanced their status.

The Republic of Venice is an interesting case study of a business empire and of economic colonisation. As a port city, the Venetians excelled in shipbuilding while they also intelligently expanded their trading network from modern Croatia to Egypt. They built fortresses, defended ports, and invested to improve the facilities of commercial hubs on Greek Dodecanese islands and the Aegean, especially on Crete and Cyprus, as well as in Constantinople while it was still under Byzantine rule. The principle of the Republic was to engage with multicultural traders irrelevant of their faith. Jewish and Greek merchants prospered in this complex trading network contributing to the



Filippo Brunelleschi's dome of the Florence Cathedral

Eastern influence in the rich artistic and architectural heritage of Venice.

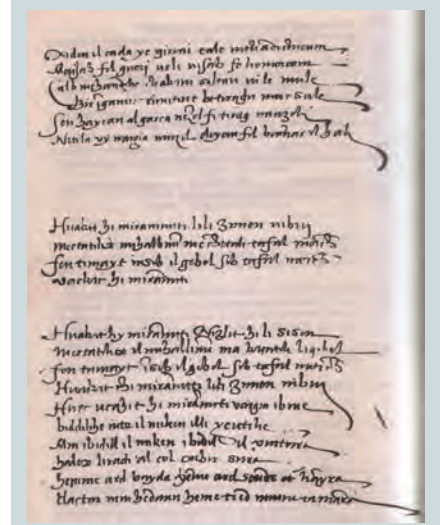
In the city of Florence, important traders and bankers like the Medici family, after the plague of 1347, had the capital to invest in beautiful artistic objects such as paintings, sculptures and new buildings. Artists' studios flourished there, and this had an impact even on science. As artists searched for ways to depict the human form in as real an image as possible, they also sought to discover more about the human body by even finding and dissecting the corpse of persons who died in the river.

Rome was the centre of Christendom, the headquarters of the Papal Curia after the Pope had returned there from Avignon in 1420. Rome was also the capital city of the Papal States, and its urban

Pietru Caxaro

(c. 1400 – c. 1485)

Pietru Caxaro was born in 15th-century Malta. His exact year of birth and death are unknown, however he studied in Palermo and was first a magistrate in the Gozo castle in 1440 and later held the same position in Malta. In Mdina, he practised as a notary, jurat and judge. He was an able orator too, but his only legacy is a poem written in Medieval Maltese known as the 'Cantilena', a poem about the struggles of life and one of the earliest examples of written Maltese. He never married and is buried in a chapel in the Dominican Church of Rabat.



MALTA

EUROPE

1700

1701

Construction of the First Ship-of-the-Line for the Order's Navy

1701-1714

War of the Spanish Succession

1714-1718

Ottoman-Venetian War

1732

Inauguration of Manoel Theatre by Grand Master de Vilhena

1741

Election of Grand Master Pinto

1749

Conspiracy of the Slaves

1751-1772

Publication of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*

1775

Rising of the Priests

1776

Declaration of American Independence

1784

Publication of the Code De Rohan

1792

Confiscation of the Order's French territories

1798

Arrival of Napoleon's fleet in Malta

1800

French surrender of Malta

1800

1789

Convocation of Estates General by Louis XVI

1793

Execution of Louis XVI

1794

Robespierre's Reign of Terror

1797

Treaty of Campo Formio

1799

Coup of 18 Brumaire

Chapter Two

The eighteenth century

Enlightenment and Revolution

Introduction

The 18th century is often referred to as the 'Age of Reason' or 'the Age of Enlightenment'. The search for new political and philosophical concepts and the new scientific breakthroughs of the time transformed general outlooks, leading to a yearning for change. The century ended with one of the most momentous events that would reshape European thought and politics: the French Revolution.

Consequences of colonisation, trade, slavery and cabinets of curiosities

Until the 19th century, colonisation was driven by mercantilism to explore and establish new maritime trading posts. Merchant companies held the monopoly, yet this benefitted the state. The merchant companies establishing these colonies were given royal administrative authority over the territories acquired and the European settler communities, in order to manage trade and impart justice. Colonisation also took place through proprietors. These individuals were given a royal decree to establish a colony and govern it through the role of a governor and his



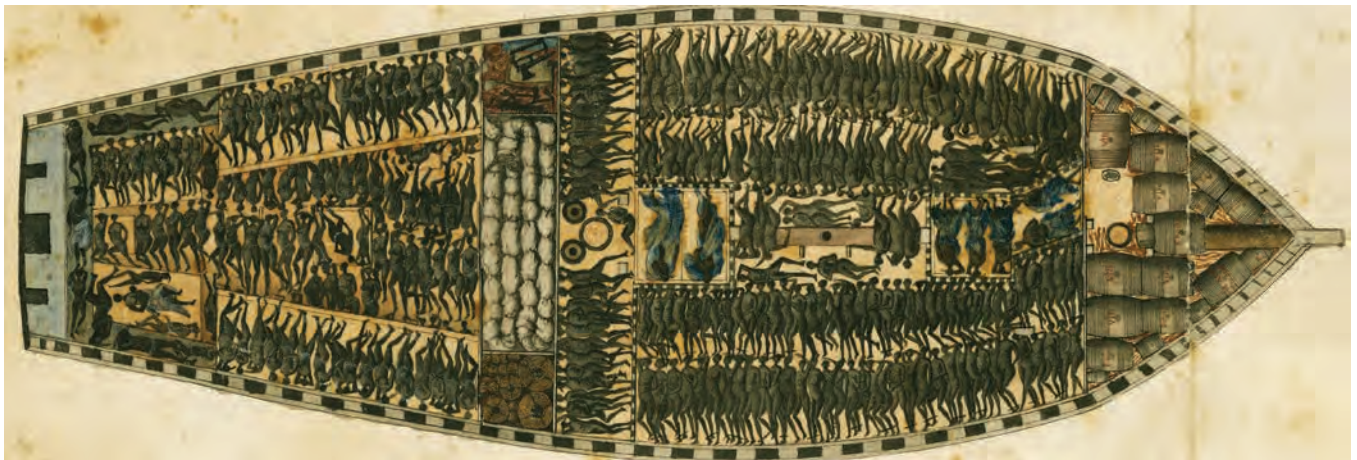
View of the West African coast, 18th century

council. If the merchant companies (self-governing colonies) or proprietors mismanaged the colony, then the crown would revoke their authority and take direct control through military intervention, sending a crown governor to manage the colony. In this way, Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and the Republic of the United Provinces (the Dutch) all became colonial empires.

In these colonies, the indigenous people could be hostile to the settlers, and relationships varied in different parts of the world. During this process, many indigenous peoples became enslaved or converted to the religion of the colonisers. In a Dutch East India colony like Batavia

(Jakarta), a cosmopolitan city emerged where Europeans, Chinese, Japanese and Southeast Asians lived and worked together in close quarters. On the African continent, enslaving prisoners was an ingrained practice, especially in Sub-Saharan port city kingdoms, so African kings had begun as early as the 16th century to trade enslaved people to Portuguese and Dutch traders visiting the Western coast of Africa in exchange for goods such as guns and alcohol.

They conceded lands to the traders where these could build coastal forts to keep the captured slaves until they could transport them to North, Central and South America. After the long voyage across the Atlantic, these slaves were sold to plantation owners in need of manpower to help expand their profitable economic activities. During the Transatlantic journey, the enslaved men, women and children suffered extremely harsh, cramped and unsanitary conditions, as the investors ensured that the ships were packed to full capacity. The captives were chained lying down on their backs and could not move when given food to eat or to relieve themselves during the long voyage which took



Plan of deck reserved for slaves on board a French trading ship, c.1770



Anne Bonny, famous Caribbean pirate

weeks and sometimes months. They were surrounded by their sick and dying friends and relatives. By the 17th century, this trade became better organised, and faster. Purposely built vessels left Africa loaded with enslaved people who were then sold on the American continent, with products from these ports shipped to Europe in what became known as the triangular trade route.

European rivalry was also manifest in the colonial sphere of influence, where for example the Dutch East India Trading Company raced to establish control of the spice trade by occupying the 'spice islands', and previous Portuguese trading-posts along India, coming into conflict with the British East India Trading Company. Britain's economy, dependent in a large measure on the East India Trading Company which had its own private army, started to control lands beyond the ports of call for its ships, as was the case of India. In fact, the British crown only took over India from the company in 1858 after controlling a rebellion in the previous year.



Slave shackles

The Dutch and English were also at war with one another along North America's coast, the British capturing New York in 1673 during the third Anglo-Dutch war. Britain was also at war with the French, Dutch and Spanish over the Caribbean Islands throughout the 17th century. Furthermore, the effects of post-war economic crises in Europe were also felt in these territories. For example, following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, as ocean-going navies reduced employment, many men resorted to the infamous early 18th century piracy that especially threatened Spanish and English Caribbean trade routes.

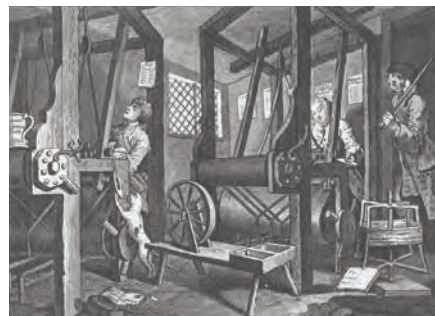
The naval expeditions resulted in the discovery of unknown lands, and the tracing of new sea routes around the globe spurred great interest in native customs, geology, flora and fauna. In their residences, monarchs, nobles, clergymen and rich merchants all over the continent, created the *Wunderkammer*, that is, rooms with cabinets exhibiting collections of curious objects gathered from travels, spontaneous archaeological digs or diplomatic exchanges, to indicate that they were keeping abreast with the latest developments in the discovery of faraway lands and their exotic customs.

Scientific discoveries and early machine-powered industry

The eagerness for further knowledge stimulated experiments that led to scientific discoveries. The effort to solve all problems through logical reasoning spurred technological advancements that led to several inventions. The early 18th century also coincided with the start of what became known as the Industrial Revolution in Britain. In 1769, James Watt invented the steam engine that replaced water-powered mills used in cotton weaving. The steam engine

was also helpful in mining for coal as it provided the energy to produce steam for all sorts of machines. Large masses of iron could now be melted down by coal to create new steam-powered machinery. The steamship, which would revolutionise navigation, was invented by Jacques Perrier in 1775. Other inventions like the flying shuttle and the spinning jenny were to contribute to the development of the British textile industry. These inventions would have a lasting impact on the production and transport of goods, the diffusion of factories and the way people worked. This also fundamentally changed colonial ambitions. While still mercantile in nature, it was now seen profitable to expand territories through conquest or acquisition from indigenous rulers, for the extraction of raw material and mass cultivation of crops such as sugar and cotton, which required a constant supply of slaves to the East and West plantation sites.

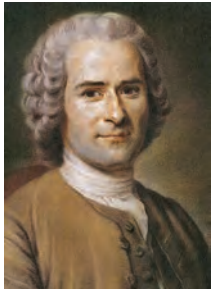
The Philosophes



William Hogarth's engraving 'Industry and Idleness' showing workmen at the looms, 1750

Many French writers published plays, books and treatises in which they commented on power, work, education, poverty, religion, slavery and equality. These writers, called the *philosophes*

or thinkers, tried to apply scientific methods to understand how society and governance worked or failed. Montesquieu questioned the Divine Right of Kings since he was in favour of separation of power and a constitutional monarchy. These ideas first spread among the nobility and *bourgeoisie* or middle class and then among the rulers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of these *philosophes* who wrote about equality, and how society was the playground for corruption and for the manipulation of the public mind. In the *Social Contract* he emphasised



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

that it was necessary for those governing the state to consult the people as 'the general will is indestructible'.

The Enlightenment ideas spread mainly by means of the 28 volumes of the *Encyclopédie*, a collection of entries published and edited by

Denis Diderot explaining contemporary knowledge on different topics like philosophy, theology, science and the arts. A main contributor to the *Encyclopédie* was Voltaire who discussed power and absolutism and wrote in favour of constitutional monarchy as already established in Britain. Indeed, these ideas would not have influenced so many people at the time if there were not a state like Britain to prove that an alternative system to absolute rule could work.

Voltaire had written other books, like the satirical *Candide* (1759) and *L'Ingénu* (1767) in which he criticised the acceptance of destiny and the corruption existing in French ecclesiastical and government circles. His ideas attracted the attention of European monarchs, and he even became an advisor to Frederick II of Prussia who invited Voltaire to his palace. In his kingdom, Frederick II introduced important reforms to the judicial

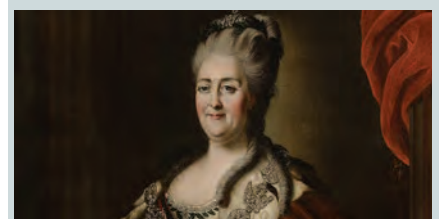
system and the state bureaucracy, which helped transform his kingdom into what was viewed as a 'modern state'.

Monarchs who wanted to reform their states, such as the already mentioned Frederick II of Prussia (1740-1786), Catherine II (also known as Catherine the Great) of Russia (1762-1796), and Joseph II of Austria (1765-1790) were viewed as 'Enlightened Despots' because of the reforms they introduced. However, they still held on to absolute rule and to the notion that they were entitled to rule through the Divine Right of Kings. They saw themselves as servants of their states with a mission to improve the lives of their subjects and modernise their kingdoms. Although they still ruled in an 'absolute' way, that is, without any say from their subjects, their attitude was completely different from that of an absolute ruler like Louis XIV of France who had described himself as the embodiment of the State when he said '*L'État? L'État c'est moi!*' ('The State? I am the State!').

The American Revolution

The impact of the 'cult of reason', and the ensuing recommendations of the *philosophes* for a better system of governance, also spread to North America. When the British started to

tax more harshly their subjects in their North American colonies, the latter were ready to go to war against their British colonial rulers for their right to have their voices heard, and hence their slogan 'No taxation without representation.' The Crown did not want to give the same rights of representation to their subjects in the colonies as to the British subjects in their own country. In 1776, Americans under British rule declared Independence. The American 'Declaration of Independence', written by the



Catherine II of Russia

(1729-1796)

Catherine II of Russia is one of the best examples of Enlightened Despotism. During her reign, she corresponded with Voltaire for 15 years. His ideas influenced a number of her reforms. She introduced an element of equality before the law through changes in the court system while still retaining her position as the lawgiver. In 1766, she called representatives from around the Empire to a general assembly to discuss the needs of the Empire and the implementation of the new justice system. However, the serfs did not have any representation. To increase literacy rates among the Russian population, she reformed the education sector in 1786, a move considered to be one of the hallmarks of the Enlightenment ideals. Although free primary and secondary schools were opened, serfs still required the permission of their landlords to attend. On the other hand, Catherine II went against Enlightenment principles in her foreign policies, especially when dealing with new territory acquired from the Ottoman Empire and the tripartition of Poland. Her traditional politics earned her a place among enlightened despots who ruled with absolute power, although she considered and attempted social reforms. She also established good relations with the Order of St John in Malta.



British surrender at the Battle of Yorktown to the American and French forces, 1781



View of Grand Harbour from Valletta, c.1750

'Founding Fathers' was based on the principles of equality and freedom, according to the teachings and beliefs of the *philosophes* in Europe. The Declaration led to war against Britain, and the Americans won the American War of Independence with the help they received from France. By virtue of the Treaty of Paris (1783), Britain had to accept that its North American colonies were no longer part of its Empire.

Malta: its Grand Masters and their projects

Throughout the 18th century, the minor powers of the Mediterranean had lost political influence and now greater powers such as Britain, France and Russia with their trading interests with the Ottoman Empire were the protagonists in the area. This meant that diplomatic trade treaties dealt a blow to the idealistic concept of a Christian West combating the Islamic Ottoman East. Consequently, these powers failed to support the Order of St John's raids on Ottoman shipping. The great powers began to limit the areas where the Order's ships could operate to destroy Turkish shipping, as at the international congress at Cambrai held between 1720 and 1725. Thus, the Order increasingly lost its income from corsairing.

During the 18th century, Malta was ruled by benevolent Grand Masters like Ramon Perellos (1697-1720) and Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736), the Portuguese Grand Master who, it is said, could speak Maltese. Perellos set up a mercantile tribunal, the *Consolato del Mare*, and donated the beautiful handmade Flemish tapestries to the Conventual Church of St John (today St John's Co-Cathedral) and to the Grand Masters'

Palace in Valletta. He also invited the renowned architect Romano Carapicchia to restructure the drainage system in Valletta. However, the news that the Ottomans were preparing a large fleet to attack Malta once again, constrained Perellos to concentrate on defence. He ensured that the fortifications were repaired, and the Order's navy was strengthened with the new 'ship of-the-line' type of vessels, which necessitated the building of a new arsenal.

Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena invested in public works, thus providing work for many inhabitants such as the reconstruction of the walls of the old capital city, Mdina, which were still in disrepair after the earthquake of 1693. He brought over to Malta the French architect François de Mondion who gave a baroque touch to the old city by building a Magisterial Palace and restructuring the main street. Vilhena also had a fort built adjacent to the Lazzaretto on Manoel island strengthening the defence of Valletta from the Marsamxett side. He also commissioned a theatre in Valletta which is still referred to as the Manoel Theatre.

For over thirty years, Grand Master Manuel Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773) ruled autocratically as the Prince of Malta. He is even portrayed by the French painter, Antoine Favray, wearing an ermine cloak, a symbol of royalty. His *Altezza Eminentissima*, or *Sultan*, as he was called by the Island's inhabitants, ruled without allowing any

opposition. He even refused to convene a Chapter General, that is the Council of Government of the Order, which met regularly during the reigns of previous Grand Masters.

Conspiracy of the Slaves, 1749

The revolt that Pinto brutally suppressed in 1749 was not organised either by the Knights themselves or by the Maltese population, but by the enslaved Muslims on the Island. The number of captives and slaves seized by the galleys of the Order and the Maltese corsairs had increased substantially. One high official of the Ottoman Sultan, Mustafa Pasha of Rhodes, had been captured at sea and brought to Malta. His high rank meant that he could bring in a good ransom and he was allowed quite a free hand on the Island, especially when he even showed an interest in converting to Christianity and marrying a Maltese lady. However, he began to meet slaves in order to organise a revolt. The aim was to capture the Island and pass it on to the Ottomans. The attack was to take place on the eve of the feast of St Peter and St Paul, the *Imnarja*, 28 June 1749. Most of the Valletta inhabitants would have moved out of the city to go to the *Buschetto* Gardens for the traditional festivities there. It was customary to spend the night at



Mustafa Pasha



Execution of slaves in harbour, 1749

The Order's Ship-of-the-Line, corsairs of Malta and new land defences

The ship-of-the-line takes its name from the new naval tactics used during sea battles. The bigger, multi-deck, three-masted vessels required less manpower but were categorised as 1st rate (100+ guns), 2nd rate (84+guns) and 3rd rate (64+guns). As of 1701, the Order decided to build a new arsenal to construct such vessels. Throughout the century, the Order made use of and constructed eight 3rd rate ships of the line. These vessels had a longer life span than galleys. For example, the *San Zaccaria* served from 1765 and was still active in 1798. The Order made use of these vessels together with their galleys sending out to sea a formidable squadron of galleys and ships-of-the-line when needed. One of the notable Knight captains of the Order was Bali Jacques François Chambray. He entered the Order in 1699, and in 1722, was appointed Major-General of Gozo and Comino. In 1723 he was promoted to Captain and then to Lieutenant in 1731. The large fort in Mgarr, Gozo, bears his name.

Many Maltese entrepreneurs fitted out ships and sought the Order's licence to become corsairs. These ships raided Ottoman trading ships and, at times, even Greek Orthodox ships, although this was disallowed. Sometimes they managed to bring to the Grand Harbour ships they had attacked with their full cargoes and their crews. Malta was also well-known for its excellent corsair captains, some of whom found favour and opportunities to serve in the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean with their private vessels and Maltese crews, going against the Order's wishes. Some notable corsair captains were: Pietro Zelalich originally from Montenegro, who first came to Malta when he commanded the seized *Corona Ottomana* into Malta's port; and Guglielmo Lorenzi, another important corsair of Corsican origin, who was given command of a vessel flying Gran Master Pinto's flag in 1767. By 1787, he was in command of a 54-gun frigate *La Fama* and a Maltese crew. Some corsair captains

of Maltese origin of the period were Michele Borg, Felice Micallef, Giovanni Gera, and Leopoldo Desira.

Throughout the century, the Order embarked on the building of a series of fortifications, the most significant of which were Fort Manoel, the completion of the Cottonera and Floriana Lines and Fort Chambray in Gozo. The military engineers

commissioned by the Order, such as de Mondion and de Tigné who also relied on Maltese draughtsmen to draw accurate plans, applied the Vauban-style of bastioned defences adapted to the rugged Maltese terrain. The system of defence offered by forts, entrenchments, batteries, redoubts and glacis slopes meant to delay and fragment any invading force.



Ex-voto offering by corsair captain Michele Borg, showing his vessel in a storm, 1794



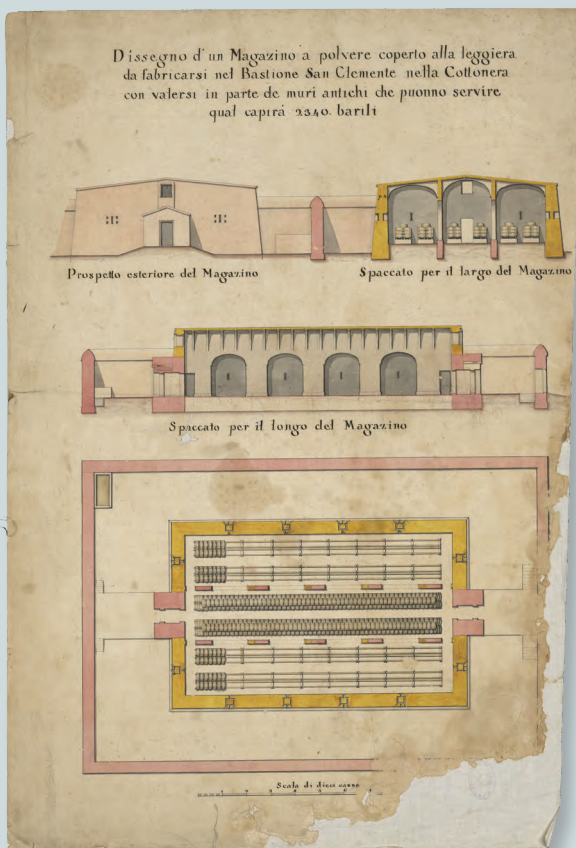
Painting showing the ships-of-the-line *San Giovanni* and *San Vincenzo* attacking an Algerian vessel, 1719



Governor of Fort Manoel



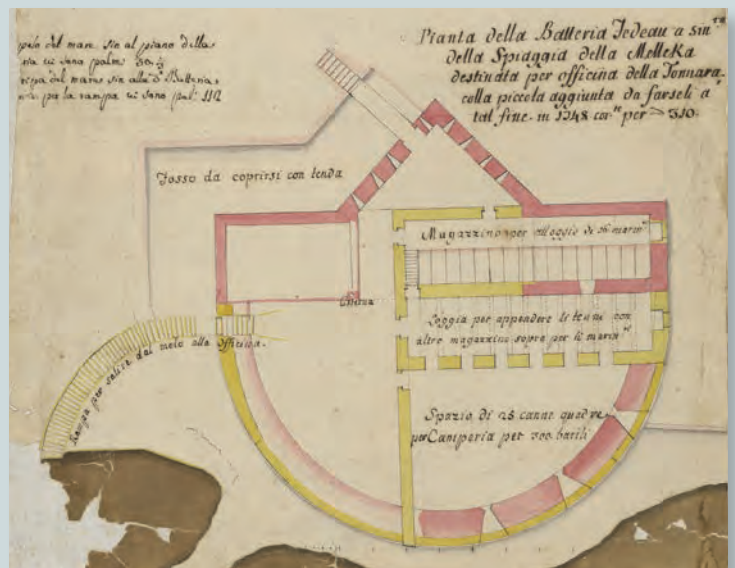
Design showing part of the Cottonera Lines, explaining the acquisition of land for its construction



Section and plan drawing of gunpowder stores to be built in the bastion of San Clement along the Cottonera lines, 1749



Design of Fort Manoel on the Lazzaretto island



Plan of Battery to be built at the Mellieha beach, 1748

the Gardens in order to be able to attend the liturgical celebrations held at the Mdina Cathedral the next morning. The conspirators, who had already involved a number of Palace servants, were ready to enter the Palace and murder the Grand Master. They even planned to take over Fort St Elmo. Once they took hold of the city of Valletta, the freed slaves were to await a fleet of corsairing ships from North Africa.

The plan was exposed by a Jewish tavern keeper in Valletta, Joseph Cohen, who overheard two men discussing the plot in his shop and immediately alerted the authorities. The conspirators were arrested, tortured (a few were quartered by ships in the harbour) and publicly executed. Mustafa, the mastermind of this plot, was saved from execution, unlike the other participants in the planned uprising, because of his political connections. The King of France managed to secure his ransom from Malta and pacify tensions in the Mediterranean that could have affected French-Ottoman relations.

Malta-France relations and the Enlightenment in Malta

Another diplomatic incident that underlined the fact that the religious military role of the Order of St John was becoming irrelevant to greater powers occurred in 1760 when some enslaved Maltese brought to Malta the *Corona Ottomana*, a ship that was the pride of the Sultan, after they had mutinied and killed the



Mikiel Anton Vassalli
(1764-1829)

Like many of his educated contemporaries, Vassalli was attracted to the spirit of the Enlightenment and focused on the principles of education. The problems related to the study of the Maltese language were at the centre of his life's work. Continuing on the work of Agius De Soldanis and Padre Pelagio and enjoying the support of Grand Master de Rohan, he published a book on the Maltese alphabet and the *Lexicon*, a dictionary of Maltese words with their equivalent in Arabic and Italian. He began to work with De Rohan to open schools to teach the Maltese language. He soon fell out of favour with the Order because of his apparent sympathy for the French Revolution and his participation in the Jacobin club in Malta. He was imprisoned and taken to Fort Ricasoli and was only released when the French army took over the island. He immediately lent his services as a scribe to General Vaubois and suffered the fate of starvation as the French soldiers, when the Maltese besieged Valletta. After the French capitulation, he was arrested as a traitor to the Maltese and sent into exile in France. He was permitted to return to Malta in 1820.

Ottoman crew. The vessel referred to, was to be returned to the Ottomans, but Pinto refused. The King of France then bought it from the Order of St John so that it could be sent back to the Ottoman Emperor.

These events were described in the publications and writings of the Gozitan cleric G.P.F. Agius de Soldanis, who dedicated his life to deciphering the linguistics of the spoken Maltese language and attributing its origins to the ancient Phoenician language. Agius de Soldanis, like many of his time, was also passionate about collecting little

treasures of archaeological and geological importance as well as books that helped him understand and write about Gozo's ancient, classical and Christian history, as well as other general topics. His great knowledge on a wide variety of subjects made him the obvious choice for the post of first librarian of Malta's public library which was set up in Valletta in 1763.

Relations between Malta and France did not always reflect tensions. For example, Louis XV granted that all Maltese be deemed nationals of France, thus allowing for a great movement of students and exchange of knowledge especially in the military and architectural fields. Inspired by the spirit of his age, Grand Master Pinto set up within his Palace the official printing press of the Order. Although there was strict censorship over all printed material, the Order had finally taken the upper hand in the long debate between various previous Grand Masters, Bishops and Inquisitors on the matter. The expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta in 1768 also provided the Order with the opportunity to set up, a year later, the *Università di Studi Generali* in the old Jesuit premises in Valletta.

Rising of the Priests, 1775

Under Pinto's long rule, Malta enjoyed one of the most prosperous periods of its history but its coffers were depleted. It was up to Pinto's successor, Grand Master Francisco Ximenes (1773-1775), to deal with the debt of nearly two million *scudi* that he found. The rising of the priests in 1775 was the result of the economic policies adopted by Ximenes to make up for his predecessor's extravagances. Ximenes did his best to tackle the economic problems, but prices continued to rise for the Maltese, especially after the harvest failed in Sicily, since the Island was dependent on Sicilian grain. The law passed by Ximenes to limit and control rabbit-hunting to allow them to breed and later provide cheaper meat enraged the low-ranking clergy who lamented to Bishop



Model of a ship-of-the-line, 18th century

Pellerano that the Grand Master was infringing their clerical privileges, while demanding a Chapter General to discuss clerical legal immunity. Clerics on the Island grew angrier as they accused the Grand Master of issuing special licences to the Knights to go hunting. The clergy started to organise themselves first under the leadership of Joseph Zahra and later under that of Don Gaetano Mannarino. The latter seems to have been under the influence of the Russian representative Cavalcabo who gave the impression that his country would support a national revolt led by these priests against the Order of St John. The conspirators believed they would gain the support of the Maltese people who were also discontented with Ximenes' rule.

The rebellious priests, led by Mannarino, found the opportune moment to make their move on 8 September 1775, while national celebrations commemorating the victory of the Great Siege were being held and the Order's fleet was out at sea. They first took control of St James Cavalier by using spare keys. They also managed to take over Fort St Elmo with the help of one of the guards. In these forts, they removed the Order's flag which they replaced with Malta's colours. Finding himself and his Order threatened in his fortified town, Grand Master Ximenes ordered the immediate recapture of these strategic military positions in Valletta, while prohibiting the citizens of Valletta from leaving their homes at the cost of being arrested. Resistance was weak as none of the Valletta residents risked joining the rioters. Mannarino is said to have blown in vain a horn on the bastions near Fort St Elmo inviting the residents to rise against the Knights. Three of the four arrested at St James Cavalier were strangled and decapitated, after which their heads were displayed on pikes on St James Cavalier – a gruesome reminder to those who intended to help these rioters of what awaited them if they were caught. Those at Fort St Elmo freed the Fort commander and his soldiers, after agreeing with the



Music sheets by composer Benigno Zerafa for the occasion of the entry of Grand Master de Rohan into Mdina

Vicar General, Monsignor Gaetano Grech, who had been sent by Ximenes himself to negotiate with Mannarino. However, the freed soldiers immediately proceeded to arrest the rebels. Mannarino was kept imprisoned in Fort St Elmo, only to be released in 1798 after the arrival of Napoleon in Malta. Although the revolt is known as 'The Rising of the Priests', most of those who entered and took over the two forts were lay men.



Front page of the Code Rohan

Grand Master De Rohan and the *Dritto Municipale*

The next Grand Master, the Frenchman Emmanuel De Rohan Polduc (1775-1797) was left to deal with the aftermath of the revolt. He convinced the Holy See, through his ambassador in Rome, that ecclesiastical immunity was threatening the good governance of the Maltese islands, since priests and clerics had instigated and planned the insurrection. He managed to obtain reforms, through a Papal decree known as *Motu Proprio*, whereby those who chose to become clerics or priests in Malta were required to have financial backing in order to aspire for the priesthood. This new requirement resulted in the decline of the number of new priests during the next few years. De Rohan considered this *Motu Proprio* so important that he included it at the end of the *Diritto Municipale* of 1784 by which he codified the laws of the Island.

The *Diritto Municipale* gave better access to the laws of the Island. However, the punishments laid down for those who broke the law seemed quite harsh, at a time when many European states were trying to mitigate their laws so that the punishments would be assigned according to the gravity of the

The Ottoman Empire in the 18th century

By the early 1700s, the Ottoman Empire had to come to terms with the growing power of Austria, Russia, Britain and France in the Mediterranean and at the Empire's borders. The Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), which ended the War of the Holy League, was a turning point as it marked the first time that the Empire surrendered large territories in Europe, including Hungary and parts of the Balkans, although hostilities recommenced with the Ottoman-Venetian War (1714-1718). Wars during the 18th century, especially with Russia and Austria, strained the Empire's resources. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), following a devastating Russo-Turkish War, had profound consequences as it granted Russia the right to intervene on behalf of Orthodox Christians within the Empire and also allowed Russian commercial ships to navigate the Black Sea.

In this period the Ottomans began adopting more systematic diplomatic practices by setting up permanent embassies, starting with that in Paris in 1721. Ambassadors played important roles in gathering



View of Constantinople by Antoine Favray



Turkish Women by Antoine Favray

intelligence, observing European innovations and reporting back on political, technological and cultural developments.

The Ottoman economy thrived through ports like Istanbul, Izmir, and Alexandria that linked European, Asian and African commerce. The Empire exported goods such as silk, cotton, coffee, grains and leather, while importing European manufactured products and luxury goods. French merchants, in particular, were heavily involved in Ottoman trade. At the borderlands of the

Empire, the elite class of *Ayan*, semi-autonomous rulers, controlled trade routes and negotiated their own arrangements with European merchants, often against the wishes of the government in Constantinople.

In the 18th century, Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Istanbul), emerged as a fascinating, exotic destination for European elites undertaking the Grand Tour. Travellers like diplomats, aristocrats and artists, like Antoine Favray, who left a great artistic patrimony in



Malta, sought that exotic experience. Constantinople captivated the male and female visitors who marvelled at the city's architecture with its majestic mosques, bustling bazaars and courtly ceremonies, leaving a lasting impact on European art, literature and fashion.

“We arrived the next day at Constantinople; but I can yet tell you very little of it, all my time having been taken up with receiving visits, which are, at least, a very good entertainment to the eyes, the young women being all beauties, and their beauty highly improved by the high taste of their dress. Our palace is in Pera, which is no more a suburb of Constantinople, than Westminster is a suburb to London. All the ambassadors are lodged very near each other. One part of our house shews us the port, the city, and the seraglio, and the distant hills of Asia; perhaps, all together, the most beautiful prospect in the world.”— Extract from letter by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1718

“I would like to leave only the Crosier and the Mitre to the Bishop ... This is no longer the Church’s century.”

— Reportedly said by auditor Gio. Nicolò Muscat, 31 March 1792

crimes committed. The *Diritto Municipale* addressed the authority of the *Castellania*, penalties for criminal acts, lawsuits, inheritance, land and rent, commerce, and armament at sea.

De Rohan also reconvened the Order’s Chapter General which had not met for 145 years. He personally partly paid for the construction of Fort Tigné, considered the most modern fort built by the Knights, situated at what is known as Dragut Point. He also had a few batteries and redoubts built on Malta’s coastline. To step up Malta’s defences, the Order’s Chapter also decided to set up the *Regimento Maltese* in 1776 and the *Regimento dei Cacciatori Maltesi* in 1777.

De Rohan’s rule faced further contentions with the Maltese Church and the Inquisition. His auditor, Gio. Nicolò Muscat, echoing the *philosophes*, had even stated that the Church should only focus on spiritual matters without having any



Soldier from the *Regimento dei Cacciatori Maltesi*

say on worldly matters. This issue had been brought to centre stage by the results of the rising of the priests and the ensuing reforms which the Order had insisted on with the Holy See, namely the *Motu Proprio* mentioned above.

Towards the end of the 18th century, especially after the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, more learned individuals, such as Mikiel Anton Vassalli, sympathised with the ideas of the French philosophers. Many of these, including French knights like Bosredon de Ransijat, used to meet secretly in a house belonging to the knight Déodat de Dolomieu in Lija to discuss the removal of the Order from Malta. At this stage, the Order’s rule was not only being seen as too autocratic by the Maltese but also as obsolete by some of its own members.

Why France?

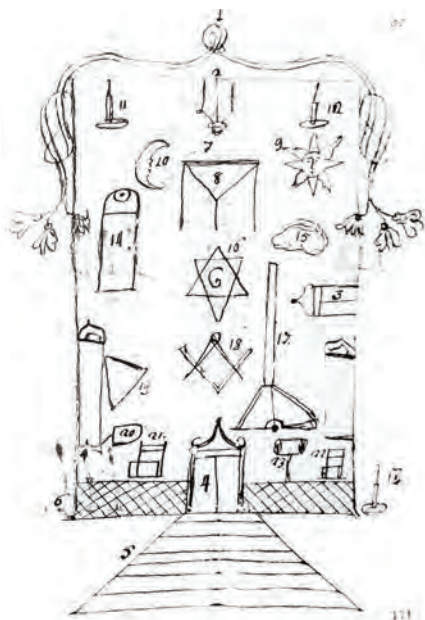
France experienced great turmoil during the reign of Louis XVI (1774-1792). The exceptionally long and war-torn reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) at the beginning of the 18th century had already bankrupted the state coffers. Later France continued to fight many wars including the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). Between 1776 and

1783, France even sent its troops to North America to help the colonies gain independence from Great Britain during the American War of Independence. Although the participation of French soldiers in this war might have boosted France’s international prestige, it had two negative effects: the war was costly and therefore the country’s financial situation continued to worsen, and the soldiers who returned home had been influenced by the new ideas that had prompted the American states to rebel against their British king with total disregard for the Divine Right of Kings.

Direct and indirect causes of the French Revolution

The immediate cause of the French Revolution was the country’s bankruptcy which created great hardship and discontent among the population and increased the unpopularity of the French royal family. There was an unfair system of taxation that practically exempted the clergy and the nobility from paying any taxes. At the same time, peasants paid their dues to the noble landowners who still held these lands under a feudal system. The nobles had many privileges by which they could ask for tolls on the roads and the marketplace and even extorted payments from the peasants living on their land to use the mills, winepresses and ovens they owned. The peasants also paid heavy taxes to the government, such as the land tax known as the *taille*, and a labour tax, the *corvée*, through which they were even bound to work a few days a year on roads, public projects or on the noblemen’s estates without being paid. The people of France were also troubled by the so-called King’s sealed letters or *lettres de cachet*, which were direct orders from the King, often passing judgment in trials without the chance of appeal.

Louis XVI seemed ill-prepared to face the problems of the country while his wife, the unpopular Austrian-born Marie Antoinette, was nicknamed *Madame Deficite* as she continued to waste the country’s funds on great luxuries. She was also



Design of Masonic symbols from an Inquisitorial trial against some knights, 1775

insultingly referred to as *L'Autrichienne*, that is 'the Austrian one', an indication that the French people still considered her a foreigner with no sympathy for their problems.

Furthermore, France had suffered a very cold and violent winter in 1788. The resulting bad harvest caused bread prices to rise. People started leaving the countryside to earn their living in the big cities, mainly Paris. The increasing population in the city led to high unemployment as did the number of *sans culottes*, the 'poor' people in Paris.

The Finance Minister, Count Charles Alexandre de Calonne, together with Jacques Necker, tried to solve the country's financial problems by proposing drastic reforms that included taxing the nobles. The king, as expected, did not agree. Necker was sacked only to be recalled to his duties once again, as

the situation did not improve. The only option to deal with this urgency was to suggest to King Louis XVI to call the Estates General which had not been summoned for 175 years.

The Estates General

The Estates General was composed of the representatives of the people of France, that is, the three Estates: the First Estate consisting of clergy representatives, the Second Estate made up of the nobility and the Third Estate comprising the middle class or *bourgeoisie* representatives. Whereas the first two Estates represented around 3% of the French population, the Third Estate represented the remaining 97%. The Estates General which first met at Versailles on 5 May 1789 constituted a unique opportunity for the Third Estate representatives to present

letters of grievances and complaints (*cahiers des doléances*) to the King.

The National Assembly and the Tennis Court Oath

At the start of the meeting, the Third Estate representatives contested the traditional Estates General procedures, that is, a general meeting with all three estates but with the collective voting of each estate given equal weight. The Third Estate agreed that the estates should meet all together but advocated for each delegate to have one vote. This meant that the numerous Third Estate members could outvote the other two Estates with their individual votes. The Third Estate representatives argued convincingly for this method by pointing out that, after all, they were representing the greatest number of people in French society.



View of Palace of Versailles, Pierre Patel, c.1660

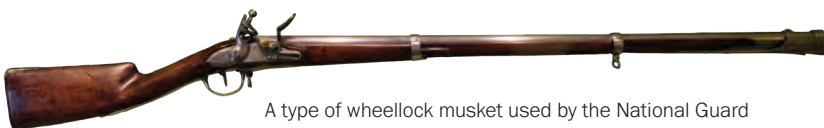


Opening of the Estates General, 5 May 1789 at Versailles, Louis Charles Auguste Couder

“We swear never to separate and to meet wherever circumstances require until the kingdom’s Constitution is established and grounded on solid foundations.” — Extract from the Tennis Court Oath, 20 June 1798



A tricolor Revolutionary cockade for a female bonnet, c.1790; a white Royalist cockade, c.1790



A type of wheellock musket used by the National Guard

“Man has the right to deal with his oppressors by devouring their palpitating hearts.” – Jean-Paul Marat

This proposal, which was also backed by some members of the First and Second Estates, made the King re-think the wisdom of having called the Estates General. He tried to lock out the members, who had started to call themselves the National Assembly, from the usual hall at Versailles. The National Assembly, led by Comte de Mirabeau, moved to an interior tennis court at Versailles, and took an oath not to leave until they would draw up a new constitution for France. This became known as the ‘Tennis Court Oath’. The unsatisfied King had to agree to this perturbing change, realising that in the future, he would lose his absolute power and rule according to a new constitution. A constitution is the highest form of law in a country, granting rights to its citizens and establishing the principles and procedures by which that country is to be governed.

Why Paris? The storming of the Bastille, the National Guard and the Paris Commune

Hunger, the circulation of pamphlets against the monarchy and the prompt firing of Jacques Necker as finance minister enraged the Parisian population. On 14 July 1789, they attacked the Bastille, a medieval fortress used as a prison for those accused through *lettres de cachet* and therefore a symbol of the *Ancien Régime*. The people of Paris, fearing that the King would arrest the members of the National Assembly, and knowing that royal troops had been sent to march against the city, wanted to get hold of the weapons and ammunition stored in the fortress. The city’s troops also supported this action and joined in the effort, earning the title of National Guard. Despite the resistance from the Bastille’s garrison, the Paris mob captured this fortress, freed the few prisoners there, took hold of the weapons, killed the Governor of the fort and his officers and paraded their heads on muskets through the streets of Paris. The 14th of July, when the Bastille fell, is still celebrated in France as the country’s national day.

The National Assembly, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, the March of the Women

The Paris Commune, that is the town council, took control of the city and elected its own mayor. The National Guard, led by Lafayette who had participated in the American War of Independence, brought back some sort of order in the city. In this urgent situation, the king had no option but to reinstate Necker, recognise the Paris Commune and the National Guard, and even agree to wear the tricolor



French revolutionary shoe, 1789

badge, the blue, white and red colours of the new National Guard of Paris. Revolutionary violent protests occurred in the French countryside

between July and August 1789 in what became known as *La Grande Peur* (the Great Fear). Peasants started attacking the noblemen's manor houses to find and destroy the documents listing what they owed to the noble landowners. Many noblemen at this point left France as they feared for their lives and became known as *émigrés*. Many repaired to neighbouring countries, urging the European monarchs to intervene against the revolutionaries in France.

By August 1789, the National Assembly, taking into account the situation in the whole of France, began to discuss the abolition of



The burden of the Church and the Monarchy on the French woman

feudal privileges. After a long session, on 4 August 1789, feudal rights were abolished, and equality in taxation before the law was established - changes that were enshrined in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen'. These reforms were later included in the 1791 Constitution which was drawn up on Enlightenment principles that stripped the King of his absolute power. These new laws did not however guarantee economic solutions as people were still starving in Paris. Since it was believed that food was plentiful in the Palace of Versailles, on 5 October 1789, the Parisian women (and men dressed up as women) marched to Versailles in what came to be referred

to as the March of the Women. The rebels managed to enter the Royal apartments and capture the king and his family. Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and their two children were taken to the Tuileries Palace in Paris. They were never to see Versailles again.

The National Assembly took drastic measures to bring in revenue by selling lands after confiscating Church property. Under this new law, even the Order of St John as a Catholic religious order lost its lands in France. The rich French commanderies were an important source of income for the Order, and this French law bankrupted the Order in Malta. Other reforms made by the National Assembly proved unpopular with the people. In this scenario. The *sans culottes* from political clubs, such as those of the Cordeliers and the Jacobins, became influential and exerted pressure on the decisions of the National Assembly.

Flight to Varennes

On 20 June 1791, the King and his family, still held captive by the Parisians, decided to escape to the closest Austrian border. This desperate attempt to seek help from the Austrian Imperial family (Emperor Leopold II was Marie Antoinette's brother) and from the Austrian army to restore order and the power of the monarchy in France, failed tragically. As Louis XVI and his family, disguised as commoners by wearing simple clothes, arrived at Varennes, close to the border, they were recognised and taken back to Paris in a procession of shame. One can argue that at Varennes, the monarchy died, and if there was still hope of some compromise with the setting up of a constitutional monarchy, this failed. The Parisians lost all trust in the King when letters from the Austrian Emperor were discovered in the Royal apartments.

The events unfolding in France preoccupied European monarchs who feared the spread of revolutionary ideals that would threaten their power. '*Liberté, Égalité, et Fraternité*' (Liberty, Equality and Fraternity), the slogan of the French revolutionaries,



Revolutionary female fan showing the October March of the Women, 1798



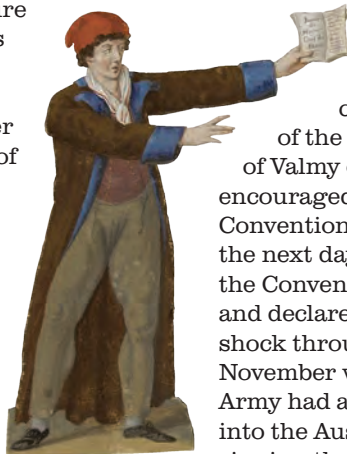
The flight to Varennes

did not augur well for the European aristocracy. As from 1792, the revolution in France had to face the powers of Europe after the National Assembly declared war on Austria and Prussia. The kingdom of Sardinia joined the anti-French coalition, as did Britain and Spain. The French armies asserted themselves militarily by invading the Austrian controlled Netherlands. In this war, the new French army proved its worth in defending the revolution.

The Paris Commune and the rise of Robespierre

The fear that France could lose the war endangered the gains of the revolution, and the National Assembly dreaded losing power to the more influential revolutionaries like the Girondins from the Commune of Paris, the city's municipal government. The Paris Commune had taken over the Hôtel de Ville in Paris as its meeting place, and had, at this point, been placed in the hands of extremists like Danton who had emerged from the social club of the Cordeliers.

Another leading figure of the revolution was the Jacobin Maximilien Robespierre, a lawyer and a strict disciple of the teachings of Rousseau, who proposed that the National Assembly should be dissolved in favour of an elected Convention which would draft a new constitution where the king would have no



Jean-Paul Marat

place. The National Assembly was dissolved to create the Legislative Assembly. But this was short-lived. The Brunswick Manifesto (named after the Commander of the Austro-Prussian troops) of July 1792 threatened that any further move against King Louis and the royal family would be punished fiercely. But this had the opposite reaction to that expected by the European monarchs, for the Parisians in August attacked the Tuileries, murdered the guards, and took Louis and his family to the Temple Prison.

This event led to the dissolution of the Assembly and the setting up of a democratically elected Convention. In the Convention that met in the *Salle des Machines* at the Tuileries, the Minister of Justice Danton, who had gained more popular votes than Robespierre, was made deputy. The government during that time was organised between the Convention, the Revolutionary Tribunal and the Committee of Public Safety, which would lead the Reign of Terror.

The Prussian victories like that at Verdun on 2 September 1792 made the French revolutionaries fear they would lose what they had achieved. News of this event led to the Paris massacres of September 1792, when many prisoners considered traitors to the revolution were killed without trial. When the progression of the war suddenly changed with the success of the French army at the Battle of Valmy on the 20 September, this encouraged the newly elected Convention that was first due to meet the next day. On 22 September 1792, the Convention deposed Louis XVI and declared a Republic sending a shock throughout Europe. By November when the Revolutionary Army had advanced to the Rhine and into the Austrian territories of Italy, singing the popular marching song of the volunteer soldiers from

“The king must die so that the country can live.” – Maximilien Robespierre

Marseille known as the *Marseillaise*, the Convention declared that it hoped to bring liberty to all peoples. At the trial, the king was found guilty and although many disagreed, he was condemned to death. The king was guillotined on 21 January 1793. His wife, Marie Antoinette, was similarly executed in October of the same year. After this, the

Convention declared France a Republic and then declared war on Britain and Spain.



Decorated plate showing the execution of Louis XVI

Reign of Terror, French Revolutionary Wars and the Convention

Continuous losses in the revolutionary wars and anti-revolutionary

rebellions in Lyons as well as a war against anti-revolutionaries in La Vendée led to panic. Robespierre, as an influential member of the Committee of Public Safety, was given more powers through the law of the Revolutionary Government in 1793. This law centralised all the military forces of France in order to continue fighting the threats to the revolution both outside and inside France. The Girondins in the Convention were threatened by a *coup* by the more extreme Jacobins (*Montagnards*) who ordered their arrest with the help of the Paris Commune and the Paris *sans-culottes* in 1793. Danton lost his place as President of the Committee of Public Safety to the ‘incorruptible’ Robespierre for not being extremist enough. Robespierre believed that terror was necessary to inspire virtue. This set off a phase during the Revolution known as the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), a period when those considered a threat to the revolution were taken through a short trial, summarily condemned and publicly guillotined in the Paris squares on a daily basis.



Soldier during the French Revolutionary Wars, detail from *Battle of Zurich* by François Bouchot

L'Ami du Peuple, a journal which instigated violence with writings by Marat, a member of the Commune, called for the blood of those who could be a threat to the revolution. Marat would receive lists of traitors from his spies, which he would publish, leading to their arrest and eventual execution by the guillotine. A young woman, Charlotte Corday, was brave enough to enter Marat's home and murder him in his bath. She was quickly arrested and executed, and the image of Marat murdered in his bath soon became a symbol of revolutionary martyrdom.

As President of the Convention, Robespierre was in total control. This period was characterised by atheism. Years were counted from 1792, the year the first French Republic was born, and the names of the months and days of the week were also changed. Public feast days celebrated the worship of the extreme Enlightenment ideal or the 'Goddess of Reason', turning France, or rather Paris, into the so called 'Republic of Virtue'. Robespierre succeeded in eliminating the Commune's resistance by substituting its members with individuals who were loyal to him. When Danton protested about all the bloodshed, Robespierre accused him of working against the revolution and after a short trial he was guillotined.

During the Reign of Terror, it is believed that almost 17,000 people were guillotined in France. The Law of 22 Prairial of Year II (10 June 1794) quickened the pace of the Terror as by this law, suspects brought in front of the Revolutionary Tribunal were not entitled to any legal defence during their trial, and no sentences could be passed if not that of being totally freed or condemned to the guillotine. As the French army started to be successful during the Revolutionary Wars with victories like that of the battle of Fleurus in June 1794, the fear that the gains of the revolution might be lost ceased. Besides, it seemed that the enemies of the revolution had been dealt with, and these two factors were considered to be sufficient to bring about the end of the Terror. However, Robespierre was calling for more blood and always had new lists of 'traitors' to be executed, including the 16 Carmelite nuns of Compiègne. When members of the Convention themselves felt threatened by Robespierre, they had him and his collaborators arrested on 27 July 1794 and guillotined the next day, an event which is viewed as truly marking the end of the Terror.

The Directory

In 1795, the corrupt Convention and Committee of Public Safety were replaced by a Directorate consisting

"I see no respite, no hope, I fear the return of the Jacobins and war! Respite, respite, that's what most are calling for." — Extract from letter from

Mme Custine to Gen. Francisco de Miranda, dated 10 May 1798

of five elected men. In this new system of government, a council of 500 men proposed laws to the Council of Ancients consisting of 250 elected members, who accepted or refused proposals but left the final decisions in the hands of the five chosen directors.

The rise of Napoleon and the Coalition Wars

The political instability that France was experiencing at this time provided opportunities for ambitious men to move forward. Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power can be seen in this context. His military successes against the British when he re-captured the port of Toulon earned him great popularity. His youth, military reliability, as well as the charismatic leadership of his soldiers on the battlefield increased his reputation for achieving military success. In



Execution of Robespierre, 28 July 1794



Caricature of officers of the British Navy at the Admiral's table

only four months, he sprang from the rank of Captain to Brigadier General. He swiftly became Commander of the French Army, leading the war on the Italian and Austrian fronts. After crossing the Alps, he drove back the Piedmontese army, taking control of Northern Italy by pushing the Austrians further out of Italy. His main military test came at the battle of Arcole (November 1796) where, at the bridge, the French were kept from advancing further but still succeeded in breaking the Austrian forces. The Austrians surrendered in 1797 and the Peace Treaty of Campo Formio was signed, ending the First Coalition War that had started in 1792. Napoleon's troops in Italy established republics in Romagna and even invaded the Papal States, exiled the Pope and declared Rome a Republic. The French army also occupied Naples, and set up another Republic, which

however was short-lived due to a civilian uprising mostly led by the Neapolitan clergy.

It was now only Britain, with its powerful navy and strong economy, that was at war with France. The Directorate decided to send Napoleon

“The Supreme Pontiff being forced to provide himself with a sufficient armed force ... against the hostility which he can justly fear from the French which descended on Italy ... has ordered the undersigned Inquisitor to procure in Malta ... ten thousand muskets for the matter in Italy.”

— Copy of letter sent by Inquisitor Carpegna to Grand Master De Rohan, 29 October 1796

to capture Egypt in a bid to undermine Britain's trade with the East. In Alexandria, the British had a large depot for goods to be exported to Asia and for imports from those same lands to be shipped to Britain. The Directory also instructed Napoleon to capture Malta on his way to Egypt. A fleet together with 40,000 troops was prepared and sailed towards Malta. It could be argued that the Order of St John had outlived its purpose, with a number of French knights in high positions being in favour of a French takeover. The island could prove a useful French outpost for the supply lines for the war in Egypt.

Grand Master Hompesch: the French capture of Malta and the reasons for the Order's surrender

As previously mentioned, the 1790s were quite challenging for the Order in Malta. Grand Master de Rohan suffered a stroke rendering him a cripple during the last few years of his life. When he died in 1797, the German Ferdinand von Hompesch was elected to be the next – and last – Grand Master in Malta. One of the reasons why the Order had elected Hompesch was due to his past experience as a diplomat. They thought he would have the right qualities to deal with the international problems facing their Order – an Order bound to a policy of neutrality since its members hailed from different European states. However, his disputed lack of effective leadership proved a serious setback for the Knights at a crucial period when the Order was losing its lands and property not only in France but in all the territories that the French army was occupying on the European continent, especially in Italy. This meant a decrease in the Order's revenue that undermined its effective administration of the Maltese Islands.

On 9 June 1798, two of the Order's vessels - the *San Zaccaria* and the *Sant' Elisabetta* - sailed in with their hulls full of profitable cargo. At that time, the French fleet under Napoleon's command was waiting to enter the Grand Harbour. Napoleon's request for water supply for his ships, which was politely refused by Grand Master Hompesch, was only an excuse since, as a neutral institution, the Order could not help any country at war. Moreover, the Order did not trust the French revolutionary governments, especially after letters in King Louis XVI's possession had



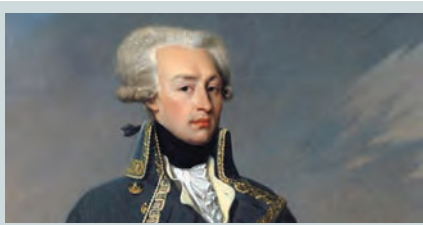
Napoleon at Arcole



Coin from Grand Master Hompesch period 1797-1798

indicated that de Rohan had provided money for the King's unsuccessful escape which had ended in Varennes. With the French fleet outside the Grand Harbour, there was great fear in Valletta of an imminent French attack, and a religious procession was held to pray for the Island's safety.

Napoleon did not dare attack the formidable harbour fortifications. Instead, his ships sailed around the



Lafayette
(1757-1834)

The Marquis de Lafayette was a hero of two worlds. He began his career during the American War of Independence when he served with the French army against the British. He became very close to George Washington who was impressed by his military skills despite his youth, and entrusted him with the command of a division of troops. He returned to France as a hero and associated himself with the more liberal nobility in favour of a Constitutional Monarchy. He was then elected in the Second Estate for the Estates General of 1789. He later supported the cause of the Third Estate and was among those who took the Tennis Court Oath. After the storming of the Bastille, Lafayette became commander of the Paris National Guard and together with his troops safely conducted the king and queen to Paris after the October Women's March on Versailles. During the revolution, he fought in the wars that ensued. His capture by the Austrians probably saved him from Robespierre's Reign of Terror. Unwilling to support Napoleon's dictatorship, he stepped aside from the political scene. He was elected to the Chamber of Deputies during the reign of Louis XVIII before returning to America in 1824. He later returned to France and played an important role during the 1830 riots against Charles X and the selection of Louis Philippe as king.



Napoleon greeted in Valletta, June 1798

Island disembarking troops at Ghajn Tuffieha and St Paul's Bay. These then marched towards Mdina. The Maltese in the old capital city rallied around the Bishop who advised them to allow the French into the walled city. A group of French Knights, like Bosredon de Ransijat, and Maltese Francophiles such as Mikiel Anton Vassalli and Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana, who had been meeting secretly to ease a French takeover, now created many misunderstandings by misinforming their colleagues, thus crushing any attempts for an organised defence against the French.

When the *Torri ta' Kenuna* at Nadur signalled the sighting of the French fleet sailing towards the Maltese Islands, some faithful knights, the *Reggimento Maltese* and the *Reggimento dei Cacciatori Maltesi* ran to the battlements of the harbour fortifications and the Forts, preparing to fight and ready to resist the French who had also landed at Marsaxlokk and St George's Bay. There were smaller battalions scattered around the Island defending the inner villages like that of Birkirkara. Fort Tigné, under the command of the German Knight von Rechberg, resisted the longest against the French bombardments and land attacks, as it halted French ships from entering Marsamxett harbour. The people of Senglea too

continued to resist and held out even after the Knights capitulated on 12 June 1798. Napoleon had to ask Bishop Labini to intervene in Senglea to assure the fighters that resistance at this point was useless, as the French had already conquered the rest of the Island.

Napoleon asked to meet representatives from Malta on his ship *L'Orient* to discuss the capitulation. He refused to speak to the Order's representatives preferring to discuss matters with Maltese people. The Order was ordered to leave the Island within 24 hours as were all the non-Maltese clerics. The latter included the Inquisitor himself and therefore, with this move the Inquisitor's tribunal stopped functioning never to be installed again.

The bishop, the Italian Vincenzo Labini, was allowed to stay on as at Napoleon's request, he had convinced the Sengleans that there was no need to continue fighting.

The reasons for the surrender of Malta are debatable. It is said that the Order was ill-prepared to face the mighty French Republican Army. Communication problems between



Bishop Vincenzo Labini

“... when I arrived ... I heard several gunshots ... I found the terraces of Rabat full of people, the Old City closed and the French commander and an officer killed.”

— Extract from the diary of Vincenzo Borg Brared, 2 September 1798

Order and the local militias could be another reason. Some blame the weak character of Grand Master Hompesch for having surrendered without a proper fight. The gunpowder stores were full and forts like Fort St Lucian held out till their ammunition ran out. The presence of French knights commanding defensive positions showing little interest to fight hindered an effective resistance. The French Bosredon de Ransijat had even informed the Grand Master that he was not ready to fight against his own country. In general, French knights seem to have had a nationalistic sympathy towards the Republican army even though their aristocratic birth should have precluded them from supporting a French Republic born of a revolution that erased nobility rights and executed the king. Republican sympathies were also widespread among the corsair captains. In fact, heroic corsair captains like Filippo Sciberras and others later joined the French when these were blockaded inside Valletta and the Three Cities, between September 1798 and September 1800.

French Republican reforms in Malta

Napoleon spent six days in Malta, setting up a new government for the Island. Before leaving for Egypt, he listed his instructions to the new administrators for new laws that needed to be enacted. He left General Vaubois as military commander of the French garrison in Malta. The Commission of Government was in the hands of the ex-knight of the

Order of St John, the French Regnaud de St Jean d'Angely. The Maltese Islands were divided into twelve different Municipalities. However, the Commission's eagerness to accomplish all of Napoleon's instructions, speedily gave rise to great discontent among the people. He gave new dispositions regarding education with new subjects being introduced at the University of Malta. He abolished slavery and released the slaves. The new administration established by Napoleon governed the Maltese Islands peacefully for less than three months.

Several instances contributed to making the Maltese restless. The French made their presence felt in the Maltese villages, causing havoc and driving the Maltese to complain - in vain - to the new government. Several Maltese men who joined Napoleon in the Egyptian campaign lost their lives at the Battle of Aboukir. Their wives in Malta had been promised their husband's wages but they did not receive them and their complaints were dismissed. With the departure of the Order's fleet, many men found themselves unemployed and those who in some way still awaited payment for services rendered to the Order, remained empty-handed. The Order's charitable deeds especially in the harbour area were discontinued. The pensions for those who served the Order, the distribution of bread and medicine to the poor, the money donated to women who had their husbands enslaved and the money allocated for the ransoming of slaves were immediately suspended by the new French government. This situation soon increased the rate of criminality due to the growing economic crisis.

On 14 July 1798, the Commission of Government decided to celebrate the feast of the *Tree of Liberty* as was done in Paris. This day was

celebrated with marching bands playing revolutionary songs and the sharing of commemorative pamphlets. During this ceremony, the Maltese noblemen were ordered to burn their title deeds. (The noblemen burnt copies of the

original documents instead.) A national guard was set up.

The Commission also established schools in the main towns. The new lease laws created by the French benefitting land and property owners made many tenants panic with the sudden immediate risk of being evacuated if the higher rent terms were not met. Taxes were also increased to meet the

new government's needs, adding to the many grievances the Maltese complained about.

The local population feared that the new administration was trying to undermine their Catholic morals. One of the first attacks on Maltese culture was to force families to host French soldiers, thus threatening the Maltese family nucleus and endangering the honour of Maltese daughters. The Maltese also had to register their marriages in government offices. The Maltese did not accept this, and Bishop Labini had to issue a pastoral letter explaining that this was not an attack on the Catholic sacrament of marriage. Malta's large ecclesiastical community was also affected when church property was expropriated, and religious orders were only allowed to have one convent.

The Maltese against the French troops, foreign aid and the National Congress

The Mdina Cathedral and St John's Church in Valletta had their gold and silver religious articles expropriated by the French Government to pay the garrison. When news went around on Sunday 2 September 1798 that French officials were in Rabat to take artefacts belonging to *Ta' Giezu* Church and that they were going to move to the Carmelite Church in



Emblem of the French Republic placed at the Cathedral, 1798



French infantry sabre

Mdina, many people gathered in the old city and attacked them. Historians agree that this was a spontaneous uprising and that the Maltese people were so angry that they were ready to take up arms against the French professional soldiers. The French locked themselves inside Mdina and escaped through a tunnel to Valletta to raise the alarm that the Maltese had risen against them. Consequently, the French closed themselves inside Valletta and the Three Cities.

The Maltese in the rest of the Island set up a National Congress led by Notary Emanuele Vitale from Rabat. Canon Saverio Caruana from Żebbuġ had been pro-French and a member of the Commission of Government but resigned after a few weeks and supported the Maltese cause, becoming a member of this Congress too. The Congress was composed of the elected representatives of the villages. They immediately sent word to the King of the Two Sicilies to inform him of the Maltese insurrection. Now that the Order was no longer governing Malta, as per Charles V's 1530 deed, Malta had to revert to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The King had his own problems, but Nelson and his ships were in Naples and therefore, he decided to ask the British to help. This decision proved vital as British ships were sent to blockade the harbour. On 19 September 1798, Portuguese frigates under the

“Mr. Ball ... remains as before at the head of the congress, as President ... the said congress, with divine help, which has been provided by the Naval fleet of Great Britain and the Portuguese fleet ... has brought about the surrender of Valletta after two years and three days of siege.”

— Extract from the diary of Vincenzo Borg Brared, c.1800



Gold Medal awarded to leaders of the Maltese

command of De Niza also arrived in Malta with 3000 troops to assist the Maltese, and brought with them 500 muskets for the resistance.

The French ships could not venture out for supplies because the harbour was now blockaded. The French did have wheat in the Floriana and Valletta granaries while the Maltese in the *Campagna* lacked necessary food supplies. Many men joined the Maltese militia which had been set up to fight the French. Since the fields could not be cultivated as usual, Vincenzo Borg known as *Brared*, a member of the Congress from Birkirkara, personally paid for grain brought from Sicily for the Maltese.

On the island of Gozo, the self-appointed Governor, Archpriest Saverio Cassar, took command of the entire resistance operations, organising attacks on the French in the *Cittadella* and Fort Chambray. He successfully negotiated with the French troops to move out of Gozo, and these then joined the rest of the French garrison in Valletta and the Three Cities.

On 3 September 1798, while the French were still inside Mdina, Notary Emanuele Vitale and Santu Formosa nicknamed *it-Tigra* from Żurrieq, led the Maltese in a direct assault to take over the walled city. Mdina was taken, and the red and white Maltese flag was flown over the bastions. From then on, the National Congress met at Mdina, a secure base from where to organise the attempt to oust the

French from Malta.

In Valletta, the besieged and blockaded French faced quite a few hardships. The Maltese, desperate to enter the city, resorted to using to their advantage those who were ready to collaborate with the National Congress. One such prominent figure was the once renowned heroic Corsican corsair, Captain Guglielmo Lorenzi who had also trained Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana to lead his Żebbuġ men into battle. Lorenzi sent letters secretly to Dun Mikiel Xerri inside Valletta. A plan was set for January 1799 whereby, under the cover of darkness, the Maltese soldiers would be ferried to the weakest point in the defences. The Maltese inside the capital city were to open the gates to allow the rebels to enter and fight the French. The alarm was to be given by ringing the church bells of St John's. However, on the day, the plot was discovered and the Maltese who were waiting to set the plan in motion, including Lorenzi, were found hiding in Valletta's ditch and arrested. Together with Dun Mikiel Xerri, Lorenzi and others were executed by the French in front of the Grand Master's Palace on 14 January 1799.

Captain Alexander Ball, the captain of one of the British ships blockading the harbour, disembarked to help the Maltese Congress take strategic decisions. This was the start of his good relations with the Maltese. As time passed, the French ran out of supplies and sought a peace agreement. Although Malta and Gozo could now be considered as part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, General Vaubois sent word to the



Alexander Ball at the Marsa Battery



Ex-voto showing Maltese soldiers fighting in Egypt, still wearing the uniform of the *Regimento Maltese*

British General Pigot that the French would surrender. However, Vaubois asked that the Maltese would not be allowed to enter Valletta before the French troops had left. On 4 September 1800, the French surrendered to the British. They were allowed to leave with full military honours, although it was stipulated that these soldiers would not, in the future, fight British troops.

The British were ready to leave the Island, though Lord Nelson was aware of Malta's strategic value in the Mediterranean. Having obtained Malta as a foothold in the Mediterranean, the British used Malta to invade Egypt and snatch it from the French. When news reached Vice-Admiral Earl St Vincent, commander of the British Mediterranean fleet in Portugal, he felt confident the British could re-establish control over the Mediterranean.

The Egyptian Campaign: discoveries and disease

In Egypt, Napoleon, first seen by the local population as a liberator from Ottoman rule, imposed French Republican ideals by declaring Egypt independent. He had invaded Egypt swiftly, fighting only one major battle, the Battle of the Pyramids. Riots that soon started in Cairo were suppressed. Besides, disease had a terrible effect on Napoleon's men. To secure Egypt, Napoleon decided to advance further and halt the Ottoman army before it reached Egypt. He succeeded in taking the strategic city of Jaffa in Palestine but his failure to take Acre allowed the British fleet to come to the aid of the Ottomans by sea. Nelson destroyed

the French fleet at the Battle of Aboukir or, as it is also known, the Battle of the Nile.

The Egyptian expedition was not simply a military one for the French. They began to conduct scientific and archaeological studies and would later make great advancements in the understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphs and language studies through the so-called 'Rosetta stone', found in 1799. This was an ancient Egyptian granite block on which were written Egyptian laws in hieroglyph and Greek.

Napoleon left Egypt in 1799, leaving his troops behind. With the

crisis facing the Directorate in France and the Second Coalition threatening French borders, Napoleon felt that he had to return to France to regain the reins of government. Back in Egypt, his absence emboldened the Anglo-Ottoman force to invade. At first, General Kléber fought back the Ottomans at the Battle of Heliopolis and even crushed the riots in Cairo, but he was killed at the battle of Alexandria against Britain. Thus, the French surrendered, together with many of the ancient Egyptian artefacts they had managed to gather during their expedition.



Caricature entitled 'A consular vomit' depicting Napoleon's forced surrender of Malta, 1803



Napoleon during the Coup of 18 Brumaire, François Bouchot, 19th century

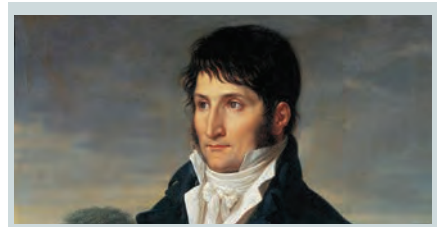
Coup of 18 Brumaire

On his return to France, Napoleon discovered that there was trouble in the Directorate. Together with his brother Lucien, a member of the Council of Five Hundred, and the ambitious Abbé Sieyès, Napoleon engineered a coup known as the 'Coup of 18 Brumaire'. Lucien printed pamphlets announcing the false news of a Jacobin riot that forced the Council to convene. For their protection, Lucien encouraged the Council to meet at St Cloud where Napoleon's troops awaited. There Napoleon entered, while Lucien tried to maintain the peace. The Five Hundred were dispersed by grenadiers, while the Council of Ancients was compelled to dissolve the Directorate and agree to a consular government of three with Napoleon as First Consul. The French Government was now composed of a consulate with three consuls heading it, the chief of whom was First



British caricature of Napoleon's departure from Egypt, 1799

Consul. By 1800, through a plebiscite, Napoleon had become the First Consul for Life.



Lucien Bonaparte (1775-1840)

Lucien had a complex character and was possibly one of Napoleon's least favourite brothers. Like Napoleon, he began his educational career in the military academy but then joined the seminary to pursue an ecclesiastical career. He left in 1791, returning to Corsica to support the Corsican leader Paoli. After Paoli was put down for fear of an alliance with Britain during the revolutionary wars, Lucien went to Paris. He invested in corsairing and was also a collector of works of art and curiosities. In 1798, he was elected in the Council of the 500, representing Corsica. At this time, Napoleon was acquiring fame in the Egyptian campaign and the Directory of Five was becoming increasingly unpopular mainly due to corruption. He planned the Coup of 18 Brumaire with his brother. During Napoleon's reign, Lucien helped in drawing up the Concordat signed with the church and in setting up the *Légion d'Honneur*. He disagreed with his brother's ambitions and moved to Rome. He died in Viterbo in 1840.

Conclusion

Eighteenth-century Europe had created a global situation where it played the leading role. The long wars on the continent wore out the energy and finances of nations. The French Revolution that started in 1789 and ended with Napoleon's rise to power in 1799, was to influence other countries. Even Malta was affected by the French Revolution which thrust it into a phase of rapid transformation. From a fief, Malta was about to become a colony, but it had shown the will and ability to form an elected national congress in a time of crisis. Europe was about to enter a new phase of war, revolution and industry.

MALTA

EUROPE

1800

1802

Treaty of Amiens,
Declaration of the Rights of the
Inhabitants of Malta and Gozo

1804

Coronation of Napoleon as Emperor

1805-1814

Napoleonic Wars

1807

Abolition of Slave Trade
in the British Empire

1813

Plague in Malta

1814

Treaty of Paris

1815

Congress of Vienna

1824

Death of the first
Governor, Lord Maitland

1821

Construction of the first
British iron steamship

1830

Revolutions

1832

July Riots in Paris

1835

Granting of first constitution

1836

Royal Commission

1839

Freedom of the Press

1848

Year of Revolutions,
Resignation of Metternich

1849

Granting of new constitution

1849

Fall of the revolutionary Roman Republic

1850

Chapter Three

The nineteenth century

Part One: War, Peace and Industry 1800 – 1849

Introduction

The French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars lasted a total of 20 years. The Great Powers, namely Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, the Holy Roman Empire and even France, yearned for peace and stability. For France, the Napoleonic era was not only a time of continuous warfare but also a time of great reforms. As Napoleon's *Grande Armée* marched through the continent, the French were exporting the French Revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity to the peoples they conquered or allied with, instilling in them a sense of nationalism. This nationalism would prove a key element in the creation of new nation-states during the second half of the 19th century.

Having ousted the French in 1800, Malta became a British protectorate during the first years of the 19th century. The first and the second Treaties of Paris (1813 and 1814)



British caricature showing Napoleon's frustration over the hold of Malta by the British Navy

recognised the island as a British colony – a status that would present fresh challenges to the Maltese in their search for recognition and autonomy.

Malta's position

As First Consul of France, Napoleon sought peace to stabilise France before pursuing more personal and national ambitions. With Britain's formidable navy successful at sea and the French Army indisputably victorious on land, a decisive victory

was eluding both sides. The British resented Napoleon's growing influence with his annexation of Piedmont, his becoming President of the Cisalpine (Italian Republic), his alliance with the newly-established Swiss Confederation, his influence in the Western part of the Holy Roman Empire and his refusal to renew the Anglo-French commercial treaty. Yet the two powers had signed the peace Treaty of Amiens in 1802. One of the terms of this treaty stated that the Maltese archipelago



Sir Alexander Ball

was to be returned to the Order of St John. In this way, the strategic island would be neutral in any future conflicts between the two sides. In 1713, the British had acquired Gibraltar during the War of the Spanish Succession, and in 1799 the British had successfully stopped the French in Egypt from blocking British trade in Alexandria. With Malta in British hands, the British Navy would have a new naval base in the central Mediterranean.

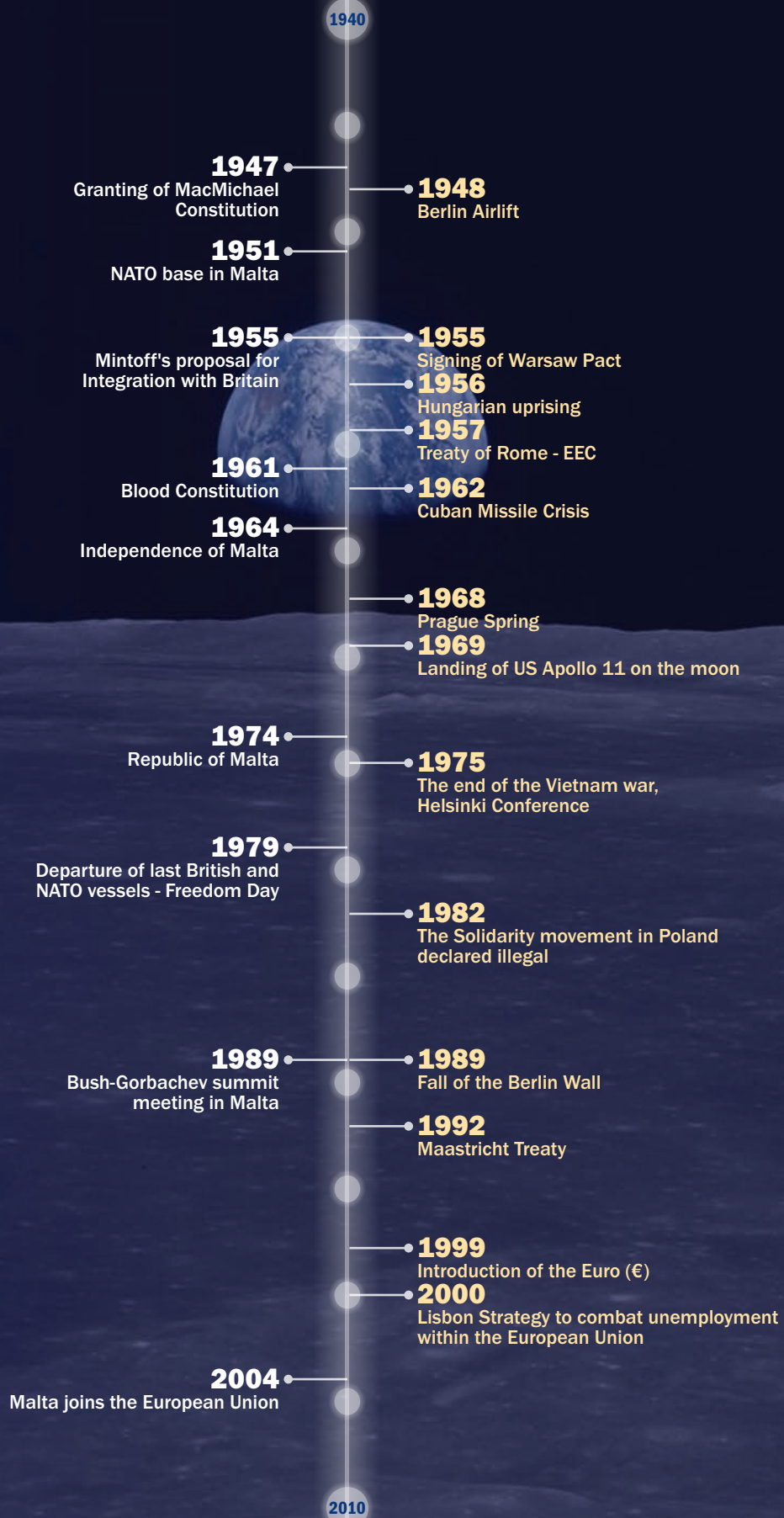
As explained in the previous chapter, the British had helped the Maltese fight against the French on behalf of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, for the Maltese Islands had to be given back to that Kingdom if the Knights left. The French army under Vaubois had surrendered to the British in Malta in 1800. It seems that British intentions regarding the Maltese Islands' future were rather clear after the French surrender in 1800. They had even sent their first Commissioner, Charles Cameron, as a representative of the British Crown, to Malta. As the British King's representative, he promised the Maltese that the British would respect their property and their religion. It was only when the Treaty of Amiens was signed in 1802 that the British were constrained by the



Street view of Valletta from *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient*, M. Goupil Fesquet, 1843

MALTA

EUROPE



1.

Places to visit

Inquisitor's Palace (Birgu)
Cathedral Museum (Mdina)
Hampton Court (London)
Topkapı Palace (Istanbul)

Books to read

Othello by William Shakespeare
Matthew Callus by Ġużè Muscat
Azzopardi

Film to watch

Conquest of Paradise (1992)

Music to listen to

Magnificat by Claudio Monteverdi

Eat like a Pope

Try out Bartholomeo Scappi's Cherry
Pie for the Pope

Discuss this!

Discuss the importance and function
of the Roman Inquisition in Malta.
Discuss how the Protestant
reformation transformed a German
problem into a continental conflict
between 1519 to 1648.

Picture this!

Benin Bronzes showing a 17th
century Portuguese soldier



2.

Places to visit

Casa Rocca Piccola (Valletta)
Fort Manoel (Gzira)
Palace of the Conciergerie (Paris)
Palace of Versailles (Paris)

Books to read

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles
Dickens
Bellilote u l-bjar ta' Napuljun by
Charles Xuereb

Film to watch

Marie Antoinette (2006)

Music to listen to

Ah Ċa Ira! by Jean-Antoine Bécourt

Eat local

Try out Francesco Agius de Soldanis'
spaghetti with Gozitan goat cheese
cream.

Discuss this!

Discuss the political and diplomatic
relations between Malta and France
from 1760 to 1800.
Discuss the impact of the Reign of
Terror on the French and on France's
diplomatic relations with the rest of
the continent.

Picture this!

Lithograph of two natives of
Australia (1784)



3.

Places to visit

St Paul's Anglican Cathedral
(Valletta)
Les Invalides (Paris)
London Museum of Water and Steam
(London)

Books to read

The Count of Monte Cristo by
Alexander Dumas
Taħt Tliet Saltniet by Ġużè Aquilina

Film to watch

Master and Commander (2003)

Music to listen to

Radetzky March by Johann Strauss

Eat like an Emperor

Try out Napoleon's favourite dish
Chicken Marengo

Discuss this!

Discuss Lord Maitland's
Governorship in Malta.
Discuss Napoleon's military
successes.

Picture this!

Haitian Revolution General Toussaint
meeting General Thomas Maitland
(1798)



4.

Places to visit

Old train Station (Mtarfa)
Victoria Lines (Bingemma)
Tour Eiffel (Paris)
National Museum of the
Risorgimento (Torino)

Books to read

The mysteries of Sherlock Holmes by
Arthur Canon Doyle
L-Għanja tas-Sienja by Laurent Ropa

Film to watch

Little Women (2019)

Music to listen to

Ride of the Valkyries by Richard
Wagner

Eat like a Queen

Try out Queen Victoria's favourite
Black Forest Gâteau

Discuss this!

Discuss Malta's Language question
and how it affected constitutional
change.
Compare and contrast the German
and Italian unifications.

Picture this!

President Lincoln at the Front
during the American Civil War
(1862)



5.

Places to visit

Malta Aviation Museum (Ta' Qali)
Lascaris War Rooms (Valletta)
Musée de la Grande Guerre (Meaux,
France)
Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (Rome)

Books to read

Atonement by Ian McEwan
Ulied in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerka by
Juann Mamo

Film to watch

Suffragette (2015)

Music to listen to

Lili Marlene by Marlene Dietrich

Eat like a Dictator

Try out Satsivi, Stalin's favourite
dish

Discuss this!

Discuss Malta's role in WWII.
Discuss the direct and indirect
causes of WWI.

Picture this!

Guernica by Pablo Picasso (1907)



6.

Places to visit

Monument to Malta's Independence
(Floriana)
European Parliament (Strasbourg)
Fragments of the Berlin Wall (Berlin)

Books to read

Animal Farm by George Orwell
Il-Gagga by Frans Sammut

Film to watch

Bridge of Spies (2015)

Music to listen to

Russians by Sting

Conscious taste

Try a carrot cake for breakfast or a
bowl of concentrated cereals as they
did in the 70s

Discuss this!

Discuss the milestones from 1949 to
2004 that led Malta to become a
sovereign state.
Discuss the political challenges of
the countries behind the 'Iron
Curtain' from 1949 to 1989.

Picture this!

Mug from the Chinese Cultural
Revolution (1966-1976)



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