

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION,
CULTURE AND TOURISM.

Return of Auberge d'Italie to the Museum Department

Earlier this week this Ministry wrote to the Administrative Secretary seeking an assurance that the Auberge d'Italie would be returned to the Museum Department in a restored condition by not later than June, 1969. A decision taken in 1943 assigning the Auberge to any but its rightful occupants (the Museum) is of no concern to this Ministry.

Less than one fourth of the archaeological material in our possession is exhibited with more coming to light all the time at San Pawl Milqi, tas-Silg and elsewhere. The little material that is exhibited occupies 7 rooms at the Auberge de Provence and it is estimated that we require between 25 to 28 rooms to display all our material so much so that most likely we should also have to use the yard of the Auberge d'Italie and most certainly the passages at ground floor level.

The Government of Malta has committed itself to stage the 1970 Exhibition of the Council of Europe on the Order of St. John and as a great number of spacious halls is required it is designed to hold this Exhibition at the Auberge d'Italie.

Irrespective of the Exhibition, however, this Auberge is required for the setting up of our National Archaeological Museum on a permanent basis. This will permit the Museum Department to exhibit the whole range of material from the prehistoric and early historic civilizations documented in the archaeology of the Maltese Islands; the Neolithic, the Copper Age, the Bronze Age, Phoenician - Punic, Roman - Byzantine, Arab and Medieval.

The implementation of this proposal to devote the Auberge d'Italie to a cultural, education and tourist purpose would enhance the prestige of our country in the eyes of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the world in general; and this at a time when my Ministry has already submitted a memorandum containing a request for a grant of £1.2 million, mainly for the conservation and enhancement of our historical heritage in the framework of cultural tourism.

Hon. Ministers are therefore requested to affirm that the Auberge d'Italie should be returned to the Museum Department by not later than June, 1969.

30th December, 1966.