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BIRMINGHAM**

**TOWARDS A DISCOVERY OF ‘MISSING’ VOICES:
SOCIAL FORCES AND THE POLICE RESPONSE
TO MALTA’S 6TH MAY 1891 DISORDER**

by

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this thesis were two-fold. Firstly, to examine the class relations and social forces at play surrounding an incident of disorder which took place in the Maltese capital city of Valletta on the 6th May 1891. The disorder occurred during British colonial rule and involved a large number of protesters, some of whom were arrested. The second objective was to reveal the background to and the causes of the disorder, as well as telling the story of the incident itself, the role the police played and their response to the disorder.

These aims have been achieved through conducting a detailed social and political analysis of the official archival records and the local English-language press reports created contemporaneously to the disorder. The analysis has uncovered a number of ‘voices’ representative of selected social groups which existed in Malta at the time. These were the official Whitehall and colony-level voices, the voice of the upper and middle-class Maltese as well as the voice of the lower-class Maltese. A number of key characters involved in the disorder have also been identified.

It has emerged that the analysis contained in this thesis is incomplete as whilst the voice of the lower-class Maltese has been identified, this group remains unheard in its own right and the social and occupational composition of this group is yet to be established. Following Gramsci and Spivak, this socially subordinate group has been described in this thesis as the subaltern Maltese. The applicability of Gramsci’s and Spivak’s influential concepts of “subaltern” have been discussed in relation to colonial Malta.

The background to and causes of the disorder have also been found to be more complex and to have had a greater bearing upon the disorder than hitherto appreciated. The accounts of the incident, and who was responsible for the disorder all differ dependent upon which voice is speaking and there are substantial discrepancies between the accounts. The middle-classes are identified as leading the protest that day, although the issues raised were of most concern to the subaltern Maltese. The role this group played in the disorder is unclear and this could be explored in further research.

The non-routine use of truncheons and a heavy police presence, complimented by an unutilised military contingent, are features of how the disorder was policed. A number of arrests were made, although these were accompanied by serious allegations of police brutality and provocation reported in the English-language press.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, who is such an inspiration to me.

PREFACE

In accordance with the University Regulations for a thesis prepared in the Law School I have used The Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities (OSCOLA 2006). This Standard is not ideally suited for referencing archival sources of the kind I have used. Therefore I have adopted The National Archives of the UK preferred citation style for archival references taken from this collection and a modified form of this citation style in relation to the National Archives of Malta. For the sake of brevity I have abbreviated the references to the newspapers contained in the footnotes and a List of Abbreviations is provided.

This research has been conducted on a part-time basis and a number of personal and practical factors, as well as academic decisions, have influenced the direction this research has taken.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MT	<i>The Malta Times</i> newspaper, The National Library of Malta, Valletta, Malta
NAM	National Archives of Malta, Rabat, Malta
PO	<i>Public Opinion</i> newspaper, The National Library of Malta, Valletta, Malta
PRO	Public Record Office
TNA	The National Archives of the UK, Kew, London

Note: This List excludes archival abbreviations explained as part of the research methodology in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The island of Malta is described by Jellison as “lying like a golden leaf in the...central Mediterranean”.¹ Malta’s location made it attractive to foreign powers and this contributed to the island’s long and diverse history. Britain was but one of the many nations that controlled Malta over the centuries.² Until the arrival of the British, the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem³ had the most lasting impact on the island.⁴ The British benefited from the extensive fortifications the Knights had constructed, which transformed Malta under the British into a strategic “fortress” colony.⁵ The legacy of the Knights also extended to civil administration; as the British inherited a society which was culturally, religiously and linguistically linked with Italy. The Maltese ruling elite, whose position had flourished under the Knights, also had to be accommodated in the colonial administration.⁶

¹ Charles A. Jellison, *Besieged: The World War II Ordeal of Malta, 1940 – 1942* (University of New Hampshire, University Press of New England, Hanover 1984) 1.

² The Phoenicians, Normans, Arabs and French - from which the British took possession - have all occupied Malta prior to the British, see Anthony Bonanno, “Malta’s Changing Role in Mediterranean Cross-Currents from Pre-history to Roman Times” in Stanley Fiorini and Victor Mallia-Milanes (eds) *Malta: A Case Study in International Cross Currents* (Proceedings of the 1st International Colloquium on the History of the Central Mediterranean 1989), Godfrey Wettinger, “The Arabs in Malta” in *Malta: Studies of its Heritage and History* (Mid-Med Bank, Malta 1986). Norman rule is discussed further in chapter 4, pp. 77-78.

³ Hereafter “the Knights”.

⁴ The Knights played a prominent part in Malta’s history, occupying the island from 1530 until the French invasion in 1798, see Dominic Cutajar and Carmel Cassar, “Malta’s Role in Mediterranean Affairs 1530 – 1699” in *Malta: Studies of its Heritage and History* (Mid-Med Bank, Malta 1986) 106, 141.

⁵ Napoleon is said to have prized Malta, although the strategic importance of Malta was not apparent to the British initially, see Quentin Hughes, *Fortress: Architecture and Military History in Malta* (Lund Humphries, London 1969) 25, 229 and Charles A. Jellison, *Besieged: The World War II Ordeal of Malta, 1940 – 1942* (University of New Hampshire, University Press of New England, Hanover 1984) 5.

⁶ This is discussed in chapter 4, pp. 76-86.

This thesis investigates a particular moment in Maltese history which occurred during the period of British rule which ran from 1800 until 1964.⁷ The moment chosen for study is an incident of disorder which took place on the 6th May 1891. The disorder involved a distinct occupational group described as the “coal-heavers”.⁸ Very little is known about the incident and those involved and these are issues form part of the aims of the thesis discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. As an introduction to the focal events, over the following pages the extent of what was hitherto known about the incident is described and linked to the rationale for this research.

At this stage it is also important to consider the historical context of the disorder as this helps to form an understanding of the reasons for the unrest and the nature of Maltese colonial society in May 1891. Therefore, in this thesis I explore the incident from the diverse perspectives of both a traditional and emergent Maltese middle-class and a range of other class and interest groups who were involved in the disorder. Needless to say ‘what happened’ was vigorously contested at the time. In this thesis I have attempted to locate these divergent accounts in their social and political context as experienced and ‘voiced’ by members of the diverse economic, political, ethnic and other groups in both the colonial and colonised sections of society.

⁷ The British occupied Malta from 1800 to 1964. In June 1802 a Declaration of Rights formally placed Malta under British rule. Malta was made a Crown Colony in 1814 under the Treaty of Paris and gained independence in 1964, although the British military base did not close until 1979. See Joseph Bezzina, “Church and State in an Island Colony” and Henry Frendo, “Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin, Mediterranean or British Empire” both in Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed) *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988), Desmond Gregory, *Malta Britain and European Powers 1793 – 1815* (Associated University Presses Inc, London 1996) 4 and Edward J. Spiteri, *Malta: From Colonial Dependency to Economic Viability 1800-2000* (Edward J. Spiteri, Sponsored by the Ministry of Economic Services, Malta 2002) chapter 1.

⁸ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

Research Rationale

My focus on Malta derived from an initial interest in colonial policing. Little has been written about the colonial policing experience in Malta and this presented an exciting research opportunity.⁹ The accessibility of the island from the UK made Malta a viable prospect, and one with an untapped research potential. My attention was drawn to the 6th May 1891 disorder whilst reviewing the Maltese-published historical literature. In order to refine the scope of the research within the field of colonial policing, I read widely on Malta's history taken from the literature available in the UK.¹⁰ By and large these sources failed to mention policing or disorder. However, during a preliminary visit to the island, the work of Edward Attard, a Maltese, locally-published historian and former police officer was recommended to me.¹¹ It was whilst pursuing this recommendation that I discovered Attard's account of the Maltese colonial police.¹²

Attard is extremely useful in providing a description of the focal events. In his account he describes "the first serious political demonstration in Valletta involving the police".¹³ This, he says, involved "a group of coal-heavers gathered in the Palace Square to protest against some government measures."¹⁴ Attard's account also discusses the involvement of the police and

⁹ I discuss the limited literature which has been published on colonial policing in Malta in Chapter 2.

¹⁰ This literature is listed in the Bibliography. However, I found the following books of particular use: Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) and Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984).

¹¹ The National Archivist recommended Attard to me when I visited the National Archives of Malta (discussed in chapter 3). Whilst residing on the island, I searched the library catalogues of the University of Malta and the National Library of Malta and I identified his 2003 English-language edition of *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)*. My searches revealed other English-language and Maltese-language books by Attard, although these were discounted. On returning to the UK I repeated the catalogue searches conducted in Malta and discovered that Attard's book was only available in Malta.

¹² Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003).

¹³ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹⁴ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

the consequences of the disorder.¹⁵ The nature and scope of Attard's account is discussed further in chapter 2 and his description is used as a point of reference throughout this thesis.¹⁶ It is therefore important at this stage to recognise the significance of Attard's account in formulating the rationale for this research.

Following the discovery of Attard's account I became intrigued to establish whether the events of the 6th May 1891 were significant, given that they had otherwise escaped academic attention. I later identified a solitary further reference to the May 1891 events in Dobie's book on Malta's path to independence.¹⁷ While Dobie does not comment on the police, and mentions the disorder only in passing, this is the only other occasion the 6th May incident is referred to in the literature.¹⁸ The cumulative effect of Attard and Dobie was sufficient to ground my hope that an investigation into the 6th May events could be worthwhile. These two scholars also provided a preliminary focus for my work.

Discovering the 6th May 1891 disorder directed my research away from a general study of the Maltese colonial police, and equally from a study which places the police at the centre of enquiry. Influenced by the two distinct trends I found to exist in the colonial policing debates discussed in chapter 2,¹⁹ the theoretical approaches of Carr, Foucault and Derrida,²⁰ and perhaps most significantly by the method Spivak used in locating the absent Rani of Sirmur,²¹

¹⁵ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39-40.

¹⁶ Chapter 2, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1957) 43.

¹⁸ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1957) 43.

¹⁹ Discussed in chapter 2, pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Discussed in chapter 3, pp. 33-41.

²¹ Spivak is discussed further in chapter 3, pp. 39-41. There are other detailed studies which consider specific moments in colonial history (not necessarily about policing or disorder) which use a similar approach, examples of these are: Hugh Tinkler, "Incident at Simla, May 1947: What the Documents Reveal A Moment of Truth for Historians?" (1982) *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 20, 200. J. R Masson, "A Fragment of Colonial History: the Killing of Jakob Marengo" (1995) *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21: 2 247.

discussed in chapter 2 I have chosen an ‘incident-specific’ approach as a framework for this research. Through the course of this thesis, a detailed analysis of the disorder and the circumstances leading up to the 6th May 1891 events emerges. This is presented through a narrative style which describes in turn the involvement of the range of social groups of which the police were but one. In taking this approach, not only are the May 1891 events explored, but the wider impact of British colonialism on policing and Maltese society is attempted to be shown.

Research Aims

In light of these interests, the first aim of this thesis is to present an account of the class relations and social forces in Malta at the time of the 6th May 1891 disorder. This will be achieved through examining officially produced documents and the English-language local press. A detailed analysis of the social groups and key characters involved in the disorder is presented and, in so doing, the range of heard ‘voices’ representative of the social structure in colonial Malta at the time of the incident are identified.²²

Following Derrida,²³ I use the term ‘voice’ in a special way, to mean the actions or responses of an individual or group of people (not necessarily limited to the spoken or written word) recorded in historical documents. This will enable me to consider a wide range of interactions and allow me treat each speaker equally, regardless of the occasion or their sociological characteristics.

²² My use of the term ‘voice’ is discussed further in chapter 3, pp. 36-38. Hereafter in this thesis the term ‘voice’ or ‘voices’ appears without inverted commas, save for selected instances where particular emphasis is intended.

²³ Discussed in chapter 3, pp. 36-38.

The second aim of this thesis is to explore the background to and the causes of the 6th May 1891 events, as well as presenting the story of the disorder itself. The role the police played and their response to the disorder is one part of this. As I hope to show, an otherwise missing history of the incident emerges from the archives, drawn from the voices of a range of Maltese social groups. By investigating each voice in turn, appreciating their relative position and relationship with others in society, it is possible to ascribe meaning and context to these diverse discourses and to understand the social relations which operated at the time. Owing to the dominance of officially produced documents and, as a consequence, the wealth of colonial policing accounts written from the standpoint of the coloniser, it is my hope that this thesis will go some small way towards redressing the balance toward a more representative study which includes the perspectives of subordinate groups.

Overview of Chapters

In order to achieve these aims, the research has been approached in the following way: in chapter 2, the literature on policing in the colonies is discussed and two main trends are identified. I distinguish between studies which consider the organisational characteristics of policing in the colonies and an alternative body of literature which considers policing within the wider political economy of specific colonial societies at the time. I refer to these as studies of particular incidents. These studies examine policing within the wider social context which existed in each respective colony at the time as well as focusing on the policing and management of disorder within colonies. The limited literature which has been published in relation to colonial policing in Malta is then reviewed. In conclusion to the chapter I comment on the literature which I found to be of most relevant to this research and I suggest where this research sits within the colonial policing debate.

Chapter 3 provides an account of the methodology used in this research. The theoretical influences of Carr,²⁴ Foucault,²⁵ Derrida²⁶ and Spivak²⁷ which have shaped the research method and objectives are discussed in detail in this chapter. An important part of this is a discussion of Gramsci's and Spivak's term "subaltern" in constructing the identity of the colonised Maltese.²⁸ I then focus on the methodology used for data selection and collection in the UK and Maltese archives.

Chapters 4 – 6 contain the substantive findings of this research. In chapter 4 the social and class relations which existed at the time of the incident are analysed. This is presented through analysis of the range of voices, representative of the various social groups in Maltese society. The official voices, the aristocracy, the middle-class voices and the subaltern Maltese are discussed in turn and the key characters from each group involved in the disorder are introduced.

In chapter 5 the causes of and background to the incident are presented, with reference to the voices identified in chapter 4. By juxtaposing the official account against the reports contained in the local English-language press, differences in the accounts are highlighted. The findings from this research are then compared with Attard's description of the disorder. In this chapter the value of adopting a deconstructive methodology, which seeks out the range of

²⁴ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961 reprinted 2001).

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn).

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997).

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (1985) *History and Theory* XXIV 3, 247, "Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography" in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, London 1987), "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988).

²⁸ Discussed in chapter 3, pp. 39-41.

voices in Maltese society is demonstrated, as the background to the incident is shown to be more complex than anticipated.

Chapter 6 presents the story of the incident itself through examining the different accounts of the events, with reference to the official sources, including the Police Chief's account and the newspaper articles contained in the local English-language press. This chapter is limited to considering the disorder itself, using documents created contemporaneously to the incident. The analysis in this chapter is taken from a close reading of these documentary sources as part of an 'incident-specific' framework for this study.

The conclusions to this research are presented in chapter 7. The appendix contains copies of original documents relating to data collection procedures referred to in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2:

POLICING IN THE COLONIES: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Introduction

The volume of literature on the police and policing theory about current and historic practices in Britain, the former colonies, the Commonwealth, and nations from across the globe is colossal. The aim of this chapter is to critically review the literature that has been produced on the policing of the colonies. In so doing, I mark two distinct trends in the colonial policing literature, namely literature which considers ‘technical’ and organisational aspects of policing in the colonies and literature which considers policing in a wider social context. In the second half of this chapter I discuss the extent of the literature on policing in colonial Malta. In the conclusion to this chapter the justification for this research is presented.

Before embarking on the main aims of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge the growth in post-colonial studies, prompted by the landmark contribution of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which examined the West’s relationship with, and construction of, ‘Others’ such as Britain and its colonies.¹ Said’s seminal text generated a more widespread interest in studying the colonies in a new way, for example, by those writing from a feminist standpoint, such as Spivak² and those writing from the standpoint of the colonised, such as Ahire.³ While Jeffries was the first to write comprehensively about the administration and organisation of

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978). Said, and those who he influenced, are discussed in chapter 3, pg. 39.

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography” in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, London 1987) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988).

³ Philip Ahire, “Re-writing the Distorted History of Policing in Colonial Nigeria” (1990) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 18, 45 and Philip Ahire, *Imperial Policing: the Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria 1860 – 1960* (Oxford University Press, Milton Keynes 1991).

the British colonial police,⁴ his book was published before critical study of colonialism and colonial policing began. The relevance of Jeffries will be considered when discussing the literature on the Maltese colonial policing experience.⁵

More recently, two edited collections on colonial policing by Anderson and Killingray, published in the early 1990s, have played an important role in generating renewed interest in colonial policing among academic writers.⁶ A thriving and voluminous body of literature on colonial policing has since developed.⁷ Sadly, only a summary discussion of this literature is possible because of word limitations. Moreover, not all of the ‘colonial policing’ literature addresses the central concern of this thesis, which is a detailed social, political and economic analysis of particular incidents of disorder in colonial Malta.

Approaches to Colonial Policing

The literature on colonial policing falls predominantly into two academic traditions which became apparent as I read more widely on the topic. Firstly there is the literature which focuses on what can be described as the ‘technical’ and operational aspects of policing, namely, police organisation, recruitment, uniforms etc. This literature includes studies on specific colonies, such as Ahire’s study of policing in Nigeria,⁸ as well as more general

⁴ Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (Max Parrish, London 1952).

⁵ Discussed in chapter 2, pg. 23.

⁶ David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (MUP, Manchester 1991) and David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917 – 65* (MUP, Manchester 1992).

⁷ Anderson and Killingray’s contribution has been a lasting one, as they continue to be cited in new literature, for example, Staci Strobl’s recent consideration of policing in Bahrain, “From colonial policing to community policing in Bahrain: The historical persistence of sectarianism” (2011) *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 35: 1, 19.

⁸ Philip Ahire, *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria 1860 – 1960* (Oxford University Press, Milton Keynes 1991).

‘overview’ accounts by, for example, Brogden⁹ and Cole.¹⁰ Studies focusing on the ‘technical’ and organisational aspects of policing dominate the colonial policing debate.

Then there is a second body of literature which considers the wider role of the police as one of the interest groups in colonial society. These accounts are colony-specific and often focus on set ‘moments’ in history, for example, the police response to disorder at times of political change. Usually policing is considered within a wider understanding of the specific social relations which existed in a given colony at a certain time. I found these accounts to be most useful in understanding the social and political dynamics which the police operated under in the colonies. Further, these narratives were most pertinent to my objectives in this thesis, namely, an in-depth study of the police involvement in, and response to, an incident of disorder (rather than a study of the organisation or function of the police in colonial Malta where the technical and organisational aspects of policing may have been more pertinent). For this reason I do not provide examples of these studies here. Instead, a more detailed discussion features later in this chapter.

Themes Emerging from the Organisational Studies

However, discarding the organisational studies is dangerous, as many important themes and classifications critical to *any* study involving the police have emerged from these accounts. Within these studies there has been a trend to study policing by colony-type, for example,

⁹ Mike Brogden, “An Act to Colonise the Internal Lands of the Island: Empire and the Origins of the Professional Police” (1987) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 15, 179 and Mike Brogden, “The Emergence of the Police – The Colonial Dimension” (1987) *British Journal of Criminology*, 27: 1, 4.

¹⁰ Bankole A. Cole “Post Colonial Systems” in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999).

grouping colonies of exploitation (sometimes referred to as extractive economies),¹¹ plantation societies (a form of exploitative colony)¹² and settlement colonies together.¹³ However, the objectives of the coloniser differed in each colony, since unique economic, political and social characteristics influenced the nature of policing. Some overview accounts inevitably tend to obscure these differences. Moreover, some colonies defy easy classification, since they exhibit features of all categories.¹⁴ Other colonies such as Malta,¹⁵ Cyprus,¹⁶ Barbados¹⁷ and Gibraltar¹⁸ were created for strategic rather than primarily economic reasons and as such are exceptions to the typologies.

¹¹ For example, Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), see Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus, London 1998) 296. See also, Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (Allen Lane, London 2003) 223.

¹² Much has been written about the colonisation of the Caribbean. I found Trotman's discussion of Trinidad and Mars and Dannes' consideration of colonial Guyana to be of most use. Dannes, and twenty years later, Mars both write on the Guyanese colonial experience and highlight the coercive and authoritarian characteristics of the colonial state in Guyana, which was firstly a Dutch possession and then later a British colony. See David Vincent Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society 1838-1900* (The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville 1986). Joan R. Mars, *Deadly Force, Colonialism, and the Rule of Law: Police Violence in Guyana* (Greenwood Publishing, Westport, 2002) and George K. Dannes, *Domination and Power in Guyana* (Transaction Inc, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1982).

¹³ For example, the North American Colonies, Canada and Australia, see Bankole A. Cole "Post Colonial Systems" in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999) 89.

¹⁴ For example, India possessed features of all classifications of colony, being plantation and extractive in nature as well as housing significant numbers of British settlers, see Anandwarup Gupta, *The Police in British India 1861 – 1947* (Concept, New Delhi 1979).

¹⁵ Discussed from pg. 22 of this chapter.

¹⁶ In relation to Cyprus, see David M. Anderson "Policing and communal conflict: the Cyprus Emergency, 1954 – 60" in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917 – 65* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1992).

¹⁷ See Anthony Harriott, "Reforming the Jamaica Constabulary Force: From Political to Professional Policing" (1997) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 43: 3, 1 and Anthony Harriott, *Police and Crime Control in Jamaica: Problems of Reforming Ex-Colonial Constabularies*, (The University of the West Indies Press, Jamaica 2000). The use of Barbadian police officers in other parts of the Caribbean, most notably Trinidad, is noted by Anderson and Killingray in David M. Anderson and David Killingray, "Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830 – 1940" in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 7.

¹⁸ I have not found any papers specifically on the policing of Gibraltar, although the police and their surveillance role is discussed in an excellent article by Stephen Constantine, "The Pirate, the Governor and the Secretary of State: Aliens, Police and Surveillance in Early Nineteenth-Century Gibraltar" (2008) *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXIII, No 504 and Chris Grocott, "A Good Soldier, but a Maligned Governor: General Sir Archibald Hunter, Governor of Gibraltar 1910 – 13" (2009) *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37.3, 421, which discusses colonial policing in passing.

There are also a number of themes in the organisational literature on the colonial police. The ones I found to be most important can be summarised as follows; the notion of policing by consent and its applicability (if ever) to the colonies. Fundamental to this is whether policing can ever be legitimately achieved without the consent of the colonised. The use of force and coercion in the colonies as a way of maintaining sovereignty and order in the absence of consensual policing is another theme. Part of this is the role that militarised or para-military police played in achieving state objectives. These will now be discussed.

Cole describes the colonial police as “the most visible symbols of imperial political power”.¹⁹ Indeed, they represented colonial authority and had the task of upholding and enforcing colonial rule on a daily basis.²⁰ The police role was formulated by reference to the objectives of the coloniser. As agents of the colonial government the police exercised their powers to further the Crown’s objectives, as opposed to crime fighting and protecting the colonised.²¹ Crime fighting only featured later on, or in situations where the interests of the colonised were threatened.²² The overriding aim of policing was to maintain order and to prevent challenges to sovereignty or the dominance of colonial power. In most types of colony this meant that a

¹⁹ Bankole A. Cole “Post Colonial Systems” in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999) 95.

²⁰ David M. Anderson and David Killingray, “Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830 – 1940” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 1-2 and Bankole A. Cole “Post Colonial Systems” in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999) 95.

²¹ Bankole A. Cole “Post Colonial Systems” in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999) 92.

²² Maureen Cain, “Policing There and Here: Reflections on an International Comparison” (1996) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 24, 399. In Queensland crime prevention became a priority and the police tackled social control issues (notably prostitution and drunkenness), see Mark Finnane, “The Varieties of Policing: Colonial Queensland, 1860-1900” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 33–51, 33-34 and 47-49.

pro-colonist interpretation of 'order' was enforced one which controlled the colonised population and maintained the financial viability, or economic "taproot", of the colony.²³

A central theme in the literature is the legitimate use of police powers and the consent of the colonised to policing.²⁴ In colonies of exploitation only minimal consent to governance was required for the economic objectives to be met. Indeed, in the slave colonies consent was negotiable but force remained the predominant mode of governance. With other subjugated populations force, although ever present, was less overt. However, the balance of policy was always firmly set in favour of the coloniser, as the police primarily served the state rather than the colonised population.²⁵ The authority of the colonial government was usually regarded as alien and inherently illegitimate by the mass of colonised and it was not usually possible for the police to secure the support and consent of the colonised.²⁶ For example, Cain comments that consensual policing was never achieved in the British colonies.²⁷ However, consent

²³ John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (Unwin Hyman, London 1902) 93 and 106. For Hobson, imperialism had an "economic root", with foreign investment being the "taproot" of imperialism. This forms part of the debate between Hobson and Lenin, the latter regarding imperialism as the monopoly stage of capitalism, see Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Pluto Press, London, first published: 1917, 1996 edition used) 89.

²⁴ A police force derives its legitimacy from the law (enacted through the democratic process) and from public consensus, both of which were lacking in the colonies, see Rob Mawby "Variations on a Theme: the Development of Professional Police in the British Isles and North America", in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999) 42. Michael Brogden, *The Police: Autonomy and Consent* (Academic Press, London 1982).

²⁵ Ahire discusses the policing of anti-tax protests in colonial Nigeria which is an example of this. See Philip Ahire, "Re-writing the Distorted History of Policing in Colonial Nigeria" (1990) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 18, 45, pp. 54-57.

²⁶ Save for perhaps on occasions where a fragile operational legitimacy existed. Administrative efficiency is an example of this. Verma describes how in India the Crown placed overriding importance on clean, well maintained police buildings in India. The compilation of endless crime statistics was also a daily objective of India's police officers. However, the statistics were not put to effective use to combat crime. See Arvind Verma, "Consolidation of the Raj: Notes from a Police Station in British India 1865 - 1928" in Louis A. Knafla (ed), *Crime, Gender and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions* (Criminal Justice History, Volume 17, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut 2002) 121-123, 125-127.

²⁷ Maureen Cain, "Policing There and Here: Reflections on an International Comparison" (1996) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 24, 399, 401. Cain also discusses the link between consent and the use of force in an earlier paper, Maureen Cain, "Crime and the Police in Trinidad and Tobago: The Colonial Legacy" in R. Deosaran and R. Reddock (eds) *Contemporary Issues in Social Science: A Caribbean Perspective* (Department of Sociology, Vol. 1, St. Augustine, Trinidad 1994). See also David M. Anderson and David Killingray, "Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830 - 1940" in David M. Anderson and David

undoubtedly made for cheaper policing.²⁸ Owing to this and to the distinct operational advantages, policing was often carried out utilising indigenous police and local law enforcement mechanisms, thereby seeking to harness some pre-existing consent to colonial objectives.²⁹

In the absence of consent, compliance could be achieved by the ever present threat of force and coercion.³⁰ Military or para-military police forces are typical in many colonies and they operated as a mechanism by which the state could exert coercive force. However, force was a feature of *all* colonies of exploitation, Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and the various colonies in the West Indies are examples provided in the literature.³¹ Force was used to counter indigenous resistance and thus policing had a social control objective.³²

Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 9.

²⁸ Maureen Cain, “Policing There and Here: Reflections on an International Comparison” (1996) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 24, 399, 401. By contrast, the policing of Hong Kong was expensive for Britain as there was a specific policy of recruiting all police, even the rank and file (which were usually drawn from the indigenous population), from overseas, most notably from India and the British enclave of Weihaiwei on China’s north coast, see Mark S. Gaylord and Harold Traver, “Colonial Policing and the Demise of British Rule in Hong Kong” (1995) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 23, pp. 23 and 26.

²⁹ Native authority police forces found in the rural areas of Africa and India augmented the formal colonial police, which was usually based in towns and cities or important economic localities. Native forces were supplemented by various other informal structures of authority, for example, district commissioners, plantation managers and labour recruiters who also maintained order, although for their own ends. Bankole A. Cole “Post Colonial Systems” in Rob I. Mawby (ed), *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century* (UCL Press, London 1999), 91. See also Sinclair Dinnen and John Bradford Braithwaite, “Reinventing Policing Through the Prism of the Colonial Kiap” (2009) *Policing and Society* 19:2, 161, in which the use of the district officer or “kiap” was a feature in the policing of colonial Papua and New Guinea.

³⁰ Maureen Cain, “Policing There and Here: Reflections on an International Comparison” (1996) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 24, 399, 401.

³¹ Mathieu Deflem, “Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya” (1994) *Police Studies* 17: 1, 60. See also Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus, London 1998) 296 and Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (Allen Lane, London 2003) 223.

³² Alice Hills, “Towards a Critique of Policing and National Development in Africa” (1996) *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34: 2, 271, 273, Philip Ahire “Rewriting the Distorted History of Policing in Colonial Nigeria” (1990) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 18, 45, 57 and Alice Hills, *Imperial Policing: the Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria 1860-1960*, (Open University Press, Milton Keynes 1991) 28.

However, the frequency and degree of force used varied between colonies over time. Para-military police forces operated upon conquest (most notably in Africa) in order to pacify the colony for economic exploitation. Some of these evolved into a quasi-civilian force. More commonly, as in the case of Nigeria, the police had distinct civil and para-military arms.³³ In a similar way, the policing of apartheid in South Africa was supported by two complementary forces, namely the South African Police and the militarised South African Mounted Riflemen.³⁴ In other colonies, the civilian police used militaristic strategies to overcome specific problems or sought assistance from a para-military branch, for example, Queensland's unique characteristics led to a multiplicity of policing styles required to tackle the divergent social order problems posed to the colonists by agriculture, sugar and the discovery of gold.³⁵ Notably, Anderson and Killingray describe a "blending" of civilian and military roles, with many police forces taking on both functions.³⁶ All this provides evidence that a variety of policing strategies were used in order to meet the specific needs of the Crown in diverse colonies over time.³⁷

Analysing the colonies by 'type' and comparing them in overview enables these themes in policing style, derived from the coloniser's common objectives (owing to similar economic or

³³ Etannibi Alemika, "Colonialism, state and policing in Nigeria" (1993) *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 20, 187.

³⁴ For a discussion of South Africa see John D. Brewer, *Black and Blue, Policing in South Africa* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994) and Gavin Cawthra, *Policing South Africa* (Zed Books, London 1993).

³⁵ Mark Finnane, "The Varieties of Policing: Colonial Queensland, 1860-1900" in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 33–51.

³⁶ David M. Anderson and David Killingray, "Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830 – 1940" in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 2.

³⁷ For example, during decolonisation military policing dominated. Anti-colonial uprisings, nationalist movements and labour riots required an armed, centrally co-ordinated enhanced police presence. A pattern of militarization, de-militarization (civilian policing) and re-militarization in African colonies is suggested in Mathieu Deflem, "Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya" (1994) *Police Studies*, 17:1, 45 - 68.

topological features), to become apparent.³⁸ Comparisons can also be made across the globe on the basis of comparable colonial objectives. However, a generalised or overview approach to colonial policing fosters a tendency to homogenise the colonies and to treat those within the same typologies as all the same, as types of “Other”.³⁹ This is dangerous as it restricts the parameters of analysis to the mode of production. As a consequence, even in the post-colonial context, policing in the colonies continues to be discussed ‘collectively’, according to how the coloniser extracted wealth from the colony (mineral extraction, plantation farming, settlement etc). In so doing, the dominance of the coloniser is maintained in policing narratives which take this approach, and the nuances in policing practices which existed in the colonies are often masked. A number of excellent studies by scholars from former colonies counteract this, in particular Danns and Mars on Guyana,⁴⁰ and Trotman on Trinidad.⁴¹ However, the tendency to homogenise the colonies remains part of the debate. This, combined with the merits of the second body of literature which I discuss next, justifies an ‘incident-specific’ approach to research on colonial policing; an approach which examines the wider political economy surrounding both policing and the incident in question, and enables the specifics of each colony to be understood.

³⁸ Deflem’s account demonstrates this see, Mathieu Deflem, “Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya” (1994) *Police Studies* 17:1, 45.

³⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978), pp. 3, 23, 25 and 41. Said’s theory was originally applied to the Arab world but has been subsequently extended to include other nations in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Chatto and Windus, London 1993) xi.

⁴⁰ George K. Danns, *Domination and Power in Guyana* (Transaction Inc, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1982) and Joan R. Mars, *Deadly Force, Colonialism, and the Rule of Law: Police Violence in Guyana* (Greenwood Publishing, Westport 2002).

⁴¹ David Vincent Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society 1838-1900* (The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville 1986).

Studies of Particular Incidents

The second body of literature, which considers colonial policing within the context of wider social relations, was of most help in this research, as these studies enabled me to appreciate the role of the police as one of the many interest groups present in colonial society. The police are not given primacy in these accounts but instead policing is examined as an intrinsic part of the political economy of the colony. This leaves space for other competing social interactions to be revealed and the various layers of complicated interrelations which exist between the police and the policed, which influence the conduct of both parties, to be recognised. Many of these studies capture a ‘moment’ in the history of the colony by analysing in detail a particular event or issue (such as disorder). The approaches taken in these accounts resonated with what I wanted to achieve when telling the story of Malta’s 6th May disorder. In this chapter I have chosen to focus on the work of Wilmot and Brereton, whose methodologies and aims (namely to investigate disorder from the standpoint of the oppressed) are most aligned with the objectives of this thesis.⁴² The methodologies Brereton and Wilson use are intrinsic to how they construct their narratives on social history.⁴³

⁴² Whilst the focus in this chapter is on the colonial context and the work of Brereton and Wilmot, it is important to acknowledge two early articles by Brogden and Harring which consider the wider political economy of policing in Britain and America. Brogden studies the interactions between the police, the Liverpool Watch Committee (the mercantile bourgeoisie) and the merchant shipping labour force. Harring analyses the measures taken by the police to control the working-classes in America (discussed further in note 95 below). See Michael Brogden, *The Police: Autonomy and Consent* (Academic Press, London 1982), chapter 2 and Sidney L. Harring “The Police Institution as a Class Question: Milwaukee Socialists and the Police, 1900-1915” (1982) *Science and Society*, XLVI: 2, 197. A third study, contemporaneous with Wilmot and Brereton is Willis’ article on policing in colonial Mombasa. I have chosen not to elaborate upon Willis’ article here, it is an excellent example of an ‘incident-specific’ political economy of policing. Willis’ article is discussed later in this chapter in the context of the role of social control legislation and Maltese policing later. Finally, the existence of other papers which consider specific incidents of disorder involving the police are recognised (such as David M. Anderson “Policing and communal conflict: the Cyprus Emergency, 1954 – 60” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917 – 65* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992)). However, this and other such papers write from the perspective of the colonized, with less emphasis on the social structure and relationships within the colonised population.

⁴³ The methodology Brereton used in her 1979 study is located at pp. 3, 4, 95 and 199 in Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979). In relation to her article on Tobago see pg. 133 for her methodology, Bridget Brereton, “Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The ‘Belmanna Riots’ in Tobago, 1876” (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110.

Wilmot considers the colour and class struggles in post-emancipation Jamaica in his article on the ‘John Canoe’ riots, which took place in Kingston in 1840 and 1841.⁴⁴ The subject-matter of disorder, against the backdrop of class relations, is pertinent to the topic of this thesis. Whilst the details are ‘incident-specific’, they highlight Wilmot’s approach. Disorder occurred over the Mayor, Hector Mitchel’s, decision to “suppress” the 1840 ‘John Canoe’ parade in Kingston.⁴⁵ His decision was provoked by a desire to curtail this important cultural celebration to demonstrate that popular politics would not prevail, and he wished to undermine the growing influence of a political newcomer, Daniel Hart.⁴⁶ Hart was a Jewish businessman who had interests in retail, trade and land.⁴⁷ As a member of the petit bourgeoisie he entered politics and became an elected magistrate with a strong black and Jewish following.⁴⁸ Hart’s presence was not welcomed by the political elite, who regarded him as ethnically inferior and his “popular politics” as illegitimate.⁴⁹ Hart and his supporters threatened the position adopted by the Mayor. This led to the Mayor’s attempts to suppress the parade in 1840 and subsequently (and also more successfully) in 1841. This led to

⁴⁴ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65.

⁴⁵ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65.

⁴⁶ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 70.

⁴⁷ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 66. Cain also discusses the suppression of culture as a mode of control in Trinidad and draws parallels also with Jamaica in Maureen Cain, “Labouring, loving and living: on the policing of culture in Trinidad and Tobago” in L. Noaks, M. Levi and M. Maguire (eds) *Issues in Contemporary Criminology* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff 1995).

⁴⁸ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 66.

⁴⁹ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 71.

disorder on both occasions.⁵⁰ In 1841 legislation was used in an attempt to regain social control and political supremacy.⁵¹

Wilmot's paper shows how Hart united the disenfranchised members of the black and Jewish communities who had been dislocated from the political process. This social and ethnic 'revolution' drew Hart into conflict with the Mayor, the white merchant class and the conservative black voters.⁵² Hart had unified the oppressed in Jamaican society against the state and in so doing had given them a voice. Thus, the annual 'John Canoe' parade was seen as – and indeed became – a class uprising, which sought increased political power for the under-classes in Jamaican society.

When it came to combating incidents of disorder in the colonies, heavy-handed public order policing strategies were usually implemented designed to control the populace. This occurred in Jamaica, ahead of the 1841 John Canoe celebrations. Wilmot describes the introduction of "special arrangements" and the establishment of an armed, mounted police force, with the support of a strengthened military.⁵³ These, and similar strategies specific to their circumstances, relied on coercion to quell disorder and achieve compliance when state-citizen consensus was abandoned.

⁵⁰ Swithin Wilmot, "The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841" (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 70, 72.

⁵¹ Swithin Wilmot, "The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841" (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 72.

⁵² Swithin Wilmot, "The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841" (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65.

⁵³ Swithin Wilmot, "The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841" (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 72.

Turning to consider Brereton's detailed study of post-emancipation Trinidad, the nature of society in the colony between 1870 – 1900 is examined.⁵⁴ The subject matter of the study is also relevant to the objectives of this thesis, since the analysis concerns disorder, this time connected with the Trinidadian Mardi Gras carnival. Part of Brereton's study is an analysis of the relations between the European, African, Caribbean, Creole and Indian populations, in what remained at the time a plantation society.⁵⁵ In particular, Brereton considers the role played by local "bands" in the disorder which surrounded the 1881 carnival.⁵⁶ She also discusses the involvement of the police in the riots which followed.⁵⁷

Brereton's study shows how incidents, such as the carnival and the Hoesin festival were the focus of police control and heavy-handed policing in Trinidad. According to Brereton, the police attempted to halt a drum dance, which led to serious rioting.⁵⁸ Such strategies formed part of a wider movement to curtail the culture and religion of the disparate labouring population.⁵⁹ A later study also by Brereton analyses the 1876 Belmanna riots in Tobago.⁶⁰ Whilst labour disturbances had been a rarity in Trinidad,⁶¹ she notes that unrest, fuelled by

⁵⁴ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979).

⁵⁵ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979) 1.

⁵⁶ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979) 124 – 125, 128 – 129, 161, 169 – 172.

⁵⁷ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979) 128, 171 – 172.

⁵⁸ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979) 161.

⁵⁹ The carnival was an important means of expression in Afro-Creole culture as was the Hoesin festival in Indian culture. However, regulations against Hoesin had been issued (see pp. 169 and pp. 183 – 184). The role of informal associations or "bands" and religious practices, for example, Obeah and African funeral wakes, were misunderstood or rejected as savage practices (see pp. 123, 169 – 170, 156 – 157). Attempts to control prostitution and vagrancy were made by, for example, the Contagious Diseases Act (see pg. 123). *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979).

⁶⁰ Bridget Brereton, "Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The 'Belmanna Riots' in Tobago, 1876" (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110.

⁶¹ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979) 189 – 190.

labour disputes, were “always just below the surface” in Tobago.⁶² The Barbadian immigrants and Creole population played a leading role in the Tobago riots of May 1876, which were themselves an outlet for long-standing grievances concerning labour conditions.⁶³

Both Wilmot and Brereton found that disorder and police militarisation were characteristics of the colonies they considered. Militarisation was either in anticipation of future unrest or as reaction to the disorder. Wilmot describes Mitchel’s militarised policing preparations ahead of the 1841 ‘John Canoe’ celebrations (which were likely to have been informed by the police’s handling of the incident the previous year).⁶⁴ Similarly, Brereton notes how police militarisation occurred in Tobago as a consequence of the riot, and as a way of countering future disorder.⁶⁵ These studies examine the police and the management of disorder in the context of the class relations which existed in the respective societies at the time. The objectives of this thesis are closely related to these accounts, since I seek to study the 6th May disorder and the police involvement through the range of voices representative of the social structure in Malta in 1891. It remains to be seen whether class legislation and militarisation of the police will be found in Malta.

The Maltese Colonial Police

In the second half of this chapter I discuss the literature on the Maltese colonial policing experience. At the outset of this research I found that little had been written about the Maltese

⁶² Bridget Brereton, “Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The ‘Belmanna Riots’ in Tobago, 1876” (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110, 112.

⁶³ Bridget Brereton, “Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The ‘Belmanna Riots’ in Tobago, 1876” (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110, 113, 121.

⁶⁴ Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, see pg. 72 in particular.

⁶⁵ By contrast, the Trinidadian police had always been militarised, see Bridget Brereton, “Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The ‘Belmanna Riots’ in Tobago, 1876” (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110, see pp. 120 – 121 in particular in relation to Tobago.

colonial police. Jeffries' brief account in his encyclopaedic study of all British colonial police forces was the only academic source on the Maltese colonial police.⁶⁶ Jeffries' account was published before the influence of the scholars of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was felt. His interest lay in publishing a comprehensive study of policing across the British Empire rather than any particular colony *per se*, which explains the brief consideration he gave to Malta.⁶⁷ On the whole he recorded the operational organisation and functional duties of the police. Jeffries' account was not retrospective; in relation to Malta, he described the police as they functioned at the time of writing in 1951. Although Malta was still a British colony in 1951, the Maltese self-governing constitution led Jeffries to classify the Maltese police as outside of the "Colonial Police Service" and for this reason he does not discuss the Maltese police in detail.⁶⁸ Thus, Jeffries' account can add little to the debate on policing in colonial Malta.

Until recently there was nothing within the body of post-colonial academic analysis or Malta specific texts which considered the nature of policing in Malta.⁶⁹ Jeffries' account was followed 50 years later by the work of Cauchi who has written about present-day policing in Malta.⁷⁰ This omission has now been remedied by the recent contributions by British and

⁶⁶ Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (Max Parrish, London 1952).

⁶⁷ Jeffries' account is limited to two short paragraphs, taking up one third of a page, Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (Max Parrish, London 1952) 141.

⁶⁸ Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (Max Parrish, London 1952), see pp. 124 and 141 for reference to Malta.

⁶⁹ Indeed, the study of criminology in Malta has recent origins, for a discussion of this see Paul Knepper, "La Scuola Lombrosiana and the Beginning of Criminology in Malta" (2008) *Journal of Maltese History*, 1, 3 and Trevor Calafato and Paul Knepper "Criminology and Criminal Justice in Malta" (2009) *European Journal of Criminology*, 6: 1, 89.

⁷⁰ Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi, *Police Culture in Malta* (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Leicester, UK 2004) and Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi, *Policewomen in Malta* (Conference paper presented at 13th Annual ANZSOC Conference, 1998) < <http://www.anzsoc.org/conferences/1998/cauchi.html> > accessed 23rd August 2007. Cauchi also presented a paper by the same title at the Fifth Australasian Women and Policing Conference in 2007, although it has not been possible to locate a copy of this. Cauchi's contribution to the *World Police Encyclopaedia* relates to present-day policing: "Malta" in Dilip K. Dass and Michael Palmiotto (eds) *World Police Encyclopaedia* (Routledge, London 2006).

Maltese scholars whom I discuss below.⁷¹ However, until these scholars, the most detailed account of colonial policing in Malta was Attard's history of the Malta Police Force, written from the standpoint of a local historian and former police officer.⁷²

Attard's Account of the Malta Police Force

The importance of Attard's account in formulating the rationale for this research has already been discussed in the Introduction chapter.⁷³ However, it is also important to situate Attard's account within the Maltese debate, as he was the first to recognise that no previous attempt had been made to record the history of the Malta Police Force.⁷⁴

Attard's book is weighty, totalling 230 pages, and in it he describes the organisational and administrative history of the Malta Police Force, as well as identifying some of the key constitutional developments which affected the police, together with other matters of interest pertaining to the police over time. This is an inappropriate place to attempt a précis of Attard's findings, given word restrictions and Attard's already successful account.

Notably, Attard writes from the perspective of a retired police-officer and his account is presented from the standpoint of the police. Attard joined the Malta Police Force in February 1966,⁷⁵ less than two years after independence from Britain had been gained.⁷⁶ Despite his

⁷¹ Discussed in this chapter at pp. 25-30.

⁷² Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003). Attard's text was initially published in Maltese in 1994 and it covered the time period of 1800 - 1956. A revised edition extended his study up until 1964 and it was published in Maltese in 2000 under the title *Il-pulizija f'Malta (1800-1964)*. An English-language edition of this was published in 2003 and this is the text referred to in this thesis. Attard has written a number of other articles and books in Maltese on police, penalty and criminology which have been published in Malta and in the Maltese local press.

⁷³ Discussed in chapter 1, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁴ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) viii.

⁷⁵ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) viii.

purely post-colonial service, and although Maltese himself, the colonial legacy remains evident, as he presents a colonial police officer's way of thinking about policing in his focus on operational and organisational aspects of policing. Significantly for me, this is balanced by descriptions of key events, such as the 6th May 1891 disorder, which present the police less favourably. Here Attard also displays an interest in the objects of policing. Whilst Attard's writing does not engage with academic work on colonial policing,⁷⁷ this does not negate the value of his account and its crucial importance in formulating the agenda of this research.

Other Maltese Literature

The recent academic literature on the Maltese colonial police by Knepper, by Cauchi and Knepper, and by Knepper and Norris adds greatly to what is known about the policing experience in Malta.⁷⁸ However, the 6th May 1891 incident is not considered in any of these publications. I found Knepper's single authored article, which focuses on crime, immorality

⁷⁶ The legacy of a colonial police force may still have been a reality in Malta in the early years of Attard's police service. Colonial policing practices are likely to have still influenced police training when Attard joined.

⁷⁷ For example, Attard's referencing of archival sources is partial, with many original references either omitted or incomplete.

⁷⁸ I have identified the work by Paul Knepper, by Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Knepper, and by Knepper and Clive Norris on colonial policing in Malta as most relevant to this research. The contribution of these scholars is discussed further below. Paul Knepper, Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Sandra Scicluna obtained British Academy and Association of Commonwealth Universities Grants to conduct research into aspects of Maltese imprisonment and policing in colonial Malta, see Paul Knepper, Jacqueline Azzopardi and Sandra Scicluna, "Research Collaboration between Malta and the UK: An Extraordinary Voyage" (2008) *Association of Commonwealth Universities Bulletin*, 166 (Dec) 6. Cauchi and Knepper have collaborated on various research, as well as Knepper writing solely, and also in collaboration with others, as discussed below. Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi sometimes refers to herself as "Jacqueline Azzopardi" in her university capacity and some scholarly writing. For the sake of consistency I have referred to her published name. Scicluna's work focuses on imprisonment and so has been of less direct relevance to this research. The influential papers by Knepper, by Cauchi and Knepper and Knepper and Norris are as follows: Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385. Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, "The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta" (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 80. Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, "Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities" in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009).

and policing in Valletta to be of most value.⁷⁹ One of Knepper's important findings is the absence of an indigenous crime problem in colonial Malta; he describes "a society where criminal activity rarely occurred" and "a remarkable absence of all crimes of an aggravated nature".⁸⁰ These findings are echoed in the literature published jointly with others.⁸¹ Cauchi and Knepper note that the majority of the police were deployed in the capital and assigned duties unconnected with crime prevention. They describe begging, petty stealing and pilfering as the only instances of crime, all of which were seen as a response to poverty.⁸²

Knepper also notes that "crime prevention never really emerged as a priority" for the police⁸³ and this had a bearing on the type of force which developed and their functions and role in colonial society. He argues that the strategic nature of Malta "informed decision-making" in relation to crime (amongst other things), and thus, the colony was policed in a particular way because of its strategic importance to the British.⁸⁴ It is also possible to make the argument that the presence of an army meant that disorder could be dealt with expeditiously without involving the police, who for this reason did not need to be armed. For both reasons perhaps, in contrast with many colonies which had a para-military police, or a civilian police with

⁷⁹ Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385.

⁸⁰ Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385 and 387.

⁸¹ See also Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, "Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities" in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009) 86 and Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, "The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta" (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 80.

⁸² Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, "The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta" (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 80. Begging and an increase in rural crime in the 1830s is also mentioned by Knepper, see Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, 387.

⁸³ Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, 388. The late emergence of detective branches in colonial forces was a symptom of this and is highlighted by Cain, Maureen Cain, "Policing There and Here: Reflections on an International Comparison" (1996) *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 24, 399, in particular pp. 407 – 408.

⁸⁴ Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, 388.

para-military units, Malta only had a civilian police force.⁸⁵ However, there was of course always scope for support from the military garrison, a factor which may have contributed to the police remaining civilian in nature.⁸⁶

The literature produced by Knepper, and by Cauchi and Knepper also focuses on the social problems which developed in Malta owing to its role as a strategic colony and the accompanying British service personnel it garrisoned. It is this aspect of their literature that interested me the most. Prostitution, gambling and drunkenness are said to have emerged as serious problems in the capital city, Valletta.⁸⁷ While prostitution was a concern at street level, the moral character of barmaids, coffee shop girls and music hall artistes were also questioned (the latter being mainly drawn from Mediterranean and wider European immigrants).⁸⁸ Knepper regards these issues as problems created by the British, but something they were reluctant to acknowledge, despite the impact vice and drunkenness had on operational effectiveness.⁸⁹ These findings must be appreciated in the context of the detailed British record-keeping procedures, which meant that reliable information was collated

⁸⁵ The police are differentiated from the military by Attard, who describes the creation of the Executive and Judicial Police. The Executive Police was organised into marine, traffic, mounted and fire-fighting branches. The Judicial Police formed the Maltese magistracy, Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003), 7 – 8, 52 – 79. Malta is not explicitly described in the literature as having a ‘civilian’ police, although this is a conclusion I have reached from the distinction which existed between the military reserve and the police force. I discuss the civilian/military split in chapter 6, pg. 148.

⁸⁶ Attard provides that the use of the Royal Malta Fencible Regiment performed police duties, Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 24. Parallels can be drawn with Gibraltar which was also a strategic colony and it had a civilian police supported by the garrison see, Stephen Constantine, “The Pirate, the Governor and the Secretary of State: Aliens, Police and Surveillance in Early Nineteenth-Century Gibraltar” (2008) *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXIII, No 504, 1981.

⁸⁷ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385. See pp. 385 for a general discussion. Drunkenness and the effect of “grogshops” is discussed at pp. 389 – 390, prostitution is discussed at pp. 290 – 291. The link with prostitution and venereal disease amongst sailors is discussed at pg. 392. See also Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 83.

⁸⁸ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, regarding music hall artistes see pg. 394, coffee taverns are discussed at pp. 396 – 397.

⁸⁹ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385.

perhaps for the first time on vice and crime under British colonialism. Whilst these issues are discussed in detail in the Malta literature, they are the *only* aspect of policing which is considered in any depth. Thus, the debate on colonial policing in Malta remains in its infancy as the academic discussion is limited to the issues which were of importance to the colonisers.

The social problems discussed by Knepper, and by Cauchi and Knepper indicate that the police adopted a surveillance and order control mandate. The surveillance measures included the introduction of finger-printing in Malta for the first time.⁹⁰ This was done in conjunction with the surveillance of “aliens” (immigrants) who were blamed (rather than the British military personnel) for the growth in the sex-industry.⁹¹ Prostitution was licensed and regulated (rather than outlawed – owing to the reality of this garrison colony).⁹² Drunkenness was criminalised, barmaids were subject to police certification, and music halls scrutinised,⁹³ with artistes and bar-workers falling under the surveillance of the newly formed Detective Force in 1919.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Cauchi and Knepper discuss the use of fingerprinting, see Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, see pp. 74, 81 – 83. Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, “Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities” in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009) 81 – 83.

⁹¹ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, is discussed at pg. 397. The Aliens Law which was enacted in 1899 and was designed to tackle the problem flow of immigrants into prostitution, the music halls and bar and coffee shop work is discussed. The surveillance of foreigners in Malta is also discussed by Attard, as well as the extraneous regulatory duties the police were required to perform, see Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 9, 19 – 20, 41 – 52.

⁹² Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, see pp. 398 – 399.

⁹³ The introduction of music halls in Malta had been heralded as an alternative to the grogshops regularly frequented by the garrisoned soldiers and sailors. However, rather than a solution, they exacerbated the problem of clandestine prostitution. This is discussed briefly by Knepper in Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, 401 and Paul Knepper, “The ‘White Slave Trade’ and the Music Hall Affair in 1930s Malta” (2009) *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44: 2, 205.

⁹⁴ See note 83 which discusses Cain’s findings regarding the late establishment of detective branches in colonial forces. Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, see pp. 394, 396 – 399, see also conclusions at pp.

The social control focus of policing in Malta followed a general trend of legislating against social problems in Britain and America and also the colonies.⁹⁵ There are many papers which consider the role that ‘class legislation’ played in the colonies, notably Willis’ excellent article concerning the regulation of the labour market in colonial Mombasa.⁹⁶ However, according to Cauchi and Knepper, the British did not regard the Maltese as an inherently “criminal class”.⁹⁷ Instead, the “Europeanness of the Maltese people” and the lack of serious indigenous crime led to the Maltese people being treated differently.⁹⁸ Rather than controlling the Maltese, legislation was introduced to limit and monitor *foreigners* entering Malta, as a

400 – 401. Cauchi and Knepper discuss the Maltese detective branch in Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, see pp. 84 – 87.

⁹⁵ “Class legislation” describes measures which sought to regulate and criminalise the conduct of a certain class or sector of the population whose conduct was deemed undesirable, or a threat to the state. Remington was the first to recognise this trend. Harring’s study of the control of working class pursuits in 1900s Milwaukee is also important. Frank J. Remington, “The Role of Police in a Democratic Society” (1965) *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Political Science*, 56: 3, 361, 362; Sidney L. Harring “The Police Institution as a Class Question: Milwaukee Socialists and the Police, 1900-1915” (1982) *Science and Society*, XLVI: 2, 197. Analysis of social history in these terms began with E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1975) and Douglas Hay, “Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase” in Douglas Hay (ed) *Albion’s Fatal Tree* (Allen Lane, London 1975).

⁹⁶ Willis’s discussion of Mombasa is also an example of a study which considers the wider political economy of policing in the context of divergent class relations of middle-class groups who had conflicting interests in the labour market. In addition to Willis’ study, Edwards, Brereton, Verma, Kaplan and Cain have written about the use of legislation as a control mechanism, see Adolph C. Edwards “The Evolution of the Obeah Laws of Jamaica” (1974) *Jamaica Law Journal*, 19; Justin Willis, “Thieves, drunkards and vagrants: defining crime in colonial Mombasa, 1902 - 32” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991); Arvind Verma, “Consolidation of the Raj: Notes from a Police Station in British India 1865 - 1928” in Louis A. Knafla (ed), *Crime, Gender and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions* (Criminal Justice History, Volume 17, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut 2002); Martha Kaplan, “*Luve Ni Wai* as the British saw it: Constructions of Customs and Disorder in Colonial Fiji” (1989) *Ethnohistory* 36: 4, 349. For Cain’s discussion of Trinidad see Maureen Cain, “Labouring, loving and living: on the policing of culture in Trinidad and Tobago” in L. Noaks, M. Levi and M. Maguire (eds) *Issues in Contemporary Criminology* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff 1995). Brereton and Wilmot have been discussed earlier in this chapter at pp. 18-22.

⁹⁷ Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73. This can be contrasted with the Criminal Tribes legislation of 1871, which was used to criminalise and control the indigenous Indian population, see pp. 73 and 79 in their article. The absence of “native criminality” in Malta is also noted by Scicluna and Knepper when discussing imprisonment in Malta, see Sandra Scicluna and Paul Knepper “Prisoners of the Sun: The British Empire and Imprisonment in Malta in the Early Nineteenth Century” (2008) *British Journal of Criminology* 48, 502, 513.

⁹⁸ The Maltese do not appear to have been “orientalised” and treated as “Other” by the British, according to Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, see their views in “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 79, 87. The concept of colonial “Otherness” derives from Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978). Said has been discussed in chapter 2, pg. 9.

way of identifying and criminalising the perceived troublesome immigrants.⁹⁹ This legislation required foreign arrivals to identify themselves to the police within two days of disembarking and their details were added to a register held and maintained by the police. Foreigners could be deported on conviction of a crime or for reasons of vagrancy or idleness.¹⁰⁰ This catch-all provision was designed to cover beggars, prostitutes and vagrants and can be linked with the objectives of class legislation used to tackle vagrancy and unemployment in other colonies.¹⁰¹ The Maltese experience also has parallels with Gibraltar, another strategic, fortress colony, where “strangers” were also put under surveillance on entry into the colony.¹⁰²

Conclusions

The literature on colonial policing can be divided into two main categories. Firstly, there are studies which consider the ‘technical’ and organisational aspects of policing in the colonies. These include overview and comparative accounts, which are too general for the purposes of this research. An alternative to these are the studies which consider the political economy of policing within the context of wider social and class relations. It is this second group of literature which I found to be of most relevance, with more general and organisational studies

⁹⁹ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43:2, 385, see pg. 397 and pp. 400 – 401. In this way, it was the foreigners who were treated as “other”, see Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, “Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities” in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009) 81.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385, 397 and Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, “Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities” in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009) 78 – 83.

¹⁰¹ This is discussed in Justin Willis, “Thieves, drunkards and vagrants: defining crime in colonial Mombasa, 1902 – 32” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds) *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991).

¹⁰² In Gibraltar census data was used to monitor and control the population and to monitor the issue of passports, see Stephen Constantine, “The Pirate, the Governor and the Secretary of State: Aliens, Police and Surveillance in Early Nineteenth-Century Gibraltar” (2008) *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXIII, No 504, see in particular pp. 1172 – 1174, 1183 – 1186.

of policing inadequate to understand events such as the 6th May disorder. Instead, careful analysis of the class, gender, race, ethnicity and economic positions (as appropriate) of the various social groups within which policing operated is required.

In relation to colonial policing in Malta, the contributions of Knepper, and Cauchi and Knepper focus on the surveillance role of the police, triggered by the social problems colonialism created which is only one aspect of policing. In the absence of all other policing scholars, it is only Attard who mentions the 6th May 1891 disorder and the use of police force. The importance of his account cannot therefore be overlooked.

Furthermore, Knepper, and also Cauchi and Knepper follow the tradition of ‘top down’ studies, which adopt the perspective of the police, rather than the colonised population. Whereas Attard’s account, albeit from a police officer’s perspective, describes the 6th May events in a way which demonstrates an interest in the subjects of policing. This is an important departure in the literature, and one which is yet to be developed into a dedicated study into how the colonised Maltese population were policed and how incidents of disorder were managed. Clearly, this requires supplementation in the post-colonial context. It is hoped that this research will add to the knowledge on Maltese colonial policing, and in a way which is completely new for Malta, since a detailed study which looks at the wider political economy of policing has not previously been attempted on *any* aspect of Malta’s colonial policing experience. Building upon Attard’s interest in the subjects of policing this thesis aims to build upon Attard’s findings by contributing an account of Malta’s 6th May 1891 disorder, written within an ‘incident-specific’ framework which enables the voices of a range of social groups to be heard.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts; I begin with a discussion of the theoretical influences that have shaped data collection and analysis. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the method used for data collection and analysis of the archival sources used in this thesis.

The writing style adopted in the methodology chapter reflects the anthropological tradition of a reflexive approach which incorporates the personal journey of the scholar in the text, as demonstrated in Foote Whyte's methodological Appendix.¹ Unlike Foote Whyte, I engaged with archival sources rather than human participants, however, the personal journey in developing a method for data collection and analysis was an important component of the methodology adopted and accordingly this plays a prominent part in this chapter.

Another important feature which compliments the personal research journey is my passion for the 'how' of research. Identifying sites and techniques for 'hearing' unofficial voices, and in particular those of relatively low income, low status people (so frequently the 'objects' of colonial policing), has been a continual process throughout data collection and analysis and derives from the theoretical influences I discuss next.

¹ William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: the Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, first published: 1943, 2nd edition: 1955, 1969 first British impression used), "Appendix: On the Evolution of 'Street Corner Society'", pp. 279-358.

Theoretical Influences

Four scholars whose work stretches from the middle of the twentieth century to the present day (Carr,² Foucault,³ Derrida⁴ and Spivak⁵) have been key in shaping the method for this research. These scholars influenced how I approached the literature on Maltese history which I considered immediately after my research methods training. I found the English-language texts on Maltese history comprehensive but dry, and of the ‘traditional’ or positivist school. These four scholars helped me to formulate the guiding principles for my research. In this chapter, after a brief overview of the connections between these scholars which follows in the paragraph, I discuss the influence of each scholar on the direction of this research.

Whilst the work of Carr and Spivak was initially published 25 years apart they both reveal how ‘voice’s absent from the records can be ‘heard’ ringing down the centuries. Derrida, whose work intersects the two, reveals how discourses can fail to disclose, yet at the same time uncover in spaces and silences, the unsaid and that which may not be spoken. Carr presents a theory of which voices would most likely be absent, and this has been followed by the work of Thompson⁶ and Hay.⁷ Spivak and later Hall⁸ demonstrate places where alternative discourses may be identified in unconventional archives. The scholarship of these individuals enables otherwise repressed voices in colonial society to be heard for the first time and when

² E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001).

³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn).

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997).

⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives” (1985) *History and Theory* XXIV 3, 247, “Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography” in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, London 1987), “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988).

⁶ E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1975).

⁷ Douglas Hay (ed) *Albion’s Fatal Tree* (Allen Lane, London 1975).

⁸ Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 2000) and Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830 – 1867* (Polity Press, Cambridge 2002).

brought together make it possible to study the oppressed in society, the under-classes or the “subalterns”.⁹ All have helped my exploration and analysis of colonial Malta, although the influence of Spivak was perhaps the greatest. I now consider my four key mentors in turn.

Carr’s work has lost favour and a place within academic debate and, as such, despite its longevity, it remains on the fringe of main-stream historical thought.¹⁰ His questioning of the legitimacy and objectivity of historical ‘facts’ gave impetus to this research, as did his emphasis on the class bias of archival production and survival.¹¹ Given the inequalities of power in colonial societies, Carr offered me a way of trying to redress this so as to allow other voices to be heard.¹² Carr encouraged me not to rely on the automatic ‘truth’ of historical documents, for example, colonial records. These records are readily accessible from frequent citations in history books. Instead, Carr helped me to use deconstructive and reflexive techniques, which acknowledged my role in *creating* history.¹³ Accordingly, when exploring the Maltese historical narratives and archives it was crucial to study who wrote the document, and to appreciate their necessary selectiveness in deciding which ‘facts’ should feature in their account. At a deeper level, no historical account or contemporaneously created document can ever be complete, so none can be truly objective.¹⁴ Accepting that historical accounts are

⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971). The term is first used on pg. 52 of his text. My discussion of Gramsci begins at pg. 40.

¹⁰ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001).

¹¹ Carr rejects the positivist approach to history, which I mention in the paragraph above as something which “clearly will not do”, E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 4.

¹² E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 10.

¹³ Carr endorses a reflexive approach to research which I adopt in my methodology. In doing so, I am aware of my role in interpreting and ‘creating’ history. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 99 and 115.

¹⁴ Carr describes the historian as “selective”, E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 5–6. See also pp. 16 – 18 for his comments on the role of the historian in selecting facts: facts “are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use – these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch. By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants.”

formed by subjective interpretation,¹⁵ which does not end when the text is published, is also crucial to Carr's approach. Thus, with every fresh reading, history is re-written by the reader.¹⁶ I have tried to acknowledge this by being reflexive about the research methods I have used.

As a consequence of Carr, I learned to challenge the validity of historical documents, including policing narratives, secondary historical texts and officially archived sources. These allege, but are incapable of presenting, an absolute or 'true' account of past events. This allowed me the 'space' to find other 'voices' in the documents and their versions of events.

Foucault is a significant contributor to modern sociological thought and his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*¹⁷ was important to my developing methodology. Foucault allowed me to question the status and authority of documents, particularly those which have official endorsement, for example, documents created by colonisers. Applying Foucault's well-known concept of the link between knowledge and power¹⁸ enabled me to treat official documents, particularly colonial sources, with caution in this research.¹⁹

¹⁵ Carr says that "history means interpretation". Historians find the 'facts' they are looking for and therefore, every historical account is coloured by who the historian is and what their objectives and motivations are, E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 18.

¹⁶ Carr says that history "is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, and unending dialogue between the past and present", E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961, reprinted 2001) 60.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn).

¹⁸ Foucault's concept of knowledge was first presented in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Routledge, London 1970). *The Order of Things* centres on the perspectival representations of art and other "knowledge". Foucault's concept of knowledge is later refined in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn) which has been of most theoretical use to me. Foucault provides a 'worked example' of the different ways in which knowledge can be constructed and interpreted in *I Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered my Mother, my Sister, and my Brother...* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London 1975).

¹⁹ Foucault invites the reader to question and challenge the meaning and authority of documents. This follows Carr's scepticism of documents, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn) 6.

Foucault allows the researcher to limit the influence of documents to being a situated “trace”, “hint” or “fragment” of the past.²⁰ Documents and archival sources can then be considered afresh, unrestricted by earlier endeavours and re-read to find potential new interpretations. Carr and Foucault both acknowledge the role of the author in creating history; what is recorded, who records it and for what purpose is ultimately dependent upon who holds power in society at that time, in this case, the colonising force. Considered in this light, documents can at best only form an account laden with ‘gaps’ or “discontinuities”.²¹ This provided me with a basis for trying to locate the missing narratives.

Whilst Foucault gave me the authority to challenge the status of ‘official’ sources and a basis for treating documents simply as “artefacts” of the past,²² Derrida takes this further with a theory for looking behind the documents and locating the ‘gaps’. Derrida, whose concern is with the deconstruction of text and words, treats documents as supplemental to that which they seek to represent.²³ This restricts the role of documents to that of a “trace”²⁴ of the past,

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn). 7 and 131. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault developed some of the fundamental aspects of Carr’s theory and both Foucault and Carr acknowledge the role of the historian in creating historical accounts. Foucault would have undoubtedly been aware of Jacques Derrida’s work and in particular *De la Grammatologie*, first published in France in 1967 (Les Editions de Minuit), which chronologically precedes Foucault’s texts. Foucault uses the Derridean concept of the “trace” in passing in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Chronologically Derrida’s contribution to theory comes first, but his text *Of Grammatology* only became of wider critical influence once translated into English by Spivak in 1976 (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, corrected edition 1997). I considered Derrida’s text after my discovery of Foucault and approaching the texts in this order has critical credibility as Derrida takes his theory of deconstruction and the concepts used further than Foucault. For example, Derrida uses the term “trace” in a significantly more developed manner. Derrida’s influence in this research is discussed below.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn) 14.

²² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn) 10.

²³ Note also Foucault and the representative function of documents: Derrida describes at great length the role of the text as a “sign” or “signifier” of the representation. There are multiple layers of signification which operate in a text: language is made up of writing, which is dependent on words to convey meaning. However, words can at best only represent what they describe. The multiple layers of signification within documents and the role of the reader in interpreting meaning prevents closure of the text and denies certainty of meaning. The role of the reader in finding a meaning which is personal to them and one which is always open to interpretation also denies authorial control of the document and closure of meaning, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by

rather than as encompassing a complete or definitive historical account (which both Foucault and Derrida would say is impossible for any document to achieve).²⁵ Deconstructing documents to this degree provides ‘space’ for other voices to be heard.

Derrida’s method of writing “under erasure”²⁶ provided me with a basis for not only acknowledging the ‘gaps’ in documents (identified by Foucault), but a method for actively searching for and locating what has been erased from conventional histories. I was then able to fill part at least of the ‘silence’ with the voice of an otherwise concealed history.²⁷ The voices of the powerless, or the “underdogs”²⁸ in society were often erased by the Colonial Office records. Together, Foucault and Derrida provided me with a method for conducting an

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997) 8, 11 and 18. In Spivak’s Preface to this edition she describes the authority of the text as being “provisional”, see pg. xviii. Translation of a document adds a further layer of signification which is discussed by Niranjana Tejaswini, *Siting Translation: History, Post Structuralism and the Colonial Context* (University of California Press, Berkeley 1992).

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997) see page 18 for his first use of this term.

²⁵ Derrida uses the terms “*differance*”, “*track*”, “*trace*” “*arche-writing*” and “*imprint*” to mean the same thing, namely the discrepancy or ‘gap’ between the text and what it seeks to represent; they all “permit the difference between space and time to be articulated”. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997) 60 - 62, 65 - 66.

²⁶ Or more correctly “*sous rature*”, see pg. xiv of the Preface for Spivak’s explanation of the translation of this term, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997).

²⁷ Derrida explains this by the crevice/glimmer metaphor: discourse “designate[s] the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed.” In this way documents do not wholly represent ‘reality’; there are gaps, spaces, “*crevices*” in the document which prevents its meaning being closed and through which “light” or the otherwise hidden, or missing, account glimmers, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997) 14.

²⁸ The term “underdog” was first used by Howard Becker in 1967 in connection with studies of deviance in America. Becker’s position is that it is inevitable that the researcher will “take sides” and so the question is whose side to be on. However, in his paper Becker does not directly answer his own question, which a point of contention for Alvin Gouldner, who a year later criticises Becker’s “partisan” approach to sociology, see Howard S. Becker, “Whose side are we on?” (1967) *Social Problems*, 14, 239 and Alvin W. Gouldner, “The Sociologist as Partisan: Sociology and the Welfare State” (1968) *The American Sociologist*, 3: 2, 103.

“archaeology” of Colonial Office records, while Carr and Spivak indicated who (in class and gender terms) was most likely to be missing.²⁹

Burton and Carlen apply Derrida’s theory to analyse officially produced documents.³⁰ They too endorse a deconstructive reading which rejects the “impartial” status of official documents. Instead they situate these documents as part of the State apparatus.³¹ Burton and Carlen helped me to understand why official documents, and in particular, Royal Commission and Tribunal reports, were created.³² Documents such as these they argue, tackle a legitimacy crisis derived from contentious events, and the unfavourable (unofficial) interpretations which often follow. They argue that official discourse confronts the unofficial accounts and deals with discreditable episodes, in an attempt to reconstruct the narrative so that it falls within the state’s range of acceptable ‘ideological practices’.³³ Thus, claims of “impartiality and disinterestedness” in these discourses must be treated with caution despite being often regarded as objective accounts.³⁴ Official discourses can be seen as a product of contemporary social and political struggles and the subsequent attempts at legitimation.³⁵

²⁹ Foucault likens the analysis of a document to an archaeological dig, where only snap-shots of a bygone era are revealed by the shards of pottery and earthworks which remain. In the same way, documents contain snippets of history and so must not be considered in isolation but in a cumulative way, Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn) 10. Derrida uses Foucault’s notion of archaeology, calling his theory of deconstruction “arche-writing”, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, corrected edn 1997) 56.

³⁰ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979).

³¹ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 13 -14.

³² Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 69, 112 - 113. The Scarman Tribunal report is one of many examples of official discourse they consider.

³³ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 13, 44 – 45. Official investigations often take place after instances of unrest or controversial police involvement in order to affirm a just outcome or to provide “jurisprudential justifications” for state actions, for example, the Scarman Tribunal, see pp. 70, 112 – 113.

³⁴ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 2, 69.

³⁵ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 6.

As this research considers a particular event in Malta's colonial history, knowledge of colonial theory³⁶ and of the post-colonial discourses³⁷ which emerged in the wake of colonialism has also been important. Spivak has been of most influence, since her work shows how the theories of Carr, Foucault and Derrida can shape a research method for the post-colonial setting. Said's explanation of the West's motivation for labelling the colonies as strange, alien and 'Other',³⁸ influenced Spivak. His work remains relevant in its own right to the analysis of the British treatment of the colonies, although it is not central to this research method.³⁹

Spivak attempts to address the deficiency in the discursive absences left by the dominant colonial discourses by making space for the colonised, or as she calls it, the "subaltern"

³⁶ The colonial theorists which have been of use to me are: John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (Unwin Hyman, London 1902), Richard Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961), Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word 1840 – 1960* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1964), Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Pluto Press, London, first published: 1917, 1996 edition used), Peter Worsley, *The Third World* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1964), Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share – A Short History of Imperialism 1850 – 1995* (Addison Wesley Longman Limited, London 1997).

³⁷ The post-colonial scholars, who in particular considered the nature of oppressed colonial nations and the aftermath of the colonial legacy, have been of particular relevance. The influence of Gayatri Spivak will be discussed in detail in this chapter. She in turn was heavily influenced by Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978). Following Said, subsequent scholars, including Spivak, Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998), Homi K. Bhabha, "The other question: difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism" in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds), *Literature, Politics and Theory* (Papers from the Essex Conference 1976 – 84, 1986) and Ali Behdad, *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork University Press, Cork 1994) all write from feminist standpoints. Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003), Catherine Hall (ed) *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 2000) and by the same author, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830 – 1867* (Polity Press, Cambridge 2002) and Niranjana Tejaswini, *Siting Translation: History, Post Structuralism and the Colonial Context* (University of California Press, Berkeley 1992) have all built upon Said's theory and have developed his understanding of how colonial subjects have been treated.

³⁸ Said's seminal study of the West's relationship with "Others" considers the framework within which the West 'knows' the Orient (namely a stereotypical construction of the Eastern, Arab nations). Orientalism is a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient". Orientalism legitimised the West's 'civilising mission' and was necessary for Western colonial domination and for a successful colonial strategy, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978) 1 and 3.

³⁹ Indeed Said's theory of Orientalism is expanded to encompass other nations in his 1993 text *Culture and Imperialism* (Chatto and Windus, Vintage Edition, London 1993) xi.

voice.⁴⁰ Spivak's use of the term "subaltern" derives from Gramsci.⁴¹ However, Gramsci and Spivak construct the concept of "subaltern" differently. One of the aims of this thesis is to locate the range of voices within Maltese colonial society. The applicability or otherwise of Gramsci and Spivak's concepts of "subaltern" to Malta will be explored in this thesis and hence, the distinction between Gramsci and Spivak is an important one.⁴²

Gramsci first used the term "subaltern" to describe the changing political and social relationship that emerged between low-class groups in Italy during the Risorgimento.⁴³ Gramsci saw an alliance emerging between the urban, industrialised workforce of the North and the rural, Southern peasant class. This alliance changed the "city-countryside relationship" and eroded the long-standing division which had existed between North and South. Whilst the Northern wage-earning workers (engaged in manufacturing) had very different social and economic lives to the agricultural labourers of the South, both groups occupied a subaltern status relative to their employer and the landowning elite. In this sense, Gramsci envisages the emergence of a "subaltern class" united against the rich, elite.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ For Spivak's use of the term "subaltern" see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography" in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, London 1987) and by the same author "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988).

⁴¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971). This is covered in his *Notes on Italian History* which is located at pp. 52 – 120 of this edition.

⁴² When referring to Malta, the term subaltern features without quotation marks in the text, to distinguish between Gramsci's and Spivak's concepts.

⁴³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971). The term is first used on pg. 52 of his text. I found pp. 52 – 102 of most relevance.

⁴⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971), pp. 90 – 100, I found pg. 99 particularly helpful. In terms of this division, Gramsci says that this arose owing to the "organic" relationship which existed between the urban North and South which was predominately, but not exclusively, rural. The urban North fed off their rural subordinate. Social, cultural and political differences also existed between the regions, see pp. 70 – 71, 90 – 94.

In contrast, Spivak's construction of "subaltern" includes *all* of the colonised population, which she sees as united against the colonising force. Spivak's concept of "subaltern" encompasses a range of social groups; the rural poor, the working, lower-classes and the former ruling aristocrats, whom she regards as all subordinate to the colonising force.⁴⁵

In particular, Spivak tries to locate the missing and hidden voices of the repressed and dominated in India.⁴⁶ In so doing, she provides an example of the incompleteness of colonial government documents, which do not include the repressed, colonised, "Other", who were deemed unimportant by the colonial administration. Spivak reveals how missing histories can be practically located in the archives, including those archives which have been previously analysed from an alternative standpoint.⁴⁷ I applied Spivak's method of locating missing histories to Malta's colonial archives and searched for the gaps in the official archives, reading the silences the official records contained, as well as considering a range of sources discussed below. Through this process I have located an otherwise missing history of the policing of the 6th May 1891 disorder.

⁴⁵ Spivak includes Indian royalty under British colonialism within her definition of "subaltern", see Gayatri Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (1985) *History and Theory* XXIV 3, 247. Spivak uses Said's concept of the colonial "Other" as a way of constituting the "subaltern" class, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978).

⁴⁶ In her 1985 paper, *The Rani of Sirmur*, Spivak locates the missing voice of the King's wife, the Rani of Sirmur. The Rani only features in the colonial documents in her capacity as guardian of the would-be young king, her son, and because of the commercial interests of the East India Company. Aside from these she has no status or role within the administration and so has no place within colonial accounts. The Rani only exists in colonial documents because of the needs of the colonial administration. Spivak says that the only other mention of women is in connection with negative connotations in relation to the practice of "sati", Gayatri Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (1985) *History and Theory* XXIV 3, 247, pp. 266 and 269. In later writing Spivak locates the account of Bhubaneswari Bhakeri's (a female Indian anti-colonial freedom fighter) suicide, which had been hitherto written out of colonial records to avoid political embarrassment, Gayatri Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988), in particular see pg. 270.

⁴⁷ For example, Spivak identifies Indian, female, "subaltern" histories as missing in Indian history and identifies the voice of women as more readily obscured. Whilst Spivak's work is gendered, it is of general application and so is compatible with my research method. Behdad, Yegenoglu and Young, discussed at note 37, also consider the gendered nature of colonial histories.

Methods of Data Collection

My research was archive based and my method was essentially a two-stage process of data collection and analysis. I was concerned to carry my interest in *all* social groupings into not only how I analysed the documents but also in my choice of documents for analysis. I decided to collect not only official records produced by the colonial government, (namely Whitehall and Malta), but to look at documents produced by, or aimed at, other sectors of Maltese society and not just the colonisers. In order to achieve this, I accessed newspaper articles for dates before and after the 6th May disorder, which I hoped would reveal the hitherto absent middle-class and lower-class voices, which constitute Spivak's "subaltern" class.⁴⁸ This was in addition to deconstructing official sources which helped me to read these documents in a different way.

Practically, the first and most fundamental point was to establish whether any of the archives containing information on the Malta police were held within the UK, or whether they remained in Malta. I started by using the online catalogues of the British Library and The National Archives at Kew, London.⁴⁹ I was unable to locate many sources this way, so a preliminary trip to Kew was made in order to establish the extent of relevant archival material held, its accessibility, and other such practicalities. During this trip, a combination of further online catalogue searches, perusal of Research Guides, advice from staff and, with the aid of

⁴⁸ I found few academic publications which use newspapers as extensively as in this thesis. The exceptions are: Brereton's study of Tobago (Bridget Brereton, "Post-Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The 'Belmanna Riots' in Tobago, 1876" (1984) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 30: 3/4, 110) and Frendo's analysis of Australian press perspectives on Lord Strickland (who is a key figure in this research), see Henry Frendo, "Australian Press Perspectives on Lord Strickland's Malta" (2009) *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3 441. However, none of these use newspapers to locate missing voices representative of absent groups in society.

⁴⁹ Formerly known as the Public Record Office. Hereafter referred to as "Kew". This depository is to be distinguished from the National Archives of Malta discussed at pp. 50-54.

Banton's publication,⁵⁰ I was able to establish that some information about the police and policing was held at Kew, although many archives remained in Malta. This shaped my research strategy and consequently I discuss data collection in the UK and Malta separately.

The National Archives. Kew, London

The archives in Kew contain records relating to the British administration of Malta. However, these documents were produced by the British government for use in accordance with *their* objectives in Malta. Therefore, whilst plentiful in number, these documents were written from the perspective of the coloniser and so I used them with caution.

In common with all colonies, there was a distinct hierarchy of colonial administration in Malta. At the 'top' was the Colonial Office in Westminster which dealt with high-level strategic policy relating to Malta and other British colonies. This department created documents in the form of correspondence, despatches and reports which passed between Whitehall and the Governor of the colony.

At Kew these documents fell under the classification of "CO" and comprised the "records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies relating to the administration of Britain's colonies."⁵¹ The scope and content of this record series is large, but for my purposes contained correspondence passing between the Governor of various colonies and the Colonial Office on

⁵⁰ Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire, 1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK* (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008), in particular see pp. 230 – 231 on Malta.

⁵¹ The National Archives website, catalogue search, <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/displaycataloguedetails.asp?CATLN=1&CATID=57&SearchInit=4&SearchType=6&CATREF=co>> accessed 11th July 2011. When referring to the archives accessed at Kew in this chapter details of the series classification are given. Specific file references are located in the footnotes to chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis.

a variety of matters, including the administration of Malta. From this potentially huge dataset, with the assistance of staff at Kew, combined with further searches of their online catalogue, I was able to identify various “divisions” within the classification, in which more focused searches could be undertaken. From these searches, I further refined my criteria and focused on the date of the disorder and documents created that year.⁵²

During a preliminary visit to Kew, I ‘sampled’ a variety of document types within a wide date-range to ascertain the relative accessibility, availability and clarity/legibility of the records prior to embarking on ‘serious’ data collection on the incident itself. The records from 1891 were in good order and were a mixture of hand-written records, hand-written comments on printed ‘pro-forma’ documents, and printed documents. These were legible and lent themselves to good-quality digital images. Documents from earlier decades were less accessible, and the earlier the record, the more likely the document was entirely hand-written and less legible.⁵³ This was a further reason for choosing the 6th May incident over other earlier historical moments.

I found the Registers of Correspondence⁵⁴ and the original correspondence files for Malta of assistance in understanding how the Colonial Office operated.⁵⁵ Although the organisational structure and administrative practices remained unclear, it was the Colonial Office Lists for 1889 – 1892 (the year of the incident, and one year either side) which helped in this. The 1891

⁵² These were contained in “sub-series” classifications organised by date.

⁵³ The first Blue Book for Malta was compiled in 1821 (reference: PRO: TNA CO 163/39). I accessed this and found the entries to be hand-written and essentially illegible. The Blue Book for 1860 (reference: PRO: TNA CO 163/79) was hand-written but legible and by 1880, the Blue Books took the form of typed print (reference: PRO: TNA CO 163/99).

⁵⁴ Classification: CO 355/11.

⁵⁵ Reference: PRO: TNA CO 158/296 – 297.

List identifies key ministers and civil servants for Malta and this was an ongoing source of reference.

“Confidential” and “secret” correspondence files and “confidential print” were also considered but they contained little relevant material.⁵⁶ Aside from the Colonial Office correspondence, other departmental files were examined if the online searches indicated potentially relevant material. However, they were also of limited relevance to the focal events.⁵⁷

Catalogue searches of the Miscellanea series indicated that, amongst other items, the Blue Books of statistics for Malta were held along with some newspapers. The data contained in the Blue Book for 1891 was of particular help in providing information on the Superintendent of Police and his subordinates and also in terms of understanding the organisational structure of the Malta police, the positions within the force and respective salaries (within the police and wider colonial administration).⁵⁸

The extent of Kew’s newspaper holdings was unclear from the record entry. It was my hope that the Maltese newspaper records dating to the disorder would be held at Kew, or elsewhere in the UK. Unfortunately the Maltese newspapers held within the Miscellanea were very miscellaneous indeed, limited in number and restricted in scope. The few available copies unfortunately did not cover the incident date. The exception to this was the comprehensive

⁵⁶ References: PRO: TNA CO 694/7, PRO: TNA CO 883/7/13-14 and PRO: TNA CO 537/7 respectively.

⁵⁷ For example, department classifications: “MEPO” and “MINT”. The exception to this was information contained in a correspondence file dating almost 40 years prior to the incident, which was useful in detailing the wide-range of duties which fell on the police in Malta (reference: PRO: TNA CO 158/167). I found this data whilst ‘sampling’ the earlier date-ranges and it was a ‘bonus’ discovery. This data helped me place policing in context and confirmed Attard’s findings in this respect, Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) chapter 4.

⁵⁸ Reference: PRO:TNA CO 163/110.

collection of Government Gazettes held off-site.⁵⁹ Whilst technically a newspaper, after sampling the content of various editions and consulting Banton,⁶⁰ I was cautious in approaching the Gazettes as anything other than an official, colonial source. This led to my decision to delay collecting data from the Gazettes until I had a better understanding of the newspapers available at Colindale and in Malta. I was conscious that the data collected so far was produced predominately by the colonial government. I was reluctant to devote any more time at this stage to further official sources, as I wanted to explore new archives which I hoped would contain material on other social groups. Ultimately, I did not consider the Gazettes extensively, only following-up specific references where required.

As a consequence of the limited Maltese newspapers available at Kew, I conducted further searches on the British Library's online catalogues, focusing on their newspaper collection located at the Colindale Reading Room to establish whether their holdings included any newspapers printed in Malta dating to the disorder. At this stage, I was satisfied that some potentially relevant newspapers were held in London. I pursued these preliminary enquiries later, when investigating the newspaper collections also held in Malta, which I discuss below.⁶¹ The decision to consider these two archives together allowed me to evaluate the best newspaper sources available, balanced with concerns over location, ease of access and completeness of collection. I placed importance on the newspaper archives because I hoped they would be of value in locating voices other than the coloniser's, such as the voice of the colonised Maltese.

⁵⁹ Classification: CO 162.

⁶⁰ Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire, 1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK* (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008).

⁶¹ Discussed in this chapter from pp. 54-60.

Turning back to the holdings at Kew, I accessed the comprehensive collection of the Acts, Ordinances and Proclamations passed in Malta in the decades prior to the incident.⁶² This classification included legislation and regulations relating to the Malta police, which although not directly connected with the disorder, was of help in understanding of how the police operated.

The last and perhaps most surprisingly useful series of papers held at Kew were described as “sessional papers” in the online catalogue.⁶³ They contained the Minutes of the Maltese legislative bodies, namely the Executive Council and Council of Government. I was disappointed when initially accessing these records as they appeared to be administrative records, ‘thin’ on detail. However, they came to be invaluable in constructing the missing history of the disorder.⁶⁴

I found the reading rooms at Kew to be well organised and enjoyable to work in, with the delivery of documents rapid. The policy of permitting digital photography of documents allowed me to collect images of relevant sources for later analysis, without incurring expensive photocopying charges. Consequently my time at Kew was focused on data collection, with limited, administrative note-taking. The online catalogue allowed me to prepare, and to order documents in advance (in bulk), and to make requests for documents held off-side ahead of my visit. The catalogue was also helpful in locating missing references when writing-up.

⁶² References: PRO: TNA CO 160/1-4.

⁶³ References: PRO: TNA CO 161/65-66.

⁶⁴ Discussed in chapter 5, pp. 117-123.

I created a Microsoft Access database to record the files I accessed at Kew, with details of the classification and complete file reference, date-range, type of source, brief notes on any observations on the documents (such as their legibility or titles) and the date the source was accessed. In the early stages of data collection I accessed and collected data which ultimately was not included in this thesis.

Data Collection in Malta

Data collection in Malta occurred during the course of three visits to the island in December 2008, April 2009 and November 2010, with some follow-up on return to the UK through email correspondence with the archivists and librarians in Malta.

The main sites of data collection were the National Archives of Malta and the National Library of Malta. The first visit to Malta in 2008 included preliminary visits to the National Archives and the National Library. The second trip involved data collection at both venues, whilst the third visit was devoted exclusively to newspaper collection at the National Library. Before discussing the practicalities of data collection at these sites, I explain the contacts I made in Malta.

Maltese Contacts

Prior to my first visit I made contact with His Excellency, Dr Michael Refalo, High Commissioner of Malta (now retired), in the hope that he might be able to assist me in gaining access to archives and making contacts.⁶⁵ Dr Refalo expressed interest in my research and

⁶⁵ This correspondence resulted in a meeting with the High Commissioner in London in October 2008.

generously offered his help. I also contacted the British High Commissioner in Malta, although I received no reply.

I wrote to the National Archives of Malta as the limited information on their website indicated that they might hold relevant archives. In reply, Charles Farrugia, National Archivist, offered his assistance. During my first trip to Malta I met with Mr Farrugia and he was able to provide me with general information on the nature of the Maltese archives and details of the potentially relevant holdings.⁶⁶

Another important contact I made was the Senior Assistant Librarian at the National Library of Malta in Valletta, Ms Maroma Camilleri, who met me during my first visit to Malta. I had contacted the Library to ascertain whether their holdings included any records relating to the police or the courts, and also to establish the extent of their newspaper collection. I was informed that the Library held copies of all the newspapers published in Malta since 1798 to the present day, stored on microfilm. I decided that the Library would be a fundamental place to search for the voice of the colonised Maltese and I focused on the Maltese archives newspaper sources, rather than the more limited Colindale collection.⁶⁷

One of the problems I encountered was making contact with the Commissioner of Police, John Rizzo, whom I had identified as a potentially useful contact. On contacting the Commissioner I received a reply from a subordinate Superintendent who informed me that a

⁶⁶ On the advice of the National Archivist, I also contacted the National Statistics Office of Malta as that digital copies of the Blue Books had become available online. Digitalisation of archives at the National Statistics Office and the National Archives were in the early stages. Unfortunately the Blue Book for 1891 and surrounding years was not yet digitalised. Had it been available, it would have reduced collection of data at Kew.

⁶⁷ I did later cross refer between the records to see if there was any overlap in their holdings which would eliminate or reduce the time I needed to spend in Malta accessing newspapers, but this produced little to justify familiarising myself with a new archive and I found it most time-effective to collect newspaper sources from Malta alone.

“considerable amount” of police documentation was destroyed during World War Two and that what remained had been transferred to the National Archives, with a “limited number” of records located at the Police Museum.⁶⁸ I contacted the Museum directly and also through the Superintendent, but my enquires went unanswered.

The National Archives of Malta

After meeting the National Archivist, the Archive Officers assisted me to identify potentially relevant record series. I based my research on a mixture of printed, card and computerised catalogues. It became apparent to me early on that the National Archives of Malta were less sophisticated than their counterpart in Kew, in relation to the cataloguing system, document storage and file requests, as well as being smaller in size.⁶⁹

Documents were ordered singularly and dependant on the various jobs the Archive Officers had to juggle determined how long I had to wait for a document.⁷⁰ Digital photography was not permitted and whilst photocopying charges were relatively inexpensive, compared with the self-service photocopying at Kew, a short delay inevitably occurred when placing requests.⁷¹ This was particularly the case when making requests of any volume, as on a couple of occasions I had to return to collect photocopies requested days previously. This was something I had not envisaged and I had to reorganise my time there as a consequence.

⁶⁸ Statement by Superintendent M. Spiteri (Personal email correspondence 28th May 2009).

⁶⁹ Mr Farrugia, the National Archivist, explained to me that archive management was still in its infancy in Malta. I was advised that the Archives face ongoing challenges. These related to document storage conditions and capacity, the ongoing cataloguing process, the vast number of unsorted and yet to be catalogued documents held on and off site and the limited staff resources. Some of these issues became apparent to me whilst working in the archives as the building was very cold (particularly in December!) and was not ideal for visiting researchers, or I suspect, the documents. Whilst the staff were extremely helpful and knowledgeable they had to combine research enquiries with locating and collecting documents for researchers and they were also responsible for photocopying requests and payments.

⁷⁰ See Appendix, Figure 1 for an example of a document request form.

⁷¹ See Appendix, Figure 2 for an example of a photocopy service form.

The location of the Archives in Rabat was less than ideal. Compared with Valletta, the facilities were limited. The National Library was located in Valletta and as all bus routes radiated out from Valletta it made further sense to stay near there.⁷² The journey to Rabat was approximately €1.00 return and took up to an hour dependant on the time of day. Owing to the distance from Valletta and rural location of Rabat, the road network did not appear to have had the same investment as in the capital and the comfort of the buses varied which made working *en route* to Rabat impossible. The opening hours of the archives also prevented long periods of study.⁷³ Unfortunately, the bus timetable and its unreliability (particularly at night), compounded by the distance from Valletta, made it difficult to take most advantage of the late opening, although it was still worthwhile to organise visits to coincide with this. On Saturdays the archives were open for an even more limited period and they were closed on Sundays, which made it impractical to visit Malta at weekends to conduct research.

The referencing systems at the National Archives comprised of a “fond” which contained a classification and number (such as “CSG 01”), then a volume number and date (such as “32/5177”), with particular documents then identifiable by a “piece number”. I discounted records which I had initially identified as relevant and identified other sources. These were the correspondence files relating to the police department and the records of the Office of the Chief Secretary to Government (classified under the fond “CSG”), both of which concerned *local* affairs rather than colonial police and as such counter-balanced the predominantly colonizer’s voice I had retrieved from Kew.

⁷² A valuable, practical contact I made, which is not mentioned in this chapter is a restaurant proprietor I met during the December 2008 and April 2009 visits. Through him I was able to rent an apartment for my 2010 visit.

⁷³ The Archives opened early (8am) but closed for the day at 2pm, save for one weekday when they opened 10am-7.30pm with an hour closure over lunch.

“GOV” files (held within the “CSG” classification) were the counterparts of Colonial Office files held at Kew. Similarly, the National Archives held copies of the Malta Government Gazettes, also held at Kew.⁷⁴ There was also an accompanying Register of correspondence for the “CSG” files.⁷⁵ I checked the digitalised Register for 1891 but was unable to locate any relevant entries. Instead, I searched the “CSG” volumes manually by date for relevant entries on the police or the disorder itself but there was no separate category for the police department. Within the “CSG” classification the records were organised numerically by document type. Of the many classifications, save for the Register (“CSG 81”), the only relevant classifications for the 6th May events were: “CSG 01”, which contained department correspondence files for the period 1851 – 1921⁷⁶ and “CSG 04”, the General Letters Book (‘out’ letters) for the period 1813 – 1910. However, “CSG 04” was illegible for the period 1st May 1891 – 17th June as damp conditions had left the writing smudged and unreadable. Unfortunately, all ‘in’ letters relevant to the incident have been lost, which rendered this aspect of the research difficult and incomplete, as I could only obtain the Chief Secretary’s response to original, unseen letters.⁷⁷ Notwithstanding these difficulties, from considering the departmental volume page by page, I found a number of relevant documents dating to the incident. One file was of particular use and it features in chapters 5 and 6; this was a department file for the police relating to the incident itself.⁷⁸

I had hoped to locate police records and court reports relating to the disorder, however these records were located within the Crown Advocate reports. These reports were available for the

⁷⁴ Classification: “MGG”.

⁷⁵ Classification: CSG 81. In order to preserve the Registers, some of which were in poor condition owing to storage in damp conditions prior to the custodianship of the National Archives the Registers for the period 1851 – 1911 was digitalised copies of the original volumes. Unfortunately, some volumes have been lost, whilst others are in poor condition. The Register for 1912 – 1921 remained in the original paper volumes.

⁷⁶ Prior to 1851 the correspondence, but not the Registers, had been destroyed.

⁷⁷ Classification: “CSG 03”.

⁷⁸ Reference: CSG 01 32/1891, piece number 5203, NAM, Rabat, Malta.

6th May but they took the form of unsorted, hand-written Italian documents. I was advised by the National Archivist that it would be difficult to identify specific cases within the files. For this reason I discounted these data.

I also hoped to access local police records dating to the incident. Initially I had high expectations as there were a number of police record books, described as the Commissioner's Occurrence Books for each police district in Malta. Unfortunately, the archives only held records relating to four of the seven historic police districts and the cataloguing process had only just begun for two of the four districts (Hamrun⁷⁹ and Birkirkara⁸⁰).⁸¹ Available data either covered a district other than Valletta (where the disorder took place) or related to a different period in history.⁸² I was advised by the National Archivist that the remainder of the records were still held locally in police stations, in an unsorted state, to which access would be difficult. I decided not to pursue these records further at this stage. I was hopeful that the General and Miscellaneous Reports ("GMR") would include Police Annual Reports. However, unfortunately the collection began in 1903 and was unavailable for 1891.⁸³

A number of supplementary documents were requested on returning to the UK, which included copies of the historic Constitutions, along with constitutional sources relating to the

⁷⁹ Classification: "POL 7".

⁸⁰ Classification: "POL 8".

⁸¹ From later email correspondence it became apparent to me that whilst it was true that the cataloguing process had begun for two of the four districts this was unfinished. Two districts had been untouched in terms of cataloguing, whilst the other two were unfinished, as at 23rd January 2009 the unsorted data was for the following districts: "Pol 2" Qormi, Siggiewi and Zebbug, "Pol 6" Sliema, St. Julians and Gzira, "Pol 7" Marsa and "Pol 8" Lija and Attard. The Occurrence Book for the incident location (Valletta) was not part of the records pending sorting, Statement by Archive Officer Joseph Amodio (Personal email correspondence 23rd January 2009).

⁸² Hamrun district Occurrence Books were held for the period 1870 – 1965. From 1900 – 1965 the records are in English, and pre-1900 are in Italian. Birkirkara district records were held for a later period 1903 – 1964 but all the records were in English. Aside from daily Occurrence Books the archives also hold a number of other record books e.g. station diary, correspondence book, permit books and log books for Birkirkara, which are in English too.

⁸³ Police Annual Reports were also unavailable at Kew.

organisation of the police. These were provided remotely in the form of digitalised images. However, owing to the late discovery of these documents I was unable to use them in this thesis.

The National Library of Malta

During my first visit to the National Library practical data collection issues were highlighted. I was informed that the Library did not employ a specialist newspapers archivist and that aside from the Reading Room Attendants, who would fetch requested items and help locate microfilm, further assistance was limited to three printed books which comprised the Library's catalogue of newspapers.

I familiarised myself with these catalogues and I decided to focus on the local English-language newspapers. By collecting articles relating to the police and the disorder from the English-language Maltese press, I have been able to supplement the colonial documents with voices from other social groups in colonial Malta.

Two of the printed catalogues were relevant to my research and they took the form of published books. The first was a historic publication by Sapienza published in 1977 which catalogued 1,220 newspapers and periodicals held in the National Library and Library of the University of Malta and covered all items published in Malta from 1798 - 1974.⁸⁴ This publication is the version the Library refers to, as they have no independent, contemporary paper or electronic newspaper catalogue. This publication also contained the Library's hand-

⁸⁴ Anthony F. Sapienza, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta (formerly Royal Malta Library) and the University of Malta Library* (Malta University Press, Malta 1977).

written annotations on their holdings. The second publication is an updated bibliography of publications covering the period 1798 – 1900 by Portelli, which lists 303 sources.⁸⁵

The Sapienza catalogue is difficult to use at first, as there are multiple entries for each publication (reflecting minor changes in title – they are given separate entries), cross-referencing and missing pages.⁸⁶ The catalogue is organised alphabetically (and not by subject, publication type or language) and so I had to read the entire catalogue before I could gain an understanding of what the Library held. The catalogue contains purely bibliographical information, from which little about the nature or relevance of the publication can be gained.

I found Portelli's book to be far more user-friendly and manageable. Portelli only itemises newspapers and periodicals published for the period 1798 – 1900. Despite the listings being less numerous, this helped me to direct my research to the most relevant publications. Portelli was more accessible and informative on the whole. All entries were written in English (unlike Sapienza, where foreign titles remained un-translated) and includes notes about the newspapers' histories, their editors, publication dates and any political, colonial or cultural social biases the newspaper took – this came to be important in this research.

I spent time in Malta analysing the catalogues and identifying possible English-language newspapers which I sampled during my first visit. I found the catalogue entries to be accurate and the microfilm easy to locate on open-access shelves. The Reading Room Attendants were helpful in assisting me to use the microfilm readers and arranging photocopies. I was also able

⁸⁵ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000).

⁸⁶ Namely the pages which contain publications numbered 1163 – 1170 and 1171 - 1221.

to obtain copies of the two catalogues and I spent further time consulting the entries and selecting three English-language newspapers for future data collection.

I found working in the National Library enjoyable and straightforward. The opening hours were longer than at the Archives.⁸⁷ Requests for copies of the newspapers from microfilm were possible and were relatively inexpensive.⁸⁸ A similar photocopy procedure operated as in the National Archives and a small amount of delay was occasioned by this and also by the specialist equipment involved.⁸⁹ Relationships with the Library staff developed over time and by November 2010 the Library were happy to arrange for digital copies to be sent by email and post to me which was helpful, and particularly useful when the quality of copies were unsatisfactory and duplicates were required.

The newspapers I chose were *Public Opinion*, the *Malta Times and Broadsheet of the Mediterranean* and the *Malta Chronicle and Imperial Service Gazette*.⁹⁰ I was informed that the Library's newspaper collection was definitive; gaps in the collection indicated non-publication rather than loss or damage. This reassured me that their holdings were complete.

I decided to review every edition of each newspaper from 1st April 1891 until the end of August 1891. I also decided to begin data collection one month before the disorder and this was an important decision, as a significant background to the incident existed. New articles about the events ceased to feature by late August 1891, so this became my end date.

⁸⁷ Opening hours: 8.15am – 5pm Monday to Friday and 8.15am – 1pm Saturdays with Sunday closure. In summer, closing was brought forward to 1pm, hence I chose to visit Malta in the 'winter' months.

⁸⁸ See The National Library of Malta Photocopy Service request form at Figure 3, Appendix.

⁸⁹ On my first trip I found out the hard way that photocopies were not possible on Saturdays, which impacted on available time that trip.

⁹⁰ In footnotes for the sake of brevity I abbreviate these newspaper titles in accordance with the List of Abbreviations.

Systematic data collection began in April 2009 with *Public Opinion* newspaper, which was published tri-weekly. Editions from July and August 1891 still produced relevant articles. However, by the end of August 1891, all relevant articles in *Public Opinion* had stopped. This confirmed my approach and reinforced the decision to search for articles up to the end of August in subsequent newspapers.

I chose these three newspapers because of their availability and their longevity and I focused on established publications because analysis of the catalogues revealed that a large number and variety of newspapers and publications went to press. Many of these ultimately became short ‘runs’ of a few editions, if not single editions, as well as one-off political pamphlets. These were avoided as they were unlikely to be representative or reliable sources (many being privately funded and fuelled by personal agendas). A number of publications in the catalogues were also missing and I discounted these. Accordingly, I considered each entry in Sapienza as well as Portelli and from these my selection was made. It was easy to discount a large number of entries, as it was clear that they were irrelevant from their titles.

Public Opinion newspaper was published every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 18th February 1867 - 7th August 1908.⁹¹ Portelli describes it as “the first authoritative English-language paper to be published by a Maltese person”; calling it an “influential political paper”.⁹² I thought this would be a good place to look for the voice of the colonised. The

⁹¹ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000), entry 244, pg. 107. In relation to *Public Opinion* pp. 107 – 109 are relevant. Sapienza’s catalogue entry for *Public Opinion* is number 904, which contains the following quotation: “established with the view of laying before our Rulers and the British Public the views and aspirations of the well-wishers of the Maltese.” See Anthony F. Sapienza, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta (formerly Royal Malta Library) and the University of Malta Library* (Malta University Press, Malta 1977) entry 904.

⁹² Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 244, pp. 107 and 109.

frequency of publication and length of run available were also factors in my choice. I was also aware that *Public Opinion* was owned, edited and compiled by Sigismondo Savona, who was described as “one of the main protagonists of the local political scene”.⁹³ However, the significance of Savona in connection with the focal events was not fully appreciated at the beginning of data collection and it was only through analysis of the various archival sources that this became apparent. That the newspaper “expounded Savona’s political and economic beliefs” and became the “unofficial organ” of his political movement,⁹⁴ added to its importance in this research. Consequently, I considered each edition of this newspaper from 2nd April 1891 - 29th August 1891. The majority of the English-language articles I collected came from this source.

Following the success of data collection in *Public Opinion*, the second newspaper I searched was *The Malta Times*.⁹⁵ This newspaper was published from 5th April 1840 - 24th September 1927.⁹⁶ Sapienza identified some breaks in the Library holdings of *The Malta Times*,⁹⁷ although these did not coincide with the disorder. In practice, I found that the frequency of publication varied. According to Portelli this newspaper “actively promoted Protestant and imperial interests in Malta”.⁹⁸ However, whether this was still accurate at the time of the incident is debatable, as Portelli states that after 1856 (when the newspaper was bought by the

⁹³ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 244, pg. 107.

⁹⁴ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 244, pg. 109.

⁹⁵ This has the sub-title *Broad Sheet of the Mediterranean*, Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 189, pg. 80.

⁹⁶ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 189, pg. 80.

⁹⁷ Anthony F. Sapienza, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta (formerly Royal Malta Library) and the University of Malta Library* (Malta University Press, Malta 1977) entry number 691.

⁹⁸ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 189, pg. 80.

then Chief Secretary, Victor Houlton) it was “still a pro-government organ...[although it] gradually drifted away from local politics and became a general paper”.⁹⁹ My findings correspond with the latter of these two positions.¹⁰⁰ I considered the newspaper from 3rd April 1891 - 28th August 1891 and I collected a number of articles of relevance from this publication, although, the number of articles and coverage in *The Malta Times* was far less than in *Public Opinion*.

The final English-language newspaper I considered was *The Malta Chronicle and Imperial Service Gazette*.¹⁰¹ Holdings for this newspaper spanned the period 1st November 1887 - 3rd May 1940 and it was published every Tuesday and Friday.¹⁰² Portelli’s commentary indicated that although “originally intended as a general paper for British servicemen, it gradually started to include comments on the local political situation from a pro-government standpoint”.¹⁰³ I considered the newspaper from 14th April 1891 - 29th May 1891 but found no relevant articles, as the newspaper content was still aimed at overseas service personnel at this time. Unfortunately, there were no articles in this newspaper relating to the incident up to the

⁹⁹ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 189, pp. 80 and 82.

¹⁰⁰ In terms of proprietorship, I was interested by the possible link with the former serving Chief Secretary, although I was unable to definitively establish this. However, after researching this further online, I began to have reservations concerning the accuracy of this statement. This was owing to an article I read on the Times of Malta website and this led me to consider the potential that Portelli had confused the former Chief Secretary, Victor Houlton with a family by the same name who were involved with *The Times of Malta* - a separate publication to *The Malta Times*. See Victor Aquilina, *Houlton, Hulton and Strickland* (Times of Malta.com, Saturday 17th July 2004) < <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20040717/letters/houlton-hulton-and-strickland.117627> > accessed 25th February 2011. I entered into email correspondence with the author of this article, but unfortunately was unable to find a definitive answer on who owned the newspaper at the time of the incident, Statement from Victor Aquilina (Persona email correspondence 1st March 2011). I subsequently established that the editor at the date of the incident was Vincent Fenech, Statement with attached newspaper extract from Maroma Camilleri (Personal email correspondence 8th June 2011).

¹⁰¹ This newspaper was also known by the title *Malta Chronicle and Garrison Gazette* in 1891.

¹⁰² Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 179, pp. 74 – 76 and Anthony F. Sapienza, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta (formerly Royal Malta Library) and the University of Malta Library* (Malta University Press, Malta 1977) entry number 625.

¹⁰³ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) entry 179, pg. 74.

end of May 1891 and so I did not extend my search to the end of August as I had with the other titles.

By the end of my second visit to Malta in April 2009 I had systematically reviewed the contents of the three English-language newspapers printed in Malta I had identified for data collection. On the whole, *Public Opinion* was the most useful newspaper given the number of articles, with the bonus of Savona's direct connection with the local political scene and more crucially, his involvement in the disorder. *The Malta Times* contained some articles of use, whilst the *Malta Chronicle and Imperial Services Gazette* contained no relevant articles at all. Ultimately, many of the articles I collected from *Public Opinion* and *The Malta Times* do not form part of this research. During data collection this was not apparent and only later did I realise that the volume of data I had located was far in excess of what I could consider in this thesis.

In light of this, and bearing in mind word and time constraints, I decided to limit the analysis contained in this thesis to only those English-language newspaper articles created *contemporaneously* with the incident, namely, the first articles published by each newspaper relating to the disorder.¹⁰⁴

Data Organisation

Having collected my data I needed to manage my sources in a workable way, particularly given the number and variety of document-types (newspaper articles, official correspondence etc.) and the different formats (photocopies, j-peg images (photographs) and PDF images on

¹⁰⁴ These are dated the 8th and 9th of May 1891.

CD). I was also aware of the dangers of only holding one copy of each document. I created a digital library of documents, with back-up copies. I organised the j-peg images I had collected at Kew and saved them in more easily useable PDF files, which I combined with the CDs of data I had received from Malta. Where I held only photocopies of documents, I photographed them and included them in the digital library so that it became a comprehensive collection.¹⁰⁵ This helped me to organise my data by document type and allowed me to systematically analyse the sources.

Theoretical Analysis of Data

After I had organised my data according to document type, I attempted to locate the range of voices within Maltese colonial society. In order to do this I reorganised my data according to ‘who’ was speaking. I identified documents created by the Colonial Office, those created at colony-level and those created by other groups in Malta, such as the middle-classes. In reorganising the documents in this way I revealed a hierarchical structure of voices.

I situated the colony-level sources structurally ‘below’ the Colonial Office records, as they formed part of the official discourse at local level.¹⁰⁶ There were many layers within the colony-level discourse, which took the form of the voice of the Governor, the Chief Secretary and the Chief of Police (who was subordinate to the former two). In relation to the English-language newspapers (*Public Opinion* and *The Malta Times*), I categorised these as middle-class sources and I regarded them as containing the voice of the colonised middle-classes, who were subordinate to the colonial and local government. Through analysis of the official

¹⁰⁵ I could also cross refer this with the Microsoft Access database of Kew records accessed.

¹⁰⁶ Namely, the “CSG” files and “GMR” reports.

and middle-class sources the voice of the displaced upper-class Maltese emerged as an important social group.

My labelling of the newspapers at this stage was clumsy and had been informed by the political biases of the newspapers indicated in Portelli's commentary and my prior knowledge of language use in Malta. Written English was only widely understood by the coloniser, service personnel and educated (wealthy) Maltese.¹⁰⁷ The language an individual spoke was inherently linked with their social standing, education and the opportunities they had.¹⁰⁸ I found that the readership of English-language newspapers in Malta was targeted at the British and the educated middle-class Maltese who were fluent in Italian and English (and Maltese). *The Malta Times* fitted my expectation of a middle-class newspaper, as its articles had a conventional, conservative, pro-colonial bias, which seemed to be aimed at this social group.

Having located the voice of the colonised middle-classes in the English-language newspapers, I identified this voice as falling within Spivak's concept of the "subaltern". However, Spivak's concept is drawn widely to include all of the colonised population and applied to Malta this would include the middle-classes, the displaced nobility as well as the lower-class Maltese. I also noted that I was yet to locate a source created by, or aimed at the lower-class Maltese who, as an element of the colonised population, also fell within Spivak's concept of "subaltern". Organising my data by document type and hierarchically allowed me to identify a variety of voices representative of part of the social structure in colonial Malta and to hypothesise where the gaps might be, such as the voice of the lower-class Maltese.

¹⁰⁷ Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 18.

¹⁰⁸ Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 6, 19 and Henry Frendo, "Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin, Mediterranean or British Empire?" in Victor Mallia-Milanes, *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988) 187.

Thus, as I began to work closely with the archival and newspaper sources, I realised that distinguishing between voices on the basis of coloniser and colonised did not necessarily allow me to identify the *range* of voices which existed within Spivak's "subaltern" group. In reaching this finding I turned to Gramsci's concept, which conceives an emergent subaltern class, comprised of the subordinate peasant and urban working-classes.¹⁰⁹

Relating my findings to either Gramsci's or Spivak's concepts of "subaltern" was challenging and the differences between their concepts interplayed with the social interactions I found to exist in my data. It became apparent that the social groupings in Malta at the time of the disorder could not be adequately described by *either* Gramsci's or Spivak's concept of "subaltern". Whilst it was possible to identify Spivak's "subaltern" voice in the archives, using her concept alone was too broad to identify the voice of the lower-class Maltese as missing. Based on the archival and newspaper evidence it was also not possible to argue that the Maltese nobility as a whole (aside from perhaps the Marquis) were united against the British administration. Further, it was also unclear whether Gramscian social unification between the urban and rural poor in colonial Malta had taken place at the time of the incident. Therefore, I have taken an alternative approach in this thesis and have used the term subaltern to signify the voice of those occupying the lowest social position in colonial Malta, namely the absent peasant and working-classes.¹¹⁰ In chapters 4 and 5 I develop this hypothesis and I contemplate which occupational groups may fall within this alternative formulation of subaltern, at which point I revisit the differences between my findings concerning the Maltese population and Gramsci's concept of "subaltern".¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Gramsci's concept of "subaltern" is discussed at pp. 39-40 of this chapter.

¹¹⁰ To distinguish between references to Gramsci's and Spivak's concept of "subaltern" and my use of the term in colonial Malta, I refer to the latter without quotation marks.

¹¹¹ Gramsci's concept of "subaltern" is discussed at pp. 39-40 of this chapter.

Practicalities of Analysis and Writing-up

My analysis took the form of one lengthy document containing the chronological dialogue I had found between Colonial Office and colony-level officials. There was a separate chronological document containing the newspaper analysis. Both documents assisted in ascertaining where the differences in reporting lay and hearing the interplay between the social groups I had found.

I ‘coded’ *all* the individuals I found in analysis documents (including authors etc.). This enabled me to identify key characters in Maltese society at the time. I highlighted the analysis documents with different colours to represent different ‘codes’ and noted the gender, locality of residence and any other personal information concerning the individuals I had identified. I also made tentative comments on ethnicity, status and possible social class. Within the analysis documents I also ‘sub-coded’ the individuals who were mentioned in relation to the disorder.

I decided to write about what each voice said in turn about the disorder and in order to present the events as they unfolded and, thus, as close as possible to the way in which the participants experienced them, I limited my discussion of the incident itself to the official sources created immediately after the incident (namely those created on the 8th May 1891) and the newspaper reports published contemporaneously to the incident. It became apparent that owing to word and time limitations and the wealth of English-language newspaper data I had collected, the decision to limit the analysis in this was practically important as well.

In the next chapter I describe the voices I found within the archives. These are representative of the social structure in Maltese society in 1891. In chapter 5, I present the background to and causes of the disorder, before discussing the 6th May events in chapter 6. I set out my conclusions in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 4:

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE AUDIBLE VOICES

Introduction

A class analysis of the various social groups involved in the 6th May 1891 disorder is attempted in this chapter. In so doing, an account of the class relations and social forces which operated in Malta at the time of the incident is presented. Multiple layers of discourse, representative of the various social groups in colonial Malta which have been previously silenced or insufficiently analysed are discussed. In addition, a number of key characters who are absent from Attard's account of the disorder are introduced.¹

The Official Voices

The official voices, which are found within the colonial government files, form the most powerful discourse and are located at the pinnacle of Maltese society. Within the official voices there are many layers of officialdom, which are represented in the files. At the 'top' is the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Knutsford G.C.M.G..² Edward Wingfield B.C.L., M.G. was an Assistant Under-Secretary for Malta and he features in some of the files, as do four civil-servants who assisted in the administration of Malta (amongst other colonies).³

The Colonial Office files and Colonial Office List contain no biographical information and so it is hard to gain a foot-hold in unpicking sociologically 'who' these characters were even

¹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003).

² Prior to his peerage Lord Knutsford was known as the Right Honourable Sir Henry Thurstan Holland. B. H. Holland (rev H. C. G. Matthew) "Holland, Henry Thurstan, first Viscount Knutsford (1825-1914)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33940>> accessed 30th January 2011.

³ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pp. 10, 11. Malta fell under colonial "Department No. 3".

when employing a deconstructive methodology. The List simply states that Lord Knutsford was appointed to the position of Secretary of State on 14th January 1887.⁴ A year later Edward Wingfield was appointed as one of the three Assistant Under-Secretaries on 19th July 1898.⁵ Two superior Under-Secretaries occupied positions intermediate between the Secretary of State and Wingfield. However, these individuals do not emerge from the archives in relation to the incident.⁶ Edward Wingfield's remit was wide⁷ and he was supported by the salaried civil-servants, who are named as Mr A. W. L. Hemming C.M.G., Mr R. L. Antrobus, Mr A. A. Pearson and Mr H. J. Read in the Colonial Office List.⁸ Wingfield and these officials had varied and broad duties and thus, cannot necessarily be seen as specialists in Malta. The civil-servants have their initials on some of the official documents contained in the files.⁹ However, often the officials are anonymous and this enables them to disappear and to become simply part of the colonial 'machine'.¹⁰

The Colonial Office files and the Colonial Office List do not permit the researcher to see beyond the official role or to catch a glimpse of the person lurking behind the job title. In order to know more, biographical sources must be considered, otherwise little would be known about the official figures, including the Secretary of State himself, Lord Knutsford. One commentator, Holland, indicates that Lord Knutsford came from a family of landed

⁴ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 10.

⁵ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 10.

⁶ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 10.

⁷ Namely "Colonial Laws and Ordinances, and other Legal Business, Land and Prisons, Hospitals, and Lunatic Asylums, Circulars, Business connected with West Indian Colonies, Mauritius, Malta, Gibraltar, Falkland Islands, and Heligoland", TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 11.

⁸ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 11.

⁹ An example of this is contained on Minute Sheet No. 135, dated 31st July 1891, TNA: PRO CO 158/297, file 15832, 31st July 1891.

¹⁰ This is a finding also made by Burton and Carlen, see Frank Burton and Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse: on Discourse Analysis, Government, Publications and State* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 32.

wealth and that his father was an eminent doctor.¹¹ Lord Knutsford appears to have benefited from a privileged upbringing; he qualified as a lawyer prior to taking up posts within the Colonial Office and then became a Member of Parliament. He succeeded his father and became a Baronet, although after becoming Colonial Secretary in 1887, his title was raised to Viscount, which under the rules of peerage allowed him to be addressed as Lord Knutsford.¹²

Whitehall (where the Secretary of State for Colonies Office was located) sits at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of voices and, as expected, the official discourse forms the dominant and most powerful voice.¹³ The Governor of Malta, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Smyth R.A., C.M.G., was the head of government in Malta and represented the Crown's interests in the island and was next within the hierarchy of officialdom.¹⁴ The discourse passing between State and colony is voluminous for Malta, as it was for most British colonies.¹⁵ Many of the despatches and documents held within Whitehall's files mirror the contents of the official government papers held in the colony, although they are filed from a different perspective dependent on whether received by Whitehall or Malta. Colonial Office files are readily accessible and have generally been regarded as historically authoritative records.¹⁶ In

¹¹ B. H. Holland (rev H. C. G. Matthew), "Holland, Henry Thurstan, first Viscount Knutsford (1825-1914)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33940>> accessed 30th January 2011. It is not stated who his mother was and she is absent in the account.

¹² B. H. Holland (rev H. C. G. Matthew), "Holland, Henry Thurstan, first Viscount Knutsford (1825-1914)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33940>> accessed 30th January 2011.

¹³ Frank Burton and Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse: on Discourse Analysis, Government, Publications and State* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979). Burton and Carlen discuss the dominant place of officially created documents. However, before these authors, E. H. Carr had already questioned the role of these documents in creating history, E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961 reprinted 2001) 10.

¹⁴ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 15.

¹⁵ Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire, 1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK* (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008).

¹⁶ Banton comments that "for the majority of researchers 'original correspondence' is likely to be the most important material held among the Colonial Office records." See Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire*,

traditional accounts the prominence and importance of official sources has often been augmented and a history according to these records dominates.¹⁷

Akin to the Secretary of State, the Governor's voice is made audible through official documents. However, both the Secretary of State and the Governor appear as one dimensional figures. The Colonial Office List describes Sir Henry Smyth as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta, which fell within the group of British Mediterranean possessions.¹⁸ He was appointed Governor by the Crown and he assumed government in 1890, based in the capital, Valletta.¹⁹ The Governor was President of the Executive Council and the Council of Government.²⁰

Smyth was paid £5,000 per annum; £1,000 more than the High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of Cyprus and £4,000 more than the Governor of the Falkland Islands.²¹ £3,000 of Smyth's salary was taken from "Colonial Funds", with the remainder from "Imperial Funds", split as £1,500 salary and £500 "table allowance" as he was the "Officer commanding the troops".²² In addition to this he received a yearly award of £100 for

1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008), 50.

¹⁷ This is discussed by Carr, in chapter 3, pp. 33-35.

¹⁸ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 15.

¹⁹ TNA: PRO, The Colonial Office List for 1891 states that Smyth was appointed on 11th January 1890 but indicates no precise date for his assumption of government. TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 15. The Malta Blue Book for 1891 provides a different date of appointment namely 15th January 1890, TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pp. H2-H3. However in one of the notes to the text it adds that Smyth was appointed Governor by Her Majesty's Commission dated 11th January [*illegible*], assuming government on the 1st March [*illegible*], pg. H2. The Blue Book provides details of the palaces and other places in Malta where the Governor was permitted to reside, pg. H3.

²⁰ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 163. Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H2.

²¹ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 15. Comparisons with the salaries of other Governors is difficult as many of their salaries are presented in local currency values. Comparisons between salaries is also difficult as the differences may take into account how 'difficult' the colony was to administer as well as the importance of the colony to the British.

²² TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 15.

“meritorious services”, although the details of these are not provided.²³ As well as being Governor, Smyth retained his military rank and responsibilities; the Blue Book describes him as remaining the “Commander of the Troops” and a “General in H. M. Army”.²⁴ Little further is known about the Governor from the official files and he has no voice in a personal capacity; instead, a secondary biographical source fleshes out ‘the man’.²⁵ One commentator, Vetch, states that Sir Henry Smyth had a long and distinguished British and colonial military career before being appointed as Governor of Malta, a position he accepted at the end of his career.²⁶ The Blue Book of statistics for Malta confirms that Smyth’s appointment as Governor was his first colonial position.²⁷

I have uncovered the official voice of the Governor as being rather hollow. Whilst he is credited with decision-making and his name appears in the official documents, many of the despatches are addressed to and from the Chief Secretary to Government, rather than the Governor. This led to my decision to label him as a somewhat ‘absentee’ Governor, possessing perhaps a *laissez-faire* attitude to responsible decision-making.²⁸ The true timbre of his voice is different from the impression a ‘straight’ reading of the official files suggests, as he was a decision-maker in name only. This does not appear to have affected how well he

²³ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H3.

²⁴ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H3.

²⁵ R. H. Vetch (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn January 2008
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36174>> accessed 30th January 2011.

²⁶ R. H. Vetch (rev James Lunt), “Smyth, Sir Henry Augustus (1825-1906)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn January 2008
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36174>> accessed 30th January 2011. Grocott comments that Gibraltar’s Governors were also required to combine civil, military and naval responsibilities, which led, in the case of Sir Archibald Hunter, to conflicts in duties. He also notes that the individuals were usually coming towards the end of their careers when they were appointed Governor. In both these respects, and in terms of the colony’s strategic function, parallels with Malta can be drawn, see Chris Grocott, “A Good Soldier, but a Maligned Governor: General Sir Archibald Hunter, Governor of Gibraltar 1910-13” (2009) *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3, 421, 422 – 423, 429.

²⁷ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pp. H2-H3.

²⁸ For example, Letter from Superintendent of Police, Captain Clement La Primadaye dated 8th May 1891 is directly addressed to the Chief Secretary, CSG 01/32, 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta.

was regarded, since he was described locally as a “perfect gentleman”.²⁹ The extent of his apparent decision-making could be explained by administrative practices, or innocuous departmental delegation, were there not other significant archival evidence which suggests that the real decision-making at colony-level was done by the Chief Secretary, a salaried civil-servant. Notably, the Chief Secretary earned a quarter of the salary of the Governor, namely £1,000 per annum.³⁰

Undeniably, the Chief Secretary held significant duties, including legitimate decision-making responsibilities. However, the argument which follows in this chapter is that the Chief Secretary’s decision-making went beyond his ‘job description’. Dobie suggests that during a previous government, in 1884, the Governor had formally relinquished some of his powers to the then Chief Secretary.³¹ This she suggests this was a practice not only tolerated by the Secretary of State but was in fact suggested by him.³² This was apparently so to reduce the burden on the Governor, who had both military and civil duties, as well as to facilitate local requirements being met.³³ Furthermore, the then Chief Secretary was given the rank of Lieutenant-Governor in recognition of this.³⁴ I have found no archival evidence to indicate that such a formal relinquishment continued under Strickland’s tenure as Chief Secretary,

²⁹ PO 9th May 1891. This can be contrasted with the contempt shown in the local press for the Chief Secretary, Strickland.

³⁰ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 163. Strickland’s salary was supplemented by eight shillings per day “for 78 drills as Major R. M. M.” – the meaning of this benefit is not clear from the Blue Book, see TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pp. H6-H7.

³¹ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 33.

³² Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 33.

³³ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 33.

³⁴ The Chief Secretary in 1884, the Honourable Sir Walter F. Hely-Hutchinson KCMG, was given the title “Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Secretary”, Colonial Office List 1889, pg. 163. Gerald Strickland became Chief Secretary in 1890. The distinction in the case of Strickland may have been because he was also not a military officer like Hely-Hutchinson, Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 33.

although if it had, this would have explained the wider ‘mandate’ I have found evidence of in this research.

Either way, whether formally endorsed or not, Governor Smyth did arguably delegate significant responsibility to Strickland, although this appeared to have no professional ramifications for the Governor, who only weeks after the incident (something which perhaps should have led to repercussions for him) was promoted to the rank of General.³⁵ Smyth was an experienced officer, although he was focused on military matters where his expertise lay.³⁶

The Chief Secretary to Government, Gerald Strickland is an important character. Although he has a strong presence in the colonial files, his role in the disorder has been overlooked in official accounts. This absence makes the official history of the 6th May selective and incomplete. Strickland is at the top of civil administration within the colony, directly below the Governor. As Chief Secretary to Government he sat on the Executive Council in this capacity and he was also Vice-President of the Council of Government, which he would have chaired in the absence of the Governor.³⁷ Strickland is described in the Blue Book for 1891 as the “Honourable and Most Noble Gerald Strickland, Count della Catena, C.M.G., B.A., LL.B.”.³⁸

³⁵ R. H. Vetch (rev James Lunt), “Smyth, Sir Henry Augustus (1825-1906)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn January 2008
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36174>> accessed 30th January 2011.

³⁶ R. H. Vetch (rev James Lunt), “Smyth, Sir Henry Augustus (1825-1906)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn January 2008
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36174>> accessed 30th January 2011.

³⁷ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg 163. Strickland would have legitimately chaired the Council in the absence of the Governor, although this does not explain the sense of absenteeism which emerges concerning the Governor.

³⁸ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H6.

Subordinate to Strickland are the heads of department. The Blue Book for 1891 describes the Chief Secretary as “the only organ between the Governor and the Head of Departments”.³⁹ This placed Strickland in a powerful and influential position, as he possessed authority over the department heads. Whilst I have not found evidence that this necessarily provided his subordinates with the legal authority to write directly to the Chief Secretary, and thus to bypass the Governor,⁴⁰ there is evidence that, in the case of La Primadaye at least, often correspondence was sent directly to the Chief Secretary rather than the Governor.⁴¹

Administratively, the colony-level official correspondence was filed at the office of the Chief Secretary and is archived under the prefix “CSG” (for Chief Secretary to Government”).⁴² Although this may have simply represented an administrative practicality during colonial rule, it could have reflected the accepted practice of corresponding directly with the Chief Secretary rather than the Governor on matters of importance. Regardless, this administrative tradition emphasises how important the Chief Secretary was considered to be and this is still reflected in archival practices today, since data continues to be organised this way.

The voice of the Superintendent of Police, Captain Clement La Primadaye features regularly in the official records. For this reason I have regarded him as one of the key characters of the day. La Primadaye reported directly to the Governor. He will be discussed more in chapter 6, which deals with the disorder.

³⁹ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H7.

⁴⁰ Two Colonial Office files from 1892 concerning the Annual Report on police, show that correspondence was sent directly to and from the Governor, rather than the Chief Secretary. See TNA: PRO CO 355/13, file 5112 (forwards Annual Report and reforms) and file 7235 (questions on Annual Report).

⁴¹ Evidence of this is contained in CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891- letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to CSG, NAM, Rabat, Malta. It may be that correspondence took this path to Strickland as although Vice-President, he was the acting chair of the Council.

⁴² This was established from archival research at the National Archives of Malta, Rabat, Malta.

The daily practicalities and decision-making were attended to by Strickland, with the assistance of an Executive Council and a partly elected Council of Government.⁴³ Strickland had been elected to the first Council of Government under the 1887 Constitution.⁴⁴ He and the politician Fortunato Mizzi drafted the 1887 Constitution which introduced the notion of representative government for the first time in Maltese history.⁴⁵ However, a year later Strickland moved out of party politics and instead focused on public service, becoming Assistant Secretary to the colonial government in 1888 and then ultimately Chief Secretary in 1890,⁴⁶ the highest civil appointment under the Governor.⁴⁷ This was a role appointed directly by the Crown.⁴⁸

Strickland's father was a Commander in the Royal Navy.⁴⁹ This, plus his privileged education and his call to the Bar, would have undoubtedly facilitated Strickland's entry into British government. Dobie argues that as Chief Secretary, Strickland regarded himself as in the position of Prime Minister.⁵⁰ Others suggest that he operated as *de facto* Governor,⁵¹ "at the

⁴³ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg. 168.

⁴⁴ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 61.

⁴⁵ This was often called the Strickland-Mizzi Constitution, see Joan Carnwath, "Strickland, Gerald Paul Joseph Cajetan Carmel Anthony Martin, Baron Strickland (1861-1940)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn May 2009

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36350>> accessed 30th January 2011. Also, Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984), 60; Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 36, Mizzi is discussed further at pg. 92.

⁴⁶ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891 confirms that he was appointed to the position of Chief Secretary on 1st November 1890, pg. H6. As in the case of the Governor, the Blue Book confirms that this was Strickland's first position in the colonial government, pg. H7.

⁴⁷ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 61.

⁴⁸ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H6. I discuss his mother at pg. 89.

⁴⁹ Joan Carnwath, "Strickland, Gerald Paul Joseph Cajetan Carmel Anthony Martin, Baron Strickland (1861-1940)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). Online edn May 2009 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36350>> accessed 30th January 2011. Strickland's mother is unmentioned and absent from the account.

⁵⁰ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 46.

⁵¹ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) citing Frendo pg. 61. Also, the National Dictionary of Biography describes him as "responsible for the civil administration of the Maltese government" and suggests that he was "lieutenant-governor in all but name", see Joan Carnwath, "Strickland, Gerald Paul Joseph Cajetan Carmel Anthony Martin, Baron Strickland (1861-1940)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004). <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36350>>

helm” of the colony rather than Sir Henry Smyth.⁵² In particular, Frendo pin-points Strickland’s *de facto* status to the five years preceding 1902.⁵³ This adds weight to the suggestion that he possessed elevated authority at the time of the incident. Strickland’s influence also extended throughout the highest ranks of administration – the Clerk to the Council should have had a general administrative duty, however, it was noted in *Public Opinion* that in reality there was only a Clerk to the Chief Secretary, not a Clerk to the Council.⁵⁴

It appears that Strickland did not approach his civil service role with impartiality and some say that he was “more pro-British than was good for him”,⁵⁵ which is likely to have enflamed the political situation and provoked outbursts in the press.⁵⁶ One commentator, Carnwath, suggests that he was personally causing problems within the administration, and his attitude to the political leaders of the time led to his position as Chief Secretary becoming untenable. Consequently, in 1902 he was posted overseas by the colonial government.⁵⁷ Ultimately, this did Strickland’s career no harm, as he returned to Malta in 1917⁵⁸ and re-entered party

accessed 30th January 2011. Online edn May 2009. This supports that at best he possessed only *de facto* and not *de jure* authority in the colony.

⁵² Archpriest Xuereb in PO 5th May 1891.

⁵³ Henry Frendo, “Australian Press Perspectives on Lord Strickland’s Malta” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3 (2009) 441, 442.

⁵⁴ Comments by Sigismondo Savona in PO 5th May 1891. Details of the Clerk to Council have also been independently verified in the Colonial Office List for 1891. The Clerk to the Council was a Mr ‘E de Petri’ in 1891, TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg. 186.

⁵⁵ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 61.

⁵⁶ For example, PO 5th and 9th May 1891.

⁵⁷ Joan Carnwath, “Strickland, Gerald Paul Joseph Cajetan Carmel Anthony Martin, Baron Strickland (1861-1940)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004). Online edn May 2009

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36350>> accessed 30th January 2011. Frendo notes that in his career he was posted to the Leeward Islands, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales, although rejected the Governorship of Fiji twice, Henry Frendo, “Australian Press Perspectives on Lord Strickland’s Malta” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3 (2009) 441, 445, 447. Also see Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967), 59 and Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 72.

⁵⁸ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 72.

politics, later becoming Prime Minister in 1927.⁵⁹ Turning back to the time of the incident, Strickland occupies the space between the more anonymous civil-servants and the high-profile politicians. As will be seen, Strickland took an involved role in colonial politics, and had a substantial role in the state response to the disorder.⁶⁰ This makes his official voice all the more interesting.

The Aristocrats

Although the analysis has not identified a source exclusively produced by or aimed at the upper-class Maltese, the voice of the aristocrats has become audible through analysis of the official documents and the English-language newspapers. It has highlighted the prominent figure of the fifth Marquis de Piro, Francesco Xavero (hereafter called “the Marquis”) who was involved in the disorder.⁶¹ The de Piro family derive their pedigree from an ancient Maltese lineage.⁶² The family history and their social position are highly relevant in understanding the place they occupied in society at the time of the focal events. This will now be explored.

⁵⁹ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984), 61; Jacqueline Azzopardi and Paul Knepper, “Criminology and Criminal Justice” (2009) *The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta*, 9: 73, 79-80. Frendo discusses how he later came to be regarded Australia in Henry Frendo, “Australian Press Perspectives on Lord Strickland’s Malta” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3 (2009) 441.

⁶⁰ This is discussed as part of the background to and causes of the disorder in chapter 5.

⁶¹ The archival sources do not provide first name details for the Marquis, therefore, based on a process of elimination using the date of the incident and the date the marquisate was inherited, Francesco Xaverio (1824 – 1894) was the Marquis involved in the incident. However, the Council of Government Minutes refer to him as “The Honourable Most Noble Colonel Marquis Saverio de Piro, C. M. G.” (i.e. the Marquis’ first name is spelt differently) see TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891. When being sworn back into government on 31st October 1891 (after the General Election) the Marquis signs as ‘Saverio’. This is possibly an Anglicisation of Xaverio, see TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Saturday 31st October 1891. Further, he is differently described as Francesco Saberio by Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 48-50. The spelling Xaverio as used by the current Marquis de Piro is adopted throughout this thesis out of courtesy and for reasons of consistency.

⁶² Note the family tree presented in Nicholas de Piro, *Casa Rocca Piccolo, Valletta* (Heritage Books, Malta 2009) 3. See also Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 46 – 50 (Marquis de Piro genealogy) and pp. 132 – 135 (Baron of Budaq genealogy). Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 2, PEG, Malta 1992) 25-29 (Marquis de Piro genealogy) and pp. 65-69 (Baron of Budaq genealogy).

The family left Rhodes with the Knights and settled in Malta.⁶³ It was because of their loyalty to the Knights that the de Piros became members of the nobility. In 1716 Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castellar conferred the Barony of Budach on Dr Gio Pio de Piro.⁶⁴ A few decades later in 1742 Philip V, the King of Spain, granted him the Marquisate.⁶⁵ However, although ancient, the de Piro family lineage was young by comparison with the titles created following the Norman Conquest of Malta.⁶⁶ Gauci's authoritative two-volume text on the genealogy and heraldry of the noble families of Malta traces the origins of the earliest Maltese nobility back to the liberation of Malta from Arab rule by Count Roger of Normandy in 1090.⁶⁷ It is said that many of Count Roger's supporters followed him and settled in Malta, where they were rewarded by land and noble titles.⁶⁸ Gauci describes the creation of a "territorial nobility"⁶⁹ whose feudal titles were intrinsically linked with the grant of land.⁷⁰ Maltese feudal society divided the population into Barons, Nobles, Knights, Citizens, Burgesses and Rustics for the purposes of taxation.⁷¹ With Norman rule the islands also

⁶³ Nicholas de Piro, *Casa Rocca Piccolo, Valletta* (Heritage Books, Malta 2009) 26.

⁶⁴ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta, 1981, reprinted 2002) 132. According to Gauci, the de Piro family hold the fief of the Barony of Budach to this date, with its accompanying land and privileges, Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 2, PEG, Malta 1992) 69.

⁶⁵ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 2, PEG, Malta 1992) 25.

⁶⁶ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 10.

⁶⁷ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 10.

⁶⁸ Malta was divided into a number of fiefs. Gauci presents a map of the principal fiefs in Malta and Gozo in Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 10, 229.

⁶⁹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 11.

⁷⁰ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 12. This is similar to the feudal society which existed following the Norman conquest of Britain in 1066, pg. 10.

⁷¹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 10.

became part of the Kingdom of Sicily and as such they became controlled by powerful foreign noble families.⁷²

Norman rule ended abruptly in Malta when the Maltese, led by the upper-classes took steps to overthrow Count Norman, although the island remained part of the Sicilian Crown until it was ceded to the Knights in 1530.⁷³ With the arrival of the Knights relations with the feudal nobility became acrimonious as the parties fought for power.⁷⁴ Prior to this the owner of each fief automatically acquired the status of noble and was entitled to sit on the local government without election.⁷⁵ However, the Knights tried to gain control by ‘clipping the wings’ of what they thought was a too numerous and powerful nobility.⁷⁶ This was achieved by compulsory purchase of “‘absent landlord’ fiefs” from owners residing abroad (mainly in Sicily). They also recognised some fiefs and but dismissed others.⁷⁷ However, the Knights also granted titles.⁷⁸ These were supplemented by titles created by foreign sovereigns during the government of the Knights.⁷⁹ Relations did improve between the Knights and the nobility and

⁷² Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 10.

⁷³ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 8-11.

⁷⁴ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 12. The King of Sicily had broken his promise not to dispose again of Malta as a fief, see pg. 9.

⁷⁵ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 11.

⁷⁶ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13.

⁷⁷ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 11.

⁷⁸ As is evidenced by the patronage of the de Piro family, with the grant of the Barony of Budach. The Maltese fief of Budach was located in North East Malta. See Gauci’s presentation of the principal fiefs in Malta and Gozo in Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 229.

⁷⁹ As also in the case of the de Piro family, with the Marquisate conferred by the King of Spain, also Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 235, the reference is contained in a reproduced document described as Acts of the Notary Public, Alex Sceberras-Trigona LL.D., dated 24th May 1975.

power was shared, allowing the nobles to occupy senior positions in government.⁸⁰ The Maltese nobility came into existence over time by three means: feudal titles granted under Norman rule, feudal titles later granted by the Knights and titles created by foreign monarchs.⁸¹ Thus, the nobility was a well established entity by the time the de Piro family joined its ranks.

Prior to the arrival of the British (and before that, the French under Napoleon) the status of the Marquis as a hereditary member of the nobility placed him as part of the ruling elite in quasi-feudal Maltese society.⁸² Under the Knights the Marquis would have had an automatic place in government.⁸³ However, with the arrival of the British the power of the nobility began to wane. Decision-making and control of the island shifted to Whitehall and the colonial administration usurped the position of the Marquis and other nobles.

The Treaty of Paris of 1814, which formalised British possession of Malta, required the British to “respect the ancient rights and privileges of the Maltese people”.⁸⁴ This has been interpreted by Gauci to include full recognition of the rights and status of the Maltese nobility.

⁸⁰ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 12.

⁸¹ This is the view of The Committee of Privileges of the Maltese Nobility concerning the origins and status of the Maltese nobility, as published in 1975, described in the Acts of the Notary Public Alex Sceberras-Trigona LL.D., 24th May 1975, Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) reproduced at pp. 235-236. The Committee functions were analogous to the House of Lords Committee of Privileges. The Committee was created in 1882 (a few years after the Royal Commission of 1877 which had been appointed to investigate into the claims of the nobility). The Committee replaced the long-standing unofficial “Assembly of Nobles”, which for a few years ran in tandem with the Committee, although without legal status (unlike the Committee) it ceased to operate in parallel, Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 227 and Nicholas de Piro, *Casa Rocca Piccolo, Valletta* (Heritage Books, Malta 2009) 235-236.

⁸² I have called Maltese society ‘quasi-feudal’ because under the Knights’ rule Maltese society moved away from an exclusively feudal structure, however, elements remained.

⁸³ “Official Website of The Almanach de Saxe Gotha”, <<http://www.almanachdegotha.org/id194.html>> accessed 4th April 2010.

⁸⁴ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13, quoting the Treaty of Paris.

However, Gauci suggests that British did not respect this and relations *vis-à-vis* the nobility and the colonial administration became “very strained”.⁸⁵ The British struggled to understand the “chaotic” system of patronage which operated in Malta, which used a different system of precedence and allowed the Maltese nobility to use foreign and “extinct” noble titles.⁸⁶ The confusing practice of “cadets” (non-titled descendents) who were allowed to use noble designations (which had the practical effect of extending the Maltese nobility to include not only the title-heads of each house but their non-titled descendents)⁸⁷ further complicated the system, and was in direct contrast with the laws of peerage which operated in Britain.⁸⁸ As Gauci notes, the British struggled with “the problem of having a European colony which possessed an ancient nobility”; one which had an independent source of prestige and influence, albeit with no longer any formal power.⁸⁹

In 1877 a Royal Commission investigated the claims made by the nobility.⁹⁰ Gauci raises concerns over the legality of the Commission and its findings in light of the protection which the Treaty of Paris afforded to the Maltese nobility.⁹¹ The findings of the Commission were controversial.⁹² The legitimacy of some noble titles was accepted, whilst others were rejected

⁸⁵ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13.

⁸⁶ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13, 15-17

⁸⁷ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13, for a detailed discussion on the position and treatment of “cadets” see pp. 222-228.

⁸⁸ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 224.

⁸⁹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 223.

⁹⁰ “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Correspondence, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London 1878) 4-5, sub-numbering 3, 4, 5: 1st and 2nd, 5: 1st – 10th.

⁹¹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13.

⁹² Protests were raised by members of the Maltese nobility, “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Further Correspondence Respecting the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, for HMSO, London 1878) enclosures 1-4.

and ceased to be recognised.⁹³ The status of the “cadet” was also removed by the Commission.⁹⁴ As a consequence of these changes, the status and power of the titled nobility was severely curtailed under the British. Significantly for the Marquis, the de Piro Marquisate was recognised by the Commission.⁹⁵ However, the position in relation to the Barony of Budach is less clear. It appears that the Marquis did not pursue the title before the Commission, although a claim to the title was brought by Monsignor Don Salvatore Grech Delicata, a linear descendant of Gio Pio de Piro.⁹⁶ The Commission made no findings in relation to Delicata’s claim,⁹⁷ and contemporary sources indicate that the de Piro family continued to benefit from the Barony and connected privileges.⁹⁸

⁹³ “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Correspondence, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London 1878) Appendix, 50-52; “Official Website of The Almanach de Saxe Gotha”, <<http://www.almanachdegotha.org/id194.html>> accessed 4th April 2010.

⁹⁴ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 224-225. Ultimately, and following protests by the cadets, the British backed down and allowed the use of titles by cadets to continue, although without formal recognition (pg. 226). Further attempts to limit the cadets’ influence did follow however, as the British tried to limit the usage of titles to the title-holder’s children. This was ignored by the nobility, although the practice did diminish. Interestingly on adoption of the republican constitution in 1964 the Maltese court upheld the right of a cadet to continue using noble designations, see also Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 226-227.

⁹⁵ “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Correspondence, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London 1878) 43-44 and Appendix, pg. 51. See also Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 132, Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 2, PEG, Malta 1992) 25 and the “Official Website of The Almanach de Saxe Gotha”, <<http://www.almanachdegotha.org/id194.html>> accessed 4th April 2010. Further, Gauci notes that prior to the Commission, the Marquis had been petitioned the Court of Spain for permission to use the title of Marquis on account of the title of 5th Marquis being originally passed to his younger brother, who died. This petition was granted and, in any event, the title was subsequently recognised by the Commission. Reference to this petition is made at pp. 43-44 of the Commission’s Report and is also referred to by Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 50.

⁹⁶ “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Correspondence, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London 1878) 8-9, paragraphs 27-28.

⁹⁷ “Claims of the Maltese Nobility: Correspondence, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of the Maltese Nobility” (George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London 1878) 9, paragraph 28 and Appendix pg. 51.

⁹⁸ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 132, Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 2, PEG, Malta 1992) 25 and Nicholas de Piro, *Casa Rocca Piccolo, Valletta* (Heritage Books, Malta 2009) 29-31.

In 1891 the Marquis was heavily involved in politics and was one of the elected members of the Council of Government.⁹⁹ In the years prior to the incident the Marquis de Piro also held the position of Lieutenant Colonel in command of the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery.¹⁰⁰ Despite the “lack of tact” displayed by the British towards the nobility in instigating the Royal Commission, and the British disregard for the titled heads of Maltese families as a “body politic”,¹⁰¹ the nobility did not retreat from public life. Indeed, Gauci states that to the contrary, “many nobles, both men and women, played an active role in the political, social and economic life of the island during British rule”.¹⁰² Therefore the Marquis’ involvement in politics was far from exceptional.

Furthermore, the 1887 Constitution which governed the composition of the Council of Government included provision for four “special representatives”, drawn from the clergy, the nobility and landed proprietors.¹⁰³ This formal recognition was a significant advance for the nobility in the governance of the island.¹⁰⁴ The Marquis’ decision to become involved in the Council of Government allowed him to participate in local politics again, albeit with diminished power compared with feudal governance. On a personal level, by membership of the Council he regained some of the nobility’s lost influence concerning how Malta was run.

⁹⁹ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg. 168.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas de Piro, *Casa Rocca Piccolo, Valletta* (Heritage Books, Malta 2009) 31.

¹⁰¹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 13 and 223.

¹⁰² Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 14.

¹⁰³ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997) 16.

¹⁰⁴ The Marquis and another noble, the Marquis St. George, may have gained their seats in the Council of Government this way, rather than from direct election. The Marquis St. George did not take part in the incident. See TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg. 168. The Marquis St. George was elected in the Council of Government “to represent the holders of titles of nobility”, in lieu of Baron C. Azzopardi deceased. He is also reported to have been appointed as Superintendent for Corradino Prison in TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Annual Reports for 1890 and 1891, No. 48 Malta, printed in 1892, pg. 15 (1890) and pg. 23 (1891). Little more is known about the Marquis St. George, save for his full name which the Annual Report states to be “Marquis G. C. Barbaro of St. George, Captain in the R. M. M.” (Royal Malta Militia).

While the Marquis and the Maltese nobility as a whole were subordinated to the colonial administration, the Governor was not required to consult the Council of Government on every issue. Even on matters reserved to the Maltese representatives, relating to finance and local concern, the Governor retained a reserve power of veto.¹⁰⁵

It was through his membership of the Council of Government that the Marquis became involved in the disorder. It was there he formed his association with Sigismondo Savona, who was also heavily involved in the focal events (and is discussed in the following section of this chapter).¹⁰⁶ Savona and the Marquis were two of the 14 elected members of the Council of Government.¹⁰⁷ The Marquis became closely aligned with the interests of Savona. It will be shown that, amongst other Council members, the Marquis was one of the co-signatories on letters passing between the Governor and Savona in the aftermath of the disorder.¹⁰⁸ The Marquis also wrote directly to the Governor on this issue and, as such, distinguishes him from the other co-signatories.¹⁰⁹ This evidences the Marquis' direct involvement in the incident; he was not a mere spectator. Owing to his unique status as a 'nobleman-politician' the Marquis' involvement in the disorder (which Attard describes as being of interest only to the coal-heavers¹¹⁰) merits consideration.

¹⁰⁵ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997) 15.

¹⁰⁶ Discussed from pp. 86-92 of this chapter.

¹⁰⁷ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891, pg. 168.

¹⁰⁸ Examples of such letters are located at Annex A to GMR 342, 19th May 1891, "Proceedings of the Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor [by letter from the Chief Secretary to Government dated 19th May 1891] to enquire into the behaviour of the police on the 6th and 7th May 1891", letters dated 15th May 1891 from Savona *et al* to the Chief Secretary and another letter dated 20th May 1891 from Savona *et al* to the Governor. These documents are discussed in chapter 6.

¹⁰⁹ GMR 342, 19th May 1891, "Proceedings of the Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor [by letter from the Chief Secretary to Government dated 19th May 1891] to enquire into the behaviour of the police on the 6th and 7th May 1891", letter dated 3rd June 1891.

¹¹⁰ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

Ultimately the position of the Maltese nobility was never fully restored; their time had passed. During British rule the objective was for democratic self-government, with no prospect of power being returned to the nobility. However, it took until 1964 for the republican constitution to give effect to the mortal demise of the nobility.¹¹¹ Gauci comments that the British had missed an opportunity to harness the support of “a harmless and potentially useful institution”.¹¹² This is perhaps surprising given that the Maltese nobility had the support of the British monarchy.¹¹³ Instead, the British used crude legislation and Royal Commission recommendations to assert control over the island.

This is the background to the struggle between the new colonial power and the ‘old’ nobility. Doubtless disenchantment and perhaps also frustration over the loss of status may have motivated the Marquis to become aligned with Savona, and consequently, to become involved in the disorder. This is in contrast with Attard’s suggestion that the incident concerned matters of direct relevance to only a sector of the Maltese working-classes.¹¹⁴ The analysis which follows will demonstrate the crucial place of the silenced upper-class voice in understanding the dynamics of Maltese colonial politics and the background to the disorder.

The structural displacement of the nobility may explain why the upper-class voice is missing from the colonial records and conventional accounts of the incident. In other circumstances,

¹¹¹ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 14-15 and 228. Malta became independent in 1964 but only gained a republican constitution in 1974. In the intervening 10 years the status of the nobility remained unchanged. On being declared a republic all formal recognition of the nobility was removed by law, Gauci quotes Act No. XXIX Part IV Section 19 (23rd June 1975) which enacted this. Strangely, the Committee of Privileges continues to exist and decides succession of titles, but it has no status in law and noble titles can now only be used socially.

¹¹² Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 228.

¹¹³ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 227.

¹¹⁴ As will be demonstrated in Chapter 5, Attard indicates that the conflict concerned only the “coal-heavers”.

and during the days of the Knights, the voice of the Maltese nobility would have been preserved in the official records. The analysis that follows will demonstrate that owing to particular political circumstances immediately prior to the disorder, it was the middle and upper-classes who were leading the struggle on the streets and in the English-language press, not only for themselves but also on behalf of the subaltern Maltese.

Strickland, the Chief Secretary to Government, has been discussed above in the context of the official voices. However, this is not the only place where he ‘fits’ within the class structure. Born in Malta, to a Naval Commander, his mother was a Maltese noble.¹¹⁵ Strickland spent his childhood in Malta before studying at Cambridge.¹¹⁶ He inherited property in Malta in 1879 and, in so doing, owing to his mother’s lineage, became a member of the Maltese nobility, gaining the title of Count della Catena.¹¹⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Strickland’s title was upheld by the Royal Commission.¹¹⁸ Therefore, Strickland is an even more complex character than first appears, since he also speaks with a Maltese upper-class voice as well as in an official capacity. This is an interesting link back to the ‘displaced’ nobility; Strickland, just like the Marquis, used politics to gain power. For the Marquis his peerage was not enough on its own and he needed to enter into politics in order to reinstate himself into a powerful position. However, Strickland’s power base was multi-faceted; he held authority delegated by the ‘absentee’ Governor and despite no longer being an elected politician he remained an outspoken ‘political’ figure in his own right as Chief Secretary: he had political weight. In

¹¹⁵ Henry Frendo, “Australian Press Perspectives on Lord Strickland’s Malta” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37: 3 (2009) 441.

¹¹⁶ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 61.

¹¹⁷ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 61. Strickland also later received a British peerage in 1928 and became Baron Strickland of Sizergh, see Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 14 and 82-91 (genealogy).

¹¹⁸ Charles A. Gauci, *The Genealogy and Heraldry of the Noble Families of Malta* (Vol. 1, PEG, Malta 1981, reprinted 2002) 83.

addition to this, through his inheritance, Strickland gained power and status on another level, namely from historical peerage. Although the position of the nobility had been eroded by the British, this did still afford him status among the Maltese population, as well, perhaps, as among the 6th May protagonists.

Many of the key characters inhabit more than one social location. Both the Marquis and Strickland are examples of individuals who cross the boundary between politician/public servant and noble. As it will be shown below, Sigismondo Savona also believed that he spoke for more than one social class. However, a hierarchy of ‘noble officials’ has also emerged from the analysis. The Secretary of State, Lord Knutsford, was superior to the Chief Secretary within the colonial administration, whereas, their status was reversed within the noble ranks, as Strickland held the superior title Count della Catena. Perhaps as a member of the colonial administration and a member of the Maltese nobility Strickland felt entitlement to speak on colonial matters. Notably however, both Strickland and Knutsford both speak with only an ‘official’ tongue (and not in any other capacity) - my interpretation is that their noble status was immaterial to their discursive power - they do not allow the noble rank to have a voice. These relationships were, however, fluid. For example, the Marquis’ title was most intrinsic to his identity, but although he had the lowest noble rank of the three gentlemen, he appears to have used his noble status to the most effect and in the most audible way.

Middle-Class Voices

Sigismondo Savona was a key political and public figure in Malta at the time of the disorder and he represents the voice of the educated, English speaking middle-class Maltese. He is the most important individual character in this thesis, intrinsic to the unfolding of events. In the

next chapter the background to and causes of the disorder and Savona's role will be considered through a detailed consideration of the emerging middle-class voice. The significance of Savona, the richness of the middle-class archives, and the 'gateway' they provide in identifying the subaltern Maltese will be demonstrated.

Aside from his direct involvement on the day, Savona was also influential in two further respects; his political opinions were an intrinsic part of the background to the incident and his newspaper became highly influential in the reporting and interpretation of it. Turning firstly to his political career, Savona was one of the elected members of the Council of Government (through which he knew the Marquis). Savona was concerned with colonial politics and was critical of the 1887 Constitution and the 'deal' it struck for Malta on representative government. Whilst the Council of Government may at first glance have appeared representative, Malta he argued, was a long way off *responsible* government.¹¹⁹ Commentators describe Savona as an "influential figure".¹²⁰ Not only this but he took an active role in local party politics and is described as "one of the main protagonists of the local political scene".¹²¹

Party politics emerged in 1880 over the thorny 'language question', namely whether English should take the place of Italian in schools and the university. The Nationalist Party was formed over this issue, with the support of the Maltese feudal elite. The Nationalists were a

¹¹⁹ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 36.

¹²⁰ Koster describes him as an "influential political figure", see Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 30.

¹²¹ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) 107.

pro-Italian, anti-reformist party led by Fortunato Mizzi.¹²² Mizzi supported unification with Italy, regarding Malta as closest to Italy culturally and religiously.¹²³ Language became a political issue and owing to the influence of Italy the church became involved. In opposition, the Reform Party, led by Savona emerged – they were pro-English-language and were supported by young businessmen and civil-servants saw closer links with Britain as crucial for Malta’s development.¹²⁴

Sparked by the language question, a division emerged within the middle-classes based on those who supported the retention of Italian and wished to foster closer ties with Italy, and those supporting closer political and linguistic ties with Britain. The Marquis, as part of the old Maltese nobility, sided with Savona (and not the Italians), which is surprising but understandable if, after displacement by the British, he wished to ally himself with the most progressive and influential political figures of the day.

Although pro-English, Savona was not pro-colonial and this is a tension. Savona supported the use of the English as a way of improving Malta’s position as a distinct, self-governing nation and as a way of helping the young Maltese gain access into institutions and democracy.¹²⁵ Koster describes a social shift which created “a bourgeoisie with upward social

¹²² Joseph Bezzina, “Church and State in an Island Colony” in Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed), *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988) 63.

¹²³ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 40; Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta, 2000) 71 and Anthony F. Sapienza, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta (formerly Royal Malta Library) and the University of Malta Library* (Malta University Press, Malta 1977) catalogue entry 611.

¹²⁴ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 57. See also Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 41 and Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality, and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914”, *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, Winter 2009, 385, 391.

¹²⁵ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 41.

mobility” drawn from the professional and middle-classes.¹²⁶ This social group supported widespread use of the English language and the alignment of Malta with Britain, rather than closer ties with Italy.¹²⁷

Savona dedicated seven years to public service as Director of Education (1880-1887).¹²⁸ However, he resigned from his post to return to politics. From his experiences in the Education Department, the ‘language question’ was an issue close to Savona’s heart and he advocated the use of English in preparation for self-government.¹²⁹ On his return to politics Savona was involved in controversial political debate. This followed on from his social welfare agenda prior to joining public service, which led him to raise difficult questions for the government in 1877 over the level of “bread tax”.¹³⁰ His motion for the abolition of what he regarded as an unjust tax was defeated by his middle-class compatriots.¹³¹ However, Savona appears to have been fighting on behalf of the “poorest classes”, who were required to “furnish the greater part of the revenue” under the taxation scheme.¹³² Although Savona was unsuccessful on this, one commentator has argued that had the voting system been different, then the outcome would have been different too.¹³³ As will be discussed in chapter 5, Savona’s association with the interests of the lower-class Maltese was still a feature of his politics at the time of the incident. At which time, Savona’s party was also fighting for the abolition of the elected members’ salaries in the Executive Council, on the basis that this

¹²⁶ ~~Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 57.~~

¹²⁷ Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1984) 57.

¹²⁸ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 38 and Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) 109.

¹²⁹ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 29, this reference relates to the point concerning the importance of English for self government.

¹³⁰ Dobie describes this as the duty on wheat and flour; see Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 24 and 30.

¹³¹ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 30.

¹³² Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 24 and 31.

¹³³ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 39.

undermined the position of the non-salaried, unofficial members.¹³⁴ ‘Savonians’ also campaigned for responsible government and more specifically wanted to restrict the Governor’s veto to only naval or strategic matters.¹³⁵

In 1891 the salaries of the official Executive Council members and the issue of ‘responsible’ government remained unresolved issues and continued to dominate Savona’s political agenda. By the term ‘responsible’ Savona meant government which gave the Maltese representatives autonomous decision-making powers.¹³⁶ In April and May 1891 Savona raised concerns over an alleged “concealed despatch”¹³⁷ (as well as concerns over the status of salaried members of the Executive Council). The details of this despatch are discussed in the next chapter. However, these issues fuelled Savona, amongst others, to resign from the Council of Government. His departure from politics was only transient though. Savona and many of his compatriots regained their seats in Council following the General Election, which was held one month after the disorder, in June 1891. At the election Savona’s Reform Party¹³⁸ gained a landslide win of 12 of the 14 elected Council seats.¹³⁹ Once re-elected Savona maintained pressure to “discredit” the colonial administration, in order to bring about ‘responsible’ government.¹⁴⁰ However, Savona’s influence was short-lived and although he continued to

¹³⁴ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 38-39.

¹³⁵ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 38.

¹³⁶ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 38.

¹³⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

¹³⁸ Dobie states that the Savonians were also called the Unionist Party. Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 43.

¹³⁹ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 43. The consequences for the government were significant – owing to the Reform Party’s majority Savona tried to make it impossible for anyone to accept a seat in the Executive Council without approval of his party, Dobie, pg. 44. In anticipation of these moves the British government issued Letters Patent on August 19, 1891 (“Letters Patent, August 19, 1891, amending Constitution of 1887) – allowed the governor to make appointments to the Executive Council outside of the Council of Government if necessary – i.e. to minimise Savona’s Party’s influence. Note that within the Council of Government nominated official members also had voting rights.

¹⁴⁰ Edith Dobie, *Malta’s Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 44.

campaign for responsible government, by 1897 his policies on this were little supported in the Council.¹⁴¹

Savona's second 'sphere of influence' was through the *Public Opinion* newspaper which he owned and edited.¹⁴² *Public Opinion* was an influential political publication and was also the first authoritative English-language newspaper published by a Maltese person in Malta.¹⁴³ However, the newspaper was also an unofficial vehicle through which Savona could express his political views and the views of his party.¹⁴⁴ I chose this newspaper for analysis for these reasons and it is a valuable source in understanding the events which unfolded. Although *Public Opinion* can be classified as a middle-class publication, it was targeted at a certain sector of the middle-classes – those whose political allegiance lay with Savona. It is possible to gain an insight into the identities of these people from *Public Opinion*. The newspaper published its interpretation of the disorder and its causes; both are sympathetic to Savona.

Savona was a passionate politician and prominent public figure who appears to have genuinely cared about his country and strove to achieve a government for the Maltese, which was truly representative of the people. He used his newspaper to rally support for his views and *Public Opinion* also became a platform through which subaltern issues could be heard. As I will discuss in chapters 5 and 6, Savona believed that he spoke for the Maltese under-classes as a whole, although this is probably exaggerated and at best he may have only captured the mood of some of this group. However, Savona belonged to the middle-classes and not the

¹⁴¹ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 46 - 47.

¹⁴² Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) 107 and 109.

¹⁴³ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) 107 and 109.

¹⁴⁴ Sergio Portelli, *A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals in the National Library of Malta Collection* (A National Library of Malta Publication, Malta 2000) 109.

subalterns whom he chose to speak for. He resided in a wealthy, high-status area (*Strada San Marco*¹⁴⁵) near to Admiralty House, the official residence of the Commander in Chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet.¹⁴⁶ This was at the opposite side of the city to where the poor-quality, lower-class housing, which attracted petty crime and poverty, was located.¹⁴⁷

Whilst not immune from acting out of self-interest and political ambition,¹⁴⁸ Savona fought for the interests of the subaltern Maltese whose voice struggled to be heard in the emerging political scene. For example, the position he took over the bread tax and his desire for responsible and representative government for the Maltese.¹⁴⁹ Owing to Savona's active role in bringing the everyday issues of the working-class Maltese to the attention of the colonial government, he gained a large popular following, as will be evidenced by the crowd that gathered outside the Palace at his request, discussed in chapters 5 and 6. This popularity was in addition to the power he possessed through his newspaper. Accordingly, Savona defies easy social classification: on one level he was one of the political elite and was also educated and a wealthy member of the middle-classes. However, he spoke most loudly for the cause of the subaltern Maltese. Local politics as well as colonial politics are hugely relevant in understanding the causes of the disorder. Savona is also crucial as he connects the displaced nobility with the subaltern Maltese through his newspaper.

¹⁴⁵ Translated: St. Mark's Street. Residence data taken from "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners", MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁴⁶ Edward J. Spiteri, *Malta: From Colonial Dependency to Economic Viability 1800-2000* (Edward J. Spiteri, Sponsored by the Ministry of Economic Services, Malta 2002) 16.

¹⁴⁷ John Scofield and Emily Morrissey, "Changing Places – Archaeology and Heritage in Strait Street (Valletta, Malta)" 15: 2 (2005) *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 481, 483.

¹⁴⁸ Dobie indicates that Savona was provoking the matter and trying to get the members of both Councils to resign in order to provoke an election – which he hoped to, and did in fact win – was it all really about leadership and political power/fame for Savona? Dobie accuses him of putting personal ambition ahead of the public welfare which he always fought for in order to gain leadership. Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 41, 43.

¹⁴⁹ Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) 24, 30, 38.

The Subaltern Maltese

The importance of Gramsci's and Spivak's concepts of "subaltern" and how they assisted me in theorising a definition of subaltern applicable to the colonised Maltese has been discussed in chapter 3.¹⁵⁰ This research is the first of its kind to suggest an application of the concept of "subaltern" to colonial Malta and so conclusions, even of a limited nature, in relation to this are of theoretical value. In chapter 3 I suggested that the subaltern Maltese group comprised of those who occupied the lowest social position at the time of the disorder, namely the peasant and working-classes and I discussed the difficulties in applying either Spivak's or Gramsci's concepts of "subaltern" to colonial Malta. The hypothesis used in this thesis situates the subaltern Maltese as subordinate to the middle and upper-classes both in terms of their position in the social structure and also in terms of their relative silencing in the archives.

I am yet to locate any archival or newspaper sources created by, or aimed at, the subaltern Maltese, or to hear the voice of this group in its own right. It was only through a close reading of the English-language newspaper sources that I found evidence of the subaltern Maltese voice, although their voice was enunciated through others.¹⁵¹ This limits what can be said in this chapter regarding the characteristics of this group. Significantly however, based on the evidence in chapter 5 of this thesis, it *is* possible to suggest that the subaltern Maltese group existed as a distinct social entity. This is an important finding in relation to Malta, and this research is the first study to identify a subaltern underclass and to suggest its composition. However, it is only possible to develop a definition of the subaltern Maltese to a limited degree, since conclusions regarding this group are based on documents created by, or aimed at, superior social groups. Therefore the existence of the subaltern Maltese as a political

¹⁵⁰ Discussed in chapter 3, pp. 39-41.

¹⁵¹ Discussed in chapter 5, pp. 107-112.

constituency is tantalising. In chapter 5 the extent to which it is possible to hear the voice of this group is explored with this limitation in mind. Based on archival evidence discussed in chapter 5, a hypothesis of which occupational groups may fall within the subaltern group is presented in conjunction with an analysis of the background to and causes of the disorder.

In terms of the possible demographic characteristics of the subaltern Maltese, limited education and poor literacy levels were likely features of this population. The spoken language was intrinsically linked with opportunities for social advancement, since Maltese citizens who spoke Italian or English were able to work within the professional sectors (such as education, the legal system or the colonial administration) unlike their compatriots who spoke only Maltese.¹⁵² At the time of the incident English and Italian were only spoken by the educated middle-classes and the nobility (as well as of course the colonisers in the case of English).¹⁵³ Italian is likely to have been spoken and understood to some limited degree by all Maltese owing to their proximity geographically and religiously to Rome.¹⁵⁴ However, Maltese was the language spoken and understood by the subalterns.¹⁵⁵ Maltese has many dialects, which remained un-codified until the arrival of the British, when this was implemented for reasons of control rather than for social benefit.¹⁵⁶ Hitherto, no dictionary or

¹⁵² Henry Frendo, "Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin, Mediterranean or British Empire?" in Victor Mallia-Milanes, *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988) 187. Also, Harry Luke, *An Account and Appreciation*" (Harrap, London 1949) 101.

¹⁵³ Italian was the language of commerce, church, university, law courts, schools and newspapers, Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 6 and 18, see also Harry Luke, *An Account and Appreciation*" (Harrap, London 1949) 101.

¹⁵⁴ Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 6.

¹⁵⁵ Maltese was habitually used and widely spoken, Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 18. Austin comments on the subsequent elevation of Maltese "from the kitchen to the courts" when made an official language, pg. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Henry Frendo, "Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin, Mediterranean or British Empire?" in Victor Mallia-Milanes, *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988) 203, 205 – 206.

formalised written language had existed.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the spoken language was reflective of the social position of an individual. It may have been difficult for the subaltern Maltese to improve their social position with only a basic formal education and limited language competency.

Without education as a route to betterment it was difficult for the subaltern Maltese to escape subordination. By May 1891 the Maltese population as a whole had become dislocated from the ruling aristocracy and this entrenched their subordinate status. The subaltern discourse was unable to compete with the dominant middle-class and colonial discourses and this excluded the subaltern Maltese from positions of authority and decision-making roles within the colony. This meant that their voice had no place within the colonial archives and their existence went unrecorded, save for the census or when they otherwise came to the attention of the government, for example, during the 6th May disorder.

Key characters have emerged from within the ranks of officialdom and from the upper and middle-classes (such as Savona and the Marquis) and these have been discussed in this chapter. However, when searching for prominent individuals from within the subaltern population, so far none have emerged from the official sources or the English-language newspapers. Notably however, two subaltern *sub-groups* feature prominently in the sources. These sub-groups can be seen as “underdogs”¹⁵⁸ in Maltese colonial society.

¹⁵⁷ Henry Frendo, “Maltese Colonial Identity: Latin, Mediterranean or British Empire?” in Victor Mallia-Milanes, *The British Colonial Experience 1800 – 1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Mireva Publications, Malta 1988) 203, 205 – 206.

¹⁵⁸ Howard S. Becker, “Whose side are we on?” (1967) *Social Problems*, 14, 239, as discussed in chapter 3, note 28, pg. 37.

The first sub-group is the “coal-heavers” whom Attard presents as the instigators of the disorder.¹⁵⁹ However, the term “coal-heaver” is misleading; they can be better described as coal scavengers as they enterprisingly reclaimed coal which had fallen to the harbour floor after the military and commercial vessels had refuelled.¹⁶⁰ Despite Attard’s comments on their involvement on the 6th May, based on the evidence contained in this thesis the extent of their participation in the events is unclear. The second sub-group is the individuals who were arrested by the police. However, this sub-grouping relies on a stereotype which assumes that the rebellious classes will be drawn from the lower-class population. Clearly, archival evidence is required to support this suggestion. However, it is unsurprising that based on the official and middle-class archival sources the subalterns still feature only as a collective and not as individuals, since the voices and concerns of the subaltern Maltese have hitherto been either silenced or insufficiently analysed and their audibility based on these archival sources remains hampered.

Thus, in this study it is the upper and middle-class discourses derived from the English-language newspapers which locate the subaltern class and identify their presence as a political constituency, but their voice remains unheard in its own right. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, *Public Opinion*, provides ‘snatches’ of the voice of the crowd gathered on the 6th May which I have interpreted to be that of the subaltern Maltese. However, in the absence of Maltese-language newspapers caution must be shown in interpreting the subaltern voice ‘second-hand’. Nonetheless, Savona’s newspaper is a crucial way of locating, but not yet

¹⁵⁹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹⁶⁰ PO 5th May 1891.

hearing, a voice which has been hitherto absent.¹⁶¹ In this sense, once again Savona demonstrates his central place within the history of the 6th May disorder.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter three important issues have been explored, all of which address the first aim of this thesis. Firstly, a class analysis of Maltese society at the time of the disorder has been attempted. Secondly, the wider social, political and economic forces existent at the time of the disorder have been examined and, finally, a range of voices, representative of the social structure in colonial Malta has been identified and explored to different degrees as far as the archives have permitted.

The voices I have identified have been drawn from the colonial administration (Whitehall and Valletta), the Maltese aristocracy, the educated middle-classes and the subaltern Maltese. Significantly, each voice has been heard with varying degrees of audibility. The official voice has been found to be highly audible, whilst at the opposite end of the social spectrum, the *presence* of the subaltern Maltese has been identified for the first time, but their voice is yet to be heard in its own right.

A number of key individuals have also been located in the archives, many of whom played a central role in the 6th May 1891 events, although their significance has hitherto been unappreciated. Notably, two subaltern *sub-groupings* have been identified, but until the subaltern voice is heard in its own right these groupings remain provisional. Equally, key individuals from the subaltern Maltese group are yet to emerge from the archives.

¹⁶¹ This will be discussed further in chapter 5 which considers the background to the disorder.

CHAPTER 5:

THE BACKGROUND TO AND CAUSES OF THE DISORDER

Introduction: Attard 's Account

Attard's description of the background to and causes of the disorder is brief;¹ he states that "a group of coal-heavers gathered in the Palace Square to protest against some government measures".² No further information is provided about the numbers of "protesters" (which he later calls them) in attendance or the "measures" they were protesting against.³ Attard is specific concerning the composition of the crowd and states that it was comprised of "coal-heavers", although based on what evidence we do not know.⁴ His account implies that the "measures" related to coal-heaving, or affected that occupational group. Attard describes the events as "the first serious political demonstration" in Malta.⁵ Attard's short account does not allow space for the political and constitutional significance of the incident to be explored. Significantly, he does not include Sigismondo Savona in his account, or other subordinate classes. This is a notable omission departure, as Savona features prominently in archival sources discussed in chapter 4.⁶

Attard's account also implies that the 6th May incident was an isolated episode of disorder, instigated by an element of the subaltern Maltese.⁷ However, the archival data suggests that it was neither isolated nor spontaneous and that the gathering of people on the 6th May was

¹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003). His discussion of the background to as well as the disorder itself covers three short paragraphs on pg. 39 of his text.

² Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

³ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁴ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁵ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁶ Discussed in chapter 4, pp. 86-92.

⁷ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

intimately connected with an earlier such gathering on the 3rd May 1891. Both occasions were timed to coincide with scheduled Council meetings, which is a significant component which adds an interesting new angle to Attard's account.

In this chapter, through analysis of the different voices identified in the range of documents in the English and Maltese archives and English-language press, Attard's description of the incident will be revealed as only the beginning of the tale. To understand the causes of the disorder, it becomes necessary first of all to consider the circumstances around the 3rd May gathering as it is reported in the English-language press. Savona's newspaper, *Public Opinion*, is the first of the sources to cover the background to the 6th May events.⁸ The reporting is detailed and spans two days. For these reasons it will be considered first, and with the most focus, before moving on to consider the other English-language newspapers.

The *Public Opinion* Account

The articles on the 3rd May gathering from *Public Opinion* highlight the political and constitutional background to the disorder which took place three days later. After a short editorial introduction, the speeches Savona and his comrades made to the assembled crowd are transcribed. *Public Opinion* claims this is an authentic account of the speeches.⁹ However, this appears not to be the case as the crowd's interaction with the speakers is incorporated into the printed dialogue.¹⁰ This provides valuable insights into the tenor of popular feeling and public emotion. Snatches of the subaltern voice begin to be heard through these responses.

⁸ PO 5th May 1891. The article refers to the gathering as a "meeting". It could be described as a public meeting, although I have referred to it as a 'gathering', so to distinguish it from Council of Government meetings. The speeches are continued in an article appearing in the next edition of *Public Opinion* on May 9th 1891 – although this article also includes reporting on the disorder.

⁹ PO 5th and 9th May 1891.

¹⁰ PO 5th and 9th May 1891.

The 3rd May gathering was called by six former elected members of the Council of Government. These were Archpriest Xuereb,¹¹ Canon Ignazio Panzavecchia, Mr Salvatore Cachia Zammit and Mr Evaristo Castraldi, as well as Savona and the Marquis, whom I have already identified as members of the Maltese elite and two of the key characters in the events.¹² These six, along with the remainder of the unofficial Council members, had resigned from their positions in government. The reasons for their resignations are at the heart of the incident, although, as will be established, these reasons do not emerge in full from the English-language newspapers alone.¹³

According to *Public Opinion*, along with Savona and the Marquis, all six of the members who resigned gave speeches at the 3rd May gathering. The resignations are discussed below.¹⁴ The Marquis' speech is the only one not reported in *Public Opinion*.¹⁵ The speeches reported at greatest length are those given by Savona and Archpriest Xuereb. They contain the most substantive content, and the subsequent speakers endorsed their views and encouraged the crowd to do so as well. In Xuereb, Savona found an ally from the clergy who was also prepared to speak-out. As a former member of the Council and a high-ranking cleric, Xuereb's sentiments are likely to have held extra weight, and the support of the church was

¹¹ Xuereb was one of the 14 "unofficial" members of the Council of Government. A special seat was afforded to the clergy in the Council of Government, although Xuereb gained his seat by election. He was also one of the three unofficial members of the Executive Council. See Minutes of Council of Government generally.

¹² PO 5th May 1891.

¹³ All of the unofficial members, which include the 10 elected members and the four "special representatives" resigned. The correct way to refer to the 14 (some being elected and others not) is as "unofficial" members.

¹⁴ Discussed at pp. 117-120 of this chapter.

¹⁵ The speeches of the following former members are reproduced in the 5th May article: Savona, Panzavecchia, and Xuereb. Cachia Zammit and Castraldi's speeches are recorded in the 9th May article, with the Marquis' speech being referred to but not transcribed. It appears that other individuals also gave speeches on the 3rd; they were a Mr G. E. Bonavia, who is described as the author of "Ginevra di Monreale". His speech is not reproduced. Benoit Xuereb, Enrico Zammit and Dr Mizzi are reported to have addressed the crowd too, but their speeches are not transcribed. These three feature in the 9th May article.

important to the Maltese people.¹⁶ Another former member, Canon Panzavecchia, who is described as “the late special representative”,¹⁷ spoke first on the 3rd May. Panzavecchia calls the events which were unfolding a “political movement”,¹⁸ which he appears to have no qualms about being part of. This is perhaps indicative of the respect for the Maltese clergy which continued under colonial rule.¹⁹ The significance and cross-class character of these gatherings are highlighted by this clerical involvement.

The 5th May edition of *Public Opinion* included a notice placed by Savona informing readers of the proposed 6th May Council meeting.²⁰ This notification is written in Italian, which indicates that the profile of the readership of the newspaper included educated Italian as well as English speakers.²¹ This also suggests that Maltese speakers were not regarded as key participants at this stage. The formal nature of the notice signifies the importance Savona placed upon a large crowd being assembled outside the Palace in the event of the 6th May meeting being convened.

The tenor of the 3rd May meeting according to *Public Opinion* was condemnation of the government. In the speeches, Savona and Xuereb recited a ‘charge-sheet’ of alleged “wrongs”

¹⁶ Gregory recognised that Britain would need to secure the support of the church to successfully administer the island, see Desmond Gregory, *Malta, Britain and European Powers 1793 – 1815* (Associated University Presses Inc, London 1996).

¹⁷ There is a discrepancy between *Public Opinion* and the Colonial Office List for 1891 in relation to who the unofficial members of the Council of Government were. *Public Opinion* states that Canon Ignazio Panzavecchia was the “late special representative of the clergy”. However, he is not named as a member of the Council of Government in the 1891 Colonial Office List. Instead Canon Don P. C. Abela is said to hold this office (it is unclear whether there was provision for more than one “special representative”). However, Abela does not feature at all in any of the document sources covering the background or the incident itself. Abela may have been Panzavecchia’s replacement. Panzavecchia was also elected/re-elected in June 1891 and sworn in as a Council member (with the other 13) on 31st October 1891, see TNA: PRO, CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Saturday 31st October 1891.

¹⁸ PO 5th May 1891.

¹⁹ Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Frank Cass and Co Limited, London 1971) 15.

²⁰ “Importante”, PO 5th May 1891.

²¹ Notably the same notice is published in *La Gazzetta di Malta*, 5th May 1891 also in Italian-language. However, it is not published in *The Malta Times*.

which the government had committed.²² Their allegations were diverse and affected a wide range of lower-class occupational groups. However, on analysis it was found that all allegations fell within two broad categories. Firstly, specific “wrongs” against certain occupations which are set out. The second category of allegations presented is of broader concern and relates to the legitimacy of the administration of government in Malta. These issues are fundamentally linked with the resignation of the members and the gatherings outside the Palace, which on the 6th May escalated into the political protest in question. For these reasons they will be considered first.

The Constitutional Context in May 1891

Public Opinion reported that at an earlier Council meeting held in April 1891, a resolution had been passed “as to the necessity of dissolving the Council”.²³ As a consequence of this, it was reported that all of the elected members resigned at a subsequent meeting held on 29th April 1891.²⁴ However, instead of dissolving the Council, the Chief Secretary read a “concealed despatch”²⁵ which gave the government powers to continue operating with only the *official* Executive Council members present.²⁶ The despatch was dated 20th March 1890.²⁷ The presence of this despatch and in particular the date of the document reveals that some time before the incident correspondence had been entered into with Whitehall regarding the scope for operating the Executive Council without the elected members. Unpicking the ramifications of this despatch is not straightforward, owing to Malta’s constitutional

²² These are all taken from PO 5th May 1891.

²³ PO 5th May 1891. From analysis the date appears to be 26th April 1891. However, there is no record of this resolution, or indeed of either an Executive Council or Council of Government meeting on the date suggested by *Public Opinion* (namely, 26th April 1891), see TNA: PRO CO 161/65 (Executive Council), TNA: PRO CO 161/66 (Council of Government).

²⁴ PO 5th May 1891.

²⁵ PO 5th May 1891.

²⁶ PO 5th May 1891.

²⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

arrangements with two decision-making Councils and some members sitting on both. This, combined with some (undoubtedly unintentional) obscure reporting in *Public Opinion*²⁸ complicated the analysis. The implication from *Public Opinion* is that instead of dissolution, the Chief Secretary was prepared to allow the government to continue legislating, now unhindered by the elected members. An example of this is a proposed scheme for universal taxation, which is discussed below.²⁹

The operation of the Executive Council in this way appears to have been controversial among Savona and his fellow elected members. Savona believed that without the unofficial, elected members the Council was “defunct”.³⁰ He argued that while the Council was still operational, the six official members who remained would be bound to vote in accordance with the orders received “from above”.³¹ For Savona the legitimacy of the Constitution is drawn into question by the operation of what is described as a “concealed” despatch.³² As a consequence of this, *Public Opinion* reports that on the 3rd May, Savona and Xuereb both called for reform of the Constitution, and they put a draft resolution before the crowd which they intended to place before the government at the next election.³³ The crowd were vocal in their support of the resolution which decried the government for not conferring on the representatives of the people sufficient control over the affairs of the island, and condemned the Council members who (it is alleged) had prior knowledge of this despatch.³⁴ Savona argued that the Council

²⁸ Clearly, the issues and key figures were known to the readership of *Public Opinion* and so not described in the article.

²⁹ PO 5th May 1891.

³⁰ PO 5th May 1891. Mr Zammit in PO 9th May 1891 said that no question (no matter how large or small) may be raised or discussed without the elected members present.

³¹ PO 5th May 1891.

³² PO 5th May 1891.

³³ PO 5th May 1891.

³⁴ PO 5th May 1891.

should be dissolved regardless, owing to evidence that some of its members were complicit in the concealment.³⁵

Savona was also enraged at the government's intention to convene a Council of Government meeting in the absence of the elected members (to be held at 3pm on the 6th May 1891), this he saw as compounding the other constitutional abuses.³⁶ He called the proposed meeting "illegal" and "a mere farce" because those in attendance would be bound to vote as ordered.³⁷ Savona urged the crowd to reconvene should the meeting go ahead.³⁸ In this sense, the gathering of people outside the Council of Government meeting was not spontaneous, albeit neither was it a properly organised protest; rather, it was more a 'call to action' by Savona, to which the Maltese people responded in great numbers. Nonetheless, this meeting can be seen within a wider mood of discontent amongst Maltese politicians and public figures, led by the middle and upper-classes and supported by the subaltern Maltese. This brings into question whether the disorder was as isolated as Attard's account implies.³⁹

These issues seem to have provided Savona with an opportunity to escalate his condemnation of the government and a justification for proposing a new way of government. This is not to say that his allegations and criticism of the administration were not justified, but he was politically ambitious and was critical of the current administration and Strickland's role in

³⁵ PO 5th May 1891.

³⁶ PO 5th May 1891. This article refers to the Government Notice stating that the government intended to hold the meeting. This was confirmed in an official Government Notice published the day before this article. Savona described the Chief Secretary and government as being "not tired of defying public opinion" in planning this Council meeting.

³⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

³⁸ Savona attempted to obtain a copy of the proposed 'Order of the Day' however this was refused by the government and no reassurance was given to Savona that the meeting would not go ahead or that matters of importance would not have been debated. Therefore, Savona encouraged his supporters to reconvene three days later, PO 9th May 1891.

particular.⁴⁰ With these factors combined, Savona may have been motivated to act not only in what he perceived to be the public interest but also in a way that helped his career. Dobie indicates that at the time Savona was instrumental in encouraging the resignations of his fellow Council members in order to provoke an election – one which he hoped to (and later did) win.⁴¹

What is apparent from all the English-language newspaper sources is that there was dissatisfaction with the government and its handling of various issues.⁴² These issues coupled with Savona's mandate and the resolution already before Council may have provoked the members to resign, with the intention of forcing a general election. For example, in *Public Opinion* Savona is critical of the Chief Secretary and his *de facto* powers which he says led to an "execrable administration".⁴³ This is something which struck a chord with the crowd: the article reported on the crowd's criticism of Strickland, shouting "down with Strickland, down with the Chief Secretary".⁴⁴ However, putting aside charged opinions on personality, Strickland's handling of the resignations appears to have inflamed the situation and may have provoked Savona and his comrades into further action on the 6th May 1891.

The proposed scheme of taxation reported in *Public Opinion* is a highly relevant part of the background to the disorder, as well as being another example of Savona's commitment to the

⁴⁰ *Public Opinion* portrays a personal battle between Savona and Strickland, with Strickland presented as effectively operating as 'the government', this is exemplified by *Public Opinion*'s portrayal of Strickland's handling of the resignations. The condemnation of Strickland may not have been justified. As will be demonstrated below, Strickland is by contrast not at all prominent in the Council Minutes, which have historically purported to present the notion of a 'balanced' decision-making forum.

⁴¹ A General Election was called one month later in June 1891, which Savona and his party did in win. The Savonians secured 12 out of the 14 available seats, Edith Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1967) pg. 43, cites the *Malta Standard*, 5th June, 26, 1891.

⁴² PO 5th May 1891, PO 9th May 1891, MT 8th May 1891.

⁴³ PO 5th May 1891.

⁴⁴ PO 5th May 1891.

subaltern 'cause'. Savona alleged that Strickland was prepared to force through, in the absence of the elected members, a scheme of universal taxation.⁴⁵ In the absence of the Council representatives the subaltern voice on the proposed taxation had no speaker to enunciate it. Even more condemning than this was Savona's suggestion that the purpose of the proposed tax was to fund an increase in the salaries of government employees.⁴⁶ It was reported in *Public Opinion* that many of the government employees lived a hand-to-mouth existence.⁴⁷ *Public Opinion* argued that the funds required for salary increases could have been allocated from the "General Estimate" and "first Supplementary Estimate", however this was voted against on the basis that if these funds remained unallocated in the budget this would assist in passing the proposed taxes.⁴⁸ Universal taxation would have affected all Maltese, rich and poor alike, although the policy would have had a more detrimental impact on those with the least disposable income. It will be shown that with reference to *The Malta Times*, taxation had been contentious for a number of years. Generating monies this way, in order to fund an increase in colonial administrators' salaries, appears to have been a politically unpopular policy with Savona's supporters.⁴⁹ The state of the Constitution and the integrity of the members were major triggers for Savona in calling the 6th May gathering. However, discontent was expressed by Savona and the crowd over a number of issues, not least the proposed new taxation scheme. These issues are discussed further below.

⁴⁵ PO 5th May 1891.

⁴⁶ PO 5th May 1891.

⁴⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

⁴⁸ PO 5th May 1891. Furthermore, although only £5,000 was required, it is alleged that a proposed scheme "for wringing more than £150,000 out of the blood of the poor!" was to be introduced.

⁴⁹ PO 5th May 1891.

Subaltern Concerns

The second category of “misdeeds”⁵⁰ which the colonial administration was accused of were more specific in nature and included issues which appear to have affected the lower-class, subaltern Maltese the most. Firstly, the government was accused of evicting tenants at a place known locally as *ta Ghain Znuber*,⁵¹ with the consequence of starvation for “those poor men”.⁵² A second allegation in *Public Opinion* was that the government increased the licence fee payable by shopkeepers, only to lower it again “after immense pressure” and refused to return to the shopkeepers the money it had collected.⁵³ A group of people called the *Piticali*⁵⁴ is the third example provided; they are described as five or six vegetable traders.⁵⁵ Whilst small in number, *Public Opinion* stated that their treatment affected all who wished to sell or buy vegetable produce. It is suggested that the government gave notice to the *Piticali* to vacate their existing, long-standing premises in order to “compel[sic]” them to move their businesses into a new vegetable market. The market had proven to be a failure under current ownership, however, the government had aligned its interests with the owner and so the move may have been politically desirable.⁵⁶ Savona argued that the government increased the rent on its properties, which had the effect of raising rent generally, at a financially difficult time, thus placing additional burdens on all Maltese.

⁵⁰ Mr Evaristo Castaldi’s describes the actions of the government in these terms, PO 9th May 1891.

⁵¹ The translation of *Ghain* is ‘spring of water’ or alternatively an ‘eye’. *Znuber* is a name not capable of translation.

⁵² PO 5th May 1891.

⁵³ PO 5th May 1891.

⁵⁴ In a recent article in *The Times of Malta* the *Piticali* is spelt *Pitkali*. The *Piticali* still exists and it is the equivalent of a controlled market for farmers selling their vegetable produce. The operation of this market remains a contentious issue even today. Matthew Xuereb, ‘New Farmers’ Market to Bypass Pitkali’, *The Times of Malta* (Malta 19th July 2009) < <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100719/local/new-farmers-market-to-bypass-pitkali.318503> > accessed 30th May 2011.

⁵⁵ PO 5th May 1891.

⁵⁶ PO 5th May 1891.

The fourth and final example brings the discussion back to the involvement of the coal-heavers. *Public Opinion* reported that many inhabitants of an area known as the ‘Three Cities’, who earned a living by raising coals fallen into the sea, were now suffering hunger owing to the “infamous interpretation” of the law passed a short time ago.⁵⁷ A further 200 families in Cospicua (part of the ‘Three Cities’) were said to have been starving owing to the government’s broken promise to provide permission for them to raise “coals”.⁵⁸ It is highly relevant that coal-heaving was *one* of the issues Savona took issue upon with the government. Attard emphasises coal-heaving in his account but based on the newspaper data discussed in this chapter it was one of many issues affecting the subordinate social group.⁵⁹

Savona’s interest in the subaltern classes predates the 6th May events: a month prior he bemoaned how the police had deprived the “so-called guides who were employed in showing the town to travellers visiting the island” (123 in total) of work.⁶⁰ These can be added as a fifth aggrieved occupational group whom Savona championed. *Public Opinion* reported that the government had decided to reduce the number of guides to 50,⁶¹ and the correct step would have been to take away permission from the guides who were too old or of bad character.⁶² Instead, those with previous convictions – no matter how historic or trivial - were targeted and prevented from working.⁶³ *Public Opinion* reported on the “pitiable condition to which several poor persons have been reduced”.⁶⁴ The police were blamed for implementing this unpopular government policy.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ PO 5th May 1891. This “interpretation” is not elaborated upon however.

⁵⁸ PO 5th May 1891.

⁵⁹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁶⁰ PO 16th April 1891.

⁶¹ PO 16th April 1891.

⁶² PO 16th April 1891.

⁶³ PO 16th April 1891.

⁶⁴ PO 16th April 1891.

⁶⁵ PO 16th April 1891.

By showing concern for the lower-class Maltese and fighting for the issues that affected them, Savona unites the concerns of these occupational groups, which range from the tenant farmers of *ta Ghain Znuber*, the vegetable traders (*Piticali*), the coal-heavers, the guides and the petit bourgeoisie shopkeepers. Following Gramsci and Spivak it is possible to suggest that these occupational groups may have formed part of the crowd gathered on the 3rd and 6th May and that Savona *had* forged an allegiance between the rural and urban poor to unite the concerns of these under-classes.

While this is akin to Gramsci's concept of "subaltern",⁶⁶ the allegiance Savona speaks of is based on his opinion of who the oppressed in Maltese society were and it is unknown whether the social reality and, furthermore, the composition of the crowd on the 3rd and 6th May 1891 matched Savona's expectations. The provenance (place of origin) of those who attended the May 1891 will be key in determining whether it is possible to argue that the rural and urban poor had unified in colonial Malta, and if so, the occupational composition of this group. Thus, it is possible to suggest that at the time of the disorder the subaltern under-classes were not sufficiently unified to apply Gramsci's concept of "subaltern". The involvement of the aristocrats as well as Savona, the middle-class protagonist also complicates the application of Gramsci's concept. The participation of the upper and middle-classes in the colonial administration (despite their allegations and calls for responsible government) makes Spivak's concept of an indigenous population united *against* the colonisers equally misfitting.

Public Opinion provides evidence of Savona's commitment to the interests of the subaltern Maltese. Indeed all of the former members support Savona on the issues he raised on behalf of

⁶⁶ Discussed in chapter 3, pp. 39-41.

the subalterns, and in particular, Xuereb reminded the crowd that “no one better than I could tell you how much he has worked, how much he has sweated, how much he has pleaded to defend your rights and to seek your interests.”⁶⁷ It appears that Savona believed that he provided a political voice for the subaltern Maltese and he also raised their concerns to a high profile in his newspaper’s report on the gathering. Without Savona these issues may have otherwise remained out of the political arena and other concerns, perhaps of importance to the more powerful classes, may have dominated the press and political debate instead. Savona’s power base lay with the subalterns and he needed their support and thus an element of ‘popular politics’ was needed in order to secure a ‘good turn-out’ on the 3rd and 6th May.⁶⁸

Public Opinion reported that 20,000 people from all parts of the island were in attendance on the 3rd May.⁶⁹ This can be contrasted with the official documents that state that the crowd numbered only 6,000.⁷⁰ Whether it is a greater or lesser number, certainly more than “a group” of coal-heavers gathered on the 3rd May as Attard suggests.⁷¹ As discussed already, the government alleged that Savona had employed underhand tactics in order to attract a large crowd, although the nature of these tactics is not made clear.⁷² Savona denied these allegations although he would have realised that in order to attract a crowd everyday issues had to be combined with the more lofty constitutional issues he wanted to raise against Strickland and the colonial administration.

⁶⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

⁶⁸ Parallels can be drawn with Wilmot’s study of the Jamaican ‘John Canoe’ riots and the role “popular politics” played in these, Swithin Wilmot, “The Politics of Protest in Free Jamaica – The Kingston John Canoe Christmas Riots, 1840 and 1841” (1990) *Caribbean Quarterly*, 36: 3/4, 65, 71.

⁶⁹ PO 5th May 1891.

⁷⁰ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - Letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to the Chief Secretary.

⁷¹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁷² Castaldi denied the truth in Strickland’s suggestion that in order to attract a high number of people to attend the gatherings that they were alleging that the government was intending to “repropos[e]” taxes, PO 9th May 1891.

The Anonymous Crowd

The existence of the subaltern Maltese as a social group becomes evident through analysis of *Public Opinion* newspaper. It is possible to take this one step further and to try to identify the voice of the subaltern Maltese, although the audibility of this group as a political constituency is hampered in two respects. Firstly, their voice of this group is only heard through the medium of documents produced by a 'superior' social class, in this case, through *Public Opinion*, a middle-class newspaper. Based upon the likely readership and language of the newspaper (English), it is unlikely that many of the subaltern Maltese would have consulted *Public Opinion*. Consequently, the subaltern voice becomes audible through a source the enunciators had limited access to. This distorts the discourse of this group. Secondly, at best, it is only possible to retrieve 'snatches' of their voice, which takes the form of the interactions and responses of the crowd (15 in total) on 3rd May 1891. These interactions are reported in *Public Opinion* and so their accuracy is unknown.

The crowd responses take various forms, for example, cheering: “(cheers)...(*prolonged cheering*)...(*loud cheers*)”,⁷³ chants: “(down with Strickland, down with the Chief Secretary)⁷⁴, cries: “(for ever, for ever)...(*name, name*)”⁷⁵ and gestures: “twenty thousand arms uplifted in support”.⁷⁶ The tenor of popular feeling that day appears in support of Savona and his comrades, as the crowd was equally vocal in their support for each of the speakers (for example, “(brave Castaldi, long live Castaldi)”⁷⁷ and their castigation of Strickland as evidenced by their shouts of “(down with Strickland, down with the Chief Secretary)”.⁷⁸

⁷³ PO 5th May 1891 for the first two quotes and 9th May 1891 for the last one.

⁷⁴ PO 5th May 1891. This is also repeated in 9th May 1891 newspaper.

⁷⁵ Both from PO 5th May 1891. The crowd demands the identity of those members aware of the hidden despatch.

⁷⁶ PO 5th May 1891.

⁷⁷ PO 9th May 1891.

⁷⁸ PO 5th May 1891.

Based on this evidence, it appears that Savona left the meeting a hero; as it is reported that the crowd lifted him and his comrades to their carriages and then “amidst the greatest enthusiasm”, carried Savona “in triumph” through *Strada Reale* to his home.⁷⁹ Thus Savona appears to have gauged the subaltern mood correctly, although this finding is based on his newspaper’s interpretation of the issues of the day.⁸⁰ There is a significant discrepancy between the official reports of the numbers in attendance and Savona’s own calculation of his supporters contained in *Public Opinion* and so there may be an element of exaggeration in the account of the 3rd May meeting. Nonetheless, *Public Opinion* remains a useful source in reporting the middle-class view of the issues affecting the subaltern Maltese. Furthermore, it is the *only* source I have located which identifies the subaltern Maltese as actually *having* a voice. The existence of a subaltern Maltese group is a significant finding in this research.

The Story Told by Other Newspapers

Despite significant column inches being devoted to the 3rd May meeting in *Public Opinion*, neither of the other two English-language newspapers I have considered place such significance on the gathering. This is unsurprising in the case of the *Malta Chronicle and Imperial Service Gazette* as the meeting did not concern military matters. However, the limited discussion in *The Malta Times* is noteworthy, as this obscures the importance of the 3rd May meeting to later events.⁸¹

The Malta Times coverage of the 3rd May is contained in the same edition as its reports on the disorder (namely in the 8th May 1891 edition). This is interesting as by this date the 3rd May

⁷⁹ PO 9th May 1891.

⁸⁰ As a former elected member Savona would have been intimately acquainted with the relevant issues of the day for his constituents.

⁸¹ In my analysis I have found *The Malta Times* to be a more mainstream, objective source than *Public Opinion*, although it is aimed at the same middle-class, if not pro-Savonian, readership.

meeting was ‘old news’. Earlier *Malta Times* articles do not refer to the 3rd May meeting. One explanation could be that the editor only felt the need to report on the 3rd May meeting in light of subsequent events. The article is short, taking up less than a column and this is in direct contrast with *Public Opinion*’s coverage. The reason for the gathering is not stated, nor put in context with the concerns raised by *Public Opinion*. However, the report states that “some 20,000 persons took part”.⁸² This figure confirms *Public Opinion*’s account of the numbers as potentially accurate.⁸³ The article is titled “The Crisis”. However, there is evidence from this, and later *Malta Times* articles, that the title may have been an ironic reference and the newspaper may not have taken matters quite as seriously as the description suggests at first glance. The evidence for this is the disrespectful dismissal of Savona’s speech: “Mr Savona recounted the woes of the people in an eloquent speech overflowing with the usual sentimentalities, and which was enthusiastically received.”⁸⁴

Further, other speakers are given little space in the article. In summary, *The Malta Times* reported that “the remarks of the speakers were generally hostile to the Government which was freely described as ‘execrable’ and ‘infamous’”, the Constitution described as “a ‘mockery, delusion and a snare’”.⁸⁵ The draft resolution proposed by Savona is reproduced and described as being “received with acclamation, the concourse holding up their hands *enmasse*.”⁸⁶ Otherwise the only details provided are from Panzavecchia’s and Xuereb’s speeches.⁸⁷ The decision to print only the content of the clerics’ speeches is interesting.

⁸² “The Crisis”, MT 8th May 1891.

⁸³ However, *The Malta Times* could have taken this figure from *Public Opinion*’s article as it was published prior to their article. PO 5th May 1891.

⁸⁴ “The Crisis”, MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁵ “The Crisis”, MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁶ “The Crisis”, MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁷ “The Crisis”, MT 8th May 1891. Castaldi and the other individuals which *Public Opinion* also reported having addressed the crowd are also reported in *The Malta Times* but in brief and derogatory terms, “Dr Castaldi, Mr Bonavia, Mr Benoit Xuereb (spelt “Bonoit” in *The Malta Times*), Dr Enrico Zammit and Dr Mizzi followed with

Panzavecchia's commitment to the interests of the Maltese is reported, as is his "duty to promote their interests" and he is also given "credit" by *The Malta Times* for the appeals he made to the crowd to maintain "decency and order, and respect and obedience to the law".⁸⁸ Xuereb on the other hand is reported as having "proposed that a petition be presented to Her Majesty the Queen, praying for the removal of the Hon. the present Chief Secretary, who was accused of figuratively, 'killing his country'".⁸⁹ Whilst plentiful criticism of Strickland is contained in *Public Opinion*, with a call for his resignation, the formal "petition" was not reproduced in the newspaper. This information is a useful addition in understanding the background to the incident.

The Malta Times reported yet further criticisms of Strickland although it is evident that the newspaper's sympathies are with the Chief Secretary, it comments that "The Hon. the Chief Secretary was the subject of gross indignities amongst which he was openly associated with 'a piece of scoundrelism!'"⁹⁰ The support for Strickland is also emphasised by an acknowledgement of his status, referring to him as "honourable",⁹¹ a courtesy which is not extended to Strickland by *Public Opinion*. *The Malta Times* supports Strickland and it republishes a short article alongside its reporting of the 3rd May gathering and the 6th May incident. The article is entitled "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners".⁹² It portrays the Chief Secretary as a victim and Savona as a supporter of the perpetrators. This timely propaganda likely designed to damage Savona provides another example of Savona's commitment to the subaltern cause, this time, their advocate (on this

denunciatory speeches, all of which were pretty much in the same terms." "The Crisis", MT 8th May 1891. In total the same individuals are reported as speaking in both the accounts of *Public Opinion* and *The Malta Times*.

⁸⁸ "The Crisis", MT 8th May 1891. This is also reported in PO 5th May 1891.

⁸⁹ "The Crisis", MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁰ "The Crisis", MT 8th May 1891.

⁹¹ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹² "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners", MT 8th May 1891.

occasion Savona can be regarded as speaking *for* an unidentified group of the subaltern Maltese).⁹³

The article also reveals that the taxation issues raised in 1891 were long-standing concerns.⁹⁴ The newspaper bemoans Savona's recent popularity - as his earlier involvement in taxation policies made him unpopular – and his change in fortunes is highlighted in the article.⁹⁵ *The Malta Times* places the background to the disorder in a wider context than just the preceding months; it appears that concerns over taxation had dominated Maltese politics in the years prior to the events and that Savona's popular appeal was a relatively recent phenomenon.

Clues as to preceding events are also referred to in *The Malta Times*' article on the incident itself. Notably, its focus is once again on the proposed taxation scheme, which is presented as the only concern of the crowd. This can be compared with Attard's account and *Public Opinion*'s report.⁹⁶ This is a good example of the different stories the range of sources tell: the taxation point may well have been the most important issue for *The Malta Times*' readership, however, this is not reflective of the build-up to the disorder with reference to *Public Opinion*. *The Malta Times* commented that it was a bad time to introduce the universal scheme of taxation as relations between the government and "the people" were "none of the best".⁹⁷ It also suggested that how the taxation concerns had been handled by the politicians had led to this and other "measures of incalculable benefit", being overturned.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the other

⁹³ "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners", MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁴ "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners", MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁵ "The Chief Secretary Insulted: Mr Savona Defends the Prisoners" and also "The Crisis" both in MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁶ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁷ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁸ MT 8th May 1891.

“measures” were not elaborated on and I have found no evidence of other significant policies being introduced at the time.

The Malta Times made a great effort to distance its readership from “the people” it refers to in its article. These “people” could be either the Maltese citizens as a whole, or, more specifically, the “uneducated class” which the article describes.⁹⁹ *The Malta Times* is derogatory about the “uneducated class”, and such a definition would have included the subaltern Maltese. *The Malta Times* stated that the “uneducated class” had already been “thrown...into a state of positive alarm” by the “searching operations” of the census.¹⁰⁰ It bemoaned the “gullibility of a certain class” who were led to follow “a popular cause” and were easily encouraged to believe “rumours”, having come to the meeting “conscientiously impressed with the idea of a grievance of some sort”.¹⁰¹ *The Malta Times* concluded this point by adding that a “large share of the population” had adopted “vague and erroneous ideas” and that it was the duty of the politicians to dispel these notions.¹⁰² These statements about the weaknesses of the subaltern Maltese frame their later discussion on who was to blame for the disorder.

⁹⁹ MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁰⁰ MT 8th May 1891. Prior to 1891 the census was authorised by an Official Notice published in the Malta Government Gazette. This changed in 1891 with a specific Ordinance (Ordinance No. II of 1891) enacted which empowered the Governor to make regulations to take the census within a specified period and crucially introduced a penalty clause for non-response. Refusal or inability (on the basis of illiteracy) to complete the census return could result in penalties. Enumeration does not appear to have been a problem however, and a simple warning appears to have been enough to ensure compliance, see National Statistics Office (NSO), Malta, “Census in Malta, Census Taking in Malta”, <<http://www.nso.gov.mt/site/page.aspx?pageid=577>> accessed 26th February 2011. The 1891 census reveals that a co-operative practice operated amongst citizens to ensure that the returns for illiterate Maltese were completed, Census of Maltese Islands for 1891 (Government Printing Office, Malta 1892).

¹⁰¹ MT 8th May 1891. An example of this “gullibility” is provided by *The Malta Times* it described “some lads” who were waving a French flag and shouting “*la Republique!*” PO 9th May 1891 also reported that some members of the crowd appeared to have caused “anti-English disturbances” when passing by the Union Club. *Public Opinion* condemns this behaviour as inappropriate, as the meeting was not a protest against the British. Note that this does not feature in the official documents and so this must have only been a very minor disturbance. Chapter 6 also discusses the conduct of the police and the crowd.

¹⁰² MT 8th May 1891.

The Official Account

The Minutes of the Executive Council and the Council of Government

The Minutes of the Council of Government and the Executive Council, which I at first discarded, in fact proved invaluable.¹⁰³ The Minutes explain the background to and the consequences of the resignation of the elected Members of the Executive Council. Whilst this would have been widely known in Malta at the time, it is not included in the Colonial Office and colony-level departmental files or in the English-language newspapers discussed.

Archpriest Xuereb's resignation from the Executive Council was the starting point in a chain of Council resignations which ultimately culminated in the disorder.¹⁰⁴ Xuereb was an unofficial member of the Council of Government and he was also one of the ten elected members.¹⁰⁵ Xuereb was also eligible (by virtue of his membership of the Council of Government) to be one of the three elected members of the Executive Council. The other two elected members were Mr A. Lanzon and Mr L. Pace Balzan.¹⁰⁶ The reasons for Xuereb's resignation are not known, as this occurred prior to the start date for data collection. However, his resignation may have been controversial since there is reference in the Executive Council Minutes to a declaration Xuereb published in the press with his reasons for resigning;¹⁰⁷ these reasons appear to have differed from the reasons he provided to the Council.¹⁰⁸ This was of

¹⁰³ See my discussion of the Minutes in chapter 3, pg. 47. The Minutes are brief and contain details of meetings dates/times and who attended. However, they were helpful in establishing the order of events.

¹⁰⁴ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd Feb 1891.

¹⁰⁵ See TNA, PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891 plus Council of Government and Executive Council Minutes for the period February – May 1891 for evidence of this.

¹⁰⁶ TNA: PRO, Colonial Office List 1891.

¹⁰⁷ Date unknown.

¹⁰⁸ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd Feb 1891.

such significance that the Minutes refer to the involvement of the Archbishop.¹⁰⁹ Notably, Xuereb's Council seat was unaffected.¹¹⁰

At the next meeting of the Executive Council the two remaining elected members (plus a Mr Azzopardi¹¹¹) presented letters to the Governor in which they advised on dissolving the Council of Government.¹¹² No additional reasons are provided for this and reports of this differ from *Public Opinion's* account of the reasons for dissolution of the Council. In *Public Opinion*, Savona is credited as suggesting the dissolution, although it is in fact his colleagues in the Council (rather than the official members of the Executive Council, as *The Malta Times* states) who first suggested this. Consequently, the extent of Savona's involvement in the build-up to the incident may have been over-stated in *Public Opinion*. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy in the date this is said to have occurred; *Public Opinion* reported that the resolution was passed on Sunday 26th April 1891¹¹³ although the Minutes reveal that neither Council met on this day.¹¹⁴ These discrepancies reveal the dangers in relying on a single account, whether that is from an official source or from the press.

Despite the dissolution being raised at Executive Council level, no action was taken and a Council of Government meeting was held the next day.¹¹⁵ However, the Council sat with only four of its 14 unofficial members present. This reveals that the resignations from the Council

¹⁰⁹ His reply, but not its contents, is documented in the Executive Council Minutes, TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Monday 4th May 1891.

¹¹⁰ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd Feb 1891.

¹¹¹ Azzopardi's presence at the Executive Council meeting is unexplained. He is a named member of the Council of Government and he could well have been Xuereb's replacement.

¹¹² TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Tuesday 28th April 1891.

¹¹³ PO 5th May 1891.

¹¹⁴ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes and TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, April 1891.

¹¹⁵ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891.

of Government did not all occur at once, as implied by *Public Opinion*.¹¹⁶ The last unofficial Council of Government members were Savona, the Marquis, Mr Naudi and Mr Grech.¹¹⁷ Xuereb, although present, was not officially recognised in the attendance list, perhaps because of his dubious status following resignation from the Executive Council.¹¹⁸ The Minutes of this meeting confirm that Savona questioned whether, in the absence of the three elected members of the Executive Council who had resigned, a meeting of the Council of Government could be held.¹¹⁹ The Minutes are clear that the Governor, and not the Chief Secretary, as *Public Opinion* states, ruled that the meeting could go ahead.¹²⁰ Notably, *Public Opinion* polemically describes this as a decision taken by the Chief Secretary.¹²¹ As a direct consequence of the Governor's ruling, Savona, the Marquis, Naudi, Grech and Xuereb all resigned from their seats in the Council of Government on the 29th April 1891, leaving no unofficial or elected members in either Council.¹²²

The Minutes of the Executive Council meeting held the day before the 3rd May gathering add further context to the resignation of Savona and his comrades which took place on the 29th April 1891.¹²³ The Minutes document a telegram sent to Lord Knutsford, the Secretary of State, and his reply "on the subject of the action as regards the business of the Council of Government in consequence of the resignation of all the elected members".¹²⁴ The response from the Secretary of State may have been inadequate or unclear, as the Minutes record that a

¹¹⁶ PO 5th May 1891.

¹¹⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891.

¹¹⁸ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891.

¹¹⁹ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891.

¹²⁰ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891.

¹²¹ PO 5th May 1891.

¹²² TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 29th April 1891. The absence of the elected members is confirmed by the Executive Council Minutes, Thursday 30th April 1891, TNA: PRO CO 161/65.

¹²³ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Saturday 2nd May 1891.

¹²⁴ The telegram itself and the Lord Knutsford's reply are dated 1st May 1891. Neither documents are included in the Minutes. TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Saturday 2nd May 1891.

second telegram was sent to Lord Knutsford.¹²⁵ This telegram asks for “authority to delay the prorogation¹²⁶ of the Council [of Government] until some legislation already introduced be disposed of”.¹²⁷ This supports the allegations in *Public Opinion* that the government wanted to pass legislation in the absence of the peoples’ representatives.¹²⁸

Lord Knutsford’s reply to the telegram was read out at the 4th May Executive Council meeting, the day after the 3rd May gathering,¹²⁹ although once again the details of Lord Knutsford’s reply are not contained in the Minutes. However, the outcome is clear; the Council of Government was permitted to sit with only the official members, as is evidenced by a Council meeting convened on Wednesday 6th May 1891 (the day of the disorder).¹³⁰ It will be shown that Savona’s fears were proven to be well-founded, as legislative matters were indeed dealt with on the 6th May 1891.¹³¹ This meeting will be discussed further in the next chapter which deals with the focal events.

The only reference to the 3rd May gathering in the Minutes of the Executive Council relates to “information...communicated to the Council respecting the proceedings of the meeting held in *Piazza Regina* on the 3rd May”.¹³² Notably, this bare statement and absence of supplementary detail indicate that, like the Maltese administration, the Executive Council of Malta may also

¹²⁵ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Saturday 2nd May 1891.

¹²⁶ Definition of prorogue: “discontinue the meetings of (a parliament etc.) without dissolving it”, *Oxford Concise English Dictionary* (9th edn, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995).

¹²⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Saturday 2nd May 1891.

¹²⁸ PO 5th and 9th May 1891.

¹²⁹ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 4th May 1891.

¹³⁰ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

¹³¹ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

¹³² TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 4th May 1891.

have attached little importance to the 3rd May gathering and the issues discussed.¹³³ It seems to have become of interest to the government only in retrospect.

Four months prior to the disorder there is a direct reference to the coal-heavers in the Executive Council Minutes, which demonstrates the protracted build-up to the events.¹³⁴ The Minutes state that a report from the Comptroller of Charitable Institutions was read out, “regarding the number of people who used to formerly earn a livelihood by fishing for coals and are now unable to obtain other means of subsistence.”¹³⁵ The Council recommended that 25 of the “most deserving...persons...be employed in raising coals from the Great Harbour on behalf of the Government.”¹³⁶ The acting Superintendent of Ports was authorised to pay them wages at the rate of one-sixth per day each.¹³⁷ While this confirms *Public Opinion’s* suggestion that the coal-heavers had been denied employment and that they were a disgruntled section of the population, the government’s employment of some of these workers in an official capacity is omitted from *Public Opinion’s* account.¹³⁸

In sum then, the telegram discussed above from the Secretary of State provided the Governor with authority to rule that the Council of Government meetings could proceed in the absence of the peoples’ representatives – thus representative government in accordance with the Constitution was abandoned.¹³⁹ Savona and comrades resigned from their seats in the Council of Government because of this ruling. *Public Opinion* referred to a despatch which gave the

¹³³ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 4th May 1891.

¹³⁴ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd February 1891.

¹³⁵ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd February 1891.

¹³⁶ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd February 1891.

¹³⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd February 1891. It is unknown what this fraction of pay equated to, or how fair this remuneration was.

¹³⁸ With reference to PO 5th and 9th May 1891.

¹³⁹ PO 5th May 1891.

government powers to operate with only the official Executive Council members present.¹⁴⁰ It is reported that this despatch was dated 20th March 1890, but was concealed for 14 months, until the 29th April 1891.¹⁴¹ This is missing from the Colonial Office and colony-level files discussed below.¹⁴² It appears that on the 29th May 1891 the despatch from the Secretary of State was relied upon by the Governor to “destroy...the constitution”.¹⁴³ This document provoked the resignations of the elected members in the Council of Government, which then spurred comments in the Minutes in early May 1891 concerning what should be done about the business of the Council of Government and also whether the Council of Government should be prorogued then, or after certain legislation had been passed.

There appears to have been concern on the part of the government regarding the press allegations concerning possible imminent legislation, so much so that the Executive Council advised publishing a Government Notice “contradicting the false reports...in circulation” that the government intended to impose a “new scheme of taxation” in the absence of the unofficial members.¹⁴⁴ The Notice stated that the draft Ordinance was to be withdrawn.¹⁴⁵ This emphatic denial, in the form of the Government Notice, is published in *The Malta Times* on the 8th May 1891.¹⁴⁶ As will be demonstrated, this Notice was not published in time to reassure the crowd, or Savona, to avert the 6th May 1891 events. Further, it will be

¹⁴⁰ PO 5th May 1891.

¹⁴¹ PO 5th May 1891. At the end of the article the draft resolution states that the 20th March 1890 despatch was concealed until the 29th April 1891.

¹⁴² Discussed at pp. 124-129 of this chapter.

¹⁴³ PO 5th May 1891.

¹⁴⁴ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd May 1891.

¹⁴⁵ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Monday 2nd May 1891.

¹⁴⁶ MT 8th May 1891, Government Notice dated May 8th 1891. This Notice is not published by Savona - the next edition of *Public Opinion* was on 9th May 1891 and the Notice is not reproduced in this edition.

demonstrated in the next chapter that whilst the Government Notice was truthful with regard to this particular legislation, other legislative business *was* transacted on the 6th May.¹⁴⁷

This constitutional crisis can be seen against wider difficulties which Cremona discusses.¹⁴⁸ He describes the difficulties the Executive Council faced because it was not responsible to the Legislature and also because of a lack of separation of powers, with three of its members also sitting on the Legislative Council.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the resignation of Savona and his comrades can be viewed against a general “feeling [which] developed that [these members’] freedom of action in the legislature might be impaired by the decisions of policy previously taken in the Executive Council”.¹⁵⁰ Cremona also states that there were frequent resignations in the Executive Council and refusals to accept seats in the Council of Government.¹⁵¹ Therefore, the disorder can be viewed in the context of a difficult political climate.

¹⁴⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891 and also my discussion of this in chapter 6, pg. 138.

¹⁴⁸ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997).

¹⁴⁹ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997) 18.

¹⁵⁰ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997) 18 - 19.

¹⁵¹ J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History Since 1813* (2nd edn, PED, San Gwann, Malta 1997) 19. Further relevant pages from Cremona are bracketed in this note. In view of these difficulties, in the months following the incident the Letters Patent of the 19th August 1891 was passed. This amended the Constitution in such manner that it was no longer required that at least three of the elected members of the Council of Government should be members of the Executive Council (pg. 19). A further Letters Patent dated 16th December 1891 also amended the provisions of the Constitution with regard to the membership of the clergy (pp. 19-20). Cremona describes this as a period of “organised conflict” and “calculated obstructionism” on the part of the elected members, who staunchly fought for responsible government and who called for self-government (pg. 20). Ultimately the 1887 Constitution was short-lived, owing to the conflict between the legislature and the elected members, the elected members had power without responsibility. Cremona states that at this time the Constitution could have turned one of two ways – either with even more reserve powers to the Crown or more towards self government (pg. 21). The 1903 Constitution provided for a new Council of Government with a different composition and the Executive Council’s representative element was initially withdrawn but later reintroduced in a reduced number (pp. 21-22). However, the Maltese had to wait until 1921 for a self-governing Constitution.

Official Correspondence on the 3rd May Gathering

Turning now to the official correspondence, it is surprising that no designated Colonial Office or colony-level file on the 3rd May meeting exists, particularly in light of the contents of the Council Minutes.¹⁵² This finding indicates once again that the 3rd May was of little interest to the colonisers and the issues discussed were not deemed particularly significant. This is notable since it was usual practice in the colonies for officials to deal robustly with any potential threats to colonial order.¹⁵³ If violence or unrest were anticipated, an official file would have been created detailing the matter and describing the measures taken to prevent, or contain, unrest.¹⁵⁴ However, it appears that the 3rd May was only discussed retrospectively in the context of the 6th May disorder.¹⁵⁵ This reference can be found in a letter from the Head of Police, Superintendent Clement La Primadaye, to the Chief Secretary, Strickland. Only a small part of the letter relates to the 3rd May gathering, which is described as “largely attended” and “without disturbance”.¹⁵⁶ However, a “synopsis” of the speeches given on 3rd May prepared by Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri accompanies the letter.¹⁵⁷ This is a fairly lengthy summary of events it has some interesting points of difference between the official and the middle-class versions of events.

¹⁵² Chief Secretary to Government (CSG) files located in the NAM, Rabat, Malta.

¹⁵³ Original correspondence dated 1897 is referred to in Correspondence Register TNA: PRO CO 694/07. This register entry directs the researcher to original correspondence file TNA: PRO GOV 1883/97.

¹⁵⁴ This is what happened regarding the 6th May – police preparations were put in place and they were documented and presented to the Executive Council. Bonavia may have been a *protégé* of Savona, who rose to relative political ‘fame’ a later that year, TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, 6th May 1891.

¹⁵⁵ In file CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta.

¹⁵⁶ The crowd marched down *Strada Reale* dragging the speakers, but they dispersed “without disturbance”. CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

¹⁵⁷ The police are not formally present at the gathering as no official police file exists and there are no reports of their attendance in *Public Opinion*. Therefore their presence may have been covert, or ‘off the record’.

Firstly, along with the six key speakers, other ‘supporting’ individuals are mentioned in the official synopsis.¹⁵⁸ None of these individuals make a significant new contribution to the dialogue. This synopsis, coupled with the Council Minutes, complete the gaps contained in *Public Opinion*’s account, for example, Benoit Xuereb, Mr Giuseppe Bonavia,¹⁵⁹ Enrico Zammit, and Dr Mizzi are all noted as speaking in *Public Opinion* but the contents of their speeches are not recorded. The details of Benoit Xuereb’s speech are omitted in both sources, although the three other speeches are elaborated on in the official source, but adding little to the published account.¹⁶⁰ The synopsis also mentions six new ‘supporting’ individuals, namely a Mr Robert Delisario, Mr Robert Balbi, Mr Giuseppe Arrigo, Mr Alberto Busistil and a Mr Vincenzo Savona.¹⁶¹ None of these appear to have made a speech as they are absent from *Public Opinion*’s transcription. It may be that they were close supporters or aides of the speakers.¹⁶²

The emphasis given to the speakers in the official archive differs from that contained in *Public Opinion*. The Marquis’ speech is completely absent, although he is named in the

¹⁵⁸ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

¹⁵⁹ Giuseppe Bonavia was sworn in as a Council of Government member on 31st October 1891 after the General Election. Bonavia was not a Council member at the time of the incident, although this may have been his aspiration, TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Saturday 31st October 1891.

¹⁶⁰ Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri described Mr Bonavia’s speech as “unimportant”, save for proposing an amendment to the Constitution. The particulars of the amendment are not noted. Clearly the ‘importance’ or otherwise of Bonavia’s speech was recorded according to Magri’s priorities and this may not have reflected public feeling. The content of Enrico Zammit and Dr Mizzi’s addresses added little to understanding the background to the incident. CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁶¹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91. It is unknown whether Vincenzo Savona was linked with Sigismondo Savona.

¹⁶² They, unlike Bonavia, did not accede to the Council of Government after the General Election.

official synopsis.¹⁶³ Far less weight is placed on the role of Sigismondo Savona than in his own newspaper and the significance of his speech is minimised in the official synopsis. It is described as a “repetition” of a previous speech made on the 26th April 1891 (save for “adding a few words about the raising of the rent on Government property and the wine and spirits licences, the *Pitcali*, [and] the salary paid to the unofficial members of the Executive Council”).¹⁶⁴ The synopsis omits some of the issues Savona raised and skims over the detail of the points it acknowledges.¹⁶⁵ While it is understandable that Savona would have wished to promote himself as a key speaker in his own newspaper, this is in contrast with the detail provided on Archpriest Xuereb in the official synopsis, in that the expansive coverage documents issues *not* reported in *Public Opinion*.

The issues Xuereb raised are described in the official synopsis as firstly, the amendment of the law relating to jurors (which Xuereb said would be to the detriment of the Maltese people),¹⁶⁶ and secondly, the treatment of the “minor government employees”.¹⁶⁷ It is this latter issue which particularly interested me, as the “minor government employees” are a new social group identified in this thesis and they may form part of the subaltern Maltese group.

The synopsis states that £12,000 had already been found to re-organise the police and to

¹⁶³ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁶⁴ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁶⁵ The synopsis adds to what is already known. Firstly by providing an additional piece of information concerning the licence fee referred to by Savona relates to wines and spirits licensing and secondly confirming that the land at *ta Ghain Znuber* was agricultural land. Notably some additional detail is also provided about this land however this is illegible; it could read that the land was taken off them to give to the “pet of the government, Mr Ciantas”. The new location of the vegetable market is described as “St. [illegible] ditch”. In *Public Opinion* a “Mr Ciantar” is referred to but no further information is provided. Both sources may be referring to the same individual, explained by a typographical error in the original document.

¹⁶⁶ It is not known what these amendments were.

¹⁶⁷ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

increase the salary of Superintendent, La Primadaye, “an Englishman” by £100, over the £400 enjoyed by the Maltese Superintendent.¹⁶⁸ There had also been a £100 increase in salary of Mr de Petri, the Clerk to the Council.¹⁶⁹ However, when a proposal to increase the salaries of “minor government employees” was raised, the government replied that funds had been exhausted.¹⁷⁰

The generation of revenue can be linked with the contentious taxation policy - it appears that the tax which had been so hotly contested by Savona was designed to generate salary funds (amongst perhaps other purposes). *Public Opinion* reported separately that some government workers were “starving on fourteen even ten pence a day”.¹⁷¹ The increase in La Primadaye’s salary, the disparity with the Maltese Superintendent’s salary and the aggrieved government subordinates who did not get a pay rise, form part of the background to the disorder.¹⁷²

As far as policing goes, there is no formal Colonial Office, colony-level or Maltese police department file for the 3rd May gathering, although Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri attended the meeting and prepared a synopsis of the speeches. In doing so he focused on the

¹⁶⁸ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁶⁹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁷⁰ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁷¹ PO 5th May 1891.

¹⁷² All of these issues are raised in the official synopsis of the speeches. The final new issue included in the synopsis is also of a financial nature, although is not of direct relevance to the incident. It relates to funds paid for a mission to Rome by Sir Lintorn Simmon see CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91. There is an oblique reference to this in the transcription featuring in PO on 5th May 1891. There is also reference to Simmon’s mission to Rome in the Annual Report for 1890, Malta Annual Reports for 1890 & 1891, No. 48, Malta, printed in 1892, pg. 15.

issues which were of most interest to the colonisers, namely the economic conditions, which could have (but on this occasion did not) provoke the disorder which occurred on the 6th May 1891.

As we have seen, and in contrast with the official sources, *Public Opinion* identifies the tenant farmers, the vegetable traders (*Piticali*), the shopkeepers, the “guides” and the coal-heavers as the social groups who were interested in the issues raised by Savona and his compatriots. It is unclear whether the views of these occupational groups were representative of the Maltese population as a whole, or indeed even representative of the subaltern Maltese.

The official evidence on the background to and causes of the disorder does not assist further in establishing the occupational composition of the 3rd May crowd, although it does provide data on the number and gender of the attendees. Whilst the crowd’s responses litter *Public Opinion*’s reports, no evidence on the composition of the crowd on the 3rd May (and by implication, who may have also attended the incident on the 6th May) is provided. Furthermore, it is unknown whether any of the potentially interested occupational groups Savona talks of were present in the crowd and this merits further investigation. Importantly, it is the official documents which shed light on the class and gender of the 3rd May crowd; La Primadaye’s letter to Strickland describes “a few hundred...men and boys of the lowest class” in attendance.¹⁷³ This description echoes *The Malta Times*’ sentiments of an “uneducated class” which have been discussed earlier in this chapter.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to the Chief Secretary.

¹⁷⁴ Discussed earlier in this chapter at pg. 116 and in chapter 6, pg. 149.

Importantly, through listening to the *official* voices the “minor government employees”¹⁷⁵ emerge as an interested social group who may have attended the 3rd and the 6th May gatherings. It is *only* through deconstructing the official discourse that the voice of these workers is identified but is also yet to be heard in its own right. Whether these workers form part of the subaltern Maltese group or represent a group intermediate between the middle-classes and the subalterns is unclear. However, this finding emphasises the continued value of colonial sources, which although most frequently used by historians and sometimes regarded as an overtly dominant discourse, they should not be dismissed as they are capable of offering new interpretations through “archaeological” analysis.¹⁷⁶

Concluding Comments

The 6th May disorder cannot be seen in isolation. Instead, it must be viewed in a wider context of the social and economic relations and the political allegiances of the time. The English-language press reports on the 3rd May gathering and the incident itself provide evidence that the reasons people congregated outside the Palace that day were not limited to a protest over the treatment of the coal-heavers: an alliance of people from different social classes and occupational groups shared a common discontent about a range of economic and constitutional issues. This alliance had been forged by Savona who united the grievances of the Maltese under-classes in protest against the colonial administration. The applicability of Gramsci’s and Spivak’s concept of “subaltern” in theorising the Maltese subaltern group has been explored further and both concepts have been shown to be inadequate to describe Maltese society at the time of the disorder. I have discussed in this chapter how Savona aligns

¹⁷⁵ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence file 5203, 8th May 1891, NAM, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary, enclosure addressed to the Superintendent of Police from Senior Assistant Superintendent Magri, dated 6.5.91.

¹⁷⁶ As discussed in chapter 3, pg. 35, see also Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, London and New York 1972, 2003 edn).

the interests of these workers into one interest group. Whether the 6th May disorder constitutes the beginning of a Gramsci unification of rural and urban under-classes in Malta is an exciting prospect which may be uncovered through future research.

The issues of concern to Savona were political and constitutional in nature as well as more ‘human’ concerns, which affected both the “minor government employees” and the subaltern Maltese. It has been suggested in this chapter that the latter group comprises the tenant farmers, the vegetable traders, the shop-keeping petit bourgeoisie, the tourist guides and the coal-heavers, however, further research is required to firmly establish this. The concerns of these occupations were economic well-being, social standing and their ability to be ‘heard’ in society. The background issues exposed in this chapter do not form part of Attard’s short account and thus, the background to the incident has been exposed as more complicated than first thought.

It has emerged that no single voice tells a complete story of the background to and causes of the events. In relation to the official sources, which have been traditionally dominant in historical studies, the causes of the disorder are totally missing; no mention is made of the grievances the subaltern Maltese had nor the extent of constitutional unrest. Analysis of the English-language newspaper sources suggests that the colonial government was abusing, or at least extending, its power, as evidenced by 1) the “wrongs” Savona highlights in his speech, 2) the problems with the Constitution, highlighted by the “concealed despatch”,¹⁷⁷ 3) the ostensibly *ultra vires* decision-making capacity of the Council in firstly holding the meetings

¹⁷⁷ PO 5th May 1891.

in the absence of the elected representatives and then transacting business, and 4) the ‘absentee’ governor and all-powerful Chief Secretary, Strickland.

The subaltern Maltese are completely silenced in the official records although they emerge in the middle-class newspapers in the form of tantalising ‘snatches’ of emotion. Unexpectedly, from analysis of the official documents, the “minor government employees” also appear to have reason for involvement in the disorder, although this occupational group merits further investigation.

When looking at the part Savona played in the build-up to the incident it becomes evident that local and colonial politics are hugely relevant to understanding Savona’s role and his links with the Marquis. Whilst the Maltese demonstrated that they were passionate about the issues (by virtue of their presence on the streets), the middle-class politicians (Savona and comrades) were leading the struggle, alongside the displaced Maltese nobility. Savona appears to have been pivotal in unifying the concerns of the rural and urban working classes. The 3rd May gathering places the 6th May disorder in a clear context of discontent. The 3rd May was a prelude to a greater protest against allegations of constitutional and social abuses on the part of the government. The focal events of the 6th May 1891 are considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6:

THE 6TH MAY DISORDER AND THE POLICE RESPONSE

Introduction

From analysis of the social relations which existed in Malta at the time of the incident and an examination of the background to and causes of the disorder, the importance of considering the wider social and political circumstances has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter. In this chapter, through analysis of the official archives and the contemporaneously written English-language newspaper reports,¹ I investigate the events of the 6th May in a similar way, together with the police response. By way of conclusion, some themes emerging from the policing practices adopted on the 6th May 1891 will be discussed.

Attard's Account

Attard's account of the incident and the police response is of similar length to his description of the background to the incident, discussed in chapter 5.² Attard describes "a group of coal-heavers [who had] gathered in Palace Square to protest over some government measures".³ Attard describes the protestors as coal-heavers, but he does not include a reference in support of this or indicate the number of coal-heavers in attendance.⁴ Similarly, the nature of the protest – peaceful or otherwise – is equally unknown and the particulars of the "government measures" he refers to are not elaborated upon. Whilst these points of descriptive detail are not included in his account, and Attard does not emphasise the full political and constitutional significance of the 6th May events, he makes a significant point when describing the incident

¹ The method for selecting contemporaneous newspapers is discussed in chapter 3, pp. 54-60.

² Discussed in chapter 5, pp. 98-99.

³ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁴ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

as a “serious political demonstration”, the first of its kind to involve the police.⁵ This makes Attard’s account important because he recognises the significance of this moment in the history of policing in Malta.

Attard mentions an individual whom I have also identified as important in the 6th May events, namely the Chief Secretary, Gerald Strickland.⁶ Attard writes that “when he [Strickland] saw the protesters from the palace balcony, he immediately informed the governor.”⁷ The involvement of the Governor implies that the incident was beyond Strickland’s remit as Chief Secretary. The Governor has otherwise been notably absent in the archives.⁸

While limited to one sentence,⁹ Attard’s description of the police response is interesting and important on two levels. Firstly, he makes the crucial point that the police were armed;¹⁰ he states that “the police were given truncheons”.¹¹ Secondly, he states that the police took aggressive measures and followed orders to “charge the crowd that had gathered in front of the palace.”¹² The arming of the police in British colonies for the purposes of social control has been well documented and discussed in chapter 2.¹³ However, the Maltese police did not routinely carry firearms, although truncheons (sometimes referred to as “batons”) were provided on this occasion. In the colonial context this represented ‘low-level’ arming. Attard

⁵ He later calls it a “protest”, Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁶ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39. The discussion on Strickland is located at chapter 4, pp. 70-73.

⁷ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁸ The ‘absentee’ Governor has been discussed at chapter 4, pp. 71-73.

⁹ Unfortunately, it is also unclear on what basis he makes this statement, as his description of the incident does not contain any archival references in support of his comments, Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹⁰ The term ‘arming of the police’ is often used in contemporary policing debates to refer to the issue of firearms to the police and in the case of the colonies to explain the trend in adopting para-military techniques.

¹¹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹² Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹³ Discussed in chapter 2, pp. 15-16.

does not say whether the use of truncheons was common practice. The reason why truncheons rather than firearms were used is not known, however, the law-abiding nature of the Maltese population, reflected by the low crime rate, discussed by Knepper in chapter 2,¹⁴ and the ever-present military garrison in reserve,¹⁵ may have negated the need for routinely carrying truncheons or firearms. Furthermore, the good relationship which existed between the police and the people, referred to in the English-language press, discussed below,¹⁶ may also explain why the disorder was handled differently compared with day to day policing. In addition to this, if the ‘rank and file’ police were drawn predominantly from the Maltese population, weapons of any nature may have not been necessary to maintain law and order and an element of operational consent to policing may have existed.

Attard’s description of the incident does not consider the relevance of the Council meeting which took place that day. A finding in chapter 5 was that Savona asked his supporters to reconvene on the 6th May, should the government proceed with its intention to hold a session of the Council of Government that day.¹⁷ In this chapter, I move beyond Attard’s description to explore the circumstances by which Savona’s supporters were prepared to gather in protest outside the Palace and the extent to which these circumstances formed a catalyst for the disorder which followed.

The Official Account

The colonial government realised that holding a Council of Government meeting on the 6th May, in the absence of the elected members, would be unpopular, even if they did not regard

¹⁴ Discussed in chapter 2, pp. 25-27.

¹⁵ Discussed in chapter 2, pp. 26-27.

¹⁶ PO 9th May 1891 reports on the hitherto good relations, described as the “best feeling[s]”, between the police and the people.

¹⁷ Discussed in chapter 5, pg. 104.

their decision-making as illegal. The evidence for this is contained in the Minutes of a meeting of the Executive Council which sat on the morning of the 6th May 1891.¹⁸ At the meeting, the Superintendent of Police, Clement La Primadaye, was called upon to inform the Council of the measures taken for “preventing disturbances” at the Council of Government meeting scheduled for that afternoon.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the Minutes do not elaborate on the nature of the steps taken.²⁰ Nonetheless, the potential for disorder was clearly anticipated, and precautions were put in place to avoid the colonial administration being disrupted. This is in stark contrast with how the 3rd May gathering was treated.

The Minutes of the Council of Government reveal that a meeting was indeed convened on the afternoon of the 6th May, at which only the six official members and the Governor were present (Savona and his supporters had resigned on 29th April).²¹ At this meeting, as Savona had feared, three Ordinances were passed by the members in the absence of the elected representatives. However, the contentious taxation issue was not dealt with. Instead more routine matters were debated (the business was, in the main, proposed and seconded by the Chief Secretary and the Crown Advocate respectively).²² The Council of Government was then immediately adjourned until the 23rd June.²³ As discussed in chapter 5, Savona’s concern over the Council sitting without the elected members was justified, as there was a clear

¹⁸ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

¹⁹ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

²⁰ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

²¹ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

²² TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891. The business transacted covered an Ordinance of Appropriation which was given its third reading and then passed. A Supplementary Ordinance of Appropriation was also given its third reading and then passed. Also, an Ordinance to amend Ordinance No II of 1884 was given a second reading and the Crown Advocate made a motion to amend the standing rules to allow this Ordinance to be ‘discussed in committee’ during this meeting, and then immediately read a third time and passed. This Ordinance related to the delivery of post by masters of vessels, including provisions for the postmaster to pay gratuities to the master for every letter etc., carried at a certain rate.

²³ Prior to this sitting the Council was prorogued by a Proclamation dated 19th June until the 15th July and then further prorogued until the 31st October 1891 (by Proclamation dated 6th July). This is why the Council did not meet next until October and the new elected members sworn in then, despite the General Election taking place in June, TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Wednesday 6th May 1891.

intention to pass new laws in the window between the resignation of the unofficial members and the prorogation of the Council.²⁴

There is no indication in the Minutes that the meeting involved a disturbance of any nature, or even that a crowd had gathered outside the Palace in protest.²⁵ Therefore the Minutes cannot assist in establishing the composition of the crowd whether it included the subaltern Maltese group. In a similar way, the police response is also missing from the Minutes of the Council of Government and Executive Council. This is unexpected as it is the very place one would expect a protest of this nature to be documented. The official records erase any reference to the crowd which had gathered or to the disorder which subsequently occurred. It may be argued that the official records encourage assumptions to be made which either ‘hush-up’ the disorder or portray the government in a favourable light by implication.²⁶ There were no Council of Government meetings in the immediate aftermath of the disorder and the Council was next convened on the 31st October 1891.²⁷ Hence, the ‘place’ within the Minutes for the disorder to be documented at a later meeting does not exist. Similarly, whilst there was an Executive Council meeting on the 8th May, there was again no reference at all to the 6th May events in the Minutes, which is surprising.²⁸ Therefore, whilst the official Minutes reveal that the Council meeting took place, the disorder escapes mention. It is unclear whether this was a

²⁴ See chapter 5, pg. 120. The authorisation to delay the prorogation of the Council until legislation already introduced had been disposed has been. The government wished to conclude these outstanding matters before the prorogation and subsequent General Election, which although practical, was regarded as illegal and in contravention of the constitution by Savonians.

²⁵ This is true in relation to the Council of Government meeting on the afternoon of the 6th May and also for subsequent Executive Council and Council of Government meetings held on Friday 8th May 1891 (the next Executive Council meeting) and Saturday 31st October 1891 (the next Council of Government meeting – delayed owing to the prorogation and then the General Election).

²⁶ Burton and Carlen make this finding in relation to officially produced government documents which tackle crises in legitimacy, see chapter 3, pp. 38-39.

²⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes, Saturday 31st October 1891.

²⁸ TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes, Friday 8th May 1891.

deliberate or benign omission, but nonetheless it is in contrast with the official correspondence files which report on the incident.²⁹

The response contained in the colony-level correspondence files is almost immediate; a file was created on the 8th May which covered the “demonstration” of the 6th May.³⁰ The disorder must have been of some concern to the Governor or his Chief Secretary as a confidential despatch was sent to the Secretary of State on this issue.³¹ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate this despatch in either the colony-level or Colonial Office files.³² Indeed, neither has a Colonial Office correspondence file been located for the incident.³³ This gap is unexplained and unexpected. Tantalisingly a Colonial Office Correspondence Registry entry exists for the disturbance but the file itself has been destroyed.³⁴

The Registry entry serves to identify and catalogue incoming and outgoing correspondence on the disorder (which was filed separately and accessed using a cross-referencing system).³⁵ The entry contains a précis of the correspondence. The précis must be viewed with caution, particularly in the absence of the original file, as it is an interpretation of the documents, written by an unconnected and anonymous Colonial Office official. This complicates the story this source tells by adding a further layer of interpretation. The method used in this thesis

²⁹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta. This is one file within the series of Chief Secretary to Government files, which contain official correspondence at colony-level.

³⁰ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta. Minute sheet dated 8th May 1891. This file also covers the gathering outside the meeting of the Council of Government on 3rd May analysed in chapter 5, pp. 124-129.

³¹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - Minute sheet dated 8th May 1891.

³² Unfortunately, this confidential despatch is not contained in the files I analysed.

³³ Chronologically the next file which refers to the disorder is dated July 1891.

³⁴ This file may have contained the “concealed” despatch.

³⁵ Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire, 1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK* (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008) 82, 87, 92.

omits analysis of Registry entries in every case but this. My decision to treat this précis as a source was because the file had been destroyed. However, this cannot be seen as evidence that the colonial government regarded the papers as unimportant. The historian, Banton, describes the destruction of supposedly “valueless” documents under statute, which operated according to the “fashions in historiography” of the time.³⁶ The documents that survive have been filtered by previous generations of official archivists and historians and what they regarded as historically significant, or reflective of the account they wished to preserve, have survived. The extent to which the précis is an accurate representation of the correspondence is unknown. However, equally no meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the decision to destroy the file. Save for the précis, Whitehall’s version of events is absent from the archives.

The précis states: the “Council meeting yesterday transacted business, adjourned till 23 June. Disorderly crowd collected – controlled by police. Some few arrests.”³⁷ Although only brief and written in short-hand it is possible to suggest that the immediate official view was of positive police crowd management and it implies that the police operations were successful. The précis is also evidence of the police exhibiting some degree of order control function at the time, although how sophisticated or routine this was is not stated. The choice of the word “controlled” also presents the police response favourably and indicates that some element of order was reinstated on the streets by the police that day.³⁸ The ‘success’ of the police, and by comparison the lawlessness of the crowd, is evidenced by the arrests made.³⁹ Arrest figures

³⁶ Mandy Banton, *Administering the Empire, 1801 – 1968: Guide to the Records of the Colonial Office in The National Archives of the UK* (University of London School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, London 2008) 99.

³⁷ TNA: PRO CO 355/11, Registry Entry 9425, 8th May 1891.

³⁸ TNA: PRO CO 355/11, Registry Entry 9425, 8th May 1891.

³⁹ TNA: PRO CO 355/11, Registry Entry 9425, 8th May 1891; CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

have been a time-honoured, quantifiable measure of police effectiveness.⁴⁰ This information is not contained in Attard's account.⁴¹

The Police Chief's Account

The colony-level record of the 6th May events is more complete than the Colonial Office records. The Police Chief's account of the disorder is contained in a letter from the Superintendent of Police, Clement La Primadaye, to the Chief Secretary.⁴² The letter provides a contemporaneous report on the immediate police response and is a document uninformed by subsequent official scrutiny.⁴³ La Primadaye describes a "demonstration" which took place in St. George's Square on the occasion of a meeting of the Council of Government.⁴⁴ He says that "acting on His Excellency's (i.e. the Governor's) orders the police made the necessary arrangements for protecting the Council from intrusion and for maintaining order", which were "successfully accomplished".⁴⁵ The nature of these measures and the success or otherwise of the policing strategy used that day is unknown, as this file contains no further evidence of the steps employed by the police. However, the Council meeting was unaffected and so La Primadaye's preparations "for protecting the Council from intrusion and for maintaining order" were a success in this respect.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ A recent example of measuring policing 'success' in this way are the crime figures presented in a leaflet circulated to Birmingham households in March 2011 entitled, "Policing in the West Midlands" (West Midlands Police Authority, undated). TNA: PRO CO 355/11, Registry Entry 9425, 8th May 1891.

⁴¹ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

⁴² CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁴³ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary..

⁴⁴ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁴⁵ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁴⁶ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

La Primadaye is unequivocal in his apportionment of blame for the disorder, stating that the meeting “would...have been unattended by any serious disturbance had not an ex-member of Council Mr S. Savona attempted to enter the Palace unfurnished with the usual ticket of admission”.⁴⁷ Savona had, by this date, resigned from his seat in the Council of Government and accordingly would not have been allowed under normal circumstances to attend the meeting.⁴⁸ Then follows La Primadaye’s account of the incident; he states that the Inspector at the Palace Gate refused Savona admittance and Savona is alleged to have said that it would not be possible to keep the crowd out of the Palace.⁴⁹ As a consequence of Savona’s refusal the crowd is alleged to have made a “rush” at the Palace. La Primadaye reports that the crowd was “repulsed” by the police although no further details are provided concerning how this was achieved. Savona is portrayed in a detrimental light, and it is suggested that immediately after the crowd rush, he “immediately disappeared”, not to be seen for the rest of the afternoon.⁵⁰ Savona’s role is identified by the official voices as pivotal in the escalation of the disorder, yet his presence on the day is little-noted.⁵¹

In contrast, Evaristo Castaldi features prominently in this official account and his involvement is portrayed in a positive light, notably as a peace-maker. La Primadaye describes Castaldi in glowing terms, commenting that he “exerted himself throughout to induce the people to

⁴⁷ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁴⁸ Other sources discussed later in this chapter question why Savona did not obtain an admission ticket. Also, one of Savona’s colleagues, a former member of the Council of Government, Evaristo Castaldi, gained entry to the Council meeting by admission ticket.

⁴⁹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵⁰ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵¹ As this chapter will demonstrate *The Malta Times* portrays Savona as the instigator of the disorder.

disperse”.⁵² Furthermore, Castaldi is said to have acted as “spokesman” for crowd; he petitioned for an interview with the Governor, a request which was granted but was “without result”,⁵³ the meaning of this is not elaborated on in the Police Chief’s account.⁵⁴ In his capacity as “spokesman” Castaldi informed the governor that the crowd would disperse if the arrestees were “liberat[ed]”.⁵⁵ La Primadaye states that the Governor refused this request but conceded that he would consider their release upon the dispersal of the crowd.⁵⁶ On receipt of this news, the crowd is reported to have made a second “rush”, targeting some small trees situated in front of the Garrison Library. The trees were “destroyed” and their supports thrown at the police, albeit “quite harmlessly”.⁵⁷ The mechanics of the police response to this were not elaborated upon in detail and this is a gap in this contemporaneously created document. These are the only two reported occasions of disorder, both of which were triggered by the involvement of the resigned members. Although Savona’s actions were designed to inflame the situation and Castaldi’s were attempts to forge a resolution, *both* led to disorder. In the previous chapter it was argued that Savona seemed to believe that he spoke for the crowd at the 3rd May gathering, now it is his comrade, Castaldi, who takes over this role. Castaldi was perhaps a more active spokesman for the crowd than Savona.

⁵² CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵³ See the differing interpretation as contained in MT 8th May 1891 discussed at pg. 146 of this chapter.

⁵⁴ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵⁵ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵⁶ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵⁷ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

La Primadaye states that “occasional collisions took place between the Police and the aggressive elements in the crowd; and several arrests were made.”⁵⁸ The language used by him (for example, the term “collisions”) is neutral (and perhaps deliberately so), and it is hard to gain an insight into the degree of disorder or the balance between the crowd’s actions and the police response. It is interesting that La Primadaye distinguishes between isolated troublemakers (the “aggressive elements”) and the remainder of the crowd, which otherwise have been of little concern to the police. Further, although he reports on only “occasional” disorder, he notes that “several arrests were made”, which supports a pro-active police response – something he was no doubt keen to portray.⁵⁹ However, with reference to the English-language newspaper sources I will argue that La Primadaye does not accord sufficient weight or importance on the disturbance. Rather, his account of the police response is an understatement of what happened on the day.

La Primadaye’s account states that the Council meeting was concluded by approximately 3.30pm. Despite this the Square is reported to have “remained occupied by an excited crowd for some hours” and only as night approached did the crowd gradually disperse.⁶⁰ Ultimately, La Primadaye was not required to keep his promise to consider releasing the arrestees, as the crowd had long overstayed its welcome in the Square after the meeting had concluded. La Primadaye provides evidence that the disorder was accompanied by “several arrests”.⁶¹ He

⁵⁸ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁵⁹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶⁰ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶¹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

comments that “as night came on” the crowd dispersed.⁶² At this time, he says, “strong patrols of police paraded the streets”.⁶³ This description emphasises order maintenance and the use of an augmented police presence to achieve control – the police visibility on the streets echoes a military parade. La Primadaye seems pleased to attribute the “quiet [that] prevailed everywhere”⁶⁴ to the actions of his force. However, this will be shown to be at variance with the reports contained in the English-language press.

The Police Chief describes the crowd in attendance at the demonstration as deviant and he identifies the arrestees (if not the crowd) as exclusively male.⁶⁵ Further data regarding the composition of the crowd is not provided and so the hypothesis presented in the preceding chapter regarding the occupational composition of the crowd cannot be tested against the official data on the incident. The arrestees appear to have been released the same evening or the next morning, with the exception of two individuals.⁶⁶ It is important to note from his account that the arrestees were immediately released once the disorder had ceased and they do not appear to have faced any penal repercussions from their alleged involvement in the disorder. However, the same is not true for the two protesters who damaged the trees; La Primadaye emphasises that “they will be duly [pursued – *original text illegible*] for the destruction of Government property.”⁶⁷ From this account the fate of the arrestees and their punishment does not appear to have been important to the colonial police. Instead, punishing

⁶² CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶³ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶⁴ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶⁵ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶⁶ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

⁶⁷ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

criminal damage was the focus. Significantly, the use of truncheons was omitted from La Primadaye's account to the colonial administration.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, and in chapter 2, Knepper has highlighted the law-abiding nature of Maltese citizens and the absence of significant crime or disorder in Malta hitherto.⁶⁸ This may explain why not all offences were punished. Perhaps the police were not used to tackling public order and equally there does not appear to have been a desire to punish offenders as an example of 'law in action'. Interestingly, criminal damage to government property had more serious repercussions, although it is unclear whether they ultimately faced any sanctions, their initial treatment was markedly different. Whilst the Maltese police may not yet have associated disorder with a threat to colonial rule, where the link between crime and colonial authority, or expenditure, was more direct, the promise of sanctions was made.

La Primadaye also uses the letter to the Chief Secretary as an opportunity to openly praise his force, stating that "the officers and men under my command showed good qualities of firmness and of forbearance and have given ample proof that they can be relied upon to maintain public order, except in the event of an entirely unexpected and numerous rising."⁶⁹ Perhaps La Primadaye is excusing his men from failing to maintain order *because* it was a "numerous rising". The order maintenance function, which was so vital to a viable colonial administration, is once again highlighted by the Police Chief.

Overall the description of the disorder by La Primadaye is relatively brief and lacking in detail given the significance of the events. Further, the nature of, or reasons for, the protest are not

⁶⁸ Discussed in chapter 2, pp. 23-25.

⁶⁹ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

elaborated on. Neither is the volume of citizens involved indicated, nor the police response discussed in any detail. As noted, La Primadaye discusses the disorder outside the Garrison Library, although highlights only the “rush” made by the crowd. He also says that the crowd were “repulsed” by the police, although the details of the police response are not described. The partial nature of the Chief of Police’s account to the Chief Secretary is indicative of selectivity in the flow of information from colony to Whitehall. Perhaps his objective was to minimise the significance of the incident or to convey effective policing. Similarly, the police response to Castaldi’s involvement with the crowd is not reported. In considering the English-language newspaper sources next, I will demonstrate the incomplete and selective nature of the Police Chief’s account to the Secretary of State.

The English-Language Press

Owing to its publication schedule, *The Malta Times* was ahead of *Public Opinion* in publishing its account of the disorder.⁷⁰ *The Malta Times*’ focus was on the business of the Council meeting, rather than the incident outside the Palace and in this way it maintains a limited veneer of impartiality towards those involved. *The Malta Times* describes the meeting as comprising “deserted benches” and “melancholy silence”, which was only broken by “the clamouring of a multitude [outside]”.⁷¹ Savona is mentioned only once in the article and it is said that he was “refused admittance” to the Council chamber.⁷² His attempts to gain entry and the reasons for his refusal are not discussed,⁷³ although neither is he blamed (as he is by the Police Chief) for escalating the incident. Reading *The Malta Times* article in isolation

⁷⁰ MT 8th May 1891.

⁷¹ MT 8th May 1891.

⁷² MT 8th May 1891.

⁷³ MT 8th May 1891.

would provide no indication of Savona's role in the build-up to the incident, nor the effect of his attempts to enter the Council meeting: he is treated as insignificant.

The Malta Times reports that, unhindered by the admittance difficulties Savona faced, Castaldi was in attendance at the Council meeting.⁷⁴ Castaldi is said to have been "loudly cheered" on entering the Council chamber and to have reappeared after the meeting "to an outburst of applause".⁷⁵ Reports are that he was "hoisted upon the...shoulders of his most enthusiastic admirers" and addressed the crowd with assurances that "there was no cause for alarm, as the taxation scheme had been withdrawn".⁷⁶ It appears that this was insufficient to prevent the crowd "forcibly" carrying him to the Palace Gate to "interview" the Governor.⁷⁷ However, this interpretation differs from La Primadaye's letter.⁷⁸ Whilst Castaldi is also described by the newspaper in quasi-heroic terms, the pressure of the crowd becomes more evident in the newspaper reports than in La Primadaye's account. Further, whereas the outcome of the "interview" is unclear from the official account, *The Malta Times* reports that the Governor "courteously received" Castaldi and that he was "willing to...renew the assurances which had already been given regarding the withdrawal of the proposed scheme of taxation". Castaldi appears to have been unsuccessful in his appeal to the Governor for the

⁷⁴ MT 8th May 1891. *The Malta Times* reports that he sat in the "Strangers Gallery" rather than the chamber. Evidently following his resignation, Castaldi gained admission by means other than his former automatic entitlement. It is unclear whether he had obtained one of the "tickets" referred to by La Primadaye. Further, *Public Opinion* later reports that admittance was still possible as a member of the press. This casts doubt over the prudence of Savona's manner of attempted entry to the meeting and led to criticism in the press subsequently that he deliberately and unnecessarily provoked matters.

⁷⁵ MT 8th May 1891.

⁷⁶ MT 8th May 1891.

⁷⁷ MT 8th May 1891.

⁷⁸ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

release of several prisoners.⁷⁹ The emphasis in *The Malta Times* is that Castaldi was less of a willing “spokesman” for the subalterns than La Primadaye portrays in the official account.

With regard to the disorder, *The Malta Times* describes “several conflicts [which] took place between the police and the people”, as well as mentioning the damage to the trees outside the Garrison Library, which La Primadaye highlights in his account.⁸⁰ The description of the “conflicts” is presented in a fairly neutral manner and the account of the crowd’s actions is not shown as one-sided, it states that the crowd acted both in “attack and defence”.⁸¹ The choice of vocabulary, for example, the words “defence”, “mutual” and “exchange” emphasise this.⁸²

In response to the disorder outside the Garrison Library *The Malta Times* reports that “the police replied with the heavy batons with which they were supplied” and this led to the police and protesters sharing a “mutual exchange of broken heads and damaged faces”.⁸³ The trees and the tree supports are said to have been used as “weapons of attack and defence”.⁸⁴ The newspaper describes “the excitement [which] continued, gradually assuming most alarming proportions”, for which “the *military* had been called upon to prepare”.⁸⁵ In “later hours” the crowd is said to have “dispersed”, although not before “several conflicts took place during the evening [and] some ugly knocks and cuts were exchanged”.⁸⁶ The conduct of the crowd is presented in neutral terms by *The Malta Times*. Even notwithstanding the reports of “conflicts”, the particular choice of vocabulary is not unduly critical of one party, although

⁷⁹ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁰ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸¹ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸² MT 8th May 1891.

⁸³ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁴ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁵ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁶ MT 8th May 1891.

The Malta Times reports that “several constables” had to be removed from duty, although on what basis, whether injured or on disciplinary grounds is unclear. This intervention may have been a prelude to the scrutiny of the police which followed.⁸⁷

The involvement of the military in the police preparations may be speculation on the part of *The Malta Times*, as this is absent from the official documents and, in particular, is missing from the Police Chief’s letter containing his description of the preparations. That said, the potential involvement of the military in policing the colony is an important discovery. This evidence clearly separates the civilian police from the military garrison and distinguishes their respective functions. However, it is unclear from the article whether military assistance was ultimately needed, and if so, whether this was a routine occurrence. *The Malta Times* reports that at a certain point during the conflict the military had been “called upon to prepare”.⁸⁸ According to *The Malta Times*, the police presence that day was obvious; Castaldi is described as passing through an “army of police” *en route* to his “interview” with the Governor.⁸⁹ This is indicative of the policing style used that day; in terms of the number of police present, their organisation and the manner of policing. Furthermore, *The Malta Times* describes the “palace gate...[as being] strongly guarded by a force of police, the main guard opposite being crowded with soldiery.”⁹⁰ The strength of the police and the presence of the military, albeit in an unknown capacity, combined with the police’s armament with “batons”, indicates a relatively heavy-handed police presence (by Maltese terms), particularly in light of allegations of police provocation, discussed below.⁹¹

⁸⁷ MT 8th May 1891. The end of the sentence is illegible and the text possible reads “several constables being removed to hospital”.

⁸⁸ MT 8th May 1891.

⁸⁹ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁰ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹¹ MT 8th May 1891.

The Malta Times blames the “uneducated class” for the disorder and the newspaper is highly derogatory about those involved in the incident.⁹² *The Malta Times* does not stipulate who it regards as falling within this “class” and thus the disorder cannot be considered in terms of occupational or social status. However, their description of an “uneducated class” supports the suggestion made in chapter 5 that it was the lower-class Maltese who formed part of the subaltern group and were involved in the incident.⁹³ *The Malta Times* describes the crowd’s gullibility in believing inflammatory rumours circulated by politicians in the preceding days and weeks.⁹⁴ The newspaper acknowledges the “significance” of a “mass meeting” of this kind and also the influence which “excited speakers” can have on “the tenderest feelings of the people”.⁹⁵ In this sense, whilst distancing itself from the subaltern Maltese who it holds responsible for the incident, the newspaper qualifies their actions by reminding its readers of the “loyalty, sobriety and general peaceful behaviour” of the Maltese people as a whole.⁹⁶

I have already suggested that *The Malta Times* reports on the disorder with a veneer of impartiality in that an unbiased description with a neutral commentary, however, the newspaper remains loyal to the government and is critical of Savona, reporting that “the Government have already given a faithful assurance” of the withdrawal of taxation scheme, the article questions “what more is required?” In the 8th May article *The Malta Times* is also unequivocally supportive of the police and the colonial administration, it comments that “our sympathies are with the police in the unpleasant duties they had to perform.”⁹⁷ *The Malta Times* suggests that “matters have gone far enough” and they are scornful of Savona’s

⁹² MT 8th May 1891.

⁹³ Discussed in chapter 5, pg. 116.

⁹⁴ Discussed in chapter 5, pg. 116.

⁹⁵ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁶ MT 8th May 1891. This supports Knepper’s later findings regarding the law-abiding nature of the Maltese people and the low crime rate in colonial Malta discussed in chapter 2, pp. 25-27.

⁹⁷ MT 8th May 1891.

authority, adding “surely Mr Savona does not presume to expect His Excellency to resign the entire responsibility of the Island to his favour?”⁹⁸

The Malta Times reports that “the respective conduct of the Police and the people is being freely discussed”.⁹⁹ This early questioning of the legitimacy of the actions taken by both police and protesters on the day is a prelude to the scrutiny which subsequently followed. Importantly, *The Malta Times* questions the provocative police presence commenting that “it may be said that their presence in some way tended to excite the people, or that they used unnecessary force in maintaining the dignity of the law.”¹⁰⁰ Whilst *The Malta Times* states that “this is open to argument” and that “their position must be fairly considered”, it is obvious that they are supportive of the police, as the article adds that the police “were subjected to gross insult and injury” and that “our [(i.e. *The Malta Times*)] sympathies are with the police”. The newspaper balances the allegations of police provocation with reports of an excitable crowd, “conscientiously impressed with the idea of a grievance of some sort”.¹⁰¹

Public Opinion’s first account of the disorder is published a day later than *The Malta Times* article, on the 9th May 1891.¹⁰² In contrast it is a very different article. It contains surprisingly little commentary on the disorder, the business of the meeting or the involvement of Savona and Castaldi – perhaps it assumes its readership was present outside the Palace. Instead, it presents the most detailed, if not polemical, account of the police response of all the sources hitherto considered in this chapter. The newspaper makes a judgement about the police actions in the very first line of the article, describing, without qualification, the “cowardly and

⁹⁸ MT 8th May 1891.

⁹⁹ MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁰⁰ MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁰¹ MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁰² PO 9th May 1891.

brutal conduct” of the police and only a few sentences later the conduct of the police is described as “butchery”.¹⁰³ La Primadaye is identified as responsible for the organisation of the police at the incident,¹⁰⁴ although the Governor is said to have “approve[d]” of the police preparations.¹⁰⁵ *Public Opinion* suggests that surely the Governor would not have approved of the steps which La Primadaye and his subordinates took and in this sense the government is distinguished from the rest of the colonial administration.¹⁰⁶

The appointment of Captain Clement La Primadaye as Head of Police is discussed in *Public Opinion*.¹⁰⁷ The article reveals that La Primadaye was a recent ‘trophy’ appointment and as such was seen as a controversial figure.¹⁰⁸ *Public Opinion* emphasises that the Superintendent was an English appointment with a questionable mandate, “it was left to the English Superintendent of Police, who was notoriously appointed to kick certain curs in Malta who understood only kicking...to organise the butchery perpetrated on Wednesday against a helpless, unarmed population.”¹⁰⁹ Little is known about La Primadaye – the official sources are equally silent in this respect as they were in relation to the other official key characters. What is known is that La Primadaye had been a Captain in the Royal Navy.¹¹⁰ This gave him

¹⁰³ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁴ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁵ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁶ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁷ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁸ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁰⁹ PO 9th May 1891.

¹¹⁰ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H42. See also PO 12th May 1891. The organisational literature on colonial policing discussed in chapter 2 includes issues such as recruitment of officers and recruitment of the ‘rank and file’ police. Although I have not considered this particular aspect of these studies, the appointment of high-calibre military officers to unconnected civilian government roles, such as the police, was a common practice during British colonialism. Although not cited in chapter 2, the choice of recruiting senior officers in this way formed part of the strategy of “policing strangers by strangers” which formed part of the strategies of control. This issue is discussed by many commentators, notably, David M. Anderson and David Killingray, “Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830 – 1940” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830 – 1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1991) 7 - 8 and David Killingray and David M. Anderson, “An Orderly Retreat? Policing the end of Empire” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonisation:*

no policing experience and he would not have possessed the necessary operational skills to successfully command a police force, although as a Captain he would have gained leadership experience.

La Primadaye was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Police on the 20th November 1890,¹¹¹ and, thus, he had been in office for less than six months by the time of the incident, during which a large proportion of his time would have been spent implementing a range of police reforms and reorganisations.¹¹² La Primadaye had been a direct appointment by the Crown, as had the Governor and Chief Secretary.¹¹³ He earned twice as much (£500 per annum) as his subordinate Maltese, Senior Assistant Superintendents, Salvatore Magri and Salvatore Stivala,¹¹⁴ although only half as much as the Chief Secretary.¹¹⁵ The wages of La Primadaye had attracted some attention in the press, particularly in comparison with his predecessor, although the figures are incorrectly reported.¹¹⁶ This helps to build a picture of him, albeit are primarily from official data. *Public Opinion* suggests a possible alliance between La Primadaye and the Chief Secretary in that La Primadaye was “in concert no doubt with the Anglo-Maltese Chief Secretary” in the “butchery” which is alleged to have taken place.¹¹⁷ The hostility to the Chief Secretary continues in this article, and some of the

Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917 – 65 (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992) 8. Hence, the appointment of La Primadaye as Chief of Police is not unusual in this respect.

¹¹¹ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pp. H42-H43. Although the Blue Book indicates that he had served under the colonial government since 11th August 1888, this may relate to his time in the Navy.

¹¹² The archives reveal that a number of reforms had previously been implemented.

¹¹³ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H42 (La Primadaye), H6 (Chief Secretary) and H2 (Governor).

¹¹⁴ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H42.

¹¹⁵ TNA: PRO CO 163/110, Malta Blue Book for 1891, pg. H6.

¹¹⁶ PO 6th June 1891. This article states that before the appointment of La Primadaye, the Police Chief's salary was £400. However, the Colonial Office List for 1891 La Primadaye states that he was paid 400L (TNA, PRO, Colonial Office List for 1891, pg. 170) and the Blue Book for 1891 states that he was paid £500. However, the Blue Book for 1881 indicates that the then Superintendent (Colonel Attilio Sceberras) was also paid £500. This may mean that La Primadaye's salary was no greater than previous office-holders' salaries.

¹¹⁷ PO 9th May 1891.

resentment may be explained by his “Anglo-Maltese” nationality;¹¹⁸ perhaps this was regarded at the time by the subaltern Maltese as worse than being English.

Public Opinion provides more detail on the policing preparations and response, compared with the content of La Primadaye’s letter to the Chief Secretary (or indeed, the content of *The Malta Times* article).¹¹⁹ In a similar way to *The Malta Times*, the volume of police present is reported by *Public Opinion*: “the vast array of police collected from all parts of the country”. The numbers and organisation of the police would have impacted on the nature of the police response and how they handled the disorder.¹²⁰ Both newspapers report the potential that such a large police presence could have provoked the protesters, although *Public Opinion* asserts that this was the cause of any disorder, whereas *The Malta Times* notes this as only a possibility.¹²¹

Public Opinion helps to explain the involvement of the military on the day. The article confirms the presence of the “Royal Malta Militia”, although the capacity or extent of their involvement in policing remains unclear.¹²² *Public Opinion* provides the most compelling evidence from the sources considered in this thesis that the military had been included in the preparations, although their involvement was not ultimately required.¹²³

¹¹⁸ PO 9th May 1891.

¹¹⁹ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²⁰ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²¹ PO 9th May 1891: “provoked...by the vast array of police collected”, MT 8th May 1891: “it may be said that their presence in some way tended to excite the people”.

¹²² PO 9th May 1891.

¹²³ When reporting on the conduct of the crowd, *Public Opinion* states that due to the “prudence and the law-abidingness of the great majority of the crowd...the intervention of the military, an eventuality for which His Excellency the Governor and his advisors appear to have been fully prepared [for]” was not required, PO 9th May 1891.

In a further respect *Public Opinion*'s presentation of who was responsible for the disorder differs from *The Malta Times*' approach. *Public Opinion* blames the government for the incident, stating that "it is the Government...that must be held responsible for all that has occurred".¹²⁴ *Public Opinion* argues that the incident was provoked by holding the Council of Government meeting in the absence of all the elected representatives, "thus defying public opinion and treading under foot the corner stone of the Constitution".¹²⁵ The crowd is said to have gathered "merely in protest" about these issues and not to assault the Palace or Main Guard.¹²⁶ *Public Opinion* alleges that the police were instrumental in provoking and exacerbating the situation on the ground by the policing style employed and by their violent behaviour.¹²⁷ *Public Opinion* is wholly supportive of those who gathered in protest and who allegedly "never...attempted to do anyone harm, provoked though they were by the vast array of police collected from all parts of the country".¹²⁸

The police response is described in relatively vivid terms by *Public Opinion*. They are said to have "used their truncheons to beat, in the most cruel and the most savage manner, helpless, unarmed, inoffensive persons, some of them mere boys, even after the crowd...had dispersed."¹²⁹ It is alleged that the crowd "never even attempted to do any one harm, provoked though they were by the vast array of police collected from all parts of the country."¹³⁰ Once again the number of police and the provocative effect this had is mentioned in this source. Later *Public Opinion* affirms its stance on police provocation, stating that the police "provoked most serious disorders" and that furthermore, even the assaults which are

¹²⁴ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²⁵ PO 9th May 1891. Although side issues regarding the coal-heavers and taxation would also have impacted on public feeling and contributed to the disorder.

¹²⁶ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²⁷ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²⁸ PO 9th May 1891.

¹²⁹ PO 9th May 1891.

¹³⁰ PO 9th May 1891.

said to have been committed against the police may have in fact been provoked by their “brutal conduct”.¹³¹ The pooling of police resources with the use of policemen from throughout Malta is also noteworthy as this reveals well-organised police preparations.

Public Opinion makes an important allegation, and it is the only source to do so, that no request had been made for the crowd to “disperse”.¹³² The article suggests that “all of a sudden, on a preconcerted signal, the police officers and men brought out the bludgeons which they had concealed about their person, and set upon the crowd savagely beating them all over the body but especially on the head.”¹³³ Polemic language is used to emphasise the outrage *Public Opinion* reports, particularly its choice of the term “bludgeon”, which has the effect of presenting the police as an unsophisticated and violent force. *Public Opinion*’s description also carries an allegation of police misconduct or deception in their suggestion that the “bludgeons” the police carried were concealed and that the crowd was not given the opportunity to disperse before they were beaten. It adds that the police continued “striking left and right, not only on the square [where the demonstration was located], but also in Str. Reale”.¹³⁴ This portrays an image of the police as somewhat out of control, perhaps indicative of a lack of experience in crowd control. Attard noted that this was the first serious political demonstration to involve the police.¹³⁵ Inadequate training (perhaps hitherto thought unnecessary given Malta’s low crime rate¹³⁶) may also have contributed to how the police handled the disorder.

¹³¹ PO 9th May 1891.

¹³² PO 9th May 1891.

¹³³ PO 9th May 1891.

¹³⁴ The full name of the street is *Strada Reale*, PO 9th May 1891.

¹³⁵ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

¹³⁶ See Paul Knepper, “A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914” (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385 and 387, Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, “Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities” in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of*

The police brutality which *Public Opinion* alleges is further compounded by their suggestion that the police did not only target the demonstrators in the Square (of which some may have been targeted unjustly) but also citizens in the neighbouring streets, including “inoffensive persons who were passing by on their business, even boys returning home from school, even after the crowd had dispersed from the square.”¹³⁷ The allegation that police brutality extended to children is mentioned four times in total in this article, with the last reference suggesting “the savage beating of boys between the ages of 10 and 14”.¹³⁸ This is damaging for the newly reformed police and particularly so when the allegations extend to La Primadaye, who is said to have beaten the crowd himself, along with “permitting his subalterns to beat in his presence peaceful and unarmed and inoffensive people”.¹³⁹

Public Opinion reports that the police abuses were not restricted to the treatment of citizens on the streets, but extended to the mistreatment of arrestees too. It alleges that “men were cruelly and barbarously beaten in the most cowardly manner” whilst being conveyed from the Square to the Palace Yard, “which was turned into a temporary guard room”. However, it is alleged that in the Palace Yard itself, as well as the Main Guard was where “the most brutal excesses were perpetrated”.¹⁴⁰ These abuses are said to have taken place in the presence of “gentlemen”, as well as “officers of the Royal Malta Militia”.¹⁴¹

The image presented by *Public Opinion* of the conduct of the police that day is a damning one. Throughout the 9th May article the police are described in derogatory terms (the

Social Techniques (CRC Press, London 2009) 86 and Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, “The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta” (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 80.

¹³⁷ PO 9th May 1891.

¹³⁸ PO 9th May 1891.

¹³⁹ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁴⁰ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁴¹ PO 9th May 1891.

“barbarous and cowardly police”) and their response to the crowd is condemned (“the bludgeoning of peaceful and inoffensive men”). There are numerous other examples of such descriptions in the article, aside from those already discussed above. The portrayal of the police is compounded by *Public Opinion*’s loyal rhetoric which supports the plight of the “helpless, unarmed population” and emphasises their “law-abidingness”.¹⁴² In further support of this, the newspaper makes the unequivocal statement that “never, since the Maltese placed themselves under the protection of the British Crown, have the police used their truncheons to beat [citizens]”¹⁴³ and that “the best feeling had existed between the police and the people. The conduct of the former...has [now] created an insuperable barrier.”¹⁴⁴

Concluding Comments

The starting point in this chapter was with Attard, who found the coal-heavers to be instrumental in causing the disorder.¹⁴⁵ Through analysis of the archival and newspaper sources the position in relation to the focal events and those involved has been shown to be rather more complicated than this. This research has departed from Attard’s account by demonstrating that the incident was concerned with more issues than coal-heaving alone. The coal-heavers *may* have been one of *many* aggrieved parties involved in the disorder, however, the composition of the crowd, and whether it was formed from the subaltern Maltese or drawn from other social classes is not yet known.

Archival and newspaper sources throw new light on the role of Savona and the significance of the ‘melting-pot’ of issues which surrounded the disorder. These sources present the disorder

¹⁴² PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁴³ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁴⁴ PO 9th May 1891.

through the official and middle-class voices, neither of which hold the coal-heavers responsible, although their views differ on who was to blame. This has been established by a close reading of contemporaneous sources which reveal the wider political economy of the events.

The official Whitehall view of the disorder is missing from the archives and the Register précis only hints at it.¹⁴⁶ Save for the Police Chief's account, contained in his letter to the Chief Secretary, the colony-level voice is also absent from the Council Minutes and remains absent in the correspondence files. Both these findings are unexpected, as I had anticipated that the official voice would dominate the account of the incident. In fact, the *only* significant point to draw from the Colonial correspondence file itself is that (regardless of who was considered responsible for the disorder) the disorder was of sufficient concern to justify sending a confidential despatch to the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate this despatch in the archives.¹⁴⁷ Neither the précis nor the colony-level file appear to take sides; the colony-level account factually tallies, more or less, with the other sources, in terms of events 'on the ground', although it downplays the degree of anger and emotion of the crowd compared with other sources, most notably the English-language press. However, the extent of the incident is not fully appreciated by any one source alone and hence why a close-reading of the sources, such as has been attempted in this thesis, is necessary.

The absence of the Colonial Office correspondence file restricts the analysis but it is likely that Whitehall's view, particularly immediately after the disorder, would have been formed on

¹⁴⁶ PRO: TNA CO 355/11, Registry Entry 9425, 8th May 1891.

¹⁴⁷ TNA: PRO CO 161/66, Council of Government Minutes and TNA: PRO CO 161/65, Executive Council Minutes both dated 6th May 1891 and CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta.

the basis of the limited information provided to Westminster by the Governor (or Chief Secretary) derived from La Primadaye's letter. The Chief of Police, La Primadaye, is a key character and he unequivocally blames Savona for the crowd's actions that day. A significant finding in this research is that Savona, a member of the educated middle-classes, was the main protagonist. It is perhaps unexpected that the police blame the middle-classes, rather than the subaltern Maltese for provoking the disorder. It is significant that the middle-classes led the struggle, which gave a platform for subaltern Maltese concerns to be heard, albeit through Savona.

In terms of management of the disorder, the Police Chief regards his Force to have successfully dealt with the incident, and he minimises the "disturbance" and reports that the Council meeting was unaffected.¹⁴⁸ This favourable presentation of the police exonerates the colonial administration. Accordingly the incident may have caused the Secretary of State, and perhaps also the Governor, very little concern as the colony continued to operate unaffected by the disturbance.

The most significant point to note is that there is no consensus over who was to blame for the incident, nor any known data on who attended the demonstration. This is reflective of the relative positions the different voices maintain throughout in terms of support for, or against, the colonial government and whether they favour the subaltern Maltese struggle. The official response is of positive crowd management on the day and the Police Chief is glowing in his praise for his men. This is in stark contrast to the more detailed, and often inflammatory, accounts contained in the English-language press. Interestingly, whilst all three sources differ

¹⁴⁸ CSG 01/32, Original Correspondence File 5203, 8th May 1891, Rabat, Malta - letter dated 8th May 1891 from La Primadaye to Chief Secretary.

in who they blame for the disorder, and there are some substantial omissions as I have explored in this chapter, there is factually little discrepancy between the accounts.

Both *The Malta Times* and *Public Opinion* publish details omitted from the official accounts, namely the notional military presence and the low level armament of the police with truncheons. *The Malta Times* ‘sides’ with the government and is quick to condemn the “uneducated class” for the disorder, although it does level criticism at certain sectors of political society (with whom its allegiance is at variance, namely Savona and comrades) for provoking the disorder.¹⁴⁹

Public Opinion’s account holds the government responsible for the disorder, although it criticises isolated trouble-makers for unconnected disreputable behaviour.¹⁵⁰ The police are also blamed by *Public Opinion* for provoking the crowd, something which the sheer number of police contributed to, as did certain police acts of violence.¹⁵¹ *Public Opinion*’s article also contains more substantive detail concerning the police preparations and the ‘on the ground’ response than the Police Chief’s letter to the Chief Secretary. Overall, the most significant difference between the two newspapers is that *The Malta Times* supports the police, whereas *Public Opinion* is the first source to allege serious police misconduct.

The arming of the police with truncheons, together with a heavy police presence supported by an unutilised military contingent, are important features of the Maltese police in response to the unrest. These features are in common with some of the themes of colonial policing

¹⁴⁹ MT 8th May 1891.

¹⁵⁰ PO 9th May 1891.

¹⁵¹ PO 9th May 1891.

identified in the first group of organisational policing studies discussed in chapter 2.¹⁵² The presence and style of policing that day suggest an unsophisticated and inexperienced approach to social control, and show failings in one of the most important functions of a colonial police force. However, the image portrayed by the official sources presents a far more accomplished police force than is evidenced in the English-language newspapers and colony-level sources.

Notably, although the military were present in reserve, the police remained a civilian force, and it was they who secured a number of arrests. However, these arrests are accompanied by serious allegations of police provocation as well as suggestions of widespread police brutality and misconduct. These were raised by *Public Opinion*, which remained loyal to the subaltern Maltese. The allegations of police abuses undermine the credibility of the policing operation and the police became the subject of scrutiny in the aftermath to the disorder.

¹⁵² Discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 15-16.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS

With reference to the aims of this thesis as set out in chapter 1, I have examined the class relations and social forces which existed at the time of the 6th May 1891 disorder by conducting a detailed analysis of the social groups and key characters involved in the disorder. This approach arose from finding that the overview and organisational studies of policing in the colonies, discussed in chapter 2, were insufficient and too generalised to reveal the social, economic and political forces at play. All of these factors formed part of the background to and causes of the disorder. Instead, an ‘incident-specific’ approach was needed to allow the incident and the police response to be considered in the context of the wider political economy of the time.

In this thesis I have uncovered the complex background to and causes of the disorder and I have established the significance of the social and political circumstances to the events which unfolded on the 6th May 1891. The story of the events themselves has been told and the role of the police and their response to the disorder has been investigated with reference to contemporaneously created documents and English-language newspaper sources. In so doing, an otherwise missing history of the disorder has been uncovered.

This research has revealed a number of voices audible from the archives. The voices I found were representative of a range of social groups in Malta at the time of the incident, namely, the official voice (both at Whitehall and colony-level), the voice of the displaced upper-classes and the voice of the middle-class Maltese. The voice of the “minor government

employees” and the voice of the lower-classes, which I have called the subaltern Maltese, have been *identified* as a distinct political constituency for the first time in this thesis, but their voices are yet to be heard in their own right.

At present the subaltern voice is only heard *through* Savona, an educated, middle-class local political figure, and his newspaper, *Public Opinion*. Savona provides a political platform for subaltern issues to be heard. Tantalising ‘snatches’ of the sentiments of the crowd gathered on the 6th May are published in *Public Opinion*, and it appears that support for Savona was widespread amongst those who attended, although significantly, the composition of the 6th May crowd cannot yet be confirmed. I have hypothesised that the crowd may represent the voice to the subaltern Maltese, although this requires further investigation.

A number of key characters have also emerged through this analysis, although the extent of their involvement in the incident varied. These individuals were: Lord Knutsford (Secretary of State), Sir Henry Smyth (Governor), Gerald Strickland (Chief Secretary), Clement La Primadaye (Chief of Police), Marquis de Piro (Maltese aristocracy) and Sigismondo Savona (middle-class speaker and editor of *Public Opinion* newspaper). No characters have as of yet emerged from the subaltern group.

My use of the term subaltern follows Gramsci’s and Spivak’s concepts of “subaltern”, which have been discussed in this thesis.¹ I have used the term subaltern to identify the voice of the

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography” in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, London 1987) and by the same author “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke 1988).

subordinate lower-class Maltese, whose voice is yet to be heard in its own right. The hypothesis of the composition of this social group can be more particularly described as including working-class, occupational groups such as the tenant farmers of *ta Ghain Znuber*, the vegetable traders (*Piticali*), the shopkeepers, the tourist guides and the coal-heavers. However, establishing the precise composition of this group and their involvement (or otherwise) in the disorder merits further research.

The combination of remnants of a former feudal society, with colonial power structures, created a new class of colonial workforce, the status of which is not yet fully understood. I have identified these as the “minor government employees”, the social position and political allegiance of whom is not yet known. It may emerge that these workers form part of the subaltern group as defined in this thesis. Alternatively, they may represent an entirely separate political constituency, intermediate between the subaltern Maltese and the middle-classes.

The applicability of Gramsci’s and Spivak’s concepts of “subaltern” to the circumstances in colonial Malta have been evaluated. Based on the analysis contained in this thesis neither Gramsci’s nor Spivak’s concepts adequately describe the social interactions evidenced in Malta at the time of the incident. I have suggested that Savona united the concerns of the working-class occupational groups identified in this thesis when he brought their grievances to the attention of the colonial government. However, it remains to be seen whether this represents the beginnings of a Gramsci unification of the rural and urban poor in colonial Malta or whether an entirely new concept of subaltern is required for Malta.

The analysis undertaken on the key individuals also reveals a series of unique power relations which may have a bearing on formulating a concept of subaltern applicable to colonial Malta. The Governor can be seen as a somewhat 'absentee' figure, compared with his powerful Chief Secretary, who was drawn from Anglo-Maltese parentage. An unusual relationship also existed between the former and current ruling elites, as evidenced by the Marquis, who participated in local and colonial politics as a means of retrieving some of his lost status under colonial rule. This he did in allegiance with Savona, who although drawn from the Maltese middle-classes, appears to speak most loudly for the subaltern Maltese and the grievances they held. However, it is unclear how far Savona can be regarded as speaking for the entire middle and subaltern classes. Through the influence of Savona and the Marquis, which extended to include the Council members, the upper and middle-classes also appear to have united in the build-up to the incident. The alliance of the Marquis and Savona may represent the beginning of Spivak 'subalternism' in Malta. However, the extent to which generalisations in relation to class-unification can be made from Savona's actions or from the specific relationships between the key individuals discussed in this thesis is not unclear. Notwithstanding these limitations, from the evidence presented in this thesis I suggest that the circumstances prior to the disorder as well as the disorder itself were unique, in that the middle-classes and displaced nobility were leading the struggle against the colonial administration on behalf of themselves and the subaltern Maltese.

Turning to the focal events of the 6th May 1891, each voice had a valuable story to tell concerning the disorder and the preceding circumstances. Following Carr, I found that no single source contained a 'complete' story.² Instead, interplay between the voices was vital, as

² E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Palgrave, Basingstoke 1961 reprinted 2001) 5 – 6.

there were significant differences between the accounts. Each voice required space to be heard in this thesis, as far as the archives permitted and this merited the use of a detailed, ‘incident-specific’ approach, such as I have adopted in this thesis. However, each voice is not heard with equal audibility, as exemplified by the missing voice of the subaltern Maltese. Furthermore, this analysis may not be definitive; further new voices may emerge, or nuances within these groupings become apparent and the voice of the subaltern Maltese is yet to be explored fully.

The disorder and the police response cannot be seen in isolation as Attard suggests.³ Instead, they must be seen in context of the wider political and social climate, which was a prelude to the 6th May 1891 events. The causes of the disorder are entirely omitted from the official sources, which if read in conjunction with Attard alone, would obscure the reality of the political situation and the extent of the disorder. Neither the centrality of the main protagonist, Savona, nor the catalyst of the Council meeting is recognised by Attard or the official sources. The Council Minutes omit reference to the disorder which prevailed outside the Council chamber. Notwithstanding this, the significance of the disorder is not appreciated by *any* one source alone. However, a finding of this research is that reliance on officially produced documents and accounts which adopt the standpoint of the coloniser is dangerous, as omissions in these documents emphasise their selective nature. This demonstrates the importance of searching for voices which have been hitherto missing from the archives and secondary accounts, such the subaltern voice.

³ Edward Attard, *A History of the Malta Police (1800-1964)* (Colour Image, Malta 2003) 39.

My findings in relation to the police response to the incident show that there was a clear civilian/military distinction in Malta. It appears that at the time of the incident the Maltese colonial police were a civilian force, entirely distinct from the military garrison. None of the Maltese studies currently published comment on this, and it is a finding relevant to not only how the disorder was policed, but perhaps also to the nature of wider policing practices in the colony.

I have found that the police were provided with truncheons (sometimes called batons) specifically for dealing with the unrest. While this represents low-level arming by colonial standards, this was significant for Malta. The use of truncheons is omitted in the Police Chief's account to the colonial government and the reason for this is unknown. This is one example of a number of omissions in the Police Chief's version of events. Perhaps more surprising than the use of truncheons here is that the Maltese police do not appear to have been routinely armed (even with truncheons) as in other colonies and Britain where truncheons were used at that time. This liberal policing style may be explained by Knepper's, by Knepper and Norris', and by Knepper and Cauchi's findings of a low crime-rate and a law-abiding populace.⁴ The military garrison may also have negated the need for the routine use of truncheons. Nonetheless, by Maltese standards, the police were effectively armed for the occasion and preparations has been made in the event of unrest, and so in this sense, the disorder had been anticipated by the colonial government.

⁴ This has been discussed in chapter 2, pg. 26, Paul Knepper, "A Few Detectives Would Be Very Useful: Crime, Immorality and Policing in Valletta, 1881 – 1914" (2009) *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2, 385 and 387. Paul Knepper and Clive Norris, "Fingerprint and Photograph: Surveillance Technologies in the Manufacture of Suspect Identities" in Paul Knepper, Jonathan Doak and Joanna Shapland (eds), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance, and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Techniques* (CRC Press, London 2009) 86 and Jacqueline Azzopardi Cauchi and Paul Knepper, "The Empire, the police, and the introduction of fingerprint technology in Malta" (2009) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, 73, 80.

While the police were at the opposite extreme of the para-military police discussed in chapter 2, aside from the use of truncheons, they exhibited other militaristic features, evidenced by the large reported police numbers, their organisation and the nature of their ‘presence’ (the “army” of police⁵). This was enhanced by an unutilised military contingent, all of which may have led to an ‘over-policing’ of the incident and led also to the subsequent allegations of police provocation. Interestingly, whilst the 3rd May gathering (convened on similar issues) attracted more supporters it was not accompanied by any disorder. The *absence* of police that day, compared with their weighty numbers on the 6th May, may have prevented matters escalating. The arming of the police with truncheons can be linked to the challenge to the constitution, which was in real crisis at the time of the disorder and mirrors, albeit to a lesser degree, the use of force to tackle challenges to sovereignty in other colonies discussed in chapter 2.

I have also found that each voice holds a different party responsible for the disorder. Perhaps most significantly, it remains unclear at this stage whether, as Attard states, the coal-heavers were involved in the disorder. However, although arrests were made by the police and these appear to have been exclusively male, it is not possible to ascertain from the archival data considered in this thesis who these individuals were, and whether they were coal-heavers, or drawn from the wider Maltese population. Significantly, public order offences went unpunished whilst perpetrators of criminal damage appear to have faced sanctions, perhaps their actions were seen as a challenging to the British administration. It is unclear whether these individuals were ultimately pursued through the courts.

⁵ MT 8th May 1891.

Allegations of police provocation and abuse were reported in the local English-language press. These allegations may have arisen owing to a lack of experience and an absence of sophisticated techniques to handling of public disorder on the part of the police, arising from the mainstay of policing in the colony operating by consent hitherto. *Public Opinion* is critical of the police and it brings allegations of police misconduct to the public attention, although despite the support shown by *The Malta Times* for the police, they too report on allegations of police provocation. These allegations are not found in the official sources, and perhaps this is an example of an attempt to legitimise the police, such as Burton and Carlen have discussed.⁶ However, my findings concerning the police are limited to contemporaneously created documents and not those created in the weeks and months of subsequent scrutiny.

Notwithstanding the limitations of this thesis, it is hoped that my findings on the policing of the disorder add to the hitherto limited knowledge on the 6th May 1891 events and the British colonial policing experience in Malta. Furthermore, the identification of an unheard populace, however conceptualised, is an important discovery and it has raised the exciting possibility that voices of the constituent groups which form the ‘chorus’ of the silenced Maltese may be heard the future.

⁶ Frank Burton & Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979) 13, 44 – 45.

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APPENDIX:

Figure 1: Example of The National Archives of Malta document request form:








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