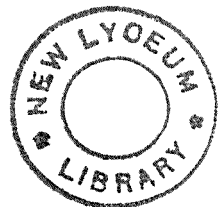


HENRY FREUDO

MALTA'S QUEST FOR  
INDEPENDENCE

Reflections on the Course of Maltese History

A VALLETTA PUBLISHING PUBLICATION



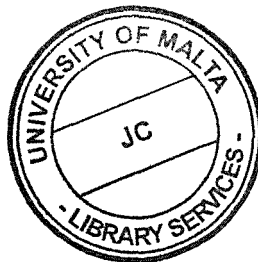
28950

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photo-copying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Published: **Valletta Publishing & Promotion Co. Ltd.**  
**76, Old Theatre Street, Valletta - Malta.**  
Copyright: **Henry Frendo, 1989**  
Phototypesetting: **Valletta Publishing & Promotion Co. Ltd. - Valletta.**  
Printing: **Gutenberg Press - Zabbar.**

*"Nationality is an element that springs from the deepest side of man's nature; you can destroy it by severing men from their past and from the immemorial traditions, affections and restraints which bind them to their kin and country. But you cannot replace it; for in the isolated shrunken individual, the cut flower of humanity with whom you have now to deal, you have nothing left to work on. Such education as you can give him will be the education of the slave: a training not of the whole man, but of certain aptitudes which may render him a useful workman, a pushing tout, or even a prosperous merchant, but never a good citizen. And he will revenge himself on you, in the subtlest and most exasperating of ways, by triumphantly developing into a bad imitation of yourself."*

Alfred Zimmern (1918)



7

8

9

7

8

To  
*Juliana, Benjamin and Oliver.*

*May home be where the heart lies.*

6

6

6

6

6

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S PREFACE	5-6
Chapter one: THE MACHISMO CULT: MALTA'S INDEPENDENCE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITIS	7-18
Chapter two: A LONG FERMENTATION: LORDS, VASSALS AND INTERMEDIARIES	20-37
Chapter three: FROM GENERALS TO GENERALS: ABORTED INSURRECTION, PAINFUL RESURRECTION	39-71
Chapter four: COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE: A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT ON DECK	178-203
Chapter five: POST-WAR MALTA: THE DEPENDENCE - INDEPENDENCE SYNDROME	205-228
Chapter six: THE LAST LAP: INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM	230-266
APPENDICES	268-274
A NOTE ON SOURCES	275

2

3

4

5

6



## *Author's Preface*

### **MALTA'S QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE REFLECTIONS ON THE COURSE OF MALTESE HISTORY**

To write about 1964 too academically is impossible for two reasons. First, much of the documentation we need is not available yet. And it is still too recent, embroiled in livid controversy such as Malta specializes in. What follows is an attempt to overview the course of Maltese history from a particular angle — that of “us” wanting (or not wanting) greater autonomy and eventually independence. It is a personal interpretation in a sense, although it does draw on a corpus of knowledge and seeks to impart insights based on that knowledge and its analysis. In the last twenty years or so I have spoken to dozens of people from all walks of life and all shades of political opinion who were intimately involved in public affairs, including Borg Olivier and Mintoff. In working specifically on this project this year, I have spoken formally and less formally to, among others, Dr Victor Ragonesi, Dr Joe Micallef Stafrace, Dr Carmelo Caruana, Mr Joe Attard Kingswell, Dr Albert Ganado, Mr Vivian De Gray, Dr Daniel Micallef, Dr George Bonello du Puis, Mr Justice J.J. Cremona, Dr Mario Felice and Dr Censu Tabone (now President of Malta). I had no time to approach several other personalities whose general positions I have been aware of however from their writings or statements. I have tried to be fair to Mintoff's party so far as it in me lay; I wished to show that the MLP has a goodly share of this quest for independence even if under Mintoff's direction it chose to renounce to that or to demand exclusivity and copyright for it, pretending that no other party deserved to be credited and merited with moving in the same direction (and doing so earlier and more consistently too). Here, however, I take the long-term view in homage to history, and also in the hope that such a perspective

may uplift readers out of the “us”-“them” rut in which locally resident Maltese seem to be almost invariably caught.

This is the first book I have written to a deadline, at break-neck speed, and it is also the first one for which I tried using a computer. Without the trust and support of my publisher, Mr Anton B. Dougall, the easy understanding, pleasant manner and speedy word processing of Ms. Tanya Attard at Valetta Publishing, and the patience and kindness of my wife Margaret, this book would never have come out in time for Malta's September 1989 extravaganza.

In addition to some academic colleagues mainly in the Faculty of Arts at the local University with whom I discussed certain events or interpretations rather informally, I wish to thank very many personalities who were directly involved in public affairs – history-makers in their own right during the past thirty to forty years – and who have given me much of their time and knowledge. Their names will appear in relevant parts of the text, wherever I felt that some observation or assessment made was pertinent to the point I was developing then.

I hope that what I have had to say here — sometimes tentatively and prematurely — will encourage rising generations to find out more about our past and present; and in embarking on that quest, to try to think honestly, dispassionately and analytically — a commodity very much lacking in all spheres of life in the Malta they have inherited. If I shall have somewhat succeeded in that provocation, this slice of politico-historical commentary will have been worth the time spent on it, in this independence “Silver Jubilee” year. Perhaps I should add, hand on heart, that although in my last ten consecutive years overseas (from 1978 to 1988) I still continued always to interest myself in matters Maltese, I was nevertheless living and working in quite different and removed environments: my last two published journal articles before repatriating concerned human rights and refugee issues in southern Africa and south-east Asia respectively. In other words, I have had to immerse myself with a jerk in Melitensia and the all-Maltese world for the benefit of local consumption. I just hope that doesn't show too much.

HENRY FREND  
Malta, August 1989.

# 1 The Machismo Cult: Malta's Independence in Contemporary Politics

Independence is not made in one day; but there is a day when it is obtained.

Thus Nigeria became independent in October 1960; Sierra Leone in April 1961; Jamaica in August 1962; Singapore in September 1963; Northern Rhodesia in October 1964; Gambia in February 1965; Barbados in November 1966; the Leeward Islands and Aden in 1967; Mauritius and Swaziland in 1968. Cyprus got its independence in August 1960 — its long campaign for union with Greece by the majority of the population having been thwarted - and retained a sovereign British military presence; what was far worse, it split tragically on ethnic-religious lines especially after the failed EOKA *coup d'état* and the subsequent Turkish invasion of 1974.<sup>1</sup> Eritrea was “handed over” by Britain to Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie in September 1952, and a civil war — the longest in Africa and one of the longest ever — has raged there since 1963. Eritreans regard it as war of liberation, of independence. Zaire, alias the Belgian Congo, was not one week old before it was shaken by a *coup d'état* that installed a military dictatorship which still thrives. Singapore was originally part of Malaysia but after two years, in August 1965, it became an independent republic. The independence given to Egypt in 1922 was obviously a sham: unilaterally declared by Britain and rejected by the Nationalist Party (Saad Zaghlul's Wafd), it imposed various crucial reserved matters. Demands

for "complete independence" as early as 1924 by the nationalists went unheeded in London: "Zaghul showed himself as inflexible as ever in negotiation", an historian has commented, "and returned to Egypt without achieving anything". A later version of Egyptian independence in 1936 was tied to a 20-year treaty, with Britain retaining a marked military and political hold until the 1950s.<sup>2</sup>

Some ex-colonies genuinely tried to possess freedom in addition to sovereign independence — for instance, Somalia under the leadership of the nationalist Somali Youth League from 1960 to 1969 — until this experiment was shattered by power-mongering generals, politicians or other disaffected elements, tribal or otherwise. In other cases, as arguably in Singapore, economic prosperity eased the consequences of authoritarian rule. In still other cases democracies were more than paper constitutions and happily survived the tests to which they were subjected once the "umbilical cords" had been cut; the most obvious examples of these on the whole have been the former "white-settled" Dominions. Many ex-colonies unfortunately have made an indescribable mess of their independence, politically as well as economically, with overseas aid often leading to widespread corruption, inefficiency and mounting debts, coupled with increasing repression that in turn caused tens of thousands of their own people to flee home and country and to seek refuge in freer and more prosperous parts of the world. From the mid-seventies, Ethiopia and Vietnam (later joined by Afghanistan) headed the list of these independent and sovereign refugee-producing countries. As patterns have taken shape with the passage of time, it is clear that, as was wont to happen perhaps, development has varied drastically from relatively steady to turbulent, from evolutionary to revolutionary, from progressive to deformed, haphazard to mature.

The analogy with life is tempting: as in the cycle from conception to birth, from adolescence to maturity, so too in the independence of nations, as indeed in that of individual persons, there is a gradual process that takes shape and form over a period of time. For an understanding of this, one has to go beyond the 'here and now' of politicians; but as we live (and think) in the present one cannot altogether disregard that either.

Briefly, both the standard versions currently presented to the public by the main political parties in Malta as to who achieved independence - how, why, when and how well - require careful scrutiny.

21 September 1989 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Malta's independence from Britain. That is, Malta was no longer answerable to London constitutionally: it could have an independent or separate existence as a State, sovereign in its decision to make treaties with other States or to join international organisations of its choosing. Malta became a member of the Council of Europe, of the U.N. and the Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup> Ties with Britain were nevertheless maintained, but of a substantially different kind; this continued to be the case for fourteen years under different dispensations. Malta also developed close relations since 1964 with

various other States, some of these have been more or less constant, others temporary or subject to modification: apart from Britain, such States have included Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., Libya and North Korea.

Like most ex-colonies, Malta since 1965 had celebrated 21 September as her National Day. A measure of consensus had been reached in Parliament at the time that Dr. Giorgio Borg Olivier headed Malta's (Nationalist) Government.

A quarter of a century later, Malta's statehood is itself beginning to have a history. In this - especially after 1971 - the very acquisition of independence has been turned into an acrimonious partisan issue between the main contending political parties, although the argument that questions how far Malta became independent in 1964 remains fundamentally a political rather than a constitutional one.

'Independence', 'freedom' and indeed 'national' days have assumed an unenviable (and unique) history of their own. Independence Day was eliminated as a national day and even as a public holiday by the Mintoff - led Malta Labour Party (MLP) following its assumption of office in 1971. After using the pre-independence national day of 8 September (1565/1945) temporarily as a stop-gap, national day became 13 December (1974) when Malta was declared a republic - no longer a constitutional monarchy as it had been since independence. But this day was itself replaced by another, that of 31 March (1979) marking the expiry of a new military agreement with the former colonial power, Britain, concluded in 1972. When in May 1987 the *Partit Nazzjonalista* (PN) were returned after sixteen years in opposition, the government would have wished to rehabilitate Independence Day; equally it sought "reconciliation" in an island that had become more internally polarized than ever. In view of the impossibility of reaching consensus about restoring Independence Day to its former status, in March 1989 it was agreed to do without a National Day as such and instead to have no less than five (5) days designated as "national" feasts, these to include 21 September 1964, 13 December 1974 and 31 March 1979. The first of these to be commemorated under this new agreement, 31 March, ended in a terrible fracas during which, *inter alia*, the Commander of the Maltese Armed Forces was assaulted on the dias by well-known MLP supporters as he was about to take the salute. Thus the meaning attributed to words - 'freedom' itself, for one - begs many a definition. Nationalistic rhetoric abounds in what appears to have become a *machismo* bout: 'whatever you can do I can do better'.

Maltese parochial politics have long been riddled with petty face-to-face piques relating to such things as patron saints and band clubs. It may be plausible to regard what may be called *pika-partiti* as a "national" variant of the more localised *festapartiti* described by Boissevain. The danger here is that such an explanation may excuse the personal responsibility of individual politicians in stirring division,

although it may explain their relative success in doing so. Another danger is to endorse the 'patriotism' of all political leaders just about equally, irrespective of what notions of '*patria*' or 'motherland' these harboured and their ethical sense or otherwise: their past behaviour, their ideologies if any, their foreign relations, their attitudes and their methods, particularly when they held office. To attribute sincerity to all in equal measure almost as an *a priori* quality in politicians - democrats and demagogues, nationalists and imperialists alike - strains the very meaning of the already vague term 'patriotism', if not also of the word 'sincerity', more so in a colonial context. Yet another danger is to shift the blame of alienation, conflict or collaboration wholesale on to the colonial power, with a dose of conspiracy theory thrown in. This writer has argued elsewhere that the overseer can be worse than the master.

'Pro-British' and 'anti-British' tendencies may be gauged from, for example, the positions taken in March 1989 by **Sunday Times** (of Malta) correspondents Griffiths on the one hand and Sammut on the other — the former a self-professed admirer of Lord Strickland whose onetime Constitutional Party he supported; the latter since 1977 a conspicuous MLP zealot.

The Griffiths stand is that Malta and the Maltese owe a debt of gratitude to Britain and the British: his is, in effect, a restatement of the civilizing mission. You can almost hear the words "*L-Ingliži għamluna nies*". Griffiths holds that Malta has reason to be thankful to Britain even for independence, something France or Russia might never have granted her. According to him, it seems that it is to foreign writers that we have to look for impartial and objective studies about the Maltese; Maltese, even if disciplined in Britain, may hardly be expected to match the others. In reviewing a book of collected writings on Malta's colonial experience,<sup>4</sup> for instance, he writes thus:

...is recognised as a most perceptive and impartial, because foreign, commentator on Maltese politics...Coming up to 1964, a goodly slice of Malta's inheritance from Britain was a highly skilled labour force in a serviceable dockyard. So pragmatic realism requires that even the 'bread and butter' aspects of the British-Maltese connection should be well regarded as a very positive element to both sides...We lack an article treating of that copious admixture of British and Maltese genes which has literally given birth to a large Anglo-Maltese community, both here and scattered world wide through emigration. Despite differences of background, culture and especially religion, mixed marriages have been so numerous that the proportion of British surnames in today's electoral lists must be considerable. The consequent effects of this type of colonial impact on language, habits, loyalties and leanings need no elaboration. The greatest representative of the 'new' Anglo-Maltese race was one Gerald Bonici Sceberras Strickland! To him, Malta's indebtedness is immense, for a lifelong and entire dedication of his superb gifts to the great cause of Anglo-Maltese brotherhood...

In referring to a contribution by Edward Zammit on British colonial policies and Maltese patterns of behaviour, Griffiths writes as follows: "Possibly through no real fault on Britain's part, other than the notorious casual attitude to an Empire 'acquired in fits and starts of absent-mindedness', Malta saw a prolonged period of

destitution, mendicancy and petty dishonesty. With the vast majority of Maltese being wholly dependent for their livelihood on their British overlords, there was the almost inevitable deleterious consequence of subservience and sycophancy, 'quiescence and fatalism, sense of inferiority and dependence arising from the paternal tradition'." Commenting on the question of *italianità* and the removal of Italian in favour of English, and Maltese, the reviewer concluded thus: "The stark truth is that were it not for Strickland's lifelong exertions to counter Mizzian 'aspirations', Malta and the Mediterranean would have been lost to the British and Allied cause in the Second World War. It is not reasonable to show the Anglicizing policies of Strickland, Hely-Hutchinson and other colonialists as unjustified...The Maltese loyalist feeling in this regard was that the British went about it too feebly and too late...if the zenith of Malta's national aspirations is seen as independence, then that too Malta owes to the British connection."

Sammut is somewhere at the other end, holding that the British government and the Catholic Church had conspired to use spiritual sanctions against Mintoff's party in order to permit Borg Olivier to come to power and then to coax him into an independence that was in effect a fraud. He says, among other things:

Mintoff, being a Rhodes Scholar, and well respected, if not always well-liked by British politicians such as Atlee, and statesmen, such as Mountbatten, had to be contained in a different fashion. So they sought to balance him with that other great personality in twentieth century Maltese history, Archbishop Gonzi...It was evident to all but the most uninformed observer that the Colonial Office had permitted religious sanctions to be used in the 1962 elections in order to secure a friendly government in Valletta.

In support of this, he referred to a letter in **The Guardian** by a former editor of **The Catholic Herald**, Count Michael de la Bedoyere, who suggested the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, may have been "hiding within the cassock of the Archbishop perhaps, in order to get his military bases".

The ten year mutual defence (and financial) agreement accompanying our Independence has been the chief stated bone of contention in Mintoff's hostility to 1964; although when in office after 1971 Mintoff renegotiated and extended the British military presence until 1979. Lord Carrington, then British Foreign Minister, says in his autobiography that he formed the impression that Mintoff "despite the impossibility of his behaviour" was "a genuine patriot". The Deputy Leader of the British Labour Party, Arthur Bottomley, expressed the view (quoted by Sammut) that the Mutual Defence Agreement was possibly too good in that it did not provide for consultations with the Maltese government "in the event of Britain wanting to use Malta as a military base for active service".

Such an eventuality arose and was resorted to at the time of the Suez crisis in 1956 (when Mintoff's party were in office and at the time seeking Malta's Integration with Britain) but happily it did not do so after 1964.

Writing in a lighter vein in the Socialist daily organ **L-Orizzont** on 30 March, Reno Borg, a committed MLP man but a history graduate, took the analogy from

conception (the *Sette Giugno*) to birth (Independence Day) to actually starting to walk (Freedom Day).

One who has rebutted this position forcefully is Edgar Soler in an article "What is Freedom Day?" which recalls the position of the parties in the lead - up to independence and the final agreement reached.<sup>5</sup> "What the Socialists call Freedom Day", he concluded, "has no important historical element which merits commemoration as a National Day. Partisan politics about it deepened the division among our people. It originated from the Socialist disappointment that it was not they who brought Independence, and so they endeavour to commemorate it in place of September 21, 1964".

The thesis presenting Mintoff as the supreme patriot - indeed the great nationalist - of post-war Malta, has been staunchly pooh-poohed by, among others, the leading columnist of *Il-Mument*, Peter Darmanin, from the PN's information division. His column has repeatedly harked back to the MLP's Integration proposal and campaign of the 1950s, which in spite of much harassment the Nationalists opposed, publishing on 26 March a four column photograph showing Mintoff speaking at an MLP - GWU meeting bedecked with huge Union Jacks. He has also quoted documents showing Mintoff's "do as I say" disposition - stressed in the letter of resignation in 1961 of the then MLP Secretary General, Pellegrini. But the central and negative argument, to counter the hailing of 1979 (and not 1964) as Malta's 'true' independence, has been the pre-1958 pro-British stand taken by the MLP, and touches of nostalgia lingering well into the seventies. As late as December 1980 Mintoff is quoted as saying on television, in a national broadcast, that Integration had been a lost opportunity: it was the British who had not seriously wanted "that we be like them and become part of them" (*li aħna nkunu bħalhom u nsiru parti minnhom*). For this same feature on 2 April, 1989, Darmanin even fished out these words written by Mintoff in *The Knight* in 1952:

"If only this dream were to come true! It would make all members of the Labour Party dance with joy, unfold the Union Jack and embrace every Briton armed and unarmed."

We know from Mintoff's spate of letters in the Progress Press papers during July 1989 that our longest-serving Labour leader and Maltese prime minister to this day makes no bones about his regret that integration with Britain did not materialize.

In the middle of the road we find Joseph Pirotta (a lecturer in Education and author of a book on post-war Malta) who in rejecting Sammut's contentions wrote thus on 2 April:

"...when it came to deciding which particular leader of the major Maltese parties they preferred to deal with, British officials came to the conclusion that there was precious little difference between them. They all stuck determinedly to their guns in their effort to achieve the best possible deal for Malta within the political ideology that they professed...It would be absolutely ludicrous for any Maltese to question the patriotism of Mr Mintoff, but it is equally



ridiculous to question, even by implication, the patriotism of any other Maltese political leader. The best known among them, Sir Paul Boffa, Dr George Borg Olivier, Sir Ugo Mifsud, Dr Enrico Mizzi and Lord Gerald Strickland...were all patriots."

"Admittedly", he added "this does not necessarily mean that one has to agree with either their beliefs or with the majority of their actions. But it is totally unfair to question the sincerity of their patriotism within the necessary parameters of their ideologies and actions since these were the logical results of the times they were living in. Let us be thankful that this small Island of ours was consistently able to throw up leaders of their calibre who helped us to emerge from an over-prolonged period of colonialism".

Clearly this is, at best, a relativist position presuming a moral equivalence, and one that therefore concedes even to arch-imperialists the merit of having "helped us to emerge from an over-prolonged period of colonialism."

Kindly, one can attribute all this unbecoming antagonism over independence dates and personalities simply to the trauma of a new-found statehood in a tiny long-dominated island. The questions put by this writer in **Party Politics** bear repetition here:

"What happens then when independence finally arrives? Is the emancipated citizen like a prisoner who walks out of his dark cell only to be blinded by the sunshine? As the former colonial subject emerges from the customary cocoon he searches about with groping hands: he searches, in the first place, to discover his inner self, to come to terms with himself. But can he now find what's left of that; or will he be for ever a different person?"<sup>6</sup>

While leaving such imponderables to the future, it is timely now to take stock of the past and to ask when, in the case of Malta and the Maltese, may one begin meaningfully to speak of independence. What is the history of freedom in Malta? Freedom from what, from whom, and to what effect? Have Maltese representatives over the years desired - or sought - independence or autonomy, regionalism or provincialism, or outright dependence in return for security and stability? What has the relationship of politics to history been? Is there a linear movement heading for this independence of 1964, or of 1979, or of some future one yet to arrive? In our imagined grand progression from domination to liberation, from colony to nation, from subject to citizen, where shall we place the recurring urge for close association, federation or integration - with Spain and even France, Italy - time and again - and indeed with Britain? Was it freedom rather than independence, or independence rather than freedom, or both together, or neither, that the Maltese possessed? If independence presumes nationhood, would ambivalent positions towards it signify a want of that, or a yearning - or an undefined need - for something other than independence?

Let us go back in time, leaving today's agitated and often trivial rhetoric behind us, and try to unearth at least some partial explanations to such questions. Here we shall look at a national history, if one may so describe a Maltese collective past: the protagonists will be seen acting together even if against each other at the time. Our

generic thesis will unfold in the following pages but *inter alia* we would like to test our theory, enunciated elsewhere, that there is “an alternating succession”, not only “in the changing distribution of power between the parties” but also in perspectives and positions taken. The approach will be a broad and somewhat “popular” one, much more in the nature of an overview than a detailed narrative; we shall look out for landmarks and explain their significance. Many of the most important of the more recent original sources are still unavailable. Hence this will be a pioneering work to attempt, not without difficulty, to make some sense of the past as this has unfolded with special reference to Malta’s condition, its constitutional problems and prospects, and to set the ball rolling for further study and discussion of very many aspects and periods that are generally neglected, if not unknown. (This writer was stimulated to produce a short history of the *Sette Giugno* in 1969 when he saw that schoolchildren in a MTV quiz had not heard of it. Twenty years later the secretary of a political club named after the *Sette Giugno* phoned him up, having heard he had written about that event, and asked him if he would give a talk on it as they had named their club *Sette Giugno* but they knew hardly anything about it. In June and July 1989 various letters have been published in the **Sunday Times** (of Malta) suggesting that the *Sette Giugno* was a non-event, not worthy of any commemoration, while no other than Dom Mintoff has taken it upon himself to push for the writing of an account of this event, doing the introduction himself, for publication by his party.)

Apart from setting the facts straight, the crucial issue is to establish conceptual frameworks as there is a topsy-turvy quality about Maltese political development. Sometimes one wonders whether the words used mean what the dictionary says they ought to or something quite different or even opposite - or what the same terms or labels would have meant in Britain or in Italy at the time. This may be partly because certain uses of names, titles, terms and labels originated in a colonial situation where definitions were imposed from above by the powerful and accepted for want of the ability to resist them by those ‘below’. In other words, one of the problems we are saddled with is precisely in knowing what certain words mean exactly - words such as ‘reforms’, ‘progress’, ‘progressive’, ‘backward’, ‘moderate’, ‘extreme’, ‘loyal’, ‘disloyal’, ‘sedition’, ‘liberal’, ‘property’ and indeed even ‘nationalist’ and ‘labour’. The other cue to watch out for of course is that words as used in one epoch need not mean the same as they would in another; not even when - and perhaps especially when - they become fossilized catch-phrases in the jargon of political vocabulary; words such as ‘fascist’, ‘reactionary’, ‘labour’, ‘collaboration’, ‘imperialist’, ‘nationalist’ and ‘socialist’ can be emotionally charged, dated and/or almost meaningless if presumed to be standard for their contemporary versions. On the other hand, time does not rest still and definitions need to be re-defined, which is one of the purposes of history, thus helping to render the present intelligible. The very names of Malta’s leading political parties

may require re-definition or re-naming. The *Partit Nazzjonalista* have formally adopted a Maltese name, although this hardly portrays the party well to those not familiar with its whole history: *Partit Demokratiku Nisrani* (PDN) might be more appropriate now. The Malta Labour Party has retained its English title, half-Maltesized in references to it as “tal-Labour”; presumably *Partit Soċjalista* or *Partit Soċjalista Demokratiku* (given that a tiny *Partit Kommunist* also exists) could be more appropriate in time. A European social-democrat would know more precisely what norms to expect from an SPD - IF the usual *données* are borne out in real life; and similarly for a Christian Democrat.

In future, it should be possible to write a work of consummate scholarship giving a far more comprehensive and lasting assessment of the issues put together in this book. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that we try to clear the air by looking for the sinews of the independence problem, if we can. Nineteen eighty-nine is a good time for such an attempt to be made. Not only is it the 25th anniversary of independence (and indeed the tenth anniversary of the end of the MLP - negotiated Anglo-Maltese military agreement); it is also the seventieth anniversary of the *Sette Giugno*, now recognised as another of our “national feasts”. Unnoticed and unstated though this may be, 1989 is also the fortieth anniversary year of what may be called “Mintoffism”: it was in 1949 that Mintoff fell out with the Labour Cabinet under Boffa (who had appointed him to it), and embarked upon his struggle. Much of the heated, rather grotesque discussion as to who really did what when, stems at least partly from the continuing consequences of Mintoffism which has always been predicated on an aggressively assertive invective, generally demeaning those who were not seen to be “with us.”

This writer is a child of independent Malta in the sense that he became a history undergraduate in 1965 - hence a challenging time to begin asking what kind of a nation-state was this and what did the future hold in store. By the same token, he was never directly involved in events relating to the actual process leading to or away from independence and thus cannot have any axes to grind one way or the other. He did not vote either in the integration referendum of 1956 or in the independence constitution referendum in 1964, although as a sixteen year old he was present at the Independence Arena in Floriana on the night of 20th September 1964 and shouted “Viva Malta!” with the multitude as the Union Jack was lowered and the Maltese colours were raised. Of the past sixteen years, he spent thirteen overseas: first as a post-graduate student in England (1973-1976) and subsequently (1978-1988) as an *émigré* in four continents.

Giusti once wrote that a book is nothing if it does not remake people. That ambitious and idealistic task is not rendered any easier in an environment which has for long time been inclined to fanatical partisanship and hierarchical censure of various sorts and when, as already indicated, that has of late been fanned to the wildest limits by certain politicians (and also by ecclesiastics) in rallying mass

support for their causes. Nor is it rendered easier by the virtual suppression of an historical discipline in the analysis of public affairs and its replacement by often highly-strung, generally tendentious and occasionally false interpretations - usually by political leaders from positions of assumed authority, in crowd scenarios with microphones and loudspeakers, with party faithful frequently including youths and even children (*Brigata* and all); and notably through the radically politicized and socially engineered broadcasting media after the GWU lock-out in 1975. At the same time, access to independent analysts has been and is severely limited as these are shunned, or else burdened with straight-jacketed presumptions or expectations by the respective parties, if not perhaps to the same extent. Such miserable attitudes necessarily twist the public debate, preventing multiple possible interpretations of the same or similar situations, and rebounding in favour of the committed functionary or fan. Particular harmful in this regard has been the explicit insistence especially over the last forty years that you must be "with us" or "against us", the warning clearly being that there can be no middle way, no shades of grey, and indeed no publicly expressed thoughts that freely contradict the will of the party, that is, in practice, of the party leader. It is as if one or two generations have never learned to ask themselves questions, let alone ask questions to others and about others, save in black-or-white terms. The jargon term for this is polarisation, but of course that begs the question why, how much, wherefrom, since when?<sup>7</sup> As noted in 1969 by Boissevain in his *Ferment* article "Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?", our people's inquisitive and autocritical qualities have not been conspicuous: are these faculties dormant? The blank spaces on borrower library cards in the history sections of the Malta University library since 1979 - 1979 being the year when the History Department was finally abolished together with the Faculties of Arts and of Science - are only very slowly beginning to be filled in again mainly by younger people wondering about the past, and the truth. That is also why this book asks questions and, in seeking answers, will pose or provoke other questions.

If independence does not admit of fearless self-examination, informed and honest self-appraisal - without a litany of breach of privilege complaints and rights of reply claims by politicians - it will be a mockery. What independence means above all else is title and responsibility. Clearly popular sovereignty is not one's vote at an election every five years: honest intellectual engagement is of the essence: to stifle this - or to restrict it to party machines - would be to render the people themselves numb and dumb. But one of the messages contained in these pages is that such attitudes have many a precedent to sustain them. Still, history never quite repeats itself in the same way so we shall have to keep looking for what is different even in what may appear to be verisimilitudes.

<sup>1</sup>Cyprus became an independent republic on 16 August 1960 and was admitted to the United Nations on 21 September 1960. Talks for Cypriot Independence were held under the shadow of Greek-Turkish tensions as well as strained US-USSR relations and a volatile Middle Eastern situation, notably in Iraq. Britain had decided in 1957 that it no longer needed the whole of Cyprus and a base under its sovereign control would be enough. The Constitution for independent Cyprus was also much influenced by the fact that two "communities" existed and sought reassurance, hence the provisions for Communal chambers. Three treaties accompanied that constitution; these established the international status of the island and of the British sovereign bases, guaranteed this status and the constitution, and set out the terms of a military alliance between Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, which included the presence of Greek and Turkish troops in Cyprus. A "Treaty of Establishment" between Cyprus and Britain laid down that the island should become an independent sovereign republic except for two areas around the British air base at Akrotiri and the army base at Dhekelia on the South Coast. These were to remain under British sovereignty; Britain would also have the right to use sites and facilities elsewhere in the island for military purposes. A treaty of guarantee between Cyprus, Britain, Greece and Turkey provided that Cyprus should maintain its independence and respect for its constitution; it forbade either enosis or partition. Greece, Turkey and Britain guaranteed the island's independence, but: "In the event of a break of the provisions of the present Treaty, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom undertake to consult together with respect to the representations or measures necessary to ensure observance of these provisions. In so far as common or concerted action may not prove possible, each of the three guaranteeing powers reserves the right to take action with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs created by the present Treaty". See R. Stephens: *Cyprus a Place of Arms* (Pall Mall London, 1966) pp. 157-161.

<sup>2</sup>In Egypt's case you had a close military alliance. "Each country was to aid the other in the event of war, and was to give Britain all facilities, including the imposition of martial law and an effective censorship, in the event of any threatened international emergency. Each country undertook not to conduct its foreign policy in any way inconsistent with the Treaty. Egypt recognized the vital interest to Britain of ensuring the liberty and entire security of navigation in the Canal, and accordingly granted Britain the right to retain troops in the Canal Zone...Egypt was to build specified strategic roads, and to improve the railways in the Canal Zone and the Western Desert...Britain was to be represented in Egypt by an ambassador taking precedence over all foreign representatives..." See G.E. Kirk: *A Short History of the Middle East* (Methuen, London, 1964) pp. 171-173. On the Mutual Defence Treaty that accompanied Malta's independence in 1964 see chapter 6, *infra*. Some details of the Cyprus and Egypt independence constitutional arrangements have been given here with that in mind. Clearly no strict comparisons are possible; to the extent that these may be made the Maltese arrangement is seen as far less exacting on the emergent State than either of these other historical examples. "Exacting" may be even the wrong choice of adjective, depending on whether one adopts a pragmatic-transitional or nationalistic-idealistic approach.

<sup>3</sup>It did not also become a member of NATO as Iceland had done, because Borg Olivier's requests after 1964 - even for observer status - were rejected. This NATO attitude towards Malta, where HAFMED was based, remains something of a mystery, particularly given the advantage Borg Olivier had had of a meeting with Kennedy before Malta even became independent. It may be simply that Malta was regarded as too small or too unstable with not much to contribute to a military alliance; but what about Iceland?

<sup>4</sup>The book was **British Colonial Experience: The Impact on Maltese Society** (ed. V. Mallia-Milanes, Mireva, Msida, 1988), to which this writer contributed the chapter entitled "Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin Mediterranean or British Empire?"

<sup>5</sup>"What is Freedom Day?", **ST**, 30 April, 1989, p. 17. Soler, one of the Nationalists deported without charge by the British in 1942, is the author of an autobiographical work: **The King's Guests in Uganda: From Internment to Independence, 1939-1964** (Valletta, 1986).

<sup>6</sup>Henry Frendo: **Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience** (Midsea, Valletta, 1979) p. 214.

<sup>7</sup>A short seminal study on political violence in Malta by Lino Briguglio, with an introduction by Kenneth Wain, was published in 1986 and reissued in 1987.