

MALTA

Dates of Elections: September 17 and 18, 1976

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Malta, the House of Representatives, is composed of 65 members elected for 5 years. The Speaker of the House is chosen either from the said members or from outside the House.

Electoral System

All Maltese citizens who have attained the age of 18 years and are residing in the country, and who have during the 18 months immediately preceding their registration as electors 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\$93, 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 for that division. Individual campaign expenses are limited to M£300.

For election purposes, Malta is currently divided into 13 divisions. Five Representatives are elected in 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 constituency. In counting the votes, a quota is first established within each constituency by dividing the total of valid votes by the number of seats to be filled, plus one; 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 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 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.

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

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Parliament was dissolved on August 13, 1976, and the polling date announced the following day. The election campaign thus lasted slightly over one month.

The country's two major parties — the ruling Labour Party and the Nationalist Party — were once again the main competitors for the newly-enlarged 65-seat House of Representatives.

A central issue in the campaign was outgoing Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff's conduct of foreign policy, in which non-alignment, designed to make Malta a bridge between Europe and the Arab world, was advocated. The Nationalists offered a return to a West European orientation.

Polling day was marked by a large turnout, as 18-year-olds voted for the first time. The Labour Party retained the three-seat majority it had had at dissolution and Mr. Mintoff remained Prime Minister.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.	217,724
Voters.	206,605 (94.89%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	1,165
Valid votes.	205,440

Political Group	Number of Candidates	v ,	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dis- solution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Labour Party.	89	105,854	51.5	34	29	28
Nationalist Party	79	99,551	48.4	<u>31</u> 65*	<u>26</u> 55	<u>27</u> 55

•10 seats added since last elections

*2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to
Professional Category*

Lawyers.	20
Doctors.	19
Businessmen.	8
Architects.	6
Trade unionists.	4
Pharmacists.	2
Journalists.	2
Others.	4

3. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex

Men	63
Women	2
	~65~

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament
according to Age Group*

25-35 years.13
36-45.20
46-55.18
56-65.12
66-75.1
76-85.1