

THE PROLIFERATION OF RUSSIAN AND OTHER 'ORDERS' OF St.JOHN

by

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A remarkable burgeoning of chivalric "orders" of all kinds on both sides of the Atlantic began in the late nineteenth century and continues to this day. Many of these orders took on the appellation "of St.John", claiming to be continuations of various alleged offshoots of the Russian Orthodox church, which was broken up in the early 1800s. First its property was seized by imperial ukase in 1810 and then in 1817 another decree proscribed the wearing of the insignia "of an order which does not exist in Russia." Others claim to be revivals of extinct priories of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (S.M.O.M.). Still others opted for the appellation "of St.John the Baptist".

For some, the attraction of these orders may simply be a nostalgia for aristocratic tradition in an increasingly materialistic world or a desire to serve a special charitable cause. For others, however, they provide a venue for a lucrative trade in false titles and distinctions. Those interested in further reading on the subject will find a partial list of useful works in the bibliography.

Many of these orders claim to be dynastic or hospitaller or a combination thereof but they impose neither responsibilities on their members nor perform any services. While some of these groups are headed by genuinely titled individuals, others are created by imaginary Byzantine "Imperial and Royal Highnesses" whose names are nowhere to be found in the Almanach de Gotha or in any other reputable lists of the nobility. These individuals waste no time in divulging their pedigrees to gullible people willing to listen which ought to be the first clue that these notables and their "orders" may not be quite what they represent themselves to be.

The question most often raised is: how to distinguish between the genuine and false orders of St.John. The answer is simple. The genuine orders are in the order of their establishment: the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, headed by its 78th Prince Grand Master, His Most Eminent Highness Frn Andrew Bertie; the Balliwick of Brandenburg of the Knightly Order of St.John of the Hospital in Jerusalem, known as the Johanniter Order, headed by its Herrenmeister, H.R.H. Wilhelm Karl, Prince of Prussia; the Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St.John of Jerusalem, of which H.M.Queen Elizabeth II is Sovereign Head and H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester is Grand Prior; the Johanniterorden I Sverige, which is under the high protection of the King of Sweden and the Johanniter Orde in Nederland, under the protection of H.M. Queen Beatrix. All other self-styled chivalric groups which use the name of St.John in their appellation are, in my view spurious.

The next question most frequently asked concerns the criteria used to determine the authenticity of an order of St.John. One of the reasons why the question is difficult to answer is that the United States has no chivalric tradition and maintains no official government entity empowered to set criteria to determine the historicity and validity of orders of chivalry. The IRS can and does grant tax-exempt status to bona-fide charitable and non-profit organizations. Thus, in the United States any legally-constituted, but not necessarily historically authentic association or sodality can take on the trappings of chivalry, add St.John to its name and, so long as it is not involved in fraudulent activity, obtain tax-exempt status if it meets the relatively simple requirements. Thus, it is up to the Most Venerable Order to set its own guidelines to evaluate the authenticity of an order of St.John. These guidelines are:

- 1) The order maintains a proven uncut historical and traditional link with the original Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem founded in A.D. 1099 or
- 2) The Order is under the protection of a reigning sovereign and/or is recognized as a chivalric order by the ruling government of the country where it is seated.

Note: In addition to fulfilling the two criteria mentioned above, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta is a case apart as it is itself a sovereign entity in international law which maintains diplomatic relations with fifty-one countries. It is also a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church under the Holy See.

Many of the groups cited herein claim either "royal" or "spiritual" protection. It must be stated that for protection to have any validity under international law it must be offered by a sovereign state or by a reigning monarch. Some scholars extend the principle of granting protection to an ex-reigning monarch whose rights of *fons honorum*, they affirm, are permanent and valid even in exile. The point is highly contested. Reputable experts agree that a junior prince of a former sovereign house who has not regained cannot provide valid protection. Neither does "spiritual protection" offered by the primate of an aepiscopal church have any validity under international law.

This exposition of the proliferation of make-believe orders is offered in the hope that it may be of value to readers and to their friends in case they should be approached to join any of these non-recognized bodies. In view of the rapid spread of these groups, a few more may see the light of day between the time this is written and its publication. Please accept my apologies.

LIST OF NON-RECOGNIZED ST. JOHN'S ORDERS

I. The Hospitaller Knights of St.John the Baptist (ca. 1875); Sovereign Order of St.John the Baptist (ca. 1975); Order of Spain of St.John the Baptist in America (ca.1975)

The first imitation appeared in Spain in either 1875 or 1876 and was, unlikely as it may seem, the result of a scission in the Spanish Red Cross Society. Part of the association separated from the Red Cross and called itself "The Hospitaller Knights of St. John the Baptist". At that time, the Spanish Langue of the SMOM was independent of Rome, and the crown of Spain had transformed it into a purely Spanish royal merit order awarded for services to the State. Acceptance did not imply or confer nobiliary status on the recipients. In 1848 the Spanish government appropriated all the former properties of the Order of Malta in Spain and sold them at auction. The Order in Spain kept only a semblance of its former character; one Infante of Spain took the title of Grand Prior of Castile and Leon"" and the other that of "Grand Prior of the Langue of Aragon".

In 1875 Don Eduardo Palau y Flores, a Spanish senator and a knight of the SMOM, was a member of the Executive Council of the Spanish Red Cross. He along with several other Spanish knights, had the idea of reviving the ancient hospitaller order in Spain independent of the Lieutenantcy of the Order in Rome.(1) And of the abusive Grand Magistracy of the Catholic King of Spain.

The senator headed the supreme council and instituted chapters in Madrid, Cádiz, Seville and Barcelona. The mission of the order was the administration of hospitals and ambulances in Spain. The first of these was the Hospital of Our Lady, headed by its Grand Master, the Duke of Alcazar de Turol, who was a member of the Spanish nobility and recognized the exclusive rights of the Roman Grand Magistracy to receive Knights of St.John into the ancient Langues of Castile and Aragón. For his part Grand Master Ceschi di Santa Croce agreed to recognize Spanish subjects who had received the royal Spanish merit decoration as "Knights of Honor and Devotion" without requiring them to furnish nobiliary proofs. Thus SMOM regained all of its ancient prestige in Spain ad a chapter was formed presided by a Bailiff appointed by the Grand master.

Meanwhile the Hospitallers of the Atocha hospital modified their insignia. They eliminated the medallion, the fleurs-de-lys, and the royal crown, but kept the eight-pointed white enameled cross with the capital "H" in the center. They added red enameled rays in the angles and substituted a wreath for the crown. Senator Palau y Flores tried without much success to reconcile the existence of the Hospitallers with the Roman Order but the former soon faded away, maintaining but one chapter in Cádiz.

In 1885 when least expected the "Heraldic Academy of Madrid", a group of amateur heraldists, tried to revive the Hospitallers with chapters in Berlin, Paris and elsewhere. The Berlin chapter was founded by one Barron Johan Moser de Voiga, who was his who later, revived the Order of St.Lazarus. A scandal ensued when the Imperial German Embassy in Madrid officially requested the Spanish government to verify Moser's allegedly Spanish title and his commercial activities. Moser had convinced the Spanish Chancellors of Arms to confirm a bogus German title and authorize its use in Spain. The German démarche demolished what little was left of the credibility of the Spanish heraldic authorities, which to this day, they have not been able to recover completely. Moser's stock in trade was the sale of orders and decorations including those of the Order of Knights Hospitaller of St.John the Baptist, as well as those of the Spanish Red Cross to German nationals. The former order was denounced as an imitation of the Papal order and again went into eclipse.

In 1952, a new group revised the statutes of the Knights Hospitaller of St.John the Baptist of Cádiz and had them approved by the Spanish Ministers of Interior and health. The initiative appears to have regained some respectability in Spain, operating a hospital in Cádiz, and no longer tries to emulate the SMOM.

In the mid-nineteenth century a "**Sovereign Order of St.John the Baptist**" appeared in France. Shortly after its creation it split into two factions, each using the same name. One was headed by a "Count René Peslier de Kersoisson". The other by a Colonel Count Poziemski, a Pole known for awarding diplomas and decorations to the well-heeled in recognition of apocryphal acts of military valour with the allied assistance in World War II. Roger Peyrefitte amusingly describes in his book "Tableaux de Chasse" how Fernand Legros, a clever salesman of forged art works loved to display his diploma as "Captain in the Resistance" issued him by the "Internallied Military Organization Sphinx (I.M.O.S.). Legros, who spent the war years as a child in Egypt did not set foot in France until after the war. This distinction is one of the many peddled by Poziemski.

The Order of St.John the Baptist in America attracted some attention at about the same period. According to Robert Formhals(2) this organization appears to be an offshoot of a Masonic Templar body which allegedly received its charter from the Congress of the United States in 1923. Formhals has some doubts as to the continuing validity of its original charter but admits that since 1939 it has been active in Southern California and is restricted to citizens of the Western Hemisphere.(3) At the outset and until 1939, its head was Dr. Prince Nicholas. Lieut.Col. Federico M. Dimas-Aruti followed as Grand master from 1939 to 1945. Alan Weaver-Hazleton from 1945 to 1974 and finally by Robert Gamble. Some evidence indicates that this institution may be connected to that of Colonel Count Poziemski, since both he and Dimas-Aruti have served on the "Supreme Council" of an "Internallied Military Organization Sphinx (I.M.O.S.)

II. The Grand Priory of America of the Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem (1908)

In 1908 its adherents claimed a number of Russian émigrés residing in New York said to be descendants of titulars of "hereditary commanderies" of the Russian Grand priories along with some American friends created this group. The promoter was William Lamb who pretended to be of Russian origin and a "general".

In 1911 this group incorporated itself in New York as "The Association of the Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem." (In 1936 the seat of the association was transferred to the residence of Charles Louis Thourot-Pichel, its "Grand Chancellor" and de facto head in Shickshiny, Pa. Pichel used the styles of "Baron de Thourot, Lord of Estagel" and officiated in a number of independent "orders of chivalry").

Allegedly "Grand master" from 1913 to 1933: Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich of Russia. Lieutenants of the grand magistracy: William Sohler Bryant (1933-1951), Baron von de Sebe-Hers (1951-1955), Count von Zeyppel (1956-1960), Paul G. Granier de Cassagnac, longer titles in France (1960-1962), Count Felix von Luckner (1962-1966). Grand master since 1966: Crollan William Edelen, who styled himself "Count de Burgh, descendant of Frankish kings of Jerusalem, of the emperors of Byzantium, of Charlemagne, etc.etc." an officer of various independent "orders of chivalry". He left this group in 1962 but was later reintegrated into its ranks. Edelen passed on in the early 1990s.

We recently came across a most interesting and important exchange of correspondence between a disgruntled Crollan William Edelen and a disillusioned Prof. Harrison Smith, a one-time professor of history at the University of Maryland and a long-time strong proponent of the legend of the authenticity of the Russian-American Priory. Edelen writes: "My problem with the history is that all seems to be false from 1908 to 1932 as published by Pichel. I know his minutes are false. Dr. Bulloch has never Grand Chancellor of the Order. He was the archivist of the old Scottish-American Order of St.John and he kept those records at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. When he was old and blind, in the early 1950s, Pichel went to him with a story that he was writing a history of the Knights of Malta and needed some records from the archives. Dr. Bulloch let him borrow whatever he fancied and then obligingly died while Pichel had the most important records. He took the material, twisted it around, took names of noblemen from the Times index and created an order stemming from the Grand Priory of Russia, all a hoax. The Scottish-American order went out of business in new York in about 1909 following the suicide of the Grand Chancellor, as well as a scandal involving payment (or non-payment) of life insurance policies on the lives of the members. Some members in New Jersey tried to save the situation by securing a charter as "The Knights of Malta" in Trenton in 1911. Their effort failed and by 1912 was abandoned. Then Pichel came along in the 1950s and claimed to be the duly-elected officer of that corporation to give his order some evidence of antiquity and to substantiate the false minutes from 1908 to 1932."

Smith replied on 20 February 1980: "I am somewhat puzzled by the information about Pichel. I remember his ways well, and you will note a sense of caution in my using his sources, but I think the question you raise is: is everything he writes about the Foundation in America, the role of Grand Duke Alexander, and the role of his successors down to the arrival of Pichel on the scene - is all that a total fabrication? I can conceive of distortion, twisting and misuse of facts, but we can conclude there is no foundation whatsoever to an American Grand Priory of Order coming out of the successors to Czar Paul in the time of Nicholas III???"

If this is true, then the revived modern order has no descent to fall back on in historical evolution other than to cling to, merge with the Hereditary Knights in Paris after the fall of the Czar."

It would appear that Prof. Harrison Smith finally saw the light although he still appeared to be laboring under the misapprehension that the **Union of Descendants of Hereditary Commanders and Knights of the Russian Grand Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem** (see III below) was itself an order. If nothing else, this exchange of correspondence should put an end to the myth, so long-maintained by its proponents, of the survival in America of the Russian Grand Priory.

Among the "dignitaries" of this association were: Prince Serge Troubetzkoy (Grand prior of the Russian Langue) ca 1967; "Baron K. Vella-Haber d'Alaro (Prior ca.1967); Otto Adrian Schobert, a.k.a. "Baron de Cholbert" (Prior and Ambassador in 1958). "Hereditary High Protector since 1973: Roberto Paterno, self-styled "H.R.H. Prince Paterno d'Emmanuel, Duke of Perpignan, pretender to the thrones of Aragon and the Balearics"; "Grand Master of the Order of St. Agatha of the Paternos" and of the "Royal Crown of the Balearics", who left the association in 1971 to join the "International Grand Priory" of Baron K. Vella-Haber d'Alaro (see XIV). He subsequently reconciled with Thourot-Pichel. Later he created his own "**Royal Order of the Hospital of Jerusalem in Aragon**" (see under XIII).

III. Union of Descendants of Hereditary Commanders and Knights of the Russian Grand Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (1928)

In Paris on 24 June 1928 a group of twelve exiled Russian noblemen, descendants of "family commanders" of the Russian Orthodox Grand Priory formed this union. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, in exile in France, agreed to be the union's "Grand Prior". When the Union of Descendants was formed, he accepted to become its head and soon tried to effect a rapprochement with the S.M.O.M. The conditions offered by the S.M.O.M. that the Union subject itself to the via Condotti (4) and receive only Roman Catholic members was unacceptable to the Grand Duke and the reconciliation never took place. Thus, the Grand Duke remained Grand Prior of the Union until his death in 1933. After his death, the presidency of the Union passed to Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich (brother of Grand Duke Kyrill Vladimirovich, head of the imperial house of Russia who also became its "protector"). Following Grand Duke Andrei's death in 1956, the Union was directed by its Secretary General Georges de Ritcheff. In 1962 the latter petitioned Grand Duke Vladimir Kyrilovich, head of the imperial house to become the Union's "protector". He personally asked H.H.H. Grand Duke Vladimir in August 1988 about his protection of the Union. He confirmed that both he and his father had indeed been its protector but that it neither was or was ever meant to be a revival of the Russian Grand priory. Rather it was, what its name implied, merely a union of descendants of the original "family" or "hereditary" commanders. After de Ritcheff's death the group virtually disappeared from the scene in France, but a new "**Sovereign Order of the Orthodox Knights Hospitaller of St.John of Jerusalem**" (see XVII) claiming to be descended from this Union was created in the United States in 1977 in close cooperation with the Association of the Russian Nobility.

IV. a) Sovereign Order of the Hospital of St.John of Jerusalem of Denmark(1934) b) The Ecclesiastical Knightly Order of Malta of St.John of Jerusalem, the Priory of St.Andrew (1939) later called The Autonomous Priory of Dacia of the Order of Malta(1983); c) The Grand priory of the Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem in Denmark (1946); Sovereign Imperial Russian Order of Knights of Malta (1948)

a) This order was created as a private non-political Christian ecumenical charitable initiative in Copenhagen on 31 August 1934. It makes no claim to be an "order of chivalry". The group, has, however through the years concluded and broken alliances with various of the groups mentioned in this paper. For a brief period the "Grand Chancellor" of this group was H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark.

b) On 10 April 1939 another private group which initially called itself **The Ecclesiastical Knightly Order of Malta of St.John of Jerusalem, Priory of St. Andrew**. Its founder was one Preben Wenck (later von Wenckheim) was in contact with Baron Michel de Taube in Paris, an official of the **Union of Hereditary Commanders (III)**. On 19 October 1938 de Taube with the consent of Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich gave von Wenckheim authorization to form a priory in Denmark. Von Wenckheim died in 1957. A few years ago the name of this order was changed to **The Autonomous Priory of Dacia of the Order of Malta**. The current head of the order is Dr. Sjaald Tving, a dentist.

This body was founded in 1946 by Mr. Grundtiff Sjallung (now deceased) who was a member of the original order (a). In 1923 Kjelving had joined the Pichelian group (II) and in 1948 was appointed deputy to Max Schiffel to start a priory in Denmark. This group no longer exists as in 1973 it merged with (a).

d) In 1948 another group led by Danish architect Charles Christensen formed its own order. In 1951 Christensen obtained a decree issued in Leipzig, Germany by "The Sovereign Russian Imperial Order of Knights of Malta", which was signed by Max Schiffel von Frauenstein (the same Schiffel as in c.). The "Grand Master" of this "order" was a "Prince Paul Avallio-Bermond". In 1974 this crew joined forces with the French group under General Pierre de Rémond du Chélas (See VI). After Christensen's death in 1979 this band was headed by Carl Wilhelm Lehman until 1975 and since then by Mr. Ove Petersen. In 1984 about half the membership of this "order" dissatisfied with its leadership seceded and joined a). above.

V. Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, Priory of the Holy Saviour (1960)

This group is one of the many scissions of the Shickshiny operation (see II). It was headed by the Rev. Christopher Carl Jerome Stanley of the Old Catholic Church. Stanley was consecrated by J.F. Assendelft-Bissard, a highly controversial "episcopous vagans" and self-styled Patriarch of the Ancient Catholic Byzantine Church. According to Formhals,(5) Stanley initially styled himself "Althold" later "Archbishop". Somewhere along the line he also acquired the titles of "Lieutenant of the Holy Roman Empire". The priory seat was originally located in Louisville, then moved to Seattle, and finally to Texas. After Stanley's death the group disappeared from the American chivalric scene.

VI. Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta or Knights Hospitaller (OSJ) (1961-62)

Paul de Granier de Cassagnac, "Lieutenant of the Grand Magistracy" of the American organization (see II) claimed the grand magistracy but was defeated and decided to go it alone by establishing his association. He called upon the deposed King Peter II of Yugoslavia to be the "Hereditary High Protector". Grand Masters: Paul de Granier de Cassagnac from 1962 to 1965; a.k.a. "Baron de Cholbert" (Prior and Ambassador in 1958). "Hereditary High Protector since 1973: Roberto Paterno, self-styled "H.R.H. Prince Paterno d'Emmanuel, Duke of Roumania and Madame "Zizi" Lambroino) who styled himself "H.R.H. Prince Carol of Roumania", and finally in 1973 by Pierre de Rémond du Chélas. The "Lieutenant of the Grand Magistracy" from 1966 to 1968 was Louis Espinasse, The "Grand Chancellors" were Otto Adrian Schobert, a.k.a. "Baron de Schobert"; in 1961, C.W. Edelen a.k.a. "Count de Burgh etc."; in 1962 and the ubiquitous K. Vella Haber d'Alaro in 1965.

VII. Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller (1965)

King Peter, although "Hereditary High Protector" of de Cassagnac's group, came to oppose the latter and created his own order in new York with the help of Otto Schobert and a Maltese French teacher, Gasto Thona-Barthet, both defectors from the original Shickshiny group (see II) and that of de Cassagnac. (see VI).

In 1968, while remaining "High Protector", Peter turned over the grand magistracy to Prince Serge Troubetzkoy, formerly "Prior of the Russian Langue" of the original Shickshiny group (see II) but Troubetzkoy now calls himself "Lieutenant of the Grand Magistracy".

In 1970 following the demise of King Peter, the latter's younger brother Prince Andrei of Yugoslavia, lent his own name to the group, which he later abandoned in order to become "High Protector", first of Sanguzko-Formhals (see XV) then of that of Thona-Barthet (see XII).

During the same year, Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark became "Grand Prior" of this order but left it in 1971 to become "Grand Chancellor" of the "Order of the Hospital of St.John of Jerusalem of Denmark" (see IV a).

From 1966 to 1970 the "Chancellor" of this assemblage was "Prince Robert M.N.G. Bassaraba von Brancovan". He was expelled and then created the "Ecumenical Knights of Malta" (see XI)

A commandery of San Francisco was established in 1988 allegedly under the protection of the late "Grand Master" H.R.H. Prince Andrei of Yugoslavia by Mr. Antonio Cortese.(6) It is currently under the "protection" of H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth of Yugoslavia, mother of the actress Catherine Oxenberg.

VIII. French Fraternity of the Order of St.John of Jerusalem (1965)

This organization, the French jurisdiction of the Pichelian order, emerged during a conflict between Peter priest of Yugoslavia and de Cassagnac (see VI) Its seat was the medieval abbey of Vaucelle in Northern France. Its "Spiritual Head" was "Father Delecambre", a defrocked Catholic priest. Among its stated objectives was the study and propagation of gnostic philosophy.

IX. The Byzantine Protectorate of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St.John of Jerusalem (1986); Dynastic Order of St. John of Jerusalem (1986)

This group appeared in France shortly after the death of Paul de Granier de Cassagnac. Its seat was in the castle of La Valouze in La Roche Chalais, France. The enterprise was a creation of "His Imperial and Royal Highness Henri III de Vigo Alarémico Lascaris Paleologue". It is alleged to have died out in 1974 for a lack of membership but was revived in 1986 as "The Dynastic Order of St.John" by the same "imperial and royal highness".

X. Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta (1968-69)

Mircea Carol von Hohenzollern-Stigmaringen, a.k.a. "prince Carol of Roumania" left the Cassagnac group of which he was "Grand Master" (see VI) and created this short-lived entity in Rome.

XI. Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, a.k.a. Ecumenical Knights of Malta (1970); The Imperial Russian Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Ecumenical Foundation (1992)

"Prince" Robert M.N.G. Bassaraba von Brancovan (whose right to the name is vigorously denied by the Transylvanian princely house of Brancovan) was a member of the de Cassagnac body (see VII) in 1960. In 1966 he became "Chancellor" of King Peter's and Prince Troubetzkoy's group (see VII), which expelled him in 1970. He founded this body that same year with the help of Otto Adrian Schobert, a.k.a. "Baron de Cholbert" and Heymie Einsontätter, a.k.a. Henry Erdesz. He initially appointed himself "Lieutenant of the Grand Magistracy" then ca. 1974 "Grand Master". He claimed to be the successor of Peter II of Yugoslavia and to maintain fraternal relations with Prince Serge Troubetzkoy. In 1975 he proclaimed the union of his group with "The Priory of the Holy Trinity of Villedieu" (see XVI).

In 1978 "von Brancovan" and some associates said they had obtained the "sovereignty" of an archipelago situated in the South China Sea consisting of uninhabited islets, atolls and reefs and covering an area of approximately 46,000 square miles. This state was known as Freedomland and was ruled by a king and allegedly represented in the United Nations by a minister plenipotentiary. Needless to say no state by this name obtained independence in 1978 or after or has ever been known to the United Nations. Brancovan claimed that after negotiations between himself and the ruler of Freedomland an accord was signed according to which the state would henceforth be known as "Colonia St.John" and "King John I" would take the order under his protection. Diplomatic passports were issued at \$2,000 a piece. Each of these bore the notation: "This passport is valid by the terms of the governmental charter of the Constitutional Monarchy of the Kingdom of Colonia St.John (formerly Khalyayan). By the terms of this governmental charter the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Ecumenical under the reigning Sovereign and 74th Grand Master, H.I. & R.H. Prince Robert von Brancovan Kinghlichavilli, Prince of Thrace is possessor of an integral sovereignty." Four of these passports were sold in 1981 for \$80,000 to some members of a Corsican drug ring who were later arrested in Beirut.

As if this were not enough, in 1981 Brancovan sought and obtained the "protection" of "Prince Alexis d'Anjou Romanov Dolgorouki, Duke of Durazzo", pretender to the Russian throne who resided in Spain until his death in Madrid in 1993. His true name was Alexis Brimeyer.

The Brancovan order, probably the wealthiest of all independent orders is now called "The Imperial Russian Order of St.John Ecumenical Foundation". Its seat is located at 117 East Fifty Seventh Street in New York City. It is currently active and recruiting members of all faiths for a (negotiable) passage fee of \$10,000.

XII. Grand Priory of Malta of the Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller (1970)

Gaston Thona-Barthet who jumped from one O.S.J. to another proclaimed the independence of this order of which he was "Grand Bailiff". In 1976 he proclaimed Prince Andrei of Yugoslavia "74th Grand Master of the Grand Priory of Russia of the O.S.J.". Prince Andrei had been formerly "High Protector" of the Sanguzko-Formhals group (see XV) as well as that of Prince Troubetzkoy (see VII).

The "Grand Prior" of the "American Grand Priory" which was seated in Houston, Texas was a certain John Wilkinson, sometimes known as "Prince Battenburg". He was also "ambassador" of a number of "princes" with pretensions to lofty imaginary thrones.

XIII. Sovereign Order of Hospitallers of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta (1970-71)

Otto Adrian Schobert, the self-styled "Baron de Cholbret" and Henry Erdesz who either defected or were expelled from various O.S.J. bodies brought their talents to this organization which was created in Rome by Vittorio Busi and Chaillo Petrucci "de Vaucelle". The Latter was "Grand Master" until his death in 1977. The Petrucci sons took up and continue the traditional chivalric enterprise.

XIV. International Grand Priory of the Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta (1971)

"Prince" Kellinu Vella-Haber "d'Alaro", after a brief adherence to the Cassagnac group (see V) went back to the Shickshiny body of which he became the "Prior of the Priory of Malta", a sub-jurisdiction of the "Autonomous Priory of Sicily-Aragon", which was created by Roberto Paterno, a.k.a. "H.R.H. Prince Paterno d'Emmanuel, Duke of Perpignan, etc.etc." (see under Miscellany). Vella-Haber and Paterno formed this "International Grand Priory" which the latter abandoned in 1973 to rejoin the original Shickshiny order.

In order to enhance the "quality" of his order Vella-Haber managed to find a "pretender" to the Russian throne in the person of "H.I.& R.H. Grand Duke Dimitri of Russia, Prince Assistent to the Throne of the National Indian Church and to the Throne of the Orthodox Jacobite Antiochian Church, Grand Prior of the Order of St. Peter of Antioch, Grand master of the Sovereign Imperial Muscovite Church of St. George and Rector Magnificus of the Imperial Academy of St. Kyrill". This "Grand Duke" is not to be confused with the authentic Prince Dimitri Romanoff who lives in Copenhagen.(7)

XV. The Knights of St.John and Malta (ca 1972)

A North-American Masonic group which emerged toward the end of the XIXth century as "The Knights of St.John and Malta" in Toronto, Canada. In 1882 it moved to New York.(8) It maintained friendly relations with "The Sovereign Order of St.John of Jerusalem" (see II) from the early 1900s until it merged with it in 1953. In 1962, it followed the Cassagnac faction (see VI) from which it seceded in 1965 in order to join up with King Peter's "order" (see VII) before seceding from it ca. 1972.

XVI. The Priory of the Order of Malta of the Most Holy Trinity of Villeneuve(1945); The Sovereign Military Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta Headquarters (1975)

This "priory" was created originally in Italy immediately after WWII by one of the many self-styled orders of Byzantium. H.S.H. Prince Don Alessandro Licastro de la Chastre Grimaldi Lascaris Ventimiglia, Sovereign Prince of Deols, Duke and Marquis de la Chastre, etc.etc. who in reality was Alessandro Licastro, a citizen of Milan. The life of this imaginary priory which he claimed had been founded in 1245 in central France was short and was dissolved as a result of pressure applied by the Ministry of Justice. The "prince" headquartered on Malta in 1975 and renamed his organization "The Sovereign Military Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Priory of the Holy Trinity of Villedieu, Malta Headquarters". He joined up with a Maltese entrepreneur, Carlo Stivala, a.k.a. "Marquis de Flavigny" and the group was eventually integrated into the Brancovan organization. (see XI)

XVII. The Sovereign Order of the Orthodox Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem (1977)

Seven descendants of Russian titulars of "family commanderies" of the Orthodox St. Petersburg Grand Priory of the Order of St. John who reside in the United States followed the example of the Union of Hereditary Commanders created in Paris in 1928 (see II). Unlike the Paris association, this group claims to be an "Order of St.John". Its "protector" until his death in 1946 was Prince Vassili of Russia, Imperial Curator of the Imperial Russian Collection of the Hoover Institution. This group has close ties to the Russian Nobility Association and its seat is in upstate New York. It has placed itself under the "High Spiritual Protection" of his Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America and headed by "no states that it is under the spiritual protection of His Holiness Aleksei II, the Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Its Grand Prior is Count Nicholas Bobrinski.

XVIII. Sovereign Order of the Hospital of St.John of Jerusalem (1982)

This mail order operation whose address is c/o P.O.Box 867, Benton, Arizona, 72015 is run by one George Cook Lyon, Archbishop of the Holy Episcopal Church in America who actually resides in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Archbishop is a retired psychiatrist who appears to have been elected to office by a separate group of former Episcopalians and is not in apostolic succession. According to his own information: "We will accept application for 100.00 from any who feel that they are qualified and render all the information that they will need to carry out their works right, orderly and lawfully. We ask for a small donation of \$100.00 to cover our costs, etc." The Order of St. John is also available by mail and for a \$100.00 minimum donation.

XIX. Priorate of the Holy Trinity of Villedieu of the Sovereign Military Order of St.John of Jerusalem (1989)

This "priorate" appeared on the New York scene in mid-1989. Its patron is believed to be the United States was one "Titular Archbishop of Ephesus" whose name is Lorenzo Michel de Valitch. This order is not identified. We not certain of this group's origina but believe it has ties with XVI above. Monsignor Valitch is also associated with another order of unverified authenticity known as the Sovereign Order of Cyprus.

XX. The Order of St.John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Priory of Famagusta (1992)

This is one of five orders sold by "H.R.H. Prince" Yves-Amourous de Lusignan through the good offices of Queensgate Associates, a nobiliary mail-order master which operates out of London post office box. The order claims to be an autonomous offshoot of the "Yugoslav League of Officers" which recognized King Peter II as Grand master. Fees range from \$1,000 for the grade of knight to \$3,200 for the Grand Collar.

MISCELLANY

The following groups have at one time or another used the St.John appellation either alone or in connection with another saint and have taken some form of the eight-pointed Maltese cross for their badge. Most of these operated in Europe and were not represented in the United States.

Royal Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in Aragon

This is the dynastic order of the "House of Paternó of Aragón. Its "Grand Master" is "H.R.H. Don Roberto II Paternó Ayerbe Aragona, Prince of Emmanuel, Duke of Perpignan and head of the Royal House of Aragónón". Don Roberto does not recognize the survival of the S.M.O.M. outside of his "realm". He is also head of the "Dynastic Order of the Collar of St. Agatha of Paternó" which is internationally distributed.

Royal Archconfraternity of the Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist of the Knights of Malta, ad honorem of Catanova (Barcelona chapter).

Not much is known about this Spanish group but it appears to have been an emulation of the S.M.O.M. established in the form of a religious confraternity by the local religious authorities with ties to the Archbasilica of Catanzaro. Its badge consists of a white Maltese cross on which rests a shield with a papal tiara and the crossed keys of St. Peter with an antique crown in the center. The cross/shield ensnared by a royal crown. The Barcelona chapter maintains its seat in that city and was quite active in the 1890s. (9)

Portuguese Order of St. John of Jerusalem

This order existed in 1977 and may still exist today. Its "grand master" claimed to be the Prince de Condé. (The last Condé died in 1830)

Order of St.John of Jerusalem of Antioch (10)

Another emulation of the S.M.O.M. this one conferred by the Patriarch of the "Primitive Christian Church of Antioch". This order became quite popular in the 1950s. I believe it may now be extinct.

NOTES

- (1) From 1871 to 1879 the SMOM in Rome had no Grand Master but was ruled by a Lieutenant of the Grand Magistracy.
- (2) Robert Formhals, "The White Cross"
- (3) It has also been alleged that this order was founded in Puerto Rico in 1929 by a group of Spaniards or Puerto-Ricans of Spanish aristocratic descent. Its first Grand master was Francisco Ramirez de Arellano y Cont. See Some Hqs. of the S.M.O.M.
- (4) Op cit. page 200
- (5) Guy Starr Sainy, "The Orders of St.John", page 162
- (6) Patrice Chairrot, "Faux chevaliers vrais gogoss", Paris 1985
- (7) Formhals, op.cit.
- (8) Jose Maria de Montells y Galán, "Diccionario de Ordenes de Caballeria y Corporaciones Nobiliarias", Madrid