

MALTA GEORGE CROSS HANDED OVERTHE SENTINEL OF EMPIRE

The following is the text of the Governor's address given at the ceremony in Palace Square, Valletta this morning when he handed to Chief Justice Sir George Borg the George Cross awarded to the people of Malta:-

"On my appointment as Governor of Malta, I was entrusted to carry the George Cross to this Island fortress. By the command of the King, I now present to the people of Malta and her dependencies, the decoration which His Majesty has awarded them in recognition of the gallant service which they have already rendered in fighting for freedom.

How you have withstood for many months the most concentrated bombing attacks in the history of the world is the admiration of all civilized peoples. Your homes and your historic buildings have been destroyed and only their ruins remain as monuments to the hatred of a barbarous foe. The Axis powers have tried again and again to break your spirit but your confidence in the final triumph of the United Nations remains undimmed.

What Malta has withstood in the past, without flinching, Malta is determined to endure until the day when the second siege is raised. Battle scarred George Cross Malta, the sentinel of Empire in the Mediterranean, meanwhile stands firm, undaunted, and undisrayed, awaiting the time when she can call "pass friend, all is well in the Island fortress".

Now, it is my proud duty to hand over the George Cross to the people of Malta for safe keeping. I repeat the words of His Majesty written in his own hand "to honour her brave people I award the George Cross to the Island fortress of Malta to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history."

The Chief Justice in reply, said :-

"Having been delegated for the purpose by the Committee appointed to organise this ceremony the pleasant duty devolves upon me today of receiving from your Excellency's hand the coveted decoration which His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to confer on the inhabitants of these islands. In doing so, I desire to express my fellow countrymen's deep sense of gratitude for this high mark of Royal favour.

When in 1800 our Grandfathers left their dearest interests in the honour and good faith of Great Britain, they swore allegiance and loyalty to the Crown, and this allegiance and this loyalty have remained up to the present day as unimpaired and as unswerving as when they were first made. With unique foresight they then believed, as we do now, that their lives and their property could not be better safeguarded than by being placed under that flag which protects millions of peoples who live happily throughout the world. For, my Lord, nothing is dearer to the hearts of the people of Malta than liberty, for which they fought and fell since time immemorial.

It was this deep love of liberty that made them resist the onslaught of the Ottoman hordes; it was this love of liberty that made them rise like one man against the army of the first French Republican whose leader had appalled and bewildered the whole world. It is this love of liberty that now makes them suffer and resist until final victory is achieved, encouraged as they are by the fine example of the fighting forces whose heroic deeds may possibly be equalled but, surely, never surpassed in wars to come, which human ambition and despotism may impose on an unwary world.

It is with deep sense of gratitude, determination to win and loyalty towards our King Emperor, whom may Almighty God long preserve, that I receive this cherished treasure. It will be handed down to posterity as a tangible symbol of Malta's union to the great and invincible nation whose protection is the best guarantee of our safety, of our country, and of our religion."

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