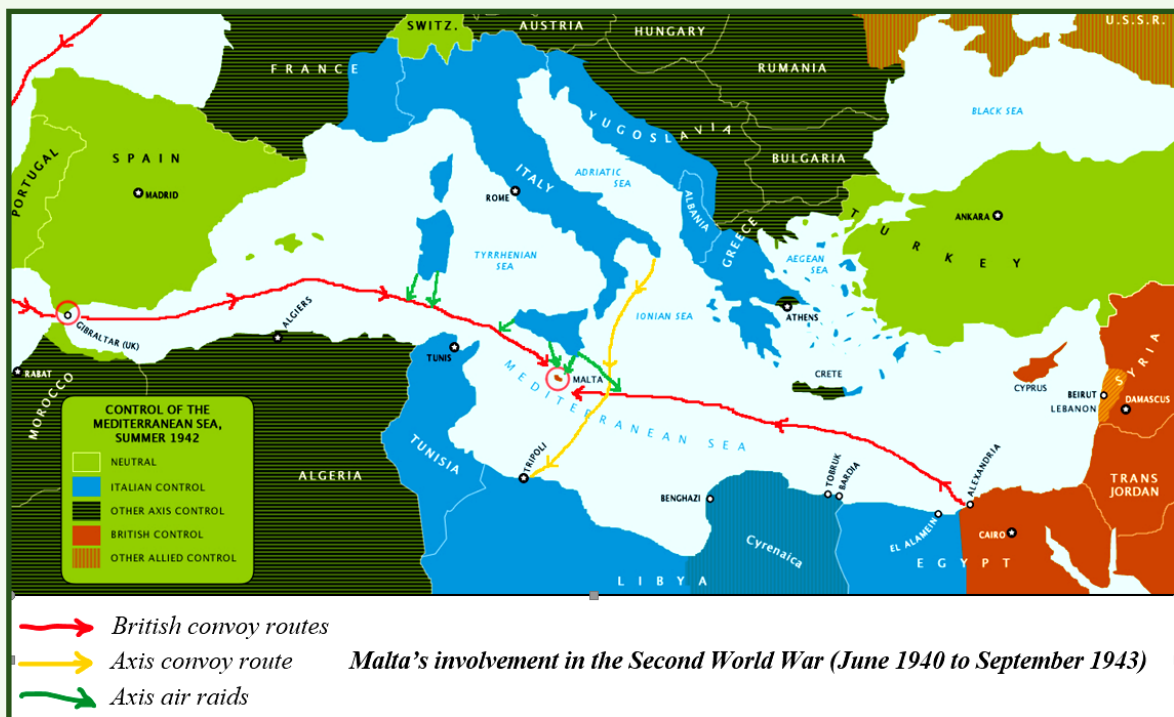


MALTESE HISTORY

LO9 no - Malta during the Second World War

LO7 jk - Postwar socio-economic developments



Year 11

Third Edition – 2024
for History SEC 2025



Curriculum Centre Annex

LO9 n - Malta during the Second World War

The Axis Powers attack the Maltese Islands

During the Second World War Malta experienced the second major siege which lasted from 1940 to 1943. Italian and German bombings caused hardship and damage to people living close to the Grand Harbour towns. Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini and the fascists wanted to include Malta in a new Italian Mediterranean Empire. Malta in fact suffered its first air raid at the dockyard and the airfields (Luqa, Hal Far, Ta' Qali) the day after Italy declared war on Britain on 10th June 1940. The Italians air force stationed 200 aircraft in Sicily with for its air raids against the Maltese Islands. In December 1940, the Germans came to help the Italians who were losing the war in North Africa. The *Luftwaffe* (the German Air Force) stationed around 150 bombers for air raids on Malta.



An Italian bomber aircraft (far left) and a German Luftwaffe bomber (left) flying over the Grand Harbour during one of their many air raids over the Maltese Islands during the war.

The year 1941 was going badly for the British in the Mediterranean. They were losing many ships because of attacks by Italian and German submarine and bomber attacks. Field Marshall Rommel, one of Germany's most brilliant generals came very close to snatching Egypt from the British. The Germans had also occupied the island of Crete from which they attacked British convoys on their way to or from Egypt.

The Axis Powers planned 'Operation Sea Lion' the code-name used for the invasion of Malta from Sicily. But the invasion was postponed indefinitely at the last minute when on 22 July 1941 Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa against the USSR instead. In July 1941 the Italian navy made a bold attack upon the Grand Harbour using e-Boats. The attack failed but one e-Boat hit and destroyed the Breakwater's iron bridge.



Left: The ruins of the Royal Opera House bombed during a German air raid in April 1942.

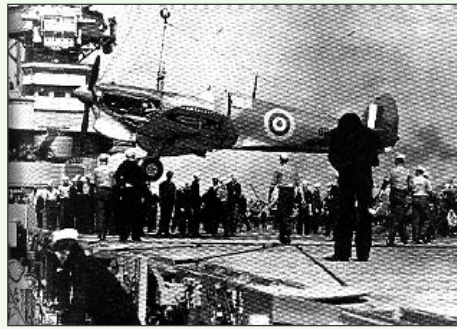
Right: The people cheering the entry in Grand Harbour of one of the Sta Maria Convoy ships



During the early months of 1942 the islands were raided almost incessantly. In April 1942, they sank the aircraft carrier *Illustrious* in the Grand Harbour and damaged the Royal Opera Theatre. These convoys were attacked as soon as they approached Sardinia and Sicily. Convoy ships carrying food, weapons and fuel were shipped to Malta from Britain or Egypt. The famous *Convoy of Sta Marija*, (code-named *Operation Pedestal*) reached Malta between 13–15 August 1942. Most probably, without this convoy, the British would have been compelled to surrender the islands to the Axis Powers.

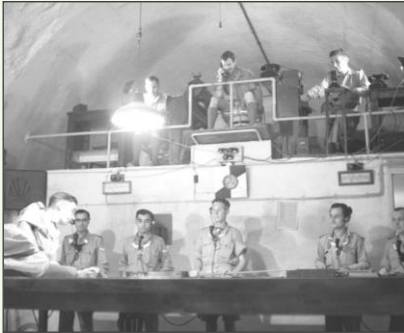
Malta's defences during the war

At the beginning of the war, Malta's defences consisted of some anti-aircraft guns and searchlights, four Gladiator fighter aircraft (named *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*) and a radar station. Once attack on Malta started, the Royal Air Force brought more fighter aircrafts. When the Germans raids started in December 1940, Malta was defended by about 60 fighter aircraft. Since the Germans bombings were causing more damage, the RAF sought to bring more aircraft (hurricanes, swordfish planes, flying boats, Wellington bombers, Spitfires) from Gibraltar and Egypt to strengthen Malta's defences. Fighter aircrafts were flown from aircraft carriers far away from enemy bases in Sicily. Thus, during the peak of the enemy air raids in July 1942 there were over 200 fighter aircrafts defending the island.



Far left: The three gladiator planes: Faith, Hope and Charity.

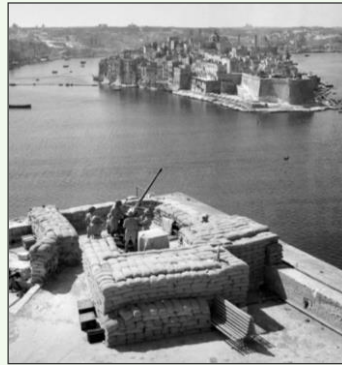
Left: Spitfire aircraft flown to Malta from a British aircraft carrier.



Far left and left: The War Rooms in Lascaris Battery served as the headquarters of Malta's defence during the war.

Far left: One of the many batteries with AA Guns situated along the main harbours against enemy air raids. Most of these cannon batteries were manned by Maltese and British soldiers.

Left: One of the movable radar stations erected by the RAF to detect enemy aircraft before they approached the Maltese Islands.



Months before the declaration of World War II, the British were already experimenting with their first radar prototype in Malta. The Malta system was the first and only one tested outside the UK, and as soon as the war broke, the British Forces brought over four more radars to cover high-level and low-level flying aircraft, as well as sea movements. Without the British radars in Malta, the war could have had a different end.

Malta's contribution to the victory of the Allies

Malta was a base for the British Mediterranean fleet and had one of the best dockyards in the Mediterranean. From Malta, the British Air Force (RAF) could attack Italian convoys carrying fuel, weapons and soldiers on their way from Sicily to the war front in North Africa.



On 15 April 1942, when Malta was experiencing its 'Second Siege' in its history a brief message was sent to the Maltese by King George VI to Governor Lord Gort:

'To Honour her brave people, I award the George Cross to the Island Fortress of Malta to bear witness to a Heroism and Devotion that will long be famous in History.'

Everyday life of the Maltese during the war

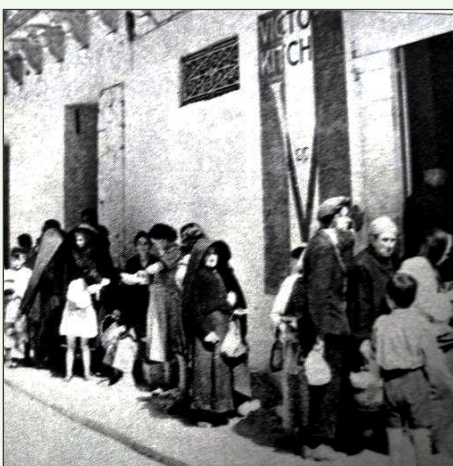
The Grand Harbour towns, where the greater part of the population lived, were heavily bombed and damaged by the Axis air attacks. Within a few months hundreds of underground shelters were dug in the soft limestone. Most of these shelters were dug by muscle power. By May 1941 there were shelters to accommodate a total of 185,000 people. Most of the dockyard workshops were moved into underground caverns dug in the rock.

War damage was greatest in the harbour towns. When the air finally ended, there were around 35,000 households destroyed or damaged in Valletta and the Three Cities. Some important historical buildings ended up in ruins as well. The population of Valletta and The Three Cities never recovered its pre-war numbers since most of the families left to live in other towns and villages decided not to return. As a result of war damage, there was a great shortage of housing for several years after the war.



*Above left: A group of Maltese civilians taking refuge in a shelter during an air raid.
Above centre: Most shelters were dug by hand in the early months of the war.
A group of women washing clothes after an air-raid.*

The everyday routine life during the war was disrupted due to frequent air-raids which resulted in internal trade and commerce to nearly stop altogether. This uncertainty affected children attending schools and religious ceremonies in the churches and leisure pursuits such as attendance in the Royal Opera House, cinema theatres and dancing floors which were mostly found in Valletta. Many streets remained blocked for days with rubble when whole blocks of houses collapsed. Commerce was disrupted but there was no unemployment. Men between 18 and 41 were liable for service in the armed forces. Wages and savings were high. But wealth was concentrated in the hands of those with goods to sell, mostly farmers and bakers. The Government tried to stop black market and profiteering.



Far left and centre: Maltese people queuing at the 'Victory Kitchen' to receive their daily ration of food.

Left: Volunteers of the Victory Kitchens preparing to distributed food ratios to the people.

During most of 1942 the Maltese were slowly starving because there was not enough food and fuel for cooking. In order so that fuel and supplies to last longer, daily food rations and 'Victory Kitchens' were opened in the larger towns to feed the population. Although the number of civilian victims of the air raids numbered 1,490, the morale of the population never broke down. Another important result of the war was to bring the Maltese and the British much closer together.

In November 1942 the Axis lost the Second Battle of El Alamein and the Allies landed forces in Morocco and Algeria (Operation Torch). The Axis diverted their forces in Tunisia and reduced attacks on Malta, ending the siege. In December 1942, air and sea forces operating from Malta went on the offensive. British air-raids from Malta on Axis convoy ships on their way to North Africa. By May 1943, they had sunk 230 Axis ships in 164 days, the highest Allied sinking rate of the war. The victory of the Allies in Malta played a major role their final victory in North Africa.

In September 1943 Benito Mussolini fell from power and the new Italian Government joined the Allies in the war against Hitler's Germany. On 8 September 1943 the Italian fleet surrendered to the Allies at St Paul's Bay to avoid being taken over by the German navy.

In October 1943, the Allies invaded Sicily from Tunisia to liberate it from the Germans. Once Sicily was back in Allied hands, the strategic value of Malta as an air base declined. The enemy could no longer attack allied ships in the Central Mediterranean. The Axis Powers had lost the battle for Malta.



Far above left: Four Italian cruisers entering St Paul's Bay on the morning of 11 September 1943.

Above right: The 'Times of Malta' edition of September 9, 1943, announcing the surrender of Italy. Photo: National Library

Above left: People reading the news of the fall of Mussolini on 25 July 1943.

Reasons why the Axis Powers failed to conquer Malta:

- The Commanders of the Axis Powers did not have a consistent and systematic plan of action. This gave the British time to strengthen Malta's defences and by sending convoys with fuel, weapons and food supplies.
- The Axis Powers made the mistake to postpone the invasion of the islands in 1941 when Malta's defences were weakest.
- The Maltese and the British fought on and endured all hardships heroically without losing morale.



Left: Cartoon depicting the war aim of the Axis Powers with regards to the Maltese Islands during the Second World War.

Above right: The Maltese national flag with the Goerge Cross was in use between 1943 and 1964.

LO9 n - Malta during the Second World War (1)

1. Fill in the table by mentioning **one** important event during the war that involved Malta. Use the information from pages 1 to 4 to help you answer. The first one is given as an example. (8)

	Year	Event
(a)	1939	<i>The Mediterranean fleet was moved from Malta's harbour to Alexandria in Egypt.</i>
(b)	1940	
(c)	1941	
(d)	1942	
(e)	1943	

2. Give **two** reasons why Malta was attacked by the Axis Powers.

(2)

3. Mention **two** ways how Malta was defended by the British.

(2)

4. How did the Axis Powers try to force the British surrender Malta.

(2)

5. Give **two** reasons why the Axis Powers failed to take hold of the Maltese Islands.

(2)

6. Mention **four** effects which the war had on the everyday life of the Maltese.

(4)

(Total: 20 marks)

LO9 n - Malta during the Second World War (2)

1. Write a brief sentence to explain the meaning of the following terms in connection to Malta during the Second World War. (8)

(a)	Victory Kitchens	
(b)	Blackout	
(c)	Lascharis War Rooms	
(d)	Operation Sea Lion	
(e)	Operation Pedestal	
(f)	Convoys	
(g)	Black market	
(h)	George Cross	

2. Use the map on the cover page of this booklet as your source to help you answer these questions.

(a) Identify the **two** locations from where British convoy ships that were sent to Malta.

_____ (2)

(b) Name the **two** islands from which the Axis Powers attacked these convoy ships. (2)

_____ (2)

(c) Why did the Axis Powers send convoy ships from Taranto (in Italy) to Tripoli in North Africa?

_____ (2)

3. Use the cartoon source in page 4 to help you answer these questions.

(a) Identify by name the two figures shown in the cartoon. _____ (2)

(b) Why is one of the figures trying to rub off Malta from the map?

_____ (2)

(c) Briefly explain the bias of the author of the cartoon.

_____ (2)

(Total: 20 marks)

LO9 n - Malta during the Second World War (3)

Source Question

Carefully read the following sources and then answer all the questions.

'I have already heard of the gallant spirit and fine bearing of the Maltese people since they have been brought within the battle zone and I have no doubt that they will be worthy of upholding their great tradition in this struggle in which they are now actively engaged.'

Source A. *Comment of King George VI on the first days of the enemy raids against the Maltese Islands.*

'Without the occupation of Malta, the North African theatre is in no way secure.'

Source B. *Comment of Field Marshal Kesselring, Commander of the German forces in Sicily.*

'As the war went on there was very little food in the shops...It got so bad that the food was sent to a 'Victory Kitchen' where it was cooked, and we were rationed to one meal a day. I used to queue up to collect our seven portions in a saucepan. The menu consisted of soup with a few vegetables floating on top called minestra...Another day we had macaroni cooked in salt, no flavouring or anything with it. Our family had a bit more than the civilians as our father had army rations extra.'

Source C. *The war through a young girl's eyes.*

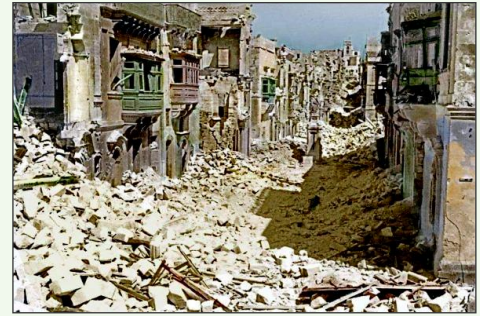
1. State why Sources A, B and C are primary sources. (1)
2. Identify the authors of these three sources. (3)
3. (a) How did the author of Source A honour the gallantry of the Maltese during the war? (1)
(b) How is this honour commemorated by the Maltese to this present day. (2)
4. How was Malta 'brought within the battle zone' (in line 2 of Source A) during the Second World War? (2)
5. To what 'great tradition' of the Maltese is Source A referring to? (2)
6. (a) Why does Source B link the fate of Malta with that of North Africa during the war? (2)
(b) How did Malta contribute to the victory of the Allies in North Africa in 1943? (2)
7. How did the Allies turn on the offensive against the Axis Powers from October 1943 onwards? (2)
8. Do you think many Maltese people ended up malnourished during the war? Use Source C as evidence for your answer. (2)

(Total 20 marks)

LO9 o - Socio-economic effects of the war

With the end of Second World War, the Maltese experienced a period of social and economic hardships. Many houses were damaged or destroyed by bombing which would need years to be restored or rebuilt. Certain streets in Cottonera were so heavily damaged that whole blocks of buildings had to be demolished completely and rebuilt anew. This resulted in an acute housing shortage especially during the increase in marriages and the baby boom of the post-war years.

Right: The effects of the enemy air raids. A heavily bombed street in Senglea.



Britain came out a weaker power after the war, both in economic and in military terms. Its economic recovery was made possible with US assistance known as Marshall Aid. In the first years after the war the British Government planned to reduce the size of the British Navy. This decision would surely result in the terminated the employment of hundreds of Maltese workers from the Malta Drydocks and the British Services stationed in Malta.



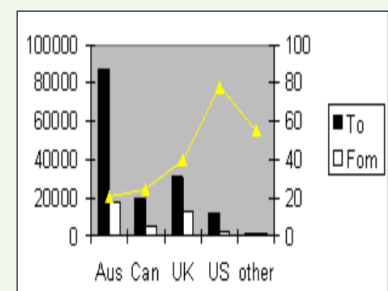
Left: The Malta Drydocks in the 1950s.

Right: A newspaper caricature about the post-war British rundowns in Malta.



In 1957, the British Government published a Defence White Paper. The aim was to reduce nearly by half the military personnel (rundown) and military spending in the colonies. This measure would reduce the number of Maltese employed by the British Services by about 7,000. This planned rundown also brought uncertainty about the future of the Malta Drydocks. Since the Royal Navy had already been reduced in size, the need for the Dockyard had diminished. The Admiralty decided to hand over the dockyard to a private company (Bailey & Co. Ltd). At this point the Maltese Parliament unanimously voted the 'Break with Britain Resolution' (December 1957). Another similar rundown took place after Independence, in 1966–1967, which further reduced the number of British Services personnel in Malta to around 3,000 personnel, the lowest ever stationed in Malta.

On a political level, the British Government assured the Maltese self-government again once the war ended, a promise which was fulfilled in 1947. From the start, the efforts of the Maltese local government were aimed to recover and improve the appalling state of the economy and the living standard of the Maltese. To reduce unemployment, the government tried to open mass emigration from Malta to English speaking countries (namely Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK). The years between 1948 and 1975 saw the period of mass Maltese emigration. In the late 1950s and early 1960s emigration reached a peak of around 5,000 emigrants leaving the islands in one single year.



Above left: The Maltese emigrants during the sea voyage to Australia in 1948.

Above centre: A group of female Maltese emigrants arriving in Australia in 1963.

Above Right: Total Maltese post-war migration. Source: <https://maltamigration.com/settlement/mme/chapter1-2.html>

LO7 j - Post-war socio-economic reforms

Post War economic reports

After the war the British Government commissioned economic reports aimed at improving the Maltese economy. Sir Wilfred Woods' Report in 1945 proposed the introduction of an income and property tax and a system of social services on a contributory basis. While Woods fixed Malta's War Damage aid for reconstruction at £31 million, the British Government only granted Malta £20 million. War Damage was granted especially to Malta by Britain due to its heavily bombings during the war. The first Maltese Government formed in 1947 had also pointed out that it did not possess the financial resources to undertake post-war reconstruction without British financial support.



Above: Dom Mintoff, as Minister for Reconstruction and Public Works overseeing War Damage reconstruction in Cottonera.

In the 1950s the Maltese governments commissioned three other economic reports. The Schuster Report investigated the Malta's finances and the economy in view of Malta's Integration or Dominion Status. Roskill Report recommended the improvements in communications, water and electricity, building of a factory estate, upgrade the building industry with modern machinery and tax exemptions and reduced tariffs to attract foreign investment. Balogh and Seers' Report recommended a five-year plan to improve the general infrastructure, technical education, agriculture and fisheries and to diversity the economy from dependence on British Services expenditure. The commissioners hoped that these proposals would be implemented by 1961.

Reforms in agriculture



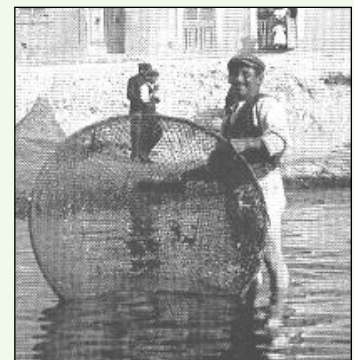
In the 1950s agriculture was the third largest employer in Malta. But Malta's agriculture was backward when compared to the more advanced countries of Europe since most of the work was still done by hand. Older farmers did not know how to use mechanized tools. Then there were terraced fields which could only be reached on foot and worked by hand. The farmers' income was lower than that earned in other 'easier' jobs.

Left: The exportation of the potato crop was one of the main export products in post-war Malta.

In 1956, the Maltese Government passed the 'Agriculture and Fisheries Act' to help farmers and fishermen purchase machinery, fertilizers, fodder, seeds and insecticides. The 'Cattle Disease Eradication Scheme' of 1956 gave free vaccination of poultry animals, rabbits and swine. The government also encouraged farmers to make use of Malta's warm climate to cultivate high-priced crops, such as tomatoes, strawberries, mushrooms and grapes for wine production.

Improvements in the fishing industry

Before 1964, fishing employed only 1% of the Maltese workforce. Fishermen did not have trawlers to fish in international waters and a cold store to preserve fish during the summer months. Thus, the 'Fish Marketing Regulations' of 1957 aimed to improve the fishing industry by encouraging fishermen to use modern fishing methods. The Fisheries Department opened area offices at Marsaxlokk and Mgarr Gozo to provide fishermen with technical advice. Fishermen could apply for loans to purchase trawlers and equipment. The *Pixkerija* at Valletta waterfront was upgraded to modern standards. But notwithstanding these improvements, by 1970, the number of full-time fishermen decreased by 33%. Most fishermen simply left their trade and looked for employment in other industries.



Above: Fishermen making use of traditional fishing

LO7 k – The Development Plans and economic diversification

In 1959, the British Governor, who took charge of the local administration after Dom Mintoff's resignation, published the first Five-Year Development Plan (DP) (1959–1964). The purpose of this plan was to set targets for economic development by diversifying (changing) the Maltese economy from one based on the military base and British Services to one based on a mixture of primary industries (agriculture, fishing, quarrying and construction), secondary industries (industrial estates were built in Marsa, Bulebel, San Gwann, Mriehel for local manufacturing industries) and tertiary or services industries (banking, insurances, real estate and tourism). It also aimed to turn Luqa Airport as Malta's main civil and international airport.

The Second Development Plan (1964-1969) set up the Malta Development Corporation (MDC) and the Malta Central Bank. The Third Development Plan (1973-1980) opened more industrial estates and expanded tourism with the building of more hotels and improving the general infrastructure of the islands (*i.e.* the road network, telecommunications, sewage, electricity and water supply).



Left: The Departures terminal at Luqa Airport in the 1960s

Right: Bugibba Square in the 1970s, earmarked as one of Malta's tourist resort sites.



The 1970s witnessed the setting up of various manufacturing and services industries, most of which still operate in the present-day, namely the Bank of Valletta (BOV), Mid-Med Bank (replaced in 1999 by HSBC), Air Malta (today replaced by Malta Air), Sea Malta, Telemalta, Enemalta (today renamed as Enemed), and Xandir Malta (today's Public Broadcasting Services PBS). These were set up as public corporations, owned and run by the Government. Since the 1990s these companies were privatised in line with free trade principles and EU policy.

Since the grant of Independence in 1964, Maltese Governments granted incentives to foreign multinational companies to open their company branches in Malta. The aim was to bring the latest technology to Malta and to increase local exports. By the late 1990s, some well-known international companies opened branches in Malta, such as SGS Thompson, Baxter, Brand International, Dowty, Vodaphone and Microsoft. These companies brought to Malta new services, products and high paid jobs. Malta's membership in the EU in 2004 and the adoption of the *euro* in 2008 further tied Malta's economy with the world's globalized economic. Under these new circumstances, the Maltese economy started facing new challenges in the worldwide competition to win foreign markets.

The 'Tourism Development Act' of 1958 aimed at establishing tourism as one of the pillars of the modern economy. The tourism industry was seen as one of the solutions to the problem caused by the Services rundowns. Tourism would increase local production and attract more foreign investment. The Government Tourist Board started issuing brochures about Malta and organizing guided tours in English. The Maltese Islands were advertised as a tourist destination for their sun, unspoiled seas and countryside, a friendly people and a rich historical and cultural heritage. Resort tourist sites marked for development were St. George's Bay, Ghajn Tuffieħa Bay, Paradise Bay, Ghadira Bay and Comino. The Second Development Plan developed Marsamxett Harbour as a yacht marina. The tourist industry created new jobs in other sectors, such as in real estate, travel agencies, banking and insurance, the leisure sector, catering and retail outlets. By 1970, there were around 14,600 new jobs in the tourism industry. These made up for the loss of around 5,400 jobs lost because of the Services rundowns of 1957 and 1967. However, one disadvantage of early tourism in Malta was that it nearly depended exclusively on British tourists which accounted to around 74% of total tourist arrivals.

LO9 o & LO7 jk– Post-war socio-economic effects and developments

1. Match Column A with Column B.

(5)

A	Woods Report		diversification of Malta's fortress economy.
B	The Services Rundown		War Damage was set at £20 million.
C	The Development Plans		farming, fishing, the dockyard.
D	The new industries		privatization of the dockyard.
E	Traditional industries		tourism, manufacturing, financial services.

2. Continue these phrases to form historically correct sentences:

(a) One reason for post-war mass Maltese emigration was _____

_____ (2)

(b) The aim of the British Defence White Paper of 1957 was _____

_____ (2)

3. State **one** target for each of Malta's post-war Development Plans:

(a) The First DP: _____ (1)

(b) The Second DP: _____ (1)

(c) The Third DP: _____ (1)

4. Identify **one** drawback and **one** improvement in the 1960s for these Maltese industries:

(a) farming: _____

_____ (2)

(b) fishing: _____

_____ (2)

(c) Tourism: _____

_____ (2)

5. Identify the major challenge for Malta's economy since its membership in the EU in 2004?

_____ (2)

(Total 20 marks)

LO9 o - LO7 jk– Post-war socio-economic effects and developments

Source Question

Carefully observe the following sources and then answer all the questions.



Source A. A newspaper caricature from 'Il-Berqa' of 1945.



Source B. 'The Malta Problem': Constitutional and economic from the newspaper 'Il-Quddiem' of 1955.

1. What type of sources are Sources A and B? _____ (1)

2. (a) What message does Source A wants to convey?
 _____ (2)

(b) How was the situation depicted in Source A come about?
 _____ (2)

(c) How did various Maltese governments after the war tried to mitigate this problem?
 _____ (2)

(d) How mass emigration in the 1950s and 1960s help to mitigate this problem?
 _____ (2)

3. Identify the dual nature of 'Malta's problem' from Source B.
 (a) _____ (2)

(b) In a sentence each, explain this dual nature of the 'Malta problem'.
 _____ (2)
 _____ (2)
 _____ (2)

(b) Why is Malta is represented as two new-born babies in the source?
 _____ (2)

4. Identify three ways how this 'Malta problem' was tackled by post-war Maltese governments.
 _____ (3)
 _____ (3)
 _____ (3)

(Total: 20 marks)

LO9 no – Malta during the Second World War
LO7 kl – Post-war socio-economic developments

Read carefully these essay titles and then choose one to answer.

PAPER Level 2-3

1. (a) How did the economic reports describe the state of Malta's economy after the war? (8)
(b) Briefly outline the main post war economic and social effects of the Second World War upon Malta and the Maltese. (12)
2. (a) Mention **four** ways how did the Second World War effect the everyday life of the Maltese. (8)
(b) Why were Maltese governments were much concerned about economic issues in the decades after the Second World War? (12)
3. (a) Mention **four** ways how Malta was defended against the enemy raids during the Second World War. (8)
(b) What part did Malta play in the victory of the Allies in the Mediterranean during the Second World War? (12)

PAPER Level 1-2

1. (a) List **four** ways how Malta was attacked by the enemy during the Second World War. (8)
(b) How did the economic reports describe the state of Malta's economy after the war? (12)
2. (a) List **four** ways how Malta was defended against enemy bombings during the Second World War. (8)
(b) Describe **three** ways how did the Second World War effect the everyday life of the Maltese. (12)
3. (a) List **four** problems faced by Maltese governments after the Second World War. (8)
(b) Outline some of the aims of Malta's three post-war Development Plans. (12)

