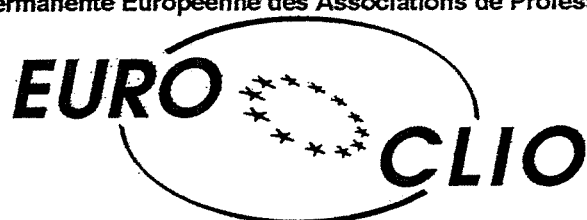


European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations
Conférence Permanente Européenne des Associations de Professeurs d'Histoire



**History and Citizenship:
Sinews of Europeanity in the
Maltese Experience**

Professor Henry Frendo

University of Malta

A Conference Paper from the EUROCLIO Conference:

**Using Historical Skills and Concepts to Promote an Awareness of
European Citizenship**

Organised in Partnership with
The History Teacher's Association of Malta

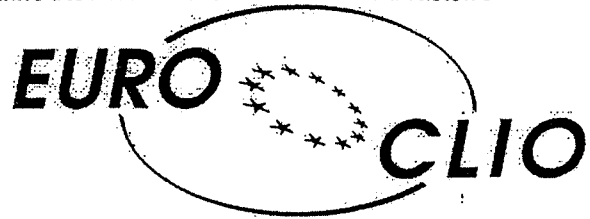


*History Teachers' Association
(Malta)*

Malta, March 2006



European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations
Conférence Permanente Européenne des Associations de Professeurs d'Histoire



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Dear Colleagues,

As you may know EUROCLIO Bulletin24 , based on the excellent conference hosted by the History Teacher's Association in Malta in partnership with EUROCLIO- the European Standing Conference of History Teacher's Associations, was published in two formats: a paper version of what is effectively a journal for teachers, and a more fulsome 'Online version' with some more substantial articles.

The theme of the conference was **Using Historical Skills and Concepts to Promote and Awareness of European Citizenship**, and interesting debate was generated by lead speeches, presentations and active workshops.

We were keen to ensure that the full academic papers could reach as wide an audience as possible- and because of their size these articles have been published online.

To further disseminate the high quality materials produced during the conference a small number of the key papers have been produced in a printed format- in this case the work of Professor Henry Frendo of the University of Malta.

We hope that you will find it as stimulating as the participants did at the Malta Conference!

Dean Smart
Spring 2007

History and Citizenship: Sinews of Europeanity in the Maltese Experience

Henry Frendo

A doctoral graduate of Oxford University, where he was in residence at University College, and an elected life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, where he was a Visiting Fellow, HENRY FRENDO has been Professor of History at Malta since 1992. The author of several books and other works since 1970, some of them published in translation, Professor Frendo has taught in European, Australian and American universities as well as held various awards. He has been an International Visitor to the UK, the USA, Germany and the EU. In addition to his academic interests relating to European history and culture, European expansion, nationalism and decolonization in the Mediterranean, migration, and journalism, Professor Frendo served with UNHCR in Europe, Africa and Asia in the 1970s and 1980s. While President of the College of Mayors in the 1990s, he headed Malta's delegation to the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, where he chaired its Euro-Med Group (1996-1999). Henry Frendo chairs Malta's Refugee Appeals Board and serves as vice-president of the Council of Europe's committee of experts on local government; he is also a governor of the Asia-Europe Foundation.

History is central to citizenship; but the discourse on belonging and identity is, perhaps increasingly, in a state of flux. So is the approach and the methodology, as mobility and technologies change rapidly, with such means as IT, TV, cinema, museums, orality, locality and regionality competing with the more traditional archival sources of information confined to books and journals, and that in a seemingly unstoppable globalizing world.¹ Citizenship can hardly exist outside of a framework of trust, born of an internalization of legitimacy, but the nurturing of such a disposition can no longer depend on set norms or value-systems, other perhaps than citizenship itself, and even this, as it is a-changing. Citizenship, however, presumes a nationhood, some kind of affiliation to nationality or statehood, otherwise it would be no more than a travel document. To make fun of a sense of affinity and belonging, of being, of place, of time and context, is to be too smart by half, or to be simply, perhaps unconsciously, the product of an utterly colonized or globalised mind. Of course identity would presume some roots. Were it

¹ See Henry Frendo, 'Can a New History Save Europe from its Past?', in *Towards a pluralist and tolerant approach to teaching history: a range of sources and new didactics* (Council for Cultural Cooperation, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1999), 27-44, and *passim*.

simply preserved in a jar, its water would have dried up a long time ago. Like citizenship, identity is dynamic; it is not a goldfish. In not being static, however, it does not thereby cease to exist.

By the same token, an ethical respect for a searching truth and an individual merit, without a disregard for the communal and collective, is of the essence, as every history teacher will recognize. In no deserving classroom or lecture room at university should there be place for abusive, whimsical ego trips on the part of the chair, at the expense of a student's willingness to learn and to participate by speaking up, in the exercise of an independent mind and spirit. Surely without such core pedagogical and psychological givens, no mutual trust, no reciprocity, and therefore no citizenship, is possible.

During a conference in Berlin on the borders of Europe in September 2004, we discussed whether national identities and a European identity, or identities, could co-exist or converge. This question is pertinent too in the light of the European Union's discussions on what they call 'Citizenship of the Union', which in real terms is still a far cry from citizenship of the nation-state, and may remain so to varying extents, Laeken, Tampere and all other such Brussels-centred declaratory policy notwithstanding, as the defeats suffered by a proposed European constitutional treaty demonstrate. Hence the concern with 'realigning the EU with citizens', not achievable through packaged PR eyewash.

In the first instance, a knowledge and respect for a national self-identity over time, comprising its non-linear variants, is needed; that not to be mistaken for a politically, correctly derided xenophobia. Definitions and sentiments on these scores have marked different periods of history from 1918 to 1945 to 1989. But still one cannot, least of all in imparting an education, destroy the sense of nationality or a somehow related citizenship by severing a person or a country from its past, traditions, affections and restraints, for as Alfred Zimmern, a historian, put it, appropriately enough in 1918:

...in the isolated, shrunken individual, the cut flower of humanity with which you have now to deal, you have nothing left to work on. Such education as you can give him will be the education of the slave: a training not of the whole man, but of certain aptitudes which may render him a useful workman, a pushing tout, or even a prosperous merchant, but never a good citizen. And he will revenge himself on you, in the subtlest and most exasperating of ways, by triumphantly developing into a bad imitation of yourself.²

² Cited after Henry Frenco, *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflection on the Course of Maltese History* (Valletta, 1989), p. 1.

In this paper I shall be looking at Malta in this light, even as traditional homogeneity has been increasingly dented by secularism, globalization and most recently illegal immigration, relatively on a record scale, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and the Muslim Arab world. But the state has not thereby become nationless. First, then, Malta as the case of an ex-colony which struggled for and finally attained its independence from Britain, in the wake of an internally adversarial cultural matrix, which reached a measure of synthesis after much strife; that 25th anniversary was celebrated pointedly in 1989.³ Second, Malta as a small island state in the Mediterranean which, in May 2004, became one of ten new member states of the European Union, thereby in a sense assuming another mantle of identity, and probably, historically, a long yearned for justifying self-fulfilment, at least in idealised terms.

Malta's membership of the EU in May 2004 deserves a discourse and a resonance: it has a lasting meaning and content for future generations, partly because it is also, historically and culturally, largely a fulfilment of past connections, sentiments and aspirations, not least during the last two centuries or so.⁴

Various aspects of life in Malta from the coming of the French onwards - be they linguistic or literary, political or cultural, social, commercial or economic, religious or indeed diplomatic, even international - have been covered in a number of works since 1964, including several of my own. Here I can briefly indicate in what respects the present may be said to tie in and to be in some way rooted in that past. From insurrection in September 1798 to independence in September 1964 we had essentially, consciously or unconsciously, a 'nation-making' exercise, partly influenced or provoked by colonialism itself; but in addition the Maltese experienced many factors and went through various phases that changed and moulded them and their country, one of the smallest ethno-linguistic minorities in the world.

Already in 1802 the *Dichiarazione dei Diritti degli Abitanti di Malta e Gozo* showed a remarkable juridical and civic consciousness on the part of the leaders, such as the right to freedom of conscience under the rule of law, with a thinly veiled

³ See i.a. Henry Frenco, *Lejn Stat Sovran: Storja Kostituzzjonali tal-Gzejjer Maltin* (National Library/DOI, Valletta, 1989).

⁴ See i.a. Henry Frenco & Oliver Friggieri (eds), *Malta: Culture and Identity* (Ministry for Justice and the Arts, Valletta, 1994), pp. 272 + colour illustrations.

presumption of independence.⁵ Like the Order before it, Britain, a naval power, was interested in harbours, docks, defences, militia and seamen, which meant that the pull from field to shore gathered momentum, radically altering demographic placement, occupational trends and production cycles. Wars, too, continued to affect the Maltese, wherever Britain was involved in the Mediterranean, as it increasingly was after taking Gibraltar from Spain in 1704, and more so after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Some of these, such as, especially, the Crimean War in the mid-19th century, and the two world wars in the 20th, profoundly affected the Maltese, bringing work and in various ways, to some more than others, an accompanying prosperity, if only a temporary one. The last war literally changed the face of Malta, not necessarily for the better, wiping it out altogether in several places under intense, but ultimately unsuccessful, Axis bombardment. The war also wiped out what was left of *italianita'* and *latinita'* as a party political platform, although anglicization did not wipe out Malteseness, Maltese becoming increasingly the language of public debate. The 'Otto Settembre', first recommended as a national day by nationalist leader Fortunato Mizzi in 1885, now came to commemorate two victories, the first over the Ottoman Empire, the second over the Nazi-Fascist Axis.

British influences may be traced in different spheres: they were administrative, military, constitutional and parliamentary, educational, even legal, although in this domain Malta's *corpus juris* was mainly non-English and remained so. To some extent, they were social and colloquial in more than linguistic terms, with plenty of mixed marriages over time. In education, after 1880, anglicization became a matter of policy, with attempts to push out Italian and introduce Maltese together with English continuing until 1934, after self-government had been revoked. At the same time, and partly for that reason, two main political parties had come about: although there was no very linear progression, both took root and evolved more or less in a continuum which in some respects remained recognisable and traceable.⁶ The role of Roman Catholicism and of the Catholic Church in Malta and among her people

⁵ See Henry Frendo, *Id-Dikjarazzjoni Maltija tad-Drittijiet, 1802-2002. Diskors fil-Palazz ta' Sant'Anton, Ó'Attard, 11 ta' Ġunju 2002* (Kumitat Festi Nazzjonali/Universita' ta' Malta, 2002).

⁶ On the formation of political parties see Henry Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* (Midsea, Valletta, 1979, 2nd ed. 1991); but see Geoffrey Hull, *The Malta Language Question: A case Study in Cultural Imperialism* (Said, Valletta, 1993). See also, i.a., Henry Frendo, 'Language and Nationhood in the Maltese Experience: Some Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives', *Collegium Melitense Quatercentenary Celebrations: Collected Papers* (eds Roger Ellul-Micallef & Stanley Fiorini, Univ. of Malta, Valletta, 1992), 439-472. A comprehensive, analytical history of the Maltese language is J.M.Brincat's *L-Ilsien Malti: Elf Sena ta' Storja* (Pin, Valletta, 2001).

remained steadfast throughout most of the period of British rule, which sought to garner the Church as an ally by generally respecting and honouring its status and privileges. At the same time, however, since Britain was a Protestant power, the firmly entrenched Maltese Catholicism was from the start a bulwark of in-group identity, devotion, piety and indeed festival. It was a buffer against 'the other', just as Italian remained for well over a century to those reared in it, brought up to regard it as Malta's language of education and public life, indeed of civilisation, a passport to the continent.

An industrial power in a pre-industrial society, Britain was a force for modernization, as other expansionist European powers had been in their own ways. If one looks at infrastructural projects, from water to electricity to drainage, the nod came first from the British side, also because it was worried about infections or epidemics which could adversely affect the garrison, hence the traditional importance of quarantine restrictions. If one looks at communications - transport, for instance - a 'progressive' range of means may be sketched ranging from train to tram to bus to ferry and motor-car. Such technological advances, which might well have occurred irrespective of who was in power, mixed and matched with Maltese, Southern European and Mediterranean likes and traits, be that in fashion, food, housing, leisure, or indeed other more characteristic means of transport, such as the *karrozzin* or the *luzzu*. Apart from a new-found discipline, regimental practices left a mark on the local band clubs, which mushroomed after the second half of the 19th century, a lot of brass and marches, where Italian, Maltese, British and other composers featured prominently. In other respects, however, the British presence was telling: in sport, football started becoming popular by the beginning of the 20th century, with plenty of teams from the fleet or the garrison to play against, while polo reached Malta from India before Britain. Other genres of folk entertainment and festivity were and remained purely Maltese, be that impromptu *g'ana* on the guitar or sea-side *ostra* on the greasy pole, or the regatta boat-races, sailing and the popular seasonal fishing for *lampuki*, the rearing of pigeons, also hunting and trapping, or horse-racing in the steet - before the Marsa 'ta' l-Ingli Ω i' finally provided a proper racing track which Maltese jockeys could use.⁷ There was the *fešta*, and the *banda*, both core values in popular ritual and festival, parochially religious and behaviouristically mundane or pagan, with strong communal connotations spread over a national canvas.

⁷ See Toni Cortis (ed), *L-Identita' Kulturali ta' Malta* (DOI, Valletta, 1989), including this author's own paper, chapter 2 in the volume, written shortly after repatriating from the emigration, asking who are the Maltese: "Storja u G'arfien: Il-Maltin min huma?", pp. 17-34.

In architecture, based on the Maltese stone, British influence was minimal compared to the earlier baroque heritage, but one may trace in some detail what occurred in related fields over the last two centuries in the expert contributions made by some of our leading specialists: Dr Paul Cassar on medicine; Mr Justice Hugh Harding on law; ĦuΩe Cassar Pullicino on folklore; Antonio Espinosa on art; Professor Alexander Borg on the Maltese language; Professor Oliver Friggieri on Maltese literature; Professor Anthony Bonanno on archaeology; the late Leonard Mahoney on architecture; and so on.⁸ To a greater or lesser extent, one will generally find, broadly, an Anglo-Italian mix with a variety of Maltese ingredients, some more distinct than others.

In Maltese poetry and literature, English inroads were limited, with Maltese largely taking over from the Italian, as in the law courts: English never managed to penetrate the inner sanctum of Malta's lawyer-politicians. In music too, Italian retained much influence, not only in opera, until the post-war populism of 'pop', where very slowly English had the better of Italian. A severe blow was dealt to theatrical, operatic and cultural productions of all kinds when their dearest repository, the Royal Opera House in Valletta, was razed to the ground by the Luftwaffe, and it has remained a ruin since. In the media, we find English chasing Italian, first on radio in the 1930s, then on television in the 1960s, with Maltese increasingly important. This was less so in the press, where World War II put paid to Italian, but English continued to be a preferred medium in several Maltese newspapers, as Italian had been before it, thereby underlining once again the bilingual, sometimes trilingual, nature of Maltese society, especially among the relatively large and growing middle classes. After 1964, Malta acquired an international persona, participating, sometimes seminally, in various fora, and not only through its diplomatic corps.⁹

In tourism, which picked up after independence (with industry and to a lesser extent agriculture becoming a pillar of Malta's now diversified economy), the British still lead as visitors, followed by the Germans, French and Italians. Meanwhile, holidaying abroad, not least in Britain and Italy, became widespread among the Maltese themselves. Having emigrated and settled right around the Mediterranean littoral in the 19th century, and in the far corners of the English-speaking world in the 20th, of late the Maltese too have become more mobile and adventurous, thanks to airplanes and cruise-liners; as well as far better connected and less isolated,

⁸ See Frendo & Friggieri, *Malta: Culture and Identity*, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

⁹ See, for example, Guido Saliba (ed), *A Council for all Seasons: 50th Anniversary of the Council of Europe* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Valletta, 1999), *passim*.

thanks to cable and internet. Such trends are likely to increase with Malta's membership of the EU.

Given the nature of this historic occasion on 1st May 2004, however, what I propose to do is rather more focussed and, as it were, tailor-made. I would like to search for, and to pinpoint, what I regard as a lingering aspiration interspersed through the past few centuries, on the part of Malta and of the Maltese (as they were a-becoming), for a greater affinity and belonging with Europe. I am perceiving Europe here not simply as a mainland but as a mainstream, not simply as a continental mass but as a matrix and milieu, in socio-economic as well as in politico-cultural terms. In EU discourse, that would be called a 'space'. For us, it certainly would comprise the sea together with the land. As times and situations changed, in ways which may at first sight even seem opposed or antagonistic, a tendency is nonetheless traceable, pointing towards a 'European' urge, latent or overt. For want of better words I shall call this syndrome 'being part of a larger whole'.

Neither linear nor constant, the yearning is recurring and decipherable. It is, in many ways, a need, geographical and circumstantial; but it has been a need conditioned by desires, qualities and preferences. This means that concerns of a socio-cultural nature repeatedly have weighed upon needs of a basic-survivalist kind, which in turn means that in modern times the sense of a self-respecting nationality vis-a-vis a wider, bigger community was increasingly present, in the forge, however imagined, however portrayed.

I have also put in inverted commas a defining chronological reference in the title to Malta's 'British' period. This was actually, more and more, a 'Maltese' period - and that precisely at a time when the islands were still ruled by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, part and parcel of a British Empire on which the sun never set (but set it did).

Britain, which greatly influenced what happened in the Maltese Islands during the past two centuries, was not a mainland European power at all. It was an island in, between the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the British (or was it the French) Channel, with a great navy and merchant fleet. But cultural pedigree betrayed the physical geography no less than the mineral wealth. Some British newspaper's comment about the continent having been "cut off" by a storm in the British Channel has been regarded as a joke for a long time, as indeed it should be. If David Hume, Adam Smith and John Locke were not Europeans, one might as well question the credentials of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, or Lafayette for that matter. The jenny wheel and the steam engine were as 'European' as the railway and the shop floor, the consequences of which so impressed Dickens and

Marx, among others, together with counter-parts throughout the continent, where speech and writing were not always as free as in Britain.

Thus, the mainstream is more important than the mainland, even if, in Malta, still closer links to the neighbouring southern European countries and kingdoms (but also, in this case again, to the North African shores) had preceded the advent of the British in the Mediterranean region by a long stretch. These long-distilled 'Euro-Med' connections continued to leave their mark in spite of British rule, or because of it, as new conceptual, institutional and practical syntheses gradually emerged, with the ensuing symbioses coming to characterise life in the colony, itself increasingly a nascent nation-state, open to modernisation.

Without delving so far back as Malta's role within the Roman Empire (for a time as a *municipium*), or St Paul's shipwreck and the subsequent conversion of the islanders to Christianity (which in time took grip of the popular imagination unshakeably), by the first few centuries of the Rome-centred Christian European era Malta had already tasted or possessed, to some extent, arguably its two most outstanding formative features, in the complementary domains of law and religion, not to mention art and architecture. It was by virtue of such codes and ethics that Cicero would defend the Maltese in the forum against a Roman colonial official, one Caius Verres, who was a thief.

Even the Arab period, of which there is barely a surviving trace in Malta - other than in the slightly camouflaged Semitic roots of a vernacular language - was very largely an 'import' from Sicily until Norman times. Moreover, lest we forget, the Arab presence in the Middle Ages had assumed important mainland characteristics well beyond Sicilian shores, to which Andalusia's rich, eclectic heritage bears witness still.

Much more telling for Malta's 'European' moulding, according to this interpretation, was the 15th century. In a typically feudal situation, rendered at one time more remote and more particular by its insularity, rebellion against abuse and oppression does not simply take the form of a *jacquerie*, a slash and burn uprising by vassals against the lord or his overseers. No, in addition to an element of violence (including the holding of the Aragonese lord's dame as a pawn in a castle) there is a negotiation, which slotted into a national mythology. A redemption from monies allegedly due is subjected to a pact. And that pact, in 1428, presumes acquired rights for the inhabitants of the land - not simply as serfs, indeed no longer as serfs, but as subjects with some rights, as a distinct people. These rights, including the right not to be sold off as a fief or private possession, and the right of direct petition and indeed the right to resist 'manu forti' any unwarranted oppression - are recognised by the throne in a charter. That parchment is preserved to this day. In

European history, it stands proudly as a Maltese 'magna charta', where, as in much larger countries, the balance of power of the lords to circumvent or curtail in relation to royal prerogative, patronage, protection or abuse, would be hammered out, usually on the battlefield. What it represents, historically and culturally, is that, in Malta too, there existed the wherewithal for a slow but sure transition from fiefdom to nationhood, evident already in the organised mobilisation of effort, at considerable sacrifice, in the face of sustained abuse by an avaricious foreign owner-overseer, one Gonsalvo de Monroy, in a time of economic stress.

Justice was sought in relation to an Aragonese oppressor just as it had been against a Roman pilferer. That presumes a commonality, a stamina and a leadership: the poor rural domains also had their citadel. No wonder, then, that as early as the 15th century the native idiom would be seen as a qualifier for position, and by the 16th century we find Malta described in different manuscripts as "nostra patria", indeed as "dulcissima", with aspects of its self-identity sometimes demonstrated in other ways.¹⁰

All this is not unrelated to what happened during the French and British occupations between 1798 and 1964 or so. Such a reading would be altogether unhistorical, for by the time these latest of rulers arrived they found what had been put in place and instilled earlier. That would include the physical as much as the social, the spiritual, the cultural. Malta by the late 18th century may not have been plush but nor was it barren and neutral, generally bereft of a thinking mind, a throbbing heart and a sensitive soul.

Charles V's decision to find a home for a wandering Roman Catholic order of chivalry - the hospitallers - by giving them Malta, raised the Christian European colours more decisively than ever. But not only on the ramparts. Here, in Malta, was a well-endowed, multi-lingual aristocratic institution of alms and arms, Christian by

¹⁰ On the medieval period see researched writings by, among others, Anthony Luttrell, Stanley Fiorini, Godfrey Wettinger, and most recently, Charles Dalli, *IQ-Ūmien Nofsani Malti*, which also has an extensive bibliography (Pin, Valletta, 2002); but for a quick general insight into the moulding of a 'national identity' over the ages, including the main influences of the Knights Hospitallers, see Henry Frendo in Frendo & Friggieri, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-25, and the accompanying bibliographies to all chapters in this pivotal reference work for Maltese studies. A recent general history of the period is Dr Joseph F. Grima's *Ūmien ill-Kavallieri, 1530-1798* (Pin, Valletta, 2001). On the early modern period, the most recent scholarly works are those by Dr Carmel Cassar, *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* (Mireva, Valletta, 2000), mainly on the 16th and 17th century, and Dr Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta* (Peg, Valletta, 2001), concentrating more on the 18th century.

mission, European by definition, holy and true, extending right across the borders of continental Europe and beyond them from Provence and Auvergne to France; from Italy to Aragon, Catalonia and Navarre; Germany, Castille, Leon, Portugal, and until Henry VIII's quarrel with the Pope, to England. Elsewhere I have analysed at some length how the Knights 'of Malta' progressively changed the islands and their people in eight important ways.¹¹ Politically, Malta became a small European state, psychologically more secure and outward-looking, it moved from hinterland to harbour. Malta became more urbanised, administratively centralised in a baroque capital city, while economically new work practises, skills, crafts and opportunities arose in construction, the navy, trade, production and services, partly catering to a demanding market at close quarters. Religiously, Malta became almost a theocracy, a Catholic frontier, what later might be called 'Europe's Southern flank', the enemy being not fascism, Nazism or communism but the Ottoman Empire and Islam, best exemplified by the (unsuccessful) 1565 siege, a full-scale fight to the finish against the turbaned infidel. Socially and culturally, the influences were widespread, - mainly but not only in the towns, including folk feast and festival, as well as the more sophisticated recreations and pursuits of elites from theatre to fashion, cuisine to music. To all, Catholic Europe became an ideological imperative, with Europe being rather more than just the Rome of Popes and Caesars. On the continent's southernmost edge and frontier, Malta came to have probably the biggest slave market in Europe. The ethnography and demography changed too, as did customs, manners, relations and aspirations, especially among the upwardly mobile. Knights were not as holy or removed as they seemed; to several, the harbour and the town became more attractive than the farm and the village (the more so as the Maltese cotton and tobacco industries declined in the 19th century). As the population increased fivefold or more, Italian remained throughout the main written language and means of formal communication, with Roman Catholicism the official religion, monitored by one inquisitor after another.

Into this stunned and betrayed old world did General Bonaparte's revolutionaries suddenly arrive, issuing edicts, burning titles of nobility, outlawing slavery, stopping the inquisition, fashioning out 'Parisian' education systems, restricting the numbers of ecclesiastics and monasteries, preaching liberty, equality and fraternity, frog-marching youngsters off to the Egyptian campaign, toying with agricultural tenure and land lease, auctioning church treasures, collecting monies, often looting, sometimes raping, occasionally shooting. Within three months, in a popular armed insurrection, the Maltese of all social classes quickly forced the French garrison to seek shelter behind the bastions of Valletta and its three surrounding harbour towns, taking control of the rest of the countryside, the citadels, towns and villages. With some Neapolitan, Portugese and most importantly British naval help,

¹¹ Frenedo & Friggieri, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-9.

the Maltese held out, with much difficulty, increasingly decimated, until finally the starving, blockaded French surrendered, not to themselves but to the British, in 1800. The British thus had come to stay in Malta for many decades and generations, at least until 1964.

In the French and British connections, however antagonistic they were at the point of first impact, Malta again had two major European fonts. The first, clearly, was its brush with the French revolution and the (French) Enlightenment. However supine the revolutionary slogans may have appeared in practice, the fact is that they came to Malta with a bang, but come they did.¹² They were not easily forgotten, and would be applied against the British by the Maltese in their subsequent fight for freedom. Much the same happened elsewhere in Europe towards the final stages of the so-called Napoleonic era. In this too, therefore, the Maltese experience fits into a European typology - be it Portuguese or Spanish or Italian, where Bonapartist rule was overthrown in one popular uprising after another. Malta's was one of the first. The clash of the 'old' world with the 'new', if so it may be called, created a tension and a resonance, which would seep into the liberal psyche, catapulting in time beliefs about popular sovereignty wherein it was people not dynasties who mattered above all. In the late 19th century, when Nationalist crowds sang the Marseillaise beneath the (exclusively British) Union Club in Valletta's Strada Rjali, that was partly what they meant to say. The other part was a taunt, the more so at a time of renewed Anglo-French rivalry over colonial expansion.

British influences on the Maltese way of life were many and varied, although it is unfair to haul every influence to Britain's door. Much was going on elsewhere in Europe and in the European empires themselves, so that a unidimensional assumption as to 'reform' or 'progress' would be wrong. Moreover, in colonial situations, there are always problems with terminology, or rather discourse, and Malta is no exception. The reason is that what the ruler may choose to call 'reform' may be seen as a deformation by the would-be recipient, and similarly for 'progress', which could be resisted as an attack on tradition, or a misconceived interpretation or disruption of a value system. A classical case would be that provided by one Sir Penrose Julyan who once referred in a report to those (distinguished) Maltese members of the bar who did not know English as its more "ignorant" members. Once again here, racial or linguistic superiority or immersion would posit 'intelligence' against 'ignorance' on the basis of prejudice or misconception. By the same token would policies based on Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' principles be advanced or applied. On the other hand, British liberalism (and Maltese agitation) made a free

¹² The most extensive recent work on the French period is Dr Carmel Testa's *The French in Malta* (Midsea, Valletta, 1998).

press possible in Malta as early as the late 1830s, while the elective principle for a crown colony legislature was introduced, cautiously, a decade later.¹³ By such means, a public opinion could start being formed and sustained, at least among the literate classes.

A resounding confrontation during the British period in Malta was undoubtedly the so-called 'language question'. This was largely a struggle between resistance on one side and assimilation on the other; but as British influences grew, not least on the labour market, and emigration prospects, a knowledge of English came to assume a 'job' value which, to an average worker, had precious little that was political about it. In fact, however, British assimilationist drives in Malta, more than elsewhere, were propelled by the presence of yet another European power amidst the Maltese. That was Italy. Such pressures were not simply motivated by the need to create a class of intermediaries, mediators, employees and servants, as in Macaulay's India. More than that, they were meant to ensure loyalty through assimilation in a strategic fortress, where *italianita'* and *latinita'* had deep roots. And the more so after Italy became a unified state and began to flex its muscles with aspirations for a Mediterranean policy of its own. Thus it came to pass that Anglicisation bred resentment and resistance rather than loyalty among those classes who were educated enough to have internalised Italian rather than English as their main life-line to the outside, or indeed the inside as well. In their conscious and unconscious efforts to create new classes more loyal to themselves, by means of the educational system, job recruitment and promotion policies, commercial or contractual preferences and suchlike, the British deepened and further crystallized the social divide, with repercussions on social cohesion. But at the same time they opened up society through opportunities made available by imperially-linked projects as in the dockyard, the navy and merchant marine, the army and later the air force, and any other occupations which they deemed to hold 'in their gift', as the saying went.

Major works such as the building of the breakwater and docks at the turn of the 20th century, or the full employment at the naval dockyard during the first and second world wars, brought prosperity. But this was temporary, it was convenient, not structural, not organic, fostering an economy liable to booms and slumps depending largely on imperial interest and movement. Social cohesion was ruptured when, as imperial interests shifted and changed, thousands of already displaced

¹³ See Henry Frendo, *Miç-Çensura g'all-PluraliQmu: Il-ĠurnaliQmu f'Malta 1798-2002* (Pin, Valletta, 2003), and for a general history of Malta during the 19th century, by the same author, see the first volume of *Umien l-IngliQ* (KKM, Valletta, 2004), a continuation of the late Professor Andrew Vella's *Storja ta' Malta*. A subsequent volume, in preparation, will cover the 20th century.

workers would find themselves out of a job, in many cases having abandoned their rural lifestyles and moved to the inner suburbs crowding the harbour creeks and bays. Development plans for the Maltese Islands only began in 1959.¹⁴ in the language question, so too in the work ethic, colonialism was a double-edged sword. Citing the utility of English to emigrate was a last resort, basically signifying that Malta no longer offered scope for a worthwhile existence. Tens of thousands emigrated in the 20th century mainly to the English-speaking world and, unlike many others before them who had lived and worked in neighbouring Mediterranean lands, most never returned. Their new homes were too far away and more different, if more promising. In the 1950s and 1960s others of Maltese stock found it difficult or impossible to 'repatriate' after generations spent in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt...

There can be no doubt that modernisation during the British period can be seen as an aspect of Europeanity - gas and then electricity; the telegraph and then the wireless; the omnibus, the tram, the railway and the ferry; the bicycle and then the motor-car; better roads and services from drainage to water to the telephone; all these were pace-setting changes which of course greatly changed Maltese ways, bringing about a more 'modern' infrastructure - from aqueducts to tap water, better hygiene and hospitals, and so on... Such improvements came about while Malta was a British 'possession', which is not to say that they necessarily would not have arrived differently, perhaps a little later, if it were not. The transition from sail to steam or from timber to steel, from manual to automated, did not bear an exclusive British copyright.

The tension in such 'modernisation' hid within it an internal contradiction, once again a product of the colonial system. In many cases, the British were keen to press changes because of their own priorities: Malta as a naval and garrison station could not afford to risk some epidemic for the troops, nor afford not to have good roads for moving military hardware, or harbour anchorage for the navy, let alone the 'native' Maltese trade and commerce. The argument that from such improvements the Maltese too would benefit, if only by default, naturally clashed with the views of elected members in the Council of Government between 1849 and 1903, the more so when the penny dropped. Partly as a result of the British and imperial obsession with Malta as a fortress, not just any other colony, political freedoms were granted on sufferance, and repeatedly withdrawn, so that constitutional history became, as

¹⁴ For socio-economic analyses and overviews see H. Bowen-Jones et, *Malta: Background for Development* (Univ. of Durham, 1961); M.M. Metwally, *Structure and Performance of the Maltese Economy* (Aquilina, Valletta, 1977); Lino Briguglio's entry in Frenzo & Friggieri, *op.cit.*, pp. 233-251; Edward J. Spiteri, *An Island in Transition: Maltese Economic History, 1954-1974* (Valletta, 1997); Christopher Pollacco, *An Outline of Socio-Economic Development in Post-War Malta* (Mireva, Valletta, 2003).

it has been aptly said, like a game of snakes and ladders.¹⁵ This undermined the very nature of a constitution, in the sense of a basic law, rendering it more akin to a piece of paper, depending on the direction in which a wind blew.

In the stunting or denting of a natural home-grown, self-reliant evolution, there are thus fundamental similarities in the disputes relating to language, education and nationality, as in those relating to investment, jobs and discharges, as in those relating to civil, constitutional rights and privileges under the Crown. During the inter-war period Malta obtained internal self-government, after a bloody clash in 1919 known as the *Sette Giugno*, but once again this did not last a decade. Even after the Second World War, in which Malta played so vital a role, self-government, once restituted, would again be revoked in the late 1950s.¹⁶

The repeated removal from Malta without charge or trial of Maltese critics of the colonial regime (as happened elsewhere, not only in the British empire) epitomises the worst aspect of civil life under British (or any other) occupation. In our case, one 'human rights' monument which stands out to such infamy must certainly be Sir Ugo Mifsud's spirited juridical rebuttal of and opposition to Britain's policy of deporting innocent Maltese subjects, so eloquently delivered on 9th February 1942 in the Council of Government, surrounded by an historic set of French tapestries (and another of spineless Maltese deputies) shortly before he collapsed and died.¹⁷ But there are others.¹⁸

¹⁵ Malta's leading constitutional historian is Professor J.J. Cremona, a former chief justice, who has authored several monographs. See *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History since 1813* (Peg, Valletta, 1994, 2nd ed. 1997).

¹⁶ For an analytical overview see Henry Frendo, *Maltese Political Development, 1798-1964* (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Valletta, 1993) and *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of Maltese History* (Valletta Publishing, 1989); but for a detailed and meticulous rendering of the post-war period up to 1961, see J. M. Pirotta's three volumes, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act* (Studia Editions, Valletta, starting in 1987).

¹⁷ See the text of the proceedings in Henry Frendo, *Maltese Political Development 1798-1964*, *op.cit.*, Part 7, . Doc. 70, pp. 517-538. Only one Maltese elected member voted against deportation, Dr G. Borg Olivier; and see his tribute to the leader Mifsud, *ibid.*, pp. 538-543.

¹⁸ See for instance the first books about Dimech and his times, *Lejn Tnissil ta' Nazzjon: it-twemmin soġġo-politiku ta' Manwel Dimech* (Klabb Kotba Maltin, Valletta, 1971), *Birth Pangs of a Nation: Manwel Dimech's Malta, 1860-1921* (Mediterranean Publications, Valletta, 1972), which are out of print, and the second edition of *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, especially pp. 148-151. Writings about later internees and deportees, biographical and autobiographical, would include those by Arturo Mercieca, Herbert

In the 19th century the Anglo-Italian tensions as reflected in Malta were best brought out first during the *Risorgimento*, when hundreds of mainly Mazzinian Italian exiles piled into Malta, many of them anti-clericals, and then because of the jingoistic plan to eliminate Italian, which soured relations until it was somewhat revised. I need hardly say that the Italian *Risorgimento*, which Britain generally supported in principle, was once again a Europeanising strain in Maltese affairs, perhaps most evidently so in the journalistic activity of the time. The conservative Catholic Church, which generally opposed it, was itself a European strain, clearly a more 'papist' one. It would take a good half-century for Italians themselves to reconcile themselves to the fact that a unified secular state and a papacy in the Vatican City need not be at loggerheads for ever. Such strains in the secularising of tradition continued to embattle Maltese society and indeed party politics well into the 1960s, until in the post-colonial era the floodgates of permissiveness opened as cinema, TV, tourism and later IT, cable and satellite saw globalising waves gushing in from every nook and cranny, not always so refreshingly.

In the 20th century, we have two outstanding examples of culture and politics which bring out evocatively the Italian and the British strains in Maltese 'europeanity'. Highly antagonistic at first, leading to much contestation over a prolonged period, in time these may now be seen as complimentary, even formative of a more holistic Maltese Europeanity.

The first of these occurred in 1912, when an up-and-coming 'pro-Italian' Nationalist leader, Enrico Mizzi, proposed in a journal article that Britain could exchange Malta for Eritrea with Italy, on the understanding that Britain would be granted access to Maltese harbours and facilities. There would be an Italo-Maltese federation of sorts wherein Maltese would benefit as much as possible from all that Italy, a much bigger country, could offer them, such as job recruitment entitlements and university placements, while at the same time being exempted from unpalatable obligations, such as conscription, with her coat-of-arms in the tri-color, and elected representatives in the Italian parliament. Malta would thus become an autonomous entity within a larger whole, with which it had strong historical, religious, linguistic, ethnic and cultural links, a return to the maternal fold. This was essentially a bold irredentist dream, given some realistic justification by the changing international politics of the time, as Britain, in the face of a growing German naval threat, sought to divest itself of direct responsibility in the Mediterranean by means of an *entente* with France, which anyway cared more for its North African ports. Ideally,

Ganado, Edgar Soler and Ray Bondin, among others, the best known among the victims being of course Nerik Mizzi (1885-1950), who had already been court-martialled for alleged sedition in 1917.

it would settle cultural affinities (with Italy) without risking naval employment (through use of Maltese harbours by Britain, France, Italy and other powers).¹⁹ Nerik Mizzi, the son of the Nationalist Party's founder Fortunato, remains to this day one of the more charismatic political figures in Maltese anti-colonial history: court-martialled for sedition in 1917, interned and deported without charge to Uganda in the early 1940s, prime minister in 1950, when he died in harness and had a state funeral, with the British military and naval top brass filing in after it. If ever there was a poetic justice, this was it.

The other 20th century event which I wish to draw attention to is as strikingly different as it is strikingly similar. This came to a head in 1956 when the Labour Party leader Dominic Mintoff and his party went all out for Malta's integration with Britain and, in that year, held a referendum about the plan.²⁰ The British were tickled pink that in 1956, just as they were being thrown out of Egypt by Nasser, in another part of the empire somebody would wish to become part of the UK. But Mintoff's plan was not unlike Mizzi's in some ways. He wanted integration as well as autonomy, assistance as well as opportunity; just as the dockyard was becoming of less use to the Royal Navy, and even its possible closure was being contemplated, he wanted to have a safety net of some kind. Malta could become part of a larger whole, with the Maltese acquiring citizenship rights like the British, minimum wages at the same rates, security and pensions, health services, schooling and university openings, and some Maltese MPs elected to the House of Commons. The late Commissioner of Police Vivien De Gray told me in 1989 (and the late Dr Ġuże Cassar would later confirm this to me) that Mr Mintoff had long contemplated the prospect of Malta somehow slotting into a bigger entity from which it could draw advantage, it being really too small to go it alone. More recent findings confirm that in addition to integrating with Britain, Mr Mintoff had also more than once, before and after that, toyed with the idea of coming to some special arrangement with Italy.²¹ It was only later, when neither of these prospects materialised or

¹⁹ See Henry Frenco, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony*, *op.cit.*, pp. 150-167.

²⁰ On this see Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Cass, London, 1971); see also J.M.Pirotta, *Fortress Colony; The Final Act*, *op.cit.*, vol. 2 (1991) *passim*; Henry Frenco, *The Origins of Maltese Statehood: A Case Study of Decolonization in the Mediterranean* (Valletta, 1999, 2nd ed. 2000), *passim*; and by the same author, *Çensu Tabone: The Man and His Century* (Valletta, 2000, 2nd ed. 2001), *passim*.

²¹ Henry Frenco, *The Origins of Maltese Statehood: A Case Study of Decolonization in the Mediterranean*, *op.cit.*, chapter 12: 'Oltre Mare: The Italian Option', especially pp. 333-334; and see also Çensu Tabone: *The Man and His Century*, *op.cit.*, pp. 155-157; and most recently the first chapters in *Patrijott Liberali Malti: Bijografija ta' Gorg Borg Olivier* (Pin, Valletta, 2005).

seemed realisable, that Mintoff's party steered away to a policy of 'Mediterranean neutrality', with the seemingly original idea of Malta as a 'bridge' between North and South - one, however, already dear to Mizzi's own heart a generation earlier, expressed in the same metaphor, but at a time of course when there was an 'Italian' southern shore.

Mizzi was a child of the 19th century. Malta's perceived self-identity struggle was that of a Latin Mediterranean nation at odds with an Anglo-Saxon and Protestant empire; it would derive what economic benefits it could from the Britain connection but not sacrifice its linguistic, cultural and spiritual beliefs and heritage. Mizzi was a romantic, slightly out of touch with the times perhaps, but a man of great sincerity and dedication to the cause in which he believed, as Mintoff was the first publicly to admit on his death in the most glowing terms ("I-ikbar fost il-Maltin"). Mintoff was born into a different world, a different class as well, his father being not a lawyer like Mizzi's but a cook in the Royal Navy. His mother was not a pedigree continental European from the south of France, but a money lender "ta' t il-bastjun". One was born in Valletta, not far from St John's cathedral, the other in Cospicua beside the docks. One read law in Urbino and in Rome. The other, an architect and civil engineer from a later generation, was awarded a Rhodes scholarship and went to Oxford, returning to Malta after the war. The British connection by accident or design undermined the traditional (italianite) middle class and created a new (anglicized) one: the younger Mizzi, like his father and that generation, epitomised the former traditional consensual ethic expressed in the slogan 'patria et religio'. Mintoff, like Sigismondo Savona and others before him, was a 'product' of the latter, if not a very malleable one, at the other end.

Moreover, the second world war had transformed Malta irredemably, killing off any *italianita'* policy that had survived if only through fear, and pushing the Maltese and the British together closer than ever before in a total war for survival and democracy. To the extent that Mizzi's option for partnership had been Italy, for Mintoff and many of his generation it logically was Britain. Indeed, most of those who voted in the 1956 referendum (many didn't) approved of the Integration plan. It was Archbishop Gonzi's Catholic Church and Dr Borg Olivier's Nationalist Party who opposed it.

As Malta joins the EU in May 2004, such harshly fought and seemingly opposed remedies for future generations clearly may be seen in a different light, as they should. Unconscious to the Maltese, who had been born and bred into a colonial situation of cultural and political dissonance, both Italy and Britain were European countries, sharing many readily intelligible and appreciable cultural traits as in literature, music, art, architecture, economic development and democratic evolution. They were both at least nominally Christian, one Protestant, the other

Catholic. Britain had supported Italy's unification, and in the 19th century even the best British schooling continued greatly to admire the Italian renaissance, poetry, art. Until Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, and at Sir Anthony Eden's behest the imposition of economic sanctions on Italy by the League of Nations, which greatly boosted Mussolini's popularity in Italy, Anglo-Italian relations always had been very cordial. Except on two or three occasions, anglicisation policy in Malta was but a niggler, a ripple, a ruffle, although there was always space for it in Italian newspapers, and occasionally in parliament. By 1938, Mussolini at Munich was even posing as Europe's peace broker.

After the war, as a good chunk of the Italian fleet surrendered in St Paul's Bay, the Allies, with Badoglio's assistance, invaded Italy, using Malta *en route*, as the German-protected Mussolini fled northwards to Salo'. Soon afterwards, not only were Britain and Italy together in NATO but ironically it was in Rome that the treaty founding the EEC was signed, with Britain only admitted as a member in 1973. Well before then, Malta had become independent, and in the 1960s Dr Borg Olivier, whose administration piloted independence from Britain in 1964, was already hinting strongly at the possibility of Malta's eventual membership of the Common Market, what became his party's policy in 1979, shortly before he himself passed away. An association agreement with the EEC was signed in 1970, which could have turned into a customs union a decade later, but it was not to be, not so soon.²²

The rest is 'history', but the point is this. In past times, recent and not so recent, Malta has on a number of occasions felt the need or been led by circumstance to belong to a larger whole, that being in some form a European empire or bloc, be it Roman or Spanish, Italian or British. Antagonisms, which seemed so real and so profound at the time, were ultimately centred around preferences between one European country and another.

Countries which were cultural, imperial or ideological rivals before are no longer so now, united as they are in the same European Union which Malta, with their full support, is joining more or less at par. Malta's membership of the European Union can thus be seen historically as a fulfilment in time, not simply as a recent, isolated event, or as a financial or economic convenience. It is a woven sinew, not a fireworks display. As the founders of the European Cultural Foundation in Geneva stressed

²² For an outline history of Malta's path to Europe since 1970 see especially the books by Roderick Pace and Christopher Pollacco; see also my biography of Ġensu Tabone, *op.cit.*, especially chapter 14: 'Second Thoughts: Foreign Policy and the Stalled E.U. Application', pp. 249-272. For relevant selected textual documents, see my *Maltese Political Development 1798-1964, op.cit.*, Part 8: 1959-1964, pp. 809-921.

after the Second World War, a united Europe would not and could not survive if its sole or even its primary motivation were simply a financial or economic one - a greedy grab. Cultural affinities and achievements over the centuries were still more European, more valuable because more lasting and inspiring: these transcended occasional political or military squabbles or confrontations, they were the real gel of which Europe and Europeans were made.

Cultural sap is a root source in the making and understanding of nations, and in the forging of lasting friendships among those of a shared human experience in time. With the advantage of hindsight, I would say that it is no shame that so small a place as Malta should have produced the Mizzi-Mintoff paradigm, on which we usefully and meaningfully could draw today. In comparative regional contexts, it could be seen to resemble the Anglo-Spanish pulls in Gibraltar, an enclave which still covers itself in Union Jacks even as its inhabitants speak a colloquial Andalucian; in the meantime, both Britain and Spain had joined the EU. It may be seen too against the difficulties of another island and ex-colony, Cyprus; but, in synthesis, Malta's experience was neither *enosis* nor *taksim*. The internal ethnic-linguistic-religious tension in which Cyprus long has been caught is unknown to Malta in modern times, the Maltese being more homogenous and distinct as an entity, with a language paralleling their history, as $\text{I}\omega\Omega\epsilon'$ Aquilina has observed.²³ Malta did not

²³ See his contribution in *L-Identita' Kulturali ta' Malta* (ed. Toni Cortis), *op.cit.*: "L-Ilsien Malti: Dokument ta' l-Istorja", pp. 225-234.

have a 'pied noir' army of *colons* from the 'mother country' as in Algeria or Tunisia, and to a lesser extent Libya; nor thousands of non-native settlers holding foreign passports, as the Maltese themselves were in Turkey until the 1920s and in Egypt until the 1950s. The dual option of integration or independence was by no means unique to Malta: it features, in different ways, in northern Africa, perhaps especially in Algeria between the Ferhat Abbas and Messali Hadj parties; nor did Malta have a 'khedive' or a 'bey' or a 'sultan' balancing out on a collaboration-resistance tight-rope between nationalist and imperialist pressures, with a price on his head either way. Governors did not depend for favour on natives or creditors: they reported straight to the imperial metropolis, by whom they were appointed and transferred, and that was not the Porte.

As it turned out, Malta's nation-forming matured in the 20th century without any of the bloodshed common to most other parts of the Mediterranean on all its borders in their quests for nationhood and statehood, starting with Greece and Italy, ending with Algeria and Cyprus, let alone Palestine since the formation of Israel in 1948, and indeed before that. In so far as political policies responded to cultural and/or economic pulls from seemingly antipodal founts, these were generally restrained and ultimately absorbed by a 'Malteseness' cushioned by homogeneity and size. Difficulties, disagreements and upsets notwithstanding, that is still evident today, and more so than earlier.

In the Spring of 2004 we had all Maltese political parties consenting to face, as best they could, the opportunities and challenges of Malta's membership of the EU, without any of the old rival fixations about Italy, Britain or France; or indeed about the pioneering multi-lingual, multi-cultural European prototype already prevalent in Malta between the 16th and the 18th century, despotic and elitist as its proponents and practitioners had been.

What remains is the ability to translate an understanding of the diverse aspects of national history in broader contexts into a knowledge and a learning experience, particularly in schools and through the media, space provided. A colonial past was not prone to highlight what was a converging national feeling, which could be anti-British or anti-Imperial; nor were undue doses of clerical influence and internecine

partisanship in post-independent Malta, conducive to helping generations of Maltese children begin to come to terms with themselves. Out of all the government secondary schools in the Maltese Islands, not more than 200 schoolchildren currently take history as an option, a tiny percentage of the school cohort. This, too, is where the challenge lies.

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