
THE M.U.H.S. - PAST AND PRESENT**Evelyn Pullicino***

When I was a History student at the Royal University of Malta during the 1970's, I was a member and for some time secretary, of the Royal University History Society. We used to organize talks, seminars, outings, Christmas and Easter lunches etc. The animator behind these activities was the late Prof. Andrew Vella O.P., who was the first Professor of History at the University. He had established the R.U.H.S. within the University in 1963 for he was keen to instill in his students a love for research and objectivity which to him were a historian's essential qualities.

As the number of History students increased, the History Society continued to thrive. In 1978 the first annual History digest *STORJA '78* was published. The editor was Dr H. Frendo. Unfortunately it was to be the first and the last publication at that time. The cessation of the B.A. History course meant that the History Society stopped functioning during the 1980's. It was only in 1994 that, on the initiative of Prof. H. Frendo, a preliminary committee was set up to reactivate the Society. Mr. Charles Dalli, Mr. Simon Mercieca, Dr. Charles Cassar and myself used to meet with Prof. Frendo in order to pick up the remnants of the former society and enliven it again. The first General meeting held in October 1994 was well attended, and the committee of the reactivated History Society was chosen. As important, was the setting up of a new Editorial Board in charge of the *STORJA* publications.

Eager students set to work to organize the first activities and make the Society known to other History students and graduates. A Press Conference was organized on campus in March 1995 as a result of which, an article appeared in *The Times* about the reactivated M.U.H.S. Members of the committee were also interviewed on local radio stations about the Society. The first activity organized by the new committee was an international public seminar, "Yugoslavia: A victim of its past?" held in March 1995 at the Foundation of International Studies in Valletta which was well attended. The participants were Alexander Bonich from Croatia, Vlatka Krzmanovich from Bosnia Herzegovina and Jovan Kurbalja from Jugoslavia. It proved an interesting and important experience to both the audience and the committee.

The Society's committee also decided to hold an annual Andrew Vella Memorial Lecture. The first was held on the 12th December, 1995 at the Green Lounge at the Hotel Phoenicia. The talk was delivered by Dr Charles Cassar about 'The Integration of Foreigners in Maltese Society: Greeks, Sicilians and Maltese in the 16th and 17th centuries'. The activity, which was sponsored by the *Klabb Kotba Maltin*, was exceedingly encouraging to the organizers since a large appreciative audience attended the event.

The committee also saw the need to cater for students' studies by holding seminars on interesting topics. The first one in the series was held in June by Mr. Charles Dalli in which he assessed current theories about development and underdevelopment.

Last June the committee organised a *Fenkata* to celebrate the *Imnarja* traditional feast. A happy group of over fifty members met at Ghar Lapsi, where we had the opportunity to get to know each other better.

Most of the Society's energies this year, however, went into having *STORJA '96* printed and published. Finally, we have accomplished what many of us have dreamed of, and worked for: a publication where students and members can hope to contribute in a significant manner to the study of various aspects of the Maltese History and approaches to it and related subjects or disciplines. And we certainly hope that through the students' commitment this publication will continue where it had left off eighteen years ago.

Other activities are being planned for 1996/97, including a number of seminars.

* A member of the onetime R.U.H.S., Evelyn Pullicino is now the Public Relations Officer of the revived M.U.H.S.