

# MALTESE HISTORY

LO6 - fghil

**Political and Constitutional Developments  
(1800 to 1914)**



**Year 10**

Third Edition – 2023  
for History SEC 2025



Curriculum Centre Annex



## LO6 f - Malta as a British Protectorate (1800–1813)



*Malta a bone of contention between Britain and France in 1800.*

*British Civil Commissioners for Malta:*

*Left: Sir Alexander Ball (1802–1809)*

*Right: Sir Hildebrand Oakes (1810–1813)*

### **British policy during the Protectorate**

- According to the Treaty of Amiens, the British were to evacuate the Maltese Islands and return them over to the Knights of St John;
- The Civil Commissioners were given instructions by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to keep or even restore the institutions in the same way they functioned under the Knights;
- The Civil Commissioners were not to interfere with the local Church authorities in religious matters;
- The local Church hierarchy was to keep enjoying its prerogatives and privileges as before;
- The British wanted a Maltese-born to be the next Bishop of Malta after Vincenzo Labini;
- The Grand Harbour was to serve as another naval base for the British Mediterranean fleet;
- When war with France was resumed in 1803 a number of British infantry regiments were deployed in Malta for the duration of the Napoleonic Wars;

### **Changes in British policy when Malta was declared a Crown Colony in 1813**

- Malta was to fall under the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Colonies;
- A series of military governors were appointed by the Secretary of State since Malta was considered a fortress colony;
- The Governors were given unfettered (complete) control over the civil and military administration;
- The Governor was to keep cordial relations with the local Catholic hierarchy and to respect the traditions and beliefs of the Maltese, so long these did not contradict British principles of good government;
- The Maltese were denied any share in the administration of the islands.



*Left: The former Grand Masters' Palace in Valletta became the seat of power of the British Governors in Malta.*

*Right: Under the British, the Grand Harbour continued to function as a naval base and trading hub.*

## Early petitions by the Maltese

For the first three decades of British rule in Malta, the Civil Commissioners and the Governors exercised almost unlimited power over the Maltese. Although some of the leading Maltese citizens formulated **petitions** and presented them to the Governor the King's representative in Malta, most of their demands were ignored. Between 1800 and 1835 no less than nine such petitions were sent. The most important documents and petitions during this period were:



Marq. Nicolò Testaferrata

- 'The Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of Malta and Gozo' of 1802;
- The petition of Marquis Mario Testaferrata of 1805;
- A petition of Marquis Nicolo Testaferrata of 1811;
- 'The Claims of the Maltese People based upon the Principles of Justice' of the *Comitato Generale Maltese* of 1835.

Below are listed some of the demands put forward by the Maltese leaders of the time.

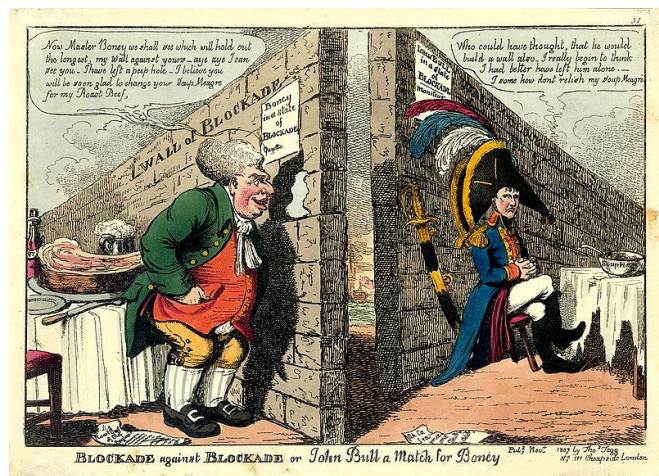
1. The setting up of a Council of Government. This demand was granted in 1835;
2. To appoint civil governors in charge of the administration instead of autocratic military governors;
3. The abolition of press censorship and the granting of a free press. This was granted in 1839;
4. The establishment of trial by jury in the Law Courts. This was granted in 1851;
5. Reform of the Criminal Code of Grand Master de Rohan, which had become to harsh and outdated; This demand was granted in 1854;
6. The setting up of primary schools in the main towns and villages with the aim of eradicating illiteracy among the people. This was granted in 1840;
7. The appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire upon the state of the islands and to suggest more reforms. This demand was granted in 1836;
8. To attract more foreign trade towards Malta by declaring it as a 'free port'.

In May 1806 Britain placed the entire coast of Europe under a naval blockade. Napoleon retaliated by establishing the Continental System. It prohibited by a threat of confiscation any vessel coming from Britain from entering any port under French control. In the end, the blockade hurt France more than it did Britain, causing widespread food shortages, a general recession, inflation and contraband trade. In these circumstances, Malta was conveniently used by British merchants as a centre for contraband goods smuggled into French-dominated Europe. So long as the blockade lasted, Malta registered its first economic boom under the British resulting in full employment and a general increase in wages for the Maltese working classes and more profits for merchants and tradesmen.

In 1807 the British authorities declared corsairing an illegal activity, bringing the end to this centuries-old industry in Malta. The distinction between corsairing and piracy was no longer acknowledged by the authorities and whoever was caught raiding merchant shipping in the Mediterranean was punishable by the death penalty. In fact, one such execution was held in public in Grand Harbour in 1815.

In 1811, a special Royal Commission was sent by the Colonial Office to study and report on the political and economic state of the Maltese Islands. The Commission was headed by the Civil Commissioner himself, Sir Hildebrand Oakes.

In 1813, Napoleon's defeat and retreat from Russia brought about the collapse of the Continental Blockade. From then onwards, Malta stopped being used as a contraband centre and ships entering Grand Harbour returned to pre-blockade level. Moreover, in May of that year, the first cases of plague were discovered among the population.



The caricature shows John Bull, representing an Englishman, gloating because his blockade is causing food shortages in France. The table behind him is heaped with food, while Napoleon sits before a simple bowl of soup. Source: Wikipedia Commons

## LO6 f - Malta as a British Protectorate (1800–1813)

1. Give the years when Malta was a British Protectorate. \_\_\_\_\_ (1)

2. Explain the main difference between a 'protectorate' and a 'colony'.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

3. List **three** aspects of early British policy towards in Malta.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3)

4. Did Malta's position changed for better or for worse when it was declared a British Crown Colony?  
Give two reasons for your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3)

5. Why did Maltese leaders put forward petitions during the first decades of British rule in Malta?

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

6. Mention **one** example of these petitions.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1)

7. Mention **three** important Maltese demands included in most of these petitions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3)

8. Briefly comment on **two** events that occurred, one in Malta and one in Europe when Malta was a British protectorate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (5)

**(Total: 20 marks)**

## LO6 g – The Administration of Sir Thomas Maitland (1813–1824)

The first British Governor to rule over Malta was Sir Thomas Maitland (1759-1824). With responsibility over the Ionian Islands and Gibraltar, Maitland was often absent for long periods from Malta. But as an administrator he was capable and efficient. When Maitland met Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, he insisted that as Malta's Governor he was to have 'free and unfettered power'.

### A Council of Government

The Royal Commission of 1811 left it in the hands of the Governor to appoint an Advisory Council where British members were to be in the majority. This Council was to have no power to vote, and points of discussion were to be brought to it by the Governor. Maitland refused to appoint such a council for he was thus determined to be the 'government' in Malta. He believed that for the people, government simply meant the provision of material benefits. He also considered the Maltese to be unfit to take part in important government decisions. So demands by the Maltese to get a share in the government made no progress under his administration. And because he was active in all aspects of Maltese life, he soon became nicknamed by the Maltese as 'King Tom'.



Left: Lord Bathurst  
Right: Sir Thomas Maitland

### The Civil Administration

Maitland was both Governor and Commander-in-Chief with all civil and military powers in his hands. The civil duties were executed in his absence by the Chief Secretary to Government. To win the loyalty of the Maltese nobles he appointed six of them as Lord-Lieutenants to a group of villages. Of course, the power of the nobles was to be only nominal. The Malta Police was set up in the same year as the one set up in Britain. The Inspector-General of Police was appointed by and acted on orders from the Governor. No person could be held by the police for more than 48 hours. Police magistrates had ten days to examine suspects and bring the accused to the Criminal Court. Maitland is often accused of having implanted a sense of superiority of the British over the Maltese. At the head of each government department, he placed an Englishman, and the Maltese were eligible only to lower offices.

### Economic measures

Maitland kept a firm hold on the finances. No money was issued from the *Treasury* except by his warrant. He also set up an Audit Office (1816) to examine the expenditure of all government departments. Government came from three sources: from the payment of rents on government property; from quarantine dues paid by all ships entering Grand Harbour; on custom duties on all imported goods. The three pillars of Maitland's economic policy were: to give preference to goods manufactured in Britain or in other British colonies; to encourage export of Maltese goods; to make Malta a centre for entrepot trade. The latter could be achieved if the government kept custom duties as low as possible, even though this was the main source of government revenue. Thus in 1819 the export duty was abolished; import duties were fixed at 1% on British imported goods and 2% on all other foreign goods. In 1820 quarantine charges were also reduced and the transit duty was abolished.

During Maitland's years, Malta established itself as an entrepot centre for trade between Europe and the Levant. But with the establishment of Greece as an independent state in 1830, this commerce became dominated by a large Greek merchant navy.

In December 1818 Maitland removed the importation of grain from the Maltese *università dei grani* and appointed a *Board of Grain Supply* as a government department on the grounds that it had a deficit of 1,700,000 *scudi* in arrears. An auditor was appointed to collect these arrears. Until 1822 grain was imported by the government, which rendered considerable profits without increasing the price of grain for the Maltese. Out of these profits the Government was able to distribute 45,000 *scudi* annually in aid for the poor.

## The Law Courts

The heaviest criticism of the Royal Commission of 1812 was directed against the judicial system. Too many appeals were permitted which prolonged cases indefinitely. Judges took their income from judicial fees, a system that encouraged bribes. Judges were practically irremovable. The Commission recommended that judges should have fixed salaries paid by the government, the Governor would have the power to remove them, evidence from witnesses should be taken to an open court and subjected to a time limit and appeals were to be reduced. But trial by jury demanded by the Maltese was not recommended in a small community like Malta where everyone knew everyone, except in the Commercial Court.

Maitland supervised the reforms in the department of justice himself. The first to be reformed, in 1814 was the old *Consolato del Mare* which became the Commercial Court. The *Castellany Court* was divided into two halls: one for the Criminal Court and one for the Civil Court. All judges were appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the King. They were appointed until retirement but could be suspended by the Governor in case of misconduct. Italian was made the language of the Law Courts. Sentences decided by a judge in Court were final. The Court of Appeal consisted of two halls, one for commercial and one for civil cases. There was to be no appeal from the Criminal Court. The Governor and two judges constituted the Supreme Court of Justice to deal with exceptional cases. The power of the Governor to reverse judicial sentences (previously practised by the Grand Masters) was abolished.

## Relations with the Catholic Church

Maitland was instructed by Lord Bathurst against religious innovations. Ecclesiastical Courts were not to be touched. In 1816 St John's Church remained Government property but was to be elevated to a Co-Cathedral and administered by the Maltese Church. The Bishop's Court of Appeal was to be left with two judges appointed by the Bishop and approved by the Governor. Their decision was to be final. But then a dispute developed when a suspected person took sanctuary in a chapel. Maitland made a formal demand to have the suspect handed over to the civil authorities for questioning. But this was refused by the Church authorities, and the suspect was questioned in the Bishop's Court instead. This meant that the case could be appealed in Rome. This was one thing Maitland would not accept, for he considered the Pope as a foreign power interfering in the civil laws of a British possession. In 1822 he went personally to Rome to settle the privilege of sanctuary and the *privilegium fori* directly with the Holy See. Negotiations were still going on when he died in January 1824. This question was finally settled in 1828 with their abolition. From then onwards the *privilegium fori* was applied only to the Bishop.

In another aspect, Maitland tried to reduce the power of the Church in Malta by reducing its property. In 1822 he passed the 'Mortmain Law' which declared that all landed property left to the Church had to be disposed or sold within one year of its acquisition. Otherwise, it was to become government property. But owing to great opposition from the local population and the Church, this law was never put into practice.



*Maitland's mausoleum at the Upper Barraca Gardens, Valletta. This monument was very simple when compared with that of Alexander Ball (1810) and Lord Hastings (1826).*

## Education

The Maltese had complained about the low state of education. At that time, it was estimated that 70% of the population was illiterate, 20% had only rudiments in reading and writing and only 10% had reached a level of advanced knowledge. In 1819 an association with the support of the Governor was formed to open primary schools. One such school, The Normal School at Valletta had 200 pupils in 1821, 66% of which were boys. But after some years this plan was discontinued because of lack of funds from the government. The British colonial authorities gave orders that no further steps in education were to be taken, conscious of the financial burden this would bring upon the limited financial resources at the disposal of the local administration.

## LO6 g – The Administration of Sir Thomas Maitland (1813–1824)

1. Why was Maitland frequently away from Malta? How did this fact affect the administration in Malta?

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(2)

2. Under which category do these Maitland's reforms fall? Tick (✓) the correct column. (8)

	Reform	Administration	Economy	Law Courts	Church-State	Education
a.	A Normal School opened in Valletta					
b.	The Mortmain Law of 1822					
c.	Abolition of the <i>Consolato del Mare</i>					
d.	A Board of Grain replaced the <i>università</i> .					
e.	Founded the Malta Police in 1814.					
f.	Judges were given fixed salaries.					
g.	No Council of Government was formed.					
h.	St John's Church became a Co-Cathedral.					

3. Why was Maitland nicknamed 'King Tom' by the Maltese?

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(2)

4. Identify **two** instructions which Lord Bathurst gave to Maitland when he was appointed Governor of Malta.

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(2)

5. Provide one reason on which Maitland introduced the following:

a. A Board of Grain Supply instead of the *università dei grani*:

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(1)

b. Judges were paid fixed salaries:

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(1)

c. The Mortain Law of 1822:

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(1)

d. An audit office was set up in 1816:

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(1)

6. Give **two** reasons why did Maitland refused to set up a Maltese Council of Government?

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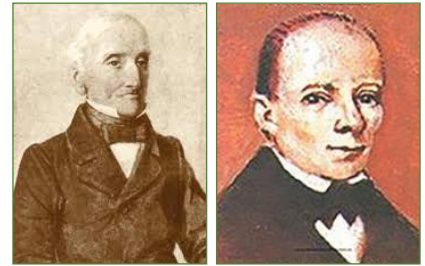
(2)

**(Total: 20 marks)**

## LO6 h – The Council of Government of 1835 and 1849

### The Comitato Generale Maltese

The year 1830 witnessed the liberal revolutions in many parts of Europe and a change of government in Britain from a Tory (conservative) to a Liberal (reformist) one. This marked an important change in British policy towards Malta. In that year some 30 Maltese 'liberals' set up the Comitato Generale Maltese to collect signatures for another petition. The leaders of the movement were Count Camillo Sciberras and George Mitrovich, a patriot from Senglea. Sciberras was influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution and he even went into voluntary exile when the French lost Malta in 1800. In 1817 he was allowed to return to Malta. The *Comitato* presented two petitions to Governor Ponsonby in 1832: one compiled by Dr Paolo Sciortino with 135 signatures and another one by Camillo Sciberras with 506 signatures. Both petitions had the following demands:



Left: Camillo Sciberras  
Right: George Mitrovich  
Below: The Council of Government's meeting room in the Governor's Palace, Valletta.

- The Governor had too much power;
- *Consiglio di Nativi* made up of 30 members as a local Council of Government;
- Reform the Criminal Code of 1782 which had become outdated;
- Increase the salaries of Maltese officials employed by the government;
- Reduce custom duties on wheat and other food items;
- Give incentives to merchants and farmers.



### The Council of Government of 1835

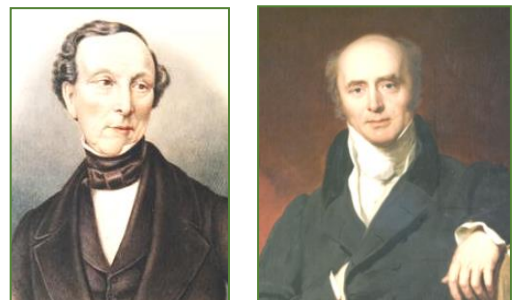
In 1835 the Secretary of State Lord Glenelg granted Malta its first Council of Government. But this Council fell short of Maltese expectations for it consisted of 3 Maltese members, 4 British members and the Governor himself. Its members were not elected by the Maltese but were *ex-officio* or hand-picked by the Governor. They did not have the right to vote for or against laws. The Governor was left free to accept or ignore its advice. The eight council members were: the Governor, the Chief Secretary, the Chief Justice, the Bishop (who renounced his seat), 1 Maltese landowner, 1 Maltese merchant and 1 British merchant resident in Malta.

In 1835 George Mitrovich obtained permission to go to London and present another petition, this time in the House of Commons itself. The petition entitled *The Claims of the Maltese People founded upon the Principles of Justice* described the recent Council of Government as 'an insult to the Maltese nation'. One positive development was that many British Liberal MPs supported Mitrovich's claims. Even the Governor had been disappointed for would have preferred at least a majority of Maltese members in the Council.

The Constitution of 1835 showed that the British Government saw Malta simply as a fortress-colony and as a naval base for its Mediterranean fleet. But the Maltese leaders continued to demand changes in the Constitution which would include Maltese elected members. For some years the British refused to grant this demand. But the liberal and national revolutions that broke out in many parts of Europe in 1848 made the British authorities change their mind and grant the Maltese an partially elective Council of Government.

### The Constitution of 1849

In appointing Sir Richard More O'Ferrall (*left*) as the new Governor of Malta in 1847, Secretary of State Earl Grey (*right*), sought to please the Maltese for the following reasons. His predecessor Governor Stuart had angered the people when he stopped Carnival festivities in Valletta in 1845; O'Ferrall was Catholic like the Maltese and the first civilian governor in Malta.



In 1848 O'Ferrall proposed the setting up of a new Council of Government made up of ten official and eight elected members. The right to vote was to be given to males over 21 years that had property and education. The number of people entitled to vote was to be fixed to about 4,000 (from a total population of about 130,000). Voters using a secret ballot were to elect seven representatives for Malta and one for Gozo. The elected and the official members were to form the Legislative Council for five years and its meetings were to be held at the Governor's Palace in Valletta. Laws passed by the Council were to be called Ordinances. The Council was to report on abuses, hear complaints and recommend improvements in government departments. Taxation and loans by the Government needed the vote of five or more of the elected members. The Council was to include three Sub-Committees for: Public Charities; University and Primary Instruction; Public Works made up of 3 elected and 2 official members. These Sub-Committees were to check the the work of their respective departments and point out cases of abuses and inefficiency.

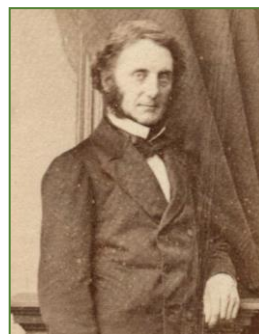
The Council had its limitations too. The Governor could use the veto whenever he wanted to stop a law from being discussed or enacted. He could also compel the 10 official members to support the Government in the Council (this was called official majority). But Governor O'Ferrall, very wisely, rarely used this official majority. Instead, he gave the Council members a great deal of freedom of debate and vote. But some Governors after him started using the official majority more frequently. Within a few years the Governors started referring to the official members as 'government members' and the elected members were as the 'opposition members'.



*Three projects in the 1860s that were approved by the official majority: left: the Valletta Royal Opera House; centre: Portu Novu at Marsa; Somerset Dock at the dockyard.*

### **The Cardwell Principle of 1864**

Under Governor Gaspard Le Marchant, the Government undertook four large scale public works projects: the construction of a deep-water commercial harbour at Marsa, a larger drydock, a Royal Opera House in Valletta and a mental hospital at Attard. A definite break with the elected members took place in 1859 when the Governor was again given military powers. In the elections of 1860, four of the eight elected members referred to by the Governor as 'The Four Lawyers' formed an organized opposition to the government. Henceforth, the Governor resorted to use the official majority even more frequently. On their part the elected members became more determined to strive for a new Council of Government.



*Left: Lord Cardwell photographed in 1864  
Right: Lord Carnarvon photographed in 1874*

However, the Colonial Office in London was not happy with the political situation in Malta. Thus in 1864, Secretary of State Lord Cardwell issued an important document known as 'The Cardwell Principle' stating that 'no vote of money was to be pressed against the opposition of a majority of the elected members, other than in exceptional cases.' The elected members had won an important victory because the Governor's actions were officially criticized in House of Commons. From 1871 onwards British policy in the Mediterranean had to take into consideration French and Italian intensions to expand their navy and colonies in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. This development brought a reversal of British colonial policy in Malta. In 1875 Secretary of State Lord Carnarvon restricted the Cardwell Principle by stating that it was to be set aside if the health of the garrison forces in Malta was at stake, which meant that the Governor could resort to the official majority to pass laws which he considered necessary.

## LO6 h – The Council of Government of 1835 and 1849

1. What was the *Comitato Generale Maltese*?

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(2)

2. Name its **two** prominent leaders?

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(2)

3. What was the main contribution of the *Comitato Generale* to Maltese constitutional development?

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(1)

4. List **three** facts about the Council of Government of 1835.

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(3)

5. What was the reaction of the Maltese leaders about this Council of Government and why?

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(2)

6. What did George Mitrovich do to show the Maltese disaffection with the Council of Government?

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(2)

7. What was the main outcome of Mitrovich's petition?

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(2)

8. List **three** facts about the Council of Government of 1849 which were different from the one of 1835.

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(3)

9. Briefly explain what was the 'Cardwell Principle' and why it was abandoned in 1875?

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(3)

**(Total: 20 marks)**

# LO6 i – The Granting of the Liberty of the Press, 1839

## The Royal Commission of 1836



Left: George Cornwall Lewis  
Right: Lord Glenelg

The Royal Commissioners (John Austin, William Ewart and George Cornwall Lewis) who came to Malta in 1836 all held liberal ideas. During their stay they inspected, interviewed people and looked at government records. In their report they declared that an elected Council of Government with the power to make laws was not in the best interests for the security of the island. But they favoured a council which included a number of Maltese elected members having 'property and intelligence'. With regards to the administration, the Commissioners advised the government to reverse Maitland's policy to exclude Maltese from higher posts in the civil service and employ Englishmen with very high salaries.

The work of the Commissioners proved in the end beneficial for the social, economic and political development of Malta. Its report served as the basis for further political, administrative and socio-economic reforms. Most of its recommendations were implemented under liberal Governors like Richard O'Ferrall (1847–1851) and William Reid (1851–1858).

## The Granting of the Liberty of the Press in 1839

In 1836 the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Glenelg issued instructions for the immediate abolition of press censorship on newspapers in Malta. But this liberal reform soon became a complicated issue. King Ferdinand II, of the Two Sicilies feared that a free press in Malta could be used by Italian liberals to foment a revolution in his kingdom. Bishop Francesco Caruana and the Vatican were afraid that the Catholic hierarchy and its teachings could come under attack by Protestant and anti-clerical publications. However, some 250 priests from a total of 750 set up a committee to show their support for a free press so long as the Church was protected.



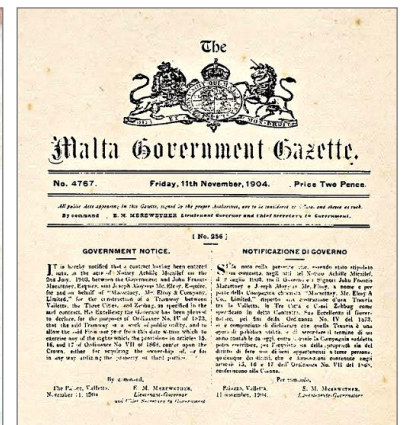
Left: Ferdinand II of the Two Sicilies  
Right: Bishop F.S. Caruana

Some sectors of the Maltese population and British colonial officials in Malta having a conservative outlook, were of the opinion that bringing political debates in the open would be dangerous for the order and stability of the colony. Local military and naval colonial officials were also afraid that sensitive military information could leak out to the press. But after some months of hesitation, Lord Glenelg decided to abolish press censorship and grant liberty of the press together with a law of libel to protect the Catholic Church against unlawful attack.

Press liberty was officially proclaimed by the Governor during a Council of Government meeting in March 1839. The first newspapers were published in Italian, English or Maltese. These newspapers varied from political, religious, cultural, commercial to satirical. They were mostly read in taverns, cafes, clubs and offices. Due to the high level of illiteracy among the people, the reading market was small. Most newspapers tended to close down after a few years due to low circulation and lack of funds. The British Government started issuing newspapers that defended its policies against criticism. The free press had one long-term effect - it gave the Maltese liberal leaders a legal platform from which to criticize the colonial administration and to spread their ideas among the people.



Left: 'Gazzetta del Governo di Malta', published since 1813.  
Right: 'Malta Government Gazette' issue dated 11 Nov. 1914.





The front page of four Maltese newspapers published in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The greater number of newspapers printed in Malta at that time were published in Italian; those in English occupied the second place; those in Maltese were in third place.



The table below is about some of the most influential newspapers published in Malta during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

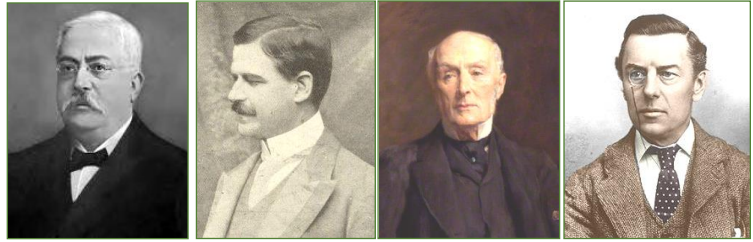
	Newspaper name	Published	Brief description of content
1	<b>Il Corriere Mercantile di Malta</b>	1856–1885	Supported the unification of Italy; anti-government; pro-liberal; in favour of the Italian language in Malta.
2	<b>Malta Gazette</b> <i>quotidiana politico commerciale</i>	1883–1940	Organ of Mizzi's <i>Partito Nazionale</i> ; the most influential pro-Italian newspaper; in favour of Maltese political representation.
3	<b>Malta Chronicle and Imperial Services Gazette</b>	1887–1940	For British servicemen in Malta; pro-government; the main pro-English; pro-imperialist; its printing press were sacked during the Sette Giugno riots.
4	<b>The Malta Times</b> <i>Broad Sheet of the Mediterranean</i>	1840–1927	promoted Protestant and British imperial interests; a pro-government organ.
5	<b>Il Mediterraneo</b> <i>Gazetta di Malta</i>	1838–1871	Founded by <i>Giovine Italia</i> 's republican movement; supported Malta's struggle for participation in government; followed a moderate anti-government stance.
6	<b>L'Ordine</b> <i>Politico, Commerciale, Letterario</i>	1849–1902	Religious newspaper founded by a Jesuit priest to counter Italian liberal papers in Malta; an organ of the clerical-conservative faction in support of the Pope in Italy; in the 1880s it supported Mizzi's abstentionism.
7	<b>Il Portafoglio Maltese</b>	1838–1902	A staunch defender of Gov. O'Ferrall and the Jesuits; supported the Pope's claims to temporal power in Italy and Mizzi's Anti-Reform Party.
8	<b>Public Opinion</b>	1867–1908	Influential organ of Savona's Reform Party; it criticized the 1887 Constitution, the government and the Partito Nazionale; pro-English in the Language Question.
9	<b>Stenterello</b> <i>Foglietto Serio-Scherzevole</i>	1845–1871	Longest published satirical newspaper set up by Italian exiles and local sympathizers; it attacked the King of Naples and the Jesuits; in 1852 it was condemned by the Bishop.
10	<b>Il Bandiera Tal Maltin</b>	1898–1914	Radical anti-government and anti-clerical stance; advocated for more education and civil rights for the Maltese working classes, including women.

## LO6 i – The Granting of the Liberty of the Press, 1839

1. Why did the Colonial authorities in London sent a Royal Commission to Malta in 1836?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
2. Explain briefly the historic importance of this Royal Commission.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
3. Why was the granting of liberty of the press in 1839 such a complicated and controversial issue?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
4. What objection did the King of the Two Sicilies put forward against a free press in Malta?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
5. Why did the local Church authorities also object to a free press in Malta?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
6. State three languages in which 19<sup>th</sup> century Maltese newspapers were published.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1)
7. Name **four** newspapers published in Malta during the years 1838 -1900.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2)
8. Briefly explain how the existence of a free press in Malta impact on Maltese social and political life?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (4)
9. From the table in page ----, identify the following:
  - (a) a newspaper in favour of the colonial government: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) a newspaper in favour of the Italian language in Malta: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) a newspaper in favour of the Italian Risorgimento: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) a satirical newspaper: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (e) a commercial newspaper: \_\_\_\_\_ (5)

**(Total: 20 marks)**

## LO6 I – The Knutsford Constitution of 1887–1903



*Left: Members of the Council of Government of 1887.  
From left to right: Fortunato Mizzi, Gerald Strickland,  
Lord Knutsford, Joseph Chamberlain*

### **Events leading up to the granting of the 1887 Constitution**

The 1880s were years of conflict between the elected members and the Governor. The elected members themselves were divided in two factions: Reformers and Anti-Reformers. In 1884 the Anti-Reformers won 7 out of 8 seats in the Council of Government. Mizzi immediately changed the party's name to *Partito Nazionale* and its supporters became known as 'Nationalists'. They started a new tactic of obstructing the Government by abstaining or even resigning from the Council in protest.

In 1886 two leaders of the Maltese national movement, Fortunato Mizzi and Gerald Strickland, went to London and to demand a 'representative government' where the number of elected members would outnumber the official members in the Council. Secretary of State Lord Knutsford accepted their demand, and the new Constitution of 1887 became known as the Knutsford Constitution.

### **How did the new Constitution function?**

The Constitution of 1887 set up a Legislative or Ordinary Council and an Executive or Superior Council. The Legislative Council consisted of 14 elected members. In 1898 this number went down to 13 when the seat that represented the clergy was abolished. The Executive Council consisted of 6 official members and 3 elected members from the Legislative Council chosen by the Governor.

Elections were held every three years. The right to vote was given to Maltese citizens based on income, property and level of education. Plural voting was permitted for voters who had property in two different electoral districts. The number of male voters amounted to about 10,000 from a population of nearly 200,000. During council meeting, the Governor had an original vote, a casting and the right to use the veto. The Legislative Council had the power to enact laws, called ordinances. All votes of public money were to pass by a majority of the 13 elected members present at the time of the vote.

### **Why was the 1887 Constitution suspended in replaced in 1903?**

During the years 1898–1903, the Language Question became more intense than before. The elected members used the powers given to them by the Constitution to block money for education at a time when the Government was trying to substitute Italian for English in primary schools, at the University and in the Law Courts. When another vote was rejected in June 1903, Secretary of State Joseph Chamberlain issued an order-in-council suspending the 1887 Constitution and replacing it by the Constitution of 1903.

The Council of Government under this new constitution was reduced to 9 official members chosen by the Governor and 8 Maltese members elected by the Maltese voters. The Executive Council was also reduced from 6 to 4 members. A compromise was reached in 1909 when 2 elected members handpicked by the Governor were given back their seat in the Executive Council.

In matters of constitutional development, the 1903 Constitution was in fact a reversal to the official majority of the 1849 Constitution. Between 1904 and 1907 no elections were able to take place because as a sign of protest, no political party presented candidates for election. The aim of the Maltese political leaders was to get back the 1887 Constitution. The political situation was still in a state of deadlock when the First World War broke out in August 1914.

## LO6 I – The Knutsford Constitution of 1887–1903

1. Fill the table below with the correct missing information. (8)

	Name of Constitution	Why was it granted?	Why was it suspended / changed?
a.	Constitution of 1835		
b.	Constitution of 1849		
c.	Constitution of 1887		
d.	Constitution of 1903		

2. Briefly explain the difference between the Ordinary Council and the Superior Council in the 1887 Constitution. (4)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

3. Mention **four** other facts about the 1887 Constitution, apart from the composition of the Council. (4)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

4. The Constitution of 1887 is said to have granted Malta ‘representative government’. Briefly explain what this development implied in practical politics. (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

5. What did the Constitution of 1903 take Malta’s constitutional development back in time by nearly half a century? (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2)

**(Total 20 marks)**

## LO6 fghil – Early 19<sup>th</sup> century Maltese Constitutional Development

Carefully read the following sources and then answer all the questions on a separate piece of paper.

'Sir Thomas Maitland was the governor, the legislator, and the judge, and stood, a military man, omnipotent in the island. By a single stroke of the pen, numbers of individuals were reduced to misery and starvation. Even the known barley bread, of only food of the poor, was highly taxes...The Maltese, deprived of the blessings of a free press...had no means of making known their grievances to the British nation...'

Source B. Extract from 'The claims of the Maltese founded upon the principles of justice, George Mitrovich, London, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1835.

'In Malta, the 1830s were important because they were to see the formation of a Maltese liberal movement...which spearheaded the agitation for political rights...'

Source A. *A Concise History of Malta*, Carmel Cassar, 2000, p.152.

'The Governor is hereby pleased to promulgate the following Ordinance, No. IV, passed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of March instant, entitled: An Ordinance enacted by the Governor of Malta, with the advice and consent of the Council of Government thereof, for abolishing the Censorship, and for providing against Abuses of the consequent liberty of publishing printing writings; which is to be observed as Law within their Possessions.'

Source C. Henry Grey, Chief Secretary to the Government, Ordinance No. IV of 1839, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1839.

1. Which of the above is a secondary source and why? (2)
2. (a) How opinion does the author of Source A has of Governor Maitland and why? (2)  
(b) Do you think that his assertions about Maitland's administration are wholly justified  
Give **one** reason for your answer. (2)
3. What makes the document from which the extract of Source A taken a very important one in Maltese political and constitutional history? (2)
4. (a) Name the 'Maltese liberal movement' referred to in Source B. (1)  
(b) Name the two most prominent leaders of this movement. (2)  
(c) How did this movement contribute to Malta's political and constitutional development? (2)
5. (a) Which political right did the Maltese acquire when Source C was published? (1)  
(b) Briefly explain what is mean by the terms: 'censorship' and 'free press'. (4)  
(c) Why do you think the author of Source A considered a free press as a blessing? (2)

**(Total: 20 marks)**

## LO6 fghil - Political and Constitutional Developments (1800–1914)

Carefully read these essay titles and then choose one to answer.

### PAPER Level 2-3

- Describe the main events and developments that took place in Malta during the protectorate phase of British rule in Malta. (8)
  - Account for Malta's constitution development during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (12)
- Account on **two** reforms of Maitland's colonial administration. (8)
  - Compare and contrast the origins, features and political aims of the early three political parties and their respective leaders that existed in the 1880s and 1890s. (12)
- Explain the arguments for and against the granting of a free press in Malta in 1839. (8)
  - Compare and contrast the main features of the 1849 and 1887 Constitutions. (12)

### PAPER Level 1-2

- List four facts about Maitland's colonial administration. (8)
  - Explain two key reforms introduced by Maitland. (12)
- List two facts that applied to the 1835 Constitution and another two facts about the 1849 Constitution (8)
  - Describe the main features of the 1887 Constitution. (12)



