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Institute of
Social Studies

Worker Cooperatives with Particular Reference to Malta: An Educationist's Theory and Practice

Godfrey Baldacchino

Journal Paper No. 107

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January 1990
Institute of Social Studies

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The Hague, 1990

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CIP-GEGEVENS KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG

Baldacchino, Godfrey

Worker cooperatives with particular reference to Malta:
an educationist's theory and practice/Godfrey Baldacchino. - The Hague;
Institute of Social Studies. - (Occasional papers / Institute of Social Studies.
ISSN-0920-8615; no. 107)

Met bibliogr.

ISBN 90-6490-033-7

SISO 356 UDC 334.7.01 (458.2)

Trefw.: coöperaties; Malta

Printed in The Netherlands

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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STAMP: 43465

DATUM: 6-10-94

CLASS: 331.152 (458.2)

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FOREWORD

This study first saw the light of day as a research paper submitted in partial fulfilment for a Master's Degree in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague in 1986. I would like to thank various individuals for assisting and encouraging me to complete the task at hand.

To my supervisor, Freek Schiphorst, fell the main burden of helping me to refine my argument and improve the quality and readability of the paper; together, we logged many hours of fruitful and pleasant discussions. Henk Thomas and Henk van Roosmalen contributed further, complimentary advice, which I very much appreciate. Further academic inputs were received from fellow participants, particularly from Omolara Olanrewaju, Nelson Neocleous and Mohammed Taher, who was kind enough to share with me his knowledge and experience of the Comilla programme in Bangladesh.

From across the seas, Kenneth Wain and Frank Ventura, staff members of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, provided useful criticism. Edith and Saviour Rizzo and Edward Zammit, my workmates at the Workers' Participation Development Centre (WPDC), provided indispensable support facilities. More of these were forthcoming from my parents and parents-in-law who kept me posted on developments in Malta during my absence.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chairman and members of the WPDC Committee for their financial support during my stay in The Netherlands as well as for nurturing my research interests.

On leaving Holland and having returned to Malta, I revised the text, following further advice from Freek Schiphorst and Henk van Roosmalen. I also took the opportunity to update and refine the contents, making them more accessible to a wider, less academic readership. Here I must acknowledge the assistance of Reverend Fortunato Mizzi, Richard Matrenza and the Chairman of the Cooperatives' Board, Joe Galea.

Further thanks are due to the ISS Publications Committee and supporting staff, as well as to the two anonymous referees, who spurred me on to undertake the tough but challenging exercise of extensive draft revision, which has led to this actual text. I must also thank the Labour & Development programme secretary at the Institute of Social Studies, Lijske Schweigman, as well as library staff, both at the Institute and

the University of Malta, who patiently handled my many queries and requests.

Finally, a special acknowledgement to Anna, my wife, for her encouragement at difficult moments of the project and for being an understanding companion in the pains of creative writing. To her goes the credit for the typing of innumerable drafts. My sincere apologies to her and to my son James for neglecting them, in favour of books and documents, over many months.

To them I dedicate this work.

Godfrey Baldacchino

Marsascala, Malta
November 1988

*'Give men a better environment,
and they will respond to it
by becoming better workers, and better men'*

ROBERT OWEN

*'The cooperative system will never transform
capitalist society. To convert social production
into one large and harmonious system of free and
cooperative labour, general social changes are
wanted, changes of the general condition of society'*

KARL MARX

*'It is only by pursuing the impossible
that the possible becomes true'*

MAX WEBER

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and the role of the accounting department in ensuring the integrity of the financial statements.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including the use of statistical software and the importance of sample size and representativeness.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Issue

The issue of worker cooperation remains at the top of the agenda for workplace organization today, although the history of worker (or producer) cooperatives is littered with failures. Yet, despite the glaring and disappointing evidence, the establishment of cooperative forms of work organization continues unabated; indeed it has gathered momentum over the last few years, in both industrialized and industrializing economies.

These initiatives have been forthcoming from a motley band of proponents: on the one hand, government officials, economic planners, trade unionists and management consultants have shown themselves disposed to finance, advise or even create worker cooperatives from above. On the other hand, an even more diverse collection of underprivileged groups or individuals is striving to preserve employment or otherwise hoping to fashion for themselves a more meaningful work environment.

A Warranted Field of Study

A cardinal principle guiding this text is that it would be premature to dismiss the worker cooperative as yet another misguided Utopian vision. The dismal evidence of failures to date is staggering and cannot of course be refuted, but a fair dose of optimism in the feasibility of worker cooperation is not totally unwarranted.

Firstly, although it is difficult to define a successful worker cooperative, there are a few lonely beacons of success, model organizations in terms of quantitative criteria (profitability, productivity per head, employee turnover) or qualitative ones (job satisfaction, motivation, power distribution).

Secondly, the promises of worker cooperation are tempting and taunting; they have been hailed as a 'third sector', emerging from the forces of big business in the West and of the centralized colossus of the East.¹ The cooperative organization of production offers an improved access to economies of scale which are reaped by medium to large scale enterprises without sacrificing the pride of skill and self-control usually associated strictly with self-employment. The combination of the interests

of capital and labour within the same individuals, as owner-workers, could defuse normative conflict and the resulting bitter and acrimonious industrial relations. Worker cooperatives offer a potential for satisfying workers' desire for greater self-actualization, for more control over the conditions of their work and for a more just and equitable share in the fruits of their efforts. Cooperative production can rectify the lack of access to certain products and services in economies geared to the production of profit rather than of use value and social needs. The possible contribution by worker cooperatives towards job creation or preservation becomes particularly attractive in the current scenario of global open unemployment and underemployment.²

Lastly, more traditional ways of arranging production can be unjust and oppressive. In the standard economic systems of the world today, it is in small minorities that power is vested, with all its ramifications: decision-making, income distribution, profit allocation, personnel management and organization of production. Consequently, the vast majority suffers, sometimes in poverty and powerlessness, often in resigned silence.³ It is partly in reaction to these conditions that experiments with worker cooperation continue to be made. In the meantime, both western style capitalism and Soviet style central planning appear to have run their course and reached a dark alley, from which the only way out is to grant greater self-determination and freedom to the worker. They also appear increasingly to appreciate and resort to the advantages of cooperation and of work humanization.⁴ These initiatives might only be cosmetic concessions which serve to further legitimize established power relations.⁵ Nevertheless, the general climate in the world today appears more disposed towards worker cooperation.⁶

Over the years, though, the dismal record book has taken its toll among the proponents of worker cooperatives. Many sympathizers have concluded that their conception of a democratic transformation of the classic workplace was pure fantasy; they have consigned the topic of worker cooperation to that of Utopian literature. Such a shift of opinion is quite easy to justify: all too often, worker cooperatives have been victims of either economic failure or of economic success.⁷

The bitter reality has had its positive spinoffs, however. Ongoing experiments in worker cooperation mean that there exists a ready market for consultancy, education, research and other services provided by the apologists. Concurrently, the latter have been forced to adopt a sharper,

more profoundly critical analysis of worker cooperative failure. Looking back, one can perceive a general trend in such an analysis: initially, a purely enterprise-based perspective had been adopted, which often suggested the wholesale export and transposition of successful – invariably first world – models to other, alien contexts. Nowadays this approach is largely recognized as erroneous and simplistic and the emphasis has shifted markedly. Firstly, thanks to advances in social anthropology, there is a greater appreciation of the wider, macro framework, which considers specific cultural, political and socio-economic forces as significant intervening variables in determining worker cooperative success or failure. Secondly, the study of internal cooperative units has benefited from social psychology and delved deeper into the structures, processes and developments which contribute to successful group activity.

Although there is a better understanding of the issue, a glaring gap remains between academic contributions and actual initiatives in worker cooperation. Only a few of those concerned with the development of the discipline from a theoretical point of view have direct experiences of worker cooperatives. At best, most have undertaken interviews or non-participant observation, retreating back to university campuses to write their books and articles. Their contributions may be milestones within the sphere of academia, but they are unsuited to advising and motivating would be or practising cooperative workers.

The Text at Hand

The argument I would like to present is oriented towards policy makers, cooperative members, worker leaders and educationists, with particular reference to those in Malta, my home country.

The text presents itself as a critique of the potential for successful worker cooperation. As an educationist I am consciously concerned with the role of education in successful cooperative development. Success is understood in terms of both economic viability and democratic participation in decision making. In Part One, the argument is posited within a broad theoretical framework and reviews the voluminous literature on the subject. It analyses the wider conditions influencing the performance of worker cooperatives, which in turn lead to a consideration of them as spearheads of social democratization, identifying the main prospects and problems of such a project. In Part Two, the general

issues raised in the theoretical chapters are applied to the Maltese experience, which serves as a test case. This is, however, not simply a Maltese study. The empirical application of theory is crucial for appraising the practical usefulness of theoretical constructs, but I hope that those constructs have also a general appeal and relevance.

Education and Cooperation

The main justification for my focus on education and its contribution towards successful worker cooperatives is pragmatic. As a research officer and educationist engaged in promoting workplace democratization in Malta, the choice of the theme was a natural one, arising from an actual situation. The text is addressed implicitly to my colleagues at the Workers' Participation Development Centre.⁸ My reliance on secondary data to present my case is also corroborated by my own experience in an educational, research and consulting agency. The WPDC has been involved in cooperative development for a number of years now and, in the process, has gone through the frustration and disillusion which follows the appraisal of the actual state of cooperative organization in Malta.

The affinity of education to successful worker cooperation was acknowledged by the followers of Robert Owen, who inspired some of the earliest cooperative ventures in an industrial setting. Owenism was essentially a movement which believed that education in the principles of the new social system was a vitally important matter and a requisite for practical success.⁹ Robert Owen was a pioneer in the field of cooperative education and opened the Institution for the Formation of Character at New Lanark, in 1816.¹⁰ The Rochdale Pioneers, established under Owenite leadership in 1844, aimed not only at enrolling members but at making good cooperators of them in a very broad sense. This included the inculcation of a clear awareness of the principles of cooperative trading, as well as a new insight into the problems of citizenship and of the moral and material forces that were shaping the industrializing Britain of their time. The group therefore encouraged education in both its technical and cooperative aspects, and they were eager to attend to the education of their children as well as their own.¹¹ As early as 1853, two and a half per cent of the Pioneers' trading surplus was allocated to financing their educational activities, which included the maintenance of a newsroom and library.¹²

While education in technical and cooperative skills was already recognized that long ago as a requisite for successful worker cooperation, it has apparently not been enough to prevent either liquidation or degeneration. Harmony Hall, the location of Owen's self-managed community, ironically became the seat of a bitter conflict within only a few years of its establishment.¹³ The Rochdale Pioneers Manufacturing Society, looked upon as a model of success, was converted into an ordinary joint-stock, profit-making concern in 1862.¹⁴ The Christian Socialists were already disillusioned with the idea that worker cooperatives could ever be viable democratic structures by 1851, when the large majority of the cooperatives they had helped establish and finance had already withered away.¹⁵

In a sense this study re-enacts the appraisal of the British Christian Socialists of 1851, but goes beyond their despair by suggesting a way out of the impasse that worker cooperatives apparently must face.

Summary of the Argument

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 examines the socio-economic conditions, that have led to the emergence of the worker cooperative as a production unit. Chapter 3 assesses the worker cooperative's potential advantages from the various political, economic, social and psychological perspectives. Optimism is guarded by a consideration of less noble and dignified reasons for cooperative promotion. Chapter 4 undertakes an appraisal of worker cooperative performance and, finding it largely uninspiring, identifies a cluster of failure-inducing constraints. Economic viability is recognized as insufficient to ensure the success of a worker cooperative. Indeed, it may be economic success which leads to a worker cooperative's downfall. Rather certain socio-economic (infra-structural) and socio-cultural and political (superstructural) variables are identified as crucial contributors to this so-called degeneration problem.

But how are these to be countered for worker cooperatives to succeed? One possible answer is to foster an environment amenable to cooperative development. To do so requires a dual approach: firstly, from a position of strength, a progressive social movement would promote, finance, defend, inspire and possibly even legislate in favour of cooperative development; secondly, and complementarily, a counter-hegemonic educational programme would be organized, initially by the same social

movement, while and until the worker cooperative sector develops and nurtures its own. Such a strategy would seek to reform the social environment so that a cooperative sector could survive and function within it. Rather than being islands in a hostile ocean, or oases in an arid desert – these being the analogies commonly reserved for cases of worker cooperation – the strategy seeks to create the suitable environmental condition whereby cooperative forms of production would flourish as normal entities, along with other non productive, cooperative organizations. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, these considerations are next applied rigorously to the specific socio-economic, cultural and political context of the Mediterranean island state of Malta. In conclusion there is an overview of the main argument and suggestions for further research in Chapter 8. The appendices give relevant background information about the Maltese environment.

NOTES

1. This identification of three motivational or institutional frameworks of human development is found, for example, in Clayre (1980) and Vanek (1988).

2. Open unemployment refers to persons without a job and looking for work (International Labour Organisation, 1976, p. 3). The underemployed refer to (a) persons who are in employment of less than normal duration and who are seeking or would accept additional work and (b) persons with a job yielding inadequate income (Ibid., pp. 17-18).

3. See, for example, Arendt (1958); Marcuse (1968); Oakeshott (1978, chapter 1); Blauner (1964) and Marx's treatment of the concept of alienation in Marx (1970) and in the chapter on alienated labour in Marx (1959).

4. The pioneering work of Mayo (1949) and subsequently of McGregor (1960), Argyris (1964), Herzberg (1966) and Weitzman (1984) identify the importance of a human relations approach to the work process, in contrast to scientific management and Stachanovism. This is reinforced by the progressive abolition of routinized labour operations with the onset of new technology and automation. The expansion of tertiary sector activities and the increasing professionalization of a better educated labour force also increases the actual provision as well as demands for job discretion and self-determination at the workplace. See Levin (1981), Rus (1984a) and Trist (1980).

5. The recent proliferation of worker participation schemes – quality circles, joint labour management boards, autonomous work groups, employee share ownership, profit-sharing, worker-directors, and so on – are often incorporatist in intent, seeking to defuse trade union consciousness, improve labour productivity and foster class harmony. See Panitch (1978); Greenberg (1983); Clarke (1977). However, such participatory schemes might lead to democratization, which would mean more participation of workers in management, control and ownership. See Cressey & MacInnes (1980); Kester & Schiphorst (1986) and Gorz (1973).

6. Defourny (1986) tabulates statistical evidence showing the increasing number of worker cooperators in Europe in recent years. The winds of perestroika blowing across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are also more supportive of both private and collective self-employment. See, for example, Cox (1987). The contemporary crisis in Yugoslavia is likely to condone worker cooperation as a more market responsive form of self-management which rewards entrepreneurship. See, for example, Sik (1986) and Vahcic et al. (1988).

7. 'Bad organization can often mean defeat. This is a truism. More interestingly, however, is the fact that *good* organization can also lead to defeat, i.e., for the purposes, goals and interests which were the original reasons that the group organized' – Abrahamsson (1977, p. 227).

8. The Workers' Participation Development Centre is an educational, research and consultation centre, which was established on a semi-autonomous departmental basis at the University of Malta in 1981. It seeks to support and promote the process of

participatory management within the Maltese economy and the wider society. See WPDC (1987, pp. 18–24).

9. Cole (1944, p. 71).

10. Ibid., p. 16.

11. The seventh principle of the Rochdale Pioneers stated that their society should serve as a means of educating its members as well as of promoting mutual trade. Ibid., pp. 64, 71–2.

12. Ibid., p. 85.

13. Ibid., pp. 57–62.

14. Cole (1944, p. 90) and Oakeshott (1978, p. 16).

15. See 'Report of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations' (1852), quoted in Cole & Filson (1951, pp. 440–3) and paraphrased in Boggis (1973). See also Thornley (1981, p. 21).

PART ONE: THEORY BUILDING

2 THE CASE FOR WORKER COOPERATIVES

Definition

There appears to be confusion about what ideological and functional aims a worker cooperative purports to achieve: to the right of the political spectrum, a worker cooperative may present the image of collective entrepreneurship, of self-willed effort and motivation which improves competitiveness and serves to push down prices, of self-reliant initiatives in the face of unemployment which mitigate the necessity for state intervention. To the political left, the worker cooperative may be seen to serve as the living banner of a nascent, non-capitalist mode of production, of a class-conscious vanguard of the labour movement, a symbol of Marxian 'responsible anarchism'. This conceptual ambiguity helps to explain the wide moral, political and practical support that the worker cooperative has gained. However, it also reflects the basic tensions, at times contradictory, in steering a happy middle course between pure commercial viability and pure democratic control.¹

The organizational forms of worker cooperation are myriad.² But, without going into complexities, worker or producer cooperatives may be generally referred to as production units which are controlled by their own workers. A loose but widely accepted definition suggests that worker cooperatives embody a number of principles:

- workers are (or can become) members of the firm, by nominal holdings of share capital;
- formal provision exists for direct participation in the firm's control and management for the worker-members;
- control is autonomous, usually on the basis of one member, one vote;
- worker-members share in the firm's surplus;
- capital is rendered a fixed and limited return.³

Origins in the First World

In Western Europe and the United States, the worker cooperative has emerged as an alternative form of working, a reaction to the conditions

of hardship and helplessness caused by industrial capitalism. The factory, the division of labour and mass production were introduced to exploit fully the efficiency and productivity of the new technology. But in doing so, workers were robbed of their traditional control over working conditions, of the implements of production and of the very product of their labour. New habits had to be formed and a new labour discipline imposed – by supervision, keeping time and rhythm, money incentives, threats of redundancy and starvation wages. Worker skill and craft pride were being transposed into machines with increasing sophistication.⁴ Increasing boredom, the meaninglessness of repetitive, fragmented operations and the powerlessness to do anything about it fostered a condition of estrangement and loss of interest in work.⁵

Such miserable and degrading conditions could not easily be avoided. The vast majority of rural workers were eventually forced to submit themselves and their families to an impersonal cash nexus and sell their labour power to survive, having been evicted from the land and cut adrift from traditional feudal obligations of security and patronage. The wretchedness of early industrialization could not fail to generate a number of different, reactive responses, some of which are still present today. A number are escapist, accepting labour's condition as a given and seeking compensatory satisfaction elsewhere, for example in religious enthusiasm, alcoholism, leisure, and earning black money.⁶ Other responses are reformist in character, proposing a betterment of labour's conditions such that workers ameliorate or outrightly usurp their pitiful status as mere factors of production. The latter include the principles of trade unionism, socialism, chartism and political democracy. To them one may also add the worker cooperative movement. Early inspiration was forthcoming from the Owen cooperatives of 1832 and the Rochdale Pioneers of 1843, as well as from the writings of Proudhon, Fourier, Kropotkin and others. They were united in their concern to establish mechanisms through which a basic principle of political democracy – government by the consent of the governed – could be extended to the workplace.⁷

Worker cooperatives today account for less than one per cent of total industrial and commercial activities in industrialized capitalist economies.⁸ In this context, the cooperative logic is subsumed by powerful socializing agents, which transmit and inculcate the legitimacy of non-democratic, hierarchical and inegalitarian principles that fashion capitalist

production relations.⁹ Foremost among these principles is the acceptance of inequality in the distribution of power and wealth on the basis of private property; the consideration of Labour as a commodity and the selective deposition of knowledge among experts.¹⁰ Even democracy is generally understood as interest group representation within an institutionalized pluralist scenario, rather than signifying high and dynamic levels of civic participation.¹¹

Labour organizations in the western world – particularly, but not exclusively, trade unions – have been largely incorporated within this dominant ideology, accepting implicitly its fundamental rules without question.¹² Such an acceptance, however, limits the range and style of labour collective action.¹³ Consequently, the assumed balance of power between organized labour and other relevant interest groups – a condition which is a prerequisite for real pluralism to function – does not exist.¹⁴ At best, therefore, western trade unions bargain over the price of wage labour, accepting the status of wage labour as a given.

In the Second World

Shifting attention to the socialist countries following the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, the official ideology promulgates monism – the institutionalized harmony of interests. This ideological unity is all-embracing, obligatory and self-righteous.¹⁵ The notion of proletarian class rule as expressed via the vanguard party of the working class implies that those who govern have to be at the same time both the representatives and the employers of the ruling class.¹⁶ What this contradiction means in practice is that trade union organizations act as western-style managerial bodies; and any conflicts generated by an organized opposition are illegitimate.

The operation of worker cooperatives in the Marxist-Leninist setting is curtailed strongly because of the institutionalization of democratic centralism. This replaces market allocation by central planning. Worker cooperatives or similar self-managed initiatives cannot be condoned in such a planned economy because they would undermine or disrespect the latter's authoritative and allocative functions.¹⁷ Thus, while certain cooperative forms of workplace organization are allowed to function, they are granted a limited measure of independence on sufferance for good behaviour, such as producing beyond the set production targets.¹⁸

However, all major plans and decisions continue to require state approval.¹⁹

And the Third World

Different conditions and patterns of cooperative development prevail in industrializing economies. The conditions of state non-intervention and a prevailing attitude of *laissez-faire* with respect to economic affairs – circumstances from which the cooperative movement in Europe emerged – are noticeably less widespread. Rather, late industrializing countries are in a race against time to develop their nations's productive capabilities as rapidly as possible, pushed on by popular demands and rising expectations.²⁰ In such a situation, indigenous development has depended considerably on state initiatives. Trade unions in this setting are generally spawned by pro-independence political activity during the latter periods of colonial rule. They continue to operate under strict collaborative, neo-corporatist arrangements with the ruling political élites, where antagonism is not permissible.²¹

In such a context, numerous top down experiments with cooperative forms of organization have taken place, mainly in the large, agricultural sector. Here, cooperative organization has been introduced in the hope of liberating productive resources, reaping economies of scale and channeling products towards local or, better still, export markets. All this is achieved, however, without going through the social dislocations of rampant collectivization or the uncompetitiveness of a sheltered nationalized agro economy. Government-sponsored cooperative federations have also served as discrete yet powerful channels of central, political or religious control over the peasant masses.²²

The Potentials of Worker Cooperation

Having looked briefly at the different socio-historical social settings in which worker cooperatives find themselves today, it is now possible to make a strong case in their favour with a number of good psychological, social, economic and political arguments. Worker cooperation thus assumes the status of a third sector, the attractive alternative to both large-scale private capitalist and state socialist models.

Both of these have proved themselves to be effective mechanisms

of long-term labour control.²³ The price of this achievement, though, has been workplace dehumanization, which demands the servile obedience of workers to superordinate forces and structures – the vagaries of an unpredictable market, the dictates of profit maximization, of cost efficiency, of technological rationalization, of the targets set by the Ministry of Planning. The consequence is a situation of chronic power inequality and conflict, latent or manifest, often reflected – albeit only partially – in a basic dualism between management and the rank and file.²⁴ This situation is very costly indeed. Firstly, in financial terms, because of reduced motivation and productivity and other forms of individual or collective reactions (absenteeism, sabotage, rapid labour turnover, industrial action). Secondly, in human terms, qualities such as worker resourcefulness, initiative, and the ability to make decisions remain untapped, when they could be nurtured through the direct experience of work.²⁵ Democratic control and management in a worker cooperative can prevent this dichotomy of interests between managers and managed, as well as the wasteful human and financial implications that accompany it.

Conventional organizations the world over are increasingly aware of this resource waste, and new forms of labour management, involving greater worker participation and initiative, are being devised to tap this energy source.²⁶ The workplace in general appears thus to be undergoing a process of democratization, although only insignificant changes are taking place in terms of the social relations of production.²⁷

The impetus for this change comes from the present socio-economic environment in which productive organizations must function. The world stands at the threshold of a post-industrial age: the labour force in the manufacturing sector is being replaced by automated processes, while new jobs are to be found in the tertiary services sector.²⁸ Many of these jobs cannot be pinned to a routine, since they involve a highly discretionary, flexible and unstructured approach to work. So, occupations become more professional in character as organizations assign their staff more responsibility and expect from them a flexible orientation to shifting market forces.²⁹ Hence the global shift away from the Fordist/Tayloristic management practices, which involve a highly specialized division of labour, low skill requirements, job discretion and rigidly hierarchical, bureaucratic, centralized decision-making.³⁰ The modern organization involves increasing interdependence of personnel, job enlargement, greater

space for individual and subgroup autonomy and initiative, and a non-routine approach to work.³¹ These developments could presage a more participatory future for the workplace.

Closely attuned to the above is the psychological perspective, grounded in the normative vision of human beings possessing both a will and a potential for growth. After all, work is central to most people's lives, not simply as a necessary condition for survival, but also as an avenue for self-actualization and as a bestower of self- and social identity.³² The latter become more powerful worker expectations when the basic conditions of survival and security are relatively guaranteed and when the educational level of the workforce improves. These intrinsic conditions are by and large present among a significant proportion of the labour force in the world today.³³

Whilst the idea that work is a bestower of self-identity and a channel for self-growth is a main component of the ideology of work, nevertheless it often clashes with the actual structure and experience of work.³⁴ Noble ideas of the self as worker are often very quickly cut down to size once one actually starts working.³⁵ Work then becomes for many a drudgery, devoid of intrinsic satisfaction. Through the experience of work, workers are often led to accept the status of professional management as being the sole depository of skill, power, knowledge, judgement, initiative and responsibility. The status of labour is reaffirmed as that of a commodity, to be bought or sold, hired or fired, according to the exigencies of some invisible force, a *Deus ex machina*, be it a free market or a state economic planning bureau. Work experience is a powerful socializing agent in its own right.

In contrast to this scenario, worker cooperatives offer the promise of self-control, elevating work to a more fulfilling, rewarding and emancipatory experience. The worker cooperative provides a likely solution to the condition of ideological and normative dislocation which industrialization has brought about. It makes it more possible for a task to be tailor-made for each person (rather than vice versa) and to recapture social support and a collective moral fabric via the formation of occupational groups.³⁶

Worker cooperation offers possibilities of increased job responsibility, job enlargement and a rotation or division of decision-making posts among a large proportion of the workforce, while the one member, one vote system ensures that all members have a guaranteed minimum and equal access to influence decisions.

It is worth emphasizing the educational value of working in a cooperative, which has been hailed as the school of democracy. Indeed, the worker cooperative holds the potential to create decentralized and accessible structures for the discussion and implementation of workers' ideas and for workers to become responsibly involved in planning and management. The practice of democratic and dialogic participation at the workplace is in itself an educational, self-supporting and self-generating process – the *more* one participates, the *better* one participates. Thus participation forces or socializes individuals to be free via socially responsible action, which becomes in itself a form of action learning. Cooperative forms of work organization, involving associated producers who control their interchange with nature rationally, have been called the most superior or the least alienating forms of production. This is because they provide for the highest degree of political and economic liberation of men and women, affording them the highest form of freedom at work.³⁷

A powerful economic attraction of worker cooperatives is that they offer the possibility for the preservation of the pride of craft and self responsibility often associated exclusively with self-employment. Over and above this, however, worker cooperatives enjoy vital economies of scale generally reaped by large enterprises. Workers may therefore band together in a cooperative framework because of a perceived common interest in pooling equipment, land, finances and knowledge in production, where they would otherwise perform inefficiently and in competition with one another. In the absence of sufficient capital or know-how, the cooperative organization of work may be the only avenue for small producers to become viable and to exercise greater influence over the vagaries of the market.

It is difficult to compare the economic performance of worker cooperatives with that of conventional capitalist firms. Some researchers have tried to identify statistically significant relations between the economic results of self-managed firms and indicators of worker participation; while others have compared economic results of firms before and after their conversion into self-managed enterprises.³⁸ The validity of such an analysis can be strengthened by comparing the two kinds of firms operating at the same time in the same activity. Nevertheless, any econometric comparative studies must falsely assume a similarity of the firms' objectives, which influence and shape organizational decisions

and performance.³⁹ All the same, major if not definitive theoretical and quantitative work over the last few years appears to establish that cooperative units of production outperform comparable conventional firms.⁴⁰ Such commendable economic performance has been linked to the greater incentive for cooperative members to be more productive and efficient in view of the direct connection between personal effort, enterprise performance and personal gain, reinforced by group pressure and democratic decision-making.⁴¹ The greater readiness towards flexibility and job rotation reduces the problems and the labour costs otherwise incurred by absenteeism and job demarcation. Labour costs also tend to be more stable because they are less liable to individual or collective production disruptions such as, for example, wage demands, strike action, rapid turnover of personnel, and sabotage.⁴² The possibility of functioning efficiently with minimal supervisory staff, because workers exercise self supervision, also reduces overhead costs.⁴³ This increases the attraction for worker cooperatives to opt for a more labour-intensive type of production organization than do capitalist firms.⁴⁴

Of course, employment creation or preservation is very often the primary objective for worker cooperative establishment. In this, they appear as ideal organizations for group and self-help mobilization, with a potentially considerable contribution to make. There are many cases of worker cooperatives having taken over capitalist enterprises or springing up where the profits to be made were insufficient to lure capitalist investment. Indeed, the ebb and flow of interest in cooperative ventures has been strongly linked to the social system's economic dislocations.⁴⁵ The Rochdale Pioneers and the early worker cooperatives in England emerged during the 'hungry forties'.⁴⁶ Hundreds of other cooperative bodies sprang up in Europe and the United States during the depression of the 1920s and 1930s, some with direct state investment.⁴⁷ During the present time, a reduced demand for labour accompanied by an increase in the size of the labour force has led to employment crises worldwide. Both state and private enterprise seem unable – some might say unwilling – to provide full employment.⁴⁸ So there are powerful contemporary reasons why worker cooperatives should be seriously considered as viable mechanisms for an innovative and diversified approach to job creation. This is particularly so in Third World countries where unemployment and underemployment levels are of greater magnitude and of greater concern because of the paucity of welfare provision.⁴⁹

Dangers

A few words of warning are in order at this point. Worker cooperatives are not a panacea for contemporary economic recession and unemployment. Literature on the subject abounds with an exclusive emphasis on the impressive and commendable credentials of worker cooperatives, including job creation, labour productivity, economies of scale, worker motivation, democratic management, skill preservation, as though they provided the magical answer to reduced worker morale, deskilling, alienation, industrial action and stagflation.⁵⁰ The case for worker cooperatives remains, but its proponents may be motivated by less noble and more disquieting reasons than those outlined above.

The current growth of worker cooperatives (particularly those formed from scratch or from rescues of existing firms) in a condition of recession and labour surplus should be seen alongside the more spectacular growth of the so-called informal sector of the economy, which comprises small-scale industry, subcontracting, sweat shops and homeworking. All of these embody forms of production relations where jobs are highly insecure. The insecurity results from pressure due to extreme competition, from the lack of legislative safeguards as well as from weak trade union power and presence.⁵¹ Indeed, such harshly competitive areas are the most accessible ones of the economy where relatively little capital is required. These areas include restaurants, book stores, print shops and repair services.⁵² Production units in these areas may be seen to perform a reserve army role, forcing workers to exploit themselves and receive wages at levels lower than the industry standards.⁵³ They also tend to serve residual, highly unstable markets which generate insufficient profits and where the conditions are not favourable to foster stable wage-labour relations. As a result, conventional capitalist firms in such areas would not be interested.⁵⁴ The existence of this production periphery is one of functional articulation with the formal sector of the economy.⁵⁵

Worker cooperatives could easily be seen forming part of this informal economy and serving as functionally articulated organizations in a predominantly non-cooperative setting, particularly during the latter's periods of restructuring and dislocation. In the capitalist context, such crisis periods afford the possibility for exploiting a labour abundant situation by pushing down labour costs. One of the ways of doing this is to reduce the size of the fully proletarianized section of the labour

force, pushing out labour into non-wage labour sub-systems. This explains the contemporary re-emergence of the informal sector, even in industrialized economies, in the guise of sweat shops, homework, part-time work, large scale subcontracting and worker cooperatives.⁵⁶ Small-scale worker cooperatives, like other small-scale producers, provide goods and services at lower prices under pressure from extreme competition in a volatile market environment; these subsidized goods and services then serve as inputs to larger producers. For this reason, their labour time does not exchange equally on the market, because they embody less than is socially necessary abstract labour time.⁵⁷

Even in centrally planned economies, cooperative forms of production perform a role of functional articulation. They fill in some of the gaps in the supply of goods and services generated by the dysfunctions of large scale production and bureaucratic allocative mechanisms; they also provide employment to handicapped citizens.⁵⁸

A second note of warning with respect to cooperative development is that, rather than being progressive *reactions* to the exploitative and alienating effects of capitalism, cooperatives could be from the outset (or could degenerate into) *expressions* of capitalism and conservatism. A number of cooperative forms can cover non-cooperative relations of production, disguised to benefit from tax concessions, for example, or to obtain access to certain means of production.⁵⁹ Others, although democratic in principle, nevertheless operate in a conventional manner with the cooperators acting as (or becoming) shareholders employing second class, underpaid labour to widen their operations and secure even greater profits.⁶⁰ Still others adhere to private ownership and individually transferable shares, motivated primarily by the opportunity to make hefty wages.⁶¹

Indeed, the most economically successful form of cooperative in Western Europe and the United States has been the agricultural service cooperative, a business conglomerate, which represents conservative reactions by agricultural and dairy producers. Initially, they banded together to purchase bulk supplies and requisites and then marketed their produce collectively, thereby increasing their power in the market to quasi-monopoly conditions. Such businesses tend to be highly capital-intensive and suppress rather than stimulate labour demand in agriculture. The highly strategic nature of their products also contributes to such cooperators becoming highly effective lobbyists, even contributing finan-

cially to politicians in a position to influence decisions concerning milk and agricultural products.⁶²

The Need for External Supervision and Support

The degeneration problem has received increasing attention of late, not least because of the track record of worker cooperation. Some consensus appears to have been reached concerning the vital need for developing a supportive and supervisory structure, that would ensure cooperatives are able to offer and maintain acceptable standards relating to minimum wages and other conditions of work, as well as ensuring credit availability, technical aid, democratic control and other provisions for social security, health and education.⁶³

It is also clear that not all cooperatives have the infrastructure and the necessary funds to provide such conditions themselves, in bottom up fashion. If this is the case, then these conditions can only be provided and maintained top down, with the active support of a powerful social force – most notably, but not exclusively, the State. Pending the emergence of strong, federated, autonomous cooperative structures, government action may be quite indispensable to ensure proper supervision, financing and development and to guard against a misuse of the cooperative structure for exploitative ends. It is the nature and form of this top down support, its educational input, and its potential for social change, that this text proposes to consider in some depth in forthcoming chapters.

Conclusion

Looking back at the argument there appears to be a powerful case to be made for worker cooperation: the strongest contemporary argument perhaps being the urgent need to redress the hardship and poverty worldwide of countless unemployed and underemployed by a more innovative approach to job creation. Without the support and supervision, though, from an external agency, notably the State, cooperatives, if they are to survive at all, could turn out to be either non-democratic, capital-intensive monopolies or else small, undercapitalized firms performing a reserve army role within a capitalist economy. Looking at its actual, track record, therefore, the hopeful middle-ground of common ownership and collective control is not quite so inspiring. It has been noted, however,

that wherever worker cooperatives are flourishing, strong support organizations do exist.⁶⁴ But why is it, then, that worker cooperatives, if they are such attractive structures of work organization, fail dismally, unless they are complemented by an external supportive and supervisory body? The following chapter will probe the reasons for cooperative failure and suggest what is the contribution that educational provision could make to improve such a condition and to transform worker cooperatives as agents of social change.

NOTES

1. Both Rothschild-Witt & Witt (1986) and Greenberg (1983) make use of Olin Wright's (1976) concept of a contradictory class location to describe the worker cooperative as a site of conflicting ideological tensions; Clarke (1984) describes the divergent possibilities of self-management at the economic, organizational and attitudinal levels, based on a series of contradictory tensions.

2. Perry & Davis (1985) dwell on this prior to proposing a detailed definition of what is a worker-owned firm.

3. These principles defining worker cooperative organization are suggested, for example, by Jones (1980, p. 42), Thornley (1981, pp. 3-4) and Bogardus (1964, pp. 19ff).

4. For general, classic descriptions of the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the emerging working class in Britain, see Thompson (1963); Engels (1971) and Cole (1944, Chapter 1). See Braverman (1974) on the progressive deskilling of industrial work and Thompson (1967) on time discipline within industrial capitalism.

5. As Marx painstakingly argued via his Labour Theory of Value and his concept of estrangement or alienation.

6. Cole (1944, p. 1) singles out religious fervour and gin. Wilensky (1960) theorized on the compensatory leisure hypothesis, following on Engels and de Tocqueville. Productive activity out of working hours, especially in the form of self-employment, reaffirms work as intrinsically an edifying and satisfying activity, aside from serving tax exemption purposes.

7. For reviews of the advocates of workplace democracy in Europe and the United States, see Vanek (ed.) (1975, pp. 16-21); King & Van der Vall (1978, Chapter 1) and Mason (1982, Chapter 6).

8. Clarke (1984, p. 97).

9. Bendix (1963) provides a thorough analysis of the development of managerial ideology in Britain and the United States.

10. See Galbraith (1958, Chapter 3) on what he describes as the economics of despair; on the mystification of knowledge see for example Illich (1977). Drama, literature, games and mass media are clear indications of the pervasive process of socialization into the logic of capitalism: for example, Hymer (1971) analyzes Robinson Crusoe as a study in capital accumulation and managerial control. TV serials like *Dynasty* and *Starsky and Hutch*, as well as popular games like *Monopoly* and *Tycoon*, revolve around implicit property prerogatives.

11. The shifting interpretation of democracy towards a legitimization of contemporary pluralism is well handled by Pateman (1970).

12. J.T. Dunlop's (1958) definition of industrial relations and the systems approach to organizational studies of Nobel Prize Winner Herbert Simon (1960) are grounded in this implicit respect for basic rules, whose transgression is illegitimate and therefore punishable.

13. In a pluralist setting the *range* of union activity is restricted because certain crucial areas of decision-making are managerial prerogatives; the *style* of union action is one of structured antagonism via collective bargaining.
14. Fox (1974, p. 207) and Schuller (1958, Chapter 2).
15. This description is from Djilas (1957, pp. 73ff).
16. A contradiction elaborated upon by Bendix (1963).
17. Historical examples of such intolerance include the dismantling of Workers' Councils in the Soviet Union just after the October 1917 Revolution and the fate of the Kronstadt Communes. Other examples include the reactions to workers' councils in Czechoslovakia (1968-9) and to the emergence of an autonomous trade union structure in Poland (1981, 1988).
18. As put by Oakeshott (1978, p. 217).
19. Galeski (1977, p. 22).
20. Gerschenkron (1966) relates development strategies to the relative time reference when industrialization is initiated. Korner et al. (1986) relate development strategies and rising expectations to suggest a vicious circle model of Third World debt.
21. See Bean (1985, Chapter 10).
22. See various contributions in the social anthropological collection edited by Nash, Dandler & Hopkins (1976).
23. Indeed, actual worker experiences reveal these labour control processes to be surprisingly similar: compare the two volumes on work experience in Britain edited by Fraser (1968, 1969) with the autobiographical material of a Hungarian skilled worker, Haraszti (1977).
24. As discussed in detail by Fox (1971).
25. The untapped resources of . . . workers constitutes a criminal waste of energy and achievement, as a result of which the majority of workers go through life without even a glimmer of what they could have attained and contributed to their fellow human beings.' Roberts (1977, p. 149).
26. Preston & Post (1974) argue that participation, defined as the inclusion of persons and groups involved and concerned with the diverse outcome of managerial activity as participants in the managerial process, is the contemporary revolution in management practices. This is corroborated by a vast volume of literature collectively referred to as the Human Relations approach to management. See Chapter 1, Note 4.
27. Forms of participatory management and other humanization of work programmes rarely challenge, but rather disguise and therefore strengthen the exercise of power by management and shareholders. See Chapter 1, Note 5.
28. See, for example Bluestone & Harrison (1982) on the deindustrialization of the United States. Thirlwall (1982) elaborates on deindustrialization in the United Kingdom.

29. On the trend towards professionalization see Rus (1984a).
30. Taylorism or Scientific Management is based on the ideas of Taylor (1911) and Fayol (1949). The concept of bureaucracy as signifying the rationalization of tasks in a context of predictability is analyzed by Weber (1947).
31. Various studies compare the Taylorist and Human Relations models of Organizational Design. See for example Burns & Stalker (1961), Likert (1961); and Abell (1985).
32. See Berger (1963, pp. 98–100) on work and self-identity and Maslow (1954) and Horvat (1982) on self-actualization.
33. See 'The New Industrial Relations', *Business Week*, Special Report, 11 May 1981.
34. This 'ideology vs structure' thesis is elaborated by Berger (1964, pp. 211–22).
35. Festinger (1957) elaborates on this adaptation via the concept of cognitive dissonance.
36. The normlessness or anomie caused by rapid social change was a central theme of Durkheim (1933).
37. See, for example, Mill (1911, p. 573), Vanek (ed.), (1975), Horvat (1982), and Marx (1972, Chapter 48, Section 2).
38. These are reviewed in Defourny (1987).
39. A point made, among others, by Thomas & Logan (1982, Chapter 5).
40. Empirical works include Stephen (1982); Jones and Svejnar (1982); Batstone (1983); Cable & Fitzroy (1980); Berman (1967, 1982); Bellas (1972); Frieden (1980); Conte & Tannenbaum (1978). Pryor (1983, pp. 158–9) cites conflicting evidence.
41. Levin (1984, pp. 24–6); Horvat (1982, p. 260); Bradley & Gelb (1981).
42. See, for example, Vanek (1970); Espinosa & Zimbalist (1978, pp. 143–6); Cable & Fitzroy (1980); Thomas & Logan (1982, pp. 49–52).
43. As described by Greenberg (1984, p. 193) in relation to the United States, and by Batstone (1983, p. 144) in relation to France.
44. See Levin (1984); Jones & Svejnar (1982); Berman (1982); and Jones (1982, p. 61) on the United States Plywood cooperatives. However, dividend maximization exerts pressure for a run down on membership: see Vanek (ed.), (1975, Chapter 28) and Roca (1975).
45. Jackall & Levin (1984, pp. 3–4). This is why Tucker (1983, p. 26) calls worker cooperatives the children of crisis. Similarly Ramsay (1977, 1983) and Poole (1975) equate developments in workplace democracy to time periods when managerial authority is felt to be under threat, such as a recession.
46. See Cole, (1944, Chapter 1).
47. Refer, for example, to Infield (1945) on state support for cooperatives in the United States following the New Deal; also reported in Pryor (1983, p. 138).
48. As argues Kalecki (1976, pp. 61–5).

49. Squire (1981, p. 72) reports underemployment estimates of 39 per cent for Africa, 26 per cent for Asia and 20 per cent of the labour force for Latin America in 1970. Sabolo (1975) estimates unemployment in the same year at 9.6 per cent in Africa, 7.1 per cent in Asia and 5.1 per cent in Latin America. The corresponding figure in the same year for industrialized countries stood at 2.2 per cent. The latter has since then increased and levelled off at about 9 per cent. (These global statistics are to be used with caution because of differing definitions and data-collection procedures used by individual countries.)

50. As is done by Young & Rigge (1983, pp. 22–32); Louis (1983); Jones (1978); Linehan & Tucker (1983); Boggis (1973); Oakeshott (1978, Chapter 2) and, with respect to Malta, Rizzo (1985a).

51. See, for example, the conditions of female workers undertaking manufacturing homework in Britain and Italy in Mitter (1986) and Solinas (1982) respectively.

52. Jackall & Levin (1984, p. 9).

53. See, for example, Defourny (1986, p. 4), Thornley (1981, pp. 173–4) and Estrin (1985, p. 353).

54. As discussed in relation to Tanzania by Bienefeld & Godfrey (1975). For an econometric discussion see Vanek & Espinosa (1972).

55. For wider reading on the 'articulation' debate in Marxism see overviews by Bradby (1975) and Foster-Carter (1978). Refer also to Chapter 3, Note 77.

56. Thus the renowned Japanese enterprise corporatism only operates effectively because of the widespread existence of small-scale industries which operate without life-time employment. In times of crisis, workers from the corporatized sector can be shed by, for example, being transferred to a subsidiary, which is then forced into bankruptcy. See Dore (1983) and Hoynden (1958, Chapter 5). Bluestone & Harrison (1982, pp. 257–62) suggest that Employee Stock Ownership Plans in the United States should be viewed equally critically. Already there are cooperatives which subcontract from industries that are suffering from foreign competition, and from those which are rationalizing their most profitable operations. See Thornley (1981, p. 98).

57. See, for example, Leys (1973) and Bienefeld (1975) with respect to Kenya and Tanzania.

58. See, for example, Oakeshott (1978) and Bislev (1985) with respect to Polish worker cooperatives.

59. In Mozambique, agricultural cooperatives were set up in the interests of small, capitalist farmers because this was a precondition for them to obtain access to tractors and other equipment. See Harriss (1980). Similarly, associations have been formed as legal cooperative entities in Sicily, Italy, to exploit generous government subsidies for the purchase of agricultural machinery – Schneider & Schneider (1976). Zwerdling (1980, p. 67) argues that ESOPs are mainly being used as financial gimmicks to evade tax on investment capital.

60. As in the case of the Sugar Cooperatives of Peru. See Roca (1975).
61. This is evident in the legal structure of worker-owned firms in the United States, which is usually based on individual shareholding among workers who form the firm. See Greenberg (1984, *passim*) for a discussion of this feature with respect to the United States plywood cooperatives. See Carnoy (1981) for a general discussion.
62. Nash & Hopkins (1976, pp. 10-11). Hence the large agricultural subsidies meted out by EEC countries as part of their Common Agricultural Policy, which allows farmers to overproduce, or to be paid for keeping their fields fallow.
63. Estrin (1985, pp. 367-8) argues that, to guard against dubious motives for cooperative establishment, one should set up 'an entrepreneurial support agency with model rules to prevent the degeneration process and with its own financial or banking department.' The functions of this support agency go beyond what Vanek (ed.), (1975) and Horvat (1982) call a shelter organization. Other proponents include Dickstein (1988); Jones (1986); Thornley (1981); Wright (1979); Lindenfeld & Rothschild-Witt (1982); Uca (1983, p. 202); Commission of European Communities (1981). Trist (1980) calls this a referent organization.
64. Commission of European Communities (1981, p. 28).

3 A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESSFUL WORKER COOPERATION

Introduction

A worker cooperative must do more than simply survive and prosper to be successful; indeed, success involves a salutary but often elusive combination of commercial viability and democratic, human-centred organization of work. Such orientations may indeed present themselves as mutually exclusive, so that one has to be sacrificed for the other.

The general outcome is that survival rates, while they are very poor for successful new businesses, are even poorer for successful worker cooperatives. Success stories, like Scott Bader in Britain, Hirondelle in France, Edilfornaciai in Italy, Cruz Azul in Mexico, the Cheeseboard in the United States and the Mondragon Group in Basque Spain, are few and far between.¹ Quite naturally, these are considered as notable exceptions to what looks like a pervasive, general rule. The result is that, over the years, many social scientists and economic planners have dismissed worker cooperatives as Utopian dreams, and consigned them to the dust heaps of history.²

This chapter hopes to challenge this approach. Firstly, it identifies the various reasons put forward for explaining the poor worker cooperative record. Next, it analyzes these conditions in macro, environmental terms, relating them to specific socio-economic, but also cultural and political factors. The analytical approach adopts a radical perspective, therefore, which goes beyond classical Marxism and ascribes a pivotal importance to cultural conditions and values *per se*, rather than treating them simply as reflectors of the all-important social and economic relations of production. Only by usurping conventional Marxism is the identification of an evolutionary reformist path to social democratization possible. Conditions that are necessary to execute such a strategy successfully include both voluntaristic and structural elements. Among the latter is the abatement of the threat of degeneration. However, with adequate educational provision and support from an appropriate shelter organization, it seems feasible that a prosperous self-supporting cooperative sector could be achieved.

A Typology of Failure

There is no difficulty in assembling the variables to explain the generally dismal performance of worker cooperatives. Unavoidable laws of tendency had already been designated in the nineteenth century and these are readily resorted to in understanding contemporary cases.³ Other reasons for failure can be gleaned by examining primary data relating to individual case studies of worker cooperative successes or downfalls.⁴ Various typologies have been postulated already as well over the years.⁵ The list below has been compiled independently, making ample use of the three sets of source material identified above. Like all typologies, a subdivision of factors may appear neat but superficial, effectively not doing justice to the dynamic relationship, which to some degree exists between the variables themselves.⁶

– *Failure due to small size, economic marginality and capital shortage.*

Many worker cooperatives tend to get set up in risky and harshly competitive product domains where failure rates are invariably high. Often the result of rescues or conversions, which are almost always due to serious economic problems, many worker cooperatives are, economically speaking, lame ducks from their very inception. In such conditions, and often without sufficient capital, the cooperatives are unable to achieve economies of scale. Survival is usually in the short-run only, and worker-members put in excessively long hours for a subsistence wage.⁷

– *Failure due to lack of managerial skills.* Many small cooperatives cannot afford to employ managerial expertise. Others could, but do not, all the same. Cooperative members may actually fail to recognise the need for skilled managerial personnel – these may be considered as simply overheads or symbols of capitalist power relations they could either do without or which they could replace easily themselves. The relative equality of pay and status may make it particularly difficult for worker cooperatives to attract managerial staff with the best credentials, whose market price would tend to be higher than most cooperatives are able or willing to offer.⁸

– *Failure due to internal dissension.* The absence of conventional authority figures and disciplinary structures in a worker cooperative could lead to insubordination, a vacuum of accountability and responsibility and leadership crisis.⁹ Efforts to reduce differences in power and influence

may generate resistance in giving legitimate authority to positions or individuals. Conflict may be suppressed, taken to imply a failure in human relations, or else handled badly by an ambiguous distinction between union and management structures, if such a distinction exists at all. The practice of democratic management may be seen as time-consuming and hopelessly unproductive, especially if the participants lack cooperative skills. The acquisition of such skills and techniques is even more difficult when the cooperative is a rescue or conversion from a capitalist firm, in which workers were used to pursuing their interests via antagonistic trade unionism.¹⁰

- *Failure due to economic success and large size.* If a worker cooperative is successful economically, it will also tend to expand. Large size, however, necessitates bureaucratization and consequently the introduction of measures of representative (instead of participatory) democracy.¹¹ There is also considerable evidence that, as the size of an organization increases, member commitment or attachment declines.¹² This may therefore introduce a diffusion of responsibility and lead to a lack of participation and initiative.¹³ This tendency to degenerate may come about as a result of economic success *per se*. It seems that, just as a hard and difficult life may stir the cooperative spirit, the urgency to cooperate may disintegrate once the hard life is overcome. Economic prosperity increases the incentive to limit membership and employ cheap second class labour.¹⁴ Otherwise, the cooperative may become a target of private capital, which may coax a buy-out from the worker-members by lucrative offers;¹⁵ or else the cooperative could become infiltrated by members of the higher socio-economic strata via the sale and purchase of shares.¹⁶ In any case, the effect is that the original cooperators are transformed into (or replaced by) capitalist shareholders.

Analyzing the Causes of Failure

Examining the failure-inducing constraints, it is clear that not all are specific to worker cooperatives; a number could apply equally well to non-cooperative enterprises.¹⁷ Take the conditions of small size and small scale. They have been considered advantageous with respect to working conditions, economic efficiency, human relations, job control and reduced alienation.¹⁸ They also contribute to the preservation of direct, partic-

ipatory democracy.¹⁹ The reality of the small scale enterprise, however, is very often different. Workers in many small firms experience lower wages, worse working conditions, less trade union representation and less protection from arbitrary management decisions than do workers in similar jobs in large firms.²⁰ Small firms, being often underfinanced, may be able to survive only via such an intensification of labour exploitation. It is therefore no coincidence that large firms eventually predominate in advanced stages of industrialization;²¹ while smaller firms generally have much shorter life-spans.²²

The typology of worker cooperative failure, though, goes beyond the maladies associated with small size and scale. It is clear that worker cooperatives suffer other specific pressures because their structures and ideology of work are anomalous with mainstream social conditions. The ultimate pressure here is the 'success breeds failure' syndrome. These pressures collectively cause a degeneration process, driving the cooperative structure into either performing a 'reserve army' role, which eventually leads to its liquidation; or, if economically successful, erode the cooperative's internal democratic organization of work.²³

From where do these specific, degenerative pressures emerge? In political and economic terms, they emanate from power relations established at the point of production, leading to a social structure with an unequal distribution of power. This is defended, reproduced and legitimized by social institutions which act to socialize members into the ethos of the status quo and discriminate in their operations against non-conforming forms of production. In cultural terms, the degenerative pressures emerge from a dominant ideology which fosters values alien to worker cooperation. For this reason, most societies provide at best only marginal skills and episodic experiences in democratic participation.

Evaluating Educational Policies

Such a perspective permits a critical evaluation of educational policies that have been implemented to encourage worker cooperation. The supporting role of education in this respect has been recognized for over a century. The objectives of such education are to mitigate some of the failure-inducing constraints tabulated above. Training programmes in management, administration, marketing and accountancy seek to generate a higher level of managerial competence among cooperative

members; training seminars in committee procedure, group dynamics, the history and practice of worker cooperation and industrial sociology seek to improve the skills and knowledge needed for effective democratic management. More broadly, instruction in political science, political economy, social psychology and industrial law seek to enhance the competence of workers generally, making them more capable of pursuing their interests as workers and citizens. This kind of educational strategy has been set in motion by most centres of worker and cooperative education worldwide.²⁴

Such a policy is undoubtedly praiseworthy and commendable. Yet, undefended from the merciless degenerative forces of the wider environment, it can only end in failure. At best, educational provision in the sense described above might counter the effect of the dominant ideological fabric on one's own value system; it could convert individual workers to the values of cooperation, but it cannot affect in any way the fundamental power relations existing in the wider society, nor can it influence the institutional supports, the socializing processes and the cultural patterns which legitimize and reproduce these same power relations.

The Third World Condition

The importance of assigning a major consideration to the specific socio economic, political and cultural environment can be evidenced from the large scale attempts at introducing viable worker cooperation in the Third World. Although essentially a First World specimen, the cooperative model was imported on a massive scale into industrializing economies, first by colonizing powers seeking to restructure indigenous agriculture along more commercial lines and later, by post-independence governments seeking rapid modernization without the evident undesirable side-effects of either private capitalism or state socialism.

The potential, then, for creating a wholesale third sector appeared to be fulfilled most effectively in the Third World, where strong state support for the cooperative project was forthcoming. The idea was attractive, both for its economic consequences, and for its ideological appeal as an instrument for fostering desperately needed national consciousness. It was also understood that certain indigenous collectivist structures and traditions presented a natural breeding ground for modern

worker cooperation. After many experiments and just as many failures, though, most of this optimism has evaporated. The worker cooperative in Africa, Asia and Latin America has not heralded the long sought-for third alternative. By and large, it has served rather as an instrument to reinforce the existing power relations.²⁵ The inquest on Third World worker cooperation highlighted the importance of peculiar environmental variables, which substantially influence the chances of worker cooperative success. Put differently, there were still degenerative forces, albeit different ones, at work in industrializing countries. Generalizing about three-quarters of the globe must be a simplistic exercise, but, for the sake of identifying some key factors, a number of Third World environmental conditions can be singled out:

- *The prevalence of pre-capitalist relations of production.* Many producers in industrializing countries, particularly in Africa, are still engaged in a small-scale family-based subsistence, rural economy with a minimal division of labour, in conditions of mutual isolation and with an open option of self-sufficiency. There is therefore little basis for capital accumulation, no incentive for change and an autonomy that enables one to escape policy demands from distant sources such as the state.²⁶ A perseverance in traditional production practices that have stood the test of generations is of course a wise and functional adaptation.²⁷ Seen from the point of view of cooperative development planners, though, it appears as a manifestation of stubborn conservatism which stifles attempts at modernization of agricultural organization. Within the context of pre-capitalist production relations, too, class interests are not easily developed – rather it is racial, ethnic and religious interests that predominate and shape power relations in the society at large.²⁸
- *The role of the state.* The development strategy of late industrializers has relied heavily on Governments to take the initiative.²⁹ The political leaders of industrializing states are in a race against time to maximize the development potentialities of their societies and meet the needs and demands of their peoples. Hence the prevailing ideology and practice towards the economy is less liberal and non-interventionist than in Europe and the United States. In the latter cases cooperative movements developed autonomously, without state support, in the nineteenth century.³⁰

By contrast, in industrializing economies, the very establishment of cooperatives often depends heavily on the State itself, usually serving

a triple purpose within an overall development strategy: cooperative development avoids a head-on clash with the large peasantry, promises to accumulate capital and establishes structures of 'top-down' ideological influence.³¹ It follows almost logically, therefore, that there is considerable interest by the State in the regulation of cooperative affairs, so that, in some cases, cooperatives have been turned into organs of state control.³² In other cases, cooperative structures have evolved as power bases independent of and in competition with the ruling administration, in which case they are broken, tamed or otherwise tolerated with closely circumscribed circuits of influence.³³

- *The economy of affection.* Within many industrializing countries there are invisible organizations of people connected by blood, kin, community and religion, which pervade all spheres of life, including the economic.³⁴ The maintenance and cultivation of an individual's position in this network of support and interaction is an important personal concern. This process delays the development of a public morality that sustains effective state power and a functional legal rational bureaucracy.³⁵ Cooperative structures can therefore easily fall victim to mismanagement, corruption, nepotism and manipulation of rules, because these are perceived as legitimate or unavoidable within such an economy of affection. This makes the cooperative structures dependent on traditional power holders, since they are usually in a position to grant favours and credit and make concessions.
- *The existence of indigenous, traditional, communal practices.* Elements of mutual aid in peasant and tribal society, such as at harvest time, planting and house building, and the solidary ties of kinship, marriage, religion and community, have been suggested as advantageous and perhaps necessary preconditions for the creation of modern cooperative ventures.³⁶ The idea is attractive but suspect; the solidarity of many traditional communities is often an idyllic oversimplification which camouflages harsh and bitter tensions, inequalities and authoritarian relations.³⁷ All the same, even if a common indigenous culture of cooperation exists, taking on the formal institutions of modern cooperatives, such as rational accounting and managerial control, could challenge the very bonds of trust and solidarity on which the community is based.³⁸

Faced with these powerful and pervasive conditions, the likelihood of effective worker cooperation appears just as elusive in the Third World

as elsewhere. Indeed, it has been suggested that, for effective worker cooperatives to be developed in industrializing countries, the society in question must necessarily first pass through the transitional evil phase of capitalism, to develop a rational bureaucracy, weed out the economy of affection, replace traditional power relations with class relations and liberate the productive forces of its workers.³⁹

Focus on Environmental Change

The lesson to be learnt, therefore, is that, if minimal consideration is paid to the specific socio-economic, political and cultural environment where the cooperative venture is to be established, then the cooperative will fail, in democratic terms if not in economic ones. The degeneration problem, once properly diagnosed, highlights first of all the importance of counter-institutional support for worker cooperation. Given the fact that legislation, education, banking systems, research laboratories, consultancy and accounting firms are geared by their very nature to operate in support of conventional (capitalist/étatist) organizations, then it is to be expected that they are not intended to support anomalous initiatives – such as worker cooperatives. Hence the case for alternative laws, schools, banks, research labs and support organizations to supply their crucial services to worker cooperatives.⁴⁰

The degeneration problem also highlights the cultural condition. Social institutions, apart from providing the social order with required services, act as powerful socializing agents. They impart the dominant values to members and therefore contribute to the survival of the given social order. A successful worker cooperative cannot neglect to have its own 'socializing force', imbuing the workers with the values salutary to cooperative organization. Apart from the actual experience of work in such an organization, which is a very powerful socializing process, a democratic consciousness, a spirit of collectivism and a common occupational culture act to forge bonds of solidarity between present and would-be worker cooperators, also distinguishing them culturally from non-cooperative workers who therefore serve as anti-referent groups.

The institutional and cultural dimensions of degeneration as emergent from our typology of failure are supported by an examination of the world's viable cases of worker cooperation. In practically all cases, research identifies the existence of both strong support organizations, as well as commitments to collectivist or democratic values.⁴¹

All things being equal, then, the case for successful worker cooperation must focus, not simply on the cooperative firm proper, but on the environment which spawns and breeds it. It is clear that cooperatives are alien products, foreign bodies in their environment and so it is no wonder that they suffer for it. It is also clear that where cooperatives succeeded, it was only because they transformed their environment to the extent that they developed an institutional and cultural framework within which worker cooperation becomes a normal, legitimate undertaking.

Such a diagnosis clearly involves a painful, revolutionary shift in perspective. Shoring up cooperatives against the inevitable forces of degeneration may be a viable proposition but only in the short term. The best form of defence is attack, based on diluting, or counteracting the forces of degeneration proper. An obsession for a defensive posture cannot produce a workable alternative.

At first sight, this may appear impossible to implement in practice. But it can be argued that it is the stark reality of so many cooperative failures which has conditioned the cases for worker cooperation. This dismal record has invariably imposed a paradigm of worker cooperation which is restricted in scope and method.⁴²

Nowhere is this more clearly manifested than in the analogies, by now quite popularized and reserved for worker cooperation: oases in an arid, hostile desert; lonely beacons of enlightened democracy; foreign bodies bound to succumb to the social system's alert defence mechanism; islands in an alien (capitalist/étatist) ocean.

This terminology and what it stands for must be usurped to give worker cooperation the chance it merits to genuinely succeed.⁴³ One must not succumb to the disillusion of so many failures and focus persistently on negative iron laws. If there exist degenerative forces which eat away at the bulwarks of worker cooperation, then there are also strong countervailing, regenerative forces, which can contribute to the building of new cooperatives or to the extension of existing ones.⁴⁴ As in the domain of the physical sciences, there is no simple and irreversible law of entropy, but an interplay of fission and fusion in the living universe.⁴⁵

Models of Social Change Considered

If the strategy to establish successful worker cooperation must be based on a degree of social transformation, even in a limited sense, then the job is much easier said than done. After all, the environmental variables to be transformed are functional expressions, developed over time, of a particular social and economic history, and reflect specific power patterns, which are not so easily dislodged.

All the same, a number of models for engineering social change have been theorized,⁴⁶ while others can be identified from experience:

- *A demonstration effect strategy.* This postulates that an autonomous spillover or ripple effect will take place, once a test-case is established and is visibly advantageous. This effect occasionally works, perhaps because, being initially an isolated phenomenon, it does not threaten traditional power élites and so does not generate too much hostility. Often, success has depended, though, on the mobilization of powerful socio-political support and the existence or development of a suitable ideology.⁴⁷
- *A radical strategy of starting from scratch.* This is based on the premise that the only way to neutralize traditional value systems and power structures is to scrap all existing institutions from a position of force.⁴⁸ Such a radical strategy requires a very powerful state apparatus which can effectively defend itself from political opposition, economic pressures and a deterioration of its ideological commitment towards change. Even then, traditional value systems may be so pervasive that they still persist and refuse to be reformed.⁴⁹ Reorganized, post-revolutionary structures may, as a result, only go through a cosmetic change.⁵⁰ Citizens and workers at large may then remain subdued in the same culture of powerlessness and passivity; they remain victims of power and policy, to be taught, led and managed by experts and élites.⁵¹ If the masses are only involved through the agency of various mediating devices that merely bear their name, then they do not effectively participate.⁵²
- *A reformist, incrementalist strategy.* This lays its hopes in the potential of education spearheading a gradual social transformation. Education is perceived to be a powerful instrument, which can bring about social change under the condition of broad social consensus.⁵³ The model, though, refuses to consider the functional relationship between educa-

tion, the respective socio-economic structure and the ideological super-structure. The purpose of school socialization to reproduce labour power and the governing relations of production – functions which are inconsistent with the values of cooperation and collective consciousness – are subsumed beneath the liberal myth which proclaims education as the means by which merit, skill, and knowledge might ultimately provide social mobility.⁵⁴ Thus, left in splendid isolation, without wider social support and inspiration, an educational programme will not only collapse but, in degenerating, end up serving the interests of the dominant social classes. In this way, rather than promoting social change, an educational programme may make it even more unlikely by legitimating, and therefore strengthening and reproducing, the existing division of labour.⁵⁵ The development of a learning society will not foster social change as long as the educational process remains rooted in the established cultural and political setting.

- *A 'social movement' approach to change.* A different strategy of social change is based on a power model of society, but, nevertheless, aims at an evolutionary sequence for transforming power relations and overcoming vested interests. Such conditions could be met via the existence of a progressive social movement: a socio-political force whose leadership is capable of influencing the behaviour and values of citizens at large by its appeals and statements from a position of authority, usually accompanied by a supportive ideology.⁵⁶ A social movement could prove to be a continuous source of support for worker cooperatives financially, vocationally and ideologically. It could institutionalize a power base and thereby provide a basis for legitimizing worker cooperatives within the community, while at the same time adapting these to best fit the local conditions. A social movement could resolve the dilemma between continuity and change by providing continually relevant responses to local problems by virtue of its dynamic character in the face of changing social conditions. It can itself be both an initiator and a motor of progressive social change.⁵⁷ A number of difficulties nevertheless reside with this approach. Firstly, it takes time to mature. Secondly, during such lengthy time periods, the social movement's power base must be strong enough to withstand hostility from those who might feel threatened, if genuine cooperativism and worker management take root: property and business interests, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the military and foreign interests.

Thirdly, such hostility may emerge from within the ranks of the social movement itself. It appears contrary to human nature for a powerful social force to purposely adopt a strategy which, if managed successfully, would lead to an increasing legitimacy and acceptability for worker cooperativism in the wider social context.⁵⁸ Developing a power base which, in the long run, becomes independent of the social movement that established it in the first place, involves a dilemma between promoting autonomy and preserving influence.⁵⁹

The Gramscian Vision

If a social movement evolutionary approach to change is adopted, then the corresponding tactic in military terms should be one of 'a war of position'. This was the term used by the Italian Antonio Gramsci whose insights are useful in clarifying the role of education and of a social movement in the broader process of social transformation towards worker cooperation.⁶⁰

The young Gramsci would have fully approved of a project aiming at bottom-up, incremental social transformation. He placed great trust in worker cooperative production and other forms of worker management as a means for educating workers to socialism, and serving as the incubators of a new society. The outcome of the 1920 Turin strikes, however, led Gramsci to identify the importance and success of political support for any initiative in workplace democratization.

Gramsci's vision of the functioning of the capitalist system matured to develop the key concept of *Hegemony*: 'An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused through society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations.'⁶¹

Gramsci thus identified the superstructure as the depository of dominant culture and the apparatus of hegemony. He goes beyond the classical Marxist ascription of the exclusive primacy of the economic sphere: The logic of domination is seen to go beyond economics into the terrain of culture and ideology. The capitalist system has its own paradigm, that is a shared conception of what is legitimate and possible,⁶² determined by a complex network of institutions, practices and day to

day routines (of which the economic sphere is but one) which act as ideological mediators.⁶³

For such a logic and ecology of domination to be eroded, it must be replaced to some extent by a counter-hegemony. Indeed, the principle of hegemony itself is to be transformed from one which mystifies social conditions to one which exposes their inner workings.⁶⁴ This counter hegemony is to emerge from the mass organization of the working class under the banner of a political party which will invest in counter-hegemonic education aimed at developing proletarian institutions, values and culture. Concurrently the counter-hegemony seeks to pervade and conquer systematically all the institutional agencies of civil society. In the Gramscian extended metaphor of warfare, the counter-culture would confront the established (for Gramsci, the bourgeois) hegemony in a 'war of position' – of trenches moving back and forth in an ideological struggle over both the consciousness of citizens and the social institutions operant in the same society. Only when the new superstructure has engulfed the old would it make sense to take over state power. The leaders of the Turin Strikes in Italy (1919-20), the leadership behind the worker and student unrest in France (1968) and Allende in Chile (1970-73) apparently had underestimated the strength and pervasiveness of capitalist ideological and cultural domination, by adopting a frontal attack strategy, what Gramsci calls the 'war of manoeuvre'.⁶⁵ Such could only work in contexts where capitalism was not hegemonic. Thus tsarism in Russia, founded on ignorance, apathy and repression, not on the voluntary consent of its subjects, could indeed be overthrown by a frontal attack.⁶⁶

The Gramscian vision of social transformation can be criticized for focusing exclusively on the political and cultural aspects of proletarian domination; it misses to consider the economic constraints of such a transformation – the flow of investment capital, exports and imports of goods and services, and the location of the society within the international economic system appear to constrain significantly any departure from the dominant hegemony.⁶⁷ It is highly Utopian to imagine a cooperative economy, whether industry-based, regionally or even nationally organized, which is not circumscribed within a larger non-cooperative framework. It may be more feasible and realistic, then, certainly in the medium term, to propose that social change be directed to the extent of creating a cooperative environment within the wider

social context and leading to a state of dual power, with a cooperative environment alongside a non-cooperative one.⁶⁸

What are the prospects for such an emergent bi-polar hegemonic condition? From the cultural perspective, it appears clear that the seeds for a counter-hegemony already exist, because no society is structurally and culturally completely homogenous.⁶⁹ At the macro level, it is this potential for a counter-culture which has been described as the seat of all emancipatory movements and of social evolution.⁷⁰ A countervailing factor to cultural domination exists in societies having a strong working class movement, party ideology or culture; these can serve as more nourishing environments for the advance of worker cooperation.⁷¹ Nor need counter cultural values emerge in revolutionary scenarios. They may simply form a transposition of values beyond one site of social practice – such as the family or government – in which they are perceived as legitimate, even by the dominant culture, to another.⁷²

Such sites of social practice which do not harbour and reproduce the dominant (capitalist/étatist) ideology are also much more widespread than may be intuitively realised.⁷³ Capitalism/étatism even in unmediated societies without a visible countervailing movement, do not pervade all areas of social activity. These conditions also find expression at the micro, individual level in ambivalent attitudes to power and authority, or in what Gramsci called a contradictory consciousness.⁷⁴

The prospects of a bi-polar hegemonic condition must also be assessed from an economic viewpoint. The existence of non-hegemonic relations of production alongside hegemonic ones has been an historical condition for many years in both étatist and capitalist economies.⁷⁵ Literature on such an articulation of modes of production,⁷⁶ each of which is governed by specific, distinct social and technical relations of production, is very vast.⁷⁷ The general conclusion of the analysis is that non-hegemonic modes enable a higher degree of labour exploitation and that such modes, while harbouring different social and technical relations, are effectively subservient to the dominant productive mode. Similarly, work cooperatives have tended to play the underdogs in this situation, serving to subsidize and contribute to the recuperation of the hegemonic economy from periodic crisis.⁷⁸

Whether circumscribed or paralleled by impersonal and commercial market transactions, or bureaucratized and centralized planning decisions,

worker cooperatives can adapt in many ways without necessarily succumbing to a subservient status, as implied by the articulation theorists. Worker cooperatives can produce special products or services that meet demands which the ordinary market cannot or is unwilling to satisfy;⁷⁹ they can and should verticalize their production by building chains of loyalty and solidarity among themselves and other social groupings.⁸⁰ The affiliation to and the provisional support of social movements would also serve as an alternative, ready market for the cooperatives' products.⁸¹

It has been suggested that the only viable economic strategy to counter a hegemonic economic system is to delink from it.⁸² This is very difficult to execute or maintain given the existence of entrenched commercial and political interests, persisting economic dependence and outward-oriented cultural tendencies and aspirations.⁸³ These can be mitigated, if not actually overcome, by a cooperative economy, that is as self-sustaining as possible, and an ideology, that is culturally self-reliant. Both of these are to be established and maintained, certainly during the process of cooperative maturation, by social movement support.

Thirdly and lastly, the case for dual power also finds supportive psychological indicators. The existence of an external, non-cooperative environment can act as an anti-referent group for the worker cooperators, fostering a spirit of ethnocentrism and self-identity which strengthens the cooperative spirit, whether based on a collectivist ideology or on ethnic and cultural ties.⁸⁴

If one goes back to Marx's historical determinism, it may be suggested that the seeds of the downfall of capitalism (as he would put it) are not located in the contradictions of the economic sphere: the class struggle and the fall in the rate of profit do not appear today to have the revolutionary potential one could validly postulate 120 years ago.⁸⁵ However, there may be discrete but powerful gravediggers of capitalism at work in the cultural and ideological spheres. That societies, in particular capitalist democracies, tolerate a war of position may be both their strength and their weakness. It is this tolerance which must be exploited by the social movements disposed towards change to tip the scales in favour of evolutionary social transformation.⁸⁶

Conclusion

An appraisal of the performance of worker cooperation has identified

various forces and pressures at work, which emanate from the environmental contextuality of these cooperative ventures. The agents of degeneration have been diagnosed as expressions of dominant socio-economic power relations and cultural values. The argument has therefore proposed that successful worker cooperation is possible only when this hegemony is sufficiently mitigated by a counter-hegemony: the latter would nurture an attractive environment, wherein worker cooperation would be a natural state of affairs. This project is envisaged to unfold via an appropriate political programme of evolutionary social change: a Gramscian-style war of attrition, which involves the inspiration and support of a social movement and, in particular, the operationalization of counter-hegemonic education.

In implementing this strategy, certain problems can be foreseen in advance. Apart from the voluntaristic conditions to this evolutionary strategy, there are also structural limitations, which reflect the tenacity of traditionally established values and patterns of social behaviour, as well as the trained incapacity of social agents, that is persons and institutions, which are themselves products of a given social fabric they are purportedly keen to transform.⁸⁷ A continuous dialectic presents itself, therefore, between the hegemonic/degenerative forces on one hand, and the counter-hegemonic/regenerative forces on the other, in the process of attempted directed social change. The function of education in supporting successful worker cooperation is a case in point to explore these dynamics. They will be examined in practical details in Chapter 4.

NOTES

1. The Scott Bader Commonwealth is described in Oakeshott (1978, pp. 75–8; 82–3); Hirondelle in Oakeshott (1978, pp. 130–1); Cruz Azul in Smole-Grobovsek (1986); Edilfornaciai in Thornley (1981, pp. 158–9); The Cheeseboard of California in Jackall (1984) and the Mondragon Movement in various texts but notably in Thomas & Logan (1982).

2. For example, Clegg (1960, p. 126) and Blumberg (1968, p. 3) consider worker cooperatives as inappropriate structures for industrial democracy.

3. These laws include those of Oppenheimer (1896); Michels (1958); Webb (1920); Gide (1930); Luxemburg (1970) and Meister (1973).

4. The large corpus of literature on cooperative case studies includes Bernstein (1976); Bradley & Gelb ((1983); Fals-Borda et al. (1976); Gamson & Levin (1984); Nash & Hopkins (1976); Meister (1969); Oakeshott (1978) Dickstein (1988); Stephen (1982); Thornley (1981); Vanek (ed.), (1975); Worsley (1971) and Sandkull (1984). Alternative assessments of why cooperatives fail resort to a historical, diachronic approach, observing the unfolding drama leading to a worker cooperative's downfall. This is undertaken, among others, by Galjart (1975) and Batstone (1983).

5. These include Potter (1891) and Webb & Webb (1920), both reported in Young & Rigge (1983); Pryor (1983, pp. 161–2); Webb (1928) reported in Cornforth (1983, pp. 173–4); Thornley (1981, pp. 10–11, 26–8) and Oakeshott (1980).

6. In this particular case, the resort to a typology hopefully qualifies as valid since the subsequent analysis shall indeed examine the variables identified in combination, relating them to a common, primordial condition.

7. The limitation of small scale saw the end of Little Women in Sunderland, England, while capital shortage led to the winding up of the Triumph Motorcycle plant at Meriden, also in England. See Thornley (1981, p. 75) and Bradley & Gelb (1983, *passim*) respectively.

8. The Ousebourne Cooperative Engineering Works in Newcastle, England, was started in 1871 but was forced into liquidation within four short years, particularly because it entered into the tough and sophisticated market of engine production without adequate managerial, marketing or costing skills. The trade union movement lost £60,000 in the process, a handsome sum in those days. See Oakeshott (1978, pp 57–8). Alchian & Demsetz (1972) argue that remuneration rates for managerial staff which are low relative to counterparts in capitalist organizations will not attract top quality expertise and will therefore impede the growth and success of collective organizations.

9. Webb (1920, p. 72) concluded that, even when professional management is enjoyed by a cooperative, the relationship between management and rank-and-file members in such democratic contexts becomes an impossible one. Shirom (1972) and Jensen & Meckling (1979) reach a similar conclusion based on more recent research.

10. This was one factor leading to the demise of Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering

of Liverpool, England. No distinction was made between union and management structures at the firm and discipline could not be imposed. Details from Young & Rigge (1983). For a complete case study see Eccles (1981).

11. The 'iron law of degeneration' of Meister (1973) and the 'iron law of oligarchy' of Michels (1958) make a similar point.

12. See, for example, Olson (1965) and Ingham (1970).

13. A strike in 1974 at Ulgor, the largest cooperative in the Mondragon group, was indeed blamed on the sheer size of the workforce which had led to inadequate communication networks and to worker alienation. See the brief report in Thomas & Logan (1982, pp. 35-6) and in Zwerdling (1980). As a rule, subsequent to this strike, workforce size in the Mondragon cluster has a maximum ceiling of five hundred. Young & Rigge (1983, p. 137).

14. Barkai (1977) and Ben-Ner (1982) discuss this phenomenon in relation to the Israeli Kibbutzim. Roca (1975) discusses it with respect to the Sugar Cooperatives in Peru.

15. A similar process occurs in centrally-planned economies, where economically successful cooperatives have been absorbed by the state-owned sector – see Oakeshott (1978, p. 217).

16. This led to the demise of the Rochdale Pioneers. See Oakeshott (1978, p. 16).

17. Wilson (1982) and Chaplin & Cowe (1977) have argued that many problems faced by cooperatives are the same as those faced by other small businesses.

18. As argued by Boissevain (1981), Storey (1982) and Bannock (1981). Schumacher (1973) is generally hailed as a main exponent of the 'small is beautiful' theory. He does not plead for independent small scale firms, however, only for a humanization and decentralization of large scale production.

19. As argues Galjart (1975).

20. See Curran & Stanworth (1981); Rainnie (1985a, b); Jefferis (1988).

21. Anderson (1982, p. 923) mentions several reasons to explain this widespread condition.

22. This is demonstrated empirically with respect to the United States by Bluestone & Harrison (1982, Chapter 7). Brusco & Sabel (1981) suggest, however, that highly capitalized, market-sensitive small firms are exempted from these conditions.

23. Rosa Luxemburg (1970, p. 69) condemns worker cooperatives to failure due to either liquidation or degeneration into pure capitalist firms. Gide's famous paradox (1930, p. 7) states that the more successful cooperatives are economically, the more liable they are to fail socially. Oppenheimer's law of transformation (1896) suggests how a dominant economy brakes, arrests and remoulds anomolous production units to conform to the dominant model. Oppenheimer's views are paraphrased in Nash & Hopkins (1976, p. 17).

24. One very comprehensive review of these is provided by Hopkins (1985).

25. As conclude the studies edited by Nash et al. (1976) and the UNRISD studies of the early 1970s. See Apthorpe (ed.), (1970); Apthorpe (1972); Fals-Borda (1971); Fals-Borda et al. (1976); Inayatullah (1972); Inayatullah (ed.), (1970); Carroll et al. (1969).
26. See for example Foster (1965); Huizer (1970) and Hyden (1983).
27. As Chambers (1983) argues convincingly.
28. Inayatullah (1972, p. 263). Shaw (1986) argues how ethnic interests become more pronounced in times of economic hardship. Russell (1984) examines the effect of ethnicity on the formation and degeneration of taxi cooperatives in Los Angeles, USA.
29. As expounded by Gerschenkron (1966). Conditionalities imposed by World Bank/IMF directives on debt-ridden countries as well as corrupt public administration have provoked outcries for a minimalist public role in development policy. See Toye (1987) and Sandbrook (1985).
30. Inayatullah (1972, p. 270); Spear (1982); Hyman (1979) and Bean (1985, Chapter 9).
31. As described in detail by Worsley (1971) and by Reed (1977).
32. As, for example, Spear (1982, p. 41) reports in the case of India and Inayatullah (1972) with respect to Sri Lanka.
33. As argues Gagnon (1976) in the case of cooperative movements in Tunisia and Senegal.
34. This condition is comparable to those of *Gemeinschaft* and Mechanical Solidarity which are associated with pre-industrial life. See Tonnies (1955) and Durkheim (1933) respectively.
35. Such problematic consequences are discussed broadly by Birungi (1986).
36. See, for example, Adeyeye (1978) on West Africa and Lowdermilk (1964) with respect to the Punjab. Mandel (1968, pp. 30-6) cites from anthropological literature other examples of indigenous cooperation with reference to Dahomey, New Guinea, Borneo, Russia and elsewhere. See also Dore (1971) and Galjart & Buijs (1982, p. 81) for a wider but conditional treatment of this hypothesis.
37. As revealed by Gosselin (1970) with respect to African communities and by various other contributors in Nash et al. (1976).
38. Worsley (1971, *passim*). A remarkably similar point is made by Titmuss (1971) to explain the reduction of blood donations in the UK when a gift relationship became commoditized.
39. This view goes back to Engels and to Lenin's debate with the Narodniks. Meillassoux (1972) and Hyden (1983) are notable contemporary adherents to a similar view.
40. There is apparently even a case to be made for alternative technology. Conventional equipment may import ordinary production relations based on the division of labour,

as happened to the French cooperative, Boimondau. See De Bettignies & Hofstede (1977).

41. These include: the strong presence of Scandinavian immigrants in the US Plywood Coops; East European Jews in Kibbutzim; Basque Nationalists in Mondragon. See Gamson & Levin (1984, pp. 225-7). The concept of an occupational community used by Lockwood (1966) and Parkin (1967) is also useful in explaining working class consciousness and collective identity. Hofstede (1980) presents an interesting comparative study of certain cultural traits. This has been applied to workplace democracy by De (1984) and Villanueva (1988), among others. On the importance of a support organization see Chapter 2 Note 63. The requirement is stipulated also by Bernstein (1976) and Rothschild-Witt (1979). Refer also to Chapter 7 Note 85.

42. Kuhn (1962) developed the concept of a paradigm to exemplify, historically and culturally, a specific vision of reality which effectively inhibits and restricts progress in the area, until an alternative paradigm powerful enough to take over the preceding one is developed.

43. The effect of vocabulary in common usage to serve as a vehicle of self-righteous capitalism is undertaken by Schuller (1981).

44. Gouldner (1955) suggests that there exists an iron law of democracy to counter the iron law of bureaucracy posited by Michels. He accuses many social scientists of becoming morticians, all too eager to bury men's hopes for a better working life. Batstone (1983) argues that a resurgence of democratic values may follow the degeneration phase. Other studies suggest that, it has never been forcefully established whether cooperative firms are more prone to failure than conventional ones. See Jones (1979, 1980); Jones & Svejnar (1982); Stephen (1982). Over and above these points, there inevitably remains a strong normative basis for affirming this claim.

45. The paradigm that all matter must degenerate into unusable energy has given way to models which can now postulate an infinite, self-generating universe. The analogy with worker cooperation is obvious.

46. For example, different strategies of cooperative-oriented social change are discussed in Clayre (1980).

47. The strong cooperative movement (especially before 1973) in Cyprus is a case in point. A progressive Cypriot established the first credit cooperative society in his own native village but then lobbied Parliament to enact supportive legislation - see Cyprus Cooperative College (1975). For an evaluation of the demonstration effect in Africa see Apthorpe (1972, pp. 100-2). The spillover effect has been criticized on the grounds of being unlikely in contexts where access to and influence over educational mass media facilities and socio-cultural processes by workers is limited. See Baumgartner et al. (1979).

48. The Leninist-Marxist strategy of revolutionary change led by a vanguard party of the working class is one variant of this approach.

49. As happened both in the case of Tanzania and Algeria. See Ergas (1982) and

McHenry (1976) on the former case; and Clegg (1979) and Raptis (1980, pp. 65-74) on the latter.

50. Where radicalism has won, 'it begins to look suspiciously like conservatism'. J.E. Thomas (1982, p. 35). Bendix (1963) makes a similar point in his critical comparison of management ideology in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia.

51. See Horvat (1982, p. 258) and Greenberg (1983, p. 193). The same implication governs the works of Kerr et al. (1962) and Bell (1961). See the criticism in Cox (1977, p. 409).

52. Raptis (1980, p. 131).

53. As, for example, described by Spear (1982, p. 45).

54. See Kessler-Harris & Silverman (1979) and, more extensively, Bowles & Gintis (1976) for a critique elaborated on in Chapter 4.

55. This point is made, among others, by Galjart (1975, p. 75). A classic case of this model's weakness is the project of the Comilla Academy of Bangladesh. The project was hoping to catalyze a complete reorganization of the social and economic village structures with a considerable investment in educational training and collective decision-making. The outcome, however, was a reinforcement, rather than a transformation, of existing social inequalities. See, for example, Blair (1978), Abdullah et al. (1976) and Inayatullah (1972).

56. Touraine (1981) defines a social movement as a collective identity bearing a common field of action and an antagonistic relation to an opposed group.

57. Such a perspective was proposed by the UNRISD project on popular participation. See Fals-Borda et al. (1976) for an overall appraisal.

58. This is the process of social objectification of democratic management, described among others by Bernstein (1976); Kester (1980); Stephens (1980) and Horvat (1982).

59. The dynamic resolution of dependency versus autonomy is discussed further in Chapter 7.

60. See Gramsci (1975). His position has been reformulated by Carnoy (1981) and Gorz (1968), among others.

61. Williams (1960), cited in Carnoy (1981, p. 245). A detailed analysis of the origin and meaning of hegemony is also undertaken in Hoffman (1984, especially Chapter 3) and Merrington (1968).

62. Refer to Note 41 above.

63. Sharp (1980, p. 116). See also Bowles & Gintis (1986). Horkheimer & Adorno (1975) refer to this as a cultural industry.

64. Femia (1981, p. 53).

65. For Gramsci's analysis of the failure of the Turin Strikes see Anderson (1976). For insight into the Allende era in Chile and reasons for its bloody demise see Winn

(1976); for an interpretation of its failure in the light of Gramscian theory, see Hoffman (1984, pp. 158–67). For an econometric analysis of the Chilean self-managed textile sector, see Espinosa and Zimbalist (1978).

66. Lenin (1950, Vol. II, p. 429), quoted in Parkin (1979, pp. 159–60) suggested that bourgeois democracy was a much less transparent system of oppression than Russian tsarism; it was a relatively simple matter to win the Russian proletariat for revolution. See also Femia (1981, p. 191).

67. Johnson (1981) thus relates the demise of leftist governments in Western Europe in the immediate post-war period to the provision of Marshall Aid. The demise of the Allende regime in Chile has also been attributed in part to the trade practices of the United States and West Germany. In contrast, many cooperative experiments in industrializing countries have been successful, only to the extent of better linking dependent capital in the world capitalist system. See Gagnon (1976).

68. The notion of dual power has been applied by Raptis (1980, p. 133) and Glucksmann (1968, p. 104) to denote the state of affairs in France during the May 1968 events. The notion is not to be taken as suggesting two mutually exclusive categories, since, as critics of dualist models have sufficiently pointed out, such a mutual compartmentalization is not borne out by social reality. See, for example, Breman (1976).

69. The notion of counter-culture and counter-hegemony are in conformity with the Hegelian notion of antithesis.

70. Wertheim (1974) calls this the counterpoint phenomenon. His concept is applied to peasant resistance by Huizer (1975).

71. Greenberg (1983) calls it a countervailing factor to cultural domination present in mediated societies. Levin (1980) equates the potential for counter-culture with 'principles of contradiction' which govern social institutions such as schools. Stephens (1980) considers these cultural and political variables, which are conducive to social democratization, as the factors that will determine whether industrial democracy ends up serving cooperative or transformative goals.

72. Bowles & Gintis (1981).

73. Baudelot & Establet (1971) argue how French working class counter ideology is disseminated by trade unions. The theology of liberation expounded by Latin American Catholic priests and Islamic Fundamentalism can similarly be seen as the ideological arms of religious social movements. One can also mention at least four lay social movements active in the United States since the 1960s: the feminist, ecological, racial and gay/lesbian, which have attempted to develop the elements of a counter-hegemonic and oppositional culture. See Aronowitz (1981) quoted in Giroux (1984, p. 125). See also Castells (1983) on urban movements and Douglas (1983) on the third sector in contemporary societies.

74. Studies of industrial relations by action sociologists confirm the existence of two levels of normative reference, an abstract conceptual one and a situational one couched in conflict terms. See Batstone, et al. (1976); Parkin (1972, p. 95); Gorz (1982). The

conflict and consensus schools have emerged from these two perspectives when the evidence suggests that they are complementary. Gramsci manages the reconciliation by his exposure to both deterministic Marxism (Lenin, Bukharin) and Italian Renaissance Humanism (Vico, Croce). See Femia (1981, pp. 83–5).

75. As argues for example, Wolf (1982).

76. Articulation means both linkage and giving expression. See Post (1978, pp. 18, 45).

77. The AMP thesis postulates that capitalism lowers costs by separating the sphere of commodity production from those of subsistence production and reproduction. See Meillassoux (1972), Scott (1976), Bennholdt-Thomsen (1982) and Wolpe (1980) for AMP applications. Ecological niches are also recommended by Stryjan (1983, pp. 277, 280) and Hedberg (1980). Oakeshott (1978, p. 67) suggests that the survival of the old British coops was strongly due to concentration on a range of 'stable' products and on servicing a specific group of customers.

78. As has been described in Chapter 2.

79. Sandkull (1984); Rothschild-Witt (1979). Worker cooperatives may be also the only production units willing to produce use-values and public goods (utilities) rather than exchange-values (commodities). See Marx (1970, especially pp. 43–9).

80. Collaboration between cooperatives is highly developed in Italy, France and Basque Spain. See Young & Rigge (1983, Chapter 5). This kind of reciprocity is the sixth cooperative principle adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1966. Solidarity links by worker cooperatives with political parties, communities, trade unions, progressive social movements and non-profit maximizing enterprises are plentiful. See also Jordan (1986).

81. Supportive bodies, such as governments, may provide phased-out monopolies or guarantees of specific product demands as a tangible means of economic support for cooperative initiatives. This was initially understood, for example, in the case of the self-managed EMAB furniture factory in Mali. See Kester & Sidibe (1986). Similar suggestions are made by Jones (1986, pp. 278–9).

82. Frank (1983) is a major proponent of delinking strategies with reference to industrializing economies as an escape from remaining satellites in the world capitalist system. He sees social movements as important agents of social transformation, which involves delinking. See Frank & Fuentes (1987). A criticism of Frank's ideas is exemplified by Palma (1978).

83. One recent example of such delinking in crisis is Burma.

84. Ethnocentrism refers to the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. The study by Sherif et al. (1961) is a classic on anti-reference group engineering. Refer also to Touraine's definition of a social movement in Note 56 above.

85. Neo-Marxist attempts to re-define class encounter difficulty when attempting to

operationalize the concept on the basis of property ownership. See Wright (1980), Carchedi (1983). The diffusion of the Marxist revolutionary threat is put forward, among others, by Dahrendorf (1959), Parkin (1979) and Offe (1985).

86. One may eschew a historic trend in the transmutation of authority, in that work democratization may be seen as the immediate and inevitable next step following upon the democratization of royal absolutism, of executive government, of franchise, of contract of employment and of ownership. See Revans (1981).

87. 'Trained incapacity', a concept coined by Veblen, refers to 'that state of affairs in which one's abilities function as inadequacies or blind spots'. The concept is similar to Warnotte's notion of 'professional deformation'. See discussion in Merton (1968, pp. 251-2).

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the statistical analysis performed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study. It includes a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the findings of the research. The data shows a clear trend of increasing activity over time.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results have significant implications for the field of study and may lead to further research in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the key findings and provides a final statement on the importance of the research.

6. The sixth part of the document includes a list of references to the sources used in the study. It includes a variety of books, articles, and other publications that provide additional information on the topic.

7. The seventh part of the document includes a list of appendices. These appendices provide additional data and information that support the findings of the study.

8. The eighth part of the document includes a list of figures. These figures are graphs and charts that illustrate the data presented in the study.

9. The ninth part of the document includes a list of tables. These tables provide a detailed breakdown of the data presented in the study.

10. The tenth part of the document includes a list of footnotes. These footnotes provide additional information and clarification on the findings of the study.

11. The eleventh part of the document includes a list of acknowledgments. These acknowledgments thank the individuals and organizations that provided support and assistance during the study.

12. The twelfth part of the document includes a list of contact information. This information provides a way for others to reach out to the researchers for more information or to request further data.

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4 AN IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE: FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Introduction

Liberal ideology would have one believe that schooling is the means towards realizing the ideals of democratic participation.¹ Accordingly, the school offers to all an equal opportunity towards full personal development, based on impartial and objectively assessed competition. In this way, social class inequality can be overcome through individual social mobility, for which school serves as a direct access mechanism.² Those who fail to measure up have only themselves to blame.³

A political economy approach, however, suggests that, rather than having an egalitarian effect on social class inequalities, the school serves to perpetuate the hierarchical division of labour, which can be seen as a modern variant of the class structure.⁴ The ideology of meritocracy and social mobility sanctifies individual rather than class struggle in the liberal dream of a white-collar, well-paid job for all.⁵ The school's major functions are argued to be more correctly understood as those of reproduction and legitimation: the school reproduces the existing social system by socializing the young generation into adequate and appropriate civic and occupational roles, making them 'good' citizens and workers, able to comply with the political and occupational demands of their society.⁶ A structural correspondence may be said to exist between the school's social relations and those of production, such that the former replicate the hierarchical division of labour.⁷ In the process, the school also serves to legitimize the existing socio-economic relations and power inequalities such that power domination persists via consent and not coercion. Thus, in a capitalist society, it legitimizes economic inequality by providing a seemingly open, objective and scientific meritocratic mechanism of assigning individuals unequal status and economic positions; it legitimizes and rewards the pursuit of individual effort and achievement and of inter-personal competition by its individually-based norms of assessment, achievement and of sanction imposition; it legitimizes and enforces power distance, obedience and respectful submission to authority. Thus the school functions as an integration process for the younger generation into the logic of the actual system and cultivates conformity to it.⁸ More broadly, the school can be seen as a reproducer and legitimator of forms of domination wider than class – as this is narrowly understood in structural Marxism – such as patriarchal, racial and age relations.⁹

The regenerative and legitimating functions of the School are operationalized by the teacher adopting the triple role of *custodian* (master of ceremonies, arbiter of rules and director of the stage), *moralist* (substituting for parents, God and the State, indoctrinating the pupil about what is true or false, right or wrong) and *therapist* (authorized to delve into the personal life of his pupil, persuading him to adopt a particular vision and morality).¹⁰ In extreme forms of this condition, there is nothing on which the children have to cooperate in order to get things done. The teacher will do it for them anyway. Hence, when the teacher requests cooperation, it is merely a request for submission. In milder forms of this condition, the teacher will see to it that children practise cooperation – in deciding whether to study the Greeks or the Romans, in nominating class officers, in organizing a class project. But these are usually small and trivial matters; all along, the teacher remains ultimately in command, and the intellectual and organizational skills associated with genuine group work and cooperation are played down, or are manipulated for individual benefits.¹¹ It is therefore hardly surprising that many young people are in no way prepared to undertake cooperative efforts (amongst other things), after so many years of uninterrupted schooling. Pupils get used to having their scholastic life planned in minute detail by the teachers hour after hour; while the subject matter is meticulously devised far away by curriculum developers.¹² Little of what might be called metaphorically the production process is left to chance. The schooling process implicitly tends to regard men and women as passive beings, meant to conform, adapt themselves and submit themselves to superior authority. The principles underlying such schooling have been identified as follows:

- a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- b) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
- c) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- d) The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly;
- e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- f) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the students comply;
- g) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- h) The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own pro-

fessional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;

- j) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects.¹³

One has only to insert the word *manager* for teacher and *workers* for students to have an accurate description of relations in the traditional workplace.¹⁴ The correspondence is not coincidental: the school, as a social institution, remains functionally addressed towards producing the workers and the skills required by occupational demands; it also produces the values and behaviour patterns which legitimize the undemocratic structure of economic life, the dominance of the employer/owner over the worker.

A more idealistic view of education, traced back to Rousseau and Mill,¹⁵ upholds that the school could and should serve as a means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality, discovering how to participate actively in the transformation of their world. The function of education is seen in this vein as that of fostering the acquisition of a full range of powers – political, physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and aesthetic – to control one's existence and contribute actively to community development.¹⁶ Such a development is however not likely to occur unless in a context of social and economic justice, based on equality, reciprocity and active political involvement.¹⁷

Introducing the Dilemma

This is the kind of democratic context which is intended to coalesce around a worker cooperative economy. How to get there, as has been theorized in Chapter 3, depends also on the provision of counter-hegemonic education. But if the educational system is an integral component and reproducer of the existing dominant hegemony, how can it ever, even with the best of intentions, prove to be counter-hegemonic?

This is a crucial dilemma which must be resolved. It applies not only to education, but to all the forces, agents and structures intended to lead the counter-hegemonic process under the aegis of a social movement approach to social change.

Social movements are themselves products of a given social fabric and the inputs they must rely upon – particularly people and institutions

– are integral parts of the social system that the social movements are purportedly eagerly seeking to transform. How then to build a new social order when all the raw materials for the task are products of the old one? It is therefore no wonder that degeneration is a common occurrence among those bodies and processes, and not just worker cooperatives, which seek to challenge the established social order in their organizational goals.¹⁸

Counter-hegemonic education for worker cooperation, then, is itself liable to degeneration, and may end up reflecting, reproducing and so effectively reinforcing, the established power relations and cultural traits it was meant to challenge.¹⁹ In view of its political long-term objective, counter-hegemonic education is meant to be the site of a battleground where different ideologies cross swords. Its objective is to develop a conceptual framework, that challenges the dominant value system and, at the same time, presents a comprehensible, alternative character. This, when all the ingredients available are themselves products of the dominant value system: the subject disciplines, the aids and technology, the teaching styles, the very teachers and students of the learning process. Even the language is a product of the dominant ethos, so that, for instance, the terms *teacher* and *student* embody authoritarian power-unequal relations.²⁰ This chapter seeks to consider briefly a number of aspects relating to the counter-hegemonic teaching process. The threat of degeneration is exposed, alongside the regenerative measures intended to push forward the counter-cultural process.²¹

Subject Categories

The process of counter-cultural educational provision involves the imparting of knowledge about the nature of society, which enables one to probe deeper into its inner logic, clear away any assumptions implicit in the judgement of social phenomena, and therefore question what one may be otherwise inclined naturally to take as a given.²² Social studies is perceived as adequate ground to cultivate such a social literacy. It promotes an understanding of social institutions and the role of the individual within them, which, it is felt, can be well grounded in the basic principles of economics, sociology, law, political science, psychology and anthropology.²³

It is all too easy, though, to maintain the artificial academic sub-

divisions between these school subjects and this is often constrained by the availability of teaching personnel, who are only competent in one specialized domain. Effective teaching, though, should recognize that these are unreal fragmentations of the total human experience. One should be free, as a group, to adopt a holistic approach, to draw on different formal disciplines and treat whole problems and issues, if they are considered relevant, at any particular time.²⁴ This may prove easier when the educators are not professional teachers. Workers from the production line, trade unionists, managers, leaders and animators in social and community affairs could perform a very relevant role in counter-hegemonic education.²⁵ They could take to a problem-solving, multi-disciplinary approach more easily and naturally.

Teacher-Student Relations

A second issue related to professional teachers is that they tend not to be student-centred in their normal routines at school. They are concerned with keeping time, imparting a set package of information, abiding by an established curriculum, keeping aloof and insisting on authoritarian control of the classroom. Such constraints are carried over and assumed even outside formal schooling in adult worker education. The consequence of such a transposition is that the educational programme becomes counter-productive, reinforcing rather than challenging and replacing the anti- or a-cooperative skills and attitudes inculcated by the school and the wider society. The requirements of educational activity for worker cooperation are such that the style of the activity itself 'should be cooperative to the greatest possible degree as much as self-management itself'.²⁶

This does not imply that there is no longer any room for any teaching, that is, for the imparting of knowledge and skills by individuals appointed for that purpose. If one extends the parallel between the practice of education and that of self-management referred to in the quotation above, then the importance of teaching can be equated to the existence of competent, professional management, that has been recognized, even within worker cooperatives, as a prerequisite for viable economic performance. But then, such managerial staff remain ultimately accountable to the workforce. So, generally speaking, a change is necessary in the authoritarian relation between teacher and student, which would reflect

better the relation between a manager and any worker-member in a worker cooperative.

This is not an easy task, since both sides of the learning process have been moulded in the old style. Potential students may give in to the scorn and ridicule encountered from peers for going back to school. Even when and if such social pressures are overcome, they may still seek authoritarian scenarios, as they have been accustomed to do. For their part, trained as professional disseminators of information, the teachers may be predominantly concerned with the preservation of the control over cultural capital, that is, knowledge.²⁸ One way this manifests itself is in the imparting of information, especially one's own brand of information. This is considered so important that little time is left for anything else.²⁹ In this way, educators might be fostering the growth of a new paternalism, not only because of the absence of good intentions but in spite (and sometimes even because) of them.³⁰

Group Work

One pedagogic technique, which is especially relevant to the development of cooperative skills, is group work. It is suggested from social psychological research that there are many ways in which cooperation can be taught and understood, and that such methods can often lead to better individual and group performances, in addition to improved interpersonal relationships.³¹ Teaching strategies, though, should incorporate tasks that are appropriate to a cooperative structure and construct groups in a way that allows individuals to participate equally. There ought, then, to be careful preparation of topics, as well as of personnel and physical components.³² Otherwise, group work sessions may be manipulated by domineering individuals who stifle group discussion and assume leadership status, which the rest of the group may be all too willing to concede. Such authoritarian led groups may perform effectively in the short run and in the presence of their leader; democratically led groups, in contrast, would tend to take more time to reach agreement but then perform more effectively in the long term, even in the group leader's absence.³³

This is not to say that leadership is some intrinsically evil phenomenon to be weeded out from democratically run units, be they worker cooperatives or educational group sessions. On the contrary, evidence

suggests that the question of leadership is quite a crucial one, particularly in cooperative structures.³⁴ The point, rather, is that such leadership, which may indeed be charismatic, remains accountable to the general membership and respectful of its participatory rights.

A recent innovation in group work technique is the T-Group. It comprises some eight to twelve individuals, with an experienced trainer, concerned to learn more about themselves and the way people relate to one another in order to influence change within organizations and the wider community. Compared to the traditional role of a teacher, the trainer is passive, intervening in the discussion about as often as the other members of the group. When such interventions take place, it is not to take up the traditional didactic role, but rather to encourage the members to observe and reflect on group processes, to offer interpretations of member behaviour and to suggest that other group members share their feelings in relation to group events.³⁵

Games and Play

Other educational devices and formats, which foster group consciousness and need not be rooted in authoritarian relations between the two sides of the learning process include role play and other games.³⁶ These allow students to live situations in which they can bring their own experiences and skills to bear, taking realistic decisions and facing the consequences. In the process of participating in such educational activities, the student becomes deeply involved, and may start understanding the socio-psychological processes which influence one's own and others' behaviour, the relations of power between different people, the usefulness of group cooperation as against competition. Hence, the direction of the programme is towards the awakening of consciousness, a change of mentality involving an acute, realistic awareness of one's locus in nature and in society; the capacity to analyse critically its causes and consequences, and rational action directed at its transformation.³⁷

Participation in the Management of Education

Democratizing education also means involving more people in its management. Such an involvement could be developmental, starting from such areas as seminar organization, course timetabling and progressing,

to include the fixing of educational objectives, the definition of subject matter, handling problems of method and of pedagogy, and dealing with salaries and regulations.³⁸ The involvement of students in such areas of decision making may be thwarted by the initiators of the educational programmes. The latter may consider such student involvement as unnecessary and presumptuous interference, as well as an invitation to trouble, since students would be expected to manipulate the process of decision making to their own advantage. While this may be true, the possibility remains that, even if avenues for co-management are institutionalized, they may be manipulated, perhaps quite unconsciously such that students may be presented with a *fait accompli*, which makes further deliberation superfluous. Or else, students may be overawed and subdued by the professional authority and persuasive talents of their educated mentors. This, in itself, is an argument for providing worker education.³⁹ Otherwise, the condition is likely to lead to management interest only being put on the agenda and eventually being advanced. The experience is closely paralleled by that of workers involved in participation in decision making within undertakings where managerial rights tend to be consolidated and managerial authority more strongly legitimized.⁴⁰

Selection Criteria

Traditionally, most institutions of learning have been receptive only to such students who have completed a prescribed set of studies and performed at a specified level on accepted examinations. Such selection criteria are to change if one is not to discriminate against the multitude without the conventional credentials. Consequently, such details as work experience, activism in worker and community organizations, leadership qualities and experience in participatory structures should be included among alternative selection guidelines.

Nevertheless, a lack of conventional credentials is not the major obstacle to enrolling on counter-hegemonic education programmes. More fundamental constraints include lack of finance, unavailability of time, domestic support or study space. Such constraints are more difficult to mitigate, and are particularly responsible for low levels of female enrolment. Public and trade union funds may be forthcoming to subsidize worker participants, but still they could be dissuaded due to a considerable loss in terms of opportunity cost; they might well have to forfeit overtime

or a supplementary job to attend classes and study. The ILO adopted Convention number 140 in 1974 in favour of paid educational leave; ratification of this by governments, or inclusion of a clause to this effect in union-management collective agreements, would act as a partial solution. Up to 1985, seventeen countries had ratified the convention. The principle, though, is mainly applied to formal types of education.⁴¹

Distance Learning

Distance learning, via the radio, newspapers and, more recently, television, is being increasingly used for worker education purposes, exposing a larger number of persons to educational stimuli, even though they cannot provide the depth and scope of coverage that is possible in a more extended course of study. In industrializing countries, with still widespread illiteracy, radio is the only advanced communication technique which has found a proper place. Its low cost, adequate reliability, low maintenance requirements and widespread distribution have been used to good effect in a number of countries.⁴² Still, people seem to be mesmerized by the reputedly greater efficiency of other media, notably television, particularly since the latter reproduces both audio and visual cues. All too often, though, sophisticated communications technology ends up transmitting western produced software imbued with western values; therefore the technology acts as an instrument of cultural domination.⁴³ More importantly, such technology, sophisticated as it might be, allows only one-way traffic, which is amenable not to discussion but to rhetoric and vests considerably more power in the hands of the transmitter *vis-à-vis* the receiver. In contrast, a significantly larger educational role can be played by interactive networks, such as the postal service, the telephone or the two-way radio, which can be extended to conference circuits. Such distance learning aids would help to facilitate access between participants in the learning process and develop in them a sense of self-sufficiency to pursue their own education. In contrast, one way traffic technology (which often includes the teacher) mystifies the source of knowledge.⁴⁴

Focus on Women

From experience, it has proved very difficult to organize educational

courses for working women, particularly wives and mothers, because such a dual burden does not permit them the necessary time, energy and commitment. Unless this issue is handled and faced squarely, then the appeal for a cooperative culture and society will be implicitly an appeal for preserving the patriarchal structure of social and political life. Participation, democracy and cooperation at the workplace would be thus implicitly treated as the preserve of men, while, behind the scenes, women continue to provide the material and emotional support essential for the reproduction and maintenance of labour power. It is so much a part of our life, that it is easy to miss this crucial point; the male workers, who are to enjoy the new opportunities and responsibilities of cooperative management, would be in a favourable position to do so precisely because they have wives.⁴⁵

Although women now account for a substantial proportion of the occupational labour force in many countries, female workers remain culturally, socially and economically disadvantaged. They are not represented equally in the various sectors of the economy; they are apt to be less skilled than men; when skilled, they usually hold subordinate posts with little prospect of promotion; their wages for identical work are generally lower than those of their male colleagues, in spite of basic equal wage for equal work legislation.⁴⁶ They also tend to be concentrated in part-time or casual occupations, with low security of employment and limited entitlement to various social welfare provisions, particularly so if they are married mothers. For this reason, they are the most likely victims of reduced labour demand. Women's first responsibility in the eyes of society (and of their menfolk?) still tends in many cultures towards the home and motherhood. Most of those women who take up paid employment do so as part of a double shift; one paid at work and one unpaid in the home. In this manner, women, as a whole, remain structurally inhibited from taking their place as equal participants and full members of democratic workplaces. Their disadvantage with respect to men is witnessed by the relative scarcity of women engaged in extra-home, community affairs. It could be that radical changes in the domestic sphere as well as the workplace and in the wider community should be the targets of counter-hegemonic education. Demands for cooperative management must go beyond the factory and the state, and encompass areas of work that occur in the family and home.

The Normalization of Cooperation

This chapter has identified in practical terms the dialectic between the hegemonic and the counter ideology and values which reflect the condition of dual power that a cooperative sector would have to live with. The discussion focused on education and on various issues involved in the educational process to highlight the conforming and regenerative functions of social institutions. It also establishes one of the guiding principles for institutional support to worker cooperation, that is, an identity between the practice of self-management and the practice of institutional (in this case, educational) support for self-management.⁴⁷

The outcome of the ideological battle waged on the educational front will no doubt also depend on the wider educative process underway in the society at large by the supportive social movement. This educative process is the extent to which experiences of cooperation and collective action are normalized and legitimized within the wider social environment. The most obvious way of bringing about such an escalation and normalization of worker cooperation is by setting up worker cooperatives, which foster a cooperative culture from the very experience of cooperation at the workplace.

Going further, one can devise ways and means of promoting cooperative experiences outside the school and the workplace. One such channel is community participation. This would create wider spaces where cooperative experience, consciousness and legitimacy can be fostered. Such experiences already exist in most societies, but they require consolidation and expansion.

One can also consider the possibility of investing in counter-hegemonic pedagogical provision out of the school system. Relieved from the constraints imposed by the economy's demands and by the needs of the social structure to reproduce and legitimate conventional capitalist values, an out-of-school educational programme can be more easily directed towards achieving counter-hegemonic aims.

Such and similar initiatives would serve to enhance the legitimacy of work cooperation in education, production and civic life. They act to normalize the cooperative condition and socialize participants into its logic and values. This, in turn, should lead to an autonomous expansion of cases of worker cooperation. In the long run, the dependence on external agencies for cooperative education, in terms of technical and

cooperative skills, as well as in counter-cultural terms, may well end. These same initiatives, though, are still affected by the tension between transformation and degeneration. They are also vulnerable to economic and cultural pressures, which manifest themselves in specifically different forms.

Conclusion

Once the strategy for worker cooperation is posited as a vigorous reform of a given social structure, in both economic and cultural terms, the various obstacles to this strategy loom ominously. A number of these are voluntaristic, dependent on the willingness to decentralize decision-making, to expand participatory experiences, to bring about legislative and financial reforms to support worker cooperation. They depend on the leadership of the social movement in question and on a masterful approach to the myriad pressures brought to bear upon it, from inside and outside the movement.

There are also structural difficulties to be surmounted. Counter-hegemonic provisions have their own pitfalls and their success would depend considerably on the success achieved by the wider, broader process of making people aware of and familiar with cooperative activity in society. The difficulties of counter-hegemonic education have been highlighted in detail to serve as an example of how the theory on hegemonic struggles translates in micro terms. Such counter-hegemonic education is nevertheless possible. The Mondragon worker cooperative movement began through the efforts of five graduates who had studied at a small technical school that had been established before by a Jesuit priest in that Basque community. While the curriculum is focused on technical subjects, the school itself – now developed into a fully-fledged polytechnic and a students' factory – is operated according to the same cooperative principles as the other cooperative firms.⁴⁸

Since the text has put forward a plea for a greater appreciation of political, economic and socio-cultural contextualization, it is now proposed to use the theoretical constructs developed above in application to a specific case. Only in this way is the pragmatic value of the theoretical perspective put to the test. It is also via such an empirical investigation that the discussion can be pulled down to investigate the pivotal role of key individuals and institutions in the process of social change, from both

voluntaristic and structural positions. This also permits a successful blend of a macro, structural approach with an action perspective at the micro level. Without this difficult marriage, the degeneration vs regeneration thesis carries all the flavour, and the flaws, of a reductionist model.⁴⁹

NOTES

1. 'Schooling is the age-specific, teacher-related process requiring full-time attendance at an obligatory curriculum.' See Illich (1972, pp. 25-6).
2. The liberal myth of education as the avenue of social mobility is critically discussed with respect to the United States by Kessler-Harris & Silverman (1979, pp. 605-7) and Bowles & Gintis (1976, Chapter 1).
3. Bowles & Gintis (1976, p. 4).
4. Bowles (1974, p. 220).
5. Price (1986, p. 193).
6. This takes place irrespective of socio-political and economic context. Unequal schooling perpetrates a structure of economic inequality which originates outside the school system in the social relationships of the capitalist economy. See Bowles & Gintis (1976, p. 242). While, in the Soviet Union, the organization of many school activities stresses group achievement rather than individual excellence . . . The top scholar is perceived as one who is industrious, highly motivated by the system, selfless and cooperative . . . See Medlin et al. (1971, pp. 183, 193).
7. The correspondence principle is described among others by Bowles & Gintis (1976, p. 131; 1978, p. 61).
8. See, for example, Bowles & Gintis (1976, Chapter 4); Braverman (1974).
9. Giroux (1984, p. 129). This position approximates the grey area between neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian definitions of power relations in society. The latter are seen to result from closure based on both property and status groups. See Parkin (1979), Murphy (1986) as well as the more contemporary position taken by Bowles & Gintis (1981, 1986).
10. Illich (1972, pp. 30-1).
11. Reisman et al. (1954, pp. 83-4).
12. Husen (1974, p. 18).
13. Taken from Freire (1972, p. 59).
14. Cohen-Rosenthal (1984, p. 8).
15. Rousseau and Mill, theorists of participatory democracy, have their ideas on education discussed in Pateman (1970, Chapter 2).
16. See Dewey (1966); Freire (1972).
17. These are, once again, the ideas of Rousseau, Mill, George Cole and more recent radical theorists of Education, such as Gorz (1973) and Lerner (1973).
18. Hyman (1971) describes how trade unions in western democracies have become integrated into the existing social fabric by failing to challenge fundamental property prerogatives, thus performing a legitimating function for the existing power relations.

Przeworski (1985) discusses how socialist parties degenerate when they succumb to electoralism and inevitably take up stakes in healthy capitalism. Wilson (1966) has argued how evangelical sects, established as a reaction to institutionalized religion, became secularized and fully fledged churches themselves, if they survive at all. The degeneration of worker cooperatives or their tolerated existence because of functional articulation within a capitalist/centrally planned economy has already been discussed.

19. For example, Haddab (1985) discusses how lifelong education projects in Algeria became mere ideological pronouncements, fulfilling the objectives already held by institutions that form part of the traditional educational system. The outcome of the Comilla Project has been described in Chapter 3 Note 55.

20. Schuller (1981, p. 285).

21. Many suggestions emerge directly from my personal experience as tutor and educational coordinator of a number of adult education courses organized by the Workers' Participation Development Centre, at the University of Malta.

22. Rizzo (1988, p. 51).

23. Lee & Entwistle (1966, pp. 105-6).

24. Hopkins (1985, p. 42). The argument is similar to Marx's criticism of vulgar economics in contrast to political economy. See Marx (1970, p. 85); Rowthorn (1974). Freire (1972) makes a similar point in his emphasis on de-codification in education.

25. Gelpi (1985a, p. 18).

26. Vanek (ed.) (1975, p. 36). This principle is discussed further in Chapter 7.

27. Lewis (1969, p. 31).

28. This has been argued with respect to all professionals by Illich (1977). The metaphor 'cultural capital' is also used by Bourdieu (1973).

29. Hopkins (1985, p. 168). This may find expression in a frenzy for note-giving, strengthened by a desire and expectation of note-taking by students.

30. Batstone (1979, p. 269).

31. Gamson & Levin (1984, p. 242).

32. Hopkins (1985, p. 170).

33. A pioneering study over the effect of leadership styles on group performance is that by White & Lippitt (1960).

34. This point is taken further in Chapter 8.

35. Wilson & Nichol (1977).

36. The advantage of using games as educational tools has long been recognized by military schools and, more recently, by management development agencies. See for example Williams (1961).

37. Such is the Freirean pedagogy of conscientization. See Freire (1972, 1974). Such approaches generally utilize elements of popular culture that could be considered as counterpoints and show that there is already some kind of resistance to the dominant culture on which counter-cultural education could be based. See Huizer (1975). For a concrete application of the Freirean perspective see the educational objectives and processes of the International Cooperative University in Mexico in Haubert (1986).

38. Fauré et al. (1972, p. 78).

39. This author (Baldacchino (1985)) discusses the importance of worker education as a means to improve the chances of successful negotiation by worker representatives in their dealings with professionally trained, managerial staff.

40. Within this perspective fall many of the practices of the Human Relations School. See for criticism Panitch (1978); King & Van der Vall (1978, Chapter 1); Pateman (1983, *passim*).

41. Hopkins (1985, p. 193). In Italy the 150 hours educational leave is mainly used for the completion of compulsory schooling. See Lichtner (1985, p. 122).

42. The use and misuse of radio as an educational medium is discussed in relation to Dahomey (Benin), Togo, Mali, Niger and Zaire by Defever (1977).

43. For example, so many individuals have been conditioned to see North American ('Red') Indians as the 'bad guys' standing in the way of progress, rather than victims of imperialism in their struggle with the white man. Exposure to innumerable western feature films and serials has most likely played a part in fostering such a value judgement.

44. Illich (1972, p. 76).

45. As argued by Pateman (1983, pp. 115-18).

46. Even in the Mondragon Cooperatives, women have not acquired equal access to higher job strata. See Thomas & Logan (1982, pp. 65, 69). Hacker (1988) pushes the analysis deeper.

47. Vanek (1977). He also suggests five other principles to guide educational provision for worker cooperation: full disclosure; transparency; pairing of co-workers; proximity between educational activities and the workplace; subordination of training in skills to the development of a critical consciousness. Levin (1980, 1981) identified independently five other dimensions: the ability to participate in group decisions; capacity for increased individual decision-making; minimum competences in basic skills; capacity to receive and give training to colleagues; cooperative skills.

48. Thomas & Logan (1982, pp. 52-9).

49. The main thesis being elaborated in this text, if limited exclusively to macro, structural propositions, would leave no space for the political decisions and actions of key individuals who are indeed influential in fashioning social history. In this sense, one may review the criticism levelled by Mouzelis (1980), Banaji (1977) and Friedman (1976) on the reductionist articulation theory, as well as the remarks of Leys (1977), Brenner (1977) and Forbes (1984, p. 73) on the core-periphery model, which is also reductionist.

PART TWO: EMPIRICAL APPLICATION

5 INTRODUCING THE MALTESE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITION

Why Malta?

The selection of the small, Mediterranean island state of Malta as the location to apply the theory developed above requires solid justification, which must go beyond the obvious convenience of the case for the author.

Malta is still a developing nation state, but its economic structure corresponds closely to that of an industrialized country. The resulting environment, then, is an interesting blend of socio-economic variables related to industrialization and its consequences (industrial trade unionism, a significantly large and skilled working class, a market-oriented economy) and cultural variables related to a dependency historically engrained by colonialism.

At the same time, Malta also serves as a typical example of a mediated society, with various social forces and pressures, not all of which can be seen as reflections of a dominant, hegemonic, economic and cultural condition. These social forces – be they individuals, pressure groups or fully-fledged social movements – have been amply documented over a time period which now encompasses almost a century of mediation. Of these, a number present themselves as countervailing forces. Rhetorically and ideologically they project themselves as progressive and counter-hegemonic, seeking a more egalitarian distribution of power, corresponding to a front for wider social democratization. Malta also conforms to a western-style parliamentary democracy, which, relatively speaking, serves as a tolerant medium for the expression of opposing values. These are the ingredients for a Gramscian ‘war of attrition’, including attempts at counter-hegemonic education.

The battleground for this heterogeneous social structure is found in the ongoing developments concerning workplace democracy. Already for almost twenty years, diverse forms of participatory management have been cultivated in Malta in a mixed economy setting. The largest enterprise on the island was turned into a self-managed firm in 1975. Other interesting and hotly debated developments included the establishment of worker cooperatives in 1983-84 and an escalation of worker directors on the boards of parastatal companies over the periods 1970-76 and 1983-88.

Malta's small size also makes it a very convenient social laboratory in which all social phenomena active in larger societies present themselves just the same but on a manageable scale. Malta may be small but it is nevertheless a total society.

I have been able to monitor and assess developments in Maltese society from the objective and academic perspective of a relatively autonomous institution, without pressures from vested interests, and under different governments. In addition, as a research officer since 1982 with an educational, consultancy and research agency operating at the University of Malta committed to the development of local workplace democratization, I have been a privileged observer and, at times, an active participant in this process of social flux. Presenting the case from my viewpoint does have its problems though; it is necessarily a subjective view of life and might only give a partial and distorted semblance of what has actually taken place. Nevertheless, work responsibilities involving dispassionate, academic research on sensitive political events has been useful training in societal observation and analysis. Having said that, close contact with the unfolding series of events has exposed me to the resilience of traditional cultural traits and power relations and the degenerative effect they have had on the process of social transformation.

The following section highlights the Maltese socio-economic and cultural environmental syndrome and applies this to an understanding of how such conditions serve to bolster or brake social change directed towards worker cooperation. This is done with direct critical application to Maltese experiences with alternative relations of production.

Malta: Ever Heard Of It?

Malta qualifies easily as a micro-state.¹ It consists of an archipelago of raised limestone blocks, of which the three largest are inhabited. These three main islands are Malta, Gozo and Comino respectively. Together, they comprise a resident population of approximately 345,000 and a surface area of 316 square kilometres.² Although it is small, the island enjoys a widespread popularity. Many more people are aware of the existence of Malta than they are of, for example, Kiribati, Saint Vincent or São Tomé.

Two important events are responsible for this. The first was Malta's

unwitting involvement in one of the dramatic voyages of Saint Paul, documented in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. On his way to Rome for trial, Saint Paul was shipwrecked off the Maltese coast. He and all his fellow travellers were saved from the wreck and, during a short stay on the island, were blessed with the hospitality of the Maltese people. The gesture was recorded for posterity.³

The second episode was more recent and concerns Malta's crucial role in the Mediterranean arena of the Second World War. From this strategically located and lonely British outpost, Allied forces played havoc with the Italian and German supply lines to North Africa. Nobly suffering under acute aerial bombardment and a state of siege, the unsinkable aircraft carrier was awarded the George Cross for its valour and courage.⁴

These two historical sketches serve as an appropriate preamble to a discussion of Malta's environmental fabric. Apart from being showpieces of Malta's chequered history, the two events highlight important aspects of the Maltese culture and economy. These continue to influence and fashion the present local condition, and therefore affect the contemporary development of worker cooperation.

The Maltese Socio-Economic Environment

Fifty years ago, the British Authorities considered Malta to be a priceless outpost to be defended at all costs. This was understandable, not from an economic standpoint, but from a purely strategic one. Such a comment is important to this study, because Malta's strategic rather than economic value affected the development of the Maltese economy under colonial rule. Malta had nothing to offer a colonizing power in terms of agricultural production, mineral resources, or an abundant population that could be carried off to slavery. Malta had none of these.

Back in 1530, Grandmaster L'Isle Adam reluctantly accepted the offer of Malta as the new home of the Sovereign Military Order of St John of Jerusalem from Charles the Fifth of Spain. It was a very harsh contrast to fertile and fruitful Rhodes, their previous Mediterranean island home and the offer was only accepted because there was no alternative.

Six years before, in 1524, an eight-man commission had reported the island's condition to the Grandmaster. This is one of the earliest documented reviews of the Maltese islands. In summary, the report

described Malta as a small, barren island covered irregularly with patches of rocky soil, that was not even suitable for growing cereals. There were no trees and little other vegetation; its supply of drinking water was extremely limited and in summer there was unbearable heat. A small population of about twelve thousand eked out a precarious existence selling honey and growing figs, melons and cotton. Gozo, the sister island, was more fertile and had small groves of orange and olive trees. It had about five thousand inhabitants. As for Comino, only birds could survive there. Mdina, the capital city of the islands, was built on a rocky outcrop and most of its houses were deserted. The only two advantages that Malta offered were a fine sheltered harbour and soft stone which could be easily worked and dressed.⁵

The report was discouraging but quite objective. Such was the physical state of affairs of the Maltese islands at that time. What the report did not mention, though, was the obviously superb strategic location of the Maltese islands, being right in the middle of the Mediterranean basin.

The Mediterranean is a most diverse meeting place of cultures: Christianity and Islam, Rome and Carthage, Arabs and Jews, are just some of the confrontations of cultural forces which interacted, not without the occasional skirmish or a fully-fledged crusade, on the Mediterranean sea and littoral.⁶ Even today, the Mediterranean remains a sensitive geopolitical area.⁷

The Maltese islands lie in this ebullient context, 93 kilometres to the south of European Sicily, 290 kilometres to the north of African Cyrenaica. Malta commands the isthmus between the western and eastern Mediterranean basins. Gibraltar lies 1800 kilometres to the west and Alexandria, Egypt lies 1500 kilometres to the east.⁸ As well as its strategic position in a politically sensitive sea, Malta has naturally deep and sheltered harbours. It adds up to a territory of great strategic value to anyone interested in becoming a Mediterranean power. For this reason, Malta has at various times been the coveted possession of several Mediterranean potentates who struggled for supremacy in the area. The Carthaginians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Normans, the various royal houses of Spain, the French and finally the British followed each other in successive waves of colonial rule.⁹

The economic consequences of colonization for strategic (as opposed to economic) interests presented themselves in an economic structure geared exclusively to the maintenance and refurbishing of the foreign

military/naval garrison. This fortress economy condition was a gradual development that gathered momentum during the last phase of colonialism, in the period of British rule (1800-1964). Firstly, it involved the dismantling of indigenous manufacturing industry and, secondly, the incorporation of the Maltese labour force into the military and administrative activities of the occupying powers. In this way, loyalty would be cultivated for the colonizing power because it was the only source of gainful employment.¹⁰ Of course, the meagre natural resources and the lack of alternative means of livelihood meant that the British Crown had to take full responsibility for job creation if it were to remain in effective control of the islands. Having a trouble-free (and therefore gainfully occupied) local population is a major precondition for having a secure military base and a viable 'fortress economy'.

Such a dependence on foreign-generated employment was compounded by the demise of the textile industry. Practically the whole population, men and women, the young and the old, in some way or another, had been engaged in this indigenous manufacturing activity. The complete production cycle, from sowing the seeds to the making of cotton garments, was undertaken by the Maltese in their own homes, making use of locally developed implements and with all parts of the plant being utilized. Unfortunately, the large scale production of cotton fabric and cloth depended on the availability of foreign markets. These were gradually lost, mainly because the Maltese could not compete with the technological improvements of their cotton-producing rivals, mainly Egypt and the American Southern States. The British also contributed to the demise of the local industry by imposing a duty on locally-grown cotton, as well as introducing foreign made textile goods.¹¹

A significant pull factor was the generation of new industrial employment opportunities in the harbour area. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the strategic importance of Malta as a bulwark of British military and commercial interest greatly increased. The harbour became a haven for shipbuilding, shiprepairing and related industries and services including bunkering, trade and finance. With these developments emerged locally for the first time both an industrial working class and a business and commerce-oriented middle class.

Gradually, a pattern of local affluence and poverty established itself. By the late 1800s, the bulk of the Maltese labour force was dependent upon the British Colonial Administration for employment. But such

employment in a fortress economy fluctuated according to the exigencies of military security. Paradoxically, war in the Mediterranean meant employment and an economic boom for the Maltese; peace was the harbinger of depression and redundancy because public expenditure dropped. Rampant unemployment during peacetime was so acute and potentially dangerous that the colonial administration sought to implement policies which would reduce the extent of dependency on public sector jobs. Large tracts of barren land were leased out to landless workers, in the hope that this would provide them with a means of livelihood and improve the output of an already strained agricultural sector. A number of new fields were established successfully in this way but the amount of labour absorption was minimal. A more successful policy option was mass emigration. Settling permanently in North Africa and other Mediterranean sites was encouraged. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were well over 50,000 Maltese scattered in such settlements.

The boom and depression cycle persisted well into the twentieth century. The Napoleonic Wars (1801-14); the Crimean War (1854-56); the First World War (1914-18); the Fascist threat and the Second World War (1939-45) and the Cold War period (1949-55) were periods of relatively full employment. In 1957, though, a radical British defence review concluded that Malta was no longer of crucial importance to British military interests.¹² A rundown was put into operation. Within a short period of time – eventually extended to 1979 – the British military presence on the Maltese islands was to come to an end.

A national crisis was inevitable. For the first time in its recorded history, Malta was faced with the challenge of opting out of a fortress economy.

Even for the British, it was quite clear that considerable alternative means of employment had to be created to make up for the loss of thousands of jobs. Efforts to achieve economic diversification were stepped up; luckily this coincided with an outflow of European and American capital away from the industrialized centres of the globe in search of profitable investments in developing countries. Malta had an English-speaking and relatively cheap labour force, was physically close to the European market, was keen to offer tax subsidies, low rents and generous grants and loans and, therefore, met with a generous response. The situation was ripe for Malta to take off Rostow-style into a period of rapid development.¹³ This coincided with the granting of political independence in 1964.

The lack of local minerals or raw materials for industrial production means that the Maltese economy must import almost everything, including a substantial amount of its food requirements. The country has only a small domestic market, so it cannot also achieve economies of scale by catering exclusively for local consumption. It is therefore obliged to remain for the most part an open, export-oriented economy, providing manufactured goods (particularly labour-intensive textiles) to the European market. In contrast to manufacturing, the tourist economy, which has a low import content, has been booming over the last 25 years, thanks to the sudden demand for sun, sand and sea by northerners increasingly able to afford holidays abroad.¹⁴

The Maltese Cultural Environment

The sheltered harbours of the Maltese islands, at the confluence of the main sea routes of the Old World, could not fail to attract seafarers from different cultures. Nor could the small local population prevent this from taking place.¹⁵ Permanent exposure to foreign interaction has made the Maltese hospitable and courteous, as well as accommodating towards a physically dense tourist presence. The natural friendliness of the local population was acknowledged by Saint Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The Maltese provide personalized tourist services with a smile, which is greatly appreciated by many foreign visitors. It also helps the Maltese endure the seasonal mass invasions of sun-worshippers, who exercise a continual strain on the island's already depleted physical and infrastructural resources.¹⁶

Of course, foreign invasions, albeit peaceful ones are nothing new to Malta. It has been heavily occupied by foreigners – be they tourists, soldiers, sailors or colonial administrators – since time immemorial. Given the small size of the islands, a fair degree of cultural and religious interaction is bound to take place between the foreign settlers and the locals. The Maltese language is evidence of this.

Until Arab rule (870–1090 AD), the structure of the Maltese language remained almost purely Semitic. After the Norman Conquest, the Maltese fell under the influence of European languages. A large number of words of Romance origin, mainly Sicilian and Italian, were attached onto the existing vocabulary and many were Maltesized in the course of time to conform to the rigours of Semitic construction. In later years English

words have been assimilated at a rapid rate into the existing language. In spite of these accretions, Maltese remains a fully-fledged language in its own right, and the official one, together with English, in the public administration of the islands.

It may come as a surprise that such a small island with a small population has managed to develop and cultivate its own distinct language, even though it is in continuous interaction with foreign cultures and foreign tongues. The explanation for this is that the Maltese language found a rational reason for existence because of, not in spite of, the intense foreign presence on the island. Apart from being a medium for abstract thoughts and symbolic expressions, the Maltese language has served as a national rallying point for the local population, a living symbol of what is Maltese in contrast to the threat of cultural invasion. The Semitic basis of the Maltese language also made it rather difficult to master by romance-oriented administrators. The Maltese language, therefore, was both a defence mechanism and a safety valve through which anti-establishment resentments and protests could be channelled without reprisal or fear of decoding by the foreigner.

In a similar fashion, the Roman Catholic faith has been another powerful symbol of Maltese nationhood, particularly during the period of British (that is, non-Catholic) colonial rule. Even before that, during the short French occupation (1798-1800), disrespect to church property sparked off a national rebellion, inspired and coordinated by, among others, priests and a bishop. Indeed, the Order of Saint John (itself a religious body) and then the British tried not to interfere in the daily, local life of the Maltese. They maintained good relations with the Church and even encouraged it to develop a dominant role in local, village affairs. The Maltese had been converted to Christendom during the stay of Saint Paul on the Islands and they remain today an overwhelmingly religious population, despite obvious secularization.¹⁷

Culturally, the Church's influence in Malta today cannot be underestimated. Institutionally it is intimately involved in the main events of the human life cycle – birth, marriage, death. Religious rites and ceremonies stamp the individual's standing in the eye of the community at different stages of maturation, as well as being occasions for affirming social solidarity. Around three-quarters of the population attend Sunday Mass regularly and listen to weekly homilies from the pulpit.¹⁸ A considerable percentage of cultural productions – music, drama, poetry,

prose – carries a religious theme or contains undercurrents of the powerful role of the Roman Catholic Church, not only as a social institution, but as a moulder and reproducer of specific values which affect one's attitude and perception of reality. This solid presence of the church at the heart of Maltese life is paralleled spatially by the central, dominant position of the church edifice proper, which commands the hub of all local towns and villages. The existence of 313 churches over a total land area of 316 square kilometres speaks for itself and leaves an astounding visual impression when observed from the air.

At the grass-roots level, the Church operates via direct and indirect agents. Historically, the parish priest has been the representative of village and community interests to the secular authorities governing Malta, in the absence of any form of local, civil government. In this way, the separation between the political and religious domains remains unclear. As in other Latin cultures, the Don Camillo-Peppone situation can flare up into bitter politico-religious disputes.¹⁹ The result is that the Maltese parish priest has become more respected and influential for some people, but has lost his legitimacy to others by involving himself in temporal affairs.²⁰

Apart from the parish priest, the Church operates among the rank and file as a powerful cultural force by virtue of a multitude of church-inspired organizations. In some villages, these bodies remain the only ones that organize social events locally, apart from the activities held in and by the Church proper. Notable among these organizations are the Church schools. Almost all privately-owned schools in Malta are run by nuns, priests and/or ecclesiastics. Together they educate today almost 40 per cent of the total school population, from kindergarten to pre-university level. Access to such schools is openly and hotly contested since they are popularly considered as better than the alternative state schools. The proper status of Church schools in the nation's educational system remains the subject of fervent debate. This is very understandable considering that education is popularly believed to be the key to rapid, upward social mobility.²¹

Apart from religion and language, the long drawn-out experience of colonialism has had powerful cultural consequences on the Maltese population. Malta has always been a prized strategic colony, and the administration of it, over the years, is therefore dominated by a number of features:

ALIENISM: The colonial rulers have always been foreign, never Maltese. The correspondence between poor and powerless locals and rich and powerful foreigners reinforced Malta's status as a client state at national level. At the individual level, it encouraged the locals' disposition to whatever the foreigner had to offer, and not only in terms of jobs and foodstuffs. Hence a preference, which is still evident, for anything foreign – whether it be language, goods, services or culture.²²

REMOTENESS: Colonial administration was a heavily centralized affair. Not only were village mayors non-existent for most of Malta's history but affairs of major importance were decided even further away, beyond the Maltese shores. This created a political vacuum at the local level, which was filled very well by the Church. The parish priest, to all intents and purposes, acted as the village mayor, while the village feast and associated revelry served as a celebration of micro-independence and local solidarity.²³

Alienism and remoteness do not in themselves make for stable government. In a fortress economy, these attributes must be balanced in some way by the powerholders to mitigate the emergence of national, class or any other form of collective consciousness antagonistic to the colonial rulers, which would threaten the latter's position and authority. Legitimacy of control must be preserved at all costs and the use of sanctions to maintain power is to be employed only as a last resort. Therefore, other features of colonial rule in Malta included:

PATERNALISM: Power holders in Malta have cultivated an image of themselves as benevolent, paternal figures, thereby masking the wielding of power in a guise of appropriateness. This ideology was easy enough to promulgate. After all, there was widespread dependence on the colonial rulers for employment, defence, avenues of social mobility, and access to certain privileges. The relation of exploitation between the powerful and powerless is conveniently reshaped as a gesture of paternal affection. This also has the effect of reducing social distance and promotes a greater identification of the islanders with the colonial rulers. This philosophy also implies its correlate, namely, that the powerless are underdeveloped, immature and in need of a fatherly hand for guidance.

PATRONAGE: That a father seeks redress for a suffering child, or bestows

a favour upon him, is a natural affair. The cultivation of patron-client networks fitted very comfortably within the Maltese paternalist framework. The Maltese population has always been ready to go beyond the formal, institutionalized channels to satisfy social needs. Through elaborate networks, manipulations and coalitions, use of a friend of a friend, the right person is contacted to satisfy a particular need or receive assistance, this serving also as an exercise in deference.²⁴ The cultivating of patron-client links was a common practice, which the colonial rulers condoned. It was a palliative to the permanent, savage competition for the island's scarce resources. At the same time, one-to-one relationships established through patronage, prevented or helped to break down class barriers or other forms of solidarity expressions and thereby discouraged a compact, anti-colonial front.

Faced with the syndrome of colonial control, the Maltese reacted in many different ways, and at different social levels. By and large they accepted the legitimacy of the colonial authorities as long as avenues for individual advancement were not blocked. This prevailing attitude was certainly paralleled and subsequently further legitimized by the Maltese perception of the function of saints. In a very transparent reflection of human life, catholic imagery and tradition has proposed a vision of an alternative world which reproduces faithfully the hierarchy of infallibility – the patron-client situation, as well as paternalist and hierarchical relations of political life on earth. The saints, some ascribed with more influence than others, are jostled by the mortals below to intercede with the absolute yet fatherly power holder on their behalf. In Malta this parallelism is more obvious and forceful because the Maltese words for patron and for saint are one and the same, *qaddis*.²⁵

The demographic conditions of small size and high population density also appear to have played a key role in fostering the Maltese cultural condition.²⁶ A small number of people, living necessarily close to one another in a tightly-knit web of interrelations, has ensured a high degree of social visibility. Knowledge, which elsewhere is either private or unavailable, is quickly acquired, even inadvertently, and rapidly made a public good, via the exchange of information and gossip. Such relationships and knowledge are valuable assets for fabricating functional networks of patronage. Individual manipulation of such a kind may also be seen as a psychological reaction, a person defending the little

independence, privacy and freedom of action afforded to him by the dense psycho-social atmosphere by avoiding too close an association with others and therefore opting for an individual, rather than a collective, route to goal satisfaction.²⁷ Nor is the officious acquiescence to institutional channels a rewarding position to take, once it is public knowledge that there is savage competition for any locally available resource – be it jobs, school placements, plots for construction or consumer durables. This is a condition exacerbated by limitations of what the island can offer, the high population density and, last but not least, the high expectations developed by a close association and identification with West European tastes and standards of living. Indeed, following the rules is widely believed to be penalized by goal frustration.

The effects of Catholicism and colonialism on Maltese culture can be profitably gleaned from a review of existing Maltese proverbs, idioms and other expressions, which have been handed down orally from one generation to another. Their persistent recurrence and usage in everyday parlance bears testimony to the philosophy of life which these expressions capture and which remains valid today.²⁸ Recurrent advice includes the importance of having friends or saints to help one advance in life;²⁹ the benevolence of God the Father;³⁰ the unavoidable fierce competition for scarce resources;³¹ the avoidance of risk and insecurity where money and employment are concerned.³² The latter condition may be seen as a reaction to the unpredictable cycles of boom and depression associated with the fortress economy.

A cultural trait of not so ancient history, but with very powerful contemporary effects, is a product of political organization and affiliation. Malta in fact exhibits today the characteristics of a dual society: there are two major political parties, two large trade union federative bodies, and two important national holidays. The split runs deep and pervades practically all aspects of civil and occupational life. Friendship links, patronage coalitions, attendance at social functions, even the colour of clothes that one wears and the vocabulary that one uses, are affected (particularly during election time) by this cultural divide. In many respects, then, Malta presents itself as the contested territory of two nations, the reds and the blues, in an eternal struggle waged with strong emotional and moral overtones. Partisan sympathies are often established during primary socialization and steadfastly maintained with the same fervour and commitment of a religious belief.³³ Both major parties each have

almost fifty per cent of total election votes guaranteed in this way as well as via intensive mobilization campaigns, which preach to the converted.

This local bipolarity is likely to have originated in the period of British colonial administration. It has already been described how the expansion of harbour and port facilities led to the development of indigenous social classes. The new middle class was composed of importers, contractors and traders, as well as civil servants and other employees engaged in civil administration. The working class was mainly composed of the shipbuilding, shiprepair and other manual employees engaged in harbour work for the British Admiralty.³⁴ Both these classes recognized the importance of the English language as the avenue for employment and social mobility. They eventually clashed with the traditional Maltese social élite – lawyers, doctors, landed gentry, university professors – who, along with the Catholic Church hierarchy had studied in Italy, spoke Italian and respected it as the language of culture. The issue, which came to a head in the 1880s, was on the language that was to be the medium of instruction in local schools.³⁵ The pro-Italian and pro-English factions organized themselves to lobby more effectively on such a matter of crucial importance, because education was the channel by which each faction hoped to socially advance and reproduce itself. Fanned by the subtle divide-and-rule tactics of the colonial administration, these factions evolved to form the basis of contemporary political party organization. The pro-English lobby eventually emerged as the Malta Labour Party (MLP) of social democratic inspiration, the pro-Italian lobby was shaped into the Nationalist Party (NP), of demo Christian orientation.³⁶

Conclusion

It would have been over-ambitious to attempt a detailed elaboration of all that makes Malta what it is, in economic, cultural and political terms. This has been tackled more competently and exhaustively by others and such an exposition is beyond the scope of this case study. In looking briefly at the Maltese environment, though, it should be emerging clearly that the Maltese are largely individualistic, competitive and wary of taking risks, who are prone to resort more to individual manipulation than to collective or cooperative action to improve their social position and

to defend or promote their interests. This dominant cultural pattern, fuelled by the long historical rigours of colonialism for strategic interests, corresponds to the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Reinforced by Catholic imagery, the islands' scarce resources and high population density, it is a powerful force, influencing any attempt at cooperative organization.

One point must be made before concluding this chapter. The hegemonic, compliant, submissive deference to authority structures wielded by benevolent rulers has been carried over beyond the political and economic circumstances which spawned it in the first place. In spite of achieving political independence in 1964 and dismantling the fortress economy in 1979, the dominant Maltese cultural pattern shows few signs of abating. It persists in contemporary values and attitudes, promoted by current social and economic practices, as well as by Maltese social institutions. The analysis of contemporary Malta, undertaken in Chapter 6, will highlight the neo-colonial orientation of Maltese society, the capitalist orientation of its economy and the legitimation and reproduction of such a social order undertaken by local institutions. A review of the local cooperative sector will be at the prime focus of attention. Its limited achievements and at times pitiful actions become understandable in the light of the peculiar economic, cultural and political contextuality of Malta.

NOTES

1. The study of micro-states is a new and promising one. It emerged as a fully-fledged area of research following the entry of 20 independent island states in the United Nations – the first being Malta – between 1964 and 1984. An exact definition of what constitutes a micro-state has not yet been agreed on. An upper cut off point of one million population is conventionally accepted. See the review by Hein (1985).
2. The population estimate is from the latest Census, conducted in October 1985. See also Table 5 in the Appendices for a comparison of Malta's size and population density with those of other micro-states.
3. Acts of the Apostles: 28: 1–10.
4. On Malta's strategic role in the Second World War see, for example, Shankland & Hunter (1961).
5. A summary of the report is found in Bradford (1961, Chapter 2), and Sant (1984), among others.
6. The complex dynamics of the Mediterranean region are ably documented by the economic historian Braudel (1966).
7. Witness the Yugoslav-Albanian; Jewish-Arab; Greek-Turkish crises, apart from Lebanon, Cyprus and the strong naval presence of the superpowers in the area.
8. Map 1 in the Appendices shows the Mediterranean area.
9. The one notable exception to this was the long presence of the Knights of the Order of Saint John (1530–1798). The Knights had no pretensions of Mediterranean grandeur. They served, however, as a convenient buffer and vanguard to the forces of Christendom, as long as the Ottoman Turks were a potential threat to Western Europe. Indeed, the Ottoman Turks were the only European power to have failed to add Malta to their empire. They tried especially hard in 1565, but the Knights repulsed them after a 3½-month siege.
10. This strategy conforms to the model of unequal exchange, whereby a colony is organized as a periphery or satellite refurbishing the core or metropolitan centre. See Emmanuel (1972) and Wallerstein (1974, 1979). The dismantling of the indigenous manufacturing base is part of this imperialist strategy. Similar dismantlings occurred, for example, in the case of Kano Cloth in British West Africa. See Illife (1983).
11. A more detailed analysis of the Maltese cotton industry in the nineteenth century is provided by Busuttil (1973) and Baldacchino (1988b).
12. The 1957 decision was caused by a constellation of factors. Among these was the inevitable decline of Britain as a superpower; its dwindling revenues from foreign settlements clamouring for independence; the disappointing British involvement in the Suez crisis of 1956 and the shifting geopolitical considerations due to nuclear arms deployments, which suggested at that time that conventional warfare had been superseded once and for all. The last British troops in fact left Malta in March 1979.

13. See Rostow (1971). For a review of Maltese economic development since 1959 see Sant (1984) and Briguglio (1983).
14. The restructuring of the Maltese economy over the last decades can be appreciated from the statistics on labour force distribution provided in Table 2 in the Appendices.
15. For most of the early Middle Ages, the Maltese population fell victim to many raids by corsairs and pirates, who ravaged the countryside and enslaved the villagers. In 1551, a raid on Gozo by a Turkish force carried off the entire population of 5,000.
16. Annual tourist arrivals since 1976 have been consistently more than the total resident population. This is a staggering feat, considering that the island is already heavily populated and that tourist arrivals peak sharply in the summer months.
17. On the secularization of Maltese society see Vassallo (1979) and Tabone (1987).
18. As reported by a census among church-goers carried out in October 1983.
19. As has occurred in Malta at least twice in the last fifty years. See Chapter 7 Note 17.
20. Boswell (1982) studied Maltese perceptions of occupational status. The Maltese parish priest ranks ninth in a status ranking of 138 occupations, although there is a large deviation in the scores.
21. Boswell (1982) reports that educational attainment is the best explanatory variable for social mobility in Malta.
22. Boissevain (1969c).
23. Vassallo (1979, p. 7) refers to the Maltese Catholic Church as an almost surrogate form of political expression and nationalism. See also Zammit (1984, pp. 15-16, 36-7).
24. Patronage occurs 'whenever men adopt a posture of deference to those more powerful than they and gain access to resources as a result'. Davies (1977, p. 132). See also Boissevain (1974).
25. On the Maltese saints see also Boissevain (1969b, 1988).
26. Malta's resident population density, over 1,200 persons per square kilometre, is the highest in the world for a small island-state. Refer to Map 2 in the Appendices.
27. Hatt-Arnold et al. (1964, pp. 45-6). A Maltese proverb goes 'Ahjar jikluk il-klieb milli tigi bzonn in-nies' (Better to be eaten by dogs than to require help from others). The idioms and interpretations which follow have been taken from Grech (1972).
28. Such a priceless resource base has been involved in sociological and anthropological studies by Boissevain (1969b, *passim*); Zammit (1979; 1984, *passim*); Stafrace (1984, p. 77); Baldacchino (1988a, pp. 14-19).
29. 'Ahjar habib fis-suq milli mitt skud fis-senduq' (Better a friend in the market than a thick wallet). 'Min ixahham jitlahham' (He who praises and grants gifts gets what

he wants). 'Minghajr qaddisin ma taghmel xejn' (Nothing can be done without the help of Saints/patrons).

30. 'Alla jaghlaq bieb u jiftah mija' (God may deprive you of one opportunity but he will surely make another hundred available). 'Alla fuq kollox u fuq kulhadd' (God is above everything and everyone). 'Dak li jaghmel Alla kollox sew' (What God does is invariably good).

31. 'Ghal kull ghadma hawn mitt kelb' (There are one hundred dogs for every bone). 'Mhux kull min jigri jiehu l-ewwel' (Success in life depends not only on ability – the best runner will not always win the race).

32. 'Ahjar ghasfur f'idejk milli mija fl-arju' (Better a bird in hand than a hundred in flight). 'Ahseb fil-hazin biex it-tajjeb ma jonqosx'; 'Arfa u sorr ghal meta tigi bzonn' (Save for a rainy day). Bowen-Jones et al. (1962, p. 352) describe how the distribution of settlements in Malta and the huge wealth and effort invested in Churches are other reflections of fear and insecurity.

33. From a study undertaken by Gallup (Malta) during 1984, 55 per cent of respondents considered themselves close to a political party, compared to 39 per cent in Europe. Reference: Gallup (Malta) Ltd Press Release, 26 June 1984.

34. Zammit (1984, p. 25, note 48)). See also Frendo (1979).

35. On the language question see Dobie (1967) and Cauchi (1978).

36. Voting patterns since 1947, when the first Maltese parliament was elected, are summarized in Table 4 in the Appendices.



6 THE MALTESE COOPERATIVE SECTOR

Introduction

The Maltese environmental condition described in the previous chapter is the starting point for any valid critique of the Maltese experience of worker cooperation. As suggested by the theoretical discussion of Section One, such a macro-level perspective, traced to infrastructural (economic) and superstructural (cultural, institutional and political) features, is indispensable to identify with accuracy the reasons for cooperative performance.

This chapter will attempt precisely such an application of contextual conditions for an understanding of the origins, nature and plight of the local cooperative sector.

A Vicious Circle of Cultural Reproduction

In post-independent Malta, the cultural adaptations to colonialism, which are not conducive to cooperation, have been largely perpetuated. In spite of rhetorical and ideological pronouncements to the contrary, the historically-ingrained cultural features appear to remain as strong as ever.

The explanation for this lies in a vicious circle of top-down social practices and bottom-up civic expectations. The State continues to project itself in paternalistic overtones, not only in terms of vocabulary, but also in terms of policy, whereby it continues to consider itself as responsible for solving all social ills.¹ The electoral system of proportional representation helps to keep alive the tradition of patron-client relations between candidate and electorate.² Within this set-up, the limits of a candidate's influence and actions on behalf of his voting client are boundless. Although hard evidence in such matters is obviously difficult to find, it is widely believed that individual manipulation through a political party machinery does provide jobs or promotions, improve access to consumer durables, allow the avoidance of customs duty. Pressure on those in power to succumb to these requests is always considerable, since elections are lost and won, thanks to the system of proportional representation, because of a handful of votes.³

Powerful social institutions in their own way continue to inculcate the hierarchy of infallibility, attitudes of submission, inferiority and lack of initiative.⁴

Take the Maltese educational system as an example. As a social institution, the Maltese School remains functionally addressed to producing the workers and skills required by professional, public and private employment demands; it also produces the values and behaviour patterns which legitimize employer domination. The requirements, then, for effective cooperative performance remain unavailable to the large majority of students obliged to follow full-time attendance.

The persistence of a 'banking orientation' to education as outlined in Chapter 4 is well illustrated by a recent survey of the teaching of social studies in the Maltese state primary schools. This subject is perhaps the most appropriate for imparting skills in the practice of cooperation, as well as exposing pupils at least to an understanding of what is a cooperative. However, the evidence suggests rather the stifling effects of examination pressure and of traditional, authoritarian, non-cooperative teaching techniques, which reinforce traditional submission and lethargy:

- most teachers do not utilize all the allocated time for Social Studies teaching (three hours per week) and use the time for further teaching in the three main subjects - English, Maltese, Mathematics - in view of the preparation for the pre-secondary examination;
- most teachers still rely on blackboard work for teaching the subject, the commonest 'activity' reported being note-taking;
- examination pressure leads pupils towards a cramming of facts, since what is required to pass the exam is the reproduction of such facts.⁵

It becomes evident, then, that most Maltese are not familiar with the experience and maybe even the existence of modes of collective leadership, responsibility and decision-making. The school also remains another arena where the struggle over scarce resources finds expression. In this case, it is the cut-throat competition for the eventual acquisition of desirable jobs, which is reproduced and rehearsed annually in the keen competition for placement in a good class, in a good school and in an obsession for certification.⁶ In Maltese society, with its limited prestige and status outlets, this struggle becomes more intense, aroused and fanned by expectations and aspirations resulting from an improved standard of living, the adoption of middle-class values and western-inspired criteria of what job is best. Admittedly, in recent years, the stigma long associated with technical training has been dampened and university courses have been more aligned to the world of work. Yet, access to desirable schools

and jobs is determined, certainly from the point of view of student, teacher and parent perceptions, by the outcome of an educational rat-race.⁷

A review of political party mobilization adds fuel to the process. The party faithful are actively encouraged to display and express emotive support for their flag and leaders. This show of solidarity is requested on practically a continuous basis, since electoral campaigns go on from one election to the next, culminating in a physically and emotionally taxing frenzy every five years or so. Under such pressure it becomes impossible to undertake a cool, dispassionate and critical analysis of a party political programme. The newspapers, financed by the respective political organizations, cultivate this indoctrination and dogmatism on a daily basis. At the same time, it is the leader of the party who symbolizes the party image in an absolute manner. Great pains are taken, whenever there are changes in the local party leadership, to build up a charismatic figure endowed with all human virtues.⁸ Political party support becomes normative and a question of morality, not of ideology or evaluation.

These structural features find correspondence and stimulation amongst the cultural expectations that Maltese individuals have from the social system. Many are of the opinion that the State is indeed responsible for all social ills. The State is in fact referred to in personalized, male terms and looked upon as a remote, distant entity, which is to be treated with suspicion and preferably kept at a distance, unless for reasons of personal advancement.⁹ Thus the State remains culturally an alien, colonial imposition with potential, paternalistic channels of interest satisfaction.

Many individuals and groups turn to traditional leadership figures – such as teachers, lawyers, priests and more recently, politicians – to take the initiative. The authoritarian role modelling is reinforced by giving such leadership figures almost divine attributes, charisma and paternalistic symbolism, which justifies and cultivates passivity and apathy among the rank and file.

Civic organization for the pursuit of common objectives is a very infrequent and fleeting occurrence. In the face of evident and commonly recognizable problems – such as inefficient public transport, insufficient consumer protection from indiscriminate sellers, unemployment, water shortages, environmental neglect – the civic reactions are predictable: grumbling; outcries against the government of the day to do something

about the problem; individual solutions to problems, often in competition with others.¹⁰

Infrastructural Correspondence

This cultural cluster of submission, apathy, transfer of responsibility to others and authoritarian-cum-charismatic leadership styles is a contemporary component of a general, dominant, non-cooperative attitude. Although in itself a superstructural condition, this component can easily be accommodated within the exigencies of Malta's socio-economic base.

The paucity of Malta's natural resources means that the country has always been economically dependent on patron states for all its requirements, even food and water, to satisfy its relatively large resident population – hence Malta's natural disposition to a client status.¹¹ This has been preserved even in post-colonial and post-fortress base conditions. Although an independent state since 1964 and no longer servicing a foreign military base on its soil since 1979, Malta remains dependent on foreign aid, foreign capital and foreign skills to preserve its standard of living. The ability of Maltese political leaders is indeed partly assessed on the basis of how much aid they manage to attract to Malta's shores.¹² Income from abroad, whether as grants or loans from friendly governments or as remittances from Maltese living abroad, constitutes a significant component of the country's annual balance of payments.¹³ The pillar of the country's industrial production is provided by West German, British, US and Italian capital which produce goods intended for their own respective markets.¹⁴ The country's tourist industry is evidently dependent on foreign customers, predominantly the British.¹⁵ As in other micro-states, it appears that the only form of sustainable development for Malta is not de-linking but, rather, the perseverance and strengthening of a rentier status.¹⁶ This integration into the international economic system exercises pressure for the maintenance of the capitalist work ethic in Malta, implying a preservation of non-cooperative attitudinal patterns.

The Local Cooperative Sector

In the context of this scenario, it is surprising that a cooperative sector exists at all in Malta. An examination of the origin, nature and conditions

of this sector, though, should confirm the validity of adopting a contextual analysis to the issue of worker cooperation.

In fact, the cooperative sector in Malta is almost exclusively agricultural and made up of service cooperatives which, therefore, maintain and do not challenge the capital-labour relationship.¹⁷ It has already been described in Chapter 5 how Maltese agricultural labour was already in sharp decline in the late 1880s. To blame were both push and pull factors. These include the offer of more attractive jobs in the harbour region, and in the manufacturing and tourist industry, the encroachment of urban and industrial development on farm land and the lack of adequate water for irrigation. This decline has levelled off recently, so that now the full-time agricultural labour force stands at about 3 per cent of the gainfully occupied population.¹⁸

The unit of agricultural production remains the labour-intensive household farm with an insignificant wage labour force cultivating a number of small non-adjacent plots.¹⁹ The fraction of owner-occupied farms is very small, but, although most farmers are tenants, rates of surplus extraction are very low.²⁰

These low rates reflect the strategic importance enjoyed by the farming labour segment in the Maltese economy for many centuries. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, in contrast to many other countries, Maltese landowners were never a powerful or compact class. The Catholic Church and its various religious orders inherited many tracts of land over the years from the faithful and often gave these out at very low rents for long leases to whoever was willing to work them. Secondly, the power position of other landowners declined sharply with the availability of non agricultural employment and the wave of urban-directed proletarianization that took place in the nineteenth century. Apart from this, output from a poor, rain-dependent soil in a dry climate was always meagre and scanty. Thirdly, because of the limited food production and a rapidly expanding population, landowners' concern was more with how to interest potential farmers into working their land. This concern was shared by the British colonial administration, particularly because food scarcities could lead to social unrest, which would undermine the image of the British as benevolent paternalistic rulers. Over the last four hundred years, parcels of land have been passed to prospective tenants at very favourable rates, in the face of a population explosion and an imminent food crisis. The thirst for usable arable land

was so strong that attempts were made to create artificial fields by surrounding bare rocky surfaces with rubble walls and then spreading a layer of topsoil, but these would at best provide output of only marginal quality.

For a time, the British also seriously considered developing the neighbouring islands of Pantelleria, Lampedusa and Linosa as food-producing centres for Malta.²¹ Ingenious plans for expanding agricultural production have also figured regularly in Maltese Government policies.²² Such a condition has made agriculture a strategic economic sector and has given even tenant farmers strong control over their farms.

One structural feature, which was reducing farmers' income and therefore dampening the attraction of agricultural self-employment, was the existence of the middleman in the marketing structure of Maltese agricultural produce. In the years preceding the Second World War, Maltese farmers are reported to have been plagued by an insecurity of income and a dependence on moneylenders, many of whom were also wholesale dealers in agricultural products. Farmers indebted to moneylenders were forced to channel all their produce via their creditors, who capitalized on the farmers' powerlessness and low level of literacy.²³ This considerable monopolistic position enjoyed by the moneylender-cum-wholesale dealer (known as *il-pitkali*) was spectacularly demonstrated during the Second World War, when the colonial administration bypassed the *pitkali* and collected all produce directly to enforce a rationing system in the face of the Axis blockade. Many farmers were surprised to see their profits increase, while the market price of their produce actually fell. This acted as an eye-opener for the administration and the farmers alike, who could now see the potential of doing away with middlemen and improving the sector's verticalization of production. As elsewhere in the British colonies, the legal structure used for this purpose was the agricultural service cooperative.²⁴ Thus, the Maltese cooperative movement was ushered in specifically as a cost-saving, profit-enhancing mechanism to boost agricultural efficiency and productivity. It involved no commitment to cooperative values, and it was not inspired by a cooperative ideology.

Apart from the cultural and economic environmental syndrome already described, the absence among Maltese farmers of a commitment to cooperation can also be seen as the result of other factors. Firstly, the typical Maltese farmer does not suffer from the disadvantages, which

lead elsewhere to the so-called deprivation trap. This drives peasants and landless workers to adopt cooperative solutions to ease their plight.²⁵ Since rates of surplus extraction are low and average incomes are quite satisfactory, tending also to be supplemented by off-farm wage employment by the farmer himself and/or by other household members, there is no perception of being in a structural bind and there is therefore no pressure to act collectively in that respect with other farmers.²⁶ Secondly, the skills and practice of cooperation, along with the economic and technical requirements of running a modern business enterprise, are generally unknown. Thirdly, the farmer's long experience of moderately successful agricultural production, undertaken on a family farm with family labour, has withstood the test of time. So, suspicion and disinterest in new techniques of farming, including a cooperative organization of services, would be a normal reaction. Even if ideas on cost-benefit analysis, rapid response to market conditions, soil conservation and use of high-yielding crop varieties and chemical inputs are known, they are nevertheless generally dismissed. Risk-taking and innovation are lacking, because failures can mean the loss of one's livelihood, apart from earning the mockery of one's neighbours. The following narrative is a humorous but significant example:

On an irrigated holding, carrots proved a profitable cash crop. The farmer was told by a returned migrant that paraffin spray was very suitable as a weed killer. He chose a small patch, in his own words, 'where no one could see what I was doing and laugh' and tried the new treatment. Eventually convinced of efficacy, this farmer was able to observe the slow visual impression made on his neighbours.²⁷

These conditions explain how, in spite of the State's preoccupation to reform the farming community's practices and ideas, farming remains highly labour-intensive, family-based, lacking the benefits of economies of scale. It suffers from decreasing soil fertility; and there is no adequate system of animal and plant health, water conservation and irrigation, with crop rotation cycles often going back many generations. It is no wonder, then, that the bulk of the farming community remains dependent on a chain of intermediaries for marketing, grading, processing and distributing agricultural produce. The persistent existence of these intermediaries is explained also in terms of debt relations and sentiment, rather than simply traditional practices.²⁸ In any case, most of the existing service cooperatives can hardly be said to serve as positive demonstration effects.

*A Case in Point: Prickly Pear Cooperative*²⁹

The Prickly Pear Cooperative was established for reasons similar to those of other Maltese agricultural service cooperatives: the exploitation by wholesale dealers (in this case dealers in prickly pears), who set the product's price and which farmers had to accept, because there was no alternative market outlet.

The cooperative was committed by statute to purchase all the prickly pears produced by its farmer-members. It started off with very few members, so it was suggested that members should be paid a higher price for their produce than other dealers. The policy certainly succeeded in raising membership figures. However, it has since become a standard procedure to pay farmer-members higher prices for prickly pears than those set by the State, regardless of the level of profits being made. This attitude is indicative of conflicting interests which have been described as follows:

On one hand, the farmers produce prickly pears for the cooperative acting as suppliers of raw materials. On the other hand, the farmers have the democratic power of running the cooperative and of deciding how much to pay for prickly pears . . . The members seem unable to realize the benefits of redeploying profits into the cooperative for its development and expansion and are intent only on removing from the cooperative every last cent that is their profit. This concentration on the short-term will have lasting effects in the long run, if the cooperative survives . . . The conflicting interests...have reduced the cooperative to a secure market for prickly pears and interest in it as a profit-making organization is lacking in members.³⁰

The running of the cooperative is not simply infected by this short-term orientation among farmer-members, which refuses to see the interests of the cooperative as a whole as being also one's own. There is also a lack of business sense, a weak investment in managerial skills and intermittent invasions of the spheres of competence of professional management by the farmer-members on the management committee, which strains the organizational set-up and blurs respective responsibilities:

- the Management Committee of the cooperative has tended to be composed of the same members, year in, year out. For many years until recently, this committee was dominated by one individual who stifled democratic decision-making processes and effectively restricted the development of management skills;

- the farmers are convinced that the processed prickly pear juice their cooperative produced is good enough to sell itself. They therefore view any marketing and product promotion as unnecessary;
- the Management Committee has asked the cooperative's accountant to refrain from producing accounts because these are a waste of time and effort. Professional management at the cooperative has in practice been de-skilled, with the quality control manager and accountant performing clerical and secretarial functions.³¹

That the Prickly Pear Cooperative survived for some years is due in large part to its involvement in a profitable side-activity under licence. This activity was however unrelated to the objectives which led to the cooperative's establishment. Eventually, even this profitable practice ran into difficulties and only a major recovery operation engineered by the Cooperatives Board saved the whole enterprise from dissolution.³²

Conclusion

Malta may be predominantly a capitalist-oriented economy with deferential, individualistic cultural traits, but it is also a mediated society with countervailing forces at work, both in the cultural and economic spheres, which are certainly bent on challenging the established social order. There are strands of cooperation in both cultural and economic Maltese spheres of social life; also, a number of active social movements, each of which contain elements disposed towards worker cooperation; and there have been experiments (some still ongoing) with worker cooperatives. But do such social forces intend to normalize 'cooperation' in Maltese society? Are they scattered or outrightly hostile to each other? Are they equipped to cultivate (at least the potential of) a veritable counter-hegemony championing the cases of worker cooperation? And which are the degeneration pressures bearing upon the process of social transformation? These are the key questions to be addressed in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. Particularly during the three most recent Socialist governments (1971–87), the State assumed greater powers, involving itself more strongly in re-distributive policy, as well as becoming a major employer, energy importer and manufacturer. This increased responsibility in social and economic affairs was a reaction to alleged rampant inequality and the persisting control of strategic industries and services by foreign/private capital. The 1981–85 recession was met in Malta by an expansion in public sector employment: a reaction contrary to the self-initiative and self-employment which characterized the general labour force response elsewhere. Overmanning in the local public sector may herald a crisis in the Maltese work ethic.

2. Boissevain (1969b, p. 132). With the PR system currently in force, Malta is divided into 13 electoral districts, each electing 5 members to a one-house Parliament. The minimum number of votes thus required to be elected is only about 3,000.

3. For example in the 1971 general election, the MLP gained 28 seats while the NP gained 27 seats. In the fifth electoral district, 5 extra votes decided one seat in favour of a Labour candidate. Had the 5 votes been for the NP, the latter would have won the election. For the slim majorities regularly resulting in general elections see Table 4 in the Appendices.

4. Malta has been described as forming part of a Latin/Mediterranean cluster of cultures, where societies manifest authoritarian, feudal and hierarchical traits. This means that rigid status and power demarcations are observed, leading to ponderous bureaucracies; government is distrusted; the law is seen as oppressive rather than regulatory; heads of state, ministers, mayors, priests and other leadership figures assume charismatic stature and exercise strong power. See Pitt-Rivers (1963). Mann (1973, Chapter 5) relates such a condition to unnaturally rapid and uneven development.

5. The survey findings were part of an assignment submitted by students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. They are summarized in Decelis et al. (1985).

6. Credentials, like marks, simplify and legitimate the process of social closure. See Parkin (1979, pp. 54–60).

7. As was expressed in an interview with Dr Alfred Sant, then President of the Malta Labour Party and Chairman of the Commission for the Development of Higher Education: 'One consequence (of the present system for entry into higher education) was that students just went flat out for as many subject grades as possible . . . The real difficulty is that nobody has a working alternative solution to what is being done now'. *The Teacher* (Movement of United Teachers publication), New Format, No. 17, May 1986, p. 16.

8. Such expressions of neo-colonial paternalism, with religious overtones, are evident from the slogans, expressions and statements made in connection with political leaders and partisan political campaigns and activities. For example, Dom Mintoff, long-time leader of the Malta Labour Party and Prime Minister has been hailed as a teacher, 'a man sent to us from God', and the Saviour of Malta. See his personality analysis in Zammit (1984, Chapter 4).

9. In Malta 'the state' and 'the government' are used interchangeably, without distinction. One reason for this is the exercise of power personalization. Bowen-Jones et al. (1962, p. 344) describes *Il-Gvern* (the government) as . . . 'a remote centre of authority which is endowed with every conceivable power and which is held responsible for many economic and social problems'.

10. Such reactions are in contrast to forms of grass-roots organization, which may be resorted to in the face of common problems – such as consumer associations, environmental pressure groups, organized lobbying and of course worker cooperatives.

11. Boswell (1980, pp. 27–30).

12. A split in the Malta Labour Party in the late 1940s was triggered off when the MLP Deputy Leader accused the then Labour Prime Minister of not having been a sufficiently hard bargainer with the British Colonial Office on Marshall Aid allocation to Malta. See Pirota (1987).

13. Grants and loans from abroad constituted 4.3 per cent, 9.2 per cent and 5.8 per cent of government revenue in the years 1982, 1983, and 1984 respectively. See *The Year Book 1986* (De La Salle Brothers Publication) p. 237.

14. An objective indicator of such economic dependence is difficult to obtain. However, from independent research and privately circulated documents, it appears that almost 12,000 Maltese workers from the 26,700 engaged in the private manufacturing sector work in export-oriented firms, which have total or considerable West German, British, Italian and US investment. In addition, of the total exports during 1986, 32 per cent had West German destinations, followed by British (14 per cent) and Italian (11 per cent) ones. Source: Trade Statistics.

15. In spite of attempts at diversifying the tourist flow, British tourists continue to contribute over half of all arrivals.

16. This point is made by Bertram (1986) in relation to Pacific micro states but his thesis applies equally well to Malta.

17. Statistical data on the contemporary Maltese cooperative sector may be found in Table 3 in the Appendices.

18. About 2,900 according to official statistics published in June 1988.

19. The most recently available Census – see Department of Agriculture (1984) – had noted the following statistical details of the contemporary farming population:

- There are 4,383 full-time farmers (3.7 per cent of the gainfully occupied population) of which 3,785 are male and 598 are female. Delia (1987) has subsequently deduced that over 2,000 farmers were being counted twice.
- Agricultural land area worked out at 32,165 acres (41 per cent of total land area) of which only 4.5 per cent is fully or partly irrigated. The percentage of land area worked was 56 per cent in 1959.
- Over 92 per cent of farm holdings are under 5 acres in extent. These are usually

composed of fragmented, scattered units with an area of a quarter of an acre or less for each one.

20. The amount of total agricultural land owned by individual farmers and their families was approximately 10 per cent in the early 1950s. The rest is held under rental or emphyteutical arrangements. Source: Bowen-Jones et al. (1962, p. 303, Table 40). Nevertheless, I have calculated the amount of surplus extracted by landowners as rent from tenant farmers to amount to an average of 2 Maltese pounds (around US\$6) per full-time farmer per year in 1983. Rent in kind is not normally practised. Source: Department of Agriculture (1984, pp. viii, 16).

21. Blouet (1972, p. 172).

22. These include solid waste recycling projects to provide effluent for irrigation; land reclamation schemes; poultry and other specialized farming; and concentration on high-priced crops.

23. Camilleri (1984, pp. 3-5); Delicata (1975, *passim*).

24. As for example, in Kenya, Uganda and India. See Spear (1982, p. 41) and Brett (1970).

25. For details on the deprivation trap see Chambers (1983, pp. 108-14). The relative affluence of farmers, arrived at via independent research, assumes a homogeneous farming population. Therefore the suggestion that middlemen 'often get a bigger share for their services than the farmer himself' might apply to the less well-off farmers. See Optima (1985b, p. 5). Zammit (1973, p. 9) claims that animal breeders get only 50-65 per cent of the final price, the difference being shared between the middleman and the retailer.

26. The structural bind is a term coined by Young (1970) to describe peasants who know that they cannot redress an unequal power balance individually, but believe they can do so collectively. See Galjart (1975, p. 77).

27. Reported in Bowen-Jones et al. (1962, p. 328).

28. Zammit (1973, p. 4).

29. While details reported here are true, the name of the cooperative and its product are fictitious.

30. The quotation is taken from a dissertation by a University undergraduate completed in 1984.

31. Details taken from the same dissertation.

32. Prickly pear deposits kept by the cooperative and worth thousands of Maltese *liri* had to be thrown away because they had gone bad. Fresh loans, grants, secretarial assistance and foreign expertise were made available by the Cooperatives Board in 1987 and two new products were subsequently launched in the local market.

7 ELEMENTS OF MEDIATION IN MALTESE SOCIETY

Introduction

It has already been emphasized that no society is structurally or culturally completely homogeneous. The Maltese environmental condition described above, with its evident non- and anti-cooperative elements, is only present by and large. There are, unmistakably, various structural and cultural forces and dynamics in contemporary Maltese society that cannot be easily integrated within the dominant, cultural configuration. Indeed, there is already a long history of cultural and economic mediation, including well organized and developed social movements, with some potential towards cooperative-directed change.

Cooperative Reactions to Colonial Rule

During the long colonial period, the conditions of alienism and remoteness did not exacerbate an exclusive orientation on the part of the Maltese for individual manipulation and paternalist expectation. Through Maltese colonial history, strands of collective behaviour emerged, in spite of benevolent authoritarian rule.¹

Certainly since the arrival of Napoleon in 1798, power holders with alien cultures and religious beliefs have served as powerful anti-referent groups. These provided a rational basis for cultivating symbols of national solidarity, most important among these being language and catholicism. Indeed, the closest that the Maltese ever came to a revolutionary consciousness occurred during the Napoleonic occupation, when the French started despoiling the local churches of their precious metals and treasures. Hitherto acquiescent, if not actually supportive of the French presence, the Maltese were soon up in arms, under the organization and leadership of the clergy. In this way the French, once and for all, lost their legitimacy to rule over Malta.²

The remoteness of power centres and the conscious non-interference by the colonial authorities in church-inspired village affairs also ushered in a host of village-based community initiatives. These served as a psychological displacement to the nation's denial to self-determination via colonialism. The Maltese involved themselves, physically and emotionally, in the majestic baroque construction of village churches and an exuberant

display of local skill, ingenuity and organization on the occasion of the annual village feast. Such revelry was an opportunity for an all-round local effort, under the direction of the parish priest, to declare the village's identity and display its talents.³

The unstable condition of the fortress economy set-up, with the unpredictable cyclical fluctuations of boom and depression, also fostered a sense of entrepreneurship among the Maltese. Low risk, labour-intensive, self-employment, family enterprise and cooperative work efforts have been and remain widespread and signify a natural reaction to unstable formal employment.⁴ They are also opportunities which generate extra income, preferably without being declared for the purposes of taxation, which explains why most of these initiatives never find their way into official statistics. The latter, by itself, cannot adequately explain Malta's favourable standard of living.⁵ Most of the black economy initiatives are individualistic, but collective enterprise is not uncommon.⁶ This preference for anonymity and informality is another likely explanation for the reluctance of the Maltese to form officially registered cooperative units, unless there are obvious financial advantages tied to registration.⁷

The issue of power alienism also explains how expressions of local discontent are seen and felt to be permissible and valid. Such expressions can be individual and collective, ranging from harmless but quite widespread grumbling, to petty acts of theft or sabotage, to fully-fledged industrial or political antagonism. These actions are justified because any liabilities they incur are understood to be beyond local concern and responsibility.⁸ Such reactions to benevolent but alien paternalism were not continuous, nor did the Maltese who resorted to this kind of behaviour maintain exclusively such an attitude in relation to colonial rule. Rather, these expressions represent ascendant consequences of different and specific power relations, physical experiences as well as personality factors within the generalized colonial condition.

Experiences of collective political activism and antagonism certainly assumed a significant primacy among the industrial workforce centred at the dockyard, because of the specific power relations to which, for many years, that workplace was exposed. Such relations were influenced by the geographical isolation and concentration of the worksite, which fostered a high level of group consciousness and solidarity.⁹ Exposure to British trade unionism via interaction with British workers, sailors and passengers,¹⁰ as well as the strategic nature of the work involved,

have moulded the drydocks labour force into a labour aristocracy,¹¹ the cradle and vanguard of what is called the Maltese Labour Movement (MLM).

The Maltese Labour Movement

The emergence of the MLM as a social movement can be traced to historical, cultural and political reactions to colonial powerlessness, which first found expression as craft or trade union consciousness. In 1884, an attempt was already being made to set up a fully-fledged fitters' union at the drydocks, at a time when the social climate was not at all supportive of such initiatives.¹² The first strike at the drydocks over a pay claim in 1917 was successful. However, the lack of any institutional machinery for negotiation,¹³ and the insecurity of employment made unionism rather ineffective until 1943 when the first general union, the General Workers' Union (GWU), was formed, again on the initiative of drydocks workers. The GWU was the collective response of Maltese wage workers to the mass redundancies looming at the end of the Second World War. With the approaching cessation of hostilities, there would be also the inevitable retraction of the British military and naval presence in Malta. Within a month of its establishment the GWU had over 10,000 members and within a year there were over 20,000.¹⁴ A Labour front was established with the Malta Labour Party (MLP) in 1946 and its pressure contributed to the enactment of favourable labour legislation.¹⁵ Policy disagreements with the British government in the late 1950s¹⁶ and a second bitter politico-religious dispute in the 1960s¹⁷ further cemented the bond between the industrial (GWU) and political (MLP) arms of this front. By 1971, the MLP was elected to power on a GWU-MLP joint electoral manifesto. Subsequent successful re-elections occurred in 1976 and 1981. The front was institutionalized in 1978 when the GWU and the MLP were united by statute. The MLP is now back in opposition having lost marginally the 1987 general election.

During the 16-year long period of Labour Government, the MLM has actively attempted with some success to supplant traditional power structures and their associated perceptions with more egalitarian ones. These include: promoting the mobility and dignity of manual labour; a narrowing of income differentials; the expansion of social services; the granting of equal pay for equal work to women; nationalizing basic

industries and major commercial banks; the promulgation of national pride and consciousness.¹⁸

One significant component of this strategy to transplant traditional power structures has involved a willingness to experiment with novel forms of production relations. These top-down initiatives bear the unmistakable stamp of Dom Mintoff, the former MLP leader (1949-84) and former Prime Minister (1955-58; 1971-84). While the establishment of a socialist society remained the foremost long-term objective, such a development could not in Mintoff's mind, take place without the achievement of national economic self-sufficiency through worker self-sacrifice and higher productivity. Inspired by the remarkable Yugoslav experience, Mintoff ushered in various forms of participatory management. These were intended as a vehicle for social democracy, as well as a departure from confrontational and economically wasteful industrial relations practices.¹⁹

The most far-reaching participatory inroads have been achieved at Malta Drydocks, the country's biggest enterprise, with the largest workforce and, not coincidentally, with record levels of political activism and very strong trade union consciousness.²⁰ The process at the drydocks was incremental and originally an *ad hoc* solution to chronic bankruptcy and industrial strife. West German style co-determination (with joint GWU and Government appointed directors) was introduced in 1971 immediately after the MLP electoral victory. Both industrial peace and profits were restored in a few years. From 1975 onwards, the Drydocks Council started being completely elected by the workforce, introducing the first experience of worker self-management in Malta. Then, in 1977, the first departmental level worker committees signalled a further refinement in the participatory system. For more than a decade now the drydocks experience has served to demonstrate how Labour can control Capital and how the experience of worker participation in management is in itself educational and does lead to shifts in worker perception and attitudes.²¹

Other examples of participatory initiatives include the appointment of worker directors to the boards of public corporations²² and management committees set up within 18 state-owned manufacturing companies, as well as within certain departments of the civil service.²³ Through these and the drydocks initiative, workers have been encouraged to question the legitimacy of the control of Capital over Labour, especially if they

are facing serious financial and organizational difficulties or unemployment. Such directions in alternative relations of production could be understood as threats to the network of ideological and cultural relations, which forms part of the Gramscian apparatus of hegemony. Indeed, not only do they challenge but, more dangerously to the hegemonic condition, they propose alternatives to the Maltese worker's self-concept regarding managerial authority, oppositional trade unionism, extrinsic orientations to work and the legitimacy of surplus value extraction.

It remains debatable whether the Maltese participatory story of the 1970s was intended as a peaceful yet dramatic transition to worker self-management. Certainly, it was inspiring enough to be described as a test case for the Gramscian evolutionary social movement approach to social democratization.²⁴ The spirit of the transition was very much captured by the Malta Development Plan, operative at the time.²⁵

Unfortunately, with the exception of the drydocks and solitary worker-directors on company boards, the transfer of self-management soon ground to a halt. A power struggle ensued between the civil service management committees, comprising mainly CMTU (that is, non-GWU) union activists, and the traditionally responsible authorities, leading to a *de facto* winding up of these structures. On the other hand, the parastatal industries had run into financial difficulties – their technology was outdated, and the technical and professional staff required was not available. In order to salvage some of the jobs involved, it was decided to convert these ventures, fully or partly, to foreign or local, private ownership. One condition in doing so was the dismantling of all other than traditional industrial relations practices.

A number of worker sit-ins and take-overs in the private sector have also occurred during the MLP's term of office, most with the full backing of the GWU. In almost every case, worker management has been only a temporary, stop-gap affair; the worker-managed enterprise reverted to traditional forms of management within a short time-span, going back to private capital control or being transformed into a form of public corporation.²⁶

Jolted perhaps by the undesirable directions that participatory developments had taken in the late 1970s, the MLM's policy on worker participation during its last term in office was concentrated away from the shop-floor initiatives with their potential for increasing worker expectations and demands and upsetting established power balances. It

focused instead on the promotion of worker directors (generally GWU-appointed) to the board of parastatal enterprises; these in minority positions and without the structural and educational support necessary to foster a wider democratization of workplace relations.²⁷

The economic recession of the early 1980s hammered more nails into the coffin of the transition to counter-hegemony. On a national policy level, a painful re-evaluation of development planning was made. The attraction of more foreign investment had become a *sine qua non* to create productive employment for the jobless thousands and open up further foreign markets for locally made goods. The drive of recent development plans shifted, therefore, from a relatively self-reliant, de-linking direction towards a stronger integration of Maltese economy with satellite status into the capitalist world system.²⁸

In the case of Malta Drydocks, unfortunately, economic viability has not kept pace with innovations in democratic management. A regular series of heavy losses since 1982 has served to make the enterprise dependent on the State for its financial flows, while the drydocks workers have partaken only marginally and indirectly in responsibility for non-profitability.²⁹

The transition towards industrial democracy in Malta was, not unexpectedly, ushered in from above with the backing and inspiration of a progressive social movement. An overall assessment can be made today with the benefit of hindsight: it has not been possible to overcome political/trade unionistic antagonism in the context of the civil service, because moves to greater democracy are seen as a threat to established power relations. The movement has had to bend or break in the face of hostile economic developments. Rather than having a spillover, expansionary and transformative effect, the drive for industrial democracy to date can now be more aptly described as corporatist and integrative.³⁰ The crucial question of accountability and responsibility of workers and their representatives has also remained unresolved.³¹

The Malta Labour Movement did not exclude worker cooperation from its experiments with novel forms of production relations. The development of cooperatives was enshrined in Malta's 1974 Republican Constitution.³² Outdated cooperative legislation, introduced by the British colonial administration thirty years before, was also amended.³³ Actual pragmatic experiments, though, again predictably top-down, did not come about as a result of a conscious worker cooperative policy. All the same,

that Maltese worker cooperatives exist at all is very largely due to the initiative and leadership of specific individuals inspired by (or actually involved in) the MLM, as well as to the wider ideological, financial and organizational support provided by the same social movement. More recently, the MLM has embarked upon what are intended as counter-hegemonic educational initiatives. Such an investment may have been strongly influenced by the 1987 electoral defeat, a result which has led the MLM to appreciate more than ever the tenacity of the dominant cultural and economic environmental fabric.³⁴ The promotion of proletarian culture, in different forms, has been given increased priority by both the MLP and GWU in their respective spheres of action.

The task at hand for the MLM is a difficult one. Educational initiatives can very easily distort themselves into self-righteous political propaganda in view of the prevailing charged partisan atmosphere. From the benches of the parliamentary opposition, the MLM also finds it much easier to oppose hegemony rather than propose alternatives to it, thus failing to reconsider the difficulties of implementing directed social change. All the same, some noteworthy cultural presentations of educational value have been successfully put forward recently.³⁵

The Nationalist Party

An equally powerful and broad-based social movement in Malta is that under the leadership and inspiration of the Nationalist Party, in government since 1987. The roots of the NP can be traced back to the Anti-Reformist League of the late 1880s, established to lobby in favour of the preservation of the traditional privileges and status enjoyed by the Maltese. The conservative character of this party was reinforced by its leaders and followers, invariably drawn from among the professionals and clergy.³⁶ The rift between the NP and the MLP was for many years neatly coincident with social class divisions.

The NP's pro-Italian sympathies caused it to lose considerable support in the period immediately following the Second World War, during which Italian planes had bombed the island into a heap of rubble. Electoral support for the NP has continued to increase steadily since 1947 and reached 51 per cent in 1981 and 1987.³⁷

Such a wide, popular following would not have been achieved had the NP maintained a rigid, conservative, pro-Italian stand. The NP has

evolved over the years, championing the cause and acquisition of Maltese independence in the 1960s and adopting a moderate demo-Christian platform as its ideology.³⁸ Upholding this mass populist image, the NP has advocated with some vigour the principle of participation and collective responsibility in enterprise and civic management, founded on the notion of the dignity and resourcefulness of the individual, as well as on the principles of co-responsibility and devolution of centralized authority.³⁹

The NP was restored to power in May 1987, following a 16-year spell in opposition, so it is unfortunately still too early to posit an effective analysis of pragmatic applications of this participative philosophy.⁴⁰ In the meantime, the MLP affirms that any inroads into democratization are impossible for the NP to implement in practice and are therefore merely vote-catching slogans.⁴¹

The Church

Potentially, the third social movement of note in contemporary Malta, and one with even older traditions and a stronger cultural presence than the MLM or the NP, is that inspired and led by the Roman Catholic Church. The Church's influence today in Malta cannot be underestimated, and its pervasive presence as a cultural force and as a social institution has already been outlined.⁴³ Yet, while the Catholic Church in Malta continues sporadically to call upon the faithful on a national basis to take stands on particular social issues, such calls are generally directed at stopping social change, not at promoting it in desirable directions.⁴³

Indicators of such leanings toward workplace democratization have not been lacking. The social teachings of the Church have long propounded that increased worker participation in enterprise management, profits and ownership contributes to a humanization of the socio-economic environment and to the promotion of the dignity of the worker as a human being.⁴⁴ Such social doctrine can be traced back to Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891);⁴⁵ Pope Pius XI's *Quadregesimo Anno* (1931);⁴⁶ Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961)⁴⁷ and, recently by Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988).⁴⁸

The Church authorities in Malta have failed so far to take advantage of their powerful cultural position and extensive proliferation in com-

munity and educative spheres, by coming out with a clear policy in favour of Maltese workplace democratization. The affinity between the religious and the secular, between Church and State, and the still high level of social control exercised by the Church in many spheres of activity is perhaps too strongly entrenched to permit the institution to cultivate and give expression to progressive ideas.⁴⁹ It is also likely that the damaging politico-religious disputes and the inexorable onset of secularization on a Church, which for a thousand years has never been threatened by other religious or social forces, has fostered a certain escapism. It does this, firstly, at the institutional level, by adopting a much less active role in social, economic and political affairs and, secondly, at the individual level, by a dogged perfunctory preservation of traditional, ceremonial and largely symbolic ritual.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, some priests and ecclesiastics have reacted courageously to the trauma of secularization and, in continuation of the Church's traditional leadership role, direct and animate various socially oriented projects and organizations.⁵¹ These include progressive stands, some on evident, cooperative lines.⁵²

One such body, closely connected to the local cooperative sector is the Social Action Movement (SAM). The driving force behind SAM is a Catholic diocesan priest, who comes from a family of prominent political activists.⁵³ SAM was set up in 1955, with the overall objective of working for the cultural, moral and economic betterment of society and especially of workers. To attain such a goal, SAM takes its inspiration from the principles of Catholic social doctrine, and either takes direct action or helps in the setting up of independent or autonomous bodies, which engage themselves in specific fields of social action.

The achievements of the Movement over three decades have been quite impressive, thanks mainly to a proliferation of action committees which have strong grass-roots representation among farmers, social workers, working women, teachers and clerical workers in particular. Such accomplishments include the unionization of farmers, workers and women, and a host of educational activities.

SAM has also set up, promoted or financially assisted a number of cooperative ventures⁵⁴ and it has been the driving force in the setting up of a Federation of Maltese Cooperatives with 14 primary societies as members in December 1973. Although, there was some enthusiasm initially, this federation never succeeded in mobilizing itself into an

effective voice or force. It blamed the Government of the day for ignoring it⁵⁵ and suffered from damaging personality feuds.⁵⁶ The Federation was discreetly disbanded after some years, when its functions were effectively taken over by the newly-appointed Cooperatives Board at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1976.⁵⁷

An Appraisal of Worker Cooperation in Malta

The elaborate preamble about the Maltese environmental syndrome has identified the forces significant to an understanding of the state and characteristics of worker cooperation in Malta, although actual experiences of the latter have been very few in number. Apart from three worker cooperatives still in operation, there are only five other documented cases, the oldest going back only to the late 1960s. All of these can be traced to one of the locally active social movements described above.

The earliest indication on record of a worker cooperative venture was the Solidarity Building Scheme, established by SAM. The venture, which lasted a couple of years, involved the construction of 7 houses by their seven eventual occupiers on a collective basis.⁵⁸

The next recorded initiative was a stevedore cooperative set up by the General Workers' Union in 1974. The coop offered cargo transport services, which were competitive mainly because of the cooperative organization that permitted the reduction of overhead costs, some work centralization and the purchase of otherwise too costly machinery. Interest in the cooperative by its members apparently dwindled over the years and only 15 members were registered in 1985. In 1987, the surviving members, contrary to the normal procedures, decided to dissolve the coop and distributed all its outstanding assets among themselves.⁵⁹

The Nationalist Party itself established a series of stop-gap worker cooperatives in the summer of 1982. Many NP sympathizers had obeyed a party directive not to report to work on a specific day, as part of the campaign the NP was waging in protest at the anomalous election result achieved in 1981.⁶⁰ The Labour government reacted with an iron hand, and many of those who had absented themselves from work were suspended indefinitely from their jobs with public or parastatal corporations. The NP was therefore morally obliged to assist these supporters in finding alternative means of survival. One of these means was the

organization of many small cooperative activities – teaching, carpentry, secretarial work, electrical installation. The whole project was abandoned once the suspended workers were reinstated.⁶¹

The most significant drive in favour of worker cooperation occurred in 1983-84 and was instigated by activists from the General Workers' Union and the Malta Labour Party. The First Clothing Cooperative (21 registered worker members) and the Kordin Clothing Cooperative (26 registered worker members) were twin companies set up in 1983 following the initiative of Alfred Sant, an economist and MLP activist.⁶² These two enterprises were intended specifically to provide employment to workers, mainly females, who had been made redundant from the textile industry. They have produced clothes on a 'cut, make and trim' basis, usually handling small orders with very diverse specifications. Unfortunately, the cooperatives have lacked marketing expertise, efficiency levels are low because of the constant shift in garment quality, and the machinery they operate is obsolete. As a result, Kordin Clothing has been liquidated in 1988, while the survival of First Clothing remains uncertain.⁶³

Cooperative Maintenance Services, with 10 registered worker members, was set up in 1983 as a business concern bringing together unemployed workers skilled in different crafts. They offered plumbing, electricity and pest control services. This time the initiative was due to a young intellectual, Adrian Gauci, who had also actively supported the setting up and early programme of the Workers' Participation Development Centre. The coop members benefited from a LM 400 per capita loan, free office premises and a steady number of orders for their services through the Government's Cooperatives Board. The worker-members did not take the challenge of the cooperative seriously though. Output was low because members persevered in non-cooperative, individual odd jobs. The CMS was also liquidated in 1988.

The Catering Cooperative (22 worker-members) was set up in 1984 in a more dramatic manner. A private catering chain, forced to cut down its number of operating catering outlets from six to three because of reduced sales, offered the three 'surplus' outlets lock, stock and barrel to its redundant employees, instead of redundancy payments. Following protracted negotiations between the catering chain's management and the General Workers' Union, in which the catering chain's workers were unionized, 22 redundant workers took over the three fast food outlets

and commenced operating them on a worker cooperative basis. The cooperative is still going strong, under the chairmanship of a GWU shop steward, and is likely to announce the settlement of all outstanding debts in 1988.⁶⁴ Because of seasonally fluctuating sales, however, the coop employs additional staff who, although partaking of profit bonuses, do not enjoy membership rights. Unless handled carefully, the condition is ripe for developing into capitalist labour relations, where a few shareholders control and employ 'second class' labour.⁶⁵

The last and most recent worker cooperative establishment is a second Stevedores Cooperative, with 47 worker-members and established in August 1987. The cooperative draws its members particularly from the two towns of Qormi and Zebbug, long associated with stevedore work. The organizer and legal advisor of the coop is a young advocate, George Hyzler, also from Qormi, whose father, a doctor, is a Nationalist Party activist and a member of the current government cabinet. The son, however, apparently enjoys popularity and following from both NP and MLP sympathizers.

Social Movement Dynamics

The Maltese economic, cultural and political condition is not kind to worker cooperation, by any stretch of the imagination. Both infrastructure and superstructure remain powerfully geared to reproducing and legitimizing a dominant non-cooperative hegemony. This condition is not readily transformed. Indeed, the size, origins, performance and problems of the Maltese worker cooperative sector bear witness to this Maltese contextuality and confirm the social movement thesis for bringing about social change in specific directions. Such social engineering, though, is not immune from ideological degeneration, economic pressure of domestic or international provenance and/or relapses to traditional paternalism and clientelism.

The Maltese case is certainly fortunate in having three powerful and legitimacy-wielding social movements disposed towards worker cooperation, in words if not also in deeds. The relationship that exists between these movements, though, leaves much to be desired. The politico-religious disputes involving the Malta Labour Movement and the Church have sharply dented the latter's image as the symbol of all that is Maltese. The MLM may have desired this head-on collision with the Church

as a necessary, purging conflict towards the building of a socialist society, rising from the ashes of a traditionally mystifying, and therefore alienating, religious hegemony.⁶⁶ Education, welfare, patron-client networks, village administration, housing, marriage – areas where the local Church had long enjoyed an unchallenged monopoly – were gradually taken up by a State anxious to embark on rapid socio-economic development. In this way the Church's socio-political role was cut down to size. The transition may well have been desirable, necessary and quite inevitable. Unfortunately, it could only be undertaken in such a short time span by an active iconoclasm on the part of the MLM. The result is a vacuum of legitimacy and self-identity, which even threatens the existence of a national, Maltese consciousness.

In the course of this struggle for cultural and political supremacy, the Nationalist Party became identified as the political defender of the interests of the Catholic Church. The NP thus offered a channel for political activism and support to a religious people with a socially dismantled Church. In this way, the MLM-Church frictions have become institutionalized in the party political arena. The MLP-NP divide, then, goes beyond simple ideology or class interests; it represents the struggle for total, cultural as well as political, social control.⁶⁷

The advances of worker cooperation are insignificant in the context of this all-pervasive dualism, which dominates the Malta stage. The slogan of cooperation, as with the related one of worker participation, can easily fall victim to manipulation, serving as a mere pawn in the overall chess game of power politics.

Autonomy versus Dependency

In this scenario, the responsibility for developing a 'culture of participation' and for promoting the normalization of cooperation in the Maltese context cannot depend indefinitely on social movements. At the same time, the initiative of social movements towards developments in work cooperation and self-management continues to be recognized as a *sine qua non*. It is unrealistic to expect any significant grass roots initiative towards worker cooperativism to occur. And even if these grass roots initiatives do emerge, the likelihood of liquidation or degeneration looms large, unless a social movement slips in to supervise and support. In this way, a critical choice between autonomy and dependency presents

itself; a social movement may be deemed responsible for supporting fledgling cases of worker cooperation. At the same time, such a movement must help workers to self-actualize and educate themselves in the practice of genuine self management.⁶⁸

The critical choice faced by the social movement is between creating a genuine self-managed sector, where people are recognized as being ultimately the masters of their own development;⁶⁹ or keeping down and manipulating people, not necessarily because of Machiavellian principles, but simply out of paternalist good will.⁷⁰ The Malta case demonstrates how the situation is ripe for devolving into a dependence on external initiative and charismatic leadership; it is also vulnerable to political indoctrination.⁷¹

This choice may be within the social movement's control, and determined by the power dynamics among its leadership. Otherwise, the choice may be made implicitly by the outcome of certain courses of action.⁷² Alternatively, the choice may be determined by the power struggle between the social movement and the cooperative sector it is fostering and which may be developing aspirations for fuller, democratic self-management. These possibilities (and there may be others) indicate that an element of faith and trust in the leadership of the social movement may be quite inevitable. After all, in terms of power and influence, fostering an autonomous cooperative sector is against the social movement's interests. At the same time, the process of counter-cultural development is a dynamic one, not only in terms of the perpetual struggle against degeneration, but also in terms of the shifting and diverse political objectives of the cooperative process held by those involved and which are in some way resolved.⁷³

Certain developments at Malta Drydocks, which since 1975 has operated under a form of self-management, certainly appear to have happened in spite of and not because of the MLP leadership's support. Although this hypothesis cannot be substantiated forcefully, it is not unlikely that the experiment went much further than its initial proponents ever imagined.⁷⁴ Strong demands for more widespread worker participation were also made on the MLM by its significant and articulate Drydocks membership.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the economic slump in shiprepair since 1981 has forced the Drydocks to concentrate on lower order, survival needs.⁷⁶

Courses for Future Action

Promoting the normalization of cooperation in Malta, therefore, might be on the future agenda of Malta Drydocks, if the latter overcomes its financial crisis and evolves a powerful set of perceptions and attitudinal styles, which are more independent and self-reliant in outlook. The impetus need not remain the sole responsibility of Drydocks workers, though. The social movements themselves can undertake valid contemporary initiatives in the cooperative direction.

One way of inculcating and fostering the appropriate set of perceptions and attitudinal styles is for the social movement to combine its inspiration and leadership with an investment in 'counter-hegemonic' supportive institutions. Despite introducing legislation that is supportive of democratized production relations, and despite having concrete examples of such production units, major social institutions in Malta remain solidly fixed to their traditional role. If such institutions had been oriented in such a way as to produce men and women as highly versed in appropriate knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes, and with the same back-up of supportive agencies as are capitalist managers today, then the cooperative story of Malta, and elsewhere, might well have been different.⁷⁷

One such institution involves the administration of finance. The scarcity of funds has caused many cooperatives to collapse; one reason for this is that the finance available to workers' coops has been much less than that available to their conventional counterparts. So, in the long-term, worker cooperatives should develop their own banking structure. In the meantime, though, the social movement could step in and facilitate the cooperatives' financial flows. The trap to be avoided is to make cooperators comfortably dependent on the social movement for all their cash requirements.

A second institution in need of developing counter-hegemonic orientation is the educational system. It has already been described how Maltese schools breed non-cooperative and non-participatory skills, under pressure as they are from the cultural conditions and economic demands of the local environment. But this does not exclude the possibility of investing in an out-of-school educational programme. The Church and the main political parties have not neglected this form of cultural and ideological reproduction and their out-of-school education projects attract

many participants.⁷⁸ Most of these initiatives, though, are of the socializing form of education, not the mobilizing kind.⁷⁹ The Workers' Participation Development Centre, although not aligned to any particular social movement, has also undertaken some educational programmes connected with cooperative development.⁸⁰ But considering the narrow resource base of the WPDC these initiatives are few and far between. The attraction of out-of-school education is that it makes possible both training and instruction in the knowledge of skills required for effective and viable cooperation; concurrently it presents the possibility for the cooperative organization of education, so that both curriculum and style of instruction will be cooperative-based.⁸¹ Ideally, the cooperative enterprises themselves should establish and organize their educational system to impart technical and cultural education appropriate to the cooperatives' needs and projects.

While these institutional reforms are fundamentally addressed to the needs of the cooperative sector – that is, providing finance, training and other inputs – they are also in themselves potentially educational. Thus, their organization should be cooperative to the greatest possible degree,⁸² as much as self-management itself. In this way they become sites of accruing experience in cooperation and therefore widen the social spheres in which cooperation and work democratization become a normalized activity.

Cooperative experiences at school should be complemented by more elsewhere, and these should occur at different levels and within different political, economic and cultural spheres simultaneously, to enable a normal evolution of democratic skills and values.⁸³ Such an escalation and normalization of worker cooperation involves setting up more cooperative activity at the workplace. Once again, it is the social movements in Malta which can be realistically expected to take the lead. Experiments in public sector democratic management have already been tried and have failed.⁸⁴ Attempts at setting up new cooperatives are glaringly absent and, when they do occur, often remain submerged in the traditional morass of patron-client networks, dependency and benevolent cooptation. All the same, new pilot schemes involving a local version of semi-autonomous workgroups may be in the pipeline. Natural starting off points for such participatory developments are those groups of public sector employees, who already operate *de facto* as occupational communities.⁸⁵ Admittedly, there is no clear evidence that a process involving the escalation of consciousness arises automatically

from a democratized work setting.⁸⁶ Still there is probably no better educational experience than the actual practice of workplace democracy.⁸⁷

Degeneration, in the guise of stifling articulation, may be mitigated by a rationalization of production by the existing cooperatives themselves. The economic spin-offs of verticalized production are not easily shrugged off; the lesson has been learnt and put to good use by cooperative and non-cooperative organizations alike.⁸⁸ Mutual assistance between cooperatives in various endeavours – counter-trade, services, establishment of new cooperative ventures, pooling of finance, research and consultancy – serves to expand the cooperative enclave. In addition, of course, it increases the likelihood of viability and profitability, through the advantages of economies of scale and the reaping of more value added by the cooperatives over the goods and services that they themselves produce.

A further option available for the normalization process involves the hitherto neglected area of civic participation in decision-making. Since colonial times, nearly all government services in Malta have been administered from the capital.⁸⁹ There have never been any village mayors, headmen or councillors who represent or administer individual towns or villages.⁹⁰ This is not entirely correct, though, because, as has been discussed earlier, the parish priests have long been the traditional spokesmen at town and village level in both religious and secular affairs for the fervent Catholic population, in the absence of secular authorities.⁹¹ That town and village consciousness is most evident on holy days such as festas is therefore no coincidence; the Church and its social functions have been practically the only channel available for community-based initiatives.

Proposals for introducing neighbourhood committees have been suggested in a number of political manifestos, but have never been implemented, arguably because they create a structure which competes against political clientelism.⁹² Of course, the 'dependency versus autonomy' dilemma breaks to the surface once again: by granting genuine possibilities of community participation in local affairs, bureaucratized and centralized power structures are essentially reducing their own voice and influence. Yet, some degree of decentralization in the civic sphere remains a necessary condition for an effective, self-managed cooperative sector to function.⁹³ Initiatives in this direction in Malta also appear in the making.⁹⁴

Conclusion

It has been suggested earlier that the introduction of a new form of work organization does not necessarily entail any change of working patterns, or of attitudes, or of socio-economic structural change. To expect cooperatives by themselves to transform the social environment has been shown to be quite illusory. Nor can one expect miracles from education programmes for actual or would-be cooperators organized in isolation from other developments. For cooperative-oriented strategies to be effective it is necessary to understand, and to a considerable extent control, the process of social change.

Instead of simply planting cooperatives in an unsuitable environment and hoping for the best, efforts should rather be directed towards fostering changes in the society's infrastructural and superstructural fabric.⁹⁵ The ambitious task at hand is none other than the normalization of the culture of cooperation, involving a recodification of social institutions, economic forces and cultural traits.⁹⁶

The Malta case provides a concrete example of how socio-economic, cultural and demographic variables explain the existence of an a-cooperative or anti-cooperative environment. This, therefore, enables the understanding of the present state and size of the Maltese cooperative sector. It also illustrates the assorted forces of mediation at work and the effect that social movements could have on social engineering by adopting the Gramscian style 'war of attrition' strategy, which questions traditional authority and power relations and promotes the acceptability and operationality of an alternative, cooperative culture. In view of the recognized structural limitations imposed on social institutions, which do not permit them to support such a strategy of social transformation, a number of alternative sites have also been proposed whereby a culture of participation could be normalized and serve as an educational and socializing agent; in cooperative production, in civic participation and in out-of-school education. The threat and influence of degeneration, however, remains a very real one. In particular, the dilemma between autonomy and articulation is not easily resolved and remains sensitive to voluntarism and personality.

If, as a consequence to the initiatives suggested above, a counterpoint value system and cooperative culture do develop, then dependence on external agencies to finance, education, political support, as well as in

counter-cultural terms, might well decrease in the long run. In that case, the cooperative sector itself would be able to organize Mondragon-style its production and reproduction, independent of external support.⁹⁷

NOTES

1. Zammit (1979, 1984) relates Maltese traditional adaptations to the condition of national powerlessness. Such adaptations are taken over from Merton (1968) and are analyzed as consequences of alienation and anomie both on a national and on an individual level. The collective expressions in open conflict against the established power structure correspond to the rebel syndrome in the Mertonian classification. The other Mertonian categories – the deferential or conformist, the ritualist-retreatist and the innovationist – are juxtaposed by Zammit to correspond in the Maltese scenario to compliance to paternalism, retreat to localism in village affairs and resort to patron-client networks respectively.

2. Descriptions of the Maltese revolt during the French occupation are provided by De Boisgelin (1804) and Castagna (1890, pp. 366–97), among others.

3. On the frenzied enthusiasm for 'festa partiti' which are religious feasts having strong political overtones, see Boissevain (1969b, 1988).

4. This widespread resort to non-market oriented production, including the production of use-values for personal use, one's family and/or friends is a common condition in industrializing economies. The value added generated in these ways does not find its way into official GNP estimates.

5. Do-it-yourself jobs inside the home, part-time catering, carpentry, electrical, plumbing and auto repair services, private lessons, dressmaking and petty trade are widespread, such that practically every family undertakes some form of value added activity other than formal employment. No official or academic research data on such local activities is available. An objective indicator is the widespread extent of part-time farming, which is registered in sporadic census exercises. The latest exercise, held in 1982, identified 10,903 part-time farmers. See Department of Agriculture (1984). This dichotomy between official proletarianism and unofficial, off-work, black entrepreneurship is common in state socialist systems such as Hungary. See Kemeny (1982).

6. Fishing and construction are such activities, involving small-sized workteams typically practising non-hierarchical power relations, job flexibility and democratic decision-making. Port workers also operate as autonomous work groups.

7. According to the Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act of 1978, persons in Malta setting up a cooperative may qualify for loans from the State.

8. Tapping once again the common sense philosophy reflected in Maltese idioms, a popular saying goes 'thallas ir-Regina'. Translated as 'the Queen will pay', it reflects the irresponsible nature of incurring losses, whether through sabotage, petty theft or mass unrest.

9. This high degree of group solidarity and militancy is apparently a world-wide phenomenon among dockyard workers. See Sandbrook (1981, p. 18).

10. It was also an Englishman, Matthew Giles, who came from Britain specifically

to reorganize drydocks workers into three branches of one national labour union in 1920. See Zammit (1984, pp. 44, 52).

11. The meaning of labour aristocracy in this context refers to a group of workers, who have achieved a high status ranking and high wages among workers by virtue of class consciousness and radical unionism. The concept begs qualification, because widely contrasting versions of the term have been used. For a review of these versions, see Waterman (1975).

12. This union was forced to change its function into that of a mutual aid society for the sick. Its name was also changed to 'Società Operaia Cattolica San Giuseppe'. See Kester (1980, p. 24).

13. The earliest legislation which allowed for trade union recognition was the Trade Union Act of 1929.

14. As documented by Fino (1983, p. 32). By the year 1945/46, hardly two years after its establishment, the GWU organized 29,660 workers in Malta; all the other unions together had only 3,649 workers. Fino (1983, p. 60).

15. These included the Trade Union and Trade Disputes Ordinance (1945); the Industrial Training Act (1948); the Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1948) and the Conditions of Employment (Regulations) Act (1952).

16. These revolved round two main issues – the flouting of integration proposals with Britain and the commencement of the British Services sudden run-down.

17. Already in the 1930s, the Malta Labour Party and the Constitutional Party had been blacklisted by the Roman Catholic Church following an escalation of tensions. At the root of the trouble was the continuing active participation of Maltese priests in local politics.

In 1958, the Church did not support the MLP's integration proposals of Malta with Britain, on the grounds that they did not safeguard the interests and influence of the Catholic Church in Malta. The quarrel grew more bitter when the MLP was accused of socialist and communist tendencies. The stigma of mortal sin was cast over the MLP, its publications were condemned and its top leaders interdicted from 1961 to 1969. This excruciating experience purged the MLP ranks and permanently alienated many of its diehard supporters from the Church. See Koster (1981, Chapters 8 & 9); Sammut (1984, Chapter 1).

18. These achievements are discussed in Zammit (1984, Chapter 4).

19. For a personality profile of Mintoff from a sociological perspective see Zammit (1984, Chapter 4). For a chronology of worker participation initiatives during the MLP government see Baldacchino et al. (1986, pp. 189–94). For a more elaborate analysis of the period 1971–79 see Kester (1980).

20. Studies of worker participation at Malta Drydocks, mostly undertaken with the direct involvement of the Workers' Participation Development Centre, include Baldacchino (1984, 1989); Baldacchino et al. (1986); Borg Bonello (1983); Gauci (1982); Kester (1974, 1980, 1986); Portelli (1983) and Zammit et al. (1982).

21. The heightened political expectations of drydocks workers and their readiness to involve themselves in decision making as a right is one conclusion of the opinion survey conducted by the Workers' Participation Development Centre in December 1982. See Baldacchino (1984, p. 47). Baldacchino et al. (1986) gives details of the total survey results.

22. These include TeleMalta and EneMalta Corporations, Marsa Shipbuilding, Air Malta, Tug Malta, the Bank of Valletta and Construction & General Engineering. For the one single academic study on the worker-director in Malta to date, see Zammit & Baldacchino (1989).

23. Their establishment, structure and eventual demise is reported in Zammit (1980) and Kester (1980, pp. 128-31; 150-3).

24. Kester (1980) as well as Zammit et al. (1982). Woodworth (1981) questions the considerable logic that Kester (1980) attributes to the Maltese transition, suggesting that this may have been merely a series of quasi-accidental and haphazard events, *ad hoc* manipulations to serve the end of political expediency.

25. Malta Development Plan 1973-80. The Plan's vision was of 'a Malta standing on her own feet, sustained by the ingenuity and resourcefulness of her people, and containing within herself the economic power and sinews to maintain self-reliant growth' (1974, p. 61). 'Industrial democracy in its various forms is now recognized as not only socially desirable but also imperative for efficient production. Malta is pioneering new forms of ownership and control in this area' (Ibid., p. 68).

26. A management committee at the country's only Casino was discreetly made defunct when a private buyer for the establishment was found. An indefinite sit-in at the local radio and television broadcasting stations led to the formerly British-owned firm becoming a state-owned company; a worker take-over in a metal furniture factory was fomented by the GWU Metal Workers' Section, in view of wages being regularly overdue to workers. Control was normalized when the issue was settled.

27. This policy has not been systematic, with some worker-directors being elected by the respective workforce, others nominated by the GWU, but endorsed by the Minister responsible. A critique of the worker-director as a form of workers' participation in management is provided by Kester & Schiphorst (1983, pp. 59-67) and Zammit & Baldacchino (1989).

28. This is evident from the emphasis on mass tourism and export-oriented manufacturing industry, which highlights the 1986-88 Malta Development Plan.

29. The apparently ambivalent juxtaposition of fixed stable wage rates and chronic losses in a self-managed firm are only understandable from a political and cultural perspective. Drydocks workers and their union continue to expect the State to cover their enterprise's losses in full and to guarantee them a fixed wage. This confluence of participatory and traditional value systems is discussed in Baldacchino (1989).

30. 'The presumed integrative function...consists of giving workers a stake in their job in a particular enterprise, fostering an identification of workers with their own

enterprise and thus bringing about acquiescence to their position in the existing social order' – Stephens (1980, p. 3).

31. Some of these pending issues are neatly captured in the article 'Worker Directors in Malta: the Present Situation at Law', *The Times* (daily local newspaper, Valletta, Progress Press) 29 Feb. 1988.

32. Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malta (1974) states: 'The State acknowledges the social contribution of cooperative societies and shall encourage their development'.

33. The Cooperative Ordinance of July 1946 was only slightly amended in 1949 and remained in force until superseded by Act 6 of 1975 and the Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act 26 of 1978.

34. See for example the letter by Mario Azzopardi, an artist involved in the setting up and activity of Politeatru (see Note 35 below) in *Orizzont* (daily local newspaper, Valletta, Union Press) 24 July 1987.

35. A proletarian theatre, called POLITEATRU is putting on socio-political dramatic pieces, including works by Brecht, which inspire a radical critique of the social order. The activities of the WPDC, the pedagogy of which is elaborated on in Chapter 4, are also aimed at a democratization of Maltese society, but of course these are not tied to any particular partisan political alignment.

36. A socio-historical account of the emergence of the MLP and NP as political parties is provided by Frendo (1979).

37. The support gained by the respective political parties in all general elections since 1947 is documented in Table 4 in the Appendices.

38. One cannot disregard the fact that it was Mintoff's long, spectacular and dramatically successful career as Prime Minister and the consequential cultural and socio-economic socialist reforms set in motion, which caused the NP to moderate its stand, rather than risk political extinction.

39. For example: 'A cardinal principle of Christian democratic ideology is that all should participate in decisions which affect them closely; this not only in the political but also in the economic sphere . . . Elsewhere, we encourage the development of cooperatives . . .' translated from Partit Nazzjonalista (1986, pp. 17–19). See also the most recent political manifesto of the NP in Partit Nazzjonalista (1987): Section II 7 on worker participation; Section III 7.5 on participatory management in the public sector; Section III 7.6 on cooperative promotion and Section III 9.1 on local civic councils.

40. Notable indicators include the Prime Minister's commitment to maintain worker participation at Malta Drydocks and the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to draft a strategy for implementing forms of worker participation in the public sector. A prominent Nationalist Member of Parliament has also indicated the importance of endeavouring to establish 'A culture of participation'. See Frendo (1988).

41. Alfred Sant, former MLP President and cooperative animator, had this to say during a conference on worker participation held in September 1988:

Ironically, during the late seventies, the right wing forces of this country were engaged in an effort to transform themselves into a mass movement. To do so, they needed to attract support from within the ranks of the working class. They could not afford to alienate any possible pockets of workers' support, and thus adopted a mixed bag of so-called 'progressive' call signs that were never given a clear policy content . . .

42. Koster (1981, p. 262) comments that even the Maltese hit parade has been dominated for months on end by a semi-religious song rendered by a group of Maltese missionary priests. A recent survey has also established that the weekly religious programme on the local TV station by the Church, 'Dawl il-Hajja', has the highest audience of 120,000; this is 20,000 more than the next best, which is the audience for the daily news bulletin, *Il-Gens* (weekly Church newspaper, Blata l-Bajda, Media Centre) 7 Oct. 1988. Linguistically, the Church's influence is underlined by numerous references to God and sacred objects in everyday parlance: Alla jbierek (praise be to the Lord); jekk Alla jrid (God willing); Mn'Alla (fortunately); Alla hares (God forbid) and common swear words.

43. One recent example has been the Church's campaign in favour of the financing, freedom and status of church schools in Malta in autumn 1984. A third politico-religious dispute-of-sorts (which Koster had predicted) thus erupted in the context of educational policy.

44. This is neatly captured in a Vatican Council II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, (London, Catholic Truth Society, 1966, p. 95): 'In economic enterprises, it is persons who work together, as free and independent men created in the image of God. So long as unity of direction is assured, a suitable share in management should be aimed at for everybody – proprietors, employers, management and workers'. For more powerful, contemporary statements coming from Catholic Bishops in the United States, consider their Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy. See National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986), Chapter 4a. For an academic analysis of the position of the Catholic Church on worker participation see Skalicky (1975).

45. 'Each needs the other completely: capital cannot do without labour; nor labour without capital'. See *Rerum Novarum*, para. 28.

46. 'In the present state of human society, we deem it advisable that the wage contract should, when possible, be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership . . . In this way, wage-earners and the other employees participate in the ownership or the management or in some way share in the profits' – *Quadregesimo Anno*, p. 65.

47. ' . . . the present demand for workers to have a greater say in the conduct of the firm accords not only with man's nature, but also with recent progress in economic, social and political spheres' – *Mater et Magistra*, paras. 32, 77, 85–103.

48. 'Both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism . . . promote at the economic level, antithetical forms of the organization of labour and of the structures of owner-

ship, especially with regard to the so-called means of production' – *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* para. 20. See also *Laborem Exercens*, para. 14.

49. As suggested by Boissevain (1969a, p. 79). 'The Church and all its activities, the belief systems and the accompanying ritual that it endorses were found (by Boissevain) so intertwined that any deviant behaviour soon became the subject of correcting social forces'. See Vassallo (1979, p. 97).

50. Suggested by Koster (1981). Note that these reactions correspond to the Mertonian retreatist and ritualist response categories as well as to those reformulated by Zammit as reactions to alienation and anomie. See Note 1 above.

51. These include CARITAS (Malta), the Media Centre, the Cana Movement, the John XXIII Peace Laboratory, The Institute for Social Education, The Emigrants' Commission, The Missionary Movement, The Residential Homes for the Handicapped. All these are under the helm of different priests and monks.

52. Notable among these are the Young Christian Workers (YCW), the local branch of an international movement inspired by the writings and actions of Josef Cardijn, a Belgian priest. The YCW, in association with other progressive representatives of the local clergy, were the first to raise the slogan of worker participation in Malta in the 1960s. A diocesan priest was also for many years the Chairman of the Gozo Milk & Agricultural Cooperative Society.

53. Reverend Furtunato Mizzi, founder and President of SAM, is the grandson of Furtunato Mizzi (leader of the Anti-Reformist Party in the 1880s) and the son Enrico Mizzi (Leader of the Partito Democratico Nazionalista of the early 1920s and of the Nationalist Party until his death, as Prime Minister, in 1950).

54. These include the MAS Consumer Cooperative and the Fishermen's Cooperative, which are still in operation. Other initiatives with only short-lived success include the Pioneer Credit Union, two agricultural service cooperatives and a poultry-breeders' cooperative. Reference to an *ad hoc* building coop is made further on in the text.

55. 'Government is putting aside the Federation and its member cooperatives and has chosen to deal only with a small number of cooperatives which are not members of the Federation . . .' Resolution passed by the Federation of Maltese Cooperatives, 19 June 1974.

56. These were essentially between the representatives of the strongest cooperative bodies: Mr E. Soler (of the Milk Producers' Coop, KPH), Dr J. Desira Buttigieg (of the Farmers' Wine Coop and the Agricultural Trading Coop) and Mr S. Attard (of the Federation of Central Cooperative Societies).

57. Via an amendment to the 1946 Cooperative Ordinance, which set up a cooperative board with a chairman instead of simply a registrar.

58. This is documented in the publicity bulletin *This is the Social Action Movement*, Malta, Lux Press, 1971, pp. 14–15. Confirmed during an interview with the Reverend Fortunato Mizzi, SAM founder and director, in June 1987.

59. Information on this Stevedores' Coop (1974) is reported in *The Labour Post* (GWU publication), Valletta, Union Press, March 1981. Information on all local worker cooperative initiatives was also forthcoming from Joe Galea, Chairman of the Cooperatives Board, during an interview held in October 1988. Rizzo (1985a, Chapter 4) also gives a concise account.

60. The proportional representation system, accompanied by the manipulation of the boundaries of electoral districts, led to a situation in 1981 whereby the Party gaining the absolute majority of votes and that gaining the majority of parliamentary seats were not one and the same. The NP did not recognize the election result, having remained out of government in spite of having gained 50.9 per cent of the vote. This crisis, which dominated the socialist third consecutive term of office (1981-87) also contributed to the government's reluctance to embark on any major participative or cooperative ventures.

61. See *The Times* (Valletta, Progress Press) 25 July 1982 and *In-Taghna* (Pieta, Independence Print), 26 July 1982. The Free Workers Coops, as they were called, barely lasted 2 weeks. Dismissed workers were reinstated before the middle of August 1982.

62. Dr Alfred Sant was Chairman of the Malta Development Corporation at the time. Subsequently, he also served as MLP President and as a Member of Parliament.

63. The economic problems of these cooperatives were identified and documented by a Yugoslav consultancy team in December 1985. See OPTIMA (1985a, 1985c).

64. The Catering Cooperative saga has been extensively reported in GWU publications (The daily *Orizzont*, the weekly *Torca* and the international monthly *Labour Post*).

65. Another move in this direction is the decision by the Catering Cooperative in 1988 to allow worker-shareholders to dispose of their shares among family members.

66. This is perhaps best spelt out in Mintoff (1961), written at the height of a politico-religious dispute.

67. The political polarization of the Maltese population is perhaps best understandable from the perspective of racial or ethnic conflict. Friggieri (1987, pp. 70-1) refers to each of the two Maltese mass parties as nations.

68. The autonomy versus dependency issue has a very long history, and is often identified with the long debate between Lenin and Luxemburg. Luxemburg (1970, p. 78) argues, as does this text, that any new democratic social order '... must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses, ... it must arise out of the growing political training of the mass of people'. This position is echoed, among others, by Raptis (1980, p. 67) and the life-long educationist Gelpi (1985b, p. 22). Kester (1980, p. 16) ascribes a key role to this process of 'growing political training' which he equates to 'social objectification'.

69. Well expressed and elaborated by J. K. Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, in his speech on Freedom and Development, October 1968. Reported in Nyerere (1973, p. 60).

70. In cooperative practice, the dilemma is discussed among others by Bonow (1966) and Inayatullah (1972, pp. 270-1).

71. 'The propagation of . . . self-management . . . may be political window dressing or even outright manipulation'. See Kester (1980, p. 16). ' . . . Self-management might simply be a charade, . . . a form imposed by the party leadership as a tool of administration surveillance and/or indoctrination. See Greenberg (1983, p. 217).

72. This has in fact been described with respect to educational provision in Chapter 4.

73. Stephens (1980) adopts a similar approach in analyzing the Peruvian experience of industrial democracy in the period 1968-75.

74. Contrary to the Drydocks Act of 1975, Malta Drydocks workers started electing the Chairman to their Council of Administration as from 1983; prior to that, he had been appointed by the elected council members, as the law stipulates. The 1983 action allowed for much less external influence on council affairs, especially on the chairmanship.

75. Note, for example, the debate on the motion to expand worker participation in industry, held during the 1983 GWU National Conference. The motion and main arguments defending the motion were forthcoming from Drydocks Union delegates. See *L-Orizzont* (Valletta, Union Press) of 4 November 1983 and 23 November 1983. The debate is reported in *WPDC Newsletter* 1/84, pp. 1-4.

76. The constitutional crisis (see Note 60 above) characterizing the period, is not to be forgotten as another brake on participatory developments.

77. A point made by Jones (1976).

78. So, for example, both major political parties have active education departments which organize seminars, publish books and press releases, invite guest speakers on topical issues, etc. The Church, of course, has its schools and various other agencies of adult education. Refer also to Note 35 above.

79. This distinction is made by Vanek & Bayard (1975).

80. Refer to WPDC: A Review of Activities - 1981/86' in WPDC (1987, pp. 18-27).

81. A review of the WPDC's pedagogy is found in Baldacchino (1985, 1987b). Chapter 4, of course, is concerned specifically with the question of educational provision for effective cooperation.

82. As recommends Vanek (1975, pp. 35-6).

83. As argued by Baumgartner et al. (1979).

84. Refer to Note 23 above.

85. Recommendations to this effect were made by Baldacchino (1986a). An occupational community refers to a cultural condition involving a strong sense of occupational and communal experiences which make for feelings of fraternity and comradeship. See

Lockwood (1966). It acts as an normative sub-system, which can not only serve as an effective barrier to the dominant social values but could produce an alternative value-set to guide the sub-group members' behaviour. Parkin (1967) applies this hypothesis to explain party political preference in Britain. In Malta, 21.5 per cent of drydocks workers sampled in 1982 claimed that friendship networks at work spilled over into non-work activities. See Baldacchino (1984, p. 40). The study of drydocks workers by Zammit (1984) generally confirms the effect of local community and occupational milieux on images and perceptions of the wider society.

86. Greenberg (1983, p. 198). He refers to Marx's criticism of incrementalist socialists like Proudhon who believed that producer cooperatives in themselves held the key to social transformation, neglecting the necessity of capturing state power, and other, wider, environmental support. Rather, even cooperatives with counter-cultural objectives may tend over time to become characterized by declining social concern and a-political or anti-political orientations. Herbert Stratton, Director, New School for Democratic Management, interviewed by E. Greenberg, July 1982. Quoted in Greenberg (1983, p. 218, Note 15). The point is also made by Baumgartner et al. (1979). Greenberg (1986, pp. 151-3) suggests that this could not be otherwise in such cases as the US Plywood Cooperatives given their unmediated environment.

87. '... participation has a major effect on consciousness, serving to modify general values about work relationships and leading not only to increases in the desire for participation among workpeople but also to its acceptance as a "normal" means of reaching decisions within society'. See Poole (1975, p. 29). See also Gorz (1982).

88. Edilfornacai, a building coop from Bologna, Italy, makes its own building material; CAMST, a catering coop from the same locality, makes its own pasta. G. Massarenti Cooperative, of Molinella, also from near Bologna, grows its own agricultural produce, provides back-up services and sells its products via a consumer coop. This information is from first-hand experience, gleaned from a visit in February 1988. Large Multinational concerns such as 3M, BTR, IBM and Royal Dutch Shell produce commodities profitably by controlling the process of production from the extraction of raw materials up to the final output. Only in specific segments of the production process, where costs exceed revenues, is subcontracting or outside purchasing resorted to.

89. The few exceptions include certain postal, banking, and social services. However, all ministries and government departments remain situated in the capital city or its immediate suburbs.

90. The French and the British actually established short-lived village councils in 1798 and during the nineteenth century respectively. The Gozo Civic Council (1961-73) has been the most recent attempt to undertake a measure of local government. Koster (1981, p. 264) however calls it a 'complete failure'. Gulia (1966) and Gauci (1986, pp. 85-97) hold different opinions.

91. Boissevain (1966, p. 2).

92. Koster (1981, pp. 263-4) feels that local government in Malta is doomed to failure because of rampant political polarization and several petty conflicts which exist at

village level. Local councils would also threaten the strict discipline exercised by political parties over their regional executives.

93. As argued, for example, by Stojanovic (1973a).

94. Proposals for local government had been put forward in the 1981-85 Development Plan but were not implemented. See Office of the Prime Minister (1981, p. 190). More recently, proposals for civic councils have been put forward by the Nationalist Party in its 1987 electoral manifesto. Such councils appear to be earmarked to administer local social and public services, cultural programmes, environmental protection and informatics. See Partit Nazzjonalista (1987, Section III, 9.1).

95. While the Maltese cultural, political and economic conditions appear malleable via a social movement approach to social change, the demographic conditions, that is the small size and high population density, remain beyond feasible and acceptable manipulation. Thus, the geophysical context of Malta will remain badly disposed to cooperative efforts.

96. The converse of the Freirean idea is neatly captured in George Orwell's *1984*, whereby Newspeak, the official language, becomes the cultivator of 'proper' worldviews and mental habits, an instrument designed to diminish the range of thought.

97. Provision for this already exists in the Cooperative Societies Act (1978). Bringing into force Section 24 would establish an autonomous apex organization, which will provide, organize and supervise effective centralized services for the local cooperative sector, including cooperative education and training. With respect to the educational system in Mondragon, see Thomas & Logan (1982, pp. 52-66).

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8 LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Answering a Key Question

How can the workers of the world find viable answers to repression, exploitation and ideological incorporation? The question has been asked innumerable times and will, no doubt, recur many times in future. This text can be seen as one version of the answer to this interpolation. In this case, the answer goes beyond the defencism of anti-statements and posits a viable, working alternative: Worker cooperatives are recognized as instruments capable of redirecting inequality, poverty and reduced job opportunities. They are also acknowledged as avenues for alleviating the alienation, deskilling and the treatment of labour as mere chattel such as prevails in the immediate workplace experience of both state socialism and private capitalism.¹ This is not to imply that the issue of labour control/motivation becomes irrelevant in a worker cooperative setting. Indeed, the absence of clear positions of authority may make it more problematic.² Rather, labour control/motivation is recognized as a necessary feature of any society which depends upon labour power for the process of production.³ Worker cooperation is nevertheless seen as holding a potential for a form of labour control/motivation which is more attractive and rewarding, less dehumanizing but just as stable as any other.

A Review of the Argument

This paper recognized from the start the importance of some form of external support and supervision to exist with respect to a cooperative sector, such that the latter's democratic principles and minimal standards of working conditions are upheld. This was followed by an examination of the factors leading to poor cooperative performance, from which the significance of the socio-economic, cultural and political environment on cooperative success was identified. With this contextuality in mind, the degeneration of a worker cooperative into yet another structure which reflects and reproduces the existing dominant socio-economic relations and cultural traits appears in many cases inevitable and only to be prevented by a definite investment in social transformation. Hence the need for external support recurs with a more concrete agent in mind:

a progressive social movement which will advance (perhaps from a position of political power) a long-term strategy of social change, which it will motivate, defend and inspire from above. Concurrently, the social movement should promote an effective educational and mobilizing strategy, which nurtures and expands the radius and influence of counter-hegemonic culture from below, taking advantage of existing cooperative features, which serve as the embryonic depositories of a transformed social order. All the same, one must remain aware of the dangers, both structural and voluntaristic, which could subvert the counter-cultural strategy itself: the degeneration problem is not specific only to worker cooperatives but to all elements anomalous to the dominant value system and relations of production.

A number of general propositions have been brought to light from the theoretical argument and the corresponding research into the local Malta condition. These are presented below in point form, serving as a summary fact sheet of various key statements made here and there in the text. Their critical but serious consideration is recommended particularly by those interested or involved in setting up and promoting successful worker cooperatives:

- the worker cooperative form of production can be functionally advantageous to its broader economic context by effectively subsidizing it, with the consequences of low wages and unsuitable conditions of work for cooperative members;
- the socio-economic, cultural and political environment, apart from being a reflection of power relations at the infrastructural level, is in itself a powerful factor which contributes to the atrophy of economically viable anomalous forms of production into conventional ones in any economy. This can be posited as a general explanation for the pervasive degeneration problem;
- worker cooperatives can best survive if they are perceived and treated as normal entities. Hence the importance to consider strategies of social change directed at the normalization of worker cooperation in a salutary environment. This corresponds to the Gramscian proposal of fostering an alternative, counter hegemony;
- counter-cultural promotion and normalization involves the existence and supportive operations of a progressive social movement, as well as the widening of cooperative experiences – in themselves educational – at work and in the wider society;

- counter-cultural elements exist to some extent in all societies. These may be harnessed by progressive social movements to serve as a basis for legitimate social engineering;
- counter-hegemonic education remains a key component for the introduction of viable worker cooperation. To serve its purpose, technical instruction in the necessary skills and knowledge must be imparted in as democratic and cooperative a manner as possible.

Directions for Further Research

Having reviewed the main considerations put forward in this text, it is worthwhile making some further observations on certain points developed in the argument, which beckon further and more elaborate analysis.

The first point concerns the location and operability of a cooperative sector. The previous discussion has suggested that the best chance of success for a worker cooperative movement is at the meso-level in society. The micro-level is weak and vulnerable, liable to degeneration and liquidation, more likely to serve a reserve function and having little spillover influence, as has been discussed. The macro-level, that is, a cooperative society replacing capitalist relations of production, hegemony and all, is quite Utopian and unrealistic, certainly in the medium term.⁴ If Mondragon, the Cyprus cooperative societies, the US plywood cooperatives and the French and Italian building cooperatives can be taken as models, then it seems that the medium-term likelihood is for a condition of dual power with a cooperative sector/environment in articulation with a capitalist one. Thus, unless and until the cooperative sector develops into a self-sufficient, self-contained enclave,⁵ it is recognized that there will always remain external constraints impinging on the working of cooperative firms, such as market mechanisms, state policies, international events, the requirements of economic viability and competitiveness, the inflow and outflow of goods and services.⁶ In other words, while cooperative production can be expected to have positive spin-offs at the level of organization of the enterprise, such benefits will be constrained within non-cooperative mechanisms of allocation.⁷ The strategies of coping with this inevitable economic articulation become crucial for the prevention of degeneration. However, given a liberal-pluralist political framework which allows for legitimate avenues of

counterpoint promotion, an interesting dynamic of cooperative and non-cooperative modes presents itself. The ensuing articulation need not be one of structural subordination for the sphere of worker cooperation; it might be the non-cooperative mode, which in turn suffers from cooperative-induced degeneration. So, it would be interesting to adopt the constructs developed in the articulation of modes of production debate to the question of cooperative-non-cooperative relations. Sufficient examples exist worldwide for comparative case studies of this dynamic.

The second item of interest is leadership. It is probably not just coincidence that cases of viable cooperation are accompanied by charismatic personalities.⁸ This in itself confirms the importance of voluntaristic elements for successful cooperative promotion, although there is something paradoxical about placing powerful leaders at the helm of cooperative, autonomous entities.⁹ It appears to be a case of servant leadership, characterized by interdependence, mutual responsibility, collegiality and creativity, such that interdependent group decision-making becomes a normal state of affairs.¹⁰ If having a leader among the self-led is an indispensable condition for viable cooperative management, then it would be pertinent to consider ways of identifying or promoting servant leaders for worker cooperation. In particular, the cooperative's educational system must be geared both to develop such leadership qualities as well as to identify their recipients. The technique is suggestive of élitism and human bio-engineering.¹¹ Indeed, there is a danger of servant leadership degenerating into dictatorship, given the authoritarian styles most people have been bred to expect and accept. Whether the democratic, growth-directed educational programmes outlined actually promote effective servant leadership remains a subject of inquiry.

The third worthwhile point to ponder is a reconsideration of Marxist theory. The overriding concern with contextuality in the foregoing analysis faithfully supports the hypothesis that no society can escape its past while looking for a future.¹² True to the Marxist vision, every society lies embedded in an historical process determined by the way people relate to each other in the course of production. Going beyond strict class dynamics, other cultural and political elements have to be added to this movement to provide a general structure of hegemony, in whose context social stability and change are to be understood. So, while the concept of hegemony as domination is useful to appreciate how social and cultural reproduction and legitimation take place, it could be extended

to include an analysis of how it functions to empower specific social movements to engage in, and bring about, social change.¹³

The hypothesis that social change can be brought about despite the heritage of the past requires further investigation. It is debatable to what extent Marx's well-known statement,¹⁴ that it is men's social being which determines their consciousness, is reductionist.¹⁵ After all, it may be precisely on the extent to which a society can escape from being 'the captive of its own history'¹⁶ that the potential of progressive social movements for bringing about social change is based. It can be argued that Marx's historical determinism, influenced by Hegel's dialectic, does recognize the potential for social change.¹⁷ Nor is such change, even to Marx's mind, confined to the relatively fixed direction of class dynamics.¹⁸ Marxist laws of social development can be seen as laws of tendency only¹⁹ and this, perhaps, is how Marx himself intended them to be seen.²⁰

If this transcendence of class analysis and reductionism is acceptable, a neo-Marxist perspective may be useful to assess the effects, if any, of progressive social movements on people's values and social perceptions.²¹ It would also help in determining the structural conditions and processes that lead to the emergence of the actual movements.²²

Epilogue

The large majority of the world's citizens remain consuming objects in workplace, classroom, parish and constituency, leaving all responsibility for social, political and economic development in the hands of the few.²³ Worker cooperatives have been proposed as the models of a hopeful alternative to this state of affairs. While constrained and distorted by their environment, they nevertheless constitute the workings of a third way, an alternative form of rationality which can contribute to the democratization of the workplace and to the future transformation of the social order.²⁴ Such is the challenge to be faced.

NOTES

1. 'Labour is not a chattel' is an often-quoted statement from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891).
2. Refer to Chapter 3, and in particular to Note 10.
3. See Harrod (1987) who also suggests that control and motivation as applied to Labour are interchangeable.
4. Although, admittedly, the overthrow of capitalism was the long-term objective of the Gramscian vision.
5. As it may be tempted to do as a defence mechanism of self-preservation.
6. Vanek (1982) considers some of these constraints. They include inflation, depreciation and investment decisions. See also Greenberg (1983, pp. 201-2).
7. For example, the Mondragon cooperatives have embraced scientific management practices to achieve high levels of productivity. See Spinrad (1984, p. 200).
8. These include Don José Maria Arizmendi in the case of Mondragon; Akhtar Hameed Khan at the Comilla Kotwali Thana; Guillermo Alvarez Macias at Cruz Azul, Mexico; and Mohammed Yasin at Deeder cooperative, Bangladesh. In the Maltese setting, one can mention Sammy Meilaq, Malta Drydocks Chairman; Joe Grima, Catering cooperative Chairman and George Hyzler, Legal Advisor to the Stevedores Cooperative. On leadership in the two Bangladesh cases cited see Ahmad (1986, pp. 59-61). On 'Don Guillermo' refer to Gavito et al. (1986, *passim*).
9. This paradox is suggested by Manz and Sims (1986) and Yeo (1980).
10. The notion of servant leadership is developed by Greenleaf (1977). A brief profile is provided by Darmanin (1985, pp. 85-6).
11. As described in the science fiction Utopia of Huxley's *Brave New World* and Skinner's *Walden Two*. See Huxley (1967) and Skinner (1976) respectively.
12. Hyden (1983, p. 191).
13. Giroux (1984, p. 121).
14. Taken from Marx (1911, p. 15).
15. See, for example, Cottrell (1984, Chapters 1 & 2) for an attempt at reconciling different degrees of reductionism in the works of Marx.
16. Hyden (1983, p. 213).
17. For an analysis of the influence of Hegel on Marx, see Balinsky (1970, Chapter 2).
18. As argue, for example, Aronowitz (1981) and Giroux (1984).
19. Merrington (1968, p. 147).

20. Ibid., p. 146. He argues that this blind belief in the irreversible forces of history is not a legacy of Marx but of the professorial Marxism of the Second International.

21. Zammit (1979, 1984) studied Malta Drydocks GWU shop stewards for evidence that they were internalizing socialist perceptions propounded by the MLM leadership. The hypothesis was that, being the vanguard followers of the MLM, they would be the most likely to manifest such perceptual shifts from the entire Maltese population. The results of the study suggest that minimal perceptual shifts have taken place.

22. In this respect, the theoretical contributions of Offe, Habermas and Touraine, as applicable to contemporary society, are useful. They all go beyond exclusive class analysis. See a review of their position in Cohen (1982). An essay discussing the character, strengths and limitations of social movements is Frank & Fuentes (1987).

23. As discussed by Sik (1984, pp. 261-2).

24. As proposed by Marx himself (1977, p. 440).

the following: \mathcal{H}_1 is the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Let \mathcal{H}_2 be the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Let \mathcal{H}_3 be the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Let \mathcal{H}_4 be the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Let \mathcal{H}_5 be the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Let \mathcal{H}_6 be the set of all functions $f: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ such that $f(x) = y$ for all $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and $y \in \mathcal{Y}$.

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APPENDICES

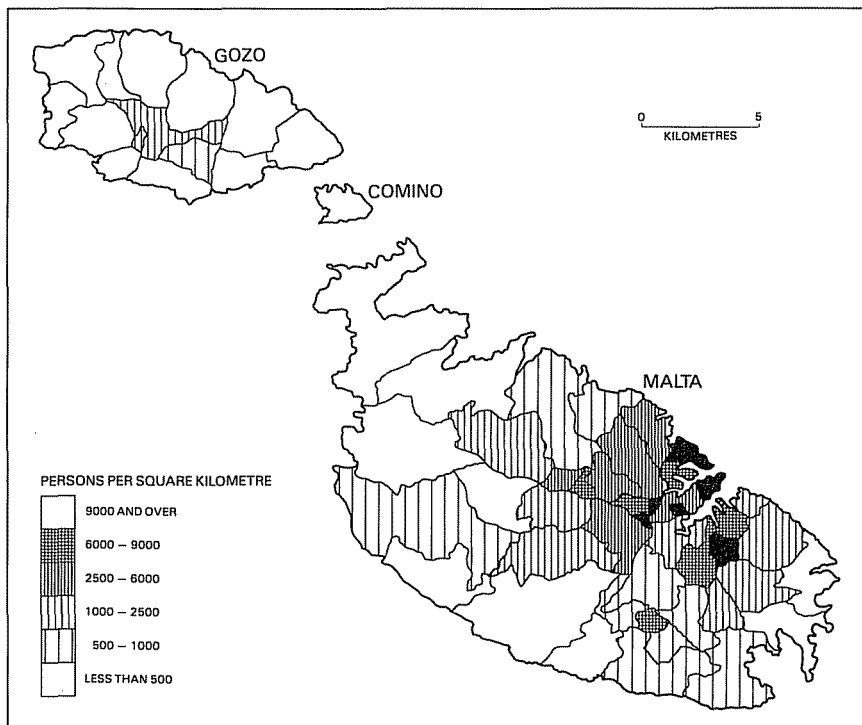
Map 1: Location of the Maltese Islands in the Mediterranean Region



Source: Baldacchino (1988a) p. 156.



Map 2: Scale Map of the Maltese Islands Showing Variations in Population Density



Source: Malta Census 1985, Vol. 3, Valletta, Malta Central Office of Statistics (1987).

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Table 1: Basic Demographic & Economic Statistics for the Maltese Islands

Item	1987 Jan-Aug	1988 Jan-Aug
VITAL STATISTICS		
Population		
Total	344,565.0	347,761.0
Males	169,846.0	171,474.0
Females	174,719.0	176,287.0
Births		
Total	3,471.0	3,541.0
Males	1,788.0	1,806.0
Females	1,683.0	1,735.0
Marriages		
Total	1,513.0	1,743.0
Deaths		
Total	2,094.0	1,870.0
Males	1,069.0	972.0
Females	1,025.0	898.0
Infant Mortality		
Total	22.0	36.0
Per cent of Births	0.6	0.9
Migration (Departures)	430.0	356.0
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY		
Total production (Lm million)	210.5	225.0
Employment	31,234.0	31,523.0
FOREIGN TRADE (Lm million)		
Imports	262.2	288.5
Consumer Goods	59.3	65.8
Industrial Supplies	148.2	177.9
Capital and Others	54.7	44.7
Exports	135.8	151.6
Domestic	125.1	139.0
Re-exports	10.7	12.6

Table 1: (continued)

Item	1987 Jan-Aug	1988 Jan-Aug
RETAIL PRICE INDEX (1983 = 100)		
All Items	101.2	104.6
Vital Items (62.10)	101.1	105.8
Other Items (37.90)	101.5	102.7
TOURISM		
Total Arrivals	502,601.0	528,056.0
UK	302,394.0	314,169.0
Italy	34,034.0	39,747.0
Germany (W)	46,070.0	50,191.0
France	22,459.0	18,127.0
Scandinavia	16,115.0	16,496.0
Others	81,529.0	89,326.0
CRUISE PASSENGER ARRIVALS	24,229.0	30,121.0
GROSS EARNINGS FROM TOURISM	71.2	81.2
(Lm million)		
MALTESE GOING ABROAD	64,866.0	66,000.0
EXPENDITURE BY MALTESE ABROAD	21.9	26.0
(Lm million)		

Source: Economic Trends (August 1988). Valletta, Malta, Central Office of Statistics.
Exchange Rate: 1 Maltese Lira = US\$ 2.82 (Aug. 1987) US\$ 2.89 (Aug. 1988).

Table 2: Distribution of Maltese Labour Force: 1948-87 (by %)

Sector	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968	1973	1979	1985	1987
Manufacturing and Shipbuilding/repair	9	11	10	18	21	30	33	28	30
Construction and Quarrying	8	7	8	7	10	4	5	5	5
Agriculture and Fisheries	24	11	9	9	7	7	6	4	3
Commerce	9	14	12	13	13	12	10	9	9
Transport/Banking and Private Services	11	13	14	14	17	18	21	22	18
Government Services	13	17	19	18	19	20	22	24	31
Defence Establishment	24	26	24	14	19	5	—	—	—
Registered Unemployment	2	1	4	7	4	5	3	8	4
Absolute Total (100%)	92,171	85,297	92,330	93,515	100,019	102,546	120,020	122,091	126,205

Sources: Malta Development Plan 1981-85, p. 49.

Economic Survey, Jan.-Sept. 1985, Ministry of Trade & Economic Planning, p. 24.

Kester (1980) p. 39.

Economic Survey, Jan.-Sept. 1987, Economic Planning Division, Office of the Prime Minister, pp. 25-8.

Table 3: Registered Maltese Cooperatives in Business

	Date Established	Sector	Member- ship	Employees
Service Coops				
Gozo Milk & Agric. Coop	1959	Agric.	820	4
Agric. & Trading Coop	1965	Agric.	716	13
* Rabat Farmers Coop	1947	Agric.	301	2
Milk Producers' Coop	1958	Agric.	231	44
Pig Producers' Coop	1958	Agric.	185	1
* Dingli Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	104	—
* Siggiewi Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	96	—
* Mgarr Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	82	—
Farmers' Wine Coop	1960	Agric.	73	5
* St Paul's Bay Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	63	—
* Zebbug Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	61	—
* Zabbar Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	43	—
* Qormi Farmers' Coop	1947	Agric.	39	—
Farmers' Central Coop (FCCS)	1948	2nd-level Agric.	37	—
MAS Coop	1974	Consumer	21	—
The Fisheries Coop	1964	Fishing	211	4
Worker Coops				
Stevedores Coop	1987	Transport	47	55
Catering Coop	1984	Catering	21	37
First Clothing Coop	1983	Textile	26	28

Membership figures are as at December 1987; employment levels are as at October 1988. Both kindly made available by the Board of Cooperatives, Ministry of Productive Development.

The number of full-time employees includes members in the case of worker cooperatives only.

** Members in the second-level FCCS.*

Table 4: Outcome of Maltese General Elections: 1947-87

(The number in brackets stands for the number of parliamentary seats gained)

	1947	1950	1951	1953	1955	1962	1966	1971	1976	1981	1987
Registered Voters	140703	144516	151979	148478	149380	166936	161490	181768	217785	238341	246292
Actual Voters	106116	106941	113368	119328	121243	151595	144873	168913	206843	225700	236720
Valid Voters	105494	106129	112625	118453	120651	150606	143347	168059	205440	224151	235169
Nationalist Party (NP)	19041 (7)	31431 (12)	39946 (15)	45180 (18)	48514 (17)	63262 (25)	68656 (28)	80753 (27)	99551 (31)	114132 (31)	119721 (35)
Malta Labour Party (MLP)	63145 (24)	30332 (11)	40208 (14)	52771 (19)	68447 (23)	50974 (16)	61774 (22)	85448 (28)	105854 (34)	109990 (34)	114937 (34)
Malta Workers Party (MWP)	—	24616 (11)	21158 (7)	14000 (3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Constitutional Party (CP)	—	10584 (4)	9150 (4)	1385	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Parties and Independents	23308 (9)	9166 (2)	2163 —	5117 —	3694 —	36370 (9)	12917 —	1858 —	35 —	29 —	511 —

Source: Il-Qawmien (Social Action Movement Publication) no. 637, June 1987, p. 7.

Table 5: Some General Statistics Concerning Micro-States

Island State	Surface Area (km ²)	Population (thousands)	Population Density (indigens per km ²)
Seychelles	280	66	236
Maldives	298	160	537
Malta	316	345	1,092
Barbados	431	268	622
St Lucia	616	118	192
Cyprus	9,251	630	68
Jamaica	10,990	2,220	202
Vanuatu	11,880	121	10
Fiji	18,274	650	36

Source: Doumenge (1985).

