

Maltese–Hungarian Relations

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Relations in the 1960s

Under the governance of the Nationalist Party (*Partit Nazzjonalista*, PN), the Maltese foreign policy was unilaterally British-oriented, since the economic and financial support came to Malta from Great Britain. Therefore, Malta's relations with other countries were limited, and that is the reason why Malta did not have strong relations with Hungary. However, when Malta gained its independence, it was necessary for her to be acknowledged, as a newly independent state, by as many countries as possible. After the declaration of independence, on September 21 1964, Malta received several messages from other states' presidents and prime ministers, in which they not only congratulated, but also recognized Malta in her independent status. The Hungarian Government also sent a letter to the Maltese Government, stating, that "*The Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary recognizes Malta as an independent state*".¹ Moreover, János Kádár's government assured Borg Olivier's government that "*on the basis of the principles of the United Nations, the friendly relationships between the two states will continue*".²

The other reason why Malta did not have direct relationship with Hungary originated in the fact that Hungary was under Soviet hegemony at that time. The Soviet ideology, the communism was strictly rejected by the Maltese Catholic Church, which actively took part in politics, and supported the PN on several occasions.³ Archbishop Gonzi condemned to socialism and communism, and therefore he disapproved the policy of the Malta Labour Party, led by Dominic Mintoff. Nevertheless, Mintoff tried to form relations with socialist countries, and as a result he established an informal relationship between Hungary and Malta in 1965. He wanted to visit to Hungary and negotiate with the Hungarian Government. At that time Hungary's bilateral relations were also expanded, so we accepted his request, moreover the Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) – henceforth MSZMP –, consented establishing connections between the PL and the MSZMP. However, the Hungarian Party told Mr. Mintoff that "*he had better not visit Hun-*

¹ National Archives of Hungary (NAH), Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1965, box 79, 005286/1

² Ibid.

³ The Labour Party (*Partit Laburista*, PL) established connections with the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) which was the source of several debates between the party and the church in the 1960s.

gary during the Budapest International Fair, but after that, and the Maltese should pay for the cost of the trip".⁴

Asking for economic aid was already among Mr. Mintoff's intentions at that time. Although, he did not mention any specific ideas, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce approved to initiate negotiations in this field. Hungary made a red meat business with the L. Scerr-Taylor Maltese red beef-importer company during these talks.⁵ Moreover, on the proposal of this company, the Hungarians initiated the establishment of the Hungarian-Maltese Association.⁶

Mintoff had an other request, beside his original one. In order to improve printing facilities in Malta, he wanted to talk with pressmen and publisher technicians, and "he asked for printing machines the Hungarians no longer wanted to use".⁷ Moreover, "he asked for scholarships for Maltese students in any higher education institutions or in trade unionist schools in Budapest".⁸

Relations in the 1970s

The 1971 election had a great effect on the improvement of Maltese-Hungarian relations. The Partit Nazzjonalista raised the number of the parliamentary seats, in the hope that they can weaken the opposition. However, the majority of the voters voted for the PL, so Dominic Mintoff's party took over the control of the state, which had great effects on foreign policy. This meant that the solely British-oriented foreign policy of Malta ended, and a new era began with the polling.

Due to the PL's victory, the relationship between Malta and Hungary started to bloom, however, its basis was laid down by the PN in October 1970. Under the governance of the PN "the People's Republic of Hungary and the Government of Malta established a diplomatic relation on ambassadorial level".⁹ Hungary did not establish an embassy in Malta, but Hungary's Maltese ambassador became the Hungarian Ambassador to Rome, who was dr. József Bényi at that time.¹⁰ The Hungarian Presidential Council affirmed this decision, and Her Majesty the Queen also gave her consent to it.¹¹

Diplomatic Relations

Due to Dominic Mintoff's victory at the 1971 election, Malta's foreign policy took a new direction. The PL's foreign policy was based on seeking for economic support and for economic aid from abroad, as Mintoff's main aim was to make Malta totally independent of the British. What he wanted was to achieve economic viability with the help of the socialist countries.

⁴ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1965, box 79, 001945/1

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. 005879

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1970, box 60, 002806/6

¹⁰ Ibid. 002806/7

¹¹ Ibid. 002806/9

Mintoff did not waste his time, and he began to establish connections with socialist countries right after his election victory. On October 26 1971, he held a talk with the Hungarian Ambassador to Rome, during which the Maltese Prime Minister told him that Malta was seeking the urgent help of the Warsaw Pact-countries, so Hungary's help too. On November 2 1971 he planned a visit to Romania, and on November 11–12 1971 to Yugoslavia, in order to establish diplomatic relations with those countries as well. He asked the Hungarian State's leadership to make an appointment with the Hungarian Prime Minister, Jenő Fock, between his visit to Romania and Yugoslavia. This meeting was the next stage in the development of political relations between Malta and Hungary, as Mintoff wanted to initiate establishing alliance between the PL and MSZMP.¹²

Besides this topic, Mintoff wanted to discuss economic issues, too. However, neither the Maltese–Hungarian, nor the Hungarian economy made it possible to give Malta credit or aid at that time.¹³

Mintoff visited to Hungary on November 6, however, he did not meet with the Hungarian Prime Minister Jenő Fock, but with János Nagy, the Deputy-Foreign Minister. This was a short visit as they talked only at the airport. Mintoff informed János Nagy that the British Government created difficult economic conditions for Malta, and they lacked in cadres. They also discussed that Hungary should send an economic delegation to Malta, which seemed urgent to them, since they asked dr. József Bényi several times¹⁴ in November inquiring about when the Hungarian delegation would arrive in Malta.¹⁵

The Maltese–Hungarian diplomatic relations became stronger at the end of the 1970s. This strengthening was driven by the force to establish a viable economy in Malta on the one hand, and to get as much economic support as possible, on the other, in order to compensate for the loss of the income, after leave of the British. The first stage of these stronger relations was a negotiation between the Maltese and the Hungarian Prime Minister in Valletta on May 8–10 1977. The second stage was the Belgrade Talks on July 21 1978. During this conference Pál Rácz, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, talked with Godfrey Testa, chairman of the Maltese delegation, and one of the members of the National Executive Committee of the PL. They discussed several topics during this meeting. First of all, Testa proposed the establishment of a Hungarian Embassy in Malta. Secondly, he suggested the strengthening of the direct relations between the PL and the MSZMP. Thirdly, in connection with the economic affairs, he initiated the establishment of mutual investments and companies. Then, he asked Pál Rácz to send Hungarian doctors to Malta. After that, he proposed the cooperation of the two countries' social, women and youth organisations, and last but not the least, he asked us to sign the proposed treaty about cultural cooperation. The Hungarian delegation was willing to fulfill the requests, but it was not possible at that time to establish an embassy on the island. However, Pál Rácz promised Testa that the Hungarian Ambassador to Rome would visit Malta soon, in order to promote the Maltese requests.¹⁶

¹² NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1971, box 73, 001880/11

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mintoff sent two letters to the Hungarian Ambassador to Rome – on November 26 and on November 27 – inquiring about the exact date of the Hungarian delegation's arrival to Malta.

¹⁵ Ibid. 001880/23

¹⁶ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001616/1

Frigyes Puja's Talks in Malta and their Consequences

The most important stage of the Maltese–Hungarian diplomatic relations was the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Frigyes Puja's negotiation with the Maltese Government in Malta. The Maltese Government invited him between December 19 and 21, and he travelled there in early January, 1979. The negotiations were short, they took place between January 9 and 11.¹⁷ Prior to his visit, a negotiation-plan was made, consisting the Maltese and Hungarian point of views, mainly about international issues and bilateral political relations.

One of the main themes of international issues was the development of the international situation and of détente. In case of détente, the Maltese and the Hungarians supported this policy, however, the Maltese wanted to use it mainly in order to ensure their position in the Mediterranean. The Maltese and Hungarian opinions differed in one matter: China's policy. The Hungarian leaders "*rejected the Maoist leaders' nationalist and hegemonistic foreign policy which endangers the peace, and does harm for the matter of progress*".¹⁸ Malta, however, stood on the side of China – as she got financial aid from the Asian country – and declared that "*in order to establish a friendly relationship between China and Hungary, Malta is willing to do anything*".¹⁹

The other main point of the international issues was the Soviet–American relationship. Hungary and Malta had similar opinions about this issue, especially about arm limitations. The Hungarians ascribed great importance to the SALT II treaty,²⁰ and emphasised the "*complex feature of maintaining peace*".²¹ In order to achieve it, Hungary regarded confidence-building inevitable in the intergovernmental relations, which should be expanded to the Mediterranean, as well. Furthermore, we appreciated and stood for Malta's initiative to abandon the British military base on its territory. Malta's main aim, in fact, was to turn the Mediterranean into a nuclear-free zone, and "*for her disarmament meant Mediterranean disarmament, and peace meant Mediterranean peace*".²² That was the main reason they wanted to wind up the NATO base in Malta.

In connection with European security and cooperation, the Hungarians suggested a Pan-European cooperation in the light of the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, while Malta's main aim was to create détente in the Mediterranean, and she "*wanted to exploit the opportunities, offered by the Final Act, one-sidedly, according to their own needs*".²³

Regarding the bilateral political connections, we know that the two countries did not have a meeting since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and Hungary. That was the reason why Malta invited Frigyes Puja to Malta. As it was mentioned before,

¹⁷ Ibid. 001570/7

¹⁸ Ibid. 001570/31

¹⁹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1979, box 90, 0034/1

²⁰ Strategic Arm Limitation Talks. These talks were held between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The main aim of the negotiations was to maximize the number of the ballistic missiles.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

he visited Valletta between January 9 and 11 1979 as the leader of a ten-member delegation. He had talks with Dominic Mintoff and Joseph Cassar, Deputy Prime Minister. The negotiations focused on three main areas: the international relations, with a great emphasis on the European security, Maltese–Hungarian economic cooperation and the development of the bilateral relations.²⁴

Concerning international relations, they talked about the status of Malta in the Mediterranean, Malta's policy, and the Maltese proposal concerning the establishment of a friendly relationship between Hungary and China. The Maltese said that "*they are generally satisfied with the Maltese–Hungarian relationship*",²⁵ however, they wanted Hungarian initiatives in the fields of diplomacy, economy and culture. The Maltese were displeased with the lack of progress in the relationship with Hungary, which was disadvantageous to them as they wanted to establish profitable political and economic relations with the socialist Hungary, as soon as it was possible. Principally, the representatives discussed to what extent the Hungarian industrial companies could contribute to the development of the Maltese manufacturing industry, to the modernisation of the agriculture and to the establishment of common businesses.²⁶

Regarding the political relations, the Maltese wanted to strengthen the bond between the MSZMP and the PL, as they needed Hungary's recognition and support, after the leave of the British.²⁷ At the end of the talks, Frigyes Puja informed Mintoff that after returning Hungary, he would discuss the mutually elaborated plans and proposals with the Hungarian Government. Finally, he said that "*he hopes that these plans and proposals will be materialized in concrete treaties in the near future*".²⁸

After the negotiations, the Hungarian delegation visited to the Dockyard, to the Grand Harbour of Valletta and they went sightseeing in Valletta. In the evening the Maltese President, Anton Buttigieg invited them to a banquet at his presidential apartment.²⁹

After returning Hungary, the Hungarian Prime Minister initiated in the Hungarian Government to devise proposals concerning the above mentioned issues. Regarding the diplomatic connections, the Hungarian politicians aimed at, among other things, arranging regular meetings between the Foreign Ministers, inviting the Maltese leaders to the national feast in March, and strengthening the relationship between the Maltese and Hungarian delegations in the international organizations.³⁰ Furthermore, the Hungarian Government wanted to invite Dominic Mintoff to Hungary before the Madrid Conference.³¹

²⁴ *Népszabadság*, 10 January 1979.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* 11 January 1979.

²⁷ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/31

²⁸ *Times of Malta*, 12 January 1979.

²⁹ *Népszabadság*, 11 January 1979.

³⁰ Malta and Hungary at that time were members of the United Nations and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

³¹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1979, box 90, 01888

Economic Relations

Trade

Although, Malta gained political independence on September 21 1964, it did not mean that she became independent economically. Malta was a British military base for 150 years, for which the British paid millions of pounds. The whole Maltese economy depended on the British as they did not only provided money, but they employed most of the Maltese workers in the Dockyard and on the air base. However, after giving political independence to Malta, the British forces were gradually withdrawn from there, so the economy sought for new basis. This proved a difficult task, as in order to establish a viable economy Malta inevitably needed foreign help, particularly loans, grants and aids.³²

The number of the countries giving assistance rose after the 1971-elections, since the PL, whose main aim was to break with Britain, won this election. The party sympathized with the socialist countries, and turned to them for economic help. While asking for support, Mintoff often argued that establishing trade relations with Malta would be beneficial for them in the future, as Malta lay in the heart of the Mediterranean, so she could open the market towards the Arab world. On the other hand, Malta became the joint member of the European Economic Community on April 1 1971, by which the economic relations could develop more easily.³³

Raising these arguments Malta turned to Hungary to ask for economic aid. The Maltese–Hungarian relations became stronger after the establishment of the diplomatic relations in December 1970 which directly promoted the formation of economic ties. The first step towards it was the Maltese International Fair, where Hungary was invited.³⁴

The second step in strengthening the economic relations was a talk between Pál Losonczi, the president of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary, and Dominic Mintoff in October 1971. During this negotiation Mintoff said that Britain gave only £ 5,25 million – while the rent was annually £ 14 million earlier – and only Italy helped Malta with £ 2,5 million to improve her economic and transportation facilities. As these incomes were quite low, Mintoff asked Pál Losonczi to raise our import from Malta, and he was inquiring about the exact date of the Hungarian economic delegation's arrival. The delegation visited Malta between February 12 and 18 1972, and came to an agreement with Malta on small-scale economic cooperation.³⁵

The economic negotiations between Malta and Hungary continued in 1974, when the Government of Malta invited Imre Dimény, Minister of Agriculture and Nutrition, to visit to Malta and to discuss economic issues. The Maltese proposed that they would import 20-40000 cattle, each 250-300 kg, from Hungary, and they wanted to fatten them to slaughter. This business was advantageous for them in two aspects. One was that Malta lifted its

³² NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1971, box 73, 001880/1

³³ Ibid. 001880/4

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. 001880/14

import duty on fodder, the other was that as the island country became the joint-member of the EEC, so they were allowed to sell the animals on the Common Market.³⁶

After these meetings and negotiations there is no mention of the economic relations between the two countries in the despatch of the Foreign Minister until 1977. On January 19 1977 a delegation visited Malta to sign a trade treaty which was in force for five years.³⁷ This treaty proved a milestone in the Maltese–Hungarian relations. It included all the important passages prescribed by the international trade rules, consequently Malta and Hungary could buy products from each other without any difficulty. Furthermore, they set up a joint committee which was responsible for promoting trade between the two countries. The main aim of the negotiation was to sign the treaty, and after signing it, the Hungarian delegation visited the Maltese Drydock Company Ltd., the Maltese Weaving and Spinning Factory, the Glass Factory and the Chocolate Factory.³⁸

The next round of negotiations took place in Budapest in 1978. Prior to these negotiations, a *Memorandum* was compiled, listing the main areas of cooperation, and analyzing the economic year of 1977. According to this analysis, the economic relations did not improve to the extent it was prescribed by the 1977-treaty. Malta, in fact, imported products from Hungary totalling £M 500.000, however, Hungary did not import any product from Malta. In order to avoid such situation in the future, the Maltese offered to sign a compensation deal on meat-trade. According to it, Malta would import livestock and meat products only from Hungary, and Hungary, in return, would import Maltese products and shipping facilities. Furthermore, as Malta had high import exigency, so to say she was at the mercy of foreign markets, the Government of Malta offered Hungary that if the Hungarians reduced the custom duties by 4%, Malta would import meat products only from Hungary.³⁹

The above mentioned talks were held between September 21 and 23 1978. The chairmen of the talks were dr. Robert Stivala, Under-Secretary of Trade and Tourism and István Török, Deputy Foreign Trade Minister.⁴⁰ During the discussions the two countries' representatives discussed the economic relations in 1977 and 1978, and they tried to work out a plan to make the commercial exchanges more dynamic. According to the despatch made after the meeting, Hungary exported products totalling \$ 1.511.796 in 1978, and to the delight of the Maltese the Hungarians also imported products totalling \$ 932.000. In 1977 our export was made up of the following products: one third of the export was textile products, 20-20% of it was canned meat and tinned fruit, less than 20% of it were medical products and 10% of it were sheep. These rates changed in 1978 as 52% of our export were sheep, the rate of the textile products dropped to 10%, and the rate of the medical raw materials, electric bulbs, electrics and incandescent lamps dropped to 2-7%. Besides it, they

³⁶ Ibid. 001827/2

³⁷ The members of the Hungarian delegation were Péter Balázs, Ida Tóth, Deputy Foreign Trade Minister, Anikó Ivanka, mercurial-political expert, György Obláth, mercurial consultant and Katrin Tarr, Mercurial Secretary of the Embassy of Hungary to Rome. *Times of Malta*, 22 January 1977.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/17

⁴⁰ *Népszabadság*, 23 September 1978.

still welcomed Hungarian economists in Malta, and they emphasised the advantage of Malta's geographical position, as a transit market towards Africa.⁴¹

Besides the above mentioned issues, the representatives discussed other possible areas of cooperation. They came to the conclusion that Hungary could contribute to the industrialization of Malta through establishing industrial plants and providing machines used in metallurgy, metal-processing, food industry and manufacture. The Maltese experts were accompanied by a group of businessmen who held talks with the representatives of Hungarian industrial and export companies.⁴²

Malta's transit market-nature was mentioned in the negotiation-plan for Frigyes Puja, Hungarian Foreign Minister, as well. The Maltese asked Hungary to import more products from Malta, to give them aid and credit, and to promote Hungarian tourism to Malta. To favour of this, in the spirit of the Helsinki Summit, they revoked the exigency of the visa, and they tried to lure Hungarian tourists to Malta.⁴³

Agatha Barbara, Minister of Labour, Culture and Welfare, visited Hungary between September 5 and 8 1978. Her primary aim was to strengthen cultural relations, but she also tried to make economic deals. In order to broaden the customer market for the Maltese Shoe Factory, she talked with Lajos Rév, the chairman of the Nationwide Council of the Industrial Associations. She wanted to make a trade agreement according to which Hungary would import 50.000 pair of shoes annually from Malta.⁴⁴

Supporting the Industrialization of Malta

The first request of the Maltese Government concerning the support Malta in the process of industrialisation arrived at the Embassy of Hungary to Rome on January 8 1972. The Maltese Ministry of Commerce asked the Hungarian Government to send a delegation of economists to Malta, which could help in establishing such industrial network which would be able to create as many workplaces as possible with the least investment. They said that "*they had empty factory-buildings which could be utilized for this purpose; furthermore, they would agree on establishing Hungarian or Hungarian-Maltese companies*".⁴⁵

The delegation of economists was sent by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce to Malta on February 14 1972, and they stayed there till February 18. This delegation consisted of company owners who talked with the Maltese representatives about exporting food, livestock, meat products and machines used in medicine and food production to Malta. However, the delegation informed the Maltese that Hungary could not help efficiently in establishing either medicine producing or poultry processing companies. But on the request of the Hungarian Dockyard and Crane Factory, the delegation made a business with the Maltese Drydock Company, according to which the Maltese agreed to

⁴¹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/14

⁴² *Népszabadság*, 23 September 1978.

⁴³ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/31

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 004841/4

⁴⁵ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1972, box 70, 00655/1

manufacture a 100-ton floating crane totalling \$ 15.000. Futhermore, we made a deal on importing silk yarn totalled \$ 800.000.⁴⁶

The contribution to Malta's industrialization intensified at the end of 1970s. On August 2 1978 the Maltese proposed the establishment of a weapon factory in Malta with Hungarian and Lybian cooperation. At first, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs thought it over because of the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Namely, if the PN had won the elections, the influence of the NATO would have been increased.⁴⁷ Still, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Sándor Torontáli to Malta, to negotiate with the Maltese economists. The talks were quite long, they lasted almost a month, from November 9 to December 2 1978. They elaborated on the quantity of the production, the capacity of production and financing. Sándor Torontáli proposed the establishment of a weapon-assembling factory, for which the Maltese would provide the building and the erecting shop, while Hungary would have been responsible for the technology, the training, the accessories, and any other tools and materials. This proved to be a serious and profitable deal for the Maltese who thought it would be really benefitting in the short run.⁴⁸

After the visit of the Hungarian Prime Minister Frigyes Puja, Sándor Torontáli visited Malta again at the request of the Malta Development Corporation. There were two aims of his visit: one was to share his views about establishing a chocolate factory, the other was to make market research by proxy of the Intercooperation PLC.⁴⁹ As far as the chocolate factory was concerned the Hungarians approved his commission in February 1979, and he succeeded in arranging that the Maltese appointed Ferenc Mohos, head of the Department of Production at the Budapest Chocolate Factory, to be the manager of the factory.⁵⁰

During the market research, Sándor Torontáli focused on the demand for livestock and meat products. In his despatch he reinforced his previous assumption according to which *"there was no correspondence between the local meat production and the import of meat products. As Hungary had 10.000 tons extra pork annually, this extra quantity could be exported to Malta not only to maintain the continuity of production, but also to avoid importing meat products."*⁵¹ This pork-importing business was discussed during the visit of Agatha Barbara, too, as due to the African pig fever, in 1978, most of the pigs died in Malta. The AGROINVEST PLC. also contributed to the development of the Maltese meat industry, and it was ready to *"install a pig breeding network (planning, construction, providing breeding stock, running the network, technical consultation) to Malta on the grounds of a bilateral commercial agreement"*.⁵²

All of this assistance proved to be useful for the Maltese, since *"these investments not only created new workplaces, and helped to reduce the unemployment rate, but they also contributed to the establishment of an export-oriented industry"*,⁵³ said Rezső Palotás the Ambassador of Hungary in Rome.

⁴⁶ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1973, box 77, 00658/1

⁴⁷ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 002197

⁴⁸ Ibid. 002197/6-00114/8/78

⁴⁹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1979, box 90, 001204/4

⁵⁰ Ibid. 004075

⁵¹ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 002300/6-00114/5/78

⁵² NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1979, box 90, 001204/3

⁵³ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 002393



Cultural relations

The Maltese–Hungarian relations were characterized particularly by the diplomatic and economic cooperation, however, though not to the same extent, the cultural relations were also tight. They comprised of the following fields: film production, national holidays, media and education. Starting with film production, the Hungarian National Television Company got in touch with the Maltese Television Ltd. in the early 1970s. After the initial steps the Hungarians proposed to the Maltese to broadcast Hungarian short films or films in Malta.⁵⁴ However, the technical facilities did not make it possible at that time to send programmes directly. Besides broadcasting, Sándor Mátray and András Sugár, Hungarian film producers, planned to shoot a film in Malta which actually took place in November 1971. Moreover, the Maltese Television Ltd. sent us the highlights of the Malta–Hungary football match.⁵⁵ They asked us to send them the coverage of the return match which was on May 6 1972.⁵⁶

The most important occasion of 1973, from Hungarian point of view, was the Hungarian Cultural Week in Malta which was organized by the Hungarian Academy in Rome. For the sake of the preparations a member of the Embassy of Hungary in Rome visited Malta on May 28 1973. The Hungarian delegate was welcomed by Agatha Barbara, Paul Xuereb Minister of Trade, Industry, Agriculture and Tourism and Anthony Abela Undersecretary. Agatha Barbara agreed to the organization of the Hungarian Cultural Week, and asked the Hungarians to focus on exhibiting Hungarian folklore products and showing Hungarian films. In addition, she asked the Hungarian delegate to invite Malta to the International Fair of Consumers Goods in Budapest that autumn.⁵⁷

The Hungarian Cultural Week was opened by Agatha Barbara on February 28 1974. Hungarian paintings, goldsmith's craft and books were exhibited, and Hungarian films were also shown with English subtitles. Moreover, dr. József Bényi gave educational materials to the Maltese, on behalf of Károly Polinszky, Minister of Education and Public Education.⁵⁸

In the field of education the Catholic Church always had a big influence in Malta. After the 1971-elections the PL came to an agreement with Archbishop Gonzi, therefore Mintoff gave a free hand in determining the educational material. In order to improve educational standards, Mintoff asked Hungary in 1972 to send them books, informational pamphlets, educational equipment, audiovisual materials and didactic films. We agreed to send them the asked materials and equipment, and the School Equipment Supplier and Seller Company put a package together worth 50.000 Hungarian Forint.⁵⁹ Besides this help, we offered the Maltese students two scholarships for the academic year 1976/1977 from "*the stipendium fund of the developing countries*".⁶⁰

⁵⁴ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1971, box 73, 001880/15

⁵⁵ It was a world cup qualification match, and was played on 14 October 1971.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 001880/31

⁵⁷ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1973, box 77, 003227

⁵⁸ B. Hilary A. Clews F. S. C. (ed.): *The Malta Year Book 1975*. De La Salle Publications, Sliema, Malta, 1975. 71.

⁵⁹ On February 1 1972 1 HUF cost £ 72, so Hungary helped Malta with £ 694.444. Source: <http://www.mnb.hu/engine.aspx?page=arfolyamlekerdezes>

⁶⁰ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/25

The Maltese–Hungarian cultural relations reached their apex on September 6 1978 when Rudolf Rónai, the chairman of the Institution of Cultural Relations, and Agatha Barbara signed the Treaty on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation in Budapest in the Institution of Cultural Relations.⁶¹ This was the first treaty between the parties in this field, whose main aim was to observe each other's scientific development which implied "*the cooperation of the Maltese and Hungarian educational, cultural and art institutions, the cooperation of the scientific and research centres, the mutual visit and information exchange of the scientists, researchers, artists, and experts*".⁶² The treaty covered every area of culture and science, such as education, literature, music, film industry, fine arts, cooperation of media, radio and television companies, strengthening relations in the UNESCO, organizing mutual sport activities, motivating the cooperation among the two countries' sport associations, and last but not least, boosting of tourism. The treaty was signed for five years, but it could be renewed.⁶³ After signing the treaty Agatha Barbara visited the Hungarian National Gallery and was taken sightseeing in Budapest.⁶⁴

Concerning media and journalism, during the film production in November 1971, we invited a few Maltese journalists to Budapest, and we proposed to publish some articles of the *Notizie Ungheresi*⁶⁵ in Maltese newspapers.⁶⁶ Before the visit of Frigyes Puja, the Foreign Propaganda Department of the Press Department also worked out proposals to improve the cultural relations between the two countries. These proposals touched upon the development of media and informative relations, primarily to strengthen the relations of the Hungarian Scientific Institution and the Hungarian Television with their Maltese counterparts.⁶⁷

To sum up the development Maltese–Hungarian relations in the 1960s and 1970s, they became stronger after the 1971-elections. The winner of these elections, the Malta Labour Party, under the direction of Dominic Mintoff, tried to loosen the relationship with the British, and wanted to break with Britain. Therefore, Mintoff tried to establish intergovernmental relations with as many countries as possible. These relations had a great importance in economic aspects, as in order to create a viable economy in Malta the Government of Malta needed foreign help. Mintoff sought for the help of the Government of the People's Republic of Hungary too, which was willing to support the Maltese aims. Although the relations evolved slowly in the early 1970s, at the end of the decade the diplomatic, economic and cultural relations were all quite tight which had a great importance for the Maltese, as on 31 March 1979 the British left the Grand Harbour, which meant that Malta had to stand on her own feet.

⁶¹ *Népszabadság*, 7 September 1978-

⁶² NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1979, box 90, 005739/2

⁶³ *Ibid.* 005739/3

⁶⁴ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 004841/4

⁶⁵ It is an Italian newspaper.

⁶⁶ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1971, box 73, 001880/15

⁶⁷ NAH, Office of the Foreign Minister, XIX-J-1-j, Malta 1978, box 91, 001570/8