

# **Malta During the First World War: Beyond the Nurse of the Mediterranean**

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Cassar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Signature of student

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the interpretation of the experience of the First World War in Malta, a subject which has attracted very little academic study and is far from exhausted. Malta's role during that war is generally discussed in terms of its function as a hospital base, labelled as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean". This has endured as a myth and became the principal, or rather the only interpretative lens of Malta during the First World War.

Therefore, this research sought to, first of all, investigate how the myth of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean' limits the understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of Malta during this war, and secondly, identify possible other themes to support a fuller interpretation of the war, especially in social, political and economic terms.

The research based on primary and secondary sources did identify these themes and these are presented in the form of a holistic framework of interpretation of the First World War. This study presents a synthesis of themes in the form of a framework upon which a holistic approach to the interpretation of the First World War in Malta may be approached. This framework suggests four overarching thematic interpretative approaches: 1) Military, (2) Civilian, (3) the War's Aftermath (including but not limited to the *Sette Giugno* riots and the Self-Government constitution given to Malta in 1921) and (4) Collective Memory and Remembrance. It also suggests ways for Maltese memory institutions, non-governmental organisations, and relevant authorities to deliver such interpretation.

The First World War in Malta is regrettably overshadowed by the memory of the Second World War. This research not only gives greater visibility to the First World War but also presents new avenues for research, discussion and heritage interpretation.

Keywords: First World War, *Sette Giugno*, Nurse of the Mediterranean, Malta, heritage interpretation

## INTRODUCTION

The First World War continues to generate interest more than a century after its end. This is reflected by extensive scholarly literature and the war's centenary celebrations, between 2014 and 2018, which prompted a general revival of interest in the subject manifested in books, documentaries, re-enactments, exhibitions and other remembrance events. However, this was almost exceptionally absent in Malta, considering that during the war Malta was a British fortress-colony and therefore under one of the warring nations. Only one new book was added to literature, and two books first published in 1991 and 2004 respectively were reprinted.

Admittedly, the First World War or the Great War as it was known before the Second World War, does not resonate with the Maltese as much as it does in other countries like in Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, and Italy. The Maltese Islands were not subject to direct warfare from land, the sea or from the air. This was because Malta was on the fringes of the European conflict and the neighbouring Italians backtracked on neutrality at the outset of the war and in 1915 joined the Allies in the fight against Austria-Hungary and Germany. In the Maltese collective memory, the First World War is subdued by the more destructive Second World War. Yet, as this research will show, there are many common themes between the two world wars.

The literature review in this thesis explains how the First World War from a Maltese perspective has not attracted much academic attention and the topic is far from exhausted. Malta's role during that war is generally discussed in terms of the island's function as a hospital base. The "Nurse of the Mediterranean" was the label given to Malta, and this has endured as a myth perpetrated by the few authors who treated the subject. The myth of the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" became the principal, or rather the only interpretative lens of Malta during the First World War, leaving a significant gap with unexplored knowledge of how the war affected Malta and the Maltese from a socio-economic point of view.

This perceived knowledge gap has informed the research questions which the thesis has sought to answer:

1. Does the discourse of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean' limit the understanding and interpretation of Malta's contribution to the Allied war effort during the First World War?
2. Beyond the discourse of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean', which other themes could inform our understanding and interpretation of Malta during the First World War?

To answer these questions the research looks at both primary sources from the National Archives of Malta and the National Library of Malta, as well as secondary sources.

Following a review of literature (chapter 2), the thesis gives an overview of the research methods employed and the primary sources consulted (chapter 3). The content from primary sources would have been too unwieldy to present as a single chapter, and it has been divided thematically over four consecutive chapters. These chapters discuss the opening stages of the war; the disruptions and restrictions brought about as a result of war conditions; the living conditions in Malta where the high cost of living, food supply, misery and hardship are the principal themes; the participation of Maltese in the war and imperial solidarity; and the political situation which was characterised by partisan politics, the Maltese claims for a new constitution and opposition to the imposition of new taxes. This analysis provides an answer to the first research question. Chapter eight then discusses the interpretation of the First World War in Malta and presents a framework upon which a holistic interpretation of the First World War in Malta may be approached. This provides the answer to the second research question. The full detailed framework is presented as an appendix.

## Chapter 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The First World War generated, and continues to generate, a vast literature. The war's centenary between 2014 and 2018 instigated a plethora of books, documentaries and exhibitions and various other activities. However, the revival of interest in themes related to the First World War witnessed abroad was notably subdued, and almost absent in Malta. The National Archives of Malta published a book about prisoners of war held in Malta, as well as a set of annotated postcards reproducing items from the archival collections related to Malta during the First World War. A number of articles also appeared in local newspapers. John A. Mizzi's book *Gallipoli The Malta Connection*, first published in 1991 and long out of print, was reprinted, as was Anthony Zarb-Dimech's generic history of the war entitled *Malta during the First World War*. The latter two publications are the principal sources which today inform our knowledge about Malta and the First World War.

During the First World War, Malta was not directly involved in the fighting. The island's geographical location placed it on the fringe of the European conflict. Although Malta was not an active war theatre, yet, "the state of emergency coloured everything" (Mangion, 2016, p.80).

Schembri et al. (2017, p.70) identified four "fundamental" segments in which Malta served the British and Allied war effort: a naval base and arsenal, a hospital base and convalescent camp, a seaplane base, and as a source of manpower. It is argued that an understanding of Malta during the First World War needs to take into consideration other aspects as well, such as the fortress and its garrison, the prisoner-of-war and internment camp, memorialisation and remembrance.

One of the earliest records of the extra-European dimension of the First World War, and which takes into consideration the part played by the various dominions and colonies forming part of the British Empire is Charles Lucas' *The Empire at War* (Das et al., 2014, p.99). The work is spread over five volumes which were published between

1921 and 1928. The fifth and last volume covers Britain's Mediterranean colonies, India and Malaya among others. In Lucas' work the role played by Malta and the Maltese is expressed in numeric terms - over 15,000 Maltese served in the military, 7,000 of them in the Maltese Labour Corps, while 15,900 Maltese served with the Royal Navy and in its shore establishments (Jackson, 2014, p.169). For a population of around 213,000 the numbers recorded by Lucas are not insignificant. Nevertheless, the military aspect of the Maltese experience of the First World War is generally neglected in academic literature. A notable exception is a paper about the Maltese Labour Corps (Caruana and Zammit, 2011).

The wartime service of the two locally raised Maltese regiments, the Royal Malta Artillery and the King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia, is discussed by Samut-Tagliaferro (1976) and Wismayer (1989). The King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia was embodied upon the outbreak of war in 1914 and in 1915 deployed a company on garrison duties in Cyprus. The Royal Malta Artillery was a regular unit. During the war it deployed a company in Egypt and played a fundamental role in manning part of the coastal defences of Malta. Rollo (2002) provides a detailed and technical narrative about the evolution of Malta's defences, during the British period, from the point of view of artillery. However, the composition and role of the garrison of Malta and garrison life during the First World War are subjects that require further investigation.

In 2013, Jones commented that an emerging theme in First World War historiography was the study of non-white troops' and labourers' experience and how race was perceived and constructed (Jones, 2013, p.874). There were no front-line Maltese units, and during the war Maltese soldiers and locally raised units were assigned secondary and support roles. One has to ponder whether this could in effect be the result of British attitudes towards the Maltese? Were Maltese soldiers considered unreliable and treated as non-white troops, and did racial prejudices result in exclusionary and discriminatory practices regarding recruitment, pay and promotion?

One of the earliest books about Malta during the First World War is Mackinnon's *Malta: Nurse of the Mediterranean* (1916). Mackinnon refers to the war work

undertaken in Malta during 1915-1916, while the campaign in Gallipoli was in progress, as one of mending limbs and "giving of a good time to the patients" while they sojourned on the island (Mackinnon, 1916, p.238). As a priest he also wrote about pastoral work, which he terms "Empire building of an enduring kind" (ibid.), conducted with the thousands of soldiers transiting through Malta.

During the war, some twenty-eight hospitals and convalescent depots were opened in Malta (Mizzi, 1991, p.132). According to the Governor of Malta, Lord Methuen, between May 1915 and March 1916 Malta received 60,300 patients in its hospitals. The hospital facilities and medical organisation in Malta are detailed by various authors (Bruce, n.d.; Mackinnon, 1916; Laferla, 1947; Mizzi, 1991; Zarb Dimech, 2014; Azzopardi, 2019; Savona-Ventura, 2001).

Mackinnon (1916) also wrote about the hospitality extended to convalescent soldiers and entertainments organised for their benefit. On this aspect Mackinnon referred principally to the efforts undertaken by his Church. However, Maltese society, too was moved to acts of kindness and solidarity with the convalescent soldiers (Mizzi, 1991). The aspect of hospitality and entertainments for the benefit of servicemen in Malta during the First World War was not just an act of charity and solidarity but also an effort at keeping soldiers away from drink. This aspect of wartime Malta remains under-explored.

The idea of the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' expressed by Mackinnon in 1916 stuck and, it is argued, has dominated the Maltese perception and narrative of the First World War. Ganado(1975, p.169-170) inferred that Malta had a medical tradition and vocation. It is a sentiment also expressed by Mackinnon (1916, p.13). Laferla(1947) stated that the war in Gallipoli made Malta the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" and added that in the early days of the war there was "no reason to suppose that the island would be called upon to assume or rather resume her hospitaller role" (Laferla, 1947, p.200).

The arrival in Malta of thousands of wounded soldiers, “the human wreckage of battle” (Mackinnon, 1916, p.13), brought home to the Maltese the horrors and the sheer scale of destruction of industrial war. Convalescent and mutilated soldiers hobbling on crutches or carried along on wheelchairs were a common sight in the towns around the Grand Harbour. Children took to playing at military funerals (Ganado, 1975, p.171).

Maltese society did its utmost to help the wounded. Showing concern for the wounded and trying to ease their convalescence in Malta was an act of Christian piety and a patriotic duty (Ganado, 1975, p.176). The influx of soldiers also brought changes to Maltese social norms. Local girls were accused of shamelessness and of publicly consorting with foreign servicemen (Bartolo, 1982, p.69-70).

Jones (2013, p.877) opined that despite the considerable corpus of academic work generated by the First World War, the history of the war at sea was a “poor relation”. This statement holds true with respect to the narratives concerning Malta during the First World War.

Authors stress the point the Malta was a strategic naval base (Lee, 1971; Lee, 1972; Halpern 1971). The Maltese narrative generally mentions that on 3 August 1914, as Britain edged closer to war with Germany, Churchill, met with French naval representatives and told them “use Malta as if it were Toulon” (Churchill, 1928). As a result, on 12 August 1914, the French fleet moved to Malta. The presence of the French fleet in Malta is often mentioned, but details are notably absent (Laferla,1947 ; Muscat 1972, Zarb-Dimech, 2014, p.22, p.43; Mizzi,1991, p.17).

Halpern (2012) makes references to Malta when discussing the Mediterranean within his wider history of the war at sea. Local authors have neglected Malta’s role in the war at sea in the Mediterranean and mostly dwell on the large number of Maltese men who served in the Royal Navy and on the Maltese casualties incurred at sea notably during the Battle of Jutland in 1916.

The First World War witnessed the coming of age of submarines. Halpern states that “the entire Mediterranean was considered a danger area” (Halpern, 1995, p.394). The impact on Malta of submarine warfare in the Mediterranean is generally discussed in terms of the loss of ship tonnage, the consequent shortages of all kinds in Malta, and their socio-economic implications (Laferla, 1947; Bartolo, 1982; Zarb-Dimech, 2014). In relation to submarine warfare, Zarb-Dimech discussed the loss of HMS Louvain with 72 Maltese men on board - reputedly “the greatest loss of Maltese lives in one single action” (Zarb-Dimech, 2014, p.74).

Some authors (Laferla, 1947; Zarb Dimech, 2014) mention the Japanese destroyers that were stationed in Malta to assist in convoy operations. Halpern (1995) places these operations within the wider context of Allied strategies and counter-measures to combat the submarine menace. The nature and extent of Malta’s involvement in anti-submarine warfare during the First World War, especially the use of aircraft for this purpose needs further exploration.

During the First World War Malta was a place of internment for prisoners of war. Malta’s role as an internment camp is discussed in Callus (2014). Giovanni Bonello states that Malta was “the major prisoner-of-war camp for those who fought for the Central Powers, their nationals and those deemed to be their supporters” (Callus, 2014, p.75). In 1916 there were 1,670 prisoners of war held in Malta (Laferla, 1947, p.212, Zarb-Dimech, 2014, p.113), but, according to Alan Green, by 1918 the number of prisoners totalled around 2,800.

It is generally the high-profile individuals, like Captain Karl von Müller of the cruiser ‘Emden’, Prince Franz Joseph von Hohenzollern, Karl Dönitz and Liman von Sanders, who get most attention (Mizzi, 1991, p.26-27, Zarb-Dimech, 2014, p.117-121, Callus, 2014, p.20-23). This provokes the question, what do we really know about the ‘common’ prisoners?

The autobiography of Prince Franz Joseph von Hohenzollern, who was a young officer on the cruiser '*Emden*,' gives a personal account of life as a prisoner of war and the conditions in the Maltese camps. The prisoners' treatment was "tolerable" (Hohenzollern, 1928, p.267). However, one of the salient points of Hohenzollern's account is that the conditions in which the prisoners lived affected their health, both physically and mentally driving some to attempt suicide (Hohenzollern, 1928, p.272).

Heimrath (2019) published the friendship-album of Eitel Kuhn, a young man held prisoner in Malta, highlighting the suffering resulting from the loss of freedom and contact with family and friends, as well as the "boredom and despair" (Heimrath, 2019, p.26). Agius (2021) amplifies on this through his analysis of a prisoner of war camp magazine produced in Malta between 1914 and 1915, entitled '*Camp Nachrichten*'.

News of the Armistice of 11 November 1918 was greeted with great joy and a sense of relief by the Maltese. Ganado (1975) gives his personal recollection of the event and described the wonder of many at seeing the streets of Valletta lit up once again. The Maltese celebrated with Allied servicemen "the demonstration was overwhelmingly Maltese, but the soldiers and sailors of many nations took part in the wild enthusiasm" (Laferla, 1947, p.216).

The Armistice engendered the hope, false as it soon proved to be, that life would return to the normality known in the pre-war days. But the war did not come to an end. In south-eastern Europe and the former Ottoman Empire "the instability of the peace settlement of 1919 can be sketched in blood, just as it can be seen clearly in the turbulent postwar years throughout the British and French empires" (Cornelissen and Weinrich, 2020, p.109). This underlies what scholars call the 'Greater War,' defined as a ten-year period of conflict spanning from the Balkan Wars of 1912, until 1923, when the Treaty of Lausanne between the allied nations and Turkey was signed.

Ganado (1975) indirectly hints at the continuum of warfare and some of its effects on Malta. Many Maltese dockyard workers, expecting to be laid off sought to emigrate.

Rumours abounded that because trouble was brewing up between Greece and Turkey, the authorities held up the issue of passports to prevent dockyard workers from leaving the island (Ganado,1975, p.210).

During this period, Malta continued its role as an internment camp. Britain controversially detained 119 Turkish Kemalist nationalist who were suspected of having committed war crimes. They were transferred to Malta to await trial (Callus, 2014, p.59).

The civil war in Russia and the conflict between Greece and Turkey in the early 1920s, made Malta a centre for the reception of refugees. From April 1919, hundreds of Russian refugees reached Malta from the Black Sea. Ganado (1975, p.183) claims there were 800 Russian refugees in Malta and wrote his recollections of some of the high-profile persons. During the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, the tragic burning of Smyrna by Turkish forces led to another wave of refugees. Between September and December 1922, Malta received some 1,600 refugees, around 700 of which were believed to be of Maltese extraction (Peresso, 2018, p.1) (Frendo, 2020, p. 180).

On 2 April 1917 President Woodrow Wilson announced that the United States was going to war “in the name of democracy, popular government, and the “rights and liberties of small nations” (Manela, 2007, p.77). The United States with its material, industrial, financial and military capabilities tipped the balance in favour of the Allies. Hence the United States had a preponderant voice in inter-allied political discussions. The subsequent post-war peace settlement was to be based on the principles outlined by Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points in January 1918. Manela contends that the rhetoric associated with Wilson’s vision of a new world order, was disseminated through the American wartime propaganda machine to become known worldwide (Manela, 2007, p.21). As a result, a wave of optimism and high hopes were created among the subjects of the European colonial empires that the time was ripe to request and obtain self-rule.

Malta's political elite were probably versed with Wilson's idea that "small weak nations were entitled to the same treatment and rights in international society as the major powers" (Manela, 2007, p.22). Also, Wilson's declaration that the United States entered the war to fight "for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations" (Manela, 2007, p.36). In January 1918, the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George declared "the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed" to be a governing principle of the post-war settlement (Manela, 2007, p.36). In February 1918, Wilson claimed that "national aspirations must be respected" and that people could be "dominated and governed only by their own consent" (Manela, 2007, p.41).

Ganado (1975) indirectly hints that the Maltese political elite were no strangers to Wilsonian rhetoric. He said that the redrawing of the map of Europe on national lines ("*fuq bazi nazzjonalista*") had much influence on the Maltese nationalists (Ganado, 1975, p.188). The Maltese demand for a new constitution which gave them a greater share in government was framed within the argument that Britain fought the war to defend the rights and liberty of small nations, and could not fail to accept Maltese claims (Ganado, 1975, p.197).

The Maltese expected Britain to give them a new constitution after the war's end and a Maltese National Assembly was convened shortly after the Armistice of 1918 to formalise this demand. The political question, persistent hardship and unemployment created discontent of which the *Sette Giugno* riots of 1919, which ended in bloodshed, were a tragic product.

In 1970, Frendo lamented that the Maltese were still lacking a history (*storja xierqa*) of the *Sette Giugno*. Since then, the void was filled by a number of books and studies on the subject. The centenary of the event, in 2019, saw further contributions to literature indicating that the memory of those events is still relevant. According to Bartolo (1977, p.4) the memory and relevance of the *Sette Giugno* renew themselves over time. Politicians of all hues have appropriated the *Sette Giugno* and interpreted its significance to suit their ends. Some saw in the *Sette Giugno* the rise of class

consciousness, others, the crystallisation of Maltese demands for political freedom culminating in independence from Britain in 1964 (Sant, 2009, pp.1-3). Interpretations of the event vary. Was it a revolution as Frenco (1970) called it, an uprising, or a riotous protest? Were those killed, victims or martyrs? Sant (2009) says that the *Sette Giugno* did not transform Malta from a colony to a free, sovereign nation, but it did change the attitude of the Maltese from meek subservience to a people who reacted when provoked.

Besides economic roots, Guze Bonnici (1931) in his history of the Maltese Labour Party indicated that divisions within Maltese society also had a bearing. He claimed that the *Sette Giugno* was the result of a 'political game'. The 'privileged clique' within the National Assembly played on the general discontent and mobilized the crowds to give leverage to its demands. However, the ploy turned tragic (Bonnici, 1931, p.5 quoted in Sant, 2009, p. 6). This idea was furthered by Chircop (1991) who states that the working masses, who were "the physical vanguard" of the *Sette Giugno* riots were used by the local 'ruling classes' to "further their own interests" (Chircop, 1991, p.4).

According to L.C. Amery, the Maltese people were desperately poor and overtaxed. He believed that "long-standing resentment against autocratic Crown Colony government had been worked up by a small disloyal pro-Italian faction into a general anti-British agitation" (Amery, 1953, p.188). The latter idea also emerged Ganado in (1975, p.215) who underlines that within the National Assembly there ran an extremist current headed by Dr Enrico Mizzi. The Mizzi faction, and the adherents of Manuel Dimech, played an active part in the riots and fomented the crowds (Ganado, 1975, p.215).

It is a common misconception that the *Sette Giugno* led to the 'self-government constitution' of 1921. According to Fenech (2005) the Colonial Office decided to give Malta a new constitution "soon after the signing of the armistice, before the National Assembly met" (Fenech, 2005, p.25). Pirotta (2012) agrees and states that the process for a new constitution started before the *Sette Giugno*, and that it was not precipitated by that event.

The Maltese greeted the new constitution with great enthusiasm and appeared to fulfil Malta's long-standing political aspirations and ended a 120-year-old struggle (Ganado, 1975, p.241).

The constitution given to the Maltese in 1921 was modelled on that of other dominions. Fenech (2005) contends that the constitution was viewed by the Maltese as giving them a level of autonomy comparable to "dominion status in fact if not in name". Nevertheless, Britain never counted Malta one of the dominions (Fenech, 2005, p.78).

The matter of commemorating Malta's participation in the First World War and memorialising the Maltese men who died was an issue taken up by the post-1921 Maltese government. In 1938 a war memorial inscribed with the names of 592 Maltese men who lost their lives during the war was inaugurated (Laferla, 1947, p.212). Laferla (1947) pointed out that the list of names was "necessarily incomplete" because many Maltese men who died whilst serving with Dominion armies (e.g., Australia and Canada) were not listed.

The Maltese Diaspora resulted in Maltese joining overseas military units. Zarb-Dimech (2014, p.30) says there were 300 Maltese with Canadian and Australian units. Mizzi (1991) listed and provided short biographical notes about some twenty-two Maltese men who joined the ANZAC forces. He also noted that among the crew on French battleships were "Maltese sailors born in France, Algeria and Tunisia" (Mizzi, 1991, p.17). However, this aspect of Maltese participation during the First World War needs to be explored further.

Jay Winter remarks that war memorials represent "powerful collective messages" telling the story of the war and its victims (Winter and Sivan, 2000, p.54). The Cenotaph in London started as a temporary catafalque built by Sir Edwin Lutyens for a victory parade held in July 1919. However, it became the focus of such an

overwhelming “outpouring of public feeling” that the temporary structure was turned into a permanent monument (Winter and Sivan, 2000, p.54). In the following years war memorials were constructed in many areas of Britain and other combatant countries. The Maltese War Memorial could be seen as a local adaptation of the Cenotaph in London. Tablets inscribed with the names of the Maltese who died during the First World War, were removed after the Second World War when the monument was re-invented as a memorial to the Maltese victims of both world wars. In a way, this act symbolised the way that the Second World War overshadowed the First World War in the making of the Maltese national narrative. The violent impact of the Second World War on all strata of Maltese society created what Winter calls “retroactive interference”, which diluted the memory traces of the First World War (Winter and Sivan, 2000, p.34).

## **2.1 The Representation of the First World War in Malta**

In Malta war is a distant memory tied to the country’s colonial past. The Second World War, in which Malta played a primary role, and the Maltese suffered much loss and ruin is losing its immediacy. The first World War is even remoter. Today, the first-hand memory of the First World War has disappeared and that of the Second World War is fast receding with the dying away of the generation that experienced the war. Nevertheless, the memory of the Second World War is still quite strong in Malta and has been sustained by the oral transmission of personal narratives from one generation to the next. In everyday parlance the Maltese still commonly refer to the Second World War as ‘the war’ (*il-gwerra*). In the Maltese context the experience of war is generally equated with the Second World War.

The First World War is accorded no such consideration, even though it impacted Malta and a number of Maltese perished because of belligerent activity. However, one must acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference between the two conflicts. During the Second World War the aerial bombardments devastated large, inhabited parts of the islands and many lost their homes and possessions. In the First World War the Maltese were spared such devastation.

The Maltese have ambivalent views regarding war-related and military heritage recalling the British presence in Malta. Some argue that this heritage is a reminder of Malta's colonial past when the Maltese had no alternative but to fight and suffer because of wars which were not their own. On the other hand, others view this type of heritage with nostalgia, and point to the Second World War as the time when the British and the Maltese stood shoulder to shoulder in defence of Malta sharing danger, despair and joy (Cassar and Avellino, 2020, p.253).

There is also ambivalence in the perceived nature of the wartime heritage itself and the qualities that are attributed to it. An empirical example of this ambivalence is provided by Magro Conti (2009). When a Second World War defence post was restored and opened for public visiting, the initiative was criticised because of its connotations with war and British colonialism. On the other hand, the cleaning and opening of Second World War public air-raid shelters was generally received positively (Magro Conti, 2009, p.125-126). Unlike the defence post, which was perceived as 'British' and alien, the shelters are perceived as 'Maltese' embodying the value of Maltese resilience under extreme duress. The George Cross on the Maltese national flag is another example of contested wartime heritage. Some see it as a mark of honour, others consider it "a vestige of colonial servitude" (Cassar and Avellino, 2020, p.251).

From a Maltese perspective, the First World War, in contrast to the Second World War, was not fought on Maltese soil. The Maltese who died in the first conflict did so in foreign lands or perished at sea. During the First World War, the Maltese were not involved in a conflict to defend their homes, but, in an imperial war against Britain's enemies. Therefore, the First World War is more 'British' than 'Maltese'. However, the singular episode wherein Malta was turned into a hospital base to tend to the sick and wounded during the Gallipoli campaign is attributed a 'Maltese' quality. It is argued that the 'Malteseness' of this war episode is founded upon two tenants: firstly, because the event unfolded on the island itself, and secondly, because it fits comfortably with the idea of the Maltese who extend hospitality, kindness and generosity to foreigners in distress. The latter characteristics are generally presented as hallmarks of the Maltese as a people. Therefore, the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" was

adopted as part of the Maltese myth. Myth here refers to the constructed narrative, a simplified, dramatised story, which society elaborates over time to give meaning and make sense of war (Whitmarsh, 2001, p.6). It is argued that the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” provides a continuum to the Maltese national narrative into which are woven the shipwreck of St Paul on Malta and the hospital run by the Order of St John in Malta.

Essentially, the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” is a colonial perspective of Malta’s role in the First World War. It probably owes its origin to the book published in 1916 by Rev Albert G. Makinnon entitled ‘Malta: Nurse of the Mediterranean’.

However, the idea of the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” provides a point where the colonial and the Maltese perspectives intersect. Malta’s hospital role is the most remembered aspect of the war, and the one which the Maltese perceive as part of their heritage. It is the privileged interpretation of Malta during the First World War.

In a BBC documentary series marking the centenary of the First World War the narrative about Malta was about how the island “pushed its medical traditions to earn the name ‘The Nurse of the Mediterranean’” (BBC, 2014). The “medical traditions” mentioned refer to the hospital run in Malta by the Order of St John. It is a reference which is found in McKinnon (1916), and which is also promoted by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) when stating that “Malta has a long history of medical care dating back to the Middle Ages and the Knights of St John” (CWGC, n.d.). According to the CWGC, Malta’s contribution to the armed conflict was “minimal” and “it was during the Gallipoli campaign that the island came to the fore” when it served as an important medical centre. The pictorial content referring to Malta during the First World War is hospital-related. The National Archives, UK (TNA) favoured a similar interpretation stating that “Malta’s most significant contribution to the war was its role as a military hospital base”, and for which “Malta became known as the nurse of the Mediterranean” (TNA, n.d.). In common with the approach taken by the CWGC, the TNA page on Malta gives some statistical data regarding the Maltese who served in navy, military units and the air force.

On 11 November 2018, the Times of Malta published an article written by Christopher Scicluna to mark the centenary of the 'end' of the First World War. Scicluna stated that the war "had a profound impact on Malta even though the island was not a direct participant" and identified major 'consequences' of the war

"The best-known consequence of the First World War was that Malta was dubbed 'The Nurse of the Mediterranean'...But the most important consequence of the first great war on Malta was actually the birth of parliamentary democracy, however limited" (Times of Malta,2018).

The dire economic situation "following the end of the war" is presented as the cause of the "bread riots" of June 1919, which according to Scicluna led to Malta being granted the 1921 constitution.

The centenary of the war's end in November 2018 was marked by two articles published by The Malta Independent, both of which focused on Malta's role as a hospital. Albert Galea delved into Malta's role as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" as narrated through letters written by ANZAC soldiers. Galea states that as a result of the praise heaped on Malta by the wounded servicemen who received treatment on the island, it "truly earned the moniker of the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' - a moniker the country still mentions with pride, some 100 years later" (The Malta Independent a, 2018). Anthony Zarb Dimech wrote about the Cottonera Hospital which today houses St Edward's College. In an article written by the same author and published in August 2018 the author highlighted two functions fulfilled by Malta during the First World War "Malta fulfilled the important indirect role of welcoming thousands of wounded and sick soldiers...and for this became known as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" (The Malta Independent, b,2018 )The other role was that of a prisoner of war camp, to which subject Zarb Dimech dedicated much of his article.

Malta's roles as a hospital base and a prisoner of war camp also emerge in an article written by Fiona Vella in 2014. Vella stated that Malta was not directly involved in the war yet served some very significant roles. One of these was the hospital setup which

led to Malta becoming known as the “Nurse of the Mediterranean”. The other role ‘assigned’ to Malta was that of receiving war prisoners for which purpose a number of prison camps were opened.

In 2014, the Central Bank of Malta marked the centenary of the start of the First World War with the issue of commemorative coins. The iconography of the coins borrowed from the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” myth and depicted a female nurse administering medicine to a wounded soldier. The coins also featured a poppy and a soldier with ‘reversed’ arms, both symbols associated with remembrance. The ‘language’ of the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” predominates in the imagery chosen for a set of stamps issued by Maltapost to mark the same anniversary.

The foregoing indicate that the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” emerges as the predominant theme about Malta during the First World War. Other lesser-known aspects are also mentioned sometimes, but these remain underdeveloped, possibly because of scant research and the limited literature available.

### Chapter 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In general, the role of Malta during the First World War lacks visibility in terms of academic study, cultural heritage interpretation and collective memory. Unlike the Second World War, the First World War is not central to the Maltese national master narrative, i.e. the dominant story about the past. This is reflected by the dearth of publications about Malta and the First World War as compared to an ever-growing corpus of books dedicated to Malta and the Second World War.

Literature reveals that the First World War from a Maltese perspective is still an under-researched topic and is far from exhausted. Furthermore, Malta's role during the First World War is generally discussed in terms of the island's function as a hospital base, and the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' is the central theme.

From the foregoing emerge the following questions with which this thesis is concerned:

1. Does the discourse of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean' limit the understanding and interpretation of Malta's contribution to the Allied war effort during the First World War?
2. Beyond the discourse of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean', which other themes could inform our understanding and interpretation of Malta during the First World War?

Sorensen and Carman (2009) describe heritage as an interdisciplinary field that engages scholars from different disciplines and is in itself intrinsically diverse, incorporating "people, things and text". Filippucci (2009, p.319) states that "qualitative methods have become a central methodology in heritage research".

A qualitative approach, rather than quantitative methods which rely on the "quantification of concepts, where possible, for purposes of measurement and evaluation" (Connaway and Powell, 2010, p.3), was deemed to be more appropriate to

the nature of the subject of this thesis. Qualitative research attempts to understand people's perceptions, behaviours, interactions and social experiences (Finn et al., 2000). It seeks to interpret phenomena "in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.45).

In the spirit of the ICOMOS Charter (2008), heritage interpretation ought to be based on reliable information and authoritative sources and present "multi-faceted historical, political, spiritual, and artistic contexts" (ICOMOS, 2008, p.9). In the light of the ICOMOS Charter, the thesis, based on historical research, will suggest ways how the presentation and interpretation of the First World War from a Maltese perspective can be effected.

History has been defined as "an interpretive account of some past event or series of events" (Lune and Berg, 2017, p.58). Historical research goes beyond description and chronology, and attempts to interpret the facts and capture the complex nuances, people, meanings, events and ideas of the past (Lune and Berg, 2017, p.158; Connaway and Powell, 2010, p.3).

History aids heritage interpretation by contributing towards a greater understanding of the historical context. Historical research is not only regarded as a means towards informing interpretation, but it is a form of interpretation in itself. Although Tilden (1977) said that "information, as such, is not interpretation", Staiff (2016, p.39) contends, "information *is* interpretation because it cannot escape being a representation of something".

Historical research methods have been used for collecting data. More than a hundred years have elapsed since the end of the First World War, as a result it is now impossible to interview persons who lived during or participated in the war and to get views and personal memories. Therefore, the primary data informing this thesis was derived from documentary sources. Glass (1989, cited in Lune and Berg, 2017, p.162) said that locating and gathering primary data is considered the data-collection component of

historical research. The documentary sources of historical information are broadly classified as either primary or secondary. Both types were used in this research.

Primary sources are considered "the raw materials of historical interpretation", and their use ensures the integrity and strengthens the reliability of research (Connaway and Powell, 2010, p.251). The search for primary sources relevant to the subject was principally conducted at the National Archives of Malta, which is the main repository of records related to the British period of Malta's history. The records held at the National Archives of Malta (NAM) document various aspects of the political development, government and administration of Malta under British rule.

The main primary source which informs this study is the incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Lieutenant Governor's office - the CSG 01 fond which forms part of the collections held at the NAM. The office of the Lieutenant Governor was the highest civil authority on the island and worked very closely with the Governor. It was through the Lieutenant Governor's office that most of the departmental correspondence regarding the civil administration of the island was channeled. Another source used was the collection of petitions (fond CSG 02) submitted to the Governor.

No other archival collection relevant to the period under study has the scope and breath of the CSG 01. Therefore, the sequential consultation of the files in this series was undertaken as a necessary step in order to build a comprehensive picture of what was happening in Malta during the First World War. However, it must be recognized that as Michelle King says, "... our forays into the archives, no matter how meticulous and exhaustive, only ever yield partial understandings." (Gunn and Faire, 2012, p.20).

In adopting this approach it was possible to evaluate and nuance current knowledge and build upon it through the acquisition of 'new' information. This was a time-consuming approach, which, seen in the light of the time limits allowed for the completion of the thesis, has to be regarded as a disadvantage. Furthermore, the

amount of information and data generated could not possibly be utilised in its entirety. Nevertheless, it was deemed that the advantages outweighed disadvantages.

It is to be noted that the cataloguing of this collection (CSG01) at the NAM is on-going, and at the time that the research was undertaken the files covering the period 1914-1918 were not yet processed. The only finding aids available consisted of the original central registry handwritten indexes, albeit some of the volumes were partially damaged and had suffered loss of content. The CSG 02 collection is uncatalogued. The lack of a searchable database or catalogue was a limiting factor.

The other primary sources consulted, besides archival records, were period newspapers and other published materials. Even when taking into consideration wartime censorship, newspapers provide a contemporary chronicle, firsthand insights and a wealth of information of various aspects of life in Malta and the topical issues of the time. The National Library of Malta (NLM) houses one of the largest and most complete collections of Maltese newspapers. The NLM does not possess a database of digitised newspapers. Newspapers have to be viewed on microfilm, or when this is not available or not of good quality by viewing the original papers.

It was not possible, within the available timeframe, to consult in detail all the newspapers issued locally during the First World War. As a result, the research was principally limited to three newspapers-*The Daily Malta Chronicle*, *The Malta Herald*, and *Is Salib* (The Cross). The *Daily Malta Chronicle* was owned by Augustus Bartolo who promoted a pro-British agenda. It carried local as well as international news agency reportage. In addition to a select Maltese readership *The Daily Malta Chronicle* addressed the local British community consisting mainly of servicemen and their families, and the wartime phenomenon of the large numbers of wounded and convalescent soldiers from different parts of the British Empire. This newspaper is therefore valuable to document aspects of garrison life. The *Malta Herald*, published by Giovanni Muscat, was principally an English language newspaper, but it also carried columns written in Italian addressed to the Italian community in Malta and to the Maltese social classes which used Italian as a language of communication. The

newspaper *Is Salib*, was a weekly newspaper edited by Alfredo Lucchese, it had a pro-catholic and pro-Church bias, and was written in Maltese. The latter newspaper was chosen to trace issues that concerned the Maltese during the war.

Secondary sources, principally published books, journals, and academic papers were utilised to supplement and contextualise the information retrieved from primary sources. As expounded by Connaway and Powell (2010, p.262) secondary sources provide insights and conceptual development, synthesise existing research literature and help to fill in the gaps between primary sources of information. Published sources as well as unpublished dissertations were used to inform the aspects related to heritage interpretation.

### **3.2 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics refer to "a set of principles that embody or exemplify what is good or right, or allow us to identify what is bad or wrong" (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012, p.16). According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), "the principal ethics consideration should be to ensure the maximum benefit of the research whilst minimising the risk of actual or potential harm" (ESRC, 2015, p.2). Harm may be physical or emotional and may involve the researcher as well as the research participants. Lune and Berg (2017, p.43) say that the principal concerns about research ethics involve issues of harm, consent, and the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality. The present research did not involve outside participants, and references to persons are made in so far as they appear in archival records that are open for public scrutiny, or that have been rendered public in secondary sources.

Ethical concerns however, also extend to the qualities of research. The researcher is bound to ensure the quality, integrity and impartiality of the research (Lune and Berg, 2017, p.43). Jordanova states that within the context of historical research one has ethical obligations to the materials used, "... to be reflective, accurate, compassionate and responsible, and to share key information with readers so that they can check for

themselves the interpretation on offer." (Jordanova, cited in Gunn and Faire, 2012, p.31).

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This research, which is built on archival sources and reliable secondary sources, could, it is hoped, contribute to the narratives of Malta during the First World War and to the literature on the war's global dimension, highlighting "the importance of the spaces beyond the 'front line'" (Schembri et al., 2017, p.68).

The First World War narratives described today "may become the narratives we live with for the foreseeable future" (Winter, cited in McCartney and Morgan-Owen, 2017, p.237). Corollary, today's narratives may percolate into, and inform the interpretation of the First World War within a Maltese context. It is towards this objective that the thesis gives visibility to themes that go beyond the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean'.

## Chapter 4 - FEAR, RESTRICTIONS AND DISRUPTION

### 4.1 War Declared

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August at midnight. It was around ten in the morning on 5 August that word started getting around in Valletta that Britain was at war. (Ganado, 1975, p.137).

People rushed to St George's Square in Valletta in the hope that they might get some news or declaration from the Governor's Palace. There the people saw that the offices of the Daily Malta Chronicle had a British and a Maltese flag and a poster saying that Britain was at war with Germany. Ganado claimed that it was that poster that broke the news to the Maltese people congregated on the square (Ganado, 1975, p.138). An official proclamation stating that Britain was at war with Germany was issued by the Governor of Malta at noon. (Is-Salib 8 Aug 1914 p 3). The square filled up with people shouting, cheering and clapping hands. Word spread that in the evening everyone was to go to Valletta for a demonstration with bands (Ganado, 1975, p.138).

In the evening the demonstrations were even larger than those held in the morning. The bands and a large crowd moved towards the French consulate. The Consul appeared on the balcony and was saluted with the playing of the Marseillaise and the British and Russian anthems. The crowd moved off shouting "*Viva it-tliet nazzionijiet: Inghilterra, Franza u Russia.*" [Hail the three nations, England, France and Russia] (Is-Salib, 8 Aug 1914, *L'Inghilterra iddichiarat il Guerra, Dimostrazzjoni f'Malta*, p.3)

#### 4.1.2 Maltese Loyalty Expressed Through War Discourse.

Despite political grievances, the Maltese backed Britain in the war. The vernacular press subscribed to a discourse which denigrated and vilified the enemy whilst extolling the virtues of Britain and her allies and the justness of the British cause. In an article entitled "*Viva L'Inghilterra*" [All hail England], *Is Salib* stated that everyone was against Germany, except for Austria-Hungary, which was a weak state. Germany was a haughty nation, "*is superva Germania*" (Is Salib, 29 August 1914, no 500, p.3), and was vilified

for having precipitated a war in which she thought she could repeat the success of 1870 against France. Germany was identified as the sole culprit for the war, flaming the dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, and the cause of all the ruin and misery accompanying it "...[il]*Germania hija il causa causorum ta cullma sar u kighed isir fid dinja.*" (Is Salib, 28 November 1914, no 513, p.1).

The Maltese press expressed their loyalty to the British crown by subscribing to propagandistic wartime discourse which originated from the British press. *Is Salib* was sure that "*Il vittorja tcun iva ta l'Inghilterra*" [England will be victorious] (Is Salib, 29 August 1914, no 500, p.1) and this victory would also belong to the Maltese (ibid, p.3) thus, reinforcing the idea that Malta's interests were best-served by safe-guarding Britain's interests. The Royal Navy, in which hundreds of Maltese were serving, was painted as the weapon of final victory for Britain "*keghda taghmel guerra giusta*" [is waging a just war] (ibid, p.1).

#### **4.1.3 Malta Fears Italian Intervention Against Britain**

When the war broke out, Germany was allied to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy in what was known as the Triple Alliance. It was not excluded that Italy on her own or in combination with the Austro-Hungarian fleet would try to force a battle with the Anglo-French naval forces in the Mediterranean.

Maltese society was gripped by the fear that Italy might subject the island to naval bombardment. The Italian navy's bombardment of Tripoli in 1912 during the Italo-Turkish War in Libya served as an ugly precedent. The fear of an Italian invasion was palpable.

*"Bosta huma dauc li ilhom sa mindu bdiet il Guerra inbezzghin li l'Italia ties parti contra l'Alleati, u verament ghal leuuel granet Malta cola chienet tibza billi il consequenzi chienu jistghu icunu coroh bil bosta."* [Many are those who since the start of the war have been living in fear that Italy might enter the war against the Allies. Indeed, during the first days of the war all Malta was in fear

*as the consequences would have been ugly*] (Is Salib, 19 Dec 1914, No 516, 'In-Neutralita ta l'Italia', p.1).

The Language Question in Malta, which was a hotly contested issue in Anglo-Maltese relations, and the pro-Italian leanings of some sectors of Maltese society created a lacuna as to where Maltese loyalties lay. With implicit reference to Italy, *Is Salib* claimed that an invasion of Malta was improbable, but "*culhatt ghandu jakbes biex incheccju lill ghadu tal potenti Inghilterra li tahha nipkghu sudditi.*" [if the need arises everyone should rise to expel the enemy of Britain of whom we remain subjects] (Is Salib, 29 August 1914, no 500, p.3).

In reviewing the happenings of the year 1914 the Maltese newspaper *Is Salib* (the Cross) described the war as a calamity and one the likes of which had not yet been experienced in the world. Until the end of 1914, Malta had only experienced the war indirectly and had to be thankful to Divine Providence. The newspaper described the situation thus: "*Dan iva hu guaj l'actar cbir ... li lilna ma messniex hlief b'maniera indiretta*" [Indeed this is big trouble...but we have only been affected indirectly](Is Salib, 2 January 1915, no 518, Harsa fuk is Sena 1914, p.1). The newspaper did not see the end of the war anytime soon.

## **4.2. Restrictions and Disruptions**

The state of war provoked a series of restrictive measures that impinged on the everyday lives of the Maltese. Being a 'fortress', Malta was governed by martial law during the war.

### **4.2.1 Military Properties**

Already before the war people were barred from military properties unless they had permission to enter. With the imposition of martial law no one was allowed to approach military properties, and those who rendered services had to obtain special passes (NAM CSG 02 1662/14). On 10 August 1914, V. Gatt and G. Benedetti were arrested for approaching a military post (NAM CSG 02 1346/14).

The local inhabitants were often warned to stay away from military properties as they could be shot at. A Government Notice of 3 April 1917 is one such warning. People were also advised to avoid roaming around the coast at night and to stay as much as possible in their towns and villages after sunset (Is Salib, 7 Apr 1917, no 636, p.2).

### **4.2.2 Harbour Restrictions**

Traffic within ports and harbours, especially the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett, was regulated and restricted. On 7 August 1914 all coal-heaving operations other than those required for naval requirements were prohibited leaving merchant ships in the lurch. This order was only suspended on 24 August to be reissued when circumstances called for. (NAM CSG 01 3331/14).

Fishermen were warned that it would be risky for them to be anywhere near the coast at night (NAM CSG 01 3179/14) and were barred from fishing in certain areas like Kalkara Creek within the Grand Harbour (NAM CSG 02 1655/14). Some restrictions curtailed them in the exercise of their trade and a number of fishermen from Mellieha petitioned the Governor to be allowed to fish during certain hours (NAM CSG 02 1850/14). Sailing out of port without giving due notice breached port regulations and was liable to a £10 fine (Is Salib, 10 Dec 1917, no 671, p.2).

On 8 August 1914, orders were issued prohibiting communication with any ship in harbour and ship crews were prohibited from landing ashore. Particularly hit were bumboat owners who earned a living selling goods on ships (NAM CSG 01 3347/14).

#### **4.2.3 Restricted Photography**

Photographing, painting or drawing fortifications, military and naval installations and assets were prohibited. On 13 August 1914, S.L. Cassar, one of Malta's renowned photographers, requested permission to take "a photographic views as well as films" of the Grand Harbour as a record of "the present circumstances constituting a historical epoch" (NAM CSG 02 1335/14). Permission was refused. A correspondent of the *London Daily Graphic*, H.C. Cooper had his camera confiscated by the police when he tried to take a picture of the French Fleet from the Upper Barracca (NAM CSG 02 1772/14, NAM CSG 01 3449/14).

#### **4.2.4 Censorship**

Already on 30 July, before the declaration war, orders were issued to the leading Maltese newspaper editors to refrain from publishing information regarding Royal Navy ship movements (NAM CSG 01 3264/14).

Newspapers needed to obtain clearance before going into print and distribution. This at times affected production schedules. In February 1915, the owners of *The Malta Herald* complained about the delay on the part of the censor in reading and approving their newspaper (NAM CSG 02 214/15). On 12 February 1917, Ernesto Tonna was given a £2 fine for publishing an advert for a football match between St George's football team and a team from HMS Larne. By publishing the name of the frigate, her presence in Malta was rendered public (Is Salib, 24 Feb 1917, no.630, p.2).

#### 4.2.5 False News

Spreading false news, especially if it could cause alarm among the population, was a punishable offence. The spread of rumour and hearsay had a wide reach. *Is Salib* commented thus “...*illum il giurnata saret moda li cullhatt ighid fuk il Guerra li irid u li joghg’bu.*” [*It has become common for people to say whatever they liked about the war*] (*Is Salib*, 16 Oct 1915, No. 559, *Contra il klajjiet foloz*, p.3). Many families, who had relatives serving abroad, were being thrown into a state of fright and agitation because of false news. Spreading false news became a punishable offence as it could undermine the security of the ‘fortress’. In March 1917, Giovanni Vella was arrested and accused of spreading false news and declarations which instilled fear in the population (*Is Salib*, 10 March 1917, no 632, p.2).

#### 4.2.6 Legal Hour in Malta

On 22 February 1917 a proclamation was issued announcing that the adoption of Central European Time had been approved by the Council on 13 February 1917. On the strength of this, the legal hour came into effect on 10 March when clocks were advanced one hour. At the end of October, clocks were moved back one hour.

The Archbishop ordered the clergy that since the Government had adopted the legal hour, church clocks were to comply, “*l’arloggi tal cnejjes ghandhom jimxu ma dauc civili*”. (*Is Salib*, 10 March 1917, no 632, p.2). The ‘*Pater Noster*’ had to be rung at eight and at noon and that the Masses should follow the new time. However, the *Ave Maria* and ‘*ta l’imwied*’ were to be rung, as was the normal practice, after sunset.

### **4.3 Disruption Caused by War**

#### **4.3.1 Banks and Paper Money**

War generated uncertainty and disrupted the normal course of life for many people. Already on 1 August 1914 the banks found themselves in difficulty to meet all the demands for the withdrawal of cash (Malta, 3 Aug 1914, p.2, Daily Malta Chronicle, 4 Aug 1914, p.6). On 2 August, the Governor issued emergency proclamations which closed banks and declared a moratorium on the payment of debts until 17 August 1914. The banks were closed. Both measures were intended to protect the banks from being rushed upon and to prevent a collapse in the sector. Another extraordinary measure was the local issue of legal tender paper money on 12 August 1914 to make up for a shortage of silver (Malta Government Gazette, 12 Aug 1914, p.499).

The closing of banks generated fear of lack of liquidity and of obtaining credit and had repercussions for the conduct of business. On 4 August 1914, Rosario Borg, who supplied eggs and poultry to government hospitals, claimed that he could not buy supplies because his capital was deposited in the banks which were closed (NAM CSG 02 1274/14). The tram office at *Porta Reale*, Valletta could not deposit its takings and the accumulation of money in its premises prompted the management to ask for police protection (NAM CSG 02 1269/14).

#### **4.3.2 Damage to Agricultural Land**

The increased military activity on the island impacted farmers. Through their activity, soldiers often damaged crops or disrupted land under cultivation. Farmers petitioned for compensation for “damages to fields” caused by the military (NAM CSG 02 1708-1710/14, 2083/14). Farmers who had lands in Zurrieq requested compensation for the demolition of walls by the military authorities (NAM CSG 02 1774/14).

### 4.3.3 Feasts During the War

Village feasts were an important part of the social milieu of the Maltese islands. The restrictions imposed on the island as a result of the war had their impact on feasts. The use of lights and outdoor decorations were curtailed. On 10 August 1914 it was notified that “no further licences for the discharge of rockets, petards or other fireworks shall be issued and that such unauthorised discharge is therefore prohibited”. (CSG01 3366/14).

Nevertheless, the liturgical element of feasts was upheld as far as circumstances permitted. Despite the wartime limitations feasts attracted large crowds. In Vittoriosa and Senglea “*ghad li tizzjin bhas soltu imhabba fl’attuali Guerra ma sarx pero il publicu icconcorra bhas soltu numerus*” [Although the usual decorations were foregone because of the war, the people attended as numerous as always] (Is Salib, 18 Sep 1915, no 555, Il festi F’Malta, A Lucchese, p.1). The feast of St Paul, “*il festa Nazionali ta l’10 ta Frar*” [the national feast of 10 February] was no less “*ma chenitx inkas mis snin ta qabel, ghax din il festa verament li hia marbuta ma kalb il maltin*” [it was not less than that of previous years, because this feast is truly special to the Maltese] (Is Salib, 20 Feb 1915 no 525, p.3). The following year the feast was equally successful. Although the procession through the streets was cancelled because of bad weather, it was held the following Sunday and was led by the Bishop (Is Salib, 19 Feb 1916, no 577, Il Festa tan Naufragiu, p.2).

Feasts were the only form of entertainment in which all the community, including the poor, could freely indulge. They also generated commerce and their curtailment represented loss of business. Contemporaries argued that in view of their social and commercial values the authorities were to consider issuing permits for feasts to be held rather than curtailing them (Is Salib, 18 Sep 1915, no 555, Il festi F’Malta, A Lucchese, p.1).

#### 4.3.4 Carnival

The 1915 Carnival was the first since the war broke out in 1914. On 16 January 1915, the Acting Superintendent of Police enquired of the Lieut Governor whether any special conditions should be put in place in view of the war (NAM CSG 01 207/15). According to a Government Notice of 9 February 1915 persons wearing masks on the streets had to remove them at sunset and had to identify themselves to police officers if so requested.

The Carnival was a subdued affair, with little public participation and with negative consequences on the trading activities that were usually generated. (Is Salib, 20 Feb 1915 no 525, Carnival p.2/3). Carnival was always permitted in the war years but in 1918 the Governor appealed to the people to consider whether, given the circumstances, it was appropriate to hold the Carnival extravaganza: "*Il Gvernatur ma jidhirlux li hemm bzonn li ifaccarlill cullhatt l'inquiet li ghandu il Gvern imhabba il gholtal huejjeg tal hajja u il questioni tal provista tal iche!*" (Is Salib, 20 January 1918, no 675, p.1).

#### 4.3.5 Social equilibrium and customs of the Maltese.

Giuseppe Belli a member of the Royal Navy Reserve, and a regular correspondent of *Is Salib* wrote how shocked he was to read the newspapers '*Habib*' and '*Malta ghada Taghna*' of 1 and 21 August, which reviled what was seen as the immodest and scandalous behaviour of Maltese women.(Is Salib, 25 September 1915, no.556, p.2).

On 26 June 1915 *Is Salib* featured an article on the subject entitled "*Corrupta est Terra*" [the earth is corrupt] and another on 10 July 1915 entitled "*morna il bahar*" [we have gone adrift]. The titles themselves reflect the nature of the content and that Maltese society was profoundly shaken by this development. Many other Maltese newspapers wrote about the matter, and the Church even launched a prayer mission which was held in various parts of the island. The mission achieved its purpose as *Is Salib* noted with satisfaction, "*...illum ma ghadecx tara bhal kabel dauc ix xbejbiet collha jigru mas suldati feruti* " [... unlike some time ago, today you do not see many young women running about with wounded soldiers](Is Salib, 25 September 1915, no.556, p.2).

## Chapter 5 - LIVING CONDITIONS

The bad socio-economic conditions that prevailed in Malta were exacerbated by the war. Within the first month of the war the Maltese experienced a downturn in living conditions. *Is Salib* described the situation thus:

*“Pajjisna, li chien ilu bizzejjed minn zmien sejjer lura u imuassal gia fl’acbar miseria imhabba in nukkas tal cummerc u il kaghad cbir li jinsab fostna u li xejn affattu ma chellu hsieb li jara u izid mal guaj li chellu din il guerra” [for a long time the country experienced misery because of lack of commercial activity and unemployment, now it had to add this war to its woes](Is Salib, 22 August 1914, no 499, ‘Il Guerra,’ p.2).*

In Malta, the war was immediately followed by scarcity of certain commodities and high prices. This was fuelled by hoarding and profiteering. There was a general rise in prices which affected the livelihood of many people who found it difficult to cope. On 7 August 1914, Lorenza Scerri, a widow with six children, petitioned the government for a free supply of bread for her family as she was in great difficulties and suffering hunger. (NAM CSG 02 1307/1914). Misery was a reality experienced by many Maltese from the very first days of the war.

Malta depended heavily on imported food to satisfy the demands of the garrison and the civilian population. Throughout the war, the resupply of Malta proved problematic. As early as 14 August 1914, the major wheat importers voiced their worry about the supply of wheat in Malta and suggested that the Government should procure a supply of wheat for sale to local millers (NAM CSG 02 1340/14). The prohibition of commerce with Germany and Austria Hungary, which were enemy countries affected the importation of various goods to Malta. Moreover, until mid 1915, importation from Italy and Greece was largely stopped. These factors did not help scarcity and the consequent rise in prices of all goods in Malta. Hoarding compounded the problems. On 24 August 1914, suppliers drew the Government’s attention to the “extraordinary

demand for petroleum” and requested that some form of restrictions be imposed on purchases to avoid depleting their stocks (NAM CSG 02 1405/1914).

On 13 August 1914 the Governor referred “the general question of the rise in the prices of articles of food” to a board which was to advise whether it was expedient to take “measures for controlling the inflation of prices.”(NAM CSG 01 3276/1914).

Sugar became scarce almost overnight and was sold at high prices (NAM CSG 02 1408/1914). The situation prompted the government to intervene in the market and regulate the maximum price at which shopkeepers could sell sugar to their customers. Persons caught selling sugar at a higher price were prosecuted (Is Salib, 19 September 1914, no 503, p.4). Many praised the government’s intervention and expected price controls to be extended other items as well, some of which like kerosene and soap had almost doubled in price (ibid, p.4).

Shop owners were cast in a very bad light:

*“Uhud ighidu li il guerra hija il cagjun tal miserja li ninsabu fiha, ... ma il miserja gejjja mill hafna huienet li ghandna li ta cull jum ma jaghmlux hlief ighollu dac li ibighu”* [some say the war is the cause of the misery around us...but misery is caused by the many shops that are always increasing prices](Is Salib, 21 Nov 1914, No 512, 'Il miserja f'Malta', p.2).

Is Salib spoke about *“l'ingordigja tan nies tal huienet”* [the greed of shop owners], labelled as *“nies minghajr cuxienza”* [people without conscience], and *“speculaturi ta bla kalb li assolutament iridu ifakkru lil poplu”* [heartless speculators bent on driving the people into poverty] (Is Salib, 10 October 1914, no 506, “Il gholi tal hobs”, p.1). However, the line against shop owners was really drawn when a few weeks into the war they attempted to raise the price of bread, *“riedu ucoll jahsbu biex jghollu il hobs li hu element necessarissimu ghal bniedem”* (ibid, p.1). According to a newspaper correspondent the Maltese were spared from death by bombardment only to be killed of hunger by ruthless speculators:

*“X’ippretendeu daun it talin, li Alla helisna mil meut tal balal tal canun biex huma jisparau il balal tahhom u joktlu lill poplu bil giuh?”* (Is Salib, 28 Nov 1914, No 513, ‘Il questioni taz-Zoccor’, p.2).

In January 1915 commentators observed that *“il miserja keghda tahdem hafna.”* [misery is widespread]. Parents sent children to beg for charity in shops. *Is Salib* spoke about *“ hafna tfal ta eta l’actar zghira jixxabtu ma l’imuejjed jitolbu il carita”* [many children hanging onto the shop counters and asking for charitable handouts] (Is Salib, 23 January 1915, No 521, ‘It Talb’, p.1). Unemployment was another widespread problem: *“Illum geuua Malta ghandna bosta li keghdin ifittxu ix xoghol u bl’ebda mod ma jistghu isibuh”* [Today in Malta there are many men out of work who cannot find employment.] (Is Salib, 6 Mar 1915, No 527, p.2). Bread, which was a staple food in Malta, had doubled in price *“...illum il hobs ghola id doppju”*. [Is Salib, 23 Oct 1915, no. 560, *Il gholi tal hajja, A Lucchese, p.2*]. Many families were forced to cut down on their intake or even go on empty stomachs. The high cost of living was indeed *“l’akua piaga li infethet fostna s’issa, mil flagell terribli tal guerra, hia l’gholi tal hajja”* [the greatest wound inflicted upon us by this terrible war is the high cost of living] (Is Salib, 19 June 1915, No 542, *Il quistioni tal hobs, p.1*).

### **5.1 Food Supplies and Exports**

Despite the scarcity of certain items, food in general was not in short supply in 1914 and 1915 and merchants requested permits to export items like potatoes, flour and Gozo cheese to north African destinations like Tunis, Tripoli and Egypt (NAM CSG 02 1964/1914, 1965/1914, 1862/1914, 1983/1914). The potato crop was good and local demand was satiated. The French fleet, which was operating from Malta, was being supplied with local potatoes (NAM CSG 02 1894/14) and there were requests to market the surplus stocks of potato with the War Office (NAM CSG 02 1887/14).

However, there were concerns that food exports were bound to leave Malta short of stocks. Some criticised the government for not taking strong action to ensure that in Malta, like in other countries, the local produce like potatoes was husbanded in order

to reduce the dependency on imports. Malta was bound to face serious food shortages “*jecc nibkghu sejr in chif ahna sejr in ghad nindmu serjament, billi mhux sgur ghad insibu x’nieclu*” [We are bound to regret our ways if we keep on going as we are, as probably we shall not have enough food to eat] (Is Salib, 3 April 1915, no 534, p.1).

## 5.2 Potatoes

On 22 April 1915 the ‘*Malta*’ wrote about the “potato question” in Malta. On one hand, the exportation of potatoes brought money to Malta, but on the other, the country could not afford to export potatoes if these were required for local consumption to feed a financially distressed population. The ‘*Daily Malta Chronicle*’, on 23 April 1915 said that exportation of potatoes should not be allowed “in the present economic conditions of the island when bread has actually become an article of luxury for the poorer classes”.

The price of bread had doubled, and many persons stopped buying it and resorted to potatoes because they were cheaper and filling (Is Salib, 1 May 1915, no 535, p.1). The Maltese press was unanimous in stating that it was more appropriate to retain the potato crop in Malta and enable the poor to be fed rather than allow a substantial part of the crop to be exported for the benefit of a few merchants (ibid, p.1).

However, the ‘*Societa Economico Agraria*’ was of a different opinion. On 8 May 1915 it submitted a report in which it “resolved to bring to the knowledge of the Government the expediency of permitting the exportation of such quantity of potatoes as it is not possible to dispose of in the country”. (NAM CSG 01 1820/1915). In formulating its report the ‘*Societa Economico Agraria*’ estimated that the Spring and Winter potato crop for 1915 would amount to 19,992 tons. The quantity required for local consumption was estimated at 6,060 tons, a figure which was twice the average consumption of potatoes during the previous three years. It was explained that the consumption figure was doubled “in view of the rise in the price of bread” (ibid). A monthly allocation of 550 tons of potatoes was set aside for “the consumption of the Army and the Navy of the Allies” in the Adriatic and the Dardanelles. After deducting

an amount of potatoes to be kept for sowing purposes, the '*Societa Economico Agraria*' concluded that "the minimum quantity which it believes expedient to export is 6,267 tons". (ibid).

The Government allowed exportation a decision which was much criticised later in the year when the price of potatoes increased. Despite an abundant winter crop "[il patata] *gholiet infern. Difatti fejn dari chien jinxtara bis sold ir ratal il lum keghda timbieh bit tliet soldi.*" [*Potatoes are very expensive. Whereas it used to be bought at 1d a rotolo, today it is selling at 3d*](Is Salib, 9 Oct 1915, no 558, Il Ghatx tal Patata, p.1).

### **5.3 Hardship and Charity**

Hardship which was provoked and exacerbated by war, crushed many Maltese. Public-spirited individuals, charitable organisations and the Maltese Church tried to afford some relief through charity campaigns. A ladies committee, chaired by Lady Frendo Azzopardi, was set up collect funds to assist workers who did not have a fixed salary and charitable institutions which could no longer afford to feed children under their care. To assist this charitable initiative a special collection was held in all the churches on 8 October 1914, and the Maltese Curia ordered that the clergy should stop receiving contributions for purposes other than charity (Is Salib, 17 October 1914, no 507, p.2).

Entertainments and other fund-raising events were held for charitable purposes. That the Governor extended his patronage to some of them indicates that misery and hardship were real problems and acknowledged at the highest levels. (Is Salib, 28 Nov 1914, No 513, p.7).

A number of charities and institutes in Malta found themselves in difficulties because of the extraordinary demand placed on their resources. In August 1915, the Adelaide Cini Institute was in a very bad situation. Appeals for help were made even though it was recognised that most of the population was hard-pressed (Is Salib, 21 Aug 1915, no 551, L'Istituti Caritatevoli, p.3).

Malta at the time was fulfilling the role of the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” which is why some sectors of the local press pointed out that the Maltese were very kind and charitable with wounded soldiers and that despite the many difficulties it was hoped that the same charitable disposition would be extended to Maltese charitable institutes. The underlying meaning behind this was that the wounded were a foreign problem whereas the children in the local institutions were a local concern. While the soldiers were well-cared for through state mobilised resources, the local institutes depended exclusively on people’s charity. (Is Salib, 21 Aug 1915, no 551, L’Istituti Caritatevoli, p.3).

In particular during the period 1915 and 1917 local charities had to compete for attention and for funds with the wounded soldiers and the initiatives organised for their benefit. In January 1916, when University students held an event at the Manoel Theatre to collect funds for the poor, *Is Salib* commented thus:

*“Malta fl’ahhar granet ghamlet cullma setghet biex iddur u ticconforta mill’ahjar li tista lill feriti li ghandna gio Malta... Ghalhecc bir ragjun collu ghandna nistenneu li il Maltin,...iridu jiehdu hsieb ta hutna li jisabu f’miserja cbira.”* [ *Malta, did her utmost to provide care and comfort to the wounded soldiers, and by the same measure it was expected that the Maltese would be equally well disposed towards their fellow countrymen who are living in wretched misery* ](Is Salib, 22 Jan 1916, no 573, Ghal Carita, p.3).

In November 1916, the La Vallette Band and Orchestra organised a fund-raising activity for Maltese charitable institutes. The organisers wished to involve a number of young ladies who were known for selling badges to collect funds for the benefit of wounded soldiers in Malta. Contrary to expectations they declined their assistance. That a local charitable initiative was snubbed by “*certi sinjorini tas sangue blu*” [*certain young blue-blooded ladies*] (Is Salib, 25 Nov 1916, No 617, p.2) caused an uproar and was considered an affront to all Maltese. A correspondent wrote:

*“Hua dover taghna li ghanna nghejnu lil feruti imma hua dover ta cull nistrani li ma jonkos mil carita mal fkir.”* [It is our duty to help the wounded [soldiers], but

*it is the duty of every Christian to be charitable with the poor*]. (Is Salib, 2 Dec 1916, no 618, Minn hagia għall'ohra - signed Orazio, p.3).

#### **5.4 Hardship and the Increase in Crime**

Hunger and misery drove desperate people to theft, “...*cull fejn thares, ma tilmahx hliet giuh u miserja, li, naturalment, huma il cagjun li certi nies jirricorru għal huejjeg hattiehor*”. In the first months of the war, the village of Kalkara witnessed an extraordinary spike in theft and the inhabitants lived in fear on account of this (Is Salib, 24 Oct 1914, no 508, p.4). In May 1915, farmers in Xghajra complained that the theft of potatoes from their fields was causing grave prejudice. (Is Salib, 22 May 1915, no 538, p.4).

#### **5.5 Economical Kitchens**

Already after four months of war, appeals were made to the Government to set up *cucine economiche* [economical kitchens] deemed to be “...*hag'a necessarjissima u ma hux biss għal Malta ma ucoll għal Għaudex fejn tesisti miserja cbira*.” [A necessity for both Malta and Gozo where there is great misery] (Is Salib, 21 Nov 1914, No 512, 'Il miserja f'Malta', A Lucchese).

#### **5.6 The Petition of the Parish Priests**

The high cost of living remained a constant preoccupation throughout the war. On 22 January 1916, *Is Salib* stated.

*“ il għoli tal hajja sar infern b'tali maniera illi il fkir kighed ibati bil bosta, u m'hux hag'a u tnejn għoleu ma collox ...Ma inghejdux li ma haunx klieh tal flus ma x'jisua dan il klieh mita il flus li uiehed jakla m'humix bizzejjed biex uiehed jixtri l'affarijiet tal hajja?”* [the cost of living has increased a lot and the poor are suffering much hardship. Everything has increased in price...Money is being earned, but this is to little avail as one cannot even buy everyday necessities] (Is Salib, 22 Jan 1916, no 573, Il għoli tal hajja, p.1)

The high cost of living, especially the price of bread, was the focal theme of a petition addressed to the Governor by Maltese parish priests on 16 November 1916. The priests were received by the Governor and the Lt Governor. The priests spoke about the state of misery, wages which failed to cope with inflation and the high price of food especially bread. Bread was a central issue because *“illum, minnu biss jiddependi il ghajxien tal biccia il cbira ta dan il poplu”* [the major part of the population is subsisting exclusively on it]. (Is Salib, 25 Nov 1916 No 617, Il Cappillani u il Gvernatur, p.2).

The priests pointed out that according to strong rumours the price of bread was to rise to 7d a rotolo. They argued that since the Government was buying bread at 4d, and that wheat was in good supply it was sure that high prices could not be attributed to scarcity.

The Governor recognised the high cost of bread, and said he took measures to promote the cultivation of potatoes, to supplement bread. The Governor indicated that although the war had driven prices up, merchants were contributing to the inflationary drive, undermined the Government's efforts at price stability by raising the cost of goods to maintain profits. (Is Salib, 25 Nov 1916 No 617, Il Cappillani u il Gvernatur, p.2).

### **5.7 Submarine War and the Re-supply of Malta**

When, in 1916, German and Austro-Hungarian submarines started operating in the Mediterranean, the food situation in Malta took a turn to the worse. Ship losses, actual and feared, exacerbated the problems of re-supplying Malta. Malta's woes increased exponentially following Germany's resort to unrestricted submarine warfare, in 1917. Ship losses and high insurance costs made it more difficult to import supplies to Malta and drove prices higher than they were.

### **5.8 Attempts to Increase the Local Food Supply**

Bread became increasingly difficult to produce, and to afford, on account of the difficulties of importing wheat and its high price (Malta Herald, 8 March 1918, p.2).

Potatoes were seen as a potential substitute for bread. The Government encouraged the cultivation of potatoes in order to increase the supply of food on the island and reduce the pressure on the stocks of wheat and flour required to produce bread as well as to have enough crop for export. A number of monetary prizes were established for distribution to those who cultivated and produced most potatoes. (Is Salib, 13 Jan 1917, no.624, p.2). Later, in June 1917, a lottery with four monetary prizes was established. Farmers received a ticket for every five 'cantari' of potatoes they harvested (Is Salib, 16 Jun 1917, No. 646, p.2).

During the last months of 1917 and the beginning of 1918 Malta experienced severe shortages in all sectors. The *Societa Economico-Agraria* said that it was an urgent necessity that people start sowing their own food products to increase the food supply. Those who had gardens or plots of land that could be cultivated were encouraged to sow and grow vegetables and legumes (Is Salib, 30 Jan 1918, no 676, "Societa Economico-Agraria – In-necessita urgenti biex jticabbru il prodotti tal ichel", p.2). Public gardens were turned to cultivation and the Mall in Floriana was planted with turnips, lettuce, peas and other vegetables (Il Habib, 20 Jan 1918, p.2).

To make front to the shortage of meat, the *Societa Economico Agraria* also established a prize for breeders of poultry and rabbits. According to the Governor who spoke during the annual *Imnarja* festival agricultural show held towards the end of June 1918 at Buskett, rabbits which in October 1917 were scarce had become abundant.

Despite the attempts to increase the local food supply, Malta continued to experience shortages of all kinds. The situation in Gozo degenerated to such an extent that on 24 October 1918 a Government Notice was issued prohibiting the transfer of livestock, especially cows, sheep, goats and pigs, from Gozo to Malta. (Is Salib, 30 Oct 1918 No 703, p.3).

## **5.9 Charitable Undertakings on a National Scale**

Inflation eroded the purchasing-power of money. Many low-wage workers and the poor relied on charity to make ends meet.

In the beginning of December 1916, the Archbishop of Malta set up a bread fund that issued bread and soup tickets to the needy. Every church had to hold a weekly collection for the Archbishop's Bread Fund. (Is Salib, 9 December 1916, no 619, p.4). In 1917, the Archbishop in his pastoral letter for Advent encouraged the faithful to reduce spending on luxuries and entertainment and to give more for charity (Is Salib, 1 Dec 1917. no. 670, Il Pasturali ta l'Iskof, p.2). He also ordered that all churches hold a weekly collection dedicated to the Bread Fund for the poor and that no collections for other purposes could be held without his permission (Is Salib, 1 Dec 1917. no. 670, Il Pasturali ta l'Iskof, p.2).

Another relief fund aimed at helping distressed families was set up in the beginning of 1918 by Lady Methuen, the Governor's wife. Philanthropic organisations, like the Society of St Vincent de Paul, also stepped in to assist the needy. In 1917 due to the critical situation of the country the Society ended up with a serious shortage of funds and the Valletta branch was forced to suspend aid to 923 families (Is Salib, 18 Aug 1917, no 655, p.2). Collections were held during various village feasts to help the Society and enable it to maintain its charitable mission. In 1917 the twelve branches of this organisation distributed £2,372 in monetary relief to around 7,500 poor and distressed persons. As part of its mission it distributed more than 65,000 loaves of bread and around 138,800 tickets of the Archbishop's Bread Fund. Each ticket could be converted into a 2d rebate on the price of bread. (Malta Herald, 20 Feb 1918, p.2).

## **5.10 Government Kitchens**

In April 1918, the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe*, a mutual help society which had around 1,400 subscribers, expressed concern at inflation especially "the very high price of bread". It claimed that workers who earned an average of around 3s a day could not afford to pay 7d for a loaf of bread, and those with large families were "compelled to

starve". (Malta Herald, 17 April 1918, p.1-2). The authorities acknowledged the problem. The Governor, Lord Methuen, admitted that the Maltese "were pinched for food, that the poor are suffering and that those on a low income (£100-150) cannot make ends meet" (Malta Herald, 16 April 1918, p.1). In January 1918, a Government Kitchen was opened at Cospicua and during its first weeks in operation served about 200 plates of soup a day at 2 pence each (Malta Herald, 21 January 1918, p.2). The Government also tried to impress upon the people to "use more vegetables and rice instead of bread" (Malta Herald, 19 April 1918 p.1-2).

### 5.11 Bread

Bread was an essential feature of the Maltese diet. During the early months of 1915, bread was being sold at 4d a rotolo when only a short time previously it was selling at 2½d a rotolo. Many believed that the high price was unjustified and was inflated by unscrupulous speculators "*il Hobs ghola infern, mentri kamh ghandna f'Malta aktar milli irridu*" [*the price of bread has gone sky-high, when Malta has an ample supply of wheat*] (Is Salib, 27 Feb 1915, no. 526, p.2). Is Salib claimed that

*"bosta negozjanti onesti ... kalulna cjar u tond li ghad li il kamh ghola pero keghdin isiru bosta abbusi billi il Hobs ma chien imisshom katt igholluh dakshecc".* [*many honest businessmen clearly stated that although the price of wheat increased, many abuses were being committed in pricing as bread should not be as expensive to buy as it is*] (Is Salib, 22 May 1915, no 538, A Lucchese, p.1).

Bread was not only sold at very high prices, but its quality deteriorated: "*sa daun il granet stess, imbieh hobs ... li appena gie maksum chien jinten pesta u culur viola*". [*lately, bread was sold which was foul-smelling and purple inside.*](Is Salib, 19 June 1915, No 542, Il quistioni tal hobs, p.1). It was alleged that the bread dough was being adulterated with rice and potatoes which resulted in unpalatable bread which went hard after a short while. (Is Salib, 23 Oct 1915, no. 560, Il gholi tal hajja, p.2). Complains about mouldy-tasting loaves appeared in the press in 1916 (Is Salib, 23 Dec 1916, no 621, X'keghdin jaghmlu!?, p.1).

By mid-1916, bread was selling at 4½ d a rotolo, which was unaffordable for the poor (Is Salib, 20 May 1916, no 590, Il gholi tal hajja, p.1). Francesco Azzopardi and Enrico Mizzi announced that they were working to get the Government to investigate why the price of bread remained high when there was ample supply of wheat and flour (Is Salib, 22 Jul 1916, no 599, Cliem bosta fatti xejn..., p.1). The price of bread kept its upward trend and rose to 6d in December 1916. (Is Salib, 30 Sept 1916, no 609, Il loghob ghal Casini, p.1, 23 Dec 1916, no 621, X'keghdin jaghmlu!?, p.1).

In the last half of 1916 the local newspapers claimed that the price of wheat abroad was decreasing, yet the local price of bread remained high (Is Salib, 16 Sept 1916 no.607 U il Cunsilieri? Jonhru?! p.1). It was widely believed that wheat importers tacitly agreed to keep prices high. Many argued that the Price Control Committee was not doing its work properly. Is Salib stated: “ *il cummissioni kif triduha trahhas il hobs, jecc il membri tahha principali huma l'istess neguzianti tal kamh f'Malta? Ghalhecc din, ... ma titchellem xejn*”. [how do you expect the commission to reduce the price of bread, when its principal members import wheat to Malta. It is for this reason that it ...said nothing](Is Salib, 21 Oct 1916, no 612, il Haddiem Malti, p.1).

Information tabled in the Council of Government showed that Government hospitals and charitable institutes obtained bread at a price cheaper than the market , “*meta ahna conna nieclu il hobs b'5 soldi ir-ratal, il Gvern sab min taghulu b'4 soldi*” [when we buying bread at 5d a rotolo the Government found who supplied him with bread at 4d ] (Is Salib, 23 Dec 1916, no 621, Fetah!!...(x'sar fil cunsill), p.1). An ad hoc committee appointed by the Government to investigate the question reported that bread could be sold at 5d a rotolo were it not for bread vendors who continually raised its price (Is Salib, 23 Dec 1916, no 621, X' keghdin jaghmlu?, p.1). This confirmed the general impression that the persons involved in commerce were the principal cause of the high price of bread.

In 1917 the authorities regulated the standard of flour used in bread manufacture. To try and curb abuse, it was ordered that no baker could keep any bran, milling offal or flour that did not conform to the set standard. By 1918 bread was "invariably black" and many complained it was giving them stomach pain (Malta Herald, 4 March 1918, p.2). Some areas like Cospicua experienced bread shortages, leading to rowdy behaviour and confusion. It was claimed that some shopkeepers were acting high-handedly and closing their shops before all the bread was sold "leaving their customers yelling and shouting for their legitimate share" (Malta Herald, 4 March 1918, p.1-2).

### **5.12 Rationing**

On 7 February 1917 a Government Notice drew the public's attention to an appeal made by the Food Controller in Britain. The Food Controller's notice was translated into Maltese, which was an extraordinary measure since the Malta Government Gazette was normally published in Italian and English. However, the authorities knew that a considerable portion of the Maltese population could neither read nor understand English or Italian. The Food Controller's notice drew attention to the urgent need to reduce waste of food. It was stated that while obligatory rationing would not be introduced unless necessary, the authorities trust upon the patriotic disposition of all people to self-regulate the consumption of food. It was suggested that the weekly ration for each person should be 4lbs bread, 2 ½ lbs meat, ¾ lbs sugar (Is Salib, 10 Feb 1917, no. 628, p.2).

The Food Controllers notice was a preliminary for the introduction of food control measures in Malta. On 27 February 1917, all heads of household were given a week to report to the nearest Police station and inform the authorities about the number of persons living within their household. (Is Salib, 3 Mar 1917, no. 632, p.1). This measure was a necessary preliminary for the introduction of rationing when the need arose.

Rationing was introduced on 12 March 1917. The first item to be rationed was sugar of which no one could buy more than a quarter of a rotolo of sugar each week, and more than a week's supply at one go. Buyers were required to inform the sellers for which

household the sugar was being bought, and the date when sugar was last bought. Even though sellers would have known their clients the system was open to abuse.

On 12 May 1917 the ration of sugar was increased to half a rotolo a week. Retailers were prohibited from selling sugar to persons who refused to give their name and the date and place of the last purchase. On the other hand, retailers were prohibited from using arm-twisting techniques such as making the sale of sugar conditional on the purchase of other things. Wholesalers could not sell sugar for the purposes of commerce or industry or to give sugar to charitable institutes unless they had a weekly permit issued by the Food Control Office. Breach of regulations could result in a month's imprisonment or a fine of not less than 40 shillings and not more than £10 (Is Salib, 19 May 1917, no. 642, p.2).

### **5.13 Controlling Supplies**

A Food and Commerce Control Office (FCCO) was set up to regulate food processing, sale, and distribution. To conserve the stock of wheat, the use of flour to manufacture confectionery items was restricted (Malta Herald, 19 June 1918, p.2). Restrictions were also made on the amount of sugar used in the manufacture sweets (Malta Herald, 10 June 1918, p.2) and on the use of starch in confectioneries (Malta Herald, 11 July 1918, p.2). Retailers and hawkers were expected to exhibit a price list and prices were not to exceed the maximum set by Government. This was done to curb profiteering. Failure to abide by the rules could land sellers in hot water. The authorities were quite heavy-handed with regards to offences involving potatoes. Two sellers from Hamrun were separately fined £30 each for selling potatoes at a price higher than the Government maximum. Another person was given a £10 fine for holding a stock of potatoes exceeding the quantity required for his everyday use (Malta Herald, 27 April 1918, p.2).

At times, cartel arrangements and high-handed action took place to circumvent regulations. The Government set the price of beef, when it could be had, at 2s 6d a rotolo. Between 5 and 6 August 1917 butchers in Sliema refused to sell beef as they claimed they could not do so at the price set by the Government. The action caused a

stir as without any warning, the public in Sliema could not buy any meat (*Is Salib*, 28 Jul 1917, no652, *Tas-Sliema bla Laham!!*, p.1). Following the Sliema butchers' 'strike', the price of fresh beef was regulated at 2s 8d a rotolo as per Government Notice of 19 August 1917. The price of pork was capped at 2s 6d a rotolo. (*Is Salib*, 30 Dec 1917, no. 673, p.2).

The price of kerosene, a fuel widely used by the Maltese for cooking, was regulated by the Government at 4¼ pence per measure. However, sellers in Sliema ganged up to fix the price to their advantage. They invariably informed customers that they could only sell half a measure for which they charged 2¼ pence. Through this expedient, they circumvented the official regulations, and customers ended up paying ¼ penny (a farthing) more per full measure (*Malta Herald*, 24 May 1918, p.2).

#### **5.14 Shortage of Paper**

On 6 January 1917, *Is Salib* printed a notice saying that the newspaper would be changing format because there were no further stocks of paper that permitted the newspaper to be produced in its usual size. Nevertheless, the content was not reduced. (*Is Salib*, 6 Jan 1917, no. 623, p.1). Readers of *Is Salib* were informed of a new prayer booklet written by Fr Vincenzo Vella and were encouraged to acquire a copy as only a few were printed because of the scarcity of paper. (*Is Salib*, 18 Aug 1917, no. 655, *Cotba Giodda*, p.2).

In December, as the scarcity of paper persisted, *Is Salib* reduced the frequency of issue from once weekly to once every ten days to conserve and prolong its paper stock (*Is Salib*, 1 Dec 1917, no 670, p. 2)

#### **5.15 Shortage of Cooking Fuel and the Economical Cooking stoves**

The availability of fuel was also affected as a result of difficulties of importing coal and firewood. On 8 March 1918 the Capuchin friars requested to be allowed a supply of firewood that was at the Addolorata cemetery. The firewood was to be used for the cooking of soup which the friars distributed to about 110 persons daily. (NAM CSG 02

478/1918). Bakers too were facing difficulties and requested permission to buy firewood from the Admiralty but this request was not accommodated as the Admiralty had contractual obligations for the sale of firewood. (NAM CSG 02 483/1918).

In February 1918, during the annual 'Candlora' meeting with the parish priests, the Governor spoke about the food situation in Malta, insisted about the need for economy, and spoke about the shortage of materials/fuel for cooking purposes. He recommended the use of an economical cooking stove that was invented by the director of the Malta Railway. These stoves were manufactured out of empty tins. For fuel they used sawdust or pressed papers together with a little kerosene. Priests, who could help spread the word among their congregations about the efficacy of these cooking stoves, were given a practical demonstration of how it worked in the Palace courtyard. (Is Salib, 10 Feb 1918 No 689, "il Candlora", p. 2). By the end of June 1918, hundreds of economical cookers had been produced. The Governor praised this initiative, which translated itself into a benefit for the people since they needed to use less coal, which was expensive to buy. Ultimately it benefitted the country in general since it helped to conserve coal stocks and reduced the quantity of coal required by Malta. (Is Salib, 6 Jul 1918, Id-discors tal Gvernatur fil Buschet nhar l'Imnaria, p.2).

### **5.16 Workers**

Workers' conditions, which were never good, had taken a downturn during the war. They were exploited because their pay was not commensurate to the amount of work they were expected to do. "...il haddiem Malti, fil hin li jahdem bosta, ha imhallas uisk ftit." (Is Salib, 21 Oct 1916, no 612, il Haddiem Malti, p.1). By October 1916, work started diminishing which made it difficult for some workers to remain employed or find a job. "*Chif cullhatt jaf, mil bidu tal guerra, il hajja bdiet toghla, toghla...u frattant il haddiem baka jakla bhal kabel, meta isib ix xoghol, ghax illum, jargia, ix xoghol nakas hafna.*" (ibid, p.1)

Workers, who on average earned at most around 2s 2d a day and who had a numerous family faced a grave predicament as in many cases salaries barely sufficed to maintain

households of six or seven persons. Low-paid public sector employees like School Assistants whose salary varied from 2s to 16d daily, depending on rank (female school assistants were paid much less than their male counterparts), found it impossible to live decently and support their families. (Is Salib, 23 Oct 1915, no. 560, Il gholi tal hajja, p.2).

Even the rich were feeling the pinch and saying that it had become difficult to cope with the cost of living: *“Illum, chif inhuma l’affarijet. L’istess sinjur ighemghem, ghax ighid li ma jistax ilahhak u dan hua collu veru, ... ahseb u ara allura, chemm ma jistax ilahhak u chemm hu actar batut il haddiem”*. [as things stand even the rich lament that they cannot keep up with the cost of living, and this is true... just imagine how more difficult it is and how oppressed is the poor worker] (Is Salib, 21 Oct 1916, no 612, il Haddiem Malti, p.1).

A correspondent of *Is Salib* wrote: *“meta uiehed ghandu nofs lira cull jum, hua maghdud bhala sinjur cbir.”* [a person possessing an income of half a pound a day is counted as a very rich person]. (Is Salib, 20 Mar 1918, no 621, Krara Sinciera– Il fkir u is-Sinjur, p.1). The same correspondent who had that income, ‘confessed’ that his income was not equal to the expense required to maintain his household consisting of a family of five and two domestics. He stated: *“Bosta drabi komt scars minn fuk il mejda ghax ma chienx hemm bizzjed biex jixba cullhatt.”* [I often left the dinner table unsatiated because there was not enough food for everyone] (ibid, p.1).

Work opportunities were not abundant, and persons of a certain social standing disdained ‘lowly’ jobs, *“meta bniedem icun imrobbi tajjeb m’hux sejjer lavrant Salonica, ankas bahri jeu suldat ”* [a person of good upbringing would not go as a work hand in Salonica, or a sailor or soldier] (ibid, p.1). Furthermore, unlike workers, the rich had to keep up appearances and were ‘forced’ into additional expenses such as buying shoes and clothing. It was only persons with a daily income exceeding £2 and large merchants whose lifestyles remained relatively unaffected by the war.(ibid, p.1).

The rich, who derived their income from accumulated wealth and investments, could hope to cope with the cost of living through effecting economy. Furthermore, it was easier for them to obtain credit *“cullhatt itieh actar billi javdah ghax hemm fukhiex u granet ahjar ghad jaslu”* [everyone grants him credit because they trust him and better days will come](Is Salib, 10 Apr 1918, no 683, “Il Hajja tal Haddiem” p.1). On the other hand the worker *“il haddiem li assolutament ma jistax jghaddi bil paga li ghandu, il flus tighu irid jaklahhom billi jahdem minn chif titla sa chemm tinsel ix xemx.”* [The worker, who cannot hope to cope with his salary, must earn his pay by working from sunrise to sunset] (Is Salib, 10 Apr 1918, no 683, “Il Hajja tal Haddiem” p.1).

Based on the daily expenditure listed by the rich man and the that listed by the worker, one can make a comparison between the two. The total daily expense for the workman amounted to 6s 10d. That showed that even in the case of one of the best paid classes of workers, those who received 5s a day, would have found it difficult to cope. In reality most workers had a much lower pay than that. It goes to show that workers had to deprive themselves of food in both quantity and variety in order to make ends meet. Notably absent from the lists are items such as meat, poultry, eggs, coffee, matches and clothing.

Daily Expense of a worker with a family of eight	Daily Expense of a rich man with a family of five and two domestics
Bread, 6 rotolo every day at a cost of 3s 6d	Bread, 7 rotolo a day at a cost of 3s 10d
Rice, pasta or vegetable soup (minestra) at 7½d	Rice, pasta, or vegetable soup (minestra) at 10d
Tomato paste, lard, etc at 3d	Tomato paste, lard etc at 3d
Fresh cheeslet at 1½d	Salt cod 11d
A salad consumed in the evening at 2d	Oil, daily consumption at 5d
oil at 5d	Salad 3d
Daily milk intake at 2d	Cheeselets or anchovies 4d
Paraffin for cooking and lighting 9d	Milk for the children at 10d
Laundry soap for a weekly wash at 1s, calculated at 2d daily.	Paraffin for cooking and lighting 9d
Rent, calculated at a daily amount of 8d.	Eggs for the children - 8 daily at 1s4d
	Daily salary of two domestics 8d
	Daily rent 1s 1d.
	Laundry soap for washing the children's clothes at 2d.

The local newspapers were unanimous on two points: that no one could cope with the cost of living, and on blaming unscrupulous speculators for causing and exacerbating the people's misery (Is Salib, 21 Jul 1917, no. 651, Geusu! p.1). Food, had become too expensive "...*cull ma tixhet fli stoncu tighec biex chemm chemm ma tmutx, jiswa hamsin darba izied minn dari.*"[*anything which one ate just to keep barely alive now costs fifty times more than in the past*](Is Salib, 21 Jul 1917, no. 651, Geusu!, p.1). Most workers could not cope and the Government was urged to take the matter in hand unless it wanted trouble,

*"Min ghandu jifhem, jifhimha: li il giuh u il miseria, dejjem ghaug u tahbit giebu fid dinja! Mela, il poplu ma inhalluhx jintghasar izied milli jiflah, ghax sgur ighid ajma bl'ugieh ta zakk, u meta jasal f'dan li stat, porog ma jisueux, ghax minn imsarnu ma icollux xi inehhi!"* [Those who need to understand should understand that hunger and misery always brought trouble in the world. So do not let the people suffer more than they can bear because in the end they will cry out with pain. When that point is reached palliatives would not work. ](Is Salib, 21 Jul 1917, no. 651, Geusu! p.1). Industrial Actions

### **5.17 Colombos Cigarettes Factory Strike and Female Labour**

The male workers of the C. Colombos cigarette factory went on strike to give force to their request that the factory owners lay off female workers. Female workers were paid at a much lower rate than their male counterparts. At Colombos a male worker was paid 2d daily, while a female worker was paid ¼ d for doing the same work. Men feared they would be replaced by 'cheap' female labour. The men's action was justified by their contemporaries on the basis that "*Illum il ghaks chiber gmielu u ma tantx issib xoghol chif gib u lahak...*" [Today want and hunger are widespread, and one does not find employment easily] (Is Salib 2 Sept 1916, no. 605, p.2). It was also argued that factories were no place for young women (ibid, p.2).

The stand taken by the male employees of Colombos factory attracted much sympathy, and various fund-raising events were held for the benefit of the workers during their one-and-a-half-month-long strike (Is Salib, 23 Sept 1916, no. 608, p.3). The strike was

concluded when the company assured the workers their jobs (Is Salib, 21 Oct 1916, no 612, p.3).

### **5.18 Tram Workers Strike**

On 22 November 1916, tram workers went on strike after they requested an increase in pay equivalent to 1d per hour, which increase the workers demanded was to be maintained for the duration of the war. On 22 November the tram workers with the exception of inspectors went out on strike (Is Salib, 2 Dec 1916, no 618, p.3)

### **5.19 Dockyard Workers Strike**

On Monday 14 May the strike at the Dockyard ended after that the Admiral Superintendent of the Dockyard announced that if the workers returned to work their demands would be taken into consideration by the Admiralty.

Following this a deputation representing the workers was formed by Dr G.F. Inglott, Advocate E Ellul, the Curate of Bormla and G. Camilleri Lanzon and Giovanni Vella. This deputation was received by the Admiral who told them that he would take the workers' demands into consideration. He also told them that as per Dockyard regulations any petitions could only be submitted through Dockyard officials. For this reason, he advised the workers to nominate a deputation from among themselves to represent their demands as per regulations.

The workers decided to return to work, and the same day a workers' deputation called on the Admiral and presented a demand for an increase in pay of 6d a day and a shilling as a war bonus.

Although there might have been other reasons for the Dockyard strike the principal motivation was as indicated by *Is Salib* that "*illum il hajja saret uisk critica imhabba il gholi chir tal huejjeg tal ichel.*" [*Today many are living precariously because of the very high cost of foodstuffs*] (Is Salib, 19 May 1917, no. 642, Ix-xopru tat-Tarzna, p.1)

## 5.20 Compulsory Education

The question of compulsory education was brought on the local agenda by the Governor, Lord Methuen, who expressed his wish to see it introduced in Malta. He believed that lack of education seriously compromised children's prospects in life, bred ignorance and manifested itself in vagrancy, with hundreds of children roaming about and causing nuisances.

The Maltese held ambivalent views on education. Some claimed that education should not be obligatory and argued that the Government had better increase the number of schools and enlarge existing ones in order to provide schooling facilities to a large number of children who were registered for entry into Government schools and for whom there was not enough space. (Is Salib, 23 Jun 1917, no.647, It-Taghlim ta bil fors, p.1). On the other hand, there were others who recognized that many Maltese lived "*f'injoranza li tuahhax*" [*in fearful ignorance*] (Is Salib, 4 Aug 1917, no. 653, Taghlim, p.2). Illiteracy was widespread. The Maltese needed to embrace education and learning as the means to improve their lot in order not to be held in contempt and looked down upon in despise by other nations. "*Ghax ma nintebhux maltin li ahna ghandna bzonn it taghlim biex ma inhallux izied lill popoli tan nazionijiet ohra jitcazau bina u iharsu lejna bid disprezz?!*" (Is Salib, 4 Aug 1917, no. 653, Taghlim, p.2).

## 5.21 Grog Shops

The large number of grog shops and the availability of drink were perennial problems for the military and naval authorities. With the coming of war, restrictions were placed on the sale of alcoholic drinks to soldiers and sailors to limit the deleterious effects of drink and intoxication. A few shop owners tried to obtain concessions and petitioned for a relaxation in the prohibition on the sale of liquor to the troops (NAM CSG 02 1641/1914, 1839/1914). Others decided to run the risk. Between September and end December 1914 the Governor received at least five petitions asking for a remission of a £5 fine incurred for "selling beer to soldiers" (NAM CSG 02 2072/1914, 2139/1914, 2173-2175/1914).

During the same period the Government received a large number of applications submitted by shop owners to employ barmaids. These requests were probably influenced by the increased business generated among others by the presence of the French fleet in Malta from mid-August 1914.

This sector provided an opening for female participation in work environments. However, this work was not perceived as respectable in view of the mingling of women in what was a predominantly male environment. The presence of foreign soldiers and sailors served to reinforce the perception of loss of respectability. The parish priests of Gozo addressed a collective petition against the presence of barmaids in wine shops in Gozo (NAM CSG 02 2170/14).

## Chapter 6 - IMPERIAL SOLIDARITY

### 6.1 War Entusiasm

In general, the Maltese did not disapprove of Britain declaring war on Germany in August 1914. The Governor received many spontaneous offers of service in military and other roles. The professional staff of the Central Civil Hospital offered to assist the military and naval authorities should the need arise (NAM CSG01 3290/1914), and the Sisters of Charity in Malta placed themselves at the disposal of the Governor should he wish to call them to assist any sick and wounded persons. (NAM CSG01 3280/1914). Others offered themselves military service. On 11 August 1914, Isidoro Schembri asked to be enrolled in any regiment stationed in Malta (NAM CSG 02 1323/14). Inspector Borg Cardona, of the Malta Police, offered his services “in any military capacity”, but the Governor said it was “undesirable” to remove him from Police duties (NAM CSG 01 3282/1914). There were requests for “enlistment in Maltese or Egyptian Corps” (NAM CSG 02 1828/1914), and for “enlistment in Lord Kitchener’s Army” (NAM CSG 02 1733/1914, CSG 02 1728/1914).

Proof of ‘war enthusiasm’ in Malta was a private initiative to form a Maltese volunteer battalion for active service. Notices appeared saying that those who wanted to register their names as Kitchener volunteers could do so by calling at a recruiting office opened in Valletta. On 3 October 1914 around 700 men had given their names to join and these increased to a 1,000 a few days later (Is Salib, 10 October 1914, no 506, p.7). This was presented as an unequivocal sign of Maltese loyalty and solidarity with Britain and the allies, “*per mezz ta dan nuru cjar li ic chejncna Malta f’din il guerra hia solidali mal cbir Imperu Britannicu chif ucoll ma l’alleati tighu*” (Is Salib, 3 October 1914, no 505, p.3).

## 6.2 Maltese in the War

The Maltese islands were on the periphery of the European conflict. Although the Maltese professed their loyalty to Britain they had very little to show for it as the war was largely fought on mainland Europe. One detects Maltese ambivalence at the fact that their island was untouched by war. The Maltese were relieved and thankful at having been spared the tragedies that were happening elsewhere e.g. in Belgium. On the other hand, Malta was left without an opportunity to prove its valour. Consequently, during the war showing that Malta was acting in solidarity with Britain was a preoccupation for the Maltese.

This preoccupation manifests itself in the manner that the Maltese press regularly reported, within the limits imposed by censorship, about the Maltese participating in the war.

Malta did not field active-service regiments to fight in the war. The labour battalions formed for service in Gallipoli and the Balkans were not front-line fighting units. A contemporary source said that as a small country, Malta could not afford the expense of forming and mobilising regiments for active service, “[Malta] *ma tistax tiffirma regimenti, timmobilizzahom u tibghathom fil camp a spejjes tahha*”. (Is Salib, 10 Jul 1915, no. 545, *Il Maltin fil Guerra*, p.1). For this reason, Maltese participation in the war was interpreted to include not just those serving with British military and naval forces but also those in other Imperial forces such as those of Canada and Australia. Maltese participation was even widened to include the Maltese diaspora in France and the French north African colonies.

In the popular ideology of the time, a country's honour was maintained and edified through participation in war. The Maltese had to look to their brethren beyond their shores to prove themselves. This was an important element in the establishing of a Maltese national self-esteem. To highlight this point 'Is Salib' mentioned how 200 Maltese who joined the Canadian forces fighting in France, “*ureu cjar li il maltin huma*

*nies l'actar capaci fl'arti militari*" [clearly showed that the Maltese are capable in the art of war] (Is Salib, 17 Jul 1915, p.1).

It is argued that the news snippets about Maltese serving with various 'foreign' units which appeared in the local press fulfilled a number of purposes: as a source of local-interest information, to keep relatives informed, and to show that Malta was playing its part in the war and was supporting the Empire. Fundamentally, they served as a record of Malta's spontaneous and voluntary contribution to the war.

Maltese officers and men who joined British and Imperial units were mentioned by name to record Malta's involvement in the war. Some examples include: Adolfo Benedetti from Senglea who joined an English regiment (Is Salib, 14 September 1915 No 553, p.2), Roberto Grech joined the Canadian forces, while Carlo Caruana volunteered with the Australian forces (Is Salib, 7 Aug 1915, No 549, p.2). Major W Savona of the RMA joined a British artillery regiment in July 1915 and took part in the battles of Loos (Is Salib, 15 Jan 1916, no 572, p.2).

Likewise, officers who received decorations for war service were mentioned to further accentuate Malta's participation in the war as was the case of Capt R.A.F. Montanaro of the East Surrey Regiment, who was decorated with the Military Cross by the King at Buckingham Palace (Is Salib, 6 November 1915, no 562, p.2). Besides being an expression of pride in the achievements of fellow countrymen news items like this demonstrated that the Maltese were as capable of 'playing the game' as their British counterparts.

The mentioning of Maltese officers and men who were wounded was a means of relaying information to relatives and friends and added weight to Maltese claims of loyalty to Britain. The listings of wounded Maltese soldiers show that the Maltese were present in two of the principal war theatres - France and the Dardanelles. To cite an example, Luigi Hare, fought with naval brigades first at Antwerp in 1914 and then at the Dardanelles in 1915 where he was wounded (Is Salib, 17 Jul 1915, p.1). On the Western

Front, Alfred Curmi, a Maltese serving with the 90th Winnipeg Rifles was recovering in a hospital in England after having been exposed to gas attack by the Germans at Ypres (Is Salib, 8 May 1915, no 536, p.3).

Proof of Malta's sacrifice in the conflict was the death of her sons in uniform far afield from their homeland. The names of these men was reported in the Maltese press as a record of the price Malta paid in blood. The importance attached to this act of memorialisation by means of the printed word is revealed through the following passage:

*"Minn gimgha ghall'ohra dejjem ghandna insibu xi uiehed minn hutna il maltin li icun jeu ferut jeu halla hajtu f'din il guerra li fiha il popoli kollha tad dinja keghdin jehdu parti; u dana kieghed jaghmel unur m'hux f'tit lill din il Gzira, li hia c'chejcna fid daks, izda cbira fil heggia u il curagg ta uliedha. J'Alla id demm li keghdin ixerrdu uliedha ghal l'actar causa nobbli, li hia il liberta ta culhatt, icun daca li icompli dejjem ictar ichabbar l'isem ta din il Gzira". [From week to week we find that some Maltese is either wounded or has died in this war in which all the nations of the world are taking part. This is doing honour to this Island, which is small in size but large in the fervour and courage of her sons. Her sons are shedding their blood for the most noble cause of liberty, may that blood serve to edify further the name of this Island] (Is Salib, 31 July 1915, No. 548, p.2).*

Obituaries often followed a formula of death 'on the battle front'. Emmanuele Micallef, from Qormi, who had joined the Canadian contingent in France, died on 25 June 1915 *"miet fuk il front tal battalja fil Belgiu"* [died on the battle front in Belgium]. Another Maltese, Alfredo Sammut died in France *"bhala suldat valorus"* [as a valorous soldier] *"fuk il camp tal battalja"* [on the field of battle] (Is Salib, 31 July 1915, No. 548, p.2). In an almost identical format one finds *"Fuk il camp tal battalja, miet ta valorus il giuvni Roberto F Grech, malti."* (Is Salib, 8 Jul 1916, no 597, p.3). A young Maltese officer, 2<sup>nd</sup>Lieut A.H. Vella, who served with the East Lancashire Regiment *"...halla hajtu fuk il camp tal unur f'uahda mill'ahhar battalji tal Macedonia"* [died on the field of honour in one of the latest battles in Macedonia] (Is Salib, 12 May 1917, no 641, p.2). Also of note

is the discourse glorifying death in battle. Alfredo Sammut was one "*fost il bosta maltin li keghdin ihallu hajjithom... ghal causa tac civilta u tal helsien ta cola chemm hi l'Europa*" [one of the many Maltese who are dying ... for the cause of civilisation and the freedom of Europe from Austro-German tyranny and militarism] (Is Salib, 31 July 1915, No. 548, p.2). In the same manner, A.H. Vella died "... *ghal liberta tal popoli u biex jiddefendi il causa tal Inghilterra.*" [For the liberty of nations and for England's cause](Is Salib, 12 May 1917, no 641, p.2).

The death of young Maltese men on a foreign field vindicated Malta's loyalty towards Britain and the Empire. In an obituary of Lieut Herbert W Huber who died in Gallipoli it was affirmed that his death "*uriet bic cjar illi hutna 'l Maltin huma m'hux biss capaci jiddefendu l'Imperu, li tighu jaghmlu parti, bil cliem, ma ucoll bil fatti, anzi bli stess meut.*" The Maltese were up to the expectation of defending the Empire not by paying lip service but by laying down their lives in doing so. (Is Salib, 15 Jan 1916, no 572, *Avanti Sempre*, written by A Lucchese, p.3).

Dying in the fight for the cause of 'civilization' and the 'liberty of nations' placed the Maltese dead and Malta within the Allied crusade against German 'barbarity' and militarism. The idea of crusade during the First World War is discussed at length by Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2002).

Guise Bosco, a Maltese living in Algeria, recommended that a Maltese Roll of Honour, which he termed '*Libro d'oro*' (Golden Book), should record the names of all the Maltese, those who lived in Malta as well as those residing in other lands, who fell during the war. According to Bosco, the '*Libro d'oro*' inscribed with the names of the Maltese who died in the 'war for civilisation' would show that the Maltese were still imbued with the spirit of their forefathers who fought the Ottoman Turks in 1565. (Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2).



The KOMRM parading before departure for Cyprus. (Pictured in the Malta Herald)

### **6.3 Maltese Participation in the War With Local Units**

During 1915, Malta effected two deployments of men overseas. In January 1915, a 560 strong contingent of soldiers belonging to the KOMRM was sent to perform garrison duties in Cyprus (Wismayer, 1989, p.156). Even though Cyprus was not a war theatre, the deployment there was the first large-scale overseas commitment undertaken by Maltese soldiers during the First World War. (Malta Herald, 18 January 1915, p.2).

In August 1915 recruitment was opened for a labour battalion for service in Gallipoli. Within a relatively short period of time a thousand men presented themselves, of which 864 were chosen (Daily Malta Chronicle, 2 September 1915). The sentiment that the Maltese were not holding back from actively supporting Britain, even in the field, is noticeable in the way in which *Is Salib* reported that in the beginning of September 1915 this contingent embarked for Gallipoli. “...*daun inchitbu bhala volontari biex*

*iservu l'Imperu bhala haddiema f'dac il pajjis."* [the men had joined as volunteers to serve the Empire as labourers in that country](Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2).

On another occasion it was reported that the Maltese labourers who had left for the Dardanelles volunteered for Anzac Cove, where they were already at work. "*Il haddiema maltin, li chienu telku ghad Dardanelli dahlu voluntari ghal pozizioni tal Anzac.*" (Is Salib, 9 Oct 1915, p.3). The emphasis that the Maltese 'volunteered' for Anzac infers that the Maltese went to serve in one of the most hotly contested and, arguably, dangerous areas on the Gallipoli peninsula.

In September 1916, the War Office requested the Maltese Government to recruit another Maltese labour battalion for service in Salonica. The battalion, numbering 850 men, left Malta on 22 September 1916 (Is Salib, 30 Sep 1916, no 609-p.2). A second labour battalion for service in the Balkans was raised in December 1917(Is Salib, 10 Dec 1917, no 671, p.1).

#### **6.4 The Maltese Diaspora**

The Maltese diaspora in French north Africa was also involved in the war. One of the correspondents of *Is Salib*, Giuse Bosco, lived in Algeria, and wrote various news snippets about the Maltese community in Constantina. He said that in Constantina there was hardly a family of European extraction, including the Maltese, that did not have at least a member called up in the French Army (Is Salib, 19 Dec 1914, No 516, p.7). As a result, the town was often saddened by the news of men killed in the war. On the other hand, "*...nifirhu ma hux ftit x'hin narau il klubija li ta cull jum juru fit takbida ulied il hanina Malta*" [we are elated by news of the bravery shown in battle by the sons of Malta]. (Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2).

Bosco defined his meaning of "sons of Malta" as not limited to those who were born in Malta, but included those who were born of Maltese settlers in other countries, like Algeria.

*“U meta nghidu ulied Malta ma nsemmux biss il dauc hutna imuielda fuk l’art mbierca ta San Paul izda dauc ucoll li tnisslu minn dem il Maltin f’artijiet ohra bhalma huma l’Algeria biex nsemmu lilha biss.”* (Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2).

Two such men were Amadeo and Alberto Sarreo, sons of Luigi Filippo Sarreo of Philippeville, Algeria. They joined the French Army and fought in the Dardanelles campaign (Is Salib, 21 Aug 1915, no. 551, p.3).

Some Maltese had already shed their blood in defence of France, an act which according to Bosco consecrated the union of the Maltese communities in North Africa with France.

*“Fost il maltin haun ta nisel il Maltin ta Constantina, xi uhud min daun il kalbiena gia halleu hajjithom u ciarc’ru demmhom fil campijiet tal battalja, bhalma huma is surgent Uigi Zahra (taz Zuavi), Giorg Fenech, Giorg Vella ecc. Huma sabu l’isbah meut li tista tintghata, il meut ghal Patria; huma reg’ghu issigillau ir rabta li torbotna mar razza francisa u issigillauha bil ghoti ta demmhom fil fiur taz zghozija tahhom”* (Is Salib, 19 Dec 1914, No 516, p.7).

According to ‘Is Salib’ there were many Maltese, especially from among those residents in Algeria and Tunisia who joined the French army (Is Salib, 17 Jul 1915, p.1). However, there were others who probably tried to avoid joining the French Army and tried to find their way to Malta. In April 1915, the British Consul in Bona, Algeria intimated that a number of young Maltese enquired whether they could enlist in the Army at Malta and whether the Government of Malta would be disposed to pay their repatriation expenses. However, there was little prospect of their services being required in Malta and the Lieut Governor informed the Consul that “...the financial resources of the [Malta] Government are under a severe strain owing to the conditions arising out of the war, and that it is undesirable for obvious reasons to increase the civil population of this fortress.” (NAM CSG 01 1797/15).

An agreement concluded between the French and the British governments on 4 October 1917 made British subjects in France and French subjects in Great Britain liable to compulsory military service.(H.M. Stationery Office, 1917, p.655). This effectively meant that the Maltese living in French colonies like Algeria were likely to be called up to join the French Army unless they opted to join the British forces.

Maltese resistance to conscription in the French Army is encountered in requests sent to the Governor of Malta requesting assistance to get an exemption from military service. In March 1918, Manuel Grech of the 3me Regt Zouaves petitioned the Governor of Malta to intervene on his behalf and on behalf of 85 other Maltese men living in Algeria who were obliged to join as soldiers with the French Army. He protested that they were born in Malta and the French had no right over them. To a similar tenor was a letter written on 26 April 1918 by Carmel Chircop of the 3me Regt Zouaves and listing 61 other names of men who claimed that they were born in Malta and were neither French nor English (NAM CSG 02 590/18). Giovanni Gauci, from Gozo petitioned the Governor to obtain the discharge of his son, Leone Gauci, who was in Algeria, from the French Army. In this, as in other similar petitions the Governor of Malta could not intervene (NAM CSG 02 590/18).

### **6.5 The Wounded in Malta**

In 1915, the Allied operations in the Dardanelles and the influx of wounded and sick soldiers into Malta to receive medical treatment was turned into an opportunity to flag Maltese loyalty towards Britain. This manifested itself in the solidarity shown by the Maltese towards the wounded soldiers on the island.

As stated elsewhere the role of Malta as a hospital base has been covered by various authors and need not be repeated here. The hospital role was a very significant one and cannot be belittled. It was a role which the Maltese accepted and made their own.

The massive shows of solidarity towards wounded soldiers could, arguably, be interpreted as the projection of the idea that Malta was rallying around the British flag

in the hour of need. Solidarity towards the wounded soldiers on the island manifested itself in various forms.

In the beginning of May 1915, shortly after the first wounded soldiers arrived in Malta a subscription fund was opened to collect money for their benefit. Between 1 May and 31 August 1915, the sum of £2,605.5s 9d was collected out of which £1,516.19s 2d were spent (Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2).

Gifts and comforts of all kinds were showered on the wounded soldiers. The owner of the Alhambra, a music hall, gave 9,000 cigarettes and 4,000 cigars for distribution to soldiers (Is Salib, 11 Sep 1915, no 554, p.2). Activities and entertainments were organised to give soldiers a good time as well as to collect funds for their benefit. Convalescent soldiers were invited to theatrical representations and other entertainments. The *'Societa Mandolinistica La Vallette'* toured various hospitals to play music for the wounded (Is Salib, 3 July 1915, no. 544, p.3). *Is Salib* noted: *"cull fejn thares ma issibx u ma tarax hliief beneficenzi u tmellis ... lejn il feruti"* [there were nothing, but charity and goodwill extended to the wounded] (Is Salib, 29 May 1915, No. 539, Malta u l Guerra Europea, p.1). In an allusion to phraseology used in the narrative of the Shipwreck of St Paul on Malta found in the *Acts of the Apostles*, *Is Salib* stated, *"Il Maltin, difatti daru u ghadom iduru mal feruti bi hleuua l'actar cbira"* [the Maltese took care of the wounded and are still attending to their needs with great kindness] (ibid p.1).

Most of the soldiers on their part had nothing but praise for the Maltese. Soldiers wrote back home about the kind disposition of the Maltese.

*"Cliem bhal dan jaghmel gid m'hux ftit lill Malta meta jinstama f'artijiet stranieri, b'mod specjali geuua l'Inghilterra, biex l'inglisi icomplu jaccertau ruhhom mil costumi taghna maltin". (Words like these do Malta a lot of good especially when read in England, to enable the English to confirm the customs of the Maltese.) (ibid, p.1).*

The solidarity that Malta showed with the wounded was perceived as an act of Christian charity consonant with Maltese beliefs and traditions. Through it the Maltese also helped the Allied cause assigning themselves an important role in the war.

*“... illum nistghu liberament inghejdu li jecc il Maltin ma hadux l’armi f’din il guerra (ghad li bosta minnhom jinsabu ucoll jiccumbattu) pero il Maltin sueu bil bosta, billi l’agir corrett tahhom hu ta cbira fejda lill’alleati ” [we can freely say that although the Maltese did not take up arms in this war (although there are many of them who are taking part in the fighting) they have played a valuable role of great benefit to the Allies]. (ibid, p.1).*

## **6.6 Supporting the British Red Cross and Order St John**

Imperial solidarity was also demonstrated in Malta by supporting fund-raising activities such as ‘Our Day’ organised by the British Red Cross and the Order of St John. These funds benefitted British and Imperial soldiers through the work undertaken by the British Red Cross and the Order of St John. These activities were endorsed by Maltese society as demonstrated by the fact that despite the hard times £400 were collected during a Badge Day held on 22 October 1916 (Is Salib, 28 Oct 1916, no. 613, p.2).

## **6.7 Supporting the War Effort - Some Incidents With Numerous Lives Lost**

### **Ordnance Store Explosion**

On 5 October 1915, an explosion occurred at the Naval Ordnance Department at the Dockyard which left 13 men dead and 17 wounded. The accident happened when some 50 men of the Royal Malta Artillery were filling hand grenades with explosives. The grenades were manufactured in Malta for use in Gallipoli.

Although the deaths did not occur in combat conditions the men were doing war work and sustaining the war effort. Hence, they were perceived as having died in the service of the King and the Empire, and their names were memorialised in the newspapers (Is

Salib, 9 Oct 1915, no 558, p.3). Shortly after the accident occurred a fund was set up to collect money for the families of the victims.

### **Battle of Jutland**

The war at sea accounted for a large number of Maltese deaths. The Battle of Jutland, when the British and the German battle fleets clashed in the North Sea was the singular event of the war that accounted for the largest number of Maltese battle casualties. News of this long-awaited titanic battle appeared in the local press together with the official lists of Maltese casualties. A funeral mass for the Maltese killed in the battle was organised by the La Valette Band Club of Valletta and was held at St Paul's Church in Valletta on 15 July 1916 (Is Salib, 15 Jul 1916, no 598, p.3).

### **Sinking of HMS Louvain**

The sinking of HMS Louvain with the loss of around 70 Maltese men on board was the largest tragedy to hit the Maltese during the First World War. The official casualty list showed that there were 70 dead among the Maltese (Is Salib, 30 Jan 1918, no 676, "Mejta Bl'Unur", p.2). Due to censorship neither the name of the ship nor the date and location of the incident were mentioned at the time.

The death of these men is framed within the discourse of 'honour' and 'glory'. The men who in fact were victims of war were depicted as having died in the fight against a cruel enemy. Their death vindicated Maltese protestations of loyalty to Britain and sanctified it in blood.

*"Huma mietu bl'unur u il Maltin jibkgħu riconoxxenti lejhom, fghax [ghax] bil meut tahhom chibbru [cabbru] l'isem ta' chejčna Gzira tagħna."* [They died honourably, and the Maltese will remain grateful to them because through their death they enhanced the name of our small island]. (Is Salib, 30 Jan 1918, no 676, "Mejta Bl'Unur", p.2).

The loss of so many men united Malta in a sense of national tragedy and mourning. E.T. Agius who resided in Hampstead, UK, sent a telegram to the Governor of Malta telling him that the 'Malta Association' sent its condolences to the families hit by the loss of HMS Louvain and arranged to hold a funeral mass at St Domenic's Church. (Is Salib, 20 Feb 1918, no. 678, p.2)

### **6.8 The War Anniversary Commemoration and Conscription**

On 12 June 1916, a national patriotic organisation was set up to commemorate the second anniversary of the war on 4 August. It was announced that on the occasion a resolution of loyalty would be adopted.

The purpose behind the resolution of loyalty that was to be adopted during the commemoration was misunderstood by the Maltese. There were concerns that the loyalty of the Maltese was being doubted and that the occasion would be used to introduce conscription.

On 1 July 1916, Francesco Azzopardi asked the Government whether it intended to introduce conscription, but this was not the intention. The Government only wished to give Malta the opportunity to mark, with the rest of the Empire, the second anniversary of the war and affirm the Allied cause. (Is Salib, 8 Jul 1916, no.597, Ebd a Informazjoni, p.1).

The Maltese did not want conscription. Malta was not lacking in supporting the British war effort. The Maltese proved their loyalty from the start as shown by the men of the Royal Naval Reserve (Malta) who all turned up for service when they were called up, "*Malli il Guerra fakkgħet, ... Minn tan Naval Reserve, malli spara il canun, hatt, ankas uiehed, ma nakas jippresenta ruhu*". (Is Salib, 8 Jul 1916, no.597, Ebd a Informazjoni, p.1).

Around a thousand Maltese men had voluntarily joined up for service in Gallipoli *“ma kaghdux iharsu lejn il paga ta 2/6 cull jum u hadmu u ghaddeu minn periculi ghax leali, avvolja il liberta politica tahhom m’hux bhal dic ta l’inglisi.”* [they did not look at the 2s6d pay, but worked and faced dangers because they were loyal and in spite of the fact that they did not enjoy the same political liberties as the English] (Is Salib, 8 Jul 1916, no597, Edda Informazjoni, p.1). Therefore, there was no need to impose compulsory military service in Malta.

If Britain needed soldiers, she could withdraw the ones she had in Malta and leave the defence of the island to the Maltese

*“Il Gvern inglis, jista iuarrab minn Malta chemm il suldat inglis ghandu, il Maltin, ghal Malta u geuua Malta, jista ilcoll suldati, u ghal bzonn isibhom might u jaghmlu dmirhom biex pajjishom ma jakax that idejn l’ghadu.”* [With peace of mind the British could withdraw all their soldiers and leave the Maltese to defend their island. If the need to defend Malta arose, all the Maltese could be considered ‘soldiers’ as they would see to it that their island did not fall to the enemy]. (Is Salib, 24 June 1916, no 595, ...Biex it-tajjeb ma jonkosx! p.2).

Malta’s claims for constitutional development were also framed within the 4 August commemoration and resolution.

*“L’Inghilterra ... uakt li hia titlobna sabiex nghaddu ir risoluzioni ta l’4 ta Auuisu, u f’nos dana ic ciarcir tad demm ta tant sudditi eroi tahha li keghdin jiccumbattu ghac civilta u ghal libertajiet tal popoli, il ghala ma tatihix lil din iz zghira Malta costituzioni ohra li dejjem talbet...”* [England is asking us to adopt the 4 August resolution. In the midst of so much bloodshed and when many of England’s heroic subjects are fighting for civilisation and the liberty of nations, what is keeping her from giving little Malta the constitution she asked for...](Is Salib, 22 Jul 1916, no 599, Il festa ta l’4 ta Auuissu, Glauco, p.2).

## 6.9 The Gallipoli Anniversary Observed in Malta

The first anniversary of the Gallipoli landings was commemorated in Malta by means of a service that was held at Ta Braxia cemetery. *“Billi bosta mis suldati feruti mietu haun Malta geu imkeghda bosta fiuri fuk il kobra tagghom”*. (Is Salib, 29 Apr 1916, no 587, p.3). On 4 May 1916, the Bishop celebrated mass in the chapel of the Addolorata Cemetery to commemorate the many Roman Catholic soldiers buried there. (Is Salib, 6 May 1916, no 588-p.3).

## 6.10 The Armistice, A Show of Joy and an Expression of Loyalty

On 11 November with the declaration of the Armistice between Germany and the Allies. Expectant crowds had gathered in Valletta and when news of the armistice was officially divulged there were outbursts of joy. Church bells rang for a whole hour.

*“Izda il ferh collu tal Maltin gie sfugat uara nofs inhar meta flimchien mal baned principali tal belt, imxeu lejn Piazza San Giorg biex jaghmlu dimostrazioni kuddiem il Gvernatur bhala rapresentant tar Re taghna” [the joy of the Maltese found its outlet in the afternoon when accompanied by the principal bands of Valletta [the crowds] walked towards St George’s Square to make a demonstration in front of the Governor as the representative of our King]. (Is Salib, 20 Nov 1918, No.705, Il 11 ta Novembru, XEPTZ, p.2).*

In the evening the electric lights went on *“f’dakka uahda inxtelghu il lampi collha elettrici li ahna conna insejna uara sentejn u nofs fid dlam. Il Piazza u Strada Riali dehru genna...fil gallaria tal palazz jitfattxa il Gvernatur u fost l’akua applausi indakklu il God save the King”*. [All of a sudden, the electric lamps were lit, the first time after two and a half years. The square and Strada Reale looked like heaven... the Governor appeared on the balcony and was received by huge applause and the playing of ‘God Save the King’]. (Is Salib, 20 Nov 1918, No.705, Il 11 ta Novembru, XEPTZ, p.2). The Governor, Lord Methuen made a speech which he concluded by calling for three cheers for the King and his consort. This was met by, *“Applausi cbar, ghajjat ta ferh u tixjir ta cpiepel segueu id-discors, u il baned dakkeu il God Save the King” [applause, shouts of joy and the waving of hats followed the speech, and the bands played ‘God save the King’]*. (Is Salib, 20 Nov 1918, No.705, Il 11 ta Novembru, XEPTZ, p.2).

The Maltese clearly and spontaneously celebrated the Armistice. It was an outburst of relief that the war had ended as much as a celebration of Britain's victory over Germany. The Maltese, who had supported Britain throughout the war, partook in Britain's victory. The celebrations following the news of the Armistice affirmed the loyalty of the Maltese towards Britain.

## Chapter 7 - MALTESE POLITICAL SITUATION

The political situation of Malta during the First World War has to be read against the backdrop of Malta's constitutional development during the first hundred years of British rule. The principle of elected representatives was introduced in the constitution given to Malta in 1849. However, the Maltese representatives were in minority. It took almost another forty years for the Maltese to get, in 1887, a constitution wherein the elected representatives were in a majority. The 1887 constitution was revoked in 1903.

As from June 1903 the Executive Council and the appointed members of the Council of Government were in majority, whereas the elected members reverted to minority status as they had been before 1887. In effect this meant that the Government would be able to pass any measure it wanted despite the opposition of the elected members. As a protest the elected members of the Council of Government adopted a policy of abstentionism. They refused to take their seat on the Council of Government thereby refusing to lend their support to measures they opposed and which the Government was in a position to pass nonetheless.

The adherents of abstentionism were known as "*astensionisti*" and formed part of the '*Comitato Patriottico*' led by Mons Ignazio Panzavecchia. The political rivalry between the *astensionisti* and their political rivals, the demand for a new constitution, and opposition to taxation were the principal themes that dominated the Maltese political scene during the war.

A few days before Britain declared war on Germany, Maltese society appeared more concerned with local political issues than with the growing tension on mainland Europe. The announced departure of the incumbent Governor of Malta, General Sir Leslie Rundle was seen as a good moment for the Maltese to press their political grievances. (Is Salib, 1 August 1914, no 496, 'Meetings hemm bzonn', p.2-3).

Through its columns *Is Salib* called for a large meeting to show the new Governor that the Maltese did not acquiesce to despotic rule: “*nuru cjar illi il Maltin m’humieux cuntenti bl’agir dispoticu ta l’attuali Gvern li dejjem haseb biss chif jista ighakkisna*”. (Ibid, p.2). Recalling the large meetings that were convened by Fortunato Mizzi in the 1880s when fighting for a new constitution for Malta, *Is Salib* said

“*Cull mita il Maltin ghamlu il Meetings, dejjem acquistau xi hag’a...Meetings ghandna naghmlu jecc irridu verament nacquistau dauc id-drittijiet li chien imisshom ilhom li geu lilna moghtija*”. [Whenever the Maltese held meetings, they always acquired something... Therefore, meetings must be held if we really want those political rights that should have been given to us long ago] (*Is Salib*, 1 August 1914, no 496, ‘Meetings hemm bzonn’ p.3).

### 7.1 Partisan Rivalry

Partisan rivalry between the *astensionisti* and those who opposed their policy was particularly strong. Some regarded this rivalry most inappropriate during the war and even appealed to the Government to avoid holding the Council of Government elections that were due in 1915. That way the Maltese would remain focused on the war and not have their minds inflamed with partisan politics “*biex il poplu jibka chif inhu mohhu biss fuk il guerra u ma ikankallux ucoll il politica biex f’ mohhu idahhallu zeug guerer*”. (*Is Salib*, 31 October 1914, no 509, “Il Politica Locali” by Amor Patrio, p.2). The country needed tranquility, and politics were best cast aside as long as the war endured, so as not to give rise to equivocal situations that ‘the enemy’ could read as shows of Maltese disloyalty towards Britain. “*Illum ... zmien li uihed izomm chemm jista il paci fil pajjis sabiex l’eghdeuua jibkghu certi li il Maltin collha huma solidali mal Gvern fil kalila guerra li keghda issir. Il politica ghal issa inhalluha fil genb*” (*Is Salib*, 14 November 1914, No 511, “Il Vera Politica”, p.1).

In their pre-electoral manifesto the The ‘*astensionisti*’ pledged that once elected they would resign immediately as a protest against the 1903 Constitution. Therefore by voting for the “*astensionisti*” the Maltese would send a message that “*li irridu Costituzioni li tixrak lin-nies u m’hux lil bhejjem...*” [we want a constitution fit for people not animals...]. (*Is Salib*, 2 January 1915, No 518, ‘L’elezioni generali’, p.2).

The policy of *'astensionismo'* was therefore a form of protest at Britain's refusal to give the Maltese a meaningful constitution which gave them greater political responsibility. The abstentionists were not against the British flag "*l'astensionisti ma humiex contra il bandiera inglisa*" neither did they wish to see Malta under Italian rule "*m'humiex dauc in nies li jixtiyku jarau Malta that il hacma ta l'Italia*". They were loyal subjects "*huma sudditi leali*" (Is Salib, 25 Mar 1916 – no 582, L'AHHAR Sigha! Poplu, thallix min jirbhec, p.2).

Maltese loyalty to Britain in the war was implicit irrespective of political grievances. Is Salib, claimed the Maltese were not against Britain "*...ahna m'ahniex contra l'Inghilterra*", they loved the British flag, "*...poplu li ihobb b'kalbu collha lil bandiera Inglisa*" and had no wish to change it "*[il bandiera Inglisa] tghogbu u l'ebda idea u xeuka li tidbiddel ma ghandu*". (Is Salib, 31 October 1914, no 509, "Il Politica Locali", p.2).

In the 1915 elections the abstentionists won six districts, while their political rival Francesco Azzopardi, was elected on the remaining two. The turnout of the electorate was very low considering, for example, that in the first district out of 6,000 persons eligible to vote, only around 500 did so. (Is Salib, 30 Jan 1915, No 522, 'L'Elezioni u ilbruda tal poplu', p.1-2). The apathy was blamed on the politicians themselves who failed to deliver anything. Others said that the policy of abstentionism had done more harm than good (ibid p.1-2), and was getting the Maltese nowhere. Some called for political meetings to shake the people out of apathy and press for political rights: "*mita il Gvern ta xi hag'a lill Maltin, tanielom uara l'agitazjoni*" [*whenever the Government gave anything to the Maltese, it was conceded to them after their agitation*](Is Salib, 30 Jan 1915, No 522, 'L'Elezioni u ilbruda tal poplu', p.1-2).

The call for 'agitation' was not shared by the anti-abstentionists who believed that during the war the elected members should support and assist the Government. They also said that the claims for a new constitution should be suspended for the duration of

the war as the Government could not dedicate time to study that question. (Is Salib, 30 Jan 1915 No 522, p.1). The *Malta* said that in view of the serious international situation it intended to stop writing about abstentionism as the situation called for 'prudence', which the newspaper said was being exercised even by Irish Nationalists (Malta, 1 Aug 1914, p.2)

Francesco Azzopardi, the anti-abstentionism candidate, gave up his seat for Gozo and new elections were called to fill this post. The anti-abstentionists fielded Giuseppe Mizzi, the owner of the newspaper '*Malta*', as candidate, while his brother, Enrico, contested the election on the abstentionist ticket. In the contest between the Mizzi brothers, the abstentionist press warned the electorate that the Government would probably increase taxes (Is Salib, 27 Feb 1915, no 526, p.2). Therefore, to support the abstentionist policy and forestall new taxes, the Gozitan electorate was encouraged to vote for Enrico Mizzi with the slogan "*LIL NERICU IL VOT ATUH, U BIR RIEHA HALLU IL HUH !*" (Is Salib, 27 Feb 1915, no 526, p.2)

The partisan contest between the abstentionists and the anti-abstentionists was described as "*Il guerra politica*" [*the political war*] (Is Salib, 6 Feb 1915, no. 523, p.1), which reflects how the war influenced local ways of expression. At any other time, the expression used could have been 'political fight' rather than 'political war'. One also finds that the *Comitato Patriottico* was "*capitanat mil kalbieni patriotta Mons. Panzavecchia*" [*captained by the brave patriot Mons. Panzavecchia*] (ibid, p.1). The *Comitato Patriottico* was 'captained' rather than 'led'. By inference, Panzavecchia was a 'captain' not a 'leader', and a captain led his men into battle.

During 1916 the argument about a new constitution for Malta was placed within the British propogandistic discourse that Britain entered the war to defend Belgium.

*"L'Inghilterra dahlet f'din il carneficina biex tiddefendi lil poplu zghir tal Belgju u sejra tibka ticcumbatti sa chem dauk il popli zghar li uakghu taht il jasar tal Germania jerg'ghu icunu independent."* (Is Salib, 29 Jul 1916, no 600, "Issa il moment" , p.2).

Britain was paying a very high price in blood for the liberty of Belgium and would certainly not deny the Maltese theirs. (Is Salib, 29 Jul 1916, no 600, "Issa il moment", p.2). In this sense, liberty was not equated with parting ways with Britain, but with the acquisition of a new constitution giving the Maltese control over their own affairs.

During the opening session of the Council, in November 1916, Enrico Mizzi read a resolution asking that the British government should give the Maltese a new constitution, which as Britain had promised in 1800 was a right of the Maltese and not a concession. In putting forward this claim, Mizzi was supported by Giuse Zammit. On the other hand, Francesco Azzopardi and Lorenzo Falzon remained passive and justified their action by claiming that they did not wish to ask for a new constitution because it was inopportune to do so during the war "*minhabba il guerra, ma iridux jitolbu lill Ministru mil Cunsil ta Malta, biex jatina li hakkna, ghax f'daun iz zmenijet rasu fi huejjeg ohra*". (Is Salib, 11 Nov 1916, no 615, Fetah!!, p.1).

At the start of 1917 the Government introduced new taxes in order to increase its revenue by £25,000 which were needed to cover an increase in the pay of some categories of Government employees. Besides being an additional burden, the new taxes created resentment at the fact that a financially-distressed population was being called upon to sustain three classes of Government employees whose fixed salary was deemed inadequate to keep up with the cost of living "*...sejhulhom batuti ghax ghandhom salariu fiss li, scont l'gholi tal hajja, m'hux bizzejjed ghalihom*" (Is Salib, 3 Feb 1917, no. 627, Taxxi Giodda u zieda fil kodma, p.1).

The two elected members of the Council, Francesco Azzopardi and Lorenzo Falzon backed the increase in taxes (Is Salib, 31 Mar 1917, No.635, Il Cunsill ghat-Taxxi?! Hatt fil Cunsill!!!, p.1). For this reason, when elections were announced, the people were told to be wary of voting for candidates who did not subscribe to the abstentionist policy: "*...mill cunsill hadna taxxi li hatt fid dinja ma stennihom fiz zmien li ninsabu fieh.*" [ *from the Council we only got taxes which nobody expected in these times*](5 May 1917 – no.640, Zmien l'elezioni – min ghandhom isiru cunsillieri – it-tielet capitlu, p.1).

The 1917 election was a victory for the *'astensionisti'* who won the five districts for which elections were held. (Is Salib, 19 May 1917, no 642, Ir-risultat ta l'Elezioni, p.1). In view of this it was expected that Azzopardi would follow the abstentions cue and resign his seat in the Council. But Azzopardi would not hear of leaving the Council. *'Is Salib'* claimed that in 1910 Azzopardi promised to leave the council that same year, but he did not keep his word. His promise was compared to the 'scrap of paper' which Germany discarded to trample over Belgium

*"dic il ueghda sfat bhal biccja carta li tkattahha meta trid u chif trid, bhal ma ghamel il Kaiser tal Germania ghat tratta li chellu mal Belgiu. Nafu li Azzopardi m'hux Kaiser... izda il kelma tighu, bil miktub jeu le, fuka ma tistax tokghod,"* (Is Salib, 7 Jul 1917, no.649, Holm F'Nofs Nhar!!..., p.]

The Governor dissolved the Council and called an election on 29 and 30 October 1917. In the campaigning period the *'astensionisti'* pointed out that the people did not gain by having representatives on the Council and claimed that if abstentionism was good before the war it was even more so during the war when martial law granted the Governor extraordinary powers in governing the island (Is Salib, 25 Aug 1917, No 656, Fakkghet il bomba ,p.1).

The *Commitato Patriottico* won seven out of eight electoral districts. The electoral result was also seen as a victory for the Maltese-language press: *"...[il poplu] jemmen billi ighidulu il gazzetti Maltin li dejjem kabzu ghalieh fil bzonnijiet tighu"*. [The people believe the Maltese newspapers, which always spoke in defence of the people.] (Is Salib, 10 Nov 1917, no. 667, p.1).

During 1918 partisan divisions between the *'astensionisti'* and those who opposed this policy continued to colour the political arguments. Lord Strickland's return to Malta, started being felt on the local political scene especially during the heated debate surrounding the introduction of the Succession and Donations Duty Bill.

As the issue of a new constitution became more persistent so did the belief that meetings might provide the necessary impetus to convince Britain to start the process. The *Comitato Patriottico* was called upon to organise a rally for this purpose (Is Salib, 20 Jun 1918, No. 690, p.1]. Nevertheless, calls for meetings were tempered with cautionary provisions emphasizing that things had to be made in a legal manner “*ghandna naghmlu hilitna collha legalment u lealment biex nacquistauha*” [we have to do our outmost in legal and loyal way to acquire the new constitution] (30 Jun 1918, No 691, “Il Costituzioni”). Emphasis was placed on loyalty

*“Naghmlu mela meeting, ... nghaddu risoluzioni ta lealta lir Re taghna Inglis u nitolbu lil Ministru biex ibiddlilna din il hrafa ta Costituzioni”* [Let us hold a meeting,... adopt a resolution of loyalty towards our King, and ask the Minister to change our constitution, which is nothing but a joke.] (ibid p.2).

Despite the protestations that the new constitution concerned all the Maltese, in reality workers and the poor were little concerned with it “*ghax daun trattament tajjeb, xoghol u hobs bi rhis l’actar li ifittxu, u id discors uisk ghall’avucati ihalluh*”. [because these were more concerned with good treatment, employment and cheap bread, they leave the talking to the advocates] (Is Salib, 20 Aug 1918, no 696, “Lil R.B. tal “Malta Taghna”, p.1).

## **7.2 Taxes**

During the council session of 20 December 1917 three draft ordinances were introduced to raise more taxes to make good a deficit of £62,000 in the Government Treasury. (Is Salib, 10 Jan 1918, no. 674, “It Taxxi”, p.1). The Crown Advocate said that the taxes proposed: an ad valorem tax, an entertainment tax, a tax on port dues, and on stamp duty did not target the poor as they affected commodities usually associated with the rich. However, many contended that, either directly or indirectly, all taxes affected the poor. At a time when “*il biccia il cbira tal poplu m’huiex jecol sa chemm jigba...*” [most of the people are not eating enough] imposing more taxes on the Maltese was not advisable. (Is Salib, 10 Jan 1918, no. 674, “It Taxxi”, p.1).

Giuse Zammit, an abstentionist candidate, admitted that Malta's treasury was in a bad state, "*li Stat Finanziariu hua uisk hazin*". The people were overburdened with taxes "*il poplu gia imghobbi bizzejjed bit taxxi*" (Is Salib, 10 Jan 1918, no. 674, "It Taxxi", p.1). He proposed that the Government raise funds by introducing 'income tax' (ibid, p.1). With Income Tax, the poor would have been relieved of carrying the burden of additional taxation. However, many of those who earned £200 a year did not want income tax because it pinched their pockets (ibid, p.1).

The Succession and Donations Duty Bill introduced in 1917 was another effort made by the Government to increase revenue. The Bill encountered much resistance, with those who were directly affected, i.e., the propertied classes and the rich were at the front. Initially, the Maltese church joined the dissenters. The *Comitato Patriottico* opposed the Bill on the grounds that in its electoral programme it promised not to legislate new taxes.

On 15 April 1917, an assembly of nobles, clergy and other parties passed a resolution against the Succession Duty. The Assembly of nobles, as it became known, drew up a memorandum, prepared by Lord Strickland, to suggest alternative ways by which the Government could increase its revenue. The suggestions involved the Assembly floating a £200,000 loan to the Government; that the Government would sell some of its land and property; and an increase to existent taxes. The Assembly was attacked because:

*"il lakgha ma illimitax ruhha li tfittex tehles minn dic il ligi, ippruvat tehles minnha a spejjes ta hattiehor, tal haddiema u tal fokra."* [nobody wanted that law... However, the Assembly did not limit itself to getting rid of that law but sought to get rid of it at the expense of workers and the poor]. (Is Salib, 20 Jun 1918, No 670 on newspaper but should be 690, "Lid-difensur tal lakgha", p.1).

Many argued that it was morally unjust for the Assembly of nobles to propose an increase in the existent taxes which fell heavily on low-paid workers

*“M’hux seuua, li is sinjuri li ghandhom l’eluf tal liri, jippretendu li ghandhom ihallsu daks minn idahhal £15 fis sena biss bhal chenniesa tat torok” [It is unjust that the rich who have thousands of pounds expected to pay as much as a street sweeper who earned a paltry £15 a year] (Is Salib, 20 Aug 1918, no 696, “Lil R.B. tal “Malta Taghna”, p.2)*

As a result of its memorandum, the Assembly of the nobles lost the support of those who initially adhered to it, like the Bishops and clergy. The abstentionist councillors opposed it, also because they saw in it the hand of Lord Strickland, who was considered a political enemy. The Government refused the assembly’s proposals and appointed a commission to report on the matter.

### **7.3 Social Inequalities**

The debate about the introduction of Succession and Donations Duty confirmed the inequalities and divisions within Maltese society between the wealthy few and the masses. On 26 July 1918 during a speech in the Council of Government, the Crown Advocate justified the Succession and Donations Duty by saying

*“il ghani ghandu jifhem li il missjoni tighu fid dinja m’hix biss li ighezzez il flus, ma li hua dover tieghu li jiccontribuixxi xi hagia ghal gid tal haddiem, sia direttament, sia indirettament billi ihallas sehem proporzjonat ghal gid li ghandu ghal bzonnijiet tal poplu”. (The wealthy person must understand that his mission in life is not limited to accumulating money. It his duty to contribute to the wellbeing of workers and to pay directly and indirectly a share proportionate to his wealth to go towards the needs of the people] (Is Salib, 20 Aug 1918, no 696, “Lil R.B. tal “Malta Taghna” p.1)*

Those words created a stir because : *“S’issa il haddiem chien dejjem imzeblah, iccalculat bhala bhima li jahdem ghas sinjur ...” [Up till now workers were despised, and held like beasts of burden working for the rich] (Is Salib, 20 Aug 1918, no 696, “Lil R.B. tal “Malta Taghna” p.2)*

Wealth, or the lack of it, was not the only indicator of the social divide in Malta. A newspaper correspondent asked

*“Li il Poplu Malti icollu Costituzioni tajba b’lehen il poplu mismuh fil Camra tal Cunsill hu dritt tal Protetariat [proletariat]?” [Is it a right of the proletariat that the Maltese people get a good constitution which provides that their voice is heard in the Council Chamber?] (Is Salib, 20 Aug 1918, no 696, Mistoqsijiet, p.2).*

Here one can sense a veiled request for wider political suffrage, which would not be limited to the privileged classes and those with access to income but would also incorporate workers (the proletariat). It is also a call for workers’ representatives to find a place in the Council to give voice to the people.

The pre-existing class distinction between the rich and the poor, the propertied classes and the working class was further demarcated during the war. The war bred new tensions within Maltese society – between profiteers and the rest of the population. Reflecting this idea, a correspondent of *‘Is Salib’* claimed that if a deficit in the country’s finances existed it should not be made good by taxes levied from the workers. During the war profiteers enriched themselves at everybody else’s expense, therefore, it was argued that “*...jecc għanda issir xi taxxa, uahda biss tista issir bil hakk t’Alla: DIC FUK IL KLIEH ESAGERAT TAL GUERRA.*” [if any tax should be introduced the only just one would be THAT ON EXAGGERATED WAR PROFITS] (Is Salib, 20 Jun 1918, No 690, “Lid-difensur tal lakgha”, p.1).

The Succession and Donations Duty Bill united most sections of the Maltese population in opposition to it, even if for various reasons. The abstentionist politicians as well as the local Italian and Maltese language newspapers spoke against it (Is Salib, 20 Jul 1918, no 693, p.1); “*IT-TAXXA TAL UIRT HIA ODIUSA, CANALIESCA, U MA TOGHGIOBNIEX U MA IRRIEDUHIEX*” [the succession tax is odious, roguish and we do not like it, and we do not want it] ‘shouted’ a newspaper correspondent. (Is Salib, 20 Jun 1918, No 690, “Lid-difensur tal lakgha”, p.1).

On 17 May 1918, the *Comitato Patriottico* adopted a resolution against the Succession and Donations Duty Bill. It claimed that while the new tax was needed to cover a shortfall of £5,000 in the local Treasury, the Government could make up the sum

through economy and savings on administration, e.g. by curbing the high pay given to high-ranking government officials. (Is Salib, 20 Sep 1918, no 699, “It-tfulija ta uiehed li cullhatt ciahdu”, p.1).

Some believed that the real reason behind the Bill was that Britain wanted the Maltese to contribute financially to the war. “*Irid jeulla, il ministru, ... li il maltin ihalsu, scont ma jistghu, ghal guerra?...Ma humiex isofru bizzejjed il conseguenze tal guerra li sgur ma giebuhiex huma? M’humieix izommu ruhhom bi snienhom bil gholi tal hajja, tant illi illum il lira tisua inkas minn seba xelini?*” [Does the Minister want the Maltese to contribute payments for the war? Are they not suffering enough as a result of a war which was not of their own making? Are they not barely scraping a living because of the cost of living which has reduced the value of a pound to seven shillings](Is Salib, 20 Jul 1918, no 693, p.1).

Despite the widespread opposition to it the Succession and Donations Duty Bill became law “il gvern uebbes rasu biex ighaddiha contra il volonta ta poplu shih...” [The government hard-headedly passed the law against the will of the entire population] (Is Salib, 20 Jul 1918, no 693, p.1).

The will of the people was completely disregarded. Some questioned “*Ghandu il poplu jinkaras minghajr ma ighid ajma u ghanda din l’ajma tinstemha minn min ghanda tinstama jeu le?*” [Should the people feel the pinch and accept the pain without complaint, and should the people’s groan be heard by those who should be hearing it or not?] (Is Salib, 20 Jul 1918, no 693, p.1). It is arguable whether this was in fact a call to action to make the Maltese voice heard in Britain.

## **Chapter 8 - DEVELOPING THE INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The dearth of publications about Malta during the First World War indicates that, in general, the First World War lacks visibility and that unlike the Second World War, it is not central to the Maltese national master narrative. The two principal published sources, which, today, serve to inform our interpretation about Malta and the First World War, i.e. Mizzi's (1991) work on the Gallipoli campaign and Zarb-Dimech's (2004) generic history of the war show that the subject does not attract much scholarly attention.

### **8.2 The Representation of the First World War in the National War Museum in Valletta**

In Malta the material heritage that relates directly to the First World War is wanting. Except for Wardija Battery, all the forts, coastal batteries and the Victoria Lines, which were in service during the war were built before the conflict. In these cases, the First World War is just a layer of history. The seaplane base that was started in Kalafrana during the war has succumbed to industrial development. Even the hospitals and convalescent camps have either vanished or were turned into an alternative use. The *Sacra Infermeria* in Valletta is a typical example. Thus, even in cases where heritage exists its connection with the First World War is often lost, forgotten, or regarded as being of secondary importance. Today, the major representation of the First World War in Malta is that presented by the National War Museum in Valletta.

The National War Museum in Valletta purports to cover “7,000 years of Maltese Military History from the Bronze Age until Malta’s accession in the EU” (Heritage Malta, n.d.) Within this museum the First World War is dedicated a very small space - the antechamber to a substantially large exhibition hall entirely dedicated to the Second World War. The First World War features in the Medal Hall which has been set up within the museum. However, there is not much effort at bringing out the stories of the men behind the medals.

Within the overall museum exhibition space that dedicated to the First World War is dwarfed and eclipsed by the Second World War. This reflects and perpetrates the idea that Malta just brushed with the First World War. It 'states' that the First World War is just another episode in Malta's long history, which was marked by two 'great' sieges, that of 1565 and that of 1940-1943. A further inference is that in comparison to these two milestones, the First World War is a relatively unimportant episode in Malta's history. This inference is reinforced by the official Heritage Malta website, which provides scant references to the First World War. In this website, the section dedicated to the National War Museum refers to the display of "military armour of the Order of St John and the Ottoman Turks", thereby alluding to the Great Siege of Malta of 1565, and the notable artefacts from the Second World War. Admittedly, the website states that "the Second World War is the most represented conflict in the museum". (Heritage Malta, n.d.). This reflects the fact that in Malta the First World War is not sellable as a tourism product. This is because, compared to pre-history, the Roman and Paleo-Christian period, the period of the Order of St John, and the British period as a whole, the First world war lacks major tangible heritage.

In its representation of the First World War, the National War Museum perpetrates the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' myth. The principal interpretation panel refers to Malta's role as a hospital, and in the other interpretation there is very little reference to contexts other than the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean'.

Literature shows that the theme of the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" dominates the current interpretation of the story of Malta during the First World War (Mackinnon, 1916; Ganado, 1975; Laferla, 1947; BBC, 2014 ). This is further accentuated through the line of interpretation favoured by the National War Museum in Valletta.

The "Nurse of the Mediterranean" emerges as the predominant theme about Malta during the First World War. Other lesser-known aspects are also mentioned sometimes, but these remain underdeveloped, possibly because of scant research and the limited literature available. As a result, this tends to give an unbalanced view of Malta during the First World War, which in effect limits a truly comprehensive and holistic

understanding. The exclusionary effect of the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” permeates the way that the First World War is generally recounted, presented, interpreted and ultimately understood.

To give the First World War in Malta a holistic treatment it is necessary get a wider view of Malta and move away from the accepted myth. A five-pillar framework of interpretation is proposed. Any interpretation of Malta during the First World War has to take into account that Malta was both a British fortress and a colony. These two aspects are represented in the framework by the ‘Military’ pillar and the ‘Civilian’ pillar. However, these are not two separate worlds and in a small island like Malta the two spheres at times overlap.

The military pillar comprises seven themes: Malta as a naval base and arsenal, Malta as a hospital base, Malta as an aerial base, Malta as a source of manpower, Malta as a Prisoner of War camp, the Malta Prize Court and finally British War Strategy which provides the background and puts into a wider perspective all the other themes.

The civilian pillar comprises four principal themes and two cross-cutting themes. The principal themes comprise: local government politics, Imperial solidarity, living conditions in wartime Malta, disruption and restrictions. The cross-cutting themes are Maltese loyalty to Britain, and social divisions.

The third pillar of the interpretation framework , ‘Aftermath’, refers to the period following the Armistice of November 1918. Literature shows that scholars speak about the Greater War and contend that the First World War did not come to an end in 1918, and conflicts still abounded especially in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean (Cornelissen and Weinrich, 2020). Malta was affected by the Greater War with, among other things, the influx refugees from Russia and Smyrna.

# MALTA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

## A HERITAGE INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES	RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION		
<b>MILITARY</b>	<p><b>Naval base and Arsenal</b> <i>The Malta dockyard; The British naval squadron and the French Fleet</i></p> <p><b>Hospital base</b> <i>The role of Malta as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean"</i></p> <p><b>Aerial base</b> <i>Seaplane facilities at Kalafrana and Mistra; Anti-submarine patrols and aircraft operating from Malta Aircraft construction at Malta Dockyard</i></p> <p><b>Source of manpower</b> <i>Maltese in the Royal Navy; Maltese units relieved British on garrison duties in Malta; The Maltese Labour Battalions in Gallipoli, Salonica and elsewhere</i></p> <p><b>Prisoner of War Camp</b> <i>Camp Infrastructure - Fort Salvatore, Verdala, St Clement's Camp; Prisoners arrested in Malta Prisoners arrested in Egypt and elsewhere transferred to Malta; Prisoners' life in camp</i></p> <p><b>The Malta Prize Court</b></p> <p><b>British War Strategy</b> <i>Malta within Imperial /Mediterranean strategy; Fortress Malta - fortresses, guns and garrison; the 1912 Malta Conference and its implications on the island's defence, the 1912 Malta Defence Scheme</i></p>	<p>Site visits, Storytelling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Heritage trails, Publications</p>		
<b>CIVILIAN</b>	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Local government Politics</b> <i>Partisan Politics; Demands for a new Constitution, Opposition to taxes</i></p> <p><b>Imperial Solidarity</b> <i>Support for the War; Maltese participation in the war</i></p> <p><b>Living Conditions in Malta</b> <i>Scarcity, Misery and Hardship</i></p> <p><b>Disruption and Restrictions</b></p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"> <p>CROSS-CUTTING THEMES</p> <p><b>Maltese Loyalty to Britain</b></p> <p><b>Social Divisions</b></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Local government Politics</b> <i>Partisan Politics; Demands for a new Constitution, Opposition to taxes</i></p> <p><b>Imperial Solidarity</b> <i>Support for the War; Maltese participation in the war</i></p> <p><b>Living Conditions in Malta</b> <i>Scarcity, Misery and Hardship</i></p> <p><b>Disruption and Restrictions</b></p>	<p>CROSS-CUTTING THEMES</p> <p><b>Maltese Loyalty to Britain</b></p> <p><b>Social Divisions</b></p>	<p>Storytelling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Publications</p>
<p><b>Local government Politics</b> <i>Partisan Politics; Demands for a new Constitution, Opposition to taxes</i></p> <p><b>Imperial Solidarity</b> <i>Support for the War; Maltese participation in the war</i></p> <p><b>Living Conditions in Malta</b> <i>Scarcity, Misery and Hardship</i></p> <p><b>Disruption and Restrictions</b></p>	<p>CROSS-CUTTING THEMES</p> <p><b>Maltese Loyalty to Britain</b></p> <p><b>Social Divisions</b></p>			
<b>AFTERMATH</b>	<p><b>The 'Greater War' and its effects on Malta</b></p> <p><b>Malta's internal struggles</b> <i>Misery and hardship after the Armistice; Unemployment; National Assembly calls for new constitution; The Sette Giugno Riots; The Self-Government constitution of 1921</i></p>	<p>National celebrations, Events, Storytelling, Digital technologies, Publications, Heritage trails</p>		
<b>COLLECTIVE MEMORY &amp; REMEMBRANCE</b>	<p><b>Military and Imperial aspect</b> <i>war graves and war cemeteries in Malta; ANZAC commemoration in 1916 and after</i></p> <p><b>Maltese aspect</b> <i>memorialisation of Maltese dead in local newspapers, Church services for the Maltese dead, Postwar memorialisation and remembrance</i></p>	<p>Events, Storytelling, Publications, Re-enactment, Site visits, Heritage trails, Digital technologies</p>		

Fig 1 The Heritage Interpretation Framework

In the wake of the Armistice, a Maltese political assembly was called to formulate a formal request for a new constitution. Unemployment, misery and hardship were hallmarks of the post-Armistice period and were a cause of the *Sette Giugno* Riots of June 1919. Malta's story of the First World War effectively ends in 1921 with the promulgation of a new constitution which gave the Maltese a measure of self-government.

This research shows that Maltese claims for a new constitution did not 'start' with the National Assembly after a hiatus during the war years. The constitution question remained very much an integral part of Maltese political debate during the war. Furthermore, it emerges that the troubles which led to the *Sette Giugno* Riots, namely the high cost of living, scarcity of food, misery and hardship did not start after the Armistice but a few days after the start of the First World War in August 1914. Hence the roots of the *Sette Giugno* Riots are in the war itself and how this impacted the Maltese.

Collective Memory and Remembrance is the theme of the fourth pillar of the interpretation framework. Here there are two major themes, one concerning military and Imperial aspects, and the other a Maltese aspect. The military and Imperial theme concerns the British and Imperial war dead in Malta, the expansion of military cemeteries in Malta. Locally, acts of remembrance associated with the First World War started during the war itself with the marking of Anzac Day in 1916. This was not an exclusively local phenomenon, because that year Anzac Day was observed in Australia and New Zealand and in other places where Anzac soldiers were serving. This has placed Malta within the Anzac myth.

The Maltese theme is concerned with the memorialisation of the Maltese war dead through mention in local newspapers and Church services and funerals. Both acts were important to bring closure to the relatives and friends of those men who died in distant lands or at sea. This study has placed the mention of the war dead in local newspapers within a wider discourse referring to Maltese participation in the war and loyalty to Britain. First World War remembrance reached its apex with the building of the war

memorial in Floriana. The First World War gradually ebbed away from Maltese collective memory as this was dominated by the more traumatic events of the Second World War.

Each of the four pillars discussed presents a thematic approach to the interpretation of the First World War in Malta. As has been discussed this consist of four overarching themes divided in various sub themes. An expanded version of the model (vide appendix 1) includes events that could serve as anchor points in the interpretation.

The fifth pillar of the framework is concerned with the means with which the interpretation of the themes could be effected. These include:

Visits to historic sites associated with the First World War e.g. Wardija Battery which served as an examination battery for the port of St Paul's Bay were shipping calling to Malta had to stop, the *Sacra Infirmaria* in Valletta, which was one of the principal hospitals for wounded soldiers.

Heritage trails grouping or following particular themes e.g. the places that served as military hospitals, the first world war burial places, the military forts that were in service during the war.

Storytelling could be an excellent way of explaining the First World War within a museum environment. Storytelling could be targeted to particular audiences such as old age persons and children. It could be a good outreach tool for museums, libraries and archives which can combine stories with artefacts from their collections.

Re-enactment and living history could be a means of interpreting people's lives, places, and events. Researched re-enactment and living history could be a valuable tool in recreating aspects, e.g. the wartime bread made with different mixtures of wheat and mixed with potatoes and rice, how it differed from the pre-war loaf , how it looked, it felt, smelt and tasted.

Digital technologies offer a wide range of interpretative possibilities. Digital platforms could be used to offer focused downloadable tours, site visits and heritage trails. A small QR code on an interpretation panel next to a building (e.g. the Sliema public school which served as a wartime hospital) could lead to additional layers of interpretation. Digital animations could show in a graphic way Malta's defence set up and how it worked. Libraries and archives could wield technology to digitise their 'hidden' collections and making them accessible to people in general and researchers. Research is at the heart of heritage interpretation and one cannot interpret in any meaningful way that which is unknown.

Events associated with First World War, such as anniversary commemorations, and exhibitions could help widen knowledge.

National celebrations associated with the First World War are the annual *Sette Giugno* Riots commemoration and Remembrance Sunday. In both cases the war itself is occluded. The *Sette Giugno* is celebrated as the first step towards Malta becoming an independent and sovereign nation. Whereas, Remembrance Sunday is mostly associated with the Second World War. Interpretation here needs to address the fact that both events find their origin and are deeply rooted in the First World War.

Publications are a good source of interpretation. Within a museum and exhibition environment leaflets, guidebooks and specialised catalogues help to interpret artefacts, collections and entire exhibitions. In conjunction with other means (e.g. digital technology, information labels, and oral guiding) publications provide an additional layer of interpretation. Publications can stimulate further interest and research.

It has been established that the myth of the 'Nurse of The Mediterranean' limits the understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of Malta during First World. This is abetted by the primary data presented in this study which shows that there are ample grounds for other interpretations of the First World War from a Maltese aspect especially, but not exclusively, from a social, political and economic point of view.

Other themes which support a fuller interpretation of the Malta during the First World War have been identified. These have been synthesised into the four overarching thematic interpretative approaches of the framework presented in this thesis as the "Malta During the First World War Heritage Interpretation Framework". Of its very nature this framework answers the second research question posed in this thesis, i.e. whether other themes, beyond that of the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" could inform our understanding and interpretation of Malta during the First World War. The research based on primary and secondary sources did identify these themes and these are presented in the heritage interpretation framework mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

The First World War was a cataclysmic event which changed the face of Europe and disrupted the political *status quo* globally. Suffice to say that the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. New nations came into being like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The British and French Empires shared between them the spoils of the Ottoman Empire and the former German colonies. Territorially, they both emerged larger than before the war. The war saw the emergence of a new world power, the United States, and a regional power, Japan. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia was followed by a bloody civil war. The spread of communism was much feared and an unsuccessful invasion of Russia was attempted in order to fight the threat.

The First World War blurred the separation between the military and the civilian realm. The destructive capability displayed during this war was like no other before. New weapons, like aircraft and submarines came to the fore and expanded the reach of war into areas where it had hitherto not existed. The bombing of British towns and cities from the air caused fears that something similar could happen to Malta and an air raid warning signal was adopted to warn the population in case of attack. Submarine warfare had a severe impact on the resupply of Malta with grave repercussions for the population.

For Malta the First World War was a transitional bridge between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. The self-government constitution proclaimed in 1921 could be viewed as the milestone marking the end of the nineteenth century Maltese struggle for political rights as well as concluding the First World War period in Malta.

This study has been concerned mainly with the situation in Malta between 1914 and 1918. The events associated with the *Sette Giugno* riots and the 1921 constitution have been documented by various authors (Fenech, 2005; Bartolo, 2019; Sant, 2009).

Nevertheless, this study shows that the social and economic problems which erupted in the *Sette Giugno* riots of 1919 started with the First World War itself. In this aspect the First World War was exceptional. Periods of war were generally marked by prosperity in Malta (Frendo, 2004 ) but, the First World War resulted in widespread misery and hardship. This pattern was to re-emerge during the Second World War. A comparative study of Malta during the two global conflicts could reveal other parallels. One which is immediately apparent is that before the wars Malta had lost a constitution and shortly after both wars Malta was given self-government (in 1921, and 1947).

It is argued that by comparing the First World War and the Second World War, parallels could be drawn to enable a better understanding of the first through the medium of the second. While there are similarities, one has to acknowledge that the Maltese experience of the Second World War was tempered by heavy and prolonged periods of aerial bombardment. Nevertheless, a comparison could be a good interpretative tool in the formulation of stories related to the Maltese experience of the First World War. This is suggested as a possible area for further study.

This study shows that the interpretation of Malta during the First World War is dominated by the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” myth, which, as a consequence, limits the understanding and interpretation of Malta during the First World War. As discussed in this study, the “Nurse of the Mediterranean” is the privileged theme which the National War Museum in Valletta presents in its interpretation the First World War. This perpetuates the idea that there is no other interpretation to be given because Malta did not take part in the war and did not suffer attack. This answers the first research question posed : Does the discourse of the ‘Nurse of the Mediterranean’ limit the understanding and interpretation of Malta’s contribution to the Allied war effort during the First World War?

Literature shows that there are other aspects to Malta’s participation in the First World War, even if these are not much explored. This is further reinforced by the primary data

presented in this study which shows that there are ample grounds for other interpretations of the First World War from a Maltese aspect.

This study presents a synthesis of themes in the form of the “Malta During the First World War Heritage Interpretation Framework”. This framework suggests four overarching thematic interpretative approaches: 1) Military, (2) Civilian, (3) the War’s Aftermath, and (4) Collective Memory and Remembrance. It also suggests ways for delivering interpretation.

The framework provides a holistic multi-themed and multi-perspective approach to the interpretation of Malta during the First World War and answers the second research question posed: Beyond the discourse of the ‘Nurse of the Mediterranean’, which other themes could inform our understanding and interpretation of Malta during the First World War?

Limited academic research hampers the interpretation of Malta during the First World War. Study into the subject is further hampered by lack of adequate discovery services within memory institutions like the National Archives of Malta and the National Library of Malta.

Meaningful interpretation depends on information based on reliable sources. Research using archival and primary sources could contribute to the creation of a corpus of published sources the dissemination which could be used to inform interpretation. It is argued that a comprehensive and researched history of Malta during the First World War has been long overdue.

The First World War needs to be given greater visibility. This can be achieved through a rework of the National War Museum display and interpretation. There might be scope for the establishment of a dedicated museum through private initiative or heritage organisations, as is the case of the Malta at War Museum in Vittoriosa which is run by *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* (the Malta Heritage Trust). It is suggested that the “Malta

During the First World War Heritage Interpretation Framework” presented in this study could be used as an outline plan for such undertakings.

The research in this thesis is a contribution to the building of knowledge about Malta during the First World War. The interpretation framework presented herein is not only a contribution to the local heritage interpretation field but, it can also be used as framework by researchers to undertake further study into the various aspects (represented by themes and sub-themes) presented.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

The Malta During the First World War Heritage Interpretation Framework

MAIN THEME	Military		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION
	SUB THEMES		
	Primary Level	Secondary Level	
Naval base and Arsenal	The Malta dockyard		Site visits, Story-telling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Heritage trails, Publications
	The British squadron	Blockade of the Dardanelles	
	Home to the French Fleet	French Blockade of Otranto	
	The role in supporting the naval war in the Mediterranean especially in the anti-submarine warfare	The Malta Conference of 1916 discussed Allied policy	
Hospital base	The role of Nurse of the Mediterranean, Hospitals and convalescent camps		
Aerial base	Seaplanes and aircraft operating from Malta	The first recorded flight from Malta 1915	
	Infrastructure - Sea Plane base at Kalafrana and facilities at Mistra and Marsa Mistra		
	Seaplane construction at Dockyard to increase aircraft for anti-submarine patrols		
	Anti-submarine patrols		
Source of manpower	Maltese in the Royal Navy		
	The Maltese Garrison which relieved British units during the war		
	The Maltese Labour Battalions in Gallipoli, Salonica and elsewhere		
	Maltese recruited into an Army Service Corps Motor Transport unit for service in the Balkans		
	Maltese in the Royal Air Force		

MAIN THEME	Military		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION
	SUB THEMES		
	Primary Level	Secondary Level	
Prison of War Camp	Infrastructure - the Maltese prison camps		Site visits, Storytelling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Heritage trails, Publications
	Prisoners arrested in Malta	civilians, military, political undesirables, Indian Muslim religious leaders	
	Prisoners arrested in Egypt and elsewhere transferred to Malta		
	Life in prison camp		
The Malta Prize Court			
British War Strategy	Malta within Imperial / Mediterranean strategy		
	Fortress Malta - the infrastructure - fortresses and guns	The fortification of Malta and the principal fortresses in service and their role in defence	
		Principal guns and their intended function for offence and defence	
	The Garrison	The British soldiers conditions of service, soldier backgrounds	
		The Maltese soldiers Conditions of service and discrimination between Maltese and British soldiers e.g. pay, rations, promotions and regimental seniority	
	Garrison Life in Malta	grog shops	
		prostitution	
		entertainments and sobriety	
The 1912 Malta Conference and the island's defence			
The Malta Defence Scheme			

MAIN THEME	Civilian		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION
	SUB THEMES		
	Primary Level	Secondary Level	
Maltese Loyalty to Britain - a cross-cutting theme	Imperial Solidarity, support of the war and participation implied as proof of Maltese loyalty		Storytelling, Digital Technologies, Re-enactment, Publications
	Politics, abstentionist policy as a protest at Malta's loss of 1887 constitution and not a sign of disloyalty		
Social Divisions - a cross-cutting theme	Living conditions in Malta division between rich and poor; division between importers and merchants and the rest of the population; division between the nobility, capitalists and workers and the poor		
	politics Language as class identity and as a social barrier between the 'puliti' and the mass of the people generally illiterate and referred to as 'baxxi'		

MAIN THEME	Civilian		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION	
	SUB THEMES			
	Primary Level	Secondary Level		Particular Item Level
Disruption and Restrictions	Malta governed by Martial Law		Storytelling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Publications	
	Access to certain areas restricted or closed. Harbours and maritime traffic regulated			
	censorship			
	Restrictions on exports			
	Problems to resupply Malta	difficulties of obtaining shipping and the submarine menace		
		Many countries impose export restrictions making it difficult for Malta to obtain supplies		
		Britain centralised the provision of wheat through Royal Commission		
		The Malta-Tunisia nexus for the supply of cattle and some other food items; The Casolani mission to Tunisia		

MAIN THEME	<b>Civilian</b>			
SUB THEMES			RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION	
Primary Level	Secondary Level	Particular Item Level		
Living Conditions in Malta	High Cost of Living, Misery and hardship	Government action: Price Controls, Bread rebate and War bonuses but these do not reach everyone, District committees and soup kitchens	<b>Storytelling, Digital technologies, Re-enactment, Publications</b>	
		Social Action: Archbishop's Bread Fund; Societa S Vincenzo de Paoli; Lady Methuen Fund for distressed Families		
	Scarcity of food, fuel and other items	Bread, a staple food becomes unaffordable		
		local invention and production of economical firepots which use less burning fuel		
		production of local charcoal		
	Food	attempts to increase local food production by cultivating wastelands, growing vegetables in public gardens, government drive to increase potato cultivation		
	Employment	Despite war-related employment unemployment remained a persistent problem		
		Wages inadequate		
		Female employment, wage discrimination, perceived as a threat to male employment, the case of Colombos cigarette factory		
Industrial action and workers unionisation				
Emigration; difficulties of emigration because of illiterism; racism and the case of Maltese who were refused entry into Australia				

MAIN THEME	The Aftermath		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION
SUB THEMES			
Primary Level	Secondary Level	Particular Item Level	
The 'Greater War' and its effects on Malta	The Greco Turkish War	Refugees from Smyrna	National celebrations, Events, Storytelling, Digital technologies, Publications, Heritage trails
		Ottoman political prisoners	
	Russian Civil War	Russian refugees in Malta	
Malta's internal struggles	Misery and hardship persist after the Armistice		
	Massive unemployment was expected		
	National Assembly calls for new constitution		
	The Sette Giugno Riots 1919		
	The 1921 Self-Govt constitution		

MAIN THEME	Collective Memory and Remembrance		RECOMMENDED INTERPRETATION
	SUB THEMES		
Primary Level	Secondary Level	Particular Item Level	
Military and Imperial aspect	war graves and war cemeteries in Malta		Events, Storytelling, Publications, Re-enactment, Site visits, Heritage trails, Digital technologies
	ANZAC commemoration from 1916 onwards		
Maltese aspect	Memorialisation of Maltese dead in local newspapers	Maltese Press subscribe to a discourse of 'honourable' death on the battlefield	
		to accentuate Malta's participation in the war; the sacrifice in the imperial struggle; loyalty to Britain	
	Church services for the Maltese dead	Many Maltese died on the sea and in places away from Malta. Religious services was a way of bringing closure to families of the victims	
		Children's memorial hospital launched by the Governor Lord Methuen as a fitting and useful tribute to remember the war dead	
	Postwar memorialisation and remembrance	The War Memorial in Floriana as a Maltese adaptation of the London Cenotaph	

## APPENDIX 2

Select Documents

*Leslie Rundle*  
*Governor & Vice Admiral*



PROOF  
-7 263 1914

ANNO DOMINI 1914.]

[No. XV.]

## PROCLAMATION.

By His Excellency Sir HENRY MACLEOD LESLIE RUNDLE, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, General in His Majesty's Army, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, and Commander of the Troops serving within the same.

Di Sua Eccellenza Sir HENRY MACLEOD LESLIE RUNDLE, Cavaliere Gran Croce dell' Onorabilissimo Ordine del Bagno, Cavaliere Gran Croce del Distintissimo Ordine di San Michele e San Giorgio, Cavaliere Gran Croce dell' Ordine Reale Vittoriano, Cavaliere di Grazia dell' Ordine di San Giovanni di Gerusalemme in Inghilterra, Compagno dell' Ordine per Segnalati Servigi, Generale nell' Esercito di Sua Maestà, Governatore e Comandante in Capo della Isola di Malta e sue Dipendenze, e Comandante delle Truppe che servono nelle stesse.

WHEREAS by a Warrant of the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, given on the 17th August 1899, in pursuance of Her late Majesty's Letters Patent dated at Westminster the 10th day of July, 1899, His Majesty's Commercial Court was required, upon any Proclamation being made by the Vice-Admiral of these possessions that War has broken out between His Majesty and any Foreign State, and not otherwise, to take cognizance of and judicially to proceed in Prize matters, as therein indicated:

And whereas war has broken out between His Majesty and the German Emperor:

Now, therefore, I, Leslie Rundle, Governor and Vice-Admiral of Malta and its dependencies, being satisfied thereof by information received by me, do hereby, for the purposes aforesaid, proclaim that war has broken out between His Majesty and the German Emperor.

The Palace, Valletta, this 8th day of August, 1914.

By Command,  
*John E. Clauson*  
Lieutenant-Governor  
and Chief Secretary to Government.

SICCOME in virtù di un Mandato dei Commissarij per adempiere l'ufficio di Lord Alto Ammiraglio del Regno Unito della Gran Bretagna ed Irlanda, emanato nel dì 17 Agosto 1899, in esecuzione delle Lettere Patenti della defunta Sua Maestà la Regina, portanti la data a Westminster nel decimo giorno di Luglio 1899, la Corte di Commercio di Sua Maestà è stata incaricata di prendere cognizione e a procedere giudiziariamente in materia di Prede, come ivi è indicato, alla Proclamazione per parte del Vice-Ammiraglio di queste possessioni dello scoppio di guerra tra Sua Maestà ed uno Stato Estero, e non altrimenti:

E siccome la guerra è scoppiata tra Sua Maestà e l'Imperatore di Germania:

Ora, pertanto, Io, Leslie Rundle, Governatore e Vice Ammiraglio di Malta e sue dipendenze, constandomi del premesso da informazione pervenutami, colla presente proclamo, per l'oggetto sopra esposto, che è scoppiata la guerra tra Sua Maestà e l'Imperatore di Germania.

Palazzo, Valletta, oggi il dì 8 agosto, 1914.

Per Comando,  
JOHN E. CLAUSON,  
Laogotenente-Governatore  
e Principale Segretario del Governo.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

*r.f.*

War Proclamation issued by the Governor of Malta  
(National Archives of Malta)

No 49.

Assistant Secretary's Office.

Gozo, 6th August, 1914.

3310  
14



Sir,

I have the honour to report that the news of the declaration of war between Great Britain and Germany, which reached here yesterday afternoon, has been received by the inhabitants of this Island with the utmost enthusiasm.

2. The local bands paraded the streets of Victoria to the strains of marches, and after "God save the King" had been played in front of the Assistant Secretary's Office, their representatives called to ask me to convey to His Excellency the Governor an expression of their sentiments of devotion and unwavering loyalty to the Throne.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the Acting Assistant Secretary to Govt. Gozo.

Acting Assistant Secretary to Govt.  
Gozo.

To His Honour,

The Lieutenant-Governor

and Chief Secretary to Government,

The Palace.

Asst. Sec Gozo - 53  
Ar. 10. 12.

War Enthusiasm in Gozo  
(CSG 01 3310/1914 - National Archives of Malta)



**GOVERNMENT NOTICE.**

[ No. 139. ]

IT is hereby notified that His Excellency the Governor, in pursuance of the powers vested in him by the Order in Council of the 26th October 1896, has been pleased to prohibit dealers in wine, beer or spirits, whether wholesale or by retail, from supplying, under any title whatsoever, wine, beer or spirits of any kind, to any non-commissioned officers or men forming part of the Garrison of Malta and its Dependencies.

By Command,

LIEUT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE,

The Palace, Valletta,  
August 10, 1914.

JOHN E. CLAUSON,

Lieutenant-Governor

and Chief Secretary to Government.

**NOTIFICAZIONE DI GOVERNO.**

SI rende noto colla presente che Sua Eccellenza il Governatore, valendosi dei poteri conferitigli coll'Ordine in Consiglio del 26 ottobre 1896, si è compiaciuto di vietare ai commercianti in vini, birra e spiriti, sia all'ingrosso che in dettaglio, di fornire sotto qualsiasi titolo, alcuna sorta di vini, birra e spiriti, a bassi ufficiali e soldati formanti parti della guarnigione di Malta e sue dipendenze.

Per Comando,

UFFICIO DEL LUOG. GOVERNATORE,

Palazzo, Valletta,  
10 agosto, 1914.

JOHN E. CLAUSON,

Luogotenente-Governatore  
e Principale Segretario del Governo.

Government Notice prohibiting the sale of alcohol to servicemen  
(National Archives of Malta)

GOVERNMENT NOTICE. No.

In exercise of the power vested in the Government by Ordinance No. XI of 1914 and otherwise, His Excellency has been pleased to direct that, until further notice, the maximum price at which Swedish <sup>Safety</sup> Matches, marked with the Wenersborg Star may be sold shall be as follows :-

Wholesale price per Gross Boxes - - - - 8/-  
Retail price per Box. - - - - 1/4d.

A list of the Retailers selected in each District to retail these Matches is posted in the Police Station for the District.



Regulating the price of Swedish Matches  
(National Archives of Malta CSG 01 425/1918)

8

LIST OF MAXIMUM PRICES.

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PORK

<u>WHOLESALE</u>	<u>RETAIL</u>
2/9 per rotolo	3/- per rotolo

PIGS OFFAL

Liver	2/- per rotolo	2/6 per rotolo
Lungs	5d. to 10d. per set	10 to 1/3 per set
Heart & Spleen	1/8 per rotolo	2/4 per rotolo
Stomacks	2d. to 6d. each	4d. to 10d. each
Intestines	10d. to 1/2 per set	1/3 to 1/6 per set
Head	1/3 per rotolo	1/8 per rotolo
Tongue	2/7 " "	2/10 " "
Feet	3d. each	4d. each

MUTTON.

2/2 per rotolo	2/6 per rotolo
----------------	----------------

LAMB

1/6 per rotolo including weight of skin	2/- per rotolo
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SHEEP OFFAL

Liver	1/8 per rotolo	2/- per rotolo
Lungs	4d. per set	5d. per set
Heart	3d. each	4d. each
Stomacks	2d. "	3d. "
Intestines	2d. per set	3d. per set
Head including ) Tongue & Brains )	10d. each	1/3 each

GOATS FLESH.

2/- per rotolo	2/4 per rotolo
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GOATS OFFAL

Liver	1/6 per rotolo	1/10 per rotolo
Lungs	3d. per set	4d. per set
Hearts	2d. each	4d. each
Stomacks	2d. each	3d. "
Intestines	2d. per set	3d. per set
Head including ) Tongue & Brain )	9d. each	1/2 each

HORSE, DONKEY & MULE OFFAL.

Liver	10d. per rotolo	1/3 per rotolo
Lungs	2d. " "	4d. " "
Heart	8d. " "	1/- " "
Spleen	6d. " "	10d. " "
Head without ) bones )	10d. " "	1/1 " "
Tongue	10d. " "	1/1 " "

HORSE, DONKEY & Mule FLESH

10d. per rotolo	1/1 per rotolo
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Prices of various meat products  
(National Archives of Malta CSG 01 418/18)

3

Article	Wholesale			Retail		
	Period	Unit	Price	Period	Unit	Price
Aubergine	1st July - 31st Oct	basket of 25	-/11d	1st July - 31st Oct	each	-/3d
Capicum (Mild)	1st July - 31st Oct	basket of 60	-/8d	1st July - 31st Oct	5 for	1d.
Soup celery	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	basket of 25	-/4d -/8d	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	each do.	-/3d -/2d
Carrots: local variety	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	pesa do.	-/3d -/6d	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	rotolo do.	3d 1 1/2d
foreign varieties	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	do. do.	-/6d 1s/-.	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	do. do.	1 1/2d 3d
B e e t	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	do. do.	-/2d. -/6d.	1st Janr - 31st May 1st June - 31st Dec	do. do.	3d 1 1/2d
Turnips	1st Decr - 30th Apl 1st May - 30th Nov	bundle of 24	-/3d. -/6d.	1st Decr - 30th Apl 1st May - 30th Nov	6 for 3 for	1d. 1d.
Jerusalem Artichoke	1st Novr - 31st Mar	pesa	-/6d.	1st Novr - 31st Mar	rotolo	1 1/2d
French Beans & Kidney Beans as vegetable	1st April - 31st May 1st June - 31st Oct	do. do.	2/1d. 3s/-.	1st April - 31st May 1st June - 31st Oct	do. do.	6d. 8d
Spinach	1st Novr - 30th Apl	per 20 bundles	-/8d.	1st Novr - 30th Apl	bundle	3d
Carobs	1st Octr - 31st Dec 1st Janr - 30th Apl At harvest time	cantar do. do.	12/6d. 15s/-. 11s/-.	1st Octr - 31st Dec 1st Janr - 30th Apl .....	pesa do.	8 1/2d 10d
Olives : fresh	(local variety) (foreign varieties)	tunolo do.	2/6d. 4/2d.	..... .....	..... .....	..... .....
salted or pickled	(local variety) (foreign varieties)	do. do.	3/6d. 5/6d.	..... .....	misura do.	1d. 1 1/2d.
Mandarin Orange	1st to 31st Decr. 1st Janr - 31st Mar	dozen do.	-/4d. -/5d.	1st to 31st Decr. 1st Janr - 31st Mar	dozen do.	5 1/2d. 6 1/2d.
Ord. & Ord. Blood Orange	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	do. do. do.	-/4d. -/5 1/2d -/7d.	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	do. do. do.	5 1/2d. 7d. 9d.
Egg & Egg Blood Orange	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	do. do. do.	-/6 1/2d -/8d -/10d.	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	do. do. do.	8d. 10d. 1s/-.
Sweet Orange	1st Novr - 31st Dec 1st Janr - 28th Feb 1st Mar. - 31st May	do. do. do.	-/5 1/2d -/6 1/2d -/7 1/2d	1st Novr - 31st Dec 1st Janr - 28th Feb 1st Mar. - 31st May	do. do. do.	7d. 8d. 9d.
Maximum price for dropped oranges & mandarin = 2/3 price quoted						
Lemons	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	dozen do. do.	-/2 1/2d -/3 1/2d -/4 1/2d	1st Decr - 31st Jan 1st Febr - 31st Mar 1st April - 31st May	dozen do. do.	3 1/2d 5d 6d
Lemons (green or verdelli)	1st June - 30th Nov	do.	-/5d	1st June - 30th Nov	do.	6d

Setting prices of vegetables - part of a report by the director of Agriculture (National Archives of Malta CSG01 212/18)

# The Malta Herald

TUESDAY, MAY, 2, 1916

## The Sugar Question.

To the Editor *The Malta Herald*.

Sir,

I hope you will allow me the indulgence of your columns to draw the attention of His Excellency the Governor to the sugar question which is again on the *tapis*. It will be remembered that not long ago the Government issued a proclamation fixing the price of this first necessary of life at 6½d. per *rotolo*. In spite of this proclamation, however, greedy speculators are selling sugar at 9d and in some cases 10d per *rotolo*. I understand that there is a sufficient supply in the Island and it is only fair and just that poor people who can hardly earn an honest living should be protected. I earnestly appeal to His Excellency and I am sure that he will not fail to take energetic steps with a view to the proclamation being enforced.

Yours truly,  
BREAD-EARNER.

Letter in the Malta Herald in which merchants are viewed as "greedy speculators".