

The Abolition of Slavery in Malta*

A few years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Emperor of Morocco began to ransom Moslem slaves from Malta on a large scale. This throws a curious side-light on the eighteenth century, the age of enlightenment, though it is doubtful whether there was any connection at all with such a peculiarly European climate of opinion: it is unlikely that similar ideas could have penetrated into Morocco which, with Ethiopia, then ranked among the most xenophobic countries of Africa. The first reference to an exchange of slaves between Malta and Morocco occurs in a letter of Grand Master Pinto, sent to his ambassador in Rome on 4 September 1769:

Led by the desire to be merciful, the Emperor of Morocco has decided to free thirty-seven Christian slaves from Tuscany, wishing to make their freedom a present to Us, whom he considers the Father of Christians. He also wanted to make the present in a becoming way, by sending us one of his Secretaries with six attendants on a proper ship. When he presented us with the credentials of his Sovereign, of which we send you a copy, and, by means of an interpreter, he assured us of the most human sentiments of his Master towards Christians, and of his esteem and respect towards our Person. In return for this politeness we have

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lodged the Envoy and his suite in a most decent house, and are providing them with all they need at our expense, neither shall we omit to reward the said Emperor in a proper way, having decided to send him as a gift some subjects of his who are slaves here, in addition to various delicacies produced by the island.

The Tuscans were lodged in the empty college of the Jesuits — who had just been expelled from the island (another example of enlightenment?), and were given a free passage to their country.¹ A letter, sent a few days later to the Order's Receiver in Florence, in addition, stated that the Order had chosen forty slaves to be sent to the Emperor of Morocco in return for his courtesy — twenty-one of them, none old, were Moroccans, including the Cadi who had once promised to pay a ransom of 1,000 scudi. They had to be sent to the port of Sallee nearest the town where the Emperor then happened to be residing.² A letter, sent two days later to the Order's ambassador in Rome, informed him that the ship which was to take the envoy, with his suite and the freed slaves, to Morocco lay ready for departure, and that the envoy was happy and quite overcome with the courtesies shown him by the whole Convent. "We can likewise say that he has borne himself with wisdom, circumspection, and like a man of good sense."³ In distant London, the *Annual Register*, after a complete translation of the Emperor's letter to Pinto, said that it trusted that the Grand Master had really sent every single slave from Morocco that there was in Malta, and ended with the comment that "a few generations of such princes might civilize the most barbarous nation."⁴

Early during the magistracy of De Rohan (1775-97), the same Emperor of Morocco — Mahmet bin Abdulla — sent another envoy to Malta, son of the previous one. This time his object was to discover whether a Ragusan ship captured by the corsairs of Sallee was really carrying a cargo belonging to Maltese merchants. This was not at all unlikely, in view of the frequency with which Ragusan vessels visited Maltese harbours.⁵ He carried detailed instructions

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about the method of obtaining depositions from the aggrieved merchants, and transmitting his findings back home. Apparently, his only direct connection with the Moslem slaves on the island was the distribution of 2,000 piastres among them.⁶

Not long afterwards began the large scale ransoming of the Moslem slaves in Malta by the Emperor of Morocco, a scheme which persisted, off and on, for the rest of the Order's stay in the island. It is not clear when it began, but on 19 June 1782 the Treasury registered the receipt of 61,515 scudi from the Knight Commander Fontani, received through him from the ambassador of the "King of Morocco", in payment for 199 slaves — obviously implying, in the circumstances that that number of slaves belonging to the Order had been ransomed by the ruler of that country.⁷ The table on page 439 of my Ph.D. thesis shows that, round about that time, fully 539 slaves were liberated, 306 of them belonging to private owners. This is an extraordinarily large number, and it is certain that most of them must have been freed with Moroccan money. That this was so is further proved by a contemporary decree of the Treasury, which mentions the sum of 1055 scudi as the *diritti* "of the Turkish slaves already ransomed by the ambassador of Morocco, who belonged to private-owners."⁸ One of the *prodomi* of the prison himself testified to the delight with which the slaves greeted their unexpected freedom.

Further information is provided by a letter that Inquisitor Chigi Zondadari wrote to the Secretary of State at the Vatican on 22 June 1782. An ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco, Mahamud bin Hotman, *Gran Cancelliere*, was then visiting Malta on his way to Naples and Rome with a retinue of twenty-five persons and much money. Zondadari was informed by the ambassador's Algerine dragoman and by the Cadi of the slaves in Malta, that his mission was to ask for a permanent peace, to arrange the ransoming of slaves, and obtain other easements for commerce — to attain which he carried letters written by his sovereign in his own hand for presentation to the Pope.

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His letter to the Grand Master contained an offer of friendship and a request for the ransom of the slaves. Verbally the ambassador expressed Morocco's desire that the Order of St. John should agree to a perpetual peace, enabling subjects of each to trade freely together. Morocco would force Algiers to accept a stable peace or, at least, be satisfied with plundering the goods and not the persons found on the ships captured by her corsairs — leaving the captives to be exchanged for Moslems on a one for one basis as Christians did with their prisoners-of-war. These views agreed well with those expressed a few days previously by the son-in-law of the Bey of Tunis when he called at Malta on his return from Mecca. It was, however, felt by the Grand Master that the momentary intentions of the Barbary States were hardly to be trusted and even less were those of the fierce military government of Algiers. He therefore answered that, while he was himself well pleased with the proffered friendship of the ruler of Morocco and could certainly see the advantages that would accrue, he could not — owing to the peculiar constitution of the Order — sign a perpetual truce until the same had been done by all the states of Europe, even the very smallest, especially those in Italy.

That the ambassador did ransom innumerable slaves is made clear by the Inquisitor who adds that, instead of awaiting the arrival of a couple of Moroccan frigates which had to carry him and the freed slaves away from Malta, he ordered the latter to depart immediately for the various ports of Barbary. The frigates in fact were never sent and he had to hire a Venetian ship on 18 July for his own journey to Naples.⁹

The next large ransoms of slaves took place in 1786-89. In 1785 His Catholic Majesty of Spain expressed a desire for a "competent number of Moroccan slaves so that he might send them to the Emperor of Morocco." The Grand Master and his Council decided that they should be given as a free gift to His Catholic Majesty, leaving the actual execution of the matter to the procurators of the Treasury.¹⁰ There cannot be much doubt that the great revival of

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slave-ransoms from 1786 onwards was due to money from Morocco. In 1787 Commander Fontani paid the Treasury for a hundred slaves bought from it by Scolaro. There cannot be any doubt that they were being redeemed by the Emperor of Morocco. In fact, in that year the Moroccans are known to have ransomed 333 of the slaves of Malta, one hundred of them belonging to the Order (presumably those "bought" by Scolaro), the rest to private owners.¹¹

However, by far the greatest redemption of slaves that is known to have been carried out in Malta by the Emperor of Morocco occurred in 1789, when the Order allowed all its slaves to obtain their freedom and return to their own country. No doubt, this did not include the baptised slaves, who could have no claims of any sort on the generosity of the Emperor nor could they have received permission from the Grand Master to return to a Moslem country because, for most of them, it would mean an inevitable relapse into Infidelity. But it is just as certain that no other slaves of the Order remained unredeemed. In fact, thirteen other slaves had to be purchased from private owners to make up the stipulated number of six hundred.¹² As a result principally of this great liberation, the Treasury was able to boast the princely income of 548,680 scudi from the ransom of its slaves for the year beginning on 1 April 1789 — an extraordinary amount, totally unique in the history of slavery in the island.¹³

The transaction had taken a long time to mature. On 2 February 1789 the Treasury resolved that, once an assurance had been received from the Court of Spain that the ransom-money for the six hundred slaves could be taken freely out of that country, it would bind itself to transport them to Cadiz or Tangier — after their exact number had been verified by "the Envoy of His Majesty, the King of Morocco, at present living in Malta."¹⁴ The slaves left the island on, or immediately before, 18 September 1789. On that day, the Vice-Chancellor of the Order had, at the command of the Grand Master, registered the following declaration of the Moroccan Envoy in the records of the Council:

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Having been sent to this port of Malta by my Sovereign the Emperor of Morocco to ask the Grand Master of Malta for the remainder of the six hundred slaves who had been bought by my Sovereign, I the undersigned declare that five hundred and thirty-three of them have been delivered to me, thus completing the said number of six hundred, whom I have embarked on two French ships hired by me in this port in order to take them to Constantinople, and in proof of this I sign myself, etc. Servant of my Sovereign, Great after God — Mahmet bin Abdalla Alzuir.¹⁵

Inquisitor Gallarati Scotti declared that trouble had arisen among the high officials of the Treasury who were perturbed that the exact terms of the agreement with Morocco and Spain had not been adhered to. It was alleged that the ambassador had not, in fact, received any commission from his sovereign concerning the slaves. He had called at Malta only because the Ragusan ship on which he was taking passage to Constantinople entered port to replenish her water supply. It had been originally agreed that the slaves were to await the arrival of some Spanish frigates or other vessels which had to transport them to Constantinople for presentation to the Grand Signior. According to the Inquisitor the ringleader in the affair was "the well-known Lorenzo Fontani, his (i.e. the Grand Master's) *guardiamancia*," who was supposed to have had some interest in the new arrangement. The King of Spain had been mainly instrumental in negotiating the original agreement.¹⁶

It was at first intended that most of the great sum of money obtained — amounting more than half a million Maltese scudi, in addition to the substantial sums paid in fees to various officials¹⁷ — should be devoted to the liquidation of the outstanding portion of the debt 250,000 scudi which had been contracted by the Order in 1785. When, however, the sum of 66,000 scudi had been thus spent, it was decided that the balance should be sent to the Royal Treasury of the King of France as the Order's Pa-

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triotic Contribution — which had been fixed by the National Assembly at 366,000 scudi, or one-fourth of the Order's revenue from that Kingdom.¹⁸

The year 1789 marks, therefore, an important stage in the gradual disappearance of slavery from Malta. For the first time ever, the Order of St. John did not possess any Moslem slaves for its galleys and shore installations. The government even had to increase the salaries of the agozzini and their subordinates on a temporary basis, because their meagre pay could not be asked out any longer with the variety of perks they levied with government approval on the slaves. But there was no intention of abolishing slavery altogether. The officials were told that they would lose their increase of pay as soon as the Order had replenished her stock of slaves.¹⁹ Even then, there were still the baptised slaves who could be used to meet the demand for slave labour.

Not surprisingly in the circumstances, the ships of the Order were soon bringing in their fresh hauls of slaves. On 15 April 1793 the Order's frigate, the *Santa Elizabetta*, brought in a total of 134 Moslems from three ships she captured.²⁰ In the same year the Order's last remaining ship-of-the-line, the *San Zaccaria*, added 124 captives — and another nine in 1796.²¹ In 1795 the two galleotes of the Order whose main job was to guard the harbour's entrance, captured forty slaves,²² and two of the galleys, the *San Luigi* and the *Magistrale*, another thirty-eight.²³ These captures, it will be observed, do not include those made by the vessels equipped by the corsairs. Between 1790 and 1798 (both years included) the corsairs themselves added another 1,023 slaves. Altogether, therefore, these final years saw the capture of some 1,463 Moslems and Jews. In the same period some 994 slaves were set free, so that the slave-prisons had a net gain of 470 slaves.²⁴

The end of slavery in Malta came from an unexpected quarter. On 9 June 1798 Napoleon's Armada on its way to Egypt arrived off Malta, and within a day or two Napoleon was able to enter Valletta in triumph. The Order's long and not unfruitful rule over the Maltese Islands came to a

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final, abrupt, and inglorious end. On 13 June, Dupuy, one of Napoleon's officers, reported that he had, in pursuance of instructions, visited the prisons and the galleys of the Order to find out the various grievances of the Neapolitan convicts kept in them. Several of them, he reported, had already served their sentence and would have been freed had they remained in their home-country — but, having got themselves implicated in the plot of a Chevalier Medichy in 1795, they had been forcibly transported to Messina and Malta, five hundred to each place. Dupuy said that the galleys and prisons of Malta contained some 700 Sicilian convicts — that is, men from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies — together with some 500 Turkish or Moorish slaves:

These men merit attention, and several of them can be put to useful work. They have asked me earnestly to have them employed as matelots. Their request is natural, because the place where they are kept is frightful. I have given orders to make it more salubrious, and to furnish them with all the things they lack.²⁵

Two days later, Napoleon wrote to the French consuls at Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers, telling them that they should inform the Beys of each place that the army of the Republic had captured Malta and that, consequently, Maltese persons were to be respected by them as they were now subjects of France. He asked them to demand liberty for all the Maltese slaves in those places, because:

He had given an order for more than 2,000 Turkish or Moorish slaves kept by the Order on her galleys to be set free. Let it be understood by the Bey that the power which has taken Malta in three days will be able to punish them if they neglect even for a moment the regard due to the Republic.²⁶

An *arrete* of the next day (16 June) declared:

Second article. Slavery is abolished. All the slaves

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known as bonavogli are set free, and the contract they made, dishonourable to human-kind, is destroyed.

Third article. In consequence of the preceding article, all the Turkish slaves belonging to private persons are handed over to the General Commandant for them to be treated as prisoners-of-war and, in view of the armistice existing between the Ottoman Porte and the French Republic, they will be sent back home, when the General-in-chief commands, and when it is known that the Beys have consented to send to Malta all the French and Maltese slaves in their possession.²⁷

Admiral Brueys was commanded by the General-in-chief to direct his officers to find out which slaves could be profitably embarked on his ships bound for Egypt. Orders were then given for all these Turkish slaves to be placed at the disposition of the Admiral who had to repartition them among the various ships. Once more, it was stated that some 500 men were involved.²⁸ In actual fact, a list of the slaves embarked on 17 June gives 520 names altogether. They originally came from every part of the Moslem shores of the Mediterranean: about 175 from Tunis alone and 35 from Morocco itself.²⁹ On the arrival of expedition in Egypt:

Napoleon ordered that all the Turkish matelots who had been slaves in Malta and had been set free, who were natives of Syria, the Greek Archipelago, and the Beylikdom of Tripoli, be set free at once. The admiral will make them disembark tomorrow at Alexandria, from which place the Etat-Major will give them their passports back home, with proclamations in Arabic.³⁰

Sixty-six Maltese slaves are known to have been set free, as a result, in Tunisia alone, at the cost of 2,855 scudi.³¹ In 1801 two hundred and fifty Maltese were officially reported to have been freed in Algiers and, a year later, an-

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other 200 were similarly set free at Constantinople, of whom 164 had their names recorded in an official broadsheet.³²

How many Moors and Turks did Napoleon really set free in Malta? Did they amount to 2,000 as Napoleon claimed in his letters to the French consuls in Barbary or just the 500 who were officially reported in the prisons and on the galleys? It is known that 520 left Malta on 17 June 1798, another seventy — mostly Tunisians — on 24 August, and seven women — also from Tunisia — on 27 September, a total of 597. The Christian slaves of the Order in 1796-97 numbered 87 kept in the Prison, 84 who were released from prison, as well as seven others who served in the Conventual Church.³³ One is still very far from a total of 2,000 freed slaves. The number becomes credible only if one included not merely all the above as well as the privately-owned slaves but also the galley-convicts and buona-voglia, who should not really be regarded as slaves at all, technically.

There is no doubt that the decree of 16 June 1798 freed the privately-owned slaves as well as those who belonged to the Order. When the Commission du Gouvernement ordered the publication of the decree of 16 June abolishing slavery in the Maltese Islands it added explanatory notes showing what had been done to put it into execution. It claimed that it had been put fully into effect, forcing a large number of private owners to surrender their slaves and lose the money they had spent on their purchase. While it was not possible, on the one hand, to compensate them for this because of the lack of money, it was impossible, on the other, to break the sacred principle proclaimed by the general-in-chief, Napoleon. When they arrived in Barbary, all the Maltese there were also set free and allowed to return to Malta, except for those at Algiers and Constantinople. Most of the freed Maltese, however, promptly joined the Maltese in the countryside who had risen against French rule.³⁴

It is doubtful how far these claims are to be accepted. The brave but ill-fated Captain Guglielmo Lorenzi claimed

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three months later that a female slave of his had been captured by the rebels in the company of an adopted daughter when two boats fell into their hands at Pietà Creek.³⁵ It would appear that months after the decree of 16 June 1798 at least some of the privately-owned slaves had been unable or unwilling to break their association with the previous owners. After all, they were often extremely well treated by them — to whom they might have belonged since infancy. In all probability neither were they eager to leave their master's house nor did they have anywhere else to go to. This is one explanation for the curious fact that as late as 11 March 1814 Michellina Briffa was still able to refer to *her two slaves* Paolo and Tomasa, to whom she left a gold necklace and a daily allowance of four tari a head for the rest of their life.³⁶ It will be noticed that both were Christians for whom a return to North Africa was impossible.

In law such persons cannot possibly have been slaves, whatever their description in private or notarial documents. The government that succeeded that of the French fully accepted the implications and consequences of Napoleon's liberation decree. This much is made clear by the proclamation issued by Captain Alexander Ball, R.N., "Chief of the Maltese", on 15 May 1800, several months before the final surrender of the French garrison of Valletta but at a time when the whole countryside of Malta was already in the hands of the rebels.

The proclamation stated that some private slave-owners had petitioned Captain Ball for permission to regain possession over their former slaves. The petitions were referred to the representatives of the people and discussed at the sitting of the National Congress that was held on 12 May 1800. It was then pointed out that any doubt in matters of personal freedom was to be exercised in favour of greater liberty: once a slave had been freed he could not again be deprived of his freedom by mere process of law. It was also recalled that the Moslem governments had also freed the Maltese slaves in their dominions and

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would retaliate in kind if the Maltese government reimposed slavery on freed slaves in its jurisdiction. It would harm the good relations that had been established between the two sides to the great advantage of Malta. It was therefore unanimously decided by the representatives of the Maltese that all those who had once been in a condition of slavery in the islands of Malta and Gozo and had been freed "during the change of government" were still completely free and able to enjoy all the effects of liberty and should not be molested in any way by those who had once been their masters.³⁷ A glance at the minutes of the Congress confirms the contents of the proclamation word for word. The Congress attributed the emancipation of the slaves by the French to their "abominable principles of liberty and equality."³⁸

Not surprisingly in the circumstances, however, this was not to be the absolute end of slavery in the social life of Malta, whatever it was in terms of law. Michelina Briffa was not the only Maltese or other inhabitant of Malta who still thought they had rights of ownership over "their slaves" as late as the second decade of the nineteenth century. For a full understanding of the place in Maltese history of Napoleon's emancipation decree, the history of slavery in Malta during these later years had to be reviewed, if only lightly.

On 22 June 1812 a certain Mr. G. Macintosh sent the following letter to Mr. Zachery Macaulay, then Secretary of the African Institution:

Sir,

I have taken the liberty to address you upon a subject which appears to me to be connected with the objects of the society which has born so active a share in the enforcement of the laws enacted against the slave trade. What I allude to is the circumstance of slaves being brought from Alexandria to Malta and then sold to the Maltese Inhabitants and to British subjects and employed by the latter as domestic servants. These slaves

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are generally negro children who have been brought from the countries on the higher Nile to Alexandria as captives. Some months ago I saw a cargo brought into Malta in a vessel under English colours, and when I made enquiry respecting the circumstances I learned that not less than a hundred slaves of both sex are sold every year in the island.

The copy at the Public Record Office, London, is docketed: "Received from Mr. Peel in Mr. Willberforce's of July 1812. Copy sent to General Oakes, July 1812."³⁹ The abolition of slavery in Malta by Napoleon was being vindicated and bolstered up by the British anti-slavery stalwarts of the time.

Partial confirmation of Macintosh's allegations is provided by the entries in the quarantine registers of Malta.⁴⁰ Though they never refer to the importation of slaves into the island — except for one unrelated incident⁴¹ — they contain numerous suspicious references to negroes, negrettos, and negrettas, who were brought into Malta generally on ships coming from Alexandria, Tripoli, Gerba or Tunis.

At least twenty-nine vessels are known to have brought negroes of either sex to Malta, beginning with the Austrian *Celere* in March 1809. Only on one recorded occasion, however, were as many as eight negroes carried to Malta from Alexandria on one vessel and four on another. Usually it was merely a matter of the odd one or two. For those carried on ships from Tripoli and other ports of Barbary it was, however, a very different affair. A Tripolitanian corvette in July 1808 carried no less than 200 male and female negroes together with 17 Tripolitanian merchants. and in 1804 a Turkish ship carried 66 from Gerba. On other occasions ships from Tripoli carried 21, 20, 26, 35, 46, and 48 negroes; others from Tunis carried 20 and 34 negroes, and from Gerba 21, 16 and 20. Sometimes, the negroes are not distinguished from the rest of the passengers, being included in a combined total of Turks, Moors and negroes. On other occasions still passengers described as Turks or

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Moors were, in part at least, negroes. In fact, the seven "Turkish" passengers brought to Malta on 2 November 1811 were expressly said to have included three male and one female negroes, and the eleven "Turks" brought in on the previous 16 July included four negresses. It is, however, obviously impractical to make a list of the hundreds of vessels which entered Malta with passengers described merely as Turks and Moors.⁴² The figures arrived at on the basis of those described expressly as negroes or negresses should therefore be regarded at best as minimum ones.

There is also another difficulty. The registers make it clear that several, if not all, of the larger parties of negroes were not destined for Malta at all, but were merely on their way from Barbary to European Turkey or Asia Minor. It is probable that several of the others had similar destinations. However, it must be admitted that, in spite of all considerations, the registers show that the days of slavery in Malta were not quite over.

That some of the negroes were, in fact, landed in Malta and treated as slaves is proved by three entries:⁴³

- 24. x.1810: a black woman for Signor Levistone
- 4.iv.1811: a negress girl for Signor Levistone
- 16.vi.1812: two negro girls belonging to the said captain (i.e. Captain Giovanni Battista Schembri, a Maltese).

Further light is thrown on the circumstances surrounding the importation of negroes into Malta by the letter that General Sir Hildebrand Oakes, the British Civil Commissioner in Malta, sent to Earl Bathurst, his immediate superior in London, on 12 December 1812:⁴⁴

My Lord,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Lordship's dispatch (No.5) under date of the 11th of August transmitting the copy of a letter which had been addressed to the Secretary of the African Institution, and directing enquiry to

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be made into the circumstances therein mentioned in the view of putting stop to the practice which the writer alleges to have obtained here.

Having complied with your Lordship's directions, it is with much satisfaction I can now assure you that the whole number of negro servants residing in this Island and its Dependencies has never exceeded from one hundred to one hundred and fifty. The information therefore conveyed to the African Institution, your Lordship will observe, is far from being correct, and I know not how to account for the error into which Mr. Macintosh has been led otherwise than by supposing that the cargo of negroes to which he alludes may have been composed of persons of that description destined for the services of the Barbary States, or passing (as frequently happens) to some parts of Africa from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

It appears indeed that in consequence of the unprecedented rise in the price of labour, the wages of servants have of late years increased to such a degree as to have induced some individuals to employ in the service of their respective families negro servants from Alexandria, but although they may originally have been purchased, as I believe to have been the case, I am not aware that they have ever been considered or treated as slaves here; and certainly no attempt has on any occasion been made to transfer such persons by Public Sale, or otherwise.

The practice, however, even in this modified shape, your Lordship will readily believe I could not approve, and it was with peculiar satisfaction I found myself authorized to put an end to what was otherwise sanctioned by the Laws and former usages of the Island.

I beg leave to enclose a copy of the Proclamation which I judged it necessary to issue on the

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receipt of your Lordship's dispatch, and which, from the peculiar circumstances under which the Government of these Islands is at present carried on, it was necessary to express, as your Lordship will perceive, with some degree of caution.

So, fourteen years after Napoleon's decree there were still some one hundred to one hundred and fifty coloured "servants" in Malta who had been bought in foreign countries, over whom ownership, according to the government, was not transferable by public sale or otherwise.

There certainly was a great scarcity of domestic servants in Malta at the time. On 20 July 1811 General Oakes himself stated that several of the most respectable inhabitants of Malta were pointing out the "great public utility which would result from permitting, as heretofore, a certain proportion of the prisoners-of-war to serve in their respective families," a measure "well calculated to keep down the enormous rate of wages demanded by the Maltese servants in consequence of the high price of labour."⁴⁵

One may, perhaps, be permitted to end by quoting in full the government proclamation of 30 September 1812:⁴⁶

Notification

Whereby it is declared that negroes cannot be considered as objects of trade. Whereas the introduction of negroes into this Island has been observed to have become frequent for some time past, arousing suspicions that there are those who live in the supposition that the same can, independently of their own will, be acquired or transferred into the possession of others with complete security, activities which are so contrary to the maxims of the government of His Majesty. His Excellency the Royal Civil Commissioner has ordered that it be brought to everyone's notice that such import of negroes will not in future be permitted into this Island, and that the negroes actually there should not be regarded as objects of trade or transferable under any title

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whatsoever. Those with whom the same negroes are serving should make due report of them to the Magistrate of Police and observe in their regard all the rules regarding foreigners, and it shall be the duty of the Magistrate himself on petition to make sure that the said existing negroes conduct themselves as good and faithful servants, otherwise — if incorrigible — they were to be sent out of the Island.

The later quarantine registers do not contain any further references to negroes. One must believe that Napoleon's decree was now being observed more closely both in the spirit and in the letter. However, Michelina Briffa's reference to two slaves of hers on 11 March 1814 suggests that even then it was not going to be easy to eradicate the institution from the mentality of the people.

SOURCE REFERENCES

1. Pinto to the Baglio de Breteuil, 4 September 1799: NLM, AOM 1525.
2. Pinto to the *Ricevitore, Commendatore della Gherardesca* at Florence, 16 September 1769: *Ibid.*
3. Pinto to Breteuil, 18 September 1769: NLM, AOM 1525.
4. *Annual Register*, vol. 12, 1769, p. 12.
5. See the entries in the quarantine registers already referred to.
6. Italian version of the Emperor's letter (undated) is in: F. Panzavecchia, *L'Ultimo periodo ...*, pp. 195-6.
7. NLM, AOM 705, p. 626.
8. Decree of the Treasury, 8 August 1782: NLM, AOM 640, pp. 299f.
9. Letters of Inquisitor A.F. Chigi Zondadari to the Secretary of State at the Vatican, 22 June 1782 and 20 July 1782: AIM, *Lettere ...*, 1771-91, fols. 123rv and 124rv. Another letter of same to same dated 22 September 1781 refers to the visit of an ambassador of Morocco who had just terminated his quarantine and was due to be received by the Grand Master on the morrow, but no further details are given: *Ibid.*, fol. 115v.
10. Decree of the Council of State, 5 October 1785: NLM, AOM 274, fol. 129.
11. Petition of the Valletta prison agazzino, Paolo Fabri, 16 November 1793: NLM, AOM 1197, fols. 179 f. The exact year has

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to be worked out from the statement that Vincenzo Gellel was the sotto-agozzino at the time, and that by 1793 he had held the post for seven years: subtracting seven from 1793 one gets 1786. But it is only in 1787-88 that the number of freed slaves is sufficiently large for it to have included this transaction: see Table 8.

12. Prodomi's report on Lorenzi's petition, 4 June 1794: NLM, AOM 661, p. 118.
13. "Bilancio Generale del Venerando Comum Tesoro dal primo Maggio 1789 a tutto Aprile 1790," Introito/Riscatto de Schiavi: NLM, AOM 873, p. 5.
14. NLM, AOM 634, p. 320.
15. NLM, AOM 197, fol. 38rv.
16. Inquisitor Monsignor J.P. Gallarati Scotti to the Secretary of State at the Vatican, 26 September 1789: AIM, Lettere ... 1779-91, fols. 269v. f.
17. See Table 1 for the amount of the ransom money paid to the Order, and the table on page 184 for the fees paid to the officials.
18. Chirografo, datable around 1790: NLM, AOM 642, pp. 354-55.
19. Petition of the four agozzini of the galleys and their subordinates with accompanying decrees and other relevant documents, dated from 2 December 1789 to 11 March 1790: NLM, AOM 672, pp. 302-05.
20. NLM, AOM 6532. All the information in this paragraph is based on entries in this register, reference being date of entry as in text and name of ship.
21. Entries dated 6 and 14 December 1793, and 18 April 1796.
22. Entry dated 25 June 1795.
23. Entry dated 8 July 1795.
24. The statistics of captures have been built up from figures given in scores of individual entries in NLM, AOM 6532: see Table 9 for complete statistics. The number of freed slaves is derived from Table 8.
25. Depuy a Bonaparte, Malta, le 25 Prairal an VI (13 June 1798): *Correspondence inedits officielle et confidentielle de Napoleon etc.*, tom. 1, pag. 159, immediate source: *Archivum Melitense*, Vol. V, pp. 131-2. For the convicts and buonavoglia on the galleys of the Order see my article "The Galley-convicts and Buonavoglia in Malta during the Rule of the Order," *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, III, 1 (1965), pp. 29-37.
26. Bonaparte to the Consuls at Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers, 15 June 1798: *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier*, tom. IV, p. 155.
27. Arrete, 16 June 1798, cited in H.P. Scicluna, "Acts ... relating to

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- the French Occupation ...”, *Archivum Melitense*, V, 87 f.
28. Napoleon to Citoyen le Roy, 16 June 1798: *Correspondence de Napoleon Ier*, tom. IV, p. 163
 29. NLM, AOM 6501: Lista di Schiavi messi in liberta nel 1798.
 30. Order issued by Napoleon at Alexandria, 3 July 1798, cited by H.P. Scicluna, “Acts ... relating to the French Occupation ...”, *Archivum Melitense*, V, 154.
 31. Deliberations of the Commission du Gouvernement, sitting of 6 and 7 Vendemiaire (27 and 28 September 1798): NLM, AOM 6523, vol. ‘C’, pp. 137-38.
 32. Government broadsheets; (a) for the Maltese slaves at Algiers, the *Avviso*, signed by Uditore Felice Cutajar, 11 February 1801 (b) for those freed at Constantinople, (i) the *Notificazione del Regio Commissario alla Nazione Maltese*, signed by Alessandro Maccaulay, 5 February 1802; (ii) *Nomi dei Maltesi Schiavi in Constantinopoli liberati dalla Schiavitù nel dì festivo della Nascita di Sua Maestà la Regina della Gran Bretagna*.
 33. NLM, AOM 795, fols. 1rv and 2rv.
 34. Deliberations of the Commission du Gouvernement, 28 Vendemiaire (1798) (19 October 1798): NLM, AOM 6532, Vol. ‘C’, pp. 170-71.
 35. Letter cited by Mons. A. Mifsud in his *Origine della Sovranità Inglese su Malta*, p. 208.
 36. “Donatio per Donnā Michaelinam Briffa pro Domino Aloisio Briffa”, 11 March 1814: NAV, Register of deeds of Notary Ignazio Debono, R 211/2, fol. 38rv.
 37. Bando, 15 May 1800: *Collezione di Bandi ...*, Malta 1840, pp. 54-55.
 38. AC, MS 136, fols. 52v, 53rv.
 39. PRO, W.O.1/1127 (photostat copy ordered and delivered by post).
 40. See Appendix III to my Ph.D. thesis for an exact list of references.
 41. The ex-Tunisian martengana which arrived on 6 August 1811 under a prize crew. See Appendix III referred to in n. 40 above.
 42. Three examples have been included in Appendix III, *ibid*.
 43. See Appendix III, *ibid*.
 44. NLM, Libr. A27, fols. 187-89.
 45. H.O. (Hildebrand Okaes) to Captain Talbot of the *Victorious*, 20 July 1811: NLM, Libr. A34, fol. 174. See also letter sent by F. Laing, Public Secretary, at the command of General Sir Hildebrand Oakes, to Philip Lamb, Royal Navy Agent, 3 August 1811, on the same subject.
 46. Translation of “Notificazione”, 30 September 1812: *Collezione di Bandi, Prammatiche ed altri Avvisi ufficiali*, p. 125.