

# THE BIRTH OF THE GOZO LYCEUM

## SOME HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Only those of us who are well-acquainted with local history can fully appreciate the utter neglect - by foreigners and Maltese alike - in which Gozo and its people have patiently had to toil and suffer throughout the centuries!

Even if we focus our attention only on the very slow and belated development of education during the British era, it will be enough for us to realize our dear little island's plight. For, whereas in Malta, by 1850, quite apart from the University, there was a well-attended Lyceum<sup>1</sup>, 24 Government Primary Schools, a night school for adults in Zabbar and an "industrial" school for orphan girls in Floriana,<sup>2</sup> there were only 4 Government Primary Schools in the whole of Gozo: one for boys and one for girls in Rabat and two similar ones in Nadur.<sup>3</sup> However, all the four Gozo schools were considered 2nd class institutions, like those in the minor villages of Malta. In 1850, however, Canon Paolo Pullicino, then Director of Education, asked that the Rabat school be upgraded to 1st Class.<sup>4</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that the Rabat Boys' School was not the local Government's brainchild, for it had been opened by the "Societa' Della Scuola Normale Di Valletta" around 1820<sup>5</sup>, in its highly commendable attempt to revive an old, endowed school which, for centuries, had been run by the local municipality - then known as "Universita'" - together with the Collegiate Church in the citadel. The school had often closed its doors for lack of funds. Thus, when Monsignor Pietro Dusina in 1775 asked the Vicar Forane, Don Laurentius a' Papis, if there was a local school, the answer was in the negative.<sup>6</sup> But the school went on shedding its spasmodic and feeble light till the arrival of Napoleon in 1798, when it was still being run by Don Giuseppe Cremona.<sup>7</sup>

In 1795, a big school was opened by a certain Fr. Michael Angelo Lauron.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, Fr. Lauron died soon afterwards, but a number of altruistic and prominent, local personalities came to the aid of the establishment. They immediately petitioned Grand Master Hompesch to help; and he "not only acceded to the request but also elevated it to the dignity of Magisterial College".<sup>9</sup> Like all other schools, it had to close its doors during the French Occupation, but was re-opened by private initiative in 1802. The Government, however, soon assumed financial responsibility for it, and it thus became one of the first three Government-aided, primary schools in both islands.

Apart from the above-mentioned 4 government-run, primary schools, there was not a single government secondary school for either boys or girls in all Gozo! In fairness to the British Government, however, it has to be stated that an an-

nual grant of 50 scudi for the Rabat (Gozo) school's upkeep, was authorized 31 years before the British Parliament in Westminster ever voted a penny for primary schools in either England or Wales.<sup>10</sup> Under the dynamic energy of Canon Pullicino, however, things at long last began to move, even if only tentatively and grudgingly. In fact, on 16th September, 1851, in a moving ceremony held in the upper hall of what is now The Victoria Primary School in Vairinga Street, before a sizable crowd which included "il capitolo della chiesa Matrice, i magistrati dell'isola, molti parrochi, alcuni superiori di comunita' religiose, ed altre persone ragguardevoli del paese",<sup>11</sup> the Director officially declared the opening of a new secondary school. It was a start, even though of very little academic value.

Indeed, in his laudatory discourse for the occasion, Pullicino admitted that a number of subjects he considered "superfluous" was to be omitted: "lasciando a parte il superfluo, ed economizzando un tempo".<sup>12</sup> He unambiguously informed the audience, that "alcune lingue antiche", as well as "molte lingue volgari" were to be omitted from the school's curriculum.<sup>13</sup> What he meant by "lingue antiche" is difficult to understand since Latin was to be one of the most important subjects. Certainly, the teacher of this language was to act temporarily as leader of the school. He was to keep the General Register<sup>14</sup>, and he was also to oversee the admission of new students.<sup>15</sup> One can, therefore, assume that by "lingue antiche" he was referring only to classical Greek.

<sup>1</sup> Agius Delicata, Joseph, "A Brief Account of The Historical Development Of The Lyceum In Malta From Its Institution To The Present Day", unpublished B. Ed. Thesis, Malta University, 1953, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> Pullicino, Can. P., "Rapporto Sulla Educazione Primaria Nelle Isole Di Malta E Gozo", Malta, 1850, (henceforth only "Rapporti") p.3.

Cfr: Laferla, A.V., "British Malta", vol. I, Malta, 1938, p.13.

<sup>3</sup> Pullicino, Can. P., ut supra, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, Appendice C, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> "The Sixth Report Of The Normal School Society Of Valletta", Malta 1829, p.9.

<sup>6</sup> (National Library (M)alta, Bibl. Ms. 643, p.417: "qui non ce (sic!) Mastro di Scuola".

<sup>7</sup> Gatt, Guze', "It-Taghlim f' Malta", in "Is-Sebh", 24 ta' Frar, 1958, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> "Ghawdex": article signed "Vox", 8th June, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> DeBono, Joe, "The Beginnings Of Education In Gozo", in "Gozo Yearbook 1979", Gozo Press, 1979, pp.67-68.

<sup>10</sup> Birchenough, C., "History of Elementary Education In England And Wales", University Tutorial Press, Oxford, 1920, p.62.

<sup>11</sup> Pullicino, Can. C., "In Occasione Della Inaugurazione Delle Nuove Classi Di Secondaria Istruzione Nel Rabato Del Gozo" (henceforth referred to as Pullicino "Discorso"), Note on unnumbered page before text.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, ut supra, p.8

<sup>13</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Pullicino, Can. P., "Circolari Ai Maestri Ed Alle Maestre Delle Scuole Di Primaria Educazione Di Malta E Gozo - Dal 1mo. Luglio 1850 Al 31 Agosto 1861", Malta 1861. Vide: Circular 18/12/1861 dated under "Scuola Secondaria, Gozo, p.75.

<sup>15</sup> Id., ibid.

However, Pullicino stressed that the level of teaching was to be superior to that in the adjoining primary school, although the two schools were to be regarded not as different entities but merely as different stages of the same institution. In fact, he stated: "vedrete subito come queste classi, unite alla scuola primaria ad esse sottoposta e con esse coordinata, possano insieme comporre un istituto, atto a preparare sufficientemente i giovani ai gradi piu' elevati della universita'".<sup>1</sup>

This meant, that despite his verbose panegyric, Pullicino was making it quite clear to all and sundry that unlike the Malta Lyceum, which formed part of the Malta University, the Gozo Secondary School - which, incidentally, he very frequently referred to as "classi di secondaria istruzione"<sup>2</sup> was nothing more than a glorified form of a first-class primary school. In fact, in

the very first regulation for the nascent school, it was unequivocally stated that "Le classi d'istruzione secondaria formano parte aggiunta alla Scuola primaria del Rabato"<sup>3</sup>

And as if to rub salt on an open wound, he specifically admitted that the new secondary school was such as, in other places, would be called "scuola primaria superiore".<sup>4</sup>

To make matters even worse, Pullicino considered each of the four secondary school classes as an autonomous entity, completely independent of each other as regards teaching. This meant that each teacher worked independently of his colleagues and, naturally, there were quite disparate levels in the subjects offered and the standards achieved!

Yet, the curriculum was quite imposing, as can be seen from the following schedules:-

### CLASSE DI LATINO E DI RETTORICA

Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri	Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri
DI LATINO	1	Etimologia Traduzione dal Latino Analisi Grammaticale	Em. Alvaro Gramm. Sulp. Severi Sacrae Historiae Eutr. Com. Rom. His. Corn. Nepotis Vitae	DI RETTORICA	4	Istituzione di Rettorica Traduzione dal Latino e dall'Italiano Analisi Rettorica	Decolonia de Arte Reth. Ciceronis Orationes Virgili Eglogae Ovid. Metamorph.
	2	Sintassi Traduzione dal Latino e dall'Italiano Analisi Grammaticale	Em. Alvaro Gramm. Ciceronis Epistolae de Officiis Phedri Fabulae		5	Elementi di Elocuzione Traduzione come sopra Analisi Rettorica	Decolonia de Arte Reth. Ciceronis Orationes Virgili Aeneides
	3	Prosodia Traduzione dal Latino e dall'Italiano Analisi Grammaticale	Em. Alvaro Gramm. I. Caesaris Commentaria Sallustii Historiae Ovid. Elegiae		6	Studio Addizionale di Logica Traduzione come sopra Analisi Logica	L. Valla Logica Titi Livii Historiae Horatii Carmina Terentii Com.

N.B. - Le ammissioni nella Classe inferiore e nella superiore hanno luogo ogni tre anni. Il corso intero e' di anni sei. Coloro che per via di esame se ne mostrano atti possono essere ammessi nel secondo o nel terzo anno, si' nella Classe inferiore che nella superiore.<sup>5</sup>

### CLASSE DI ELOCUZIONE E COMPOSIZIONE ITALIANA

Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri	Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri
INFERIORE	1	Etimologia Comp. in istile Epistolare Mis. e Mov. del Globo	Puoti Elem. di Lingua Italiana Puoti Adv. all'Arte dello scrivere Fornaciari Prose Reid's Geography	SUPERIORE	4	Elementi di Composizione Composizione in istile didattico Geografia Storica antica	Picci Guida al comporre Putz Elem. di Storia e Geografia
	2	Sintassi Comp. in istile descrittivo Geografia fisica	Cristoforo Gramm. Puoti Adv. all'Arte dello scrivere Fornaciari Poesie Reid's Geography		5	Elementi di Comp. in istile didattico Geografia Storica Moderna	Picci Guida al comporre Putz Elem. di Storia e Geografia
	3	Prosodia Comp. in istile descrittivo Cosmografia	Corticelli Regole della lingua Toscana Picci Primo Adv. al comporre. Secondo Adv. al comp. Reid's Geography		6	Elementi di Elocuzione Composizione in istile Oratorio Geografia Politica	Costa della Elocuzione Balbi Comp. di Geografia

N.B. - Le ammissioni nella Classe inferiore e nella superiore hanno luogo ogni tre anni. Il corso intero e' di anni sei. Coloro che per via di esame se ne mostrano atti possono essere ammessi nel secondo o nel terzo anno, si' nella Classe inferiore che nella superiore.<sup>6</sup>

**CLASSE DI ELOCUZIONE E DI COMPOSIZIONE INGLESE**

Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri	Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri
INFERIORE	1	Etimologia Traduzione dal l' Inglese	Lennie's Eng. Gram. Enfield Select pieces of Prose	SUPERIORE	4	Elementi di Composizione Esercizi elementari di Composizione	Chamber's introduction to English Composition
	2	Sintassi Traduzione dall'Inglese	Grammar come sopra Select Pieces come sopra		5	Elementi di Composizione in istile Epistolare	Chamber's introduction come sopra
	3	Prosodia Traduzione dall'Inglese e dall'Italiano	Grammar come sopra Select Pieces of poetry		6	Principi di Elocuzione Esercizi di Composizione in istile didattico	Chamber's Principles of Elocution

N.B. - Le ammissioni nella Classe inferiore e nella superiore hanno luogo ogni tre anni. Il corso intero e' di anni sei. Coloro che per via di esame se ne mostrano atti possono essere ammessi nel secondo o nel terzo anno, si' nella Classe inferiore che nella superiore.<sup>7</sup>

**CLASSE DI MATEMATICA**

Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri	Classe	Anno	Lezioni ed Esercizi	Libri
INFERIORE	1	Aritmetica	Francoeur Corso completo di Matematiche pure Aritmetica	SUPERIORE	4	Algebra Geografia Matematica	Francoeur Corso completo di Matem. pure Algebra Hughe's Mat. Geog.
	2	Geometrisa Piana Sferica	Legendre Elementi di Geometria		5	Geografia Analitica Geografia Matematica	Francoeur come sopra Geom. Analitica Hughe's Mat. Geog.
	3	Misurazione	Mensuration for the use of the Irish Schools		6	Trigonometria Piana Sferica Geografia Matematica	Legendre Trigonometria Hughe's Mat. Geog.

N.B. - Le ammissioni nella Classe inferiore e nella superiore hanno luogo ogni tre anni. Il corso intero e' di anni sei. Coloro che per via di esame se ne mostrano atti possono essere ammessi nel secondo o nel terzo anno, si' nella Classe inferiore che nella superiore.<sup>8</sup>

The teachers and their respective subjects were:-<sup>9</sup>

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>TEACHER</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Latin and Rhetoric Italian and Elocution	Fr. Tommaso Pace, D.D., Dr. Giuseppe Xuereb LL.D.	First teacher i/c of school First teacher i/c Nadur Primary and later A/teacher Rabat Primary
English and Elocution Mathematics	Fr. Fulminio Paolo Dr. Mallia Edoardo	

<sup>1</sup> Idem, "Discorso", op. cit., p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, Title page. Cfr: Idem, "Circolari. . ." op. cit., p.67 et passim.

<sup>3</sup> Pullicino, Can. P., "Circolari", op. cit.: circular dated 22nd September, 1851, p.67

<sup>4</sup> Idem, "Rapporti", op. cit.: "Secondo Rapporto. . .", 1852, p.4: "Di modo che forma oggi essa per Gozo cio che chiamasi altrove scuola primaria superiore".

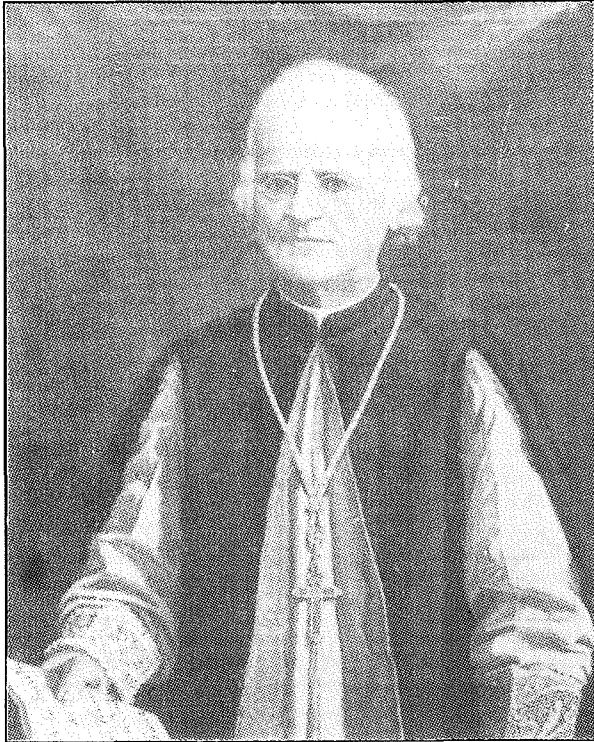
<sup>5</sup> Pullicino, "Circolari", op. cit., p.71.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, p.72.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, p.73.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.74.

<sup>9</sup> "Malta Government Blue Book 1852", p.282.



*Kan. Paolo Pullicino M.A., D.D., D.Theol., D.Ph. (1815-1890)*

A careful perusal of this prospectus, however, will show that despite Pullicino's fanfare, the curriculum comprised only five subjects: Latin, Italian, English, Mathematics and Geography. Even more astonishing was the omission of Religion! Indeed, this state of affairs was to last for more than a quarter of a century, for when Royal Commissioner, Patrick Joseph Keenan, made his exhaustive report on the educational system of Malta in 1879, he wrote: "No religious instruction is given in the school. Indeed, in this respect it is unique. It is the only school in which, either in Malta or in Gozo, there is no provision for such instruction".<sup>1</sup> It has to be said, however, that somewhat flimsy arrangements were made for the boys to attend Sunday morning prayers, to hear Mass and to listen to a lecture by a priest on a religious topic in the church of San Giacomo<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the contents of the curriculum, Keenan reported that the five subjects in the curriculum comprised only Latin, Mathematics, Italian, English and Drawing.<sup>3</sup> This means that Geography had been dropped. Yet, in that year, the Valletta Lyceum provided instruction in English, Italian, Latin, French, Arabic, Mathematics, History, Geography, Drawing, Book-Keeping and Penmanship. There were also 4 "schools", or classes, of technical instruction, i.e., of: Descriptive Geometry and Mechanics, Mechanical Engineering, Land Surveying and Navigation; as well as Evening Classes offering Practical Geometry, Book-Keeping, Commercial Arithmetic, Correspondence and Drawing.<sup>4</sup>

But whereas Keenan was very critical of the Malta Lyceum, and the liberty with which the students attending it chose their subjects and absented themselves, he was quite satisfied with the progress of the students and the competence of the teachers in the Gozo Secondary School.

For example, he described the teacher of the Latin Class, a priest, as "very bright, energetic and efficient".<sup>5</sup> His students' answers were also satisfactory.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the instruction of the teacher of Italian "was very varied and interesting and the answering of his pupils satisfactory".<sup>7</sup>

Only the teacher of English did not come up for praise. He was contemporaneously the teacher in charge of the adjoining Primary school where he, apparently, was doing some sterling work, for Keenan stated: "of his work in the Primary school, I have a high opinion".<sup>8</sup> But in the Secondary School he was not so successful, even though his students' translation from English to Italian "was very satisfactory".<sup>9</sup>

This means that the Gozo students were making good use of the long time-table described below:-

From 8 to 10 a.m.	Algebra and Trigonometry
10 to 11	Latin and Rhetoric
11 to 12	English
2 to 4 p.m.	Elocution and Italian Composition
4 to 5	English <sup>10</sup>

This time-table was applicable from Monday to Saturday with the exception of days of obligation. Incidentally the summer holidays lasted from 16th July to 8th September.<sup>11</sup>

One very surprising item is the age of the students attending at the time: in the lower division of the Latin class it was 16.6 years while in the upper division it was 20 years.<sup>12</sup>

Within three decades, however, the school's standards, seemed to have declined somewhat, if we consider the results of the annual examination in July, 1908. The number of students, too, seemed to be decreasing, for whereas, in 1907 there were 56 on the register, in 1908, there were only 44.<sup>13</sup>

In the Lower class, of the 31 students, taking Latin, 17 scored less than 60 per cent of the marks allotted while only 11 scored over 60 per cent. In English, out of 31 students, only 6 scored more than 60 per cent, while 24 scored less than 60 per cent. In Italian, the results were even worse, for out of 29 students only 4 scored more than 60 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

What was even more alarming was the fact that no students in the lower class sat for algebra, geometry or history, while in the upper class, no student took arithmetic, or geography!<sup>15</sup> One can, therefore, perhaps surmise that the Malta Lyceum students' liberty to choose their subjects had infected their Gozo Secondary Schools' colleagues as well!!

Keenan would have liked to call the Gozo Secondary School "a Lyceum", but as it was under the jurisdiction of the Director of Primary Schools, he did not feel authorized to do so.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, several decades had to pass, before it was accorded the title by Dr. A. V. Laferla, then Director of Education in his 1934-35 Annual Report.<sup>17</sup> Yet, only one year earlier, Laferla had stated that "This school hardly deserved the name of a Lyceum".<sup>18</sup> Could it be, therefore, that only some sort of political pressure forced him to change the school's name? Certainly, he felt that "What Gozo needs is a good Agricultural School!"<sup>19</sup>

In fairness, however, it must be stated that the school

had been, and was still, passing through some very bad days. In fact, between 1919 and October 1935, it had never had its full complement of classes, as the following figures well show:-

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CLASSES</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1919/20	Higher	17	48 <sup>20</sup>
	Lower	31	
1921/22	Higher	29	57 <sup>21</sup>
	Lower	28	
1922/23	Higher	14	39 <sup>22</sup>
	Lower	25	
1923/24	Class I	29	49 <sup>23</sup>
	Class II	14	
	Class III	6	
1924/25	Class I	30	53 <sup>24</sup>
	Class II	15	
	Class III	8	

There were, at the time, 2 full-time Masters, i.e. Mr. H. F. Scott and Fr. Giuseppe Galea, as well as 5 visiting teachers.<sup>25</sup>

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CLASSES</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1926/27	Class I	26	47 <sup>26</sup>
	Class III	15	
	Class V	6	

The staff, too, had dwindled to 1 full-time Master, Fr. Giuseppe Galea, who was in charge of the school, and 5 visiting teachers.<sup>27</sup>

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CLASSES</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1928/29	Class I	28	52 <sup>28</sup>
	Class III	18	
	Class V	6	

The staff had increased too: 1 full-time teacher, Fr. G. Galea, who was still in charge of the school; 1 acting teacher of English; and 5 visiting teachers. Incidentally, the school had, for a number of years, formed part of the Secondary Schools' Department, under the "Director" Cyril Leach.<sup>29</sup>

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CLASSES</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1929/30	Class II	24	44 <sup>30</sup>
	Class IV	16	
	Class VI	4	

The staff now consisted of 3 full-time Masters, viz: Fr. Giuseppe Galea, still in charge; Fr. Giuseppe Farrugia and Mon-

signor Salv. Attard. Yet, despite the limitations of the school, the levels were quite good, for student Giuseppe Vella of Class VI passed the Malta University Matriculation in September.<sup>31</sup>

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CLASSES</u>	<u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1930/31	Class I	23	50 <sup>32</sup>
	Class III	15	
	Class V	12	
1931/32	Class II	17	43 <sup>33</sup>
	Class IV	15	
	Class VI	11	

The Director of Secondary Schools was now the Rev. Alb. Pantalleresco.<sup>34</sup> At the Matriculation Exam. held in June, 1932, student Salvatore DeBono gained first place in Mathematics.<sup>35</sup>

1932/33 There were only 3 Classes, viz: I, III and V, with 57 students on the roll.<sup>36</sup>

Rev. Alb. Pantalleresco retired and was raised to the Dignity of Dean of the Mdina Cathedral. The post of "Director of Secondary Schools" was abolished, and on 31st October, Dr. A. V. Laferla was appointed Director of Education.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Keenan, Joseph Patrick, "Report On The Educational System Of Malta", Dublin, 1879, p.21.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p.25

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p.21

<sup>4</sup> Idem, pp.68-69

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p.21

<sup>6</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Pullicino, Can. P., "Regolamenti Delle Scuole Componenti Il-Dipartimento Di Primaria Educazione Nelle Isola Di Gozo", Malta, 1871, p.28.

<sup>11</sup> Idem P. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Keenan, Patrick Joseph, op.cit., p.21

<sup>13</sup> Magro, E., "Annual Report On The Working Of The Department Of Public Instruction For The Years 1907-8-9", Malta, 1910, p. M17.

<sup>14</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Keenan, Patrick Joseph, op.cit., p.21

<sup>17</sup> Laferla, A.V. "Department of Education Annual Report 1934-35" in "Reports On The Working Of Government Departments During the Financial Year 1934-35", p.316

<sup>18</sup> Idem, "Reports On The Working Of Government Departments During The Financial Year 1933-34", p. K2.

<sup>19</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1919-20, p. M4.

<sup>21</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1921-22, p. P5.

<sup>22</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1922-23, p. L5.

<sup>23</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1923-24, p. LL5.

<sup>24</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1924-25, p. L6.

<sup>25</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "Reports. . .", op. cit., 1926-27, p. L8.

<sup>27</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "Reports. . .", 1928/29, p. L11.

<sup>29</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Reports. . .", 1929/30, p. L11.

<sup>31</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Reports. . .", 1930/31, p. L12.

<sup>33</sup> "Reports. . .", 1931/32, p. K10.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, K11.

<sup>35</sup> Id., ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Reports. . .", 1932/33, p. K3.

<sup>37</sup> "Reports. . .", 1933/34, p. K1

In October, 1935, when the present writer joined the school as a new student in Form I, there were only four classes with 42 students of whom slightly more than half were in Form I. As there was still no Form V, anyone reaching that stage had to go to the Girls' Central School to continue his education there.

Mainly because of the paucity of students involved, some people suggested that the school should be closed down<sup>1</sup>, and the disparaging remarks of the Director of Education referred to earlier seem to suggest that he, too, shared the view. But, luckily for Gozo, better counsels prevailed, and within a few years the school had its full complement of classes. Besides, some good teachers were roped in locally and from

Britain, and the results became increasingly better. In fact, in 1938, a Form V student won the British Council's Essay Competition and, 2 years later, the present writer repeated the success.

Soon, however, World War II swept over Europe and involved our islands as well. Some of the older boys were conscripted even before they could finish their courses, but the school went on shedding its light partly in the nearby primary school but mainly in a small private building, with only one bathroom to serve all the students and teachers, and not an inch of ground where the students could spend their recreation period!

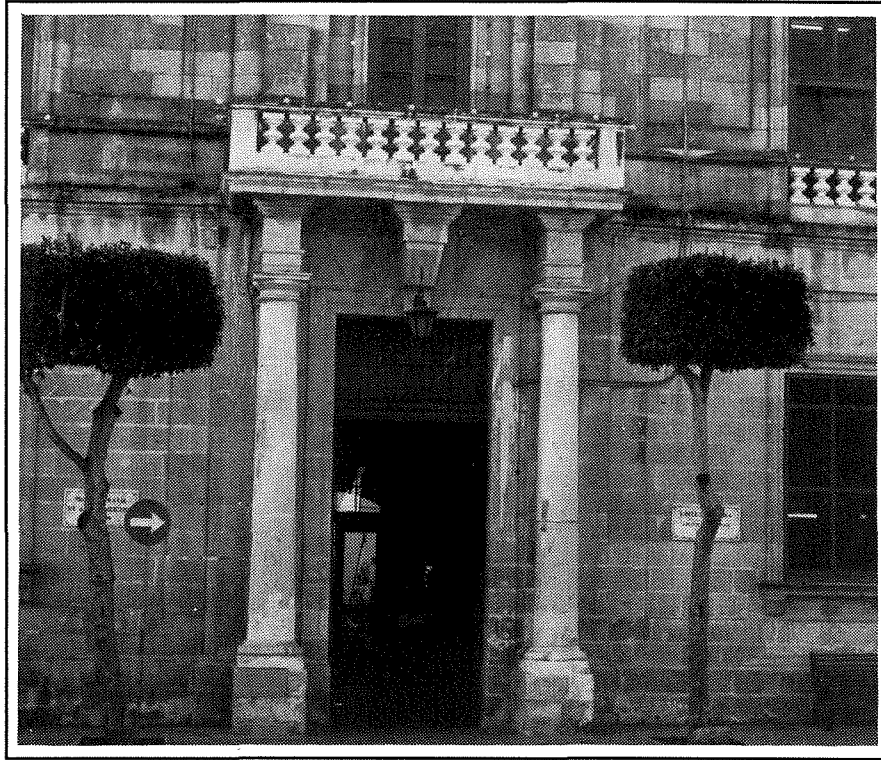
But by September, 1957, when the present writer joined the staff as a graduate teacher of English, a modern building in Victoria's main street had been inaugurated, and the school was staffed by a group of highly dedicated and competent teachers. The curriculum, too was extended and the sciences began to feature prominently. For the first time, too, a student gained the G.C.E. O'Level in music.

Meanwhile, on 18th December 1962, Mr. Salvino Xuereb was appointed first Headmaster of the school which was no longer considered as an adjunct of the Malta Lyceum. Even then some doubts still lingered as to the ability of the staff to prepare schedules of work and ex-

amination papers, but these, too were soon dispelled.

That was a time when the school also housed the Secondary Technical School which was under a different Director, but under the same Head. This was an experiment - tried only in Gozo - which considerably undermined the smooth running of the Lyceum. In 1967-68, the Sec. Technical School had

168 students on its register,<sup>2</sup> while the Lyceum catered for 159<sup>3</sup>. Despite the fact that current regulations stated "Candidates for admission to the Technical Institutes are required to pass proficiency tests in English and Arithmetic which are set at a lower standard than those for admission to the Secondary and Grammar Schools",<sup>4</sup> there were only 62 students in the recently-opened Gozo Technical Institute<sup>5</sup> even

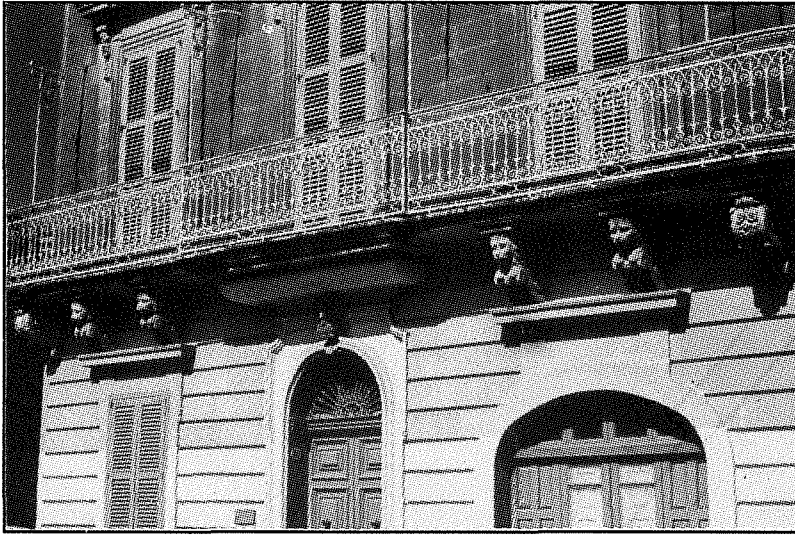


*Sir Arturo Mercieca Primary School - Victoria, which hosted the first Gozo Lyceum.*

though "candidates above the maximum age limit for admission to a secondary education" could still sit the relevant admission examination.<sup>6</sup>

The newly-added Technical Institute, also housed in a building adjoining the Lyceum, now meant that the building now catered for three different types of school, if one excludes the Gozo Trade School - which added to the melange in an adjoining building, but used the same playgrounds! This was assuredly the biggest blunder ever committed locally for, since all three divisions were under one Head - always academically trained - the Secondary Technical School and the Technical Institute never really got off the ground. Besides, the staff were interchangeably used<sup>7</sup>, and several never quite got used to the idea, with the result that there were some occasional frictions.

Luckily, by 1970, the Lyceum and the adjoining Secondary Technical school became so integrated that they began "to be regarded as one school offering a diversity of courses to all students".<sup>8</sup> Besides, the Department of Education now provided Secondary Education for all, and 4 new Secondary Schools - two for boys, one at Xaghra and one at Xewkija; as well as two for girls, one at Gharb and one at Qala - were opened. Eventually, these were closed down and the boys were transferred to the Lyceum while the girls



*The Second Gozo Lyceum.*

went to St. Mary Grammar School in Victoria.

Despite these many changes and difficulties, the Lyceum still went on achieving some very good results at both "O" and "A" levels of the General Certificate examinations. For example, at the 1970 "O" Level, 11 out of 14 students - or 78 per cent - passed in Mathematics; while 5 out of 8 - or 83 per cent - were successful in Physics.<sup>9</sup>

At the "A" Level Examination, 3 out of 3 - 100 per cent - passed in English, while 4 out of 5 - or 80 per cent - were successful in Physics.<sup>10</sup>

These highly commendable results were achieved year after year, so that the Headmaster of the school, in 1988, had every right to be happy at the students' G.C.E. successes the year before. In fact, at the "O" Level, out of 32 Form IV candidates, no less than 24 passed in Mathematics, 14 of them scoring "A"; while 19 were successful out of 31 in English Language.<sup>11</sup>

At "A" Level, 10 out of 11 New Lyceum students were successful in Physics; and 8 out of 11 made the grade in Chemistry while all the 11 candidates in Italian came out with flying colours!<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, to-day it would be very difficult to find a profession that is not graced by ex-Gozo Lyceum students!

What a tragic blunder and what an irreparable loss it would have been if the denigrating cries and the sugges-

tions for the closure of this august institute by the prophets of doom of the 1930's had been followed!

<sup>1</sup> "Journal of the Malta University Literary Society", Vol.2, No.7, October, 1935. Vide: Letter signed Lewis Portelli, pp.375-376.

<sup>2</sup> "Educational Statistics 1967-68", p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> "Educational Statistics 1966-67", Malta p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> "Educational Statistics 1967-68", Malta p. xiv.

<sup>6</sup> "Educational Statistics 1966-67", Malta p. xix.

<sup>7</sup> Report on the working of the Department of Education for the year 1969", Malta. 1971, p. 34: "Most members of the staff teach in all three sections". <sup>8</sup> "Report on the Working of the Department of Education for the Year 1970", Department of Information, Malta, 1972, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> "Report on the Working of the Department of Education for the Year 1970", op. cit., p. 42.

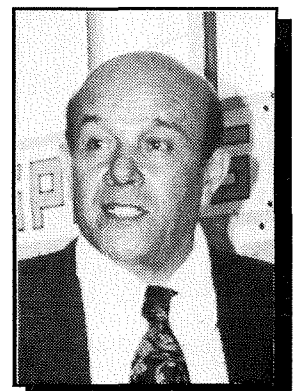
<sup>10</sup> Idem, pp.42-43.

<sup>11</sup> "Focus 1988/89 1989/1992, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Id., ibid.



*The Present Gozo Lyceum.*



Mr. Joseph Debono