JOURNAL FOR MALTESE AROUND THE WORLD

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

Editor: Frank Scicluna OAM MQR JP Email: maltesejournal@gmail.com

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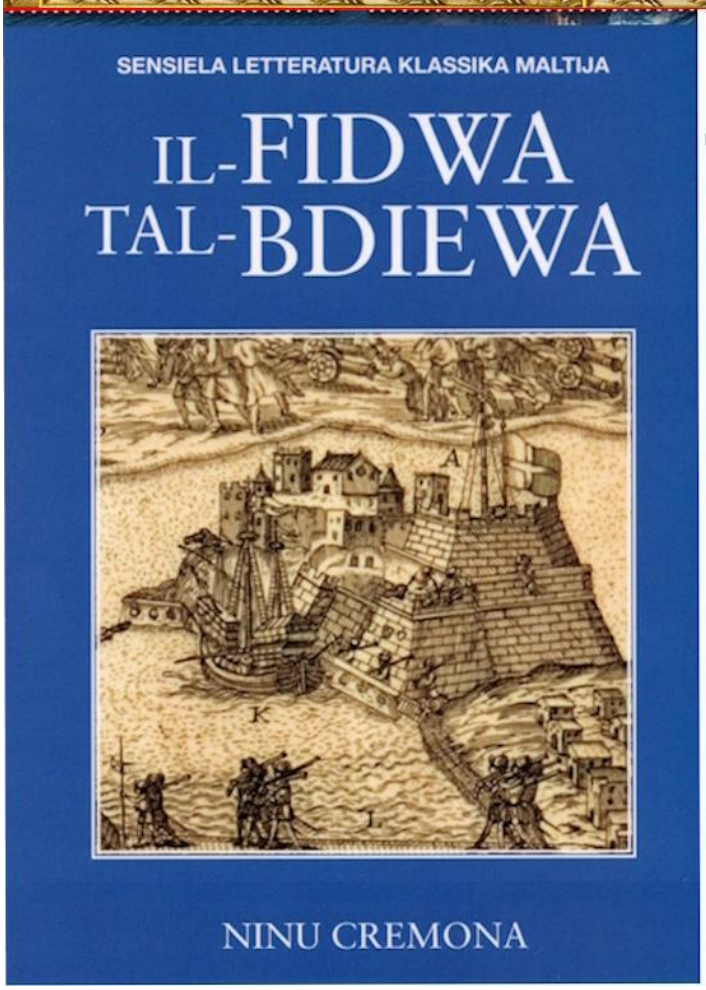
MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT OF MALTA TO THE READERS OF THE MALTESE JOURNAL



MALTESE LIVING ABROAD
Malta in the World

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION FOR MALTESE CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD

www.servizz.gov.mt

Message from H.E. Myriam Spiteri Debono President of the Republic of Malta The Maltese Journal

It is with pleasure that, for the first time as President of the Republic of Malta, I am addressing the readers of the Maltese Journal across the world.

As an indispensable source of contact and information for the entire Maltese diaspora, this journal serves as the bridge between Malta and beyond, and its success speaks for itself.

In this regard, I would like to commend the work of Mr. Frank Scicluna and all contributors who are an example for others who strive to keep our Maltese identify alive and vigorous wherever there are fellow Maltese away from Malta's shore.

The rationale behind Malta's efforts to keep open the lines of communication with Malta's diaspora stems from a desire to ensure that our fellow Maltese abroad continue to feel included in affairs concerning their motherland and country of origin: we in Malta recognise that they are part of the Maltese people, a product of the Maltese identity and traditions, in spite of the fact that they have chosen to establishment themselves **outside Maltese borders**.

We in Malta are still very much aware that in certain instances, our fellow Maltese were driven to foreign lands due to certain circumstances primarily in Malta at certain stages of our history.

Sixty years ago, on 21st September 1964, Malta became independent; our motherland was born to statehood, a sovereign entity under international law, equal to other countries in terms of its autonomy and territorial integrity.

Ten years later, fifty years ago, Malta became a republic, further establishing our country with a Maltese national as its head of state. The Maltese people date far beyond these sixty years. Our identity as Maltese is a product of centuries. It is not developed from one generation to the next, it is alive in our hearts, minds, souls and spirit.

The term 'Maltese Living Abroad', while correct in the literal sense, may be an inaccurate representation of what Malta truly is. The Maltese nation survives anywhere the Maltese may go – Malta is not just a country in the Mediterranean Sea, Maltese is alive wherever Maltese individuals and families are found. If statistics are anything to go by, Malta is found on every continent, in almost every country, in major cities worldwide and even in the most remote corners of the globe.

I encourage you to keep the Maltese spirit alive. All of us together are Malta; it behoves all of us to keep our history, culture, heritage and, above all else, our unique and priceless language alive.

Let us ensure that our children and grandchildren, our descendants always stand head high and say "*I am Maltese, my roots come from Malta*".

Hi Frank, I trust this finds you and your family well,
Another interesting newsletter – full of amazing colour, news of Maltese talent and such other interesting stories. It never ceases to amaze me how you manage to find such wonderful, famous and interesting people as well as 'just the ordinary people and information' both of great importance.
I know that I just love every article in every newsletter, except for the articles in Maltese, sadly, I am unable to speak or read Maltese but there is certainly enough on every other page to grab everyone's attention.
I wish I knew more about my grandmother's early days and her family (DOUBLET & INGUANEZ) and so many other surnames attached to these), and although I listened to many of her stories about her family and the Casa Inguanez, I was only young and did not take it all in. However, I do remember a lot of information she told me and about some members of her family and ancestors. I treasure everything I can remember and also every photo that I found many years after she passed away. Some of these photos are absolutely amazing and of the early days in many areas of Malta. She kept them in a photo album, which now, is very old and the pages are very fragile. I keep the album in a dark place in a wardrobe and take out very carefully, often, to look through it.
I cannot thank her enough for giving me this photo album. I will always treasure it as will my family. Although I have visited Malta twice and hope to return next year, your newsletter gives so much information about Malta and its people.
Thank you so much Frank, for all you give us in your regular newsletters.
Kind and sincere regards Marion – Brisbane, Queensland Australia

CASA INGUANEZ IN MDINA THE HOME OF MALTA'S OLDEST ARISTOCRATIC FAMILY.

Triq Villegaigon is the Silent City's of Mdina main thoroughfare and along it, this palace with bright red apertures is a sure eye-catcher. Prominent on its façade along this street are a pair of unique, arched balconies.

The palace is adorned with a big black door and two famous knockers.

MEDIEVAL ORIGINS

The historic villa was originally built in medieval times, precisely in 1370 for the noble Inguanez family. Such was their importance to the city that their family's coat of arms is engraved inside the city's main gate.

The house contains numerous paintings and valuable documents. Parts of the original 14th century palazzo still exist today. The building's old entrance is this one, with its bold knockers. It can still be found around the corner in Triq Inguanez, as well as its small 'secret' garden across the lane.

THE KiNG OF SPAIN WAS HERE

When, in 1432, the King of Spain Alfonso V travelled to Malta he stayed in Casa Inguanez. Interestingly, the King of Spain still has the right to live in this residence, although no royalty has visited since 1917, year in which the King of Spain Alfonso XIII resided in it.

THE DOOR KNOCKERS

Casa Inguanez's big black door in Inguanez Street features a pair of outstanding knockers that were deemed so special that it was featured on the old 1976 Malta Lm50 coin.

CASA INGUANEZ WINDOW

While strolling along Trig Villegaignon, the main street stretching south to north through Mdina for about 250 yards, watch for a large limestone building with these green shutters. This is Casa Inguanez. It was originally built in the mid-14th century as the residence for the noble Inguanez family. Their lineage of governors was so important to the city's history that their coat of arm is engraved inside the main gate. Interestingly, the King of Spain still has the right to live in this mansion but no royalty has visited since the early 20th century.

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia meets British Labour Party politician Kevin Bonavia

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, welcomed Kevin Bonavia, a serving British Labour Party politician and Member of Parliament for Stevenage, at the Parliament of Malta. The meeting underscored the strong ties between Malta and the United Kingdom, built upon a rich history and common values shared between the two nations.

During the discussions, the Speaker and Bonavia exchanged views on a range of issues of mutual interest, including the importance of fostering bilateral relations in areas such as education, cultural exchange, and the Maltese diaspora in the UK. They also highlighted the significance of continued cooperation in the face of global challenges, such as climate change, security, and the post-Brexit landscape.

Kevin Bonavia, who was born to a Maltese father and a Scottish mother and spent part of his childhood in Rabat, Malta, expressed his strong personal connection to the country. His unique background provides him with a deep appreciation of both Maltese and British cultures, enabling him to serve as a bridge between the two nations.

Farrugia praised Kevin Bonavia's dedication to public service and his efforts to strengthen ties with Malta. He noted that Bonavia's heritage and connection to the island are invaluable assets in promoting stronger collaboration between Malta and the United Kingdom.

Both dignitaries acknowledged the importance of deepening cooperation between parliaments and maintaining open channels of dialogue to address shared priorities. The meeting concluded with a commitment to continue working closely on issues of common concern and to explore new opportunities for engagement between Malta and the UK, especially the fostering of relations between the Parliament of Malta and the House of Commons.

MALTESE LIVING ABROAD
Malta in the World

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION FOR MALTESE CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD

One million people of Maltese descent encouraged to enter details in 'Persons of Value' form – www.servizz.gov.mt

Maltese who live abroad and Maltese descendants are encouraged to voluntarily enter a register which will contain a list of persons of value. This call is being made by the Maltese Government. Professionals, manual workers, businessmen, sportsmen, artists, and missionaries, among others, are encouraged to register their details with the Ministry by accessing the online form. Maltese abroad will have the opportunity to participate in a skills survey, which will be launched in the near future by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This was launched amid Malta's international policy strategy, and that it will translate in an online register that will identify the abilities and qualifications of Maltese who live abroad.

Through this strategy, and using this form entitled Persons of Value Form, (V Form), every Maltese living overseas is invited to participate, and even descendants of Maltese living abroad, to register online and through this they will be in contact with them.

The aim of this initiative is for the Maltese Government to increase connectivity with Maltese living abroad, by filling in this form which is aimed to encourage people who have something to offer in terms of work experience to register their interest and collaborate with the Maltese Government in various tasks that are being carried out to strengthen what he called ' Global Malta '. Professionals, manual workers, businessmen, sportsmen, artists, and missionaries, among others, are encouraged to register their details with the Ministry by accessing the online form. Human resource as very important and should be further exploited.

It is a fact that that there is very strong human capital out there, with experiences in various disciplines, that Malta can greatly benefit from. You are invited to contribute to Global Malta. The Government places a lot of emphasis on a global Malta, not a territorial Malta, but a widespread Malta. Wherever you are, you carry your Maltese identity you.

All over the world, on five separate continents, there are an estimated eight hundred thousand to one million Maltese people, or those of Maltese descent. The range of Maltese covers people of all ages and reflects the wisdom, zeal and sense of integration that the Maltese have always embraced over time.

Forms are found here

malteselivingabroad.gov.mt/voluntary-registration-for-maltese-citizens-living-abroad/

GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES VISITED MALTA

H.E. Matt Skelly, Australians High Commissioner in Malta, had the pleasure to meet with the Governor of New South Wales, H.E. Margaret Beazley AC, KC, while she was visiting the republic island of Malta.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, also held a significant meeting today with Margaret Beazley AC, KC, the Governor of New South Wales, to discuss key bilateral issues and the longstanding relationship between Malta and Australia.

During the meeting, Farrugia and Beazley focused on a range of topics central to the Maltese-Australian partnership. Foremost among these was the contribution of the Maltese community to Australia's development, particularly in New South Wales, where a large and vibrant Maltese diaspora has flourished over the years.

The Speaker expressed his deep appreciation for the remarkable achievements of the Maltese community in New South Wales, noting their significant role in the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the state. The Maltese community in New South Wales has not only preserved their rich heritage but has also made invaluable contributions to the growth and prosperity of Australia.

The discussions also explored avenues for enhanced cooperation between Malta and New South Wales.

The discussions also explored avenues for enhanced cooperation between Malta and New South Wales.

Both emphasized the importance of fostering closer ties in areas of mutual interest, including trade, education, and cultural exchanges. Farrugia and Beazley agreed that by leveraging the strengths of both Malta and New South Wales, the two regions can create new opportunities for their people and contribute to a stronger bilateral relationship between Malta and Australia as a whole.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to furthering dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that the strong bonds between Malta and New South Wales continue to grow for the benefit of both nations. The Deputy Speaker of the House, David Agius was also present for the meeting.

MALTESE LIVING ABROAD HAVE A LOT TO CONTRIBUTE

INTERNATIONALISATION

ARTS COUNCIL MALTA wants the arts to be at the heart of Malta's future. Driven by the commitment to cultural rights, it invests in the arts to strengthen Malta's creative and cultural ecology.

An international outlook is a prerequisite for professionalisation and further growth in today's globalised world. Given the geographical context, ARTS COUNCIL MALTA recognises that forming and maintaining international connections is fundamental for Malta's cultural and creative sectors to flourish.

ACM envisions stronger global cultural relations that enable long-term sectoral development via new opportunities for international collaboration and exchange – partnerships based on mutual understanding, trust and intercultural dialogue, whereby arts and creativity transcend borders.

We foresee Malta's cultural and creative practitioners becoming increasingly engaged in international exchanges and co-productions in the coming years. Given the constant evolution of the cultural and creative sectors, we also understand that there is a need to develop the skills of creative professionals to engage internationally. This includes reaching out to new and diverse audiences around the globe and sustaining the growth of cultural and creative entrepreneurs. In addition, there are also spill-over effects in other sectors, including nation branding, development, tourism and trade.

As being partly responsible for implementing the National Cultural Policy 2021, ACM shall advocate for a more open approach to cultural relations – one encompassing open dialogue with multiple stakeholders to engage and mobilise citizens, artists, civil society and cultural institutions. Our strategy will be directed towards building trust and nurturing relationships across national borders, as well as supporting and facilitating cross-border creative experimentation and new international cultural projects. Our existing and future roles as a national entity within international networks will also contribute to global conversations shaping the trajectory of international cultural relations.

For these reasons, ACM embraces the guiding principles of the EU's agenda in international cultural relations, as established in the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations. The document reaffirms the EU's commitment to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and encourages cultural cooperation between EU member states and partner countries by "promoting a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental rights."

artscouncilmalta.gov.mt
Arts Council Malta is the national agency for arts and culture in Malta

www.heritagemalta.mt
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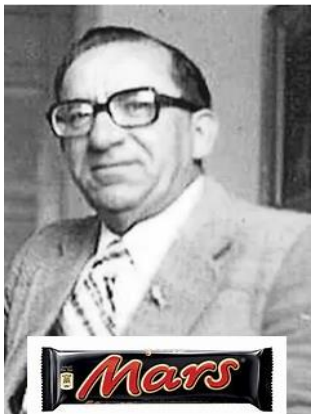


Malta's Economic Transformation under Dom Mintoff – no imported chocolate

Dom Mintoff, the leader of Malta in the 1970s, was a figure renowned for his controversial policies. Aiming to foster local industries, Mintoff introduced a series of measures that led to the prohibition of specific imported goods, one of which was chocolate, an item cherished by the locals.

This measure, while aimed at economic protectionism, brought a wave of changes that went beyond the realm of chocolate aficionados. Economic protectionism is a policy that restricts imports to boost domestic production. Although it holds the potential to develop industries and curb economic dependency, it also restricts consumer choice and can lead to increased prices.

The Implications of Mintoff's Ban on Imported Chocolate

With the implementation of Mintoff's policy, only a local brand, 'Desserta,' was available in Maltese groceries. This ban on imported chocolates became one of the most contentious policies in Mintoff's administration. Not surprisingly, many Maltese refused to accept a world without their favorite chocolates. Smuggling operations flourished as brands like Hersheys and Mars were ferried into the island. Strip searches became common practice on people arriving from Sicily. The Maltese colleagues still expecting chocolates from abroad would be relieved to know the ban has since been lifted.

Decoding Mintoff's Economic Game Plan

The 1970s marked a significant shift in Malta's economic landscape. After gaining independence in 1964, Mintoff was determined to reduce the island's reliance on British military expenditure, leading to the withdrawal of British troops in 1979. The imposition of import controls and quotas was part of a broader strategy to promote local industries by artificially eliminating foreign competition. In this economic game, chocolate became a sacrificial pawn.

Evaluating the Chocolate Ban's Impact

Balancing consumer freedom and the island's economy was the crux of Mintoff's chocolate ban. Though the policy led to industrial growth, improved social welfare, and maintained low public debt levels, whether the ban was necessary and effective is a point of contention.

Economic textbooks offer mixed reviews about trade protectionism, especially for a developing economy. While such policies can protect domestic industries and jobs and increase government revenue, they also hinder competitiveness, innovation, and economic growth. Moreover, in the current landscape of free trade agreements, reintroducing such protectionist measures is not feasible, particularly for European Union members.

The Legacy of Mintoff's Chocolate Ban

Mintoff's chocolate ban was a unique economic experiment unlikely to be repeated. Yet, it offers vital lessons from the past, especially when understanding the socio-economic backdrop of the time. The case leaves us contemplating when a government should ever prioritize macroeconomic goals over individual freedom. In conclusion, the tale of Malta's chocolate ban provides an intriguing perspective on the impact of economic policies and how they shape a nation's progress. Studying such historical incidents can provide valuable insights into the potential outcomes and implications of protectionist policies, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of global economics. **By Spunt**

PARADIS LOST – A SOLO EXHIBITION

Paradise Lost marks the debut solo exhibition of Jade Zammit, a personal exploratory journey. In this new body of work, Zammit confronts the fragility of paradises—both real and imagined—that are perpetually "hanging by a thread." How do these paradises unravel over time? What remains when the thread finally snaps, and the utopian visions dissolve into disillusionment? The works vary not just in form, but in their thematic undertones, reflecting the multifaceted nature of paradise itself—a concept that is as fragile as it is alluring.

Drawing upon the romanticised portrayals of non-European cultures, Zammit uses the Gobelin tapestries housed in Valletta's Grand Master's Palace as a foundational reference. These 17th-century masterpieces, initially commissioned to evoke awe, mystery, and wonder, are reinterpreted through Zammit's contemporary lens. Inspired by the idyllic yet ultimately disillusioning scenes in Paul Gauguin's Tahitian series and the decaying world of colonial Africa as depicted in Ben Okri's 'The Famished Road', Zammit's work weaves together threads of personal memory with broader themes of a deteriorating paradise.

Zammit's work delves into the discomfort associated with the loss of the natural world, a paradise that, like the tapestries she references, is both beautiful and precarious. Through an almost imaginary perspective, she evokes a deep sense of nostalgia, compelling us to reflect on the fragility of both personal and collective histories. How do we reconcile the idyllic pasts—whether personal or cultural—that have fragmented into unsettling realities?

As viewers, we are invited to journey through this exploration with Zammit, reflecting on her perceptions of paradise. Are we, too, holding on to something that is hanging by a thread? And when that thread snaps, what do we find ? Zammit does not merely present a series of artworks; she offers us a space to dream, to question, to reflect, and perhaps come to terms with the inevitable losses.

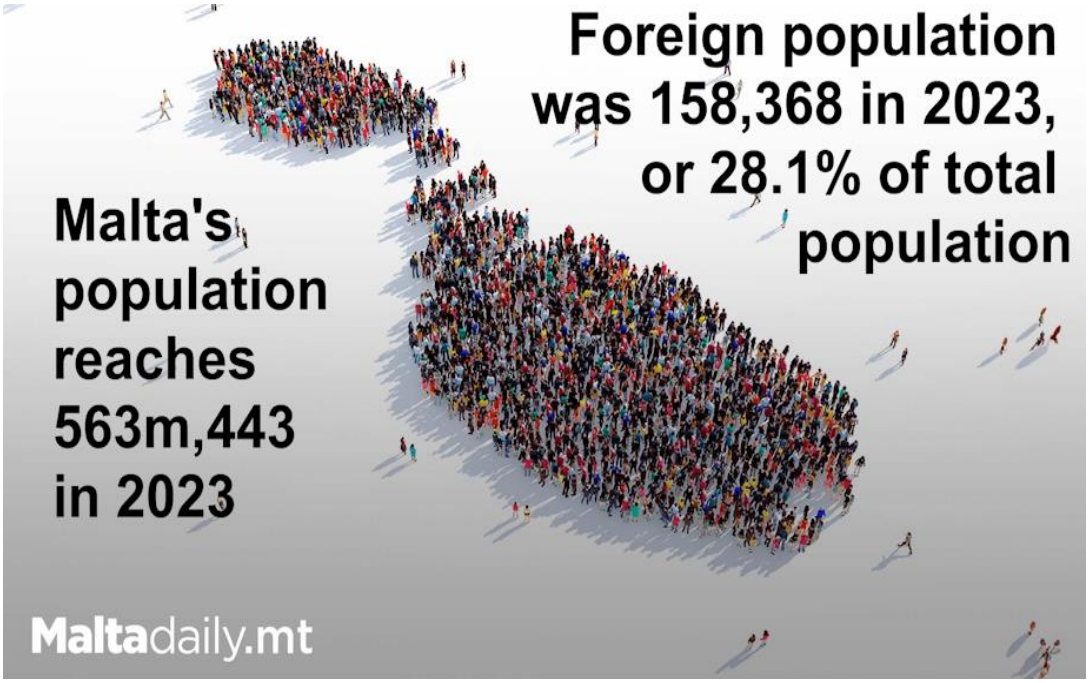
Curated by Maria Galea

Għeżież, Heritage Malta bi pjaċir qed tistiednek għar-raba' taħdita fis-sensiela ta' taħditiet minn eks ħaddiema tat-Tarzna, sessjoni oħra li tqanqal il-ħsieb u l-memorja. Din se tittella' fil-**Mużew Marittimu, il-Birgu, nhar il-Ħadd 29 ta' Settembru fl-10:00 am.**

Din id-darba flimkien se nidħlu fid-dettall dwar il-kummerċjalizzazzjoni tat-Tarzna ta' Malta.

Din id-diskussjoni timmira li tkompli taqsam il-wirt għani tat-Tarzna, u toffri lill-parteċipanti titwila mill-qrib lejn din id-dinja mhux wisq magħrufa. Titlifx din l-opportunità biex tesplora l-istorja tat-Tarzna dritt minn fomm uliedha!

Il-parteċipazzjoni hija **bla ħlas** iżda hija **miftuħa biss għal dawk li jibbukkjaw post minn qabel minn hawnhekk** Store – Heritage Malta **jew mill-mużewijiet u s-siti ta' Heritage Malta**, billi l-postijiet huma limitati. – HERITAGE MALTA



The foreign population stood at 158,368 in 2023, accounting for 28.1% of the total population in Malta. This is according the to latest population and migration statistics from the National Statistics Office.

The NSO noted that while the foreign population grew by 15.3% between 2022 and 2023, the Maltese population only grew by 0.1% from 404,675 to 405,075 in 2023.

It pointed out that "there are stark contrasts in the age and sex structure of the Maltese and foreign population at the end of 2023 as depicted by the population pyramids for each group."

The NSO highlighted that while the sex distribution in the Maltese population is nearly equal, at 49.8% males and 50.2% females, among the foreign population, males accounted for 61.1% of the population compared to 38.9% females. The foreign population is also younger.

The median age for the foreign population was 32 years, while among the Maltese population it was more than 10 years higher at 43.

The differences between the age structure of the foreign and Maltese population are further highlighted by the old-age dependency ratio, the NSO said. The old age dependency ratio is the number of individuals aged 65 or older per 100 people of working age, defined as those aged between 20 to 64 years old.

The ratio for the Maltese population has increased annually since 2012 from 28.2 to 41.8 in 2023. On the other hand, the ratio for the foreign population has declined annually from 17.0 in 2012 to 4.4 in 2023.

The NSO said the ratio for the total has remained relatively stable since 2012, "likely due to the influence of the declining ratio among the foreign cohort."

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Maltese Community Council of Victoria, Inc.

RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE MALTESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF VICTORIA -AUST.

Madam President Antonia Camilleri was elected the MCCV President for a second term unopposed. In her address , at the annual general meeting, she mentioned that during her two years, her passion, drive, vision and strong leadership has seen the MCCV grow and is recognised highly not only in the Maltese community but other communities as well.

Antonia covered some of the big milestones and successful events that the MCCV achieved under her leadership.

These events included :

- The 40 anniversary since the MCCV was created
- The 75th anniversary of the signing of the assisted package for maltese migrants in collaboration with the National Archives of Australia.
- The Commissioning of the play - Wenzu u Rozi
- The welcome visits of H.E Helena Dalli - Commissioner for Equality in Europe.
- The welcome visit of our past Maltese President Dr George Vella
- The successful events of the annual high Tea and Independence celebrations.
- The annual Senior and Children Christmas party
- The participation in the Moomba parade - although after a lot of work it was cancelled due to the hot weather.
- The participation with the International Youth Fellowship

Antonia was visionary with all these events and believed that they would be successful and ensured they were delivered.

She thanked Tania De Carli (Vice President for her extraordinary work with the children's event and Rosemary Attard for her commitment to the volunteer work and her colleagues in assisting in updating the records in digital form at the National archives of Australia.

Andrew Gatt was also thanked for his continued hard work as secretary.

Fr Lonnie was thanked for being there with his support and to represent the MSSP on the Executive. The rest of the executives were thanked for their contributions throughout the two years including the new members. Staff were also thanked for their exception high standard of work.

The President also mentioned that keeping up to date with all the regulatory compliance is priority and this initiative seen both the financial report audit and the Quality Age Care standards audits were unqualified which is testimony of the process the MCCV adopted.

The President welcomed the new Executive, Ron Evans (Secretary) Andrew Gatt and Tania De Carli (Vice Presidents) Joseph Matina (Treasurer) Rosemary Attard (Welfare Officer) , Joe Camilleri, David Betts, Jessica Galea, Mary Noonan, and Rita Attard as executive members.

Antonia's vision for the next two years is to see the MCCV grow and bring the Maltese Community together through various activities for all ages including children and young adults.

ANNIVERSARY OF MALTA'S INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED IN NSW

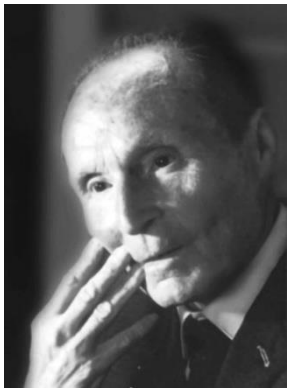
MR. LAWRENCE BUHAGIAR

CONSUL-GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA IN SYDNEY, NSW

It was a great honour and privilege as Consul-General of Malta with jurisdiction in NSW to host the event. Formalities included the singing of the National Anthem of the Republic of Malta followed by that of the Commonwealth of Australia, graciously sung by Australian-Maltese entertainer, Ms Natasha Tatarinoff.

Formal speeches delivered by the following speakers: Mr Lawrence Buhagiar; Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales; The Honourable Chris Minns MP Premier of New South Wales; The Honourable Mark Buttigieg MLC and the Honourable Mark Coure, MP- Parliamentary Friends of Malta.

We were humbled with the presence of so many dignitaries, Mr Dennis Wilson being the Governor's husband, Members of Parliament such as The Hon. Dr Hugh McDermott MP, The Hon. Julia Finn MP, The Hon. Kylie Wilkinson MPO; esteemed colleagues from the Consular Corps; distinguished leaders of the Maltese Community including the President of the Maltese Community Council NSW, Ms Miriam Friggieri; President of the Australian Maltese Chamber of Commerce Inc Chev. Sydney Borg; President Slovenian Australian Chamber of Commerce Ms Mateya Slobodnik; CEO of Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce Mr Wally Mehanna; and, a long list of distinguished guests representing businesses, NSW Police, DFAT, NGO's and many others from the Maltese Community in NSW.



GEORGE PISANI – GOZITAN POET

GEORGE PISANI remains best known for its importance to Gozo as a beautiful and beautiful place. Speaking of many social and human problems, his best works are inspired by ancient hoardings and corners. Perhaps this is why Ġużè Chetcuti calls him "the poet of history" because numerous poems he has written have a prehistoric theme such as *Ħaġar Qim, Il-Ġgantija Gozo* and*Għar Dalam*. But he was also known as the poet of youth, as prof. Joseph Aquilina in 1945 in the preface to Pisani's book, *Easter of Youth*: "Removing ... the black moments of discouragement or despair, the greatest motive of Pisani's poem remains the valiant forward-looking youth full of eagerness and quickness in the race of life."

George Pisani was born on 6th May 1909 in Victoria, Gozo. From the Government primary school he entered the Gozo Lyceum and in 1935 he was appointed the first headmaster of Maltese at the same Lyceum. Pisani was the first to teach Maltese to Gozo Seminary students and Gozitan primary school teachers.

In 1940 he joined as a translator and later as co-editor of the *Information Service Bulletin* in Maltese at the Information Office, Valletta. At the same time he taught Italian and Maltese at girls' secondary school, in Valletta and to Sacred Heart girls in St Julian's. George Pisani became Assistant Information Officer for Gozo in 1942, and fifteen years later he became Public Relations Officer. In 1957 he became the first Information Officer and remained in service with the government until June 1972. On 4 November 1963 Pisani married Mary Rose Formosa and they had a son named Paul George who became a notary in 1985.

Pisani touched on several branches of literature: he wrote poems he collected *in Easter of Youth, The Waltz of Shadows, Melodies and Colors* and *The Triumph of Peace*; plays such as *The Craft of Love, Apotheosis* and *The Secret of Swor Kristina*; short stories compiled in the book *Twenty Novella*, essays compiled in the book *Evviva l-Ħajja*, the novels *Beraq and Rainbows and Żerniq on the Hill* and also wrote the folk studies *Gozo Dreaming of Legends*.

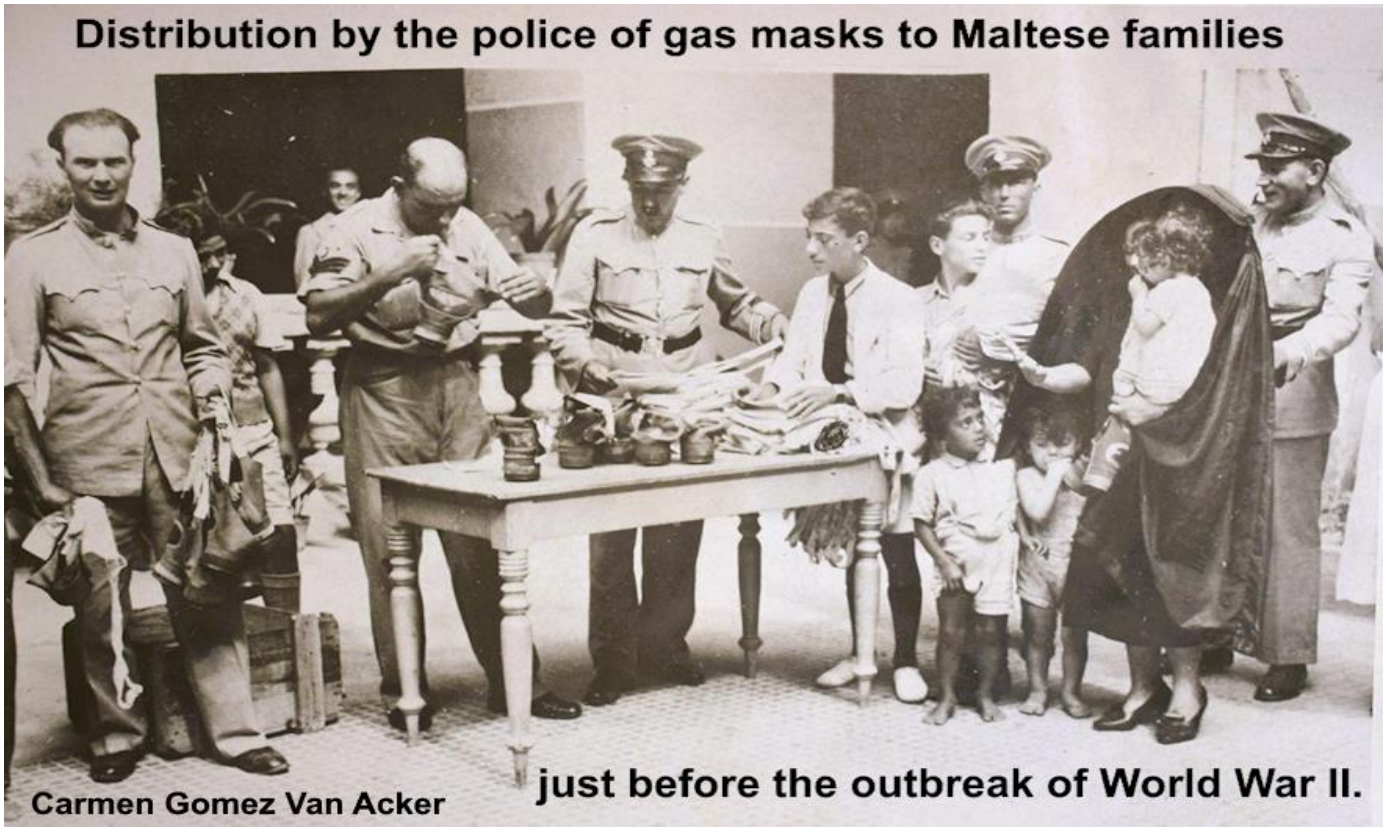
Pisani won a number of literary awards, including those launched by għaqda tal-Malti for *leħen il-Malti*and *Pronostku Malti* in the early 1930s. In 1977 he took the first place in the Malta Literary Award for the novel *Beraq and Rainbows* and six years after the second place with the novel *Żerniq on the Hill*. He was awarded the Città di Valletta prize in 1983 and on his 80th birthday the Academy of Maltese paid tribute to him on a musco-literary evening.

George Pisani died on the 24th February 1999 at the age of ninety – after a long life filled with activity in Gozitan cultural life.

J.P. Borg

OPINION

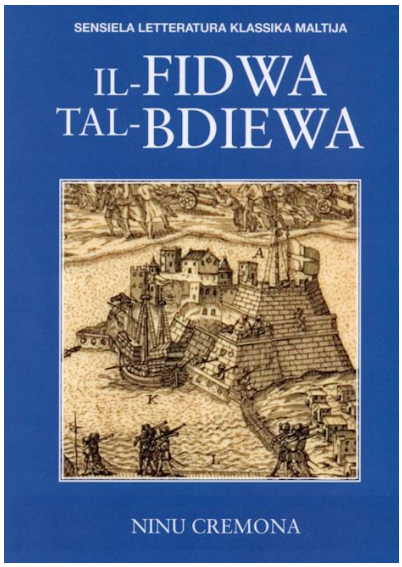
The archipelago of Malta has a proud and ancient history. However, due to overpopulation and the scarcity of work opportunities, living conditions deteriorated. To survive, Maltese needed to migrate and migrate they did! From 1900's onwards, Maltese made Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA and UK their home. They brought with them their farming skills and the ability to work under harsh conditions with the aim of owning their own homes and provide all the essentials for their families. Their families followed in due course and relied on each other for friendship and support. Today their children are educated, resilient and successful.



THE RANSOM OF A NATION

Ninu Cremona, *Il-Fidwa tal-Bdiewa*, L-Akkademja tal-Malti and Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2024, 35 euros.

The fourth edition of Ninu Cremona's classic play *Il-Fidwa tal-Bdiewa*, originally published in 1935, marks the launching of a noteworthy initiative by the Akkademja tal-Malti. This is the first in a series of publications of the classics of Maltese literature, all of which are now practically unavailable after having been out of print for a long time.



And it is indeed an elegant hardback production made possible also with the financial help of the National Book Council which is subsidizing the republication of out of print books. The end result is a most handsome volume which will be published with a very limited run of 300 numbered copies which will be welcomed by students and scholars of Maltese literature. The book includes an excellent wide-ranging critical appreciation by Ġużè Diacono as well as a short biography of Cremona, whose original footnotes have been duly preserved in the text.

Originally written in 1914, incidentally just two years after Dun Karm wrote his first poem in Maltese, the play was first published in book form in 1936. Written in hendecasyllabic verse, it was a veritable tour de force for Cremona also keeping in mind the time it was written, that is at a time when Maltese plays tended mostly to cater for a popular mentality.

The play is set in Aragonese Malta at the time when King Alfonso had enfoeffed Malta to Monroy for 30,000 florins in 1420, whose tenure was marked by his efforts to extract as much as possible from the scanty resources of the islands, then also subject to regular razzias by Muslim corsairs. The poor Maltese peasants often ended up abused in an atmosphere of lawlessness until they are finally led to rise against Monroy's tyrannical exploitation. Against this historical background of the Maltese who rise against the foreigner, with Monroy's wife ending up barricaded in the Castrum Maris, is set the travailed love story of Pietru l-Baħħari and Rożi tal-Qerrieda.

The king's offer to the Maltese to repay the 30,000 florins to Monroy naturally caused extreme hardship among the poor people, who made every effort and more to raise this considerable sum. Actually before his death Monroy would eventually return the sum collected until then to the Maltese, except for 10,000 florins that were to be used to improve the defences of the island.

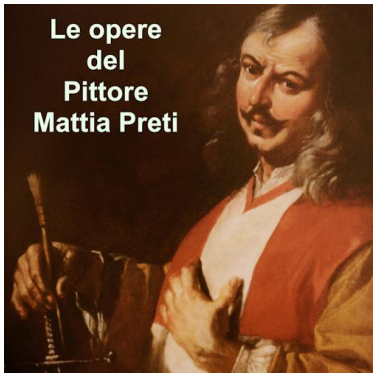
For the first time in their history, the Maltese felt the need to unite as a declaration of national identity. It is all so aptly put in the statement that '*Ċkejkna ħafna/ kienet din l-art minn dejjem u n-nies tagħha/ għaxet taħt is-saqajn dejjem ferħana;/ il-weġgħa qatt ma ħaset, kielet dejjem/ loqom ta' ħobż u l-id ta' sidha lagħqet.*' Words that echo Mikiel Anton Vassalli's clarion call *Alla Nazione Maltese* in the 1796 edition of his *Lexicon*. More than the ransom of a few peasants, the play is about the ransoming of a nation.

Il-Fidwa tal-Bdiewa has stood the test of time as a fine literary work but is ironically almost impossible to stage to a live audience. Its long declamatory speeches will not go down well with modern spectators while the romantic overtones of the Pietru-Rożi scenes are certainly passé. Moreover, its very length and long speeches that lack naturalism make it difficult for the actors to handle. Louis J Scerri

LAUDATE DOMINUM 4 OCTOBER 2024 VENUE: ST. JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

Laudete Dominum is this year's CSR event organised by Malta Enterprise. In celebration of its 20th anniversary since inception, Malta Enterprise has put together yet another meaningful soiree of praise in aid of the Children in need Foundation, a charitable organisation which serves to support the educational, physical, social, and mental needs of vulnerable children. The concert being organised as part of Malta Enterprise's annual CSR commitment, promises a wonderful rendition of hope and prayer through music at the awe-inspiring surroundings of St John Co-Cathedral dedicated to raise funds to the children in need. This production promises to be a blend of social, spiritual, and musical oneness, and all for a very good cause.

The internationally acclaimed Nicola Said (soprano) and Cliff Zammit Stevens (tenor), together with the Pueri Cantores Jubilate Deo (under the direction of Daniela Ellul), the Jubilate Deo Choir will be performing an eclectic programme of sacred works ranging from Bach to spirituals, as well as ever popular solos such as Ave Maria and Panis Angelicus. During the concert, Cathedral organist Ronald Camilleri will unleash the full power of the Mascioni organ through Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor and Widor's Toccata from Symphony No. 5. The concert will be under the musical direction of the Maestro di Cappella of the Metropolitan Cathedral Christopher Muscat.



MATTIA PRETI

Mattia Preti was born in 1613 at Taverna in Calabria, Italy's extreme south; hence he is often refered to as 'Il Calabrese'. De Dominici, his biographer, wrote that Mattia Preti left Calabria at the young age of 17 and travelled to Rome to meet his brother Gregorio, who was also a painter. In Rome he came across, the works of Caravaggio which influenced the artist's technique throughout his life. Caravaggism, the play of shade and light, or commonly known as 'chiaro scuro' can be seen in the works of art of Mattia Preti. In Rome, he carried out the large scale fresco cycles in Sant'Andrea della Valle and San Carlo ai Catinari.

Between 1653 and 1660, Preti worked in Naples were he was directly influenced by the main contemporary artist working in that city. Following the catastrophic plague of 1656, Preti was commisioned with various Ex-Votos, like large frescos which were painted on the seven city gates of the city. Of these city gate frescos, almost nothing exists of Preti's two year work, most of them were destroyed with the ravages of time. Another commision was the mural paintings at San Pietro in Maiella. Preti's seven years in Naples were highly productive and had a tremendous effect on the development of neapolitan art.

St John's Cathedral Valletta

Preti's masterpiece was to be the baroque re-decoration of St John's Cathedral in Valletta. The artist, was already received as a Knight of Obedience whilst he was in Rome, in 1642. From 1661 until 1699 the artist lived in Malta. In 1661, he began to re-decorate the barrel vaulted ceiling of St John's Cathedral in Valletta, a cycle which depicts the life of St John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order. Simultaneously, he sketched the drawings of all the carvings which today decorate the walls of the lateral chapels. For each chapel, a stone carver and a gilder was assigned, a proceedure which enabled the re-decoration of the church to proceed concurrently with Preti's vault decoration. This enabled the artist to oversee the entire works of the church. The vaulted ceiling was completed by the artist in December 1666, 5 years after commencement.

Mattia Preti was promoted as a Knight of Grace and died in Malta in 1699. He can be remembered as a great baroque artist. His works, apart from the re-decoration of St John's Cathedral, adorn various altars in churches around the island. The martyrdom of St Lawrence, which is an alter piece at the Vittoriosa parish church, is just one example of his great achievements. A unique collection of his works of art are exhibited at the National Museum of Fine Arts Valletta. He was ultimately buried at St John's Cathedral were his tombstone can still be seen today.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS IN MALTA AND GOZO LAST YEAR AMOUNTED TO 158,368. Figures released today by the NSO show that almost a third of our country's population is now made up of foreigners. So much so that the total number of foreigners in Malta and Gozo last year amounted to 158,368. In a year's time, the population of foreigners in our country has increased by more than 15 percent. In the same period – between 2022 and 2023 – the Maltese population increased by only 0.1 per cent. And it remained at 405,000 people. Interestingly, according to the National Statistics Office, the average age of foreigners working and living in our country is 32 years. This is when the average age of the Maltese is 43 years

NEW GENERATIONS MUST KEEP REMEMBERING THEIR PAST

The Greek's Gate – MDINA

(Maltese: *Bieb il-Griegi* or *Il-Mina*) is a gatethat takes you into the fortified city of Mdina, Malta. The gate was originally built in the medieval period, and its outer portal was built in the Baroque style in 1724 by Charles François de Mondion. Despite this, the rear part of its gate retains its original form, making it one of the few visible remains of Mdina's medieval walls.

History The Greeks Gate is one of two main gates of Mdina, the other being the Mdina Gate. It is located near the southwest corner of the city, and it got its name since a small Greek community once lived close to the gate.[1] This gate was the only entrance into Mdina from which slaves were allowed to enter.

Greeks Gate in 2010, before it was restored

In the medieval period, the Greeks Gate was flanked by a D-shaped wall tower, which remained in use until the early 18th century, when Mdina's fortifications were upgraded under the military engineer and architect Charles François de Mondion. It is believed that the tower still exists buried behind Mondion's ramparts. At this point, Mondion also grafted a Baroque portal onto the Greeks Gate, giving it its present appearance. The inscription on the gate which commemorates this renovation is dated 1724.

The Greeks Gate was restored between January and June 2003 by the Restoration Unit of the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure. Restoration cost Lm15,000, and it included cleaning the gate, consolidating its decorative elements, and removal of vegetation on the roof. Plans for another restoration were made in 2014, when the government allocated €1 million of ERDF funds for the restoration of Greeks Gate and the surrounding areas.[4] Restoration of the gate commenced in late 2015 and was completed in early 2016.

The Greeks Gate was included on the Antiquities List of 1925. Today, it is scheduled as a Grade 1 national monument, and it is also listed on the National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands.

Architecture

The Greeks Gate actually consists of two vaulted gateways grafted in front of each other. The inner gate still retains its original medieval features, including a pointed arch. A guardhouse was located inside the passageway between the gates. The outer gate consists of a Baroque portal, decorated with various coats of arms and a Latin inscription reading:

VETUSTISSIMÆ HUJUS URBIS
SUB SERENISS. M. MAG. D. ANTONII MANOEL
FELICISSIMO PRINCIPATU RESTAURATA MOENIA
TUO, DIVE PAULE, HOSPITO,
PRÆDICATIONE, QUAM VETUSTATE, CLARIORE
TIBI MERITO NUNCUPANT MELITENSES CIVES
ANNO SALUTIS MDCCXXIV.

The upper part of Greeks Gate contains a mural and oil paintings, one representing the Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Trinity, and the other showing the Baptism of Saint Publius by Paul the Apostle accompanied by Luke the Evangelist.

Outer Greeks Gate The gate is approached through a *pas-de-souris* which is sometimes referred to as the Outer Greeks Gate. This was originally protected by a re-entrant place-of-arms, and was linked to the gate by a caponier. Today, the *pas-de-souris* provides vehicular access into the Mdina ditch, while the place-of-arms and caponier no longer exist. The gate was protected by a wooden *à la Vauban* drawbridge and a drop ditch, but the latter has been filled in. The underground chamber in which the drawbridge was retracted still exists. The gate still retains its original wooden door.

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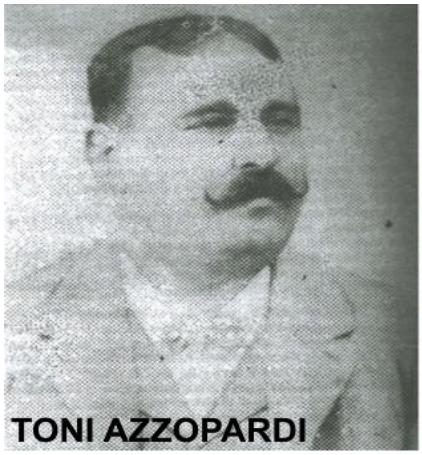

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF NINU XKORA

Antonio Azzopardi was born in Valletta. Azzopardi murdered Giuseppe Camenzuli, known as *Żabbatu*, outside his own shop 'Omdorman' at Broad Street corner with Saint Joseph High Road, in Ħamrun on 6 December 1907

Toni Azzopardi (nicknamed Xkora), has become a legend and part of our Maltese folklore. This man was hanged as he had killed his daughter's lover, a thirty-year-old man who was seducing Xkora's fifteen year old daughter.

Did this father have no right to defend his daughter from this paedophile? Was he given a fair trial, when the whole courtroom spoke Italian, as was customary in those days, and he did not understand what was being said against him? Was he given a decent burial? All these questions arise when we speak about this man who was unjustly treated by eighteenth century society.

The story starts when Ninu, grieved by his wife's death and the death of 4 of his offspring, used to drink and play cards only to end up in considerable debt with Joseph Camenzuli – who eventually became his daughter's lover. He used to refuse to go home and eat with his 2 remaining daughters and found refuge in Camenzuli's inn, drinking and spending money uncontrollably.

One night, Stella his daughter, came to tell her father that their maid had supper laid on the table, and that everyone was waiting for his arrival. He shouted at Stella to go home and that he was not returning home, before he finished playing cards with his mates.

Before leaving, Joseph told Stella if she would like to come and see him in the coming days at his inn, so that they could chat and get to know each other better. Stella immediately fell in love with Joseph and a love story between the two soon ensued.

Ninu was not at all happy when he learnt about this and forbade the two from speaking to each other again. Unfortunately, they did not pay attention to his words, and this brought a catastrophe…

One morning, exactly on the 6th December 1907, as Joseph was opening his inn, preparing for a day's work, Ninu rushed towards him and struck him 14 times with a dagger in his chest. When the magistrate heard the case, Ninu's verdict was that he was to be hanged. His burial took place a few hours after his death and many are of the belief that he was buried alive.

Legend has it that Ninu's spirit still haunts the Prison Cemetery as a lady relates the story when she went to place some oil so as to light a lantern on his tomb and found the cemetery to be closed. No sooner had she turned around to start walking home, a man called her and asked if she needed anything. The lady told the man that she wanted to place some oil in a lantern to light Ninu's tomb. The man offered that he would do this himself and took the oil from the lady's hands and thanked her heartily.

When the lady related the story to two guards who were there in the following days, she was shown a photo and asked if she recognized the man in the picture. She did not hesitate to utter that the man in the photo was the same man who had taken the oil and offered to place it on Ninu's grave. The guards then gave her the shocking news, that the man was no-one else but Ninu Xkora himself!

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The Maltese Center

OPEN HOUSE

Friday September 27th at 7:30 pm*
*subject to change

MEET AND GREET

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta
Hon. Robert Abela

The committee and the members of the Maltese Center are honored to welcome His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta together with the delegation to the Center.

ALL WELCOME

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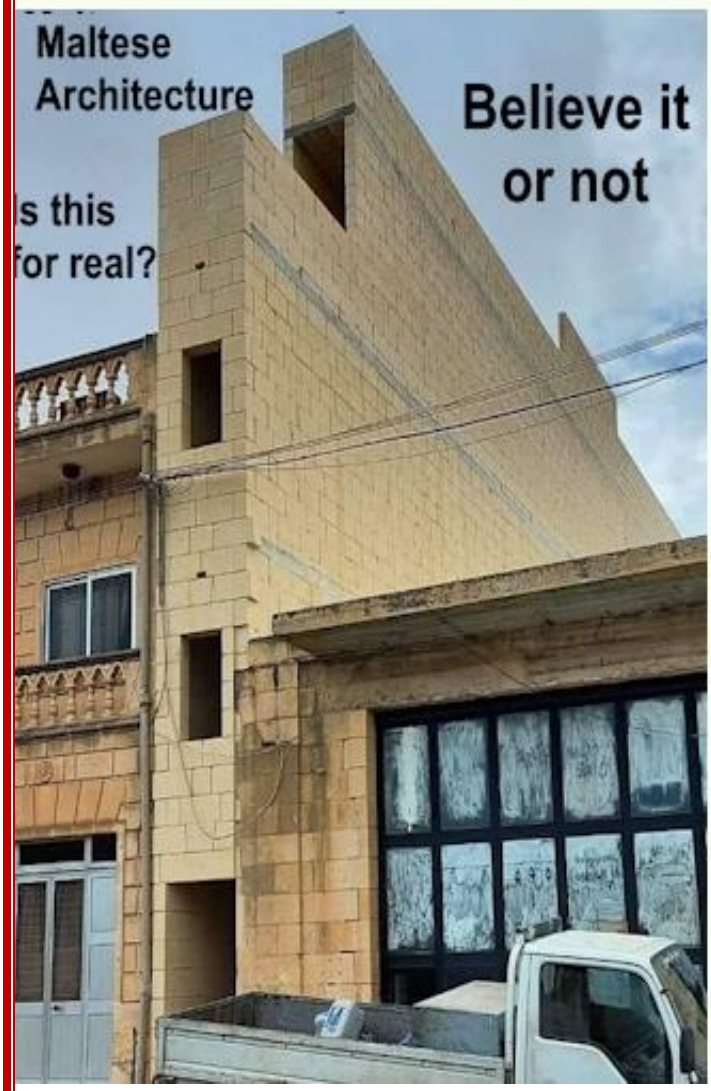
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