

HISTORICAL REVIEW

In 1798 Napoleon and his powerful army – on their way to Egypt – occupied the Maltese islands (*Malta, Gozo, Comino*). Thus, the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem lost their territory, from which they were forced to leave after 268 years. (*In Malta, members of the Order are still called and remembered as Knights of St. John rather than Knights of Malta.*) To this day, countless great buildings and European-renowned facilities are reminiscent of the state, founded by the knights in Malta, whose legitimacy and statehood were guaranteed in principle by the Treaty of Amiens of 1802, but its contents were never fulfilled. The Order did not regain the territory offered to the Knights of the Order of St. John by the German-Roman Emperor Charles V in 1530, after they were also expelled from Rhodes, where they lived between 1308-1523, after Jerusalem (at the Holy Land where the Order was founded in 1048), Acre and Cyprus.

In Malta, the Knights established their well-organized and prosperous state with all institutions, infrastructure, including a new capital, named Valletta (*after Grandmaster Jean Parisot de La Valette*). The knights began to build the new fortified capital after the Great Siege, launched by the Ottoman Empire in 1565 and successfully repulsed by the Maltese knights, and later heroically defended it also from the ongoing Turkish invasion in the Mediterranean.

In 1789, with the French occupation, the life of the Order in Malta ended sadly, the knights dispersed, but some priories that did not join the Vatican retained their independence. At the beginning of the 20th century, members of these independent priories considered that the time had come for unification and reorganization. At the end of several years of negotiations, in 1909 in the USA, they agreed, established and registered the Union of Independent Priories of the Order of St. John, today known as the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Federation of the Autonomous Priories (KMFAP), as the legitimate successor to the Order of Saint John, founded in 1048, in Jerusalem, at the Holy Land. After the merger, the official status of the KMFAP was confirmed by numerous court judgments in disputes with other Maltese or St. John's Orders, such as in St. Petersburg in 1898, then in Rome in 1955, and on several other occasions.

The Order of St. John, to which the Sovereign Order of Cyprus (*a.k.a. the Knights of Sword and Silence*) also joined as its military branch, was incredibly strengthened and renewed in the USA in the 20th century. In this sense, it eliminated all forms of discrimination, so that ladies and gentlemen of any religion, origin and identity could become members of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem (KMFAP) if they proved worthy. During these Golden Age decades, the US Congress dealt with our Order three times in its sessions: in 1967, 1973, and 1984, in connection with some illustrious persons who became knights of our Order, as reported in the official "Congressional Record" in our possession.