

Portrait

SIR LUIGI PREZIOSI (Part two)

The other facet of Sir Luigi Preziosi's life was his keen interest in Politics. During the 1921 Constitution he became a member of the Panzavecchian Party. When the latter was dissolved he became a member of the Nationalist Party.

Prof. Preziosi represented the Graduates and was elected to the Senate in the 1927 and 1932 Legislature. Subsequently in the latter legislature he was elected president of the Senate.

After the end of the war he had the opportunity to play a significant role in the constitutional development of the Island, which preceded the restoration of Responsible Government.

In 1944 with the establishment of the National Congress for the formation of Responsible Government, he was chosen to become its President.

On Saturday, January 20, 1945, he called a

meeting of the representatives of the Congress to decide about the formation of a National Assembly. There were two candidates for the presidency of the Assembly. Prof. Preziosi was proposed by Monsigneur Bonnici and seconded by Captain A. Semini, whilst Dr. P. Boffa was proposed by Ġużè Ellul Mercer and seconded by Dominic Mintoff. An election was held. Prof. Preziosi brought 189 votes and Dr. P. Boffa brought 142 votes.

Dr. P. Boffa congratulated Prof. Preziosi who thanked the assembly and reminded them of Sir Philip Sciberras who in 1919 convened and presided over the first National Assembly, that for the first time in the History of Malta won Responsible Government. He said that Dr. Sciberras was one of his great friends. He used to discuss with him the work of the Assembly. He was going to follow Dr. P.



Above:

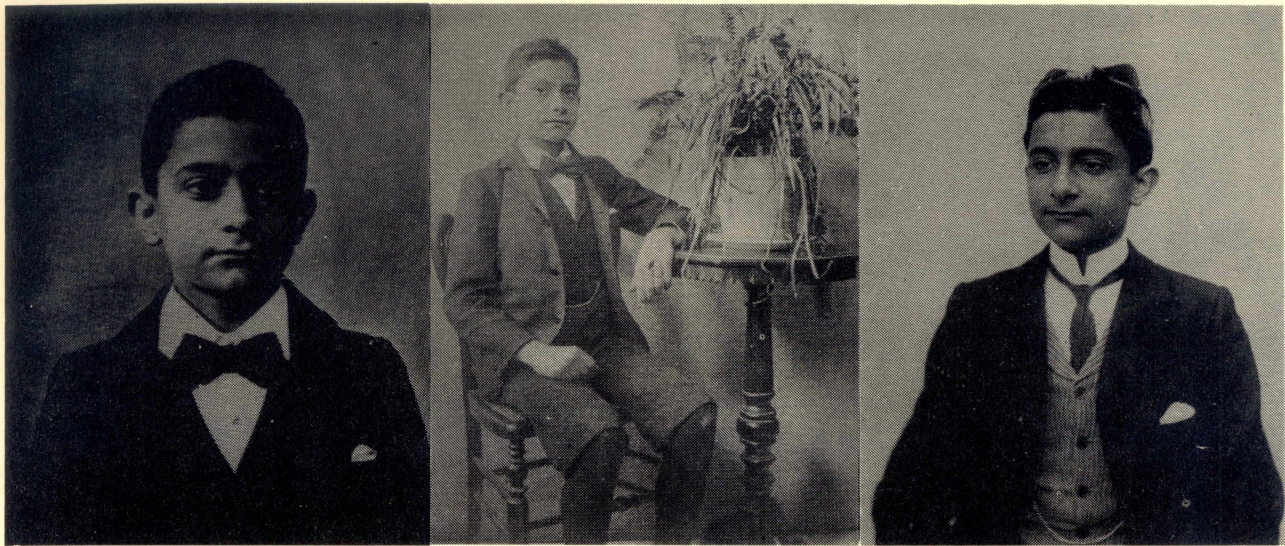
The Ophthalmic Clinic at the Central Hospital Floriana. It was here that Prof. L. Preziosi, for 26 years, treated thousands of patients

(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)

Left:

Monument to the memory of Prof. L. Preziosi erected at the Mall, Floriana

(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)



L. Preziosi in his early teens (*left*) and during his first years at university (*centre and right*)

(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)

Sciberras' example as leader of a National Movement.

Prof. Preziosi drew out from his pocket a brilliant ring which was given to him by Dr. Sciberras as a wedding present. Prof. Preziosi said he was going to wear the ring in order to have the help of Dr. Sciberras and so that the latter will also be, in a way, with them in the New National Assembly.

The sitting held by the National Assembly on July 27, 1945 to decide amongst other things, whether there should be a Senate in the new Constitution, must have played an important role in the future of the Political Life of Professor Preziosi.

Though at the end of a long discussion the Assembly by a vote of 165 in favour and 160 against, decided the retention of the Senate, several Labour groups and unions did not accept the result of the vote. There was a row, chairs were flying everywhere, some heads were broken. Nothing was ever seen like this in the Grand Hall of the Magisterial Palace.

Prof. Preziosi was very much surprised by this violent and unexpected reaction. He did not manage to take the necessary measures to control these abuses which broke the liberty of the vote of the Assembly.

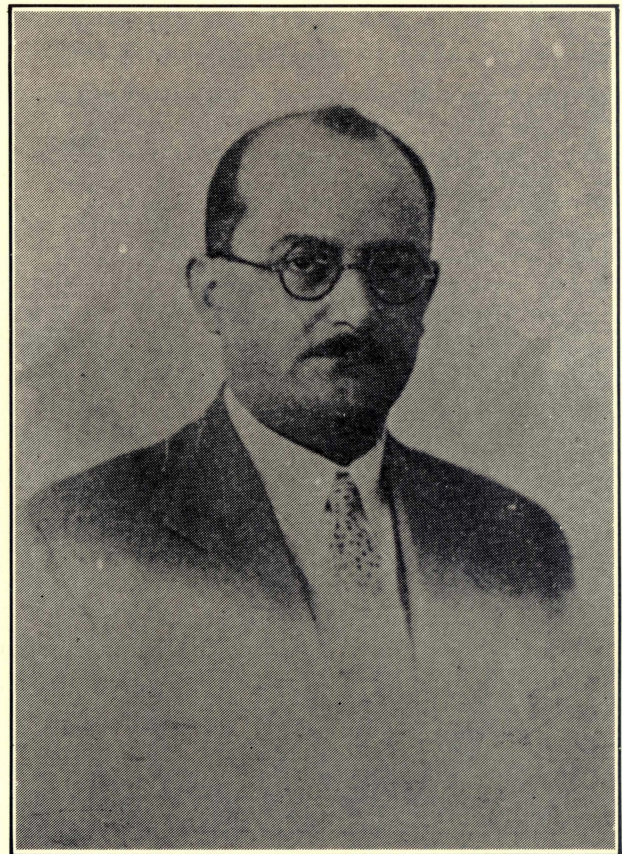
After this sitting the Assembly lost its moral and political strength. The sort of senate agreed upon later on was so much emasculated that Sir Harold MacMichael kept the Senate out, when he drew the 1947 Constitution. It must have been a bitter disappointment for Prof. Preziosi.

He was knighted in the New Years Honourous List of January 1948, partly for his medical work and partly for his political work.

In 1949 he retired from Politics to devote himself entirely to Ophthalmology for the remainder of his life.

Of Prof. Preziosi it has been said that his greatest

attribute was his humanity. He was the most kindly man one could wish to meet. No patient, however, humble received anything from him but the most friendly attention and all his skill, quite regardless of time. He never turned anybody away and it was not unusual for him to be seeing patients late after



c.1935: Prof. L. Preziosi M.D., ex-president of the Senate, a Nationalist Party candidate on the second district

(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)



1950's: Prof. L. Preziosi at a delicate operating session
(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)

midnight. Though he was certain about the time of his breakfast, he was not at all certain what time late at night he could get his dinner.

At times his temper could be rather quick. He could not suffer fools and he did not like to be contradicted. There was no time limit when examin-

ing a patient who deserved all his attention; an exact diagnosis was his main aim.

At the end of the course of Lectures in Ophthalmology to the University Students at the Clinic of the Old Central Hospital he used to make a farewell talk. After stressing the importance of eye diseases in Practice, he recommended to the students that they should not make money their main interest in life. The interest of the patients should come first. This used to be followed by drinks at his summer house in St. Paul's Bay and by a dinner at the Gillieru Restaurant.

Prof. Preziosi did not make money out of his profession. His fees were very low and many people never received a bill for an operation.

Up to few days before his death Prof. Preziosi was still carrying on with his operations. He died on July 30, 1965 – “a vast crowd of sorrowing people from all walks of Maltese life attended the funeral and were an impressive testimony to the love and esteem in which Prof. Preziosi had been held by all those who knew him”.

A few years later mainly through the efforts of the Floriana Civic Committee and a special committee founded for the same purposes, a marble bust was erected to his memory in the Mall Gardens, Floriana.

F.J. Damato

(concluded)



From left to right: Widow Mrs Vadala-Chapelle; late Sir Luigi Preziosi; late Fr Leonardo Preziosi; late Judge Albert Camilleri; widow Mrs Viatarine Camilleri-Preziosi; late Marie Preziosi
(Photo credit: Preziosi Family)