

PARTIT KOMUNISTA MALTI



COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALTA

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The Independence Struggle and the CPM

Malta was a British Crown Colony since the beginning of the 19th Century after Malta's then backward Peasants kicked out the French invader with the aid of Britain. Mistaking enlightenment that had brought about the French Revolution as something very anti Catholic. The British rulers made pacts with Vatican, thus the Church under these pacts became the de-facto ruler of the Maltese, second only to the colonial administration of the islands.

Attempts to form a Communist Party during the 1920's by a group of intellectuals and progressive workers failed after falling victims of the Church Hierarchy and the British colonial administrations. Homes were raided and classical Marxist literature were found, charged with the possession of seditious literature and sent on trial. Most of those on trial were given prison sentences, making the workers involved lose their jobs.

Two large political parties survived the Second World War:

:The Labour Party which made large gains during the war years and emerged as big Party after the War.

:The Nationalist Party, the bourgeois party, although weakened by its affiliation with Italy's Fascist Party prior to the war managed to survive.

The 1947 elections gave a large electoral victory to the Labour Party. However in 1950 it became embroiled in a leadership struggle between its actual Leader Dr Paul Boffa and the then still young Dom Mintoff. Mintoff brought down this government in a vote of No Confidence. It was a turbulent time during the period between 1950 and 1955 as three minority Nationalist Party governments, in co-elation with Boffa's Labour Party were brought down during Budget vote, by the Mintoff faction.

The Labour Party won their second election under electoral promise of “Integration with Britain or Self Determination” The Nationalist Party Opposition Led by Dr G. Borg Oliver Responded the slogan of a “Quasi Dominion Status” within the British Commonwealth* that is being almost like Australia and Canada who were Dominions

The 1955 Labour Administration run into trouble as the Plans for Integration with Britain were refuted by the British Government and the Maltese Government had a row with the colonial Authorities over the amount of money that was to be budgeted for Malta. The British Authorities revoked the 1947 constitution and applied direct rule. During this period the Labour Party embarked on the struggle for Independence asking for a complete separation with Britain.

The Catholic Hierarchy led by Sir Micheal Gonzi Archbishop of Malta, feared that the Church privileged position was threatened came out into the political arena and a bitter Religious-political war ensued between the Labour Party and the Catholic Hierarchy under these conditions The British granted a Malta a New Constitution and set the date for new General elections

In the 1961 general elections freedom of speech was restricted as the Labour Party was censored and thus kept out of the political broadcasts on the grounds that their contribution offended Maltese religious sentiments furthermore moral sanctions were imposed on those who either voted Labour or did not vote all. At the Confessional Maltese faithful were asked for whom they were going to vote, and refused absolution if they insisted that they will vote labour. British Catholic Servicemen stationed in Malta, who were not eligible to vote, were given votes and asked to vote in order to save the Catholic Church from a possible Communist victory

Although the Communist party was not formed up yet communists existed in small numbers, and militated both within the Communist Party of Britain or the Italian Communist Party, and also within the ranks of the Labour Party. The Labour Party at that time was just starting to be a Social Democratic party and its membership with the Socialist International was used by the Church against that Party branding the Socialist International as a Communist Organization. The stage was set for the British Authorities to grant an independence constitution that safeguarded British and NATO interests.

Thus the 1964 Independence Constitution did not give Malta full Independence, as Britain kept control of Malta’s Ports and Airport, Broadcasting, and Communications. Also paid for its NATO controlled military bases on the Island by 3 Million Sterling as soft loans, plus another 2 million as Grants. Malta had to wait till 1979 to really be Independent and

sovereign After a New Labour Administration elected in 1971 which was instrumental in making Malta a Republic, changing the Maltese constitution that enshrined neutrality and kicked NATO and the Military bases out. Finally I want to point out that Communists militated within the ranks of the Labour Party and some served in its executive, so there was Communist influence in all of this. The Communist Party of Malta was finally formed in 1969