

THE CRY OF *Munxar*

Text & Pictures by
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I parked my pitiful car in Marsascala near the famous waste recycling plant, and walked all the way to the seashore near pretty St. Thomas Bay. A couple of spirited windsurfers dotted the scene with an amazing dash of colour which was lost in the large expanses of green and blue. There was a large accumulated pile of seaweed (a flowering plant) covering whole areas of the apparently desolate bay. It was brownish in colour and the sea waves battered against its leaves, making a select few slither in a startling way. A group of old men were trying to capture worms and shrimps to use as bait for fishing. They were putting their large nets to good use while they were sifting through hundreds of seaweed strata.

Suddenly, two young children appeared from the intertwined leaves, their faces immensely triumphant with a couple of helpless shrimps twitching incessantly in their hands. Further inshore, a large number of Maltese fishing boats eagerly awaited the arrival of the summer months in order to show off their newly acquired strength and colours. In the path leading to Munxar, small summer houses were grouped together in a cluster, but in a way, it also seemed that they were the outcome of crisis management. Some of the summer residences are well kept, while others are in complete ruins.

I walked on. The track was marvellous and the greenery was still full of dewdrops. One or two people had already braved this cold and rain threatening morning and found the bay an ideal place to fish. Their catch revealed that they were either very good or very lucky.

Munxar is an area of land projecting out from the main land and can be seen as a white tongue shaped protrusion with an upper covering of green from the Marsascala mainland. The area also includes one or two small and secluded beaches. Munxar is facing St. Thomas Bay and provides a land of scenic value from very far off, as it is surrounded by the sea. The

green scenery provides a natural backdrop to St. Thomas Bay, a bay which is very popular with the Maltese public.

In December of last year, a new tourist development was proposed in Munxar sited in between the bays of St. Thomas and Xrobb I-ghagin. This ill conceived development project has plans for a hotel, over a hundred and forty - two storey apartments, sports and recreational areas and a restaurant. The plan also includes an area to be developed as a 'natural park' so as not to directly kill the endemic plants (plants which exist only in Malta and nowhere else in the world!) present in the area, but to enclose them in a 'cage' in an effort to safeguard them from the same development. Nonetheless, they will probably die out just the same. And the question 'naturally' arises... Why make a 'natural park' from what is a natural park already?

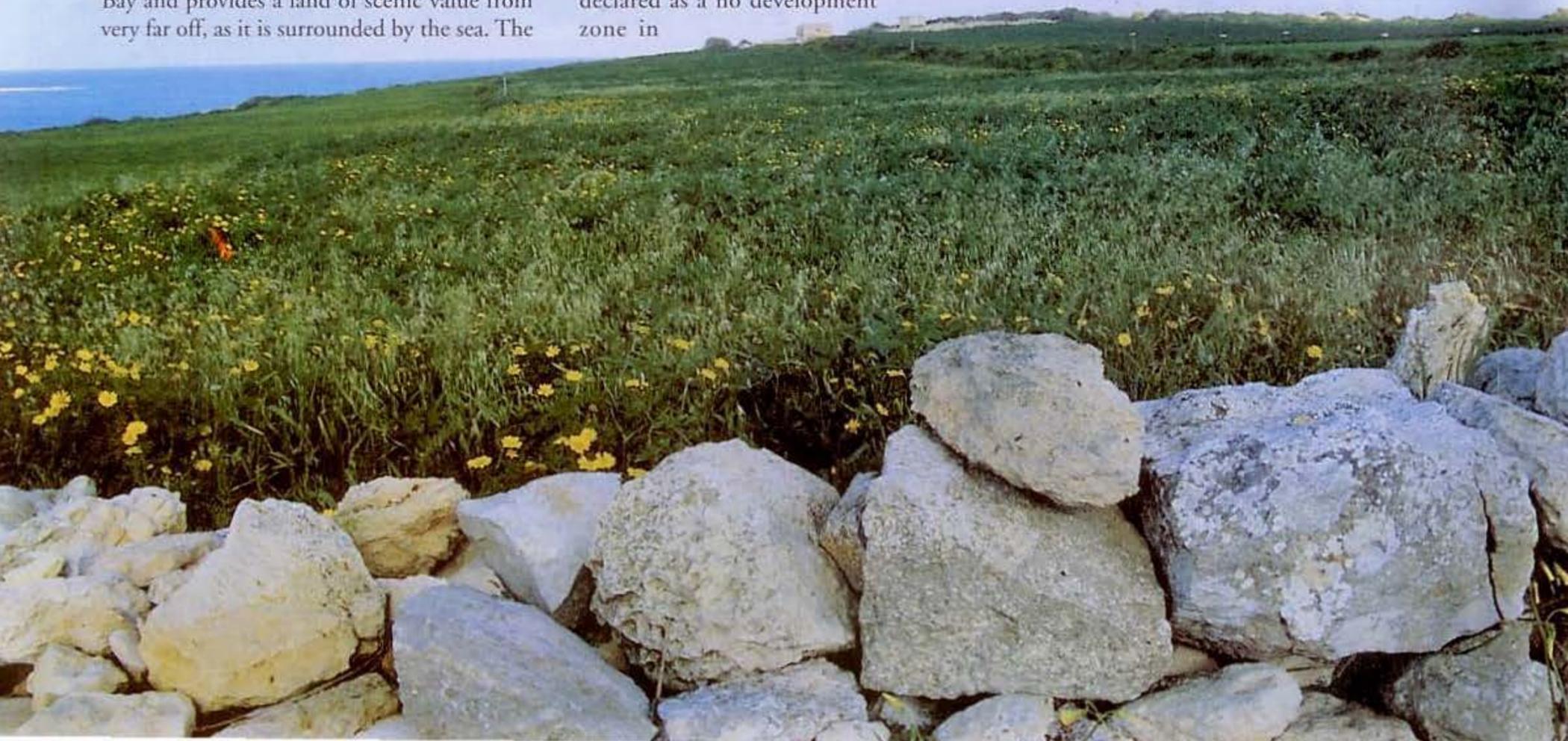
The area known as Il-Ponta tal-Munxar is declared as a no development zone in

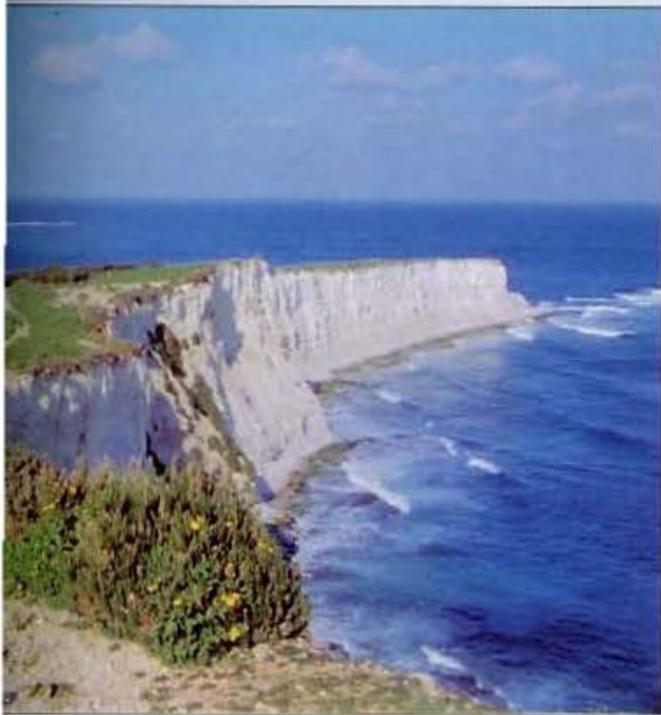
the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands. The Structure Plan is a strategic long term plan for the Maltese islands covering a twenty year period up to year 2010. Munxar is a rural conservation zone of ecological importance. In order

to enhance and protect the countryside, the Structure Plan formulates a series of Rural Conservation areas in which development of any structures or activities in rural areas other than those legitimate and natural to them are prohibited. One such area is Munxar. Amongst others, the Plan

tries to conserve agricultural land, the coastline and other areas of natural beauty, all of which are present at Munxar.

While using my old camera to photograph this brilliant place, I was also noting that as the day grew older a fair amount of families were arriving at the bay with their cars and then strolling along the beautiful landscape. Their children seemed to be more interested in noting the variety and richness of plant species in





land (and its owners) if the proposed development gets the thumbs up - now especially so as the original plan has been modified and the proposed project has been moved further inland covering more agricultural land.

Environmental groups, environmentalists, and Marsascala residents have opposed the plan. A councillor from the Marsascala Local Council was quoted as saying that "Munxar is an area of outstanding beauty, which will be spoilt if the complex goes ahead". Three Labour representatives from the third electoral district declared that they would do everything possible to prevent this project. One should remember that this project should not even be

considered for at least the next fifteen years; let alone approved.

Trying to capture the beauty of the site on film proved to be an extremely difficult feat, due to the winding contours which were great to look at, but made it impossible to fit in the place all at once. I then decided to focus on parts of Munxar to let you appreciate the beauty of the area, and decide for yourself on the fate of unique Munxar. Whether your humble opinion counts or not, dear friend, is wholly another matter. Yet, you should definitely make it heard.



the area. Asphodels were striking with their pale flowers, while their long stems seemed to grow out of the shorter squills, sparges and thistles. An assortment of red and yellow small, wonderfully coloured flowers was granted by the Storksbill, the tender Trefoil and the sinuous Crocuses. The way things are proceeding, when these children themselves become parents, they will have to content their own children with museum visits and photographs.

In addition to the unique garigue habitat present in Munxar, there is also an area of agricultural land (in place of the proposed development), which may account for the livelihood of a number of people living in the surrounding areas. What would happen to this

Left, Right & Above: Views of and from Munxar point.



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