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Malta

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

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Malta

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A. Introduction (C)

Malta, a parliamentary democracy within the British Commonwealth, shares many traditions with the United Kingdom as a result of over 160 years of British rule. British efforts after World War II to rid itself of an outdated colonial role conflicted with the long held assumption—not least on the part of the Maltese—that the islands could never be economically independent. Nationhood in September 1964 did not really settle the question of Malta's future status, because concurrent defense and financial agreements with the United Kingdom gave the British control over key elements of Maltese foreign policy. One of the major objectives of the new Malta Labor Party (MLP) government is to break this hegemony, and an accord between Malta and the United Kingdom reached in 1972 is a major step in this direction.

Malta's modern political development began in the early 1800's with the British occupation during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1802, the Maltese people petitioned London to take the islands under British sovereignty, and 12 years later the United Kingdom formally acquired Malta as part of the Treaty of Paris. One of the foremost concerns of the British throughout much of the ensuing colonial period was the reduction of the influence of the "Italian faction" in Malta. Many leaders of the upper class identified culturally with Italy and argued that had it not been for the United Kingdom, Malta would have been included in the movement for Italian unification.

By the late 19th century this conflict, now highly politicized, focused on the question of which languages—Italian or English and Maltese—would predominate in the schools and the government. The Italian interests were represented by the Nationalist Party (NP), while pro-British sentiments found expression in the Progressive Constitutional Party. London, for its part, sought to encourage the stunted pride of the Maltese in their Punic (as opposed to continental European) heritage—a novel approach given the efforts of the imperialist contemporaries of the United Kingdom to check nationalist movements elsewhere. This focus took the form of official

assistance in the revitalization of the Maltese language. Upper class resistance to the overall British program was bolstered by the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy to middle class English ideas of democracy, liberalism, and commerce. The Italian element received a telling blow in 1932, when English and Maltese were given the status of official languages. Several tries at limited autonomy were made between 1921 and 1933. But virtually every time the Nationalists came to power, they clashed with the colonial administration, and the United Kingdom suspended limited self-government. In 1933 the Constitution was withdrawn, and with the subsequent rising international tension the British dropped further experiments in self-government until shortly after World War II.

Although domestic disputes were submerged, World War II was nonetheless a watershed in Malta's political development. Successful withstanding of the intense Axis aerial bombardment and ship blockade from 1941 to 1943 (Figure 1) strengthened nationalism and cemented Anglo-Maltese bonds. In fact, the people of Malta were awarded the George Cross in 1942 for their "heroism and devotion" during the siege. Furthermore, the attack on Malta by Fascist Italy signaled the decline of the NP "Italian faction." In the longer term, nevertheless, the diminished postwar world role of the United Kingdom eventually made possession of Malta more a liability than an asset.

When Maltese political life resumed under a new Constitution in 1947, national leaders and issues were significantly different. The NP still represented the upper classes and depended on support from the Roman Catholic Church and the tradition-minded farmers, but while some of its members retained their pro-Italian personal sentiments, its program was more generally pro-Western European and "Malta-centered." The MLP—an offshoot of Maltese trade unionism during the 1920's—replaced the Progressive Constitutionalists as the major alternative party and came to power in 1955. The election issue, unlike that in most other colonies after World War II, was "full integration" with the mother country, a program



FIGURE 1. Valletta's Old Bakery Street in 1942, after Axis air raids, and rebuilt, in native golden limestone, to its old form (U/OU)

backed by the MLP. For the United Kingdom, which surprisingly enough did not reject the proposal out of hand, it was as if a policy of *L'Angleterre d'Outre-mer* (England Overseas) was about to take root in Whitehall.

The mixed emotions, not to say apprehensions, with which the Maltese watched other colonies achieve independence was perhaps best expressed in the ensuing efforts by the ruling MLP under Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff to obtain Maltese representation in the British Parliament as well as the benefits of the British welfare state for Maltese citizens. However impracticable this scheme may have been on geographic and religious grounds alone, it represented the desire of many Maltese to remove the colonial stigma while retaining the economic benefits of British protection. Among the Maltese, however, were many who opposed the scheme from the outset (Figure 2). For a United Kingdom which—on the eve of its misadventure at Suez—still perceived itself as a great power, the scheme was attractive as a means of maintaining military facilities at a key Mediterranean strongpoint.

Tory Prime Minister Anthony Eden signalled the fundamental U.K. accord with the integration proposal by appointing a distinguished bipartisan committee of Members of Parliament to study its feasibility. At the end of 1955 the committee reported that the proposal was acceptable. Before they would recommend passage to the British Parliament, however, the Maltese people would have to "demonstrate clearly and unmistakably" that they favored integration. The referendum, which was held in February 1956, won a deceptive 74% of the vote: the strong opposition of the NP and the Catholic Church had caused such massive abstentions that the proposal received the approval of only 44% of the total electorate.

In the months that followed, Mintoff and the British Government began to draw back from their original positions, and tensions started to build. The less than overwhelming results of the referendum provided a rallying point for anti-integration forces in both the United Kingdom and Malta. Significantly, too, one consequence of the Suez fiasco was the installation of a new Prime Minister in London, who



FIGURE 2. Labor government uses police to disperse Nationalist rally, protesting the plan for integrating Malta into the United Kingdom, 1955 (U/OU)

began to recognize that the sun was setting on the Empire and that perhaps the U.K. future lay in Europe. For his part, Mintoff's stance on the financial aspects of integration hardened. When the Maltese leader failed to win his economic demands, he made a total about-face and became a vehement advocate of immediate independence—claiming that the United Kingdom was deliberately keeping Malta economically dependent to insure easy retention of its military facilities. Strikes and demonstrations fomented by Mintoff, with the support of the powerful General Workers Union (GWU), led in 1958 to the resignation of the Mintoff government and eventually to suspension of the Constitution and reimposition of direct rule from London.

With integration a dead issue, Malta moved rapidly toward independence. New elections were held in 1962, and the NP was returned to power. The Nationalists desired independence but wanted Malta to remain closely linked to the United Kingdom and other Western nations. Primarily because of intervention by the Maltese hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, which made it a mortal sin to vote for the MLP, Mintoff's share of the popular vote dropped from 56.4% to 33.8%. The Nationalist Party's percentage of the vote increased from 38% to 42.1%, and on the basis of that plurality Giorgio Borg Olivier became Prime Minister.

The three smaller parties did not want independence at all, at least for the time being, because of the damage they said it would do to national prosperity. Furthermore, Mintoff and Borg Olivier were in sharp disagreement on what kind of independence

constitution they wanted—whether the church's freedom to intervene in politics would continue, and whether Malta should be tied to a defense and economic arrangement with the United Kingdom which would in fact limit its sovereignty in foreign affairs. In the end some few concessions to civil rights for non-Catholics—were forced on Borg Olivier by the British, and on the Maltese church by the Vatican, and 10-year defense and finance agreements with the United Kingdom were agreed to. In contrast to the prolonged debate over integration, the Malta Independence Act was whipped through all stages of the legislative process during the last 2 weeks of July 1964, and Malta became independent on 21 September 1964.

Persisting opposition to Mintoff by the church helped the NP win another victory in the March 1966 elections, but this time with a decreased popular and parliamentary lead over the MLP. The 1966 election eliminated the three smaller parties from parliamentary life, clarifying the conflict between the two major parties.

The Nationalist administration continued, characterized by the seemingly contrasting qualities of bureaucratic ineffectiveness and stagnation, coupled with the achievement of economic well-being. The bureaucratic inertia, however, eventually contributed to a downturn in the economy, a depression which, according to the opposition, stemmed largely from Borg Olivier's inability either to delegate authority or personally to take the initiative. In addition, Opposition Leader Mintoff made headway with claims that he could do a better job of completing the independence of Malta from the Western powers and establishing ties with its non-European neighbors in the Mediterranean. Even after Borg Olivier obtained more beneficial terms for the balance of the U.K. financial accord in late October 1970, he failed to capitalize on favorable local reaction by calling early elections.

In the 1971 contest the MLP returned to power with the main objectives of stimulating the economy and providing a higher standard of living for the Maltese people. To accomplish this end, Prime Minister Mintoff asserted, Malta must shed its centuries old "fortress image" and adopt a neutral position in the Mediterranean, so that it will be free to trade with and accept aid from any source. Shortly after coming to office, Mintoff severed Malta's informal ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), removed the small NATO naval command from the island, and refused the U.S. Navy further entree into



FIGURE 3. British warships take on provisions in Grand Harbour, 1972 (U/OU)

Malta. He also began to press, often flamboyantly, for renegotiation of the defense and financial agreements with the United Kingdom. He argued that Malta should receive larger payments from the British for use of the defense facilities (Figure 3) and for denying them to nations of the Warsaw Pact for military use. After prolonged negotiations and the withdrawal of almost all British forces, an agreement was signed in London on 26 March 1972. In return for an annual payment of 14 million pounds for 7½ years, Malta granted the British continued base rights, with provision for use of U.K. installations by at least some NATO members. The accord also states that Warsaw Pact nations are to be denied military use of Malta.

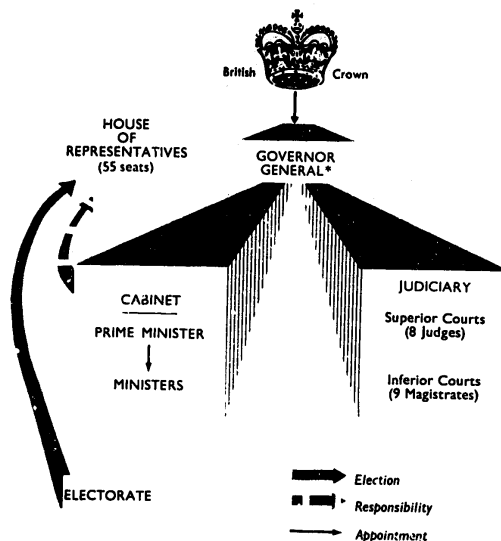
Although the new agreement has been looked upon by almost all Maltese as an important foreign policy success for Mintoff, the extended negotiations exacerbated the islands' economic difficulties. Unemployment increased significantly, several manufacturing firms folded, some retail outlets closed, and the flow of tourists slowed. The return of British troops and their dependents helped restore much-needed purchasing power, but the new U.K.-Malta accord by itself will not soon alleviate the remaining problems. As a direct result, the Mintoff government has lost much of its initial popularity. Elections well before the legal deadline (September 1976) are not likely, unless government plans progress, the economy picks up, and unemployment is substantially reduced. In the meantime, the one vote parliamentary margin of the MLP will probably be maintained for as long as required—barring some unforeseen and unsettling event—through a combination of tight party discipline and antipathy toward its Nationalist opponents.

Mintoff's preoccupation with foreign affairs through early 1973 resulted in too little activity on the

domestic front. The confrontation with the United Kingdom in late 1972 and early 1973 was at least temporarily settled when Mintoff accepted a special payment from the NATO allies as partial compensation for losses caused by the sterling float. With the U.K.-Maltese dispute under wraps and consideration of the details of aid commitments from other Western nations and the People's Republic of China underway, Mintoff had a renewed opportunity to concentrate on his goal of making the Maltese economy self-sustaining. Newly available funds were used largely to reduce the national debt rather than for reinforcing the infrastructure, creating new production, and paying higher wages, as many expected. Capital and current expenditures were reduced, and revenue increased. Coupled with this policy have been appeals to all sectors of the community to accept sacrifices "with patience and patriotism." To this end, the very real stimulus Mintoff has given to national pride is an important plus. Depressed economic conditions and heavy unemployment, however, have since led to increasing dissatisfaction, even among many of his supporters.

B. Structure and functioning of the government (U/OU)

Malta's governmental structure was devised by the British colonial administration and is modeled on the British parliamentary system (Figure 4). One major difference from British practice, however, is the privileged position of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Constitution contains a general civil rights provision, it specifically excludes matters of adoption, marriage, divorce, and burial, where canon law is operative. Furthermore, there is no legal prohibition, as there is in the United Kingdom, against



*Personal representative of Queen Elizabeth II in her capacity as Queen of Malta.

FIGURE 4. Structure of government (U/OU)

"threat of temporal or spiritual injury" from the clergy in connection with elections. These factors make possible a large measure of clerical influence in government.

Theoretically authority rests with the Queen of Malta (Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) represented by her Governor General, and with the unicameral parliament. As in the United Kingdom, however, the monarch's power is limited to ceremonial duties, advising on and assenting to acts of the Prime Minister and parliament, and certain politically nonpartisan functions, such as appointing the electoral commission.

The House of Representatives, commonly called the Malta legislative assembly or parliament, is made up of 55 members. They are elected at least once every 5 years by direct universal suffrage. The Speaker of the House is elected by the members and may be from outside their own number. The Governor General, as titular executive, appoints as Prime Minister the leader

of the majority party, or if no one party should command a majority, the party leader who is able to form a majority from a coalition of parties. He also nominally appoints, upon recommendation of the Prime Minister, the individual ministers to head each of the government departments. Together with the Prime Minister they form the Cabinet, which is collectively responsible to the parliament.¹ Cabinet ministries are as follows:

- Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs
- Development
- Education and Culture
- Finance and Customs
- Health
- Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
- Labor and Social Welfare
- Public Works
- Trade, Industry, Agriculture, and Tourism

¹For a current listing of key government officials consult *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments*, published monthly by the Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.

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The Constitution also provides for an official Leader of the Opposition. He receives, in addition to his salary as a member of the parliament, a government salary and staff. The Prime Minister is required to consult him on government appointments to such agencies as the Maltese Broadcasting Authority and the Public Service (civil service) Commission.

The approximately 11,000 white-collar civil servants who staff the ministries are selected and promoted by competitive examination. Their number—almost 9% of the total labor force—reflects the heavy dependence of citizens on government employment. The civil service offers both economic security and a way up from the working classes. This overstuffed body is highly protectionist in outlook and organized into unions, which jealously guard the status and position of each member. Furthermore, the tradition of patronage makes civil servants especially vulnerable to pressures for favors from a wide complex of relatives, religious society and social club fellows, and hometown friends. These factors partly explain the extremely conservative outlook of the civil service and its general resistance to modernization and streamlining of functions. The Institute of Public Administration was created in the 1950's, however, to improve the professional competence of officials and staff through part-time attendance at lectures, conferences, and seminars. Political officials also are encouraged to take the institute courses.

The Minto government is committed to eliminating incompetents from the civil service rolls, which, it claims, have been padded with the supporters of the former Nationalist government. The Laborites, with their reputation for efficiency, have tightened up discipline considerably and made some progress in increasing productivity. The government claims additionally that corruption is slowly being stamped out.

For all its size and ponderousness, the Maltese Government has at least the virtue of centralized simplicity, as there are no legally established local governmental bodies on the main island of Malta and only a civic council on Gozo, with quite limited functions; there are also only a few regional branches of the central government. With the exception of the police, regional branches of the post office, and local medical dispensaries, government programs—including even water supply, sewerage, and street lighting—are administered directly from Valletta, the capital. The police are virtually the only official representatives of the government operating extensively at the local level, and their duties as

distributors of voting certificates and relief items, as census takers, and as advisers on income tax and other government forms probably take more of their time than actual law enforcement. This centralized system results both from Malta's small size and from the essentially military nature of earlier governments under foreign control.

From time to time the issue of establishing a system of local government is raised, and the present administration, in principle, is in favor of granting legal status to the informally constituted civic councils. Only the civic council on Gozo has legal standing. In the years after World War II, civic councils began to spring up in Malta, and there are almost 30 of them, each with its own separate rules. Their makeup includes representatives of local organizations—religious, cultural, and sporting—and usually the parish priest. Some localities conduct elections for council posts, but for the most part local leaders fill these positions by appointment. The continued absence of local government administration is an important factor in perpetuating clerical influence in political life. Although the councils perform a useful function in helping to improve the cultural level of the community and in providing a local outlet for complaints to the central authority, their effectiveness is uneven. There is a definite need for a more active municipal effort in cleanup campaigns, welfare assistance, and local planning to assist the government in Valletta.

The confederation of civic councils, which was established in 1966, formally petitioned the government in early 1971 for assistance in setting up municipal bodies that would be elected by universal suffrage. The Minto government has responded to this request with a pledge to produce a White Paper on municipal government. Among the problems to be considered are what powers Valletta would devolve as well as how a new system would be financed. So far, council activities tend to be nonpartisan, but local elections, if held, would be sure to have a strong political character. Democratically elected councils would also undermine the political strength of the church.

A partial relaxation of central authority has already taken place on Gozo and Kemma (Comino). In response to a prolonged feeling of neglect by the capital, a civic council was formed in Gozo in 1961, with one commissioner from each village on Gozo and one from Kemma. The council is permitted to administer some of the government's purely local programs (such as sanitation and street lighting) on Gozo and Kemma, and in effect acts as a special

pressure group representing their interests in dealing with the central government.

The eight Maltese judges divide their duties on the various superior courts. The highest tribunal is the Constitutional Court, whose four judges and Chief Justice review laws and executive acts. The other superior courts are the Civil Court, the Commercial Court, the Criminal Court, and the Court of Appeal. In addition, a single judge presides over the Arbitration Tribunal and another justice over the Land Arbitration Board. The Chief Justice is President of the Court of Appeal and a member of the Criminal Court. Judges are appointed by the Governor General on advice of the Prime Minister and serve until retirement at age 60. Usually the post of Crown Advocate General (attorney general) is apprenticeship for judgeship.

Nine magistrates sit in the inferior courts: the Court of Magistrates of Judicial Police for Malta and the Court of Magistrates of Judicial Police for Gozo and Kemmuna. The magistrates conduct inquests and investigate deaths, thefts, fires, explosions, and maritime incidents. They make inquiries into criminal cases and investigations of complaints about unpaid bills, violations of sanitary codes, and other matters of public concern.

C. Political dynamics

1. Political forces (U/OU)

The political forces active in Malta since World War II remain centered about the Nationalist Party, the Malta Labor Party, and the Roman Catholic Church, but the balance among the supporters of these three groups is shifting. The church's political influence, while still great, is waning because of a growing anticlericalism which the MLP has encouraged and exploited and because of the moderating influence of the Vatican. Many farmers—traditionally Malta's most conservative group—have at least part-time jobs in the Valletta area to supplement their income and are influenced by the ideas of their new, often anticlerical, urban coworkers. The General Workers Union has an independent and significant influence in Maltese life and politics, as well as a role in helping shape MLP policy. As a byproduct of the transition from a military to an industrial economy, Malta is developing a middle class of businessmen and entrepreneurs. Significant segments of this new bourgeoisie, which in some cases includes the sons of the old landowning families, have voted for the MLP. Finally, better education for more

Maltese, enhanced geographic mobility of workers looking for new jobs, and improved communication with the outside world all are breaking down the urban-rural division and changing—if slowly—the political as well as social outlook of the Maltese.

These changes are reflected in politics. The three parties which opposed independence all failed to win seats in the 1966 election and had virtually disappeared by the 1971 election. This development has produced a clearer split between the pro-Western and essentially traditionalist NP and the MLP, whose leader voices his admiration for "positive neutralism."

Personalities play an especially prominent role in politics. The Maltese are interested in politics, as demonstrated by the fact that over 90% of the electorate has voted in the past three elections. As in so many aspects of life, however, the almost feudal tradition of dependence on a leader still prevails. The forceful personality and image of efficiency of Dom Mintoff possibly have been as important in the success of the MLP as has any alternative program it has offered.

2. Malta Labor Party (C)

A comparatively recent arrival on the political scene, the MLP dates only from the 1920's. It was created by the GWU, much as the British Labor Party began with the Parliamentary Representation Committee of the British Trades Unions Congress. The MLP still depends on industrial workers—particularly the members of the GWU—for the bulk of its support, although in 1971 the MLP won the votes of many independent, middle class Maltese who were surfeited with the bureaucratic inertia that characterized the Nationalist administration. There is no longer a formal link between party and GWU, and the union leadership sometimes criticizes the party.

The socialism of the MLP is modeled on the pragmatic example of the British Labor Party and envisages a role for both private and public economic activity. The party, moreover, is less interested in socialist doctrine than in claiming more benefits for its members. Its present leader, Prime Minister Mintoff, has been influenced by the late Aneurin Bevan and others in the leftwings of Western European socialist parties, by President Tito of Yugoslavia, and by Arab leaders, such as the late Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir and Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba. Although he may be somewhat to the left of many of his followers, Mintoff has voiced admiration of a mixed economy, such as that of Israel.

The Malta Labor Party is extremely well organized, with local, district, and regional committees. It also

has an effective press and public relations program. The MLP is a member of the Socialist International and is affiliated with the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference.

The MLP programs and activities are essentially those of Dom Mintoff, possibly the most capable and almost certainly the most dynamic politician in the islands (Figure 5). He runs the party with an iron hand and does not tolerate open dissent. All important and many unimportant policy decisions are made by Mintoff with minimal advice from political leaders and civil servants. He takes pleasure in showing his subordinates (often correctly) that he knows more about their work than they do. It is likely that he formulated much of contemporary government policy during the 13 years he spent in opposition. Some decisions, however, are made on the spur of the moment and have resulted in confusion and mistakes.

The MLP government program is ambitious, it is aimed at nothing less than creating an economically viable and fully independent Malta. The Prime Minister has made it clear that these goals can be achieved only if the people accept sacrifices, and in this regard he has effectively exploited latent nationalism. Mintoff's preoccupation with foreign affairs during most of his first 18 months in office—in postindependence Malta—has, however, had a dampening effect on the development of economic policy and progress on related domestic fronts. The economy has languished, and little concrete action has been taken on such problems as modernizing the educational system or augmenting the construction of badly needed low-cost housing.

Before independence Mintoff made much of his visits to Bonn, Cairo, Belgrade, Moscow, and Algiers, as well as to an Afro-Asian People's Solidarity meeting, claiming promises of financial support and possibly military equipment to overthrow the government if



FIGURE 5. Prime Minister Mintoff on the campaign trail in 1971 (U/OU)

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independence were granted without curbing the influence of the church or ridding Malta of British military bases. After independence he abandoned the threat of violent overthrow of the government. Throughout, however, he has kept up his party's fraternal contacts with West European socialists and with like-minded individuals elsewhere, both in and out of government.

Mintoff's base of support at home was narrowing by early 1973. The decline in popularity stemmed principally from unfulfilled expectation that the large amount of money obtained from the March 1972 Malta-U.K. base agreement would result in immediate tangible benefits to the Maltese people. The anticipation of material benefits was not ill founded. While in office from 1955 until 1958, Mintoff, aided by a generous budget provided by the United Kingdom, made good to a great degree his election promises to extend social services. Numerous public works, such as schools and roads were undertaken, and Mintoff made serious attempts to modernize agriculture. This time around, however, the average citizen has not yet reaped the benefits of the increased income generated by the agreement with the United Kingdom. Rather, Mintoff concentrated on reducing the budgetary deficit and followed an austerity program disliked by most Maltese. His threat in November 1972 to abrogate the base agreement unless the British made up the losses Malta incurred because of the sterling float and also the resulting series of minicrises have contributed to increased public disenchantment with his leadership. The Maltese, concerned about the departure of British forces and the impact this would have on the sluggish economy, appeared to have some reservations about a leader who constantly embroiled them in a protracted crisis. Finally, Mintoff's abrupt manner has contributed to this unpopularity. His brutal humiliation of Cabinet ministers or other subordinates has had a chilling effect on his standing with the public.

Despite this diminution of popular support, Mintoff's hold on the MLP leadership appears firm. Through shrewd and assiduous maneuvering he continues to exercise tight control of the party machinery and parliamentary group and the politically powerful General Workers Union. Barring any rash acts by the unconventional Prime Minister and assuming that the economy will turn up, Mintoff should be able to remain in command until 1976, when he is required to call an election.

Should Mintoff be forced from office, the MLP would probably seek an interim successor, Minister of

Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Anton Buttigieg, a popular and capable politician, would probably be acceptable to all elements of the party. Although in agreement with Mintoff on many issues, Buttigieg's moderate image and less abrasive style might enable him to hold the party together. Lorry Sant, the ambitious Minister of Public Works, would be another contender for the leadership. The former fiery chief of the largest labor union had been a rising political force prior to being coopted into Mintoff's Cabinet. Sant's political base in the dockyards has been weakened, however, since he left his union post, and he still lacks Mintoff's appeal among the nonworking class. Nevertheless, Sant, who has mellowed somewhat since assuming public office, remains a strong figure in the left of the party and in the long term is likely to be Mintoff's successor.

No discussion of the MLP would be complete without mention of its conflict with the conservative hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Malta. The dispute centers on Mintoff's anticlericalism. In 1955, for example, Mintoff's unwillingness to pay homage to the influence of the church was reflected in his refusal upon taking office to make the customary call on the Archbishop of Malta. Growing in intensity during the 1950's, the dispute reached a peak over Mintoff's attempt to "fully integrate" Malta into the United Kingdom. The hierarchy's clear aversion to that proposal directly contributed to the failure of the attempt and the eventual collapse of the first Mintoff government. During the MLP's years in opposition animosity gave way to open hostility, as the church interfered directly in the electoral process. In 1962 the hierarchy declared a vote for the Malta Labor Party to be a mortal sin. During the 1966 campaign church leaders backed off this position, but they still issued a pastoral letter advising against voting for Labor.

A reconciliation took place in 1969 when the church agreed to maintain neutrality in future elections. The hierarchy adhered to the agreement during the 1971 campaign, although some parish priests indirectly opposed the MLP. Since taking office, Mintoff has managed to avoid conflict with the still influential church. He even managed, through some exceptionally clever maneuvering, to create the impression with the public that his old nemesis, Archbishop Michael Gonzi, supported the efforts by the Labor government to renegotiate the base agreement with the United Kingdom.

3. Nationalist Party (C)

The pro-Italian party in 19th century Maltese politics, the Nationalist Party (NP) has consistently

spoken for the landowners, the more prosperous businessmen, the professional classes, and, to a large extent, for the church. The party also draws support from white-collar civil servants and, because of the church's opposition to the MLP, from many of the lower classes. The farmers, traditionally the poorest and the most backward Maltese—as well as the most ardently religious—are especially strong Nationalist supporters.

The party has dropped pro-Italianism as part of its political program, although many of its leaders and wealthier supporters still emphasize their Italian descent. The party's leader, G. Borg Olivier, had his Christian name legally changed from George to Giorgio when he entered politics. In fact, notes of the party's executive meetings were taken in Italian until the summer of 1971, when younger members forced a change to Maltese.

Dependent on at least tacit support from the strong conservative elements of the Catholic Church, the party has opposed the extension of civil rights to non-Catholics in matters of personal law, such as adoption, marriage, and burial. The NP also supports a tax structure that favors the wealthy and the church, although its 1971 campaign platform contained proposals that seemed to break with this long held position. The party advocates good relations with all countries, particularly Malta's Mediterranean neighbors, but it is staunchly anti-Communist and pro-Western. The NP advocated independence in the 1950's and 1960's, albeit with especially close ties to the United Kingdom. Its platform, in general, provided sufficient opportunity for the opposition to charge that the Nationalist administration (1962-71) was interested only in defending the *status quo*, and those charges contributed to its narrow defeat in the 1971 election.

Giorgio Borg Olivier, who is formerly pro-Western in outlook, has been the Nationalist leader since 1950 and Prime Minister twice (1950-55 and 1962-71). He is a man of intelligence and integrity, but he has failed to provide vigorous leadership either to his party or his nation. His inertia and indecisiveness when he was Prime Minister inhibited government performance and blurred the popular impact of its successes. Personal problems, notably marital, exacerbated his natural tendency to delay difficult decisions. Furthermore, as Prime Minister, he was slow to take others into his confidence and reluctant to delegate authority. Cabinet ministers hesitated to offer advice on policy matters and often failed to make decisions which fell within their competence. As a result, Borg

Olivier made all but the most minor decisions, and government operations sometimes came almost to a halt.

Following the NP defeat at the polls in June 1971, the party fell into a state of disarray. The shock of the setback, coupled with the new Prime Minister's vigorous pursuit of "just" financial recompense from the British for the use of Maltese military facilities, contributed to an ineffective NP performance in the unfamiliar role of the loyal opposition. In addition, some of the younger Nationalists blamed the fall from power on the lethargy of the party's war-horses and began to push for new leadership and policies.

By early 1972, however, the Nationalists seemed to have sorted out many of their intraparty problems and began to assert themselves more skillfully in parliamentary debates. Although party elections confirmed Borg Olivier's hold on the leadership, this action probably reflects the belief of many Nationalists that to change leaders now would push the party toward a split that might redound to the benefit of the Malta Labor Party. Borg Olivier is still a relatively strong vote getter, and the NP needs his presence for the foreseeable future. Party members elected Vincent Tabone, formerly Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, to the post of deputy leader and several of the younger leaders to positions in the shadow cabinet. They appear to be working well with Borg Olivier and Tabone, but others—still dissatisfied—continue to call for a wholesale rejuvenation of the party.

4. Splinter parties (U/OU)

In the past minor parties played an important role in politics, but during the 1960's they went into a decline that culminated in 1971 in their virtual disappearance. In 1962, for example, three healthy minor parties polled almost one quarter of the vote and won nine parliamentary seats. Four years later, these same parties gained less than 9% of the vote and lost all of their parliamentary representation. By 1971, only the Progressive Constitutional Party remained in the field, and its handful of candidates drew only 1% of the vote. Despite this bleak history, the prospect of establishing a system of local government and rumors of dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Mintoff's autocratic manner within the ruling Malta Labor Party raise at least the possibility that the minor parties may experience a comeback.

The smaller parties grew either from personal quarrels with leaders of the major parties or from disagreements about whether or to what degree Malta should have independence. The Progressive Constitu-

tional Party was the pro-British party of the 19th century and one of the two dominant forces in Maltese politics. It is led by Miss Mabel Strickland, the energetic but aging daughter of its pre-World War II leader. Miss Strickland drew most of her preindependence votes from the pro-British community, which opposed separation from the United Kingdom. Her newspapers—notably the *Times of Malta*—usually give tacit support to the Nationalist Party.

The Christian Workers' Party was formed in 1961 by Anthony Pelligrini, who had been Deputy Prime Minister under Mintoff in 1955-58, in protest against Mintoff's increasingly anticlerical position and domineering methods. Pelligrini was rumored to have received money from the church and from the British to enable him to provide an alternative to Mintoff for workers who do not want to clash with their church. His chief program was to abolish the income tax, and he apparently would have made up the loss of revenue by taxing heavily the foreign-financed industry. The Christian Workers' Party was disbanded early in 1971. Most of its supporters probably voted for the MLP in the 1971 election, because Mintoff resolved the party's dispute with the church hierarchy.

Herbert Ganado's Democratic Nationalist Party was dissolved soon after the 1966 election. It had split from the Nationalist Party in 1958, because it opposed independence before Malta was economically viable. Ganado may then have tried—with church backing—to oust Borg Olivier from NP leadership. In many ways the program of the Democratic Nationalist Party was similar to that of the NP, especially in opposing socialism and supporting the church's privileged position. Ganado—exiled from Malta during World War II because of his pro-Italian sympathies—depended for support upon members of the upper classes who still identified more with Italian than with British and Maltese culture. Ganado's efforts in 1966 to be taken back into the Nationalist fold were blocked by Borg Olivier's continued bitterness over his 1958 disloyalty. Most of Ganado's followers have returned to the NP.

Parties of the far left have made only brief and desultory appearances. The major weaknesses of the extreme left are its lack of dynamic leadership and ideological disagreements among its leaders. At present, only the inactive Communist Party of Malta (CPM) lays claim to the left of the political spectrum. The CPM, which was founded in 1970 and is led by Paul Agius, has fewer than 100 members.

5. Roman Catholic Church (C)

The traditional role of the Roman Catholic Church in Maltese life underlies the willingness of so many

voters to accept its political guidance. To many Maltese it is only natural and right that the church, which has been their protector, spokesman, and patron over the centuries, should still extend its interest to every phase of their lives. Their communal life is still closely tied to their parish life, with the priest as the appointed headman. Many Maltese still believe in their priest's power to damn them for the way they vote, and many others—especially those with social status to lose—are responsive to the threat of ostracism from church-centered society. The church's position as the islands' largest landowner also gives it a special interest in domestic policy.

The conservative Maltese hierarchy, under the leadership of the aging Archbishop Michael Gonzi (b. 13 May 1885), has long had a contentious relationship with Mintoff. Church leaders began their active and open opposition to him about 1960, ostensibly because he had increased his ties with the Socialist International and joined the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference. In 1960 the church issued an interdict against MLP officers (lifted at the time of independence) and its newspapers (lifted in June 1966). An interdict against attending party meetings has also been dropped. The church made it a mortal sin to vote for the MLP in 1962, and clerical pressure apparently persuaded many young professionals and intellectuals who had voted for the party in 1955 to abandon it in 1962. In 1966 the hierarchy, in response to Vatican urging, limited itself to a pastoral letter informing the faithful of their duty to vote against a party which opposed the church's interests. Some parish priests, however, are believed to have taken it parishioners who would not promise they were voting against Mintoff.

Perhaps because the hierarchy recognized that its dispute with the MLP was doing the church more harm in the eyes of the electorate than it inflicted on the party, open hostility gradually ceased. A formal reconciliation took place in April 1969, when church leaders acquiesced in the principle of noninterference in politics. A pastoral letter issued a few days prior to the 1971 election confirmed this rule of conduct, but also urged the electorate

to vote for those candidates who provide a guarantee for good and honest leadership for the future inspired by the Catholic teachings upon which the islands' glorious history is based.

Archbishop Gonzi surely would have liked to go further. The letter, however, provided sufficient rationale for some conservative priests to exercise their political influence in support of Nationalist candidates.

The church's political influence is on the wane, and it is unlikely that it will ever recapture the powerful position it held in the past. The opening of Malta to foreign economic interests and the heightened literacy rate are making more and more Maltese aware of the modern world and able and eager to judge for themselves on political issues. Moreover, the authority of the parish priest in the rural villages will be reduced even further if the central government gives approval for the establishment of a system of local government. Nevertheless, Malta remains strongly Catholic, and the influence of the church will continue for the foreseeable future to be the single most important moral and cultural force in the daily lives of most citizens.

6. Electoral laws and practices (U/OU)

All Maltese over 21 years of age may vote except those who are insane, currently under prison sentence of more than a year, or previously convicted of an election offense. Elections since World War II have been generally fair, although the MLP claims that clerical interference has made them less than free.

Prior to the 1971 election, each of the 10 electoral districts (nine in Malta and one for Gozo and Kemmuna) elected five delegates to a 50-member House of Representatives. In 1970 the government amended the Constitution to increase the number of seats from 50 to 55. An extra seat was awarded to each of the five more populated districts (ranging from approximately 18,000 to 21,000 voters per unit), while the others remained static. In those areas the number of voters ranges from about 14,000 to 17,000 per seat as a means to improve its reelection chances and at the same time the easiest way to take population increases into account without implementing the electoral boundary changes recommended by an official commission. The amendment, by establishing an odd number of representatives, minimizes the chances of an evenly split parliament in case of a very close election.

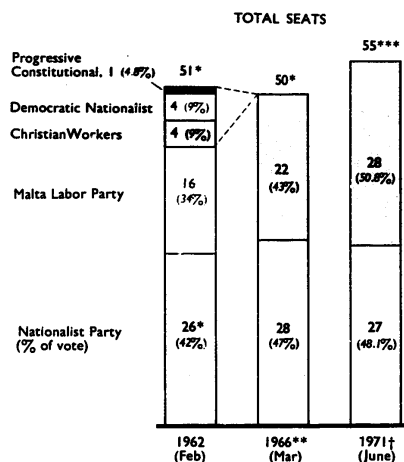
Voters in each district elect delegates by a complex and time-consuming system of proportional representation based on the single transferable vote. Each voter marks candidates in order of preference, as far down the ballot as he wishes. The quota needed for election is one-sixth plus one of the total valid votes in each district. Surplus votes which any candidate receives over this quota become a pool of votes, transferred in succeeding counts to the next-choice candidate on each ballot. If there are no extra votes to be transferred, a surplus is created by eliminating the candidate with the lowest number of votes and

assigning his ballots to the next-choice candidate indicated on each. This process continues, count by count, until the five candidates finally are elected.

A casual election, called for if a candidate is elected from more than one district or if a member of the House of Representatives dies or resigns, does not mean the voters go to the polls again. Instead the surplus (in this case, total) votes of either a winning candidate who vacates his seat to represent another district or who has vacated his seat through death or resignation are transferred to the remaining candidates by the procedure already described. In this case the quota for election is 50% of the number of votes received by the original winning candidate. If no candidate receives the necessary 50%, the vacancy is filled by cooption by the new parliament.

7. Voting patterns and participation (U/OU)

The 1971 parliamentary election, which brought Malta its first postindependence Labor government



* There are only 50 elected members. In 1962 the Nationalist Party selected the Speaker from outside parliament; in 1966 the party chose one of the elected members as Speaker.

** In 1966, 5 other parties received 10% of the vote, but won no seats.

*** A constitutional amendment in 1970 increased the number of seats from 50 to 55.

† In 1971, the Progressive Constitutional Party received 1.0% of the popular vote; others received 0.1%. None of these won seats.

FIGURE 6. Party representation in parliament (U/OU)

(Figure 6), was complicated by a number of factors not present in 1966, when the Nationalists retained power by a comfortable margin. In addition to elimination of overt church opposition, the MLP probably won a majority of the young voters—25% of the eligible voters were under 30—many of whom were voting for the first time. Labor picked up the bulk of the votes that in previous elections had gone to splinter parties. The campaign by the Laborites was better organized and more oriented toward the issues than was the effort by the relatively colorless Nationalists, who were very vulnerable to the charges of bureaucratic stagnation.

The 1971 election, with a 92.9% participation by the 181,800 eligible voters, was the heaviest turnout since World War II. The Maltese are politically active, and their participation in the electoral process has shown a consistent upward swing over the last 25 years. The rising literacy rate and the fact that 2½ days—including the weekend—are allotted for voting contribute to the high interest. Moreover, the absence of local government on the main island means that most Maltese may get only one chance every 5 years to express an opinion on their elected officials.

D. National policies

1. Domestic policy (C)

Although still in preparation, the new development plan is related to the government's stated goal of completing the transition from the British-supported garrison economy to national self-sufficiency. Most other issues and policies relate to this goal and often are judged primarily by how they affect it. The administration aims to expand and develop industrial production as rapidly as possible in order to increase employment and exports, to expand the tourist industry, and to reduce and even eliminate the massive deficit of the government-run drydocks. To achieve this, Mintoff has sought and will continue to seek foreign assistance, and he will endeavor to promote private foreign investment. He will also try to restrict wage levels and price increases and to boost expenditures on priority infrastructure projects, such as expansion of civil facilities at Luqa Airfield and modernization of the Valletta port and drydock complex (Figure 7).

To accomplish these ambitious goals, the Mintoff government has called on all citizens, regardless of station, to accept sacrifices in support of the national interest. Mintoff is seeking nothing less than a revolution in Maltese attitudes toward life and work. His arousal of latent nationalism has thus far had a



FIGURE 7. Valletta and Grand Harbour (U/OU)

positive impact on instilling the people with a greater sense of purpose and identity. On the negative side, an austere fiscal policy and preoccupation with foreign policy to the detriment of domestic affairs has cost the Mintoff government considerable popular support. The MLP campaign platform, together with Mintoff's own public record, clearly forecast the style and direction of the new government, but the expectation of change did little to lessen the ferment and controversy that arose when changes did in fact take place.

Because of the delay in formulating the new development plan, government activity on the domestic front has usually lacked direction and is often *ad hoc*, with perhaps some inspiration drawn from the MLP campaign platform. The government, however, has begun to take measures to relieve what is the highest level of unemployment since independence. Mintoff inherited a slumping economy from the NP administration, but the uncertainty created by his controversy with the British drove employment to politically unacceptable levels. Thus far, the chief response to this difficult problem has been to establish a labor corps for some of the unemployed. The Pioneer Corps—formed in 1973 to replace the Emergency Labor Corps—is supervised by the Malta Land Force. The corps is organized along paramilitary lines. Although members participate in some military

exercises, their main duty is to work on various public works projects. Authorized strength is about 3,700 officers and men.

Although the government is known to consider the program a success, the corps is, at best, a very limited partial solution. In the short run Mintoff continues to be faced with the task of creating new jobs at a rate sufficient to absorb the current unemployed along with additions to the labor force. Over the longer term, the anticipated increase in government expenditures on major infrastructure projects should help alleviate this problem. In addition, changes in educational policy that lay greater stress on technical education should provide more skilled manpower, which in turn should help attract new industry to the islands.

The government-owned Malta Drydocks Corporation continues to present a special problem. It contributes about one-fifth of the manufacturing output, employs about 5% of the labor force, and is an important source of foreign exchange. It has been operating in the red since it was transferred to the Maltese and commercialized over a decade ago. The Royal Navy had run the drydocks (Figure 8) as a semiwelfare operation, leaving successive Maltese Governments to grapple with the problem of rationalization—a nettle that both Nationalist and Laborite politicians have been unable or unwilling to grasp.

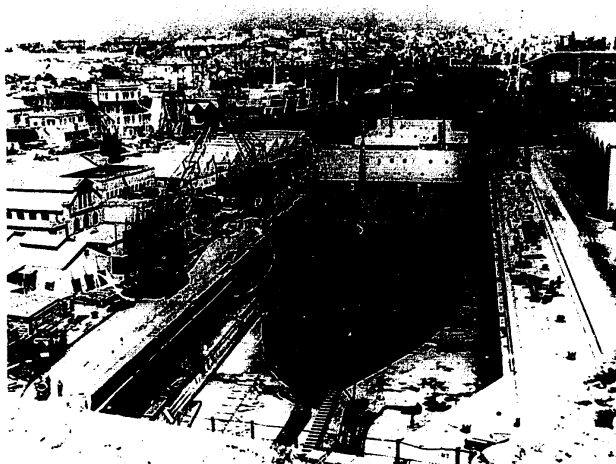


FIGURE 8. A tanker undergoes repairs at the drydocks (U/OU)

Hard hit by a drop in shipping traffic when the Suez Canal was closed in 1967, the drydocks were plagued by costly strikes and politically inspired industrial action until Mintoff became Prime Minister. Since then, labor disputes have virtually disappeared, and the workers have been given equal representation with the government in the management of the drydocks and the new port cargo handling company. Nonetheless, many workers remain disgruntled, because their newly enhanced position has not led to the benefits they expected. Government efforts to increase productivity have not been successful. In fact, despite a record workload in 1972, losses are expected to exceed US\$5 million.

The MLP legislative program has been innocuous for the most part (e.g. decimalization of the currency) and passed almost mechanically by the parliament. Among the relatively few bills with a political cast were an increase in social welfare benefits and improvement of the program of free legal aid for the poor. A bill reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 years received a parliamentary majority, but it failed to secure the necessary two-thirds vote for passage of a constitutional amendment.

The 18-year-old vote and other issues have raised questions about the constitutional amendment process and even the validity of the Constitution itself. Many MLP leaders point out that the 1964 referendum approving the new Constitution was passed only by a slim margin and actually received approval from less than 50% of the total electorate. Moreover, the

document was subsequently ratified by only a simple majority of the parliament. Thus, they argue that the section of the Constitution requiring a two-thirds parliamentary vote for amendments is improper or at least illogical. The government has cast a further shadow over the Constitution by failing to reactivate the Constitutional Court, whose five justices review laws and executive acts. The Nationalist opposition, regardless of whether or not it favors the constitutional matter under consideration, has refused to join with the government in voting on changes in the Constitution until Mintoff agrees to convene the court.

Rumors that the Mintoff government will propose major constitutional changes circulate regularly. In addition to lowering the voting age, the administration is alleged to be planning a change in the system of proportional representation—possibly to follow the West German model, which requires splinter parties to win at least 5% of the vote before taking seats in parliament. Such a law would limit the possibility of formation of a third party, with its clear threat to the slender MLP majority. Nationalist Party leaders have declared that they would fight “illegal” changes and expressed fear for the “democratic process.” Although it seems likely that Mintoff may attempt at some point to change the method of amending the Constitution, NP fears do not appear justified. Mintoff’s actions are more correctly attributable to normal politicking designed to detract from Nationalist accomplishments rather than to maintain himself in power illegally.

Apart from this, there appears to be a sufficient number of Labor members of parliament who would refuse to support extraconstitutional moves by Mintoff.

2. Foreign policy (C)

a. General objectives

Foreign affairs have been Mintoff's forte since he took office, and, as promised in his election campaign, he has given foreign policy a decidedly new direction. Mintoff holds that foreign rights to military establishments in the islands should be terminated, and that Malta should adopt a neutral position in the Mediterranean in order to trade freely with and accept aid from any source. To this end, he successfully renegotiated agreements with the British that not only returned control of key aspects of policy to Malta but almost tripled the amount of money received under the old base arrangements. In addition, Mintoff has carried on extensive discussions with a large number of non-Western nations in an effort to expand political and economic contacts. The high point of these efforts was Mintoff's weeklong visit to the People's Republic of China and its subsequent extension of a US\$15 million interest-free loan.

Prime Minister Mintoff, like his predecessor, serves as his own Minister of Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs, and the conduct of foreign policy is carried on essentially by him. The absence of organized pressure groups gives Mintoff wide latitude in pursuing his objectives. Only the MLP parliamentary group, which has lobbied against a final break with the United Kingdom, has successfully brought pressure on him. Nevertheless, imponderable factors inhibit Mintoff from making a precipitate move away from Malta's historic European ties. One is the inherently conservative nature of the people, which, in these heavily Catholic islands, is reinforced by the traditionalist beliefs of the hierarchy of the Maltese church. Another is the attitude of the moderate wing of the MLP, which is concerned over some of Mintoff's foreign policy goals and his freewheeling tactics. Moreover, the generally negative view of Arabs held by most Maltese has a dampening effect on Mintoff's efforts to promote a special relationship with the pro-Arab nationalist regime of Libyan President Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi.

b. United Kingdom

Mintoff's attempts to demonstrate the independence of Malta are best exemplified by a new relationship with the United Kingdom. The

sympathies of the previous Nationalist government lay with Western Europe, and British influence was understandably the strongest. In 1964, at the time of independence, Malta signed a 10-year defense and financial agreement with the British which granted responsibility for the military security of the islands to the United Kingdom and gave it veto power over third country military use of Maltese harbors and airfields. In return, Malta was to receive approximately US\$140 million in development aid; it had already received about two-thirds of these funds at the time of Mintoff's election in 1971.

Shortly after taking office, Mintoff began to press—often quite flamboyantly—for renegotiation of the agreements with the United Kingdom. He claimed he wanted a greater return for use of the defense facilities on the islands and for denial of these facilities to Warsaw Pact nations. After a series of prolonged and bitter negotiations, a new Malta-U.K. accord was signed in London on 26 March 1972 (Figure 9). The agreement, backdated to September 1971, is scheduled to run for 7 1/2 years. In return for an annual payment of US\$36.4 million—made up of contributions from NATO members, chiefly the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, and West Germany—Malta granted the British continued base rights, with provision for the use of U.K. installations by NATO members. Italian and Dutch naval vessels visited Valletta in 1972, and Mintoff has indicated that at least some other NATO nations would also be permitted access. Warsaw Pact states are denied military use of Malta, and a confidential annex calls for U.K. approval before Malta can grant long term military use of the facilities to any other country. This latter point is less than airtight and may prove troublesome. In addition to the base rental payment, Mintoff secured over US\$40 million in bilateral aid from various NATO allies.

In Malta, the settlement was hailed by all but the most partisan opposition, but the excitement following the signature of the accord has waned with the passage of time. More importantly, Mintoff in late 1972 and early 1973 brought into question the continued validity of the agreement so recently signed. In an effort to gain additional concessions—and perhaps to distract the population from pressing economic problems and again rally them around him in a renewed hassle with the United Kingdom—Mintoff threatened to abrogate the agreement unless the British or NATO made up the losses suffered because of the pound devaluation and unless the United Kingdom settled other outstanding bilateral issues. As of spring 1973, the crisis was not fully resolved, and



FIGURE 9. Prime Minister Mintoff and British Defense Secretary Lord Carrington sign Malta-U.K. accord in London, 26 March 1972 (U/OU)

the question of how long the agreement might last was moot. Although Mintoff's foreign policy efforts have provided a stimulus to national pride, the average citizen has received few concrete benefits from the newly enhanced financial status. Indeed, many Maltese have suffered material losses under the MLP Administration. Moreover, charges that Mintoff's arbitrary bargaining tactics have inflicted long term damage on relations with the United Kingdom and other NATO members have been increasing.

c. Western Europe

Mintoff would like to strengthen relations with Western Europe, particularly with social democratic governments. He is likely to judge relationships on the basis of the economic benefits accruing to Malta.

The Maltese still have strong love-hate feelings for Italy. There is still a considerable Italian influence, mostly cultural, and it is reflected in Maltese interest in Italian television, sports, and fashions. Rome is currently popular with Mintoff, but his strong anti-Italian bias might reassert itself if Rome abandons its forthcoming attitude. Aside from the financial contribution toward the rental payment of the U.K. base agreement, Italy has provided significant economic and technical aid. Italy has also given Malta important diplomatic support in the forums of both NATO and the European Communities (EC).

Mintoff feels an affinity for the Social Democratic government of Chancellor Willy Brandt and, during the first few months of Mintoff's administration, relations were affable. His brusque manner and constant demands, however, offended Brandt, and relations have cooled. Nevertheless, West Germany continues to remain an important potential source of bilateral aid, private investment, and tourism for Malta. Mintoff has considered France a source of economic benefits for Malta. Continuing French concern with Mediterranean affairs may present Malta the opportunity for further gain.

d. United States

The Maltese are curious about the United States and well disposed toward it. There are small but well-organized Maltese communities in the United States—especially in New York, San Francisco, and Detroit—comprised for the most part of Maltese who have prospered in America. Unlike the immigrants to Australia, who seldom return, Maltese Americans go back on frequent trips or even periods of residence, and they paint a glowing picture of opportunities in the United States. Both political parties hope for increased U.S. aid and investment.

Mintoff's views of the United States are ambiguous. He admires and respects American strength and technological progress. At the same time, he opposes

the U.S. military presence in the Mediterranean, claims not to understand U.S. foreign policy, and has some inherent dislike of the United States. This last point possibly results from a combination of factors: imagined bad treatment in Washington while on a Leader Grant in 1965; failure to obtain an official invitation to come to Washington for high level talks both while in opposition and in office; the attack on his father by a drunken American sailor on shore leave in Valletta; and his belief that former U.S. Ambassadors to Malta have been pro-Nationalist.

The stationing of U.S. Navy repair ships in Malta and the increase in Sixth Fleet visits beginning in 1965 were enthusiastically received by many Maltese and may have been an important factor in the reelection of the Nationalist government in 1966. U.S. naval visits were suspended by Mintoff shortly after taking office. He holds that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. should not have military use of facilities on the islands, because it might contribute to "super-power" rivalry in the Mediterranean.

e. Middle East and North Africa

Mintoff has long sought better relations with the Arab nations. He believes that Malta's cultural, historical, and linguistic ties with the Middle East and North Africa, his long time friendship with Israel, and his own abilities make him the one person uniquely capable of solving the Middle East dispute through personal diplomacy. At present he is not actively pursuing this ambitious goal. More pragmatically, he views this region as fruitful ground for economic activity that would redound to Malta's benefit: exports would stand a better chance of successful competition there than in the highly developed markets of Western Europe. Even many pro-Western Nationalist Party supporters agree that Malta should establish closer economic relations with the Middle East and North Africa.

Mintoff has paid close attention to relations with oil rich Libya, which has responded with some bilateral aid as well as timely diplomatic support during his disputes with the British. In addition, commercial opportunities in Libya for Maltese businessmen have expanded under the MLP administration. Mintoff shares Libyan President Qadhafi's view that the Mediterranean should be a "lake of peace," devoid of the Soviet and U.S. fleet, and that all the littoral states should cooperate closely. Mintoff would be interested in attending any nonaligned or regional Mediterranean conferences, as he envisions Malta as the link between the northern and southern Mediterranean states. In fact, he took the lead in

promoting a meeting in November 1972 in Valletta of the foreign ministers of Malta, Italy, Libya, and Tunisia to discuss subjects of mutual concern. The four nations have held further talks on the working level, and Mintoff may hope that these discussions will be the nucleus for some eventual Mediterranean grouping.

Malta still attempts to maintain good relations with Israel despite Mintoff's pro-Arab leanings. The Israelis, who raised their resident charge to ambassador in October 1971, have provided Malta with limited technical and economic assistance, but there are no current programs.

f. Communist nations

Mintoff, unlike his predecessor, has taken an active interest in expanding diplomatic and economic relations with Communist countries. Malta now has diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, North Korea, Yugoslavia, Albania, and all Warsaw Pact states. Apart from the People's Republic of China, no missions from these countries have been established. Even though Mintoff has concluded cultural exchange and commercial agreements with a number of them, no significant results have been forthcoming. Only the U.S.S.R. has shown any interest in setting up a resident mission. Mintoff has maintained a cool but correct stance with the Soviets and apparently has tied permission to open an embassy to a substantial improvement in commercial relations and an offer of economic aid. A compromise could be effected by allowing Moscow to set up a small resident trade mission. For the present the Soviet presence in Malta is limited to the one-man TASS bureau set up in May 1972.

Mintoff's choice of Romania, the most independent member of the Warsaw Pact, as the first Communist country to visit after taking office suggests a special affinity for it. Bucharest views positively Mintoff's strong assertion of national sovereignty, seeing it as an example for leaders of all small European countries. Politics aside, assistance for offshore oil development appears to be the major purpose behind his interest.

The Prime Minister's visit to Peking in April 1972 resulted in the establishment of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and an interest-free loan of US\$45 million (Figure 10). Some \$3 million will be provided in hard currency, and the remainder has been allocated for equipment and technical assistance. Peking has a resident mission of some 10 to 12 officials—large by Maltese standards—and its presence could be dramatically increased by the arrival of Chinese technicians to plan aid projects. The

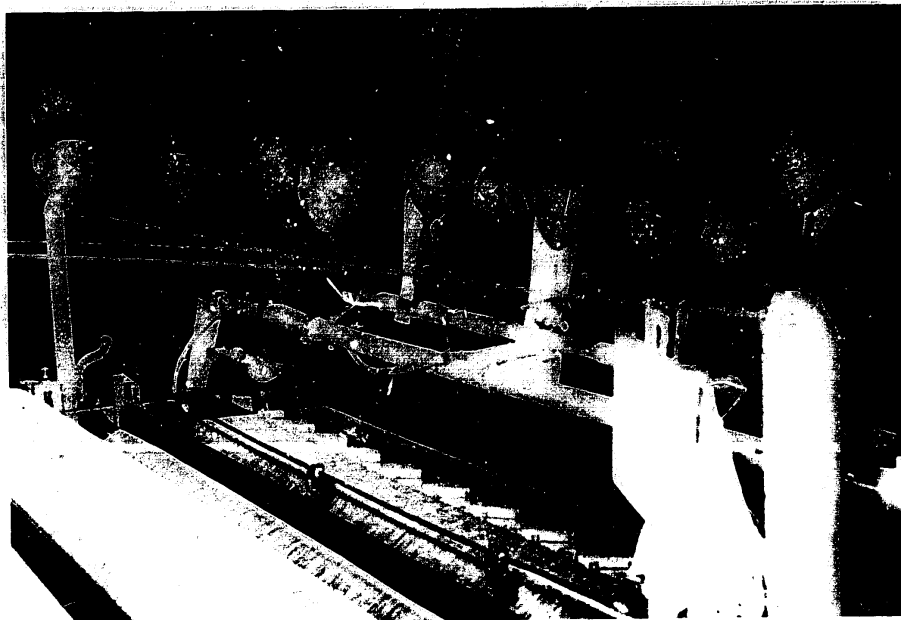


FIGURE 10. Accompanied by Vice Premier Li Hsien-Nien, Prime Minister Mintoff and his delegation visit the Peking No. 2 Cotton Mill, 1972 (C)

chief project, the planning and design stage of which is expected to be completed in early 1974, is the construction of a drydock and quay for ships of up to 300,000 tons. Construction of a chocolate factory and a glass factory is also planned. Although relations between Valletta and Peking have been excellent so far, it is very likely that the Chinese may experience vexing problems with Mintoff in carrying out the assistance program.

By courting Mintoff, the Chinese apparently hope to forestall the development of Soviet influence in Malta. They also see a propaganda advantage in backing Mintoff's endorsement of the "lake of peace" concept.

g. International organizations

Malta takes very seriously its role in the United Nations. Under the Borg Olivier administration Malta usually supported U.S. proposals and positions, but the Mintoff government steers a generally neutral course. Firm direction from Valletta to the delegation is often spotty, because the small staff of the Foreign Office is unable to draft timely instructions.

Malta's participation in other international bodies is limited by the expense of representation. In addition to membership in the United Nations and some of its specialized agencies, usually as a beneficiary, Malta is a member of the International Monetary Fund, the Council of Europe, and the Commonwealth of Nations (and some of its committees). Reports that the Mintoff government may proclaim Malta a republic have circulated from time to time. Such an event would not automatically remove Malta from the Commonwealth. Indeed, Commonwealth membership is compatible with Mintoff's neutralist views and provides a source for assistance. Malta subscribes to the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and applied in 1972 for membership in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Presumably, the expense of full membership has kept Malta from joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Malta concluded an association agreement with the European Communities in July 1970 which will lead to a full customs union in 10 years. The agreement, worked out by the former Nationalist administration,

was essentially designed to give the NP some preelection prestige rather than to secure significant economic benefits for Malta. There appears to have been little internal coordination and virtually none with private business during the negotiations with the EC Commission. Local Maltese and expatriate businessmen have been unanimously critical of the terms. For example, only a small portion of Malta's important textile exports to EC countries qualifies for immediate tariff cuts. Mintoff has sought revision of this and other aspects of the agreement. The EC Commission has not prepared any formal proposals for renegotiation of the accord and probably will not do so until directed by its Council of Ministers. In the meantime, negotiations will focus on securing a tariff arrangement for Malta in the U.K. market during the transition period of British entry into the EC.

In July 1971 Mintoff terminated the arrangements covering NATO facilities and forces in Malta. Since achieving independence in 1964, the relationship between Malta and NATO had never been clearly defined. There had been loose consultative ties, and two command units—Headquarters, Allied Forces, Mediterranean (HAFMED) and Naval Headquarters for Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH)—had been located on the islands at different periods of time.

The Nationalist government would have liked membership in NATO. This was opposed by the Italians, who wanted the Mediterranean headquarters moved to Naples, and by the French, who objected to giving to a former British colony concessions which had been denied to Algeria. In 1965 Prime Minister Borg Olivier, under attack from the MLP for giving more to NATO than Malta was getting from it, tried to win from the North Atlantic Council a defense guarantee or at least a declaration of "interest in insuring" Malta's security. This time the Norwegian and Danish Governments, reluctant to hurt the electoral chances of a fellow labor party, joined the opposition, and Borg Olivier had to settle for a NATO declaration of "interest in" Malta's security and "willingness" (rather than commitment) to discuss any threat to its sovereignty.

E. Threats to government stability (S)

The only serious threat to the stability and orderliness of Maltese political life is the danger of a massive increase in unemployment. Mintoff's periodic threats to terminate the base agreement—a move which would mean not only the departure of large numbers of British troops but also the loss of some 6,000 civilian jobs—could lead to precisely that

situation, unless alternative sources of immediate employment could be found elsewhere. Mintoff is keenly aware of this, and it is a prime reason for his reluctance to force the United Kingdom out and rely on other countries, which might provide aid but not jobs. Short of such an economic disaster, the Maltese remain a law-abiding, deeply religious people, particularly immune to Communist arguments. Furthermore, although Malta no longer has an informal tie with NATO, it is still closely linked with the Western alliance through the base agreement by which the United Kingdom and some of its partners are pledged to provide an annual payment until 1979.

Although there is some dissatisfaction because the Prime Minister's new policies and orientation have not brought immediate tangible economic benefits, it is highly unlikely that any organized groups would take to the streets or resort to massive violence. Some in the Malta Labor Party—and even Mintoff himself—were sometimes cited in the past as being capable of using violence to attain power while still in opposition, but those same militants are unlikely to turn against Mintoff and lose the fruits—however small at present—of being in power. Certain influential leaders in the General Workers Union, a key base of support for the Prime Minister, would be a moderating influence on more radical MLP members. The opposition Nationalist Party is not only disinclined by nature to resort to subversion or force but also is too poorly organized to do so.

The Soviet Union is interested in Malta's potential as a starting point for activities in North Africa and the Middle East. Soviet efforts, peaceful and low key thus far, have met with little success. Mintoff has adopted a correct but cool stance toward Moscow, partly because he genuinely wants to keep Malta neutral and partly because the Soviets apparently have not been willing to offer any large amounts of hard cash. Soviet attempts to obtain a resident diplomatic mission have been fruitless. The Soviet news agency TASS has recently opened an office in Malta, which will give Moscow a small foothold. No Western journalists were based on the islands as of early 1973, which gives TASS an additional propaganda advantage. The Nationalist Party press has already begun to attack the activities of the TASS correspondent, claiming he has frequently been seen with Paul Agius, self-styled leader of the Communist Party of Malta.

The ardent Roman Catholicism of most Maltese works against the growth of any significant Communist sentiment. There are fewer than 100 Communists in Malta, and even this small group is split between Maoists and Russian-oriented leftists

who probably understand little about ideological consideration. No more than 30 of these would approve of violent action, even in the unlikely event the party should opt for this course of action. Although Communist leader Agius has made several representations to the Soviet Ambassador to Malta, Moscow undoubtedly is aware that its own interests can best be served by courting Mintoff and the MLP.

The Communists use friendship societies with various Communist countries as front groups and have circulated some leaflets and have demonstrated against the United States in connection with the Vietnam war. The party has also distributed some Russian propaganda on the islands, as have several front organizations which have largely the same membership as the Communist party. The volume of Soviet literature coming to Malta from London and from Soviet merchant ships apparently showed a substantial increase in late 1971.

Agius' prestige rose when he organized and led a successful demand by the farmers for increased milk prices in 1971. Since they are perhaps the most conservative and tradition-bound segment of Maltese society and are traditional supporters of the

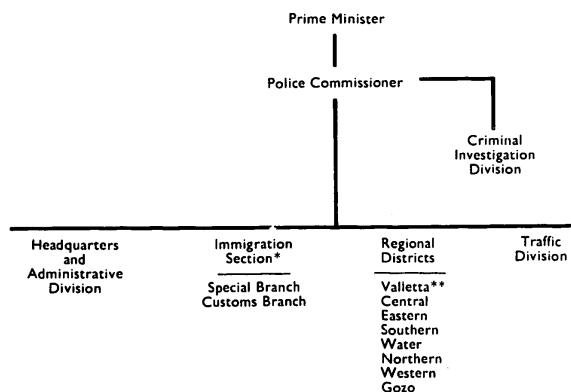
Nationalist Party, his success as a "peasant" organizer may yet bear some fruit. Agius appeals also to workers, intellectuals, and students to join the party, and he may try to enlist the tacit support of more liberal young priests in order to counter clerical influence against the Communists. Despite these efforts, the Communist Party of Malta remains an insignificant political force with only a minimal capability for organized subversion or violence.

F. Maintenance of internal security

1. Police (S)

Malta has a police force of approximately 1,400 members, including about 55 officers. The Malta Police Department (MPD) is made up of headquarters, eight regional districts, the Traffic Division, the Immigration Section, and the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) (Figure 11).

The police force is substandard for Europe, principally because of inadequate training, a dearth of modern equipment, and internecine rivalries and jealousies that prevent effective cooperation between



*Although subordinate to the Deputy Police Commissioner, the superintendent has a direct line to and frequently works directly for the Police Commissioner.

**Superintendent of the Valletta Regional District is also Water Superintendent.

FIGURE 11. Organization of Malta Police Department (U/OU)

regional districts and headquarters. Although police administration is theoretically centralized, each district superintendent exercises considerable autonomy. In the latter half of 1972 the efficacy of the MPD was further impaired by a quarrel between Police Commissioner Alfred Bencini and Prime Minister Mintoff over alleged interference by the latter in police affairs, specifically his "arbitrary" appointments to the force. Bencini, who had been on "sick leave" since mid-August 1972, resigned in early 1973. His brother, Edward Bencini, replaced him in March 1973. The new commissioner may well be more subservient to Mintoff. The dispute has had a deleterious effect on morale and operations in the MPD.

Radio equipment and traffic control vehicles have been in particularly short supply, although the radio capability improved in 1972, and further improvements are expected. Because of the infrequency of major crimes, such as murder, specialized crime laboratories with modern investigative and forensic medical research facilities were never set up; investigation of felonies is hindered by lack of such facilities and specialized techniques. Investigation of narcotics traffic also is restricted by inadequate specialized training. Clues are quickly developed, however, and the police have a very good record of arrests and convictions.

In 1972 capabilities in contraband control were somewhat enhanced. Malta received several helicopters from the West Germans, who further undertook to train personnel of the police department and of the Malta Land Force (MLF) in their use. The MPD has assigned several men, including pilots, to work with the MLF maritime troop, which operates the helicopters and the new antismuggling patrol boats received from the United States and West Germany. The department has applied for membership in Interpol and has improved its relations with Italian authorities in an effort to control smuggling more effectively.

The Immigration Section of the MPD has consistently operated with relative efficiency. Both its Special Branch, which conducts surveillance, and its Customs Branch are considered reasonably good. The effectiveness of the Special Branch can be attributed partly to the small size of Malta and the nature of its society, which make it easy to obtain information and to keep track of selected individuals.

Admission to the police force is by competitive examination, and advancement through the rank of superintendent is supposedly based on merit, with examinations carried out by an impartial body. This

system is followed the greater part of the time, but the commissioner exercises considerable influence in eliminating those whom he considers politically unreliable. As was evident in late 1972, the Prime Minister may also interfere in appointments and promotions. Proficiency in English is required for admission to the force, and the equivalent of a high school education is generally demanded. Most officers with the rank of superintendent or higher have a university degree, and many of them also have law degrees.

Policing the unusually law-abiding population is relatively easy. Since the police in the countryside spend much of their time on public service duties which elsewhere would be the duty of local government functionaries, the population tends to regard them primarily as helpers and advisers. The police do not find it necessary normally to carry arms or sticks, although weapons are available, should they become necessary. In the mid-1960's some members of the MPD were trained in riot control, including the use of tear gas, by British military units stationed in Malta.

The police force is loyal to the government and quite reliable. A large proportion of the force belongs to the Malta Labor Party. Although some in the Nationalist Party have accused the force of anti-Nationalist bias, there have been no known significant displays of it.

2. Intelligence and security services (S)

Malta has no intelligence service, either civilian or military, and internal security is the responsibility of the regular police under the jurisdiction of a senior inspector and superintendent attached to the Criminal Investigation Division. The CID has about 24 members, a few of whom received training from the British intelligence service (MI-5) in London. In general, the CID men are well trained. The head of the division reports directly to the Police Commissioner, who in turn reports directly to the Prime Minister.

The ability of the police to conduct counterintelligence operations is considered poor. There is no known national intelligence system apart from the Maltese diplomats in a few posts who collect information and report to the Foreign Office. There are no specialized intelligence officers or personnel within the office to analyze and evaluate the input from diplomats in missions abroad. On several occasions the CID has asked British military counterintelligence authorities to conduct investigations and operations for it.

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3. British forces (C)

The British forces on Malta do not normally take part in internal peacekeeping, but their presence almost certainly acts as a brake on antigovernment violence. It is not known whether or to what degree these forces would actually be used to back up the police if a situation beyond local control developed. The British High Commissioner has voiced his reluctance to become involved in any matter that might appear to be interference in the internal affairs of Malta. Nevertheless, British forces could be depended upon to act to insure the security of their base areas.

Although under the Visiting Forces Act of 1966 the British military maintains jurisdiction over its personnel, a British serviceman accused of a crime off a British base and in off-duty status is subject to local

law and jurisdiction. Since the Malta Labor Party came to power in 1971, local officials have acted on their prerogatives and have been a little tougher than heretofore with British servicemen who have broken a Maltese law.

4. Countersubversive and counterinsurgency measures and capabilities (S)

The need for countersubversive or counterinsurgency measures is limited. The ability of the police to handle widespread rioting or terrorism, in the unlikely event it should occur, is probably minimal, however. The police have had some training in riot control and could probably cope with small scale disturbances. Should a general outbreak take place, the police doubtless would coordinate their efforts with the Malta Land Force and might request help from British forces on the island.

Chronology (u/ou)

1500 B.C.

Phoenicians begin colonization of Malta.

218 B.C.-

870 A.D.

Malta is under control first of the Roman and then of Byzantine Empires. Inhabitants converted to Christianity in the first century A.D.

60 A.D.

Saint Paul shipwrecked on Malta.

870-1090

Arabs rule Malta.

1090

Normans conquer Malta.

1530

After being ruled by various feudal monarchs, Malta is ceded to the crusading Order of Knights of St. John.

1565

The Knights successfully withstand the Great Siege by Turkish forces, thus checking the Mediterranean conquests of Sultan Suleiman I of the Ottoman Empire.

1798

Napoleon takes Malta and ousts the Knights.

1814

Malta emerges from the Napoleonic Wars as part of the British Empire.

1921

British grant Malta a Constitution providing limited internal self-government.

1930-36

United Kingdom twice suspends and then revokes the Constitution. The underlying issue is the degree of influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the government.

1940-43

Malta sustains serious destruction from bombing by the Germans and Italians.

1947

September

United Kingdom restores internal self-government to Malta with a new Constitution.

1955

February

Malta Labor Party, led by Dom Mintoff and favoring integration with the United Kingdom or alternatively, self-determination, wins election.

1958

April

Mintoff government resigns; riots follow and Constitution is suspended.

1961

United Kingdom approves new Constitution granting self-government.

1962

February

Nationalist Party, led by Georgio Borg Olivier and favoring independence within the British Commonwealth, wins election.

August

Prime Minister Borg Olivier formally requests Maltese independence with membership in the Commonwealth.

1964

September

Malta becomes independent under a new Constitution. Agreements for mutual defense and for financial assistance are signed with United Kingdom.

1966

March

Nationalist Party wins reelection.

July

United Kingdom's proposals to accelerate withdrawal of British forces from Malta cause bitter U.K.-Malta political dispute.

1971

April

Association Agreement with the European Communities comes into force.

June 16

Malta Labor Party wins election and Dom Mintoff begins his second term as Prime Minister.

SECRET

1971

June 22

Sir Anthony Mamo, the first Maltese to hold the post, appointed Governor General following Mintoff's specific request.

August

Mintoff requests NATO to remove its naval headquarters from the island.

1972

March

A new Malta-U.K. accord is reached, ending prolonged, acrimonious negotiations.

April

Prime Minister Mintoff visits People's Republic of China.

1973

January

Prime Minister Mintoff threatens to abrogate the base agreement unless Malta is compensated for base rental losses caused by the sterling float in June 1972.

NATO contributors to base rental payment except the United Kingdom agree to give Malta special payments to compensate for losses caused by the sterling float.

February

Prime Minister Mintoff agrees to accept first-quarter base rental payment from London.

April

Malta accepts NATO special payment, although it is dissatisfied with reduced amounts caused by the floating of major currencies in February.

Glossary (u/ou)

ABBREVIATION	NAME
CID.....	Criminal Investigation Division
CPM.....	Communist Party of Malta
GWU.....	General Workers Union
MLF.....	Malta Land Force
MLP.....	Malta Labor Party
MPD.....	Malta Police Department
NP.....	Nationalist Party