

**AGRICULTURE AND
PEASANT POLITICS IN
WARTIME MALTA, 1939-1945**



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AGRICULTURE AND PEASANT POLITICS IN WARTIME MALTA, 1939-1945

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Malta, in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History (By Research)

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*For Nannu Lolly (1936-2017) and Nanna Georgia,
and all the stories*

PREFACE

Following a dogfight sometime in April 1942, Acting Squadron Leader Laddie Lucas's Spitfire had developed problems of its own. He had been hit and his aircraft motor seized completely. Realising he could not have reached any of the airfields on Malta, a tiny cultivated piece of land on the outskirts of Siġġiewi had to do. He forced a crash landing in the field, landing between 80 to 100 yards away from a rubble wall. Jumping down quickly from the cockpit, he noticed three old Maltese women in long black dresses, almost touching the ground, and black scarves covering their heads, approaching him stumbling over the rough ground, as fast as they could towards him. Each was carrying some scooping implement and a hessian sack in their hands. As they came near, they stopped and, breathlessly, started shovelling earth into the sacks, intent upon getting up onto the wing and emptying the contents on the smouldering engine. Although incapable of understanding English, they turned away after having made sense of his gestures urging caution. The oldest and most senior of the three then walked back slowly to the Spitfire and touched the wing lightly with her hand. Returning to him, she rested her hand gently on his forearm. Lucas went on to describe the exchange:

As she did so she looked up into my eyes. A smile of benign serenity spread across that heavily lined, endearing face. Making the Sign of the Cross deliberately across her chest, she touched my arm again. With that, she turned with the others and went back to tending the land.¹

After his close brush with death, Lucas could have been forgiven for indulging in some romantic platitude about two specific types of people coming together as one in the midst of a war. This scene is all too common in texts written by predominantly British authors – mostly military men – about wartime Malta. The 'natives' largely entered the scene either when the storyteller had viewed them from afar as a distinct species or when the raconteur had come into contact with the communities living out in the margins of the Colonial State.

¹ Laddie Lucas, *Malta: The Thorn in Rommel's Side. Six Months that turned the War* (London, Penguin Books, 1993), 98-99.

There is no limit to the amount of works dealing with the military aspect of the War. The dogfights, the bombings and the artillerymen have overwhelmingly taken centre stage in memoirs and publications and there is no sign of this approach ever being exhausted. Going back to Lucas, in painting this somewhat serene picture during a period of great disorder, he had burst upon a social dimension – the rural areas – to which so much attention was devoted by the colonial government during the War itself, yet, which ironically has simultaneously escaped the observation of scholars in mainstream academia. The field in which Lucas landed and others like it, small and insignificant as they may have been to the observer, had a part in dictating the Fortress's wartime colonial politics vis-à-vis the wider war in the Mediterranean. The food situation had constantly plagued the upper echelons of Government in the late inter-war period, up till and including the harsh blockade imposed by Axis forces at the height of the siege. This dissertation seeks to understand and scrutinize the role agriculture in Malta had played at the heart of the conflict and the changes it underwent as a result of this unwelcome intrusion. The focus on this industry is not intended to exclude other interpretations but rather to add a much overlooked feature to our understanding of a civil aspect of the Second World War. Teodor Shanin declared, 'It is a commonplace to say that agrarian history as such is neglected – the fact is too obvious to be denied.'²

The rural areas and the country folk had never been high on the agenda of the colonial authorities, situated in their palaces and the urban belt around Grand Harbour. Poverty and sickness were all too common, illiteracy was rampant and deaths at childbirth were a normal occurrence. Government's attention shifted to the country districts seemingly over a few months when logistics, supplies and food became the be-all and end-all of their war. By tackling the war through this prism, the objective is to devote a substantial study of an industry and a way of life which were to change irrevocably between the discharge of the first bomb and the capitulation of the Axis powers.

This dissertation uses a multitude of documentation ranging from official reports, government correspondence, memoirs, visual material and oral testimonies. In using this panoply of sources, an attempt was made to reconstruct

² Teodor Shanin, 'The Peasantry as a Political Factor', in *The Sociological Review*, xiv, 1 (1966), 5-27.

the past while utilising the viewpoints of officials formulating and implementing government policy and that of the common folk, who were historical actors as much as the elites. The first chapter consists of a short history of agriculture in the colony followed by an in-depth evaluation of the agricultural sector's mobilisation due to the exigencies of war, spanning the Italian declaration of war and the Siege of Malta until 1942. The second chapter deals with the post-Siege phase, wherein the Axis aerial assaults had mostly subsided and Government initiated steps in trying to regularise, reform and rejuvenate the sector leading into the post-war era. Chapter III deals with the human element. A history of the peasant farmer in the Colonial State is merited as, more often than not, this labour group was completely omitted from wartime histories, including the National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo (NFU), which had garnered significant clout in the ever-fluid situation which the War helped to create. Farmers were not idle victims of wartime policies; they took to protest and resistance, in the process inhibiting Government's work. The last chapter is dedicated to propaganda and the Church, two instruments deployed to shape peasant farmers' attitudes and actions in a favourable way, ultimately beneficial to the regime.

As a final note, credit has to be given where it is due. I firstly need to thank Prof. John Chircop, who, as my tutor, helped me immeasurably, especially in the last few months prior to submission. His constant guidance and supervision led me to approach my research area in such a way that I had not envisaged beforehand. The result is the dissertation that you see. Special thanks also go to Mr Charles Dalli, for his lectures at the beginning of the course. Further thanks must be given to Maria Micallef, archivist at the National War Museum, Valletta, for providing documentation and photographs which have proved indispensable, and for opting to stay late at work when I was carrying out research. Mario Farrugia, CEO of *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* and Ray Polidano, Director-General of the Malta Aviation Museum respectively, provided ample photographs which have opened a window into the past, better complimenting this work. Thank you also to the interviewees who had accepted to sit for hours-long revelatory talks about their childhood and the traumas which their War shaped. Stories were recorded and bonds created. Thank you to my mother who, notwithstanding my shortcomings, has stood by me all these years. Lastly, thanks go to Joana. Her

unwavering support and limitless patience know no bounds, especially when she missed out on life while I had to push on with this work. This is as much hers as it is mine.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALG	Assistant to the Lieutenant Governor
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CSG	Chief Secretary to the Government
CO	Colonial Office
CP	Constitutional Party
DSO	Defence Security Officer
GMR	General Miscellaneous Report
GOV	Government
HOM	Head of Ministry
KOMR	King's Own Malta Regiment
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIG	Malta Imperial Government
NAM	National Archives of Malta
NWM	National War Museum
NFU	National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo
NP	Nationalist Party
PMA	Public Memory Archive
PWD	Public Works Department
RAF	Royal Air Force
REP	Report
RMA	Royal Malta Artillery
TNA	The National Archives [London]
TUC	Trade Union Council

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CHAPTER ONE

MALTA'S BATTLEFRONT: SIEGE FARMING

Introduction

During the War, survival hinged on the colony's ability to defend itself and strike back. This easily conjures up images of a military struggle. Yet, one dimension which had concurrently occupied the political establishment during the period under study was agriculture; to talk about food is to talk about agriculture. To talk about agriculture is to talk about survival. The pre-war era saw little to no Government involvement in local farming. Given this chapter deals with the sector of agriculture as a whole, an attempt at a short history is merited. There could be no history of a particular timeframe without an analysis of its past.

Wartime agriculture tends to be intensive and tightly controlled, as opposed to peacetime farming, when Government regulation relating to the industry is not as rigid. During the war, local agriculture was pulled out of the doldrums by the vicissitudes of the conflict. The second section of this chapter is an endeavor at how, despite the odds, local agriculture was shaped, exploited and impacted by the war.

A historical background to Maltese agriculture

For centuries, agriculture was the traditional economic-base on which the majority of peasants and rural dwellers had depended, long before the Islands' central position in the Mediterranean had affirmed itself.¹ The old Maltese names of localities where particular crops took precedence are evidence of this. *Fiddien*, or silvery, is in allusion to the large crops of cotton which used to be grown in this particular area; *Fulia* was the special land for beans; *Imrieñel* was the pasture land of large herds and sheep; *Żebbuġ* referred to olive trees, whereas *Imġiebañ*

¹ Godfrey Wettinger, 'Agriculture in Malta in the Late-Middle Ages', *Proceedings of History Week*, (1982), 1-48.

was the place for beehives.⁴ A diverse agriculture sector with locally-grown produce included, but was not limited to, onions, tomatoes, wheat, cereals and cumin, the latter of which had been grown locally since the 16th century. Strawberries were predominantly cultivated in the north-west of Malta and fruit, legumes and tobacco were also standard items of cultivation. Cotton had been a fundamental cash crop in the local economic setup for centuries. British rule, however, saw the Islands transformed into an emporium of commerce embracing free trade. As the decades rolled by, short-sighted colonial policies aimed at safeguarding imperial interests had indirectly shifted economic activity from the agricultural hinterland, found beyond the fortified urban areas, to the Grand Harbour and the surrounding littoral, where industrial and business activity was entrenched from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. By the opening of the Suez Canal, Malta had stopped being an agricultural colony and its very character shifted purely to a transshipment outcrop within an imperial framework. Local agriculture always faced problems of development: climactic-environmental conditions such as weather unpredictability, winter gales, climate, pests, diseases, water shortages and foreign crises were *long durée* problems which left a significant impact. Although, management, or lack thereof, had certainly played a part in the ever-diminishing influence of this rural pursuit. The Islands' new colonial *raison d'être* as a naval-military station, coupled with the *laissez-faire* policy adopted by successive colonial administrations in this sector, directly led to stunted development of Maltese agriculture.

In the early years of the British occupation, Civil Commissioner Alexander Ball had written the following to the Colonial Office in London:

They export annually into Spain cotton thread to the amount of nearly half a million sterling. The oranges of Malta are of an excellent quality. They export annually to the amount of 2,000 sterling and much greater quantity might be produced and exported. The honey of Malta is of a good quality and might become an article of exportation. The cultivation of potatoes is now introduced and will prove of great advantage to the inhabitants.⁵

⁴ John Borg, 'Agriculture and Horticulture in Malta', in *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated. Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial, Facts, Figures and Resources*, Allister Macmillan (ed.), Midsea Books Ltd, Malta, 1985, 224-239.

⁵ Joseph A. Micallef, 'The Agrarian Society: Its contribution to Maltese agriculture and the part played by voluntary organisations in Malta', *F.A.O. Regional Seminar*, St Paul's Bay, Malta, 6-10 November 1995, 1-7.

In April 1844, the *Societa Economico Agraria* was formed.⁶ The colonial government sanctioned its formation and Governor Sir Patrick Stuart approved the society's rules with a pledge to subsidise its operations from the Treasury while simultaneously suggesting the organisation of an annual agricultural exhibition to be set up by the same organisation.⁷ The society's statute was as follows:

*Lo scopo della societa` sara` il promuovere il perfezionamento de metodi di coltura: l'aumento del suolo attuale coltivato, l'introduzione e la propagazione di nuovi rodotti, o di strumenti agrari per quali con piu' efficace: in fine l'introduzione di nuove specie o razze di animali economici che possono riuscire.*⁸

It would be safe to assume that had the administration set up an official government department entrusted with the technical improvement of agriculture, the previous extract could have been its proclamation. This voluntary organisation and its members had not only preceded the creation of such a department but there does not seem to be any surviving documentation which shows that agricultural policy was high on the list of priorities in the first century of British rule. The *Societa Economico Agraria* was also assigned with running experimental farms and two such centres were opened: one in Ħamrun while another one followed at Żejtun, to cater for farmers living on the other side of the Island. At the turn of the century, another experimental farm, albeit on a smaller scale, was set up in Gozo. In the end, lacking major funding, the society's main activities were restricted to agricultural and livestock shows, disseminating information to peasants and herdsman and to debating farming methods. It is clear that a corps of individuals with significant clout had been interested in developing the sector. On the administration's part, a combination of the absence of a policy-setting entity within the colonial government and a lack of scrutiny to farming methods were glaring inconsistencies which hindered the potential development of this sector.

A minor substitute for the dwindling cultivation of cotton was the tobacco crop, primarily the production of cigars and later cigarettes. This had been a sufficient export item with Maltese cigars having found suitable markets around the

⁶ This society's official name was changed into English in 1940: the Agrarian Society.

⁷ Micallef, 1-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Mediterranean basin. Yet, the introduction of the potato crop in the early 1800s⁹ was in one way used to pacify farming communities reeling from the dwindling loss of significant capital. This new crop did not replace cotton manufacture, yet over the following decades, suitable export markets were identified and exploited. The crop's seed was shipped to the Islands from Britain, intertwining the colony's agricultural production with Britain. In favourable circumstances no other crop was as equally profitable and the same land produced two crops a year and sometimes even a third, the so-called summer crop.¹⁰

War, which usually spelled disaster for other states, meant prosperity for Malta, however brief it may have been. Owing to the outbreak of the American Civil War the supply of cotton from the southern US states dried up, and this forced buyers to tap other sources of supply. The price of cotton trebled and Maltese farmers, quick to grasp the situation, doubled their cotton acreage to meet new demand.¹¹ The war in America came to an end in 1865 and the short cotton boom was over by the second half of the 1860s.

The opening of the Suez Canal further reduced this sector's significance. The new waterway had shortened the West-East trade routes by a time margin which could not have been overstated. This geostrategic development changed the colony from a trade *entrepôt* into a significant transshipment bunkering station within an imperial framework, with most, if not all industry centred around Grand Harbour and HM Dockyard. Herbert Ganado was apt to single out this state of affairs in his memoirs and went on to stipulate that the Islands had then henceforth lost their once-agrarian identity.¹² Moreover, in the second part of the 1860s, a series of uninterrupted droughts occurred, added to a cholera outbreak in 1865 which devastated the internal villages.¹³ As a result, local agriculture went through a critical period of change as emphasis on wheat growing began. By the mid-19th century, agriculture had become of marginal importance to the

⁹ Chircop gives the year as 1803, while Borg dates its introduction to 1808. John Chircop, *Underdevelopment: The Maltese Experience 1880-1914*, unpublished M.A. dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 1993, 8; John Borg, 224-239.

¹⁰ Borg, 224-239.

¹¹ Arthur G. Clare, 'Features of an Island Economy', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 127-154.

¹² Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel: It-Tielet Ktieb (1942-1955) (It-tieni edizzjoni)* (Malta, Interprint (Malta) Ltd., 1977), 245.

¹³ Chircop, 57.

British administration in Malta, whose only interest was related to the storage of wheat for security reasons.¹⁴

Foreshadowing what was to come during the Second World War, the colony's dependence on foreign markets was clearly displayed as the exigencies of the previous global war had also altered the Islands' foodstuffs' economy, a situation which came to worry both the colonial government and agricultural experts. Writing in February 1918, Charles Strickland – brother to Lord Gerald – then one of the principal pig breeders then operating in Malta, stipulated that potato farming, which since the late-nineteenth century had secured suitable foreign export markets¹⁵, had declined by about 60%.¹⁶ Poultry farming was no longer profitable as the price fixed for eggs was lower than the cost of production. Farmers were killing their stock without endeavouring to renew it, as it did not pay. The cost of manure, labour, and farm rents was on the upward trend. During the inter-war period, the agriculture sector was the hardest to be hit by depression and most governments responded with similar policies: marketing boards, price control schemes, output restrictions, tariffs, milling requirements, land reclamation, and flood control projects.¹⁷

Up till the immediate post-First World War years, the official Government body tasked with agricultural matters was an Agriculture Office within the Department of Works.¹⁸ The royal commissioners who visited in 1911 submitted that the sector was by far the largest and most important industry and in light of the number of dependents, the department should have been further developed and the field of its activity extended.¹⁹ Its head was to be a practical expert in agriculture, giving his whole time to the work of his department, including visiting every part of the Island, making himself familiar with the agricultural conditions of the several districts, and most importantly, getting in touch with local farmers.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵ By the turn of the century, potatoes became an export staple. In 1880, 1,261,255 lbs. worth of potatoes were exported and in 1900 this was down to 1,256,150 lbs. By 1910-11, the export quantity boomed to 23,527,550 lbs.

¹⁶ NAM, CSG 01, 3923/1940.

¹⁷ Wheat duties were reintroduced in Germany in 1925 and in France two years later. In 1929 and again in 1931, Germany and France (along with Italy) raised *ad valorem* rates on wheat imports. Both Germany and France introduced milling requirements at about the same time that Italy did. Jon S. Cohen, 'Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb., 1979), pp. 70-87.

¹⁸ Micallef, 1-7.

¹⁹ NAM, GMR 606, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Position and Judicial Procedure of Malta* (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), 1-20.

The office dealing with agricultural specialisation was the Superintendence of Gardens and Plantations, whose head was Dr John Borg. When a new Department of Agriculture was set up in 1919, the latter was promoted to lead the department as its first chief. Judging by the positive impression he had left on the commissioners it may be sufficed to say that the decision taken to give him the reins of the new body was not that difficult.²⁰



Fig. 1. Dr (later Prof.) John Borg, Superintendent of Agriculture between 1919-1933.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

In 1920, J. Dawson Shepherd was sent out to Malta by Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture to report on the state of the local agricultural industry. He was impressed with Maltese farmers' work ethic and their ability to produce high yields in fragmented and small acreages. Yet, he concluded that the extension of the agricultural area under cereals – or any crops for that matter – was not in any way possible. Matters were to be made worse if the then-present area under cultivation was to be maintained. Impoverishment of the soil and reduced yield per acre due to over-cultivation was to be a tangible result in the not so distant future.²¹ Geography and lack of space was to be one of the internal factors which

²⁰ *Ibid.*, (Minutes of Evidence).

²¹ J. Dawson Shepherd, *Report on Agriculture in Malta*, (Cairo, Ministry of Agriculture, 1920), 15.

local agriculture could never have hoped to overcome. Dawson Shepherd did not mince his words, terming the situation 'a crisis'.²²

Dawson Shepherd considered agriculture to be 'an old art' which further fuels the conclusion that the *laissez-faire* attitude taken by successive colonial administrations was questionable, if not downright irresponsible. Agriculture had fallen further down the pecking order in the list of colonial priorities and it was only now after the experience of the First World War that the British devolved actual responsibility to the Maltese administration.

The first minister responsible for the sector was future Head of Ministry Ugo Mifsud. His successor, Colonel William Savona had served as Minister for Posts and Agriculture for a year until 1923. Upon relinquishing the post, he submitted a report on the working of the agriculture department and certain components of the sector which needed further analysis and possible exploitation. He stated that even though the department was carrying out 'valuable' experiments in the selection of crops – particularly wheat – unless an experimental farm was established, the aforementioned experiments would have had to be 'insufficiently exploited' and, possibly, they would not have been sufficiently extensive.²³ He envisaged the commercial manufacture of cheese and other dairy products, in consideration of a dairy which had been set up in Msida a few years back. He also recommended the expansion of viticulture in the Islands and set up a new office of Viticulture Instructor for Gozo. Savona was followed by Antonio Dalli, Enrico Mizzi, Walter Salamone and lastly, Giuseppe Micallef, until the constitution was withdrawn in 1933, with agriculture being again under the colonial government's guidance.

Another two surveyors were sent to Malta in the 1930s to report on local agricultural pursuits. Henry William Potts arrived in February 1930, to be followed by Sir Frank Stockdale in March four years later. Both were experts in their field with the latter being, at the time, a Colonial Agricultural Service officer and the first Agricultural Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In front of the then-Governor and Head of Ministry, Potts had tabled various suggestions about the domestic livestock he studied while on his tour. He suggested the introduction of the pure-bred, dual-purpose Norfolk Red Poll cow as being more profitable to

²² *Ibid.*

²³ NAM, CSG 01 – 21/1923.

the one then being utilised. This bovine breed produced 700 to 1000 gallons of rich milk from calf to calf, as opposed to the cow then being milked in the Islands which produced 150 to 170 gallons per season.²⁴ Moreover, the animal was dual-purpose as when the period of lactation finished, it readily fattened and produced a high return for beef. The calves of both sexes provided good veal also. Potts discouraged the use of sheep's milk, instead encouraging cow's milk for giving better returns for cheese-making and advised the introduction of the New Zealand Corriedale Sheep.²⁵ He singled out the poultry for not being productive and 'unhesitatingly condemned' the pig stock in Malta for being 'not worth feeding' and advised the introduction of another pure-bred kind.²⁶ All this was also linked to the preservation, or the slowing down in the degradation, of the local soil. The improvement effected in selecting and rearing higher grade domestic stock would have naturally increased the available amount of farmyard manure so much needed in the Islands with their calcareous soils. On the cultivation front, he suggested the purchase of pure-bred seed potatoes free from disease from the north of Scotland, to better strengthen the local crop's ability to withstand pests. Governments, he said, needed to take the place of well-to-do landowners by establishing stud and experimental farms. In conclusion, Potts made reference to the necessity of organising a system of technical training by which the suggestions he had offered to improve the producers' position could have been affected.²⁷ Borg had in fact managed an experimental farm at Attard and was to set up another one at Għammieri.

Stockdale on the other hand, was more damning in his assessments. He found the experimental farms the least advanced. No agricultural officer was trained in the supervision of this duty and even then, arrangements had not been made for the selected officer to secure post-graduate experience of an executive character.²⁸ His voluminous report proposed various reforms and singled out the Department of Agriculture for its lack of experts and the colonial government's parsimony *vis-à-vis* investment in the industry and its workers. He recommended

²⁴ NAM, GMR 1118, *Lecture on the Improvement of Live Stock and Agriculture in Malta delivered at the Palace on the 6th February, 1930 by Mr H. W. Potts, F.C.S., F.L.S.*, 1930.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ F. A. Stockdale, *Report on the present condition of Agriculture in the Maltese Islands* (Malta, Government Printing Office, 1934), 32.

practical training to peasant farmers and their sons and the establishment of a vocational agricultural school. Short leases of land were highlighted as being counterproductive to encouraging permanent improvements and further development of arable land. Rents were high and absentee landlords paid little to no attention to the proper maintenance of buildings on farmland. Knowledge of fertilisers was still scanty and the overworked soil had been starved of nutrients for decades. He suggested the development of an experimental and livestock farm with the least possible delay. His visit also resulted in the appointment of an advisor in animal husbandry and controller of export produce, the latter to improve the quality of produce exports by grading. He also proposed reforms to the *pitkali* system of brokerage but was forced to admit that increased food production and development was mainly dependent upon increased supplies of irrigation water.²⁹

Administrative agencies can easily become bureaucratic, an issue which Stockdale noted this in his report. Also, there can be no escaping their political nature as these agencies are run by Government. Stockdale's conclusions and suggestions made the rounds in the local press, resulting in the agricultural department becoming another political battlefield, just after self-government was revoked and Malta reverted to direct rule.³⁰ During the period of the suspension of the constitution, the financial policy and alleged extravagance of the colonial government had been strongly criticised.³¹ The criticism was extended to the agricultural department on these grounds and the Government Experimental Farm at Għammieri, despite its reorganisation in accordance with the advice of Stockdale himself, had been attacked as a waste. There was a strong body of opinion that was determined to cut down on expenditure of the Department, and with the approach of the highly important election of July 1939, the thought of spending more money on agriculture or any other department was not looked upon favourably.³² 'Economy' was the constant cry. It is important to note however, that a political element was present in this confrontation. After the election, out of ten newly-elected members, six were elected on the Constitutional Party (CP) ticket. The Department was at that time being led by Dr

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 234/1934.

³¹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

³² *Ibid.*

Giuseppe Micallef³³, who had taken over from Borg after the latter's retirement in 1933. Micallef was a self-educated countryman – a farmer's son – who, although not possessing a detailed technical knowledge of agriculture, was described as thoroughly understanding of the country people and their problems.³⁴ He had served as Treasurer to the National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo (NFU) in the early 1920s and had also been Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in the final administration before self-government was revoked. Described as the 'least political' member of the late ministry, he was still an ex-politician who had made many political enemies, which generally interfered with the activities of the Department.³⁵ Whilst no documentary evidence exists, it is easy to see that a political agenda could have stifled official agricultural policy between the 1939 election and the outbreak of war in the Mediterranean in 1940. The incoming majority was determined to reduce the Department 'to a skeleton'.³⁶



Fig. 2 Dr Giuseppe Micallef, Director of Agriculture between 1933-1940.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

³³ Micallef requested that the title of 'Superintendent of Agriculture' be changed to 'Director of Agriculture' to bring him in line with almost all other colonies and to give him standing over officers with equal or superior titles such as the Superintendent of Public Gardens and Plantations and the Director of the Experimental Farm and Agricultural Organiser. NAM, CSG 01 – 290/1933.

³⁴ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

Climate, considered the first great pacemaker of change, is of the utmost importance if the recent global discussion on climate change is anything to go by.³⁷ Yet, the ups and downs of the weather such as floods or droughts can on the human level produce disasters which wreak havoc on the food supply and affect thousands (and even millions) of people.³⁸ The year starting 1 Sept. 1930 is a good case study if we were to have a look into an uncharacteristically negative period for local agriculture.³⁹ The first shower of about half an inch fell on 1 Sep. but the first useful rains followed on the 14th of the month, on which 2.96 inches of rainfall reached practically all over the islands. This kickstarted the germination of *sulla*⁴⁰, barley and other crops, which was perfectly normal. The germination of unirrigated winter potatoes followed soon after, and therefore, the season may be said to have been anticipated by a fortnight. Abundant showers fell between 15 to 20 October, and this was not evenly distributed so that in the western district unirrigated potatoes had hardly germinated by the close of the month. Stormy weather followed from 13 to 15 November and a prolonged spell of fine weather with southern winds continued up to 8 December. Showery weather continued throughout January and up to the third week of February, the soil remaining continually in a wet condition of over two and a half months, rendering cultural work impracticable and causing much delay in agricultural operations. A furious westerly gale of extraordinary violence took place between 21-23 February which threw down a large number of trees in both islands, and caused considerable damage to growing crops, particularly to early spring potatoes, beans and peas. Another north-westerly gale took place on 1 and 2 March, but fortunately this was less violent and of shorted duration. A prolonged spell of fine weather followed, but the ground had become too caked and fissured to permit the satisfactory development of most growing crops. The long spell of dry weather came to an end on 10 and 11 May, when with a northerly wind, good

³⁷ J.M. Roberts & Odd Arne Westad, *The Penguin History of the World* [Sixth Edition] (London, Penguin Books, 2013), 4.

³⁸ Almost 250mm of rain fell over Malta in October 2021, the wettest October in 64 years. A month later, the torrential rains which hit the Islands flooded agricultural areas, washed away crops and destroyed rubble walls. Whereas the rains in October were considered by farmers as 'a blessing from God', the ones in November were 'a curse'. Retrieved on 26 November 2021 from <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-floods-a-curse-made-worse-by-poorly-built-rubble-walls-farmers.917344>.

³⁹ NAM, GMR 1160, *Report on the working of the Office of Agriculture, 1930-1931*.

⁴⁰ Sulla is a short-lived perennial crop with a high drought tolerance. It produces large quantities of high quality forage in winter-spring.

showers fell on both islands by which most crops benefitted more or less. In consequence of this late rain, the soil would have been moist for a considerable part of summer and would have permitted an extensive cultivation of dry-farmed summer crops, such as cotton, maize, sesame, tomatoes, melons and dry farmed vegetables such as marrows, cauliflowers and cabbages. On the whole, the results of the agricultural year may be described as comparatively poor, and would have been little short of disastrous but for the rather belated, but very beneficial rain in May. In fact, with the exception of sulla and forages, generally, no crop was wholly satisfactory. The prices of vegetables and practically of all farm produce were excessively low, which added to the high rents and high cost of labour, had brought about a formidable crisis in the agricultural industry, resulting in much distress, and compelling many farmers to run high into debt.

The Maltese population was perpetually on the increase⁴¹, with the Islands destined to get caught within a Malthusian trap. Further north, Italy sought to reduce agricultural imports and to strike a balance-of-payments of sorts. Mussolini 'declared war' against grain imports in 1925. The Battle for Grain – *Battaglia del Grano* – had to be fought, the Duce stated, to free Italy from the slavery of foreign bread.⁴² Self-sufficiency – autarky – was to be achieved by increasing wheat yield. Three years later, he introduced the Integrated Land Reclamation programme – *Bonifica Integrale* – which, he assured his countrymen, would bring substantial economic and social benefits to the nation. However, although the Fascists focused their propaganda efforts on these two programmes, they introduced other policies of equal economic importance for agriculture. From 1926 onwards import restrictions were placed on all agricultural commodities; beginning in 1929 subsidies were paid to encourage the export of certain crops; after 1930, acreage, output, and price controls were established by the colonial government or by government-sponsored groups for most major crops. Legislation was passed to encourage ruralisation and internal colonization and there was even some attempt to halt the flow of people from the countryside to the cities.⁴³ In addition to Mussolini's imperial Roman dream of Mediterranean domination and empire-building, the Italian government sent agricultural experts

⁴¹ At the beginning of the British occupation, the population of the Islands was around 100,000. In 1920, it had increased to around 224,323.

⁴² Cohen, 70-87.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

to Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia to assess whether the colonies could be transformed into a breadbasket for Italy. These were unsuccessful and in 1938, Italy again sought to invigorate food production in its empire and sent 20,000 peasants to Libya, their role being to rebuild this territory as the erstwhile 'granary of Imperial Rome' and to strengthen the Italian campaign for food autarky.⁴⁴ It could be seen that Italy was repeatedly exploring avenues of agricultural production and food security just before it entered the Second World War. This was an issue which the smaller Maltese Islands could never fall back on.

Back to Malta, one factor which took a surprising toll on farmland during the inter-war period was the military use of land. Throughout the Empire, the army built military camps and gun and searchlight sites, took over coastal areas and borders for defence, anti-aircraft batteries and observer posts. Vast areas were needed for practicing manoeuvres. The most land-hungry arm of the military was the airforce. The necessities of stationing aircraft on an island fortress far outweighed any arguments against. Runways and aerodromes had to be sited on high, well-drained arable land. In Japan there was competition from the military for the limited amount of flat land. In Britain the best efforts of the ploughing-up campaign, which sought to increase the amount of cultivated land, were counteracted by the military requisitioning of 750,000 acres in England and Wales.⁴⁵ In Germany, compulsory land purchases swallowed up tens of thousands of hectares of motorways, airfields, barracks, camps, army training areas and the defences of the Siegfried Line. In the case of Malta, a wartime Royal Air Force (RAF) commander estimated that 75 miles of low stone walls had been removed to build Hal Far airfield.⁴⁶

In 1929, two sites were earmarked for the construction of a civil aerodrome.⁴⁷ Even though this project was beyond the colonial government's means, Ta' Qali was chosen and in the process, 'one of the finest sectors of first-class arable land', of which the colonial government owned very little, if any, was destroyed.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food*, (London, Penguin Books, 2012), 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁶ Air Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd, *Briefed to Attack: Malta's part in African Victory*, (Great Britain, Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 64.

⁴⁷ Another potential site at Safi was taken over by the RAF. NAM, CSG 01 – 99/1929.

⁴⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 99/1929.



Fig. 3. Plots of agricultural land earmarked for the construction of Ta' Qali aerodrome in 1935.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

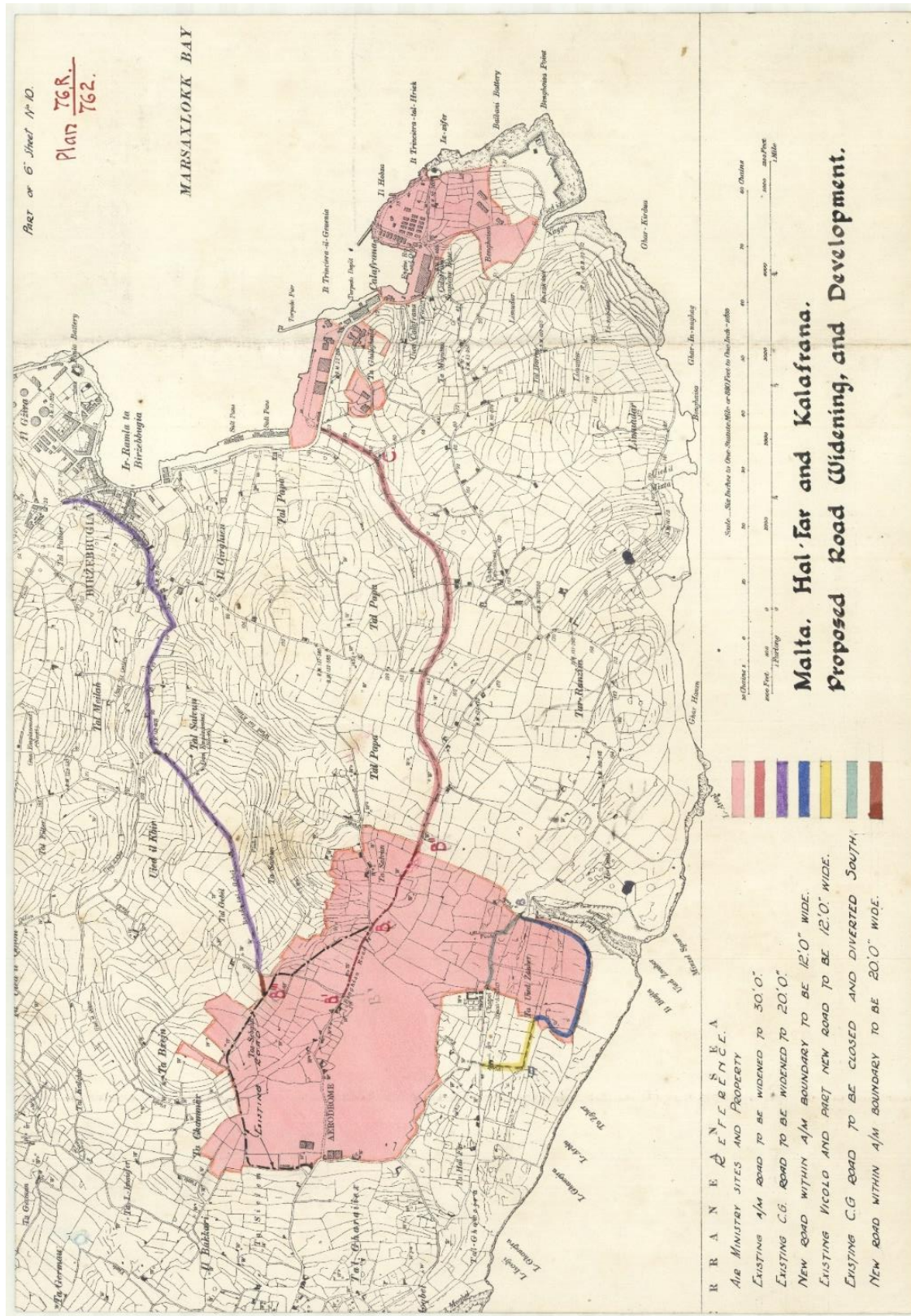


Fig. 4. A plan showing the RAF landing ground extension works at Hal Far airfield, starting in April 1940. This necessitated the closing, diversion and widening of certain Air Ministry and Civil Government roads stretching between Hal Far and Kalafrana.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Good quality soil was dug up and disposed of, rubble walls were dismantled, the whole surface area was levelled while hangars, warehouses and fuel stores were erected over the identified area. Starting in the mid-1930s, specifically after the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, a cursory look at official Government files would go some way in shedding light on the intensity of this activity until the outbreak of war. The military authorities bought up and requisitioned agricultural land. Barbed-wire entanglements snaking over rubble walls - in the process hindering farmers access to their lands – became a common sight. Country lanes and roads were widened to accommodate the military for defence purposes. This scramble for land led to one parish priest⁴⁹ to write ‘an impassioned appeal’ decrying that ‘Ghain Tuffieha, Hal Far, Tal Kali, Hal Luca, Marsa, Salini, Melliha, have already been wrenched from our Agricultural industry.’⁵⁰ In military terms, there was no alternative but for construction of airfields to spill over the cultivation and to destroy the small walled fields where the soil was shallow.

Until 1935, movement of the colony’s precious soil was unregulated, and soil itself was often lost or wasted. In the same year, the colonial government increased the scale of soil transfers while limiting soil waste through the provisions of the Ordinance for the Preservation of Fertile Soil. The Ordinance required that all soil must be removed from construction sites and taken where it may be used for agriculture. In 1938, for example, 78,795 cubic yards of soil was moved from construction sites across the country.⁵¹ Of this amount, 29,425 cubic yards was used to reclaim 119 fields, and 11,658 cubic yards was used for the government’s Experimental Farm at Għammieri.⁵² The rest of the soil was used for back gardens.

By the 1930s, the only agricultural exports of importance were 10,000 to 15,000 tons of potatoes to Britain and northern European countries, 2,500 tons of onions and 250 tons of cumin seed.⁵³ Shipments amounted in value to £105,370 in 1934.⁵⁴ As can be deduced, the potato crop had become the most important export item and the Islands’ cash crop to an extent that its status in the

⁴⁹ The role played by the clergy will be delved into further in Chapter Four.

⁵⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 15921938.

⁵¹ Paul Caruana Galizia, *The Economy of Modern Malta: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 70.

⁵² The next law on the preservation of soil was introduced almost 40 years later. *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Report on Economic Conditions in Cyprus and Malta with a note on the trade of Gibraltar*, J. B. Greaves, Department of Overseas Trade, April 1935, 43.

⁵⁴ Stockdale’s figure for the same year had amounted to £107,306. Stockdale, 13.

local economy and the export market was to merit significant attention. As the clouds of war were felt to be inching ever closer, sections of the press exhorted farmers to plant as many crops as was humanly possible and to increase the acreage under cultivation. *Il Berka*, the Times of Malta's sister-newspaper in the vernacular, boldly stated that:

the potato crop is honoured with being the biggest and the best industrial enterprise in the Islands, but in times of war or any other crisis, this crop will be one of the most sought after by the inhabitants of Malta and Gozo.⁵⁵

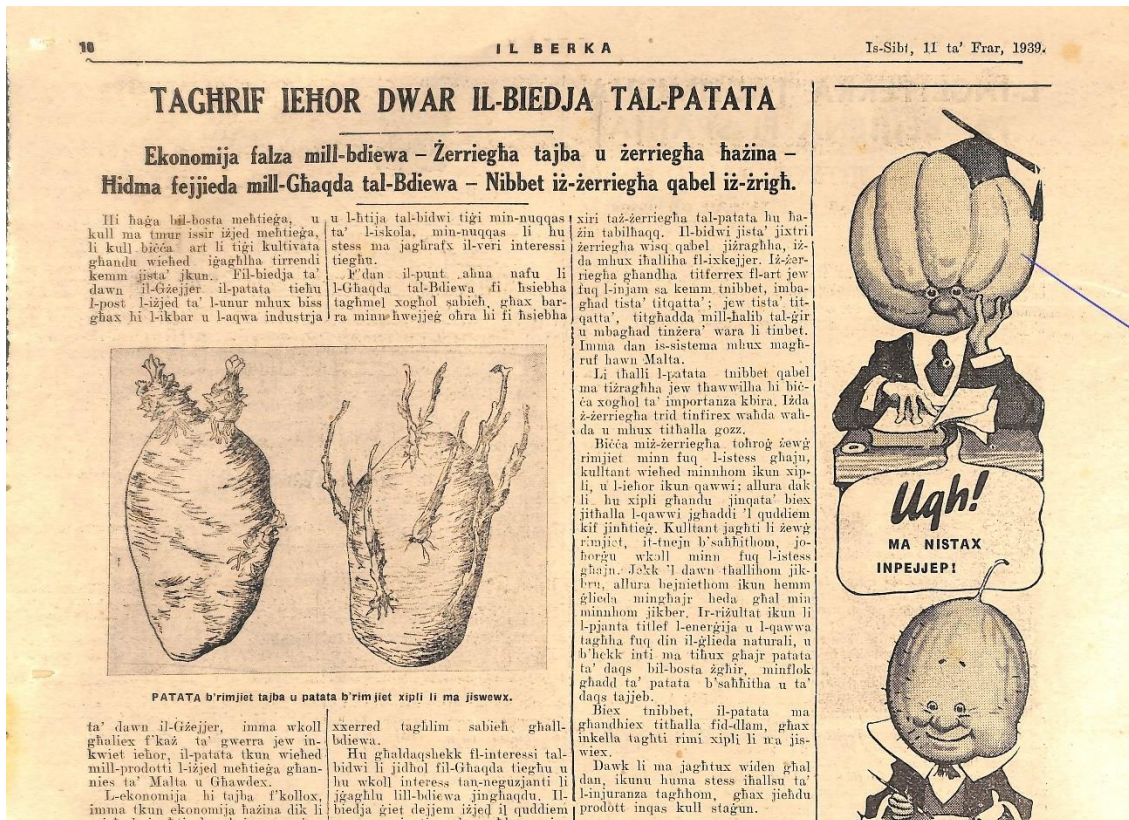


Fig. 5. Article in *Il Berka* on potato farming.

Source: *Il Berka*, Saturday, 11 Feb. 1939.

Maltese government policy dictated that exportation of the potato harvest was to be made of that part of the crop which was surplus to requirements.⁵⁶ In an all-too-familiar case of putting one's eggs in one's basket, thousands of farming families were dependent upon the surplus of the winter harvest reaching the

⁵⁵ *Il Berka*, 11 February 1939.

⁵⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 4442/1939.

northern European markets. The issue then making the rounds in government circles was not if, but when Germany would move to neutralise her enemies in the west and when Italy was going to show her hand. In November 1939, it was intimated that for the latest potato harvest to reach the Dutch and Belgian markets, a ruling from the Secretary of State would have most probably been required due to the state then presiding on the continent.⁵⁷ In the end, this consignment was shipped unmolested. In May 1940, a month before the Italian declaration of war, the German army swept into the Low Countries, in the process overrunning the traditional markets. In Malta, farmers were faced with a sizeable surplus of the spring crop while the major exporters⁵⁸ had also voiced their displeasure that the powers that be had not actively planned for such a scenario after the relevant shipping licences had been acquired. Robbed of a lucrative market, the colonial government rushed to seek an alternative. In the end, government opted to buy the surplus for local consumption. The jockeying of interests between the private sector, the working (and producing) class and issues pertaining to national security were to play a pivotal role during the conflict.

Agriculture in the Maltese Islands resembled a classic case of shutting the barn door after the horse had bolted. Multiple factors had hindered and stalled agricultural production: the vice of geography, military buildup and the taking of good agricultural land for defence purposes, Government's *laissez-faire* approach to the sector and the lack of attention to the labour pool dependent on this livelihood led to agriculture being reduced to a mere ancillary industry. The agricultural economy was slowly but surely left to its own devices while the colonial government's attention tended to be firmly fixed on satiating the Empire's military and trade interests. As has been shown, local agriculture morphed from a diverse and stable sector to one the bulk of which was dependent on the exportation of the potato crop. With every passing decade, the importance of this crop was further affirmed. Foreign inspectors and agricultural officers viewed it as indispensable to farmers' annual yields and the local economy but this ever-increasing reliance directly pushed agriculture into being little more than a potato-exporting enterprise at the mercy of foreign markets. The overrunning of the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ The major exporters then were Agius & Agius, Enrico Sammut, Giovanni Cutajar, Joseph (also known as Ġużè) Orlando Smith, Adolph Pace Balzan, Walker & Pace, The Agric. Products Association and the Malta Agric. Potato Association.

northern European markets in the second quarter of 1940 by the German military proved to be panic-inducing for all the local stakeholders involved. As a result, the implications of over a century of underdevelopment, characterised by short-sighted policies were to be felt with quasi-catastrophic consequences in the dark days of the Second World War, when the food situation became close to untenable and the fortress colony was close to unravelling in 1942.



Fig. 6. RAF aircraft over the Maltese countryside.

Source: National War Museum Association

The changing dynamics of wartime agriculture (1940-1942)

Malta happened to sit on the North-South, East-West trade route. If Italy were to declare war, in the process opening a new theatre in the Mediterranean, the Islands were to be indubitably fought over by the opposing coalitions; Britain on one side had to defend its isolated and exposed rocky outcrop, whereas the Axis aimed to dislodge the former from its position. When this scenario was enacted, Malta was caught up in a battle of supply, followed by a relentless blockade. As was discussed in the previous section, it was impossible for Maltese agriculture

to sustain the colony in peacetime. At best, it produced around 25% of the food required by the inhabitants.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is sufficiently reliable to demonstrate conclusively that the continuance of resistance during the war depended fundamentally on employing both internal and extraneous components. Agriculture could not survive without outside succour, and neither could the inhabitants.

In Sep. 1938, Germany annexed the Sudetenland, followed by the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia into the Reich in March 1939. Six months later, on 1 Sep. 1939, Hitler took Europe to war by invading Poland, which was defeated within a matter of weeks. The outbreak of war in England caused an immediate state of emergency to be observed in the colonies. In Malta, all troops were confined to their war stations and every weapon was ready for instant use as no one doubted that Italy would join in and attack the Island without any formal declaration of war, as Germany had done. Lookouts scanned the air and the sea for the first signs of hostile approach. Woefully weak in the anti-aircraft gun department, and horribly exposed with regards to aircraft, Malta lay isolated and open to attack. Black-out regulations were strictly enforced but no form of rationing of petrol or foodstuffs was put in force by the colonial government.

Outside the actual military posts the outbreak of war made no difference to the civil population except by enforcing the night-time curfew. The Maltese got over this inconvenience by sitting outside their houses on the pavements and life became very communal.⁶⁰ Numerous letters were written to the press complaining of the encouragement to moral laxity that the black-out gave and eventually, whether as a result of these or not, the restrictions were relaxed until midnight.⁶¹ After two or three weeks of this intense inactivity, it became apparent that Italy was sitting out the war. A British army officer had the time to pen a poem about the general situation then permeating throughout the Islands:

Now here is a saga,
Of people at Gargur,

⁵⁹ NAM, GMR 1107, *Preliminary report on an agricultural survey of Malta and Gozo with specific reference to increased food production during war-time*, 1942.

⁶⁰ Lt.-Col H. E. C. Weldon, R.A., *Drama in Malta (A personal flashback)* (England, The Naval and Military Press Ltd, 2009), 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Defending the island of goats,
Who sit on their bums,
And twiddle their thumbs
And shoot at imaginary boats.⁶²

Picking up from where it had left off, by June 1940 Germany had conquered Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. The latter country sunk further below under the weight of Italy, which had thrown its lot in with the Germans in the same month. By mid-1940, Britain suffered a double blow and was in a strategic quandary. Well within reach of German-occupied western Europe, it was at the mercy of an air and sea blockade, compelled into potentially accepting a negotiated peace settlement. The fall of France also meant that the French Navy, which originally was to patrol the western half of the Mediterranean had now been neutralised. The Mediterranean, which had previously been a highway for British commerce, was converted not into an Italian lake, but into a channel dominated by British naval power, but none the less fraught with danger.⁶³ This meant that Malta – which had no air force and no navy of its own, on account of the Mediterranean Fleet having sailed to Egypt on 30 April – neither had a barrier to protect itself from potential invasion nor anything remotely like the *materiel* having been promised the previous summer.⁶⁴

Among the general upheaval then unfolding across the continent, the previous extract gives the impression that nothing resembling any kind of planning had been done in Malta over the months preceding the war's outbreak. In reality, stock-taking on food supplies had started months beforehand. On 1 Feb. 1939, Micallef submitted a scheme embodying general and emergency recommendations as well as certain observations regarding the Experimental Farm at Għammieri. The most important points concerned the water supply. Forage for livestock and crops for human consumption was to be increased by extending irrigation for which a grant of £43,000 from Colonial Development

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Times of Malta*, 26 November, 1941.

⁶⁴ During the spring of 1940, the supplies which stevedores unloaded at Grand Harbour consisted of the following: 145 bicycles, 400 tonnes of sandbags and a detachment of the Middle East Pigeon Section, made up of 15 soldiers and 200 pigeons and 8 rabbits. The Island still needed 78 heavy and 38 light anti-aircraft guns to make up the quota promised the previous summer. James Holland, *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege, 1940-1943* (London, Phoenix, 2004), 28-29.

Funds was approved.⁶⁵ Financial aid was to be provided for individual projects such as the provision of efficient water pumps which would have enabled the pumping of water in, for example, the artificial lakes at *Tal-Grazzja* in Gozo, to be utilised for irrigation purposes.⁶⁶ Compulsory immunization of breeding pigs was on the agenda as was the placing of cows' milk on the same footing as goats' milk. Available public lands had to be ploughed, including the Marsa grounds, for planting with potatoes, whereas the onion crop had to be limited, it having been one of the principal export items in the interwar period.⁶⁷ At this juncture, Micallef summarised the effect of his proposals:

The general recommendations are of a practical nature and could be put into operation with a minimum of delay. To rely on emergency measures with regard to food production means loss of time, diminished efficiency and poor returns for the funds utilised. The general recommendations are designed to bring about a quick improvement in the efficiency of local agriculture with regard to food production and at the same time, their effect would be of a permanent nature and of general benefit to local agriculture. The more these islands become self-sufficient, in the way of foodstuffs, the better will be the position in the event of hostilities. The only way we can really utilise local agriculture to its utmost is by careful preparation well before an anticipated crisis.

It is the opinion of this department that the rapid extension of irrigation is the key to increased production of foodstuffs.⁶⁸

Only a few measures were adopted between September and December. The slaughter of breeding and immature stock was prohibited. In order to anticipate the tendency, experienced during the First World War, to fell trees for firewood, no person was allowed to destroy trees without the permission of the Director of Agriculture⁶⁹ while tobacco cultivation was outlawed, thus releasing about 40 acres of land for the cultivation of crops for human and animal consumption.⁷⁰ The regional situation turned ever more treacherous months later. Although, the long stretch of time which Micallef seemed to have wanted to take advantage of was left to go to waste by the Government. There is no doubt that, following the grant from Colonial Development Funds, a valuable opportunity to tap supplies

⁶⁵ NAM, CSG – 683/1943.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of water by boring below the Blue Clay and by the construction of a system of reservoirs to store surface water was lost owing to procrastination.⁷¹ Sufficient plans could have been put in place by summer 1939, with the first crops ready for the harvest by the end of the year. Taking into account Germany's adoption of a rationing scheme shortly before the invasion of Poland, the colonial government's attitude to Micallef's recommendations was nothing short of desultory and inexplicable, especially with the benefit of hindsight factored in.

Secretary of State for the Colonies Malcolm Macdonald had brought together a 'Colonial Advisory Council of Agriculture and Animal Health' during late August 1939, providing recommendations in regards to the planning of agricultural policies throughout the Empire.⁷² Gearing the colonies for war, Macdonald's despatch stipulated that the individual agricultural departments were to take centre stage in the food production policy. The recommendations were based on the assumption that colonial governments had prepared an outline review of the social, political and economic situations of the colony.⁷³ The Department of Agriculture in Malta was therefore called upon to take stock of its activities and of agriculture in general with a view 'to consider the methods which should be adopted to produce locally as much foodstuffs as possible' in the event of an outbreak of hostilities.⁷⁴ Like the British Isles, the Maltese Islands were thickly populated with around 270,000 persons living on 77,980 acres, a large part of which was rocky, barren waste.⁷⁵ For more than 30 years, the only non-agricultural land available comprised Comino, the sites on which towns and villages stood, open spaces such as roads and streets, other sites required for the defence of the Island and the entire foreshore and playgrounds.⁷⁶ These tracts could have not in any way provided agricultural succour. The only solution available was to use the land and resources available. In its first war effort, the agricultural department had to abide by a request issued by Macdonald which stipulated that it had to furnish the colonial secretary with quarterly reports on the activities of the Department, summarising the more important events and

⁷¹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

⁷² NAM, CSG 01 – 3318/1939.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁷⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

⁷⁶ NAM, GMR 530, *Report on the working of the Office of the Inspector of Agriculture 1907-1908*, 1908.

decisions which had occurred in Malta in connection with the war.⁷⁷ It is these reports, coupled along with documentary evidence found in local repositories which had proven invaluable during the research for this dissertation.

Transparency aside, the agricultural department was engulfed by a management crisis at the start of the war. Upon John Borg's retirement from the department, the top post went to Giuseppe Micallef. Following a period of ill-health, Micallef died on 8 Feb. 1940, but not before being replaced as head of the department on 19 January by Tancred Mercieca.⁷⁸ The latter only lasted until 15 April, wherein he was replaced as acting director by Mr Oscar Sammut.⁷⁹ In the span of 3 months, the role charged with carrying out the colony's agricultural policy at a time of great uncertainty changed hands three times, at a time during which period the activities of the department naturally lacked the coordination and stability the sector needed.



Fig. 7. Mr Tancred Mercieca, Director of Agriculture between 19 Jan. and 15 Apr. 1940.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

Enrico Mizzi, Nationalist member in the Council of Government, was the first member to touch upon a potential food crisis, asking whether the Government

⁷⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

⁷⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 823/1940.

⁷⁹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

had taken any steps to increase food production and, if for this purpose, it intended to exploit a larger extension of public and private fields, the latter of which were either uncultivated or were being worked for purposes other than for food production.⁸⁰ The agricultural department henceforth devoted its attention to surmounting the water shortage, which were it to be left unchecked, would not have led to any increase in agricultural output. In conjunction with the Food and Commerce Control Officer, the Department was reportedly doing its best to enhance the reserves of animal stock for human consumption. Its attention to the utilisation of all cultivable public lands, the reclamation of derelict land, the compulsory immunisation of breeding stock and the prohibiting of slaughter of breeding and immature stock was also intensified.⁸¹ Other measures were reportedly under consideration, but unfortunately, the chances of the allocation of funds for the fostering of agriculture and stock-breeding were very slim, under the then prevailing financial stringency.⁸² By November, however, inroads had been made into the water supply conundrum. With a view to increasing the storage accommodation for water to be utilised during the summer period, a high number of disused public wells existing in Valletta and the villages were reconditioned.⁸³ Debris and silt were removed, pumps, extensions and drains were fixed and cesspits were excavated. In addition to the 42 million gallons in the reserves, the new wells had henceforth added nearly 6.5 million gallons at a final cost of just £1,600.⁸⁴

In his 'Call For Colonial War Effort' the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, Lord Lloyd had called for the greatest possible effort from all of the Empire's peoples.⁸⁵ Full cooperation was to be expected. In economic spheres, the general aim and policy was to bring the maximum contribution of the colonies to an immediate war effort in the way of supplies and to reduce to the minimum their demand on the resources of men, material and money which were or might have to be made available either at home or overseas. His mantra was colonial

⁸⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 4112/1939.

⁸¹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁸² NAM, CSG 01 – 4112/1939.

⁸³ NAM, CSG 01 – 4066/1939.

⁸⁴ Floriana had the biggest well in *Str. S. Tommaso (Ta Bugaci)*, reportedly capable of holding 1,000,000 gallons. Valletta had the largest number of wells with 10, the biggest of which was in '*Str. Reale* opposite the Law Courts', holding 804,000 gallons. *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Times of Malta*, 8 June 1940.

production and sustainment of the status quo. Dependencies which produced raw materials of importance to the war effort, were to aim at maintenance and production at whatever level that may have to be indicated from time to time. Most dependencies could have given substantial assistance by refraining from making demands for non-essential imports of every kind. The maximum development of production of foodstuffs to meet local demand for consumption was to continue to be vigorously pursued. Lastly, it may have been no longer possible for market or shipping facilities to be provided to the same extent as formerly for commodities which were not of a great degree of importance to the UK.

In October of the same year, MacDonald circulated among the colonies a 'Table of Principle Agricultural Imports into Malta' for the year 1936.⁸⁶ Why he saw fit to make other dependencies' governments aware of statistics related to the Maltese Islands remains unknown, but this happened a month after the British declaration of war. The list presented the kind of food and products then needed by the Islands in peacetime and it makes for somewhat startling reading. More than £1,228,000 worth of articles had to be annually shipped in to keep the colony afloat. Tobacco, lard, cheese, preserved milk and different kinds of meat were imported from the U.S.A., Argentina, New Zealand, Norway, and Lithuania and Poland, respectively. Pulses were shipped in from Turkey and China. The despatch had finished thus:

The dependence of Malta on imported foodstuffs is very considerable and it is unlikely that it can be lessened, as practically all arable land is cultivated. The above imports do not include the requirements of the naval and military establishment. There is little or no possibility of increasing production appreciably, and the provisioning of the Dependency must remain primarily a defence problem.⁸⁷

Malta was linked to Britain in more ways than one. Firstly, the two island nations were cut off from European territory, an advantage which allowed the countries to safely position themselves behind a stretch of water, a moat of sorts, therefore thwarting easy occupation by opposing armies. Britain had as its natural barrier the English Channel, whereas Malta had a 90-kilometre stretch of

⁸⁶ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

water separating itself from Sicily. This leads us to the second point, in that there was a downside to this benefit. Since both territories were heavily dependent on food imports, the two moats very easily could have transformed the countries from fortresses into open-air prisons for their inhabitants, starved of foodstuffs and supplies of any kind. Ships, so vital to international trade and imperial integration, had to sail through treacherous waters in attempting to supply outlying territories. Malta was one such example which happened to sit on the British Empire's mercantile route in the Mediterranean, equidistant from the west and the east. It was the Malta convoys, having been feats of logistics in themselves, that throughout the war, supplanted local agriculture when the sector depended on the ships the most. Although this quandary was keenly exploited by Axis forces, it was not uncommon for the colonial government to secretly declare in official circles that food supplies were low at any point of the year during the siege, until merchant ships safely slid into Grand Harbour and afforded the local food producers ample breathing space by bringing in just enough food and kerosene. The latter was fundamental to local farming. In such an arid country where fields had to contend with six dry months every year, farmers were faced with the following choices when watering their crops: American-type wind pumps, donkey-powered pumps, and later English diesel pumps.⁸⁸

It did not take long for the authorities to realize that the strategy of blockading was to become mercilessly effective. By June 1940 – Italy's entry into the war – importations ceased completely. The question was put to the Government by the senior Vice Admiral's chief staff officer as to the possibility of restricting the volume of imports for agricultural purposes to save shipping space, which would have simultaneously reduced the number and size of convoys then sailing under threat from Italian air attacks.⁸⁹ Starting in August 1940, continental Europe was cut off from the world food market by the British blockade of Germany and all of occupied Europe.⁹⁰ In war, most actions are linked in a theatre of operations and the Germans later responded with their U-boats patrolling the oceans, posing a

⁸⁸ Caruana Galizia, 41.

⁸⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4354/1940.

⁹⁰ In June 1941, the German invasion effectively removed the Soviet Union from the market. By the end of 1942, Japan had imposed a blockade on Nationalist China and taken control of south-east Asia and large parts of the western Pacific. Collingham, 66-7.

threat to Allied shipping. This, combined with a shortage of ships, meant that every cubic inch of shipping space was hotly contested. Civilian food supplies had to compete for space on ships with coal, fuel, steel, phosphates for explosives, military supplies and troops.⁹¹

Arguably the two most essential crops on which the survival of the colony hinged were fodder and cereals. On fodder rested the maintenance of the livestock population of the Islands, its manure and a supply of fresh meat, milk and eggs. Essential cargo consisted mostly of beans, barley, maize, cotton seed and chickpeas and being an extremely bulky cargo, it was evident that as pressure on shipping space increased, the normal fodder import of 60,000 tons a year could not be expected to continue.⁹² The Department of Agriculture advised farmers to grow as much fodder as possible and in August 1940 warned them that stocks of imported fodder were 'relatively low'.⁹³ The Government Experimental Farm in 1940 devoted the greater part of its land to forage crops. As long as it was the policy to maintain livestock it was correspondingly essential to continue imports of fodder, as far as the convoy situation allowed, and to encourage local production of fodder. At the same time, it was essential to reduce consumption below the normal peacetime level of 5,000 tons per month and from the summer of 1940 onwards measures were taken to achieve this reduction.⁹⁴

In July, the agricultural department took a census of the livestock population with a view to rationing fodder. Retailers also were required to make a declaration of their fodder stocks. Owners of animals kept merely for pleasure were requested to have them slaughtered. The poor response to this appeal showed clearly that propaganda, which was not backed up by compulsion, was not enough. The following month, the Director of Agriculture forbade the slaughter of breeding cows, heifers and young stock under 9 months in order to prevent the killing of essential breeding stock which would have been encouraged by the scarcity of imported meat. At the same time, the government made a very careful consideration of the situation regarding the slaughter of livestock. The question at issue was whether it was desirable to slaughter immediately or to keep the livestock 'on the hoof' as an emergency reserve to be tapped only in the last

⁹¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4354/1940.

⁹² NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

extremity.⁹⁵ Apart from their value as meat, goats, sheep and cattle were an integral part of the Island's internal economy as producers of milk and manure. Horses and other draught animals were at this time essential for purposes of transport, in that they provided an invaluable substitute for petrol-driven vehicles. It was recommended at the end of the year by the Director of Agriculture that the goats or a large proportion of them should be slaughtered, but the Government's decision was that this could not be contemplated until a sufficient supply of powdered milk was obtained in the Island.

Since the outbreak of war in 1939, the agricultural department had prohibited the slaughtering of bovines under nine months of age and since hostilities had commenced in June 1940, the slaughter of female bovines was outlawed except in cases of emergency.⁹⁶ In reducing the colony's dependence on animal husbandry, slaughterings started taking place at the civil abattoirs. It was established from the agricultural census held on 5 July 1940, that the number of animals extant in Malta and Gozo was as follows:

Animals	Number
Equines	11,694
Bovines (Cattle)	4,901
Ovines (Sheep)	25,860
Caprines (Goats)	69,282
Swine (Pigs)	19,214

Wheat on the other hand was – and still is – used as the chief ingredient in the staple food of the people: bread. This crop was grown mainly to supply farmers and the rural districts with this type of food. The local crops were not used to any large extent to supply the urban population, who depended upon imported wheat and flour.⁹⁷ In September, a certain anxiety about the local wheat position was keenly felt when the Food and Commerce Control Officer stipulated that wheat was not to be sold without the permission of that officer. Feeding

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁹⁷ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

wheat directly to humans maximized its energy-giving potential, which, during war, is doubly needed due to labourious tasks. Although, irrespective of the rural-urban spectrum, this foreshadowing was omnipresent during the war, especially as the siege got harsher.

Reflecting the gravity of the situation, under Article 50 of the Malta Defence Regulations 1939, the Government assumed complete power over agriculture. A 'competent authority' – in the case of farming, the Director of Agriculture – was empowered to regulate the carrying on of 'any undertaking engaged in essential work.'⁹⁸ In a quasi-dictatorial approach, the director could enter any premises and, if he thought fit, take over a farm altogether. For the first time, the Director of Agriculture was given the power to exercise the powers of a 'Competent Authority' conferred to him under Regulation 50 of the Malta Defence Regulations of 1939. War measures dealing with agriculture started being adopted during the second half of 1940:

- a) A census of the animal population was taken;
- b) Retailers were made to declare weekly their stocks of animal feeding stuffs;
- c) Slaughter control of breeding stock was introduced for the purpose of conserving, as long as possible, the fresh milk supply and, also of providing a limited quantity of fresh beef;
- d) Distributed imported fodder in short supply direct to the producer in order to ensure equitable distribution and to prevent hoarding;
- e) The establishment of a rabbitry at the Government Farm with a free stud service of Flemish Giant bucks. The importance of this measure was to be much appreciated during the siege period of the war when rabbits formed a valuable source of fresh meat supplies;
- f) The use of surplus first-class water at the Government Farm for the production of additional fodder for sale to farmers;
- g) Sold surplus water to farmers at nominal rates as an encouragement to raise more agricultural produce;
- h) Distributed seeds from the Government Farm, free of charge;

⁹⁸ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

- i) Undertook the growing of vegetables and fodder in public gardens and public sites;
- j) Imported and distributed sprays and fertilisers in order to ensure that adequate supply be made available to farmers at a fair price.

While this was being undertaken, the cost of the Department had continued to absorb the attention of the Council of Government.⁹⁹ In February 1940, an Economy Committee was set up while later in the year, in an effort to offload what the Government felt was a bleeding ulcer, the representatives of the CP proposed in the Council that the Agrarian Society might well take over all or part of the work of the Department of Agriculture.¹⁰⁰

The growing of vegetables and fodder in public gardens was undertaken by the Department and hardly anyone would have realized before war broke out that the golf course, polo grounds, racing track and cricket pitches of the Marsa Sports Grounds would soon have to be turned into arable land producing crops of vital necessity to the Island. Ploughing tractors were put on the job, seed was broadcast and the first harvest was keenly awaited. Work which was initiated by a private contractor in 1940 was later handed over to the care of personnel from the Government Farm. The author of the agricultural department's official wartime report noted his 'pleasure' to place on record that additional production of foodstuffs was affected on this land covering an area of 150 acres.¹⁰¹ Land already ploughed was sown with potatoes (followed by a summer crop of melons) and with wheat. Further land was cleared of waste grass and after ploughing sown with forage maize. Other portions of land had a crop of hay taken and were ploughed ready for the autumn sowing of potatoes. Two abandoned wells were cleared. A good crop of forage maize was obtained while the threshing of the wheat grown resulted in an exceptionally good yield. About 75 acres of land were put under winter potatoes.

The farming position in 1941 was decidedly discouraging. The resultant situation served to amplify the Government's anxiety in the distribution of food.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

The *Luftwaffe* settled in Sicily at the end of 1940 and during January 1941, Grand Harbour was subjected to a hitherto savage assault never seen before. The attack on HMS *Illustrious*, then awaiting repairs in Grand Harbour, made it obvious that any kind of supplies from abroad – especially fodder – would be difficult to obtain, if at all, and, therefore it became imperative to introduce a rationing system to conserve available stocks. Such a scheme for livestock was introduced by the Department on 1 March, following the collection of data on the livestock population.¹⁰² At the same time, increased facilities for the serving of cows, ewes and does were introduced at the Government Farm, with a view to an intensive substitution of quantity by quality.

A somewhat successful crop of spring potatoes was obtained from the late arrival of 2,600 tons of seed potatoes imported in January 1941. It was estimated that between three to four thousand tons were surplus to local requirements, which had to be disposed of quickly.¹⁰³ Such surplus was normally exported but, it was to be appreciated that with conditions worsening every day, no one was in the mood of parting with any kind of food and the treacherous waters made it impossible for normal shipping operations to be carried out. It became necessary, therefore, to devise ways and means to utilise such surplus to the best advantage. On 5 July, it was made lawful for bakers to incorporate not more than 30% by weight of cooked peeled potatoes in the dry mixture used in the manufacture of all kinds of bread.¹⁰⁴ On 22 July, Government Notice No. 344 made it compulsory for bakers to incorporate not less than 20% of cooked peeled potatoes in their bread mixture and added further penalties in default.¹⁰⁵ The compulsory mixing was in force for some 50 days and an added advantage of this system was the saving of approximately 1,000 tons of flour.¹⁰⁶ The War Department also helped in reducing the glut by increasing the daily ration of potatoes from ten to fourteen ounces and by baking potato bread which became known as 'wheatato'.¹⁰⁷ This policy found stern opposition from bakers, yet bread, having been the staple food of the people, had to be secured at all cost.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁰⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁰⁷ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

By means of incorporation of potatoes into bread, 1000 tons of wheat were saved during the fifty days that the scheme was in operation.¹⁰⁸ Far from conserving flour, this plan of action had a political dimension. Past experiences had shown in an unmistakable way, that bread was 'generally the means chosen to create bad feeling and unrest.'¹⁰⁹ In allusion to the 1919 bread riots, it became obvious without a doubt that to preclude the possibility of unrest, the Government had to create an atmosphere of confidence by going so far as to plan to nationalise the privately-run flour mills and so eliminate a source of 'disgust' in the Island Fortress. Fearing disgust was too strong a word, it was crossed out and 'disquiet' written over it.¹¹⁰

General conscription was introduced on 3 Mar. 1941.¹¹¹ All men between sixteen and fifty-six were liable for national service. Twenty- and twenty-one-year-olds were first called up, including farmers' sons, who were not spared. Added to this were shelter construction, maintenance of aerodromes and civil defence services which contributed to a major shortage of agricultural labour. This policy was to lead to great difficulties in the following months. By March 1942, the agricultural department was experiencing great difficulty in obtaining farm labour precisely because of this policy. Organised labour becomes a key prerequisite in war, and the full cultivation of both private and public lands was sorely needed. The Government did not need to put the majority of men under arms but judging by officials' fear of imminent invasion, little alternatives were available other than to requisition human capital for defence purposes.

At least until mid-1941, the Government's policy was based upon the assumptions of a liberal economy. In pursuing their own interests, farmers were best serving their communities. The fall of Crete in June changed all that. The sea route to Malta was henceforth effectively enfiladed by enemy air bases in both Crete and North Africa. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet recalled that 'To send convoys to Malta from the East was to court disaster [...].'¹¹² Many apprehensions arose. One of the most disquieting factors concerned the wheat supply and in order to meet possible eventualities it was

¹⁰⁸ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹⁰⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3719/1939.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ J. Holland, 137.

¹¹² Richard Woodman, *Malta Convoys, 1940-1943* (London, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.), 2003), 181.

decided to take stock of the standing crop of wheat and of any which had already been harvested, with a view to immediate requisitioning for general use. At the end of July, Government called upon all farmers who had sown wheat to register at the police station of their district the crop which they were expected to recover. This was a measure which was to be greatly beneficial to the farmers. As Government was subsidising wheat, local wheat sold for manufacturing bread was to necessarily realise a much lower price than would be the case had there been no Government subsidy. In order not to prejudice the interests of the farmer and at the same time keeping the price of bread on a low level, it was the intention of the Government to offer to farmers a price equal to the cost of importation of foreign wheat so that whilst the farmer would receive full importation cost, the Government subsidy would be applicable also to wheat grown locally.¹¹³ It was anticipated that the tonnage which would be collected represented between four to six weeks consumption of flour by the local population. Plans were worked out to purchase the local crop of wheat. Farmers were required to register their acreage under wheat and were forbidden to sell it except under permit by the Director of Agriculture. As imported wheat was being subsidised by the Imperial Government the same price was offered to the farmer as an inducement. However, the whole scheme was dropped owing to the timely arrival of wheat supply ships but it portrayed a scene in the dress rehearsal of the drama which was to be enacted later in the war.

At the Department of Agriculture, Oscar Sammut was relieved of his duties as acting director on 27 June.¹¹⁴ The hot seat was given to Mr Robert Biasini, chief clerk in the department, who was fast-tracked to the top job with effect from 20 June.¹¹⁵ Despite protests by the Malta Civil Service Association against his appointment,¹¹⁶ he was described as having gained a really intimate knowledge of the administration of the various branches making up the Department.¹¹⁷ He had a knack for understanding the psychology of local farmers and consequently easily gained their confidence, yet his main handicap was a lack of technical agricultural knowledge.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹¹⁴ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹¹⁵ *Malta Government Gazette*, 27 June 1941.

¹¹⁶ The file bearing this title at the NAM had no contents. NAM, CSG 01 – 1842/1942.

¹¹⁷ Public Gardens and Plantations, Veterinary and Civil Abattoirs and routine administration work.

¹¹⁸ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.



Fig. 8. Mr Robert Biasini, Acting Director of Agriculture as from 20 June 1941.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

In understanding the survival of Malta, the nature of the naval equilibrium in the Mediterranean was vital, especially during 1942. The Royal Navy had suffered grievous losses in Cretan waters in April 1941. The nadir of the British war at sea, however, came the following December at the hands of the *Regia Marina*.¹¹⁹ The latter's human torpedoes had previously made several attempts to penetrate British ports in the Mediterranean, including Grand Harbour in July 1941. They failed then but now managed to infiltrate Alexandria's inner harbour and sank two battleships, one of which was the flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet. Practically, not only was the Fleet deprived of any large-scale firepower, but Malta was now left completely exposed as this attack showed the vulnerability of British naval power. Yet, so long as the British held on to airfields in northern Libya, sufficient air cover existed for ships to occasionally rush through to the Island from the east, past an Italian fleet preoccupied with protecting its naval traffic to Libya.¹²⁰ The British could therefore just about keep a grip in eastern Mediterranean waters, while the Italians could dominate the centre, but neither could exert exclusive domination over the linking passages and so prevent the

¹¹⁹ Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London, Penguin Books, 2013), 255.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 255-6.

other getting through to their respective destinations. Far from being a British lake, the Mediterranean was changed into a violent highway where big power politics and colonial ambitions served to upset the balance which had been in force for decades. However difficult it was for the British to supply Malta, it certainly wasn't any less difficult for the Italians. Whereas the eastern Mediterranean route between Crete and Libya was known as 'Bomb Alley', the Italian course through the Sicilian narrows, past Malta and on to Libyan ports came to be known as 'the death route'.¹²¹ 'I have a name for my disease,' Mussolini once said of his nervous condition. 'It is called convoys.'¹²²



Fig. 9. An Alfred Gerada cartoon showing John Bull fighting his way to Malta in spite of difficulties put up by the Axis. The reality was much different.

Source: The Sunday Times of Malta, 29 Mar. 1942.

Back in Malta, after exhaustive censuses throughout the first half of the year, it was concluded that to open up new areas for agricultural cultivation was impossible. The shortage of petrol for pumps put an end to the possibility of even a limited extension of irrigation, and the Department of Agriculture concentrated rather on ensuring that land already under cultivation was to be used properly.¹²³

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

There was, however, an important step taken to encourage farmers to develop their holdings to the full. This was the issuing of the Agricultural Leases (Restriction of Rent) Emergency Regulations of 7 July 1941.¹²⁴ Under these regulations, tenants who held a field continuously since August 1935 were entitled to resist 'any undue increase of rent, or change of condition of the lease, or eviction from that field.'¹²⁵ The purpose of these regulations was to deal with the counterproductive nature of short leases, to which attention had been called in the Stockdale report. It was hoped that the farmer would then develop his land without fear of having his rent raised, or making it less likely that his lease would not be renewed.¹²⁶

During 1941, the fodder situation became increasingly serious, and this was reflected in the fact that meat, eggs and milk became increasingly scarce and expensive. On 5 February, the Lieutenant-Governor stated in a reply to a question in the Council of Government that

At this season of the year the milk yield of goats invariably drops. This year it has dropped not by 14% as last year, but by 23%. The shortage of supply is accentuated by the greater demand for milk owing to the shortage of meat and eggs.¹²⁷

Nevertheless, the policy of the Government was still to preserve the local livestock industry as far as possible, and the Department of Agriculture urged farmers to grow all the fodder they could. During his first tour around Malta, the incoming RAF commander was taken to Mdina where he admired the one-horsed carriages, standing in their splendour with a peacock's feather fixed erect in the bridle and standing between the horses' ears. After having seen horses being washed three or four times a week around the village pumps and in the sea, he recounted how

The Maltese certainly know how to look after their horses [...]. As I had been told, as soon as I arrived, that the horses were our "reserve meat ration" I was delighted that they were being looked after so well.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Lloyd, 26-27.

Forage maize was grown at the Marsa Sports Ground, also. To preserve the supply of fresh milk the Department of Agriculture undertook to reserve at least 50% of the stocks of cattle fodder arriving in the Island for herdsmen supplying milk to the Milk Marketing Department.

Following the recommendations of the recent committee who considered local agricultural problems, an Advisory Board of Agriculture was formed on 8 Aug. 1941.¹²⁹ Its objective was to 'advise the Government on general questions affecting the Agricultural industry on the policy of the Government in agricultural matters.'¹³⁰ This was composed of three official and seven unofficial members.

Labour shortage, as mentioned earlier, became very acute and the military authorities allowed the Government Farm a squad of King's Own Malta Regiment (KOMR) soldier-farmers who were stationed on the Farm and kept under military discipline.¹³¹ This enabled the Government Farm to form an agricultural labour squad of about 15 men from its own skilled labourers who were made available to farmers who were in need of labour. The winter crop of potatoes – a portion of which was on a considerable area of the Marsa Sports Ground which had been ploughed out during the summer months – promised to yield an excellent crop due to the early September rain. However, this was a very big disappointment. The winter of 1941-1942 turned out to be the coldest and wettest for many years, so much it was remembered as the 'Black Winter'.¹³² Cold winds cut the tops in early December before the crop had matured and persistent heavy rains in late December and early January 1942 made it nearly impossible to get on the land.¹³³ A considerable part of the crop rotted in the soil. Some areas at the Marsa Sports Ground lay under water for several weeks. It was apparent to farmers that it was very doubtful whether seed potatoes for the spring crop would be obtained as usual from the United Kingdom. The only seed obtained was less than 1,000 tons mainly from Cyprus, although neither the quality nor the quantity available was satisfactory. Apart from the treacherous situation at sea, even the elements added agony to the hunger, the sleepless nights, the terror and the

¹²⁹ This was agreed upon by Government back in February 1941.

¹³⁰ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹³¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹³² George Hogan, *Malta: The Triumphant Years, 1940-43* (Malta, Progress Press Co. Ltd., 1988), 62.

¹³³ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

destruction. Things were to get much worse before the food situation could have realistically gotten stable again.

1942 is commonly accepted as the *annus horribilis* of wartime Malta. The advantage in North Africa was slowly slipping away from the British. The Axis-imposed blockade was effectively intensified and the handful of ships that managed to get through by the skin of their teeth were never enough. The fear of invasion was palpable, yet the physical aching brought on by hunger was worse and widespread. Sometime during the year, Grace Schembri had spotted two stray dogs roaming the square in Siggiewi. Strangely enough, they each had a morsel of bread. Chasing after them, she succeeded in retrieving the bread, not thinking twice about devouring it.¹³⁴

In this scenario, the sacrifices that siege conditions necessitated in everyday life had to be invariably extended to the industries involved in keeping the colony afloat and its people fed. It was henceforth imperative to think not in terms of long-distance policy, but in terms of meeting the most immediate and pressing needs of the people and securing the biggest returns, if at all possible. Not only had plans for the future to be sacrificed to the needs of the present, but farmers were compelled to accept a degree of regimentation and autocracy that would hardly have been thought possible at the start of the war. State intervention in local agriculture was relentless and the depth to which the state exerted its control was unparalleled. Livestock was killed off; the dissemination of fruit and vegetables was controlled while crop control in the fields were the topmost priorities by which farmers had to abide. British agriculture and food experts were brought in to the country to survey the sector and suggest ways in which food production could be maximised and waste cut down. As we shall see, during the spring and summer of 1942, agriculture in Malta began to assume a new form, dictated not by commercial considerations, not even by sound farming principles as generally understood, but by the immediate need for survival in the face of potentially a slow famine.

With the majority of rainfall falling almost entirely during six months – October to March inclusive – local agriculture was largely dependent upon the supply of irrigation water. In addition, only some 4.5% – approximately 2,000 acres out of

¹³⁴ University of Malta, Public Memory Archive, 039 Grace Callus interview, 27 Apr. 2000. See Appendix I.

46,000 acres then under cultivation – of cultivable land was at present capable of irrigation by existing means.¹³⁵ It must be appreciated that a large civilian population and a large wartime garrison depended upon these 2,000 acres of irrigable land for its supply of vegetables during the rainless summer months – April to September. The amount of irrigation starting in the mid-1930s had been considerably reduced by three factors. Firstly, the compulsory restriction of pumping in certain areas where agricultural pumps were considered to draw on supplies required for urban needs led to the identification of water-controlled areas¹³⁶, naturally leading to protests by farmers.¹³⁷ The second factor was the wartime difficulty of distributing kerosene and other fuel for motor pumps and lastly, the diversion of supplies for military requirements further exacerbated this problem. Mr Henry Hirst, Advisor in Animal Husbandry since 1938¹³⁸, suggested sinking new wells to tap underground water yet pointed out that the wells which had been sunk years earlier had resulted in robbing those already extant of much of their supplies. His recommendation as a wartime measure of getting three hundred additional windmill pumps from Canada and Australia to be either sold direct or by hire purchase to farmers could not be adopted due to the aforementioned reasons.¹³⁹ This decrease in irrigation had directly contributed to the recent increase in the price of vegetables and fruits which of course, was largely influenced by the wartime cessation of imports and the increased consumption of vegetables brought about by the enlarged garrison. Many farmers favourably disposed were as a result growing out of season tomato crops to replace the tomatoes normally imported from North Africa and other sources.¹⁴⁰

From late March, there were five straight weeks of constant bombardment of Malta; supplies failed to get through and when a vessel from Gibraltar finally sneaked into Grand Harbour, most of the goods were destroyed before they could even be gotten off the quayside. Although strenuous efforts had been made to maintain an uninterrupted supply of fresh animal products, prices of meat, milk and eggs soared high through increasing shortage of fodder. To keep up spirits,

¹³⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹³⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 4653/1939.

¹³⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹³⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 615/1944.

¹³⁹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

King George VI awarded the George Cross to the Islands collectively on 15 April. However, in light of the incessant bombings and perpetual shortages, sections of the population took to calling the medal '*Ġuħ Cross*' ('Hunger Cross').¹⁴¹ One worker mocked the granting by sending a letter to the press, titled '*Tawna Salib u Mhux Ħalib*' ('They gave us a cross and not milk').¹⁴²

In setting the stage for what was to come, on 27 April, Governor William Dobbie declared, 'For the time being, we are living in siege conditions and must accept the sacrifices that are involved.'¹⁴³ The monthly fodder ration issue was reduced to one-third of the pre-war consumption and by April it was reduced further to one-sixth. The main office of the agricultural department was moved from Valletta to temporary quarters at San Anton, followed by its final destination at Ħamrun.¹⁴⁴ On 1 May, Biasini was made Director of Agriculture and seconded to the Protection Office for special duties in connection with Protection Officer work.¹⁴⁵ Hirst was appointed Acting Director of Agriculture, his stint as chief of the department coinciding with the most ferocious months of the siege.¹⁴⁶



Fig. 10. Mr Henry Hirst, Advisor in Animal Husbandry starting from 1938 and Acting Director of Agriculture from May 1942 till June 1944.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

¹⁴¹ Alfred Cachia, *Tfuliti f' Birkirkara fi żmien il-Gwerra* (Malta, Book Distributors Limited, 2016), 135.

¹⁴² *The Torch*, 27 April 1945.

¹⁴³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹⁴⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

An agricultural return was made in May in which farmers declared their acreages of spring potatoes, wheat, barley, meslin, vines, tomatoes, sulla, summer potatoes and also the number of goats and pigs.¹⁴⁷ An order was published on the 26th prohibiting the feeding of grain to livestock and the sale or disposal of grain except to Government brokers. As one can deduce, Government's request for farmers to list their crops gives an idea as to the alarming situation on food stocks.

By early June 1942, two convoys were mustered from both ends of the Mediterranean. *Operation Vigorous* was mounted from the eastern side while its twin in Gibraltar was *Operation Harpoon*. The safe arrival of these convoys would not only have provided Malta with significant respite from her travails but scored a valuable psychological victory over the enemy, since whoever triumphed in the dispute over its passage would have had effective mastery over the eastern Mediterranean. The convoys, which left for Malta on 12 June, were mostly destroyed by the 16th. *Vigorous* was a disaster, 'an imperial balls-up', a gunnery officer of one cruiser described it, and the retreat of a number of ships was a defeat for Britain.¹⁴⁸ Dominated by the Axis, the central Mediterranean was impassable to British forces, which left Malta besieged, her isolation complete. The sole mitigation was the arrival of two ships, the *Troilus* and *Orari* which gave Malta a slender breathing space of one week.¹⁴⁹ The general feeling of despair was further increased by the Axis capture of Tobruk and Gazala in eastern Libya, both of which fell on 21 June. The failure of this convoy directly led to a radical restructuring of local farming policies. In view of these extraneous pressures, the colonial administration in Malta was forced to either look within to remove assets from the sector which were being counterproductive to the war effort or find a way to make up the shortfall in the food stocks. The Government did both. It was therefore clear that until the safe arrival of convoys could be guaranteed, salvation rested with local agriculture and the wartime policies laid down.

London was alive to the colony's food shortages. In the midst of this ever-worsening situation, two British officials – Prof. Jack Drummond and Mr J. E. Wall

¹⁴⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁴⁸ Woodman, 367.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 368.

– were sent out to Malta in the same month by the Ministry of Food.¹⁵⁰ The result of their two-week visit, the ‘Report on the Food Situation in Malta’ was arguably the standout report concerning wartime Malta.¹⁵¹ Their recommendations chiefly targeted food policy and production but included were points on imported commodities, distribution, rationing and price control, curtailing of the black market economy, kerosene, nutrition and health along with the Victory Kitchens.

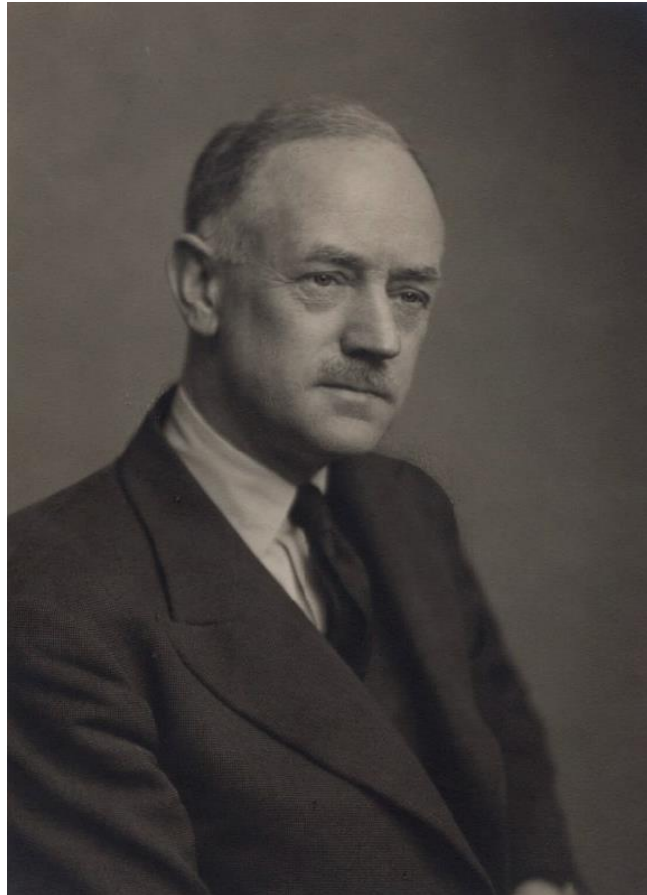


Fig. 11. Prof. Sir Jack C. Drummond, March 1944..

Source: National Portrait Gallery.

Their most plausible arguments addressed farming, especially the first one in the report, which stated that agriculture was to be

¹⁵⁰ Wall was Assistant Secretary and Director of External Relations in the Ministry of Food. On the other hand, Drummond was Chief Scientific Advisor to the Ministry of Food and Fullerian Professor of Physiology and Comparative Anatomy at the Royal Institution from 1941 to 1944. In 1944, Drummond was made an advisor on nutrition to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and was assigned the same role the following year to the allied control commissions for Germany and Austria. Also in 1945, he joined Boots Pure Drug Company as Director of Research, but remained seconded to the Ministry of Food until 1946.

¹⁵¹ NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta*, 1942.

diverted as quickly as possible from the production of animal fodder and crops of low nutritional value to the maximum production of human food and of crops of higher value.¹⁵²

They pointed out that

It is imperative that the Government stipulates what shall or shall not be grown. Such decisions cannot be made by the growers. One reason for this is the obvious one, that commercial possibilities would clash with the country's requirements, but there is another which is less understood or appreciated. While concerned with the maximum yield from the land the Ministry of Food is not interested in the yield per acre of this or that crop, but in the yield per acre of certain food units [...].¹⁵³

They recommended the cessation of fodder imports, the forceful requisition of grain stocks – if price incentives were to break down – and the slaughter of goats. They did not fail to single out the authorities, rebuking the Government and the agricultural department for past inaction and what was deemed a general lax attitude:¹⁵⁴

As far as home production is concerned, we have been surprised to learn that no plans were laid for developing a war-time agricultural policy. [...] The peace-time agricultural and food structure of Malta was peculiarly vulnerable to war-time conditions, based as it was on the export of early vegetables and the import of cheap, poor quality foodstuffs, fodder and cattle for fattening. We believe that a long-range policy introduced at the outbreak of war and designed to adjust agriculture to the production of the maximum quantity of human food coupled with the importation of only essential foods in concentrated form (e.g. flour, canned meat and fish, dried milk and eggs, cheese and pulses) could have made it possible for Malta to provide her own supplies for perhaps as much as half a year (instead of a bare 3 months) and to put aside ample stocks of imported foods for period of shipping difficulties.¹⁵⁵

They went on:

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Officials over in London disagreed, stating that the report's authors could not have reasonably been aware of the historical and economic context of agriculture during a 14-day lightning visit. The National Archives, CO 852/493/1.

¹⁵⁵ NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta, 1942.*

planning before the war could have improved this position very substantially but in the foreseeable future it would be unwise to expect any material gain from domestic sources apart from the livestock slaughter policy.¹⁵⁶

It was estimated that at the end of November 1941, there were in the Islands 11,500 equines, 3,650 bovines, 275,000 sheep, 68,000 goats, 17,000 pigs and 1.5 million poultry and rabbits.¹⁵⁷ At the beginning of May 1942, only 4,049 tons of imported fodder remained and the ration was reduced to about 1,000 tons a month. It became apparent that expedients for preserving livestock could no longer suffice. In addition, the need for growing more food locally for direct human consumption had become imperative. In June, the general outlook had deteriorated to such an extent that all hopes of replenishing stocks had vanished. It was realised that food for direct human consumption and war material would receive first priority in the allocation of any possible freight to Malta – fodder was too bulky a cargo to load on severely restricted shipping, if any. Stocks of fodder had been exhausted, supplies of fresh meat were most urgently required for feeding the population and land under fodder cultivation had to be freed for producing cereals and potatoes. An emergency slaughter policy for livestock was unavoidable, however, the slaughtering of animals had already commenced by the time the report had made the rounds. In this instance, the agricultural department seized the initiative and enforced the policy, under which the vast majority of animals were to be killed off within six to nine months, thus providing an extra supply of about 3,000 tons of meat.¹⁵⁸ The last issue of fodder was made on 16 June, reserving a small balance for draught horses, weaner pigs and rabbit breeding stock.¹⁵⁹ However, this had to be but a short-term policy, dictated by the necessities of war. Apart from a lack of meat, the overall fertility of the land was to decrease, gradually at first but seriously after two years, owing to a lack of manure.

The first victim in the sacrifice of compulsory destruction was the goat. It had been decided to retain the goat population as long as possible being the only

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

¹⁵⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

¹⁵⁹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

source of milk supply but the safe arrival by submarine, in July 1942, of stocks of milk powder enabled Government to proceed with the scheme for their compulsory slaughtering. The original intention was to spread the culling over a longer period but the failure of the June convoy and the pressing needs of the population necessitated its acceleration. Goats from the larger herds received first attention and, subsequently the smaller herds were tackled – it was also borne in mind when requisitioning goats, to destroy animals of inferior quality in the first instance. Goatherds and farmers were paid £17 per *qantar* for goat flesh and another £3 per goat on half the goats requisitioned.¹⁶⁰ Some 25,000 goats were destroyed in this scheme, which understandably led to significant opposition from goatherds and farmers.¹⁶¹ Although, the latter group had not yet realized that the Government was not going to import fodder. This was due to the fact that Government's policy had not been made clear enough¹⁶², therefore distressing farmers, leading to widespread opposition. Such was the furore, goatherds' representatives were granted a meeting during which an understanding was reached, in that for the present, the Government was not to requisition more than 60% of any herd of goats. Yet, it was declared that the policy was all the same necessary and the authorities could not see any way to depart from the policy.¹⁶³ In forcing slaughtered goats onto the public, Government was pressuring the populace into consuming meat, which had not been part of the daily diet in the pre-Second World War era. This was so detested an item – specifically goats' meat – that at the civil abattoir, the product was stamped as mutton.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ NAM, CS01 – 4126/1942.

¹⁶¹ This will be further delved into in Chapter 3. NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

¹⁶² NAM, CSG 01 – 6910/1942.

¹⁶³ NAM, CS01 – 4126/1942.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*



Fig. 12. A Maltese family with their goats. These were possibly slaughtered in line with the Department of Agriculture's policy.

Source: Stan Fraser Collection, National Archives of Malta.

As a result of this policy, fresh beef and pork became a great luxury and the negligible day-to-day purchases at the abattoir were passed on for consumption in public institutions. Goat's flesh was absorbed by the Communal Feeding Department in the preparation of meals for the Victory Kitchens. There was no meat left for direct sale to the public and as a consequence, butcher's retail shops had to be closed down. On the other hand, the compulsory slaughter of poultry raised tremendous difficulties and eventually the idea had to be discarded. It was realised that fresh eggs were important to children and the extermination of poultry was not yet justified.

Notwithstanding the opposition which this sired between farmers and goatherds on one hand and the authorities on the other, the success of this strategy served to fulfill another purpose. Whereas the Milk Marketing Department came to regard the pasteurization of goats' milk as a permanent

solution to the undulant fever problem, the agricultural department could not think of it as more than a palliative, and believed that the undue encouragement of the goat industry was not in the agricultural interest.¹⁶⁵ It was more concerned with the elimination of the disease itself from goat herds, a view shared by Stockdale.¹⁶⁶ Between April 1934 and February 1940, 2,216 goats infected with *brucellosis* were slaughtered,¹⁶⁷ whereas another 3,620 had been killed between June and September of the same year.¹⁶⁸ An official in London who was given a copy of the Drummond-Wall report corroborated what the colonial government had felt was the need to eradicate the disease. He came to the following conclusion:

Incidentally, from the long term point of view, if measures carried out now, as a consequence of the dire needs of Malta, lead to improved agricultural and food production methods and policy and the elimination of the non-economic and traditional goat herds (which spread *Brucella* infections) that will be at least something material that has been achieved.¹⁶⁹

The retail sale of vegetables and fruit engaged the attention of the agricultural department in February; however, the Fruit and Vegetable Purchase Scheme was launched in July.¹⁷⁰ Farmers were selling their produce not only through the middlemen – *pitkali* – but also from the fields direct to greengrocers and to consumers. Government contractors and the Services were finding it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations. As a preliminary, the Department assumed powers to requisition supplies brought in the *pitkali* markets to fill up such requirements, which later included the Victory Kitchens. When these were closed down, vegetable distribution centres were opened in several villages. Such centres in effect replaced the Victory Kitchens, but the food the public was given was raw, as opposed to cooked.

¹⁶⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Points 84 and 85. Stockdale, 28.

¹⁶⁷ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1940, Second Session, Sitting No. 20, 12th March, 1940, 575.

¹⁶⁸ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1940, Second Session, Sitting No. 37, 24th September, 1940, 1014.

¹⁶⁹ The National Archives, CO 852/493/1.

¹⁷⁰ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

The wheat collection crisis which had been narrowly averted the previous year had to be faced owing to the alarming food shortages brought by the ever-worsening Axis blockade. The land could only produce a finite amount in peacetime, let alone during war. The local crop of wheat, barley and meslin¹⁷¹ could no longer be left in the hands of local farmers who, normally used it for bread-making. There was also the danger that barley and even wheat could have been fed to livestock in considerable quantities. It had to be collected as a contribution to what the Department called 'the common granary'¹⁷² and equally distributed among the inhabitants. The situation, therefore, necessitated a dictatorial approach by the Government and the Director of Agriculture. To attain this end, an agricultural return was made in May, in which farmers declared their acreages of spring potatoes, wheat, barley, meslin, vines, tomatoes, sulla, summer potatoes and also the number of goats and pigs. On 26 May, an order was issued prohibiting the purchase, sale and disposal of locally-grown cereals without Government permit. The feeding of locally-grown cereals to livestock was outlawed. The country flour mills where farmers ground the bulk of their grain for domestic use were compulsorily closed down and the milling of grains was made illegal without a government permit, with the minimum penalty having been two months imprisonment¹⁷³ and the maximum 2 years.¹⁷⁴

The Government was determined to collect every scrap of local grain. Major General Beak, the General Officer Commanding, even offered the army for the harvest, including any special measures necessary for fire-fighting for crop protection.¹⁷⁵ Putting it bluntly, farmers were given no option but to sell their cereals to the colonial government, or let their crops rot, of which there was no chance of happening. This step was essential to the survival of the people and the garrison, as there was no other way of ensuring that local grain was utilised and distributed according to the needs of the moment, which demanded self-preservation. Farmers were also made to understand that the feeding of locally-grown grain – even barley – to livestock was not only illegal, but 'unpatriotic'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Meslin is a mixture of wheat and barley.

¹⁷² NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

¹⁷³ NAM, CSG 01 – 2571/1942.

¹⁷⁴ *Malta Government Gazette*, 18 June 1942.

¹⁷⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 2302/1942.

¹⁷⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 2571/1942.

The stakes at issue were too great to warrant taking the risk of failing through offering too low a price. In order for public opinion to have been fully behind Government over the collection of the crop without having to revert to force of arms, the public and the farmers had to be shown that the latter stood to gain from handing over their harvests. Farmers were offered £14 per local quarter for wheat and £8 for barley and meslin¹⁷⁷, with an average price of £60 a ton.¹⁷⁸



Fig. 13 A farmer threshing barley. Note the pillbox at centre-right, an ever-present landmark throughout the countryside during the War.

Source: Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna.

Financial incentives aside, a mere appeal to their potential sense of duty, coupled with a hint that those who were customarily employed in the production of foodstuffs – if they refrained from following their own pursuit simply because a small amount of risk was involved – were not to reasonably expect to be supplied with items of food which had to be imported. This perceived selfishness on the

¹⁷⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁷⁸ NWM/GOV/REP/26.

farmers' behalf would have involved not only loss of life but also loss of war and commercial vessels which, as was explained earlier, could not very well have been afforded at that juncture.¹⁷⁹ Collection centres were established in the principal agricultural villages to which a fleet of trucks was despatched, where, according to a pre-announced schedule, the grain was weighed and paid for in cash on the spot. If sold through a broker, the fee was £1. Each centre was open at least one day per week and farmers were allowed to retain a certain amount of grain for seed purposes.

The Government had already collected a significant amount by mid-June 1942 and it was hoped that when farmers saw the amount of grain being delivered, they were to come forward of their own free will and offer to sell their grain to replenish the 'Nation's larder.'¹⁸⁰ Drummond and Wall had written that the matter had to be handled with the utmost care:

We desire to stress our conviction that in such a matter, as these half-measures will prove worse than useless. In the first instance every appeal should be made to the farmer to surrender his grain in the interest of the great and noble task of saving the Island and its heroic people. If this approach fails and if he refuses to sell at what is clearly a fantastically high figure, he should be treated with an iron hand. There should be no hesitation in applying the sternest measures. We have, however, considerable confidence that the plans made by the Department of Agriculture before our arrival and which are now being put into operation should have the desired result.¹⁸¹

The Government watched the response from farmers very anxiously during the following days. By 27 June, Hirst told Cohen – the Assistant to the Lieutenant Governor – that the department was getting a 'very reasonable reaction'¹⁸², however, in some cases the requisition order was enforced.¹⁸³ By 29 July 1942, the amount of wheat, barley, and meslin harvested throughout the rural areas in Malta came in 1773¾ tons over 34 days.¹⁸⁴ Frankly not enough, Government turned to Gozo as an extra provider. Although, in this case, things were not to be as straightforward.

¹⁷⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3170/1942.

¹⁸⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 2571/1942.

¹⁸¹ NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta*, 1942.

¹⁸² Minute by Hirst. NAM, CSG 01 – 2571/1942.

¹⁸³ NWM/GOV/REP/26.

¹⁸⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 6907/1942.

During a CP meeting in Rabat back in 1939, Roger Strickland had called Gozo 'the island of the forgotten' (*Il Gzira tal-minsija*).¹⁸⁵ A more appropriate phrase he could not have found, as notwithstanding the appeals and pleading of the inhabitants in petitions to the Government. Nothing seemed to have gone the Gozitans' way in the interwar years: they had clamoured for an ambulance, to no avail; fountains were being shut off as there was a shortage of water and water-controlled areas were introduced in Nadur, which acutely suffocated irrigation.¹⁸⁶

Further proving Strickland's point, there are very few official documents relating to Gozo leading up to the war and the period up to June 1942. This lack of documents is to some extent indicative of the immunity of Gozo from war conditions until 1942 and the consequent lack of urgency in the administration, which marked the early period. From the summer of 1942 onwards, Gozo became progressively more important to Malta as a source of local food supplies and the subsequent period is marked by a series of energetic measures designed to make as much use as possible of Gozo's produce during the period of acute food shortage.¹⁸⁷ In early summer, Tancred Mercieca, Principal Government Veterinary Surgeon and Dr Alfred Azzopardi, Superintendent of the Government Farm took up duties in Gozo. The latter was made the first agricultural advisor in the island, further signalling Gozo's newfound significance in the colony's agricultural policy.¹⁸⁸ This symbiotic relationship between the two islands – whereby Malta required food and Gozo needed supplies was exploited in the summer of 1942, by which the smaller yet sparsely populated island was utilised as Malta's breadbasket.

¹⁸⁵ *Times of Malta*, 17 July 1939.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ NWM/GOV/REP/26.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*



Fig. 14. Dr Alfred Azzopardi, Agricultural Advisor in Gozo, June-Sept. 1942.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

In normal times Gozo derived its chief source of income from exports to Malta of cheeses, honey, eggs, chickens, fish, livestock, fruit and all types of vegetables. Until June 1942, the export of all these commodities was free and uncontrolled. During the period beginning in June 1940, the internal economy of Gozo was affected by four main factors: the influx of refugees from Malta, which caused roughly a 25% increase in home consumption and a corresponding decrease in exportable surplus; the restriction on fishing imposed by the authorities, which caused considerable financial hardship to the fishermen; the dangers and difficulties of sea transport between the two islands and the supply position of Malta.¹⁸⁹

Before June 1942, Gozo was, in spite of the influx of refugees, self-sufficient in agricultural produce and was able at the same time to export a surplus to Malta. Until the summer, Gozitan agriculture was of little importance in Malta's

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*



Fig. 15. Gozo boats at Valletta waterfront. Note the activity on the left amongst the barrels.

Source: Malta Aviation Museum Foundation.



Fig. 16. Foodstuffs awaiting collection and distribution at Valletta waterfront.

Source: Malta Aviation Museum Foundation.

war economy, whereas, by reason of their isolation, Gozitan farmers were more 'conservative'¹⁹⁰ in their ways than their Maltese counterparts. Naturally, farmers and their families were anxious to keep their crops in their possession in case the Islands' general stocks ran out at a later date. Added to this, the harvest had been poor – about 50% of the normal amount – due partly to the excessively wet winter being followed by a dry summer.¹⁹¹ In this case, the interest of the individual had to be sacrificed for the benefit of the people as a whole. Farmers were having to give up their year's supply of grain in order that all would have enough bread until more convoys could have been forced through for relief. The response in some areas was gratifying, while in other districts the amount of grain collected left a lot to be desired. Evidently, farmers were holding back a large proportion of their grain.

Government recognised that force might have ultimately had to be used and even that the troops might have had to be asked to assist in the collection of the crop.¹⁹² Seeing as the army had already offered its services, the colonial government was alluding to the possibility of breaking into farms and searching people's houses. This hypothetical situation would have been at the least counterproductive and at the most disastrous for the colonial regime. Logistically, using the army to forcefully collect the cereals crop would have been a criminal waste of resources and a laborious affair, meaning that the personnel charged with carrying out this job would have needed more food and nutrition, both severely lacking, thus further worsening this predicament. The cereals crop was scattered throughout the two Islands on some 8,000 holdings, however, it would not have been difficult for farmers to hide their grain and it would have been almost impossible to make them disgorge their hoards once established.¹⁹³ Therefore, the use of troops for this purpose would have been – according to official documentation – 'most undesirable.'¹⁹⁴ In a nutshell, this quasi-dictatorial approach would have needlessly aggravated the farmers at a time when their cooperation was indispensable. By 8 Aug., 2000 tonnes were collected,¹⁹⁵ and

¹⁹⁰ The issue of the term 'conservative' – as adopted liberally by government officials and writers – will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

¹⁹¹ NWM/GOV/REP/26.

¹⁹² For a case study of this scenario see Brian Short, 'Death of a Farmer: The Fortunes of War and the Strange Case of Ray Walden', *The Agricultural History Review*, lvi, 2 (2008), 189-213.

¹⁹³ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Il Berka*, 8 August 1942.

by the following month, another 600 tons had been added to the Department's tally.¹⁹⁶ However, 180 tons were selected and stored for seed purposes.¹⁹⁷ This fell considerably short of what had been anticipated. Whereas no wheat was reputedly taken by force in Gozo, considerable quantities of grain were effectively hidden away.

Excluding the nation-wide cereal collection scheme, cereal stocks were also delivered to Malta by the remnants of the Pedestal convoy, which had limped in Grand Harbour in mid-August 1942. The convoy, the Chiefs of Staff in London admitted, had failed, and the best that could be achieved would be for the Island to go down fighting.¹⁹⁸ Even though in some ways the outcome of the operation was tactically mixed, given the huge loss of ships and lives aboard (arguably ships mattered more than people to war planners), Pedestal was a strategic success as it supplemented the recently-collected grain stocks. Although, a large portion of the wheat supply could have very easily gone to waste. The flour received from this convoy was in fine condition, but due to the lack of experience in the unloading of convoys and the employment of the so-called 'Dum-system' for the first time, this flour received some unfortunate treatment; it was exposed on the lighters, quays, vehicles and dumps to the fury of the August sun, often for as long as 18 hours, resulting in the heating of the flour with its consequent increase in the rate of the natural organic action by which the life goes out of the flour.¹⁹⁹ In addition, many thousands of bags became wetter by a sudden heavy rain-storm, which, whilst not materially damaging the whole bag of flour, sealed up the pores where the bags were wetted, preventing the free circulation of air – so essential for the keeping of all foodstuffs, especially milled cereals. In spite of this, many thousands of bags were issued direct to the *burdnara* for delivery to bakers after it had been in store for nine months and the flour was found to be 100% fit for bread-making. Those bags which had been wetted were sent to the mills for re-dressing and it was found that the percentage of loss through this

¹⁹⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943. However, 180 tons were selected and stored for seed purposes. NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁹⁷ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Simon Ball, *The Bitter Sea: The Brutal World War II Fight for the Mediterranean* (London, HarperPress, 2010), 150.

¹⁹⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 641/1941.

cause was as low as 5%, meaning only 7 lbs of flour in each 140 lbs bags was unfit for human consumption.²⁰⁰



Fig. 17. Bags of grain being weighed, 17 Aug. 1942.

Source: Imperial War Museums.

The previous month saw the Governor appointing an Agricultural Enforcement Board, which had the power to inflict fines up to £100 and to refer to the Director of Agriculture the more serious offences, which the director then placed before the Food Control Enforcement Board, where the penalties were higher.²⁰¹ The Advisory Board of Agriculture was reconstituted and given executive powers and was to be known henceforth as the 'Agricultural Board'; to include senior members of the Department of Agriculture responsible for the operation of the various agricultural schemes.²⁰² This would have enabled it to keep a closer touch with the activities of the Department of Agriculture. It was

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

chaired by Cohen and made responsible for advising the Government on the policy front, and also for the execution of that policy through the department.

From the non-stop, round-the-clock bombing of earlier months, air raids dropped to just 57 for the whole of September.²⁰³ It was a quiet time, although behind the scenes, lots more work was being done. Two British experts had arrived in Malta to draw up specific reports. Mr E. Skillman was loaned by the Ministry of Agriculture for his in-depth knowledge on seed supplies and production. He was secured to ensure that the correct vegetable seeds, which had to be flown to Malta in precious airspace, were imported and to investigate the possibilities of local production of seed, although this showed more promise as a post-war development.²⁰⁴ The second specialist was Mr N. Grieve, who had spent 2 and a half weeks starting from late September. On his second visit – his first had been in 1932 - he had arrived at a time when the outlook for the food supplies of the island was causing very careful planning to be made regarding local food production and he was available to help in the discussion on important legislation with regard to Control of Agricultural Cropping and the cultivation of lands.²⁰⁵

A proposal by the Department made in the early days of the war was at last adopted in October and it was decided to appoint six district agricultural officers in Malta and two in Gozo, each of which was given charge of a District Agricultural Office.²⁰⁶ For this purpose, Malta was divided into six districts centred on the following villages: St Paul's Bay, Mosta, Birkirkara, Siġġiewi, Żejtun and Żurrieq, while Gozo was divided into an eastern and western district. Staff having a knowledge of agriculture and acquainted with farmers were engaged for this work. This wisdom of this decision soon became apparent as with the number of varied schemes in operation – schemes which included new ideas and imposed tight restrictions on farmers – it was impellent that there should be in the country districts accredited representatives of the Department explaining the then current agricultural policy.²⁰⁷ These officers' duties included giving advice to farmers and

²⁰³ J. Holland, 382.

²⁰⁴ R. J. M. Swynnerton, 'Siege Farming in Malta', *The East African Agricultural Journal*, xii, 1 (1946), 21-25.

²⁰⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

²⁰⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

²⁰⁷ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

regular visits – in all weather – inspection of farms and buildings for the checking of agricultural censuses, providing crop estimates, enforcement of agricultural legislation and liaison with village committees of farmers, among other reasons.²⁰⁸ Had these officers been appointed at the start of the war, or at the very latest, at the beginning of 1942 – before the then-looming food shortages – it is easy to see that a multitude of communication problems between the agricultural department and the farmers would have been checked at the beginning, thus eliminating an element of suspicion between the two groups and potentially stabilising industrial relations throughout the rural areas at the height of the siege.

A renewed Axis blitz began on 11 October. The assault lasted for two weeks yet the most intense period of enemy action was already over after three days.²⁰⁹ Comparatively little damage was done to agricultural land and the effective defeat of the enemy's effort to establish air superiority had a good effect on the morale of farmers in target areas.²¹⁰ Going back to the Drummond-Wall report, by late-1942, most of the advisors' recommendations were adhered to and adopted by the authorities, laying bare the weight of instruction the authorities had desperately needed. The Second Battle of El Alamein starting in late-October had pushed the Germans back into Libya. The Stoneage convoy departed Alexandria on 15 November, laden with 35,000 tons of food and supplies, and arrived five days later, just thirteen days away from the target date.²¹¹ On 6 December four more merchant ships had arrived in Malta from Egypt, testifying that the Mediterranean passage was unsealed at both ends.

Conclusion

Pre-Second World War agriculture in Malta was characterised by a *laissez-faire* attitude, whereby state interference in the industry was practically nonexistent. Left to its own devices over the decades, the sector's potential growth was stunted as successive colonial administrations tended to neglect agricultural development in view of the growing importance of an emerging port economy

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ J. Holland, 395.

²¹⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

²¹¹ J. Holland, 407.

centred around Grand Harbour. Apart from its central position in the Mediterranean, occupying the much-coveted East-West trade route, the Islands had no raw materials, and, owing to a handful of obstacles, the increase of cultivable land and production levels could not have been achieved.

Following the outbreak of war, British geostrategy in the region was dependent on the colony putting up resistance, *vis-à-vis* Axis designs in the region. The geopolitics of the central Mediterranean came to determine and define agriculture in Malta, whose limitations were starkly exposed. The veneer of stability was brutally taken apart upon Italy's declaration of war in June 1940. Regular imports were curtailed and shipping space was heavily restricted. War *materiel* replaced agricultural goods. As Maltese agriculture at its best produced around 25% of the food required by the populace, it would be foolhardy to assume that continued resistance to Axis designs in the region did not depend on the convoy²¹² coupled with a drastic implementation of new policies which were sure to impact the lives of the communities dependent on agriculture. Petrol, kerosene, powdered milk and grain stocks were shipped in along the armed highway which the Mediterranean had turned into. Maltese agriculture was propped up by British seamen running the gauntlet between the two furthest points of the Mediterranean. If wartime agriculture was indeed an engine, it was fuelled by convoys. Most ships were sunk, and Government had to look within to make up the shortfall. However, one must not discount the role played by other external variables such as the weather. The 1941-1942 winter served to destroy crops, material which took time to mature – time which the besieged were not afforded. The wind wreaked havoc as well, and these two factors together led to stringent regulations and policies being applied.

Ironically, the Government's pre-war reduction of the Department of Agriculture due to petty politics was to have greivous consequences. Also, it is safe to say that had Government availed itself of the the nine month breathing space between September 1939 and June 1940 by the rationing of essential commodities, the instigation of wartime measures and the release of colonial funds for the further development of irrigation, the necessity of state intervention to the extent that was seen during the dire days of the siege would not have been

²¹² NAM, GMR 1107, *Preliminary report on an agricultural survey of Malta and Gozo with specific reference to increased food production during war-time, 1942.*

as necessary. Instead, a lack of rigorous pre-war stocktaking led to the Government issuing policies, regulations and protocols, the likes of which the populace was to sure to have never thought possible before.

The sacrifices²¹³ – as termed by British officials – that siege conditions involved in the agricultural industry were especially great, for it was imperative to think not in terms of long-term policy – which before the war had been non-existent – but in terms of meeting the most immediate and pressing needs of the people. Farmers were compelled to accept a degree of regimentation and autocracy that would hardly have been thought possible at the start of the war. During 1942, agriculture in Malta began to assume a new form, dictated by a quasi-dictatorial approach. Fodder for livestock could not be fully grown on the Islands, which meant that convoys were needed. When these failed to make it through and Malta was left on the breadline, drastic measures had to be taken. Animals were culled and Government ordered farmers to plant crops of priority, rather than what they were used to cultivating. Certain policies irked farmers no end and served to foment opposition, as was the case with the livestock slaughter policy.

British experts were flown in to survey the sector and provide alternate ways at which the colony could have eked out a living in spite of perpetual shortages. As a result, in 1942 agricultural policies had to be enacted within the context of short-term improvisation. Drummond and Wall had written that planning of food policy was impossible without reserves, but it would have nonetheless been useful to establish lines of longer-term policy on the assumption that further convoys were to be run, leading to the build-up of a reasonable reserve.²¹⁴ All this was happening while the Islands stuck to their role as a bulwark in the central Mediterranean, used as a nuisance to Axis shipping plying between southern Italy and North Africa.

²¹³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

²¹⁴ NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta, 1942*.

CHAPTER TWO

ATTEMPTS AT STABILISING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Introduction

When recounting the War, attention tends to be overwhelmingly focused on the first two years of the siege, culminating in August 1942 with the arrival of the remnants of the Pedestal convoy. Having been a massive morale boost for the locals, this has been consolidated in the country's 'national' memory as a feat of messianic undertaking replete with religious symbolism. The only circumstances following this event mostly considered to be worth noting are the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and the surrender of Italy two months later.¹ The preceding years' constant attacks ravaged the physical and social landscapes: housing was scarce, medical and sanitation problems were rampant, whereas the shortage of foodstuffs was still ever-present. In this scenario, the colonial authorities took an introspective approach as opposed to the siege-era policies which were promulgated to stave off surrender. Agriculture was to go through further changes, which is why this chapter seeks to bring to light developments in the sector between 1943 and 1945.

Reform, reconstruction and innovation (1943-1945)

By early 1943, enemy raids had been negligible. From 153 in October 1942, there were just twenty-five in January and a mere five in February.² This decrease was due to the arrival of more aircraft and supplies, coupled with the westward advances of British forces into Libya from Egypt and the American landings in French North Africa in November 1942. During this period of the War, the colonial

¹ The reinforced colonial narrative which Malta was consistently looked through during British rule is epitomised in a handful of books. One of these is James Holland's *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege, 1940-1943*, which looks at the Islands through the prism of military expediency.

² James Holland, *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege, 1940-1943* (London, Phoenix, 2004), 409.

government was more cognizant about agricultural reform, owing that the overall situation was not as perilous as it had once been. Whereas the authorities were before occupied with the continuous production – wherever possible – and security of food stocks, the authorities could now have committed to instilling much needed reforms.

The seed production industry started in Malta in 1942 with the arrival of Mr E. Skillman, who was sent over from England to study local conditions and to report on the possibilities of establishing this new industry in the Islands. He concluded that while no growers specialised in seed production locally, there was scope for growth, especially for seed potatoes.³ This having been primary export produce, farmers bought seed either directly from the agricultural department or from the private sector. While a negligible minority did reserve a minimum quantity for later planting, seed production had not been thought of as a viable possibility in the inter-war period. In this case, farmers had been unwittingly subjugated to the whims of importers. Also, he noted that a large proportion of the potato crop was invariably lifted whilst it was still immature in order to command the highest prices. He suggested farmers could be induced – or prohibited – from lifting the winter and spring crops before certain fixed dates. Leaving the plants in the soil for another two weeks after early lifting time often resulted in a doubling of the crop. Suggestions were made for the methods of producing vegetable seeds for use in the Islands whereby it only appeared justifiable to concentrate on small to medium scale production of local varieties to supplement the stocks produced by the farmers themselves. Sites were identified for possible planting and cultivation.⁴ Skillman was succeeded by Mr Roy Hay, who had not only endorsed his predecessor's report, but agreed that Malta was climactically the most favoured of the European seed producing countries and that a flourishing export trade with a limited range of vegetable seeds could be built up, provided that satisfactory control could be established.⁵

³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

⁴ Hastings Garden in Valletta was identified as was Boschetto Gardens, Gozo and Comino. Irrigation was an ever-present problem, especially in the urban areas, whereas in the case of Comino, there was a danger of cross-pollination as pollen from the adjoining mainlands could have been carried by the wind for several miles. *Ibid.*

⁵ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

The system of tenancy of agricultural lands then prevailing in Malta had long been considered defective. During the War, land was normally held on an eight-year lease, equal to two cycles of crop rotation. This short tenure gave farmers no guarantees that rents were not to be raised, did not protect them against dispossession – although this rarely took place – and gave them no inducement to improve the land.⁶ Farmers were unable to understand why whilst a shopkeeper, who was not a productive agent, should have practically unlimited rights of tenancy under the law which protected him against the inroads of his competitors, they themselves could not be entirely protected by the law.⁷ The chief complaints which farmers saddled the authorities with were their inability to demand and obtain long-term leases on current rents and when improvements were carried out by them, even in property owned by the colonial government, this served as a basis for an increase of rent. The Church let their lands by public tenders to the highest bidders, pricing out the small subsistence farmer.⁸ The practice of fracturing holdings to such an extent as to make it impossible for the tenant to make a living off the land was described by Oscar Sammut back in 1941 as ‘another evil.’⁹ This had led to the creation of a labour group which could not in any way have been classed as farmers. These people sought employment in the urban areas as coalheavers, cartmen and stevedores who cultivated a plot of land as an adjunct to their profitable work. Sammut suggested that fragmentation of the land had to be fixed to a realistic limit and that at the termination of any lease, the tenant of the adjacent land whose holding was inferior to the established limit should have had the right of priority to any other claimant.¹⁰

However, peasant farmers had not only been protected by emergency regulations against increases in rent during the siege¹¹, but the rat race for agricultural produce led to the majority of the producers raking in plenty of money. There had been a 500-600% increase since the beginning of the War¹², with the

⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 518/1943.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The Agricultural Leases (Restriction of Rent) Emergency Regulations, 1941 were introduced to give the producer a measure of security of tenure. NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

¹² NAM, CSG 01 – 6172/1943.

majority of funds not having been invested. Although it was inevitable for prices to go down once the situation was stabilised and war subsided, wages for skilled and unskilled labour were to stay as they were or maybe increase due to demand for reconstruction. Farmers were bound to feel the consequences for this slump and it was common knowledge that the inter-war crisis of labour depletion in the rural areas could not be repeated.¹³ It was thus thought desirable that the purchasing power which farmers now wielded would be funnelled into eliminating a common source of discontent. The majority of members of the Agricultural Board were of the same opinion, holding that security of land tenure was vital to post-war reconstruction. Hirst, on the other hand, opposed this view, advocating security of tenure by lengthening the period of leases in the case of Government land and by security of tenure and tenants' rights legislation.¹⁴ Bishop of Gozo Michael Gonzi made it clear that under no circumstances was the Church going to sell off its land¹⁵, while the Malta Landowners Protection Association naturally opposed the move on the principle its members had a right to enjoy private ownership and no amount of Government compulsion would have been appropriate. The Association however, added, that legislation would have been justified only in the interest of a weak class unable to protect its own interests:

It is notorious that the farmer class in Malta is far from showing any sign of weakness or from being incapable of holding its own without legislature help and outside interference.¹⁶

No compulsory slaughter had been carried out in early 1943 and several butchers had received prison sentences for illegal slaughtering and possession of meat. This greatly reduced the illicit sale of meat and it was finally almost entirely eliminated when frozen meat was placed on the ration.¹⁷ 'Excellent crops were being obtained from the Marsa Sports Ground and the Government Farm and the produce very materially helped the Vegetable Distribution Scheme. The main problem on the Government Farm was mainly restricted to labour. Fifty

¹³ This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁴ Hirst pointed to the experience of farmers in the UK after the First World War, many of whom bought their land and subsequently went bankrupt in the slump or were forced to mortgage their holdings up to the hilt. NAM, CSG 01 – 518/1943.

¹⁵ Minute by Scrivenor. *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Times of Malta*, 29 May 1943.

¹⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

KOMR personnel were loaned to the agricultural department which helped out in the wheat harvest at Marsa, however, this salient problem was to rear its head until conscription was enforced

As the cereals crop was being collected during the previous summer, the colonial government was sure of extending the scheme to 1943.¹⁸ Fortunately enough, the majority of farmers had stuck to the general order to put at least 50% of their cultivable land under cereals and to restrict the growing on animal fodder. The cereals crop turned out to be excellent, yet this was the unintended result of a stumbling block which had been engaging the attention of the agricultural department since the height of the siege. The ever-present problem of agricultural labour meant that most able-bodied men were under arms. In an effort to partly rectify this problem, it was decided to employ all able-bodied male convict prisoners on the cultivation of the Marsa Sports Ground.¹⁹ The plan was for one hundred and forty men to be available for this job every day, subject to being under the watchful eye of prison wardens. Failure to provide wardens led to abuse and ill-discipline and work had to cease by the following year.²⁰

Farmers had to declare their acreage and their fields in a census and had to grow cereals in 50% of their fields. However, the government was apparently asking too much from the farmers. They were served with a notice to surrender their wheat and barley and the amount asked for, in a considerable number of cases, was one half and even twice the amount that could have been grown in their fields.²¹ Whereas the colonial government stipulated that the harvest envisaged was to be an estimate of what the farmer should have been able to deliver, the countryside was in a state of unrest. Having known full well that they could not have complied with those kinds of regulations and that fines ranged from £20 to an eye-watering £500, these farmers were not in a cooperative mood. This issue snowballed into an even bigger one and could have derailed the state-peasant relationship which was fundamental to the agricultural department's wartime policies. This event will be further explained in the following chapter.

¹⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4666/1943.

²⁰ 'The Director of Agriculture stated that he would be glad to get rid of convict labour. The convict set a bad example, with regard to output of work, to the other labourers on the Farm. He considered that one farm labourer carried out as much work as 5 prisoners.' *Ibid.*

²¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4329/1943.

Many farmers were already seriously distressed over the labour situation. While this hindrance stimulated the growing of cereals at the expense of crops such as vegetables – which required much more labour – farmers were still being conscripted, in stark contrast to Hirst's requests.²² Although exemptions were granted, this was a rarity and farmers had to contend with multiple hearings in front of the exemption board, which more often than not took months, diverting them away from their day-to-day jobs at their fields. The task of exempting genuine farmers was made all the more difficult as many of the younger generation took to engaging in outside work other than farming for varying periods of the year. This tendency had been increased by the remunerative pay given to miners, convoy workers and Service auxiliaries.²³ The tightening-up of conscription and its extension to older age groups understandably caused alarm among the farming communities. Harvest operations in Malta were carried out under more or less settled weather conditions but even so, it was the usual practice to reap when dead ripe so as to facilitate the primitive mode of threshing.²⁴ This involved reaping in the early hours of the morning when the corn was still pliable with the early morning dew. Hirst turned to the army and was given only one hundred men for the harvest and another fifty for work at the Marsa Sports Ground, which had been planted with cereals also. Knowing now how Axis forces were occupied in the defence of their North African positions and the subsided threat of invasion to Malta, it is puzzling as to why the colonial authorities dithered in their exemptions of farmers from conscription. Another twelve men from British units were seconded to the agricultural department, whereas in January, what at first glance appeared to have been a measly fifteen 'of the most-deserving'²⁵ conscripts were scheduled to be discharged to tend to their harvests. Upon further investigation, the latter group individually tended to on average, a not-so-insignificant 46 tumoli of land each.²⁶ These selected farms ranged from 29 tumoli to an impressive 100 tumoli, the latter some of the largest in the Islands. For the agricultural department, it was pertinent to show how a few individual families, the majority of whom were headed by old farmers

²² NAM, CSG 01 – 2569/1943.

²³ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

²⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 2569/1943.

²⁵ Minute by Cohen. NAM, CSG 01 – 2570/1943.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

physically unable to tend to their lands without any help, had lost their family manpower to the state, and it was imperative for the Department to be assured of their release. The labour shortage was most apparent during periods of seasonal work such as potato lifting and planting, when the extra pair of hands were mostly needed as opposed to maintenance work such as pruning and soil carving. It was evident that extra labour was required to cope with what was expected to be a record harvest. Weather conditions had been good, as rainfall had been well spread out and late rains continued up till late March.²⁷ However, the Spring weather had been rather late and cold winds in the same month had caused damage to early crops of potatoes and other vegetables. The aforementioned toing and froing between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Man Power occupied a significant part of the post-siege dialogue with which the agricultural department was encumbered.²⁸ As a result of this conundrum, farmers were being required to provide crops in excess of production power. They were served with a notice to surrender their wheat and barley, while the amount being asked for, in a considerable number of cases, was considered to have been one half and even twice the amount that could have been grown in the fields with agricultural about factored in. This state of affairs was to result in a dangerous quasi-breakdown between the peasant farmers and the agricultural department, which shall be delved into in the following chapter.

After the conquest of North Africa by Allied forces, attention turned to southern Europe. In the build-up to the invasion of Sicily, large areas of agricultural land were used for camp sites by the military. Little interference with agricultural production took place as the majority of the sites were vacated well before the time of autumn cultivations. Also, the camp sites had been carefully chosen to avoid as far as possible the little irrigated lands available. On the smaller island, giant bulldozers converted about 250 acres of green fields into an emergency aerodrome. The job was carried out in July and at the shortest notice the agricultural department carried out a survey of the crops in the area affected and of the tenants involved and assisted the Service authorities in checking claims

²⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

for compensation due to dispossessed farmers.²⁹ The aerodrome was relinquished the following month and the Department again took over by ploughing out the land and by reinstating former tenants as soon as boundaries of their farms had been marked out by the Public Works Department (PWD). The majority of the land was back to normal production in time for the ensuing winter crops.

The subjugation of Sicily meant that sea lanes in the Mediterranean could be opened for commercial activity without the need for constant protection. It was decided that the larger island was to take Gozo's place as Malta's breadbasket, with the most sought-after commodities having been citrus fruit, sulphur, which was needed in large quantities by the agricultural department and wine, the export of which – the surplus – would have brought down the very high price of local wine to a reasonable figure.³⁰

The Fruit and Vegetable Purchase Scheme was still in full swing yet farmers were dismayed at the rapid turn of events as regards supplies and the consequent reduction in produce prices.³¹ However, most realised that prices would have been much lower had it not been for government control. The Government was also keen to reignite the Islands' export market for potatoes. With this in mind, the Department had started dealing very strictly with farmers who had brought their produce in with a large proportion of soil. Such potatoes were refused and had to be properly cleaned by the farmer and the broke concerned before they were accepted. Because of the war and increased scrutiny by the populace, the standard of grading was then higher than it had been in the inter-war period.

On the irrigation front, the colonial government was pushing a scheme for extending the irrigated area by 50% by securing sufficient water for another 1000 acres on dry land. The prototype of this project was found at Żejtun where bore hole, pump, reservoir and piping had been put in operation with more bore holes in course of construction in the area. On the other hand, the PWD had started experimenting with a small sewage aeration plant which had been constructed

²⁹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

³⁰ Minute by Scrivenor. NAM, CSG 01 – 5281/1943.

³¹ *Ibid.*

before the heavy air raids. It was estimated that if the plant were to be put to work, following the visit of a foreign expert, an extra 500 additional acres of land could have been irrigated.³² However, unchecked irrigation was not the way to go. Over three thousand tumoli of extra land were to be put under irrigation and without proper control this might have easily led to over production with disastrous effects on prices instead of the boom it was envisaged to prove under proper direction.³³ Directed marketing had to serve equally well both the farmer and the consumer.

A long-awaited change was implemented in March 1944, when the sixteen original vegetable distribution centres – the *pitkali* – which were opened during the siege were to be reduced to six.³⁴ The Centralised Wholesale Markets System served to revolutionise the relations between the *pitkali* and the farmers. Under the old system, which John Borg had warned required ‘very urgent attention’ back in 1911³⁵, farmers unloaded their produce at the *pitkalija* and went away hoping that the *pitkal* was an honest man. Farmers were neither aware of the weight nor the price it fetched when sold in his absence. The *pitkal* kept his accounts on a stick of wood engraved with hieroglyphics and in other cases, the way these were written were undecipherable to even literate people.³⁶ When farmers did stay on site to survey the sale, the *pitkal* went from one potential buyer to the next whispering prices silently in their ears, leaving the farmers in the dark. Undoubtedly, the farmer was at the mercy of the *pitkal* yet the former also sold seeds, gave advice and when necessary, lent money with interest. Whilst solving the farmers’ immediate difficulty, this tied them down for an indefinite period and in bringing produce to market, farmers were morally bound to deliver it to the *pitkal* to whom they owed money.³⁷ With the new scheme, produce was weighed on spring platform balances which were provided with dials showing readings in English and Maltese weights. Farmers soon learnt to read the dials which were visible to all whilst departmental cashiers effected

³² NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

³³ NAM, CSG 01 – 7067/1943.

³⁴ These were to be set up at Rabat, Żebbuġ, Lija, Marsa, Valletta and Sliema waterfront with all *pitkali* in any one *pitkalija* operating under one roof

³⁵ NAM, GMR 606, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Position and Judicial Procedure of Malta* (London, His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1912), 1-20.

³⁶ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

immediate payment, if farmers so desired.³⁸ The duty of the *pitkal* was restricted to the weighing of produce, its handing over to the Department's distribution machinery, the return of empty containers to farmers and, most importantly, the sale by *viva voce* auction. Their commission was reduced and farmers were satisfied.

By this time, the Government's vine nurseries which had been largely turned over to vegetable and other food crop production under siege conditions were reverted to their peacetime usage. Public gardens were cleared of debris and, where possible, vegetables were planted. The livestock population was on the increase and there was every indication that such imports could have been increased to meet the maximum requirements. The Plant Pathology section had made great strides in combating insect pests and a financial provision was approved to enable the formation of a mobile plant pathology squad of ten men who would augment the regular service, but unfortunately this was dependent on the release of personnel by the military authorities and other civil government departments.

After much discussion, the proposed agriculture holdings ordinance as ideally stated could not have gone through as a result of vested interests. The new legislation was dependent on individuals or groups selling their land. Instead, a balance had to be struck between the colonial government and landowners, and it seems that Hirst's proposition prevailed.³⁹ Farmers were thus allowed to implement certain improvements without the consent of the landlord, mostly related to maintenance of buildings, whereas those improvements which merited the consent of the owner included the erection of buildings, fixing of roads and bridges, the erection of wells and reservoirs, the planting of trees and the terracing of land. In what at first glance could be construed as a blow to farmers, the minimum term for lease was enshrined at four years, but the lease was permitted to run indefinitely from four years on unless it was to be terminated by either party, giving six months' prior notice. Where a landlord was to give notice of quitting the agreement, the tenant was entitled to compensation for disturbances (a sum equal to two years' rent) and compensation for

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 October 1943.

improvements at their value to an incoming tenant.⁴⁰ A landlord on the other hand, could claim against the tenant for neglect. This Bill gave farmers' livelihoods newfound security as, even though the initial government plan wasn't forced through, it succeeded in nullifying significant opposition in the press and made good on its guarantee to consolidate tenant rights.

Going back to the seed industry, apart from the immediate financial benefit which was to accrue by the seed producer, a properly organised industry would give much scope to specialisation without which agriculture anywhere could not have thrived. The first attempts of vegetable and flower seed growing were in many cases disappointing owing to various causes.⁴¹ By 1944, farmers were taken to the idea of seed growing with increased interest, and upwards of 150 farmers were growing small lots of seed under contract. Naturally, they had a 'pretty shrewd and empirical knowledge' of the rudiments of seed growing as they were in the habit of saving material of many crops for their own use.⁴²

From its inception, it was the opinion of the seed experts that a Malta Seed Company operating with Government's support and the Department of Agriculture be set up. With this aim in view, Hay was replaced as Horticulture Officer by Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà in August 1945 who proceeded to loosen the industry's overt ties with the government. A monopoly was granted by the Governor giving the new company Malta Seeds Ltd. the exclusive right to contract for, process, and deal in the vegetable and flower seed business.⁴³ The Company was formed by private agreement on 24 July 1947.

Over the last two years of the War, great strides were made in technology and education. Mechanical threshing machines, as opposed to hand-powered ones were imported and used at the Government Farm⁴⁴, whereas the agricultural department, in cooperation with the education department started a series of lectures and classes reserved for farmers. In a broadcast on Rediffusion, Biasini declared that

⁴⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 518/1943.

⁴¹ Stock-seeds for reproduction arrived late, certain crops were found to have been more susceptible to disease when grown from foreign seeds, in some cases stock supplied was of inferior quality and the ever-present difficulty of securing labour at planting time.

⁴² NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Il-Bidwi*, 25 December 1945.

A farmer who does not at the least know how to read and write in his mother tongue, can never know of what is happening around him, and even less so of what is happening in other lands.⁴⁵

This was followed by the setting up of an evening school for adult farmers – ‘*għall-kbar*’ – where they were given the opportunity to sit for literacy courses.⁴⁶

The last act which it could be said detached the Department from wartime exigencies was the abolition of the District Agricultural Officers. Set up in October 1942, these individuals were considered to have rendered a ‘valuable contribution’ to the war effort, by succeeding in obtaining the ‘confidence’ of the farmers while and making them aware of the government’s policies and making the agricultural department aware of the farmers’ needs and requests.⁴⁷ Even though this came late in the war, the system functioned well. Although created as an emergency measure, according to the Department’s official report, it showed definite possibilities as a permanent institution, which is somewhat perplexing in that these offices had to be closed down and the posts annulled after the War’s end and the curtailment of expenditure.

Hirst, the indefatigable Acting Director of Agriculture who had steered the department through the toughest months of the siege was made to leave Malta in June 1944 upon the termination of his contract.⁴⁸ Biasini, having been made full-time director in his stead was alive to the idea that, for the agricultural sector to be consolidated and put on a solid footing in the post-war era, official policy had to be dictated not only by an individual entity, but the concern was to be of all government departments.⁴⁹ Because the Department’s and the colonial government’s interests aligned during the War, the sector stood to gain from the firestorm of the siege. State intervention, however necessary this was years beforehand, had to give way to a more balanced approach by Government. The introduction of tractors had met with considerable success and the use of mechanical mowing machines had gone on unabated.⁵⁰ Tenant law was changed whereas the dreaded *pitkali* were shorn of their abusive control. A seed

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 October 1945.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 December 1945.

⁴⁷ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁴⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 3756/1944.

⁴⁹ Minute by Biasini. NAM, CSG 01 – 2767/1945.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

industry was started, showing that local peasant farmers could not be simply restricted to exporting potatoes to the traditional markets in northern Europe. The realisation that the sector had been badly mismanaged was exposed by the War. This served to delineate the reforms needed by the industry.

The introduction of Cooperative Societies

Cooperation was at first the antithesis of what the local peasant farmer was thought to have stood for. Individualistic, shrewd and cynical were a few choice descriptions used by officials. Despite these supposed characteristics, the Second World War showed that cooperation between farmers was not a difficult element to foster if the conditions were right. Government did come around to introducing this *modus operandi* once hostilities had receded from Maltese shores. Though this was a direct result of the War, the question on the institution of cooperative societies had started years before the first Axis bombs were discharged over Malta. The coming of war led to the shelving of these plans as more pressing matters had by then presented themselves.

William K. H. Campbell described cooperation as:

[...] no more than working together, so it is a mere truism to say that there is hardly anyone who is not in a position to derive advantage from its application in one form or another to his affairs.⁵¹

He reduced the principles of cooperation to four steps⁵²:

- a) Members join as human beings and not as capitalists, which involves an important feature, namely, distribution of profits (so called) according to business done with the society not capital invested.
- b) They meet on a basis of equality, which involves another important feature, one man one vote;
- c) The act of association is voluntary;

⁵¹ W. K. H. Campbell C.M.G., *Memorandum on Co-operation in the Colonies* (London, Colonial Office, 1944), 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*

- d) They join to promote the economic interests or advantage of members, not of non-members.

The modern cooperative movement originated in Europe and spread to other industrializing countries during the late-19th century as a self-help method to counter extreme conditions of poverty. One development that probably had the greatest singular impact on determining agricultural cooperatives' unique operating principles was the formation in 1844 of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, Ltd. This was a consumer cooperative established in Rochdale, England, by a group of workers representing various trades who formulated a set of basic operating rules based on a two-year study of cooperatives, including some that were not successful. The cooperative's objectives were to address members' needs for better housing, employment, food, education and other social requirements.

By the mid-1940s, cooperation was a worldwide movement. It was established throughout the Empire in colonies such as Cyprus, Palestine, Nigeria, Ceylon and India, it existed in most European countries and in the United States, China, Japan and Egypt. The membership in thirty-nine countries where cooperative societies were affiliated to the International Co-operative Alliance was estimated before the war at 100,000,000, with the aggregate turnover of these societies reckoned to having been at £1,660,318,000.⁵³ In this respect, Malta had to make up for lost time.

Cooperative societies are labour groups through which workers can pool their resources for their economic well-being and the collective good of the sector. In the Maltese context, this would have had as its objectives the promotion of the economic and social interests of its members and the safeguarding of the productive needs of the cultivator. The principle of cooperation was not entirely novel in the Islands. Before the First World War, a few farmers formed a promising cooperation for the export of potatoes. Had it not been for the outbreak of war in 1914, the movement might have become securely established and widespread.⁵⁴ Almost two decades passed until reference to the possible

⁵³ NAM, GMR 1504, Oscar Paris, *A Study of the Working of Co-operative Societies based on Enquiries in Cyprus, Palestine and Egypt* (Malta, Department of Agriculture, 1945), 1.

⁵⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

introduction of cooperative societies in the Islands was made. In his 1934 report, Stockdale dealt very warily with the question, and far from recommending its institution, limited himself to suggesting that it might be attempted only after certain essential preliminaries were satisfactorily introduced:

Such organizations require guidance at the outset from persons experienced in co-operative work, and to make attempts unguided is certain to result in disappointment and probably in failure. A study of the experiences of producers [sic] co-operative associations, of which there are many examples in the Empire, would be commended to those interested in the establishment of producers co-operative societies in Malta.⁵⁵

Joseph Olivieri-Munroe, member of the Malta Trade Union Council, representing the NFU laid down the following⁵⁶ as the objectives of a cooperative society for the local farming community:

- a) To obtain funds to be lent to its members for necessary purposes;
- b) To promote thrift, and for this purpose to induce its members and other to place savings on deposit with the Society;
- c) To exercise its influence to restrain its members from unnecessary and unproductive expenditure, and from the observance of detrimental customs;
- d) To promote better farming methods, and organise its members for the use of pure seeds, fertilisers and improved agricultural implements, and for the planting of fruit trees;
- e) To grant short-term loans for any necessary purpose.⁵⁷

The most pressing needs were adequate finance and able administration. Apart from being indebted, farmers were fiercely competitive and most were proudly individualistic in their endeavours. Notoriously difficult to part with capital which they slowly accumulated in the pre-war years – if they had any – this was more often than not squirrelled away for a rainy day. Most of these people

⁵⁵ F. A. Stockdale, *Report on the present condition of Agriculture in the Maltese Islands* (Malta, Government Printing Office, 1934), 26.

⁵⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁵⁷ These included the purchase of seed, fodder, manure or fertilisers; the purchase of agricultural implements, animals or machinery; the delay of sale of produce for better conditions of marketing; the improvement of agricultural land; cultivation expenses; the repayment of usurious debt; the purchase of land; necessary living expenses; the building or repair of houses; trade.

distrusted banks, also. Zammit-Marmara, who had a hand in trying to disseminate information about cooperatives then, was told repeatedly, 'We're puny, we can't do anything.'⁵⁸

A lack of understanding in this approach was rampant among producers, but signs that cooperation had been understood in other sectors was not wanting.⁵⁹ Dr Giuseppe Micallef who was then heading the agriculture department had floated the idea in government circles, lending credence to the argument that individuals in the higher echelons of power were alive to the idea.⁶⁰ The remedy to this state of affairs, as espoused by many, was to be the setting up of an agricultural bank for loans. Olivieri-Munroe concurred.⁶¹ However, much propaganda was needed before it was to be expected that any cooperative institution was likely to prosper.

Taking the cooperative societies of the 'Arab villages of Palestine' as a case study, Stewart Perowne indicated that each one was prey to feuds and dissension, and it was moreover blighted by 'illiteracy and distrust of Government's Greek gifts.'⁶² Despite his apparent hesitancy, he noted that the movement could with advantage be introduced in Malta, owing to the Islands' higher standard of living and literacy. General behaviour was considered better than that in Palestine also. Barclay's Bank was selected with putting up the funds, however, Mr A.C. Schill, Controller of Agricultural Marketing expressed in the strongest terms that he was against any agricultural bank. He held the time was not yet ripe for local agriculture to take these steps.

Despite the chorus of advice to the contrary of the societies' introduction in Malta, correspondence was initiated between the agricultural department and the heads of co-operative societies in Palestine and Nigeria with literature having been received about the cocoa societies in British Cameroons.⁶³ After consultation with the Director of Agriculture, a small committee was set up which ought to have examined the causes of the indebtedness of farmers (and

⁵⁸ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 July 1943.

⁵⁹ A sort of cooperative union was in operation among Sliema bus owners throughout the 1930s, their aim having been the wholesale purchase of supplies and of spare parts.

⁶⁰ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁶¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

fishermen) in the Islands and the desirability of introducing cooperative credit and thrift societies. The movement was discussed somewhat desultorily in official channels. There was a lack of expert advice and insufficient preparatory work. Moreover, a report was never submitted and the subject appears to have been dropped by tacit consent. The outbreak of war and the ensuing siege only exacerbated this foot-dragging, but did not manage to kill of the proposal.

When the idea was revived in April 1943, it found more fertile ground owing to the changed circumstances brought about by the war. The classic incentive to invest in these cooperative ventures was the eradication of chronic indebtedness, which had been removed by the astronomical prices brought about by the lack of food and the black market. Government needed to convince farmers that only through joint action could they build on the central control which they had gleaned from their past diligence and avoid sliding into perpetual debt again. To fall back on state intervention indefinitely would mean retaining wartime measures.

Campbell stipulated that, ideally the movement of cooperation had to spring spontaneously from the people themselves and Government had to have no need to help in its propagation.⁶⁴ In most of the colonies there were masses of people whose need of the results which the movement could have produced was exceptionally acute while the chances of its spontaneous birth were so small that Government was justified in taking a hand in its organisation. It was rightly identified that the movement had to be launched then. If Government had to wait till the war's end – whenever that may have been – the only movement to command any support would have been the return to normality. Officials in the agriculture department shared the first opinion, yet to move forward without having conducted ample research, and without having identified a future chief – a registrar – of the cooperative societies would be fatal to any plan. Legislation would have to follow for this policy to be solidified and consolidated.

The cooperatives were to serve as agencies through which directions were to be issued to farmers as to what vegetables they should grow and in what quantities. It was not uncommon to hear of a surplus of pumpkins, onions and other products while Maltese households were lacking other vegetables.⁶⁵ There

⁶⁴ Campbell, 3.

⁶⁵ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 December 1943.

was to be no legal sanction by which enforcement of such directions were to be carried out but farmers disobeyed them at their own risk with foreknowledge that any excess which they could have grown was likely to prove difficult to sell at a profitable price. Such societies were in a position to buy on behalf of their members products such as seeds, fertilisers, agricultural implements etc. as they may have needed and thus secured for the groups of small units the advantages of large-scale purchase.

During springtime 1943, advantage was taken of a visit to the Middle East by Hirst. He was sent to Palestine to study agricultural cooperative societies and in his report he 'strongly recommended' the adoption of agricultural cooperation as a definite policy.⁶⁶ He suggested for a senior civil servant experienced in administration and with some knowledge of agriculture to take over a future Cooperative Section and develop it as a Department of Rural Development dealing with cooperatives, agricultural tenure, tenant right and other aspects of the trade. He pushed for legislation covering the cooperative movement to be introduced with the minimum of delay and advocated for an agricultural bank financed by government which would give out long term loans against adequate security. Lastly, he saw as equally important the formation of a general multipurpose cooperative society with limited liability in every parish in Malta and Gozo. Wherever possible, these societies were to have had the paid services of a local schoolmaster or other suitable person as secretary.⁶⁷ Under potential war conditions, the societies were to act as official government agencies receiving a commission for the collection of cereals, potatoes and other products. While no great difficulty was to be encountered in its establishment, the movement was to be entrusted to the agriculture department, on the definite understanding that the cooperative section would be developed within a reasonable time as a Department of Rural Development. This was to work separately but in close cooperation with the first department. It was proposed at first to confine the scheme to Malta and to leave Gozo and Comino to be treated later.⁶⁸

Indications that farmers were appreciative of the dialogue between themselves and Government were clear. At a meeting of the NFU with about two

⁶⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

thousand members present, the subject taking centre stage was the issue of cooperative marketing. The only dissentients present were farmers who had over-produced and landed themselves with an unmarketable surplus. Some of these were converted to the idea of the movement and a unanimous resolution was passed in favour of the installation of cooperative marketing. The president and both vice presidents had voted in favour of this motion as well. By December 1943, both the NFU and the agricultural department were in favour of the same course of action, much to Gort's delight.⁶⁹ Although, a divergence seems to have emerged between Strickland and Hirst. The NFU president felt that anything other than outright success in the establishment of the first society should not be accepted and for this to be achieved, more propaganda was needed to fully eradicate any doubt amongst the farmers. Hirst on the other hand believed that the department should strike while the iron was hot. In his report, he strongly recommended that the Malta government obtain the service of an officer serving in Palestine whom he had met during fieldwork and whom he considered admirably suited to the work.⁷⁰ The Board of Agriculture endorsed his recommendation. The quick implementation of his plans was, according to him, instrumental in the positive start of the movement without any delay. The Executive Council, however, advised that it was not expedient to obtain the services of a special adviser and recommended that a senior Maltese officer had to be selected as Registrar-designate of cooperative societies and that he be seconded for some time to a British colony where the officer could report on a cooperative movement whose socio-environmental factors resembled those in Malta. On his return, he would have lead the technical implementation of the policy.

Early in 1944, William H. K. Campbell, a former Registrar of Cooperative Societies in Ceylon and an expert on the subject visited the Islands at the request of the government while on his way to Kenya and advised the authorities to follow the Tanganyika Co-operative Societies Ordinance. Action was taken on his report⁷¹ and intensive propaganda was carried out in the country districts to

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ The young officer was Mr Y. Ben Dror, a Jewish Palestinian former statistician of the Department of Cooperation in Palestine. Hirst also wanted to secure an advisory visit by Mr B. J. Surridge, former Registrar of Cooperatives in Cyprus.

⁷¹ Owing to the limited time which Campbell was given to compile his report, Assistant to the Lieutenant Governor Mr T. Scrivenor called it a '*remarkable tour de force*'. NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

introduce cooperative principles and to form District Committees. Oscar Paris⁷², Robert Biasini and Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà addressed large gatherings of farmers who afterwards elected their own committees. Hirst doubled efforts by addressing farmers on 1 Mar. 1944:

Farmers have recently voted in favour of the introduction of the cooperative movement as soon as possible and it is up to them to see that they are introduced at the earliest possible moment and that Government control is handed over to Cooperative marketing. If this is a success and a success it must be, the District Committees will, in due course be invited to be incorporated as District Agricultural Cooperative Societies performing a variety of purposes. Farmers have rightly demanded cooperatives and the Department of Agriculture is prepared to guide them in the movement. [...] Farmers of Malta must unite for their common interests. They can determine their own future eschewing those who advocate a return to normalcy which means the degradation of indebtedness community. By unity farmers can maintain a fair measure of prosperity, by disunity and strife they will only sink back to the level of the bad old days.⁷³

Much of the material related to the actual process of setting up these cooperatives in the different villages – listing nominations, elections, letters, protests and memoranda – have been lost. It is however appropriate to adopt a village as a case study to try and reconstruct how the lengthy procedure came to fruition and what the stumbling blocks were. For the scope of this dissertation, the village of Mosta has been taken as an example.

As a preliminary step towards the introduction of cooperatives, throughout March 1944, District Agricultural Committees were elected in 19 different villages which, it was hoped, were to merge into cooperative societies. They worked in close association with the committees of the NFU and in many districts were even identical. A meeting of farmers was called in the first instance at which candidates were nominated. For every hundred farmers or over there was one representative on the committee. Farmers were supplied with a sheet which contained one column for the farmer's registered number, twelve columns numbered consecutively from one to twelve, each number representing the nominated candidate, a column for the farmer's signature or mark and a final column for the date on which the farmer recorded his vote.

⁷² Paris was a graduate in horticulture and the wartime Superintendent of Public Gardens.

⁷³ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1 & 2; *Il-Bidwi*, 1 March 1944.

When farmers were called to vote, the names of the candidates were read out to them and they were asked for their preferences. The respective column on the vote sheet was then marked with a cross either by the farmer himself or, in the case of illiterates, by the officer in charge at each village or centre. If any farmers refused to vote, a dash or dot was put in all the columns.⁷⁴

B

LISTA TAL-KANDIDATI GHAL KUMITAT TAL-BDIEWA TAL MOSTA.

<u>F.R.C.</u>	<u>Farmer's Name</u>	<u>Nickname</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>No.</u>
609	Gatt Salvu	Tal-Gzejri	F/H Ghajn Ribana	1.
29	Bartolo Karmnu	Ta'Vennura	6, Callus Street	2.
466	Vassallo Majsi	Ta'Miju	405, High Street	3.
168	Chetcuti Frangisk	Tal-Mingba	3A, Mill Street	4.
252	Fenech Paula	Tal-Hajsu	12, St. Silvester Street	5.
175	Chetcuti Mikiel	Ta'l-Gharus	25, Oratory Street	6.
12	Agius Marcell	Ta'Popolla	22, Parish Street	7.
171	Chetcuti Gamri	Ta'Zambura	118, Bridge Street	8.
209	Dimech Pacik	Tas-Supra	Bidnija	9.
166	Chetcuti Indri	Ta Sarima	155, Hope Street	10.
539	Xerri Guzepp	Ta Vitor Ta Sprettu	79, High Street	11.
174	Chetcuti Salvu	Tal-Hajsu	168, Hope Street	12.

FARMERS ARE TO VOTE FOR 7 CANDIDATES ONLY.

Fig. 18. List of electoral candidates for the elections of members of the District Agricultural Committee of Mosta.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

⁷⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

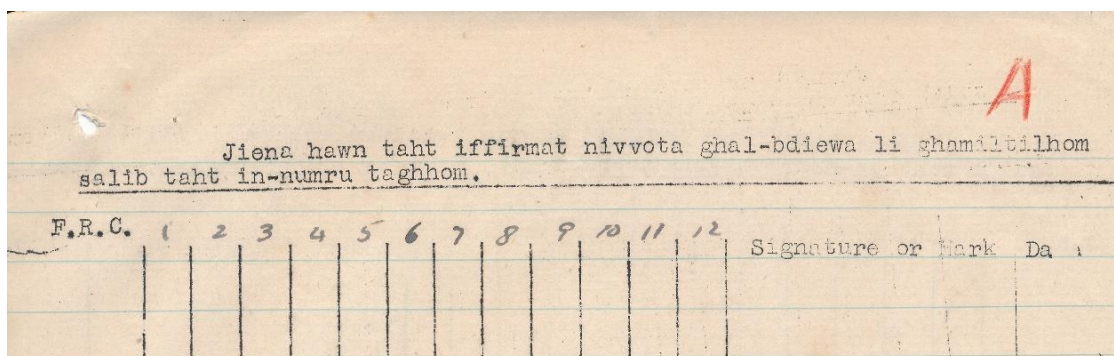


Fig. 19. Voting sheet for the elections of members of District Agricultural Committees.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

It was declared in the Council of Government, that two farmers from Mosta – Angelo Sammut and Victor Chetcuti – had complained very strongly that they were forced to agree to the appointment of a committee to deal with the question of cropping and the marketing of produce in their area. They also divulged the possibility that their votes may have been recorded incorrectly.⁷⁵ There was an amount of looseness in the election. There was no secrecy which one was to expect at a polling station. Farmer number 116 was put down as sick when his mark was clearly visible. Numbers 124 and 546 were reported to have refused to vote, but no signatures or marks were recorded.⁷⁶

The agricultural department admitted that although the election left much to be desired, the voting system was the most practical when dealing with illiterate farmers. Hirst explained that it was proven that the farmers quoted had not actually voted despite the allegation that their votes had been cast against their wishes (although no written evidence of this was provided).⁷⁷ An analysis of the Mosta vote revealed that 36% voted against and 34% in favour, with 28% abstaining and 2% doubtful.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

STATEMENT BY ANGLU SAMMUT

Jena Anglu Sammut niddikjara illi meta mort nikteb
ir-raba is-sur Bajjada qalli biex nistenna ftit ghaxem il vot.
Wara ~~da~~ ^{hemm kien hem is-sungant famet} hhalni fkamra biex nivvota u giebli karta bseba ismiejet,
tnejn minnhom sgassati u kalli il vot ga lest. ~~ur riedna nifferma.~~
Jena ghatlu lest kief ghax jen mgharriedx nivvota. Hu qalli
ma gara xjen u sgassa ill hamis ismiejet lohra. Imbaghat jen
iffirmajt il karta bismieghet kollha sgassati. Imma kiku
mghandunaghaidx kont sejjer nivvota ghal nies hi mgharidtomx.

Angelo Sammut

5th April, 1944.

Fig. 20. Statement by farmer Angelo Sammut.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Critical gossip of the movement in the rural areas was aplenty. Farmers against cooperation were content enough in making it widely known that they wanted a return to pre-war conditions. Hirst castigated these individuals as short-sighted, selfish and harking back to a period of poverty, ignorance, and debt.⁷⁸ In addition to a number of farmers' negative opinions to cooperation, the most significant stumbling block in this area was a petition addressed to the governor himself, dated 31 Mar. 1944. A corps of farmers in certain agricultural districts seemed to have rejected the idea and stipulated the desire for their farming to again have the 'liberty' of pre-war days.⁷⁹ They were pessimistic of the success of this policy and were wary that cooperative marketing could discourage other farmers from taking up the trade, specifically their children. Certain farmers had overproduced certain products, mostly Jerusalem artichokes and pumpkins as a

⁷⁸ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 March 1944.

⁷⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

speculation, because of the high prices of the previous years. As the war moved further north, the reduction in military personnel led to a decrease in demand and they were thus left with a lot of these on their hands. It was evident that following the war years – with excellent financial returns – certain farmers still wanted to strike out on their own.⁸⁰

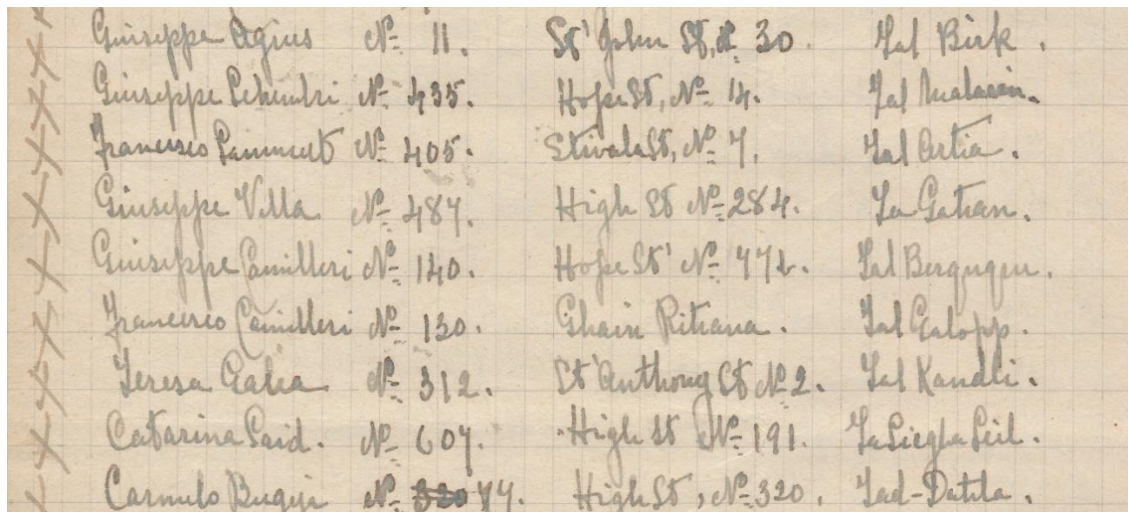


Fig. 21. A section of the petition sent by the farmers of 'Mosta, Bidnija, Ghain Riřana and others.' The list consisted of the farmer's mark, his name, registration number, address and nickname.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

The significance of this petition was not lost on the Department. It was striking that a large enough section of the Mosta farmers were apparently against cooperatives. Hirst concluded that the adoption of this stance by so many was directly linked to their strategic preference of keeping alive the continuation of Government intervention: the retention of the Fruit and Vegetable Purchase Scheme. Owing to the alarming lack of food back in 1942, contractors to Government institutions and the armed forces found it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations. The project, launched in July 1942, was set up to secure food and supplies at a time when farmers were selling their produce not only through the *pitkali* markets but also from the fields direct to greengrocers and consumers.⁸¹ Although this was a wartime measure, this policy ensured a fixed

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

and perpetual stream of revenue for farmers, a section of which were anxious in seeing cooperation introduced and therefore resorted to any method in trying to derail the latter. Cooperation would have jeopardised certain individuals' profit margins and 'some' would have preferred to go it alone.

Upon closer inspection, the Department uncovered that the petition had been prepared by the parish priest of Mosta, Rev. Carmelo Sciberras. An agricultural inspector reported that apart from the farmers who were genuinely against cooperatives, several others in the same village were strongly against cooperation simply because they were badly impressed by somebody who might have been interested in the matter.⁸² Some of the farmers, instead of calling personally to the parish priest, sent their Farmers' Registration Card, laying bare the confidence with which these peasants had held their spiritual leaders. One of the farmers had reportedly forwarded his card, not only without calling personally at Rev. Sciberras, but without even knowing the contents of the petition and for what purpose it was sent. Rev. Edgar Salomone, parish priest of Mġarr, was allegedly present when the petition was drawn up. He had allegedly attended a meeting with brokers and potato merchants before this was sent.⁸³ This state of affairs lends credence to Strickland's earlier view that much more propaganda was needed to fully convince farmers of the benefits of cooperation.

The possibility of jeopardising the momentum gained was then inconceivable. In order to snuff out any long-lasting opposition which could have snowballed into something bigger, Zammit-Marmarà suggested the agriculture department call for the mediation of the Archbishop, Mgr Gonzi. Strangely enough, this confrontation was not mentioned in the department's wartime report.

The 1935 committee which was set up to lay the ground for the initiation of cooperative societies recognised that serious difficulties would have had to be overcome before the movement could be successfully launched in Malta and Gozo. Prolonged and careful propaganda was necessary so as to accustom an intensely individualistic set of labourers to the idea of cooperation. Farmers viewed each other as competitors and were not accustomed to the idea of joint ventures. The ground was not yet fertile (pun intended) for farmers to cooperate with each other. In the post-siege era, difficulties still presented themselves, but

⁸² NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

the majority of local farmers were not only more receptive to the idea, but elected district committees. The NFU voted in favour of their introduction and it was deduced, correctly, by Gort that wartime experience greatly increased the desirability of this movement.

Knowing full well wartime measures had to be repealed and state intervention curtailed, the mendicant mentality which farmers were thought to have fallen prey to had to be eradicated by Government. Whereas change and development in the agriculture sector had to come from within, the state took matters into its own hands and sought to push through change in the rural areas, even when consensus had not been overwhelmingly secured. In a broader context, cooperative societies were seen as leading to 'rural development'⁸⁴, by which the colony's food producing districts would be granted the appropriate platform in which resources could be pooled together in a democratic manner without necessitating state overtures. Even though food security could never realistically be achieved, farming communities would have been self-reliant and self-regulating.

By mid-1944 seven cooperative societies had been set up with over 710 members, while more were in the process of being formed throughout the villages.⁸⁵ In July 1944, a shortlist was produced outlining the prospective candidates which were to lead agricultural cooperation in Malta, one of which had to undertake fieldwork on the orders of the agriculture department.⁸⁶ Oscar Paris was chosen and between August and October 1944, he travelled throughout Egypt, Palestine and Cyprus and studied their cooperative societies, drawing up a report at the end of his visit.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ The seven functioning cooperatives consisted of two cooperatives in Gozo – the Gozo Farmers Co-operative Association and the Gozo Agricultural Co-operative Society – and another five in Rabat, Żabbar, St Paul's Bay, Dingli and another one representing some of the farmers of Żabbar together with the farmers of Kalkara. The other societies in the process of forming were in Mellieħa, Siġġiewi, Żebbuġ, Qormi, Santa Venera and Żejtun and had around 100 members.

⁸⁶ The short list consisted of Vivian Albert Dillon, J. Mifsud Bonnici, J. Vella Gera, V. R. Rizzo, Oscar Paris and Carmelo Zammit Marmara.

⁸⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 542/1944.



Fig. 22. Oscar Paris, Superintendent of Public Gardens.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Paris's report was submitted to Government in January 1945. He detailed the present state of the movement throughout the three aforementioned territories, detailing credit societies,⁸⁸ agricultural marketing, the fair exploitation of the water supply, bulk purchasing, collective agricultural settlement and workers' partnerships. The advantages of these policies, he wrote, were multiple. There is strength in numbers and farmers would get fair treatment from the dreaded *pitkali* due to the better bargaining position while financial protection would be assured through collective sale. The granting of short- and long-term loans to society members (three years and twenty years maximum, respectively) was to further help the farmer.⁸⁹

The Draft Bill to introduce the movement was passed through the various stages by the Council of Government. On 8 July, 1946, ordinance No. XXXIV of

⁸⁸ Credit societies were meant to grant short term loans for working capital i.e. to purchase seed, fertilisers, fodder etc. or the necessities of life required until production materialises.

⁸⁹ NAM, GMR 1504, Oscar Paris, *A Study of the Working of Co-operative Societies based on Enquiries in Cyprus, Palestine and Egypt* (Malta, Department of Agriculture, 1945), i.

1946 received the assent of H.E. the Governor and a Department of Cooperatives was set up with Paris appointed as Director.⁹⁰



Fig. 23. Trademark of Maltese farmers' central cooperative in 1952.⁹¹

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Backing the views of the NFU and Hirst, Paris concluded that farmers needed initial capital by which farming activity could be sustained in the long run. Without the provision of this working capital, he argued the agricultural sector would not advance. By this point, the government had a history of making small grants for this purpose to farmers through the Agrarian Society, the Agricultural and Industrial Show and the Horticultural Society. However, these grants were wholly inadequate. In 1922, the funds granted amounted to £300.⁹² The idea for an agricultural bank had been mooted for more than twenty years but it was in 1943 when the Agricultural Board unanimously agreed that the time was opportune for such an endeavour, which, the Government could not have afforded to neglect.⁹³

Short-term loans could have been used to buy items like seeds and fertilisers whereas, the function of an agricultural bank, on the other hand, was to grant long term loans, for periods of five to twenty years, for fixed capital. Purchase of land to acquire, an increase or consolidation of a holding and development works such as irrigation all fell within the latter's parameters.

The agricultural bank which certain individuals had spent years lobbying for never came and Salvino Busuttill argues this was for good reason. Most farmers had little capital to put into such a bank. Whatever capital farmers managed to accumulate during the war was either stored at home or put into the Government

⁹⁰ The designation 'Registrar' had no local significance as regards the cooperative movement and when used in connection with other work usually implied clerical duties only, instead the title 'Director' was applied.

⁹¹ In 2021, this cooperative was still in operation and was made up of seven primary cooperatives comprising around one thousand farmers.

⁹² This figure is from the 'Production and Natural Resources' chapter of the 1922 Malta Blue Books, under 'Summary of Industrial Development', 6.

⁹³ NAM, CSG 01 – 518/1943.

Savings' Bank.⁹⁴ Busuttil went on to argue that farmers had only one use for their fixed capital: the purchase of agricultural land. However, these were limited for three reasons. First, the tenant farmer did not always see the utility of owning his land. Normally his rent was low and few were ready to part with hard-earned capital, even on a long-term basis, when they did not think it made a material difference to their way of life.⁹⁵ Private landowners were reluctant to sell their land to farmers, expecting urban developers would pay more during this period of urbanization. Lastly, the Church, Government and the British Services were averse to selling land. The Church and Government were more interested in acquisition and the latter had no intention of withdrawing from Malta, so were not interested in selling either.⁹⁶ In this case, multiple agencies with their interests jostled for space over an area where there was not nearly enough. Busuttil concluded, 'such a restricted sector could not have warranted the setting up of an Agricultural Bank'.⁹⁷

It is true there was not enough land to buy, but according to Paul Caruana Galizia, 'the credit scarcity argument is overdone'.⁹⁸ The funds for an agricultural bank were to be provided mainly by Government from its own funds or from the proceeds of a bond issue. The bonds, Paris stipulated, could have been issued by a private bank or a consortium of private banks in which case a higher rate of interest would probably have had to be offered to attract subscribers.⁹⁹ The two methods could possibly have been combined to create an agricultural bank financed partly by government funds and partly from private sources, with private management under Government inspection and audit. As a matter of fact, this bank was an instrument for tapping the general money market for agricultural purposes.¹⁰⁰ The money was usually put up by Government from its own or borrowed funds, by private banks or by public subscription. Essentially, this capital came from outside the farming community. But why should capital for an agricultural bank have had to come from farmers alone? It was understandable

⁹⁴ Salvino Busuttil, 'Agriculture in Malta: A Historical Note', in *Malta: Food, agriculture, fisheries and the environment*, S. Busuttil, F. Lerin, L. Mizzi (eds.), CIHEAM, Montpellier, 1993, 9-26.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Busuttil, 9-26.

⁹⁸ Paul Caruana Galizia, *The Economy of Modern Malta: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 76.

⁹⁹ Paris, 16.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

that farmers would not want to depend on farming for both their direct income and investment, preferring to keep their savings in the Savings' Bank. Back in 1935, Government had found no difficulty in getting Barclay's Bank to put up the funds. The conclusion we are able to reach is that Government had no intention in setting up a bank for farming purposes in the first place.

Conclusion

It seemed natural that improving the productivity, profitability, sustainability and marketing of smallholder agriculture was deemed to have been the main pathway in the post-war era. The offloading of state intervention in local farming coupled with development action in the rural areas were deemed to be the only feasible ways forward and a delicate balance had to be struck. One could argue that subsistence farming is about small-time business and trade. However, the War managed to shape local farming into an even bigger business. The war enabled farmers – and the political process – to take advantage of new improvements. Pesticides, fertiliser, seed production, land tenure security and the reform to the *pitkali* were all noteworthy, as was the importation of tractors, the introduction of mechanical threshing machines, and the holding of literacy classes for farmers. However, full stabilisation and consolidation of the sector could realistically never have been achieved owing to the fact that agriculture was and is at the mercy of external variables beyond anyone's control. For the Maltese Islands, the landmass in question could never have supported the ever-increasing population, especially with the lack of labour. The Church and other landowners were unwilling to even entertain selling off their land. Because of this, the colonial government was dependent firstly on convoys during the siege, then on other fertile lands nearby such as Sicily, to supplant the agricultural production the Islands needed and to further contribute to the food supply.

CHAPTER THREE

PEASANTS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE

Introduction

According to one pithy definition, politics is about ‘who gets what, when and how’.¹ To elaborate further, it is about the control, allocation, production and use of resources and the values and ideas underlying those activities.² Individuals typically relegated politics to what government officials, politicians, lobbyists and the like do, which means that, generally, the peasantry is thought of as being as far away from this set of activities as is humanly possible. In this case, the politics with which we are concerned are those which peasant farmers were involved in *vis-à-vis* the larger society of which they formed part during wartime Malta and Gozo.

Peasants appear to belong in economic or social history, but rarely in political history, since rulers rarely have to bother for more than a moment about what happens in the villages.³ In this vein, a short introduction of the farming communities in rural Malta is appropriate. The accepted view is of a depressed labour class which operated on the border of the urban colonial hub and had fleeting links with the market towns which, after the 1870s, increased in population and size, leading to the peasant farmers being pushed further out of the new emerging colonial framework and the economy. Lord Gerald Strickland once called the National Farmers’ Union of Malta and Gozo (NFU) ‘a political organisation’⁴, but all trade unions are concerned with politics, hence this field being placed in this chapter. Remarkably, there is no readily available published account of the origins and workings of the NFU, although it would be hard to

¹ Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, ‘Everyday politics in peasant societies (and ours), *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, xxxvi, 1 (2009), 227-243.

² *Ibid.*

³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, ‘Peasants and Politics’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, i, 1 (1973), 3-22.

⁴ Henry Frenco, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* [Third edition] (Malta, Midsea Books, 2013), 184.

underestimate its importance to wartime agricultural policy. This section seeks to go some way towards remedying this deficiency in our understanding of local wartime agrarian politics and the individuals who played a significant part in its function. Lastly, rather than be passive bystanders, the rural peasantry were historical actors as they sought to break out of their subalternity by employing survival strategies and functioning within the vicissitudes brought on by the War.

The peasant farmer in the Colonial State

Malta's economic predicament has often been summarised as having been at the perpetual mercy of military activity in the region and British defence spending. This approach has been picked apart numerous times and has occupied a major part of historical discourse relating to Malta's colonial era. In addition, most the dialogue has tended to focus on the political machinations adopted by the elites, spanning the decades after British rule was affirmed. Moving away from these structures of power, the peasants, who over the centuries have made up the majority of mankind, were concentrated in the rural districts of the colony. An attempt at reconstructing a short history of peasant farmers in Malta and Gozo is somewhat a problematic task. The majority of these people, many of whom were illiterate, left no records and data of their daily travails. They were mostly analysed in a top to bottom approach, looked upon as props within an idyllic environment devoid of emotions, perspectives and thoughts. While the following can never claim to be a definite history of the peasant farmer in the colony, endeavouring to understand the country folk's struggles in a rapidly-changing agrarian society will set up the reader to make sense of a distinct labour group operating in the countryside in Malta and Gozo during the timeframe under study.

Since rural farming was synonymous with this social class of manual labourers, a definition of the term *peasantry* is pertinent.⁵ Alfred Kroeber defined peasants as constituting part-societies and part-cultures:

They are definitely rural, yet they live in relation to market towns. They form a class segment of a larger stratificatory system, within which they are far from being the dominant group. They lack the isolation, political autonomy, and self-

⁵ In Maltese, the term peasant or peasant farmer would translate as *bidwi*. Maltese *bidwi* covers the English lexemes of peasant, countryman, farmer, tiller of the land.

sufficiency of tribal populations, yet their local units nevertheless retain much of their old identity, integration, and attachment to soil and cult, to parochial custom and folk art.⁶

As a result of their labours and the resources with which they eked out a living, peasants predominantly lived beyond the urban sprawl where merchant activity and trade was at its most intense. Living in the countryside, they were agricultural producers, subsistence-oriented cultivators, who, though they may have sold crops, did so in order to meet everyday needs, as opposed to a farmer who sold his other crops for reinvestable profits. Peasant property was at least *de facto* family property.⁷ The family was the production team of the farm and the position in the family defined the duties to the farm, the functions and rights attached. The rhythm of the farm defined the rhythm of family life.⁸ Their foremost cultural and personal obligations were – in no particular order – to family, the community and the land, the ‘little world’, as described by Hobsbawm.⁹ They lived in a closed society in which, among other things, ‘people greet each other even if they are not acquainted [...] everyone knows everyone whom everyone else knows [...] and gossip is more powerful than law.’¹⁰

Teodor Shanin identified the general type of peasant as having the peasant family farm as the basic multi-dimensional unit of social organisation; land husbandry as the main means of livelihood; specific cultural patterns linked to the way of life of a small rural community; the ‘underdog’ position – the domination of the peasantry by outsiders.¹¹ These four facets, as we shall see, were synonymous with the Maltese peasantry.

The family mostly provided the labour on the farm, which in turn provided for the consumption needs of the family. It was not autarkic – not self-reliant – as a daily exchange of goods in labour markets was needed and the work was closely interwoven with a division of labour centred on family relations. Peasants tried to harness nature – as oxymoronic as it may sound – by using the land at their disposal for food production in conjunction with diverse seasonal rhythms. The

⁶ Clifford Geertz, ‘Studies in Peasant Life: Community and Society’, *Biennial Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1961), 1-41.

⁷ Teodor Shanin, ‘The Peasantry as a Political Factor’, in *The Sociological Review*, xiv, 1 (1966), 5-27.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Hobsbawm, 3-22.

¹⁰ Geertz, 1-41.

¹¹ Teodor Shanin, ‘Introduction: Peasantry as a Concept’, in *Peasants and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings* [Second edition], Teodor Shanin (ed.), Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1987, 1-11.

impact of the climate and weather are too important to put into words, but a bad harvest or crop failure may have led to the farm's extinction. Peasant culture also reflected the life of a small village community within which most of the peasant needs of social living and social reproduction could be met like social networks and solidarity, coupled with lack of anonymity and face-to-face relations. Lastly, the peasantry was at the bottom of the social power structure. The injustices resulting from political subjugation and economic exploitation has over the centuries fueled repeated attempts at quasi self-defence through the extensive use of 'weapons of the weak' such as tax avoidance and boycott and in some conditions, of revolts which turned peasants into major insurrectionary forces over the centuries.¹²

The peasantry was the disenfranchised majority in any society. Yet, it vaguely elicited interest from without, as, throughout the nineteenth century, the rural folk of Europe were a constant preoccupation of historians, politicians, artists and writers. Turning our attention to the culinary habits of the Maltese at the start of British rule, visitors noted that

These people [labourers and small farmers] subsisted on a meagre diet of barley bread, vegetables, and a little cheese, with olives, oil, pasta and, occasionally, the luxury of some fruit or fish. They dressed in cheap, home-produced cottons and went about barefoot [...] A family might live in one or two rooms, where they would sleep on straw (as in peasant houses in most other countries). Very poor and with little cash, they frequently paid rent in animal manure.¹³

For some, including Balzac, peasants were simply savages, little more than animals, men without culture and certainly without civilisation.¹⁴ For others, among them George Sand, the country folk of Europe were not dirty and ignorant brutes, but the embodiment of Rousseau's 'noble savage', honest and industrious people who represented all that was good.¹⁵

The peasants did not lack any chroniclers in the following century, either. Dawson Shepherd had singled out the Gozitan farmer who went about his work 'more earnestly' than his Maltese counterpart and appeared to be getting far

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Desmond Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers, 1793-1815* (New Jersey, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 29.

¹⁴ Caroline B. Brettell, 'Nineteenth Century Travellers' Accounts of the Mediterranean Peasant', *Ethnohistory*, xxxiii, 2 (1986), 159-173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

more out of his ground.¹⁶ Harry Luke echoed these musings and described the local farmers as ‘skilful and industrious farmers with a wonderful knack of extracting the utmost from the soil’.¹⁷ The final inter-war governor, Charles Bonham-Carter called them ‘the best specimens of any country in the world’¹⁸ while a wartime propaganda publication was to later class the Gozitans as a ‘tougher, less gay race’ who made excellent colonists and pioneers.¹⁹ Eric Brockman stated that there was an identifiable Maltese type, commoner in Gozo and the country than in the urban areas:

The Maltese country peasant is of middle height, barrel-chested and sturdy [...]. He is of cheerful disposition and has a vast capacity for hard manual labour. Self-reliant, independent, quick-witted and friendly once he has overcome his Islanders’ distrust of strangers, he is much slower to arouse than his Sicilian or Corsican cousins and, although he once shared their tradition of the Vendetta, he does not bear personal grudges. In complexion, the countryman is deceptively dark, for he spends all his days in the open and is tanned from birth by a fierce sun. [...] I am not the first to remark that the Maltese woman is often taller than her menfolk and her ‘milky’ complexion has been remarked by connoisseurs of such matters from the sixteenth century at least.²⁰



Fig. 24. First World War-era photograph of peasant women in the *Ta' Ċenċ* area, Gozo.

Source: National Archives of Malta, Gozo Section.

¹⁶ J. Dawson Shepherd, *Report on Agriculture in Malta*, (Cairo, Ministry of Agriculture, 1920), 10.

¹⁷ Harry Luke, *Malta: An Account and An Appreciation*, (Great Britain, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1960), 216.

¹⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹⁹ Captain Lewis Ritchie, *The Epic of Malta* [Facsimile edition], (Malta, Valletta Publishing & Promotion Co. Ltd., 1990), 54.

²⁰ Eric Brockman, *Last Bastion: Sketches of the Maltese Islands*, Malta, Progress Press Co Ltd., 1975, 248-249.



Figs. 25 & 26. (Left) A barefoot peasant farmer transporting wheat on a horse-drawn cart and a peasant boy during the Second World War.

Source: Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna.

Flattery however belied a tough and unforgiving existence; their exertions in the fields had not changed for centuries. They had to learn how to make the most of their arable lands; with infinite patience and diligence they terraced the rocky hillsides, conserving soil in the process. Mechanisation had not caught on and the implements used were primitive as were their methods of irrigation. Every job had to be manually-undertaken with the help of a few tools in addition to beasts of burden which had to be fed, sheltered and taken care of. Blindfolded animals worked wells of age-old antiquity and determined the sites of farms. Subsistence farming, which meant farming for survival's sake, was a family affair and roles were assigned to each member, including women and children.²¹ The individual, the family and the farm became one indivisible whole.

²¹ Women toiled in the fields as much as the men did, yet their presence in visitors' accounts is severely lacking.



Fig. 27. 'The family was the production team of the farm and the position in the family defined the duties to the farm, the functions and rights attached. The rhythm of the farm defined the rhythm of family life.' This photograph was taken in Siġġiewi, Malta in March 1942. A serviceman from 7 HAA Regt., Royal Artillery is seen standing in the doorway, most probably making use of the peasant family's requisitioned farm.

Source: Private collection.

These struggles left an indelible mark on the peasant farmer's physique and health. Joseph Vella who hailed from Siġġiewi had late in the war sent in a letter to a farming periodical under the heading '*It-Tbatijiet tal-Bidwi*' (The Farmer's Struggles).²² His words could easily be adapted to the farmer's way of life in any context throughout the previous centuries:

Nibda mela biex nistaqsi jekk fid-dinja hawnx xi sengħa oħra ħlief tagħna tal-bdiewa f'dawn il-Gżejjer li fiha ma tistax taħdem jekk mhux ħafi, jgġifieri li waqt ix-xogħol ma tilbes ebda xedd f'riġlejk, jew żarbun jew qorq, sew jekk ikun il-ksieħ kemm jekk ir-raba' ikun bit-tajn. Din hi ħaġa li tagħmilna agħar mill-Għarab. Din il-ħaġa tbaxxina b'mod li meta bidwi jiltaqa' ma' bniedem bil-ġlekk u biż-żarbun dan bilkemm jindenja ruħu jsellimlu. Il-ħefa barra milli hu għajb, jista' jagħmel ħsara fl-għarqub, għax mhux l-ewwel darba li s-sieq tixxaqqaq u dak li jkun ibati biex jimxi bl-irfis ta' xi ħaġa li tinfed il-ġilda. Ħaġ'oħra. Fost kemm hawn nies fid-dinja mhux tas-sew il-bidwi li tara liebes l-aktar imqatta', maħmuġ u diżutli? – mhux il-mara tal-bidwi li tara ħafna drabi irsira fil-għalqa mar-raġel minn filgħodu

²² *Il-Bidwi*, 1 February 1945.

sa filgħaxija, u xi mindaqqiet taħdimlek xogħol iebes ukoll? – Min ħlief il-bidwi li hu imjassar dejjem bix-xogħol u ma għandu qatt ġurnata mistrieħ. Għax jekk ikun maltemp u niežla x-xita, il-bidwi dlonk tarah jinfexx imidd idejh biex jagħmel xi ħaġa oħra, inaddaf taħt il-bhejjem jew annimali, u ħafna xogħlijiet oħra li għandhom x'jaqsmu max-xogħol tar-razzett jew tal-maqjel. Barra minn dawn, hemm ħafna tbatijiet li isofrihom il-bidwi, tbatijiet li ma jidhirlix li għandi bżonn insemmi, l-ewwelnett biex, Sur Editur, ma neħodlokx il-wisa' u t-tieni biex ma jgħidux li aħna l-bdiewa aħna nies li nħobbu ngergru ž-žejjed. Jidhirli li x-xogħol tagħna l-bdiewa għandu jitqies u jintizen skond il-ħaqq. Kulħadd imissu jaf xi tbatija fiha s-sengħa tagħna u kemm hija mill-banda l-oħra ta' ħtiega għall-ħajja tal-popolazzjoni. Imma bosta nies dan ma jqisuhx; iżda jaraw biss kemm frott u basal u pastard daħal fis-suq.

As one can deduce, the rural way of life was hostile and unforgiving. Thousands of families had dedicated their lives to tilling the land, these being metaphorically chained to the soil with little to no hope of any respite. The near century and a half of British administration which preceded the Second World War did see the farmer experience periods of rare positive returns, however short they may have been. Albeit on the whole, farming communities tended to basely sink further into a depressing state of affairs.

During the siege of Valletta and the start of the British occupation, the arrival of British troops made for more mouths to feed, as did Napoleon's institution of the Continental Blockade, which made Malta one of Europe's main trans-shipment points, bringing thousands of merchants and sailors to the country. Clare writes that 'Maltese farmers were called upon to produce food not only for the local population but also for the thousands of foreigners – perhaps as many as 30,000 including the British contingent – who came to Malta at this time.'²³ Farm incomes increased substantially during this period, and wheat production was unusually high.²⁴ With the end of the war and of the Blockade, the agricultural sector experienced difficulties and returned to its trend of decline throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Reports of farmers being unable to pay land rents abound during this period, as do reports of falling farm prices, the inability of cotton-growing to compete on the international market, and the general undercapitilisation of the sector.²⁵ Also, land was saturated with labour and, inevitably, rural earnings were very low.

²³ Arthur G. Clare, 'Features of an Island Economy', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 127-154.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

By the mid-1830s, 28,675 were involved in the agriculture sector, of which 2,215 were proprietors and shepherds.²⁶ Land was owned by the colonial government, the Church, the military departments, peasant farmers and other private individuals. Tenants struggled to scrape a living and were rarely able to pay on time. The landlord, reluctant to evict them but expecting remittance, usually seized their crops. Rents of Church owned-land were often reasonable and this was usually passed from one generation to the next with the Church more often than not having been malleable since most clergymen hailed from peasant families.²⁷ Farmers made no use of any kind of technology which could have alleviated their plight and issues beyond anyone's control made farming a somewhat maligned undertaking: winter gales, the unpredictability of the weather, climate, pests, diseases, water shortages, the fluctuations of the market and other crises.

By 1851, employment in agriculture hit 26% of total employment, reduced to 22% in 1881 and averaging 24% until 1931.²⁸ By way of comparison, as late as 1900, around 70% of Cyprus' total employment was agricultural.²⁹ In 1901, Italy's agricultural employment share of total employment was 59.4%, declining to the still-high level of 48% by 1938.³⁰ However, the main decrease was experienced by the agricultural labourers which had formed the largest category in the sector. This class dwindled down from well over 10,000 in 1871 to 2,799 in 1891.³¹ At the same time, however, farmer-cultivators rose from a little over one thousand in 1880, to 7,112 in 1911.³²

The nineteenth century was a confrontational one for the Maltese peasantry. Rapid urbanisation tied to the vicissitudes of the colony's *raison d'être* altered the socio-economic structures of the countryside, rural life and agricultural work head-on. Authors tended to single out the opening of the Suez Canal as the start of Malta's shift to a major transshipment station on the imperial Mediterranean

²⁶ Henry Frendo, *Storja ta' Malta: Żmien l-Ingliżi – Is-Seklu Dsatax* (Santa Venera, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2004), 94.

²⁷ Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel: It-Tielet Ktieb (1942-1955) (It-Tieni edizzjoni)*, (Malta, Interprint (Malta) Ltd., 1977), 246.

²⁸ Malta Blue Books, 'Persons employed in Agriculture' expressed as a ratio of the sum of persons employed in 'Agriculture', 'Manufactures', and 'Commerce'. From the 'Population' chapters.

²⁹ Paul Caruana Galizia, *The Economy of Modern Malta: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 45.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ John Chircop, *Underdevelopment: The Maltese Experience 1880-1914*, unpublished M.A. dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 1993, 17.

³² *Ibid.*

trade route, heralding the demise of the colony's agrarian identity. Ganado³³ seemed to think so as did Castagna³⁴ before him, who reported that parcels of land fell into disuse when villagers migrated to the urban and suburban areas in search of better paid jobs in the developing harbour towns.³⁵

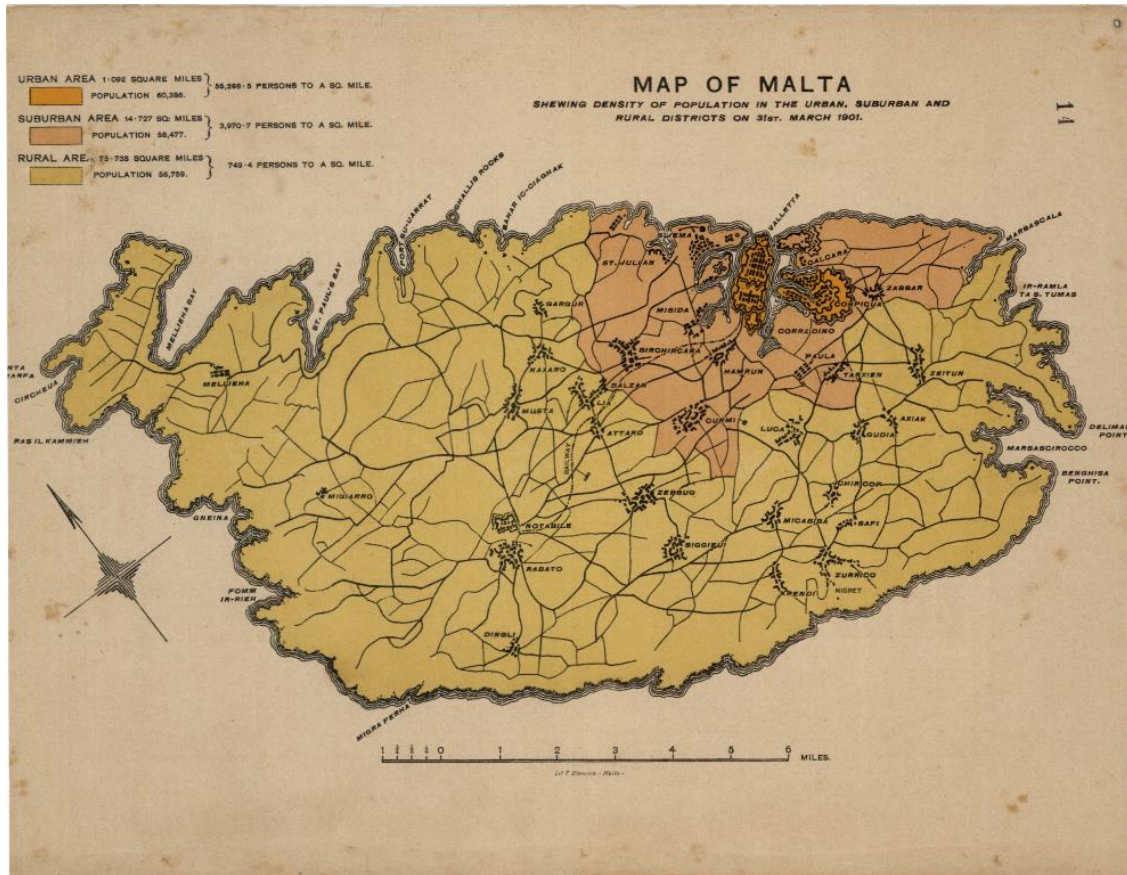


Fig. 28. A 1901 map of Malta showing the cities, the suburbs and the countryside.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Dudley Buxton asserted that if Malta were to be divided along a line west of Għargħur, Naxxar, Mosta, Mdina, Rabat and Qrendi, the areas east and west of such a line would be almost equal in size, but in 1911 the western – rural – area contained only 5,737 inhabitants whereas the eastern area – urban and suburban – had the large number of 183,132.³⁶ This leads us to conclude that

³³ Ganado, 245.

³⁴ P. P. Castagna, *Malta Bil Ghzejer Tahha u Li Ghadda Min Ghaliha*, (La Valetta, T. Busuttill, 1865), 27.

³⁵ Paul Caruana Galizia on the other hand states that the change in Malta's economic character had happened centuries earlier, when, after 1530, the Knights Hospitallers started a shift of labour out of agriculture and into shipbuilding and shiprepair activities. Caruana Galizia, 45.

³⁶ L. H. Dudley Buxton, 'Malta; An Anthropogeographical Study', *Geographical Review*, xiv, 1 (1924), 75-87.

non-agricultural employment became more dominant in the Maltese economy and a considerable number of internal migrants were agricultural labourers. They flocked to the the harbour towns which became the epicentre of commercial activity focused around a highly demanding dockyard, leading to the depletion of farmhands in the rural areas which in turn inversely affected the price of labour. Because of the capital concentration and population growth, the growing urban area started overtaking the countryside in importance and became the main determinant of social and economic change.³⁷ The peasants' small producers' world started becoming a mere segment of a world very differently structured.

Amidst all this internal migration, peasant communities were able to maintain, as Geertz calls it, 'intense social unity and marked cultural distinctiveness against the background of a nationally-centred society', as, in contrast, the rural areas experienced little transformation.³⁸ Whilst in 1842, the population formed 34.9% of the total inhabitants, by 1901 it declined to 33.7%.³⁹ In the first decade of the 20th century, the main rural villages retained over 83% of their native-born population, including 86.93% in Rabat, 93.05 in Mġarr, 86.11% in Dingli, 87% in Siġġiewi, 81.67% in Gudja and 83.28% in Qrendi.⁴⁰ While giving rise to an active mercantile class in the harbour area, this socio-demographic feature accelerated the consolidation of the family farm and the rural areas and affirmed the individualism of the peasants.⁴¹ This phenomenon directly led to two divergent groups of people in Malta as countrymen, indeed, are often physically different from townsmen. Even when there is no difference of race, colour, language or religion, the former's behaviour and costumes were different. By the inter-war period, a sharp distinction between town and country had come to be; two distinct micro-nations had been forged as a result of this paradigm. The local urban-rural spectrum was then represented as a difference between an outward-looking, more 'anglicised' community centred around Grand Harbour and the northern littoral of Marsamxett Creek as opposed to an inward-looking interior, where family and communal affiliations and social and religious devotion tended to be stronger.

³⁷ Shanin (1966), 5-27.

³⁸ Geertz, 1-41.

³⁹ Chircop (1993), 15-16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

It seems worthwhile at this point to mention one prevalent feature of land tenure in Malta. Inter-war Malta had around 11,000 farmers, but half of this amount actually worked full time.⁴² They had big families, and the farm was the family economical unit. The economic size for a farm holding was about 25 tumoli. This was the area needed to enable a wholetime farmer to support himself with a wife and three children. For a long time, holdings were shrinking in size and were still doing so by the inter-war period. This was due to the prevailing custom of giving a piece of land to a daughter as dowry and dividing the family land between all sons on the death of the father. This process of land fragmentation was aggravated by the fact that most holdings were already in several separated plots and the offspring usually insisted on having each a share of each plot. With this intense parcelling-out of land from one generation to the next, peasant households came to form the basic unit of agricultural production.⁴³ As farmer-proprietors increased in number, they began to make use of their own internal family kinship for assistance. This kinship network became the backbone of a stable household agriculture, which made hired agricultural labour increasingly unnecessary. Therefore, agricultural labourers came to form the increasing number of unemployed which created so much concern in the higher levels of the administration.⁴⁴ The only work available for them came to be found on larger farms which normally still did not exceed 30 acres. Generally, a farmer with ten tumoli of land was a whole-time farmer and by the mid-1940s, the average was about eleven tumoli.⁴⁵ A farmer with less than ten tumoli had to have other occupations to supplant his earnings. It was these whole-time farmers that were generally in debt. As has been already explained, this fluctuating proportion of agricultural labourers determined the wages forked out by peasant farmers for the former's services.

By the inter-war period, Malta's labour-land ratio was already high. In its attempt to address this land hunger conundrum, Government turned to emigration, which had been a safety-valve of sorts for decades.⁴⁶ Agriculture in peacetime tends to suffer from excess resources and in early twentieth century

⁴² Ganado, 246.

⁴³ Chircop (1993), 17

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁴⁶ Emigration of peasant farmers had been strong in the previous century. The inter-war period saw a continuation of this migratory experience.

Malta, the abundance of labourers led to them being viewed as a surplus to requirements. Cultivable land became extremely limited due to population expansion and soil deterioration and this oversupply of agricultural labour came to be keenly felt especially during the inter-war period. The population had been increasing in a fairly rapid manner since the 1880s, but since economic opportunities from the 1890s onwards were not rising in step, unemployment at the turn of the century was high. In 1920, Dawson Shepherd could not specifically calculate the actual working population employed in the sector as so many combined agricultural work with other labours.⁴⁷ He concluded that 'probably more people than are actually necessary pass their time in the fields.'⁴⁸ The spectre of overpopulation had confounded the government for decades and, coupled with the absence of a developing industrial sector which would have offered eventually an alternative form of employment, the choice for many was clear enough: leave or starve. As such, the extreme population density had to be relieved to some extent by emigration. The most common reason provided by prospective emigrants on their passport applications were either 'in search of employment' or 'work.' The ones who fared the best in distant lands were the skilled labourers, specifically, ex-Royal Dockyard men and agriculturalists, hardy pioneers who gravitated towards the two most successful settlements, the US⁴⁹ and Australia.⁵⁰ In the process, the local agricultural sector was bleeding its workers. Attached to these two types of emigrants and in much worse condition were the unskilled and landless labourers, who, young or old, had to support their families. Squeezed out of the job market, they cast their look elsewhere and sailed around the Mediterranean basin, especially French North Africa and most commonly, as far away as Australia in search of work, but rarely made permanent settlers. The following three photographs are but a snapshot of the common emigrant forced in seeking employment opportunities on the other sides of the

⁴⁷ The report of the 1912 commission stipulated that the number of persons employed in agriculture was 15,2000 (11,905 males and 3,295 females). Since a large number of small holders combined agriculture with other employments, were they to be included in the calculation, the agricultural population would have largely exceeded the previous figures. GMR 727, NAM, Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic position and Judicial procedure of Malta.

⁴⁸ Dawson Shepherd, 10.

⁴⁹ Outward movement to the US was practically stopped by the quota under the Immigration Restriction Act of 1921.

⁵⁰ Henry Casolani, *Awake Malta or The Hard Lesson of Emigration*, (Malta, Government Printing Press, 1930), 19.

Empire. Farmers Nicola Debrincat⁵¹ from Għarb and Joseph Schembri from Casal Axiak⁵² chose to make the journey to Australia in the 1920s. Carmel Vella⁵³, a sixteen-year-old farm-labourer from Limbordin did the same thing in 1939. Age was not a determining factor, as both old and young were forced to sail elsewhere for survival.



Figs. 29, 30 & 31. (From left to right) Nicola Debrincat, Joseph Schembri and Carmel Vella, inter-war emigrants to Australia who had previously worked in the Maltese agricultural sector.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Another factor which has to be taken into consideration in relation to the inhabitants of a militarised outcrop – as was Malta – is the point of contact between the local peasant farmers and the ever-increasing number of troops. Whereas in England military manoeuvres took place on Salisbury Plain on land acquired for the purpose, in Malta, these exercises occurred on beaches, garigue, barren and uncultivated land and also farmland. The militarisation of the Island served to amplify the intangible distance peasant families in the countryside felt in their dealings with Government. As early as 1825, the first Governor of Malta Sir Thomas Maitland decreed that British troops had to have the benefit of ‘permissive trespass’⁵⁴, meaning they could encroach, against payment of so-called collateral damages, on the estates of Maltese peasants

⁵¹ NAM, MFA 01, 1849/1923.

⁵² NAM, MFA 01, 13/1927.

⁵³ NAM, MFA 01, 25891/1939.

⁵⁴ *Malta Government Gazette*, 9 November 1825.

while conducting field drills.⁵⁵ Subsequent governors had never thought it necessary to legislate on such military practice, because the local peasantry had continued to accept it 'on mere sufferance'⁵⁶, or better on the condition that the Fortress Compensation Officers would pay them – in the opinion of a legal advisor – 'exorbitant monies'.⁵⁷ Route marches in the countryside were customary as much as they were destructive. Nor was it uncommon for the army in Malta to conduct artillery practice on possibly the most isolated point in the archipelago. In the 1920s, the artillery used Comino as target practice – firing from both Malta and Gozo – forcing farmers into leaving the small island for their safety. Marija Said remembered the following:

*Meta kont tifla niftakar li l-Ingliži kienu jagħtuna xelin kull wieħed kuljum biex jeħduna Għawdex biex huma joqgħodu jisparaw mit-Torri l-Abjad fuq Kemmuna. Tispicča biex ma tkunx tista' taħdem l-għalqa. Jafu jagħmlu l-ħsara.*⁵⁸

In 1923, the Nominated Council passed legislation prohibiting the Maltese from entering into military-occupied lands – the Trespass Ordinance⁵⁹ – which irritated some local farmers so much that they utterly refused to deal with the Fortress Compensation Officer.⁶⁰ By contrast, they and other landowners had stayed quiet in exchange for adequate compensation even when they had suffered from expropriations for development purposes⁶¹, comprising the recent building of a military aerodrome.⁶² The military authorities announced that they would move legislation to regularise the situation after farmers started to put up 'Out of Bounds' notices on their lands.⁶³ Turning to what James C. Scott called 'weapons of the weak'⁶⁴, farmers turned to initiating peasant resistance, albeit most simply resigned themselves to their mischance in the face of the military

⁵⁵ Raymond Mangion, 'Aspects on forces of influence by persons and groups under Malta's first responsible government', in *The Quest for Authenticity and Human Dignity: A Festschrift in honour of Professor George Grima on his 70th birthday*, Emanuel Agius and Hector Scerri (eds.), Faculty of Theology, University of Malta, Malta, 2015, 303-337.

⁵⁶ NAM, MIG – 156/1927.

⁵⁷ NAM, HOM – 215/1924.

⁵⁸ Steve Borg, *Il-Maltin: Għemilhom, Drawwiethom, Ġrajjiethom. It-Tieni Volum* (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2018), xxix.

⁵⁹ *Malta Government Gazette*, 15 December, 1922.

⁶⁰ NAM, MIG – 156/1927.

⁶¹ NAM, MIG – 230/1926.

⁶² NAM, MIG – 4649/1921; NAM, MIG – 8/1922.

⁶³ NAM, MIG – 98/1925

⁶⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1985), 29.

machine. The Maltese political parties polarized the issue from the very moment – 17 May 1926 – the Nominated Council convened to impose what the Governor called a ‘praedial servitude’ – a right of way through the property of Maltese farmers in favour of the military services.⁶⁵ In a military fief, held solely for its central position in relation to trade routes, the rights of the lowliest inhabitants were outweighed by imperial needs. On 4 Feb. 1927, Governor Congreve promulgated Ordinance I⁶⁶ – to incorporate into Maltese law an old Armed Services practice in relation to field drills and artillery manoeuvres – despite the fact that the Legislative Assembly and the Senate passed unanimously two resolutions of condemnation.⁶⁷ Congreve’s legal advisor had reckoned military practices in Malta to be ‘as frequent as fox-hunting goes on in England.’⁶⁸

The War Office and Army Council forcibly drove the Military Training Ordinance into the Maltese legal system and the peasant farmers were pressured in the name of the law to accept their circumstances. Following Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the scare over an invasion of Malta, this quandary was intensified to a whole new level. Military exercises and route marching in the country became the order of the day. The recent ‘Emergency’ was the cause of approximately 180 claims, amounting to £920, for compensation for damages, principally from farmers.⁶⁹ Many of these cases arose through farmers being denied access to their fields owing to barbed wire entanglements erected around the perimeter. The destruction of farmers’ highly-prized and hard-tilled crops caused a furore, yet a brigadier declared that compensation claims were settled to the satisfaction of all concerned, a matter of great local importance in retaining the good will of the inhabitants and ensuring their ‘loyal cooperation’ with the movement of troops over their private lands.⁷⁰ Far from securing loyalty and cooperation, these perpetual conditions drove a wedge between sections of the peasant population and the state.

By the 1930s, most farmers found themselves in a depressing state. Stockdale had dubbed them ‘debt-slaves’.⁷¹ It was common for them to hand

⁶⁵ Mangion, 303-337.

⁶⁶ *Malta Government Gazette*, 4 February 1927.

⁶⁷ Mangion, 303-337.

⁶⁸ NAM, MIG – 98/1925.

⁶⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3007/1936.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Stockdale, 30.

over a portion of their harvest to their landlords to cover rents, while it was estimated that the majority were in debt to the *pitkali*.

A final note should be dedicated to the peasant farmer's attitude. Paul Caruana Galizia stipulates that successive colonial administrations did attempt, at various points and in various forms to modernize the sector, in many cases the stumbling block having been the farmer's much-maligned 'conservatism'.⁷² Some authors summarized the situation at the start of the nineteenth century as follows:

Agricultural practices were highly conservative: the Maltese preferred to adhere to the customary practices of their ancestors, rather than experiment with new farming methods. This suggests that, in their role as newcomers, the British had not persuaded the Maltese that they had any superior skill or knowledge to impart.⁷³

It seems the general term analysts preferred to make use of when describing the farmers' attitude was 'conservative'. John Borg concurred⁷⁴ whereas the Department of Agriculture's wartime report highlighted the farmers' 'innate conservatism' and traditional reluctance in accepting innovations.⁷⁵ The Honorary General-Secretary of the NFU conceded the farmer's mentality as having been 'ultra-conservative'⁷⁶, having added years later that 'the farmers have always been considered by the townsman as an unpleasant lot of grumblers.'⁷⁷ These regurgitated excuses were put forward without most writers having ever understood the economic and socio-climactic context which farmers had to survive in. True, peasant farmers were creatures of habit who, because of familial relations and kinship, saw fit to give weight to their forebears' farming experiences, however outdated their techniques might have been. Also, historically, peasants were enormously aware of their distinction from, and almost always their subalternity to and their oppression by the minorities of the

⁷² Caruana Galizia, 57.

⁷³ Barry Hough & Howard Davis, *Coleridge's Laws: A Study of Coleridge in Malta* (London, Open Book Publishers, 2010), 60.

⁷⁴ John Borg, 'Agriculture and Horticulture in Malta', in *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated. Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial, Facts, Figures and Resources*, Allister Macmillan (ed.), Midsea Books Ltd, Malta, 1985, 224-239.

⁷⁵ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁷⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 1379/1940.

⁷⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 6733/1942.

elites, whom they did not like or trust. But, to solely underline this attitude as having been the only counterproductive barrier to not securing better farming methods or otherwise is to miss the mark completely. Dawson Shepherd attempted to expound as to why peasant farmers had such a frame of mind:

The Maltese farmer had been called very conservative but all farmers, uneducated or educated, are conservative: generally they cannot afford to be otherwise. Convince the farmer that what you want him to do will result in increased and immediate profit to him, and his conservatism will vanish. The farmer will not 'take a telling', but he will 'take a showing' provided he is convinced it is not faked. Inaccurate himself and prone to exaggeration, he is apt to discount much of what he is told by others. Show the farmer you can produce more money from an acre than he can – not always an easy matter at first, for agricultural experiments are full of disappointment, show him that you can continue doing so and he will not be slow to follow your example.⁷⁸

It is safe to assume that the basic economic relations of peasant life were – and still are – directly related to an environment characterised by extreme variables. Few factors for productive labour were ever available to the peasant farmer and while the major factor of production has always been land, in Malta this was severely lacking. The population had considerably surpassed its sustainable limit and having perplexed Government for decades, the traditional safety valve for this problem was emigration. For those who stayed, the increasing fragmentation of holdings, the isolation of farms, and the consolidation of the household were primary factors in determining the individualism of the peasants.

When the peasant farmer was able to combine a significant amount of land and labour in a particular wealth-generating endeavour, productivity was likely to be extremely low due to limiting factors such as technology and capital.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the peasant farmer was powerless against many threats which thrived in his environment. These were disease, exploitation and lastly, injustice at the hands of the powerful, in this case Government and its colonial agenda in the expansion of the military footprint throughout the Islands. Relatively little could be done about this situation and the peasant farmer's lifestyle often included themes of misfortune and vulnerability. As George Foster neatly

⁷⁸ Dawson Shepherd, 27.

⁷⁹ In the late-1930s, there was a total of six tractors being used in Malta. NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

summarized it, the outlook this situation engendered in the peasant is the 'Image of Limited Good'. Within this image

peasants viewed their social, economic and natural universes – their total environment – as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship, love, manliness and honour, respect, status, power and influence, security and safety, *exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply*, as far as the peasant is concerned. Not only do these and all other “good things” exist in finite and limited quantities, but in addition there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities. [...] If “Good exists in limited amounts which cannot be expanded, and if the system is closed, it follows that an individual or a family can improve a position only at the expense of others.⁸⁰

All of the aforementioned factors contributed in producing in the peasant farmer a conservative, cynical, distrustful and superstitious worker whose social and economic stature had not changed for centuries – the bad old days.⁸¹ Despite the increased attention paid to the economic problems of farming by the late inter-war period, rural peasants could reasonably have considered themselves as second-class citizens. It is this prism which one has to look through when analysing the peasant farmers' relationship with the colonial government and the survival strategies employed during the Second World War.

The National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo

The National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo⁸² occupies an ambiguous position in Malta's wartime history.⁸³ A fully-fledged organisation by the interwar years, the outbreak of war served to catapult the NFU into the intertwined arenas of national politics and national security. Being the purported gatekeeper of peasant farmers and those with interests in agriculture, the unsurprisingly strong profile the Union possessed during the war afforded it a seat at the table alongside the policy-makers whereby members of its executive were given

⁸⁰ George M. Foster, 'Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good', *La Revista Mexicana de Psicoanálisis, y Psicología*, i, 1 (1965), 293-314.

⁸¹ NAM, GMR 3784, R. Cirillo, *Report on the Social Aspects of Maltese Agriculture*, (Malta, Royal University of Malta, July 1959), 18.

⁸² Hereafter, 'NFU' is used interchangeably with 'the Union'.

⁸³ Symbolic of the Union's mostly forgotten wartime role, documentation about the NFU's operations in archival repositories is incredibly sparse.

positions on the food distribution, agricultural and price boards. Officials liaised with the Department of Agriculture on a daily basis whereas individuals in leadership roles were simultaneous members of the Council of Government during a national crisis, hence giving the NFU – and peasant farmers – bargaining power in light of its position as the sentry to farmer-members then living in the rural areas and as a stakeholder in food production. Appeasement and collaboration make for strong bedfellows in times of crisis. After their interests and their problems had been brushed aside for decades, the NFU's rank and file were suddenly thrust high in the list of colonial priorities, with the powers that be having eyed cooperation in the name of security.

The potential power of the traditional peasantry is enormous, but its actual strength and influence are much more limited. The first major reason for this is its constant, and in general, quite realistic, sense of its weakness and inferiority when compared to the upper strata of society. The inferiority is social and cultural, for instance, as illiterates against the educated, hence the importance to peasant movements of locally resident and friendly intellectuals.⁸⁴ In most cases, the village intellectuals were more often than not whittled down to the primary schoolteacher and, in a predominantly religious country such as Malta, the parish priest, whose role during the war will be expanded upon in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Because of their overwhelming illiteracy and their occupying the position on the lowest rung of the social ladder, the peasant farmers in Malta had always been incapable of enforcing their interests in their own name. Ideally, they turned to the class of the non-peasants for a degree of political representation: white-collar workers in Government, merchants and politicians, the last of whom had their own agenda to satiate.⁸⁵

It can be said that the political impact of the peasantry was generally marked by its basic socio-political weaknesses. The many groups and communities did not have any political representation until the start of the Trade Union Council (TUC) just after the end of the First World War. Yet, the peasantry had its socio-political points of strength in being the main food producer, its dispersion in rural

⁸⁴ Hobsbawm, 3-22.

⁸⁵ Politicians offered themselves as claimants to the guardianship of the toiling masses and their interests, one of whom was Enrico Mizzi and his links to the *Società dei Piloti*.

areas and its numerical size. Its monopoly of food production proved of crucial importance in times of crisis. The spread of the countryside, as Shanin wrote, could easily become a stronghold from which peasant farmers were able to negotiate their economic interests.⁸⁶

The NFU – *Għaqda Nazzjonali tal-Bdiewa ta' Malta u Għawdex* – is listed as having been established in 1919 by Prof. John Borg and Mr Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà⁸⁷ – of whom we shall get to later – however, the Union's Council reportedly met for the first time on 24 June 1921.⁸⁸



Fig. 32. Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

The Union's aims were plenty but its chief objective was

⁸⁶ Shanin (1966), 5-27.

⁸⁷ In the 15 Jan. 1943 edition of *Il-Bidwi*, Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà is listed as having been the one to set up the Union, whereas in Prof. John Borg's obituary two years later, the latter was identified as having been its rightful founder: '*...u kien għalhekk sejjah lis-Sur Karm Zammit-Marmarà u t-tnejn flimkien kienu waqfqu din l-għaqda; iżda għandna nistqarru illi l-professur Ġanni Borg kien dak li holoqha u li għalhekk għandu jitqies bħala l-Fundatur tagħha. Il-Bidwi*, 15 May, 1945; Report by William K. H. Campbell. NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

⁸⁸ NAM, CSG 02 – 1249/1921.

To promote the interests of those engaged in farming and agriculture in all its branches, in the Islands of Malta and Gozo, by facilitating the co-operation of farmers and others interested, with a view to the protection of agriculture as an industry, by furthering legislation which shall, in the opinion of the Union, be sound and beneficial and by opposing legislation which shall, in the opinion of the Union, be prejudicial to the interests of farmers and agriculture, and by any other lawful means which, in the opinion of the Union, shall be conducive to the attainment of this object.⁸⁹

Membership was not solely reserved for male farmers as the list below shows:⁹⁰

- Farmers, whether owners or tenants of the land they cultivated;
- Farmers' wives and sons or daughters over 18 years old, engaged in the industry;
- Persons employed in the breeding and rearing of farm-animals as well as their wives and sons or daughters over 18 years of age;
- Poultry farmers;
- Cheese makers and milk sellers, including makers of fresh cheese *ricotta*, dried cheese etc;
- Fruit-growers and natural wine makers and their wives and their sons or daughters over 18 years old;
- Gardeners employed in vegetable-growing;
- Persons interested in agriculture;

The NFU had no connection to other trade unions neither in Malta nor abroad. Were it to have done so, it would have been barred from inclusion in the newly-set up TUC, entry into which the NFU was granted after having lodged a formal protest at its initial exclusion.⁹¹ The TUC stipulated that unions were to have three basic qualities.⁹² When the first Maltese TUC was elected on 16 Sept. 1921, the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ For more information on the Trade Union Council, see *Responsibility and Power in Inter-war Malta. Book One: Endemic Democracy (1919-1930)* by Dominic Fenech.

⁹² 1) Improving the conditions and upholding members' interests; 2) Improving hours of work, wages and conditions of employment; 3) maintaining good relations between the employer and the employee.

NFU then consisted of 852 members and 9 delegates⁹³, with most members having been land-owning farmers.⁹⁴

The Union was led by a President heading a Council which in turn controlled a selection of committees throughout both islands made up of parishioners in a particular district where there was a government elementary school. Each committee had to have a president, a secretary and a treasurer holding the offices for a year, although other positions were allowed to be set up if the committee saw fit to do so. They were to meet four times a year. For Gozo, a Sub-Council was constituted on the same lines of the main Council and by June 1921, district committees had been formed in most of the villages around the Islands.⁹⁵ The number of members and the fact that Gozo was represented, given its more often than not palpable isolation from Malta, shows that farmers had indeed been waiting for representation within the harness of a trade union.



Fig. 33. Notary Lewis Gauci Forno, the first president of the National Farmers' Union of Malta and Gozo.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

⁹³ Every union within the T.U.C. was to have one representative for every one hundred members, and another one for every fraction of hundred over fifty. Joseph Borg, 'Maltese Trade Unions (3): The Setting Up of a Trade Union Council', in *Civilization*, 3, Gulf Publishing Ltd., Malta, 60-63.

⁹⁴ Dominic Fenech, *Responsibility and Power in Inter-war Malta. Book One: Endemic Democracy (1919-1930)* (Malta, Publishers Enterprising Group (PEG) Ltd., 2005), 103.

⁹⁵ i) Tarxien and Paola, ii) Notabile and Rabato, iii) Attard, Lia and Balzan, iv) Sta. Venera and Hamrun, v) Zeitun, vi) Melleha, vii) Migjaro, viii) Birchircara, ix) St. Paul's Bay, x) Gudja, xi) Axiak, xii) Siggieui, xiii) Zebbug and xiv) Victoria, xv) Xaghra, and xvi) Nadur in Gozo. NAM, CSG 02 – 1249/1921.

Initially having been set up to lobby in favour of farmers' interests, the NFU hit the ground running. One example in which the Union applied direct action and took a confrontational approach in its role, was the attempted breakup of the import-export cabal which had by then cornered the market and was, according to the former, 'detrimental to the interests of the farmers and the whole population.'⁹⁶ In 1921, the Malta Government sought to get permission from the Imperial Government for a Union representative to travel to Ireland to buy the Champion variety potato for sale and distribution in Malta, a request which was acceded to.⁹⁷ Lewis Gauci Forno and Dr Giuseppe Micallef – respectively President and Treasurer of the NFU – proceeded to import on their own funds a trial consignment of two hundred tonnes of seed potatoes during the sowing season of 1921-1922 as the Union had no sufficient funds at its disposal.⁹⁸ The ring of importers in Malta, as well as the ring of exporters in Ulster had to be 'definitely broken...in the interest of the Farmers Union, and indeed of the farming community.'⁹⁹ Upon the arrival of the NFU's consignment, the 'ring' brought down its price to below that offered by the NFU. After the Union's stock had been exhausted, the importers jacked up their prices to more than the original price their seeds had initially been on sale for, in trying to recoup their expenses and to make an additional profit. Whereas the farmers profited by the difference not only on the two hundred tonnes imported by the NFU, but also on the quantity sold by the ring at the reduced price during the time when the Union's consignment was being sold, no direct action was taken by Government to do away with the ring and its 'evil' consequences.¹⁰⁰ By the 1922-1923 sowing season, the NFU had initiated contact with and secured the help of the Ulster Farmers Union. It succeeded in breaking the control local importers had on the shipping of seed of potatoes from Ireland via Liverpool to Malta. This time, the importation of seed potatoes became free for all and local farmers saved at least £30,000, half of which would have gone to the Ulster group as their share of the booty.¹⁰¹ Operating at a loss from the first consignment, Gauci Forno and Micallef

⁹⁶ NAM, HOM 02 244-1923.

⁹⁷ The term quoted was 'seed yellow champions.' NAM, HOM 01 – 102/1921.

⁹⁸ NAM, HOM 02 – 244/1923.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ This also meant that the NFU prevented £15,000 from going irretrievably out of the Island. *Ibid.*

could not sustain their undertaking and the local importers were given free rein to sell their produce at a high price in 1924. Although they gave a splendid example of public spirit by undertaking the difficult operation and financing it at their own charge and risk, Government did not see fit to reimburse the NFU's expenses, but was fully cognizant of the potential conditions which the Union had introduced.¹⁰² The NFU had deliberately announced itself in local industrial relations by chipping away at the apparently not so impregnable ring of the Irish exporters and the local importers of agricultural produce. The introduction of a new player in the agricultural sector could have altered the private sector's monopoly over the market.

On the educational front, the village committees were accorded the use of elementary schools outside of school hours, to be used as debating and discussion centres for members of the Union and to give agricultural talks to the public. Much work was being done along the grassroots level to publicize the agricultural sector's pitfalls among the populace. However, years earlier, Government had made it abundantly clear that since the Union's scope was non-political – underlined as in the original document – only topics pertaining to agriculture were to be discussed.¹⁰³ Strickland claimed that in allowing a government school to be used by the NFU, Government was discriminating against his party by allowing electioneering facilities to his opponents, as, according to Frendo, the Union was back then 'pro-nationalist'.¹⁰⁴ However, Strickland could not be faulted for worrying, as, apart from promoting 'sympathetic understanding and good feeling' among farming-centric individuals, the NFU did have a political agenda – as most unions are bound to – which was to 'combat' electoral candidates whose views were not aligned with the Union's while upholding – promoting – those who shared the same interests.¹⁰⁵

By the late 1930s, the Union was well within the grasp of the CP with Lord Strickland himself having been elected president, along with Armando Mifsud as his vice-president. In 1938, the constitution of the Union's Managing Committee stood as follows:¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ NAM, CSG 01 – 2833/1921.

¹⁰⁴ Frendo (2013), 184.

¹⁰⁵ NAM, CSG 02 – 1249/1921.

¹⁰⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 460/1938.

President: The Right Honourable Lord Strickland
 Vice-President: Mr. Armando Mifsud, L.P.
 Technical Advisor: Prof. John Borg, M.D.
 Honorary Secretary: Mr A. Zammit McKeon, L.P.
 General Secretary: (Temporarily vacant pending Government's reply to representations)
 Treasurer: Mr J. Bonello
 Assistant Treasurer: Mr John Cascun
 Propaganda Officers: Mr A. Zammit McKeon, L.P.
 Mr J. Baldacchino
 (Mr Joseph Olivieri Munroe¹⁰⁷ had also been nominated by the Council).



Figs. 34 & 35. Lord Gerald Strickland (left), and Armando Mifsud, respectively President and Vice-President of the NFU in 1938.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Upon its constitution, it had been estimated by the first president that the NFU was to be the strongest organisation of the sort existing in the colony.¹⁰⁸ For trade

¹⁰⁷ In certain documentation, Olivieri Munroe's last name is sometimes written as 'Munro'.

¹⁰⁸ NAM, CSG 02 – 1249/1921.

unions, strength lies in numbers: the bigger, the better. As has been said elsewhere, by the interwar period, the farming population hovered around the 11,000 mark.¹⁰⁹ Having had an initial 800-plus members at the constitution of the TUC was a good start for a new union professing to fight on behalf of the oldest industry in the colony. However, the evidence unearthed tells a different story as by 1938, the Union had shrivelled to a shadow of its former self. The presence of a newspaper mogul and former prime minister¹¹⁰ heading the chain of command was not enough to command significant influence as, by 1938, the NFU was lobbying for a place on the Agricultural Board.¹¹¹ From hundreds of paid-up members, the Union's ranks had withered to an abysmal 267 members who hailed from seven villages, the majority of whom resided and/or operated in Siġġiewi.¹¹² No committee was operating on Gozo. As a result, the NFU could not, at that time, genuinely profess to be the voice of peasant farmers throughout the Islands. In fact, Rev. Edgar Salomone, the parish priest of Mġarr who we shall get to in the final chapter, had sharply rebuked the NFU by sarcastically inquiring about the whereabouts of the 'much vaunted Farmers union', conspicuous by its absence and its deafening silence on farming matters.¹¹³ No members hailed from the priest's area which lends credence to the theory that the Union could never have had in any realistic way sounded any objection to Government's agricultural policies negatively impacting the farmers in the locality or those then living in the northern part of the island – including Gozo – owing to its small size and its diminished influence. The following is the breakdown of the 1938 numbers:

Village	Number of 'farmers'
Rabat	10
Żebbuġ	34
Siġġiewi	181
Żejtun	24
Għaxaq	13

¹⁰⁹ Ganado, 246.

¹¹⁰ The correct term back then was Head of the Ministry.

¹¹¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 460/1938.

¹¹² Malta Government Gazette, 1938 supplements, XXI.

¹¹³ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

Marsa	1
Valletta	2
Tarxien	1

However, in this case, the term ‘organisation’ would be more suitable in describing the NFU rather than it having been a traditional trade union. Judging by the data provided in the previous table, the majority of members of the NFU were peasant-farmers. Although, one member who hailed from Żejtun was Joseph (more commonly known to as Ġużè) Orlando Smith. He was an author, newspaper editor, trade unionist, general secretary of the Labour Party (1924-1928), a commission agent for agricultural produce and, from the start of World War II until his retirement, attached to the agricultural department as a district official. Another member who hailed from Valletta was Captain Charles Pace, a merchant. It would be somewhat out of place to imagine a trade union accepting importers of agricultural produce and big landowning farmers – who had their own own economic interests – rubbing shoulders with small-time peasant-farmers making up the rank and file in the same set-up.

It is however apposite to aptly introduce an individual who played a noteworthy role both in the NFU and wartime agriculture in Malta. Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà originally worked in the private sector as an operator for the Eastern Telegraph Company.¹¹⁴ He became deeply interested in agriculture having co-founded the NFU, of which he was appointed Vice-President in 1921.¹¹⁵ In light of his interests and his role in disseminating educational matter on agriculture, he was appointed Honorary Delegate for the Chilean Nitrate Producers’ Association the following year, only relinquishing that post in 1930 when he was appointed Honorary Agricultural Adviser in Malta to Imperial Chemical Industries and Plant Protection Limited.¹¹⁶ Apart from his appointments, he also conducted public talks on farming matters. An example of this was 2 Feb. 1930, when he was assigned the use of the Government Elementary School at Casal Axiaq to lecture the public in the Union’s name about

¹¹⁴ NAM, MFA 01 – 2770/1929.

¹¹⁵ *I-Bidwi*, 15 January 1943.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the cultivation of potatoes and a particular illness then present throughout the islands.¹¹⁷ In 1935, he attended the 11th International Horticultural Congress in Rome and in 1938, he attended by invitation the Great International Horticultural Congress in Berlin, at which he was elected Chairman of the 4th Session.¹¹⁸ He was appointed as Honorary General-Secretary of the NFU by Lord Strickland in 1939, acting on the suggestion of Joseph Olivieri Munroe.¹¹⁹ The Union's official headquarters was Villa Chelsea in Birkirkara, Zammit-Marmarà's residence.¹²⁰



Fig. 36. NFU letterhead.

Source: National Archives of Malta.



Fig. 37. Lord Gerald Strickland (left) with Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà (in white suit) at an agricultural show in the 1930s.

Source: *Strickland House, Book One: 1921-1935*, Victor Aquilina.

¹¹⁷ He had also strangely expressed his intention of instituting a 'society of all the farmers' presumably to help them in their endeavours. NAM, Pol. 5, Vol. 36. 2 Feb. 1930.

¹¹⁸ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 January 1943.

¹¹⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 6827/1944.

¹²⁰ NAM, MFA 01 – 2770/1929; NAM, MFA 01 – 29413-1945.

The German invasion of Poland on 1 Sept. 1939, set in motion panic buying all over the Islands which practically emptied shelves in grocery stores. Dissatisfaction among farmers was rising in step with the steadily rising cost of foodstuffs. Strong feelings existed all over the country that while farmers were eager to play their part in providing the maximum amount of food, Government was doing nothing to safeguard their interests. Complaints had been made at one particular Union meeting that the maximum price of some of the local produce was fixed so low that returns to farmers were not economic, and unless a change was enacted, it would be difficult to maintain the normal rate of production, still less to increase it.¹²¹ The effect of this situation was that, in particular, pig and egg production will have had to cease unless protected by the Government, as the farmer could not continue to produce at a loss. This predicament was pushing the farmer into the tighter grips of the money-lenders.¹²² Bringing up the farmers' self-esteem – or lack thereof – Zammit-Marmarà stated that

The farmer must be made to feel that his fight is being immediately and sympathetically considered by the Government, Something tangible should be done at once if we are to avoid the deadly disappointment which may too easily be our discovery when it is too late to do anything about it.¹²³

In short, a balance needed to be struck between the price being paid to the producer and that paid by the consumer, unless the State was to have to settle problems with the food producers at a time when foodstuffs were of the essence. In light of this, Borg was selected as the NFU representative on the Food and Commerce Control Board in May 1940.¹²⁴ Yet, starved of a stable standard of living for decades, it was this unbridgeable facet of wartime logistics and financial returns which was to partly characterise the standoff between the State and peasant farmers for much of the war.

Lord Strickland died in August 1940 and while ownership of his newspapers passed to his daughter Mabel, the CP's leadership was taken up by his nephew Roger Strickland, as was the Union's top post.¹²⁵ The younger Strickland was a

¹²¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 1379/1940.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 1299/1940.

¹²⁵ Hereafter, the surname 'Strickland' will be taken to refer to Roger.

merchant, had acted as private secretary to his uncle, served in the army and had for a period worked for the *Times of Malta*. He got successfully elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1927 and again in 1939.¹²⁶ He had declared in the Council of Government that he was afforded the luxury of speaking with a certain degree of authority on agriculture. As a child, he used to spend six months of the year out in the country among farmers, thus giving him the opportunity of understanding their mentality and what they were 'trying to get at.'¹²⁷ His father was the Noble Charles Strickland, one of the principal pig breeders in Malta during the First World War.¹²⁸ Although Strickland was President of the NFU, as General-Secretary, Zammit-Marmarà was *de facto* leader. He was in charge of the day-to-day running of the Union and as Agricultural Liaison Officer was the chief broker between the agricultural department, the NFU and the farmers.



Fig. 38. Roger Strickland, leader of the Constitutional Party and President of the NFU.

Source: *Strickland House: Times of Malta at war and Labour Party's sweeping victory. Book Two: 1935-1947*, Victor Aquilina.

¹²⁶ Henry Frendo, *Europe and Empire: Culture, Politics and Identity in Malta and the Mediterranean (1912-1946)* (Malta, Midsea Books Ltd., 2012), 690.

¹²⁷ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1941-1943, Third Session, Sitting No. 26, 26th May 1942, 576.

¹²⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 3923/1940.

As tensions of potential war with Fascist Italy were becoming all too real, the Union was afforded a new strategic position, one which it had never been party to before. The toiling masses of rural Malta and Gozo could have been certain of having had the best of both worlds. With Strickland as majority leader in Government and Zammit-Marmarà having been entrusted with propaganda and marketing, it could be construed that, heading to war, farmers had the services of a public official with actual influence in Government, having a say in how the sector ought to have been aided and managed, along with an agricultural expert who had the ear of the agricultural department. It was this triangular collaborative order which, when put to effect, was envisaged to reap significant results. Also, this set-up was advantageous to Government as any potential upheaval in the farming communities could be pre-empted and pacified much earlier. However, Zammit-Marmarà's twin roles as the NFU's lieutenant and agriculture department employee were at odds with each other. The first role required him to further farmers' (mostly financial) interests, which had been, and were destined to be at odds with what the state needed and asked for. The second collaborative position, however, was created to smooth over any differences with the same farmers who he had sworn to negotiate on behalf of, without the State having to draw the short straw. The wartime recommendations of the NFU could be seen as an attempt to forge an active State-farmer 'partnership' in agriculture. However, it has to be said that the principle of partnership was more implicit than explicit, with more emphasis being placed on the needs of the State rather than on the need to strengthen agriculture as such. As was discussed in the first chapter, civic duty was what was expected of farmers, rather than the fulfilment – as equal partners – of a bargain with the State.

The NFU emerged as more than just a legitimate pressure group. Rather than being a trade union in the traditional sense of the word – in taking up a particular labour group's causes – as the siege tightened, the Union effectively operated as an arm of the agricultural department in the name of national security. In taking a two-pronged approach in trying to tackle problems in the farming communities and the agricultural sector, Strickland adopted a strategic role in using his position in Government, while Zammit-Marmarà focused on dealing with the farming folk and their daily issues.

Judging by the correspondence Zammit-Marmarà kept with the authorities, he was well aware of the golden opportunity which the NFU and its members were handed by the war. In a telegram he sent to Lord Lloyd on 8 Sept. 1940, he henceforth declared the NFU's loyalty, stating that Maltese farmers were determined to face any sacrifices and 'to live or die with the British Empire.'¹²⁹ A month later, Gozitan farmers – who in the meantime had set up a NFU committee on Gozo run by a priest – made it known that they wished to be associated with the previous telegram.¹³⁰ The publicity was invaluable, and the executive seemed to have realised that by asserting their position, the NFU was manoeuvred ever closer to the structures of power. Either due to the uncertainty of war, or the public talks then having taken place over the summer throughout Malta and Gozo, by October 1940, the Union's numbers had ballooned to 1,500.¹³¹ Although, at the outset of the year, the NFU had already learnt a great deal in organisational terms. Structures and actors had been put in place early as by this time, village committees were already extant in the rural areas, thereby creating and solidifying an all-reaching farming network throughout the Islands. Superimposed upon the social differences and the cultural barriers of the rural areas, a committee leader, usually a prominent agriculturalist, was put at the head of a group of farmers to relay information up and down the chain of command. He was aided by a treasurer, secretary and other committee members. In this instance, the NFU was better prepared for war than Government. The Department of Agriculture's District Agricultural Officers and the village committees they controlled were still a long way off from being appointed, at least two years after the Union's were. By seizing the initiative, the latter had an advantage over the State in that the NFU could easily get any of its messages across over to farmers before Government ever could. Slow to grasp the ever-changing political landscape, the Government's protracted plan in setting up its own village committees further exposed the chasm between the State and the farmers.

For the year 1941, literature dealing with the Union's operations is sparse. However, following the formation of the Advisory Board of Agriculture in August

¹²⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4132/1940.

¹³⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 4146/1940.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

1941, a greater degree of cooperation between the Government and the NFU was sired. With Strickland having been the second most senior member on the Board – chaired by Baron Depiro D’Amico – the Government adopted a policy of consulting the NFU before any step was taken affecting agriculture.¹³² One member each had to be nominated by the Agrarian Society and the Chamber of Commerce, while another two had to be nominated by the NFU. The Agrarian Society was represented by Zammit-Marmarà, while the NFU put forward Henry Sacco, CP member in the Council of Government and Tony Scott.¹³³

On 3 Mar. 1941, general conscription was introduced.¹³⁴ Whereas Henry Sacco suggested for Government to stop conscripting farmers’ sons and to release those who were in the service already – pleas that were all too common in the farming communities – Strickland stuck to Government policy of letting the agricultural department investigate each individual application of release and to let the official process unfold as it was meant to.¹³⁵ Upon first inspection, this course of action seems to have run counter to what the Union should have been doing, that is securing the full potential of human capital for the function of the agricultural sector during war. However, in an atypical broadcast to farmers on 26 Sep. 1943, Strickland had divulged that his idea was to not only acquire for the colony the ‘honour’ which was due to her – patriotic fervour – but to be on a sound footing to be better placed to fight and negotiate when the time was ripe.¹³⁶

By January 1942, the Union had 2,300 members¹³⁷ while by the following month, the General Council stood as follows¹³⁸:

President:	The Hon. Col. Roger Strickland
Vice-President(s):	The Hon. Dr Henry Sacco & Mr. Armando Mifsud, L.P.
Treasurer:	Mr Paul Bonello

¹³² NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

¹³³ Tony Scott’s original name was Antonio Scotto. He relocated to Gozo at the start of the war and settled in Xaghra with his family. NAM, MFA 01 – 153/1925.

¹³⁴ James Holland, *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege, 1940-1943*, (London, Phoenix, 2004), 137.

¹³⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 1902/1942.

¹³⁶ Strickland also made public his intention of having never wanted conscription for farmers. ‘We have always fought against this policy because we always wanted conscription only for those men who had nothing to do.’ NAM, CSG 01 – 6172/1943.

¹³⁷ Frank Bezzina, *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940-1943* [Updated edition], (Għawdex, A & M Printing, 2020), 410.

¹³⁸ *The Times*, 21 February, 1942.

Hon. General Secretary:	Mr Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà
Assistant Secretaries:	The Noble W. P. Sceberras Trigona and Mr Jos. Bonello
Chief Propaganda Officer & Organiser:	Mr George Zarb
Propaganda Officers:	Mr R. Zammit-Marmarà and Mr J. Portelli
Technical Adviser (and Life Member):	Prof. John Borg
General Adviser:	Mr Joseph Olivieri Munroe

Whereas the Council of the Gozo branch consisted of the following personnel¹³⁹:

President:	Mr Tony Scott
Vice-President:	Joseph Farrugia
Secretary:	Rev. Joseph Camilleri
Assistant Secretary:	Francis Gauci

Arguably, the most pivotal period in the NFU's short existence overlapped with the colony's critical year during the siege and the war in North Africa. The amount of documentation available is somewhat encouraging, yet this has virtually received no recognition in local Second World War literature, with scholarly attention instead having been overwhelmingly focused on the Malta convoys. The failure of the June convoys has already been covered in the first chapter, as were the resultant emergency policies instituted by the agricultural department, one of which was the Cereal Collection Scheme. The necessity of requisitioning the cereal stocks in 1942 was critical. As Gozo turned into a much more indispensable provider, it was in this scenario that the NFU came in and played a significant part.

It was in this context that the Union's village networks were ideally supposed to be put to use. Exploiting the committees would have significantly lessened the problem of communication. In his second quarterly report of 1942, Hirst had written that all the principal villages were visited, not making any distinction between the two islands.¹⁴⁰ The only committee then in force in Gozo was a

¹³⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 2584/1942.

¹⁴⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943

general one for the whole island. There was no criss-cross network of farmers' groups indigenous to every village, so the value of propaganda disseminated in Gozo was of a more considerable nature. In June and July 1942, the Union initiated an intense information campaign in Gozo aimed at making public the colony's dire food situation, hoping to preempt the coming wheat harvest. In a series of public meetings held in nearly all the main squares, Strickland and Zammit-Marmarà divulged that wheat stocks were dangerously low while simultaneously making every effort to convince Gozitan farmers of the essential need of handing over their cereals to the Government. If the Islands were to be forced to capitulate, it was highly unlikely that the Germans¹⁴¹ would have allowed the farmers to keep their wheat or that the bread ration would be maintained at its then existing level.¹⁴² On 7 June, they held public meetings in Rabat, Nadur and Xagħra.¹⁴³ On the 21st, meetings were held in Xewkija and Żebbuġ,¹⁴⁴ followed by others in Għarb and Ta' Kerċem.¹⁴⁵ A week later, another meeting was held in Rabat, followed by another one in Nadur.¹⁴⁶ The point being reiterated was that farmers were on the 'home front' and their contribution to the war effort could not be overestimated.¹⁴⁷

Reflecting the urgency of the situation, the president and general-secretary held more than one meeting on the same day on more than one occasion. Farmers had previously supported themselves with flour but now had to draw bread from the Government at the reduced ration – three-eighths of a rotolo (300g) – which provided far less than the average farmer was accustomed to eating.¹⁴⁸ The Department of Agriculture found farmers were fairly reluctant in selling off their cereal crops; once again, the colonial government viewed farmers as 'typical peasants, uneducated but shrewd and out to protect their interests and those of their families.'¹⁴⁹ This highly skewed outlook which had permeated successive colonial administrations and the agricultural department in their

¹⁴¹ Official documentation mentioned the 'Germans' and not the 'Italians', giving away that the colonial authorities considered the former to have been much more menacing.

¹⁴² NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

¹⁴³ *Il Berka*, 12 June, 1942.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 June, 1942.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 June, 1942.

¹⁴⁶ Bezzina (2020), 422.

¹⁴⁷ In the 3 July, 1942 edition of *Il Berka*, the Department of Agriculture issued a notice in which it gave thanks to all the farmers who had contributed their stocks to the Government, while also appealing to others who still had to give theirs.

¹⁴⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

relations with farmers was carried on into the war, conveniently omitting the fact that this hoarding was a direct result of the low standard of living and other factors which contributed to the farmers' viewpoint, leading these rural communities to hoarding their stocks. Therefore, an appeal to their patriotism unsupported by any other inducement was not likely to succeed.

The patriotic angle along with the financial incentives on offer were rammed home by the two Union officials with the help of specific individuals in certain localities. In Xagħra, Tony Scott, Honorary President of the NFU Gozo branch helped Strickland and Zammit-Marmarà in their campaign. Plausibly, another two individuals who played a significant part in that summer's cereals harvest were Ġorġ Pisani¹⁵⁰ and Kelinu Vella Haber. Pisani, who was gazetted as Assistant Information officer for Gozo on 2 June 1942¹⁵¹ played a role in addressing farmers, having done so on 12 July in Nadur.¹⁵²



Fig. 39. Undated photo of Tony Scott and his wife Adelaide Bonnici.

Source: *Ir-Rifugjati Maltin f'Għawdex fi Żmien il-Gwerra*, Frank & Charles Bezzina.

¹⁵⁰ Pisani wrote a fictional radio play based on his experiences of early summer 1942. Ġorġ Pisani, *Il-Gabra tal-Qamħ: Sketch għal fuq il-microphone* (Malta, A. C. Aquilina & Co., 1945).

¹⁵¹ NWM/GOV/REP/26

¹⁵² Bezzina (2020), 422.

After weeks of having persistently lectured about the situation then unfolding across the channel, inroads were finally made as the speakers succeeded in getting the farmers to hand over 14 tonnes of wheat on 13 July.¹⁵³ Two days later, the same amount was again harvested from Nadur.¹⁵⁴ On the initiative of Kelinu Vella Haber, a NFU branch was set up in June to represent the farmers in Nadur and nearby Qala and Għajnsielem.¹⁵⁵ Although, contrary to safeguarding the interests of farmers who hailed from these villages, this committee was set up with the aim of roping in more grassroots support for Government in its hour of need as attested in a message of 'loyalty and sacrifice'.¹⁵⁶ By mid- July, the Union boasted a little more than 3,000 members.¹⁵⁷



Figs. 40 & 41. (Left) Ġorġ Pisani & (right) Kelinu Vella Haber.

Source: The National Archives of Malta & *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940-1943*, Frank and Charles Bezzina.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ According to Vella Haber, Nadur was the 'most prominent site of Agriculture in the Islands.' NAM, CSG 01 – 2331/1942.

¹⁵⁶ NAM, CSG 01 –2584/1942.

¹⁵⁷ *Il Berka*, 15 July, 1942.



Fig. 42. Geoge Ransley, Acting Commissioner for Gozo 1942-1944.

Source: The National Archives of Malta, Gozo Section.

On 19 July, the NFU and the Information Office had planned to hold a public meeting in Żebbuġ. Along with Ġorġ Pisani, recently-appointed Acting Commissioner for Gozo George Ransley was to be present. The audience of farmers was mutinous and openly hostile to the officials. Upon investigation by Pisani, the farmers present disclosed that they were short of kerosene, that rationing supplies were not reaching the village and they lacked the most essential commodities.¹⁵⁸ According to what Pisani told Charles Bezzina decades later, the local farmers were pacified after the promised supplies were delivered.¹⁵⁹ Pisani and Ransley later held the meeting in Żebbuġ and somehow got the wheat from the farmers, which was eventually collected in the following weeks. By 8 Aug., 2000 tonnes were harvested.¹⁶⁰ Even though this wasn't close to being enough, it proved sufficient in keeping the colony afloat until the remnants of Operation Pedestal reached the Islands barely a week later. Either as a result of the Żebbuġ incident or realising the importance of open lines of

¹⁵⁸ Bezzina (2020), 422.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Il Berka*, 8 August 1942.

communication between stakeholders in the sector, Ransley proposed chairing weekly agricultural conferences, his intention having been also the inclusion of representatives from each of the NFU's village committees, thus giving the Gozitan farming communities the opportunity to deal directly with Government.¹⁶¹ Rightly considered one of the crucial moments of the blockade, the Gozitan wheat harvest of summer 1942 has got a puzzling tilt, also. This has gone down in local history as having been brought to a successful conclusion by the absolute support of the then-Bishop of Gozo, Michael Gonzi. His alleged accomplishment has over the years been reinforced by authors – Emmanuel Tonna & Michael Galea to mention two of these – who have steadfastly clung to the view that the Bishop's timely intervention in the issue and his relationship with his flock was the deciding factor in securing for the colony the farmers' stockpiles. This controversy will be discussed in the last section of the final chapter.

Many men both young and old usually engaged in agriculture found lucrative employment with the Services, while others were conscripted into digging shelters. The shortage of labour which ensued did, to a certain extent, affect the production of fodder and food, while also resulting in land remaining uncultivated. During a meeting of the Advisory Board on Agriculture, Baron Depiro D'Amico referred to the apparently large number of horses farmers kept for pleasure purposes.¹⁶² Owing to this previous assumption, farmers' carts started being requisitioned with this policy having been in full swing by July 1942. Similar to conscription, these farmers were now expected to carry out their farming duties – without their carts and horses – while dealing with work on aerodromes and other jobs assigned to them by Government. Paul Xuereb, whose farmhouse was at Imtañleb, was ordered by the Director of Transport to report for work with the Air Ministry at Mosta.¹⁶³ As he had 40 tumoli of land in the cliffs, he required both his animals, while the idea of giving up his farming work was unthinkable.¹⁶⁴ Ġużepp Camilleri of Rabat was another farmer who was summoned for failing to comply with a requisition order. He had 64 tumoli of land, 40 of which were irrigated. As a result, numerous farmers were calling in on Zammit-Marmarà protesting against their call-up for duties with their draught animals and horses.

¹⁶¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 6602/1942.

¹⁶² NAM, CSG 01 – 3833/1942.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The latter was damning in his assessment. Stating someone in authority must have gone mad for the policy to have been promulgated, it was very risky to squeeze the farmer any more.¹⁶⁵ He pleaded with the powers that be to ‘not allow these farmers to lose their heads.’¹⁶⁶ A compromise was reached by which farmers were to be called to work not more than three days per month.¹⁶⁷

For the individuals who spend their lives taking care of either a patch of soil or entire swathes of the countryside for subsistence, the bane of their existence is surely petty theft from their fields. In a Council of Government session sometime in 1880, the then-Crown Advocate Adrian Dingli, had commented that ‘It is impossible for the police to protect every cabbage in the country’¹⁶⁸, in answering for unreported countryside thefts. This circumstance was no clearer than during the war. Thousands of people from the urban areas had descended to the countryside to get away from the harbour areas, while the military had taken up a substantial amount of land to site aircraft, gun positions and soldiers. As the food situation got worse, so did the reports of pilfering. Servicemen were common offenders. One wartime conscript was asked if he remembered any countryside thefts and replied in the affirmative:

Daka iwa, imma dana għaż-żmien għaż-żmien l-għaks. Għax u mbaġħad għaż-żmien l-għaks iva. Meta ma kienx imbaġħad naqas i- naqas ir-ration u naqas kollox, konna pereżempju jkun haw’ għalqa pa- għalqa patata, konna niftehmu kellna l-l-haversack aħna haw’, konna nimlewha, konna nitqassmu hekk [jidħak] u naqilgħulu l-patata kollha u nħallulu xi tnejn. Naqilgħu l-patata minn taħt tkun għada waslet biex is- biex biex biex, biex issir il-patata, u konna nimlew il-boroż. [Ma jinftihemx] Xi trid tiekol, qed tifhem? Darba minnhom sħabi daħlu, jien ma kontx magħhom. Kien hemm razzett u kien hemm mara xiħa u serqulha t-tigieg [...] it-tigieg. U kien hemm daw’ ta daw’ daw’ kienu ħafna tal-kampanja li kellli miegħi suldati jien, qed tifhem? Dak kien Ħal Far. U serqulha t-tigieg, xi ġiex tigigiet [ma jinftihemx] [jidħak] u ġibuhom haw’. U u sajjarnihom insomma.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁶⁸ Evelyn Pullicino, ‘Theft in Nineteenth Century Malta’, *Journal of Maltese History*, v, 1 (2016), 28-47.

¹⁶⁹ NAM, MEMORJA, 014, Vincent ‘Ċensinu’ Caruana interview, 24 Nov. 2017. See Appendix II.



Fig. 43. Soldiers 'enjoying stolen fruit.'

Source: Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna.

Pilfering was especially common from fields close to the RAF bases. Zammit-Marmarà let it be known in official circles that by August 1942, daily reports were reaching him that military personnel were trespassing in fields picking all sorts of fruit.¹⁷⁰ The greatest damage was caused in the neighbourhood around the Luqa airfield and by 3 August, he estimated the damage caused to grapes to have run to four figures.¹⁷¹ A farm in the *Tas-Safra* area in Mqabba was targeted multiple times also by which good bunches of fruit were stolen, whereas sour grapes were disposed of and left to rot.¹⁷² Even though the farmers were promised compensation, they refused, as, according to Zammit-Marmarà, they were 'pro-British to the backbone...stating that they would be satisfied if they are left to work in peace.'¹⁷³ With crops and trees ruined, Zammit-Marmarà described these infringements as having resembled 'a procession' as the habit was by then

¹⁷⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 3502/1942.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

widespread.¹⁷⁴ Trouble was also brewing in the Siġġiewi area. Apart from further aggravating the farmers and contributing to the traditional distrust they harboured as has been explained in the first section of this chapter, it was evident that these violations were hampering to a considerable extent the propaganda which Government was jointly producing with the NFU and generating ill-feeling in the country. Ġamri Muscat from Żebbuġ, Malta was exempted from military service but as his family had to farm a substantial amount of land – 23 tumoli – his first thought was of protection of his family's crops, even through the use of force:

*Għaliex kellna tlieta u għoxrin tomna u trid tindokra r-raba' għaliex jisirqulek, bil-għaks u l-blakmarkit li kien hawn. Kont norqod ġo munzell tas-silla bis-senter u kelb tal-kaċċa bin-naskja tajba. Jidnol bniedem barrani jxommu. Imbagħad ħalli f'idi.*¹⁷⁵

The Air Officer Commanding, Sir Keith Park was urged to take some sort of action to stop the picking of fruit, but, if allowed to carry on, unpleasant incidents could have very easily have come about.¹⁷⁶

The machinery for improved consultation and co-operation between the Government and the Union was fully realised in September. The Advisory Board of Agriculture was reconstituted and was to be known as the Agricultural Board, now including senior members of the Department of Agriculture responsible for the operation of the various agricultural schemes. The Advisory Board had often complained that it had not been sufficiently consulted by the Government. The new body was given the responsibility of managing the agricultural department and of advising the Government as to policy and also for the execution of that policy through the same department.¹⁷⁷ The District Agricultural Officers, which were appointed the following month were chosen by the Board, also. Its chairman was Andrew Cohen, while his deputy was Oscar Sammut. Biasini, Hirst, Ransley and other officials sat on the Board as did Strickland, Henry Sacco and Zammit-Marmarà. This was a turning point in the NFU's relations with the Government as an alliance was consolidated between the Union and the Department of

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ S. Borg, 9.

¹⁷⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 3502/1942.

¹⁷⁷ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

Agriculture, as the former had now officially been invited to take part in policy-formation.

Zammit-Marmarà did not forget the farmers' grumbling from earlier in the summer when Government put an end to them making their own bread. He subsequently tried to renegotiate their conditions on two occasions during the second half of 1942. At a meeting of the NFU's Rabat branch on 27 September, a resolution was passed unanimously to enquire from Government an increase to the bread ration of the farming community to 14 oz. – half a rotolo, meaning 400g – per head per day, irrespective of age or sex.¹⁷⁸ If impossible, Zammit-Marmarà stipulated that the Government should increase the bread ration of farmers, men, women and children, by a percentage on the total allowed to each family. If age were to be made a limiting factor, as was at present, the age of men was to be extended from 60 to 70 years. In addition, the ration of bread farmers were to be allowed in future was to be issued to them in flour, meaning that they should have been allowed to make their own bread, with the bakers' charge for baking the bread having been fixed by Government.¹⁷⁹ Lastly, the ration of paste were to be issued weekly instead of fortnightly, considering that the farmers could not have possibly left their farms to go and subscribe in the Victory Kitchens.¹⁸⁰ Cohen, refused the request as the food situation was still alarming. Not only did the stock position not permit this, but if such an exception were allowed, other applications which would have been impossible to resist were sure to come forward. Increasing the bread ration for one group of people would have undoubtedly been at the expense of another. Had this been affected, other sections of the population would have been surely antagonized, which according to Zammit-Marmarà, was nothing other than 'class hatred' towards the farmers.¹⁸¹ During the public information campaign back in July, he had had complaints from various places and wherever he came in contact with farmers during a meeting, he was told that town people were badly treating the farmers, with a Gozitan farmer having allegedly been told of how glad certain people were that the farmers had to live on three-eighths rotolo of bread a day.¹⁸² Zammit-

¹⁷⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 4914/1942.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3005/1942.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

Marmarà had indirectly warned 'town people' over Rediffusion to avoid this, yet upon investigation Ransley found no evidence of the matter. Although the NFU's justification for operating was to secure farmers a decent standard of living, it is easy to envisage the trouble that might have ensued had Government acceded to his initial request. The class hatred which Zammit-Marmarà had mentioned in his letter would have been as a direct result of this policy.

The other scenario was in December when on the 8th, it was decided at a meeting of the NFU's District Committees to put certain queries and requests before the Government for the second time. Price control is always an issue during war. Ultimately, the control of the highest possible price for foodstuffs served to jointly curb inflation while restricting materials to be within reasonable purchasing limits for the people. Zammit-Marmarà stated that since Government controlled the maximum price, it was now desired by the NFU that the minimum price of all agricultural and horticultural produce be also fixed.¹⁸³ It was estimated that since the people should have always been given the chance to afford produce, it could have been reasonably stipulated that the farmers were to be given the chance to make profit on their labours, granted by Government. The controlled price of vegetables had to be fixed monthly and that it should have been under the control of a special committee which should have comprised three members of the NFU. The Government price of seed potatoes as well as the minimum price of the resulting crop had to be fixed as well. To this were included wheat, meslin and barley and if it were necessary for the Government to requisition the grain crop, a certain quantity was to be left for the farmer's family use. Farmers needed protection against the pilfering of their crops which was still going on in full swing. The Union stipulated the Government's agricultural policy of sowing crops suitable for human consumption could not be followed when the fields were already too exposed. Lastly, farmers complained that though they were told that they were to be required to work with their flat carts on aerodromes once only for three days, they had been called up several times. They reported that the work was purposely delayed by contractors who instructed the farmers to go slowly, thus work which should have taken only a few hours was extended to some days. While Strickland was anxious that a price

¹⁸³ NAM, CSG 01 – 6521/1942.

for the following year's cereals crop should have been fixed immediately, suggesting that the 1942 price would suffice, both the director of agriculture and Cohen were opposed.¹⁸⁴ Though the price for seed potatoes was already fixed at £2.1.8 per quarter, the price for the spring potato crop could not be fixed until the majority of the seed potatoes arrived by ship. It was too early to announce whether the grain crop was to be requisitioned, while on the pilfering front, the Agricultural Board asked Cohen whether the possibility of allowing farmers to shoot at trespassers would be sanctioned. He promised to look into it but nothing was done on the matter. All in all, the NFU was not provided with any concrete answers. Gort finally told Strickland that the Union needed not be apprehensive that the improvement of communications in the Mediterranean would lead to its members interests being overridden.¹⁸⁵

The General-Secretary was concerned that a return to the dark days of the inter-war period was on no one's agenda. The preceding two years not only gave farmers a modicum of breathing space, but the emergence of good times – state intervention and the constant demand for produce – enabled them to set aside those fears. Zammit-Marmarà, having steered the farmers for years and eyeing the post-war order, submitted to the CP executive committee an ambitious eighteen-point plan of action for the improvement of agriculture.¹⁸⁶ The farming community was adjudged to have been a secure voting base for the CP. These suggestions were to form part of the party's electoral programme for the coming election. His first point was the metaphorical dismantling of the cultural demarcation line between the farmers and the townsmen, which had contributed to significant ill-feeling between the two sections of the population. It was imperative in getting the urban people to understand the NFU's agricultural views and to appreciate the then-current difficulties. The farmers had always been considered as 'an unpleasant lot of grumblers.'¹⁸⁷ One such reason for this was that the townsmen more often than not usually bought produce below the actual cost of production. What the farmer got was very much different from what the consumer paid. Zammit-Marmarà had the foresight to acknowledge that improved farms were to be an asset to the agriculture sector, whether or not they

¹⁸⁴ Minute by Cohen. *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Minute by Cohen. *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 6733/1942.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

were called upon for war production. He suggested starting immediately by persuading Government to grant leases for 99 years for all its farms. The farmers had plenty of cash now which could have been invested in the improvement of the countryside to alleviate rural poverty. The sale of Government land should have been made only to owners-occupiers – that is no farmers were to be allowed to buy more land than he and his family could have looked after. He proposed a rehousing drive in the countryside whereby decent homes were to be built with every farm, with a ready supply of water and electricity. Cities and villages were to be built on waste land. Protectionism was to be enforced¹⁸⁸, state intervention encouraged, the irrigated areas extended and agricultural pursuit was to be made more enticing for the provision of farm workers. These recommendations were laid down with the aim of increasing the purchasing power of the countryside, which the war had significantly helped to bolster. He also suggested securing the English market for exportation, for the experimental farm at Għammieri to be abolished and for the Imperial Government to provide funds.¹⁸⁹ Surplus population in the countryside emigrated to Australia and other countries in the past. In return for the hardship endured during the war, Zammit-Marmarà felt the Maltese were entitled to ask that Tripoli be handed over to them and be declared as a Maltese self-governing country under British rule. Declaring the NFU's loyalty once again, starting in mid-1942, official letterheads started sporting a Union Jack.

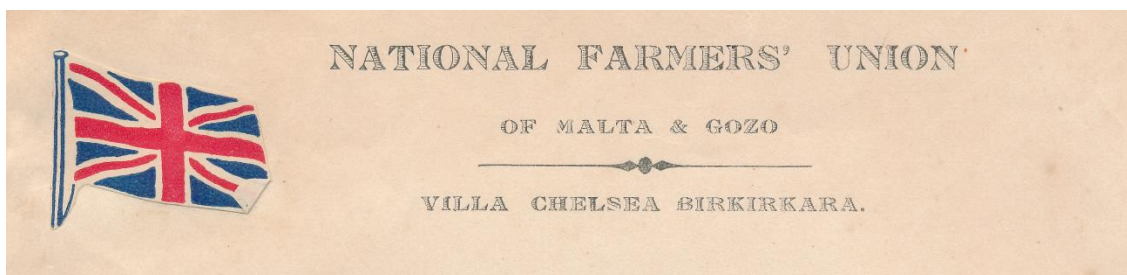


Fig. 44. NFU 1942 letterhead in English.

Source: The National Archives of Malta.

¹⁸⁸ Zammit-Marmarà called free trade a 'betrayal of Agriculture'. He envisaged withholding the importation of potatoes from neighbouring countries when there was sufficient local produce. The Royal Navy used to be supplied with a large percentage of Italian potatoes by their contractor. Farmers were able to feed the Services during the war, he argued, they should have also been allowed to feed them during peacetime.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

During the wheat harvest of summer 1942, the authorities had already been laying plans for the collection of the following year's crops. Cohen suggested for farmers to get 'a good price' for their crops, including a bonus for extra acreage.¹⁹⁰ However, by May 1943, the members of the Board of Agriculture were split into two opposing factions as to the coming harvest's potential price. Whereas the price for the previous summer's harvest was justified as the colony could not have done without, the agricultural department was not prepared to pay as much the second time around. The agricultural board fixed the price at £9 per mott for wheat and £4.15 for barley; an allowance was given of 22.5 rotolos of flour per head over 7 years of age in farmers' families and the return of offals of wheat to farmers based on a 10% to 15% basis on amount requisitioned. Strickland initially protested at the low prices offered, although on behalf of the NFU, stated that they were to be the minimum acceptable, failing which, farmers were to request they be allowed to retain their cereals. A meeting was called at which the various NFU village committees agreed to submit to the Government offer and to ascertain their cost of production figures. Also present were Biasini, Hirst, Zammit-Marmarà, Sacco and George Zarb, with Strickland presiding. Farmers agreed that the previous year's price had indeed been high – as had Zammit-Marmarà in a confidential letter to Scrivenor (Cohen's successor as ALG) – but pointed out that the same prices for 1943 were below the cost of production figures as manure, the cost of labour and the cost of living were considerably higher. Moreover, the colonial government had compelled the farmers to sow up to 50% minimum of their land irrespective of whether this was against the natural laws of rotation of crops or not. The NFU's recommendations included an increase in the allowance of flour to 50 rotolos and that the prices were to ideally be at £12 and £7 respectively for wheat and barley. Other representatives agreed to the increase in the flour allowance but that the prices were not to have been lower than those of the previous year. The authorities flat out refused. The farmers had to abide by the same regulations as had been promulgated by government for the previous years' collection scheme. The farmers acceptance of prices lower than their production costs was actuated by the fact that they had to share the burden of war and they, according to

¹⁹⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

Strickland, 'welcomed the sacrifice'.¹⁹¹ However, patriotism aside, the farmers, it seems, couldn't be controlled to a certain degree. This brings us to a salient inconsistency as to which extent farmers had heeded the Union's calls for cooperation with the colonial government. Farmers were seemingly playing the Government in the hope of securing a better price for their crops than they were being offered. Farmers were being approached by dealers who offered them exorbitant prices for the grain crops. There were offers of about £20 per quarter for wheat, and there were also others of £2 over the Government price, irrespective of what this was going to be. This served as an incentive to the farmers to claim high prices, and Zammit-Marmarà doubted whether in most cases it was a source of subversive propaganda to create discontent and trouble.¹⁹² The General-Secretary divulged it was a mistake for the Government to have assured farmers that they were right in expecting a good price for their harvest. They were put in a position from which they were not going to back down. Accepting that the situation had allowed the farmers to harbour an inflated sense of self worth, the General-Secretary suggested it be a good idea if the Government were to create an impression in the minds of the illiterate farmers that local agricultural produce was no longer necessary:

I am doing my utmost to put agriculture's house in order by propaganda. I think it would have been a good idea considering our illiterate farmers, if the Government could do something to create an impression in the minds of the farmers that local farm-produce is no longer necessary for the life of the Country. That would shake them up a good deal.¹⁹³

Zammit-Marmarà instructed for Scrivenor to show the letter to Gort himself, but otherwise it was to be treated as confidential: 'kindly do not allow it to be photographed!'¹⁹⁴

As has been discussed earlier, as an external variable, the weather is a significant factor for change. Hot and dry winds throughout late May and early June 1943 during the period of grain formation reduced the yield considerably. In certain cases, wheat was sown after wheat or on unsuitable ground, resulting

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

in a poor yield. This meant the price the village committees and the agricultural department agreed upon would have resulted in the farmers' profits being next to nothing, as the financial emoluments depended on the yield harvested. By 2 June, Zammit-Marmarà divulged the country was 'calmer yesterday evening, and I hope to completely calm the atmosphere soon, though there is all probability of some trouble again as soon as the wheat price is announced.'¹⁹⁵ To this, Scrivenor replied that Zammit-Marmarà's 'alarmist interpretation' was not justified.¹⁹⁶ On 4 June, Zammit-Marmarà reported about 'considerable unrest' the previous day in the Rabat-Siġġiewi area amongst farmers, to which Scrivenor again dismissed Zammit-Marmarà's fears as 'Cassandra-like prophecies.'¹⁹⁷ Not only were farmers conscious of their loss of income, but they were being summoned for disobeying the 1942 Cropping Orders¹⁹⁸ and for being prosecuted on the strength of their own declarations in the census in which they were ordered to list their acreages. This demonstrated clearly that the officials concerned had made erroneous calculations. Feeling ever more cheated, farmers were made aware that Government put less than 50% of its lands under cereals and no compensation had been paid to those who, by order of the colonial government, ploughed up their clover to make way for cereals only to find that no seed was available for them.¹⁹⁹ Due to the agitation in the rural areas, Zammit-Marmarà suggested for summonses to be delayed as farmers were communicating that they had been let down by the NFU and the Department of Agriculture. Such a tense situation, coupled with the underhand work of 'quislings', might have led to riots in the country.²⁰⁰ Trouble spread to Gozo where the farmers in Nadur were refusing to sell their wheat crop to the government, leading Scrivenor to take notice.²⁰¹ As a result, the price for wheat was fixed at £9 per quarter and £6 per quarter for barley and meslin, costing the colonial government a subsidy of approximately £75,000.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Minute by Scrivenor. *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ The most important measure of this policy was that 50% of the cultivated area had to be under wheat.

¹⁹⁹ *Times of Malta*, 1 July 1943.

²⁰⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943

²⁰¹ 'There may be something more in [letter number in document] Mr Zammit-Marmarà's other letters. I am going into the matter in Gozo over the week end.' Minute by Scrivenor. *Ibid.*

²⁰² Minute by Scrivenor. *Ibid.*

By September 1943, the farmers still felt aggrieved. With tensions simmering, they enlisted the help of the parish priests of the 'agricultural districts' of Malta.²⁰³ In their petition to Gort, the priests made it known that ill-feeling in the farming communities was rampant as a result of pending grievances which the agricultural department was either too slow in tackling, or hesitant in solving. The petition succeeded in drawing the attention of the department, whereby Strickland was accorded a talk with Biasini, Hirst, Paris and Leslie Swindells, the latter having been in charge of marketing in the Department of Agriculture. The complaints listed were numerous: the misplacing of farmers' produce baskets, the illicit exchanging of sacks, price fixing (and lack thereof), and agricultural department employees. Talks between the Department and the NFU had been initiated yet farmers were not kept abreast of developments. Tensions boiled over and the farmers threatened to go on strike in September, which could have been a-crossing-of-the-Rubicon of sorts for the Union and its constitution. In a damage control exercise, Strickland went on Rediffusion – he very rarely did – on the 26th to appeal to them directly in order to assuage their fears and thwart any fallout. Taking a literal paternal approach, he addressed the farmers:

I expect here someone to tell me, "But why then do you not inform us of what is going on?" I reply Because we feel that as a true father wishes to comfort his sons, so we must try to comfort and appease you and without your knowledge we try to come to terms with the Government. From the letters I received from you, from others which I received from the farmers, from what I witness personally and finally from daily information gathered by your secretary, I am acquainted of all your complaints and troubles and try to use my influence both as president of your Union and as a member of the Council of Government to try to get what is reasonable for you. In a few words, we try to improve your position as much as possible.²⁰⁴

It was agreed that farmers had a genuine grievance in the non-return to them of basket containers, in which agricultural produce were given to the *pitkalis* who in turn handed these to the department, of which 3,000 were owed in total.²⁰⁵ The middlemen, who were supposed to return these to the farmers, did not always do so, however, greengrocers were the chief offenders. Each grocer had a £20

²⁰³ Mosta, Mġarr, Mellieħa, St Paul's Bay, Naxxar, Birkirkara, Għargħur, Rabat, Dingli, Siġġiewi, Żebbuġ, Gudia, Żabbar, Żurrieq.

²⁰⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 6172/1943.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

deposit with the department and it was agreed that in future the cost of unreturned baskets were to be deducted from these deposits. It was agreed that the department was to return as many baskets as it could recover from the greengrocers and the balance in cash, while the middlemen were instructed to return either baskets or their cash value to the farmers. Farmers complained that watchmen at the produce centres – *pitkalija* – substituted old sacks for the new ones brought in by them.²⁰⁶ Still on the subject of the middlemen, the farmers wanted that their products had to be weighed by the *pitkali* in their presence so that they could be aware of the actual weight. The Government agreed that the products should have been weighed in the presence of the farmer as the *pitkali* had no right to refuse weighing the products on the spot and such a refusal would put them at risk of losing their licence. This practice was to be stopped and the perpetrators fined. Regarding staff at the agriculture department office, the farmers complained that they were kept waiting for long periods when sent for to attend the acting director's office. Several Union meetings took place to discuss the price of wheat, barley and meslin. The Union decided to ask for the previous year's price, but the proposal was rejected by the Government, which in turn subsequently fixed the price on its own. True, the NFU did not deliver the price it had asked for, though Strickland vouched – without any evidence – those prices were going to be much lower than they hitherto were at present, and thus it could be said that the NFU somewhat succeeded in getting a better price for wheat.²⁰⁷ Strickland wound up his broadcast by invoking the Almighty's help, in that those particular days of great expectations for agriculture will have soon dawned.²⁰⁸

It was in this spirit that work had been underway for months to lay the ground for the research and overseas fieldwork that was needed to precede the introduction of farming cooperatives in Malta, which the NFU took a lead part in instigating. Among the resolutions passed at its annual general meeting on 10 Feb. 1944, the following was agreed upon by an overwhelming majority:²⁰⁹

The NFU, whilst reminding the Government of the severe sacrifices made by farmers during the Siege in the National and Imperial interests, asks that:

- a) The system of vegetable control be improved;

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 1268/1944.

- b) That the control of vegetables be continued until the Co-operative movement is introduced;
- c) That co-operatives be introduced as soon as possible;
- d) That the Village Committees of this Union be consulted more often to secure the more rapid success of the scheme.

With the first two points, the Union was cognizant that as cooperatives were a new process of marketing local produce, the sector had to be given time to come to grips with their introduction. State intervention regarding the sale of vegetables was necessary until the system was stabilised and the benefits could have been reaped. However, this ought not to have distracted from the fact that cooperatives were to be introduced as soon as possible. Government could not have taken a paternalistic approach to the industry, and farmers had to be self-sufficient in selling their products, as was shown in the previous chapter.

As part of the same document, the General Council of the NFU for the year 1944 was included. Compared to the 1942 set-up, what strikes the reader is the expansion that the Union's executive experienced over the previous two years and the amount of new members. Roger Stickland still retained his position at the head of the NFU, Henry Sacco was still Vice-President, whereas Armando Mifsud²¹⁰ was now a council member, with his previous position as one of two Vice-Presidents having been taken up by Lt. Albert Bartoli.²¹¹ This time round, the council included the President and Secretary of each village committee and Mabel Strickland, the only woman to have been in the executive during the War.²¹²

²¹⁰ In the previous document, Armando was now 'Armand.'

²¹¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 1268/1944.

²¹² *Ibid.*



Figs. 45, 46 & 47. (From left to right) The Hon. Dr Henry Sacco, O.B.E., M.D., The Hon. Lt. Albert V. Bartoli, R.E., and The Hon. Mabel Strickland, O.B.E.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

The embodiment of agricultural cooperatives, an idea innovative as it was revolutionary in the local context, ultimately proved to be the death knell of the NFU itself. Early in 1944, the Department of Agriculture held public elections throughout the villages in Malta and Gozo for 'Farmers District Committees', which were to form the basis of future cooperative associations answerable to the agricultural department.²¹³ Zammit-Marmarà thought it strange that the same members forming the Union's village committees were in each and every case returned as members of the new District Committees. However, it is easy to see why these men were elected to their new posts, having each established themselves during the War as a veritable grassroot movement.²¹⁴ The NFU was in fact transformed into official district committees, though there was nothing to prevent the Union from functioning also as a separate body – a trade union. The fact that farmers met with the Director of Agriculture as head, discussed matters and ventilated their grievances made the necessity of the NFU meetings useless, which in theory, is the rationale of every union. In this way, farmers were continuously in touch with the Government and the NFU had never, since 1943, held meetings or even elections as such.

As was expected, the Union had to be registered on an annual basis to function as an official trade union, an issue which was still pending by mid-September 1945. Owing to the delay on Zammit-Marmarà's part, registration

²¹³ NAM, CSG 01 – 5838/1945.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

could not be affected. The latter claimed that since the agricultural department's elections siphoned off the NFU's human capital and farmer-members, the Union was not operating properly as it awaited much hoped for reorganisation. The NFU did in fact cease to function, and the Farmers' District Committees held periodical meetings under the Chairmanship of the Director of Agriculture, other officers of the Department and with Zammit-Marmarà as secretary – having been appointed by the farmers, such was the esteem in which he was held. He stipulated that cooperative societies was what the Union had campaigned for and both Strickland and himself knew perfectly well that the formation of these committees would for all intents and purposes mean the end of the NFU. Strickland, according to Zammit-Marmarà, was prepared to surrender his 'political' interest in the Union for the Nation's benefit, justifying the idea that the CP's alliance with farmers was also that of a vote-grabbing action.²¹⁵ The truth of the matter though, is that, farmers were already in a rush to constitute these committees, without the Union's help. To completely kill off the Union would have set off alarm bells throughout the farming communities then still grappling with a new agricultural policy and it would have also been imprudent and callous when taking into account the contribution it gave the state in 1942.²¹⁶ To dissolve the Union would have resulted in a PR disaster for the Government, and it was necessary to make farmers feel that the NFU was there if they wanted it.²¹⁷ He requested that, in lieu of the Union's stellar involvement in the war, no action be taken for the delay in registration and he be allowed to continue to reconstitute the Union on a new footing. The NFU's General-Secretary went ahead with his attempt to re-register and 'revitalise' the N.F.U and on 1 Oct. 1945, he called on interested parties – men and women over 16 years of age – in print and on Rediffusion to send in their names, addresses and nicknames by mid-month, emboldening them to subscribe once again.²¹⁸ He received no response. On 29 Apr. 1946, Zammit-Marmarà communicated the following to the Registrar of Trade Unions, stating that

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 October, 1945.

With reference to the National Farmers' Union, I have the honour to state that an effort has been made to reform it but I was unsuccessful. Farmers are at present forming Cooperative Societies some of which are already functioning and I think that others will start their activity soon.

Under the circumstances I feel that the Union is at present non-existent and therefore the necessity of registering it does not arise.²¹⁹

In response to a question about the NFU's position, on 1 May 1946, the Registrar answered that, 'The National Farmers' Union has not been reformed [...] In these circumstances and in view of [Zammit-Marmarà's letter] no further action appears to be necessary.' It was in this way that the NFU died with a whimper and its story seemingly fell through the cracks of popular memory.

Resistance, subversion and dissent

Aided by lackadaisical enforcement and strengthened by community relations which offered a token of protection from official retribution, infractions were endemic throughout the Islands in wartime. As soon as refugees had moved into the reception areas, reports surfaced of shopkeepers using irregular weights and measures.²²⁰ Numerous allegations were levelled against Protection Officers in the villages²²¹ while pilfering from convoys – by both Maltese²²² and British servicemen²²³ – was all too common. Individuals posing as Demolition & Clearance Department personnel looted from damaged premises²²⁴ while servicemen trespassed in the fields and helped themselves to crops.²²⁵ Entire rackets operated with the alleged help of the law²²⁶, Victory Kitchen employees carried off rationed commodities²²⁷ while Government officials used their official cars to transport hoarded goods and articles, knowing they were immune from

²¹⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 5838/1945.

²²⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 2816/1940.

²²¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3179/1941; NAM, CSG 01 – 1673/1942; NAM, CSG 01 – 2797/1942; NAM, CSG 01 – 3047/1942; NAM, CSG 01 – 3164/1942.

²²² NAM, CSG 01 – 694/1942.

²²³ Christopher Jary with Nick Speakman, James Porter, Andrew Edwards & Laurence Thornton-Grimes, *Yells, Bells & Smells: The Story of the Devons, Hampshires and Dorsets in the Siege of Malta 1940-1943* (United Kingdom, Bluemoon Print, 2017), 150.

²²⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 3926/1942.

²²⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 3398/1941; NAM, CSG 01 – 5390/1942.

²²⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 3282/1942.

²²⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 4937/1942.

any interference.²²⁸ The *pitkali* had their own unlawful agendas²²⁹ and peasant farmers got in on the action, also. As a result, their visits to the banks grew appreciably as the war dragged on.²³⁰ While illicit acts have been preserved in historical memory as part of a black market economy, this is but one dimension of how sections of the population aimed to subvert the state for their personal benefit and to get ahead in a land of scarce supplies and fewer opportunities, Foster's concept having been on full display during the war.²³¹ The peasantry was weakest in every facet of life: politically, socially and economically. However, what peasants lacked in strength, they made up for in either subtle or overt resistance to state control, in what James C. Scott called 'everyday forms of peasant resistance'.²³² Rather than seek to justify the ways and means which farmers used to advance their economic standing, this section seeks to provide the context in which peasant farmers resisted, confronted and defied the colonial government in both subtle and overt ways and employed survival strategies *vis-à-vis* the pressures – and opportunities – brought on by the War.

For peasants, resistance more often than not took the form of foot-dragging, feigned ignorance, pilfering, sabotage, desertion, or any other action – coordinated or not – which may have been utilised to hit back at the structures of power while avoiding any direct symbolic confrontation.²³³ The role bestowed upon these people in the historical record of the War has been not so much as historical actors, but rather more or less as anonymous contributors to conscription, labour and crop production. The imposition of colonialism on peasants, according to moral economists, harmed peasant welfare for it increased inequality and stratification and forced more and more peasants into isolated positions.²³⁴

Peasants, as opposed to town dwellers, lived off the land. The produce from the fields and the farms fulfilled the basic consumption needs of the peasant family, and allowed the peasants relative independence from other producers

²²⁸ Joseph Micallef, *When Malta Stood Alone* (Malta, Interprint Limited, 1981), 182.

²²⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 5774/1942.

²³⁰ Frendo (2012), 407.

²³¹ Foster, 293-314.

²³² Scott, 29.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Samuel Popkin, 'The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Peasant Society', *Theory and Society*, ix, 3 (1980), 411-471.

and the market.²³⁵ They very rarely went to town and were little affected by what went on in the outside world. This, according to Shanin, afforded households relative stability, as in crises they were able to maintain their existence by increased effort, lowering their own consumption and partially withdrawing from market relations.²³⁶ These same market relations came to characterise a significant factor of resistance, in opposition to the colonial government, as the 'little world' which Maltese peasants inhabited was wedged wide open in June 1940, when thousands of inhabitants from the inner harbour area and their suburbs descended into the countryside for accommodation.²³⁷ Town dwellers and peasants mixed, and the market, which in the inter-war period was to be found beyond the confines of the villages, came to be imbued within the peasants' own communities. This blend of two distinct peoples, leading to the start of the dismantling of the social strata of the rural areas, presented the peasant farmers with an opportunity never before experienced. This came to be keenly and shrewdly exploited by the farmers throughout the villages as austerity gave way to a parallel illicit economy, based on unchecked goods and the abject misery of many. While the origin of a black market economy cannot be pinpointed at any point in time for obvious reasons, violations were directly proportional to the ever-worsening situation. In a case of one man's tragedy is another man's opportunity, the illegal sale, purchase and bargaining of goods was a method at which peasant farmers were able to oppose colonial control.

Resistance is the apex of a failure in the cooperative social arrangement. In their report²³⁸, Drummond and Wall stated that this shadow economy was applied indiscriminately to three types of transactions:

- a) Trading in stolen goods (often stolen from convoys or looted bombed premises);
- b) Illicit trading in rationed goods;
- c) Transactions in excess of an official price or profiteering generally.

²³⁵ Shanin (1966), 5-27.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Times of Malta*, 15 June, 1940.

²³⁸ NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta*, 1942.

Over months, food and commodities had gotten increasingly expensive because of two reasons. Supplies were not coming in as most convoys were either being turned away or sunk on their approach to Malta. The second reason was the government's policy of buying produce in bulk for the Victory Kitchens and the Services – in cash – in the process leaving the populace with the feeling of having never had enough food, coupled with perpetual fear of getting no reprieve. Those who could not afford to buy at farmers' inflated prices simply didn't. Those who could however, further exacerbated the supply-demand conundrum and fuelled these illicit practices, leaving the authorities with no hope of ever stamping out these illegalities. In this instance, members of the public and greengrocers bought produce directly from the fields, in the process circumventing the *pitkali*. In no time, the rural areas were filled with money.²³⁹ Loulou Mifsud Bonnici, a Sliema resident who sought refuge with her family in a cave in Dingli Cliffs, had the following to say about the lengths to which people went in trying to secure much sought-after produce from the farmers:

Imma mbagħad huma kienu japprofittaw ruħhom! Għax kienu jiġu ħafna nies minn tas-Sliema biex jixtru. Pero' ma konniex narawhom aħna. Hekk nitilgħu 'il fuq mill-mill-irdum tara n-nies mixjin fl-għelieqi, fit-triq, biex imorru jfittxu l-bdiewa biex jbiegħulhom il-patata. Kienu jiġu bil-bil, haw' mhux basktijiet, bagoll! Li ssiefer bih, hekk! Jiġu biex jixtr- jpoġġuhom fihom biex ħadd ma jaralhom x'għandhom, hu! Ma jmurx xi ħadd jagħmel għalihom u jeħduhomlom għax joħdilhom il-basktijiet, għax kien, kien, kien kulħadd kien bil-ġuħ, tas-Sliema, ħafna, ħafna [emfasi].²⁴⁰

In certain cases, gold was demanded in lieu of paper money:

Għax anki darba minnhom mort ma missieri, mort ir-Rabat biex ingibu l-patata. Niftakar mhux flus riedu l-bdiewa dik il-ħabta, deheb deheb dak il-ħabta kienu jridu, hu.²⁴¹

Frank Attard's testimony was further corroborated by Vincent Caruana:

Kienu jħallsu bid-deheb ta. Ħafna nies xtraw bid-deheb, jiġifieri biex jakkwistaw l-ikel u xi ħaġa. X'kienu [ma jinftihemx] jixtru? Xi tiġieġa, xi fenek, jixtru. Dawn bil-black market kienu jixtruhom, qed tifhem? Xi bajda 'l hemm u 'l hawn. Konna-konna, bajda ta' sold u nofs kienet tinbiegħ, ħafna flus biex tixriha qed tifhem?

²³⁹ 'Il-kampanja kienet mimlija hu bil-flus.' Frendo (2012), 407.

²⁴⁰ NAM, MEMORJA, 009, Loulou Mifsud Bonnici interview, 7 Nov. 2017. See Appendix III.

²⁴¹ NAM, MEMORJA, 054, Frank Attard interview, 20 June 2017. See Appendix IV.

*Biex forsi t'habbatha tagħmilha froġa, x'tagħmel. Il-ġuħ ġuħ. Tagħmel minn kollox.*²⁴²

A Bank of Malta employee vividly recalled the scene of farmers coming to town with their sacks of paper money to put into the vault:

*Anzi l-bdiewa bdew jiġu bl-ixkejjer! [...] Flus? Lanqas kienu jafu kemm għandhom il-gabillotti! Lanqas kienu jafu ta! Darba wieħed għedtlu: "Minn fejn dawna?" "Mill-arunġ, mill-arunġ." Oranges, iġifieri.*²⁴³

However, at the end of the day, others saw it as a mere business opportunity. When asked about the black market, the distinct lack of proselytizing from Michael Grima was noticeable. This was made all the more interesting, knowing he had started work at the Department of Agriculture when the black market had reached its zenith:

*Fuq il-black market? X'irrid ngħidlek, ruħi? In-nies kienu jitiġħu minn naħa t'isfel minn kullimkien, immorru fil-kampanja msieken, biex jixtru jew patata, jew xi naqa ħaxix jew xi ħaġa hekk u u anke għat-dqiq [emfasi] u jiġu anke forsi ji- forsi jixtru naqra dqiq jagħmlu naqra ħobż jew xi ħaġa huma anke b'hal ma' qed ngħidlek jien biex jagħmlu naqra għaġin jew xi ħaġa hekk, il-bqija ma ssib xej – dak huwa l-black market; dak hu, l-black market.*²⁴⁴

[...]

*Heqq min jgħid jieħu pjaċir bil-gwerra, negozjanti u hekk. Min jgħi- mhux m'hawnx ħafna jgħidu hekk ta! Iġifieri, mhux jgħidu hekk [ton baxx]. Imma ikun haw min pereżempju qed iddaħħal il-flus u dan, ehħ jieħu pjaċir iddaħħal il-flus, qed tifhem? Imma meta tisma' ċerti affarijiet b'hal dawn huma ma jieħdux pjaċir pereżempju bil-mewt jew bil-ġuħ jew hekk, imma n-negozju huwa negozju – daqshekk! Għax in-negozju kollu negozju. In-negozju m'hemmx gwerra u mhux gwerra. Min ikun għandu n-negozju għall-flus u dan, jkun fin-negozju, jkun xtara, u jkun irid ibiegħ. U min ibiegħ irid jaqla', qed tifhem? Dak hu! Eh u u biex tixtri f'it, issib tixtri. Ikun hemm xi ħadd pereżempju li xtara xi ħaġa [emfasi] minn x'imkien ieħor u jrid ibiegħha. Daw' affarijiet ikunu, ġieli nqabdu nies kienu ta! Li qegħdin ibiegħaw bil-black market mhux iġifieri kul'ħadd alarieħu, da- fil-beraħ*²⁴⁵

²⁴² NAM, MEMORJA, 014, Vincent 'Censinu' Caruana interview, 24 Nov. 2017. See Appendix II.

²⁴³ Frendo (2012), 407.

²⁴⁴ NAM, MEMORJA, 011, Michael Grima interview, 10 Aug. 2017. See Appendix V.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

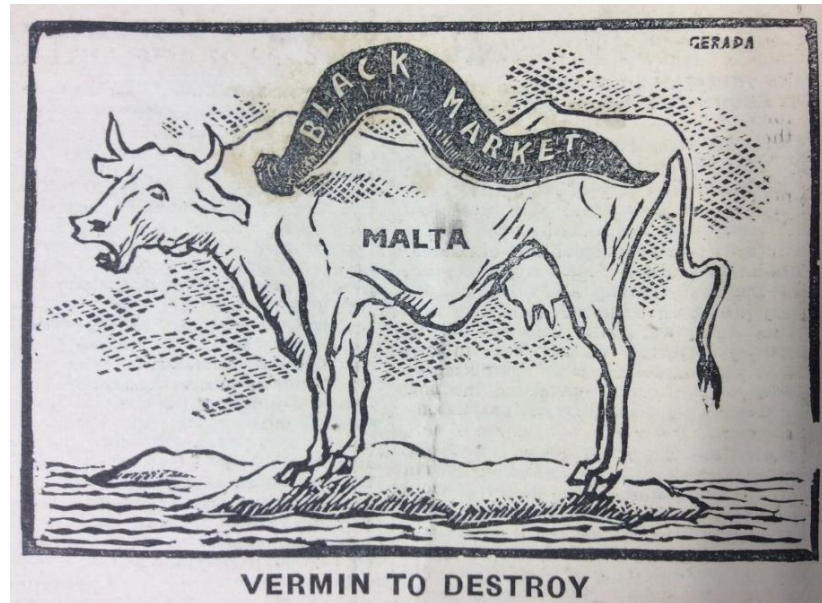


Fig. 48. A self-explanatory cartoon as drawn by wartime artist Alfred Gerada.

Source: The Sunday Times of Malta, 26 July, 1942.

In his capacity as president of the NFU, Roger Strickland had castigated the Council of Government for adopting a one-size-fits-all approach when it came to this issue. The farmer was now presented as 'a very wicked old man'²⁴⁶, that he was overcharging the public and that he had to be gotten hold of to sell his produce at a price that pleased the consumer, hence the birth of the Price Control Board.²⁴⁷ One reason why a black market was created was down to the precarious and unpredictable nature of the farmers' job. Without a living wage and feeling that they weren't getting enough for their produce, farmers were asking much more than what the Government was striving to cap prices at. If the expansion of racketeering was the only *modus operandi* by which peasant farmers could subvert the colonial state, it seems however, that Government indirectly aided and abetted it. Upon first glance it appears that the members in the Council of Government were at their wits' end, having no concrete idea as to how to reimpose order, especially in the rural areas. These practices became a political issue during the official sessions, with priorities ranging from poor policing and alleged corrupt government officials. The lack of collaboration in

²⁴⁶ In the Council of Government sessions and in official notices, the farmer was always referred to as a 'he'.

²⁴⁷ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1941-1943, Part I, Third Session, Sitting No. 26, 26 May 1942 (Malta, Government Printing Office, 1945), 578.

reporting pilfering communicated the people's distrust in the Government.²⁴⁸ Ultimately, people who could afford to pay more did so as this ensured their food supply and, knowing that the existence of a black market offered a section of the population the chance to buy their own food, the Government looked the other way, despite the appearance of having tried.²⁴⁹ This included the NFU, which, even though most of its members were said to have adhered to official regulations, individual farmers did make the most of their situation when they were sought out in the fields by the have-nots.²⁵⁰ If this kind of resistance was anything to go by, it can be safely said that peasant farmers forced the colonial government into inaction. *Il-bombi nieżlin u l-flus dieħlin'*, went the saying in Maltese banking circles.²⁵¹

The first confrontation between the peasant farmers and the Government could be said to have occurred in the lead up to the cereals' collection of summer 1942. Even though plans had been made for the purchase – and if this failed, forceful requisition – of the local cereals, the Government was sure that difficulties were to be faced. The farmers were not accustomed to handing over their grain and although small amounts were sold from each year's crop, especially for animal fodder, the bulk was kept by the farmers themselves for their own consumption and feeding to their livestock. Drummond and Wall had reported that

To requisition grain from farmers is probably the hardest task a Government Agricultural Department can be asked to undertake. Farmers, particularly peasant farmers, will resist almost to the death before they surrender food they regard as necessary for their own survival.²⁵²

Following the colonial government's overtures and the NFU's propaganda drive, tons of the cereals crop were sold to the agricultural department. The overall result had been positive; however, farmers did find a way at how to undercut the authorities. A common problem that government collection agencies faced was

²⁴⁸ *Times of Malta*, 25 November 1942.

²⁴⁹ The Government had instituted the Black Market and Cost of Imported Commodities Committee, which was still in existence by mid-1946.

²⁵⁰ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

²⁵¹ 'As the bombs fall, the money pours in.' Frendo (2012), 408.

²⁵² NAM, GMR 1543, *Report on the Food Situation in Malta, 1942*.

that small-scale farmers were well-placed to illegally hold back more than their fair share of food, much of which they then channeled on to the black market.²⁵³ Certain country mills were in operation and were illegally milling wheat and grain.²⁵⁴ A large part of the agricultural produce sent from the smaller island to the *pitkali* in Malta reached the latter only in part as this generally disappeared during the Gozo-Malta transit.²⁵⁵ Much of the wheat handed over was being left unthreshed, or otherwise given to animals.²⁵⁶ Earth was added and the consignments were usually wetted with water also; in this way, the farmers were supplying the government with adulterated material.²⁵⁷ The farmers went unhindered in their violations by lack of enforcement. Although the agricultural department managed to get together a large staff of inspectors, these were drawn from the ranks of town dwellers so not only were they out of touch with the farmers, but most were unused to working in the country.²⁵⁸ If an unwilling body of farmers had to be forced to plant an increased cereals acreage, a much larger number of men would have been needed and these would have been exceedingly difficult to find owing to the shortage of labour all over the Islands.

Confrontation and protest can take many forms, even when a poor labour group is apparently against the odds. The livestock slaughter policy served to stir great opposition to the agricultural department and the colonial government, as this was viewed by the farmers as having increased the state's endeavours at peasant oppression. Not only did this policy interfere with their traditional way of life, but it would have wiped out their livelihoods. In the first act in the arc of events, goatherds sent a letter to the Governor on 23 August, the members of the Council of Government and to the press, making it known that the policy did 'not meet with the approval of the public, much less with the views of goatherds.'²⁵⁹ In their view, this was a 'short-sighted', rather than a 'short-term'

²⁵³ Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food*, (London, Penguin Books, 2012), 73.

²⁵⁴ In one particular example, 22 farmers were convicted of having had their grain milled at Żebbiegħ. The miller was sentenced to 2 months' imprisonment while the farmers were initially fined £50, as was the minimum. Some made it known that they would have elected to go prison, rather than pay the fine in which case they would have been imprisoned for 100 days. The fines were reduced to £10. NAM, CSG 01 – 6382/1942.

²⁵⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 2331/1942.

²⁵⁶ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1941-1943, Part II, Third Session, Sitting No. 30, 14 July 1942 (Malta, Government Printing Office, 1946), 733.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 664/1943.

²⁵⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 4123/1942.

policy.²⁶⁰ They branded Hirst a 'Jew' – before going on an antisemitic tirade²⁶¹ – while, in an act of cooperation with newly-formed state regulations, offered to slaughter of their own free will any goats which were not remunerative. After a meeting of representatives of goat owners from different parts of the Island was held at Msida, four other representatives of the goatherds were accorded a meeting with Cohen, Hirst and Paris. Sacco and Ercole Valenzia translated. It was decided that no more than 60% of any herd of goats would be destroyed and they would be given more financial remuneration for their loss. The goat owners were told, however, that the policy would not be stopped. The result was the emergence of a racket. Goat owners arrived at the abattoir a goat or two short of their supposed tally, with the veterinary surgeon present not insistent on the proper number produced. A number of goats were intentionally kept back, which in turn could have found immediate sale, incredibly, even in the vicinity of the abattoir itself.²⁶² Goats were passed from one farmer to another at ever-increasing prices. A goat which was purchased for £7 on one day was known to be able to command £14 by the following day.²⁶³ In proposing to defeat this Government measure, goat owners were prepared to render incorrect returns in the possession and by scattering their herds and hiding a number of their goats. Commissioner of Police Joseph Axisa had reported that he did not anticipate any serious trouble, but there was sure to be a certain amount of unrest, as the goat owners held very strong views about parting with their animals. What Axisa failed to realise, as part of the high-ranking indigenous elite, far removed from the country people, was that this event specifically demonstrated how these cohorts of the poverty-ridden living on the fringe came to confront and defy the might of the colonial state, in the midst of war.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ '[Hirst] is a Jew, and Jews are the so-called experts he induced the Government to bring from Tanganyika, and elsewhere. Experience of conditions in those parts of the world do not necessarily combine with ours. We know it, and everyone knows it, that Jews make use of all subterfuges to reach their aim. This is a common knowledge all the world over. It is not the exception with us. Let it be understood that here in Malta we are determined not to be led by Jews. They were the cause of all the trouble the world is in; they were the principal cause why Hitler came to power. They did not play the game in Germany; they did not do their duty elsewhere. We do everything in our power by legal means not to allow them to besmirch the fair name of Malta now made known to the world through our sacrifices.' *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ John Chircop, 'Colonial Encounters in Multiple Dimensions: Collaboration, Defiance, Resistance and Hybridity in the making of Maltese History', in *Colonial Encounters: Maltese Experiences of British Rule 1800-1970s*, John Chircop (ed.) Malta, Horizons, 2015, 13-66.

The 1943 cereals requisition order has been mentioned in the previous section and there is no need to get into the intricacies of the episode. However, the chain of reactions and gross mismanagement led to a stand-off between the peasant farmers and the colonial state. It is compelling to note that the farmers went through different stages of resistance in this instance, as had happened during the livestock slaughter scheme. Collaboration with the traditional village intellectuals – the priests – gave way to resistance; resistance gave way to confrontation, whereas confrontation gave way to defiance. A colony-wide strike nearly derailed the peasant-state relationship which was successfully exploited at the height of the siege, only for it to be averted by the NFU president, who condescendingly fawned over the farmers while listing the Union's achievements. Ever slow to realise the situation, the bureaucratic machinery at the heart of Government was blind to the possibility of a peasant insurrection, further reinforcing the belief of the existing gulf that lay between the urban elites and the villagers.

The tightening up of conscription and its extension to older age groups had caused some alarm among the farming communities. Peasants had the tendency of splitting family farms up so as to show that members liable to conscription were cultivating areas of land on their own account.²⁶⁵ One last example of how farmers managed to get around the rules during the War was discovered by Herbert Ganado sometime in the immediate post-war years. He had been made administrator of two sizeable parcels of land belonging to the Mdina Cathedral, this having been the first time when he had come into contact with hundreds of farmers.²⁶⁶ Setting out to register the lands, he surveyed plans and boundaries which were listed during the War, only to realise that the numbers didn't add up. Apparently, the majority of fields were listed as having been drip-irrigated (*saqwi*) as opposed to dry-farmed (*bagħli*). After ten days of not having gotten anywhere, he came to the conclusion that, since farmers were assigned petrol according to the number of motorised pumps, they inflated the number of their drip-irrigated fields to receive bigger rations. He proceeded to tear up his notes.

Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. It has long been assumed that, just as the majority of the inhabitants had accepted their lot during the war,

²⁶⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

²⁶⁶ Ganado, 246-7.

so did the rural peasantry. As we have seen, peasant farmers, turned to resistance, public protest and outright defiance within the context of war, all of which forced the colonial authorities to sit up and listen. These illicit acts, and their impact, have at present, still not escaped the ire of a public who lived through the War. The passage of time had not softened people's attitudes if the oral history interviews cited in this section were anything to go by. However, it need not be forgotten that wartime farmers had to adhere to stringent Government regulations, the likes of which they were not accustomed to. The War made peasant farmers realise their worth. Rightly a reserved labour group, they came into their own when astronomical prices were obtainable for their produce. Having become impossible to suppress, the black market was the biggest evidence of peasant resistance to state control. Many families who had never possessed more than a few trinkets and a bag of silver coins, by way of capital, hidden beneath a loose stone in the upper room, found themselves with a sizeable fortune at the end of the war.²⁶⁷ Although, farmers were tarred as having lacked formal education, they were astute enough in exploiting the general chaos of their surroundings and consolidating their interests at the expense of the powers-that-be, affirming the fact that peasant farmers were not always the underdogs.

Conclusion

Politics can be easily whittled down to dialogue and conflict. The Second World War proved to be the first time in local history wherein local peasant farmers acted politically in a class-like social entity. The peasants' chances of influencing the political sphere increased sharply in times of national crises. Whether this potentiality becomes reality is mainly dependent upon the peasants' ability to act in unison or without organisation. This in turn is dependent upon the cohesiveness of the peasantry, its economic, social and cultural similarities and interaction and its reflection on the ideological sphere. The patterns of peasant political action and influence are determined by its character as a social entity. Suspicions of government promises, and of officials in general, suffused through

²⁶⁷ Brockman, 129.

generations of farmers contributed to producing a shrewd, unscrupulous and 'untrusting' farmer. The pre-war period had seen the peasant farmers left to their own devices, the demarcation line between the urban and the rural areas having become almost tangible. The encroachment of the countryside by the military authorities was a harbinger of things to come. The rural areas were under intense scrutiny, yet, with the NFU on their side, peasant farmers were made aware of their worth. It could be said that the NFU was the channel through which 'guided political action' was exploited, whereby the peasant class was moved by an external uniting power elite which had its own political ends to boot.

The emphasis on the war period should not detract attention from the progress the Union had made prior to the war. Somewhat emasculated due to its dwindling numbers by the late inter-war period, it had been undeniably easier for it to initiate new relations with Government because it had already established both its credentials – visibility in the executive and the political elite swarming its ranks – and a sound organisational structure through which it delegated official agricultural policies as an unofficial arm of the Department of Agriculture. Highlighting the contacts the Union had made with both the Department and the CP, by 1940, the NFU seemed to have won a place on the political platform as the authoritative spokesperson on the needs of agriculture.

There can be little doubt that the war years greatly boosted the NFU's position and served to afford it the visibility which it could never have dreamt of in the inter-war period. The Union was drawn into policy discussions at the national level via its leaders. In his official Government post as liaison officer with the agricultural department, Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà served to be the farmers' ear in official circles as well as their guide, due to his position in the NFU as while the colony's agricultural strategy was delegated to peasant farmers through the numerous village committees. However, the seriousness which necessitated the Union's collaboration needs to be analysed. As we have seen, the Union's numbers fluctuated considerably before war broke out, with peak membership having been reached at the height of the siege by mid-July 1942. Then, the NFU boasted a little more than 3,000 members.²⁶⁸ Though, according to Zammit-Marmarà, 13,000 peasant farmers were scattered throughout both islands during

²⁶⁸ *Il Berka*, 15 July 1942.

November 1942.²⁶⁹ Roger Swynnerton, a British agriculture expert seconded to the colonial government, seemed to have corroborated the figure²⁷⁰, which uncovers that the Union could not have in reality claimed to have spoken on behalf of all the farmers in the colony. In addition, N. MacLeod, who in September 1943 had been sent out to Malta to report on the causes of the same summer's strike, had reported that the two unions which he had been able to trace were the General Workers Union (GWU) and the Cigarette Makers Union.²⁷¹ In essence, the NFU was neither national, nor a union, as has been stated earlier on in this section.

Notwithstanding the pedestal onto which it had been pushed by the war, the NFU did not have the staying power of other 'unions'. It had been buoyed by the circumstances which had given it a newfound relevance in wartime, yet its dissolution immediately after the conflict proved to contribute to its total disappearance from the history of local industrial relations. While, in a reversal of roles, peasant farmers were much sought after during the War, as their positions of food producers mattered more than most. The struggle for political and economic emancipation can take many forms. In the scope of this chapter, local farmers turned to resistance, protests, confrontation and all out defiance in their bids to influence, dissuade and defy the colonial authorities from imposing wartime measures which ran counter to the farmers' traditions and livelihoods, best encapsulated in the cereals collection schemes and the livestock slaughter policy. The black market on the other hand, has been normally viewed from the outlook of moral economists. Such a frame of reference, as has been reinforced by the majority of authors throughout the decades, continues to underpin the colonial approach to this illicit trading mechanism. While not in any way condoning these illegal activities, such a black and white approach only continues to perpetuate the official – and national – record in lieu of putting forward the historical argument of the subaltern's way of subverting state control and oppression.

²⁶⁹ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 November, 1942.

²⁷⁰ R. J. M. Swynnerton, 'Siege Farming in Malta', *The East African Agricultural Journal*, xii, 1 (1946), 21-25.

²⁷¹ N. MacLeod, *Report on situation arising from the strike, 20 Oct. 1943*, 1943.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPAGANDA AND PERSUASION

Introduction

The handling, control and dissemination of sensitive information is paramount during times of crises. Wartime propaganda serves a diffused purpose as, apart from sustaining morale, it serves to reaffirm or redefine attitudes, involves leaders on both sides and necessitates the support of certain policies and institutions.¹ As has been discussed earlier on in this dissertation, the farming communities in most rural areas of the islands and their social networks were pivotal to the survival of the colony. These had to be reached by the State because of two reasons. They were to be kept abreast of the war's developments abroad – as long as it suited the authorities – while the State had to divulgate official agricultural policies as part of the war effort. Collective attitudes which are manipulated by socially significant symbols are amenable to many modes of alteration by different media. For this end, Rediffusion, the spoken word, the print media and motion pictures were specifically utilised to coercively educate and instruct peasant farmers. These will be discussed much more in detail in the following chapter. In doubling down on the peasants, Government turned to that institution which had for centuries been interwoven into the rural social fabric, in the peasants' daily life: the Catholic Church.

Colonial Propaganda

The main strategy employed by state propagandists involved the presentation of a specific scenario to groups of the population and, in our case, peasant farmers, in such a manner that a positive attitude was to be inculcated in this all important social class. The plan was to draw out 'positive attitudes' and for this to have the desired effects, the scenario was to be presented as a continuation of the

¹ Harold D. Lasswell, 'The Theory of Political Propaganda', *The American Political Science Review*, xxi, 3 (1927), 627-631.

intended recipients' values. In this way, the propagandist was very much concerned about how a specific solution was to be evoked from the audience.² The chief aims of the propagandist, was to intensify the attitudes favourable to the purpose, to reverse attitudes hostile to it and to attract the indifferent, or at the worst, to prevent them from assuming a hostile bent.³ Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà had foreseen the value of propaganda back in April 1940 when he wrote to the Lieutenant Governor that

Only lectures and propaganda by a tactful individual who understands the ultra-conservative mentality of our farmers can turn out a successful scheme. In this direction, the National Farmers' Union can be of very great service to the Government, if it is taken into its confidence and not ignored as has been done in the past.⁴

In light of this statement, it is not hard to see why Zammit-Marmarà was selected to assist the agriculture department with propaganda measures related to farming.

While the local press news had a near-monopoly of the news media at the time, print media could not be fully exploited in the rural districts due to the overwhelming illiteracy of the peasants in the country. Pre-literate societies depended on oral tradition for the transmission of knowledge and wisdom.⁵ The effective dissemination of information did not prove to be troublesome, however. On the contrary, the lack of formal education and functional illiteracy of the tillers of the land proved to be somewhat beneficial to the regime. The colonial authorities easily provided material which the peasants could listen to and which was linked to the colony's wartime agricultural policies.

In the 1930s, a private British firm closely allied to the British Government and its intelligence service succeeded in monopolizing the divulcation of official news by cable of the BBC broadcasts to British colonies, including Malta. Enjoying the confidence and protection of the Crown, it installed loudspeakers in the city centres and village squares of the Islands and transmitted free of charge to all

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 1379/1940.

⁵ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* [Fourth Edition] (United States of America, Oxford University Press, 2017), 24.

who gathered and cared to listen the BBC news translated into Maltese.⁶ Just before the Second World War broke out, the Rediffusion service transmitted all the government directives, receiving sets were banned, and the company's vetted cables became the only legal means for the islanders to hear news from the outside world.⁷

By the time war broke out in the North, the Rediffusion Service had been extended only to Valletta and the nearby towns. Naturally, the populace wholly relied on the state for daily information about the fight then unfolding beyond Maltese shores. By October 1939, most country towns and villages were primitively served by loudspeakers which had been fitted in the principal square, controlled by the local police station.⁸ Wherever possible, amplifiers had been installed as well. Radio sets were owned by relatively few families and most people had to contend with listening in on public Rediffusion broadcasts.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Government officials and British agricultural experts had consistently stipulated that the major obstacles in relating to the farming community were the deep-rooted distrust which farmers always harboured towards officialdom as well as the farmers' personal pride in seeking to go about things their own way. The various measures, which the authorities wanted to get across, contained many ideas, which were new to the innate 'conservatism' of the farmer. Propaganda objects had to be chosen with extreme care, so careful handling in their presentation was required.⁹ For this purpose, half-hour Sunday morning broadcasts to farmers over Rediffusion were arranged in consultation with the Information Officer, starting in March 1939. At that time, farmers were able to collect in the village square and listen to these talks, which were delivered in the vernacular. An English translation was sent to the agricultural department and the chief censor, Reginald W. Tench, while the broadcast adaptation into Maltese was prepared by Antonio Cremona.¹⁰ For the first time, farmers were able to hear directly what the Department had to tell them.

⁶ Dominic Mintoff, *Mintoff, Malta, Mediterra: My Youth*, (Malta, The Association for Justice, Equality and Peace, 2018), 293.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 3009/1939.

⁹ Lasswell, 627-631.

¹⁰ *Times of Malta*, 3 April 1940.

The scientific data were supplied by the branches of the Experimental Farm, Plant Pathology, Public Gardens and of the Controller of Agricultural Marketing.¹¹

The first talk was broadcast over the Rediffusion system and the public loud speakers on Sunday 31 Mar. 1940. These talks were scheduled to be relayed on Sundays starting at 10.30 in the morning with a station announcement followed by a brief biography of the saint of the day and a special commentary on local war topics. Reference to the progress of the war was also made thus enabling the farmer to realise the gravity of the situation and, at the same time, the impellent necessity of accepting whatever controls or restrictions which were imposed on him by the Government.¹²



Fig. 49. Antonio Cremona, translator of the farmers' broadcast talks.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

The advice given ranged over many topics, but in general, the farmers were urged to concentrate on potatoes, wheat and fodder. The growing of onions, a perishable crop of which there had in pre-war days been a surplus for export,

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

was discouraged. Rabbit-keeping was encouraged, and attention was called to the facilities offered in this connection by the Government Experimental Farm. Owing to the importance attached to eggs in Malta as an article of diet, advice was given on poultry-farming. But it must be noted that at this stage the desirability of poultry farming as a wartime feature was now qualified by the difficulties of importing fodder. In this manner, the Department of Agriculture tried to secure, by propaganda, the best use of cultivable land, an issue that most farmers found near impossible to understand.

The talks – of which only a handful are today extant – were structured in the form of a fictional dialogue between two male peasant farmers, *Toni* and *Peppi*. The farmers listening to these planned talks were, in turn, able to pass on by word of mouth the information which they had been transmitted. In peasant societies, gossip was more powerful than law.¹³ The rumour mill went into overdrive but instead of defeatist or counterproductive hearsay, which during wartime had the tendency to spread like wildfire, farming methods and the Department's policies were being shared by the peasants from the ground up.

Most of these dialogues¹⁴ started off with one farmer in a foul mood, reflective of – according to the agricultural department – the apparent typical outlook which this proud rural labouring class was accustomed to. The farmers' apparent inability to understand what the State required of them during those unstable times, pushed the Department in attempting to overcome this intractable character by framing the start of the third talk in an appeal to one of the fictional farmers to look at the bigger picture:

Peppi: Do you know what I am inclined to do? I am in half a mind to leave everything as it is, because what can't be cured must be endured. It turned out a bad year and there is nothing one can do about it.

Toni: You mustn't talk like that, *Pepp*. Remember that we are at war and that it is our bounden duty to save as much of our field produce as possible.

Peppi: So you told me last week, *Ton*, if you remember. You told me that it is us farmers who can win the war for our country. Then I said to myself: how on earth can we help in the war? It isn't as if bullets or guns are going to sprout from our fields!

¹³ Clifford Geertz, 'Studies in Peasant Life: Community and Society', *Biennial Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1961), 1-41.

¹⁴ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

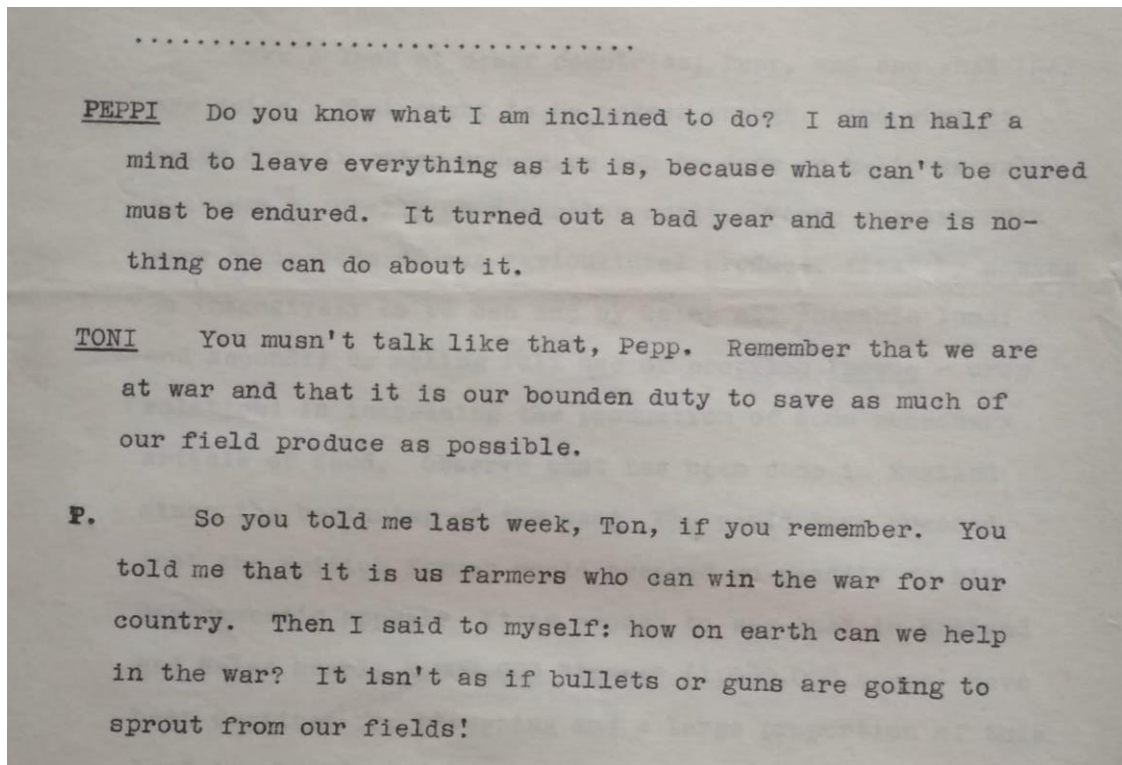


Fig. 50. Wartime propaganda talk, broadcast to farmers on Sunday 7 Apr. 1940.

Source: National War Museum Archives.

This dialogue was broadcast on 14 Apr. 1940. *Peppi* is incredulous to the possibility that England might not have enough ships at its disposal to send supplies to the Islands. *Toni* assures him that while the mother country was in possession of ample ships, these might have to be diverted for other uses. Agricultural self-sufficiency had to be achieved for this reason. The dialogue continued as follows:

Peppi: I can understand this much, Ton. What beats me is how the farmers are going to set about increasing their produce. They have the same amount of land which they had before the war.

Toni: Take a look at other countries, Pepp, and see what they are doing. That ought to be answer enough. And what is being done in other countries can be done in Malta as well, although naturally on a smaller scale. There are two main ways of increasing our agricultural produce: first by sowing as intensively as we can and by using all possible land; and secondly by making full use of cropping (*newba* – crop rotation) in increasing the production of some necessary article of food [...].

Peppi goes on to mention the – obvious – exemplary undertaking of British farmers who had to increase yields as a way of circumventing German submarines, then prowling the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, a parallel was drawn between the mother country *vis-à-vis* the Battle of the Atlantic and the colony having to face the potential disruption of British maritime routes in the Mediterranean. *Peppi*, the former pessimist turned patriot goes on to say:

Peppi: It appears from this, *Ton*, that if the Maltese farmer doesn't do his bit, he would be classed a laggard. Then it behoves us to lose no time in showing our mettle, because the Maltese farmers have their traditions to uphold and must be true to them.

Toni: That's the stuff, *Peppi*! Now you are talking like a man! Let us put our shoulder to the wheel and do our damndest to win this war. And we must always keep in mind that if we lose this war it would be at the expense of religion and of the small nations. I have nothing more to tell you now, *Peppi*. See you next Sunday. Good-day to you.

Peppi: Good-day, *Ton*, good-day.

With these talks, a direct tie was created which bridged the distance between the speaker – in this case representing the colonial authorities – and the predominantly peasant audience. The strategy proved to be overwhelmingly positive. Rev. Joseph Callus, who was the secretary of the Parish Agricultural Committee of Luqa, addressed a letter to the Director of Agriculture wherein the priest saw fit to notify the director of the farmers' attendance to the previous talk, which had been 'very accepted by the farmers of Luqa'. [...] 'So the result was very good, since every one heard the broadcast with great interest, and every one is anxious to hear more instructions about agriculture.'¹⁵ In addition, a great number of 'amateurs' had attended, which could have meant that the original scope of this particular talk had been surpassed. Callus finished his correspondence by writing that 'Farmers were much encouraged in hearing that farmers now in time of war are of great importance to the Nation. In England agriculture is kept in great esteem.'¹⁶ As if to make sure he was fully conscious of these people's role, this last quote had been underlined. Also, these dialogue talks and special educational talks lead to at least one regular discussion group

¹⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

formed by a village parish priest and their comments were reputed to have stimulated interest and proved very useful in planning future broadcasts.¹⁷

Ten weekly talks were given and several topics of interest to farmers were discussed until they had to be dropped by 1 Aug. 1940 owing to the inadvisability of having huge crowds in village squares on Sunday mornings.¹⁸ The talks resumed on 18 August, however, instructions to farmers were still given over the Rediffusion system before the broadcasting of the news in Maltese and by the publication of articles in the vernacular press.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the apparent success with which these broadcasts were met, problems were all too common. Villages were of varying size and many farms were spread out in the countryside, far from the main village square where most loudspeakers had been affixed. Villages also had one loudspeaker from which news was transmitted, so farmers had to be present in the main square during the scheduled talks. Agricultural propaganda suffered extensively from a lack of Rediffusion in, ironically, some of the largest agricultural areas, such as Dingli and Siggiewi.²⁰ This difficulty was partly overcome by providing an amplifier van to carry information into the villages by the end of 1941²¹, and, by having news readings in the villages which lacked Rediffusion.²² Although, owing to enemy action, things had seemed to have gotten worse the following year. Supplies of cable were lost at sea and this service was still lacking in some districts by 1942. However, in one particular case, the hindering factor in transmitting propaganda seemed to have been negligent attention to duty. Writing from Birkirkara on 14 Oct. 1943, Derflam Nitram – a *nom de plume* – wished to know why the Rediffusion at the local police station was very often than not kept closed during the BBC News transmissions as well as other local broadcasts. He sarcastically asked whether it was because people cheered every time they heard of Allied victories, which as of late had been happening often.²³

On the other side of the channel, Gozitan farmers had had the same problem. Whereas the farmers' broadcast talks were already being transmitted in Malta by

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Minute by Nunn. NAM, CSG 01 – 416/1942.

²³ NAM, CSG 01 – 7077/1943.

the time the first Italian air raids had occurred, the sister island's first loudspeaker was affixed in Rabat on 31 Jan. 1941,²⁴ while the smaller island had no Information Service and only a skeleton Rediffusion Service until Ġorġ Pisani was gazetted as Assistant Information officer for Gozo on 2 June 1942.²⁵ It is safe to say this state of affairs did not go down well with the inhabitants and the refugees which had flocked to the smaller island.



Fig. 51. Ġorġ Pisani seated at his desk at it-Tokk in Gozo broadcasting a Rediffusion transmission during the war.

Source: Private collection.

A cursory look at the daily *Il Berka* is testament to this fact. Koli Apap had sent a multitude of letters, writing on behalf of hundreds of Gozitans who bemoaned the lack of news and communication and the ill-discipline of the persons in charge of making sure transmissions and speeches were being received by the populace. On 4 Feb. 1941, *Semmiegħ* stated that the service was barely audible, right after its installation at *It-Tokk*.²⁶ Barely a month later, Koli Apap again wrote that the person in charge of the Victoria station barely switched on the service, to the detriment of the locals and the hundreds of evacuees which had

²⁴ Frank Bezzina, *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940-1943 (Updated ed.)*, (Għawdex, A & M Printing, 2020), 244.

²⁵ NWM/GOV/REP/26.

²⁶ *Il Berka*, 4 February, 1941.

considerably swelled the population.²⁷ By March 1942, electricity was being suspended between seven o'clock to five o'clock.²⁸ The broadcasting-relay service in the smaller island had been intended primarily for Mġarr and Għajnsielem, though by June 1942, that specific area still lacked a connection or communication.²⁹

As the food situation worsened and so did the bombardments, members of the Advisory Board of Agriculture had agreed that propaganda measures had to be intensified.³⁰ Sacco urged that more propaganda was necessary and that farmers should be given practical instructions as to how they could put into effect the Government cropping policy.³¹ Biasini advocated the holding of meetings in church squares. The Board had to accept that more speakers were required.³² Hirst on the other hand, was more forthright in his assessment. Regarding propaganda, on 21 Aug. 1942, he wrote that:

This is being done. We have enlisted Mr O[scar] Sammut to assist Mr Zammit-Marmarà in making speeches. What we want more than anything else is a Rediffusion speaker in every village square and that all could keep acquainted with world news and would then be able to appreciate the need for local emergency measures. One finds almost complete ignorance of the present position in outlying villages depressed of Rediffusion news – the Information Officer centres although valuable will never replace straight news *viva voce*.³³

It seems the reason given for the suspension of the farmers' talks first time around was not enough to stop these when enemy air raids were in full swing and the effects Axis naval blockade were being felt, as, by the summer of 1942, oral agricultural propaganda was reinstated. By the following summer, thousands of farmers were still gathering in the village squares to listen to the policies, regulations, and other general information the department had to publicize.³⁴ High-ranking officials transmitted talks to farmers, including the Assistant to the

²⁷ Il Berka, 7 March, 1941.

²⁸ Debates of the Council of Government of Malta, 1941-1943, Part 1, sitting no. 21, 19th March 1942, p. 448.

²⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 2765/1941.

³⁰ The authorities distinguished between two types of propaganda. Indirect propaganda included discussions such as a woman's hour, talks for children (e.g. Scouts and Guides) and talks on matters of general interest. Direct propaganda included giving reasons for the Government's actions or lack thereof in certain situations and broadcast pertaining to certain subjects, with special reference in Maltese. The farmers' talks fell in the latter section. NAM, CSG 01 – 416/1942.

³¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 3849/1942.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Minute by Hirst. NAM, CSG 01 – 3849/1942.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Lieutenant Governor, the Chief Government Medical Officer and the Acting Director of Agriculture.³⁵ Roger Strickland had addressed concerned farmers about the NFU's negotiations with government.³⁶ By the early summer of 1942, most broadcast talks and propaganda measures had shifted from educational purposes to keeping the agricultural districts abreast of the ever-worsening situation. Calls were initiated encouraging farmers to plant more cereals and to provide the government with their full harvests. Officials had to pander to the peasants' pride. In a talk titled *The present position of agriculture* given on 24 May 1942³⁷, Zammit-Marmarà was adulatory in his address:

The whole world has its eyes on Malta and ALL MALTA HAS ITS EYES ON YOU FARMERS. Malta requires more food – food for our gallant airmen, food for our fighting men, food for the people. The question of food has now taken another turn and our responsibility has grown greatly and this responsibility is now pressing with great weight on our conscience. What are we going to do? [...] Your President, the Hon. Colonel Strickland, has you always in his thoughts, he always says that farmers are men of steel and honest men.

By June 1943, propaganda amongst farmers was continued through Rediffusion with the main emphasis being on vegetable contracts, grading, agriculture surveys, fire protection of crops and cereal control.³⁸ Turning to Gozo, by May 1943, Victoria, Nadur, Xagħra, Xewkija and Għajnsielem had a homemade amplifier with a loudspeaker.³⁹ By 1944, Qala still had no electricity and no broadcasting service, and was therefore cut off from all news except by newspapers which reached the villagers two, three or more days after these were distributed in Malta.⁴⁰ Nothing was done as there was no wiring in the area and no additional telephone lines were available.⁴¹ There was practically no means of disseminating Maltese news to the population as a whole, and least of all to the farmers who inhabited the countryside.

The lack of urgency in laying cables and wires in the interwar period, coupled with the lack of supplies and absence of funds served to dent and nullify Government's message to farming communities in both Malta and Gozo at a time

³⁵ These were Mr Andrew Cohen, Prof. Albert Bernard and Mr Henry Hirst, respectively.

³⁶ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1 & 2 (Secret).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

³⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 1992/1942.

⁴⁰ NAM, CSG 01 – 4917/1944.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

when collaboration, cohesion and collective action were most desperately needed. Certain complications were straightened out by the introduction of an amplifier van, but had the state of audio propaganda been better, peasants would have been more amenable to official policy. However, talks to farmers were still being relayed on Rediffusion well into 1945, giving credence to Hirst's words of the oral transmission of news as having been invaluable.⁴²

Owing to the lack of propaganda broadcasts in certain villages, Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà suggested the publication of a periodical containing agricultural news and technical information. This idea was deemed acceptable as it was felt published instructions and articles were to suffice in lieu of the absence of loudspeakers in certain communities in which the information was of the utmost importance. In addition, this course of action was taken so as to dispel categorically any misunderstanding which might have arisen from the interpretation of information or directions issued by the department.⁴³

The propaganda publication *Il-Bidwi* – The Farmer – was not the first of its kind. In the early 20th century, the Agrarian Society had issued a publication in Italian about agricultural practices and gardening.⁴⁴ Farmers made little use of it. In 1921, another periodical started being distributed free of charge among farmers, gardeners and other interested persons. *Il Bidui*, edited by Zammit-Marmarà, was a welcome addition to the local agricultural scene. This quarterly 'politics-free' periodical was in the care of the Chilean Nitrate Committee, a technical propaganda association which succeeded in distributing thousands of pamphlets in English, Italian, French and Maltese along with thousands of packets of vegetable seeds purposely and specially imported from abroad.⁴⁵ By the mid-1920s, circulation reached 6,500 copies which led to Zammit-Marmarà requesting for the publication to be supplied – free of charge – with the Malta Government Gazette and other Government publications; in return, he offered to have Government notices reproduced therein in the vernacular.⁴⁶ His request was granted and publication was in continuation for 10 years, until the agriculture

⁴² *Il-Bidwi*, 1 August 1945.

⁴³ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

⁴⁴ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 January 1943.

⁴⁵ NAM, HOM 02 – 247/1925.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

department began printing *Melita Agricola*, another publication with the same objective.

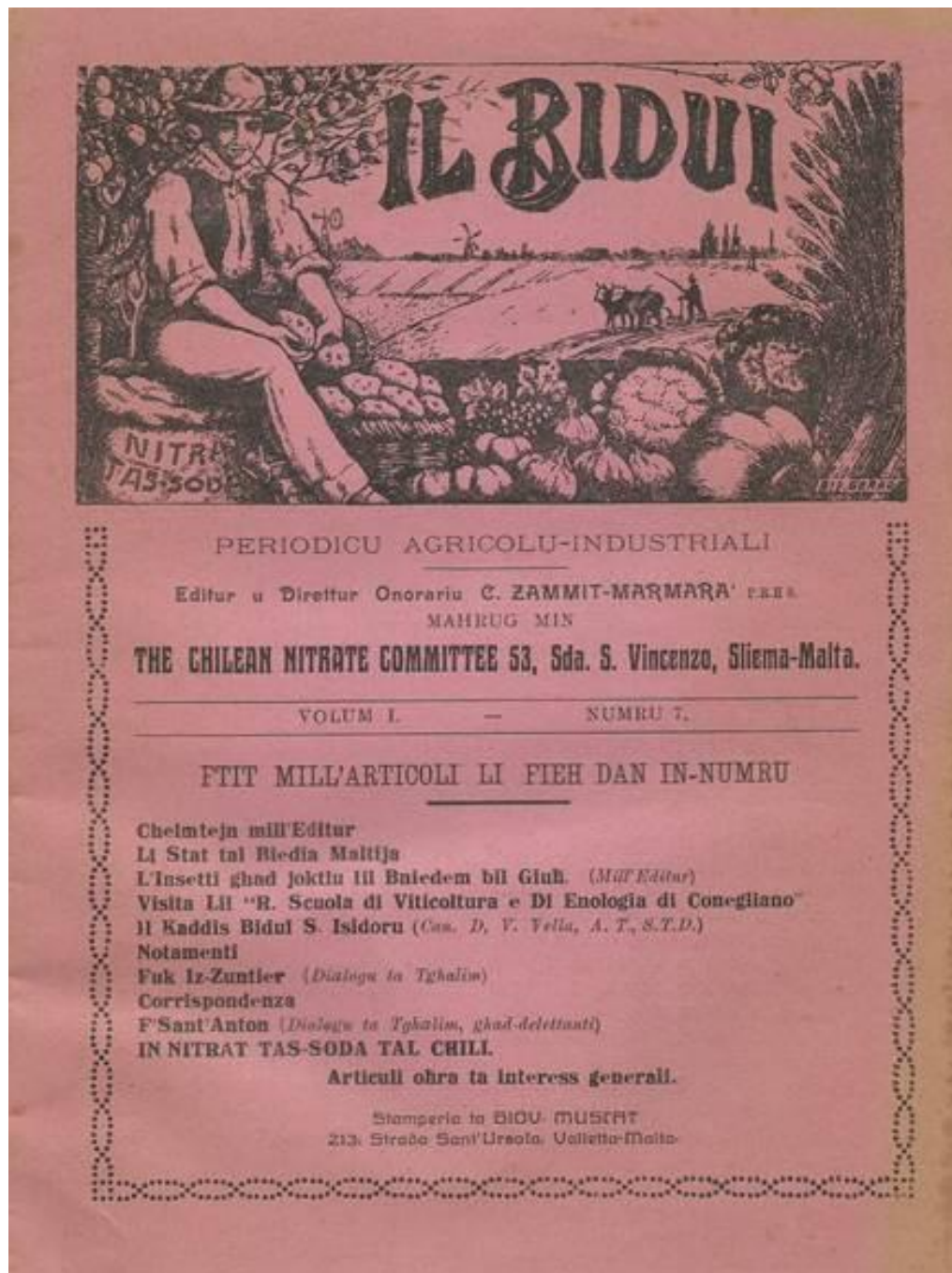


Fig. 52. *Il Bidui*, edited by Carmelo Zammit-Marmara.

Source: National Library of Malta.

During the war, the existence of sufficient newsprint was jealously guarded by the Government Printing Office and the Information Officer. The agricultural

department, however, was finally permitted to print another incarnation of a farming-centric newspaper, this time titled *Il-Bidwi*. This made its first appearance on 15 Nov. 1942, under the editorship of Zammit-Marmarà once again. With newsprint becoming available as the siege was lifted and to satisfy an ever-increasing demand, Government was asked to provide sufficient paper to increase the circulation from 1,000 to 3,000.⁴⁷ Having met with more success, by the first quarter of 1944 demand exceeded the available supply. Distribution stood at 5,000⁴⁸ and was raised by successive stages up to 5,600 copies, a proportion of which was at one time used as reading matter in the adult evening classes, organised by the Education Department.⁴⁹



Fig. 53. First print of *Il-Bidwi*, 15 Nov. 1942.

Source: National Library of Malta.

Il-Bidwi was predominantly a technical manual but was also utilised as a tool to snuff out the purported conservatism which farmers were accused of suffering from. Articles aimed to educate the readers about gardening, livestock farming, seeds, topical notes on cultivations, animal husbandry, irrigation, diseases, the introduction of cooperatives, agricultural marketing and imports and exports. Photographs showed the ideal presentation of produce in food stalls. NFU notices about meetings and committee elections were given pride of place. Films in the country districts were advertised. The suggestions printed ranged from the innovative to the downright plain. Farmers were encouraged to mix manure with

⁴⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

either ash⁵⁰ or seaweed⁵¹ but on the other hand, were reminded to avoid stepping on recently-watered farmland, to avoid soil compression and the inevitable lack of aeration. This last point can mean either one of two factors: that farmers were indeed in need of instruction in the most trivial of affairs or the authorities were taking no chances and informing these labourers in the most simple things. Black marketeers were named and shamed whereas farmers were castigated for not sticking to the pre-war procedure of going through the middleman for their sales. Instructions in fiscal responsibility were printed, but only inasmuch as it suited Government.⁵²

Conciliation with the Empire's war aims were clear for all to see. Farmers were exhorted to plant more crops, especially cereals. One appeal went on as quoted below:

Jekk nagħmlu dan inkunu qiegħdin nisimgħu mill-Gvern. Għandna nifmuha darba għal dejjem li l-Gvern għandu d-dritt kollu li jgagħalna nagħmlu dan meta huwa stess qiegħed jonfoq miljuni kbar u, dak li huwa iżjed, jissakrifika eluf ta' żgħażagħ (baħrin Inglizi) biex idaħħilna x'nieklu minn artijiet oħra. Għandna nifmu li aħna midjunin lejn il-Gvern Ingliz u mhux hu lejna.

[...]

Żgħażagħ Inglizi, Awstraljani u Kanadiži qiegħdin, bl-eluf, iċarċru demmhom ġol-Libja biex jifftħulna l-bieb li bih aħna mblokkati. Ma rridx infisser li aħna l-Maltin ma batejniex bil-gwerra u għaldaqstant nobdu lill-Gvern billi niżirgħu wċuh li jservu għall-ikel tall-bniedem u mhux għall-bhejjem.

[...]

Is-sakrificcji tal-bdiewa Maltin huma wisq iżgħar minn tal-bdiewa ta' pajjiżi Inglizi. Nagħmlu mela dmirna lejn pajjiżna u lejn is-Saltna Ingliza biex ma ndumux ma nirbħu kif inhija x-xewqa ta' kulħadd.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 December 1942.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1943.

⁵² 'La trekkinx u la taħbix flusek fil-blat, ġewwa l-ħajt, f'kaxx fil-ħamrija u x'naf jien! Kien hemm min ħadhom miegħu f'xelter tal-blat u tilifhom jew serquhomlu. [...] Ixtri bi flusek Titoli tal-Gvern, in-National Savings Certificates (*Titoli tat-Tifdi*) u d-Defence Bonds (*Titoli tad-Difiza*)'. *Il-Bidwi*, 15 February 1943.

⁵³ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 December 1942.



Fig. 54. A notice printed on 1 March 1943 urging subscription and for farmers to lend used copies of the paper.

Source: National Library of Malta.

Agricultural know-how was imparted in three ways: by way of dialogues between two fictional peasants⁵⁴, articles written by contributors working in both the public and private sectors and by oral tradition in the form of written Maltese proverbs. Contributors ranged from farmers who sent in letters for inclusion, but the main columnists were officials from the agricultural department and the NFU, Zammit-Marmarà and Joseph Orlando Smith, a district agricultural officer. Regarding proverbs, a selection of these were linked to the same month in which they had made their appearance. For January 1943, this rhyme was offered: *Meta x-xemx issaħħan f'Jannar, Ikollok biex fis-sajf timla d-dar.*⁵⁵ For September 1943, the following made an appearance: *Għal San Mikiel, lesti l-musbieħ*, reminding farmers to get a headstart and go to their fields earlier than usual as the day would have started to get shorter starting on 29 September as opposed to the summer months.⁵⁶ Others had a patriotic tint: *Jekk twarrab il-lexxuna tagħti lill-għadu għajnuna* and *Jekk int l-imgħażqa twarrab dewmien fir-Rebħa ggarab.*⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Like the weekly broadcast talks, the two fictional peasants were called *Peppi* and *Toni* as well. This series of dialogues was printed under the heading *Fuq iz-zuntier* (On the church parvis).

⁵⁵ This meant that heat or warmth in January was welcomed by the topsoil after the previous three months' rain. *Il-Bidwi*, 1 January 1943.

⁵⁶ This proverb is sometimes recited as *Għal San Mikiel, lesti l-kandler.* *Il-Bidwi*, 1 September 1943.

⁵⁷ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 November 1942.

Blandishment through the written word was all too common and the department took a paternal and flattering approach to its communication with the farmers who could either read or were read the paper.⁵⁸ On 23 Feb. 1945, Governor Edmund Schreiber visited the agricultural department amid much pomp and fanfare. He was shown around the Għammieri Experimental Farm, the Balzan Centre⁵⁹, and the slaughterhouse. At the end of his visit, printed in bold lettering the Governor was reputed to have said, 'Had I not been a soldier, I would have been a farmer, and when I'm not a soldier, I hope I will be a farmer'.⁶⁰ Biasini christened The Department of Agriculture as the Farmers' Department.⁶¹



Fig. 55. Joseph (Ġużè) Orlando Smith.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

⁵⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 2584/1942.

⁵⁹ This was one of the locations where agricultural produce was marketed and sold.

⁶⁰ 'Li Kieku ma kontx suldat, jiena kont inkun bidwi, u meta ma nibqax suldat, jiena nittama li nkun bidwi.' *Il-Bidwi*, 15 March 1945.

⁶¹ *Għala d-Dipartiment Tal-Biedja Hu d-Dipartiment Tal-Bdiewa. Il-Bidwi*, 16 April 1945.

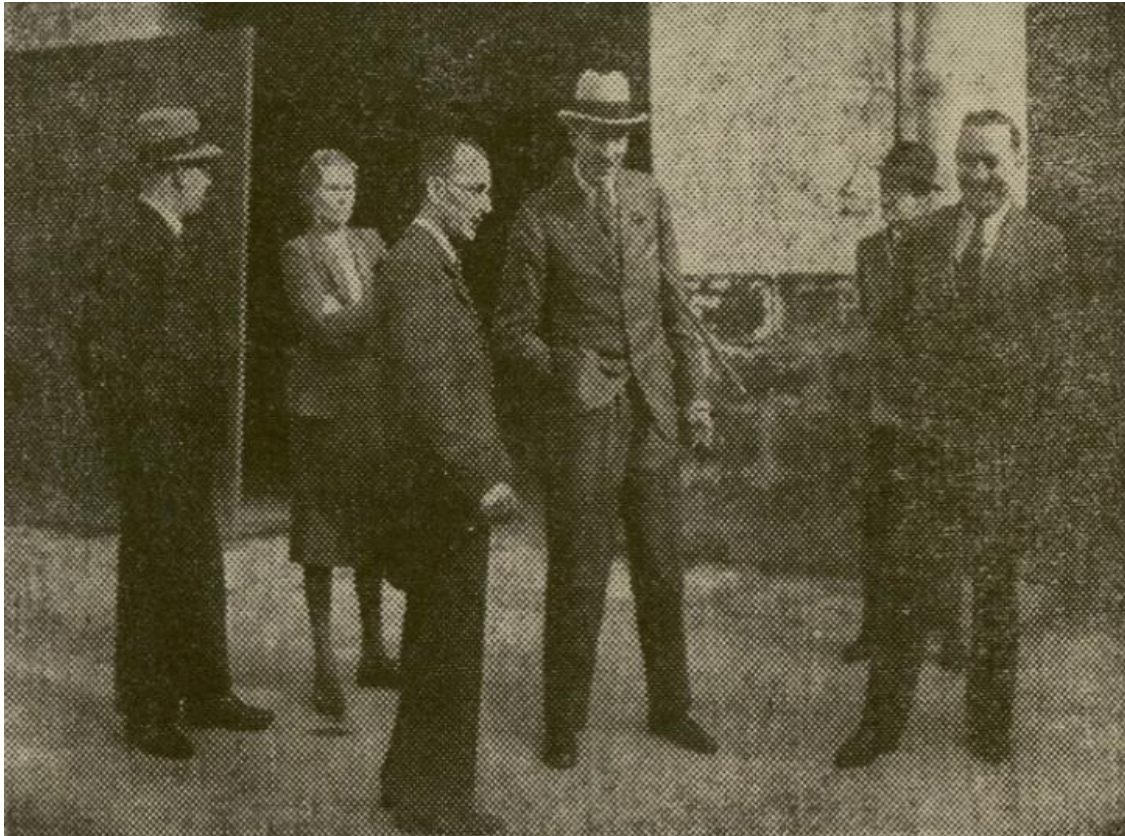


Fig. 56. Photograph from *Il-Bidwi* dated 15 Mar. 1945 showing (from left to right) Robert Biasini, Lady Schreiber, Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà, Governor Schreiber, V. R. Rizzo and Oscar Paris touring the Balzan Centre.

Source: National Library of Malta.

If the statistics provided are anything to go by, farmers took an active interest in the periodical judging by the steadily increasing number of readers during and after hostilities. Unfortunately, a general curtailment of expenditure accounted for the issue of *Il-Bidwi* to once a month instead of fortnightly as from 1 Apr. 1946. Joseph Orlando Smith was appointed editor of the periodical starting from the November 1947 issue, on the relinquishing by Mr Zammit-Marmarà of his appointment with Government.⁶²

In conjunction with Rediffusion and *Il-Bidwi*, a cinema campaign was designed by the authorities with three objectives in mind. Local farmers had to be made knowledgeable of the mobilisation of agriculture in Allied countries and steel themselves for the same fight. The second point was the engendering of a

⁶² NAM, GMR 1501, *Report by the Director of Agriculture covering activities of the Department during the period October 1938 to September 1946 and the Agricultural year October 1946 to September 1947* (Malta, Malta Government Printing Office, 1950), 551-700.

link of kinship with labourers from the same social class then fighting for the same cause and the final aim was the publicization of the fight unfolding on the other continents. The presentation of motion pictures in the villages was a spoke in the imperial wheel by which the peasant farmers scattered in the outlying areas were indoctrinated and brought further into the fold, thus successfully aligning their ideals with those of the colonial regime, making it an early example of the state's use of film for social and colonial cohesion.

These agricultural propaganda films were not the first of their kind and had already proved fruitful elsewhere.⁶³ The stakeholders behind this kind of propaganda drive believed cinema to be a powerful cultural medium. Earlier in the War, the Information Officer had suggested the production of a documentary film about Malta's war effort⁶⁴ whereas the following year, Government had received another offer for permission to film everyday life during the siege.⁶⁵ In essence, this medium could be construed as having been the most democratic form of communication. The viewers' illiteracy need not have been factored in and it was this point precisely why cinema was exploited to affect more output in the agricultural sector.

The first mention of cinema being used to sway the peasants' opinions was in 1942 when, in discussing propaganda, Cohen and others⁶⁶ agreed that they were to ask the Colonial Office to see whether a 'cinema van' could be sent out to Malta.⁶⁷ No result seems to have come out of this enquiry, if any was submitted at all. However, before the motion pictures campaign was extended to target farmers specifically, films were already being shown throughout the Islands in the country theatres and other places of entertainment. On 13 Dec. 1942, hundreds showed up at the Pius X band club in Lija to watch two 'talkies' about the War, which, for the first time, included translations and comments in Maltese.⁶⁸ Writing in *Il Berka*, the spectator *Liensis* reported 'The clapping which the assembled people commonly broke out in is evidence of the enthusiasm and

⁶³ Alison Murray Levine, 'Projections of Rural Life: The Agricultural Film Initiative in France, 1919-39', *Cinema Journal*, xliii, 4 (2004), 76-95.

⁶⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 3467/1941.

⁶⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 4429/1942.

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Nunn, Major Francis Gerard, Major Briffa de Piro, and Lt. Ken Burns, all employed in the Information Office.

⁶⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 416/1942.

⁶⁸ *Il Berka*, 24 December 1942.

affection which the pictures have engendered.⁶⁹ He continued that, for the Government to capitalise, films – even old ones for that matter – needed to be shown regularly, in all the villages throughout the mornings and evenings.⁷⁰

Fully aware of the influence of this type of propaganda, by 1943, these wartime features were regularly advertised in local print media. To ensure further cooperation between peasant farmers and the state, the agricultural department, along with the information department, started sponsoring films aimed for these labourers. These shows started being shown in local theatres long after the siege was lifted but while food shortages were still acute. Typically, the programme was kick-started by Government and NFU officials giving short commentaries on agricultural policies and the Union's work on behalf of its members, followed by the chosen feature. For the sake of translation, placards on site provided a translation of the script.

The Colonial Office had asked for special films for Malta and a proposal to dub the film *Land Girl* in Maltese was abandoned in favour of dubbing *The Great Harvest*.⁷¹ Joseph Sultana of the BBC wrote, translated and recited the film in Maltese, including a specially written foreword for local audiences:

The people of Malta have suffered much and they are in need of more food and British ships and British men will see that they get it. Nevertheless, the more food that we grow on the island, the more ships can be diverted to the main job of smashing the Hun. Let us then resolve, men, women and children of Malta, to help by our labours to produce the maximum amount of food on our own soil. This film shows you what the men, women and children of England have done.⁷²

This was shown for the first time at the Odeon Theatre in Ħamrun on 21 Mar. 1943.⁷³ Among the dignitaries present, there were Roger Strickland and his wife, Robert Biasini, Henry Hirst, Oscar Paris, Leslie Swindells, Roy Hay, Arthur Zammit Cutajar, Nicola Biancardi and A. Cauchi Gera. According to *Il-Bidwi*, around one thousand farmers had showed up.⁷⁴ Some brought their families along and together, they were shown films about agricultural work and the War's

⁶⁹ *Iċ-ċapċip li fih infexxew bosta drabi in-nies li ngabru fil-bitħa tal-Każin hu xhieda ta' l-entuzjażmu u tal-għożża li nisslu fihom dawk l-istampi tal-gwerra.* *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ TNA, FCO 141/9304.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 April 1943.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

latest developments. The hall was festooned with the Allied countries' flags.⁷⁵ Having started off with describing rural depopulation in inter-war Britain and showing large tracts of uncultivated farmland, the film largely dealt with mechanised farming in the mother country and it aroused a great deal of interest and showed local farmers the effort others were making to produce record crops. The film then shifted to presenting idealised images of rural life along with hardy farmers getting a helping hand from family members and labourers, offering soliloquies such as:

Farmers and farm workers are happy. Of course their war work is simply the work they longed to do [...] They long to farm well. They are fighting with the weapons of life, not the tank that kills but its twin brother the crawler tractor, that grows crops to keep us alive.⁷⁶

As had been established during the Rediffusion talks, the link between agricultural output and shipping space was brought up once again. As if to drive the point home, the farmers in attendance were once more made aware, that a larger output of home-grown products would mean freeing up space on convoys bound for the Islands. These could in turn be diverted to ferrying troops to combat zones. Producing more food and alleviating the convoys was equated with patriotism.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The term used was *Bandieri tan-Nazzjonijiet Magħquda*. *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ Retrieved 28 July 2021 from <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060006291>.

⁷⁷ *Il-Bidwi*, 1 April 1943.



Fig. 57. George Zarb⁷⁸, NFU Chief Propaganda Officer (and starting from 1944, Treasurer) and employee in the Information Office.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

The NFU stipulated these events were to be held fairly regularly. Following the screening in Ħamrun, the second one was held at the Astoria theatre in Rabat on 11 April, followed by a third one at the Buckingham Theatre in Żabbar on 9 May. For this last screening, eight hundred farmers showed up from Żabbar and the surrounding country areas, even though the theatre held up to six hundred people.⁷⁹ For the first time, a leader was chosen from the audience to address the assembled crowd. Karmnu Attard from Żebbug apologetically confessed that he had been against any kind of cooperation⁸⁰ during the war but credited the NFU with alleviating the plight of farmers and for standing firm when taking up the fight for their interests. By the third show, the number of propaganda films had increased substantially, having included features about the Malta convoys, the battles of Stalingrad, Dunkirk and the siege. Farmers were reported to have

⁷⁸ Zarb had worked as a propaganda officer and later as Information Officer under the Defence Security Officer (DSO) Bertram Ede. During the War, he was a Maltese announcer for Rediffusion, working together with Effie Ciantar and Ġużè Chetcuti and a personal assistant to Major Francis Gerard. Having been a good friend of Mabel Strickland's, he was made Chairman of Allied Malta Newspapers in the late 1960s.

⁷⁹ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 May, 1943.

⁸⁰ Whether this meant cooperation with Government policies or the introduction of cooperatives remains to be seen.

emerged from the theatre beaming and seemingly had not wanted to stop clapping when the English anthem was played.⁸¹ St Paul's Bay was the site of the following propaganda film, wherein the BBC reporter on site was interested in getting a 'story' about Malta's agriculture.⁸² The farmers of Żurrieq, Għajn Tuffieħa and Mellieħa had been given the same treatment⁸³, whereas across the channel, Ġorġ Pisani was responsible for setting up films and documentaries at the Royal Talkie theatre in Victoria, Gozo. By December 1943, viewing times were three days a week with Sunday mornings earmarked for farmers.⁸⁴

Judging by the success of the cinema drive, it seemed that Government decided to broaden its audience and expand its subject matter to beyond farmers and agriculture. The subsequent selected 'talkie film shows' dealt with, but were not limited to, Empire, the royal family, wartime military campaigns and the liberation of cities by Allied troops.⁸⁵ They were scheduled and shown to children in primary schools and adults all over the country districts⁸⁶ and it was estimated that thousands of locals had sat for propaganda films with attendance numbers having increased as the years went by, the last films having been shown in early 1946. It can be safely said that the visual approach to propaganda reaped the best results.

The Dig for Victory campaign was one of the iconic propaganda campaigns in Allied countries during the War.⁸⁷ Public parks in Britain, the United States and other Commonwealth countries were planted as vegetable and fruit gardens to supplement local populations with ample food rations to reduce pressure on the public food supply and to minimize reliance on shipping. Private residences were also urged to join by growing their private allotments. Around one third of the vegetables produced by the United States came from victory gardens⁸⁸ while in Britain, 'digging for victory' used land such as waste ground, railway edges, ornamental gardens and lawns, while sports fields and golf courses were requisitioned for farming or vegetable growing. This made victory gardens a part

⁸¹ *Il-Bidwi*, 15 May, 1943.

⁸² NAM, CSG 01 – 6478/1943.

⁸³ Minute by Geoffrey Nunn. NAM, CSG 01 – 416/1942.

⁸⁴ Wednesdays were earmarked for members of the public who hailed from Victoria while Mondays were reserved for schoolchildren. *Il Berka*, 3 Dec. 1943.

⁸⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 6982/1945.

⁸⁶ Dingli, Gudja, St Paul's Bay, Żebbuġ, Naxxar, Tarxien, Lija, Ħamrun, Pawla, Birżebbuġa, Vittoriosa, Notabile, Qormi.

⁸⁷ In Malta, this campaign was called 'Aġħżaq għar-Rebħa.' *Il Berka*, 10 August 1942.

⁸⁸ Stuart A. Kallen, *The War at Home* (San Diego, Lucent Books, 2000), 15.

of daily life on the home front and Malta, considering its isolated and precarious position, needed the extra food more than most.

In and around many towns and villages in Malta and Gozo, there were uncultivated plots of land which were to be set aside for this purpose. Government appealed to the owners of such fields to get in touch immediately with the agricultural department which was to offer to pay rent for these fields and sublet them to allotment holders. As most did not have the land to dig or the tools to dig with, Government proposed to start an allotment scheme which was to provide land, tools, seeds and expert advice.⁸⁹ Similarly, all persons who were able to provide information regarding any land suitable for allotments were to get in touch. Individuals who wished to participate in the scheme by digging, organising or helping in any other way were asked to apply to the Department of Agriculture which was to provide the tools, the land and the seeds. It was realised that many of the potential new growers did not have any experience or knowledge of how to produce the needed crops. Therefore, advice was to be given by the technical staff of the department, and experienced gardeners were sent periodically to give practical demonstrations. In addition, Mr E. Skillman reached out to people through Rediffusion from where he spoke about soil preservation, gardening, the conservation of water, fertiliser and the purchase of seed.⁹⁰

Subject to limitations of staff and limited facilities for propaganda, by the first quarter of 1943, the Dig for Victory campaign led to about 200 military sites being cultivated in some measure and an increasing number of private gardens were producing vegetables throughout the Islands. In addition, a site of between two to two and a half acres at St Julian's containing between forty-five to fifty plots was by then cleared, levelled, ploughed, manured, fenced and irrigated and was being let as allotments.⁹¹ Suitable sites were difficult to find and water was always a limiting factor, but the success of the first site encouraged the department to look for further sites. A demonstration garden was set up in the most frequented part of Valletta and a seed and plant sales kiosk was being erected on the site.⁹²

⁸⁹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

⁹⁰ *Il Berka*, 10 August 1942.

⁹¹ NWM/GOV/REP/06, Vol. 1.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Press and Rediffusion, leaflets and a Garden Advisory Panel were used to disseminate horticultural advice to the public.

While having been an overwhelming success in other countries, many people in Malta were not able to respond to this slogan. It was extremely difficult to form any estimate of the effect of this campaign, but the monthly takings for seeds and fertilisers at the Food Production Bureau and other seed sales centres gave some indication that the public was responding slowly. During the second quarter of 1943, sales of seeds from the department's shop amounted to a negligible £140 while £250 worth of seedlings were sold.⁹³ Hirst pointed out that results comparable to those in the United Kingdom could not be expected from the Maltese population as 'the apathy of the public is considerable and the facilities for publicity are extremely limited.'⁹⁴



Fig. 58. Growing tomatoes in a garden, somewhere in Malta.

Source: Imperial War Museums.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 618/1943.

Ecclesiastical Intermediaries: The Church as stabilising agent

The dynamics of colonial control in Malta rested on the power-balance between Church and State. Cognizant of its stature in local social and spiritual affairs, the British were well aware of the emotions and actions the Catholic Church was capable of stirring up among the local inhabitants. Godfrey Pirotta stated that the Church in Malta was, 'with British blessing, a uniquely powerful institution.'⁹⁵ True as this is, though far from needing any protection, the exalted status which the institution occupied was well-preserved by the country folk and the urban populace. Instead, research shows the British had repeatedly striven to sire good relations with the Church, in the process making it an untouchable ally in the local colonial setup. Over the years, the latter managed to secure repeated concessions from the colonial government. Its collaboration and support were imperative in safeguarding British strategic imperial interests; therefore, it was allowed to continue projecting its power onto the local population unhindered. Britain had everything to gain from stability and order on the Fortress Island and consequently, the colonial authorities supported the Catholic Church, but only as far as it accorded with its own interests. War necessitated total cooperation.

In trying to understand the role the Church played in social affairs during the period in question, a short introduction to the clergy and their leaders is necessary. Reminiscing about Malta in the 1920s, naval officer Eric Brockman had this to say about the immense presence of the people of the cloth throughout the Islands:

We used to play a game called 'Priests'. Four of you sat in a *karozzin*, two on each side, and scored points for the numbers of priests and nuns you could identify on each side of the road. We were ignorant of such Popish distinctions as Secular, Regular, Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian, or Lay Brother, and we scored one for Black Priest, two for a Brown Monk, three for a White Monk, and so on. The side which sighted its own ship's parson lost the game. The score ran sometimes into treble figures, and I hope we may be forgiven for thinking Malta 'priest-ridden'.

[...]

⁹⁵ Godfrey Pirotta, 'The Malta Labour and the Church: Building the Democratic State, 1921-1976' in *Revisiting Labour History*, John Chircop (ed.), Horizons, Malta, 2012, 85-121.

Englishmen were apt to point critically at the number of priests, monks and nuns to be seen in the streets. Few of them understood that these people were the doctors, lawyers, nurses, welfare workers, teachers and civil servants and the like, who operated a welfare state based upon voluntary offerings and dedicated service. If all the operators of the National Health and Education services and the multiplicity of State-aided organisations given over to 'welfare' in England, were to wear a recognisable uniform, we should get a rude shock.⁹⁶

Brockman could be absolved of the astonishment with which he viewed local society at first glance. The Church's rapid expansion during the nineteenth century saw its *raison d'être* surpass its original spiritual objective. Its activities in the charitable, social and educational areas – exclusively in the hands of the Catholic clergy – made it a bastion of the welfare state. Clergymen were supported 'entirely from funds supplied by the people themselves'⁹⁷, but were tax-exempt, as were their families.⁹⁸ The number of collegiate chapters and basilicas increased and many new parishes were created; Gozo even became a separate diocese in 1864, consolidating the loyalty of the Gozitans. The populace on both islands, notably the country folk, depended directly on the local priests, making the Church the centre of village life and the parish priest its first citizen. Herbert Ganado related that, when in the 1920s, he was invited by a friend to the Siggiewi village feast, his friend's father asked him whether he had first been to the parish priest. When Ganado replied in the negative, the man suggested for Ganado to go. In the village, doctor, lawyer, notary, pharmacist, police inspector and sergeant all enjoyed an important social status, but the parish priest was the undisputed head.⁹⁹

Undeniably, this interdependent relationship between the faithful and the clergy led to the successful penetration of all spheres of social life by the Catholic Church in both Malta and Gozo. It had its own intellectuals in all domains of society who were tied up with the traditional rural (and urban middle) classes.¹⁰⁰ This process of 'clericalization', as identified by Koster, lasted until after

⁹⁶ Eric Brockman, *Last Bastion: Sketches of the Maltese Islands* (Malta, Progress Press Co Ltd., 1975), 14.

⁹⁷ Joseph Bezzina, 'Church and State in an Island Colony', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 47-78.

⁹⁸ Dominic Fenech, *The Making of Archbishop Gonzi*, (Valletta, Union Press, 1976), 6.

⁹⁹ Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel: It-Tieni Ktieb (1933-1942) (It-tieni edizzjoni)* (Malta, Interprint (Malta) Ltd., 1977), 19.

¹⁰⁰ John Chircop, *Underdevelopment: The Maltese Experience 1880-1914*, unpublished M.A. dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 1993, 116.

independence had been granted'.¹⁰¹ Although, in the pre-Second World War era, the abundant presence of clerics roaming Malta presented the British military establishment with a dilemma. Admiral Sir John Fisher was conscious of Malta's imperial role in that it existed solely for the Navy and by the Navy. It was

quite impossible to suppose that either through a seditious press, or priestly pressure, the splendid and loyal feeling of the Maltese for the English (which are heartily reciprocated) should be permitted to be sapped.¹⁰²

Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, governing the Islands at the tail-end of the 1930s, communicated the following to Bishop Maurus Caruana as the clouds of war were gathering over the continent:

You are doubtless aware that we are taking precautions in our power to protect the population in the event, unlikely we hope, of war and an air attack on Malta. One of the dangers that might arise would be panic among the people and we are making arrangements to train suitable persons to act as advisers and helpers. It has been suggested to me that the parish priests would be certain to lend their assistance in keeping the people calm and maintaining good order and that it would be only fair to them if they were informed of the conditions that might arise.¹⁰³

Government had doubtlessly been aware of the domineering and potentially stabilising power of the Church.¹⁰⁴ When on the subject of evacuation of the harbour areas, Bonham-Carter also made it a point for the clergy to rope in as many people as possible in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) as air raid wardens: 'I took this opportunity to ask for your help and cooperation upon which I am confident I can depend.'¹⁰⁵ A great deal of propaganda work was carried by the agricultural department with assistance from the archpriests and parish priests

¹⁰¹ Adrianus Koster, 'Regular and Secular Clergy in British Malta', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 79-90.

¹⁰² Henry Frendo, 'Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin Mediterranean or British Empire?', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 185-214.

¹⁰³ Laurence Mizzi, *Il-Knisja u Malta fil-Gwerra (1939-1945)*, (Malta, Publishers Enterprises Group (P.E.G.), 2005), 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ The influence – and power – which the Catholic Church in Malta wielded did not go unnoticed by Fascist Italy, either. It had specifically tried to involve the Church and the clergy in their propagandistic efforts during the 1930s. The majority of the clergy held pro-Italian sentiments in the 1930s. They were schooled in Italian and Latin, they were familiar with Italian culture and were sympathetic with and admired Italy's rise as an imperial power. This admiration was further strengthened by Italy's Concordat with the Vatican in 1929. Lord Strickland was accused of harbouring masonic links, so automatically their allegiances lied with the pro-Italian Nationalist Party. They were susceptible to Italian propaganda themselves. Reno Borg, *Malta u l-Faxxiżmu* (Malta, Sensiela Kotba Soċjalisti, 1991), 47.

¹⁰⁵ Mizzi, 14.

around the two Islands. The village leaders were requested to 'publish' free of charge all sorts of notices, instructions and warnings in the churches during the service when the congregation was at its largest.¹⁰⁶ Monsignor Lorenzo Spiteri was archpriest of Mqabba in the 1930s. He had this to say:

We clergymen used to regularly gather at the government's request, either at the Curia, sometimes at the Governor's Palace and even at any school. We were given instructions on how to conduct ourselves and how to lead the people in case of war. [...] Back then, we were the ones who led the people. We had the people's trust as well as that of the authorities. Government used to get through to the people with the help of the clergy.¹⁰⁷

Spiteri's words betray the fact that the institution allowed itself to be deployed as a willing agent of indirect rule. Two days after the British declaration of war, the Bishop of Gozo Michael Gonzi wrote to Government that 'the Church Authorities will fall in with any wish of the Government [...] and are prepared to assist the Government, through the Parish priests, &c., in every possible way.'¹⁰⁸ In response to Gonzi's assurance, the official answered with 'Seen, thank you. This is very satisfactory'.¹⁰⁹ Apart from being the spiritual agents of the Church, the village clergy acted as the colonial agents on the ground, intermingling with the locals keeping everyone in check while simultaneously acting as lines of communication for Government.

In early 1939, even though Bishop Maurus Caruana did not consent, he gave parish priests permission to read out a notice in churches every Sunday to speed up the Royal Malta Artillery's recruitment drive. They also were to attend ARP courses and help in the fitting and distribution of gas masks.¹¹⁰ They, along with their second-in-command were listed in ARP documentation, highlighting their esteemed positions within the vilages and, if need be, their potential pacifying role in the coming crisis.¹¹¹ They were made chairmen of Food Control Committees. Communal kitchens were set up and run by the Church. They were ordered to instantly shoot down any rumours pertaining to the food supply and to castigate known hoarders. They therefore had a direct link to food production

¹⁰⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 837/1937.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 3033/1939.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Mizzi, 13.

¹¹¹ NAM, ARP Bundle 7, no.4.

and the producers on whom the effectiveness and survival of the colony as a supply and offensive base hinged. National security had become the Church's prerogative as well.

Irrespective of whether they were instructed to play an active part in official evacuation policy or were moved into acting due to the gravity of the situation, priests assigned thousands of refugees to semi-permanent homes in the reception areas in the first few months of the siege. Vincent Caruana's family was made to leave Senglea and seek shelter at Siġġiewi and he attested to the role played by Rev. Francesco Mangion, the village's spiritual leader:

[...] *Ta' Paċpaċ*¹¹², the archpriest, came knocking on the door, "Open up, open up. Have you got any rooms to spare?" "No we haven't, Sir! How many rooms have we got? Though, we have got one. It's full of clover." Understood? These people were all farmers. "Listen, it doesn't matter. We'll empty all the clover and place a family inside this room." "In here?!" "We have no choice", said the archpriest. "We do not have a choice", echoed the police sergeant. "Do as you're told. These people aren't going to stay outdoors. These are our brothers."¹¹³

Fundamentally, parish priests acted as intermediaries between government and the peasants working the land. A case in point was Rev. Edgar Salomone, the anglophile parish priest of Mġarr who has gone down in local history as one of the most public-spirited clergymen in the first half of twentieth century Malta. Over the years, especially during the 1930s, Salomone sent numerous protestations, petitions and letters to the agricultural department, inadvertently taking on another role as the spearhead of his farmer-parishioners' requests and complaints. Farmers from Mġarr had sent a petition on 18 Jan. 1935 calling on the government to halt the importation of pigs from Bulgaria and stick to the policy then adopted by the Constitutional and Nationalist Parties in the previous years. Salomone, highlighting the 'sad – very sad plight of our farmers' sent his own vociferous letter three days later urging the authorities to take the same course of action owing to the competition then in play *vis-a-vis* the local pig market.¹¹⁴ Three years later in June 1938, he sent a remarkably fiery letter to the Governor condemning 'the state of ignorance' and 'lack of initiative and providence' lying

¹¹² This was his family's nickname.

¹¹³ NAM, MEMORJA, 014 Vincent 'Ċensinu' Caruana interview, 31 May 2017. See Appendix VI.

¹¹⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 714/1935.

on the side of Government.¹¹⁵ He lambasted the authorities for not monitoring farming activities in his jurisdiction, specifically the Mġarr and Għajn Tuffieħa areas. The proposed regulation¹¹⁶ on the extraction of ground water, further limiting irrigation – the lack of which had already proved to have a detrimental effect on morale – was, in his opinion ‘another big nail in our premier industry’s coffin.’¹¹⁷ Asking if farmers were entitled to live ‘quite as decently as the workmen of the suburbs occupying Government specially built dwellings’, Salomone personally enquired if the Governor himself had ever travelled as far as Għajn Tuffieħa, Santi and Binġemma to inspect the government farmsteads for himself.¹¹⁸ This confrontation earned the priest a meeting with Bonham-Carter himself. Having achieved his aim of bringing to the latter’s attention agricultural conditions in the parish of 6 miles area, the former received assurances that the Governor himself was to look into the water shortage problems which had been stifling agricultural work for over a year and to fast track compensation claims which had been left unfulfilled.¹¹⁹ Bonham-Carter wrote Salomone made

the most ridiculous attacks on the Agricultural Department [...] but he is such an earnest, hardworking fellow, devoted to his people, that he is worth the trouble of an attempt to keep him straight.¹²⁰

The garrulous cleric was faulted for talking too much¹²¹, yet it would be difficult for individuals to cast doubt on his genuine concern for the tillers living in his parish. When twenty six farmers were fined £50 by the Board of Agriculture for retaining some corn and attempting to get it ground, he appealed to the Governor’s good nature in attempting to secure a reduction in their penalty.¹²² He sought to underpin that these farmers, guilty as they were, had given more than the surplus of their very own corn. It was quite natural, ‘according to the laws of self-preservation to keep a morsel or two from a loaf [...] when you know

¹¹⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹¹⁶ The Draft Ordinance for the Registration and Control of Water Pumps.

¹¹⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹¹⁸ The then-Director of Agriculture, Dr Giuseppe Micallef, had countered that the farmsteads at Għajn Tuffieħa were in a satisfactory state of repair while those at Binġemma and Is-Santi were in need of repairs such as painting, white-washing and woodwork. NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹¹⁹ John Manduca, *The Bonham Carter Diaries, 1936-1940: What the British Governor thought of Malta and the Maltese* (Malta, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd, 2004), 250-251.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² NAM, CSG 01 – 5855/1942.

that by giving that loaf you are certainly going to remain hungry yourself.¹²³ Throughout his past correspondence, Salomone described these tradesmen as 'helpless and quiet farmers' but they were 'my farmers'.¹²⁴ Their endeavours were illustrated as 'the splendid efforts of our patient and really industrious tillers of our own – *Very own* – beloved land'¹²⁵, closing off with the glowing exaltation: 'Of all labourers, the farmer is the most matter of fact, practical, resourceful and I may add indefatigable – so much he is attached to the land and its cultivation.'¹²⁶



Fig. 59. H.E. Governor of Malta Major General Sir William Dobbie (left), Lady Sybil Dobbie and Rev. Edgar Salomone (right), parish priest of Mġarr.

Source: Sciortino Collection, National Archives of Malta.

As has been shown, priests acted as aids in channelling peasant resistance, as an alternative to when official channels did not produce tangible results. This had been fairly common in the inter-war era when parish priests petitioned Government, in the name of their parishioners, on affairs such as sanitation, the asphaltting of roads, drainage, compensation claims and other difficulties in

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 1592/1938.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

farming. Government beauracracy was amplified during wartime, leading to a sharp increase in these kinds of communications from the villages to the seat of power in the colony.

In September 1940, the secretary of the Luqa agricultural office Rev. Joseph Callus issued a plea for answers regarding compensation in an address to the Director of Agriculture.¹²⁷ In March 1941, farmers in Siggiewi aired their grievances through an official government channel, the Protection Officer. As with other villages, the pre-war population of the locality had more than doubled since the arrival of hundreds of refugees who had to be fed. A few days later no apparent answer had been granted to the sender. To add more credence to their problems, Rev. Francesco Mangion himself, the parish priest who doubled as a member of the local district committee sent the following urgent letter to the Lieutenant Governor's office:

[...] To day I write as a Parish Priest of the village owing to the fact that certain complaints should be given the utmost and quickest consideration. It is the salt complaint. I am sure that no human being living in the Island has ever dreamed that we are to run short of this. [...] Do you know that milk usually turned by our farmers into fresh cheese is going [to] waist [sic] for shortage of salt? I speak on facts which my own eyes have witnessed.¹²⁸



Fig. 60. Rev. Francis X. Mangion, wartime parish priest of Siggiewi.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

¹²⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 3977/1940.

¹²⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 1390/1941.

This plea got the Regional Protection Officer to suggest building a reserve stock of salt and firewood to avoid having to face a similar situation.

By mid-1942, the Axis bombing campaign had turned ever more brutal. The June convoys which had been planned to converge on Malta from Gibraltar and Alexandria had failed. 15,000 tons had reached the Island which were not near enough and on 16 June, the Governor broadcast that the convoys had largely failed. Five days later, upon Cohen's request, the clergy were asked to use their status and directly address parishioners from the pulpit during Sunday mass.¹²⁹ During the summer 1942 wheat harvest, the agricultural department sent out notices to the Gozitan parish priests keeping them abreast of the collection dates in the villages.¹³⁰ In this vein, the farmers were notified by their priests of the task at hand during mass. Their harvests were stored in a warehouse or a large storage space close to the church or square and the collection – certain villages provided cereals numerous times – would have taken place on a Sunday.

Owing to the pressing need for wheat, Government felt that many farmers probably did not appreciate the seriousness of the present position as the latter were endeavouring to keep livestock alive by feeding grain, which had to be preserved for human consumption. The Assistant to the Lieutenant Governor opined that the clergy could 'play a big part in bringing the facts before the farmer' and their kind cooperation would be much appreciated.¹³¹

During his fact-finding mission in Malta in June 1942, Prof. Drummond had a chance meeting with Rev. Mangion, during which both men apparently discussed the agricultural situation.¹³² During mass the following, the priest publicised the experts' fieldwork, which made his congregation 'extremely happy to realise that Your Excellency is taking so much interest on behalf of their own improvement.'¹³³ As a result of which, the farmers present approached him submitting their grievances. Due to the absolute shortage of skilled men in the area, 600 tumoli of land within the boundaries of Siġġiewi alarmingly remained uncultivated. Motors were impressed by the military and shortages of kerosene

¹²⁹ While chairing a meeting about the use of propaganda, Cohen and the others present agreed that while it was felt that a combination of the press, Rediffusion and the pulpit was likely to be sufficient in most cases, more use ought to be made of the pulpit. NAM, CSG 01 – 416/1942.

¹³⁰ F. Bezzina, 424.

¹³¹ Philip Vella, *Malta: Blitzed but not beaten*, (Malta, Progress Press Co. Ltd., 1985), 147.

¹³² NAM, CSG 01 – 2594/1942.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

were common. Courageous as they inevitably were, eight farmers were killed while working in their fields.¹³⁴

Rev. Mangion's tone did not remain pacific for long. In response to Cohen's request, the priest did furnish 'facts' but not to his farmer-parishioners. In a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor, he remarked that if Government's wish for a particularly strong potato crop meant something, 'as I hoped it does, it should be accompanied by facts'.¹³⁵ He did announce the agricultural department's notification from the altar but felt that one-way lecturing was not sufficient and action was required by Government. Cultivation of land, he went on to explain, involved men to work and manure and other ingredients for fertilisation. He suggested for Government to spare at least 100 gallons of petrol to transport manure to Siggiewi at the expense of the same farmers, this being their own suggestion. He also advised for one tractor to be left for the fields of the village and that fertilisers be given to his farmers with the aim of hiring other men for help. Hirst accepted that Government was asking a lot without giving very much material help in return, but nothing could have been done owing to the shortage of labour and other villages having prior claim to petrol for manure transport.¹³⁶

The clergy's vast presence in rural circles was exploited by the NFU. For the Union's meeting at Xagħra, Gonzi was persuaded and sent over the parish priest to bless the meeting.¹³⁷ The first wartime NFU committee in Gozo, composed specifically of farmers from Nadur but representing also the farmers of Qala and Għajnsielem, was lead by Rev. Carmelo Caruana.¹³⁸ For the most part, as the numerous committees were formed, priests were given positions within the ranks and in a few cases, led them. Among the politicians and merchants making up the Union's membership, Rev. Lawrence Scicluna was a general council committee member, while doubling as the Secretary of the Għaxaq agricultural committee.¹³⁹ In Gozo, the intermediary role between peasants and the State was more tangible for all to see. Priests also occupied a seat on village committees and had also been chosen to act as secretaries.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 3209/1942.

¹³⁶ Minute by Hirst, *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ NAM, CSG 01 – 4132/1940.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *The Times of Malta*, 21 February 1942.



Fig. 61. Rev. Lawrence Scicluna, committee member of the General Council of the NFU.

Source: National Archives of Malta.



Figs. 62 & 63. Rev. Carmelo Caruana (left), President of the committee representing the interests of the farmers of Nadur, Qala and Ghajnsielem and Rev. Joseph Camilleri, Secretary of the Żebbuġ (Gozo) branch of the NFU.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

As the siege dragged on, supplies got scarcer and rations got smaller while tensions were bound to simmer. In certain cases, parish priests were asked to defuse problematic situations by both farmers and the state. On 19 July 1942, the Information Office in Gozo had planned to hold a meeting of the NFU in Żebbuġ square. The local peasants had no intention of listening to the day's appeals and had avoided the spot where the meeting was to commence. A local policeman advised for the meeting to be abandoned, whereby the officials present turned to the parish priest, Rev. Francis Mercieca for help, that is, to persuade the people to lay their attitude aside for the moment and to listen to what the speakers had to say. Such was the crowd's anger, that the priest's intervention failed,¹⁴⁰ but not every farmer had resorted to adopting this recalcitrant attitude. Very often it was indeed the good word of the local parish priest that made the farmers see the grave situation Malta was in. Rev. Salomone praised his 'splendid parishioners who contributed in response to the government's request no less than 1,500 *salmi* of wheat from their crop.'¹⁴¹ Whereas, upon the insistence of Rev. Carmelo Caruana, now president-nominee of the Nadur branch, the group of assembled farmers then present at the first general meeting acquiesced to the pressing need of providing the forthcoming harvest to the government.¹⁴² At the end of the meeting, Caruana was confirmed as President for the year 1942-1943. However, there was at least one priest in Gozo who instructed farmers to hold on to their stocks.¹⁴³

As we have seen, the clergy were all too willing to act as mediators between the structures of civil power and rural dwellers when Government sought help. However, they did not always dance to the latter's tune. Problems remained, long after the unrelenting bombardments had subsided and the siege had been lifted. By September 1943 – the same month in which Fascist Italy surrendered – what should have led to the stability of the agricultural industry in the post-blockade period had given way to uncertainty and disillusionment.

Archpriests and parish priests operating in the agricultural areas of Malta had petitioned the governor, to bring to his attention 'a state of much worry and

¹⁴⁰ F. Bezzina, 422-3.

¹⁴¹ Joseph Micallef, *When Malta Stood Alone*, (Malta, Interprint Limited, 1981), 170.

¹⁴² *Il Berka*, 9 July 1942.

¹⁴³ Anton Buttigieg, *Mill-Album ta' Ħajti. It-Tielet Ktieb: Fil-Morsa tal-Gwerra*, (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1981), 201.

discontent' prevalent among the farmer-parishioners in their respective areas.¹⁴⁴ The number of priests declaring their support for the farmers was cause for concern. Priests had jointly declared that due to their close contact with farmers, they were best disposed to voice the latter's grievances. These included excessive red tape at the agricultural department and the officials working there, confrontations with the *pitkali*, the cost of manure and the fixing of prices. It seemed these clergymen did not pass up the chance to remind government of their wartime role and the lengths to which they had gone to aid the colony while it was in dire straits:

We, the undersigned again respectfully submit to Your Excellency [...] as the conscientious Parish Priests who invariably were always ready to help the Government and the farmers every time they were approached with various requests for publications from their altars.¹⁴⁵

The government was reminded of the importance which agriculture had always occupied and that the most important stakeholders – the producers themselves – had felt they had been let down by the authorities, namely the agricultural department. At first, this declaration sounds surprising as it had been the NFU that had championed the farmers' 'plight' during the siege while the clergy were deployed to pacify the rural areas. In this case, it seems that the strategy had been for the clergy to fire the opening salvo, to be followed by the NFU which was to list the farmers' grievances in a meeting with officials from the Department.¹⁴⁶

As we have seen, by early March 1944, plans for the introduction of farming cooperatives in Malta and Gozo were in an advanced stage and elections had been held. Whereas most farmers throughout the country agreed about this incoming policy, a section of those in Mosta, Bidnija, Għajn Riĥana (and others) were seemingly dead set against this.¹⁴⁷ Backing the petition were the parish priests of Mġarr and Mosta, the aforementioned Salomone and Rev. Carmel Sciberras – also Honorary President of the Mosta branch of the NFU – respectively. No official reason was uncovered in the stance taken by these

¹⁴⁴ NAM, CSG 01 – 6172/1943.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ This issue has already been covered in Chapter Three.

individuals, but Hirst suspected farmers' financial interests were at play. Even though these two parish priests were allegedly voicing their constituents' disapproval about cooperative marketing, they seemed to have been the exception to the rule.



Fig. 64. Rev. Carmelo Sciberras, parish priest of Mosta between 1943 and 1948.

Source: National Archives of Malta.

Wardija's parish priest's suggestion in seeking out Mgr Gonzi's help found acquiescence in Zammit Marmarà's letter to Hirst:

In a country like Malta, I think that it would be a great advantage if we can get the Archbishop to agree to the move we are going to make – possibly he will issue instructions to the Parish Priests to co-operate with us.¹⁴⁸

Hirst replied with the following:

The cooperative movement is quite in keeping with Catholic dogma and if the Archbishop would issue a pastoral on the subject or at least instruct parish Priests to give active support to the introduction of the movement it would be very helpful.¹⁴⁹

Although, Paris seemed to have hit an impasse:

¹⁴⁸ NAM, CSG 01 – 699/1935.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

It is useless to hold elections in Musta, Mġarr, and S.P.B. [St Paul's Bay] as long as co-operation from Father Salomone is not forthcoming. I spoke to him yesterday, together with Mr Zammit-Marmarà, and he promised to hold an election himself next week. I doubt whether we shall get very far with him. He recently attended a meeting of brokers and potato merchants.¹⁵⁰

No further evidence was uncovered relating to the standoff these two clergymen initiated. In requiring help from persons higher up in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, this scenario clearly showed the clout which the unofficial leaders of the villages wielded.

The British had long been cognizant of the Church's power since before the Islands were brought into the fold. Aware that 'he who rules the soul rules everything'¹⁵¹, fraternisation between Church and Government was assured in the name of the colonial state's survival and the retention of the naval base. The prominent office of bishop of both dioceses in the overwhelming Catholic colony was considered a fundamental affair by both the rulers and the ruled, so candidates and occupants of both positions had to be well-vetted and well-suited to the posts.

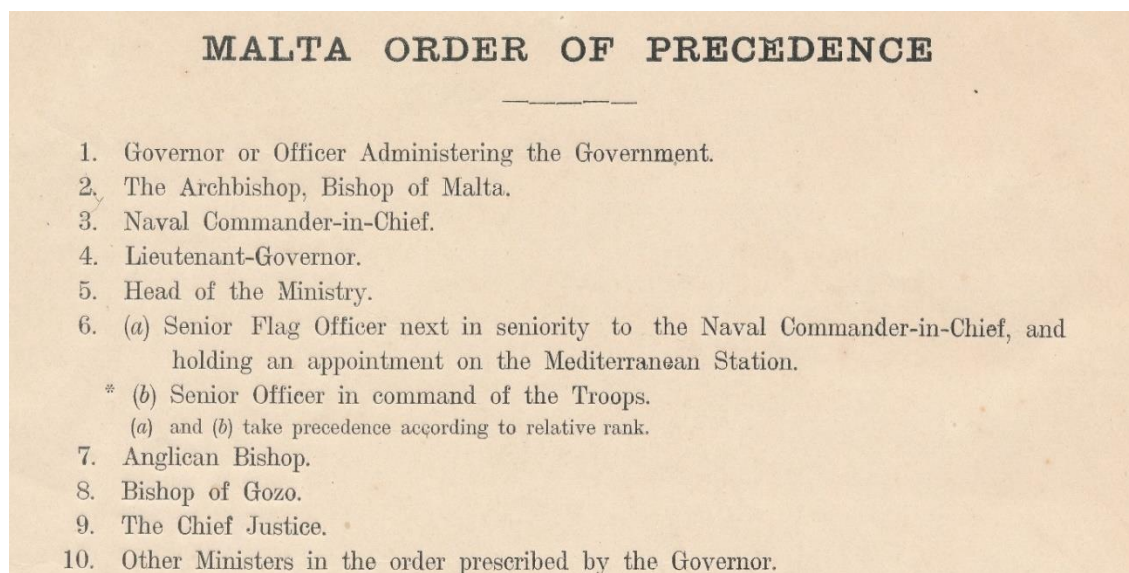


Fig. 65. Malta order of precedence.

Source: National Archives of Malta

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ J. Bezzina, 47-78.



Figs. 66 & 67. Bishop Maurus Caruana (left) and Bishop Michael Gonzi, leaders of the Catholic Church at the height of the siege.

Source: National Archives of Malta

Bishop Maurus Caruana had been elevated to the superior post during the First World War and his loyalty had never been in doubt. Already in poor health during the siege, one of his regular visitors was Hugh Pugh Lloyd, one of the wartime RAF commanders. It seems a close relationship developed between the two. In his post-war memoirs Lloyd had written the following about Caruana:

[...] sometimes I used to drop in for tea with Archbishop Caruana, who was a shrewd student of air warfare and lived at M'dina. He was educated in Scotland and spoke English as a scholar would. His chief hobby had been cycling and he would take me on his tours through Wales and the Midlands, which were as fresh to him as yesterday, despite the fact that they must have taken place certainly not less than forty years ago. He was a most enthusiastic airman and demanded details about superchargers, boost pressures, variable pitch propellers and so on. When I discussed the battle over the sea, showed him photographs of Naples and Tripoli and explained the strikes at Axis shipping I found an astonishing knowledge of the rudiments of sea warfare. We also discussed the lessons to be learnt from Norway and Crete, and how they applied to Malta – in fact there was little of the war which had escaped his inquisitive brain. He always made me very welcome and I never left him without an expression of his warmest regard for the air and maintenance crews.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Air Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd, *Briefed to Attack: Malta's part in African Victory*, (Great Britain, Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 87.

In stark contrast and despite his protestations, the Bishop of Gozo felt like a pariah. Gonzi had accepted the Gozo bishopric in 1924, presumably in the hope that the appointment would serve as a stepping stone to the higher position in Malta. He was faced with the concerted opposition of the colonial government and of Lord Strickland, despite repeatedly assuring the authorities of his pro-British leanings. The latter saw Gonzi's potential appointment as Archbishop of Malta akin to 'giving the fortress to Mussolini' and every possible expedient was at first employed to prevent his appointment, not without serious risk to Anglo-Vatican relations.¹⁵³ The Colonial Office, however, took a more balanced approach. 'Ambitious without concealing his desire for the succession' was an apt way of putting it.¹⁵⁴ Far from relegating him to a marginal figure, the siege would present him with an excellent opportunity to show his dedication to the Allied cause. Seized with the utmost eagerness when the time was right, this opportunity was to alter his fortunes.



Fig. 68. Bishop Maurus Caruana (left, with cane) and Bishop Michael Gonzi (second from right, front row) among the Service chiefs and government officials during the George Cross presentation ceremony in Valletta, on 13 Sep. 1942. Roger Strickland, in military uniform, is partially obscured by Caruana's *cappello romano*, whereas the elusive Andrew Cohen, is in the middle wearing a light-coloured Panama hat.

Source: Malta Aviation Museum Foundation

¹⁵³ Fenech (1976), 8; 13.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

It has been mistakenly accepted that Gonzi's role as Bishop of Gozo saved the colony from the jaws of defeat. His clout and heavy-handedness with farmers in Gozo during the summer of 1942 is largely believed to have led to the release of surplus wheat stocks to the Government, which in turn pushed the potential surrender date back by a few weeks, thus giving the fighting forces a chance to hold out until remnants of the Operation Pedestal convoy reached harbour in mid-August 1942.

The story goes that during a top-secret meeting with Lord Gort and two British officials in the first week of July 1942, the Governor confided in Gonzi that the Islands' wheat provision was to run out in less than a month. Following this, the bishop was provided with extra rations of fuel which he used the following days to tour the smaller island while persuading or chastising the reputedly stingy Gozitans to sell all their harvest to the Government instead of hoarding it for their families. Some sources report him as having 'helpfully pronounced that hoarding was a mortal sin.'¹⁵⁵ Had it not been for Gozitan wheat, starvation could have possibly consumed the garrison and the besieged. The Islands may very well have crossed the tipping point, that is surrender.

Two sources are extant which go some way towards shedding some light on this event. The first source appears to have been an interview which the man himself gave to the National War Museum Association in 1975, of which he was the only eyewitness to corroborate this story. After the meeting with Gort, Gonzi recalled that

The following evening, I returned to Gozo; next morning, Mr George Ransley, the Commissioner for Gozo, and I visited all the farms, one by one, explaining the desperate position. All farmers agreed to hand over their stocks of wheat in an effort to save the country. When I phoned Lord Gort telling him to send two trucks to collect the wheat, he was delighted and thanked me.¹⁵⁶

The second source was an interview Gonzi gave a few years later to the journal *Storja*.¹⁵⁷ The following is an excerpt in which he described how this particular situation had unfolded. The following reproduction has been left in the

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵⁶ Vella, 147.

¹⁵⁷ Andrew Vella & George Attard, 'L-Arcisqof Gonzi intervistat mir-rivista Storja', *Storja*, (1978), 121-133. Retrieved on 30 May 2021 from [um.edu.mt/library](https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/25133/1/Storja%20Hajja%20-%20L-arcisqof%20Gonzi.pdf).

original Maltese to further show the bishop's grandiose statements in relation to his purported actions:

Dak kien is-Sibt [4 July 1942]. Il-Ħadd, kien hawn Mr Patrick Holland, li kien qisu l-gvernatur ta' Għawdex. Sejjaħtlu. Għedtlu: "ara: għada mmorru Għawdex, u tiġi miegħi." It-Tnejn morna. Dorna r-raba kollu ta' Għawdex. U nista' ngħid li l-bdiewa kollha ġenerożament tawni. Dawk li kienu jikkonservaw ħafna minnu għall-familja tagħhom u jbiegħu...għeditilhom "ara, inħallsukom tal-qamħ." Kienu jadurawni: la l-isqof qed jgħidilna hekk, mela nagħmlu hekk. Ċempilt lill-gvernatur, għedtlu: "send two trucks tomorrow morning and you will have all the wheat of Gozo." Iġġennen bil-ferħ dan! Bagħthom. Dik salvat is-sitwazzjoni. Għax imbagħad, għadda ftit taż-żmien, u sar li sar, saret il-konklużjoni, imma baqa' jservi sakemm saret il-paċi. Kellna żewġ trucks immensi, taf.¹⁵⁸

Gonzi name-dropped two different officials in his reputed tour around Gozo. During the course of this study, only one author – Philip Vella – was discovered to have reproduced the first retelling of the story, whereas on the other hand, numerous authors have over the decades further buttressed this widely-accepted affair by quoting the second account. Koster¹⁵⁹, Mizzi¹⁶⁰ and Ganado¹⁶¹ along with Tonna and Galea¹⁶² are a select few who over the decades reproduced the second account almost *verbatim*. This episode was mentioned fairly recently during oral history fieldwork and the resultant interviews. The awe and esteem in which the first interviewee – a priest – held Gonzi's unquestionable wartime exploits and timely intervention was palpable:

Iva, dik niftakarha tajjeb meta, er, il- il-bdiewa Għawdxin- l-Isqof kien għadu l-Isqof ta' Għawdex, għax wara il-fort- fil-forty-three miet Mauro Caruana, u kien għadu l-Isqof ta' Għawdex, u l-bdiewa Għawdxin kienu ħbew il-qamħ li kellhom, u kellhom bżonn, u kellhom il-Gvern Kolonjali bżonn il-qamħ tagħhom biex ma jċedux. U kien l-Isqof cr- cre- hawn Gonzi, kien strumentali biex ħarġu l-qamħ l-Għawdxin. Ħarġu l-qamħ li kellhom moħbi, għall-użu tagħhom u dan kollu, imbagħad tawħ għal Malta [...].¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress* (The Netherlands, 1981), 134-135.

¹⁶⁰ Mizzi, 90-93.

¹⁶¹ Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel: It-Tieni Ktieb (1933-1942) (It-tieni edizzjoni)*, (Malta, Interprint (Malta) Ltd., 1977), 438.

¹⁶² Emmanuel S. Tonna & Michael Galea, *L-Arcisqof Gonzi, L-ewwel volum*, (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1981), 177-179.

¹⁶³ NAM, MEMORJA, 100 George Mangion interview, 22 August 2017. See Appendix VII.

The second interviewee, historian Albert Ganado, seemingly corroborated this fallacy in another interview:

*L-Għawdxin kellhom ikel kemm iridu. Għaliex Għawdex kienet gżira agrikola, għelieqi, bdiewa, gabilotti u kellhom il-ġid t'Alla. Difatti kienu jgibu l-affarijiet minn Għawdex għal hawn Malta. Id-dqiq pereżempju ġibuh b'ordni ta' ta' em tal-Isqof, tal-Gvern, megħjun minn Monsinjur Gonzi, biex jigi d-dqiq minn Għawdex, għax hawn Malta ma kienx hawn, għax hawn Malta naturalment kien hawn il-black market.*¹⁶⁴

The first person which went some way in pointing out Gonzi's inconsistencies was Anton Buttigieg.¹⁶⁵ He stated that far from his confident claim of having had Gort's trust, Gonzi was still out in the cold by the time the new Governor had arrived in early May 1942. Buttigieg, a police officer during the siege, was clandestinely told that Gonzi, upon having received a phonecall urging him to lend a helping hand in the wheat crisis, was deliberately obstructionist. In writing, the bishop allegedly answered with '*non serviam*'. This could have stemmed from his poisoned relationship with the colonial government and the Strickland family.¹⁶⁶ Trying his luck again, Gort instructed a Gozitan high official at the Palace who acted as Treasurer to ask the bishop whether the latter could scrape some additional wheat from the island for Malta. This time around, Gonzi apparently agreed to play a part. This begs the question as to why Gonzi had a sudden change of heart. His hindrance in refusing to help when called upon, yet eager to play a part when singled out by the Governor while the latter was desperate makes this somewhat a bizarre yet otherwise a very opportunistic ploy which worked to Gonzi's favour.

Joseph Bezzina states that Gonzi securing the archbishop's throne was the result of Vatican diplomacy and not of the grain-gathering episode.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, by the time Gort requested Gonzi's help, the massive propaganda drive instituted by the NFU and the Information Office in Gozo was already in full

¹⁶⁴ NAM, MEMORJA, 006 Albert Ganado interview, 19 September 2017. See Appendix VIII.

¹⁶⁵ Buttigieg, 196-202.

¹⁶⁶ On 6 June 1932, two Constitutional Party electoral candidates, Roger Strickland and Armando Mifsud, had called on Gonzi for an unannounced visit. He refused to receive them until they recanted the 'lies' they had spouted about him. Steve Borg, *Il-Maltin: Għemilhom, Drawwiethom, Grajjiethom, It-Tieni Volum*, (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2018), xxx-xxxi.

¹⁶⁷ J. Bezzina, 47-78.

swing as has already been described in the previous chapter.¹⁶⁸ Public meetings in all the Gozitan village squares had already started being held whereas talks on Rediffusion by Roger Strickland, Andrew Cohen and Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà, had been transmitted for years. Articles and instructions bordering on pleas had been all too common in the local newspapers. Intriguingly, upon the inauguration of the NFU Nadur district branch in June 1942, founder Kelinu Vella Haber wrote to Gort that

The farmers of Nadur wished to emphasise their readiness to endure by God's help any Sacrifice whatsoever, included that of offering the greatest possible amount of grains for the National and Final Victory.¹⁶⁹

It was imperative that the wheat harvest had to be collected, yet, to all intents and purposes, more than being compliant, a section of farmers in Gozo were voluntarily offering to hand over the majority of the fruits of their labour, which makes Gonzi's unproven trek around Gozo at the height of the siege less impressive than what he initially reported.

As has been said before, farmers were well-organised during the siege, having had political representation in the Council of Government and the agricultural department having become more accomodating to farmers' requests yet more stern in the collection of crops due to the exigencies of war. Though, it seems when the pangs of hunger were being felt and people were boring more holes in their belts, the tillers of the land did not want to part with their surplus stocks, which in the scope of things, should not be considered an abnormal course of action. Gonzi was well-aware a bishop's influence would generate much more esteem among the religiously conservative farmers and he succeeded in getting them to hand over their wheat to the authorities.

A population of 270,000 civilians and a garrison numbering in the thousands are in need of more calories in wartime. The people then stranded in the Islands

¹⁶⁸ In an interview which Charles Bezzina had had with Kelinu Vella Haber, the latter had divulged that he had accompanied Carmelo Zammit-Marmarà on a visit to the Gozo Curia sometime during early summer 1942, before the Gort-Gonzi meeting. By then, N.F.U. meetings had already started. Zammit-Marmarà and Vella Haber called upon the bishop to ostensibly ask for his help and influence to cajole farmers into selling their stocks to the government. According to Vella Haber, Zammit-Marmarà was unsuccessful in his endeavours. The latter was a member of the Constitutional Party, as was the N.F.U. executive, some of which served in the Council of Government. This was recounted to the author by Charles Bezzina during a private conversation.

¹⁶⁹ NAM, CSG 01 – 2594/1942.

could not have realistically held on for a further month on two ‘immense trucks.’ This leads one to the conclusion that Gonzi’s recollections were either, at the most, very hazy or at worst, an outright embellishment. Even though no extant documentation survives regarding the final amount collected – the agricultural department’s report makes no mention of Gonzi’s ostensible role – it is estimated that 28 tons of wheat were harvested from the fields of Nadur on 13 and 15 July 1942.¹⁷⁰ By 2 September, around 2,600 tons were collected which, according to Hirst, were still short of what had been anticipated.¹⁷¹

Gonzi’s actions during July 1942 – if they did indeed happen – did somewhat help the government’s cause, as, apart from the aerial defence of the colony, the priority at that period was the severe need for food. But to single out his actions as being pivotal to the final outcome is to simultaneously miss the mark and completely omit the role undertaken by individuals on the ground during that critical period. It is not beyond the realms of possibility, though Gonzi could very possibly have embellished the account(s) he had furnished in the 1970s. There has never been anyone else to contest and contradict his claims. Another possible theory is he could have forgotten to mention others’ work which had been ongoing for months beforehand. Taking the NFU’s and the government’s propaganda drive into context, especially since the authorities were utilising every medium to get their point across, the latter theory does not hold water in the long run.

Nevertheless, Gonzi’s role – inflated or not – did ultimately manage to persuade the colonial overlords of his pro-British standing. Gonzi himself clearly expected to be reimbursed for his cooperation and derring-do. In a letter to Lieutenant Governor Edward Jackson dated 23 Oct. 1941, he wrote that

After the Great War, the help given by the Maltese bishops to the government was greatly appreciated by the Imperial Government. Archbishop Caruana was created Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Is ingratitude on the part of the British Empire going to be the reward of my co-operation during the present war? I hope not!¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ F. Bezzina, 422.

¹⁷¹ NAM, CSG 01 – 683/1943.

¹⁷² Fenech, 45.

Gort spoke highly of Gonzi to King George VI when the latter visited Malta in June 1943. Bishop Maurus Caruana died six months later and Gonzi took his position on 19 Dec. 1943, whereby he was congratulated in his appointment by the Gozo branch of the NFU¹⁷³ He was promoted to Archbishop of Malta when the colony was elevated to an Archdiocese in 1944. He got his K.B.E. in the 1946 New Years Honours, allowing him to be called Sir Michael Gonzi.



Fig. 69. Bishop Michael Gonzi before his elevation to the Archbishopric of Malta in 1944.

Source: Wartime Kissauniana, Archives and Rare Books Collection, University of Malta.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Colonial State and its acolytes pulled out all the stops to arrange, rearrange and reaffirm attitudes in the rural communities, so long as it suited the needs of the moment. Apart from its deployment as a means of social control, wartime propaganda was carried out as a reformist weapon in the authorities' confrontation with peasant farmers. The word 'confrontation' is

¹⁷³ NAM, CSG 01 – 2584/1942.

suitable in these circumstances as, in this context, Government engaged in a cultural war to break down the intangible social barriers that had long been extant between the structures of power and the country folk. In using Rediffusion, the broadcast talks, motion pictures and *Il-Bidwi*, Government aimed not just for cooperation, but for total subservience during the crisis, within the prism of food production and colonial politics. The propaganda used served to better help the agriculture department and Government in gaining access to the peasant farmers, thereby extending to this labour group the need for agricultural policies to be adhered to and dictating which crops were to be planted and harvested so as to maximise agricultural potential. In gaining access to the individual farmer's private stock of meanings, language and diction, Government became ever more capable of exploiting them. Subtle – the fictional farmers' dialogues – and not so subtle means – *Il-Bidwi* – were employed with the aim of reaping direct, tangible and substantial gains from farmers. On the other hand, the Church's hegemony allowed it to act not only as a channel of communication between the authorities and the population, but also as a conflict-resolution mechanism. Short of any local figureheads wielding sufficient influence among the peasants, both sides of the political divide – the rulers and the ruled - had in certain cases no choice but to turn to the clergy – the traditional intellectuals in the villages – or their leaders to surmount any impasse. These peripheral networks were put to use in order to defuse class conflict whereby farmers' requests and government appeals unofficially, yet very effectively, went through the ecclesiastical authorities. Farmers' personal queries and issues of national security were publicised either from the platform of a pulpit or through a priest-backed petition. In this way, the colony was stabilised at a time of crisis while the regime was allowed to occupy itself with the defence of the Fortress and the prosecution of the war. Full cooperation between Church and state during an international crisis was shown to be total. The aim was to have the clergy keep the rural peasant majority loyal to the colonial regime to thwart any fallout, which would set alight anti-colonial agitation at the grassroots level.

CONCLUSION

Over the decades, Malta's overriding use as a military and transshipment base indirectly led to the underdevelopment of agriculture. By the late inter-war period, the sector consisted of a debt-ridden labour group striving to get by in an environment far from having had the attention or priority of successive colonial administrations. As the clouds of war started gathering, carelessness gave way to management-by-crisis. The Islands were at the mercy of external events, planned and executed by foreign actors operating from far away shores. Food security was non-existent and the colonial leadership, charged with the survival of more than a quarter of a million souls looked for cooperation and compliance from the ones who had harnessed the land. In the words of a high-ranking RAF officer, the hallowed British custom of being unprepared for war was on full display in 1939, as it had been more than twenty years earlier.¹

War is one of the great levellers of History. While the consequences of the siege did not wipe the slate clean, the impact the Second World War had on local farming cannot be understated. The contact between the colonial government and the peasant farmers had been closer than ever before. The reform of the *pitkali*, the emergence of the seed industry, farmers' education and land tenure security were feats in modernisation which could not have happened in such a short and swift time. As the siege was lifted, government control had to be withdrawn, but certain gains which agriculture had made were to be maintained.

Before the War, the philosophy that colonies had to be self-supporting rather than a drain on the imperial government's budget perpetuated underdevelopment.² The results of this policy ran counter to the needs of the war effort. In essence, the war intensified the exploitative nature of colonialism. The official bodies charged with assuring food production in different empires were accorded new powers to check potential shortages and maximise their resources. When scarcities could not be surmounted, instability in the food supply made way for violent and disproportionate policies being pursued. In

¹ Air Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd, *Briefed to Attack: Malta's part in African Victory*, (Great Britain, Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 29.

² Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food*, (London, Penguin Books, 2012), 121.

taking Germany and Japan as subjects, both sought to individually carve out economically self-sufficient empires whose industrialised centres were to be complemented by agrarian colonies in addition to reaching self-sufficiency in raw materials.³ The colonial government in Malta had no such landmass from which resources could have been extracted. It sought to rush through emergency regulations and mould an entire industry and its workers to withstand the exigencies of war, hoping this would serve as ample reinforcement for the colony's continued use as a military base. States were to be fully involved in the minutest details of the industry, since war, it seemed, was inescapable, and 'famine is the traditional accompaniment of war.'⁴ State intervention in ordinary people's lives increased substantially. The Director of Agriculture was given quasi-dictatorial powers. Authority was given to the army to inspect farms and fields for hidden foodstuffs. Farmers were exploited for the fruits of their labours. They were told what to plant and how much of their acreage had to be devoted to certain crops; in addition, they were forced to sell those crops to the state. Their livestock was killed while farms and fields were requisitioned for the storage of supplies and the siting of *materiel*. The survival of agriculture as a whole hinged on external factors, also. In being cut off from outside succour, convoys were to be the Islands' umbilical cord. The continuance of these operations in the face of stiff resistance kept the government and the people supplied with kerosene and fodder which kept the colony afloat, thus thwarting any potential anti-colonial uprising, a possibility which the government was starkly aware of and keen to extinguish.⁵

It was fashionable to see nothing but tragedy in the lives of peasant farmers, not unlike victims of their own circumstances. However, it could be said that the resident farming communities were not simply powerless recipients or subdued casualties of colonial rule, but also in different shades and measures, protagonists. Clinging to their outworn, back-breaking labour, the War brought great advantages to the farming community. While the colonial government pulled out all the stops to separate farmers from their produce, prices were good

³ Michael Howard, 'The Second World War in Perspective', *Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies Journal*, cl, 4 (2005), 56-59.

⁴ Brian Short, 'The Social Impact of State Control of Agriculture in Britain, 1939-1955', in *War, Agriculture and Food: Rural Europe from the 1930s to the 1950s*, Paul Brassley, Yves Segers and Leen Van Molle (eds.) Routledge, New York, 2012, 173.

⁵ NAM, CSG 01 – 3719/1939.

and the farmers who possessed good irrigated land were by the end of the War comparatively well-off and made great profits. A considerable portion of the war bonds sold in Malta were purchased by farmers and many of them had substantial deposits in banks, and this notwithstanding the diffidence of many of them who had still persisted in the old habit of keeping their money hoarded in their own homes.⁶ Agricultural indebtedness to a large extent had been wiped out⁷, however, dry land farmers had in most cases no more than paid their debts.

Farmers were not just idle spectators in a highly dangerous environment. The NFU's unusual relationship with the administration at the start of the war developed into a fully-fledged alliance by the end of it. Peasant farmers, through their leaders were given the opportunity to set agricultural policy and air their grievances within the halls of Government. However, a substantial amount of farmers also made hay while the sun proceeded to shine. Exploiting the situation, individuals resisted state control through a black market economy, protests and dissention and outright insubordination which did substantially unsettle the powers that be.

Colonial propaganda, as the means to shape 'uneducated' peasants into more productive subjects was packaged in an elaborate reformist discourse. Oral, written and visual propaganda served to deepen and further extend colonial influence in the areas which, since the outbreak of war, took on significant political significance. With the benefit of hindsight, it has to be said that alleged government frugality led to complications. Had the government invested into laying down sufficient infrastructure for Rediffusion in the country areas during the inter-war period, specifically in Gozo, the isolation which peasant farmers may have felt before and during the War would have been severely curtailed, thus having made them ever more aware of the suffocating food shortages which threatened to alter the balance. In this instance, the Cereal Collection Scheme of 1942 would have been made much easier. The general uneasiness which pervaded the rural areas during the conflict was checked by the Church in its role as stabiliser, as was expected by the government. Having worked hand in glove with the colonial authorities, the clergy acted as bridgheads between the government and the peasantry, assuaging the former's fears while pacifying the

⁶ NAM, CSG 01 – 518/1943.

⁷ *Ibid.*

latter's grievances and problems, all in the name of imperial security. The clergy and the pulpit, two of the focal points of village life, were effective as much as the propaganda measures previously mentioned.

Harking back to Hobsbawm's quote about rulers' apparent disinterest in village life⁸, it seems the War had served to bring the periphery ever closer to the epicentre of government discussions during a time of great upheaval. Agrarian politics, the peasantry and the colonial machine played an intricate part in holding Malta as an integral part of the imperial military chain.

⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Peasants and Politics', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, i, 1 (1973), 3-22.

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Ball goes into detail about the warring coalitions' – and the allies making up these coalitions – competing interests in the Mediterranean. This was used to quote the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff about the Pedestal convoy.

Bezzina, Frank, *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940-1943* [Updated edition], (Gozo, A & M Printing, 2020).

A revised edition of a book filled with day-to-day information about wartime Gozo and other general subjects. This came in useful when referencing minute details and quoting certain wartime regulations and proclamations. While Bezzina delves into great detail when mentioning individuals and locations he provides no in-depth analysis as to the impact left by the War and to Bishop Michael Gonzi's alleged role in the wheat collection of summer 1942. This book is also conspicuous for its lack of NAM references, so it can only purport to provide part of the story.

Bezzina, Frank & Bezzina, Charles, *Ir-Rifuġjati Maltin f'Għawdex fi Żmien il-Gwerra* (Gozo, A & M Printing Ltd., 2017)

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This paper details Church-State relations in British Malta. Informative for its portrayal of a priest-ridden colony and for the author's opinion on Gonzi's role during the War.

Borg, John, 'Agriculture and Horticulture in Malta', in *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated. Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial, Facts, Figures and Resources*, Allister Macmillan (ed.), Midsea Books Ltd, Malta, 1985, 224-239.

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Brockman, Eric, *Last Bastion: Sketches of the Maltese Islands*, (Malta, Progress Press Co Ltd., 1975).

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Busuttil, Salvino, 'Agriculture in Malta: A Historical Note', in *Malta: Food, agriculture, fisheries and the environment*, S. Busuttil, F. Lerin, L. Mizzi (eds.), CIHEAM, Montpellier, 1993, 9-26.

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Buttigieg's volume about his wartime experiences is unfortunately one of the least known, if known at all, in local Second World War historiography. His contradictory opinion – as compared to the majority of writers – of Gonzi's role

in the wheat collection episode of summer 1942 was worth highlighting and referencing.

Buxton, L. H. Dudley, 'Malta; An Anthropogeographical Study', *Geographical Review*, xiv, 1 (1924), 75-87.

A short yet informative approach to the demographic dispersal of the peasantry in Malta in the first two decades of the 20th century.

Cachia, Alfred, *Tfuliti f'Birkirkara fi zmien il-Gwerra* (Malta, Book Distributors Limited, 2016).

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Cohen, Jon S., 'Fascism and Agriculture in Italy: Policies and Consequences', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb., 1979), 70-87.

A statistic-driven paper about Italian agriculture in the inter-war period. Explains in great detail the autarkic policies undertaken by the Italian government and was useful when contrasting Malta's agricultural sector with that of Italy.

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Frendo, Henry, *Storja ta' Malta: Żmien l-Ingliżi – Is-Seklu Dsatax* (Santa Venera, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2004).

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Hobsbawm's paper was indispensable as contrary to popular belief, the peasantry can be a political animal in that the people on the lowest rung of the social ladder can still hit back at power structures and influence policy through their numbers.

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Not dissimilar to Geertz's paper, Kerkvliet's specializes in peasant politics in South East Asia. His take on how peasants go about trying to achieve their objectives while simultaneously being apart from the structures of power was useful when writing about the Maltese peasantry.

Koster, Adrianus, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress* (The Netherlands, 1981).

A much cited work, Koster's book was useful in dealing with Gonzi's wartime role.

Koster, Adrianus, 'Regular and Secular Clergy in British Malta', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society*, Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), Mireva Publications, Malta, 1988, 79-90.

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Lasswell, Harold D., 'The Theory of Political Propaganda', *The American Political Science Review*, xxi, 3 (1927), 627-631.

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Lloyd was Air Officer Commanding, Malta between June 1941 and June 1942. While his work is an airman's take on the siege, he offered certain insights into the social side of things, mainly food, infrastructure, utilities, morale and the inhabitants.

Lucas, Laddie, *Malta: The Thorn in Rommel's Side. Six Months that turned the War* (London, Penguin Books, 1993).

The author was posted to Malta during some of the heaviest months of the siege in 1942. Although devoid of any insights into the locals' lives, the author did come into contact with peasants working the land after having once crash landed.

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Mangion's paper is centred on several aspects dealing with Malta's first responsible government. One of these was the military's perpetual encroachment onto farmland, which led to several protests and petitions by peasant farmers.

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A short yet very informative paper explaining the Agrarian Society's origins and duties throughout the years.

Micallef, Joseph, *When Malta Stood Alone* (Malta, Interprint Limited, 1981).

One of the best books ever published about wartime Malta. In his book, Micallef dealt with every possible aspect of the siege – civil and military – but more importantly, he wrote in detail about farmers, agriculture, hoarding and the black market, all subjects which were delved into in this dissertation.

Mintoff, Dominic *Mintoff, Malta, Mediterra: My Youth*, (Malta, The Association for Justice, Equality and Peace, 2018).

Mintoff's autobiography was a welcome addition to the Melitensia cannon. He described in great detail daily life in the inner harbour area and politics in the inter-war period, yet this was used for his description of Rediffusion.

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Pirotta, Godfrey, 'The Malta Labour Party and the Church: Building the Democratic State, 1921-1976' in *Revisiting Labour History*, John Chircop (ed.), Horizons, Malta, 2012, 85-121.

Pirotta's paper deals with Church-Malta Labour Party relations. This came in useful when reading on and writing about Church-State relations during the British period.

Pisani, Ġorġ, *Il-Ġabra tal-Qamħ: Sketch għal fuq il-microphone* (Malta, A. C. Aquilina & Co., 1945).

A radio play based on Pisani's experiences during the cereals collection of summer 1942.

Pullicino, Evelyn, 'Theft in Nineteenth Century Malta', *Journal of Maltese History*, v, 1 (2016).

Pullicino's paper came in handy as farmers had been petitioning the colonial government for decades, hoping that something would have been done to curb thefts from fields.

Ritchie, Captain Lewis, *The Epic of Malta* [Facsimile edition], (Malta, Valletta Publishing & Promotion Co. Ltd., 1990).

A wartime propaganda publication extolling the virtues of the Maltese and the Gozitans. The tone of this publication is out of date in today's world, however, it is a very valid pictorial survey of life during the siege.

Roberts, J.M. & Westad, Odd Arne, *The Penguin History of the World* [Sixth Edition] (London, Penguin Books, 2013).

A behemoth of a book dealing with world history. In the introduction, the authors speak of climate as a 'mover' of history and how events are at the mercy of this external variable. This idea was adapted to Maltese agriculture in the first chapter.

Popkin, Samuel, 'The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Peasant Society', *Theory and Society*, ix, 3 (1980), 411-471.

Popkin wrote about moral economy, peasant society and patron-client relations. These ideas and approaches were dealt with in the third chapter of this dissertation.

Scott, James C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1985).

This specific work is the go-to-book when researching peasant resistance. While Scott researched peasant society in South East Asia, any of the conclusions which he reached can be applied to most areas, as the basic hopes and fears of the peasant remain the same the world over.

Shanin, Teodor, 'Introduction: Peasantry as a Concept', in *Peasants and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings* [Second edition], Teodor Shanin (ed.), Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1987, 1-11.

Shanin's introduction is a worthy opening to his seminal book on the peasantry. He described the peasantry's common social and economic features, which were useful when approaching the same subject for my dissertation.

Shanin, Teodor, 'The Peasantry as a Political Factor', in *The Sociological Review*, xiv, 1 (1966), 5-27.

The peasantry is as far as can be from the traditional approach to what we call politics. Shanin provides examples as to how the peasantry the world over went about trying to better their social position through their brand of 'politics'.

Short, Brian, 'Death of a Farmer: The Fortunes of War and the Strange Case of Ray Walden', *The Agricultural History Review*, lvi, 2 (2008), 189-213.

No parts from this paper were referenced, yet Short gives a good account of state overreach in Britain and quasi-dictatorial policies in wartime. In this particular work, Ray Walden had refused the British authorities' order to vacate his farm. In the end he was shot and killed.

Short, Brian, 'The Social Impact of State Control of Agriculture in Britain, 1939-1955', in *War, Agriculture and Food: Rural Europe from the 1930s to the 1950s*, Brassley, Paul, Segers, Yves and Van Molle, Leen (eds.) Routledge, New York, 2012, 172-192.

Short's chapter detailed the level to which the British government had intervened in agriculture due to the exigencies of war.

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A concise article about wartime agriculture written by a British expert who had spent the siege in Malta.

Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past* [Fourth Edition] (United States of America, Oxford University Press, 2017).

Thompson's book has become one of the benchmark works on oral history and oral tradition, going through various reissues. This was referred to when discussing information transmission in pre-literate societies.

Tonna, Emmanuel S., & Galea, Michael, *L-Arcisqof Gonzi, L-ewwel volum*, (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1981).

A biography which reads like a hagiography. The authors reproduce *verbatim* the account Gonzi had given to the Andrew Vella in his 1978 interview.

Vella, Andrew & Attard, George, 'L-Arcisqof Gonzi intervistat mir-rivista Storja', *Storja*, (1978), 121-133.

This specific interview has been cited multiple times and is usually taken to be the only source about Gonzi's wartime exploits. This was used for the same subject in particular.

Vella, Philip, *Malta: Blitzed but not beaten*, (Malta, Progress Press Co. Ltd., 1985).

Vella's book is considered to be one of the best on the subject. It tackles the military and social side of the War by using British, Maltese and even Italian sources and was used multiple times during this dissertation.

Weldon, R.A., Lt.-Col H. E. C., *Drama in Malta (A personal flashback)* (England, The Naval and Military Press Ltd, 2009).

A short book about an artilleryman's wartime exploits in Malta. Heavy on the military side, as it should be, the author did manage to note some worthwhile observations about the locals.

Wettinger, Godfrey 'Agriculture in Malta in the Late-Middle Ages', *Proceedings of History Week*, (1982).

Wettinger's paper was used read to get a general overview of agriculture in Malta during in the pre-Hospitaller period.

Woodman, Richard, *Malta Convoys, 1940-1943* (London, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.), 2003).

A very technical book about a very technical subject. Woodman leaves no stone unturned and mentions every operation, every ship and every high-ranking captain that sailed to Malta. He provides the political angle as well as the naval angle of things. This book was used so as to give a general account of the situation supplies-wise at the beginning of summer 1942, when the June convoys had failed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

0039.

Intervista lil: Grace Callus née Schembri

Siggiewi

Data: 27 – 4 – 2000

Hin: 16.43

Tul ta' l-intervista: 18.06 min (approx.)

- **Mela Gracie, int ittina l-kunsens biex din l-intervista nużawha ghar-riċerka?**

Tridx inzommu jiena? (Ghall-microphone)

- **M'hemm għalfejn...ittina l-kunsens?**

Iva, iva, iva, bil-qlab kollha. Mela le!

- **Tista' tgħidli x'kien ix-xogħol t'ommok u ta' missierek?**

(Waqt li titbissen) Fir-raba' kienu...fir-raba'. Jahdmu fir-raba' nsomma, u daqqa jahdem fil-barriera. Ġib inzommlok ftit trid? (Il-microphone)

- **Mela kien jahdem fil-barriera għidt?**

Ehe. U fl-ghaxija...sa nofsinhar jahdem ir-raba' il-barriera, imbghad jiġi jistrieħ ftit, u jmur l-ghalqa jerga'. U dam hafna hekk, ghax dak iż-żmien hekk kienu. Ma kellhomx xogħol ieħor u kien jagħmel hekk: sa nofsinhar barra u fil-ghaxija jahdem naqra l-ghalqa tiegħu. Insomma, biex irabbi l'familja. Kellhom hafna tfal ghax kellhom...

- **Kemm kontu?**

1

Erbatax...kellha erbatax.

- **Kollha ghexu?**

Le, le, erbgħa.

- **Erbgħa fadal.**

Iva erbgħa.

- **Int il-kbira kont?**

Jien...hija l-kbir, Kola. Jien, hemm sena u xi tlett xhur bejnietna.

- **Jigifieri int it-ticni wahda, inti?**

Jien it-tieni ... mill-hajjin, ghax mill-mejtin kien hemm qabli. Kien hemm xi sitta qabli mill-hajjin. Dażgur!

- **Kien hemm hafna.**

Nismaghha tghid l-ommi...Mari Karm, Ġilormu...kollha kienet tghidli x'kein jisimhom. Imma kienu jmutu malajr. U x'tisqi ma kellhomx dari...naqra halib, ajma jummi! [Tibda titkellem fuq missierha] Imma insomma. Imbgħad ma baqax hekk, ġiet il-gwerra, qalulu biex imur fl-*air force*, kien hawn suldati tal-*air force*, u ma riedx imur ghax kien qisu...ma tantx...billi ma kienx, jien nghidlu, mdorri jahdem hekk, dak ix-xogħol, ma tantx ried imur. Ommi kienet tghidlu: 'Mur jahasra, forsi tlaqqat xi haġa u nieklu naqra hobż. Imma rasu ma kinitx ittiġ. Insomma...u bqajna hekk. Imbgħad reġa' mar il-barriera. Imbgħad kien imur mal-bennejja hekk, jerfa' l-ġebel. Darba refa' ġebbla, għidtlek, kbira (waqt li tiftah idejha biex turini li il-ġebbla kienet kbira hafna) jgħidulha

vasa, kemm hi kbira! U kulhadd stghageb: ‘Dak kif refaghha? Dak kif refaghha?’ Darb’ohra kien sejjer lejn ...fejn hawn il-lukandi illum. Ghax dak iz-żmien inbena hekk hemm. Ilu jiggifieri ġej dak il-bini. U kien jiehu l-ġebel. Ha vjaġġ ġebel u missieri kien lhobb l-inbid. Kien jixrob l-inbid, jixrob. Ommi kienet tixtrilu niskwarta (waqt li tidhaq). Dari bil-kwarta kienu, jew niskwarta nbid. Kien jixrobha ta niskwarta nbid! U mbghad, darba minnhom ghabba vjaġġ ġebel u l-bghala li kellu, ghandikun. Nismaghhom jighidu ta, ghax jien ma niftakarx, ‘I ommi, flok ma ma marret ‘I hawn [tghamel sinjal b’idha biex tindika x-xellug]. Ghax kien jorqod, fuq il-karrettun, bl-inbid, [waqt li tidhaq] fejn tiehdu l-baqra, fejn tiehdu l-bghala, jmur! U flok haditu ‘I hawn, ghandikun haditu ‘I hemm, u sabet xi ġebli u l-karrettun nqaliblu bil-ġebel b’kollox. U hu qam u sab ruhhu hekk fl-art. U x’hin qam refa’ l-karrettun bil-ġebel. Refghu bi spalltu...X’sahha kellu! Bi spalltu hekk [waqt li timmima lil missierha jerfa’ l-ġebel]. Tghidli ommi, karrettun ġebel bi spalltu refghu, il-karrettun hekk bi spalltu. Halli mbghad wegghetu spalltu (waqt li tidhaq) Tghidx kemm dam muġuġh. Imma nsomma, reġa’ ġie. Dejjem l-istess storja: u daqqa fir-raba’ sa nofsinhar jahdem mod u filghaxija jahdem iehor. Ghax dari hekk konna. Sa nofsinhar per eżempju jkollna ż-żara’, Il-qamgh nghidulu żara’, nahsduh fi rtuba. U filghaxija mbghad nghidu ha mmorru wara nofsinhar innaqqu l-patata jew nahsdu naqra silla, jew innaqqu naqra basal. Dak iz-żmien hekk kien. Insomma u donna sejrin hekk hafna. Imbghad bdiet iddoqq il-gwerra. Ġejja l-gwerra! Ġejja l-gwerra! U ġiet. Waslet il-gwerra.

- **Ehe. X’gara? Baqa’ jahdem hemm?**

Baqa’ jahdem...u waslet il-gwerra mbghad. Imbghad bdew ix-xeltrijiet. Dawn iridu jaghmluhom, ghax ma kienx hawn, itaqqu, itaqqu biex ihaffru x-xelter. Imbghad mix-xelter iridu jaghmlu l-kamra. Hafna nies, kulhadd xtaq li kieku jkollu kamra tiegħu, sewwa. Kulhadd jaghmel il-kmamar. Imbghad beda ġej l-ilma. Ghax ninsa. Beda ġej l-ilma, itaqqu u feġġ l-ilma. Imbghad missieri marad. Qabdu ir-rewmattiżmu. Miskin! Ma setax. Kellu joqghod fis-sodda. Imbghad balal nizlin. X’nieklu ma kellniex.

- **X’ghamiltu mbghad?**

Imbghad kellna għar il-Fawwara ngħidulu u qal (missierha): ‘Trid kieku mmorru nagħmlu erbat ijiem hemm?’ U ahna, mhux ahna biss, hemmek hafna raba’ minn naħa tagħhom qassmuh biċċa kull wiehed. U kullimkien hemm naqra għar. Kulhadd il-familji kollha, kollha morna hemm.

- **Għax bżajtu jiġifieri?**

Għax bżajna mill-gwerra, għax ma kellniex fejn nidhlu u morna noqgħodu hemm. Missieri marid. Ommi kuljum trid tinzel minn hemm biex iġġibilna l-hobż, fl-ghaxija, minn hawn. Kien hawn hanut hawn ara [waqt li tippona lejn il-pjazza] fejn dik il-purtiera l-hadra, konna ngħibuh minn hemm. Iva, lanqas kien iservina. Kont ngħidilha: ‘Kolina, għandek xi hobża żejda?’ Kienet tghidli: ‘Ara, ha ntik t’ghada issa.’ Għax ma kienx ikollha. U ahna ma kienx ikollna x’nieklu. Insomma, kienet itthielna.

- **Batejtu imma, l-għuħ?**

Batejna, batejna, batejna...hafna batejna. Tridx ngħidlek kemm batejna? Darba jiena kont ġeġja mid-dar u nara zewġt iklieb. Dan veru ta’, li qed ngħidlek. U kien hemm zewġt iklieb jiġru u kellhom biċċa hobż f’haqhom u jiena bdejt, ta’ tifla li kont, għax jiena tifla kont għadni...

- **Kemm kellek żmien?**

Kelli hdax-il sena.

- **Kont għadek zghira.**

Kont ghadni żghira u bil-ġuħ! Jaħasra! Kelli l-ġuħ! U ma nafx minn fejn ġabuha kellhom biċċa hobż...u jien niġri warajhom. Hawnhekk ara kien [waqt li tipponta lejn il-pjazza] Issa mbgħad nurik fejn.

- **Fil-pjazza.**

Ehe. Hawn kien hawn il-bokka tax-xelter. U dak telaq jiġri u l-hobż telaqha, u jiena hadtha...u kiltha! Emmnu jekk tridu! Il-ġuħ li kien hawn! Fi żmien il-gwerra speċjalment! Imbghad jiena ma kellix missieri habrieki u ommi, miskina, heqq din il-mara b'erbat itfal. U l-mard kielna. Dejjem dak marid, dak marid. Fi żmien il-gwerra taf kemm kien hawn! U *scable* u affarijiet, imbghad ta. Imbghad insomma nżilna, għax heqq, it-tabib mhux se ġej kuljum il-Fawwara. Missieri ġos-sodda. Kien hemm huħ, nizzilna fuq il-bhima. Għabbejna il-biċtejn li kellna, u ġejna noqghodu d-dar. Imbghad ommi, imbghad bdiet il-gwerra tfaqqa', balal, ajruplani!

- **Bdiet iktar jiġifieri. Żdiedet?**

Iiii żdiedet! Imbghad l-ajruplani jillandjaw. Konna naraw! 'Ara dak x'jillandja?', konna ngħidu. Tarah ixejjer hekk ta...jgħamillek hekk ta oooooommmmmmmmm...minn miegħek hekk. Speċjalment konna nkunu l-għalqa. Jgħaddi minn miegħek hekk ara l-ajruplan oooooommmmmmmmm. Jitlaq il-balal u jitlaq. Jitlaq il-balal li jkollu u jitlaq. Ommi fil-għaxija kienet tgħidilna, mela x'hin inzilna mill-Fawwara kienet tgħidilna: 'Mela issa nehodkom ġox-xelter fil-għaxija, ħalli jekk immutu ma mmutux kollha. Imqar tibqgħu intom jaħasra! Ahna ha mmutu, issa kbar, imma intom għadkom erbat itfal żgħar.' U morna. U ġuħ! X'nieklu ma kellna xejn. Dejjem bil-ġuħ. Imbghad la damet naqra l-gwerra ġew tal-*protection* konna ngħidulhom, tal- *Victory Kitchen*. Kienu jtuna mill-*Victory Kitchen*. Daqqa naqra għagin, u daqqa naqra hekk. Imma qatt ma xbajna. Qatt ma kellna, qatt ma kellna x'nieklu. Darba minnhom kellna għalqa pastard u ġie wieħed ngħidulu *Skallig*, kien joqghod hawn. Qallha 'Anni', qallha 'tbighielhi dik l-għalqa pastard?' Qaltu 'Jien aħjar ġibtli xkora dqiq għal dawn it-fal li għandi.' Qallha 'Mela ha ntik l-ixkora dqiq u int tini l-għalqa tal-pastard!' Omni qaltu iva. U tatu l-għalqa, jaqta' l-pastard u ġabilna xkora dqiq. Konna ngħaġnuha. Nagħmlu l-ftajjar fil-

- **Dawk it-tfal li kienu jmorru l-iskola min kienu? Jigifieri anke dawk it-tfal li bhalkom kellhom missierhom u ommhom jahdmu fir-raba', wkoll kienu jmorru l-iskola?**

Imhalltin hux kienu, imhalltin. Kien hemm min missierhom jahdem fil-gebel, kien hemm missierhom jahdem fir-raba', kein hemm min missierhom forsi jghallem. Avolja ma tantx kien hemm dak iż-żmien, min jghallem l-iskola u hekk. Imma nsomma, forsi kien hawn xi hadd hekk. Imma ahna konna, ahna konna, ahna konna foqra, ahna konna foqra. Ghax la jimradlek il-kap, la marad missieri, m'ghandekx cans. La jimrad ir-raġel hija. U l-omm biex trabbi t-tfal. Dak iż-żmien lanqas kien bhal-lum, tmur in-nisa kollha jahdmu. In-nisa hadd ma kien jahdem. L-ghalqa, d-dar. Fl-ghaxija jidlam raqqadhom, orqod. Fil-ghodu qum, erga' ghamel il-kafe'. Stanjata kafe', jekk kellek stanjata, ghax ġieli ġo landa niftakar, ghamilna l-kafe', jien. Ahna anke nkunu l-ghalqa ta, saru t-tlieta, l-erbgha, qabs hatab, landa tal-kunserva, frit ilma, niehu naqra kafe' u zokkor maghna, u nsajjru kitla kafe' ġol-dik, ġol-landa tal-kunserva. Uhhh kemm ghamiltha!

- **Issa, kontu tilghabu flimkien?**

Nilghabu, iva, konna. U anke ma' tfal ohra. Hawnhekk (waqt li tipponta lejn il-pjazza). Ghax ahna konna noqghodu hawn. Allura hemm fejn dak il-hanut, ta' Edith, hemm, hemm konna nagħmlu hofra u nilghabu. Jew kien ikollna iż-żibeġ. Ġieli żibeġ ma kellniex. Kien hawn siġra kbira tagħmel nżarar irqiq, qisu hekk (waqt li turini b'subghajha li ż-żerrigħa kienet wiesa xi lcm), nżarar irqiq. Niġbruh u noqghdu nilghabu bih. Nizzikkaw hekk, nilghabu bih (waqt li ccaqlaq idejha biex turi li kienet logħba tixbah lil dik li jilghabu iż-żibeġ). Imbasta nilghabu, u konna noqghdu kwiet, noqghdu kwiet! Kulhadd ġor-rokna kwiet. Biex trid taqbeż? Mela dak iż-żmien hija, hadd ma kien enerġiku ta. Nghid għalina ahna batejna hafna, hafna, hafna batejna. Qed nghidlek ikollok il-kap marid tbat, u ma tkunx bene hux. Ahna ma kellna xejn dak iż-żmien, dak iż-żmien ma kellna xejn.

- **X'tahseb, x'differenza tara bcjn it-tfal tal-lum u t-tfulija tieghek?**

Ehhhhh x'differenza binti! Jiena lanqas żarbun qatt ma kelli! Żarbun qatt ma xtratli omni. Kienet thitli biċċa ċarruta hi. Sebghin sena ilu, kont ta' erba' snin niftakarha tghamilli biċċa ċarruta ma xulxin, hekk. Anke għamilt il-preċett. Qas kelli papoċċ, qas kelli papoċċ.

- **X'tahseb li l-ahjar li l-ahjar it-tfulija issa, jew mcta' kont zghira int?**

Jiena ha ngħidlek. Jiena meta' kont zghira, tifla zghira u bdejt nikber hekk, dejjem kont *happy*, dejjem ferhana u enerġija u enerġika hafna u bieżla. Jiena qatt ma tghaxxixt ġo rokna avolja konna bil-ġuh u ma kien ikollna xejn. Jien dejjem bieżla u nadifa u naħdem. Bdejt naħdem ta' sitt snin, hawwilt il-basal jien, jghidulu il-'Qurru', kienu jghidulu. Joqgħod hawn, ara, hdejn Edith, ukoll kien joqgħod. Aqta' kemm tani? U hawwilt basal ta, għax qalli 'Inti ittir mhux thawwel il-basal.' Aqta' kemm tani ta' ġurnata? Kienu xi t-tmienja u ġejna f'xi l-erbgha. Mhux ġurnata dik?

- **Kemm tak?**

Six pence, two cents five tal-lum. U ma tahomlix. U omni qaltli 'Grezz hija mur ghidlu jtihomlok ha nixtru hobza'. U mort ghidtlu 'Karmnu', ghidtlu, 'hallasni tal-basal', ghidtlu, 'ha nixtri hobza.' Qalli ejja hija, ejja, ejja qalli, jien ma hallastikx.' Billi ma hallasnix? 'Lestejt illum.' Imma ma kellha xejn omni. U tani six pence u xtrajna hobza, kilna fl-ghaxija. Dak, mela xi hsibt, bhal-lum? Daż-żraben li hawn, u dal-hwejjeġ li jarmu u jaħlu. Ara w jien, illum kbirt, ghandi sebghin sena u żżewwiġt u ma jonqsoni xejn. Infittex sold, nsibu, grazzi sinjur Alla! U li ridt nagħmel il-lussu kelli biex għax iżżewwiġt kbira, hađt raġel ikbar minni ghoxrin sena. Għax inhobbu ta, hađtu, mhux għall-flus, għax jien il-flus qatt m'għamli bija. Imma kont inhobbu. Raġel sew. Nafu, tar-raħal, u kont inhobbu f'kelma wahda, u dejjem kont, nizzi hađr 'l Alla. Kien bix-xarabank.

Dejjem kelli, dejjem, imma dejjem bqajt lura, għax hekk imdorrija. U nhossni kuntentissma ta, taħsibx li jiena mdejja għax m'għandix, għax jekk irrid nibdel, u jekk irrid nġamel. Għax ara marritli l-machine, morna xtrajna waħda malajr. Ilha tmien xhur jew disgħa, qas tellajtha. Jiġifieri jien mhux għax...imma minni hekk. U kuntentissma ta'! U kemm inhobbu dak iż-żmien! Kieku kellu jiġi jerga' dak iż-żmien, għalih immur.

- **Jiġifieri taħseb li dak iż-żmien kontu hafna iktar kuntenti?**

Uhhhhhhhhhhh kemm konna kuntenti! Tgħidli biex? La kien hawn ghira, la kien hawn dnuviet u la kien hawn u la kien hawn qisu...Dejjem ikun hawn minn kollox, biex nifthiemu. Imma jien għalija uuuu kemm insemmih dak iż-żmien! Kemm niftakar fih! U meta' konna l-Fawwara, u meta kellna l-għalqa 'l hemm, u meta kont mmur naħsad is-silla fl-għaxija, u meta naħsdu l-qamgh u nnaqqu l-patata, uuu kemm kien, kemm kien żmien sabih! Illum xiha u li kelli mmur, immur, kelli mmur naħsad immur, avolja xiha. U li kelli naqla' il-basal u nhawwel il-basal...kollox nagħmel, għax veru kont għal qalbi!

- **Orrajt, grazzi hafna.**

APPENDIX II

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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Hal Tauxien

Tel: 21896896 e-mail: _____



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MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

INTERVISTA

INTERVISTA MINN: JAMES BALDACCHINO

INTERVISTA MA': VINCENT 'ĊENSINU' CARUANA

DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: 24 TA' NOVEMBRU 2017

POST: HAL TARXIEN

TUL TAL-INTERVISTA: 50 MINUTA u 5 SEKONDI



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Illum l-erbgħa u għoxrin ta' Novembru, elfejn u sbatax, jien James Baldacchino qiegħed mas-Sur Vincent Caruana, aktar magħruf bħala Ċensinu, ġewwa r-residenza tiegħu f'Hal Tarxien f'isem il-proġett Memorja għall-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta.

M: Ċensinu, fejn twelidt u meta?

Caruana: Jien twelidt, eh, fil-eh [jlaqlaq] l-Isla, fin-*nineteen twenty-two*. Senglea [...] [jlaqlaq] Ġunju tan-*nineteen twenty-two*.

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Caruana: Aħna konna ħa- konna sebgħa. Sebgħa u bqajna l-aħħar tnejn jiena u ħija biss issa, kollha telqu l-oħrajn.

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Caruana: Missieri kien jaħdem il-*powerstation* [...] orrajt? Kien eh jagħmel ix-xogħol ta' kollox dak. Kien jaħdem fil-*boilers* pereżempju [jlaqlaq] jimla *boiler* ġdid u da' kien itella' u jagħmel. Kien *coppersmith*, jaħdem fuq il-forġa u da' l-affarijiet kollha imma, li jiġi għal idejh da' kien jagħmel. Darba minnhom dak għamel xogħol dak privat, is-sede tal-Azzjoni Kattolika. Dam jaħdmu sentejn. Is-saqaf, is-saqaf tal-eh taċ-ċirkolu tal-Azzjoni Kattolika kien [jirrepeti] bil-*c-* bil-*corrugated [iron]* dak iż-żmien u riedu jagħmlu t-*talkies* fih, allura riedu jagħmlu saqaf tal-injam, u kien għamel saqaf żul minn hemm. Jiġifieri s-saqaf kollu dam jaħdmu sentejn wara x-xogħol. Kien imur hu u kien hemm wieħed jgħinu [...]. L-Isla da'.

M: Qatt emigrajt xi mkien?

Caruana: Emigrajt? Ma le emigrazzjoni qatt ma kont, bħala emigrant imma eh sifirt kemm-il darba pereżempju jien. Jien mort xi tletin darba

pereżempju għax hemm it-tifel u l-familja l-Amerka. Morna xi tletin darba [ma jinftihemx]. U mbagħad wara dak it-tifel kien jibbukkja *hotel* fl-Ewropa, f'xi *hotel*, f'xi belt kapitali l-Ewropa pereżempju bħal Ruma, P-Parigi eh haw', eh, fej' jgħidulha di'? Hemmhakk imorru ħafna turisti hemm [...]. Eh fej'? Il-belt kapitali hemm ma nafx ta' fejn hi pa- ah [...] u Innsbruck, Innsbruck u da'. Insomma, *Holland*. L-aħħar waħda li morna jgħifieri konna A-Amsterdam. Dik kienet, fin-*nineteen* fin-*nineteen*, le fit-*two oh*, fit-*two oh ten*. Dik kienet l-aħħar waħda illi morna, fit-*two oh ten*.

M: [Jisgħol] X'xogħlijiet kellek?

Caruana: Jien *mech-mechanical fitter*.

M: U fejn kont *fitter*?

Caruana: Il-*powerstation* stess. Għax hemmhakk dak iż-żmien, mhux pereżempju bħal-lum eh jara min imissek u bil-bil-bil-, bil-ministeri u da' ma kienx hemm da' l-affarijiet qabel, qabel il-gwerra da'. Qed tifhem? Allura kont taf, pereżempju kien rikonoxxut ħafna, missieri, allura kien jgħidulu pereżempju 'Dak u iwa ġibu.' Kien hemm iċ-*chief* jismu *Mr Buckley*, kien Ingliż, u mbagħad, kien hemm is-Sur Fenech, eh is-Sur Fenech, il-ħabib tiegħu kien Dun Anton tas-Siġġiewi, u mbagħad meta spiċċa sar qassis dak meta spiċċa bis-sittin [ma jinftihemx] qallu 'Iwa.' Qallu qallu 'Ġibu'. Qallu 'Kemmm għandu żmien?' Qallu 'Se jagħlaq', qallu, 'se jagħlaq-għandu sbatax'. Qallu, 'Mela ġibu hawn'. Kien f'xi n-*nineteen* xi ħaġa mingħalija fin-*nineteen*, *thirty-eight* jew *thir*- [...]

M: Fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?

Caruana: L-Isla [...]. L-Isla [...]. Senglea [...]. Konna noqogħdu... Ngħid it-triq ukoll? *St Orsola* [sic.] *Street* [...]. *Number five*.

- M:** Kemm għandek tfal?
- Caruana:** Eh tnejn [...] [jlaqlaq] kienu. Issa wieħed baqa'. Kellna Monica [...] Monica, hemm hi qiegħda hemm araha *baby* hemm araha. U, li għandi issa qiegħed l-Amerka [sic.] Eugene. Kellimtu inti.
- M:** Ċensinu waqt il-gwerra int kont dħalt fl-Armata. Kif sibt ruħek bl-uniformi?
- Caruana:** [Jidħak] Xej' qisha qisha avventura, qisha avventura. [Jlaqlaq] Tara 'l kulħadd bl-uniformi, qisek [...] qed tifhem? Xejn eh normali hu'.
- M:** Mm. Kif spiċċajt suldat imma?
- Caruana:** [...] Kif spiċċajt jigifieri spiċċajt? Eh bagħtu għalina. Kont, kont għamilt kors, bagħtuna xi sitt xhur kont u b'xi sitt xhur mar-REME, *St Andrew*. Peress illi jiena kont tas-sengħa u da' bagħtuni b'haw' ma' ma' m- *workshop*, *workshop* ma' *ele*- mal-*electrician*. U l-*in charge* tiegħi kien ċertu Mifsud, Lionel Mifsud, kellu kien kien, famuż ħafna da', fuq l-*ele*- fuq il- x'jismu fuq il- fuq il-*ele*- affarijiet tal-elettriku. U kienu bagħtuni hemm u għamlu sitt xhur, domt sitt xhur. Insomma kont a- kont ħadt, qabel ma spiċċajt, u meta spiċċajt minn hemm jien u mbagħad, ċempilli [...] il-*BSM*, li kellna [...] ċempilli l-*BSM*. Qalli, 'Caruana?' Għidtlu, 'lwa'. Qalli, '*Four one three double one*?' Għidtlu, 'lwa [ma jinftihemx] in-numru tiegħi *four*, *four o- four*, *four*, *three*. Kemm għidtlek jien? *Four three double one*.
- M:** *Four one three double one*.
- Caruana:** *Four one three double one*. 'lwa', qalli. 'Mur', qalli u qalli, 'Ipprepara kollox'. Qalli, 'Hu kollox', qalli, 'miegħek', qallu, 'ibqa' sejjer', qalli, qalli, 'ir-*rest camp*', qalli, 'il- eh il-il-il-il- eh', [...] mingħal-, 'il-*Battery HQ*'. Il-*Battery HQ* mingħalija kienet, għadha

‘mma m’iniex ċert. Mingħalija kienet għadha Birżebbuġa. Minn Birżebbuġa morna hemmhekk. Kien hemm bil- [pawsa u jieħu nifs fil-fond] il- eh il-kurunell. Kien hemm il-kurunell ħadilna b’idejna, insomma u da’. Qalilna, ‘Issa intom spiċċajtu mill-*Army*’. Irringrazzjana u da’. Qalilna, ‘Issa morru r-*rest camp* biex tispiċċaw minn hemmhekk’, [jlaqlaq] Ta’ Kandja, is-Siġġiewi. Minn hemmhekk kien hemm *b-* kien hemm *barracks*, hemmhekk Ta’ Kandja. [Ma jinftihemx] spiċċajna minn hemm. U mbagħad minn hemm qa-qalulna fejn għandna mmorru. Fil-post fejn mort ma nafx, fejn morna, fejn mort, il-post fejn morna, fejn morna biex ħadt, biex ħa- biex, biex ħadna l-ħwejjeġ u da’, bagħtuna xi mkien u ma nafx fej’. Taf x’tawna l-? Tawna l-ħwejjeġ pajżana. Tawna *raincoat*, tawna lobbja, haw’ il-kappell haw’, insomma libsa komplita [sic.] bl-ingravata, żarbun, qed tifhem? U u spiċċajna [...] b’wiċċ il-ġid [...]. U konna s-Siġġiewi, għax konna evakwati s-Siġġiewi dak iż-żmien aħna [...]. Allura, qed tifhem? [...] U kelli pass jiġifieri bejn Ta’ Kandja kont ħadt kollox id-dar is-Siġġiewi.

M: Ejja mmorru lura għal meta dħalt fl-Armata. Kif spiċċajt fl-Armata int kif spiċċajt dħalt fl-Armata?

Caruana: Kienu waħflu l-karti mal-ħitan [...] qed tifhem? Dawk li għalqu dsatax-il sena, imorru je- imorru jirreġistraw, imorru jirreġistraw għall- eh eh il-, Tas-Sliema, *number eight*, Don Rua Street. Allura dak iż-żmien qe-qed tifhem kienu jfittxuk. Allura jien għalija ħadt-, bħal speċi ħadtha, ħadtha, bi pjaċir m-mhux pjaċir imma, għax xtaqt l-avventura di’, qed, [jlaqlaq] m-m’hemmx riskju m’hemm xej’. Qisni.. qisna kont kont kuntent jiġifieri jien, għax dak kulħadd kien bl-uniformi u mort *number eight* Don Rua Street, Tas-Sliema [...] għall- eh eżaminawna, insomma ċċekkjawna. Kien hemm it-tobba u da’ u sebaħ u dalam u mbagħad, bagħtuna [...] għax u mbagħad biex tiftakar kollox impossibbli mbagħad bagħtuna, bagħtuna [ma jinftihemx] issa mmorru l-*Battery HQ* [...] eh mur il-*Battery HQ*, qalli fej’ immur il-*Battery HQ*, u bagħtuli fej’ għandi

mmur, nippustja ruħi fuq il- eh fuq il-*bofors*. Għidtlu, 'Jien', għedtlu, 'ma rridx immur fuq il-*bofors* fuq il-kanuni'. Għidtlu, 'Jien irrid immur eh ma ridx immur fuq il-eh fuq il-ka- fuq il-da', fil-KOMR'. Għidtlu, 'Basta ma mmurx fil-KOMR'. Qalli, 'Sejrin'. Għidtlu, 'Fl-*Air Force*', għidtlu, 'nixtieq nidhol jien fl-*RAF* [*Royal Air Force*]'. Qalli, 'Le', qalli, 'm'għandniex', qalli, 'għax din', qalli, 'batterija ġdida', qalli, 'it-*twenty second third light attack, twe-*, orrajt [sic.] *twenty second third light attack*'. Qalli, 'Mur hemmhekk', qalli, 'u mbagħad iqassmuk huma fejn għandek tmur'. U bagħtuni l-Furjana [...] il-Furjana [...] fej' hemm il- fej' hemm i-il- l-Isptar Boffa m'hemmx xi ġnien hemmhekk il-Furjana? Dak il-ġnien dak il- dik hemm bil- [jlaqlaq] bil-ħadid magħluq. Dak il- imbagħad ma kienx jintuża 'ħabba l-pubbliku kien għalina biss.

M: [Jisgħol].

Caruana: Hemmhekk kellna kanun, u l-port kien jiġi kollha taħtna [...] qed tifhem dak iż-żmien. U għamilna, il-*gun pit* hemm bil-kanun hemmhekk. U konna eh nieklu hemm, kienu jtuna [sic.] s-sigaretti u insomma, ah għax kienu jagħtuna ħames pakketti sigaretti fil-ġimgħa, dak iż-żmien kont inpejjep hu' kont għadni żgħir [...]. U konna ngħadduha hekk [...]. Konna tmienja min-nies, mingħalija tmienja j- xi tmienja konna [jqahqah]. Biex tiggannja kanun trid tmienja min-nies.

M: Kont taf b'xi nies li diġà kienu suldati qabel ma dħalt int?

Caruana: Le ma kont naf 'il ħadd. Li kont naf jien li kienu li [jgħolli leħnu] kien hemm imma. K-kont kont na- ma kontx nafhom qabel. Sirt nafhom meta kont l-*archives*. Kien hemm ħafna volontieri [sic.] hu' [jqahqah].

M: Qatt smajt b'xi tip ta' tgergir kontra l-lieva?

Caruana: Le laqqas [sic.] xej', laqqas [sic.] xej' [...]. Ħadna bħal speci avventura hu'. Kulħadd ħadd ma kien igerger [...] ħadd ma kien igerger. Eqq l-ewwel ħaġa, paga kien ikolli iżjed milli kelli fl-*Army*, milli kelli kont naħdem hemm. Eh qed tifhem? Meta kont naħdem il-*powerstation*, kont dak iż-żmien jien kont għadni żgħir, kelli 'aqqas [sic.] kelli nofs lira fil-ġimgħa. U meta meta meta dħalt l-*Army* mbagħad, kelli xi lira fil-ġimgħa [...]. Ara [jidhak] jiena bħal speci eh ħadt iktar pjaċir hu', għax hemmhekk il-il-p- il-pagi kienet jiena bdejt, jiena bdejt meta kont *apprentice* [sic. *apprentice*], għall-ewwel fin-*nineteen thirty* fin-*nineteen thirty-eight* hux hekk kelli fin-*nineteen thirty-eight*, il-paga kienet [...] sikspenz kuljum. Tliet xelini fil-ġimgħa [...] dak iż-żmien. U mbagħad wara xi sentejn u mbagħad ilħaqt ilħaqt wara sena tawni disa' soldi, kuljum. U mbagħad għaddiet dik is-sena u mbagħad reġġhu tawna ż-żieda, u lħaqt insomma [...] xi nofs lira fil-ġimgħa. Meta dħalt l-*Army* kien ikolli nofs li- kien ikolli, lira fil-ġimgħa [...] bħala *pocket money* eh?

M: Kien hemm min kien ġie *exempted* mil-lieva?

Caruana: Min ikun marid? Ġieli kien hemm [...] xi ħadd jiġi *exempted*. Ikun marid b'xi ħaġa u da' qed tifhem? Eh kien hemm wieħed pereżempju bit-*TB* [*tuberculosis*] dak iż-żmien it-*TB* kienet, kienet, kienet in voga, it-*TB*. 'Mma illum m'għadhiex tinstema' jkun marid b'sidru, qed tifhem? Allura kienu jgħadduh bord dak kien haw', dak iż-żmien. Imma naf xi tnejn kienu hekk [...] min-naħa tagħna ta' fej' kont jien [...] [jqahqah].

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hemm anka voluntiera li kienu ntbagħtu l-Eġittu, le?

Caruana: Iwa dak kien hemm il-*[5th Battery]* [...]. Għedthielek dikinhar id-darba l-oħra. Kien hemm il-*[5th Battery]* [...] minn Malta, marru [ma jinftihemx]. Qalulhom, 'Tridu tmorru l-Eġittu taħdmu [ma jinftihemx]?' Marru hemmhekk u dawk kollha qalulu, 'Iwa iwa iva',

u marru bil-*Breconshire*. U marru l-*5th Battery* u damu xi sentejn, jew xi sena u disa' xhur xi haġa hekk. U daw' il-*5th Battery* u mbagħad marru għamlu ħafna arja [...] hemmhekk u bdew jattakkaw kullimkien, jidhlu f'xi ħanut, serqulhom darba minnhom serqulhom il- eh il- *is-safe*, ta' xi ħanut. Kienu jmorru jixorbu, jiskru u jagħmlu qed tifhem? U peress illi l-Eġittu kien qiegħed, kien qiegħed ma kienx fil-gwerra, allura kienu jiltaqgħu ħafna nazzjonijiet hemmhekk, qed tifhem? Huma kienu kienu eh ma kellhomx, ma kellho- ma kinux *action* imkien, ma kinux *action* mkien il-vapur kien ġej u sejjer hemm [ma jinftihemx] dak iż-żmien, qed tifhem? Il-Ġermanja qatt m'attakkatu hemm l-Eġittu. Allura, x'irrid ngħidlek jien? Daw' għamlu ħafna arja mal-Eġizzja-ma-mal-Eġizzjani mal-Għarab, qed tifhem? U daqqa serqu hemm oħra serqu hemm u bdew jarrestawhom, qad [sic. qed] tifhem? U mbagħad, ah telgħu telgħu l-qorti hemmhekk għandu jkun il-[jlaqlaq] il-kaptan tagħhom jew min kien insomma l-l-fizzjali, qed tifhem? U qalgħu l-batterija mbagħad raw kif irranġaw jien ma nafx x'għamlu [jlaqlaq] x'għamlu għax kieku kienu jirrakkontaw huma meta ġew. U qalu mela l-batterija tagħkom se tiġi *disbanded*. Kienet il-*5th battery* [...] *anti-aircraft*. *Disbanded* u mbagħad is-suldati ġew, u qassmuhom fuq il-kanuni kollha tagħna. Min bagħtuhom ma- [...] min bagħtuhom fuq il-*bofors*, min bagħtuhom fuq l-*anti-aircraft* qed tifhem? U qassmuhom kollha hekk għax xi mkien iridu [ma jinftihemx] daw'. Daw' kienu ħa- daw' kienu volontieri [sic.] daw' terġa' ta, ta' qabel il-gwerra, tal-*5th battery*. Dik bqajt niftakarha sewwa jien [jqahqaħ] għax ki- peress li kienu jirrakkontawlna x'kienu jagħmlulhom hemmhekk.

M: [Jisgħol] It-*training* tagħkom minn xiex kien jikkonsisti?

Caruana: Kien x'inhuwa?

M: It-*training* tagħkom minn xiex kien jikkonsisti?

Caruana: It-*training* kien jikkonsisti, mela, meta d'halna rekluti allura l-ewwel darba, d'halna rekluti. Ikun i-id-*drill*. Konna konna Tigné hux hemm? Tigné Tas-Sliem- Tigné [jqahqah] qed tifhem? Kellna l-*barracks* hemmhekk u għamilna xahar *training* [...] għamilna xahar *training*. Konna norqdu hemm u mbagħad kien jiġi l-fizzjal ċertu, ċertu Mr Wirth, Wirth kien kunjomu [...]. Illum mejjet naħseb eh. U, hemmhekk kien hemm il-grawnd u 'ekk għadu hemm għandikun il-grawnd, hemm Tigné. U nibq- eh insomma u nittrenjaw bl-uniformi eh *right left and right*. Nippassiġġaw minn banda għall-oħra u mbagħad tawna r-*rifle* u nagħmlu *drill* bir-*rifle*. Nagħmlu *present arms* perezempju ki-kif għandek tagħmel *present arms* u mbagħad, konna konna [jqahqah] konna f'każ ta' *action*, konna nilbsu l-maskra tal-gass wara daharna, haw' quddiemna, il- eh il-*haversack* il-maskra tal-gass kienet tkun quddiemna haw'. Ilbist il-*helmet* u konna nagħmluha, ngħadduha hekk dak ix-xahar kollu *training* hekk eh, qed tifhem? U mbagħad filgħaxija kien ikollna daqsxejn *libertà* u k- min imur Tas-Sliema 'l hemm min imur 'l haw', qed tifhem? Imma basta triq toqgħod hemm filgħaxija.

M: [Pawsa twila] U xogħlok fl-*RMA* x'kien eżatt?

Caruana: Jiena xogħli kien jew *layer* jew *layer* fuq il-kanuni jew inkella perezempju nkun eh nagħmel il-balal, il-il-il-il- iċ-*charger* qed tifhem? U ieħor fuq il-kanun kien ji- kien jiċċarġja l-kanun. U wieħed inewwel minn hemm. Inkunu tlieta. Wieħed minn haw' wieħed minn haw'. Wieħed għall-ieħor bupp ġol-bott [jċapċap idu biex jiddeskrivi l-azzjoni], qed tifhem? U kien jibqa' jiċċarġja l-kanun. [Jbaxxi leħnu] Issa mbagħad norihulek [sic.] il-kanun. Kien jitfa' iċ-*charger*, jitfa' l- [ma jinftihemx] ġo fih [...]. Norihulek [sic.] [...] [jbaxxi leħnu] x'kont nagħmel haw'.

M: Fejn kont stazzjonat?

Caruana: [Jidħak] Issa di'. Stazzjonat [jidħak] parti minn minn Malta eq eq Ħal Luqa [...] Ħal Far [...]. Tar-Rikażli l-aħħar l-aħħar li konna fir-Rikażli. Ir-Rikażli l-aħħar l-aħħar darba l-aħħar waħda kienet ir-Rikażli. Eh Ta' Qali [...] Ta' Qali [jbaxxi leħnu] u ma ma nafx fejn konna iżjed [...]. Eh [...] Wied il-Għajn, iż-Żonqor, iż-Żonqor, Wied il-Għajn eh domna hemmhekk. Għidthomlok kollha [ma jinftihemx] għax konna nagħmlu ħafna xhur hemm.

M: X'tip ta' ikel kien ikollkom?

Caruana: U u l-Furjana bilħaqq, u l-Furjana wkoll. Eh? Tip ta' ikel eh mhux [jidħak] [ma jinftihemx]. Kellna ikel tajjeb għall-bidu. Ma konniex neqsin minn xejn. Ma kinitx għadha għadhom ġew il-Ġermaniżi ta sadattant [sic.] eh qed tifhem? Kultant tiġi *air raid* tat-Taljani, kien jitfa' xi bomba u mbagħad bdew jitolqu. U ftit konna nisparaw jiġifieri aħna fuqhom. Allura eh ikt- it-tip ta' ikel, bottijiet tal-fażola, [...] kombif [sic. *corned beef*], għaġin, ħaxix, ħaxi-. Da' kien ikollna kollox u laħam. Laħam kienu jgibulna, qed tifhem? Tieħu biċċa laħam. Allura kien hemm wieħed kien kok, magħna. Dak ma kellux x'jaqsam mal-, il-kok ma kellux x'jaqsam mal-kanuni dak jew hekk, jew jagħmel jew jagħmel xi għassa jew hekk [jqahqah]. U mbagħad [ma jinftihemx] kien ji-jirrangalna ah l-ikel u qed tifhem? Konna nieklu tajjeb. Ma kellna xejn xi ngergru, dak iż-żmien. Ħobż orrajt [sic.] kien ikun, tas-servizz. Eh dana ma kienx għadu ż-zmien tal-għaks hu'. Da' l-inkwiet beda meta ġew il-Ġermaniżi diment li baqgħu it-Taljani [...] *well and good*. Ma konniex ħazin.

M: Jiġifieri kontu sodisfatti?

Caruana: Ħafna [...]. Konna sodisfatti.

M: Kien isir serq mis-suldati?

- Caruana:** Kif?
- M:** Kien isir serq mis-suldati?
- Caruana:** Mmm le rari rari rari. Le ma kienx isir.
- M:** Ġieli kellkom tisirqu ħxejjex u frott [Is-Sur Caruana jibda jirrispondi] mill-għelieqi?
- Caruana:** Daka iwa, imma dana għaż-żmien għaż-żmien l-għaks. Għax u mbagħad għaż-żmien l-għaks iva. Meta ma kienx imbagħad naqas i- naqas ir-*ration* u naqas kollox, konna pereżempju jkun haw' għalqa pa- għalqa patata, konna niftehmu kellna l-*haversack* aħna haw', konna nimlewha, konna nitqassmu hekk [jidħak] u naqilgħulu l-patata kollha u nħallulu xi tnejn. Naqilgħu l-patata minn taħt tkun għada waslet biex is- biex biex biex, biex issir il-patata, u konna nimlew il-boroż. [ma jinftihemx] xi trid tiekol, qed tifhem? Darba minnhom sħabi daħlu, jien ma kontx magħhom. Kien hemm razzett u kien hemm mara xiħa u serqulha t-tigieg [...] it-tigieg. U kien hemm daw' ta daw' daw' kienu ħafna tal-kampanja li kelli miegħi suldati jien, qed tifhem? Dak kien Ħal Far. U serqulha t-tigieg xi ġiex [sic.] tigigiet [ma jinftihemx] [jidħak] u ġibuhom [sic.] haw'. U u sajjarniehom insomma.
- M:** Kont tgħid illi kien, li kien ikun hemm min kien anki jisraq il-porvli tal-balal.
- Caruana:** Iwa dak kien hemm. Rari imma. Darba minnhom kellna kwistjoni hekk għax darba għamilna, għamilna [jqahqah] ixxiftajna (sic) lill-Ingliži, darba minnhom. Għamilna għamilna xxiftajna (sic) li- kien hemm kanun tal-Ingliži. U l-Ingliži, morna flokhom. Allura kellna niċċekkjaw [...] x'ħallewlna u ma ħallewlnie- u ma ħallewlnie. Allura kellhom kellhom il- kellhom il- eh, kien hemm kien hemm il-balal, fil-kaxxi daqshekk u bdejna niċċekkjawhom bil-fizzjal

magħna, u da' insomma. Di' di' x'fiha bom- naqbd u l-balal, ngħodduhom u nimlewhom. Daw' il- daw' il- il- tal-*bofors* il-*forty millimeters*, u nimlewhom. U waħda minnhom kienet vojta, mi-kien hemm bil-*cordite* kienet tkun mimlija, bil-*cordite*. Hi kienet vojta. U għidnielu, 'Ara'. Kien hemm il-fizzjal għidnielu, 'Ara', għidnielu, 'vojta ara ta'. Waddab hemm waddab hemm qalli, 'Waddab hemm'. Insomma, u għaddiet. Ġie jagħmel *inspection* fizza l- ieħor biex jara biex jara biex jara da'. Għidnielu qali-qalilna, 'Di' x'inhil di', di' x'inhil?' Mhux dak il-fizzjal li konna ħadna *over*, mill-Ingliżi. Ġie fizza l- ieħor għa- u għax kultant kien jiġi jagħmililna [ma jinftihemx] il-fizzjali. Eh ma ħallewhx kwiet dak dak iż-żmie-dak iż-żmien. Allura tana [...] U mbagħad qabad dil- qabad qabad dil- dil- da' għidnielu qalilna, 'Di' x'inhil?' Għidnielu, 'Eh dika ħallewha l-Ingliżi vojta'. Qalilna, 'Vojta? X'jiġifieri? Ma ma m-ma nduna-'. Iwa kien hemm il-fizzjal insomma u da'. Qalilna, 'Imma?' Mar mar mar mar biha dak. Kellu l-mutur. Mar il-*Ba-Battery HQ* qallu, 'Żommhom spot splot s-, *stop leave*, il-kanun kollu b bi bis-Surgent b'kollox [...]. U għamilna xi tmint ijiem ma noħorgux. Qabel konna noħorġu, tlieta barra eh tnejn ġewwa u waħda barra l-*leave*, kien ikun. Ġurnata tlett ijiem taħ- ġewwa u waħda tkun bil-*leave*. Jibagħtek id-dar mal-familja forsi trid tbiddel jew da'. Iwa. U mbagħad, ma ħalliniex immorru u għal- għal- għa- għamilna *stop leave* [...] il-kanun kollu u pprotestajna aħna. Għidnielu għidnielu, 'Ħa-a ngibulek il-fizzjal li kien hemm qabel u ngibu dik il-fizzjal li qabel'. Qalilna qali- qallu... Qbiżt jien l-ewwel wieħed kont. Għidtlu, 'Inti kont sir' Għidtlu, 'Inti rajtna u wrejnihiekk dik, illi ħadna *over* mingħand l-Ingliżi'. Qalli, 'Ma niftakarx'. Għidtlu, 'Imma niftakru aħna. [Ma jinftihemx] intortament' qed nagħmillu jien. Qgħadt nippilla (nappella) miegħu. Qalli, 'Tippillax (tappellax) ħafna ta', is-Surgent. [Jidħak] Ma ridniex. Għidtlu, 'Imma allura nibqgħu hekk?' Insomma, 'Aħna', għidtlu, 'Ċertissmu [sic.]', jien qed ngħidlu lil da', 'għax *just* biex taħlef jien illi dik ħadnieha *over* mingħand l-Ingliżi, bi- mingħajr mingħajr [sic.] *cordite*, il-ba- il- dak l-iskartoċċa'. Insomma dak dawwarha kif ried insomma u

mbagħad irranġaw kollox u qalulna, 'Orrajt [sic.] mela kollox sew', meta mar jitkellem mal- eh ma-mas- mal-*BSM* u da', qed tifhem eh? S-spiċċa spiċċa eh ġiet normali [...] qed tifhem? Ma kinitx l-*istop leave* li kien iżommuna. Jkun telf tiegħu [...] li kellna kellna raġun.

M: Semmejt *BSM*. *BSM* x'igifieri?

Caruana: *Battery Sergeant Major*.

M: U Ġensinu, qatt kien hemm xi tgergir bejn il-fizzjali, u s-suldati l-oħra?

Caruana: Mm, le le le. Ma, eh kien hemm ma nafx hu jien *as such* x'kien hemm imma ma niftakarx.

M: Qatt kien hemm xi pessimizmu bejn is-suldati meta l-*air raids* bdew jiħraxu?

Caruana: X'inhuma?

M: Qatt kien hemm pessimizmu meta l-*air raids* bdew jiħraxu?

Caruana: Pessimu- pi- xi pi- xi, x'jigifieri? [...] Xi biża'?

M: Eżatt.

Caruana: Xi biża'? Eh, kien hemm xi ħa- eh ma konniex jgigifieri, bid-daħqa [sic.]. Eh tħosshom da' l-affarijiet meta qalulna illi ġew il-Ġermaniżi l-ewwel darba. Imma li kien haw' dak iż-żmien meta ġew l-ewwel darba jien ma kontx għadni fl-*Army* ta. Għax dak kien fil-*forty-one*, ma kontx għadni fl-*Army* jien. Mingħalija, fis-sittax, tan-*nineteen forty-nine* għax il-gwerra bdiet, għidtlek dikinhar, il-gwerra bdiet f'Ġunju, f'Ġunju [...] tan-*nineteen*, forty. Orrajt? [sic.]

Ġunju tan-*nineteen forty*. Dak iż-żmien it-Taljani kienu. Fil-*forty-one* aħna konna s-Siġġiewi. Mis-Siġġiewi mbagħad ma kontx għadni fl-*Army* jien. U mbagħad inżilna l-Isla, u mbagħad inżilna l-Isla, qed tifhem? Għax qalu illi daw' [ma jinftihemx] t-Taljani sakemm ġie l-*Illustrious*. Meta ġie l-*Illustrious* u waqqa' kullimkien, waqqa' kullimkien l-Isla pereżempju u da' (ma jinftihemx) fuq il-bombi u da' biex jolqtuhom u laqtuhom, l-*Illustrious* tal-ajruplani taf insemnih qed tifhem? Ergajna tlajna s-Siġġiewi, u morna, u morna fil-kappella tal-mużew, morna fil-kappella tal-mużew. U ommi ħalliet xi affarijiet hemm għal jista' jkun. Qalet għax forsi jkollna bżonn nerġgħu niġu, qed tifhem? U kienet ħalliet xi, wara l-artal, ta', tal-kappella, tas-Siġġiewi għax bqajt niftakarha di', hemm wara, wara l-artal kien hemm qisu bi-qi-qi-qisu, qisu entratura hekk żgħira, u ħalliet xi affarijiet hemm dik, ommi, kienet xi ħwejjeg u affarijiet hekk għal li jista' jkun. U baqgħu hemm. Ma tantx domna wisq, għax u mbagħad [ma jinftihemx] xi tliet xhur domna l-Isla mbagħad biss għax u mbagħad, tlajna s-Siġġiewi u minn hemm jien inqbadt suldat mis-Siġġiewi [...]. Mis-Siġġiewi spi-bdejt, u mis-Siġġiewi spi-ċajt.

M: X'ħassejt meta r-*rations* tal-ikel u tal-munizjon kienu tnaqqsu?

Caruana: [Jidħak] Eqq xi trid tagħmel? Tgerger. Eqq dak kien hemm. Konna nikkuntentaw milli jtuna [sic.]. Xi trid tagħmel? Kienu jtuna [sic.] l-*crackers*, kienu jagħtuna xi biċċa kombif [sic. *corned beef*] 'l haw u 'l hemm ħalib tal-ħalib ħalib kien qisu ġebbla, konna rridu nfarrkuh, mill-inqas, kienu jtuna [sic.] t-tamal, da' li haw' bħa-bħal daż-żmien haw'. Kien [ma jinftihemx] dat-tamal li eh ġie li jġi bħal daż-żmien. Insomma affarijiet bħal daw'. Xi ħaġa żgħira, u r-*ration* mhux kienu jgibulna kuljum. Kienu jgibulna [jidħak] għal xi għal xi tlett ijiem, da' liċ-ċekċik li kienu jtuna [sic.]. Ħobża hi sewda, ħobża sewda trid tinqasam bejn kulħadd. Il-ħobża konna naqsmuha bejn tmienja. U mbagħad forsi kienet tibqa' xi farka u konna nagħmlu t-tokk [sic.] għaliha [jidħak]. Eqq, qed tifhem? Ah il-ġuħ ġuħ. Fit-

triq forsi jkun hemm xi ħarrub. Konna mmorru xi siġar tal-ħarrub, fejn konna pereżempju Ғal Far dak iż-żmien kien hemm xi siġar tal-ħarrub. Eh kien kollu siġar, u konna mmorru għall-ħarrub u niġu u nixtru minn hemm u naqilgħu minn hemm [...]. Ma kienx hemm ħwienet fej' tixtri u tagħmel da' [ma jinftihemx]. Gwerra gwerra hu' [...] *Blackout* kuljum.

M: Tiftakar meta waslu l-*iSpitfires*?

Caruana: Niftakar. Meta aħna smajna l-*iSpitfires* kienu ġew [...] dakinhar kont fl-*Army* jien hu'. Meta rajna l-*iSpitfires* itiru, qed tifhem kulħadd ħa pjaċir. Ara ġew da daħlu l-*iSpitfires*, u bdew jiġu *in formation in formation*. Daħal l-*aircraft carrier* u beda jtajjarhom minn hemm mill-Mediterran, u kollha niżżilhom [...] Ғal Luqa, u Ta' Qali, qed tifhem? Allura l-kanuni, kollha, marru *defence*, lej' lej' lej' Ta' Qali, lej' Ta' Qali, u lej' Ғal Luqa. U aħna missna Ғal Luqa [...] qed tifhem? Allura għax ġabu issa [ma jinftihemx] ġew il-Ġermaniżi illi se jattakkawhom u kienu jattakkaw, ir-*runway* [...] minn fej' itiru. Allura dak kienu jagħm-jagħmlu r-*runway*, biex l-ajruplani ma jtirux b- mhux talli jolqtu l-ajruplani. l-isma' darba minnhom laqtu l-*barracks* tagħhom u qatlu ħafna *pilots*. Sibb bomba fihom hemm. Niftakarha dik jien [...] Ғal Luqa. Kienu l-*pilots* kienu hemm għax kienu hemm *stand-by* [...]. U jagħmlu l-*craters* kienu [ma jinftihemx] u mbagħad kien hemm nies apposta bit-trakkijiet bil-, bit-trakkijiet tal- tar-ramel u ġebel u żer-u żrar u da' u kienu jmorru malaj', qed tifhem kif jitlaq l-*air raid*, u jimlewhom il-ħ- jimlew il-ħofor, jerggħu jagħmluhom kif jistgħu biex 'ekk jiġu l-ajruplani haw' jerggħu jkunu jistgħu jillandjaw. Dik kienet eh il-pożizzjoni kif kienet dak iż-żmien hu'. Għal eq, eq ma tafx int x'jista' jsir dak iż-żminijiet [jqahqaħ].

M: Kellkom xi tip ta' relazzjoni mal-membri tas-servizzi l-oħra?

Caruana: Le le ma kellniex [...] ma kellniex.

- M:** U kellkom xi tip ta' relazzjoni ma' suldati u fizzjali Ingliži?
- Caruana:** Le le le laqqas [sic.] xej'. Laqqas [sic.] xej' le.
- M:** X'kont tagħmel meta kont tkun *off* jew bil-*leave*?
- Caruana:** Kont immur id-dar [jidħak]. Kont immur id-dar, kont ninħasel għax ma kellniex fejn ninħaslu. Kont nieħu *shower* kull kull tlett ijiem. Forsi nbiddel xi naqra qed tifhem? Xi trid tagħmel? Ommi kienet tistennieni s-Siġġiewi. Konna noqogħdu, konna noqogħdu [...] eh *St Margaret Street* [...] għand Karmnu kien jismu dak. Kinna [sic.] konna konna xi, konna xi tliet familji hemm, fil- [jlaqlaq] post tiegħu hemmhekk, daw'. Konna kellna kamra hemmhekk qed tifhem? U kellna waħda żgħira kamra, bil-lampa tal-pitrolju, u kont forsi nieħu *shower* hemmhekk u ninħasel kif tista' u tbiddel dak il-ħin u oħti kienet trixxifhom il-ħwejjeg fil-bitħa. Xi trid tagħmel?
- M:** Kienu jiġu ppjanati xi attivitajiet fil-Milied?
- Caruana:** Imma, kienu jiġu, kienu jiġu jisimhom [emfaži] I-ENSA (*Entertainment National Service Association*), ma nafx xi tfisser [emfaži] I-ENSA. Kienu jiġu l-Ingliži, imma jiena lħaqthom darba meta konna r-Rikażli. Imma daka kienu jiġu wara li spiċċaw [...] imajnow l-attakki ta, ir-Rikażli. Dik kienet tiġi dik. Allura konna mmorru [...] hemmhekk [...]. Qed tifhem, konna mmorru kien hemm sala kbira u u niftakar kien hemm waħda kienet ta- ikantaw eh jagħmlu kant u żfin u da'. U niftakar kien hemm waħda u bdiet tkanta l-Ave Maria ta' ta' ta' Gounod [...]. Allura kienet sabiħa niftakarha wkoll, għax ġiet bil-velu u da' liebsa sewwa u da' ma tafx? [jidħak] Qisha l-Madonna kienet. L-Ingliži kienu I-ENSA daw' kienu. Kienu jduru l- il- it-truppi kollha. Kienu jissugraw.
- M:** Waqt il-gwerra kif kont tħares lejn is-suldati Ingliži?

Caruana: Xejn. Normali. Qatt ma kellna kuntatt magħhom aħna. Eq, [ma jinftihemx] xi fizzjal pereżempju u da' nsellimlu u nibqgħu għaddejjin. Qatt ma kellna [...] qatt ma kellna bejnieta magħhom aħna.

M: Imma niftakrek issem mili żewġ suldati, Gordon u Morris.

Caruana: Eh ija dika konna s-Siġġiewi. Konna s-Siġġiewi. Daw' kienu s-Siġġiewi evakwati. Kienu bil-kampijiet Ta' Kandja [...] daw'. Kien hemm kienu kienu kienu jkunu grupp. Dak kien waqt il-ġuħ. Kien waq-waq l-għaks [...]. Allura, ommi, allura daw' kienu jmorru jitolbu xi haġa u da' Ka- Karmnu, fejn konna aħna s-sid, tal-post hemm, insomma daħħal tliet familji, eh kellu ħabib tiegħu jismu Morris, jismu Morris [...]. U kien imur u kien iraqqudu, hemmhekk meta jkun filgħaxija. U kien iraqqudu kellu, kellu raff, u kellu t-tiben da' da' kien tar-raba', da' Karmnu. Ken [sic. kien] tar-raba'. U kien ira- u k-kien jorqod hemm [...] insomma. Allura, da' kien itih [sic. jagħtih] xi haġa ikel, u kellu kellu xi affarijiet xi ġwież affarijiet tal-x'jismu, tal-eh bħall-ħarrub u affarijiet hekk, qed tifhem? U kien jgħidlu, kien jgħidlu, 'Issa ħu minn hemm, ħu m- ħu trid tiegħu xi haġa ħu minn hemm'. U mbagħad darba minnhom ġie telgħulu dak qallu, 'Issa m'hemmx iktar spicċa spicċa. U qallu, 'Orrajt, orrajt [sic.], da' Morris. U mbagħad reġa' mar, u u sabhielu, sablu xkora, tal-tal-ħarrub jew x-, jew xi ġwież. 'Mma x'kien ma nafx, imma naf li kellu li kien tajjeb għall-ikel. Qallu, 'Sibtlek ta sibtlek. Għandek kellek hemm kellek hemm moħbi da''. Da' kien kien tal-iskola da' ta. Kien tajjeb u kien jitkellem bl-Ingliż bl-Ingliż tajjeb kien ta ma kienx, da' Karmnu. Kien ġuvni niftakar. Iwa, kien mill-aħjar miskin. Imm' illum ilu mejjet. U mbagħad, daw' kienu ħbieb u kellu ieħor, Gordon [...] Gordon. U mbagħad meta saret l-*invasion*, għal Sqallija, għal Sqallija 'l haw' l-*invasion*, daw' it-truppi kollha ħaduhom, u niżżluhom id-dwana niżżluhom ix-xatt tal-Belt, qed tifhem? Niżżluhom ix-xatt tal-Belt, kien hemm il-*barges* hemm, kien hemm kollox u saret l-*invasion* [jiegħu nifs] għal

Sqallija għax u mbagħad eh għadda ħafna żmien hu' [...]. Niżżluhom hemm, u da' Gordon, u da' Morris kienu ħbieb u u dak Gordon dak Morris, mar, ma-mar, u, kif tela' k-kif kif hemmhekk waslu Sqallija, kien hemm il-*barbed wire*, u kien hemm il-bombi u an- u miet hemm, da' Morris. U ġara, naf waħda għax ġie Gordon lura, u reġgħu ġew fil-kampijiet Malta meta daħlu. Bagħtuhom lura Malta. Ġew bil-bil-bil- haw' bil-*barges* haw' biex ġew ma nafx, qed tifhem? U ġie għandna d-dar [...] ġie Gordon, u ġie jfitti- u saqsejniet [sic.] għalih (ma jinftihemx). Qalilna. 'Rajt u dak il-ħin', qal, 'u mbagħad ma rajt iktar'. Sa hemm nafu. U mbagħad [...] mar, ma ma bediex jiġi iktar hu' d-dar [...] għax u mbagħad l-affari bdiet tmajna hu' tal-gwerra.

M: Rajt suldati ta' pajjiżi oħra?

Caruana: Iwa kien hemm kien hemm. K-kien hemm ta' pajjiżi oħra. Kien hemm tal-Jugoslavja pereżempju. Il-Jugoslavja ġew ħafna r-Rikażli [...]. Ġabuhom hemm ir-Rikażli. Kienu jagħmlu d-*drill* hemm imma mhux jieħdu *action* ta jew hekk ta. Biex jorqdu u jieklu hemm biss. Dak kien kien, eh milli eh kienu bħalna qishom. Kienu jorqdu hemm. Issa jew ħarbuhom, jew ġew **volontieri** [sic.] ma nafx jien kif ġew dawk. Naf li Jugoslavi kienu.

M: Tiftakar xi suldati oħra?

Caruana: U kien hemm kwantità ta' suldati eh mill-Eġi- milli- eh tal-Basutu kienu jgħidulhom [jidħak]. Kull xoffa daqshieħ, qed tifhem? Għarab, Għarab, kien jgħid- ah minn dil-kwalità li kien hemm. Kien hemm ħafna suwed kien hemm minnhom minnhom. Kienu suwed. [Jbaxxi leħnu] Ġie xi ħadd?

M: Jiġifieri li tara lis-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni f'dak il-perjodu?

Caruana: Perjodu eh insomma 'mma komuni kienet, għax kulhadd, kulhadd suldat. Gwerra gwerra [...] qed tifhem? Dak li jkun qed tifhem? Pereżempju l-pjazza tas-Siġġiewi, kienet tkun, bir- bi-bi-bin-nies li kien ikun hemm għax i- da' l-Kottonera kollu telgħu tqassmu Birkirkara u s-Siġġiewi, u fl-irħula u Ғaż-Żebbug u da'. Allura ma kellhomx fej' joqogħdu d-djar. Kien imorru kemm kemm jorqdu. Kellhom xi mkien xi biċċa intrata jorqdu bil-familji. U mbagħad kulhadd jippassiġġa barra, speċjalment meta jkun is-sajf. Kulhadd jippassiġġa barra. Il-pjazza tas-Siġġiewi 'aqgas [sic.] kont tista' timxi fiha, qed tifhem? U kont tisma' l-añbarijiet, mill-għassa tal-pulizija fej' kien hemm illum ma nafx min hemm hemm id-eh, ma nafx min hemm illum, pjaz- fejn kienet il-pjazza quddiem il-każin tal-banda.

M: Mm.

Caruana: Hemm kien hemm ir-*Rediffusion*, u kulhadd malli jisimgħu l-añbarijiet kulhadd in-nies kienu jmorru biex jisimgħu l-añbarijiet hemmhekk [...]. Insomma, [jbaxxi leñnu] u kienet... Mingħalija kollha rrakkontajthomlok daw' jien, id-darba l-oħra.

M: Tħoss li l-militar ħalla xi impatt fuqek?

Caruana: Xej' affattu [...]. Xej' [jidħak] xej'. Eh kont għadni żgħir hu dakinhar meta spiċċajt jien.

M: Tiftakar meta ngħata l-George Cross?

Caruana: Eh niftakar mela le. Niftakarha mhux ma kontx mor- imma ma kontx imma għall- eh [jqahqaħ] ma kontx, għall-għall-funzjoni li kienu għamlu hemm għall-parata li kienu għamlu hemm. Kien mar il- x'jismu, il-President tal-Qrati dak iż-żmien [...]. [Jbaxxi leñnu] X'kien jismu bħalissa? 'Mma dak iż-żmien il-President Camilleri ma nafx min kien.

M: George Borg?

Caruana: Le. Ma nafx min kien. Insomma daka rajnieha, u għamlu quddiem il- quddiem il-*main guard*, taw i- taw taw i- taw i- taw il-George Cross f'April kien, tan-*nineteen forty-two* mingħalija jien. 'Mma l-attakki kienu naqqsu dak iż-żmien [...]. Fil-*forty-two* biss, l-aqwa [ma jinftihemx] l-attakki li kienu tal-Ġermaniżi fil-*forty-two*. Bdew minn qabel il-*forty-two*. Imma meta ġie, meta ġie taw il-George Cross, kien, kienu naqsu [...] l-attakki. Jien dak iż-żmien kont ir-Rikażli imma, għax rajt ġej dal-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija [...]. L-aqwa wieħed dak. Fil-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija kont bagħtuna hemmhekk. Minn Ħal Far bagħtuna hemmhekk [...]. Meta dħalna [...] bil- eh bil-bil- bit-trakk, bit-trakkijiet tagħna, tal-tal-*Army* u bil-ħwejjeg tagħna u da'. Kif dħalna sewwa, atta- għamel *attack*, u waqqa' l-bieb tal-b- tar-Rikażli. Kumbinazzjoni darba kienet [...] darba kienet, u bdew jiġu l-ajruplani fis-sebgħa ta' filgħodu [...]. Fis-sebgħa ta' filgħodu, kulħadd, konna narawhom eh pereżempju pereżempju aħna konna r-Rikażli i-is-sema kien jidher, kien jidher sewwa, u konna narawhom ġejjin, *in formation in formation*. U kienu jkunu xi tmenin [...] jitqassmu mbagħad daw', l-ajruplani. Jitqassmu biċċa fuq id-*Dockyard*, [...] oħra Ta' Qali [...] u u l-oħra Ħal Far. Jitqassmu hemm. U u fuq id-*Dockyard*, Ħal Far u Ta' Qali. U jitfgħu l-bombi hemm, qed tifhem? U jitolqu. U konna nisparaw fuqhom. Dak iż-żmien kellna r-*ration* ma kienx għadu iebes. Kellna kellna k-kellna affarijiet. Għax da' kien ilu sejr in minn Frar pereżempju ta minn qabel. L-attakki kienu ġejjin fis-sebgħa ta' filgħodu. Għamilna xi tliet xhur hemmhekk aħna r-Rikażli, sakemm ġie l-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija. Issa (ma jinftihemx) niġu għall-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija. Daw' l-attakki kienu qed ikunu ta' spiss, isiru. Insomma kuljum mas-sebgħa ta' filgħodu jiġu, jiġu l-ajruplani. Dak iż-żmien u mbagħad ġew il-*Hurricanes*. Kellna l-*Hurricanes*, dak iż-żmien, u ġew kien ħa- ġa haw' l-i-*Spitfires*. L-i-*Spitfires* ġew qabel il-Konvoj, ta' Santa Marija. Għax imb- għax kien dak il-gvernatur Lord Gort min kien. U ried i- u ried illi Malta,

illi 'l Malta ma ċċedix. U Malta kienet se ċċedi, għall-aħħar, għax ma kienx haw' xejn. Ma kienx 'ellha kellha ħmistax 'il ġurnata oħra. Allura kienu ma kellhomx xi triq oħra jgħaddu jagħmlu, illi kienet se ċċedi Malta. Nirringrazzjaw 'l Alla beda sejjer insomma u da' u għax l-l- l-Italja u mbagħad beda beda, beda, beda l-*front*. Mill-Eġittu [...] beda l-*front* għax kien hemm Rommel dak iż-żmien. Allura daqqa kienu jidhlu t-Tobruk, il-Ġermaniżi, u mbagħad jidhlu l-Ingliżi, u joħduh [sic.] huma. U kienu damu sejr in ħafna għaddejjin u sejr in. U waslu sa Tobruk u jerggħu lura. Sa Tuneż ma kinitx fil-gwerra għandikun Tuneż dak iż-żmien m'iniex ċert. Imma Tuneż ma waslux. Allura, eh beda l-attakk minn hemm [ma jinftihemx] u ħa kemm sab armamenti ġiebhom [sic.], qed tifhem? Biex ja- biex jiddefendi 'l Ma- biex jife- issir l-*invasion* għall- eh għall-Sqallija, da' l-gvernatur li kien hemm [...]. X'għidtlek jismu?

M: Gort.

Caruana: Gort. Mela Lord Gort kien, mingħalija jien. [Jgħolli leħnu] Montgomery ħi. Montgomery kien ġeneral kbir. Montgomery hemm il-Man- Montgomery House Montgomery [...]. U hu u l-gve- l-aqwa ġeneral li kellhom il-Ġermaniżi [emfażi] Rommel Rommel [...]. Allura, dak beda offensiva kbira. Kemm sab armamenti mill-Eġittu, u beda sejjer u beda jressaqhom lura dejjem it-truppi. U dejjem ji-ji-jim-jimbuttawhom, qed tifhem l-armamenti li kellhom ajruplani. Dikinhar, dak iż-żmien qatlu lil Rommel. Rommel kien fuq karozza mikxufa, eh ittipjawh għax Rommel kien ġej u sejjer il-Ġermanja. Spiss kien imur, għax kien famuż ta dak il-ġeneral. Ġew ġiex [sic.] ajruplani *Hurricane* kienu, għamlu rawh, be- kienu ttippjati ta. Rawh bububububum [jimita l-ħoss tal-isparar], u qatluh hemm ir-Rommel, fid-deżert [...] fid-deżert, tal-Afrika [...]. Iwa tat-Tripli insomma, hemmhekk qed tifhem Tripli. Tripli kienet għax Tripli kien tat-Tal- kien fl-idejn tat-Taljani dak iż-żmien, għax qabel fil-*for...* kien hemm il-gwerra tal- eh, tal-Abissinja tiftakarha

u ta' u ta' u u ta' Tripli kien-kienu okkupawh it-Taljani dak. Ah it-Taljani baqgħu ħafna żmien hemm, it-Taljani, anki wara l-gwerra, baqgħu hemm, il-ħwienet, il-banek u da' [jisgħol] insomma [...]. Iwa, u mbagħad dal-Konvoj, ġie [...] meta wasal biex jidħol il-Konvoj meta da' ġie qalilna, 'Ara' ġie l-Captain, *Captain Captain*, ġie *Captain Bor-* [...] Ġiġi Ġiġi Borg. Hux għidtlek Ġiġi [jbaxxi leħnu]? Iwa [...] iwa, Ġiġi, Ġiġi Bor- is-Sur *Captain* Borg. Ġie qalilna, 'Ara'. Ġie f'xil-ħdax ta' billej'. Ġie dak ġabarna żewġ kanuni, Rikażli *East* u Rikażli *West*. Tellagħna reġa' ħdejna. Qalilna, 'Isimgħu 'l haw' x'se ngħidlikom'. Qalilna, 'Għandu jidħol konvoj me-', qed tifhem? 'Telaq mill-Ingliterra [sic.], u qiegħed nofs triq, biex jidħ- u se jgħaddi minn ġol-port mill-*breakwater*, minn [jlaqlaq] għal ġol-port'. Qalilna, 'U qed jiġi attackat mill-bogħod [...] da' [jqaħqaħ]. Qalilna, "ekk jistgħu jsalvawh isalvawh'. Kien hemm il-*bomb [sic. boom] defence*, għadni naftakarhom [sic.] issa qed nara lilek. Ġie ġewx ġewx [sic. żewġ] brake- żewġ [...] *thug boats* [jisgħol]. Wieħed minn banda u l-ieħor mill-oħra, u ġibdu l-, ix-xibka li jkun hemmhekk biex ma jidħlux is-*submarines* [...] u daħal l-ewwel vapur [...]. Daħal l-ewwel vapur imm-i-immejjel 'l hemm u 'l haw' se jaqa' sejjer u ma jegħreqx [sic.] ta. Daħal ma mal- ma ma ma mas-sebħ [...] daħlu. U daħlu u daħlu ħames vapuri kienu biss [...]. Daħal dak tal-patata li jsemmu, il- eh l-Ohio [jisgħol]. U insomma l-oħrajn insejt x'jisimhom [...]. U nofshom mgħarrqin. U [ma jinftihemx] u ttrakkawhom fej' hemm il- eh fej' hemm il- eh il-*Waterfront* illum, u ttrakkawhom mal-moll hemm, biex ma jegħreqx, qed tifhem? U sadattant [sic.] bdew iħottuhom u ġiebu [sic.] l-*ismoke screen* kienu dik iż-żm- dak iż-żmien, qed tifhem? Ġiebu [sic.] l-kanuni kollha fil-port [...] kollha ta' lil hemm [ma jinftihemx] u ġew ta jattakkaw imma ma, ma ma m-ma m'għamlu xej', għax kien hemm offensiva kbira. It-Talja- il-Ġermaniżi ma bassruhiex li se jkun hemm di' l-offensiva. Ara x'segretezza kien hemm. Ma bassrux illi se- illi minn ġurnata qabel [...] laqqas [sic.] kienu jisparaw il-kanuni, u mbagħad dikinhar di- tara dak il-baraxx kollu għax fil-

konvoj ġiebu [sic.] l-*ammunition* u ġiebu l-proviżjoni, ġiebu [sic.] kollox u ġiebu [sic.] l- u ġiebu [sic.] l-g u ġiebu [sic.] l-*ismoke screen*, dak iż-żmien, qed tifhem? Allura da' kien billej' stess, bille-dik il-ġurnata stess qassmu kullimkien fuq il-kanuni kollha, u ġiebhom [sic.] kollha, il-kanuni kollha li kien hemm, fej' kienu mxerrdin ġiebhom [sic.] kollha għall-port, biex isalvaw il-Konvoj. Allura, bħal speċi daw' l-ajruplani eh il-Ġermaniżi, qishom ixxukkjaw, għax ma kinux jistennewha di' li [jlaqlaq] di' l-offensiva kollha li f'daqqa waħda bdew jisparaw, għax għall-ewwel kienu u, għall-ewwel bdew jiġu qishom xalata [...] għax ma kinux jisparaw fuqhom. Insomma niżzu ħajr 'l Alla tefgħu l-*ismoke screen* kienu, u aħna u sparajna bil-maskra, u bdejna nisparaw fuq min ġie ġie u *Spitfires* u daw' ajruplani jaqgħu, għal isfel minn tagħna u minn tagħhom, *parachutes* niżlin, qed tifhem? Kienet tragedja (ma jinftihemx), tal-għaġeb. Sadattant [sic.] kienet il-Belt kollha kienet imwaqqa' kollha [ma jinftihemx] għedthielek il-Belt kollha mwaqqa' kienet bit-Teatru Rjal u faċċata fej' Kastilja, qed ti- eh insomma kienet [...] xena [jidħak] li ma tinsieha qatt.

M: Meta qalulek [...] li kellek titlaq mill-Armata x'kont ħassejt?

Caruana: Eh? Eh pjaċir hu'. Għidt [jidħak] issa nibda ħajja oħra jien, insomma. Għidt issa jien qaluli, qaluli sewwa saqsewni [sic.] l-ewwel qaluli, 'Għandek fej' taħdem inti? Fil-każ', qaluli, '[jlaqlaq] insibulek *job* magħna f-fil-fil-militar'. Għidtilhom, 'Le jien għandi *job* għandi'. Qaluli, 'Fejn kont da'?' Għidtilhom, 'Fil-*powerstation*'. Kienet għadha tal-Kurċifiss hemm [...] il-Furjana. (ma jinftihemx). Qaluli, 'Jzommuk', qaluli, "jekk ma jzommukx", qalli, 'ejja għandna'. U mort jien, l-għada, l-għada kont kont ah kont bl-uniformi, għadni kif spiċċajt. Għidtlu kien hemm is-Sur Fenech [...] dak iż-żmien illum issa llum miet. Kien qassis u mbagħad wara ħafna. Dun Anton għadu qassis tas-Sigġiewi. Dun Anton Vella tismagħhom isemmuh naħseb, għax kienu ħbieb ħafna. Peress illi dak [...] da, da da da, Dun Anton, kellu ħuh, il-*head teacher*,

Ƨal Qormi, Ƨal Qormi, u da' minn Ƨal Qormi kien is-Sur Fenech għalhekk kien jismu Ġorg, minn Ƨal Qormi. Allura eh peress u u mbagħad das-Sur Fenech kien għamel ħbieb ma' Dun Anton, u meta spicċa bis-sittin dan għadda ż-żmien ta jġifieri, qed tifhem mar mar għamel il- [jlaqlaq] l-age vocation k- vocation kienu jgħidulu. Mar Ruma għandikun u studja u kompla, u sar qassi-. U dam għoxrin sena qassis ta. Qassis qadde- u beda jqaddes San Bastjan [...]. Kien iqaddes hemm. Insomma dik erħilha dik affari oħra. Iwa u [...] [jbaxxi leħnu] [ma jinftihemx]. X'kont qed ngħidlek? [...] Eh [...] il- l-a- l-ajruplani qed tifhem eh rajna kwantità kbira ta' ajruplani u da' u ba- u niżlin bal-[sic.] *parachutes* u da' u kienu straġi sħiħa. Sadattant [sic.] ir-Russja fetħet *front*, minn hemmhekk, hi, għal fuq il-Ġermanja, ir-Russja allura, t-truppi li kien hemm... hemm ħadna r-ruħ, Malta. Telgħu t-truppi kollha li kien haw' Sqallija, u tellgħuhom kollha, lej' in-naħħa [sic.] tagħhom hemm lej' naħħa tar-Russja, qed tifhem? U hemmhekk qisu l-gwerra bdiet tmajna. Sadattant [sic.] laħaq Settembru, Settembru fit-tmienja ta' Settembru ċediet ċediet l-Italja. Kont l-Isla jien. Kont għadni suldat dak iż-żmien. Kont l-Isla [...] u kien hemm it-tmienja ta' Settembru [...] bil-Bambina tal-Isla. Konna x-xatt għax dik kienet tinżel ix-xatt. Ġie armiral [sic.] [...] kien, sab il- ah kappillan, 'il ċertu kappillan Burlò, Burlò [...] ġie, u qallu qallu [...] 'avża n-nies' qallu u da'. Indunaw illi kien ġara xi ħaġa, illi l-Italja ċediet lill-Malta, *unconditional Surrender* [...] l-Italja. Allura kulħadd iċapċap. 'Mela ninżlu l-port ninżlu l-port'. Għajjat kbir għajjat kbi-kbir. Il-biki kien jaqbdek dikinhar. U kulħadd tala' [sic.] jġiri ġol-Knisja ta' San Filippu [...] San Filippu u tlajna San Filippu, u ċapċip u insomma u da'. U domna sa xi, domna eh sa xil-ħdax ta' billej' konna għadna qegħdin iktar xi nofs il-lej', qed tifhem hemmhekk l-l- l-Isla. Issa dan biex se mmorru biex se mmorru ridt immur is-Siġġiewi [jqahqah]. Kont għadni bl-uniformi dak iż-żmien. Insomma tafx int? Issa da' entużjażmu kbir hu. Kien hemm ħafna nies minbarra l-pajjiż ġew ġew l-Isla. U jiena kont mort, bil-mixi, mill-Isla, għas-Siġġiewi dik ma ninsieha qatt. U kelli ħabib

tiegħi kien tal-mużew, Ġorġ eh, Lorr- eh Lo-Lorry Lorry Lorry [pawsa u jbaxxi leħnu] eh xil-Madonna Lorry Theuma, Lo- [...] Cassar, Cassar, miet. M-miet ta' ta', kemm kellu? Kellu kellu *seventy*, kellu *ninety-seven*, meta miet. M'ilux da' mejjet. *Ninety-seven* kellu, meta mie-. [Jgħolli leħnu] U tlajna flimkien. U kien hu hekk ta' Ħal Qormi hu. U jiena kont noqgħod is-Siġġiewi u Ħal Q- u sa' Ħal Qormi, wasalna flimkien. U jien bqajt tiela' s-Siġġiewi, u wasalt f'xi l-erbġha ta' filgħodu [...] id-dar. U, 'Mela ġejt?', ommi, 'Mela ġejt?' ommi, 'X'gara gara?' Għidtilhom, 'Ċediet l-Italja'. Laqqas [sic.] jafu xej'. 'Ċediet l-Italja spiċċat il-gwerra issa minn Malta issa orrajt [sic.]. Eh eh insomma ma tafx int? Eh [ma jiftihemx] [jidħak] dħalt ġewwa ninħasel nin- insomma eh u rqadt hemm. Imbagħad ergajt mort, u mbagħad bdejta eh beda, il-perjodu l-ieħor kif se nispiċċaw mill-*Army* hu' [...]. Insomma. Ippermettili daqsxej' ħa mmur sat-*toilet*.

[STOP TAPE]

M: Qatt għaddielek minn moħħok li stajt tlift ħajtek?

Caruana: Eqq dan fatt. U żgur. Ir-Rikażli pereżempju, għidt daqshekk ħaj. Għidt issa m'hemmx jew ħajja, jew eh [...] jew spiċċajna minn ħajjitna. X'tistenna? Daqsdawk bombi [jidħak] hu' niżlin? [...] Dak ġieni f'rasi kemm-il darba. 'Mma l-iktar meta konna r-Rikażli. Meta konna fil-kampanja u dan, ma kontx nagħti kas [...] imma hemmhekk iwa. Fir-Rikażli biss kont nibża' [...]. Biża' kelli. Ma ngħidx jiġifieri li jiena xi wieħed eh, s-straordinarju li ma tibżax, daqsdawk bombi niżlin u da' u ajruplani eqq issa jew ħajja jew mewt [...] orrajt [sic.]? Meta tara dak il-bombi kollha l-knisja tal-Kalkara pereżempju [jisgħol] rajtha taqa' kollha. Il-ġebel tagħha ġie qabeż ir-Rikażli, bil-bombi mm tefgħu *mine* fuqha għandikun, qed tifhem? [...] Eqq, għax bdew jifgħu l-*mines* [...]. Bdew jifgħu l-*mines* u l-*mines* mhux dejjem ġew fil-baħar. Jibdew bihom fuq il-

bini. Però l-Isla koll-kollha bil-*mines* waqgħet, u meta jiġi *mine* jwaqqa' blokk sħiħ.

M: Tiftakar f'xi episodju li baqa' stampat f'moħħok minn żmien il-gwerra?

Caruana: [...] Pereżempju? [pawsa u jidħak] Emm, mhux li l-Konvoj li baqa' stampat f'moħħi jien għaliġa? Il-bqija qisna, ma ngħidlekx qisna xalata [jqahqah]. Imma insomma [...] ko-kont normali, ngħadduha ta' tfal li kont ta' dak iż-żmien. Ma kont taħseb f'xej' [...] eh.

M: Mela, Ċensinu, grazzi ħafna ta' ħinek.

Caruana: [Jidħak] Affarijiet żgħar. Niringrazzjak. Għamilt milli stajt [...] orrajt [sic.] milli stajt milli ftakart hu', peress li għadda ħafna żmien. Imma l-memorja baqgħet tajba, speċjalment tal-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija spjegajtu kif mill-aħ- mill-aħjar li stajt.

APPENDIX III

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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Illum is-sebgħa ta' Novembru elfejn u sbatax, jien James Baldacchino qiegħed mas-Sinjura Loulou Mifsud Bonnici ġewwa r-residenza tagħha fin-Naxxar f'isem il-proġett MEMORJA għall-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta.

M: Loulou fejn twelidt u meta?

Mifsud Bonnici: Tas- fourth February ta' nineteen twenty eight tas-Sliema.

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Mifsud Bonnici: Erbgħa, erba' bniet, four girls.

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Mifsud Bonnici: Eh- il-mama' d-dar, u l-papa' clerk ma' Micallef Eynaud.

M: L-aħħar darba kont għedtli li ommok kienet twieldet Smyrna?

Mifsud Bonnici: Yes, u mbagħad ġiet refuġja- kienet twieldet Smyrna; ma- ġiet refuġjata Malta meta kien hemm ir-revoluzzjoni ta'-ta' lżmir.

M: Tiftakar xi ħaġa mill-istejjer li kienet tirrankonta'?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ehh kienet tgħid li-li- kemm kien hemm massakru, kemm kien hemm nies jgħajtu. Huma minħabba' li kienu British subjects, l-Ingliži marru jsalvawhom. Marru l-Konsolat ta' tal-l-Ingliži, hemmhekk Smirna, u [...] ssalvaw, koll-kollha ssalvawhom in-nies li kienu Maltin bil-British subjects, b'passaport Malti. Daqshekk [minn taħt l-ilsien] u ġiet Malta, u ġew Malta u meta wasslu Malta, ħaduhom l-Lazzarett għax fuq il-vapur kellhom tifel bl-iskarlatina,

allura huma marru korantina kollha li ġew, tista' timmaġina; u- mbagħad kumbinazzjoni kien hemm min kien għassaduty ta' l-Lażżarett fejn ħaduhom, kien Mifsud Bonnici, iz-ziju tar-raġel tiegħi, u tagħhom jieklu l-corned beef u bot ilma u te' jew kafe' u, għamli għalih! Għax huma kienu ilhom jieklu corned beef il-vjaġġ kollu minn Iżmir sa Malta! Meta tel- meta telqu minn Iżmir. Hekk dik, u u mbagħad nsomma irranġaw u ftehm u kollha marru ġo furnished flahouses. Il-mama' kienet ġiet furnished f'str- fil-pjazza Lunzjata ta' Stella Maris, fil-pjazza tal-każin ta' Stella Maris u [...] hemm hekk ntaqat mal-papa' [...] wara ftit taż-żmien. Kemm damet ma nafx, ma nistax niftakar, imma l-papa' kien ra [...] u kien jimxi warajha, u ra, u jerġa warajha, u jerġa jarha, u mbagħad iżżewġet mal-papa' tiegħi, u żżewġu fil-knisja żgħira ta' Stella Maris. Imbagħad kella lil Dorothy; għax mej- għax il-papa' kien armel tiegħi, kella l-Dorothy, kella tifla, kella l-Dorothy, lili u Carmen iż-żgħira tlieta, il-mama' u l-kbira kienet ta' l-ewwel mara tal-papa'. Daqshekk.

M: Qatt emigrajt x'imkien?

Mifsud Bonnici: Jiena le, ħlief mort l-Londra ma' Maurice biex jistudja. Għamilna ma nafx kemm żmien, imma għam- għamilna quite a long time. L-ewwel morna for four months andikun, u mbagħad morna xi-se- la naf sena, la naf ten months dommna, għax il-baby tiegħi hemm tweled, Mark, it-tifel. Tweled l-Lon- għax jiena kont pregnant ta' six months, u tlajt l-Londra, u tweled hemm, Mark. U dommna hemmhekk xahar meta tweled il-baby u ġejna lura mbagħad, lura għax Maurice ma kellux għalfejn joqgħod iżjed speċi hemmhekk u [...] that's all, naħseb.

- M:** X'xogħlijiet kellek?
- Mifsud Bonnici:** Jiena kont teacher St.Joseph qabel ma żżewiġt, u kont ngħallem it-tfal ta' four [...] ma'- mas-sorijiet fejn kont jiena mmur l-iskola kont mort hemmhekk kont naħdem, il-bqija ma ħdimt m'kien iżjed.
- M:** Fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?
- Mifsud Bonnici:** Dejjem tas-Sliema, tas-Sliema. Dejjem tas-Sliema, u mbagħad [tlaqlaq] wara li konna tas-Sliema, [kliem mhux ċar u mlaqlaq] kien hemm il-il- x'jisimha ta' li jiftehmu Hitler u Mussolini u u Churchill dak iż-żmien, mhux Churchill!, Chamberlain!, Chamberlain kien dak iż-żmien u ddikjaraw gwerra, u ġiet il-gwerra.
- M:** U kemm għandek tfal?
- Mifsud Bonnici:** Jiena? wieħed biss, wieħed. Qatt ma kelli iżjed, ħasra [tlissen il-kelma 'ħasra' baxxa ħafna bil-kemm tinstema']
- M:** Loulou, fejn kont meta smajt bid-dikjarazzjoni ta' gwerra?
- Mifsud Bonnici:** Id-dar, mal- papa' u mama' u aħna kollha. Jiena ma bżajtx mal-papa' [emfasi], ħuti beżaw ma ġewx magħna fuq il-bejt, u aħna tlajna fuq il-bejt. Tlajna fuq il-bejt u rajna l-arjuplani Ġer- Taljani, ajrup- Taljani deħlien. Pero' ma kienux jagħmlu l-ħoss li kienu jagħmlu l-Ġermaniżi t-Taljani. U mbagħad imxew lejn il-Gżira u tefaw bomba fuq il-Gżira [...] u kienet u kien hemm dik id-diżgrazzja il-Gżira dak li miskien kien qatawlu saqajh bil-bil-bil-ġebel li waqaw il-Gżira. U [...] kulħadd jibza', u mbagħad meta aħna rajna li hemm id-duħħan [ton ta' stagħġib] u il-bomba nżilna niġru minn fuq il-bejt! ma qbajniex fuq il-bejt għax bżajna. Pero'

t-Taljani kienu jaħarbu malajr [...] L-arjuplani kienu malajr jdurru jmorru lura, ma kienux bħall-Ġermaniżi. Il-Ġermaniżi kienu iktar ta' stonku, iktar ta' kuraġġ' haw. Kienu [...] Ġermaniżi nsomma! [emfasi] ta' [tlaqlaq] ta' li huma! U [...] nżilna, u mbagħad bdejna naraw x'se nagħmlu, x'se nagħmlu, x'se nagħmlu, u rranġajna biex meta kull-kull sirena li nisimgħu ninz- konna ninżlu noqgħodu taħt il-mejda tal-kamra tal-pranzu, u mbagħad minn hemm rranġajna li ninżlu f' kantina, għax taħt id-dar aħna, viċin ħdejna bieb ma' bieb kien hemm kantina, niżilna mejda u konna ninżlu fil-kantina u noqgħodu taħt il-mejda. U mbagħad tħaffru ix-xelters, tħaffru ix-xelters kellna xelter quddiemna, konna xe- ninżlu fix-xelter quddiemna, kulħadd iross, kulħadd jimbotta' biex jidħol, u konna ninżlu fix-xelter, u x-xelter kien hemm waħda tgħidilna r-rużarju dejjem, daruz- kulħadd jimbotta', u aħna konna dejjem riedna nżommu postna [emfasi] fix-xelter għax kien hemm wieħed ħdej- quddiemna kien maħmug! jintenn! [emfasi] u ma konniex irridu noqgħodu quddiemu u [...] il-mama' kienet tbatu biex tinżel fix-xelter. Imbagħad il-prinċipal tal-papa' qallu 'ara ejjew oqgħodu fid-dar tagħna Tower Road', u morna fid-dar Tower Road, li- għax ix-xelter ma kelniex – aħna kellna thirty eight taraġ biex ninżlu għax-xelter il-mama' u ħabba li l-mama' kienet ehh tgħawġet biż-żmien, eqq- konna-konna ninżlu haw u morna hemmhekk, u hemmhekk ma kellniex taraġ, konna nifθu li-bieb u faċċata kelna xelter Tower Road. U meta konna Tower Road smajna n-nies 'ara x'daħħlu, daħħlu t-Taljani bl-e-boats, ara l-e-boats', u ħriġna jien l-papa' u morna Għar id-Dud – fil-bidu ta' Kwisisana – qssamna triq fuq in-naħa tal-baħar u rajniehom! rajniehom deħlin, deħlin, deħlin, u,u, [teċċita ruħa] min diehel lejn il-port u min diehel [tlaqlaq b' eċċitament] jġiri lura. Bde-bdew jibżaw għax [tlaqlaq bl-eċċitament] xejn! ma nafx x'kien ġaralhom, naf li eh da-daru

lura, marru lura. U- aħna morna niġru d-dar mbaġħad, għax bżajna li, smajna xi ajru- xi ħoss ta' ajruplan għandukun, morna lura d-dar. Imbaġħad dejjem fix-xelter, fix-xelter, fix-xelter, sirena, sirena, nitilgħu, ninzlu, noqgħodu hemm, ndumu hemm. Pero' qatt ma [emfasi] qadna hemm il-ħin kollu [...] speċi ma kollniex nitilgħu d-dar, konna nidħlu d-dar. U mbaġħad darba minhom ehh, ġie air-raid kbir u kien dam, kienu s-siegħa, naf li żgur kienu s-siegħa, il-ħin nitakar [emfasi] għax ġie l-papa' mill-uffiċju u l-mama' qaltlu 'mur itfi l-minestra' qaltlu 'għax hemm il-gass jixgħal', qaltlu 'ma murx jaqbad xi nar' qaltlu 'tinħaraq u jkun hemm', u l-papa' daħal id-dar – ma kellux bod ta! qallu bod qiesu kellu bod ta' ġiex tid-djar hekk fit-triq [tispjega] de- mix-xelter kien faċċata n-naħħa ta' Haro u aħna konna quddiem Villa [...] Drago u daħal il-papa' u sema' UUUMMMM, UUUMMMM [tispjega ħoss] ġejjien l-ajruplani, ġejjien, ġejjien [ton ta' biża] u lil ta' ħdejna kienet qegħda tfarfar il-biċċa ta' tfar qaltlu- qallha imxi ninzlu fix-xelter ta! qallha 'għax dawn Ġermanizi!' fil-pront jinżel il-papa' u tinżel hi kollhom trab u re-regħdna ta! fix-xelter [tistagħgeb] regħdna 'sew' [emfasi] u x'ħin ħriġna twerwirna għax rajna d-dar ġebel weħida, il-Gaiety spiċċa!, il-kantunira li kien hemm id-djar k-kollox mdendel f'it ġebel wieqaf ma waqax, ma waqax kollox u kulħadd jibki, kuħadd jibki għax ma-ma kellniex x'nilbsu xejn! [emfasi] ma kellna xejn, xejn, xejn xejn [tirrepeti b'emfasi]. Anzi aħna kellna d-dar l-oħra, imma kellna kollox fid-dar, fe-fejn morna Tower Road. Ħadna kollox u ta' quddiemna kienet tgħidilna 'toħduhomx ruħi, toħdux kollox hemm', 'ah toħdux' għax qaltilna 'jien jekk jinfethilkom il-bieb ngħalaqulkom' din kienet tagħalaqulna l-bieb tad-dar tagħna fejn konna noqgħodu aħna, għax aħna morna fid-dar tal-tal-prinċipal tal-papa'. U, u x'jismu imbaġħad minn hemm il-il-papa' speċi beda jinkwieta għall-mama' għax trid titla' dak it-taraġ

kollu, u offrewlna li mmorru għant-oħtu, għant-aunty Melita fejn in-Nażżarenu. U dawk diġa kien hemm, ġa kienu jiġu l-Ġermaniżi kont tisma' l-ajruplani, BBBUUMMM, BBBUUMMM [tipprova timmita' l-ħoss ta' l-ajruplani ġejjien]. Le! [emfasi bħal kieku qed tikkoreġi ruħa] qabel ergajna morna d-dar, morna d-dar u meta morna d-dar kellhom il-ħok- il-ħakk, di- Carmen oħti ż-żgħira u l-papa' u l-papa' b'sebu ż-żgħir u f'sebaw dan [turi għal xi seba ieħor] kellu l-ħakk, u k-kienet, k-konna ngħamlulha biċċiet hekk biex biex biex [tlaqlaq] tiffriška għax dejjem ma tistax toqgħod bil-qegħda oħti z-żgħira, konna naħslu l-ħwejjeġ fil-kantina u nitla' nonxor fuq il-bejt; għax il-bomba ta' Stella Maris, għandu jkun qabel il-Gaiety tella- niżlet. M'inhieħ ċert- m'inhieħ żgura, żgura, żgura, jekk hux ta' Stella Maris qabel il-Gaiety. Għax aħna konna d-dar, kont id-dar jien nżilt k-kont qed nonxor, u meta niżlet il-bomba Stella Maris, il-blast ħadli l-bieb! Ma stajtx ngħalqu l-bieb, żammejtu b'idejja t-tnejn hekk, u ma stajtx, ma stajtx ngħalqu, imbagħad ġbidtu hekk, b'dil-id u bl-id l-oħra, u, u rnexili ngħalaq u nżilt fix-xelter – kenna x-xelter quddiem il-bieb aħna, u mbagħad ħabba' f'hekk morna Tower Road, dak iż-żmien morna Tower Road, wara l-bomba ta' Stella Maris, żgur! [emfasi] Għax ma stajniex noqgħodu iżjed fil-kantina, u ninżlu, il-kantina maħmu- ma konniex norqdu aħna fiha, konna- thirty eight it-taraġ kellna biex nitilgħu u ninżlu ba- biex ninżlu x- xelter - daqshek il-flat kien għoli, u mbagħad morna hemmhekk, morna Tower Road, u ġara dil-biċċa xogħol tal-bomba, tal-ħames bombi għandu kienu jew erbgħa tal-Gaiety. U l-papa' salva' għax vera niżel sitt tarġiet jew tmienja minn tax-xelter għax kien karigor hu xelter [...] ta' Tower Road, ar- ta' quddiemna le, ta' quddiemna kien hekk [donna turi kif kien] it-taraġ, imma ta' ta' ta' Tower Road kien karigor. Imbagħad minn hemm, b-ehh- morna għant iz-zijiet fejn in-Nażżarenu, fejn in-

Nażżarenu, u fejn in-Nażżarenu konna bnejna ħajt - kellhom kċina, il-kċina ma kienetx kbira ħafna, daqs bathroom kbira, ftit ikbar il-kċina – għalaqna [...] nofsa hekk, għamilna qisek slice meta taqsam il-ħob-sandwich bread tagħmilha, u konna noqgħodu hemm bi speċi għandna xelter, u u minajr saqaf! allura kienet taqa' d-dar kieku mhux pulpetti konna nsiru! [tidħaq] kienu jsibuna mafġin bħall-ġrieden. U mbagħad minn hemm ehh erġajna morna d-dar u xi ħadd qallu lill-papa' 'mhux aħjar tiġu Ħad-Dingli' qallu 'm' hemmx taraġ, hemm l-għerien,' qallu, 'kulħadd qed iħaffer l-għerien fil-blat', qallu, qallu u. Le! [twaqqaf lilha nifisha biex tikoreġi li qed tgħid] Ħal Lija morna l-ewwel [...] Ħal Lija morna, għant tal-giddy morna [...]. Morna Ħal Lija aħna. Morna Ħal Lija u tawna kamra ta-tar-raħal fejn kienu joqgħodu meta nhar ta' Ħadd jmorru hemm, u mbagħad minn hemm tawna kamra ġor-razzett, fl-għalqa. U fl-għalqa ma kellhomx xelter huma, allura Salvu kien [...] qata' ħamrija ġo-ġol-għalqa li kienet għolja; qata' qisu daħla hekk fil-ħamrija; saqaffha bil-corrugated iron u għamel l-ixkejjer bil-ħamrija fuqha, u konna niġru għal ġol-għalqa, meta kien jagħmel xelter, għalqa bil-ħamrija. U domna hemmhekk Ħal Lija, ma nafx kemm domna preċiż; minnhemm u mbagħad morna Ħad-Dingli, morna Ħad-Dingli. U Ħad-Dingli kienu qalulna issa pero' ehh, m'hemmx kmamar tal-ġebel, t-tridu tħaffru ġol-blat, u sab il-Karabusu il-papa', ħaffirlu bil-baqun għax dak iż-żmien hekk jagħtu il-fu- toqba u mbagħad jagħtu furnella żgħira, żgħira ħafna, għax ma setawx jagħtu ħafna, u ħaffrulna u tlajna hemmhekk, u qagħdna hemmhekk. U hemmhekk konna kuntenti ħafna, alavolja ġol-blat. Mbagħad il-papa' bena' kċina ta' l-ijam barra żgħira, kelna kċina u konna mmorru nixtru, mmorru r-raħal – kenna miexja ħafna kbira, għax kenna mill-irdum sal-sal-raħal. Konna mmorru meta kienu jtuna l-ħobż bir-ration konna

mmorru ngibu l-ħobż, u mbagħad fetħet il-Victory Kitchen. Fetħet il-Vict- ma konniex nbatu l-ġuħ. Fetħet il-Victory Kitchen u konna mmorru ngibu l-Victory Kitchen, u xi ħadd tana tlett flieles, u l-papa' għamlilna gallinar, u dak li ma kienx jogħgobna lilna tal-Victory Kitchen konna ntuh lit-tiġieg – b'hekk rabbejna t-tiġieg. U kont mmur għant il-bdiewa, nixtri l-bajd, nixtri l-ħalib. Il-bajd kienu two and six il-waħda!, il-flixxkun tal-ħalib tad-Drewers b- whisky, lira!, flixxkun ħalib [emfasi]; patata landa ħalib, patata tal-butir mielañ, kienu jżommuli ħam- ehh lira taha jew-jew skont il-patata xi tkun. J- hekk tkun hekk boċċi żgħar, u kienu jt- jix-jtuna t-tqiq, kienu jtuna borża tqiq u l-mama' kienet tagħmlilna l-għaġin bit-tqiq, idendlu fuq il-qasab biex jinxf l-għaġin. U kienet tagħmilomna b'subajha hekk qishom žibeg, u u u konna konna nidubbaw il-ħaxix u hekk. Il-bqija ma batejna xejn xejn xejn ġuħ [emfasi]. Mbagħad kienu jiġ-konna nkuna fl-għalqa nsajru b'-b' fuq, fuq iċ-ċint kie-kenna kenu, konna nsajru l-minestra, u ħaxix u patata u l-għaġin, u-u l-pilots kienu jgħaddu b-b' spitfire u aħna nxejrulhom kollha tlieta kemm aħna anke l-mama' magħna. U mbagħad darba rajna, għidna ara madoffi kemm ġejjien Nglizi, kemm ġejjien, kemm niżlien in-niżla – dik in-niżla ta' l-irdum – u konn għadna 'ara kemm ġejjien Nglizi!', u daw xejrulna u xejrnilhom aħna, għax aħna konna nxejrulhom bl-ajruplan. U qalulna 'we see you from the plane, we are the ones that you wave to us', qalulna, 'how lucky you are, how healthy you are! [emfasi] Go to Sliema and see the young girls in Sliema, they're all like skeletons'. Hekk kienu jgħidulna l-pilots, u domna hemmhekk hu!. It-tbatija li kellna biex ntellaw l-ilma mill-bir, komdu kienet it-tarjola ta! tal-bir imma, biex ġgorru d-dar kelli bod jiena qisu [...] qisu [...] ara minn hawn sal-bieb ta' barra għall-tlett darbiet, dik il- u telgħa, daqsxejn telgħa, kemm kemm telgħa; mhux bħat-telgħa li ninżlu għal ġol-

għal meta taqbad għall-irdu- biex tinżel għall-blat, u kont ngor l-ilma u naħslu hemmhekk kollox u, u ninżlu l-għelieqi; morru ma' ta' l-għalqa għax kien hemm ta' l-għalqa wkoll kienu joqgħodu hemmhekk u, u waħ- familja minnhom; u kellha n-nagħaġ u konnu morru bin-nagħaġ fl-għelieqi. U darba niftakar morna kie-kien hemm il-kwiet, għax kif naraw li m'hemmx ħsejjes ta' l-ajruplani konna noħorġu bin-nagħaġ, [tbaxxi leħinha turi l-kwiet] u mmorru magħha Mannani. U [...] konna [...] morna sa' l-Imtaħleb niftakar u-u mtedejna għall-żaqna hekk u nitawlu lejn il-baħar. Oh ma! ikrah font [emfasi u tistagħgeb] hemm font! u l-mama' meta ġiet qaltilna 'Fejn mortu?! Fejn mortu?!' għidnilha 'ma għax ma-ma hawnx ajruplani' għidnilha 'allura ma ġejniex qadna l-Imtaħ- morna sa' l-Imtaħleb mxejna bil-mogħoż u [...] haw [...] kif tgħid? bżajt jiena ħafna meta tawalt lejn il-baħar għax il-ġebel li konna qed nitfaw il-baħar lanqas biss rajniehom, qas konna narawha nieżla l-ġebbla, ara x'font hemm! ikrah iswed! U, u kien hemm il-kwiet għax l-air- naħseb l-ajruplani Ġermaniżi ma tantx kienu jiġu l-dik in-naħha, iżjed kienu jiġu lejn il-bliet. Għax aħna lejn l-għelieqi konna ħafna, kien hemm ħafna għelieqi qabel ma tasal għal-għal-għal-caves li konna ngħixu. U l-caves kenna kumdi ta' għax kenna ġiex k- ikmamar. Għax l-ewwel kenna kamra waħda, imbagħad il-papa' qal 'le ma jstax jkun!' qal 'jeħtieġ nagħmlu kamra oħra għax jekk meta tkun ix-xita kif se noqgħodu kollha hemm ġew ġo dak id-dlam' u nixgħelu l-lampa tal-pitrolju, fanali kelna tal-pitrolju [bħal tikoreġ ruħa], fanali u xemgħat. Għax ix-xemgħat ma kienx jridhom il-papa'. U mbagħad xtara fanali, u fanali. Għax il-kamra kienet tidħol għaliha kuruttur hekk fil-blat, u s- ddur on the left hekk u ssib kamra. U mbagħad fejn kelna l-ħajt faċċata ma' wiċċna meta konna nidħlu l-kuruttur minn dan il-passaċċ hekk, kien blat u ftaħniha kamra. U kenna kamra żgħira biex- bathroom

żgħira – daqs nofs galarija ta' l-injam, daqs nofs galarija ta' l-injam – hemmhekk konna ninħaslu u mmorru nużaw toilet bil-lejl, imma wara nofs in-nhar konna mmorru taħt il-ħarruba fil-għodu. Kulħadd jigr [tidħaq] taħt il-ħarruba u kulħadd jagħżaq! Dejjem bl-imgħażqa konna! [tkompli tidħaq]. Ma kenniex toilets hu! Ma kienx hemm dranaġġi u u fosos xejn! Għax difatti konna ninketaw għax il-papa' dik l-ewwel ħaġa li kien nkwieta. Għax qal 'issa' qal 'bla toilet hemm hemm ġo dak il-blat'. Imma morna u ħadna, ħadna ruħ meta morna għax anke għal mama' speċi ma kienetx tbatu biex tidhol fix-xelter. [Jinstema' xi ħadd jisgħol].

M: X'ħassejt meta l-ġenituri qalulek li kellkom titilqu mid-dar għall-ewwel darba?

Mifsud Bonnici: Eq eq, speċi bdejna bid-dmugħ f'għajnejna, għalaqna d-dar, għalaqna l-affarijet, speċi għadna issa min jaf nergawx nieġu lura u nsibu d-dar hawnhekk – dik- dika tħossha! [emfasi]. Dika ħassejnieha, għax speċi meta morna Tower Road li- d-dar sibnieha fraħna tgħidx kemm, għax għidna waqgħat bomba Stella Maris mhux bogħod!, ġiex kantunieri minnha ta! Stella Maris! mi- id-dar tagħna. U dar aħna kienet għolja tagħna, speċi tara d-djar kollha baxxi u d-dar għolja ħafna għandi r-ritratti haw. U [...] meta speċi tgħid ara waqgħet fejn morna noqgħodu biex-biex nifrankaw it-taraġ u biex nifrankaw il-biża' speċi iktar nies aħjar milli kien hemm; għax kienu jiġu l-ġi ta' l-isqaq magħna, u jiġi wieħed maħmuġ [emfasi] u kien vera maħ- u jien il-mama' kienet sabiħa [ton ta' nostalgija] ala kien joqgħod hemm, kien joqgħod hemm aħna konna nersqu l'hawn u biex ma jiġiex ħdejna u dak jersaq l'hemm [tidħaq]. Hu [emfasi] u hu tana l-iscabies ta! dak ir-raġel. Kien-kienu- kelli oħti batuta, kella, kella, kella kuxtejha fejn tpoġġi bil-qegħda s-scabies, kelna nerg- naħslu ħwejjeġ u

nitla' bihom fuq il-bejt qatt ma bżajt nitla' nonxor [emfasi] u kont nisma l-ajruplani ta! ma ngħid la qegħdin il-bogħod, isa, isa lesta! Għax kont tismagħhom ġejjen BBBUUUM, BBBUUUM, BBUUUMM [tipprova timita' ħoss ta' ajruplan]. Il-ħoss tagħhom kien speċjali tal-Ġermaniżi. U mbagħad u meta konna noqgħodu fejn in-Nażżarenu għant iz-zijiet, hemmhekk kien hemm l-*Illustrious*, il-Gżira, u din l' *Illustrious* kienu l-Ġermaniżi d-d-dar ta' ziti kienet hawn u aħna konna noqgħ- [kliem mhux ċar] lx-xatt kien kollu d-x'jismhom? destroyers, u aħna konna fil-bieb ta' barra. L-ajruplan konna ngħidu madonna! Fta jmiss mal-bejt! Tant kienu jinżlu baxxi li kważi, kważi, kważi, kważi, kważi taralhom fejn jitħlu r-roti ta' l-ajruplan u meta kien- kull bomba li jitfgħu anke alavolja tiġi ġol-baħar il-kol, il-kolonna kienu jagħmlu hekk [turi kif] tad-dar, madonna! Ara kemm, anke huma tal-ħoss tagħhom x'ħin jgħaddi minn fuq il-bejt, hekk ara! Hekk kienu jgħaddu minn fuq il-bejt, hemmhekk [emfasi] konna nibżgħu hemmhekk konna nibżgħu [emfasi], kont nibża' ftiit jien. Għax u mbagħad meta konna naraw l-ajruplan ma kontx nibża', ara daqsxejn! Issa dik xi tkun hu?! Hekk ikollok kuraġġ hu!

M: Meta mortu Fta Lija, x'kontu ħadtu magħkom?

Mifsud Bonnici: Fwejjeġ biss! fwejjeġ, lozor, mħadded - għax jien dejjem nġorr l'imħadda tiegħi, ma ridtx imħadda ta' ħadd – ehh, ħadna, ħadna, ehh ma ħadniex la fided, la ħadna, ħallejna kollox id-dar u ħadna ehh fwej- biex nilbsu u borom, platti u hekk. Fta kollox tagħna, all-hu- huma l-ewwel jumejn tawna kollox ta! Għax daru bina tal-Giddy speċjali daru bina tal-Giddy!, għax tal-Giddy kienu jgħidulhom Fta Lija. Salvu [tiftakar b'ton ta' nostalgija] Kien jgħidli 'ejja Loulou, ejja mmorru ejja ser naqta' l-ħawh, trid tiġi? Ara m'hawnx ajruplani, ejja!' Kelli fourteen jien hu! U kont kien itini ħawh

x'niekol! U konna nkunu [...] Salvu, eh Mannani u Lucy. Kellhom oñthom nurse daw, tal-Giddy. U konna mmorru naqtaw il-ħawh fiż- għax kellhom ħajt mimli ħawh, mimli siġar tal-ħawh. Kellhom għax daqs kemm kien hemm frott [emfasi] iż-żmien tal-gwerra, qatt ma kellna daqshekk frott Malta! Dik l-unika ħaġa li kenna li kellhom x'jieklu n-nies, frott!, frott kien hawn ħafna. Imma mbagħad huma kienu jipprofettaw ruħhom!, għax kienu jiġu ħafna nies minn tas-Sliema biex jixtru. Pero' ma konniex narawhom aħna. Hekk nitilgħaw il-fuq mill-mill-irdum tara n-nies mexjien fl-għelieqi, fit-triq, biex jmorru jfiċċu l-bdiewa biex jbiegħulhom il-patata. Kienu jiġu bil-bil, haw mhux basktijiet, bagoll! li ssiefer bih hekk! Jiġu biex jixtr-jpoġġuhom fihom biex ħadd jaralhom x'għandhom hu! ma jmurx xi ħadd jagħmel għalihom u jeħduhomlom għax joħdilhom il-basktijiet, għax kien, kien, kien kulħadd kien bil-ġuħ tas-Sliema, ħafna, ħafna [emfasi] Il-Belt ma nafx imma tas-Sliema batew in-nies bil-ġuħ. Għax il-Belt ħafna min-nies- ħarġu mill-Belt, anke mill-Isla u dal-postijiet, mela!

M: X'kien il-proċess biex sibtu l-kenn Ħal Lija?

Mifsud Bonnici: Għaliex oñt il-papa' ta'-ta' uncle Walter Salamone, dawk kienu joqgħodu Ħal Lija. U dawk meta kienu joqgħodu Ħal Lija, kie-kienu joqgħodu wara l-knis- wara l-għassa tal-puluzija l-qadima, f'dik id-dar fejn hemm l-istatwa ta' San Pawl, kienet dar kbira ħafna, ħafna. Xahrejn jew xahrejn qabel, niżlu tas-Sliema għal kollox [emfasi] fejn in-Nażżarenu u dikjarat il-gwerra. Imma huma kienu jafu ħafna nies minn Ħal Lija għax kellhom il-Malta Weave, kienu jaħdmu l-Malta Weave fil-ġnien, kellhom factory żgħira ta' ta' de Trafford, u kienu jaħdmulhom hemm, u kellhom n- it-tfajliet mpjegati, se jaqbadni l-attakk! [tispjega

lila nnifisha] u [...] kienu jafu n-nies u kienu qalulna ‘ara aħna se nitilaw, tal-Giddy sabulna post’ ma’ ma’ ma’ waħda mill-aħwa, marru fid-dar tagħha, u ‘ntom ejjew, se jtukom id-da- il-kamra li għandhom fit-triq int u tiela’; hemm Ħal Lija hemm triq dejqa, dejqa, dejqa,dej- u mbagħad tiġi faċċata hekk, hemm ġiex tid-djar, waħda [...] kienet ta’ Saliba, kien teacher hu, u l-oħra kienet tal-Giddy, dar żgħira, kellhom ġiex t-ikmamar isfel – id-dar ta’ nhar ta’ Ħadd ngħidilha jien - u tawna il-kamra ta’ fuq lilna, tawna kamra fuq u konna ninżlu nsajru fil-fil-bitħa, hekk għax kellhom arkata hekk kenna nagħmlu l-kuċċinieri hemm hekk, u konna ninżlu hemm hekk. U mbagħad minn hemm tħallna r-razzett. Tħallna r-razzett u tawna l-kamra tan-nagħaġ u kulħadd innaddaf [emfasi] għax dil-kamra tan-nagħaġ kienet maħmuġa [emfasi]; tista taħseb kien hemm in-nagħaġ fiha; u n-nagħaġ mitulhom baqalhom tlieta biss m- kellhom fejn jagħmluhom, għamluhom f’xi post ieħor, u lilna tawna dik il-kamra. U hemm hekk ġabulna s-sodod, ġabulna s-sodod huma u aħna telgħina l-lożor tagħna u l-affarijiet tagħna; u konna kuntenti hemm ħafna ukoll. Ma, ma kelniex, we weren’t, ma konniex mdejġin [emfasi] speċi alavolja tlaqna mid-dar. Ta’ tfal li aħna ħabba li m- tas-Sliema kien il-ħin kollu l-air-raids, air-raids, niżlin u telgħin ix-xelter, konna kuntenti li hemm hekka, qas konna nibżgħu qisu [hi stess tistagħġeb bil-fatt]. U, u ġo-ġo xelter tal-ħamrija ta! skużi. Ħamrija haw, ħamrija haw u ħamrija haw, u aħna bil-bil-dak tal-gallinari tista’ timmaġina. Illum tgħid, mhux illum [emfasi] years ago kont ngħid imma kif qadna hemm hekk?! Kif ma bżajniex hemm hekk?! [emfasi] Għax kien periklu, li tidħol hemm!; il-ħamrija mhux kien, kienet titfinna l-bomba [nofs daħqa], imbagħad morna morna haw [...] wara ħafna żmien [...] Ħad-Dingli. Ħad-Dingli konna kuntenti ħafna. Jidher kemm konna kuntenti għax ara [ton nostalgiku turi]. Met- anke konna mmorru

ġurnata, kien jogħġobna ħafna hemm hekk, u nies laqawna eh [emfasi] il-bdiewa laqawna [emfasi] ħafna laqawna l-bdiewa. Pero' meta waqatilna d-dar *Tower Road*, jien kont mmur kuljum [emfasi] – issa ftakartha din – kont mmur kuljum noqgħod hemm ma' ta' ARP kienu hu dawk?; kont mmur kuljum ħa nara ħa jtuni l-affarijiet, il-pupa l-iżjed. Għax il-pupa kont met- ddoqq l-air-raid nitfa' l-pupa taħt is-sodda, kelli pram u pupa, u nitfaħ- taħt is-sod. Qatt ma sibna xejn [emfasi u ton għoli] Qatt ma tawn xejn [emfasi u ton għoli] Qatt, qatt, qatt! Qatt ma tawna nitfa! [emfasi] U l-papa' kien jinkwieta ruħu għax peress li d-dar ma kienetx tagħna weħedna u kien hemm l-affarijiet tan-nies, kien jinkwieta l-papa' [emfasi] ħafna kien jinkwieta. Għax kien kien kien ehhe jgħid 'kif jista' jkun?!' għax kien hemm affarijiet fuq, għax fuq qatt ma tlajna aħna [emfasi]. Fuq qatt ma wżajniha dar hemm hekk *Tower Road*, isfel konna noqgħodu; ħadna ġiex t-ikmamar u l-kćina u konna noqgħodu hemm hekk, u l-intrata, il-bqija il-kmamar l-oħra qas-użaj qas użajn- għax kienet dar, kienet dar kbira sabiħa ħafna, bil-kolonna [ton tistagħġeb] kien hemm parapett bil-kolonna u ma' ġenbna kien hemm il-Bank hekk, bil-kolonna l-istess. U mbagħad x'jismu hu! kont mmur u ngħidilhom 'ma sibtu' xejn?', 'Lee xejn ma haw'. 'Dik il-gwardarobba ħadra dik il-gwardarobba ki-kif tfarrket u ma sibtu xejn ġo fiha?!' 'Lee xejn naħseb li vojta kienet ta! vojta'. Qatt ma tawna [...] kuććarina jew marfa [emfasi] jew-jew ćarruta' – qatt! Darba tawni bićća ćarruta' hekk, xi-xi- bićća drapp ta' l-ilbiesi tagħna mqatta' kollha għax naturalment bil-blast jew bix-xita, ma nafx! Imma qatt, qatt ma tawna xejn [emfasi] Kollox tliġna hemmhekk. Kollox, kollox, kul ma ħadna. Qas mħadda [emfasi] Possibli? [emfasi] laqas laqas ssib mħadda?! meta, meta l-affarijiet saru hekk u l-fonda [kelma mhux ćara] saret hekk bil-bil-ġebel minn hawn bil-ġebel minn hemm [ton baxx u serju]

Għax kien hemm ġebel ta! kbir [tistagħġeb] Il-ġebel kien, haw, x'jgħidulha ċangun? tal-ġebel, ċnagen! [bħal sabet il-kelma] Kienu kbar iċ-ċnagen! U kol- u l-kolonna ta' l-intrata' u l-kolonna ta' barra – xejn ma tara xejn – kollox. Qiesek qbadt ehħh barmil ġebel u tfajtu' hekk fl-art u kollox fuq xulxin. U tara biċċa mkissra, biċċa mkissra, tieqa mkissra. Il-il-is-sodod ma jidhrux. Imbagħad meta kixfu huma bdew jneħħu l-ġebel, jneħħu l-ġebel, bdew jidhru s-sodod mgħawgien [ton serju] il-ħadid, is-saqaj, is-saqaj tal-mobli miksurin , dak li tara, l-bqija qatt ma tawna xejn [emfasi] dawn tal-ARP, qatt! [...] xejn! Mmm.

M: Il-kundizzjonijiet li sibtu Fhal Lija, kienu biżżejjed?

Mifsud Bonnici: Eħe, għax kien hemm bath- kien kenna toilets, kenna l-kumdata' Pero' t-toilet kien ma' tagħhom eh, mhux voldiri għalina weħedna. U, u huma fir-razzett kellhom toilet alla kien komdu it-toilet, mhux tgħid per eżempju bħal ma' konna Fhad-Dingli. Għax Fhad-Dingli m'hemmx, m'hemmx, ma kienx hemm haw [...] kif tgħidha l-kelma? [...] s-sanitary use biex nużawh. [jinstema kelb fil-bogħod] Imma [...] għamilna l-meżzi li konna komdi [...] Fhad-Dingli, u [...] Fhal Lija, Fhal Lija konna iżjed komdi speċi għax anke stajna noħorġu ftit fit-triq malajr iżjed, mhux bħal dak timxi biex tmur il-quddies. Ġieli morna l-quddies Fhad-Dingli, konna mmorru l-quddies ta' tad-disgħa jew tas-sebgħ-sebgħ, ta' t-tmienja kienet tkun quddiesa, ġieli morna, pero' skont li nisimgħu [...] l-ajruplani ehħ. Konna nerġaw lura. Darba ġarejna lura tlett darbiet. Għax kien ikollna ngħaddu, għax u mbagħad hemm hekk kien hemm ehħ, irdum ieħor, wieħed tal- minn għalija tal-Mejjiesa tagħna jew tal-tal-Mučċu wkoll, għax tal-Mučċu kienu jgħidulhom lill-dawl-aħwa li konna nafu l-Ġanni, dak tal-Mučċu jgħidulu, allura dak kienu jgħidulu l-irdum tal-Mučċu, u hemm u hemm min

kien jgħidlu l-irdum tal-Mejjiesa. U mbagħad kien hemm l-irdum tal-tal- tat-Turretta; hemmhakk ukoll kien hemm ir-refugjati u daħlu fil-caves kienu jgħixu. Kien hemm ta' Engerer, ta' Engerer. Ta' Engerer kważi kollha spiċċaw mhux żgur fadal, it-tfal tat-tfal li fadal ta' Engerer, imma xjuħ kollha marru. U, u t-Turretta kien hemm xi erba' familija. Imma naħa tagħna kien hemm ta' Bugeja Meli; twiel- Maurice Bugeja Meli hekk għadu ħaj, hemm twieled – l-irdum. Hemm wiolditu ommu, fil-kamra li kien hemm tal-ġebel. Għax hemm hekk kien hemm kollox b'blat ġol-blat, u mbagħad kellhom kamra ħierġa l'barra mill-blat hekk tal-ġebel; kien fiha daqshekk ta! saqaf għoli [tistagħġeb] kienet daqshekk u meta telaq kulħadd krejnijha aħna. Krejnijha aħna u mbagħad ġew ħaduhomna, biex ħadha Pugliesevich għall-porvli is- issa u xi-xi tl- erbgħin sena ilu, ħamsin sena ilu. Laqas ħamsin, xi xi forty għax ara għanna forty two years ġo di dar aħna u konna għadna tas-Sliema meta ġie Ċikku ħadilna [diżapuntata]. Għax Ċikku qal- ġie jgħid il-papa' qallu 'Ehh tieni ċ-ċavetta' qallu 'għaliex hemm hekk se joħ- il-Gvern taha lill-Pugliesevich biex jagħmel il-il-porv- haw [...] l-isplużjonijiet li jużaw għall-festi u għal-għall- għall-bombi li jagħmlu u mela' l-għerien kollha – hekk u veru! [emfasi] Pero' għalqu kullimkien bil-ħadid, bil-grad tal-ħadid, ma tistax tinżel issa ta! hekk tmur. Magħluq. Issib id-daħla, hekk, tinżel s'hawn u mbagħad minn hemm l'hemm magħluq. Biex issib il-kmamar, qas il-ħarruba ma tara. Xejn ma tara! Għax ikun fadal biċċa oħra – hemm ir-ritratt x'imkien – fadal biċċa oħra biex tinżel u mbagħad tibda tara l-għerien. Tara l-ħarruba u mbagħad ftit iżjed l-isfel tara tara ta' mis- ta' Meli; għax kien hemm ta' Meli, ommu, kellha s-seftura magħha, ġiebitha magħha, u mbagħad aħna u mbagħad kien hemm biċċa xejn, blat, u mbagħad terġa ssib il ta'- lil ta' [...] Attard Montalto, ta' l-avukat, kienu hemm hekk dawk. U kienu kellhom kamra

kbira tal-blat, kienet daqs din [tistagħġeb] il-kamra tagħhom. U kienu erba' boys, s-seftura u miss- għax ommhom kienet mejta. Umbagħad kien hemm ta' Engerer, umbagħad kien hemm ta' Apap, umbagħad kien hemm ta' Arpa ta' tal-ħanut tal-Belt; dawk it-tnejn mietu hi u hu. Ooohh [karba] u aħna morna l'fuq. Umbagħad ma- u mbagħad kien hemm trejqa żgħira hekk, hekk titla' minn naħha l-oħra. Kien hemm ġiex naħhiet biex tinżel għall-irdum. Waħda żgabraża għax hekk [turi kif], imma l-oħra dejqa, alla tid tgħaddi, tid- tibza' tgħaddi, imma [...] konna kuntenti ħafna.

M: Qatt kellkom xi problemi man-nies ta' Ħal Lija u ta' Ħad-Dingli?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ma ta' Ħal Lija qatt! [enfasi]. Ma ta' Ħad-Dingli qatt! [enfasi]. Il-papa' mbagħad taħn attakk ta' l-ernja, hemmhekk Ħad-Dingli [...] u morna niġru ngħidu t-tabib – u t-tabib qas karozza ma kellu! bil-mixi ġie biex jarah, jew kera-kera jew xi ħadd waslu b'xi kerettun. Umbagħad kien se jieħu l-papa' biex joperah u aħna bdejna nibku u l-mama' tibki, kulħadd jibki. Qallu 'ara, erġa lura' it-tabib, qallu 'għamel hekk u għamel hekk, hemm il-faxex' qallu 'nfaxxa ruħek' qallu 'u tagħmilhiex'. U baqa' sakemm miet, voldiri kellu fifty six dak iż-żmien? – minn dak iż-żmien sa kemm kellu seventy four qatt ma neħiha miskien – baqa' biha l-ernja [...] il-papa' [jinstema' kelb fil-bogħod]. Kien jħobb imur il-ka ċċa [ton nostalgiku]. Gianni kien jgħidlu 'hemm isfel, f' l-għalqa tiegħi mhux f' ta' Grezz u ta' Pawla u ta' ta' Marie, tiegħi [enfasi]' qallu 'taħt it-tielet sigra, hemm summiena, mur għaliha!' U kien jinżel dak l-għelieqi kollha l-papa' u jġiebha, jaħasra [tidhaq bin-nostalgija].

M: Kien hemm familji li baqaw joqgħodu f' Ħal Lija u Ħad-Dingli wara li spicċat il-gwer- ?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ħal Lija, kien hemm nies li baqaw Ħal Lija u,u, xtraw id-djar Ħal Lija, ftit, imma Ħad-Dingli kulħadd telaq mill-għerien, u ħadd [emfasi] ma tantx kienu jiġu picnics b'ħal- aħna bqajna mmorru l-picnics, bqajna mmorru ġurnata, konna nieħdu l- affarijiet u konna nagħmlu picnic hemm fix-xitwa. Fix-xitwa konna nagħzlu xi ġurnata sabiħa, ngħidu mela, niftehmu ma' ħbieb, jew nkella mmorru Maurice, jien, oħti u,u, ħabiba tagħha, u mmorru ġurnata. Imma n-nies li kienu joqogħdu hemm qatt ma reġaw lura, jerġaw immorru hemm hekk qatt [emfasi], qatt ma ntqajna ma' ta' Engerer, ma' ta' Ap- – ta' Apap ma kellhomx tfal – ta' Engerer kellhom it-tfal u ta' Apap kellhom it-tfal. Eileen Engerer kellha, kienet iż-żgħira, għax imbagħad kienu Edwin – dak kollha kien hemm. Imma mbagħad ma qatt, qatt, qatt ma ġew Ħad-Dingli. U aħna bqajna mmorru, u mbagħad krejna l-kamra aħna, met- telquha l-kamra, u kien hemm familja mill-Gżira, mietet Mary Magion, ilha li mietet għax dik ukoll kienet hem- ir-raġel tagħha kien hemm. Le dak miet, qabila miet, mela! u-u x'jismu aw [...] il-bqija ma kien hemm ħadd iktar. Mangion, Montalto, Apap, Engerer, Engerer ġiex familji, aħna [...] u l-mama' ta'-ta' [...] Bugeja Meli. Voldiri konna disgħa familji hemm hekk, disgħa familji [...] għax kien hemm tal-Gżira, fil-kamra, u kellhom l-għar. Kellhom kamra barra, maħruġa minn mal-ħitan, minn mal-blat meħruġa, u kamra ġol-għar, u mbagħad l-oħrajn kollha ġo l-għerien, kollha ġo l-għerien, kulħadd ħaffer!. Għax hemm hekk ma kienx hemm, kie- andujkun konna nħallsu la naf ġux liri fis-sena, la naf nofs lira; huma, dawn ta' l-għalqa, kienu għamluh tagħhom hemm. Allura ħadet biċċa Gianni, biċċa Marie, biċċa Karmni [jinstema' taħbit fuq wiċċ iebes]. Kollha ħadu [...] parti, parti mill-ħajt u għaml- u noħdu nofs

lira fis-sena. Mingħalija nofs lira, il-kera [emfasi] kienet, imma ma niftakarx sewwa sewwa. Carmen mietet għax kienet tgħidilna kieku – dik kienet tiftakar! [tistagħgeb biha], kellha memorja spjetata [emfasi] Carmen.

M: Ħassejtu is-sens ta' komunita' avolja ma kontux f'darkhom?

Mifsud Bonnici: Eq- ħassejna naqra hu! ħeq-ħeq-ħeqq, kont tħoss li m'intix qiegħda fid-dar fil-kumditat' li kellek int speċjalment [emfasi] il-biċċa xogħol tat-toilet. Dik, dik li [emfasi] l-iktar ħaġa, li tagħtik fastidju, meta ma tkun barra mid-dar – l-iktar ħaġa li ddejjeq[emfasi] Għax, it's a hassle hu! [kelma mhux ċara] Jisma' ta! imma fejn, fejn tgħajjat [titkellem minn taħt l-ilsien] l-bqija le!

M: Wara li r-ritornajt tas-Sliema ddeċidejtu li tmorru Ħad-Dingli, għaliex?

Mifsud Bonnici: Imma mhux norqdu hemm! ma kellna xejn hemm!; mejda kellna - difatti hemm il-papa' bilqiegħda fuqha dik il-mejda, mejda, u xi siġġu. Imma mbagħad ġol-kamra u magħluqin hu! ter-terra' kollox. U l-kċ-kċina baqqet hemm, l-injam qatt ma nkiser; dam-dam hemm, il-kċina damet hemm, u [...] u konna ninżlu nimxu u ninżlu fl-għelieqi, għax kienu huma, għax humu kienu jiġu daw, Marie, Karmni, Marie, Grezz u Salvina, - tlett aħwa kienu xebbiet, u kien ma joqgħodux hemm, ma joqgħodux Ħad- fl-għerien, fir-raħal. Kienu jiġu meta jmisshom- di jmissa l-ilma dil-ġimgħa, l-oħra jmissa l-ilma darb' oħra. Kienu jiġu jsaqqu, għax kellhom frott u bambinella [tistagħgeb] ġmiel ta' frott, u ġmiel ta' ħawh, u għambaqar, kull għambaqra settembrina daqshekk [bħal turi]. U ħaw- u tuffieħ, u ġmiel ta' tuffieħ. Kienu jiġu jsaqqu u min immissu. Kien min kien immissu

kien jiġi jsaqqi. U darba kien wasal l-Easter, u l-mama' kienu mdorija jieklu l-ħaruf lżmir, u qaltilha l-Pawla, qaltilha, 'jien dalwaqt ikolli ħaruf għax in-nagħġa dalwaqt se tixtri – għax kienu jgħidu 'se tixtri' [bħal titbissem], bħal li kieku sejra tixtri minn ġol-ħanut, xi bott ħalib – u qaltilha 'jien nżom-nżomullek għalik'. Qaltilha l-mama' 'mbagħad min se joqtlu?'. Qaltilha ngibulek lest'. U din ġabiltinna dal-ħaruf, għorietunna ħaj, u l-għada ġabitulna mqaxxar u lest, u l-mama' qaltilha 'fejn hu l-fwied?' 'Le, le, dak ma ntihulekx' qaltilha, il-ħaruf biss. U dal-ħaruf ma qaltilhiex kemm hu, 'u le mbagħad naraw' bdiet tagħmilha, 'mbagħad naraw' għax lilhom konna nħallsu l-kera aħna, lil di, Pawla, u hu kien jismu Pietru għandu jkun, nsejt x'kien jismu. U qaltilha, il-mama' tgħidilha, 'Pawla ħa nħallsek ta' dak il-ħaruf, għax issa ara kemm ilek, ilu, eqq-eqq għ-għalaqna tlett ġimgħat issa li kilnieh'. Din tgħidilha 'm'hemmx għaġla, m'hemmx għaġla'. [jinstema kelb fil-bogħod]. Umbagħad kienet qaltilha, la naf three pounds tal-ħaruf, u l-mama' baqqgħet hekk [tidħaq u turi kif] u mingħajr ir-ras, għax ir-ras ma ridnihiex aħna, u ehh la naf three pounds, la naf erbgħa liri. U l-mama' qaltilha 'EEHHH!!' [vuċi għolja], hekk werżqet ommi Alla jaħfrilha, qaltilha 'erbgħa liri ħaruf, ħaruf!'. U daqshekk kienet ħadtilna għall-ħaruf. Pero', pero' konna nħobbuhom meta konna żgħar, imma mbagħad qatt ma sajjarthu jiena.

M: Kif sibtu fejn toqgħodu fl-irdumijiet?

Mifsud Bonnici: S-sorry?

M: Kif, sibtu, fejn toqgħodu, fl-irdumijiet?

Mifsud Bonnici: Il- Ħad-Dingli? Sa- lestejna l-kmamra eh, lestejna l-kamra u tlajna niġru, għax għamluhilna malajr, f'tlett ġimgħat

ħaffruha jew ġimgħatejn, aqas ankukun ħaffruha malajr. Damu, [...] Karabus u t-tifel u ġab lavrant miegħu. U bil-baqun ta! mhux bil-bil-furnelli, għax ma setgħux jużaw furnelli hemm ġew ħeq! Kienu jużaw [...] eh ħa għax x'jgħidulu, bħall-tornavit hekk, nsejt x'għidulu, iħaffru ftit jżommuh hekk u jdañ- u mbagħad jaqtaw hekk, jagħmlu oħra, jagħmlu oħra, jagħmlu oħra, u tinqala' biċċa kbira. Għax il-bqijja, biċċiet, biċċiet bil-baqun, kollox bil-baqun. U dan kien qisu martel [...] qisu martel, kbir oħxon hekk, jkollu quddien qisu tornavit alla kien jidħol malajr ġol-blat. U ma sabux blat qawwi [enfasi] allura malajr, malajr, għaj-għajnhom ħafna il-blat. [jinstema bħal xi ħadd se jitkellem]

M: Kemm domtu tużawh dal-għar Loulou?

Mifsud Bonnici: Domna mmorru, mhux norqdu hemm [enfasi] Qatt! għax ma kellna xejn, ħlief mejda u banketta u bdew jiterrew għax magħluqin ġol-blat, ma konniex mmorru spiss. Imma konna mmorru qisu fix-xitwa, fix-xitwa konna mmorru nhar ta' Ħadd, xi festa mmorru hemm hekk. Perezempju ma rridux noqgħodu għall-festa, ta'-ta'ta'- di-di-di nibgħu d-dar, fl-Easter; wara li jgħaddi l-Easter konna mmorru, nieħdu l-baj- għax il-mama' fl-Easter kienet tiżbogħlna l-bajd aħmar. U konna nieħdu l-bajd, mmorru nagħmlu nagħmlu s-sandwiches, u nagħmlu il- il- x'jismu l-krema bl-isponge fiha, u nieħdu sponge magħna, u konna mmorru ma xi ħbieb. U konna nagħmlu ġurnata hemm hekk, konna nieħdu gost [tinstema' l-gost fil-vuċi] ħafna. U anke Maurice, hemm hekk kien jiġi, għax, konna għadna nibdew noħorġu flimkien. U kelli r- kien ħadli r-ritratt darba u l-papa' – il-papa' wkoll kien jiġi magħna ħafna drabi – bil-buses dejjem, għax konna nieħdu bus minn tas-Sliema għall-Belt, mill-Belt għar-Rabat, mir-Rabat għall Ħad-Dingli, tlett tlett buses konna (jinstema vuċi ta' raġel jzied 'bil-mixi')

[jinstema xi ħadd minn taħt l-ilsien jgħid biex ikompli] U meta konna morra hemm hekk, mi-fiz-żmie- meta darba minhom morna fiż-żmien San Ġwann kien bin il-bajtar, u konna klikka, għax li kont mmur ħafna ma' May Hughes, May Hughes u Robin Hughes. Robin għadu ħaj, May, May mietet, konna l-iskola flimkien u konna ħbieb ħafna u kienet tħobb tiġi Ғad-Dingli. U konna morna u kien żmien il-bajtar u dan Ġianni qalilna 'inżlu għall-bajtar, għax hemm il-bajtar fis-sigra, morru ħudu l-bajtar'. U aħna nżilna u u nżilna għall-bajtar, u jiena kilt il-bajtar, u kilt xi waħda, u ma tantx stajna nieklu għax ħabba x-xemx qalilna biex ma nieklux jekk tkun taħraq il-bajtra. U jien ma kienetx taħraq ħafna, kienet ftit fietla il-bajtra, u kiltha u mbagħad meta ġejjien lura bil-buses fil-għaxija, dil-bajtra għamlitli d-deni, irreġetajt [tidħaq] fejn il-buses tal-tal-Belt, fejn fejn tħallas għall-buses?, u kif nżilt ix-Xatt inż- rreġetajt ix-Xatt – kien hemm il-Ferry Cafe' dak iż-żmien – dan mhux fil-gwerra eh! wara l-gwerra, eh u reġajt ix-Xatt ergajt, għax il-bajtar għamilli deni – qatil- qatlitni [emfasi] – bajtra kienet fie-mhu-mhux taħraq imma kienet sħuna hekk fietla. Għax fix xemx il-bajtar ma tistax tiekol, għax jagħmillek ħafna deni, u għamilli d-deni. Umbagħad domt ma niekol bajtar! [ton ta' tbissima] U meta mort Ғad-Dingli, ergajna morna xi ġurnata, morna naraw - għax konna dejjem mmorru narawhom il-Ġianni – u kien jgħidilna 'morru morru morru u jekk isibu frott ħudu għax aħna m'għadniex nduru l-għelieqi tagħna, spicċa! lanqas immorru nsaqqu iżjed' qalilna, 'jekk ssibu frott taħt fejn, taħt fejn il-ħajt tagħkom fejn kontu toqgħodu bilqegħda', qalilna 'aqtawh u kulu', u [...] għidtlu 'Ġian x'kemm għamilli deni il-bajtar!' qalli, 'jien għidtilkom ma tiekluhx sħun bilfors kilt xi waħda taħraq [emfasi]' qalli, u kien għamilli d-deni, ħafna. Um-Umbagħad konna morna [...] niftakar u il-papa' xarrab xi kalzetta u jiena speċi neħħa l-kalzetti u kenna dan il-wire

fejn nonxru, u jien kont sirt naf il-Maurice dak iż-żmien, u nxar- nxart il-kalzetta, u jien qagħad hekk mall-ħajt u dak ħadli r-ritratt [...] u kiteb, wara r-ritratt kiteb poezija,[jinstema ħoss ta' taħzież] poezija; Loulou kalzetta, warajha għandha kalzetta – għax il-kalzetta ġiet tidher fir-ritratt, u kerha tidher – u mbagħad għamel, Sono belli i occhi ver- neri, sono belli i occhi blu, ma le gambe, ma le gambe a me piacono di piu' [tidħaq] fir-ritratt qegħda. Aj [bħal tiftakar b'nostalgija].

M: Loulou, inti tiftakar meta bdew jattakkaw l-Ġermaniżi?

Mifsud Bonnici: li dażgur li niftakar [emfasi]! Missni le! Magħharqin! Kemm kienu koroh! [tidħaq] u jagħmlu ħoss BRBRBRB [tipprova timmita' l-ħoss] hekk kien il-ħoss taggħhom, qisu, qisu qiegħed an-an echo, hekk coming. Eħe niftakar żgur. Niftakar u mbagħad eh ma nafx meta, hux qabel il-Gaiety jew wara l-Gaiety, ma nafx meta kienet, għax waqgħat pjazza Lunzjata bomba, waqgħat Strada Santa Rita mietu ħafna nies – Santa Rita mietu n-nies – waqa' umbagħad waqa' waqa' il-Gaiety. Issa which liema kien l-ewwel ma nafx, ma nistax niftakar, hekk hux il-pjazza Lunzjata l-ewwel u Santa Rita t-tieni u l-Gaiety l-aħħar. Ma nistax niftakar. Imma naħseb li l-Gaiety l-aħħar, għax aħna ma konniex hemm meta waqgħat ta' Santa Rita mingħalija, ma konniex fid-dar. Għax aħna d-dar tagħna kienet hawn [donna qed turi b'ideja] u mbagħad hawn kien hawn Strada Lunzjata u hawn kien hawn Strada Santa Rita voldiri aħna kenna di triq fejn hemm il-baronessa Trapani Galea – hemm hekk hemm il-baronessa toqgħod Trapani Galea – għandhom villa sabiħa.

M: L-ewwel k-kont qed titkellem fuq ix-xelters; kif kont tgħixu hemm isfel?

Mifsud Bonnici: Konna noqgħodu hemm isfel ngħidu r-rużarju; kien hemm waħda tgħid ir-rużarju u meta kienet tgħid l-latanija kulħadd jibda jidħaq għax kienet tgħid ‘vingon pontes, vingon klemens’ kienet tgħi- kienet tgħawġu ħafna – u kienet Dolly, kien jisimha Dolly. Dolly kienet tbiegħ is-sigaretti x-Xatt; kienet miżżewġa lil dak tas-sigaretti joqgħod ix-Xatt. U kienet dejjem tgħi- kif nid- ninżlu whoop! rużarju! kulħadd jgħid rużarju, rużarju, nitolbu, u titlob il- lill-Santa Rita, u kulħadd joqgħod kwiet jgħid rużarju – hekk konna nadduh fix-xelter, ngħidu r-rużarju mbagħad konna npaċpċu between u hekk, imma l-iżjed konna nitolbu, ħafna, ħafna [emfasi] U [...] konna nitolbu anke għall-baħrin li jaħdmu fin-Navy għax qegħdin fi-fil-periklu fil- f-f-f-fregati. U nitolbu għal għal kulħadd li jkun fuq l-ajruplan. Pero’ qatt ma naf li tlabna għall-Ġermaniżi [emfasi] Qatt ma għadna nitolbu għall-Ġermaniżi, m’għandix ideja, m’għandix ideja li aħna [emdfasi] kienet tgħidilna ħa ngħidu Ave Maria li għal daw li qegħdin jiġu jfarkuna. Għandu jkun darba [emfasi] eħe, għax qalet ħa nitolbu għalihom ħalli il-Bambin jilluminhom u ma jiġux iżjed l’hawn – dik li niftakar kienet il-kelma li li li nqalet fix-xelter – il-bqija ma nafx!

M: Kulħ-kulħadd kien jinżel fix-xelter?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ftit kienu jibqaw id-dar. Ġużeppi kien jibqa’ ta’ ħdejna, Sciortino, il-papa’ kien jdum ma jinżel [ton ta’ ċanfira], eh jiena, pero’ Dorothy kienet tibza’ ħafna [emfasi] ħafna, ħafna. Carmen kienet tibza’ wkoll. Di ara Dorothy, din kienet tibza’ ħafna din. U dik darba waqgħat Ħad-Dingli – għax in-nanna tagħna minn lżmir, aħna fil-gwerra – Maurice ma jridtx jiblahu – fil-gwerra aħna rċevejna landa [emfasi] olive oil minn għant in-nanna u waslet!. Kif u kome ma niftakarx kif waslet għax il-papa’ qal kif rajna l-l-posta

ġabulna l-posta, għax il-posta allura, jimpustawna Ħad-Dingli u dawn tal-farmers iġibulna l-posta, b'hekk konna nsibuha l-posta. Huma kienu jġibuhomna l-ittri, min kien jikteb għax ma tantx kien-kienu jiktbu. U [...] marru jġibuha minn Ħad-Dingli u marret Mannani dik li mmorru bin-nagħaġ magħha, huma u ġejjien ajruplan ji- jdur fuqhom jimmaxenginjom u huma jistaħbew taħt il-kerettun, għax kie-kienu d-dubbaw aw kienu xi ħadd bil-kerettun wassalhom sa' fuq l-irdum, u meta waslu minn hawn [tinstema' turi b'idha] għall-dak il-bieb biex jinżlu n-niżla b' dil-landa oil, ġiex, hi kemm kellha? kellha eehhhhhh, jien kelli fifteen u mbagħad hemm hekk, u u Dor- Carmen kellha twelve jiġ- jerfaw dil-landa ol- żejt, l-oħra kienet ikbar minnha, kellha nineteen, u waqqgħat, waqqgħat, ġietha ħofra f'koppitha, u kellha ġebbla daqs daqs il-boċċi li jilgħabu fit-triq il-boys. U tikbi, tikbi, tikbi ma rieditx tneħija u nfaxxatha mb- u l-mama' tgħidilha il-mama' 'ħa ħa nagħmillek hek' u mbagħad kien hemm din, daw tle-tlett nisa, tlett tre grazie li kienu jiġu jsaqqu, u qaltilha 'sinjura ħa nġieblek, ħa nġieblek ħaxixa, għalijilha' qaltilha 'għalijilha il-ħaxixa' qaltilha 'u l-ħaxix kien tgħallijilha' qaltilha, 'safija, l-ilma żommu ġo flixkun, aħsillha sieqha biha kuljum u għamilla l-ħaxixa fuq it-toqba fejn għandha', għax kienu se jaqtawlha sieqha! ifjammatilha". Mela kienet waqqgħat, waqqgħat, waqqgħat fuq-fuq preċiż qabel ma bdiet nieżla n-niżla, għax dik in-niżla kienet kerha eh!. Għax difatti huma bdew jippruvaw jaraw dan tal-kerettun għandux xi ħaġa biex jżommuha fuq izkuk tal-tal-dak u jmexxuha, fuq zkuk [tidħaq] Mela [bħal tiftakar] Imma l-bqija mbagħad, ma nafx [minn taħt l-ilsien], jaħasra [ton mnikket u nostalgiku].

M:

X'tip ta' xelter, kontu tużaw wieħed publiku jew kellkom wieħed privat tal-familja?

Mifsud Bonnici: Le, Le publiku [emfasi] publiku bil-qegħda fuq b-, għax imbagħad għamilna għamilna ġebel, ġebel u u injam – bankijiet fix-xelter. Min-min ġab bank, minn ġie kien jiż-aħna konna ninzlu b'ġux sigġijiet jingħalqu! sigġiejiet jingħalqu kienu żgħar hekk! – tiftakarhom dak is-sigġijiet jingħalqu? [ton ħelu] U konna niddubaw bil-qegħda hekk. U ġieli ġieli ma ssi- ma kenniex fejn noqgħodu bil-qegħda, allura noqgħodu waħda toqgħod u waħda tqum, u waħda tqum tpoġġi, nċedu lil xulxin. Imma [...] u in-nies min ġab deck chair, min ġab x'jismu, għax id-deck chairs imbagħad kienu jieħdu ħafna post; imma mbagħad kien hemm ħafna nies għamlu l-kmamar, ħaffru l-kmamar fix-xelters. Ħaffru l-kmamar u kienu jinzlu fil-kmamar tagħhom hu! anke għamlulhom bieb biex għam- jissakkru l-kmamar tagħhom eqq! Dik hija li x'jismu [...] u ftakart xi ħaġa u f'daqqa waħda nsejtha [...] [...] U k-kienu jiġu jbiegħawlha ta! tal-tal-bajt, imbagħad ma ġewx, kienet tiġina l-ħassielha aħna, M-Marie li kienet taħsilha l-ħwejjeġ kienet dej- mbagħad meta ġew il-Ġermaniżi ma ġietx Imma l-bqija kienet tiġi fil-bidu tal-gwerra. [kelma mhux ċara minn taħt l-ilsien].

M: Kif kontu tgħadduh il-ħin fix-xelters?

Mifsud Bonnici: Nitolbu biss. Nitolbu u ġieli, ġieli ehh konna nieħdu knitting, naħ-naħdmu n-knitting. Jien ma kontx ninnittja, għax ma konts nħobb ninnittja'. U ħwejjeġ ma kenniex konniex inniżlu magħna, konna nniżlu biss jersey jo xalla [emfasi], biex jekk nħossu l-bard, għax kien ikollna bard ta! Konna nħossu l-bard fix-xelter.

M: Kontu tagħmlu ġranet jew ljieli sħaħ hemm isfel?

Mifsud Bonnici: Le ġranet le, imma imma pereżempju għamilna sagħtejn u mbagħad nitilaw u wara nofs siegħa terġa air-raid ieħor

[ton ta' paċenzja] n-nerġgħu ninżlu u wara wara pereżempju xi siegħa erġa' air-raid ieħor – għax għamlu ħabta' kienu wara-wara spiss ji- [tlaqlaq] spiss jagħmlu l-air-raids hu! kienu wieħed wara ieħor, meta ġew il-Ġermaniżi speċjalment [emfasi]. Kienu kienu kattivi hu! Eqq [...] u aħna kellna ziju miżewweġ Germaniża jekk jogħġbok! kienet tħobbna! u marret Berlin [...] l-ewwel ġimgħa [...], ġimgħa qabel ma bdiet il-gwerra – ma sabuha qatt! għax Berlin they bombarded Berlin ħafna. Ma-ma setgħax isibha qatt, dam ifittxha ta! Għax hu jiġi kuġin t'ommi – uncle Johnny [ton baxx u nostalgiku].

M: Avolja kontu taħt l-art, kien hemm regolamenti ta' x'seta' jew ma setgħax issir?

Mifsud Bonnici: [...] Li ma nagħmlux pipi' hemm hekk, hemm ġew! [tidħaq] għax it-tfal żgħar hu! eqq! dik [emfasi] dika nafa żgur [emfasi] dika żgur kon- rridna noqgħodu attenti ara ma xi ħadd jagħmel pipi' hawn ġew għax nkella jiba jintenn u ma nkunux nistaw nidħlu iżjed. U All'jbierak ma kellniex riħa tintenn ta! in-nies kienu jkunu maħmuġin, in-nies kienu jkunu maħmuġin! Dika, dika xi ħaġa li kienet li [tieħu nifs minn bejn snienha] ittini fastidju. U jiena għandi għandi xi ħaġa, għax , il-bieraħ hekk għedtlu l-Bambin – ġħedtlu Gesu' x'kastig tajtni? li tant inxomm! [emfasi u bħal issabbat fuq wiċċ iebes] [jinstema' daħq b'simpatija]

M: Kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u l-ilma?

Mifsud Bonnici: Le! Fix-xelter? [tistagħgeb bil-mistoqsija] Leee, inniżlu flixxun. X' konna nniżlu xi flixxun ilma u aqa- ma tantx ta! Ma tantx. Konna noqgħodu bil-għatx, konna, konna, konna nbatu l-għatx għax, mhux dejjem niżilna flixxun. Imma nies kienu jiġu bil-baskett bil-ħobż, bil-ħobż, b' xi-xi zalzetta fix-

xelter, ġobon, ġobon, imma ftit, ftit, ftit [emfasi] għax naħseb jiena ma kienux jippreparaw jekk jagħmel air-raid x'se nieħdu magħna. Aħna forsi xi cracker, ġieli konna qed nieklu xi cracker u nibqaw niżlien biha! L-bqija ma-ma niżilniex ikel. U mn'Alla għax min jaf kemm kien ikun hemm ġrieden [emfasi] kieku. Min jaf kif konna niġġenu!

M: Taf b'xi każijiet ta' min tweled jew welled ġox-xelter?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ġo xelter le [emfasi] Imma Ħad-Dingli [...] Mrs Meli [...] Bugeja Meli, Bugeja Meli ta' l-injam [emfasi], dika welldet il-Maurice u semmithu Maurice it-tifel. U min għalija għadu ħaj! Dika, dika, min għalija welldet – mhux min għalija! Welldet hemm [emfasi] Pero' mhux ġo l-għar, għax kien hemm kamra tal-ġebel u lestewlha dik il-kamra. Kien hemm kamra daqs din hekk tal-ġebel, u mill-għar ħaduha hemm hekk jumejn qabel, għax, k- u welldet hemm, dik [emfasi] Hemm tweled Maurice Meli – Maurice Bugeja Meli ta' l-injam, għ- min għalija għadu ħaj jien. Ma nafx min qalli 'iva għadu ħaj!' Għax ma nafx lil min staqsejt ilu ħafna, u isma' he is in his-in his seventies issa hu! hekk tweled fil-gwerra. [tisgħol] U kien hemm ta' Montalto, u ta' Montalto hemm xi ħadd minnhom għadu ħaj ta! – ta' l-avukat Montaldo. Qum u għoqod għax għajjet bil-qegħda [tidħaq].

M: Għat-toilets x'kien isir?

Mifsud Bonnici: Kenna slop pails bl-għatu, puliti, kenna tnejn, u konna nużaw lilhom. Bil-lejl speċjalment hekk wieħed jq- użah, użah, ngħattuh, kell- għax kienu bl-għatu. J'alla m'għandiex xi għatu tat-toilet x'imkien ta'-ta'-ta' slop pail. Għax dak iz-żmien kie-kie-kienu jkun bis- bill-għatu is-slop pails. U, u mbagħad il-papa' miskien dejjem kien imur fil-

għodu, kif iqum l-ewwel ħaġa li jagħmel jbattalhom ta' bil-lejl. Ma tantx konna nquma ta' bil-lejl [emfasi], ma tantx konna [...] konna bravi nsomma.

M: Kif kontu żżommu l-indafa?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ehhh dik hi! Dika, dika kenna nikinsu l-blat li kien sa- allura hemm hekk, he żgur konna nikinsu l-art, allavolja ma kienx ikun hemm xejn għa- [tinstema' tisbita' fuq wiċċ iebes]. Naħslu le, għax il-blat ma kienx jinħasel pero' dak qatt ma tħammeġ. U darba daħlilna ftit ilma, u l-papa' mbagħad għamel kanal [jinstema' taħbit fuq wiċċ iebes] hekk biex l-ilma ma jidholx ġewwa jibqa' sejjer għall-għall-taħt il-kċina u jmur għal barra. U, l-il-il-ilma ma kienetx problema għax aħna kellna l-blat [...] kollu blat għoli ta' xi erba' sulari, il-blat, u fejn kenna l-kmamar kien, kien, kien mdaħħal [emfasi], allura meta kien jinżel ix-xita ma tantx kien jiġi, kien jiġi fit-triq biss. Allura kien kien jinżel l-ilma ta' [impressjonata'] Imma mhux, mhux li jinkwetana. U,u ħriġna nsajru barra għax għamillha-għamillha, għamilna biċċa qisha nofs gallarija ta' l-injam fejn ninħaslu, dik konna se nagħmluha kċina. Imbagħad għidna 'kif jista' jkun nsajru hawn ġew u,u,u, u r-riħa li tmur fil-kamra fejn norqdu, kif-kif se toħroġ minn hemm ġew bla tieqa?' – bla tieqa [emfasi]. Għax ma kienx hemm, ma set- ma setgħax qatt ssir tieqa [emfasi] għax il-blat kien oħxon hekk [turi kemm] u aħna konna, konna haw ġew u 'l-blat, ma setgħatx ġo dil-kamra ma setgħatx issir tieqa – impossibli – u,u mbagħad ftaħna k-kamra oħra din naħħa, u din naħħa ma kienx hemm il-blat oħxon, allura għamilna tieqa hekk daqs nofs gallarija u hemm hekk konna ninħaslu, kenna it-tripid, bil-fliskatur ta' l-enamel, bil-buqar u kenna slop pail, u hemm hekk konna nużaw toilet fil-għaxija [...] meta jidlam, għax meta jidlam kien ftit ikrah eh!

M: U kif kontu żżommu l-indafa ġox-xelter ta' tas-Sliema u Ʀal Lija?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ta' Ʀal Lija ma kellniex xelter ġo Ʀamrija, ġo Ʀamrija, ta' Ʀal Lija. Imma ix-xe aħna ta' Ʀad-Dingli, il-kamra ta' Ʀad-Dingli dejjem ko- dejjem nadifa. Ġħax ma konniex, konna nagħmlu minn kollox biex ma nieklux hemm ġew jekk jista' jkun. Pero' Ʀafna drabi kilna imma mhux fil-bedroom, ġħax hawn hekk kellna kamra u hawn hekk kellna kamra – ma kienux kbar ta! daqs bathroom ta! eheheh, ara! aqsam din [turi il-kamra li qegħdin fiha] f'er, ara! kienu kbar daqs hekk [turi] daqs hekk [jinstema siġġu jersaq] kien kbar hekk, forsi sa iżjed mill-fridge hekk u iżjed daqs hekk tnej- [...] kellna.

M: Qatt ġħidilkom minn moħħkom li x-xelter seta' jisfronda waqt xi air-raid?

Mifsud Bonnici: Hawn hekk le Ʀad-Dingli. Imma fix-xelters ta' ta' tas-Sliema iwa ġħax ngħidu issa tiġi bomba fit-triq? Din ma tolqodtx djar u tiġi dritt ġħat-triq kif ma possibli [emfasi] ma tistax Ʀħaffer it-triq u siebna? Ġħax kien hemm taraġ, ġħax kien hemm ten jew jew eight tarġiet. Voldiri daħ- min min Ʀħaffer nižel fil-fond hu! Imma ma tistax taf it-triq x'hemm fuqħa jekk hux blat, jek hux terrapien, jekk hux xaħx u mbagħad hemm l-asfalt hu! Eqq it-it-triq min-min jassigurak li triq soda soda bižejjed? Anke li jġħaddu t-trakkijiet u l-cars, ġħax dik tgħadili minn rasi jien, tgħadilli Ʀafna ngħid 'madonna! it-triq tiflaħ dak it-toqol tat-trakkijiet li jġħaddu!?' U kbar kif inhuma daż-żmien. Dik tgħadili mir-ras- imma qatt ma ġara xejn nzuħ il-l'Alla hu!

M: Bħala tfal kontu tibżaw?

Mifsud Bonnici: Insomma [ttawwal il-kelma] jien ma tantx nibża, din kienet tibża din Dorothy, din din din kienet tibża ħafna din [bħal turi min] u din [...] kienet tibża imma mhux daqs Dorothy. Dorothy kienet tibża ħafna – kienet sabiħa [tbaxxi leħinha u b'nostalgija] Dorothy, kellha għajnejha sbieħ [ittawwal il-kelma] u din it-tif- di di in-nannu tagħha Salomone, it-tifla ta' Margaret.

M: U meta toħorgu minn taħt l-art, x'kontu tagħmlu u taraw?

Mifsud Bonnici: N-N-Nitilaw fuq hu id-dar, jew jew Tower Road fejn konna nitilaw fuq. Dejjem kilna bil-paċi ta! Il-il- Tower Road, meta konna Tower Road, x'ħin jigi l-papa' fis-siegħa dejjem kilna bil-paċi u mbagħhad wara xi siegħa BBBBBUUUU [tispjega ħoss] għax-xelter! Umbagħhad nerġaw nitilaw u għat-te', għax xelter! Hekk konna u dax ħamlu ħabta kienu ħafna viċini l-air-raids titla' u terġa tinżel fix-xelter, titla' u terġa tinżel hekk kienu għamlu ħabta.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn min bata' l-ġuħ?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ħafna [emfasi] ħafna nies, speċjalment in-nies ta' tas-Sliema batew il-ġuħ għax jie- konna nafu eqqq kelna l-ħbieb tagħna kollha kienu jgħidu kemm kemm batew ġuħ kollha [emfasi] Ehh naf ħaġa oħra; meta waqgħat il-bomba tal-tal-pjazza [emfasi] aħna konna fix-xelter u smajna ħoss [tistagħgeb] imma ngħidlek kulħadd beda jgħid fix-xelter 'id-dar tagħna, id-dar tagħna, waqgħat id-dar tagħna żgur!' [vuċi mbikkem u ansjuż] U x'ħin ħriġna rajna pjazza Lunzjata nofsa ta' San Vincenzo, mil-mil- l-isfel minn minn Nicola' Nic-Nicola' Street għal s-s għal Carmel Street, ħ-ħerba! [emfasi] Ħerba ġebel hekk kollox uup! Għax ġie, kif waqgħat, kif waqgħat mhux bħal djar oħra, waqgħat hekk qisu xi ħadd għamillha hekk u waqaha! U hemm hekk kien

hemm in-nutar Vassallo, miet, taħt id-dar tiegħu hemm hekk u ġux t-iffal, ġux t-ibniet Roża, Lina u John salvawilhom – dawk l-erbgħa salvaw! U dawk kellhom dar sabiħa ħafna, kellu u kienu joqgħodu hemm hekk. U hu kellu kollezzjoni tal-tal- bolli – m’għaġbin x’kollezzjoni sabiħa kellu, u kollox kien mirdum allura din ma ċcaqqalqet qatt minn hemm [emfasi] sakemm ssib din il-kollezzjoni! biex ma jisirqulhiex! Għax ġiet fixxa! [emfasi] Bla sold! Ma kelliex biex tixtri ħobża pereżempju. Tawha ħutha, għinuha ħutha – tal-Losco – Ira Losco? Iz-zija tagħha tiġi din, ħu missier- oħt missierha. U [...] din ehħ sabitha nsomma mbagħad, u kien hemm waħda – ma miet ħadd hemm imma. Imma waħda korriet oħ-oħt Rita l-ħajjata korriet. U korriet il-qasba ta’ sieqha s- fejquha uu operawha u għa- imma l-qasba ta’ sieqha kienet mħaffra hekk, kerha u kienet timxi hekk [bħal turi kif] imma kienet timxi, u żżewwġet Alla jbierek, u n-nies ta’ tal-Ħallu marritilhom id- dar. Xejn issa illum qegħda flats hemm hekk, telgħet kollha flats, imma batew ħafna [emfasi] n-nies t’hemm hekk meta waqgħatilhom id-dar ta’ Pjazza Nunzjata, u [...] ġew fixxa, fixxa xejn [emfasi], ġew bla-bla ħabba f’idejhom, għax kellhom kollox, kollox ġod-dar. Ma kienux jiddepożittaw flus il-Bank. Ma nafx kienux sabuhom il-flux tagħhom, pero’ batew ħafna, batew ħafna. Imbagħad l’omm, l’omm ma nafx x’għamlet b’dil-kollezzjoni tal-bolli, jekk beħithiex biex tista tkompli mat-tfal. Kellha tifla, Roża, miżżewwġ- aw saret spiżjara, it-tifel ma nafx John, u tifla, waħda minnhom Lienja, li kienet daqshekk ara, issa kienet saret daqshekk – qabel hawn għandi r-ritratti – ehħ iżżewwġet ma’ [...] x’kien jismu? – Camilleri! Austin Camilleri u u marru joqgħodu Għawdex u kella t-tfal Għawdex, u t-tifla tagħha miżżewwġa ma’ Magro tal-tal-kunserva tad-tadam, it-tifla ta’ din, ta’ dan dan nutar Vassallo. Mietu issa, hi u hu mietu. Marru joqgħodu hemm hekk. Imma mhux tal-gwerra dak,

għax war- l-gwerra daw. Kienu ħbieb tagħna, u aħna konna noqgħodu il-każin ta' Stella Maris hawn f'di triq f'dil-pjazza, tinżel San Vincenzo hekk u hawn hekk ssib Strada Castelletti, hemm hekk konna noqgħodu aħna – Castelletti Street. [kienet se terġa titkellem imma waqfet]

M: Loulou int qatt rqadt bil-ġuħ?

Mifsud Bonnici: [...] Mhux kwa- mhux bil-ġuħ bil-ġuħ imma forsi kelli aptit iżjed ma stajniex nieħdu biċċa ħobż oħra għax irriduha għal għada hu! Dika dika imma mhux bil-ġuħ li li jkonna speċi għandna ħobża waħda, il-mama' kienet taqsama, nofsa nikluha llum għax ma ma ken-kenniex minn fejn nġiebu mbagħad; pero' il-mama' mbagħad kienet tagħmlilna l-għaġin f-f dak kienet tagħmlilna l-għaġin. Niddubaw it-tqiq Ħad-Dingli u tagħmlilna l-għaġin. Kienet tagħmlilna l-għaġin u mbagħad kenna żejt kenna u kienet tagħmel tewm – konna nagħmlu t-tewm aħna – niżiraw it-tewm kenna bi-biċċa ċa- ħamrija, tewm; naniegħ; ħabaq; merqxux, u [...] kienet tagħmlilna żejt u tewm biss imma ma kellniex ġobon. L-għaġin bla ġobon jien qatt ma kont nħobbu, pero' mbagħad kont drajtu hu! Għax la jkollokx minn fejn iġġib j- kollox tidra'.

M: X'kienu l-Victory Kitchens?

Mifsud Bonnici: Il-Victory Kitchens ehh [...] ma kienux, l-ikel ma kienx ikun tajjed, pero' mbagħad kien hemm xi ħaġa, la naf mqarrun il-forn, ma nif- ma nistax niftakar, pero' konna nitqazżuh aħna, mbagħad il-mama' iktar kienet, għax ma kienetx tagħmlilna kuraġġ, allura ddubbajna dal-flieles, la naf erbgħa la naf tlie- tiġieġ kienu, saru tiġieġ għax kienu jtuna l-bajd, u kenna waħda tiġieġa sewda [emfasi], kienet kważi darb iva darba le tbieta [jinstema' bħal tisbiet zġħir fuq wiċċ

iebes] dejjem tbiet u ġmiel ta' bajda, u konna nieħdu gost noħduha min immissu. U konna ngħattuhom lit-tiġieg, imma ma kenniex ġwież biex nagħtuhom lit-tiġieg, kienu jtuna xi ħaġa tal-tal-fniek tagħhom, għax tal-fniek mhux għax voldiri, għax ħaxix u hekk ta! għax ma kienx haw ewrofaks dak iż-żmien, u konna ns- kienu jtuna mqanħarrun. Kienu jtuna ftit mqanħarrun, għax kienu jiżraw il-mqanħarrun huma u l-qamħ, għax kienu już- jaħ- jaħartu l-qamħ, u meta dak kienu jtuna ftit qamħ imma mhux ħafna ta! [ton diżappuntat] bor- hekk ta! [bħal turi kif] imma [...] kienu saru kbar hekk konna nħobbu narawhom. Jien nħobb ħafna l-animli eh għandek tkun taf! [ton b'tbissima].

M: Kif kienet taħdem is-sistema tal-Victory Kitchens, tiftakar?

Mifsud Bonnici: Niftakar kienu ja- [kelma mhux ċara] biljetti, hekk niftakar, kienu jagħtuna biljetti, mmorru nuruhom dal-biljett u jtuna l-ikel, għall-erba' minn nies pereżempju; ministra għall-erbgħa nieħdu borma u nġiebu dil-minestra, m'hemm għalfejn ngħidlek eh! ġieli kilna xi ħaġa minnha imma ma kon-konniex nkomplu nikluha għax ma kienetx togħgobna, ma kienx tajjeb l-i-ikel, xejn, xejn ma kien tajjeb [emfasi]. Hm- ġieli voldiri, hemm minn mnej kien aħjar minn ġranet oħra imma mbagħad aħna meta konna niddubbaw it-tqiq, u l-mama' kienet tagħmlilna l-għaġin, nini nini [ton ta' nkejja] l-Victory Kitchen, ma doqnihiex iżjed. Konna ngibuh għat-tiġieg [...] x'għarukaża hu! eqq [tidħaq ftit]

M: Kien hemm ħafna jużaw il-black market, x'tgħidilna fuq dan?

Mifsud Bonnici: Eħe, black market minn għant il-bdiewa xtrajna żgur. Kollox bil-black market għax mill-ħwienet, il-ħwienet kienu

[enfasi] jzommulna aktar imma ftit kellhom affarijiet, ma tantx kellhom, ma tantx kellhom – taf x'kienu jtuna? tal-Victory Kitchen?, xi corned beef għandu jkun, xi biċċa corned beef u dik dik il-papa' kien jkolha l-papa'. Minn għaliġa kienu jtuna l-corned beef imma m'inhix żgura [enfasi] għax jiena ma nħobbux, oħti ma tħobbux. Maurice iħobbu [enfasi] il-il tgħidtx kemm, imma jiena ma tantx, ma tantx. Minn għaliġa jiena kienu jtuna corned beef. U għaġin, għaġin ftit, ftit kienu jtuna, ftit. Ma niftakarx sew, pero' kienu jtuna l-minestra, kienu jtuna l-fażola [enfasi] baked beans; kienu jtuna l-baked beans ma xi haġa ma nafx ma xhiex, għandu jkun ma biċċa corned beef kienu jagħmlulna l-baked beans. Minhiex ż- minhiex żgura ta! għax insejt. Nsejtha l-Victory Kitchen x'kienu jtuna, imma Lina għanda mnejn tiftakar, di tal-Mosta? għanda mnejn tiftakar.

M: Kontu tafu lil b' xi hadd li kien negozjant tal-black market jew approfitta' habba dan?

Mifsud Bonnici: Le ma konna nafu l'hadd, lil hadd.

M: U x'tip ta' ikel u oġġetti kienu jingiebu bil-black market?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ma nafx għax ma ma black market, l-iżjed li xtrajna – mhux black market – l-iżjed li xtrajna aħna ħalib u bajd; ħalib u bajd u tqiq [enfasi] kienu jtuna għax huma peress li kienu jithnu il-qamħ, kienu jagħtu l-qamħ jithnulhom biex jagħmlu l-ħobż tagħhom huma, imma mbagħad fil-gwerra ma tantx baqaw, għax ma nafx x'garalhom x'kienet, imma kienu jagħmlu l-qamħ, u daw, issa ngħid [tgħaġġel l-aħħar żewġt ikliem], u dawn il-qamħ it-tqiq kienu jiddubawlna borża tqiq hekk, u l-mama' ma [kelma mhux ċara] ma kienetx tagħmel kejk jew hekk jew torta, għaġin [enfasi] kienet tagħmel. Għaġin, kienet tagħmlilna għaġin tagħmlu tagħmlu dritt

hekk u ċatt [emfasi] žigarelli, žigarelli, kienet tagħmel ġux qasab u tagħmlu jinxf fuq il-qasab, flok flok spagetti, għax spagetti ma setgħatx tagħmlu u u kienet tagħmel kapelletti tagħmilhom b'subajha hekk jiġu qishom eqq [...] biċċa qishom bebbux, bebbux hekk miftuh. Il-bqija ma nafx.

M: Kontu tafu x'kien qed jiġri barra minn Malta?

Mifsud Bonnici: Ehh, iva għax il-papa' me mbagħad ma kenniex radio Fġad-Dingli, ma tantx. Ma tantx kien, kien ikun jaf pereżem- għax immur l-uffiċċju hu! Ġieli mar l-uffiċċju il-papa' ta!– kien jimxi ta! Kien jimxi dik il-mixja biex jaqbad il-bus, imbagħad jiġi- bus minn Fġad-Dingli għa-għar-Rabat, mir-Rabat għall-Belt. Kien ġie- mar mar mhux ġieli [emfasi] [...] mar l-uffiċċju ħafna drabi. U meta ġie mat-tabib laqas ke-kellu car it-tabib, minn għaliġa wasslu xi kerettun u qallu stennini ħalli terġa toħodni għax irrid ngib pazjent. Ma niftakarx sewwa. Dik ma niftakarhiex.

M: Kif kontu tkunu tafu li dieġel xi *convoy*?

Mifsud Bonnici: Għax konna naraw il-vapuri minn hemm hekk [ton ferrieħi] konna narawhom, konna narawhom, u mbagħad u j'alla [emfasi] ma rajniex il-vapuri jimburbardjawhom. Ma niftakarhiex sew imma. Mmma niftakar għax aħna jidher il-baħar, jidher, minn Fġad-Dingli u rajniehom hu! Raj-rajna darba minnhom imma imma ma nistax ngħid [...] kif tgħid ehh diddiskrivi [emfasi] preċiż. Biss rajna il-papa' qal 'ara, ara dieġel *convoy*, tgħidli qalbi *convoy* dak mhux *destroyers* biss u'. U kien ikun hemm il-il-gwida magħmagħhom ta! Għax kien ikun hemm vapur fin-nofs u *destroyer* l'hawn u *destroyer* l'hemm kienu. Imma [ttawwal il-kelma] dik ma tantx niftakarha.

M: Qatt ħassejt li l-għadu seta' jinjadi?

Mifsud Bonnici: Dik iva [emfasi] konna konno ngħidu 'madonna! jekk ma jiġġieldux l-Ingliżi' għax aħna konna Ingliżi [ton ta' ftaħir] ta! kont nħobbhom [kelma mhux ċara]. Il-papa' kien iħobb l-Ingliżi! [emfasi] Ehh imma voldiri konna ngħidu 'madonna santisma jekk l-Ingilterra ma terbaħx!' U mbagħad laħaq Churchill wara Chamberlain, laħaq Churchill [ton ferrieħi]. Allura konna ngħidu, 'issa Churchill jaħsra, isa, isa, isa, isa x'jismu iċċedux l-Ingliżi allaħares iċċedu l-Ingliżi għax niġu f'idej il-Ġermaniżi, f'idej il-Ġermaniżi' [ton ta' ħniena]. Aw kif tgħid jirrej- mhux jirredjawna u iva jidħlu fil-pajjiz kif tgħidha?

M: Jinvadu l-pajjiz.

Mifsud Bonnici: 'Jinvaduna, jinvaduna, le' [ton mbeżza']. Il-mama' kienet tgħid 'no no no Dio non lo permetera', Dio non lo permetera' kienet tgħidilna l-mama'. 'Non lo perm' Bit-Taljan aħna konna nitkellmu mal-mama' u x'jismu u darba niftakar k- Strada Nunziata kien hemm kerrejja, u ġo dil-kerrejja kien joqgħod missier, ġux t-itfal u l'omm. U daw wieħed minnhom, il-kbir, kien antipatku, mqareb [ton ta' stmerija] u darba ġie wara l-bieb tagħna 'A Taljani, oħorġu minn hemm a Taljani! [ton jgħajjat] Jgħajjarna Taljani għax konna nitkellmu bit-Taljan u aħna, il-papa' bżajna, għax il-papa', għidtlu 'pa' dak qed jiġi jgħajjarna ta! ta' ta' tal-baj, it-tifel tal-bajjad – għax missieru kien ibajjad – għidtlu 'jiġi t- jgħajjarna Taljani' għidtlu 'aw joqgħod jgħajjat fit-triq'. U għandu jkun kien qal lill-missieru il-papa'. Qallu, 'dak għalfejn qed, qed jgħajj- it-tfal tiegħi mhux Taljan, jitkellmu bit-Taljan għax ommhom taf il-Franċiż biss u jiena għallimtha it-Taljan għax eħfef għal min jiġi jaħsilna l-art, jaħsilna l-ħwejjeg' mela! [ton serju kważi rrabbjat ftit] U

niftakar konna bżajna eh! Għax ma ma tridtx turi li- x'int dak iż-żmien tal-gwerra. Ma tridtx turi x'int, intiex Taljana, intix Franciża, intix Maltija, u kien jgħajjarna. U mbagħad waqgħat bomba, minn għaliġa Strada Carmine, l-isfel ffit minn Strada Santa Maria, m'inhie x'għura imma. Hemm hekk minn għaliġa mietu n-nies jien ukoll, miet xi wiegħed jew waħda, ilu, aw mhux idu. Fha ngħidlek Strada Santa Maria, minn għaliġa l-isfel [...] minn Strada Carmine mhux lejn is-Sakra Cuor [...] imma tal-pjazz Nunzjata kienet straġi [emfasi] straġi sħiħa [emfasi] eh eh għax kulħadd twerwer, kulħadd twerwer [emfasi] li- ta'stra- għax qalu 'issa, issa se jiġu lejna, lejna it-triq tagħna, għax kulħadd peress li aħna ma tantx konna mhux l-bogħod mill-Gaiety, mhux bogħod mill-Majestic u mhux bogħod mill-Carlton, kie-kien u jidhru mill-ajruplan li hemm is-cinemas hu! U s-cinemas għandhom il-il- is-soqfa mhux bħal tad-djar, u u l-Gaiety għalhekk ibbombardjaw hu! Għax il-Gaiety [ton ta' stagħgib] kienet bomba kerha ta! Il-Gaiety kien tant kbir [tistagħgib] is-cinema, kien kbir qis- ma nafx. Ara kien kbir, il-Lidl tal-Mosta, hekk kien kbir il-Gaiety; forsi biċċa nieqsa mhux twil daqs hekk, imma hekk kien kbir. U ġie fraq [emfasi] Tgħid possibli? [tistagħgib] dan sar borġ ġebel! Ara kif kissruh! Min jaf x'hasbu li hu, hu? mill-ajru? Għax huma ma- fejn ibbombardjaw ma kienux jafu x'inhu l-post, rie-riedu jibombardjaw l-army huma hu! l-isudati u hekk naturlament, u fabbriki – u aħna ma tantx kenna fabbriki dak iż-żmien – mhux żgur kenna, mhux żgur kenna fabbriki Malta dak iż-żmien tal-gwerra. Kien hawn, tal-tal-tqiq biss li jith-jithnu t-tqiq, mma qas fabbriki, fi-fi-fi garaxxijiet kbar kienu. Għax haw Burmarrad kien hawn gattijiet [kelma mhux ċara] tat-tqiq ġol-garaxx kienu. Kellhom magni sbieħ! Kont tarhom jithnu tqiq, jithnu t-tqiq, jagħmlu l-qamħ, jagħmlu n-nuħhala, nuħhala f'oxna, nuħhala rqiq, jagħmlu s-smied – tlett affarijiet jagħmlu mill-qamħa – tqiq, smied u

nuħħala u nuħħali rqiqa u u xi ħaġa oħra għandu jkun [...] eh u l-multi grain aw il-brown flour – five.

M: Kif kontu tinħaslu? L-ilma kien skars?

Mifsud Bonnici: Konna nġibu mill-bir! mill-ġiebjja konna nġibu ta! Issa nurik fejn kont nimla' [jinstema' čekčik]. U tqila' ta! U x'ma juġaniex haw jien issa [emfasi]. U ilu juġani! [jinstema' taħbit minn barra] Għandna ġarra hekk, kbira hekk tal-fuħħar [tqum u tikellem u terġa tiġi] Qed tara dik? Bħal dik imma kbira hekk, kbira. Allura kont nimliha bil-lambut [jinstema' xi ħadd iħabbat u jgħajjat] kont nimliha bil-barmil tal-ġiebjja - ilma ġieri mill-blat ehh [emfasi] L-ilma kien tajjeb [tistagħġeb]. Meta konna mmorru ġurnata dejjem konna nġibu flixkun tal-luminata' mimli bl-ilma, d-dar.

[STOP TAPE]

APPENDIX IV

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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MEM [O] RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

INTERVISTA

INTERVISTA MINN: JAMES BALDACCHINO

INTERVISTA MA': FRANK ATTARD

DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: 20 TA' ĠUNJU 2017

POST: BIRŻEBBUĠA

TUL TAL-INTERVISTA: 55 MINUTA u 14 SEKONDA



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Jien James Baldacchino, f' isem il-proġett MEMORJA għall-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta, illum l-għoxrin ta' Ġunju elfejn u sbatax qiegħed ma' Frank Attard ġewwa r-residenza tiegħu f' Birżebbuġa.

M: Frank, fejn twelidt u meta?

Attard: Jiena twilidt il-Belt, fis-sebġha ta' *February, nineteen twenty-eight*, fil-knisja ta' San Duminku l-Belt [jitbissem].

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Attard: Aħna konna sitta aħwa, sitta aħwa konna aħna. Mhm. Jiena biss imwieled il-Belt imma ħuti kollha mwieldin l-Ħamrun hu? [jidħaq].

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Attard: Missieri kien bil-*grocer* u ommi mara tad-dar kienet, hu. Ma kienetx taħdem, hu.

M: Qatt emigrajt x'imkien?

Attard: *No, no, no.* Le qatt m'emigrajt qatt m'emigrajt.

M: X' xogħolijiet kellek?

Attard: Xejn jien dħal-dħalt bħala *paperboy* mal-gazzetta fi, fi żmien il-gwerra, fin-*nineteen forty-one* u bqajt naħdem fit-*Times of Malta* sakemm kelli sakemm san-*nin- nine-nineteen ninety-eight*. Għamilt ħamsa u ħamsin sena jġifieri [jidħaq].

M: Fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?

Attard: Fi tfuliti, sakemm kelli tmien snin kont ngħix il-Belt u mbagħad morna noqgħodu l-Ħamrun. *Strada El Dorado* l-Ħamrun.

M: Kemm għandek tfal?

Attard: Jien għandi waħda jisimha Miriam u għandha tlett itfal [jitbissem].

M: Frank, fejn kont meta smajt bid-dikjarazzjoni ta' gwerra?

Attard: Dan l-Ħamrun dak iż-żminijiet, kont nisma' fuq il-gazzetti u fuq ir-*radio* li Hitler attakka hemm hekk u attakkaw haw' u ma konna nafu xejn hu, imma mbagħad bdew jagħmlu ħafna fuq ir-*radio*, "X'għandek tagħmel jekk jinqala' xi ħaġa", "Tixegħlux dwal", "Oqogħdu taħt it-taraġ u għamlu xi mejda tal-pranzu taħt it-taraġ jew taħt xi kolonna." U sewwa, eh u xi kolonna [ma jinftiehemx] [jidħaq]. Sewwa u [b'leħen baxx] stenn daqsxejn waħda ħa nerġa ħa ndurlek oħra [jitbissem]. Imbagħad dik il-ħabta bdew jiġu ħafna nies min-naħa l-oħra min-naħa ta' Bormla u l-Birgu u aħna konna nkunu qed nilgħabu hemm hekk u ma konniex nafu. Nafu li se jinqala' xi ħaġa u dak iż-żminijiet il-Ħamrun kien hemm ħafna postijiet kienu vojta u kien ikun hemm miktub *Si Locha* [sic] fuqhom jew inkella *To Let*. U aħna nkunu qed nilgħabu u bdew jiġu ħafna nies min-naħa l-oħra u bdew jitħall- konna nitħalltu magħhom imma kultant il-lingwa tagħhom, id-djalett tagħhom, ma konniex nifthemu [jidħaq]. Għax huma jitkellmu bid-djalett tan-naħa l-oħra imma imbagħad *issetiljajna* [sic.] flimkien it-tfal li konna hu u imbagħad dak iż-żminijiet iġifieri ma kien hawn xejn meta kont id-dar jien filgħodu kmieni u nisma l-bombi jfaqqqgħu, qomna niġru xi s-sebġha ta' filgħodu niftakar hu, bdejna nittawlu minn barra hu. Issa qabel huma kienu javżawna li jekk jinqala' xi ħaġa ħadd m'għandu joħroġ barra u t-twieqi, l-ħġieġ niżbugħhom bil-kulur iswed anka t-toqba tal-muftieħ ma nħalluhiex tidher ħabba d-dawl [jidħaq]. [B'leħen baxx] Sewwa [jidħaq].

M: Kont għidli li tiftakar xi Faxxisti l-Ħamrun.

Attard: Iwa niftakar. Qabel il-gwerra [...] [jidħaq]. Qabel il-gwerra kont qiegħed quddiem il-knisja tal-Ħamrun jiena u nara grupp hekk ta' xi qisu għoxrin ruħ tletin ruħ għaddejjin, kollha libsin qomos suwed hu. Dak iż-żmien

konna nafu x'inhuma hu kienu jgħidulhom tal-*Ballilla* għandikun dak iż-żminijiet. Tal-Faxxist- tal-Faxxisti. Bdew jiġru u jkantaw [ma jinfteximx] [jidhaq]. Niftakar niftakar qisu l-bieraħ narahom għaddejjin quddiem wiċċi l-Ħamrun għaddejjin ikantaw hu, dak iż-żminijiet [jidhaq].

M: U x' kien għalhom dan-nies?

Attard: Le ma kien għalhom- u imbagħad ħafna wara imbagħad kienu internaw ħafna minnhom kienu internawhom hu, biċċiet minnhom, kienu nternawhom [jidhaq]. Kienu nternawhom, wara mhux daww iż-żminijiet hu, wara hu. Imma imbagħad meta faqqgħet il-gwerra imbagħad kienet mod ieħor għax la kellna ajruplani tal-gwerra hawn Malta, ħlief tliet ajruplani antiki l-*Gladiator Hope* u *Charity* kienu hu? U la kellna xelters fejn nistkennu ma kellna xejn. Umbagħad niftakar dak iż-żmien min kien jikmanda bgħatilna żewġ ħaddiema l-Ħamrun, tawhom il-baqqun bil-bqaqen u bdejna inħaffru biex nagħmlu xelter minn *Strada El Dorado* l-Ħamrun għal *Strada Fra Diegu* jiġi n-naħa ta' *Strada* Rjali hemmhekk hu, kollna kallijiet it-tfal li konna u kulħadd jagħti x'taħseb biex tħaffer xelter bil-baqqun dik il-ħabta minn triq għall-oħra [jitbissem] mhux bħal-lum, hu? Biex tħaffer fil-blat hu? U konna għamilna x- konna għamilna xelter. Jiena kelli ħuti kelli waħda minn ħuti, tant kienet tibza li kien ikellna r-*Rediffusion* id-dar dik il-ħabta u r-*Rediffusion* ikun qisu wieqaf bil-lejl ikun wieqaf imma x'ħin jifthulu li se jannunzjaw xi haġa konna nibdew mill-ewwel nindunaw li huwa ġej *air raid*. U kelli oħti kienet titlaq tiġri bil-kutra f'idejha biex tmur go xelter privat. Missieri kien ħallsilha biex toqgħod go xelter privat u jien u oħti konna nibqgħu d-dar u noqgħodu naraw daqqa naraw l-ajruplani meta iktar tard fil-gwerra għax għall-ewwel ma konniex nagħtu kas għax l-ajruplani Taljani kienu jkunu fl-għoli ħafna, hu. Ma konniex nagħtu każ imma qabel anka qabel il-gwerra konna naraw ix-xe- haw' is-*searchlight* tal-batt- tal-tal-kanuni jagħmlu *rehearse- training* haw' Malta. Dak iż-żmien kont tara xi kanun għaddej fit-toroq jew xi xi xi tank tal-gwerra għaddej kien ikun haw', dak iż-żminijiet, hu. Imma ħafna kanuni kienu l-*Bowfords* dik il-ħabta l-*Bowfords* hu. Imma imbagħad meta bdiet il-gwerra iktar bdiet tiħrax kien hemm bastiment tal-gwerra

kien l-Imsida jew il-Gzira kien l-*HMS Terror* kienet waħda mill-aqwa bastimenti li sal-lum bqajt niftakarha hu. Imbagħad kien hemm il-fortizza ta' Ċejlu l-Marsa, kienet waħda mill-aqwa fortizzi. K-kien haw' fortizzi imbagħad bdew, kien hemm, jagħmlu l-lieva għamlu l-lieva imbagħad dik il-ħabta, hu. Il-Ħamrun kien hemm l-*ARP (Air Raid Precautions)* dik il-ħabta u tad-*Demolition, Fra Diego Institute* dak iż-żminijiet kien kollox hemmhekk imbagħad [jidhaq].

M: Ta' tifel li kont, kellek idea x'kienet se tfisser il-gwerra?

Attard: Ma konna nafu xejn, dak iż-żmien lanqas *television* ma kien haw' dak iż-żmienijiet hu. Ma konniex nafu kif inhi hu imma [ma jinftihemx] li konna naqraw hu, il-Ġermanizi daħlu hemmhekk hu u hemm kollox hu. Imbagħad konna nisimgħu li Mussolini u Hitler iltaqgħu għalhekk bdew jaħsbu li ġejja xi ħaġa fuq Malta, hu? Imma timmaġina dak iż-żminijiet hu jgħidlek "Oqgħod taħt l-arkati jekk jinqala' xi ħaġa, taħt xi taraġ, taħt xi mejda" Heq jekk jinqala' xi ħaġa jġifieri jekk taqa' bomba, iktar tkompli titgħaffegħ hu, taħt taraġ umbagħad speċjalment, hu [jidhaq].

M: X'kien jiġri kull meta kienet tindaqq is-sirena? Kif kont tħossok?

Attard: Dak iż-żmien konna nibzġgħu hu, konna nibzġgħu hu. U kulħadd jiġri dak iż- kif iddoqq is-sirena tara' in-nies kulħadd jiġri hu. Minn kien ikollu xi ħaġa d-dar id-dar tiegħu, xi deheb jew xi flus kien joħodhom miegħu go x-xelter hu. Immorru, konna nagħmlu tlett ijiem fix-xelter ġieli. Tlett ijiem sħaħ għamilninhom fix-xelter hu, bil-lejl u bi nhar hu. Imma dak iż-żmien meta ma kien hawn xejn xelters hu, kien hawn it-Taljani. Sa kemm kien hawn it-Taljani, ma jim- ma tantx konna nagħatu kas ħafna, hu. Vera darba minnhom it-Taljani kienu tefgħu xi bomba n-naħa tal-Kalkara, u kien qabad ħafna petrol hemmhekk, niftakar dam jaqbad ħafna, niftakar. Anke il-Ħamrun fejn kont nogħod jien niftakar. Għax aħna konna nkunu l-Ħamrun, konna nkunu klikka ġuvintur zgħazagħ jġifieri hu nogħodu barra hemm hekk inkantaw, ngħidu l-istejjer hu. Umbagħad darba minnhom ma mortx ma mortx jiena hu, u kont qiegħed id-dar u taqa

bomba ftit il-bogħod mid-dar tagħna hu, ftit hu, u kienu mietu xi għoxrin ruħ hemm hekk eh. Kien hemm familji ta' Serra, ta' Burlo, ta' Azzopardi, li konna nkunu npaċċu s-soltu flimkien hemm hekk hu. Kellhom tarbija kienet mietet ġo s-sodda tat-trabi, bil-bombi, kien hemm wieħed miskin kien fil-gallarija biex biex waqa' għal isfel. Kien hemm ieħor kien għadu ġej minn suldat, kien bil-lieva, kien miet ukoll hu, għax anke l-arloġg tiegħu konna sibna, fil-ħdax ta' bil-lejl kienu. Kienu mietu ħafna nies eh. Imbagħad in-naħa l-oħra ukoll, xi ftit bogħod eh, xi tletin pass il-bogħod minna waqgħet bomb oħra ukoll hu, f'nofs it-triq hemm hekk hu, in-naħa ta' *Stada Gafa*, *Strada Brighella*, l-oħra ma *Strada El Dorado* l-oħra hu, u kienu mietu n-nies. Fil-fatt kien hemm raġel miskin kien jaħdem id-dockyard ma stajniex insibuh dan ir-raġel. Kien sejjer ix-xelter waqgħet din il-bomba, u waqa' il-qiegħ ta' gallarija, ma kon- wara sirna nafu, għax kull ħadd beda jagħdi minn fuq tal-gallarija, taħt il-qiegħ tal-gallarija kien hemm dan miskin da' r-raġel taħtha, wara wara xi ġranet sabuh umbagħad, da' r-raġel hu. Għax niftakarha hu.

M: Apparti s-sireni kien hemm metodi oħra kif in-nies kienu jiġu avżati?

Attard: Ir-*Redifussion* biss, ir-*Redifussion*. Idoqqlok is-sirena u jibda' jgħajjat "*air raid warnings*," "sinjal ta' l-attakki mill-ajru," "sinjal ta' l-attakki mill-ajru" hu, u daqshekk. Imma dak iż-żmienijiet, umbagħad terga' ma kien hawn ikel, eh, fuq kollox eh, jagħtik hawn qwart ta' biċċa ħobż hawn, u trid tagħmel ġurnata bih eh. Imma jiena missieri kien bil-ħanut kien bil-ħanut u niftakar kien jibagħatni, fi żmien il-gwerra mhux fil-bidu dan, iktar tard fil-gwerra hu. Niftakar kien jibagħatni l-Marsa bil-*pushchair*, jibagħatni għand xi ħadd, ma nafx minn hu dan il- bniedem hu, immur bil-*pushchair*, u kien jagħtatini ħafna laned tal-bejken, peżutijiet, affarijiet, affarijiet naħseb jien affarijiet tas-servizz bil-kutrabandu eh naturalment kien hu dak iż-żmienijiet. Għax anki darba minnhom mort ma missieri mort ir-Rabat biex inġiebu l-patata, niftakar mhux flus irridu l-bdiewa dik il-ħabta deheb deheb dak il-ħabta kienu jridu hu. Imma l-aktar ħaġa li bqajt niftakar jien, għadni, għada ġo moħħi sa llum. Missieri kien jgħidli l-ħobż togħodx tieklu barra qogħod id-dar biex ma togħodx ix-xennaq lil sħabek.

Għax aħna kien ikollna ħobż. Kien iġib missieri minn hemm jew minn hawn. Togħodx tieklu barra biex ma toqogħodx ix-xennaq lil sħabek. U bqajt niftakara sa llum eh dik hu. Vera kien eżempju, kien eżempju tajjeb, u vera kellu raġun hu, noħroġ b'xi kissra ħobż. Anke meta bdejt naħdem u nieħu l-ħobż miegħi kont naħbieh biex ma daqqa biex ma jisirqululieħ sħabi [jidħaq]. Għax umbagħad iktar tard ħafna mill-iskejjel kienu magħluqin dik il-ħabta, kienu magħluqin l-iskejjel hu, u mort naħdem jien hu, morna xi tfal mill-Ħamrun, morna naħdmu it-*Times of Malta*, u *l-Berqa* dik il-ħabta [jidħaq].

M: Issa int kif bdejt taħdem mat-*Times* waqt il gwerra?

Attard: Dak iż-żmien kelli, qiesu, kont sa nalaq xi tlettax il-sena u nofs, mingħalija kelli, xi ħaġa hekk kelli jien hu. U konna morna xi tfal mil-Ħamrun hu, bħalla nqasmu l-gazzetta dak iż-żmienijiet hu. U dak iż-żmien ma kienx hawn karozzi tal-linja bħal m' hawn illum. Dak iż-żmien il-karozzi tal-Linja kienu kollha jieqfu l-bombi, u mhux il-ħin kollu kienu jaħdmu l-anqas, eh. Aħna ta' tfal li konna meta morna mat-*Times* jew mal-*Berqa*, konna mmorru xi ħamsa ta' filgħodu l-istamperija, u kienu jiġuna ir-rombli tal-gazzetti, għax dak iż-żmien mhux bħall-lum, ir-rombli jibgħatuhom ir-Rabat, il-Mosta u dan. Aħna konna mmorru b'dawn ir-rombli b'karrettun, nimxu sal-Bombi waqt l-*air raid* kien ikun l-*air raids* ukoll eh, ġieli ħallejna kollox f'nofs it-triq hemm hekk, u nitilqu niġru għax-xelter eh, filgħodu speċjalment hu. Umbagħad konna nsibu *drivers* tal-linja, natu kas tar-Rabat, tal-Mosta, ta' Ħal Qormi, Ħaż Żebbuġ, insibu d-driver, nagħatih romblu bil-gazzetti. Ngħidlu, "Jekk jogħġbok dan ħudulna r-Rabat. Issa jiġi għalih l-aġent tar-Rabat, hu." Inħalsu l-*fare* tiegħu qiesna ħallasna għall-bniedem, u iwassalhomna, iwassalhomna kien hu, dik il-ħabta hu.

M: U xorta baqaw jitqasmu l-gazzetti?

Attard: Il-gazzetti, xorta, ija. Umbagħad speċjalment it-*Times of Malta* u *l-Berqa* qatt ma waqfet. Qatt. Dejjem ħarġet il-gazzetta, allavolja kien ġo l-uffiċju

tagħna kien intlaqgħat bil-bombi wkoll xorta baqet toħroġ il-gazzetta, xorta waħda, qatt ma waqafna l-gazzetta aħna.

M: Taħseb li t-*Times* tat sehem ewlini rigward il-moral tal-poplu?

Attard: Eh, dak iż-żmien il-gazzetta, il-gazzetta, hawn min kien jixtri l-*Berqa* u t-*Times* hu, ħalliha li dak iż-żmien in-nies kienu jixtru l-aktar il-*Berqa*, dak iż-żmien l-iktar hu. U ħafna minnhom peres li kien hawn elf ta' suldati Ingliżi, *service men* u dan, jixtru l-gazzetta hu. Kien hemm iċ-ċensura wkoll dak iż-żmienijiet hu. Ċensura ma kienux iġibu kollox hu ħeq, fihmta. Imma dak iż-żmien għall-moral tan-nies hu, il-*Berqa* speċjalment hu [ma jiftehimx] hu ma kienux qieshom jgħidu l-veritajiet x-ġara jew ma ġarax hu, daki iż-żmienihiet hu [jishol].

M: Kif kont tmur ma Mabel Strickland?

Attard: Uh, ma, ma Mabel Strickland kont immur tajjeb ħafna jien hu [jisgħol], għax intqajt magħha, kwazi kuljum niltaqa magħha kont hu jien, Mabel Strickland hu, mmur il-villa għandha, kienet mara tal-għaġeb eh. Għax anki niftakar kien hemm nies kienu morda, tibgħathom barra minn Malta, u tħalsilhom kollox kienet hu, u anke fi żmien il-gwerra nagħtu kas hu, jekk jiġi l-Milied kien jtuna l-laring u, sigaretti [jishol] imma lili ma kienux itagħuni sigaretti peres li kont għadni zgħir, imma kienu jagħtatuna l-laring, anki paga doppja kienu jagħtatuna, ma kelliex paga dak iż-żmien hu. Kemm kelli ħmistax il-xelin paga fil-gimgħa hu. Imma umbagħad aktar tard fi żmien il-gwerra iktar tard hu, meta l-Ingliżi kienu jerbħu nagħtu kas Tobruk jew Benghazi u dan kienu jagħtatuna paga tripla dak iż-żmienijiet hu. Umbagħad aktar tard bdew jagħtatuna l-bonus fil-*Christmas*, minn dejjem konna nieħdu l-bonus aħna, minn dejjem eh. Le hi kienet mal-ħaddiema hi kienet vera mara ġentili ħafna eh ħafna. Ma tistax timagina kemm kienet ġentili l-mara mal-ħaddiema hu. Anke politikament jekk ma taqbilx magħha fil-politika iktar għandek fiduċja li taħdem magħha [jidħaq].

M: Qatt kellek kunflitti magħha?

Attard: Le, le, le magħha qed ngħidlek kont, kont wieħed mill-favoriti tagħha, kull haġa li jkollha kienet tqabbad lili, u ġieli anke, darba minnhom, għidilha, dan wara l-gwerra umbagħad eh, għidilha “kemm nixtieq immur nara logħba futbol l-Ingilterra.” Kien sa jilgħabu l-Ingliżi u t-Taljani. Niftakar. U qaltli “Meta?” “Meta din il-logħba?” Għidilha “Xi għaxar xhur oħra jien hu?” Fl-aħħar, meta wasalna fl’ aħħar umbagħad, niftakar, ċemplitli u qaltli “*Come and see me.*” U mort narha. Qaltli “Għadek trid tmur tara l-logħoba inti?” Għidilha “Yes” jiena hu. Qaltli “*Ħa nibukjalek [sic.]*” għidilha “Le, ħa ngħid lill-mara l-ewwel.” Qaltli “*good, good, good, staqsi l-mara.*” Dan mort id-dar għid lill-mara. Il-mara għall-ewwel ma rididx tara l-futbol u dan umbagħad il-mara aċċetat. Umbagħad l-għada mort u qaltli “X’ha tagħmel?” U għidilha “*My wife, il-mara ġejja miegħi.*” Qabdet it-telefon, ċemplet l-aġenzija, u *bbukjatli, ibukjatli [sic.]* mill-ewwel biex immur nagħmel gimgħa Londra, biex nagħmel gimgħa Londra. Hemm hekk hu. U niftakar kont qiegħed in-naħa ta’ *Marble Arch* hu, u ġiet hemm hekk hu, u qaltli “Int hawn qiegħed? Mela imxi miegħi” qaltli. Qaltli “Għax għada hawn *taxi strike* hawn Londra.” Għax din ħasbitni għandu jkun nogħod nigri bit-taxi jiena Londra, taf Lonfra kemm hi *expensive to travel* u ħaditni r-*Regent Palace Hotel, Piccadilly Circus*, hu. Umbagħad dak tagħni l-kont domt xi għaxart ijiem hemm hekk hu. Kif tagħni l-kont, għidlu “Dan jekk jogħġbok ibagħadtu lil Mabel Strickland,” daqshekk hu. U niftakar l-ewwel darba li tlajt kelli xi tmintax il-sena, qaltli “Trid is-sifer?” [ma jiftehimx] stidnitni biex immur niekol magħha quddiem il-każin tal-banda *La Vallette* il-Belt, kien kemm lukanda ma nafx x’kien [ma jinftehimx] ma nafx x’kien jisimha, fejn *Captain Caruana* hemm hekk, kien hemm hotel, u stidnitni biex immur niekol magħha u jien meta mort, kont għadni zgħir, dak l-eċċitament insomma. Mort niekol magħha. Umbagħad qaltli, trid issifer? Għidilha “yes” jien hu. Qaltli “Mela” qaltli “ħa nibgħatek xahar man-*navy*” qaltli, xahar, il-Greċja, qaltli, u fejn morna, u Tangier u dan qaltli “ħu l-paga bil quddiem,” qaltli “ħa ntgħuk xi *hundred pounds pocket money*” qaltli “għandek kollox mħallas” u mort għamilt xagħar nigri l-Greċja u dan. Umbagħad fuq l-oħra qaltli, qaltli “Inti

għandek *evening dress*” qegħdilha “le m’għandiex” jien hu, qalti mela mhur *Palace Square* il-Belt hemm hekk, hemm hekk hemm *Green Bag*. Wieħed kien imsemmi li jħejt l-aqwa ħwejjeg lil tas-servizzi Ingliżi, tal-fizjali, u mort hemm u ordnajt *evening dress* biż-żarbun, biċ-ċoff, kollox eh u ħalsithom, ħalset kollox hi hu. Anki nagħtu kas il-karozzi *licence* ma kelliex jien hu, għax darba minnhom kelli xogħol, fis-sitta nkun il-*Phoenicia* u fis-sitta u nofs irrid nkun in-Naxxar, dawk b’ tal-Linja, b’ tal-Linja, u nqajt magħha u qaltli “*How are you Frank?*” Għidilha “Mhux *how are you Frank, miss*” għidilha. Għidilha “L-ewwel ħaġa, *these long hours we are working*” għidilha “*without over time*” qaltli “X’inh?” Għidilha “*We are working*” hinijiet twal u ma jagħtuniex *overtime*. Qaltli “*I’ll see it.*” [Ma jiftehmx] Bagħtet ittra lil kulħadd u taf kif spiċċajna, qaltli kif tridu taħdmu? U jiena lil sħabi għidilhom, ma nistgħux nispiċċaw kollha fil ħamsa aħna fi xogħol tagħna. Insomma umbagħad għamlulna *shift*, u bdew jagħtuna l-*overtime*. Qaltli “*are you happy?*” u għidilha “yes” hu. Umbagħad din tal-karozza ma kellniex transport, u darba għidilha, u l-għada filgħodu ġiet bagħtet għal kulħadd, qaltli “Frank” qaltli “*can you drive a lambretta?*” Għidilha “no” jien “no, no, no” għidilha “no.” Qaltli “*Can you drive a car?*” Għidilha “no.” Qaltli “*Can you drive a Lambretta?*” Għidilha “*Want to learn the car? Driving?*” Għidilha “yes” jien hu. Qaltli “Mela mhur tagħlem il-x’jismu d-*driving*, meta ġġib id-*driving licence*” qaltli “għidli, ċemplili.” Niftakar ġibt id-*driving licence*, ċempiltilha. Għidilha “*Good morning miss,*” għidilha “Frank Attard jien” għidilha “għandi *driving licence*” qaltli “*phone me up tomorrow.*” U l-għada ċempiltilha ergajt qaltli “*can you come to the villa?*” qaltli “*about ten?*” u mort il-villa l-għada, kellha mini minor ġdida fjamanta, qaltli “toġġħbok din?” Qaltli “*You can have it,*” “*you can have it*” hu. Dak iż-żmien kienet mara, qed ngħidlek, kif tkellimha, ħeq.

M: Kien hemm minn kien iħares lejki bl-ikraħ għax kont taħdem ma’ *Times*?

Attard: *Sorry?*

M: Kien hemm minn kien iħares lejki bl-ikraħ għax kont taħdem ma’ *Times*?

Attard: Le, le lilna in-nies, in-nies għadhom sal-ġurnata ta' llum, politikament, dak il-ħabta, dik il-ħabta u għadhom sa llum, wara l-gwerra, wara l-gwerra, meta kien ikun hemm *public meetings*, hu, jien kont immur il-*meetings* tat-tnejn, u dak iż-żmienijiet ma kontx tmur *meeting* ngħidu aħna tal-*Labour* u jilqawk kif jilqawhom illum bit-tapit l-aħmar ta. Dak iż-żmienijiet u, għax ġrew warajna kemm il-darba u kollox anki u n-nies. In-nies, meta tmur biex tieħu ritratt inti, nagħtu kas ikun *meeting* tan-Nazzjonalisti, in-nies, nagħtu kas kont tmur f' gallarija, tgħidlu tellani, ma kienux it-telgħuk għax, kien jibżgħħ mis-supporters tan-naħa l-oħra. Għax inti ta' *Times* u sebaħ u dalam hu dak iż-żminijiet hu. Il-politika kienet minn dejjem hawn Malta, [ma jinftehimx] jiġu nies Maltin jiġu mil-Awstralja *holiday*, jgħidu ġejna a *holiday*, ngħidilhom, "ha ngħidilhom giex kelmiet meta tiġu Malta titkellmux fuq il-politika għax tqajmu gwerra mondjali" [jidħaq].

M: Lil Mabel kont tarha tkellem personaġġi mill-gvern jew nies ta' pużizzjonijiet għolja mis-servizzi?

Attard: Erga' irrepeti please.

M: Lil Mabel kont tarha tkellem nies għoljin mill-gvern?

Attard: Rajt ħafna li, kienet vera mara magħrufha hu, għax kellha vera *power* Malta dak iż-żmien, dak iż-żmienijiet hu. Anke mal-Maltin meta saru ministri Maltin, kellha *power* hawn Malta, anki, kienet fil-parlament ukoll hi hu, kienet fil-parlament hu. Imbagħad ma l-Ingliži u mal-kbarat hu, *she's very well known in* Malta kienet din il-mara hu, tal-għageb. Id-*drawback* kienet li kellha, li ma titkellimx bil-Malti, bil-Malti.

M: Issa ħa nerġa mmur lura, tiftakar meta rajt l-ajruplani ta' l-għadu għall-ewwel darba?

Attard: Iva, dażgur. Dak iż-żminiejiet kull meta kien jiġu l-*air raids*, hu, di fatti konna nitigħu fuq il-bejt biex naraw dawn l-ajruplan ġejjin jattakkaw,

huma tand it-Taljani tand kienu jkunu fl-għoli kont tarhom zgħar hu. Ġieli konna naraw xi *bullet* nieżla mil-ajruplan hu, jaqaw fuq il-bjut, imma ma konniex nibżgħu hu. Imma umbagħad iktar tard meta bdew jaslu l-Ġermaniżi, jien dak iż-żmien kont ninzel ix-xatt tal-Belt biex insib biċċiet tal-bombi, *shrapnels* jgħidulhom hu, u *air raids* kbar konna narawhom ġejjin il-Ġermaniżi hu, tletin, erbgħin, ħamsin, mija u ħamsin, *bunch* wieħed eh. U tisma bum kulħadd, minn kullimkien, kien jisplodi hu. Umbagħad anki il-Ġermaniżi bdew jitfgħu *paper bombs*, *paper bombs* bħal envelop, tmur tmissu tmissu dan l-env- taqbd u inti u jesplodja jisplodi f' idejk eh. Kienu jgħidulhom *paper ball- bombs*. Umbagħad niftakar meta ġew li *Spitfires*, hu, kienet ġurnata msaħba ħafna, kienet niftakar kollha sħab hu, u bdejna naraw l-ajruplani jiġu wara xulxin, ma konniex nafu li ġie *bunch* arjuplani Ingliżi godda *Spitfires* hu. Meta ġew li *Spitfires* umbagħad il-gwerra hawn Malta ħadet volta mogħod ieħor umbagħad eh. Umbagħad kellna d-difiża hawnek eh. U anke meta kien hawn is-suldati Maltin tal- fuq il-*bowfords* u dan hu. Fil-fatt jiena wieħed mill-ħbieb tiegħi miet hawnek Birżebbuġa, fuq kanun hawnek hu, dan ix-xagħar li ġej ma nafx kemm jalaq. Inqabad bil-lieve hawn hekk hu, kien qiegħed fuq kanun Birżebbuġa, u ġiet *direct hit* fuqu eh. *Direct hit* eh Miskin. Kien għad kellu tmintax il-sena nqabad bil-lieva kien miskin.

M: Issa int bqajt fl-istess lokal tul il-gwerra kollha?

Attard: Iwa, bqajt il-Ħamrun, tul il-gwerra kollha iva. Umbagħad bdejna ta' tfal li konna bdejna nilagħbu tas-suldati bil-bini mwaqqa li kien hemm il-Ħamrun eh. Kien hemm il-bini mwaqqa l-Ħamrun, konna okkupajnieh aħna, u konna noqgħodu nilgħabu tas-suldati ġo fiħ eh. Imma dawk li kienu mietu eh, imsieken hu, ta' Serra ta' Burlo, x'jismu Criminale, dawk kunjomu Criminale. Kien hemm waħda miskina mara avanzata, it-tifel tagħha kien għadu kif ġie id-dar mill-lieva, baqa' tal-kolp hemm hekk hu [ma jinftehimx].

M: Allura, x'esperjenza għandek ta' nies li bdew ġejjin minn irħula oħra?

Attard: Le dak iż-żmien għall-ewwel ma konniex nistgħu, ċerta kliem ma konniex nif- nif- nifhmuh aħna, u konna naqbd u nitqu, imma għamilna, konna għamilna, konna ħbieb sewwa magħhom hu, jiġi minn naħa l-oħra. U ħafna minnhom baqaw joqgħodu, anki wara l-gwerra umbagħad, baqaw joqgħodu l-Ħamrun eh. L-ismijiet l-Birgu. Di fatti, il-mara tiegħi jiena mill-Birgu l-mara tiegħi, imma fi żmien il-gwerra kienu marru joqgħodu kollha Ħal Qormi, u baqaw Ħal Qormi, il-familja kollha mill-Birgu kienu.

M: Kif ilqajtuhom lil dawn in-nies?

Attard: [Ma jiftehmx] insomma Maltin bħalna, m'hemmx differenzi billi minn naħa l-oħra u dan hu. Konna *friendly* ħafna, joqgħu jilagħbu magħna, nilgħabu l-boċċi konna, nilagħbu l-ballun fit-triq, mhux bħal illum ta, togħod fit triq [jidħaq].

M: Fejn kienu joqgħodu u f' liema kundizzjonijiet?

Attard: Kien hemm id-djar vojta li kien hemm il-Ħamrun dak il-ħabta kien hemm ħafna djar kienu *si locha*, miktub *si locha*, jiġifieri dan post vojta hawnek. Ħafna minnhom kienu joqgħodu mal-Maltin ukoll, eh, fl-istess djar, fl-istess djar tal-Maltin hu. Kien hemm minn iżommom magħhom, di fatti, ħafna nies minn naħa l-oħra, min mar Ħal Qormi, min mar is-Siġġiewi, min telgħa r-Rabat hu, joqgħodu l-Gudja. [ma jiftehmx] Speċjalment minn kien joqgħod in-naħa ta' *dockyards*, l-iktar *area* li kienu ibbumbardjati hemm hekk hu, għax anki l-barakka ta' fuq niftakar, kienet bil-*bowfords* ukoll, il-barakka ta' fuq hemm hekk, kien hemm kanun hu. Imma dawn ta' Ċejlu tal-Marsa, kienet batterija, il-ħin kollu tfaqqa bil-lejl u bin-nhar ta. Ġieli kont immur Ħal Luqa wkoll nara l-ajruplani tilgħajn biex, fi żmien il-gwerra ta'. Immorru bil-mixi, u nogħoqodu narawhom telgħin u niżlin. Darba minnhom kont mixi l-Ħamrun, f'nofs inhar għada ajruplan Ġermaniż u kien *imaxingunjana* [sic.] ta. Ma kienx laqatna imma eh, ma kienx laqatna, fejn il-knisja tal-Kunċizzjoni. Dak iż-żmien ma kienx bħal lum kollu bini, kollu għelieqi kien hu, kollu għelieqi kien hu.

M: X'kien ikun il-proċess sa biex taċċetaw ir-refuġjati f'darkom?

Attard: Kif iniha?

M: X'kien ikun il-proċess sa biex taċċetaw ir-refuġjati f'darkom?

Attard: Dak iż-żmien konna naqilgħu bħal ma il-klandestini li hawn illum, qieshom hu, biex tgħinhom hu, ma kienx hawn djar vojta għal kulħadd hu. Imma kienu jithaltu ma nies oħra hu heq. U dak iż-żmien il-Ħamrun per eżempju peres li kien hemm il- il- il- ta' *Fra Diegu Institute* kien kollox hemm hekk hu, l-*ARP (Air Raid Precaution)*, id-*Demolitions*, *Social Services*, kollox hemm hekk kienu, dawn l-*ARP (Air Raid Precaution)* kienu nies biex meta jaqa' l-bini mmorru jduru bil-*casualties* hu, minn wegħhu hu. U ta' *Demolition* biex *jiklijerjaw [sic.] jiklijerjaw [sic.]* il-ġebel minn nofs it-triq u kollox hu. Imbagħad kien hemm l-*Special Constables*, ukoll hu, li malli jdoqq *air raid*, u anki meta ma jdoqqx *air raid* filgħaxija ma tistax togħod barra inti, kien jittawal, bħal *warden* li hawn illum, li *Special Constables* u idaħlek il-ġewwa eh, dak iż-żmien, hu. Kien ikollhom faxxa ma idejhom, *Special Constables*, hu. Imma biex ħaffirna dawk ix-xelters, eh, kbira kienet, bil-baqqun u ma tistax timagina hu, daqqa ta' baqqun taqtalek biċċa, u tħaffer xelter minn triq għall-oħra hu, daqshekk hu. U ġieli kien hemm fejn waqqgħu l-bombi, mhux il-Ħamrun imma, ma niftakarx, waqqaw fi żewġ bokkok tax-xelter eh. Nagħtu kas waqet bomba fil-bokka ta' hawn isfel u bomba oħra fil-bokka ta' fuq, u kullħadd jibqa tal-kolp hemm hekk, hemm taħt hu. Naħseb il-Ħamrun kien mietu erbgħa u għoxrin ruħ hemm hekk ħdejna aħna, heq. U aħna konna d-dar darba minnhom qabdu ajruplan fis-*searchlights*, u lil oħti gġidilha qabduh fis-*searchlights* hu, f'daqqa waħda tisfira kbira, bomba niżla, tisfira, u bomba niżla, bum, u waqqgħet kantuniera l-bogħod minnha, kantuniera bogħod minnha, u fejn ġiet din il-bomba kien hemm bħall xelter, mhux fil-blat imma, mina u n-nies jogħodu taħt il-mina. Ġiet fuq din il-mina, l-bomba, u taħthom kien hemm ġibjun, u sfronda kollox u kulħadd, niżel. Kienu mietu ħafna nies ukoll, eh, ġol-ġibjun, minn dawn, *Villambrosa* kien, *Villambrosa*, bqajt niftakarha dik hu.

M: Qatt smajt jekk kienx hemm xi kunflitti ma dawn ir-refuġjati?

Attard: Le, le qatt ma niftakar, ma niftakar le, qatt ma niftakar.

M: Hallelw xi impatt fuq in-nies tal-Ħamrun?

Attard: Le ma hallelwx, ħafna minnhom baqaw jogħodu hemm hekk *di fatti* huma hu. Tant ingranaw magħna, li baqaw jogħodu hemm ħafna minnhom hu. Aħna ngħidulhom tan-naħa l-oħra dawk, konna ngħidulhom aħna hu, [jitħaq].

M: Kienu jgibu ruħhom differenti minnkom?

Attard: Le, le. Kien jgibu ruħhom tajjeb ħafna magħna hu. Kienu qieshom Ħamruniżi bħalna hu, ħalliha li jien mill-Belt hu [jitħaq].

M: Avolja dawn ir-refuġjati kienu meqjusin barranin ħassejtu sense ta' komunita ma dawn in-nies?

Attard: [Ma jiftehimx] Regolari, [ma jiftehimx] x'jismu ta' xejn, regolari, Maltin bħalna, Maltin bħalna hu, anzi konna nitħasruhom li ġew minn naħa l-oħra, ħabba l-gwerra ġew joqgħodu magħna hu [ma jiftehimx].

M: L-ewwel semmejt ix-xelters, kif kontu tgħixu hemm isfel?

Attard: Xej' [ilalaq] [ma jiftehimx] kien ikollok ammont minn x'ħin idoqq l-air raid kulħadd kien minn iġorr xi banketta miegħu, minn jiegħhu xi sigġu miegħu, minn jiegħhu xi kutra miegħu biex jibqa hemm hekk hu, ħeq.

M: Kulħadd kien jinżel?

Attard: Mhux kulħadd, imma l-maġġoranza, l-maġġoranza n-nies kienu jinżlu fix-xelter. Jien ma kontx nibża, kont nieħu gost anzi nara l-ajruplani maqbudin f' xi *searchlight* hu, kont nieħu gost jaqbduhom fis-*searchlight*

hu [jithaq]. Imbagħad jibdew niżlin il-bombi umbagħad hemm, mogħod ieħor [jithaq].

M: X'tip ta' xelter kontu tużaw, wieħed publiku jew kellkom wieħed privat tal-familja?

Attard: Xelter? Le, tal-publiku, tal-publiku aħna. Imma kien ikun hemm fix-xelter min kien ikollu wieħed, *area privata* tiegħu. Di fatti oħti kienet tmur f'xelter privat, u kien iħalsilha missieri biex toqgħod ġo fiħ. Kien iħalsilha biex toqgħod ġo dan x-xelter. Kienet tiġri. Kif jibda jinfetah ir-*radio*, li sa jibda jannunzja ġa telqet tiġri għax-xelter, in-nies hekk kienu jagħmlu eh, tal-għaġeb eh. Heq mhux kulhadd kien xorta, hu. Kien immur joqogħod fil-bokka tax-xelter [jidħaq], sa kemm jinżlu l-familja u joqogħod barra.

M: Kif kontu tagħadah il-ħin?

Attard: Nistennew, nistennew il-ħin kollu xi *air raid* ġej il-ħin kollu. *Di fatti* aħna Malta kellna fuq tlett elef *air raid* fi żmien il-gwerra aħna hawn Malta, fuq tlett elef *air raid* kienu hu. Niftakar meta waqa' il-*Capitol* il-Belt, niftakar, nismagħhom jgħidu hu. Niftakar darba konna fuq iz-zuntier tal-knisja u qallu waqa t-*Teatru Rjal* il-Belt. Umbagħad bdew jitfgħu l-*parachute mines* eh, mhux bombi, bħal mina, *mine* bil-*parachute* hu. U niftakar meta t-Taljani pruvaw jidħlu fil-port bil-*midget submarines* li kellhom, bil-*piggy* kien jgħidulhom għandikun. Pruvaw jidħlu fil-port dak iż-żmien kien hawn qiesu xibka fil-port hu, u t-Taljani pruvaw jidħlu minn hemm hekk hu, dak kien xi l-ħamsa ta' filgħodu, ma rajthomx imma nismagħhom jgħidu kien hemm l-*RMA (Royal Malta Artillery)* s-suldati Sant Iermu, u l-*RAF (Royal Air Force)* hu, kienu qerduhom kolla mingħalija hu. Dawk kienu jgħidulhom il-*midget submarines* għandikun hu.

M: L-ewwel semmejtli li kontu tagħmlu ane granet sħaħ ġo x-xelters?

Attard: Konna, niftakar konna darba minhom, għamilna tlett ijiem, xi tlett ijiem, bil-lejl u bi nhar hu. J' Alla ma kienx żmien il-Milied, ħabta tal-Milied kien

dik il-ħabta. Eh, dak iż-żmien iżgur differenza kbira differenza kbira mil-lum eh [jithaq]. Ma tistax timaġina, fuq il-gwerra hawn mijiet ta' kotba miktubin fuq Malta fi żmien il-gwerra. Imma jien ma nistax nimaġina ma tkunx qiegħed hemm fi żmien il-gwerra, u tikteb fuq il-gwerra Malta. [Ma jifthemix] Naħseb jiena, iktar jieħdu pages minn kull ktieb u jagħmlu storja minnha, jew inkella ma tintaqax ma nies li kienu Malta fi żmien il-gwerra, kif qed nirrakkonta jien hu, jekk ma tkunx hawn ma tistax tgħid hu.

M: Avolja kontu taħt l-art kien hemm regolamenti ta' x' seta u ma setgħax issir?

Attard: [Ma jiftehix]

M: Avolja kontu fix-xelters kien hemm regolamenti ta' xi stajtu tagħmlu?

Attard: Le xejn kulħadd jgħid ir-rużarju, kien kulħadd, kulħadd jitlob, kulħadd jitlob. Niftakar kien hemm, kienu jgħidu biex il-bombi jekk jista' jkun il-bambin jifgħom fil-ħamrija jew fil-baħar. Dak ma kienx ikun bdot tajjed jekk jifgħom fil-baħar [jithaq].

M: Kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u l-ilma?

Attard: Naħseb li kellna dawk iż-żmienijiet dawl u ilma. Iktar li kien ir-razjon, l-ikel l-ikel l-aktar li kien skars, hu. Imma insomma umbagħad bdejna meta l-Ġermaniżi, niftakar ħadu Kreta u invadew Kreta, u meta kien immiss is-sehem ta' Malta jgħidu. Jgħidu ġejja l-invażjoni ta' Malta hu. *Di fatti* l-Ġermaniżi kienu niżlu l-Italja diġa biex jinvalu l-Malta, kien jgħidu dik il-ħabta. Konn qed nistennew l-Ġermaniżi jaqbzu bil-*parachute* Malta u kollox hu. Imbagħad Hitler jgħidu li Hitler kien biddel l-ideja, u marru jattakaw lir-Russja niftakar.

M: Jiġifieri kien hemm il-biża' li Malta seta [...]

Attard: Kien ikollna nċedu *di fatti*, għax dak iż-żmienijiet *di fatti*, l-anqas il-kanuni, l-anqas *ammunition* ma setgħu jisparaw kemm irridu. Il-kanuni ma kellhomx *ammunition* biex il-ħin kollu jfaqqa. Niftakar darba minnhom waqt fuq il-port kien jitfgħu bħal *parachute bombs* tal-biex l-ajruplani jibgħu deħlin ġo fihom fihmna? Imma [ma jiftehemx] *ir-ration*, il-balal kienu *bir-ration* dak iż-żmien Malta hu. Spiċċalhom l-*ammunition* kważi kien spiċċalhom hu, u dak qed nistennew l-invasion ta' Malta, u kienu jkaxkruna dak iż-żmien umbagħad eh. *Di fatti* ġa niżlu l-Italja, Ġermaniżi, insemmu xi postijiet hu.

M: Taf xi każijiet ta' min twieled jew welled ġo xelter?

Attard: Le ma niftakar il ħadd jiena le. Ma niftakarx hu.

M: Għat-*toilets* x'kontu tagħmlu? Għat-*toilets* x' kontu tagħmlu?

Attard: Xiex għat-*toilet*? Kien ikollhom xi bramel hemm isfel, fi bramel hu, fi bramel hu, inkella dak li jkun jitla' immur id-dar hu, għax fix-xelter ma kienx hemm dik il-kumdata le, bħal ma tkun id-dar hu, alumenu.

M: Kif kontu ż-żommu l-indafa ġo x-xelters Frank?

Attard: [Ma jifthemix] Iktar in-nies stess kienu jikinsu hemm hekk dak il-ħabta hu, u immorru jġibu l-ilma minn barra u kulħadd kien ikollu s-siġġu tiegħu. Joqgħodu ma l-art alumenu.

M: Qatt għadilkom minn moħħkom li x-xelter seta' jisfronda waqt xi *air raid*?

Attard: Le għax aħna minn għalina li fix-xelter konna *very safe* taħtu. Taħt il-blat hemm hekk hu. Kien *safe* sewwa konna naħsbu aħna. Imma kien hawn fejn xelters sfrundaw ukoll hu, jew bombi ġew fil-bokka tax-xelter hu. Dak speċjalment meta tiġi bomba fil-bokka tax-xelter minn ikun hemm isfel hemm hekk jibqa daqshekk hu, daqshekk hu.

M: Bħala tfal kontu tibżgħu?

Attard: Jiena u oħti ma tantx konna nibżgħu, waqt l-*air raids* konna nogħodu d-dar, ġieli mormna x-xelter ta imma d-dar konna nogħodu aħna, di fatti meta waqgħu l-bombi ħdejna, anki l-għamara d-dar tagħna, il-gwardarobba waqgħet, id-dar tagħna stess hu [ma jiftehimx] il-Ħamrun hu. Speċjalment meta għidlek li kienu jifgħu l-*paper bombs*, biex inti tmur is-sibgħa, taħsiba ittra inti, taħsibha ittra u tkun bomba tkun bomba. Dak iż-żmien hu.

M: U meta taħorġu minn taħt l-art x'kontu tagħmlu u taraw?

Attard: Meta noħorġu minn go x-xelter?

M: Meta toħorġu minn go x-xelter?

Attard: [Ma jiftehimx] Tmur lejn id-dar hu, sa kemm idoqq l-*air raid* ieħor hu, sa kemm idoqq *air raid* ieħor hu.

M: Imma kontu taraw bini mġarraf.

Attard: Il-Ħamrun ma tantx waqa ħafna bini, bħal ma waqa l-Isla, il-Birgu, Bormla dik-*area* t'hemmek hu. Imma l-Ħamrun waqa bini, imma mhux, fejn pajjizi oħra ma tantx kien waqa bini hu. Minn naħa tagħna kienu mietu xi erbgħa u għoxrin ruħ iva, imma ma kienx waqa ħafna bini l-Ħamrun hu. Almenu ma niftakar li waqa ħafna bini. Waqet *Villambrosa* kien, niftakar, mhux bogħod ħafna minna. Imma l-Ħamrun ma tantx kienu waqgħu bombi dak il-ħabta hu. Iktar in-naħa l-oħ- in-naħa tad-*dockyard*, in-naħa tal-*airport* hu. Dik l-*area* hu.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn minn bata l-ġuħ?

Attard: U ħafna, ħafna batew il-ġuħ, u min ma kienx ikollu biex jixtri bil-*black market*. Dak iż-żmien [ma jifthemix] tal-*black market*, hu, kienu ħafna

negozjanti jbiegħu ħafna affarijiet bil-*black market*. Affarijiet misruqin tas-servizzi speċjalment, hu. *Di fatti* anki ġieli missieri batni l-Belt jien inġieb xi ġarra żejt, ġarra żejt mill-Belt hu. Taf fejn kont immur hu, fuq il-Marsa, immur bil-*pushchair*. Jgħidli mhur għand it-tali u jimlilek il-*pushchair* bil-bejcin tal-landi, kien ikun bejkin tajjeb, affarijiet hekk hu niftakar.

M: Semmejt il-black market, x'tgħidilna fuq dan?

Attard: Fuq il-*black market*? Heq jekk ma jkollokx flus ma tistax tixri bil-*black market* hux [jitħaq] imma meta tmur biex tixri bil-*black market* irrid ikollok il-flus hu, speċjalment anki dan il-bdiewa dik il-ħabta, biex ituk il-patata, jgħidulek “deheb għandek deheb? Ġib id-deheb u ntuk il-patata.” Mhux flus, il-flus ma jiswew xejn f'ċertu punt.

M: Kontu tafu b'xi ħadd li kien negozjant tal-*black market*?

Attard: Konna nafu kienu ma konniex immorru hu? Kieku ma konniex immorru hu? *Di fatti* missieri kien jaf minn ibiegħhom dawn l-affarijiet, u konna mmorru għandhom hu.

M: X'tip ta' ikel jew oġġetti kienu jinġiebu bil-*black market*? Tiftakar?

Attard: Affarijiet tal-*preserves*, tas-servizzi tas-servizzi Ingliži l-iktar hux. Imbagħad kien hemm dawk in-negozjanti Maltin min zamm ħafna affarijiet minn qabel il-gwerra fix-xelters kien hemm minn ħbiehom ġo l-bir, ġo l-bir, nagħtu każ ċertu affarijiet bħall *corned beef* u dawn l-affarijiet minn kien jobsor li ġejja l-gwerra kien jaħżinhom ġo bir, ġo bir eh, biex ma sibuhomlux eh, u żgur hu. Il-makakki dawk hu [jitħaq].

M: Qatt smajt b' xi nies li kienu jgħorru li jridu minn bini mwaqqa? Kienu jisirqu?

Attard: Jgħidu iwa, jgħidu. Kienu jmorru ifitxu u jagħmlu u kien minn jakuzha nies li ma kienux vera wkoll hu. Minn immur biex jaqla l-ġebel, biex *jiklerjaw*

[sic.] kienu jgħidu li jsibu jieħduh kienu jgħidu imma qatt ma naf li rajt nies li jsibu xi haġa, imma tisteniha din umbagħad hu, tisteniha hu.

M: Int qatt irqad bil-ġuħ?

Attard: Le. *Thanks God Thanks God* qatt ma rqadd bil ġuħ. Għax qed ngħidlek li missieri kien iġib eh, kien iġib. *Thanks to him* ma batejniex aħna fil-gwerra. Peres li kien bil-grocer u kien jaf minn dawn li jbiegħu il-*black market*, hu. U niftakar darba wkoll kien intaqa ma xi għaxra minn nies u kien għamilhom ikla ġo każin il-Ħamrun missieri hu. Għaxart iħbieb tiegħu, għaxart iħbieb tiegħu ġo xi każin il-Ħamrun għamilhom ikla hemm hekk hu, dak iż-żmien hu.

M: Waqt il-gwerra?

Attard: Waqt il-gwerra, iva, iva, ehe, ehe. Ma nafx fejn imma, niftakar nisimgħu jgħidu hu ġabar xi għaxra u għamlu ikla filgħaxija bil-lejl hemm hekk hu, ikla hu.

M: Il-*Victory Kitchen* x'kienu eżatt?

Attard: X' inhuha?

M: Il-*Victory Kitchens*?

Attard: Eh il-*Victory Kitchens*. Il-*Victory Kitchens* xejn. Dawn kienu nies impjegati u inti tmur tinkiteb, jiena kont miktub. Għax meta kont naħdem it-*Times*, ukoll, *di fatti*, kien jgħidulna morru u eħilsu tal-*Victory Kitchen*, minngħalija kien *two and six*, rbieghi dik il-ħabta. Ninkiteb il-Ħamrun jiena u jgibulna l-ikel it-*Times*. L-offiċju it-*Times*. Kien hemm kamra dining room fejn konna mmorru nieklu, nistrieħu, u jgibulna l-ikel hu. U kulħadd għandu l-platt tiegħu u furketta. F'xi nofs inhar iġibulek l-ikel hu tmur tipreżenta it-*ticket* li kien ikollok, platt u jagħmilek erba' għaġiniet hu, jew inkella xi biċċtejn laħam zgħar u koċċ zalza dak li kien [jithaq]. Mhux xi

three course dinner ta, dan kien ikun ta [jithaq]. Jew xi *buffet dinner* ta [jithaq] erba' għaġiniet daqshekk hu. U niftaklar aħna konna nħasluha l-Ħamrun hu kienu jagħtulna lura mal-paga wkoll eh, mal-paga konna nieħduha lura dik *it-two and six* kienu jgħtuilna.

M: Kif kienet taħdem din is-sistema?

Attard: Ħeq minn kien immexxi l-pajjiż dik il-ħabta hu, kollox huma, kollox huma hu. Dan inti trid tidħol bħala membru, ngħidu aħna. Tħallas *two and six* fil-ġimgħa mingħalija, hu, xi ħaġa hekk kienet hu, u tmur kien ikollhom kamra isfel u jibdew isajjru hemmek. Taħseb kemm kien ikun hemm kokijiet tajbin hux *chefijiet* [sic.] li kellhom. Jagħhallilek koċċ għaġin biz-zalza hu mhux ħa jagħtik xi muntanja ta, [ma jiftehimx] erba' għaġinijiet toġhodhom kienu jgħatuk [ma jiftehimx].

M: U kontu tkunu sodisfatti?

Attard: U illum tmur tiekol ġo lukanda [jithaq] [ma jiftehimx] għandek kemm trid u ma tkunx sodisfatt aħseb u ara dawn l-erba' għaġiniet li kienu jgħatuk.

M: Kontu tkunu tafu x'qed jġgri barra minn Malta?

Attard: Eh ġieli konna nistimgħu ir-radju Taljan, niftakar ir-radju Taljan u ftit minn kien ikollu *radio*, dik il-ħabta, hawn Malta iktar ir-*Redifussion* hu, imma fuq ir-*radio* kienu jaqbdur r-*radio* Taljan hu. Niftakar darba qalu li Taljani attakaw Malta u laqtu l-ferrovija Malta, kien kollu gideb dan [jithaq] ma għandniex ferrovija Malta, u kisrulna hemm hekk, u kisru hawn hekk hu [jithaq].

M: U kif kontu tkunu tafu jekk huwiex dieħel xi konvoj?

Attard: Kultand xi nies minn naħa l-oħra, dawk kienu jkunu mas-servizzi Ingliżi u kien ikun, dak kollox sigriet kien ikun, kollu sigriet hu. Nagħtu każ jgħidu "Telqu konvoj ta." Imma umbagħad sa kemm jasal Malta dak iż-żmienijiet

il-*konvojs* [sic.] hu kollha taħt l-ilma kienu jkunu l-vapuri. Ftit li kienu jaslu Malta dik il-ħabta vapuri [jithaq]. Heq. U kien hemm il-baži tas-*submarines* Forti Ma- Forti Manoel hemm hekk kienu, imma l-maġġoranza tas-suldati li kien hawn Malta hu tal-Bažuto, ir-*Royal Engineers*, il-Furjana, ħafna regimenti differenti, l-*Cheshires Regiment*, l-RAU [ma jifthemix], barra l-RMA (*Royal Malta Artillery*) Maltin hu, l-RAF (*Royal Air Force*), u *Commandos* minn kollox kien hawn hu. Kien hawn eluf, eluf ta' Ingliži hawn Malta dik il-ħabta hu. Kull minn tara bl-uniformi dik il-ħabta hu, il-*bobs*, il-*bobs* hu. Il-Maltin jibzgu minn dawk is-suwed għax kienu jarawhom koroh il-Maltin, [ma jifthemix] ma konniex m'dorrijin narawhom aħna. Imma kienu *jihelpjawhom* [sic.] ukoll il-Maltin, jekk jaraw xi ħadd miexi kienu jwaqfulu biex itellgħuh, imma l-Maltin kienu jibzgu umbagħad jitolgħu eh fil-karrozzi magħhom hu. Imma ma l-Ingliži dejjem konna mogħod ieħor, ma l-Ingliži. *Di fatti* issa, illum il-ġurnata l-Maltin għadhom jippreferu, minn nazzjonijiet kollha għadhom jippreferu l-Ingliži hawn Malta fihmt.

M: U int waqt il-gwerra kif kont tħares lejn is-suldati Ingliži?

Attard: Kellna ħafna ħbieb anke ġieli jkunu, kienu jkunu bil-lieva. Il-Ħamrun kien hemm *bar* u kienu jiġu hemmek jixorbu il-birra kienu jixorbu, konna ħbieb magħhom l-Ingliži konna ħbieb hu. Il-*bobs* il-*bobs*, l-iktar li kien ikollhom baġġ ħamra hawn hekk. Umbagħad niftakar il-Ġermaniži umbagħad, ukoll, priġunieri tal-gwerra eh. Kienu jilagħbu xi logħoba futbol l-istadjum il-Ġermaniži. Allura, flok qabel tibda l-logħba, il-Ġermaniži, flok jipprezentawlek bandiera, taf kif jagħmlu l-*captains* hu, il-Ġermaniži jipprezentawlek xi biċċa għamluha mill-ġebel huma, jew forma ta' knisja jew forma ta' xi ħaġa hekk, bil-ġebel hu li jaħdmu l-priġunieri tal-gwerra. Dawk kienu *Sant Andrew* dawk hu. Imma kienu jilagħbu l-futbol hawn Malta wkoll hu. Kienu jilagħbu hu.

M: Kif kontu tinħaslu, l-ilma kien skars?

Attard: [Jithaq] Ma kienx hawn abbondanza bħal-lum, imma kien ikollna ilma, ma kienx ikollna ilma sħun ija [jithaq] mhux bil-heaters u dan ta.

M: F'każ ta' mard x'kontu tagħmlu?

Attard: Emminni qas naf ingħidlek, temmen. Jew ma konniex. Dak iż-żmien kien hawn ħafna mard tal-ħožba, mhux ħožba, eh *chicken*-, x'jgħidulu bħal issa, tintela kollok ħafas, eh x' kienu jgħidulu dak bħal issa, mhux *chicken pox*, mhux *chicken pox* kien ikun. Kien hawn mard kulħadd iħokk, il-ħakk, jaqbdek il-ħakk, il-ħakk.

M: *Scabies*?

Attard: L-*iscabies*, kulħadd bl-*iscabies*, kulħadd, kulħadd idellek l-ingwent, l-ingwent ta' l-*iscabies*. Kulħadd imma, tiskanta ta [jidħaq].

M: Kif kontu issibu tobba u mediċina?

Attard: Emminni qas niftakar kif konna nsibu. Dak iż-żmien ma kienx hawn spiżeriji bħal m'hawn illum hu. Wieħed, wieħed kull raħal kien ikun hawn dik il-ħabta, hu. Dak bħal mediċini anki tobba. Ma kienx hawn dawk it-tobba li għandna illum għax il-Ħamrun niftakar xi giex spiżeriji kien hemm, xi ġiex tobba kien kemm il-Ħamrun, ma kienx hemm xi ħafna tobba bħall-lum, hu.

M: Kien hemm xi mard relata ma ħmieġ?

Attard: Ma jidirliex. [Ma jiftehmx] Dak il-ħabta qas tagħti kas ta' dawn l-affarijiet hu, moħħok fil-bombi, u l-ikel, dawk l-aktar importanza kienu hu.

M: U għall-ħwejjeġ kellek bizzejjed, jew ġieli kellek taqsam ma ħutek?

Attard: Dak iż-żmien ma tantx kien hawn ħwejjeġ. Għax anki l-ħwejjeġ kienu bir-*ration* ukoll, b' ir-*ration* speċjalment ħwejjeġ tan-nisa speċjalment, u

qomos u dan bil-kupuni trid tmur tixtri. Kien itik kupun biex tmur tixtri bihom. Heq.

M: Illum jagħdilek minn moħħok li stajt tlift lill-ġenituri tiegħek?

Attard: Illum iwa, imma dak iż-żmien le, dak iż-żmienijiet hu. Stajna ninqerdu kollha dak iż-żmien, mhux il-ġenituri biss hu.

M: Issa, x'kont tħoss rigward it-Taljani u l-Ġermaniżi?

Attard: Dak iż-żmien konna iferoċjati għalijhom dik il-ħabta aħna hu, għat-Taljani mod hu. Imma umbagħad speċjalment meta bdew jiġu l-Ġermaniżi, u kienet storja mod ieħor il-Ġermaniżi hu. It-Taljani kienu qieshom dilettanti u dak aħna għalina. Imma imbagħad ġew il-Ġermaniżi hu qed ngħidlek, qiesni l-bieraħ qed narhom ġejjin grupp, mhux wieħed u tnejn ta, għoxrin, tletin, erbgħin hu, *bunch* wieħed deħlin hu, tista timaġina hu [jishol] timaġina.

M: Meta spiċċat il-gwerra kif irritornajtu għall-ħajja normali?

Attard: Heq, heq, dan mhux il- bieraħ jiġifieri [jithaq]. Imbagħad bdew ħafna demolition, bdew fejn kien waqa fi żmien il-gwerra, bdew ikomplu jwaqqah jew jirrangawh u wara l-gwerra umbagħad hu. Dawk id-djar li waqaw umbagħad bdew ineħħu l-ġebel il-ħażin, umbagħad min beda jibni, bdiet ġejja l-ħajja għan-normal umbagħad hu [jisgħol].

M: Tiftakar fejn kont meta smajt meta t-Taljani ċedew Frank?

Attard: Ma niftakarx ta, ma niftakarx, ma niftakarx [jisgħol]. Nismagħhom jgħidu li kien hemm il-festa tal-Bambina l-Isla, u waqt il-purċisjoni bdew jgħidu li ċediet l-Italja niftakar, imma ma niftakarx iktar, tiskanta ta. Għax dak iż-żmien kien hemm bastimenti tal-gwerra l-Isla wkoll hu. Fuq il-Belt kienu saru ħafna demonstrazjonijiet favur l-Ingliżi dik il-ħabta li spiċċat il-gwerra hu. Imma peres li kont għadni zgħir dik il-ħabta hu.

M: Tiftakar xi episodju li baqa stampat f'moħħok minn žmien il-gwerra?

Attard: Dawk meta waqgħu l-bombi ħdejn hu, għax konna qegħdin ġo fihom hu. Meta kienet taqa' bomba nagħtu kas il-Gudja jew jew Bormla la ma targħix inti, meta tara d-diżastru li kien ikun hawn, billi qed tara l-bini kollu mwaqqa, it-toroq imblukkati ħadd ma jista' jagħdi qas bil-mixi, qas bil-mixi ma kont tagħdi. Tiskanta dak il-bini kollu kif kont f'nofs it-triq, u kollox hu, umbagħad dik il-konfużjoni. Umbagħad pulizija, tal-*ARP (Air Raid Precautions)*, kulħadd jagħti hu [ma jifthemix] biċċa xogħol kbira kienet hu.

M: Frank, grazzi ħafna ta'ħinek.

Attard: Daqsekk [ma jinftiehemx] [jidħaq].

APPENDIX V

MEM [O] R J A

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DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: GHAXRA TA' AWISSU ELFEJN U SBATAX

POST: DAR TA' L-ANZJANI – VILLA MESSINA

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Illum l-għaxra ta' Awissu elfejn u sbatax, jien James Baldacchino qiegħed ma' Michael Grima għat-tieni parti ta' l-intervista tagħna ġewwa d-djar ta' l-anzjani Villa Messina r-Rabat f'isem il-proġett MEMORJA għall-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta.

M: Mike l-aħħar darba konna qed nitkellmu fuq ir-refugjati, biex nkomplu, qatt smajt jekk kienx hemm xi konflitti ma' dawn in-nies?

Grima: Le, le qas qatt [ton kajman u ċert] – konna qisna familja waħda.

M: Tiftakar jekk hallewx xi mpatt fuq in-nies tar-raħal?

Grima: Le, xejn [ton kajman u ċert] telqu bil-kwiet jġigifieri; meta għaddew l-affarijiet u dan, qabdu u telqu jġigifieri ma kienx hemm nkwiet ta' xejn. Konna ħbieb, nixtieq narhom, jġigifieri, darba [kelma mhux ċara] ntqajt ma' wieħed minnhom kien qassis li hu – Fr Victor Soler – għadni niftakar kien ġie hawn man-nies, u qaluli, għedtilhom dan min hu? u qaluli Dun Victor Soler, imbagħad kif qaluli Dun Victor Soler jiena ħadt ir-ruħ u kellimtu! [iqaħqah]

M: Kienu jġibu ruħhom differenti minnkom?

Grima: Xej, xej, xej qisna familja konna, qisna familja.

M: Kien hemm familji li għażlu li jibqaw fil-lokalita' wara li għadda kollox?

Grima: Skużi?

M: Kien hemm familji li għażlu li jibqaw jgħixu r-Rabat?

Grima: Iva kien hawn ħafna, iwa u għad baqa' [enfasi] u għad baqa' [enfasi] li kienu jgħixu hawn hekk fil-gwerra u baqaw haw ir-Rabat. Naqsu ħafna [enfasi] minnhom iwa, bħalissa ninsa min haw, min haw u dan, imma

naf li kien baqa' ħafna wara. U żżweġġu haw ir-Rabat u baqaw haw ir-Rabat jiġifieri kienu għadom żgħar, baqaw haw ir-Rabat.

M: Avolja r-refuġjati kienu meqjusin barranin, ħassejtu sens ta' komunita' ma' dawn in-nies?

Grima: Ħafna, ħafna, ħafna, [kliem mhux ċar] konna qisna familja [ton kajman imma ċert] K-kif konna ningabru d-dar kulĥadd qisna familja, għax ank-meta kien per eżempju jdoqq air-raid konna mmorru naqra fil-kantina biex tħalna taparis x-xelter [nofs daħqa] jiġifieri konna, konna ni-nirranġaw [emfasi] kif nistgħaw bħal speċi qed tifhem?

M: Kont semmejt li tiftakar lil-lil Edgar Soler u l-familtu?

Grima: Eĥe, iwa, iwa, iwa. Ħafna niftakru lil Edgar Soler. Naf li kien tifel sewwa ħafna u dan imbagħad ġara li ġara, ma aħna ma konniex nafu u l-għal xiex u mhux għal xiex sewwa? għax imbagħad in-nies bdew jgħidu xi-x-affarijiet [...] ll-bqija da- ma nafx [ibaxxi leħnu ħafna] [jinstema' ħsejjes ta' karozzi fit-triq].

M: Tiftakar meta bdew jattakkaw il-Ġermaniżi? [mistoqsi darbtejn].

Grima: Ma nafx meta bdew jattakkaw il-Ġermaniżi [ton baxx]. Naf li il-bidu ġew il-il it-Taljani filgħodu kmieni, tefaw il-bombi u telqu mbagħad eħħ ġew il-Hurricanes; kenna l-Hurricanes – mhux Hurricanes [jikoreġi ruħu] kenna, wara l-Hurricanes [ton jgħola u jsir iktar sod bl-eċċitament] kenna tlett Gladiators – il-Faith, Hope u Charity [ton daħkan] – sew dak kulĥadd jiftakarhom. Imbagħad meta bdew ġejjen iktar spissi u dan, bdew ġejjen il-Hurricanes. Ġew il-Hurricanes, imbagħad wara l-Hurricanes, meta eħħ bdiet daqsxejn żżid il-gwerra u dan, imbagħad bdejna naraw l-ispitfires [emfasi u ton aktar sod] – ajruplani jiġiefieri ta' ħeffa kbira [emfasi u b'ton sod]. Għax jiena ġieli rajt dog fights ji-ji- anke minn fuq is-Saqqajja; dog fights kif jiġġieldu, laqas, laqas l-leħna ta' berqa jgħaddulek [emfasi u ton sod].

M: Waqt il-bumbardamenti kontu tfittxu x-xelters?

Grima: Waqt i-bumbardamenti dażgur li konna nfittxu x-xelters [emfasi] Tant hu veru anke jiena kont għamilt wiehed; k-kont għamilt wiehed il-il-kulleġġ, ta' x'jgħidulu haw, il-kulleġġ tar-Rabat. Kont ħaffirtu jiena stess, kont għadni daqxejn ta' tifel, kont niddobba' naqra minn hawn u naqra minn hemm biċċa għodda. Kelli wiehed jitgħalla x-xaħx fuq u jien kont nkom-kont għadni naqra ta' tifel, imbagħad [emfasi] mort l-lmtarfa bħala MAC – il- Malta Auxiliary Corps.

M: Dawn il-Malta Auxiliary Corps x'kienu eżatt?

Grima: Dal-Malta Auxiliary Corps kienu [...] għanna il-kit militari, kit militari nklus il-kowt, il-*grey coat* tagħhom, bil-beritta normali xorta biss pajżan! [emfasi] u kenna s-salib aħmar hawn [juri] u x'jgħidulu [...] kien hemm min hu pereżempju ehħ min iġġorr – għax hemm hekk kien hemm ħafna Nglizi jkollhom bżonn il-faħam għall-għall- x'jgħidulhom – għal għal dan li jixgħal ta' ġewwa l-fuklar hux jew x-x- kienu jgħilulu u dan [jaqta' fil-qasir] Kien hemm pereżempju bħall-*Hygiene Section* illi jien kont fiha, ġifieri għax kont nilgħab daqxejn diletant ta' mastrudaxxa u għedtilhom li jien mastrudaxxa kont diletant [ton daħqan] u kont qiegħed ma'-ma' dawn in-nies jġifieri konna qegħdin tlieta; tnejn u jiena u x'jgħidulu. Kien hemm Ngliz jismu Brouthen [?] għadni niftakar; kien nkarigat minna u dan qed tifhem? U u konna mmorru, kienu jkunu ehħ is-suldati fl-għelieqi. Kienu jkunu fl-għelieqi s-suldati u konna nagħmlu bħall-partners [jinstemaw ħsejjes ta' bramel] biex jagħmlu, biex jagħmlu il-bramel ehħ bħala toilets qed tifhem? U u nduru l'hawn u l'hemm. Pereżempju mbagħad ġieli konna nagħmlu minħabba l-*black-out* [emfasi] – meta ġie l-*black-out*, konna jtuna gvieret ġodda u nagħmluhom nwaħħluhom mat-twieqi biex ma joħroġx id-dawl minn tku- ġewwa l-barra ma joħroġx id-dawl u dan l-affarijiet iġifieri. Ko- kienu jmorru, kien hemm nies pereżemju jgħorru l-faħam u dan – kienu jkunu suwed faħma, imbagħad jmorru jinħas- u dan. Ikunu nies tax-xogħol [emfasi] iġifieri qegħdin hemm, biex meta jkun hemm bżonn jmorru jieħdu l-faħam lit-tali familja

u li t-tali familja għax kien hemm ħafna fizzjali u kien hemm il-familji tagħhom – *Officers' Mess* u *Family Quarters* u dan. [jisgħol] Anke sptar, kien hemm. Pereżempju aħna kieku wieħed jkun ma jiflaħx jew hekk, jkollu bżonn xi ħaġa, jaċċetawk l-isptar, kont tmur toqgħod hemm hekk l-isptar daqs kieku suldat xorta waħda, xorta waħda.

M: Tiftakar x-service numbers kellek?

Grima: Uhh *three o eight* żgur u *five five five*. L-ewwel wieħed nsejt x' - hu, kien *three o eight five five five*.

M: Ghedtli wkoll li kont tħalt fil-Malta Volunteer Defence Force?

Grima: Iwa, iwa iwa l-Malta Defence Force [ton jitbaxxa]. Aħna konna ehh meta jkun hemm *air-raid* noħorġu – kien hemm min kellu l-azzarini [emfasi] jien ma kelliex azzarin. Kien hemm min kellu azzarini imma. Ħatni pereżempju, kien *Postman* kellu, kellu x'jgħdulu, kellu azzarin. Imbagħad tawulhom lura u dan wara ċertu żmien u dan qed tifhem? Ejwa [ton baxx donnu jiftakar] Konna nagħmlu naqqa *drill* nsomma taparsi – bħal suldati! [emfasi] ehh bħall- s- affarijiet ta' suldati. Konna noħorġu pereżempju biex naraw hekk jkun hemm nies barra ndaħluhom waqt *air-raid* u dan qed tifhem? Imma l-iktar dik kienet ħaġa, dik kienet ħaġa l-iktar ta' l-ARP u tal-tal-Police Cor tal-PCs – *Police Constable*. Nies pajżana iġifieri imma għandhom għandhom awtorita' daqs puluzija! [emfasi]. Jħarkek [emfasi] daqs puluzija iġifieri jekk tagħmel kontravvenzjoni jew xi ħaġa. Daqs hekk jġifieri [...] mbagħad ma qbajtx, għax imbagħad mort l-Imtarfa – ma qbajtx.

M: Int ngbart bil-lieva jew kont voluntier?

Grima: Voluntier! [emfasi]. Le le, bil-lieva? Għidt bil-lieva inti? No mhux bil-lieva le [emfasi] Jiena mbagħad meta spiċċajt minn dawn l-affarijiet li qed ngħidlek, kont inspector tal-karozzi, kont l-Imtarfa bħala MAC u dan, imbagħad jiena [...] mort għall-Puluzija, ma tħaltx għax kont għadni żgħir,

kelli sbatax il-sena u fil-ħdax ta' Novembru tan-*nineteen forty-two*, *eleventh November nineteen forty-two*, mġegajt ruħi mal-Gvern bħala clerk one, qed tifhem? L-uffiċċju kien għadni niftakar wara l-għassa il-Ħamrun l-iskola, kienet l-iskola, imbagħad minn hemm hekk morna xxiftjajna u morna il-*farm* qed tifhem? U bil-*farm* imbagħad ehh bdew, bdejt ehh ehh jkolli ħafna xogħolijiet. Imbagħad nħolloq il-kustjoni tal-kontroll tal-prezzijiet, u nħollqu ħafna affarijiet, ehh kien hawn ħafna ġuħ; konna niġbru l-patata u dan u din. Imbagħad meta għaddew dawn l-affarijiet minn fuqi, ftaħna ċ-ċentri biex il-ħaxix jingabar fiċ-ċentri u mbagħad nqassmuh aħna liċ-ċentri oħra biex iqassmuh lix-xerrejja. U mbagħad ehh jtuh ibiegħawh in-nies. Kelli ħafna ġifieri, kien hemm ħafna affarijiet xi jsiru ħafna. [xi ħadd iqaħqaħ] Kulħadd mbeżża, ġuħ; kien hawn il-ġuħ. Kien hawn nies jġgru l'hawn u l'hemm, biex min jitla' Ħad-Dingli, min immur l-Imtaħleb, min immur hawn min immur hemm. Issaqsu l-gabilotti biex jixtru xi ħaġa, xi bajd jew – kollu *black market* iġifieri qed tifhem? Iħallsu l-flus imsieken – x'tagħmel?! [emfasi] Bil-ġuħ? ta' ħobża ħames xelini je-jew skont kemm jitolbok ittih [emfasi] għax il-ġuħ, ġuħ! [emfasi] Kwart u nofs kellna ħobż iġifieri, kwart u nofs [nofs daħqa] ġiex gidmiet sewwa u daqshekk [ton baxx] Jiena missieri kien puluzija u kien ikollu r-razzjon tiegħu għax kien Ħad-Dingli, ġieli kie- meta kien jkun ir-Rabat jkollu r-razzjon tiegħu u kont immur nġib ir-razzjon għalih iġifieri kwart u nofs *plus* [emfasi] tal-familja, sewwa! Għax hekk u ġonta [emfasi] kien itielek ta! jekk ikun per eżempju nieqes naqra jaqtagħalek biċċa oħra biex iżidilek, biex itik il-*fair-fir*! Imma mhux se jtik iżjed – itik dak li għandek tiegħu! Jekk għandek erba' kwarti kien itik rata. Daqshekk iġifieri [jbaxxi t-ton] [jinstema' xi ħadd iqaħqaħ].

M: Għall-*Volunteer Defence Force* kif kontu titħarġu?

Grima: Għal xiex?

M: It-*training* minn xiex kien jikonsisti?

Grima: Il-vol- tal-volontieri? Xejn [ilaqlaq] pereżempju taraw xi ħaġa tkellmu mill-ewwel u dan iġifieri għax kienu jistennew anke pereżempju, l-azzarini għaliex kienu? L-azzarini kienu *in case of emergency* illi illi pereżempju jkun hawn ehhhh paraxutisti u mbarazzi hekk, qed tifhem? Għal li jista' jkun [enfasi] m- qatt ma ġaraw dawn. Anzi ġraw ħafna affarijiet pereżempju meta ehhh meta jiġu jattakawna l-*bombers*, jwaqqaw xi *bomber* speċjalment ikun hemm il-*fighters* tagħna fuq iduru għalihom u jwaqqaw xi wieħed u jaqbeż [enfasi] xi wieħed bil-*parachute* – għax qabżu ħafna bil-*parachute* sewwa u u u għal li jista' jkun. M- qatt ma sparaw fuq nies imma ta! [enfasi] Qatt ma smajt [enfasi] li xi ħadd mill-Maltin jew xi ħadd ieħor mill-art jispara għall-paraxutisti. Kienu jmorru mbagħad jiġbruhom; jekk jmorru fil-baħar hemm tal-baħar, jekk jm- fuq l-art immorru l-pulizija *whatever* u suldati u dan jiġbruhom mbagħad jitfawhom; jiena pereżempju meta kont l-Imtarfa – m- mhux haw qiegħed – għandi salib daqshekk magħmul minn priġunier tal-gwerra x-waqa' bl-ajruplan. Għandi salib kurċifiss ingrevjat [enfasi] fuq biċċa majka! [...] U kienu jagħmlu ħafna affarijiet, kienu jagħmlu ħafna affarijiet, kienu kapaċi ħafna l-Ġermaniżi [enfasi] speċjalment. Il-Ġermaniżi l-Imtarfa kienu jagħmlu ħafna affarijiet u kont tarahom il-Ġermaniżi [jaħtaf il-kelma] meta kont l-Imtarfa m- MAC kont narahom għandhom dawra ħamra f'darhom, bħala priġ- [ilaqlaq] bl-uniformi tal-priġunieri sewwa, u jkellmuk qisek qed tidħadedd xejn [enfasi] [jinstemaw ħsejjes ta' karożzi għaddejien] m'hemmx mibgħed [jogħla leħnu] ħa nitħattu hekk! qed tifhem, titħadedd magħhom ikomplu u dan, bl-Ingliż u dan. Jiena kont għadni taqa ta' tifel ma kontx naf ċerti affarijiet qed tifhem? imma kont nara u ninnota ħafna affarijiet. Imma qatt ma għamlu pereżempju reżistenzi u *whatever*, sa fejn naf jien [enfasi] sewwa! [jinstema' ħoss ta' horn]

M: Fejn kont stazzjonat?

Grima: L-Imtarfa! [ton għoli] l-Imtarfa.

M: Tiftakar xi nies li kienu miegħek?

Grima: Niftakar nies li kienu miegħi [igerwed bil-mod] imma, mejtin. [jinstemaw ħsejjes ta' vetturi mit-triq] Wiehed niftakar - wiehed mir-Rabat, nsejt x'kien naf li kien jismu Azzopardi xi ħaġa, imma, ma niftakarx [jitkellem bil-mod u mkarkar] In-nies minn naħħa t'isfel, daw li kienu fil-fil-*Hygiene Section* miegħi. It-tnejn kienu minn naħħa t'isfel. Imbagħad nfirex kulhadd min mar l'hawn min mar l'hemm. Ġieli ntqajt ma' xi ħadd jgħ-jjena kont l-Imtarfa u hekk dak iż-żmien, qed tifhem? imma il-il-maġorparti mejtin! [emfasi]. Għax meta kont hemm jien, kont għadni tfal, kont għadni żghir, sewwa? u daw li kienu kienu kbar, kien hemm miżżewġin [emfasi] iġifieri kienu akbar minni ħafna qed tifhem? Iġifieri tista taħseb, tqis li jiena, niżżik ħajr l'Alla, [jidħaq] għext daqs kemm għext! Daqshekk, imma ehh. Mn'alla ara! għax kieku ma kontx tkun taf int, ċerti affarijiet, mhux hekk? [jiċċajta ma' James]

M: Tiftakar f' xi esperjenzi ta' meta kont fid-*Defence Force* u fl-MAC?

Grima: Kif?

M: Tiftakar f'xi esperjenzi li baqaw miegħek?

Grima: L-esperjenzi li baqaw miegħi? [jirrepeti l-mistoqsija bħal jipprova jiftakar] Jie- daw- kienu, ta' ta' mastrudaxxa kont dilettant, baqgħat miegħi s-sakemm għamilt dak l-arloġġ dak dak fuqna haw, iġifieri, esperjenzi, daw l-esperjenzi, esperjenzi, esperjenzi koroħ – ġrajt ħafna [itawwal il-kelma][xi ħadd jisgħol] nies fl-art mejtin iġifieri bil-bombi u affarijiet hekk, esp- dawk mem-memorji koroħ, imma nsomma tiftakarhom. Żwie-żiemel fl-art rajtu mejjet, jiskarnawh u kollox. Nies [emfasi] fl-art, għadtlek meta waqgħat il-bomba fuq id-dar ta' l-Imħallef Montanaro Gauci, iġifieri rajt nies, rajt il-mara, dik li għedtlek kienet tq- kienet dieħla fix-xelter, oħtha daqqa ta' bonavostra ma laħqitx daħlet fix-xelter; ir-raġel tal-mejta [emfasi], il-bogħod b'saqajh maqtuġhin; surgent ta' l-*Air Force* kien għadu ħiereġ mill-Bank - dak iż-żmien il-Posta kien hemm, kien hemm qisu bħal Bank tal-Gvern, kien ħi- u fl-art karti bluni għadni niftakar, k-karti Nglizi tal-liri bluni jġru ma' l-art, qed tifhem? Biċċa sieq biż-żarbuna

l'hinn, oħra l'hemm. D-d-daw l-affarijiet tiftakar – mhux affarijiet sbieħ. Tiftakarhom iva [...] għax ma tistax tinsiehom, la tkun rajthom hu! dawk iż-żmienijiet. [jkomplu l-ħsejjes tal-karozzi fit-triq]

M: Tħoss li dawn il-forzi kienu ta' ġid għalik f'xi mod?

Grima: X'inhuma? [jinstema' xi għajjat femminili fil-bogħod]

M: L-MAC u *Volunteer Defence Force*?

Grima: Għalija, forzi għalija, għax jiena kont immur biex naqla' xi ħaġa! [jinstema' vuċi femminili fil-bogħod] Eħe, kont mmur biex naqla' xi ħaġa! Ħeħe. Kem-kemm kelli *seventeen and six* fil-ġimgħa [jidħaq], kienu jtuna s-sigaretti. Imma kont tiekol [emfasi]. Kont tiekol bħas-suldati, fil-għodu għandek il-*breakfast*, fl'nofs il- għandek iċ-ċe- ; fl-għaxija għan-għandek naqa te'; għandek il-*Canteen* [emfasi], hemm il-*Canteen* tmur tixtri pereżempju pasta daqshekk [juri], tlett soldi, tixba' tista ma tiekolx wa- f'nofs in-nhar imbagħad. Kont issib kollox. Kollox ġenwin [emfasi] għax kien ikun tan-*NAAFI* , kienu l-materjal kien ikun tajjeb. Kien ikun haw dak il-ħobż tal-birra, kont niġġenen għalih jien! Tista tieklu b'xejn, ħobża daqshekk [juri], tqattaha kwadra, tqattaha u tiekol tal-birra, u staqsejt kemm l-Ingilterra, staqsejt il-Ġermanja. Aqas ħadd [emfasi] l-Ingilterra, l-Ingilterra li haw is-suldati ħlief minnu ma kienux jieklu, lanqas jafu biha! [jistagħġeb] il-ħobż tal-birra. Aqas jafu biha! [emfasi] Ħbieb u tal-familja staqsejthom jekk jeżistiex il-ħobż tal-birra l-Ingilterra [...] qed tifhem? kont ngħib waħda jew xi ħaġa - ma jafux biha [emfasi] biss li kienet teżisti. U haw Malta kie- biha biss miżawda barra li kien ikollna ir-razzjon tagħna Malti sewwa? Imma jiena kont niekol l-lmtarfa, fil-għodu tieħu ġiex *slices* perżut; *e-e-eggs and chips* u u perż- *bacon, eggs and bacon*; muk te' [emfasi] jinżillek għasel. Imbagħad kellna ikel tajjeb ħafna, kenna l-istju – kienu jagħmlu l-istju bil-muntun; [tinstema qanpiena ta' l-elettriku ta' l-isptarijiet] *Stew* ta' l-Ingliżi, b'riħa tiegħu biss tiekol kont, ġifieri kont gawdut bl-affarijiet ta' l-ikel ma kontx nieqes imbagħad għax kont l-lmtarfa [tinstema qanpiena ta' l-ettriku ta' l-isptarijiet] Imbagħad meta

spiċċajt mill-lmtarfa, mort l-agrikoltura, u mort fin-naħħa l-oħra, ta' l-ikel, [il-qanpiena għada għaddeja] ħaxix u frott u affarijiet hekk biex nqassmu lin-nies biex jkollhom x'jieklu [il-qanpiena għada għaddeja] qed tifhem? Iġifieri kien jiġi għandna, ma kienx jistaw jbiegħaw il-gabillotti l'haw u l'hemm, għalkemm xi ħaġa kien joħroġ u dan, fil-gwerra li-li tista ddaħħal, ddaħħal, li kienu jixtru n-nies msieken sewwa? biex jieklu, u aħna konna nqassmuh lil-lil-lix-xerrejja bie-biex jqassmuh huma mbagħad – jbiegħawh huma [emfasi] mhux iqassmuh [jkorreġi ruħu] [il-qanpiena għada għaddeja] Kien ikollhom il-prezzijiet, kien ikem l-mita, tal-prezzijiet [...] u daqshekk iġifieri [jbaxxi ton] ma nistax [minn taħt l-ilsien]

M: Waqt il-gwerra kif kont tħares lejn is-soldati Nglizi, kellek xi tip ta' relazzjoni ma' xi wieħed minnhom?

Grima: Kelli [emfasi] mhux Nglizi kienu. Kelli żewġt iħbieb, kbar tiegħi – wieħed minhom għandi r-ritratt tiegħu – Robert Boudram Mauritius u ieħor kien jismu Michael. Id-dar fl-*album* għandi r-ritratt tiegħu wkoll. Konna ħbieb ħafna [emfasi] imbagħad meta telqu, konna ħbieb ħafna [terġa tinstema l-qanpiena] Robert Boudram għadni niftakar kien student, kien *conscripted* dan, nqabad bil-lieva [emfasi] mill-Mauritius u l-ieħor ukoll naħseb. Im-imma dan R-Robert Boudram, kien għadu żgħir, għax iġġib wiċċu quddiem għajnejja qisu qisu llum [il-qanpiena għada għaddeja] Għax għandi r-ritratt narah kultant u dan; kie-kien qed jistudja għal tabib, għadni niftakar. Kien żgħir hekk, tajjeb, pulit hekk, edukat kien ħafna, anke Michael [emfasi] wkoll. Imbagħad meta, ċċaqalqet l-affari ta' l-invażjoni [emfasi] meta ċċaqalqet l-kwistjoni ta' l-invażjoni marru minn haw Malta, naf [emfasi] illi Michael kien miet – wieħed minnhom kien miet [...] tal-wieħed minn daw it-tnejn. Mauritius! are kif tista? - kieku kienet ħaġa possibli [emfasi], ma għadda daqsdak żmien [emfasi]. Għax hu kien għadu daqxej- – *conscripted* ! xi *eighteen years*, xi *seventeen* hekk xi ħaġa ukoll hekk kellu; jien kon- iżgħar minn hu jiena kont [emfasi] iġifieri, jien għadni ħaj [emfasi] ma nafx jekk għadux ħaj? Imma kieku ħaġa tista tkun [emfasi] u possibli [possibli] nara nsaqsi xi ħaġa għa- il-Mauritius, il- xi ambaxxatur *whatever*, biex jara jek- dal-bniedem għadux

jeżisti! Imma xi trid tagħmel [ton ta' dispjaċir], ma nistax nitfhabat jien issa biex nagħmel [jidhaq ftit] da l-affarijiet.

M: Aparti suldati Nglizi u s-suldati mill-Mauritius, rajt suldati minn pajjiżi oħra?

Grima: Suldati minn pajjiżi oħra?! [jirrepeti l-mistoqsija b'ton ta'għageb] Skoċċiżi kien haw, qas [illaqlaq ftit] kien haw Skoċċiżi, kien haw tal- x'jgħidulu haw tal-*Commandos* ; baħrin kemm tara b'għajnejk [emfasi]. L-Imtarfa ħija!, l-Imtarfa! ir-Rabat konna, ir-Rabat konna; ir-Rabat il-popolazzjoni kienet ma' l-erbgħin elf, bir-rifjuġati b'kollox. Bir-rifjuġati ma' l-erbgħin elf konna niftfakar kont nismagħhom issemmu. Imbagħad kien haw ħafna i-i- d- *Devils; Devonshire* ; Ir- *Irish Fusiliers* ; laq [illaqlaq] Minechester. Laqas naf x'ma kienx haw. Baħrin ta' *HMS* hekk u *HMS* hekk. Għax anke pereżempju il-baħrin, għalkemm kien hemm ta' Bigħi [emfasi] – għax il-baħrin kellhom ta' Bigħi bħala sptar, pero' [emfasi] ġieli kien ikun hemm ta' L-Imtarfa wkoll. U l-Maltin ukoll. Le bis-suldati Maltin kienu jkunu l-Imtarfa wkoll [...] qed tifhem? meta jomordu jew hekk immorru hemm. Kelli pereżempj l-kuġin tiegħi jien – il-kuġin [emfasi] kien MAC ukoll, kien għamel operazzjoni tat-tunsilli l-Imtarfa [...] qed tifhem? għax kellu bżonn jagħmel l-operazzjoni, u għamluhielu l-Imtarfa bħala suldat, daqshekk. Għax l-Imtarfa għadni niftakar fil- *fil-ground tal-hockey* - fejn kien hemm il-*ground tal-Hockey* għadni niftakar, kien hemm, salib tond kbir [emfasi] biex jindika' li hemm hekk sptar; kien hemm salib aħmar, ċirku abjad kbir [emfasi] u salib aħmar. Wiesgħa daqshekk s-salib ta' hekk [bħal juri] jiġifieri aħma- [jintervjeni James]

M: Qed tgħid daqs żewġ piedi.

Grima: Ehh?

M: Qed tgħid daqs żewġ piedi.

Grima: Ehhh daqshekk, ohh oħxon wiesgħa wiesgħa ħafna [emfasi] Ki-kien wiesgħa daqs dawn pereżemju [juri lejn xi ħaġa] hekk bħala salib biex tarah mill-ajru qed tifhem? [jinstema xi ħadd issaffar] U ġieli tefgħu wkoll hemm; ġieli tefgħet xi bomba hemm. Issa jista jagħti kas, illi l-bomba ntefgħet, ma ntefgħext għall-isptar, imma [emfasi] ntefgħet għal, peress li hawn hekk hawn l-lmtarfa u hawn hekk haw ta' Qali, jista jagħti kas li l-arjuplan ġie minn hemm, jitfaha u tiġi hawn flok haw, qed tifhem? ikun hemm daqsxejn ta' x'jgħidulu, ta' żball! Imma ġieli, mhux ħafna ta! imma ġieli.

M: Mela, li tara s-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni anke r-Rabat.

Grima: Ehh?

M: Li tara s-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni ħafna.

Grima: Ir-Rabat! [jirrepeti mistagħġeb] L-lmtarfa. Ħa ngħidilek bil-mod din. Di-dan meta kien, sieħbi haw meta kien fl-*Air Force*, imma mhux fil-gwerra ta! kien ġief- [minn taħt l-ilsien] għax kien dejjem taħt l-art, kienu jitiġgħu l-lmtarfa, ġif- jitiġgħu r-Rabat is-Saqqajja qed tifhem, u joqgħodu jduru hemmhekk. Għax is-Saqqajja kienet tkun daqs kemm ikun hemm nies *Strada Rjali l-Belt* [emfasi]. Għax nies tar-Rabat hu! u dan, l-iżvok hemm [emfasi] Kont tibda tara pereżempju [ilaqlaq] ma kienx haw ħwejjeġ. Jien pereżempju kelli kowt, ħatni kien xtara biċċa drab [emfasi] tal-fizzjal ta' l-*Air Force*, u għadu għandi l-kowt – *double-breasted* għadu għandi, ġdid fjamant [emfasi]. *Double-breasted* ġdid fjamant [emfasi] għadu jekk ilbistu darbtejn għadni niftakar fin-*nineteen fifty-five*, kienet l-elezzjoni u xi ħaġa oħra, u darba oħra. Għax tqil, tqil ma tħoxx bard xejn eh! u għadu pingut eh! Għal barra, jien mhux se nilbsu! [...] Ġdid fjamant għadu [bħal jiftakru sew] Bl-inforra, ki- ħituli, ko- kien ħittuli wieħed ir-Rabat stess ta! ħabib tiegħi, ħajjat ir-Rabat. Dan li qed ngħidlek jiena kien [...] ara fil-*fifty-five*, ehh *fifty-five*, fil-*fifty-five* ilbistu u fil-*fifty-five* għamillitu qisu. Għax dak fil-*fifty-five* għa- niftakar bdejt ngemma l-lapsijiet tar-riklami. U kont neħejthom issa ta! Imma kelli *over five thousand*. [...] X'jgħidulu *fifty-five*

iġifieri *forty-five*, *fifty-two*, *sixty-two*. Għandu tnejn u sittin sena [...] jgħaddi ż-żmien [bejnu u bejn ruħu] [jinstemaw hsejjes ta' karozzi fit-triq] [kliem mhux ċar] forsi nbiegħaw.

M: Tiftakar il-bomba li kienet waqgħet quddiem il-*Pont-de-Vue* ? [jinstemaw karozzi fit-triq].

Grima: Żgur niftakarha il-bomba waqgħet fejn il- *Pont-de-Vue* [b'ton ta' kif jista jinsa'] [jinstemaw hsejjes ta' karozzi fit-triq] Hlief biċċiet tal- hlief biċċiet tal-laħam ta' l-*Air Force* tas-suldati ma kontx tara! Hlafna [emfasi] għax il-*Pont-de-Vue* [kliem maħtuf] kien mimli, kien mimli bi-, anke pereżempju, aħna kenna l-lukanda ta' hatni, kien xtraha hatni mbagħad. Meta waqgħat il-bomba kien xtraha hatni u mbagħad bieghha. Il-lu- il- *Queen's Hotel* kienet [emfasi], *Queen's Hotel*. Kien hemm is-suldati ta' l-*Air Force* [...], għalkemm kienet lukanda kien hemm iz-zijiet tal-mara fiha tnejn, għax kien hemm daqsxejn ta' *Bar* żgħir u anke kienu jiġu l-Ingliżi jxorbu xi haġa mill-*Bar*, imma fuq [emfasi] kien hemm, kien hemm l-*Air Force*, kien hemm is-suldati tal-*Air Force* u kenna hbieb aħna; il-familja tal-mara tiegħi kellhom il-hbieb iġifieri kien jiġu, tant hu veru għandi *mug* daqashekk [juri] bl-*RAF* fuqha jiena, minnhom għadhu – qiegħed għant it-tifla. Żgur li niftakar [...] Bob, Bob niftakru wieħed minnhom, kien ji- kien jismu Bob u ek j'alla ma kienx ġie Malta ukoll u u kien ġie għandhom id-dar [mhux ċert] Kien haw hafna [ton mkarkar u baxx jiftakar] Suldati tgħidx kemm kien ikun haw [...]. [Ilaqlaq] Suldati Ngli- hu! *Pickets* [bħal jiftakar f'daqqa], kont tara *Pickets* jdura fl-għaxijiet tar-*red cup*, suldati tar-*red cup* , bil-biritta hamra jduru ehħh biex jaraw i- i- jkunx hemm xi – għax kien ikun hemm hafna kol- ġie- jkunu fis-sakra u dan qed tifhem? Ikunu jaqbuhom, jiġbruhom u jeħduhom lej lej l-lmtarfa u dan - hekk ġifieri kont tara hafna affarijiet minn dawn iġifieri, fiż-żmien il-gwerra.

M: X'kont tħoss rigward it-Taljani u l-Ġermaniżi?

Grima: Xi tridni nħoss? Biža' [emfasi][jidħaq] [jinstema James jidħaq ukoll] Xi trid tħoss mhux biža'? [emfasi]. Qiegged inti jekk qed idoqq *air-raid*, tmur fix-xelter - ikollok ix-xelter - tmur fix-xelter, ehhhh idoqq is-sirena, tar-*raiders past* imbagħad il-qniepen l-*all clear*, tal-knisja, tmur id-dar, kif tinža' [ilaqlaq] iż-żarbun terġa ddoqq is-sirena u trid terġa tmur fix-xelter. Di-dik dik il-gwerra ruħi qal- bil-gwerra biža' [emfasi] Biža u qalbek itaqtaq dejjem. Fil-bidu qabel kelna – diġa għedtulek mingħalija dan, li konna mmorru l-Kuleġġ tar-Rabat, il-Grotta ta' San Pawl, hemm isfel, min fit-taraġ, min jidħol il-ġewwa, w- qed tifhem? Ma nafx qatx mort hemm hekk il-Gro-?. It-taraġ kien ikun mimlu [ton eċċitat]. Issa dan qegħdin fix-xelter aħna mingħalina sewwa? Imma konna nkunu qegħdin hemm, kulħadd jgħid ir-rużarju, speċjalment meta taq-taqa' xi bomba lejn ir-Rabat, qrib [emfasi] tinstema' u jkun hemm bil-blast. Tant hu veru meta waqgħat il-bomba fuq l-iskola, il-blast, dik li għedtulek diġa semmejthielek tar-Raħal il-Ġdid li ntqajt magħha, iż-iż-Żuża ta' Lugermo [kelma mhux ċara] għeditilha, 'jiena dak li kont erfajtek meta nżilt it-taraġ kollu tax-xelter' qed tifhem? U- vil- il-gwerra dejjem biža', dejjem biżat. Kif tisma kulħadd mwerwer. Dan x'tistenna? [jistaqsi b'emfasi] Li ħa tmur id-dar ma ssib xejn! [...] għax ir-Rabat waqgħu ħafna djar. Ir-Rabat waqgħu ħafna djar [emfasi] eh iġifieri, mhux il-ħafna, ħafna ħafna, imma waqgħu [emfasi] fil-gwerra [...] [jinstemma ħoss ta' karozza fit-triq] Jie- l-iktar, l-iktar, l-iktar li niftakar jiena tal- tal- ta' l-Imħallef Montanaro Gauci, kienet kantuniera, meta mietu dawk in-nies ma laħqux daħlu fix-xelter għax kien hemm ix-xelter kumbinazzjoni quddiem quddiem id-dar tiegħu, quddiem it-triq, Labini Street. [ħsejjes ta' karozza fit-triq].

M: U semmejtli ġie li rajt prigionieri tal-gwerra wkoll. Semmejtli li ġieli rajt il-Ġermaniżi bħala prigionieri tal-gwerra?

Grima: Prigionieri [pront jwieġeb] iva, u anke Taljani [emfasi], ġieli kien hawn ukoll. Għax dana, jekk pereżempju ġie arjuplan; laqtuh; qabeż bil-*parachute*, fil-baħar u fl-art. Fil-baħar immorru għalih għax ikunu għassa bi- jaraw ikunu fej mar ehħ il-militar kellu, kellu, kellu xtajtiet mdawwar kollu l-baħar mdawwar bis-suldati sewwa? Mill-art tkun taf bejn wieħed

u ieħor lhiem naħħa waqa' ; in-naħħa tal-Baħrija; in-naħħa ta' l-Imtaħleb; in-naħħa ta' l'haw in-naħ. Meta ġiebu l'dak li semmejna – il-Karmenu [...] sewwa? Daka mhux minn hawn daħal? In-naħħa ta' ta' ta' Fomm ir-Riħ? Ġie bid-dagħajsa jew biex ġie? Ġiebuħ minn hemm u kie- ntaqa' kumbinazzjoni ma' *Captain Warrington*, [nofs daħqa] li kien tabib l-Imtarfa ta' RAMC u aġħrfu l'xulxin. Pero' l-ieħor kien bil-leħja [jintervjeni James].

M: Għal Karmenu Borg Pisani qed tgħid.

Grima: Għal Bo- Pisani. Daka niftakar kont hemm jiena [emfasi] jiena, jiena rajthom ġejjen bih iġifieri u rajtu dieħel il-il-il x'jgħidulu il- Company Office [ton eċċitat]. U sirt naf li kien hemm *Captain Warrington*, illi *Captain K-Warrington* kien joqgħod haw ir-Rabat u naf fejn kien joqgħod; kien joqgħod *Strada* Kontu Ruġġieru ma' familja, kien Kaptan, iġifieri niftakar ħafna affarijiet minn dawn. Meta, għax qed issemmi int [emfasi], mbagħad bħal speċi ngib quddiem għajnejja. U daa ehħ ikun hemm ħafna affarijiet [ibaxxi leħnu] u anke tkun forsi kwiet tiftakar xi ħaġa oħra [jdoqq mobile].

M: Mike, kont qed issemmi lil Karmenu Borg Pisani u Tommy Warrington.

Grima: Ija daka [jġebbed il-kelma] kif għidtlek jiena. Kont rajthom qalu 'ġabu wieħed, qabduh Fomm ir-Riħ, daħal bid-dgħajsa' u dan u nziertajt kumbinazzjoni kont qiegħed ħdejn il-*Company Office*, l-Imtarfa u rajthom ġejjen bih – skurtat naturalment sewwa? u daħħlu fil-*Company Office*, bid-daqna u bi-bil- leħja u dan, imbagħad kelma ġgib il-l'oħra u min jgħid hekk u min jgħid hekk u min jgħid hekk, qalu 'Karmenu Borg Pisani'. Imbagħad sirna nafu illi kien l-iskola ma' Warrington – aġħrfu l-xulxin u dan, qallu jiena Karmenu, u aġħrfu l-xulxin hekk! Mbagħad li qagħdu jithattu dawk huma jafu x'qalu u ma qalux [...] Ħa niftakar meta pereżempju meta nternaw, in-in-nternaw anke nies [...] mir-Rabat. Nternaw persuna minn haw ir-Rabat ukoll [...] kien l-Italja. Dak kien hemm wieħed l-Italja u kien joqgħod jithaddet fuq ir-radju. Min għalija

dak kien x'jgħidulu Vassallo kuljomu kien. [ton baxx] Ninu! [bħal jiftakar] Ninu Vassallo. Kien l-Italja dak, kien mar student jew xi ħaġa u kien jithaddet anke fuq ir-radju. Iwa [ton baxx ħafna] U mbagħad ġe haw Malta [...] u mbagħed kien ġie Malta, u kien il-Qorti, u ma nafx x'għara mbagħad [jgħaġġel il-kliem] imma kif kien baqa' il-Qorti u mhux Qorti. Kif kien dak [ton baxx] mbagħad kien miet.

M: Biex nkomplu fuq, ix-xelters [jintervjeni Grima 'x-xelters?'] waqt il-bumbardamenti kif kontu tgħixu hemm isfel?

Grima: Kif konna ngħixu? [jirrepeti l-mistoqsija] Ngħidu r-rużarju, x-x kif trid tgħix? Scabies [emfasi] min iħokk l'haw min iħokk l'hemm; ħmieġ [emfasi] Għax kollox hemm! [emfasi u ton għoli] kollox hemm! [emfasi u ton għoli] [illaqlaq kliem mhux ċar] ma kontx tmur f' toilet jew xi ħaġ – imkien! Qed tifthem? Heqq konna hemm hekk f'kamra [...] mbagħad tmur id-dar u tingeda kif tista d-dar u filli qiegħed upppupp u terġa titlaq – dik kienet il-ħajja! Iktar ix-xelter; għamina żmien, iktar fix-xelter [...] iktar fix-xelter mill' id-dar [emfasi] Darba minhom ma nafx kemm dan, kemm il-siegħa dam madonna *air-raid*. Mbagħad ehh kif tisma ehhe is-s-sirena ddoqq tar-*raiders past* tieħu naqra n-nifs u wara ftit tisma' l-qanpiena tal-knisja, tal-tal-Paroċċa iddoqq li hu *All-clear* [emfasi] – tista toħroġ mix-xelter u terġa titlaq lej id-dar. Meta kif tasal id-dar! [emfasi] terġa pup! Tar- tisma UUUUMMMM UUUUMMMM UUUUMMMM UUUUMMMM [jipprova jimmita'] l-ħoss ta' l-ajruplani] l-ajruplani ġejjien! Thosshom [emfasi] dak il-kwiet, qed tifthem? Kullimkien id-dar, kullimkien magħluq, it-twieqi magħluqin, mbarazzi mgħotti l'haw u mgħotti l'hemm [jistagħġeb] u dan! Dik kienet il-ħajja tal-gwerra [...] dik il-ħajja tal-gwerra – gwerra kiefra eh! Meta l-gwerra [...], min ikun bħali żgħir jiftakarha, u jiftakarha sew, għejxha [emfasi] Jien għextha [emfasi] il-gwerra, anke meta kelli kont għadni żgħir, meta kont l-Imtarfa u meta mbagħad thalt mal-Gvern, fil-gwerra fil-*forty-two* – l-aqwa tal-gwerra kienet! Konna niġru l'haw u l'hemm biex niġbru l-affarijiet. Ġieli konna mmorru pereżempju f'għelieqi, biex naraw pereżempju nkunu għaddejien nduru l'haw u l'hemm f- f- fil-kampanja tara bejt, ikun hemm xi qargħa aħmar

jew hekk immorru għalih [emfasi] Min jiġi bil-kelb għalik; min jiġi bl-istanga; min jiġi b'- hekk. Mbagħad bdejna nieħdu l-puluzija magħna [emfasi], u noħduhomlu u nħallsuh ta! iħallsu l-Gvern iġifieri ta! Imma noħduhom biex nqasmuhom aħna mhux dak joħodhom ffit, [ilaqlaq] ibiegħhom il-xi ħadd u u jqassamhom kif irrid *black-mark* [jaħtaf il-kliem] u hekk qed tifhem? Dik li kienet il-gwerra. Aħna għalek konna [emfasi], nduru l-ħwienet biex naraw għandekx eehhh hekk jew hekk; ċ-ċerti affarijiet; xi laring ġi hekk, qed tifhem? Ma nafx għadux ħaj Ġuži, Ġuži tal-Munrož [kelma mhux ċara] – naħseb miet imma. Eh konna flimkien, għax konna noħorġu tnej tnej. Konna *inspectors* dak iż-żmien, imbagħad tla-minn *clerks* sirna *inspectors*. Bl-*ID card* ta! jiena għandi anke *ID card* ta' ta' meta kont *inspector agr-* kont l-*Agriculture* [...], mela hemm kont sabiħ, dak kont sabiħ jien [jiftakar u jiftaħar], hemm qalla kont qalla bniedem tmintax il-sena!. [Ilaqlaq] mhux ta' kul- nithaddet [ton daħqani imma baxx]

M: X'kontu tniżżlu magħkom, x'kontu tniżżlu magħkom fix-xelter?

Grima: Ġox-xelter? Hija x'tiehu miegħek ġox-xelter? X'tiehu miegħek, eh forsi jkollok *Thermos* forsi [emfasi] jekk ikollok naqra kafe'. Eh xi trid tieħu – xej! [emfasi] Xejn! Xi trid tieħu? Kien hawn il-*Victory Kitchen*. Għadni niftakar darba mort għall-*Victory Kitchen*, kien hemm il-minestra, kienet msajjra għandu jkun fuq il-ħatab, u mort ħadt borma bil-bil-platt għall-minestra [...] u u dan, u kien hawn wieħed ir-Rabat kien ikollu t-tin ibiegħaw hekk, u xtrajt biċċa, għax qaluli għant it-tali u tali – Ġannikol kien jismu – kien joqgħod l-hawn fuq, u mort ħadt dil-minestra bid-debulezza, mhux waħdi [emfasi] li kellna qsamniha [emfasi] bejnietna [emfasi]. U kienet msajjra fuq il-ħatab għadni niftakar kien fiha togħma ta' ħatab [emfasi] dil-madoffi ta' minestra, u kilt dil-biċċa tin u qatluni, baqgħetli fuq l-istonku tiegħi [jidħaq]. Eh dik dik il-gwerra; dik il-gwerra [emfasi]. Haw min jieħu pjaċir bil-gwerra għax issir sinjur. Min ikun fiha [emfasi] u dawk is-suldati msieken, diġa għedtlek mall-ewwel radd tas-salib kif ġew it-Taljani *direct hit* fuq il-kanun, mietu sebgħa! Dik il-gwerra [...] fit-triq, tiġri. Darba niftakar nieżel minn *Via Buskett* haw fejn ta'

Sawra, nisma UUUUMMMM UUUUMMMM nagħmel hekk [juri] u nara l-*Blemings* [mhux ċara l-kelma], *Blemings* [mhux ċara l-kelma] *Bombers*, għamilt hekk [juri] u rejthem u kif għamilt hekk narhom, il-bombi, fetħu, fetħu il-il-dak, jiftaħ il-x'jgħidulu i-i-dak u rajthom niżlin hekk għal fuq Ta' Qali [ton eċċitat u ta' biża']. Trid tiġri saqajk teħel ma' l-art [emfasi], bil-biża' – saqajk teħel ma'- ma tiġriex!. Qed tifhem? Anke mbagħad darba oħra fej-fej-fej il-*Pont de Vue*, fej ix-xelter ukoll. Nies għadhom niżlin ix-xelter, deħlin fix-xelter u taqa' bomba. Kien hemm mie- kien hemm min miet fil-bokka tax-xelter, qabel niżel. Dik il-gwerra qalbi! Tiftakar qed issemmihieli int [...] ma kontx nsemmi xejn imma [...] issa la qed issemmihieli qed niftakar ħafna affarijiet tal-biża [emfasi] u u ta' twerwir – dik il-birra- dik il-gwerra. [...] Pero' [emfasi] [...] naf li kien hawn kuraġġ kbir [emfasi] Malta għax imbagħad meta ġie Lord Gort. Meta ġie; meta kenna l-kustj- tal-konvoj? meta kien ġej il-konvoj, kenna l-Lord Gort [emfasi] – konna lesti! [emfasi] konna lesti! [emfasi]. Li kieku ma daħalx dak il-vapur, meta kien hawn Lord Gort, kieku ma daħalx dak il-vapur [...] [ilaqlaq kliem] - il-konvoj ta' Santa Marija jsibuh, jgħidulu [emfasi]. Tant hu veru hemm anke l-qanpiena, li ddoqq il-qanpiena, fi fil-dan. Għandu jkun fil-ħmistax iddoqq, fil-ħmistax ta' Awissu issa [emfasi] riċentament. Iġifieri, qed tifhem? Dak iż-żmien karozzi jiġru [jistagħġeb] bl-affarijiet, imbagħad daħal il-konvoj, sewwa? b-b- in-nies bil-lejl u b'inhar [...] msieken [emfasi] – jissograw [emfasi] b'konvoj fil-fil-port dawk il-bombi niżlin, l-istukas jagħmillek hekk jinżel dritt hekk rasu l-isfel u joqgħod hemm jinżel u jitla' hekk [juri b'ton eċċitat]. U mietu nies ukoll, meta kienu pereżempju jkunu qed jhottu vapuri u hekk. Eekk jiena ġieli meta mbagħad dħalt f'x- fl-agrikoltura, meta sirt *inspector*, konna – imma dak kienet qisha spiċċat il-gwerra. Konna mmorru biex nibgħatu l-patata, l-Olanda u hekk – patata bajda l-Olanda, patata safra [jikkoreġi ruħu] u l-bajda konna nibgħatu il-patata l-bajda, ramembere [kelma mhux ċara] ngħidulha; u bajda l-Ingilterra għax l-l-Olanda ma konniex nigħbatu ħafna mill-bajda, konna nibgħatu s-safra, kienu jagħmluha għal butir u l-affarijiet hekk, kienu jgħidu. Ntqajt ma' ħafna affarijiet is- [ton baxx ħafna] Tagħmel, tarahom jistakkjaw biex ma jgħaffġuhiex, biex ikunu tkun tasal tajba [emfasi] u dan, imbagħad jasal ir-rapport, tagħmel ir-rapport le-

x'rajt u ma rajtx, qed tifhem? Dak hu x-xogħol. Imma dana kien iġifieri mbagħad wara [jkaxkar il-kliem] wara l-forty-five u dan qed tifhem? Għax fil-gwerra ma konniex mmorru bil-patata u dan ma konniex nibgħatu, imma meta spiċċat il-gwerra b-b-bdew mmur- xi affarijiet jmorru l-Olanda, il-patata kienet issiefer ħafna l-patata [emfasi] mħabba l-bdiewa. Kienu jiġbru l-flus, il-bdiewa kienu jiġbru ħafna flus; għax jibgħata l-Gvern, qed tifhem? Konna mmorru aħna, it-tinda tal-patata għax il-Marsa, nispezzjonaw, il-patata nifftu xkejjer biex naraw jekk tkunx patata [...] tajba, sabiħa u dan, mdaqqa, k-kenna s-size kemm trid tkun, qed tifhem u dan. Jekk tkunx pereżempju bil-ġlata[emfasi] jew tkunx pereżempju bis-susa u dan – ma tibgħatiex [emfasi]. Mela! għamilt erba' u erbgħin sena [...] l-Argikolutra, erba' u erbgħin sena għamilt [ton baxx].

M: Kulħadd kien jinzel fix-xelter?

Grima: Kull maġorpart- kulħadd! Imma kien hemm [emfasi] [...] jien l-ewwel wieħed [...] li kont nabbuża [...] u ma kontx nidhol fix-xelter. Jew kont nisma' xi ħaġa k-konna nkunu nafu li qegħdin fuq il-port, kont tmur fuq is-Saqqajja [emfasi] biex tara dak il-bumbardjament fuq-fuq ix-. Għax mis-Saqqajja [emfasi] , għandna veduta bħal dik kont tara l-Belt, in-naħa dik il-biċċa kollha hekk! fuq il-Belt. Għax meta kien ikun fuq il-Belt, iġifieri fuq fuq il-port, ma kienux jkunu lej l-irħula u hekk; meta jiġu l-ajruplani, pereżempju jew ġejjen għal Ta' Qali, jew sejrin lej Ħal Far, jew sejrin għal-għal-għal port, qed tifhem? Heqq, dik! U aħna hawn hekk ir-Rabat, peress li għandna Ta' Qali viċin aħna, għandhom il-Katidral pereżempju *target* [emfasi] għal Ta' Qali, [...] knisja. Għax il-Katidral u Ta' Qali taħtu, eżatt hekk, qed tifhem?

M: X'tip ta' xelter kontu tużaw kellkom wieħed publiku jew kellkom wieħed privat tal-familja?

Grima: X'inhu?

M: Ix-xelter li kontu tużaw, kien privat jew publiku?

Grima: Ix-xelter? Qed ngħidlek, ix-xelter ħija, ix-xelter jew konna noqgħodu d-dar, ħeħe [jidħaq] kienu jiġu tal-Gvern jagħmlu biċċtejj tavla hekk [juri] [tinstema' l-qanpiena għat-tqarbin] b' seretizz hekk. Imbagħad meta għamel da- mbagħad il-Gvern beda jħaffer ix-xelters; il-Gvern beda jħaffer ix-xelters, u għad hawn ħafna u hawn xelters [emfasi] hawn xelters – għamlu sewwa – fetħuhom u u jarawhom li- speċjalment dan tal-Kuleġġ inti ma nafx qatx mortx. Mort il-Kuleġġ? Għax naħseb li Joseph ħadek [il-qanpiena tat-tqarbin tersaq qrib] xelter hemm [emfasi]. Hemm konna aħna, tinzel l-ewwel għandek il-bir [emfasi] mbagħad hemm *on the left* għandek toqba hekk sejra l'hemm u mbagħad terġa ddu hekk mbagħad hekk [juri]. Jien kont l-ewwel xelter, l-ewwel wieħed x'ħin tidħol għad-dritt [tkompli tinstema' l-qanpiena għat-tqarbin] għat-twila u dam [ilaqlaq] biex kiber, biex jagħmluh; mhux se tagħmlu f'ħakka t'għajn! Mbagħad meta bdew jagħmlu x-xelters bde- nieħdu r-ruħ im-im-imma ehh *it takes time* biex tagħmel dak ix-xogħol kollu, [...] [jinstemaw ilħna] qed tifhem? Qed ngħidlek għamilna, għaminna m-m-m-mill-forty, mill-forty ta! *sal-forty-five*. Mma mbagħad mill-forty-four qisu nofs il-*forty-four* l'quddiem bdejna nieħdu r-ruħ iġifieri ta! għax fil-*forty-five* ma kien hawn xejn mbagħad. [Kelma mhux ċara] Il-paċi il-gwerra fil-*forty-five* il-gwerra ma kien hawn xejn fil-*forty-five* ,qed tifhem? [jinstema' lehen feminili fil-bogħod] Il-gwerra kienet *forty*, *forty-one*, *forty-two* u *forty-three*, u biċċa biċċa biċċa żgħira [ton baxx] fil-*forty-four*. Imma l-*forty-two* kienet il-goffa eh! Meta tħalt mal-Gvern jien.

M: Kien hemm min kellu kamra privata ġox-xelters publiċi, taf xi ħaġa dwarhom dawn?

Grima: Fejn? Ix-xelter? Kien hemm ħafna [emfasi] [tinstema' l-qanpiena għat-tqarbin] kien hemm ħafna min ħaffer imma jien ma nafx min huma! Jiena naf li kont għamilt waħda lil wieħed. Ta-ta-tagħna kienet hawn u tiegħu kienet qegħda hawn u aħna kenna kamra, kenna xelter, fix-xelter, kamra fix-xelter ma' ħaddieħor – għax mbagħad wara ta' Soler ġie ħaddieħor magħna minn Bormla, qed tifhem? [...] daqshekk. U kont għamilt waħ-wieħed ta' quddiemna. Il-bqija kien hemm ħafna [emfasi] kmamar privati.

Kulhadd jagħti, jbeqqen u jagħmel u u u jigri. Heee x'tagħmel? [...] Tant hu veru tagħna mbagħad min kien magħna kie- maxtrudaxxa u kien għamel bieb, bie-bieb bħal speċi qisu bħar-rixtellu? Biex tidhol l-arja wkoll meta jingħalaq. Heqqq [ton ħożbien].

M: Kif kontu tgħadduh il-ħin?

Grima: Fej? Fix-xelter? Fix-xelter kif trid tgħaddi il-ħin? Tithaddet, tgħ-tgħid xi ħaġa, tgħid ir-rużarju, x-x-x'għara, x-waqa' hemm fejn waqa' hemm u kemm mietu hemm, u k-k-kemm korrew nies. Dak x-x-xi trid tgħid fil-gwerra? Heqq, mhix ħa tgħid affarijiet, la quddies xejn! [...] La quddies, għax il quddies [ilqaqlaq] ma kienx issir; skejjel xej [enfasi], lanqas [...] sewwa? Heqq, kienu għamlu niftakar [...] ta' Bugeja [enfasi] – kien sptar. Ta' Bugeja kien sptar niftakru jiena sptar, għax Pietru Pawl Debono [tinstema' l-qanpiena tat-tqarbin] hemm kien joppera. Pietru Pawl Debono, kien professur, ta' kollox u kien hemm ħuh – professur Salvinu, kien ta' l-ENT [enfasi]. Imbagħad kien hemm ħuh Josie – medicina. Tlett professuri aħwa - Debonijiet [tinstema l-qanpiena għat-tqarbin]. Wieħed kien kirurgu, Pietru Pawl; Sal-sil- Salvinu kien ukoll, tal-tal-ENT u Jo-Joe Debono kien tal-medicina - ma kienx jopera. Mela u anke rajthom deħlin bihom. Għax imbagħad *in the mean time* jiena daka kont *inspector* fuq tal-linja dak iż-żmienijiet imbagħad – qable il-forty-two eh! [enfasi] Għax fil-*forty-two* tħalt mal-Gvern. *Eleventh November* tħalt mal-Gvern u għamilt sa l-*eighty-six* [tibqa tinstema l-qanpiena għat-tqarbin u karozza fit-triq]. Jgħaddi, kemm Hu kbir Alla [...] kemm Hu kbir.

M: Ġieli għamiltu għranet jew ljieli sħaħ gox-xelter?

Grima: [...] Mm?

M: Ġieli għamiltu għranet jew ljieli sħaħ [Grima jinterrompi biex iwieġeb]

Grima: U mela ma ġiex! Iwa [emfasi] Dik waħda minnhom illi għedtlek, darba ma nafx kemm kien dam. Mela! u ġieli, ġieli iwa, ġieli [ton baxx] u sigħat! [emfasi u jgħolli t-ton] Sigħat, sigħat qas tgħoddhom kemm tagħmel. Sigħat qas tgħoddhom [emfasi] [jgħolli t-ton] Jew tidħol [...] wara kwarta jdoqq ir-*raiders past*; wara minuta jerga jiġi, jerga jiġi, *guy* ieħor [emfasi] [ħsejjes ta' karozzi fit-triq]. Għax ġejjin u sejrin, ġejjin u sejrin, qed tifhem? L-ajruplani l-ħin kollu, fl-ajruplan, tisma', tisma' l-ajruplani għaddejin kontinwament. Daqqa tagħhom, daqqa tagħna, imma l-ajru, l-ajru hekk kien [emfasi] U anke meta jkun hemm pereżempju ġlieda ta' l-ajrup- kien ikollok muketerija sħiħa fis-sema. Ehh tgħid msieken dawk in-nies – ta' ġiex naħhiet [emfasi]. Ta' ta' huma min huma [emfasi], nies hemm, hemm fuq; min immut nies [emfasi] sewwa? dawk mhux *robots*. L-ajruplani bi- ħeq- bin-nies jimxu, il-fighters ikun fiha wieħed imma il-*reconnaissance plane*, meta kien jiġi pereżempju – ma jitfax bombi dak imma, tar-ritratti xej [jispjega] dak ikun fih- meta waqa' dak il-il- x'jgħidulu haw? X' il-madonna kien jismu? ir-Rabat! Dak tal-tal- x'jgħidulu kien ta' tal- [...] mela! Nsejt x'kien, x'kien [ibaxxi leħnu u jipprova jiftakar] li x'jgħidulu, x'jismu. Għad haw ir-ritratti [minn taħt l-ilsien] [...] mela! Kienu mietu wieħed u għoxrin ukoll hemm [ton ta' dieqa]. Imma daka mhux bil-gwerra, fil-*forty-six*.

M: Avolja kontu taħt l-art, kien hemm regolamenti ta' x'seta' u ma setgħax isir?

Grima: Kif?

M: Avolja kontu taħt l-art [jinterompi Grima]

Grima: Eh!

M: Kien hemm regolamenti ta' x'seta' jew ma setgħax isir fix-xelter?

Grima: Seta' u ma setgħax issir x-x-x-! Xi trid tagħmel fix-xelter? Issajjar? biex? [emfasi] X'għandek? Xi ssajjar? Aqas id-dar! [jidhaq] aħseb fix-xelter!

Tixrob naqa kafe' jew naqa mishun jew [ilaqlaq xi kliem mhux ċar] kien haw forsi flixxun luminata' – jekk kien haw! [emfasi] Imma skars kollox! Mi-min kien jagħmel pereżempj id-dar jagħmel xi haġa hu, jgħasar xi haġa u ja-jagħmilha hu stess, qed tifhem? X-x il-bqija, x-x-xejn. M'għandekx ħobż [emfasi], taqgħalek farka fl-art t-tiġborha, t-tikolha, biex ma tinħelix. U illum haw daqs dawk nies bil-ġuħ, barra, msieken mhux ukoll? [ton baxx] Għax aħna sinjuri hawn żżik ħajr l'Alla [...] ħdejn ħaddieħor.

M: Kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u l-ilma?

Grima: Kenna da-, dawl u ilma kenna [ton baxx] Pero' [emfasi b'ton għoli] trid toqgħod attent għad-dawl [...] għax il-pulizija u u l-*Police Contable* jdur, biex jaraw fejn ikun hemm id-dawl u hekk – ma tistax tħalli dawl jidher għall-barra [emfasi] qed tifhem? ank ilma [ħsejjes ta' karożzi fit-triq] ilma ġieli kenna, ħeqq imma mbagħad forsi taqa' bomba; tkisser *pipe* jew xi haġa jew ġibjun jew hekk, mbagħad eh eh irid it-tiswija [emfasi], qed tifhem? Niftakar jiena [emfasi] xi haġa hekk. Għax imbagħad dawk ċerti affarijiet ma kontx nagħti kas tagħhom jien, iktar kont ħsiebni biex minn fejn ħa nġib biċċa ħobż [...] daqshekk eh il-bqija [...] il-gwerra, gwerra kiefra eh!. Il-gwerra kiefra ħafna, ħafna ħafna [ton jispiċċa fix-xejn ix-xejn] Gwerra kiefra [...] Jiena [emfasi] jien kont xtrajt ġlekk għadni niftakar, meta tħalt l-Agricoltura [jidħaq bil-memorja] m'għant Ġużeppi Battaglia kunjomu – Battaglia kien [emfasi] Joe Battaglia. Kellu ġlekk, ma kienx jiġih, ġie lili [emfasi] u xtrajtu minn għandu [emfasi] biex ilbistu jien. Ta' xejn [emfasi b'ton għoli] għax ma ssibx tixtri qmie-, ma ssibx tixtri qal- ma tixtri xejn ma ssib tixtri xejn [emfasi]. Qed ngħidlek, in-nisa [emfasi] il-maġorparti kowtijiet tal-tal-tal-kutri [...] kutri! [emfasi] jew ta' l-*Air*- jew xi haġa ta' l-*Air Force*, jew kutri li kienu jitgħattaw bihom – kannella, grieži, qed tifhem? Kowtijiet tan-nisa daw ta! iġifieri, iħituhom huma mbagħad jew il-ħajjata *whatever*. Dik kienet il-ħajja [emfasi] Dik il-ħajja [emfasi] tal-gwerra [...] ma fihix pjaċir. U qabel il-gwerra, qabel bdiet x- meta kienet ġejja il-gwerra, kienet tiġi karożza, magħluqa, jtuk il-maskla [bħal donnu jagħmel idejh ma ħalqu], biex tidhol fiha biex tipprova il-gass [tob

mbikken]. Kelli kelli xi tlieta daqshekk jien id-dar – stoċċijiet tal-gass taħraqhom joħ- [ilaqlaq kliem mhux ċar] – ta' dmugħ, gass tad-dmugħ – kont ġibthom mill-Imtarfa. [Ilaqlaq kliem mhux ċar, fil-waqt li James jipprova jgħid hu] Tubu daqshekk, ara! ara! dan haw tad-tad-dawl [James jintervjeni].

M: Daqs pulzier qed tgħid kważi?

Grima: X'jgħilulha tad-dawl? [...] Biex jiġi d-dawl? [jistaqsi biex issib il-kelma] meta jmurlek - il-*fuse* ![emfasi, jiftakar] Ara l-*fuse* u ara lilu [emfasi] iku-bil-bil-ponta hekk u dan. Il-bqija xej, kienu jiġu karozzi biex tidħol ġo fiha, titla' bit-taraġ hekk, tidħol hekk, jgħattija b'kuttra jew xi haġa hekk u tilbes il-maskla, ikollu dal-gass li qed ngħidlek jien tad-dmugħ u dan biex tara jekk t-tinfetx – tr- bħala *training* [emfasi b'ton għoli] iġifieri biex kulħadd ikun ippreparat. Kienu tawna waħda kull wieħed [emfasi] kulħadd [emfasi] kienu tawn waħda kull wieħed iġifieri. Kellna d-dar mbagħad irritornajhom, u diżpjaċini li ma żammejtx waħda jien. Jien anke *steel helmet* kelli, anke *steel helmet* kelli jien – għax aħna kellna l-*steel helmets* ukoll meta konna l-Imtarfa kelna l-*steel helmet* ; fil-vulunteeri kellna l-*steel helmet* iġifieri qed tifhem? Hawn min żammhom kien dawk, haw haw min għandu minnhom.

M: Taf b'xi każijiet ta' min tweled jew welledt ġo xelter?

Grima: Lee [ikaxkar il-kelma] niftakar [jidħaq bil-mod] niftakar min twelledt niftakar ta' gabillotta, deħlin lejn ir-raba', mir-Rabat għar-razzett u welledt fuq il-karettin hi u sejra, fuq il-ħmara iva – nismagħhom jgħidu, dejjem [emfasi]. Welledt mara, hi u sejra lejn ir-razzett, fuq il-karettun. Daqshekk nista' ngħid, ma nafx, ma rajtx u dan qed tifhem? [iqaħqaħ ftit] Pero' [ton għoli] fix-xelters welldu [emfasi], ħafna. Fix-xelters welldu iwa, ġieli welldu, ġieli smajt, jiena qatt ma rajt [emfasi], imma ġieli smajt, ġieli smajt. Hawn min tweled ġo xelter. [...] Nismagħhom jgħidu dejjem, għax jiena qatt ma rajt dawn l-affarijiet [ton baxx] Jien kont għadni żgħir, ma kontx nagħti kas ta' dawn l-affarijiet lanqas, ċerti affarijiet.

M: Għat-*toilets* x'kien issir? Għat-*toilets* x'kien issir?

Grima: Heeq, għat-*toilets* x'kien issir? [jirrepeti l-mistoqsija] Id-dar kellek it-toilet, id-dar kellek it-toilet [emfasi]. Imma bħal ma qed ngħidlek jien ċerti affarijiet barra, das-suldati u hekk, konna aħna mmorru nagħmlulhom il-il-il-dawn. Min kien pereżempju joqgħod fl-lukanda, bħal m' għedtlek jien, kien hemm ta' l-*Air Force* jew il- Point de Vue, kien hemm ta' l-*Air Force*, dawk għandhom it-*toilets* tal-postijiet. Imma daw is-suldati, jew [...] ġieli fix-xelters kien ikun hemm ħafna affarijiet [...] minn dawn li qed tgħid inti [emfasi] Dak uġett, illi [...] tagħmel x'tagħmel ikun *air-raid* mhix se toħroġ [emfasi] X'tagħmel? [...] Dan m'għandekx għandek xkora siment tagħlaq it-toqba, biex ma joħroġx il-ġurdien! Qed tifhem? Qeee, iridu jsi- affarijiet ta' bil-fors [emfasi] Kont tara ħafna affarijiet anke xelters ikunu jintnu ċerti affarijiet ikun hemm, ċertu ntina – kont ixxomm ħafna affarijiet fix-xelter ta! Aħseb meta kie-kien hawn ħafna nies – kważi Malta kollha [emfasi] – bl-*iscabies* . *Scabies* taf x'inhuma? L-*iscabies* huma ponot qishom bl-msiemer bil-materja kollha, qed tifhem u ħakk! [emfasi] Tħokk [emfasi] *scabies* ! [emfasi] qed tifhem? dawk huma l-*iscabies*. Minn dan kollu bil-ħmieġ, nuqqas ta' *hygiene* [emfasi]. Kien hemm nuqqas kbir [emfasi] ta' *hygiene* speċjalment fix-xelters. Għax fix-xelters m' hemmx affarijiet, m'hemmx *toilets*, m'hemmx affarijiet li tista tinqeda, qed tifhem? U dana konna nagħmlu sigħat [emfasi] u sigħat twal. Konna nagħmlu sigħat twal. Heqq dak huma, dik hi l-gwerra. Hawn min stagħna bil-gwerra, haw min stagħna bil-gwerra [emfasi], heħe speċjalment meta kien issir il-*black market* u hekk [jinstemaw ilħna fil-bogħod] kien haw ħafna min jagħmel bil-*black market*. U kien hawn ħafna [emfasi] [jinstema taħbit fuq bieb]

[JITWAQQAF IR-RECORDING; tiġi *carer* u niddeċiedu li nkomplu darb'oħra.]

APPENDIX VI

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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Signature: *Vincent Garuana* Date: 31-5-2017

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MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

INTERVISTA

INTERVISTA MINN: JAMES BALDACCHINO

INTERVISTA MA': VINCENT 'ĊENSINU' CARUANA

DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: 31 TA' MEJJU 2017

POST: HAL TARXIEN

TUL TAL-INTERVISTA: SAGĦTEJN, 5 MINUTI u 22 SEKONDA



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Jien James Baldacchino, f'isem l-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta għall-proġett MEMORJA, illum il-wieġed u tletin ta' Mejju elfejn u sbatax qiegħed ma' Vincent Caruana aktar magħruf bħala 'Ċensinu' ġewwa r-residenza tiegħu f'Hal Tarxien.

M: Ċensinu, fejn twelidt u meta?

Caruana: Jiena twelidt fit-tnejn u għoxrin ta' Ġ- ta' Ġunju eq, *nineteen, nineteen twen-nineteen twenty two.*

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Caruana: Konna sebgħa.

M: U kemm kontu subien u bniet?

Caruana: Subien u bniet tnejn bniet u erba' subien. Xi ħag'hekk. U erba' subien erba' subien għax l-ieħor kien ilu mejjet.

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Caruana: Missieri kien jaħdem il-*Powerstation*, kien eh, *tool and coppersmith*, ix-xogħol tiegħu fil-forġa, qed tifhem? U l-bqija ħija kien *head messenger* id-*Dockyard* il-kbir u ż-żgħir, li qiegħed l-isptar illum, eh kien jaħdem mal-eh, mal-mal-Gvern mastrudaxxa. *Carpenter.*

M: U ommok fejn kienet taħdem?

Caruana: Imkien. Tad-dar, mara tad-dar.

M: X' xogħlijiet kellek?

Caruana: Jiena kont *mechanical fitter*. Kont *apprentice* u dħalt ta' sbatax-il sena naħdem.

M: U fejn?

Caruana: Il-*Powerstation*. Għax kien hemm missieri hemmhekk, qed tifhem? U kien irraġgali mal-kapijiet tad-dipartiment ta' dak iż-żmien tal-*instruction*, tač-*chief engineer* kien irraġgali peress illi missieri kien ikkonoxxut ħafna qallu, "Iwa" qallu, "Ġibu għada". U l-għada mort naħdem, hekk kienet dak iż-żmien. U tawni paga ta' sikspenz kuljum. [Jitbissem] Ngħidlek id-dritt, tliet xelini fil-gimgha bħala bħala bħala *trade boy, apprentice*. U kull tliet snin kienu jżiduna bi tliet soldi kuljum allura ġejt wara sena tawni [jitbissem u jgħolli leħnu] disa' soldi! Disa' soldi. Insomma. Imbagħad iż-żminijiet bdew jitbiddlu, qed tifhem? Dan kien qabel il-gwerra it-*thirty-seven, thirty-seven*. Konna mhux ħazin dak il-ħin, imma kien hemm- issa dak iż-żmien [...] dak iż-żmien imbagħad fit-*thirty-eight* bdiet il-kustjoni bejn il-Ġermanja u l-Ingilterra. L-Ingilterra ma kinetx armata allura kien hemm Chamberlain, kien Prim Ministru Ingliż kien geġ u sejjer il-Ġermanja biex jipprova jtawwal iż-żmien [jgħolli leħnu] tal-gwerra ma' Hitler. U din damet sejra qisu xi sena. Daqqa jmur oħra jiġi lura u da' u sadattant l-Ingilterra dejjem tibda tarma għax kienet taf l-Ingilterra illi għada pitgħada dan se jagħmel gwerra l-Ewropa. Ma kellhiex armamenti ma kellha xejn, qed tifhem? U bdew dak iż-żmien kienet għadha kif spičcat il-gwerra tal-Abissinja. Issa l-Abissinja użaw il-gass [ilaqlaq] it-Taljani. Allura, kienu qabel ħafna kienu okkupaw Tripli, it-Taljani. Imma mhux bi vjolenza kbira kienu okkupawha ma kienx hemm gwerra. Qabdu u daħlu u okkupaw il- eh okkupaw [jħares 'l isfel waqt li jaħseb] eh il-Libja [jisgħol] okkupaw il-Libja u ħadu kollox f'idejhom. Għamlu re, għamlu r-re Idris, qed tifhem? Bdew ituh il-flus u jirraġgaw hekk u bdew il-kummerč [ma jinfthihemx] u t-Taljani l-lingwa kienet kwazi kollha Taljana l-Libja, kulħadd kien jitkellem bit-Taljan, qed ngħid dawn għax naf li mort jien wara ħafna żmien li kollox bit-Taljan, banek per eżempju u affarijiet sptarijiet u dan kollox bit-Taljan, orrajt iwa, issa x'izjed?

- M:** Qatt emigrajt x'imkien?
- Caruana:** Le, le, emigrazzjoni, le mkien
- M:** Dejjem Malta bqajt.
- Caruana:** Dejjem Malta bqajt.
- M:** Fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?
- Caruana:** Senglea
- M:** U kemm għandek tfal?
- Caruana:** Heq heq jiena tnejn, kelli tnejn, waħda mietet u l-ieħor għadu ħaj.
- M:** Mela Ċensinu fejn kont meta smajt bid-dikjarazzjoni tal-gwerra?
- Caruana:** Jiena kont id-dar, hawn ma dik il-memorja, kont id-dar, u kont ma niflaħx u kelli tmintax-il sena dak iż-żmien jien, imbgħad, kelli tmintax-il sena, iva tmintax-il sena u, dak iz-zmien kienu jsiru ħafna manuvri, peress li l-Italja kienet għadha kienet għadha qiegħda qiegħda taħsibha jekk tidholx fil-gwerra jew le. Kienet għadha ma dikkjaratx gwerra l-Italja. Allura kien hemm Franza. Allura Hitler dak iż-żmien beda il-gwerra fin-*nineteen thirty-nine* qed tifhem? Issa, fin-*nineteen thirty-nine* beda jokkupa 'l ta' madwaru, l-Awstrija, il-Polonja, insomma dawk ta' madwaru kollha kollha u bdew jokku- u bdew iċedu kollha, bdew iċedu dawk il-pajjiżi, ma kinux armati ma għamlux ma għamlux resistenza, sewwa allura kollha bdew iċedu u jidhol it-truppi jokkupaw kolloxx f'idejhom kienu officini, insomma kienu jibdlu ġenerali minn tagħhom u da u kien hemm ħafna Lhud u l-Lhud kienu jiddeportawhom għal *Concentration Camps* il-Ġermanja 'l fuq Awsbrig Awbrig (Auschwitz) u l-ieħor x'kien jismu? Ausbrig

insomma dak *Auschwitz*. Kienu ji- ji-jittrasportawhom kien hemm it-*trains*, bil-ferroviji, kien għadhom bil-faħam il-ferrovijiet dak iż-żmien. Kienu jgħabbu n-nies hemm hemm. In-nies ma kinux jafu fejn sejrjn il-Lhud, kienu joħduhom hemmhekk u daqshekk u ma jafu xejn aktar. *Concentration Camp* kien 'il bogħod ħafna. Eh eh x'izjed? Insomma dak kienet il-bidu tal-gwerra. L-Italja aħna ma konniex għadna bdejna attackati, sadan ittant sadanittant Hitler meta beda jokkupa u hekk ried jaħtaf l-Ingilterra, ried jokkupa l-Ingilterra l-aktar. Allura jaf illi Franza illi Franza viċin l-Ingilterra l-Ingilterra kien hemm iċ-*Channel* iċ-*Channel* bejn l-Ingilterra u Franza ma kienx hemm bogħod. U beda jarma beda jarma braken kbar, *boats* hawn, *speed boats* kbar biex joħodhom, biex u mbagħad jittrasportawhom għal Franza, għal Franza, il-post fejn, x'jismu bħalissa? Dober hemm?

M: Dover l-Ingilterra.

Caruana: Franza, dak il-port viċin, insomma dak il-baħar. Kien hemm, kien hemm iċ-*Channel*, iċ-*Channel*, iċ-*Channel*, bejn l-Ingilterra u Franza. Allura Franza meta ġiet attackata għax u mbagħad mal-ewwel pruvaw għal Franza, u Franza ċediet mill-ewwel [qaħqaħ] ċediet mill-ewwel Franza qed tifhem? Filgħaxija meta ċediet Franza konna smajna ir-*radio*, 'il Mussolini kien it-Tlieta, er [...] nhar it-Tlieta, er liema data kien it-Tlieta.

M: Fl-Għaxra ta' Ġunju.

Caruana: *Nineteen forty, nineteen forty, nineteen forty* u u kienet u l-għada filgħodu, Mussolini ddikjara gwerra kien it-Tlieta qed tifhem? U l-Erbgħa filgħodu ġew l-ajruplani tagħhom hawn Savoia-Marchetti zgħar qed tifhem u bdew jattakkaw Malta jattakkaw Malta fejn ġie ġie u l-ewwel nies li qatlu, qatlu il-kanun ta' Sant Iermu – kien hemm is-soldati u mmaxingannjawhom [sic.] jew tefgħulhom bombi bombi zgħar kienu jitfgħu, insomma. Tefgħu il-bombi il-

il- bejn il-Belt u l- Furjana tefgħu bombi hemmhekk u..... In-nies twerwret daqqew is-sireni u ħadd ma kien ta kas dan kien fis-sebgħa ta' filgħodu ħadd ma kien ta kas li din hi l-gwerra illi l-Italja daħlet fil-gwerra. Ħadd ma ta' kas il-gwerra ħasbuhom manuvri n-nies tas-soltu, peress li kienu jagħmlu ħafna manuvri peress għadha kemm kienet spiċċat il-gwerra tal-Abissinja ħasbu l-Italjani minħabba t-Taljani bdew jagħmlu l-manuvri hawn Malta. Insomma u bdew sejr in hekk u er er il-manuvri baqqgħu hemm. Allura, oħti, pereżempju, nibqa' nsemmiha għax baqqgħet go moħħi, kienet fuq il-bejt taħsel il-ħwejjeg, kellna fuq il-bejt taħsel il-ħwejjeg hemm, u taħsel u omni kienet il-knisja San Filippu, insemmiha wkoll din, għall-quddiesa tas-sebgħa ta' filgħodu, tmur tas-sebgħa u oħti fuq il-bejt taħsel, u taħsel kienet u taħsel baqqgħet. U ajruplani jiddajvjaw [sic.] magħha u insomma ħafna sparar u dan. Ħasbithom ħasbithom il-manuvri tas-soltu u jien kont qed naqra fis-sodda kont ma niflaħx u qed naqra l-istorja bil-faxxikli ta' Toni Bajada, forsi tismagħhom isemmuha ta' Toni Bajada li kont qed naqra dak il-ħin. U giet, giet omni mill-knisja tħabbat il-bieb kemm tiflaħ "iwa" bdiet tgħidilha "inżel inżel inżel minn hemm Marija, Marija" u nizlet oħti u qaltilha "x'għara ma? X'għara għalfejn dan l-istorbju kollu?" qaltilha "Bdiet il-gwerra, bdiet il-gwerra, inżel minn hemm inżel minn hemm" " u xil-gwerra u xil-gwerra dawn manuvri dawn manuvri" "Gwerra din gwerra din ilbsu ilbsu ejja ħa naraw fejn sa mmorru." Dan kien l-Erbgħa insomma. Missieri mar għax-xogħol bil-lanċa u nqabdu taħt il-mina ta' fejn id-dwana u baqqgħu hemm għax u mbagħad indunaw li bdew jifgħu l-bombi. Missieri mar għax-xogħol is-soltu. Għax dak kien is-sebgħa ta' filgħodu, jgħifieri, u dak kien jitlaq qisu fis-sitta u nofs missieri għax-xogħol sakemm tiġi l-lanċa u jmur. U nqabdu hemmhekk u nqabdu ħafna nies li kienu sejr in peress li l-*powerstation* kienet ix-xatt tal-Belt, ix-xatt tal-Furjana, hemm qabel it-telgħa tal-Kurcifiss, il-*powerstation* ta' dak iż-żmien. Insomma allura, ilbisna malajr, insomma għebet karozza. Sadattant leħqet il-ġurnata u nżilna fil-kantina għax jgħidu li l-kantina kienet bil-ħnejjiet peress li ma kienx

hawn *shelters* tagħna kellna kantina bil-ħnejjiet u dal-ġirien ġew ġo fiha u ntefgħu ġo fiha, biex inkunu mingħalina qegħdin *safe* go-fil-kantina, kieku giet bomba kieku konna nintradmu lkoll. Imma insomma u għaddejnieha. Figħaxija ġie missieri u dan waranofsinar u qalilna “x’se nagħmlu? x’se nagħmlu?” qal u morna Raħal Ġdid għand Emilio Camilleri, Emilio kien tas-sanità. Dan Emilio, dan Emilio il-mara tiegħu kienet tiġi kuġina tagħna, kienet tiġi kuġina. U ġiebet u, ġiebet u, kien hemm wieħed bil-bil-[ilaqlaq] bil-light car, kienu jġu dawn karozza tal-linja u għabbiena malajr, malajr, malajr ħa nieħdu xi ħaga tal-ħwejjeg ħalli mmorru r-Raħal Ġdid u ħadna Raħal Ġdid, insomma, u għamilna l-Erbgħa u l-Ħamis u l-Ħamis daqshekk. Dan Emilio Camilleri peress li kien tas-sanità u kien id-dwana minn hemm batgħuh is-Siġġiewi qed tifhem minħabba r-refuġjati li kien hemm biex jgħin lill-Kappillan u s-surgent tal-Pulizija u da’, dan Emilio, għax kien lingwista tajjeb u da’ Inġliż tajjeb li kellu qed tifhem u da’ u li kellu kollox kellu, iwa. Kien Grieg propja dak. Allura, allura għabbejna din il-karozza, ħadna xi ħaga tal-ħwejjeg magħna, ħadna xi tiġieg. Niftakar kellha it-tiġieg oħti u niżlithom minn fuq il-bejt, għamlithom hemmhekk u morna u morna u ġejna ġejna noqgħodu Ħal Tarxien St Joseph Street. Id-dar għadha hemm l-istess jismiha *Joseph*, id-dar naraha għadha l-istess dar u rقادna hemmhekk għamilna lejl. Ġie dan Emilio, dan kien għadu il-bidu tal-bidu tal-gwerra dan. Ġie Emilio minn hemmhekk u qalilna “ppakkjaw [sic.] u kollox għax irranġajt ma’ wieħed ta- tal-linja”, kien jafu ħafna, ċerti Soler kien jismu, għadni niftakar kien da’ ragel oh-, hekk imbaċċaċ dan Soler, u ħadna, qalilna “fejn sejrjn? fejn sejrjn?” “Għas-Siġġiewi intom, għas-Siġġiewi” u morna s-Siġġiewi. Insomma. Emilio magħna. U qalilna, u mar kellem wasalna s-Siġġiewi u mar kellem lis-surgent “fejn sa joqgħodu dawn? Fejn ħa joqgħodu?” Qallhom “dawk għandhom il-mużew għalihom” qalulu kienu jafu bih. Morna l-mużew tas-subien quddiem fejn kien joqgħod Dun Anton orrajt?. Il-mużew għadu l-istess. U qalilna “ara intom oqogħdu f’ din il-kamra u intom oqogħdu f’ din il-kamra.” Huma qagħdu fil-kamra l-

kbira bi dritt hu', qed tifhem? U għax kellu t-tfal hu wkoll, kellu t-tfal, fil-kamra l-kbira u aħna qgħadna f' tal-ġenb u insomma. U frixna xi ħaġa milli kellna tal-ħwejjeġ ġew Dun Anton, ma rridx ninsieha dik, għax kienu tat-tajjeb ħafna ta Dun Anton ta' Sikkina kienu jgħidilhom, tiftakarhom qed tifhem? U bagħtulna bagħtulna ħafna u ħafna saqqijiet minn tagħhom u ġiebu kutri u saqqijiet fl-art qed tifhem? Avolja kien Ġunju dak iż-żmien, ridna norqdu, allura m'intx ħa torqod fl-art. U bdejna għaddejna dak illejl hemm. Insomma u bqajna sejrjn. Sa hemmhekk, orrajt din il-bičča? Dik il-bidu. Fejn inkomplu?

M: Issa, x'hassejt meta l-ġenituri qalulek li kellkom titilqu mid-dar?

Caruana: Bil-biża' hu'. Bil-biża'. Bħal speċi għidna dana, għidna dana ta' ftit żmien se tkun din qed tifhem? Għax it-Taljani kienu jifgħu ġieħ bombi u jtilqu. Ma kinetx jiġifieri tal-biża' ħafna. Imma kulħadd kien jiġri barra xorta waħda. Il-karrozza tal-linja u mbagħad meta tlajna s-Siġġiewi ma morniex għax-xogħol. Min imur għax-xogħol kien imur, għamlu *shelters* għamlu *shelters* ġo (ma jinftihemx) fir-raba' mibnijin apposta tondi hekk tal-konkrit u meta tieqaf kar-idoqq *air raid* il-karrozza tal-linja kienet tieqaf u tniżżel in-nies hemm ġew, insomma. U bdejna għaddejin dak iż-żmien tat-Taljani dan tat-Taljani għaddejin dak iż-żmien. U kienet il-gwerra kienet għadha mhux ħarxa biex niftiehm fi żmien it-Taljani, insomma. U wasal Ottubru, wasal Ottubru bdejna din il-pożzzjoni. Issa f'Ottubru bdew iħaffru x-*shelters* l-Isla għax in-nies imbagħad riedu jmorru d-*dockyard* ħafna nies tax-xogħol, allura biex jirritornaw ġo djarhom ħaffrulhom ix-*shelters* ġo l-Isla peress li l-Isla kollha bit-taraġ allura bdew iħaffru taħt it-taraġ tal-Isla ta' fejn kienu, għamlu *shelters* fihom biex in-nies tistkenn ġo fihom. U l-Isla aħna kellna *shelter* ħdejna l-Isla allura għidna bejnietna omni u missieri "għax ma mmorrux l-Isla? Kulħadd niżel x'ħa noqogħdu nagħmlu hawn?" eq eq "M'għandniex ix-*shelter* jekk fil-kas jinqala' xi ħaġa?." Għax kulħadd ma kinux ħadu b'dik is-serjeta' tal-

Ġermaniżi. Kienu jittgħu erba' bombi qed tifhem u jtilqu. Jew jittgħuhom il-baħar kienu, jew jittgħuhom fuq xi mkien, jew xi għalqa u kienu drawhom in-nies. Kienu qas imorru mkien. Kienu drawhom, "ara ajruplan," tefa' bomba u jitlaq. Insomma din kienet il-bidu tal-gwerra eh. U aħna meta raw illi baqgħet sejra hekk għax iktar ma jiġux kienu milli jiġu. Sa Ottubru hekk kienet l-affari ma jiġux. U bdew, u bdew qishom imajnaw, ma kellhom qishom interess għal Malta qed tifhem? U sadattant, sadattant il-Ġermaniżi kien għadhom qed jattakkaw in-naħa ta' fuq. In-naħa ta' fuq, iktar moħħhom fl-Ingilterra kienu, milli milli hawn Malta. Insomma allura [...] x'gara illi n-nies bdiet tirtira ġo pajjiżhom għax ħasbuha se tibqa' sejra hekk u peress li kien hemm ix-*shelters*, in-nies mill-Birgu u l-Kottonera insomma u dawn l-affarijiet kollha, il-biċċa l-kbira tal-Kottonera marru Birkirkara. Ta' Birkirkara ma- ma-baqgħu fejn kienu għax [ma jinftihemx] ma marrux per eżempju ġew l-Isla jew dak. Ta' Birkirkara ma' ġewx, tas-Siġġiewi, min kien Ғaż-Żebbuġ, min kien is-Siġġiewi, min kien tal-irħula ta' dawk in-naħa tal-Imqabba u dak. Ғafna minnhom irritornaw pajjiżhom, Bormla, l-Isla u l-Birgu. Insomma, allura bħal speci drajna. Kien idoqq *air raid* u peress li kellna dar kbira aħna bi tliet sulari niżżilna is-sodod isfel, kellna intrata kbira ikbar minn din il-kamra, isfel, allura għamilna is-sodod isfel biex malli jdoqq *air raid* nilbsu xi ħaga u ninżlu fix-*shelter* mill-ewwel. Ma niż- Ma jkollniex ħafna taraġ u da' peress li kellna dar kbira allura fuq insejnieh aħna, nitilgħu xi ħaga għal bżonn u konna norqdu hemm f'din il-kamra u mbagħad, dan kif bdejna fil-bidu tat-Taljani. Imbagħad inżilna, meta jdoqq *air raid* konna nagħmlu... jiena kien għadni ma kontx għadni fl-*army* dak iż-żmien orrajt?. U mbagħad inżilna inżilna ġo x-*shelter*, insomma, jew billejl [ma jinftihemx] "qumu malajr qumu malajr" u konna kienu jiġu żewġ ajruplani, iddoqq is-sirena *raiders passed* u kulħadd jerġa' jmur postu. U bdejna għadejjin u bqajna dal-perjodu sejrini hekk sa Ottubru insomma, u Novembru, qed tifhem? U daħal Jannar. Hemm bdiet l-istorja minn Jannar. Għax minn Jannar u mbagħad il-Ġermaniżi bdew jinżlu 'l isfel għax it-

Taljani ma bdewx jaqduhom. It-Taljani kienu iktar jitfgħu l-bombi l-baħar, it-Taljani. Sadaittant it-Taljani bdew il-ġlied fil-Libja, fil-Libja kien hemm ħafna nies peress li l-Libja kienet Taljana, qed tifhimni?...allura bagħtu kemm riedu suldati hemm, qed tifhem?...il-Libja, biex jattakkaw, qed tifhem? ..bnadijiet oħra minn hemm. Ħafna, eluf kienu u t-Taljani bdew jinqabdu priġunieri ġol-Italja, u kkonfondew bdew jikkonfondu x'se jagħmlu x' ħa jagħmlu bihom dawn in-nies. Bdew joħdulhom ir-*rifles* u jibgħatuhom Malta. U bdew iqassmuhom lil kulħadd lil dawn il-kaċċaturi per eżempju bdew jagħtuhom dawn ir-*rifles*. *Rifles* zgħar daqshekk mhux bħal tagħna kbar.

M: Ftit inqas minn metru hemm.

Caruana: Xi daqshekk kienu zgħar ir-*rifle* tat-Taljani.

M: Pied u nofs

Caruana: Ija ija, kienu *automatic* ukoll ta. Insomma u insomma u, xi rrid ngħidlek jien?. Ma kienx hemm bdew peress illi kienu jiġu t-Taljani kienu jmorru, ġejjin u sejrini il-Libja jgħaddu minn ħdejna qed tifhem? Ma kellniex ajruplani aħna. Kellna tliet ajruplani, tlieta biss, x'jisimhom bħalissa, kienu aw [...]

M: *Gloster Gladiators*

Caruana: *Gladiators*. Kienu minn dawn, *Gladiators*, kienu tlieta għandhom isimhom hu'...

M: *Faith, Hope u Charity*

Caruana: *Hope*, ija,

M: *Faith, Hope u Charity*

Caruana: Iwa, Iwa, Iwa, fe- qed jinstema' li qed tgħid int? Iwa aħjar issemmagħha inti. Allura kienu jitolgħu hemmhekk, bu bub u, kien issir *dogfight*. Konna nghidulha *dogfight*. *Dogfight*, *dogfight* kienu jgħidulhom, jimmaxingannjaw [sic.] lil xulxin, min jaqa' minn hawn u min jaqa' u l-ajruplani tagħna Alla jbierek ma kinux jaqgħu. U tagħhom kienu jwaqqawlhom, mela. U tlieta salvaw l-ajruplani. Kien hemm wieħed jismu Bergers, Inqliż, u kien isuq wieħed minnhom. Kien bla saqajn, da' kien baqa' msemmi u baqa'. Kien kuraġġuż immens baqa' jissemma ħafna. Kien wieħed fuq dawn l-ajruplani u tgħidx kemm waqqa' ajruplani Taljani. Allura huma t-Taljani kienu jiġu fuq id-*dockyard* ma tantx kienu jiġu u kienu jmorru kienu jmorru jafu li kellna tliet ajruplani biss, kienu jmorru Ħal Luqa, kien hemm ir-*runway* hemmhekk, u kienu jifgħu l-bombi hemmhekk biex l-ajruplani tagħna ma jkunux jistgħu jillandjaw [sic.] għax peress li jaqilgħu l-art kollha qed tifhem? Kienu jkissrulhom ir-*runway*. Allura u mbagħad kien hemm insomma irranġaw l-Inqliżi rranġaw biex ħallew ħafna trakkijiet bit-terrapien u b'dawn l-affarijiet kollha biex malli jispiċċa l-*air raid* kienu jmorru u jimlew il-ħofor jerġgħu u jagħtu xi laqgħa biex ikunu jistgħu jillandjaw [sic.] l-ajruplani tagħna [daħaq] u l-istorja kienet wieħed u ieħor kienet għaddejja hekk sakemm wasal Jannar. Sa hekk konna mhux ħazin, konna ħarir. Ma [jilaqlaq] waqgħux djar u da', insomma ma waqgħux djar u hekk. Issa ġara li l-Ġermanizi ma bdewx jafdawhom lit-Taljani peress li bdew iċedu. Allura niżlu 'l isfel lejn Sqallija lejn Sqallija biex jgħinu lit-Taljani. It-Taljani kien hemm ċertu Ġeneral, Ġeneral Badoglio, Badoglio u dak ma riedx il-Gwerra dak il-Ġeneral, qed tifhem? Iktar kien jagħmlilhom bsaten fir-roti milli kien jgħin lill-Ġermanizi qed tifhem? Għax dina kienet, peress li kienu faxxisti, idea ta' Mussolini dik ħafna minnhom ma ridux. Mussoloni qabel il-gwerra, kellu ħatnu, semmejthielek, insemmuha din, kellu ħatnu jismu Conti Ciano. Conti Ciano jiġu, jiġi r-raġel t'oħtu, Kien Conti, ir-raġel t'oħt Mussolini, qed tifhem? T'oħt Mussolini. Mussolini kien- kellu mara oħra mhux dik, imma dan il-konti peress li kien kontra tiegħu,

x'għamel, qabdu u qatlu jew assassinah u sparalu u da', qed tifhem? Għax ma riedx ikompli b'din l-istorja ta' gwerra. It-Taljani ħafna minnhom, il-biċċa l-kbira n-naħa ta' fuq ma ridux gwerer. Insomma biex ma ntawwallekx għax l-istorja daqsxejn waħda kumplikata ta kienet.

[Pawża]

Caruana: Kont is-sittax ta' Jannar. Is-soltu n-nies kienu jaħsbu li malli jdoqq *air raid* bħal tas-soltu kien ikun, ngħidu Taljani. Imma ma kienx hekk fil-fatt għax daħal l-*Illustrious* u l-*Illustrious* kien beda jiġi bbumbardjat minn barra u daħal minn Ġibiltà biex imur fid-*dockyard* ta' Malta, qed tifhem? U attakkawh ħafna u dawk bdew jitfgħu bombi fejn ġie ġie u tajru ħafna bini l-Isla u l-Kottonera u da' fejn ġie ġie minħabba li minħabba d-*dockyard* qed tifhem? U tefgħu fuq l-ajruplani. Ajruplan minnhom ikkraxxa fuq l-istess *aircraft carrier*. Insomma, u sadattant, il- il- [ilaqlaq] *Illustrious* ma għeriqx u ma attakkawhx sewwa, għax u mbagħad l-ajruplani bdew bdew... u mbagħad ġew il-*Hurricanes* dak iż-żmien, dak iż-żmien u mbagħad l-Ingliži bagħtu l-*Hurricanes*, mhux l-i-*Spitfires*. U bagħtu il-*Hurricane*, il-*Hurricane* kien aktar avanzat ajruplani er *fighters* biex niftiehm...żjed minn tat-Taljani qed tifhem? Kienu ta' ħeffa kbira kienu. U bdew iwaqqgħu ajruplani, u kienu l-i-*Stukas* dak iż-żmien. L-i-*Stuka* kien jinżel, jinżel hekk u jitla' hekk ta kien.

M: Kien jiddajvja [sic.] qed tgħid?

Caruana: Jiddajvja [sic.] u jitlaq. Jitfa' l-bomba eżatt, kien jinżel, kwaži ftit kien ikun wasallu biex jasal mal-art għalhekk biċċiet minnhom l-ajruplani kien jibqa' nieżel, jeħel. Jew ma jkunx attent jew da' qed tifhem? Ma jitlaqx il-bomba. U kien ifittex ineħħi l-imbarazz li jkollu fuqu biex ikun jista' jkun ħafif u jitla' allura kien jitlaq il-bombi hemmhekk. Allura ġieli ġew bombi fuqu imma ma għamlulux ħsara kbira. Fuq id-*deck* per eżempju dan il da' x'jismu da' l- da'.

Kien hemm in-nies tad-*dockyard* qegħdin jaħdmu fuqu u niżlu l-bugħaddasa wkoll dak il-ħin, ara x'kuraġġ kellhom fuq l-iskrejjien, Maltin ta kienu dawn. Kienu ħadu kienu ħadu ħafna midalji. Insomma biex ma' ntawwallekx dan l-*aircraft carrier* bumbardament sħiħ kissru kullimkien, allura min kien id-dar min kien id-dar, qed tifhem? Niżel fix-*shelter* ħaduha *easy*, ma kinux jafu li daħal u mbagħad bdew jiġġennu meta raw daww il-bombi kollha u niżlu kollha fix-*shelters*. Insomma. U d-dar tagħna giet bomba u waqgħet kollha, lilha u ta' ħdejha kollha. Strada Sant Ursula, kienet l-Isla, u id-djar kollha minn hemm. Aħna- jiena kont mort fuq ix-xogħol dak iż-żmien ma' missieri, u ġejt bil-lanċa. Il-lanċa baqgħu jaħdmu minn hawn u minn hemm, jew jieqfu jew jaħdmu l-laneċ tal-port mill- mill-Belt għall-Isla u għall-Kottonera baqgħu jaħdmu l-laneċ, niftakarhom bil-laneċ. Tiftakarhom il-laneċ inti, għandek xi idea tagħhom? Iwa, u l-laneċ, ġejna bil-lanċa is-soltu. Ma kienx hemm, kollox kwiet kien qed tifhem, għamlu li għamlu, kellhom jagħmlu, u ġejna, u ġejna lura, u mix-xatt tal-Isla kellna turreta kbira aħna fuq il-bejt u għidtlu "Pa, ara x'gara! L-Isla spiċċat id-dar ta" għidtlu "ara t-turreta ma' tidhirx" "it-turreta" qalli "Tgħid?" "Le, m'hemm xejn" Għidtlu "m'hemm xejn." Kien hemm l-imagħallem Nikol, insomma, l-istess. Għandu jkun ma' waqatlux id-dar lil imagħallem tagħna Nikol. Għax kienu mill-Isla daww kollha, qed tifhem? Qalli "Issa x'se nagħmlu?" u fit-tarf tas-Serena, għax fejn is-Serena fil-bidu tax-xatt insib insib lil ħuti, Ġuza, il-ħuti, u 'l Marija, da' biex jilqgħuna hemmhekk. Qalulna "Id-dar spiċċat ta, issa sa norqdu hawn fix-*shelters*, irrangajna xi ħaġa fix-*shelters* u da', u sa norqdu hawn illejja, issa mbagħad naraw x'ha nagħmlu filgħodu" qed tifhem? Imbagħad minn hemm riedu, bi-lejl irqadna hemmhekk, ġew tad-*dockyard*. Ġew bil-lejl, xil-ħdax ta' bil-lejl, qalulna "jekk tridu tieħdu *shelters* ġod-*dockyard* tistgħu tiġu b'kollox u tiġu hemmhekk, toqogħdu hemmhekk." Insomma għidnielhom aħna ma ridniex. Għidtilhom "ma, issa l-ewwel xogħol kif jisbaħ nitilqu lejn s-Siġġiewi nerġġu." Qed tifhem? Għax omni s-Siġġiewi ħalliet xi ħaġa. Hemm kamra zgħira wara l-artal tal-

kappella. Kien hemm kamra qisa żgħira ma nafx jekk tiftakarhiex hemmhekk u ħalliet xi ħaga hemm, tal-ħwejjeg għandu jkun u xi kutri, u hekk, ħalliethom hemm ommi. Donnu ġieha dan il-ħsieb. Insomma u ntfajna s-Siġġiewi. Jiena ma mortx għax-xogħol iktar u mbagħad, bdejt nibża', kont għadni żgħir hemm. Dak iż-żmien kelli tmintax-il sena, kelli tmintax-il sena, insomma allura, ġara illi n-nies bħal speċi bdiet tidra. Allura, r-refuġjati bdew ġejjin kuljum mill-Kottonera. Is-Siġġiewi ma kienx hemm fejn toqgħod labbra l-pjazza, kulħadd kien hemm, kulħadd jippassiġġa barra. Djar fejn joqogħdu ma kellhomx. Allura kulħadd beda jippakkja. Kien hemm is-surgent tal-pulizija, kien hemm dan Emilio u l-kappilan Mangion, tismagħhom isemmuha biss Mangion, il-Mangion. Mangion, kien aħrax ta dan Mangion il-kappillan ta' lil hemm. Ta' Paċpaċ kien jgħidulu. Ta' Paċpaċ hemm il-ħanut għadu hemm jeżisti ta' Paċpaċ?

M: Iva.

Caruana: Dak kien hemm ħuh hemmhekk ta' Paċpaċ, ta' Paċpaċ. Kien hemm oħ- x'jisimha waħda minnhom, it-tfal tiegħu kienu xebbiet. U dan ta' Paċpaċ, u dal-Kapillan, qed tifhem, dan ġie ħabtilhom il-bieb, "Ifthilna. Ifthilna. Ara għandek xi kmamar hawnhekk int?" "Le, Sur Kappillan, kemm għandna kmamar aħna, sur Kappillan, għandna waħda aħna kieku, għandna is-silla fiha" qed tifhem? Għax kienu kollha bir-raba' u "Għandna s-silla fiha." "Ma ġara xejn inbattlu s-silla ħa ndaħħlu familja hawn". "Iddaħħhom hawn?" "M'hemmx x'tagħmel" jibda jgħidilhom. "M'hemmx x'tagħmel." Lis-surgent tal-pulizija "għamli hekk kif qed ngħidulkom" "Allura, m'humie x sa joqogħdu barra dawn in-nies, dawn ħutna" tal-biki kienet ta. Meta niftakar jaqbiżli d-dmugħ [jibki]. Tal-biki kienet. Allura kienu jmorru bieb bieb, u mar-raħal kollu kienu jmorru ta. L-ewwel il-pjazza. U dawk in-nies iridu jidħlu xi mkien, billejl fejn tridhom imorru, joqogħdu barra? Sal-ħdax ta' bil-lejl għadhom barra jippassiġġaw. Kien is-sajf verament. Insomma, u bdew

jippakkjawhom [sic.] ġo djar, ġo djar. U kien hemm il-Palazz ta' Piepu. Għadu jissema. Dak kien ippakkjat [sic.] bin-nies ta' Piepu. Anqas kellhom kamra. Kulhadd mhallat ma xulxin, familja ma' familja kienu. Imma n-nies kienu ma kinux er er ta' mneħirhom imxammar. In-nies kienu ee [ma jinftihemx] jinħabbu ma xulxin peress kull wieħed jgħin lill-ieħor. L-għaks, jigifieri l-għaks tal-ikel ma kienx, kien għadu bilanċjat, ma kienx għadhom bil-*Victory Kitchens*. Kien għadu tista' tixtri oġġett qed tifhem? U da'. Imbgħad wara ftit bdew joħorġu l-kupuni. Imma kont issib tiekol hemmhekk, qed tifhem? Ħafna ħwienet kienu għadhom ibiġħu u da'. Ħwienet u xi naqra nbid, u hekk, kont tixrobha, minn xi ħanut 'l hemm u 'l hawn. Ħeq ħeq, in-nies x'tagħmel in-nies?. Insomma dak kien il-perjodu il-bidu tal-*Illustrious*, kif ir-refuġjati ir-refuġjati okkupaw irħula bħal Ħaż-Zebbuġ u s-Siġġiewi u da'. Jien semmejt is-Siġġiewi għax konna hemmhekk, u għamilna żmien twil is-Siġġiewi.

M: Biex nerġa' naqbadlek ma' dan is-suġġett. Meta tlaqtu mill-Isla, u tlaqtu Raħal Ġdid u s-Siġġiewi x'kienu l-affarijiet li ħadtu magħkom?

Caruana: Ħadna xi kutri, xi ħwejjeg fuq fuq, ta' taħt u ta' fuq milli stajna dak il-ħin li qbadna qed tifhem?...biex ikollna biex inbiddu. Imma ġo soror ta. Ġo sorra mhux toqgħod tagħzel u tagħmel. Kelli libsa ġdida kont għadni kemm nagħmilha. Kont għadni kemm għamilit il-qalziet twil dak iż-żmien jien, għax qabel konna mhux bħal-lum nilbsu l-qalziet twil, konna nkunu bix-xorts qabel, bil-qalziet qasir dak iż-żmien, illum kulhadd bil-qalziet twil iż-żgħażaġħ, kienu jkunu. Kont għadni kif għamilt libsa ġdida, mhux żgur kont għadni lbistha tlett darbiet il-libsa jiena, insomma, intradmet ma sabuhiex. Ma sab- qabduhiex u insomma ġibuha wkoll. Insomma minn li stajna kulhadd kien jista' jieħu xi ħaġa kulhadd ħa milli jista' minn li tal-ikel kienu jitgħu kollox hemm biex tlaġna is-Siġġiewi imbagħad.

- M:** Issa meta mortu s-Siġġiewi intom kontu ġejtu milqugħin tajjeb?
- Caruana:** Ħafna, ħafna, kulħadd irid jgħin mill-aħjar li jista', kulħadd, kulħadd mill-aħjar li jista' kien jista' jgħinek. Minn daqshekk sibna koperazzjoni kbira man-nies man-nies kulħadd fetaħ il-bibien għal kulħadd in-nies kollha, qed tifhem?
- M:** U l-kundizzjoniet il-ġodda kienu biżżejjed?
- Caruana:** Pereżempju?
- M:** Id-djar li qgħadtu fihom kienu sodisfaċenti?
- Caruana:** Ma kinux għal kolli hu' *hundred percent* hu' imma insomma wieħed kel- kel- kellu saqaf fuq rasu biss dik l-aqwa, dik l-aqwa.
- M:** Kien hemm familji li baqgħu f'dan ir-raġal wara li spiċċat il-gwerra?
- Caruana:** Iwa, iwa. Kien hemm tas-Sanità, jgħidulhom tas-Sanità dawk baqgħu sa l-aħħar. Huma biss dik il-familja baqgħet hemm. Kienet toqgħod fejn il-knisja sewwa, illum għandu jkun mietu kollha. Dik is-superjura, oħti per eżempju fetħet il-Mużew tal-bniet tan-nisa għax ma kienx hemm. Oħti kienet superjura tal-Mużew, il-kbira Marija, Alla jaħfrilha. Dik kienet fetħet Mużew hemmhekk. Irranġat ma' Dun Anton peress illi kellu ħutu dejjem ġewwa xebbiet u daħħlithom il-Mużew qed tifhem? U daħal bil-Mużew tal-irgiel u mbagħad ħuh Żarenu, tiftakru nsemmuh?
- M:** Le ma niftakrux
- Caruana:** Żarenu kien, miet. Qed tifhem? Taf min baqa'. Kellhom hemm wieħed ukoll rabbewh huma ċertu Joey. Illum tas-Sanità mis-Siġġiewi. Missieru kien Kola jismu, ma tafux naħseb. Qatt ma tela' is-Siġġiewi?, Iltqajt miegħu darba l-Belt meta kont għadni mhux

ħazin jien, qalli “inti mhux it-tali mhux it-tali s-Sigġiewi.” Għidtlu “Kemmm nafek żgħir, Marija Santa,” rabbewh huma kienu dawn. It-tifel ta’ Kola peress li kellu ħafna tfal dak.

M: U intom, il-familja tiegħek jġifieri kontu għamiltu xi snin toqgħodu s-Sigġiewi wkoll?

Caruana: Għamilna għaxar snin fuqhom, fuq għaxar snin, għaxar snin kienu żguri bejn għaxra u ħdax-il sena u bqajna hemmhekk imbagħad krejna dar, wara. Eh, bagħtuna l-iskola. L-ewwel ma bagħtuna l-iskola tal-gvern it-tieni darba. Ħriġna minn hemm minn minn minn tal-Mużew ħriġna u bagħtuna l-iskola fejn hemm il- il- il-Kunsill illum għandu jkun u bagħtuna kamra hemm mill-iskola. Imbagħad wara ħafna żmien, imbagħad minn hemmhekk minn insomma jien minn hemmhekk inqad s-suldat, minn hemm jġifieri jiena inqad s-suldat fit-tmienja ta’ Awwissu. Wasal Awwissu u mort, inqad s-suldat minn hemmhekk għax kien hemm it-tieni ittra, trid tmur tirreġistra, *number eight*, Dun Rua Street, tas-Sliema biex tingaġġa fl-*army*, orrajt? sa hemmhekk. Hemm kif dħalt fl-*army* jien.

M: Biex insaqsik l-aħħar mistoqsija fuq ir-refuġjati, ħassejtu sens ta’ komunità avolja ma kontux f’darkom?

Caruana: Ħafna ukoll. Ħafna, kulħadd kien iħobbna. Knisja sabiħa kienet dak iż-żmien u għadha illum sal-lum.

M: Issa biex nerġa’ mmur aktar lura, kien hemm xi preparamenti għall-gwerra fix-xhur ta’ qabel ma giet iddikjarata l-gwerra?

Caruana: Fejn is-Sigġiewi?

M: Fuq Malta?

Caruana: Bdew jippreparaw, imbagħad bdew iżidu hu', bdew iżidu l-kanuni, bdew iżidu er tifhem? Bdew iżidu mbagħad, eh eh għalhekk imbagħad kien hemm ir-regimenti, kien hemm ir-regimenti tal-*heavy attack heavy attack* d- er er fortizzi tal-*heavy attack*. Kienu kienu t-*three point seven* xi haġa u li kien hemm mill-*four point five* kanuni kbar dawn ikbar. A- dawn kienu jisparaw bom- il-balla kull waħda daqshekk, issa ngibulek waħda minnhom. Kienu jisparaw kull balla daqshekk dawn il-kanuni. Imma kienu jisparaw waħda u mbagħad oħra qed tifhem? Imma hekk dawn ma kellhomx biex jilqgħu l-ajruplani iz-zgħar biex jilqgħu lilhom qabel jimmaxingannjawhom [sic.]. Allura kull fortizza kien ikollha xi żewg kanuni magħha *bowfords*. Peress ili l-*bowfords* kien er er kanun *quick firing forty-millimetres* kien jispara kien jispara b'heffa kbira qed tifhem, ic-*charger* ħamsa per eżempju ħamsa, ħamsa, ħamsa [għatisa] *thank you*.

M: Issa kien hemm min kien ġie internat u anke deportat waqt il-gwerra, x'tiftakar minn dan l-episodju?

Caruana: Dan l-episodju. L-għajdut tan-nies da' ma kinux fil-pubbliku ta. Kienu jgħidu n-nies "internaw it-tali ta, internaw lil Nerik Mizzi, internaw lil Pantalleresco," isqof hawn x'jismu Monsinjur Pantalleresco, Nerik Mizzi, ċertu Ganado, Herbert Ganado, insomma ċertu Naudi u insomma, u kienu kwantità kbira dawn, li internawhom, ma niftakarhomx kollha. Ċertu Frans Curmi, nafu ħabib tiegħi ħafna kien, Frans Curmi dilettant tat-teatrin, qed tifhem? Kellu kellu kumpanija. Allura, dawk kienu jmorru karozza ħdejn il-bieb tad-*dockyard*. Ma tidħolx, tidħol fil-bieb, jgħidu 'l tal-bieb il-gwardjan. Għax bil-gwardjani kienu dak iż-żmien id-*dockyard* kienu bil-gwardjani Ingliżi. Kienu jgħidu t-tali u t-tali sa mmorru għalih, kien jgħidilhom għaddu minn hemm, minn hemm wup wup wup. Kienu jmorru jgħbruh, jgħidlu "ara itlaq kollox minn idek, ejja magħna għax hawn karozza qed tistenniek" kien jitlaq kollox "fejn?" "issa ngħidulek aħna" irikbuh fil-karozza qed tifhem?

Tup għas-Salvatur. U hekk kienu jinternawhom kollha dak il-ħin stess. Qed tifhem? Biex internaw lil Nerik Mizzi u u l-x' jismu, [ilaqlaq] l-president tal-Qrati Mercieca.

M: Arturo Mercieca

Caruana: Arturo Mercieca. Imma dak ma internawhx ta. Dak baqa' Għawdex, għax dak Għawdx i propja kien, baqa' Għawdex, ma internawhx. Imma peress li kien president imma dejjem qisu *house arrest* kien, qed tifhem? Ma fdawhx, imma bħala president għandu jkun giethom ħniena minnu.

M: Issa inti ħassejtek dispjaċut għal dawn in-nies?

Caruana: *Sure*, ħeq ħeq, jiddispjaċik għalihom biċċiet minnhom kont nafhom, bagħtuhom is-Salvatur. Is-Salvatur imbagħad kien perikoluż għalihom ma ridux huma illi dak u riedu jinternawhom x'imkien iehor, u bagħtuhom Sant'Agata, Sant'Agata taf fejn hemm?

M: Ir-Rabat

Caruana: Ir-Rabat, fejn hemm l-MSSP hemm [ma jinftihemx] morna hafna hemmhekk kemm-il darba, kellhom *shelter*, kellhom kollox u kellhom da', kellhom kol-. U damu xi ftit ta' żmien. Kemm damu ma nafx, kemm damu ma nafx. Sadattant hawn Malta kien jidħol il-*Breconshire* (*HMS Breconshire*), dak il-vapur. Kien jidħol il-*Breconshire* il-vapur, dak kien ġej u sejjer mill-Eġittu għal Malta, kien iġib il-proviżjoni, kien iġib l-*ammunition* u kien iġib dawn l-affarijiet. U kien ġej u sejjer mill-Eġittu għal Malta, ġej u sejjer u darba minnhom qabduhom dawn qalulhom, ippakkjaw [sic.] kollox li għandkom, ħwejjeġkom, qed tifhem? Qas in-nisa tagħhom ma avżaw ħaduhom, xejn, ġew bil-forzi armati ħaduhom f' karozza ħaduhom ix-xatt għabbewhom fuq il-*Breconshire* ġo l-istiva u

ħallewhom hemm u qalulhom “intom minn hawn għall-Eġittu.”
 Insomma, u kellhom bumbardament kbir huma u sejrin, kienu ġo
 stiva kollha. Kienu jitolbu flimkien, qed tifhem? Ġo din l-istiva,
 jisimgħu l-bombi u ma ntlax, ma ntlax huma u sejjer dan l-
 arju- dan il-*Breconshire*. Għax dan kien armat ukoll hu. Kien *cargo*
ship u fl-istess ħin kien em em kien armat bil-kanuni u hekk, qed
 tifhem?għall-ajruplani. U ħaduhom, u waslu, u mill- sal-gwerra
 Eġittu, mill-Eġittu bagħtuhom l-Uganda. U l-Uganda damu sal-
 gwerra sal-aħħar tal-gwerra, u damu hemmhekk ħafna. U
 għamlu, u għamlu bħal speci er għamlu ħbieb man-nies ta'
 hemmhekk kienu jgħinuhom ħafna n-nies tal-Uganda. Iktar aħna
 batejna minnhom, iktar hawn Malta batejna, dak ma kienx hemm
 gwerra l-Uganda. Qed tifhem? Mill-Eġittu bagħtuhom l-Uganda u
 ħadu ħafna esperjenzi. Iwa. Fejn naf jien, spiċċaw hemmhekk u
 baqgħu hemm imbagħad kif spiċċat il-gwerra imbagħad
 irritornawhom lura lejn Malta. Ġew imbagħad l-Ingliżi bagħtu
 jaraw wieħed ċertu Karlu Mallia, ċertu Karlu Mallia, kien *pro-*
Italian, *pro-Italian* dan kien jieħu ħsieb il-Maltin ta' hemmhekk
 imma kellu passaport Taljan. Reġa' ġie hawn intervistawh u
 reġgħu bagħtuh lura għax kien ta' passaport Taljan, cittadin Taljan
 kien. Issa kien hemm dak iż-żmien ta' Borg erm ta' Borg Pisani,
 orrajt. Borg Pisani tiftakru?.... ta' dak li kienu għalquh? Kien Lulju,
 dak iż-żmien, u ġew it-*torpedo boats*, *torpedo boats* kienu, biex
 jidħlu fil-port tagħna u jtajru l-bastimenti kollha li kien hemm fil-
 port, bid-*dockyard* b'kollox. Jidħlu ġol er ġol er, ikissru l-ewwel il-
bomb defence, għax il-*bomb defence* kienu jiġu kienet bil-bagi
 kienet xibka kbira tal-ħadid u kienu jzommuhom fil-wiċċ permezz
 tal-bagi, bagi bagi, waħda wara l-oħra u kien hemm żewġ *tug*
boats, wieħed f'banda u l-ieħor f'oħra u meta kienu jiġu l-
 bastimenti Ingliżi kienu tarahom, ikunu jafu eh, jaqbduha wieħed
 f'tarf u l-ieħor f'oħra u jifthulhom, jidħlu, u kif jidħlu jerġgħu
 jagħlquhom, jerġgħu jagħlquhom. Qed tifhem? U kien hemm tliet
destroyers Ingliżi, kienu jagħmlu l-*patrol*, dak iż-żmien mal-*area*
 ta' Malta u f'tit "il bogħod minnha, kienu jagħmlu *patrol*, jekk hemm

xi ħaga qed tifhem?.... jittorpidjawhom [sic.], u darba minnhom darba minnhom... allura dawn il-Ġermanizi dawn daħlu.... Ie, l-ewwel ġew it-Taljani, it-Taljani ġew b'dan kien x'jismu Borg Pisani, kien imlaħħaq ħafna mat-Taljani, kien ufficjal, Taljan, kien qed jistudja l-Italja qed tifhem? ... ma' ċertu ma...a, mhux ma Warrington, wara sabu. Kien qed jistudja l-Italja, kien student hemmhekk, qed tifhem? U sar, u ndiehes mat-Taljani qed tifhem? U sar Taljan, mingħajr ma kellu l-passaport Taljan, Inġliż, Inġliż, kellu l-passaport Inġliż, mingħajr ma kellu l-passaport Taljan, u baqa' bil-passaport Inġliż da'. U meta ġew it-*torpedo boats* peress li hu billi kien jidher bħala Malti kien il-*leader* hu, allura ġew xi ħamsa jew sitta *torpedo boats*, kien *July* da', *July tan-nineteen forty-one* għax wara nqbadt suldat jien. Kien *July tal-forty-one* allura ġew tal-*forty-one* dan insomma u ġew il-*Hurricanes* kollha u għarrquhom kollha, għarrquhom kollha, kissruhom kollha u għarrquhom kollha, kissru, ibumba- immaxxingannjawhom [sic.]. U dan Borg Pisani leħaq salva u mar l-art, u nzerta Sant' Iermu. Intefa' fl-art.. jgħidlek issa dan kien jgħid sa jaqbduni prigunier jien u jispiċċa kollox u niġi prigunier, *prisoner of war*, mentri, u ħaduh minn hemm ġarrewh bil- bil- ħaduh insomma formalment ħaduh bħala prigunier u ħaduh l-Imtarfa l-Isptar biex jaraw qed tifhem? ... jekk għandux xi ġrieħi jew da' għax hekk suppost il-prigunieri kont tieħu ħsiebhom ukoll, u bagħtuh l-Imtarfa u kien hemm dan it-tabib Warrington (Colonel Thomas Warrington), mill-Isla wkoll, dan Borg Pisani kien mill-Isla wkoll, u kien jafu lilu kien student u meta mar ikellmu bit-Taljan dak għarfu, qallu "Għaraftni lili int?" qallu "Inti mhux it- it-tabib" qallu "Warrington?" Qallu "Iwa." Qallu "dak x'fettillek?" Qallu, qallu "Jiena," qallu "indehist mat-Taljani." Insomma saret parlata konversazzjoni sħiħa, għax kien hemm il-*Berqa* kollox kienet iġġib dak iz-zmien, il-gazzetta. U qagħad jgħidlu, qallu "isma jiena ma' nistax ma' ma' nagħmilx ir-rapport ta fuqek" qallu " issa ara kif se tirranġa inti" qallu "magħhom u da'," qallu "x'passaport għandek int?" qallu "għandi passaport Inġliż" qallu "Passaport Inġliż gejt mill-Italja?" kollha

ġibitha l-gazzetta kienet. Qallu “Għandek passaport Ingliż allura kont l-Italja mank bdiltu bħalma għamlu sħabek l-oħrajn tal-Italja?” Qallu “Għax m’għamiltx il-passaport Taljan? U kont tiġi cittadin Taljan għax kieku kont tiġi *prisoner of war*” qallu, qallu “hekk ġiet, issa jagħmlu huma” insomma u ġew l-awtorità u rappurtawh u sebaħ u dalam u qalulu u għaddewh ġuri, għaddewh ġuri. Qalulu “int is-sentenza tiegħek” kienet għada il-forka. Qalilhom “jiena għalija ma jimpurtax.” Kien kien kien determinat. Qalilhom “jien għal *patria* mmut. Għall-Italja ma jimpurtax.” Qalilhom il-gazzetta ta. Qallhom, qallhom “Però nixtieq waħda, rrid” qallhom “illi lili” qallhom “mhux tagħlquni, xkubettjawni” ssemmevha din “xkubettjawni bħala eroj.” Qalulu “Le, il-liġi ta’ Malta ma tippermettix dan” qallu “Inti cittadin Malti, cittadin Ingliż, cittadin Ingliż” qallu, “Inti” qallu “trid tiegħu skont il-liġi, il-forka” u l-aħħar wieħed li kienu għallqu. Jgħidulek, kellu kuraġġ kbir dan, jgħidu. Kien hemm wieħed qalli “dak” qalli “generalment dawn kienu taqbadhom *diarrhoea*,” ħasra kbira sa ddendel bniedem hu’ “kien jaqbdhom *diarrhoea*” qalli “dan” qalli “dan inzerta ma kellu xejn dan, ma kellu xejn minn dawn l-affarijiet” ara kemm kien determinat, qed tifhem? U saret, spicċat l-istorja hawnhekk ta’ da’. Sadattant kien *July* da’. Issa mela niġu għal Awwissu.

M: Issa biex nistaqsik xi haġa oħra. X’kien jiġri kull meta kienet tindaqq is-sirena, kif kont tħossok?

Caruana: Eh eh eh meta ġew il-Ġermaniżi? Kulħadd jinzel f’qoxortu fejn se jmur ‘l hemm fejn se jmur ‘l hawn. Per eżempju konna s-Siġġiewi dak iż-żmien jien kont għadni mhux fl-*army* kont nara fejn naqbad nidhol bubu min jiġri ‘l hawn minn jiġri ‘l hemm, jekk ikunu l-knisja joħroġu qed tifhem? X’ taqbad tagħmel allura kulħadd kien jara fejn ideffes rasu imbagħad orrajt idoqq ir-*raiders passed*.

M: U dawn is-sireni fejn kienu jkunu stazzjonati generalment?

Caruana: Ġeneralment kienu jkunu fuq il-bejt tal-għassa tal-pulizija waħda minnhom kienet tkun, imma waħda kien ikun hemm - sirena. Dak konna ttestjajniehom [sic.] jien, mhux jien, l-imgħallem li kelli l-*powerstation*. Kienu kbar daqshekk b'zewg tnejn daw' iduru daw'. Għax dik is-sirena ma kienet xejn ta. Mutur fin-nofs u kienu *rollers* daqshekk bi xfafar b'hekk kienet tgħajjat ta waħda 'l hemm, le, le terġa dawn tal-elettriku dawn, dawk iz-zgħar ħaġa oħra. Kienu bi xfafar hekk allura kienu jduru dawn qishom fannijiet wieħed 'l hawn u l-ieħor 'l hemm iduru u kienu jgħajtu ħafna allura kien biżżejjed dak qed tifhem?

M: Apparti s-sireni, kien hemm metodi oħra kif in-nies kienu jġu avżati?

Caruana: Issa, meta mbagħad meta jkun attakk qawwi ħafna, kien hemm jgħidu t-*typhoon*, it-*typhoon*. Qisha, qisha it-*typhoon* kienet erm joħorgu l-vapuri ma jkollhomx is-suffara tagħhom. Dak kien jagħmel woوو woو. Dak it-*typhoon* meta je je je jħaddmu dan it-*typhoon*, it-*typhoon* kienu jgħidulu, kien ikun iktar ġej xi *raid* qawwi, kienu jgħidu. Dak msemmi dak it-*typhoon*. Jgħidu “ara mhux sirena bit-*typhoon*, ħareġ it-*typhoon*.” L-ewwel jibdew is-sirena imbagħad jibda t-*typhoon* biex iktar in-nies iddabbar rasha.

M: Issa tiftakar meta rajt l-ajruplani tal-għadu l-ewwel darba?

Caruana: Meta?

M: Meta rajt l-ajruplani tal-għadu l-ewwel darba?

Caruana: Niftakar mela le. Eh eh eh eh kont imbagħad mis-Siġġiewi rajthom kollha. Konna narawhom mill-għoli ħafna qed tifhem? “Ara fejnhom ara fejnhom ara ara ara għaddej ara.” Imma kienu ta' żmien it-Taljani, tal-Ingliżi, tal-Ġermaniżi ma konniex narawhom

ta. Ma kontx tarahom. Dawk kellhom heffa tal-għaġeb il-Ġermaniżi, kien hemm il-*one o nine* u l-*Stukas* u daw' issa.

M: Waqt il-bumbardamenti kontu tfittxu x-xelter?

Caruana: *Sure*, [daħaq] fejn trid tfittex? xelter kont tfittex waqt il-bumbardamenti, jekk tkun tista' tidħol, tidħol. Min jaf kemm tgerbu nies it-taraġ tax-xelter [daħaq] biex jidħlu jġru.

M: Kien ikun hemm heffa kbira biex in-nies jidħlu?

Caruana: Għamilna wieħed konna fejn ix-xelter fejn il-Mużew aħna hemmhekk hemm xelter hemm. Quddiem il-Mużew għamilna xelter għadu hemm għadu hemm jekk forsi tgħaddi minn hemm.

M: Kif kontu tgħixu hemm isfel?

Caruana: Xejn, jgħidu r-rużarju [daħaq] u jdejhom marbuta. U bil-musbieħ.

M: X'kontu tniżżlu magħkom?

Caruana: Kien hemm min min kien inizzel xi ħaġa tal-ikel miegħu, qed tifhem? Insomma ma tafx inti ma nafx nispijegalek fuq hekk. Inizzlu xi ħaġa magħhom għax imbagħad malajr kienet iddoqq is-sirena malli jtilqu kienu jdoqqu *raiders passed* hu'. Għax huma kienu jagħmlu l-attakk u jtilqu. L-ajruplan mhux se jibqa' hawn, kien jitlaq jerga'. Irid ikollu l-*fuel* biex eq eq eq jerga' jmur lura, qed tifhem? Ma tantx kien idum l-*air raid*. Idum *air raid* meta kienet jġu *wave* wara *wave*. Tiġi *wave* u mbagħad tiġi oħra. Hemmhekk iwa ġieli domna ħafna. Pereżempju, darba minnhom, darba minnhom in-nies bdiet tidrahom għall-ewwel għax bdew jaqtgħu xi naqra, allura n-nies bdiet tintefa' tmur il-Belt u t-*talkies* baqgħu jiftħu u kien hemm ir-*Regent talkies*. Jien kelli ħabib tiegħi hemmhekk u daqq *raid* filgħodu kmieni u baqgħu jġi xi ajruplan u ma reġgħux

għamlu *raiders passed* għax kien imur u jerġa' lura u dement li jisimgħu l-ajruplan li għadu qed idur mal-gżira ir- ir- il- il- il- ma kinux jagħmlu *raider passed*. Kien għamluh [...] li wasal attakk, allura, u damet, u damet xi nofs ta' nhar sħiħ di'. Allura n-nies kollha kollha bħal speċi qalu mhu xejn dan, mhu xejn, ara ara baqgħet hemm, u ma daqqewx ir-*raiders passed*. F'daqqa waħda niżlu l-bombi niżlu l-Belt, attakkaw il-Belt u waqa' r-*Regent*, ma waqax kullimkien waqa' r-*Regent*. Bil-bombi waqa'. U mietu k-mietu ħafna nies ġewwa fih ir-*Regent talkies* qed tifhem? Kelli ħabib tiegħi Attard kien jismu jaħasra, kemm kien ħabib tiegħi kien gustuż. Kemm bkejtu jien.

M: Kulhadd kien jinżel fix-xelter?

Caruana: Eh. Kien hemm min joqgħod id-dar. Kien hemm min joqgħod id-dar għax kienu jgħidu jien qatt ma nżilt xelter. Imma kienu jabbużaw eh.

M: Intom x' tip ta' xelter kontu tużaw wieħed pubbliku jew kellkom wieħed privat tal-familja?

Caruana: Le, le pubbliku, pubbliku għax tal-familja ma kellniex. Pabbliku pubbliku. U għax konna. Imma privat kien tagħna. Privat ta' dik in-naħa. Kienu ħallsu n-nies qed tifhem? Ta' fejn il-Mużew meta kont għadni mhux fl-*army* jien. Quddiem il-Mużew hemm xelter hemmhekk. Dak kien privat kulhadd ħareġ xi ħaġa tal-flus bdew iħaffru iħaffru iħaffru u kienu joqgħodu ta' dawk l-akwati hu', qed tifhem?

M: Kien hemm min kellu kamra private ġox-xelters pubbliċi?

Caruana: Iwa. Iwa kien hemm. Kien hemm min ħaffer kamra għalih, kamra għalih, ħaffer għalih, qed tifhem kamra privata għalih. Anke hawn għadhom jeżistu dawn anke sal-lum.

- M:** U kontu tagħmlu għranet jew iljieli sħaħ hemm għew intom?
- Caruana:** Lej- Iljieli, ġieli għamilna iwa. Ġieli għamilna ljieli. Forsi mhux jien, ħuti u ommi għax jiena wara li kont fl-*army* jien hekk kienu jagħmlu, qed tifhem?
- M:** Avolja kontu taħt l-art kien hemm regolamenti ta' x'seta' u ma' setax isir?
- Caruana:** Le lanqas xejn, lanqas xejn. Setgħu ħallew kollox kif baqgħu- Le le minn daqshekk ma kien hemm sikkatura xejn. L-ebda regolamenti ma kien hemm.
- M:** Kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u ilma?
- Caruana:** Xejn. Ma kienx hemm ilma u dawl. Kulħadd kien inizzel xi ħaġa miegħu biex jixrob jew hekk qed tifhem? Jew per eżempju waqaf naqra l-*air raid*, qed tifhem? Kien jitla' xi hadd li jkun viċin u jgħib xi buqar bl-ilma, kemm jixrob ħa, jew naqra te. Xi ħaġa hekk. Inqassmu lil xulxin. Ma tafx int kif kienu jagħmlu. Kont ta' malajr din. U jerga' jinżel hemm isfel.
- M:** Taf b' xi każijiet ta' min twieled jew wellied għo xelter?
- Caruana:** Nismagħhom jgħiduha. Nismagħhom jgħiduha. Pereżempju dawn Ħal Tarxien twieled, ma nafx, insomma kien hemm każi hekk, ma nistax ngħidlek fejn huma imma kien hemm każi li welliedu hemm. Kienet waslet mara, ħeq qed tifhem? Fix-xelter trid twelled. Imma kien hemm każi imma fejn ma nafx biex ngħidlek id-dritt.
- M:** Għat-toilets x'kien issir?

Caruana: It-toilet, dik kienet problema oħra tat-toilet. Min kien hemm jitla', jitla' jkun vicin imur id-dar. Jew imbagħad għamlu rokna għamlu rokna u għamlu barmil bramel kbar, ikun irid jagħmel pipi, qed tifhem? Ma tistax tgħid xi jkollu dak iż-żmien u għamluh f'rokna f'rokna għalih. Qed tifhem? U jerġa' jitgħatta. Xi trid tagħmel ħi. Kienu xi ħaġa hekk jagħmlu. Ħafna kienet ittihom imsarinhom u da' bil-biza'. Kienu jirrangaw x' h- hekk. Min seta' jitla' d-dar, jitla' jiġri u jerġa' jinżel, kien jissogra.

M: Ġieli smajt b' xi każijiet kellhom msarinhom?

Caruana: Iwa ġieli smajt, iwa, ġieli kien hemm, ġieli kien hemm każi bħal dawn.

M: Kif kontu żzommu l-indafa hemm isfel?

Caruana: Mmm. Problema. Ndafa kif trid iżzommha?. Anqas wiċċek ma kont taħsel. Ma kienx hemm biex taħsel wiċċek, xejn. Qed tifhem? Kif trid taħsel wiċċek, m'hemmx kumdità ta' xejn. Kulħadd qiegħed magħsur fuq bank. Fuq bank tal-injam jew tal-ġebel bilqiegħda idejk marbuta jgħidu r-rużarju. Hekk kienet is-sitwazzjoni.

M: Jiġifieri kienu postijiet maħmuġin dawn ix-xelters?

Caruana: U u u, ma tgħidx mhux bħal hawn u. [Daħaq] Insomma kienu jippruvaw iżommuhom indaf, imma sa fejn tista' hu'. Meta jkun hemm folla kbira imma qatt ma kien hemm inkwiet. Dik li nista' ngħid fix-xelter. Qatt ma kien hemm pereżempju, inkwiet bejniethom in-nies. Kienu kienu *close* ħafna. Kienu jingwalaw, wieħed kien iċedi lill-ieħor malajr. Ma kienx ikun hemm kwistjonijiet, qed tifhem?

M: Qatt għaddielkom minn moħħkom li x-xelter seta' jisfronda waqt xi *air raid*?

Caruana: Iwa, Iwa. Imma dik dejjem dejjem bil-biża' dik, dejjem bil-biża' kienet tkun.

M: Bħala ġuvnott inti kont tibża'?

Caruana: Heq mela, kont nibża' żgur.

M: U meta kontu toħorġu minn taħt l-art x' kontu tagħmlu?

Caruana: Heq, kont tmur id-dar. Tinħasel malajr, qed tifhem? Issajjar xi ħaġa forsi biex tiekol xi ħaġa. Dejjem tistenna *raid* ieħor hu. Ta' malajr hu' li kont tagħmel. Dak dement li għadni m'iniex fl-*army* eh. Għax u mbagħad xi ħaġa hekk kienu jagħmlu ħuti u ommi, qed tifhem? Xi trid tagħmel. Tagħmel xi ħaġa malajr għax ix-*shelter* ma kienx ikun 'il bogħod qed tifhem? Jew titla' oħti malajr, "ejja isa isa mur ġib daqsxejn hekk mur ġib daqsxejn hekk, mur ġib daqsxejn ilma, mur għamel kitla kitla te malajr" u kienet tinżel b'xi ħaġa hekk u tinżel. Ikun viċin. Ma kinux imorru l-familja kollha ma kinux jabbużaw għaliex l-*air raids* kienu spissi mbagħad.

M: Issa semmejt li għamilt żmien fl-armata. X'kien il-proċess biex inġbart bil-lieva?

Caruana: Jiena dak kienu jwaħħlu l-karti mal-ħajt l-ewwel, orrajt. Min għalaq it-tmintax-il sena, jew- l-ewwel kienet ta' tmintax, l-ewwel kienet ta' dsatax, ta' għoxrin kien imur. Jien kien għad ma' kellix għoxrin dak iż-żmien. Min għalaq il- [ma jinftihemx]. Imbagħad bdew inizzluha qalu "sa jagħmlu riġment ġdid" qalu. Qalu "trid tmur bilfors, trid tmur bilfors." Allura jiena kelli mmur. Kont għalaqt dsatax-il sena, kelli mmur. Ghidt, aħjar immur issa jien, ħalli mmur fejn irrid jien, nagħżel. U ridt nidhol fl- RAF jien.

M: RAF x'jiġifieri?

- Caruana:** L-Airforce.
- M:** *Royal Air Force*
- Caruana:** *Royal Air Force*. Riddt nidhol fl-*Air Force* jien. Qalli “Le” kien hemm surgent. Qalli “Ma tistax” qalli “issa dika *full up* dan se jkun hemm rigment ġdid u se tkun fuq *Bofors* fuq kanuni żgħar” qalli, qalli dan qed jgħidli. Qalli “allura se jkun hemm” qalli “rigment ġdid dan, il-kurunell se jkun il-kurunell Salamone.” Insomma. Bħal speċi qed tifhem? Qalli, “mhux aħjar hawn fejn trid tmur għalfejn trid tmur hemm, hawn trid tidhol.” Qalli “Ejja ħa neżeminawk.” U eżaminawni, insomma għall- għall- eżami- *medical examination*, qed tifhem? Għajnejja, il-tul u dan għandek kollox fil- x’jismu, it-tul u dan, qed tifhem? Qaluli “issa mur irraporta” ma nafx fejn qaluli. Jien kont Dun Rua Street. Qalli “issa għada mur ir-rapporta Tigne.”
- M:** Tigne Barracks, jġifieri?
- Caruana:** Tigne Barracks biex immur għall- għall- għall-bidu, x’jgħidulu training, x’jgħidulu, rekluta.
- M:** Reklutaġġ.
- Caruana:** Reklutaġġ. Qalli u kien hemm fizza is-sur Wirth, Ġermaniż ismu bid-*double ‘u,’* Wirth, Wirth, niftakru [daħaq] Wirth, hemmhekk. U għamilna xahar hemm. Kien hemm surgent u beda jagħmlilna d-*drill*. Jagħmlilna d-*drill* hemmhekk u dan jagħtuna nieklu u da. Għall-ewwel kont qisni ta’ tfal li kont u, kont qisni xalata [daħaq] hemmhekk. Kulhadd jiċċajta. Kulhadd hekk qed tifhem..kien. Konna mmorru nieklu. Kellna l-*barracks*, kien hemm l-ikel għadu tajjeb hemm dak iż-żmien, ma kontx issibu d-dar l-ikel li kien ikollna fil-bidu, meta nqbadt suldat jien. Eq eq kurraġġ kienu jagħmlulek. Kienu jtuna is-sigaretti, kont inpejjepp xi sigarett jien,

ħames pakketti fil-ġimgħa, kien jiġi *r-ration*, insomma u għaddejnieha. Ikel tajjeb kien. Ma konniex fuq kanuni dak iż-żmien, konna fil-*barracks*, konna noqgħodu fil-*barracks*. Jien kelli sodda għalija qed tifhem? U da', qed tifhem? Ħeq ħeq, ħeq, qed tifhem? U mbagħad kull jumejn kienu jibgħatuna ġurnata *leave* id-dar, kull tlett ijiem kien jibgħatuna ġurnata d-dar. Ommi kienet tiġi tgħannaqni. Konna s-Siġġiewi. Kelli battikata biex minn tas-Sliema biex niġi s-Siġġiewi jien mill- mill- *mill-barracks*. Qed tifhem? Kont immur is-Siġġiewi u konna noqgħodu d-dar dak iż-żmien, [...] Strada Margerita kien hemm wieħed x'jismu bħalissa, kif insejt x'jismu. Konna xi tliet familji f' di' dar hawn, tahlina hu. Kien kien tifel raġel mill-aħjar ta', ara kif insejt kunjomu, u l-laqam, il-laqam li għandu. Insejtu, insejtu l-laqam li-għandu, qed tifhem? Miet illum ta' insomma. Anki kien iħobbhom, kien *Britisher* dan, mal-Ingliži. Meta kien jara l-Ingliži kien jipprova jthom. U kellu, kien ġuvni dan u kellu u kellu razzett u kellu it-tiben u dan u ġieli dah - magħna kien idaħħal l-Ingliži wkoll hemm ġew din id-dar, ukoll fiha, din id-dar, fejn Santa Margerita kien żgur. Dik li niftakar. Il-bqija ma nafx x'jismu. Insejt x'jismu. Ara kif insejtu miskin u kien mill-aħjar dan ir-raġel. Insomma rħilu hu min hu. Iwa, da' kien Santa Margerita. Kont suldat jiġifieri kont fl-*army*, kont immur hemmhekk u norqod hemm, qed tifhem? Kellna kamra żgħira, għadni niftakar u kont, u kont immur, ma kellniex fejn tieħu banju u kont immur nieħu banju hemm. Kellna kamra. Ġieli ġejt billejl id-dar. Qed tifhem? Kont ninħasel jien. Dak reqdin kollha ħuti f'kamra oħra u ommi, u kont immur nieħu banju jien qed tifhem? Nagħmel naqra miħun fuq tal-isteam, iwa u ninħasel u da' u nbiddel naqra jien. Ħeq, ħeq trid tagħmilhom dawn l-affarijiet hu'. U ngħadduha hekk, imbagħad filgħodu kont immur, kont nagħmel ġurnata nippassiġġa s-Siġġiewi kont, bl-uniformi ta' suldat, imbagħad l-għada kont nerga' mmur nirritorna l-*barracks*. U bqajna dan ix-xahar kollu hekk bħala rekluta [...] l-*barracks*. Il-kurunell kien Salamone dak iż-żmien. U kienu għadhom ma ssetjawnix [sic.] fuq il-kanuni, kien Salamone, u għamilna xahar,

it-training. Nagħmlu d-*drill* kif tarawhom il-pulizija jagħmlu *left - right* u da' insomma, qed tifhem? U u u u *present arms* u dawn l-affarijiet kollha, kollha kont nieħu pjaċir bihom. Ta' tfal li kont, kont nieħu gost bihom allavolja [jidħaq] kienet esperjenza bħal speci ma tagħtix kas tal-gwerra u da' qed tifhem? Kulhadd jiċċajta konna suldati konna għadna tfal qed tifhem? Wieħed jinbex lill-ieħor u għaddejja l-istorja. Qed tifhem? Insomma, imbagħad qalulna "Issa ara, int, int u int, int in-numru tieghek" Tawna in-numri tagħna qalli "inti *four one three double one, four one three double one*. Inti l-ieħor," ta' ħdejjja kien Caruana wkoll niftakar, u minn Ħal Tarxien, kien miet ta m'ilux għax nafu kien kiber ukoll ħafna. Kont niltaqa' miegħu kemm ilna hawn, qed tifhem? U kien il- *one ow* dak *four one three one ow*. Għax konna wara xulxin jiena u hu l-*one ow*. "Ara Caruana" kien jgħidli. "Iwa Caruana" kont nagħmillu jien. Alla jaħfirlu, miet kien. Niftakar, kellu kellu vann kien jinżel xi mkien u jaħdem, ma nafx fejn. Insomma, wara l-gwerra jiġifieri dan.

M: Int f'liem reġiment kont, Ċensinu?

Caruana: *Third Light, Third Light Attack Regiment, Twenty-second, Twenty-second Battery, Twenty-second Battery* u mbagħad ir-reġiment kien *Third Light*. It-*Third Light* kien jikkonsisti fil-*Bofors* u fis-*Search Lights*. Is-*Search Lights* dawn li jieħdu ħsieb is-*search lights*, għax dawn kienu bis-*search lights*. Tiftakarhom is-*search lights* hu. Għandek xi idea? [ma jinftihemx].

M: Għandi idea.

Caruana: Is-*Search Light* u aħna konna reġiment wieħed u kurunell wieħed. Il-Kurunell kien Salamone. Salamone kien jiġi ħu l-kappillan tal-knisja tal-Imġarr. Salamone. Wiċċu dejjem serju hekk kien, illum mejtin ta. U kellna OC, OC Scicluna, OC Scicluna. Kien l-OC il-Maġġur. Qed tifhem? U fizzjali kellna 'l dan Wirth, hemmhekk,

imbagħad meta morna fuq il-kanuni, biex niftiehm u minn hemm, għax inkella, [ma jinftiehm] għaddejna hemmhekk bagħtuni l-Furjana, bagħtuni l-Furjana fuq kanun fil-port. Il-Furjana m'hemmx dak il-ġnien fejn ħdejn l-Isptar Boffa hemm u hemm ġnien hemm, għandu dak tal-ħadid hemmhekk. Hemmhekk konna għalaqnieha għalina s-suldati dak il-ġnien. U kellna *barracks* hemm żgħira kamra, fejn nieklu u norqdu insomma, u kellna il-kanun mas-swar, kellna l-kanun mas-swar u meta jiġu l-ajruplani, qed tifhem?.. għal fuq id-*dockyard*. Konna nisparaw minn hemm u kellna dak l-kanun u kellna ieħor l-barrakka ta' fuq bħalu, qed tifhem? Allura aħna, kienu jikkomunikawlna mill-barrakka ta' fuq bit-*telephone* minn hemm. U kellna dawn it-*telephones* daqshekk iddawwar hekk tagħmlu ma' widnejk u tgħid hello, *telephone* bil-*wire* tal-*army* ngħidilhom jien. Kienu tajbin ta dawk it-*telephones*. Kellhom batteriji daqshekk, bil-*battery* kwadri, kienu, u wieħed, wieħed bl-ilma u l-ieħor bl-aċidu biex, ma nafx kif kienu xi haġa hekk tiftakarhom hekk daqshekk. Għandek xi idea tagħhom?

M: Niftakarhom

Caruana: E u dawwar hekk [ma jinftiehm] u jirrispondik is-sur- is-*Sergeant Major* qed tifhem? Is-surgent maġġur. Is-surgent Stevens kien jismu dak iż-żmien. Illum mejjet, Albert Stevens, kien ħalliel tal-għageb das-surgent. Kien jipprofitta ruħu minn kulħadd.

M: Meta tgħid ħalliel x'jigifier?

Caruana: Ħalliel pereżempju taf x'kien jagħmel? Pereżempju, Eq eq inti pereżempju, jien qed tifhem? Kelli nagħti xi haġa tal-flus flus pereżempju, xi xelini hekk ta lit-tali. "Ħallihomli hawn, qalli bihom ta" kien jgħidlek "qalli bihom, ħallihomli hawn" u joħodhom hu. Joħodhom hu "le, mhux veru ma ġabuli xejn minn dawn". Kien imur għand tan-NAAFI (Navy Army and Air Force Institutes)

pereżempju. Kien jagħmel xi karta għax kien dilettant tal-affarijiet tal-kitba. Missieru kien Inġliż. U dan daħal fl-army, kien dan Stevens, minn Bormla. Daħal fl-army għax fil-gwerra l-oħra ta' qabel din kien kien fin- fin-*navy*, allura jgħidlek jekk jiġbruni fin-*navy*, jien ma rridx immur fin-*navy* aħjar nidhol fl-army. U daħal fl-*army*. Għax kellu Inġliż tajjeb ta' da' Stevens, qed tifhem? Allura, darba minnhom kien hemm wieħed, biex ma ntawwalx u żżewweġ dan. Qallu "Għamilli pjaċir surgent" qallu "ara ġġiblix żewġ fliexken *whiskey* għax ħa niżżewweġ il-Ħadd li ġej" per eżempju dan. Qallu "mela le, ħalli f'idejja." Għax dawn kellhom l-*issue* il-*whiskey* b'xejn li li lis-surgenti. Kellhom il-*whiskey* b'xejn jagħtuhomlhom tal-*army* minn NAAFI. Qallu "ħalli f'idejja. Ħalli-" U ġieblu żewġ fliexken *whiskey*. Qallu "Kemmhuma?" Qallu "Seba' liri" tnejn seba' liri b'xejn dak iż-żmien. Illum iwa, illum mhux ħa tixtrih seba' liri *whiskey*, fliexkun *whiskey*. Kienu seba' liri ġieix fliexken *whiskey*. Insomma, u dak iż- mar, u meta wasal għat-tieg da' reġa mar għand is-surgent u qallu "l-*whiskey*" qallu "ġibthomli Surgent?" Qallu "X' *whiskey* hu?" Qallu "tajtek seba' liri!" Qallu "x'inti tgħid" qallu "ara ma ngħidlekx għax narrestak" beda jagħmillu, "mur 'l hemm mur 'l hemm mur 'l hemm ma tajtni xejn lil ħaddieħor għid" qallu "X'jiġifieri?" beda jgħidlu żul minn hemm. In-nies beda jgħidu u kollha ħaduha kontra Stevens. Qallu "Dak giddieb" qallhom "mhu veru xejn" qallhom "dak qed jipproffita ruħu" da' da' s-surgent. Insomma, u baqa mingħajrhom miskin qed niftakru jibki biki żul minn hemm. Għal giex fliexken *whiskey* seraqhomlu. Kien ħalliel das-surgent insomma.

M: Apparti l-Furjana fejn kont stazzjonat?

Caruana: Il-Furjana hemmhekk. Dak il-ġnien biss. Darba. Dak il-ġnien ta' *Hastings*, ġnien hemm.

M: Ta' fejn l-Isptar Boffa.

Caruana: Fejn l-Isptar Boffa kien hemm dak il-ġnien, eġe.

M: Apparti l-Furjana kont stazzjonat xi mkien ieħor f'Malta?

Caruana: U żgur. Imbagħad minn hemm, imbagħad minn hemm, mort per eżempju, minn hemm, minn hemm fejn morna ixxiftajna [sic.], imma tgħidlix fejn mort ta ħi ta. Morna. Meta tidħol xi *information* per eżempju tal-ajruplani, konna, peress li konna *mobile* aħna bilkanuni, konna mmorru per eżempju Ħal Luqa, dik waħda minnhom. Ħal Luqa konna mmorru, jitfgħuna f'għalqa, kienu jitfgħuna f'għalqa, qed tifhem? Biex inkunu biex inkunu ta' għajnuna għall-ajruplani li jkun gejjin, biex ma nħalluhomx jiddajvjaw [sic.] u jkissru l-ajruplani. Allura konna nagħmlu xi ffit granet hemmhekk, qed tifhem? U mbagħad nerġgħu nirritornaw għal band'oħra. Imbagħad darb'oħra ħaduna Ta' Qali. Allura, Ta' Qali allura qegħduna hemmhekk Ta' Qali u minn Ta' Qali. U minn Ta' Qali konna f'għalqa, Ta' Qali u ma kellniex *billets* fejn norqdu u kien ġibulna l-kampijiet kbar, kamp, kamp u kienet ix-xitwa u mbagħad dak iż-żmien, u mbagħad leħaq daħal iż-żmien, kienet ix-xitwa u għamlet xita kbira u konna s-sodod niżlu hemmhekk, niżlu ġol-art, kien ikollna s-sodod tagħna jingħalqu, qed tifhem? Kellna l-kaxxa, tal- x-jismu, l-għatu tal-kaxxa għadu għandi tal-ħwejjeg, insomma, u kollox ġol-ilma kien u kellna xalata u tgħaffiġa sħiħa żul minn hemm jaħasra, kemm batejt dikinhar, konna Ta' Qali. Sadattant u mbagħad ġiebu l-Ingliżi l-Imtarfa, l-Imtarfa fejn hemm l-isptar, dan l-Imtarfa hemmhekk ġiebu l-Ingliżi u kien kemm il- il- xjismhom l-Ingliżi, kienu fuq it-*telephone*, kienu, kienu, it-*telephone operators* biex jagħtu l-*instructions* minn hemm u peress li kienu Ingliżi, riedu 'l xi ħadd biex jittrasmetti bil-Malti lil oħrajn, qaluli trid tmur hemmhekk?. Għidtilhom iwa, u kont ħadt pjaċir jien ma' dan l-Ingliż kien jagħmilli ħa dan għalik, ngħidlu x'ngħidilhom, jgħidli x'ngħidilhom bl-Ingliż. [ma jinftihemx] Isma' kont ngħidilhom qed tifhem? "Oqogħdu attenti għax ħa jkun hawn gejjja *in formation* dawlaqt u dan oqogħdu attenti għaliha, it-

tali post u mit-tali post ara ħadt il-messaġġ issa, orrajt?." Kont hekk u għamilt xi erbat ijiem sewwa hemmhekk, imma niftakar kien diżabitat hemmhekk, biex kont nitla', biex kont nitla' hemmhekk billejl, billejl, ma kontx nara fid-dlam sa naqa' u ma naqax hemm hemm fejn kienu huma kien stazzjonati. Insomma dik kienet il-ħajja ta' dak iż-żmien. Minn hemmhekk minn Ħal Far, minn minn minn Ta' Qali u mbagħad morna Ħal Far, Ħal Far għamilna xi disa' xhur, le għamilna xi sitt xhur hemm, Ħal Far qed tifhem? Konna fuq kanun hemm fuq Ħal Far. Konna mhux ħazin Ħal Far ta. Konna, konna, 'l bogħod daqsxejn mir- mir- mir-runway Ħal Far. Konna tajjed hemmhekk. Kellna kamra kbira hemmhekk, bla bibien xejn allura kienet din il-kamra, kienet mibnija u għadhom ma ġewx fiha n-nies ta' min kienet, allura ħadielhom il-militar, għax hekk kienet da' jaraw ta' min hi, jagħtuh xi haġa tal-kera min ikun, u joħduhieu biex idahħal is-suldati fiha. U kellna kamra bis-suldati, konna nkunu xi tmienja mdawrin hekk, qed tifhem? U kamra oħra kien hemm wieħed isajjar. Dak ir-ritratt li wrejtek, wieħed minhom hemm konna ta' Ħal Far ta' Ħal Far. Konna ngħadduha hekk hu. Kellna fejn fejn biex tagħmel toilet, kellna emm, barmil, x'jgħidulu *bucket*, barmil kbir, kien ikun kbir apposta, qed tifhem? Kien ikun imwarrab. Għall-ilma kien jiġi t-tanker. Kien jiġi tank wieħed tas-suldati, kien jiġi suldat, hawn, [...] tal-Qutu kien jgħidulhom, miż-Żejtun. Tal-Qutu kien ħa kuntratt kbir mal-Ingliži, biex iqassam l-ilma lill-kanuni. Kien hemm aktar minn wieħed, imma aħna kellna wieħed miż-Żejtun. Allura kien jimla l-ilma dan, kien jimla l-ilma. Ingibulu ingibulu l- l- *l-jerry cans* hawn xi haġa aħna, jimlihomna, qed tifhem? U jerġa' jitlaq. U jkollna l-ilma biex nixorbu. Jew issib xi bir viċin u konna nimlu minnu. Ikun viċin bir, konna nimlew minnu. Konna ngħadduha hekk Ħal Far. Domna ħafna hekk. Insomma kien jiġi dan "ara ġie l-ilma, ġie l-ilma" u konna, bejn tinħasel. Kellna landi daqshekk tal-*petrol* tal-*petrol* konna naqtgħuhom u nagħmluhom qishom fliskatur qed tifhem? Nimluhom bl-ilma u ninħaslu daqsxejn wiċċna fihom. Darba minnhom konna bil-*leave* u konna jiena u

ieħor. Qalli “għada bil-leave intom ta” da’ surġent Azzopardi ma nafx jekk għadux ħaj illum. “intom bil-leave għada” qalli “isma” qalli “Caruana” qalli “ara mmorru kmieni” qalli “biex nilħqu l-karozza ta’ Birżebbuġa.” Issa hemm mixja minn Ƒal Far għal Birżebbuġa. Qalli “immorru kmieni ta.” U arloġġi ma kellniex ta, ma kellniex orrajt. U hekk għamilna. U tlaqna filgħodu kmieni u x’hin kien ma nafx. U qgħadna fuq targa ħdejn il-knisja ta’ ħdejn il-knisja ta’ ta’ Birżebbuġa, qegħdin hemm nistennew din il-karozza ġejja iwa, [ma jinftihemx] ma narawx nies. U hemmhekk kienu kienet issir il-quddies tal-ewwel tal-erbgħa ta’ filgħodu dak iż-żmien kienu jqaddsu kmieni. “Ara deħlin il-knisja n-nies għall-quddies!” “mela x’hen hu?” “eh, din tal-erbgħa ta’ filgħodu” “mela ilna hawn mis-sagħtejn ta’ billejl.” Konna ilna mis-sagħtejn ta’ billejl [Daħaq] u qas nafu x’hin hu. Bil-bard hemm qegħdin hemmhekk mgeddsin, qed tifhem? Hekk konna qegħdin hemm għadni niftakarha dik inhar. Ƒeq issa allura xi trid tagħmel. U ġiet il-karozza u għabbietna u tlaqna. Wara l-erbgħa ta, kienu xil-ħamsa ta’ filgħodu [ma jinftihemx] fuq il-karozza.

M: Issa x’kien xogħlok fl-RMA eżatt?

Caruana: FI-RMA jew kont jew kont *layer*, *layer* fuq il-kanuni, jew kont innewwel il-balal, x’jgħidulu dak li jnewwel il-balal? Kont, għax min inewwel il-balal, kien [ilaqlaq] jew *layer* jew xi ħaġa hekk. Kienu tnejn *layers* u wieħed *in charge in charge* jillowdja [sic.] l-kanun. Ġieli kont nillowdja [sic.] jien. Kienu jtuni l-balal, xi tliet affarijiet qed tifhem? Min jillowdja [sic.], min inewwel, qed tifhem? Bil-ħeffa da’ l-affarijiet kienu jkunu, meta jkun hemm l-ajruplani, bil-ħeffa u trid iġġiblu *charger charger*, ħa imla, bub u bu bum spara. Imla imla, dawwar ‘l hemm dawwar ‘l hemm. Ƒafna ġenn ta ara ġej wieħed minn hawn, tih tih tih minn hawn u tih. Daka jimmaxingannjana [sic.] kienu u darba minnhom dħalna fir-*recess*, daw’ jgħidulhom, dawn tal-balal hemm fejn indaħħlu l-balal u dħalna ġo fihom rasna hemmhekk. U għadni niftakar wieħed

ilqattu biż-żarbun u tajjartlu mniefhru, [daħaq] kien daħal warajja. Kemm għajjat miskin. Insomma din kienet il-ħajja tagħna dak iż-żmien.

M: Kif kont tħares lejn is-soldati Ingliži waqt il-gwerra?

Caruana: Ma konna ngħidu xejn hu. Xi tridna ngħidu fuq l-Ingliži aħna. X'taqbad tgħid. Kif tridna nħarsu lejhom. Dana kienu kienu dan.

M: Kellek xi tip ta' relazzjoni magħhom?

Caruana: Le ma tantx. Ma tantx kellna Ingliži aħna. Kellna, il-, kellna wieħed it-Tippy kienu jgħidulu, it-Tippy. It-Tippy kien mekkanik Ingliż, biex jieħu ħsieb il-kanun. Kien jgħidli ara se nibgħatlek wieħed dan is-surgent [ma jinftihemx] biex fuq il-kanuni jekk hemm xi ħsara jew le. Jgħidli kollox jew da' ma kellniex relazzjoni mal-Ingliži. Qed tifhem? Insomma dana għadna ma daħalx il-konvoj ta, li qed nirrakkontalek jien, għax imbagħad beda dieħel iż-żmien.

M: Imma kont semmejtli xi żewġ soldati, Gordon u Maurice?

Caruana: Daka kienu soldati Ingliži. Dak kienu. Dak ma kellhomx x'jaqsmu magħna jiġifieri dawk. Dawk kienu jkun bil-*leave* kienu s-Sigġiewi, kienu viċin, kienu kkampjati hemm is-Sigġiewi, qed tifhem? Qabel ma saret l-*invasion* dan dan, Gordon u Maurice allura qed tifhem? U kienu jkunu bil-*guñ* jaħsra dawn u omni kienet iddaħħalhom ġewwa, ara qabiżli dmugħ meta niftakarhom, [jibki]. Kienet iddaħħalhom ġewwa u tagħtihom xi haġa omni, qed tifhem? Biex jittreju. U tgħidx kemm kienu jgħannquha u jbusuha lil omni, ma tafx kemm. Omni ma kinetx taf bl-Ingliż, kienu jirrangaw huma magħha. Maurice u da'. U mbagħad kienu ħafna stazzjonati fir-raba' dak iż-żmien. Issa da dak iż-żmien, l-aktar wara dak ta' qabel l-*invasion* kienu hemm, stazzjonati hemm dawn, imma kienu jinżlu l-pjazza passigġata sa hemm [ma jinftihemx] min kien

Catholic kien jidħol il-knisja jew jieħdu xi naqra birra jew filxkun inbid li kienu jsibu, qed tifhem? Imma rari ta għax guħ kien hemm dak iż-żmien. Kien hemm wieħed jgħidulu l-Ħaħaj, ibigħ il-bajd, tiftakarhom isemmuh?. “Tmintax irbiegħi bajda, tmintax irbiegħi bajda.” Tmintax irbiegħi kienet ġiex xelini, kemm tiġi bil-flus tal-lum, ġiex xelini u sikspenz, u sikspenz. Insomma inti ma tiftakarhomx. “Tmintax irbiegħi bajda tara x’kull bajda” [jidħaq]. Għadni narah il-pjazza, kienu jixtru n-nies din il-bajda. Insomma.

M: Kont rajt suldati ta’ pajjiżi oħra?

Caruana: Iwa, u żgur. Jugoslavi per eżempju. Dak meta konna Rikażli mbagħad. Kien hemm ħafna Għarab, Għarab ukoll. Kelli ħabib tiegħi Għarbi jien u kont inkellmu, kont inkellmu. Kien jaf xi ħaġa bil-Malti u oħra bl-Ingliż, konna nirrangaw. Konna nieħdu xi naqra nbid hekk mis-Siġġiewi taf fejn il-ħanut kien ikun? Fejn san-. Ħa ngħidlek – ta’ min hu, kellu laqam. [ma jinftihemx] Tiftakarhom inti. Il-knisja ta’ San Ġwann, fuq lil hawn, m’hemmx qisu sqaq hekk. Kienu joqogħdu n-nies. Kien hemm Schembri, joqogħod hemm, kien patri u dan. Niftakru. U ħdejh kien hemm ħanut żgħir, ħanut żgħir tal-inbid. U kien jiġi hemmhekk, ngħidlu “ejja ħu daqxejn inbid miegħi hemm,” u nieħdu nbid. U jiena kelli santa tal-Madonna tal-Madonna, u għidt “ħa nara x’reliġjon hu jien” peress li kont iktar reliġjuż iktar minnhom, u dan, kont ngħidilhom ir-rużarju wkoll kultant ta lis-suldati. Insomma allura għidtlu “din qatt rajt bħalha?” jien. Qalli “Taf min hi din? Sidtna Marija,” għadni niftakarha. “Sidtna Marija.” [Daħaq] Bil-Malti qalli “Sidtna Marija.” Għadni niftakru, kelli ritratt tiegħu ta, m’ilnix li qattajt kollox, m’għandix x’nambih dak jien insomma.

M: Li tara s-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni dak iż-żmien mela?

Caruana: X’inhaha?

- M:** Li tara lis-suldati kienet haġa komuni?
- Caruana:** Kien hemm kull kwalità ta' suldati hu. Tal-Bażutu, per eżempju, b'kull xoffa daqsiex, qed tifhem? Suwed, Għarab, minn kollox kien hawn. Qed tifhem? Meta konna Rikażli kellna l-Jugoslavi. Mela niġu għall-Konvoj?
- M:** Hej nistaqsik mistoqsija oħra qabel. Tħoss li l-militar kien ta' ġid għalik?
- Caruana:** Hekk sibtu jien. Hekk sibtu. Heq jiena kont sibtu ħafna. Heq. Taf għaliex? Għax jiena konna taħt kura. Aħna kellna in-*notebook*, kellna l-*injections* li kienu jagħtuna. Daqqa kienu jagħtuna tat-tetanus oħra ta' xi haġa oħra, u evitajna ħafna mard, ħafna mard. Dak iż-żmien kien hemm marda tal-ħakk l-*iscabies*, isemmuha. Kulħadd kien attackat, jiena niftakar, kont attackat ukoll, imma mhux wisq, mhux wisq. Kien hawn wara dahari. U mbagħad ġiebu da' aklaklavin (Acriflavine) isfar, konna nindilku bih u dan qed tifhem? U hekk, imma insomma. Jien ma kontx attackat wisq, kulħadd kien iħokk ta u jqatta' ġismu. Kien hemm wieħed kien kien hemm wieħed b'ġebbla, kien niftakru suldat b'ġebbla. Kien miegħi kien miegħi, "Ara Ċens, ara Ċens" kien jagħmilli "Ara daqsxejn" Madonna, ħakk ħakk kien iqattgħu. Demm minn gismu. [Jgħolli leħnu] ċaqqufa kien ikollu. Biċċa ċaqqufa u kien jobrox saqajh. M'għandekx idea l-ħakk. Il-ħakk. Peress li ma konniex nieħdu s-sustanzi u dan. Imma l-*injections* li kienu jtuna fil-ktieb imsemmijin. Qed tifhem? Biex jagħmilhulna kien jiġi kulltant, kien jiġi kulltant x' jismu tabib jew x'kien, ma nafx x'kien, jew tabib naħseb. U kien jiġi biex jispezzjonana ta. Konna ninżgħu, qed tifhem? Kien jispezzjonana kollha. Wara xulxin qed tifhem? Nifthulu idejna jew dan jaralna jekk għandniex murli, l-awrina kif inhi u da' qed tifhem? U xi tħoss u jaralna għajnejna u dan, is-snien, is-snien, kien ikollna *inspection* tad- tad-dentatura. Jien kont zgħir, kelli snieni kienu tajbin, dak iż-żmien, mhux bħal-lum,

illum barranin, tal-età tiegħi kulhadd irid jibdilhom hu'. Kienu tajbin dak iż-żmien. Mela ma jkunx hemm wieħed ħareġ mingħandu, qalli "għidlu *refuse treatment*" qalli "għidlu *refuse treatment*, tagħmel xejn għax iwegġgħek ta dak." Issa ma kien wegġgħni xejn ta. Kien hemm ieħor pajżan qalli "x'ser tagħmel?" qalli. "Għax mhux ser ngħidlu jagħmilli *treatment*" "Hemm x'ser tagħmel?" qalli. Raġel tal-affari tiegħu kien. Qalli "Għaliex dan mhux ser tagħmilha?" Qalli "Mur ħalli jispezzjonalek is-snien" "Le għax nibża' jien." Qalli "Tibża' xejn" qalli "mur mur ma jagħmillek xejn." "Idħol idħol." U ma ridtx nidħol jien. Biex smajt minn dak il-ħmar jien. Eh. Għax kieku jaħsra snieni kont insalvahom ħafna iżjed. Mhux hekk. Bdew imorruli. Ma kien jagħmilli xejn speċjali. Konna konna konna Ħal Far. Kien hemm MDS hemm.

M: Kif kontu tkunu tafu li dieħel xi Konvoj?

Caruana: Er [...] Il-Konvojs konna nafu...meta konna Rikażli imma biss dan, il-bqija ma konna nafu xejn. Kien konna konna Ħal-Luqa jew jew jew Ħal Far jew hekk. Ma konna nafu xejn x'dieħel ma diħelx ta. Ma konna nafu xejn. L-ajruplani konna nkun nafu li deħlin. U mbagħad, insomma biex ma ntawwalekx, iktar ħafna ġiri ma' Malta kollha bil-kanuni, peress li konna *mobile* aħna, daqqa xahrejn hemm oħra xahar hawn, insomma fl-aħħar wasal dan l-imbierrek Konvoj ta' Santa Marija. Għax u mbagħad beda l-ġuħ u beda l-għaks u kienu jgħidu li Malta se taqa' u se tispicċa u dalam, qed tifhem? Sadattant beda, beda l-ġlied fil-Libja, fil-Libja. Daqqa jieħdu Tobruk, oħra jerġgħu lura. Kien hemm dak il-general famuż, hawn x'jismu erm, Rommel.

M: Montgomery.

Caruana: Rommel kien imsemmi ta. General famuż kien. Kien ġej u sejjer ta l-Ġermanja, jieħu l-istruzzjonijiet, qed tifhem? U kellu truppi kbar. U daqqa jieħdu Tobruk, jinqabdu ħafna prigunieri Ingliżi

kienu qed tifhem? It-Taljani kienu jirtiraw waħedhom awtomatikament [sic.] dawk għax kienu jibżgħu u dej- u daqqa ħadu Tobruk u oħra ħadu Benghazi u sejrjn. U mbagħad, u mbagħad, għax u mbagħad kienet waslet qisu l-gwerra meta rebħu Tobruk. U mbagħad sadattant, kienet sejra hekk l-affari. Sadattant qabel ma daħal il-konvoj... il-konvoj daħal f'Santa Marija f'Awwissu tinsieħ illi f'April, jiġifieri ara kemm kien hemm. Kien hemm April, Mejju, Ġunju, Lulju u Awwissu. Domna ħames xhur b'attakki kbar. L-attakki kbar ħames xhur mhux ćajta, l-attakki kbar. Kienu jiġu l-ajruplani Ġermaniżi minħabba l-*Illustrious* [HMS *Illustrious*]. L-*Illustrious* kien f'Jannar tinsieħ qatgħu naqra ftit ta' żmien reġgħu bdew jiġu, qed tifhem? U [...] aħna konna ir-Rikażli dak iż-żmien, dak iż-żmien konna Rikażli. Kien jiġi għamilna għamilna ftit ta' żmien sewwa, għamilna xi erba' xhur hemmhekk ir-Rikażli. Konna żewġ kanuni biss ta' r-Rikażli, però, biex nilqgħu l-ajruplani, però konna *safe*. Għax peress li konna Rikażli, hawn kien baħar u hawn kien baħar, u l-ajruplani ma kinux jattakkaw lil Rikażli, ma kellhomx għalfejn. Huma riedu jattakkaw id-*dockyard* u Ħal Luqa u kienu jgħaddu minn fuqna, u jibqgħu sejrjn, qed tifhem? Aħna konna, ma kinux jgħaddu fil-baxx ħafna. *In formation, in formation*, allura kien jgħidilna, il-GOR kien jgħidilna, [ma jinftihemx] "ara oqogħdu attenti għax hemm tmenin *in formation*, warajha hemm waħda oħra ta' sittin". Kienu jkunu jafu, "hemm oħra *in formation*, qegħdin wara xulxin ara mhux ħa ngħidilkom iktar issa biex toqgħodu b'seba' għajnejn għax fuq il-port deħlin". Kif kienu jaslu r-Rikażli, fuq ir-Rikażli sewwa daħlu fuq il-bidu tal-port. Ma jitfgħux bombi hemm, ma jitfgħux bombi, Alla ħares tefgħu l-bombi fuq hemm għax kienu joqtluna, ma jitfgħux bombi hemm. Aħna konna nisparawlhom orrajt, imma kienu jkunu għadhom fil-għoli, u mbagħad jibdew jinżlu bil-mod il-mod, u kien jinfirex lejn Ta' Qali kienu dawn l-arjuplani, kienu kwantità kbira, minn fuq id-*dockyard* qed tifhem? U dak l-inħawi kollha u Ħal-Luqa, u kienu Ta' Qali, id-*dockyard* u Ħal Luqa u kienu jibbumbardjaw, u bdew jitfgħu l-*mines*. Il-*mines* bdew

jitfgħuhom fil-baħar ukoll, biex ma jidħlux il-bastimenti, allura konvoj ma jistax jidħol għax jitfgħu il-*mines* bdew, allura ebda vapuri ma kienu jidħlu, da fi fti- f'erba' xhur ta. Mas-sebgħa ta' filgħodu kienu kontinwu, kontinwu, kuljum, kuljum bl-*air raids*. U daqqa jwaqqgħu il-Belt.... jien il-Belt rajtha taqa' kollha. Il-Belt rajtha taqa' kollha minn San- mir-Rikażli qed tifhem u minn Sant le- Sant' Anġlu kien hemm l-Ingliżi, kienu jisparaw ħafna minn hemm, kien hemm il-*pom-poms*. L-Isla kien hemm il-*pom-poms* ukoll. Kienu neħħew il-gardjola, kienu neħħewha l-gardjola minn hemm. Kienu żarmawha, dik il-gardjola li hemm illum. Kienu reġgħu bnewha eh. Kien hemm il-*pom-pom*. Il-*pom-pom* kien b' xi sittax-il kanun ta kienu dawn. Il-*pom-poms*, hekk il-kanuni tagħhom, u kienu jisparaw it-*twenty millimetres*, dawk ukoll. Qed tifhem? Kienu jisparaw baraxx sħiħ dawn fuq l-ajruplani fuq id-*dockyard*. U u konna għadejjin hekk. U mela ġie dan il-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija... għax daka memorja kbir għandi tiegħu jien...il-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija. Hemmhekk kien hemm il-*bomb defence*, bħalma għidtlek qabel. Kien hemm barkun 'l hemm u barkun 'l hawn. U *bomb defence*. Kienu filgħodu kull min [ma jinftihemx] iħolluha u da'. Darba minnhom jintlaqat arjuplan mill-fortizza għidthielek, mill-fortizza tal-Marsa, kienet *four point five* kbira il-fortizza ta' Ċejlu jaqa' arjuplan kbir beda jinżel jinżel jinżel, qed tifhem, bdew jisparaw fuqu kien [ma jinftihemx] fil-baxx ma setgħux jisparaw fil-baxx imbagħad għax il-kanun ma jġigix hekk. Issa hekk orrajt imma hekk le [ma jinftihemx] u ġie fuq il-*bomb defence*, u għereq hemm. Bil-.. iswed faħma dan l-ajruplan, [ma jinftihemx] qisni qed nara lilek, iswed faħma għax taħtna ġie eżatt. Qed tifhem? Ma salva ħadd minnhom ta, u baqa' nieżel fuq il-*bomb defence*, fuq il-bagi, ried jipprova jiskappa u jibqa' sejjer Sqallija, qed tifhem? Kien jaqbad ta minn wara u ntefa' hemm fuq kollox li kellu fuqu. Dawk kienu xi ħamsa kienu ta, *bomber* mill-kbar. Insomma, u ġie biex jasal il-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija. U niftakar ġie, għadni qisni qed nara lilek. Konna "ejjew 'l hawn" qalilna "itilgħu fuq, itilgħu fuq kollha." Qalilna "Ara." Ġabar il-kanun

I-ieħor ukoll, għax konna tnejn tnejn kanuni u ġiebhom hemm, fuq il-kanun tagħna, fuq il-west, fuq il-west gun ġew kollha. Ġie *Captain* Borg, Alla jagħtih il-glorja tal-ġenna, kemm kon- kemm kelli stima lejha, u mbagħad sar Kurunell wara. *Captain* Borg, Ġiġi Borg, tiftakarhom isemmuh. Kien futboler kbir ma- mal-*Melita* jew tas-Sliema dan. Kellu tim ta tal-futbol x'jismu hawn fl-*army* hemm stess. Kellu tim tiegħu u kienu kien jilgħab ma' ħafna nies. *Captain* Borg, Ġiġi Borg, kulħadd jafu. Tas-Sliema jafuh ħafna. Dan Ġiġi Borg ġie. Qalilna "ħa ngħidilkom ara l-aħwa" qalilna "ħa nkellimkom ta' ħbieb, ta' ħbieb." Hekk kien qalilna. Qatt ma kien kellimna ta' ħbieb. Qalilna "għandu jidhol konvoj, ara ħadt l-informazzjonijiet issa taħt segretezza kbira" qed tifhem? "Taħt segretezza kbira u għandu jidhol fil-port, u se jkun hemm in-*navy* kollha ingli- se jkun hemm in-*navy* kollha miegħu" u kienu xi ħmistax-il vapur għandu jkun kienu dawn. Għandu jidhol minn hawn qed tifhem? U dan se jitlaq minn hawn minn l-Ingilterra, minn l-Ingilterra, bin-*navy* kollha miegħu biex toqogħdu attenti biex kif taraw xi ħaġa," qed tifhem? "eh eh eh infurmawna malajr" ċemplulna peress li konna fil-bidu aħna. Sadattant ġie Lord Gort, hux Gort kien dak, il-gvernatur Gort kien u Gort ried, Gort Gort jir-jagħmel il-kanuni kollha fuq il-port kollha fuq il-port kollha. U qabel daħal wieħed daħal wieħed vapur, il-x'jismu hawn, il- il-*Breconshire*, u daħal bi *smoke screen* u l-*ammunition* biss, u daħal taħt biża' kbir u ma ġewx għalih. U daħal billejl kien dak qabel il-konvoj, għax ma kellniex *ammunition* biex nisparaw u l-isparar kien, kellna kellna, kellna xi għaxar *rounds* aħna, jiġifieri għaxar *rounds* u għaxar *rounds* oħra, kont tisparahom f'minuta. Tisparawx fuq ajruplani li jkunu deħ- li jkunu ħerġin, sparaw fuqhom dawk li jkunu deħlin, dawk li jkunu ħerġin erħulhom, tisparawx fuqhom biex taħluhom fuq dawk li jkunu deħlin, mhux veru, għax [ma jinftihemx] kienu qalulna, u konna nisparawhom dawn u spiċċa ndabbru rasna fejn trid taqbad tagħmel. Min jidhol banda min jidhol b'oħra, rasna xi mkien daqs dawk bombi li niżlin, u billi niżlin x'toqgħod tagħmel fuq kanun u ma tistax tispara. U

dañal dan, u dañal dan il-*Breconshire* u ġibulna l-*ammunition*, u ġibulna l-*ismoke screen* u l-*ismoke screen* u l-kanuni, u l-kanuni kollha niżżluhom fil-port. Fix-xatt ta' mhux bl-ixkejjer u da magħhom. *In air* kienu ta, fuq il-mollijiet tax-xattijiet, tal-Isla, ta' kullimkien, tal-Birgu, il-port kollu, il-port kollu, mimli bil-kanuni. U kulhadd jispara direzzjoni għalih biss. Per eżempju aħna kellna direzzjoni per eżempju mit- mit- mit-tali *number* sat-tali *number* minn hemm. Inti ddawwar il-kanun minn hemm sa hemm, allavolja m'hemmx ajruplani spara minn hemm biex il- biex il-kanuni jiġu kollha qishom xibka, ma jhalluhomx jiddajvjaw [sic.]. Kienu ħadmuha tajjeb l-Ingliżi ta, biex ma jiddajvjawx [sic.] allura kulhadd jispara jispara u l-balal kienu jiġu konna fuq l-istess post, allavolja ma jkunx, imma min ikun fuqhom kien fuqhom ma kienx jista' jillandja [sic.] [dañaq]. Il-bombi kien jitfagħhom bl-addoċċ, imma allura bdew jitfgħu l-*mines*, u l-*mines*, [ma jinftihemx] l-Isla waqgħet kollha bil-*mines* qed tifhem? Jiena rajtha taqa' kollha. Il-Belt bil-*mines* waqgħet. Ghax il-*mines* kienu jagħmluhom biex jitfgħuhom fuq il- x'jisimhom fuq il-baħar, mhux biex jitfgħuhom fuq il-bini. Imma dana meta tiffa' *mine* int, bil-*parachute* tinżel bil-mod, sejjer hekk, qed tifhem? Sejjer bil-mod il-mod hekk nieżel, bil-mod il-mod qisni qed nara lilek, *mine* daqsiex, ikun, malli taħbat ma xi mkien pup splużjoni enormi kien ikun, insomma. Kien hemm wieħed beda jibki "Madonna ara sa jaqa' San Ġwann, sa jaqa' San Ġwann ara San Ġwann sa jaqa'." It-turretta tal-Belt, insomma u dan, u bini kollu jtir, trid tara l-bini jtir, il-Kalkara per eżempju, inlaqtet tajjeb, il-Kalkara, il-knisja waqqawha kollha, il-ġebel tagħha, il-ġebel tal-Kalkara, mhux 'il bogħod għal hemmhekk qabeż fuqna hekk, bl-isplużjoni. Qabeż fuqna l-ġebel. Bil-ġebel tal-Kalkara tal-knisja ġie ġie hemmhekk, ġie r-Rikażli. Insomma, u daħlu dawn l-imberkin vapuri bin-*navy* imkissrin, kollha, bastimenti tgħidx kemm għerqu Ingliżi, *aircraft carrier*, kien hemm xi tlieta magħhom u għerqu wkoll kien hemm il-*Glorious* (HMS *Glorious*) *Glorious*. Kien hemm battleship kien hemm battleship x- *Warspite* (HMS *Warspite*) il-*Warspite* niftakar.

Battleships kbar kienu dawn. Kien għerqet ukoll għax bdew jittgħulhom il-*mines*, bdew jittgħulhom it-*torpedoes* biex bdew jittorpidinawhom [sic.] biex ma jidholx il-konvoj. Kienu xi ħmistax-il vapur, mgħobbijin kollha barra milli kien hemm in-*navy* mgħobbija wkoll, li setgħu jgħabbu, kulhadd beda jgħabbi biex Malta ma ċċediex. Għax dak ried assedament, Lord Gort illi Malta, għax jekk iċċedi Malta, Malta, kienet titef il-gwerra l-Ingilterra. Dañhalha f'rasu hekk, dak ras Ingliz kien u hekk kien u kif qal hu sar ta. U dañal dan il-konvoj, biċċiet biċċiet dañal dan il-konvoj. U aħna [ma jinftihemx] dañal il-konvoj aħna ma konniex, tinsix x'għedlek ...aħna konna nisparaw xi ħmistax-il *round* kull wieħed mill-kanuni tagħna biss ta' Rikażli. [ma jinftihemx] Ma kellniex *ammunition*, konna nisparaw fuq dawk l-ajruplani ħerġin. U sadattant kellhom xalata l-ajruplani deħlin u ħerġin jittgħu l-bombi u ħadd ma jispara fuqhom. Imma [jgħolli leħnu] meta ġie l-konvoj u mbagħad u ġabulna l-*ammunition* u ġibulna kulhadd [ma jinftihemx] jipprepara l-*ammunition* billejl da ta, kienu għadhom xil-għaxra ta' billejl, għax il-konvoj kien wasal għal xil-ħdax ta' billejl in-nofsiegħa ta' billejl dak iż-żmien gibulna dak il-ħin, kien dañal dan il-vapur u ġew malajr u poġġejna ħafna *charges* fuq fuq il-*gunpit* kollha kollha kollha lesti preparati. Għax kif qalilna *Captain* Borg kien kollha preparati. Allura, huma ħasbu l-ajruplani se jiġu l-istess bħalma kienu jiġu qabel jiġu u għandhom xalata. Għax ma jkunux jafu għandu jkun illi l-konvoj wasal biex jiġi dawn l-ajruplani ġew biex jerġgħu jibbumbardjaw ġol-port, u ħarġu ħarġa waqgħu għan-nejk biex niftiehmu [dañaq]. Skantaw dawn. Għax u mbagħad ġew il-*Hurricanes* u ġew l-*Spitfires* dikinhar u ġew ħafna armament, u ġew l-*Spitfires* u *Hurricanes* u da'. Imma l-istraġi li kien hemm taħtna, Marija Santa, meta niftakar il-biki jaqbdek, l-istraġi li kien hemm. Arjuplani minn tagħna, tagħhom, sparar żul minn hemm. Dawn ħasbu li mhux ser ikun hawn sparar għalihom, għall-ajruplani. Bdew jittkessħu qishom jinżlu fil-baxx u jagħmlu, jaqgħu ajruplani bl-addoċċ, minn tagħna u minn tagħhom qed tifhem, *parachute* nieżel minn hemm, min hu nieżel

u min hu niezzeġ 'l hawn, min hu niezzeġ 'l hemm. Joħorġu l-laneċ għalihom u kienu jissugraw ta jaħasra, joħorġu biex isalvawhom huma min huma, kien u jaqgħu ħafna Inġliżi, Kanadiżi kien hemm ħafna, għax kellhom (ma jiftihemx) hawnhekk, miktubin ħa narawhom. Imma kienu ħarġu minn hemm dawk, minn taħt ir-Rikażli, bil- bil- bil-*motor boats* għalihom. Kienu jgħabbu wieħed jew tnejn qed tifhem? Għax ikunu fil-wieċ għadhom qed tifhem? U baqgħu skantati dawn u ħarġu ħarġa ta' ċwieċ biex ngħid il-kelma sewwa. Ta' ħmir dawn m m m [ilaqlaq] ma bassrux. U l-konvoj daħal bil-ħniena ta' Alla. Imkissrin giex braken ma kull vapur iħottu dak il-ħin iħottu dak il-ħin huma u deħlin. Iħottu dak il-ħin. Bil-krejnijiet 'l hemm u 'l hawn minn taħtna. Irmunkati jżommuhom żewġ [ma jinftihemx] *destroyers* kull wieħed li kien hemm ħarġu d-*destroyers* u ta' rmonk li kien hemm. Dik li setgħu jirranġaw jirranġaw iżommuhom hekk marbutin, biex daħlu wieħed inkaljawh għax min kien sejjer [ma jinftihemx] fil-port, inkaljawh taħt fejn hemm ta' Pintu fejn hemm fejn hemm il-*Waterfront* illum. Hemmhekk kien hemm giex vapuri hemmhekk mgħarrqin. Damu ħafna żmien hemm sakemm [ma jinftihemx] kissruhom biċċiet u ħattu kulma kien hemm, qed tifhem? U patata u dqiq li kien hemm u balal u kollox. Minn kollox li kien hemm ġiebu. Tefgħu li-*smoke screen* insomma u sadattant sa san it-tant daħal dan l-imbieriek konvoj ta' Santa Marija. U hemmhekk kienet id-daqqa tagħhom darba għal dejjem għax ma reġgħux ġew iktar kif kienu jiġu qabel. U mbagħad sadattant, għax trid tgħid kollox. Ir-Russja fetħitilhom front, ir-Russja u mar-Russja m'għamlu xejn għax kienu waslu it-truppi u jerġgħu lura kienu għax ir-Russja kien hemm il-kesħa. Ma kinux ippreparati l-Ġermaniżi għal din il-kesħa kollha tar-Russja. Allura riedu jtellgħu t-truppi kollha li kien hawn minn hawn la issa Malta ma għamlu xejn, allura tellgħu t-truppi kollha hemm fuq. Sadattant beda Montgomery minn hemmhekk minn Alamein. Tiftakarha ta' Alamein. Telgħu minn hemm ħa kemm seta' armamenti minn hemm u mbagħad. U beda baqa' għamel offensiva kbira, b'da' Rommel b'kollox. U Rommel kien

hemmhekk u ġew giex ajruplani kien attakk- niżlu fil-baxx *Hurricanes* kienu, kienu *Hurricanes* attakkawh u qatluh lilu u lil sħabu kollha tal-karozza. Karozza mikxufa kienet u Rommel spiċċa ħajtu hemm, kien, dan Rommel, u hemmhekk kienet il-folja nqalbet għall-aħjar. Sadattant insomma, u mbagħad bdiet toqgħod l-istorja [daħaq] [ma jinftihemx] il-konvoj, beda jitqassam ħafna ikel, u mbagħad ħadu ruħ in-nies, rringrazzjaw l-Alla, miraklu kbir da', miraklu kbir, insomma, da' kien fil- *fil-forty-two* u. *Fil-forty-two* ta' Santa Marija. Dan kien Awwissu kien, Awwissu. Awwissu, u mbagħad Awwissu, wasal Settembru. Settembru waslet il-festa tal-Vittorja, orrajt. Allura, il-Bambina tal-Isla, peress li jien mill-Isla, kienu ħaduha Birkirkara, kienu ħaduha Birkirkara, u meta l-affari kkwietat, l-Arċipriet ma ridux il-kanonċi l-oħra, u l-arċipriet tal-Isla qallhom "le, inniżżluha l-Bambina l-Isla ta San Filippu" għax il-knisja, il-Vittorja kienet inqerdet għal kollox, allura kienu jużaw il-knisja ta' San Filippu, dik baqgħet tajba, ta' San Filippu. Allura kien hemm dan l-arċipriet Dun Gian Karl, u ried jagħmel il-festa hemmhekk, ried jagħmilha l-Bambina fit-tmienja ta' Settembru. U fit-tmienja ta' Settembru eżatt, il-Bambina [ma jinftihemx] kienu joħduha x-xatt, peress li għandha għandha storja li l-Bambina, giet bil-baħar, insomma storja kbira din u riduha dak iż-żmien fl-antik, għax l-uniku statwa antika li kien hawn fid-dinja, li kien hawn Malta, il-Bambina tal-Isla, taf inti kienet antika ħafna riedu jżommuha Malta, qed tifhem? Allura allura kienu talbu l-bastiment ta' dak iż-żmien ta' qabel ħafna ħafna żmien ilu fin- *nineteen seventeen*, ta dan kien, meta ġabu l-Bambina hawn qed tifhem? Għandu jkun qabel il-Francīzi, meta ġew il-Francīzi u ġibuha hawn u daħħluha u tawhielhom u kienet ġo kaxxa. Din kienet tal-pruwa ta' bastimenti ta kienet se tkun din, [ma jinftihemx] kienu jagħmlu statwa tal-Madonna hekk. Din kienet qed titpoġġa xi mkien, kienu sejrin biha band'oħra [daħaq] u dak iż-żmien is-Sengleani kienu talbuhom u tawhielhom, kienet, ma kinetx bid-deheb kif inhi illum, kienet liebsa biċ-ċelesti u dan, bħala tarbija, insomma. Il-Bambina fiha daqshekk kulma hi mhux

kbira, iwa. Għax jiena kont, peress li jiena kont diletant tal-festa l-Isla u missieri ħadem ħafna fiha, insomma. U kif waslet ix-xatt jiġi l-ammiral, l-ammiral ittrakka mal- x'jismu mal-moll li hemm l-Isla. Qallhom emm "isma" mar sab l-arcipriet. In-nies bdew jiskantaw, "x'kien dan ġie jagħmel dan l-ammiral?" bdew jgħidu. Kont magħhom jien ta.

M: Dan liem sena li qed tgħid li qed jiġri imma?

Caruana: Fi tmienja ta' Settembru

M: Tal-*forty-three*?

Caruana: Tal-*forty-three*, fit-tmienja ta' Settembru tal-*forty-three*, [ma jinftihemx] għidilhom in-nies qalilhom qalilhom – l-Italja *unconditional surrender*, u ċediet lil Malta, [daħaq] mhux l-Ingilterra, lil Malta ċediet. Lil Malta bagħtet *unconditional surrender* lil Malta. Hemm qiegħda l-ħelwa lil Malta ċediet [jidħaq]. Mela din *unconditional surrender*. [Jgħolli leħnu] In-nies ifferoċjaw, daqs dawk nies, ġew minn kullimkien, ġew minn Ħal Qormi, jiena mis-Siġġiewi, kont għadni suldat dak iż-żmien, insomma dħalna l-knisja b' ċapċip immens, storbu sħiħ, ma kienx hemm musketteriji u sparar dak iz-zmien, qed tifhem? Qas banded, ma kien hemm xejn, in-nies biss bdiet, ċapċip u storbu. Telgħu fuq il-pulptu, qallhom "nirringrazzjaw 'l Alla, l-Italja ċediet." Qalilhom, qalilhom "Issa aħna rasna mistrieħa" [ma jinftihemx] u saret il-paċi qisha Malta fit-tmienja ta' Settembru. U kien miraklu ieħor dan kbir. Fit-tmienja ta' Settembru eżatt ċediet l-Italja lil Malta, mhux kbira kienet din. Insomma, u minn daqshekk u mbagħad jiena mort is-Siġġiewi bil-mixi, wasalt qisu xil-erbġha ta' filgħodu hemmhekk. Qaltli "X' ġiebek," ommi "x'gejt tagħmel dan il-ħin? X'gejt tagħmel dan il-ħin?" Konna jien u ċertu wieħed kien refugjat Ħal Qormi. Għidtlu "Wenz," għidtlu "immorru flimkien, inti itlaq Ħal Qormi, mmorru flimkien." Ma kienx suldat l-ieħor. U dak

mar id-dar Ħal Qormi, jiena bqajt sejjer lejn is-Sigġiewi. U wasalt fl-erbgħa ta' filgħodu jien. "X'gejt tagħmel dan il-ħin?" omni "x'gejt" "Ma spiċċat il-Gwerra, spiċċat il-Gwerra ċediet," "Iwa ħarġu l-Bambina? Ħarġu..." Insomma u għaddiet l-istorja kollha minn hemm. U mbagħad bdejna noqogħdu. U mbagħad sadattant lili bagħtuni, bagħtuni, biex nagħmel, biex nittrenja fuq is-sengħa. U bagħtuni mal- x'jgħidulu - dak ir-regiment, u ara kif insejt. Bagħtuni Sant Andru, Sant Andru kien hemm il-*workshops* hemm. Kien hemm il-*workshops* jirrangaw, għandhom isem, għandhom isem, kien reġiment hemmhekk u bagħtuni magħhom insomma hemmhekk dak il-*workshop*, tal-Ing- [ma jinftihemx], insomma u spiċċajt minn hemm u minn hemm u mbagħad spiċċajt jien. Kont qed nittrenja hemmhekk u bagħtuni *rest camp*, kienu bagħtuni *rest camp*. Ħa ngħidlek oħra ma rridx ninsieha. Peress illi konna, din qbiżthielek jien ta' qabel. Jien kont immur bil-mixi, bil-mixi għal biex immur ir-Rikażli meta nkun bil-*leave*. Kont ngħaddi Bormla, qed tifhem? Kien hemm wieħed surġent, jaħdem, kien kien, kien fuq il-kanuni wkoll. Ċertu ċertu Coleman. Coleman kien jismu. Insomma nafu ħafna jien. Kien kien refuġjat is-Sigġiewi wkoll dan, u konna mmorru flimkien u kien jgħidli, "issa mmorru flimkien," u konna mmorru Bormla u Bormla kienet imwaqqgħa kollha, biex jien kont immur il-Kalkara, biex immur il-Kalkara, hu kien stazzjonat band'oħra hu, dan x'jismu dan dan Coleman, qed tifhem? U niftakar, kien hemm karozza tal-linja, għamilna f'art għax m'hemmx fejn jgħaddi, qbadna bibien tan-nies li kien hemm biex iwassalna, għax kien ħabib tiegħu dan, dan li qed insemmi. "hemm inwassalkom" u wassalna sal-Kalkara sal-Kalkara. Il-Kalkara kien hemm dak l-arbli l-Irnella, kont għadni ma wasaltx l-Irnella. Tiftakarhom tal-*wireless*? Kienu twal ħafna, m'għandekx idea żgur tagħhom, kienu twal, kienu tnejn kbar twal ħafna, dan kien qabel, u jien kont immur bil-mixi minn hemm biex naqbad it-triq, għall-mixi u kont nitla' bil-mixi ma kontx immur bil-baħar. Mill-Kalkara għal-Rikażli kont stajt timxiha, anki issa għadek għadek timxiha. U tiġi *air raid*. Ajruplan jitfa' bomba u tiġi fuq il- fuq l-arblu

tal-Kalkara, tal- tal-Irnella ngħidulu, tal-*wireless*, dan kien bil-ventijiet, u taqbd u minn hemm u twaqqgħu u ġie. Jien intfajt taħt ħajt tas-sejjeħ. Wiċċi mal-art hekk, hekk ara kont hekk jien, għax ma nafx fejn sa jiġi u fejn ġie mhux 'l bogħod minni, u fejn waqa' għamel sinjal u waqqa' il-ħitan tas-sejjeħ kollu, dan l-arblu għax baqa' sħiħ. Baqa' kollu, sat-tarf kollu baqa' sħiħ, it-tul kollu, baqa' sħiħ qed tifhem? Sħabi ma ridux jemmnu. Qalli "kif sa-," qalli "mhux għax ntfajt taħt ħajt jien, Alla ħares ġie n-naħa tiegħi, għax kont kieku spiċċajt jien." Dik nibqa' niftakarha. Insomma issa naħseb jiena mbagħad bdejna bdiet toqgħod il-gwerra hu'.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn min bata l-ġuħ?

Caruana: Ħafna, ħafna, u ħafna batew il-ġuħ. Kien hawn ħafna serq. Fejn jistgħu jisirqu jisirqu kienu hu'. Eq eq minn kullimkien, is-serq tal-ġuħ jagħmel tiegħu ta qed tifhem? Ħobż iswed per eżempju kien ikun ta, mhux bħal dan li nieklu illum ta. Ħobża, per eżempju, aħna tal-*army* jagħtuna ħobża daqshekk ara kienet tkun għax is-suldati, kienu jridu jtuhom jieklu inkella kif jistgħu jimxu. Kienet naqsmuha bejn erbgħa, jew bejn kemm inkunu nies, qed tifhem sewda, għax kienu ma kinux jarmuh l-affarijiet l-oħra. Jiena ma nafx kif jagħmluh il-ħobż, bit-dqiq ta' ta' kollox kienu jagħmluhom. B'kollox b'li kien ikun hemm, [ma jinftihemx] għandu jkun, konna nikluhom. Il-ħobż iswed kien ikun, mhux iswed ħafna bħal dan il-qalziet imma insomma, *brown* ħafna kien ikun il-ħobż. Il-ħalib per eżempju, kien jiġi l-ħalib, il-ħalib kien jiġi ġebel. Qisu ġebel ħalib, konna nkissruh, qed tifhem? Kien ikun magħqud. Konna nkissruh, nagħmluh trab nirrumblawh, b' xi flixkun u konna nagħmluh matte, il-ħalib. Kien jagħtuna dawn l-affarijiet, x'tagħmel. Ħalib ma kien jiġi ħalib bħal dan bil-bottijiet u hekk, ħalib ġebel kien jkun.

M: Semmejt is-serq, kien hemm ħafna nies jużaw il-*black market*?

Caruana: Ħafna, ħafna. Min ikollu bil-*black market* kien ibigħu. Ommi per eżempju xtrat xkora dqiq, ħamsin lira, biex għamlet il-ħobż, ħamsin lira, u dqiq nofsu, nofsu mxarrab kien, milli serqu mill-konvoj ta, [daħaq] [ma jinftihemx] konvoj kienu jisirquh qed tifhem? U joħduh b' karozza jew trakk li jkollhom u kien nofsu bl-ilma, imxarrab bl-ilma. Ħamsin lira xtratha ommi. Anqas kellha ħliefhom għandu jkun.

M: Kontu tafu b'xi ħadd li kien negozjant tal-*black market*?

Caruana: M'għandix idea, m'għandix idea, imma kien hawn. M'għandix idea tagħhom.

M: X'tip ta' ikel jew oġġetti kienu jinxraw bil-*black market*?

Caruana: Eh eh eh xi dqiq hu', d-deheb. Kienu jħallsu bid-deheb ta. Ħafna nies xtraw bid-deheb, jiġifieri biex jakkwistaw l-ikel u xi ħaġa. X'kienu [ma jinftihemx] jixtru? Xi tiġieġa, xi fenek, jixtru. Dawn bil-*black market* kienu jixtruhom, qed tifhem, xi bajda 'l hemm u 'l hawn. Konna konna bajda ta' sold u nofs kienet tinbiegħ ħafna flus biex tixriha qed tifhem? Biex forsi tħabbatha tagħmilha froġa, x'tagħmel. Il-ġuħ ġuħ. Tagħmel minn kollox. Ma kienx hawn it-te u l-kafe. [Ma jinftihemx] Forsi kont issib xi naqra kafe, xi ħaġa u tħallatha.

M: Qatt smajt b'xi nies li kienu jisirqu li jridu mill-bini l-imwaqqa'?

Caruana: [Daħaq] Dak kien hawn ħafna, imma ma nafx min huma jien. Imma kien hawn ħafna nies. Kien hawn [ma jinftihemx] tad-*demolition* per eżempju. Dawk min jaf x'għamlu tad-*demolition*, dawn li [ma jinftihemx] jekk hemm xi nies mirdumin u dan, dawn tad-*demolition* kienu li jsibu joħduh, tad-*demolition*. Kienu jafu bihom in-nies li kienu jisirqu. Li kien jogħġobhom kienu joħduh,

dawn in-nies tad-*demolition*. Kienu *guy* sñiħ impjegati kienu dawn tal-gvern. Nies tad-*demolition*.

M: Int qatt irqad bil-ġuħ, Ċensinu?

Caruana: Bil-ġuħ, bil-ġuħ ħafna le. Imma qatt ma qgħadt bil-ġuħ xi ħaġa dejjem kelli, għax kien jagħtuna gallettini [ma jinftihemx] krakers, jew xi tamal jew xi ħaġa hekk, hekk ta. Imma mhux ngħid bil-ġuħ li ġuħ li ma tissaportihx. Peress li kont fl-*army* dejjem laqqattha minn hawn jew minn hemm. Imma mhux xi ikel ta eseġerat, platt għaġin jew hekk. Dak ma jeżistix. Pereżempju aħna kien jagħtina ir-*ration*, iġib kaxxa daqshekk, ħaxix, patata. Dawn l-affarijiet tal-bdiewa li kienu jġibu, patata ħaxix, krafes. X' kien ikollu iktar, xi biċċa qaraħamra qed tifhem xi biċċa laħam taħsibha taħsibha xi biċċa xi ħaġa qas ngħidlek x'inhi, qisha qisha tkun *waste* tkun ngħidlu. Darba minnhom ġie qalli "dik x'inhi?" [ilaqlaq] għidtlu "għandu jkun *waste* dik" - qalli l-fizzjal qalli "dik laħam ta dik" għidtlu "dik laħam?" insomma kien isajjarha, u kien iqatta' kollox u kien jagħmel borma biha.

M: X' Kienu l-*Victory Kitchens*?

Caruana: Eh [daħaq] kif x'kienu? Eh eh kienu jsajru meraq. Meraq kienu jagħtuhom. Jien qatt ma hadt mill-*Victory Kitchens*, ommi kienu jieħdu. Missieri kienu jġibulu jġibulu da'. Kienu jagħmlu xi ħaġa fiha, jitfgħulu xi dan xi ħaġa fiha, qed tifhem? Jew fażola, jew xi ħaġa tal-għaġin irqiq hekk, jekk kienu jiddubbaw xi ħaġa, affarijiet żgħar insomma. U kien ikollhom borma daqshekk, jimlielhom u jieklu lilha.

M: Għandek idea ta kif kienet taħdem is-sistema?

Caruana: Is-sistema kienet bil-kupuni, bil-kupuni tippreżenta l-kupun tiegħek biex tieħu biex tieħu l-*Victory Kitchen*, bir-*ration* ma tistax

taqbad tmur addoċċ kienu jkuni bil-kju in-nies. Kienu jmorru kien hemm apposta dak joħorġu mejda barra, jilbsu fardal abjad. Ħaddiema. Minn daqshekk kienu dan, ikun hemm miktub *Victory Kitchen*, hemm fuq fuq dak qed tifhem? Kien imorru bil-kju jimlielhom jimlielhom il-*container* li jkollhom, insomma, affarijiet bħal dawn hu.

M: Taf x'tip ta' ikel kienu joffru?

Caruana: Kif?

M: Taf x'tip ta' ikel kienu joffru?

Caruana: Ma tantx naf wisq, taf għaliex? Għax jiena peress li kont fl-*army*, jien x'jieklu kif kienu jgħiduli jien, qed tifhem? Qatt ma kilt mill-*Victory Kitchen* jien peress li kont fl-*army* jien.

M: Issa, kontu tkunu tafu x'qed jġri barra minn Malta?

Caruana: U żgur. Kollox konna nkunu nafu, kollox konna nafu għax kien jgħid ir-*radio* u dan qed tifhem? L-aħbarijiet kienu jagħtuhomna, perezempju attakkaw hemm, attakkaw hemm qed tifhem? Issa meta kien hemm l-*invasion* ta' x'jisimha, mietu ħafna Ingliżi dak ix-xatt il-kbir hemm. Fejn kien hemm l-*invasion* tal-Ingilterra biex jaqsmu għall-Ingilterra, x'jismu bħalissa?. Mhux ta' Pearl Harbour ta, ta' Pearl Harbour ħaġa oħra. Ta' Pearl Harbour tiftakarha jsemmuha. Ta' Pearl Harbour ma kinetx fil-gwerra l-Amerika qed tifhem? Kienu marru l-Ġappuniżi dak kienu xxamplati l-Ing- il-baħrin u l-Ingliżi, u attakkaw lil kulħadd u qerdu ħafna nies, u bastimenti qerdu u ħafna nies għalhekk bagħtulhom il-bomba atomika. U mbagħad spiċċat il-gwerra mal-bomba atomika. *Unconditional surrender* għamluha. Hemmhekk spiċċat.

M: Qatt ħassejt il-biża' li l-għadu seta' jinvadi?

Caruana: Eh dik kulhadd kien mwerwer biha. L-*invasion*. *Invasion* kulhadd kien jistennieha *invasion* hi. Kulhadd kien jistennieha.

M: Kif kontu tinhaslu? L-ilma kien skars?

Caruana: L-ilma l-ilma kien skars Insomma [ma jinftihemx] kellhom il-bjar per eżempju u dan u mill-kanen li kienu għadhom tajbin, li ma tkissrux bil-gwerra bil-bombi u dan, qed tifhem? [ma jinftihemx] ilma moħli. Mill-bjar perezempju bjar. Minn daqshekk l-ilma ma tantx kien skars għax kont issib tixrob, naħseb jien iwa mingħalija.

M: F'kas ta' mard x'kontu tagħmlu?

Caruana: Problema hi. Problema. Problema. Sptarijiet ma kienx hawn. Ma kienx hawn l-isptarijiet qas San Luqa ma kien lest. San Luqa ma kienx lest l-isptar u għamlu d-Dar ta' San Ġużep, hawn. Ha ngħidlek x'gara. Eh [...] il-Ħamrun, 'l fuq mhemmx id-Dar ta' San Ġużep? Kbir, x'għidulha dik bhalissa? Dik kienet sptar. Kienet sptar u kien hawn, tħallatilhomm l-ilma, tħallatilhomm l-ilma ma' tad-drenaġġ u qabadhom tifojde, ħafna minnhom. Missieri kien ingidem minnhom din wkoll. Kien wieħed minnhom missieri u baġħtuhom kollha l-isptar. Jien kont immur narah 'il missieri l-isptar, bit-tifojde. Però dak iż-żmien l-isptarijiet ridt tħallas għalihom, kienu bil-flus. Imma każ bħal dan kien kulhadd b'xejn. Ma ħadulhomx flus. Ħaduhom hemm emergenza. Dak kien wieħed mill-isptarijiet. [...] Kien hemm l-Imtarfa wkoll. L-Imtarfa imma tas-suldati kienu, jiena kont hemmhekk. Jiena ridt ngħaddi *board*. Kien hemm wieħed qalli, eh eh x'jismu hawn kien, kien ta' kien tal-isptar, x'għidulu. Qisu *nurse*, ma nafx għandhom l-isem tagħhom hemm, qed tifhem?. U nafu ta minn hawn, Ħal Tarxien kien. Ma kienx jafni lili kien imma sirt nafu wara. Iwa miet illum. Kien qalli "taf xi trid tagħmel? Għid li għandek daharek juġġhekk. Għid li għandek daharek ma tissaportix." U niftakar jien, niftakar jien mort biex immur għamilli. Għidli "Aghamilli ċertifikat għax ma

niflax” lis-surġent. “Agħmilli ċertifikat għall-Isptar, ma jiflaħx niċċaqlaq” u hekk ma jkunx jista’ jgħidli le. Għamilli ċertifikat. Kien kitibli karta. Qalli “mur ħa.” U kellna l-MDS, kien il-barrakka ta’ fuq, [ma jinftihemx]. U jiena kont hemm qed nistenna l-ambulanza ġejja. Darba minnhom. Dan każ ieħor kien, waqt il-gwerra, u kien hemm l-ambulanza. Ġiet l-ambulanza kien hemm xi baħrin ukoll. Qed tifhem? Jien u xi baħrin eżaminana “Għall-Imtarfa intom” qalilna. U sadanittant dakinhar ġew is-SIAI Marchetti, Taljani. Dikinhar nibqa’ niftakarhom. U ġew fil-baxx, ġew fil-baxx, imma kbar ta fil-baxx qishom mhumieħ huma. Daħlu attackkaw is-Salvatur, u s-Salvatur kien hemm il-ħażna tal-pitrolju dak iż-żmien, is-Salvatur u tiskanta, il-bombi kollha fuqu eżatt. U trid tara d-daħna li telgħet, u nirien li telgħu mis-Salvatur, mir-Rikażli konna naraw kollox. U tela’ dak in-nirien kollha minn hemm u reġgħu telqu baxx baxx. U ħadd ma spara fuqhom. SIAI Marchetti kienu. Taljani.

M: Minn fejn kontu ssibu t-tobba u l-mediċina?

Caruana: X’mediċina? Min kien isibha l-mediċina, mela kien hawn xi ħaġa dak iż-żmien. Qas spiżeriji ma kien hawn għandu jkun dak iż-żmien. Ma kienx hawn il-mediċini bħal-lum hu’. L-ispiżjar x’kien jagħtik, għall-porga kien jagħtik qartas jgħidulu. Per eżempju, ikollok id-*diarrhoea* “ħa tih qartas.” Ara jiena kelli wieħed tifel, kelli ħija, insomma, da qabel il-gwerra ta, kellu ħames snin, u ġie ġie ma jiflaħx, kien imur l-iskola tas-sorijiet, għadni narah, Willie kien jismu. Ta’ ħames snin ġie mill-iskola u ġie għajjen miskin qaltli ommi. U ommi kienet tagħtu, kienet tagħtu gallettini bin-numri, biex fl-istess ħin jara n-numri, numri gallettini, kienu, dak iż-żmien tiftakarhom? Ma nafx. Kienu gallettini imma numru kien. Gallettini zgħar hekk daqshekk, u, u, u baqa’ ma jiflaħx, għajjen u ġibuh is-soru d-dar. Insomma, ommi kienet iġġennet, u ġiebet it-tabib, Gravina, Alla jaħfirlu għax miet ukoll Gravina, it-tabib. Insomma dina familjari kienet, Gravina għadda d-dar, u qallha “M’għandu

xejn. M'għandu xejn. Issa jgħaddilu. Issa jgħaddilu. Mur tih qartas, ixtrilu mur agħtih qartas.” U tah qartas u vvalenah bih. Qed tifhem? U l-għada miet. Ta' ħames snin u ħames xhur, qartas. Kieku illum Alla jaħfirlu, qartas. “agħtih qartas” dak jigifieri l-medicina li kien hemm. Qartas kien ikun xi daqshekk, fih il-powder tagħmlu bl-ilma, qed tifhem? Jien ma nafx x'kienet tagħmel bih. Ikkollok id-deni kienu jagħtuh lilek “mur agħtih qartas.” [daħaq]

M: Kien hemm xi mard relatat ma' ħmieg?

Caruana: [Ma jinfthimx] Kien hawn kien hawn, mela le, ma nafx kif nispegalek imma kien hawn.

M: Għall-ħwejjeg kellkom biżżejjed?

Caruana: Ħwejjeg? Heq, niddubbaw konna. Imma konna nirrangaw insomma. Ma kinetx problema l-ħwejjeg. Kien hemm ħafna ħwienet kienu għadhom bil-ħwejjeg, kienu jbigħu wkoll. Dak iż-żmien avolja kienet il-gwerra, kienu armati bil-ħwejjeg il-ħwienet kienu baqgħu ibigħuhom allavolja fil-gwerra, heq mhux hekk.

M: Illum jgħaddilek minn moħħok li stajt tlift il-ġenituri tiegħek?

Caruana: Jgħaddili mela le, meta nara d-dar [...] ħadt ir-ruħ meta nara d-dar waqgħet u nara lil ommi u missieri u l-familja kollha baqgħu ħajjin hux hekk. Għadda ħafna żmien hux hekk qed tifhem? U mbagħad, ġejna s-Sigġiewi għamilna dak iż-żmien kollu s-Sigġiewi. Is-Sigġiewi kollna in glorja aħna ta. Meta l-qniepen is-Sigġiewi dikhhar, il-ġurnata tlaqna lura. Għax missieri, kien hemm Ġelardu. Ġelardu tiftakru, mis- mis- in-nannu hu' jiġi, in-nannu tiegħek jiġi? Dak, Ġelardu konna ħbieb ħafna, kien tela' ma qanpiena dak. Kien jivvintahom dak. Dak kienu tellgħu bil- bil- dak b' idejhom, u tela', qabad mal-qanpiena hemm u tela' sa fuq il-kampnar, da' Ġelardu u tela' magħha. Ħadu r-ritratti tagħha.

Kienu bidlu l-qniepen. Ta' Taylor il-qniepen hawn, qniepen sbieħ dawn ta. Tas-Siġġiewi.

M: X' kont tħoss rigward it-Taljani u l-Ġermaniżi?

Caruana: It-Taljani konn ngħidu, konna ngħidu "dawn ma jafu xejn" imma l-Ġermaniżi kienu qliel. Ħeq ħeq ħeq kienu ħorox. Il-Ġermaniżi kienu ħorox. It-Taljani ma kinux. It-Taljani qatt ma riedu din il-gwerra. Apparti meta ċediet l-Italja, qed tifhem... Mussolini ried jaħrab. Ried jaħrab u kien sejjer l-Isvizzera, bir-reġiment tiegħu li kellu. Kellu ħafna karozzi miegħu Mussolini, qed tifhem? U l-partiġġjani kienu jafu, partiġġjani Taljani u leħquhom fuq il-fruntiera. Bejn Franza, bejn l-Italja u l-Isvizzera, hemm fuq. Kieku qasam hemmhekk waqqfuhom kollha. Kellu l-kellu l-Petucci [Clara Petacci] miegħu, il-mara li kellu. [Daħaq] Waqqfuhom kollha, kienu armati l-Maltin, it-Taljani qed tifhem? U ħallewhom jinżlu kollha l-art. Ħallewhom l-karozzi hemm. Ħaduhom lhom, il-karozzi. Xkubettjawhom kollha. L-Mussolini għamluh rasu 'l isfel, Mussolini. B'hekk miet Mussolini. U Hitler, jgħidu li qabbad lil wieħed jisparalu u jaħarqu, jgħidu. Ma jafu xejn ta fuq Hitler. Kif mix-xhud illi kien hemm minn dan.

M: Qatt rajt priġunieri tal-gwerra hawn Malta?

Caruana: Priġunieri tal-gwerra. Kien hawn *concentration camp* ta hawn, ma nafx fejn kien. Naf li kien dejjem bil-bozoz imma qatt ma rajthom hekk għaddejjin. Iwa, kien hemm ta rajthom ta. Kellhom ġakketta għalihom. Kienu joħduhom għandu jkun xi mkien. Ġieli rajthom għaddejjin fit-toroq. Priġunieri armati- żarmati. Kellhom kellhom ġakketta għalihom. Kellhom xi ħaġa f'rashom, kienu priġunieri, iwa, bis-suldati magħhom. Imma kienu kuntenti b'hal speċi huma hawn Malta. Jew Taljani, jew Ġermaniżi, x'kienu ma nafx. Imma aktar kienu Taljani.

M: Meta spiċċat il-gwerra kif rritornajtu għal ħajja normali?

Caruana: U mbagħad mod ieħor hu'. U mbagħad mod ieħor, u mbagħad eh eh eh. Qed tifhem? Spiċċat il-gwerra krejna dar is-Sigġiewi, St Nicholas Street. Hemm isfel kellna dar, sittax-il lira fis-sena dak iż-żmien. Kellna dar kbira. Kellna dar hawn, għamilna l-elettriku fiha jiena u missieri. Kont naħdem fl-elettriku jien. Jien spiċċajt mill-*army* wkoll. Konna mod ieħor hu'. L-ikel ma kienx ħazin, qed tifhem. Tixtri u tagħmel u dan. Insomma, karozzi tal-linja kulħadd kien iġerger għalihom għax kienu erba' ħames karozzi tal-linja. Jew erbgħa kienu. Kien hemm ic-Charlie, ic-Ċapin, jgħidulu, ic-Ċapin, min kienu, kollha bil-laqam kienu l-Beżiż, bil-karroza tal-linja, il-Beżiż tiftakru. Tiftakru l-Beżiż, jgħidulu l-Beżiż. Qatgħulu siequ kienu, erbgħa hekk kienu. Allura, x'kienu jagħmlu, wara s-sebgħa kien jogħla l-*fare*, kien jogħla l-*fare*. Allura kien hemm il-karozzi in-nies fil-kju. Kienu jgħidu, issa din imissha, u kien jiftah il-*bonett* taparsi għandu l-ħsara. Meta jdoqqu s-sebgħa insomma, kienu jgħidu, "iva rrangajna," u kien joħdilhom id-doppju [jidħaq]. Kienet tliet soldi kienet? Tliet karnijiet kienet. Iwa, iwa, tal-ħaddiema kienet tliet karnijiet. Ġiex soldi u sitta.

M: Kif għazilt li titlaq mill-armata?

Caruana: Kif?

M: Kif għazilt li titlaq mill-armata?

Caruana: Jien, qaluli. Qaluli "Trid titlaq?" qaluli. Għidtilhom "Iwa." Mill-ewwel jien ridt nitlaq u mbagħad. Qaluli "Orrajt." Qaluli "*Discharged*." Ħadna għand l-OC, ħadna b'idejhom. Irringrazzjana. Qed tifhem? Le "Issa mmorru t-tali post fejn konna biex jagħtukom il-ħwejjeġ pajzana." Tawna pajzana, tawna *raincoat*, tawna libsa kontinwa bis-sidrija u lobbja, ħwejjeġ. Tawna l-uniformi "ħuduha" qalulna "dik jekk tridu tużawha għal xi ħaġa oħra." Insomma spiċċajnieha b'hekk. U tawna l-flus, u tawni tmenin lira lili. Ifadlulna huma tawna

tmenin lira. Flus ta liri, tmenin. Bihom kont mort l-Italja wara żmien. Fin-nineteen fifty mort l-Italja bihom mal-oħrajn. L-ewwel darba li mort l-Italja.

M: U tiftakar b' xi episodju li baqa' stampat f'moħħok minn żmien il-gwerra?

Caruana: Mhux wieħed kieku. Hemm ħafna imma. Ma niftakarhomx bħalissa ta. Ma niftakarhomx. Flief dak l-episodju li għidtlek tal-konvoj ta' Santa Marija, daka baqa' stampat ġo moħħi eh. Għax dak qisu l-ikbar attack li kien. Daqshekk.

M: Mela, Ċensinu, grazzi ħafna ta' ħinek

Caruana: [Daħaq] Mhux xorta għalija, qed nieħu pjaċir bik jien. Qas qatt ma kelli konverżazzjoni ma' ħadd. X' ser tagħmel tirrekordjaha [sic.] issa?.

APPENDIX VII

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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28 Aug. 2017.

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MEM [O] RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

INTERVISTA

INTERVISTA MINN: JAMES BALDACCHINO

INTERVISTA MA': GEORGE MANGION

DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: 22 TA' AWISSU 2017

POST: ATTARD

TUL TAL-INTERVISTA: SIEGĦA, 26 MINUTA u 53 SEKONDA



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Illum it-tnejn u għoxrin ta' Awissu elfejn u sbatax, jien James Baldacchino qiegħed ma *Father* George Mangion fir-residenza tiegħu f' Ħal Attard, f'isem il-proġett MEMORJA ta' L-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta.

M: *Father* Mangion fejn twelidt u meta?

Mangion: Jiena twelidt Ħal Qormi fit-tmienja u għoxrin ta' Jannar elf disa' mija tlieta u tlettin.

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Mangion: Aħna konna sitta mill-ewwel omm għax umbagħad mietet omni zgħira u baqjna t-tlett subien għax konna *alternate* tifel, tifla, tifel, tifla, tifel, u dawk kollha u l-bniet kollha mietu *babies*, u baqjna tlieta għadna ħajjin illum, it-tlieta għall-grazzja t'Alla.

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Mangion: Missieri kien ħabbies u omni kienet ħajjata.

M: Qatt emigrajt x' imkien?

Mangion: Le, m' emigratx imma sifiert.

M: X' xogħolijiet kellek?

Mangion: Jiena prinċipalment qassis imma kont għamilt kwazi għoxrin sena ngħalem fi skola tal-Gvern.

M: U fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?

Mangion: Fi tfuliti għamilnija Ħal Qormi, żewġt, tlett id-djar anzi. Tlett idjar. Twelidna f'waħda umbagħad morna fi żmien il-gwerra, tlajna u

oħra, erbgħa, ir-raba' waħda. Umbagħad ġejt nogħod hawn. Issa ilni [jaħseb] xi ħamsa u għoxrin sena.

M: Fejn kont meta smajt bid-dikjarazjoni ta' gwerra?

Mangion: Kont Ƨal Qormi fi Triq Santa Katarina, ma konniex bogħod mill-pjazza ta' San Frangisk, fejn kien hemm l-*ispeaker*, il-tromba, konna ninżlu nisimgħu l-aħbarijiet hemmek u filgħaxija naraw ħafna, jien kont għadni zgħir, naraw ħafna nies niżlin "Għax qed nistennew x' sa jgħid Mussolini," fejn kellu jiddikjara, u fil-fatt iddikjara li se jidħol fil-gwerra kontra tagħna man-Nazi, ma l-*Axis*. Imbagħad filgħodu, kien il-ħdax ta' Ġunju, ma jidirlix li qed niżbalja, ħdax ta' Ġunju, konna qegħdin nonxru l-ħwejjeġ fuq il-bejt maz-zija, u newlulha u naraw diġa daħlu l-ajruplani, u dak iż-żmien billi kienu qegħdin jiglajdjaw [sic.], in-nies, "Ara x'hemm qed jeqilbuha l-ajruplani, qed jeqilbuha, dħalna fil-gwerra, dħalna fil-qwerra." U kienet il-bidu ta' dik l-istorja li ġiet wara u konna nafu x' jġigifieri xi tfigħer tkun fi gwerra.

M: Tiftakar f'xi preparamenti għall-gwerra fi xhur ta' qabel?

Mangion: Le ta, ta' tifel li kont ma niftakarx li kienu qed jippreparaw. Imbagħad wara meta dħalna fil-gwerra bdew jaraw kif isibu qishom xelters. Per eżempju anke fid-dar tagħna. Dar kient antika, imma kien hemm kantina, qatt ma konna jinżlu fiha, bl-ilma li kien ikun fiha. U fuqha kien hemm kmamar, u ġew minn naħa tal-gvern, u saħħew il-is-soq-is-soqfa billi għamlu emm travi, u għamlu serattizzi hekk, biex sa dan itant aħna nistgħu nistkennu f'din il-kantina, u konna nistkennu wkoll, kellna x' jgħidula, qisu arkata kbira, u fuqha kien hemm it-taraġ għal fuq. Kien hemm qisu taħt it-taraġ hekk. U konna nistkennu hemm hekk, sakemm umbagħad ftehmna sitt familji ġirien konna niftehemu ħafna, u mill-kantina ta' waħda mill-ġirien ħafirna bejn sitt familji, biċċa xelter hekk, jibda minn ħdejn il-kantina, umbagħad kienu jagħmlu

bokka ukoll, jiġifieri qiesu spira, qiesu x'jghidulu illum tgħidlu bir hekk. Biex jekk jiblokka ruħu d-dar u l-kantina nistgħu noħroġu minnha.

M: Kif kont tgħixu hemm isfel?

Mangion: [Ma jinftehimx] Fix-xelter?

M: Iva

Mangion: Fteq, l-aktar li konna ngħixu hemm hekk meta kien hemm xi *raids* ma tul il-lejl għax naf li ġieli kellna ljieli ta' *raids* allura konna norqdu hemm hekk. Fil *peak*, fl-aqwa tal-gwerra meta kienu ġejjin ħafna, ħafna u ħafna *air raids* spiss ġieli rقادna hemm hekk. Kellna dak iż- qisu sqaq dejjaq ta forsi kien ħames piedi wiesgħa, kemm tagħmel idejk hekk, u kellna biċċa hekk, u nogħqudu mgetsin kif nistgħu fuq xi saqqu, dak iż-żmien insibu saqqu antik, jew tal-ħaxixa jew tat-tiben u nqeduh fl-art u nidgetsu mill-aħjar li nistgħu.

M: X'kontu tniżlu magħkom?

Mangion: Eh, x'konna niżlu magħna? Xi ħaġa x'tiekol. Dak iż-żmien il-familji kollha kien ikollhom basket b' xi ħaġa tal-flus, u xi ħajta tad-deheb li kien ikollhom. Qed tifhem? Kulhadd kien iniżlha miegħu, iqiegħdha ta' taħt rasu, tifhem? Ma tħalihiex fil- fid-dar, għax serq kien hemm ukoll. Qed tifhem? U dak ħi.

M: Kulhadd kien jinżel jistken?

Mangion: Tista' tgħid kulhadd kien jistke- jinżel jistken. Forsi ma tantx kien jinżlu l-irgiel għax taf inti l-irgiel ħasbu għall-familja, għall-mara u għat-tfal. Jew kien hemm familja wkoll kellhom ommom anzjana, biex jistkennu [ma jiftehix] kienu jaraw kif jagħduha jew jibqgħu

fil-bokka tax-xelter, il-bokka jġifieri l-bieb tax-xelter, jew joqgħodu barra umbagħad meta jġi *r-raid* fil-qrib jidhlu jistkennu.

M: X' tip ta' xelter kontu tuzgħu wieħed pubbliku jew kellkom wieħed privat tal-familja?

Mangion: Le aħna kellna, għidlek għid diġa, kellna xelter bejn sitt familji, tifhem? Imma li kien jġri kienet illi l-*owner*, is-sid tad-dar, wara li ftit li jdoqq l-*air raid*, umbagħad kienet talaq il-bieb, jinżlu huma. Mod li ġralna xi darbtejn, niftakar bil-lejl kienu daqsxejn kapriċ tiegħi, għax aħna kellna żewġ erbgħa zijiet, wara li mietet ommi, żewġ xebbiet u żewġ ġuvintur. Imma l-ġuvintur kienu joħorġu għax-xogħol. Wieħed kien suldat, isuq il-karozza ta' l-uffiċjali, u l-ieħor kien *Demolition and Clearance*, u aħna konna ninżlu maz-zijiet. U niftakar darba darbtejn smajt il-bieb iħabbat u smajt is-sirena ddoqq, u ma għidilhom xejn, għid "Forsi jagħdi l-*air raid*." Umbagħad l-*air raid* qliel u resqu lejna u kellna noħorġu u mmorru ġo xelter publiku, kien kemm tnejn aktar l-isfel minnha, żewġ bokok, waħda fil-pjazza fejn hemm il-Madonna ta' Lourdes u l-oħra kantuniera ma fuq Triq il-Kbira, tiġi lejn San Ġorġ, ħdejn id-dar konna ngħidulu tal-er ta' [...] [jaħseb] kienu jgħidulu bħalissa nsejt, er, imma ma kienx laqqam ikraħ, per eżempju, konna hemm hekk. Ħdejn l-ispizerija, kellna spizerija *Pasteur*, u nżilna wieħed minnhom niftakar ta' Lourdes. Imma darba darbtejn għamilnija din, il-bqija dejjem inżilna fix-xelter tagħna.

M: Kien hemm minn kellu kamra privata ġo xelters publiċi, taf xi ħaġa dwarhom dawn?

Mangion: Iva naf li kien hemm. L-inizja- kienu jieħdu inizjattiva li jaqbd u jħas- jħafu kamra biex tkun riservata għalihom, qed tifhem? Għax ġieli anki twieldu *babies* fix-xelter. Kien ikunu daqsxejn ta' priva- privatezza ukoll, qed tifhem? Insejt ngħidlek ma nafx jekk inti ħa saqsijili fil-kas. Darba kellna nagħmlu tlett ijiem fix-xelter,

għaliex giet bomba quddiem id-dar tagħna. It-triq ma kienetx wiesgħa, għada hemm sa llum, u ma ħadetx, u ma ħallewniex nidħlu d-dar. Għaliex qalulna jekk is-sabtu l-bieb tista tieħu di' il-bomba. U għada d-dar kellna biċċa minnha mi' d-dar, kienet qiesha *farm*. Kellna tiġieġ, kienu importanti ħafna jkollok bajda, jew toqtol tiġieġa meta. Kellna mogħza u kellna anke nagħġa, għall-ħalib, tifhem? U kellna nogħodu fix-xelter tlett ijiem, bil-kemm għandna x' nieklu, u għandna l-ħalib kemm hekk u għandna xi bajd. Sa kemm umbagħad semgħu z-zijiet u anke missieri, niftakar, minn fejn kien u ġew u qabdu daħlu ġo d-dar, u ġabulna provista tajba ta' bajd u ħalib. Ma ħaditx il-bomba, umbagħad jiġu wara ftit jiġu [ma jiftehimx] xi dawn in-nies u jneħħu l-*fuse* tal-bomba u stajna nidħlu nergaw id-dar. Imma għamilna tlett ijiem hemm isfel fid-dlam u fl-umditu u għall-ewwel ġabulna xi ħaġa x'nieklu l-istess familji li kienu jinżlu magħna, niftakar [ma jiftehimx] landa *corned beef*, u l-oħra xi ħaġa oħra u konna idubbajna hekk.

M: Kif kontu tgħadduh il-ħin?

Mangion: Ġeneralment jgħadduh jgħidu r-rużarju. Għaliex b'dawk il-bombi u b'dawk l-*air raids* il-poplu kien aktar reliġjuż, anzi kien reliġjuż ħafna, u hekk kien jinfex. Li jitolbu. Veru. Speċjalment in-nisa, qed tifhem? Imma, u meta kien jafas anke l-irġiel li kienu naqra mbedin ta' kullħadd kien jibża. Ma kienetx ħaġa taċ-ċajt, kulħadd kien imwerwer u marid b'dak li jgħidulu qisu bi qtajja'. Tand hu hekk li f' xi żmien tfaċċaw fuq ħafna nies l-*iskables* [sic.] [*scabies*]. Kienu qishom ponot u niftakar tara lil kulħadd ġej għandna, għax iz-ziju kien suldat u kien imdaħal anki wkoll fl-isptar. Kien hemm sptar aħna u telgħin minn Ħal Qormi għal Santa Venera, fejn illum hemm triq, erm x'jisimha bħal issa [...] [ma jinftehimx] iva, kien hemm sptar. Għall-ewwel kien razzett tal-barrin umbagħad il-militar għamlu sptar, u z-ziju kien iġib tip ta' *calamine lotion* ta' llum u jdilku biex jgħadilek dan l-*iskables* [sic.] [*scabies*]. Allura

kulhadd gej għand iz-zija “Gianna għandek xi ftit ħija għax mimlijin bl-iskables [sic.][scabies]?” Ija.

M: F’każ ta’ mard x’kontu tagħmlu?

Mangion: Heq kellna mard, għax jiena kelli zija waħda minnhom tgħidx kemm kien iħossha ħażin ikraħ, u kienet tagħmel granet qisu b’dan il-ħass ħażin. Jiġi t-tabib u qisu ma jagħmel xejn qatt, għax ix-xjenza kienet għadha sew lura biex tagħti għanjuna. Nista ngħid ukoll il-każ ta’ ommi, li mietet fit-*thirty-nine*, jiġifieri qisu sena qabel il-gwerra, għax f’ Marzu tat-*thirty-nine*. Tifhem? Kull ma kellha, xi ħamest ijiem wara l-aħħar *baby* daqsxejn ta’ infezzjoni, imma ma kienx hawn il-medicina li hawn illum biex tikurha, daqsxejn ta’ infezzjoni, u kienu ġiebu is-sangisug, jiġifieri jixrob-
jieħu d-demm il-ħażin u xorta mietet. Imma ma kienx hawn l-ebda mezz, jew ftit mezz, ma nafx. Ta’ tfal li kont naf li qiesna quddiem il-mard iċ-ċedi.

M: Minn fejn kontu ssibu tobba u medicina?

Mangion: Kien hemm tabib anzjan, illum hemm x’jgħidulha, hemm pjazza msemmija għaliħ Frederico Maempel. Imbagħad bdew jiġu xi tobba aktar zagħzagħ, bħal ma kienu t-tabib Hyzler, George, li ġie miż-Żejtun imma jidirli wara l-gwerra. Imma anke qablu kien kuġinuh Albert Hyzler. Dawk kienu t-tlett tobba. Li niftakar anke f’dak iż-żmien, imma l-aktar l-aktar l-aktar lil Fredrick Maempel. Tifhem?

M: Kien hemm xi mard relatat ma ħmieġ? U kif kontu tfejquh?

Mangion: Il-marda relatata ma ħmieġ kienet it-*Tetanu* [sic.] [*Tetanus*]. Tifhem? U jekk ma jkollokx l-injezzjoni qabel tat-*tetanu* [sic.] [*Tetanus*] aktarx kienu jmutu. U it-*tetanu* kien perikoluż, speċjalment jekk għandek x’taqsam mal-ħamrija. Għax anke il-

ħamrija jwaddbulha d-demel, jiġifieri ir-*refuse* tal-*animali*, u dak il-bidu ta' ħafna ħafna mard. Qed tifhem? Iġene ngħidulha llum ffit konna nafu biha l-iġene dak iż-żmien.

M: Biex immur lura għax-xelters, għat-*toilets* x'kien issir?

Mangion: Biex?

M: Għat-*toilets* fix-xelters?

Mangion: Eee. Alla ħares ikollok bżonn. Ġeneralment kien ikollok xi barmil. Qabel il-bidu tat-*toilet*, bħal ma kellna aħna. Billi konna l-ewwel nidħlu f'kantina umbagħad minnha għat-*toilet*, konna noħorgu daqsxejn u ninqdew f'dak il-barmil. Tifhem? Barra minn hekk kien anki kien hawn il-mezzi l-oħra ukoll. Tifhem? Kienu kbar ukoll li togħqod bilqeda fuqhom, mhux biss zgħar, għalina l-*babies*, imma anke kbar. Kullħadd jitla hemm hekk umbagħad jara kif ibattal fid-dar. Imma iġene. Trid ngħidlek każ ieħor? Per eżempju aħna konna nkunu qegħdin reqdin u kienet tidħol xebba anzjana, ffit kienet tara, u kienet tiġi b'sandli mimli bit-tibel u affarijiet oħra li kienet rifset id-dar qabel ħarġet u konna naraw kif ha nerfġu ffit is-saqqu biex ma tirtifx fuq is-saqqu u jibqa hemm hekk ħalli tirtes fuq l-art għax kienet tidħol warajna, tagħdi minn fuqna. Tifhem? X'tagħmel hu tiġieled. Tagħmel hekk konna nogħqodu hemm hekk bi kwietna u naċċettaw kollox.

M: U kif kontu tippruvaw ż-żommu l-indafa hemm isfel?

Mangion: Ħeq. Indafa fil-qies tan-nies li kienu ndaf iva. Imma jkollok każ bħal dan kellna nies kienu ndaf ħafna, anke tal-familja tiegħi u konna ndaf daqsieħ dak iż-żmien. Tant hu hekk li n-naħa tan-nanna tiegħi kienu jgħidulha l-ħassila, Ġorga l-ħassila għax tant kienet taħsel u tant, kienet anke ħwejjeġ, u ħwejjeġ tan-nies, u anke dak iż-żmien per eżempju, ftakartha m'ilux, jew din il-

gimgħa, insejt fejn kont, kienu jaħslu anke it-twapet tal-knisja. Kienu jiħduhom l-għajn tal-ħaselin l-Imsida, jaħslumhom hemmek u jlaħalħuhom, u jmorru bi ħmara. Umbagħad dan l-imbierak ta' tapit, jitwuh, iħalluh fuq ix-xatba ta' karetun. Huma ma jirkbux, il-ħmara iġorr u joqtor sa kemm tasal id-dar. Sa kemm tasal mill-Imsida sa Ħal Qormi ikun qotor sewwa eh. [Ma jiftehmx] jiġifieri ndafa iva kien hemm. Indafa, neħħi, din li każ ta' dik li kienet tidħol b'dak is-sandli kollu ħmieġ ma kellniex minn xiex ngergru għall-indafa.

M: Qatt għadilkom minn moħħkom li ix-xelter seta jisfronda waqt xi *air raid*?

Mangion: Le ma, qatt ma kellna dak il-ħsieb. Għaliex ix-xelter kien ikun imżerżaq daqsexjn fil-fond, jiġifieri dejjem kien ikun kemm dawk l-għaxar piedi blat fuqek. Qed tifhem? Il-periklu kien ta' xi xelters, illi daħlet il-bomba mill-bokka, mill-bokka, konna ngħidula l-bokka tax-xelter, jiġifieri l-entrata li kienet tibda b'taraġ mit-triq jibda nieżel, biex issib il-livell taħt it-triq u jibqa miexi fih dak il-livell, tifhem? Ġieli niftakar kien hemm xi każ il-Mosta, illum naf li kien fi Triq Gafa, għax kien hemm kuġin tiegħi, ikbar minni kellu ż-żmien, kien *driver* is-suq it-trakk, kien mogħbi bil-*petrol* ħalla trakk barra l-posta mogħbi bil-*petrol* għax kien ġej *raid* qawwi. Mar fix-xel- fil-bokka tax-xelter u ġiet il-bomba fil-bokka tax-xelter, u waqet, u baqet niżla ġo xelter, u hu fejn kien seta joħroġ u kien salva tfajla miegħu, li kienet qabdiltu ma wiċċu hekk u baqa tlett iswaba tagħha qieshom fil-laħam ta' wiċċu, niftakar. Dawk li niftakar. Ta' tifel li kont, kien hemm xi każi oħra ta. Imma.

M: Bħala tfal kontu tibżgħu?

Mangion: U żgur li konna nibżgħu, eh, u żgur li konna nibżgħu, u żgur li konna nibżgħu. Mela ma tkunx tibzgħa. Ħeq, darba kien, darba minnhom aħna konna għadna ġejjin minn għand familja kuġini li

kien miet missierhom il-Mosta ukoll. Kien miet hemm hekk. Kien mar jinnegozja taqxejn ta' poni u morna ngħtuhom l-għomor sakemm ġejna d-dar, kien l-għaxra ta' Frar, kien hemm *raid*, u jiena ried naqra ħobż mixwija dak iż-żmien fuq spiritiera ta' bi tnejn, "u ejja ħa mmorru għax ġej l-*air raid*" u ġejna biex noħorġu, u l-*blast* ta' bomba li waqet, sewwa sewwa ħdejn id-dar fejn konna nidħlu għax-xelter, wadbitna l-ġewwa, bil-*blast*, wadbitna l-ġewwa. Imbagħat ħriġna, dak it-terapin u dak il-x'jismu. U żgur li konna nibżgħu, u mela le. Ma ħlistiex il-mewt darbtejn jew u tlieta b'dan il-mogħod? [Ma jinftehemx].

M: Meta toħorġu minn taħt l-art x'kontu tagħmlu u taraw?

Mangion: E, konna nieħdu [ilaqlaq] n-nifs bl-arja friska, hux, mill-arja u umdita li kien hemm hemm isfel, u dlam għax kull ma konna niżlu [ma jinftehimx] konna ngħidulu niċu għax jew lampa jew daqxejn ta' bott jafsuh minn naħa jagħmlulu daqsxejn ta' ftilla, u jkun hemm naqra pitrolju, u jzommuh daqsxejn jixgħel din il-fjamma hekk kemm ikun hemm xi taqta d-dlam, ngħidu taqta dlam.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn minn ġie internat u anke deportat. X' tiftakar minn dan l-episodju?

Mangion: Fuq dak ma naf xejn. Fuq dak sirt naf meta kbirt. Sirt naf meta kbirt għaliex is-seminarju kelli jagħlmuni wieħed li kien professur l-Universita dak iż-żmien tal-ekonomija politika, Giulio Cortis, u kelli anke bħala rettur il-Monsinjur Pantaleresco illi t-tnejn kienu flimkien internati. Naf li l-ewwel kienu internati fid-dar fejn hemm illum tal-MSSP [Missionary Society of Saint Paul] ta' San Pawl, id-dar ta' De Piro. Forsi kien ħadhom De Piro stess, għax kien midħla tajjeb tal-Gvern Kolonjali. Imma umbagħad kienu spiċċaw l-Uganda, l-Uganda, tifhem? Veru li De Piro miet fit-*thirty three*, imma wara De Piro, Pantaleresco kien sar dak li jjeħu ħsieb il-patrijiet ta' De Piro, forsi għalek ħaduhom hemm hekk, sakemm

umbagħad, bagħtuhom fuq vapur, nismagħhom jgħidu xi ħaġa, imma insejt illum, it-tbatija li bagħtew ukoll eh, tifhem?

M: Kont dispjaċut għaħ dawn in-nies?

Mangion: Dak iż-żmien ma kontx naf x'hinu jgħri fi żmien ta' gwerra. Ma kontx naf x'hinu jgħri assolutament. Li sirt naf wara bl-istorja tagħhom, imma umbagħad konna nafuha bħala fatt, x'gara u daqshekk, allura ma stajtx tħoss għaliegħ, tħoss għaliegħ orajt. Sibb ir-raġunijiet ta' wieħed kien verament *proud*, kburi li kien *pro-Italian* u ma dispjaċihx f'ħaġa [ma jiftehmx] dispjaċir li kien l-Uganda jiftaħar għax qisu għall-ideal tiegħu, tifhem? Imma niftakar Monsinsur Pantaleresco kien jgħid iva eh xi tbatija, xi tbatija, batejna, batejna, iva. Imma ma tfissirx li għandi xi *feelings* kontra jew favur u dan kollu, narha bħala fatt illum ma dawn it-tnejn. It-tnejn kienu b' si mogħod benefatturi tiegħi, għax wieħed tgħidx kemm kien tajjeb biex jagħlimna t-Taljan u tagħna Taljan, Giulio Cortis. U l-ieħor insomma bħala rettur, ma ngħidlux deni fuq ħad fuq il-mejtin, u aktar u aktar m'hemmx għalfejn ngħidu ebda deni.

M: Ta' tifel li kont kellek ideja ta' x'kienet tfisser il-gwerra?

Mangion: Għalina kienet tfisser ġuħ, barra periklu tal-mewt bil-bombi fuq rasna. Tifhem? Imma tafu intom illum illi ħadd ma kien jaf x'kien qed jagħmel Hitler fil-Kampijiet tal-Konċentrament, u aħna iktar u iktar ma konniex nafu minn hawn hekk hu. Tifhem? Imma aħna għalina l-aktar li kienet toqrosna bil-Malti, li ma nistgħux nieklu. Konna neqsin mill-ikel, u li kellna dak il-biżgħa fuq rasna eh. Għax ara kieku tgħid nieqsa mill-ikel u ma għandniex dak il-biżgħa fuq rasek ukoll, [ma jiftehmx] Tifhem? It-tnejn flimkien umbagħad hu jfisiru ħafna.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn minn bata l-ġuħ?

- Mangion:** Ma neskludix. Aħna [Ma jiftehimx] li kellna minn hawn jew minn hemm xi haġa bħala tfal għax iz-zijiet kienu jaraw kif iġibulna minn hawn jew minn hemm, speċjalment iz-ziju li kien suldat. Li kien anki mithla ta' l-isptarijiet, dak iż-żmien li kienu la naf *Saint Patrick's* l-anqas *Saint Andrew's*, u x-xtajta tas-Sliema hemm, fuq ir-*Regional Road*, ġieli ġabilna anke l-pasti minn tal-isptar. Kien jidobba xi tnejn u l-ewwel ma kien jaħseb f'inha, imma ma neskludix li kien hemm minn bata l-ġuħ. Naf x'ha tistaqsini, imma aħjar nistenniek tgħidili.
- M:** Int qatt irqad bil-ġuħ?
- Mangion:** Jekk ma rqudx bil-ġuħ bil-ġuħ, imma ġieli rquadt nieqes. Li tixtieq tieħu xi haġa oħra, qed tifhem. Imma konna, kif jgħiduha, konna imċaħdin u dan, ma kellniex. Dak li kellna kellna, kwart u nofs ħobż, kwart u nofs ħobż.
- M:** X'kienu l-*Victory Kitchens*?
- Mangion:** Il-*Victory Kitchens* kienu kien għamilhom il-Gvern biex jipprovdi mill-ftit ikel li kellu ikel għal min ma kienx ma kienx ikellu. Biex immur iġib xi haġa minn hemm hekk u jerga l-*Victory Kitchen*, [Ma jiftehimx] magħha biex jagħmlu qalb lil poplu biex iż-żomm iebes u ma jċediex, tifhem? Għax konna bil-ġuħ, u ġieli ma kien hemm ikel. Aħna ma tantx kilna mill-*Victory Kitchen* nista ngħidha, ma tantx ġibna mill-*Victory Kitchen*. Jiena kont daqxejn fitt u kont anke nitqases ċeri affarijiet. Fejn qisni irrid l-ikel li konna ndorri biħ id-dar qed tifhem, u sakemm kellna dawk iż-żewġ bajdiet, naqra ħalib, u l-ħalib konna nagħmlu l-irkotta, u kellna xi naqra dqiq, u nagħamluha jew għaġin jew nagħmlu ravjul. Imma niftakarna naqsam ir-ravjula fit-tnejn biex qiesni għandi aktar x'niekol flok waħda tiekolha f'gidma waħda, qed tifhem?
- M:** Kif kienet taħdem din is-sistema?

Mangion: Le, le. Kienet sempliċiment tmur bil-borma, tmur bil- x'jismu u mill-li jagħmlu, li joħroġ tiegħu, naqra, naqra x'jgħidula, naqra minestra jew hekk. Anke kienet minestra, l-ikla prinċipali ta' ħafna Maltin speċjalment filgħaxija, anke ħafna żmien wara l-gwerra kienet borma minestra eh. Li kienet frott, eh kif jgħiduha, ħaxix u xi ffit għaġin u kienet tkun magħmula tajjeb, ta' togħma tajba, u kienet tiekol filgħaxija platt, kienet iżommok, qed tifhem? Qed tifhem? Da' kien. Jiġifieri id-dieta tagħna dak iż-żmien m'għandiex x'taqsam mad-dieta tal-lum. Jien niftakarni anki fi żmien wara l-gwerra ħafna tfal sħabi kienu jieklu ejja qabel biċċa ħobż biż-żejt u l-kunserva, zejt u t-tadam u mhux xi platt jew għaġin u bil-*bolognese* jew xi trid u xi biċċa tiġieġa jew hekk. Anke it-tiġieġ, it-tiġieġ ma konniex nafu kif inhuma llum. Tiġieġa ddum l-ewwel għamlet il-kors tagħha ta' bajd jekk mhux tnejn jew tlieta umbagħad meta tkun qisa xrafet u dan kollu, timlija, tħaliya xi erba' sigħat tagħti tagħti biex tiekol, tifhem. Alla ħares kellha tiġi gwerra f'dawn iż-żmienijiet. Dak li bżajt meta kellna l-gwerra tal- tal-Iraq għaliex tgħidx kemm ibagħatu iktar.

M: Tftakar x'tip ta' ikel kienu joffru dawn il-kċejjen?

Mangion: Le, l-aktar li naf li kienu joffru, xi ministri, xi għaġin. Dak li naf. U kull minn kien immur u dan kollu jiġifieri ma kienx hemm sustanzi, għax naqra brodu, mhux xi kemm, naqra naqra brodu u xi erba' għaġiniet jiġru, biċċtejn ħaxix. Ta' l-estremitya tal-gwerra meta ma stajniex nagħmlu iktar qabel ma nċedu.

M: Kien hemm ħafna jużagħu l-*black market*, x'tgħidilna fuq dan?

Mangion: Iva ħija. Pjaga kbira kienet dak iż-żmien, kienet kbira. Għax bil-ġuħ m'intix ħa tħali speċjalment lil uliedek u f'ħaġa ta' estremitya lest biex anki tagħti d-deheb tiegħek, kulħadd kien iħobb ikollu dik il-ħajta deheb. In-nisa kienu jkunu mkabrin bil-barbazal [ma jinfteximx] kienu jgħtuhom biex flok il-ħobż, flok l-ikel, kienu

jibdluhom. Kien hawn min profitta ruħu ħafna tifhem, *black market*. Bil-moħbi bil-lejl. Ejja filgħaxija, bil-lejl u tara kulħadd jgħri minn hawn u minn hemm barra d-dar bil-lejl. Jien għandi esperjenza darba, ta' din ta' bil-lejl. Għax iz-ziju tiegħi kien jaf kien jgħin ħafna lil dak u l-ieħor, u kien hemm wieħed għenu, tagħah xi ħaġa tal-flus li ma kellux hu biex jieħu forn. U biex iħallsu dak tagħah, tagħna xkora dqiq abjad sabiħ, rari, dak iż-żmien kienu jgħidu li kienet tinbiegħ erbgħajn lira. Issa erbgħajn lira dak iż-żmien, dak iż-żmien kienu erbgħajn lira, mhux erba' mitt lira tallum ta'. Iva u konna nuzgħuha ftit ftit. U aħna, iz-zijiet kienu jagħmlu qabel il-ħobż id-dar. Kellna lembija kbira hekk, j' Alla m'għadiex għand in-neputi, iva. U għamilna, u ħadniya għand wieħed, ziju biex jaħmi dawn l-erba' ħobżiet, tlett ħobżiet, tlieta kienu ta' ratlejn u nofs, qiesu nofs wisna kienu jgħidu, kbira hekk. Ħadnihomlu bil-lejl kwazi, u erġajt mort għalijhom jien. Kont daqsxejn ta' tifel. Iva. U dak inhar qalli "tergax iġieb." Ma kellniex ċans nerġgħu nagħmlu mqarr tlett darbiet, għax dak it-tlett ħobżiet ta' nofs wiżna l-waħda servewna mhux ħażin mal-ftit ħobż li kellna, li jgħtina bir-*ration*. Umbagħad qagħdna nagħmluhom għaġin u nagħmluhom ravjul. Qed tifhem? Imma nimaġina jien min ma kellux minn hawn u minn hemm kemm kien hemm nies li sofrew ġuħ. Jew inkella tgħati ħwejjġek għal- b' xejn biex għal biċċa ħobż. U profitaw ruħhom ta wkoll, tant improfitaw ruħhom, illi wara l-gwerra, il-knisja għamiltu bħala dnuw riservat. Mhux li ma jinħafirx, imma biex jinħafer irridu jgħidu lill-isqof il-qassisin, u dan bħala deterrent għan-nies biex jagħmluh, u anke l-isqof bejn wieħed u ieħor ikun jaf il-gravita kemm huwa frequentat kemm issir. Qed tifhem? U kien hemm dnuw ieħor, kien riservat is-serq, speċjalment minn bini mwaqqa, dak li ngħidulu illum xakalaġġ, għax taqa' dar u jkun hemm hekk bil-lejl immur ifittex u jara, id-dar ta' dak, seta kellu xi moħba x'imkien u kien hemm moħbiet, qed tifhem? Għax xi ħaġa zgħira li jkollok taħbija. Kien hawn il-proverbju, taqlaħa minn taħt il-maduma, jew kien ikun hemm, fil-bini l-antik kien ikun hemm, eh qieshom eh [jaħseb] qieshom

armarji fil-ġebel stess. Jiena ġieli rajt, taqla ġebbla u tagħmel xi ħaġa hemmek, terġa tpoġġi fuqha l-ġebbla, u tagħmel biċċa tavla, umbagħad tagħmel il-ħwejjeġ, imma inti għandek dik il-moħba hemmek. Allura kienu jmorru bies ifittxu xi ħaġa wkoll hux, u jisirqu. Kien hawn dawn l-abbużi wkoll, ejja ngħidulhom abbużi.

M: Kont tafu b' xi ħadd li kien negozjanti tal-*black market*, jew approfitta minħabba dan?

Mangion: Ħafna approfittaw. Għax il-Malti għandu din eh. Reliġjuż kemm trid, imma meta tiġieh is-sieġha biex jagħmel sold, jagħmilha eh, jagħmilha. Tand hu hekk illi konna nafu dak iż-żmien, “eh ħija fil-gwerra stana dak,” “il-gwerra ġietu tajba.” Kienu jagħhiduha xi individwi l-hawn u l-hemm, qed tifhem? Anki min kien dawk li nsejnhom *wholesale*, li jġibu kienu jaħbu ċerta affarijiet, imbagħad “jiena ntgħik ta landa kunserva, imma mhux bħal tas-soltu ta, jekk kienet żewġ liri, trid tagħtini ħamsa ta” per eżempju, qed tifhem? Minn dawn l-affarijiet ġraw, ġraw u kien hawn, kulħadd beda jiprofitta ruħu hej.

M: X' tip ta' ikel jew oġġetti kienu jinġiebu bil-*black market*?

Mangion: Ħmerijiet ta kultant, li ikollok imqarr siegħ dqiq, dak iż-żmien kien bis-siegħ mhux bir-ratal, ikollok ratal zokkor. Tara minn fejn, li jkollok mhux il-lussu ta, ta' l-użu, ta' l-użu. Għax jekk trid tagħmel naqra te, ma kienx hawn naqra te, jekk trid tagħmel naqra kafe, orajt konna jew. Minn fejn ħa ġieb il-qamħ biex tidħan il-qamħ biex tagħmlu kafe, u kienu jagħmlu anke bix-xejr. Imma meta meta naqas ix-xejr naqas il-qamħ, biex issib naqra xejr u naqra qamħ, aħseb u ara l-kafe ta tal-Brazil jew hekk. Issemiex. L-affarijiet ta' l-użu kienu jfitxu n-nies, ta' l-użu. Ħwejjeħ m'hemmx għalfejn ngħidlek, għax kulħadd iraqqa fuq xulxin, iraqqa fuq xulxin, qed tifhem? Qed tifhem? Il-parti kbira tan-nisa kienu kollha jafu jħejtu xi ftit għaliex tqattatlu l-qmis, mhux sa sib tmur tixtri qmis oħra,

jew tistenna s-sale le għandna l-lum, u tixtri qmis jew anke *seconds*. Tqatet trid tara s-sib biċċa minn l-hawn jew l-hemm biex traqqagħha. U anke ħwejjeg ta' taħt. Dak iż-żmien ma kienx ikollna, flanella, li kienet tiġi minn barra, anke qlizet ta' taħt kienu isiru *handmade*, qed tifhem ħi? Affarijiet ta' bżonn, tal-bżonn speċjalment, għal ħajja biex tiekol u ma tmutx.

M: Qatt smajt b'xi nies li kienu jgħorru li jridu minn bini mwaqqa?

Mangion: Ta' tifel li kont, ma smajtx hekk, imma naf li kienu jsiru, naf li kienu jsiru, qed tifhem. Jiena kelli ziju li kien jaħdem fid-*Demolition and Clearance* u kien isemmi. *Demolition and Clearance* kienet per eżempju dawn kellhom iċ-ċentru tagħhom niftakar, iz-ziju kien Ħaż Żebbuġ, u jmorru bil-mixxi. Minn jaf kemm niżlu bil-mixxi minn Ħaż Żebbuġ sa l-Isla, fejn kien ikun, u l-Kottonera fejn kien hemm ħafna twaqqiegħ u darba dan iz-ziju għabilna ktieb mimli santi u kien qal imbagħad qallu "dan il-ktieb nista nieħdu daqsxejn għat-tfal." U taf kemm domna ngħożuh jidispjaċini ma nafx umbagħad kif spiċ- fejn spiċċa. Kieku kont-. Qed tifhem? Imma ħadieħor kien jabuża, u jsib u jdabbar. Kien sigħha ta' hekk. Meta qed tgħid meta din se tintrema jew hekk jew għandi bżonnha sa nużha jien xi ħadd ħa joħodha. It-tentazzjoni, ħeq, u għandna principju anke fil-morali meta niġu fl-aħħar fl-aħħar l-affarijiet hawn l-oġġetti isiru ta' kulħadd, jekk qedgħha biex tiekol irrid nidħol fl-għalqa u nieħu fejn naf ġidra, semmejt ġidra, u kemm kiltha u dan kollu jew frotta ħeq f'aħħar, x' tagħmel immut bil-ġuħ għandi bżonn dik biex niekol, tifhem. Ma semmejtilekx li anke l-ħarrub kien jinbiegħ b' ħarrubu sold. Ħarrub, li kienu s-soltu jaqtgħuh għall-animali hu. Imma kienu jixtruh in-nies, "xtrajt ħarrubu sold," "xtrajt tlett ħarrubiet tlett soldi." Niftakarhom sewwa.

M: X' kien jiġri kull meta kienet tindaq is-sirena? Kif kont tħossok?

Mangion: Jien ma kontx nista għalija bil-lejl. Bil-lejl ma kontx nista għalija. Imma niftakar [jidhaq] kont sejjer l-iskola u daqqet is-sirena, ma konniex nogħodu l-bogħod mill-iskola, alavolja l-iskola kienet ta' Fhal Qormi kienet magħhudha nofsha għall-anzjani, bħal qiesu l-Imgieret, għax anke l-Imgieret kien intlaqat, ija, u aħna kellna wara kienet l-azzjoni kattolika. Kien hemm żewġ klassijiet konna *stage two* dak iż-żmien. U għid ma rridx immur l-iskola issa, ħa nerġa mmur lejn id-dar. U kif indawwar wiċċi biex immur lejn id-dar, nara *t-teacher*, Alla jaħfirla, *Miss Ġorġa Calleja*, baqet tħobbni sa kemm mietet. Kienet mietet ta' eta kbira. U rajt kif skartajt, anke minnha. U kien hemm wieħed isewwi ż-żraben, skarpan, u dħalt għandu biex ngħidlu għandi "żarbun is-sewwijuli," "iva," qalli "gibu meta trid", u ma kelli xejn żarbun, imma għamiltha dik biex niskarta mill-*miss* li kienet se toħodni magħha l-iskola u wrejt u eġajt lura lejn id-dar *air raid* issa ma mmurx l-iskola. Qed niftakru issa imma baqa' dejjem f'moħħi ta. Tħalt ngħidlu, għadni niftakar il-post fejn kien, bħalissa qed kollu quddiem għajnejja, hekk tifhem? Xi mmur nagħmel l-iskola biex ninżel fix-xelter tal-iskola, immur f' tagħna.

M: Dawn is-sireni fejn kienu jkunu stazzjonati ġeneralment?

Mangion: Ġeneralment fuq l-għassa tal-pulizija, qed tifhem? Ġieli ma smajnijjex ta, għax ir-riħ ikun kontra, speċjalment Fhal Qormi, raħal daqsxejn dejjem kien kbir u estis, u l-għassa għadha fejn għadha llum. Kienet fuq il-bejt, għall-bidu kienet idoqq il-qanpiena, umbagħad ġiet is-sirena. Qed tifhem? Kienet id-doqq il-qanpiena. Umbagħad, [ma jiftehimx] *raid*, *air raid warning*, għandna *air raid*, reġa qed idoqq is-sirena, l-istorja kollha hu.

M: Apparti s-sireni kien hemm metodi oħra kif in-nies kienu jiġu avżati?

Mangion: L-ewwel ma naf kienet il-qanpiena, imma umbagħad la naf is-sirena biss dak iż-żmien, konna nisimgħu s-sirena, qed tifhem? Ma kellniex sistema qas ir-*Redifussion* kien għadu ma daħalx daqsxejn ta' *cabl* li ikun hemm, kif għedlek, kien hemm din konna ngħidulha il x'jismu il- fil-Pjazza ta' San Franġisk, u f' ċertu ħinijiet kienu jixgħelu biex jagħtu xi aħbarijiet ta' x' kien qiegħed issir x'għara u ma għarax.

M: Tiftakar meta rajt l-ajruplani tal-għadu? X'ħassejt?

Mangion: Ġieli rajthom, u l-akbar esperienza li kellna Ħal Qormi aħna kienet meta kienu ġew il-*Wellingtons* [Vickers Wellington], biex jibumbardjaw Sqallija u dawn il-*Wellingtons* [Vickers Wellington], ma nafx kemm kienu ta, xi ħamsa. L-ewwel wieħed li tela' kif tela ma nafx fejn waqa', u t-tieni wieħed kif jaqta minn Ħal Luqa, ma nafx xi żvilluppa, u d-dur fuq Ħal Qormi kollu kienu xi tmienja ta' figħaxija, ħajta dlam u ħajta dawl, kulħadd jiġri barra bil-ħwejjeġ ta' taħt "Fuqna sa jaqa! Fuqna sa jaqa! Fuqna sa jaqa." U l-pilot kien qed ifittex li jfittex jisk- jaħrab Ħal Qormi u jwadb u xi imkien hekk kif joħroġ minn Ħal Qormi biex ma jiġiex fuq il- fuq il-bini, u ġie fuq żewg terrani kienu taz-ziju tiegħi, u mietu l-ġenituri tagħhom, u ġie eżattament f'tarf fejn wara kien hemm barriera, u jgħidu li l-pilot kien għadu ħaj u l-ajruplan qed jaqbad, u kien hemm surgent tal-pulizija, Karmnu Camilleri, illum għandu triq imsemija għalih ukoll in-naħa ta' Ħal Qormi fejn żvillupa int u tiela lejn Ħaż Żebbuġ, Karmnu Camilleri, kien emigra mar l-Awstralja Karmnu Camilleri, qed tifhem li għamel att erojku niżel għaliegħ lil dan il-*pilot*, qed tifhem? Imma dan l-ajruplan, sa jaqa u ma jaqax idur fuq Ħal Qormi, werwer Ħal Qormi kollu, u niftakru dak il-biża, umbagħad waqa ħdejn l-iskola ta, f'tit il-barra minn fejn hemm l-iskola illum, għadni narah, u għandi ktieb, issa nurijulek, hemm ir-ritratt tiegħu u l-bini fejn waqa. Dak kienet lejla ta' terrur għal Ħal Qormi kollu. *Wellingtons* [Vickers Wellington] kienu, tifhem?

- M:** Int bqajt f'istess lokal tul il-gwerra kollha?
- Mangion:** Iva, iva bqajna fl-istess dar, ma stajniex niċaqilqu minn hemm hekk għal ħafna raġunijiet. Umbagħad wara l-gwerra ftit xhur wara bdilna d-dar.
- M:** Allura x'esperienza għandek ta' nies li bdew ġejjin minn irħula oħra?
- Mangion:** Oh! L-ewwelnet anke aħna kellna familja magħna, kienu jiġu minnha, kienu ġew mil-lmsida, Vidal kienu kunjomhom, kunjomhom Vidal, qed tifhem? Imbagħad ma damux ħafna magħna, qed tifhem? Imma ġiebu magħhom xebba qiesa tip tal-Mużew hekk u baqet magħna għal ħafna żmien, qed tifhem? Kienet xebba religjuża, ma kellna xi ngħidu xejn. Lanqas ma l-oħrajn ta. Imma imbagħad insomma eh aħna ma konniex mdorrijin bil-modd ta' ħajja tagħhom u nsomma sabu li x' imkien ieħor u er *reliefjawn*a [sic.] daqsxejn minn dak il- x'jismu. U imbagħad il-post, il-kmamar fejn kienu jogħodu huma, iz-ziju li waqgħu tant ma kienx, kienu mentalita ra x'gabar minn dan il-post, per eżempju xi xorok u xi travi anke magħuġin u biex giebhom id-dar, u tefagħhom f'dawn il-kmamar fejn qabel kien hemm dawn jogħodu dawn, niftakarni niftehmed, imbagħad, imma wara ġieli ntużaw għax jiena ma nafx li kellha dar fejn kienet waqat il-kamra ta' ġol-bitħa fil-*war damage* u dan kollu, il-benejja kienu jinqdew bl-isiebu, travu minn hawn, wieħed, per eżempju wieħed travu tal-injam u ieħor tal-ħadid, u kamra tirovinha alavolja dak iż-żmien kollox kien jagħadi, u xorok. Imma dan iz-ziju kien ġie, ma nafx kemm użagħ dak li ġieb mill- mill- dar mwaqqa meta reġgħet imbniet id-dar.
- M:** Mill-liem rħula bdew ġejjin l-aktar dawn ir-refuġjati?

Mangion: Aħna l-iktar li kien, kien hemm ħafna mil-Kottonera, Ħal Qormi qed ngħidilek għax qed niftakar. Irrid ngħidlek ħaġa fuqhom. Ir-revoluzjoni li ġiebu f' Malta in-nies li ġew u bdejna, u bdew jitħaltu, in-nies tal-irħula man-nies qieshom tal-ibliet u dan kollu. Per eżempju, qed niftakar karratru speċifiku, kienu joqgħodu quddiemna, kellu tifla [ma jinftehimx] li kien tant qiesu żbukkat li jidħol il-knisja dak inhar kont San Ġorġ, kien l-ewwel darba li smajt b' xi ħadd jerfa leħnu biex er jikritika l-kappillan. In-nies li jgħidilhom il-kappillan l-ewwelnet anke l-kappillan kien raġel tajjeb u da kollu marradi u da kollu. Imma tant kellna rispettt lejħ, meta ġie dan "x' jġigifieri, x'jġigifieri mela, allura, billi l-kappillan." Saret rivolizjoni siekta f'Malta, tifhem? F'kull sens ta' ħajja u anke reliġjożita.

M: Kif ilqajtuhom lil dawn in-nies?

Mangion: Le. Jien ngħid kull minn kellu fejn laqahom, laqahom tajjeb, tifhem? Il-Malti, tifhem. Wara kont tisma xi stejjer u dejquni u dan kollu, imma kont tħenn għalijhom hux. Telqu minn hemm u ma għandhomx dar, tħalijhom barra. Anke l-knisja stess hux kienet tagħat il-kappelli z-zgħar u l-knejjes biex jistgħu jidħlu fihom eh. Joqgħodu fihom hu. Kien hemm żewġ knejjes ħdejna kienu t-tnejn bir-refuġjati ġo fihom.

M: Fejn kienu joqgħodu, f'liema kundizjonijiet?

Mangion: Er. L-aqwa li d-daħal rasek, umbagħad tara kif, iġene u dan kollu, *toilets* eh. Dak iż-żmien ma kellniex kmamar tal-banju ta [ma jinftehimx]. Ħeq l-ewwel *toilets*, fil-bitħa anqas kien iġeniku għax kien x'jisima dritta, u t-tela' riħa. Ma kienetx is-serpentina, qed tifhem, u jkun fil-bitħa anke biex ma tagħmilx ġewwa, [ma jinftehimx] kamra tal-injam biex għallinqas tidħol hemm hekk. [Ma jinftehimx] Imbagħad anke biex tinħasel ta, idaħal banju, tinħasel hekk.

M: X'kien ikunu l-proċess sa biex taċċetaw ir-refuġjati f' darkom?

Mangion: Le, le. Kienu kien- kien hemm proċess ta. Irrid ngħid illi jiġi xi ħadd jgħidlek hawn hekk għandek għandek fejn iż-żomm, u trid iż-żomm [ma jiftehmx] allura kienu anke jagħatu xi qiesu tabella hekk zgħira u jwaħħluielek mal-bieb. Hawn hekk qed joogħoqodu, hawn trid id-daħħal. Hemm dik trid tiftakara wkoll hemm iva. Allura billi mill-ewwel ġew dawn, mill- li kienu jafuna, u dan kollu, taz-zija Bassu, għax Bassu wieħed mill-ismijiet tal-familja. Ġew taz-ziju Bassu ta, u mill-lmsida, msieken, allura mill-ewwel ilqajnijhom u dan da kollu.

M: Qatt smajt jekk kienx hemm xi kunflitti ma dawn in-nies?

Mangion: U ċertu konflitti tifhom hu, għax il-bnedmin meta, imma ħafna kienu tant kienu kif jgħiduhom, tħaltu li hekk iżżewġu għand xulxin. Tifhem? Anke iżżewġu għand xulxin. Imma ma teskludix li jkun hemm *misplacement* qiesu. Qed tifhem? Ma ntaqgħux, ma jaqblux flimkien allura aħjar qed tifhem? Imma meta kien hemm dan aċċetawhom u dan kollu li anke iżżewġu għand xulxin imbagħad.

M: Kienu jgħibu ruħhom differenti minnkom?

Mangion: Ħafna. Ħafna qed tifhem? Għalek għidlek kienet daqsxejn ta' revoluzjoni soċjali qed tifhem.? Kien hemm. Kien hemm ħafna anke kif jilbsu. Per eżempju, l-ewwel ma rajna nies bil-*lipstick*, qed tifhem? Jew xi naqra ta' *make up*. Ħafna terrer dak iż-żmien, *make up* u dan kollu. Imma kont tinduna. Kont tinduna anke il-mod kif, anke kif jilbsu hekk daqsxejn skullat, tifhem? Il-Maltin ma tantx kienu jilbsu skullat.

M: Kien hemm familiji li għażlu li jibqgħu fil-lokalita wara li għadda kollox?

- Mangion:** Iva. Ħafna, ħafna. Iva. Tant li saru qieshom mill- mill- mill-post, iva ma marrux lura. Fatt li jafu. Dan huwa fatt ukoll hux. Fatt x' jgħidulu l- l- l- ma marrux lura lejn il-Kottonera ħafna minnhom, ma marrux lura, kulħadd jafha, tifhem? Għadhom sal-lum immorru għall-festa, għax jiena missieri kont mill-Birgu u dan kollu, qed tifhem? Dawk li sabu fejn jogħodu sewwa u dan kollu. Ħafna minnhom ma marrux lura.
- M:** Avolja r-refuġjati kienu meqjusin barranin ħassejtu sens ta' kommunita ma dawn in-nies?
- Mangion:** Meta kienu dan iva ta. Ngħidlek iva. Imma dejjem kien jibqa per eżempju dak il-karratru daqsxejn, dak il-karratru daqxejn, qed tifhem? Tifhem? Iva [ma jiftehimx]. Ma nistax ngħidilek hawn *tirrekordja* [sic.].
- M:** Mela tiftakar meta bdew jattakkaw il-Ġermaniżi?
- Mangion:** Użgur. Ajma ħej. Meta daħlu li *Stukas* [Junkers JU 87] Ġermaniżi. Taf m'hemmx għalfejn ngħidlek l-akbar *raid* li kien hawn fuq Malta, fuq l-*Illustrious* [HMS *Illustrious*] Ġunju, fuq l-*Illustrious* [HMS *Illustrious*] f' Ġunju, *sixteenth June nineteen forty-one* jidirli kien, *sixteenth June forty-one* il-x' jismu kbir hu, dak tal-Ġermaniżi. Dik dik id-differenza konna nagħmluha, illi t-Taljani ma kienux effettivi daqs il-Ġermaniżi fl'*air raids*, tifhem? Ħafna kienu jgħdu li t-Taljani jitfgħu il-bomba mill-għoli u jtilqu, imma tal-Ġermaniżi għandhom xi *target*, għandhom xi *target*. Fatti darba minnhom kienu qalu t-*target* kien Ħal Qormi, u kien il-kwistjoni tal-fran u jekk jogħod taħseb, fejn konna nogħoqodu aħna [pum] qiesu l-fran kollha daruhom, jew qrib jew da kollu, tifhem? Xi ħaġa kien hemm jiena ma nafx x'kienet dak iż-żmien, imma kienet li veru, il-Ġermaniżi kellhom dejjem *to the target* imma, it-Taljani kienu jgħidu jibgħu fil-għoli u dan.

M: Kontu tafu x'kien qed jiġri barra minn Malta?

Mangion: Jiena ma kont naf xejn. U aħna nafu illum tifhem? Le konna neqsin mill-aħbarijiet ta' barra per eżempju ma konniex nafu kif Hitler ħa Franza f'erbat ijiem, u l-Olanda baqa diehel u dan kollu. Niftakar iva, f' Settembru ta' *thirty-nine* meta qalu li Hitler invada l-Polonja. Dik niftakarha, tifhem? Imma umbagħad konna skarsi minn dak illi kif saru l-affarijiet sirna nafuhom wara u sirna nafuhom bħali, qari minn hawn u minn hemm hu.

M: Kif kontu tkunu tafu li diehel xi konvoj?

Mangion: Aħna konna nafu Ħal Qormi għax kellna ħafna nies jaħdmu x-xatt. Mela kien hemm hafna nies jaħdmu x-xatt, jiġifieri jhottu, dak iż-żmien kont fuq l-ispalla u ħafna burdnara, burdnara, ukoll, uħud minnhom kienu bil-karretun, burdnar bil-karretun, tifhem? Umbagħad bdew xi burdnara, ikollok trakk, trakk wieħed, qed tifhem. Imma li *stevedors*, tgħid għal meta kien il-gvern nazzjonalista ta' li kien Cachia Zammit daħħal xa ħaġa, allura, eh. Jiena kont għadni ma qaddistx, u kollha rridu karta tal-magħmudija, ċertifikat tal-magħmudija, u ntqajna ma Cachia Zammit u qallu, qallu "Kemmm ġewk?" Qallu "Xi daqshekk." Qallu "Daqshekk irrid jiġuk." Għax Ħal Qormi kien hemm *five hundred out of seven hundred and fifty stevedores*, dawk ħaddiema tax-xatt. Kien hemm minn seba' mija u ħamsin kien hemm ħames mija kollha minn Ħal Qormi. Qed tifhem? U kienet antika, dak iż-żmien kienu missier għall-iben, infatti, jiġifieri jiġifieri kien minn dawn konna nkunu nafu x'diehel. U tismagħhom "Għada diehel tal-*P and O*," tal- "Għada diehel it-tali" kont tismagħhom, wara l-gwerra, u anke fil-gwerra nimaġina dawn kienu jkunu jafu, tifhem?

M: Qatt ħassejt il-biża li l-għadu seta' jinjadi?

Mangion: Fha ngħidlek ma konniex nafu bihom dawk l-affarijiet, tifhem? Le, imma ta' tifel li kont, kont smajt bl-attentat tal-*e-boats*. Ipprovaw jidħol fil-port, għax dak b'hekk miet Pisani, sal-Port daħal bl-*e-boat* mill-Italja. Sabuh hemm. Allura, kien hemm xi ħadd jafu qallu "Int m'intx mhux Borg Pisani" u għarfuh għax kien *short sighted* ħafna u kien tilef in-nuċċali, tifhem? Naf qassis u għadu ħaj, Kanonku ta' San Pawl il-Belt, jiġi zijuh, ħu missieru, dan Borg Pisani. Ħu missieru. Tifhem? Għax dan Borg Pisani kellu ħuh qassis ukoll, kien kanonku l-Birg- l-Isla, niftakru jien. Kien raġel irqieq twil. Imma dan kellu dak l-ideal tal-Italja Borg Pisani. Kien ipenġi u da' kollu, kellu xi *scholarship*, u kien tifhem? Imma tal-*e-boat* daħlu, din l-*e-boat* ma kontx naf x'inhi, umbagħad smajt illi anki li l-port kienu jagħlquh b- xibka. Insomma, imma dejjem kien hemm din ix-xa ħaġa, imma qatt ma, qed tifhem? Ta' tifel li kont qatt ma kellna dak il-biża li setgħu jinwaduna. Ma kienx diffiċli ta tifhem? Tand għandna bajjiet hux bħal Mellieħa.

M: Kif kontu tinħaslu? L-ilma kien skars?

Mangion: Mill-bir. Konna bil-bir. Dak iż-żmien kien jgħidlek m'għandekx bir, żgur li d-dar ikollha bir. Iżgur li l-ilma kien skars. Għidlek ħafna drabi, ħafna djar, lanqas kellhom ilma d-dar, kienu jmorru fuq il-pompa pubblika. Jiena kemm niftakar nies tax-xatt, wara li jiġu mix-xatt, forsi ħadmu ma naf xix, maħmuġin, jinħaslu fuq il-pompa. Da żgur, wara l-gwerra, żgur. Kien importanti l-bir. Umbagħad jiġi bħal ma għandi din id-dar jien. Ħadha fl-*eighty* [...]jaħseb] fl-*eighty-eight*, *eighty-seven*, *eighty-eight*. Ħadha qadu sa jsaqqaf l-ewwel sular. Hawn wara għandu jorodom u ma jagħamilx bir, kapriċċuži, kapriċ, għax għal tiegħu ta' hawnek għamel il-bir. Imma dak iż-żmien, fl-aħħar ta' l-amministrazzjoni ta' Mintoff, tgħdix kulħadd jagħmel li jrid kien. Jiena ma nafx kif taħsibha, imma jien min jgħidli Mintoff għamel il-ġid Malta, ngħidlek Mintoff l-aktar li għamel deni lil Malta. Mintoff qatt ma għamel l-ebda ħaġa tajba għal Malta. Malta l-ewwel u qabel

kollox. Imbagħad għidlu le le irrid biċċa bir. Umbagħad beda jhaffer biex għamel bir zgħir hemm hekk tal-mitejn, elfejn gallun, meta seta jagħmili. Kienu kulhadd jagħmel li rrid. Jiena għandi daqsxejn ta' x'jgħidulha, qed tir-rikordja?

[Jitwaqqaf ir-*recording*]

M: Kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u l-ilma fix-xelter?

Mangion: M'għadniex kif għidlek li kull ma kien ikollna daqsxejn ta' niċu. U niċu taf x'inhu? Għidlek bott kemm jalqulu naqra hekk, jagħamlulu biċċa ftila, dak kollox, ma nesklusieq li kien hawn xi wħud. Kif tniżel id-dawl.

M: Avolja kontu taħt l-art kien hemm regolamenti ta' x' seta' u ma setax issir fix-xelter?

Mangion: Le aħna konna ninżlu biex nistkennu, dak li naf ħi. X'seta' jsir u ma setax issir. X'seta' sar u ħafna affarijiet oħra, għax kienu jsemmu qed jistrojaw [sic.] affarijiet tax-xelter fix-xelter, anki *fuel* li qabad, bħal ma kien hemm il-Mosta. Il-Mosta kien qabad u da' kollu u għamel infern hemm hekk, qed tifhem? Għax ibni l- Malti jipproffita ruħu minn kollox ta, u anke mill-gwerra ipproffitta ruħu l- Malti ta. Anke mill-gwerra. Tifhem? Iva. Heq.

M: Għall-ħwejjeġ kellkom biżżejjed? Jew ġieli kellek taqsam ma ħutek?

Mangion: Il-ħwejjeġ tibza għalijhom, għalkemm kien hemm mument, dan nista' ngħidu. Anki meta kont l-iskola jiena kienu jgħiebu għat-tfal fil-bżonn, u darba, żgur, tawni par żarbun għax kien hemm x'jgħidulha, kien hemm fattiga l-iskola, Alla jaħfrilha Ġorġa, li kienet tafna u dan kollu, u kif kienu jgħiebu xi ħaġa "ejja Mangion" u iġibli biex tawni żarbun, par żarbun. Iva, kienu jqasmu xi ħaġa

hekk, iva. Kienu jagħmlu, imma kien hawn in-nuqqas, kien hawn in-nuqqas. L-ewwelnet kif għidlek dak iż-żmien anke jiena niftakar l-ewwel Hal Qormi, John Borg meta beda jagħmel qomos, kif ngħidulhom dawn kummerċjali, u fil-bitħa tal-kunjata għamel erba' magni, ġiex tfajliet, kulhadd iħitu qomos u da' kollu. Imma qabel qmis biex tordnha, trid tordnha, issib [ma jinftehimx] u qalzit. Iz-zija waħda minnhom kienet tħit. Kien ikollha ħafna ordnijiet anke ġej San Ġorġ, tiġi din il-mara tgħidlu “għar-raġel għar-raġel tagħmillu, dan id-drapp Chal, għandek id-drapp għall-qalzet” iġiblu l-qies u tagħmilu dan, u tagħmilu qmis, allura kienu kollox qiesu *self made* għal dik l-okkażjoni, mhux taqbad illum tmur u tixtri, u ma għoġbitex armejta, jew [ma jinftehimx] tifhem ħi ħeq?

M: Illum jgħadilek minn moħħok li stajt tlift lill-ġenituri tiegħek?

Mangion: Ħeq, ħeq, jiena, kont bla ġenituri fil-gwerra kont, kollha kemm hi, għax ommi mietet fit-thirty-nine, u rabbewna z-zijiet. Konna erbgħa għall-ewwel, umbagħad mietet iz-zgħira wkoll u missieri ma kienx magħna għax ried jerġa jizzeweg, u beda familja oħra u lilna ħalina ma z-zijiet. Tifhem ħi? U kien hemm min tilef il-ġenituri mela le, mela le. Kien hemm min tilef il-ġenituri, mela, ħeq. Speċjalment ikollok missieriek fuq il-*front* suldat jew hekk, fuq il-batterija. Iva ħija.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kif kont tħares lejn is-suldati Ingliżi?

Mangion: Le, jiena qatt ma ħarist ikraħ. Ma kelliex, kif għidlek l-aħħar darba, dak is-sens ta' politika, u da' kollu, jew dħalna fil-gwerra. Jiena għalija qatt ma rajta minn dak il-lat. [Ma jinftehimx] Kont naf imbagħad anke wara, l-iskola li dan, fuq il-moviment Taljan li kien hawn hawn Malta. Imma mill-familja aħna kellna zijiet tad-dar, tax-xogħol, imma mhux ta' politika u hekk u da' kollu, le. Le mhux minn dawk li stajna. Niftakru kien isemmi l-*Gross* insomma z-ziju, u, imma anki. Isemmi l-*Gross*, imma billi dik ta' Kottonera aħna

qiesu l-Kottonera kienu nies l-hemm minnha [Ma jiftehimx] bħala Ƒal Qormi. U huma wkoll kienu qieshom maqtugħejn għalijhom u kienu *proud* eh u dik it-tkissir li ġieb il-gwerra Hitler fuq il-Kottoner, il-Kottonera qatt ma sabet l-għeruq tagħha li kellha qabel, ta. Qatt ma saret dak li kienet, ta il-Kottonera. Per eżempju l-Isla kienu qieshom l-*elite* ta' Malta, milli ninduna anke illum, anke naqra iktar l-*intelligentsia*, u aħna mħuħ u [ma jiftehimx], dik qatt ma kisbuha lura. It-tlett ibliet, qatt ma kisbuha lura, dik il-*pride* li kellhom qatt u l-kumplament ta' Malta għalijhom kienet *down*, u l-kumplament ta' Malta għalijhom kienet *down*. Qed tifhem? Kien iħarsu anke lejn l-irħula Ƒal Kirkop, Ƒal Kirkop raħal tal-mogħoż, mhux raħal tan-nies, qed tifhem? Donhom, revoluzjoni, il-gwerra dejjem iġieb revoluzjoni.

M: Rajt suldati ta' pajjizi oħra?

Mangion: Iva, kif semmejtlek id-darba l-oħra konna naraw il- is-suldati Afrikani, jew Bazuto, jew da' kollu. U l-aktar li kienu jolqtuna ħa ngħidha, kienu meta jidħlu l-knisja, kienu joħorġu b'lura biex ma jagħtux darhom lejn is-sagrament. Hekk- dak kienu l-iktar li kienu jolqtuna, tifhem? Iva.

M: Li tara lis-suldati kienet xi ħaġa kommuni anka Ƒal Qormi?

Mangion: Le, le. Kellna nies suldati. Iz-ziju stess kien suldat. Iz-ziju tiegħi kien jilbes ta' suldat, qed tifhem? *Driver* mal-uffiċjali, ġieli kien jiġi wara l-bieb bil-karozza ta' dawk li jsuq, imma. U dak inqabad suldat. Għax dak kienet bil-lieva s-suldat, kienet bil-lieva, ċertu eta, qed tifhem? U konna nafu "eh dak ma marx suldat ħija, dak kellu min jaqbes għalih" qed tifhem? Imma l-bqija kien hemm il-lieva, bil-lieva, u ħafna kienu jibzġħu mill-lieva li jmur suldat għax sa tmux hux, u esperienza li ħadd ma kellu x'jiġifieri suldat. Allavoja kien hemm suldati qabel ma daħlet- dħalna fil-gwerra. Naf wieħed jiena, kien Toni Tabone, kien jogħod ħdejna, Toni is-

suldat. Imma mhux per eżempju, imma imbagħad fil-gwerra kien hemm il-lieva, u trid tmur, u jekk sejjaħlek għandek l-eta, trid tmur, tifhem?

M: X'kont tħoss rigward it-Taljani u l-Ġermaniżi?

Mangion: Ma tantx kont narhom sbieħ, ma tantx kont narhom sbieħ it-Taljani, [ma jinftehimx] sbieħ. Imma mhux li tgħid din il-mibegħda ejja ngħid u da' kollu, tifhem? Li tibqa, le, dik, jew mibegħda ta' klassi, jew mibegħda politika. Sempliċiment kellna ngħixu dak iż-żmien, tifhem?

M: Qatt rajthom priġunieri tal-gwerra?

Mangion: Iva, ġieli konna narawhom, il-priġunieri tal-gwerra, iva, u kienu joħduhom jaħdmu f'ċerti postijiet. Inadfu, per eżempju fejn waqa', kont narhom. Dawk konna narawhom iwa. Priġunieri tal-gwerra kien ikollhom marka fuq darhom li huma priġunieri, tifhem? [Ma jiftehimx] l-oħrajn għassa magħhom waqt li qed jagħmlu ċertu xogħol jew kienu jagħddu f' xi trakk, għaddejjin il-priġunieri tal-gwerra, iva.

M: Meta spiċċat il-gwerra kif irritornajtu għall-ħajja normali?

Mangion: Il-gwerra kienet spiċċat qabel spiċċat fil-fatt. Meta kien hemm żmien, speċjalment meta waqt l-Italja, konna diġa bdejna deħlin f'ċertu żmien ta' inqas raids u da' kollu. Imma imbagħad meta sar l-armistizju, niftakar konna tfal, kont ħdejn il-knisja ta' San Ġorġ u kien hemm wieħed Xuereb, kellu l-karozza ta' Birkirkara għadni naf lil uliedu, u rikkitabna fuq il-karozza u dawarna ma Ħal Qormi, insabtu, u nħabtu ta' fuq il-karozza għax spiċċat il-gwerra. Għamilna dik il- erm dik il-festa qisa. Induru, u ngħajtu tifhem? Ija.

M: U kont għidli wkoll li mn' Alla kien l-Isqof Gonzi għal Malta waqt il-gwerra?

Mangion: Iva, dik niftakarha tajjeb meta, er, il- il-bdiewa Għawdxin, l-Isqof kien għadu l-Isqof ta' Għawdex, għax wara il-*fort- fil-forty-three* miet Mauro Caruana, u kien għadu l-Isqof ta' Għawdex, u l-bdiewa Għawdxin kienu ħbew il-qamħ li kellhom, u kellhom bżonn, u kellhom il-Gvern Kolonjali bżonn il-qamħ tagħhom biex ma jċedux. U kien l-Isqof cr- cre- hawn Gonzi, kien strumentali biex ħarġu l-qamħ l-Għawdxin. Ħarġu l-qamħ li kellhom moħbi, għall-użu tagħhom u dan kollu, imbagħad tawħ għal Malta, talba tal-Gvernatur, tgħidlix minn kien dak iż-żmien il-Gvernatur, għax l-ewwel Gvernatur li niftakar jien kien Gerald Creasy wara l-gwerra, li tant kien kien kien Gvernatur simpatiku, u darba ġie l-iskola Ħal Qormi, tgħidx kemm għamlilna x'jismu u konna ħabbejniah. Ma semmejtlexx meta waqet l-iskola ta' Ħal Qormi. Iva. Fi tlett ta' Mejju kien ta' l-elf disa' mija tnejn u erbgħin, kien hemm attakk fuq Ħal Qormi u ġiet bomba fuq il-faċċata, mal-faċċata ta' Ħal Qormi, fejn kienu jfirdu l-iskejjel *primary* u *secondary*, u incidentalment fejn ġiet il-bomba kien hemm il-kappella u kien hemm l-artal. Fuq kien hemm kappella. Jiġifieri tlett klassijiet miftuħin u mbilli kien hemm l-anzjani u xjuħ. Niftakar anke bħala abbati konna ngorru l-mejtin minn hemm hekk, flokk l-Imgieret, jew estenzjoni tal-Imgieret, *Saint Vincent de Paul*. Insomma, aħna konna nużaw dik il-parti tal-iskola u x-xelter kien fuq warab tagħna. U, u wara sirna nafu, li kien hemm żewġ tfajliet ta' xi *standard two* jew *three*, u kien hemm waħda minnhom u rat il-qanpiena li kienet id-doqq il-madam, ta' fuq li kienet *air raid warning*, meta d-doqq hi, u qaltilha "Ara" qaltilha "u li ma doqqiex?" u daqqitha, u l-iskola kollha ħasbet illi hemm *air raid warning* u l-iskola kollha bdiet niezla lejn ix-xelter, tifhem? U kien hemm tassew *air raid warning* ftit wara li daqqet il-qanpiena, u l-*air raid warning* ma kienx jagħti ċans kieku ma daqqewx dawk it-tfajliet il-qanpiena qabel biex l-iskola tkun kollha fix-xelter u wara

meta ġiet dik il-bomba. U ġiet eżatt hemm hekk. In-nies ta' Hal Qormi kulhadd jiġri għax waqet il-bomba fuq l-iskola, minn San Bastjan ukoll, għax dak iż-żmien ma kienx hemm ta' dik ta' San Bastjan, kulhadd hemm kien jiġi, u kulhadd tiela biex jara l-ġenituri wliedhom fejn huma. U ara jiena naf, illi, u l-unika persuna li weġat kienet is-sinjora stess, il-*headmistress*, kienet Farrugia, Rikarda Farrugia. Li din marret tfitteż it-taraġ biex tinzel ħalli tidhol fix-xelter, u il-bomba kienet diġa waqet hemm hekk, it-taraġ ma kienx hemm u waqet għal isfel, ma weġetx ħafna. Imma il- il-xjisimha, il-bomba li ġiet, ġiet fuq l-artal, tant li n-nies bdew jgħidu "Gesù ġibidha fuqu flok fuq l-iskola fuq it-tfal." U jiena kont abbati dak iż-żmien rajt l-ostji li ġabru li kien hemm fit-tabernaklu ħodor bil-blast, miġburin hekk. Kont nideffes ħafna. Imma l-kappillan kien iħobbni ħafna għax kien isiebni għal kollox fil-parroċċa. U niftakar il-kappillan qallhom "jiena jixtieq nikolhom dawn, nikunsmhom" u ġie uffiċjal tal-gvern u qallu "mela inti miġnun," qallu "dawk kollha valenu trid trmut?" imbagħad għamluhom ġewwa container tal-talkina jew tal-x'jismu, niftakar, kien ikollna buqar hekk sabiħ, bil- ilma, u qegħduh ġo post, kien hemm iċ-ċimiterju wara, jew irixtellu, illum imbena u kien hemm armarju fil-ħajt jinqafel u qegħduhom hemm sa kemm dawn l-ostji kunsmaw. Imbagħad dik kienet oħra. Taf li jiena wkoll salvajt fil-gwerra? Għax konna hemmek aħna, ta' tfal li konna, anki ħuti izgħar minni. Ix-xelter kien sewwa fuq wara, imma kellna ċans li mmorru fix-xelter qabel ma beda l-*air raid* u giet il-bomba jew waddab il-bomba l-ajruplan ma nafux kif, billi dawk iż-żewġ tfajliet qieshom impikaw bejnithom, u tgħid kumbinazjonijiet.

M: Tiftakar f' xi episodju li baqa' stampat f' moħħok minn żmien il-gwerra?

Mangion: Dan l-aktar, għax er mejtin rajt, anke darba meta kienu taru t-triq tagħna dar minn fuq s-isfel bil-bombi, rajt ġuvni mejjet barra. Kien ġuvni niftakar ta' minn jgħidulu ta' minn kien ukoll, qed

tifhem.? Kien barra quddiem fejn illum hemm Santa Katarina u l-x'jgħidulu l-ħbula biex ħadd ma jidħol, imma jiena rajtu mejjet, iva, da'. U anke meta rajt l-arjuplani eh fuq id-dar taz-ziju, għax jien kont tlajt u rajtu dan l-arjuplan. Qabad, bil-fuel li kellu dan il-*Wellington*.

M: *Father Mangion, grazzi ħafna ta' ħinek.*

APPENDIX VIII

MEM[O]RJA

oral, sound and visual archive

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MEM [O] R J A

oral, sound and visual archive

INTERVISTA

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INTERVISTA MA': ALBERT GANADO

DATA TAL-INTERVISTA: 19 TA' SETTEMBRU 2017

POST: VALLETTA

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Illum id-dsatax ta' Settembru elfejn u sbatax, jien James Baldacchino qiegħed ma' Albert Ganado ġewwa r-residenza tiegħu il-Belt, f'isem il-proġett MEMORJA għall-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta.

M: Albert, fejn twelidt u meta?

Ganado: Mela jiena twelidt il-Belt, fid-disgħa ta' Marzu, tal-elf disa' mija u erbgħa u għoxrin.

M: Kemm kontu aħwa?

Ganado: Dak iż-żmien konna [...] eh meta twelidt jien? Meta twelidt jien tlieta biss, konna, għaliex l-ewwel tlieta li kellu l-papà mietu zgħar, allura kien hemm *the fourth and the fifth* meta twelidt jien, imbagħad warajja kien hemm żewġt ibniet oħra.

M: Fejn kienu jaħdmu ommok u missierek?

Ganado: Erm il-papà tiegħi naturalment kien jaħdem il-qorti. Kemm meta sar- meta kemm meta kien avukat, u kemm meta sar maġistrat u meta sar imħallef dejjem il-qorti jiġifieri, kien jaħdem.

M: U ommok fejn kienet taħdem?

Ganado: Ma kinetx taħdem.

M: Qatt emigrajt xi mkien?

Ganado: Le.

M: X'xogħlijiet kellek?

Ganado: Xogħol professjonali qed tgħid? Jiena kont- dak iż-żmien, ma ki-l-ewwelnett dak iż-żmien ma kienx hemm speċjalizzazzjoni dak

iż-żmien. Illum tant saret vasta [jagħmel emfasi] l-professjoni legali, illi bilfors trid tispeċjalizza. Dak iż-żmien ma kien hemm xejn, kien hemm tlett iqrati, iċ-ċivil, il-kummerċ u l-kriminal, u jiena kont naħdimhom it-tlieta. Anke ġuri ta' omiċidju għamilt, per eżempju. [...] U għamilt- kont wieħed mill-avukati tat-*trial* tal-*BICAL* [*Bank of Industry Commerce and Agriculture Limited*] tal-bank, l-itwal ġuri li qatt kien hemm domna sitt xhur, bil-ġuri dak.

M: Fejn kont tgħix fi tfulitek?

Ganado: Fejn kont ngħix. Mela. Emm [...] l-ewwel kont ngħix naturalment- meta meta twelidt, meta twelidt jien konna noqgħodu *Strada Genio* hawn wara. *Sappers Street*. U mbagħad, meta l-papà sar imħallef iġifieri, konna noqgħodu *Strada San Paolo*, 'l isfel mill-Università allura kont ngħix hemmhekk, natur- il-Belt sa kemm s-skuppjat il-gwerra. Meta s- meta bdiet il-gwerra, għalkemm id-dar baqa- bqajna ninżlu fiha xi kultant, emm għamilna *minn nineteen forty san-nineteen forty-eight* ir-Rabat. F'dar ir-Rabat, *Via Boschetto*. *Okay?* Emm u mbagħad inżilna l-Belt sakemm iżżewwiġt, wara li żżewwiġt, wara xi sentejn li nżilna l-Belt, mort noqgħod il-Furjana, u mbagħad fin-*nineteen fifty-eight* tlaqt il-*flat* tal-Furjana u ġejt noqgħod ġo did-dar. Għaliex hawnhekk kellna *the Air Officer Commanding*, u meta [ilaqlaq] s-servizzi telqu minn Malta u kkonsennjaw iċ-ċwieviet kollha tad-djar li kellhom lil-*Housing Commissioner* u mbagħad bħala *co-owner* jiena dħalt ġo din id-dar. *Nineteen fifty-eight*.

M: Kemm għandek tfal?

Ganado: Tnejn, għandi. Żewġt ibniet [jidhaq]. Waħda twieldet *nineteen fifty* u l-oħra twieldet *nineteen fifty-eight*.

M: Issa, Albert, fejn kont meta smajt bid-dikjarazzjoni ta' gwerra?

Ganado: Jiena kont ir-Rabat [...] fis-salott, f'kamra kif tidhol mill-bieb ta' barra *on the right*, kellna r- ir-radio ta' dak iż-żmien [jidhaq] orrajt? Iva, u jiena kont dejjem interessat iġifieri. Kont nisma'. U mort nisma' it-*Telegiornale*, iġifieri, u smajt 'il Mussolini jipproklama gwerra. Hemm kont f'dik il-kamra. [Jidhaq] U jiena dak il-ħin, ta' ta' tifel, avolja ma kontx tifel ta, iġifieri, imma għidt 'daqshekk studju mela' [jidhaq]. Għax dik iż-żmien ma kontx inħobb nistudja nikkonfessa eh! [jidhaq].

M: Kien hemm xi preparamenti għall-gwerra fix-xhur ta' qabel?

Ganado: Emm kien hemm, kien hemm, preparamenti kien hemm biss it-tqassim tal-f- maskri tal-gass, u nippruvaw il-maskri tal-gass, għaliex fil-gwerra tal-Abbissinja milli jidher kien ġie ntuzat il-gass, allura l-ħsieb kien biss attacki tal-gass. Attacki tal-bombi ħadd ma ħaseb fihom.

M: Tiftakar meta l-Italja invadiet l-Abbissinja fl-elf disa' mija ħamsa u tletin?

Ganado: Għandi idea tagħha wkoll, iva. Għandi idea tagħha. Għaliex kienet għamlet kjass, hux? Iġifieri l-Ingilterra għamlet is-sanzjonijiet kontra l-Italja u ħabba fihom, l-Italja, ħabiba ħafna tal-Ingilterra minn dejjem, spiċċat ma' Hitler. Allura k-kien hemm di- dit-taqliba, allura ma stajtx ma tapprezzahix dak iż-żmien hu? X'inhu jġgri.

M: X'tiftakar mill-politika f'hawn Malta qabel il-gwerra?

Ganado: [Jidhaq] Mela [...] Emm, niftakar tan-*nine*-, fl-elezzjoni tan-*nineteen thirty-two*. Għaliex l-ewwelnett aħna konna noqgħodu *Strada San Paolo*, u n-nies tal-Arcipierku dak iż-żmien kienu kollha Nazzjonalisti, tal-Mandraġġ kienu Labu- kienu Stricklandjani, bejn bejn wieħed u ieħor, għalkemm Toni ta' Ljun li kien iġorr l-għamara ta' kulħadd kien Nazzjonalista, joqgħod il-

Mandraġġ. Imma bħala klassi l-Arċpierku kien Nazzjonalisti. U jien niftakar kont kienu jgħaddu t-tfal per eżempju u ġuvintur kont narahom mill-gallarija niż-niżlin b' tebut, *right*, li fuqu hemm isem Strickland, ikantaw 'Le, le, le, il-babas ma rriduhx, assassin tal-Maltin.' Għaliex fit-*thirty-two* n-Nazzjonalisti, il-partit Nazzjonalista kien rebaħ l-elezzjoni, orrajt? U Strickland kien ġab biss xi għaxar vot-, xi għaxar er *seats* ta fil-parlament, insomma jġifieri. Allura kien hawn ċelebrazzjonijiet kbar Nazzjonalisti.

M: Kien hemm min ġie internat qabel id-dikjarazzjoni ta' gwerra. X'tiftakar minn dan l-episodju?

Ganado: Eqq, niftakar ħafna, għaliex wieħed mill-internati kien Herbert Ganado, prim kuġin tiegħi. Ħafna jaħsbu li ki- li h kien iz-ziju, għax kien hemm *gap* kbira fl-età. Imma daka *first cousin* tiegħi jġifieri, il-missirijiet aħwa. Iva, u konna ħbieb ħafna, magħhom għaliex aħna konna noqgħodu *Strada San Paolo*, u Herbert illi kien jgħix il-Furjana ma' missieru, meta żżewweġ kien ġie joqgħod *Strada Vescovo*, ki-kif tikser minn *Strada San Paolo*. Allura konna anke viċin mid-djar. U l-papà tiegħi 'l eh Herbert Ganado kien [emfasi] il-favorit min-neputijiet kollha tiegħu, għaliex kien bniedem kapaci, inte- jinteressa ruħu fil-politika ħafna, jikteb f'*Leħen is-Sewwa* u l-papà dejjem kien akkanit ikun jaf x'i- x'se x'jigri jew ma jġgrix insomma, u Herbert kellu ċerta previzjoni. *Difatti*, er niftakar, niftakar, ġurnata minnhom, erm, ċe- ah, ftit qabel dik il-ġurnata, kellu diskussjoni mal-papà tiegħi da Herbert, orrajt u qallu 'Mussolini sa jinvasi l-Abbissinja.' U l-papà qallu 'Ajma!'. Qallu 'Kif taf?' Qallu 'Issa tara!' Niftakar il-papà kien qed jistrieħ xit-tlieta u nofs ta' wara nofsinhar, ċempel it-*telephone*, kien Herbert fuq il-linja. Qalli 'Il-papà hemm qiegħed?' Għidtlu 'Rieqed' qalli 'Mur qajjmu u għidlu li Mussolini invada l-Ab- l-Albanija.' [jidħaq].

M: X'reazzjoni kellek meta sirt taf li Herbert ġie deportat, wara?

Ganado: Ir-reazzjoni kienet [emfasi] anti-gvern għall-aħħar.

M: U kont dispjaċut għal dawn in-nies?

Ganado: Speċjalment illi barra 'l Herbert internaw nies illi jiena kont nafhom mill-viċin ħafna! Pereżempju Monsinjur Pantalleresco, illi meta kont il-Liċeo, konna kien iqadd-iqaddsilna *first Friday*, kien jagħmlilna l-quddiesa il-ġiżwiti Monsinjur Pantalleresco u darba tani ktieb bid-dedika tiegħu wkoll *preg- tal-pregħieri*. U mbagħad Sir Arturo li kien ħabib ħafna mal-papà. Għaliex Sir Arturo kien *Chief Justice* u l-papà tiegħi kien *Senior Judge*. *Difatti* meta internaw lil Sir Arturo, il-papà tiegħi kien wasal għas-*sixty-five*, u għamel sitt xhur *Acting Chief Justice*. Sakemm għalaq *sixty-five* u mbagħad naturalment spiċċa u għamlu lil Sir George Borg spiċċaw.

M: U kont dispjaċut għal dawn in-nies?

Ganado: Ħafna [jidħaq]. Ħafna speċjalment, ħa ngħidlek il- l-internament ma kienx gravi ħafna. Natural- naturalment, bniedem bħal Herbert għadu jibda l-professjoni tiegħu, għadu jizzewweġ u żewġt itfal, qatgħulu saqajh [...] finanzjarjament. Imma hu x'inhu, tr- hawn Malta żgħira, tiddobba, familja tgħin u dan kollu. Jiġifieri dika kienet sa ċertu punt. L-inkwiet, kien. Imma l-eżilju kien ikrah eh. L-eżilju l- eżilju kien terribli. Is-separazzjoni ta' dawk l-internati kollha mill-familja, telqu minn hawn għall-mewt bil-*Breconshire* [*HMS Breconshire*] taħt attackki feroċi kontinwi Taljani u Tedeski orrajt? U naturalment, min internahom forsi spera li l-*Breconshire* jegħreq [jidħaq] imma waslu l-Eġit- waslu l-Uganda, qawwijin u sħaħ u ġew lura kollha qawwijin u sħaħ *nonostante* il-mard illi soffrew hemmhekk. Għax Herbert kien jirrakonta l-mard, il-malarja, il-*jiggers* anqas naf kemm mard kien isemmi hemmhekk li kienu jieħdu.

- M:** Ta' ġuvni li kont kellek idea ta' x'kienet se tfisser il-gwerra?
- Ganado:** Xi tfisser il-gwerra? Le ma kelli l-ebda idea. Le cioè mhux ma kelli l-ebda idea għax kont naqra l-gazzetti u nisma' r-radjo l-bumbardamenti fuq il-Polonja pereżempju, u fuq Franza u l-invażjoni. Le le, kont insegwi kontinwament. Ma kinetx tgħaddi ġurnata jien li ma nismax ir-ir-*Rediffusion* u l-*Giornale Radio* mill-Italja. Kont nismagħhom it-tnejn. U 'l papà jien kont intih in-notizzji [jidħaq].
- M:** X'kien jiġri kull meta kienet tindaqq is-sirena? Kif kont tħossok?
- Ganado:** Hāa ngħidlek. Jiena kont għadni [...] żgħir, insomma, ġuvni, u jiena minn dejjem ottimista. U jien kont nirraġuna- l-ewwelnett peress li aħna konna noqgħodu r-Rabat ma konniex a *danger area*, u t-tieni haġa kont ngħid 'Insomma jekk imbagħad tiġi xi bomba jiena qas inkun naf li mitt.' [Jidħaq] Hekk kont nirraġuna. Ma kontx nirraġuna li nista' nibqa' li nista' nibqa' mmankat ħajti kollha, dika ma kinetx tidħolli f'rasi. Allura ma kontx, [ilaqlaq] ma kontx nibza'. U xelter rari ħafna nżilt f'xelter. Rari ħafna.
- M:** Dawn is-sireni fejn kienu jkunu stazzjonati ġeneralment?
- Ganado:** [Jagħmel sinjal li ma fehemx.]
- M:** Dawn is-sireni fejn kienu jkunu stazzjonati?
- Ganado:** Ma fhimtekx.
- M:** Dawn is-sireni fejn kienu jkun stazzjonati?
- Ganado:** Eh sireni! Is-sireni naħseb illi prinċipalment fl-għases tal-pulizija, jekk niftakar sew. Fl-għases tal-pulizija nistħajjel- jista' jkun li kien hemm anke xi ċentri oħrajn, forsi. Meta beda għaddej iż-żmien,

iġifieri u *r-raids* saru iktar frekwenti, nimmaġina illi għamlu sireni anke f'diversi postijiet hux. Għax perezempju, hu r-Rabat u l-Imdina, orrajt? Ir-Rabat li kienet l-għassa, allura tal- tal-Imdina kapaci ma jisingħux biżżejjed. Iġifieri naħseb jagħmlu diversi postijiet.

M: Apparti s-sireni kien hemm metodi oħrajn kif in-nies kien jiġu avżati?

Ganado: Iva, bil-bandieri. Bil-bandieri. Eh jiġifieri jekk titla' b'ħamra jiġifieri *air raid*. Ġejjin l-ajruplani. U xi kultant jaslu qabel ma titla' l-bandiera ħamra [jidħaq]. Naturalment insomma. Iva [jidħaq] imbagħad *ir-raider passed* u mbagħad *l-all clear*. Kollha kienu bandieri differenti.

M: Tiftakar meta rajt l-ajruplani tal-għadu? X'ħassejt

Ganado: Heq dika hej [jidħaq] ma tantx ħadt gost naħseb jien hux? Heq, però kelli ċertu eċċitament jien. Haġa ġdida, haġa ġdida. Emm, sakemm konna r-Rabat u konna naraw l-attakki tat-Taljani fuq l-*air-* eh l-*airport* ta' Ħal Luqa, orrajt, ma kinux jinkwetawni xejn. Għax dak 'l bogħod kollu, mir-Rabat għal Ħal Luqa, jien kont narahom minn fuq il-bejt tad-dar tagħna sewwa kont nara l-ajruplani niżlin, jiġifieri b'hal *Junkers Eighty-Eight* [*Junkers Ju 88*], kienu l-*Macchi* [*Macchi C.202 Folgore*] dak iż-żmien kien għadhom orrajt, *nose-diving* fuq l-*airport* nara l-isplużjoni u daqshekk. Ma kinetx tħallini, kienet tħallini indifferenti pjuttost jiġifieri. Apparti naturalmenti illi, xi kultant kienu jolqtu forsi xi batterija u kienu jmutu n-nies forsi, għax ma kinux għadhom bdew jattakkaw il-villaġġi, dak iż-żmien. Eh meta u mbagħad niżlu t-Tedeski u bdew *ir-raids*, jiena niftakar l-ewwel raid tal-*Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] kienet waħda mill-ġranet li l-papà kien niżzilna l-Belt, għax il-papà kien iħobbha l-Belt u kultant żmien jekk jista' jkun darba fil-gimġha, konna ninżlu, kien jikri *taxi* u konna ninżlu

I-Belt. U meta daqqet is-sirena tal-*Illustrious* jien ma kontx naf x'inhu ġej preċiż tlajt fuq il-bejt ta' *Strada San Paolo*, illi jiġi jagħti fuq il-barrakka t'isfel. Ġiex kant- kantuniera bogħod, u bdejt nara t-Tedeski deħlin, l-ajruplani Tedeski deħlin, il-*Junkers Eighty-Seven* kienu jidħlu fil-għoli, allura ma tantx kont nagħti kas tagħhom, u mbagħad meta jaslu fuq l-*Illustrious* jagħmlu *nose dive*. Imma l-*Junkers Eighty-Eight* kienu *losing height* waqt li qed javviċinaw il-port, il-*breakwater*. U sakemm jaslu biswit fejn kont qiegħed jien kien ikun tant tbaxxa l-arjuplan, illi kont nara ras il-pilota jiena. Heq eq mingħajr ma trid haġa tant ġdida teċita ruħek xi ftit hux veru. Il-papà jsejjaħ minn isfel, dak iż-żmien ma kellniex xelter fid-dar, kienu kollha fil-kamra tal-bitħa, ħuti u l-papà. Il-papà jgħajjat 'Albert inżel, Albert inżel' imma jiena kont qed nieħu gost b'dak li, bix-xena li qiegħed nara, mhux b'dak li qiegħed jiġri naturalment. Bix-xena li qiegħed nara. Li kien jinkwetani, illi naturalment, li kien hemm ħafna *anti-aircraft*, *barrage* kbir ta' *anti-aircraft* u kienu joħo- jaqgħu l- *isplinters*, orrajt. *Red hot* madwari. Dawk bdew ibbeżgħuni. Għidt jekk tidħol waħda ġo [jidħaq] rasi addijo. Allura kien hemm kamra tal-ħasil, ħriġt tavla poġġejtha fuq rasi [jidħaq] u bqajt nara hemmhekk jaġifieri, x'inhu jiġri.

M: Int bqajt fl-istess lokal tul il-gwerra kollha?

Ganado: Il-gwerra kollha?

M: Bqajt fl-istess post?

Ganado: Dejjem ir-Rabat, yes. Imma qed ngħidlek il-Belt konna ninżlu regolarment.

M: Imma x'ħassejt meta l-ġenituri qalulek li kellkom titilqu mill-Belt biex tmorru r-Rabat?

Ganado: Emm kienet haġa normali. Għaliex il-familja tiegħi ma kinux iħobbu l-baħar. Allura l-papà fis-sajf villegġjatura kien jagħmilha r-Rabat. U minn dejjem- anke qabel ma twelidt jien, dejjem kellu dar ir-Rabat, villegġjatura. Dak iż-żmien li twelidt jien kien *Saint Augustine's Avenue*, it-triq ta' quddiem Santu Wistin u mbagħad meta twelidt jiena kien *Via Boschetto* quddiem dawk iż-żewġ vilel li hemm *Via Boschetto*, orrajt? Iġifieri kienet haġa normali għalina u *di fatti* aħna konna tlajna r-Rabat- emm le ma konniex għadna tlajna imma il-papà kien diġà qiegħed jipprepara għaliex konna nafu li ġejja l-gwerra. Għaliex kienet haġa komuni jiġifieri, kien qed jgħidha l-gazzetti kollha u dan illi Mussolini kien dieħel fil-gwerra ma' Hitler, orrajt. U konna tlajna r-Rabat allura malli skoppjat il-gwerra, jekk mhux xi ġranet qabe, meta bdew l-internamenti naħseb. Meta bdew l-internamenti kienet haġa ċara li ġejja l-gwerra u konna tlajna r-Rabat jiġifieri, ma qagħadx jistenna sal-aħħar ta' Ġunju u mbagħad kien jinżel għall-qorti meta jkollu xi seduta naturalment, jiġifieri. Iva. Kienet haġa normali. Allura ma ma ħassejt xejn speċjali. Anzi ħadt gost li aħna kellna dar lesta [...] għalina jiġifieri li kienet minn dejjem kont nafha d-dar jien eq, eq, ħalli mbagħad naturalment meta kompliet il-gwerra u bdew jagħmlu il-*billeting*, imbagħad kellna ndaħħlu familja magħna jiġifieri. Aħna konna ngħixu l-fam- il-pjan ta' fuq orrajt, huma kienu jgħixu l-pjan t'isfel u l-kċina kienet komuni.

M: Kif kienet l-atmosfera meta n-nies bdew jitolqu mill-Belt?

Ganado: Emm, il- ħeq, ħeq, ħeq. Ma nistax ngħid preċiż. [Ma jiftihemx] Naf x'jiġifieri ħeq, għaliex aħna qed ngħidlek bqajna ninżlu l-Belt regolarment u konna naraw anke r-Rabat stess u fit-toroq, karrettuni l-aktar, b'għamara tar-refuġjati. Kienu għaddejjin kontinwament dawka malli bdiet il-gwerra jiġifieri però sakemm kien hemm it-Taljani ma tantx kien hemm refuġjati, il-Belt almenu. In-naħa l-oħra ma nafx preċis, imma l-Belt ma kienx hemm refuġjati, għaliex it-Taljani l-aktar li kienu jattakkaw l-*air fields*

jigifieri, il-Belt naħseb jiena xi bomba jew tnejn biss waqgħu. Waqgħet waħda Sant Iermu għandu jkun kienet jekk niftakar sew imma ma kienx hemm dak il-biża' tal-bombi illi inti bilfors trid tillarga mill-Belt u ma tistax tinżel iktar. Jigifieri kienet haġa em, komplejna bir-rutina ta' qabel.

M: Qatt kellkom xi problemi man-nies tar-Rabat waqt il-gwerra?

Ganado: Er man-nies tar-Rabat ma kellna l-ebda problemi, barra ma' familja waħda. Inzerta kien kunjomhom Inġliż għalkemm kienu Maltin, heq, illi meta internaw lil Herbert peress illi kienu jafu għax kienu joqgħodu *Via Boschetto* peress li l-papà tiegħi kien jiġi z-ziju ta' Herbert orrajt, darba minnhom jigifieri kien għaddej u l-mara ta' din il-koppja Inġliża bdiet tinsultah, u qaltli "inti," kien *Acting Chief Justice* eh u qaltli "inti missek qiegħed internat bħan-neputi tiegħek" qaltli. U dak iż-żmien is-segretarju tal-gvern, tal-*Imperial Government*, wieħed minnhom kien Orlinu Briffa de Piro, u l-papà kien talab *interview* miegħu qallu "jien ġejt mhux bħala Robbie Ganado għax dak affari tiegħi." Qallu "Ġejt minħabba l-kariga li qed nokkupa ta' *Acting Chief Justice*, dik il-mara insultatni waqt li għaddej li ma jmurx ikun hemm xi rapport falz, u jiena niġi internat bħal Herbert għax din hekk riedet li jiena niġi internat." Qabez dan Briffa de Piro. Qallu "Sur Imħallef" qallu "m'għandekx biża' li tiġi internat." Qallu "Għaliex kulħadd jaf x'int." Qallu "Però tiftakar il-ġuri ta' l-ispija Bellardinelli" qallu, "kont wieħed mill-imħallfin?." Qallu "Dażgur li niftakru," kien ftit snin qabel il-gwerra dan, qallu "kien hemm *Security Officer* qed jisma' l-każ kollu, u fir-rapport tiegħu, is-*Security Officer* kien kiteb illi "*questions asked by Judge Robert Ganado helped the prosecution with its case.*" Qallu jigifieri, "kulħadd jaf illi inti kont imparzjali bħala mħallef," qallu "ma għandekx biża' li tiġi internat."

M: Kien hemm familji li baqgħu ir-Rabat wara li spiċċat il-gwerra?

Ganado: [Ma jinftehimx]. Baqa' xi ftit bilfors imma gradatament (sic) bdew niżlin il-familji. Ibda minna meta spiccat il-gwerra bdejna naħsbu biex ninżlu. Veru li domna hemmhekk sal-*fifty-eight*, imma l-papà ried isib dar il-Belt. Għax aħna konna mdorrijin dejjem b'dar il-Belt. Id-dar tagħna jiġifieri kienet ġiet *blasted* ta' *Strada San Paolo*, fil-gwerra jiġifieri, u ma konniex nistgħu ngħixu fiha, u l-papà *difatti* kien neħħa l-kirja tagħha ma baqax jikriha u jħallas il-kera, allura ma stajniex immorru fejn konna qabel il-gwerra, u sakemm sibna dar il-Belt u rrangajnieha jiġifieri fuq *Saint Barbara Bastion*, fuq il-port propju jiġifieri, *Saint Barbara Bastion* għaddew is-snin hu. U nżilna fil-*fifty-eight*, ftit wara li miet il-papà. Il-papà miet ir-Rabat. Kieku [jitbissem] kellu jagħżel kien ikun irid li jmut il-Belt għax kien iħobbha ħafna l-Belt.

M: Ғassejtu sens ta' komunità r-Rabat avolja ma kontux f'darkom?

Ganado: Le, le [ma jinftehimx] normali kollox normali, emm, avolja l-internati kienu Sant' Agata wara li tellgħuhom mis-Salvatur, orrajt, erm jiġifieri u aħna konna mmorru narawhom. Ma nistax ngħid illi kien hemm xi ostilità, kien hemm ostilità, kien hemm elementi ostili u ġieli għamlu xi dimostrazzjoni, jiġifieri, ftit nies ta, mhux ħafna jiġifieri, imma l-bqija jiġifieri kien kollox normali u ħajja mingħajr inkwiet.

M: Tiftakar meta bdew jattakkaw il-Ġermaniżi?

Ganado: Ғeħe, appuntu emm, l-attakki tal-*Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] bdew jiġifieri u jiena emm fil-fatt tnejn anke darba, it-tieni attakk jien emm ma nafx għaliex kont mort il-ġnien ta' taħt *Duke of York Avenue* ma nafx hux kontx qed nimxi għal *buses* forsi, ma nafx, u ġie t-tieni attakk tal-*Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*], u anke dak jien rajtu mill-viċin, minn dak il-ġnien, rajthom deħlin imma kollha kienu biex jattakkaw l-*Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] allura ma kien hemm ebda biża', kieku rajthom ġejjin in-naħa tiegħi naturalment

kont nibža', hux veru. Imma kienu ċar li t-*target* kien l-*Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] u daqshekk. Għalhekk waqgħu ħafna djar l-Isla eċċetera, għaliex kienu fil-qalba *Illustrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] kienu fil-qalba ta' dawk il-bliet. Imma l-Belt ma kinux jaqgħu bombi dak iż-żmien.

M: Waqt il-bumbardamenti kontu tfittxu x-xelter?

Ganado: [Jidħaq] Emm. Jiena prattikament qatt ma dħalt go xelter. Meta l-papà għamel, kien hemm żmien illi d-djar, [ilaqlaq] il- il- il-kapijiet tal-familja ġew imħajrin, mhux ordnati, imma ġew imħajrin li kulħadd jagħmel xelter fid-dar tiegħu min jista' jħaffer xelter imħabba illi x-xelters komuni kienu jkunu dejjem imballati, u l-papà kien għamel xelter fil-ġnien jiġifieri. Imma, *again*, meta kienet iddoqq is-sirena jien u ħuti ma konniex ninżlu fix-xelter. Dar- xi darba jew darbtejt forsi kien niżżilna l-papà ġagħalna ninżlu għaliex darba minnhom kienet waqgħet bomba r-Rabat. Ee kienu laqtu n-naħa ta' Santu Wistin u laqtu d-dar ta' Mallia Pulverenti, li kien jagħmel l-inbid quddiem il-*Hotel Verdala* kien orrajt. Jiġifieri *a stick of bombs* kienet waqgħet ir-Rabat, allura speċi ta' bħala prekawzjoni l-papà insista li ngħaddu lejl jew tnejn fix-xelter. Daqshekk. Dina tfakkarni f' incident ta' meta għal bidu ma nżiltx fix-xelter, imbagħad kelli ninżel. Għaliex jiena kont ninżel m'oħti l-Belt u l-papà meta bdew għaddejjin is-snin ma kienx jibqa' jinżel il-Belt dejjem, u jiena kont ninżel minħabba l-istudji, eċċetera, u oħti kienet ikbar minni erba' snin u kienet taħdem it-*Transport Office*, fejn hemm l-għassa tal-pulizija l-Belt, *Strada Vescovo*. U l-papà qallha "Ara li tiegħu ħsieb Albert." Qallha "Thallihx jibqa' barra fl-attakki, niżżlu miegħek fix-xelter." Daqqet is-sirena kienu xi nofsinhar u Hilda, oħti qaltli "Albert ejja magħna." Hi kellha ħabiba magħha taħdem hemm wkoll ħarġu flimkien, hi u Dolly, u jiena ħriġt warajhom. Wasalna fix-xelter ta' bejn iż-żewġ bibien tal-Palazz, għax kien hemm bokka ta' xelter hemmhekk biex ninżlu fil-kantina bħala xelter tal-Palazz, hemmhekk hemm ħafna blat.

Il-kantina m'haffra fil-blat jiġifieri xelter tajjeb. U meta bdejna niżlin it-taraġ jien bdejt ninżel magħhom u wara ftit ergajt lura u mort fil-bokka tax-xelter, u nara *formation of fifteen Junker Eighty-Eight* deħlin lejn il-Belt minn tas-Sliema. Jiġifieri issa mhux aktar bumbardamenti tal-*Illustrious*, bogħod mill-Belt, issa diretti għol-Belt, u jien meta rajthom għall-ewwel affaxxinajt ruħi nara tlett formazjonijiet b' ħamsa quddiem, ħamsa *on the right*, ħamsa *on the left diving towards* Valletta. Ċertu mument rajt l-*under carriage* jinfetaħ u l-bombi ħerġin. Ħaġa ta' twerwir kienet meta rajt il-bombi neżlin propju fid-direzzjoni tiegħi inżilt niġri kemm niflaħ it-taraġ. Bomba minnhom splodiet fuq it-taraġ tal-Palazz, u jien allura bil-*blast* intlejt ġir tal-ħitan u meta u mbagħad inż- wasalt isfel u ratni oħti abjad karti twerwret ħasbet li ġrali xi ħaġa u ħlistha. Meta tlajt fit-triq nara, żewġ suldati tal-*air force* mejtin ġo *Strada Reale* u kerrettun bil-ħmar mejjet. Kieku jien bqajt fil-bokka tax-xelter, kieku addijo. Imma kont aġli biżżejjed dak iż-żmien li ninżel niġri kemm niflaħ u salvajt ħajti.

M: Kif kontu tgħixu hemm isfel fix-xelters?

Ganado: Kif konna ngħixu fix-xelters? Qed ngħidlek jiena xelters ma nafhomx ix-xelters prattikament. Jiġifieri dak li kont nisma'. Ara l-uniku wieħed li kien imur fix-, li kien joħroġ mid-dar u jmur fix-xelter kien iz-ziju li kien jgħix magħna. Daka iva, daka malli ddoqq is-sirena kien jitwerwer jilbes kien malajr, joħroġ jiġri u jiġri għax-xelter, imma aħna qatt ma morna xelter pubbliku. Tista tgħid, qatt.

M: Allura intom xelter privat kellkom?

Ganado: U mbagħad kellna x-xelter privat. Imma wara xi sentejn ta, meta bdew jiħraxu l-attakki Tedeski, jiġifieri fil-*forty-two*, fil-*forty-two*, hux.

M: Fix-xelter privat tagħkom kellkom aċċess għad-dawl u ilma?

Ganado: Emm, ma niftakarx kienx hemm komunikazzjoni elettrika, er imma [jaħseb] le ma naħsibx li kien hemm komunikazzjoni elettrika, lanqas ġod-dar ma kellna k- komunikazzjoni. Kien hemm żmien konna mingħajr dawl, imma kien ikollna x-xemgħa, jiġifieri, kien ikollna x-xemgħa.

M: Taf b' xi każijiet ta min tweled jew welled ġo xelter?

Ganado: Ġieli qrajt xi ħaġa, iva, imma [jisgħol] ma nistax ngħidlek eżatt jiġifieri. Imma qrajt yes ġieli qrajt li kien hemm min tweled ġo xelter. Iwa, u r-Rabat darba minnhom kien hemm koppja għadha tiżżewweġ, u daqqet is-sirena u l-għarus u l-għarusa jiġru kemm jifilħu ħa jmorru fix-xelter, għamlu l-*honeymoon* fix-xelter [jidħaq]. Imsieken.

M: Għat-*toilets* x'kien isir?

Ganado: Heq preċis ma nafx. Heq imma naħseb illi ma tantx saru affarijiet sbieħ, għax in-neċessità neċessità, ma tistax taħrab minnha, u min jinżel fix-xelter u jkun hemm dik il-kwantità ta' nies, eq, mhux kulhadd ikun jista jitle' jekk ikollu bżonn jitle' sa fuq jiġifieri u dana. Imma probabbilment kienu jgħorru nimmaġina xi *pots* magħhom, nimmaġina jiena. Imma qed ngħidlek x'kien jiġri preċis ma nafx.

M: Kif kontu żżommu l-indafa fix-xelter tagħkom?

Ganado: Kif konna?

M: Iżżommu l-indafa fix-xelter tagħkom?

Ganado: Le kien tagħna biss, ma kienx hemm problemi ta' ndafa, u qed ngħidlek ftit vera ftit użajnieh ta, għaliex mhux wisq wara li li tħaffer, u mbagħad bdew jonqsu l-attakki, ir-Rabat kważi qatt ma waqgħu bombi *anyway*, jiġifieri, barra dawk li semmejtlek. Ee

konna bogħod mit-*target areas* u allura ma kienx hemm, bil-kemm konna nużawh ix-xelter. U ftit wara bdew jonqsu t-Tedeski, u mbagħad daħal il-konvoj u bdew jispiċċaw l-attakki mill-ajru

M: Qatt għaddielkom minn moħħkom li x-xelter seta jisfronda waqt xi *air raid*?

Ganado: Emm, ħa ngħidlek, konna nisimgħu, mhux ix-xelter jisfronda imma kien hemm xi każijiet li sirna nafu bihom illi l-bomba daħlet fil bokka tax-xelter u splodiet isfel jew fit-taraġ u mietu xi nies fix-xelter. Iwa. Imma li sfronda xelter ma niftakarx jien, ma niftakarx.

M: Bħala tfal kontu tibzġhu?

Ganado: Ma konniex nibzġhu barra oħti ċertu żmien. Ħadd minna ma kien jibza' ċar u tond għax qed ngħidlek ir-Rabat konna nikkonsidrawh *a safe area*, allura l-mentalità dik hi. Jiena m'iniex fil-gwaj , li qed isofruh in-nies l-oħrajn li jgħixu fejn qed jaqgħu il-bombi. Aħna konna, kellna ċerta paċi r-Rabat, kif kellhom ir-Rabtin kollha, kull min kien jgħix hemmhekk, u ma konniex ninzlu fix-xelter. Qed ngħidlek meta ddoqq is-sirena z-ziju biss kien joħroġ biex imur fix-xelter. Imma darba minnhom oħti ta' qabli, jġigifieri Emma, marru passigġata n-naħa ta' Ta' Qali, għax aħna konna mmorru spiss passigġati. Ir-Rabat ċentru ta' passigġati. Issa mmorru Chadwick Lakes, issa mmorru 'l hemm, issa mmorru 'l hemm. U marru n-naħa ta' Ta' Qali, ġie attakk fuq Ta' Qali, splodiet bomba viċin tagħha u kellha *shell shock*, u minn dikihar bdiet tmur fix-xelter. Imma aħna bqajna ma mmorrux.

M: Issa Albert int semmejt li għamilt żmien fl-armata, kif sibt ruħek bl-uniformi ta' suldat?

Ganado: [Jidħaq] Uniformi ta' suldat. Kienet ħarxa xi ħaġa, konna ngħidulha libsin xkora aħna, konna ngħidulha, speċjalment meta

u mbagħad ġew l-Amerikani għall-invażjoni ta' Sqallija, kollha qomos tal-ħarir [jidħaq]. Imma ma kienx hemm x'tagħmel kien ikollna nilbsu l-uniformi orrajt bil-beret ukoll, tajjeb, hu eq eq eq. Insomma ma kienx hemm x'tagħmel ma konna nieħdu gost xejn bl-uniformi. Konna rridu nqumu. Aħna konna Rikażoli, għax irridu nibdew minn hawn, għaliex kont suldat jien? Jiena ma mortx narwola bħala suldat jiena. Kif ma kif ma marrux sħabi tal-kors tal-liġi li bdejna l-Università fin-*nineteen thirty-nine*, jiġifieri qabel ma bdiet il-gwerra. Fin-*nineteen forty-one* però il-*Conscription Office* dehrilhom li aħna nistgħu inkomplu lis-, il-kors t- t-, il-korsijiet tal-istudju l-istudenti tal-Università, imma hemm bżonn nagħmlu xi *t-training* għal dak li jista' jinqala' għada pitgħada, pereżempju, invażjoni ta' Malta, eċċetera. U hemmhakk allura konna xi sebgħin bejn avukati, tobbja u periti, u ħaduna Rikażoli, żewġ *barrack rooms* forma ta' elle bejniethom jiġifieri, u s-saqaf fuq miftuħ, il-ħajt li jddividihom ma jasalx sas-saqaf, u konna mqassmin f'dawn iż-żewġ *barrack rooms*. Kienu jqajmuna fis-sitta ta' filgħodu u nibdew it-training fis-sebgha ta' filgħodu. *Breakfast* u nibdew xi sebgħa ta' filgħodu. Dejjem bil-lisba ta-suldati allura naturalment hemmhakk [ma jinfteximx] ta' suldati ovvjament, imma tidraha, kollox tidra fid-dinja, sakemm m'hemm xejn iweġġgħak fiżikament jew moralment tidra, allura ma konniex nagħtu kas jiġifieri, ta' bl-uniformi. Speċi saret il-lisba ta' kuljum hux tqum u torqod biha, jiġifieri ma kienx tinkwetani. Qed ngħidlek barra li kienet ordinarja xa ħaġa, ma kienx tinkwetani l-lisba.

M: Apparti Forti Rikażoli fejn kont stazzjonat aktar?

Ganado: Emm, Forti Rikażoli. [...] Aħna għamilna tlett xhur, u mbagħad ġejna *transferred Class W Reserve*, u kienu qalulna kull sitt xhur tridu tmorru xi mkien ħa tkomplu *t-training* ta' suldati u kienu jqassmuna. Xi wħud minna per eżempju Kast- kienu jmorru Kastilja, grupp minna li konna noqgħodu r-Rabat kon-n xi tmienja

jidhirli, kienu ħaduna l-batterija ta' Nadur tar-Rabat li tiġi fuq l-Imgarr, u darb' oħra flok batterija kienu ħaduni Sant' Iermu, jiġifieri. Er er dawk li niftakar li kont mort jiġifieri. Dawk iż-żewġ postijiet.

M: U f'liem riġment kont?

Ganado: *RMA* konna aħna.

M: U x'kien xogħlok fl-*RMA* eżatt?

Ganado: Insomma, kienu jgħallmuna diversi suġġetti militari u matematika naturalment, insomma jiġifieri, trigonometrija, a, a, *military law*, u mbagħad *training* tal-kanuni u kif nisparaw il-*machine guns* jiġifieri, iva. Em, waqt *raid* konna nkunu kienu jpoġġuna ma batterija pereżempju biex naraw is-soldati *in action* jisparaw il-kanuni, e e dak kien it-*training* bejn wieħed u ieħor. Imma ladarba inti ma tkunx għal hemm ma tantx tieħu interess, almenu jiena ma tantx ħadt interess. Però imbagħad darba minnhom sibnieha redikola meta bħala parti mit-*training* poġġew tnejn minna ġo kamra il-lejl kollu ma kanun li ma jisparax, [jidħaq] u qiegħed ġo kamra u tnejn minna għassa lejl kollu miegħu dan il-kanun [jidħaq]. M'hemmx għalfejn ngħidlek, aħna konna noħorġu noqgħodu npaċpċu ma dawn it-tnejn, meta mbagħad isir il-ħin għall-irqad konna mmorru lura fil-*barrack room*. Huma tnejn, wieħed kien jorqod u wieħed joqgħod għassa biex jekk ikun ġej xi ħadd iqajjem lil sieħbu jiġifieri [jidħaq].

M: Waqt il-gwerra kif kont tħares lejn is-soldati Ingliżi?

Ganado: Ma tantx, ma kellniex er konnessjoni aħna ma' soldati Ingliżi. Kellna fizzjali Ingliżi. Rikażoli l- il-Maġġur kien Ingliż, *Major Fleetwood*, il-Kaptani kienu wieħed Ingliż, *Captain Lister* u t-tnejn l-oħra kienu Willie Wirth, Malti u Willie Moore, Malti wkoll

għalkemm kunjomu Inġliż, tal-familja Moore, li għadhom sal-lum jgħixu Malta, jiġifieri. Em dan *Captain* Lister kien daqsxejn antipatiku insomma, mhux wisq ta' jiġifieri. Imma peress li dawk it-tnejn, Willie Wirth kien, jiena u hu konna l-iskola flimkien pereżempju, *Saint Joseph* għand is-sorijiet, meta jiena kelli, meta kelli ħames snin jien, tista' timmaġina allura, ma kienx jilgħabha ta' fizza magħna, għax kien ħabib kważi ma' kulhadd Willie Wirth, jiġifieri m'għandniex xi ngergru, ħeq. Għandna xi ngergru kif kif ġejna trattati malli dħalna, għaliex meta morna biex biex niffirmaw l-uffiċċju tal-*Conscription* quddiem il-Maġġur, quddiem il-Kurunell Bartolo imlejna l-formola kulhadd u qalulna "issa" qalulna "morru Rikażoli minn hawnhekk, jgħidulkom itukhom l-istruzzjonijiet, tmorru d-dar u jgħidulkom meta terġgħu tidhlu". Minn dan kollu ma kien hemm xejn. Meta morna Rikażoli, kulhadd bil-lipsa ta' fuqu qalulna "qabel tlett gimgħat m'intomx sejrin id-dar" u kulhadd kellu jibqa' bil-ħwejjeġ ta' taħt naturalment li kellu fuqu. Dika dika rajnieha redikola, daqsxejn ta' ineffiċjenza bejn dipartiment u ieħor tant illi kien hemm wieħed minna, ħeq, *Ghia*, er er, x'kien kunjomu bħalissa, er *anyway*. U dan qal qal "noħroġ bla *leave* ta" wara xi gimgħa ħmistax, qal "se nibqgħu kalzrati hawn ġew, ma noħroġu xejn? Noħroġu mingħajr *leave*." Tua, kunjomu Tua, orrajt, ija. U għidnielu "kif se noħroġu?". Qalilna "ara ħamsa noħroġu, min irid jiġi miegħi. Jiena rajt post li jagħti għad-*ditch*, illi l-ħajt kollu mikul u miegħu nistgħu niddendlu, tajjeb". Ija, u jiena kont wieħed minnhom, l-izgħar naturalment ija. U dan, wasalna fuq is-sur xħettna l-*greatcoats* kollha fid-*ditch*, biex jekk naqaw almenu il-*greatcoats would break our fall*, orrajt. U dan niżel l-ewwel wieħed. Hemm il-kuraġġ. Il-kuraġġ ta' min niżel l-ewwel, għax dak għadu ma jafx x'se jsib. Seta' ma kienx biżżejjed għaref li jara li jista' jinżel, imma rnexxielu jinżel. La darba niżel hu u mbagħad *no problem*, għax pereżempju meta wasalt biex ninżel jien, hu jidderiġi. "Albert" pereżempju, "*left foot* niżzilha pass, hemm ħofra daħħal sieqek hemm, itlaq it-tali id" u ftit ftit ftit inżilna kollha fid-*ditch*. Dana kienu xi sebgħa ta' filgħaxija, għax fis-sitta

konna nieqfu training aħna, u joħduna għaċ-ċena. U mxejna sar-Rabat. Konna imxejna lura u mbağħad biex immorru lura Rikażoli, konna ħadna dgħajsa mill-Belt għan-naħa l-oħra, għal taħt Rikażoli. Il-problema kienet issa kif se nerġgħu nidħlu. Għax ħriġna ħriġna u ħadd ma nnota li ħriġna. Kif se nerġgħu nidħlu. *Major Fleetwood* kuljum kien imur jinżel il-Kalkara u dejjem kien jittla' jkanta, *happy* u daqsxejn xurban. U aħna allura nafu hekk, konna hemm xi nofsillejl nieqes kwart, tajjeb, mistoħbijin in-naħa tal-bieb tar-Rikażoli, moħbijin u nisimgħuh tiela, ikanta. *Ħarġu il-guards*, iż-żewġ suldati tal-*guard* bħas-soltu, marru jgħinuh u ġarrewh fil-kamra tiegħu. Malli dawn telqu ħa jgħorruh fil-kamra tiegħu, dħalna go r-Rikażoli, u ħriġna u dħalna mingħajr inkwiet ta' xejn [jidħaq]. U l-papà moħħu mistrieħ li jiena qiegħed hemm *safe*. Kien jibza' għalija x'waħda din il-papà. Kont l-uniku tifel, allura, u t-tradizzjoni dak iż-żmien, taf kif kienet ġeneralment, it-tfal isegwu l-passi tal-missier, allura dana għalih, missieru kien avukat, jien- hu kien avukat, u l-idea tiegħu kienet li jiena l-uniku tifel insir avukat, u *difatti* kont bdejt il-kors tal-liġi diġà meta ħaduna suldati. Mela.

M: Rajt suldati ta' pajjiżi oħra waqt il-gwerra?

Ganado: Iva, iva, iva. Meta saret l-invażjoni ta' Sqallija hawnhekk il-bombi kienu kważi waqfu kompletament tista tgħid, u kienet ġiet, kienu ġew l-Amerikani, u jiena niftakar l-Imsida, għax it-tfajla li kont ninnamra magħha meta spiċċat il-gwerra niżlu mir-Rabat l-Imsida fid-dar tagħhom. Waħda mill-familji li mill-ewwel niżlu għax dawn kellhom id-dar tagħhom l-Imsida, ija, u jien niftakar kont immur għandha, u nara diversi suldati Amerikani hemmhokka jippassiġġaw, jidħlu fil-ħwienet tax-xorb, insomma jixtru eċċetera, eċċetera, eċċetera. U hemm kont nara l-eleganza ta' dawn il-marelli suldati Amerikani. Kont ngħid x'differenza minn li kienu jlibbsu lilna. Mela. Imma fuq din hemm inċident inċident interessanti, li jolqot iċ-censura tal-gwerra. Meta tkun ċensur, xi

kultant faċli, tajjeb, għax jekk pereżempju għandek ittra ta' xi ħadd ħierġa minn Malta biex tmur barra minn Malta, il-bieraħ kien hawn *raid* per eżempju u laqtu Sant' Iermu, ovvja neħħieha, orrajt. Ikun hemm każijiet ċarissimi. Imma ċ-ċensur irid joqgħod b' seba' għajnejn għal kollox. Għaliex? Herbert Ganado kien l-Uganda, u qed ngħidlek fl-*Leħen Is-Sewwa* kien jipprevedi x'se jiġri anke fil-gwerra ta' Spanja, u dik kienet waħda mill-affarijiet probabbilment li ħadmet kontra tiegħu, għax kienu probabbilment jaħsbu li dana xi spjun, xi spija. Imma kien dejjem jipprevedi, kif ippreveda tal-Abbissinja. U dan jirċievi ittra mingħand il-mara tiegħu. Qallhom "Se ssir l-invażjoni ta' Sqallija." "U ajma Herbert kemm int kiesaħ. Kif taf mill-Uganda li sa ssir l-invażjoni ta' Sqallija?." Qallhom "Issa taraw minn hawn u ffit ieħor." *Sure enough* saret. Taf għaliex? Għaliex fl-ittra tagħha, Alda, il-mara ta' Herbert, it-tfal kienu għadhom zgħar, Tonio u Vanni, Vanni li miet dan l-aħħar li biddlu l-katavru tiegħu b'kunbinazjoni Vanni, iva, tfal zgħar. Dina kitbitlu, qaltlu "morna l-quddies bħas-soltu u t-tfal baqgħu mistagħġbin illi raw żewġ suldati suwed jisimgħu quddies bħalna." Herbert qal "suwed Maltin mħumiex, Ingliżi mħumiex, mela hemm l-Amerikani. Jekk hemm l-Amerikani għalfejn? Biex tinvadi Sqallija" [jidħaq]. Liċ-censur ħarbitlu din. Dawn stej- aneddoti tal-gwerra insomma [jidħaq]. Għax kollox jolqtu, tistagħġeb ta, kif aneddoti jolqtu diversi affarijiet.

M: Li tara lis-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni anka r-Rabat?

Ganado: Anke r-Rabat xiex?

M: Li tara lis-suldati kienet xi ħaġa komuni? Anka kont tarahom?

Ganado: Le, le, le, le, le, le. Ħa nara fil-*forty-one* konna għadna r-Rabat, le r-Rabat ma kinux jersqu 'l hemm is-suldati. *No*. Fejn hemm il-baħar kienu jkunu ghax kienu jiġu *on seacraft*. Bħall-lmsida pereżempju, kienet tkun mimlija bihom għax kienu jidhlu *seacrafts*

Amerikani hemmhekk, u hemm kont narahom jiena fejn kienet tghix in-namrata tiegħi.

M: F'alla xi impatt fuqek il-militar?

Ganado: Xi impatt fuqi? Le, le. Em [...] jiena kont minn dejjem daqsxejn indixxiplinat, kont ftit ribelli dejjem, anke meta kont il-Liċeo jġigifieri. Em, id-dixxiplina allura ma tantx kont inħobbha wisq, imma naf li dina haġa li ha tispicċa, tajjeb, u allura ma kontx nagħti kas, insomma. Le, le, ma ħalliet l-ebda impatt fuqi. *No absolutely.*

M: U kif għazilt li titlaq mill-armata? Kif għazilt li titlaq mill-armata?

Ganado: Le mhux jien għazilt. Meta għalqu tlett xhur, li daħħluna għal tlett xhur, kienu qalulna “tidħlu f'Ottubru tispicċaw f'Diċembru biex tkomplu l-istudju f'Jannar”. Allura f'Diċembru *they* transferewna *Class W Reserve* sejħulha u ħriġna minn suldati, però, konna nilbsu l-uniformi. Di' pereżempju ħudha meta kont mort in-Nadur pereżempju dina, dar-ritratt.

M: Waqt il-gwerra kien hawn min bata l-guħ?

Ganado: E, guħ iva. Guħ anke jien batejt [jidhaq]. Kulhadd bata l-guħ. Insomma meta ngħid kulhadd hawn Malta, għax Għawdex ma batewx guħ Għawdex. L-Għawdxin kellhom ikel kemm iridu. Għaliex Għawdex kienet gżira agrikola, għelieqi, bdiewa, gabillotti u kellhom il-ġid t'Alla. *Difatti* kienu jġibu l-affarijiet minn Għawdex għal hawn Malta. Id-dqiq pereżempju ġibuh b'ordni ta' ta' em tal-Isqof, tal-Gvern, megħjun minn Monsinjur Gonzi, biex jġi d-dqiq minn Għawdex, għax hawn Malta ma kienx hawn, għax hawn Malta naturalment kien hawn il-*black market*. Heq, min kellu kien jaħbi, jew inkella jbigħ bil-*black market* jġigifieri, u allura hawn Malta guħ kien hawn kemm trid. Imma, heq, heq heq, u mbagħad il-gvern għamel il-*Victory Kitchen* u spicċajna għal bidu konna

nieklu l-għaġin, tajjeb jew ħazin *pasta*, imma meta wasalna biex nieklu il-laħam tal-mogħoż [jidħaq] kien jiddisgustak, imma trid tieklu, iżaq iżaqżaq taħt sninek, dan il-marelli laħam. Imma biex tgħix trid tieklu bilfors, tajjeb jew ħazin [jidħaq]. U mbagħad jerġa' aħna kellna żvantaġġ kbir, bħala familja, għaliex filwaqt illi familji tal-ħbieb tiegħi kienu jixtru bil-*black market* għax min kellu biex jixtri kien jixtri, flus dak iż-żmien ma kont tonfoq f'xejn assolutament, orrajt, allura, *black market* biex tgħajjex il-familja diċentament, ija. Imma peress li l-papà tiegħi r-Rabat jafuh minn dejjem l-ewwel bħala maġistrat, u mbagħad bħala imħallef, meta t-tfal tiegħu kienu jmorru jaraw bniedem għandux xi ħaġa għal bejgħ, jibzgu ibigħu, "għax dan familja tal-maġistrat jew imħallef. Ma tarax aħniex ħa nbighulu bil-*black market*." Heq. Allura aħna *again* ma kellniex ċans li nakkwistaw affarijiet barra dak li hu normali, u *difatti* jiena kont għolobt, kont għolobt sew eh. Meta spicċat il-gwerra kont vera magħlub jiena.

M: Għadek kif semmejt il-*Victory Kitchens*. Dawn x'kienu eżatt?

Ganado: Dawna kienu postijiet illi l-gvern kien stabilixxa f' kull belt u raħal ta' Malta, kien jagħmlu forn, jagħmlu l-kaldaruni, impjega n-nies, tajjeb, biex isajru l-ikel, jagħtu l-kupuni, u tmur bil-kupun u jtuk il-porzjon tiegħek. Il-ħobż bil-kupuni kien, l-ilbies ukoll kien bil-kupuni, l-ilbies. Ma kontx tista' tixtri lbies kif trid inti ta, kien bil-kupuni. Kollox bil-kupuni – ħaġa tajba għax kulħadd xorta. Imma mbagħad min għandu, fejn naf, min għandu pereżempju, xi ħadd fl-*army*, għax meta konna suldati hemmhekk, konna nieħdu r-ruħ hemmhekk, fil-batterija, Sant' Iermu, għax hemmhekk l-ikel kien normali, għaliex is-serv- it-truppi kollha kellhom ikel dejjem, ma rridx ngħid kemm iridu imma kellhom ikel normali s-suldati. Allura min ikollu da truf heq heq heq. Pereżempju, membri tal-familja tiegħi, anzi mill-familja tal-mara per eżempju orrajt, fejn jiena dejjem bil-kwart u nofs ħobż magħmul mill-qamħirrun, illi trid tieklu bilfors imma, u dejjem u tipprova tara jekk hemmx xi biċċa extra,

orrajt, dan ir-raġel tal-familja tal-mara, kien jgħix ir-Rabat bieb ma bieb ma' forn, allura hemmhekk kien jiekol il-ħobż abjad. [Jidħaq] Jigħifieri din hija kwistjoni tigri fil-ħajja ta' kuljum. Min ikollu l-okkażjonijiet imur aħjar minn ħaddieħor, u anke fil-gwerra allura, kien hemm dawn l-okkażjonijiet, imma l-minoranza li kien ikollhom okkażjoni, il-maġoranza kienu bħalna hux li batew il-ġuħ.

M: U dawn il-kçejjien x' tip ta' ikel kienu joffru?

Ganado: Er dan li qed ngħidlek, fil-bidu għaġin orrajt, u mbaġhad, e e e *goat's meat*, għax ara spicċa anke l-ħalib, peress li qatlu l-mogħoż kollha, l-ewwelnett ma kellhomx biex *jiffidjaw* [sic.], għax ċirku vizzjuż. Il-mogħoż ma kellhomx biex jagħlufhom il-gabillotti, ma kellhomx għalf xi jtuhom, għaliex spicċa l-għalf, u ma ġie xejn minn barra, allura dawna ma komplewx jagħmlu ħalib, allura spicċaw qatluhom kollha l-mogħoż u lilhom konna nieklu aħna mill-*Victory Kitchen*. Tajjeb jew ħazin minnu trid tiekol daka biex tgħix, heq.

M: U kontu tkunu sodisfatti b' ikel li kienu joffru?

Ganado: [Jidħaq] Ovvjament li le, ovvjament li le. Konna nixtiequ li dejjem nistennew żminijiet aħjar, għalhekk meta daħal il-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija kulħadd ħa r-ruħ għaliex daħlu erba', ħames vapuri kollha *supplies*, u allura nafu illi issa *on the way to recovery*, kif fil-fatt ġara. Inti tista' timmaġina pereżempju tant kien hawn skarzezza ta' ikel, illi l-Gvernatur kien għamel *Christmas Message*, u kulħadd stenna xi ħaġa speċjali f' dan il-*Christmas Message*. Taf x' kien il-messaġġ? Li se jagħtu razzjon extra ta' xemgħa biex ikollok biex tixgħel id-dawl tax-xemgħa u razzjon extra ta' fażola. Dak kien il-*Christmas Message*, xemgħa u fażola [jidħaq] tista' timmaġina. Dana jekk niftakar sew *Christmas* tal-*forty-two*.

M: Kien hemm ħafna jużaw l-*black market*, x' tgħidilna fuq dan?

Ganado: X' kien il-*black market*? Anke laħam, bajd. Bajda kienet xi *two shillings six pence* ta mħiex ċajta dak iż-żmien, *two and six* kienu flus dak iż-żmien, biex tixtri bajda bil-*black market* kienet, kont trid xi *two and six* u l-laħam iktar u iktar *difatti* kien ikun hemm ħafna kawżi l-Qorti għax kienu jaqbd u nies li kienu qed ibigħu bil-*black market* tajjeb. Allura maġistrat jġifieri iġibulu salt kawżi quddiemu u kollha l-istess, illi biegh laħam bil-*black market* pereżempju “ħames liri u konfiska, ħames liri u konfiska, ħames liri u konfiska,” għax tant saret ħaġa ordinarja illi l-maġistrat kien dejjem iwaħħal l-istess multa u naturalment jikkonfiskaw l-oġġett. Issa l-oġġett x'kien isir minnu ma naħsibx li kien jġi distrutt min jaf fejn kien jispiċċa [jidħaq].

M: Kontu tafu b' xi ħadd li kien negozjant tal-*black market*?

Ganado: Le kont zgħir wisq biex inkun naf in-nies, le, le, le le le le

M: U x' tip ta' ikel u oġġetti kienu jinġiebu bil-*black market*?

Ganado: Eq, eq, bil-*black market* kont issib kollox prattikament ee. Qed ngħidlek laħam kont issib, bajd kont issib, frott kont issib, em, ħeq ħeq ħeq imma *the basics* ta jġifieri għax affarijiet oħra, affarijiet *tinned* ma kinux jeżistu pereżempju jekk m' għandekx kif qed ngħidlek, xi ħadd fl-*army* pereżempju u jgħaddilek xi landa *corned beef* pereżempju, ħeq, imma *on the black market*, anke l-ikel *on the black market* kien limitat ħafna eh.

M: Qatt smajt b' xi nies li kienu jisirqu minn bini imwaqqa' ?

Ganado: *Looting*, kien hemm *looting* ija, u żgur li kien hemm *looting*. Ibda mid-dar tagħna ta' *Strada San Paolo* fejn konna noqgħodu. Meta id-dar ġiet *blasted* pereżempju aħna konna nżilna xi gimgħa ħmistax wara, insibu li serqu l-grad a u serqu l-pumi tar-ram,

[jidħaq], ħeq għax il-bieb ta' barra infetaħ bil-blast allura setgħu jiżvitaw il-pumi minn ġewwa, kull pum daqshekk ta.

M: Daqs pied qed tgħid?

Ganado: Tal- x'jismu hawn, bl-iskultura, u żgur, kien isir *looting*, *yes*, *yes*, *yes*.

M: U qatt smajt jekk kienx ikun hemm *looting* min-nies tal-awtorità *ARP* u *Demolition Squad*?

Ganado: U insomma, naf b'każ iżolat imma ma nixtieqx insemnih.

M: Kontu tafu x'kien qed jiġri barra minn Malta?

Ganado: Iżgur li konna nafu, *yes*, għaliex ir-*Rediffusion* kien jagħti notizzji minn filgħodu sa fiilgħaxija, orrajt. Eh, meta ma kienx hawn elettriku naturalment *Rediffusion* biss konna nisimgħu, jiġifieri, u dana dam diversi xhur bla dawl. Meta u mbagħad reġa ġie d-dawl ergajna bdejna nisimgħu r-*radio*, *BBC*, Taljan, *whatever*.

M: Kif kontu tkunu tafu li dieħel xi konvoj? Kif kontu tkunu tafu li dieħel xi konvoj?

Ganado: Emm, il-kelma kienet timxi, [jidħaq] il-kelma kienet timxi. Anke biex l-awtoritajiet iserrħu moħħ in-nies, u jgħollu l-moral, kull meta jkun ġej xi konvoj mill-ewwel kienet timxi l-kelma u meta telqu tnejn, wieħed minn *Gibilterra* u l-ieħor mill-Lixandra konna nafu qabel, u konna nafu anke minn notizzji, għaliex it-Tedeski u t-Taljani, it-Taljani bl-*Aero Suluranti* u t-Tedeski bid-*Dark Boers* kienu jattakawhom kontinwament il-vapuri ġejjin miż-żewġ naħat, u dana r-*Rediffusion* kien jgħidu, kif kien jgħid il-*BBC* hux, ħeq.

M: Qatt ħassejt il-biża' li l-għadu seta' jinvadi?

Ganado: Emm, li l-għadu se jinvasi [...] [jaħseb]. Kien hawn biża' li l-għadu sa jinvasi. Yes, kien hawn biża', speċjalment meta Rommel beda jikkonkwista l-Libja kollha u meta Malta kienu qegħdin jегħrqu l-vapuri li kienu jgħaddu mill-Italja għal-Libja. Malta kienet il-baži illi kienu jattakkaw dawka l-vapuri. *Difatti* kien minħabba f'hekk illi Rommel kienu naqsulu s-*supplies*, jgħifieri aħna konna nafu allura, ma kontx trid wisq intelligenza biex tirrealizza x' għandhom f'moħħhom. Kieku wasal Rommel Lixandra, u kien hemm anke l-invażjoni ta' Kreta quddiem għajnejna, illi kienu llandjaw bil-*parachutes* Kreta u ħaduha f'kemm ili ngħidlek. Allura aħna konna bil-biża' li jinżlu hawn Malta bil-*parachutes* u dawka kienu jkunu Tedeski, mhux Taljani u Tedeski tibża' minnhom daqsxejn hux trid. Heq.

M: Kif kontu tinħaslu? L-ilma kien skars waqt il-gwerra?

Ganado: L-ilma le. Ilma ilma qatt ma naf li kien skars le qatt *no*. Dejjem kellna ilma anke biex ninħaslu jgħifieri kellna ilma normali. Yes. L-unika ħaġa li kellna sħiħa bħal qabel il-gwerra. Tista tgħid, l-unika ħaġa.

M: F' każ ta' mard x'kont tagħmlu?

Ganado: F' każ ta' mard? Emm le, kemm tri-, tobbha kemm trid ir-Rabat. Pereżempju, apparti l-isptarijiet, ir-Rabat kien hemm Santu Spirtu, orrajt, kien hemm l-isptar tal-lmtarfa, orrajt. Imma tobbha u mbagħad ir-Rabat, daqskemm kien hemm tobbha refuġjati, eqq, ma kienx hemm problemi ta' saħ- ta' saħħa, ta' tobbha jgħifieri, eqq. Sptarijiet emm kienu ġew improvżati xi sptarijiet f'xi postijiet ukoll, għaliex naħseb tal-Furjana, fejn kien hemm l-isptar ċivili daka naħseb ma kienx jiffunzjona minħabba l-bombi, allura kellhom jagħmlu sptarijiet f'diversi postijiet oħra, bħal emergenza.

M: Minn fejn kontu ssibu tobbha u medicina?

Ganado: Emm mediċini dak li ssib tixtri hu. Insomma ħa ngħidlek dak iż-żmien dak iż-żmien il-mediċini kienu limitati għal ċertu mard biss. L-*antibiotics* ma kinux jeżistu eq, allura inti sempliċement jekk għandek riħ qed tixtri xi ħaġa biex suppost jgħaddilek ir-riħ hux. Ma kienx hemm xi mediċini speċjali, jien m'iniex tabib ta jġifieri, imma ma naħsibx illi kien hemm xi mediċini partikolari dak iż-żmien għax jien niftakar ġieli kelli d-deni pereżempju u kien jġi jarani t-tabib, mhux deni għoli kollox sew eq, eq, oqgħod irtirat, oqgħod fis-sodda sakemm jgħaddilek hu, eq ma kienx hemm x'tagħmel. Eq, anke jekk għandek riħ, jew xi bronkite, jew xi plewrite ma kienx hemm x'tagħmel. Heq.

M: Kien hemm xi mard relatat ma ħmieġ?

Ganado: Mhux mal-ħmieġ, imma konna nafu pereżempju li hemm l-*iscabies* min- nuqqas ta' *vegetables* hux veru jidhirli, jidhirli nuqqas ta' ħaxix. Dawka jġibu l-*iscabies*, kien hemm każijiet ta' *scabies* yes, imma ħmieġ per se, naħseb jiena li bħala razza konna ndaf pjuttost. Speċjalment ir-Rabat kien dejjem post minn dejjem nadif eh ir-Rabat. Ir-Rabat qatt ma kont tara ħmieġ ta. Post nadif kien, ċerti villaġġi oħrajn ma nistax ngħid għax ma kontx naf bihom.

M: U għall-ħwejjeġ kellkom biżżejjed jew ġieli kellek taqsam ma' ħutek?

Ganado: X' inhuwa?

M: Għall-ħwejjeġ kellek biżżejjed?

Ganado: Le bil-kupuni qed ngħidlek, bil-kupun, bil-kupun. Bħalissa nipprova niftakar x'kienu jtuna. Imma insomma ilbies ta' fuq jew ilbies ta' taħt. Bil-kupuni imma. Għaddi b'li għandek. Il-mentalità dik kienet, m'hemmx għalfejn ordnijiet. Int għandek daqshekk,

ħadd ma jista' jtik iktar minn li għandek għaddi b'li għandek, ħeq m'hemmx x'tagħmel. Emergenza hu. Żmien ta' emergenza kbira, ħeq li ma tistax timmaginaha. Ħeq.

M: Illum jgħaddilek minn moħħok li stajt tlift lil ġenituri tiegħek?

Ganado: X' inhija?

M: Illum jgħaddilek minn moħħok li stajt tlift lil ġenituri tiegħek?

Ganado: Fil-gwerra? Le, jiena dejjem ottimista kont. U peress li konna ngħixu r-Rabat aħna jiġifieri qatt ma kelli biża' illi xi ħadd se jmut. Jiena r-Rabat pereżempju kont ngħaddih fuq il-bejt nara d-*dogfights* bejn il-*Messerschmitts* u l-*Spitfires* jew l-*Hurricanes*. Fuq il-bejt ir-Rabat, kont narahom fuq Ta' Qali, u l-bumbardamenti ma kinux jersqu 'l hemm. Il-bombi kienu jkunu fuq Ta' Qali fuq il-er er er Ħal Far, lejn Ħal Luqa eċċetera bogħod minna. Qed ngħidlek ir-Rabat b'cikka li xi darba jew darbtejn waqgħu il-bombi. U *difatti* xi ħadd pereżempju kien qal daka kapaċi kien xi ajruplan illi laqtuh orrajt u u u waqgħulu l-bombi, jiġifieri ma kinetx, r-Rabat qatt ma kienet, sa fejn naf jien u nista' ngħidu b' ċerta ċertezza qatt ma kien *target* ir-Rabat matul il-gwerra kollha, kif ma kinux it-*three villages*. Dawk l-istess Ħal Balzan, Ħal Lija u, orrajt l-istess it-*three villages*, ma kinux *target area*, forsi taqa' xi bomba waqt li qed jibbumbardjaw Ta' Qali pereżempju hemmhekk orrajt Ħ' Attard, Ħal Lija u Ħal Balzan forsi imma *they were safe areas*, Birkirkara *was a safe area*. Is-*safe areas*, l-*unsafe areas* kienu fejn hemm *targets* militari, speċjalment meta niżlu t-Tedeski, għax it-Tedeski biex iġagħlu lil Malta ċċedi, u mbagħad ma baqgħux jattakkaw it-*targets* militari għall-ewwel iva riedu jiddistruġġu d-difiża ta' Malta imma meta raw illi Malta sa tkompli tirreżisti u mbagħad daru kontra ċ-ċivili, u għalhekk jiena dawk l-ajruplani qed jattakkaw il-Belt. Il-Belt per se m'hijjex *target* militari Sant' Iermu iva. Imma ma kinux, l-attakk ma kienx fuq Sant' Iermu,

kienu fuq il-bini tal-Belt, allura hemmhekk inta ma tistax tkun *safe* qatt, u l-biża' hemm hu. Imma qed ngħidlek billi aħna konna qed ngħixu fis-*safe area*, il-mamà qatt ma niżlet mir-Rabat eh, qatt qas darba [jidħaq] imma l-papà qed ngħidlek meta jis- jis- jista' kien jinżel il-Belt. Jien niftakar darba minnhom, erm, għax kien niżzilni miegħu jgħifieri lili biex ma jinżilx waħdu wara li l-Belt għiet distrutta jgħifieri fin-*nineteen forty-two* wara dawn l-attakki li qed insemmi ma kontx tgħaddi mit-toroq, kollha munzelli ta' af- djar imwaqqgħin. Ikel xejn. Fhanut wieħed biss miftuħ hdejn is-suq u jien għidt ħa mmur nieħu kafè, x' kafè kafè trab [jidħaq] f'ħalqek mhux kafè. Imma u mbagħad taf x'irnexxieli nixtri, fil-bieb ta' Putirjal kien hemm wieħed ibiġħ il-ħarrub. Lè-èikkulata, il-karamelli tal-ħarrub. Dak iż-żmien mhux karamelli, il-ħarrub, il-ħarrub stess, u kont niekol il-ħarrub, dak irnexxieli nieħu. Kafè kelli nħallih hemm, qed ngħidlek trab f'ħalqek, mhux kafè, orrajt, imma mbagħad sibt il-ħarrub fil-bieb ta' Putirjal, xejn iktar, il-Belt magħluqa, ħwienet kollha magħluqin, dižastru. Imma niringrazzja 'l Alla illi kollox għadda b'wiċċ il-gid, komplejt ħajti qisu ma għara xejn u mbagħad ħadt il-professjoni u hawn jien illum, niringrazzja 'l Alla li tani din is-saħħa.

M: X'kont tħoss rigward it-Taljani u l-Ġermaniżi?

Ganado: Heq kont inħoss li huma *nemici* tagħna hu għax qegħdin fil-gwerra kontra tagħna, naturali heq. Imma, jaħasra l-Italja, id-dispjaċir kbir kien l-Italja, għaliex Malta dejjem kienet kultura Taljana, kellha kultura Taljana, konna niffurmaw parti mill-Italja, orrajt. *Difatti*, meta għie Napuljun ir-re ta' Malta kien ir-re ta' Sqallija, il-*Re delle Due Sicilie*, kienu jgħidulu dak iż-żmien, Sqallija u Napli, orrajt. U baqgħu dejjem ħbieb mal-Ingilterra. Anke l-ewwel gwerra mondjali kienu flimkien, kienu min-naħa tal-Ingliżi t-Taljani ma kinux mat-Tedeski, u mbagħad Sir Anthony Eden għamel dawk il-marelli sanzjonijiet fil-*League of Nations*, u kieku ma kinux dawk, u kieku l-Italja baqgħet ħabiba mal-Ingilterra, kieku aħna ma

soffrejnieh il-gwerra għax it-Tedeski kienu jkunu 'l bogħod wisq kieku biex jibbumbardjaw Malta. Imma ġara li ġara heq Mussolini ma kellux fejn idur, għamel patt ma' Hitler u dar ma' Hitler u għamel gwerra ma' Hitler. Fhaseb naturalment li l-gwerra sa tispiċċa f'kemm ilni ngħidlek meta ċediet Franza tajjeb, jgħidlek mela allura, għax ma kellux biex jiġġieled Mussolini, dan la kellu armata la kellu, la kellu kanuni u ma kellu xejn biex jiġġieled jiġifieri, bil-bajjonetti biss [jidhaq] ija, imma f'aseb li l-gwerra se tispiċċa malajr għax Franza ċediet u daħal fil-gwerra ma' Hitler u fallielu bl-ikrah, fallielu bl-ikrah, imma il-vittimi konna aħna hu għax it-Tedeski niżlu l-Italja u Sqallija u sofrejna li sofrejna.

M: Qatt rajthom priġunieri tal-gwerra?

Ganado: Qatt rajt?

M: Priġunieri tal-gwerra?

Ganado: Emm, *no, no*. Le qatt ma rajt priġunieri. Konna nafu illi illi emm l-isptar tal-Imtarfa kienu rikoveraw dawk li ġew bil-*mass*, bit-*torpedo boats*. Dawka kienu dawk li salvaw mill-baħar, dawka kienu l-Imtarfa u kien hemm suldat li kien l-Imtarfa li kien ħabib tagħna, kien jiltaqa' magħna fuq is-Saqqajja, orrajt illi kien jgħidilna, kien jgħidilna pereżempju t-tali t-tali fizza l-Taljan qalli hekk hekk u hekk wieħed minn dawk illi nqabdu, imma l-bqija qatt ma rajthom personalment, qatt ma mort l-Imtarfa jiġifieri.

M: Fejn kont meta smajt li l-Italja ċediet?

Ganado: Fejn kont [jaħseb] eżatt ma niftakarx, imma kif qed ngħidlek nisma' r-*Rediffusion* kontinwament u smajt in-notizzja li l-Italja ċediet. Konna nafu li ġej xi armistizju, għaliex waqa' Mussolini, arrestah ir-re, poġġew il-Badoglio, orrajt minfloku. Badoglio mal-Ingilterra kien ħabib ukoll jiġifieri Badoglio, kif kienu ħafna Taljani,

ija, erm, insomma rajna l-invażjoni tal-Italja, ta' Sqallija, tal-Italja, Musso- it-Tedeski tilgħin 'l fuq jirtiraw u ċedijiet l-Italja, jiġifieri kienet haġa haġa li nafu li ġejja, ma kienx hemm għalfejn tkun Herbert Ganado dak iż-żmien biex tkun taf li l-Italja se ċedi [jidhaq].

M: Meta spiċċat il-gwerra, kif irritornajtu għal haġja normali?

Ganado: Eq, eq, ftit ftit, ftit ftit għaliex dana mhux *Pandora's Box* tiftaħ il-bieb, il-kaxxa u joħroġ kolloxx. L-affarijiet bdew ġejjin bil-mod il-mod għax il-gwerra kienet għadha sejra jiġifieri. Għalkemm l-Italja ċediet il-gwerra kienet għadha sejra, allura l- *is-supplies* ma setgħux jiġu fil-kwantità. Kienu jiġu *safely*, orrajt, ma kienx hemm problemi tal-baħar li jegħrqu vapuri eċċetera, imma l-alleati riedu jkomplu l-gwerra kontra l-Ġermanja u jirbħuha, jiġifieri. U mbagħad kien hemm il-Ġappun ukoll kien għad għadu fil-gwerra sakemm ġiet il-bomba atomika. Imma meta spiċċat il-gwerra kompletament, u mbagħad dejjem ġimgħa aħjar mill-oħra, xahar aħjar mill-ieħor, sakemm lanqas tinduna u mbagħad tiritorna għan-normalità. Il-bniedem, il-bniedem dejjem għandu speranza, il-bniedem dejjem jixtieq il-ġid u jħares lejn il-futur b'wiċċu minn quddiem allura qed ngħidlek lanqas indunajna mbagħad kważi kważi li sirna normali.

M: Tiftakar xi episodju li baqa' stampat f' moħħok minn żmien il-gwerra?

Ganado: [Jaħseb][...] L-aktar wieħed li baqa' stampat f'moħħi, dawk il-ħmistax il-*Junkers* [jidhaq] ġejjin lejja l-iktar li baqa' stampat f'moħħi. Emm, eq eq insomma ma naħsibx li kien hemm xi incident partkolari, l-attakki tal-*Illusrious* [*HMS Illustrious*] ukoll baqgħu stampati f'moħħi għadni nara lili nnifsi fuq il-bejt b'dik l-injama fuq rasi minħabba minħabba l-*isplinters* tal-bombi. Heq

mela, speċjalment tal-*anti-aircraft*, le le dak dak li baqa' stampat f'moħħi. Dak l-attakk ta' fuq il-Belt.

M: Albert, grazzi ħafna ta' ħinek.