

MEMORANDUM
by the
Hon. Minister of Justice and
Parliamentary Affairs
for discussion in Cabinet.

Subject: Requisitioning of block of flats
at Gzira, known as Marshall Court,
and allocation of the several flats
thereof if requisition is enforced.

In May 1968 the Housing Secretary suggested that, as the block of building in Gzira known as Marshall Court, composed of eighty-nine flats, was being released to the owners by the Naval Authorities, and as these flats were not let as 'furnished flats', the furniture in them having been provided by the Naval Authorities, a number of these flats should be requisitioned for allocation to cases on the books of the Department falling under the policy of "direct allocation."

The cases of direct allocation in the area amounted to nineteen, of which twelve were T.B. cases. Of the other seven two have since been allocated to premises in Valletta. The other five cases cannot afford to pay high rents.

The Housing Secretary caused an inspection to be made of the block. It was found that all flats had several common services, such as heating, and refuse disposal, and on this account the Housing Secretary was of the opinion that it would not be expedient to requisition only a few flats for allocation to families who would probably play havoc with these services to the detriment of the other flats not requisitioned. Housing Secretary furthermore, stated as his opinion that, in view of the fact that the block was built at considerable expense, it having been planned for use of naval families any rent assessment made by the Rent Regulation Board, based as it would be on cost, would be much too high to be acceptable to any of our evictees. The allocations of T.B. cases was not considered as Chief Government Medical Officer opposes the placing of T.B. families in flats.

At the time the owners had applied to the Malta Development Corporation for a grant to develop the block as a hotel, and the Department was verbally informed that such a grant was being made by the Development Corporation.

All this considered it was decided in July, 1968 to drop the idea of requisitioning any flats at all from this block.

In March 1969, the Housing Secretary was directed to requisition the whole block. This requisition was served on the 14th March, 1969 on the owners, Col. Roger Strickland and Capt. S.C. Xerreb.

There is now a request by the Parish Priest, Gzira, that the flats forming the block be put up for applications by engaged couples.

The first consideration which should be given to this matter is a financial one.

As soon as the requisition Order is enforced the Housing Department will be saddled with the payment of rent for each of the 89 flats as from the date of receipt of keys from the owners to the date of allocation to the several successful applicants. There will also be the added expense of providing a watchman for this period and a permanent caretaker for the common parts.

There is, of course, one possibility which could be explored; that of subsidizing the rental should the Rent Regulation Board assessment result in too high a rate. This, however, entails making an "ad hoc" provision in the estimates and would constitute a most dangerous precedent.

Application will have to be made by the Housing Secretary to the Rent Regulation Board for the fixing of the fair rent of each flat.

It is presumed that even if the rent assessment will be high a sufficient number of applicants will respond to a call for applications from engaged couples.

In order to obviate, or reduce as much as possible, the expense of rent payment by the Department it would be essential that a call for applications from engaged couples be issued immediately, should it be decided to enforce the requisition order on the whole block.

Hon. Ministers are therefore requested to agree:

EITHER that the Requisition Order served on the owners of Marshall Court, Gzira, be enforced and action be taken as stated in this memo

OR that the Requisition Order be withdrawn, in view of the fact that it is the policy at present not to put up for applications premises which are privately owned, unless these premises have come to the Housing Department because the tenants have been afforded accommodation in a Government tenement.

5th April, 1969.