

MALTA

Date of Elections: June 12, 13 and 14, 1971

Reason for Elections

The June 1971 elections were organized with the purpose of filling the 55 seats of the Maltese Parliament on the normal expiry of the previous legislature.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Malta, the House of Representatives, consists of 55 members (instead of 50 previously), elected for a period of 5 years from the date of the first sitting of the Assembly. The Speaker of the House, elected by the Representatives, may not necessarily be chosen from among them; if he is not a member of Parliament, he must fulfil the requisite conditions for eligibility.

Electoral System

All Maltese citizens of either sex, aged at least 21 years, resident on the island territory at the time of the elections and having resided there for at least one year during the 2 years preceding their registering on electoral rolls, are entitled to vote. These are revised and published in the Official Journal twice yearly in April and in October. Voting is not compulsory.

To be able to stand for election, a voter must be of sound mind, not be deprived of civil rights, and not be subject to a prison sentence exceeding a length of 12 months. The mandate of Representative is incompatible with public service and a military career, as well as with membership of any company or association having contractual engagements with the Government of Malta.

Several Representatives are elected in each of 10 electoral constituencies, according to the single transferable vote system and proportional representation.

Each voter receives a ballot paper containing, in alphabetical order, the names of all the candidates in his constituency. He votes for one of these by writing the figure 1 opposite a candidate's name: he is then at liberty to indicate an order of preference for the other candidates by adding the figures 2, 3,4, etc., against their names.

In counting the votes, a quota is first established in each constituency by dividing the total of valid votes by the number of seats to be filled plus 1; the quota is then deemed to be the smallest whole number that exceeds the figure obtained. Candidates who obtain a number of first preferences equal to, or greater than, this quota are immediately elected.

Should any seats remain to be filled, then the surplus votes (i.e. those in excess of the quota) polled by candidates already elected, are transferred to the remaining candidates on the basis of the second preferences indicated. The votes thus transferred are added to those polled by each remaining candidate; the candidate or candidates who now possess a number of votes equal to, or greater than, the quota are elected.

The same operation is repeated with regard to the next available preference until such time as all the seats are filled or there remain no more transferable surplus votes. In the latter event, all the ballots of the remaining candidate with the least votes to his credit are transferred to the other candidates not yet elected, on the basis of the next available preferences. The same procedure is repeated until such time as all the seats are filled or there remain only as many candidates as there are seats to be filled. The latter are then declared elected.

Should a seat fall vacant during the legislature, a by-election is held: if the same seat again becomes vacant, or if the by-election does not give a valid result, the vacancy shall be filled by co-option.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The electoral campaign began in May 1971. Basically, the contest was between the Nationalist Party, which held a majority in the previous legislature, and the Labour Party, the two groups presenting 78 and 94 candidates respectively. The Constitutional Progressive Party had 19 candidates and 8 people stood as Independents.

The electoral programmes of the main parties each proposed measures designed to promote the economic and social development of the island, but they advocated different positions as far as foreign affairs were concerned. While the Nationalists, under the leadership of Dr. Borg Olivier, outgoing Prime Minister, envisaged closer ties between Malta and Great Britain, the Labour Party, under the direction of Mr. Dominic Mintoff, supported a much more neutral position in the island's relations with other countries; they proposed that any country wishing to establish bases of a military nature in Malta be required to pay for such facilities and closer alliance with Libya.

As a whole, the electoral campaign was conducted in a calm atmosphere. After the Labour Party's victory, Mr. Dominic Mintoff was asked to form a new Government on June 17.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives

Number of registered voters.	181,768
Voters.	168,808 (93.4 %)
Blank or void ballot papers.	749
Valid votes.	168,059

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes	%	Number of Seats in House of Representatives	Number of seats at Preceding Legislature
Labour Party . . .	94	85,448	50.8	28	22
Nationalist Party .	78	80,753	48.1	27	25
Constitutional Progressive Party . .	19	1,756	1		
Independents . . .	8	102	0.1		
				66	70

2. Distribution of Representatives according to Professional Category

Lawyers.	22
Medical professions.	13
Journalists.	4
Architects.	3
Without any profession.	13
	55

3. Distribution of Representatives according to Sex

Men.	53
Women.	2
	55

4. Average Age: 42 years