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CHANGING PATTERNS OF CONTRACEPTIVE USE IN MALTA*

Robin G. Milne & Robert E. Wright

INTRODUCTION

In 1971 the first author carried out a family planning survey in Malta (Milne, 1973).¹ In 1993 a similar survey was carried out. This paper reports the main findings of the *1993 Survey of Family Planning in Malta* and compares these findings to the 1971 survey. The main aim is to examine the changes in the extent of contraceptive use and to evaluate the degree to which more efficient modern methods of family planning have replaced traditional methods.

METHOD

In the 1993 survey, the methodology used to collect the data was very similar to that used in 1971. In particular, family doctors were asked to interview a modest number of their patients on a confidential basis. The questionnaire is reproduced in appendix 1. In the 1971 survey, 34 general medical practitioners were approached and asked to interview up to 30 patients each. In the majority of cases, these general practitioners were government-employed district medical officers. In total, 19 doctors supplied information on 331 married women.

Since 1971 the organisation of general medical services has greatly changed in Malta. Although general medical practitioners still exist, the class of "district medical officer" has disappeared. Our solution to this problem of constructing the sampling frame was to seek the support of the *Malta College of Family Doctors*. We asked its Council to endorse our survey and supply us with a list of its current membership. Most generously, the College agreed to both requests and supplied the detailed information needed to construct the sampling frame.

The questionnaires were mailed out from Glasgow in March, 1993. The authors visited Malta in March/April in order to follow up those doctors who had not responded to the survey. At that time, completed questionnaires were collected from St Luke's Hospital. In addition, "reminders" were sent out and completed questionnaires were examined. The last questionnaires were received in July, 1993.

* This study would not have been possible without the co-operation of the *Malta College of Family Doctors*, and very many of its members. The support and assistance given by Drs Ugo Agius Muscat, Wilfred Galea, John Mamo, Mario Sammut and Dennis Soler is most appreciated. The comments of Reno Camilleri on an earlier draft of this paper were most helpful. Financial support from the *Simon Population Trust* is gratefully acknowledged. Of course all errors and shortcomings are the sole responsibility of the authors.

There are several advantages associated with directing the survey through the College. First, the group of doctors is well defined in terms of appropriateness for a survey of family planning, given that more than 1,000 doctors are on the *Register of the Medical Council of Malta* (Medical Council, 1993). Second, even though membership in the College is voluntary, 144 doctors in general practice are currently members. This large number of doctors created the potential for a large sample, without making excessive demands on individual doctors participating in the survey. Third, and possibly of greatest significance to this study, the College defines as one of its most important roles, the promotion of continuing medical education among its members. Participation in studies such as this one is seen as an important element of continuing education and contributes to the accreditation of doctors and their membership of the College.

We sent questionnaires to all 144 family doctors and received replies from 98 (a response rate of 68%). Of these, 86 provided information on up to 15 patients, which resulted in a sample size of 1,011 women. Since the identity of non-respondents was known, the overwhelming majority of non-respondents were either: (a) doctors who held a government post and therefore were self-employed as part-time family doctors with small practices or (b) full-time family doctors with a practice which had few married women in the age group under 45 years of age. Therefore, few members of the College, without suitable groups of patients for our survey, failed to participate; and our "true" response rate is in excess of the 60% implied by the 86 doctors who provided information.

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on current and past contraceptive use and to relate it to certain demographic and educational data in respect of the person interviewed. This paper, however, concentrates upon the basic question of family planning practice, reviewing the variety of possible contraceptive methods used.

RESULTS

Altogether completed questionnaires were received for 1,011 women. Some women were excluded from our calculations. Since the illegitimate birth rate in Malta is very low, 10 unmarried women were excluded from the sample.² A further 6 women had hysterectomies for medical reasons. These women are quite different to those women who were sterilised for purposes of fertility control and therefore were excluded. In the sample, 16 were pregnant at the time of the interview and were also excluded. Since the questions relating to current contraceptive use are not relevant to these women, they were also excluded from the sample.

Women under the age of 20 and women over the age of 45 were not included in the calculations. The main advantage of restricting the age group studied to 20–44 years is that it corresponds to those studied in 1971. Of the 1,011 women, 73 were outside this age range (one of whom was also pregnant). Thus a total of 104 women were dropped from the analysis, leaving 907 for further study.

One check for possible sample bias resulting from the way in which the sample was drawn, is to compare the age distribution of the sample with the known age distribution of the population. Information on the latter is taken from the 1985 population census. These distributions are shown in Table 1. A Chi-square test suggests that the difference between these two distributions (the sample and the population) is not statistically significant at the 5% level. Therefore, we believe our sample to be a representative sample of married Maltese women.

TABLE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF 1993 SURVEY AND 1985 POPULATION CENSUS

Age Group	1985		1993	
	N	%	N	%
20 – 24	4298	9.0	61	6.7
25 – 29	10612	22.2	185	20.4
30 – 34	11459	24.0	282	31.1
35 – 39	12481	26.1	227	25.0
40 – 44	8893	18.6	152	16.8
20 – 44	47743	100	907	100

Note: Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Sources: 1993 Survey on Family Planning in Malta; 1985 Maltese Census (Central Office of Statistics, 1986)

Information on the proportion of the 907 women not practising some form of contraception, and the proportions practising each of the identified forms of contraception, is shown in Table 2. Comparative information is shown for the 1971 survey where possible. Two points are immediately evident.

**TABLE 2: CURRENT CONTRACEPTIVE USE BY METHOD:
1971 AND 1993 (PERCENTAGE)**

Method	1971	1993
None	12	14.2
Abstinence	1	7.9
Rhythm	40	19.4
<i>Coitus interruptus</i>	70	40.6
Condom	12	21.9
Diaphragm	*	1.0
Oral Contraceptive	2	15.8
IUCD	*	2.9
Abortion	*	0.1
Sterilisation (wife)	1	2.2
Vasectomy	1	2.2
Other	*	0.2

Note: *Indicates a small level of use.

Sources: 1971 Survey on Family Planning in Malta and 1993 Survey on Family Planning in Malta.

First, there has been very little change in the proportion currently practising family limitation. In both years, about one-in-seven married couples were not currently practising some form of contraception. In the 1993 survey we also asked whether contraception had been used in the past. Of the 129 who were not currently using contraception, 31 indicated that they had used some method in the past. Therefore, of the 907 women, only 10.8% reported they had never used any method of contraception.

The second point immediately evident from Table 2 is that those trying to limit family size often used more than one method of contraception. Of those reporting positive evidence of practice in 1993 – 778 in all – only 549 (71%) reported using one method; 202 (26%), 25 (3%) and 2 (0.3%) reported using two, three and four methods, respectively. None reported using five or more methods currently.

There has been a decline in abstinence and rhythm from 41% in 1971 to 27.3% in 1993. Among other methods we see the replacement of *coitus interruptus* by condom use and oral contraceptives. Invasive methods such as diaphragms and IUCD's are still not popular in Malta. Nor are abortions, if one can trust – as seems plausible – the reporting of patients to their doctor. On the other hand, the sterilisation of husband or wife is non-trivial, being a method used by nearly one-in-twenty (4.4%) couples.

We now report the use of the different methods, taking into account that, while it is more common for couples to use only one method of contraception at any one time, it is not uncommon for two or more to be used concurrently. Some idea of the frequency that combinations of methods are used (by method) is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: CURRENT CONTRACEPTIVE USE BY METHOD: 1993 (TOTALS)

Method	Sole Method	Used in Combination
Abstinence	10	62
Rhythm	70	106
<i>Coitus interruptus</i>	192	176
Condom	94	105
Diaphragm	5	4
Oral contraceptive	113	30
IUCD	24	2
Abortion	0	1
Sterilisation (wife)	20	0
Vasectomy	20	0
Other	1	1

Source: 1993 Survey on Family Planning in Malta.

One important point to note before drawing conclusions from Table 3, is the interruption of what constitutes a "current method". Questions on the survey were primarily concerned with current methods (i.e. methods being used at the time of survey). However, it does seem likely that doctors, in some cases, also recorded other methods that were used in the past. For example, when the husband or wife had been sterilised, they would clearly not need to use other forms of contraception, but the doctor may have recorded methods used prior to sterilisation.

It is possible that similar confusions occurred in other less obvious circumstances. However, in these cases no attempt was made by us to correct the information provided, and the reader is left in a position to give his or her own interpretation. Nevertheless, it seemed entirely plausible to us that couples might use more than one method, especially if they did not have full confidence in a single method which was also readily available. This might be described as the "belt and braces" approach to family planning.

Adopting the "belt and braces" hypothesis, we find evidence of confidence in the use of oral contraceptives and the IUCD, in that these methods were commonly used alone rather than in combination with some other method. There appears to be much less confidence in rhythm, *coitus interruptus* and condoms.

In Table 4, we identify the most frequent combinations used by married couples. As is shown in Table 3, these are likely to be restricted to five methods: (a) abstinence, (b) rhythm, (c) *coitus interruptus*, (d) condoms and (e) oral contraceptives. In some cases a third or even a fourth method is also reported as being currently in use.

TABLE 4: COMBINATIONS OF METHODS OF CONTRACEPTION USED: 1993 (TOTALS)

Method	Abstinence	Rhythm	<i>Coitus interruptus</i>	Condom
Rhythm	21			
<i>Coitus interruptus</i>	38	72		
Condom	18	26	67	
Oral contraceptive	3	4	19	11

Notes: The table shows pairwise combinations. In some cases three or four methods are reported as currently in use. In the case of the combination of abstinence with rhythm, 11 women reported using only this pair and 9 reported using a third and 1 a fourth method.

Source: 1993 Survey on Family Planning in Malta.

In terms of frequency, *coitus interruptus* is the method most commonly used in combination with other methods. It seems to be used intermittently with all four of the other identified methods. Few of those abstaining or using one the rhythm methods used them alone, or as the sole combination. Of the population at risk of 907, 778 reported they were currently practising some form

of contraception. Of these, the numbers reporting abstinence or the rhythm method alone were 10 and 70, respectively (Table 3). Of the 21 reporting using both these methods (see Table 4), 11 do so without recourse to any other method. Thus 91 married women, some 12%, of those practising contraception did so in a manner consistent with the Catholic Church's teaching.

CONCLUSION

The decline in Maltese fertility has not been accompanied by an increase in the overall level of contraceptive use, but by a change in the methods used. While a significant proportion of couples still use abstinence and rhythm, the proportion doing so is declining. Modern methods are replacing traditional methods, with oral contraceptives being the most popular. Sterilisation is a method adopted by a small but significant proportion of couples. Abortion is virtually non-existent.

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Notes

1. Malta is understood to refer to the group of islands of which Malta, Gozo and Comino are inhabited.
2. For example, in 1990, only 1.7% of births occurred to unmarried women (Central Office of Statistics, 1990).

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON FAMILY PLANNING - 1993

APPENDIX

- Question Answer
- A. Date of Birth (give year of birth)
- B. Women's educational attainment
(Tick in the appropriate box)
- (1) Did not attend primary school (1) ☐
- (2) Attended but did not complete primary school course (2) ☐
- (3) Completed up to class 3 at the secondary level (3) ☐
- (4) Completed secondary education beyond Class 3, but terminated education at secondary level (4) ☐
- (5) Attended third level (5) ☐
- C. Date of marriage (give year)
- D. Live births and stillbirths, date of birth, is baby surviving or dead?

Date of Birth Month Year	Live birth Surviving (1) Died (2)	Stillbirth (3)
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		
(4)		
(5)		
(6)		
(7)		
(8)		
(9)		
(10)		

Give details of date of birth. Indicate by ticking whether live or stillbirth, and whether the live births are still surviving?

- E. Are you currently practising family limitation? Yes ☐
(Tick in appropriate box) No ☐
- F. If 'Yes' to question 5, what method are you now using?
Indicate if more than one type is being used, eg (b) and (g).
(Tick in appropriate box and give details for answer (h))
- (a) Abstinence (a) ☐
- (b) Rhythm (thermometer and calendar) (b) ☐
- (c) Coitus interruptus (c) ☐
- (d) Condom used by husband (d) ☐
- (e) Diaphragm (e) ☐
- (f) Combined oral contraceptive (f) ☐
- (g) Progestogen only pill (POP) (g) ☐
- (h) IUCD (h) ☐
- (i) Abortion (i) ☐
- (j) Sterilization of wife (j) ☐
- (k) Vasectomy (k) ☐
- (l) Other method, please state (l)
- G. When did you first regularly practise some form of family limitation? (give year)

For University Use Only

1-4

5-6

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8-11

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17-20 21

22-25 26

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WHY DREAD WHAT IS PREVENTABLE?

Yana Mintoff Bland

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day:
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

Dylan Thomas (1946)

Cancer cases and deaths in the Maltese Islands have been rising while most other killers, such as heart disease or diabetes, have been declining.¹ Whilst the overall cancer rate remains below most industrialised countries, the increase of breast and lung cancer, especially since the 1970's, has been phenomenal. It is the purpose of this paper to examine possible causes and suggest preventive action.

Today, more than ever before, the price of health is vigilance, and this vigilance means that we must recognize not only the poisons in our environment but also the efforts on the part of industry to resist, in the name of profit, the removal of these carcinogens and mutagens, as well as government tolerance of these efforts (Glasser, 1979: 173)

There is no doubt that industry is responsible for a great deal of cancer. Many known carcinogens are the products or by-products of profitable, multi-national companies. The oil, chemical, petrochemical, asbestos and automobile industries; the pharmaceutical, agricultural and food industries are among a few of the giant cancer causers.

When the directors of these multi-national corporations control the funds of major investigate bodies such as the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre, the American Cancer Society, and the National Cancer Institute, then we have a case of the wolf "protecting" the sheep.² Cancer management itself has become big business with a concentration of control, interlocking directorates, financial services, professional conformity, reciprocal favours and common interests. Many of us have an uneasy suspicion that the air, water and food we inhale and ingest are becoming increasingly unhealthy and that bombardment with so many industrial and military pollutants is inevitably leading to horrific breakdowns in our immune system. Few of us know, however, just how our fears can be turned into vigilance and our vigilance rewarded by reduced cancer suffering.

The conflict between health and profit has taken many forms throughout history. In the 1960s the climate was right in industrialized countries for health and safety consciousness to rise. The shortage of labour, the civil rights

movements, the growing environmental, anti-nuke and anti-chemical & biological warfare movements³ co-incided with a growing awareness that cancer constitutes not an individual but a social problem. It, more than any other disease, epitomises the callous disregard for public health currently displayed by military-industrial economies of the world.

As a result of hard-hitting exposes of work-related cancers and community cancer hot-spots close to chemical and petrochemical industries or close to nuclear missile test sites and nuclear plants, some basic regulations were enacted in the 1970's in most industrial countries.⁴ Was this legislation effective? Or did industry find a way to avoid and weaken restrictions? Were smaller countries like Malta affected adversely? To answer some of these questions, I will first discuss one dangerous pollutant, asbestos, and the rise in lung cancer.

ASBESTOS

By the beginning of this century asbestos had become a big industry. Mined mainly in Quebec, Canada by Johns-Manville Corporation, asbestos rock is manufactured into over a thousand different products including water tanks, ironing board pads and stove linings. It has been used widely in piping, insulation and brakes because of its resistance to heat and fire. But asbestos is also a most dangerous pollutant. Its microscopic fibres are virtually indestructible. People who work or live in the vicinity of asbestos inhale or ingest these small, tough fibres which are then trapped by the membranes or the lining of the lungs or by the stomach or colon. Scarring of the lungs takes place and after some years scar tissue replaces healthy tissue. This condition is known as asbestosis. The victim regresses from persistent coughing to difficulty in breathing and eventually dies.

"But asbestosis is only one of the dangers. The main problem is cancer. Lung cancer forms within and around the scar tissue. Another form of cancer attacks the linings of the lungs. This is called mesothelioma. Once a rare disease it has now become common among asbestos workers. Other kinds of cancer are also typical results of asbestos exposure". (Moss 1980: 237)

Moss, writing in 1980, goes on to point out that not only asbestos workers are in danger but also anyone who has lived near asbestos. Family members are particularly at risk as the invisible fibres attach themselves to clothing and eventually permeate the household.⁵ U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare statistics estimate that between 4 million and 8 million workers may die of asbestos-related diseases. A high percentage of all urban dwellers have asbestos fibres in their lungs at autopsy – even if they never worked near asbestos (Brodeur, 1974). Government officials state that 10 to 15 per cent of *all* cancer deaths are due to asbestos alone. (Brodeur, 1985)

Although asbestos manufacturers, the medical profession and life insurance companies were well aware of the hazards of asbestos by the 1920s, safety rules were resisted by the giant manufacturers and neglected by the government. The industry denied access to worker's medical records and aggressively dismissed the asbestos-cancer link. Not until Dr Irving Selikoff and his co-workers went directly to the unions involved was the full extent of the disaster revealed. For instance, they studied the health of the 632 men who had been in a New York pipefitters union in 1943. By 1977, Selikoff reported,

"instead of the 330 anticipated deaths there were 478 deaths.

Why did some 150 people die who were not expected to die? Well, there should have been 56 deaths from cancer, and there were 210. Instead of 13 deaths from lung cancer there were 93. One out of every three asbestos workers dies of lung cancer. This is simply a disaster!... Interestingly, too, instead of 15 deaths from cancer of the esophagus, colon, stomach and rectum there were 43... Obviously anyone who inhales dust also tends to ingest it." (Selikoff, 1978)⁶

In the U.S., there is now awareness of the asbestos peril. Asbestos workers have filed over \$2 billion in lawsuits against manufacturers.⁷ Regulations have tightened. In a massive cleaning up programme, asbestos has been removed from most public places. The asbestos industry has not, however, reduced output. It has simply moved its factories abroad, and increased sales to places such as Malta where very few people know that asbestos fibres break up into a multitude of smaller lethal fibrils; where regulations are lax (an exception being the Malta Drydocks); where mesothelioma is not diagnosed at death; and where health laboratories are under-equipped.

The practise of dumping hazards on more innocent populations has not been restricted to asbestos companies like Johns-Mansville or Raybestos. As the link between pesticides and cancer, smoking and cancer, or radiation and cancer have been exposed in the industrial countries, and as regulations have increased, so the runaway movement has gathered momentum. Carcinogenic pesticides are re-labelled and sold abroad; contaminated food is re-packed for export; hard-sell campaigns are focused on countries with rising real income but less experienced consumers; "dirty" factories are moved to new regions and countries without strict regulations. It is incumbent on governments of small and developing countries to understand and exercise their responsibilities in the wake of this onslaught of runaway companies; and it is a first priority that government agencies increase vigilance. The disturbing evidence that cancer has increased tremendously in Malta during the past twenty years is a clear indication that reaction is belated and much is amiss.

The profits of many companies have been and are being achieved at grave human cost.⁸ Even where regulations have been legislated, they are seldom enforced.

"One in every four American workers (approximately 21 million) currently may be exposed on either a full or part time basis to OSHA-regulated hazardous substances. Upwards of 40 to 50 million persons or 23% of the general population of the United States may have had exposure to one or more OSHA-regulated carcinogens or hazardous substances during their lifetimes".

(Senate Committee 1977)⁹

The grave estimates of both the human and socio-economic costs of occupational exposure to carcinogens led to the 1979 Guidelines in USA, but when jobs are scarce and deregulation in vogue, such human suffering and social scandals are sacrificed at the altar of the almighty dollar. For instance in 1991, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, will inspect fewer than 0.5% of jobsites in Georgia: a 1-in-200 chance of scrutiny.¹⁰ When deaths on construction sites are being ignored and tacitly condoned, deaths after twenty years (which is the average latent period for lung cancer) are even more easily disregarded.

The latest British longitudinal study of the relationship between cancer and social factors confirms that mortality from lung, stomach and cervical cancer is higher in the working class. "Lung cancer shows the largest class differential in males but in women the largest class differences are for cancer of the stomach and the cervix".¹¹ Specific site studies of naval shipyard workers 1958-77 by Najaran and Cotton show a two-fold mortality rate increase from all cancers and an astounding five and a half-fold increase from leukemia. They posit multi-factor causation: in particular exposure to asbestos, welding fumes and nuclear radiation.¹² A retrospective occupation cohort study of Finnish shipyard and machine-shop workers from 1945 to 1960 shows "an increased risk of lung cancer among the shipyard workers. The most probable explanation for this finding is exposure to asbestos".¹³ The excess was most prominent for pipefitters, who were especially exposed to asbestos fibres. Autopsies of the lungs of men who had been exposed to asbestos dust at the Royal Naval Drydocks of Devonport, Plymouth showed a correlation between occupational asbestos dust exposure and severity of lung pathology.¹⁴ It is now scientifically accepted that all shipyard trades carry the risk of mesothelioma, lung cancer and pleural fibrosis caused by severe exposure to asbestos and other fibres. Some studies also show a thirty to forty per cent higher rate of lung cancer amongst welders exposed to stainless steel fumes, since chrome and nickel are cancer-causing agents.¹⁵

As Table 1 illustrates, many other substances have been shown to induce lung cancer in humans: acrylonitrile used in the production of artificial fibres; fertilizers; pesticides; herbicides and related compounds; solvents and dyes. Besides shipyard workers, many other occupations have been shown to be at a higher risk of dying from lung cancer. These include: cement and chemical workers; stone, clay, pottery and glass workers; foundry moulders and coremakers; fitters and metal dressers; metal plate workers and riveters; plumbers and lead burners; bricklayers and tile setters; coal tar and pitch workers; textile workers; plasterers, charmen, window cleaners, chimney sweeps; and radiologists.¹⁶ Radiologists are more likely to develop lung, breast cancer and leukemia. Radiation is also teratogenic, harming the fetus, as well as reproductive organs. It merits a fuller discussion forthwith.

TABLE 1: KNOWN CANCER CAUSING AGENTS AND SITE AFFECTED

Agent	Primary sites affected
asbestos	lung, GI tract, larynx, ovary
cadmium	lung, prostate
cement	lung, stomach
chromium	lung
nickel	lung
arsenic compounds	lung
beryllium	lung
bischloromethyl ether	lung, nasal
mustard gas	lung
iron oxide	lung
petroleum & oil mists	lung
coal tar fumes	lung, skin
tobacco	lung, bladder
acrylonitrile	lung, stomach, colon, bladder prostate
petrochemicals	lung, GI tract, liver, stomach
silica	lung
wood	lung, nasal
aluminium	lung
Halogenated Hydrocarbons Pesticides	
Aldrin	lung
Dieldrin	lung
Chlordane heptachlor	
Malathion	
Parathion	
Dinoseb	lung, foetus
Dioxins: TCDD, 2, 4, 5-T	sarcoma, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, lung, liver, foetus
	- ditto -
Dibenzofurans	
Carbon tetrachloride (CTC)	lung, liver
Ethylene oxide	leukemia, reproductive hazards
Unsaturated Halogenated Hydrocarbons	
Vinyl Chloride Monomer	liver
PCBs	lymphoma, lung, liver, foetus
Alar apple growth stimulant	breast
DES animal growth stimulant	breast, foetus, vagina
Depo Provera	breast, uterus
HRT	uterus, breast, ovary
chloroform in water	bladder, liver
nitrosamines in food & water	stomach, mouth, bladder
nitrite in food	lymphatic systems
benzene exhaust fumes, gas stations	leukemia
aromatic amines e.g.	
beta-naphthylamine	bladder
benzidine dye	bladder
mineral oil	skin, scrotum, cervix
Aldactone & Flagyl (drugs for high blood infections)	pressure & trichomonas

The evidence linking smoking to lung cancer has been widely accepted. Cigarette smoke contains a wide variety of mutagenic chemicals which irritate the lungs, become absorbed into the blood stream, circulate through distant organs, and concentrate in the urine of smokers. However, there are good grounds for concluding that the relationship between smoking alone and lung cancer is being overestimated. Many studies show that there "may be synergistic or multiplicative interactions between smoking and certain types of occupational exposure – especially asbestos – in producing increased risk of lung cancer". (Epstein 1979: 152) In congested urban areas, the combination of vehicle exhaust fumes and industrial pollution enshroud cities in deathly haloes that cannot be disregarded in deference to recent propaganda that cancer is just an individual smoking problem.

Recent trends in U.S. site-specific cancers have brought the 'smoking causes lung cancer' mentality into question because bladder cancer, closely associated with smoking, has decreased while lung cancer has not. (Davis 1988: 633) Whilst individual smoking habits no doubt exacerbate lung cancer risk, individual attempts to quit smoking are undermined by the tobacco companies hard-sell techniques and by the increasing stresses of living in an economy-imposed rat-race. There is overwhelming evidence of societal, rather than individual, cause for the current epidemic of cancer. It is an ineluctable fact that chemical and nuclear pollution of our air, water, food and seas are the major cause of cancer.

What is produced, how it is produced and how it is consumed primarily determine the increasing trend in this terrible disease. However, conservative oncologists choose to ignore this evidence, while most cancer control experts argue only for more cancer detection and treatment. Neither will address the destructive and rapacious modes of production in today's burgeoning military-industrial economies, or admit that the only effective cure for cancer is prevention!

"The very obvious and dramatic class differences in cancer mortality"¹⁷ and the specific occupational links to cancer are officially recognised in most industrialised countries. In Malta too, my research has shown that unskilled and skilled manual workers are much more likely to die from cancer at any age than professional and managerial workers. It is among the urbanised working classes that multiple causation conspires, and victims of cancer increase. My previous research on the location incidence of lung cancer supports this hypothesis.¹⁸

BREAST CANCER

Who sees variety and not the Unity wanders on from death to death.

Brihad-aranyaka Upanished

Breast cancer does not kill as many women as lung cancer kills men, but now Malta has the highest recorded female breast cancer mortality rate in the world! At 35 per 100,000 per year it is, for instance, double the breast cancer death

rate in Greece.¹⁹ Its rising incidence in the Maltese Islands and in many other countries, such as the Caribbean, South America and Eastern Europe, has been dramatic.²⁰ Whilst the rate is much lower in USA, the number of women affected is not. A Breast Cancer Coalition of members concerned with the increasing incidence of breast cancer have collected 175,000 letters, one for each new diagnosis in 1991, addressed to the U.S. President and members of Congress. The letter begins, "Breast cancer is killing American women at an alarming rate – one every 12 minutes. Every three minutes another woman is diagnosed with this disease."

A severe drawback to informed analysis is the fact that occupational and environmental data is even less available for women than it is for men. And in the case of breast cancer, its very location suggests a hormonal as well as industrial determinant. The latest U.S. National Cancer Statistics Review puzzles over the long-term continuing increase in cancers of the breast and prostate. Brenda Edwards, associate director of the cancer surveillance programme noted that "60 per cent of the women diagnosed with breast cancer now have no recognized risk factor such as a family history of the disease". (NCI 1991) The list of known risk factors reflects the establishment's bias toward individual characteristics, omitting all reference to synthetic hormones, carcinogenic chemicals and irradiation.

Were all the recognized risk factors just statistical artifacts? For instance: family history of cancer: reproductive history including early menstruation, no children, first born child born after 35, late menopause: race and ethnicity; high fat and meat diet. These factors were found to be highly correlated to the number of breast cancer victims. But were researchers unable to see the forest for the trees? Is there an increasingly hostile environment for women's health and biological harmony? Against a pervasive carcinogenic backdrop, any one of these "risk" variables may trigger off a hormonal imbalance. "Breast cancer is a multifactorial disease," said Dr Dao to Rose Kushner (Kushner 1975: 107), "There just is no one single cause that works". Rose elicited this comment from the Chief of the Endocrine Laboratory in New York, after much probing.

Dr Dao stated: "Anything that upsets the body's hormonal balance contributes to a favourable environment for cancer growth in the breast". For instance, stress: "Plenty of hormones are secreted during stressful time: One hormone could stimulate another. A stress hormone that stimulated estrogen secretion could help to create the nourishing endocrine environment the cancer needs".

Most oncologists would agree that stress, whether individual or systemic, is a significant contributive factor. Inability to cope with the deep contradictions and fast changes of our times has an effect on our health and our resistance to disease. Whether this is seen as individual breakdown, general maladaptation, class alienation or women's oppression, it is scientifically referred to as the residual factor in cancer causation.²¹ Clearly, mind and body are inextricably related.

Stress may have particular relevance to female breast cancer. In the attempt to break free of their historical repression, women are caught between twin destinies: the ancient destiny to multiply and make the earth more fruitful; and the modern destiny to limit the number of her offspring, curtail or avoid breastfeeding and, when possible, enter the workforce.²² A traditional "cottage" spinner or weaver suffered greater economic hardships and higher mortality rates, especially among the young, but she was not torn from her home by the need to earn money; nor was she isolated within it to bear and rear her children.²³

The dramatic change in women's reproductive and productive roles is nowhere more abrupt than in the last three generations of women on the Maltese Islands. The stresses of such a sharp transition were exacerbated by socioeconomic changes which led to unhealthy habits and brought exposure to widespread chemical carcinogens and high irradiation levels.

There is also a recent and growing danger of excessive endogenous and exogenous hormones. What you eat affects, among other things, your hormonal balance. Frequent consumption of animal fats and meat leads to higher estrogen levels and higher cancer rates.²⁴ "Several researchers have pointed out that most of the meat we eat comes from female animals—hens and ewes, which are loaded with natural estrogens, or from castrated meals—steers and capons—whose androgen-producing testicles have been removed." (Kushner 1975: 108) Most animals are also reared under very stressful conditions and slaughtered in mass panic, leading to greater hormonal imbalance.

In addition, many animals are fed or injected with growth stimulants—exogenous estrogens—like diethylstilbestrol (DES). Since the 1940s hormones like DES have been widely used as a fattener and food additive for beef cattle and sheep and the 1979 US regulations are far from sufficient.²⁵

Many women have unwittingly been given prescriptions for one estrogen or another. The synthetic chemical substitute DES is among the hormones that have been liberally prescribed as oral contraceptives and morning-after pills; in estrogen-replacement therapy for menopause and miscarriage; for menstrual cramps and irregularities; and for general itching, acne and hirsutism. Other hormonal drugs such as estrone and estradiol prolactin have also been shown to stimulate breast cancer. Much hormone replacement treatment at menopause has been associated with the development of breast cancer in later life.²⁶ Some of these drugs, such as DES, also have the ability to cross the placenta, reach the foetus and then cause serious disease (e.g. vaginal cancer) twenty to thirty years later.²⁷

"Here's that which is too weak to be a sinner
Honest water which ne'er left man i' the mire."

(Shakespeare *Timon of Athens* 1607–8 Sc.2 Line 60 and inscribed
on the drinking fountain in the market square of Stratford-on-Avon).

Most drinking water is full of carcinogens: chlorine, reacting with organic material in water, produces hundreds of chemical by-products; some of which – like chloroform, DCA and TCA – are potent carcinogens. In summer, when more chlorine is added to water supplies, trihalomethane levels jump far above suggested health limits. Nitrate, which finds its way into water from sewage and agricultural runoff, also transforms into compounds which become potent carcinogens such as nitrosamines. Irresponsible handling and disposal of toxic waste, together with the contemporary pesticide-mania, lead to dangerous leakages into ground water and contamination of sea water.²⁸

Tracking all these contaminants is difficult and costly, but absolutely necessary. Water is life itself. We owe it our children to discover how many carcinogens are in that feeding bottle or glass of water. Yet with all the giant steps in missile technology and outer-planet research, the techniques for testing water are still archaic. "If you don't know what (chemicals) you're looking for, it's difficult to find out what's in water," says Washington State University's Richard Bull, a leading drinking-water authority. In addition, officials have looked at the risks from each known contaminant individually, when it is known that cancer risks multiply when carcinogens are added together. Chemicals are much more risky when mixed together, concludes Daniel Okun, professor emeritus of environmental engineering at the University of North Carolina.²⁹

"Food is the single most important route of exposure for humans to synthetic chemicals. In a year the average American eats about 1500 pounds of food containing nine pounds of chemical additives (other than sugar and salt)." (Epstein 1979: 179)

Many food additives have been shown to be carcinogenic. Whilst some do not have a proved direct link to breast cancer, food contamination is definitely a contributory factor. The slow upward trend in stomach cancer in the Maltese Islands, counter to the prevailing downward trend in most industrialized countries, is of significance here.

Direct food additives were once natural plant extracts; but these have been ousted by synthetic dyes based on coal tars. Many coal-tar derivatives are known carcinogens, for example, 2-naphthylamine and benzidine cause bladder cancer in occupationally exposed workers.³⁰ The red colouring agent, Red 2 or amaranth, used widely by the food industry, is also carcinogenic. But many food dyes have not been adequately tested. The long controversy over whether or not saccharin is a carcinogen highlights the inadequacy of many industrial and epidemiological studies.

Indirect food additives include the residue of pesticides and herbicides on vegetables and cattle-feed. Perhaps best known are the carcinogenic and mutative hazards of 2, 4, 5-t and the impurity, dioxin, that is produced in its manufacture.³¹ The human tragedy following explosions at manufacturing plants (Seveso, Italy in 1976 and Coalite, USA in 1968), the flagrant spraying

of Agent Orange herbicide (made of equal quantities of 2, 4, 5-T and 2, 4-D) by the American Troops in Vietnam, and more recently the explosion of Union Carbide's chemical pesticide plant at Bhopal, India (killing 1,700 people in only a few hours and injuring hundreds of thousands of residents) revealed the horrific dangers of these toxic chemicals to the world. A recent retrospective cohort study by Marilyn Fingerhut at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, found that chemical workers exposed to dioxin (TCDD or 2, 3, 7, 8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin) for longer than a year with more than twenty years latency, have a cancer mortality rate 46% higher than the general population. In the USA, prime sources of environmental TCDD have been traced to the use of leaded gasolines, municipal and hazardous waste incinerators and chlorine bleaching of pulp in the paper industry.³² (See Chart A below on the known risks of this pervasive contaminant).

CHART A

TCDD has several toxic effects

Death

Wasting syndrome

Thymic atrophy

Splenic atrophy

Testicular atrophy

Liver enlargement, fatty deposits, necrosis

Hyperplasia: gastric mucosa, urinary tract, bile duct

Squamous metaplasia: meibomian glands, ceruminous glands

Cloracne: hyperplasia, hyperkeratosis, altered pigmentation

Teratogenesis

Carcinogenesis

Immunosuppression

Enzyme Induction

Biochemical effects

Source: Environmental Protection Agency, U.S.A.

Little known is the fact that:

"the lipid solubility of pesticide residues and halogenated biphenyls leads to their selective concentration in breast milk...Their chemical stability and physical properties lead to their persistence in the environment." (Raffle P.A.B. 1987: 962)³³

However in Malta, toxic pesticides, such as Malathion, and Vegadex weedkiller, are imported in greater and greater quantities and used widely, with little protection and no afterthought. Controls are few and outdated and spraying is generally done with great abandon. The sprayers, the sprayed, the environment, and those who consume the sprayed food are all contaminated.

The growing pollution of the air, water, food and sea by carcinogens multiplies the risk of cancer. Regulations are all too few and carcinogens are all too many. They include many pesticides, benzene, certain hydro-carbons produced by the chemical processing of petroleum, vehicle exhaust fumes, sulphur dioxide emissions from conventional power stations and – last but not least – ionizing radiation from X-rays, nuclear power stations, nuclear weapons-testing and nuclear leakages.

The health hazards of nuclear radiation have been curiously overlooked both by those fighting for nuclear free zones, who focus on fear of the ultimate explosion, and by those calling for cancer prevention programmes, who focus on cancer screening or anti-cancer diets.³⁴ Each ignores the invisible fallout that is bombarding us every day to the proliferation of nuclear equipment. Yet scientists know more about the cancerous effects of irradiation than that of chemicals.

Indeed, results accumulating from the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and from patients treated by X-ray therapy, strongly indicate that ionizing radiations can cause cancer in nearly all organs of the body, and that some effect is produced even by a low dose rate.³⁵ The Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs led to an epidemic of leukemia and thyroid cancer. Atomic fall-out also led to higher rates of breast and lung cancer, especially after 25 years. Recent research by Dr Yoshimoto et al, taking a 1950 – 1984 timespan, suggests a higher susceptibility to radiation-induced cancers in prenatally exposed survivors than in exposed adults.³⁵ This augurs badly for those still in the womb at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

The open-air atomic weapons testing carried out by the U.S. and other countries in the 1950s and early 1960s led to hazards that few people realized. In Southern Utah, 1979 reports show that two and a half more children died of leukemia there than elsewhere in USA and that other products of irradiation such as cataracts, thyroid disease and birth defects are relatively high.³⁶

Our exposure to radiation has increased most insiduously as nuclear missiles, nuclear power stations, nuclear transport, and nuclear waste recycling have become bigger and bigger business. In addition military secrecy concerning numerous accidents to nuclear submarines and ships carrying nuclear weapons, and the ever-increasing risk of such accidents – especially in the Mediterranean – make genocide a highly logical outcome. Denuclearization of sea, land, and space is vital for the future of human life on earth.³⁷

The geographic distance over which radiation leaks are dangerous, and their long-term effects, are inestimable. Recent research links Chernobyl to a rise in US death rates and shows that vulnerable groups – newborn babies and the elderly – also suffered higher death rates in 1954, 1955 and 1957 (peak years for atmospheric nuclear testing) as well as in 1980, the year of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident. The atmospheric testing of the mid-fifties also damaged the immune systems of babies, making the 25 – 34 age group more vulnerable

to Chernobyl, according to Dr Gould and Dr Sternglass.³⁸ Female breast cancer in Malta shows a tri-modal age incidence rate from 1970–80, suggesting that “three ancillary experiences should be taken into account in interpreting this data. The particularly high number of cases in the 70–74 age group indicates that these women may have been particularly vulnerable about twenty-five years earlier in the 1945–55 period.” (Mintoff 1990: 49). This period is when irradiation was at its first high point, with the 1946 US A-bombs on Japan and the above mentioned atmospheric testing of the mid-fifties. In addition, upwind to the north of Malta, France and Italy were increasing their nuclear power plants and nuclear arsenals. Israel, to the East, was doing likewise.

That irradiation was an important trigger to both breast and lung cancers, could be corroborated by the fact that the 1960's saw a large increase in Malta's skin cancer rates, and the past thirty years saw a general increase in skin cancer in the Mediterranean.³⁹

Of significance too is the yet unexplained rise in the incidence of birth defects. The acute short term effects of irradiation include sickness, nausea, headaches and balding; the long term chronic effects include leukemia, cataracts and cancers. But there are also important developmental (harming the pregnant woman on her progeny) and genetic (affecting reproduction) hazards of fallout. Children born to exposed women have a higher risk of mental retardation, nervous-system disorders, bone malformations, leukemia and other cancers. A tragic case in point are the “jelly babies” born in the Pacific Islands, where French atomic bomb testing was rife. The extreme vulnerability of the foetus to radioactivity in the first trimester of pregnancy is now a scientific fact. Even the smallest radiation dose will produce mutations in chromosomes of gonadal cells that become sex cells. A simple example is a sex cell with 47 (instead of 46) chromosomes, causing Downs Syndrome in offspring. Add to this the increasing exposure to developmental and mutagenic toxins, and we realise that our children are in great danger.

Interpretation of the 150% increase in Malta's breast cancer death rates from 1960–80 and the subsequent 33% rise in just eight years, 1980–88, includes the multiplicative effects of increasing exposure to irradiation and carcinogenic chemicals; widespread prescriptions for hormonal treatment; increased animal fat, meat and sugar in diets; and stress due to dramatic changes in women's reproductive and productive roles.

SUMMARY

The recent history of many carcinogens is a saga of official neglect, in complicity with industrial and commercial interests. Inherent limitations to cancer epidemiology do exist: for instance, long latent period and synergistic effects of cancer agents. But these limitations afford no excuse for the continuing subordination of public health to self-serving, short-sighted industrial, military

and political interests. Such interest groups are in the business of preventing prevention. The tactics they use include: minimizing the risks; diversionary moves: propagandizing the public; blaming the victim; controlling information; controlling public policy; exhausting the regulatory agencies; and flight to countries and regions more receptive to "dirty" industries.⁴⁰ Economists are employed to argue that benefits exceed the costs of continuing production. Lobbying, including daily conferences with congressmen and other politicians, is a way of life in industrial nations. As the cancer of corruption spreads through inhumane and uncontrolled military-industrial-political circles, so the proliferation of carcinogens increases throughout the world.

As a minimum, the following steps are urgently required on a local level:

- (a) Government increased responsibility for healthy economic development and increased vigilance against carcinogens and toxic chemicals, formation of an Environmental Protection Agency, regulation of all industrial and environmental poisons and carcinogens, mass education;
- (b) Legislation to have health and safety committees with executive powers on all worksites;
- (c) Improvement of women's work conditions: increase in women's freedom and ability to be productive members of society; increase in women's knowledge and control of reproductive practices;
- (d) Limitation of the number of hormonal prescriptions and X-rays to the bare minimum necessary;
- (e) Mandatory tests for radioactive contamination of food, sea, water, air, e.g. imported grains;
- (f) Mandatory tests for carcinogenic substances: ban or limits on use, exploration of alternatives. Ban on the use of all asbestos and removal from all public places: school-to-school health surveys to test air and water for carcinogens and lead levels;
- (g) Strict control of the disposal of toxic wastes;
- (h) Strict control of the use of pesticides – introduction of permaculture farming techniques.

Coupled with the conservation of energy and the advocacy of denuclearization of the sea, air, water, and space through Mediterranean and international associations, the above *eight-point plan* is a priority. It could be the best present we ever gave our children.

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A primary data source are Malta Department of Health Statisticians.

Also see the Demographic Reviews of the Maltese Islands.

2. Moss R W (1980) *The Cancer Syndrome* Grove Press Inc NY. Especially Chapter 14 *Preventing Prevention*, and Chapter 16 *The Cancer Establishment*.

Dr Helen Caldicott warns that “with each launch of the (space shuttle) one quarter of 1% of the ozone layer is destroyed. So far the agency shuttle has destroyed 10% of the available ozone”. The agency charged with the worldwide monitoring of the ozone levels is NASA, which is responsible for the shuttle launches. Yet another case of the goat “guarding” the cabbage patch!

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Murphy S. et al (1984) *No fire No thunder* Pluto Press, London.

4. For instance the British 1974 Health and Safety Act and the US 1979 Guidelines for the General Regulation of Carcinogens. This latter scheme established three fundamental principles:

(a) animal carcinogens must be recognised as human carcinogens;

(b) it is impossible to define a “safe” level of exposure to carcinogens;

(c) all carcinogens need to be treated in the same way, with standard regulations limiting exposure to the “lowest feasible level”.

The European Community Council Directive 80/1107/EEC short-term measures were that: (a) workers and/or their representatives at the place of work receive appropriate information about asbestos, arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury, (b) there is appropriate health supervision of workers during the period of exposure to asbestos and lead.

5. Dr H.A. Anderson & Dr I. Selikoff found that chest X rays of 30% of wives and children of asbestos insulators and factory workers showed asbestos-related abnormalities: quoted by Brodeur P. (1985) pp. 339–340.

6. Selikoff I. Profs (1978) Speech to the Society for Clinical Ecology Key Biscayne, Fla., November 19 1978.

7. Brodeur P. (1985) pp. 324, 336, 339, 345.

Also calculates that property damage claims against Johns-Manville totalled \$50 billion in 1985 while the company was in bankruptcy proceedings.

8. Dramatic examples include: the hazardous waste leakages at Times Beach, Mo, USA (1983) which necessitated evacuation and federal government purchases of the entire town; the Love Canal, NY, (1980) toxic chemical exposures which necessitated evacuation of the community; the California train accident of 1991, in which thousands of gallons of insecticide poured into the Sacramento River, destroying all marine life for many miles.

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 17. Doyal L. & Epstein S. (1983) p. 13
 18. High risk communication for lung cancer from 1970 to 1988 were the three dock inner cities of Senglea, Cospicua and Vittoriosa, the quarry areas of Qrendi and Mqabbba and other towns in the industrialized inner harbour region. And: "Over the 1970–80 period, 44% of all female breast cancer patients lived in the highly urbanised Inner Harbour Region whilst less than 38% of the total female Maltese population lived there." Mintoff Y. (1990) p. 51 and Tables 7–11 pp. 59, 60. High rates of most cancers have been related to proximity to toxic chemical waste disposal in many geographic studies including that of Najem et al (1985) *Clusters of cancer mortality in New Jersey Municipalities* Int J Epid 14: 528–537.
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CONCEPTUALISING LABOUR IN DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

Godfrey Baldacchino

INTRODUCTION

This article reviews the changing prerogatives of development theory and strategy within a historical perspective. Their implications on “the labour question” are reviewed, particularly from the perspectives of popular, radical and functionalist positions. The suggestion is then made for adopting a perspective to labour studies which properly captures the interplay between structure and agency in the management of the circumstances of production. The methodology is recommended as a guide to studies and research on issues concerning labour (*sic* personnel or human resources).

LABOUR IN DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND STRATEGY

“Development” has long been tacitly equated to growth with an appealing simplicity, and growth is generally understood as implying the expansion of productive capacity based on the accumulation of capital. Thus labour, from this perspective, is important only in so far as it contributes to the creation of surplus value within an economic capitalist system. The biases in favour of industrial, wage-earning, productive labour, hailing back to the emergence of political economy, persist.¹ But they are accentuated and given a definite normative tinge because non-productive labour – that which does not produce commodities – is also seen as a burden on the developing economy. It is an anachronism which must, in some way, be reformed and armed with skills, social mobility, a “hungriness motive” and/or entrepreneurship to join the ranks of the producers.² Labour policy is already gripped by the imperative to create a work force which “must be recruited, committed, advanced in its skills, and maintained in a state of productivity...mobile geographically and occupationally, must be educated and must be given a structure of rules within which to work”.³ Within the parameters of development, the sharpened cardinal objective of labour policy is the transformation of a rural – meaning backward, subsistence oriented, idle and underproductive – mass population into a skilled, industrial, consumer oriented proletariat.

A PASSING PARADE OF MODELS

The act of cherishing such an ambitious project can only be understood if situated historically, and accompanied with a critical stance which permits a review of the “passing parade” of development models. In the wake of rampant

decolonization, the governments of newly independent countries were under popular pressure to speed up the development process, thus consolidating their own fledgling political power and at the same time engaging in a programme of cultural and economic nation-building. The cold war helped to ensure a plentiful supply of aid in cash or in kind to third world clients. And, irrespective of whether the choice fell on Western or Soviet models, the emphasis was invariably for an industrialisation strategy. After all, industrialisation had been the key to the (different but equally impressively successful) economic development of both First and Second Worlds. It was treated as virtually synonymous with development itself.⁴ It promised substantial value added, economic verticalisation and domestic linkages, skill formation, work discipline, large scale non-seasonal employment, greater economic self-reliance and a move away from the dependent status of primary production which colonial economic policy had dictated for many years.⁵

THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY: A HISTORICAL SWEEP

The starting point of the so-called "labour question" in development theory and policy was invariably the phenomenon of rampant labour underutilisation, going back to the colonial period: "The fact that in Asia and Africa hundreds of millions of human hands are lying idle, capable of being employed, if at all, only for a few months of the year, and then for the most part in a highly unproductive way".⁶ Within the general concern with scarcity which forms the basic preoccupation in subjective preference, neo-classical economics, labour appeared initially as the scarcest resource – unwilling or unable to join the other, presumably available, factors of production to create wealth. Already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, European observers and colonial administrators had noted the apparent abundance of leisure among indigenous workers and the chronic shortages of unskilled wage labour.⁷ Their conclusion was given flesh as a respectable theory: A leisure-preference hypothesis and a backward bending supply curve of labour. This reinforced the image of the lazy and directionless primitive (in contrast to the industrious, work-ethic infused, western master) and legitimated, apart from moral superiority, a low wage policy.⁸

Research eventually suggested that labour scarcity in both rural and urban employment was better explained by the miserable remuneration paid to labour (which made it suicidal to leave the subsistence economy and therefore explained seasonality of employment and temporary migrations) as well as by the absence of worker or legislative pressure on employers to raise wages, given the active policy of generating labour supplies.⁹ The resort to leisure, that is the refraining from wage employment, began to be seen more as an *involuntary* act.

Hence, the old assumptions underlying conventional wisdom came up for revision. One cause of poverty and lethargy (against which the resources of the rich world were powerless to intervene) was replaced by another (against which the rich world could apply an already proven prescription). People were now depicted as willing and able to work, if only there was productive work available. In a variation of the Marshall Plan's single-barrier, bottleneck theory, the existence of unlimited supplies of labour waiting in the wings to be productively unleashed was hailed as a great advantage to countries seeking to achieve high and rapid rates of growth. Dualist economics described how the marginal product of labour in the traditional subsistence sector – which was claimed to be close to zero in any case – would be below the going wage in the modern sector, thus guaranteeing a highly elastic supply of labour even at low wage rates.¹⁰ The way forward was confidently laid out, and would be activated naturally, following the establishment of a growth pole or a propellant industry.¹¹

One basic fallacy of the labour surplus philosophy (as with the backward bending supply curve of labour before it) lies in its improper understanding of the working behaviour of indigenous workers in the subsistence sector. The absence of productive, meaning market-oriented, work had been wrongly interpreted as the absence of work activity itself. Peasants and rural workers were actually believed to be most of the time idle – doing nothing, a view reinforced by the tropical temperatures. Yet, empirical investigation suggests that rural subsistence workers may even have too much to do.

But the main outcome of the fallacious premises of modernisation theory was that the sleeping giant of labour underutilisation, indeed, had been awakened;¹² but it was now on the verge of an uncontrollable rampage. Even where fast economic growth in real terms had been achieved, the outcome was very rarely accompanied by a trickling down of wealth to the lower rungs of society.¹³ There was a widespread failure of the modern urban industries to generate a sufficient number of employment opportunities. The blame was placed on a push-pull combination resulting in a mass rural exodus to the towns.¹⁴ The political and economic bargaining power of emerging trade unions was also hailed as the culprit behind wage increases among urban/mining labour segments unmatched by productivity gains, leading to a preference for capital-intensive technology.¹⁵ The outcome on labour was rampant unemployment and underemployment, especially in urban concentrations, made worse by levels of high population growth. The threat of escalating labour costs and of a climate not conducive to foreign investment encouraged the establishment of political repression, a situation which further curtailed the possibilities of pluralist industrial relations for the organised labour minority.

If one understands labour policy to mean management, or “the marshalling of the labouring population to get the necessary work done”,¹⁶ then in the context of developing areas, the policy instruments to do so were, simplistically

put, on one hand, a "destruction of natural economy" via slavery, indenture, monetary tribute, landlessness or debt bondage;¹⁷ and, on the other, the promotion of widespread total, seasonal or partial proletarianisation, a combination which guaranteed that the price for labour would remain cheap.¹⁸ This was the case in the unskilled, unprotected job opportunities created by mobile foreign investment in both primary (such as plantations) and secondary (screwdriver industries and textiles) economic production. Free Enterprise Zones attracted young (cheap and disciplined) women, although nimble fingers and patience are often cited as formal justification.¹⁹ Meanwhile, strategic and skilled personnel (the military, miners, dockworkers, public servants) enjoyed such relatively envious conditions of work that have been considered in the literature as labour aristocrats, lost forever to the revolutionary cause.²⁰ The bulk of the remainder eked out an existence in a sprawling and unrecognised informal urban or rural economy as landless, casual poor, swelling the ranks of the underemployed, the unemployed and the petty self-employed.²¹

In recognition of this "breakdown of modernization", optimistic evolutionism gave way to a mixed bag of less euphoric policy prescriptions.²² Departing from the painful recognition that economic development was evidently not synonymous with economic growth, a compromise, reformist strategy of redistribution with growth was put forward.²³ The model called for the guarantee of basic needs for all and for the adoption of more labour-intensive techniques and the promotion of small scale industry which would reduce inequalities in the general process of increasing income. A rural development school switched its focus onto the rural areas, encouraging the raising of rural income levels via land reform, appropriate technology and a boost of agricultural productivity.²⁴ One significant novelty here was the hitherto neglected informal sector, now recognised as holding great promises of productive activity, given a positive relationship with the state and the modern sector.²⁵

In contrast, radical underdevelopment theorists diagnosed the crux of the crisis to lie in the inherently exploitative, capital extracting world economic system, fostered and defended locally by a neo-colonial state and a *comprador* bourgeoisie which siphoned off potential capital investment.²⁶ Such a structural diagnosis of the problem called for a structural solution, intended to wean countries away from international dependence and an emiserising world economy. Reformist strategies were seen to be attacking the symptoms and not the real causes of the problem.²⁷ Calls were made in the early 1970's for the establishment of a New International Economic Order, involving a drastic restructuring of international trade practices.²⁸ The empirical countering of imperialism was sought via a more active state role as an enlightened investor and manager of the local economy as well as via attempts at enhanced self-reliance via import substituting industrialisation.²⁹

Such protectionist policies, however, generally fell victim to political patronage and economic inefficiency.³⁰ Coupled with consumer demands for more and better choice, such policies by and large failed the test of time and heightened rather than reduced international dependence because of resulting indebtedness on an unprecedented scale. The cumulative effects of oil price hikes, the grips of a world recession, failed ambitious development programmes, stagnating agriculture and deteriorating terms of trade have contributed to long term national indebtedness with a backlash effect even on the relatively secure, public sector salariat.³¹ Other countries simply failed to “take off” and remain located as primary producers in the “old” international division of labour, banana republics victims of an enclave, often monocrop, plantation economy.³² Elsewhere, natural disasters, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, have meant that even the natural economy safety net had been dealt a heavy blow.³³ Those countries which actually succeeded in establishing themselves as vigorous and competitive exporters have apparently done so in the context of exceptional historical circumstances, and at the price of stifling political opposition and/or by fostering effective subsidising mechanisms within the domestic economy.³⁴

This most recent crisis of developing nations has led to the perhaps irrevocable breakup of the (always strained) concept of a unified Third World.³⁵ The newly industrialising ‘tigers’ – particularly the Asian ‘Gang of Four’ (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore) along with Mexico – have now been promoted to a class of their own and theoretical debate addresses the effects of their successful industrialisation spurt within the context of global post/neo-fordist restructuring and relocation.³⁶ Those indebted beyond relief are relegated to a still lower rung of a “fourth world” which effectively is a public declaration of the absence of credit worthiness. These countries – the new LDCs – now risk serious emarginalisation from aid, trade and investment flows. Development policy for them is down to basics, concerned with the fulfilment of basic needs in spite of conditions of negative growth.³⁷ And everywhere, the role of government as an active agent in the process of economic development has come under attack, not only for ideological reasons;³⁸ but on the basis of the poor track record of domestic policy which failed to respect market discipline – by interfering with prices and exchange rates; dampening private enterprise, investing in large unproductive bureaucracies, squandering funds on white elephants and warmongering as well as indulging in corrupt practices.³⁹ The retrenchment of the state in the economy is also to be seen as one of the rigorous conditionalities of structural adjustment which inevitably accompany the “salvage operations” of the IMF and World Bank.⁴⁰ Recent events which have led to the sudden collapse of the Second World alternative serve to reinforce further this anti-Keynesian policy orientation that government is not the solution but the problem.⁴¹

POPULAR IMAGES

All of this has about it a certain Malthusian air of the inevitable. And, indeed, it conforms very well to the prevailing popular image, fed by the western media, of the labour condition in developing countries. The labouring masses are looked upon exactly in this sense: as amorphous and impersonal millions who lack the will, let alone the ways and means, to influence, much less to control, their lives. They are portrayed not only as generally idle and lazy but also as silent and expressionless, so subdued in the (heroic) bearing of perpetual misery that they are incapable of anything else. This conforms to the cultivated myths of functionalist industrial relations, where workers are seen (or perhaps desired to be?) submerged passively in scenarios determined by strategic management and other industrializing elites.⁴² This image of deficiency is reinforced by the selective media reportage on third world events, which generally make the headlines only occasionally to report yet another flood, famine, earthquake or epidemic. This perspective may evoke pity and sympathy but not empathy and understanding. It thus serves to cultivate a more discreet, contemporary form of benevolent paternalism.

Otherwise developing world labour is depicted as composed of uncontrollable revolutionaries taking part in demonstrations, civil wars or military coups. While in themselves indicative that there is more than mere resignation in the third world character, such episodes are often reported out of context and suggest volatile, untrustworthy, indisciplined and violent mobs easily manipulated by power-hungry demagogues – invariably chiefs or generals. This process of stereotypication is a common feature among social groupings which lack sufficient control and influence over the means of communication. For most, therefore, the people of the Third World are simply passively waiting for their deathbell, with the occasional uprising or revolt adding a spice of adventure to an otherwise dull and drab existence.

RADICAL IMAGES

In the more radical literature, which theoretically acknowledges conflict among social classes as a powerful causal dialectic, labour does at least enjoy the pride of centre stage. Nevertheless, the preferential focus on the labouring condition has tended towards one of two extremes. The romantic and optimistic indulge in the utopian search for a revolutionary working class, concentrating on the otherwise very fleeting episodes of explosive unrest by the industrial proletariat. And, faced with very few concrete cases of this, the category of analysis may be widened to incorporate other oppressed social groupings. Add to this the portrayal of trade unions in the developing world as corrupt organisations unable to advance anything but the bigoted self-interest of already powerful union cadres and privileged occupational groups.⁴³ The logical outcome appears to be to cry farewell to the working class altogether, with its imputed messianic role.⁴⁴ Such a vision effectively relegates worker action analysis to somewhat rare and exceptional moments – as would a botanist who studies the life pattern of a cactus on the basis of its short and fleeting flowering period.

Alternatively, for those focussing on structural features and global tendencies – such as the penetrations of capitalism, the articulation of modes of production and the international division of labour – it is easy to become gripped with pessimistic functionalism. The temptation here is, in strictly Althusserian fashion, to ascribe these with deterministic powers.⁴⁵ Whether explaining urban unemployment, capital accumulation, class alliances or class ideologies, the procedure, at the bottom line, tends invariably towards the same *deus ex machina* – the (changing?) reproductive needs of western capitalism. Indeed, the growing, explicit recognition of the international dimension to labour affairs makes it so much easier to emphasise the global structures and processes which impinge upon workers than to assess the sporadic, weak and often invisible reactions of workers to these. All the more so when the collapse of the command economies of Eastern Europe has legitimated with vigour the lack of a workable alternative to free market capitalism and reinforced the logic of industrialism and the end of ideology and history.⁴⁶ The bargaining potential and initiative of any form of individual or collective behaviour disappears from the agenda of possibility.⁴⁷ The very *raison d'être* of labour organisation may be questioned.

A ROLE FOR THE HUMAN ACTOR

Yet, global determinism is a far from homogenous affair. The shaping of actual labour relations and labour policy is carried out in the context of uneven capitalist development, where potential internationalisation is realised historically in concrete, local social formations. One such consequence is that, other than as a gross generalisation, it is most difficult to talk in terms of a homogenous working class.⁴⁸ There are real distinctions of nationality, race, gender, skill and status which separate worker from worker.⁴⁹ The issue is compounded by the large numbers of non-proletarian workers as well as by myriad variations of proletarianisation.⁵⁰ It appears to make more sense to speak of working classes rather than impute a simple working class. Otherwise the large majority of the developing world's labouring population would be automatically excluded. This state of affairs inhibits the construction of a unified labour concept in theory as much as of labour solidarity in practice.⁵¹

Nor is the terrain of labour organisation and reaction necessarily straightjacketed to the level of structures, albeit different ones. One cannot simply turn a blind eye to the natural tendency of human beings to respond to objective socio-economic conditions. Continually and inexorably, people both influence and are influenced by human and impersonal factors and forces in their lives as workers. Admittedly, other persons, plans, markets or organisations shape the quality of their lives, define the limits of their potential, influence their aspirations, tastes, skills and consciousness in different and significant ways. But to such a reception, workers may, individually or collectively,

consciously or otherwise, react, seeking to escape, forget, succumb or else transform or influence intended effects with different degrees of success.⁵² After all, structures which appear to have a life of their own are, more often than not, historical products which trace their origin to social dynamics. Hence social structures may be better understood as epiphenomena, reflections of a process through which different people try to sustain, advance or change their interest.⁵³ The responsive mechanism of the management of circumstances by the human interface can thus be easily lost within a panoply of powerful and seemingly inescapable structures. Overstating the objectivity and passivity of workers is tantamount to overkill.

The danger here is to consider the human response as being a relatively autonomous project, as the "consumer is king" philosophy would have us believe. But nor should one perhaps dismiss completely the existence of action strategies and alternatives by individual actors, some of which are surprisingly rational and ingenious.⁵⁴ The terrain between the dangerous pitfalls of neo-liberal humanistic reductionism and politico-economic structuralism is to be skilfully negotiated.⁵⁵ Global forces, along with histories, cultures, resources, personal qualities and skills, do limit possibilities but that does not mean that they determine outcomes. They always allow a number of alternatives, leaving some room for manoeuvre within which actors individually or collectively realise, or fail to realise, their conflicting and contradictory projects and, as a result, bring about social change.⁵⁶ There is always something which can be done;⁵⁷ nor is the choice in doing so forced upon us.⁵⁸

In a sense, the fundamental concern of development should perhaps be addressed precisely at the creation of more options for more people, the creation and provision for the greatest number of people of more choices and better life chances.⁵⁹ Just as with revolutionary impulses, resignation to the status quo is neither natural nor inevitable; the seeds of such a response not least occasioned by the techno-social experience of work itself.⁶⁰ Hence the diversity of response increases in the understanding of the objective diversity of work experiences.

LABOUR RELATIONS BEYOND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Moving on to the technocratic model of conventional industrial relations, the plea is once again to move beyond, but in a different sense: In the western context, industrial relations has emerged naturally given the industrial character of the workforce, working in formal, stable, urban, organised, male dominated, large scale establishments. But this has only been the exceptional case in the developing world, nor does it look like being the case in the foreseeable future. Following on the narrow wage earning segment is the limited extent of trade unionism, not only in terms of absolute numbers and membership density but also given the more heavily regulated and institutionalised curtailment of other

than pre-programmed trade union action. And while trade unions may be recognised as legitimate bargaining agents, all other forms of labour organisation and action, whether individual or collective, may easily be once again relegated to a marginality which may incorrectly be mistaken for inexistence.

The very selective orientation of industrial relations studies in developing countries may perhaps be seen as a reformist concession to the most strategic and potentially most troublesome labour segments.⁶¹ But, in isolating groups of workers for special treatment, the descriptive and explanatory powers which industrial relations studies bring to bear on labour organisation, control and resistance become pathetically limited: They cannot vouch for the far richer, more assorted and complex reality of the developing world condition. By the standardised criteria of industrial conflict, third world workers would prove to be surprisingly docile, if not outrightly content: They are generally non-unionised, they do not strike and they do not play truant. But worker resistance can, and does, take different forms apart from the ones expected when using the industrial relations lens. These forms may be easily overlooked therefore, all the more so because they tend to be hidden or latent, silent and unorganised.⁶²

Indeed, steady deindustrialisation and fragmentation of production are causing a resort to work relations which differ from the traditional stable employment patterns even in the western world – migrant labour, homeworking, subcontracting, cooperatives, part-time and contract employment – the study of industrial relations risks becoming an anachronistic analytic tool even on its home turf. A purist pursuit may nevertheless be encouraged and sustained both out of financial discipline – that's where the bulk of sponsorship for labour studies originates anyway – and because of the much lower levels of public concern with work activities invisible to the police, trade unions, safety officers, tax collectors and the general public eye: Hence a convenient disguise to practices where the absolute exploitation of labour may proceed unperturbed.

The deficiency in scope must be twinned to a deficiency in method. Industrial relations has been dominated by structural-functionalist and cyberneticist systems models which serve as indirect apologetics to the forces of order and authority, such that the essence of social order is not questioned.⁶³ The perseverance of this approach and its promulgation by respectable international bodies is perhaps indicative of its socially cathartic effect in channelling labour protest into tolerable expression and sterilising it from the more sensitive area of political mobilization.⁶⁴

Indeed, in the cold neo-liberal climate of the 1980s, the emphasis on the reification of labour appears even further advanced. Labour relations specialists in both industry and academia have been forced to come to better terms with the spirit of human resource management and human capital theory which seek – in the name of market discipline – to re-establish the dominance of a functionalist perspective. Perhaps this even transcends its previous systemic

and pluralist framework by imposing a monist, unitary one where there is now only one recognised policy making elite, enlightened management, and only one form of labour mobilisation, responsible unionism.⁶⁵ Workers have returned to being a resource, robbed this time of legitimate room to react, their institutions discredited, their actions accused of subversive political motives, their academic and media supporters made redundant or readily incorporated and silenced within less critical departments.⁶⁶

TAKING STOCK

The “gestalt switch”⁶⁷ in the study of labour may thus be summarised as follows: Firstly, the worker is definitely the central social agent.⁶⁸ One key idea dismissed as debilitating is that there are only a few workers in the developing world. The scope of the working class, confined to wage earners in industry, perhaps also assuming that this is an emergent class which will eventually engulf all other forms of productive employment, is not borne out in practice.⁶⁹ Another dismissal is that these workers are either completely passive (except when regimented through fairly tightly orchestrated protest) or totally sovereign in what they choose to do. The actual balance cannot be specified across the board or *a priori* because this also depends on specific space-time configurations. Thirdly, the critically widened scope of both the working class(es) and of labour resourcefulness suggest a complementary widening of concepts relating to social relations of production, labour formation, control and resistance. Lastly, by dismissing the preconceived primacy of either conflict or consensual social relations as well as by widening the definitional scope of key organising principles, there is a danger of ideological adriftness;⁷⁰ or, worse still, the failure to become aware of ideological positions and normative perspectives which impinge all along the research process: infusing one’s research question, one’s methodology, one’s presumed conclusions.⁷¹ Nevertheless, such a conscious attempt at normative distancing is crucial if what is at stake is a process of theoretical formulation and articulation carried out by the examination of, and exposure to, a particular set of data.

CONCLUSION

The division of caricatured humanity into utopians and pedants is deplorable. The upholders of the former ascribe too much volition and autonomy to individuals, expecting them to move mountains and defy all odds with will power, knowledge and drive. Functions, policies and strategies are considered without exposing their relationship to structures which mould, inhibit and distort processes and people. This is perhaps the strongest critique one could level at the contemporary more popular variant of labour policy and labour relations – that of strategic human resource management. The technocratic focus is simply too empty of two centuries of advances in the social sciences. The other extreme perspective, yet as equally resorted to as the former, is to play paranoid and ascribe powerlessness across the board, a stance reminiscent of puny, mock-heroic mortal status in Greek mythology.

"What is needed is to marry the two: Pedantic utopians or utopic pedants—who cultivate, with informed fantasy, imaginative but carefully worked out visions of alternative social possibilities".⁷² To rehash an old and hackneyed phrase which however remains surprisingly fresh, it is men (and women) who make history, but not just as they please: They make it under circumstances directly encountered and transmitted from the past, *inter alia*, which they cannot control. But *they* make it nevertheless.

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Notes

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1. The discipline of political economy directed attention away from the sphere of circulation and trade (with the money difference between buying goods and selling them dear as the source of wealth for the mercantilists) to the sphere of production—Chattopadhyay (1987, p. 49).

2. The hungriness motive is a revealingly crude concept coined by Samuelson (1966) to represent the incentive to work.

3. Kerr (1983, p. 17).

4. Seers (1982, p. 74).

5. Singer (1950, pp. 476–7).

6. Billerbeck (1961, p. 4).

7. "The African worker is inherently indolent...His direct wants are few; the climate is warm and he needs little clothing; ... leisure ranks high in his scale of preference"—Guillebaud, a commentator, quoted in Sabot (1979). For other examples, see Illife (1969) and Orde-Browne (1946).

8. On the backward bending supply curve of labour see Berg (1961). For an example of low wage policy justification, note the following by a colonial administrator: "...travelling labourers...have a definite sum in view and that they hope to earn that amount and then go home again...Consequently, the offer of more money seldom has much attraction; increased wages enables him to leave earlier, but do not persuade him to remain longer"—Orde-Browne (1946).

9. Bienefeld & Godfrey (1975); Sabot (1979).

10. Boeke (1953); Ranis & Fei (1961); Todaro (1969). The phrase "unlimited supply of labour" is associated with Lewis (1954, 1955).

11. Rostow (1956) and Perroux (1955) respectively.

12. Edwards (1974, p. 2).

13. "The average per capita income has increased by over 50% since 1960. (Nevertheless) the incidence of poverty...seems to have either stagnated or further increased." Brara (1983, p. 2).

14. Todaro (1973) and Tidrick (1975) both propose "wage-gap" models of urban unemployment.

15. Todaro (1973, p. 44); Meier (1977, p. 23).

16. Pentland (1968, p. 1) quoted in Russell (1990, p. 1).

17. On the destruction of the "natural economy" see Bradby (1975).

18. A focus on the creation of a developing world labour force is expounded by Munslow & Finch (1984, pp. 1–17). These processes are perhaps best described in studies utilising the "articulation of modes of production" approach. See Foster-Carter (1984) for an overview.

19. Munck (1988, p. 52); Deyo (1984, p. 276).

20. An argument put forward by Arrighi & Saul (1968). For a succinct review of different interpretations of the labour aristocracy concept see Waterman (1975).

21. Bromley & Gerry (1979); McEwen Scott (1979); Mazumdar (1976).
22. A diagnosis of the disorder in the sequence of development is attempted by Eisenstadt (1969).
23. Redistribution with Growth – RWG – was first formulated by Hans Singer in the ILO Mission to Kenya – ILO (1972) – and later generalized in an IDS/World Bank Study – Chenery et al. (1974). It was the guiding philosophy of various ILO employment missions, including those to Sri Lanka and Zambia – See ILO (1971, 1980) respectively.
24. This philosophy was adopted by FAO in a major project undertaken in eight Asian countries in the early 1970's – see FAO (1977, 1979). On the "urban bias" of most development projects see Lipton (1977) and Streeten (1986, p. 23).
25. "The informal sector...is composed of the self-employed and small scale traditional crafts and services, all unprotected by government policies. In the informal sector are the hawkers, porters, shoe-shine boys, but also the small scale craftsmen, small retail traders, own account workers and unpaid family workers" – Meier (1977, pp. 16 – 7). The sector includes "heterogenous sets of activities and of people, whose definition is imprecise, and who have no identifiable, analytically useful common characteristics" – Bienefeld & Godfrey (1975, p. 7).
26. Bienefeld (1983, p. 22)
27. Brara (1983); Blaikie et al. (1979); Seddon (1982).
28. Resolutions 3201 and 3202 (S-VI) adopted by the UN General Assembly on May 1st 1974.
29. The most notable being the policy advocated by Prebisch (1950) and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA/CEPAL).
30. See, for example, Kaplinsky (1983, p. 205).
31. Korner et al. (1986, p. 133).
32. Munck (1988, Chapter 3).
33. Shaw (1986); JASPA (1986).
34. The performance of such a "reserve army" role is discussed by Dore (1983) with reference to Japan. Streeten (1983), also makes relevant comments in the context of the "success" stories of South Korea and Taiwan.
35. Hettne (1990).
36. See, for example, Cline (1982).
37. ILO (1980); Stewart (1986); Landes (1991).
38. Neo-Liberalism as expounded by Friedman and Friedman (1976), the rediscovered Hayek (1976) and the "new development economics" of Balassa, Lal, Little, Scitovsky and Scott – reviewed in Tøye (1987).
39. World Bank (1981); Allison & Green (1983); Sandbrook (1985).
40. Korner et al. (1986, Chapter 4).
41. Schneider (1987, p. 8).
42. See Dunlop (1958, pp. 317 – 341); Kerr et al. (1960) and criticism by Cox (1977, pp. 409).
43. This is allegedly due to the effects of the iron law of oligarchy – Michels (1949) – the subordination of unions to nationalist governments, documented evidence of corrupt and maverick leadership; the proneness to "trade union imperialism". See discussion in Munck (1988, Chapters 6 & 10).
44. Skopcol (1979); Burawoy (1985, p. 6).
45. As described by Bourdieu (1980) and quoted by Lipietz (1984, p. 81).
46. Fukuyama (1989).
47. See for example Dunn (1990).
48. Lloyd (1982); Munck (1988, Chapter 5).
49. Haworth (1984).
50. Munslow & Finch (1984).
51. Cohen et al. (1979, p. 13); Waterman (1981, p. 11).
52. The dialectic, hailing from Marx, has been described as labour control and labour resistance – Crisp (1984, p. 1); Munck (1988, Chapter 7). The concepts' application is however usually limited to the industrial proletariat and the capital-labour relations to which it is subjected.

53. Cardoso & Faletto (1979, p. 14).
54. For example, "many of the pejorative stereotypes about small scale farmers have been challenged as impressive levels of environmental knowledge and sound ergonomic principles are being repeatedly identified, documented and confirmed by scientific investigation" – Barker & Spence (1988, p. 198). Lipton (1977, p. 264) describes how the farmer is no fool. See also Chambers (1983) and Pitt (1970, p. 265).
55. See, for example, from different historical periods, how Gramsci and Giddens try in their different ways to manoeuvre their way between agency and structure: See Femia (1981, pp. 83–5) and Giddens (1984) respectively.
56. Mouzelis (1980, p. 373).
57. Clay & Schaffer (1984, p. 1); Cardoso & Faletto (1979, p. 14).
58. Marcuse (1968, p. 7) quoted in Burawoy (1985, p. 75, Note 58).
59. Dahrendorf (1979); De Kadt (1985).
60. Burawoy (1985, p. 7).
61. See for example, the Passfield Memorandum of 1929 – commented upon by Harrod (1988, p. 50).
62. Cohen (1980a, p. 8).
63. The issue of hegemony, the presumed authority of the state and the symbolic equilibrium between the forces of capital and labour in collective bargaining are cases in point. See Schuller (1985, Chapter 2) and Fox (1974, p. 207).
64. Cohen (1980b, pp. 8–9; 1987, pp. 4–8).
65. Dunn (1990); Hyman (1989, p. 13). On the difference between the pluralist and unitary traditions in industrial relations see, for example, Burchill (1992).
66. Lovett (1988).
67. Kuhn (1962, p. 119); Elguera (1985, p. 226). What Cohen (1980b) calls a "paradigmatic shift".
68. Bergquist (1984, p. 15); Bjorkman et al. (1988, p. 64).
69. Lloyd (1982, p. 21).
70. Post (1987, p. 71).
71. Massey & Meegan (1985, p. 6).
72. Streeter (1983, p. 886). The dichotomy also recurs in Little (1982, pp. 20–1).

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CHILD WORKERS IN MALTA: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON A NEW UNDERCLASS

Ronald G. Sultana

INTRODUCTION

The problem of "child labour" has, at least ever since the 19th century, surfaced and submerged in the eyes of public opinion and policy makers as a 'scourge' and 'a blot on the conscience of the developing countries' (Unesco Courier, 1973, p.7). Schildkrout (1980, p.480), reviewing a large number of European studies which report on child labour during the industrial revolution, concludes that '*the exploitation of child labour in its most brutal form occurs during periods of transition from one mode of production to another, usually from the familial to the industrial one*'. The reason for this is partly structural. Marx, who so thoroughly denounced the exploitation of children in the inhuman conditions of the mills and mines in the nineteenth century, clearly identified the structural economic and social conditions which arose with industrial capitalism and which rendered children ripe for exploitation by the employing class:

'In so far as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of slight muscular strength, and those whose bodily development is incomplete, but whose limbs are more supple. The labour of women and children was, therefore, the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery....Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of children's play but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family' (Capital, Volume I in Tucker, 1978, p.404).

While the excesses we usually associate with the 19th century have been curbed through legislative means and the pressure of social and economic transformation, it is quite clear that the problem of child labour prevails in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, parts of southern Europe and in depressed areas of more industrialised regions (cf. Anti-Slavery Reporter, 1989).

The purpose of this paper is to present original data on the extent of child labour in Malta, and to situate that data within a context which does justice to the complexity of the issues involved, the international dimensions of the problem, as well as to the legislative and other recommendations made by such bodies as the International Labour Organisation, Unesco and the Anti-Slavery Society in order to promote and protect the rights of children. In this paper I will therefore provide evidence to show that a high percentage of young students from one stream of Malta's secondary school system, namely Trade

Schools¹ have experienced work on a part-time and/or full-time basis. The focus of this paper will be on the conditions under which these students labour in what has been called the 'twilight economy' (Finn, 1984). More specifically, this study will address the following issues:

- I. Child labour in an international context.
- II. Child labour in Malta: legislative history.
- III. Factors which influence the extent of child labour.
- IV. Contemporary research on child labour in Malta.
 - (a) How many young people hold jobs ?
 - (b) What kinds of jobs do they do?
 - (c) Why do young people seek to work?
 - (d) At what age do they commence work?
 - (e) Number of hours worked and wages received.
 - (f) The experience of work.
 - (g) Child labour and schooling.
- V. Policy recommendations for combating child labour.

Each of these issues will be considered in turn in the following sections.

I. CHILD LABOUR IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Statistics on the extent of child labour at a national and international level depend on the way 'child' and 'labour' are in fact defined. It is useful here to follow the usage employed by the International Labour Organisation which since the First Conference Session in 1919, adopted the first of 11 Conventions on minimum age for employment, as well as a number of others to regulate the conditions of work of children and young persons when they do work. Swepston (1982, p.578) notes that *'these Conventions and their accompanying recommendations have formed the basis for much of the legislation on child labour adopted by most of the Member States of the ILO'*. Hence, according to the 67th Session of the International Labour Conference (Convention No.138, 1973) 'child' refers to persons below fifteen years of age. Convention No.138 (Article 2) also states that the basic minimum age for employment or work shall be not less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and in any case not less than 15 years.² It is important to note that Recommendation No.146 (Paragraph 7) states that the objective of Members should be to raise this minimum age to 16.

The same Convention attaches great importance to the term '*employment or work*'. Swepston (1982) notes that this definition of labour ensures that all economic activity done by children is covered, regardless of their formal employment status. He notes that in many countries *'many young persons who do not work under a contract of employment simply are not covered by the legislation. They therefore have no protection in regard to the minimum wage*

at which they may work, nor in such basic matters as wages, hours of work and social security benefits'. (Swepston, 1982, p.581). This is further complicated by the fact that 'measuring the productivity of children's economic activities is very difficult, since their contribution is so often indirect, and their activity may not be considered as work' (Schildkrout, 1980, p.484).

It is important to point out that the ILO Convention does not impose a blanket prohibition on 'child labour' – what it does set out to do is to prohibit the imposition on children of labour which calls for greater physical and mental resources than they normally possess or which interferes with their education and development. It also sets out to regulate the conditions under which these young people may be allowed to work.

'If we take into consideration the above clarification regarding the meaning of 'child labour', and if we look at the results of statistical surveys carried out by a number of organisations, it becomes immediately clear that the incidence of children's involvement in industrial and non-industrial work is very high indeed. ILO statistics (Swepston, 1982, p.591) estimate the number of working children under 15 to be 55 million for the world as a whole. However, as Schildkrout (1980, p.379) points out, such figures are often based on census reports which take only the formal wage sector into account. In fact, a United Nations study (Economic and Social Council, 1981) considers that the figure of 145 million children is much closer to the mark. While the problem is clearly more prevalent in developing countries such as India, Colombia and a number of African nations, it is also present in economically developed countries such as the United Kingdom (MacLennan, 1980) and New Zealand (Sultana, 1990a,b), to mention only two. The issue of child labour has been highlighted in the United States. Bingham (1990, p.36) reports that as part of 'Operation Child-watch', a series of 3,000 raids were conducted all over the United States in a week in March of 1990. 7,000 minors were found to be working illegally. This was the tip of an iceberg, and indicated the extent to which child-labour laws were being ignored. In fact Labour Department inspectors reported 22,500 violations of such laws in 1989. Bingham also quotes a Government Accounting Office report which showed that 128,000 minors were injured in work-related accidents during 1987 and 1988.

II. CHILD LABOUR IN MALTA: LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Child labour in Malta, as in many other countries, has a long history. Prior to the nineteenth century and throughout the slow industrialisation of the Islands, it is clear that children were an economic asset as unpaid, or underpaid family workers (cf Busuttill, 1965, p.9). Serious attention was given to the issue of child labour in Malta when legislative measures were taken in relation to the employment of minors in 1924 when the school leaving age was fixed at

twelve. It was then stipulated that these students were to attend school at least 75% of the time. Borg (1983, p.86 ff.) provides a useful critical account of the development of Maltese industrial law in relation to this problem, and notes that the 1924 Compulsory Attendance Act, while making it illegal for employers to take on minors during school hours, was only addressed to those children registered in the few State schools then available. The 1911 Census shows that out of 48,302 school-age children, only 24,963 were in fact attending schools. Part of the problem was that the educational infrastructure had not developed sufficiently to absorb all the children under fourteen years of age, who were thus eligible for employment. Furthermore, *'in an age where poverty was rampant in Malta, parents had little or no incentive to register their children especially where child labour was a supplement to the bread winners' wage'* (Borg, 1983, p.86) .

Some of the loopholes of the 1924 Act were addressed two years later in the Factories' Regulation Act which specified more clearly some of the conditions under which minors could work when they were legally entitled to do so. Thus employers were prohibited from employing minors (under fourteen years of age) in industrial establishments, quarries and building construction sites. Following ILO Conventions and Recommendations of the time, the 1926 Act prohibited the employment of minors during the night and in work that endangered their health and safety such as quarries, tobacco manufacture, dyeworks, and tile manufacture. The Act also specified that those minors who were legally entitled to work could not work more than eight hours a day over a six-day week. They could work on one of two 'days of obligation' if both days fell in the same week and if the ecclesiastical authorities had given the necessary dispensation.

Further restrictions were imposed on the employment of minors by the 1944 Ordinance, which clearly stipulated that children under twelve years of age could not be employed by anyone. It was moreover established that it was illegal to:

- (a) employ school children during school hours and before six o'clock in the evening;
- (b) employ minors for more than two hours on school days and on Sundays;
- (c) employ minors in places of public entertainment, in transport work and in street trading and during night shifts.

These provisions reflected an ILO concern that children ought not to engage in work which could have a significant negative impact not only on their health and safety, but also on their moral and overall development.

Significantly, the 1944 Ordinance provided a system of inspection of industrial and commercial premises, although Borg (1983, p.88), drawing on a variety of reports, concludes that such measures were not effective in eradicating child labour in such areas as night work in restaurants, cafes, and public transport.

The 1946 Compulsory Education Ordinance established that the primary education of children was the responsibility of their parents and guardians, and set up 'School Attendance Officers' to ensure the enforcement of the ordinance. School-leaving age was set at fourteen in the case of attendance at a public primary school, and the age of sixteen in the case of attendance at a technical school.

Much more effective in terms of enforcement was the Industrial Training Act of 1952 which provided legislation for the regulation of minors entering apprenticeship schemes. This Act encouraged the setting up of an educational infrastructure which taught minors work skills so that these could eventually find more remunerative and satisfying employment. The conditions of employment and training of apprenticeships were clearly established and fell under the supervisory capacity of the Minister and Director of Labour. Regulatory mechanisms covered such issues as duration of the apprenticeship, the rates of pay, working hours, the nature adequacy of the practical training, the maximum period of overtime and the number of paid holidays. It also established the Director of Labour as an arbitrator in the case of litigations between employer and apprentice, with the possibility of appeal before an Appeals Committee.

Further provisions for the regulation of the employment of children and young persons appeared in 1973. The Merchant Shipping Act established the conditions under which minors could be employed on sea craft, and adopted two of the three enforcement mechanisms suggested by a number of ILO Conventions, namely the clear identification of the persons responsible for compliance and the keeping of a register of young persons employed, open to inspection by the Minister of Labour. A third enforcement mechanism, namely the establishment of measures to ensure enforcement – such as penalties for contraventions – was also nominally established: but, as Borg (1983, p.92) correctly points out, *'a fine not exceeding ten pounds for first offenders and not exceeding twenty pounds for second offenders is not a very formidable deterrent'*.

Two further pieces of legislation were enacted recently. The first was the 1974 Education Act which established free and compulsory education for all children from six to sixteen years of age. The Act gave full powers to the Minister of Education to refuse the work permit to those who fell under the compulsory school attendance: *'the Minister shall not grant such permission and shall withdraw any permission granted where it appears to the Minister that the employment would be or is prejudicial to the health of the child or otherwise such as to render the child unfit to obtain the full benefit of the education provided for him'*. The Minister was also responsible for the regulation of the employment and conditions of work of such children as were permitted to work before the statutory age of sixteen. Such regulations included

the requirement of information or returns, the keeping of registers, and the inspection of premises. Those who contravened these provisions were liable to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds and to an additional fine not exceeding five pounds for each day during which the offence continues in the case of a continuing offence. The Department of Labour, together with welfare officers, were to help the Minister of Education in the task of enforcing the provisions of the Act. The 1988 Education Act ratified the 1974 provisions, but reduced the fines to between Lm3 and Lm25 for contravention, with an additional Lm1 every day in the case of a continuing offence.³ In May 1988, Malta ratified a number of ILO conventions, among which was Minimum Age Convention No. 138 of 1973 (*Industry Today*, 1988, p.47).

The problem of child labour has again surfaced as an issue over the past two years. A series of tragic accidents – among them the electrocution of two minors – raised public consciousness and anger. Articles about child labour appeared in *Labour Post*, a publication of the local General Workers' Union (March, 1988 and January/February 1989), in *il-Ġens* (24th August, 1990), a publication of the Catholic Church; in *it-Torċa*, a weekly publication of Malta's General Workers' Union (12th August, 1990); in *il-Ħaddiem*, a publication of the Young Christian Workers' Organisation (June/July, 1980); and in *Alternattiva* (November, 1990), a publication of the Green's political movement. While, with the exception of the latter two write-ups, most of the articles featured denounced child labour but brought forward little proof regarding its extent, the media coverage the problem received helped to bring it to the attention of the relevant authorities. The Bishop on the island of Gozo encouraged this by actually writing a letter to the people in his diocese pointing out the social and moral problems connected with child labour practices. A number of public officials were interviewed by press reporters, and parliamentary questions were asked on the subject.

Thus, for instance, the Director of Work was reported as saying that while inspections were made on a regular basis, he did not have enough staff available to do the job thoroughly (*il-Ġens*, 24th August, 1990, p.1,4). The 'Minister of Social Policy pointed out in Parliament that inspections to check child labour practice were being intensified, and that 7 children were found to be working in 1984, another 7 in 1985, 11 in 1986, 12 in 1987 and 16 in 1988 (*it-Torċa*, 12th August, 1990, p.16). 30 cases were reported in 1989 (*il-Ġens*, 24th August, 1990, p.4). The data presented in this study show the extent to which the problem of child labour is not simply a question of legislation, but also of enforcement.

III. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EXTENT OF CHILD LABOUR

Schildkrout (1980 p.480) argues that in order to better understand the nature and extent of child labour, one needs to look closely at the specific economic, cultural, and social contexts in which it occurs. Child labour seems to prevail in

competitive, highly volatile and seasonal markets where *'it is more advantageous to employ children than adults: they can be easily laid off when business is slack; they cost less; and they have no rights as workers and cannot join trade unions* (Bequale and Boyden, 1988, p.153). Due to legislation and to the setting up of international standards, child labour is least apparent in large-scale and modern industrial establishments. Here, *'the high level of capitalization, advanced technology, and an abundance of a relatively mobile adult work force, are all factors which militate against the continued employment of children'* (Schildkrout, 1980, p.379). Child labour is consequently more prevalent in small and marginal factories where their size and underdeveloped technical sophistication renders them uncompetitive with the larger industries, which fact can drive them to resort to child employment to keep the wages low. Typically such industries are textiles, clothing manufacture, food processing and canning (Unesco Courier, 1973, p.7).

The practice of employing children is most pronounced in those unregistered and undercapitalised enterprises which require casual labour, in that informal sector where it is very difficult for legal enforcers to supervise and control labour standards adequately. Thus child labour is very common in small-scale retail shops, hotels, restaurants, services, street trades and domestic service, and agriculture.

The economic and socio-cultural context in Malta encourages the practice of child labour in a number of ways. One of the key industries in Malta is characterised by its seasonal nature. In 1986, for instance, earnings from tourism amounted to about 22% of all earnings from exports of goods and services, but the major part of these earnings were made during the summer months (Briguglio, 1988, pp.20 – 1). The seasonal nature of this industry encourages the employment of labour which can be easily shed: as we shall see, children are easily tempted into this sector. A second characteristic of the Maltese economic structure is the fact that the most common type of industrial set-up is the small firm. In 1987 for instance, 88.5% of workers in manufacturing, quarrying and construction and non-manufacturing industries were to be found in establishments employing less than 20 people (Central Office of Statistics, 1988, p.200). 75% of all establishments employed 5 persons or less each. Again, in view of what has been said above, such establishments strive to remain competitive by employing casual and cheap labour. Many of these enterprises involve members of the same family. Much the same comments can be made with regards the agricultural sector in Malta, which employs close to 3,000 persons in the private sector alone. The Working Committee's report on Occupational Health and Safety noted that many of those working in the agricultural sector *'are self-employed persons and family-concerns, (and) the employment of children cannot be ruled out altogether'* (1988, p.24)

A third economic characteristic is a highly developed 'underground economy'; Delia (1987) has estimated that the hidden economy in Malta could be as high as 10- 20% of the GDP. Money earned through this kind of activity is obviously not declared or even invested in banks out of fear of raising suspicion. This partly explains why a large percentage of the currency is held in circulation: 50% of GNP in 1985, compared to 5-10% in many other countries in the same year (Briguglio, 1988, p.94). Needless to say, such 'underground' economic activity attracts those who, like students, prefer to work in establishments which, by their very nature, are hidden from the public scrutiny of the Labour Office. Finally, as Cremona (1989, p.3) notes, the fact that until recently Malta's tax rate was the highest in Europe, but its wage rate one of the lowest meant that parents were pressurised into one or other or both of the following strategies: seeking a second job in the underground economy to boost income, and/or rely directly or indirectly for financial help from the wages earned by their children.

There are also socio-cultural factors which encourage child labour practices in Malta. One such factor which is peculiar to Malta is the adoption, since 1978, of a student-worker scheme for students at sixth form and University levels, i.e. for ages 16 onwards. Based on similar attempts in other socialist countries such as China and Cuba to link productive work with education (cf Carnoy and Samoff, 1990), this scheme (see Schembri, 1982) gave a certain degree of legitimacy to the idea that students who were at school could – and indeed should – work. While perhaps few understood the ideological underpinnings of such a scheme, it is here postulated that it certainly did not discourage the idea – and perhaps actually encouraged the practice – of child labour. A second socio-cultural factor peculiar to Malta and which needs to be highlighted is the competitive work ethic which is engrained in children from an early age. Even at a primary school level, Falzon and Busuttil (1988) report that 70.7% of students in state schools had attended private tuition after school hours. The percentage was even higher at a secondary school level, where 82.9% said that they attended private lessons over and above their schooling. Leisure for leisure's sake is strangely missing or severely curtailed for children in what is, for tourists, a leisure island. It would appear that if students are not labouring away in the catering or manufacturing industries, they are to be found busily employed striving for better grades or more credentials to ensure survival in the official labour market.

IV. CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON CHILD LABOUR IN MALTA

Two empirical studies have been carried out regarding the extent of child labour practice in the Maltese islands. The first study by the present author focuses on participation in paid employment on the part of all third year Trade School students (age = 15 years) on the main island of Malta. The second study,

that carried out by Cremona (1989), focuses on all secondary level students in their last three years of compulsory schooling (ages = 13 to 17 years) on the smaller island of Gozo. Both research projects are of a statistical nature and further research needs to be done to explore, through qualitative means, the phenomenological significance of this work for minors (see Sultana, 1990a for an example).

With regards to the study carried out by the present author, a questionnaire form was distributed among all the third year trade school students found in their classrooms during the survey period between October and December of 1989. 680 students (male = 486; female = 194) were present to answer the questionnaire, and this represents 57.53% of the total of 1182 students (male = 725; female = 457) that should have been present according to official lists of population in trade schools for 1989/1990 (Department of Education, July 1990). Students not present were generally habitual absentees, with the exception of 6 male students who were involved in an extra-curricular project and were absent from school for long periods of time, and one male who preferred not to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire schedule is one of the research tools used in a *Trade Schools Research Project* intended to build a complex profile of trade school students. The questionnaire set out to collect data on the socio-economic background of these students, their educational and occupational experiences and aspirations, as well as information on their leisure activities. Part III of the questionnaire focused specifically on the part-time and full-time work these students had experienced during term and/or holiday time.

A second study by Cremona (1989) reports on questionnaire data collected from 905 Gozitan students (male = 434; female = 471) attending the last three years of academic and technical secondary schools. While Cremona's research offers less details than that provided by the Trade School Research Project, it is useful in that it shows that similar patterns of child labour exist in Gozo as in Malta, and that participation in paid employment on the part of minors differs depending on whether they are in academic or technical schools. Different aspects of the practice of child labour in Malta will be explored in the sections below. References to Cremona's findings will be made throughout in order to highlight similarities and differences between the archipelago's two main islands.

(a) How many young people hold jobs?

Starting first with data which emerged from the Trade School Project, 378 students – or over 55% of those who responded to the questionnaire – said that they had worked for money at some stage or other in their life. 330 of these were male students; in other words, almost 70% of those attending boys' trade schools have worked. Only 48 female students, or close to 25% of the total number of girls sampled, admitting to having worked either in term time

or during the holiday seasons. Of the total 378 students who worked, 203 did so before and/or after school hours, and on weekends in term time. 341 students worked during the holiday season, and 166 students worked both during term time and during holidays. Cremona (1989) reports similar patterns for his study of young people in Gozo. Thus, 46.8% of Gozitan boys and 16.4% of Gozitan girls were engaged in some form of waged employment. The lower percentages in Cremona's study are probably due to the fact that his sample included students attending both trade schools as well as modern secondary and junior lyceum schools. In the latter, more academic-oriented institutions, students were found to be less involved in paid employment, and this reduced the global percentage of working children.

It needs to be pointed out that for a number of reasons the above statistics are conservative ones. In the first place and with reference to both studies, it was clear that some students preferred to withhold information out of fear of being caught out by the authorities. They were quite aware that they were not entitled to work without a work book and the permission of the Minister of Education. In my research project for instance there were two occasions where groups of students told me they while they would answer most of the questionnaire, they would leave Part III blank. A second reason which suggests that the statistics are in fact higher is that both questionnaires measured only 'paid employment'. From another section of the Trade School questionnaire it became clear that girls, for instance, were often involved in carrying out domestic chores – such as taking care of younger children and doing housework – which were either remunerated by 'pocket money' allowances, or not at all. It will be argued that such activity has an economic function as it often releases adults so that these can work or reduces the need for such adults to employ domestic help. Finally, and again with reference to my research, 42.4% of trade school students were missing from the classroom during the survey months. A study by Scicluna Calleja *et al.* (1988) found that girls in trade schools, on average, absented themselves for 50.5 out of 148 days, an absence rate of 33%. The frequency for boys stood at 35 days out of 148, yielding an absence rate of 24%. For the academic year 1987-1988, the Department of Education had approved 861 requests for permission to leave school before 16 years of age (cf *It-Torċa*, 12th August, 1990, p.17). Both the high rates of absenteeism and early school-leaving are a sign of the readiness these students have to work, in the first case without, in the second with, a work permit.

It is instructive to compare the Maltese and Gozitan data with those emerging from other studies carried out in parts of England and Scotland. MacLennan (1980) for instance found that 20% to 30% of all 14 to 16 year-olds were in part-time employment in the United Kingdom. Finn (1984) reports that 75 of his sample of 150 boys and girls in their last year of compulsory schooling in 3 Coventry and 1 Rugby school had had some involvement in the juvenile

labour market. Griffin (1985) found that 50% of her Birmingham girls had experienced some form of part-time employment prior to leaving school. Howieson (1990) reports that 45% of a sample of school-leavers in Scotland had done part-time work during term time. The first three studies mentioned above confirm the patterns of child employment that have been found locally. In other words, more of the 'non-academic' students tend to be working than the 'academic' ones, and more boys than girls tend to be in paid employment. Howieson, however reports a different pattern. Howieson's study, which involved 10% of all school-leavers from 1979–1987, found that more girls (67%) than boys (41%) had worked, and that while the highest percentage of working students was to be found among middle-attaining pupils (34%), a higher proportion of the most academic pupils had a part-time job (29%) than the least academic (25%). Howieson is the only one to report on data collected longitudinally and it is interesting to note that the number of students who did part-time work increased between 1979 and 1987.

(b) What kind of work do these students do?

The range of jobs reported in the *Trade Schools Project* questionnaire was very wide indeed. Most, however, were involved in work in an informal sector which afforded them little educational experience and practically no useful training for adult work roles other than 'conditioning' to form part of an unskilled, uneducated proletariat. Among the most common jobs done by the 203 students who worked during term time are: shop assistants ($n=32$), and helpers in a variety of small-sized trade enterprises such as carpenters ($n=17$), mechanics ($n=12$), and electricians ($n=7$). A substantial number were employed as farmhands ($n=13$). Before and after school hours as well as during weekends students cleaned wood, helped builders and butchers, acted as sales persons, polished wood, sprayed wood and cars, worked in kitchens, painted houses, and sold produce. If we had to group these different jobs into larger categories, the top three work categories for term time jobs would be as follows: Trades ($n=64$), Catering ($n=42$) and Shop Attendance ($n=32$).

Similar patterns can be found in the jobs done by students during holiday time. Some of the more popular jobs were, again, helping out in small trade establishments such as carpentry ($n=32$), automechanical work ($n=13$), panel beating ($n=8$), and electrical installation ($n=11$). Student summer work also consisted of street vending ($n=6$), tile laying ($n=3$), painting houses ($n=10$), shop assisting ($n=26$), and working in hotels and other catering establishments as waiters or waitresses ($n=27$), barmen or barmaids ($n=17$), pool attendants ($n=9$), beach attendants ($n=5$), in take-aways ($n=9$), as kitchen hands ($n=7$), cleaners and maids ($n=20$) and confectioners ($n=3$). If we again grouped the jobs into categories, summer time work would have the following profile: Catering ($n=130$); Trades ($n=100$) and Shop Attendance ($n=26$). It is indicative that during holiday time, 17 students were involved in some form or other of factory work.

Gozitan students were employed in similar kinds of work and Cremona (1989) reports a concentration of children in the catering sector – which employs 29% of all male children who work – and in work related to shops. Fewer Gozitan than Maltese children and young persons were found working in the agricultural sector. It is interesting to note that 30% of Cremona's female sample were involved in knitting work for the textile industry. This form of home-based labour was not reported in the Maltese data.

It is important to point out that trade school students, for instance, were involved in work which has been specifically designated as dangerous by ILO Convention No.138, and which could not be excluded from the Convention's application. If we take into account all student work done during term and holiday time, this included quarrying (n=2), electrical works (n=18), construction (n=22) and transport and storage (n=5). Convention No.138 also identifies manufacturing as a form of dangerous employment which could not be excluded from its application. Eight students worked in a factory during term time, while 17 did so during the holiday season. A number of ILO Conventions on work done by minors have been careful to specify that some employment – such as work in restaurants and in bars – present particular problems for the moral safety of young persons. It is therefore relevant to point out the large numbers of students employed as barmen/barmaids, and as waiters/waitresses. This reflects the importance of the tourist service sector in the overall Maltese economy, as well as the nature of this sector characterised by the 'need' for cheap labour that can be easily employed and shed.

A general point that can be made about the kind of jobs done by these young workers is its reflection of different destinies in the sexual division of labour. Hence, in both the Maltese and Gozitan studies, girls tended to be found in what are locally considered to be traditionally female jobs such as cleaning, tailoring, hairdressing and babysitting. Another fact that needs to be highlighted is the large number of students employed by their adult family members. Of the 196 trade school students who replied to the question asking for details regarding employers, 62 – or 31.6% – answered that employment was provided by a family member. Cremona (1989) found a similar pattern for his sample in Gozo, and that 104 children work for their parents, while 30 were employed by somebody related to the family. As in many other areas in the world, children often work in familial contexts (Bequale and Boyden, 1988, p.158).

It is important to point out that a high percentage of trade school students reported that they helped out their parents in household chores. While this is not often seen to be work, Schildkrout (1980, p.484) is correct to point out that children are clearly economic assets since when they perform errands they are *'contributing to the maintenance of their households, as well as reducing the opportunity cost of women's (and men's) work, even though children may not*

be directly generating 'income'. In other words, were students not to perform these tasks, other help would have to be employed. It is also possible that children's work may release one or other or both of the parents for productive employment in a full-time or part-time capacity.

(c) Why do young people seek to work?

It is commonly believed in Malta that trade school students seek to work in the trade that they intend to practice after they leave school. My research however does not bear this out to any large extent. Of the 341 students who worked during the holiday season, only 43 – or 12.6% – were employed in a sector where they could practice the trade skills they were learning at school. The percentage is almost twice as high for the group of 203 students who worked during term time: 49 out of 203 students – or 24.1% – were therefore involved in work which could help them make progress in the skill they were studying at school. In another question, students were asked to identify what they liked about the work they did. 28 said that learning a trade was a positive aspect of their experience in paid employment. Despite this there is agreement with Bequele and Boyden (1988, p.156) who, reflecting on child labour within an international context, conclude that *'ILO studies give little reason to believe that working children are gaining valuable skills and experience. The vast majority receive little or no preparation for the work they are given and consequently child labour tends to be concentrated in unskilled, simple jobs that offer little opportunity for moving to better paid, safer or more interesting jobs'*.

The major reason for working was undoubtedly related to financial remuneration. The highest number of students (n = 38) who expressed directly what they liked about the work they did during term or holiday time mentioned 'money' and 'pay'. Cremona (1989,p.60) notes that 35% of the boys and 32% of the girls in his sample of Gozitan students had remuneration in mind when they decided to work. 44% of the girls and 25% of the boys said they were pushed to work for 'family reasons', which Cremona interprets as helping out in family business or in augmenting the family budget. Child labour, both within the house and outside of it, and whether it is formally remunerated or not, should therefore be considered as an economic contribution to the household economy rather than for any educational experience that it might offer. This economic contribution is made in both direct and indirect forms. In the first instance, the Trade School questionnaire revealed that 145 out of the 378 students – or 38.3% – who worked throughout the year gave a percentage of the money they earned to their parents. Secondly, the fact that these young people were earning money meant that parents were not obliged to provide allowances to support expenses on clothes, travel, food, and entertainment and leisure activities. Some of these young people were therefore financing most if not all of their own leisure activities, besides helping out their parents.

It has been noted in a number of countries that the economic recession and high rates of unemployment have put even greater pressures on young people to contribute to the family budget (see Finn, 1984; Sultana, 1990a; Howieson, 1990). While Malta has not gone through the same kind of economic problems and there is a highly developed social service system, it is postulated that high taxation levels, relatively low wages, and the current increases in cost-of-living will have very much the same effect, and that parents actually encourage their children to find some form of paid employment. This proposition is borne out by the fact that 41% of the students who replied to the trade school questionnaire admitted that they had found their jobs with the help of parents, older siblings, or uncles and aunts.

Finally, it should be noted that work provided students with the possibility of socialising. 26 trade school students mentioned this factor as a pleasant thing about their work experience; meeting members of the opposite sex, tourists, and making friends with adult workers provided them with positive experiences. It became clear from my study that many students were working in jobs which allowed mixing with older workers. While 79 students claimed they worked with persons of their own age, 248 said that they did not. Work during term and holiday time to some extent also encouraged the mixing of genders: while boys and girls were involved in work roles which generally revealed the sexual division of labour in Malta, 181 worked in a mixed sex environment, while 148 were in a single workplace. Working alongside adults of the same or different gender can have both positive and negative effects on young students. Among the latter one can mention the tendency on the part of full-time, non-seasonal adult workers to impute a lower status on younger, casual labourers (cf Clark, 1986). Sexual harassment is also often reported when adult males work alongside young females (Sultana, 1990a).

(d) At what age do young people commence work?

The Trade School questionnaire reveals that students had started working before their fifteenth birthday. Indeed, 20 admitted that they had entered into paid employment at the age of ten or younger, while 10 and 33 had started at the age of eleven and twelve respectively. 76 students had started working when they were thirteen years of age, and 130 when they were fourteen. Only 79 students admitted to having had their first work experience at the age of fifteen or over. A similar pattern emerges if we examine the data presented by Cremona for his sample of Gozitan students. In this case, while there were a few who began work at 6 or 7 years of age, the majority entered into some form of paid employment at the age of 12 (15.7%), 13 (17.2%), or 14 years of age (21.6%)

(e) Number of hours worked and wages received.

In this section it is useful to distinguish between term and holiday jobs. Starting with the former ones first, an analysis of the Trade School questionnaire data shows that on average, both male and female students were involved in 4.7 hours' work per day, before, during and after school on school days and weekends. There was very little difference between male and female students: on average, male students worked 4.7 hours per day, while female students worked 4.5 hours daily. It needs to be pointed out that these averages conceal the fact that 16 students did 6 hours work daily, 12 did 7 hours work or more per day, 18 laboured between 8 and 11 hours daily. Cremona (1989, p.54) reports that most of the Gozitan male and female students worked less than 10 hours per week during term time.

The average number of hours of work for students involved in holiday work was almost twice that for term jobs. Male and female students worked, on average, 8.4 hours per day, with males clocking up to 8.6 hours and females 7 hours daily. Again, averages conceal the fact that 47 students worked for 9 hours daily, 33 for 10 hours, 16 for 11 hours, another 16 for 12 hours, 3 for 14 hours, and 5 for 15 hours per day. Similar data were reported by Cremona (1989, p.53) with regards to Gozitan students: 22.2% of his sample of boys who worked during the holiday season laboured for between 31 and 40 hours per week, while 16.8% worked between 41 and 50 hours. 23.4% of the girls worked for 10 or less per week, while 19% of them worked between 41 and 50 hours per week. Fewer girls than boys worked more than 70 hours per week during the holiday season.

The Trade School questionnaire data permits the calculation of the average hourly and weekly wages that these students received, although it does not permit the identification of cases where there was a combination of cash and kind as remuneration. There is an important degree of difference between the average hourly rate of pay for term and holiday jobs. For the former, the average was Lm1.18c per hour, with a difference of five cents between the average hourly pay for male and for females, in favour of the former. The average conceals the fact that 83 of the students who worked during term time did not know their hourly rate of pay – this, it will be argued later, enhances the employers' possibility of exploitation of young workers. It is possible that rather than not knowing the hourly rate, students were unwilling to declare how much money they made out of fear of getting into trouble with the authorities. This is the reason Cremona (1989, p.55) advances in order to explain the non-response rate for this question. It could also be postulated, however, that flexible hourly rates of pay is a characteristic feature of the informal sector in which most of the students laboured.

The average hourly rates received by trade school students also hide the fact that some students were getting far below the Lm1.18c mentioned above: 18 were getting only between 25c and 50c per hour; 26 were earning between

55c and 80c an hour. Other students were earning more than the average: 15 were earning between Lm2 and Lm2.50c an hour, 3 were earning Lm4 and 2 were earning as much as Lm5 per hour. On average, the weekly earning for males who worked during term time was Lm23.20c while for females the figure was Lm18.

Holiday work earned students even less money, below the 86c per hour which constitutes the official minimum wage in Malta. On average, an hour's work gave trade school students between 67.9c – if they worked five days a week – or 56.6c – if they worked for six days a week. This meant that most students were earning between Lm30 and Lm50 a week ($n = 122$), while a minority were earning between Lm55 and Lm70 a week ($n = 14$). Five students were earning Lm100 per week in the holiday season. It needs to be noted that while the average weekly earnings for holiday work are higher than those for term time, students were involved in work for much longer hours. Cremona provides similar information, although it seems that Gozitan students are even more underpaid than Maltese students. Cremona (1989, p.55) notes that 52.5% of his respondents were earning between 51c and Lm1 per hour, while 27% were earning less than 50c per hour.

(f) The experience of work.

One needs to look beyond wages to have a better understanding of the exploitative conditions under which child labour is usually carried out. With regards to remuneration, both Cremona's study and mine indicate quite clearly that young persons are satisfied with very little: Cremona (1989, pp.56 – 57) notes that only 25% of the girls and 12% of the boys claimed that their wages were low for the type of work they performed; 47% of the girls and 63% of the boys claimed that the remuneration was good while 19.5% of the boys and 19.2% of the girls claimed that their wages were very good. In my survey, 38 students identified money as the main thing they liked about work; only 4 complained about the low pay! Trade schools students were clearly more alert to exploitative work conditions outside of the wage realm. 30 students complained about such things as the physical suffering the job cost them, the long hours of standing on their feet, and the heavy loads they had to carry. 23 students highlighted the hierarchical relationship with their boss or supervisor. Another 20 complained about the work environment, such as dirt, foul smells, and exposure to extreme weather conditions. When responding to a question which asked them whether they would like to do the same kind of job after they left school, 157 of the 167 who answered the question (or 58.8%) said that they would not. The major reasons they gave were that this work caused too much suffering (46), was monotonous (6), had low pay ($n = 15$), and offered very bad conditions of work ($n = 15$).

Despite the generally exploitative conditions in which these trade school children laboured, it is worrying that as many as 110 out of 267 or (41.2%) who responded to the same question felt ready to continue with the same work they were doing after they left school. 50 students said that they felt that they were 'happy' and were 'good' at what they were doing, 19 were keen to remain in the trade they were practising, while another 19 believed that they were making enough money in that job as to warrant their staying on. 9 felt that their job offered them opportunities to socialise, and they felt accepted and respected at work, while 4 mentioned that their particular job did not cause them any physical stress, and therefore they found no reason to leave it on reaching compulsory school-leaving age. Whatever the reason, it is significant that so many students did not desire – possibly not even foresee the possibility of – a better working future with improved conditions of work, better salaries, and enjoying more rights and/or responsibilities.

Cremona's data is limited when it comes to providing information on the Gozitan students' experience of work. The latter were simply asked to say whether they thought their conditions of work were good or not without actually providing any indication of the specific conditions in question. In his sample (Cremona, 1989, p.58), 62% of the boys and 49% of the girls claimed that their conditions at work were good; 30% of the boys and 39% of the girls said the conditions were fair, while 4% of the boys and 5% of the girls admitted that the conditions were bad. Again, it becomes apparent that these students were basically satisfied with their work experience, and were largely unaware of the exploitative conditions they were labouring under.

(g) Child labour and schooling.

Childhood and youth, as Tucker (1977) among others has pointed out, are not mere biological constructs. They are also, and perhaps above all, projections of particular historical social formations. What appears at one point in time to be atrocious or totally unacceptable can be found to be common practice at another point in time. Suchodolski (1979, p.37), a Polish philosopher who has published extensively on the question of the rights of the child, notes that *'According to their circumstances, children in the past experienced either the joy of a carefree existence with plenty of opportunities for play in the fresh air, or a life of hardship and struggle characterized by poverty, homelessness, dependence on private persons, charitable institutions and even the State, and employment in adult work, which resulted in the exploitation and premature death of the children who made up this cheap labour force'*. Reflecting on the status of the child today, Schildkrout (1980, p.484) argues that in many societies, children's economic contribution is insignificant, and *'childhood is defined as the very antithesis of work. Childhood is assumed to be a rehearsal for adult*

life, and childhood experiences are then evaluated in terms of their educational importance'. It is therefore in the context of education and schooling rather than of labour and work that children develop and grow in modern social formations.

There are a number of relationships that can be played out between child labour and schooling. It could be concluded from Schildkrout's excerpt above that there is value in child labour when this offers educational experiences to children. This proposition has taken hold in a number of countries, and secondary schools in countries as far apart as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand actually organise work experience or work exploration placements for their students so that these can learn about the world of work (cf Watts, 1983). The educational value of such programmes is doubtful (cf Sultana, 1989), especially since the sector in which students are placed often reinforces the social and sexual division of labour, reproducing class, racial, ethnic and gendered economic destinies. Besides, it has already been pointed out in a previous section that many of the tasks performed by students are relatively simple and allow little opportunity for learning.

Earlier it was argued that one of the most successful ways of controlling child labour has been the raising of compulsory schooling to the age of fifteen or, as in Malta, sixteen. The presence of an educational infrastructure which can cater for all students up to a given age does not of course guarantee the complete disappearance of child labour. In the first place, as we have seen, many students are involved in part-time and full-time work during school holidays. Secondly, a large number of students manage to combine schooling with work by labouring before or/and after school hours and during weekends. Others simply do not turn up at school and prefer to work. All of these options have definite and negative effects on students' performance at school. Students begin associating school with loss of earnings, and this drastically reduces the little motivation there might be to invest in education. This process is bound to happen if, as Willis (1977) and Sultana (1990b) suggest, students from a working class background somehow penetrate the credentialling ideology and perceive that schooling will have little if any relationship between investment in schooling and future employment prospects.

When work is carried on outside school hours, the result is exposure to fatigue. Bequle and Boyden (1988, p.157) draw on a number of studies and report that '*Grossly overworked, the children are found to be less alert, less arduous and less regular in school attendance, and consequently are at a constant disadvantage throughout their school years and even later*'. School work should indeed be considered to be work for a number of reasons. Qvortrup (1989, p.10) correctly argues that from a historical perspective, '*school work is child labour under modern conditions. The social importance of children's school work is just as great as child labour was for parents and the local community in former*

times'. Over and above this, political economy of education after Bowles and Gintis (1976) stresses the correspondence between school and work, arguing that school children experience a number of the social relations of production – including, for instance, the bifurcation between the spheres of work and leisure – at school (cf Apple and King, 1977; Cole, 1988; Sultana, 1990c). Indeed, if one adopts a structuralist and conflict perspective, and if one accepts the premises behind the 'correspondence theory', one could well argue that it is quite enough that young people are exposed to the hierarchical and alienating social relations – typical of capitalism – within the school. To allow the reinforcement of such relations within a context of labour would only serve to further humankind from fulfilling one of its most basic duties, namely offering '*the child the best it has to give*' (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, United Nations, November 1959).

V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

One important step towards the achievement of that goal is the formulations of a strong policy which ensures that the rights of the child for education and for freedom from material constraints are guaranteed. Such a policy would also ensure that children will no longer need to labour – at least not in situations which permit exploitation. To summarise a number of points argued throughout the paper, a strong and effective policy with regards to child labour is necessary because, in Malta as elsewhere:

- a. Children are involved in doing repetitive, alienating and fragmented tasks; have little or no control over the work process, and learn and use few skills. These unskilled and often simple jobs offer little opportunity to move on to other, better paid, safer or more interesting occupations. Children are therefore often trapped in fluctuating or unstable labour markets characterised by low pay and insecurity of employment.
- b. These working children have few rights, and the few they do have are not clearly stipulated. They are thus more subject to the whims of their employers.
- c. Their vulnerability is emphasised by the fact that they have no collective representation and thus little protection from exploitation or harassment. The fact that they are voluntarily working illegally means that they will be even more hesitant to complain to authorities as this would mean admitting to having broken the law. They have few alternatives for employment, and this fact renders them even more dependent on their employers.
- d. Children are often expected to do adult work for a wage far below that normally given to adults, even when they are involved in doing the same tasks. There are no fringe benefits, insurance or social security costs. Such low wages give employers an advantage in national – and in some cases, international – markets. In addition, these employers can often avoid the obligation to comply with the national employment requirements.

e. Employers do not generally take into account that most workplaces and most work tasks were designed with adults in mind. Hence, when children perform the same work they are more likely *'to suffer occupational injuries due to inattention, fatigue, poor judgement or insufficient knowledge of work processes and also to the fact that the equipment, machinery, tools and layout of most workplaces are designed for adults'* (Bequle and Boyden, 1988, p.154).

f. These children are involved in long hours of work, especially if we consider school to be work. Many labour on through the weekends, attracted by the added incentive of special rates of pay.

g. It is moreover not often pointed out that more remotely but perhaps very importantly for the employing class, child labour seems to initiate students into capitalist work relations and conditions, enveloping young people in a world of hard facts where the 'what is' assumes a common-sense and taken-for-granted quality, divorcing it from the alternative and humane vision of the 'what could' and the 'what should' be. Experience in the twilight economy therefore seems to mould young persons into the future workers who will find naive joy in the in the 'improved' conditions of their full time work. Such an experience produces ideas, feelings, desires and forms of consciousness which lead to an adaptive mentality rather than to one which yearns – and struggles – for alternative arrangements in the social formation.

What form would a child labour policy take in view of all that has been said this far? Swepston (1982, p.590) notes that a key factor is enforcement, and that this depends on three basic requirements: first, the identification of the persons responsible for compliance; second, the establishment of enforcement measures, including penalties, and third, the keeping of registers of young persons employed or working. He concludes (*ibid.*, p.591) that *'the most indispensable enforcement mechanism in this field is an adequate labour inspection service'*.

I would however tend to agree with Bequle and Boyden (1988, p.163) when they note that legislation and enforcement on their own have their disadvantages in that they can force children to *'work clandestinely in unregulated sectors of the economy where it is impossible either to detect or to protect them'*. They therefore favour a multi-prolonged approach which includes legislation and law-enforcement, but goes beyond that to embrace action in areas such as income and employment, formal and informal education, welfare and the promotion of children's rights. They also highlight the role that unions can play by including young persons in their struggle to improve – if not change – the social relations and conditions of labour.

Bequle and Boyden (*ibid.*, p.163) also note that incentives are also effective in curbing the incidence of child labour. The authors present Hong Kong as an example of a country which has developed an efficient and diverse approach which goes beyond legislation. This includes regular and thorough inspections;

yearly special campaigns to detect child employment and to raise public awareness; requiring all young workers to have an identification card with a photograph which facilitates inspection and enforcement of rules; and the introduction of social security contributions in respect of young workers. The latter fact has reduced employers' reliance on child labour in that country. Depending on the resources of a country, there could be the payment of a cash allowance for children withdrawn from prohibited employment.

Educators too have a part to play. Transformative teachers intent on engaging the world in order to change the oppressive conditions in which life is lived need to help students develop a critical social intelligence, enabling them to penetrate the structures of domination and injustice in which they already live in a multiple of social sites, and most of all at work. Such teachers would develop a critical literacy (Freire, 1972) in their students, who would thus be able to read and decode not only 'words' but 'the world'. It is only by awakening in these students a full consciousness of the extent of their exploited condition that they will prove willing to cooperate with those who are struggling on their behalf.

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Notes:

1. Trade Schools were set up in Malta in 1972 and in 1989 they were catering for 2868 boys and 1509 girls, or about 17.5% of all secondary school students attending government schools (Central Office of Statistics, 1990). For a full account of the development of trade schools in Malta, see Sultana (1992)
2. The Convention takes into account that there are large differences between countries when it comes to economic development as well as to the availability of compulsory mass schooling. The Convention therefore allows the minimum age to be set at 14 initially. Malta has the necessary educational infrastructure to provide schooling up to and beyond that age, and indeed compulsory schooling was extended to 16 in 1974.
3. In 1989 the minimum wage for a forty hour week was Lm34.37c. Depending on fluctuations in exchange rates, one Maltese lira is equivalent to around 2.5 ECUs (or 3.35 U.S. dollars).

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TOURISM AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS IN MALTA

David E. Zammit

This paper aims to explore the relationship between tourism and community celebrations.¹ This relationship is often presented as being of an uni-directional casual nature, with positive or negative effects depending on the observer's prejudices. Hence some argue that tourism boosts such ritual events, providing an audience and funds which expand their size. Others point to increasing disaffection with such rituals on the part of the 'locals', as the meaning of the event is irreparably altered in the process of turning it into a tourist commodity. On the basis of observations I made while conducting anthropological fieldwork in a Maltese village² which I will here call Hal-Harrub, I shall argue that both views are misleading insofar as they overlook the polysemic nature of ritual events and the manifold effects of tourism.

My starting point is the *Lejla Harrubija*, a community celebration which is staged in Hal-Harrub on a Sunday night two or three weeks before the village festa. This celebration involves various events and performances, such as an agricultural fair, folk-dancing by village youths and *ghana*³ by professional *ghannejja* imported from outside the village. These performances take place at night, on a specially constructed floodlit wooden stage in the village square and are introduced by a *compere*, who stresses the folkloristic significance of the events and connects them to the special role allegedly played by Hal-Harrub in Maltese history. Many Maltese who reside outside the village attend this event as do an increasing number of tourists. Their presence is actively solicited by the committee which organises the *Lejla Harrubija*. Thus, I helped three village youths set up posters advertising the event on the major cross-roads leading to the village.

It is easy to take such a celebration at its face-value, as many tourists presumably do and see it as a quaint survival of ancient agrarian rites, which is now being altered and perhaps ruined by the participation of tourists. However, there are many indications that this is not the case. For one thing, I was told that this event originated in the early nineteen eighties,⁴ although my interlocutors generally added that this event was the fore-runner of the *Lejla Maltija* celebrations which are now held in many Maltese towns and villages. Significantly, too, the village youths are taught their folk-dancing not by aged rustics, but by an up-to-date dancing master from the sophisticated town of Sliema. The *ghannejja*, the *compere* and most of the other components of this celebration are imported from outside the village.

Clearly the *Lejla Ħarrubija* belongs to the category of "invented traditions", described by Eric Hobsbawm as:

...a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (my italics).⁵

Hobsbawm points out that one must not be misled by claims to immeasurable antiquity ascribed to such practices as the Highland kilt, or the British coronation ceremony. Even when particular aspects of these practices are genuinely antique, their revival is a response to present needs.

It is interesting to speculate as to the motives behind the creation of the *Lejla Ħarrubija*. It seems to have been associated with a general revival of interest in folklore starting in the late sixties and early seventies, itself related to the political and religious upheavals of that period. Thus, one observer has commented:

An interesting feature of the development of folklore in Malta is that it took-off in the 1960's.⁶

It is also perhaps not irrelevant that *Hal-Ħarrub* is one of the most geographically isolated communities in Malta, which is often seen as being behind the times. There is certainly a trend to exploit this archaic image for pecuniary motives. *Hal-Ħarrub* is perhaps the most well-known village in Malta to have specialised in the cooking of the *fenkata*.⁷ Various bars in the village offer this meal to other Maltese who are often middle-class urban youths. Going to *Hal-Ħarrub* to eat a *fenkata* is, for these youths, a ritual involving contact with a romanticised past, which is perceived as somehow still alive in this remote corner of Malta. In this context, the claim that the *Lejla Ħarrubija* was the forerunner of other similar events may, whatever its factual basis, be highly significant. It shows that issues of originality and authenticity are closely associated with the *Lejla Ħarrubija* in the minds of the villagers. This event may therefore be seen as a strategic manipulation of *Hal-Ħarrub*'s primordial image, uniting the community in the task of attracting outsiders to the village, thus raising the self-esteem of the villagers and providing a flow of clientele to the local bars.^{7a}

Other factors may be adduced to explain the *Lejla Ħarrubija*. Jeremy Boissevain claims that there has been an increase in community celebrations throughout Southern Europe, coupled with a qualitative change in the type of celebrations which are popular.⁸ He relates this to factors such as the decline in emigration; the post-modern reaction to industrialisation and consequent revalorisation of past traditions; a reaction to increased isolation brought about by new patterns of work; the media explosion; the advent of mass tourism and increasing democratisation leading to a redefinition of legitimate culture.

Whatever the precise combination of factors which gave rise to this event, it is clear that it is not solely a festival *by villagers for villagers*. Outsiders to the village play a critical part in the proceedings leading up to this festival and supply a very substantial part of the audience. The content of the festival is only understandable as a portrayal of Hal-Harrub as the villagers would like outsiders to see the village. Even if the reason for the invention of this "traditional" event is not, as I have suggested, the self-conscious manipulation of the outsiders' view of Hal-Harrub in order to attract these same outsiders, it seems clear that we are here dealing with a celebration *by the villagers, of their village and mainly for outsiders*.⁹

This already casts major doubts on the thesis that tourism is associated with a decline in community celebrations, as we are here speaking of a celebration the *raison d'être* of which appears to be inherently linked to the existence of an outside audience, whether it consists of "tourists" from other parts of Malta or from beyond our shores. It may be objected, however, that I am here speaking of a very artificial type of celebration. Surely other "insider" celebrations *by a community for that same community* are weakened and diluted by the overwhelming weight of mass tourism.

These arguments are bolstered by anthropological evidence such as Davydd J. Greenwood's case-study of the *Alarde* ritual staged by the Basque town of Fuenterrabia in Spain.¹⁰ This ritual is a recreation of a key event in the town's history, when the city successfully withstood a French siege. It involves a mass procession by different groups, representing the different categories of the town's population and the firing of certain guns in unison. Greenwood observes that the significance of this ritual was to be found in its unifying effect. It represented the town to itself in a manner which showed that all the categories of the population had their specific contribution to make to the defence of a heroic, common, Basque identity. This sense of community served to alleviate the tensions and divisions engendered between the various sections of the town's populace in the preceding year and to counter the sense of alienation from civic life experienced by the increasing number of the town's inhabitants who were finding employment outside its confines.

The whole meaning of this ritual, Greenwood observes, was that it was an insider event. It was a performance *by Fuenterrabia, of Fuenterrabia and for Fuenterrabia*. However, the entire meaning of the event was destroyed by the advent of mass tourism. As a result of the increasing interest shown by tourists in the *Alarde*, the central government authorities decided that it should be staged twice a day in order to ensure that a larger number of tourists watched the proceedings. This, according to Greenwood, had a very negative effect on the attitudes of the Fuenterrabians to their ritual. It was now seen as being a *performance by the Fuenterrabians for tourists*. This resulted in a sense of confusion and cynicism about the event, reflecting the loss of significance it had undergone. The town's inhabitants became apathetic about the whole celebration and many stopped taking part. Eventually, the municipal government was forced to consider paying people to take part in the ritual.

Ultimately, Greenwood argues, the mistake which the central government made was that it did not take into account the meaning of the *Alarde* for the participants, as part of a system of meanings by which the nature of reality is established. Instead the central government treated the *Alarde* as a commodity, as something which could be sold as part of a package for tourists. Tourism is particularly prone to lead to such a commoditisation of culture and therefore tends to have a disastrous effect on such rituals.

While it seems clear that tourism can have such an effect, I would argue that Greenwood's argument places too much emphasis on the destructive effect of tourism, while underrating (1) the fact that celebrations are constantly changing over time; (2) that they perform a variety of functions; (3) the human capacity to create different celebrations to replace those which have been destroyed and (4) that tourism may actually stimulate increased ritual activity, by way of reaction.

Thus in Hal-Harrub the *Lejla Harrubija* event is followed, after one or two weeks, by a late-night disco in the village square. This celebration appears to be even more recent than the *Lejla Harrubija*. I view this disco as a reaction to the self-conscious folkloristic character of the *Lejla Harrubija* and an attempt to exorcise its characteristic focus on outsiders, by the creation of an event which is strictly for internal consumption. The contrasts between this event and the earlier folkdancing are schematically presented below:

Lejla Harrubija

1. Early night.
2. Many outsiders present.
3. Folk dancing.
4. Organised by established community leaders. Middle-class youths associated with Catholic Action, play an important role in the stage performances.
5. Highly ritualistic.
6. Youths wear special rustic clothing.
7. Only a select few dance.
8. The dancers prepare for their dancing for months before the event.
9. The platform and *compere* are imported into the village.

Disco

1. Late night.
2. Very few outsiders.
3. Modern dancing.
4. Organised by a wild band of village youths from the lower classes.
5. Ludic and playful elements are pronounced.¹¹
6. Youths wear ordinary clothes.
7. Anyone can dance.
8. The dancing is marked by improvisation.
9. Local youths construct the shack housing musical equipment and act as DJs.

In the context of these sets of oppositions, it seems to me to be highly significant that both celebrations entail dancing and follow each other so closely. Here, the common (dance) idiom in which the celebrations are expressed serves both to highlight the intimate connection between these two celebrations and to place in relief the contrasts between them. Maltese festas do not normally contain any dancing and the combination of two events which do is too neat to be coincidental. The observer is almost forced to make comparisons. In doing so, the radical difference between the types of dancing which occur provides an insight into the true nature of both events. Paradoxically this shows us that when the villagers wish to present themselves to outsiders, they pose as rustic embodiments of Malta's past and when they hold the mirror up to themselves, they pose as participants in the modern world of the late twentieth century!¹² Furthermore, it illustrates the point that community celebrations tend to spawn other ritual events which often arise by way of reaction and stress features and meanings neglected in the original celebration. In this case, at least, it seems that a ritual event *by villagers for outsiders* has given rise to a community celebration *by villagers for themselves*.¹³

It may be objected that I am here placing too much emphasis on the outsider/insider dichotomy and barely referring to the competitive results of class tension which, some would say, provide a more convincing explanation of these paired events. According to this view, the disco is the lower class response to and comment on the middle class *Lejla Harrubija* and the paired structural features I outlined are to be understood in this light. While acknowledging that class tension is part of the fuel which drives people to create these paired ritual events, I would still attribute great importance to the insider/outsider dichotomy and this for the following reasons:

1. While the organisers of the two events I described do seem to be opposed in class terms, many of the participants overlap. The appeal of the late night disco for those who take part in it, is therefore not solely that of class loyalty.
2. One could argue that the insider/outsider dichotomy is manipulated by the lower class youths in order to add piquancy to their rejection of middle-class values. This view, however, still assumes that participants to these ritual events reflect on the difference between villagers and outsiders and that they feel strongly enough about it to stage celebrations specifically for internal consumption.
3. Class conflict alone does not really explain the structural features which point to a tight and intimate connection between these two ritual events. If the disco were solely a means to carry on class conflict, there would be no reason to make it an "insider" event in opposition to such an explicitly "outsider" event as the *Lejla Harrubija*. One would also expect the disco to contain denigratory symbolical references to the higher social classes, whereas most of the messages which are sent in these ritual events seem to focus on the village's identity, the dichotomy between past and modern and that between outsiders and insiders.

It may also be claimed that I am falling into the common anthropological trap of drawing too many inferences from a single case. However, anybody who reflects on the characteristic structure of the Maltese festas will note how often celebrations seem to refer to each other. There seems to be such a relationship between the band marches which are held for the villagers only and those which are widely patronised by tourists. Furthermore, I have already referred to the increase in insider celebrations which Boissevain has noted throughout Southern Europe. He has associated this, *inter alia*, with increased tourism from Northern Europe. The Hal-Harrub material suggests that tourism results in an intensified awareness of the distinction between insiders and outsiders, resulting in ritual events which owe their appeal precisely to the way in which they engage with the issues of identity thus posed.

Thus the effect of tourism on community celebrations is not explicable by reference to any facile theory of promotion or destruction. Whilst it may have a hand in destroying certain community celebrations, tourism may also provoke the creation of new ones. These ritual events are often dissimilar in their forms and their intended audiences. Play is counterpoised to ritual, outsider events to insider events, lower classes to middle classes.¹⁴ The important point is that community celebrations are dynamic entities which are often in a dialectical relationship to each other. This antithetical relationship finds expression in the structure and meaning of these celebrative events, leading to sets of sharply contrasted features. In these cases there is often a connecting thread in the idiom in which the celebrations are expressed, the temporal setting of the events¹⁵ or some other structural feature. This connecting thread forms an integral part of the sets of dichotomies, serving to intensify the symbolic effect of the contrasting features.

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Notes

1. In speaking of "community celebrations", I am using the term Manning uses to describe performances which are (a) entertainment, (b) public and (c) participatory. For further information, refer to Manning Frank (ed.), *The Celebration of Society*, (1983), Bowling Green: Popular Press. The term "tourism" has no specialized or technical meaning, as employed here.

2. I am indebted to the University of Malta for giving me the opportunity to conduct this field-work in the period of June/August 1991, as part of my Summer work-phase.

3. Traditional folk-singing, performed by singers known as *ghannejja*.

4. The precise year when the *Lejla Harrubija* started is apparently 1982.

5. Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.1

6. Sant-Cassia, Paul, "History, Anthropology and Folklore", in Sant-Cassia (ed.), *Journal of Mediterranean Studies: Volume 3, No. 2, 1993*, The Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, p. 301.

7. This is a type of rabbit stew which is often seen as the Maltese national dish. It forms an important part of the rustic image which some Maltese associate with their past. According to unpublished research by Charles Cassar, it may have been used as a symbolic vehicle to express sentiments of resistance to the rule of the Knights of St. John.

7a. It is also important to note that Hal-Harrub's proximity to the popular bays of Ġnejna and Għajn Tuffieħa has long established its popularity among tourists.

8. Boissevain, J., (ed.), *Revitalising European Rituals*, 1992, London: Routledge.

9. After writing these words I recently returned to Hal-Harrub, in order to check up on some details. In conversation with one of the villagers, I was pleased to note that without being prompted, she made the same distinction, observing that the *Lejla Harrubija* was an event by the villagers, but primarily for outsiders.

10. Greenwood, D., "Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization", in Smith, Valene, (ed.), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, 1977, University of Pennsylvania Press.

11. During the disco which I attended, one of the wilder villagers actually brought a bowser and proceeded to spray most of the participants and the houses facing the square with a powerful jet of water.

12. One can view the disco and the *Lejla Harrubija* as reflecting the tension between different ways of conceptualising the rural world. For the urbanite, the village is related to the past and opposed to the town which is related to the "modern" present. For the villagers, the village encapsulates both past and present and is opposed to the town on the basis of other criteria.

13. In claiming that the *Lejla Harrubija* provoked the creation of the late night disco, I do not wish to imply that the two community celebrations are equivalent in size, degree of community involvement and complexity of organisation. The *Lejla Harrubija* is a much larger and more complex event. The late night disco involves far fewer people in its organisation.

14. On the basis of the Hal-Harrub evidence, I would tend to agree with Boissevain's contention that an increase in the ludic aspects of celebrations is positively related to increased popular and working class participation in such events. See Boissevain, op. cit., p.14

15. Hence it is no accident that St Joseph the Worker's day coincides with May Day. These two community celebrations are locked in a dialectical relationship to each other, where the common temporal setting only serves to highlight the tension between the Catholic values espoused by the Church and the left-wing ideas which inspire the organisers of May Day. This does not mean that these values and ideas are always seen as conflicting, only that the *possibility* of this happening is underlined by the celebration of these two separate community celebrations on the same day.