

Malta: divided but not polarized

Efforts to unite the people through a single national day have so far failed – but the divisions are only skin deep, notes JAMES DEBONO

JUDGING by the results of a MaltaToday survey conducted in April 2009, choosing one national day which satisfies the entire population, or even a majority, could well be an impossible task. The survey showed that none of the current five national days enjoys the support of an absolute majority of the population; and despite the appropriation of two of these dates by the two big parties, only 48% choose Freedom or Independence Day; while 35% opt for either Victory Day (13%), Sette Giugno (12%)

or Republic Day (10%).

The survey showed that Independence Day – chosen by 27% is the most favoured day followed by Freedom Day at 21%.

Independence Day enjoys greater support among university-educated respondents (35%), Nationalist Party supporters (51%) and those aged between 18 to 34 (30%). Support for Independence Day ranks lowest among respondents aged between 35 and 54 (22%) and among those with a primary level of education (25%).

On the other hand only 3.8% of those with a tertiary education opt for Freedom Day as Malta's national day. Freedom Day enjoys the highest approval among Labour voters (43%). But significantly, 38% of Labour respondents opt for other national days, while 10% would keep the status quo of five national days.

Unsurprisingly, only 3.2% of Labour respondents opt for Independence Day, which was taken off the official calendar under Dom Mintoff. Independence was only rehabilitated in

Labour's history books under former leader Alfred Sant. On the other hand, 7% of PN voters opt for Freedom Day.

Support for Victory Day – which commemorates the 1565 Great Siege and the victory of Nazi Fascism in the Second World War attracts the highest support among Nationalist voters (18%) and those aged between 35 to 54 (18%).

Sette Giugno, which commemorates the 1919 bread riots, is more preferred by tertiary educated respondents (19%) and

middle aged respondents aged between 34 to 55.

On the other hand, Republic Day – which commemorates the end of the monarchy in Mintoff's heyday in 1974, and which was supported by a vast majority in Parliament at the time – is mostly preferred by Labour respondents (13%).

Nearly 4% choose alternative days to the current five national days. These included May 1 (International Workers Day) and March 8 (International Women's Day).

Which event should be commemorated as Malta's only national day?

Independence Day	27
Freedom Day	20.6
Victory Day	13
Sette Giugno	11.7
Republic Day	9.7
All five national days	9.3
Others	3.7
Don't Know	6



By political leaning

	PL	PN	Undisclosed
Independence	3.2	50.5	26.7
Freedom Day	43	6.6	13.3
Victory Day	7.5	17.6	15.6
Sette Giugno	11.8	11	11.1
Republic Day	12.9	4.4	10
All five	9.7	5.5	12.2
Others	2.2	3.3	5.6
Don't know	9.7	1.1	5.5

(Respondents were asked for which party they had voted for in 2008 general election)

By education

	Tertiary	Secondary	Primary
Independence	34.6	27.7	24.7
Freedom Day	3.8	22.6	22.1
Victory Day	11.5	12.9	11.7
Sette Giugno	19.2	12.9	6.5
Republic Day	11.5	9.7	10.4
All five	3.8	8.4	11.4
Others	11.8	0	5.2
Don't know	3.8	5.8	8

By age

	18-34	35-54	55+
Independence	30	21.5	30.5
Freedom Day	23.3	20.6	19.8
Victory Day	6.7	17.8	12.2
Sette Giugno	13.3	16.8	6.9
Republic Day	6.7	11.2	9.9
All 5	10	4.7	13
Others	3.3	1.8	2.4
Don't Know	6.7	5.6	5.3

Methodology:

452 persons were contacted by telephone between 23 and 29 April. 300 accepted to participate. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 5.7%

National day? No, Unity Day!

RENO BORG

I would go for any of the National Days had I been assured that that day would bring sincere unity among the Maltese. Independence was celebrated in 1964 as the 'glorious' day for the Nationalists, but not so for the Labourites. For a very long time the day itself was observed in an atmosphere of division, with inflammatory speeches on the Granaries by PN leaders. As a result, Labourites never came to terms with the idea of having Independence Day as their truly



National Day.

On their part, Nationalists always considered Republic Day and Freedom Day as inferior to Independence, something which irks Labourites. It was the result of this polarization

that led the two major political parties to agree on five National Days for Malta.

In my opinion, both Victory Day and Sette Giugno could well qualify to be declared Malta's National Day, keeping in mind that on both occasions the whole population was united in its search for survival and political autonomy.

Another alternative which could solve the impasse on having just one National Day could be the conception of what I term as Unity Day. This would be the occasion where, in just one day, the Maltese people would cel-

ebtrate together all five National Days. Independence Day, Republic Day, Freedom Day, Sette Giugno and Victory Day would still have their significance as distinct occasions in our political history. But Unity Day would underline a day where ALL the Maltese could celebrate together all their political, social and economic achievements.

However, for such an occasion to make real sense, we have to adopt a new political mentality whereby merit comes before political affiliation, where transparency substitutes ambiguity, and where everyone starts to

believe that he is not living in a anana republic.

George Borg Olivier wanted to be remembered for signing the Independence document, Mintoff for a making Malta a Republic and signalling in bold letters that Malta could live without a military base; FEDdie enech Adami for adjoining Malta to the EU.

The next Maltese statesman should be the one to have the moral strength, determination and foresight to forge real unity among the Maltese. On that occasion we will celebrate together Unity Day.