

## The Last Lap: Independence and Freedom

The title of this chapter really says it all: what mattered most in attaining independence was that this ushered in experimental years of internal freedom. Many ex-colonies - too many - obtained independence and became unfit to live in, producing refugees by the thousand. That certainly did not happen in Borg Olivier's Malta. By 1969 emigration reached rock bottom, return migration grew, settlers came to Malta from overseas. The economy boomed, creating problems of a different kind in its wake. But these were not so much problems of freedom as of economic well-being and learning to live together and to pull through: there was no repression whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary the MLP criticism (and a popular joke) was this: *tghajjatx ghax tqajjem il-gvern!* Government became rather inconspicuous, unobtrusive, intruding only perhaps by a certain apathy, as well as increasingly a lagging commitment on the part of Borg Olivier's ageing team, especially after 1969. Borg Olivier himself, having attained independence, was no longer at his prime, and his unfortunate private and family foibles did nothing to enhance his delivery. In spite of all that, the election result in 1971 was a very close shave indeed. The Nationalist Party, in government since 1962, did not even have a daily newspaper until 1970, on the eve of the election! By contrast the GWU daily **L-Orizzont**, started in 1962, and other pro-MLP organs lambasted the Borg

Olivier administration constantly, and frequently enough, mercilessly. 1970 also saw the use of the GWU strike as a full-scale political weapon when dockyard workers were ordered to strike for months, disrupting the island's major industry mainly on the issue of flexibility. (This ceased to be such an issue when the government changed).

Freedom was in the air in the sixties in all spheres of life. Education slowly blossomed; so did art, poetry, theatre. New industries and leading hotels set up shop in the island; agriculture was put on to a different footing, with some export oriented goals; young women could go to work in new factories. The property market skyrocketed, causing severe problems in the process, as Maltese on local pay-packets could not keep up with rich residents from overseas who began to swamp the islands. Fertile valley land, such as that at Santa Marija Estate, was sold (by the Church in this case) for property development. Housing styles were revolutionised too, and expectations of standards rose and improved all round. Malta was recognised as a small, fairly respectable state in the international community. As it joined international organisations including the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth and the United Nations there was much new scope for travel and participation in overseas goings-on, especially for politicians. Malta's first and best-known Ambassador to the UN, Dr Arvid Pardo, scored a world hit in proposing an international conference on the Law of the Sea.

There was freedom. Not perfection, freedom. If workers went on strike, they were not suspended, locked-out, dismissed or beaten up. Never. If students protested, marching down Kingsway or touring the villages in jeeps and loudspeakers, they were not molested or insulted by anyone. They were criticising the government about the housing shortage and proposing solutions. The Prime Minister, Borg Olivier, and the Archbishop, Gonzi, met them and spoke to them civilly. This writer led that campaign in 1969. Partisan political violence such as we have come to know it today did not exist. The Mintoff-Gonzi clash had calmed down by the late sixties,<sup>2</sup> and come 1970, *violà* Mgr Emanuel Gerada from the Vatican's diplomatic corps to patch over the rift that remained. In spite of lingering moral censures, the first election after independence, in 1966, was held in relative calm, decently, reported on MTV; we watched the counting, filled in our score sheets, and candidates were interviewed and filmed at the counting house. No food poisoning. No police dogs. No soldiers with machine-guns. Results came in and were announced at regular intervals. No party clubs smashed up. No cars blown up. No private houses or printing presses raided. Not in Borg Olivier's Malta. This must be said. Sovereignty may have been imperfect, but freedom is indivisible. For such instances, indeed such patterns, we have to look elsewhere. It is as well that today's generation should realise this because in our time, as protesting students, we assumed freedom was inalienable and untouchable: we took it for granted because we had it (that was what we did not quite understand then). That was the world we entered and we therefore

assumed that was what the world (our world) would be like, as a matter of fact. About the past we knew precious little. Governors and Bishops. Grand Masters and Inquisitors. Kennedy and Khrushchev. And Rag Day on 18 November at Għajn Tuffieħa, after parading Valletta's streets and collecting monies for charity. We covered all the towns and villages including Zejtun! No incidents, just good fun. There was the graduation ceremony - 'NO RUM DICTATORSHIP' the streamer would say, a fire cracker in the Jesuits Church, and so on - and to listen to Mgr Coleiro give the oration in Latin was a bit too much. For the rest, we cheered the graduands loyally. There was freedom. No armed thugs on the campus. No accompanying cadres from the nomenklatura. Who would have dreamt up any possibility of that? The police could be morons, as when they refused to let us place a wreath in memory to Jan Palach<sup>3</sup> at Putirjal, because they said Putirjal was a national monument! So what? But instincts were under control.

Borg Olivier is much too often praised for obtaining independence. What he should be thanked for more is that this was accompanied by freedom. Independence was an external act: it was a matter of negotiation between the possessor and the possessed; but freedom was the real thing. Title to the land, the future in your hands, a forging of destiny. From subject to citizen to protagonist.

In an obituary in the local **Sunday Times** of 2 November, 1980 that is more than speaking well of the dead, Ragonesi painted Borg Olivier in these colours with a fine brush:

"Dr. Giorgio Borg Olivier served his country long and well. His love for Malta was paramount and it permeated all his actions. As the chief architect of independence his name will remain forever inscribed in the pages of the Island's chequered history and in the hearts of many of its people.

He was Prime Minister in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1962. But it was his term of office which started in 1962 which will be remembered most, for he witnessed the birth of political nationhood.

Beginnings are always difficult. Periods of transition are equally perilous, and they call for cool heads and steady hands. Of course some mistakes were made and we sometimes disagreed, but more than mutual respect and trust remained. We realised that few other politicians could have steered the Ship of State from Crown Colony Government to full sovereignty without collision, and without falling foul of the treacherous rocks and shoals which abound in political waters national and international.

Because of Dr. Borg Olivier Malta and Gozo not only achieved their rightful place in the world, and in the Council of Europe, but achieved these objectives with the least possible disruption and ill will.

During his term of office, industrialisation commenced apace;

Sound foundations were laid for an expanding tourist trade; law and order were maintained, as was equality before the law. Long-cherished principles were reaffirmed and Malta's security and defence was assured.

No mean achievement, and we salute him for it.

We salute him also for the manner in which these objectives were attained. Obstacles were formidable and resources scarce, but always Dr. Borg Olivier aimed at consensus rather than division; at building rather than destroying; at levelling up rather than down. Whatever the

difficulties or the set-backs, Dr. Borg Olivier retained his quiet diplomacy and his dignified and civilised manner and manners.

He was the epitome of a gentleman. Always smart bearing and impeccably turned out. He had the relaxed style of a person confident of his own strength, of the loyalty of his colleagues, and of the inherent soundness of his policies. He did not see the exercise of authority as incompatible with courtesy; nor the maintenance of the dignity of office as incompatible with kindness; or the occasional giving rein to his puckish sense of humour. He had a way of putting colleagues at ease, of reducing tensions, and of giving everybody around him that sense of "equality" which made working with him and for him a pleasure. At no time did he feel the need to assert himself. He oozed personality, and his eyes were often as expressive as his tongue, which he used sparingly (preferring as a rule to listen), never cruelly, and yet so effectively.

A gentle person, subdued in manner though of unquestionable charismatic quality. His image was that of a man, impassive and unemotional under stress, strong and decisive when necessary, but not the sort of person to deny free expression of opinion to others in the formative stages of decision-making, while accepting and appreciating full well that ultimately the buck stopped with him.

His sense of timing aroused occasional controversy - and it is already clear that history will rate him kindly on the score - but his judgment could seldom be faulted. He had his objectives in clear focus, pursued them with single-minded purpose and achieved an unparalleled record of success by non-abrasive, patient, dignified diplomacy. It was not the speed with which many things were done that mattered to him, but the quality and durability of the end product.

A skilled and tenacious negotiator, he realised that good Government must be founded on compromise but never at the expense of deeply felt principles; though an astute politician, he often achieved statesmanship in preferring the interests of the country to those of his party. Like Sir Ugo Mifsud and Dr Enrico Mizzi before him, he gave all to his country and asked for no personal gain in return.

In his off-work moments, he was excellent company, a very good mixer and never a man to throw rank on anybody. His zest for politics was matched by a zest for life; he lived fully in every sense. He had his moments of triumph and of course, many a time there were darker patches, but at all times his equable temper remained unruffled, never unduly euphoric, never permitting himself to wallow in despondency.

When the dust settles and the history of our country comes to be recorded objectively and with hindsight, a place of honour will surely be found for this gentleman and patriot.

He served his party better by serving his country best'.

This writer's attempt at an obituary was more modest and a trifle more detached; he belonged to a different generation and knew the man far less well than one who had been his Secretary during a most formative period; but it is important today to realise that this gentleman politician, an "anti-hero" to Mintoff, profoundly influenced Malta and our expectations of what life in Malta could be like:

Dan hu l-jum u din is-siegha;

Issir l-għaqda, isir il-patt;

'Kk ma taqbdux fil-harba tieghu,

Dan iż-żmien ma jerga' qatt.

— Dun Karm: *Lil Ħuti l-Maltin Nhar l-Għoti tal-Kostituzzjoni* (1921)

The passing away of Ġoġ Borg Olivier (1911-1980) makes us recall the man as well as the times with which his whole life was intertwined. His behaviour as a politician and statesman is our inheritance. And more so than we can realise.

Borg Olivier became politically active in the nationalist ranks when he was still a university student. Malta was a crown colony; but he would have remembered the *Sette Giugno* (he was eight years old) and the attainment of Self-Government (when he was ten), and much more so would he have been conscious of the abrogation of this in the nineteen thirties. One year after finishing his studies in law in 1938, we find him in the Council of Government, at the age of 28. In 1942, in wartime, at the age of 31, Borg Olivier was the only Maltese representative in the Council of Government to oppose and vote against the deportation of fellow Matese: Maltese who had never been charged of any crime, let alone found guilty. Throughout his long career Borg Olivier was almost everything in the vocabulary of political office-holding: Minister of Education, of Justice, of Public Works and Reconstruction; Deputy Leader and subsequently leader of his Party; Leader of the Opposition in the 1950s and 1970s. He became Prime Minister, in all, five times, and held office in that capacity for fourteen years (1950-1955; 1962-1971). In the early sixties he led Malta to Independence (21 September 1964).

After narrowly losing two general elections in 1971 and 1976, he stepped down from the Party leadership, but retained an honourable place in the Party and more than once enthusiastically and movingly addressed large public meetings especially on Independence Day. Had he survived this Administration's term of office, he might well have been the next President of the Republic.

In our constitutional development and socio-political evolution as a nation, Independence may be considered the most significant historic event since Malta's occupation by Britain. It marked the final triumph of the nationalist cause and struggle over many long years. It enabled us to begin to experience living in freedom, and so far as possible in equality with other States. Through its acquisition, the PN vindicated the past. Nationalism was a quest for freedom. Freedom from tyranny; freedom from abject dependence on foreigners. When he opposed deporation - voting in support of a man's right to live in his own country and not to be punished for deeds that he is not shown to have committed - Borg Olivier was giving us (and Britain) a lesson in freedom. His Party's stand for Independence followed logically from its former wish for Dominion Status, and was a milestone in its tried yearning for freedom. That the PN should have attained Independence was a poetic justice, not only because this party had staunchly opposed the Integration policy, but it was the same party that, under Fortunat Mizzi, had fought for and obtained Representative Government in 1887, and Responsible Government in 1921 - an event still within the living memory of many senior citizens. Borg Olivier's epitaph will be short and telling: *Missier Malta Indipendenti*.

I would suggest that what most endears Borg Olivier to our respect, if perhaps not what most distinguishes him, is freedom rather than Independence. Many countries became independent in an ecstasy of rhetoric but soon became unfit and unsafe to live in. That did not happen in Borg Olivier's Malta. Moreover, I believe that had the PN not obtained Independence in 1964, some form of Independence would have come anyway, sooner or later. Independence, but perhaps not democracy. Freedom from the colonial ruler perhaps, but freedom from fear and from want? I am talking about the practices of a democratic State. Freedom is the wilful refusal to indulge in despotic government once you have the power to do so. Our Independence was not absolute - that is impossible - but it was sovereign enough. In other words, had Borg Olivier wanted to establish a dictatorship, there would have been no House of Commons, no Royal Navy to stop him. Had he wanted to unleash thugs to beat up people or smash up clubs and houses, he could have done it. No printing press was bombed or set ablaze. Had he wanted to subdue the GWU, which largely brought about his downfall through prolonged political strikes in the dockyard, he might have done so. That kind of thing happened in most ex-colonies. That Borg Olivier did not do so is not to say that he could not have tried, and perhaps succeeded. But not Borg Olivier.

In line with his Party's political philosophy, he chose the democratic way. He was tolerant. he realised and recognised that 'the other side' too was the nation. He saw the Maltese as one

people, not as two tribes: there were divergent views, but one melting pot. He was a liberal patriot. Therein lies his greatness. This we must recognise in him, however much we may have disagreed with some of his views or actions.

In a parliamentary debate on housing in 1969 the Leader of the Opposition in mounting a barrage of criticism seemed momentarily to have run out of breath. Borg Olivier intervened briefly. He said: "*Qed niġhallmu*" (We are learning). Truly, Independence teaches much better than tutelage. It is all the more necessary to listen, to recognise your limitations, to take advice, and to learn. It is also necessary, one might add, to act promptly, if possible, and boldly, if necessary. Independence was a new and challenging experience, especially for one who had spent the best part of his life a native colonial subject. Nevertheless, Borg Olivier (and his colleagues and advisers) presided over the creation of an operational democratic framework and of a lasting economic infrastructure. His legacy is that he did this: freely, liberally, patriotically, without enriching himself materially, without resorting to endless propaganda, violence or repression. During his premiership, formally to make use of words such 'Malta' and 'nation' came to be universally recognised as a sign that a new awareness and self-pride had gripped the country.

Borg Olivier held two general elections (as well as a referendum on the Independence Constitution - without "trusted friends") - elections that were manifestly free and unfettered, organised, carried out and reported in a climate of relative calm. In Borg Olivier's time, a peaceful transfer of power was what you expected and got. We remember him walking side by side with the new Prime Minister at the inauguration of Parliament in 1971. We saw it on M.T.V.

Borg Olivier knew many successes in public life but he could play the political game; he went down like a man; he lost with dignity; he kept his head. Witness his behaviour at the time of the selection of his successor, Eddie Fenech Adami, a rather different kind of person, more than twenty years younger than he. Borg Olivier did not denounce his successor (just as the successor certainly did not pillory his "rotten" predecessor). He did not split the Party. Borg Olivier was at Fenech Adami's side after the latter's election. He shook his hand and wished him well; they were pictured together. That was Borg Olivier's example.

In his later years, Borg Olivier seemed less shrewd and impelling than formerly; weak, complacent, slow, removed; but he was always civil, seemly, prudent, humane, and it is for such qualities that he will probably be most fondly remembered.

I remember talking to a Maltese emigrant in San Francisco in 1973 in the wake of the Anglo-Maltese dispute; he was genuinely worried about what was going on and did not know what to make of it. "When Borg Olivier came here", the emigrant recalled, "he put his arm round my shoulder and we had a beer together; he didn't think he was God Almighty". A simplistic observation perhaps, but it captures a mood that must be widely shared.

It may help us understand why, in 1980, Dr Borg Olivier's corpse lay-in-State at the Palace; and also, why crowds wept in the streets of Valletta and all the way to the Addolorata.<sup>4</sup>

You can argue as Mr Mintoff has been doing this year in "The Times" (of Malta) - that Malta's independence in 1964 was a "a whore", "an *operetta*", a mockery; and how pleased he is that it was not him who obtained it or he would have been "a clown". Twenty five years ago he had called it "a farce" and spoken about "arming MLP supporters", "rivers of blood", "revolution", and so on. If you buy that, you can take the argument further and say there is no freedom without independence, Malta was not truly independent, therefore Malta was not free. But what are our measuring rods to determine if Malta was independent or not, free or not? Total independence, like total freedom, does not exist, except in the imagination.

If we take an historical perspective and look at the stages of constitutional development, and constitutional collapse, that characterise Malta's experience during the past centuries, it has to be recognised that juridically, constitutionally, historically and also politically 1964 was an emancipation. One can argue until doomsday about whether clause x should not have been modified into clause y, and so on; or whether agreement z should not have waited until later or been done differently; or whether Elizabeth or Agatha should have become Head of State; or indeed whether Malta was prepared for independence at all and whether that was not a premature step to take; but one cannot escape the conclusion that it was then that Malta emerged as a nation-state in the world, and that as of then the legitimate Maltese government could decide on practically all matters concerning public affairs, appoint ambassadors to other countries - a prerogative of sovereignty - and also revise, modify or revoke any decision taken.

To claim that because of a 10 year mutual defence agreement, under which Britain continued to have special facilities in defined areas, was a limitation of independence or sovereignty is theoretically acceptable. But many other countries, whose independence nobody has dared challenge, such as the Federal Republic of Germany, have agreements which permit incomparably larger foreign military presences under agreed terms and for mutual defence purposes. The defence agreement was renegotiated clamorously in 1972 and Britain continued to have a base here until 1979, and to pay for it.

The original defence and financial aid package was worth £50,000,000 in grants and loans, not a negligible sum for Malta in 1964, and one that was sorely needed particularly in view of the impending defence run-downs on a large scale. Thus while one can argue about priorities, procedures and legalities of this kind, the fact remains that to all intents and purposes Malta became independent and sovereign in 1964. Thereafter Maltese governments exercised that independence and sovereignty as they saw fit. If they chose to be heroes or whores, they were free to do so, subject only to the doctrine of popular sovereignty, which is what freedom as we understand it is about. Governments, as always, are free to err, and don't they? All governments err, though not all in the same ways; every now and again you whack across an aberration, which is usually put right in the course of time.

What freedom was it to revise salary anomalies in a way which increased the pay of those in the upper rungs of the ladder and gave the lowest paid a pittance? Freedom to err. Freedom to mend. Independence. What freedom was it to open up the islands to foreign speculators in property and land while engaged couples could not find as much as an apartment to live in if they got married? Freedom to decide who your guests should be, where you sought to obtain revenue and exchange from. Sovereignty. What freedom was it to have a Foreign Interference Act making it illegal even for Maltese citizens resident overseas to speak their minds in Malta or about Malta? Sovereignty, not freedom. What sovereignty was it to enter into a

secret agreement having military implications with arguably the most idiosyncratic communist *régime* in the world, North Korea, which is hardly recognised as a legitimate independent state itself? Clearly, that was an unprecedented abuse of sovereignty. That is where a country becomes more “independent” and less free. When sovereignty begins to belong more to State than People. Where the whole delicate edifice of freedom and independence begins to crack. During the decade 1977-1987 Malta witnessed a prolonged provocation of politically-motivated violence, the likes of which were unthinkable or at least unknown in the sixties. There were at least six fatal victims of such a collapse: one a teenager shot wantonly and maimed in Rabat by wicked policemen and who died tragically this year (Mario Pavia); another who confided to a British journalist that he had been tortured and that for speaking out he would soon be killed, as indeed he was very soon afterwards, shot dead (Wilfred Cardona); a third who was beaten to death and dumped in a valley when supposedly in custody at Police Headquarters (Nardu Debono); a fourth was caught in the line of fire at the Gudja PN club when *squadristi* in a passing jeep machine-gunned it (Raymond Caruana); a fifth the young and innocent victim of a letter bomb addressed to her father recently arrived from a medical practice in southern Africa (Karen Grech); and the sixth, an accountant who disappeared shortly after the death in a shoot-out of a leading bandit and whose body was found chopped to pieces in a well years later (Lino Cauchi). Freedom? If so, a “freedom” without precedent in our little island.

An Independence without freedom might as well not have been attained at all. As this writer noted in addressing an international colloquium in Milan before the May 1987 elections:

“Freedom is more important than statehood: the latter was intended by the former for itself. Therefore, freedom is more vital than any Nationalism that denies it; no clique of whatever description has the right to lord it over the majority of the population. The crucial point at issue is freedom after independence. Independence without freedom is worthless; it need not be any better, and can even be worse, than foreign rule”.<sup>5</sup>

And yet people also learn best at their own expense because we know that life is experience.

Freedom has to be lived to be learned and to be earned.

These last concerns broadly encapsulate the main divergent trends in the positions taken by the five Maltese political parties in the lead-up to independence. On the one hand, you had the three smaller ‘church’ parties who opposed immediate independence or even preferred a less “adventurous” solution, in principle. They were Herbert Ganado’s **Partit Demokratiku Nazzjonalista** (PDN), which four years earlier had fallen out with Borg Olivier and his style of leadership; Toni Pellegrini’s **Partit tal-Haddiema Nsara** (PHN) led by one who until 1961 was Secretary General of the MLP and trounced Mintoff as a dictator and a phoney; and Mabel Strickland’s **Progressive Constitutional Party** (PCP/PKP), which brought Stricklandism, panting, to the very last lap of colonial rule. There was a fourth tiny

party, the brainchild of another staunch Anglophile, George Ransley, which proposed a latter-day version of integrated self-government (“‘full self-government’ *b’għaqda ma’ l-Ingilterra*”) and called itself the **Christain Democratic Party** - its party organ was **The Christain Democrat**.

In the 1962 election, fought under the shadow of a fierce politico-religious tussle mainly involving Mintoff and Gonzi, the first three of these parties obtained 9 seats between them. The former two (PDN and PHN) had 4 seats each, including each of the party leaders - Ganado and Pellegrini were both elected - and the third party (PCP) had one seat only, Mabel herself. Considering that the two of these parties that made headway had not been long formed and, with the exception of the one who did least well, had little of a party history to back them up, they did not do too badly, obtaining 9 out of 50 seats and as much as 24% of the votes. If we rope in Ransley’s “Christain Deomocrats” with them, these “anti-Independence” parties obtained 36,242 out of 150,606 votes, thus over 24% of the voters in 1962 were in no fret to see Malta independent.

This result can be interpreted in different ways. Was it due to their being backed by the church, as no doubt they were? Was it perhaps due to a certain disappointment in both the main parties with the style of the leadership being supplied by Borg Olivier and by Mintoff, hence a ready willingness to shift sides once an alternative offered itself? Was it due to a genuine reluctance to face independence before Malta’s economic viability had been better ascertained? Was it rather due, perhaps, to a fear that, with independence, Mintoff could eventually come to power and rule absolutely?

In the words of Albert Ganado, who belonged with the PDN, a primary concern in their minds was that Malta would get independence “with Mintoff around, and nobody to oppose him”. This concern was expressed by Herbert Ganado himself to this writer.<sup>6</sup>

A reading of **It-Tarka**, the PHN weekly organ, leaves no doubt that Mintoff was perhaps the single greatest fear, and Pellegrini’s 1961 letter of resignation is an intriguing document worthy of study. The PHN, which was rather prone to wild accusations and to bombast, borrowed Boffa’s emblem and made it their own - once again we had the human solidarity of hand in hand. According to Daniel Micallef, who contested the 1962 election with Pellegrini but resigned shortly before the 1966 election, Pellegrini was too pro-British, to put it mildly; Micallef resented this and decided to leave the party. Years later he joined the Mintoff party where he stayed. Micallef’s theory is that the three ‘centre’ parties were largely a creation of the church, perhaps especially of Gonzi and his entourage, with British connivance. The object: to prevent either one of the larger parties from obtaining a commanding majority and thus to weaken the standing of these vis-à-vis the British when it came to negotiating an independence package. If that was the case, the scheme worked beautifully, although the PN just missed getting an absolute majority. It had 25 out

of the 50 seats and 42% of the vote; later on there was a defector from Ganado's party, thus giving it 26 seats. The MLP obtained 16 seats and 33.8% of the vote. Mortal sins notwithstanding.

Mabel Strickland was predictably reluctant to accept independence for Malta, though she came close to admitting the principle, provided that special arrangements could be guaranteed regarding foreign policy and defence. Defence was also a grave preoccupation of the other parties, including the P.N. who were more confident but wary, knowing well enough that Malta unaided would be altogether unable to resist or to pretend to resist any aggressor. The MLP at this stage seemed negative or ambivalent on this aspect; in the recent past they had been quite prepared to grant that, in the event of integration, defence and foreign affairs would continue to be a British prerogative. By 1964 the PCP position though distinct from that of the PN was closer to it than would have been the case right up to 1958, 1961, or even 1963. The integration campaign, which both PN and PCP for their own reasons opposed, could have brought the parties closer. The anti-Mintoff position, often argued more vibrantly by the PCP than by the PN, started to smoothen past differences (which were so many and so profound) between these parties. All the more so from 1958 onwards when the MLP vanguard became both more bent on violence as well as remorselessly anti-British, mixing with Socialists and, in AAPSO, even Communists.

What the centre party position represented therefore was a guarded caution in the face of an uncertain future, a firm preference for economic development to precede independence, concrete assurances with regard to security, stability and democracy as well as, of course, safeguarding the position of the Roman Catholic Church to a maximum extent. The opposing view was that Malta could not become economically viable unless and until it was independent to plan and to implement its own future as necessary.

The PN and the MLP agreed in principle that Malta should be granted full independence. Both parties in their electoral manifestoes for the 1962 election had stated that much. In the light of the negative and exaggerated position adopted by the MLP in government after 1971 towards Malta's independence when there was clearly an attempt to pretend that Malta had "not yet" obtained independence and it was only now, under Mintoff, that the curtain would rise - it is important to recall that such antagonism and hostility were not as evident in 1964. Micallef Stafrace is of the opinion that such differences as existed have been exaggerated, a feeling shared by others who were in the thick of politics at the time. The GWU commemorated 21 September 1964 in a special supplement.

All things considered, the chief difference would seem to have been that regarding the position to be enjoyed by the Roman Catholic Church. Brushes of the Gonzi-Mintoff confrontations surfaced at the round table conference at Marlborough House in 1963. Ever since the late fifties, Mintoff had floated 'six points' which were

primarily intended to make Malta a lay, secular State, thereby diminishing the influence of the Church. As he once confided to a **Guardian** journalist, Brockington, family relations in Malta had to become more horizontal than vertical, a turn of phrase that could be interpreted to mean anything from equality between the sexes to laicisation of marriages and society in general. This mentality obviously was in line with what had been happening in central and northern Europe; but did not fall in with what the moral codes of southern Europe and the Mediterranean were at that time, and Malta was to be included undoubtedly with these latter. A crucial point of difference concerned the exact position to be allowed to the church in matters spiritual and temporal, and the degree of absoluteness in their exercise. In the final outcome, the church was guaranteed full establishment, a position with which only the MLP disagreed.

In this episode it is not even clear that the Vatican were terribly keen to push for over-protection of the Maltese church, and the part played by Mgr Iginio Cardinale in London was an equivocal one, possibly because Vatican diplomats kept an eye on the wider implications of Anglo-Vatican relations, or indeed for other reasons related to Cardinale's own career ambitions. During the London talks an angry Borg Olivier asked Ragonesi to go to the Vatican and request that it stop interfering in Maltese affairs. This "*doppio giuoco*", as Ragonesi calls it, greatly disappointed Archbishop Gonzi whom Borg Olivier had reassured on safeguarding the Catholic position. When Cardinale attended Malta's independence celebrations in 1964 any desire he may have had to be appointed Nuncio in Valletta found no encouragement in the Auberge d' Aragon.

Borg Olivier would have seen the Church in Malta as a bastion of tradition and stability and would not have wanted to jeopardise her standing which was high among the population at large. Catholicism had been understandably a salient feature of colonial nationalism. Although Borg Olivier himself had none of Ganado's missionary zeal, he knew his protocol and his politics better than anyone else and he made sure he would not slip on this one. The 'church' parties were relieved and supportive, although they still maintained that the church's position was (somehow) being weakened.

The PDN was most vociferous on this point. The PDN version would have been this:

"The Roman Catholic religion and the Roman Catholic Church in Malta shall continue to enjoy all those rights, privileges and prerogatives, in accordance with the law of Malta and the code of the Canon Law, obtaining on the appointed day". The proposed PHN and PCP versions were identical.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly then, a vast majority of the population as represented by the parties, supported the acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church in Malta as an established one with its own rights and privileges, guaranteed, subject naturally to the constitution.

Article 2 in chapter 1 of the Constitution ("The State") finally read thus: (1) The Religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion. (2) The State guarantees to the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church the right freely to exercise her proper spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and duties and to manage her own affairs. Art. 10 in Chapter 2 ("Declaration of Principles") laid down that religious teaching of the Roman Catholic faith would be provided in all State Schools. However Article 33 (b) and (c) in Chapter 4 ("Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual"), provided for "freedom of conscience, of expression and of peaceful assembly and association" as well as for respect of the individual's "private and family life".

The position advocated by the MLP during the Malta Independence Conference in 1963, as laid down in printed papers presented by Duncan Sandys, the Colonial Secretary, to the British Parliament in August of that year, was this:

- (1) All religious denominations are equally free before the law.
- (2) Religious denominations other than Catholic are entitled to organise themselves according to their own creed provided that they are not in conflict with Maltese juridical organisation.
- (3) The State recognises the validity of Catholic marriage and its subjection to the provisions of Canon Law, and nullity cases therefore shall be reserved to the Catholic Ecclesiastical Court. Separations *quoad torum et mensam* shall continue to be dealt with by the Civil Courts.
- (4) The law will provide also for marriages to be celebrated before a public registrar or the recognised minister of some other religion, in which case they are not subject to Canon Law.
- (5) Marriages celebrated according to Canon Law or where any of the contracting parties is a Catholic shall not be soluble by divorce.

In a further proviso suggested for insertion in article 24 of the draft constitution ("Protection of freedom of assembly and association") the MLP proposed two additional articles, in these words:

"Broadcasts on religious questions with political affinity shall be allowed provided that they are carried out within the limits of reasonable discussion without resort to vilification", and "when any person or political party is attacked on religious grounds on wireless broadcasting television or other means of communication, that person or political party shall have the right of reply and will not be debarred from answering to such attacks by reason of offending religious sentiment, saving the case of libel and slander"

By the early sixties one is tempted to see a clerical-anticlerical divide instead of the earlier cultural-utilitarian one. The pro-English and subsequently pro-British alignment which then turned nationalist was nevertheless more British-influenced in its attitude to religion and church matters than the original nationalist alignment would ever be. Indeed. Protestantism ("the secret of England's greatness") and laicism had been

laicism had been bogeys in the stereotyped rhetoric of colonial nationalism. This would explain Borg Olivier's somewhat uncharacteristic lampoon in relation to Sandys when there was a suggestion that some of Mintoff's proposals might be accepted possibly over the heads of government and church in Malta. "No Sandys, Freemanson, Protestant or Communist" would make him accept such clauses, he stated. Sandys himself, and the British in general, would have been sympathetic to the secularist and anticlerical position taken by Mintoff's party; as indeed they had been to the earlier integration proposal; except that in the case of church-state relations the British attitude was perhaps a consequence not so much of Freemasonry as of the times in Western Europe of the nineteen sixties, and to social history in Britain particularly. Equally, it should be noted that for all Borg Olivier's intractability, opposition to any changes in the *status quo* was emanating mostly from church quarters, politically represented chiefly by Ganado, rather than from the PN as such; in the event that some modification of formulae would have put independence at risk, Borg Olivier would have fought doggedly for safeguarding the acquisition of independence. In the end, as Dobie had noted, some changes were made precisely on this score - the Church question - which was the most troublesome. One amendment, added to the section on discrimination, said no law would make any provision that discriminated either of itself or in its effect. "No person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the function of any public office or any public authority". As discrimination included offences relating to political opinion or creed, the terms here "public office" and "public authority" would have included the ecclesiastical authorities and the bishops. But that was not spelt out as it might have been to satisfy the "Corrupt Practicies" prohibition being demanded by the MLP. The second amendment essentially deleted from the constitution two clauses which barefacedly placed the church in Malta above the law. As these clauses stood, the Church was empowered to flout human rights (as explained in the relevant chapter of the constitution itself) "in the exerise of its spiritual power or duties".<sup>9</sup>

Had Mintoff not been to Borg Olivier what he once called "a past master of abuse", some *rapprochement* between the two could have been reached thus to render the Independence Constitution more generally acceptable. There was no very great commotion in Malta when, for example, civil marriage was made lawful by the second Mintoff administration; and indeed even before in the sixties secularization in lifestyles was proceeding apace, whether or not recognised through new legislation. Other points of divergence included whether Malta should stay in the Commonwealth or not, be a constitutional monarchy or a republic, endorse inter-governmental agreements before or after independence, whether or not to represent the George Cross in the canton of the white stripe of the Maltese flag, and various other points. The George Cross issue was hotly debated even in the PN executive and it was Censu Tabone's intervention that finally secured agreement. Tabone

argued (as he recalled) that the George Cross was after all part of Malta's "proud" history as indeed were the national colours themselves (held to derive from Norman times, these red and white colours could be one of the earliest national flags). In 1963 the MLP's position was against showing the George Cross in Malta's flag, but when in government afterwards, the national flag was retained as it was. As noted below, this has now become a non-issue, as indeed has Malta's membership of the "British" Commonwealth of Nations.

A much more important issue was whether or not to hold a referendum about Independence and on what to hold it exactly. The centre parties would have had it on whether you want independence now, whereas the other two parties saw no reason for asking that question because they had already put it to the electors in their programmes. Still the MLP, which soon abandoned the conference, insisted on general elections before independence, hoping to win office and conduct the negotiations itself. There was a further argument to the effect that the dominating issue at the popular level during the 1962 election campaign was not Independence but "religion" (the Mintoff-Gonzi clash, the "*sitt punti*", "*Gunta*" and MLP meetings, moral sanctions *et cetera*). In the event, the referendum held in May 1964 asked whether you approved of the Malta independence Constitution as proposed by the Government. As this excluded controversial MLP proposals mainly relating to civil marriage and divorce, a "yes" vote was generally seen as "pro-church", even if, ironically again, the 'church' parties were opposing Independence then. The British government regarded the 1962 election result as indicating that a substantial majority favoured independence. To presume otherwise would have been to insult Maltese electors by holding that they had no idea what the parties they voted for had wanted and promised to them. The truth is also that Britain had had her fill of frustrating negotiations with the Maltese politicians since 1958, if not earlier, and moreover the 1960s mood was in favour rather than contrary to giving independence to colonies, while retaining whatever links were possible.

Over 65,000 voted 'yes' thus ensuring that the constitution and Independence - would go ahead, as they did. As in the 1956 referendum, much of the lobbying and publicity turned on how far the Roman Catholic Church's position would be safe or unsafe. The history of referenda in Malta from 1870 to 1964 is dominated by Church connections. The MLP instructed supporters to vote 'no'. No, that is, to the proposed constitution, not to independence; and that mainly because of the church question and related issues of morality and secularisation. Due to the way in which the referendum question was put - a masterpiece of Borg Olivier shrewdness - a few thousand supporters of anti-Independence parties ended up voting for the Independence Constitution (*ergo* Independence), thus giving the government a fairly comfortable lead which actually bolstered its showing at the polls at the previous election, and thereby weakened the centre.

When Lord Perth tried to block the passage of the Maltese Independence Bill in the House of Lords he made two points, one that the Maltese were showing no urgency for independence and, two, that if the British left they would be replaced by someone else. The second fear, which was somewhat outdated, was nevertheless related to the first conclusion. In truth, over 33,000 out of an electorate of 162,743 had not cast a vote in the referendum, and over 9,000 had cast an invalid one. In addition, nearly 55,000 electors had voted against the proposed independence constitution. Thus although over 50% of those voting supported the government, nearly 60% of the electorate did not albeit for different reasons. Had the same criteria been used in 1964 as had been used admittedly in different circumstances in 1956, independence would have been thrown out as integration had been. It is quite possible that Britain, after the embittered experience with Mintoff in government and opposition, would have preferred to deal and secure agreement with Borg Olivier. On the other hand, Borg Olivier was the government: he had won the election comfortably, more comfortably in percentages of votes obtained than most British governments do; and he had confirmed his government's hold on public opinion by marginally strengthening his own support in the referendum result. On this count, the Nationalists would be in office for some more years, and Mintoff's own future, after all, was unknown.

From the wording of the referendum question it is clear that Borg Olivier's strategy was to make sure that the "anti-Mintoff" parties would have little option but to support the "pro-church" government. But had a straight referendum been held, on whether Maltese wanted independence or not at that stage, what would have been the outcome?

In all probability the government would have lost it, because the MLP would have voted negatively, and the centre parties would have been obliged to do the same in observance of their own policies. What kind of independence Malta would have obtained had that ensued and when is a matter for conjecture, as are the likely consequences.

The last lap to independence could be considered in much more detail, especially when original correspondence at the Public Record Office in London will become available. Briefly there are four or five sign-posts to follow.

First, 1958. Although it was the PN not the MLP who for as long as anyone could remember or recall had championed the fight for greater constitutional freedoms in Malta, from representative to responsible government to dominion status, nevertheless in 1958 the MLP turns bold and starts talking of independence. Unqualified Independence. Naked Independence. Independence, rather than Dominion Status. The difference is not simply etymological. Historically, it is semantic. Independence - in contrast to Dominion Status - rather implied a rejection of Commonwealth membership. Dominion Status, on the other hand, implied independence within the Commonwealth. Throughout the empire and in the history

of decolonization, we meet with such distinctions and differences of emphasis. Thus the sudden reference to 'Independence', after the integration interlude, was pregnant with a new-found anti-Britishness, it sought to underscore the demand for a total break: not your friends any more, go away. The Nationalists, by contrast, who had been championing Dominion Status since 1932, would not abandon their choice of term, even if they increasingly spoke of it in terms of independence within the Commonwealth, making reference to Australia and Canada (rather than to Southern Rhodesia, as in 1932 and in 1953). After April 1958, Borg Olivier publicly suggested to Mintoff that he should now form a common front with the PN to fight for independence. Writing about "*Il-kwistjoni serja ta' l-Indipendenza*" in **Malta Taghna** in August, 1962, when Borg Olivier formally requested Independence for Malta in a communication to London, Ganado almost equated Borg Olivier with Mintoff; "Now the fight between Borg Olivier and Mintoff will be who is to become Malta's first Nkurmah."

With the advantage of hindsight, we know that in the end the MLP in government after independence opted to stay in the Commonwealth as well as to retain the George Cross in the national flag, and it seems that Maltese political parties have stopped squabbling about these issues now. The die is cast. Far more significantly, in spite of grave troubles in the areas, the MLP under Mintoff's guidance finally transferred power peacefully in an independent state, in May 1987. Thus no Nkurmah - who proclaimed a one party state in Ghana in 1964 and was overthrown in a *coup d'état* two years later.

Our second stop, though by no means a water-shed, in the journey to 21 September, 1964, is Sir Hilary Blood and his 'bloody' commission. This was essentially a formal exercise to permit a return to self-government; it was the usual British stratagem, and we had seen it in operation many times before. 1961 is probably most comparable to 1931, when a royal commission had come to investigate the situation, following the suspension of the constitution in 1930, and recommended that self-government should be restored and fresh elections called. Blood did more or less the same, although far less people were willing to see him than was the case with the 1931 commission, or the 1919 enquiry whose minutes of evidence need a special drawer to store in. Once we had this 'go-ahead' of sorts, new elections could then be held under the 1962 constitution.

This Blood constitution is our third stop. There were problems with it; parts of it were unacceptable to both the PN and the MLP. The single most distasteful provision probably concerned reserved powers over the police and the civil service. In its report of February, 1961 the Malta Constitutional Commission, as it was called, recommended that henceforth Malta be described as "The State of Malta" and that the position of the Governor "should be approximated, so far as is possible in present circumstances, to that of a constitutional monarch". In February 1960, just before Sir Hilary Blood was entrusted with this Commission, the Colonial Secretary

told the Commons that Britain desired "to restore representative Government in Malta". In the Commissioner's terms of reference, the mandate was to give the Maltese people "the widest measure of self-government consistent with Her Majesty's Government's responsibility for defence and foreign affairs and their undertakings in respect of the public service, the police and human rights generally". These limitations and others - such as the Governors's "right to see Cabinet papers" - met with much opposition, with both Borg Olivier and Mintoff vowing to have them removed. However, the Commission also proposed to replace "reserved matters" with "concurrent powers" relating to subjects in respect of which both the UK Government and the Maltese Government would have the power to legislate, the UK legislation prevailing only if conflict arose. The Commission's interpretation of this provision was that many of the powers and duties which in defence and foreign affairs were previously in the hands of the Imperial Government would now be left to, or delegated to, the Maltese legislature and Maltese Ministers, thereby extending the operations of the Maltese Government "well beyond the normal area of internal self-government".

Here again we note the phraseology of transition, cautious but discernable. In the sphere of decolonization Malta's closest parallel at this stage was probably Singapore which progressed from internal self-government in 1959 to Independence, as a member of the Federation of Malaysia, in 1963. Lee Kuan Yew, whose People's Action Party won 37 out of the 51 Legislative Assembly seats, in the September 1963 election, actually visited Malta and met Borg Olivier. Vivian De Gray, who met Blood in London and again in Valletta, believes that it was the Singapore model that Blood had in mind for Malta.

The PCP organ, *Progress'Il Quddiem*, while admitting that it was humiliating for the Maltese Government to be deprived of responsibility for the police and the public service, recalled how the police had been used and abused in Mintoff's time, the troubles in and after 1958.<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt that such experiences greatly impressed the Commissioner as can be seen from article 11 in the report on "the misuse of Power" and article 12 on the "need from stability".<sup>11</sup>

The PN pledged to have the constitution changed as soon as it was elected. Once elected, as we have seen, a delegation led by Borg Olivier proceeded to London mainly to have the constitution changed in this sense. The police and civil service had to report to the prime minister not to the governor or anyone else. While the discussions ultimately bore fruit, it was touch and go until the last minute. Victor Ragonesi and J.J. Cremona, who were with Borg Olivier, both interceded privately with Sir John Martin, permanent under-secretary at the C.O., and it seems that an agreement was reached just before Borg Olivier was due to leave London, determined to keep his promise to resign if he had not got what he sought. Another election in 1962 was all that Malta needed! Fortunately this matter was resolved, and from then onwards the run to independence turned into a sprint. The other notable

Colonial  
office

feature of this London mission was the Treasury stinginess in granting Malta financial aid, in spite of the rosy picture painted of British generosity by the Blood Commission. When offered an additional £100,000 Borg Olivier indignantly turned down the offer, saying he had not gone to London "to make a silver collection". It was in August 1962 that Borg Olivier demanded independence, after all this: and it was agreed to have a round table conference in Marlborough House with all the parties concerned to thrash out the proposal. In some ways the breakdown of financial assistance negotiations in 1962, which led to the push for independence, mirrors the disappointments of 1957 which resulted in the abandonment of Integration and the consequent bid for self-determination.

The "round table" or Malta Independence Conference took place in July - August 1963; it was an exercise in which all parties had their say, but without much agreement on anything. The constitution draft was mainly prepared by the Attorney General, J.J. Cremona, who worked closely with Borg Olivier, but it would have undergone some changes as a result of the London negotiations. Some slight accommodations, not fundamentals, except perhaps in the two amendments regarding the Church's position. Indeed, as already noted, the fundamental disagreement that existed was whether Malta should be granted independence then or not. That was overcome, albeit not by a straight referendum on the issue of independence. Although the British were ready to give Malta independence, particularly perhaps if they could continue to ensure security interests such as telecommunications and an air base, we do not know in how great a rush they were to do so. Until only a few years earlier, they would not even discuss the prospect. Now the apple was more ripe for the picking. In the fourth volume of his splendid autobiography **Rajt Malta Tinbidel**, Ganado argues the British were all too ready and eager to clear out at a moment's notice! Were they simply waiting for the nod then?

Had the Maltese side refused to have any defence agreement, mutual or otherwise, would independence still have come when it did? Might it have not taken some more years? The PN insisted that it wanted a mutual defence agreement in Malta's interest. "That was always our policy" says Victor Ragonesi. "That was a good agreement" says Albert Ganado. On the MLP side this view is not shared, partly no doubt under the spell of Mintoff's leadership which out-nationalized the Nationalists *de rigueur*, and also because some provisions of the Agreement on mutual defence and Assistance could be criticized from a nationalist standpoint, and all the more so from the opposition benches.

[Briefly this ten-year agreement provided as follows: Britain would have in peace and war the right to station armed forces and associated British personnel in Malta and to use facilities there for the purpose of mutual defence, the fulfilment of international or Commonwealth obligations, the assistance of other nations in maintaining independence and stability, or the protection of UK citizens and of British colonies,

and of Maltese citizens. The preamble to this agreement is given textually towards the end of this chapter.

When all was said and done the British Labour Party agreed with their Conservative government, that Malta should not be denied her independence. This decision was taken notwithstanding a formal request from the MLP to Harold Wilson's Executive to oppose the Malta Independence Bill in the Commons. We have this from the deputy leader of the Labour party, George Brown, who was first to announce the Labour Party's decision to Borg Olivier, in the presence of Ragonesi. In the corridors of the House of Commons, Brown congratulated Borg Olivier, hugged and kissed him on both cheeks.

Attempts by the party's colonial affairs spokesman to have independence postponed until after a general election in Malta were unrepresentative. The British Labour Party decided that once independence had been given to various other countries, strategic interest should not deny it to Malta, whatever spokes in the wheel a local opposition party sought to put. In any case, the perceived British policy and interest would have come first, hence the reference to what had been done in the case of other colonies. On becoming Colonial Secretary in 1959 Iain Macleod expressed the belief that Britain could not possibly have held by force to her territories in Africa. "We could not, with an enormous force engaged, even continue to hold the small island of Cyprus. General de Gaulle could not contain Algeria". And he added: "The march of men towards their freedom can be guided, but not halted. Of course there were risks in moving quickly. But the risks of moving slowly were far greater".<sup>12</sup> Compared to the 1950s when there were "even after Cyprus, still enough strategic British colonies in the world - Malta, Aden, Singapore - to keep secure a framework of British world influence",<sup>13</sup> in the 1960s even very small islands were gaining their independence. As Lloyd noted:

"The Commonwealth was moving away from any social commitment or deference to Britain...By the late 1960s each country took some trouble to devise national symbols like an anthem and a flag and most of them spent a fair amount of money on buildings in the capital that could represent the spirit of the nation...In the few years since 1958, ideas of how large a state had to be in order to survive had altered dramatically: by the early 1960s Cyprus had become independent with a population of about 700,000 and Malta with a population of 300,000 was considering it (and did become independent in 1964). Trinidad and the smaller nearby island of Tobago felt certain that as a united state they could manage their own affairs at least as well as Jamaica; though their population was smaller they were richer ...These changes were carried out in a friendly way..."<sup>14</sup>

We have since found out something else. In 1964 the MLP had sent a memorandum to Rome including a draft integration or federation plan for Malta with Italy. An elaboration of the Mizzi idea of 1912! Paragraphs 22 to 30 of this document were published by the Page Thirteen team of **The Sunday Times** (of Malta). No denials have appeared from any quarter.

Secretly prepared and despatched in April, 1963 it bore the address of the Party Headquarters in *Strada Rjali* (Sede Centrale, Strade Reale 41, Valletta). The text of paragraphs 22 to 30, parts of which might as well have been lifted from Nerik Mizzi's 1912 article in *La Rassegna Contemporanea*, deserve quotation in full:-

22. On the other hand the Labour Party sees in the immediate and complete liberation of the Island from British domination, and in closer political relations with Italy, one of the more practical and equitable solutions of the multiple problems of Malta.

23. The elimination of isolating barriers and the consequent re-entry of the Island in the Mediterranean, and more specifically Italian political life and culture, in fact guarantees to the Maltese people an integral progress, that is the free and natural development of its intellectual, moral and material potential.

24. The drawing closer of Malta to Italy will be facilitated by the fact that Malta, only 95km from Sicily, for geographical, climatic, historical, cultural and religious reasons, is particularly tied with Italy, and the Italian Constitution provides for, inside the Italian Republic, autonomous regions and also sovereign states with particular treaties of "friendship and good neighbour relations"; it also equates to Italian citizens, Maltese citizens as being "Italians not appertaining to the Republic" (Art. 51).

25. The exact form of these much desired closer relations between Malta and Italy will be established after an exhaustive study of the matter, and in such a way that it will turn out to be the best and the most useful in the common interest of Italy and Malta. One could consider a relationship similar to that with San Marino, or to a regional autonomy similar to that of Sicily.

26. An exhaustive study could ascertain moreover whether it would be desirable in the common interest that Malta should remain a neutral territory like Singapore (a similar proposal was made in the treaty of Amiens) and would thereby be useful to Italy and the Common Market.

27. It is here to be recorded that Maltese politicians have recently approached Italian statesmen to discuss the solution of Malta's political problems on the lines referred to above.

28. We expect now that the representatives of the Government and of the Italian political parties express their position in this regard. In particular, the Malta Labour Party requests this to be able to go ahead with this plan of theirs; and this was the purpose of its Leader Dom Mintoff's visit to Italy in February 1963, as also the preparation of this short informative report on the internal situation of Malta.

29. It is worth mentioning that, given the particularly favourable moment, because of the excellent relations existing between Italy and Great Britain (England is seeking Italian support to enter the Common Market), Great Britain should not find excessive difficulties to allow Malta to seek the solution of its problems in greater closeness with Italy. Nor, on the other hand, should Italy find difficulties to express itself favourably on such a final solution. This has been implicitly said in a recent speech delivered in Malta by the British Governor of the Island.

30. We believe finally, that Italy, which has given considerable economic aid to the various people of Africa (Tunisia, Somalia, Ethiopia) also to counterbalance the increasing Arab nationalism, should not hesitate to lean forward towards those who the Italian Constitution considers "Italian citizens not belonging to the Republic" (Art.51).

It would seem therefore that the MLP's request to the British Labour Party to oppose the grant of independence to Malta in 1964 was contemporaneously supplemented by a move seriously to sound out the possibility of Malta's union with Italy under given terms and conditions. The dependence-independence syndrome of which we spoke in the previous chapters takes us to the very brink of colonial status,

and demonstrates how far the hidden misgivings about independence existed, not only among the 'church' parties but more generally as well.

Both Ragonesi and Dr. Vanni Bonello mention the close rapport that existed between an Italian professor of the Malta University, di Pietro, and Mintoff in the early sixties. Di Pietro, a Christian Democrat, believed ardently in restoring Italo-Maltese friendship, which had suffered as a result of the war, and so did Mintoff. Di Pietro is known to have met Mintoff on various occasions and it is possible that he may have conveyed the MLP memorandum to Rome personally or advised the MLP how best to proceed about the matter .

The devastating critique on 14 August 1988 by Page Thirteen of this MLP policy or plan concerns itself not so much with the ideal in question - an ideal which, as already indicated, would not be averse to the heart of many an old time Nationalist - but with what must be regarded as a hypocrisy by the "anti-Italian pro-Italian" party of Malta (the same "pro-British anti-British" party of a moment ago). Some of their comments deserve registration, to wit:

"It would not have been at all easy for the Socialists to explain to the people that while Dr. Borg Olivier was at the height of his struggle for independence, the other major political force in Malta was secretly plotting behind the back of the people a humiliating vassalage under Italy.

Because the truth is that, while the Nationalist Government was striving for the colony's independence, the Malta Labour Party was planning a political future for Malta which would have transformed the Island from a British colony to an Italian dependency.

The people would not have been overjoyed by the comparison between what the Nationalists and the Socialists were doing.

The Secret memorandum, of which *Page thirteen* has obtained a full copy, is in Italian, it emanates from the *Sede Centrale Strada Reale 41, Valletta*.

Pages 1 to 7 consist of a "Short Report on the Present Political Situation in Malta"; pages 8 to 11 are dedicated to "Notes on the Economy of the Island".

Most important are paragraphs 22 to 30, entitled "The Labour Party and the political reasons with Italy"...

The secret Socialist memorandum refers explicitly to the Italian Constitution by virtue of which, the author alleges, the Maltese are simply "Italians not belonging to the Republic".

The memorandum also speaks of the "much desired closer relations with Italy" taking the form of either an association as the one existing between Italy and San Marino, or a regional autonomy similar to the status of Sicily in the Italian Republic.

In both alternatives, Italy is the dominant nation. The autonomy of San Marino is more decorative than real, while the independence and sovereignty of Sicily are virtually non-existent.

In truth, the Malta Labour Party's alternative proposals were the negation of independence.

We do not know the reasons why Mr. Mintoff's secret love affair with those "of the Mafia" went sour. Was he rejected by his Latin Lover? Did the integration-compulsive Socialist Leader discover a fourth integration passion after the U.S.A. Great Britain and Italy? In fact, was a rejection by Italy the motivation for the alleged proposal for integration with Libya?

*A careful reading of this secret memorandum reveals some most interesting facts:*

- Serious and secret talks were already being held on this proposal between the Malta Labour Party and the Italian Government. Mr. Mintoff's visit to Italy in February 1963 was dedicated to these talks.

- The Labour Party considered that "Malta's neutrality would be useful to the Common Market". This is interesting, as now the party loudly claims that Malta's neutrality would be an obstacle to its joining the Common Market.
  - The memorandum emphasises *twice* that, according to the Italian Constitution, the Maltese are Italians, but Italians who do not belong to the Republic.
  - The Socialists considered that union with Italy, and the financial aid expected through it, would be useful to counterbalance the growing Arab nationalism, seen at that stage, as an evil to be counterbalanced.
  - The Labour Party was vigorously pressing Italy for a favourable reply to the proposal, in order to be able "to go ahead with this plan of theirs".
  - One thing is certain: the Nationalist Party, in spite of its original sympathy for Italian culture, had *never*, in its long history, formally requested the annexation of Malta to Italy.
- It had to be the Socialist Party, which always attacked the Nationalists for their pro-Italian sympathy, that ended up doing formally what it had always accused its opponents of thinking about.

In the present case, annexation with Italy was not a dream of a few nostalgic hot-heads. It was the official policy of the party itself.

Why was this proposal kept so secret? Why was the rank and file of the party never consulted, or even informed? Was the Executive Committee of the party aware of these top secret negotiations, or was this 'hot' mystery reserved only for an inner enclave?

The Socialists castigated the Nationalists for attaining independence which was not independence enough. It is ironic to discover that just before independence, the Socialists were secretly plotting an "independence" which would have been a million times more humiliating than the Nationalist one - a cancellation of Malta, intended to turn the Maltese into Sicilians of the South!

Ironically several latter-day Nationalists would have staunchly opposed such a move even on "cultural" grounds; the current Finance Minister, Bonello du Puis, prides himself on being a "Britisher" and regards "the discipline" introduced by the British as being a factor that kept the Mafia out of Malta; a former MP for the Sliema district on behalf of the Pellegrini party, he even has a portrait of Sir Alexander Ball in his office.

Still more novel is the record of another conversation this writer had, with former Police Commissioner De Gray, with regard to the MLP's 1963 move. It did not surprise him at all! Why not? "I remember Colombo saying, in the presence of Cassar, that before the 1947 election - he had already quarelled with Mintoff - they were on a roof somewhere, and Mintoff came up with the proposal that they should integrate with Italy, probably that was when they were expecting the Communist Party to come to power in Italy. Colombo opposed that, he said". "And Cassar"? "Cassar didn't express an opinion".

This piece of information is telling, indeed, although one would have to keep in mind that Colombo would have well and truly fallen out with Mintoff by the time he was relating it. Moreover, if Mintoff aired this view "on a roof somewhere" the occasion could only have been a very informal one, and he may have been simply venting one of his opinions about anything and everything, as he is wont to do. He flew a kite. But Colombo's record of that conversation also indicates the impression it made on

him, and the whole matter assumes greater importance in the light of what happened later on, particularly the April 1963 memorandum we have been discussing above. The reference to the PCI has to be seen in context as the anti-Fascist resistance had brought Communists under Togliatti and Christian Democrats under De Gasperi closer together; moreover Togliatti in spite of his reverence for the Soviet Union was beginning to experiment with a national version of communism, under the influence of Gramsci rather than Lenin, hence his moving away from a party of professional revolutionaries on the Leninist vanguard model to a mass-based party. Moreover the PCI for the reasons stated above was included in every coalition government from 1944 to 1947 and cooperated with De Gasperi, helping him assume power in 1945 and in drafting a republican constitution. It supported the peace treaty and initially formed a popular front alliance with the Socialists. When the Kremlin ordered opposition to the Marshall Plan, and a stop to cooperation with "bourgeois" parties the communists were expelled from government and have generally been out of power ever since.

This MLP initiative in 1963 seems not to have been an isolated instance. In the January-June 1988 issue of *Malta Napoli*, a senior Italian Ambassador, Giuseppe Walter Macotta, revealed that in the early sixties Malta's British Governor discussed with the Consul for Italy Malta's future after Independence. The Governor had suggested that either Malta would be annexed to Italy after independence, or that some form of association between Italy and Malta was to be established. An "Italian solution" after the British withdrawal would have served imperial interests during the cold war, as it would have prevented Malta slipping into hostile hands. These, however, are merely "private exchanges", whereas the April 1963 memorandum is an official MLP document.

Borg Olivier it was who thus returned to Malta triumphantly announcing that independence would be granted - and unlike Integration in 1956, it was truly 'in the bag' this time - and on 26 July 1964 announced 21 September 1964 as the official date for it. The chairman of the Independence Celebrations Committee, Carmelo Caruana, an old war-horse who had served under Mizzi as a Minister in 1950, ordered a set of stamps to mark the day before being actually sure of what the precise date would be. It turned out well for him. Why the 21 September and not the 8 September, already a national day? Independence deserved a date of its own, and one that was not too close to the other. Originally Malta was to have independence by 31 May but preparations dragged on. Was 21 September inspired by some partisan event from the past? Apparently not, although it happens to coincide with the reconvening of the Nationalist Party's Congress after the war. It seems Borg Olivier was unaware of that; Ragonesi did not know of it. In any case a date had to be set and September was as good a month as could have been selected for it: in addition to the 8 September (the *Otto Settembre*), marking two Maltese victories - over Turkey Islam in 1565, and over National Socialism and Fascism in 1943 - it is also the

also the month of the Maltese insurrection against French rule starting at Mdina on 2 September 1798 (and ending on 5 September 1800). Quite coincidentally, Malta thus had its independence in its most "national" month. In an interview with Borg Olivier on the tenth anniversary of independence, in the Nationalist press, Borg Olivier said that his wish initially was to get independence on 8 September.

In 1989 we saw another postage stamp set, inspired by that first one, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of independence.

Those celebrations were held in great style as anyone who was there with the multitude will recall and recount. Sentiments difficult to convey. A truly memorable experience.

This writer was 16 at the time, and he was there: on the Balzunetta/Mall side of what used to be known as *Ix-Xagħra tal-Furjana*, now *l-Arena ta' l-Indipendenza*. As the Maltese flag was raised and the Union Jack lowered, joyful and emotional cries of "*Viva Malta!*", "*Viva l-Libertà*", "*Viva Malta Indipendenti!*" rent the night air. Tears could be seen on many people's faces that night. Some of those who had been interned or exiled by the British were even present. Unfortunately Mintoff, being Mintoff, rather than going on the podium next to Borg Olivier, as he had been invited to do, gathered a crowd of MLP supporters and from the Phoenicia side, close to the Biskuttin, tried to create a small disturbance on Independence Day. But De Gray's police promptly took care of that mob, having anticipated their likely movements. Such behaviour by Mintoff's party, after our integration story and the 1964 anti-independence overtures, could not but register the impression that having failed to obtain either integration or independence all Mintoff could do was boo. *Min jitwieled kwadru ma jmutx ton*; but here we had the moulding of a generation of two of miniature Mintoffs.

In Attard Kingswell's estimation a factor in the rivalry that took root was the completely different characters of Mintoff and Borg Olivier. Whereas one would just walk out if something did not come his way, the other would wait for months without a decision. Kingswell notes the peculiarity in Mintoff's character which, as we know, has greatly tinted his whole political career and Malta's own history: the fact that he would not play ball if what he wanted was not delivered as he wanted it. Short of what he wanted he would play the spoiler. Kingswell recalls a definition of Mintoff which Balogh had once expressed to him personally. Dr Balogh, Mintoff's economic adviser during the integration talks, regarded Mintoff as an intelligent, even brilliant man, who would dream up a hundred ideas during the night. Of these, ninety-nine you could dispose of, but one, if entrusted to capable hands, might well succeed. Just that very fact - Mintoff's incessant energy to come up with new miscellaneous suggestions - was striking; but unfortunately by itself it was never enough because more often than not good ideas were ruined in the process of their implementation either by his own excessive involvement with them or by their being delegated to persons who did not have it in them to deliver. Kingswell regards

independence as a good thing and he welcomed it, as did the GWU at the time: “we never regarded the independence constitution as unchangeable”, he says; “we believed that Parliament could in future see what could be modified in the general interest, by consensus, and it would do so. But we had to do that ourselves”. Mintoff however would not bend and he protested by the method that he knew, with the result that the consequences of that 21 September protest enlarged the nature of independence-related protests possibly beyond what Mintoff himself might have intended in the first place. Objectively if not nostalgically Kingswell insists that the MLP raised the prospect of a full-blooded independence before the PN, who were still talking more about Dominion Status. Attard Kingswell, who knows Mintoff inside out, even describes him as “*l-ikbarġellied għall-Indipendenza*”.

Thus Mintoff’s “contra” posture even on Independence Day is ironic and self-defeating because after 1958, Mintoff mobilized his party for Independence, articulating nationalist and anti-colonialist notions locally and overseas - headline words such as “colonialism” and “imperialism”, with which Malta readers of the 1930s, would have been familiar, and others such as “liberation”. As independence approached with him and his party in opposition, he seems to have had cold feet.

And yet 21 September was accepted as Malta’s national day by the parliament in 1965. Mintoff almost played ball: and he is on record saying independence was an historic event. But the constitution was not quite the one he had wished for. The last lap to independence was a rushed job, and certainly Mintoff opposed this too. In the event, independence allowed him to amend that constitution, although Borg Olivier would not humour him, least of all without a referendum. Another referendum, such as that which had endorsed that Constitution in the first place. There was much arm-twisting in 1974, when the Independence Constitution was first amended, and it may be too soon to tell the tale as it must be told in all fairness. Malta became a republic, but stayed in the Commonwealth. The church lost some of its privileges, but was not quite silenced. Instead of a governor-general, we were to have a president.

The Malta Independence Constitution, presented to the British Parliament by Sandys in July 1964, was a liberal and democratic instrument guaranteeing fundamental human rights and providing every means for legal and constitutional redress. It endorsed the accepted red and white colours (with the George Cross in the canton of the white stripe) as Malta’s national flag, the *Innu Malti* of Robert Sammut and Dun Karm - opening with the words “*Lil din l-art ħelwa l-Omm li tatna isimha*” as Malta’s National Anthem, and Maltese as “the National language of Malta” (Art. 51) The Maltese and English languages (and such other language as could be prescribed by Parliament by not less than a two-thirds majority) were to be the official languages of Malta (No Italian.) Art.53 even specified that “the language of the Courts shall be the Maltese language” (fully accepting the MLP position on language in the 1930s, and as originally decreed by British *fiat* in 1934).

Article 6 laid down what J.J. Cremona describes as a "super-norma" - that the Constitution be the Supreme Law. Why was this section not itself entrenched therefore, rather than being liable to be changed by a simple majority? That was unnecessary and would be contradictory, Cremona holds: "you cannot insure against all risks". In its second chapter the constitution sets out a Declaration of Principles safeguarding the right to work, the promotion of culture and research, protection of the landscape and historical and artistic patrimony, religious teaching in state schools (even here), compulsory and free primary education. The constitution's democratic formulation did not exclude social aspects of right. Merit is an underlying construct of it. Thus article 12 lays down, as a guiding principle of policy in the State, that "capable and deserving students, even if without financial resources, are entitled to attain the highest grade of education", and moreover that the State "shall give effect to this principle by means of scholarships, of contributions to the families of students and other provisions on the basis of competitive examinations". The PN which had thrown out many an Education Ordinance at the turn of century forcing the temporary closure of schools, which had fought tooth and nail against an education policy seen to be assimilative and denaturalizing, fully redeems itself of any past "wrongdoing" by binding itself in an independent state to the furtherance of education by every means. The chief stumbling block in the past had been "language." Chapter II also elaborated on the protection of work, insisting on a legally fixed maximum of hours of work per day; on the worker's entitlement: "to a weekly day of rest and to annual holidays with pay - he cannot renounce this right" (14.2). Furthermore, the State would aim at ensuring that "women workers enjoy equal rights and the same wages for the same work as males" (Art.15) - one of the most controversial rights upheld by among others Manwel Dimech excommunicate. There would also be a prescribed minimum age for paid labour and the labour of minors would be safeguarded to assure to them "the right to equal pay for equal work". Article 18 on "Social Assistance and insurance" once again fully endorses various social rights that had been championed in the past by different parties and individual campaigners or lobby groups, in varying degrees at least from the turn of this century onwards: every citizen incapable of work and unprovided with the resources necessary for subsistence "is entitled to maintenance and social assistance"; workers were entitled to "reasonable insurance on a contributory basis" for their requirements in case of accident, illness, disability, old-age and involuntary unemployment; disabled persons and persons incapable of work were entitled to "education and vocational training".

This enlightened charter then turns its attention to the encouragement of private economic enterprise, and of cooperatives, and the protection of artisan trades. Chapter 3 has been somewhat modified just recently: dual citizenship had been denied to Maltese subjects by the 1964 constitution. Chapter 4, to which reference has already been made, was dedicated to "fundamental rights and freedoms of the

individual”, and in *forma mentis* harks back to the 1802 *Dichiarazione dei Diritti degli Abitanti di Malta e Gozo* shortly after Britain’s arrival here.

Art. 35 *et seq* sought to ensure protection from “arbitrary arrest or detention”, from forced labour, inhuman treatment, the deprivation of property without compensation. There was to be the legal and constitutional machinery necessary to protect privacy of home and personal property, to secure the protection of the law itself, of freedom of conscience, of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, and (Art. 44) deportation was prohibited. “No person shall be extradited for an offence of a political character” (44.2) and “No citizen of Malta shall be removed from Malta” except subject to very special proceedings in exceptional cases (as when a crime had been committed in another country). Echoes of 1942, although we know from bitter experience that rights enshrined on paper need not always be respected and upheld in actual practice.

Freedom of movement is protected: “the right to move freely throughout Malta, the right to reside in any part of Malta, the right to leave and the right to enter Malta”. Equally there was to be no discrimination on the grounds of “race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed”.

Most importantly the citizen was to have every right to enforce these protective provisions by recourse to the Civil Court, First Hall. The Constitution then goes on to speak briefly about the office of Governor General (Chapter 5), and about Parliament (Chapter 6): its composition, constitution, qualifications, and disqualifications, privileges and obligations; it also refers to voters, an Electoral Commission, electoral divisions and boundaries which could be reviewed subject to set conditions and needs; and the powers and procedures of Parliament.

There were to be 50 MPs elected by universal suffrage in a system of electoral districts (no *scrutin de liste*), by transferable votes in administrations lasting up to five years at a time.

Chapter 7 treats of the Executive (executive authority was vested in Her Majesty, exercised on her behalf by a Governor-General). The Cabinet was to consist of a PM and “such number of other ministers as may be appointed”. Cabinet was responsible to parliament. In the event of a vote of no confidence in the government, the Governor-General (since 1974 the President) could remove the PM from office and/or dissolve parliament and call fresh elections. Ministers could cease to hold office, *inter alia*, at the request of the Governor-General “acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister”.

Chapter 8 dealt with the Judiciary - courts and appeals. There was to be a Constitutional Court. A judge “shall not be removed from his office” except by the Governor-General upon an address by the House of Representatives supported by not less than two-thirds of all the members thereof and praying for such removal on the ground of proved inability to perform the functions of his office or proved misbehaviour. In other words, *quam diu se bene gesserit* dating from the earliest

period of British rule, is spelt out for everyone's benefit. Eligibility for appointment to the bench necessitated a legal practice in Malta for not less than 12 years, and it was the PM who made recommendations to the Governor-General (the President) for such appointments. Chapter 9 then dealt with finance - the Consolidated Fund, contingencies, public debt, audit; and chapter 10 with the Public Service Commission. This Commission was to be consulted in the event that any Maltese ambassadors overseas were selected from the public service (114.1) or removed from such posts. In the latter instance, the person in question would revert to the previous rank held in the public service. Pension rights of civil servants were also specifically assured.

The final chapter of the Malta Independence Constitution established a Broadcasting Authority whose function was supposed to be that of ensuring that "so far as possible, in such sound and television broadcasting series as may be provided in Malta, due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy and that broadcasting facilities and time are fairly appointed between persons belonging to different political parties". Clearly therefore, the overriding concern here relates to the politicians and their parties as these are reported and/or represented in the "mass media".

Another less important and far less permanent document which merits some attention before we conclude our independence story is the Agreement on Mutual Defence and Assistance between the Government of Malta and that of the UK, proposed to the British Parliament in July 1964 by the Colonial Secretary and ratified upon Malta's attainment of independent status.<sup>15</sup> The Defence Agreement was intended and phrased as a mutual one, accompanying a financial assistance package of £50 million in grants and loans. It explained what access Britain would be permitted to continue to have in Malta, as indicated by the annexed map we are publishing here. (See Appendix 5)

The preamble to the agreement contains a gist of what was intended:-

Whereas Malta is a sovereign independent state within the Commonwealth,  
And whereas the Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland desire to provide for their mutual defence and to contribute to the maintenance of peace in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and generally to help promote stability and security,  
Now therefore the Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have agreed as follows.

#### Article 1

The Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom each undertake to afford to the other the assistance specified in this Agreement.

#### Article 2

## The Last Lap: Independence and Freedom

The Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom each undertake to afford to the other assistance for mutual defence and to consult together on the measures to be taken jointly or separately to ensure the fullest co-operation between them for this purpose.

### Article 3

The two Governments will foster the closest co-operation between the armed forces of the two countries. If so requested by the Government of Malta, the Government of the United Kingdom, after taking account of other demands on its resources, will provide assistance or advice, in such manner and to such extent as may be agreed, including;

- (a) personnel to assist in the staffing, administration and training of the armed forces of Malta;
- (b) facilities, including instructional courses abroad, for training members of the armed forces of Malta;
- (c) expert advice and assistance in operational and technical matters;
- (d) use of facilities in Malta under the control of the British forces for the maintenance and logistic support of the armed forces of Malta; and
- (e) assistance in the supply of equipment for the armed forces in Malta.

### Article 4

The Government of Malta grants to the Government of the United Kingdom in peace and war the right to station armed forces and associated British personnel in Malta and to use facilities there for the purposes of mutual defence, the fulfilment of international or Commonwealth obligations, the assistance of other nations in maintaining their independence and stability, or the protection of the citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies or of Malta.

The Annex to this Agreement shall govern the rights and facilities to be afforded in Malta to the Government of the United Kingdom and to its armed forces and associated British personnel.

### Article 5

Except under arrangements made between the two Governments no forces, other than the forces of Malta and the United Kingdom, shall be stationed in Malta or to be permitted to use harbour, dockyard, airfield, staging or communications facilities in Malta, unless the use is rendered necessary by distress in the course of sea or air navigation or to establish such facilities in Malta; provided that this Article shall not apply to the forces of any Party to the North Atlantic Treaty, to which the Government of Malta may accord any such rights or facilities which do not impede the exercise of the rights or the use of the facilities granted to the Government of the United Kingdom under this Agreement.

### Article 6

The Government of the United Kingdom will consult the Government of Malta when major changes in the British forces in Malta which might have significant effects on the defence or economy of Malta are contemplated.

### Article 7

Arrangements shall be made for consultation between the Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom and their respective authorities on the operation of this

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Agreement and each Government shall have the right to raise with the other at any time any question as to the application of this Agreement, where that is materially affected by any change of circumstances.

### Article 8

Nothing in this Agreement is intended to or shall in any way prejudice the rights and obligations which devolve or may devolve upon either Government under the Charter of the United Nations.

### Article 9

The Annex to the Agreement shall have force and effect as an integral part of this Agreement and this Agreement shall be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of Part 1 of the Annex.

### Article 10

This Agreement shall come into force on the date of signature and shall remain in force for a period of ten years thereafter.

It is sad to have to note that after 1971, when Mintoff became PM a second time, Independence Day was removed from the calendar, even as a public holiday, and Nationalist commemorations were almost invariably disrupted or attacked by incensed MLP thugs, often armed with stones, bottles, nails, bolts, in the "traditional" fashion now rightly or wrongly identified with Mintoffism (or is it Socialism). And yet the populist had the better of the dictator in the end: in February 1987 it was agreed that majorities of votes not gerrymandering of districts should decide which party governs. And in early 1989 the two main parties, the MLP led by Mintoff's successor Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, and the PN led by Borg Olivier's successor Eddie Fenech Adami, came to an agreement whereby these accepted five days, foremost among them independence day, as national holidays. Five! Perhaps in time, as the dust settles, and if the more tainted power-mongering mischief-makers lose out, Malta will again have a national day as befits any independent state. There would be nothing special about that date being Independence Day because, as noted in our first chapter, that is what in fact happened in most ex-colonies; that is the case today around the world. "Yes, but not in Malta".

However:

On, becoming independent from Britain in September 1964, the Maltese people possessed a homogeneity of race, language and religion of which many another newly-independent state could justly have been envious; nor had British domination, the quest for independence or its immediate aftermath, produced the blood-letting or repression that so many other countries had experienced. There had been no Mau Mau riots as in Kenya; no separatist wars as in Katanga (in the former Belgian Congo) or in Biafra (in Nigeria); nor indeed any active separatist or irredentist aspiration as in Cyprus or Spain: Malta had neither an EOKA nor an ETA. There had been no state of Communist insurgency and of anti-Communist emergency as in Malaya and in Indonesia. There were no tribal divisions as in most African countries and also in Asian ones, as in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka; nor had there ever been any "ideological" civil war, as in Russia and Spain. As in many islands, the sea had drawn a natural frontier; artificially drawn boundaries

dividing people as in the Horn of Africa or in postwar Germany, were absent. The language of communication was the native one: Maltese, a Semantically derived language written in the Roman script that had existed for countless generations, and which now was entrenched in the Malta Independence Constitution of 1964 as the national language, with English as a second language. In other words, the inhabitants could read, speak and write in the same language - a historically not insignificant fact in a country where the battle of cultural loyalties between the established official language Italian, and the colonial language English, had raged for well over a century. So here, in 1964, no recourse was necessary to the colonial language as has been the case often enough in the post-colonial world. There were no rival language groups, nor were there any seething religious secretarian rivalries. Very nearly all Maltese were Roman Catholic. There were no ethnic differences either.

Last but not least - partly perhaps because of the absence of such potentially disruptive differences - the leader achieving independence, Giorgio Borg Olivier did not move increasingly to transform the country into a one party state (then perhaps relying on one power bloc or another for financial, military and other forms of sustenance) as Kwame Nkrumah did in Ghana or even as Robert Mugabe has been seeking to in Zimbabwe now.

The Independence Constitution was a liberal democratic instrument in the best Commonwealth tradition.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover:

In the history of Maltese culture, Independence is a water-shed. Malteseness came of age. Artistic endeavours flourished: subjects and styles changed. Composers orchestrated melody complementing the traditional singing. Painters experimented with collages of native flora and fauna. Architects designed modernized versions of rustic dwellings and farmhouses. Literary criticism developed as new poets suddenly emerged. There was a flair of soulsearching, a rediscovering and questioning of past and present - without the need to present a common front against anyone. Malta assumed its place in the international community of nations *sur le pied de l'égalité*. Union Jacks were no longer stamped on Maltese history books.

The surrounding Mediterranean distanced itself from the old Mother country in the Atlantic. Maltese gradually assumed more importance than English as a medium of instruction, as educational institutions increased and improved, with secondary and tertiary education becoming free by 1971. Maltese theatre (as opposed to farce) started to be taken seriously, as were original TV documentaries and discussion groups. Tourism boomed; hotels such as Hilton and Sheraton sprang up; British settlers came; Maltese tourist guides abounded talking about archaeological remains, bastions, tapestries and aqueducts, auberges and paintings and the Blue Grotto, in a babel of tongues from German to Russian, with English and Italian the most popular. Traditional Maltese dishes started to be served in restaurants. Incentive schemes saw the openings of many light industry factories, causing a radical change in the occupational status of women, especially young women. It was emancipation. So this cultural revolution spontaneously influencing Maltese nationality and self-pride, transforming identity or at least the appreciation of it, made little of no practical impact on Maltese overseas who simply could not experience it, except perhaps remotely. Colonial Malta's habits of mind, impressions and norms persisted untouched by the revitalized air of self-discovery and auto-criticism, of challenge and opportunity, except in so far as these were influenced one way or the other by the host society itself.

Emigration from Malta reached a bottom low in 1969.

Naturally there could be no sudden or fundamental break with the past. The new state was, after all, an old nation. Moreover this challenging self-assessment phase, after centuries of subjection to foreign rule, could turn out to have been just a euphoria. It could be nipped in the bud by neocolonialism, by statism. A democratic political culture was a fragile reed in Malta, in spite of all make-believe to the contrary. And the overseer could be worse than the master.

Monolithic sanction could be restored by a rather more familiar breed, if not by a new invader as before.

But the soul was stirred. Conscientization became possible. Subjection and alienation could not be quite the same again.<sup>17</sup>

What about the future?:

Free from the burdens imposed by size, wealth and power, the small island state cannot subsist independently unless and until it succeeds in combining cultural with economic self-reliance, internal freedom with external affairs. But then again: in a world which supposedly guarantees to each state the exercise of its sovereignty, but where at the same time interdependence is daily more pronounced, perhaps the small island states can survive after all. The irredentist yearnings, mixed with the desire for independence, influenced by the reaction to foreign domination, could perhaps find a place in closer and more equitable economic and political ties which transcend the nation-state, as would be the coming into being of a united Europe embracing the southern no less than the northern shores and, hopefully, the eastern frontiers with it, in a democratic mould.

The infrastructure is already there: Britain is a member of the EEC as is Italy, Greece and now Spain; other countries have association agreements. There is a Council of Europe and a European Parliament.

As European union should have neither the imperialistic motive nor the nationalistic urge, it could well serve to redirect latent feelings of dispossession, insecurity and unfulfilment experienced in Mediterranean areas such as Cyprus and Malta by providing a unified body politic, willing to shape a new economic order, and inspired by a common heritage.

A common heritage in this respect would not imply the destruction of the nation but rather a break-down of state frontiers: diversity and individuality are in themselves supreme European characteristics, after all. Instead of forced allegiance to an imperial metropolis, a federalist "extendable" Europe would make possible the union of such Mediterranean states as equals, within a wider and more secure framework and also within the confines of what may be seen to be the European-Mediterranean heritage. The preoccupations with security - with securing one's boundaries no less than with preserving one's life-style - have not been by any means restricted to irredentist parties. On the contrary, the very desire for European unity arose in the aftermath of the second world war: it was partly out of a fear of domination by the two super-powers that the dream of European unity began to advance. And it is curious to observe that at least three of the major exponents of the cause of Europeanism - Schumann, Adenauer and De Gasperi - had, in their own lifetimes, been close to irredentist under-currents arising out of cultural uprooting or political disadvantage. The French foreign minister, Robert Schumann, had been brought up in German Alsace-Lorraine. Konrad Adenauer was a Roman Catholic Rhinlander, who sometimes turned more readily to Paris than to Berlin. And the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide De Gasperi, had grown up as a citizen of a multi-national Austro-

Hungarian Empire. Is it too much to suppose that their own experiences led them almost instinctively to join hands to proclaim the death of "parochial" nationalism?<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The only noteworthy blemish on the new government's human rights record was the exclusion of MLP papers (which had been interdicted by the local church) from public hospitals, but Constitutional redress was sought and granted.

<sup>2</sup>Archbishop Gonzi lifted the interdict on MLP Executive Committee members in September 1964.

<sup>3</sup>The Czech student who committed suicide in August 1969 in protest at the Soviet invasion of Dubcek's Czechoslovakia a year earlier.

<sup>4</sup>See "Borg Olivier's Legacy" in *The Popular Movement for a new Beginning*, op.cit., pp. 61-65.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Frendo, "Freedom After Independence: A Western European or a Third World Model for the Maltese Islands?", *World Review*, Vol. 26, No.2 June 1987, p.62. *World Review* is published from Queensland University's History Department under the auspices of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. An edited earlier version of this paper was published in *Malta and the Security of the Mediterranean Region* (International Security Council, New York, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>When still a student; during *kafè u pastizzi* sessions at **Ta' Londra** - that once famous Floriana confectionary which for years now has been a sorry sight, rotting away.

<sup>7</sup>The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, whose meetings Mintoff started attending in 1961.

<sup>8</sup>Their views are included in appendices to the Malta Independence Conference papers. (Cmd. 2121 H.M.S.O. London)

<sup>9</sup>Both amendments are quoted *verbatim* in E. Dobie: *Malta's Road to Independence* (Univeristy of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967), pp.252-253

<sup>10</sup>"*Nergghu nghidu li, bhala Maltin, kien jixirqilna aħjar. Izda mhux meta l-pulizija ma thallietx taqdi dmirha, tač-čivil intimidati u vittimizzati, u s-sigurtà ta' l-individwu mregħda. Ma ninsewx il-pulizija b'idejha marbuta u lanqas lil tač-čivil obbligati jagħtu l-gurament lit-tfal, u ma ninsewx l-aktar meta l-gvern kien ibagħbas fuq it-telefon biex jissemma x'ikun jingħad biex wara ssir vittimzazzjoni...*" See "*Il-Kummissjoni Kostituzzjonali*" 'Il-Quddiem, 4 Nov. 1960, p.2

<sup>11</sup>The Report of the Malta Constitutional Commission, dated February 1961, is available at the Bibliotheca, Valletta.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted after B. Porter: **The Lion's Share: A short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1970** (Longman, London, 1975) p.332

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p.330.

<sup>14</sup>T.O. Lloyd: **The British Empire 1558-1983** (Oxford, 1984), pp.362-365.

<sup>15</sup>(Cmd. 2410) Reference has already been made to this agreement above. The Independence Constitution reference is Cmd. 2406.

<sup>16</sup>Henry Frendo: "Freedom After Independence: A Western European or a Third World Model for the Maltese Islands?" in **World Review**, Brisbane, *op. cit.* p.39. See also, by the same author, "Messages from Mintoff's Malta", in **Quadrant**, Sydney, Vol. XXX, No.12 Dec. 1986, pp. 18-33.

<sup>17</sup>See Henry Frendo: "Maltese Settlement in English-speaking Countries: The Australian Case", in **The Democrat**, Valletta, Dec. 1986 - Jan. 1987, reprinted in **The Malta Cross**, Sydney, Jan-Feb. 1987; this selection appears in the chapter "Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin Mediterranean or British Empire?" **British Colonial Experience: The Impact on Maltese Society** (ed. V. Mallia-Milanes), *op.cit.* pp.210-211.

<sup>18</sup>Henry Frendo, "The 'British' Mediterranean": Self-Identity in Small States", in **Islands and Enclaves** (ed. G.W. Trompf), an anthology about the world's smaller nationalities (Victoria University Press, Wellington, in the press). This chapter was first read as a paper to the Graduate History Seminar at the University of Papua New Guinea Port Moresby, in 1985 and in revised format was presented to the Politics Academic Staff Seminar at La Trobe University, Melbourne, in 1986.



## APPENDIX I

HISTORICAL CHART INDICATING THE EVOLUTION OF PARTIES,  
ALIGNMENTS AND FACTIONS IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS (1880–1926)

1880	REFORM PARTY (-c. 1891) (PARTITO RIFORMISTA) V. Bugeja, S. Savona, Dr. P. Mifsud F. S. De Cesare, W. J. Smith [ <i>Public Opinion: Malta Standard</i> ]	PARTITO ANTIRIFORMISTA (-c. 1884) (ANTIRIFORMIST PARTY) Dr. F. Mizzi, Dr. Z. Roncali, S. Cachia Zammit, Dr. Agost. Naudi, Can.. C. M. Muscat [ <i>Il diritto di Malta</i> ]
1887	REFORM PARTY S. Savona [ <i>Public Opinion</i> ]	PARTITO NAZIONALE Dr. F. Mizzi [ <i>La Gazzetta di Malta</i> ]
1889	REFORM PARTY S. Savona [ <i>Public Opinion</i> ]	PARTY OF ORDER (PARTITO DELL'ORDINE) Count G. Strickland, Dr. Alf. Naudi, E. Ciantar [ <i>Politica e Commercio</i> ]
1891		PARTITO UNIONISTA (UNIONIST PARTY) R.P. + P.M. = P.U. S. Savona, E. Castaldi
1893	REFORM PARTY S. Savona [ <i>Public Opinion</i> ]	PARTITO NAZIONALE Dr. F. Mizzi, E. Castaldi, Mgr. A. Mifsud [ <i>Malta</i> ]
1895		PARTITO POPOLARE (POPULAR PARTY) S. Savona, Mgr. I. Panzavecchia, A. Dalli, Dr. A. Pullicino [ <i>Malta Tagħna, Public Opinion</i> ]
1897	PARTITO POPOLARE S. Savona, Mgr. I. Panzavecchia [ <i>Public Opinion, Malta Tagħna</i> ]	PARTITO NAZIONALE Dr. F. Mizzi [ <i>Malta</i> ]

1899	ASSOCIAZIONE POLITICA MALTESE (-c. 1905) (MALTESE POLITICAL ASSOCIATION) Dr. F. Mizzi, Mgr. I. Panzavecchia, Dr. F. Sceberras, F. Azzopardi [ <i>Malta</i> ]		
1905	ASSOCIAZIONE POLITICA MALTESE/ PARTITO NAZIONALE (-c. 1910) F. Azzopardi [ <i>Malta</i> ]		
1910	P.N. ANTIASTENSIONISTA (Azzopardian) F. Azzopardi, Dr. F. Sceberras, Dr. A. Mercieca [ <i>L'Avvenire</i> ]	P.N. ASTENSIONISTA (Mizzian) Dr. G. Mizzi, Dr. A. Pullicino, A. Dalli [ <i>Malta</i> ]	
1911	COMITATO PATRIOTTICO (PATRIOTIC COMMITTEE) P.P. + P.N. = C.P. Mgr. I. Panzavecchia		
1914	P.N. ANTIASTENSIONISTA (Neo-Mizzian) Dr. G. Mizzi, Dr. E. Mizzi [ <i>Malta</i> ]	P.N. ASTENSIONISTA (Panzavecchian) A. Dalli, Dr. A. Pullicino [ <i>Il Patriota, La Voce del Popolo</i> ]	
1921	CONSTITUTIONAL PARTY Count Sir G. Strickland [ <i>Il Progress, Daily Malta Chronicle &amp; Garrison Gazette</i> ]	LABOUR PARTY (LA CAMERA DEL LAVORO) Col. W. Savona [ <i>Il Hmar</i> ]	
	PARTITO POPOLARE/UNIONE POLITICA MALTESE (MALTESE POLITICAL UNION) Mgr. Panzavecchia [ <i>Il Corriere Popolare, Malta</i> ]	PARTITO DEMOCRATICO NAZIONALISTA (DEMOCRATIC NATIONALIST PARTY) Dr. Enrico Mizzi [ <i>L'Eco di Malta e Gozo, Malta</i> ]	
1926	CONSTITUTIONAL PARTY Count Strickland [ <i>Progress, Chronicle</i> ]	LABOUR PARTY Col. W. Savona [ <i>Labour Opinion</i> ]	PARTITO NAZIONALISTA U.P.M + P.D.M. = P.N. Dr. U. Mifsud, Dr. E. Mizzi [ <i>Malta</i> ]
	'Compact'		

## APPENDIX 2

### GOVERNORS OF MALTA (1813-1964)

Lieut.-General the Honourable Sir Thomas Maitland	1813-1824
General the Marquess of Hastings	1824-1826
Major-General the Honourable Sir Frederick Ponsonby	1827-1836
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Bouverie	1836-1843
Lieut.-General Sir Patrick Stuart	1843-1847
The Rt. Honourable Richard More O'Ferrall	1847-1851
Major-General Sir William Reid	1851-1858
Lieut.-General Sir John Gaspard Le Merchant	1858-1864
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Storks	1864-1867
General Sir Patrick Grant	1867-1872
General Sir Charles van Straubenzee	1872-1878
General Sir Arthur Borton	1878-1884
General Sir J. A. Lintom Simmons	1884-1888
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Torrens	1888-1890
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Smyth	1890-1893
General Sir Arthur Fremantle	1893-1899
Lieut.-General Lord Grenfell	1899-1903
General Sir Mansfield Clarke	1903-1907
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Grant	1907-1909
General Sir Leslie Rundle	1909-1915
Field-Marshal Lord Methuen	1915-1919
Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer	1919-1924
General Sir Walter Congreve	1924-1927
General Sir John du Cane	1927-1931
General Sir David Campbell	1931-1936
General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter	1936-1940
Lieut.-General Sir William Dobbie	1940-1942
Field-Marshal Viscount Gort	1942-1944
Lieut.-General Sir Edmond Schreiber	1944-1946
Sir F. (later Lord) Douglas	1946-1949
Sir Gerald Creasy	1949-1954
Major-General Sir Robert Laycock	1954-1959
Admiral Sir Guy Grantham	1959-1963
Sir Maurice Dorman	1963-1971.

•Sir Maurice Dorman was 'Governor -General' of Malta after 1964. He was replaced by the Maltese Chief Justice, Sir Anthony Mamo, in 1971.

## APPENDIX 3

### SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR WAR AND THE COLONIES (1812-1852)

1812 Earl Bathhurst;  
1854 F.J. Robinson (Viscount Goderich);  
1828 Sir George Murray;  
1830 Viscount Goderich;  
1833 E.G. Stanley;  
1834 Thomas Spring Rice;  
1835 Charles Grant (Lord Glenelg);  
1839 Lord John Russell;  
1841 Lord Stanly (Earl of Derby);  
1845 William E. Gladstone;  
1846 Earl Grey;  
1852 Sir John S. Pakington;  
1852 Duke of Newcastle.

### SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES (1854-1964)

1854	June 10	Sir G. Gray, Bt.;
1855	February	Sidney Herbert;
1855	March	Lord John Russell;
1855	July 21	Sir William Molesworth;
1858	November 17	Henry Labouchere;
1858	February 26	Lord Stanley (Earl of Derby);
1858	May 31	Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton;
1859	June 18	Duke of Newcastle;
1864	April 4	Edward Cardwell (Viscount Cardwell);
1866	July 6	Earl of Carnarvon;
1867	March 8	Duke of Buckingham;
1868	December 10	Earl Granville;
1870	July 6	Earl of Kimberely;
1874	February 21	Earl of Carnarvon;
1878	February 4	Sir Mi chael E. Hicks Beach;
1880	April 28	Earl of Kimberely;
1882	December 16	Earl of Derby;

1885	June 24	Colonel F.A. Stanley;
1886	February 6	Earl Granville;
1886	August 3	Edward Stanhope;
1887	January 14	Sir Henry Holland (Baron Knutsford, Viscount Knutsford);
1892	August 17	Marquess of Ripon;
1895	June 28	Joseph Chamberlain;
1903	October 9	Alfred Lyttleton;
1905	December 11	Earl of Elgin and Kincardine;
1908	April 16	Earl of Crewe;
1910	November 7	Lewis Harcourt (Viscount Harcourt);
1915	May 27	A. Bonar Law;
1916	December 11	W.H. Long;
1919	January 14	Viscount Milner;
1921	February 14	Sir Winston Churchill;
1922	October 25	Duke of Devonshire;
1924	January 23	J.H. Thomas;
1924	November 7	L.C. Amery;
1929	June 8	Lord Passfield;
1931	August 26	J.H. Thomas;
1931	November 9	Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister;
1935	June 7	Malcolm MacDonald;
1935	November 27	J.H. Thomas;
1936	May 29	W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore;
1938	May 16	Malcolm MacDoanld;
1940	May 13	Lord Lloyd;
1941	February 8	Lord Moyne;
1942	February 23	Viscount Cranborne (Marquess of Salisbury);
1942	November 24	O.F.G. Stanley;
1945	August 3	G.H. Hall (Viscount Hall);
1946	October 7	A. Creech Jones;
1950	March 2	James Griffiths;
1951	October 27	Olvier Lyttleton (Viscount Chandos);
1954	July 30	A.T. Lennox-Boyd (Viscount Boyd);
1959	October 19	Iain Macleod;
1961	October 16	Reginald Maulding;
1962	July 17	Duncan Sandys.

## APPENDIX 4

### HEADS OF MALTESE ADMINISTRATIONS 1921

Joseph Howard (Unione Politica Maltese/Nationalist)	1921-1923
Dr Francesco Buhagiar (Unione Politica Maltese/Nationalist)	1923-1924
Dr (Sir) Ugo Mifsud (Unione Politica Maltese/Partito Nazionalista)	1924-1927
Sir (Lord) Gerald Strickland, Count della Catena (Constitutional Party with Labour Party support)	1927-1930 (1932)
Sir Ugo Mifsud (PN)	1932-1933
Dr (Sir) Paul Boffa (Malta Labour Party)	1947-1950
Dr Nerik Mizzi (PN)	1950
Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier (PN)	1950-1955
Dominic Mintoff (MLP)	1955-1958
Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier (PN)	1962-1971
Dominic Mintoff (MLP)	1971-1984
Dr Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici (MLP)	1985-1987
Dr Eddie Fenech Adami (PN)	1987

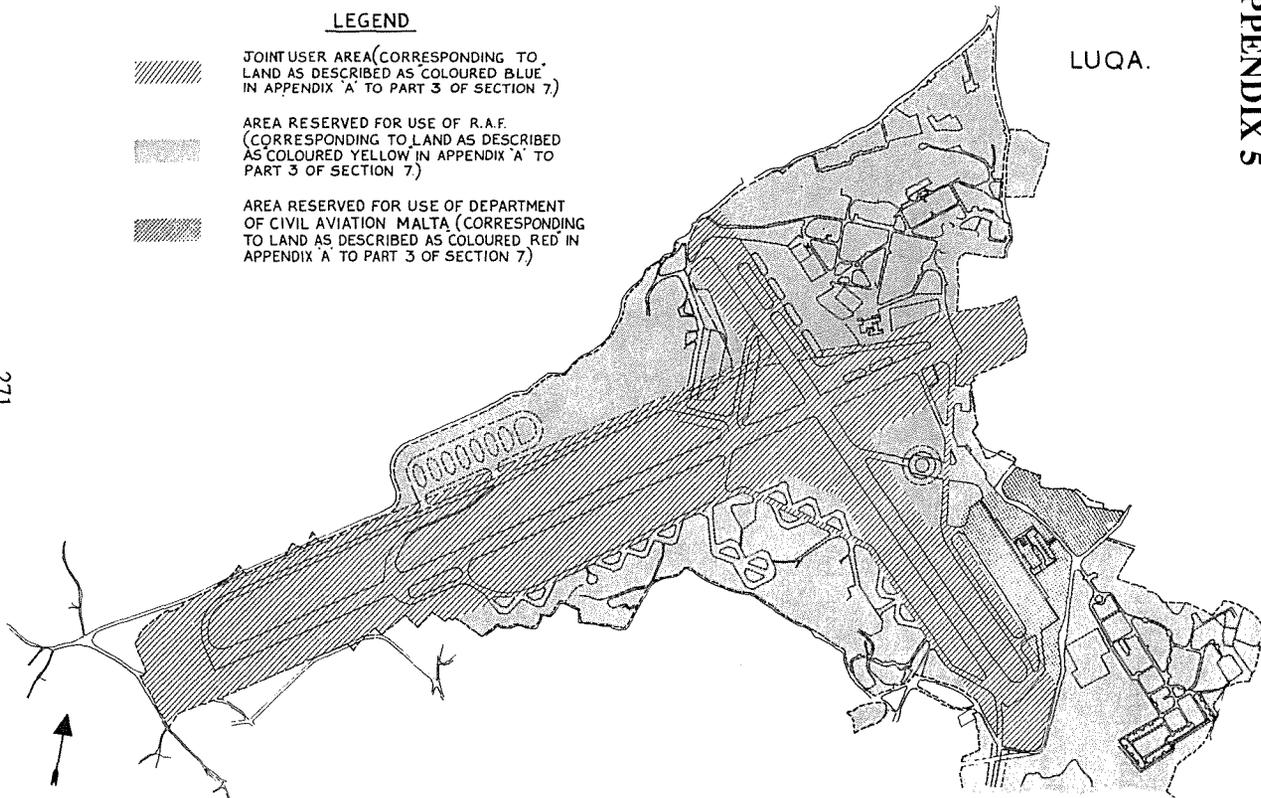
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LEGEND

 JOINT USER AREA (CORRESPONDING TO LAND AS DESCRIBED AS COLOURED BLUE IN APPENDIX 'A' TO PART 3 OF SECTION 7.)

 AREA RESERVED FOR USE OF R.A.F. (CORRESPONDING TO LAND AS DESCRIBED AS COLOURED YELLOW IN APPENDIX 'A' TO PART 3 OF SECTION 7.)

 AREA RESERVED FOR USE OF DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION MALTA (CORRESPONDING TO LAND AS DESCRIBED AS COLOURED RED IN APPENDIX 'A' TO PART 3 OF SECTION 7.)



## A NOTE ON SOURCES

This book was meant as an easily accessible and commemorative production. My main concern has been to identify areas in our past which have a bearing on the theme of the work and to reflect on these insightfully, rather than to set out historical events in detail. I have avoided conventional and specific referencing of the kind used in **Party Politics** and other recent publications, except where I felt that direct quotations from the works of other authors were useful.

For the most part I have relied on my own past writings and more recent researches, some of them still unclassified and unindexed. My primary sources have included the Palace archives in Valletta (now removed to Rabat) for 1800-1947; the Biblioteca in Valletta, for 1798-1964; the Public Record Office in London for 1870-1947; files in the Office of the Prime Minister archives at Castille for 1947-1964; the Farnesina archives in Rome for 1920-1940; published collections of British and Italian diplomatic correspondence for much of the 19th century and up to the first half of this century; as well as some materials in private hands. Of these latter, far the most important here, for the first half of the 19th century, have been documents and papers kindly made available to me by Dr Albert Ganado of Valletta.

Such secondary sources as exist covering parts of the whole period surveyed have been credited or referred to in footnotes or indicated approximatively in the main body of the text. For more comprehensive data about existing sources relating to the colonial period one can always consult **Party Politics** (1979) and books published more recently by A. Koster (Progress Press, Valletta, 1984, 1986), J. Pirota (Studia Editions, Valletta, 1987) and the anthology **British Colonial Experience** (Mireva, Msida, 1988), this also contains a comprehensive bibliography.

H.F.



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***"Independence"***, writes Professor Frendo, ***"is not made in one day, but there is a day when it is obtained"***. He then asks: ***"What is the history of freedom in Malta?"*** and traces answers to that question from Roman times to the present.

An insightful overview of recorded Maltese history, the book concentrates on the periods of French and British rule from 1798 to 1964.