

A TRANSIENT COLONY IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE

**The History of the Maltese Colony
in Egypt throughout the 19th and
20th Century**

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[The following extracts are taken from this recently published book (2015) to give an idea what it is about.. The original may be obtained from Mr Nicolas Chircop, email: nchircop@bigpond.net.au]
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Chapter 1: The Arab Republic of Egypt:

Our Original Settlement

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According to the 1986 census the population was 48,205,049; compared to that in 1995 which was estimated to be 58,819,000. Over 57% of the population were rural.

At the end of the Second World War, the population of Alexandria was 928,237. Not including the British Military personnel, there were over 150,000 European nationals of different nationality, the majority being British of Maltese origin, as well as French, Germans, Greeks, Italians, Swiss, not including thousands of Armenians, Lebanese, Russians, Syrians and Turks who were not able to produce any document to prove their nationality, or who opted for the Egyptian citizenship in 1937.

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Napoleon Bonaparte landed in Egypt on July 2, 1798 and the French Army stayed upto September 1801.

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It was only fifty years later that the Europeans came to Egypt in great numbers and the Europeanization of the country began to be shaped according to the will of Europe. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt's strategic position paved the way to European ascendancy and domination. The Khedives that succeeded the Viceroy, borrowed lavishly from European bankers. By doing so, the national debt drove the Pashalik into bankruptcy and finally into the terms imposed by their French and British creditors.

The country now weakened by internal quarrels and the feeble morale of the Egyptian soldiers caused a rebellion by Army officers to end foreign and Christian control. The situation caused concern and provoked the British Government to a military intervention. Finally, British troops occupied the country in 1882.

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In 1991 the population reached 56million (80 m in 2006). Even after taking into consideration the vacuum caused by the departure of foreign communities that left Egypt at the time of the Suez Crisis, the Government could not provide jobs to all their peoples. Therefore the economic conditions compelled the Government to allow Egyptian workers to consider employment in the Arabian/Persian Gulf Countries. According to official figures 1.4m Egyptians worked abroad. Their remittances to support their families and the earnings from the tourist industry, (much reduced during the conflict with Israel) helped to rehabilitate the country's economy.

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Up to 1987 Mr. Joseph Schembri, was Malta's non-resident Ambassador to Egypt. In 1990 the Maltese Embassy was opened at Maadi, Cairo, with H.E. Mr. Ives de Barro as Ambassador of Malta to Egypt.

Mr de Barro was born in Cairo of Maltese parents, took up residence in Malta in July 1950. After a number of years in journalism he joined the Maltese Diplomatic Service in 1967. He attended an academic course in Diplomacy at the "Institut des Hautes Etudes Internationales" in Geneva, followed by an assignment at the British Embassy in Tunis. His first diplomatic post was in Tripoli, Libya (1969-1974). He retired prematurely from the Diplomatic Service in 1984 but rejoined in 1987 before taking the post of Ambassador to Egypt.

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CHAPTER II

A TRANSIENT COLONY IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE

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Between 1814 and 1825 it was estimated that 6,500 Maltese were attracted to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, particularly to Egypt. The boom years of the 1850s were characterised by the demand for qualified workers for employment with the Suez Canal Company, which attracted great number of artisans, clerks, merchants, skilled and unskilled labourers from the four cities around Grand Harbour: Vittoriosa, Senglea, Cospicua and Valletta.

Estimates by Ramiro Vadala published in his book: “*Les Maltais hors de Malte*” based consular despatches for Malta in relation to the censuses of 1881 and 1891, the number of Egypt-bound Maltese amounted to 2,000 in 1842; 5,000 in 1865 and 7,000 in 1885 including the return of some of the evacuees brought to Malta at the time of the 1882 insurrection.

A Maltese craftsman in one of the Pasha’s establishments earned some three shillings a day compared with six pence to two shillings in Malta. Furthermore he was able to save substantially and live more comfortably in Egypt than in Malta.

For the intending Maltese settler eagerly waiting for some news from the southern shores of the Mediterranean, the sea was the main channel of communication with the outside world. The people of the Cottonera and Valletta were the first to benefit from the return of a vessel and somehow hear the news and information brought or sent home by the mariners. The overseas news where also published by the Italo-Maltese newspapers, such as *La Vedette*, a weekly publication which was first issued on September 14, 1859. It was printed in French and Italian. Under the title: *Passe temps des*

Familles, the editor devoted a page on matters regarding the good prospects of a new life in the Pashalik of Egypt.

The open door policy directed by the Pasha toward European craftsmen and religious fraternities, must have encouraged our forebears to emigrate to Egypt.

There were also a number of Maltese aged and unhealthy persons who sailed away toward the new horizon, only to find most vacancies limited to the younger and healthier settler. Others made hasty departures from Malta before they had given much thought as to whether they were suitable or qualified for the new country.) That period coincided with the outbreaks of plague of 1834, when no less than 1,500 Maltese fled back to their mother country to avoid the epidemic that in the course of two years killed one-third of the native population of Cairo and Alexandria.

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The Crimean War (1854-56) was for Malta a major period of prosperity, but even then the Egyptian cotton boom was more attractive and during that period a record emigration took place.

In the late 1880s, large-scale public expenditure in Malta led to increased employment with a result of a counter stream of Maltese expatriates. That period coincided with the repatriation of 8,000 Maltese from Egypt at the time of the 1882 Orabi revolt.

While the majority of Maltese in Egypt emigrated from Malta, there were other expatriate Maltese who in the early 1900s came in a large number to Egypt from Corfu (Kerkira), Ionian Islands, Constantinople (Istanbul), Smyrna (Izmir) and from the Maghreb or French North Africa, particularly from Tunisia between 1836 and 1844 when religious incidents occurred between Maltese settlers and native Moslems. The friction induced the Bey of Tunis to order all Maltese to leave his regency.

In accordance to the Franco-English Convention of 1914, the third generation of Maltese born in Tunisia ceased to be recognised as British Subjects and could not adopt Tunisian Citizenship under the local judiciary; the only alternative was to accept a French

Citizenship¹.

A similar agreement was made for the Italian settlers of Tunisia, who also applied for French Citizenship.

Among the Maltese settlers who also choose the Valley of the Nile as their place of residence were the Maltese refugees, victims of the Armistice Treaty of 1918 that saw the Nationalist forces in Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal, leader of the Young Turks, defeat the Greek army in Anatolia.

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Earlier on, in 1801, at the end of the Napoleonic Egyptian Campaign and the disbandment of the Maltese Legion known as *La Legion Maltaise*, a number of Maltese soldiers made their way to Alexandria and Cairo, realizing the affinity of the Maltese language (a Semitic tongue) to the Arabic language prevalent in Egypt, undoubtedly an advantage when requiring contact and trading with Arabic speaking peoples.

The subsequent Maltese emigration may have been influenced by the same view, namely, that the language played a prominent part in the decision to migrate to Egypt. It was also influenced to a considerable extent by the increased rapidity of diffusion of news, as communications improved since 1867 with the laying of the first direct submarine telegraph cable between Malta and Egypt.

The works of the Suez Canal and the foundation of the city of Port-Said (Bur Sa'id) attracted a large number of Maltese. The number became more pronounced in the early sixties with the cotton boom that produced a new wave of prosperity and a demand for labour throughout Egypt.

The opening of the Suez Canal in November 17, 1869 caused an increase in the volume of shipping through the Mediterranean including Malta as a port of call, and this brought the prospect of new commercial fields which tempted prospective migrants to travel

¹ *Beylical Decree No.124 d/d. Tunis, 19th December 1919.*

east.

The open-door policy derived from the successive Khedives, followed by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 accelerated the arrival of foreigners in Egyptian ports. These included a large number of skilled and unskilled Maltese workers who arrived on their own initiative to work with the British Administration and the military forces.

The free and unorganised Maltese migrant had no problem finding transport as the skipper of a Maltese boat might have charged the equivalent of sixty cents to the next port of call in Tripolitania or the equivalent of \$1.20 to an Egyptian port.

It often happened that the emigrant found it convenient to travel on a speronera (Maltese boat) of a relative or friend sailing along the Mediterranean coast to the Ionian Islands or to Alexandria or Rosetta in Egypt, while others moved to Tunis, Algiers, Tripoli or Benghazi and then managed their way along the coast².

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With the passing of the years, some settlers experienced several setbacks. For instance, during 1835-36 the country was affected by plague and between 1839-40 due to the monopoly crisis between Egypt and Britain, British Consuls evacuated more than 600 Maltese labourers to Malta, the rest were threatened with expulsion. In 1864-65, a plague epidemic forced no less than 1,500 Maltese settlers to depart from Egyptian ports toward Valletta. With every outbreak of Cholera in Egypt, a large number of unskilled Maltese workers were suspended from their place of employment due to the stagnation of business provoked by the departure overseas of the well-to-do for the duration of, and some for a long time after the cessation of the epidemic.

With no resources, the Maltese worker had no other alternative than to call at the Consular Welfare section or at the Maltese Benevolent

² *Malta National Library, various derivations from newspapers and publications.*

Society to obtain some cash so to be able to meet urgent necessities. According to the *Malta Standard* of July 17, 1896 the Government of Malta had sanctioned expenditure of 100 pounds on behalf of the fund raised in Valletta for the relief of the Maltese suffering directly or indirectly from the epidemic which has been prevailing in Egypt.

In 1882 a mass evacuation to Malta took place as a result of the revolt in the Egyptian army lead by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Orabi, which was followed by the naval bombardment of Alexandria by the Royal Navy under the command of Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour. Orabi was defeated at Tell el Kebir and the British military occupation of Egypt began.

In 1913 a special pilgrimage took place for the XXIV International Eucharistic Congress held in Malta from the 22nd to the 27th April 1913; about 2,000 participants attended, mostly drawn from Mediterranean countries, including a good number from Egypt. Many of our contemporaries may have noticed the monument of Christ the King, by Antonio Sciortino in Floriana, dedicated on the 30th December 1917 to commemorate the event. The cost amounted to 600 pounds, derived from the profit made by the Congress itself.

The First World War (1914-1918) saw a large number of our men enlisting in the Armed Forces and Auxiliary Services with the British Troops in Egypt. Maltese volunteers also served in British Regiments, the Royal Navy and with the First Australia Imperial Forces in the Sinai campaign and the Dardanelles.

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From Malta, a detachment of the 7th Company of the Royal Malta Artillery served in Egypt from 1916 to 1919. The officer commanding the detachment was Major O. M. Carbonaro. Other Officers of the R.M.A that served in Egypt during the second half of World War I were three brothers, Colonel William Savona, Major Edward Savona and Captain Pio Savona.

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CHAPTER III

OVERVIEW OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS

(1530 – 1900s)

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Stepping into the nineteenth century, Malta saw the impoverished classes of labourers and artisans of the archipelago emigrate to the North African coast and to the cities of the Levant. Constantinople attracted skilled Maltese artisans by offering remarkable rewards for their craftsmanship.

At the time, communications between Malta and foreign ports was made possible by the large number of boats based in Maltese harbours, so uniquely situated and considered the trading centre by merchants from Africa and the Levant who brought their cargoes to Malta to be sold to European merchants by Maltese brokers.

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It was estimated that by 1842 there were already 2,000 Maltese in Egypt and reached 5,000 in 1865³. By the end of the nineteenth century over 50,000 Maltese lived in North Africa and the Levant. There were also small settlements in Sicily, the Ionian Islands, the South of France and Gibraltar. A private scheme in 1878 to settle Maltese farmers in the Turkish island of Cyprus failed as bad publicity caused concern among the prospective settlers. A similar attempt to settle Maltese men to the West Indies was unsuccessful from the start.

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³ Fr. L. Attard - *Lil-Hutna*. d/d: November 1992. p.11.

CHAPTER IV

WITH BONAPARTE TO EGYPT

1798 - 1801

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Bonaparte quickly recognized the military capacities of the Maltese as he inherited a force of 6,000 men including the Militia. That corps was trained and maintained by the Knights of the Order of St. John. At first, a special company comprising thirty young men from wealthy families and veterans that had served in the Order's ranks where ordered for service in Corfu.

General Dugua, assisted by a gentleman called Baron, an active Member of the Masonic Lodge of Malta and worshipful master and commandeur de Villefranche, Colonel of the Regiment of Birkirkara, appealed to Maltese to join *La Legion Maltaise* (The Maltese Legion) and succeeded in securing some 2,000 men who sailed on June 19, 1798 with the Expeditionary Forces then bound for Egypt. The children of these soldiers over ten years of age were also to be engaged to serve as cabin boys on French ships.

The formation and enlistment in the Corps of the *Legion Maltaise* was made by order of General Bonaparte. The Legion included the 2,000 volunteers who enlisted in Birkirkara and soldiers of the Grand Master's Guards, the Regiment of Malta, including marine naval gunners and sailors. Many of the sailors were Neapolitan convicts jailed for being implicated in the plot of the Medicis in 1795, arrested and forcibly transported by galleys to Messina and Malta. With the arrival of the French in Malta, several men asked to be employed as sailors in the expeditionary fleet.

The Maltese Corps was intensively trained and organized by Staff Colonel Bernard Macsheedy and served in Egypt throughout the

Campaign. From a quote in a report to Bonaparte, the Colonel stated that: *the Maltese Corps had become a well knit and disciplined force*. Bonaparte saw that the Maltese enjoyed the same conditions and pay as the French soldiers and that their dependents were to receive an army allowance⁴.

Sailing East to Egypt

Finally, the Maltese Legion was embedded with the French expeditionary force and embarked on June 15, and sailed on the 19th for Egypt, leaving in Malta a French garrison of 4,300 men under the command of General of Division Claude Vaubois.

The French Armada comprised 300 vessels, and arrived off Alexandria (Egypt) at dawn on the 30th June 1798, the fleet anchored close to the isle of Marabout, the army landed on the 2nd July on the shore of Marabout Bay situated near the fishing village of Dekheila, about 30 km southwest of Alexandria.

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It would be appropriate to mention that during the European Napoleonic wars, Eugene E. Fenech, son of Calcedonio Fenech was appointed Surgeon General in the French Army and by 1813 was assigned as a Doctor at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris.

The details of the uniforms which were issued to officers and men of the Maltese Legion, are described in a planchette exhibited at the Musee de L'Armee, in Paris, as well as in the set of postage stamps in the series devoted to Maltese uniforms, issued by the Malta Postal Administration during the year 1989.

After intensive training the Maltese Legion fought under the command of General Jean-Baptiste Kleber at the Battle of the Pyramids and at the Battle of Nicopolis, sometimes referred as the

⁴ Capt. J.M.Wismayer: *The History of the Maltese Regiments*, 1989. p.91,92,93.

Battle of Canopus for the City of Alexandria under the command of General Jacques-Francois Menou.

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At the end of the campaign, some members of the Maltese Legion who may have been taken P.O.W. or who might have even abandoned their units, took refuge in the midst of the local population. In an article published some time ago in the Maltese press and reproduced in part by Ivan Magri-Overend, in the AMCOE Newsletter, we learned that: *In 1941 when Maltese gunners of the 5th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Malta Artillery, stopped in transit in the city of Zagazig (84 km north east of Cairo) they were approached by two men in galabieh (Arab dress) who told them that they were the descendants of Maltese soldiers from Birkirkara, who served in 1798 with the French Army and since then lived in Zagazig.*

To the contemporary Maltese soldiers of the R.M.A. it came as a surprise to hear that these descendants of Maltese soldiers fighting in Egypt still understood spoken Maltese and knew about Malta.

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On the British side at the end of the Egyptian Campaign and the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1814, forty-one veterans were recipient of the British Silver Medal, bearing words: To the British Army with an additional bar bearing the word Egypt. The name of each soldier and the Regiment Maltese Pioneers, was inscribed on the rim. A number of officers and men of the Maltese Pioneers Corps and the Corps of Artificers, were awarded the Military General Service Medal. In 1850 the War Medal was struck and awarded to surviving veterans in recognition of their service in the British Navy and Army from 1793 to 1814.

Attached to the Corps and recipients of the War Medal, where: Surgeon, F. Camilleri; Medical Officer, D. Schembri and Rev. Fr. F. A. Baldacchino, the Corps Chaplain.

Lieutenant S. Mitrovich, who served in Egypt with the Maltese Pioneers, was the recipient of the Gold Medal awarded by the

Ottoman Sultan, Selim III. The medal was also awarded to each of the officers who took part in the campaign, bearing on the obverse the Sultan's cipher and on the reverse in Arabic, the year 1801.

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According to Baron Desgenettes, Chief Medical Officer of the French Expeditionary Forces, the Maltese Legion had lost approximately 100 men in all, of which one third died when an epidemic of plague raged among the troops stationed in Alexandria.

When the French evacuated Egypt toward the end of 1801, a fair number of enlisted Maltese and local Greeks accompanied the Army to Toulon, later passing into the Corps of the Chasseurs d'Orient (Hunters of the Orient). From the French side at the end of the hostilities, very few Maltese soldiers ever came back to their native Islands. Some joined the British Forces under General Hutchinson, others dispersed in Egypt, or opted to go to France where the Maltese Legion was disbanded in August 1801 and some of its members joined La Grande Armee in the Legion Expeditionnaire, which was formed in Toulon on September 2, of the same year.

As for the families of soldiers left behind in Malta, the French Government never honoured the promised allowance; probably as a result of the uprising of September 5, 1800.

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CHAPTER V

**SLAVES, MISSIONARIES, SOLDIERS,
EXILES**

AND

**FREE SETTLERS in THE NORTH
AFRICAN COAST**

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Early Maltese Religious Missionaries in the Pashalik

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Another aspect of early Maltese presence in the Pashalik relates to the presence of Maltese religious missionaries. The early story derives from a little book written and published in 1927 by **Fr. Angelo Mizzi, O.M.C.**, which details all missionary activity around the world under the title *Malta Missionaria*. According to Fr. Mizzi, there was in 1582, long before the arrival of Bonaparte in Egypt, a missionary Bishop in the diocese of Armenia and Mesopotamia (now Iraq) by the name of **Monsignor Antonio Zahra, O.P.**, who was at a later date appointed Bishop in the Pashalik of Egypt.

Between 1689 and 1718 **Fr. Antonio da Malta OFM**, was the co-founder of the hospice run by the Franciscans in Akhmin, a town in Upper Egypt, populated in majority by Copts. In 1707 the Home was sold and refurbished as a hospital for slaves.

From Fr. Angelo Mizzi OMC, we learned also, that an important religious event took place in 1713, when the Apostolic Prefect of Egypt, **Rev. Fr. Archangelo Zammit OFM**, received the 'abjure' (or the renouncement on oath) from the Most Rev. Alessandro Capasulis, Patriarch of the Eastern Greek denomination.

In 1771 the **Rev. Fr. Bonaventura Chircop C.M.**, was the Vicar General of the region of Nicopolis, which included the eastern expansion of Alexandria now known as Ramleh.

One may wonder if Fr. B. Chircop, during his apostolic mission in Egypt, ever made any contact with the Maltese soldiers in the French Expeditionary Forces.

From 1816 to 1820 the **Rev. Fr. Salvatore Antonio Vassallo OFM**, was the Custodian of the Holy Land and the Commissioner for the Oriental Church. During his years in the apostolate, Fr. Vassallo was appointed Apostolic Prefect for the Pashalik of Egypt and Cyprus. Fr. Vassallo returned to Malta, where he died in 1859.

Br. Nicola Borg OFM, settled in Egypt between 1850 and 1874. As an architect he dedicated his vocation towards the construction of convents, churches and schools, his involvement extended as far as Palestine, Syria and Cyprus.

The **Rev. Fr. Francesco Saverio Bugeja OFM**, was a lecturer in Theology. His missionary work culminated in being designated as Apostolic Commissioner of the Oriental Church and Apostolic Prefect of Egypt and Cyprus. At a later date, Fr. Bugeja was elected Bishop and Custodian of the Holy Land and Apostolic Delegate for Syria⁵. Fr. Bugeja returned to Malta in 1854.

In the nineteenth century, there was in Egypt and the Sudan, at the time being part of Egypt, a substantial number of Maltese priests and nuns of different Orders from Malta who devoted their missionary work in serving the Church overseas.

In the middle of 1846, **Monsignor Annetto Casolani (1815 – 1866)** was consecrated titular Bishop of Mauridastro and appointed Apostolic Vicar of the Mission to Central Africa, and was entrusted by the Vatican to found a Catholic Mission in Khartoum. The Bishop departed from Malta and met the rest of the Missionaries in Alexandria. The group left for Cairo, where they embarked on a dhahabiya (river boat) flying the Union Jack, and started their trip on

⁵ Fr. Angelo Mizzi omc., -*Malta Missionaria* 1927. pp.28,29,46,48

the Nile in September 1847 and arrived in Khartoum during February 1848. In October 1849 another Maltese Missionary, Fr. **Don Gaetano Zahra**, joined the Mission in the Sudan. Annetto Cassolani, who was born in Valletta on August 10, 1815, was the first Catholic titular Bishop in the Sudan, and appointed Apostolic Vicar of the Mission to Central Africa. He returned to Europe in January 1849 and died in Malta in 1866. According to a manuscript deposited in the National Library in Valletta, the Maltese Bishop constructed a large building to accommodate the Mission in Khartoum. After the closure of the Mission it was used by the British as the governor's palace.⁶

Archibishop Ambrose Agius OSB., was the son of **Tancredi and Saveria nee Sammut**. The family settled in Egypt in the early 1800s; Tancredi had some shipping interests in Alexandria where his son Ambrose was born on September 17, 1856. At the age of 12 Ambrose was sent to study at the St. Winston Abbey in Ramagate, Kent, Britain.

After completing his seminary studies for priesthood in 1881, and with his Monastic experience he was sent to Rome to work in the management of the Benedictin Congregation. In August 1904 Ambrose was elected to be the Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines and consecrated Titular Bishop of Palmyra. In November of the same year, he left for the Philippines where he carried some reformation in the local religious affairs.

Archibishop Ambrose Agius died in the Philippines on December 12, 1911.

Parishes

In Egypt, Maltese parishes existed from the early 1800s in the following cities: Alexandria, Cairo, Port-Said, Suez and Zagazig.

The first privileges and recognition of a Maltese Confraternity was given to the Maltese Colony of Alexandria, on the 10th July 1854 by

⁶ Charles Catania, *-Andrea De Bono.. Maltese Explorer on the White Nile.*2002, p 70., 109

Bishop Perpetuo Guasco of Fez and Apostolic Delegate for the Pashalik of Egypt. The Testimonial was signed at the convention by Monsignor Bishop P. Guasco; Fr. Bernardino da Montefranco, Custodian of the Holy Land; Fr. Antonio da Melicocca, Guardian of the Church and **Fr. Bernardino da Malta**, Chaplain of the local Maltese Colony. The Committee Delegates were: **Messrs. Achille Vella, Giuseppe Farrugia, Vincenzo Biancardi and Giuseppe Camilleri.**

In the early days when the city of Port-Said was being built-up, Fr. Erasmo de Sasso OFM, Parish Priest in Damiette (*a town on the eastern side of the Nile Delta*), was regularly visiting Port-Said on religious missions. That was the first step of the Catholic Mission in the new city.

On March 27, 1869, the Suez Canal Company, with the assistance of the French Consul, donated land to the Franciscan Order and Custodians of the Holy Land for the construction of a church in the new city. The Maltese, with the rest of the Catholic Community of Port-Said, were able to erect their church and a small school for 20 pupils in Ramses street, now known as Ahmed Chawki, in Al Manshia, Port-Said.

It is said that part of the stone to build the church was imported from Malta. As a matter of fact Maltese stone was used at the time as ballast to stabilize a ship. The builder was a Maltese mason-builder named **Camilleri**. The new church was dedicated to St. Eugenie V.M., and consecrated by Monsignor Guido Corbelli, Apostolic Delegate for Egypt and Arabia on March 19, 1890. **Fr Marco Anastasio** was its first Parish Priest. In 1920 the Community had their first Maltese Chaplain and Parish Priest: **Fr. Mark Sammut OFM**. Fr. Sammut was born in Egypt and had never been to Malta. However he was dedicated to the service of the community and was very proud of his Maltese origin⁷.

Another clergyman originating from Port-Said was **Fr. Carmel Farrugia** who later became the Parish Priest of Notre Dame de

⁷ Sir A. Dingli. *Report to the Colonial Office*, d/d 17.10.1878.

Lourdes in Attard, Malta.

A legendary secular Maltese Priest in Alexandria was **Fr. Don Guzepp Verzin**. He was born in Malta in 1876, became Chaplain to the Maltese Military Contingent in the Dardanelles during the First World War, and finally in the 1920s settled in Alexandria, Egypt. He resided in an apartment close to St. Catherine Church. Fr. Verzin used to celebrate the 7 o'clock mass in Maltese in the Chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and a mass in the Chapel of the Franciscan Nuns in Zaharia. Fr. Verzin was also the Rector of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and the Chaplain of the local Maltese Community as well to the R.A.F. Station, Aboukir, to where he used to travel by motorcycle. During W.W.II, he visited too the men of the Royal Malta Artillery stationed in the region. On weekends, he enjoyed being invited for Sundays' lunch by Maltese families, and it is said that he was very sociable in social gatherings, particularly when inviting some poor people for lunch at his place on some special days. As a Maltese patriot, every year he celebrated a Special Mass on the 8th September, Malta National Day, in St. Catherine. The celebration was attended by the President of the Community, Chev. P. N. Bianchi, representatives of various Associations, as well the Maltese Scouts and Girl Guides.

The respected and devoted Fr. Don Guzepp Verzin died in Alexandria in 1954 aged 78.

In 1931 the Maltese Colony of Port-Said welcomed from Malta, the **Rev. Fr. Paskal Grech, OFM** in the Parish of St. Eugenie. He was subsequently appointed Superior to the said Parish and Chaplain to the British Troops stationed in the Canal Zone. During his term of religious duties in Port-Said he was appointed Honorary President of the Maltese Club and President of the Mutual Help and Benevolent Society. He also acted as a member of the War Service Grant Committee in the Canal Zone. Furthermore, he was made the Catholic Official Visitor for Civil and Military prisoners of war. After having spent 25 years in Egypt, he returned to Malta in 1951 where he celebrated his 60th Anniversary of his ordination as a priest (1928 –1988).

While spending some time in Malta in 1987, the author, as a former member of the Maltese Community of Egypt, was requested by Monsignor Philip Calleja, Director of the Emigrants' Commission, to do the honour of presenting to Fr. Paskal Grech a Commendation from the Vatican to mark his 60th Anniversary of Priesthood. The presentation took place in Hamrun, Malta.

On the eastern side of the Canal was the small township of Port-Fuad, inaugurated as a town by King Fuad in 1926. The houses in the residential area were built for the employees of the Suez Canal Company. Amongst its early inhabitants were 100 Catholic families who carried their religious exercises in a small weatherboard chapel.

In Cairo in the early part of the twentieth century, a Maltese Carmelite, **Fr. Costantino di San Giuseppe** was the founder of St. Joseph's Church, in Sharia Madi el Din, Tewfiqiya, which sited in the commercial centre of the city. In that church, the altar dedicated to St. Paul the Apostle was decorated with a painting of the Apostle by the local Maltese artist, **Joseph Bonello**, nicknamed "Beppe".

In 1935 **Sr. Maria P. Cassani**, Mother-Superior of the Franciscan Missionaries (known as the Sisters of Egypt), celebrated her 50th Anniversary of her Religious profession, from 1885 in Clot-Bey, Cairo, to 1935 in Zahria, Alexandria.

During WWII the Parish Priest and Chaplain of the Maltese Community of Cairo was **Father Valentino Cardona**. Under his auspices, the crypt was put at the disposal of the Catholic Women's League for their social activities. Again in 1952 after the destructive demonstration known as *Black Saturday* when Malta House was destroyed during the widespread incendiarism, our Community found a temporary shelter for its activities in that same crypt that, thanks to the kind assistance of the Rev. Fr. Pier Paolo Governanti, Superior of the Parish, who when approached, without any hesitation, put a room of the Antonian Club at the disposal of the Cairo Community.

In October 1992, the news media reported that the city of Cairo suffered a devastating earthquake that caused a number of buildings to collapse and killed an estimated 400 persons. Among the

casualties was St. Joseph Church that suffered damages to its structure with cracks and partial breaks in several places. The massive Cross on top of the Church fell and smashed through the ceiling and came down into the crypt and broke into a hundred pieces.

At the end of WWII, **Fr. Dominic Coppola, OFM**, was the Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in the city of Suez, as well Chaplain to the local Maltese Community and to the British Military garrison. He was also a frequent and popular preacher in Cairo. In 1951, after having served nine months in the said Parish, Fr. Coppola was transferred to Malta and appointed Guardian of the Franciscan Friary in Sliema before being transferred to England as a Chaplain to a group of Maltese girls working in the Lancashire Mills. After two years in Manchester, he left for London, where he was appointed Chaplain to the Maltese Community.

The large Maltese Community of Egypt welcomed and was very proud to learn in 1952 of the appointment by the Holy See of a Maltese Bishop, **His Grace Monsignor Emmanuel Gerada** to the Inter-nunciature of the Vatican in Cairo.

Monsignor Gerada was born in Zejtun, was educated at the Freres School, and obtained a B.A, and Lic.D.from the University of Malta. He was selected by the British Council for a special course at the University College of Nottingham. Later on he completed his ecclesiastical studies including Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome. He was then admitted to the Vatican Diplomatic Academy before joining the Vatican Diplomatic Services and starting his career in Cairo. During his term of office in the Egyptian Capital. H.E. Monsignor Gerada dedicated some of his precious time, by taking a keen interest in the work of the local Maltese Community.

During its period of settlement in Egypt, the Maltese Community was served by dedicated members of various monastic orders and congregations, whether born in Egypt or originated from Malta, France and Italy, for their religious and educational needs. The

following is a list of religious people who may not have been mentioned in other parts in this publication:

Sr. **Carmelina Abela**, Superior of Kasr el Nil College Cairo.

Sr. **Maria di Lourdes Asphar**, spent 25 years of mission work in Egypt, 1900s.

Fr. **Marco Anastasio**, 1st Parish Priest, of St. Eugenie, Port-Said. 1900 - 1915.

Fr. **Nikol Magri**, O.F.M. P.P. at the Assumption Church, El Musky, Cairo. 1918.

Fr. **P. Valentino** O. CARM. Observance. Cairo, 1920s.

Fr. **Marco Sammut** O. CARM. Observance. Port-Said, 1920s.

Fr. **Lettore Vittorino**, O. CARM. Observance Egypt, 1920s.

Br. **Ippolito Vital** (Frere des Ecoles Chretienne). Egypt, 1920s.

Br. **J. Caruana** (Frere des Ecoles Chretienne). Egypt, 1920s.

Fr. **Joseph Vella** O.F.M. Parish Priest, S. Francesco della Marina, Alex. 1929 - 1930.

Fr. **Oliver Borg**, S.J. Parish of Fagualah, Cairo.

Sr. **Stella Galea**, Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Cairo.

Sr. **Maddalena Grech**, Sacred Heart, Cairo.

Sr. **Giulia Bernard**, Sacred Heart, Cairo.

Sr. **Sophie ?**, Sacred Heart School, Alexandria.

Sr. **Maria Rita Vella**, St. Joseph of the Apparition, St. Joseph School, Port-Said.

Fr. **Valentino Cordona** O.F.M. Parish of St. Joseph, Cairo and Sacred Heart, in Alexandria, he was preaching in Maltese in both Churches, in the 1930s.

Fr. **Herman Mizzi** C.M.I. Father Superior, Parish of St Therese. Cairo.

Even after thirty years following the Suez Crisis, Maltese Nuns carried uninterrupted their religious mission in Egypt. It was learned too, that up to December 1967 there were still 11 Maltese Sisters at the "Bon Pasteur College" in Shubra, Cairo.

In the 1980s **Sister Maria Coreschi**, Missionary Sister of Charity was in charge of the dispensary in the desert village of Zaraabi with a population of approximately 20,000 of whom twenty-five per cent were Christian of different denominations and the rest were

Moslems. In her missionary activities, Sister Coreschi shared her work with a Lebanese and two Egyptian Sisters who taught in the village Mission school.

In the poor area of Cairo there was **Sr. Bernadette Zammit Lupi**, Missionary of Charity of the Congregation of Madre Teresa who served, amongst other places, in the Sudan and Egypt where on February 2, 2001 she left this world aged 41 and was buried in the Cairo Catholic Cemetery.

Sister Maddalena Vergas of the Order of the Comboni Missionaries, was born in Egypt, educated at the Sacred Heart School and was an active member of the 4th Alexandria Maltese Girl Guides Company. Prior to joining the Religious Order, she qualified as an operation theatre Sister, employed by the local Italian Hospital. Sister Maddalena has worked with the poor people of Mokattam in Egypt and in Ethiopia and in the southern region of Sudan. In 1997, Sister Maddalena visited Australia and was able to see her brother whom she had not seen in twenty five years, and meet friends of her youth she had not seen for forty two years. On her return to Africa Sr. Maddalena expected to return to south Sudan for her mission work, this time with a team to work on a new project consisting of a mobile clinic that would be operating in a circuit of 36 villages.

We may claim that our clergymen and nuns were among the early Maltese who obtained positions in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church since the days when Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire. It may be said too that: the Maltese Clergy in Egypt as well in other parts of the former Ottoman Empire, has maintained and served the Church as far as we know, from the sixteenth century to this day.

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Some Famous Early Maltese Personalities in Egypt

The following paragraph is devoted to some famous Maltese personalities that have impressed their name in the history of the Maltese Colony of Egypt.

An early famous Maltese settler was **Andrea De Bono**. Andrea was born in Senglea in 1821, and at a later date he followed his parents to

Egypt. He lived and worked in Rosetta (Rashid) before moving to Cairo. Debono is often mentioned in classical books in company with two other Maltese travellers, namely: **Lorenzo Cremona** and Captain **Giorgio Portelli** who showed an active interest in the search for the sources of the Nile⁸. He is recalled more extensively later on in this book.

Among the early settlers that took the open door policy to Egypt in particular for the prospects of a job with the Suez Canal Company, as ship engineers, pilots and tradesmen, we find: The Admiral of the Khedivial Navy: **Lorenzo Zarb**, later awarded the title of Bey. At the time of the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869, he was in command of the Khedivial ship the *Mahroussa* carrying on board Khedive Ismail, and leading the Imperial yacht *L'Aigle*, with Her Imperial Majesty Eugenie-Marie (1826-1920) on board.

Manoel Azzopardi, who was born in 1860 in Cospicua, married to **Carolina Abela** in 1889 and had five children all born in Egypt.

Ignazio Poggi, originating from Bormla, left his native land in the 1880s to settle in the new city of Port-Said. He married a local Maltese girl named **Rosalie Esposito**, they had two sons **Carmelo** and **Giuseppe** and two daughters, **Maria** and **Georgina**. Ignazio worked as a fitter and his two sons followed their father's trade by working as fitters in the dockyard of the maritime city⁹.

Reverting to the 19th century, at the 1866 Inter-Colonial Art Exhibition of Australasia, a certain **Angelo Azzopardi** had two water-colours paintings exhibited: "View of Cairo" and "View of Jerusalem". By his exhibited arts, it can be said that he must have transited and stayed for a while in Cairo and visited Jerusalem.

Angelo and his brother **Valletta** were educated in Europe, their father **Antonio Azzopardi** is considered the first Maltese free settler to arrive to Port Phillip (Melbourne) in 1838, when the city of Melbourne possessed only a thousand or so citizens¹⁰.

⁸ Emmanuel Spiteri, *Note:s. - AMCOE N/L 16*, p 7.

⁹ Y. Camilleri *Sunday Times, d/d.24.3.02* p.38

¹⁰ Barry York, *The Maltese in Australia*, 1986 pp.13, 14,15.

Joseph C. Buhagiar was born in Cairo and was a pupil of Salvo Frendo de Mannarino. He was employed by the British Army in the Civil Division. In later years he formed his own firm of General Contractors and many works were carried by his undertakings, amongst others: Works for the Suez Canal Co., the British Boys' School of Port-Said, the Anglican Cathedral in Cairo and others. During his sojourn in Port-Said, he served as a Municipal Councillor and was the founder of the local British Chamber of Commerce. He also was bestowed the title of Patron of all the Maltese Organisations of that City. Mr J.C. Buhagiar was made a Chevalier of the Order of the Nile and of the Order of St. Sylvester. Furthermore, at a later date he was awarded the O.B.E.

A famous Maltese of Egypt was **Joseph Georges Pisani**. He was born in Alexandria in 1870. From his early age he showed a great gift for music and was sent to study music at the "Conservatorio San Pietro" in Naples, Italy. He composed numerous pieces of music. At a Musical Contest held in Paris in 1892 he was awarded first prize and was appointed member of the "Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs"¹¹. In 1894 Pisani performed his operas *Il Re delle Caverne* and *Cleopatra*, at the Zizinia theatre in Alexandria. The Artistic Society in Malta has honoured Joseph G. Pisani by erecting a sculpture of his bust in the foyer of the Orpheum theatre in Gzira, Malta¹².

In the late 1870s, the impresario of the Zizinia Theatre was the well-known Maltese composer, **Giuseppe V. W. Malfigianni**, who was the first impresario of the Royal Opera House in Valletta inaugurated on the 9th October 1866. Malfigianni was born in Malta and migrated to Alexandria with his family. During his sojourn in Alexandria, his wife passed away when she was then only 36 years old, leaving behind her nine children. Malfigianni was recalled to Malta to re-organize the Royal Opera House in Valletta, which had already been functioning since 1866¹³.

¹¹ *AMCOE N//L (London) No. 45 p 13.*

¹² Edmond Caruana, *Interview d/d. 14.6.1987.*

¹³ Ivan Magri-Overend, *AMCOE N//L 16 d/d 16.5.1969 p.8.*

Pericles Cirigottis was born in Malta in 1888 and landed in Egypt in 1913 where he started as an employee with the Tanzim (Cairo Municipality). In 1925 he decided to join the Shell Company of Egypt and soon became one of those pioneers who introduced the use of bitumen (asphalt) throughout the Middle East and as well in Malta. Cirigottis was one of the founders of the Maltese Dramatic Society and the Maltese Union Club of Cairo. After his retirement, he returned to Malta in 1947 and passed away in Italy in 1949.

An early settler to the city-port of Port-Said was **Gio Felice Caruana**. Gio was born in Cospicua, in a family of seafarers. Following in the tradition of his forebears, he obtained his Certificate of Competency to act as "Mate of Merchant Vessels commanded by Masters of First or Second Class". In June 1873 he applied for and was granted the license to act in that capacity by the British Board of Navigation¹⁴. Caruana settled with his family in Port-Said after securing a position with the Suez Canal Company as a pilot for ships crossing the canal. He felt honoured when asked to navigate the Royal Vessel, carrying the British Monarch crossing the Suez Canal. Gio sired sixteen children. His descendants are of course scattered all over the world with eleven of his grandchildren living in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia¹⁵.

In the city of Mansourah was the industrious Trigaci Family established in that city since the 1860s. **Giacinto Carlo Trigaci** was born in Mansourah, in September 1866. He was renowned as one of the best producers of cotton and wheat of the region. In 1905 he was appointed Judge-Assessor of the Mixed Courts in Mansourah, the capital centre for the province of Dakahlia, and he held that office till 1938. As an important personality of that city, Giacinto was elected Municipal Councillor in 1910 and held that office till 1944. In 1921 he inherited the hardware and ironmongery business founded by his father as early as 1892 and was considered the best-stocked store in the region. As a linguist, Giacinto had a complete mastery of Arabic, French, Greek and Italian. He loved to speak and

¹⁴ Thomas Cook - *Travel Archive*. London.

¹⁵ Alex Darmanin, Interview d/d 1994.

write in Maltese¹⁶.

In the field of international travel, particularly for the Middle East, we find in 1880 **Carmelo Aquilina** as the man who played a part in building the business of Thomas Cook Travel, in Egypt as well as in Malta. The first endeavour in Cairo of Thomas Cook was to organise tours to the Holy Land (Palestine) and Carmelo Aquilina played an important part in building up the business that was to become the jewel in the crown of Thomas Cook-Travel¹⁷.

Joseph Bartolo established in Egypt in 1880 the J. Bartolo & Co. manufacturers of fine Egyptian cigarettes. His products were patronized by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, and exported to Europe.

Vincenzo Burlo was born in Cospicua in 1860. He immigrated to Alexandria in the 1880s. Versed in music he became a music teacher at the “Ecoles Chretiennes d’Egypte” (Christian Brothers), and Bandmaster of St. Vincent de Paul Boys’ School. Vincenzo carried his dedicated profession up to 1923. Mtro. Burlo composed the following known titles: *Waltz e Mazurka* and *Waltz Alessandrina*¹⁸.

Charles Mattei was born in Malta in 1864, studied medicine at the Royal University of Malta and in the United Kingdom. As a General Practitioner travelled to Egypt and settled in Alexandria and worked among members of the local Maltese Community. In 1892 he travelled to Western Australia during the gold rush, but had the opportunity to look after sick people, as an epidemic of typhoid affected the local population. He then joined the Australian Medical Corps and in 1901 his unit left for Sth Africa for the duration of the Boer War. In 1904 he returned to Malta and worked as a GP, being involved with migrants, he was given the task of honorary secretary in the newly instituted “Malta Emigration Committee.”

In 1913 he migrated to Sydney, N.S.W. where he started arrangements to bring more Maltese migrants to Australia. Dr. Mattei was

¹⁶ *Malta National Library, Valletta, 1987.*

¹⁷ Manwel Nicholas-Borg, Interview d/d. 1994.

¹⁸ Manwel Nicholas-Borg, Interview d/d. 1994.

hoping that the Maltese Government would recognize him as the Representative of the Maltese in Australia, but this never eventuated. With the outbreak of WWI, he enlisted and was sent to Egypt and the Gallipoli peninsula. He was actually mentioned in dispatches when he was with the ANZACS. He also served in France and Italy. By the end of the War, he had been promoted to Lt. Colonel. He moved to Mackay, Queensland, where he helped launch the Maltese Farmers and Settlers Association, of which he was the first President. He was also the medical officer in charge of Rosemount Hospital where he had the opportunity to deal with fellow Maltese. Lieut. Colonel, Dr. Charles Mattei died in 1939.

In the City of Suez, **Joseph F. Buhagiar** was appointed the Hon. British Vice Consul for Suez and Port-Tewfiq, and Branch Manager of the Port-Said and Suez Coal Co. Ltd. For many years he was the President of the Maltese Community of Suez (El Suweis) and was actively connected with the local British School which was owned by the local Maltese Community. J.F. Buhagiar was awarded the O.B.E. He passed away in London, England, in 1949.

A successful Maltese Maritime enterprise was the firm, Bianchi & Co. from Malta, when in 1919 its founder, **I. R. Bianchi and his son Philip**, opened a branch-office in Alexandria. Within two years the branch established itself and had taken its place among the leading maritime organizations in Egypt. In effect the firm offered a worldwide network of sea communications. The expansion continued and in 1932 the branch was consolidated as a limited liability company of Bianchi & Co., (Egypt) Ltd., and included a modern river flotilla serving Alexandria, Cairo, the Upper Nile region and the Sudan. In 1950 Bianchi & Co., celebrated its thirtieth Anniversary of progress in the Port City of Alexandria and on that occasion, **Chev. Philip N. Bianchi**, who was also the Hon. Consul for Mexico and President of the Maltese federated Communities Council in Egypt, gave a reception in his property in Ramleh. The guests included important Egyptian officials, the Consul-Generals of Great Britain, the U.S.A., Italy and Sweden, the India Trade Commissioner and prominent members of the Maltese Community. In 1952, for the inauguration of his new ship *M/V Cairo*, Chev. P.N.

Bianchi invited on board to a reception, General Muhammad Naguib, First President of the Egyptian Liberation Movement, the Governor of Alexandria and many Egyptian notables and Members of the Diplomatic Corps.

In the field of journalism, **G. Palmier** and **M. Nuzzo** are known as the pioneers of Maltese Journalism in Egypt. They published the first known newspaper of the Maltese Colony. The first issue appeared in August 1893 and was suitably named *Melita*.

Four years later, to be precise on August 4, 1897, **A. R. Zerafa**, published in Cairo the first weekly periodical *L'Egittu*. Both newspapers were printed in Maltese. The exact period of existence of both publications the *Melita* and the *Egittu* are not known¹⁹.

On a more contemporary note, **Fredu Nicholas**, was born in Malta and came to Egypt from the U.S.A. His interest was always in dramatic art. In Cairo he was involved with the local Maltese Community Council and above all, with the *Kumpannija Filodramatica Maltija Tall Kajr* (Maltese Dramatic Company of Cairo). In 1943 Fredu was appointed Editor of the *Il-Habbar Malti Fl-Egittu* ("The Maltese Chronicle of Egypt") and was elected President of the Maltese Union Club of Cairo. As a scholar, one of his academic works was to adopt Latin characters for the Arabic Language based on the Maltese alphabet. Another predominant work of his was a book for Maltese Stenography, titled *Stenografija Maltija* which he published in July 1930 and was adopted by the Maltese Government as an educational book. Fredu Nicholas returned to Malta in 1946 after retiring from his position as Secretary to the Cairo City Police²⁰.

Amongst the European Architects in Cairo during the 1930s was the well known Architect **Arnold Zarb**. His landmark constructed in 1939 in the City Business Centre was the building of the: *Assicurazione Generale di Trieste*, corner of Abdel Khalek Sarwat and Muhammad Farid streets.

¹⁹ *Il-Habbar Malti fl-Egittu*, d/d 12.5.1944, p.1.

²⁰ *Maltese Benevolent Society, Alexandria - 75th Annual General Report.*

Some Maltese/British Personalities in the British Consular Service of Egypt

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The first British Consular Agent in the new city of Port-Said was **Dr. Herbert Zarb**. Dr. Zarb was the personal physician to Ferdinand de Lesseps.

In 1884 **Raphael Borg**, was the former British Consul in Cairo. He was transferred to Alexandria in 1895 as Acting Consul-General. In 1900 Mr Borg was transferred back to Cairo as Consul with jurisdiction over half of Egypt. During his term in office, Raphael Borg was awarded the C.M.G. (*Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George*). He was also a member of the Masonic Bulwer Lodge of Cairo, situated at the time in Sharia Wagh el Birka before being transferred in 1902 to Maison Bonello, in Midan Ismail (now Midan Tahrir).

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In his paper read at the Maltese Migrants' Convention, held in Valletta in 1969, **Ivan Magri-Overend** states that the Late Consul Raphael Borg, C.M.G., is reported as having tipped Benjamin Disraeli of the offer to acquire the Khedive personal shares in the Suez Canal Company for four million pounds. Contradicting this report, according to Paul Morand in his book *La Route des Indes*, the offer was made directly to Disraeli by Frederic Greenwood²¹.

A person well remembered by many of my contemporaries, was **Paul Cassar M.B.E.** Cassar was born in Malta in 1882, and was educated at the Tigne Garrison School, from where he went as a boy writer into the Army Ordinance Corps. He joined the Consular Service in 1902. Early in the century he came to Egypt and succeeded **Hughes Laferla** as "Shipping Master" for the Canal Zone, before being transferred to Alexandria in 1911. In 1929 Paul Cassar became Registrar of the Provincial Court as well Vice-Consul in

²¹ *Study Session I paper I. "Migrants' Convention - 1969"*.

Alexandria, an office which he held till his retirement in 1947. In those days, there was a Supreme Court for Egypt and the judge used the Provincial Court Registrar as his Registrar wherever he sat. Paul Cassar emigrated with his family to South Africa where he died in 1951.

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We had also in Alexandria during the 1940s **Anthony Cumbo M.B.E.**, as a Pro-Consul and at Suez, and **D. Scerri** as Vice-Consul.

Joseph W. Caruana joined the Port-Said Consulate in 1915 and was appointed in 1924 Pro-Consul and Registrar of the Provincial and Supreme Consular Court. Caruana was awarded the M.B.E. in June 1928. Later in May 1933 he was appointed Vice Consul and several times Acting Consul. In 1951, Caruana was transferred to Tripoli (Libya) and appointed as head of the Consular section at the British Residency.

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In an earlier reception in their honour held at the Union Club by members of the Anglophone Community, Mr. Worrall expressed his sorrow at the loss of two very dear friends and presented to Mrs. Caruana a silver dressing set and to her husband, an engraved silver salver²².

Another young dedicated Consular Officer was **Joseph A. Cassar M.B.E.** Cassar was born in Alexandria in 1919 and was educated at the British Boys' School and Victoria College and also from 1939 to 1942 at LSE which stand for "London School of Economics". During the Second World War, Cassar was a code-breaker in Bletchley Park, England and at the S.E.A.C. (for *South-East Asia Command H.Q.*), in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

From 1946 to 1949 J. A. Cassar was appointed as Assistant-Registrar of H.M.'s Consular Court in Egypt and concurrently as British Vice-Consul in Alexandria for the period 1946-56 coinciding with the time of the Suez Crisis (1956), when J.A. Cassar was appointed as Acting

²² *Il-Habbar Malti fl-Egittu*, d/d 16.10.1951 p.3.

Consul-General in Alexandria before leaving for England. Up to 1956 he also held the office of District Commissioner of the British Boy Scouts Association in Alexandria, Egypt.

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Maltese Exiled and Interned in Egypt

One of the exiled Maltese to Egypt was **Manwel Dimech**. He was born in Valletta, on December 25, 1860. His father Carmelo was a craftsman and he died when Manwel was still a child. His widowed mother, Evangelista (nee Zammit), brought him up and by all accounts he was a roguish child. At seventeen he was sentenced for an assault charge and for trying to use counterfeit money. Dimech spent most of his youth in an institution. It is said that Dimech made good use of his spare time in prison by learning to write and teaching himself Italian, French and English. Dimech was also a good reader of French classics such as Boileau and Voltaire.

In 1897 then in his thirties, Dimech founded a school of languages and a year later he published the newspaper, *Il-Bandiera Tal-Maltin* (*The Maltese Flag*). The newspaper was said to have become the most popular paper published in the Maltese language.

On October 2, 1900 he married Virginia Agius and they had three children, Attilio, Evelina and Silvia.

At the age of 45, Dimech went to Genoa where in all likelihood he met prominent Mazziniani politicians and surely enough; he absorbed the principles of the “Risorgimento”. Dimech met and made friends with well-known politicians and scholars in Italy, Greece and Turkey.

On his return in 1911 from the Continent to Malta, he founded the *Xirka tal-Imdawlin*, (*The Association of Enlightened Ones*), which then were clamouring for political progress and social reforms.

As a poet, journalist, social reformer and an opponent of the British

Colonialism, he became the victim of antagonism for the church and the British administration and was considered an apparent danger to society.

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With the oncoming declaration of war, the 54 years old man was apprehended under the emergency ordinance, by order of General Sir Leslie Rundle, Governor of Malta (1909 –1915), and exiled to Egypt on the grounds that he was fomenting disloyalty among the dockyard workers.

Dimech was taken on board an Italian ship *S/S Stura*, bound for Syracuse with only the equivalent of \$6.00 in his pocket. The next morning he was escorted on board another Italian steamer *S/S Porto-Said* which conveyed him to Alexandria, Egypt²³.

On his arrival in Alexandria, the British Vice-Consul handed him back his British passport. In a matter of days, the amount of cash in hand was reduced to ten Francs. He was compelled to sell a diamond ring that he carried on his finger to a Greek merchant in exchange for some goods.

When in Egypt, Dimech wrote articles for his newspaper about his aspiration that: *one day he will see the Maltese catch up with other nations*, and that: *... the Maltese people may wake up to themselves*, phrases quoted in his correspondence from Cairo²⁴.

Having little money and no resources except for the small revenue from private lessons, he was compelled to call several times at the British Consulate for some charitable assistance. For a short period Dimech was sent to a pauper's (poor people home) refuge, known as "Rudolph Home" where, not being accustomed to lead a beggar life, one day, he decided to board a British ship the *S/S Demarera* in company with an Australian sailor stranded in Alexandria and sign as a trimmer for Australia, where he planned to remain till the end of the war. His plan was discovered and he was put under arrest by the

²³ *Malta National Library, Valletta, 1987.*

²⁴ Edmond Caruana, *Interview d/d. 14.6.1987.*

Egyptian Police and sent to El Hadra Prison (Foreigners' Jail). According to G. Azzopardi, his precious manuscripts and an Italian comedy written in verses by him, and the papers on which he taught languages for a living, were taken away from him.

From El Hadra Prison also known as "Prison des Etrangers" where he was detained for over a month, he was conveyed to the P.O.W. Detention Centre, at Ras el Tin, in the old quarantine station, where he remained for four months in the midst of German internees who hated him, because they suspected that being a British Subject, he had been placed among them to spy for the authorities.

One day after an incident with a group of detainees, he was taken in front of the Camp- Commandant and told that an English clergyman has interested himself about his welfare and that his case was being re-examined. A few days later, Dimech was escorted for a sham medical examination and consigned back to a military escort and taken back to El Hadra Prison, where he was kept in transit before being taken to the Abassieh Lunatic Asylum in Cairo, where he was kept for sixteen months²⁵.

During his sixteen months spent at the asylum he never accepted any medication nor taken any food that was given to him, because he was afraid of being poisoned. Dimech lived on what the others left over and for the period of time he spent in El Hadra and Abassieh, he abstained from writing to his wife. His last letter was from Ras el Tin. In her reply, Virginia told him that her sister-in-law's brother from Syracuse (Sicily) informed her that the British Consul had been enquiring after him as he was holding on his behalf the sum of ten Pounds. Dimech had written to him requesting that six Pounds be sent to his wife in Malta and the balance to him at Ras el Tin. His wife acknowledged the money from the Anglo-Egyptian Bank. He never received his share²⁶.

From Abassieh, a suburb north of Cairo, Dimech was transferred to the British Army Barracks in Kasr el Nil (now demolished), where

²⁵ Manwel Nicholas-Borg, Interview d/d. 1994.

²⁶ Manwel Nicholas-Borg, Interview d/d. 1994.

he spent about a year clad in tatters wearing the only shirt he had and which he used to wash on Saturdays evening to wear the next day.

Once more the authorities transferred him to the Foreign Internees and Turkish P.O.W. Camp in Sidi Bishr, an outer suburb at about ten km. north-east of Alexandria city. At the time of his sojourn in Alexandria, there was also a compatriot named **Gwann Mamo**, a native of Hal Luqa, who settled in Egypt and resided at No. 8, Rue Macoris, El-Gumruk, an inner suburb of the city where he worked as a waiter and later as an office worker for the British Army in one of the internment compounds where Dimech was held.

As a friend, he paid him regular visits. In some of his letters written during the period 1920-1921 to his relatives in Malta, Mamo describe the poor state of Dimech – rundown and demoralized. One day the only food issued to him was a piece of bread and an onion. Being ill, he was treated at the Indian Military Hospital. According to Mamo: *nobody could imagine his experiences*²⁷.

When War ended in 1918, all the internees, Germans, Austrians, Turks and Bulgarians, returned to their respective families, but not Dimech – he remained an internee²⁸.

Virginia Dimech and her children tried in vain to petition Colonel Simpson, Inspector of the Prisoners of War Camps, with the hope of obtaining his release, but the submission was all in vain. In a letter dated January 30, 1920 addressed to the then Governor of Malta, Field Marshal Viscount Plumer (1919-1924). Virginia begged his Excellency to examine her husband's case and allow him to return

²⁷ *Il-Habbar Malti fl-Egittu*, d/d 12.5.1944, p.1.

²⁸ *In support to the claim that the internment camps did existed up to 1920, the author was able to peruse two certificates of discharge from Military Service, belonging to a Maltese settler, on which it is stated: Discharged on account of being no longer required with the Egypt Expeditionary Force stationed at the P.O.W. camp No. 2 and Camp No. 4, Sidi Bishr, Alexandria. The documents bear the name of Joseph Caruana, native of Valletta, Malta, who had served in the staff of the P.O.W Camps from October 7, 1916 to April 24, 1920.*

home. She describes her husband as the hardest-hit victim of the war.

Earlier in his period of his exile, Dimech wrote a letter to Lord Methuen, then Governor of Malta (1915-1919), kindly requesting some subsidy for his wife and three children, a similar practice carried for the other families of political prisoners. His request dated November 14, 1915, was ignored.

On January 15, 1921 Prof. Pier Frendo and Advocate Giacintu Tua, President and Member of the Malta Labour Party respectively, prepared another petition on behalf of his wife, pleading to the Governor to bring back Dimech from exile as he was a sick man. The representation met an insurmountable wall. The application was refused again and returned to Virginia.

Dimech reached the stage of begging the Authorities to bring him before justice and be condemned to the deserved punishment, but if found innocent, he said, it would be a shame to let him die in these circumstances. His wish was to get out of Egypt where he had suffered so much away from home. Dimech asked also, to be allowed to stay a few more days in Egypt as a freeman, so to gain a few pounds in weight. In another petition he wrote: *...pray for me, I am not mad, far from it, but in a terrible state of despondency, thinking continuously of the sufferings of my poor wife who is ill and that my children are not attending school as they had no shoes*²⁹.

At the end of the war, the Maltese Community of Egypt was vigorously protesting against the continued internment of Dimech, while in Malta some Maltese acting on behalf of Dimech's family, were petitioning Governor Plumer, for his return from exile³⁰.

His family suffered until he died on April 17, 1921 at the age of 61. Dimech was buried in the Latin Cemetery, in Chatby, Alexandria, where some Maltese sympathisers adorned his grave with a large wooden cross³¹.

²⁹ Fr. Lawrence E. Attard. *The Great Exodus* 1989, p.25.

³⁰ *The Maltese Standard* d/d. 12.5.1896.

³¹ Prof. J. Aquilina / *The Sunday Times* d/d. 13.12.1987, p.50

In 1972, **Prof. Henry Frendo** forwarded to the Deputy Egyptian Ambassador in Rome a copy of a photograph reproduced in Malta in the early 1920s that shows Dimech's grave in Alexandria, but to no avail as the cemetery site is no more and all efforts to trace Dimech's remains have proved fruitless.³²

When Dimech died, Mamo announced his death with these words in the form of a public notice in a Maltese language newspaper³³.

Poplu Malti, il-habib tal-poplu fqir, il-gharef qatt minsi martri, Kbir patrijott Malti Emmanuele Dimech, marbut mar-rieda t'Alla, halla dan il-wied tad-dmugh fit 18 t'April 1921 – Lixandra.

[People of Malta, the friend of the poor people, the never forgotten martyr and sage, the great Maltese patriot, Manwel Dimech, accepting God's will, left this vale of tears on April 18, 1921 in Alexandria.]

Another Maltese member of the Nationalist movement regarded as a foremost sympathizer, was **Francesco Azzopardi** who was also shipped off to Egypt by the British Authorities in 1919. It is to be remembered that pro Italian feeling was not uncommon in Malta. For instance, a year before Italy entered the Second World War (1939-1945), an editorial published in *the Times of Malta* on July 20, 1939 stated that: *Dr. Enrico Mizzi sincerely believed in the Italian school of thought that for political reasons desired the world to consider Malta as terra irredenta.*

For some time, in Malta as well as in Egypt, the British Secret Service had kept an eye on Italian citizen and pro-Italian elements, and to keep the security under control, in 1940 the British Authorities branded Nationalist sympathizers as "Fascists". Several nationalists were detained without charge, under Ordinance No.1 of 1942, with the consequence that in February 1942 many of these were exiled from Malta, among them Dr. Enrico Mizzi and a number of businessmen, journalists, lawyers, civil servants, university students and dockyard workers.

³² J. A. Mizzi, *Scouting in Malta* 1989 p.136.

³³ Ivan Magri-Overend, *AMCOE N/L*, 29, 1976 p.7.

The deportees from Malta embarked on *H.M.S. Breconshire*, bound for Alexandria where they disembarked after two and half days. They were put on military vehicles and taken to a railway siding where they boarded a train for Cairo. For a month they were detained at the Citadel and guarded by New Zealanders. From the Citadel, they were taken by train to Wadi Halfa on the Sudan frontier with Egypt (1,620 km south of Cairo), and after a trip on the Nile they reached Khartoum, Capital of Sudan and finally they disembarked in one of the many camps in Bombo and ended their journey at a new camp in Entebbe, Uganda³⁴ The majority of the exiled Maltese were interned for over five years. They reached home after being issued with a certificate liberating them from internment. They were the last Maltese having transited in Egypt.

Various Maltese Associations in Egypt

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In the city of Alexandria the majestic church of St. Catherine Virgin Martyr, was completed in 1850, and in the space of four years, members of the Maltese Colony of that city, formed a committee to constitute the **Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel**, and adopted Our Lady as the Patron Saint of the Colony. Their request was granted on the 20th September 1854 with an official recognition from Rome allowing them the custody of a chapel and the use of a room for their meetings.

.....

In Egypt as in other Ottoman lands, the local authorities at the time possessed no organization for welfare and for the distribution of relief funds to distressed European residents. So to assist the ones in need and to give assistance to the aged and sick, the elders of the Maltese colony at a meeting held in Alexandria on the 23rd May 1880 instituted the ***Societa Maltese di Reciproco Soccorso*** which remained in existence through a number of difficult years, up to 1956.

³⁴ Magri-Overend, I, "Migrants' Conversion - 1969" p.6-7.

....

On the 19th October 1946 to conform to the new law promulgated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Society changed and registered its name as: ***Maltese Benevolent Society***.

....

In Alexandria the formation of Associations, Clubs, etc. that followed **the Confraternity of O.L.Mt. Carmel** in 1854, **the Benevolent Society** and **the Maltese primary school** in 1880 goes as follow: In 1888 they established **the Gruppo Letterario** (Literary Group), **The Circolo Nazionale Maltese** in 1896, was later registered as : **A.M.Y.A.** (Alexandria Maltese Youth Association) in 1932, again in 1945 the A.M.Y.A. was recorded as **Maltese Union Club**. The **Maltese Catechetical Teaching** started in 1898, the **Dramatic Society** in 1904 followed by the **Philharmonic Society “Valletta”** in 1905, **The Community Council** was formed in 1925, **the Melita Sports Club** was formed in the 1920s and **a Scout Group** followed in 1932. The **Dramatic Society “Icilio Calleja”** in 1934 followed by a **Sea Scout Group** in 1936 and **the Girl Guide Company** in 1939. During W.W.II, **the Sons of Malta Association (Social & Soccer team)** was formed in 1941 by our co-nationals from Malta. In 1942 the **Maltese Literature & Propaganda Society** was set up, and was followed in 1943 by the **Malta Relief Fund (Egypt Committee)**. In 1945 Maltese Representatives were elected in **the British Legion – Alexandria Branch**.

In Cairo, on the same principles the Colony founded in 1890 the **Maltese Mutual Help Society**. In 1910 the MMHS wound up and was followed suit by **the Maltese Benevolent Society**. **The Maltese Club** was formed in 1916 and **the Maltese Scout Group** was formed in 1921, **the Girl Guide Company** in 1936, **the Federal Community Council** was established in 1927 and **Malta House** inaugurated in 1939. In 1941 they formed **the Maltese Ladies Union** and **the Dramatic Society**, **the Melita Football Club** followed in 1943. In 1944, the Council was working on a project for a **Maltese Hospital**, and the last registered association was founded in 1945 by **the Maltese Ex-Servicemen Association**.

The Maltese Colony of Port-Said, begun its existence at about 1859 at the time when construction works commenced for the Suez Canal. By 1896 when the Suez Canal was inaugurated, the local Maltese colony consisted of about 100 families and was able to form a musical group, called *Filarmonica Maltese Melita*. In 1915 as the colony increased in number, they instituted the *Maltese Benevolent Society*, and became known in 1922 as **the Maltese Mutual Help Society**, followed by a *Football Club*, a *Social Club*, a *Literary and Dramatic Societies* and youth groups: *Scouts and Guides*. The *Community Council* was formed in 1929 and *Malta House* was established in 1942.

In the Catholic Church of Ste. Eugenie, consanctred in 1890, the Maltese had their own altar, dedicated to **Our Lady of Mount Carmel**. On the feast day (16th July) the colony used to organise a public procession and a festa and appropriated music was played by the Maltese Philharmonic Band. The event was greatly assisted by a sponsorship from Mr. **Antoine Said** owner of the Port-Said Water Supply Co.

Going back to the Alexandria Community of the 1890s, for their social life and leisure, they founded on May 12, 1896 the *Circolo Nazionale Maltese* with the following members elected to the executive committee:- Mr **G.B.Caffari** President, Mr **Vincenzo Fiteni** Vice-President, Mr **Alberto Cumbo** Secretary, Mr **E. Vizzari** Vice-Secretary, Mr **Giuseppe A. Pace** Treasurer, Messrs **Gaetano Morello, Giuseppe Coppola, Alfredo Bartolo** and **Emmanuele Darmanin** as Councillors.

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Up to the mid 1920s, the various Maltese Community Councils in Egypt existed as autonomous organizations. In December 1927, following an invitation by Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, British High Commissioner in Egypt (1925-1929), an appeal was made and published in the Maltese newspaper “**L-Standard tal-Maltin**” (edited by **George J. Vella**). It received a good response and this resulted with the formation of the “**Central Maltese Community Council**”. The Central Council then published its own official

newspaper “**Il-Habbar Malti**”.

Apart from social clubs and benevolent societies, the Maltese in Egypt founded a Primary school in Alexandria as well a school of Music. In the city of Suez an English school was founded whose property was owned by the Maltese Community of that city.

In the main cities the communities as you have noted established philharmonic, dramatic and literary groups, as well as youth associations, boy scouts and girl guides a Ladies Union ,and a project for a Maltese hospital. At the end of the war an Ex-Servicemen association was formed and was recognized by General Paget Commander in Chief of British Troops Egypt.

On December 19, 1939, the **House of Assembly of the Maltese Community in Suez** was officially opened by H.B.M.’s Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson.

The Maltese Youth groups in Egypt

From the 1920s, the majority of our youth in the Community were attending French Schools run by Religious Orders.

Sports activities were not of great primary interest, as the scholastic studies included homework after school hours and for the weekend. Therefore, exercise used to be carried out by participating according to age groups with: the A.M.Y.A. soccer team or the rugby team with the Melita Sports Club, and in the 1920s; attending a gymnasium was considered very fashionable for men only.

A very particular activity carried by all ages, was cycling, some people owned their bicycle or hired by the hour from the bicycle shop. Camping was an activity for scouts and to some extent by hunters during their overnight stay in the desert. Many of the hunters belonged to fishing and hunting Clubs in their respective city.

Fishing was very popular, from shore or from a boat or even from a movable platform known as “Cavalletto” (trestle). Its use was later prohibited by the coast guards for being considered too dangerous³⁵.

³⁵ For a detailed list of Maltese Organizations in Egypt from 1854 to

During August 1939, at the same time of the Scouts visit to the Maltese Islands, another group of Maltese visitors from Alexandria the *Xirka ghat-Tixrid tal-Qari Malti* exchanged visit with the local association. That group included Mr. and Mrs. **Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi** and their two sons; Father **Valentino Cardona** OFM of Cairo, Fr. **Karm Mercieca** OFM of Cyprus, Mr. and Mrs. **Armand Attard**, Mr. and Mrs. **Edward Cassar** and Mr. **Richard Zahra**. In one of their social gathering held at the Osborne Hotel with their counterpart from Malta, Dr. Guze Bonnici President of the *Xirka ghat Tixrid ta'I-Ilsien Malti*, (Malta Association), in his welcome speech praised the work carried by the Association in Egypt, to which Mr. Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi replied with appreciative words on behalf of his Association.

The Federation of the Councils

With the initiative to co-ordinate the various organizations formed in each city in an orderly structure, the first centralized Maltese Community Council was federated in 1927 in the city of Cairo, followed by Suez, Alexandria, Port-Said and Ismailia.

The first Federal Maltese Community Council was formed in Cairo with the support and encouragement from Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, British High Commissioner, and the valuable support of **George J. Vella**, Editor of the Maltese local newspaper *L-Istandard Tal-Maltin*. The first Federal Council in Egypt was formed as follow:

Robert Borg as President, **P. L.Gatt** as Hon. Secretary, **W. S. Caffari** as Treasurer, with the following Councillors: **L. Naudi**, **Edgar Bartolo**, **G. Calleja** and **F. Pace**.

The initiative was taken by **George J. Vella**, of Cairo when he inserted an editorial that inspired the patriotism of the Maltese of Egypt, in his newspaper *L-Standard tal-Maltin* ("The Maltese Banner"). His successful patriotic articles inspired the formation of the Melita Band, the Maltese Club of Suez, the Maltese Boy Scouts,

1956, see Appendix "H"

Girl Guides and the Cairo Ladies Union.

L-Standard Tal-Maltin was printed in Cairo and appeared as a weekly and was considered worthy of its name. This Maltese newspaper appeared in 1909 and ceased publication in 1912. It resumed publication in 1919 and survived till 1924.

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Flow and Counter Flow of Maltese Migration

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[D]uring the late 1860s with the early construction works on the Suez Canal and the cotton boom, Maltese emigration to Egypt fluctuated from some 5% to 30% exceeding that to Algeria in French North Africa³⁶.

The outbreak of plague during the 1800s caused 1,500 Maltese to flee to Malta to avoid the epidemic. Another epidemic of cholera in 1896 afflicted once again the poorer Maltese in Alexandria, as a large number of workers were out of employment as result of sanitary precautions and stagnation of business in that city with the departure of the well-to-do towards other localities i.e., Rhodes, Athens, Beirut³⁷.

To alleviate the distress of the Maltese Community and to reduce the pressure exerted by the demand of relief funds to the *Societa Maltese di Reciproco Soccorso e Beneficenza* (Maltese Benevolent Society), established in Alexandria in 1880, a Committee for the Relief of distressed Maltese in Egypt was formed in Valletta to which the Maltese Government contributed the sum of one hundred pounds. The Relief Committee was composed as follows: President, Marquis Gius Scicluna (banker); Secretary, E. Castaldi, Treasurer; Giuseppe Bencini (merchant); Members: Prof. Salvu Grech DD.; Oreste Grech LLD; Lieut.Col. L. Manche MD. R.M.A; Count Giovanni Messina LLD., and Mgr. Alf Mifsud STh.D. A fund-raising campaign was launched with a notice published in the *Malta Standard* announcing

³⁶ *Passport Records* - Appendix "B" pr.12.

³⁷ *The Public Opinion*, d/d 23.6.1896 - Malta National Library

that on June 23, 1896, a performance will be given at the Theatre Royal on behalf of the Fund Raising Committee.

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An article appeared in the newspaper *Public Opinion* dated, June 23, 1896, raised the matter under the following heading, "***For our brethren in Egypt***":

... We are sure that the appeal now made to all classes for assistance will be adequately responded to. Those who have much to give will, we trust, give much. Others will give in accordance to their means. Let it not be said that while foreigners have assisted the Maltese Colony in Egypt, their own countrymen have denied their modest contribution.

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Commenting upon the dispersal of the Maltese Community of Egypt after its Exodus, the "AMCOE Newsletter," organ of the Association of Maltese Communities of Egypt published in London since April 1965, in its issue dated September 1994, the editor disclosed that his publication is mailed to members of the Diaspora, now residing in 17 countries around the world.

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Restrained Maltese Migration to Egypt

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Emigration to Egypt in the 1920s, as already stated, was strictly now limited to seamen who went to Egyptian Ports to sign on and to Maltese of the skilled class having a pre-arranged employment by the British Administration or the British Military Authorities and contractors.

Between April 1930 and March 1931 the number of skilled migrants who proceeded to Egypt from Malta were 121 (106 men, 8 women and 7 children) and the number of those who returned home during the same period was 29.

Not shown on statistics was a number of Maltese who enlisted in Malta for service with the British Troops in Egypt and who settled in the country after their discharge from the British Army. These new (former-military) settlers married local Maltese or Italian girls and took residence in the main cities. As for their children, under the Capitulatory Treaties, their birth in Egypt as British Subjects had the same effect as being born in the United Kingdom³⁸.

The Maltese emigration from the 1900 to 1930 had the effect of a security valve for the economy of Malta. Their descendants in Egypt acquired Italian, French or English education as French and Italian Catholic Missionary Orders ran most primary, secondary and technical schools.

Funding Migration to Africa

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Maltese settlement in the Pashalik of Egypt took root in the early part of the nineteenth century in the city of Alexandria, where the small colony at the time, was incorporated within the rest of the Christian community of that city. Alexandria in the middle of the last century had under Muhammad Ali and the consecutive khedives, recovered part of its ancient splendour and had been enriched by the economic activity of a multi-cultural society and British occupation.

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Some Maltese involved in the building of the Suez Canal

From 1859 the number of Maltese settlers arriving in Egypt kept increasing, from 2,000 in 1842 to 5,000 arrivals in 1865. A number of Maltese stonemasons were employed for the construction of quays and embankments for the new city of Port-Said. It took 161,650m³ of stone quarried at El Mex and transported by barges to the site. According to some elderly people, the English Company that operated the Mex quarries employed a number of Maltese

³⁸ *Interviewes:-* E. Bonello, J. Camilleri, J. Caruana, and M. Scerri.

stonecutters for the supply of material to the Suez Canal Company, and at a later date the same quarries supplied the stone for the construction of the breakwater for the eastern port of Alexandria.

A well-known mariner was **Gio Felice Caruana**, a native of Cospicua. Gio was the son of Antonio, a Master Mariner of the First Class, with a Certificate issued at the Palace in Valletta, on May 19, 1835. Following the family tradition, Gio obtained his certificate of competency to act as "Mate of Merchant Vessels - commanded by Masters of First or Second Class". In June 1873 he applied for and was granted the Licence to act as Mate of Merchant Vessels by the British Board of Navigation. Gio and his family settled in Port-Said after securing a position with the *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez* as a pilot for vessels in transition through the waterway.

Another descendant of a family of mariners that had a connection with the early years of the Suez Canal is Captain **Nicola Fleri**. When Nicola's father, also a Master Mariner lost his life in the Bay of Biscay during a rougher than usual storm, Nicola decided toward the end of 1882 to emigrate to Egypt where he joined the Suez Canal Company as a pilot. After a few years service as a pilot with the C.U.C.M.S. (Suez Canal Co.), Nicola Fleri was appointed Harbour Master in Alexandria³⁹

More names may be added to the list of early pilots with the Suez Canal Company, namely, Captain **Antonio Caruana**, Captain **Fernandez** and Captain **J. Naponelli**.

A more recent mariner was **Joseph Caruana** who was born in Valletta. Joseph was the holder of a certificate of competency issued by the British Board of Trade. Joseph Caruana arrived in Egypt from Valletta in September 1916 at the time when the war was unfolding in Europe and in the Sinai and along the Suez Canal. As Master of a foreign-going steamer, he acted up to May 1926 as skipper of a ship

³⁹ *AMCOE N/L. 55, p.13.and Convention 1969 pape I. p.7.*

used for the maintenance of Light-houses and navigation buoys along the Red Sea, south of Suez⁴⁰.

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Maltese Pioneers in Egypt

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Many Maltese names appeared during the research carried for the period of the 1800s by persons having settled in Egypt, and to name just a few: Concetta and Carmela Abela, Francesca Azzopardi, Amabile Bonello, Marius Camilleri, Pio Caruana, Giovanni and Nicola Chircop, Michele and Teresa De Bono, Salvu Frendo De Mannarino, Pietro Grech, Luigi Nani, Francesco and Giuseppe Pace, Paul Pace, M. Psaila, Gannanton Vassallo, Lorenzo Zarb and many others.

Such an example of an old pioneer Maltese family of Egypt was the family of **Pietro Grech**, who lived in Rosetta in the 1800s and was employed as a foreman at the dockyards of that maritime city.

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The story goes that the eldest daughter of Pietro, Giuseppina, was born in Rosetta, on June 16, 1840 and eventually, the good lady made news when she celebrated her 100th birthday in 1940 while residing in Cairo surrounded by over 60 members of her family⁴¹ On that occasion, Zette, a reporter of a local French newspaper *Le Progres Egyptien*, interviewed Mrs. **Giuseppina Aquilina**. The meeting was held at her villa, bearing her marriage name "Villa Aquilina" at No.4 Rue Champollion, Heliopolis. According to the reporter, her brother **Fr John Grech**, then 85 years of age, was at the time a Monsignor with the Franciscan Fathers in Holy Land, Palestine.

Further on it was reported that the centenarian Giuseppina had the

⁴⁰ Oscar Caruana, Interview - June 1995.

⁴¹ *Le Progres Egyptien* d/d.16.6.1940.

joy to witness the growth of five generations within her family. She was exceptionally religious and she visited Malta three times in her life span. Under the heading "L-Ixjeh Maltija fil Kajr" the Maltese language newspaper *L-Bullettin* reported that Giuseppina Aquilina was at that time the oldest person in Egypt. The article goes on to say that her descendants in Cairo were: **Cesare Aquilina**, **G. J. Vella** and **Franz De Barro** of the Marconi Wireless Company. Several of her descendants, namely: Aquilina, Grech and Vassallo, are now residing in England or Australia. Among her descendants is her great-grandson, **Ives De Barro**, a member of the Maltese Diplomatic Corps and up to recent date, Ambassador of Malta in Cairo, before being appointed as High Commissioner for Malta in Canberra, Australia, and on August 1st 2002 he was then appointed Ambassador of Malta in Tunisia.

Another famous Maltese with an affinity to the city of Rosetta was **Andrea De Bono.**, (sometimes spelt Debono). Andrea was the son of sea captain, **Michele De Bono**, who was married to **Teresa Carabott**, and they had two children, a girl by the name of Battistina and Andrea who was born in Senglea, on November 7, 1821. As a boy, Andrea received a bourgeois education, learned Italian, which was at the time the language of culture in Malta, where he also studied chemistry, that became useful when he was in Egypt and in the Sudan.

Andrea followed his parents to Egypt in the late 1830s. The family settled in Rosetta where Andrea exercised his profession as a chemist for a number of years at the local hospital. For only a short time after the family settled down in Rosetta, the young people became orphans and they decided to go to Cairo, where Battistina got engaged to **Giuseppe Mussu**, a member of the local Maltese Colony. In 1841 Battistina married Giuseppe. A year later, Andrea fell under the spell of the River Nile and the southern hinterland, known to Europeans as Black or Equatorial Africa.

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The following epitaph written in Italian adorns his grave:

ANDREA DE BONO REST IN THIS PLACEAN INTREPID
TRAVELLERLIVED FOR A LONG TIME ON THE WHITE NILE
AND PUSHED HIS EXPLORATIONSAS FAR AS THE NILE
SOURCES

....

During the 19th century a good number of Maltese prospective settlers have visited and stayed for a number of years in Egypt.

One of such early visitor to Cairo was **Count Amedeo Preziosi**, who was born in Malta in 1816, and was educated in Paris where he attended L'Ecole des Beaux Arts. Soon after his return to Malta, Preziosi left to settle in Pera, a district situated north east of Istanbul (Constantinople), married a Greek girl, Iphygenie and fathered four children.

In the early 1860s Preziosi visited Egypt and published his artwork in the form of a lithographic album, entitled *Souvenirs du Caire*. His watercolours depict the dress of men and women of the Ottoman region as well as views of mosques and fountains. One of Preziosi's Egyptian paintings was exhibited as early as 1863 at the Royal Academy in London. Some time after 1876 he was appointed as court painter to the Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Count Amedeo Preziosi died on September 28, 1882 following a shooting accident⁴².

In 1869 at the time of the festivities for the inauguration of the Suez Canal, Maestro **Joseph Calleja** was transferred from the Court of the Sultan in Constantinople, to the position as Chef D' Orchestre at the Royal Opera House, Cairo. Admiral **Lorenzo Zarb Bey**, and **Schembri** as purveyor and caterer in Suez, they are the three known Maltese Officials having been involved during social functions for the inauguration of the Suez Canal.

Another interesting Maltese person in Egypt at the time of the opening of the Suez Canal was **Carmelo Aquilina**. According to the story: It was the opening of the Canal in 1869 that had inspired Thomas Cook and his son John, to open an office in Cairo and their

⁴² A.E.Abela /T.S.T. d/d.19.11.1989. p.26. Not

first employee was Carmelo Aquilina, who had joined the company soon after it had opened its Travel Agency in Egypt.

....

Another Maltese, **Antonio Gauci**, was employed by Thomas Cook, as a marine engineer, responsible for the company steam-boats used on the River Nile. Antonio was married to Adelaida Mifsud and had seven children. The family resided in Cairo.

Over time, Thomas Cook Travel employed a good number of Maltese from Egypt. Two contemporary employees of Thomas Cook, Alexandria Branch, namely, **Oswald Garsia** and **Julius Borg** were able after emigrating to Australia, to take their respective duties with Thomas Cook in Sydney and Melbourne respectively and they do deserve a mention for their considerable efforts in assisting some co-nationals with the formalities that prevailed in relation to the booking of a sea passage on a boat bound for Australia during the difficult years prior to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian Government.

Amongst other early settlers from Malta, we find **Giovanni Antonio Vassallo**, better known as, Gananton. He was born in Valletta, on June 5, 1817 and got a thorough background and grounding in Italian and Latin from the Maltese classical scholar Giuseppe Zammit among others. He graduated in 1842 and read Law at the University of Malta. Between 1844 and 1863 he spent some time in Egypt where he studied Arabic and Greek. He is the author of the book, *Storia di Malta*, 1854, and as a writer, he is best remembered for his poem, *Il-Gifen Tork* which narrates the 1760 epic of the capture of the Turkish admiral vessel, “*Corona Ottomana*” by seventy-one Christian slaves that mutinied, prevailed over the guards on board and sailed for Malta. Vassallo returned to Malta in 1863 and became Professor of Italian at the University of Malta, Gananton died in his native Island in 1868.

The spirit of liberalism of our Colony in Egypt in the 1800s is reflected by a public appeal made by **Amabile Bonello** and **G. Carbonaro** published in the newspaper *L'Emigrazione Maltese* of April 15, 1872 to which the Maltese Colony responded by

contributing the sum of ten pounds toward the scheme to erect a memorial to the Maltese patriot, Don Gejtu Mannarino, leader of the revolt against the Order's rule, on February 9, 1774.

A relative of the Maltese patriot, was **Salvu Frendo de Mannarino**. Salvu was born in Birgu (Malta) in 1845. Emigrated to Egypt and settled in Cairo. In that city, Salvu met members of the Maltese Colony among them intellectuals of Italian literature. He also acted as legal procurator for Maltese residents having to deal with H.M. British Consular Court, at the time when Raphael Borg, C.M.G., was the British Acting Consul-General in Cairo. According to Ivan Magri-Overend, Salvu was his maternal grandfather who, at the time of the insurrection of 1882 was evacuated to Malta from where he returned after few years and established himself as a headmaster and teacher of languages.

As a writer, Salvu wrote several plays in Maltese and Italian. His book, *Il Barunissa Maltija* originally published in 1894 was his best success. On the ninetieth anniversary of its publication (1894–1984) “Il Barunissa Maltija” was read in Maltese over Xandir Malta (Radio Malta) and commented on by Charles Arrigo. During the explanatory commentary, Arrigo stated that the written composition is an historical romance of the early XVI century, a kind of “I Promessi Sposi” which brings to light an obscure period in the history of the Church in Malta – the attempts by Lutherans to replace the religion of the Islands.

Frendo de Mannarino was also active in community affairs. He was one of the founders of the “Mutuo Soccorso” (Maltese Mutual Help Society), established in Cairo in 1880. When he passed away in Cairo in 1918 he was the President of the Society he helped to put forward⁴³.

In the late 1800s the colony had in its midst, some good music composers. A praiseworthy Maltese composer in Egypt was **Joseph Georges Pisani**, who was born in Alexandria in 1870 and at an early age he was sent to study music at the Conservatorio San Pietro, in

⁴³. Magri-Overend, *AMCOE N/L. 43, d/d. Feb. 1984*, p.10.

Maiello, Naples, Italy.

At a musical contest held in Paris in 1892, Pisani won the first prize with his presentation “La Vierge de la Haute Tour.” His musical talent became well known by the artists of the fine arts. To his credit are numerous pieces of music. In a meritorious gesture the French Society awarded Pisani the honour of being elected a member of the “Societe des Auteurs et Compositeurs.”

In 1894 Pisani produced at the Zizinia theatre in Alexandria, his opera “Il Re delle Caverne” followed by “Cleopatra”. Maestro Pisani was also well known in Malta. His bust is exhibited at the Orpheum theatre in Gzira, Malta.

From an article written by Capt. **J. M. Wismayer** in the Sunday Times, we learned that when in 1858 the sea transport ship *S/S Princess Royal* left Malta with on board the Middlesex Regiment on its way to quell the Indian Mutiny. On board the troopship was Maestro **Philip Galea**, bandmaster of the 1st Battalion, 57th Regiment of Foot. He wrote in his diary:- “...*The ship arrived off Alexandria on May 15, 1858, but due to bad weather it entered port on the next day and went ashore. Three days later the battalion disembarked and boarded a train for the city-port of Suez...*”

At Suez, in transit prior to embarkation on *S/S Prince Arthur* bound for India, Mtro. **Galea** met two countrymen, a certain **Schembri**, who was a representative of the Shepherd’s Hotel in Cairo and **Emmanuel Caruana**, an employee of the Egyptian State Railway⁴⁴.

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Another music teacher was **Vincenzo Burlo**, who was born in Cospicua in 1860s and he was dedicated to music and joined the H.M.S. Naval Band. In 1880 he left Malta for Egypt and settled in Alexandria, where he dedicated his talent as a music teacher by giving private violin lessons. Later on in life, he was employed by the French Catholic Schools of that city as a music teacher and by the end of the First World War he was the conductor of two school

⁴⁴ Capt. J.M.Wismayer. *T.S.T.* d/d. 8.12.1991.

bands, at the Ecole des Freres St. Catherine and St. Vincent de Paul's Boys School. He retired in 1923 when he concentrated on composing more music. He passed away peacefully in Alexandria in 1932.

Not so long ago, **Alexander (Sandro) Darmanin**, grandson of the late Burlo, discovered some written music among some old family papers. One of the compositions was under the title "Alessandria Waltz". With his usual incentive, Sandro had it played professionally and recorded it on tape. As far as is known, Alexander is treasuring his discovery and reproduction by keeping it close to his heart⁴⁵.

A frequent visitor to Egypt was **Antonio Schranz**, of Valletta, a landscape and marine painter. He left Malta for Egypt with Viscount Castlereagh and his companions on November 26, 1841. He returned to Malta from Alexandria on October 5, 1842. Antonio travelled again to Egypt in the 1850s. Some of his original sketches done in Egypt for Viscount Castlereagh can be seen in the Searight collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London⁴⁶.

Religious Missionaries

The recent beatification of **Sister Maria Caterina Troiani** by Pope Giovanni Paolo II, brought to light her story and her affinity with Malta and Egypt during the nineteenth century. On September 14, 1859, Sister Maria Caterina Troiani, originating from Giuliano di Roma, left her native Italy for Malta on her way to Egypt and in spite of the fact that she heard that the Bishop who called them to Egypt had died, she carried on with her journey, but only after recruiting in Malta a number of religious sisters willing to venture into the Mission. On their arrival in Alexandria, they were welcomed by a Maltese couple, **Salvu** and **Marija Gatt**, who cared for them until their departure for Cairo. The Maltese Community in both cities helped them heartily⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Alex Darmanin - Interview, 1994.

⁴⁶ The Schranz Artists *Die Malerfamilie Schranz* 1987.p..41.

⁴⁷ *The Voice of Malta, d/d.1.5.1985*, p.4.

An appeal made for the Mission by the Apostolic Vicar of Egypt, Monsignor Perpetuo Guasco was answered by a group of twenty - five novices who joined the mission. With the increase in the number of noviciates, the Bishop then proposed the establishment of a monastery in the suburb of Clot-Bey, Cairo, for the education of young children of poor families.

In 1860 in an age when social services were conspicuous by their absence, a philanthropist from Malta, named **Adelaida Cini**, opened a home for unmarried mothers and abandoned girls. Some of the girls not only changed their way of life but later entered the nunnery in Cairo. Adelaida also obtained financial assistance for her benevolent work from **Jean Asphar** and his Maltese born wife **Angelica**⁴⁸

From 1863 the responsibility of the mission was given to Sister Maria Troiani, who had to face a distressful situation because, she received an order from the Mother-House to repatriate to Italy. A very hard resolution had to be taken by her Community. They decided to remain in Egypt even though this entailed a split between the two Communities. On September 17, 1865, she wrote to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fidei*) a short statement to explain her situation, stating that *After six years of inexpressible labour, we cannot abandon such deeds of charity*. The situation was only regularised by the hierarchy of the Church in 1895, eight years after the death of Mother Troiani, on May 6, 1887⁴⁹.

The congregation admitted Maltese girls born in Egypt. One of the local novices was **Maria Celestina Gatt**, born in Alexandria in 1877. Maria Celestina entered the convent when she reached her thirteenth birthday. Her mission took her to Tripoli, Libya, where she spent twenty years of her dedicated life. At a later date she was transferred to Malta and ended her days, at the age of 98, confined to bed for the last six months, at the Motherhouse, in Canon Bonnici street, Hamrun. Her last dictated letter addressed to her nephew

⁴⁸ *The Democrat*, d/d.21.3.1987, p.4.

⁴⁹ *Bollettino degli Italiani d'Egitto*, d/d. June 1987, p.8.

Frank Gatt in Melbourne, was dated, April 13, 1976. On that letter she stated that she prayed for and remembered all the nieces and nephews and wished them all the best of luck and prosperity in the Lord⁵⁰.

Sister Maria Gatt was the sister of a well known Maltese personality of Alexandria, **Carmelo Gatt**, a marine engineer, employed by the Administration des Ports & Phares. Her nephews are the industrious and diligent Gatt brothers, Frank and Mario, both residing with their respective family in Melbourne.

The seal of recognition for the Congregation known as, *Suore Francescane Missionarie del Cuore Immacolato di Maria, (dette d'Egitto)*, was bestowed on July 5, 1868 by Pope Pius IX known as the Pope who convoked the First Vatican General Council on June 29, 1869 and proclaimed the Papal Infallibility a dogma of the Church on July 18, 1870⁵¹.

Even though the founder, Sister Maria Troiani, was a native of Italy, most of her novices were from Malta and Egypt and to this day in most of the Congressional Homes their Communities include a large percentage of Maltese Nuns. The school in Vittoriosa, Malta, was founded in 1886 by the Blessed Founder.

The Order of the Sisters of Egypt run a school in Cannon Bonnici Street, Hamrun, Malta. Overseas the Order is still active in helping the unprivileged and the poor people in Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Lebanon, Brazil and amongst the Palestinian refugees.

From the book, *Malta Missionaria* (1927) by **Fr. Angelo Mizzi OMC.**, the following names of religious sisters do appear under the heading, *Suore Francescane d'Egitto*, Franciscan Sisters of Egypt :

- Sr. **Evelina Azzopardi**, in Menhe.
- Sr. **Partenia Bezzina**, in Suez.
- Sr. **Anna Debono**, in Beni Suef.
- Sr. **Elpiade Desira**. in Mansura.
- Sr. **Maria Ellul**, in Cairo.

⁵⁰ *Bollettino degli Italiani d'Egitto*, d/d. June 1987, p.8.

⁵¹ Fr. P.C.Thomas. *A Compact History of the Popes 1994*, p.169.

Sr. **Carmelina Meli.** in Alexandria.
Sr. **Carmelina Paris.** in Assyut.
Sr. **Maria Zammit.** in Alexandria.

In 1991 Malta's Prime Minister, Dr Fenech Adami PM paid an official visit to Egypt and on that occasion. H.E. Mr Ives De Barro, Ambassador to Egypt, gave a reception for the P.M. and Members of the Delegation. Invited too was the small number of remaining Maltese Members of the community, which amounted to 31 residents, including 15 members of the Clergy. During the reception, the Prime Minister spoke with each of the guests among whom was Sister **Maria Antonietta Brincat**, aged 92, of the Good Shepherd , and Father **Guglielmo Morrazani**, aged 82, of the Salesian Order of Don Bosco.

Maltese Soldiers having served in Egypt

A number of Maltese Soldiers also deserve a mention for that period of history marked by the British Military presence in Egypt during the 1800s. With the British Expeditionary Forces in Egypt went a substantial number of Maltese officers and men. The troops included the "**Maltese Pioneers**" the "**Corps of Artificers**" and the "**Royal Malta Fencible Regiment**" converted since 1861 into an artillery corps and became known as the "**Royal Malta Fencible Artillery**". Their number also included men in the "**Royal Navy**".

The names of Maltese Officers who served in Egypt as early as 1801 are recorded in a book written in 1897 by Maj. A.G. Chesney, titled, *The History of Maltese Corps of the British Army*. From the same book, the following names are extracted:

Lieutenant **S. Mitrovich**, served in Egypt in 1801 with the **Maltese Pioneers**. For his service during the campaign, he was awarded the Sultan gold medal and the English war medal. The same decoration was also awarded to Lieutenant **G. Salamone** of the R.M.F.R. and assistant-surgeon, **F. Camilleri**.

At the time of the insurrection of 1882, a detachment of **The Royal Malta Fencible Artillery**, left for Egypt, with a number of non-commissioned officers, under Captain **M. Portelli**, Lieutenants **A. Cavarra**, **A. Mattei** and **A. Trapani**. Dr. **T. Bonnici**, was the Medical Officer and Rev. Fr. **Don Luigi Spiteri**, the Regimental Chaplain. All the men volunteered their services by joining the Maltese detachment to Egypt.

With the same Expeditary Corps, was Lieutenant **C. Trapani**. He was appointed superintendent to the Maltese commissariat drivers, a component of the armoured train which formed part of General Alison's defences in the west of Alexandria. These officers and men were awarded the *Egypt Medal* (1882-89) and the *Khedive's Star* was awarded by Khedive Muhammad Tewfik, to all servicemen who received the Egypt Medal. (*Replicas of the Medals are exhibited on the wall of Honour at the Melita Social Club, in Melbourne*).

A famous Maltese soldier who received the title of Pasha of Egypt, was **Edgar Edwin Bernard**, born in Valletta in 1866, and educated at the Flores College, the Malta University and later on at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. Bernard was appointed in 1887 second lieutenant in the Devonshire Regiment and appointed lieutenant to the Army Service Corps in 1890.

In 1887 Lieut. Bernard took part in the Ashanti Expedition in Ghana (formerly the colony of the Gold Coast and territory of Togoland). Bernard was transport officer during the Sudan Campaign. After the Battle of Omdurman in 1896 he was appointed administrator of the provinces. In 1898 he was appointed to the Staff of Horatio Herbert Kitchener, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army and Commander of all Anglo-Egyptian forces in the Sudan, which was formerly part of Egypt.

At Malta House, Cairo, a portrait of **Bernard Pasha**, was hung with other portraits of distinguished Maltese personalities in one of the main rooms of the said premises. Unfortunately, all records and memorabilia assembled during a life span at the Maltese Centre, perished during the widespread fire, on that "Black Saturday" of January 26, 1952.

Commander Bernard was created a Pasha of Egypt and was awarded in 1906 the C.M.G.(Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George). In 1919, Colonel E.E. Bernard, received the accolade of knighthood as a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire by King George V at Buckingham Palace.

Count Bernard returned to Malta in 1923 after retiring from the army. In 1925 he was appointed Island Commissioner of the local Scouts Association by General Sir Walter Congrave Governor and Chief Scout of Malta. Sir Edgar died on July 3, 1931⁵².

Some of the Maltese Scouts from Egypt that visited the Maltese Islands in July 1932 and in August 1939 may recall their respective afternoon party given by Lady Bernard. On both occasions, the visitors had the opportunity to see the many trophies collected by the late Sir Edgar during his years of service in Egypt and the Sudan.

A similar collection of memorabilia of the Sudan Campaign was exhibited at the Earl Club, 5, Rue de L'Ancienne Bourse, in Alexandria. The Club was at a later date used by the British Legion, Alexandria Branch. It is regrettable that the name or names of the donors who donated and exhibited the large spoil of the Sudan war was not available at the time of my visits.

Another Maltese of that period having had a connection with Egypt was **F. Casolani**, who was employed in 1867 in the Special Service in Egypt .Three years later he was appointed Commissary in the Control Department. He returned to Malta at a later date.

A good number of Maltese held positions in telecommunications, namely the Marconi Radio and Telegraph Company, as well with the Egyptian State Telephones, where the position of Chief Superintendent was held by **Adolfo Bartolo** and **Franz De Barro** was the Deputy Chief Engineer at the Abu Zabal station, Cairo. In Alexandria **John Pavia** was the Chief-Telegraphist. The majority of telegraphists, telephonists, engineers, maintenance and technical staff in Alexandria, Cairo, Port-Said and Suez were Maltese employees.

⁵² J.A.Mizzi. *Scouting in Malta 1989*, p.108.

From a paper presented by Ivan Magri-Overend at the Maltese Migrants' Convention, held in Malta in 1969 we learned that the personal physician to Ferdinand de Lesseps was **Dr. Herbert Zarb**, who also was the first British Consular Agent in Port-Said and so was the aide-de-camp to the Governor and Commanding Officer of the Police, **Bonelli Bey**.

Until 1923 most of the Ministries were administered by foreigners and their authority laid mainly in special treatments of the foreign interests, such as the Debt Fund, the Mixed Courts, the Suez Canal and affairs concerning Foreign Societies, Schools and Associations. The official language of communication between the Departments and the foreigners was French, a practice which continued until Britain announced that Egypt was its Protectorate in 1914.

During that period of British control, Maltese professionals had the advantage as British Subjects to be appointed to senior administrative officers in a number of Egyptian Governmental Departments. In the Postal Administration, the Director was **Attilio Nani, M.B.E.**, and the Director of the Public Health was **Dr. William Sacco** while **Dr. M. Paris** was in charge of the Quarantine.

In 1915, **Joseph W. Caruana**, joined H.B.M. Consulate in Port-Said. Within few years, Caruana was appointed Pro-Consul and in 1924 Registrar of the Provincial and Supreme Court. Caruana was awarded the M.B.E. in June 1928. Later in May 1933 he was appointed Vice-Consul, a position which he retained up to 1951 when he was appointed as head of the Consular Section at the British Residency in Tripoli, Libya.

As a staunch supporter of the Maltese Community Council of Port-Said, Caruana was continuously been elected its President. He devoted much of his time to the Benevolent Society of which he was for a number of years the Vice President. He was also an active member of the Board of Directors of the British School in Port-Said.

The Maltese Community of Port-Said will always remember their successful achievements at the Maltese Club, known prior to June 1940 as: *Circolo Maltese*. The club was considered the best Maltese

Club in Egypt. In 1954, Sir Ralph and Lady Stevenson, H.B.M. Ambassador to Egypt paid an official visit to the Club. The diplomats were received by the President Chev. Joseph W. Caruana MBE.

Incidentally the Maltese Club of Port-Said is referred to as: *Le Cercle Maltais* in the book: *La Route des Indes*, by Paul Morand.

A well known Maltese family in Port-Said was the family of **Giovanni Said**. Originating from the Cottonera, they emigrated to Egypt in the 1880s and settled in the maritime city of Port-Said where the Said brothers established the Port-Said Water Supply Company, delivering water by tanker-boats to vessels calling at Port-Said in transit for the crossing of the Canal. The company boats were known locally, as the *Maltese Fleet* as their vessels were recognizable by an emblem on their funnel, consisting of the Maltese colours and cross.

Hughes Laferla was during the 1930s attached to H.M.S. Consulate as Shipping Master for the Suez Canal. In 1940 he was relieved by **Paul Cassar**, who held the position up to 1944 when he was transferred to the Alexandria Consular Office, as Registrar of the Consular Court.

Egypt continued to attract artisans and labourers from Malta and elsewhere, even at the time of Ismail's bankruptcy, when the production of public works came to an end with the rise of nationalism and the demand of social changes by the young Army Officers under the leadership of Colonel Ahmad Orabi who made his bid to anticipate history with the insurrection of 1881-82.

CHAPTER VI

THE PASHALIK OF EGYPT THROUGHOUT THE PERIODS OF MUHAMMAD ALI PASHA AND LORD KILLEARN

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Some Maltese Individuals of the 19th century

Between 1822 and 1899, twenty-two Maltese enterprises were established in Egypt and the number increased with the years up to the end of the Second World War, culminating with a general sequestration of their property “stock and barrel” at the time of the Suez Canal debacle of 1956-57.⁵³

From an extract of an article by Giovanni Wian, we learned that in 1822 the first book printed in Egypt consisted of an Italian/Arabic Dictionary. The author appointed by Muhammad Ali was the Maltese **Don Raffaele Zakkur**⁵⁴.

On November 17, 1869 the Suez Canal was opened to navigation. A grand ceremony was organised. A convoy of 30 vessels entered the

⁵³ For a detailed list of Maltese businesses and professions held in Egypt, see: Appendix "I".

⁵⁴ *Bollettino degli Italiani d'Egitto*” d/d. Sept. 1995, p.4.

Canal in Port-Said, *L'Aigle* carrying on board Empress Eugenie and Mr de Lesseps was followed by the yachts of the Emperor of Austria and the Prince of Prussia. The following vessels carried a number of international personalities. The convoy travelled up to Lake Timsah, and arrived at Ismailia by sunset. The town of Ismailia was already in full festive mood as hundreds of people flocked to vantage points to view the procession. During the afternoon three vessels from the port of Suez made their way toward Lake Timsah, after being reassured that the southern part of the Canal was in good order for navigation.

On board the *Mahroussa* commanded by **Admiral Lorenzo Zarb Bey**, Khedive Ismail was ferried along *L' Aigle* flying the French flag on its masthead. The first official act for the Khedive was to board *L' Aigle* to greet the Empress and congratulate de Lesseps. Ashore the party began and lasted all night. In one large marquee there was a dinner for five hundred guests, in another for three hundred, all for a luxurious dinner and good wines. Dinner was followed by a noteworthy show by dancers, singers and jugglers. It was open house everywhere, even fireworks in the garden of the Viceroy's palace. The general comments were that it was like something out of the Arabian Nights.

As stated earlier we learned that in the early years of the Suez Canal, the personal physician to Ferdinand de Lesseps was **Dr. Herbert Zarb**, and the Director of Public Health was **Dr. William Sacco**. **Dr. M. Paris** was at the Quarantine, while **Joseph Tabone** was the Harbour Master. The Canal Company also engaged Maltese manual workers specilized in shipping as well a number of employees in other services. Soon new comers established Shipping Agencies and Supply Contractors like the Suppliers of water to vessels crossing the Canal.

By 1882, the position as Shipping Master in the Canal Zone, was held by **Captain Nicola Fleri**, followed in the early 1920s by **Hughes Laferla**. This office was taken over by **Paul Cassar** (later awarded the M.B.E.) a position which he held up to 1932 before being appointed as Registrar of Consular Courts in Alexandria.

With the British occupation, the number of settlers from Malta increased due to the establishment of Army barracks and an Admiralty office in Port-Said and Port-Tewfik, in the city of Suez.

In each respective city in Egypt, the City Council or municipality had the power to enforce rules for the survey and valuation of properties, and sanitary prescribed rules including the responsibility for the maintenance of city streets, parks and gardens.

The Postal Service known as the “Posta Europea” was established in Alexandria by an Italian, Carlo Murati, and was privately owned. In 1865 the Egyptian Government bought out the Posta Europea and incorporated it into the public service. The first Egyptian postage stamps were issued in 1866 with their denominations in paras, milliemes and piastres. The Khedivial Mail was carried by appointed agents, among them was a Maltese named: **Lorenzo Zarb** Bey. During the early British period the directors of the Egyptian Post were **Attilio Nani MBE, and Enrico Zarb**. In 1900 the official with the longest service in the Egyptian Postal Administration was Cavaliere **Luigi Nanni** who was awarded the title of Bey.

Young philatelists will be pleased to learn that the Suez Canal Company issued in 1868 for a period of four months its own set of four stamps with the following denominations and colours: 1 cent: black; 5 cents: green; 20 cents: blue; and 40 cents: red. They were inscribed: *Postes – Canal Maritime de Suez*. At the request of the Egyptian Government the set of stamps were withdrawn from circulation.

In agriculture there was in the 1880s a potato grower and merchant, a certain **Giuze Borg**. He cultivated a parcel of land along the Mahmudiya Canal, not far from the city of Alexandria.

Also in the 1880s a **Joseph Bartolo** established in Alexandria the the company of “J. Bartolo & Co.” Which specialised in the manufacture of personalised hand-made Egyptian cigarettes with tobacco imported from Turkey. His goods were also exported to Europe. To note that in the early 1900s Egypt had over twenty cigarette manufacturers of various qualities.

During the same decade another Maltese named **Jean Bonello** was by “Khedivial Assignment” the builder and carer of the palace coaches.

Under the reign of Khedive Ismail, (1863-1879) the Master of Ceremonies at the Palace was **Tonio Salamone**, and **De Martino Pasha** was the General Director of the Khedivial Daira. Other less official positions at the Palace were held by **Montaldo** and **Seguna**. There were even Maltese pages in the Royal Court, according to Charles Catania, the last of them, was a certain **Sant**, who died in Malta in the early 1930s⁵⁵.

Another employee at the Palace was **George Sant**, who was born in Malta on January 19, 1842. He married in 1876 a Maltese woman, named **Marianna Micallef**, who was also a native of Malta. They had one child, Antoine, who was born on July 9, 1877. George Sant arrived in Egypt in 1859 and worked for the Palace as a carpenter and cabinet maker. At a later date he was assigned to the Cairo Opera House. George continued to reside and work in Egypt until his death in 1896.

His son, **Antoine Sant**, obtained a French education, as French was at the time the leading European language and culture in Egypt. After completing his studies at the Jesuit College, he went to work in “Hamzawi” Cairo commercial district. In 1899, he started to operate a flour-mill on part of his significant land holdings, and this went on to become one of the important flour-mills establishments in Egypt.

In 1901 he married **Clothilde nee Zammit**, and had eight children. Clothilde was a very civic-minded person and worked very hard within the British Community and was elected President of the community in Cairo, (circa 1940 - 1948).

On October 17, 1923, Antoine for his charitable work was made Chevalier of the Order of St Gregory by Pope Pius XI, and Clothilde was honoured with the M.B.E. in January 1949 by King George VI, the award was for her relentless work with the British and Allied troops in the Middle East during the Second World War. In

⁵⁵ Charles Catania, “*Andrea de Bono*” 2001, pp. 27, 28.

November 1956 at the time of the Suez Crisis, they were expelled from Egypt and all their possessions were confiscated by the Egyptian Authorities. The family settled in Cheshire, England, where Antoine died on April 27, 1957. After her husband died, Clothilde left for Australia. She died in Melbourne in 1958⁵⁶.

The appointment of Maltese to the service of the Egyptian Monarchy goes back to the reign of King Fuad (1922 – 1936) who commissioned the Artist Painter **Enrico Zarb** to paint his portrait that appeared on postage stamps on his anniversary in 1926. The King also detailed Dental Surgeon, **Dr. Albert Cassar**, to operate on his daughter, Princess Fawzia. The surgery was exceptionally successful⁵⁷. Princess Fawzia by marrying in 1939 the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was crowned Queen of Persia (Iran).

During the reign of King Farouk (1936 – 1952), the Maltese archaeologist **Fernand Debono**, was entrusted by the King with the task of exploring the Eastern Desert and to lead the Royal Archaeological Mission in the Lakeita and Hammamat regions⁵⁸.

The Chief Engineer on board the Royal Yatch *Mahroussa* was **Salvatore Bonello**. He was discharged from his duty in 1940. As a British Subject he joined the Royal Navy.

Under the reign of the Monarchy, many Europeans including some Maltese settlers chose specialized rural jobs; like the family of **Emanuel Gialanze**, Manager of a cotton plantation in Zifta, a locality on the Delta between Tanta and Zagazig. With the crisis of 1956 they ended up as refugees. The family was accommodated after their departure from Egypt in a hostel in Warrington, England before settling down in Sydney, Australia.

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⁵⁶ Anthony Sant - *Reminiscence*. Sydney, August 2003.

⁵⁷ . M. Cassar / *AMCOE N/L*. 69, d/d.March 1997, p.19.

⁵⁸ G. Calleja / *Il-Habbar Malti*, d/d.1.11.1949.

La Colonia Maltese di Cairo, offre, 25 Giugno 1887.

According to correspondence exchanged with H.E. **Ives De Barro**, the former High Commissioner for Malta in Canberra and his counterpart in Cairo, we learned that the marble memorial has been removed from the church and no one to this day knows where it is. The removal may have taken place after the last tremor which caused some damages to the church structure.

With the passing of the years, most of the occupants in the residential areas, including Maltese, gradually moved to the west side of the city area, to the districts of El-Taufiqiya and Abdin.

Like so many other Cairenes of the Roman Catholic denomination, **Guerino Gauci** was born in Egypt, baptised in 1915 and Confirmed in 1925, he remembered quite vividly that, at the church of the Assumption, a Maltese Priest, **Fr. Nikol Magri**, served the Parish for approximately thirty years, before being transferred to Palestine⁵⁹. St. Joseph Cathedral in Emad el-Din street, became the new chaplaincy for the Maltese Colony of Cairo. In the same church, one of the side altars is dedicated to St. Paul and is adorned with a painting of the Apostle by the local Maltese artist, **Joseph (Beppe) Bonello**ⁿ

The Parish Church of St. Joseph grew in importance during the Second World War, with **Fr. Valentino Cordona** as Chaplain of the Community. The crypt was put at the disposal of the Catholic Women's League to hold their activities. After that tragic day, known as *Black Saturday* (26.1.1952), when Malta House was destroyed by fire, our Community found another shelter for its own activities.

The affinity which the Cairo Maltese Community has held with that church, even after forty years of its exodus from Egypt, was clearly demonstrated when the dispersed community contributed a favourable sum of money toward the Church and more voluntary donations were contributed toward the Missions in Upper Egypt as well for the maintenance of the Latin Cemetery in Alexandria.

⁵⁹ Guerino Gauci. *Interview, Melbourne, Feb. 1994*

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Municipal Councils and Maltese Involvement

The “Ornato” a name given by the Levantines to the municipal council (*Majlis al tamzim*) was instituted in Alexandria about 1835. Alexandria was granted municipal privileges by Khedive Ismail in 1868 when a Commission under the chairmanship of an Italian resident by the name of A. Colucci (later Bey), drafted a bill on municipal regulations, which were approved by the Government on June 3, 1869.

The Municipal Councillors were chosen from among prominent citizens, professionals and merchants of that city. Such positions were assigned mainly to personalities of the European Colonies. With the passing of the years, a number of Maltese were elected Councillors while others were employed by the various municipal departments.

In Cairo, there was **Cr. Pericles Cirigottis**. In Alexandria, the Superintendent of the harbour was **Captain Giuseppe Gauci** assisted by his co-nationals, **Captain Borg**, **Captain Cassar**, **Captain Falzon** and **Captain Patiniott**. **Dr. Edward Valenzia** was the Health and Medical Officer and **Joseph Gatt** was a Health Inspector. **Vincent Bayada** was the Chief Gardener for parks and gardens in the Municipality. Other councillors included, **Cr. Giacomo Trigaci** in Mansura and **Cr. Joseph C. Buhgiar** in Port-Said.

The semaphore signalling system, originally installed under Bonaparte, was operated from Alexandria to Cairo. It consisted of 20 towers, erected by the French engineer, Pascal Coste and relayed a message to its destination in 15 minutes..

Educational Establishments in Egypt

In their benevolence the Pasha and Khedives welcomed the Franciscans to Alexandria and presented the Franciscans' Order (*Ordine di Terra Santa*) with a large parcel of land, limited by Rue Abu Dardar, Rue Sidi el Metwalli, Rue de L'Archeveche and Place Ste. Catherine, now denominated Manshia Sugra. One of the streets connecting Manshia Sugra to Rue des Soeurs (Sharia Sabaa Banat) carries the name 'Rue de Malte'.

The Franciscan Order was not the only Catholic religious group to receive such a gift. The Order of the Soeurs de la Charite among others was also the recipient of a parcel of real estate. The Jesuits owned the original building of the Governor Offices (*Mahawzah*); the College in question was the St. Francois Xavier which cared for the children of wealthy families, among them a large group of Jewish pupils. As it happened, in 1891 the parents of the Jewish pupils started protesting that the curriculum did not provide for Jewish religious activities and accused the Jesuits of being strong disciplinarians. The crisis was one of the causes that brought about the closure of the institute.

The Franciscan Nuns established in Alexandria their first school for girls in January 1882, in the newly formed Parish of St. Francis of Asisi, known as "San Francesco della Marina". The curriculum was Italian and French, it included religion and needle work. Instructions were given by Italian and Maltese Nuns. Some of the names still remembered are: Madre Pia, **Suora Eugenia** and Suora Ortanzia. Suora Eugenia liked to speak to children in Maltese and had the habit of sniffing tobacco powder, which she believed helped her sinusitis. Remembered too the two Parish Priests and Chaplains to the school, Fr. **Joseph Vella** OFM, from 1929 to 1930 and Fr. **Joseph Cauchi**, from 1934 to 1963.

Blessing of the corner stone, 1882

The ceremony of the laying and blessing of the corner stone for the Parish complex of St. Francis of Assisi, in Alexandria was held on January 29, 1882. The ceremony was led by the Catholic Archbishop accompanied by members of the clergy, the Consul General of France, local dignitaries and the school staff. According to *Il-Habbar Malti*, the ceremony was witnessed by a large number of Maltese families residing in the El-Gumruk district.

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English Education for Maltese in Egypt

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With the assistance of the newly formed British Council, the Maltese Community of Alexandria raised some funds for the formation of a new school, namely, the British Boys' School. The premises were located in the suburb of Mazarita and the school opened its door on October 6, 1928 with a group of 84 pupils and with Mr. H. R. Thompson as Headmaster.

From an old photo taken in 1928 and supplied by **Joseph A. Cassar**, M.B.E., a former pupil of the school, the following names do faintly appear on the valuable document:-

Taliana, Camilleri, Pantalìs, Antoniades, Farrugia, Peli, Camilleri, P. Pegna, Abela, O. Laferla, E. Vassallo, Argy, E. Cassar, J. A. Cassar, H. Rossi, C. Zernitz, P. Schembri, D. Naudi, E. Xerri, C. Xerri, Vassallo, J. Cassar, Rossi, R. Askar, P.T. Ruisi, Rossi, Salama, Zahra, Camilleri, Gauci and Turner.

Among the mentioned pupils was Joseph A. Cassar who became a Junior Teacher at the Victoria College in Alexandria and later, in 1939 was awarded a scholarship at Cambridge University.

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Churches and the Maltese Parishioners

Many may remember that in the grounds of that whole Christian complex which included the Apostolic Vicarage, the Cathedral of St. Catherine and school, the Holy Land flag was flown from a centrally located flag-mast, as late as 1955. The flag marked the Church complex as neutral and impartial and that was under the sovereignty of the Holy See.

The history of the church and Parish of St. Catherine of Alexandria is from its early years intertwined with the history of our Colony in Egypt. In the year 1850, the newly formed Parish of St. Catherine V.M. the Christian Community comprised a large number of Maltese, in that respect a Maltese Chaplain administered to his own countrymen in their own language. Therefore, a chronological history of the church in relation to the Maltese parishioners is worth mentioning.

The history of the Cathedral is linked with the formation and recognition of the first overseas Maltese organization, known as the "Konfraternita Tal Madonna Tal Karmnu" the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel founded in 1854 by local members of the Maltese Colony of Alexandria.

By establishing the Confraternity the Maltese devotees to Our Lady acquired by doing so an affinity and identity as a national group and laid in Egypt the foundation for more organizations to follow their example, and it would surprise no one that the first Maltese association founded overseas was distinctively a religious one.

In the same parish, the "Pious Union of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" was amalgamated with the Confraternity of the Adolorata in 1858, and the "Pious Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" was founded in 1867. As the number of parishioners increased with the arrival of Italian settlers, the "Confraternity of the Madonna del "S.mo Rosario di Pompei" was founded in 1893. Electric light was introduced in the church in 1901. At that time, Catechism was taught

in different languages including Maltese, to children of the Parish and many still keep to this day their certificates of baptism, first communion and wedding certificates written in Latin, issued and counter-signed by the Parish Priest of the day.

The *Gioventu Antoniana* (Antonian Youth Group), was founded in June 1914. At a later date a hall with a performing stage was built in the parish ground. Within that association, many Maltese families of the inner city area spent their hours of leisure. Many of the unprivileged children of the parish during the summer season were taken by bus to the *Ospizio Marino* (Sea side hospice) in Chatby for a few days at the beach.

The Church bells tower was erected in 1874 and five bells for the Cathedral were blessed in a ceremony held in Venice before being shipped to Alexandria. The clock was installed in the tower in 1889.

In an interview of **George Tabone** maintenance contractor of the church, we learned at the time, that during some maintenance work carried at the end of the Second World War on the top of the portico of the main entrance to the cathedral, the name '*Farrugia*' was discovered chiselled on the stone. '*Farrugia*' was the name of his maternal great grandfather, who worked at the site as a stonemason.

Devotion to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Malta and Egypt

It was during the short reign of Khedive Abbas I (1849-1854), that the Maltese parishioners of the Catholic Church of St. Catherine founded the first Maltese religious organization in Alexandria. The construction of the church started in 1834 by Fr. Vincenzo di St. Anastasio then president and rector of the Christian Community of Alexandria. The church of St. Catherine was finally consecrated in 1850 and it took four years for the local Maltese Colony, which was at the time amalgamated with the local Christian Community, to get together and form an autonomous committee to constitute “Il Konfraternita Tal-Madonna Tal-Karmnu”, [*The Confraternity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel*]. The first steering committee was formed by

the following gentlemen **Achille Vella**, **Giuseppe Farrugia**, **Vincenzo Biancardi** and **Giuseppe Camilleri**. Their request for an official recognition was handed to the Assistant Parish Priest and Chaplain, **Fr. Bernardino de Malta**, who in turn submitted their wish to H.E. Perpetuo Guasco da Solero, OFM, Bishop of Fez, (Morocco) and Vicar and Apostolic Delegate for the Pashalik of Egypt. The adoption of the name and dedication of the confraternity to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel may have had a link with the church of the Carmelite Community in Valletta and Mdina, Malta.

Mount Carmel takes its name from Mt. Carmel a mountain range immediately above the city-port of Haifa, in Palestine (now Israel). Mt. Carmel is regarded as a holy place of pilgrimage and according to the Prophet Isaiah it was the site of the confrontation of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It is thought that the convent was founded by a Maltese discalced Carmelite, **Fr. Grech**. Another priest at a later date offered free land on the slopes around the monastery to Maltese settlers interested in agriculture.

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The last Committee which held office up to the end of 1956, just before the final exodus of the Maltese Community of Egypt, was composed as follow:

Rector:	Francesco Frigieri.
Assistant-Rector (Sr.)	Emmanuele Abela.
Assistant-Rector (Jr.)	Spiridione Zammit.
Hon. Secretary:	Giovanni F. Debarro.
Procurator:	Nicola Pace.
Asst. Procurator:	Lorenzo Madiona.
Councillors:	Antonio G. Luca, Antonio Aquilina, Mario H. Grech, Paolo Urso, Isidore Bereau, Edgar Cini, Giovanni Caruana, Salvatore Camilleri.

Auditor: **Giuseppe Inglott.**

The adornments of the statue of O.L.M.C. are now deposited for safe keeping at “Dar L-Emigrant” Valletta. The merit for such a “coup-de-force” for having been able to arrange during such difficult times the transfer of the articles from Egypt to Malta, goes to that indefatigable person for Maltese affairs, the Late **Karmen Mikallef-Buhagar.**

Such devotion to Our Lady by the Maltese congregation was also visible in Cairo and Port-Said. The religious spirit of the Maltese in Egypt was clearly confirmed by **Ugo Abela-Hyzler**, when during his talk, in October 1921 at the Governor Palace in Malta in his capacity as the representative of the Maltese Colony of Cairo, he declared his love, as well as that of all Maltese in Egypt for Malta and all its activities. Amongst other things he stated: ... *Although we are all far away from our Country, we still keep our immaculate and Holy Religion, the great religion of God as given to us by St .Paul.* (30)

Maltese in the service of the Egyptian Navy

In the city of Alexandria, in the 1800s, Muhammad Ali founded and established his arsenal and dockyards. Maltese settlers with an experience in shipbuilding and ship repairing were engaged to work for the new Egyptian Navy. **Lorenzo Zarb** was made the director general of the naval establishment. Besides those employed in the dockyards, other countrymen served as captains and officers of the Egyptian ships: *Behera; Charkie; Dahhalie; El-Masr; Gharbie; Mansura; Menoufie* and *Tanta*. The mentioned vessels were under the command of the following Maltese officers: **Calascione; Garrone; Caruana; Cassar; Losco; Marengo; Pereira; Tagliaferro** and **Zarb**. The fleet was based in Alexandria and Suez The Medical Officer of the Egyptian Navy based in Alexandria, was Doctor and Scientist, **Francesco Schembri**⁶⁰.

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⁶⁰ Charles Catania. *Andrea de Bono. 2001*

The Sudan (The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1899 - 1955)

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The Civil Service employed a number of Maltese that settled in the capital and Port-Sudan. Among them was: **Chev. Hector E. Floridia MBE**, a well-known person by former Alexandrians. Floridia was the Chief-Clerk in the passport and security department of the Sudan Civil Service in Khartoum before retiring to Alexandria, Egypt.

Frequenting the Cairo Community Center was a well known personality **Colonel Count Sir Edgar Bernard KBE, CMG**. Sir Bernard was born in Valletta in 1866, educated at the Flores College and Malta University. At a later date he was admitted to the Royal Military College of Sandhurst. Commissioned into the Devonshire Regiment in 1887, and then transferred to the Army Service Corps in 1892. In 1898 Colonel E. Bernard was appointed to the Staff of Lord Kitchener Commander of the Anglo-Egyptian Forces in Sudan. Colonel Bernard was created Pasha of Egypt in 1906. He retired to his native Malta where he died on July 3, 1931.

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The Europeans in the Sudan

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The Sudan had largely originated from the larger Maltese Colony in Egypt. Reproduced hereunder are names of some of the known early settlers: **Mgr. Annetto Casolani**, who in 1846 was appointed Apostolic Vicar of the Mission to Central Africa. **Andrea de Bono**, Maltese explorer and trader on the White Nile, he also published articles and maps in the geographical journals of Europe. Andrea was born in Senglea, Malta in 1821 and lived for a decade in Egypt, first in Rashid, then he uprooted himself to Cairo and arrived in Khartoum early in 1848, probably on the same boat with Mgr. A. Cassolani. **Lorenzo Cremona** was a business associate of Andrea

de Bono and they knew one another in Cairo since both arrived in Khartoum in 1848. In that city was a Maltese merchant by the name of **Giuseppe Mussu** who married **Battistina nee de Bono** (Andrea's sister). Moreover, in 1861, there was a sea captain named, **Giorgio Portelli**, operating on the Nile. The Maltese, almost to a man, were traders on the arm of the White Nile.

While in Egypt...

At the same time the Maltese colony of Alexandria was taking the form of an organized community, and in the north-eastern corner of Egypt a new city was to be built on marsh land and with time, the site of Port-Said became a maritime city with a large Maltese settlement.

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To control the flow of unrestricted immigration, on the 15 January 1836, the Egyptian Government ordered that: *All immigrants to Egypt must show proof of means of existence. Every ship's captain who brought in a person unable to support himself would be compelled to ship him off again at his own risk and peril*

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Communications between Malta and Egypt

In 1867, a communication link between Malta and Egypt was established with the laying of the first direct submarine telegraph cable. That communication link became in the decades that followed a major employer of Maltese personnel in Egypt; universally known as the Marconi Radio Telegraph Co., and at a later date as the Eastern Telegraph Company.

There were several well-known members of our community who had long years of service with the said company in the four main international branches of Cairo, Alexandria, Port-Said and Suez, amongst whom were: Engineer **Franz De Barro** as the Deputy

Chief-Engineer stationed at the Abu-Zabal station, and in Cairo **Anthony Trigaci**, **C. Buttigieg** and **Edward Bonello** as Supervisors. In Alexandria, **Antonio Grima**, and **John Pavia** as Chief Telegraphist. In Port-Said, **John B. Fenech** and **Emmanuel Testa**, who at the time of the landing of the Franco-British Troops in Port-Said in 1956, was left in charge of the Telegraph Office.

As a matter of facts, Franz De Barro is the father of **Ives De Barro**, the former Ambassador of Malta in Cairo, and later High Commissioner in Canberra. The late Edward Bonello was the father of **Joseph G.P. Bonello**, a licensed stockbroker trading at the Maltese Stock Exchange.

Anthony Trigaci was born in Cairo and he joined the Marconi Co. in 1926. At the end of the Second World War he was appointed Supervisor, an office held up to 1956 when he had to leave Cairo for London, where he joined the Cable & Wireless Co. In the U.K. his experience and knowledge of languages proved an asset. Transferred to Hong Kong in 1959 with the responsible position of Commercial Manager, earning the nickname of *Mr. Telex* for having introduced the Telex service in Hong Kong. By the time of his retirement the service had expanded to the whole region of south- east Asia.

Ironically, during the 19th century, the large number of Maltese settlers employed in the shipyards and affiliated shipping services in the main ports of Egypt had indirectly affected Malta's economy.

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CHAPTER VII

THE INSURRECTION OF 1881-1882

On May 23, 1880 in the city of Alexandria **Salvo Grech-Borg** founded the *Societa Maltese di Reciproco Soccorso* (Maltese Benevolent Society). The aim of the society was to provide to members of the local Maltese community. medical and financial assistance to the one in need. In the same year, next to their building the Society established a Maltese Primary school. In Cairo the *Maltese Mutual Help Society* was founded in 1890 by **Carmelo Cachia**, and Professor **C. Debono** was elected its first President.

According to Ramiro Vadala, in 1912, the Alexandria Society under the Presidency of **Mario Vella**, was receiving a grant of 300 Pounds from the Maltese Government and a subsidy from the Alexandria Municipality to assist indigent families in the local community.

The Maltese Colony of Alexandria commemorated the 25th Anniversary of the foundation of the Benevolent Society and its founder, the late **Salvo Grech-Borg**, with the laying of a commemorative ornamental marble plaque on his grave in the Latin Cemetery, bearing the following epitaph:

Al Benemerito Promotore Salvo Grech-Borg La Societa Maltese di Beneficenza Nel 25mo Anniversario di sua fondazione Riconoscente e Memore Pune 1880 23 Maggio 1905

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On June 6, 1882 *Il-Habbar Malti*, reported that the situation in Egypt was deteriorating with no end in sight and that the S/S *Scio* had arrived in Valletta harbour with 600 refugees from Alexandria. The same paper reported too, that the English Colony presented to H.M's Consul in Alexandria a petition requesting the protection of the

Army.

Among the Christian Community, now panic-stricken, all who could leave packed up some of their belongings and made for Alexandria, where some twenty-five warships of the Powers were waiting to take them on board.

Though many Maltese seemed willing to brave the troubles, the Consul-General decided to evacuate all British Nationals⁶¹. By early June about 14,000 foreigners had been embarked and 6,000 more were preparing to follow. Among them 7,000 Maltese landed in Malta and were accommodated in the Lazaretto on Manoel Island and encamped in tents in its close vicinity and as well in Sliema, while a smaller group was landed in Cyprus. The *Malta Times*, of June 24, reported that about 5,000 refugees have already landed in Malta, having been forced to flee from Alexandria leaving behind everything they possessed including furnished dwellings, shops, tools of trade and most of their personal effects. The editorial carried the following comments:

...The appearance of these people as they landed from the steamers was deplorable, some of the unfortunate families being in a starving condition after enduring a terrible passage being penned up like cattle on the crowded deck without food, their precipitous flight preventing them from providing for their requirements. The commentator added: ... We are however pleased to mention the sympathy displayed by our Government upon the occasion when every possible facility was offered. The Lazaretto in Manoel island, was immediately placed at their disposal. Tents also have been provided and pitched outside Fort Manoel. The health of the refugees is reported good and every precaution is being taken by the sanitary authorities.

On the 28th June 1882 the Maltese Government appointed a Relief Committee with Mr. S. Savona as Chairman, and four Councillors: Messrs. F. V. Inglott, Geo L. Carr, G. Monreal and A. Sceberras. The Commission was to transmit too to the Government the present

⁶¹ Price, C.A. *Malta and the Maltese*, 1989, p 137

and probable future expenditure on account of the refugees, and in turn requesting a grant from the Imperial Funds to cover unforeseen expenditures incurred by the Maltese Government on account of the refugees from Egypt.

According to Colonial Office papers relating to the maintenance in Malta of refugees from Egypt, a large number of the refugees, some 4,000 never entered the Lazaretto nor the camp at all, but either went to live with their relatives and friends or hired lodgings for themselves, under the impression that the troubles would last a few days or a couple of weeks at the utmost. But the little they brought with them was soon exhausted, and they were then driven to apply to the Commission for relief.

According to A.E. Abela in his article published in the *Sunday Times*, dated 31.10.1993, invaluable service to the refugees from Egypt was given by a dedicated humanitarian, Sir Ferdinand V. Inglott a Maltese Civil Servant, a scholar and member of the Relief Committee. In recognition to his voluntary work he was awarded by the Maltese Government a grant of 100 Pounds, which he would not accept⁶².

The *Economist* of London, reported at the time that the estimated value of assets left behind in Egypt by refugees that landed in Malta amounted to 70,000 Sterling Pounds.

It is important to note that the figure of 7,000 Maltese refugees from Egypt that landed in Malta, derive from the special count made in Egypt during the evacuation of 1882.

An anomaly at the time did exist as to the number of Maltese in Egypt and according to Consul-General Reade's report, many failed at the time to register because they refused to pay the applicable consular fee⁶³.

Besides the 460 British natives of the United Kingdom, other than Maltese or of Maltese birth or origin that arrived and were relieved in

⁶² A. E. Abela / *the Sunday Times* d/d. 31.10.1993, p.32.

⁶³ *Appendix C.II, IV, 31/12/45, F.O. 102/24.*

Malta, there were 65 Greeks, 31 Austrians, 2 Americans, 21 Italians, 8 Swedes, 2 Romanians, 2 Frenchmen, 1 Russian, 37 Ottomans, 84 natives of Egypt including Copts, Christian Syrians and Jews and numerous families of Spanish Jews who had long ago emigrated from Gibraltar to Egypt and were registered as British subjects, as well a number of people carrying no documents as they were compelled to flee for their lives on that tragic day of June 11.

With regards to refugees of other countries, their Consuls were instructed to provide for their own subjects; but there were many of these refugees who were disowned by their Consuls for being unable to produce any identity; which in their hurry to escape, they left behind in Egypt.

With the arrival of more refugees, life in the Lazaretto had become unmanageable, so members of the Commission tried to persuade the refugees to emigrate to Tunis, Algiers, or any other place on the shores of the Mediterranean, or the Levant, offering them a free passage for themselves and their families, and a small sum of money to live upon, till they should find work abroad.

After his first report about the work carried by the appointed Committee, the Governor of Malta informed the members that the responsibility for the refugees had been turned over entirely to the Commissioners of Charity. In order to elevate the burden on the Committee for Refugees, a donation of 1,000 Pounds was received by the said Committee from the Lord Mayor of London.

A polemic existed at the time in the local press about the refugees in Malta. The following is an extract from the correspondence published in the *Malta Times & United Service Gazette*, dated 26.8.1882:

We have been more than once requested to bring to the notice of the public, the astonishing indifference displayed by the majority of the Maltese, to the distressed state of their countrymen, who were compelled to flee from Alexandria to escape the slaughter which threatened them from the hands of an infuriated mob .

Many of these refugees had to make their escape with the clothes

they had on their backs and therefore became objects of charity from the moment of their arrival in Malta.

....

There was also contributions to the appeal by Lady Houlton for the Ladies' Clothing Fund, which continued to appear in the local press and which reached as at August 26 the following result:

Cash donations B/F.	...	Pounds	528.	15s.	6d.
Rev, E. A. Layard	...	"	26.	3.	0
Lady Brassey	"	25.	0.	0
Mrs. Bloomfield	...	"	13.	0.	0
Mrs. Ames	"	5.	0.	0
			<hr/>		
			597.	18.	6

Apart from the cash donations, contributions were made in the form of clothing and material, i.e.:

From J. E. Emmerson Esq. C.M.G. - Two bales of cotton. From Lady Amelia Zebb, a box of clothing and books. From Marshal & Seagrove - through the Secretary of the Mansion House Committee, eight boxes of clothing. From Mr. Mac Iver, a box of clothing, etc.

....

With regard to the Maltese refugees from Egypt who landed in Cyprus, according to press reports, a good number saw no hope of returning to Egypt and decided to settle on the Island and found employment in various enterprises. Those with some capital thought that the best means of investing was in cultivating the vine. In the circumstances, the refugees could not expect good will toward their enterprises from the British Government as Cyprus for political reason and convenience was out of favour.⁶⁴

Through the first week in June, conditions in Alexandria became steadily worse. Agitators ran through the streets calling out, *O Moslems, kill the Christians and we want an independent Egypt*. The

⁶⁴ N. D. Chircop *"The Maltese Levantine Experience" 1994, p.26.*

insurrection had reached a boiling point.

On June 3, 1882 the *Malta Times & United Service Gazette* reported that in Egypt the rumours were so complicated that it was impossible whom or what to believe. However, it was to be hoped that the timely presence of the powerful Anglo-French men-of-war would result in a prompt and satisfactory solution of the long-existing confounded problem.

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On that fatal day of June 11, Mr. **Carmelo Aquilina**, manager for Egypt and Palestine of the world renowned firm, Thomas Cook & Son, had just returned from the Holy Land, after having led the *Great French Pilgrimage* which consisted of a large group of pilgrims including staff through Samaria and Jerusalem.

It appears that on that Sunday afternoon, Aquilina was standing in the vestibule of Europa Hotel, when he noticed that the carriage carrying the wife and children of the Austrian Consul was just arriving at the entrance of the hotel, when he realized that the vehicle was being surrounded by a group of enraged demonstrators. Suddenly, the piercing shrieks of the lady made him rush forward; he opened the door and pushed his way towards the carriage, just in time to rescue her and the children, and helping them into the safety of the hotel. After such an experience, on June 20, Carmelo with his wife and family landed safe and sound in Malta⁶⁵. In the aftermath, the police was accused of making no attempt to intervene and permitted some of the massacres to take place under their eyes.

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Khedive Tewfik was overwhelmed by the situation, and Orabi Pasha was acting nominally under the Khedive's authority. The economy of the city was idle, the merchants left their goods on board ships in harbour, which was considered safer than they would be in their warehouses.

⁶⁵ *The Malta Times & United Services Gazette*, d/d,24.6.1882, p.2.and d/d 3.6.1882 p.10 .- 26.8.1882 p.11.

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The Naval Bombardment of Alexandria

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On August 10, a Battery of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery was detailed for active service in Egypt. The Battery consisted of 115 men under the command of Captain Portelli. At about 3.30 p.m. they left their barracks and marched down Strada Reale (now Republic Street) to the Palace Square, where a large crowd of people assembled round the square and in every window and balcony in the neighbourhood warmly received them with cheers.

Drawn up in two lines facing the Palace, H.E. the Governor, General Sir Arthur Borton, accompanied by some of his staff inspected the Battery and expressed himself thoroughly pleased with the appearance of the men, all of whom seemed to be in excellent health and spirit.

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The Maltese contingent included Rev. Fr. I. Spiteri, as their Chaplain and Dr. Bonnici, M.D. (Surgeon) as their Medical Officer.

The detachment headed by Colonel Lazzarini, Major the Marquis de Piro and the officers of the regiment, then continued their march down to the Custom House for their embarkation, accompanied by the band playing *The memories of the past*.

The troopship *Humber* began to move from her moorings and as she slowly steamed along, the hearty cheers of their companions in arms from Fort St Angelo drew corresponding cheers of congratulation. The same enthusiastic exchange took place in front of Fort St. Elmo. The next embarkation on the Transport ship *Holland* was the 6th Auxiliary Transport Company, consisting of 252 men, with horses and mules. On H.M. Troopship *Orantes* embarked another contingent of Maltese drivers 190 in number, under the command of Lt. Colonel Trapani.

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Following the departure of Maltese Units for Egypt, Dr. Frederick Bernard, third son of the Late Major L. Bernard of the R.M.F.A volunteered for Medical Service in Egypt. He was appointed to the directorship of a hospital for Maltese personnel.

In Malta, the Hospital in Fort Chambray on the Island of Gozo was inaugurated as a Base Hospital towards the end of August and *H.M. Troopship Euphrates* disembarked the first stretchers with wounded from the war on the Valley of the Nile.

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Captain Portelli, who commanded the battery emplacement of the Maltese Artillery that kept the rebels at bay in the outskirts of Alexandria, was promoted to the rank of Major.

To compliment the R.M.F.A. an editorial in the press carried the following extract:

...I hear good accounts of our Fencibles in Egypt, brave lads, I hear too that their health has been capital in the field, while their courage and discipline has already found a favourable record in the War Office⁶⁶.

....

The Editor of the *Corriere Mercantile Maltese* commented on the reputation of a Maltese in reporting the crisis in Egypt. The Secretary of State for the Colonies requested the Local Government to secure at any cost the services of Mr. G.B.Diacono as a Special Correspondent in the Secret Political Department with the Expeditionary Forces in Egypt, assisted by Mr. W.H. Russell, formerly special correspondent of the *Times*. All his friends in Malta felt pride of the fact that Mr. Diacono's merits were duly recognized.

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⁶⁶ Press extracts - National Library, Malta. d/d 2. 9. 1882.

Meanwhile in Malta, on August 19, the Governor received the authority from London to offer to the refugees a free passage to Alexandria at the cheapest possible rates, and suggesting to use some of the unemployed troopships in Malta for that purpose.

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Not till into 1884 did life in Egypt returned to anything like normal. As the community was re-settling in their respective city, so were the various organizations. From *the Malta Standard* of April 16, 1895 we learned that in their Annual Report for 1895-96 the Maltese Society for Mutual Help & Charity of Alexandria, their elected Committee was constituted as follows: **C. Aquilina** President; **Amabile Camilleri** Vice President, **Giovanni B. Caffari** Hon. Secretary, **Stefano Fleri** Treasurer, **Francesco Lanzon** Accountant, **Dr. F. Dimech, I. Scifo, A. Ibrey** and **V. Darmania** as Councillors, **C. Griscti** and **W. Redding** as Auditors⁶⁷.

After seven decades I do remember two friends of mine: **Spiros de Gabriele** and **Joseph Tanti** recall that their grandfathers recited or sang in Maltese a passage of a song about the 1882 Refugees. Unfortunately, no records exist and no person has been found to this day able to remember/repeat any line or melody of the song.

As the Colony was re-settling, the British presence in Egypt would stifle any hope of liberalisation in the political field for a further seventy years. The insurrection of 1882 was the prelude for the 1919 upheavals, described as *The Cataclysm* by the Nationalist Leader, Saad Zaghloul Pasha, and eventually the 1952 revolution by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, which was the prelude to our exodus.

⁶⁷ National Library, (newspapers 1800s) Valletta, Malta.

CHAPTER VIII

ITALO - MALTESE CULTURE IN A MEDITERRANEAN CONTEST

Roma Santa, Napoli Bella, Malta Piccola Ma Fior Del Mondo. (Italian Parody.)

[Holy Rome, Beautiful Naples, Small Malta but flower of the World.]

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Most Maltese settlers from the Cottonera during the middle of the nineteenth century had some knowledge of two or three languages, and Egypt offered them a range of prospective employments in any of its principal cities.

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Maltese Community Culture and Education

In general, our culture and education were influenced by a cosmopolitan and multicultural society that started at school age. Traditions intermingled to a certain extend with the Italian, French and Greek cultures.

Some examples of life in the Community may give a picture of life in those days. For instance, young couples used to court always in the presence of family members. A girl invited to a social occasion was accompanied by a chaperon. After a dance, young men went by the young lady's home and serenaded her - while the father would sternly admonish his daughter not to encourage them by looking out of the window.

Table manners where very strict, nobody started eating before the

father started and you had to eat whatever was served. The family always celebrated the name of the saint for which they were named, instead of the birthday, and the usual visit of cousins, relatives and friends took place in the afternoon with assorted cakes and refreshments being served.

The children at school or at home enjoyed participating in traditional games like *Iddur Iddur* the game being played by a group of children sitting in a circle facing the centre and a child holding a knotted handkerchief runs round the circle while the group sings a rhyme. When the singing stopped, the handkerchief was dropped behind a child who collects it and had to catch the child who placed the handkerchief and tried to return to the vacated spot.

They played also the universal games of *Hide and Seek* and a variety of *Marble Games*, *Rope-Skipping* and *Passju* (Hop-scotch). Of course children were thought also to play table games, such as *Dominoes*, *Ludo*, *Trick-Track* (Backgammon), *Draughts* and *Chess*. As they grew up and were able to join in sporting activities, they participated in soccer, rugby, basketball, and table tennis, while others attended a gymnasium for gymnastic exercises which were very popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Swimming, sailing and rowing were the favoured sports during the summer season.

Christmas traditions included the germination of a mixture of barley, wheat and lentil seeds in nappies or small dishes, the seeds having been sown on St. Lucy Day, (13th December), kept in a dark place and watered twice a week. By Christmas the greenery was ready to decorate the nativity crib set up in the home. Another modern Christmas decoration found in nearly every home was and still is the decorated Christmas tree.

By tradition, the Christmas eve was spent at home; the meal consisted of fish dishes and contour, the family and friends played *Tombola* (Bingo) or *Chipa-dadoo* an old game of chance known in Latin as *Teetotum*, consisting of a small six faceted top, spun with the fingers in turn and on landing showing one of the following facets: *All Put - Take All - Put One - Put Two - Take One - Take Two*. The midnight mass was a must for the young people, and on

Christmas Day, the family celebrated with a splendid dinner and the distribution of gifts to the children.

As for our culinary background, many traditional cooking styles of Europe and the Middle East in particular from those countries around the Mediterranean basin were adopted by our mothers and wives. The new influence gave to their culinary art that international outlook whose origin may have been picked up from a visit to neighbours, or from a friend they had met and with whom they exchanged a recipe. As a result, such an international cuisine widened their cookery repertoire that added varieties to the dinner table of that cosmopolitan community.

In general, Maltese clergymen, and local youth attending cultural activities organised by the social clubs, dramatic societies, the Maltese bands, soccer teams, boy scout and girl guide groups, helped to keep us together and maintain our identity as Maltese. It helped also to preserve our heritage and ethnic identity in a multicultural country where we were all deeply influenced by both the Middle-Eastern and Western philosophies.

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According to Prof. Geoffrey Hull, most of the Maltese who settled in Egypt during the nineteenth century spoke Italian as well as Maltese and with the time it became fashionable among those embarrassed by the similarities of Maltese to some Semistics characteristics; so they brought up their children speaking Italian. With the years by speaking this variety of Italian, heavily influenced by French, the Maltese of Egypt felt more confident of their "Latinita" in the face of the Arab majority.

The Italian language was excluded from the field of education in the mid-1920s and the switch to French that resulted from a hostility born amongst the Maltese Colony in Egypt against Fascism that was established in Alexandria since 1921, followed by Cairo and the cities along the Suez Canal.

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International Politics Involving Egypt

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On his return from a visit in Australia in October 1953, Monsignor Michael Gonzi took the opportunity, during the transition of the liner crossing the Canal from Port-Tewfik, Suez to Port-Said, to meet the local communities. When the liner berthed, and as Monsignor Gonzi appeared, the awaiting local Community accorded him a strong welcome. His Eminence travelled from Suez to Cairo where the Community Council organised a dinner-reception at the Royal Automobile Club. The next morning he celebrated Mass in St. Joseph's Church, and met the large congregation of Maltese parishioners. Following he started his return another reception at the Maltese Club he embarked on a liner for his return trip to Malta.

The Maltese Community and its connexion

Sixty years after the arrival of the first Maltese workers for the construction of the Suez Canal followed by the British occupation, a new wave of Maltese manual workers started landing in Egypt. The requests were made in 1919 by British contractors for tradesmen in the building industry, as the Maltese were considered useful and able to communicate with the Egyptian labourers and overall were loyal to the British Empire. A large number of prospective migrants applied for jobs.

As they settled down, the community entered too into friendly relations with the local Italian community that resulted in intermarriages, employment, education, religious celebrations and social festivals including once or twice a year band marches and sportive competitions. During the carnival period, the different European clubs held fancy dress balls. The nosiest of all was the carnival parade along the city streets that ended with a ceremonial burning of king Carnival in Piazza Paglia (*Hay square*); that marked the end of the festive days preceding Lent. That visible aspect persisted up to the early 1930s.

In January 1987, the "*Bollettino degli Italiani d'Egitto*" published in

Rome, carried a page dedicated to the Maltese of Egypt, which lived near and formed the community of “*Caracol Labban*” in the area of Piazza della Fontana (*Fountain square*). The editorial which was signed by Renato Zottich (32) was headed as follow:

Greetings to our Friends the Maltese of Egypt :To all the members of the old colony now in the U.K., the best wishes for the New Year.

The introduction was followed by various memories dating back to the end of the First World War up to the early 1930s, pointing now and then, the place of residence of Maltese families with surnames such as Malfegianni, Pensa, Spiteri (whose father was a printer at the “Egyptian Gazette”), the Fiorentino brothers, employees of the Lebon Co., the Cremona, Vassallo, Zammit, and Caruana families, not forgetting Bertrando Morello known as Baby, with Laferla and Buttigieg, all well known football (soccer) players of the A.M.Y.A. (*Alexandria Maltese Youth Association*) of which, the writer did remember the good games between the two factions. Not far in sharia (street), Bahari Bey was the Darmanin liquor shop, known as the *Hammara (Bistro)*, a rendez-vous on the way home for some men.

Further on, the writer recalls that at school, he shared the classroom with Gastone Coppola, Paul Cassar, Rene Zarb, and Paul and Joseph Bonnett, Guido Baldacchino, John Farrugia and Pisani. The article referred too to the formation of the *Circolo Cattolico di Terra Santa (Catholic Coterie of Holy Land)* in the Parish of San Francesco alla Marina, under the supervision of Fr. Teofilo Caprio O.F.M, and **Fr. Joseph Gauci O.F.M.** The first President was a Maltese by the name of **Scivolo**, who was the director of Watson Engineering Co., known later as The Alexandria Engineering Works. The list included also names of some Councillors, e.g. Galea, Borg, Micallef, Mallia, Giordimaina, Zara etc... The article then switches to names of Maltese who by marriage joined their partner and settled in Italy after their exodus from Egypt.

The Maltese Communities in Egypt celebrated their National Day (8th September) with a Vin d'honneur, (*cocktails reception*) and having as guests the British Consul, the President of the Central Council, the City Governor, dignitaries and some businessmen of the

community. A dinner dance took place in their premises or in a well-known reception establishment. In the main cities, the local Maltese Chaplain celebrated a special mass on that day, or the following Sunday.

As an example, in 1944 the celebration in Cairo was organized by a special committee under the Presidency of Mr. Joseph Bonello, assisted by seven committee members, the festivities started on Wednesday 6th with a cinema projection on Malta, kindly supplied by the British Ministry of Information.

On Thursday 7, Afternoon Tea-party was offered by the Maltese Benevolent Society to its members. Friday 8, Vin D'Honneur (Cocktails) at the Community Center, organized by the Central Council of the Community, and the guests were addressed by the President, Maitre Robert Borg. On Saturday 9, a dinner dance was held; and on Sunday 10, a Solemn Mass in St. Joseph Church was celebrated by Fr. Valentino Cardona Chaplain of the Community. In the afternoon the Community Council invited all Maltese Servicemen to an Afternoon-Tea with entertainment in Malta House⁶⁸. The Community also celebrated "Empire Day" with a gymkhana, and the "14 July" with a dinner dance.

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Our Dispersed Community

Our community even though dispersed to the four corners of the world, has established an Association in England, known as the *Association of Maltese Communities of Egypt*, and in Australia our Association has acquired a property, in Coburg, a northern suburb of Melbourne and runs a social club known as the *Melita Social Club Incorporated*, and is also known as the: *Association of Maltese of Egypt*. The Association has proudly celebrated in this decade its 50th Anniversary (1954 - 2004) of its establishment in Victoria, Australia.

In many instances it has been noted that the expatriate Maltese

⁶⁸ Ivan Magri-Overend, *copy of souvenir program, Cairo 1944*

regard the concept of solidarity as an integral social value, not only on a national level but also internationally. Where else than in Egypt such sentiments were maintained, until the fateful years when all foreign communities had to repatriate to their land of origin or re-settle on different shores.

Like all foreign colonies/communities in Egypt, the Maltese first generation was more than willing to adapt itself to the new surroundings, but did not like to see their children and grandchildren rejecting the norms and customs of the old, which these younger descendants had never really known. While some rebelled, others were willing to comply.

The same philosophy is at present tested by settlers in the new lands of the Diaspora.

CHAPTER IX

EGYPT PROCLAIMED A BRITISH PROTECTORATE

The Maltese Colony during the Two World Wars

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Many Maltese served during the First World War in various British Regiments and Corps on the island of Lemnos, Suvla Bay and Gallipoli, while it is difficult to estimate the number of Maltese settlers who joined up in Egypt. Amongst the volunteers was Private **Adolph Benedetti** of Port-Said, he was the recipient of the Military Medal, which was instituted by King George V on March 25, 1916, for “Acts of gallantry and devotion to duty in the field.” Private Benedetti served with the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Paul Debono received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty with the A.I.F.(Australian Imperial Force). An officer recipient of the Military Cross was **Commandant Pisani** who was in charge of the French Artillery in Akaba, Palestine.

Other expatriate Maltese joined up in Australia particularly in the State of Queensland and arrived in Egypt with the first A.I.F. According to Barry York, it has been established that there were six Maltese in the 7th Australian Brigade and with the 8th Company of Infantry which earned fame in the Gallipoli landing. Furthermore, on the Malta’s First World War Memorial, amongst the names on the plaques of those who died in the War, there are five names of Maltese soldiers that died in action while serving with the Australian

Expeditionary Forces⁶⁹.

Apart from the volunteers for ANZAC Cove, in October 1915 in the Malta Labour Corps under Captain F. Stivala, eighty of whom sustained shrapnel's injuries⁷⁰.

Eighty volunteers from the Malta Labour Corps under Captain F. Stivala sustained shrapnel injuries at ANZAC Cove in October 1915⁷¹.

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Maltese Settlers in Egypt in the early 1900s

With the British administering the Protectorate of Egypt, a new wave of Maltese manual workers from Malta arrived in Egypt between 1914 and 1922 as demand was made by British contractors to fulfil contracts with the British Military Administration, particularly in the building industry, as carpenters, glaziers, masons, blacksmiths and others.

As the new arrivals from Malta arrived in Egypt, they made it their duty to register at the respective Britannic Majesty's Consulate, and in return received a Certificate of Registration for a fee of 2/6d. The certificate carried the following clause:

This Certificate of Registration must be carefully kept by the party in whose favour it is issued, if he would avoid delay and inconvenience while resident or travelling in the Ottoman Empire⁷².

According to a report from the Department of Emigration for the period 1922-1937 the number of departures from Malta for Egypt

⁶⁹ Barry York "Empire & Race" 1990, p.71.

⁷⁰ Barry York "Empire & Race" 1990, p.71.

⁷¹ Barry York "Empire & Race" 1990, p.71.

⁷² The 1st British passport with photograph was issued in Britain on February 1, 1915.

reached a total of 2,589.

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It is also important to bring to light an important and often overlooked aspect of Maltese migration, namely, the position of women in the settlement process of early Maltese migration to Egypt. It is a well know fact that prior to the Young Single Women's Migration Scheme of 1961, Maltese women rarely migrated alone. Yet the Maltese women of that early period played a vital role in maintaining the family in Malta in cases where the husband made the initial move or wherever the family settled in the new land.

In those days Maltese single men intermingled and intermarried with young women of similar Catholic background - Italians, French, Slovenes. On their other hand there was less rapport with the Greek-Orthodox local colony, so marriages were less common as a Catholic marrying an Orthodox, or vice-versa, as it was not considered the norm.

In the case were a Maltese was marrying a Christian girl of a different religious denomination, the Catholic marriage ceremony was not celebrated in front of the Altar, but in the sacristy, with a condition that children be baptised and brought up in the Catholic rite.

Also up to the mid-1920s members of the community still adhered to the practice of addressing a person according to their social class or rank. An ecclesiastic person was addressed as *Reverendo*, a professor as *Eccellenza*, a trader or merchant as *Signore*, and an artisan as *Mastro*.

The early Maltese settlers in Egypt lived apart from, but to a degree in harmony with the native Coptic and Muslim Egyptians. In such a multicultural society, there was diversity in daily life, at work as well at the various religious and social gatherings and in the respective clubs by attending various social activities. Most of the various communities had their philharmonic and dramatic societies, which competed by performing the best of their repertoire.

The first Maltese Band was formed in the city of Port-Said in 1896 and named *Filarmonica Maltese Melita*. A second band was formed in 1923 under the name *Filarmonica Iperia*. In Alexandria, the *Filarmonica Maltese Valletta* was formed in 1905 as a school of music, under Maestro Michallef.

That initiative was taken by a group of Maltese frequenting a coffee shop in Sisters Street, not far from the police station of Labban, opposite Rue Bab el Karasta. It has been said that they all had a musical ear and some of them were able to play the mandolin and guitar. So, when a certain Mangion, proposed to form a band, the idea was accepted with interest amongst the community. Soon, music classes were held after school hours in the premises owned by the Maltese Benevolent Society. Due to a good response from the members, a general meeting was held and the name *Filarmonica Maltese Valletta* was adopted in 1905. The Band's first public appearance took place on September 8, 1909. The First World War compelled the committee to reduce their activities to a very low level⁷³.

In 1918 under the Presidency of Chevalier Philippe N. Bianchi and under the direction of Maestro Carese, the band was revived. A shift to new premises in Sharia Hamam el Warsha was followed by another move, this time to a rented house known as Sambosky, at the corner of Rue Caied Gohar and Rue de L'Ancienne Ecole Italienne, in the city area known as El Manshiya.

From recollection the following gentlemen held the presidency of the band during various terms: Messrs. **Cilio; Camilleri; Antonio Portelli; Chev. Philip N. Bianchi; Joseph Bayada; Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi; Isidore Morello and Edgar Archer Bonnici.**

From 1948 to the time of their transfer to the suburb of Camp Caesar, in Ramleh the Secretary **Prof. John Caruana** offered the use of their premises on temporary conditions to the Maltese Scout Group as they had to vacate the room used for meetings at the Maltese Union Club, 32 Blvd. Saad Zaghoul, City, which was required by the

⁷³ Prof. John Caruana "*Brief History of the M.P.S.V. Alexandria.*"

secretariat of the Maltese Community Council and the executive of the Maltese Union Club. By doing so, in the same floor of the building we had the office of the *Maltese Benevolent Society*, the office of the *Maltese Community Council* and the *Maltese Union Club*.

At the old Philharmonic premises, the Scouts' Group entertained parents and friends by organizing social afternoons. At one such activity Rover Scout Julius Borg was invited to perform some magician's acts, which he did under the name of "Wabino", while other members performed in an ensemble or in a solo performance with great success.

At the end of the Second World War, the Band converted its name to *Maltese Philharmonic Society – Valletta*, which comprised the band proper registered as a school of music and simultaneously incorporating a membership that formed the social club. The division was necessary as it conformed to the new Government regulations. By then the Society moved to larger premises in the suburb of Camp-Caesar, in Ramleh, where the band incorporating the social club, continued its activities up to the eve of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal (26 July 1956).

In their new and larger premises the Band committee promoted the formation of their social club; by doing so they attracted a large membership and their socials activities were always well patronised. For their excursions, they had to hire four coaches to satisfy the demand. It was in those same premises that a reception was held for the Maltese athletes who participated in the 1st Mediterranean Games, held in Alexandria in 1951.

The committee under the presidency of **Edgar A. Bonnici** and Secretary, Prof. **John Caruana**, extended their benevolence once again to the Group Scout Leader, N. Chircop by offering the full use of the garage by converting it into a scouts' den and the use of the adjacent garden for their activities, free of charge. The same arrangement was offered and accepted by Captain Ms. **Iris Dimeck** on behalf of the Maltese Girl Guides Company.

In appreciation for the offer of the facilities, the Rover Scouts lent

their co-operation in erecting on the site prior to the day of the club excursions, a large tent, nick-named *Medrano*, a name which originated from a circus tent. The large tent or “Marquise” was also lent to the Scout Group for their summer camp at the sea resort town of Mersa Matruh, a locality at approximately 305 km west of Alexandria.

While the Troop and Pack used the allocated premises at the Valletta Club, the Rover Scouts held their weekly meeting in the library of the Maltese Union Club, situated in Boulevard Saad Zaghoul, city. As members of the M.U.C., they had the privilege to use the library, table-tennis and billiards facilities. Once a year the Group held their annual competitions and a ball with the profit going towards the Group funds.

The Maltese Scouts and Girl Guides in Egypt.

The formation of the first Scout Troop was formed in Cairo in 1921 with a membership of 60 boys on the initiative of the local Maltese newspaper “L-Istandard tal Maltin”. At a special ceremony the Maltese Ladies Committee presented to the Troop a Maltese Flag which was embroidered by the nuns in Malta.

In 1921 the Governor of Malta Field Marshall Viscount Plumer accompanied by the Prime Minister the Honourable Joseph Howard, received Mr. **Ugo Abela-Hyzler**, representative of the Cairo Maltese Colony/Community Council, who informed them that a Maltese Boy Scouts’ Association had been formed in the City of Cairo. Mr. Abela-Hyzler also stated that he was appointed as the Chairman of the said association; and added: ... *the success was due, thanks to the editorial by Mr. George J. Vella in his Maltese language newspaper, that the groups have been started.*

By 1930 the two Maltese Groups were affiliated to the newly formed British Scout Local Association under their respective leader: Group Scoutmaster **Francis De Barro** for the 18th Group and GSM **John De Barro** led the 19th Group.

The following names are some of the leaders of Maltese Scouts in

Cairo: **Francis De Barro, John De Barro, Joseph Vella, Hercules Aquilina, V. Briffa and Ivan Magri-Overend.**

During his sojourn in Egypt as British High Commissioner (1925 – 1929), Lord Lloyd of Dolobran visited Malta and inaugurated the British Institute and attended the Great Scouts' Rally. Before departing from Malta to Egypt, he told the local press-reporters: *I have been impressed by the kneeness and virility of the youth of Malta as evinced in the Great Scout Rally which I was privileged to see last Sunday.*

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In Alexandria, the Scout Group originated in 1927 as a Rovers' Crew, and was known as the "Colonial Rovers" under the leadership of Werner Milke, a German citizen. They used to hold their meetings in an old British Military Camp site in the outskirts of the present suburb of Camp-Cesar.

In 1933 on the occasion of the celebration of the 8th September (Malta National Day) the President of the Maltese Colony: Mr. **Philip N. Bianchi**, approached Mr. Werner Milke, suggesting that his Scouts, who were mainly Maltese, be registered as a Maltese Group. W. Milke insisted to maintain its original name; therefore, he resigned.

By 1935, the reformed Group under the newly appointed Group Scoutmaster **Anthony Bajada** increased in membership in the three sections: Wolf Cubs, Scouts Troop and Rovers Crew. The new Group was registered as the 1st Alexandria, Maltese Group. The following year, a Sea-Scout Group was formed by Dr. **Edward Valenza-Clarke.**

A Scout Troop was also registered by the British Boys' School with Mr. Heyring (Teacher) as Scoutmaster. The school had a large number of Maltese boys, and was registered as the 3rd Alexandria. In later years the troop was under the leadership of **I. Aquilina.**

The British Boy Scout Association (Egypt) came into being in 1938 with Mr. Douglas Allen as the first Scout Commissioner and Sir Edward Peel as the first President of the Association. Sir Edward

Peel was also the President of the British Community of Alexandria. With its incorporation in the British Association, the 1st Alexandria became known as the 4th Alexandria.

As in Malta, there was in Egypt in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church some hesitation in accepting the Scouts' Movement, due to an insinuation that the movement was being introduced in order of converting boys and girls of Malta and of the Community in Egypt into Protestantism.

During an interview of the late **Edgar J. Cassar**, former Group Scoutmaster, we learned that in 1931, at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, an open letter from the Bishop was pinned on the notice board which condemned the Scouts' Movement and the formation of such groups within the Catholic community of Alexandria and added that: the Movement was a pursuit to convert the youth to Protestantism

In Catholic schools the same idea was also held in relation to pupils intending or having joined a scout group. The Movement proved to be nothing of the kind, rather the opposite. The number of recruits increased and the Maltese Girl Guides, with some small difficulties due to parental hesitation, made a fair progress in the late 1930s with the following leaders: **Marie Bonnici** and **Karmen Micallef-Buhagiar** (Rangers), **Violet Rossi** and **Iris Dimeck** (Guides), **Arlette Buhagiar** (Assistant), and **Mable Fiorentino** (Brownies).

The first initiative to visit the Maltese Islands was in July 1932 by the Cairo Maltese Group. The Group spent 17 days in Malta and the sea transport was provided free of charge by the firm Bianchi Shipping Organization of Alexandria. The party consisted of 30 boys with **V. Briffa** as their Scoutmaster. That group was the first to make use of the grounds at the new Island Headquarters in Floriana where they were inspected by the Governor of Malta, Sir David Campbell. Arrangements were made for them to visit a number of historic sites and were received in audience at the Archbishop's Palace by Monsignor Caruana. They were also invited by the Acting P.M. the Hon. Borg-Olivier; the Officers of H.M.S. *St. Angelo*, the President and Members of the Casino Maltese, and the Valetta Band

Club. They also paid homage at the Great Siege Monument, where their Leader V. Briffa laid a wreath at the foot of the Memorial.

On the first day of their arrival in Malta, the Group was invited to take part in the procession of the funeral of Monsignor Erik Dandria former Minister of Education, when as far as we know, all known organized bodies of Malta took part. There was of course nothing special doing so, but what shocked some scouts of the group, were some comments from the crowd, such as: *Mela down mumiex Masuni !* (Are these not Freemasons, then!).

Any spectator could have noticed that on our shoulder patch, there was the inscription: *Maltese Scout Group*, and a badge with a Sphinx with the word "EGYPT" which confirmed that we were not from the Island. To this day one wonders why it was thought that we were Freemasons.

Before their adieu to Malta, a campfire was held at Island Headquarters in Floriana, the reunion was attended by over 600 Scouts under the leadership of Captain J. V. Abela, Deputy Camp Chief, assisted by Scoutmaster V. Briffa and District Commissioner A. Triolo.

In his farewell message the Group Scoutmaster expressed his Party's thanks to all who had made their visit so agreeable. He added: *With this expression of gratitude we leave Malta, the beloved Island of our forefathers, for our home in the hospitable Valley of the Nile. Au revoir, sweet Isle of ours, au revoir dear people of Malta, may our dear memories live long in our hearts*⁷⁴.

The day arrived for the Cairo Group to board *S/S Samos* for their return to Egypt, reaching Alexandria on the 23rd July 1932.

In 1935 four Rover Scouts of the Alexandria Group: **Joseph Butigieg; James Laferla; Herbert Naudi** and **Robert Pisani** took part in an inter-groups Marathon walk from Alexandria to Cairo, covering a distance of 220 km. via the agricultural road, in a record time of 64 hr. 25'. The departure took place from the entrance of the

⁷⁴ S. Rafaat / *Egyptian Mail* d/d. 30.3.1996.

Alexandria Maltese Youth Association, in Boulevard Saad Zaghloul, in the presence of the British Consul, the President of the Maltese Community Council, the Committee Members of the Youth Association and a number of local dignitaries, relatives and friends. Their departure and arrival were registered at each respective local police station up to their arrival in the Capital and welcomed by the Community. It was followed by a reception by the Maltese Community of Cairo. The four were considered their heroes by the youth of the Community.

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Educational Establishments in Egypt

In their benevolence, the Pasha and Khedives welcomed the Franciscans to Alexandria and presented the Franciscans' Order, (*Ordine di Terra Santa*) with a large parcel of land, limited by Rue Abu Dardaa, Rue Sidi Metwalli, Rue de L'Archeveche and Place St. Catherine, now denominated Manshia Sugra. One of the streets connecting Manshia Sugra to Rue des Soeurs (Sharia Sabaa Banat) carry the name "Rue de Malte".

The Franciscan Order was not the only Catholic religious group to receive such a gift. *The Order of the Soeurs de la Charite* (Sisters of Charity) was also the recipient of land; They established an orphanage, a hospital, a school, and a free medical centre for which the street known as Sisters Street, was named after them.

On July 1, 1847, the first school of the *Freres des Ecoles Chretiennes* of Alexandria was established in a small dwelling situated at 70, Sharia Sabaa Banaat, (Seven Sisters Street), Manchia, with a couple of dozens of pupils.

In 1854 St. Catherine College opened its doors to 400 pupils, while in Cairo, in the suburb of Koronfich, the Brothers inaugurated their first school which was followed by many others.

Many past Maltese pupils of the Ecole Chretienne de Ste. Catherine of Alexandria would be interested to learn that the original school on the same site was in 1853 known as "*Il Collegio di Terra Santa*". At a later date it was handed over to the Catholic Brothers of the "*De La*

Salle – Ecoles Chretiennes D’Egypte”, a religious order dedicated to diffuse free education over generations to a large number of members of the European and Levantine communities.

The Catholic Brothers continued their expansion in the field of education over all Egypt, open to all who wished to enrol their children. By 1836, there were sixty-seven primary schools run by Christian Orders with a European curriculum (French, Italian and German) and preparing students for the specific schools founded in the course of the previous ten years.

The Italian vocational or technical schools run by the “*Don Bosco Salesians*” were established in Egypt since 1896. *The Regie Scuole Italiane* (lay schools) were established in 1915 in the district of Karmous, Alexandria, and in the district of Boulac in Cairo.

Towards the end of the Second World War, the Don Bosco Institutes were acknowledged as elementary and secondary schools for the children of the Italian Community, whose parents had been interned. The girls attended the “*Scuole delle Religiose Francescane*” (Franciscan Nuns), in the main cities, as well the school run by the “*Sister of the Order of Maria Ausiliatrice*”.

For the Maltese settlers of the 1880s a Maltese Primary School was planned and built by **Salvatore Grech-Borg** next to the established building of the Maltese Benevolent Society, in Sharia Manshia, in the city proper. The school started in May 1880 with an enrolment of 51 pupils, but its activities were suspended during the insurrection of 1882. The school was again operative in 1890 with funds provided by grants from the Maltese Government and the Alexandria Municipality. It is presumed that within few years, the school was abandoned due to financial and scholastic problems.

As early as 1898, the same organization published a collection of Catholic books, titled “*Giabra Ta-Taghlim Nisrani*” (A Collection for Christian Teaching). The books were printed in Maltese in Egypt and sold for one Piaster each. From then on, our children attended Italian and French Catholic schools.

Up to 1919 the Jesuits Order owned the original building of the

Governor's Offices (*Mahawzah*). The College in question was the St. Francois Xavier which cared for the children of wealthy families, among them a large group of Jewish pupils. As it happened in 1891 the parents of the Jewish pupils started protesting that the curriculum did not provide for Judaic religious activities and accused the Jesuits of being strong disciplinarians. The crisis was one of the causes that brought about the closure of the institute.

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Throughout the two world wars, the Maltese in Egypt in spite of their Italian or French education remained politically pro-British and retained their British citizenship. Their feelings were expressed by an Italian Diplomat in his report on Malta, made in Rome prior to the Second World War⁷⁵.

... Un partito Italiano a Malta non esiste, ci sono pochissimi esaltati che non costituiscono partito. I Maltesi non vogliono cambiamento di bandiera; sono contenti della Inglese; non se ne lagnano... Cio che iMaltesi vogliono, e la conservazione della lingua Italiana. ...

After the First World War, the Maltese of Egypt were initially drawn into the orbit of French civilization, to the extent that a concerted effort was made by the Italian Government to set up parallel cultural institutions and an education system to rival those of the French in Egypt.

The majority of Maltese who arrived in Egypt during the 19th century spoke Italian as well as Maltese, as the Knights of St. John used Italian in Malta from the 15th century to the end of their reign in 1798, and it was also widely spoken during the French and British occupation up to the mid- 1930s. In Egypt, the majority of Maltese also learned French and some Greek or German while most knew colloquial Arabic.

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⁷⁵ Lawrence Mizzi, "*Ghall-Holma ta Hajtu*" p. 160.

British Education

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Victoria College included in its teaching staff, **Joseph A. Cassar**, a Junior Teacher who was awarded in 1939 a scholarship at the Cambridge University. In the college administrative office we do remember in the Bursar's Office: **Vincent Darmanin**, **Lawrence Madiona** and **Albert M. Chircop**. In the Headmaster's Office, there was **Mario Madiona**.

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Our co-national and Advocate, **Robert Borg**, President of the Barristers that pleaded at the bar of the Mixed Courts of Justice, had the satisfaction, after the abolition of the said Courts, of defending in 1949 the rights of the Mixed Courts' lawyers and through negotiations with Mustafa el Nahas Pasha, P.M., obtained for them a pension which is still being honoured by the Egyptian Government⁷⁶.

Apart from men in the legal profession, the Courts employed some Maltese and one of the last European employee, was **Andrea Bonello** who was born in Malta in 1875 and died in Egypt in 1945. Andrea was an Usher at the Court of Appeal. He was also, the grandfather of **Edwin Bonello**, contemporary President of the Melita Social Club, in Melbourne.

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Life and Cost of Living in the pre WWII period

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For their socials and amusements they had five theatres: The Alhambra, Le Palais de Cristal, The San Stefano, La Tour Eiffel and the Zizinia: all presented during the operatic season, some of the best artists from Europe. They also attended functions organized by the "*Socjeta Letterarja Maltija*" (Maltese Literature Society) and at the

⁷⁶ Ivan Magri-Overend / *AMCOE Newsletter No.30, 1976, p.4.*

“*Ghaqda Artistica Maltija*” (Maltese dramatic Union); the Circolo Nazionale Maltese, later known as A.M.Y.A. (Alexandria Maltese Youth Association, well known for their Fancy Dress balls, and musical concerts at the Maltese Band “Valletta”.

An afternoon session at a cinema, costed between 2 and 5 Piastres, and the popular sandwich of Ta’amia or Falafel and a bottle of Saad Mustapha lemonade would have costed 2 Piastres. For an evening in the city and dinner, the bill would have reached 10 to 20 Piastres per person including drinks.

The fitness enthusiasts of the 1920s frequented a number of gymnasiums with comprehensive facilities. Some had their gymnast to supervise their activities.

Social get-together and dancing were organized by secular or religious groups, with music provided by an organist (organ grinder). That period of the 1920s was followed by amateur musicians playing the guitar, mandolin and accordion and most of the times it included the participation of a singer.

Dinner-dances and fancy dress balls were held in larger reception centres like the Moassat Ballroom by the “Circolo Nazionale Maltese” with a band and catered for by professionals. One could also attend evening dances at the “Nouzha Garden Café” or at the “Mon Seigneur”.

At the end of the First World War, private parties were held in private gardens or roof-tops with recorded music and the organiser supplied refreshments and finger food for a reasonable contribution.

In the 1920s and 1930s ,food and drinks were supplied at social functions by caterers, usually members of the association, such as **Alfredo & Giuseppina Camilleri**, and with pride it can be added that their descendants, Ferdinand & Family are today practising the same kind of activity in Melbourne.

At the end of the Second World War recorded music was in vogue in private parties and the smorgasbord, a buffet of hot and cold foods, replaced the portion of *pasta al forno* (baked macaronis), *pastizzi* (Maltese cheese cakes), or bread-rolls filled with mortadella, ham,

foie gras, or with a variety of cheeses.

The *Xirka Tixrid Qari Malti* (Society for the spreading of Maltese Literature) was formed in the early 1930s, by **Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi** as its administrator and **Antoine G. Said** as the editor of their publication: *Il-Qari Malti*. The printer was **A. De Giorgio**, of 6, Rue Constantinieh, Port-Said. The review appeared at intervals till 1946 when Antoine Said left for Australia. Apart from the editorial by Antoine G. Said, this quarterly magazine carried interesting extracts from a serialisation of novels by **Marie Greck**, wife of music professor **Alexandre Greck** and **Mary A. Said**. The periodical also included historical events by Guze Muscat-Azzopardi and articles from many more contributors, such as, **Anthony Bajada** and **Richard Zahra**. In one of the issues it even included an article written in Maltese by an Egyptian national, **Salem Hassan**, compositor, employed by the Maltese printer, A. De Giorgio of Port-Said.

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The society had its distributors and agents throughout Egypt: in Cairo it was **Mr. Ugo Abela-Hyzler**, in Alexandria **Mr. Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi**, for Port-Said **Mr. Antoine G. Said** and for Suez and Port-Tewfik **Mr. Emmanuel Paris**.

Apart from *Il-Qari Malti* which was sold for three Piastres a copy or eight Piastres for an annual subscription, the Society also acted as distributor for the revue *Lehen Il-Malti* and *Il-Berka*, both papers were published in Malta.

In August 1939, a group from the Society visited the Maltese Islands, the group included Mr. and Mrs. Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi, and their two sons; **Fr. Valentino Cardona OFM**,

Fr. Karm Mercieca OFM from Cyprus; **Mr. and Mrs. Armand Attard**, **Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cassar** and **Mr. Richard Zahra**. To meet their counterparts from Malta they held a tea party reunion at the Osborne Hotel. In return they were entertained by the Local Association, known as: *Xirka ghat Tixrid ta'I-Ilsien Malti*, their President, Dr. Guze Bonnici, in his welcome speech, praised the work carried by the Association in Egypt, to which Mr. Ivo Muscat-

Azzopardi, replied in the name of his group.

In 1942, **Ivo Muscat-Azzopardi** added to the title of the said society the word *Propaganda* and it became known as the *Maltese Literature & Propaganda Society*. The aim of the society was to diffuse by radio on the Egyptian Broadcasting events in Malta, appeals toward the *Malta Relief Fund* and the distribution of propaganda material for display in shops' windows: pictures depicting air battles over Malta, gunners of the R.M.A. and the repulsion of the Italian Naval Commandos' assault on Grand Harbour.

Another publication was printed in Cairo in 1937 called *Bulletin of the Maltese Community of Cairo*. In 1943 this periodical changed its name to *Il-Habbar Malti Fl-Egittu*. Its first editor was **Joseph Bonello**, followed by **Elissio Camilleri** and **Fredu Nicholas** who continued the tradition to print the paper in Maltese up to 1948 when **Ivan Magri-Overend** succeeded as the new editor. But when it was decided to expand the readership by including articles in English and French the "Habbar Malti fl-Egittu" ceased its publication in 1953 when its last editor Ivan Magri-Overend, with many others left Egypt for England and Malta, period that coincided with the aftermath of the widespread fires in Cairo.

Contributions to the Malta Relief Fund (Egypt - 1942)

For the expatriate Maltese during the dark years of the Second World War, it was the most moving thing to see the spirit of the Maltese people triumphant. The Maltese Community of Egypt was also very pleased to learn of the award of the "George Cross" to the people of Malta by H.M. King George VI. On Malta National Day (8th September 1942), **Chev. Philip N. Bianchi**, President of the Malta National Day Committee in Egypt, sent the following telegram to the Governor of Malta:

A hundred thousand Maltese Crosses are proudly worn today throughout Egypt in celebration of Malta's National Day. We are with you all in spirit at the end of a year of suffering and of unprecedented glory. May God bless Malta.

The hundred thousand Maltese Crosses referred to the little flags

pinned to lapels by members of the A.M.Y.A., assisted by the Maltese Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, who had volunteered to collect donations on that day toward the **Malta Relief Fund**. The Committee of the Malta Relief Fund was formed under the Chairmanship of Chev. Philip N. Bianchi, C.B.E., President of the Central Council of the Maltese Communities of Egypt. The support to the appeal came from all quarters. At the Alexandria Naval Base, the sum of L.E. 700 (Pounds) was raised. A similar donation came from the R.A.F. Aboukir Station and from *Malta Camp*, site of the 5th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Malta Artillery.

As part of the fund-raising effort, the Maltese Dramatic Society *Icilio Calleja* under its President, Ivu Muscat-Azzopardi, gave a presentation at the French Lyceum, on June 7. The stage plays included *Il-Tewba* and *Zeza Tal-Flagship*. Towards the same appeal, a musical concert was held by an orchestra of twenty musicians under **Mtro. G. Borghese**, who presented a repertoire of Maltese compositions by composers **Joseph G. Pisani** and **Alexandre Greck**. At such functions patriotic poems from Dun Karm and Gorg Pisani were declaimed and were acknowledged by great ovations.

In Port-Said, the English Colony celebrated the award of the "George Cross" to Malta, with a cocktails party at the Casino Palace Hotel, to which were invited the President of the local Community Council, **Mr. J.W. Caruana**, **Rev. Fr. Pascal Grech**, Chaplain of the Community and other dignitaries. The Port-Said Community also organized a concert at the Britannia Club, under the chairmanship of Mrs. **Zammit-Caruana** and a Gala Ball was held at the Maltese Club with all the profit going towards the Malta Relief Fund. According to the local press including *The Bulletin* of June 10, 1942, all events were very well attended and resourceful.

Apart the monetary donations special efforts were made by the Special Committee appointed by the Central Council with the support of the Ladies Auxiliary, to collect gifts of clothing and other necessities. Gifts were gratefully received at the offices of Bianchi & Co., in Alexandria at No.18 Rue Sesostris and in Cairo at No. 6 Midan Soliman Pasha. Included for shipment were two hundred parcels sent to Malta by the soldiers of the Royal Malta Artillery and

other Units. The R.A.F. provided the packing crates and the Royal Navy shipped them. At the same time the handsome sum of L.E. 60,000 (Pounds) was remitted to the Maltese Government by Chev. Philip N. Bianchi, C.B.E., the Organizer of the Malta Relief Fund in Egypt.

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It would be appropriate to mention the contribution to the Fund made by our compatriot, the late **Anglu Cutajar**, known as *The Champ*, a title acquired for being a Heavy Weight Boxing Champion in Egypt during his Service in the Army. Anglu was born in Alexandria and was commissioned during the 1914-18 war in the British Army Medical Corps where he was a successful osteopath for which he was awarded the *Order of Saint Sauveur* by the Greek Government for services rendered to the Greek Community of Alexandria. His services were also recognised by the Tunisian Government, awarding him the Order of *Nitcham Niftikar*.

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Anglu Cutajar passed away in Toronto in November 1973 at the age of 72. The Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto, as a mark of respect to their long standing former President, draped his coffin with the flag of the Society.

It may be added that the spirit of unity and patriotism amongst the Maltese expatriates has been zealously maintained and carried during war and peace.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF AN ERA

1940 - 1957

VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCES

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In the month of May, 1940, the first English women and children were evacuated from Malta to Egypt. They embarked on S/S *Oronsay*. On the same day the 5th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery of the *Royal Malta Artillery*, under the command of Major (later Lieut. Col) J. V. Abela embarked on S/S *Strathmore*. The Battery consisted of 216 officers and men and reached Port-Said, on May 7.

Before leaving Malta there had been an impressive parade and the Governor, General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter in his farewell message said: ... *I am confident, that Major Abela and his men will uphold and enhance the high reputation already earned by your Regiment for zeal and efficiency.*

In Alexandria, the Maltese gunners of the Royal Malta Artillery were allotted their war positions at El Wardyan coded as No. 4 area with their 3.7 inch. Anti-Aircraft guns weighing 16 tons each, and disposed in a radius of about 33 km. between positions.

Soon after the arrival of the R.M.A. in Egypt the local English and French newspapers reported on headlines: *Maltese Anti-Aircraft Battery arrives in Egypt*, and: *Avec les Chevaliers sans Armures: Les descendants des celebres cannoniers de Malte, formant la Royal Malta Artillery, au service de L'Empire Britannique.* ("With the Knights without armours: The descendents of the widely known

gunners forming the Royal Malta Artillery, in the service of the British Empire”)

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After a heavy raid on El Wardyan, the R.M.A. Battery position was moved to Aboukir in the area denoted as No.14 Canopus, with the Battery Headquarters at Aboukir. Their base-camp and H.Q. was known as *Malta Camp*.

On July 1940 Major J. V. Abela, the Battery Commander also assumed the tactical control of the Egyptian Army's anti-aircraft positions around Alexandria. Major Abela was awarded the MBE, Battery Sergeant Major J. Cassar was granted a commission and appointed Headquarters Subaltern. In September, 2nd Lieut.G.V.Micallef was promoted Captain. 2nd Lieut. (Later Captain) M.P. Mifsud was never to see Malta again. He died in Egypt in 1942).

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With the transfer of the British Admiralty from Malta to Alexandria, hundreds of Maltese volunteers mainly from reserved occupations with the Royal Air Force and H. M. Dockyards reached Egypt between August 1939 and the early 1940s. Some of the early arrivals from the Malta Dockyards flew to Egypt and landed in Cairo before travelling by rail to Alexandria. Many were billeted with Maltese families and frequented local Maltese Clubs. Soon they formed their own association, known as *The Sons of Malta Association* including a football team.

From his memoirs, under the title *Il-Hidma tieghi f'Lixandra*, (My employment in Alexandria), G.Gauci explain that in Cairo before embarking for Alexandria, he went with his companions to the Telegraph Office so to despatch a telegram to his family to inform them that he had a safe trip. To his surprise it turned out that the clerk that helped them with the telegram was a local Maltese and when he asked him to recommend them a place for a drink, he suggested the Maltese Club and that he will be pleased to take them as soon as he finished work. A few minutes later the group was at

the Maltese Union Club, where they were introduced to the President. In his turn the President made an announcement from the stage, telling all present that their guests had just arrived from Malta.

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It would be appropriate to mention too the large number of Maltese sailors from the Merchant Navy that served in a number of Cargo Ships forming the 11 convoys that operated from Alexandria to Malta that sustained heavy losses by hostile forces.

Alexandria during the War 1939/1945

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Committees were formed for the *Anti-Waste Campaign*, the *Silence Campaign*, the *Red Cross* or *Red Crescent* and others.

Ivo organized many concerts for the Malta Relief Fund and for the entertainment of the Troops. He was always in the forefront when it came to making Malta and things Maltese known in the Valley of the Nile.

During the war years whole communities became divided by suspicion, affected by the internment of one or more members of the same family, i.e: a relative of Italian or German nationality, and it became a common practice for city dwellers to wear a national emblem on their lapel, so to be recognized as belonging to one of the allied nations.

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Civil Defence

Our Community being the largest British Community in Egypt, responded well when the call for volunteers was made for the formation of the "Civil Defence" by the Central British Council.

The Maltese community youth group and Rover Scouts took part in the distribution of gas masks to each member of the household in the Community. Similar arrangements were made by members of the Community in the distribution of identity cards and the distribution of a questionnaire in case of an evacuation, at the time of El

Alamein.

The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides participated in the collection rounds of items with some usefulness to the organizers of the "Anti Waste Campaign" and also in collecting books and magazines for the distribution in military hospitals. They also acted as ushers at special social functions and assisted in the sale of souvenir programs at the annual inter- services ball-games held at the Alexandria Municipal Stadium for the benefit of the British Red Cross.

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At the Maltese Community Centres, first-aid lessons were given by local Maltese doctors to anyone interested in taking part. Ladies of the Community held regular meetings and contributed their efforts as Red Cross Voluntary Workers. In Cairo, the Maltese Ladies of the community formed in 1941 the "Maltese Ladies Union" with Mrs. Clotilde Sant, as President.

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Our Community in general contributed enlisted men and women in the armed forces, including officers, the staff for the military offices, manpower for the war production and volunteers for services with the British Red Cross and canteens of the Navy Army and Air Force Institutes. The first Maltese men to enrol as volunteers in the British Army, were detailed to the Royal Army Service Corps - Motor Transport Companies, mostly constituted by Maltese and Cypriots of Egypt.

Many of the first volunteers were workers employed by German and Italian firms having ceased to operate as their assets were put under sequester by the authorities. Others were lay down as their employers in the import-export trade ceased their commercial operations with hostile countries in Europe.

The assignments of the Motor Transport Companies consisted of conveying military stores, water and petrol to bases in the Western Desert. Colonel J.C. Armstrong, M.C. was the Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport, with H.Q. in Cairo.

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Two of our first young volunteers to enrol with the R.C.S. were Pascal Infanti and Robert Zapara. Both young men had their pictures projected on cinema screens and published in newspapers in recruiting segments, as: *Maltese lads volunteer in the Royal Corps of Signals*.

Among the men enlisted in Egypt in the General Corps as Interpreters was **Alphonse Farrugia**. Alphonse was born in Alexandria and educated at the Scotch School. Before his call-up for National Service, he was employed by a British firm retailing men's wears.

After the three months training at the Infantry Training Depot in the Canal Zone area, a period which consisted preparing the unit for the landing in Italy. Alphonse was first attached to a Ghurkhas Unit and later transferred to a South African Unit of the Royal Engineers. He participated in the landing operation in Italy. Affected by battle fatigue, he was hospitalised in a military hospital in Palestine before his return home at the end of the war⁷⁷.

Joseph Gauci in his reminiscence⁷⁸ tells us that he was called up in June 1943. After completing two months training at the No. 1 Infantry Training Depot in Fayed, he was transferred to the Abassieh Barracks, Cairo. After being transferred to other transit camps, his group was told that they were to be transferred overseas. Soon the order was given for a transfer to Alexandria, where six ships were embarking troops and military equipment. The convoy of six transports was escorted by destroyers. As the convoy navigated for about six days along the African coast the ships were attacked by torpedo boats. The attack was repulsed as we were under the protection of the R.A.F. till the day that they were able to site Malta in the distance, when they were briefed that they will soon be joined by a large convoy and expected to land in Sicily in the region of Augusta.

⁷⁷ *Reminiscence* - by R. Farnay, *Melbourne*.

⁷⁸ Joserph Gauci, *his reminiscence of his years in the Service*.

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In the R.A.F many Maltese from Egypt served in the Special Duties Flight which became known as the Balkan Air Force stationed in Bari, Italy. The Flight was mainly formed by personnel from Malta and Maltese from Egypt. Squadron Leader Romanes, originating from Malta, was the Senior Technical Officer. Also attached to the same flight was **A. Bajada** and **R. L. Psayla**, of No.2 photographic Reconnaissance Unit, R.A.F. Middle East.

Romeo Psayla was among the men from Malta who served in Cairo and was later transferred to the Balkan Air Force. Other companions amongst others that frequented Malta House in company with Psayla are Bianchi, Lanzon and Spiteri.

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Maltese employees working in indispensable services (water supply, electricity, war production, telecommunications, Royal Navy Victualling Depot, were required to join the *Civil Defence Force* in their respective city. They wore their uniform during the weekend, drilled and trained to carry arms in military camps and assigned guard duties at military establishments and the harbour area.

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Apart the men enlisted in the Royal Navy, others joined the Merchant Marine including the crew of tug-boats that went along with the convoys to supply Tobruk and Malta. Two of the crew serving on tugboats, were both born in Alexandria, namely, **Joseph Spiteri** and **Fortunato Polidano**. Moreover, **Anthony Attard** served on the Hospital Ship *Maine* which made calls in several ports including Malta and Alexandria.

The tour of duty of Maltese enlisted personnel who served in the various Corps of the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, included areas far away from Egypt and Libya, including Malta, Italian East Africa (Somalia), Palestine, Cyprus, Greece including the islands of Crete and the Dodecanese, the landing in Sicily and mainland Italy. As well as places in Asia, namely, Yemen, Persia (Iran), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Malaysia and Burma (now

Myanmar).

One of the commissioned Fighter Pilots, in the R.A.F., was **Robert Caruana**. After his training in Southern Rhodesia, he was posted to Burma in 1944 and was attached to the famous *Chin-dits Squadron*⁷⁹. Also with the R.A.F in Burma, where, a certain **Cachia** and a **Charles Madiona**.

Many of our men obtained a Commission. **G.M. de Vella Clary**, B.Sc., former President of the A.M.Y.A, and **P. N. Bianchi** received a commission with the British Troops Egypt. The Officer-in-Charge of the German Prisoners of War camps in the Middle East was Major **Edwin Magri-Overend**. Wing Commander **Wyndham Grech**, R.A.F., was Assistant Judge. Major **Roland Podesta** and Captain **A. J.Dimech** M.C., of the Seaforth Highlanders and both officers were in the Intelligence Corps, Colonel **Albert Podesta** was for a while the Military Governor of Asmara (Italian East Africa.), and Major **Michael J. Vella**, D.S.O. was for a while the Military Governor of a Greek Island after liberation. The list includes too Captain **Leon Azzopardi** who was previously a Constable in the Egyptian Police. One of ours that participated in the landing during the Suez invasion, was **Lt. H. Agius** formerly of Alexandria having settled in England prior to the eventful crisis..

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Men were also enlisted in the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers and served in workshops and advance depots throughout the Middle East and Italy. Their linguistic skill was also favoured in the Intelligence Corps, the Field Security and as code-breakers.

With the latter was a particular and well-known personality of our Community, namely, **Joseph A. Cassar** M.B.E., who became the Acting British Consul-General in Alexandria at the time of the Suez crisis of 1956. During the Second World War, Joseph A. Cassar, was a Code-breaker at Bletchley Park, in the United Kingdom and later transferred to the South East Asia Command Headquarter, in Ceylon (now Sri-Lanka).

⁷⁹ Ivan Magri-Overend / *AMCOE Newsletter No.30, 1976, p.8.*

In the Intelligence Corps, was Lieutenant **Albert J. Dimech**, who was the first President of the Cairo Maltese Youth Association and in 1945 was the co-organizer of the Maltese Ex-Servicemen Association and was elected its first President.

Lieut. (later Major) Albert Joseph Dimech served first with the Seaforth Highlanders. He showed great gallantry in North Africa, in January 1943 in leading his company after his Company Commander had been wounded, although he himself had already been twice wounded in the morning. He was taken prisoner, but managed to escape. Major Dimech served in the Intelligence Corps in Malaysia. He was awarded the Military Cross on August 18, 1948 after retiring in Malta - five years later the award was gazetted in London.⁸⁰

At the time of the call up for service of British Subjects in His Majesty's Forces, it was planned to have a Maltese Unit with Maltese officers, but the scheme was deferred when the British Authorities opted for general conscription, to include also women. At a later date, most of the women were able to assist in the war effort without being called up for National Service.

Women's contribution to the "War Effort" included work as telephonists, shorthand writers, secretaries, clerks and as drivers in the three Services.

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On regular visits to the French Squadron was **Salvo Vella**, acting as the Liaison Officer and whose duty was to liaise with the respective officers for the supply of victuals and fresh water to the ships.

There were too, a large number of men employed by the various contractors' workshops supplying material to the Fleet repair ship, *H.M.S. Resource*, among them **Angelo** and **Spiros De Gabriele**, and many others.

The main harbour area was under the control of the Alexandria Port Police under the supervision of Major **Edward Podesta**. They wore the same uniform as the Egyptian police, including the fez.

⁸⁰ A.E.Abel, "*Malta G.C. & War Gallantry Awards*" 1989, p.51.

At a later date, an Auxiliary Dockyard Police Corps, with British Officers was formed. It recruited Maltese ex-servicemen, as well as other Europeans from the local communities for the surveillance of British Naval establishments. In 1946 after the evacuation of British Forces from Cairo and Alexandria, the Auxiliary Police Corps was maintained and transferred for service in the Suez Canal Military Zone, under the management of the *Suez Contractors Ltd.* As an auxiliary force, their function was to keep order and surveillance in the British Military base which included compounds with a large number of native civilian labourers, and employees of the Suez Contractors.

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[Diaspora]

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At the end of the hostilities the first Maltese families from Egypt to arrive in N.S.W. landed in Sydney during 1946 and settled in the south-eastern suburbs of Sydney, such as Botany, Maroubra, Matraville and Radwick. The majority of members of the Maltese Community of Egypt had worked overseas in middle-class occupations, areas in which they sought employment in their new country. As many did not master the Maltese language and the older people spoke little English, they were discouraged to associate with the larger community of Maltese from Malta.

Amongst the first arrivals, was the Said family whose Maltese origin and connections date back to the 1880s when they emigrated from the Cottonera and settled in the new city of Port-Said.

These newcomers from Egypt were affectionately nicknamed, *Maltinta L-Egittu*. They were not favoured with assistance schemes nor purposely chartered ships. They came by their own initiative.

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[T]wo brothers, **Joseph and Espedito Briffa**, were the founders of the *George Cross League*. Others, like Ronald Cefai, helped in their dedicated way, to organise the successful participation of the Maltese

Community of New South Wales in the Eucharistic Congress of 1953. Another first was the participation of Maltese Veterans in the ANZAC Day March in Sydney organized by the Late **Maj. Michael J. Vella** DSO. Not long afterwards (April 1967) he promoted the participation of Maltese Ex-Servicemen in the Annual ANZAC Day March in Melbourne.

Another well known personality in Sydney is **Leslie Cassar**, apart being the Managing Director of World Aviation Systems, he was appointed on Australia Day 1997 by the Governor General, as a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia (OAM), for service to Maltese/Australian relations.

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In Melbourne, our first settlers made their homes in the suburbs of Brunswick, Coburg and Preston, which carry such street names as, Gezireh, Heliopolis and Moascar, etc. The coincidence of names may have played a sentimental part in the choice of the area. The street names originate from the time of the first sub-division of estates in the northern part of Melbourne and coincided with the return of the Australian Military Forces from the Middle East.

It is in Melbourne in the suburb of Coburg that the Maltese of Egypt established in 1954 their first community centre, **The Melita Social Club**. The hall was constructed as a non-conformist church in 1891 for the Baptists' Debating Society. The front of the building was made of polychrome brick and blue stone. The Baptist congregation moved to a new church nearby in 1918 and the Australian Labor Party purchased the premises and used the hall for political meetings and other activities up to 1954, when, during October of the same year, a proposal was put forward to some co-nationals by **Anthony Busuttil** to form a club on lines similar to those of the club left back in Alexandria. In no time a list of names with addresses was collected and an invitation to attend a meeting was forwarded. The meeting was held in the premises of Mr. and Mrs. **Carmelo Malfegianni** which resulted with a good number of attendants all in favour for the scheme. According to **Ronald Camilleri**, the sum of 340 Australian Pounds was collected on that day to form the first

club's fund. On that day too, an interim committee was appointed. The first provisional committee met on December 1, 1954 at Mr. and Mrs. **Michael Barun** premises in November, when the name "Melita Social Club" was adopted and a draft of the club's constitution was read and accepted.

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During the Suez Crisis (1956-58) the Melita Hall became the welcoming centre for new arrivals in Melbourne and was the centre of operation for the Maltese in Egypt Relief Fund and the Information Centre for the whereabouts of Maltese refugees from Egypt.

That section was able to operate with the cooperation of the Australian and International Red Cross. At an Extraordinary Meeting that followed the Suez Crisis, the Club voted to adopt the name for the sub-committee dealing with community affairs, the title of: *Association of the Maltese Community of Egypt - Melbourne* (abbreviated to A.M.C.E). The title for the sub-committee was adopted unanimously.

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Its highest membership was reached in 1957-58 at the time of the Suez Crisis and Exodus when it reached 600 members. To day after undergoing some low and high periods in the past fifty years, the Melita Social Club is still very active with a membership of over three hundred. In general regular activities are held at the club premises for our Senior Citizens and Veterans. Social monthly activities do attract a good number of participants to dinner dances, excursions, the annual Christmas party, and Sundays' lunches.

The Club has to this day a highly motivated Ladies Auxiliary, and a Hon. Secretary that deal in Community Affairs. The Club also publish its quarterly newsletter, and maintain a small multi-lingual library.

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Maltese Ex-Servicemen Association

In Sydney as in Melbourne, the formation of the Maltese Ex-Servicemen Association, was due to the legendary **Maj. Michael J. Vella, DSO**, a veteran of the original Cairo Committee.

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In 1964 the late **Chev. Benoit Muscat O.S.J.**, established in Melbourne the **Priory of the Knights of Malta, Sovereign Order of St. John, (Langue de France)** under Grand-Master, Colonel Paul de Granier de Cassagnac, O.S.J. The new priory was able to extend for a number of years their benevolence to local orphanages.

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In Western Australia, our early settlers from Egypt arrived in the early 1950s. They settled around the city of Fremantle. It took no time for the enterprising people in the community of Egypt to form an Association and in 1955 **the Maltese Australian Club** was formed with the assistance of Mr. **Oswald Armarego**, a hard working committee member. Another Maltese organisation was formed by Maltese migrants from Malta in Bassendean and adopted the name "**The Australian Maltese Association of Western Australia**".

In 1961 attempts were made to unite the two groups under one federation. All attempts were characterised by good will on both sides but differences in the socio-economic backgrounds proved to be barriers which neither side was able to bridge; so both Associations decided to go their separate ways (15). By 1984 as support for the Maltese Australian Club gradually dwindled, the Committee agreed to suspend all its activities.

Of more recent date, ex-patriates from the southern states that have settled in Queensland, particularly in the Gold Coast, organized in 1991 the "**Maltese Australian Gold Coast Association**" with as President **Salvo De Celis** and **Edmond Galea** as Hon. Secretary. Mr. De Celis, was a regular contributor of articles in *the Maltese Herald*, of Sydney, mainly dealing with the history and the lack of recognition by the Maltese Government of our Maltese ancestry.

In England the first expatriates from Egypt arrived after the events known as *Black Saturday* (26th January 1952) when an anti-British demonstration turned into widespread incendiarism with the loss of a number of lives and properties in the C.B.D., Cairo.

At the time of the Suez Crisis of 1956 hundreds of Maltese British Subjects made their way to the United Kingdom where on arrival, they were accommodated in hostels in the Midlands. They managed to survive even though on their departure from Egypt they were dispossessed of their property and were not allowed to take anything out of the country.

In London they formed the “**Association of Maltese Communities of Egypt**”. Since then, the Association has acted as the claimant in relation to issues of compensation for the Maltese Community assets seized in Egypt during 1956-57.

On February 28th 1959 an agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt requested that owners of sequestrated property in Egypt should apply to the Sequestrator-General in accordance with the Egyptian Military Proclamation No 5 of November 1956.

Regular exchanges of correspondence and representations were made to the Association of Maltese Communities of Egypt, London, in relation to community claims by members of the Special Committee of Melbourne known as “A.M.C.E.” which stand for the *Association of the Maltese Community of Egypt*, Melbourne. Our Representatives were: **Maj. M. Vella** in 1967; **Prof. Jean Caruana** in 1971; Mr **Adolph Bajada** in 1973 and Mr. **N. D. Chircop** in 1987. To this day, all our representations resulted in negative statements.

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The London Association main objective is the publication of a quarterly newsletter; and to commemorate the Anniversary of the award of the “George Cross“ to Malta by holding a Dinner Ball, under the patronage of the High Commissioner for Malta and a number of distinguished guests. Furthermore, they participated to

the up-keep of the Latin Cemetery in Alexandria, one of the last transfer as far as we are aware amounted to L.E.1,466.34 (Egyptian pounds).

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Settlers in Foreign Lands

In Australia:

Anthony Bonnici, B.A., LL.B., AM

Martin Bonnici is the son of **Anthony Bonnici** and is a renowned Maltese- Australian professional photographer since 1992,

Professor Joseph A. Camilleri

Chev. Frank Robert Gatt

Mario C. Gatt:

MARRAND Precision Engineering Pty. Ltd: Armand (Andy) Ellul

Tony Ellul.....

David Ellul

Councillor, Sam De Gabrielle: (1941-2003,,,

Alexander (Alex) Darmanin:

Edwin Agius:.....

Edwin Bonello:

Julius Borg :.... .

Rodney A. Borg....

Cesar Manasi:......

Joseph Tanti:....

Anthony M. Vella OAM: (1930- 2008)

Phillip Cachia:.....

Joseph Caruana....

Fr Andrew Zerafa, ...

It was in Sydney, at a later date that the late **Maj. Michael Vella D.S.O.** succeeded in forming the **Maltese Ex-Servicemen Association**. Others served in the committee of the Eucharistic Congress of 1953, as well in **The Maltese Guild of Australia** and in the committee of the parish of the Sacred Heart in Lalor Park.

Two distinguished brothers, **Joseph** and **Espedito Briffa** founded the **George Cross League**

Fr. Roland Darmenia, the former parish priest of the Catholic Church in Zagazig, Egypt.

In Surfers Paradise, Queensland, two expatriates from Egypt, Mr. **Salvu De Celis** and Mr **Edmond Galea** were respectively the first President and Honorary Secretary of the **Maltese Gold Coast Association**.

In the United Kingdom:

Marius Camilleri & Fils: Armuriers – Fabricants & Importateurs. sustain all the weight of the business and that caused a reduction in affairs.

Ivan Magri-Overend NOM,(1916-2006):

Christopher Cassar, R.I.B.A.

Iobert Bauval:

Karmen Mikallef Buhagar:.....

Lewis Said....

John Bonello:

Carmelo Bugeia

Ferdinand Sammut.....

In the U. S. A.:

Louis Camilleri:

Roland Cassar

Mr. Dalli

In France:

Rene Debono....

Patrick Debono

Maitre Robert Borg M.B.E. :

In South Africa: Edgar Archer Bonnici:

In Switzerland:

Thomas Mifsud....