

50th Anniversary of Independence

by

Dr. Alfred Bonnici

50 years ago the Malta Government under Prime Minister Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier achieved independence on the 21st September 1964. and to commemorate this great political event the Independence Commemorative Stamps were issued on the 21 September 1964.

Dr Carmelo Caruana instructed Mr Emvin Cremona to design a set of Independence Commemorative stamps, which were submitted and the Ministry approved them.

After the referendum of May 1964, the printing was awarded through the Crown Agents, to Messrs Harrison & Sons.

Proofs started coming in one after another with Mr Cremona doing the necessary re-touches. When the final proof arrived the printers demanded from the Minister the go ahead, by a certain date, as otherwise they would not be ready by September.

The talks dragged up to the end of July the bill having to pass through the House of Commons and the Lords and so the Minister could not give the go ahead.

However his Secretary Mr John Scicluna in an article about the Minister's achievements while in Office in "Il Mument of 4 February 2007" tells us the following.

"The Minister called him and told him that he was going to tell the printers to go ahead. If the British Parliament will grant us Independence we will have a commemorative set of Postage Stamps to be proud of. If Parliament does not approve our Independence, we will over print them with the words "*Independence not granted*".

He gave the necessary order to Messrs Harrison to go ahead with the printing. The road to Independence was a long one.

The French occupation Forces surrendered to Major Pigot on the 4th September 1800 and Malta passed under British rule. Since then Malta had various Council of Government, with the first Self Government Constitution being granted in 1921.

In the pre war years of 1940, the Nationalist Party was in favour of a transfer from the Colonial Office to the Dominion Office - Dominion Status, a concept which the Nationalist Party continued to demand up to the time when the Malta Labour Party advocated a policy of Integrating Malta with the United Kingdom.

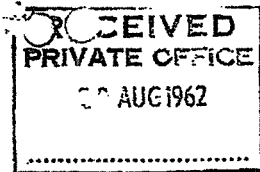
When this idea failed in 1958, Mr Mintoff on the 30 December 1957, presented in Parliament "The Break with Britain Resolution", which the Nationalist Party under Dr G Borg Olivier seconded. There was now a united demand by the Malta

Parliament for the first time for INDEPENDENCE. The Integration talk failed and Mr Mintoff resigned on the 21 April 1958., and Malta passed under a Council of Administration up to 1962.

In the electoral manifesto of the Nationalist Party and the Malta Labour Party, Independence featured prominently.

This election saw the Nationalist Party being returned to Government, and after Dr Borg Olivier clarified various clauses which he objected to with the Colonial Secretary, formed a Government and summoned Parliament.

To counter act severe British Forces run downs and the Dockyard problem Dr



SAVOY HOTEL,
London, W.C.2.

20th August 1962.

Sir,

On behalf of the Government and People of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, I have the honour to invoke for my country the right to be an independent State.

I request you therefore to fix as a matter of urgency a date for the Maltese Islands' independence within the Commonwealth.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Esmond Olivier".

The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
and for the Colonies.

Borg Olivier started negotiations with the Colonial Secretary Mr Duncan Sandys, for financial help, asking for 1.8 million Pounds.

On the 17 August 1962, Mr Sandys, offered the miserable sum of £100,000.

Dr Borg Olivier told him that if he were to accept this sum he would become the laughing stock of the Maltese.

“I am not a SAXTON I did not come here for a Silver Collection”

On the 20 August 1962 he demanded the granting of INDEPENDENCE with URGENCY.

At that time besides the Malta Labour Part in opposition which wanted Independence, but as a Republic and with the inclusion of six Religious clauses, fully documented in the Blue Book issued by the British Government, which of course the Church in Malta at that time objected to, there were three other parties in opposition. The Progressive Constitutional Party led by Miss M Strickland, The Democratic Nationalist Party led by Dr H. Ganado and the Malta Workers Party led by Mr T Pellegrini, who were totally against Independence at that time

Negotiations with the British Government started in earnest in London where all parties were represented.

Dr Borg Olivier in a Referendum on the 5th of May 1964 proposed his Independence draft, without the amendments that Mr Mintoff wanted, namely that Malta becomes a Republic and six religious points, among which was civil marriage and divorce, corrupt practice act etc

The question being.

“Do you approve of the Independence Constitution as being presented by the Malta Government”

In other words, without the clauses that Mr Mintoff wanted to include. The vote was yes. From now on negotiations with the British Government continued.

Attached to the Independence Constitution there was attached a Financial and Defence Agreement. Negotiations were hard with sessions lasting for a long time the longest was on 4 July which lasted from 7pm to 3am with a short break, continuing the next day at noon.

On the 26 July 1964 the British Parliament at its last sitting before dissolution approved the Malta Independence Constitution

Malta became Independent on the 21st September 1964.

Independence enabled Malta to become a Republic in 1974 and join the European Union as a full Member State in 2004 which will feature in the December Issue.

I served as Member of Parliament 1962-1976, Speaker Parliament of Malta 1966-1971.

independence
commemorative
issue

21st september 1964

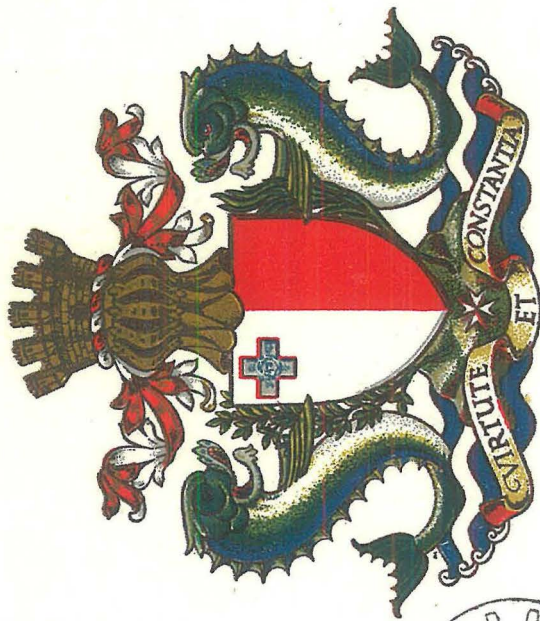
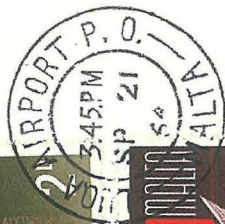


Presented to

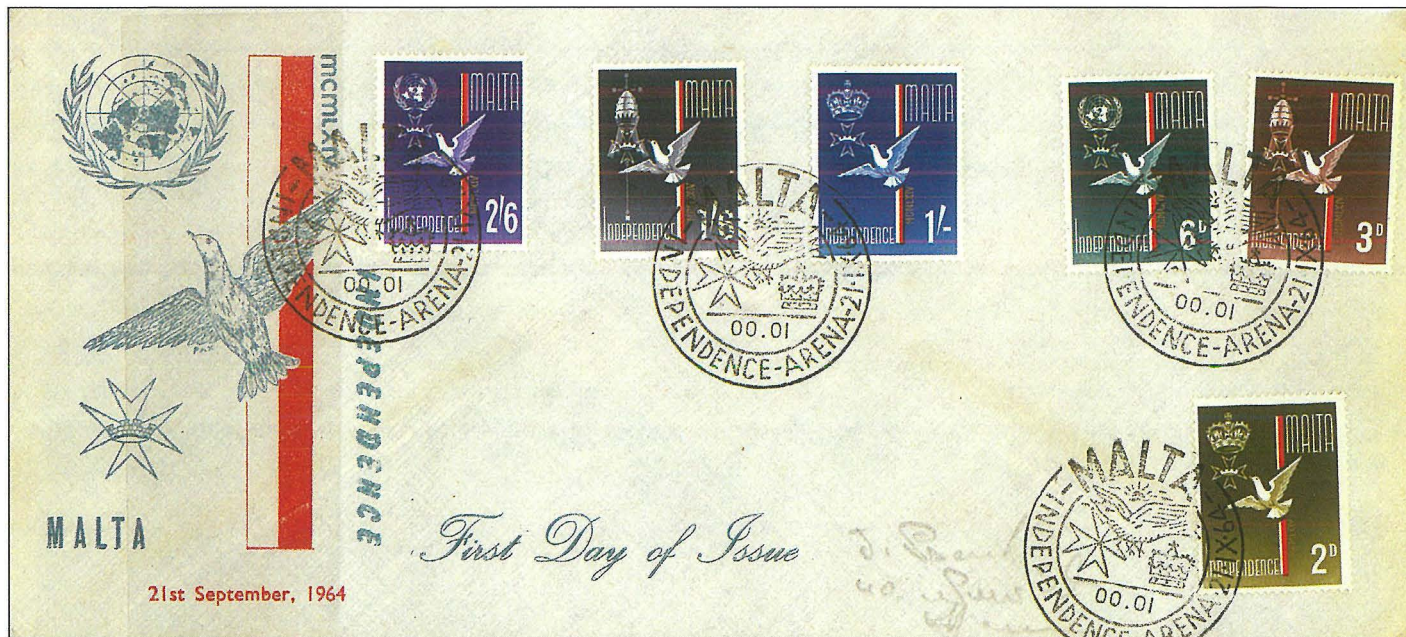
The Hon. Dr A. Bonnici, M.P.

With the Compliments
of
The Government of Malta

Special souvenir folder presented only to Members of the Malta Parliament



Independence Coat of Arms



1st day of issue cover, with special hour dater (00.01)

INDEPENDENCE (1964—1975)

1964 21st September
INDEPENDENCE

Designer	: Chev. E.V. Cremona
Printer	: Harrison & Sons
Process	: photogravure
Watermark	: Maltese Crosses pointing upwards
Gum	: arabic
Perforation	: 14.5 by 13.5 comb
Plates	: 1A1A1A; 1B1B1B
Sheet	: 60 (10 × 6)
Imprint	: none
Last day of sales	: 31st December, 1964
Quantities sold	: No. 301: 1,150,927; No. 302: 1,797,145; No. 303: 600,777; No. 304: 349,203; No. 305: 221,468; No. 306: 151,358;

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