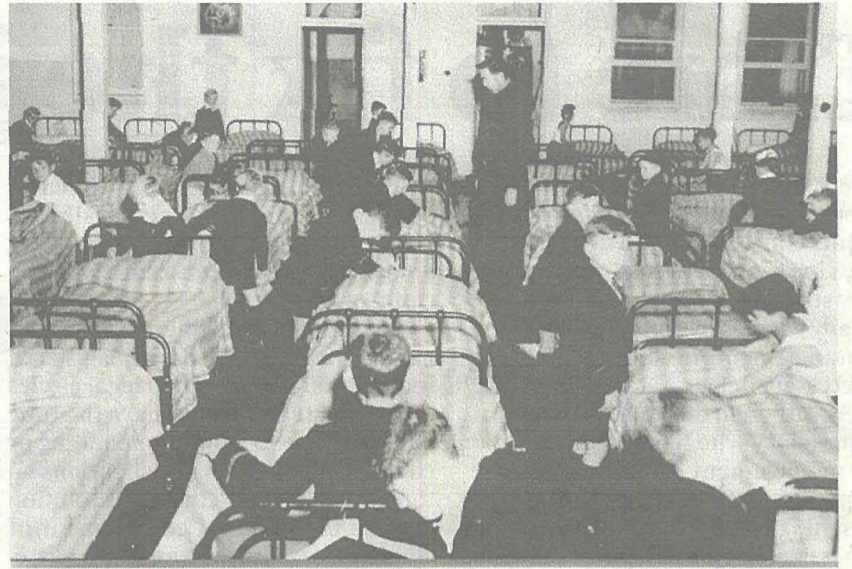
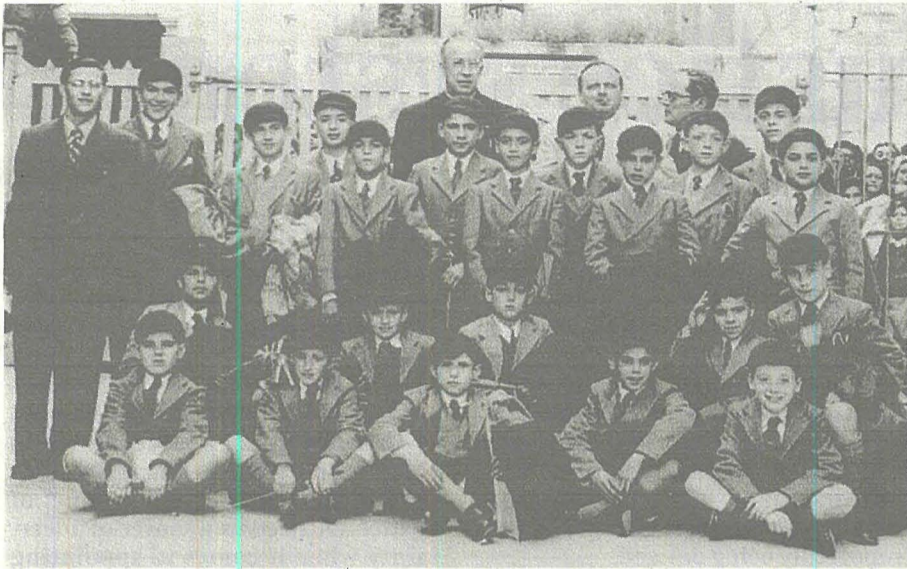


COMMENTS AND LETTERS



A group of boys before leaving Malta in 1950 (left) and making their beds in a dormitory. Below is the child migrant monument in Valletta.

The untold story of Malta's child migrants

PAUL CALLEJA



On Sunday, March 1, 2002, I witnessed the unveiling of the child migrant monument that now adorns the Pinto Wharf in Malta's Grand Harbour. I was there with the late Prof. Plowman and two other members of the Child Migrants of Malta (CMOM), courtesy of the government of Malta. The unveiling marked the end of a six-year endeavour by the CMOM committee to achieve important outcomes for the former Maltese child migrants.

Many within Malta and its diaspora believed then (and still probably do today) that they had the complete body of knowledge of Malta's child migrant narrative. Those still believing this are mistaken. In reality, what they have is just the skeletal component which, on its own, projects a distorted image of the true story.

A skeleton needs the fleshy bits to clad it before the accurate image can emerge. Unfortunately for those who want the complete picture, much of the fleshy bits can only be found in the Maltese child migrant's digital archive that I retrieved recently from my computer.

The archive is important for Malta to establish a correct and complete collection of historical material on this significant and unique chapter of its history and is equally important

to those who write this history for much the same reasons.

The archive contains material from a broad variety of sources under an extensive range of headings. These include documents and correspondence from the Australian and Maltese governments, High Commissioners of Malta, the Christian Brothers and a host of other religious orders, Perth's archbishop, Geraldton's bishop, the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Migrants & Refugees, the International Association of Former Child Migrants, the Battye Library of Western Australia's Migrant Communities Archives, Malta's Migrant Commission, Senator Andrew Murray and Chief Justice David Malcolm, to name a few.

Also held in the archive are newspaper articles from the now defunct *Maltese Herald*, *Times of Malta*, *The Malta Independent on Sunday*, *L-Orizzont* and more. Newsletters of CMOM and Christian Brothers Ex-Residents and Student Services (C-

Berss) plus oral histories (C-Berss produced) featuring 10 former Maltese child migrants in addition to CMOM's photos collection and information of a host of other topics further enhance the archive.



Two sections can be identified in the archive. The first covers the period from 1990 to 2002 and the second from 2002 to 2008.

Materials of the first section – 1990 to 2002 – originate from research I conducted for a book I was writing on the history of Maltese settlement in Western Australia. The book was titled *The Maltese of the Western Third*.

The 'Western Third' refers to Western Australia. This state occupies one third of the entire Australian continent and is so large that it can accommodate seven countries the size of the UK or five the size of France.

Materials of the second section – 2002 to 2008 – commence with my 'light-bulb' moment that resulted in the formation of the Child Migrants of Malta. Its subject matters are broad and abundant.

These include the contrasting level of support by three Malta High Commissioners of CMOM between 2002 and 2008, the magnitude of support from Church, State and the community, CMOM's origin, CMOM's committee and their individual contribution to the cause, CMOM's influence in the Australian Senate child migrant inquiry and finally the catastrophic Clontarf bus tragedy that killed one Irish child migrant and severely injuring six Maltese – one of whom lost one leg, the other two.

The archive has always been in my possession because I built it during an 18-year period from researching a book from 1990 to 2002 and as CMOM's secretary from 2002 to 2008.

Now I feel obligated to make this archive available to migrant organisations and institutions working for migrants and preserving migrant records and other forms of information. To that end, I will forward the archive to Directorate for Consular Services and Maltese Living Abroad, Malta Emigrants' Commission and the University of Malta.

It is my genuine hope that, at one point in the future, a Maltese historian or PhD student will write a complete account of Malta's child-migrant era and publish the results in a book.

I believe there would be strong interest in Malta, Australia, Britain, New Zealand and the USA to purchase the book.

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