

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET BY THE
HON. PRIME MINISTER

Diplomatic Relations with Israel

In a telegram dated 2nd October, 1964, the Israel Government proposed the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and Israel. For this purpose they suggested accrediting the Israeli Ambassador at the Court of St James to be the Non-Resident Ambassador of Israel to Malta.

2. In the first place it is necessary to decide whether Malta should establish diplomatic relations with Israel. In view of the nature of the offer made, it would be difficult to prevaricate without giving offence. Malta has already had friendly contacts with Israel, and there is no doubt that it would be advantageous to cultivate close relations with Israel. It must be borne in mind however that as soon as formal relations are established requests for the establishment of diplomatic relations from the United Arab Republic and other Arab States can be expected to follow. Official contacts with the latter have hitherto been confined to Libya and Tunisia, which countries have already been approached on the subject of a Trade Agreement. Other trade agreements are known to be contemplated by the Ministry of Industrial Development and Tourism with several Mediterranean countries, including the U.A.R. and Lebanon. If trading relations are to be promoted with these countries it will be difficult to refuse to cultivate diplomatic relations. The only reason against the establishment of a U.A.R. mission in Malta is, of course, one of security as the aims and policies of the U.A.R. are well known to run counter to the views of the Malta Government of close association with the West and N.A.T.O. This is a risk however (not to be exaggerated) which will have to be faced, unless Malta wants to assume a position of unfriendliness towards the U.A.R. and, as a consequence, with all the Arab world (including Libya). Even if Malta does not establish relations with Israel there is no guarantee that the U.A.R. will itself fail to seek the establishment of diplomatic relations. To refuse such an approach from U.A.R. would be construed as meaning that Malta wants to assume a position of unfriendliness towards the Arab world. A refusal to Israel's request would not change the position. An attitude of complete neutrality in the dispute between the Arab world and Israel would be a correct one to adopt: this implies friendliness towards both camps.

3. If this reasoning is accepted there would obviously be no question but that the Israeli offer to establish diplomatic relations should be accepted. The question would therefore reduce itself to the form in which such relations would be conducted.

4. If the Israeli proposal to accredit their Ambassador in London to Malta is accepted, there are two

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possibilities open to us:

- (1) full reciprocal action, entailing the appointment of the Maltese High Commissioner in London as the Non-Resident Ambassador of Malta to Israel. Although diplomatically preferable, this would involve considerable expenditure in periodical trips from London to Tel Aviv on the part of our High Commissioner. It would also throw unduly heavy demands on the High Commissioner's time, with possible prejudice to his other duties in London, not only vis-a-vis the United Kingdom Government, but also as our principal channel of communication, at present, with other governments;
- (2) the alternative would be to accept the Israeli appointment but to reciprocate only to the extent that our High Commissioner in London would be designated as our medium of communication with Israel without formally accrediting him to Tel Aviv. In other words, he would not be required to pay periodical visits to Israel, and for all practical purposes would continue to carry out duties vis-a-vis Israel which he is already being asked to do now.

5. Another possibility is to inform the Israeli Authorities of our intention to open a Maltese Embassy in Rome, and to propose that for geographical reasons it might be more convenient to accredit our ambassadors in Rome to be the non-resident Ambassadors in Tel Aviv and Valletta respectively. This proposal has the merit of securing a delay of about one year or more (thus enabling the External Affairs Office to gain experience) and it would also be a less expensive arrangement as the fare from Rome to Tel Aviv is cheaper than that from London.

6. Still another possible alternative would be to accept the Israeli proposal forthwith, and to inform the Israeli Government accordingly adding that, as soon as a Maltese Embassy is opened in Rome, the Maltese Ambassador there would be accredited as the non-resident Ambassador in Tel Aviv and that as from that date the Israeli Ambassador in Rome should replace the Israeli Ambassador in London as their non-resident Ambassador in Malta. In the meantime we would proceed as outlined in para 4 (2). This proposal has the same advantages as the procedure suggested in the said paragraph 4 (2) whilst conveying a plausible reason for not accrediting a non-resident Maltese Ambassador forthwith; and it also secures for the Maltese External Affairs Office the benefit of acquiring further experience through the delay.

7. Hon. Ministers are invited to give their views as to the course of action to be followed, i.e. -

- (1) whether to accept in principle the Israeli proposal to establish diplomatic relations between Malta and Israel; and in the affirmative,

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- (2) whether to accept the Israeli proposal to accredit their Ambassador in London as a non-resident Ambassador to Malta and -
- (a) to appoint the Malta High Commissioner in London to be non-resident Ambassador to Israel; or
 - (b) to ask the Israel Government to accept a delay in the appointment of a Malta Ambassador to Israel pending the opening of a Mission in Rome when both Ambassadors in Rome could be appointed non-resident Ambassadors to the respective countries; or
- (3) whether to ask for a delay in the exchange of Ambassadors pending the opening of the Malta Mission in Rome where both Ambassadors could be made non-resident to Malta and Israel respectively.

6th November, 1964.