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# *Towards an Economic History of Eighteenth Century Malta: Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's Correspondence to the Venetian Magistracy of Trade 1754-1776*

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Malta

The restraining late medieval legacy of allegiance and dependency which the Knights of St John inherited on settling in the tiny central Mediterranean island of Malta had never been compatible with the Order's grand aspirations.<sup>1</sup> The history of Malta's foreign relations from 1530 to 1798 is

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used:

- A.G.P.V.: Archives of the Grand Priory of Venice  
A.I.M. : Archives of the Inquisition of Malta  
A.O.M. : Archives of the Order of Malta  
A.S.T. : Archivio di Stato, Trieste  
A.S.V. : Archivio di Stato, Venice  
M.B.G. : *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 601, "Lettere del Commendatore di Malta Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga".*  
M.C.C.V.: Archives of the Museo Civico Correr, Venice  
M.V. : Modo Veneziano  
R.M.L. : Royal Malta Library

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<sup>1</sup> For a sound bibliography of twentieth century works on the history of the Order of St John in Rhodes, see: J. MIZZI, "A Bibliography of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (1925-1969)", *The Order of St John in Malta with an exhibition of paintings by Mattia Preti Painter and Knight*, Malta 1970, nos. 160-202. Prof. Lionel Butler's long-awaited study on the subject is still a *desideratum*. Among the fundamental works published before 1925 are the official chronicles: J. BOSTO, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill.ma Militia di S. Gio. Gerosolimitano, di nuovo ristampata e dal medesimo autore ampliata et illustrata*, Rome 1621-1629, and B. DAL POZZO, *Historia della Sacra*

the story of the Order's conscious and protracted efforts to remove the negative structural and institutional forces which debarred growth and development in order to mobilize the positive forces which would lead to economic progress. It was a difficult task to break away from the pattern of politico-economic subjection — to powers like France and Spain — to conditions which would reduce Malta's complete dependence on traditional markets, manufactures and capital. Veneto-Maltese mutual economic approaches during the eighteenth century were just one outstanding example of this complex process of economic reorientation. It is my purpose here to examine these "approaches" within the broad framework of the island's economy as a whole and the conceptions of it entertained by the Venetian Magistracy of Trade — the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*.<sup>2</sup> My examination will draw heavily on the large collection of Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's original, manuscript despatches from Malta to the *Cinque Savi*.<sup>3</sup>

## I BUZZACCARINI GONZAGA

### A *The Man*

On 21st April, 1776 Antonio Poussielgues, the Venetian Consul in Malta,<sup>4</sup> wrote to the Cinque Savi in Venice to tell them of the sad and sudden

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*Religione di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta*, Verona 1703-1715. See also J. DELAVILLE LE ROULX, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes jusqu'à la mort de Philibert de Naillac (1310-1421)*, Paris 1913. No systematic analysis of the Order's eight-year odyssey (1522-1530) from Rhodes to Malta has yet surpassed R. VALENTINI, "I Cavalieri di S. Giovanni da Rodi a Malta. Trattative diplomatiche", *Archivum Melitense* IX (1935), pp. 137-237.

For the history of Malta before 1530 the standard work is A. LUTTRELL (ed.), *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, London 1975. It is regretted, however, that the economic aspect has only received passing references. The editor's contribution, "Approaches to Medieval Malta", is by far the best modern bibliographical study of the period both in exposition and interpretation.

The original Bull ceding Malta to the Order of St John, dated 23rd March, 1530, is in A.O.M. 70.

<sup>2</sup> M. BORGHERINI-SCARABELLIN, "Il Magistrato dei Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia dalla istituzione alla caduta della Repubblica", *Miscellanea di Storia Veneto-Tridentina* II (Venice, 1926), pp. 1-148 is a useful and readable survey of the history of the Magistracy.

<sup>3</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 601*, "Lettere del Commendatore di Malta Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga".

<sup>4</sup> He was appointed consul on 22nd March, 1766. A.O.M. 569, f. 194 v. For a brief study of Poussielgues's Venetian consulship, see: V. MALLIA-MILANÉS, "Malta and Venice in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Consular Relations", *Studi Veneziani* XVII-XVIII (1975-76), pp. 316-319.

<sup>5</sup> "Mi do l'onore di partecipare all'Eccellenze Loro la perdita che fecchino li 16 del corrente di Sera del Commendatore Fra Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, colto quasi all'improvviso da una vomica che in un'ora di tempo gli fece rendere l'anima al Creatore; arrivò munirsi della Sacramental Confessione, ed essendosi subito perduto di Sentimenti

death of Buzzaccarini Gonzaga.<sup>5</sup> Still a minor,<sup>6</sup> Commendatore Fra Massimiliano Emanuele<sup>7</sup> Marchese<sup>8</sup> Buzzaccarini Gonzaga,<sup>9</sup> from Padua,<sup>10</sup> son of the noble Antonio de Buzzaccarini, Knight of San Giorgio<sup>11</sup>, was professed a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem on 20th January, 1712.<sup>12</sup> On 25th September, 1754 he was the first to be accredited *Huomo della Repubblica di Venezia* to the Grandmaster's Court in Malta,<sup>13</sup> and on the morning of 4th December he arrived on the island in that capacity.<sup>14</sup> Soon after, he paid courtesy calls on all members of the Venerable Council.<sup>15</sup>

In his letter, the consul paid tribute to the Knight for his "rare and sterling qualities" he had demonstrated throughout his long term of office as Venetian Minister in Malta.<sup>16</sup> For an almost<sup>17</sup> uninterrupted stay of over

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mentre gli si amministrava l'Estrem' Unzione, spirò, lasciando a tutti quelli che lo conoscevano una pena indicibile per le sue rare e distinte qualità. Non avendo avuto tempo di fare alcuna disposizione ne per li suoi interessi, ne per il suo incarico riguard' agl'affari della Serenissima Repubblica; e non trovandosi attualmente qui altro suddito tra li Cavalieri che il solo Commendatore Fra Alviero Zacco suo cugino appena recuperato da una mortal malattia essendo ben noto all'EE. Loro per averle serviti in assenza del defunto; ad esso m'indirizzai per usare tutte quelle diligenze necessarie per mettere in sicuro tutte le scritture del defonto, li Passaporti, Sigilli, registri ed altro; ed avendo chiesto al Gran Maestro il permesso di ritirare il tutto avanti che li Ministri della Religione avessero esaminate le Carte me l'ha accordato, infatti li 18 corrente 'intervenni all'apertura de' Sigilli, e prima di procedere all'inventario mi fecero esaminare a me medesimo, ed al Cavaliere Mignarelli come procuratore del Commendatore Zacco tutte le scritture e mi fù consegnato tutto ciò che ho trovato appartenere al pubblico servizio; in somma senza che niente si sij trascurato, ed avendo fatto riponere tutto in Cassa sotto chiave; ne ho fatta la consegna al sudetto Commendatore Zacco in sua Casa; anzi mi si fece la promessa dai Procuratori del Tesoro che se mai troverebbero altre scritture, me le consegneranno". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 711, 21st April, 1776.*

<sup>6</sup> A.O.M., 515 f. 69 v - 70 r. " ... è stato già ricevuto di minor età in grado di Fra Cav.re di Giustizia, mediante indulto Magistrale del giorno 20 Gennaio 1711 ab Incarnazione, e secondo l'uso Ord.rio 1712 incoente al Breve Pontificio in quello inserito". A.G.P.V., busta 166, n. 26, "Processo delle Prove delli 4 Quarti del Nobile Massimiliano Buzzaccarini".

<sup>7</sup> A.O.M., 515 f. 69 v - 70 r.

<sup>8</sup> A.G.P.V., busta 166, n. 26, *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> All his letters to Venice were signed "Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga", though the "Gonzaga" was rarely appended to his name in the correspondence he received from Venice or in other Venetian documents.

<sup>10</sup> A.O.M. 2166, pp. 284-285.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>12</sup> A.O.M. 2166, pp. 284-285. A.G.P.V., busta 166, n. 26.

<sup>13</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 403, fascicolo 76.*

<sup>14</sup> "Pervenne in convento la mattina: il Cavaliere Buzzaccarini Gonzaga". A.O.M. 2231, p. 6. See also A.S.V., M.B.G., 7th December, 1754.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> On at least three occasions Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga referred to his being grievously afflicted with gout: "... un sofferto incommodo di furia di sangue che malignamente minacciava, e di podagra in appresso sopraggiuntami per la prima volta ...", A.S.V., M.B.G., 12th March, 1763; "... una lunga e penosa malattia da me sofferta ...",

twenty years on the island, Buzzaccarini Gonzaga had been entrusted with protecting and helping all Venetian subjects who either "proceeded to Malta for purposes of trade", or who were "conducted to that place by shipowners and Christian corsairs". In the latter case, he was "to procure, by care and effort, the immediate release of ships, effects and persons", and to take cognizance of "all minute details of the circumstances", particularly, the exact locality in which such "arrests" had occurred.<sup>18</sup>

## B His Correspondence

During his tenure of office, Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga kept in constant touch with the Venetian Magistracy of Trade, writing an average of one letter a fortnight,<sup>19</sup> giving what may be defined as a regular news-sheet, enriched by frequent, sound value-judgements, of all that was happening in and around Malta. The whole collection is an enlightening and eloquent primary source for a socio-economic history of eighteenth century Malta. It owes its importance to four basic reasons. Firstly, it records not only the major events in the history of Malta during the period covered by the letters, but also the daily occurrences which usually pass unnoticed, and therefore unrecorded, in normal official correspondence.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, it penetrates deeply into the nature, character and potentiality of Malta's economy.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, Veneto-Maltese day-to-day commercial and mercantile relations are presented in a clear and vivid perspective.<sup>22</sup> Finally, it throws

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*ibid.*, 23rd June, 1766; "...un attacco di podagra sopraggiuntomi, che con atroci dolori mi tenne afflitto per qualche giorno...", *ibid.*, 3rd August, 1767.

<sup>17</sup> He had left Malta for Venice on 20th May, 1760 and returned on 3rd April, 1761. For information about his journey, see: A.S.V., M.B.G., 14th June, 1760 (from Padua), 7th March, 1761 (from Rome), and 17th March, 1761 (from Naples). During his absence from Malta, his cousin Fra Alviero Zacco acted as Venetian Minister in his stead. *Ibid.*, 14th June, 1760.

<sup>18</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 403, fascicolo 76*, "Commissione per l'Huomo della Repubblica di Venezia in Malta", 25th September, 1754.

In his correspondence to the Cinque Savi, Buzzaccarini Gonzaga very often referred to the manifold purpose of his mission in Malta. A few examples will suffice. "...ed io con lo sborso di non poche somme somministrate per il mantenimento di questi Infelici (sudditi Veneti ingiustamente spogliati) nel loro soggiorno a Malta...", A.S.V., M.B.G., 12th July, 1761; "...Non cesserò mai in alcun tempo impiegarmi in favore di ritrarne il maggior loro vantaggio, riconoscendo essere questi il principale mio dovere...", *ibid.*, 27th July, 1761; "...Dovendo per mio dovere applicarmi à rendere que' vantaggi desiderati dalle EE.VV. per il Commercio, e che dalli Savij provvedimenti Loro procurati vengono à beneficio de' sudditi...", *ibid.*, 1st June, 1761. See also: *ibid.*, 10th August, 12th October, 1761 1st and 28th April, 15th June, 1762.

<sup>19</sup> See note 28 below.

<sup>20</sup> See A.S.V., M.B.G., *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> See below.

<sup>22</sup> See below.

intense light on the island's trade links with other European, Levantine and North African markets.<sup>23</sup>

Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's correspondence ranges from an analysis of matters of far-reaching influence on Venetian policy in the central Mediterranean<sup>24</sup> to items of local significance;<sup>25</sup> from an accurate rendering of the certain repercussions of the *Ottoman Crown* episode on the whole of Christendom,<sup>26</sup> probing with precision into the state of fortifications of the Maltese Islands in the 1760s<sup>27</sup> and into the psychology of the local inhabitants faced with an imminent Turkish assault,<sup>28</sup> to frequent passing references to a

<sup>23</sup> For references to foreign shipping in Malta (other than Venetian) in Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's correspondence, see: A.S.V., M.B.G., (Danish) - 30th June, 10th August, 6th September, 1761; (Dutch) - 10th November, 1755; 5th January, 1755 M.V.; 31st July, 1756; 15th March, 1757; 1st April, 1762; 11th January, 1762 M.V.; (English) - 1st January, 1755; 5th January, 1755 M.V.; 31st May, 26th June, 31st July, 2nd December, 1756; 30th January, 1756 M.V.; 15th March, 1757; 17th June, 24th September, 1761; 15th June, 1762; 12th March, 10th April, 1764; (French) - 25th August, 6th October, 10th November, 1st December, 1755; 10th, 31st May, 26th June, 23rd July, 2nd December, 1756; 20th December, 1761; 13th December, 1762; 30th April, 7th June, 1764; (Greek) - 31st May, 14th June, 1756; 15th May, 1761; (Imperial) - 2nd June, 14th July, 1755; 26th June, 1756; (Neapolitan) - 20th April, 1760; 24th September, 1761; (Papal) - 14th July, 1755; 15th May, 1st, 30th June, 1761; (Ragusan) - 31st July, 1756; (Sicilian) - 25th August, 1755; (Swedish) - 16th February, 1755 M.V.; 1st April, 1762; (Tripolitan) - 2nd December, 1756; (Tunisian) - 10th May, 1756.

The commercial history of Malta during the Order of St John's rule (1530-1798) remains only imperfectly known. There is no work devoted entirely to that theme. The few studies that exist deal only with the island's trade relations with individual countries. For Venice see V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations in the XVIIIth Century", *Studi Veneziani XVI* (1974), pp. 503-553; and the same author's "Malta and Venice in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Consular Relations", *Studi Veneziani XVII-XVIII* (1975-76), pp. 265-320. For France see M. CHAILLAN, "Le commerce de Malte avec Marseille et la France", *Memoire de l'Institut historique de Provence* (1935), pp. 173-199; and J. GODCHOT, "La France et Malte au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle", *Revue historique* 206 (July-September, 1951), pp. 67-79. On the subject of Anglo-Maltese commercial relations see A.P. VELLA, "A Sixteenth-Century Elizabethan Merchant in Malta", *Melita Historica V*, 3 (1970), pp. 197-238; and V. MALLIA-MILANES, "English Merchants' Initial Contacts with Malta: A Reconsideration", *Melita Historica VI*, 4 (1975), pp. 342-361. Tunisian trade links with Malta are dealt with by L. VALENSI, "Les relations commerciales entre la Régence de Tunis et Malte au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> Siècle", *Cahiers de Tunisie II* (1963), pp. 71-83.

<sup>24</sup> See A.S.V., M.B.G., 14th April, 19th May, 11th and 25th August, 1st December, 1755; 5th January, 16th February, 1755 M.V.; 10th and 31st May, 14th, 18th and 26th June, 23rd and 31st July, 2nd December, 1756; 30th January, 1756 M.V.; 15th March, 1757; 7th April, 1761; 11th January, 1762 M.V.; 20th May, 19th August, 1763; 7th June, 27th July, 30th August, 1764.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 6th October, 1755 for the sojourn in Malta of "Madama d'Alleurj Vedova del Ambas.re di Francia in Constantinopoli".

<sup>26</sup> See my forthcoming paper "The Venetian Minister in Malta and the *Ottoman Crown Episode*".

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

## APPENDIX I. DATA PROBLEMS

The underlying data are the detailed, annual, official Egyptian foreign trade returns, collected by the customs authorities and published in the *Annual Statement of the Foreign Trade of Egypt*, 1919 to 1961, the *Monthly Summary of Foreign Trade*, 1918 to 1961, and in the *Commerce Extérieur de l'Égypte* from 1878/82 to 1918. For the years 1885 to 1905, as well as for 1909 and 1918, our access was limited to the summary information presented in the *Annuaire Statistique*, 1913 and other issues. Complete data do not appear to be available in the United States for the period 1940 to 1943 and for that reason we did not include 1940 to 1945 in our indices.

There were two major revisions of the commodity classification — 1919 and 1930. The earliest period, for which we have only summary data, is, in effect, a fourth classification. In addition, each year there were a great many small modifications in the classification, tending toward a greater number of commodities and toward metric quantity units, especially by weight. In the earliest period the summary data listed less than 100 commodities; by 1930 there were almost 10,000 imports listed and at least half as many exports. The primary problem was to select from this *embarras de richesses*. Commodities were chosen both for their numerical importance and their intrinsic interest, and many smaller commodities were aggregated from the later data to provide continuity with the earlier data. Altogether we collected data on 1,070 commodities, 871 imports and 199 exports, although very few series last for anything like the entire period. Our data consist of approximately 70,000 coded entries. The number of enumerated commodities included in each yearly indexing computation from 1885 to 1961 (species excluded), with and without quantity description, increased for imports from 33 and 45 to 356 and 374, respectively. For exports the corresponding numbers increased from 18 and 20 to 85 and 86, respectively. For the general export and import indices, coverage in terms of value increased from 53 to 91 percent for imports and remained unchanged at 96 percent for exports. Coverage is thus very satisfactory.<sup>1</sup> Details about these matters are included in Appendix II.

Egyptian trade with the Sudan is a special problem. Before 1915, when the Sudan was separated administratively from Egypt, such trade was considered internal and thus does not appear in the Egyptian returns. For the period 1915 to 1955, it had a special status and was also excluded. This problem is minor, presumably, but some adjustments are needed for the period before 1955.

The official returns have been accepted at face value apart from a few instances where obvious mistakes were discovered. Smuggling played a minor role with the exception possibly of precious stones and hashish; but underevaluation is known to be a problem, in particular before 1911. The low tariff rates prevailing until 1930 (8 percent *ad valorem* for almost all imports and 1 percent for exports) fortunately meant that the incentive to under-invoicing and other methods of illegal underevaluation was not overly strong. But the customs authorities' own method of applying negotiated rather than actual prices to cotton (and some major import commodities) is believed to have led to underevaluation of the value of cotton exports by at least 10 percent with some under-

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<sup>1</sup> American pioneers in the field of national indices, Fabricant and Kuznets, considered 40 percent coverage as a minimum — rather arbitrarily of course.

Dutch and Livornese<sup>34</sup> to news of the "immense damage caused by a terrible earthquake" in Lisbon, of floods in Cadice,<sup>35</sup> the wild spread of plague in Algiers and epidemic in Naples.<sup>36</sup>

The collection of Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's correspondence, in conjunction with the equally important consular despatches,<sup>37</sup> provides ample documentation for a reconstruction of the gradual evolution of Veneto-Maltese commercial relations during the eighteenth century:<sup>38</sup> from the very poor facilities available to Venetian merchants and seamen in Malta in 1700<sup>39</sup> to the formal establishment in the 1750s of a Maltese Consulate in Venice and

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March, 1756. "Io poi come significai alle Ecc.ze V.e con la mia devota segnata 22 Marzo, fissato avevo render pubblica la mia destinazione il giorno del glorioso S. Marco come segul: procurando dare le maggiori dimostrazioni di mia divozione verso il Ser.mo mio Principe, e ricognizione del onore donatomi. Furono esposte le Gloriose Insegne della Ser.ma Rep.ca con suoni, illuminazioni, e fuochi ad uso del Paese, si alla mia Casa, come pure alle rispettive de Cav.ri Nazionali, come è il solito praticarsi per le due sere, e furono trattati detti Cav.ri ed altri il giorno stesso di S. Marco in mia Casa; dimostrazione dà me ben dovuta verso il mio Principe, e che con maggior decorosa forma avrei desiderato eseguire, ed ora mi tengo nel piede istessa degli altri tutti che sostengono simile Carattere". *Ibid.*, 10th May, 1756.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 14th April, 1755.

<sup>35</sup> "Le notizie... che in quest'ordinario posso avanzare à V.e Ecc.ze, e che à noi sono pervenute, sono assai funeste, e di già suppongo note a tutta l'Europa: queste sono in rapporto alli immensi danni causati dà un terribile Terremoto, ed accesso fuoco in Lisbona, dalla esorbitanza del Mare in Cadice, ed altri luoghi, qual notizia reco somma afflizione à questo Governo, ed alla Religione stessa che molto nè soffrirà...". *Ibid.*, 5th January, 1755 M.V.

<sup>36</sup> With regards to Algiers, he wrote that "Dà Bastimento proveniente dà Tunesi nel mese scorso, si ebbe la notizia che in Algieri la Peste s'era novamente manifestata con violenza". *Ibid.*, 10th May, 1756. In 1764 this is what he wrote on Naples: "Le Novità di Napoli sono sempre lacrimevoli per le continuate Malatie, e morti, e quella gran città vedesi abbandonata dà forestieri tutti e dalla Nobiltà che retirasi alla campagna per sfuggirne la mala influenza: Iddio non voglia che le calamità non acreschino". *Ibid.*, 27th July, 1764.

<sup>37</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 711*, "Lettere dei Consoli: Malta a. 1712-1797".

<sup>38</sup> See V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations in the XVIIIth Century". *Studi Veneziani XVI* (1974), pp. 503-553.

<sup>39</sup> "Il Gran Maestro fà egli li Consoli per le Nationi gente villissima, sue Creature. Quello per Venetia è un Barbiero, birbo quanto si possa dire; da ciò si può ben vedere, che quando capitano Negotij delle Nationi, se non v'è altra assistenza, restano molto male appoggiate e per la viltà e per la dipendenza di chi assiste. La Frantia però tiene un Cavalliere, che è chiamato huomo dal Re, e questo invigila a tutte le cose della Natione. Il Re di Sicilia hà il Ballij Doria, che assiste. Gl'altri hanno qualche cosa di più, che il Console. Venetia sola non hà alcuno, e per questo è peggio trattata, benché per dire il vero rarissimi sijno li Bastimenti, che con Bandiera di San Marco colà capitino". M.C.C.V., *Donà dalle Rose*, Ms. 381/6, "Descrittione di Malta Anno 1716", f. 37 v. The consul referred to in the excerpt was Francesco Matteo Angelis. See V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Malta and Venice in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Consular Relations", *Studi Veneziani XVII-XVIII* (1975-76), p. 302.

a Venetian Consulate in Malta;<sup>40</sup> from the negligible trade carried out between Venice and Malta in 1700<sup>41</sup> to the lucrative bilateral commercial agreement between the two countries in the 1760s;<sup>42</sup> from the occasional appearance in the Maltese harbours of an insignificant number of Venetian vessels at the opening to the century to the Venetian Republic's exploitation of Malta as a naval base in the 1780s.<sup>43</sup>

## II AN ECONOMIC SURVEY?

### A Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's description of Malta

It took Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga seven years to survey Malta's economic condition and potentialities. In 1761 he defined the island as "a country extremely limited in natural resources",<sup>44</sup> producing only cotton fibres<sup>45</sup> and a very limited amount of ashes.<sup>46</sup> The latter were mostly imported from Sicily,<sup>47</sup> to be in turn resold to a number of foreign markets, including Venice.<sup>48</sup> For almost everything else the island depended on foreign sources of supply.<sup>49</sup> Malta, implied Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, would

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> See note 39 above.

<sup>42</sup> See below.

<sup>43</sup> See V. MALLIA-MILANÉS, "The *Buona Unione*: An Episode in Veneto-Maltese Relations in the late XVIIIth Century", *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, The Royal University of Malta, IV, 4 (1971), pp. 309-326.

<sup>44</sup> "Un Paese assai scarso di Prodotti". A.S.V., M.B.G., 1st June, 1761. On 5th December, 1761, the Cinque Savi wrote to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga instructing him "per espore qual comercio praticare si potrebbe con questo Porto (di Malta)". *Ibid.*: 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>45</sup> As late as 1785 an anonymous traveller to Malta had this to say about cotton production on the island: "Il Cotone è il maggiore prodotto dell'Isola; sorte quali tutto vergine o filato, e le sole manufatture di questa merce si fanno al Gozzo, e consistono in Berette e coperte e calzette. Il celebre M.r de Soufrin (sic) avea fatto negli anni scorsi trasportare a quest'isola una Colonia di 30 indiani per istabilirvi di que' fini lavori; ma poi da lui stesso fu mandata nelle vicinanze di Parigi, e ne fece un presente al Re". M.C.C.V., *Miscellanea Correr* LXXIX/2664, "Breve descrizione dell'Isola di Malta. L'Anno 1785" (unpaginated). For a brief survey of the cotton industry in Malta during the Order's rule, see V. MALLIA-MILANÉS, "Some Aspects...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 505-508.

<sup>46</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 1st June, 1761. See also V. MALLIA-MILANÉS, "Some Aspects...", *loc. cit.*, p. 504; and *Istruzione per Ordine de' Censori sopra l'Arte Vetraria per la coltivazione del Kali Maggiore ecc.*, Venice 1780.

<sup>47</sup> "... la quale viene in maggior parte dalla Sicilia". A.S.V., M.B.G., 1st June, 1761.

<sup>48</sup> L. DE BOISGELIN, *Ancient and Modern Malta* I, London 1804-1805, p. 109.

<sup>49</sup> V. MALLIA-MILANÉS, "English Merchants' Initial Contacts with Malta: A Reconsideration". *Melita Historica* VI, 4 (1975), p. 344. See also, though outdated in approach, A. MIFSUD, "L'approvvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle passate Dominationi". *Archivum Melitense* III, 5 (1918), pp. 163-212.

gain in economic significance to the Venetian emporium if only its purchase-market potentialities were fully exploited. The process would prove feasible and the attempt viable if the island would be encouraged to redirect its search for raw materials to the Adriatic port.<sup>50</sup> The only difficulties were of a purely psychological character. On the one hand the Order had always been ready to grasp at every opportunity to offset its old ties of politico-economic dependence on Sicily, Spain and France, but due to the nature of its composition,<sup>51</sup> it still harboured in general an innate preference for anything that was French. French commodities enjoyed a privileged position in Malta. The knights in their majority were prejudiced against anything else.<sup>52</sup> This frame of mind on the part of the administration was bound to restrain the conduct of trade and restrict the extent of trading operations. On the other hand the Maltese merchant, accustomed as he was to the traditional slow rhythm of his unadventurous and unsophisticated trade, to the small range of his land's agricultural yield and to his unrivalled, regular sea links with Sicilian ports, was by nature conservative.<sup>53</sup> The process of change would have to be gradual.<sup>54</sup> Only "with industry and confrontation", confessed Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, would he be able to overcome these difficulties. It would not be an easy task to accomplish.<sup>55</sup>

Not that the Maltese merchant was unresponsive to initiative or ambition, to risk or adventure. His piratical incursions in the Adriatic were not an uncommon occurrence, even as early as the fourteenth<sup>56</sup> or fifteenth<sup>57</sup> century, while his daring corsairing activity in the Levant during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was as dreadful to the Turks as it was devastating

<sup>50</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 1st June, 1761.

<sup>51</sup> See J. GODECHOT, *Histoire de Malte*, Paris 1952. Id., "La France et Malte...", *loc. cit.*; and M. CHAILLAN, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> "... a motivo della prevenzione che si hà per le cose tutte provenienti dalla Francia e de pregiudizij che soffrir deve a particolare proprij interessi...". A.S.V., M.B.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>53</sup> "Fissi nel loro pensiero". *Ibid.*, See L. BUTLER, "The Maltese People and the Order of St. John in the Sixteenth Century", *Annales de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire de Malte* XXIII (1965), pp. 143-148, and XXIV (1966), pp. 95-135; and E. ROSSI, "I Maltesi nella Marina dell'Ordine di San Giovanni", *Archivio Storico di Malta* III (1931), pp. 221-234.

<sup>54</sup> "... essendo assai timida questa Nazione nel appigliarsi a nuovi progetti, senza averne prima piena conoscenza". A.S.V., B.M.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>55</sup> "... Spero però superare le difficoltà con industria, e con il confronto, il che riuscendomi non sarà piccolo oggetto...". *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> These adventures may be followed in A. LUTTRELL, "Malta and Dubrovnik towards the year 1380", *Melita Historica* V, 2 (1969), pp. 158-164. See also B. KREKIC, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au Moyen Age*, Paris-The Hague 1961.

<sup>57</sup> See F.B., "Corsari maltesi a Ragusa nel Quattro e nel Cinquecento", *Archivio Storico di Malta* VII (1936), pp. 243-245.

to the Venetians.<sup>58</sup> By the time Buzzaccarini Gonzaga was writing, the Maltese merchant — partly with the connivance of the Order, partly on his own initiative — had previously tapped the Venetian market as a secure source of supply.<sup>59</sup> Large assortments of commodities — from timber, wax and ironmongery to paper, copper, mirrors and other glassware were shipped from the old Adriatic port to Malta, very often in exchange for ashes of Kalimagnum.<sup>60</sup> This commercial service was of long standing.<sup>61</sup> Other vast shipments of foodstuffs and other products were purchased from Levantine markets, whereas it was only recently that the Maltese merchant had been venturing on Dalmatian markets, particularly for wine.<sup>62</sup> He had also lately resolved to start buying ironmongery from Trieste, seemingly unaware, according to the Venetian Minister, of “loss of time on the longer voyage and of differences in weights and quality”.<sup>63</sup> The Maltese merchant sailed to these distant ports, in distant hostile waters, rarely safe from piracy or immune from similar mishaps, with “ready cash” on board, entirely at his own risk.<sup>64</sup>

Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's “economic survey” mentioned other determining factors. The first was the Greek merchant whose ties with Malta had for long been close.<sup>65</sup> With the services of a Greek Consulate on the island,<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> A few excellent studies have been devoted to this theme. A. TENENTI, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice*, London 1967; P. EARLE, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary*, London 1970; P. CASSAR, “The Maltese Corsairs and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem”, *The Catholic Historical Review* XLVI (1960), 2, pp. 137-156; J. GODECHOT, “La course maltaise le long des côtes barbaresques à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Revue Africaine* XCVI, 430-431 (1952), pp. 105-113; and R. CAVALIERO, “The Decline of the Maltese Corso in the Eighteenth Century”, *Melita Historica* II (1959), pp. 224-238.

<sup>59</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> “Questo commercio viene continuamente praticato”. *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> “... con sommo loro rischio”. *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> As the Greek merchant's role in Malta's trade pattern has not yet been submitted to any comprehensive analysis, our knowledge of the subject is still imperfect. The same may be said of Malta's commercial relations with the Levant.

<sup>66</sup> The earliest reference to the Greek consul in Malta that I have come across in my research is the Bull nominating Josepho Moniglia consul in Malta “pro natione Graeca” on the 13th of November, 1623. A.O.M. 461, f. 316 v. On 31st January, 1668 Giacomo Sagnano was appointed consul “pro natione Graecae et Dalmatae”. A.O.M. 481, ff. 281 v-282 v. On 13th June, 1758 Grandmaster Pinto granted his “fiat” to Giuseppe Luri's petition concerning Greek consulage in Malta. “Giuseppe Luri Umilissimo Servitore e Vassallo dell'A.V.S.,... gl'espone ritrovarsi consolato mercè le Grazie dell'A.V. della carica di Console de Greci, ed essendo stato concesso a suoi Consoli antecessori il poter conseguire due per cento dalli bastimenti Greci di mercanzia, che venderanno o compreranno in questo suo dominio, e dall'accordi che si faranno con la sua assistenza, et industria... Ricorre per ciò umilmente all'A.V.S. supplicandola degnarsi restar servita aggraziarlo di poter continuare d.to Consolato collo conseguire delli dritti sudetti...”. A.O.M. 1190.

he frequented the place on his own ship or on foreign galleys as a peaceful trader, received safe-conducts from the Grandmaster, dealt in the 'art' of ransoming slaves and often called at the local tribunals to sue against "wrongful depredations".<sup>67</sup> A favourite pilot on Maltese vessels, he knew very well the worth of the Maltese corsair in the Levant, occasionally supplying him with important secret intelligence.<sup>68</sup> Sensitive to the urgency and priority the Order attached to the grain trade and to the perennial wheat shortage experienced by the island, the Greek merchant was continually exploiting the situation.<sup>69</sup> He was a formidable trader in the Mediterranean and an even more formidable competitor in Malta's grain and timber trade, always managing to extract handsome interests, and being occasionally mistaken for Venetian.<sup>70</sup>

The Order's social life in its "commodious palaces of Valetta . . . and the countryside",<sup>71</sup> at once dignified and impressive, extravagant and ceremonial, became through the years more sophisticated, and sharpened its members' ever increasing appetite for luxury. Economically this was another effective force of change. On the other hand, the Maltese inhabitants' experience of "prosperity and a comfortable standard of living"<sup>72</sup> was

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ff. 7-8. See also A.O.M. 1185, ff. 157/164, "Supplica di Nicolò Iagnotto, console della Nazione Greca", (a. 1659). A.O.M. 1188, ff. 234-235, "Supplica di Demetrio dell'Arsa, Console dei Grechi", (a. 1741). A.O.M. 1197, ff. 311-314, "Supplica di Giuseppe Giovanni Kermes; Relazione di Bartelmy Carcas, Console dei Grechi, 15-X-1794; Breve di Pio VI P.P. 'Retulit Nobis', inviato a Giuseppe Giovanni Kermes, 3-VIII-1780".

<sup>67</sup> P. EARLE, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>70</sup> "Li Greci fanno sovente negozio di frumento ed orgio con proprij loro Bastimenti, che la maggior parte vengono riconosciuti per Veneti, tutto che non alborino l'Insegne del Glorioso S. Marco, ma la Bandiera Greca: questi però vengono alla sorte, ma sempre fanno il loro interesse". *Ibid.*, "Il Commercio de' Legnami di Construzione introdotto, da alcuni anni sono, dà un suddito della Ceffalonia fù con molta soddisfazione da questa Religione abbracciato, e per le qualità ottime de' legnami, per li prezzi assai vantaggiosi; ma ora sta sul finire, mentre li Greci avendone ritrovata la facilità tutti vi concorrono, e ne hanno portata provvista tale, che la Religione fu obbligata di non accetarne d'avantaggio; venendone più di cento Bastimenti per anno . . .". *Ibid.*, 10th June, 1765. See also *Ibid.*, 6th January, 1765 M.V. For the Grandmaster's Decree "relativo à Greci sudditi del Gran Signore, che con Bandiera Greca approdassero à questo Porto", see *Ibid.*, 14th June, 1756. On the Greek merchant's mistaken identity, Buzzaccarini Gonzaga told the Cinque Savi that he had discovered "che molti di questi Bastimenti Greci, quali approdano costì con Bandiera di Gerusalemme sono riconosciuti la maggior parte per Ceffalonitti, ed al uscir del Porto inalborano la Bandiera Turca: questo loro procedere può essere molto pregiudicievole agli altri sudditi di quelle parti, e principalmente quelli che depredati furono da Corsari di Monaco". *Ibid.*, 15th May, 1761.

<sup>71</sup> L. BUTLER, "The Order of St. John in Malta: An Historical Sketch", *The Order of St. John in Malta with an exhibition of paintings by Mattia Preti Painter and Knight*, p. 41.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

mirrored in the island's steady demographic growth. From 64,000 inhabitants in 1650,<sup>73</sup> population increased to 100,000 a century later<sup>74</sup> and to about 130,000 by 1785.<sup>75</sup> Amelioration in the social life of the country was bound to be reflected in, and in turn to stimulate the diversification of Malta's trade pattern.

### B *The Cinque Savi's idea of Malta*

The Cinque Savi's idea of Malta in the 1760s was derived partly from Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's correspondence and other regular despatches of the Venetian consul resident on the island,<sup>76</sup> and partly from the rich collection of original documentation preserved in the Archives of the Magistracy.<sup>77</sup> In 1761 they submitted a detailed, elaborate report on Malta to the Venetian Senate.<sup>78</sup> The report, hitherto unpublished, is important to the economic historian of the Mediterranean. In clear and specific terms, the Cinque Savi laid down what they considered to be the basic characteristics of Malta's economic structure and trade pattern and the island's potentialities as a purchase-market and commercial entrepôt. In so doing they penetrated into the nature of the former close Veneto-Maltese trade links and into the forces that were threatening to undermine these ties in the eighteenth century. The report is a forceful attempt to fit in Malta's developing commerce with the Venetian policy of self-readjustment and rehabilitation, placing the various events and developments in Mediterranean economy in perspective. It betrays a vivid consciousness of the complex forces pressing hard on the Republic's ailing economy. In fact, the Cinque Savi's concept of Malta was conditioned by the Republic's inability to reassert its identity and its withdrawal productively "further and further into uncomplementary local and parochial economies".<sup>79</sup>

Nature, the Cinque Savi pointed out, had been deplorably avaricious

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<sup>73</sup> R.M.L., *Library Ms. 23*, ff. 237v-261.

<sup>74</sup> H. BOWEN-JONES, J.C. DEWDNEY, W.B. FISHER, *Malta: Background for Development*, Durham 1960, pp. 133-135.

<sup>75</sup> M.C.C.V., *Miscellanea Correr LXXIX/2664*, "Breve Descrizione dell'Isola di Malta. L'Anno 1785".

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed study of Veneto-Maltese consular relations see V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Malta and Venice in the Eighteenth Century...", *loc. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> See A. DA MOSTO, *L'Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, Rome 1937-40.

<sup>78</sup> The Report is in A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum*, busta 396, fascicolo 126, *scrittura 9*, 2nd March, 1761.

<sup>79</sup> See *Aspetti e Cause della Decadenza Economica Veneziana nel Secolo XVII*, Venice-Rome 1961. (Atti del Convegno 27 giugno - 2 luglio 1957. Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore). B. PULLAN (ed.), *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the XVIth and XVIIth Centuries*, London 1968. M. ROWDON, *The Fall of Venice*, London 1970. G. LUZZATTO, "La decadenza di Venezia dopo le scoperte geografiche nella tradizione e nella realtà", *Archivio Veneto*, Serie V, LIV-LV.

in her dealings with Malta. The rigidity and barrenness of the soil deprived the country of any natural resources, contributing only towards the island's impregnability.<sup>80</sup> As if to conform with the meagre character of the land, the local inhabitants were renowned for their lack of skill and inexpertise in every important trade.<sup>81</sup> With revenues flowing "luxuriously" into the country from the Order's possessions all over Europe, and with the islanders' practice of exchanging a highly restricted range of local products, the Order of St John was compelled to seek from foreign sources not only "essential foodstuffs" but also "all other commodities for human use and comfort".<sup>82</sup> The island was bound regularly to import what the Cinque Savi called "the produce of the land" — like wheat, oil, wine and salt — either from neighbouring markets — like those in the Kingdom of Naples, Sicily and the Morea — or from others which, due to surplus production, were deemed of greater convenience.

The Cinque Savi recalled that centuries earlier the political situation in the Mediterranean had deprived the Republic of her previous customers and of her commanding position. Cities, like Marseilles,<sup>83</sup> were quick to take over the role previously monopolized by Venice. States, "better enlightened" and "provided with their own merchant fleets", like France,

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<sup>80</sup> I shall limit myself to indicating what I think the most important edited or partly edited descriptions of Malta. Undoubtedly the most detailed description in print, and which constitutes a mine of first-hand information, is G.F. ABELA, *Della Descrizione di Malta*, Malta 1647. A.P. VELLA, "La Missione di Pietro Dusina a Malta nel 1574, con la trascrizione del MS. Vat. Lat. 134111", *Melita Historica* V, 2 (1969), pp. 165-184. L. SANDRI, "Due Relazioni inedite sull'Isola di Malta (secolo XVI e secolo XIX)", *Archivio Storico di Malta* IX (1938), pp. 212-224. C.A. VIANELLO, "Una Relazione inedita di Malta del 1582", *Archivio Storico di Malta* VII (1936), pp. 281-303. G. SEMPRINI, "Malta nella seconda metà del seicento", *Archivio Storico di Malta* IV (1933), pp. 97-112. A wide-ranging survey containing very useful documentary information is A. BONNICI, "Due Secoli di Storia Politico-Religiosa di Malta nel fondo Barberini Latino della Biblioteca Vaticana", *Melita Historica* IV, 4 (1967), pp. 229-256.

<sup>81</sup> See note 80 above.

<sup>82</sup> "... dacché necessariamente nè avviene, che col denaro, che vi ridonda dalle possessioni accordategli dai Principati Cattolici, e col concambio di pochi minuti generi, la Religione non meno che la totale popolazione è costretta a provvedersi nei Porti Stranieri non tanto dei prodotti necessarij alla vita, quanto di qualunque altro effetto indispensabile all'uso, ed al comodo umano". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9*, 2nd March, 1761.

There is no one satisfactory book on the economic history of the Order of St. John in Malta. The following works, however, contain summary accounts and frequent cross-references to the finances of the Order and its balance of payments. L. DE BOISGELIN, *op. cit.* E.W. SCHERMERHORN, *Malta of the Knights*, Surrey 1929. W.H. THORNTON, *Memoir on the Finances of Malta under the Government of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, during its last years of its Dominion and as compared with those of the present time*, Malta 1836. W. ETON, *Authentic Materials for a History of the People of Malta*, London 1803. R. CAVALIERO, *The Last of the Crusaders*, London 1960.

<sup>83</sup> See J. BILLIQUOUD, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille: de 1515 à 1549*, Paris 1951

Holland and England, by-passed her as the traditional middleman;<sup>84</sup> others "opened their own ports" with a similar objective. "The Court of Vienna" did its utmost to attract these new, commercially "independent" states to Trieste, "deviating their [original] trade routes to our detriment", while "the merchants of Trieste, flying the Imperial flag diffused themselves in all parts of the commercial world".<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, Venice in the 1760s, according to the Cinque Savi, was still "a centre of distribution of copious congeries of manufactured goods"<sup>86</sup>.

Nor was the Adriatic port by any means a new source of supply for Malta. On many previous occasions the *Dominante* had supplied the island's demands for a vast array of manufactured goods of iron, steel, copper and brass.<sup>87</sup> Amid the changing circumstances of the Mediterranean, the Order — and on its example, the Maltese merchant — still favoured its traditional Adriatic market, until it succumbed to such forces as self-interest and pressing warnings from its Resident Receivers in Venice<sup>88</sup> to change its trade direction.<sup>89</sup> "Some under Austrian, some under Roman influence", these Receivers sought respectively to promote the commercial interests of Trieste, Leghorn and Ancona, aiming successfully, according to the Cinque Savi, at redirecting Maltese merchant ships. This deviation of Maltese trade became even more pronounced in 1761 when a number of Maltese ships proceeded to load the whole or part of their merchandise in Trieste.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9, 2nd March, 1761.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* On the port of Trieste, see J. LANEVE, *Il porto di Trieste nel secolo XVIII*, Milan 1930. V. FRANCHINI, *Aspetti e momenti della funzione del porto di Trieste attraverso i tempi*, supplement of *Rivista di cultura marinara*, (Nov.-Dec., 1932). V. MARCHESI, *Le condizioni commerciali di Venezia di fronte a Trieste alla metà del secolo XVIII*, Venice 1885.

<sup>86</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9, 2nd March, 1761.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> On the office and function of the Order's Receiver, see A.O.M. 1683, "Trattato dell'Offizio del Ricevitore".

<sup>89</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9, 2nd March, 1761.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* On 25th April, 1761, G. MARSANDO, the Venetian consul in Trieste, told the Cinque Savi that "Il commercio di questo Porto (di Trieste) non è cosa indifferente; riconosco sino dal principio di questo mio soggiorno essere questo quel ramo di Negoziazione, che da venti anni circa si vede rissecarsi in Venezia". On 18th April of the same year, he had referred to the various foreign consulates in Trieste, including Rome, Naples, Ragusa, Denmark and Malta, "e tutti tengono sopra la strada le armi de loro Sovrani". The first reference to ships sailing to Malta after having loaded at Trieste is in his despatch of 26th September, 1761: "...partì ancora per Malta una Polacca Napolitana qui venuta da Venezia col suo carico reso pieno in questo Porto da molte ferraresse, e da molti barrilli di chiodi". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, busta 752, "Lettere dei Consolli. Trieste 1761-64", 18th, 25th April, 26th September, 1761.* On the Maltese consul in Trieste, see A.S.T., *Intendenza Commerciale per il Litorale, fascicolo 257, "Consule zu Malta".*

On this occasion the Maltese merchant availed himself of the proximity of other neighbouring markets to buy supplies of sugar and wax from Fiume,<sup>91</sup> glassware from Bohemia, paper from Romagna, silk goods from Tuscany and many other commodities from surrounding markets.<sup>92</sup> The Venetian consul in Trieste, wrote the Cinque Savi, had repeatedly informed the Magistracy of these developments<sup>93</sup> which were again to be "respectfully stressed" later by Knight Michele Sagramoso,<sup>94</sup> "who, with noble sentiments, [sought] to remedy the loss suffered by Venice on account of Maltese trade deviation by possibly redirecting it in the future".<sup>95</sup>

To achieve this end, it was vital to find means of restoring confidence to the Maltese merchant community. "It is therefore necessary", concluded the Report of 1761, "to make every effort to recall and reinstate a not unimportant branch of commerce which has slipped visibly from our hands, and in so doing, has undermined not only a portion of our distribution of Germanic goods, but — and this is even worse — a host of our own manufactures".<sup>96</sup> Anxious to secure the possible benefits of a Veneto-Maltese trade link, the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* deemed it expedient "to relieve that branch of commerce of export duties and, by way of restitution, of import duties too on all Germanic goods exported to Malta. These burdens had lain at the root of Malta's trade deviation".<sup>97</sup>

### C Malta's customs-tariff system

Busta 43 of the Archives of the *Gran Priorato dell'Ordine di Malta* in Venice contains a very interesting document on the system of customs-tariff practised in Malta.<sup>98</sup> In principle customs dues were generally

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<sup>91</sup> Referring to the ports of Fiume and Segna, Marsando wrote that with the exception of Venice, "tutti gli altri Consoli esistenti in Trieste hanno in quei due Porti i Loro Vice Consoli". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 752, Trieste, 2nd August, 1761. On Fiume, he wrote "Fiume è un Porto niente meno geloso di Trieste, gode in tutto e per tutto eguali a Trieste gli effetti della Sovrana Protezione di S.M. E non è indifferente il suo commercio, il studio di aumentarlo e di introdursi manufatture". *Ibid.*, 22nd August, 1761.

On the Maltese consul in Fiume, see A.S.T., *Intendenza Commerciale per il Litorale*, fascicolo 241, "Consulat von Malta in Fiume". See also G. KOBLER, *Memorie per la Storia della liburnica città di Fiume* II, Fiume 1896, p. 78.

<sup>92</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum*, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9, 2nd March, 1761.

<sup>93</sup> See A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 752, "Lettere dei Consoli. Trieste 1761-64".

<sup>94</sup> See A.O.M. 1518, "Memoria" of 31st October, 1762.

<sup>95</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum*, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9, 2nd March, 1761.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Enclosed in "[Copia del] Capitoli che si propongono per esser confirmati da S.A. Em.a con suo Decreto presentati dal Sig.re Cav.re Buzzaccarini".

reckoned in terms of value, while extra charges were imposed separately on different classes of merchandise, rated in terms of weight (cantaro, salma...), volume (botte, cafisio, barrile...) or number (dozana...), depending on the type of goods involved. There were two rates of customs-tariff.<sup>99</sup> Merchandise imported by nationals and Sicilians<sup>100</sup> was charged 3 1/3% *ad valorem* duty, while all other foreign merchants were subject to a 6 1/3% *ad valorem* duty. Foodstuffs and potables, together with any other type of merchandise freighted to the Order in Malta by its Receivers in Europe, were exempted from all customs dues.<sup>101</sup> Dues on transit-trade, a facility to be enjoyed only by the foreign merchant, were reckoned at 1% if re-exported within a year; otherwise, the levy for bonded merchandise was worked out at the rate of 6 2/3% for Maltese/Sicilian merchants and 12% for all other foreign traders.<sup>102</sup>

Tables A, B and C, a reproduction of the above mentioned document, give a clear and detailed cross-section of the Maltese customs-tariff system and other related charges imposed by the local autonomous corporation known as the *Università dei Giurati* whose main function was to administer the *Massa Frumentaria*, which gave interest of 3% *per annum* on savings deposits. Investments in the *Massa Frumentaria* would go for the purchase of the necessary foodstuffs, particularly wheat.<sup>103</sup> Table D shows consular dues in Malta.

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<sup>99</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V., and 17th September, 1763. See J. MEA, "Customs Tariff in Malta since 1530", *Melita Historica* II, 2 (1957), pp. 88-94.

<sup>100</sup> In Malta the Sicilians were considered as co-nationals. So were the Maltese in Sicily. See A. Mifsud, "L'approvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle passate Dominazioni", *Archivum Melitense* III (1918), pp. 163-212.

<sup>101</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> "La nostra Università in seguito di più privilegi concessile da Sovrani da moltissimo tempo prima dell'arrivo di questa Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana fu sempre in uso provedersi francamente di Frumenti, vino, legumi e tutto il bisognevole dalla vicina Sicilia, e per la compra di quelli e massime dei frumenti usava farne raccolte di danaro nel modo che siegue. Avvicinandosi il tempo di far spedite le navi per la compra e trasporto de' frumenti si dava per Bando l'avviso al publico acciò chiunque avesse denaro da applicare portasse il suo capitale per quell'impiego col cambio allor stabilito durato dal dì della partenza de Bastimenti sino al consumo dei frumenti, e perché molti concorrevano a quella lucrosa e sicura contribuzione (mentre di più la somma totale si faceva assicurare da altri negozianti) perché in quel concorso venivano preferiti i poveri ai ricchi. Dopo comprato e portato il Frumento in Porto si faceva il calcolo del costo dei Frumenti e di tutte le spese si beneficiava quando un mondello quando più per salma a favor dell'Università, e per servire ai salari e spese ordinarie della medesima è fatto il calcolo colle promesse deduzioni si ratiziava il costo ai frumenti e davasi su di quello la metà. Da ciò si ricava che la metà de' Frumenti variava secondo ogni compra che si faceva e l'Università godeva il profitto... che dicevasi peculio dell'Università". A.I.M., *Un Giornale Istorico*, f. 12. See also A. Mifsud, "L'approvigionamento e l'Università di Malta...", *loc. cit.*

TABLE A

MERCI SOGGETTE AL DIRITTO DI NUOVE IMPOSTE  
OLTRE IL DIRITTO DI DOGANA

Articles	Unit of Measurement	Scudi	Tarì	Grani
Coia pelose di bovi e vacche grandi	coio		2	
Li Merrani	coio			10
Vitelline	coio		1	10
Pelli d'agnello pelose	cento		6	
Sola e Vacchetta di Ponente e Levante	cantaro	2		
Infodere, ossia Barrane	dozana		1	
Camuscie bianche	dozana		1	
Camuscie di colore ad olio	dozana		2	
Montonine	dozana		2	
Vitelline	dozana		6	
Bragotti	dozana		6	
Alacche rosse e gialle	dozana		6	
Vacchette di Fiandra	pelle		3	
Carta da scrivere da Venezia	cassa	3		
Carta bruna grande da straccio	ballone		1	
Carta fine, carta reale e castarda	risma		3	
Carta da campana di Francia	ballone	2		
Cartone	cantaro	4		
Cordovane	dozana		4	
Tabacco in foglia di Levante	cantaro	2	6	
Mendicanti	cantaro	2	1	
Tabacco avana, Spagna ed in carotte d'ogni qualità	cantaro	7		
Mendicanti	cantaro	5		
Caffè di Levante	cantaro	3		
Caffè di Ponente	cantaro	2	4	
Acquavite	barile		6	
Sapone in pietra fino	cantaro	2		
Sapone ordinario	cantaro	1		
Sapone liquido	cantaro		6	

TABLE B

MERCI SOGGETTE AL DIRITTO DELL'UNIVERSITA'  
OLTRE IL DIRITTO DI DOGANA

Articles	Unit of Measurement	Scudi	Tarì	Grani
Cimino dolce, ed agro	cantaro			10
Sapone d'ogni specie	cantaro		1	10
Cottone filato	cantaro		2	
Cottone in lana e cornuto	cantaro		1	
Cottone con semenza, ed in cocca si riduce in cotone in lana	cantaro		1	

TABLE C

ALTRE MERCI SOGGETTE AL SOLO DIRITTO DELL'UNIVERSITA'

Articles	Unit of Measurement	Scudi	Tarì	Grani
Vino	botte di 22 barili		2	10
Diritto d'Abbatia			6	
Vino Musto	botte		2	
Diritto d'Abbatia			4	
Formaggio della Sicilia e Morea	cantaro		2	
Casciocavallo	cantaro		2	
Formaggio scaldato	cantaro		2	
Olio	ogni 100 cafisio	1		
Ogni sorte di carne salata e salami	cantaro		2	
Formento	salma			16
Sarde tonnina ed ancioie salate	barile			5
Surra	barile			10

TABLE D \*

TARIFFA PER IL CONSOLE RESIDENTE IN MALTA

	Scudi	Tarì	Grani
Per ogni nave polacca, o altro bastimento che naviga con vele quadre, negli alberi di Maestra e Trinchetto	6	6	10
Per ogni altro bastimento che naviga con vele quadre nel solo albero di Maestra e Trinchetto	3	6	
Per ogni tartana con poppa piatta, e vele latine	1	4	
Per pinco, pincotto, martingana, pandoria, fregatella, o altro simile bastimento latino	1		
Per schifazzo tarantino, guzzo, lentello, bergantino, filuca e speronara a due alberi senza caicco		8	
Per scifazzo tarantino, guzzo, lentello, bergantino, filuca e speronara a due alberi senza caicco		4	
Per filuca speronara o altro simile bastimento a remo, con un albero		2	

Source: A.S.V., Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 943.

### III AN UNWRITTEN TRADE AGREEMENT

#### A Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's initial measures

In Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's early correspondence (i.e. from 1754 to 1760), only occasionally does one come across isolated references to ships proceeding to Malta with Venetian merchandise. But was not this the Venetian consul's task?<sup>104</sup> In May 1755, for example, *La Galleria S. Pietro*, master Nicolò Tarabocchia, arrived in Malta from Venice in 46 days, laden "with effects" for "this Sacred Religion",<sup>105</sup> while Pietro Iannich "unloaded" in Malta "a cargo of wheat" before proceeding to Trapani.<sup>106</sup> Others came, at remote intervals, with shipments of construction timber and other merchandise.<sup>107</sup> It is, however, in conjunction with his "economic survey" that Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's initial measures to augment Veneto-Maltese trade relations should be traced. In his letter of 1st June, 1761 the Cinque Savi were told that the local Maltese merchant was seemingly inclined to start buying "quantities of linen controlled by Antonio Carrari" from Bovolenta. One Maltese trader was in fact furnished with all relevant information and recommended to a certain Signor Smichia. He was also advised by Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga to see for himself "the manufacturing process of silk fabricated in Venice".<sup>108</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Venetian Minister this time approached the Order on the same question, ordering samples of linen from Carrari. This proposal, wrote Buzzaccarini Gonzaga in February 1762, "was still being considered".<sup>109</sup> During his "months-long" visit to Malta, Giovanni Martinich was encouraged by the Minister in his attempt to foster a Veneto-Maltese trade link "of no mean consideration [and] from which great benefit would be drawn by Venetian merchants and ships".<sup>110</sup>

Faced with the triple task of consolidating initial gains, attracting Venetian merchants to Malta and redirecting Maltese trade to the old Adriatic port, Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, in February 1762, proposed the urgent setting-up of a Venetian Trading House (*Casa di Commercio*) on the island.<sup>111</sup> "It would remedy", he explained, "the inconvenience of a nation which must avail itself of all opportunities [for its subsistence]

<sup>104</sup> See A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 711*, "Lettere dei Consoli: Malta a. 1712-1797", particularly Poussielgues's despatches from 1778 onwards.

<sup>105</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 19th May, 1755.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* See also 2nd June, 1755.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 31st May, 14th June, 23rd July, 1756.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st June, 1761.

<sup>109</sup> "Da mè fù proposto a questa Religione le Tellarie che per uso della medesima dalla Francia vengono soministrate, ed anco dal Carrari di Bovolontà ne hò fatto venire li campioni: l'affare stà in esamina...". *Ibid.*, 24th February, 1761 M.V.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

to the point of vexing even the foreign merchant whenever it is felt necessary to transact business with him". With a Venetian House in Malta, "merchandise proceeding from the Levant, particularly linen-cloth manufactures, would be stored in [local] warehouses to await the right opportunity, or else transhipped to other markets whenever Maltese merchants were not prepared to pay the right prices". An "established house", affirmed Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, would gradually absorb Malta's eastern Mediterranean trade. This branch of Maltese trade, "which today is being carried out by the Maltese merchant, would be performed by Venetians on their own ships; merchandise would be brought to Malta either through commission or put in bond for a year as foreign merchandise in transit, paying 1% duty besides warehouse dues". If this objective materialized, thought the Minister, "the introduction of other commodities, like wool, silk and other manufactures, would be a matter of course...; besides, these articles would also sell in Sicily and Barbary" in exchange for ashes, Tunisian linen cloth and a host of other goods. Deeply rooted and sustained commercial contacts existed between Malta and these parts, and trade with the area gave ample scope for development, manoeuvre and even monopoly.<sup>112</sup> However, the establishment of a Venetian Trading House in Malta, in Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's view, was bound to encounter an important technical difficulty. Would Venetians be granted equal rights to trade on the island as the Maltese merchant? Would they be subjected only to the same customs-tariff? How would the conservative Maltese merchant react to such a project? Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga had to wait for instructions from Venice before starting formal negotiations with the Grandmaster.<sup>113</sup>

### B The "April Decrees"

In 1761 the Sublime Porte was threatening the island of Malta with an imminent assault unless the *Ottoman Crown*, "the most beautiful vessel of Constantinople", was immediately restored by the Order.<sup>114</sup> Faced with the serious, turbulent situation at Constantinople,<sup>115</sup> and sensitive to the urgent precautions being taken in Malta against any Turkish attack,<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> "... essendovi continuo commercio per quelle Parti, e con le due Reggenze". *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> "... parola sù questo proposito sino ad ora non hò io fatto; non convenendo che si renda nota una tale Idea prima che dalle EE. Vostre non nè venghi approvata la massima, e per non apportare costì gellosie frà Negozianti stessi. Dipenderò addunque da Veneratis.mi Comandi Loro, e con questo Gran Maestro farò quei Offizj, e manegj che Vostre EE. vorano prescrivermi, impiegandomi con tutto l'animo mio à corrispondere à Loro proficui desiderj". *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> See note 26 above.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

the Venetian Senate, on the Order's petition, granted Knight Michele Sagramoso licence to export duty-free from Venice large quantities of pick-axes and mattocks to the island.<sup>117</sup> Sagramoso was no idle diplomat. He was fully acquainted with the Republic's inclination towards securing a purchase market in Malta and using the island as a central Mediterranean entrepôt.<sup>118</sup> Early in 1762, in his capacity as Acting-Receiver in Venice,<sup>119</sup> he submitted, on his own initiative, a new case before the Senate. The dynamic element, latent in every society however conservative, would regenerate the island's old trade link with the *Dominante*, if carefully exploited with regards to Malta. With psychological finesse, he explained that it had always been the Order's desire to reactivate Maltese trade with the Adriatic port in preference to any other foreign market.<sup>120</sup> Were not heavy tariffs and high prices among the main causes of deviating Maltese commerce with Venice and her colonial ports? If the tariff exemptions granted lately in connection with the *Ottoman Crown* episode were extended and made permanent, would not both the Venetian merchant and the Order of St John benefit? Would not this be a wise gesture on the part of the Republic to encourage the Maltese merchant to redirect his trade towards the Adriatic market, and inject the old Veneto-Maltese trade link with a new vitality?<sup>121</sup> The Senate described Sagramoso's case as "worthy of being cultivated and fully seconded".<sup>122</sup>

In April 1762 the Venetian Senate issued two important decrees. The first, dated 2nd April, exempted *Germanic* merchandise directed to Malta via Venice from all export duties for a five-year probationary period. Import charges imposed on such goods on entering Venice were to be refunded.<sup>123</sup> The second decree, dated 30th April, extended tariff exemption to *all* merchandise exported to Malta.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>117</sup> A.O.M. 1517, Pinto to Sagramoso, 10th August, 1761.

<sup>118</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 9*, 2nd March, 1761.

<sup>119</sup> The Receiver, Fra Zenobio de Ricci, was on a mission in Vienna. *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> A.O.M. 1518, "Memoria", 31st October, 1762.

<sup>121</sup> A.S.V., *Senato, Deliberazioni, Roma Ordinaria, Secreta, registro 108, f. 190 r.*  
"... che questo (maggior ingrandimento di scambievol Commercio) si potrebbe ottenere principalmente quando una competente aggevolezza di Dazi de Prodotti diversi, e varie manufatture dello Stato ponesse le Isole di Malta in grado di poter a prezzo eguale estrarre da questa Dominante più tosto, che dagli altri Porti Franchi vicini, quella ben considerabil parte de proprj Provedimenti, che da prezzi minori è costretta d'annualmente ritrarre più da quelli, che da questo". A.G.P.V., *busta 43, "Copia di Contenuto nel Memoriale del Ricevitor di Malta"*.

<sup>122</sup> A.S.V., *Senato, Deliberazioni, Roma Ordinaria, Secreta, registro 108, f. 190 r.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 193 v. A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 937, "Lettere e Minute del Magistrato ai pubblici rappresentanti e consoli esteri", Al Buzzaccarini, 30th April, 1762. On 22nd May, 1762, Gerolamo Marsando wrote to the Cinque Savi in Venice: "La pubblica Sovrana Clemenza di Vostre Eccellenze con un venerato*

In the context of the second decree, complete tariff exemption meant reimbursement of all dues (import and export) paid on merchandise shipped to Malta. To qualify for such a privilege, the Maltese merchant had to follow a set of prescriptions stipulated in the *Terminazione degli Illustrissimi, et Eccellentissimi Signori Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia. Che comprende li Metodi da osservarsi per bonificare il Dazio d'Uscita a tutte le Merci, che saranno estratte per Malta, e quello d'Ingrasso ai Generi infrascritti. Approntata con Decreto dell'Eccellentissimo Senato dei 30. Aprile 1762. Stampata per li Figliuoli del qu: Z. Antonio Pinelli, Stampatori Ducali*.<sup>125</sup> In brief, the methods and documents demanded by the Cinque Savi were the following:

1. *Before departure from Venice*

— two authentic copies, bearing the merchant's signature, of the *Manifesto di Mercanzia*, which contained (a) a detailed description of the nature, quality and quantity of the merchandise about to be exported; (b) the name of the ship being used for the purpose; and (c) the Master's name.

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dispaccio dè 15 cor.te onora questa Carica Consolare con la informazione del Venerato Decreto dell'Ecc.mo Senato che stabilisce un reciproco Commercio con la Sacra Religione di Malta per cinque anni avvenire con tutte quelle esenzioni che si leggono nel Decreto medesimo, di cui ne hò ricevuto l'autentica copia. Mi sono valso di una tal' onorevole notizia, et hò gia cominciato a farne parola con alcuni di questi Negotianti che la introduzione in Trieste del Commercio per quell'Isola fomentava forti lusinghe di non mediocre ingrandimento. Formò un tale discorso quella poca grata impressione, che suole nascere dalla mancanza delle concepite speranze, e penetrò grandemente il Decreto di franchiggia sul fondato timore, che il buon esito di tali facilità promover possa nell'animo, e nel studio di Vostre Eccellenze l'applicazione di accordare eguali esenzioni ad altri oggetti di Commercio. Nessuna cosa più disamina questa Piazza quanto il pensiero, che possi nella Dominante Veneta pensarsi ò a minorazione, ò ad esenzione dè Dazij; eguale sarà il pensare delle altre Piazze Emule, che si circondano da ogni parte; ed infatti questo sarà nelle presenti circostanze, nelle quali ogni Principe applica al Commercio l'unico mezzo di riprodurre alcuno di quei Rami di negoziazione che sono stati svelti dalli Porti di Genova, Livorno, Ancona, Trieste e Ferrara a danno della Piazza di Venezia...". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Lettere dei Consoli, busta 752, Trieste, 22nd May, 1762*. It is interesting also to point out that only a few weeks before, Marsando had written to the Magistracy on the latest developments in Vienna. "Sopra i varij articoli di Commercio posti in riflesso a questa Intendenza della Corte di Vienna fù sino ad ora posto in effetto quello delli Grani dell'Hungheria. Fù in conseguenza reso publico un Decreto, in vigor del quale si promette a qualunque Negotiante Suddito, od Estero una intiera esenzione dai Dazij, et una gratificazione di sette Carantani, che sono dodici soldi Veneti sopra ogni storo di grano che da quel Regno per la strada di Carlstadt fosse introdette in Trieste, ò in ogni altro Porto del Littorale Austriaco tanto per consumo tanto per estrazione, ò Commercio...". *Ibid.*, 10th April, 1762. Could not Marsando have been instrumental also in speeding up Venetian negotiations with Malta?

On the 'April Decrees', see also V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 512-513.

<sup>125</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, "Malta"*.

— one copy had to go to the *Fedel Raggionato* of the Magistracy of Trade, the other to the *Fedel Nodaro* and *Scrivano d'Uscita* for scrutiny and registration.

— two copies of the bill of lading (*Bolletta*) identical to the *Manifesto*: one for the owner of the merchandise, the other for the *Raggionato*.

— sorting out and packing of merchandise into *colli* in the *Fante's* presence.

— each *collo* had to be sealed with the "Stamp of Our Protector St Mark".

— Lading of merchandise on board in *Fante's* presence. *Fante* would give the captain an authentic list, bearing his signature, of merchandise laden on ship, to be handed over to the *Raggionato*.

— no alteration could be made in the *Manifesto* after this stage.

## 2. On arrival in Malta

— The ship's master would submit the bill of lading to the Venetian consul, who would verify whether the shipped *colli* were strictly in accordance with the *Bolletta*. He would then issue a *Responsable*, a document, bearing the consular seal, certifying the arrival of merchandise.

— *Responsable* to be countersigned by Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga in his capacity as *Uomo della Repubblica*.

## 3. Claim

— Submission of authentic *Responsable* to *Fedel Raggionato* in Venice for reimbursement of all duties paid in the process.

The Maltese merchant's right to reclaim duties on goods paid on entering Venice was restricted to a host of commodities specified in the *Terminazione*. The list, comprising 47 different types of commodities, is reproduced here in the original on the following page.

Tariff exemption applied also to the export of heavy timber (*tavolame, travame, alborame*), purchase of which had normally to be exacted from the Venetian Guild of Timber Merchants.<sup>126</sup>

The Republic's measures of April 1762 were explicitly directed at attracting a "not unimportant" branch of Maltese trade away from Trieste.<sup>127</sup> Austrian policy, particularly after the Treaty of Passarowitz, had been especially geared to isolate Venice "within the Adriatic". Austrian Trieste

<sup>126</sup> "Altro Metodo per la Restituzione del Dazio a tutti li Legnami, che verranno estratti per Malta, qual dovrà farsi dal Consorzio dei Mercanti da Legname", *Ibid.*, "Terminazione...".

<sup>127</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, *Scritture* 1762-63, f. 15 v.

NOTA DEI GENERI, AI QUALI SARA' RESTITUITO IL DAZIO D'INGRESSO  
ALLA LORO ESTRAZIONE PER MALTA

Bande di ferro	Tele G.H. cioè Tele grezze da Pittori
Bazze di filo di ferro	di Cento Aquilone, Agnelline e Ariete
Caldaje e caldaiette di rame	in sorte
Crogioli	Tele Fiocchetti, o sian Olmi
Chiodi di sorte	Tele Negresine
Fil di rame diverso	Tele Occhietti
Lamierini di ferro	Tele Paggere e Paggerine
Legnami tedeschi	Tele Poggiane, o sian da vele e da locca
Lime di ferro	Tele rigate
Lime di paglia	Tele Sangali e Quadretti
Oro battuto da Colonia	Tele stampate
Picconi di ferro	Tele tovagliate di lino e stoppa
Rame di Piancia	Tele Terlise e Terlisette
Rame rosso diverso	Tele Terlisoni
Tele carnizze in sorte, dette anche Lubiane	Zappe e zapponi di ferro
Tele Cavalline	Carte Bergamine
Tele Costanze curate	Azzali
Tele Costanze grezze, Olandine fine, & ordinarie dal Can, e Cavalline in sorte	Banda raspata
Tele da Tamisi	Banda stagnata
Tele da Campidonia	Coltelli con Pironi
Tele di Slesia e di Germania	Coltelli Caravani
Tele di Rensi Tedeschi	Fili Latton
Tele Giurini in sorte	Lametta di Latton bianca e gialla
	Padelle di ferro
	Trementina

and Rijeka (Fiume) had been declared free ports in 1719 and since then had been waging "an economic siege", "a war of industry" against the Republic. Not only was the fiscal policy at the *mercato realtino* appearing by comparison over-burdensome to the foreign trader — whether from the Levant, the West, Albania, the Turkish provinces or Germany — but it was even repellent to the Venetian merchant himself. Total or partial tariff exemptions at the port of Trieste, declared the Cinque Savi, "had lately succeeded in diverting Maltese ships from lading in Venice supplies of Germanic manufactures", previously monopolised by the Republic.<sup>128</sup> These, having been one time the leading articles of Maltese trade with the Republic, used to serve as an occasion for the purchase of a host of other Venetian products.<sup>129</sup> Germanic goods had become much more expensive to buy in Venice than in any other market.<sup>130</sup> In the face of such growing

<sup>128</sup> "... ch'essi per antica consuetudine continuavano a provvedere nella Dominante". *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> "... altri generi nostri...". *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> The Senate admitted that "il deviamiento dè Maltesi dal nostro Porto è prodotto dal prezzo più gravoso, che negl'altri dè Generi Germanici...". A.G.P.V., busta 43, 2nd April, 1762. In Pregadi. (Copia).

competition, the April Decrees would lure the Maltese merchant and re-route a substantial part of his trade towards the Venetian emporium.

To stretch the objectives of these concessions a step further, the Cinque Savi commissioned Buzzaccarini Gonzaga to try and follow up the April Decrees by reaching a similar agreement — “by way of treaty” — with the government of Malta: Venetian merchandise shipped to Malta by Venetian merchants on Venetian ships would receive similar facilities and tariff exemptions at the port of Malta,<sup>131</sup> “until this mutual practice evolved into a permanent convention”.<sup>132</sup>

This was a delicate question which would involve one of the Order of St John's most fundamental principles — that of neutrality. As this subject has been treated at some length in another paper,<sup>133</sup> I shall limit myself to two observations. First, the Grandmaster would not venture on a policy that would prove unwelcome not only to himself but also to his successors, “since the revenue accrued from customs and excise duties constituted a fair portion of his income”.<sup>134</sup> According to an independent source, the Grandmaster's yearly income (*Ricetta Magistrale*) during the early decades of the eighteenth century had risen to about 100,000 scudi “because customs duties have been extremely increased, higher than ever before”. The same source points out that 30% of the magisterial revenues, then, came from the *Dogana* alone.<sup>135</sup> By the 1760s trade and duties had increased accordingly.<sup>136</sup> Secondly, favouring the Venetian merchant would almost inevitably create a precedent. Exemption of a few would lead to exemption of all. France, Spain, Portugal and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies would have reason to demand similar tariff concessions which would be diplomatically impossible to refuse. Privileges enjoyed by the Order and the Maltese merchant in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Neapolitan and Sicilian ports were, according to Grandmaster Pinto, much mote

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<sup>131</sup> “...che le merci qui provedute giungendo in quell'Isola si fossero ricevute con agevolezze equivalenti a quelle, che se gli erano da noi accordate nell'estrazione, le quali avrebbero posto in sempre maggiore vantaggio la corrispondenza con questo Porto”. A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, *Scritture 1762-63*, f. 15 v.

<sup>132</sup> Buzzaccarini Gonzaga “rappresentò al Gran Maestro, come un contrassegno della pubblica propensione verso la Religione le agevolezze concesse alle estrazioni per esse, e per la sua Isola destinate, e nel tempo stesso il desiderio di V.S.tà, che la Religione medesima cooperasse dal canto suo ad agevolare il reciproco commercio delle due Nazioni, accogliendo nelle sue Dogane le merci da qui estratte con facilità corrispondenti a quelle, che per parte pubblica s'erano dichiarate, sicchè questo scambievole concorso prendesse forma di permanente convenzione”. *Ibid.*, ff. 15 v-16 r.

<sup>133</sup> V. MALLIA-MILANES, “Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations...”, *loc. cit.*, pp. 515-520.

<sup>134</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, *Scritture 1762-63*, f. 16 r.

<sup>135</sup> M.C.C.V., *Donà dalle Rose*, Ms. 381/6, “Descrizione di Malta Anno 1716”, f. 28 r.

<sup>136</sup> B. BLOUET, *The Story of Malta*, London 1967, pp. 124-125.

substantial and extensive than those recently accorded by Venice. None of these had ever approached the Order for anything like preferential treatment.<sup>137</sup>

### C. An Alternative Design

In August 1763 Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga submitted his alternative project to the Grandmaster for the establishment in Malta of a Venetian Trading House.<sup>138</sup> The design was based on three principles.

1. One or two Venetian merchant "families" would be granted naturalization. i.e., they would be allowed to take up residence in Malta in their capacity as traders,<sup>139</sup> and to enjoy "il Privilegio Nazionale", i.e., all those customs-tariff exemptions normally reserved only for the Maltese merchant.
2. They would enjoy "il Privilegio di Transito" or "il Privilegio dei Forastieri", i.e., transit trade concessions not shared by nationals. Imported merchandise, Venetian or otherwise, would be allowed re-exportation from Malta, subject only to 1% duty, and storage in local warehouses for a period not exceeding one year; if not exported before the expiry of that specified period, and used instead for local consumption, it would become subject to the "Law of Higher Duty of 6 1/3%".
3. Merchandise initially manifested for transit purposes and afterwards declared for local usage, would be bracketed within the 3 1/3% concession.

Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga's design fitted in nicely with the Republic's economic rehabilitation policy. Venetian trade in the central Medi-

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<sup>137</sup> "...i privilegi posseduti nei loro Porti sono ancora maggiori di quelli, che vengono di conferirsegli da V. S.à, mentre per parte delle due Sicilie, e delle Spagne amplissime sono le Franchiggie, alle quali furono abilitati i Maltesi, e per quella della Francia, si è generalmente esentata qualunque estrazione, indi l'ingresso dei Cottoni recati coi loro Bastimenti, dall'Isola e recentemente vi si concesse la naturalizzazione senza che nè dall'una, nè dall'altra siasi mai richiesta convenzione di sorte". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, *Scritture* 1762-63, f. 16 r.

In 1761 France had exempted the Maltese merchant from the *droit d'aubaine*, while in 1765 he was granted the same civil and commercial rights as if he were a native of France. A.O.M. 271, f. 205 v. A.O.M. 272, ff. 61v-64. A. Mifsud, *Knights Hospitallers of the Venerable Tongue of England in Malta*, Malta 1914, p. 284. In his 1762 *Memoria* to Sagrarnoso, Grandmaster Pinto explained that "Gli Negozianti Maltesi godono effettivamente grazie assai singolari nelli Regni di Francia, Spagna, e Portogallo, concesse loro dalla Real munificenza delli rispettivi Monarchi unicamente perchè sono Vassalli della Religione da essi onorata in tutte le circostanze di singolare Clementissimo Patrocinio senza che mai avessero perciò preteso gli di loro rispettivi sudditi, che qui capitano con effetti di Commercio, avere qualche esenzione...". A.O.M. 1518, "Memoria", 31st October, 1762.

<sup>138</sup> "Proposizioni del Cav. Buzzaccarini: Capitoli che si propongono per essere confirmati da S.A.E. con suo Decreto". *Ibid.*, August, 1763. A.S.V., M.B.G., 19th August, 1763. A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, ff. 16v-17r.

<sup>139</sup> "... con il Titolo di Negozianti...". A.O.M. 1518, August, 1763. "... per esercitare il Negozio...". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, f. 16v.

terreanean would gradually absorb not only a large portion of Maltese trade but also — due to the island's geographical position — of trade with Sicily and North Africa. The Venetian Minister was, no doubt, conscious of the difficulties involved in apportioning without distinction the comparatively limited trade of the island among nationals and foreigners, as this in practice would necessarily reduce the profits of the Maltese merchant.<sup>140</sup> Nonetheless, the Grandmaster seemed, in general principle, inclined towards acceding to this alternative design, provided that "this acquiescence" would not be embodied in any "authentic document", as this would open the door for other states to make similar claims.<sup>141</sup> The one or two Venetian families would be granted the *privilegio nazionale* and the *privilegio di transito*.<sup>142</sup> The third article was rejected as the principle it involved would automatically render all tariff legislation in Malta extremely flexible to the sole discretion of the owners of the respective merchandise. The Venetian families concerned would be in a position "to assume control over the largest part of the island's traffic".<sup>143</sup> The Grandmaster's Decree, granting the Venetian families naturalization and enabling them to partake of the said privileges, would be issued to the merchants concerned, on their arrival and at their own request. This would give the document a *private* character and the Trading House the informality of a private business concern.<sup>144</sup>

Although these concessions were not as liberal as their Venetian counterparts, they were nonetheless "acceptable" to the *Cinque Savi alla Mer-*

<sup>140</sup> "... stante le difficoltà che potea incontrare un indistinto accomunamento di Forestieri coi Nazionali nella limitata negoziazione dell'Isola, come quello, che verrebbe a detrarre il profitto dei Nazionali medesimi...". *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> "... che di questo acconsentimento non se ne esigesse un documento autentico di convenzione perche questo sarebbe un titolo somministrato alle altre Nazioni di pretendere in forza dell'esempio la stessa predilezione, che non si poteva generalmente accordare senza grave detrimento della Nazione Maltese". *Ibid.* "... essendo il Gran Maestro sempre fisso nel scrupoloso suo sistema di non fare cosa, che comparire possa una formale Convenzione...". A.S.V., M.B.G., 19th August, 1763. See also A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, filza 99*, f. 130.

<sup>142</sup> "Per il p.mo punto che riguarda all'avoglimento delle due famiglie veni dà questo Gran Maestro accertato di sua particolare Predilezione ed assicurato del Transito per tutte quelle Merci che loro fossero raccomandate ò dirette con dichiarazione d'essere per altre Parti destinate...". A.S.V., M.B.G., 19th August, 1763.

<sup>143</sup> "... sopra di questo (articolo) non essergli stato possibile di conseguirne una dichiarazione... ma che l'assolutamente accordargli un deposito di Merci, che godere possa ad arbitrio dè proprietarj, e del privilegio del transito interdetto à Nazionali, e di quello assieme del lor minor Dacio, ciò sarebbe l'aprir ai d.ue Veneti Nazionali un campo d'impadronirsi della più gran parte dell' traffico di quell'Isola". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, busta 190*, f. 17r.

<sup>144</sup> "... questo (Decreto) non può per ora rilasciare, non sapendosi in nome di chi dare si debba; onde solo al arivo à questa Parte dè soggetti destinati à stabilirsi ed alla loro istanza verà accordato...". A.S.V., M.B.G., 19th August, 1763. See also *ibid.*, 10th September, 1763.

canzia, as they would give the Venetian merchant a greater opportunity of strengthening his trade links with Sicily and North Africa. The only setback was that the agreement would not be embodied in a formally written, binding and officially rectified convention. Successive Grandmasters could, if they so desired, completely disregard it.<sup>145</sup>

Towards the end of their report, the Cinque Savi paid tribute to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga and Sagromoso: the former, for having, with "dexterity" and "true diligence", succeeded in extracting "advantages, singularly concerning our commerce" from "a government indisposed to concede them"; the latter, for the "praiseworthy thoughts and ability" with which he had grasped the opportunity "of redirecting to the *Dominante* the commerce of Malta" and for "the uninterrupted attention with which he had so indefatigably worked to recall Maltese ships to our harbour".<sup>146</sup>

#### D. Requests for Renewal

Just as the five-year period of Venetian tariff concessions was about to expire,<sup>147</sup> a group of interested, shrewd Maltese merchants — including the brothers Carlo and Antonio Mattei, Giuseppe Grech, Pietro Felice, Giuseppe Bonello, Giulio d'Andrea, Carlo Ciantar, Gio. Andrea Xerri and Lorenzo Grech —<sup>148</sup> petitioned the Grandmaster "to interpose his good offices" so that the Venetian Republic "would have the kindness to grant the renewal of the said exemptions for another five years".<sup>149</sup> In 1769, two years after, Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, on behalf of the Grandmaster, submitted a formal request for renewal to the Venetian Magistracy of Trade,<sup>150</sup> asking for a modification of the April Decrees. No reference was made in the application to goods of Germanic origin, nor to Venetian manufactures, which had featured so prominently on the first occasion. Perhaps the most significant trade concession contained in the April Decrees had been the granting of the right to purchase and export different types of timber free of all imposts. The Magistracy was now being asked to retain concessions on this indispensable commodity. Buzzaccarini Gon-

<sup>145</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 190, f. 17r.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 17 v.

<sup>147</sup> "... si trovano quelli già vicini a spirare ». A.G.P.V., busta 43 (unpaginated).

<sup>148</sup> The first three, together with Carlo Grech Delicata, have been described in a different context as "the names of the principal Maltese merchants". *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* They ended their petition like this: "Sperano final[men]te gli replicati Or[ator]i la supplicata grazia, fondati nella Paterna Munificenza dell'A.V.S. intenta sempre a favorire con amorevole impegno il Commercio di queste Sue Isole, dal quale dipende la felicitazione di tutto il Suo Vassallaggio...". *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> A.G.P.V., busta 43, scrittura 24th February, 1769. Also A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, *Diversorum*, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 2, 27th September, 1784.

zaga indicated also the Order's desire to start buying regularly annual amounts of grain — from 20 to 30 thousand *staia*, tax-free.<sup>151</sup>

The application was referred to the *Magistrato alle Biave*, but due to a number of difficulties concerning navigation, the State's finances and "domestic economy", it remained shelved for the next twelve years or so.<sup>152</sup> On 20th December, 1781 the question was brought up again by the Order's Receiver in Venice in a *promemoria* submitted to the Venetian College.<sup>153</sup> On the strength of past performances, would a renewal of tax-exemptions prove economically rewarding to the old Adriatic port? Was the preferential treatment which Venice extended to the Maltese merchant in 1762 instrumental to the improvement in the Republic's network of trade relations with other cities? Were there any marked differences in Venetian exports to Malta between the five-year period of concession (1762-67) and later years?

The 1760s had shown promising signs of recovery in Venetian trade relations with Denmark and the Barbary Regencies. Denmark, in her "modernization" drive, was seeking opportunities for expanding her overseas commerce with the east and the Mediterranean. Trade agreements had already been concluded with France, Spain, Genoa and Naples.<sup>154</sup> "Why not with Venice, too?" thought Buzzaccarini Gonzaga. In his despatch of 10th August, 1761 the Venetian Minister submitted an account of his negotiations with the superintendent of a Danish trade mission during the latter's sojourn in Malta. He explained plans for a provisional Veneto-Danish trade agreement and advised the Magistracy to act promptly in that direction lest the outcome might prove as abortive as the 1750 attempt.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Every 3 1/3 Venetian *staia* were equivalent to 1 Maltese *salma*. A.S.V., M.B.G., 10th January, 1764 M.V.

<sup>152</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busca* 396, fascicolo 126, *scrittura* 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, *scrittura* 9/E, "Memoria per l'Esenzione de' Dazj presentata nell'Eccellentissimo Collegio li 20 Dicembre 1781".

<sup>154</sup> On the history of Denmark, see L. KRABBE, *Histoire de Danemark*, Paris 1950.

<sup>155</sup> "Devo... rendere intese l'EE.VV. che nè scorsi giorni approdò a questo Porto una Fregata Reggia di Danimarca con altri Bastimenti di Convoglio destinati per il Levante ove dicesi voler quella Nazione stabilire un Comercio, infatti trasportò a Malta soggetto, che per il passato fù console di Francia costi, ora della Danimarca fatto soprintendente di tal Comercio con Onorificio ed utile assegnamento: Egli hà la soprintendenza di stabilire li Consoli in quelle Scale e dovrà ogni tanto tempo passare à quelle Parti. Sopra detta Fregata vi sono più Soggetti destinati à trattarsi in Levante, per prendere tutte quelle cognizioni necessarie si per il Comercio, come per altre osservazioni; ed uno dè più giovani restò a Malta, per apprendere la Navigazione sopra le Gallere". A.S.V., M.B.G., 30th June, 1761. "Sotto il dì 30 Giugno mi diede l'onore di significare alle EE.Loro l'arrivo à Malta di soggetto destinato dalla Danimarca con soprintendenza di Comercio per il Levante, ed a queste parti; ora rappresentar devo quanto proposto mi viene dal medesimo della occasione auta di seco lui trattare confidenzialmente, ed in tempo che

In 1763 Venice concluded peace treaties with Algiers<sup>156</sup> and Tunis,<sup>157</sup> in 1764 with Tripoli<sup>158</sup> and in 1765 with Morocco.<sup>159</sup> It is premature, if not too presumptuous, to assert that such a development in Mediterranean history had been a definite outcome of a close Veneto-Maltese *rapport*. Other forces at play there certainly were, particularly Austria's stipulation of commercial treaties with the Barbary Regencies, which Cessi calls "a moral threat to the Republic".<sup>160</sup> However, Malta's share in the process cannot be denied, if only as a secure and direct source of intelligence, even though her relations with Barbary could have never been cordial.<sup>161</sup> From the Venetian point of view, Austria's progressive relations with the Regencies constituted a very undesirable stage in Mediterranean political and commercial development. In December 1755 Buzzaccarini Gonzaga informed the Cinque Savi that Turkey had given Algiers specific instructions to settle peace with Austria.<sup>162</sup> Two months later he observed that

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mi studiavo con il maggior fervore prestate i miei serviggi alle EE.VV., con insignuargli la provista d'alcune manifatture Venete, che trasportar si potrebbero à Malta. Le quali con profitto avrebbe Egli potuto diffondere à quelle parti; ma ciò non potè riuscirci d'ottenere, adducendomi più ragioni e frà l'altre l'Alleanza di Commercio stabilita dalla Danimarca con tutte le nazioni, per la quale ritrar poteva d'altrove tutti Effetti con maggiori vantaggi. Il discorso però passò più avanti, e mi disse che la sua Corte' avrebbe anco desiderato di stabilire con simile alleanza con la Serenissima Republica; e che sopra tal proposito n'era stato anco fatto qualche discorso nè tempi passati, ma che la cambiazioni de' soggetti dà quali erasi proposto l'affare, aveva fatto caderne il Progetto. Ora, questo ben volentieri si riprenderebbe sperando riaccontrare la stessa buona sorte con la Ser.ma Rep.ca, che incontrata hà con la Francia, Spagna, Napoli, Genova ed ora in Levante; così che li rispetivi sudditi e bastimenti goder dovessero reciprocamente di tutte quelle prerogative che godono le altre nazioni, le più distinte e con parzialità riguardate. Si propona a questo commercio tutte sorti di Pesci Salati, de' quali nè possiede la Danimarca, la pescazione, Droghe che di p.ma mano ricava con il commercio che tiene a quelle parti; ritraendo dalle Isole sudditi del Levante le Passoline tanto ricercate, e necessarie al loro quotidiano uso, e dà Venezia chincagliarie d'ogni genere, cristalli per la china, Tellerie, e Saponi di quali molto abbisognano, e che da tutte le parti cercano ritrate". *Ibid.*, 10th August, 1761. On the Danish expedition of 1761-1767, see T. HANSEN, *Arabia Felix*, London, 1964. On its relations with Malta, see *ibid.*, p. 75 f.

<sup>156</sup> See A. SACERDOTI, "La mission a Alger du Consul de Venise Nicolas Rosalem", *Revue Africaine* XCVI (1952), pp. 64-104. *Id.*, "Venise et les Regences d'Alger, Tunis et Tripoli, 1699-1764", *Revue Africaine* CI (1957).

<sup>157</sup> See V. MARCHESI, *Tunisi e Venezia nel secolo XVIII*, Venice 1882.

<sup>158</sup> See G. CAPPOVIN, *Tripoli e Venezia nel secolo XVIII*, Verbania 1942. F. CORÒ, *Il Consolato della Repubblica di Venezia a Tripoli dal 1764 al 1779*, Tripoli 1955.

<sup>159</sup> See V. MARCHESI, "La Repubblica Veneta e il Marocco", *Rivista Storica Italiana* III (1886).

<sup>160</sup> R. CESSI, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia* II, Milan 1968, p. 237.

<sup>161</sup> "... essendo somma la difficoltà di stacare Persona per la Barbaria, non avendo quest'Isola alcun commercio à quella parte, e dovendosi noi servire sempre di Bandiere estere, le quali in alcuni tempi sono rare... la Bandiera Maltese non può andare in quelle Parti, perchè nemica, e conviene servirsi d'altre sicure che casualmente giungono...". A.S.V., M.B.G., 27th January, 1765 M.V.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 1st December, 1755.

no marked progress had yet been made towards Algerian peace with the Habsburgs.<sup>163</sup> Was it perhaps because Algiers was at war with Tunis?<sup>164</sup> Was it because Algerian Beys were by nature "always the most insolent and the most fiercely given to the *corso*"?<sup>165</sup> Or was it perhaps because the Regency's alliance with the strong naval powers in the Mediterranean, France and England, encouraged Algerian corsairs to confine their reprisals to the weaker nations?<sup>166</sup> Certainly, the situation was even worse than in early 1755 when strained relations between the Regency and the Dutch and Livornese had caused unrest to Austrian navigation.<sup>167</sup> Now, even the Austrian consul in Tunis had been conducted to slavery in Algiers.<sup>168</sup> Buzzaccarini Gonzaga depicted the Algerian siege of Tunis with great mastery and detail, overconfident that the Magistracy in Venice would be awaiting news of the latest developments.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 16th February, 1755 M.V.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 10th May, 14th June, 23rd July, 1756. See also V. PARADIS, *Alger au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Algiers 1898.

<sup>165</sup> M. NANI MOCENIGO, "La marina della Religione di Malta", *Ateneo Veneto* CXXVIII, 2 (1937), p. 81.

<sup>166</sup> See S. BONO, *I corsari barbareschi*, Turin 1964. G. FISHER, *Barbary Legend: War, Trade and Piracy in North Africa, 1415-1830*, Oxford 1957. H.D. DE GRAMMONT, "Etudes Algeriennes: La course, l'esclavage et la rédemption à Alger", *Revue Historique* XXV-XXVI (1884-85). P. GRANDCHAMP, *La Correspondance des Consuls d'Alger, 1690-1742*, Algiers 1890. M.S. ANDERSON, "Great Britain and the Barbary States in the Eighteenth Century", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XXIX (1956).

<sup>167</sup> A.S.V., M.B.G., 14th April, 1755.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd December, 1756.

<sup>169</sup> "Significai sino dà molti mesi alle Ecc.ze V.e la partenza di queste nostre Gallere, ed uno dè Vasselli destinati per la Barbaria; ciò ch'è accaduto mi fò ora à nararle. Vi si tratenno continuamente per tre mesi in vista di Tunesi, in attenzione dè Scambechi Algerini, sperando aver l'occasione d'attaccarli nel tempo, che questi venissero per impossarsi della Goletta, e stringere Tunesi anco per parte del Mare; ciò non seguì perchè gli Algerini nè fugirono l'incontro. Dalla permanenza della nostra Squadra in que' Mari, molto n'approfitò il Bej, il quale non lasciò di dimostrarne gratitudine, avvedendo rilasciati dodici Maltesi Schiavi, e prometendo la libertà di tutti li Cristiani, se felice gli riusciva l'esito della Guerra: mà il giorno due settembre fù per assalto presa la Città dagli Algerini, e passati a fil dè Spada tutti li seguaci del Bej, ed abbandonata la Città per otto giorni al saccheggio. In questa confusione quatro dè primi Ministri del Bej, si salvarono sopra le Gallere, e diedero conto di quanto era accaduto. Il nostro Generale à tal notizia si determinò armare tutt' i piccoli Bastimenti delle Gallere, e dalle medesime sostenuti entrare nella Goletta, e trasportar fuori sei Bastimenti Corsari collà armati; il tutto fù eseguito con la maggior risoluzione, e cortaggio; così che in meno d'un'ora il tutto fù fatto senza un minimo inconveniente, nonostante che continuato fosse il fuoco, che dagli Algerini si faceva dalla fortezza sopra la squadra. Diede fondo il nostro Generale à Capo Cartagine fuori del Cannone, ove vi si trattene tutto il giorno due, per poter metter in istato di navigazione li suoi Bastimenti, e la notte stessa fece vella per Malta. Da lettera 23 ottobre del Console Francese di Tunesi, sentesi che sieno state comesse tutte le crudeltà, e disordini immaginabili, non risparmiandola neppure à Consoli, spogliati e maltrattati senza alcun riguardo: il Console Imperiale, ed Olandese furono condotti schiavi in Algeri, e lo stesso di Francia spogliato nudo, e portato al campo per esser in confronto del Vecchio Bej.

Relations between Venice and Tripoli were traced with no less skill and colour.<sup>170</sup> It was precisely in one of his despatches on this theme that Buzzaccarini Gonzaga implicitly confirmed the intermediary role Malta was playing between the Republic and the Regencies. Writing in mid-1764 he referred to the recently concluded peace treaty between Venice and Tripoli.<sup>171</sup>

I trust that this new Commerce with Barbary will provide me with greater opportunities to render service and obedience to Your Excellencies. This Island's position, being within easy reach, gives me access to the most reliable and speedy information about other Nations' trade with Barbary. Through these Nations, which call here frequently, Venetian consuls [there] would keep me in touch with all developments the moment they receive instructions from Your Excellencies.

Malta had a new role awaiting her. Five months before the Order's Receiver had submitted his *pro-memoria*,<sup>172</sup> a plague-stricken Venetian ketch, the *Buona Unione*, master Girolamo Padella, anchored in the vicinity of Marsamxetto Harbour. With a rich cargo of linen, wool, camel-hide and rice, she had been chartered for Sfax by some Tunisian merchants. "To prevent the plague from spreading and preserve the tranquillity of the Mediterranean", the Grandmaster ordered the ketch to be incinerated on the 9th July in St Julian's Creek. The incident was communicated to the Trade Magistracy by Antonio Poussielgues, the Venetian consul in Malta, on 14th July, 1781.<sup>173</sup> The Venetian Republic's refusal to compensate the loss of 14,000 *zecchini* claimed by the Tunisian merchants,<sup>174</sup> and its failure to overawe the Tunisian Bey with Andrea Querini's imposing

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impuntandogli sollecitazione della Francia il soccorso à Tunis portato dalla squadra di Malta. Il Vecchio Bej dopo alcuni giorni tenuto alla catena nel paviglione del Generale Algerino, e maltrattato con il bastone, acciò manifestasse li suoi Tesori fù strangolato, e li di lui figli tagliati a pezzi nel sito stesso, ove furono arrestati; di tutti solo passò esente il Console Inglese, per l'amicizia che dicesi tenere con il Bej Constantino, Generale dell'Armata Algerina. Li due ottobre l'armata partì da Tunesi apportando secco tutto il meglio del Paese, e tutta l'Artigliaria, lasciando il nuovo Bej spoglio di tutto, il quale stà attualmente travagliando per stabilirsi nel suo Regno". *Ibid.* "Di Barbaria nulla si hà di nuovo; solo che Tunisi è in deplorabile stato, privo d'ogni cosa, e che poco contenti sono que' Popoli del nuovo Bej". *Ibid.*, 15th March, 1757. "Abbiamo in Porto tre Navi di Guerra Olandesi, e dicesi che altre ve nè approderano per riunirsi, meditando di prendere una soddisfazione con la Barbaria...". *Ibid.*, 11th January, 1762 M.V. "Qui è giunta la notizia della guerra dichiarata dagli Algerini agli Imperiali, e molti Bastimenti di questa Bandiera sono stati qui arestati...". *Ibid.*, 30th August, 1764.

<sup>170</sup> See *Ibid.*, 12th March, 30th April, 13th May, 1764; 2nd December 1765; 29th January, 13th February, 1765 M.V.; 24th March, 21st April, 12th May, 29th August, 1766.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 7th June, 1764.

<sup>172</sup> That is on 6th July, 1781.

<sup>173</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 711*, 14th July, 1781.

<sup>174</sup> S. BONO, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

squadron,<sup>175</sup> were sufficient evidence that the episode would lead to serious repercussions. It would be suicidal for the Republic to break her good relations with the Order at a moment when Malta was bound to have an important function to perform.<sup>176</sup>

There were other equally important factors to consider. The *Manifesti di Esportazioni e Ruoli di Basimenti*, contained in the archives of the Cinque Savi, provide a means for an examination of the commodities which filled the holds of most ships trading between Venice and Malta. The correspondence of merchants and consuls in Malta very rarely recorded the respective amounts, values or volumes of freighted goods; and it is only from 1778 onwards that Antonio Poussielgues started to submit regularly lists, backdated from 1773, of Venetian ships arriving in Malta.<sup>177</sup> Between 1762 and 1767 about 100,000 planks of *Larese*<sup>178</sup> timber was shipped to Malta from Venice.<sup>179</sup> In 1763-64, which were years of severe bad harvests and grain shortage reaching famine proportions,<sup>180</sup> Malta imported over 15,500 *staia* of grain. Other Venetian merchandise included all types of paper (*carta, carta strazza* (sic), *carta da scrivere, carta da scrivere fina, carta stampata, carta da navigar, cartone*), books,<sup>181</sup> glass panes, mirrors, crystals,

175 R.S. ANDERSON, *Naval Wars in the Levant 1559-1853*, Liverpool 1952, p. 310.

176 See V. MALLIA-MILANES, "The Buona Unione...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 309-326.

177 See *Id.*, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 536-43, 552-53.

178 See G. BOERIO, *Dizionario del Dialetto Veneziano*, 2nd Edition, Venice 1856, p. 361, *sub voce*.

179 On Veneto-Maltese timber trade in the eighteenth century, see V. MALLIA-MILANES, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 533-536.

180 *Ibid.*, pp. 530-533.

181 In Malta the book trade was free from all customs tariffs. A.S.V., M.B.G., 30th August, 1764. It was certainly not a lucrative business. *Ibid.*, 7th June, 1764. The country was not inclined towards participation in such a trade. "I libri", affirmed Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, "è una mercanzia qui non conosciuta". *Ibid.*, 31st July, 1765. The number of those who could read, let alone grasp philosophical ideas, must have clearly constituted a very tiny sector of the 'chivalric' class of the population. The majority, the masses, were inarticulate and superstitious. Some time before 1764 a certain Andrea Rappetti, a Venetian bookseller, arrived in Malta to start trafficking in books on the island. The only opposition he met, particularly in his sale of French literature, was forthcoming from another bookseller of French nationality, who had been, for years, established in Malta. The latter had been entrusted with the task of binding books for the Order of St John and, as Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga put it, "di servire alla Religione". *Ibid.*, 7th June, 1764. This French bookseller and binder had obtained an almost exclusive monopoly of the book trade in Malta: "...ne ottene aria primitiva con la quale vi fù compresa anco la Vendita". *Ibid.* Nothing else is known of Rappetti, except that he had not even been recommended to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga by the Cinque Savi. *Ibid.* The case of Giuseppe Azzopardi was different. On 25th May, 1765, the Cinque Savi wrote to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga instructing him to help and protect as best he could this Azzopardi who had been commissioned to act as Representative Agent in Malta for the Gio. Batta Remondini Publishing House of Venice. According to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, Azzopardi was not the right man to undertake such an enterprise: he lacked the necessary

nails, copper, lead, wax, turpentine, linen and wool.<sup>182</sup> The Cinque Savi claimed that a close examination of Venetian exports to Malta during the tax-free period 1762-67, when compared to the next five years when tariff

knowledge and experience of how to run a trade, considering that he neither owned any book-shop before, nor was he ever known to have established a small business of any sort in the city. The Venetian Minister believed that the only way Azzopardi could venture profitably on such an enterprise was to indulge in wholesale business. This, however, would also seem rather ambitious and difficult to carry out in a small island like Malta, "il quale non inclina à tale commercio": *Ibid.*, 31st July, 1765. Nevertheless, Buzzaccarini Gonzaga pointed out that "stampe e carte vendute per le publiche strade anno auto il suo buon esito, come cosa nuova e d'un prezzo assai inferiore à quelli di Francia, che con riputazione si vendono". *Ibid.* There was also in Malta at the time a representative of Antonio Zatta's Publishing House of Venice. He was apparently faring fairly well, although Buzzaccarini Gonzaga feared he would soon have to meet the same fate of his predecessors. Many French booksellers had had the misfortune of starting on such a venture and were soon after compelled by the sheer force of bleak prospects to give it up altogether. "La moltiplicazione di negozio d'una stessa specie non può avere buon effetto in un Paese assai ristretto, e particolarmente in questo ove il Paesano non applica à tali generi di cose à lui affatto ignote". *Ibid.* The Zatta agent had been fortunate enough to have found the country utterly wanting in "Libri Scholastici", but unless he decided, thought the Venetian Minister, to extend his trade to other more useful commercial products, like "Panni o Sete", his future would not be very promising. *Ibid.* Nonetheless, on 4th September, 1765, the Magistracy of Trade wrote once again to Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, insisting that the "Negozio Zatta" should be incorporated from then onwards, in the recently concluded Veneto-Maltese commercial agreement. This was naive and unwise thought Buzzaccarini Gonzaga. "Ho l'honore di dirle sù questo proposito, che dal p.mo momento che comparse à questa Parte l'Agente del d.o Zatta, mi sono fatto incarico di proteggerlo in tutto, e procurargli tutti l'avantaggi possibili d'Esenzione e francheggie; il che mi riuscì con facilità ottenergli, mentre li Libri non sono soggetti ad alcun aggravio, ed usata anco gli viene ogni agevolezza per quelle cose tutte, che gli sono d'uso per il suo Mestiere che per altro soggiacer dovrebbero alla Dogana. Ciò ottenuto senza alcun agravio nè contrasto, hò creduto sempre inutile il dichiarare questo Negozio come di casa Veneta, riserbando tale Prerogativa per altro Negoziante più proficuo, e di maggior utile... Quello per altro che si ricerca dal Sig.r Antonio Zatta... si è una Privativa à favore del suo Negozio, temendo che altro da costà possi essere spedito con simile genere di Mercanzia; la quale cosa, al certo, se accadesse sarebbe lo stesso che rovinarsi l'un l'altro senza profitto d'alcuno. Il Paese non dà per se a vivere ad un solo... mi nasce anco il dubbio se convenga il ricercarla (= la Privativa) per un Negozio, il quale è libero e franco; e che ottenutasi si perderebbe la Prerogativa della Esenzione d'una Casa, che con profitto maggiore nè potrebbe godere; mentre si dovrebbe in allora dichiarare il Negozio Zatta come una delle due Case Venete concordate nella stabilita Convenzione". *Ibid.*, 21st October, 1765. On 27th October, 1766 Buzzaccarini Gonzaga reported to the Cinque Savi that the Zatta agent had had to leave Malta after having been recalled by the Firm's director. He could no longer afford to stay in Malta: "Ja sua onoratezza e buona maniera molto gli hà procacciato per mantenersi tutto questo tempo; ma ora che hà provisto il Paese non vi può vivere". *Ibid.*, 27th October, 1766. Six months later, the Minister informed the Trade Magistracy that he had already written about "l'Infortunio agli assicuratori per il Signore Antonio Zatta ed à suo tempo se nè riceverà il pagamento". *Ibid.*, 13th April, 1767.

<sup>182</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, busta 909, "Manifesti di Esportazioni e Ruoli di Bastimenti 1752-1765"; busta 910, "Manifesti... 1766-1772".

concessions had expired, revealed "only a very slight difference". This was a strong indication, they explained, of the vital necessity for Malta to secure regular supplies - with or without concessions.<sup>183</sup>

Besides, in 1782 the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* was still seeking to utilise Venetian trade links with Malta towards a new industrial joint venture. On the 27th September of that year, the Magistracy made overtures to the Venetian Consul in Malta for the possibility of having the Order's ships constructed in the Venetian arsenal.<sup>184</sup> Did not the Grandmaster recently attempt to revive the recrudescing Maltese *corso*?<sup>185</sup>

The Magistracy of Trade was in favour of renewing the April Decrees. There was no other country better suited than Malta, they explained, which, in proportion to its slender means, could readily meet the requirements concerning the promotion of "an active and profitable trade".<sup>186</sup> However, in view of what were termed as "recent developments",<sup>187</sup> there were two other points that had to be considered before exemptions were renewed. First, a variety of Venetian manufactures "in imitation" of those bought from Germany, particularly *PELLI*, *TELE* and *LANA*,<sup>188</sup> could be gradually introduced on the Maltese market in order to stimulate the local industry and to reduce the burden of tax-exemptions.<sup>189</sup> Secondly, regulatory efforts should be made to avoid disparity in prices for the same Venetian commodity. If Venetian timber were undersold from Malta, by way of

<sup>183</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 2*, 27th September, 1784.

<sup>184</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, prima serie, busta 711*, 9th October, 1782. On the history of the Venetian arsenal, see V. MARCHESI, "L'arsenale di Venezia nei due ultimi secoli della Repubblica Veneta", *Annali del R. Istituto Tecnico di Udine* II, 6 (1888). M. NANI MOCENIGO, *L'Arsenale di Venezia*, Venice 1938. C.A. LEVI, *Navi da guerra nell'Arsenale di Venezia dal 1664 al 1896*, Venice 1896.

<sup>185</sup> P. EARLE, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270. R.E. CAVALIERO, "The Decline of the Maltese Corso...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 224-238.

<sup>186</sup> "Col mezzo dell'esercitare diligenze si riconobbe, che trattandosi d'istituire, e di coltivare l'ampliamento di commercio tra questa, ed una data Nazione, niun'altra, per quanto apparisce al nostro intelletto, più della Maltese in proporzione alla tenue sua estesa, sia in grado di soddisfare per conto nostro a tutte le viste di un attivo e proficuo Commercio". A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum, busta 396, fascicolo 126, scrittura 2*, 27th September, 1784.

<sup>187</sup> "...alcuni recenti innovazioni...". *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> "In quanto però alli Generi Germanici, sù quali è ricercata, conforme alle facilità assentite col Decreto 1762 la restituzione del Dazio d'Ingresso, dobbiamo umilmente riflettere a VV.EE. essere sin dalli 23 dicembre 1776 quello delle Pelli, 20 febbraio 1777 quello delle Tele, e 10 maggio 1781 quello delle Manifatture di Lana, abboccato il Dazio per tre de più importanti articoli di questa Classe di Mercanzia, cioè Tele, Pelli e Manifatture di Lana, per li quali se la S.V.ra credesse assentire all'Istanza, dovrebbe poi per sentimento di equità verificarsi a favor dell'Abboccatore, e con aggravio della Pubblica Cassa, il risarcimento del Dazio corrispondentemente all'Estrazioni, che se ne facessero". *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

transit, to Mediterranean and Barbary markets, where it was always in unvarying demand, the credibility of the Venetian product would be subtly undermined and would thus be defeating the purpose of such concessions.<sup>190</sup> In the end, the Cinque Savi proposed a tax-exemption period of ten-years.<sup>191</sup>

Such was the broad context within which Veneto-Maltese economic approaches moved in the eighteenth century, leading the Order of St John and the Adriatic Republic towards a very close relationship. Stripped of idealistic motives, the main issue that was settled during Massimiliano Buzzacarini Gonzaga's ministry was mutual economic reorientation, a process which proved rewarding to both countries. Venice gained, alongside the other European powers, a stable position in the neutral, strategically invaluable Maltese principality. The Order of St John found in the Venetian emporium a guaranteed market which successive Grandmasters were determined to safeguard at all costs. Pinto's hesitancy to join the papal coalition against the immediate repercussions of the Veneto-Tripolitan Peace Treaty of 1764<sup>192</sup> and the stringent precautions taken by De Rohan in the 1790s to prevent the recurrence of corsairing hostility in the Levant<sup>193</sup> betrayed an obvious timidity in encroaching upon the Republic's delicate cordiality with Turkey.

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> A.I.M., *Corr.* 100, f. 278, 16th January, 1765.

<sup>193</sup> A.S.V., *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Diversorum*, busta 403, fascicolo 76, 21st March, 11th, 25th April, 1773.

APPENDIX

MASSIMILIANO BUZZACCARINI GONZAGA'S FOUR QUARTERS OF NOBILITY\*

"ARMA BUZZACCARINA"

Arcoano  
 |  
 Francesco  
 |  
 Arcoano  
 |  
 Agostino  
 |  
 Lodovico  
 |  
 Francesco  
 |  
 Brunoro  
 |  
 Vincistao  
 |  
 Brunoro

"ARMA LEONI"

Francesco detto Checo  
 |  
 Paolo  
 |  
 Leonello  
 |  
 Francesco  
 |  
 Gentile  
 |  
 Co. Girolamo  
 |  
 Co. Leonello  
 |  
 Co. Girolamo  
 |  
 Beatrice Co. Leoni

"ARMA PINBIOLA"

Francesco Engelfreddj  
 |  
 Pietro Bono  
 |  
 Sebastiano  
 |  
 Pimbiolo  
 |  
 Ottaviano  
 |  
 Glo. Fran.co  
 |  
 Annibale  
 |  
 Lorenzo D.  
 |  
 Lorenzo  
 |  
 Girolamo

"ARMA CUMANO"

Giacomo  
 |  
 Rinaldo  
 |  
 Giacomo  
 |  
 Gasparo  
 |  
 Giacomo  
 |  
 Claudio  
 |  
 Giacomo  
 |  
 Claudio  
 |  
 Giacomo  
 |  
 Laura Cumano

Don Antonio  
 Co. Buzzaccarini Kr.  
 Padre

Chiara Pimbiolo Engelfreddj  
 Madre

Pretendente

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