FORTUNATO MIZZI 5 July 1844 – 18 May 1905 Founder of the Partito Nazionale – the Gozo Connection

JOSEPH BEZZINA

Fortunato Mizzi will be forever remembered in the annals of the history of Malta as the pioneer of political parties in Malta. He founded the Partito Nazionale 135 years ago. The Gozitans respected him wholeheartedly, nurtured high hopes in his ability to promote the interests of Gozo, and contributed in no small measure towards the success of his political career.

The Constitution of the Year 1849

Between 16 and 20 August 1849, when Fortunato was five years old, the people of Malta and Gozo voted in the first ever election held in Malta.

It was held under the Constitution of 11 May 1849 – the third of twelve granted by the British Government to Malta during one hundred and sixty four years of colonial rule. This Constitution established a Council with eighteen members: ten *ex officio* and eight elected by the people. It was craftily conceived, as while the Government had a majority on the Council through the official members, five of these officials were Maltese and so there was a majority of Maltese. The Council had the right to enact laws, but could not propose financial votes. Besides, the Colonial Office in London had the right to proceed in enacting legislation and to suspend laws approved by the Council.

So as to vote, one had to be over twenty-one years and either (1) had a property rendering one hundred Scudi annually (€19.40), or (2) one's residence, if rented, could render fifty Scudi a year (€9.70), or (3) one was partner in a business with a person so qualified. Malta and Gozo were divided into eight districts with Gozo as the eighth with 281 persons from a population of around 14,500 which had a right to vote for the Gozo candidate. Of these 281, only 128 were resident in Gozo, the remaining 153 were Maltese that had the right to vote for the Gozo candidate as they owned property in Gozo. This means that 54 per cent of the voters were people resident in Malta who with all probability had never set foot on Gozo. Their only interest was to collect the annual rents and emphyteusis on their properties and not to promote the interests of the island and its inhabitants. The lawyer Adriano Dingli, the son of a Gozitan, was elected to represent Gozo with 117 votes.

The Council met for the first time on 8 January 1850. Dr Dingli succeeded to put Gozo on the agenda of the Colonial Government. It was through his endeavour that the Government voted money for a road between Mellieħa and Marfa easying transport to and from Gozo towards Mellieħa and Valletta. He played a pivotal role with Dun Pietro Pace in the establishment of the diocese of Gozo on 16 September 1864.

The 1849 Constitution remained in force, with small modifications, up to the year 1887. Fortunato Mizzi entered politics so as to improve on this Constitution.

The Gozitan Roots of the Mizzi Family

The roots of the family of Fortunato Mizzi in Gozo go back more than four hundred years (see Figure 1). On 5 March 1628, Domenico Mizzi married Marietta Azzopardi at the Gozo *Matrice*. Domenico was the son of Pietro Mizzi and a certain Paolina that might have settled in Gozo towards the end of the sixteenth century. Francesco Mizzi, the father of Fortunato, was the ninth generation ensuing from this couple.

On 25 July 1765, his great grandfather, Notary Placido Mizzi, who was also a cleric, presented a petition to the *Gozo Universitas*, to erect a plinth with a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto upon Pjazza San Ġorġ, ir-Rabat (see National Archives Gozo (NAG), UG, 03/*Suppliche* 97 170r-171v). The statue is still there but not on its original plinth. Through the same Placido, he is also



Figure 1: Family Roots. Courtesy NAG/Toni Calleja.

related to Karolina Cauchi, who in 1889 founded the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Malta.

His grandfather Fortunato Mizzi married Vincenza Mallia at the Gozo Matrice on 11 January 1811. Fortunato was named after him. The name originates from that of a *corpo santo*, the holy remains of a Roman martyr, that the Mizzi family kept with veneration at their home. In the early twentieth century, they donated it to the parish church of iż-Żebbuġ, where it is venerated to this day.

Francesco, his father, was born in Rabat, Gozo, and was baptised at the Matrice on 18 January 1819. He became a lawyer and, on 1 May 1943, soon after his graduation, he married Maria-Josepha Cassar, daughter of Salvatore, a well-known general practitioner, at the Chapel of Saint Paul, Birkirkara. Francesco exercised his profession in Malta and in December 1868 he was promoted to the bar. For some time he practiced in Gozo, as newly appointed magistrates were sent to Gozo for training.

Fortunato Mizzi

Fortunato was born in Valletta on 5 July 1844. In all probability, he passed his summer holidays in Gozo, as his family owned a residence at the resort of Marsalforn. He graduated a lawyer in 1865 and married Sofia Fogliero de Luna, descendant from Italo-Spanish nobility, on 22 July 1871 (see Figure 1).

During his life he militated for three ideals: to secure a liberal constitution for Malta; to defend the Roman Catholic religion and traditions of the island; and to promote the Latin and European culture of the people of Malta. He was fully aware that the liberal movement that was transforming the political class of Europe was squashed by the Imperial interests in Malta. He set himself the arduous task to align the political movement in Malta with that of Europe.

In October 1878, the Colonial Office in London, which ruled supreme over Malta, sent a Royal Commission made up of Sir Penrose Julyan and Patrick Keenan to prepare a report on the civil and educational system of Malta. The report, authored by Keenan, was concluded in June 1879, but it was only in August 1880 that it was presented to the British Parliament and became public. Mizzi

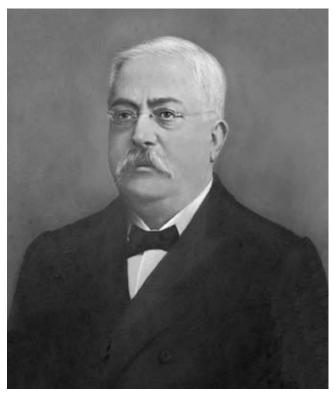


Figure 2: Fortunato Mizzi. Courtesy MAPN•Mizzi Archives-PN-Pietà/Richard Muscat.

and his ilk were of the opinion that the true reason behind the Commission was to enhance and further solidify the imperial interests in Malta.

In Mizzi's opinion, this was the real reason why the Commission suggested the promotion of the English language. Between August and October 1880, this line of reasoning brought together a group of gentlemen led by Mizzi and they decided to militate against the reforms proposed in the report. It was for this reason that the group, the nascent political party, became known as *Anti-Riformista*.

There is no doubt that Fortunato and his group were promoters of the Italian language, however, they opposed the imposition of English not because they were against that language *per se*, but as through this imposition they perceived more intrusions by the Colonial Government in the administration of Malta. So much so, that during a prize day ceremony at the Gozo Seminary, that was held under his auspices, he praised the teaching of English at the institution as it was carried out without any imposition.

This line of reasoning is reflected in the programmatic names that he gave to the newspapers that he edited. The first was *Il Diritto di Malta*, (the rights of Malta) and the Maltese vis-à-vis the Colonial impositions; its first number was issued on 1 July 1880 and it was published for five years. He acknowledged that *Il titolo di un giornale deve rappresentare di per sè un programma*. On 10 November 1883, he published the first number of *Malta*, a name that encapsulates his whole political programme, a name declaring Malta as a political entity on par with other countries, a name in which it is possible to percieve the remote beginning of the road to Malta's independence.

This is what he himself wrote in the leader of the first number of *Malta* referring to the many possible titles that could have been given to the newspaper:

Molti ci suggerirono vari altri nomi tutti belli ed addatti alla circostanza... La Gazzetta di Malta rivaleggia molti grandi giornali del continente – L'Unione esprime una necessità nel paese – La Voce del Popolo echeggia le aspirazioni della Patria – L'Antiriformista simboleggia il Partito Nazionale – La Patria rammenta un dovere; tutti sono bei nomi – ma ... MALTA ... ahh! Questo è il nome che parla dolci accenti al cuore. Scegliamo questo caro nome e preghiamo venia ai nostri buoni amici se non ci sentiamo la forza di cambiarlo per alcun altro fra i tanti suggeriti.

It is in this leader of 10 November that the *Partito Anti-Riformista* is referred to for the first time as Partito Nazionale – its aim was to bring about a major constitutional change (see Figure 3).

Elections

The population of Gozo from 14,343 in the year 1842, when the first census was held, had climbed to 17,653 in the year 1881, and to 20,003 in the year 1901 – an increase of 39.47 per cent in sixty years.

The first election after the formation of the *Anti-Riformista* group was held between 13 and 16 October 1880. Fortunato Mizzi contested the Gozo district, the eighth, that had 292 electors, of which 172 were Gozitans and 120 Malta residents (see Fig ure 4, courtesy NLG/Paul Falzon). He was elected with 131 votes. The beginning of his political career is rooted in Gozo. In the election, the *Anti-Riformisti* won five of the eight seats.

In the following election, held between 8 and 11 October 1883, he once again contested the Gozo seat and won with 270 votes. Only 25.8 per cent cast their votes in this election; in Gozo the number



Gazzetta Quotidiana Politica e Commerciale

Anno I

Malta, Sabato 10 Novembre 1883.

Num. L.

"MALTA" Gassella Diretta dal Da FORTUNATO NETEI (W publics tot) 7 givent, ment i field ()

Abbonamente per Mella (muse scellin) by re-assite — per l'esters scellini scilini + pené sei per sensite. Un remese segnate 2 perce. Insernere de archin in prime + sociada pogna 6d per linas, in term 51, sei in quarta C.

L'uffinie del Giorrado i in Vallette Strada Zorea e. 15, ed tri al ricerenzo le associationi e al vendono le copie separate.

La latteri u davoni dirignos nal modu seguente "Alla Directore della Gameria quotidiana MALTA 18 Strada Zecca — Talletta-Maita."

Quei signori, che non vogliono abbenarsi al presente diario, sono pregati, in cortesia, di respingere questo primo numero,

MALTA 10 NOVEMBRE 1883

PROGRAMMA.

Dopo il verdetto, che le urne han dato nelle recenti elezioni,-dopo il so-lenne duplice PLERISCITO del 15 Ottobre — chi può mai dubitare che la opinione pubblica non sia contraria alle malangurate riforme proposte da Rowsell, Julyan o Koenan !

Sembrerebbe impossibile trovare, in un piecolo paese come il nostro, dopo una pubblica manifestazione così chi osasse disconoscere in tutta la sua estonsione la terribile condanna, da un popolo intero lan-ciata contro riforme, che a viva forza si regliono imporre alla patria comu-ne, o chi ardiase affrontare i senti-menti d'un intero popolo entusiasmato alla solenne vittoria riportata sugli comressori oppressori.

Eppure !

Eppure i giornali riformisti, con a afrontatozza rara se non unica, si accingono a continuare la guerra già da tre anni è più accesa contro una intera populazione, che a tatto costo si vuole gettare nel fango e rendere echiava per sempre, spegnendo in essa ogni cubra di sontimento nazionale. Anzi, ora più che mai sentono i rifor-misti di potar con maggior saccesso misti di poter con maggior successo uscre in compo aperto contro i so-menitori del popolo, perchò sanno di poter disporre di das – anti di tre – fogli quotidiani, quando gli antirifor-til nou ue hanno alcuno. E adope-rando senza serupolo le armi vili del-la calannia, travisando i fatti, vitu-peratodo, schernendo, grà si dan premura di denegrire tutte le azioni più pa-triottiche dei Rappresentanti del Po-Polo, che uniti e risoluti combattogo polo, che uniti e risoluti combattono pai patrii diritti. Essi sunno quanta tari illa si debta incontrare a fun-dar o mantenere un diario politico antenere un diario politico antenere un diario politico antenere il ardua impresa per

r contere in enuipe a combatterii : vivildia, essi fan male i propri --groechè come per ben diesi-mi il direttore di questo nuopoter eco coutsette mai il direttore vo peraliso la pituto sostenere, senza alcun incasso, il Riscoginento or cadato il mano ai Bolormetti sapra coni continure il combattimento diffinte-rennito per tutta la vita, dedicando al deno dei suoi computriatti la sue Cre di tiposo, colla sola speranza di tropare sufficiente "incorsegnmento per rearsi sufficiente "incoraggimento per rearsi della spesa di stataria. Ecol la ragione per cui un muova di sp^obena fondato. E bai tefena

E ha pebesaro che un giornale erpanga in modo chiaro, preciso e vertino gli atti tatti del Consiglio, perabe il pubblico possa seguire lo reolgimento dolla quationi, che mag-giorninte lo interessano, e giudicare con esttarza della condetta dei suot rappresentanti. E perelsi non posso cadary dubbio salla veracità della esposicioni, che il nuovo giornale andrà facendo delle com patrie, esso pub-blichetà per coleso futti i documenti. che verranzo massi sulla tavola del Consiglio, ad eccesione di quelli che veninaro pubblicati dalla stamperia di roverno ; o quendo i decembriti, cue veniserro posti sulla tavola del Consi-glio, fossero troppo veluminasi e non potessero trovar luogo nel nostro gior-nale, ne verrà pubblicata la sostanza.

E siccome il rapporto ateno-grafico dei dibattimenti del Consi-glio viene pubblicato tardivamente (ol-

glio viene pubblicato tardivamente (ol-trecchè costa poco meno del giornale) così sarà nostra cura di dare, senza ritardo, un sunto dei dibattimenti di ogni sedata del Consiglio. Tottociò serve a mantenere il popolo alla corrente degli affari pubblici, di che poi produrrà il benefico risultato di teserlo sempre sveglio sui propri interessi e di impedire quella roa apatia, che spesso ci ha immersi in prefonde lataren sem genere mente de profondo latargo con grave nostro detrimento.

Ed è hen necessario che un diario ouesto sveli i misteri della politica interna, perocchè una

Lercia, servil, malefica Stampa alle mance avvezza

già si accingo a calpestare cui suci luridi picili ogni più onesta e patriot-tica azione di quelli, i quali, mandati dal populo a rappresentarlo, non han-no altro scopo, che di cooperarsi a una buona amministrazione delle cose pubbiona amministratione one cose publicho. E infatti, qual altra via ri-mane ai pocli riformisti venduti per acquistare il terreno perduto, che di screditare i Rappresentanti del Popolo ! Il movo diario però, echeggiando conte Il naovo diario però, echaggiando conti-nuamento la voce del Popolo, ridarrà al silentio la stampa prezzolta e di-sonesta, difendendo la varità, e sempre la vorità, e particolarmente quella unione di sentimenti e volontà, che nei membri electivi, sotto fausti an-spici, si è insin dal primo momen-to dell'elecione manifestata, e che dalle prime zedute del Consiglio venne piesamente conformata. pienamento confermata.

Nel dire che il muovo giornale darà contenza precisa e chiara delle cose del

Consiglio, abbiamo di conseguenza vo-luto andes comprendere tatti gli atti dr_{12}^{2} Governo e di clascon dipartimengovernativo, perocebò nel Consigennno a far capo taiti gli atti Governo localo. Portuato il u del no esperta con proclatore egni atto n Giovacno e di ciment Dipertimen-te Governativo, che, necendo dalla or-ditaria rottas il azieno, sia in bene che in male, meriterà menzione o di liste o di biasimo. Così ancora autrà evolgendo tutte quelle più uniti rifor-me, che nella macchina governativa possono essere vintaggiosamente inresoluto deservo transportante ar-trodotto -- continuando a for giusta guerra alle riforme effettuato e cho si vogliono ancera effettuato nulle dor-ne date dai tre Commissionari di infanata memoria. Altra missione del giornale,

ed messione colle core locali, sara quel-la di incoraggire le arti, le industrie, la commerca, a ciò non solo col ripor-laca o illustrate ogni utile proposta, ma più particolarmente col tenere in-formati i lettori d'ogni noovo ramo di induttria, che vie io a mano a ma ne introdotto in altri paesi, d'ogni pe ferionamento o facilitazione nelle si suelle manifal. , a ugni alcoperta di pratica atiluà, ed infine col cooperarsi a incoraggire tutti quei generosi figli di Malta, che coi loro talenti el saran resi benemeriti nelle industrie, nelle arti e nel commercio. Quanto al commerció poi in particolare, il nuovo giornale consacrerà la terza pagina a daro tutte le più esteso od importanti notizie finanziarie, commer-ciali" e marittime.

No such trascurata la crounca locale, to ance trascurate in cromes jonaio, precursando noi di dure al pubblico tutto lo più importanti notizie, per la qual cosa molti amici, aparsi in vari casoli delle dua isole, ci promettono tener-ci informati di tutto ciò che mo-cede meritovole di nota. Por comiodo poi dei Signori Avvocati, Procuratori Legali e litiganti, daremo sem-pre le liste delle cause da trattarsi nelle Corti Superiori, preudende cura di due importantissimi punti — prime che le liste siano ben corrette, e pui che siano sollecitamente pubblicato. E fin qui delle cose locali. Ma il

iovo giornale avrà anche una parte dedicata alle notizie estere, che estrarmo da altri giornali dei più accreditati nel Continente, e dal telogram-mi. Però siam lieti di aver trovato parecchi corrispondenti particolari, nel Cairo, in Alessandria, in Costantino-poli, in Tripoli, in Tunisi, ed in Roma. Questi si impegnano di tenecci informati degli affari politici e com-merciali più importanti dei loro pas-ti. Nel presente primo numero del Giornale la politica estera è internmento trascurata, perchè c'è sovrab-bundanza di matoria locali : - ma in Appresso il diario darà posto a tutto. Non abbiano bioggeo di dire che il linguaggio nostro anà sempre di-gnitoso ed urbano, senza imitare mai la scurrill'à di certi altri fogli, che del sa-

crosantò ministero della stampa han fat-

to un abbietto mestisser tre nuni di vita poesentano il direttore di questo glio dalla nocossità di qualunque dichiarazione su questo suggetto. Solo crediamo giusto di fare un limito perchè non si ernia che interficmo ecolere in zalanele Al. Chiameremo nero il nero, hinneo il bianco; a quando accada di dire che un Tinio, nella vita pubblica, ha fatto mercato della sua possilorio di rappresentante del populo, noi chiamere-mo quel Tinio coi nomi che gli con-Sempronio scrivesse al Ministri dell' imporo, esprimendo a nome di futta la populazione le suo private aspirazioni, o si astenesso dal rendore di pubblica ragione I sunt scritti, nol chia-Semprovio un vigliacco ed un malandrino, senza domandargli il; messo. L'arbanità dampue non l'éfaconsisters in una converia fraziologica, ma in ciè che esta devrebbe sere-cioè nel non attaccare alcuno nella una vita privata, e uel non adoperare frasi scairili ed ablaiette, nel non fare accuse ingustamerto o sourn utilità nubbilica ; del res

Ci resta ora a dire una parola en -ome, che abbiamo dato al nuovo nome, diario.

Per contentare amici, averamo sato di battemario "II, PLEBISCITO", in memoria del duplice sclenne plebiscito del 15 Ottobre : ma in allora speravamo che il Diario avrebbe cominciato le sue pubblicazioni senza ritardo. Incontrammo però molti ostacoli alla ne del nostro disegno, perocebè non abbiam pointo trovare stamperia ova cominciare le nostre pubblicazioni. AL cuui degli stampatori avevano davvero gioste ragioni per riflutarei la lero opera — ma alcuni sliri han avato paura comprospetterni con certe autorità. Per giungere allo scopo ci bisognà ri-correre ad un amico, il quala comprà a proprio nome la stamperia di u quelli che ci avevano ricussto la pubblicazione del giornale, o poi ce ne fece il trasferimento, Questa storia giustifica il ritardo del promesso giornale, ol an-che del cambiamento del titolo. Ma se molti dei nostri abbonati han

acere che il titolo Il Plehiecito sia cambiato, certo nomuno quanto noi ne è contento. Insin dal primo momento che abbiamo divisato di fondare un giornale pensammo di dargli il nome più hello che possa mal aentirai da orecchio mal-- il nome della nostra cara patria. Molti ci suggerirono vari altri nomi, tutti belli ed adatti alla circostanza. It PERSONN rammenta una data felice della nostra storia - La Gazzerra Matra rivaloggia molti grandi giornali del continento - L'Ustorr esprime una necessità nel passo - La voca pur Po-roto echeggia le aspirazioni della pateia-L'avringeomera simbologgis il partito nazionale — La Parna rammonta un dovere : — tutti, tutti sono bei nomi — ma... "MALTA"... ah! questo 8 il nome che parla dolci accenti al cnore!!

Figure 3: The first issue of Malta. Courtesy NLG•National Library Gozo/Paul Falzon - this facsimile, formerly unknown, is being published for the first time.

THE GOZO OBSERVER (No. 33) - Winter 2016

legge per votare per la elezione di un Membro del Con-	ST of persons deemed to possess the qualifications required by law to vote for the election of a Member of the Council of Government, for the islands of Gozo and Comino.
--	---

survey of the second	PARTE PRIMA.	
Gran Castello.	Borg, Gio. Maria Str. Biblioteca 14	Busuttil Dalli, Chier. } Str. Pietà 12
Refula Can Da Dan 2	Formosa, Can. Don Saverio 28	Michelangelo §
Refalo, Can. Dr.Don Michelangelo SalitaGranCastello	Pace Cauchi, Francesco 47	Calleja, Can. Don Salvatore 41
Vuereh LL D	Pace, Chier. Luigi 2	Cauchi, Can. Don Antonio 63
Xuereb LL.D., Michelangelo Salita Gran Castello 6	the second se	Cassar, P.L. Pietro Paolo 24
michemigero)	Gauci, Can. Don Mario PiazzaS. Francesco 38	Vella, Michele di Salvatore 9
	Grech, Can. Don Salvatore 5	the second second second second second
	Sammut M.D., Paolo 6	Cauchi, Can. Don Francesco Str. Carità 32
the second s	Zammit, Can. Don Francesco 8	Montanaro M.D., Giuseppe 76-
The second secon	Refalo, Not. Onorato Giovanni 41	Diacono, Angelo 100
Delate	a marrie su al la Falada	Montanaro M.D., Giuseppe 76- Diacono, Angelo 100- Diacono, Don Francesco 100-
Rabato.	Camilleri, Luigi Str. Ghain Katet 32	Grech, Michelangelo 20
Amount Barrow Date Date 00	Refalo, Don Lorenzo 17 Sammut, Don Gaetano 31	Grech, Michelangelo 20- Mallia, P.L. Guglielmo 107 Debono M.D., Giuseppe 88-
Azzoppard, Francesco Piazza Reale 22 Calleja, Francesco 26	Sammut, Don Gaetano 31 Spiteri, Salvatore 19	Debono M.D., Giuseppe 88-
Calleja, Francesco 26 Cremona LL.D., Paolo 1	opiteri, oaivatore	A. M. A. A. A
Asciach, Salvatore 3		Calleja, Antonio Str. Mercato 30
Meilach, Luigi di Antonio 6	Camilleri, Can. Str.Sotto Porta Reale 6	Farrugia Pace, Francesco 28
Meilach, Luigi di Antonio 6 Calleja, Antonio 9	Micallef, Giuseppe - 13	CALSIE CLD 11
Caruana, Vincenzo 11	anoaner, oruseppe	Grech, Sud. Francesco Str. Provvidenza 7
	Buhagiar, Don Francesco Str. Palma 38	Bugeja, Don Vincenzo Str. Provicario 12
D D 01	Canai Nat Carmala	Giojoso, Giacinto 4
Bondì, Ginseppe Str. Corsa 27 Bondì M.D., Luigi 27	Gauci, Not. Carmelo 41 Cassar, Perito Michele 67 Ferriggi, Don Antonio 17	Teuma, Can. Don Francesco 4
	Forrieri Don Antonio 17	Pace LL.D., Ignazio 19
Micallef LL.D., Vincenzo Paolo 52	Grima, Michelangelo 44	Tate min.D., Ignado
Micalief LL.D., Vincenzo Paolo 52 Mizzi, Perito Fortunato 7 Pace, Luigi 6	Margiaga Imigi 69	D.CI. M. I. M. D.M. OF
Pace, Luigi 6 Pace LL.D., Michele 54	Sammut, Farm. Giuseppe 73	Refalo, Not. Vincenzo Piazza Sabina 25-
Pace, Monsignor Dr. Don Pietro 56	Seychel, Can. Don Michele 15	Refalo, Can. Penitenziere Dr. Don 5 Michelangelo 5
Lace, atomsigaor Dr. Don Fletro 00	Refalo, Aurelio 41	Calling (Stamping
	A CONTRACTOR AND A CONTRACTOR OF A	Saliba, Giorgio 28 Mercieca, Can. Don Giorgio 19
Sammut M.D., Eduardo Via Migiarro 44	Debrincat, Pasquale Str. Stretta 14	mercieca, Can. Don Giorgio
Bonello, Giorgio	Sammut, Can. Don Michele 1	
Cassar, Don Francesco 20 Caruana LL.D., Luigi 16 Giardina, Perito Antonio 39	Sultana, Can. Coad. Don Carmelo 12	Dalli, Giovanni Str. Areiprete 45
Caruana LL.D., Luigi 16 Giardina Parita Animaia 20	A STATE OF THE OWNER	
Giardina, Perito Antonio 39 Mallia, Roberto 37	Montanaro, Emmanuele Str. Conservatorio 42	Mizzi, Michelangelo 44
Mercieca LL.D., Felice 31	Refalo, Can. Decano Don Salvatore 8	Farrugia, Don Luigi 13 Mizzi, Michelangelo 44 Portelli M.D., Lorenzo 58 Vella, Ginsenne 22
Sammut, Don Enrico 44		Vella, Giuseppe 22
Sammut, Don Enrico 44 Xuereb LL.D., Giuseppe 41	Farrugia, Eduardo Str. St'Andrea 73	Subject to the second s
and a marchine and ar	Refalo, Arciprete Dr. Don Felice 21	Bugeja, Antonio Str.Arciprete Vicolo 1º 50
Sammut, Farm. Ignazio Str. S. Giacomo 5	Xerri, Don Lorenzo 18	and a second s
and a sum a Burnio a sur or a moonto a	Street of the second second second second	The second se
Attard, Perito Pietro Str. Gran Fontana 21	Consider the state of the second second	Attard, Salvatore Str. S. Giorgio 5 Cassar Antonio 67
Lauro, Don Michele 128	Gauci, Luigi Str. Ghedrin 20	Cassar, Antonio 01
Lauro, Don Michele 128 Mercieca, Francesco 76	Lineson Layes	Mizzi, Can. Don Giuseppe 86 Meilach, Giuseppe 12
Jucreicon, 1 Iduococo 70	Formosa, Fortunato Str. Nuova 39	Meilach, Giuseppe 12
	Montanaro, Gaetano 44 Cutajar, Don Francesco 44	There are a series of the seri
Pace, Can. Don Giuseppe Str.Ghammiesa 3	Cutajar, Don Francesco 44 Tabone, Antonio 18	Mifsud, Giuseppe Str. Sotto i Bastioni 18
Clenchi Dan Clinatia Ch. Mart and		the set of
Cauchi, Don Giorgio Str. Manderaggio 62	Farrugia, Don Giuseppe 16 Bonello, Lorenzo 14	Mercieca M.D., Barto-) Str. Weiringia 25
Debono, Gio. Battista 2 Cremona, Not. Felice 3	Bonello, Lorenzo 14 Baluci, Tommaso 14	lommeo Ghain Tuta
Cremons, not. rence. 3	Datuel, Tommaso	Tommeo) Ginam Luta

Figure 4: List of persons eligible to vote in the 1880 elections. Courtesy NLG/Paul Falzon.

of voters exceeded 50 per cent in support of Mizzi. On that occasion, the *Anti-Riformisti* won seven out of eight seats. The low turnout demonstrates that the people were fed up of the political situation. In conformity with the general feeling, the elected members resigned soon after their election to the Council.

Expression of Gratitude

The Council met for the first time on Tuesday, 30 October 1883. The following weekend, Fortunato Mizzi travelled to Gozo to express his gratitude to the Gozitans for the trust they placed in him (see Figure 5). He reiterated his appreciation in the first number of *Malta* in a leader entitled: *Ringraziamento ai Gozitani*:

I heartfully thank my good and generous compatriots for the overwhelming display of affection and support they showed me, when, following my election as their representative on the National legislative body, I went there to express my gratitude for the trust placed in me. The celebrations they prepared for me were touching, but, knowing that I did not merit them and I cannot take their credit in compensation for the meagre services that I have been able to render them up to now, I will consider them as an incentive to work effectively and as a strong encouragement to continue to strive for our rights Meanwhile I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all they did for me (*Malta*, 10 Nov 1883 p.2)

(Translated from the Italian language)

RINGRAZIAMENTO AI GOZITANI

Ho voluto adempiere a questo grato dovere subito dopo il mio ritorno dall' Isola sorella, ma disgraziatamente il *Diritto di Malta* di lunedì passato non poteva dar luogo a una mia lettera, e per ragioni già spiegate nel programma, questo nuovo diario non ha potuto veder la luce prima d'oggi.

Ringrazio di tutto cuore i miei buoni e generosi compatriotti per le taute dimostrazioni d'affetto e simpitii, che han voluto farmi allora quando, dopo la mia elezione a loro rappresentante nel Corpo Legislativo della Patria, sono stato a render grazie a loro per la fiducia in me riposta. Le feste, che mi han preparate, mi commossero, ma, sapendo di non averle meritate, non possono essere da me ascritte a compenso dei poverissimi servizi, che io ho potu o fin adesso render loro, ma a ragione li ritengo come fincitamento a bene operare, e come un potente incoraggimento a continuare la difesa dei nostri diritti. E qual cosa potrebbe meglio incoraggire i Tribuni della Plebe a sostenere la guerra contro gli usurpatori del potere, che di sapersi fiancheggiati e protetti da tutte le classi della popolazione ? Sì, io torno a promettere di adoperarmi a tutt' uomo per meritare'allo stesso tempo e la fiducia dei concittadini, particolarmente dei buoni e generosi Gozitani, e le dimostrazioni d'affetto, onde essi mi colmarono. " Li ringrazio intanto Cal profondo del cuore per quanto fecero per me, e voglio perare, coll'ajuto di Dio, che essi non

Ringrazio ancora i Molto Reverendi Figure 5: The text of the expression of gratitude to the Gozitans by Fortunato Mizzi. Courtesy NLG/Paul Falzon – this facsimile, formerly unknown, is being published for the first time.

......

Ċ

ano a po cisene

THE GOZO OBSERVER (No. 33) - Winter 2016

The *Partito Anti-Riformista* became the *Partito Nazionale* with the specific objective to strive for a better constitution. It was successful and through *Letters Patent* of 12 December 1887 – the fourth Constitution granted by the British to Malta – the elected members gained a majority in the Council and were granted the right to enact legislation and control local finances.

The number of electors in Gozo, as evinced from the electoral register published in the Malta Government Gazette (24 Feb 1888, p.91-99), had climbed to 1621 as the annual income granting one the right to vote was lowered from €19.40 to €14. Besides these there were 113 persons resident in Malta who had a vote in Gozo. Elections were held between 1 and 3 March 1888. Gozo was the tenth district and there were only four voting posts: at Victoria, l-Gharb, ix-Xewkija and in-Nadur. When Fortunato Mizzi made it known that he would once again contest the Gozo seat, no one dared to challenge him. It was a well-known fact that all Gozo was with Mizzi and that it would be useless to contest him. The Partito Nazionale of Mizzi set a record by winning all seats. The Council was inaugurated by General Sir John Lintorn Arabin Simmons, Governor of Malta, on 21 March 1888; however, it functioned for less than a year and a half as, due to a multitude of reasons, the members resigned.

Elections were held once again on 24 and 25 September 1889, but Mizzi did not contest. In an *Indirizzo ai Gozitani*, he informed the Gozitans that he was retiring for health reasons as he longed for some peace from the frenetic life full of tensions of a politician. He had partly fulfilled his political vision with the acquisition of the 1887 Constitution and a representative Council. He continued to play a role in local politics through the newspaper *Malta* for many more years.

The Appeal of the Gozitans

When elections were called for 28 and 29 September 1898, Mizzi was adamant not to enter politics again. On 15 August 1898, a group of admirers of Mizzi from Gozo started to circulate a petition to convince him to change his mind (published in *Malta* – 24 Aug 1898) (see Figure 6).

The petition opened by reminding him that since his exit from politics, the political freedoms laboriously

Al Paillustic Signore Avvecto D' Poetunato Moizzi 1. Gontani Paillashe Signey Da quande a sich silvale des likerta pelitiche ci funeno telle de non ne rista che us separinhamente di per costiluzionali. thima legis amente e principio di popolare, i redollo a mi a dinen siere unio e succedata la un debite publice la lingua chats le i d'interesse vitale che sia supre hille, i ridella ad una materia di sec dine nuff isami per gl'impreghi ende tre sulla partica istingione, dalla qu pende l'echicagione non sole corte, relignore totte di mane al popule

Figure 6: Petition to convince Mizzi to contest the election of 1898. Courtesy MAPN/Richard Muscat.

gained in the previous decades had been reduced one after another. The supreme power, a reference to the Imperial Government, was dominating all sectors of the political, economic, and social structure of the island. Public debt was on the increase and the right to public meetings had been squashed. The Italian language – *la quale è d'interesse vitale che sia suprema in tutto* – had been downgraded. The running of public instruction, upon which both civic and religious education depended, had been taken away from the people and passed over to a person who was neither of the same religion, nor Maltese. Private property was threatened on the pretext of military requirements and public hygiene.

Confronted by these threats, it was of utter importance that Malta would be led by an honest person full of vigour and energy. *La lotta nella quale per tanti anni siete stato il duce*, the struggle of which you were the undisputed leader for many years, bears witness to the fact that you are endowed with these qualities, they affirmed.

They proceeded: For this reason, *ardentamente*, (from the depth of our heart), we appeal to you to once again accept to represent Gozo on the Council.

Remember that the gifts with which you are endowed to be il *Duce del popolo*, (the undisputed leader of the people), were received from Divine Providence and when it trusted these gifts upon you, it did so in order to be its instrument.

You were the defender of our religious and political rights in difficult times when everything seemed lost. We do not wish that in the future you will have the misgiving that you did not cooperate with the plan of Divine Providence. For this reason, it is imperative that you undertake this generous sacrifice – concluded the petition.

The petition was signed by 95 priests, amongst them all the members of the Cathedral Chapter – the first signature is that of Archdeacon Gużeppi Mizzi – and all the parish priests of Gozo. It was also signed by 70 other professionals and merchants. Dr Isidoro Xuereb, Gozo's leading lawyer, head these signatures. All the Gozitans that counted signed the petition.

Fortunato Mizzi was convinced and he once again contested the election on the Gozo district and got 346 votes, the absolute majority of the Gozitans that had a vote. He contested again in March 1899, in September 1900, and in January 1904. In the last three elections, people did not vote as candidates in Malta and Gozo were not contested.

The Council was hardly functional in those years due to one division after another on expenditure. The 1887 Constitution was withdrawn on 3 June 1903 and replaced by another, the fifth, a shameful document that put the political situation in Malta back to 1849. Gozo became again the eighth district.

In January 1905, Fortunato came up with the idea of a political union and the *Associazione Politica Maltese* came into being with the aim to pave the way for a popular election in the country. Fortunato was elected president, but he died suddently on 18 May 1905.

Religious Family

Fortunato and his wife Sofia nurtured an exemplary and religious family. He was active in the *Pija Unjoni tad-Duluri* founded at the Church of Stella

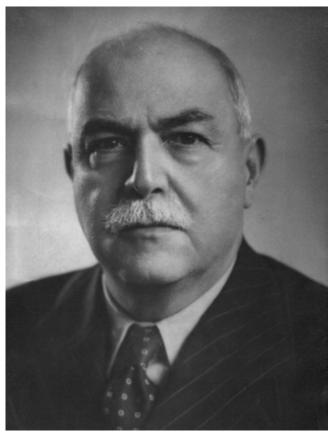


Figure 7: Enrico Mizzi. Courtesy MAPN/Richard Muscat.



Figure 8: Patri Fortunato. Courtesy MAPN/Richard Muscat.

Maris, Sliema. His son, Enrico, eventually became Prime Minister (20 September 1885 – 20 December 1950) (see Figure 7), they had two other sons both of whom joined the Franciscan Capuchins. Patri Fortunato (5 July 1880 – 23 July 1945), ordained

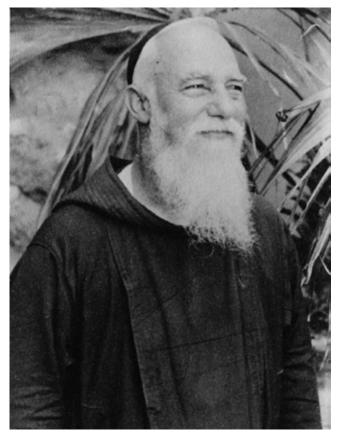


Figure 9: Patri Ang. Courtesy MAPN/Richard Muscat.

priest in 1906, fulfilled his pastoral mission in Ottawa, Canada, and afterwards on the island of Corsica (see Figure 8). His brother, Patri Anġ (22 October 1888 – 16 May 1957), ordained priest in Burgos, Spain, on 20 December 1913, was for several years a missionary in Ethiopia and later on in India where he died and was buried (see Figure 9). He is the author of the researched book *L'Apostolato Maltese*, a biographical dictionary of the missionaries hailing from Malta.

Conclusion

Slowly, one step after another, the *Associazione Politica Maltese* and other political movements got stronger and their determination led to major achievements in the political and social sphere. It was finally crowned by the attainment of Independence on 21 September 1964.

Joseph Bezzina studied at the University of Malta and the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He was ordained priest by Pope Paul VI in 1957. He was for many years Head of Department of Church History at the University of Malta and Senior Lecturer in history in the Faculty of Theology at the same University and at the Sacred Heart Seminary, Gozo. He is the Assistant National Archivist of Malta and Head at its Gozo Section that he founded in 1989.