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MALTA

1. Eastward drift in foreign policy

- 1979 NATO out
- 1981 Bunkering facilities given Soviet merchant fleet
- 1982 Treaty of military cooperation with North Korea
- 1984 Treaty of friendship and cooperation with Libya, including far-reaching defence protocol
- 1978-1985 Extensive and solid links with all Eastern countries in trade, broadcasting, culture, hospitals ...

2. Domestic situation

Government: Socialist since 1971

Economy: largely government controlled as a result of nationalisations and proliferation of controls

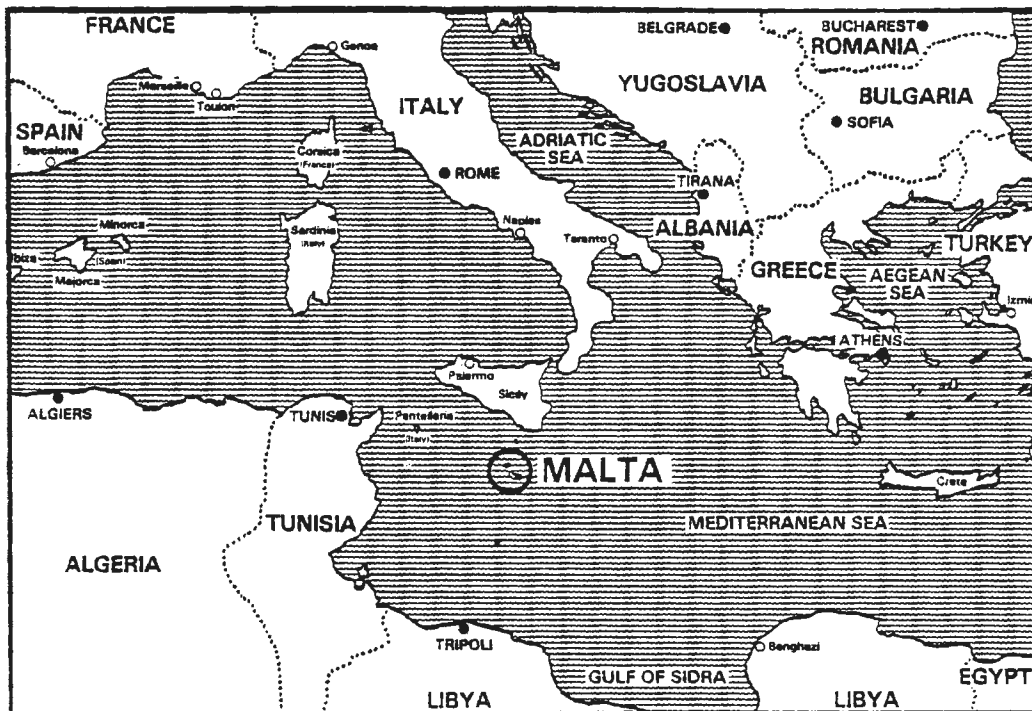
Opposition: pro-Western Nationalist Party, member of Christian Democratic International

Leader: Eddie Fenech-Adami since 1977

Last elections: 1981, Nationalist Party won 51% of the popular vote but a minority of parliamentary seats as a result of various irregularities

Next elections: 1986 or 1987. The government is believed to be intent on other methods to stay in power despite a widely expected negative vote

Prospects: if power does not change hands at the next elections, the trend towards a totalitarian state under Soviet-Libyan tutelage will become irreversible



FROM THE CAPITALS OF THE WORLD

PEKING • WARSAW • KHARTOUM • VALLETTA • ISLAMABAD

SMALL GAIN IN SOVIET, CHINA TIES

Cut through Chinese ballyhoo about how the latest Sino-Soviet talks mark a new beginning in relations with Moscow and you wind up with this: A happy reunion between the Communist rivals is not quite at hand.

True, there's a positive side to the trip to Peking by Deputy Premier Arkhipov, highest-ranking Kremlin official to visit in 15 years. The two nations now tout plans to boost trade to nearly 2 billion dollars in 1985 and to spur economic, technical and scientific cooperation.

Yet neither country is ready to make more far-reaching compromises.

For example, Arkhipov's endorsement of plans to help China modernize 200 factories--a Peking priority--is suspiciously vague. Privately, Soviet officials describe it as a commitment only to study the idea.

More important, there is no sign that political and ideological differences that have marred ties since the late 1950s will be resolved.

The Kremlin wants China to ease military pressure along its border with Vietnam, the Soviets' closest ally in the Far East. No deal.

Peking demands that Moscow pull its troops out of Afghanistan; compel Hanoi to end the occupation of Kampuchea, reduce the size of the Soviet military presence along the Chinese frontier. No headway there either.

KREMLIN WORRIES ABOUT U.S.

Complicating the Sino-Soviet picture is Kremlin mistrust of Peking's links with the U.S., a relationship dramatized by the January visit to Peking of Gen. John Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Moscow sees Peking trying to play the superpowers against each other.

That makes the Kremlin cautious. Soviets want to help China reduce dependence on the West, but don't intend to be used by the Chinese for their short-term gain, only to be discarded down the line.

Time of testing is not over for Polish Premier Jaruzelski despite his deft handling of the explosive situation rising out of the murder of pro-Solidarity priest Jerzy Popieluszko. No-holds-barred trial of secret police accused of the crime has headed off popular protests. But . . .

Jaruzelski still must decide what action to take against any higher-ups implicated in the slaying. Letting top officials go scot-free could provoke civil disorder, but purging them could anger Soviet-backed hard-liners anxious to dump Jaruzelski because he is "too liberal."

Best bet: Premier will punish guilty, slowly weed out troublemakers.

AMERICA RUSHES AID TO SUDAN

Twin objectives--humanitarian and strategic--underlie Washington's emergency airlifts of relief supplies to pro-Western Sudan.

Latest flood of refugees from famine-swept Ethiopia, 50,000 in the past few weeks, is too much for economically distressed Sudan to handle.

Total number of refugees huddling in jerry-built camps along the arid Ethiopian-Sudanese border is estimated at 400,000. Thousands more are

(over)

reported in flight from drought and civil war in northern Ethiopia.

HIGH
STAKES IN
KHARTOUM

Numbers are growing too big to feed and shelter. Worse, President Nimeiri worries about a backlash among his countrymen. That's no minor headache. Nimeiri has been a target of numerous coups and presently is plagued by a Sudanese drought, economic stagnation, a rebellion in the south and his own spreading unpopularity. So he welcomes American help.

The U.S., for its part, considers Nimeiri an important source of support in the Moslem world and a major barrier to Libyan strong man Qadhafi's ambitions in Africa. And toppling of the Nimeiri government would heighten the Libyan threat to Egypt, another key American friend.

MALTA
STICKS TO
THE LEFT

Drop any idea that Malta's new leader might end the leftist tilt of the strategic Mediterranean island. Carmelo Bonnici is the hand-picked protégé of the anti-West, pro-Soviet ex-Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff.

The mild-mannered Bonnici, 51, will provide a contrast only in style, not substance, to the fiery Mintoff, who left no doubts where he stood.

Mintoff shut down a NATO naval base in 1979, let Soviet ships bunker there, dropped a military-assistance pact with Italy in 1984 and then signed a new one with Libya. Before stepping down in December, he wrapped up a 265-million-dollar trade agreement with the Kremlin.

Bonnici's first concerns will be domestic. A series of actions against the Roman Catholic Church triggered widespread protests among the island's 320,000 citizens at the tail end of Mintoff's 13-year rule.

Before taking over, Bonnici said the unrest could force his Labor Party to call off elections set for 1986. Nationalist Party opponents fear that could be a first step toward establishing a one-party state.

A bigger worry for both the Nationalists and the West is that Bonnici might even decide to invite Libyan troops in to prop up his government.

PAKISTAN'S
ZIA ON
A ROLL?

Pakistan's President Zia is riding high these days. Here's why--

First. Zia regards Pakistanis' approval of his Islamization policies in a December referendum--in the face of a boycott call by political foes--as a green light to rule for at least five more years.

Second. Planned February elections for a National Assembly, he believes, will undercut attacks by critics demanding democratic reforms.

Third. Overwhelming election victory of Rajiv Gandhi in archrival India, Zia feels, will enable New Delhi to offer daring proposals for regional stability and end the threat of another Indo-Pakistani war.

Pipe dreams? Probably. Take internal politics. Vote for parliament will be on a nonparty basis. Opponents won't be able to organize, hold mass meetings or even stage large-scale marches. That spells trouble.

Even after the balloting, Zia will maintain martial law until the new government demonstrates it can preserve law and order. More trouble.

Breakthrough with India is unlikely, too. Gandhi's first priority is to rebuild national unity, not to pursue an accord with a historic enemy. Moreover, if Gandhi runs into trouble at home, he may try to use Indian enmity toward Pakistan to rally his nation behind him.

ARAB-ASIAN AFFAIRS

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international
currency review

Number 130

Editor and Publisher: Christopher Story MA

February-March 1985

SOVIETS SCRAP YALTA – QUIETLY SUBVERT MALTA

New régime has close military links with Libya

In the preceding issue of this service, we showed how the United States has sought to check Soviet ambitions in the Levant region by establishing a 'secret' military airbase on the politically 'sanitised' territory of the fledgling and largely unrecognised territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. We pointed out that this crucial geopolitical development has been poorly covered by the somnolent Western media. This issue concentrates on the Soviet Union's parallel attempt to checkmate the West by a surreptitious progressive takeover of the island of Malta. This strategic Mediterranean island – of crucial geostrategic importance to the West – was recognised under the pernicious Yalta agreement of 1945 to be within the Western sphere of influence. But the Soviets, rightly confident that the two Western powers concerned, Britain and Italy, will remain complacent and will fail to react as the Americans did in Grenada, are in the process of flouting the Yalta understanding in pursuit of what they regard to be the commanding strategic prize in the region. Naturally, the Libyan puppet-Soviet régime has been ordered to do some of Moscow's dirty work.

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A Soviet succession

Despite appearances, Mr Dom Mintoff's recent decision to hand over the premiership of Malta to Dr Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici has plunged Malta into uncertainty. Mintoff has retained the leadership of the ruling Socialist Party (SP), his parliamentary seat and his control of all the levers of power within the government. Informed reports say that he will be assuming more direct responsibilities over the central bank, oil exploration and some aspects of foreign relations.

Mifsud-Bonnici himself is a political creation of Mintoff. He is an extreme socialist, a puppet of Moscow, and a strong believer in the right of 'the pro-

letariat' – that is to say, a small privileged élite acting in its own selfish interests in the name of the proletariat – to remain in power, but he has never contested an election. The pro-Western Nationalist Party (NP) dubbed him Dr Zero, a reference both to his lack of charisma and personality (see picture), and to the fact that he has never obtained a single vote. Significantly, the sobriquet has been taken up by many people within the SP. Several Socialist ministers had been building up a power base with a view to succeeding Mintoff, but the latter disappointed them by picking up a backroom strategist and having him appointed deputy leader of the SP over their heads – and without a



Dr Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici: the hardline, Soviet-tutored, crypto-Communist backroom strategist who has been elevated to the Premiership by Mr Mintoff.

vote. Mintoff then had him co-opted into parliament by the Socialist majority, and promptly appointed him Deputy Prime Minister.

Mifsud-Bonnici's lack of any support within the SP is compounded by the SP's minority status in the country. Elections held in 1981 gave an absolute majority of the popular vote to the NP and only the gerrymandering of the constituency boundaries (authored pa-

IN THIS ISSUE

Malta-USSR	2
Malta-Libya	4
Text: 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Malta and Libya': 19 November 1984	5
Press interview with Mifsud-Bonnici	6
Malta-Israel	7

tiently and painstakingly by Mifsud-Bonnici himself in the dusty and dimly lit offices of the supposedly independent Electoral Commission) gave the SP a majority of parliamentary seats.

Thus the new prime minister remains a tool in the hands of his predecessor, who can dispense with him as easily as Mr Bourgiba in Tunisia dismisses his disposable premiers. However when Mintoff disappears from the scene (and rumours about his poor health abound), the disappointed pretenders will be out for Mifsud-Bonnici's blood – perhaps even literally. The consensus is that the two main contenders would be Public Works Minister Lorry Sant, who is backed by Libya, and Foreign Affairs Minister Sceberras Trigona, who is close to the Soviet Union. Their hands have been strengthened by Mintoff's last two acts in the field of foreign relations: a treaty of military co-operation with Qadhafi, the text of which is reproduced in this issue, and an official visit to Moscow where the Maltese ruler established stronger economic and political links.

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Malta-USSR

Over the last decade, the Soviet Union has been 'softening' up Malta by its support of the small, but increasingly influential, Maltese Communist Party and by means of stepped-up cultural and political exchanges. Communists or Communist sympathisers hold key positions in the Government's information department, the state-run radio and television monopoly, and the largest and Government-dominated labour cartel, the General Workers' Union (GWU). Special courses on trade unionism are routinely held for GWU members in Prague by the corresponding Czech union. The transmission of pro-Soviet films and programmes on radio and television has gradually increased. News and current affairs (including sports) are given a consistently anti-Western and pro-Soviet bias. Communist cells are very active in the Drydocks, the huge former Royal Navy Dockyard, which is Malta's largest and oldest enterprise and also provides the mainstay of SP support.

It has always been to the dock workers that the SP has resorted in times of crisis. The last such occasion was in September 1984, a time of popular upheaval and mass demonstrations against the Government's attempt (since postponed) to take over the Catholic schools. Mifsud-Bonnici went over to the Drydocks and made a rabble-rousing speech to several hundred dockers who then proceeded to Valletta in trucks and other company vehicles, and, carrying knives, steel chains and iron bars, ransacked the law courts and the Archbishop's curia



The unstable maverick ex-ruler of Malta: Mr Dom Mintoff.

AWKWARD FACTS ABOUT MALTA

● On 28 November last year, the Maltese Minister of Finance and Industry, Mr Wistin Abela, announced in his 1985 budget speech that the Maltese Government was proposing a change in the unit of the local currency. He stated that the Government, after consultation with the Central Bank, intended to 'change the Maltese currency in order to eradicate (*sic*) the connection, albeit psychological, still existing between the Maltese lira and sterling'. A Central Bank report states separately that 'this proposed measure – which is particularly relevant to the tourist industry – is intended to end, once and for all (*sic*) the lingering psychological link of the Maltese currency with sterling'.

● Saudi Arabia supports the Maltese régime financially. For example, some two-thirds of loans and grants from abroad, worth Lm9.1 million in 1985, is being made available by Saudi Arabia in connection with a port project at Marsaxlokk and the Government's Reverse Osmosis project (Lm0.4 million). Some Lm6.0 million is being provided by the Saudi Arabian Fund for Development. The Abu Dhabi Fund for Arab Economic Development, operating beyond its racial remit, is providing a further Lm0.3 million.

● Malta's international reserves are huge for a micro-nation with only 380,000 people. At the end of December last year, the Central Bank of Malta held \$924 million, and its 46,600 ounces of fine gold were valued nationally at \$64.5 million. So the Central Bank had international reserves of just under \$1 billion. These funds, derived from current account surpluses (tourism) and accumulated old remittances from Britain and NATO for the use of the military areas relinquished to Malta on 31 March 1979 (see Figure 2), have simply been hoarded over the years, rather than partly disbursed to improve the island's economy. The existence of the reserves makes nonsense of the Government's continuing requests for financial assistance, whether from Arab or from other sources (the EEC is supplying Lm2.2 million of discretionary taxpayers' money during 1985 by way of grants). Intelligence to the effect that Mr Mintoff is now effectively in control of the Central Bank can therefore be seen to be significant. For part of the political arrangements with the Soviet block may necessitate access to, or close control over, Malta's accumulated international reserves – which the new protecting powers may covet for their own purposes. ●

(the latter being situated only 30 metres away from the police headquarters). Over the last few years the Drydocks have been seriously under-utilised; but, rather than reducing the work-force, the Government has provided loans and overdrafts through the nationalised banks. Both the USSR and Libya have understood the Drydocks' strategic importance on the Maltese political scene and have helped the Government out by agreeing to have some ships built and refurbished there.

In March 1984, Malta and the USSR signed a still unpublished trade agreement which is said to envisage about \$260 million of Maltese exports to the Soviet Union over the three-year period to 1987, roughly the time by which the next elections should take place. The figure includes the supply by Malta of seven ships to be built under the supervision of the Russians. The conditions attached to this contract are not known but the Soviets are said to have driven a hard bargain as regards the ships' price, and their presence will ensure both that quality is

satisfactory and perhaps also that the right kind of information about the Soviet Union is disseminated among the gullible Maltese dockers.

The propaganda concerns of the Soviet Union were revealed for all to see when Moscow agreed to send a survey ship to start removing bombs and other war remnants from the sea-bed in Malta's Grand Harbour. Mintoff had deliberately (and with characteristic bad manners) raised this issue into a festering dispute with Britain; and since Britain refused to clear the war remnants without charging for the service (London being perfectly well aware that Malta has hoarded some \$1 billion of international reserves), he won a diplomatic 'victory' by prevailing on the Russians to do it instead. However, although the USSR is quick to win propaganda points, it has not been too generous in the implementation of the trade agreement. (Malta is expected to buy an equivalent amount of imports from the USSR, thus diversifying its trading patterns and coming to rely less on EEC countries

which at present provide some 70% of Maltese imports.) In addition, there have been extensive reports about a lack of agreement concerning the precise currency of payment for Maltese exports: one report claims that the Russians have insisted on paying for some textile exports in sterling, since the Maltese pound is much too overvalued.

However, despite its direct presence, the Soviet Union has, as usual, preferred to work in its established mediaeval fashion through surrogates, in developing its relations with Malta. It is perhaps aware that under the Yalta agreement of 1945, Malta (then a British colony) was recognised as belonging to the Western sphere of influence; and Moscow is thus being careful to advance indirectly and surreptitiously, so as not to upset the West too much. A military treaty was signed between Malta and North Korea in 1982; the latter provides arms, ammunition and training to Maltese military personnel. A second treaty, more far-reaching in its implications, was signed with Libya in November 1984. It follows

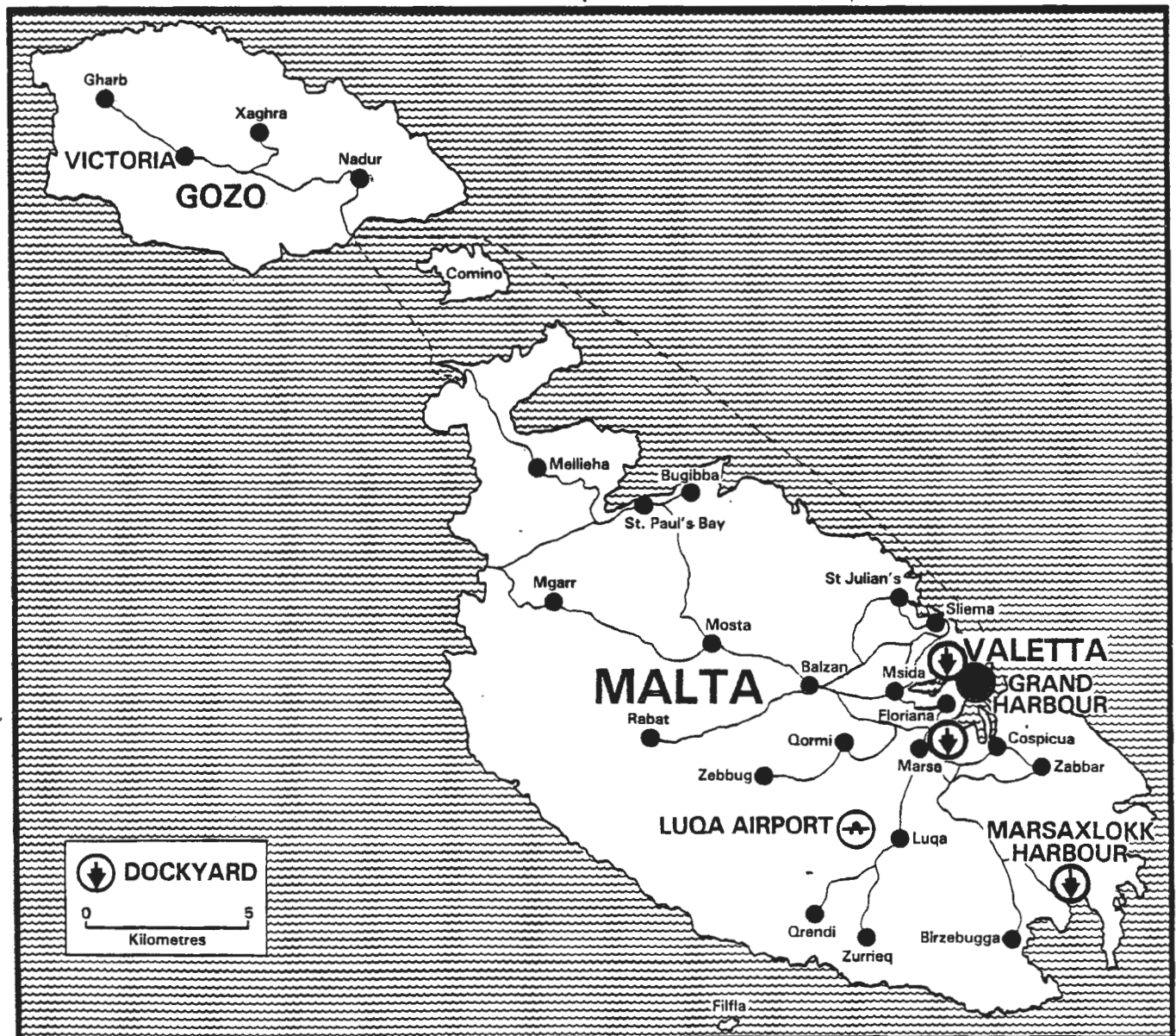


Figure 1: Map of the Maltese islands, showing the main towns and villages.

the usual proforma format of Soviet-style 'slave' treaties intended to constrict and subjugate target peoples, as a reading of the text reproduced here will confirm.

★ ★ ★

Malta-Libya

The Libyan-Maltese treaty covers defence and economic cooperation and virtually establishes a Libyan protectorate over this strategic Mediterranean island. Malta has received the promise of Libyan trade and participation in joint ventures and of the possibility that *a military labour corps of Maltese workers would be engaged on key projects in Libya*. In fact, throughout the months of December and January, several Libyan military vessels, amounting to a veritable naval flotilla, docked at Malta Drydocks for unspecified repairs. Trade between the two countries has also picked up, after having reached record lows in 1980-81 when Maltese imports into Libya were banned by Qadhafi as a result of differences between the two countries over the sharing of the continental shelf between them.

In exchange for increased Libyan business, Malta has accepted the establishment of a Libyan garrison in Malta (the strength and numbers of which have not been determined) supposedly to provide training to Maltese military personnel. It is well known that Libya does not have the capacity to train anybody, and in any case the Maltese forces are still proud of a military tradition acquired under the British. So the military training promised by the Lib-

yans will probably be provided by some other countries with which Libya has close military contacts, and is likely to be only a pretext for a military presence by Cubans, East Germans, Czechs, Bulgarians and Russians.

A defence protocol to the treaty provides for 'continuous exchange of information on matters of special interest to the mutual security and defence purposes of the other side', a provision which is likely to prove a one-way street. NATO sources fear that, as a result of this provision, Libya or some other country beholden to the Soviets, if not the Soviet Union itself, will be able to establish installations to monitor air and sea traffic in the central Mediterranean area. Another provision says that Libya will supply Malta with 'any military equipment and armaments which the Maltese side may require for their own use.' This is believed to be the provision of the greatest interest to Malta's sinister socialist régime, which wants to be prepared in the case of a popular uprising - which is not unlikely.

A similar motivation probably underlies the other provision whereby Libya has undertaken to assist Malta 'in case of threats or acts of aggression against Malta's territorial integrity and sovereignty.' It is very unlikely that Libya could defend Malta against a foreign aggressor, *but it could defend the Maltese régime against the wrath of the Maltese people*, especially since any other government (except one led by Public Works Minister Lorry Sant) is likely to be much less pro-Libyan than the present régime.

In what could be the first step towards a

merger, Libya and Malta also promise to hold consultations to 'harmonise' their viewpoints on political, economic, security and international issues. It is hard to see how the Maltese, who are Catholic, pro-Western and very attached to their democratic traditions, could harmonise their views with those of the Sovietised and brutalised Qadhafi dictatorship. But two matters mentioned in the joint communiqué published after the treaty's signature could land Malta in very troubled international waters.

The two sides expressed 'their profound concern at the many provocations by the USA which violate the sovereignty of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and its territorial integrity, which constitute a threat to international peace and security.' Furthermore, 'the Maltese side reiterated its support for the Jamahiriya's efforts to resist the various pressures arising from these provocations.' This diplomatic jargon refers to the various incidents between US and Libyan warplanes over the Gulf of Sidra, which is part of the High Seas but which in recent years Qadhafi has claimed as being Libyan territorial waters. US aircraft have overflown the Gulf to reaffirm its international character. However the Maltese régime has become the second one after the Libyan Government, to recognise the Gulf as an integral part of Libyan territory.

A second example of the harmonisation of Maltese and Libyan views concerns the Middle East. In the joint communiqué, the 'two sides confirmed their full support and absolute assistance to the armed struggle

Continued on page 6.



Mr Dom Mintoff, then Prime Minister, welcomes Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, the Libyan dictator.

FULL TEXT OF THE 'TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION' BETWEEN MALTA AND LIBYA OF 19 NOVEMBER 1984

The treaty of friendship and cooperation between Malta and Libya, signed by Prime Minister Mr. Mintoff and Col. Qadhafi, is the following:

"1. On the basis of their desire to preserve the bonds of friendship and the strategical relationship which exists between them, and their willingness for the consolidation and development of the relation of cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit and welfare of the Maltese people and the Libyan Arab people.

"2. Desirous of turning the Mediterranean into a lake of peace and of cooperating to achieve this end,

"3. Taking into consideration the decision of the People of the Republic of Malta to shed for ever the harmful and humiliating role of a foreign military base and to become instead a bridge of friendship between Europe and North Africa,

"4. Resolve by this Treaty to strengthen mutual security, friendship and cooperation between the two countries, in conformity with the principles of Non-Alignment and the Charter of the United Nations and therefore agree as follows:

ARTICLE 1

"The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Republic of Malta undertake not to participate in any Military Alliance which may affect the security interests of the other side.

ARTICLE 2

"Malta undertakes not to allow foreign military bases to be established on its territory and undertakes not to allow its territory to be used militarily against the security, territorial integrity of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

ARTICLE 3

"The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya undertakes to respect and support Malta's neutrality and will assist Malta whenever the Government of the Republic of Malta explicitly requests so in case of threats or acts of aggression against Malta's Territorial integrity and sovereignty.

ARTICLE 4

"In view of the importance of Malta's economic viability it is agreed that economic cooperation will be prompted in the fields of joint ventures, balanced commercial exchanges, and the utilization of Maltese labour. For this purpose, agreements in the fields of defence, information and economy will form an integral part of this Treaty.

ARTICLE 5

"The two sides will work towards the development of cooperation between them in the information and cultural fields with the aim of achieving stronger bonds between the two peoples.

ARTICLE 6

"The two sides will hold consultations aiming at harmonizing their viewpoints on political, economic, security and international issues which affect their interests whether directly or indirectly, and will endeavour to support one another's viewpoints whenever this mutual support is required.

ARTICLE 7

"The two sides will do their utmost to coordinate their efforts in the preservation of international peace and security, especially, in the Mediterranean region, and emphasize their faithful adherence to the principles and goals of the United Nations and Non-Alignment.

ARTICLE 8

"The two sides agree to set up a Mixed Commission which shall meet at Ministerial level alternately in Valetta and Tripoli, at least once every six months, to review progress in the above fields of cooperation and to plan and see to the implementation of cooperation in new sectors.

ARTICLE 9

"Any differences between the two sides which may arise from the interpretation of these provisions will be settled in a brotherly manner.

ARTICLE 10

"The duration of this 'Treaty' shall be five years renewable automatically for further five-year periods so long as none of the two sides expresses a desire in writing to adjust it or abrogate it six months at least before its expiration date.

ARTICLE 11

"This Treaty will come into force with immediate effect on the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification but not later than January 1985."

Protocol

The protocol on cooperation in security, signed by the Foreign Affairs Ministers, Dr. Alex Scerberras Trigona, and his Libyan counterpart Dr. Ali Treiki, says:

"Having regard to Article 3 of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Malta and the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, signed in Malta on the 19th November, 1984, the two sides further agree as follows:

"1. In order that each side may be fully informed on matters pertaining to this agreement, the two sides agree that there should be a continuous exchange of information on matters of special interest to the mutual security and defence purposes of the other side; and,

"2. In order to enable the Maltese Armed Forces to reach higher standards of military preparedness to be able to withstand threats or acts of aggression against Malta's territorial integrity and sovereignty the Libyan side shall train Maltese military personnel in Libya or in Malta as the two sides may agree from time to time and in the numbers and modalities that may be agreed upon.

"3. To meet the requirements of the Maltese Armed Forces which will be identified from time to time by the different sections of the Maltese forces, the Libyan side agreed to study supplying from their armouries and stores any military equipment and armaments which the Maltese side may require for their own use." ●

PRESS INTERVIEW WITH MIFSUD-BONNICI: JOURNALISTS FAIL TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

On 10 February, the Soviet-trained Prime Minister of Malta, Dr Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici – who has never contested an election in his life and is thought unlikely, if he has his way, ever to have to do so – answered questions put to him by some foreign travel writers. This interview would have been of zero significance had it not been for the fact that the writers were 'permitted' to ask some political questions. In the following excerpt, we have skipped the travel industry material, and simply reproduce the political section of the interview transcript. It will be seen that the journalists – Mr Lewis de Fries of the London *Sunday Express*, Mrs Frances Krebs for *Schönen Wohnen* and Mr Alan Levy of the *International Herald Tribune* – asked anodyne questions, when they could easily have pinned the Prime Minister down to having to clarify his pro-Soviet, anti-Israeli and Libya-loving attitudes and obligations.

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Q: How will the new Mifsud-Bonnici Government differ from the Mintoff Government?

Mifsud-Bonnici: Obviously it cannot be the same as it was because Mr Mintoff is no longer heading the Government. Also the personality of Mr Mintoff is such that he could run the show by himself. He did not do that even though that was the impression given. Now it will be a team effort. As regards the policies, these have to be approved by the General Conference of the Labour Party and implemented through the Cabinet decisions. It is too early to say whether the new Cabinet will depart from the policies of the previous Government. We are reviewing all the policies that we have inherited from the previous Government and if we think that it is in the interest of the country to depart from the policies pursued in the past, there will be no obstacles in doing so.

We have a very big advantage over other changes in Government because Mr

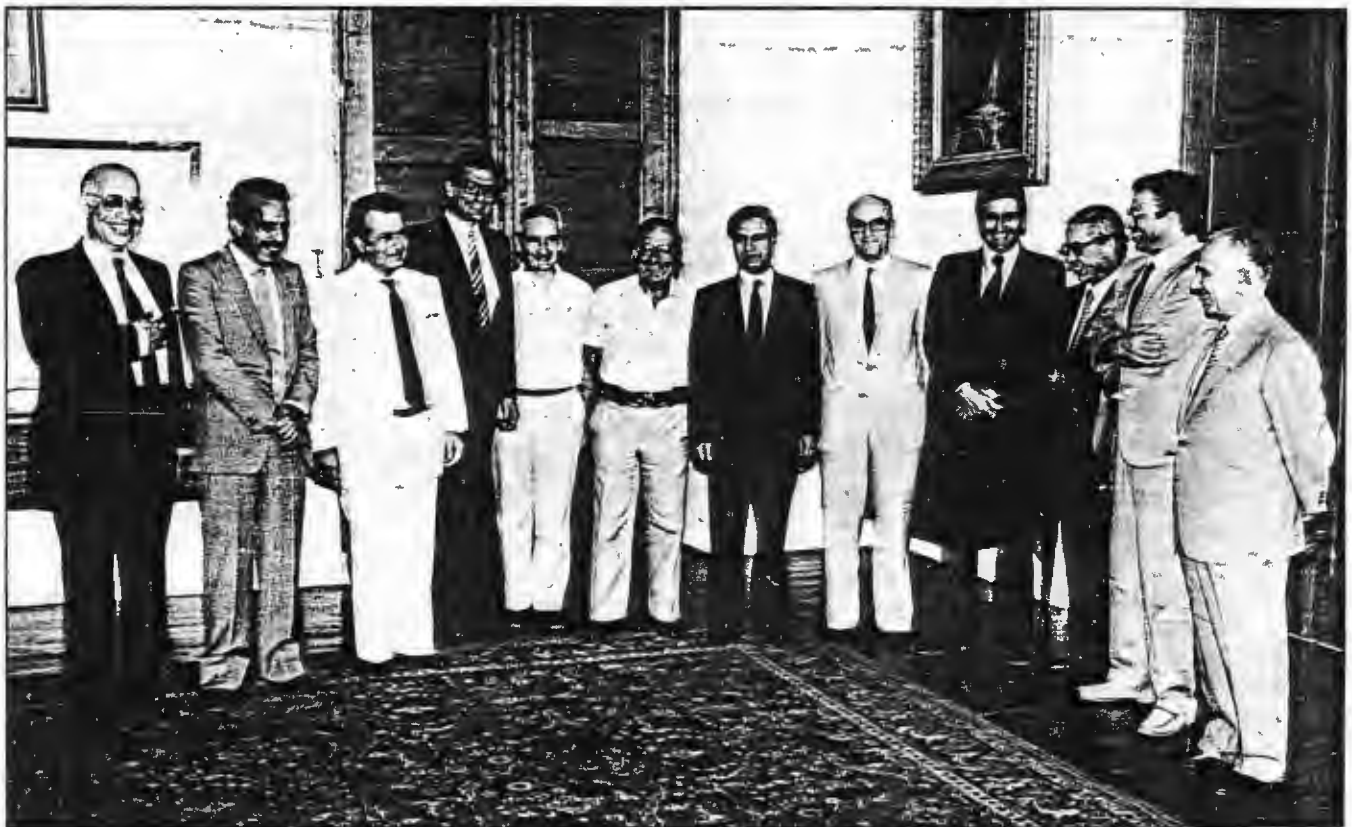
Interview continued on page 7.

Continued from page 4.

staged by the Palestinian people to liberate their soil in its entirety and return to their homeland' and 'strongly condemned all defeatist plans and submissive solutions in the region.' Malta has thus already harmonised its 'views' with those of Libya concerning the vexed question of Palestine, supporting the armed struggle according to Soviet directives and forswearing negotiations as a means of solving the dispute.

A by-product of the treaty may be an increased use of Malta as a staging post for international terrorism. Several key Palestinian and Libyan terrorists caught in Europe in recent years have carried false Maltese passports. In mid-November, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, revealed that an assassination attempt against a former Libyan Prime Minister, Mr Bakoush, resident in Cairo, had been masterminded by the Libyan Embassy in Malta – which had been instrumental in recruiting a four-man hit squad of two Maltese and two Malta-based Britons. One of the Maltese turned out to have been an unsuccessful SP candidate in the 1981 elections. A few days after the plot was uncovered, Colonel Qadhafi landed in Malta for a triumphant visit during which he signed the military co-operation treaty with Mintoff. During his visit, Qadhafi addressed a public rally of the ruling SP, in the course of which he called Reagan a 'madman' and Mubarak 'a CIA agent' – to the apparent non-embarrassment of his Maltese hosts.

Whatever that visits means in international affairs, it certainly showed that Col-



Sceberras Trigona, Mifsud-Bonnici and Mintoff (centre) with delegates to a meeting of 'non-aligned' Mediterranean countries.

onel Qadhafi felt very much on home ground when he was in Malta.

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Malta-Israel

Up to 1971, Malta's Socialist Party had close relations with Israel's Labour Party, its partner in the Socialist International. In the 1950s and the 1960s, when he was in opposition, Mintoff requested and received help both from the Mapai and from the trade union organisation Histadrut. This continued well after the war of Yom Kippur in 1967, even though Mintoff later tried to argue that the reversal of alliances had resulted from his opposition to the annexation of territory by Israel as a result of that military engagement.

In reality, it was after his election to office in 1971, that Mintoff turned anti-Israel as a direct result of Qadhafi's influence and 'generosity'. In the United Nations, Malta has often taken the initiative in proposing anti-Israeli resolutions, and has willingly provided a front for Arab states. Trade and economic co-operation with Israel have been banned, though Maltese industrialists agree that the island could benefit from Israeli technology and know-how. Malta's radio and television, a state-run monopoly, have been violently pro-Arab and anti-Israel over the past fourteen years, both in their daily news bulletins and other in current affairs programmes. In an effort to please Qadhafi, Mintoff banned the public showing of the film *Raid on Entebbe*, which remains very popular in private viewings with the strongly anti-Arab Maltese people.

The most bizarre and significant incident concerning Israel occurred on December 23, 1983. Esther Milo, the Israeli Chargé d'Affaires, escaped with injuries to her face and arms after five shots were fired at her as she was returning to her car. The assailant, a young man of Arab complexion, escaped and the police showed a remarkable lack of enthusiasm in pursuing the matter. The Mintoff régime failed to condemn the attack or to express its sympathy either to Miss Milo or to the Israeli Government. Indeed, the pro-Mintoff press tried to cast doubt as to whether the attack had actually taken place. It was only weeks after the incident (by which time the assailant had probably left the island), that the police circulated an identikit picture of the presumed attacker, and interrogated some Arabs who obviously had no connection with the case ●.

★ ★ ★

From the agenda of the meeting of 'Non-aligned' Mediterranean countries convened by Malta on 10 September 1984:

'Review of the situation prevailing in the Mediterranean...

● The situation in the Middle East and the problem of Palestine and in particular the deprivation of Arab People of Palestine of their national and inalienable rights, the persistence of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, the annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan heights and the occupation of South Lebanon by Israeli forces, the Israeli inhuman and illegal practices in Palestine and occupied Arab territories, the threat to the national security of Syria, and the US/Israeli strategic alliance'.

Interview: Continued from page 6.

Mintoff has been appointed special adviser which is a very big help because of his vast experience having been Prime Minister for 13 consecutive years, leader of the Labour Party for 35 years (*sic*) and his 40 years in politics. But otherwise the Government is free to accept or not the advice of Mr Mintoff.

You may have already noted a different approach towards the EEC. We have started negotiations and we hope that the reception we will have from the EEC will be better than we have had in the past. We have shown our good faith in again re-establishing links with the European Community and we hope that they will react positively in the same way that we have reacted. We would like to see more progress than has been registered in the past. The reception in the past from a number of Governments has been rather cold. Relations with the United Kingdom are not as good as we would like them to be. We hope to pick up the loose ends very soon.

The same thing applies to the US Government. We have endeavoured to get closer to the US Government on a number of occasions and if we are not as close as we would like to be it is not because we have not made efforts. We hope that the change will induce these Governments to have a new look and a new approach. On our part we are willing to try again and adopt different tactics which in the past may not have been successful.

Q: What are the negotiations you have having with the EEC? Are you applying for membership?

Mifsud-Bonnici: We are not in a stage to apply for membership in the EEC. Not even the EEC has suggested that we should do that. We have been discussing the renewal of the financial protocol which expired two years ago. After that we have to discuss trade relations with the EEC because we import twice as much as we export to the EEC and we have to boost our exports to be able to absorb our unemployment. It is only fair for the EEC to help Malta to increase its productive base to export more in order that we may solve our unemployment problem. That is the help we would expect from friendly countries.

Q: Your efforts to get closer to the EEC, the United Kingdom and the US Governments, are they being done at the expense of your relationship with Qadhafi?

Mifsud-Bonnici: That is not so. Our experience of Qadhafi differs completely from what the newspapers say about him. We believe that Qadhafi would like to get closer to a number of European countries notwithstanding what the papers say about

Interview concluded on page 8.

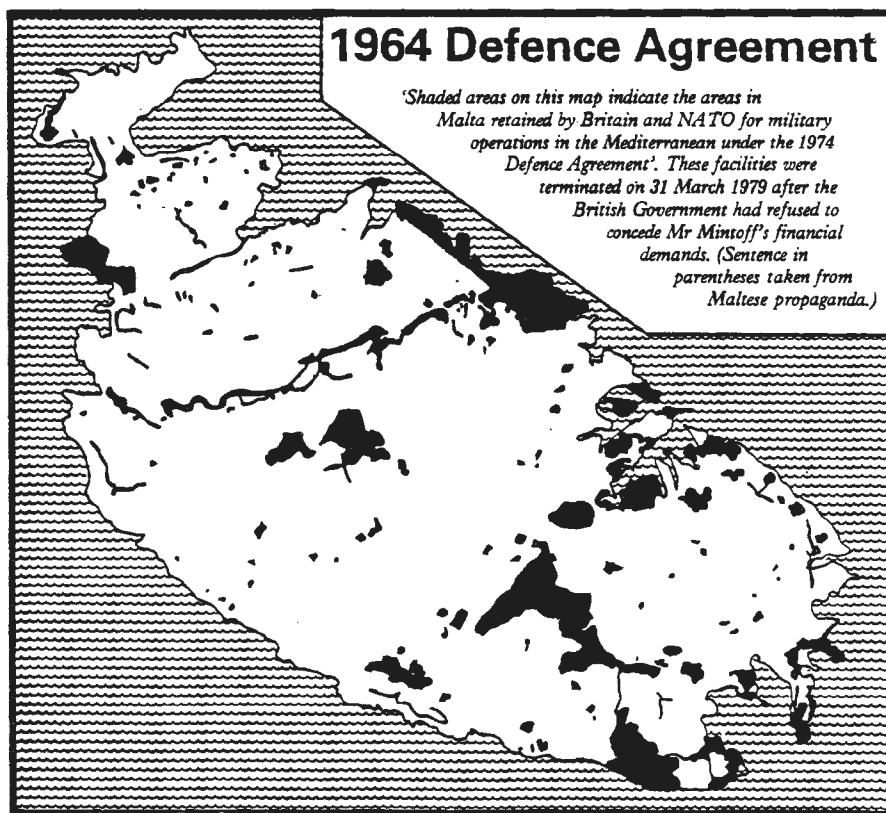


Figure 2: Maltese Government map of former British/NATO military areas.

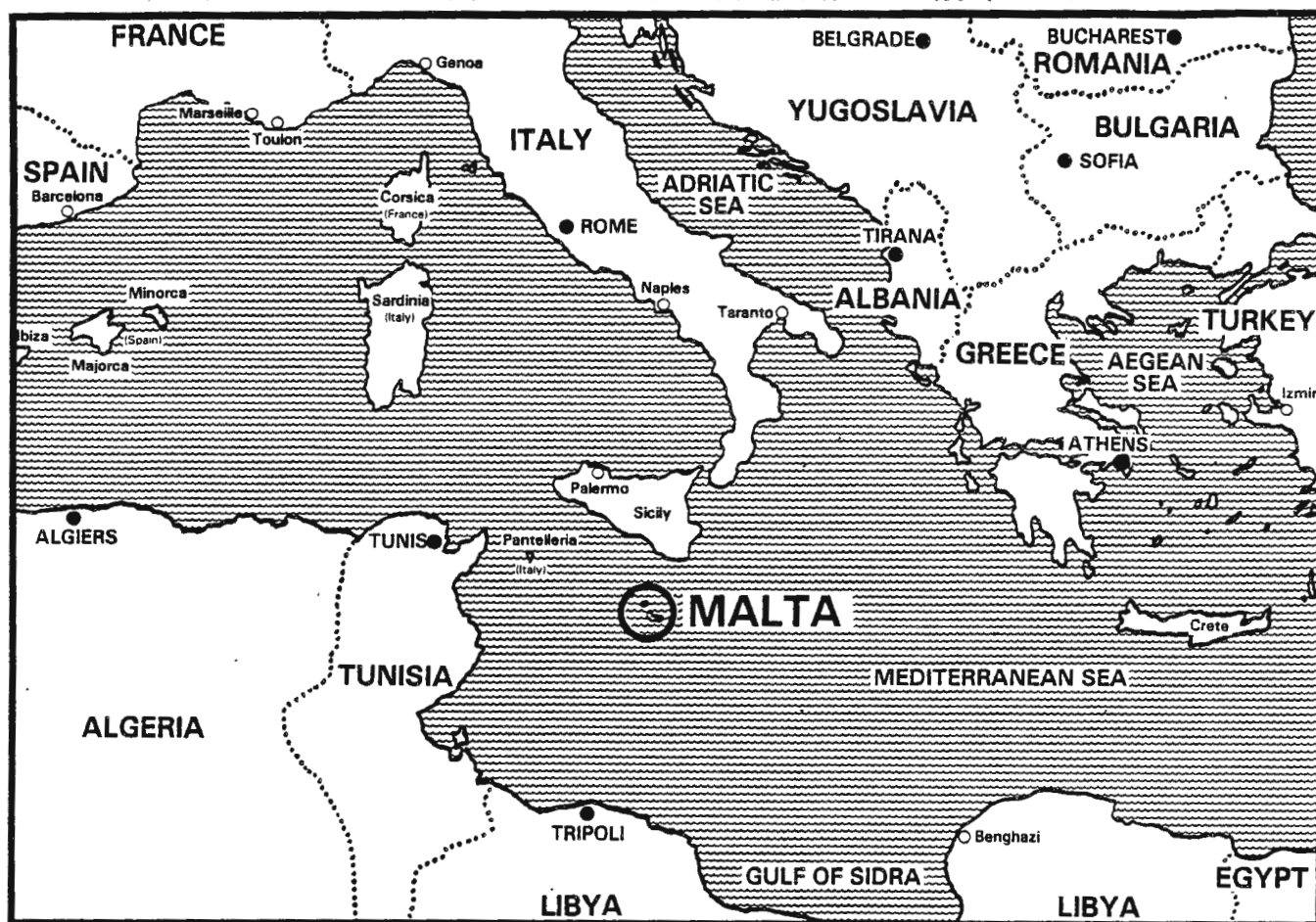


Figure 3: Location of the Maltese Islands: strategic gateway to the Eastern Mediterranean and to the Middle East.

'Non-aligned' meeting of Mediterranean countries at Valetta, 10 September 1984:

The following is an excerpt from the opening statement of the Soviet-oriented Maltese Foreign Minister, Dr Alex Sceberras Trigona, at a Ministerial meeting of 'Non-aligned' countries of the Mediterranean which Mr Minotoff arranged in Valetta to promote Soviet objectives and propaganda in the region:

'Until 1972, since Malta was considered an outpost by the West in its contest with the East, far from assuming a rôle for peace in the Mediterranean we were expected to project the aggressive stance of outside powers. We were obstructed from utilising our own land for building the houses, the factories, government departments, schools and tourist accommodation so badly needed to redress the grossly inadequate social and economic infrastructure we inherited from the colonial period'.

ARAB-ASIAN AFFAIRS

Editor and publisher: Christopher Story MA
Published by World Reports (UK) Limited
108 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2EF, England.

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Interview: Concluded from page 7.

him. That is the impression that he has fostered among us. For example the United Kingdom and Libya have done their utmost to solve the difficulties that have arisen recently between their two countries. One should not go by what appears on the surface.

Our relations with Libya are not an obstacle to better relations with the European countries. We have been trying to impress upon these countries that it is in their own interest if they could have a go-between. We could be friends to both.

Q: What about your relations with the Church?

Mifsud-Bonnici: Our relations with the Church have improved considerably and we are expecting to start negotiations on a Concordat with the Holy See very soon.

Q: Are you planning to call an election before 1987?

Mifsud-Bonnici: Certainly not. We want some time to tackle more urgent problems. The moment we feel that it is in the best interest of the country to have an election, we have no worries or fears to call an election. It is not in the interest of the country to have an early election. We sincerely believe this for two reasons: (a) because of the instability which an election campaign brings in its wake and at the moment we think we should avoid this; and (b) we sincerely believe also that the Opposition Party does not have alternative plans to govern the country.

Q: How do you think you would do if an election was held now?

Mifsud-Bonnici: We will win it again.

(Editor's note: The government party did not win last time. It rigged the result. It would be most unlikely to win next time, either — so more ballot-rigging will be necessary. Our extremely well-informed sources believe that, if he survives an internal power struggle, Mifsud-Bonnici would not dare risk another open election. He may opt for a Lenin/Qadhafi-style 'People's Committee' system to institutionalise his permanent personal rule. More probably, either he or his successor may court domestic disturbances and then justify dispensing with the tiresome formalities of democracy by imposing a military-backed dictatorship).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1985

Its Strategic Location Makes Malta Notable Beyond Its Falcons

* * *

Some Fear New Marxist Drift
And Alliance With Libya;
Others Just Call It Quirky

By JAMES M. PERRY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

VALLETTA, Malta—This handsome little island is overrun with Moslems from Libya and communists from Russia, China and North Korea.

The Grand Harbor—and grand it truly is—is filled with Russian ships. The new dockyard cranes were installed by the People's Republic of China. The police were trained by the North Koreans.

Western diplomats worry that Malta, with its strategic location in the middle of the Mediterranean—it is south of Sicily, north of Libya—could become a dangerous Marxist state, harboring Libyan terrorists or even providing a safe harbor for the Russian navy.

Unlikely Marxist Haven

But it is an unlikely Marxist haven. Ruled for centuries by mighty world powers, it now is on its own, and all the old rules are out the window.

For starters, the local Gallup poll suggests that it is the most Roman Catholic nation on earth. Of the island's 320,000 population, 98% are Catholic, and they go to church on Sunday. They are conservative and traditional Catholics, too.

The parliament meets in one of Europe's grandest palaces; it was once the headquarters for the grand masters of the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Each year, the grand master paid tribute—one falcon—to the Holy Roman Emperor's viceroy in Sicily. (Right, the Maltese falcon.)

The Maltese are used to foreigners. In 1565, 700 Knights of St. John and about 7,000 ordinary soldiers held off a great Turkish army of 30,000 men sent to subdue them by no less than Suleiman the Magnificent. The island held out for 31 days in one of history's immortal sieges. The Turks were forced to beat a hasty retreat when a relief force hove into view from Sicily.

The tiny island survived a second siege in World War II. Italian and German war planes rained bombs on it for four years. The Maltese endured 3,340 air-raid alerts, huddling in bomb shelters for a total of 2,357 hours and six minutes, according to official statistics. (Malta achieved its independence from Britain in 1964, but the last British soldier didn't leave until 1979.)

But, "look what's happening to us now," says Vincent Tabone, president of the executive council of the Nationalist Party, the opposition party in Malta. "We survived centuries of colonial rule. We held on to our culture and our language. We remained one of the oldest civilizations in Europe. Now, finally, we are on our own. And we have an increasingly authoritarian regime. It is a tragedy."

Tourists still flock to Malta to take pictures of the ancient fortifications and soak up the sun. But even the tourists are getting the idea that everything isn't strictly on the level here. There are aberrations.

Curious, indeed, is something called the Foreign Interference Act. The law makes it illegal, technically at least, for a foreign reporter to interview a local politician without the foreign minister's permission. "It is illegal for me to talk to you," notes

Mr. Tabone, comfortably ensconced in a lounge chair in the lobby of the Phoenicia Hotel, still filled with British tourists with stiff upper lips and memories of the days when they ruled here.

There are other curious laws and edicts. The Maltese can't buy Japanese products because the Japanese don't buy Maltese products. The aim is to punish Japan, though the Japanese economy seems to be surviving. Italy isn't popular either, so it is almost impossible for Maltese to withdraw money from the Bank of Malta to travel to Italy.

Also unpopular with the island's socialist Labor Party government is the Roman Catholic Church. Not long ago, party hooligans broke into a church building and vandalized the chapel. The government has been attempting, so far without success, to control the Catholic schools, where some 40% of the island's children go. The Vatican is attempting to reach an agreement with the government. "We are literally fighting for Malta's soul," says a young Catholic priest.

Then there is the Libyan connection. The largest hotel on the island is owned by and used almost exclusively by Libyans. Arabic is now a required language course in all Maltese schools. There is a new mosque built by the Libyans. Recently, Libyan warships have been regularly putting into the Grand Harbor.

Libyans don't need passports to hop across to Malta (just an identification card). American officials suspect Malta is being used as a jumping off place for Libyan terrorists. They suggest that the Libyans can come here and buy Maltese passports for as little as \$300. They worry that guns used by terrorists may be shipped through here. They even suspect that the uniforms worn by Libyan strongman Muammar Qadhafi are made by Maltese tailors (who honed their naval tailoring skills on generations of British naval officers).

Dealing with the government can take on the aura of a James Bond adventure written by Woody Allen. One night, a visiting reporter is told to be at the Labor

Party headquarters, located deep within one of the fortress towers built by the Knights of St. John centuries ago. There he is to interview Alfred Sant, president of the party.

The ground floor of the party headquarters is a disco. "We rent it out," says Mr. Sant, a saturnine management expert educated at Harvard, "but nobody seems to come." The disco, in fact, is empty.

Mr. Sant escorts the visitor through a maze of ancient tunnels, water dripping down their walls. The music from the disco echoes through the ancient fortress. Mr. Sant sits down at a small desk. The visitor sits down across from him. "Would you like to see the prime minister?" he asks.

Mr. Sant and the visitor set off again, finally arriving in a large, handsomely furnished room. Seated at the desk is Prime Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici says most journalists who come to Malta write "naughty" things. He wants to explain what's really happening in Malta.

Technically this interview may be illegal, for there is no indication the foreign minister has given his blessing to the two-hour talk. But that doesn't stop Mr. Mifsud Bonnici, who after all is new to the job. When Malta's longtime leader Dom Mintoff stepped down last December, he hand-picked his successor. Because Mr. Mifsud Bonnici has never stood for election—to any office—his Maltese critics call him "Zero."

The man called Zero gives a long, and occasionally impassioned defense of Malta's quirky ways. Malta is a little country trying to get along in a big, sometimes cruel world, he suggests.

If other countries can trade with Libya, he says, "why can't we?" He denies that Malta is being used as a terrorist center by the Libyans or that Maltese passports are for sale to Libyans. He defends Malta's agreement to build eight 8,500-ton ships to haul timber for the Soviet Union. Maltese shipyards have never built such big ships.

"We had no choice," the prime minister says. "We literally begged the United States to do business with us. But we were turned down flat. We are neutrals. We want to do business with everybody." (American diplomats say the Maltese have been unable to convince American businessmen that the climate here is congenial for investment. The diplomats add that Maltese leaders can't understand that the U.S. government is unable to force businesses to come to Malta.)

It is late in the evening when the interview winds down. Drinks are brought in. The disco music is still playing, far away. Now, the prime minister has a question. "What's going to happen to the dollar?" he asks. He wants to know because most of socialist Malta's reserves are in capitalist American dollars. He is disappointed that his visitor is unable to make a prediction.

Mardi 26 février 1985

Page 4

Malte

● **ARRESTATION DU PRÉSIDENT DES JEUNES DÉMOCRATES-CHRÉTIENS EUROPÉENS.** — M. Massimo Gorla, président de l'Union européenne des jeunes démocrates-chrétiens européens, de nationalité italienne, a été arrêté samedi soir 23 février à La Valette, parce qu'il venait de prendre la parole au cours d'un meeting du Parti nationaliste (opposition) pour lui apporter « le salut de son organisation » sans en référer aux autorités gouvernementales, en application d'une loi de 1982. Il a été libéré sous caution dimanche. L'opposition maltaise avait saisi le Conseil de l'Europe d'un recours contre cette loi au début de l'année. L'avocat de M. Gorla, de son côté, a soulevé devant les juges une exception d'inconstitutionnalité pour violation de la liberté d'expression. — (AFP, Reuter.)

Concern at Malta's Eastern tilt

BY GODFREY GRIMA IN VALLETTA

MALTA'S flirtations with Moscow have become a source of growing concern for the island's traditional trading partners in Western Europe. Suspicion is heightening that the courtship could lead to East European countries being awarded a bigger portion of Malta's rising imports bill.

Dr Alex Sciberras Trigona, Maltese foreign minister, on Friday night however dismissed the ominous complexions colouring Malta's growing affinities with the Eastern bloc. Reporting back to Parliament on last week's Prime Ministerial visit to Moscow where trade and economic ties were discussed, Dr Sciberras Trigona asserted Malta was trying to tap markets ignored by previous administrations. This, he added, would not be done at the expense of Malta's existing trading relations with Western Europe.

Mr Dom Mintoff, the outgoing Prime Minister, at the same time invited the U.S. to upstage the Soviet Union by providing the island with even better

trade deals than the \$265m three-year countertrade accord signed with Moscow in March.

Western Europe remains by far the major beneficiary of Maltese purchases from abroad. Out of a global imports bill totalling Maltese £273m (£462.4 totalling Maltese £273m (£462.4m), imports from EEC and EFTA countries by October this year had reached £M215m (£365m). Orders placed with East Europe, including of course Moscow, at £M11m were dwarfed into insignificance.

In between January and October West European companies had picked up almost all of Malta's industrial production, not including tourist receipts. Their share of the island's £M138.8m exports came up to £M103m, which greatly towered over the £M7m worth of purchases and ship repair jobs arriving from the Soviet bloc.

Particularly disconcerting, however, are Maltese demands for bilateral trade to be wound down to more rational levels

where the imbalances against Malta are huge.

This has led to constant wrangling with Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Imports from the latter two countries are currently banned.

Malta insists its leading partners either step up their purchases of semi-manufactured goods or else increase their industrial investments on the island.

East European countries, lead by the Soviet Union, have been making overtures by offering countertrade and barter accords. By year end the Eastern bloc, due predominantly to the countertrade accord with Moscow, will have eradicated its net trade surplus and tipped the balance in Malta's favour.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

(Brussels edition)

15 JAN. 1985

Here Comes Dr. Zero

Dom Mintoff, Malta's recently retired prime minister, never left any doubt that his primary objective was to steadily tighten the government's grip on his tiny island nation. Measured against that objective, he has succeeded admirably. He also has made sure that his retirement will change nothing for the better.

In his last speech before the Maltese parliament, Mr. Mintoff rattled off his "achievements," noting that the supply of essential commodities was no longer dependent on the whims of private entrepreneurs. This is correct. For the supply of essential commodities is today dependent on the whims of people like Mr. Mintoff, whose government exercises control over all imports. In practice this has meant, for example, that the Maltese can no longer buy Japanese cars, the preferred import of the Labor Party government, being the Russian Lada.

Moreover, Mr. Mintoff has ensured Malta's slide away from democracy with his choice of successor, the former education minister, Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici, you may remember, was the government spokesman making all those inflammatory remarks during last fall's feud with the Roman Catholic Church. He was the same one who led a mob through the streets of Valletta before it sacked the Roman Curia. He also uttered dark warnings that "foreign interference" might make future

elections "useless and baseless." Nicknamed by the opposition "Dr. Zero" because he has never run for office—even his position to parliament was an appointment—Mr. Mifsud Bonnici understandably fears what elections might bring.

Indeed, with Malta now closer to nations like Libya and North Korea than to, let us say, nearby Tunisia, and with just about everything on the island nationalized, the logical next step was for Mr. Mintoff to retire and leave the country in the hands of his handpicked deputy. Originally he had intended to retire after a triumphant return from Rome, where he had hoped to wangle an agreement with the Vatican. When that failed, he headed off to London, where he was the object of several demonstrations and the recipient of a lecture from Mrs. Thatcher. In the end, he was forced to go to his new friends in Moscow to get any measure of respect, coming back to Malta clutching an agreement to build Soviet ships. That contract no doubt owed more to Malta's strategic placement at the key chokepoint of the Mediterranean than to Mr. Mintoff's bargaining skills or personal charm.

But by his own lights, the man has been a great success. Having brought his people to the borders of the promised land of collectivism, he leaves the amply qualified Mr. Mifsud Bonnici to take them those last few steps.

Malta: Mintoff's premature obituary

Reports that Dominic ('Dom') Mintoff has retired from Maltese politics are grossly exaggerated. Before Parliament recessed for Christmas in December 1984, the 70-year-old veteran handed over the post of Prime Minister to 51-year-old Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici. Mintoff retained his parliamentary seat, as well as his control over all the levers of power in the government, the ruling Socialist Party (SP) and the government-dominated General Workers' Union (GWU).

Mifsud-Bonnici, an SP backroom strategist for over a decade, has never contested an election. He was co-opted into Parliament in 1982 after an elected member was persuaded to resign; he was then nominated leader-designate of the SP by Mintoff over the heads of more established figures. His nomination was not put to a vote, secret or otherwise, and was approved by acclamation by the party's general conference. During the 1982-4 period, he tried to establish himself by weekly speeches, regularly re-echoed by the state broadcasting corporation, which has a monopoly of broadcasting on the island. These talks were promptly called 'Sunday homilies'—not surprising in a Catholic country where even anti-clericalism takes a clerical tinge. He has been known to open public rallies by calling on the party faithful to 'ask for the blessing of our father' (meaning Mintoff) and to refrain from doing anything 'which could cause pain to our father's heart'.

In the space of a few years, Mifsud-Bonnici, a bachelor lawyer of ascetic appearance, turned from a fanatical Catholic to a no less fanatical Marxist. From 1982 to 1984 he led with crusading zeal the latest phase of Mintoff's campaign against the Catholic church, at one time even threatening to set up a rival church. His speeches have revealed a strong totalitarian streak: he has threatened to withhold recognition from the trade unions which do not belong to the GWU, to replace the courts by 'people's tribunals' if they oppose the government's will, and to silence newspapers which criticise Libya and the Soviet Union. His attacks on private enterprise were less surprising because his predilection for state ownership and control was well-known. More important, he has stated several times that the next elections, due in 1986, could be called off in case of 'interference' from abroad or from the Catholic church, or simply to allow the government to tackle the island's unemployment problem. Passing from words to action, in September 1984, at the height of a dispute over church schools, he led a demonstration of dock workers, many of them carrying steel bars and chains, into the capital, Valletta. Though he was not with them when they ransacked the law courts and the Archbishop's curia, he later called them 'the aristocracy of the drydocks workers' and thanked them for having done 'what was needed to be done'.

Nobody doubts that Mifsud-Bonnici sincerely—indeed, passionately—believes in the justice of his causes; but it is obvious that he does not have the political clout to promote them. He

would not have acceded to the SP leadership if Mintoff had not placed him at the top and, without his mentor's support, he would soon be relieved of his post if only because his statements and actions are unpopular with many SP supporters. The SP itself is the minority party in Malta: at the last election, in 1981, it obtained 49 per cent of the popular vote, compared with 51 per cent for the pro-western opposition Nationalist Party (NP). However, despite the country's system of proportional representation, the SP obtained 34 out of 65 parliamentary seats thanks to a last-minute revision of constituency boundaries which was said to have been plotted out by Mifsud-Bonnici himself.

Instead of seeking a broad political consensus to make up for its lack of a popular mandate, the Socialist government took a more controversial stance. This pushed it into bitter and divisive confrontations with the unions representing public employees, parents and teachers of private schools accounting for 30 per cent of the island's school population, and the business community, in addition to its running battles with the opposition NP and the Catholic church. Periodic and unnecessary rows with Britain, Italy, West Germany, the Vatican and the European Community, combined with growing links to Soviet bloc countries and a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Libya, have further eroded the government's support among the predominantly pro-western population.

On domestic matters, Mifsud-Bonnici has systematically taken aggressively radical positions while Mintoff has often kept a low profile and, paradoxically, tried on occasion to appear the more moderate of the two. This can be explained by his ambition to become President of Malta, a post which is at present largely honorific but which he would like to see vested with executive powers over domestic and foreign policy. Like President Bourguiba in Tunisia, he would transfigure himself into a national leader while leaving the day-to-day business of government to lesser and younger mortals. In this regard, the selfless Mifsud-Bonnici is the person best suited to stage-manage Mintoff's apotheosis; others who had patiently constructed a power base of their own within the SP would have had less reason to be grateful and deferential towards the ageing leader.

However, the elevation of Mintoff into an executive president cannot be effected without a major political crisis. The necessary constitutional amendment would require a two-thirds majority in Parliament and the opposition NP, which feels it was cheated of an electoral victory in 1981, is in no mood to help Mintoff. For his part, Mintoff will be reluctant to court defeat by putting the proposed constitutional changes to a national referendum. Any attempt to bypass the Constitution could well lead to the suspension of democracy in Malta, a prospect made more palatable to Mifsud-Bonnici by the unlikelihood that he would win any elections in the near future.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

6 JANUARY 1985

Enter 'Dr Zero', stage left Malta

● After 13 years Dom Mintoff has been succeeded by MIFSUD BONNICI as Malta's premier. Peter Godwin charts the history of his rise to power

VALLETTA'S Auberge de Castille et Leon, a former inn for Spanish knights and now Malta's seat of government, last week admitted a new prime minister, Karmelo Mifsud Bonnici, erstwhile harking dog of his predecessor, Dom Mintoff.

For 35 years Mintoff stamped his pugnacious personality on the style of leadership of this, densely populated Mediterranean island, and his departure leaves a yawning gap. Into the void created by the end of the undoubted Mintoffian charisma — he evoked devotion or hatred amongst his fellow Maltese, but never indifference — enters, by complete contrast, the grey man, Karmelo Mifsud Bonnici.

Sporting a spiky, silver crew cut above an unnaturally pale face that even the Mediterranean sunshine has failed to

tan (he is reputed to be one of the very few islanders who cannot swim) KMB, as he is known, speaks in an earnest monotone with a fastidiousness sometimes verging on pedantry. At 51, KMB, a lawyer by profession, remains a bachelor sharing a modest terraced house with his spinster sister, and brother, the local priest.

Bonnici was born into a devoutly religious, middle class family that traditionally voted for the opposition Nationalist party, whom his other brother, Ugo, still represents in Parliament. As a young man, Bonnici was deeply involved in church organisations.

It was via industrial law and trade union legal work that Bonnici has steamed into power from relative obscurity in little over five years.

What endeared KMB to his idol, Mintoff, was his masterminding of the Labour party electoral victory in 1981. Through an elaborate series of boundary changes before the voting, Labour narrowly won the election despite polling fewer votes than their Nationalist party rivals. Although the tactics brought about a constitutional crisis, with a Nationalist boycott of the subsequent parliament amid accusations of gerrymandering, KMB earned Mintoff's undying gratitude for delivering the victory.

Having been brought in as party deputy leader, KMB was appointed in 1982, again at Mintoff's insistence, "leader designate" of the Labour party, and co-opted as a Labour MP in 1983. All this was achieved without the aid of a single vote, from either Labour members or the general electorate, and this has earned him the nickname "Dr Zero" from his detractors.

It is perhaps this lack of democratic initiation that, on occasion, results in Bonnici's dismissive opinion of electoral niceties. It was in an interview with *The Sunday Times* last year that he first threatened to cancel Malta's forthcoming general election due by autumn next year, if he deemed there to be "foreign or church interference". And he has also been known to muse enviously in public about the attractions of a one-party state.

But it was as minister of education, his most recent mantle, that KMB really took the political limelight. His determination to force church schools on the island to waive all fees provoked fierce church resistance. It was an issue that divided the devoutly religious island as never before.

The crack-down against the church was the last round in a long battle to curb all centres of opposition, from independent unions and the medical profession to the judiciary and teachers. In carrying out the final assault on the church, the once religious KMB showed all the cunning of the poacher turned gamekeeper.

At the height of the dispute Bonnici accompanied a mob of dockworkers, the rump of Labour's working class support, waving the red and white banners of the ruling party, who marched through Valletta, carrying the "tools of their trade", metal bars, sledgehammers and knives.

The mob went on to damage the law courts and ransack the archbishop's curia. Bonnici's condemnation of these acts was curiously circumspect. While he deplored the damage caused, the government, he said "had to thank God that these incidents had served to avoid greater damage on October 1st" (when church schools were due to open in defiance of government policy).

Despite his legal background, Bonnici has shown a growing frustration with the established courts, particularly in constitutional cases when judgement has been against the government and has suggested the setting up of "peoples' courts".

In foreign policy matters Bonnici is likely to continue Mintoff's easing away from European skirts, clutching instead at those of Libya, and even the Soviet Union in pursuit of the grail of a neutral "sea of peace" in the Mediterranean.

Despite his "retirement" however, Malta has not seen the last of Dom Mintoff, and he continues in attendance as midwife to the lacklustre Bonnici's fledgling premiership, for the moment preventing challenges from other contenders within the party for the leadership. Mintoff is tipped for the governorship of the Bank of Malta cum roving ambassador, and remains very much Malta's elder statesman.

Straying perilously close to a pirate version of the Lord's prayer, Bonnici recently began a Labour party rally by invoking "the blessings of our father, Dom Mintoff". And it is Dom Mintoff who art, for the time being at least, still pulling the strings above the glare of the Maltese political stage.

Die Presse

Unabhängige Tageszeitung für Österreich

Freitag, 1. März 1985

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1985

(BUSSELS EDITOR)

Nights of Malta

If you're planning any vacation time on sunny Malta this coming travel season, you might want to note the fate of one Massimo Gorla. Mr. Gorla is the Italian president of the European Young Christian Democrats, and while in Malta the other day he addressed a public meeting of the opposition Nationalist Party without the permission of the Maltese foreign minister. The Maltese police nabbed him Saturday evening after the speech, and after making bail he headed back to Rome, happy not to have been sent to prison.

Mr. Gorla's arrest probably won't cause much of a blip on the human rights seismographs, since Malta is a small place with little effect on world affairs. That's too bad, because his arrest is but the latest step in the slide from the democracy that this former British colony once enjoyed. It's also evidence—if any were needed—that the retirement of the long-time Maltese premier, Dom Mintoff, and the accession of his handpicked successor, Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, will not mark a turn for the better. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici, you might recall, is the man who during last fall's dispute with the Roman Catholic Church distinguished himself with volatile talk and dark hints that elections might be suspended.

The Mifsud Bonnici government moved against Mr. Gorla under a 1982 measure called the Foreign Interference Act, which defines foreign activity as "anything done by, or sponsored, promoted or in any manner whatsoever assisted or encouraged by

any foreign person." A product of the Mintoff days, the act's design is twofold: first, to outlaw any foreign broadcasting aimed at the Maltese people and thus strengthen the government's own monopoly of the island's sole broadcasting station; second, to control the other activities of, for example, visiting journalists. The wording is deliberately vague, and as the arrest of Mr. Gorla shows it in practice gives the ruling Labor Party the right to arrest any visitor it feels like arresting.

From all accounts thus far, there appears to be nothing unusual or subversive about Mr. Gorla's actions in Malta. Throughout Europe it is common practice for the various parties to visit each other and express their solidarity, and Mr. Gorla's speech to the Maltese Nationalist Party seems to have been merely one such visit. By invoking the Foreign Interference Act in this case, the Maltese government has flexed its muscles and confirmed its moves toward a one-party state.

The arrest of Mr. Gorla also comes on the eve of a scheduled Council of Europe investigation into whether this act violates fundamental human rights and in the midst of Maltese bickering with the European Community. Clearly, the arrest of a European spokesman on Maltese soil is calculated to show what the ruling Labor Party thinks of the Western democracies and their civilized concerns. That itself demonstrates that the Council of Europe has grounds to press ahead with its investigation.

Malta zensuriert Friedenstreffen

Eigenbericht der „Presse“
FREIBURG/WIEN (m. z.). Ein am Samstag beginnendes Weltfriedens-treffen anlässlich des 40jährigen Bestehens der Vereinten Nationen (UN) kann nicht, wie ursprünglich vorgesehen, auf der Mittelmeerinsel Malta stattfinden, da das dortige „Peace Laboratory“ nach Angaben der Veranstalter die Rednerliste zensurieren wollte. Die vom Agape-Verein in Freiburg im Breisgau vorbereitete Veranstaltung, die der UN-Friedensuniversität zugute kommen soll, findet nun in Amsterdam statt.

Die maltesischen Behörden sowie das „Peace Laboratory“ unter der Leitung eines Bruders des „starken Mannes“ Maltes, Dom Mintoff, haben den Veranstaltern zufolge eine Reihe von schikanösen Bedingungen und Vorschriften erlassen, um das sechstägige Treffen zu verhindern. Aus der Rednerliste sollten diejenigen Personen gestrichen werden, deren politische Haltung maltesischen „Grundsätzen“ widerspreche.

Konkret handelt es sich um den amerikanischen Rabbi Zalman Schachter und um das geistliche Oberhaupt der Tibetaner, den Dalai Lama.

Malta

Deputy Dom

Many a prime minister must dream of it. For many it remains a dream, but Malta's Mr Dom Mintoff has pulled it off. After 13 years in office he has handed over, at a time of his own choosing, to the man whom he had picked, promoted and proclaimed as his heir. The new prime minister, Mr Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici, who was sworn in on December 22nd, owes everything to his predecessor. He has never had to seek election: Mr Mintoff made him deputy leader of the ruling Labour party in 1980, secured him a seat in parliament and a ministerial post in 1983, and then established him as heir-apparent with seemingly effortless ease.

This all makes Malta sound like a quiet little place where changes of leadership go smoothly because there is nothing much to quarrel about. But that could hardly be more misleading. Mr Mifsud-Bonnici has taken over a bitterly divided island. He heads a government whose right to rule has been repeatedly challenged by the opposition Nationalist party—which got more than half of the votes

in the 1981 general election, but was prevented from ousting Labour by some blatant gerrymandering of constituency borders. As minister for education, he has been personally spearheading the campaign to impose a new regime on Malta's Catholic schools that led to last autumn's widespread violence.

Nothing indicates that the change of leadership will provide any chance of easing the internal conflicts that now plague Malta. Mr Mifsud-Bonnici is a less colourful character than Mr Mintoff, but there are fears that he will prove more rigidly doctrinaire. In any case, for some time he is likely to be boxed in by the conditions—both at home and in Malta's foreign relations—created during the last year of his predecessor's long reign.

Last January Mr Mintoff visited Libya for the first time since his quarrel with Colonel Qaddafi in 1980 over offshore oil rights. During 1984 the colonel seemed to regain his former position as Malta's special patron (the dispute about sea zones being left to grind its way through the mills of the International Court). On November 19th a military co-operation

treaty was signed, under which Libya will help to supply and train Malta's defence forces and will assume a role as its protector.

In December Mr Mintoff spent four days in Moscow, where his proclaimed devotion to non-alignment proved no bar to his acceptance of some familiar Soviet formulae on strategic questions. In exchange he got new assurances about economic co-operation which enabled him to go home with an aura of success, making it a suitable moment for him to announce his retirement.

On December 31st, when Mr Mifsud-Bonnici made his first major speech as prime minister, he declared the aim of improving Malta's relations with Italy, with other west European countries and with the Vatican; but he indicated no readiness to concede any points in the controversies that have impaired those relations. Shortly after he spoke, an explosion damaged a Catholic priest's home. It was the 20th bombing incident of the past three months.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Testing time for Malta's new PM

Friday December 28 1984

BY ALAN FRIEDMAN AND GODFREY GRIMA IN VALLETTA

MALTA'S new Prime Minister, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, will need to draw on his keen intellect and agreeable nature if he is to steer the island through its present political and economic difficulties.

Dr Bonnici, 51, who took over from Mr Dom Mintoff last Saturday, is a curious mixture, at times a retiring lawyer and at other times a doctrinaire extremist who is not afraid to threaten to cancel elections.

He has never won an election and has risen incredibly rapidly as Mr Mintoff's hand-picked successor.

In the 1960s Dr Bonnici was a pillar of the young Christian workers movement. He has also nurtured close ties with the Government-controlled General Workers Union (GWU).

Oddly enough for a man who last year termed the saying of masses after death a "medieval" practice, Dr Bonnici's brother is a parish priest. Another brother is a member of the opposition Nationalist Party and a cousin is the opposition's shadow minister for education, a post the new Maltese premier continues to hold.

Such anomalies are not unusual in Malta, however, a tiny island with a population of 328,000. Bitter disagreements between Mr Mintoff's Labour Party and the opposi-

tion Nationalist Party have tended to polarise the island, so much so that many families have been divided over issues of church and state.

What is striking is Dr Bonnici's rapid rise to power. He was never viewed as a leader until 1983, when Mr Mintoff appointed him to parliament, gave him the Education Ministry and designated him Deputy Premier and his chosen successor. Some observers say Mr Mintoff's aim was to avoid an internecine battle for succession with the ranks of his ruling Labour Party.

Regardless of the logic behind his appointment, Dr Bonnici soon proved himself to be as tough as Mr Mintoff. If there were any doubts about whether he would deviate from Mr Mintoff's increasing flirtation with Moscow, Libya, North Korea and other nations hostile to Nato, these were dispelled less than 48 hours after he took office last Saturday.

On his first day in office Dr Bonnici extended a warm welcome to a large delegation from Colonel Qaddafi's Libya.

Libya and Malta only recently signed a military pact, which came a year after a treaty with North Korea provided for police training, anti-aircraft weaponry, mortars, rifles and pistols.

Mr Mintoff's last act as Prime Minister a week ago was to visit Mr Konstantin Chernenko, the Soviet leader, in part to bolster commercial ties with the USSR. Malta last year signed a \$265m countertrade agreement with Moscow and is now receiving Soviet shipbuilding orders.

In time Dr Bonnici's personal attributes may help regain respect for the Labour Party among the many voters who have abandoned it on account of the Mintoff Government's failed economic targets, rumoured corruption and displays of excessive force.

Mr Mintoff gave Dr Bonnici his first government job in the 1970s when he was assigned to investigate and prosecute fraudulent owners of the now defunct Bank of Industry, Commerce and Agriculture. Last year, impressed by Dr Bonnici's dedication, Mr Mintoff threw him into the deep end of a divisive dispute with the Church over its school fees system.

The fight, on an island where the overwhelming majority regularly attend church, brought out Dr Bonnici's best qualities as a lawyer, but also displayed his propensity to go to extremes to press his point of view.

Church schools which refused to dismantle their tuition structure

were simply closed down as a result of the dispute. Parents were banned from making donations to church schools. At one point Dr Bonnici even discussed the possibility of civil war between government supporters and dissenting parents, adding that he was ready to lead his supporters to the gates of church schools should they attempt to reopen without government permission.

The new Prime Minister also led a mob of dockyard workers on a rampage into Valletta in October. Incited by his rhetoric, the crowd smashed the island's court house and the Archbishop's offices and chapel.

How the new premier will handle the threadbare peace negotiated with the church will be a key issue.

Dr Eddie Fenech Adami, the opposition Nationalist Party leader, warns that Malta "may be in for a difficult time". The same Dr Fenech Adami, in condemning what he alleged was government-orchestrated violence against his party, last year said the Mintoff Government's behaviour was "worthy of dictatorial regimes."

Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, a mild-mannered man who none the less has a glint in his eye when he speaks about his enemies, is likely to face a testing time.

New York City Tribune

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1985

Former prime minister of Malta holds onto power behind scenes

Special to the New York City Tribune

VALLETTA, Malta — The resignation of Dominic Mintoff as prime minister of Malta and his replacement by Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici have set the stage for a major political and constitutional struggle in this embattled Mediterranean island.

Mintoff has retained his parliamentary seat and his control over all the levers of power both in the ruling Socialist Party (SP) and

in the government. He is also said to have set his heart on becoming president of Malta, a post that is now largely honorific but that he would like to see vested with real

NEWS ANALYSIS

powers over domestic and foreign policy.

Such a constitutional change would require a two-thirds majority of parliamentary seats. The SP has 34 out of 65 seats, and even those were obtained through blatant gerrymandering. The pro-Western opposition Nationalist Party (NP), led by Eddie Fenech-Adami, took only 31 seats with 51

percent of the popular vote and will not humor Mintoff by agreeing to unwarranted constitutional changes.

Whatever happens, Mintoff's determination to keep his hand on the rudder was revealed by two developments in the few weeks before his well-staged resignation.

On Nov. 19, he signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Libyan strongman Moammar Qaddafi, thereby effectively establishing a Libyan protectorate over Malta. Qaddafi has agreed to give arms and military training to the Maltese armed forces and has acquired the right to install his military advisers on the island.

The Maltese government has undertaken to share military information with Libya, thus extending Qaddafi's reach more than 100 miles north of the Libyan coast and right into the center of the Mediterranean Sea. This has increased Libya's power to interfere with sea traffic and given it added means to

assert its sovereignty over the Gulf of Sidra.

Under the military pact, Libya also promises to come to the aid of the Maltese government at the latter's request. This is generally regarded as an insurance policy taken by the Maltese regime against the possibility of a popular uprising.

The second development was Mintoff's visit to Moscow only a few days before his resignation, where he discussed the expansion of trade and economic cooperation with the Soviets. In March, the Soviet Union agreed to purchase \$265 million worth of Maltese exports, including ships, over the 1984-1986 period.

In choosing to have ships built at Malta drydocks, the Soviet Union has assured itself of a physical presence in the island's oldest and largest industrial enterprise where communist cells are known to be especially active.

The shipyard, which used to be a British naval dockyard, also provides the core support for the SP, and for this reason the government has been financing its losses rather than forcing it to trim its work force. The Soviet Union will no doubt send scores of experts and advisers to supervise the building of its ships in this fertile field for communist infiltration and propaganda.

Military strategists have noted that Malta's gradual drift from a British naval base to a pro-Soviet form of non-alignment has introduced a twist to the post-war European frontiers between East and West. According to the Yalta agreement of 1945, Malta was recognized to be part of the Western world, and in fact the majority of the people are pro-Western and strongly oppose their government's foreign policy. The pro-Soviet drift is likely to become stronger under the influence of two avowed Marxists — the new prime minister, Mifsud-Bonnici, and the foreign minister, Alexander Sciberras-Trigona.

Mifsud-Bonnici was never elected to any office. He was hand-picked by Mintoff who gave him a parliamentary seat and had him chosen as his successor without an election — over the heads of more senior SP personalities. This makes him a mere tool in Mintoff's hands and had led to his sobriquet of "Dr. Zero."

In the last 2 years he has tried to establish himself by weekly speeches to the party faithful, which were routinely magnified by the state radio and TV monopoly. His totalitarian and anti-democratic tendencies have clearly emerged from several statements he made to the effect that he was prepared to do away

with freedom and democracy and to call off the elections due in 1986.

In September, he led a group of dock workers into the capital, Valletta. Although he was not with them when they ransacked the law courts and Curia of the island's Roman Catholic archbishop, he later called them "the aristocracy of the drydocks workers" and thanked them in public for having done "what was needed to be done."

Given Mifsud-Bonnici's lack of support in the SP and in the country at large, it would not be surprising if he made good on his threat of not calling elections.

From then on, the island's politics would enter uncharted waters. The North Koreans have been on the island for 3 years providing arms and training the Maltese armed forces in riot quelling; together with the Libyans they would be more than enough to fend off any uprising by the restive but unarmed population.

One Western ambassador swears that when Mintoff is no longer around to prop up Mifsud-Bonnici, the race will be open between Sciberras-Trigona, who would try to take power with the help of the Soviet Union, and Public Works Minister Lorry Sant who would call for Libya to intervene on his side.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1984

Maltese suspicions about Libya heightened by assassination plot

By Jim Rupert

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Valletta, Malta

Eddie Fenech Adami is worried about what the Libyans are doing on his islands.

Last month's foiled assassination plot against a Libyan dissident, which allegedly involved the Libyan embassy here, fueled suspicions that Libya is using Malta as a staging ground for terrorism.

The latest cause of concern for Mr. Fenech Adami, the leader of Malta's opposition Nationalist Party, is the new Maltese-Libyan cooperation treaty published last week.

Under the accord, Libya will train Maltese forces and provide unspecified help, should Malta ask for it, in combatting "threats or acts of aggression against Malta's territorial integrity or sovereignty."

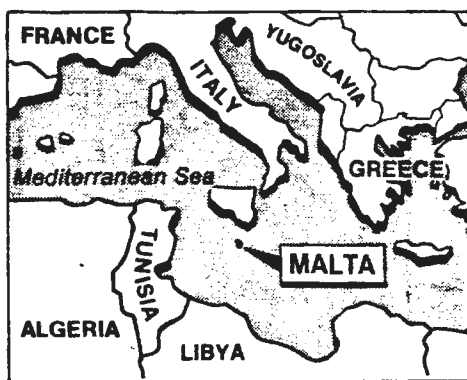
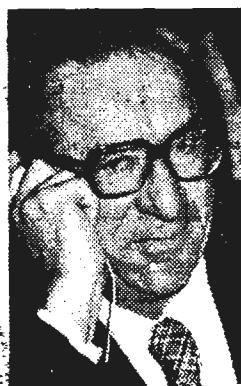
In recent years, Malta's internal political situation has grown increasingly bitter and violent. Government officials have accused the Nationalists of responsibility for a two-month string of bombings, of trying to overthrow the government, and of taking massive financial aid from foreign Christian Democratic parties.

The Nationalists deny the charges. But Fenech Adami worries they might serve the government as a pretext for using Libyan help to fight domestic opposition. "This military relationship, at a moment of huge internal difficulties . . . makes us

worry about the future of democracy in Malta," he said in a recent interview.

Western diplomats here share Fenech Adami's concern in varying degrees. Some worry about the immediate influence of Libya and the Soviet Union. Libya owns portions of various commercial and industrial projects here, including a part of Malta's new shipyard, an important source of jobs for the economy and votes for the socialist government. The Soviets signed a \$265 million trade deal with Malta earlier this year, including an order for the construction of several ships.

Other diplomats stress the staunch nationalism of Malta's prime minister, Dom Mintoff, suggesting he would not permit foreign domination of Malta. Mr. Mintoff closed a NATO naval base here in 1979



Prime Minister Mintoff's (left) treaty with Libya worries opposition leader Fenech Adami

and declared Malta's neutrality.

One year later, Mintoff expelled much of the Libyan community after a dispute with Libya over offshore drilling rights. The new treaty completes a gradual normalization of Maltese-Libyan relations.

Facing economic stagnation in the islands, Mintoff has pressured other countries to increase economic aid and guarantee larger orders for Maltese goods. Western diplomats say he has been skillful in playing off East against West. But they express little confidence in Mintoff's potential successors, who are already battling for influence. The diplomats fear one or more of the rivals might offer Libya a larger role in Malta in exchange for support in the succession struggle.

Diplomats and Maltese opposition fig-

ures have long suspected that Libya was using its business and diplomatic communities here as staging points for terrorism abroad. The suspicions were confirmed when Egypt exposed Libya's plan to kill former Libyan Prime Minister Abdel-Hamid Bakkush in Cairo. Egypt accused the Libyan embassy here of organizing the plot. Libya never denied the charges, made while Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi was here to sign the treaty.

But last weekend, the Maltese government broke its silence on the affair by accusing Egypt of "fooling" Libya into attempting the assassination. In an interview, Malta's deputy prime minister, Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, said the Egyptian Embassy here had admitted recruiting two Maltese and two British citizens and sending them to the Libyan embassy to pose as a hit squad for hire. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici said had Libya accepted the men's offer to kill Mr. Bakkush.

"We are very angry that the Egyptians should have used Malta to work this on the Libyans," Mifsud Bonnici said.

He warned Egypt that Malta would publish proof of its claims and demand the release of the two Maltese under arrest in Cairo.

Mifsud Bonnici said Malta had guarantees from both Cairo and Libya against similar incidents in the future. He also made it clear that Malta would not allow relations with Libya to be hurt.

PHOTOS BY SVEN SIMON. MAP BY JOAN FCHIES

IPI report

Monthly bulletin of the International Press Institute

Vol. 33 No. 8 August 1984

Malta lashes the opposition Press

THE latest threat to the free press in Malta has been directed at the independent *Times* newspaper and those published by the opposition Nationalist Party.

C. Mifsud-Bonnici, the deputy Prime Minister and designated successor to 70-year-old premier Dominic Mintoff, accused them of harming the people's interests by criticising Libya and the Soviet Union, with which Malta's socialist regime has recently entered into trade agreements. He added that "the people" would not allow these newspapers to continue expressing views at variance with the government's foreign policy.

The attack was strange for several reasons. Only last October, Malta's foreign minister was attacking the Soviet Union for not keeping faith with the Maltese government to which it had promised in 1981 to increase economic cooperation to the same level as Malta-EEC trade.

A new Malta-USSR agreement was signed in March 1984 and the government's sensitivity to anti-Soviet statements in the press is generally interpreted as a reflection of Soviet demands. The friendship with Libya is also a new development.

It was only in 1980 that Libyan gunboats chased Maltese oil rigs prospecting in the disputed seas between the two countries and Libya banned imports from Malta.

The socialists' claim to speak for "the people" is also odd. In the elections of 1981, held under proportional representation, the opposition NP obtained 51 percent of the votes but the Mintoff socialists secured a majority in parliamentary seats.

The NP newspapers have emerged as the main source of the opposition to the regime, while the *Times* newspapers have retained both their quality and independence, to the extent of publishing even the regime's attacks of press freedom.

The Mintoff government's attacks on

free speech are symptomatic of the general reduction of freedom and democracy in Malta which is causing serious concern to the parliamentary democracies of the West.

In 1979 a crowd celebrating one of Mr Mintoff's many anniversaries gutted the printing press which publishes the *Times* newspapers — under the eyes of several dozen policemen. In efforts to intimidate the free press, editors, reporters, photographers and contributors of the NP newspapers have frequently been arrested and detained for questioning. Press releases by the government's director of information have been made immune from legal proceedings.

Foreign journalists were seriously restricted by the Foreign ~~Influence~~ Act of 1982 which makes their activities in Malta subject to a government permit.

In the meantime, the Mintoff government has intensified its attitude toward the foreign press, banning some newspapers and individual reporters and accusing others of working for the secret services of several countries.

interference

paranoid

Libya to Train Maltese Forces Under Newly Revealed Defense Pact

Ties With Qaddafi Alarm Island's Opposition Party

By James Rupert
Special to The Washington Post

VALLETTA, Malta, Nov. 30—Malta and Libya have signed a military agreement calling for Libyan training of Maltese forces and for unspecified Libyan assistance at Malta's request "in case of threats or acts of aggression" against the strategically placed Mediterranean island nation.

The new military agreement, part of a larger friendship and co-operation treaty signed on Nov. 19 but published only within the past two days, has renewed concern among western diplomats and Malta's opposition party over Libya's expanding role here.

It was not immediately clear whether the treaty would involve the stationing of Libyan advisers in Malta but the leader of Malta's opposition Nationalist Party, Eddie Fenech-Adami, said tonight that his party was "alarmed at the government's security arrangement with Libya . . . at a moment of huge internal difficulties."

Several diplomats expressed concern that Malta's socialist prime minister, Dom Mintoff, may—by unintentionally—be giving Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi an influential foothold in Malta. The Maltese government has kept silent on reports that the Libyan Embassy

here organized this month's foiled assassination attempt against a Libyan opposition leader in Cairo.

Qaddafi and Mintoff signed the Libyan-Maltese treaty here on the same day the Egyptian government announced that it had arrested two Maltese and two Britons who had been directed in the assassination attempt by Libyan diplomats in Valletta. The Libyan government has not denied using its embassy in Malta to direct the assassination attempt. During his visit here, Qaddafi ignored questions on the issue, calling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak a CIA agent and President Reagan a "madman."

Western diplomats said that Malta's failure to distance itself from the assassination plot and from Qaddafi's attacks here on foreign leaders were undermining Malta's proclaimed policy of neutrality.

Since he forced NATO to withdraw a major naval base from Malta in 1979, Mintoff has pledged to balance Maltese relations between East and West.

He has pressed Malta's commercial partners to guarantee balanced trade with the island country, and has employed embargos on imports—notably from Italy and Japan—to pressure them to comply. Some nations, including Iraq, the Soviet Union and Libya, have

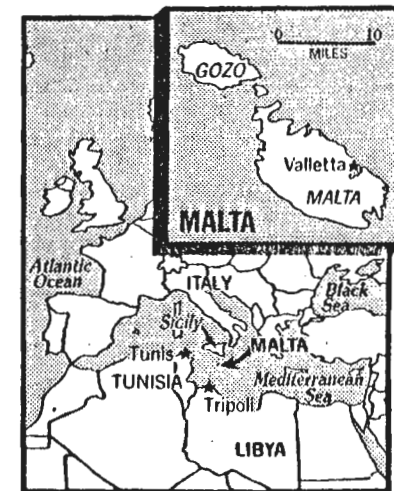
signed balanced trade agreements, but businessmen and opposition leaders say they have not brought increased orders for Maltese goods.

Businessmen agree that Malta's economy is suffering not only from the world recession but from excessive government control. They, and foreign economic analysts, suggest that the Maltese unemployment rate is nearly twice the official figure of about 10 percent.

The economic malaise has aggravated Malta's bitter political conflict, which has provoked a steady chain of violent incidents since the last elections in 1981. Thanks to a last-minute change in electoral boundaries, Mintoff's Labor Party retained a majority of parliamentary seats although it was outpolled by the Nationalists, 51 to 49 percent.

The Nationalists, and Malta's powerful Roman Catholic Church, claim Mintoff has resorted increasingly to mob violence and harassment of his opponents to secure his hold on power. One year ago, the Nationalist Party published the text of a secret treaty between Malta and North Korea for the supply of Korean arms and advisers to Malta's police force.

"Such treaties—with countries with whom we would prefer not to associate—are especially alarming to us when the deputy prime minister speaks about the possibility of



BY DAVE COOK—THE WASHINGTON POST

canceling the next elections or of creating a one-party state," opposition leader Fenech-Adami said. The government made the threat while accusing the church and foreign political parties of intervening in elections on the side of the Nationalists.

The most recent phase of Malta's internal hostilities has been over the Catholic schools, for which the government wants the church to stop charging fees. The church, noting that the government recently tried to expropriate a large number of its properties, says it feels under constant attack from Mintoff and his Labor Party.

In late September Deputy Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud-Bonnici led a motorcade of angry Labor supporters to Valletta's courts, where some of them ransacked offices, apparently in retaliation for a court ruling against the government. Some of the mob then vandalized the offices of Malta's archbishop with the apparent acquiescence of police stationed outside.

OUTLOOK ON MALTA

During last Sunday's mammoth meeting at Floriana, PN leader, Dr. Eddie Fenech Adami referred to a recent BBC programme which featured recent events in Malta.

"The Democrat" feels that this radio programme is of interest to many of its readers. We are therefore reproducing on this page a few excerpts.

Presenter: Dr. Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici is a stocky lawyer in his early fifties, with sparkling white crew cut hair. To his opponents he is known as Dr. Zero since despite his powerful position he has never once faced the electorate having been co-opted to Parliament last year.



KMB — "Dr. Zero".

Like many Maltese families Dr. Mifsud Bonnici's is filled with irony. The staunch opponent of the Maltese Church hierarchy and the Opposition, has a brother who is a priest. Another brother and a cousin are both on the Opposition benches and to add to the confusion, in the early battles between Mr. Mintoff and the Archbishop, Dr. Mifsud Bonnici used to fight on the side of the Church.

Ordeal

The Programme then refers to lists of Private School teachers which were sent "anonymously" to many Labour Party supporters, and says that it was then that things began to get really nasty for many private school teachers.

Female Voice: "A week before school started I received a phone call threatening me that if I went to school, when schools open, I would have a bomb behind my door and I said well you can go... you know where... and it happened, that the same day, after about four hours I received a third call which happily was answered by my husband and when they asked whether I lived there he said, yes she does but at the moment she is not here, and he gave me a piece of his mind.

"At first I thought it was neighbour who knows where I work and who has different beliefs than I do, but then I received a paper with the heading saying 'These are the names of private schools teachers who said that they are going to break the law. The duty of the workers is to stop them.'"

Presenter: The names, everyone assumed must have come from the Education Ministry or from the Minister himself, Dr. Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici but everyone also assumed that if he would be directly challenged, he

would deny it. They were wrong.

KMB: "I did it and I assume full responsibility. This was necessary to stop these teachers from going into the school and commit a crime."

Presenter: "What are you suggesting that the workers should do?"

KMB: "Help the Police to stop these teachers from doing that."

Presenter: "Which workers? Where will they come from?"

KMB: "Well, supporters of the Labour Party. We were telling the supporters of the Labour Party, because of the majority of the supporters are workers. We were telling them and encouraged them and we also appealed to them to support the Police to stop these..."

Presenter: "What are the methods?"

KMB: "They find out before, who he is and get to know him, otherwise on D-Day, 1st October, the person would be able to go into the school without being identified. We had to identify them before, so that on that Day we stop them from going in."

Presenter: "Mr. Minister let me get it straight, the idea is that the Labour supporter would go to the address here, have a look at the person, obviously coming out of the house so that they can recognise that person..."

"...then go to the school gate so that they would then be able to 'stop' them, because if they don't know the teacher they can't stop him."

KMB: "Yes, the Labour supporter and the Police."

September 28

Presenter: And on, September the 28th, go they did, following Dr. Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici into the capital. And as they went, the leaders of the drydocks workers' told me, many carried the tools of their trade, as a journalist, they explained carries a notebook and pen. The tools of their trade by contrast include metal bars, steel hoses and stark steel knives.

"Everything was normal, people were shopping, tourists were there... a big truck with drydocks workers', everybody had the helmet on and these were carrying sticks and big chains, very big chains. These workers were banging on the trucks with the chains and iron sticks. They were shouting 'Jew b'xejn jew xejn' which means 'either free or nothing...' (that's about the schools?)"

After this truck there was a tractor and after this Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, the Minister of Education and Deputy Prime Minister and the successor of Dom Mintoff as well, in an open-roofed car. He was standing up waving a red handkerchief. He was waving to the people around him. This is very important because people around him carried bars and chains as well."

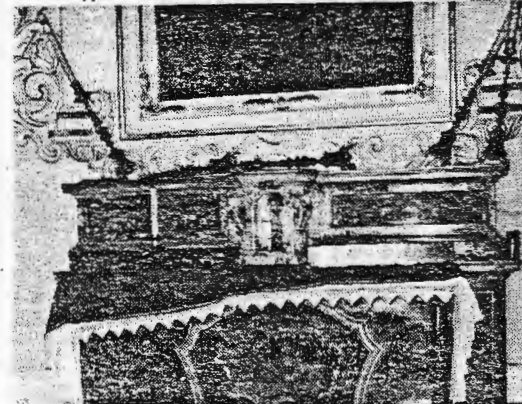
"Yes it was terrible and frightening. There was a lady near me and she was screaming. She said 'Oh they are coming, they are coming' and the shop-keepers were closing the shops, and calling people into the shops."

The attack at the Curia

KMB: "Sure they are not serious incidents. What we had is that one room in the Law Courts was ransacked and two or three rooms in the Curia which were ransacked. Are those serious incidents? Those are trivial incidents. Very, very trivial. These could have been the work of a few, out of thousands."

Presenter: "I don't think any people would internationally agree with you that those are trivial incidents... breaking down the Law Courts and ransacking a chapel, a holy place."

KMB: "First of all it's not breaking down the Law Courts. It is one room in the Law Courts, and the room which was adjoining the street, secondary there is no chapel in the seminary, it's part of the Curia not the chapel. It happened that one of the rooms was used as a chapel. There are so many churches, hundreds of churches, no church has been forced in. Had the supporters of the Labour Party wanted to ransack a church, they would have found many, hundreds to do that. The point is that some of these hot-heads, went into the Curia, where the Archbishop's offices are situated, and one of the rooms happened to be a chapel."



The smashed altar at the Curia's chapel. Facts prove KMB to be lying.

(Editor's note: It is to be pointed out that in Section 5 of the Devolution of Certain Property of the Church Act, the Government, of which Dr. Mifsud Bonnici is an important official, gives a list of chapels and churches which according to Government are its property. The list includes, on page 14 "The Chapel of St. Calcedonius — the Curia, Floriana. This is the Curia's chapel ransacked by the Mintoff thugs and acknowledged officially as a chapel by the Government."

It is to be added that in all, 14 rooms, chapels and other sections of the Curia were ransacked. That is many more than "two or three rooms")

The Computer Centre

Presenter: You've got to get it into perspective Dr Mifsud Bonnici said, and compare these incidents with something really serious like the bomb which damaged the government Computer Centre at Dingli the Sunday before. There too no one was hurt. But to the Education Minister that incident is quite different in character and severity.

KMB: "The person who went to the Computer Centre and planted a bomb, is a criminal, but the person who sent him to do it and the organisation or the party which instigated that person to do it is much more criminal than the one who planted the bomb. Those are criminals and then we have those hot-heads who did damage the law Courts and the Archbishop's offices or Curia. To my way of thinking, these persons DO NOT stand in the same level of "criminals" as the first two. The first two are criminals as a person who had done wrong but not with a criminal intent."

Victimisation

Presenter: Unusual tactics have been used against some of the striking teachers. In Malta some of the teachers supplement their income, by acting as tourist-guides part-time and in the holidays. For this they need a Government licence. To get the licence they need to pass a proficiency test which was held early this year.

As we walked round the streets of the ancient capital of Malta, Mdina known at the silent city

Presenter: "You mean that the Minister said in July that 14 people had failed and that they were going to get the licence and suddenly the number went up to 52? What do you think is the reason for that?"

Voice: "Yes that's true. What I can say is this. I state facts and then let people draw their own conclusions. At the moment there is the teachers strike. If you have a guide list and take a good look at it, there are 26 teachers on strike. All the teachers on strike have had their licence withdrawn. All the teachers without exception who are not on strike, who broke the strike, who are in schools, have been granted licences."

Presenter: Government in Malta, you will be often told is like an octopus controlling people in every walk of life. If it does not employ you directly or through a nationalised industry headed by a government appointee, the chances are that you still need their permission to earn your living.

Elections

Presenter: But the Labour Party electoral prospects are by no means certain. At the last election in 1981 the Nationalists actually polled more votes but through a quirk in the electoral system which the Nationalist claim was plain gerrymandering, the Labour Party ended up with a majority of seats!

But if the Government should get too used to the habit of bending the rules, there are many in the Opposition who fear that they may end up going in for the big rule bend, by abolishing the next general election.

Dr. Mifsud Bonnici said that only extreme interference from the Church or external political forces could make him contemplate such an action. But if the pressure from the Opposition continues to mount, the idea is not so far fetched... George Agius, General Secretary of the Government's own union...

George Agius: "I would want one thing: to have a state of affairs in Malta which would enable us to hold elections (that we have always promised to hold) and the winner will win and govern. That is the state that I want. But if they are not careful, they have already done things and they are doing things which will make many people say, 'well enough is enough'."

"The justification for that is simply the anomaly to trust or to be able to trust the other side to do an honest job if it were returned to power. This is the thing. Can I trust the other side to do right by me? Like I am saying I want to do right by them. And if that trust and confidence is broken, then you have anarchy, then you have breakdown and then you have to resort to measures which you never really contemplated as resorting to."

Parting shot

Presenter: "If the wheel of violence does begin to turn there can be little doubt that one of the people driving it will be the next Prime Minister of Malta Dr. Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici."

Malta Democracy May Be Loser in Strife

By Don A. Schanche

Los Angeles Times Service

VALLETTA, Malta — A clamorous, often violent dispute between the Roman Catholic Church and the government of Dom Mintoff, the leftist prime minister, threatens to wreck what remains of the democratic tradition in this Mediterranean island nation.

In what his opponents fear is an accelerating plan to establish one-party rule on the Soviet pattern, the prime minister has established firm ties with the Soviet Union and other East-bloc nations, has used North Korean experts to arm and train a police riot squad and has provoked a vicious battle against the church and his opposition to justify harsh controls.

"We fear they are trying to give the coup de grace to democracy here; otherwise, one cannot explain all this confrontation," said Eddie Fenech-Adami, leader of the opposition Nationalist Party, as he ticked off a series of recent violent incidents.

Among them have been almost daily, but so far nonfatal, bombings of the homes and businesses of people associated with the Nationalist Party, the church and the anti-Mintoff teachers' union, which has been on strike. One bomb demolished the car of the British high commissioner and another was planted but failed to explode at the door of the house of Archbishop Joseph Mercieca.

The most shocking incident, as the staunchly Roman Catholic Maltese see it, was the ransacking of the archbishop's offices and the desecration of his private chapel Sept. 28 by a mob of Mintoff supporters.

The mob, in the first stages of its rampage, was led by the prime minister's chosen successor, Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici, who is senior deputy prime minister and minister of education.

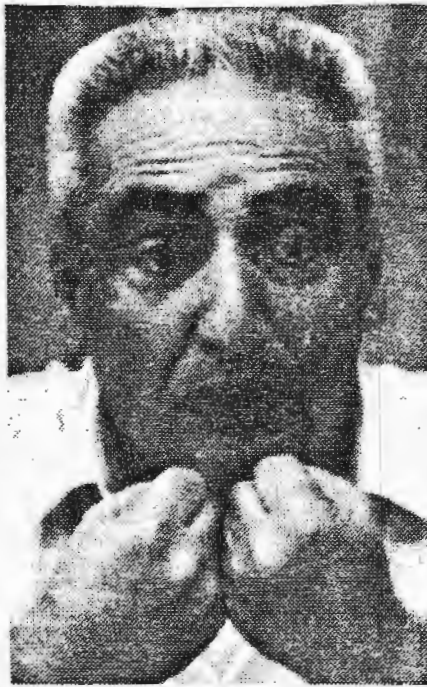
IN an interview, Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, who had earlier dismissed the bomb at the archbishop's door as a hoax, criticized the mob for its violence, but shrugged off the incident as "trivial" compared with violent incidents elsewhere in the world.

It was not seen as trivial by large numbers of the tiny country's 326,000 people, who are among the world's most devout Catholics. An estimated 98 percent of the Maltese people belong to the church and 90 percent attend Mass regularly.

About 20,000 of them showed up in Valletta for a protest rally a few days after the attack on the archbishop's offices. Many of them carried makeshift weapons ("there were 10,000 umbrellas, and it wasn't raining," a Nationalist Party spokesman said), but there was no violence. A week earlier, a rally had been broken up by riot police using tear gas, the first time it had ever been used in Malta.

About three weeks later, on Oct. 26, another rally to protest Mr. Mintoff's anti-church campaign drew a crowd estimated by a Western diplomat to number "upwards of 100,000." It was believed to be the largest crowd ever assembled on the island.

Behind the protesters' rising emotions is a long-running Mintoff campaign against the church. Some of it, like the crude anti-clerical cartoons in Mr. Mintoff's Labor Party press depicting the archbishop as a bejeweled money



Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici



Archbishop Joseph Mercieca

Behind the protesters' rising emotions is a long-running campaign against the church. Some of it, like the crude anti-clerical cartoons in Mr. Mintoff's Labor Party press depicting the archbishop as a bejeweled money grabber, a liar and a thief, has been cited as reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

grabber, a liar and a thief, has been cited by his opponents as reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

No more subtle was the transfer to the state, by act of the Mintoff-controlled Parliament, of much of the church's property; the prohibition by law of voluntary public donations to church schools; and what churchmen and many Maltese fear is an attempt to take over or destroy the Catholic school system.

It is this last issue that appears to have polarized Maltese society and led at least some of Mr. Mintoff's former supporters to defect to the opposition.

The apparent attempt to cripple the church schools began more than a decade ago, when Mr. Mintoff's government reduced the grant that it had historically provided to private schools and at the same time forbade the church to charge more than 72 Maltese pounds (about \$160) a year for tuition. In 1980, the grant was suspended, and a later attempt by parents to make up the church's loss with voluntary donations was forbidden by law.

LAST year, Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, who emerged as a government strongman after Mr. Mintoff suggested he might soon retire, decreed that Catholic schools must operate free of charge, as do the public schools.

The crisis escalated last summer, when Mr.

Mifsud-Bonnici listed eight Catholic secondary schools that would be forbidden to open Oct. 1, the beginning of the school year, unless they canceled tuition fees and met eight other criteria concerning faculty, students, school hours and curriculum that would, in effect, have placed them under his control.

When Archbishop Mercieca replied that he would defy Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici and open the schools anyway, the deputy prime minister circulated a list of the schools' teachers, nuns and lay people, along with their addresses and photographs. An accompanying statement said that since they were planning to break the law by reopening the schools, it was the duty of government supporters to help the police to stop them.

When asked if he were not encouraging vigilante justice, Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici expressed doubt that Malta's police could have handled the problem by themselves.

"We couldn't say or find out whether the police would be able to handle the situation," he said, "so we had to decide whether the police or the vigilantes, as you call them — our supporters — had to stop the schoolchildren or the teachers. And we decided that the least we could do was to let the children go in but to stop the teachers. So I had to circulate the names, addresses and photographs of these teachers to be able to identify them."

PTO

Almost on the eve of the expected school confrontation, following a reportedly fiery speech by Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici in the Mintoff-controlled Malta dockyards, a mob of supporters armed with chains, clubs and steel bars fell in behind the deputy prime minister's open car and poured into Valletta.

"It was a frightening sight," a man who watched the advancing procession said. "It looked like an invasion."

The crowd surged on to the curia building, which contains the offices of the archbishop and is situated almost directly across the street from national police headquarters.

"We had heard more than two hours earlier that an attack was planned," said Father Joe Borg, the church spokesman. At the drydocks, he said, they were using a loudspeaker to announce the plan. "A lawyer for the archdiocese called the police at 8:45 that morning to alert them," he added.

YET when the mob struck at 11 A.M., witnesses said, the only police in sight were a few men standing near the front door of the building. Around the corner, less than 40 yards (36 meters) away, the mob wrestled a steel gate off its hinges and used it as a battering ram to smash open a side door. Dozens poured into the building, smashing religious statues and vandalizing valuable paintings.

In the archbishop's chapel, the mob smashed the gilt tabernacle on the altar in which the sacred bread of Holy Communion is normally kept (priests had removed it as a precaution when they evacuated the building before the mob struck). The destruction continued for 10 to 20 minutes, Father Borg said, yet the police made no attempt to intervene.

As in earlier incidents, none of what both sides call "the thugs" has been identified or prosecuted. Nor has there been a serious police investigation of any of the incidents, according to church and opposition leaders.

With emotions at fever pitch after the attack on the curia building, the archbishop declared for safety's sake that none of the church's 72 schools, attended by about 30 percent of Malta's 70,000 schoolchildren, would open Oct. 1.

Coincidentally, the teachers' union went on strike, partly in support of its members who taught in the Catholic schools and partly in response to a lockout order by Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici following a long dispute over pay and working conditions. Thus, primary and secondary education on the island has been virtually at a standstill this year.

Since the attack against the archbishop's offices, the prime minister, a British-trained architect and Rhodes scholar who has led Malta for 13 of its 20 years of independence from Britain, has kept a low profile at home but has played a highly visible role abroad.

WHILE visiting Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in London last month, Mr. Mintoff demanded that Britain take responsibility for clearing World War II wreckage from Valletta's harbor, most of it Allied shipping sunk by German and Italian bombers. Mrs. Thatcher reminded him, in firm diplomatic tones, of what countries were responsible for the mess.

At the Vatican, seeking to win papal approval of a concordat similar to one between Italy and the Holy See, which would narrow the influence of the church in Malta, he was rebuffed by the Vatican secretary of state.

Paul Missud, a close associate who is a government spokesman, said that Mr. Mintoff had hoped to announce his retirement after the trip to London and Rome, but in the absence of a foreign policy victory, he decided to stay on until he could leave on a positive note.

One possible victory in the offing for Mr. Mintoff would be the implementation of a \$250-million trade agreement recently negotiated with the Soviet Union.

Diplomatic observers doubt that Mr. Mintoff's retirement, when it comes, will lessen his influence in the government. Officials of the prime minister's party have speculated that he will take over the central bank, where control of the purse strings would leave him as powerful as ever.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, a soft-spoken man whose crew-cut white hair and self-effacing manner startle visitors who have heard critics describe him as a fiery and emotional leader, has been left to spearhead the anti-church campaign.

The prime minister-designate, sometimes called "Dr. Zero" by opponents because he was appointed to Parliament by Mr. Mintoff and has never faced a popular election, has continued to campaign with such aplomb that opposition leaders fear he is planning a power takeover.

"He talks and acts like a Stalinist, even when he can see that most of the people here are against him," a Nationalist Party official said.

The Nationalist Party secretary-general, Louis Galea, said, "Their campaign has backfired and it has cost them a lot of votes, but it makes you wonder if those people are any longer interested in votes."

Statements by Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici threatening to cancel the next general election, in 1987, if the church wields too much influence, or if foreign interests intervene, have further alarmed Mr. Mintoff's opponents.

Mr. Fenech-Adami, the opposition leader, says that the government is at present too weak to face an election, and its behavior in recent years suggests that it cannot win one even two years hence. He recalled that Mr. Mintoff lost the popular vote by 49 percent to 51 percent in the last general election, in 1981, and holds power only by gerrymandering election districts to produce a majority in Parliament. Since then, Mr. Fenech-Adami said, thousands of Mr. Mintoff's Labor Party supporters have changed sides, disillusioned by the church-state battle.

"There is no way that the Mintoff government can regain a popular mandate," Mr. Fenech-Adami said. "It makes us fear that the government has decided to do away with democracy."

Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici said that the Nationalists themselves managed to achieve a majority in 1981 only with massive financial and political help from the Italian Christian Democratic Party. And diplomatic observers here say that that is probably true.

"We are saying that if foreign interference here is to take place, you do not expect to hold free and democratic elections," the deputy prime minister said, "and if elections are not free and democratic because they are distorted by massive foreign interference, why hold the elections?"

He said the same reasoning applies to interference by the church, and he recalled that the archbishop's predecessor excommunicated Labor Party leaders, including Mr. Mintoff, during an election campaign in the early 1960s.

"All this," Mr. Fenech-Adami said, "shows that Malta is on the way to becoming a fascist state unless people are prepared to stand up and resist. My gut feeling is that events could precipitate into a real confrontation. Things could be coming to a crunch quite soon."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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EASTERN EDITION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1984

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Grenada of the Mediterranean?

For months we've been noticing in Europe's newspapers the dispatches from the Mediterranean island state of Malta. "Tear Gas at Rally in Malta," "Malta Schools Unrest Spreads," "Government Closes Catholic Schools in Malta" and "A Safe Harbor for the Soviets" are just a few of the headlines. News of bombs planted in front of the local archbishop's house and in the British ambassador's car are other items not expected from a Mediterranean tourist paradise.

So recently William McGurn of The Wall Street Journal/Europe went to the island to see what was going on. Sadly, as he reports in the accompanying article, trouble seems to be the rule rather than the exception. During 13 years in power, Dom Mintoff's Labor Party has moved the government aggressively into almost every area of Maltese life. From nationalizing banks and television stations Mr. Mintoff has gone on to 48-hour detention without charge and attempting a state monopoly on education. Mr. Mintoff's designated heir has lately been making noises about how it may be "useless and baseless" to hold the next elections.

Mr. Mintoff's bid to bring the Roman Catholic schools under state control by prohibiting them from charging tuition is but the latest instance of his intolerance for anything that competes with the government. In addition to the banks and TV, the government now controls the largest trade union, the university and essential imports. Were the Catholic Church to lose the schools battle, about the only organization left to oppose Mr. Mintoff would be the nation's sole independent newspaper, the Times. Its building

was burned down a few years ago by a mob.

Inevitably, Malta invites a comparison with Grenada. The two sunlit islands share a British colonial heritage. And Malta's growing government controls at home have been accompanied by greater ties to Communist nations. Earlier this year Malta signed an agreement with North Korea for the training and arming of special police riot squads. The Soviet Union now stores oil in Malta.

With the government increasing use of its licensing power to reward its friends and punish its opponents, daily life in Malta has become highly politicized, dividing families and friends alike. As one woman said, "A couple of years ago no one even knew who the ministers were, but today that's all we talk about." For those who happen to disagree with the Labor Party—who according to the vote in the last election are a majority of the population (Labor managed to keep its majority in parliament)—it is becoming ever more difficult just to make a living.

A little over four decades ago, these tiny islands stood alone in the South Mediterranean against the furious air bombing of the Axis, a display of fortitude that earned the Maltese the King George's Cross that today adorns their flag. Four centuries earlier, the islands—with a few hundred armed knights and a few thousand citizens—defeated vastly superior Turkish forces in a battle that profoundly affected the course of European history. What the situation in Malta demonstrates today is that for democracies, the siege does not always come from without.

Malta's Troubled Shores

The most serious fears concern the future elections, which according to the constitution must be held in two years. Specifically they fear Mr. Mifsud Bonnici, Mr. Mintoff's heir designate, who lately has done all the speaking for the government. Nearly all agree that the hard-working Mr. Mifsud Bonnici will never be able to generate the popularity of Mr. Mintoff, a roguish product of the old school of rough-and-tumble personal politics. "The problem may come," says one local, "if Mifsud Bonnici finds he can still govern but cannot win an election." The education minister himself does little to allay such fears with his frequent talk of "foreign interference." Journalists now complain of being detained and questioned at the airport upon arrival. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici offers a clarification on reports that he said there would be no election. "I did not argue that there would be no elections," he says, "I argued that, given a massive foreign intervention that would distort the local situation, it would be useless and baseless to try to hold free and democratic elections."

A Police State?

Malta today is no East Germany, not even some right-wing South American dictatorship. Except for the mass rallies and local newspapers, a tourist could pass a week here in blissful ignorance of the turmoil. There are no reports of political prisoners. Most comparisons that favor Malta are made with countries with traditions of oppression. What makes Malta special is that it is a democracy moving in the wrong direction.

Mr. Mifsud Bonnici says he most resents charges that Malta is a police state. If that is defined as the police force's ability to arrest and jail without due process, then Malta has a long way to go. No one has been arrested for placing the bomb recently discovered outside the archbishop's house in Mdina; the attack on the curia; the bombing last month of a parish office; the blowing up last week of the British ambassador's car. Nor were there ever any arrests made when Malta's lone independent newspaper, the Times, was burned down a few years ago and Mr. Fenech Adami's home and family were savagely attacked the same day. On this record, then, Malta is certainly not a police state.

Yet.

Mr. McGurn is editorial features editor of The Wall Street Journal/Europe.

Certainly the 13 years of Socialist rule have seen ever-more aspects of Maltese life brought under state control. Over this time Mr. Mintoff has nationalized the banks, incorporated the largest trade union into the party, nationalized the only local television and radio station, entered into a number of agreements with nations ranging from Libya to China, allowed the Palestine Liberation Organization to open a Malta office, instituted a system whereby all essential imports must pass through government hands, and harassed those who have expressed opposition. In manner and tone, the Socialist government and its press behave like a one-party state.

In foreign policy, the ruling Labor Party favors "nonalignment." In practice this has meant cutting off trade with Western countries with which Malta has a trade imbalance (e.g. Japan and Italy) at the same time trade with the Eastern bloc is increased. When Malta's doctors went on strike in 1977, for example, Mr. Mintoff brought in Czechoslovakian doctors. He has also instituted the "student-worker"

plan of alternating work and study at the university, a model from China's Cultural Revolution. This spring Malta accepted arms and police training from North Korea. As part of a recent \$260 million trade agreement, the Soviet Union now bunkers oil in ports built by NATO, which was evicted in 1979.

The Maltese themselves seem to worry more about the internal political situation. Almost all are willing to talk; however, most do not want to be quoted by name. In a small country, where nearly everyone knows or is related to everyone else, reprisals can be swift and petty. People who disagree with the government report to work and find themselves transferred to the far part of the island nation. Since practically every commercial activity is licensed or in the process of being licensed, the government's opponents are vulnerable.

The most explosive situation at present involves the church. Malta's 318,000 population ranks among the most devout in the world. Some 98% of the people are Catholic; and—unlike the Italians, for example—an estimated 90% attend Mass each week, more even than in Ireland. So the church is an influential base in Malta. Back in the 1960s, when the Labor Party first started to confront the church openly, the then-archbishop had denied the sacraments to the party leaders—something that rankles the Socialists to this day.

In recent years the Labor Party has been more successful, focusing on the schools. This year Mr. Mifsud Bonnici's education ministry has been locked in a dispute with the archbishop affecting the autonomy of Malta's 72 church-run schools. On Sept. 28, the Friday before the schools were to open, a mob of demonstrators, having listened to a rousing speech by Mr. Mifsud Bonnici, marched through the streets and broke into the curia. There they vandalized chapels and ransacked the archbishop's office. Mr. Mifsud Bonnici was with the marchers much of the way, but didn't enter the curia, which is smack across the street from the police headquarters. The government maintains that the police were watching the front door and "never expected" people would avail themselves of the side door. Religious paintings were defaced. "I think you would have to go back to the Turks or pirates to find such desecration," says the archbishop's spokesman, the Rev. Joseph Borg.

Since then, the government has been increasing pressure on the Maltese judiciary, which is attempting to resolve the school issue.

The attempt to diminish church influence is only one aspect of what the Nationalist Party leader, Mr. Fenech Adami,

calls the government's "intention to do away with all forms of pluralism" in Malta. In the last election, although Mr. Fenech Adami's Nationalists won the popular vote 51% to 49%, the Labor Party has a 34-seat to 31-seat parliamentary majority in a gerrymandered election. So bad has the local situation become that Freedom House, a New York-based international human-rights organization, this year moved Malta from its list of "free" to "partly free" nations. Charting the progress of freedom over the past year, the organization cited Malta as "most discouraging" for its "continuing retreat" from civil liberties.

BY WILLIAM MCGURN

VALLETTA, Malta — Midway through this hot Friday afternoon, the air around the Auberge de Castille et Leon is already alive with anticipation. Outside the Auberge—a former inn for Spanish knights that is now the prime minister's office—a mass rally to demonstrate popular support for the government has been scheduled by the ruling Labor Party for 5 p.m. Soon the streets thicken with supporters, ranging from dark-eyed infants to wrinkled grandmothers. Many are clad in the red-and-white garb of the Labor Party itself, and a good number enthusiastically wave the red Socialist banner, some even wearing it on their persons. Against the coming dusk the crowd thus becomes a rippling wave of color.

The demonstration has the air of one of Malta's grand religious festas, except for the whiff of nastiness. As they gather in the granaries outside St. Publius Church—named for the Roman governor of Malta converted by St. Paul—they break into party songs that alternate praise for party leaders Dom Mintoff and Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici with contempt for Archbishop Joseph Mercieca and opposition leader Eddie Fenech Adami. One refrain runs thus:

*You will do nothing against
You will do nothing against
You will do nothing against
il-Perit [the architect] Min-
toff.*

Mr. Mifsud Bonnici takes the stand to warn of the "threat by reactionary forces, aided by foreigners." In the background, the outstretched arms of Christ atop St. Publius Church are silhouetted against a darkening sky as Mr. Mifsud Bonnici implores the gathered to ask for "the blessings of our father, Dom Mintoff."

Bitter Dispute

The words are not without irony, for at the moment the 66-year-old Mr. Mintoff is in the midst of a bitter dispute over the sovereignty of Malta's Roman Catholic schools, a situation aggravated by a just-ended strike by state-school teachers. At home the opposition complains about the "erosion of democracy" and harassment by the government, while Western diplomats express concern about Malta's growing ties with Libya and Communist-bloc states. Though direct U.S. interests here are minimal, Malta has had historical strategic importance, serving as the only allied Mediterranean base in World War II.

During the past 13 years Mintoff has ruled Malta by a series of battles, all of them successful, against the medical profession, the judiciary, the press, civil service, the unions, businessmen, educationists and the official opposition. In the name of socialism, he has done away with many of Malta's old connections. The Grand Harbour is no longer available to the British navy. The Soviet fleet now has bunkering facilities in this strategic port. The old regimental guardhouse, which used to bear the inscription "To Great and Invincible Britain, The Love of the Maltese", has now been given to the Libyans as their cultural institute and the inscription covered over. Mintoff's best friends internationally are now Bulgaria, North Korea and Libya. Colonel Gaddafi's luxury yacht was in the

harbour for a refit last week. Mintoff is at pains to emphasise the north African connections of Malta, which lies midway between Italy and Libya, and has introduced Arabic in schools — an unpopular move with most Maltese.

His efforts to transform Malta's political system have polarised the population. He abolished the faculty of arts and sciences at Malta's university because he felt it was "non-utilitarian". He changed the medical system and, when the doctors objected, he locked them out. They have

now been on strike for seven years and the hospitals are manned by foreign doctors, Czechs, Palestinians and Poles. He closed down private hospitals and has moved judges off cases because they decided against the government. His opponents claim he controls the people of Malta through an elaborate system of influence, allocating jobs in government to his supporters, granting import and export licences, loans at the banks, entry to university, house building permits and even telephone lines. The state controls radio and television. Opposition papers exist, but they are harassed and one, the Times of Malta, was burnt down by Mintoff's supporters in 1976.

But the one battle he has so far failed to win is with the church. In the 1960s the church came out in open opposition to the Labour party, which is now led by

Mintoff. The previous archbishop of Malta went so far as to tell his flock that voting Labour was a mortal sin. He also forbade the burial of Labour members in consecrated ground. Largely as a result of this church campaign, Labour lost the 1964 election to the National party and remained in opposition until 1969 when it squeezed into power and formed a shaky "peace treaty" with the church.

It did not last long. In 1971 Mintoff set about cutting down the church's power. He removed the faculty of theology from the university and

abolished seven religious holidays. Last year he passed the "devolution of certain church property act", by which the church stands to lose about half its assets. Mintoff has refused to recognise the appointment of Joseph Mercieca as archbishop of Malta even though he was appointed 10 years ago this week.

The issue which made the conflict erupt into violence is Mintoff's attempt to stop the church charging fees for its schools and to impose some measure of state control over private education. The church is adamant that its schools, which educate 30% of Malta's children, will retain their own "identity, character and autonomy". The result is a bitter, vicious impasse.

The demonstration which led to the desecration of the archbishop's palace was addressed, some say incited, by Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, the deputy prime minister, minister of education and Mintoff's chosen heir. He is popularly known as Mr "Kiss Me Baby" because of his initials, and Doctor Zero because he never had a single vote and was given his jobs by party conference acclamation. Mintoff will hand over to him soon — possibly the week after next.

The demonstrators were mostly tough workers from the drydocks in Valletta. At the meeting, they formed a convoy and drove into the city. Armed with chains and metal pipes, they drove chanting through the streets, refusing to take the last order

where they ransacked some offices. High court judges were forced to flee out the back doors and take refuge in a church. Bonnici led the convoy, waving a red handkerchief through his car sunroof.

A large section of the mob went on to the archbishop's palace which stands opposite the police headquarters. The palace had been evacuated and the police forewarned but they failed to stop the attack and no arrests were made. Bonnici told The Sunday Times last week that there had been "some confusion" over the warnings.

There have been other violent incidents in recent weeks. A bomb was placed outside the archbishop's door though it failed to explode. Priests have been beaten and church doors daubed with paint. Eight church schools have been closed by the government, and the 61 other church schools have closed in solidarity with the eight.

THE RESULT of all this is an island divided between Mintoff's Labour party and the Nationalist party, which supports the church. One Maltese said he had changed his cigarette brand from one with a red box (the colour of the Labour party) to one with a blue box (Nationalist) because he was "attracting adverse comments at the office". People will not, as a rule, buy goods which are owned by members of the opposing party and the divide has split many families, including that of the archbishop's brother, a

priest, but they are not on speaking terms. Mintoff has a brother who is a monk and was happy to let photographers take his picture clearing up the damage at the palace caused by Mintoff's supporters.

The archbishop is constantly denigrated in the socialist press, and a cartoon depicted him as a money-grabbing zealot trying to wheedle cash from Christ on the cross. And when Father Joe Borg, the church's press spokesman, wrote to the director of state TV and radio complaining about biased media coverage, his letter was returned, ripped to pieces, with a note which said it would have soiled the director's waste bin.

Despite the government onslaught, the church is maintaining its influence and a recent Gallup poll showed that it retains the confidence of more Maltese than any other national institution. The population is still served by 1,274 priests and monks and 1,552 nuns.

And the church is fighting

back, through the courts, where it has lodged an appeal against the education act, and won a case against the property act which was declared unconstitutional by a judge last month.

Members of the Nationalist party see the church school issue as part of a headlong plunge into totalitarianism. They are not encouraged by Bonnici, who, when asked about the next elections due within 2½ years, said: "If, for one reason or another, elections cannot be held freely, then there is no constitutional protection or safeguard which would make us hold them."

In Malta last week parents were organising "underground lessons" for their children, the Movement of the United Teachers (MUT) moved to continue its strike and fewer than 30% of government school pupils were receiving lessons. Striking teachers have been threatened and "hate lists" giving their names and addresses distributed. Several teachers' houses have been attacked. The "Free Trade Union" is to decide this week whether to go on general strike in sympathy with the teachers.

Last week, police raided the Pilar convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart to look for guns, after a tip-off that nuns were seen carrying several heavy cardboard boxes into the building. No arms were found.

Neither side looks like backing down, and this could be a fight even Dom Mintoff cannot win. He might do well to study his country's history. The last ruler of Malta to attempt a confrontation with the church was Napoleon in 1799, over exactly the same issues. His men were in the process of auctioning off the treasures of the Carmelite church of Medina when the locals rose up and, with some external help, ejected the French after a bloody fight.

For the moment at least, Malta's "tiny bright flame" has been dimmed. A one woman teacher said last week: "We were supposed to be one of the most hospitable and sunny people in the world. Now all we can do is scowl at each other. It's a tragedy."

THE SUNDAY TIMES

(London)

7 October 1984

THE SUNDAY TIMES, 7 OCTOBER 1984

15

WEEK IN FOCUS

MALTA'S UNHOLY WAR

IN THE DARKENED corridors of the Archbishop of Malta's palace, the Franciscan sisters were sweeping away the last pieces of rubble. Decapitated statues of the Virgin Mary and St John, damaged almost beyond recognition by their use as battering rams, were stacked against the wall of the chapel. The tabernacle door still swung on one twisted hinge. Two massive gilt-framed oil paintings, showing "the arrest of Jesus" and "the washing of the disciples' feet", lay on the floor, their canvases slashed and jagged. In one, the face of Christ had been ripped out. Surveying the scene, Father Francis Schembri found some cause for cheer: "It's lucky for us that they missed some of our most valuable paintings," he said. "The people who did this are not the sort to know the value of art."

The astonishing thing is that the mob who attacked the archbishop's palace were Catholics (98% of Malta's population are). They were also the supporters of prime minister Dom Mintoff's socialist government which has ruled this Mediterranean island for the past 13 years. Their violence marked the low point in a long-standing feud between Malta's two great institutions, the church and the state, which has brought the island to the brink of civil war.

Last week the atmosphere was tense. Middle-class professional people are now seriously contemplating violence in retaliation against what they see as mob rule.

● Peter Godwin reports from Valletta on Malta's state versus church crisis

One businessman said: "We're unique in the Mediterranean, with Latin blood but a British sense of what's cricket. But we have had enough. We will take measures to defend ourselves."

Passions are running high. An Italian journalist, unwise enough to question people in the street about the crisis was set upon by government supporters, beaten and punched.

All last week the Maltese waited to see if Mintoff could resolve the crisis at a meeting with Vatican representatives in Rome. But the talks collapsed and it looks as if the issue will be resolved on the streets of Malta.

THE BRITISH still harbour fond memories of Malta as the George Cross Island. It was awarded the honour in 1942 for heroically withstanding the waves of German bombers in the first years of the Second World War. "This island standing alone but unafraid in the centre of the sea, one tiny bright flame in the darkness, a beacon of hope," said the late American president, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Malta was a British colony for over 150 years and has the curious distinction of being the only country to join the British Empire voluntarily, although the motive was mainly to get rid of the French who then occupied it. Twenty years after independence the Maltese still have an affection for things British and most speak good colloquial English with an odd Latin lilt. But otherwise things have changed radically.

The new Malta has been forged by the character of Dom Mintoff, who has ruled more by conflict than consensus. Mintoff was born in a slum in Conspicua, a poor suburb of Valletta, 67 years ago. His crusade against the Catholic church is rooted in early experience when, as the eldest boy in a family of 11, he was pushed by his mother towards the priesthood. Every Tuesday, in honour of St Dominic, she made him wear on his way to catechism class, a cut-down habit of the Dominican order. Later, at the seminary, there was a row: the director who had waived fees for the poor. Mintoff boy discovered that one of his sisters had had a costly wedding reception. Fees were demanded; young Dom abandoned his vocation. Ever since he has glared balefully at the church hierarchy.

SEPTEMBER 26 1984

Maltese court defends church property rights

From Austin Sammut
Valletta

The Maltese civil courts, in its constitutional role, has declared two Acts of Parliament null and void because they were in breach of three human rights provisions of the constitution.

The Acts are the "Devolution of Certain Church Property Act" and the "Land Registration Amendment Act", which were aimed at depriving the Catholic Church in Malta of virtually all its immovable property and controlling its possession of movable items.

The former law also restricted legacies left by the faithful for the celebration of Masses for the repose of their souls.

Mr Justice Stephen Borg Cardona declared the laws contrary to the provisions of the constitution concerning protection from deprivation of property without compensation, freedom of conscience and worship and protection from discrimination on grounds of creed.

The case was brought by Archbishop of Malta, Mgr Joseph Mercieca against the Prime Minister, Mr Dom Mintoff. The government is expected to appeal.

● **BOMB FOUND:** A bomb was found yesterday outside Archbishop Mercieca's residence. It was defused by an explosives expert.

● **TEACHER'S STRIKE:** Eighty per cent of teachers in

government schools obeyed a union call this week for a two-day strike, the Movement for United Teachers claimed.

The dispute arose after the union directed its members last week to work to rule after the Government failed to satisfy long-standing claims. The Minister of Education, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, reacted by asking all teachers to sign a declaration that they would not obey the union directive.

SEPTEMBER 27 1984

Clashes feared at school gates in Malta

From Austin Sammut, Valletta

Ministers accompanied by troops and police and government supporters will be at the gates of private schools in Malta to prevent any attempt to reopen them for the coming school year, the Government has made clear.

The nine private schools usually reopen on October 1, but this year the date has yet to be announced. The parent-teachers' associations, who have been coordinating the fight against new government controls over private schools, have instructed parents to accompany their children to school on the first day and observers fear clashes will result.

There has already been serious violence between police and opposition supporters last Friday police used tear gas against demonstrators for the first time over Malta.

Meanwhile, the teachers' strike in Government schools

has been extended for a three days, until the end of the week. The teachers union, the Movement for United Teachers, said 84 per cent obeyed the strike.

● The Maltese civil court has annulled only the regulation (issued) pursuant to the Land Registration Amendment Act and not the Act itself, as was suggested in our report yesterday.

● **VANDALS STRIKE:** The main office of Malta's teachers' union was vandalized on Tuesday night soon after the labour group extended its teacher's strike (AP reports).

It said "Unknown thugs" using a metal pole damaged furniture and art works in the building. The cost of the damage has not been assessed, but the union said "It is quite substantial".

There was no immediate comment from police or the Government.

SEPTEMBER 29 1984

Malta dock workers attack Curia

From Austin Sammut
Valletta

The Archbishop's Curia in Malta was attacked yesterday by government supporters, who caused considerable damage, especially in the chapel.

The Curia houses the Roman Catholic Church's central administration and the offices of the Archbishop, Mgr Joseph Mercieca. Those who caused the damage are reported to have been a group of dockyard workers on their way from a pro-government demonstration in Valletta.

Earlier, dockyard workers also descended on the courts of justice and damaged an office after forcing in a door.

Judges, magistrates, lawyers, court officials and members of the public left by back doors. The workers were participating in a demonstration in support of government efforts to force the church to offer free education.

The demonstration included the senior Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, who is due to succeed Mr Dom Mintoff as Prime Minister in the next few days.

In both the attack on the Curia and on the law courts, no police intervention was reported.



Dr Mifsud Bonnici: Was present at demonstration.

Dirty work in a small island

OCTOBER 6, 1984

Volume 293 Number 7362

What was Malta's prime minister, Mr Dom Mintoff, really aiming at when he decided to visit Britain this week, accompanied by his foreign and industry ministers, and to seek a meeting with Mrs Thatcher? He is an avid traveller, but in recent years he has been seldom seen in London (where he was once a familiar visitor; indeed, back in the 1950s he tried hard to have Malta integrated into the United Kingdom).

Since none of the various reasons given for this week's trip seemed adequate ones, it set off a wave of speculation. And some saw it as mainly intended to do just that. The present state of things in Malta is such that, for Mr Mintoff, a timely diversion is highly desirable.

The next few days should show whether a similar explanation accounts for the past week's rumours about his imminent resignation. Mr Mintoff is now 68; he has been prime minister since 1971, and leader of his Labour party for 34 years. A year ago there was a brief outburst of rumours that he was going to hand over to his deputy, Mr Carmelo Mifsud-Bonnici, who had already been named by the ruling party as the chosen successor to the leadership. Now the same rumours have been revived—only to be dismissed by Mr Mifsud-Bonnici himself as soon as Mr Mintoff had left for London on October 2nd.

What is clear is that a handover to Mr Mifsud-Bonnici would not ease the present crisis in Malta; for he, as minister for education, has been the prime mover in creating it. The latest stage in the long and bitter conflict between the Labour government and the Catholic church is centred on the schools. It came to a head on October 1st, when the church schools that about a third of Malta's children attend were due to reopen after the summer break. Those schools have not reopened; and, since hardly any of the state schools are operating normally, the education of young Maltese has, for the moment, virtually ceased. Meanwhile the church has become a target for violent attacks by Labour supporters.

Since Labour came to power in 1971

the government has chipped away at the church schools, successively limiting the fees they could charge, withdrawing capitation grants, and forbidding donations to the schools by parents. This year it launched a new offensive, through legislation that would shut down any private school that charged fees or rejected conditions which amounted to virtual state control. A separate measure was designed to expropriate most of the church's immovable property; this seemed to conflict with Mr Mifsud-Bonnici's argument that the church was so rich that it could afford not to charge any school fees.

Malta's Archbishop Joseph Mercieca asked the courts to declare both these measures unconstitutional. On September 25th the expropriation measure was declared null and void; the schools case has not yet been decided. The Labour leaders, however, have indicated that they will not brook opposition from the judges any more than from the church. On September 28th Mr Mifsud-Bonnici took part in an angry demonstration in Valetta after which a mob wrecked the archbishop's official residence and chapel and part of the law courts.

The events on September 28th prompted both the Pope and the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Hume, to protest at "the violence directed against the church" in Malta and to assure it of their sympathy and solidarity. The government, in its turn, is ready to accept outside help in settling the dispute. On October 3rd, the government's spokesman said it would accept Italy's offer of mediation.

The headquarters of the teachers' union has also been damaged by a fire bomb. In Mr Mifsud-Bonnici's eyes, the union is now acting as an ally of the church. The teachers in state schools have indeed shown some sympathy with the church schools, but they have a dispute with the government of their own, over rates of pay and working conditions. When the state schools reopened in September some of their teachers began to "work to rule"; the authorities imposed a

lockout on the offenders, and the union then called a strike.

Most of the teachers obeyed this strike call, and although Labour party volunteers were sent in to replace them the schools had to be put on a half-day basis and little serious teaching could be done. Many state schools were short of pupils, too: parents opposed to the government's actions against the church have been withholding their children in protest. And at the newly improvised state schools to which the government ordered some church-school pupils to move this week, neither staff nor pupils appeared in enough numbers for the new term to be started in anything but name.

Until last week the church had intended to try to reopen its schools on October 1st in defiance of the new law, but after the violence on September 28th the archbishop and the parent-teacher associations told parents that in the prevailing atmosphere the reopening must be delayed. This decision averted an outbreak of more widespread violence, for Mr Mifsud-Bonnici has given warning that gangs of Labour party supporters will be sent to resist any attempt to open the church schools.

He claimed, this week, that the government was thus obliged to "use thugs to stop thugs" because the opposition Nationalist party had plans to send its own gangs to enable the schools to reopen. The Nationalists have given no sign of having any such plans. They are, however, angrily opposed to the new measures against the church.

In fact, they challenge the validity of all legislation passed since the 1981 election, when they got 51% of the total vote but were kept out of power by a gerrymandering of constituency borders. As they see it, Labour has ceased to care whether it has majority support in the island and is bent on ramming through changes that are bound to provoke growing opposition. The government's actions also raise the question of whether fair elections can be held at all. The next election is due to take place in 1986.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Malta: chaos looms

Education goes underground in Malta

By Godfrey Grima in Valetta

PRIVATE EDUCATION in Malta has been driven underground by the dispute between the Roman Catholic Church and Mr Dom Mintoff's government which has closed many schools on the island.

Each day, some 18,000 church school students attend lessons furtively in private houses and garages whose locations are the closely guarded secret of parents and teachers.

Students at state schools are faring little better. Teachers there have been on strike for six weeks over an issue unrelated to the church dispute, and the schools are being kept open with the help of volunteers.

"Close your eyes and pray to God for sweets," one volunteer instructs his pupils. As they open their eyes, no sweets appear on their wooden desk tops.

"Now pray to Premier Mintoff." This time the prayer works, but the students receive little by way of a formal education.

Hopes of an early settlement in the Government's attempts to force church schools to stop charging fees are now beginning to wane.

The church says it does not have the resources to finance free education and its court action challenging the legality of the Government action is proceeding very slowly.

Yesterday, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, the senior Deputy Prime Minister and the Government's leading counsel, insisted that the judge step down because he admitted in court to being the son of a worker educated by the church.

The result was yet another adjournment for a week while the judge ponders his position.

The Government's belief that it could win a quick victory has proved optimistic. The seizure (since declared illegal) of the church's immovable property in the opening stage of the dispute, the use of deadline diplomacy to wrest concessions from the Vatican over the head of Maltese church leaders, the excessive use of legislative and administrative powers and the eruption of violence have all failed to transform church schools into free institutions.

The Government, nevertheless, is determined that the fees system must end, even if that results finally in the state's complete takeover of education.

SEPT 29, 1984

Maltese archbishop's office attacked

By Godfrey Grima in Malta

SQUADS of dockyard workers demonstrating in support of Premier Dom Mintoff's government yesterday attacked the offices of Archbishop Joseph Mercieca, head of the island's Roman Catholic Church. The Archbishop was not inside the building at the time of the attack.

Church officials strongly condemned the minimal efforts made by the police to protect the building, which is situated across the street from the island's police headquarters in Floriana, outside Valletta. Damage on the first floor, which was completely ransacked, was said to be considerable.

This violent outburst mirrors the tensions caused by the government's worsening dispute with the Roman Catholic Church over its schools. Despite widespread opposition by parents, the government wants church schools to dismantle their fees system. In defiance, parents pledge to send their children back, even to the eight leading church colleges which have not been licensed to reopen in October.

Dockyard workers started pouring into Valletta after they had been addressed by Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, the island's senior deputy prime minister. Dr Mifsud Bonnici has full powers to handle the situation and is trying to marshal support in the face of the huge rallies being organised almost daily by the opposition Nationalist Party, trade unions not committed to supporting the government and parents' associations.

THE island of Malta appears to be plunging headlong into civil disorder because of a bitter confrontation between the Roman Catholic church and the Socialist government.

This weekend last-ditch efforts are being made to halt the slide towards chaos. On Friday night Malta's prime minister Dom Mintoff, held a four-hour meeting with the head of the island's church, Archbishop Joseph Mercieca, in a futile attempt to break the impasse over the enforced closure of church schools.

The government is insisting that the church end all fees and donations at these schools. It is the most divisive and violent

by Peter Godwin

issue since the island became independent in 1964.

The academic year for church schools starts tomorrow, and the church has pledged to open them as usual. In reply, the government has placed police guards outside the eight schools and padlocked their gates. Yesterday, it was reported that several nuns were locked inside for a time.

Violence erupted on Friday when government supporters from Malta's large dry docks were addressed by the senior deputy prime minister and leader-designate, Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici.

sud Bonnici. After the rally, the 800-strong mob drove in convoy to the capital, Valletta, where they left a trail of devastation.

Swinging chains and iron bars, they broke into the law court, where they ransacked offices. They went on to the archbishop's palace, which had been evacuated, and wrecked the chapel and offices, using sacred statues as battering rams to break down doors, and caused thousands of pounds' worth of damage to precious art works.

The confrontation is the latest in a series of clashes which have beset Mintoff's government.

New York Tribune

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1984

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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Surrogates of Soviets propping up leftist Malta

SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE

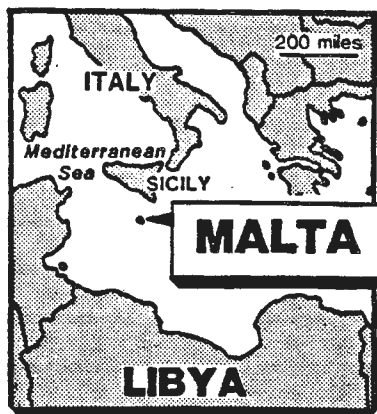
VALLETTA, Malta — Twenty years after gaining its independence from Britain on Sept. 21, 1964, the strategic Mediterranean island of Malta is adrift between East and

NEWS ANALYSIS

West and between democracy and dictatorship.

Direct Soviet presence is small but Russia's surrogates, Libya and North Korea, are well-entrenched and are propping up the regime of 70-year old Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff.

Elections held in 1981 under a system of proportional representation gave the pro-Western Nationalist Party (PN), led by Eddie Fenech-Adami, 51 percent of the



popular vote but a minority of parliamentary seats. Mintoff's ruling Socialist Party obtained an absolute majority of seats with 49 percent of the votes.

Gerrymandering was only one feature of the elections. The state monopoly of radio and television was used as the government's propaganda machine. In some constituencies, violence prevented opposition supporters from reaching the polling booths. When the population statistics for 1981 were published, the number of inhabitants of voting age was 5 (see MALTA, page 2A)

MALTA

(From page 1A)

percent lower than that of voters' names on the electoral register. The statistics were promptly revised.

Right to govern challenged

The PN, which saw freedom and democracy being slowly eroded under Mintoff in the 1970s, has challenged his right to continue governing without a popular mandate. It stayed away from parliament for over a year. For 2 years it ordered its supporters to boycott products advertised on the discredited radio and television station. It has held monthly rallies and protest demonstrations, which are expected to culminate today in a mass meeting to celebrate Independence Day — which Mintoff refuses to recognize because it was a PN government that brought an end to Malta's status as a colony after 2,000 years under the various

powers that controlled the Mediterranean Sea.

In any democracy, the stalemate would have led to fresh elections, possibly after a period of non-partisan and non-controversial administration. But that is not Mintoff's way. In 1982, he signed a secret treaty with North Korea which, when revealed by Fenech-Adami, turned out to be a copy of that signed by North Korea and Grenada.

North Korean President Kim Il-Sung has sent Mintoff arms, ammunition and military instructors to train the Maltese police and armed forces in crowd-handling and the interrogation of detainees. In the last 2 years the army has regularly set up roadblocks and checkpoints. The police have become more arrogant and brutal.

Furthermore, North Korea aircraft are known to stop overnight in Malta without unloading, thus raising suspicions that the island may have become a staging-post for North Korean arms shipments to

economic woes, but it has mobilized the opposition against Mintoff and disturbed many of his supporters.

The summer of discontent is likely to reach its climax in today's protest rally and in October when the church reopens its schools — as it is determined to do.

The confrontation has been long and sustained. It has taken all of Fenech-Adami's powers of control over his supporters to prevent it from degenerating into open violence. However, any incident, any spark may cause the situation to explode — with untold consequences both domestically and for Malta's international associations.

Forty years ago, Mintoff started his political career as a popular and populist leader. The last 3 years have shown him hanging on to power at considerable cost to his country and to his own image. The question which the Maltese are asking is whether the intractable political crisis will lead to a dictatorship with heavy backing from Libya and North Korea.

review the wide discretionary powers assumed by the executive has been severely curtailed.

The Roman Catholic church, once a powerful political force, still claims the loyalty of more than 80 percent of the population but has borne the brunt of Mintoff's deep-seated aversion. In 1983, most of its property was nationalized. Earlier this year the bishop was informed that his statements would be reported on radio and television only if Mintoff's speeches were read from church pulpits. The church's schools, which expended as state education weakened, have been forbidden from reopening in October unless they agree not to charge any fees — with the government suggesting that the church could melt its gold chalices and silver altarpieces to fund its schools.

Opposition mobilized

The confrontation with the Catholic church may have diverted attention from the island's economic

designs on Malta.

The Maltese economy has stumbled as political strife was added to the government's record of creeping controls and takeovers and its reluctance to spend money to build up the country's infrastructure. Unemployment rose to around 20 percent and underemployment has become widespread. Of the island's main foreign exchange earners, clothing and textile exports have been undercut by Far Eastern manufacturers; tourism has been slashed by the overvalued Maltese pound and chronic water shortages.

As he has often done in times of adversity, Mintoff has radicalized his rule. He and his lieutenants have spoken ominously of setting up a one-party state, suspending freedom and democracy, and recognizing only trade unions and enterprises that follow government orders. Press freedom and the independence of the judiciary have been assailed. The courts' ability to

Mintoff's old weapon of forging closer links with communist countries and Libya — to extract money from the West — has been blunted by use. Even Italy, coalition-ridden and subject to blackmail because of its proximity, is still brooding over Mintoff's concept of neutrality before renewing an agreement, expired in 1983, whereby it guaranteed Malta's neutral status and dish out financial subsidies for the privilege of doing so.

Pact with Soviets

Mintoff has concluded cooperation agreements with the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia and with a large number of non-aligned countries, although in the past such exchanges have not borne much fruit. However, relations with Libya have again warmed up after the 1980 dispute over the division of the continental shelf between the two countries — even though Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi is known to harbor

