

MALTA

Date of Elections: 9 May 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Malta, the House of Representatives, is composed of 69 members* elected for 5 years. The Speaker of the House is elected either from within the House or from outside from among persons who are qualified for election as members.

Electoral System

All Maltese citizens who have attained the age of 18 years and are residing in the country, and who, during the 18 months immediately preceding their registration as electors, have been resident for a continuous period of six months, or for periods amounting in the aggregate to six months, are entitled to vote. Disqualified from voting are the insane, persons under sentence of death or serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months and persons convicted for an offence connected with elections to the House.

Electoral registers are revised and published twice a year, in April and October. Voting is not compulsory.

Any person who has the qualifications for registration as a voter may be elected to Parliament. Disqualified from membership are persons owing allegiance to a foreign State and undischarged bankrupts, whereas holders of public office, members of the armed forces, certain persons party to a government contract, and officials connected with the conduct of the elections cannot, while remaining in these situations, be elected to the House.

Each candidate must be nominated by four voters registered in his electoral division and deposit a sum equivalent to approximately US\$ 100, which is forfeited if the number of votes obtained by him does not exceed one-tenth of the total votes polled divided by the number of members to be elected by that division. Individual campaign expenses are limited to a sum approximately equivalent to US\$ 1,500.

For election purposes, Malta is currently divided into 13 divisions. Five Representatives are elected from each of these according to the single-transferable-vote form of proportional representation. Under this system, each elector indicates his order of preference among all the candidates in his electoral division. Candidates are grouped together in alphabetical order

* See "General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections", below.

under the name of the political party to which they adhere. Independent candidates are listed at the bottom of the ballot paper.

In counting the votes, a quota is first established for each electoral division by dividing the total of valid votes by the number of seats to be filled, plus one, i.e. divided by six. Candidates who obtain a number of first preferences equal to, or greater than the quota, are declared elected.

Should any seats remain to be filled, the surplus votes (i.e. those in excess of the quota) polled by candidates already elected are transferred proportionately 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 (candidates) who now possesses (possess) a number of votes equal to, or greater than the quota is (are) elected. Candidates with the lowest number of votes are eliminated and their votes transferred to the other remaining candidates according to the next preference shown on the ballot paper. The same operation is repeated until there are no more seats to be filled.

A 1987 constitutional amendment provides for the election of as many unsuccessful candidates of a political party which has obtained more than 50% of the popular vote in a general election as are necessary to exceed the overall total of the other parties' elected candidates*.

By-elections are held to fill seats which become vacant between general elections.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Parliament was dissolved by outgoing President of the Republic Agatha Barbara on 15 February 1987 and the election date was announced on 22 March.

A total of 171 candidates participated in an intense and occasionally violent campaign. Main issues concerned foreign policy, the country's economy and the controversial 1981 elections, in which the opposition Nationalist Party won 50.9% of the vote but ended up with a minority of seats in Parliament because of Malta's proportional representation system. The conservative Nationalists, led by Dr. Edward Fenech Adami, favoured closer ties with the West, membership in the European Communities and an increased free-market economy. The ruling Malta Labour Party, headed by Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici (who succeeded Mr. Dom Mintoff in December 1984), defended its record in office and advocated neutrality and non-alignment in foreign affairs combined with continued close relations with Libya.

Polling results and the new constitutional amendment giving an automatic parliamentary majority to any party getting more than 50% of the popular vote toppled the Labour Party from power for the first time since 1971. Although the Nationalists gained only 31 seats (to socialist Labour's 34) despite obtaining a bare majority vote, they were awarded four "bonus" seats under the amendment to raise their total to 35. Parliament's size was thus increased to 69 until the next general elections.

On 12 May, Dr. Fenech Adami was sworn in as Prime Minister. His Cabinet was then sworn in by acting President Paul Xuereb.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 15.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	238,378
Voters.	96.11%
Valid votes.	235,169

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
Nationalist Party	119,721	50.91	35* (+4)
Malta Labour Party	114,937	48.87	34 (=)
Others.	511	0.21	
			69

* Including four "bonus" seats.

2. Distribution of Representatives according to Sex

Men.67
Women.2
	69