

The Spirit of Enterprise:

**Malta's most important
Asset**

What is Enterprise?

- The readiness to take on new projects and challenges, especially those which are daring and courageous.

The Austrian School of Economists

- The so-called Austrian School economists, von Mises, Schumpeter and Hayek, have proposed that entrepreneurs have the following three attributes:

Self-motivation

- Enables them to thrive on the risk and uncertainty which they see as containing both the seeds of opportunity and the potential for profit.

Problem Solving

- A capacity to solve problems even if it leads to conflict with others.

Capacity to network.

- Being at the centre of a rich social and business network.

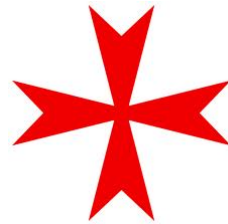
I propose to look at a fine example of home-grown entrepreneurship

18th-CENTURY

MALTA:

A VIBRANT CITY STATE

OPEN TO THE WORLD



- Malta's harbour towns open to the world from early on but particularly after the Hospitallers' arrival here in 1530
- In the late 17th Century, a crisis in the corsairing sector caused locals to seek alternatives
- This took the shape of a remarkable **diaspora**, or dispersion, of merchants all over the Mediterranean and beyond, particularly in Spain

The Maltese Entrepreneurial Network

- As Catholics and subjects of the Hospitallers, Maltese merchants were, in general, very welcome in Catholic Europe.
- The Order of Saint John aided Maltese businessmen by setting up the *Consolato di Mare* in 1697 to regulate the increasing volume of trade. This presentation and a whole series of publications have drawn considerably on its documentation housed at the National Archives in Rabat.

The Maltese Mercantile Diaspora in Spain

1,200+ Maltese heads of family, mostly engaged in business, were counted in late 18th century Spain, operating mainly in Andalusia, Murcia, and the Kingdom of Valencia

A much smaller number of wholesalers controlled the cotton business in Barcelona



Western Europe

Two Stages in its Formation

- Until mid 18th Century, brigantine expeditions with a couple of dozen men who multitasked as mariners, merchants and musketeers
- Seemingly more-settled establishment on land after 1760s after a spate of legislation sought to control their operations. As business grew it was also safer to travel in larger vessels.



Brigantino

From *Le Neptune François, ou Atlas nouveau des cartes marines*.
A Paris, chez Hubert Jaillot, 1693.

Who were these Maltese?

First and foremost, they were overwhelmingly from Cottonera, the inner-harbour area which until the last war was the focus of the business community.

18th-Century Cottonera: a vibrant 'Smart City' open to the world

- In the mid-18th Century, 42% of Senglea's men were away trading or serving in foreign navies
- In 1745-1746, nearly 70% of merchants returning from Spain were from Senglea (L-Isla), Cospicua (Bormla) or Vittoriosa(Birgu)
- In 1791, men from Senglea and Cospicua accounted for 77% of the large Maltese merchant community in Spain, namely Cadiz which was the point of entry into Europe of the all-important silver bullion from the Americas
- Cottonera would remain the focal point of much local enterprise until the advent of the II World War



SENGLEA (L-ISLA)



CADIZ

CHARACTERISTICS OF MALTESE

- Reliance on kith and kin for business
- Traded and lived in close proximity to each other
- High regard for honour and trust in business
- Regular travel to and from their island
- Mutual support
- High degree of social control
- High level of literacy

RELIGION A KEY IDENTIFIER

- There is no doubting their religiosity. They had their own religious confraternities and priests. In 1791 Don Andres Ardizzone from Cospicua was chaplain in Cadiz, the largest Maltese community in Spain: he was there to “administer the sacraments owing to his understanding of their language”
- Some were, nevertheless, open to new ideas. Pasqual Delceppo, a leading Maltese merchant in Barcelona, had no qualms about reading books on the Inquisition’s prohibited list. His library included works on geography, natural history, politics, theatre, travel, the learning of both the French and German languages, commercial law, religion, and history in Italian, Spanish and French.



Name of brigantines often started with SS Crocefisso followed by the name of a saint

THE HUMAN ANGLE

Behind the aggregate figures I have given you are individuals such as Antonio Caruana, Alexandro Romano, Joseph Grech, Angelo Seychel, and many others, each with their own story to tell!

Antonio Caruana – A Maltese Success Story in Spain

- Born in Senglea in 1753. Son of Felix Caruana and Madalena Brignone
- Apprenticed in the shop of his uncle Juan Brignone in Valencia in 1769
- By 1803 was a successful silk factory owner in Valencia given the right to carry the Royal Coat of Arms over his house and factory
- Married a Spaniard, Maria Angela de Alcantara
- Father of Peregrin Caruana, one of the most important figures in the bourgeoisie of 19th Century Valencia; involved in banks, railways, potable water...
- Died 1819 in Valencia
- Jaime Caruana, former Governor of Spain's Central Bank and of the BIS, a direct descendent



JAIME CARUANA

Others were not so respectable!

- In 1752 Granada, Alexandro Romano accused his partner Joseph Desala of a whole range of misdeeds including sleeping on the job, frequenting prostitutes, drinking and threatening to kill him
- In 1773, Joseph Grech was denounced as a bigamist to the Spanish Inquisition in Cadiz by resident Maltese Chaplain Don Juan Bautista Camilleri
- In 1790, Angelo Seychel claimed his partner Salvatore Azzopardi owed him money but the latter asserted he had used it all on medical care for the venereal disease which Seychel had contracted from Isabela Calan in Cadiz which left him blind in one eye

Cash for Cottonera

- In Spain, Maltese merchants lived a very frugal life but once back home openly flaunted their wealth
- I.S. Mifsud, an 18th Century diarist, refers to the beautiful and expensive dresses worn by the wives of merchants in the Spanish trade which “not even ladies of rank and members of the rich nobility possess”
- Rich families like the Camilleris, Lanzons, and Gaffieros also gave generously to the church

Malta their point of reference

Not unlike the Armenian diaspora's relationship with New Julfa, in Isfahan, the Maltese mercantile diaspora in Spain had a symbiotic relationship with their place of origin, the Three Cities, where they raised capital, had families, and regularly returned to.

Fast Forward to the Present

Guard against Hubris

ANY QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU

FOR MORE INFORMATION
EMAIL ME AT
carmel.vassallo@um.edu.mt

