Maltese Emigration History

This section will provide information and details about the historical aspects of the Maltese migratory movements.

Maltese in New Zealand

The last census put the figure of Maltese people resident in NZ at 222. There have never been huge numbers of Maltese in New Zealand, but we can trace the first one to within the first decade after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi - which is the document that the British Crown signed with the indigenous Maori, and now forms the basis of our nation. In a study that Mark Caruana and I co-ordinated some years ago, the earliest Maltese man we have discovered was Angelo Parigi:

He is listed at St Patrick’s Church in Auckland as having married 16-year-old RoseAnne McMullen on 4 July 1849. He was described as “a boatman born in Malta”. Others followed including a James Cassar for whom some letters remained unclaimed at the Auckland Post Office in 1864. In 1883, Francesco Saverio de Cesare, who you will know was tasked by the Government in Malta to assess the “suitability of the British Colonies in Australia as a field for Maltese Migration” reported that:

“At Auckland I met three Maltese, there settled for several years, and at Tauranga another one, employed as a cook; they are doing well; and have no idea of returning to Malta. They told me there are some other Maltese, whom they know, settled in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin."

Since these times there have been small groups of Maltese who came out in drip and drabs, some after the first and second world wars, some jumping ship from British naval vessels, and others under a limited annual assisted quota system. Over these times there have also been those who arrived in NZ via Australia - after they saw the light!

In 1989, a small group of Maltese formed the Maltese Association of Wellington (later incorporated) on 29 June (Mnarja). I was founding president.

Source: Dr. Carmen Dalli

Maltese-Australian History

Australia represents a major port of call for the Maltese.

In 1983 the Maltese communities around Australia celebrated the centenary of the first organised and subsidised large-group migration from Malta to Australia. At that time, there were no books available that offered an Australian perspective on Maltese migration. All that was available was Charles Price’s 1954 book, Malta and the Maltese: a study in nineteenth century migration, which contained only a few pages on Maltese settlement in Australia. Those few pages, however, fuelled some enthusiastic research in the 1980s. Individuals within the Maltese communities in Melbourne and Sydney, mainly retired persons or persons approaching retirement and professionals with backgrounds in education and literature, found vital support for their work in the pages of Australia’s principal Maltese newspaper, The Maltese Herald, which continues to publish feature articles with historical and sociological bents. Also, in 1983,
Hugh Azzopardi's book, *The Maltese*, was published for use in schools. It was the first published attempt at a comprehensive promotion of Maltese history and cultural life in our schools.

It was no coincidence, in my opinion, that the upsurge in active interest in Maltese-Australian history occurred in the 1980s. It wasn't until the 1980s that the Maltese settlers, who mainly migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, were in a position to afford the luxury of research. Most who had come here in the '50s and '60s found employment as manual workers and, like other ethnic groups who provided factory labour, their priorities were with buying a house and creating economic security for their families. For many, this was achieved in a rudimentary way by the 1970s. Whatever spare time they had, they devoted to the greatest of Maltese passions: family life and soccer!

**Maltese 'prohibited immigrants': the Australian experience, 1912-1946**

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**Maltese 'prohibited immigrants'**

Between 1901 and 1946, more than three million immigrants and visitors were admitted into Australia. Over the same period, more than 3,290 persons were refused admission as prohibited immigrants.

Unfortunately, the figures are not complete because those for two years (1906 and 1925) are missing from the official record and some groups, including the Maltese, were not listed separately until several years after the compilation of the annual returns on immigration commenced in 1901. The figures for all groups should be preceded by the words "at least". In the case of the Maltese, separate figures on exclusions (prohibited immigrants) were only compiled between 1912 and 1946 while figures on Maltese admissions were only compiled between 1911 and 1946.

The largest single group of persons excluded from Australia comprised the Chinese who were a main target of the White Australia Policy. At least 1,527 Chinese were refused permission to disembark but individuals of virtually every nationality or ethnicity - from Armenians to West Indians - were excluded at one time or another.

The Maltese were the second largest excluded (prohibited immigrant) group, with a total of 224 persons refused admission into Australia between 1912 and 1946. They were followed by the Italians, with 174 excluded persons and the Indians with 104.

These figures in themselves do not seem significant but it must be kept in mind that most of the individuals or groups excluded had arrived at Australian ports with the reasonable expectation that they would be allowed to disembark. These were persons migrating to Australia on lawful passports. The Maltese people's British status was meaningless when it came to their exclusion.

**The dictation test**

In some cases, exclusion was justified, as in the case of persons with contagious diseases, but most of the Maltese - and indeed nearly two-thirds of all persons excluded between 1901 and 1946 - were kept out by section 3(a) of the Immigration Act, known in common parlance as the dictation test. Section 3(a) provided for a dictation test to be administered in any European language to an arriving migrant. It was a selectively administered device, as not all immigrants were tested; in fact, the vast majority were not. The decision to exclude via the dictation test sometimes came from officials high up in the departments responsible for immigration and it
even came, on occasions, from ministers. Most of the time, however, the decision was taken by customs' officers at ports of disembarkation.

459 Chinese were excluded under 3(a) in 1902, and 208 Maltese were similarly excluded in 1916. These were the two biggest single groups to be excluded in any given year. The dictation test was neither an educational nor a literary test. It was not really a test at all but a ploy designed to keep out individuals or groups whom the government of the day or immigration and customs officers felt were undesirable immigrants.

The absurd and dishonest nature of the dictation test is revealed by a handful of cases: a Japanese kept out after failing a test in Greek, an English divorcee excluded after failing the test in Italian, 208 Maltese kept out after failing it in Dutch, and so on.

Annual Returns on immigration: essential data

It is possible to accurately chart the pattern of exclusions because, under the Immigration Act, it was required that, each year, returns be presented to the Australian parliament on admissions and exclusions. The data, which was collected by customs' officers at each port, revealed the following information about excluded persons: (i) countries of origin, (ii) countries from whence they arrived, (iii) grounds on which admission was refused and (iv) persons who passed the dictation test. The annual returns also provided data, by year and race, on persons who departed from Australia. (Between 1901 and 1946, approximately 140,000 people left Australia, mainly Asians responding to legislative measures taken against them).

The dictation test could be applied in any European language and was principally designed to exclude Asians and other non-whites, though it also occasionally proved to be an effective way of keeping out persons deemed to be politically or morally undesirable by the government. The test was mainly used in the early years of Australia's federation. About 2,000 immigrants were stopped from disembarking after failing the test, but nearly half that number were denied admission during the first five years of the test's existence. The test really ceased to be the main method of exclusion after the first world war, when various amendments at different times ensured that 'undesirables' did not attempt to gain admission in the same large numbers as in earlier times and when the test had well and truly become an effective deterrent to Asian immigration.

Beneath the raw statistics are some important and fascinating stories of the endeavours and sacrifices of human beings who journeyed to a strange new continent in search of a better future.

The 224 Excluded Maltese

The official returns, collected by customs' officers at each port, reveal that 214 Maltese were excluded from Australia as prohibited immigrants in 1916. Of that number, 208 were kept out by section 3(a), the dictation test. Prior to 1916, two had been excluded under section 3(d), which related to persons with contagious diseases. In 1926, five Maltese were excluded, one under paragraph (a), two under paragraph (f) and two were stowaways. Paragraph (f) in 1926 related to persons likely, in the opinion of a customs officer, to become "a charge upon the public". Three more Maltese were excluded: one each in 1927, 1932 and 1934. The latter two were stowaways from Egypt and French Morocco but again, in 1927, one Maltese was victim of section 3(a), the dictation test.

Guiseppe Mifsud, 1926

It is possible to identify some of the excluded Maltese. The individual excluded by the dictation test in 1926, for instance, was almost certainly Guiseppe Mifsud, whose case was reported in the daily press. Mifsud and his English wife and young daughter were detained on board the Moreton Bay at each Australian port until their final destination, Sydney, when they were
deported on the Esperance Bay. According to press reports, Mifsud had "failed the migrants' test"; a test which had been applied because of his alleged Communist sympathies. Press reports indicated that, two days out from Fremantle, Mifsud had refused to stand for the playing of the National Anthem at the conclusion of a concert on board the ship. Reports are not entirely clear, but it seems that a group of young men started to sing the 'Red Flag'. Officers on the Moreton Bay had reported that Mifsud was spreading Bolshevik propaganda among the younger migrants.

Mifsud was angered by the prohibition and denied that he had attempted to spread Communist doctrines. A veteran of the first world war who had served in the British Army Services Corps as a baker and, on being demobilised in 1919, in the Royal Navy as a cook, Mifsud possessed a certificate of discharge which described his conduct in the service as very good. Completing his service in the Navy in January 1926, he unsuccessfully sought employment in England until he signed on with the ship Relion as a cook. The Relion was headed for America, where Mifsud hoped better employment prospects might lay. However, the Relion sank 500 miles from Ireland and Mifsud and his shipmates spent three days and nights in open boats before making it to the safety of the Irish coast. Mifsud then decided to try his luck in Australia.

The Maltese of New Caledonia, 1916

The incident involving the biggest single group of excluded Maltese has been well documented through my own publications and those of others, such as Mark Caruana and Frank Zammit of Sydney. The group of 214 Maltese 'prohibited immigrants' in 1916 comprised a boatload of agricultural labourers who were turned away at their intended port of disembarkation, Sydney, after having failed the dictation test while their boat was offshore at Melbourne. The method used by the Hughes' federal government was to have the test administered to the Maltese in the Dutch language.

On failing the Dutch dictation test, the Maltese became prohibited immigrants, unable to disembark anywhere within the Commonwealth of Australia, and liable to six months imprisonment and deportation should they somehow make it to shore. In addition to the official immigration statistics for 1916 which clearly show that 208 Maltese were kept out by section 3(a), there is evidence in the form of letters written by a Maltese priest in Sydney, Fr William Bonett, who had boarded the Gange, the ship on which the 214 travelled to Australia, and spoken directly with them. According to Fr Bonett's letters, the men were tested in the Dutch language, and the test was administered by a professor from Melbourne University.

The 1916 incident is remembered throughout Maltese communities today as either the 'Maltese of New Caledonia' incident, because that is where they ended up for a while, or as 'the Children of Billy Hughes', after the Australian prime minister who made the political decision to keep them out. Further details and analysis may be found in the following publications: Frank Zammit's Il-Ballata tal Maltin ta' New Caledonia and my book Empire and Race: the Maltese in Australia 1881-1949, especially chapter 5. Also, the National Library of Australia holds an interview that I recorded with Mr Emmanuel Attard, who was on the ill-fated Gange in 1916. A copy of Fr Bonett's letter to the Australian Governor-General, dated 1 December 1916, appears as an appendix in my research paper, published by the Australian National University, Exclusions and admissions: Maltese arrivals at Australian ports 1911-1946.

It was rare indeed, by 1916, that such a large group - regardless of nationality - should have been excluded. As mentioned earlier, the Immigration Act proved highly effective in deterring Asian immigrants during the first five years of its implementation. A penalty of one hundred pounds for each prohibited immigrant was imposed on the masters, agents, charterers and owners of ships that brought such persons to Australia. Thus, after a few years of harsh experience, shipping companies dissuaded persons who stood a chance of being excluded at an Australian port from proceeding with their intended voyage. The French shipping company Messageries Maritimes clearly had no idea that the Maltese on the Gange would be declared prohibited immigrants and excluded from Australia.
On November 12th 1903 the British governor of Malta, Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke, addressed the new Legislative Assembly in Valletta and hinted at a major headache that was troubling the administration. The particular problem which was troubling the governor was the expanding population of the Maltese islands which in 1901 had reached the total of 184,742. The colonial administration was worried about too many civilians crowding the restricted space of these small islands which happened to be a very important base for the British navy. On that particular day Sir Mansfield Clarke said that the Maltese islands had the highest population density in the world and that unless new measures were taken the excessive population of the towns would pose a very serious problem.

More than ninety years before, in 1812, a British Commission of Inquiry had been sent to Malta to suggest how to govern the island which had not as yet been formally incorporated into the Empire. The Royal Commissioners commented favourably on the general standard of living of the Maltese who were not only contented with their newly acquired status of association with Great Britain but were also enjoying unprecedented wealth and prosperity. However the Commissioners did note that the Maltese not only lived long but also loved their families, which were usually large, and because of this there were too many people on an island which was primarily a strategic base for the Royal Navy.

In spite of such dire forebodings the Maltese always managed not only to survive but also to live in a degree of comfort not always shared by their Mediterranean neighbours. Maltese harbours flourished after 1869 when the Suez canal was opened and Valletta became the chief bunkering station in the Mediterranean when ships of various nationalities called in for coal. The initial years of the twentieth century had brought with them an economic boom and Admiralty works in the Dockyard kept many workers busy; in 1905 the number of men employed by the Naval Establishment was 9,175. The War Office undertook the construction of various barracks, and the two great arms of the breakwater, which made the waters inside Grand Harbour safe throughout the year, were by now nearing completion. No wonder that there was no real unemployment and that labourers had to be lured from Spain and Italy. As wages went up so did the material well being of the Maltese.

According to R. Vadal the Maltese had in 1901 a fleet of some thirty-five boats which employed two hundred and twenty-seven men. It had long been suggested that a locally financed merchant fleet would not only provide more jobs but would also bring in more revenue. Local businessmen however lacked the initiative and the Government had to foot the bill of five thousand pounds for a Hungarian boat to ensure a reliable postal service between Valletta and Syracuse in Sicily.

Full employment provided by British expenditure in the island had made the Maltese rely heavily on imperial policy which itself was bound to fluctuate according to the international political situation. The prosperity of the Maltese no longer depended on the amount of trade they were able to create with other Mediterranean lands but rather on how much money the British Exchequer was willing to spend on safeguarding the sea routes particularly within the basin of the Mediterranean Sea. As the Imperial link grew stronger it weakened the traditional initiative of Maltese private enterprise. When London decided on reducing expenditure the Maltese economy would reel under the impact.

When the Royal Commission of 1911 -12 examined the almost total dependence of Malta’s economy on Imperial strategy, the Commissioners unequivocally stated that the island had been experiencing a gradual decline in revenue since 1902 when the Imperial Garrison, both naval and military, had been reduced by six battleships and two battalions. This reduction, the
Commission said, must mean a loss to the industries of Malta of not less than £400,000 a year.

The loss from Imperial expenditure was not the only reason for the rise in unemployment during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Grand Harbour was no longer the busiest port in the Mediterranean because larger ships were being built and these would bypass Malta whereas previously every steamer passing through the Mediterranean was practically obliged to call at Maltese ports for coal and provisions. The development in the construction of steamships meant an obvious decline in bunkering. Finally, competition from other Mediterranean ports challenged the former superiority of Malta's position as the favoured island in the middle of a very busy sea. Algiers and Tunis were being developed by the French and efficient shipyards were already operational. in the East, Alexandria and Port Said were coming into their own because of the increased trade due to the opening of the Suez Canal. Ironically, thousands of Maltese immigrants employed in the shipyards of those two Egyptian cities had indirectly helped to bring Malta's economic boom and trade monopoly to an end.

The difficulty of finding work at home, coupled with the decrease in trade with foreign countries, made the Maltese worker look to emigration as a solution to this double problem. Maltese had been emigrating to the lands bordering on the Mediterranean for many years and there were Maltese colonies in Egypt, Tripolitania, Tunisia and Algeria. The colonisation of Cyprus and the Ionian Isles had been tried with no spectacular success and even the little island of Lampedusa was turned into a Maltese colony for some forty years. The British had never involved themselves in organised emigration from Malta but they considered emigration as a possible solution to the overpopulation of the island which would cost them nothing. The local papers plunged into the argument for or against emigration with uncontrolled zest. Newspapers with Imperial loyalties, which were published in English, favoured emigration to the vast and empty lands of the Empire or at least to countries where English was spoken. Other newspapers considered emigration as an evil tool of the Imperialists who were secretly planning to get rid of the civilian population so that the island would better serve its military and naval call as one of Britain's most strategic bases.

A daily newspaper published in English which strongly advocated organised emigration was The Daily Malta Chronicle. in an editorial dated September 30th 1910 the paper said: "There is one question which rises above all other questions. Month by month it acquires greater importance. It may well be called our burning question: it is the question of emigration. There can be no longer any hope for us of welfare, except in getting for ourselves another home in a favourable land". in a somewhat dramatic vein the editor put the question to his readers: "What is to become of us? When we had a mighty fleet and a great garrison, we could all get along somehow ... we are left like some tree that had flourished in good soil but at length could find but scanty nourishment in the ground. The tree decays because it cannot be transplanted. And we shall decay unless we are determined to transplant ourselves!"

The prolonged absence of the navy from Maltese harbours de discharges from the Dockyard inevitable. A number of men were employed as casuals only to be declared redundant when their jobs had been finished. Others, barely surviving on very low wages, were often sent on compulsory leave for an indefinite period during which even those low wages were withheld. Workers and their families who were living under such insecure conditions began to look to other places where work was available and skilled people were appreciated. Another newspaper, The Malta Herald, in a letter dated June 16th 1913 aired the prevalent despondency: "Workpeople who are living in these straits have no option to resort to, but to quit their Island home and settle in such parts of America where work is plentiful, substantial wages prevail, and the employers' treatment and appreciation of skill, sobriety and honesty of the labour employed are of the very best". Another correspondent laments that ... "wages have fallen to nothing ... there are mechanics, even doing dangerous work, who receive 14s a week. One shilling and four pence a day is considered to be remuneration enough for thousands of able bodied workmen!"

According to a parliamentary question put by Lord Charles Beresford in 1913 to the First Lord of the
Admiralty, Dr Macnamara, in the British House of Commons, wages in Malta had remained practically stationary for the last thirty years.

Unemployment had brought an increase in the number of beggars who were seen pester ing people; many of these beggars were young children pushed out into the streets by their parents in order to earn that little extra money. These were usually the children of illiterate parents; but the children of the more comfortable middle classes had their worries too. Malta has always had to carry the burden of those who by family tradition feel that manual work is not for them. Between 1909 and 1912 some two hundred students had received their diplomas and degrees from the Royal University and these swelled the ranks of lawyers, notaries and legal procurators; in those unsettled days these students had little prospects for a remunerative practice. Many of them ended up by entering the political arena for the sake of having something to do.

Although the island suffered because of the superfluous number of men who had come out from the university, there certainly was enough room for good doctors. Maltese generally enjoyed good health, but the prevalent poverty which preceded the First World War and the primitive standards in hygiene did contribute to occasional scares of cholera and fever; trachoma was unfortunately very common. It is only fair to state that other countries did not fare much better. Immigrants from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean littoral were particularly scrutinised as they set foot in receiving countries because of the diseases referred to and also because of the obvious prejudices enter-tained in those days against Catholics and Latins in English-speaking countries. In 1911 a number of emigrants from Malta were left stranded on Ellis Island, New York, because their eyes were infected with trachoma; in spite of the hardships endured and the expense which they had to make in order to make the voyage from Malta to the U.S.A., all of them were sent back.

Trachoma had been widespread in Malta for many years and was only eradicated during the late forties when systematic inspections were carried out in the schools and throughout the villages. It seems that few were the doctors in Malta who had professional knowledge of the disease because a number of prospective migrants had been examined before they emigrated only to be refused entry once they were examined by health officials. Very often, those same migrants who carried with them official certificates which stated that they had had their eyes examined by local doctors, were found to be sufferers from trachoma.

Professor Lawrence Manche' was in charge of the Ophthalmic Institute at Hamrun where he and his son examined men and women who were going to foreign countries. When the professor appeared before the Royal Commission on December 13th 1911, he stated that he had examined some 1,500 cases in his clinic. He also stated that although he had published leaflets in Maltese about the causes of trachoma and wrote down suggestions on how to check the infection, he did not believe that his leaflets had had much impact on the populace because so many people were illiterate. The professor also criticized district medical officers who treated patients suffering from trachoma very superficially. The report of the Royal Commission of 1912 stated clearly that "no candidate should be approved unless he possesses a medical certificate that his health will enable him to stand the climate and other conditions of the country in which he is to work. There are diseases to which Malta is subject which add to the importance of this consideration". In fact the colonial administration of the time did very little to follow the sound advice given by the Royal Commissioners. Emigration continued till 1914 in a very unplanned manner. The rulers of Malta simply had developed no policy regarding emigrants and emigration. The emigrant had to plan his future on his own because he found hardly anybody willing to help him.

Illiteracy, destitution, disease, rough manners and the language handicap, weighed so heavily against the Maltese migrant, that one cannot but admire the courage and resourcefulness of those early emigrants who set out on their own for the vast spaces of foreign countries when, till then, they had hardly ever ventured away from their village square. The secretary of the Malta Emigration Committee, Dr Charles Mattei, in a letter written on March 17th 1911, to a local newspaper gave a somewhat cynical account of how the eminently practical doctor
disposed of his less fortunate brethren who had applied to emigrate but who had no knowledge of the English language. The letter ran thus: "As many people have asked me how the language difficulty is overcome by our countrymen emigrating to North America, the following may be of interest. I give a man a piece of cardboard with the following writing in large letters:

I am - e.g. Antonio Calleja a British subject from Malta, Europe - 1 am perfectly healthy in body and mind 1 have enough money according to United States Immigration Law: and a fully paid ticket to my destination - 1 want to go to e.g. Mr Fenech, Sansome Street, San Francisco, California - Please send me on".

"The emigrant was instructed to hand this round his neck, over his clothes on his chest, in a conspicuous place and be sure to have it on when landing, when going through the Immigration Offices at Ellis Island, New York, and on the train - to trust implicitly and obey to the best of his intelligence officials with long blues frock coats and brass buttons".

"Practically I attached a label to this man and sent him by mail carriage paid and he was safely delivered - The man reached his destination safely without trouble and is now working at two and a half dollars a day. On reaching San Francisco he was put on a tram car and dropped at Mr Fenech's place. One could be dropped at St. Bruno where other Maltese live - they soon recognise each other through a cummerband, or curls on the forehead, or a Maltese cross hanging about somewhere. There is now a 'parcel' of six women and four children waiting to be 'mailed'.'

Subsequent history remained silent on what happened to such hapless people in search of work and food in lands completely strange to them. Mattei's attitude does not show any particular concern about later experiences of these migrants. The letter indicates that any interest that was shown in emigration seemed to have been to deliver the goods and conveniently forget about the whole thing as soon as possible.

The image of the Maltese emigrant was that of a poor and confused itinerant. When in 1912 some migrants were about to embark on a boat that would eventually take them to Brazil, Professor Manch@ noticed that some of them had neither enough clothing nor the financial means to support themselves during the long voyage. Manche' suggested that a voluntary subscription should be opened to provide those men and women with some decent covering.

The impression given by Maltese migrants to Australia and North Africa was also unsatisfactory. The Tunis correspondent of The Daily Malta Chronicle wrote on August 9th 1913 about Maltese immigrants who arrived in groups, without having any shoes on their feet or jackets on their backs. In Australia people looked on the Maltese in amazement because they spoke a language nobody could understand. The same correspondent noted that the Maltese were known for their foul language and that the French in North Africa referred to them as swearers. One other nuisance which seemed to be associated with the Maltese abroad and at home was the habit of spitting which they seemed to be doing all the time.

The general impression in Malta before the outbreak of the First World War was that emigration was the only solution to the problem of over-population and unemployment. Workers without a job were considered as a potential danger to the stability of the political system and to the efficiency of the island as an important Imperial base. Even the local middle classes were uneasy at the sight of unemployed people because these were now a burden on the economy. It should be remembered that while the ruling classes of Malta discussed emigration and argued about the countries which offered the best opportunities, they themselves felt that they were only academically involved: it was the workers and the farmers that had to be induced to go. Emigration was the apparent solution to the troubles of the labouring classes.

An improbable complication connected with emigration was the thorny question about the privileged position of the Italian language in Malta. Again this was an argument which only
involved the educated masses; these were themselves divided into two camps, those who
favoured the British connection and therefore wished to see English the dominant language in
Malta, and those who felt that their culture was Latin and therefore defended the position still
held by Italian as the language of the elite. The rank and file of the Maltese were only involved
as incidental to the Language Question.

The only language that the Maltese understood was their own: a semitic tongue which they
have been speaking for centuries and which is still today the basic mark of their individuality at
home and even more so abroad. Because Malta had been under foreign rulers for endless
centuries, the dominating families had adopted Italian as the language in which they
communicated with the European mainland. A number of such families were themselves of
non-Maltese stock as their names indicated. The only experience they shared with the ordinary
people of Malta, apart from the Catholic faith, was their residence on the same island.
Members of the higher classes and some of the clergy completed their studies in Italian cities
and consequently the Italian language and culture became the symbol of the preponderance of
the few over the native population.

With the coming of the British at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the position of
Italian became ambiguous especially since the majority of the Maltese did not feel involved in
the language dispute. It was only in 1934 that the language of the people of Malta was made
the principal language at the law courts. The question of the Italian language in Malta was
finally disposed of among the debris left over by Axis bombs during the Second World War.

Inevitably emigration became a political issue; those who favoured emigration contended that
the Maltese should emigrate to the lands of the British Empire over which the sun never set
and which were protected by the Union Jack, itself a sign of stability, democracy and freedom.
Naturally if Maltese decided to emigrate to countries within the British Empire or to the United
States, they had to learn English, and English was then expected to replace Italian in schools.
The pro-English party was made up of the so-called Reformers who were also supported by
influential papers published in English. Those who opposed the Reformers stated somewhat
melodramatically that emigration was an evil plan concocted by the British overlords who
wanted to do away with the native population so that the English could come in and settle in
the Island for good. The anti-Reformers also spread the rumour that the British favoured
emigration to the colonies so that they would have Maltese soldiers ready to fight for them and
defend their possessions. This was the political thesis of the Italianate newspaper, "Malta";
sym-pathisers with this point of view did propagate the suggestion that Malta was an
unredeemed" island and that Italy should annex it. Again. it must be kept in mind that the
Maltese men and women of Malta and Gozo were not even remotely interested in
argumentations relating to Anglo-Saxon or Latin cultures. They kept themselves out of this
battle of words and their constant preoccupation was where to find work and who was willing
to pay them a decent wage.

However the Language Question did cause divisions and waste of precious years. The
administration of the island was kept going even if at a somewhat languid pace. In an effort to
do something to help organise emigration the British governor of the time, General Sir Harry
Barron, set up in 1907 the Malta Emigration Committee which was composed of ten influential
gentlemen who were interested in relieving Malta of its over-population and who were ready to
do something practical rather than lose their energy in useless verbose argumentations which
seem to have been the popular pastimes of Maltese leaders of those times. The Committee
had as its honorary secretary the energetic and resourceful globe-trotter, Dr Charles Mattei.
After completing his studies in Glasgow and Dublin, Dr Mattei returned to Malta in 1906 and
was soon asked by the Governor to help set up the Emigration Committee. Mattei had been to
Australia where he was made Protector of Aborigines and was then affiliated to a tribe of
Aboriginal cannibals. He was also in China where he witnessed the decapitation of twenty
pirates. He also liked Canada very much and had had the foresight to encourage Maltese
emigration to that Dominion. In 1912 he went to Canada to explore the possibility of sending
Maltese emigrants to British Columbia.
During Mattei's absence, his place was taken by Professor Lawrence Manche' who, in the meantime, had been devoting his attention to a scheme to help organise emigration with the aid and collaboration of the Colonial Government, the Church and the people. Manche's was an idealist and he was genuinely surprised that in spite of his letters to the press and an occasional pamphlet written by himself, he had managed to make practically no impact on either the Council of Government, the Church or the people. He favoured Vadala's scheme for emigration to Brazil, an ill-fated venture which ended in tragedy. He opposed the introduction of taxes on landed property and considered income tax as 'very objectionable', hoping it would be abandoned for 'voluntary and spontaneous action' on the part of the Government, the Church and the people. In a letter dated August 5th 1910, Manche' states that taxpayers "are in our case, chiefly the poor country people" and the editor of The Daily Malta Chronicle in his editorial of August 27th 1910, complains that "we do not even want to hear the name of taxes ... we fear that those who would have the least difficulty in paying them are the loudest in proclaiming their utter dissatisfaction with even the mention of them".

The Malta Emigration Committee had no money with which it could offer practical help to intending migrants. Like so many other Maltese bodies of the time it could only talk! The only scheme it approved (only verbally) was Vadala's scheme of free emigration to Brazil. And that turned out to be a colossal fiasco. The Committee had no funds and its status was unofficial. It had no real power to back it. The only practical contribution it made to the movement of Maltese emigration was the correspondence it entered into with the Home and Colonial Governments. In the report published on November 26th 1910 under the signature of Major General A.P. Penton, president of the Committee, it is stated that the gentlemen of the Committee had sat for fifteen regular sessions and information had been received about such diverse countries as Argentina, Canada, Cyprus, the Transvaal, Chile and British Honduras. The report ended with an appeal to the general public to contribute generously towards a fund from which loans could be given to intending migrants.

As it was constituted the Emigration Committee was almost useless. in a speech delivered by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Clauson, to the Council of Government on July 30th 1913, one can find an indirect comment on the inefficiency of the Committee even if the speaker did not intend it as such. Sir John said: "I have already alluded to the Malta Emigration Committee, which preserves a sturdy attitude of complete aloofness from the Government, which 1 much appreciate". It was this 'sturdy aloofness' which was so agreeable to the Colonial administration, that made the Committee largely useless and irrelevant and thus rendered it incapable of contributing anything substantial towards alleviating the hardship of those emigrants who were leaving their homes unaware of what was waiting for them on the other side of the world.

The Council of Government, the gentlemen on the Emigration Committee, and local politicians, talked and occasionally wrote about the need of emigration in a manner which showed that the problem did not concern them; they were only telling the lower classes that they had better emigrate to alleviate the burden on the economy and to seek a brighter future for themselves and their children. They worried about lazy youths because these were a potential threat to their way of life. The Malta Herald of August 1st 1910 made this point painfully clear: "it is the emigration of the masses that Malta wants, of the labouring classes of the farmer and agriculturist and of the various trades; and it is on this account that we have always advocated the establishment of technical schools for our classes".

At least this newspaper spelled out clearly who was expected to leave the island, and it did come out with a valid suggestion: that intending emigrants should be taught a trade before setting out into the wide world. The two most serious handicaps of the Maltese migrant at that time were, his inability to speak English and his status of unskilled labourer. These two disadvantages must also be seen against the background of poverty and lack of financial means.

The need for a technical education rather than a mere literary one for the sons and daughters of the working classes had been felt as far back as 1867 when Dr Charles Casolani had
recommended "a general theoretical and practical school of Mechanical Engineering, Art, Manufactures, Trades, Agriculture etc". Casolani also suggested a Nautical School stationed on a training ship "where a general, theoretical and practical course of instruction will be given to those who, after completing their preparatory studies ... were willing to embrace the naval profession". This school-ship was also to be made available to the "lower orders" so that they could be trained as sailors. Casolani suggested that Primary and Technical education should be geared to practical use because ... "it is well known that in Prussia every man is obliged to learn a trade from the Prince Imperial downwards". The schools were to be the means by which the emigrants’ bread was to be earned and Casolani also included instruction in cooking and in house-hold management as part of the practical education of Maltese students.

It is important to keep in mind that such wise suggestions were made way back in 1867 and repeated again in 1878. But the Colonial Administration would not shake itself into action, partly because it did not want to spend money on education and partly because of the troubled political situation in Malta at that time. Casolani himself was a well known Imperialist. He had tied his suggestions to a very controversial condition, namely that of replacing Italian with English so that that language would "knit the hearts of these islands into one harmonious concord with the British Crown".

Again, the need of preparing the Maltese migrant with a sound education was ignored by a somnolent and indifferent Council of Administration and rendered almost impos-sible by the fanaticism of the two opposing political groupings which were busy arguing with each other on the Language issue while the population of the two islands was left without help and leadership. And while the politicians were wasting their time in grandiloquent rhetoric and invective, the unemployed masses of Malta and Gozo, farmers, workers and youngsters were leaving their homes in increasing numbers.

Leaders of the community were not unaware of the dangers of mass emigration and they felt that something should be done to give migrants some direction, especially when a number of migrants would apply for a passport and actually board a ship without any precise idea as to where their destination lay. Professor Manche' was of the idea that three solutions could be tried in order to put the migratory movement under some sort of dis-cipline. He thought that emigration from Malta and Gozo could either be organised by a syndicate as a private enterprise, or be taken up by the Church with its system of parishes by which practically anybody in these islands could be reached, or by the Colonial Administration which would provide the cash needed in order to help penniless migrants defray, at least part of the expenses involved in order to reach the final destination. However, Manche' himself, rightly felt that the ultimate responsibility lay with the Colonial Administration. He had the foresight to come to the conclusion that "emigration on a large scale cannot be undertaken either by capitalists or by the Church". He was justified when he said that organising emigration on some logical footing was the duty of the political men who sat on the council of government under the chairmanship of the representative of the British Crown.

That same conclusion had been arrived at by Sir Adrian Dingli who in a memorandum published in October 1878 had suggested that emigration to Cyprus should be taken in hand by the Government, and Maltese colonists in Cyprus should be given financial aid by the State and work under the protection of the British Government.

Manche' was also not favourable to the then prevalent idea of creating a Greater Malta Overseas where the emigrant, though he had left his original country, could settle in a place peopled by settlers of his own race, speak his own language, hold the same old traditions and practise the religion of his fathers. Instead, Manche' was of the idea that the Governor should send a representative to an area marked as a possible site where Maltese could successfully settle; this representative would help intending emigrants to find accommodation and work and also act as interpreter. This representative would naturally be a Maltese who would receive from the Maltese Government remuneration depending on the total of emigrants he had helped to settle on that site.
Another sound suggestion put forward by Manche' was the granting of a free passage to "bona fide" emigrants. This could be done, Manche' thought, by entering into an agreement with some steamship lines such as the "Cairn Line" or the "Anglo-Hellenic Steam Navigation Company". This suggestion was an extremely valid one because lack of available cash was the major obstacle in the way of Maltese emigrants. Had this suggestion been taken up in 1910 when Manche' had made it, many Maltese would have left for North America. The irony of it all was that although the Maltese did have intelligent spokesmen for their cause, since Malta was a colony and lacked the strength of a representative form of government, the Maltese could talk and write in vain because their ideas were not backed by political power. Decisions about their livelihood did not rest with them but with their Colonial masters.

Besides practical suggestions, Professor Manche' made other useful recommendations. Manche' wanted "a reliable clerk" to be appointed here in Malta who would collect information about receiving countries and make such information available to those who were interested. This clerk was to make sure that migrants were fit to embark and were also serious in their minds about their decision to emigrate and therefore qualify for a free ticket. His other duty would be to circulate regulations to the towns and villages and with the help of the local parish priest to explain in Maltese such regulations to the illiterate.

Since Manche' was himself a doctor of medicine he was very insistent on migrants being in good shape. He had pleaded with the authorities to help stamp out trachoma. Manche' reasoned that good health was indispensable for the success of an emigrant on whose clean bill of health rested the chance of finding work. Moreover stringent sanitary regulations barred unfit immigrants from gaining a foothold into the new country and Manche' himself knew... "of several Maltese who were precluded from disembarking ... suffering the loss not only of their probable employment but also the expense incurred in going there and back".

Manche' also suggested that emigrants should be of good conduct and have their certificates signed by the Police and their parish priest. The same emigrants were to possess at least 10 before setting out on their destination. Manche' felt that emigrants should preferably be unmarried; if they had a family they should carry with them sufficient capital to support their dependants until they found employment. Skilled migrants and agriculturists were to be preferred to those who had had little or no experience of any specific type of work. However, unskilled workers, of whom Malta had an over abundance, could be sent to "virgin lands" where all kinds of work was required. Those who knew some English were to be preferred to those who knew no English at all. Finally, Manche' was of the opinion that areas of high concentration of Maltese immigrants should never be without the two men indispensable for a sense of security: a priest and a doctor. These two must be Maltese in order to freely communicate with their fellow countrymen. Unfortunately none of these suggestions were ever taken up.

There were some Maltese who thought that the best way to organise emigration was for the Maltese to buy land in Australia, Rhodesia or British East Africa and emigrate there in large numbers, about 50,000, in order to create an area that in future would be something like another Malta - the Greater Malta already alluded to. It was thought that a capital of about 100,000 was needed to realise this project. Needless to say that the Administration never even considered the idea because anything that involved money was discreetly ignored. Some hoped that the Church would provide the necessary capital; this would be a patriotic contribution to help those who were in need and would also advance the cause of religion because emigrants from Catholic Malta would plant the Cross in the heathen parts of darkest Africa. The Royal Commission of 1911 in its report made public the following year accepted the idea of founding a Maltese colony which would serve as a nucleus for future migrants and would also solve the thorny problem of communication since the Maltese spoke only their own language. The Commission called the suggestion of creating a Maltese colony as "the only arrangement practicable".

The Church did set up a "League of the Apostleship of Prayer" which had as its aim the giving of moral and material help to those in dire need. The League established a Penny Bank which
accepted small deposits from people who were saving for their passage. The League was also involved in correspondence about the feasibility of establishing a Maltese colony in Floresville, Texas, U.S.A., or in the area around the town of Malta in the state of Montana. In Floresville there were already some Maltese colonists with a Maltese priest amongst them. In 1910 the League was corresponding with the bishop of Great Falls in Montana, U.S.A., who had expressed interest in receiving Catholic immigrants in his diocese.

Again the work of the League was largely ineffectual. It was an ecclesiastical body which had no official status and had to rely on charity for funds. Members of the League did ask the Administration for funds; it appealed to the wealthy classes. None would listen. Eventually the only concrete result of the League was the setting up of the Penny Bank and its correspondence with Catholic prelates and associations abroad thus disseminating information on the conditions prevailing in various lands.

The Church had tried to play a part in the development of organised emigration from Malta but did not have the necessary status to sponsor a national exodus, nor was the participation of the Church in a purely economic and political venture desirable. More-over, emigration itself was a controversial issue which divided political opinion in Malta. The Governor, on the other hand, had no objection to allowing thousands of Maltese leaving their island and he was equally glad that that was a process by which the administration was relieving its exchequer of unwanted people without spending a penny.

Another alert Maltese gentleman, who was himself a convinced Imperialist, urged the government to move in the matter of emigration because that was a challenge which was not to be -left in the hands of inept philanthropists. The gentleman in question was Commander V.E. Speranza who in January 28th 1911 was in the Chilean port of Valparaiso aboard his ship "Guatemala". Speranza had been interested in the movement of emigrants from Malta to British possessions for a very long time. He was also a determined opponent of those who upheld the privileged position of the Italian language in Malta and he wrote that the compulsory teaching of English in all Maltese schools should be instituted without hesitation and with all possible speed. Moreover Speranza felt that the excessive population of the island was a blessing rather than a headache. Speranza reasoned that as the population increased more Maltese would emigrate and thus strengthen the loyal numbers of British subjects in the colonies in which they settle.

Speranza felt that the immediate adoption of the English language as the principal one in all government schools was imperative. The teaching of English to Maltese students was a wise investment in the future. Speranza suggested the creation of a mutual benefit scheme between Malta and the receiving country. Speranza wisely suggested that Maltese should settle in the Australian state of Victoria. He proposed sending a small pioneering party to test local conditions and prepare the way for the thousands who were to follow. Speranza suggested that a loan of $100,000 at 3% interest should be floated by the Malta Government and the interest paid by an increase in taxation.

Speranza was not listened to; he had however foreseen a situation which was to develop some forty years later when emigrants from Malta would depart in their thousands towards Australia and many would prefer the State of Victoria. Speranza like Manche' before him talked to deaf ears. When it came to money matters the ears of the Colonial Administration were stone deaf.

The question of emigration hinged on one fundamental requirement: that of finance. Most of the unemployed and the under-employed were too poor to spend money on their tickets to go to distant countries such as U.S.A. and Australia. And these were the people who needed to go. Because of lack of money emigrants only ventured as far as the countries bordering on the Mediterranean because these were near enough and going there did not entail much expense. Organised emigration was not possible unless the State was prepared to assist financially those who wanted to go. A letter dated April 6th 1911 which appeared in The Daily Malta Chronicle, suggested the setting up of a voluntary fund to which some two hundred
contributors would donate $5 each in order to raise a fund of $1,000 which was to be made available to applicants who were seeking their future beyond the shores of these islands. The idea was that needy migrants would be given a loan to help them obtain their passage money and these would repay the loan as soon as they found work. If they felt like it they were to give a donation to the fund. The two hundred contributors were to expect no return for their money; any payments would go towards increasing the fund so as to help more people buy their tickets.

At the sitting of the Council of Ministers held on July 30th 1913, the lieutenant governor at that time, Sir John Clauson, promised $300 for the setting up of an Emigration Information Office. This was an idea which had been put forward by the Royal Commission of 1911. The Commissioners had suggested that the pamphlets and information printed by the Emigrants information Office in London should be translated into Maltese and made available throughout different towns and villages in Malta. Two years later the local administration was still toying with the idea, when finally Sir John Clauson made it known that the Emigrants Information Office was to be part of the passport branch in Valletta. "where we have our finger on the pulse of the emigration movement and through which practically every emigrant passes". Sir Clauson made it clear that if the Emigration Information Office started functioning, its sole aim would be to furnish information on the same basis as the Malta Emigration Committee of 1907. Migrants were to be exempted from the 2s6d fee which they normally had to pay when they applied for a passport as long as he "furnishes us with information as to the circumstances of his emigration and destination".

The lieutenant governor also hoped that the information given by those intending to go abroad would help the administration in building up a picture of the dimensions of emigration from these islands. The people's insistence on the need for assisted passages remained ignored because, in Sir John's words ... "it has been decided not to ask the Council for funds to promote emigration by advances to emigrants". The official reason given by the administration was that money offered by the State ... "would have dried up the springs of private subvention to emigrants". Sir John thought that State help would be an unnecessary interference in the migration of Maltese. He also somewhat vaguely described migration as ... "an aggregation of personal movements for private business purposes".

It was obvious that the migrants had no one to turn to when it came to actually asking for cash. Men with philanthropic ideas could express noble thoughts and set them down in writing, but what the migrant needed was funds to help him buy expensive tickets which were normally beyond his reach. To appeal for voluntary contributions was touching but useless. Typical useless suggestions were the execution of musical pro-grammes at the Argotti Gardens in Floriana for the leisured classes, proceeds from which were supposed to go towards helping migrants. Others thought that "subscription balls" could be organised and money raised for the purpose of providing financial help to those who intended to emigrate.

There were noteworthy exceptions to the general rule of high-sounding but useless suggestions. These two honourable exceptions were two gentlemen, Vincenzo Bugeja and Giovanni Pappaffy. Bugeja was a wealthy philanthropist who left substantial sums of money to help the orphans and other unfortunate children. In his will he bequeathed money to an Emigration Fund. This money was to be used towards defraying some of the expense which travel then entailed. In 1912 the number of applications had already exceeded by far the amount of money available; the Bugeja Fund was, by that year, in a depleted condition. However, between 1909 and 1911 the board entrusted with the running of the Bugeja Fund had helped sixty six applicants and given out a total of $2669. 1s. 4d. That was no inconsiderable sum for those days. The destinations of those who received help from the Bugeja Emigration Fund were many but those who wished to emigrate to North America outnumbered the others. In North America three destinations seem to have been popular. These were New York, California and Winnipeg in Canada. Other stated their destinations as North Africa, Australia, the United Kingdom and Tasmania.
The other benefactor of Maltese emigrants was Greek-born Giovanni di Niccolo Pappaffy who was born in 1792 in Salonika and emigrated to Malta when he was only eighteen years of age and later on married a Maltese girl who herself had been born in Corsica. The Pappaffys both knew the hardships of emigration and since their business in Malta had been highly profitable they decided to set up the Pappaffy Fund to help subsidise those who wished to seek their future elsewhere. Giovanni was himself a very highly respected citizen, so much so that he was one of the spokesmen for the con-stitutional rights of the Maltese before the Royal Commission of 1836. Giovanni grew to respect the good qualities of the Maltese worker and he encouraged young men who were unemployed to seek their future where their qualifications could help them to advance in life. When Pappaffy died in 1886 he had left in his will 1,000 to the Maltese people and he stipulated that the interest from that capital was to go towards financing the passage fare of those who wished to emigrate. Those eligible to receive help from the Pappaffy fund were to be young lads between eighteen and twenty-four, who had a working knowledge of the first four rules of arithmetic, who knew two of the following languages: Italian, French, English or Greek, and who mastered the beautiful art of calligraphy.

The Pappaffy Fund had been a generous gesture from a Greek to the Maltese people whom he admired. Up to 1961 a total of 554 migrants had received assistance from the Fund which totalled 23,786. 15s. Between the years 1908 -191 1, sixty-two emigrants received subsidies from the Fund and of these only two had returned home, and these because of ill health. Although some had gone to Egypt and the Sudan, the majority, twenty-two in all, preferred North America. Eleven chose Australia, five of whom settled in Sydney, while others went to the United Kingdom the others to Mediterranean countries.

The gestures of Bugeja and Pappaffy were commendable and they should have inspired similar efforts from those who were always ready to give suggestions but did nothing practical. But Bugeja and Pappaffy were mere drops in the vast sea that surrounded the Maltese islands. Moreover the money from these two funds never really reached the illiterate masses of the people who most urgently needed financial assistance. Pappaffy's conditions effectively excluded dockyard workers and farmers who could hardly write in their own language much less know anything about the art of calligraphy. In addition, married men, women, applicants who had more than twenty-four years, and those with no education were all debarred from the benefits offered by Pappaffy. One commentator justly moaned about Bugeja and Pappaffy when he wrote in 191 1: "these exist, for all- practical purposes, for the benefit of those who have not yet experienced the bitterness of disappointment; working men, married generally, who can no longer support here their wives, their children".

Local voluntary agencies could not hope to provide the necessary capital to finance passages to North America, much less to Australia. The colonial administration wanted more people to leave but it would not have anything to do with the financial side of subsidising emigration. The unemployed people of Malta had two alternatives: either stay at home and hope for a change in the local situation - incidentally, a change which was about to come with dramatic force with the outcome of the 1914-’18 War and the consequent activity which those hostilities brought to the harbours of Malta - or else decide to emigrate if the money were available.

The evidence of the Hon. Lieutenant -Colonel E.P.S. Roupell D.S.O. given to the Royal Commission of 1911 is poignantly relevant to social and economic prospects for the beginning of the twentieth century in Malta. Roupell was acting Lieutenant-Governor and Post Master General and in 1905 he was assistant secretary to the Colonial Adminis-tration. He testified ... "Everyone who has been here a few years always wonders how one half the place lives; but they are like one large family, and they are so very charitable and helpful to each other that they can always find a little money for a specific purpose. The other day we had a case of a man who had saved 3. Somebody in the family gave him 3 and he sold furniture for 11, making 17 and somebody else helped to pay his passage. He fell sick and returned disheartened. He could not stay there on account of something the matter with his eyes".
Roupell’s evidence was disarmingly sincere; he was also completely uninvolved in the local situation. He remained aloof and very distant as behaved a member of the British ruling class and displayed only a sense of curiosity on how the natives managed to survive. Roupell noticed the concern most Maltese showed towards each other and related the pathetic efforts of an intending migrant to collect a meagre sum of money to go away from what had been his home and country, only to be crushed by failure; probably the cause of this failure was trachoma.

The problems of lack of finance and occasional ill health debarred the way to emigration, but the migrant from Malta had another disadvantage. He had no one to clearly suggest to him where to go. In 1911 Professor Manche\{ advised against emigration to Canada and Australia because Canada was too cold and Australia was too English. Subsequent history of Maltese emigration was to prove Manche\{ wrong. Manche\{ was right however when he said that California was a good place to go to. He also suggested the American states of Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma, but emigration to these states never got started.

Charles Mattei recommended emigration to British Columbia and the American Pacific States of Washington, Oregon and California. Others suggested Australia, Rhodesia and British East Africa, particularly the Sudan, this latter country was preferable because of its relative accessibility, its affiliation within the British Empire and because ... "it must not be forgotten that we are more or less of Punic origin and that the Southern sun agrees with us better than the Northern ices and snow". The Maltese themselves had shown a marked preference to the U.S.A. Some others had gone to Canada and a trickle had even ventured as far as Australia. The old established Maltese settlements in North Africa continued to thrive. The Royal Commission of 1911 had considered Egypt and the Sudan as the only openings left to Maltese emigrants, with the exception of California. The Comissioners noted that ... ',the Maltese have long been accustomed to emigrate to North Africa, and we believe that they are perfectly capable of taking advantage, without Government assistance, of such openings as present themselves".

One cannot but note the Commission's anxiety not to involve the administration in organising some form of financial help to needy emigrants. It came as no surprise when the Commissioners admitted that they could find no satisfactory conclusion to the problem of emigration because only governments had the power to do so. The colonial administration remained adamant on its refusal to proffer financial assistance to prospective migrants and because of lack of hard cash no real and effective organisation could be put into the Maltese emigration movement.

Although emigration as the alternative to excessive population had been advocated at least since 1895, a thinking section of Maltese society had refused to accept emigration as the panacea to Malta's problems. The National Party, with its pro-Italian feelings, had opposed emigration for reasons already stated. Since 1903 the elected members in the Council of Administration were mostly from the ranks of the National Party and these expressed their xenophobic fears about the number of foreigners who were coming in while the Maltese were being urged to emigrate.

The organ of the National Party, "Malta", on February 7th 1911 called the attention of its readers to the large number of settlers from England who had made their permanent abode on the island. The paper also complained about foreign workers who had been previously recruited to work on the breakwater and on other Naval works and who had stayed in the island when there was no longer any need of them because major construction works had ended by 1907. Another paper, "The Malta Herald" of February 9th 1911 noted that such men and their families ... "all seem to have found means of living, ... the fact must not be lost sight of that Malta is our own, and for the Maltese in preference to aliens". Even pro-emigration sources voiced their concern about the inflow of outsiders and called for effective checks on foreigners running profitable businesses in competition with locals. It seemed then that all that an alien needed to settle in Malta was a money guarantee which was easily obtainable even by those who had absolutely no
Uncontrolled emigration, on the other hand, was worrying some observers among whom are to be included the two gentlemen who were so involved in the movement: Manche and Mattei. As early as August 5th 1910, Manche warned that mass emigration could inflate wages because of the dearth of available men. Manche proposed the reclamation of abandoned farmland which was state property. This land would then be offered free of charge to whoever was willing to work it and then, after five years the tenant would start paying a nominal rent.

During the sitting of the Council of Government held on February 8th 1911 Dr Mattei noted the large number of able-bodied men who were leaving the island. Dr Mattei calculated that for every migrant who had left the island (he had earlier on calculated that some 300,000 Maltese were abroad!) the local exchequer was losing some £40,000, allowing £ 8d a day for the wealth-producing labourer and an active life-span of some forty years. Without wholly accepting Mattei's statistics and calculations it was obvious that the less pleasant effects of emigration on a grand scale were already tothering those who had the future well-being of Malta at heart. After all the best investment of a nation has been its working population and an exodus of healthy men from an island contained a quarter of a million people could have had a debilitating effect.

Maltese who had already settled abroad were writing cautious letters home; some dissonant voices were occasionally heard through the press. A certain Mr Charles E. Bonavaia who had emigrated to Western Australia wrote a critical letter bearing the date of May 30th 1913 in which he criticised the way Malta was being governed and stated that the present hardship in the island could have been avoided if those who were responsible had planned for the island's development. Bonavia wrote ... "Although Malta is over-populated, if things were carried on there as they are in other parts of the world, the island, small as it is, would be big enough to hold the lot of them". Bonavia was not typical of the average emigrant. He was highly educated and was a graduate of the Royal University.

Malta's ever active press did not accept emigration as the final solution. The protection of local products by levying taxation on imported goods was another suggestion to improve the economy of Malta. The attitude of the average Maltese on importation and taxation was ambivalent to say the least. Maltese mentality had been influenced by colonial thinking. Locally produced articles were thought of as low class and imported products were considered better simply because they were made in other countries. While imported goods flooded the local market - in 1910 the import bill rose to the tune of about £2,000,000 - there was fierce opposition to any imposition of duties on foreign goods. The National Party was steadfastly opposed to duties and taxes and consequently the Council of Administration was not able to give protection to local goods. The editor of The Daily Malta Chronicle in an editorial of August 27th 1910, bemoans the fact that a Maltese gentleman would extend his patronage to a foreign barber because that was the trendy thing to do; foreign shoes were more fashionable. The painting inside the parish church at Birkirkara, completed at a cost of about £5,000 was entrusted to a foreigner; the same thing had been done when the church of St Paul in Valletta was decorated by an Italian. The editor, conscious of the fact that so many Maltese were out of work, put the question: "Have we no local talent?"

What Malta sorely needed at that time was a form of a representative government that would look after the civilian needs of the people. To the British, the island was a strategic base necessary for the domination of the Mediterranean to guard the sea-routes to India. Few cared about the real needs of the people: education, health, and a stable economy that was not wholly dependent on the strategy of Imperial policy planned in London.

In 1887 a constitution had been granted which tried to reconcile Imperial and Maltese interests through a system of dual control. The Council of Government was made up of twenty members, fourteen of whom were to represent the Maltese electorate, while the Governor retained the power of the veto to safeguard Imperial interests. This constitution was revoked...
in 1903 because of constant clashes between colonial and national needs. The island was again to be ruled by a Council with elected members who were outnumbered by those representing the interests of the Empire. This constitution was despised by the Maltese, and the representatives of the people very often resigned soon after they were elected. This they did as a form of protest.

The Maltese could not speak with one voice, divided as they were by internal political divergencies. However, radical spokesmen for the unemployed began to address the masses. One such angry voice was that of Manwel Dimech (1860-1921) who opposed Malta's colonial status, called for economic and political independence, wrote in favour of the Maltese language when others were arguing for the supremacy of either English or Italian, and championed the cause of the emancipation of women. Dimech had con-siderable influence among Dockyard workers some of whom joined his radical League of the Enlightened (Xirka tal-Imdawwlin) which he founded in 1911. When war broke out in 1914 Dimech was exiled to Alexandria, Egypt, where he died in 1921.

During the first three months of 1913 a local newspaper wrote about "a veritable flow tide of emigration from Malta to British North America". In March of that year at least one hundred and fifty emigrants departed for Canada and the editor of that paper speculated whether those were the beginnings of what might in future be something like seven thousand leaving every year. That forecast never materialised because of the declaration of war in 1914.

No official statistics were kept. When Sir F. Mowatt of the Royal Commission of 1911 asked E.P.S. Roupell how many Maltese had emigrated during the last few years, Roupell regretted that he did not know. When intending emigrants applied for their passports and the clerk asked them what their destination was, according to Roupell's evidence, many would simply tell him to put in any place he liked.

Two years later, in 1913, Roupell's successor, Clauson, spoke of ... "the stream of emigration ... during the last few months the exodus to Canada has been so great...". A statement published in "The Malta Herald" bearing the date of June 6th 1912 shows that between January 1st 1909 and May 1st 1912 there were 1,222 passports issued which covered 1,203 emigrants. It must be borne in mind that such statistics do not include Mediterranean ports but only countries such as Australia, Canada, U.S.A. and Brazil. The largest number of applicants, 602 in all, were those who wanted to emigrate to U.S.A.

One other difficulty in establishing the number of emigrants during the period in question is that Malta had no direct routes with the receiving countries and therefore, most emigrants had to go to North America or Australia through a European port. Ships calling at Valletta sailed for Naples, Genoa, Marseilles or Le Havre and then the Maltese had to embark on a transatlantic liner. Men who left Malta's ports in this manner would be listed as having gone to Europe and not to America or Australia. It is also a known fact that a sizeable number of passengers who had embarked for North African ports such as, Port Said, Tripoli or Tunis, would then carry on their journey to more distant parts of the world.

The report of the Malta Emigration Committee of November 26th 1910 showed that during 1907-1910 the trend of emigration from Malta was to Western seaboard of U.S.A. and Canada where some Maltese had been settled since 1895. That report showed that in California alone there were about two hundred Maltese. During 1910 some three hundred emigrants, mostly from Mosta and Naxxar had settled in San Bruno, California, where... "they were almost all living together in the same place".

In a letter written on May 19th 1911 Dr Charles Mattei claimed that during the eleven months between April 1910 and May 1911 he had sent about five hundred Maltese to North America. It is possible though, that this number includes the previous three hundred already mentioned in the report of November 1910. According to reports printed in various newspapers of the time, between February 1912 and March 1913 about one hundred migrants left to various...
destinations within the U.S.A. This should bring the total number of known departures to about 600. Such a conjecture is compatible with the figure of 602 persons, who according to the statement issued in 1912, had applied to emigrate to the U.S.A.

The migratory movement from the Maltese islands during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century was only a very small part of the vast emigration that was going on from Europe to other less populated parts of the world. The drawbacks which made this process difficult for the Maltese were also experienced by other European migrants, but at least no Maltese emigrant ever left his island because of political or religious persecution. On the other hand the Maltese did have some peculiar problems of their own: their country of origin was largely unknown and because of this they very often aroused suspicion. The Maltese described themselves as Europeans who were also British subjects. But to call oneself British without being able to speak English was somewhat contradictory. Malta was a colony with no responsible parliament and the colonial administration was never very interested in the civilian needs of the population because to the British policy-makers the island's value was purely strategic and related to the defence and interests of the Empire.

Emigration was not the most desirable solution to the underdevelopment of Malta's economy; it did however, offer some respite. After all many major European nations looked on emigration as a solution to their many problems and also as a means of increasing their influence beyond their frontiers.

The plight of the Maltese emigrant could have been eased had the rulers of the time come forward with some financial help or offered their leadership. This never came about. The development of Maltese emigration right up to the First World War continued in a confused manner; but continue it did. When no help or leadership were available the men and women from the small towns and villages of Malta relied solely on themselves: on their alert minds and on their tough muscles supported by a strong determination to succeed.

ONBOARD TOWARDS BRAZIL

THE MALTESE IMMIGRATION

by Almir da Silveira (Brazil)

Beyond the line of grey cargo ships and the terrible heat, the SS. Province reached the port city of Santos. After a month on board, father Charbon and his flock of seventy three people had finally arrived in Brazil, their new homeland. In the same month of April, another ship left Malta bringing another 106 souls to work in the coffee plantations. Though they would also come to work in the plantations, their final destination would not be the same.

The year was 1912 and the opening of the twentieth century which found Malta with an increasing population, a high rate of unemployment and the absence of a developing industrial sector. With the detraction of Malta's naval importance, the problem became even worse, and a great number of Maltese started to leave Malta.

Most of the Maltese emigrants arrived in Brazil holding a British passport and were, therefore, considered by the Brazilian authorities to be British citizens, and not Maltese. Add to it the fact that some of the emigrants had their surnames changed to have an anglicized touch in them. Despite the lack of trustworthy statistics, as Dr Bonnici from Maringa State University explains in his article, we can divide the Maltese emigration to Brazil into three different periods with distinct purposes.
The first group of emigrants arrived in the first decade of the twentieth century to work in the coffee plantations. By that time Brazil's economy was heavily based on the coffee monoculture, and coffee was the most valued asset of the nation. There was a demand for people to work in the plantations, and a great number of European emigrants came to Brazil. The first group of Maltese headed to the plantations in Sao Paulo, while the second group was sent to rural activities in Fortaleza, in Northern Brazil. From these two groups that arrived in Brazil, many of the families returned to Malta.

The second group of emigrants arrived by the end of the 20's to work for the British enterprise of building and maintenance of Brazilian railroads. The few miles of Brazilian railroads were an impediment to the flow of the Brazilian production proceeding from other regions. It was in the twenties that the railway expansion boomed and President Washington Luis summarized its importance in his well known motto: "Governing is a railway building." Almost all the Maltese that came to Brazil at that time met Mr Dominic Collier from Floriana, who held an administrative position in the Sao Paulo-Parana railway company.

The third and last Maltese immigration to Brazil in the 50's and 60's differed totally from the previous two and had a religious purpose. During the fifties the State of Parana experienced an economical development and the spiritual need of the population were increasing. The Franciscan Order of Malta had been required to send some sisters to help with the growing diocese of Jacarezinho. Throughout the fifties and sixties a great number of priests proceeding from the islands of Malta and Gozo arrived to Brazil. Priests coming from Zebug, Naxxar, Birkirkara, Floriana and many other Maltese and Gozotian cities were sent to a great number of dioceses, not only to the State of Parana but also to the States of Sao Paulo and Pernambuco. In 1977 father Walter Ebejer was consecrated bishop of the diocese of Vitoria do Sul. Father Ebejer is author Francis Ebejer's brother.

Presently, many families of Maltese background can be found in several Brazilian cities; quite a few remained from the first and second immigration groups and most of the others are priests in the clerical work. Among them we can find the Busuttils, the Zammits and many other Maltese descendants; and if we take a look at the telephone directory we will find many other Maltese surnames, such as Azzopardi, Balzan, Cutajar, and so many others which sound familiar to any Maltese. Among the priests, Father Xavier from Luqa is well know to all those who got married in the beautiful parish of Osasco.