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THE FIRST CONGRESS ON MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES OF ARABO-BERBER INFLUENCE

SCHOLARSHIP, creative work and teaching are the primary functions of a progressive University. The administrative machinery with its wheels within wheels and with hundreds of cogs around the edges of these wheels operates the structural mechanism of the institution. For this reason alone it is as indispensable to it as a battery is to a car. But the real soul of a University, which is much more than an inanimate car, is in the pursuit of knowledge both for its own sake, for its practical use, and for general diffusion.

Our University is ideally situated for International Congresses. Some have already been held at *Tal-Qroqq* with notable success. One of them, the 3rd Congress of the *Atlante Linguistico Mediterraneo*, which was held at the University in 1969, was partly organized by the editor of this review. The interests of the Department of Maltese and Oriental Languages are certainly not just insular. They are of a Mediterranean nature in a broad sense. As the language is made up of Semitic and Romance elements, so the interests of the Department spread out both towards Europe and the East (the Arab world). They are all centred round Euro-African studies, with their many ramifications.

The Department of Maltese and Oriental Languages, with the full support of the R.U.M. Council and the *Ecole Des Hautes Etudes* of the University of Sorbonne, from the 3rd to the 6th of April 1972, will hold the *First Congress on Mediterranean Studies of Arabo-Berber Influence*. The organizing committee is made up of the teaching members of the Department of Maltese, including the lecturers in the Junior College. The French liaison member is Madame M. Galley, who is also the General Secretary.

There is no better place fitted for Arabic studies within the Mediterranean context than Malta where the language spoken is structurally

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Semitic and only superstructurally Romance. The Editor of the Journal, who is also the Holder of the Chair of Maltese, would have liked to see such studies encouraged and promoted than more they have been so far. This is a matter that he raised with the R.U.M. Commission on more than one occasion but with no success so far. It seems that this is one of the questions that we Maltese could, and should, settle for ourselves without having to depend so helplessly on outside advice which is not always as expert and well-informed as one might think it is. If we are really independent, we must also learn to be self-reliant and to feel that there are matters about which we are the best judges because we know what is best for us.

One may hope that with the new concept of Mediterranean association and the forthcoming Congress of Arabo-Berber Studies, the Government and the University Authorities will appreciate the need for a profounder and more intimate knowledge of the civilization and culture of our Mediterranean friends. We Maltese are in the privileged position of being able to look eastwards and westwards with great ease and walk over the bridge that links us up with Europe on the one hand and with North Africa and the rest of the Arab world on the other, while we continue to cherish and preserve our national identity and ancestral heritage.

THE EDITOR