

MEMORANDUM TO CABINET PRESENTED BY THE
MINISTER OF COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with U.S.S.R.

At the time of the independence celebrations the Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers sent a message expressing the willingness of the U.S.S.R. to establish diplomatic relations with Malta. In reply the Malta Government readily accepted in principle the offer of the Soviet Government to establish diplomatic relations and looked forward to the day when it would be possible to arrange for an exchange of missions. The Malta Government however regretted it was not in a position to establish its own mission in Moscow or adequately to cope with the establishment of further missions in Valletta at that stage. The Malta Government further suggested that for the present relations between the U.S.S.R. and Malta could be conducted through representatives in London.

This continued to be Malta's stand up till now although other foreign missions have been established in Malta since. In the meantime Malta has received a number of invitations from the Soviet Government for Ministers to visit Moscow. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers has recently sent a personal gift to the Prime Minister on the occasion of the launching of "Luna 9". A message accompanied the gift. The gift was received through the Permanent Representative to the United Nations and in making the presentation the Political Counsellor to the U.S.S.R. Mission to the United Nations underlined the Soviet Government's wish for closer relations with Malta.

So far Malta has been able to hold off the Soviet Union on what can only be described as very implausible reasons. It could be argued that diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union are inevitable in the long run whatever the internal political difficulties

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of taking such a step. It might therefore be better for Malta to choose her own timing and manner. Any more rebuffs to the Soviet Union might provoke hostility. Malta is practically alone in Europe not to have diplomatic relations with U.S.S.R.

Apart from the fact that Malta cannot continue ignoring the existence of a very powerful nation, it is not very likely that the establishment of diplomatic relations with U.S.S.R. will have any beneficial results for Malta. There is too much danger in receiving aid from U.S.S.R. and the possibilities of trade are not great. On the other hand it is well that the Western powers should not take Malta too much for granted.

It is for decision:-

- (1) Whether to leave matters as they stand;
- (2) Whether to suggest a non-resident Ambassador without immediate reciprocation;
- (3) Whether to suggest a resident Ambassador, subject to limitations on the number of staff in the Embassy and subject to such other precautions as may be necessary.

22nd July, 1966.