

The Police Corps: Achievements past and present

The successes registered by the Malta Police Force in recent years are considerable. Crime rate is down by 11%, homicide cases dating back by decades have been solved, and as the Corps prepares itself for the daunting task of integrating in the Schengen System, its ratings in public opinion continue to soar.

It is government's intention to join the Schengen area next year with the first wave of new member states. The process and preparation has not been free from difficulties and burdens. The idea behind Schengen, launched in 1985 by a core-group of Member States, was the dismantling of internal borders between Schengen Member States, and the strengthening of the external borders of such countries; in practice this means that any person entering in Malta from outside the Schengen area shall be checked through an intricate and complex information system shared by Schengen member states; once he is allowed entry he may freely roam within the Schengen area without any passport control; naturally this also applies to Maltese nationals who already enjoy freedom of movement within the EU. They shall now enjoy free movement without any control – not even the current requirement of being in possession of an identity card – within the Schengen area.

The preparations for integration in this process were difficult and laborious; integration in the system presumes assimilation in a network of sharing information to strengthen external borders; consequently a non-EU national refused entry in France would not be able to beat the system and enter the Schengen area through Malta and vice-versa.

The Police Force will deploy around forty Police Officers to man the Schengen Unit to be accommodated in brand-new premises at Police Headquarters. Admission into Schengen when it arrives, will be another feather-in-the cap for our Police Corps.

In the meantime our main law enforcement agencies will continue fulfilling their mission of policing our community, protecting it against harm, and exercising such duty within parameters necessary in a democratic society.

Looking back at the past twenty years, the current Government is justly proud of its record in office regarding our Police Force. From the abyss in which the Force pathetically lay in 1987, (considered then to be the executive arm of repressive regime) – it has flowered into an efficient police force, fully aware of its obligations in a democratic society. It has introduced self-imposed measures to prevent abuse and strengthen outside control of its powers; at the same time Government has not shied away from bestowing special powers to it to professionally; fight organized crime and other scourges of modern times.

Government has also recognized the difficult role played by Police Officers in modern times; and it has done so in a concrete and tangible way. It reintroduced the 25-year service pension which had been hedged and diminished by a Labour Government, raised Police pay in successive special arrangements for the Police and for the first time introduced a new shift system which allows the members of the Force to plan their lives and commitments, months ahead.

At the dawn of the second half of the first decade of this century, the Force views its challenges as an opportunity to be of service to Maltese Society. In spite of faults which any organization inevitably has, it has striven to be present in society, without being too visible, to police without creating annoyance, to monitor without being intrusive.

These blessings have not fallen from high above, nor are they a mere coincidence; they owe their existence to a hard-working Police Force and a caring and benevolent government.

Tonio Borg

Deputy Prime Minister