

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE
HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS

Commonwealth Telegraphs Partnership

Invitation to the Malta Government to Join the
Commonwealth Telegraphs Partnership
and to Appoint a Member to the
Commonwealth Telecommunications Board

L-Arkiwji Nazjonal ta' Malta

On attainment of Independence, Malta has been invited by the British Government, on behalf of all Commonwealth Partner Governments, to join the Commonwealth Telegraphs Agreements of 1948 and 1963 and to appoint a member to the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board.

2. As a result of a Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference held in 1945 by representatives of the Governments of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, a Commonwealth Telecommunications Agreement was signed on the 11th May, 1948. The purpose of this Agreement was the adoption of measures to promote and coordinate the efficiency and development of the telecommunications of the Commonwealth. To this end, a Board known as the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board, comprising representatives of the Partner Governments, was set up with its offices in London.

3. Under the terms of the original agreement, the Partner Governments were to purchase all the assets of the operating company within their territories. This requirement is no longer binding as it was agreed by the Partner Governments that this requirement need no longer apply to newly Independent Commonwealth Countries.

4. If the Government of Malta decides to become a Partner Government, it will be necessary to appoint a National Body to fulfil the functions and responsibilities set out in the Agreement. The British High Commissioner, in passing the invitation to the Malta Government to join the Telegraphs Agreement, assumed that the Malta National Body would be Messrs. Cable and Wireless Limited. This appears to be a logical assumption provided, of course, that Messrs. Cable and Wireless Limited would continue to operate the external telecommunication services in Malta.

5. It would also be necessary to appoint a member to the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board in London, unless it is decided that, for the time being, the interests of Malta should be looked after by the member appointed on the Board to represent the interests of those territories which are not represented by their own member. The appointment of a Maltese member on the Board would not entail any expenditure as his salary, which will amount to approximately £2,500, would be met from the funds of the Board. The Malta Government would only have to pay its contribution which, in accordance with the latest information from the Secretary General of the Telecommunications Board, would in the case of Malta amount to perhaps £200 or £300 per annum.

6. At the Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference held in London in April/May this year and at which the Malta Government was represented by the Deputy High Commissioner, Mr J. Mamo Dingli, and by Engineer Mr A. Attard

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of the Posts and Telephones Department, it was decided that the whole structure of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board should be revised on the re-assembling of the Conference in January, 1966, after consideration of a report on the matter which is to be submitted to the Conference by a working committee appointed for the purpose last May. The main advantage of joining the Commonwealth Partnership would be that Malta would be entitled to a full voice on the Board and that she would have available the advice of all the members of the Commonwealth Countries and the benefit of their combined knowledge in telecommunications matters.

7. It is considered that in view of the small expenditure involved, which is much more than outweighed by the advantages of the help which Malta would obtain in its telecommunication problems, Malta should join the Commonwealth Telecommunications Partnership. However, in view that a decision on the appointment of a National Body cannot be arrived at before Messrs. Cable and Wireless Limited are granted a licence to continue to operate the external telecommunication services, agreement to accede to the Partnership should be deferred until the operation licence is issued. The appointment of the representative of Malta on the Board could also be deferred until the revised structure of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board is decided upon by the Commonwealth Conference in January, 1966.

11th August, 1965.