

MALTA: A PARADIGM OF SMALL POWER  
INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION STRATEGY

James Stewart Cooper



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

MALTA: A PARADIGM OF SMALL POWER  
INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION STRATEGY

by

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December 1980

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T197059



## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

READ INSTRUCTIONS  
BEFORE COMPLETING FORM

1. REPORT NUMBER		2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Malta: A Paradigm of Small Power International Negotiation Strategy		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Master's Thesis December 1980	
7. AUTHOR(s) James Stewart Cooper		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER	
8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California 93940		9. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)	
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California 93940		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS	
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE December 1980	
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 105	
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified	
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited			
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)			
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Malta, Negotiations, Negotiations/Theory, Small Power Negotiations Theory, Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, Maltese Economic Conditions, Mediterranean Affairs, U.S.-Maltese Relations, Soviet-Maltese Rela- tions, British-Maltese Relations, Libyan-Maltese Relations, Libya			
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This thesis examines the recent foreign policy of Malta within the analytical framework of international negotiation theory. The island may be seen as a paradigmatic test-case of small-power international negotiation strategy in that Prime Minister Mintoff seems so far to have been unable to repeat his 1971 success in negotiating. The Zartman structural Paradox that prevailed in 1971 has yielded to a more typical small-power situation as cir- cumstances have changed. Malta's current status of unarmed			



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Mintoff's Malta will probably pursue a foreign policy of nonalignment with economic and military guarantees provided by Italy, and perhaps other West European states.





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INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION STRATEGY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 1980

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1971, Malta, an unarguably small power, only recently (1964) independent, dictated terms for a renegotiation of the British-Maltese defense agreement, including the total withdrawal of British forces by 1979. This feat was a prime example of the structural analysis model as conditioned by the tactical use of power sources in an imbalanced relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Maltese Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff's avowed aim was for Malta to assume a non-aligned role, serving as a bridge of peace and understanding between North Africa and Europe, a policy course still pursued today. In this new status of unarmed neutrality, the economic void created by the withdrawal of lucrative British defense spending has necessitated the search for increased economic ties abroad. The Mintoff regime has promoted proposals for a neutralization of the Mediterranean, free of influence by either the U.S. or the USSR.

In consideration of the loose bipolar character of the international framework, and the emergence of ambitious lesser powers, especially Colonel Qadhafi's Libya, Mintoff's policies have and will continue to require a shrewd and careful negotiating skill. The problem is apparent: can Mintoff's Malta succeed?



This thesis will test the hypothesis that Malta's current status of unarmed neutrality is unlikely to persist. This status (the dependent variable) is arguably a function of Maltese decision-making and negotiation strategy (the independent variable). Maltese strategies are, in turn, presumably influenced by several factors, including: (1) the perceived historical pattern of Malta's relationship to great powers in the Mediterranean; (2) prospects for economic viability; (3) nationalism; and (4) the more personal and idiosyncratic characteristics of the current Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff. At the same time, Maltese decision-making will be conditioned by the policies and perceptions of key actors in the Mediterranean: the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Algeria, and Libya.

An attempt will be made to assess the impact of all of the above factors on Maltese decision-making, through the utilization of an analytical framework presenting Malta as a paradigm of small power international negotiation strategy. This study will evaluate the probability of different outcomes in terms of (a) Maltese preferences and necessities, (b) Maltese negotiation strategies and options, and (c) the attitudes and perceptions of the key Mediterranean actors.

Finally, the Maltese case will be assessed in its significance to negotiation theory in general, and resulting implications for U.S. and NATO security interests.



## II. BACKGROUND

### A. HISTORICAL SETTING

For the first time in several centuries, the Mediterranean is in a state of transition. No power or nation can truly be said to have dominance over this sea. This fact is reflected in the status of Malta, whose current government champions Euro-Mediterranean neutrality. Historically, the power which has controlled the Mediterranean has also dominated Malta; at present, no nation dominates the tiny archipelago nor controls the Mediterranean.

The seafaring Phoenicians settled the main island, naming it Malet (Phoenician for shelter) in 1500 B.C., as they expanded their trade-based influence westward.<sup>1</sup> Several centuries later, another Phoenician vassal state, Carthage, began to supplant the mother-power's bases in the area, and absorbed Malet as part of this process.

In 216 B.C., the Romans defeated the Carthaginians at Malet and annexed the island for the Empire. By this time the Romans were becoming dependent on the grain shipments from the North African colonies, and thus, control of the Mediterranean was a necessity in order to ensure the security of the trade routes. It was during this period that the island was renamed Melita.<sup>2</sup> In 60 A.D., a galley carrying St. Paul to Rome was shipwrecked on the island. St. Paul converted many of the island's





inhabitants to Christianity, and the church has enjoyed an uninterrupted and preeminent position in Maltese domestic events ever since.<sup>3</sup> With the division of the Empire in 395 A.D., Malta was assigned to the eastern half which was to be administered by Constantinople.<sup>4</sup>

As Roman power waned, Malta fell to succeeding powers. The Arabs were the immediate successors to Roman rule as they expanded from North Africa to fill the void created by the deterioration of European power and unity. The Arabs gave Malta her present name.<sup>5</sup>

In 1091 A.D., Count Roger of Normandy secured the islands from the Arabs as European Christians pushed the Moslems back into North Africa. In 1120, Count Roger's second son was crowned Roger I of Sicily, and Malta was passed on to the Sicilian throne through the Normans and Aragonese.<sup>6</sup> In 1530, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Spain, ceded the island to the Order of the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem.

The Knights constructed extensive fortifications on the island (most of which still stand today), enabling Malta to serve as a Christian citadel capable of resisting attacks by the Ottoman Turks and the Barbary Pirates. The Turkish siege in 1565 was particularly determined, but ended in a decisive defeat to the Turks, in part because of Spanish and Sicilian support of the island.<sup>7</sup> European Christendom was convinced even then of the importance of Malta to the security of the southern flank of its civilization.





The Knights' rule in Malta had fallen into a state of inner decay and corruption by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Infiltrated by French sympathizers and on the brink of financial ruin, the Order's Grand Master Hompesch surrendered to Napoleon in June 1798, and the Order's membership scattered to the patronage and protection of the various European courts.<sup>8</sup>

The Knights had oppressed the Maltese in the waning years of their rule, and, as a result, the natives were glad to see the Order depart the island, and received the French as liberators.<sup>9</sup> However, despite Napoleon's promises of freedom and prosperity, French rule placed heavy burdens upon the Maltese, including excessive taxation, disrespect for local customs and religion, food shortages, and local inflation. In September 1798, the population revolted after the French attempted to auction off some local church property. In mid-September, Maltese envoys appealed to King Ferdinand of Naples for aid, and hailed down the passing flagship of Britain's Lord Nelson. Nelson blockaded the island, gave the Maltese a portion of his fleet's provisions and weapons, and joined in their deputation to King Ferdinand in late October. The King was reluctant, but Nelson persuaded him that the island was desired by the Russians. Nelson assured the King that England, having recently acquired Minorca, did not desire Malta. Nelson's warning of Russian interest was reinforced by rumors that a Russian fleet was transiting the Dardanelles, bound for Malta,



and of a Russian army marching toward the Adriatic. It was reported that the Tsar intended to restore the Knights of St. John to their former position in Malta with the aid of a 3,000-man army led by Prince Dmitri Volkonskiy.

King Ferdinand was finally persuaded to provide aid, but it was offered in only token amounts. The Maltese began appealing to the King of England to claim the island, and, indeed, tried to convince British troops to raise the Union Jack over the island. In the spring of 1800, British troops from Minorca reinforced the Maltese rebels, and by September of that year, the French garrison surrendered to the blockade.

Lord Nelson, calling Malta a "most important outwork to India", assumed sovereignty of the island on behalf of the British Crown, declaring that Great Britain should never give up the island. Under the Treaty of Paris, 1814, (Article 7) the island of Malta' and its dependencies shall belong in full rights and sovereignty to his Britannic Majesty."

Great Britain did retain Malta as a Crown possession until 1964, and maintained a military presence on the island until 1979. Malta was developed as the main base for the British Mediterranean fleet, due in large measure to the fine dockyard facilities which date back to the 1560's.<sup>10</sup> The dockyards and Naval Hospital served the Royal Navy admirably, especially in both world wars. In World War I, when Malta was known as the "nurse of the Mediterranean", casualties under care at the Naval Hospital sometimes numbered up to ten thousand, and the



dockyards were operated around the clock.<sup>11</sup> During the Second World War, the British maintained possession of Malta, despite fierce German and Italian efforts to remove this Allied toe-hold in the Mediterranean.

In the postwar period, Malta suffered the fate of other overseas British bases as a result of the British White Paper of 1957, which called for a steady drawing-down of the worldwide network of Imperial possessions due to budgetary constraints. In 1959, the dockyards were passed from Admiralty control to commercial control, and in 1964, Malta became an independent member of the British Commonwealth. Simultaneously, a treaty establishing British and NATO rights to use Maltese military facilities for a ten-year period was concluded. Prior to the expiration of the 1964 agreement, in 1971, Malta forced the negotiation of a new treaty concerning military facilities usage, designed to obtain increased British aid in weaning the economy from dependence upon Crown defense expenditures, prior to a final British withdrawal in 1979. Britain did withdraw all of her forces by the spring of 1979, and in the intervening year and a half, Prime Minister Mintoff has made it clear that he intends to attempt to steer a middle course between the strategic maneuverings of the USSR and NATO.

With this historical background, we can now turn to a consideration of Malta from a strategic point of view.





## B. STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

The major Maltese islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino measure approximately 315.5 square kilometers (121.3 square miles), and Malta, the largest island, is 27.3 km. long by 14.5 km. wide (17 mi. by 8 mi.).<sup>12</sup> However, Malta's diminutive size is overshadowed by her location, in the center of the narrow gap separating the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean, 93 km. (58 mi.) south of Sicily and 288 km. (180 mi.) from the North African coastline. From this position, the island could serve as a base for surface sorties against lines of communication, and aircraft with a mere 200-mile radius of operations could patrol the entire Mediterranean gap from the Straits of Messina to the North African coastline.<sup>13</sup> In either case, Malta could serve to sponsor operations designed to sever the passage between the eastern and western Mediterranean basins.

Malta offers natural deepwater harbors, repair depots, a well-trained labor force and underground fuel and ammunition stores facilities. Former RAF airbase facilities exist at Luqa, staffed by British-trained Maltese administrators and controllers.<sup>14</sup>

Malta is not self-sufficient; if the North African and Italian territories were hostile to the island, resupply would necessarily be dependent on long, exposed tranists. During World War II, Britain did effectively resupply Malta in the face of Axis foes who held both Italy and North Africa,





although the effort was costly in terms of both men and material.<sup>15</sup> British air and sea forces based at Malta sank over half of the supplies destined for Rommel's Afrika Korps, and succeeded in making the Axis maintenance of the supply lines out of Italy an exhaustive and expensive task.<sup>16</sup>

The security of the lines of communication between the two Mediterranean basins is important for several reasons - above all, because of the transport of oil from the Middle East to Europe via the Suez Canal, and the right of access to the Canal itself. The potential consequences of restricting or denying the flow of this vital strategic and commercial resource to the Western nations have become uncomfortably evident in the last decade.

Israel, Greece and Turkey are dependent in varying degree on the Mediterranean Sea routes. Israel is alone among hostile Arab neighbors (except for Egypt) in the Middle East. As illustrated during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, Israeli lifelines in time of conflict are almost entirely dependent upon American freedom of passage in the Mediterranean. Israel has no overland resupply available, and no benefactor as committed or strong as the U.S. Greece and Turkey are isolated from the rest of the NATO nations, and, along with Italy, would depend upon sea lines for 90% of their wartime supplies.<sup>17</sup>

Western conventional and nuclear naval forces constitute the final important justification for ensuring freedom of access to the eastern Mediterranean. The presence of the



forward deployed aircraft carriers and SSBNs of the Sixth Fleet serve as a constant strategic problem for the Soviet Union, and represent a major factor in the strength of NATO's southern flank.

It has been argued by several sources that the value of Malta is neutralized as long as one can operate out of Italian and Sicilian bases, from whence the same missions can be accomplished.<sup>18</sup> This argument assumes that NATO has complete and assured freedom of action from its Italian bases. However, the fairly recent political gains by the Italian Communist Party should cause the astute observer to question the permanence of NATO access to Italian bases, and of Western ability to use them as the Alliance chooses (all assurances by the Italian Communists that they would not hamper NATO operations aside). In any situation where NATO's Italian connections were restricted, access to Malta would once again become significant.

Even if the presence of NATO forces at Sigonella, Sicily, were permanently assured (duplicating possible strategic value to be gained by stationing forces on Malta), there is an equally important "negative" strategic value to be gained by the retention of Malta as a sympathetic, Western-oriented state, or, at least, as a truly nonaligned state. That, of course, is denial of the use of the island to the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron.



### C. THE SOVIET INTEREST

The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron (SovMedRon) commenced permanent deployment to the Mediterranean in 1964, and in the following decade, her influence ashore increased in North Africa and the Middle East. However, the latter half of the 1970s witnessed a loss of most of the Soviet shore facilities. The 1976 abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian defense agreements has denied the SovMedRon the fine port and dockyard facilities she once enjoyed in Egypt.<sup>19</sup> The Soviets are once again dependent upon sea lines of supply stretching back to the Black Sea ports and passing through the Dardanelles, and are thus somewhat inhibited by the Montreux Convention and Turkey's membership in NATO.

Limited port facilities are available to the Soviets in Latakia (in Syria), and at commercial facilities in Yugoslavia, but the major maintenance and resupply effort is accomplished at the Soviet anchorages in international waters: Kithara in the Aegean, the Gulf of Hammament off Tunisia, the Hurd Bank off Malta, the Gulf of Sirte off Libya, and the Alboran Islands off the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>20</sup> In addition to material difficulties encountered in supporting the SovMedRon, the loss of land bases has denied the Soviets the ability to provide air cover to their fleet. Of somewhat lesser importance, the morale of Soviet sailors is suffering due to the unrelieved routine of deployed shipboard life.<sup>21</sup>



The strategic virtues of Malta are therefore perhaps even more important to the Soviets than they are to NATO: location astride the mid-Mediterranean choke point, port and air facilities, and proximity to the North African coastline. A Soviet presence on Malta would be invaluable to the SovMedRon in countering the NATO presence in the Mediterranean and would serve as a counterweight to NATO's Italian facilities. In addition to hosting the Soviets' extensive conventional/nuclear submarine fleet, the island could be used to host buoyed or submerged acoustic detection systems designed to inform the Soviets of the passage of U.S. SSBN's.<sup>22</sup> This submarine/moored detection capability would give the Soviets a valuable advantage in their solution of the ASW problem in the Mediterranean.







### III. DOMESTIC FACTORS

#### A. THE MALTESE ECONOMY

One of the major determinants for Maltese politics in the past several decades has been the economy. A few basic demographic facts should be mentioned at the outset.

At the close of 1978, Malta's population was 327,407, representing a population density of 1,036 persons per square kilometer (2,695 per square mile)<sup>1</sup>, the highest population density in Europe and the Mediterranean except for Gibraltar.<sup>2</sup> This population boasts a literacy rate of over 90%<sup>3</sup>, and only about 6% of the labor force is engaged in agriculture and fishing.<sup>4</sup> Cultivable land claims about 40% of the total land area of the archipelago, yet approximately 80% of the food consumed annually is imported<sup>5</sup>, a fact hardly surprising in light of the high population density. Small amounts of produce (mainly potatoes and onions) are exported, but the main resources of the islands are its deepwater harbors and labor force. The only proven mineral resource is globegerina limestone.<sup>6</sup> Oil is believed to exist in offshore deposits in the southern portion of Malta's shelf, but as will be discussed in Chapter V, disagreements with Libya have delayed exploratory drilling.

Malta thus has a large labor force, the majority of which is literate and engaged in non-rural trades and which is not self-sufficient.



The actual patterns of employment depend largely upon a number of historical accidents. The economy has been service-oriented for over four centuries, with the balance of trade deep in the minus column, compensated only by a balance of payments receiving large injections of foreign capital.

The Knights of the Order of St. John brought to Malta in 1530 great wealth and "power dependent on external wealth."<sup>7</sup> The local population turned to trades related to serving the needs of the Knights rather than developing a self-supporting productive base. Agriculture continued as a primary occupation until the 1870s, through the mid-point of British rule. The British inherited the dockyard system begun by the Knights, and the Admiralty soon made the Maltese port of Valletta the main base for the Imperial Mediterranean Fleet. The dockyards and other sectors of the British defense establishment on the island became the main employers of Maltese labor, a situation which accelerated to the point of crippling the agricultural sector after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. As they absorbed local labor, the British suppressed entrepreneurship by discouraging the development of a private, indigenous industrial sector<sup>8</sup>: in addition, until 1959, when the Admiralty passed control of the dockyards to a private firm, no Maltese employee was promoted to a rank higher than foreman.<sup>9</sup> By 1912 the situation was such that a Royal Commission reported that the local labor force was fully geared to the service of the Imperial government and that Maltese



prosperity was precarious and artificial.<sup>10</sup> Cotton growing, the leading industry of the nineteenth century, which employed 20.2% of the labor force in 1861, disappeared, and while 42% of the labor force was engaged in manufacturing in 1861, this figure had decreased to 21% by 1957.<sup>11</sup>

The dockyards reached a peak of activity during the Second World War, employing over 12,000 laborers.<sup>12</sup> However, in the postwar period, concern emerged over rebuilding a viable local commercial productive base. Malta was not included in the Marshall Plan program, but the British made a £32 million grant to Malta to aid in reconstruction of war damage.<sup>13</sup> This program, run on a decreasing annual payment basis, was exhausted by early 1960. In 1957, the release of the British White Paper on Defense called for a gradual rundown of the military facilities on Malta as part of the larger plan for the gradual withdrawal from selected overseas bases. This event confirmed the worst fears of many Maltese, including Dominic Mintoff, the leader of the Malta Labour Party (MLP), that Malta could not count on the British military expenditures indefinitely, and that the island needed to develop activities to counteract the effects of fluctuations in defense spending, and to provide a basis for growth independent of the defense sector. Mintoff had become the Maltese Prime Minister when the MLP won the 1955 elections, and he fought vigorously for full integration with the United Kingdom, desiring to permanently connect Malta with its financial resources and social benefits.





As will be discussed later, Mintoff's integration plan failed, and he resigned in 1958.

In 1959, the dockyards were turned over to commercial interests, but with an Admiralty guarantee to ensure the employment of 7,000 workers for the next three years. The enormity of Malta's dependence on the British military sector during this period was evident in that in 1959 it accounted for over 25% of her labor force, 20% of her GNP, and 60% of her foreign exchange earnings.<sup>14</sup> Also in 1959, Malta embarked on her first five-year plan, supported by a £29 million grant for Great Britain.<sup>15</sup>

The Nationalist Party was in power when Malta became independent in 1964. The Nationalist diversification program was three-pronged: to stimulate investment, attract tourists, and attract wealthy residents.<sup>16</sup> Foreign investment was attracted with various incentives, including interest-free loans for plant/equipment purchases, government-built factories on industrial estates at low rental rates, income-tax-free profits for ten years, and exemptions from import duties on raw materials and equipment.<sup>17</sup> The Nationalist Party was openly pro-British, and thus most of the takers in all three sectors of its program were British. The cheap labor and financial incentives in Malta attracted British industry. British tourists were at the time (1966-1970) restricted by law to fixed spending limits outside of the so-called Sterling Area, but Malta was in the Sterling Area, thus





proving an attractive holiday spot. Income tax incentives encouraged prospective British retirees to settle down in Malta.

Concurrent with independence in 1964, a ten-year mutual defense treaty was signed by Great Britain and Malta. The pact included a British agreement to provide £51 million in aid during the ten year period. Article 6 of the defense pact specified that no changes were to be made in the level of British military activity of such a degree as to affect the Maltese economy without prior consultation with the Maltese government. The £51 million grant was to be distributed on a 75% gift/25% loan ratio for the first five years, with the gift/loan ratio for the latter five years to be negotiated at a later date.<sup>18</sup>

The Nationalist Government's economic programs began to unravel by the 1969-1970 period, unfortunately just prior to elections. The defense treaty proved the first problems, as Great Britain commenced an acceleration of the planned rundown of defense activity on the island in 1966, apparently without prior consultation with the Maltese. The Maltese government claimed that it had not been consulted about the rundown, but was forced to abandon its position when the British threatened to withhold assistance payments if the Maltese continued to complain. In 1967, the Suez Canal was closed, cutting deeply into Mediterranean shipping traffic and thus lowering the dockyard employment level in Malta. The spending limits imposed by the British government on their citizens traveling outside



the Sterling Area were lifted in January 1970, and the tourism and real estate industries in Malta suffered as a result. The influx of British tourists and settlers in the late 1960s had inflated the real estate market in a building boom that tripled between 1965 and 1969.<sup>19</sup> When tourist arrivals fell off in 1970, the real estate market collapsed, and foreign investment and industrial development declined as well in 1970-71. All these factors contributed to a rise in unemployment, from under 3% in early 1970 to 5% in late 1971. This dismal economic picture was a prime contributor to the Nationalist Party's narrow defeat in the elections of June 1971.

Upon coming to office in the 1971 elections, Prime Minister Mintoff of the victorious MLP renegotiated the defense and financial agreements with Great Britain, obtaining a tripling of payments to £15 million annually, and an agreement for total British military withdrawal from the island by the spring of 1979. The MLP Government thus embarked on an economic development path designed to reduce dependence on British military spending. The stated national objective became the achievement of "sustainable economic growth and viability by a diversity of relationships with a wide range of partners", and the establishment of an "industrial society with a special focus on the creation of dynamic and export-oriented industries and on the development of the services sector."<sup>20</sup>



The main tool for the Labour Government's economic program has been the 1973-1980 Development Plan for Malta. The Plan was designed to achieve a consensus between government, labor, and the private sector for an overall design to select target sectors to lead the entire Maltese economy; however, the plan was intended to be flexible and responsive to changing economic conditions worldwide. The original growth sectors were industrial enterprises, ship-repairing and ship-building and related services, with the main emphasis on increasing Malta's productive activities.<sup>21</sup> In 1977, a supplement to the 1973-1980 Plan was published, indicating a redirection of emphasis toward developing Malta as a "center where raw materials or semi-processed goods from distant countries in South America or Asia may be processed and distributed to other countries in Europe and North America."<sup>22</sup> One of Malta's secondary harbors, Marsaxlokk Bay, has been designated as the main site for the new transshipment enterprises.

The development of a mixed economy in Malta has been spurred by the activity of the Malta Development Corporation, which provides governmental assistance to investors desiring to establish industrial enterprises in Malta, including public, private, local, foreign, joint and independent projects. The mixed economy approach is an indicator of the Labour Government's intention to become more closely involved in Maltese society: this developing governmental involvement is explored





more fully later in this thesis. Governmental control was in evidence early on, as the drydocks were nationalized in 1971, and since then the government has partially nationalized the Mid-Med Bank (ex-Barclay's) and the Bank of Valletta (ex-Banco di Sicilia).<sup>23</sup> Controls on the import and distribution of essential commodities were recently expanded to include wood, cheese, coffee, tea, fresh fruit, rice, sugar, tinned food, tinned milk, butter, meat, barley, cereals, potatoes and steel.<sup>24</sup> The present government advises that private enterprises can "flourish subject to regulation in the public interest."<sup>25</sup>

The MLP formed an alliance with the General Workers Union (GWU) in the 1940s, and this alliance has strengthened over the years; in 1979, for instance, the leaderships of the MLP and GWU were formally integrated.<sup>26</sup> This is a considerable advantage for the MLP as in 1975 the GWU membership of 25,300 workers was out of a total unionized workforce of 36,200.<sup>27</sup> The Labour Government has encouraged the establishment of workers' councils in public sector enterprises in order to facilitate better labor relations. The drydocks formed the first such councils after nationalization in 1971, and the councils have since spread to various other enterprises.

Full employment has been a target of the present government, and paramilitary labor corps have been organized to contribute to public infrastructure projects while training unemployed workers for trades. The opposition Nationalists, however, claim that the labor corps merely provide a cover for





hidden unemployment. The Government is also thought to employ persons merely to decrease visible unemployment. In December 1978, Government departments employment stood at 20,600, the labor corps at 5,900, and the British military facilities at 1,540. In September 1979, Government departments employed 24,900 (a 25% increase in nine months), the labor corps had decreased to 1,800, and, of course, British military employment was 0, the base having closed in March 1979.<sup>28</sup> Certain Maltese sources claim that this explosion in Government employment is really only a sophisticated method of hiding unemployment.

In 1979, the trade gap stood at 119.7 million, the highest ever; yet Malta's foreign reserves were more than adequate to cover the difference, and the balance of payments remained in the surplus column, where it has been since 1971.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that the British left in 1979 (thus ending the annual £15 million official rental and approximately £13 million spent annually on unofficial local expenditures by personnel<sup>30</sup>), foreign exchange flows remain favorable, and Malta maintains a level of foreign exchange reserves sufficient to pay for 18 months of imports.<sup>31</sup>

Much of the influx of funds is a result of tourism-related expenditures, now that the British services' expenditures have been ended. These tourist outlays include actual tourist purchases, ticket receipts from the public-owned airline (AirMalta), ship repairing and ship building profits.<sup>32</sup>



The other main source of Malta's payments surplus has been foreign grants and loans, the main source (aside from Great Britain) in the past decade being Libya. The Libyan relationship will be studied more thoroughly in Chapter V, but economic aid has included shares in Malta's Investment Finance Bank, part ownership in several hotels, the establishment of the Libyan Arab Maltese Holding Company (LAMHC), a share of the Marsaxlokk project, development loans at 2-3% interest, and aid in water-boring operations, hospitals, and transfers of helicopters and trawlers.<sup>33</sup> The LAMHC has been the coordinator for Maltese-Libyan resource development, and has established nine joint ventures so far, with Great Britain, France, Italy, Lebanon, and Brazil, as well as the two founding countries.<sup>34</sup> The Libyan aid has been in evidence since 1971, when Mintoff came to power, and Libya's Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi promised "unlimited aid to my brother (Mintoff)" after the British withdrawal.<sup>35</sup> From 1972 until 1979, Libya provided petrol, diesel, paraffin and lubricant oils to Malta at Libyan domestic prices, a significantly discounted price. Col. Qadhafi desired that the petrol products be sold at the same price on the local Maltese market, but the Maltese Government retailed the petrol at premium prices, using the profits to finance Government projects and subsidies.<sup>36</sup> The concessionary oil arrangement was discontinued in the summer of 1979 amidst increasingly disturbed Maltese-Libyan relations, and since then the Government has strictly controlled petroleum



sales while searching for a new concessionary arrangement with other Arab oil producers. Libya signed a £23million, four-year economic assistance agreement with Malta in November 1979, but in light of recent relations, the viability of that pledge is uncertain.<sup>37</sup>

Other aid has included interest-free loans from Saudi Arabia to help finance the expansion of dockyard facilities, Kuwaiti loans for a waste recycling project and fisheries development<sup>38</sup>, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) assistance, the refinement of Libyan crude at concessionary prices by Italy<sup>39</sup>, and massive financial and technical aid from the People's Republic of China for the construction of Malta's biggest drydock facility.

Malta has been an associate member of the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1971, when a Nationalist Government-negotiated agreement came into effect. The original arrangement established a target date of ten years for customs union (full membership and no tariffs either way), to be finalized by negotiations at a later time, and provided for a 70% cut in EEC tariffs against Maltese industrial exports, a 35% reduction in Maltese tariffs against EEC goods (the imbalance supposedly addressing Malta's less-developed, less-advantaged situation vis-a-vis the EEC members), and preferential EEC treatment of Maltese agricultural exports.<sup>40</sup> Negotiations concerning customs union, originally scheduled for 1976, have been postponed at Malta's request twice, the latest postponement expiring on





31 December 1980. EEC associate membership has been very advantageous for Malta, both in terms of trade and financing. In 1976 the EEC committed 26 million units\* for financing projects in the economic and social development of Malta, 15 million units to be provided by the European Investment Bank.<sup>41</sup> The latest EEC grant will be £M1.3 million for technical assistance and training projects in electronics fields.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, EEC countries take 75% of Malta's exports and provide 70% of her imports: Italy and Great Britain provide 21% and 20%, respectively, of Malta's import requirements, and West Germany buys about 36% of Maltese exports.<sup>43</sup>

The Maltese economy has survived the loss of British military revenues, at least for the present. However, this success is conditional on the continued flow of funds to maintain Malta's balance of payments surplus. The success in attracting foreign capital is dependent in large part on the domestic and foreign policies of Prime Minister Mintoff's government. The tourist trade, energy supplies, and demand for Malta's planned transshipment center are all dependent on worldwide economic factors out of Malta's control. The situation is reminiscent of the 1912 report: to a significant degree, Malta's economy still seems precarious, her prosperity artificial. As Prime Minister Mintoff's international relations are reviewed later, the importance of obtaining funding will be obvious.

\*A European Currency Unit (ECU) is the standard monetary instrument used by the EEC. The ECU was created through the combination of the currencies of the member states, with a specific conversion rate for each individual national currency. In 1974, one ECU equalled £M2.8.





## B. DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS

### 1. Dominic Mintoff

A charismatic, strong-willed national leader can often come to dominate or profoundly influence governmental policies to the point where the policies and the man seem inseparable. Dominic "Dom" Mintoff, the present Maltese Prime Minister, is such a leader, and, as is usual in such cases, it seems few are neutral in their opinion of him.

Mintoff was born in Cospicua, near the port of Valletta, in 1917, the son of a British Navy steward. Mintoff's higher education began at the Royal University of Malta, where he was awarded the one annual Rhodes scholarship granted to Malta. He earned a degree in architecture and civil engineering, and returned to Malta in 1943. A story may illustrate the beginnings of Mintoff's fierce nationalism. His father was stationed at the Auberge de Castille, a grand palatial building built by the Knights. The Auberge was then the British Naval Headquarters on Malta, and the main entrance was reserved for dignitaries and high-ranking officers. However, Dom also liked to use the main entrance. One day, when his father admonished him for using the front entrance and told him that the British officers were complaining of young Mintoff's habit, Dom is supposed to have replied, "Don't worry Dad, someday that place will be ours."<sup>44</sup>

Mintoff has been associated with the MLP since 1938, and in 1949 he assumed the leadership of the Party. Discussions



of Mintoff's negotiating style in the next chapter will reveal more fully Mintoff's blustery, combative style, but a recent incident in Malta can once again provide a clue to Mintoff's quick temper. While addressing the Maltese House of Representatives, Mintoff became infuriated by interruptions from an opposition party Member of Parliament. Yelling, "If you can't stop him, Mr. Speaker, then I will!", Mintoff charged the offending M.P., having to be physically restrained from assaulting him.<sup>45</sup> The same source reports that Mintoff is apt to respond to advice with screams, threats, and a quick dismissal of the advisor in question.

Prime Minister Mintoff's authoritarian nature, blended with the MLP's socialist tendency to increase government involvement in Maltese society, is showing signs of eroding the democratic character of the island. On the one hand, Mintoff's defenders point to Government achievements in expanding welfare programs, compulsory and free education, Government-subsidized mortgages and housing, free hospital care and cheap public transportation.<sup>46</sup> However, Mintoff's Government has alienated at least three important groups of professionals in Maltese society: the doctors, lawyers and educators.

In 1975, legislation was introduced by the Prime Minister which rescheduled the curriculum at the Royal University of Malta to resemble a vocational program, providing for six months of study alternating with six months of work in Maltese society. When educators at the University objected,



he changed the name of the College of Art, Science and Technology to The New University and gave it control of most of the faculties and the library of the Royal University.<sup>47</sup> The Royal Medical School of Malta was also affected, and graduates were required to spend their first two years of practice in Government hospitals before receiving a license to practice. Enrollment has dropped dramatically at both Royal schools, both have lost their accreditation abroad, and have, in effect, been disbanded.<sup>48</sup>

The new requirements for licensing imposed upon Medical School graduates, as well as legislation providing for free hospitalization, led to a limited strike by the members of the Medical Association of Malta (M.A.M.), which did promise to provide emergency care during their strike.<sup>49</sup> Mintoff reacted swiftly, locking M.A.M. members out of Government hospitals within 24 hours and importing foreign doctors and specialists from Libya, Algeria, Palestine, and Czechoslovakia.<sup>50</sup> The Czech doctors in particular are unpopular, reportedly due to their inflexible, strictly scheduled, bedside manners. The strike is still in progress at the time of this writing.

After the 1976 elections, the Nationalists filed a complaint concerning irregularities in voting in one District. The case was brought before the Constitutional Court. After the Court ruled that the complaint was valid, Mintoff ordered the Court dissolved and replaced with new justices. Mintoff claimed that one of the justices had made statements maligning





the Maltese Constitution during the initial hearing of the case, but the dismissal of the Court seems to have been in line with a 1958 pledge to free Malta of the grip of the "legal fraternity who have turned the Courts of Law into a means for their own livelihood."<sup>51</sup>

In addition to alienating professional classes of Maltese, the Government has nationalized banks, radio and television; the radio allows some time to the Nationalists for routine party broadcasts. In November 1978, it became illegal to use the word "Malta" in any name, title, or subtitle of any publication, trade union, company or other institution without prior permission of the Prime Minister.<sup>52</sup>

The Labour Government has witnessed a rise in the level of political violence, especially during and since the 1976 elections. The violence has apparently been directed mainly at the Nationalist Party membership and their offices, and it specifically includes ransacking of Party offices, beatings of known Party members, attacks on the person and family of the Nationalist Party leader, Dr. Eddie Fenech-Adami, and arson and vandalism at the offices of The Times (of Malta), a newspaper sympathetic to the Nationalist viewpoint.<sup>53</sup> There is some evidence that the police are not impartial in these situations. The 1976 election campaign exposed evidence that the MLP was exerting a degree of control over the police<sup>54</sup>, while most mob crimes against the Nationalists result in no police intervention or follow-up arrests.<sup>55</sup> Some reports imply





that Mintoff is unable to control the radical left-wing of the MLP, that Party extremists carry out the violence without his approval,<sup>56</sup> while other sources claim that Mintoff is moving toward full Governmental control through monopoly of the instruments of power,<sup>57</sup> that, for instance, the Parliament has been made merely a rubber stamp for his policies.<sup>58</sup>

The available evidence seems to tilt against Prime Minister Mintoff, considering his autocratic personality and penchant for exerting personal control. Whatever the case, interviews with officials of the Nationalist Party reveal that, once out of power, Mintoff would be charged with violations of the penal code.<sup>59</sup> In fact, these same sources hint that Mintoff might try to rig or otherwise interfere with a free election process in 1982, when the next elections are due. The certainty at the moment is that Mintoff does control the society and politics of Malta to a considerable degree.

## 2. Political Parties

There have usually been a number of political parties competing in the Maltese electoral process, but the political horizon has been dominated by two parties for over fifty years, the Nationalist Party and the Malta Labour Party.<sup>60</sup> Both parties can trace their beginnings to the latter half of the nineteenth century, and both have been in and out of power through alternating periods of direct British rule and periods of self-government.



a. The Nationalist Party

The early Nationalist Party was strongly influenced by the Italian Risorgimento of the nineteenth century, and reflected a movement toward nationhood with aspirations of an Italianized, middle class morality. In the interwar period, (1919-1939), the Nationalists became embroiled in a conflict involving all major sectors of Maltese society, concerning linguistic and ecclesiastical differences. The Nationalists led an unsuccessful bid to establish the Italian and English languages in equal prominence in education and culture. The Party fell under suspicion and disfavor during the 1930s and through World War II because of widespread fear of the Fascist regime in power in Italy.

When Dom Mintoff's MLP was in power from 1955-1958, the Nationalists in Opposition were opposed to his efforts to achieve integration with the United Kingdom, perhaps mainly because of high British income tax scales.

In 1962 the Nationalists, with Dr. Borg Olivier as Prime Minister, were elected to power, and this Government took Malta through the early period of independence (granted in 1964), but it maintained close ties with Great Britain, Western Europe, and NATO. As described earlier, economic failures caused a 1-seat loss to the MLP in the 1971 elections, and the Nationalists have been in Opposition ever since. Dr. Fenech-Adami now leads the Nationalist Party. The Party advocates a free market economy, and has developed close ties to the Christian Democrat



parties in West Germany and Italy. The Nationalists are oriented toward the educated, professional classes of Maltese society, and continue to advocate strong economic and defense ties with Western Europe, objecting to the present Government's nonalignment policies as dangerous.

b. The Malta Labour Party

The MLP was formed in 1920 by a group of professionals of the educated working classes who were influenced by Catholic social doctrine and British trade unionism. In the 1930s, anglophile, anticlerical and socialist elements began to penetrate the MLP. In the linguistic conflicts of the 1930s, MLP pressure resulted in the establishment of Maltese as the national language. In the postwar period, MLP support was centered mainly among the dockyard workers in Valletta.

In 1949, Dom Mintoff ousted Dr. Paul Boffa as the leader of the MLP in a disruptive struggle over the MLP's relationship with Britain. While in power from 1955-1958, the MLP lost a fight to integrate Malta with the United Kingdom. With integration denied, the MLP turned to demanding immediate independence, and began to develop contacts with the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), and fashioned a policy of nonalignment and democratic socialism. The MLP was out of power until 1971, when it narrowly defeated the Nationalists. The major aspects of the current domestic and foreign policies of the Labour Government are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.





### 3. The Roman Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Malta has the oldest, most firmly established infrastructure in the island's society. The Church in Malta, as mentioned before, dates back to the visit of St. Paul. Since all conquerors, even the Arabs, did not interfere with the religious habits of the Maltese, the island is probably the only extant Apostolic see, except for Rome.<sup>61</sup> In 1913 it was claimed that the island had more pastors per capita than any other place in the world. The population is over 99% Catholic, and all schools teach Catechism. Even MLP members, if accused of being godless Marxists, claim that they are still good Catholics.<sup>62</sup>

Church involvement in Maltese politics is a historical fact. In 1775, a priest named Gaetano Mannovino led an abortive coup against the Knights of St. John.<sup>63</sup> In 1798, Canon F. X. Caruana assumed leadership of the revolt against the French, and later demanded that the British annex the island. After annexation, in 1802, the British Government pledged to leave the Catholic Church's privileged status unaltered, and that pledge was respected for the entire period of colonial rule.<sup>64</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s the Church was deeply involved in the controversy over the role of the Italian language and the role of the Church itself in local politics. In 1955, the Church opposed Prime Minister Mintoff's drive for integration, fearing that direct membership in the United Kingdom would threaten the position of the Church in Maltese society, especially in the educational system.





MLP candidates were put under interdict during the 1962 elections, thus making a vote for such a candidate tantamount to a mortal sin. The interdict was in response to Constitutional amendments proposed by Mintoff which would secularize Maltese Civil Law (then equal to Canon Law).<sup>65</sup> In 1971, however, the Archbishop and Mintoff apparently arrived at a concordat, as the Church did not involve itself in the election campaign. It is not known what arrangements may have been agreed upon, but the Church has suffered violations of its status in the past decade. Mintoff has since ended the paramountcy of Canon Law in Malta with requirements for Government registration of all Church marriages, and has made it illegal for priests to comment on any matter even remotely political.<sup>66</sup>

Currently, Mintoff is nationalizing the Blue Sisters Hospital. The hospital was built with funds left to the Little Company of Mary by a wealthy Maltese woman over 70 years ago, with the proviso that the hospital be turned over to the Government if the Order disbanded. However, Mintoff has discovered a clause in Maltese law specifying that an outright gift can be for perpetuity, but a gift of use is valid for only 40 years; therefore, the Government is in the process of taking over the hospital from the Sisters.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, since the 1971 campaign, Church influence in politics seems to have come to a low ebb, and secularization of society is creeping forward. However, the Church still



remains a strong institution in Maltese life, and it is a distinct possibility that the priests will again decide to meet the current Government's challenges to their authority.

#### 4. The Armed Forces of Malta

Malta is obviously vulnerable in an indigenous military sense, the island's 1980 budget allotted 3.5% to defense,<sup>68</sup> mostly for pay and allowances. The remaining \$1.9 million will go for improving the quality of the small arms equipment in the military inventory.<sup>69</sup> Malta cannot afford to establish or maintain a force of sufficient size and armament to successfully defend her territorial integrity alone.

The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) are receiving renewed Government interest after a decade of neglect. The AFM at present consists of two 500-man, main force units, one of which is primarily an engineering unit.<sup>70</sup> The AFM's duties are primarily anti-smuggling and anti-pollution patrols conducted via patrol boats and helicopters, and control of harbor traffic.

In February 1980, after an alleged violation of Malta's territorial waters by British naval vessels, AFM patrol boat units were instructed to commence a wider patrol pattern, necessitating several days at sea for each such new patrol.<sup>71</sup> The boat crews refused the new procedures, and it is not clear how the dispute was resolved.

At present, the Government is experimenting with a "Task Force", an elite group of handpicked police and AFM



personnel, designed to assume the coastal security patrols of the AFM and to provide internal security in national emergencies.<sup>72</sup> The new Task Force is headed by a former Police Commissioner.

In an interview with a former Maltese Government official, however, it was claimed that the Commanding Officer and several senior officers of the AFM were pressured to resign, and that a massive reorganization of the entire AFM is being conducted.<sup>73</sup> The official interviewed suggested three possible reasons for the AFM reorganization: (1) possibly a preparation for implementation of a recently concluded Maltese-Libyan defense pact; (2) a solidification of Governmental control of the AFM by purging the officer corps of Nationalist Party members; or (3) the emasculation of a possible source of any plans for an anti-Government coup d'etat.

The defense pact with Libya was concluded in spring 1980, and exact provisions of the treaty are not known. Rumors claim that soon after, Libyan security troops in plainclothes began appearing on the island.<sup>74</sup> At present, as will be discussed later, Libyan-Maltese relations are strained and the future of the defense treaty is in some doubt.

The Maltese military is a very small, limited force, and due to the current reorganization, the likelihood that it will be capable of any meaningful political role other than as desired by the Government is very small indeed.





#### IV. THE 1971 NEGOTIATIONS

The 1971 renegotiation of the Anglo-Maltese Defense Facilities Agreement constituted a landmark in, and possibly the peak of, Dom Mintoff's career as an international negotiator. The 1971 talks saw him employ tactics and strategies developed during over twenty years of practice, and most notably through three major confrontations. These precursors to Mintoff's 1971 success were the 1949 Anglo-Maltese talks on Marshall aid and food subsidies, the 1955-1958 integration struggle, and the 1962 elections and Constitutional debates through independence in 1964.

##### A. PRELUDES TO THE 1971 NEGOTIATIONS

###### 1. The 1949 Anglo-Maltese Talks

In the postwar period, the Malta Labour Party (MLP) was headed by Paul Boffa. Dom Mintoff, however, was by this period maneuvering to replace Boffa. Mintoff was building a personal image of a selflessly nationalistic firebrand, hoping to contrast favorably with Boffa's moderate, even-handed style, which Boffa had adopted in order to ensure smooth Anglo-Maltese relations and MLP unity.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1949, the British Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs called a conference of representatives of all colonies to London to discuss economic problems. Mintoff, as deputy Prime Minister, was chosen to join the Maltese delegation, and



during the conference, he submitted a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary justifying Malta's claims for aid under the Marshall Plan. He had previously, albeit unsuccessfully, lobbied with the Colonial Office for increased food subsidy payments for Malta. After the conference, and following Mintoff's return to Malta, Admiralty plans to lay a large number of dockyard workers off were announced. Prime Minister Boffa and Mintoff were dispatched to urge the Colonial Office to grant Malta the requested Marshall Plan aid and food subsidies, especially in light of the layoffs at the dockyards.

The Colonial Office's reply was that the Marshall Plan aid request was under consideration, the food subsidies were out of the question, and the layoffs would occur as scheduled. Mintoff angrily asserted that the British were being callously oblivious to Maltese problems, and that he "could not bear to see his people crushed and humiliated without taking up the cudgels in their defense."<sup>2</sup> On 2 August 1949 he drafted an ultimatum addressed to the Colonial Office, which read in part,

Before the end of August the British Government should consent to Malta's receiving a direct share of Marshall Aid. Failing this outcome the Malta Government would ask their people in a national referendum whether they wish to stay in the Commonwealth or throw in their lot with any other major power that offered economic aid in return for the use of Malta as a base. <sup>3</sup>

The ultimatum was approved by all the ministers of the Malta Government, and Mintoff submitted it to the Colonial Office. The Colonial Secretary in turn demanded that Prime



Minister Boffa, who had returned to Malta, should return to represent Malta. Boffa returned to London, and on the advice of the Colonial Secretary, withdrew the ultimatum. Mintoff angrily resigned from the Government and returned to Malta.

Back in Malta, Mintoff organized rallies at which he gave speeches extolling his own virtues as a valiant fighter for "Malta First and Foremost."<sup>4</sup> He attacked Boffa as being naive and easily outwitted by the British, and unable and unwilling to stand up to Crown representatives.

As a result, in October 1949, the MLP passed a resolution declaring Boffa to be "lacking in the necessary qualities as leader of the Party and of the Nation."<sup>5</sup> Boffa resigned from the MLP, but continued as Prime Minister. Mintoff was elected as the new head of the MLP.

Thus, although he was unsuccessful in obtaining Marshall Plan aid for Malta, the crisis of 1949 did enable Mintoff to gain control of his party.

## 2. The Struggle for Integration: 1955-1958

In 1955 the MLP was again elected to power, and Mintoff became Prime Minister. He had campaigned on a platform promising to seek integration with the United Kingdom under a formula he had devised in 1950. Mintoff's plan called for the admission of three Maltese representatives to Parliament and the administration of all internal Maltese problems by the Maltese legislature. The internal matters would include any affecting the position of the Church, local education, marriage and family life.





After discussions were held between Maltese and British officials, it was decided to hold a national referendum on the question of integration in Malta on 12 and 13 February, 1956.

Domestically, the Church and the Nationalist Party were opposed to integration. The Church was worried about the effect that integration with Anglican Great Britain would have on the continued prominence of the Catholic Church in Malta, especially with regard to education. Archbishop Gonzi demanded on 5 February that a firm guarantee from the British Government regarding the Church in Malta be given before the referendum was held. Since all manner of official guarantees had been given by all parties concerned, it was presumed that the Archbishop desired an Act of Parliament.<sup>6</sup> Mintoff replied that the referendum would not be postponed for further assurances, and the Archbishop thus advised the people that the Church could not endorse the referendum.

The Nationalists, while quick to support the Church's position, were also privately concerned about the fact that full integration would possibly lead to disadvantages such as exposure to the high British income tax rates. They thus opposed integration in favor of autonomous Dominion status.

The referendum, held as scheduled, resulted in the following vote totals:<sup>7</sup>

In favor	67,607
Opposed	20,177
Spoilt Ballots	2,559
Abstentions	62,480





Although the Church and the Nationalist Party claimed that the results showed that less than half of the electorate desired integration, the British Government declared the results to be in favor of integration, and initiated talks with Mintoff's Government as to the specifics.

Mintoff initially demanded £8 million annually in British aid, and through negotiation, secured a counteroffer of £6 million. In April 1957, with the annual aid amount still unresolved, the two sides deadlocked over terms for reaching "equivalence" in British and Maltese standards of living.

Mintoff demanded guaranteed equivalence within twelve years, with annual monetary contributions and private investment contracts provided until that deadline. If equivalence was not achieved within the specified twelve years, he proposed that the British Treasury assume the burden for the difference with the direct cash grants. The British, however, agreed only to work to achieve equivalence by helping to increase Maltese productivity, but with no time limit. They offered £5 million annually for five years to promote development, and offered to pay one quarter of Malta's social services and one-third of her education costs.<sup>8</sup>

As these negotiations were progressing, the British White Paper for 1957 was released. This White Paper announced a cutback in military strength at colonial garrisons, including that of Malta, and an accompanying decrease in defense activity which would certainly reduce activity and employment at the dockyards.



Mintoff, after the negotiation deadlock and the White Paper revelations, made pronouncements promising to seek independence if the British did not accede to his demands for integration, and to ensure the alternate employment of any dockyard workers laid off.

Talks resumed in spring 1958, at which time Mintoff demanded that Britain: fund alternative industries to employ workers laid off by the military services with £7.5 million in grants and £15 million in loans; pay for the commercialization of dockyard assets not required by the Admiralty; and provide a £4.5 million grant to ensure Malta's ability to pay unemployment subsistence allowances at a rate equal to 85% of the domestic rate in Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> British unwillingness to meet these demands resulted in the resignation of Mintoff's government in April 1958.

### 3. The 1962 Elections and the Independence Constitution Struggle

The period 1958-1964 was one of political infighting among the Maltese political parties and the Church as various formulas for Independence and the Constitution were hammered out, and these issues dominated the 1962 election campaign.

The main combatants were Malta's Archbishop Gonzi and Dom Mintoff. Mintoff had asserted in 1959 that the Archbishop was interfering in politics, as illustrated by the 1958 integration referendum experience. Gonzi responded that socialists (i.e., members of the MLP) could not be good Catholics, and



that anyone who was against the Archbishop was against the Church and God as well. When Mintoff attended a meeting of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization in 1961, an organization considered by the Church to be pro-Communist, the Archbishop declared that Mintoff and the MLP were opening the door for Russian intervention into Malta.<sup>10</sup>

The conflict escalated through the winter of 1961-1962, with the Nationalists allied with and supported by the Church in the campaigning for the 1962 elections. Prior to polling in February 1962, the Archbishop advised his flock that a vote for any candidate not fully supportive of the Church would not be a Christian vote. In addition, all MLP candidates and publications were placed under interdict, a spiritual punishment one step short of excommunication.<sup>11</sup>

The elections proved a victory for the Nationalist Party, who drew 63,262 votes as opposed to 50,974 for the MLP. Mintoff claimed, with some reason, that the elections had been unfair, that the Church had influenced the vote with the collusion of the Nationalist Party and the British Government. The British Government concluded that his charges were unfounded.<sup>12</sup>

In the postelection period, the new Prime Minister, Dr. Giorgio Borg Olivier, and his Government completed a draft constitution for independence. Mintoff objected to the proposed constitution, presenting his own so-called "six points" for inclusion: (1) to permit civil marriage; (2) to strip the Church of its powerful influence; (3) to remove the Archbishop's





exemption from civil suit; (4) to amend the Corrupt Practices Act to prevent the use of spiritual sanctions to influence public elections; (5) to guarantee freedom of belief for non-Catholics; and (6) to recognize Roman Catholicism as the state religion, with a provision allowing parents to decide if their children should attend religious instruction in school.<sup>13</sup>

The British declared their intention to let the Maltese decide on the nature of their own constitution, and planned a referendum on the Borg Olivier Government draft constitution to be held in May of 1964. The Nationalists represented the referendum as (again) a vote which would determine the future survival of the Church in Malta, while the MLP urged a "no" vote for a constitution that they claimed would perpetuate a state of Catholic tyranny over Malta's political affairs. The final vote totals were:

In favor	65,714
Opposed	54,919
Spoilt Ballots	9,016
Not Participating	33,094

The Nationalists claimed victory, and the Colonial Office interpreted the vote the same way.

Malta, under the adopted Independence Constitution, joined the British Commonwealth as an independent monarchy (sharing the British throne, and thus yielding control of her foreign policy to the British). Coincident with independence, the two countries signed an Agreement on Mutual Defense and Assistance which specified Britain's right to use Maltese



military facilities in "peace and war".<sup>14</sup> NATO allies could also use the facilities with no restriction. Britain was to pay a total of £150 million over the ten-year life of the treaty, with a 75%/25% ratio of grant to loan for the first five years, and the ratio to be renegotiated at the beginning of the second five year period.

Mintoff visited Moscow soon after independence, promising to seek Russian aid when the MLP returned to power. He branded the entire independence process as a sham imposed by Great Britain, with the British retaining the power, keeping the base, and paying far less than they would have been willing to pay considering Malta's strategic importance.<sup>15</sup> He would get his chance to prove his claims in 1971.

## B. THE 1971 NEGOTIATIONS

For reasons described in Chapter III, in the elections of June 1971 the Malta Labour Party won the majority of seats, and Dom Mintoff was Prime Minister again. His primary goal, enunciated time and time again in the election campaign, was to make the British "pay through the nose" for the use of Malta's military facilities.<sup>16</sup>

Mintoff swiftly began asserting his authority and making his intentions clear. The day after he was sworn into office by the British Governor General of Malta, Sir Maurice Dorman, he dismissed Sir Maurice and replaced him with a Maltese. He fired the British police chief, an old political enemy. He



ordered the dockyards nationalized, and declared that, in light of Britain's unauthorized acceleration of the rundown of her facilities usage in 1966, the 1964 Mutual Defense and Assistance Treaty was null and void. If the British wanted to stay, they would have to pay more. In addition, he asked the U.S. Sixth Fleet to suspend port calls in Malta "pending revision of general agreements."<sup>17</sup>

The Commander, Combined NATO Naval Forces, Mediterranean, Italian Navy Admiral Birindelli, was ordered out of his Malta headquarters by Mintoff. The Prime Minister claimed that Birindelli was a fascist and had been interfering in Maltese politics by accusing Mintoff of planning to let the Soviets use the island as a naval base.<sup>18</sup>

While Mintoff was causing consternation among the members of NATO, he was making overtures to the Soviets and to Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, whose Revolutionary Command Council had overthrown the Sanusi monarch, King Idris, in Libya in September 1969. Qadhafi was, at that time, calling for a neutralization of the Mediterranean, and was promising aid to any country which would work toward that goal. Mintoff did make verbal commitments to that goal at this time, and his entire neutralist-nonaligned policy will be reviewed later. Qadhafi reportedly contributed to Mintoff's electoral campaign in 1971,<sup>19</sup> and made a £1.5 million grant to the newly-elected Mintoff's government.<sup>20</sup> He also loaned the Maltese Government the equivalent of suspended British payments during the 1971 negotiations.





Mintoff claimed that the Maltese would offer their "services to the one who pays the most except for the three countries which we fear: Italy, the U.S., and Russia."<sup>21</sup> However, this message was clouded by visits with the Russian Ambassador to Malta, Mikhail Smirnovsky.

Prime Minister Mintoff thus secured the attention of several key players immediately. The British were uncertain as to how much more they would have to pay for their facilities in Malta; the Italians were concerned over Admiral Birindelli's expulsion, and by Mintoff's relations with the radical Qadhafi, since Malta is only 60 miles away from Italian territory; the United States was concerned with a possible Soviet attempt to gain a foothold in Malta should the British leave, especially in light of recent Soviet Navy expansion in the Mediterranean. The latter concern was prevalent: the average military-political newspaper writer evaluated the chances of Malta becoming a "Mediterranean Cuba."<sup>21</sup>

With this background, Mintoff met with Lord Carrington, the British negotiator, several times through July and August, 1971. Mintoff reportedly demanded an annual rent of £30 million, while Great Britain would only offer £8.5 million.<sup>23</sup> In September 1971, Prime Ministers Heath (of Great Britain) and Mintoff met at Chequers to try and resolve the disagreement. They reached apparent agreement on a figure of £9.5 million annual rent, a £4.8 million grant for development assistance, an immediate British payment of £4.75 million as an advance





of the first six months' rent, and Malta's right to obtain bilateral agreements and financing from the other NATO signatories.<sup>24</sup>

In November, however, Mintoff declared that the British had misunderstood the Chequers agreement, that the £4.75 million was only for three months, not six. The negotiations on the final agreement stalled, and in December, Mintoff declared that, if Britain did not make an additional £4.75 million payment by 31 December, she would have to withdraw her forces by 15 January. The British reiterated their position that the £4.75 million was for six months, and thus paid rent through 31 March 1972, and that they would observe that date as their withdrawal deadline.

As British forces began the phased withdrawal in January, the NATO allies began to worry about the consequences of such a move. Prime Minister Heath was convinced that Mintoff's domestic base could not withstand the economic disruption of a full British withdrawal, and that if no further offers were made, that Mintoff would give in at the last moment. However, President Nixon was convinced that the British were risking the loss of Malta to the Soviets, and that such a loss would be a serious diplomatic and political setback for the West. He therefore proposed that NATO supplement the British payments in order to retain the base rights.<sup>25</sup> As put by then-U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Zumwalt, "we ought to pay a little more blackmail...rather than risk



driving Mintoff too far leftward at this time."<sup>26</sup> Admiral Zumwalt urged his counterparts in the Netherlands and Norway to convince their governments of his views as he explored further avenues for direct U.S. aid. Admiral Zumwalt did find that Malta was ineligible for Agency for International Development assistance under law, as the only merchant vessel then registered in Malta had engaged in trade with North Vietnam.<sup>27</sup>

Italy also became a more active participant at this time, inviting Lord Carrington, Mintoff, and NATO Secretary-General Joseph Luns to Rome for a continuation of negotiations in January. But from mid-January to mid-March the negotiations occurred in an on-off pattern as Mintoff would make one more demand, request one more payment, set one more deadline. He became known as "Deadline Dom" to NATO diplomats,<sup>28</sup> and Secretary-General Luns came out of one meeting shouting, "You never know what he is coming up with next!"<sup>29</sup>

The British withdrawal continued toward the 31 March deadline, with a British pledge that once all the troops were out, they would not be back. Malta's Archbishop Gonzi and Italy's Ambassador to Great Britain tried to arrange another meeting with the two Prime Ministers. Finally, on 27 March, with only 30 of the normal 4,000-man garrison remaining, Prime Minister Mintoff accepted the final British-NATO offer for settlement.

The new agreement was a seven-year pact which specified a £14 million annual rent payment, to be made jointly by Great Britain (38%), the United States (26%), West Germany and Italy



(17% each), and Belgium and the Netherlands (1% each).<sup>30</sup> Only British forces were to be allowed use of the facilities: other members of NATO would have to make prior arrangements with the Maltese Government. Warsaw Pact countries were denied use of the facilities.<sup>31</sup> In return for the earlier Libyan grant of £1.5 million, Mintoff secured a British pledge that the facilities on Malta would not be used to mount any offensive operations against any Arab state.<sup>32</sup>

### C. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1971 TALKS TO NEGOTIATION THEORY

The Maltese-British negotiations of 1971-1972 are an excellent example of the Zartman Structural Paradox: the greater the structural imbalance in a bargaining relationship, the more likely it is that nonstructural elements will determine the outcome.<sup>33</sup> Malta (unquestionably a small and weak state) was through the shrewd tactical application of her power sources able to obtain her stated goal: a redistribution of the benefits and profits accruing from her location and military facilities.

One definition of the standard small power that has been put forward is as follows: a state which recognizes that it can not obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so.<sup>34</sup> In a standard big small-power relationship, the structural inequity gives the big power the overwhelming advantage. However, when





the Structural Paradox is present, as in the Maltese case, the advantages and disadvantages of relative size and power are outweighed by other, nonstructural but vital, elements. Thus, whereas a small power normally would expect to have a correspondingly small amount of influence in a bargaining relationship vis-a-vis a big power, the presence of the Structural Paradox can grant the advantage to the small power.

Within a global, systemic context, Prime Minister Mintoff read the developing changes in the Mediterranean and took advantage of them. The Soviets were expanding their naval presence into the Mediterranean Sea and obtaining port privileges along the shoreline, challenging the concept that the Sixth Fleet ruled the Mediterranean. Libya's Colonel Qadhafi represented the rising impatience and power of Third World nations in the area, (especially the oil-rich Arab nations) which were beginning to cause new problems for strategic planners accustomed to working within the framework of a strictly bipolar international system.

Mintoff was successful in large part due to his ability to capture the attention and then the participation of the United States and Italy, first by halting U.S. port calls and ejecting Admiral Birindelli, and then through the subtle, implied threat that he had viable alternative partners in the Libyans or the Soviets if the British did not make him a satisfactory offer. Thus, a bilateral negotiation process became a multilateral one, to the advantage of the Maltese.



Prime Minister Mintoff personally conducted all bargaining with the allies: therefore, his personality was a key determinant in the conduct and the outcome of the bargaining process. He had developed a reputation for being abusive, unpredictable and uncompromising. In the course of his career, he had become accustomed to issuing ultimatums and demands for more money to the British, and, likewise, the British had developed some experience with Mintoff.

Mintoff chose to follow a strategy of continuing negotiation up to the final agreement, constantly raising his demands just when an agreeable conclusion seemed imminent. He utilized threats, warnings and bluffs to attempt to alter the British and NATO expectations of their gains or losses as a result of various choices, in an attempt to influence their choices.<sup>35</sup>

The British realized that Mintoff was playing a high-risk strategy, that a full withdrawal from Malta would force Mintoff to resign in the midst of the domestic economic crisis which would follow.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Prime Minister Heath was confident that Mintoff would give in first, and Heath was determined not to raise the ante. The NATO negotiators were convinced of Mintoff's unpredictability, however, and were more willing to pay than to play the game, and risk a loss to the Soviets.

The offered rent payments increased as time passed, from £8.5 million to £9.5 million to £14 million, illustrating the



tendency in deadline bargaining, where concessions tend to be the greatest at the end of the process, as opposed to non-deadline bargaining, where concessions tend to be greatest at the beginning.<sup>37</sup>

To recapitulate, the Maltese-British negotiations of 1971 represent an aberration in small power negotiating strategy, that of Zartman's Structural Paradox. Possession of a perceived, saleable strategic value (whether interpreted as positive or negative); an undeniable domestic economic dependence on external aid and service to external powers; manipulation of alternative buyers; a negotiator with an unpredictable and irresponsible reputation - all these factors combined to provide Malta with the ability to force NATO to triple the British rent payments for conditional use of the island's military facilities. The next section of the thesis examines the success of Mintoff's Malta in the decade following those negotiations.



## V. MINTOFF'S MALTA, 1972 - PRESENT

### A. MINTOFF'S SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATING FORUM

In the past decade, Prime Minister Mintoff's foreign policy has been aimed at securing new sources of direct financial aid to replace the revenue that would be lost after the British withdrawal from the island in 1979. As a vehicle for his search for new benefactors, he has chosen to champion the cause of Mediterranean neutrality with his own vision of Euro-Arab relations.

#### 1. Mintoffian Euro-Mediterraneanism

In January 1959, Mintoff made a speech to a meeting of the Malta Labour Party assembled to discuss proposals for the Maltese constitution then undergoing formulation. He described an independent Malta with its neutrality guaranteed by the United Nations - in his own words, a "Switzerland of the Mediterranean."<sup>1</sup> He planned to emulate the nonalignment of Tito's Yugoslavia and Nasser's Egypt, and would seek international funding in order to convert Malta into a cultural and commercial bridge linking the Arab countries with the European continent. Mintoff's proposals were not adopted for the new constitution, however, and the concept was tabled, but not forgotten.

During the 1971 negotiations, Libya's Colonel Qadhafi vigorously expressed neutralist, anti-Communist, anti-NATO





sentiments, and indicated a willingness to back any regime which would join him in a nonaligned foreign policy. This may be a clue as to why Mintoff made it a point to indicate his own belief in nonalignment publicly. He did so in a speech to the Maltese Parliament in August 1971, indicating that Malta would: follow a nonaligned foreign policy; become an associate member of the EEC, but service Eastern bloc ships as readily as Western ships; and accept business and aid from whatever source offered the best terms.<sup>2</sup>

The agreement reached in 1971 specified a seven-year life for continued British use of the island's facilities. In the wake of the British withdrawal, Malta pledged that it would not offer either superpower the use of its facilities, and promised to pursue a new status of political neutrality and nonalignment, dedicated to becoming the bridge of peace between the European and African littoral states of the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup>

Mintoff envisions a regional bloc comprised of these states, pursuing a peaceful, neutralist course of European-Arab unity. He feels that such an independent bloc of states could jointly persuade the Soviet and American fleets to leave the Mediterranean.

...we do not accept...the inevitability of their permanent presence (or) their interference in our affairs. We are not against NATO: we just do not have to be part of it. Nor are we against the Russians: but we would like them better if they kept their fleet away from our shores.<sup>4</sup>



Malta has taken formal steps to become identified as a nonaligned state, including joining the Non-Aligned Movement in 1973 and the "Group of 77" in 1976, two semi-official, third-world nation "clubs".

Viewing the island as the centerpiece of this new neutral, peaceful Mediterranean, Mintoff's plans required defense and economic support guarantees by neighboring states in order to ensure Malta's continued independence and success. Prime Minister Mintoff and the MLP saw two options for Malta in this regard.<sup>5</sup>

The first and less desirable option was for Malta to negotiate separate bilateral defense and economic pacts with any nation believing such action in its interests.

The second and preferred option was to secure guarantees from neighboring states to defend Malta militarily from any external aggression, and to aid Malta economically in the post-British period. The neighbors desired were France, Italy, Libya, and Algeria, thus forming a quadrilateral, balanced system binding Europeans and Arabs to the protection of Maltese independence. The four countries would support Malta economically by jointly providing £M28 million per year for five years.<sup>6</sup>

This, then, was to be the new Malta: aside from the small, essentially coastal-security-oriented Armed Forces of Malta, the island would depend for its defense totally upon neighboring Arab and European countries as it spearheaded a



new Mediterranean regionalism rivaling and supplanting super-power influence in the area.

The responses of the four countries in question, however, as well as relations with other major participants in Mediterranean politics, have been varied and discouraging for Prime Minister Mintoff.

## 2. Responses of Interested Parties

Of all the states concerned, the Libyan response was the most promising, and is best understood in light of a relationship developed over a ten-year time span.

As discussed in Chapter III, economic aid from Libya has entered the island mainly through the coordination of the Libyan Arab Maltese Holding Company. Various training schools for Libyans were established in Malta, and Libya trained Maltese pilots to fly the five helicopters which the Libyan Government transferred to the Maltese military. During the 1971-1972 Anglo-British negotiations, when British payments were suspended, Libya financed the Maltese Government, a loan since repaid by Mintoff.<sup>7</sup> Concessionary oil prices were granted to Malta from 1972-1979, and in November 1979 an economic agreement ensuring £23 million per year in Libyan investments in Malta over a five-year period was concluded.<sup>8</sup> In March 1980 an agreement was signed which provided for full Libyan cooperation in strengthening Maltese defenses.<sup>9</sup>

Part of Prime Minister Mintoff's ambitious program for Maltese development included exploration for offshore





oil south of Malta. The Libyan coast, however, is within 180 miles of Malta, and in view of the adoption of 200-mile economic zones by many countries during this period, a Libyan-Maltese agreement on a median line of underwater territory was necessary. Colonel Qadhafi proposed that the median line be drawn so that Libya be awarded two-thirds of the territorial waters in question, based on its greater degree of coastal development. Malta, on the other hand, desired a 50/50 split.<sup>10</sup> Disagreements continued through 1974 and 1975. In 1976 Qadhafi agreed to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice, while Mintoff contracted with three U.S. oil companies to make test drillings as soon as the dispute was settled.<sup>11</sup>

By spring 1979, relations between the two countries began to deteriorate. The Libyans kept stalling on the issue of the median line, and, during an address by Mintoff to the Libyan Peoples' Congress in Tripoli in late 1978, several Libyan legislators suggested to him that the Maltese convert to Islam, adopt Libyan-style democracy, introduce the Arabic language, and convert the island into an Arab base.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of these ripples of disagreement, Qadhafi was the only head of state to attend the ceremonies marking the British withdrawal from Malta. With an imported retinue of 500 cheering Libyans waving his Green Book (analogous to Mao's Red Book), Col. Qadhafi told the audience at the ceremony that Britain was a common enemy of Malta and Libya.<sup>13</sup> and



that there was no place for Malta in Europe;<sup>14</sup> that the two countries should join hands to aid the PLO against Zionism, a move which would prove Maltese neutrality.<sup>15</sup>

In the period following the British withdrawal, further irritations occurred. Qadhafi froze oil exports to Malta in 1979 at levels exported in 1978, and later stopped providing oil to Malta at the concessionary price. In July 1979, Mintoff, in a possibly related move, shut down a Libyan radio station which had been operating on Malta with official permission. The station had begun broadcasting anti-Israeli and anti-Egyptian propaganda prior to the shutdown. Colonel Qadhafi then began to indicate that he would restrict further aid grants until he learned what Malta would receive from other sources.<sup>16</sup>

Libya had been joined only by Algeria in expressing definite interest in the quadrilateral arrangement. On several occasions the Algerians indicated an intention to support Malta, most notably in a communique issued after a visit by Algerian President Boumedienne to Malta in January 1978.<sup>17</sup>

The Italians and French, however, were unwilling to join in any such arrangement under Mintoff's terms. In 1977, the French ambassador to Malta reportedly informed Mintoff that France respected Maltese neutrality, but did not feel obligated to pay for her neutrality.<sup>18</sup> Mintoff requested a private meeting with French President Giscard d'Estaing, but



was refused.<sup>19</sup> Later it was reported that France had offered a soft loan for an unspecified amount to Malta.<sup>20</sup>

Italy, meanwhile, had offered to continue the approximately £2.6 million payment it had provided under the expiring Anglo-Maltese agreement of 1972 for another five years, an offer rejected by Mintoff as "offensive".<sup>21</sup>

The Italian and French refusals to accede to Mintoff's demands prompted him to issue a deadline of July 1977 for a response to his proposals. Failing a satisfactory reply, he threatened to align with the Arab world.<sup>22</sup> The deadline passed with no noticeable move on the threat. In 1978, Mintoff declared that the French and Italians were communicating "at best, vague and conflicting, at worst, arrogant and humiliating" answers to his proposals.<sup>23</sup> He set another deadline of 30 March 1979 for responses, and when that deadline arrived, he ejected the 42-man Italian military mission with their 120 dependents, a move further straining Italian-Maltese relations.<sup>24</sup>

The other countries Mintoff requested aid from refused his demands as well. In spring 1979 the West Germans refused to consider direct governmental financial aid to pay for Mintoff's neutrality plan, but did offer a soft loan.<sup>25</sup> Mintoff tactfully responded by calling the West Germans "a lot of Nazis".<sup>26</sup>

The two superpowers have not shown any desire to compete for Maltese favor. Private U.S. investment does





contribute substantially to the Maltese economy, with 20% of Malta's export earnings coming from the U.S.-owned Wrangler jeans factory.<sup>27</sup> In 1978, President Carter communicated possible U.S. interest in encouraging further private investment and in providing loans to Malta. Mintoff interpreted the letter as a commitment of U.S. loans to Malta,<sup>28</sup> and now claims that the reluctance of the U.S. to follow up on that promise is a reflection of official U.S. policy not to support Malta's neutrality.<sup>29</sup>

The Soviet Union, long desirous of opening an embassy on Malta, has been rebuffed by Mintoff, who requires that they provide concrete proposals for trade and economic assistance as evidence of support prior to making a full diplomatic arrangement.<sup>30</sup> Mintoff has indicated that the Soviets have never really shown an interest in aiding Malta, and that during the 1971-1972 period, "Although (they) had much to gain...(they) remained aloof."<sup>31</sup>

Neither Great Britain nor Malta ever showed any interest in extending the Military Facilities Agreement beyond 1979, and relations since the withdrawal have been cool but detached, with no direct aid requested by or provided to Malta. Trade relations are very good, and British private investment and tourism continue to contribute to the Maltese economy. In March 1980 a minor crisis occurred when two British warships steamed within twelve miles of Malta while on routine maneuvers. The British observe a





three-mile limit for territorial waters at the present, while Malta claims twelve miles. Although Mintoff threatened to remove the George Cross (awarded to Malta in 1942 by King George VI for the island's heroism in withstanding Axis raids) from the Maltese flag in protest, the dispute seems to have cooled off.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the low level of interest exhibited by the West in bankrolling Maltese development, Mintoff has continued to threaten and chastise the West.

The point is that internationally guaranteed neutrality is one thing and nonalignment is another, whereby a country can very well be closer to some states than to others and can even have links of all kinds, including military links, with the ones which it considers its friends. The Europeans are unwise to ignore the fact that in certain circumstances the difference between these two positions could prove to be of fundamental importance.<sup>33</sup>

As to his approach for requesting financial support for his neutrality plans, Mintoff says,

We tell them we are doing this for you. We have a right to come to you and say you must pay your contributions. We're not begging you - we don't want to beg - but you must pay. This is something you must do... in your own interest.<sup>34</sup>

Although he continued to threaten a complete turn toward the Arabs, no offer other than the "offensive" offer from the Italians was made with reference to direct cash aid.

Prime Minister Mintoff's abrasive style was reflected in his prescription for full membership for Malta in the EEC:



first, Malta must be allowed to continue her nonalignment policies; second, Arab countries must be allowed to join; and third, Malta's economic ties with Arab countries would remain intact.<sup>35</sup> He also reserves the right, if Malta should join on a complete basis, to quit the organization at any time.

Maltese relations with NATO have never existed on an official, mutually recognized level. The Naval Headquarters and the right for NATO nations to use the British bases under the 1964 agreement were arranged without any formal or definite commitment with any Maltese government.<sup>36</sup> In 1965 the Nationalist Government requested membership, but was denied even an observer membership, in part due to pressure from the Scandinavian members of NATO. (The reasons for Scandinavian opposition are unclear.) Since the negotiations of 1971-1972, both the Nationalists and the MLP have indicated their intention to stay out of NATO and any and all other military alliances. NATO's official position now is that any facilities on Malta would be redundant and that as long as Warsaw Pact forces are excluded from use of the island, and it continues a policy of nonalignment, the interests of the Alliance are satisfied.<sup>37</sup>

#### B. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES WITHIN MALTA

The effects of the British withdrawal have not been dramatic. The current state of the Maltese economy has already been reviewed in Chapter III, but a quick summary will follow.



Although the trade gap is growing (£M119.7 million in 1979, up from £M89.6 million for 1978<sup>38</sup>), the foreign exchange reserves more than compensate for that deficit. An unemployment rate of 2.8% and inflation of 10-12% are currently troubling the Mintoff Government.<sup>39</sup> Unemployment has been kept low through the use of the labor corps and the expansion of Government employment, but the Government still considers 2.8% unacceptable. This is because the 1973-1980 Development Plan goals have not been met (13,600 new industrial jobs planned, only 8,652 jobs realized). The employment shortfall is a function of the fact that industrial growth has not met Plan goals.

However, per capita income rose from £M264.9 in 1966 to £M651.8 in 1977, a real increase of 8.5% annually, and the GNP has grown steadily in the past decade.<sup>40</sup> The biggest industry is the tourist and service industry, however, and the economy is in need of more productive industrial information. Mintoff has indicated that he will require £28 million per year for the next five years in order to further improve the Maltese economy.

The Nationalist Party feels that Malta's historical, ethnic, cultural, and traditional roots lie in Western Europe. They view a pact binding Libya with the Europeans to protect Maltese neutrality as dangerous, in that, if the Nationalists came to power and tried to improve relations with the Europeans, Libya might use that policy switch as an excuse to intervene





in Malta.<sup>41</sup> The Nationalists thus believe in obtaining guarantees from Italy, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and, indirectly, the United States. They further state that guarantees should stress the protection of Maltese territorial integrity and political independence and not her neutrality. They see neutrality as a judicial concept, to be discarded by Malta when necessary to request military aid from a guarantor nation.<sup>42</sup> In time of peace, no foreign troops would be stationed in Malta. However, in case of war, troops of one or all of her guarantor nations could be moved to Malta as necessary to protect the island.<sup>43</sup> The Nationalists do not, however, advocate any attempt to join NATO in any status.

The Nationalists also want full customs union with the EEC as soon as possible. Although they emphasize the desire to work and cooperate with all nations, it is clear that they lean toward Western Europe to a considerable degree.

Until very recently, it seemed as if the only place the Labour Government could turn for the type of aid they desired was Libya. The Algerian Government lost interest in the quadrilateral arrangement after the death of President Boumedienne in December 1978. The French and Italians showed little interest, as did the rest of the Western nations. Mintoff could take what he could get from Western nations (not much) and, at the same time, try to get more out of Colonel Qadhafi, or he could turn to Qadhafi's support exclusively.



### C. OUTCOMES

Recent events seem to have narrowed possible outcomes for Malta. In August 1980, Libyan-Maltese relations reached a point of crisis.

In July 1980 Prime Minister Mintoff announced that the Maltese Government had authorized Texaco to begin drilling a test well on the Maltese side of the Maltese - Libyan median line.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, one of the Libyan-Maltese agreements had come up for renewal in June 1980, and at that time, Mintoff had been assured by the Libyan Foreign Minister, Major Jalloud, that Libya would submit the matter to arbitration by the end of June. When that date came without such action by Libya Mintoff decided to go ahead and drill. He stated that Malta and Libya would continue to remain friends as long as Libya continued to support Malta's neutrality and nonalignment, and as long as Libya allowed the Maltese to search for oil undisturbed.<sup>45</sup>

Texaco contracted the Italian energy corporation, ENI, to drill a test well 58 miles southwest of Malta (Malta and Libya are 196 miles apart at the closest points of tangency). On 20 August, after the rig began operations, a Libyan submarine and warship approached the drilling platform and ordered the crew to cease operations and depart the rig, or face the threat of force.<sup>46</sup> The crew did cease drilling and abandoned the rig, and it is now being dismantled.



Malta responded by immediately expelling all uniformed Libyan military advisors,<sup>47</sup> and requested an immediate session of the United Nations Security Council to consider the Libyan aggression. Unfortunately, the Iran-Iraq war relegated the Maltese-Libyan dispute to obscurity, and so Mintoff flew off to Rome in search of help.

As the oil rig was dismantled, Italian warships and aircraft patrolled the area on an around-the-clock basis, indicating a strong concern about the crisis. On 15 September, Malta and Italy exchanged letters of intent to sign a treaty by which Italy would agree to ensure Maltese neutrality.<sup>48</sup> Support to achieve this goal would include support before the U.N. Security Council, opening of consultations if the island's neutrality were endangered or violated, and the use of force for the protection of Malta if both governments concur on such a course of action. The agreement included an economic package of direct aid, £11 million in credits on easy terms, and technical assistance.<sup>49</sup> The treaty will remain open for other European signatories, such as France.

Libya has several reasons for not settling the median line dispute. A similar dispute with Tunisia is currently under negotiation, and a settlement of the Maltese-Libyan dispute under terms not of Libyan choosing might prejudice their bargaining position with Tunisia. Colonel Qadhafi also has strong desires for hegemony in his corner of the Mediterranean, and has nothing to lose and much to gain by keeping





Malta dependent on imported oil, thus giving Libya permanent leverage over the Maltese.

The future of Malta seems to have taken a new turn. Certainly the majority of Maltese, uncomfortable with the growing Libyan presence on the island, will be happy to see this rupture in relations, and will resist any attempt to resume close relations. However, Mintoff is a fiercely determined, unpredictable, and independent leader. Based on his past record, it would be unwise to rule out a renewal of Libyan-Maltese relations in the future, especially if the Italian treaty falls through, or if Mintoff sees a new opportunity to get a better deal from Qadhafi.

#### D. SIGNIFICANCE IN NEGOTIATIONS THEORY

Prime Minister Mintoff's eloquence tends to muddle international and historical concepts of nation-state behavior.

To begin with, Malta bears little resemblance to Switzerland. Swiss neutrality is a centuries-old and fixed diplomatic concept presenting a virtual psychological barrier to invasion. The Alps present a physical deterrent to would-be aggressors, and the three groups comprising the Swiss Confederation would have a hard time agreeing on a choice of sides in any given conflict at any rate.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Switzerland has a formidable, population-wide militia-type army and a highly skilled labor group, together with an industrialized economy. If invaded, the Swiss could destroy the tunnels and passes in





the Alps, thus denying an invader the major strategic advantage in such an invasion. Malta has been examined at sufficient length to make the contrasts obvious. The once-proud and impregnable bastion of the Knights and Christianity is no longer such. As one Maltese military expert has stated, "Now, for the first time in its history, Malta is defenseless."<sup>51</sup>

The concept of guaranteed neutrality has a definite historical precedent, though it is not cited by Mintoff. In the nineteenth century, the neutrality of Belgium and Luxembourg was guaranteed by the five Great Powers; France, Great Britain, Prussia, Austro-Hungary, and Russia. However, such a guarantee was and is conditional upon a balance of power among the guarantors: without such a balance, guarantees would probably degenerate into control of the neutral by the most powerful guarantor.<sup>52</sup> In the Belgian case, the 1839 guarantee began to deteriorate by 1870, when Great Britain had to secure a promise from France and Prussia to observe the 1839 agreement concerning Belgian neutrality. By 1914, the guarantee afforded Belgium no protection at all.

Guaranteed neutrality also meant something very different from Mintoff's current definition in another sense. It was presumed that the recipient of such a status was being withdrawn from world politics, that the political system would operate as if the neutral state was no longer present.<sup>53</sup> Prime Minister Mintoff, of course, intends to pursue a very active role in shaping events in the Mediterranean.



Nonalignment more closely resembles the stance adopted by Mintoff in definition and usage. It has been termed a tactical principle designed to extract the widest range of advantages from a particular type of power configuration.<sup>54</sup> As such, it is only viable until the small power is directly threatened. At that point, the small power must seek support from a more powerful nation. Thus, the idea that nonalignment is independent of power relations is incorrect. The benefits of nonalignment have been enumerated as: (a) ensuring freedom and independence; (b) keeping small powers out of larger conflicts of no concern to them; (c) as a means of avoiding alliances which make local problems more difficult to solve; (d) a means of preventing the diversion of scarce resources to military obligations; (e) and as a means of obtaining foreign aid from both sides.<sup>55</sup>

Albert O. Hirschman's discussion of the relationship between neutralism and economic necessity considers the levels of aid available for different stances in alignment.<sup>56</sup>

As Hirschman asserts, if a small state values aid and independence, such a policy can realize maximum aid as long as the superpowers do not penalize neutralism in their aid policies (an approach which might be adopted in order to prevent sudden shifts in small power alignment, and thus corresponding shifts in the world power balance).

As illustrated during the 1971-1972 negotiations, Malta was able to play the superpower rivalry in such a way as to



maximize the available aid from the West. The Soviet Union would not, and does not, desire to cater to Mintoff's voracious appetite for cash, but the fact that the two sides were meeting served as an impetus to Western compliance.

In the past decade, however, the level of concern in the West over Malta's alignment declined along with the worry that Mintoff would align with the Soviets. It had become obvious that the Maltese would not enter the Soviet camp. Thus, the operation of the Structural Paradox, so viable in 1971-1972, ceased as Malta lost the leverage of Western concern over a Soviet move in regard to Malta.

Prime Minister Mintoff was faced with a dilemma. He desired aid, but no one was willing to give it to him, and no one seemed to pay attention (other than Libya) to his schemes for a new Euro-Mediterraneanism.

It is the contention of this thesis that Mintoff's negotiating strategy had failed by the summer of 1980, and that the conditions operative in 1971-1972 which combined with his personal style to give him a diplomatic coup then have passed forever. In the long run, the Mintoff style has proved counterproductive. Western Europeans have grown tired of his tirades, insults, and deadlines. Therefore, he may have initiated the 1980 crisis with Libya deliberately as a means of grabbing the attention and concern of his neighbors. He may have realized that the Libyans could not permit him to discover oil in the disputed waters, and he further





recognized Italian concern over a dispute so close to their shoreline. Once again, Mintoff seems to have been successful. Although the quadrilateral arrangement seems to be a dead issue, the Italians have come through with almost all which he could ask for with the newly proposed treaty. On the other hand, it could be argued that Mintoff simply was controlled by events, and that he was (once again) relatively fortunate.

On the Italian side, certainly the issue of oil served to reinforce their interest in the Maltese-Libyan dispute. Italy currently obtains 12% of its oil from Libya.<sup>57</sup> If, however, the median line dispute were settled, and Malta discovered oil on the seabed, her new treaty partner, Italy, would probably be first in line to deal with the Maltese for purchase of that oil.

It is interesting to note that for all of Prime Minister Mintoff's claims that the Arabs were his true friends and that the West was ignoring Maltese needs, he flew to Rome to seek Italian aid when dire necessity arose. Another possible motive for the break with Libya and the agreement with Italy is that it, in a sense, preempts the Nationalist Party platform as the elections of late 1981 begin to draw near. The Nationalists proposed to drill long ago, they have consistently decried the Libyan connection and called for a treaty with a Western nation: in one short month, Mintoff accomplished all three objectives, albeit differently than the Nationalists would have approached the problem.



Prospects for the future seem to be an Italian-backed nonalignment-neutrality for Malta. However, as mentioned and shown before, Mintoff is unpredictable and acts with little warning. It is likely, with elections approaching, that Mintoff will continue his current drift toward Western support in order to complicate the position of the Nationalist Party. If the MLP is reelected, it is possible that the Mintoff Government would drift back toward the Arabs, depending, as has been discussed before, on the terms they offered him. Finally, any Nationalist Party Government elected to power would accelerate the trend signaled by the Maltese-Italian treaty.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

"From the East shall come the Punic heart to trouble Italy and the heirs of Romulus, accompanied by the Libyan fleet; the temples of Malta and adjacent isles shall be emptied."<sup>1</sup>

Dom Mintoff, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, realized that Malta, due to the course of history, had a firmly established service-related economy dependent upon external sources of aid and grants. His attempts to tie the British permanently to Malta in the late 1950s failed, and in 1971-1972, he succeeded in a renegotiation of the Anglo-Maltese Defense Treaty. The goal achieved was the extraction of the maximum monetary benefit available from NATO and the British, to be used to finance the redirection of the Maltese economy toward more productive, profitable enterprises. As the 1970s progressed, Mintoff declared a nonaligned status for Malta, a conscious decision designed to establish a bargaining position from which he would be able to negotiate for aid from both East and West, Arab and European, in order to ensure a steady supply of outside economic and financial support after the withdrawal of the British in 1979.

In the 1971-1972 Anglo-Maltese negotiations, Zartman's Structural Paradox<sup>2</sup> was instrumental. The factors of the perceived negative strategic value of Malta, and the American determination to have it appear that NATO was standing firm



in the early stages of Soviet-American detente, combined to provide sufficient external leverage to Prime Minister Mintoff to allow him to overcome the structural inequity of his position vis-a-vis Great Britain and NATO. As a result, he was successful in his bid to triple the amount that NATO paid for the use of the island's facilities.

Mintoff believed that the threats, insults, and deadlines employed in 1971-1972 could be continued in order to wring further concessions from the West. However, as the non-structural elements (negative strategic value, worry about losing Malta to the Soviets) lost their applicability, Malta became just another small power struggling to survive. Increasing dependence on Libya, a situation which was allowed to develop in hopes of frightening the West into action, did not produce the desired concessions, and, indeed, became too dangerous for even Mintoff to continue. Therefore, he precipitated a crisis over conflicting Maltese-Libyan claims to oil in the seabed between the two countries, and then turned to Italy for aid and protection. Italy, a major trading partner with, and oil customer of, Libya, did not wish to see Colonel Qadhafi transform Malta into a Libyan colony, and thus agreed to aid Malta economically, and to protect her neutrality with the force of arms if necessary.

Even prior to the August 1980 crisis, Mintoff showed a movement away from unarmed neutrality. In June 1980, Mintoff signed a secret agreement with Yugoslavia which





reportedly is concerned with Maltese defense. After the Yugoslav agreement was signed, Mintoff announced that Malta would allow foreign military forces to use the island's military facilities if and when it was in Maltese interests to do so.<sup>3</sup> Later he added that the agreement would remain secret, but implied Yugoslav contributions to Maltese defense might be forthcoming by stating, "Suppose (the Yugoslavs) give us torpedoes. I will let others guess. If they think Malta has one thousand torpedoes instead of ten it is all the better because they will not come."<sup>4</sup>

The exact provisions of the Yugoslav agreements are unknown, but the treaty was probably a largely symbolic gesture of solidarity with an acknowledged leader of the non-aligned movement. The pending Italian-Maltese treaty is public and specific. Mintoff, when threatened by the Libyan challenge, flew to Rome, not to Belgrade.

Thus, for the present, it appears that Mintoff has abandoned a strict unarmed neutrality for a Western (Italian) backed neutrality, even to the point of agreeing to let foreign troops use the island's military facilities in its defense, a departure from earlier stated intentions never to allow foreign troops on the island again. No mention has been made of any restrictions on the use of the island's facilities in opposition to any Arab countries, an agreement forced upon Britain in 1972.



The significance for negotiation theory of the Maltese situation is that Mintoff's negotiating style, his offensive, abusive, deadline-related bargaining, has been revealed as bankrupt. Arguably, the 1980 Maltese-Libyan crisis was another Mintoff tactic to force Western concessions, but it was a riskier, higher-stakes gamble in terms of Maltese sovereignty than the tactics employed previously. If Italy had not reacted favorably, Mintoff may have succeeded in precipitating the erosion of Maltese sovereignty by Libya. However, Mintoff has apparently profited from his gamble. But, conversely, he was forced to turn to a more powerful, Western neighbor in the face of a threat from an Arab nation once projected by Mintoff himself as a guarantor of Maltese neutrality, in order to protect that neutrality.

In general, then, Malta fits with Rothstein's definition of a small power. The elites recognize that they must rely on external aid to survive. However, Prime Minister Mintoff's strategy in pursuing that aid differs from the norm of international relations. His strategy, though successful in some instances, is dangerous and unsettling to the normal process of diplomacy.

Implications of the Maltese situation for U.S. and NATO interests in the Mediterranean are favorable. The U.S. has undergone a period of retrenchment and readjustment of its foreign policies. U.S. policies in the Mediterranean have become less assertive and more contradictory. The policy



aim of protecting the Western supply of Arab oil may conflict with the avowed intention to support the continued existence of the State of Israel. U.S. regional policy has become less distinct as its past naval superiority in the Mediterranean has yielded to a more ambiguous situation vis-a-vis the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean.

The Italian-Maltese treaty illustrates a willingness on the part of Italy to contribute to regional stability in the Mediterranean, as well as a recognition of Colonel Qadhafi's desires for influence in the region. It is also a positive sign for Italy, where the power of the Italian Communist Party and the paucity of national defense budgets have been perceived by the Alliance as factors contributing to the weakening of the southern flank. The treaty may be a sign of recognition on Italy's part of an ability to promote Western security interests in the Mediterranean.

This may be the best possible outcome for NATO. A Libyan-controlled Malta would have threatened the regional balance in the Mediterranean, providing a springboard for Libyan-backed terrorism against Italy and southern Europe, and could have allowed a Libyan threat to the security of Western shipping through the waters surrounding Malta (with Libyan-sponsored but autonomous attacks on selected Western shipping by terrorists equipped with precision-guided munitions, for example).





Multilaterally-guaranteed neutrality has been shown to be historically unworkable, and Mintoff's plan was precarious in the proposed combination of four states with quite different national characters: France, a champion of European self-determination; Italy, a reliable member of the NATO alliance; Algeria, a moderate Arab state; and Libya, a radical Arab state seeking hegemony in the Mediterranean. This would have produced a volatile combination at best, a four-way battle for control of Malta at the worst. Libya would seem to be most inclined to try to exert control over Malta; Italy would be the most likely to try to protect Malta; Algeria and France have shown little or no interest in any attitude toward Malta.

U.S. and NATO policy interests would best be served by allowing the present course of events to continue. Although Mintoff has preempted several Nationalist Party pro-West policy recommendations, the fact stands that he was forced to concede, by action if not by word, that the relationship with Libya was a failure, and his campaign for the elections in 1981 will suffer for that failure. Subtle U.S. pressure on the Western Europeans to indicate a preference for the Nationalist Party, to continue private economic investments at the present, might aid a Nationalist victory in 1981. However, any repetition of the 1972 events, where U.S. pressure forced the British to concede to Maltese demands, and thus ensured the success of Mintoff's negotiations, would be detrimental to Western interests. Overt, seemingly NATO-inspired activity



in the support of the Nationalists would be counterproductive. Any support offered must be subtle and given bilaterally, not multilaterally.

Although events of the past decade have convinced different observers at different times that Malta was destined to become a Libyan or communist client state, recent events have shown that even Prime Minister Mintoff perceives the advantages of "nonaligned alignment" with the West. He may perceive the ambiguity of recent U.S. policy in the Mediterranean, but in the long run he certainly recognized the fact that he can obtain a better deal from the West in terms of real economic investment and protection of internal sovereignty. As long as it is apparent that the West, as represented by Italy, desires to see an independent Malta, nonaligned but free, Mintoff will probably continue to ultimately rely upon Western sources for support and protection.



## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER I

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

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## CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Nostradamus, as cited by Joseph Micaleff in "Mediterranean Maverick," Round Table 275 (July 1979), p. 251. Nostradamus was a French astrologer in the 16th century, one of the most popular of the Renaissance era. His prophecies have been considered to be sometimes obscure, but this is explained by some as an indication that the prophecies encompass events still far in the future. Micaleff suggests that the cited passage foretells an invasion of Malta by Libya, and the destruction of the Catholic Church on the island.

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### INTERVIEWS

Interviews were carried by the author and others with officials of the Maltese Government, past and present, including members of both parties (Malta Labour Party and Nationalist Party).



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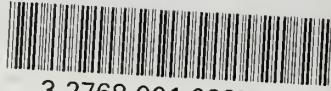
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