

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET BY
THE HON. THE PRIME MINISTER.

War Damage Repairs at Senglea Basilica

In 1959, the Cottonera Civic Committee complained with the Government of the time that the repairs carried out of War Damage funds have marred the aesthetics of the Basilica at Senglea and they are now pressing to have this question settled with urgency in view of the Great Siege Centenary celebrations due to be held next year.

2. That part of the Basilica which was damaged by enemy action was rebuilt and the walls painted in terms of a "concordat" reached between the Chairman, War Damage Commission and the Curia in 1944 which stipulates, inter alia, that it is not expected that compensation will cover non-essential embellishments and works of art but only the reinstatement or reconstruction of the building of the Church according to its architectural style and with that amount of accommodation and standard of refinement which belonged to it.

3. The undamaged part of the Basilica is still lined with marble and a claim is being pressed for lining with marble the other part mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The cost of this work was estimated at the time to be in the region of £8,000 but this amount may yet have to be revised in accordance with present costs. Alternatively, the Cottonera Civic Committee may consider removing the existing marble and paint the walls for the sake of uniformity. In the opinion of the Hon. Minister of Works and Housing the latter alternative would cost more.

4. The known outstanding war damage claims in respect of Churches are as follows:-

Lady of Victories, Senglea:	£8,042	4s,	Od.
St Publius, Floriana:	2,802	-	-
St Augustine, Valletta:	837	-	-
Parish Church, Vittoriosa:	178	-	-
St Ursula, Valletta:	184	1	-
St Paul's Church, Cospicua:	16	6	6
Dominican Church, Vittoriosa:	1,438	10	-
St Francis Church, Valletta:	230	-	-
	£13,728	1	6

5. All the war damage repairs in the above Churches, with the exception of the marble works in the Senglea Basilica (first on the list) have been completed but payment of the claims has not been made by the War Damage Commission.

6. The Commission has exercised its discretion against such Church claims because it is known that there

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are no sufficient funds to meet the outstanding claims and feels that third parties who have paid a contribution under the Land Valuation (Developed Tenement) Ordinance, should receive priority over Church claims, in respect of which no contribution was ever paid.

7. However, the Commission is prepared to meet the Churches' claims if an assurance is given by the Government that additional funds would be provided to meet all the outstanding claims in respect of private property. The Hon. Minister of Works and Housing states that the attitude of the Commission is reasonable.

8. The Government can hardly renounce to its obligations under the War Damage Ordinance to make good war damage suffered by private owners of property and the necessary funds would have to be found to meet all justified claims. On the other hand, the assurance insisted upon by the Commission and the Hon. Minister of Works and Housing cannot be given before the outcome is known of the impending discussions on the Second Five-Year Plan which provides a further sum of £710,000 for war damage compensation.

9. Hon. Ministers are asked to consider whether the Church claims should be met in anticipation of the provisions of funds required to meet all outstanding war damage claims, or whether the terms of the 1944 concordat with the Curia should be strictly applied pending availability of the required funds.

21st February, 1964.
