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The Italians of Port Pirie  
Dissertation  
Presented for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in the  
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at the  
Australian National University.

J.F. Bromley,  
September, 1955.

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Synopsis.

This study is concerned with Italian settlement in the industrial city of Port Pirie, South Australia. The problem to explain the kind and degree of assimilation among migrants of Italian descent was bound up with the further problem of group integration, since the Italians who appeared least assimilated formed themselves into a cohesive racial group, and the most assimilated Italians resisted group integration. Because of this variation in grouping the study of the assimilation of Italians in Port Pirie became one of the effect of group integration on assimilation into the host society - that is, that portion of the adopted country where the migrants chose to settle.

The degree of assimilation was not amenable to quantitative measurement, but was gauged comparatively by the knowledge that the migrants had of the host society, their readiness to accept its norms, and the willingness of the host society to accept them on a similar footing in the society. The problem of assimilation was complicated because the adopted country and the host society were not themselves uniform, and it is dubious whether there was any one set of values about which all Australians were agreed. Thus the type of explanation of assimilation which depended on the replacement of an Australian ethos, described by listing typical Australian behaviour traits and expectations as criteria by an Italian ethos was too facile, and the study of such a transformation would have meant that equal attention should be given to Australian and Italian folkways. Such a study would have demanded more time and resources than I had at my disposal.

Uniformity could be more easily achieved by the migrant group than the host society, and so long as it remained small in size it could

retain a fair degree of homogeneity, which made the study a less imposing one to begin with. But, since the more coherent Italian group composed of Molfettese fishermen and their families was virtually a closed community, and the fishermen were not given to making abstractions or verbalising their motives for action, there were many initial difficulties. The study became to depend on patient and participant observation of group behaviour in a variety of settings. This gave an interactional bias to the study which, however, was not a shortcoming since interaction was implied in group analysis.

Group membership and interaction were both selective processes. People belonged to groups for the same reason that they made friends - they wanted to express themselves freely and economically on a variety of subjects, and to have their wants recognized by others. Successful interaction tended to draw people together because there were always other people outside, with whom it was difficult to interact and become intimate. Temperamental and experiential differences put restraining barriers on interaction. Also, before people could communicate with one another they must at first agree about the meanings of the symbols they used. Some of the symbols might attain special emotional overtones in that they were adopted at a critical stage in the development of the individual. The interactional approach to assimilation raised at the outset the problems - Why do groups arise, and why do some groups persist? - and indicated that the answers to the problems would have to be sought in the values upheld by the groups.

The first problem was met in relation to the formation of an Italian community in Port Pirie in Chapters Two and Three. The answer to the second was sought in an account of family solidarity

and the socialization of the individual in a family setting in Chapter Four. The discussion of values themselves was left to Chapter Seven. The question of changes in value and value orientation led directly to the problem of assimilation, which was considered as a part of social change in the final chapter. Material more directly concerning change within the most solidary of institutions in the Molfettese community - that of the family - were considered immediately after the discussion of the family, and in Chapter Five.

The influence of size and common experience were crucial to group formation and integration. They explain why illiterate Southern Italians coming from Sicily and Naples did not affiliate themselves with Italian groups in Port Pirie. There does not seem to have been sufficient number of them to have formed a group of their own at any time, and their experiences seem to have been too remote from those of the North Italians or the Molfettese to allow them to interact freely with them. This is born out by the fact that the two literate Sicilians who attached themselves to particular North Italian friends left the group when the North Italians married. When the Molfettese group expanded rapidly in size after the Second World War the community tended to split into sub-groups, and this splitting in turn undermined group control. Where the community no longer provided a source of security against the more remote out-group, interaction within the community itself became restrained and group values were not reinforced.

Group solidarity was achieved at the expense of the out-group or host society. But where the outgroup seemed, to a sufficient number of deviants, to offer fuller economical and social rewards without personal restraints, group disintegration would soon be under way. If this was

met with acceptance on the part of the host society then assimilation would be accelerated. Knowledge of the out-group was obtained chiefly through the steady indoctrination of schools and newspapers, by radio and through films. The process of assimilation in this respect became one of the extension of knowledge and experience, and of accepting for consideration alternative modes of response. It was characterized by an extensity of interaction at the expense of an intensity of interaction. Extensity of interaction lessened racial prejudice as such, and opened the way for assimilation. For, two freely communicating individuals will tend to know, and not to know, many of the same things, and through sharing the same opinions will reinforce one another's opinions and come to regard other opinions and values as incorrect and pernicious. Thus group life has a cumulative aspect, and group values become clearer when the life of the group is intense and self-contained.

The main groups considered in this study were the Family and the Community, and some reference was made to recently formed sub-groups. The community was residentially split into major areas, so that the effect of propinquity could be studied in relation to assimilation. The Italian living in the less-concentrated area were not invariably more assimilated than those living in the more concentrated area. Children, however, in the predominantly Australian neighbourhood picked up English more quickly than the dialect spoken by their parents, and presumably they acquired many Australian culture traits at the same time.

The institution of visiting kept up communications within the two communities, and if a family lived away from the main residential groups it was obliged to make periodical calls upon relatives within the community. Although relatives often sought to live next to each other, the converse proposition that related neighbours were invariably

on good terms did not apply. Each family had an autonomy of its own, theoretically vested in the father, or leader of the house, and outside interference in family affairs would lead to quarrels and estrangements. The community was not structured to accept a leader, and attempts to alter the community structure in this direction were resisted.

The community was held together through intra-marriage and "other-family" reference. The intense concern with other families led to rivalry and fission where some families became more prosperous than others, and temporary co-operation in the early periods of settlement gave way to competition. The rivalry was expressed through the display of Australian goods, showing that the owner had been successful in the new environment. The material adoption of Australian objects thus preceded the cultural adoption. Competition itself encouraged further innovations and the adoption of more Australian folkways than did co-operation. Where the possession of goods rather than the faithful observance of group standards brought increased prestige and respect, a change in value-orientation occurred in the minority group, which was of vital importance to assimilation. Through his increased desire for Australian goods the Italian was placing himself on a competitive plane with Australians, who were also in a position to note his success and to accord him due recognition. His seeking of the recognition of Australians made him more aware of group pressures in the host society, which he did not previously recognize as applying to him. His success in the new environment together with the disintegration of his group was leading to his acceptance of Australian ways, although it was accompanied in some individuals, and in North Italians, with a certain amount of marginal self-consciousness which impeded assimilation.



## II

Chapter One sets out the problems, and makes preliminary definitions. Chapter Two sets the background for the study, both in Italy and Port Pirie, and pursues the theme of motives for migration, and compatibility of the new environment with the old. The previous experience and education of the migrant in the country of origin were part-determinants of the adjustment and assimilation in the adopted country. The most conservative migrants were the least educated, and the women whose duty to their own family and the relatives of their lineage tied them to the home.

Assimilation was retarded with the establishment of the Molfettese community and the importation of large numbers of Molfettese women from Italy. It was retarded while the Molfettese found employment within their own group, and apart from the host society. The economic apartness of the Molfettese community is described in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four describes how family solidarity is achieved through the socialization process. Religious and educational influences outside the home were not first encouraged by the Molfettese family, and had less weight than might have been supposed. The Family was an omni-present group; its roles and norms were clearly defined; respect, love, hospitality, thrift, and industry were enjoined upon members, and common consultation over family decisions was an important feature.

The break down of the Family as an omni-present institution was achieved when governmental and commercial agencies took over many of the non-essential functions of the family. The encroachments of the Government had been resisted before the war; most resistance was disappearing, by 1953.

Interest in Family affairs was kept alive by visiting,

family discussions, contiguity of relatives, the display of portraits and group photographs. These partly make up the social life within the community, which is described in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six gives more stress to conditions as they existed in 1953 whereas Chapters Two and Three make reference to the evolution of traditional institutions. Since it analyses sub-groups as they existed at one point of time, it may give a false emphasis to the importance of some of these institutions in the long run. Sub-group formation was accompanied by an increased value of education, freedom, independence and leisure. Chapter Seven analyses traditional Molfattese values, and changes in value. Concessions made to young men were extended in a modified form to girls. The prestige of the mother was rising where the authority of the father could recall the past, and cause strain if the authoritarianism of the father was no longer necessary for group survival.

Chapter Eight attempts to show the interrelatedness of the standard of living and the knowledge of the migrant on his acceptance of an Australian way of life, and the acceptance of the Australian of him. Through the analysis a certain resistance to change was noted, so that the migrant tended to adopt as far as they were able behaviour patterns with which they were familiar in their country of origin. Once one pattern is formed it tends to affect through cultural inertia the adoption of other cultural patterns. The adjustments of migrants and host society are cumulative, so that if adjustments are not made the host society will be conceived as inhospitable, and this inhospitality will discourage further adjustments. The balance between low acceptance of the migrants and the host society was upset by the other balance-upsetting disturbances of a major world war.

In general, the North Italians are, except for their self-consciousness and some inhospitality in the host society, well on the way to complete assimilation. The Molfettese are still relatively unassimilated, though as fishermen they have been given a place in the host society, and the cessation of the fishing industry would be noted with some regret by the host society. Before the war they were almost entirely cut off from the host society. Since the war new groupings, institutions and values have been introduced which, although they do not invariably make for assimilation, tend to undermine the solidarity of Italian groups and remove some of the barriers to assimilation.

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## Chapter One.

What the enquiry is about: the study of an Italian migrant community with special reference to the problem of assimilation.

Stated in a broad way the problem I propose to investigate is that of the assimilation of a group of Southern Italian migrants in Port Pirie, South Australia, making reference to a group of North Italians in the same town. The term assimilation is itself broadly used to mean the process in which groups of diverse origin and culture come through residential propinquity to accept one another and to share a common set of values. It is a process of "mutual interpenetration and fusion." <sup>1.</sup>

There is, however, nothing automatic about this process. It is not inevitable that when a migrant group becomes established in a new environment it shall by virtue of its residential propinquity become assimilated. It is quite possible for a closed group of aliens to live within a host society and remain unaware of local customs and expectations. Alternatively, it can be aware of such customs but consider them something not directed towards itself. To describe such a relationship - where there is physical but no social contact between groups - Robert Park used the term <sup>2.</sup>  
symbiotic. He gave as well-attested historical examples of symbiosis

the confinement of Jews to a ghetto, the subordination of pariahs in India,

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1. R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Sociology, Chicago, 1921, p. 735.

2. "Reflections on communication and culture" A.J.S., 1938, pp 187-205 and "Symbiosis and Socialization" A.J.S., 1939, pp 1-25.

and the relationship between dominant European colonizers and subject native people. The individual under such conditions is not treated as an individual but as a member of a group, recognizable by the distinctive physical features of its members or the artificial markings adopted by the group. The apartness of the group is emphasized through the allocation of specific economic roles to each, and perpetuated by the restriction of inbreeding between them.

Assimilation should be further distinguished from accommodation. <sup>3.</sup> Accommodation is a temporary solution of a potential conflict situation; ~~assimilation~~ is a process towards permanent adjustment. The term ~~accom-~~  
<sup>4</sup>modation was adopted by Danhoff to describe the gradual modification of five more or less equal but conflicting cultures and classes in the newly established community of Boulder City, Nevada. Assimilation is used to describe the process which occurs when the groups in question are not equal, and where the subordinate or minority group has to make the major adjustment.

Two things seem to occur when the process of assimilation is complete - the individual in the minority group adopts the culture of the host society, and is accepted by the host society as an individual, and not as a member of a subordinate minority group. He is judged to be assimilated when he is no longer made conspicuous by his strange mannerisms, or recognized by any style of expression, speech, or thought to

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3. E.W. Burgess "Accommodation", Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences II, pp.403-4.

4. "Accommodation and Integration of conflicting cultures in a newly-established Community" A.J.S. ,1943, pp.14-24.

have strange affiliations. He understands the way of life of the host society, and his actions can be understood by reference to its values. Assimilation thus implies acceptance on the part of the migrant, acceptance on the part of the host society, and a common fund of knowledge.

Three Requisites to Assimilation.

Acceptance on the part of the host society, acceptance on the part of the migrant, and a common fund of knowledge are inter-dependent factors. Before the migrant can gain insightful knowledge about his new cultural environment there must be some hospitality on the part of the host society. This knowledge when obtained must be accepted, internalized, and acted upon before the individual is judged to be assimilated. Yet since the host society is apt to distrust and reject any group of migrants which does not live up to its implicit standards and preferences, an initial lack of knowledge on the part of the migrants can retard their assimilation. An initial lack of hospitality on the part of the host society can influence the adjustment of migrants, so that they fall back upon their resources and integrate themselves more securely as a self-sufficient group.

5.

Assimilation in this way is a cumulative process. The more knowledge the migrant gains of his new environment the easier will it be for him to acquire further knowledge again. And, in addition, as the migrant obtains more knowledge he tends to accept to a fuller degree the values and characteristic forms of expression of his new environment. By his acceptance he comes in turn to be more and more fully accepted by the host society.

It is unreasonable, however, to assume that the process is a simple and continuous one, always proceeding with uniform and increasing speed in the same direction towards a goal of assimilation. Hospitality, the acquiring of knowledge, and the degree of acceptance by the migrant, will each be influenced by further factors such as the number of migrants entering the society, their expectations of the new environment based upon their experiences of the old, the cultural gap between the way of life they were accustomed to and that of the host society, their degree of literacy and capacity to acquire new knowledge, and their accustomed standard of living compared with that of the host society.

The degree of hospitality extended to the migrants, for example, will be effected by the crude number of migrants entering the society. If the numbers are small the individual migrant will tend to be treated as an individual. His strangeness - combined with his apparent helplessness may make him something of a curiosity, and may find him patrons who are willing to instruct him about the ways of the host society. He may be welcomed, too, by the opportunist as a possible source of cheap labour. However this may be, a small number of migrants will not seem to challenge or jeopardize established interests as a large number may. Yet, a rapid or retarded rate of assimilation can not be simply inferred from observations that a small or large number of migrants have entered a society at a particular time. If the number is large, as in Australia after 1945, special provision may be made to accommodate them, and public attention mobilized on their behalf by propaganda. Again, assimilation into the host society may be facilitated by the arrival of large numbers of migrants, if the role of host is assumed by a well-integrated minority group.

This group, which cannot effectively incorporate into its body any large numbers arriving at the one time, will now become less well-integrated, and earlier arrivals previously held by the group will themselves be given an impetus to assimilation.

Hospitality has its qualitative side also. Certain degrees of intimacy may be extended to some races and not to others. A measure of this permissive intimacy, or the lack of it, was quantitatively expressed in the 'social distance scale' developed by Bogardus.<sup>7</sup> Individuals and groups low on the scale would presumably meet with greater prejudice and hence further barriers to assimilation than those high on the scale.

There is a variation, too, in the tenacity with which certain discriminations are likely to be held. Many discriminations, no doubt, are of the nature of nationality stereotypes, or short cuts to formulating attitudes in the absence of direct contact. Favourable and unfavourable mental pictures are revealed in newspapers, magazines, popular fiction, and on films. At this level are the stereotype of the Italian gangster and the materialistic Jew. Such attitudes are seldom corrected in school books, which rarely treat the foreigner adequately, and which, by representing the national policy as implicitly honourable and courageous, may, on the contrary,<sup>8</sup> do national opponents injustice. Many such discriminations arise mainly from indifference, and ignorance. They are likely to be found in a country town where few have been educated above the primary level, and where the commonest reading is the newspapers and magazines. Other discriminations, particularly against dark-skinned people, are probably more deep-rooted, and are traceable backwards to the time when European explorers justified their exploitation of non-Europeans on the grounds

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7. E. S. Bogardus, Immigration and Race Attitudes, p. 25.

8. Otto Klineberg, Tensions Affecting International Understanding.

that these were an inferior subspecies, closer to the beast than to man.<sup>9</sup>

Hospitality by its very nature is only a temporary attitude. A host-guest relationship is likely to break down when the guest assumes the prerogatives of the host. The curiosity that prompted the initial hospitality may be soon satisfied, and an early friendliness replaced by indifference - or hostility if the migrant too early assumes equality of status. A guest is in many respects a dependent: he is expected to show gratitude, to respond quickly, and he must not obtrude without invitation. The position of the newly-arrived migrant is similar again to that of the child in a socialization process.<sup>10</sup> Yet the migrant is expected to respond as a mature individual in that unreliability, obtrusiveness, underhand practices, and the lack of courtesy on his part will be resented.

The host society thus makes some difficult demands initially on the migrant. Assimilation will not occur so long as the migrant is a dependent. It is absurd to expect him to put aside all his old standards on the moment of entry into a new environment. Hospitality may be withdrawn as a result of a clash between standards, or when the host society realizes that the migrant holds values other than his own. Certain differences in ideology or value, such as standards of cleanliness, may remain unimportant so long as the migrant keeps his distance. The differences, however, will become apparent with closer and more intimate association, and may lead to the development of strong prejudices. Once such concretely-based prejudicial attitudes are formed it will be hard for the migrants to live them down. People with lower standards may be avoided as if these were contagious and unhealthy - and prejudices springing from an objection to one specific trait may be extended spontaneously to encompass other traits and

<sup>9</sup> "Negro Problem", Encycl. Soc. Sci., vol. II, pp. 335-56; E. B. Reuter, Racial Theory, A. J. S., vol. 50, pp. 452-61.

<sup>10</sup> O. R. Park: Symbiosis and Socialization, A. J. S. XLV, pp 1-25.

groups. The hospitality is less likely to be extended towards people and groups who can be collectively labelled as having a low standard of living. Once the host society has come to believe that the migrants are dirty, noisy, dishonest, or otherwise objectionable, the migrants will be treated according to this belief, no matter what the objective facts at the moment may be.<sup>11</sup> A continuing hospitality, or acceptance of the migrant group by the host society, seems therefore to be contingent upon some recognition of differences by the migrant group, and a consequent adaptation to the standards of the host society.

The second requisite for assimilation, that of mutual knowledge, will mainly arise from interaction. Cultural similarity and the degree of literacy of both groups will hasten the acquiring of such knowledge. The migrant, again, is expected to make the larger adjustment and to acquire the language of his adopted country. But he will not think of himself as a member of a wider national group unless he has been indoctrinated in national ideologies permeating downwards from elites. Without continuous indoctrination individuals identify themselves more or less exclusively with their local group and care little what happens beyond it. With the heightened perception of his universe attained from literacy, the individual, constantly surrounded by alternative patterns of life, is likely to recognize that his culture is not the only, inevitable, natural way of living, and will be moved to evaluate one pattern against another.

The third condition necessary before assimilation is achieved is acceptance by the migrant of the norms and values about which he has obtained knowledge. Acceptance is aided by cultural compatibility.<sup>12</sup> The newly-arrived migrant expects that he will have to conform to

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11. La Piere: *Sociology*, p.435.

12. W.L. Warner and Srole, The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups.

regulations he does not understand, and, not knowing otherwise, he is likely to accept as legitimate any show of authority. He may not respond unless the new environment challenges him. At the same time his capacity to accept a new way of life is largely determined by his experience of the old environment. The acceptance of the established migrant is more deliberate. It is generalized, and guided by his further experience. On the cultural level he may accept some Australian traits and reject others as irrational. If, after obtaining knowledge of Australian traits, he regards his own way of living as more adequate, it becomes to have increased meaning for him, and assimilation is retarded. Three ways of orientation are open to him. He may reject his own cultural heritage, reject the culture of the host society, or remain vague and undecided between the two extremes.<sup>13</sup> The migrant orientates himself towards the host society and becomes assimilated because he believes, or learns, generalizing from his own experience of two contrasted ways of life, that by such behaviour he will be offered fuller rewards, a higher status, and be able to avoid discriminations arising from his non-conformity<sup>14</sup> in a wider group. He orientates himself towards his racial group for one of two reasons. Either he knows no systematic pattern of life other than that in which he was brought up, or he considers the rewards offered by his own group more certain and sustaining.

#### The Minority Group and Assimilation.

It would appear from the above analysis that minority group membership may be a barrier to assimilation - or perhaps, even more strongly, an alternative to it. How far this is so will emerge more

13. Ivor L. Child: Italian or American, The Second Generation in Conflict, Yale 1943.





clearly after a fuller examination of the concept of a group.

A group is defined in terms of regular interaction, which is itself defined as activity stimulated by activity of another.<sup>14</sup> Evidence for the existence of a group may not be found in the combination of linguistic, cultural, or biosomatic traits alone. The fact that there are many people in Australia who were born in Italy, speak an Italian dialect, look like Italians, were brought up in the Catholic faith, does not mean that there is a group of all the Italian people in Australia. Distinguishing cultural categories only become sociologically significant when people meaningfully orientate their actions towards them. The members of a group, by virtue of belonging to it, regularly interact with each other, and stimulate each other into activity. The activity of one answers or anticipates the activity of another, and an economy in the relationship is achieved through anticipation of future probable actions based on actions of the past.

The group gives the individual a position in a social order, or a status in relation to other individuals. It may survive while its members die, or otherwise replace one another, and in this way it comes to provide security for the individual. The group develops ideals of behaviour appropriate to its members, and tends to discourage deviations in behaviour or opinion away from group norms. It tends to guard these norms as sacred, and to restrict the efforts of those outside the group to change them. The strength, integration, or cohesion of the group is thus measured by the clarity with which its norms are expressed, the extent to which the interactions of its members are confined to the group, and the effectiveness of the social control exerted by the group over its members.

~~14. Homans, The Human Group; Nadel, Foundations of Social Anthropology, Cap. VII; E. K. Francis, Minority Groups (British Journal of Sociology, 1951, p. 219-229).~~

In brief, the group provides regularity, economy and stimulus to activity. It gives the individual a status, and promises him security with his observance and application of its norms towards all contingencies. Groups thus tend to maintain a level, and make for stability in a changing world.

Groups have been classified as primary and secondary. By primary group is meant one with which the individual forms his most intimate and sympathetic alliances, and which he ceases to pose and be on his best behaviour. By secondary group is meant an association of individuals, sharing a common interest, and uniting and interacting for a specific purpose. There is a limit on the number of people that an individual can know intimately, and primary relationships are usually centred in the one group and locality. The limitation on the number of informal, secondary group relationships an individual can have seems to be set by his interests, his mobility, and the fluidity of the communications reaching him.

A primary group communicating within a territorial boundary is called a community. The centre of the community is the place where most communications or interactions are concentrated. In a community the method of group recruiting, or selection of members, is simplified. Some groups have rigid boundaries in relation to selecting members. In all groups certain people belong to the group, and certain other people do not, and are not eligible to belong to it. In the community the individual becomes eligible to belong through common residence. The members of the community share common experiences, and have memories of changes and developments in the place where they have made their home, and are interested in current and future local developments in a particularly intimate and detailed way which distinguishes them as members of a community.

A minority group is a primary group of a special sort. Its members are recruited by virtue of their birth in other remote but related communities, or through their affiliation with families which share memories and interests in such remote communities. A minority group may thus form a community within a community. Assimilation is aided when the community of adoption replaces the community of origin as the home of the group, and when the residence pattern of the migrants becomes diversified.

When he first enters a new community the migrant cannot be absorbed or assimilated by it in its totality.<sup>15</sup> His major reference points will be the secondary interest groups which parallel similar groups in his country of origin, and a minority group which preserves the norms and values of his community of origin. In the absence of such reference points the individual will be faced with the alternatives of adapting himself rapidly, or remaining a social isolate. If the gap between the culture of the new and the old environment is a large one, and the migrant has few techniques to close it - that is, if he is illiterate and without varied experiences of life - he will be given added inducement, once he decides to remain some time within the new environment, to persuade his relatives and friends in the community of his origin of the superior economic and other attractions of the new environment. In this way a minority group may be formed within a community which is not actively hostile to the migrants in question. When the migrant stream flowing from the community of origin to the community of settlement is a steady, continuous one, the minority group may perform the very real function of acting as a buffer against the host society, and so preventing change-producing confrontations with new values and goals.

The minority group thus provides stability in a social order where there is a continuous migrant stream. It preserves much of the culture of the community of origin, and where it makes adaptations it need not direct them to conform with the institutions of the host society. The culture which the minority group preserves is the totality of its norms and values expressed in actions. The norms are the usual standards

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15. MacIver and Page: Society pp. 117-24.

of the group, the explicit statements of what ought to be. The values are the implicit assumptions underlying behaviour when it is viewed relative to other alternative forms of behaviour. The group, as it were, contains the activity; the well-integrated group is one in which there is frequent and intensive participation in common activity. Any study of assimilation in relation to minority groups will be in effect the study of group integration brought about by the increasing relationships of individuals in the minority group with individuals outside the group. The relationships may increase in frequency, duration, variety, intensity, and order - that is individuals in the minority group in becoming assimilated will interact more frequently, for a longer time, over a larger span of activity, with more detail and intimacy, and will come to initiate interaction, with individuals outside the minority group.

Special Features of the present enquiry.

The problem of the assimilation of Italians in Port Pirie presents special features because the bulk of the "migrants" present in Port Pirie in 1953 came from one class and one occupation in one town in Apulia, and first adopted the same occupation in Australia. Approximately 800 Italians<sup>16</sup> have entered Port Pirie over the half century and these have been classified, partly from their group-adherences and partly for convenience, as North Italians, Southern Italians, and Molfettese. Both the Molfettese and to a lesser extent the Northern Italians have evolved separate groups. Only the Molfettese group is well-defined. The special attitudes of apologetic contempt of the Northern Italian toward the Southern, expressed in verbal withdrawal and verbalized disapproval, helps to differentiate them as a group. Southern Italians are generally

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16. See Appendix One.

devaluated by the Northern because they have brought discredit upon the name of the Italian abroad. They have accepted a low valuation of themselves. By their passionate impulsiveness they have featured in newspapers for using a knife in brawls, and have helped to establish a stereotype of the Italian as a knife-user. They have been clannish, illiterate, and their ways are further removed from and less compatible with the ways of the Northern European. They have made it more difficult for the North Italian to be assimilated in Australia.

The bulk of the North Italians who migrated to Port Pirie came from the town of Rocca D'Arsie in the province of Belluno, and were employed by the Broken Hill Associated Smelters in Port Pirie. The bulk of the Southern Italians came from Molfetta in Apulia, and were engaged in fishing. Their separateness from other Italians is perhaps sufficiently indicated by the fact that they came to regard the speaking of Italian as pretentious, and communicated among themselves in a dialect which is unintelligible to other Italians.

The term Southern Italian for purposes of definition refers to all Italians and their descendants to three generations, born south of a line arbitrarily drawn from Rome to Ancona. It excludes the Molfettese, or those Italians and their descendants, coming from the District of Bari in Apulia, who are familiar with the dialect of the Principate of Molfetta. Italians of non-Apulian but Southern birth have not been sufficiently numerous to form a group of their own. Detached Neapolitans and Sicilians were among the very first settlers in Port Pirie. Before the first world war they commonly lived with other Italians, and were engaged in similar work. After the first world war a large number of Italians from various Southern provinces came to Port Pirie. Some stayed for

only a day and moved on. Very few remained after the depression. Those who remained, and who were probably too few and too heterogeneous to form a protective group of their own, have indicated most symptoms of marginality.<sup>17</sup> They are the most self-conscious of the Italians. They have become aggressively Australian. They have adopted a sectarian religion. Their children have been educated to a higher standard than any other children of Italian descent. They are ashamed of this descent. They enjoy a higher status than the other Italians of Port Pirie.

The Italians, however, were not the only Europeans of non-British birth who came to Port Pirie over the half century. In 1953 the population of Port Pirie included those who were descended from Greek, German, Maltese, Dutch, Russian, French and Scandinavian settlers. Of these the Greeks were the most notable. Although they did not come from any one village or town, as the Italians, they were more organized than the Italians, and in many respects acted as a foil for them. Their higher degree of literacy won them more respect from the host society, and enabled them to avoid certain conflicts with the host society.

The Southern Italians, Germans, Maltese, Dutch, Russian, French and Scandinavian settlers were never very numerous, and did not form minority groups. In the early years of the century before the first world war there appeared to be only the one Italian group in Port Pirie, and Northern and Southern Italians commonly associated with a fair degree of intimacy. Between the wars the Molfettese, Greeks, and to a

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17. Robert Park: "Human Migration and the Marginal Man", A.J.S., XXXIII, pp. 881-93; E.V. STONEQUIST, The Marginal Man.

a lesser extent Northern Italians formed distinct groups. By 1953 the Molfettese had become the most 'visible' migrants in Port Pirie, and in the popular view the least assimilated.

The problem, therefore, is to explain the group-forming tendency and to relate it to the separation of the Northern Italians from the Molfettese, and the further integration of the Molfettese, and to assess which cultural features were predominant in retarding the assimilation of the one particular Molfettese group.

## CHAPTER TWO.

The locus and the people - an historical account of migration, indicating how the outlook of the Northern Italians differed from that of the Molfettese, and how they more readily modified this to the predominant working-class ethos of the host-society.

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The migrant stream from Molfetta to Port Pirie has been continuous, except for war periods, and communications with the country of origin have been continuous over half a century. Since many, if not all, of the migrants intended on first arriving to return to Italy eventually, the question of assimilation, from the point of view of the migrants, has not always been a relevant one. But it has become relevant with the emergence of an Australian-born generation, and the arrival of remaining members of families from Italy.

A similar shuttle pattern of migration to and from Italy was followed by the Molfettese in other parts of Australia, but different group life and different degrees of assimilation have resulted elsewhere. The first Molfettese to come to Australia arrived in Sydney in the 1870s. Settlements in Fremantle, Port Adelaide, and Port Pirie occurred more or less simultaneously. Port Pirie has the largest Molfettese settlement today. It is followed by Port Adelaide, Fremantle and Sydney. There are pockets of Molfettese in some N.S.W. ports such as Tuncurry, and a few may be found on farms in Queensland. Fremantle, Port Adelaide, and Port Pirie are of comparable size, and the number of Molfettese in the first two ports is large enough to permit comparisons with Port Pirie.

In Port Adelaide, where there were less extensive fishing grounds to be explored, some Molfettese men early found alternative employment. At first this was connected with fishing - such as the making and



supplying of ice to boats. The ice-box that first brought profit to Port Adelaide fishing was not introduced into Port Pirie until thirty years later. Characteristic Molfettese institutions were not maintained in Port Adelaide, and relations with non-Molfettese became more frequent. Old men retained an interest in Molfettese ways which was allied with an interest in the past. They took a more intellectual interest in reviewing the past and noting significant changes and developments. The first Molfettese inter-marriage in Port Pirie occurred in 1900, twenty years before an inter-marriage occurred in Port Pirie. There were more local opportunities for the employment of girls than existed in Port Pirie, and parents early modified their objections to their daughters' going out to work in Port Adelaide. In 1953 English was the common language spoken in the Molfettese home at Port Adelaide. Families of Molfettese origin were spread out in Port Adelaide into neighbouring suburbs of Alberton, Ethelton, Granville, Semaphore and Largs Bay. They seldom extended hospitality towards or interfered with one another.

In Fremantle<sup>1</sup>. Molfettese men followed a seasonal pattern of fishing such as they had been used to in Italy. They went out for long distances, sometimes for three-monthly periods, in large trawlers, and divided their catch on a share-profit system. They displayed a pride in their craft, and would sometimes indicate their prosperity by buying a new boat where the old one would have sufficed. In Fremantle there is

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1. Charles Gamba: The Italian Fishermen of Fremantle, 1948. I have since verified these details.

an equally large group of Sicilian fishermen. The Molfettese, reacting perhaps to Sicilian rivalry, preserved much of the religious ritual associated with the festa of Our Lady of Martyrs, patron Saint of Molfetta, and enacted this ritual more lavishly than elsewhere in Australia.

Molfettese families were related to one another in the three communities,<sup>2</sup> and although it is possible that the more progressive and intelligent families migrated to the environment that would give them most scope, an explanation for the variations in adjustment should not be looked for in the intelligence of possible community leaders in the three ports, but, more fundamentally, in the ecological opportunities latent in the varying environments. It would seem from this cursory comparison that the variations in adjustment owed something to the technological and cultural potentialities for life-expression growing independently in the three communities.

#### The Growth of Port Pirie as a Community.

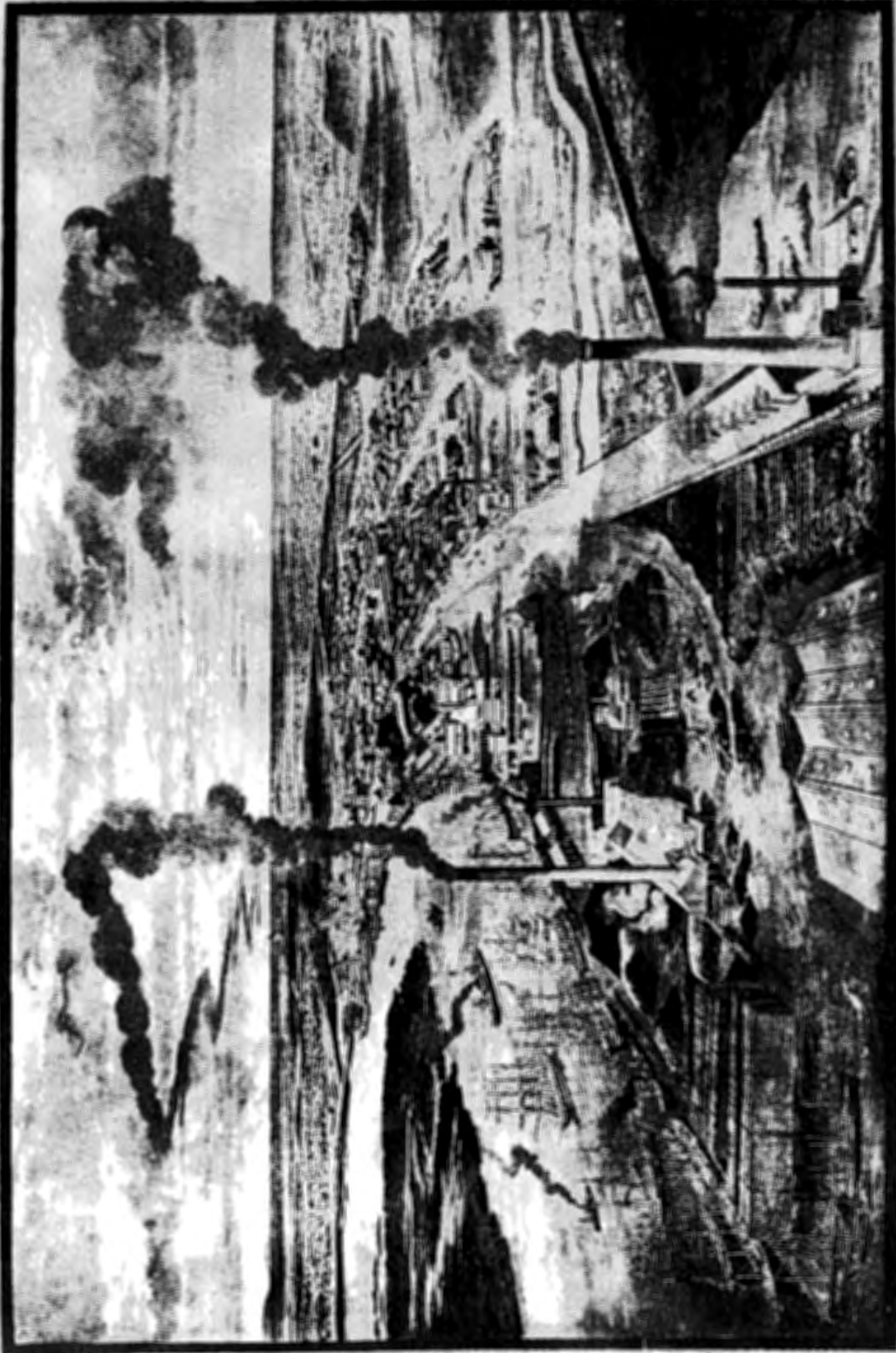
The city of Port Pirie has a population today of over 14,000. It is the second largest town and port in South Australia, and is situated on the Spencer's Gulf, 150 miles from Adelaide. Trains run twice daily to Adelaide, and constantly to Broken Hill carrying lead to be smelted at the Broken Hill Associated Smelters. There is a daily air service to Adelaide. City interests are represented on two regional wireless stations, and in a newspaper that comes out three times weekly. There are usually more than three overseas vessels in port at one time; and the streets are constantly filled with groups of foreign sailors, who walk up and down, look in shop windows and speak strange languages.

Among the street walkers at night are commercial travellers who make  
<sup>2.</sup> The same names recur in the three ports. The relationship was closer in the early years of migration.

monthly visits and usually stay no longer than two days, and gangs of youths and boys who usually meet on the wharf, on the top of corn stacks in summer, in milk bars and at street corners. Wednesday and Friday are market days when farmers come in from the foothills. A farmer's wife living near the railway tracks may habitually shop in Port Pirie, and may travel as far as twenty miles on market days to reach the city. The residents of the town are used to a quick turnover of strangers, are mostly tolerant of them, and let them fend for themselves without prying into their reasons for being in town.

Port Pirie is a men's town. Without the Smelters it would be doubtful whether there would have been a town of any size on the present site. The Smelters today give employment to some one and a half thousand labourers. The presence of the Smelters has given rise to numerous satellite industries employing skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labour. Skilled boilermakers are required for foundries; unskilled labour is wanted for railway yards, petroleum dumps and the wharves. What clubs there are are associations of workers, seafaring men, and small business men. These clubs are mainly drinking places. Men congregate in the bars of hotels at all times of the day, and go the rounds from one hotel to another. Men will amble down to the fisherman's wharf on a summer evening or a Sunday morning, and there is usually someone at work on his boat there and disposed to yarn. The coming and going of small fishing boats forms a pleasant background for the idle curious, for men with an hour or two to pass between shifts. There are some two hundred registered fishing and pleasure boats moored to the fisherman's wharf, and most of these are about twenty feet in length. Labourers work on shifts at the Smelters and on the

BALLOON VIEW OF FORT FIERIE.



wharves so that there is usually some men around all day at the hotels, or going to and from their work or homes. In summer there is no organized local sport of any importance. Men listen to the races and test matches in the bars of hotels and betting shops of a Saturday afternoon. In winter men become ardent barrackers at the local football and soccer matches. The language of men is loud on the wharves in hotels, in the railway yards, in the Smelters - places where women seldom come. Few women stay at the hotels, and none of these presumably come for a holiday. Local women are less mobile than the men and more dependent, in the outer suburbs, on an infrequent bus service.

The centre of the community of Port Pirie is the centre of communications, on the corner of Ellen and Alexander Streets, near the Railway Station, Post Office and the Wharves. On one corner of these intersecting streets is the Corporation Buildings, on the two other corners are the leading hotels, and on the fourth corner is a shopping block and terminus of suburban buses.

Port Pirie and the country round it is flat, treeless, and badly-drained. The soil is salt-impregnated, and the air suffused with sulphur fumes when the wind blows from the north. Consequently people are discouraged in making gardens. Salt water seeps to the surface in high tides, and in some areas rain water is left lying in stagnant pools during winter. Sewerage is primitive. The Corporation is responsible to a labour-elected group, who, it is said, are without business experience and foresight. They are regularly returned in majority by working-men voters who, however they may



take refuge in blaming the incompetence and greed of other men for inefficiency and misfortune, are still faithful to their principle to vote labour. Corporation rates are minimal, and have been fixed by a State law not yet repealed. Lacking adequate capital the Corporation has patched roads with rubble and cinders, and this costs more in the long run than the building of solid bitumen or concrete roads. Heavy vehicular traffic has increased since the war with the extensions to the Smelters and the construction of a Uranium-treating plant, and roads are deteriorating rapidly. The Corporation cannot, at present, cope with the pan system for the removal of refuse, labour being short and inefficient for this unattractive work, and housebuilding going on without any restriction because of the expansion of local industry. Without capital the Corporation cannot carry out proposals for public works. A plan for putting deep drainage into the main part of the town was projected forty years ago, and the hope of the possible realization of this plan with State assistance has discouraged the general substitution of septic tanks.

The typical Australian's ambivalent attitude towards "the Government" is modified in Port Pirie by a further ambivalent attitude towards the Smelters. The Australian may be said, on the general level where one discusses "national character", to resent interference from Governments, but to expect help from them at every crisis. The effective government in Port Pirie is the State rather than the remoter Federal Parliament. The State had provided a fund of £20,000 for the victims of a salt-water flood in 1934. It had built a pipe line from the Murray to Whyalla, from which Port Pirie benefited. It was building a large Power House at Port Augusta sixty miles north, and a Uranium-treating plant adjacent to the Smelters. Road and railway link Port Pirie to

Port Augusta and beyond to Central and Western Australia - areas which the critical working man says need developing by the Government. There is a feeling of identification with the north, and I met men who thought they should be rewarded as pioneers for the self-sacrifice of not living with the sophisticated in Adelaide. The influence of the Smelters is felt to be paramount in local affairs. Men who have done little to improve their standard of life will blame the Smelters too for every wrong turn of events. The Smelters which is obviously wealthy should lead the way, they declare, in any improving to be done in the town. The Smelters had contributed in the founding of a municipal gardens, and many regarded such public works as the responsibility of the Smelters. At the same time no help is expected from the Smelters of the Corporation. The Corporation rarely interferes, and allows much latitude to the individual. Not until the 1920s was it necessary for plans of buildings to be submitted to the Corporation. As a consequence most buildings in Port Pirie were built without an architect; extensions and outhouses have been added by owners from time to time, and some of the dilapidated wood and iron shanties are contiguous to solid stone structures.

With this freedom from inhibition and restraint a spirit of laissez-faire abounds. A man with enterprise can make capital, and many of the town's most noted citizens have built themselves up from nothing through small businesses. The possibility of business gives a common reference point to the commercial class. A man will begin a conversation more readily by enquiring about the state of business than he will pass remarks about the weather. Business men drink at different bars from the labourers. Their drinking is accompanied by a certain affability since they wish to make good connexions. Much of their drinking is justified on the grounds that it is good for business. There is

a tendency for the successful man to avoid the less enterprising. But in other respects the business group are not very removed from the working class, with whom they may sympathise politically. The community is small enough for a professional man to know all other professional men, and many workers besides. The prosperity of the workers effects the prosperity of the town.

There are no exclusive men's groups in Port Pirie, and no occasions when an elite comes together. Status is not clearly defined, and not inherited. There are no old, proud, colonizing families in the district. Children go commonly to the same State and Catholic schools, and very few are sent away to board on reaching secondary school level. The interests of the technician-engineer are given priority in adult education, but the engineer obtains higher status as a successful than as an informed man. The medical profession occupies a special position, and the general practitioner is appealed to as a general authority to decide out-of-the-way issues not within his province. Nevertheless, with all this egalitarianism, there is a feeling of the uncleanness and inferiority of subordinate racial groups. The discrimination seems to be largely capricious, for Port Pirie itself grew rapidly in a makeshift fashion, guided by few clear or adequate standards.

Although Port Pirie is largely the product of the Smelters, which commenced operation in 1888, settlement goes back to 1873, two years after the town was surveyed and gazetted. The first building was a wool shed erected to store wool from near-by stations. The wool was lightered to sailing vessels lying outside the creek. Dengue and typhoid broke out in the early years, and the harbour was only



dredged and widened after the expenditure of much money. It was unlikely that the settlement would have flourished with these natural disadvantages if it had not been the Port for Broken Hill. After 1888 it imported oregon for use in the Broken Hill mines, and a railway was laid to facilitate transportation. It was possible, also, to reach Adelaide in twelve hours by rail.

Port Pirie grew rapidly. The population by the 1881 census was 901; by 1901 it was 7,983. There were as many as thirty three ships in port at one time during this period. Most of the buildings now standing were erected in the ten years following the opening of the Smelters. Inferior building continued, most of the houses being four to six-roomed wooden and iron box structures, with a passage down the middle, and a verandah in front and rear. Stone houses could be built for £250, galvanized iron houses for £220. Those who could not get material for houses camped in canvas and hessian tents on the banks of Dead Horse Creek, near the railway terminus, wharf and Smelters. Water supply was a problem in the early days and plumbing was added to some early built houses much later. It was not until 1918 when the Smelters undertook to supply current that the town was adequately lighted.<sup>3.</sup>

During the 1880s waterfront workers organized themselves into a Working Mens Association. Loading and discharging cargoes was done by the aid of baskets carried on the lumper's shoulders and tipped at the stack at the wharf frontage. There were, on an average, 800 members of the Waterside Union until the first world war when, <sup>the</sup> numbers

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3. Power was supplied to approximately 600 houses in 1918 compared with 3,000 in 1936 ...i.e. roughly to each household in 1936.

were halved with the introduction of mechanical loading. A labourer would get 8/- a day on the wharf compared with 7/6 in the Smelters.

Work in the Smelters was heavy, dirty, and dangerous. Bag houses had not been constructed to catch the sulphur fumes, and the company sort casual labour by keeping an "open gate" to take in on a daily or weekly basis any labour that was offering. Some of the jobs would not be undertaken by any but foreign labourers, many of them firemen deserted from overseas ships. The "open gate" system for the recruitment of labour selected labour from those prepared to work under poor conditions and low standards, and it helped to keep living standards low. In its total labour-force of 1,971 in 1925 the Smelters employed 651 non-Australians; in 1952 the total labour-force was 1,551, of which 71 were non-Australian by birth.<sup>4</sup> Until 1939 the job foreman selected his labour outside the gate to make up for any absentees until the job was finished. If the labourer was willing and satisfactory he was added to the labour pool.

#### The Coming of the Italians.

Italian seamen came to Port Pirie before the Smelters were built. It is not possible to tell exactly how many came in these early years, whether they had any intentions of settling, or for how long

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|                       |                  |              |                 |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 4. In 1925 there were | 362 Greeks       | In 1952..... | 31 Greeks       |
|                       | 104 Italians     |              | 14 Italians     |
|                       | 68 Maltese       |              | 10 Maltese      |
|                       | 47 Scandinavians |              | 3 Scandinavians |
|                       | 20 Russians      |              | 4 Russians      |
|                       | 18 Germans       |              | 5 Germans.      |

they remained. The first overseas vessel with a cargo is reputed to have arrived in 1869, and there is evidence that a few Italians assisted on the ketches that came up the gulf, helping to lighten wheat from the mainland. Naturalization records suggest that a substantial number of Italians, <sup>who</sup> were settled in Port Pirie before 1900 came from Naples and Sicily. Conditions seem to have altered towards the end of the century, and discriminations made against Italians. I was told by one of the first Molfettese migrants that it was difficult for him to get work on the wharf in 1890, except for half a day on the very hottest days, but it was quite easy to construct a small flat-bottomed dinghy from drift wood and row out to the near-by mangrove creeks. Apparently fishing paid, and after one or two years a migrant fisherman could save up enough money to return to his family in Italy.

In 1896 a complaint was sent to the Harbour's Master in Adelaide that "foreigners" were interfering with the livelihood of "British" subjects in the colony. Thirteen or fourteen boats had been counted fishing with small seine nets across the creek shallows, disturbing the breeding ground of fish. Further complaints and a petition signed by twelve British subjects of the colony (three of these had German names) conveyed the impression that the Britishers were being outnumbered, and feared they would have their nets cut. "They have a scattered brotherhood of twenty-eight to thirty people working as one man.. They are like an octopus...Fishermen come straight from Italy and start fishing as soon as they land. Four came in 1898. Every year the fish are getting less. In 1894 there were seventeen fishing, in 1898 there were thirty seven."

Although the Molfettese were not the only Italians to fish they appear to have established a monopoly in fishing. They had

been fishermen in Italy whereas the other Italians had been mainly sailors and sail-makers. The brotherhood seems to refer to them. They were related and brought each other out, and they worked harder than the other Italians with a goal to return to their home town when they had saved enough money for their passage. The other Italians, coming mainly from Genoa, Leghorn, and Treviso in the North of Italy were more literate and became fish-buyers and fish-vendors. With their property interests in Port Pirie, their greater adaptability, and their less intense attachment to their community and families of origin, they were more inclined to settle, and become small-scale money-lenders to the returning Molfettese. Some married locally and had children buried in the local cemetery before the end of the century. The descendants and founders of only seven of these families remain in Port Pirie today.

Until the first world war, when most of the North Italians were sent back to enlist in Italy, all the Italians lived near each other and worked more or less as the one group. After about 1914 a separation occurred and two distinct categories of Italian migrant could be discerned. There were the seamen who came almost exclusively now from Molfetta, and a group of labourers employed in the Smelters, who came predominantly from the town of Rocca D'Arsie in Belluno. The circumstances of migration and subsequent history of the two groups were almost entirely different. Once the numbers involved were sufficiently large a separation between the two groups was maintained, both because their cultural origin was different and because their relationship with the host society was different. The migration from Rocca D'Arsie owed much to the successful migration of one man; that from Molfetta was bound up with the Molfettese family. The fate of the

North Italians in Port Pirie was linked with policies adopted by the Broken Hill Associated Smelters. The lack of discrimination on the part of the host society in ascribing a common identity to all Italians retarded their assimilation. No doubt North Italians and South Italians shared some interests and responsibilities along with a common recently-acquired nationality, but their differences were more striking. They did not so much consider themselves as Italians as men from Rocca D'Arsie, or men from Molfetta. In order to bring out more clearly the cultural differences separating these North from these South Italians, and hence the respective cultural gaps between the communities of origin and the host society which was considered relevant for the discussion of assimilation, I shall consider briefly and in turn some of the attitudes and activities found in both the communities in question. At the present moment it will be sufficient to note that the historical separation of North from South Italy, and the casual attitude of the Italian government towards its migrants did not tend to unite the two groups as fellow Italians.

#### Italy and Migration.

During the nineteenth century the Italian government had hardly formulated a policy with regards to migrants. In 1910 it recognized that the departure of thousands of unskilled labourers yearly to Europe and America could be an economic advantage to Italy if the migrants retained their ties to Italy. Migrants imported goods made in Italy, and were encouraged to do so; they sent back money earned nell'estero, and it was made easy for them to do so. The Italian-born male naturalized outside of Italy could regain his Italian citizen-

ship after six months' residence in Italy, and some Molfettese fishermen, holidaying in Italy, were conscripted for the Turkish war in 1911, for the first world war, and for naval service after and between the wars. Records and statistics were kept in the Town Halls at Rocca and Molfetta. Adults were given identity cards and strangers might be arrested at night if they were found moving aimlessly about in the streets. To these cards was later added information of education and progress at school.

Few of the intellectual elite migrated from Italy until after the first world war. Their motive for migration may be considered to be political, whereas the major Italian motive for migration was economical. The wealthy almost invariably migrated to South America, where the bulk of Italian migration went between the two wars. Mussolini discouraged the migration of the elite and of those who were to build up a strong Italy, but there does not seem to have been many difficulties placed in the way of Molfettese fishermen coming to Australia.

Very little attention was given officially to the migration to Australia. Almost nothing was taught about Australia in the schools, while many lessons were devoted to North and South America. In 1925 an agreement with the Australian Government to restrict emigration to those who had £40 capital or who were nominated had little effect on Molfettese migration, although it may have had considerable effect in curtailing the casual migration of North and South Italians who had no relatives in Australia. The casual North and other South Italian migration to Port Pirie<sup>5</sup> reached its peak in the years 1920-24, and had practically ceased by 1930.

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5. See appendix One.

The Migration of North Italian Labourers from Rocca D'Arsie.

The first Italian recognized in Port Pirie as having wealth and influence was a man called Angelo Bassani, who was listed in the directory of 1900 as an Oyster Saloon Proprietor. Before he came to Port Pirie he had travelled fairly extensively throughout Southern Australia with his wife, a Swiss girl who had worked in cafés. Bassani became, de facto, an Italian consular agent with connexions in Adelaide, Port Lincoln (where the oysters came from), Melbourne and Broken Hill. In 1908 he returned to his home town of Rocca D'Arsie in Belluno showing signs of prosperity. When he appeared at the local inn wearing a hard-hitter he created quite an impression. The news of his arrival spread throughout the village of Rocca and families from the scattered farms gathered at the inn. The story is still well-remembered how he entertained all present producing a sovereign to cover expenses, and, when a peasant who had never seen gold before wondered at it, Bassani drew out a bag of coins and scattered them over the table. Australia came to be known as the land of plenty, and the shipping company at Genoa with its agent at Feltre spread the rumour that gold could be picked up in the streets.<sup>6.</sup>

Rocca D'Arsie has a population today of one and a half thousand,<sup>7.</sup> mostly consisting of poor people working on scattered farm vieyards, living in family units of seven to fifteen in stone houses two or three stories high. A typical house would contain a cellar and working room on the basement, a kitchen, sitting room and dining room on the first floor, three bed rooms on the top, and an attic for storage. A large family

6. The rumour was well confirmed by informants, one of whom pointed to the gold finds at Kalgoorlie as being responsible for it.

7. The Columbia Gazeteer of the World, 1952 quotes the population as 1,537.

brought prestige, but it was a struggle for most to maintain many children while these were young. From the latter part of the last century sixty or seventy youths would leave Rocca regularly every spring with the object of saving a little money to buy a property. With capital a man could "live like a lord", own a block of land, send his grapes to Belluno, and be free. Young girls went abroad as frequently as the men and worked in factories in Switzerland. The men would seek work farther from home in France and Germany, as labourers in the fields or on construction work with pick and shovel. The young men would send their wages home to their mothers, who would put any money that could be spared into bank accounts that could be opened when they became twenty one. Some married men, too, would join the seasonal migration to Central Europe and their wives and the younger children would carry on the farm, tending the cows, goats and pigs. In autumn the men would return to help make cheese and butter, chop wood, catch birds, kill pigs, and store food for the oncoming winter. In the evening they drank wine and played cards, while the young people sang and danced on a Sunday night in the hills.

The drive to earn a little more money to keep them above the subsistence level set up a seasonal migration rhythm of life for the small peasant farmer of Rocca. Prosperity was closely linked with the ownership of land, which could be acquired but was mainly inherited through the father's line. Division of property was equal among all children, unless they proved themselves wastrels, and were cut off by a family will. The land was divided into strips by a surveyor so that each son inherited both fertile and poor land, some cultivated, some scrub, in different parts of the town. Since redivision made it harder for any one brother to maintain a family on a reduced acreage, some agree-



ment was usually made by which one brother would get the land and another would get his share of the money. There were provisions in law whereby brothers were forced to come to a settlement. If there were a lot of sons in a family most of these, if the family was not to be reduced to poverty, would be forced to migrate. Some would not marry. There was a proverb to the effect: "Before you get married take a lesson from the wild bird of the forest.... Build your nest firm: acquire your family next." In this way population remained fairly stable.

There appear to be four classes of land-holding families in Rocca D'Arsie. The first were the few rich, whose land had not been subdivided among many children. The second and largest group were those who owned insufficient land to keep them at their desired standard of living, and who migrated seasonally. The third group owned too small a quantity of land to subsist even after seasonal migration. The fourth group were those who had saved enough money to buy land from the third group. Younger men who migrated overseas did not normally inherit land until later in life, and were prevented by legal clauses from drawing an income from the land unless they were in Italy. Once they had set roots in a new country of adoption they were little prepared to return to the heavy taxes and subsistence-living of North Italy.

#### Opportunities and Conditions for their Employment in Port Pirie.

A number of such men followed Bassani to Australia after his visit to Rocca D'Arsie in 1908. The country round Port Pirie was thought at the time to be suitable for tobacco growing, and Bassani had arranged to assist many of his countrymen in this enterprise. He guaranteed them accommodation, and took over a group of houses on the Terrace which he and his family maintained as Boarding Houses until his death

in 1927. The tobacco-growing proved to be economically unsuccessful. The Victorian Government heard of the scheme and financed tobacco growers in the Goulburn Valley. But, although good crops were grown here, distribution remained a problem and the scheme folded up within two years. The only work available to Italians in Port Pirie at the time was that offering by the Broken Hill Propriety in the Smelters. Some of the would-be tobacco-growers found heavy labouring work through the Smelters at Iron Knob ; some returned to Italy during the strike at the Smelters in 1909. Bassani had as many as twenty eight men staying with him at one time before the first world war, including some Germans employed at the Smelters. Many of Bassani's men owed their passage money to their fathers or the shipping company. They knew no English, and were dependent on him. At the outbreak of the war most of them obtained a free passage to recruit in Italy.

After the war it was difficult for the North-Italian casual labourer to find any work in Europe, and the introduction of passports discouraged international (European) mobility. Men who were prepared to take the trouble to obtain passports were probably prepared to migrate for a longer period of time. The very act of obtaining a passport required some forethought, not necessarily present in the casual pre-war migrations. After the war America put restrictions on its immigrant intake. Thus the largest peak of casual Italian migration to Port Pirie occurred between 1920 and 1926.<sup>8</sup> Some of the migrants were wasters who believed the stories that gold and fortunes could be picked up in the new land with little effort. A large number were middle-aged men with wives and children in Italy. Most of them intended to stay for only a few years while conditions settled down in Europe,

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<sup>8</sup>. See Appendix One.

and had no knowledge of conditions in Australia. Ex-soldiers from Rocca had their return fare defrayed by the Australian Government. They came back despising Southern Italians. During the war the Belluno Alpine Regiment had camped with a contingent of Southern Italians from Aquila Picchono. The Southerners had never been moved away from their homes previously, or been to school. They were homesick, cowardly, and did not wish to mix with the North Italians.

The labour turnover of Italians at the Smelters was rapid. The contrast between the cold, stimulating climate of Rocca and the hot, trying summer of 1922 in Port Pirie discouraged many of the workers. There were no showers installed in the Smelters. Some unscrupulous Australians let out beds which were occupied both day and night by alternative shift workers, without a change of bedding. Many stayed only a month, and sought work elsewhere, frequently on the cane fields or wolfram mines of Queensland.

At this time there was much internal migration going on among Italians in Australia, similar to the internal migration pattern that had preceded it among land-workers in Europe. Italians kept in touch with one another to report on conditions in various parts of the continent. Comparative estimates of labour conditions were continually being made and exchanged, and frequently the labourer would only stay in one job until he heard of something that promised better elsewhere, or he had sufficient funds to seek the more promising job. Italians worked in gangs of ten or a dozen in the Smelters under a leading hand who, it was likely, had been employed in the Smelters before the war. It is these leading hands who settled in Port Pirie, while fellow Italians moved to more congenial, farming occupations.

As conditions improved in the Smelters the labour turnover and force were reduced. In 1924 an enquiry was made into lead poisoning. Italians were among the heaviest sufferers, partly because they were employed in the more dangerous jobs and partly because they were less particular in, and had fewer facilities provided for, their personal hygiene. It was suspected that some foreign-born employees bought lead ointments from the chemist, or neglected to take precautions, because they wanted the £800 compensation money to return to Europe. Compensation claims increased remarkably in number once compensation was known about, and this confirmed the suspicion. The company grew reluctant to employ labourers with dependents in a foreign country. Again, with the improved metallurgical processes the less skilled labour was weeded out. A de-silvering process was introduced in 1931-2, with bag houses to catch sulphur fumes. There was a reduction of thirty per shift in the refinery. While the work was mechanical it had not been necessary for each worker to be able to speak and understand English. With the quick turnover of labour this was not possible. The labourer worked as one of a team with the leading-hand gang-interpreter as a semi-official go-between and guide. When the work became less mechanical the gangs grew smaller, and the labourer was required to work more as an individual and on his own initiative.

A prolonged strike in the late twenties obliged the Smelters to give priority to married, then to single Australians. Labour was reduced in the Smelters during the depression; and the recently-engaged and non-Australian labour were the first to be reduced. The labour intake of Italians employed in the Smelters dropped, by my estimate, from 105 (between 1920-24) to 32 (between 1925-29) to 3 (between

With easier and healthier conditions of labour, good wages, and a lead bonus paid to all employees, there is now a wide competition to enter the Smelters. Italian labour was given a low priority in the years of fascist imperialism, although North Italians headed by the Belluno section made it quite clear that they discredited fascism.<sup>10</sup> After the second world war the Smelters adopted an employment system giving priority to ex-servicemen, sons of old employees, and Australians.<sup>11</sup>

The Italians now remaining in the Smelters work side by side with Australians, and with premiums going to long-established Australianism many have adopted Australian values and norms. Their leisure habits approximate to those of the Australian workman, and they may be found listening to races in hotel bars on Saturdays. They have become suspicious rather than respectful of management. Their norm of conformity is expressed in the idiom "being one of the boys". The Italian-born worker must think and express himself in a certain way before he can be accepted outside a small circle of friends as a "regular fellow". He must understand something of the mystique of mateship, expressed in spontaneous willingness to help his fellow workmen allied with him against management and a rugged natural environment. When he is referred to as "dago" or "grill"<sup>12</sup> he is in effect being challenged as to his understanding of the Australian ethos. As an assimilated Australian workman he should be prepared to defend, by verbal truculence or a show of

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9. See also Appendix One.

10. Fascist violence may have been more evident in the North than the South. More resistance would have been expected there.

11. Some looseness is expressed in the definition of "Australian". by the employment section. It certainly means naturalized Australian, Australian-speaking, and extends to Australian-seeming and Australian-born.

12. A recent, disparaging, local nickname for the Italian.

fighting, the most trivial aspersions to his manhood and fitness to belong. He must be prepared to defend the position that he is the equal of any other Australian, and that he does not set himself up to be apart from or superior to any other Australian.

The Italian labourer who had long associated with Australian workmen in the Smelters has become the most decided of all workmen I encountered in his contempt for the Molfettese group of ignorant fishermen. He despises the Molfettese as the dirt - even though in his standards of cleanliness and morality the Molfettese is frequently purer than the Northern Italian.

#### Some General Remarks on the Molfettese Migration.

Nearly all the South Italian migrants in Port Pirie have come from Molfetta, where they were fishermen, as were their fathers before them. While the Northerners came to Australia independently, usually after travelling through Europe, the Molfettese came as members of a family group, one after another, one sponsored by another, father nominating his son, a brother his brother, a man his friend. As fishermen they worked first as a team, the younger men serving an apprenticeship to the elder, who made all the decisions, were responsible for them, and guaranteed them work and food. As fishing was available for them at Port Pirie very few Molfettese entered the Smelters, and comparatively few left Port Pirie to find employment in other parts of Australia.

The migration situation is an interestingly paradoxical one. The Apulian fisherman is strongly attached to his family - a man, for example, once locked himself into a room for a week when one of his parents died - and he dislikes being away from home for any long period of time. He was

strongly attached to the community in which both he and his predecessors were born. Yet in migrating he left his town, his home, and his family for an indefinite period to live frugally in a country about which he initially knew nothing, and in which he was treated as an inferior. Since many Molfettese migrated early in life <sup>13.</sup>, it should not be unreasonable to expect that the young migrant would have the zest of an adventure-loving boy, wishing to explore his new environment and to seek out new experiences for their own intrinsic worth. But the Molfettese was not enterprising or spurred by adventure ; he was not a gambler ; he avoided taking risks; he distrusted the outsider, and he did not at first trust his money to the care of banks. One of his main outlets against economic distress had been a sexual one, but having migrated he was enforced through his economic and racial inferiority to live a chaste life.

A fuller understanding of the motives underlying the migration of the fishermen and the adaptation they made to the new environment of Port Pirie may be gained from a brief description of their community of origin and the pattern of living they conformed to in Molfetta.

#### The Background of the Molfettese Fishermen, and its bearing on Migration.

Historically Molfetta is very old. There are caves near the sea that bear relics of settlement in pre-Roman times. Molfetta was a fishing

13. In a random sample of 25 Northern Italians and 25 Molfettese the ages of migration were as follows :

| Age Group | Molfettese | North Ital. |
|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 0-10      | 3          | nil         |
| 11-19     | 8          | 3.          |
| 20-29     | 9          | 11          |
| 30-39     | 4          | 5           |
| 40-49     | 1          | 4           |

2 North Italians,  
nil Molfettese in  
age group 50- 59

village in the 11th. century when the Knight Templars built a hospit al there for passing Crusaders. The town was walled in mediaeval times and governed by a Prince. Since the 16th.century the marine industry has been the main source of occupation.A new city was built on the outskirts of the old walls in the 19th.century,during the latter part of which the beginnings of industrialization and migration took place. The population of Molfetta was some 14,000 in 1811; it had doubled itself by 1871,and doubled itself again by 1921. The fishing fleet seems to have expanded more than proportionately.<sup>14.</sup> There were approximately one hundred boats in the harbour in 1861;approximately two hundred and fifty boats (6,000 mariners) by 1900. In 1884 ship-building began,an d ketches up to 100 tons were built. Not all these were used for fish trawling,but enough were in commission to threaten the security of the small-craft owner by bringing a glut of fish to Molfetta. By 1930 over 80% of the boats were equipped with engines and refrigerators, and,with a crew of six to twelve,they used to stay out for fourteen days or more before returning and equipping themselves again.<sup>15.</sup>

There were degrees of prosperity among fishermen and there was always the possibility,if a man had a large family of boys to work for him and some initial capital,that he could become prosperous through

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14.Statistics and facts from *Le Cento Citta D'Italia Illustrate*, medio-evale e moderna, 1930; *Encyclopedia Italiana* ; *Statistica delle migrazioni da e per l'estero*; *Censimento Generale della popolazione*; and *Annuncio Statistico della Emigrazione Italiane*.

15.Molfetta was second to Sicily in its fishing catches for 1949-50... i.e. it caught more fish than Pezzuoli,Sciacci,Palermo and Chioggia : *Statistica della pesca e della caccia*.



fishing. Some fishermen owned small boats and went out daily; some had shares in the ownership of larger boats, but most earned only a share in the profits of the catch of the trawler on which they worked. It was the ambition of many a man who migrated to Canada, the Americas, or Australia that he would earn enough money to return one day and become the owner of a trawler. Children boasted in play that when they grew up they would sail out in the harbour as master or mate on a large fishing schooner.

Fishermen had been lowly people, midway in status between the Corporation or Wharf workers and the tradesmen. Few before 1927 were literate.<sup>16</sup> They were looked down upon and ignored by the rich, educated, and professional classes. Yet they had a certain independence and pride in their work which the day-labourer had not. They would talk on a friendly basis with Corporation and unskilled labourers, but would only accept with reluctance a Corporation or wharf job.

No matter to what class a man belonged before he migrated he returned as a "campagna" - or a man from a far country. He enjoyed the higher status belonging to a more prosperous American or Australian. He would meet other returned emigrants and discuss comparatively the profits of fishing in South America, Alaska, or the United States. His company and advice would be sought after at times by those of a higher social position. Although it could not have been a motive that led men to migrate in the first place, this glorious homecoming later added to the attractions of migration, and possibly persuaded a would-be emigrant, who

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16. When Mussolini introduced compulsory education into Italy.

was on the margin of doubt between migrating and not migrating, to seek his fortune in a remote land. The hardships of this remote land were as yet unreal to him ; the pleasantness of homecoming he had witnessed in another's case. I infer as much from the biographies I took.

But Molfetta did not remain a static community, and the returning migrant found much that was altering. After 1925 Molfetta became increasingly industrialized with the construction of macaroni, brick, cement, rope, soap and bedding factories. Olive oil works and timber yards utilized near-by resources. In the light of this progressive expansion the question might be asked at this stage : - "Was migration ever really necessary? Was there no mobility of labour from fishing to industry, particularly after 1925 ?" If there was such mobility it would appear that attachment to a particular occupation or mode of earning a living was a stronger motive for action than attachment to a particular family and place, assuming that the action was rational. The tenacity with which the Molfettese held to their age-old dependence on the sea and continued as fishermen in new environments should be considered conjointly with alternative occupations available in Italy. The answer to the question is contained partly in the popular sayings of the migrants<sup>17</sup>; and their constant quoting of comparative densities of population in Italy and Australia.<sup>18</sup> I was told that there was so much labour available in Italy that a man must have special skill in his trade before he could be sure of constant

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17. Such as : "Italy is so crowded that there is no room to cast your anchor there."

18. In Molfetta the density is 815 people per sq. km.

employment in it. A foreman could at any time ask a labourer to work overtime without notice or reward, and if the labourer objected he could be told to go elsewhere. The labourer could be dismissed at any time, and he in turn did not feel obliged to give notice to his employer if another and better job became available for him. If, for example, a small area of fence was to be painted, then two labourers might be engaged to paint it side by side so that they could be compared in skill and output, one with another, and only the more satisfactory worker would be retained. Because of its abundance and lack of organization the price that unskilled labour commanded on the market was small. Some unemployment had been relieved through public works, Molfetta had, for example, been supplied with water from the mountains in 1917. It had had scarcely any washing facilities previously. It had been given up-to-date roads and sewerage during the depression. The cemetery had been made to seem a garden, and work is still going on in renovating the harbour and beaches. Consequently, for the unskilled and illiterate fisherman there was little mobility of labour in Italy. His way of hope still lay in saving enough money to buy a trawler, or a small business on his own account. After compulsory elementary education was introduced to Molfetta in 1927 a new world of opportunity was opened to his sons: who proved able and willing to learn. The enterprising but poorly endowed young man no longer had to migrate to a remote country in order to obtain the capital and security to marry and to support a family, but could obtain these, and the respect of his neighbours through his diligence in attending a trade school<sup>19</sup>. and becoming a

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19. Some of these were: Ginnasi e licei ginnasi, licei scientifici, istituti tecnici, istituti magistrali, istituti femminili, scuole complementari, istituti con ordinamento autonomo, istituti di cultura e perfezionamento.

a skilled artisan. Parents came to hope that one of their younger sons would become an artisan, and there were some fishermen who might have returned to Italy earlier who remained away from their families to meet the expenses of secondary education for these sons. To the older Molfettese growing up during the depression, and faced with the overcrowding of the fishing industry in Molfetta, the most rational plan of action was to seek new fishing grounds elsewhere.

#### The Migrations of the Molfettese.

The main impulse to migrate in the years immediately prior to the second world war came from men maturing before 1930, who were handicapped educationally by the younger men who were sent to trade schools after this date. Fishermen born in the 1870s and 1880s had had little or no education. Their prospects and way of life were those of most fishermen born before the middle twenties. A boy used then to be put to work at the age of six if his parents were poor. He could be useful in many odd jobs if he went to sea in a trawler. One of his tasks was to call the crew members, living scattered over various parts of the town, when the fishing boats were to leave about four o'clock in the morning. Besides this it was considered that when he went fishing he would earn a skill that would make him useful, perhaps to a relative overseas who needed assistance. Not having a detailed knowledge of fishing grounds in the Mediterranean his skill during the early years of his life was not a strictly localized one. Such a man was a potential migrant. He liked his sons in turn to follow the same occupation as himself, and depending on their vision of the future the fishermen who established themselves and their fam-

ilies in Port Pirie before the last war took it as a matter of course that their sons would become fishermen. Being fishermen they had at least to consider the possibility of making temporary settlements wherever fish was abundant and marketable.

A precedent to migration was set up by the formation of Molfette "colonies" in the Mediterranean. Some 3,000 Molfette had migrated to other countries by 1931, and these were mostly fishermen. Fishermen sailed to Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia in the nineteenth century, and had captured the fish market of Patros, which supplied a large part of the fish to Central Greece. Fishermen migrated first to Greece, then to Turkey, Russia, Australia, Egypt, Central Africa, and Asia Minor. There are Molfette in Port Pirie who were born in Turkey, in Egypt, in Canada, and in America. Greek and Egyptian <sup>Arabic</sup> are spoken by a few of the fishermen.

Many more Molfette went to the Americas than to Australia, since the distance was shorter and the money for the passage fare less. Those who went to Brazil were readily assimilated and less frequently returned to Italy.<sup>20</sup> Nearly all the Italians who came to Port Pirie were related to one another, and some returned to Port Pirie after being more successful in the Americas because they had more relatives in Australia.<sup>21</sup>

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20. from genealogies, and Jose Rios, The Italian in Brazil U.N.E.S.C.O. 1950.

21. This important point was born out by the genealogies, and implied by some of the statements of informants. The relative strength of economic and family ties would differ presumably with different families. It raises a host of interesting speculations which cannot be gone into here.

Their Migration to Port Pirie.

The Molfettese first came to Port Pirie in 1889. During the next twenty years they continually came and went, passing each other on the way, borrowing and lending from each other, carrying news to and from Italy in the days when very few of them at home or abroad could read and write. The earliest migrants left the bulk of their property and possessions in Italy. A man may have brought a charm or the photograph of his mother, fiance, or patron saint, but he usually had no other clothes than those he wore. Those who, migrating for the first time, had brought a suit of clothes with them found no occasion to wear it, and had nowhere to keep it while they lived in lean-to humpies. Consequently their clothes quickly shrunk and deteriorated.

Bringing few possessions with them the early Molfettese were more strongly motivated to return to Italy. The time interval between successive return voyages gradually grew longer for individual remigrating Molfettese, and for the migrants generally. Migration to Australia and America was comparatively simple in the years prior to the first world war; fares were cheap, and shipping companies encouraged the to-and-fro movement of passengers for their own profit. In addition there were more overseas vessels before international trade shrank and the aeroplane gave an alternative mode of transport. When, after the first world war, passports became necessary for international travel and passage fares gradually rose the Molfettese were discouraged from returning to Italy at regular intervals, and encouraged to accumulate their possessions and make their home in the one country or the other.

Many of the first arrivals were married, and have since returned to Italy, while their sons have replaced them in Australia. The retired Molfettese are still considered in Port Pirie, if they are ever referred to, as successful migrants. But not all the early arrivals were successful. One fisherman - whose story is typical in its account of entrances and exits during the early part of the century - came to Port Pirie at the request of an elder brother. (This brother had in turn been called to Australia by his eldest sister's husband, recently deceased; the eldest sister's husband came by an invitation of the brother and friend of the first arrival). The fisherman was naturalized in 1913, being advised to go through the formality of naturalization by a policeman at that time. He returned to Italy from 1909-1912, from 1919-1920, three times between 1921 and 1929, and from 1929 to 1937. During his first and last trips he tried to earn his living as a fisherman on the Adriatic Sea. In his other trips he was married and begat his children. He returned to Australia in the first place because he had discovered fishing grounds in the Spencer's Gulf for which he had little competition. He went back to Italy because his heart was in Italy, because he wanted to get married, and because when married he could not or did not persuade his wife to come to Australia. He came to Australia finally with his eldest son, who fished with him until the remainder of his family migrated to Australia in 1947. From his story three common aspects of the migration pattern of the Molfettese to Port Pirie early in this century can be summarized.

(1) The Molfettese hoped that his stay in Australia would be short, and that he would only have to remain until he had saved enough

money to return and establish himself in Italy. He might have to come back to Australia several times before he had saved enough to be able to return permanently.

(2) Because the speaking of English would not help him in Italy he did not bother to learn to speak it in Australia, or to associate with Australians. He did not invest money in Australia, but sent his savings to Italy where they could be used to gain him prestige, a wife, and later property. Hoping eventually to make good in Italy he did not insist that his wife should come out to Australia. She was looking after his property and interests in Italy.

(3) Finally, after he had returned to Italy and failed financially, and with more and more Molfettese coming to Australia, he severed his economic ties with his birth place, and saved to buy a house and property in Australia. Here he could make more money as a fisherman more surely.

The question of making money more easily in Australia is not a relative one, governed by comparative standards of living. The question itself is relevant but not here. The man who returned to Australia after setting up a business or buying a trawler in Italy had made the capital in Australia with which he set up the business. He lost this capital in Italy while taxes were high during the Abyssinian war, and businesses were taxed not on the income they received, but on the profit they ought to have earned, determined in advance by assessors.

The pattern of migration in relation to the length of stay in Australia, the property brought into or accumulated in Australia, the competition of family units in Australia and the consequent orientation towards Australia, was gradually being modified throughout



the century. For historical purposes it is possible to distinguish four periods of migration in which the pattern of migration was influenced or directed by historical events in Italy, Australia, and among the Molfettese themselves.

Thus the first exploratory period of migration occurring before the first world war may be said to have terminated about 1911 when the first Molfettese women came to Port Pirie. By contrast, the second period of migration from 1911 until about 1927 was one of indecision. Travelling restrictions after the first world war and the realization that the frequent back-and-forward sea voyages were expensive faced men with the problem of whether to bring their families to Australia or return permanently to Italy. For some the indecision was carried over into the third period of migration lasting until the outbreak of the second world war. But during this third period more and more Molfettese women came to Australia, and their Australian-born children were growing up in Solomontown. This period was therefore generally one of consolidation and activity on the part of the Molfettese. Finally, the fourth period of migration separates off the post-war migrant period, and will be considered in more detail after some attention has been given to the growth of the Molfettese community during the third migration period. Roughly speaking, a major event effecting both Italy and Australia separated one period off from another. The first period was divided from the second by the first world war; the second from the third by a world depression; and the third from the fourth by the second world war.

The first period of migration was characterized by strong Italian orientation, and frequent migrations. The Molfettese had

certain relations during this period with North Italians and other South Italians, who lived near them and acted as advisors. They had a unity of interest and fortune with these Italians, and among themselves they were co-operative. By the third period of migration an incipient Australian orientation - a recognition of the potentialities of Australia - was emerging.

The differences in attitude characterizing the successive periods of migration were subtle and diffused. They were not, for this reason, less real. The changes of attitude cannot be demonstrated or explained by statistics, or by any one factor, such as economic motives, alone. The Molfettese migrant did not calculate his chances of survival in the one country as against those of another. His leaving his family to seek fishing grounds in a remote country did not mean that he cared more for fishing than for his family, or that his family was unimportant to him. The hypothesis that economic motives were mainly responsible for emigration while ties toward family and community of origin brought the migrant back again when he had earned sufficient money requires further analysis. It could only be established if the enquiry were extended to cover the incomes of migrants relative to those of non-migrants. It might be shown from such an investigation that the migrants were not the most indigent group in Molfetta, and that many of them could have supported a family at their accustomed standard of life if they had remained in Molfetta.

There is no available evidence on comparative standards of living between either migrant and non-migrant in Italy, or between

the migrant in Australia and the non-migrant in Italy. While granting that it would be absurd to expect men to migrate continuously if they did not consider there was some economic gain from migrating, it is not possible to push the argument of actual economic gain very far. Migration was a more emotional undertaking than statistics might reveal. Always the way of the migrant was the way of hope.<sup>22</sup> Both North and South Italians agreed that Italy was a beautiful country. But the poor man had no chance to look around there and enjoy the beauty. There were too many people in Italy. Australia, on the other hand, was an infant country - the best country in the world for a poor man.

#### The Molfette Family and Migration.

Economic factors had an important indirect bearing on migration through what may be called the 'honour of the family'. Fishermen did not only wish to subsist, but to win the approval of others by a display of generosity at festas, and by being able to provide handsome dowries for their daughters.

It was a matter of honour for a family to get its daughters married as well as they could be. The marriage contract was arranged through an 'estimator' who was selected in the first place from his or her knowledge of the potentialities and assets of the families involved. The prospective groom would say how much he wanted when he married a particular girl, and he would have to pay an equivalent amount himself towards the setting up of the new house. The value of each item brought by the respective bride and groom was calculated by the 'estimator'. Once the contract was agreed and made

22. Il cammino della speranza....the common theme of Italian migration.

public it was a matter of honour for both families to see it fulfilled. It was the duty of the sons in a family with a disproportionate number of girls to make up the deficit for the dowries of their sisters if their father could not provide for these alone. Without a dowry the marriage of his sisters would be delayed, and this delay itself meant that they could only be given in marriage to the least desirable men. To prevent this a man frequently migrated, worked, and saved in company with his future brother-and-law. In this manner each was able to meet his side of the dowry agreed on in advance in the marriage to be contracted between one of them with the sister of the other.

The theme of family honour extended in many directions. It was concerned with the behaviour of each of the members of the family, ascribing norms of conduct to these, and stressing the part that each played in the perpetuation of life through the alliances of families. Migration did not interfere with such alliances, but, as it has been stated, it facilitated them. Without this emphasis on the honour of the family and the pride of certain families of raising themselves in a grade of honour, the separation of a home-loving man from his wife, home, and possessions would hardly be intelligible. Without wishing to treat the subject of family honour exhaustively at this stage I will give one further illustration of this motive, to substantiate the argument that it was an important consideration in the thoughts of men who decided to migrate from Molfetta.

In Molfetta, as in other towns in Italy, living-space was

limited and families rented or owned two or three-roomed flats, called casa or houses, in blocks of houses, three or four storeys high. There were four or five such houses on each landing, and women and children constantly visited one another in their leisure moments. Under conditions of severe economic competition only relieved by family co-operation, rivalries and jealousies among families who suddenly improved their position could become acute. By the middle of the depression families who owned houses or who lived on the top storey considered themselves superior to those who lived on the bottom. Poverty could be something which through its implications was to be ashamed of. The phrase "living on the bottom" signified low-class people low in the scale of family honour, who were symbolically without education or the will to improve themselves given to narrow-mindedness and cankerous gossiping, and given to swearing, throwing rubbish into the streets, superstitious and dirty in their habits, too improvident to raise themselves. From such families presumably came the prostitutes, the women without pride. From such degradation the honourable family went to great lengths to preserve itself, and recurrent examples of the distress of the poor spurred on the respectable families to work and to save harder in order to make useful alliances, and maintain their honour.

Rents were not very much higher for houses on the upper storey, but the additional expense deterred the less enterprising. Wealth alone could not buy respectability; nevertheless, in Italy there was almost an inseparable barrier between the wealthy and the poor classes, and the poor who aimed at respectability aimed also at acquiring wealth. The man who was prepared to migrate

to Australia to improve the position of his family also aspired to sit on a balcony with his family on summer evenings in Molfetta, watching the movements of the people below.

Yet, though it promised to improve family honour and security, the migration of men in their most productive years caused much family distress. In some families where there were many sons the mother would speak little to them about migration lest it should encourage them to leave her. Nevertheless, she usually gave her consent for the eldest son to join her husband, although she might have known from previous examples that when this happened there was little chance that they would both return to Italy. She would worry over adverse items of news, and, after they had been separated for long periods, over the constancy of her husband. But every letter and remittance of money was a reassurance. She would show the letter to her neighbours, and give a detailed account of how she used the money in her reply to her husband. In other families, where <sup>there</sup> was a preponderance of daughters, the mother might talk more freely to them about the virtues of sacrifice, partly as a measure of discipline. "Your father is away to keep you, to work for you, to bring you things."

Again migration could become a habit in a man. One fisherman, for example, first migrated to Australia before he was married in Italy. He subsequently migrated to San Francisco and Alaska on two occasions, returning between migrations to Italy. He remigrated to Australia in 1924, returned to Italy, and finally migrated again to Australia. He was married in 1914 at the age of twenty eight.

His sons were born in 1915 and 1918. His daughters were born in 1920, 1923, and 1929. His photograph was in his wife's bedroom, and when the daughters grew older and asked where their father was they would be shown the photograph. When the father returned they refused to recognize him, and went to their uncle saying - "my father is only a piece of paper." It was such an episode as this that persuaded the wife of this man to bring her daughters to Australia. His repeated absences were due in the first place for his desire to provide well for his family, then later to save for his daughters' dowries. It might have been possible for him with his earnings to have settled in Italy at the outbreak of the depression, although it later became impossible for a man to get a job there unless he was a declared fascist. He did not remain long enough to try to obtain employment in Italy. His sons came to Australia in 1929 and 1931; the remainder of his family came in 1935.

The Migration of Molfettese Women, and the Changing Attitude towards the repeated Migration of men during the Second Period of Migration.

No permanent Molfettese settlement with the possibility of Australian orientation and assimilation was possible while the Molfettese men remained strongly attached to women in Italy. Family security and pride were rooted in Italy. The stability of the family depended on the constancy and faith of the women as much as it did on the economic contributions and sacrifices of the men. The place of the Molfettese woman was traditionally in the home, and "home" for the early Molfettese migrants to Port Pirie was in Italy.

The arrival of the first Molfettese women in 1911 created a

precedent, which was to change the thoughts of the Molfetteese in regard to emigration. While men lived in lean-to humpies or in a rat-infested shed during the first period of migration there was little question of their bringing their wives to Port Pirie, even if the women would agree to come. Contrasting with this, in the fourth period of migration it was considered a woman's duty to join her husband in Australia, even though she might live more comfortably with her mother's kin in Italy.

The migration of women, which because of its sociological implications has been taken here to separate off the second period of migration from the first, was largely an oddity during this second period. Individual migrations can be accounted for as due to some special set of circumstances, sometimes involving exceptional behaviour. Thus the first woman to arrive had few relatives in Italy. Her mother was dead, and she had no sisters. Her coming to Australia was linked with the poverty of her family, which could not provide her with a dowry. The man she married in Italy had procured a room in a house rented by a North Italian, and wanted to take a Molfetteese woman back to Australia with him. The anxieties attending her decision were no doubt mitigated by the promised migration of a younger sister-in-law, who arrived a few months after her. The first woman had no children. By 1922 four daughters were born in Australia to her sister-in-law, and the eldest of these was by this time considered old enough to help her mother. The childless woman adopted the second daughter and returned to Italy. No other Molfetteese woman or second-generation Molfetteese has to my knowledge returned to live permanently in Italy, and there has been no other case of





adoption.

But, as was the case with the Molfettese men, the Molfettese women did not migrate singly or as individuals. They migrated with other members of their family, and came to be attached to the part of their family that had migrated previously. The first family migration occurred in 1913. The wife of a fisherman who had recently died in Port Pirie, and who was too old to remarry, decided to join her eighteen year old son who had migrated to Australia in 1902. She came in the same boat with her two younger daughters, her deceased husband's brother's sons, and her deceased husband's sister's son. The husband of her second daughter was fishing with her son in Port Pirie. She sold her furniture in Italy to pay for the sea passage; and she let out rooms to boarders to help pay for the rent in the house where she now presided. Her boarders were mainly relatives, and were charged 2/- a week for a share of a room and 2/6 a day for food. The arrangement introduced a slightly higher standard of living in Port Pirie for larger numbers of Molfettese men. This higher standard of living is a characteristic of the second period of migration.

The family gradually extended and established itself. The main branch, however, always remained through the superior attitude it adopted towards other Molfettese something of a conspicuous exception. In 1915 the youngest daughter married; in 1916 the husband of the second daughter was drowned at sea; in 1918 the second daughter married again; in 1921 the eldest daughter and her farmer

husband and family migrated to Port Pirie to live near the second daughter. The son sold his boat to buy a business in Solomontown, where he, his mother, his younger sister and her husband, and later their children and children's husbands and wives all worked together.

Only nine Molfettese women migrated to Port Pirie during the years 1911-1920.<sup>23</sup> The proportion of Molfettese males to females arriving, estimated in five-year periods remained 4 to 1 until the third period of migration. The migration of women was not, therefore, the main factor accounting for the decreasing rate of return voyages made by men during the period. Return voyages had become increasingly less frequent after the first world war.<sup>24</sup> And it is reasonable to expect that they should have. One reason has already been discussed in relation to North Italian migration<sup>25</sup> where it applied differently. International mobility had been freer before the first world war. In the second place the cost of a second-class passage to and from Italy was increasing steadily as international trade shrunk during the course of the first half of the century.<sup>26</sup> The earliest Molfettese, who were not deserters or stowaways, came as steerage passengers on German barques, and it was easy, when so many sailors deserted on reaching Australia, for a skilled seaman to obtain a return passage as one of the crew. The return voyages

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23. See appendix One.

24. See appendix Nine.

25. See above p.32.

26. The price was £55 in 1923 compared with £176 in 1947.

of the Molfettese migrants became appreciably further between as sailing vessels went out of commission.<sup>27</sup> Thirdly, as living conditions improved in Port Pirie itself and larger sailing vessels took the place of small dinghies some fishermen left Port Pirie itself during the second period of migration for longer periods of time, explored new and more profitable fishing grounds in the Spencer's Gulf and sailed as far as the Great Australian Bight. An Italian fishing colony was opened up at Port Broughton by 1914,<sup>28</sup> largely made up of Molfettese who came from Port Pirie. Fourthly, though I do not think that any of the Molfettese consciously migrated for political reasons mainly, the introduction of fascism into Italy had its effect on returning migrants since it made their re-adaption to Italy more difficult. Many Molfettese men in Australia feared for the safety of their interests in Italy and nominally belonged to the Fascist Party in Australia. Unless they belonged to the party they were told that they could not bring their wives into this country. If a man could not so readily return to his family in Italy he desired more strongly to bring his family to Australia.

The Migration of Women and the Growth of an Italian Community during the Third Period of Migration.

The most important feature distinguishing the third period of migration seems to be the growth of a Molfettese community, residentially separated from the North Italians, and located in Solomontown.

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27. Most of the Molfettese fishermen before the second world war had a good knowledge of sail. Engines were not added to their boats until the 1930s.

28. See appendix Ten.

Although in the years 1930-34 the number of females arriving was for the first time in excess of the number of males, the figures as plotted for the shorter time interval may present a distortion which would make exact comparisons difficult <sup>29</sup>. The figures as they stand indicate a progressive lessening of the tendency of women to remain in Italy.

As more women came to Australia and there was more company for them here, there was less hesitation on the part of men to ask them to come. Many women, nevertheless, were reluctant to leave their family and home in Italy. A frequent reason given by women for not coming to Australia earlier was that they had to care for an ageing mother. But sometimes a traumatic experience might induce a woman to migrate. The husband of one woman ceased to send her money saying that her father was well enough off in Italy to look after himself. Since her mother had died when she was young her father did not want her to leave him. She fell ill with yellow fever, and made a vow that if she recovered she would come out to Australia. She explained to her father: "you will lose me in either case." She sold her house on recovery, to pay for her passage.

Most women, too, were afraid of the sea. Some gave as their reason for not returning to Italy once they reached Australia that they had been frightened all the way coming out. Any stories of disasters and losses at sea were relayed and magnified. <sup>30</sup> Whereas men had been used to leaving Molfetta for months at a time in the nine-

29. See appendix One.

30. For example, two men from one family had died on their way to Sydney in 1926. The incident was well remembered. I was constantly reminded of the fear of the sea by fishermen who made for

teenth century, women had traditionally waited for them at home, and most women had never left Molfetta until they were called upon to make another home on the other side of the world. The letter that asked the woman to come out to Australia was often inconsistent with its predecessors. Letter after letter would reach Molfetta nostalgically complaining of the drabness of life in Australia :

"The day is long. We know no one out here "- and then without explanation would come the direction : "Sell everything. Come to Australia."

More than one woman sold her property, bought a ticket to Australia, and went as far as the wharf at Naples, before she changed her mind, and went back to live with her mother's family. There are men at present in Port Pirie, who came to Australia over thirty years ago, who married, had children, acquired property in Italy, and whose wives have still delayed coming to Australia.

A further reason why men no longer hesitated to ask their wives to come to Australia during the third period of migration was their feeling that it had become comparatively less expensive for them to keep a wife in Australia than to keep her by remitting money to Italy.<sup>31</sup> Appendix Three shows the comparative movements of the

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30 (continued) the shore at the first sign of bad weather, and who took excessive precautions to avoid sand-banks and passing ships at night.

31. The proportion of men to women migrants altered from 3.75:1 in 1925-29 to .07: 1 in 1930-34 to 1.44 to 1 in 1935-39.

The proportional increase in the number of Molfettese women was too small to support a hypothesis that the relative cost of living in the two countries was a major cause for the altered pattern of migration. The total migration figures for Australia seem to support it, but other factors such as the cost of passage fares would have to be taken into account for other Italian migrants to other parts of Australia.

cost of living in Italy and the cost of living in Australia in terms of the Italian lira, from 1929 until 1949. The cost of living is calculated for the base year of 1937. The exchange rate vis a vis the U.S. Dollar between the two countries favoured the Italian currency, so that the Australian currency lost value when it was sent to Italy. The cost of living fell more rapidly in Australia than it did in Italy, particularly in the years 1930 to 1933. Although it rose more rapidly in Australia from 1936 to 1937 the cost of living index in Australia in terms of lira was still below that of Italy. It is reasonable to suppose some time lag between the period when the cost of living in Australia began to fall more sharply and the period when the economic advantage of supporting a wife in Australia could have been perceived by the more intelligent of migrants. The cost of a passage fare for the migrating women would not be relevant because the bringing of the women to Australia would be more economical than re-migration of the men to and from Italy even if the cost of a passage was increased. If the passage fare was reduced it could be argued that several fares - for the woman and her children - could be paid for at the one time. Most of the Molfettese had sufficient money invested in property in Italy which when sold could bring their families to Australia. Once an economic decision was made, incidentals, such as the cost of a fare, tended to be brushed aside. In arriving at a decision such issues as the comparative cost of living based on supposition and hearsay would probably be taken into account, though incidental and exact expenses and costs would not be computed. Only two informants mentioned that they had considered it less expensive to support their wives in Australia, so it is unlikely that the economic motive was a

major factor controlling the bringing of women to Australia during the depression years. At the same time, since the men who mentioned the economic factor were among the most prosperous Molfetteese in Port Pirie during the depression years, their opinions on the comparative cost of living in the two countries would probably have been heeded, and could have had some bearing on the subsequent family migrations.

As more women came to Australia the prospect of coming to Australia became less unthinkable on the part of some poorer families who were able through a system of proxy marriage to get their daughters married with a reduced dowry to men overseas. Before 1930 the Molfetteese man usually returned to Italy to obtain a wife. During the early years of the depression he more frequently became married by proxy. He chose his wife from photographs sent out to him, but on the understanding that she would follow them when he married her. The marriage gave her security in Australia so that there was little chance that she would be neglected and abandoned there, as might have been the case if there had been no marriage service in Italy. If she intended to remain in Italy there would be no point in becoming married by proxy, and the man she was pledged to could obtain a separation on the grounds that the marriage was not consummated.

A sense of community, which was something apart from family extension based on family honour, arose from the alliances of these women, drawn to one another through their sharing of a common fate. They had come to Australia, for the most part, without near relatives, knowing no-one here except the fisherman who had acted as proxy

for their husbands in their marriage ceremonies performed during his return visit to Italy. Their community feeling was further strengthened through residential propinquity - the residentially separation of the Molfettese from the North Italians and their concentration in Solomontown during the third period of migration. It may have been given a further impetus, too, from Fascist propaganda - or from the fact that the Italians arriving in Port Pirie during the years of Italian aggression in Abyssinia were regarded with suspicion generally by the host society. The growth of a community, apart from family alliances, seems to be the most important sociologically distinguishing feature of the third period of migration. The importance of both family and community alliances in relation to assimilation will be dealt with more fully in later chapters.

#### Fascist Activity and the War.

The growing sense of community among the Molfettese was encouraged by Fascist organization and propaganda. Fascist activities were never more than a façade to the Molfettese, but this was not to be known at the time to the host society. During the Abyssinian campaign the Molfettese had paraded in brown shirts quite openly. It was rumoured that married women sent their gold wedding rings to Italy and received alloy ones in exchange. The Town Hall was hired, and leading Port Pirie citizens were invited to attend "Fascist" dances. At the outbreak of the war some incriminating papers and photographs were found, and all who had signed a petition declaring their



loyalty to Italy were arrested and interned. Very little evidence came out at the trials. The document was an old one. Many of the men who had made their mark upon it could not read, and it is doubtful whether any of them understood the implications of the document. A man who was not well-inclined towards Italians declared that it was all very well for them to be humble when they were found out, but if the war had turned out badly for the allies then the Italians "would be lording it everywhere".

Public opinion about the Italians, if it were previously unconcerned, began to crystallize during the war into the favourable and the unfavourable. Some of the Molfettese themselves declared they were conscious of an antipathy towards them, and would walk on the more deserted side of the street to escape hostile glances. A man who disliked Italians said that he thought it disloyal when he heard foreigners speaking "in their lingo" on the street and the wharf. During the war a Bombing and Gunnery School in the R.A.A.F. was opened up outside of Port Pirie, and the contrast between unkempt fishermen and smart men in uniform was noticeable. Others again, who had closer association or business connexions with the Molfettese spoke in their favour particularly after they had been interned. The fish market in Adelaide was affected, and it was argued that the Italians were incapable of any organized subversive activity. It was said that they had been inhumanly arrested without time to say goodbye to their wives and families. Some of these families were without clothes and sufficient rations. A petition was got up

on behalf of an internee who had belonged to the yacht squadron and was considered loyal and generous. Thus Port Pirie became more aware of its migrant group and took sides for or against them.

#### Post War Migration.

The changes brought about by the war were many and complicated. Not only did migration procedure change with a new Commonwealth policy to people Australia, but there were considerable differences both in Molfetta and in Port Pirie which have effected the attitude of the arriving migrant, and his reception by the host society.

Fishing boats were tied up in both ports during the war. In Molfetta only the old men were allowed to carry on fishing, and after the war there were more possibilities for young men to learn the locality of the best fishing grounds in the Mediterranean if they were so minded. Nearly all the migrants from Molfetta before the war had been fishermen; after the war the majority of migrants were labourers and tradesmen<sup>32</sup>. who had little intention of fishing in Australia.

The war opened up new vistas and possibilities for the Molfettese both at home and abroad. Thousands of people were thrown together under conditions of equality, and moved adventurously from one part of the world to another. Most Molfettese men left their homes during the early part of the war, and women took over jobs which had been exclusively reserved for men. This had the effect of breaking down some of the more rigid family customs, and furthering the independence of young people. The British army had been billeted in Molfetta after the invasion, and a certain amount of

fraternization went on. A similar mixing, or subjection to a new way of life, was the lot of the internee fisherman in Australia. In the internee schools many men learned to express themselves in English for the first time.

The war may have only hastened changes which were inevitable, and which were gradually making their way before it. Most noticeable in this respect is the increasing awareness of government and municipal authorities to non-British migrants. More detailed information has been required about such migrants since the war. The amount of detail had increased cumulatively before the war, but there was less insistence on collecting and recording it. The Corporation had at one time recorded allotments tenanted by Italians as leased to "foreigners" or "Italians" merely; after 1939 the name of the owner and occupier were given in full. The Electoral Department more recently insisted that all naturalized Italians should record their changes of address and should vote. The Education Department Truant Inspector became known mainly since 1939 when he waited on the wharf for boys under 14 who had been fishing instead of going to school. There had been boys of nine years of age coming from Italy and going out fishing in the thirties; most of these can speak good English today, but cannot read or write it.

Besides penalties for non-complying there have been rewards

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32. I estimated the occupations of men to have been 71 labourers; 17 tradesmen; 8 fishermen and seamen; 6 farmers.

for those who knew their rights - child endowment, maternity allowance, sickness benefits, occupational guidance, new opportunities for employment, and hire-purchase benefits. Only since the war when they have been assured of a steady income have the Molfettese bought goods by hire purchase and time payment. New migrants have come into a community with a higher standard of living than that which existed before the war, and they have had much more impetus to spend and advertize their prosperity locally than had migrants arriving before the war.

More than two hundred Italians settled in Port Pirie from 1945 to 1953.<sup>33</sup> The majority of these have come from Molfetta, and few are more distant relatives from other parts of Apulia. Nearly all have been nominated, some at their own request, by their relatives in Port Pirie. A large number of women would have come to Australia between the years 1940-44 had it not been for the war. During the war they had received very few letters and remittances,<sup>34</sup> and felt cut off from their relatives in Australia. Younger men, however, have come to escape the large-scale post-war unemployment in Italy. Among these are the discontented and disappointed who saw their horizon once more retract with the cessation of the war, and who have Mussolini's propaganda of a new world for Italians at the back of their minds. They believe that it should be possible somewhere to earn money

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33. The figures include children. I estimated that by July 1953 nine adults had come from Apulia (excluding Molfetta), four had come from Central and Southern Italy, four from North Italy, five from Egypt and Turkey, and that eight had left Port Pirie.

34. The maximum remittance was a ten lb. parcel, irregularly delivered.

quickly and to sweep it into their pockets. They envisage staying only a little while and returning rich ;they are disappointed when they can not get a job in their trade in South Australia. They will not trust anyone where money is concerned. They expect ready assistance from their relatives, and give vent to their disappointment by cursing God and the Virgin. They are not prepared as were the Italians migrating earlier in the century to accept unattractive jobs and to work hard in them.

Thus the fourth period of migration is differentiated by the diversity of the types of migrant entering, by the changed attitude of many of the migrants, and by the lessening of their dependence on the Molfettese community in Port Pirie for guidance and support. Before the importance of any change in attitude of migrants can be considered it will be first necessary to describe the solidarity of existing families in the community, and how the community came to be established and was held together in the first place.

## CHAPTER THREE.

The establishment of a Molfettese Fishing Community.

The Molfettese population in Port Pirie grew gradually throughout the course of the century until the third period of migration when Molfettese women began to come in greater numbers, and houses were bought, families established residentially, and children were born in Solomontown.

The first child of Molfettese parents was born in Port Pirie in 1914. The number of children born to Molfettese calculated over five year periods from 1900 to 1949 is given in the following table, where the figures are compared with children born to North Italian families :

|          | <u>Molfettese</u> | <u>North Italians</u> |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1900-04  | -                 | 5                     |
| 1905-09  | -                 | 8                     |
| 1910-14  | 1                 | 7                     |
| 1915-19  | 13                | 5                     |
| 1920-24  | 15                | 9                     |
| 1925-29  | 20                | 9                     |
| 1930-34  | 28                | 5                     |
| 1935-39  | 79                | 3                     |
| 1940-44  | 72                | 6                     |
| 1945- 49 | 78                | 5                     |
| Total    | <u>316</u>        | <u>60</u>             |

The number of children born to Molfettese parents in Australia from 1935 until 1950 was more than three times the number born from 1915 to 1934.

There were four nuclear families in Port Pirie in 1914 ; there were approximately thirty nuclear families by 1930 ; there were approximately ninety-five families by 1939. There are some one hundred and fifty nuclear families today. Thus the period of growth and expansion of the Molfettese community began during the depression, and has gone

on multiplying itself since.

In addition to those of Molfettese descent born in Port Pirie there were some two hundred and forty males and one hundred and fifty females who were born in Molfetta, but had settled in Port Pirie in the year 1953.<sup>1</sup> The Molfettese population at that date comprised some seven hundred, including children, more than half of which had been born in Molfetta. About one quarter of the population then resident in Port Pirie had migrated since the war, but more than a half had migrated to Port Pirie or were born in Port Pirie between the years 1930 and 1945.

106 nuclear Molfettese families owned or rented houses in Solomontown in 1953; 27 owned or rented houses in the David Street area of the town; 17 families had moved to more distant suburbs; and 15 families were sharing houses with other Molfettese families mainly in the Solomontown area. In addition to the families there were single young men of Molfettese birth boarding with some of the families with which they were related, in the Solomontown and David Street areas.

#### The Establishment of the Community Residentially.

At the beginning of the century fishermen used to tie up their boats on the Wharf near the Custom House, not far from the Smelters and close to David, George, Florence and Gertrude Streets, where they

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1. See appendix One a.

Statistics are given to the nearest unit of five. They are difficult to compute because of the to and fro movement of Italians to Italy, Port Adelaide and elsewhere, and by the fact that a man might spell his name in a variety of ways and give different dates of birth on each occasion. 110 Italians were buried in the Port Pirie Cemetery during the Century. 370 according to my estimation left; 150 of these being Molfettese.





and other Italians lived.<sup>2.</sup> When the North Italians married during the first period of migration<sup>3</sup> they moved westward to houses which were being built along the Terrace and at the back of it in Charles, Hallam, Revell, and Pavlich Streets. These new houses were about a third of a mile away from the Smelters and Custom House Wharf, and still at a walking distance. Three Molfettese families, also, bought property in this part of the town in the early twenties. The North Italian fishermen sailed to different fishing grounds from the Molfettese, but they marketed their fish in the same way, and frequently came in contact with the Molfettese with whose affairs they were familiar.<sup>4.</sup>

In the twenties the Fisherman's wharf was removed from the David Street end of the town, and by 1942 the Harbour's Board had constructed a new Fisherman's Wharf near Boat Fittings in the Solomontown area. Fishermen began to remove to Solomontown in the middle thirties, buying and renting houses as close as they could get them to the wharf. Houses were cheaper in Solomontown, and land rates were less. Allotments were small and some had to be subdivided. On the whole smaller houses were less rickety here than in the centre of the city. Now that his house was farther removed from the Smelters it was possible for a man to cultivate more successfully a small flower bed in the front, and a small garden of vegetables in the back.

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2. See Residence Maps, Appendix Two.

3. See above p. 68. The North Italians birth rate was fairly constant over the course of the century, rising slightly in the twenties, which was their period of intensest migration. They first rented houses in the David Street area of the town, and were able to afford to rent houses earlier than the Molfettese since they did not spend their money returning to Italy.

4. The North Italians resident in David Street before the first world  
(continued)



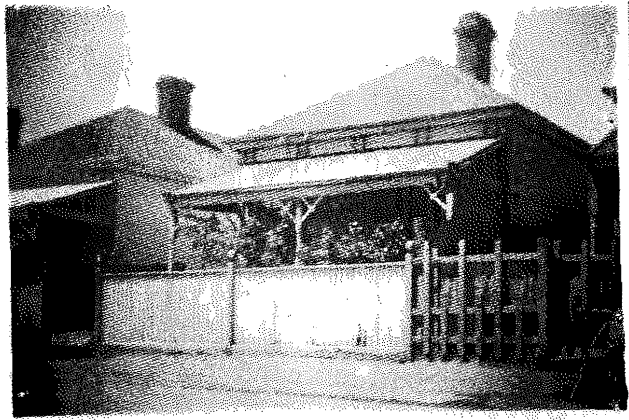
The earlier-arrived Italian families who settled in the David Street portion of the town are mostly there today. The Molfettese who bought property in Pavlich Street moved to Solomontown in the thirties - although other Molfettese have bought houses in this and other near-distant areas since the war. When the Italians moved in large numbers to Solomontown this area became less desirable residentially to the non-Italians who moved out. Some of the previous tenants of Solomontown said that they did not want their children to grow up with Italians, and they avoided the intruders as if they were contaminated. The tenants who remained were more disposed to be friendly, and more than one Molfettese woman has picked up English of recent years through talking over the fence to her Australian neighbour. The Molfettese bought houses that had been previously rented, sometimes paying higher prices for them than an Australian would at an auction sale, yet not paying extortionate prices, as the land agents said, and showing a good understanding of the value of property. Later, more wealthy members of the community have approached Australian householders with increasingly generous offers to purchase their houses, so that the buying family may have a house near their own to give to their newly married son or daughter.

#### The Importance of Buying Houses.

The final decision to settle in Australia seems to have been made when a man bought a house here. Although this investment may not appear at first sight to be very different from the purchasing of any other property, such as a boat or fishing equipment, nets or

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4 (continued) war had many deeds to relate about their ~~Solomontown~~ compatriots even though they tended to look down on them at present



Wooden houses in Alpha Street. Terrace



Fisherman preparing boat prior to going out to sea (the mast has been removed to facilitate the use of nets).



an engine for his boat, it was in many ways a different sort of investment. In the first place it was a more substantial investment, and involved further expenditure on furniture. It was an investment that affected the family, was more permanent, and could be passed on to one's children. The ownership of houses in Molfetta was an indication of wealth and prestige. Property ownership there seems also to be the surest form of investment, and the one least affected by the crippling taxation applied to consumer goods.

The newly-arrived fisherman saved by putting aside one half of the money he earned. The first thing he saved for in Port Pirie was a boat. Money was readily lent for this purpose by fish buyers, who were in this way assured that the fisherman would sell his fish through them. He could generally borrow some money from a relative, or a more affluent fellow-countryman, and he paid back his loan with any interest in a lump sum. Next he saved to buy the gold to give his wife to be, and he sent home money to Italy to his own, and perhaps future wife's, family so that the marriage could be finalized and the fare for his wife to Australia paid. Alternatively he saved enough money for his return fare, to be married in Italy. He thought he was more likely to get a good girl if he demonstrated his worth, and the security he had to offer, by sending frequent remittances back to Italy. While negotiating for matrimony he would be saving money so that he might ultimately be able to buy a house, in Italy or Australia. The decision to buy a house in Solomontown was not unconnected with the fact that these houses were comparatively inexpensive, and that the equipment he needed for fishing in Australia <sup>before</sup> was much less than that which he needed in Italy.

A fisherman would not buy a house unless he had his wife coming out from Italy. When fishermen first moved to Solomontown they were content to board, along with the sons they had brought out to fish with them, in the house of a brother's wife, or some near relative. Even if he had saved enough money to buy a house a man might not always be able to get one when and where he wanted it, near the wharf and his other relatives. He was less likely to call his wife out to Australia if he had purchased a house in Italy. He rarely had enough money to buy a house if he married by proxy, and he would have to work and save for a longer period until he could establish himself as the owner of a house. Such a man would rarely have a house to put his wife in when she first arrived from Italy. While he was out fishing it was considered that the strange woman would need the companionship and help of other women which she could best obtain by sharing a house with them.

Generally when the Molfettese women arrived in Port Pirie in the thirties they shared a house with another Molfettese family. A woman liked to have another woman handy while she could speak no English. The desire for another woman's company grew strong when she had her first confinement in Australia. But when either or both of the families began to have children regularly, and the children reached the school-going age, it was specially necessary for each family to live in a separate house.

Thus as the birth rate of the Molfettese increased during the thirties and forties the number of houses owned or rented by Molfettese increased during the period. There was a lag in the residence figures indicating that houses were only rented or purchased after the

the children were born. There were some 9 houses lived in by Molfettese families in Solomontown in 1930. The figure increased to 25 in 1935, to 50 in 1940, and 75 in 1950. There were approximately 45 nuclear families owning or renting their houses in Solomontown and 20 nuclear Molfettese families similarly placed in the David Street area by 1939, which means that 30 Molfettese families, or approximately one half, were still sharing a house at that time. The Molfettese family during the last fifteen years in Solomontown has moved from house to house in the same or adjoining streets, from relatives with many children to relatives with fewer, until after the war most families which migrated before the war had saved enough to buy their own houses and to settle down more permanently.

When the Molfettese family finally owned its house it began to improve it. The man knocked down one of the dividing walls of the smaller rooms at the back of the house to make a community kitchen. He put concrete on his paths, and sometimes a concrete wall along the street. Because of his desire to own a house as soon as possible in the third period of migration the Molfettese usually bought an older house that needed reconditioning. The labour for the improvements to the house was supplied by relatives.

After it had become common for men to own houses in Solomontown the man without a house would feel restrained. In the past when houses were crowded his movements had to fit in with the family with which he boarded. While all the men were out fishing this did not matter so much. But when their families came to live in Port Pirie men would come ashore for a longer period of time. The man without

a home of his own would be obliged not to return without the husband of the woman with whom he boarded on shore, since the husband would be jealous to see his wife looking after another man. Thus he would be both stimulated to save for a house for himself, and to request his wife to come out to Australia. Again, while he was ashore there was little for him to do at night other than to go to bed, play cards, or go out visiting. He did not feel he had the same freedom to invite others to visit him. He had to be in on time for meals, while if he owned a house and was the head of the family, meals would be delayed until he arrived. With these restraints he was strongly encouraged to bring his family to Australia and to work and save in order to establish them here. With this object a man brought out his eldest son or sons from Italy, and they worked together as a team.

#### Fishing Conditions during the Third Period of Migration.

While the adult fisherman worked mainly during the depression years to establish his family in Australia the young men who were called to Australia to assist in this task had little opportunity to do any other.

One young man who had begun work at eight years of age in Italy came to Port Pirie at the age of nineteen. He was driven in an old utility from Adelaide at night. Next morning when he wanted to have a look round the town he was told that he already owed a debt of £63 to his step-father for his passage fare, and that he was to begin work to pay it off immediately. Where he expected to see large trawlers such as he had worked on in Italy, a cluster of small dinghies was pointed

out to him, one of which was prepared for sailing.

The small boat was evolved in Port Pirie through the shallow nature of the harbour, the restricted mooring space, the non-existence of local boat-builders and repairers, the slowness of larger boats in going long distances, their greater tendency to roll in heavy seas, and the heavier cost of fuel in the larger boats when engines were put into them. The smaller boats were more manoevrable in netting. They were not as comfortable as the larger, cabined boat. The larger boats had been used in the second period of migration, when fishermen explored more distant waters and stayed out for months at a time; but when these new waters were being fished by Australians, and when the Molfettese women came to live at Port Pirie many men desired to return to Port Pirie more frequently. The larger boat came to be used as a supply ship on which the elder and married men would return to shore each week with the fish and buy more provisions. The young men were only sure of returning for feast days. They might be out together on the other side of the gulf for as long as three months at a time. They returned for Christmas, Easter, the feast of San Corrado in June, the feast of the Madonna of the Martyrs in September, and the feast of deaths in November.

The young men gathered together into the cabin of one of the larger boats when they camped alongside each other in shallow water at night or during rough weather. They used to listen to stories read from Italian romanzas by the few who could read, and they would sing, play cards together, or sleep. So long as they stayed out together the young men had little need of an allowance. Food and tobacco were brought them by the elder men, and a few old clothes were all



considered necessary while they were fishing.

If the father had more than one son, or did not own a boat and fished with his brother or another relative, he might hire out one of his sons to some other fisherman who needed a partner.<sup>5</sup> The wages that the young man received under this arrangement were only nominal. One youth after a year's toil was paid £5. If he worked for his father he could have the assurance that he was helping his family to establish itself, and in so doing was providing for his own future.

#### Family Economy.

The Molfettese family established itself in Port Pirie by the various members working together for the common interest. The man brought or sent home all the money he earned to be kept for definite goals such as the buying of a house, the buying of an engine for a boat, the purchase of a radio, or the providing of a dowry for his daughter about to be married. The money was kept in the house by his wife for immediate use, or to meet sickness and emergencies. Most of the purchasing was done by her, although for expensive items her husband was first consulted.

So long as he stayed in the house the young man was expected to pay over any money he earned to his mother. All his clothes were provided for him, as was his food. If he saw some article he liked, the boy might tell his mother who gave him money to buy it, or he might get the article when his mother next "went down the street". Parents thus

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5. There were approximately a dozen young men who fished with men other than their fathers in the years preceding the second world war.

prevented extravagant spending, and helped to stress the precept that the interest of the individual was bound up with the interest of the family which was more far-sighted in monetary matters. The family should be consulted on all items of major spending.

Family accounts were often very rough, and many a family would have been in a securer position economically if it invested its earnings. A man kept no receipts of his earnings, and often did not sell to the best market. He worked everything out by rule of thumb from his average earnings a week at fishing, less the number of weeks for cleaning and painting his boat. He may have evaded some taxation through overestimating some of his deductions, but at the same time he penalized himself through his ignorance of other procedures, such as claiming for sale's tax deductions.

Work was not available for Molfettese girls in Port Pirie before 1953, so the girl stayed at home, helped her mother, and made no monetary contributions to the family fund.

In the 1930's one family had been persuaded to take out a small industrial assurance policy on the life of one of its members who was later drowned at sea. The Assurance Company paid in full to the surprise and delight of the bereaved family, which went round canvassing relatives to take out assurance policies. Most of the policies were for small amounts, of £50-£100, on the life of daughters to mature at the age of twenty one, when they could be used for dowries.<sup>6</sup> Other families distrusted assurance and made reference to some disreputable companies in

6. One Company had two dozen Molfettese policies on its books in 1953.

Italy. The attitude was partly that money was only safe when trusted to the head of the family - a fisherman who knew its value, or the wife that managed his affairs for him.

The Molfettese were more willing to take out Fire Insurance Policies to protect their property, for they regarded it as the part of the family to provide for any member who was in any way distressed. This attitude was so strong that only in the last few years have applications been made for Old Age Pensions. By applying for a pension a man was demonstrating that he had not been frugal and industrious, that he had not planned and set aside for his old-age, and was therefore a less estimable person. The attitude can also be explained as an example of family solidarity, which showed pride in being able to look after its members, and family hostility to the outside interference of the Police and the Government, which were thought in Italy to bleed the working people for the interests of remote powers in Rome.

An excellent example of the valuing of money for the establishment and maintenance of the family was afforded by the development of the big wedding ceremony in Port Pirie during the early years of the depression.<sup>7</sup> In Molfetta it had been customary to give presents to newly married couples. In Port Pirie the guests contributed money in wedding envelopes. If it had the capital to invest for a large wedding reception the family might double its outlay in wedding envelopes. As much as £500 has been spent on a wedding reception. As many as three hundred guests have been crowded into the Town

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7. See below p. 7

Hall or The Excelsior Hall. Incidental costs would not increase with the larger gathering, but more money would have to be found initially for the catering of a wedding dinner for all guests. The wedding reception was thus a type of family investment wherein the community pooled its resources for the establishment of new families under the direction of the families of origin of the bride and groom. One man estimated that he was paying out £60 a year in wedding gifts to other Molfettese families.

Such expenditure was not directly taken into account in the day to day family budget. The general family economy was one of working and saving for the establishment and maintenance of the family. Such a pattern had been evolved in Italy against a background of poverty. Day to day expenditure on food and other items was at first small. A fund had to be provided too for feasts, for the care of the aged and the sick, and the bringing of relatives from Italy. These items had a priority in expenditure and often absorbed any surplus in saving. When they were met the goal was to improve and increase property holding locally. How far this latter goal was achieved may be judged from Molfettese property holding in Port Pirie in 1953. 106 houses in the Solomontown area and environs, and 27 houses in the David Street area were occupied by Molfettese at this time. By 1951 46% of the Molfettese men who migrated before 1945 owned their own houses ; 33% owned them jointly with their wives ; 12% in addition rented houses to other Italians and Australians ; and 7% owned vacant land. Only 9% rented houses from non-Italians.

#### Changes in Occupation and Opportunity since the War.

The Molfettese community that established itself in Solomontown

during the third period of migration was almost entirely a fishing community. Before the depression a farmer, wheel-wright, stonemason, or macaroni-maker could get employment as labourers in the Smelters or elsewhere, or as fish buyers and hawkers, but during the depression when fish hawking was forbidden locally the Molfettese tradesman, if he wanted to stay in Port Pirie with his relatives, had little choice other than to go out with the fishing fleet. And this was more than was offered him in Italy.

During the war the Molfettese men who were not interned or called up for military service found labouring jobs together with Australians on the railways, or constructing the Murray pipe line or local air strip. After the war there was an exodus of wharf labourers seeking steady employment in the large industries opened up in Adelaide and a large number of Italians were able to get jobs on the wharf.<sup>8.</sup> Such work was congenial to them, being near their homes and allowing them more time with their families. Wharf work was disliked by some labourers because there used to be no certainty of employment. The shift foreman would only pick out the good workers, and the others would be short of work when there were only one or two ships to load. The Molfettese did not mind the slack period on the wharf because this coincided with the good fishing season. In 1952 several Molfettese wharf labourers went fishing for three months, and there was not enough labour available to load and unload the odd vessels that arrived during the slack period. So in 1953 the Union introduced a

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8. The first batch was taken on in 1949. By 1953 there were some 200 applications.

policy of paying labourers who reported even when there was no work, and making them de-register from the Union if they took leave other than what was due to them annually. The effect of the part-time employment of wharf-labourers in fishing was to discourage non-wharf labourers from fishing in the slack fishing season. The effect of their prohibition from fishing has been to reduce the number of men engaged in fishing, though some Molfettese men who work on the Wharf still have fishing boats and licences, and may go out over night or during a free week end.

In addition to wharf labouring other labouring work, most notably the construction of an acid plant at the Smelters, has been available for and sought by Italians after the war. Molfettese men who served in the armed forces during the war have been able to obtain permanent remunerative employment in the Smelters, and they consider themselves better placed than ever before. With the construction work in house building going on the tradesmen who during the depression could not obtain any work except in fishing may now receive alternative employment, often in their trades. Some Australians have become willing to employ Molfettese now that they have learned to speak English. The older men learned this during the war, and Australian-born Molfettese have learned it at school. With their ability to speak English young men have been able to obtain employment on their own initiative, and newly-arrived Italians could receive assistance from the Employment Service established in Port Pirie since the war.

Since the war young men are earning more money "on shore" than

many of their fathers are out fishing. This has resulted in more changes in fishing procedure than in the family. While I was in Port Pirie some young man was leaving fishing for a shore job almost every month. When one obtained a "shore job" another wanted a similar job until it became the fashionable thing for young men to be employed outside the family. Those who left fishing after the war were those who had been most harshly treated before it. The father who had been lenient to his sons and promised him a house when he married, or had enabled him to return to shore more frequently, retained the services of his sons longer.

Before the war it had been customary for two or three men to go out in each boat. After the war there was usually only the one man in the boat. The more recently-built boats were constructed without cabin or well. With such a boat the fisherman could use only the small seine net. The fisherman went out for about a week depending on the size of his catch, the season of the year, and the state of the weather. When he returned he took one day to clean his boat, and one day to prepare it for his next trip. He made fire of mangrove wood in an iron tin at night, and this helped to warm him in winter and to dry out his boat. Once a year he overhauled and repainted his boat on the slip-way. There was less intensity of effort in this style of fishing than existed *before* the war. Men who went out and worked as a team on a larger boat might use a heavy drag net. With this kind of fishing they would keep watch all night. They would eat nothing and keep awake by drinking coffee. When they came ashore they might sleep for a couple of days, depending on the weather. When adult men went out together they usually netted in well-known places. Line

fishing would require more knowledge of tides and locations. Two adult fishermen would always be blaming one another if one of them persuaded his companion to try to fish in a particular spot that failed to yield a good catch. A fisherman would thus prefer to take out with him a newly-arrived Italian or a man who usually worked ashore and who would be less competent and likely to criticize his skill.

Fishermen were thus, in many ways, on the defensive since the war, and rivalries between individual fishermen were conducive to splitting the community, as co-operation among fishermen had helped to unite it previously. Fishing was being considered as an outmoded occupation, although many young men who obtained employment elsewhere recognized that they might have to go back to fishing if the present period of post-war expansion ended, and work again became difficult to find in Port Pirie. Under such a contingency many of the present labourers would leave Port Pirie and seek work in other parts of the state.



## CHAPTER FOUR

The solidarity of the Molfettese Family - Socialization of the individual.

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The Molfettese fisherman's family as it evolved in Italy was a co-operative and productive unit, ideally owning property in the form of houses, insuring itself against contingency by the services of many children, which, with the houses, indicated its stability. The family pooled its resources to maintain itself in a difficult environment, worked always for objects against obstacles, and obtained honour when it could demonstrate to other similarly-placed families its capacity to provide well for its children. In so far as the Molfettese family worked as a unit for the approval of other self-contained Molfettese families, either in Port Pirie or in Italy, the members of the family did not strive to obtain the approval, acceptance, or recognition of Australians, to understand their contrary ways of life, and to be assimilated in the Australian society. Self-conscious North Italians wanted this approval, and repudiated the Molfettese.

The kin group was the most important and effective group that the Molfettese belonged to in Italy and in the past because it was omnipresent. It was the chief educative group, and in some cases before Mussolini's reforms the only one. It was an economic unit. Son went fishing with his father, uncle, or brother at an early age, and had few leisure moments while he was out at sea for long periods of time. It demanded and obtained loyalty from its members. In return the family would protect the individual. If, for example, a girl evaded the rigid chaperonage and protection offered by the family and disgraced herself

by losing her virginity, the family would stand by her as long as it was possible. Her act brought dishonour to her kin, and family honour was more important than the welfare of any one individual member of the family. The girl might decide to leave the family rather than let its reputation suffer. But if she left home without seeking the protection and advice of her kin she would never again be recognized by them. A woman in Port Pirie who had committed adultery and left her husband was called a harlot by her son. He said that he would never properly live down the disgrace his mother had brought upon him. The adultery could have been hushed up, but not the desertion.

The protection that the family gave to the individual extended to material things. The outside world was competitive and full of dangers to be feared and avoided - a man could starve in Italy if he had not the collective support of a family to fall back upon, a woman could be reduced to prostitution. The family was co-operative, and shielded the individual from the worst rigors of the outside world. A mother might give a child a crust telling it not to share it with other children or starving animals, for it was all she had. A mother might look sorry during the hard times in Italy if she could not give her children more adequate food. Such experiences more than any verbal instruction would impress upon the child that its duty lay in helping its mother, and boys from families in need went out willingly to work where they could, to help supplement family finances.

Many significant modifications in the rigidity of family protection and control occurred throughout the century, at first in Italy and then in Australia during the fourth period of migration. But

the essential features of gradual indoctrination and soliciting of obedience have remained, and it is these that have largely gone to make up family solidarity.

Child Birth, and the Early Care of Children.

More than one half of the Molfettese at present in Port Pirie were born and brought up in Italy, and more than one third of these born in Port Pirie were born during the last twenty years. But owing to the comparatively recent arrival in Australia of the bulk of the Molfettese women, who have continued to be more isolated than the men, children born to them in Australia have been brought up, with environmental modifications, in the traditional Italian ways. Modifications have been introduced in Australia when some child-rearing aids present in Italy have not been available, but advantages present in Australia have not been so readily adopted. In Italy, for example, children were encouraged to walk with the aid of a movable wheel-like support which kept the child upright. The device was not available in Australia, and mothers had to spend more time in guarding children if they did not want them to fall over. Milk, on the other hand, has been cheaper and more abundant in Australia, but mothers have not as a rule substituted a diet containing a large quantity of milk for the adult food given the child from the age of ten months in Italy.

A woman became socially important when she had children in Italy. She was given the best foods, was allowed to do no work, and was attended by relatives for the first weeks after child-birth, while she sat round and nursed her infant. In Port Pirie there were not sufficient women to help her through her difficult months after her delivery. Her mother and sisters, for example, might still be in Italy.

She became anxious over her family if she were confined in the hospital for more than a few days. She preferred to bear her children in the house with the aid of a mid-wife and in the presence of large numbers of spectator relatives. There was a large number of still births and a high proportion of infant mortality among the Molfettese until a Maternity Block was built on the Port Pirie Hospital in 1941, and unqualified midwives were prevented from practising.<sup>1</sup>

Molfettese women were pessimistic and superstitious about child-birth. They would emphasize the difficulties and dangers of delivery to a woman who was about to have her first child, and recall instances of how so-and-so had died in Italy. One reason given why children were never punished outside the family was that the punishment by an outsider of another child of a woman in cilda might so upset her as to cause her to bear a defective infant. Such women were advised not to go out away from the home lest they might see something that would disturb them. If they saw an ugly man, for example, they had to turn their heads away.

Women were generally afraid of child-birth and feared the worst, particularly if they were delivering their first child. In the maternity ward they were not segregated from Australian women, and were allowed only few visitors. The woman was afraid that she might not be able to make her wants known if she could speak no English, and might die without the assistance of her relatives.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The most popular midwife used to comfort anxious women by going to bed with them while they were confined. She was against calling in doctors.

2. Her fear was more real because doctors in Italy neglected poorer patients who could not afford to pay for the most qualified practitioner. The presence of relatives in Italy signified that they would combine to pay **for** the most expensive treatment if necessary. The unexplained fears of Molfettese women did not encourage nurses to  
(continued)

After the child was born it was breast fed, and weaned from the age of ten to eleven months when it was likely that the mother would be having another child. Much stress was placed on the desirability of keeping the infant quiet, and so long as it did not cry it would not be disturbed for regular time-scheduled feeding. When the older child cried it was usually given food to quieten it. If it persisted it would be given a teaspoon of olive oil, and if it resisted these they would be forced upon it.

Toilet training was never severe, although there seems to have been much more stress placed on the importance of cleanliness in the families of recent Australian-born than of the Italian-born. Children were not made to feel self-conscious over elimination or any of the natural functions of the body.

Children were bathed in Italy in water heated by the sun, and the washing in cold water was remembered as a traumatic experience of one adult. But apart from this the basic training of the child seemed to be mild. The child was indulgently treated until it was about five or six years of age and was first able to be of assistance to its parents. Parents were proud of their children and exhibited them whenever there were guests. Little children were given sweets by visitors, and encouraged in turn to offer them to grown-ups and siblings. If a child reached over to take too much food it might be lightly tapped on the hands to show disapproval. In this way the child was taught to be generous, to expect help from and to return gifts to other adults and children within the family group.

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2. (continued) be gentle with them.

First Disciplining.

Children grew up in the presence of many adult relatives, whom they later had to distinguish and accord respect, and with children of their own age with whom they shared the affection of their parents. There were usually four or more children in each family.<sup>3</sup> Children were not put away when their parents were visited, and they were taken to parties where they were left with other children before they had learned to talk. One of the first lessons taught them verbally was to love one another, as their mother loved them, and the older child would often be made responsible for the younger. Children were frequently exhibited by parents who were proud of their precocity; they were not permitted, however, to be proud at the expense of their brothers and sisters.

No specific differentiation had been made in the early life of the child between the world of the adult and the world of the child. The children saw adults dancing and imitated the actions of the dancers at the age of four or five, without disapproval or amused toleration from adults. Children were not sent to bed while adults sat round and discussed family affairs. As a consequence the children needed no special coercion to share in the economic activity of the family when they were old enough to do simple tasks. Such activity was their activity too. The mother might first say to the child "Come on, dear. Help me," giving a child a broom to sweep the floor. As she grew older in age the number of tasks allotted to the girl increased and became conditional.... "When you have finished your work, you may play." The boy had no household tasks to perform in a family where there were

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3. See Appendix six.

girls, but he might have been detailed by his father to clean out his boat and throw water over it in hot weather. He might also be sent on messages. The youngest son in a family of boys usually had to help in the house. As a reward for these services in Port Pirie since the war the child has received a small allowance that was put aside every week for him, and he was sent off to the pictures on Saturday afternoons. If the child was disobedient he might be told that he would not be allowed to go out on a Saturday afternoon, but the threat was rarely carried out, and the child was almost invariably given another chance by its parents. Children were punished on impulse, and never in a calculated way. Owing to the casual nature of punishments children did not always obey immediately. They might say "We will do it later" - and forget.

The father would on occasion use physical force to coerce the child, but the punishment was usually given some pretext and the child made to feel that he deserved it. The child might be catechised before he was punished: "What did I say if you did it again? Are you sorry?" The child was warned before he was punished and forgiven afterwards. This also applied in households where the father was absent. Men recalled the look on their mother's face after she had beaten them, and said that they knew she was sorry and had not wished to hurt them.

The child was punished physically, and not by the deprivation of food, love, or privileges. The mother did most of the correction for the small child; the father merely frowned or showed his disapproval. But the father had a more terrifying aspect since he was the last court of appeal and was considered more influential by the mother. Thus the mother might threaten the child "You wait till your father comes home - and I tell him." The mother would tend to spoil the child and give in to its

whims; the father, once aroused, was more unrelenting and abrupt. The women might intervene on behalf of a child being punished by its father, saying "you hate to see them suffer"; the father would more likely insist that the child was old enough to be responsible for its actions, and must take the consequences of its inconsideration.

Children learned through actions more than through verbal explanations, which their parents rarely gave them. They acted together, and with their parents. General patterns of behaviour were set forth in proverbs.<sup>4</sup> There was always a strong stress put on conformity. "Do not do anything on your own head" a child was told. One of the chief occasions for punishment was non-conformity.

Children were not punished or corrected for emotional outbursts. Temper tantrums were tolerated in the young, and noisiness and impulsiveness were seen as an expression of the Molfettese virtue of being open and frank in emotional matters, of not restraining one's joy, sorrow, or appetites. Both sexes were expected to give vent to their emotions under stress, and here children followed the example set them by their parents. It was once a common thing for men to weep at a sick bed or funeral, although this practice has become less apparent in recent years.

A large part of learning was through imitation of a large circle of related adults, and disciplining was more real because it was difficult to escape their interest and surveillance. Learning in the family was facilitated by anticipatory responses. Children received regular rewards, love, and sympathy, if they were obedient. They were punished most frequently by the temporary withdrawal of the rewards.

#### The Protection of the Family.

Children grew up as part of an encircling family, and they were

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4. Some of these are given in Appendix Five.



expected to consult it in all emergencies. They rarely had to choose, even when they were older, between a complicated series of alternatives, or to make important decisions. When decisions were made, such as the choosing of a lawyer or a physician, the whole family was consulted and the merits of the one were weighed against the merits of the other.

From an early age children were taught two major corroborating lessons (1) that the outside world was full of dangers and difficulties that could harm the individual, and (2) that love and help should be found and given to kin, to whom respect was owing. The first lesson was mainly conveyed through superstitions and the instancing of misfortunes. The second lesson was conveyed by precept and example.

Children were not told stories to make them individualists, to stir up their imaginations with the deeds of mighty heroes, triumphing through the use of power or magic. Instead of tales of capricious fairies they were told of saints working miracles to benefit the faithful. They were sung songs to send them to sleep with themes about engulfing white snow, and a poor boy or girl begging for bread. The stories treasured by the adults reflected the power of high people to order the immediate death of subjects for paltry misdemeanours, and the concern of the poor peasant with earning and spending economically. The happy ending they provided was the escape from threatened summary execution, and an unexpected monetary reward.<sup>5</sup> Children were frightened by veiled references to the black dog or mal ombra which would eat them up if they did not do as they were bidden, or show due respect. An older Molfettese man was still likely to tell children in the streets of Port Pirie as it was growing dark to go home before they were picked up,

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<sup>5</sup>I collected half a dozen such stories...one is given in Appendix Four.

put into a sack, and taken away.

The most notorious spinners of frightening tales were the older women who at times related these while children listened in hushed silence. Most of the older Molfettese believed in the lupaun, which was a kind of somnambulistic vampire that barked like a dog during the full moon, and was dressed in white. The boys who used to go round Molfetta at night and wake up the men for the trawlers had seen these, and it was claimed that one had once got off a ship that was seen in Port Pirie. A lupaun had attacked a child that was lying ill in Molfetta and torn it about in an unmentionably horrid way. The stories showed a love for children in the horror that they expressed when physical harm was done to them.

Parental affection became particularly marked when children became ill. Parents would pour gifts in great profusion on their children in hospital, and constantly visited them without paying attention to visiting hours. They would spare no expense in getting the best medical treatment, and rewarded nurses who were good to them with presents after the patient was cured.

By reminding children what harm might come them if they, for example, crossed their legs or arms <sup>6.</sup> relatives showed that they were constantly concerned in protecting them. The concern for the well-being and health of members of the family continued all through life. Fighting among older children was repressed with the explanation that it could be dangerous, and the child might lose an eye. The uncle of a man advised him in a serious tone of voice to see a doctor for a slight inflammation in the corner of his eye. "You be careful," he was advised, "such things can

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6. The superstition was: "Don't cross yourself or you will be crossed."

be dangerous." Women still visited each other weekly to enquire whether their relatives were in good health.

The child received attention and affection from many relatives, whom he always saw on exciting occasions such as weddings and feast days. Children heard from an early age and witnessed their parents' concern about relatives they had never seen in Italy, who were ill or in difficulty. They were in this way made to feel that the fate of their family was their concern. A child received a sense of security in the family. He was expected in his turn to help, and it was taken as a matter of course that he should.

In recognizing the interest and assistance given by his relatives the child was taught to respect his elders. Some authority was given to the eldest son or daughter who might play a part in bringing up younger children, in caring for and disciplining them, and helping to provide for them too if it were necessary. The younger brother, as a consequence, would refrain from swearing in the presence of an elder brother he respected. The younger should always respect the elder and greet him first in the street. He would be regarded as proud if he passed an elder compatriot and did not recognize him. In addressing one another the Molfettese used kinship terms or terms denoting extended kinship. But a young man would be embarrassed if he were addressed as "bassi", the dialect for "compare" or god-father by an elder. Such terms might be used by men of the same age related through a god-father.

Members of the group were reminded of their obligations to one another through their using kinship terms. A man who married the daughter of the eldest sister of a family of three sisters

had to call the husbands of the two younger sisters "uncle" even though nephew and uncle were of similar age and had fished together in Italy. Men and women on friendly terms spoke of each other as cousin or brother-in-law wherever such a relationship existed. They were frequently unaware of the exact degree of their relationship, but still spoke in terms of the family when they thought of friendship, co-operation, help, hospitality and obligations.

The roles of father and mother, husband and wife.

The Molfettese family was a solidary unit founded upon the idealization of the fidelity and constancy of women. The woman was the conserver, the banker of money earned by men, the fixed and dependable source of security for men. Her function to preserve and extend the family was God-ordained, and her sphere of influence was the home.

The mother was spoken of as angela della famiglia or angela del padre and the sentiment of mother-love as was lyrically expressed by Mazzini was recommended to me by a recent Molfettese migrant as being the most adequate expression he knew.... "The family is the country of the heart. There is an angel in the Family who, by the mysterious influence of grace, of sweetness, and of love renders the fulfilment of duties less wearisome, sorrows less bitter.... The Family contains an element of good rarely found elsewhere, constancy. Its affections wind themselves slowly around you, unheeded, but tenacious and enduring as the ivy round the tree; they follow you hourly, and identify themselves silently with your life... The angel of the Family is woman. Mother, wife, or sister, Woman is the caress of life, the soothing

sweetness of affection shed over its toils." 7.

The mother generally gave in to temper tantrums, and became quiet when her husband in a moment of excitement reproved her. She refused to take offence, but smiled back, shrugged her shoulders, and did as she was bidden. She waited on the family at meal times in the absence of an elder daughter, and was always ready to jump up and attend to the wants of her husband. The ideal of the good woman who made a good man was discussed by Italian fishermen quite frequently, and a widower whom I knew well was all the time pining for a good woman to look after him. He excused his shortcomings with his family by the fact that he had no wife: "When my wife was alive it was all different. When she died I go crazy. I don't want to work. I don't want to buy a new boat. I have to clean the house, do the cook.... It is no good. Do you get what I mean? I want a wife like Sam's. She's a good woman; he a lucky man. I thought I had a good woman, and was going to send money to Italy when p-phew I was told she no good woman. I am now lucky man. I don't want to waste all my money. She no good to me...." The admiration of men outside the family for women who care for their husbands and families was a strong inducement for a woman to look for her rewards in the family circle.

The good woman took pride in the domestic tasks of being a good cook and housekeeper, in having many children and seeing them married well. One woman expressed her pride in the fact that her father's shoes and socks were clean and well-darned when the coroner had to make a report on his sudden death. The good woman

was proud to show that her house was clean to a chance visitor, although in the depression years this cleanliness had not been possible. She managed the family budget, and it was her pride to have enough to entertain well on feast days. A woman who lived near her daughter or daughter-in-law might send over a fish pie or some cakes she had baked, and related women visited each other to learn recipes and help prepare for special occasions. In order to have a surplus for these occasions she stinted her expenditure in other directions, gave no donations to the Red Cross or the Catholic School, made her own dresses, went to bargain sales, and bought in bulk.

Much of the working day was spent, after the young children were provided for, in preparing elaborate cooking dishes and recipes and in dressmaking.

The Molfettese wife cleaned her husband's boots and did some other tasks for him not usually done by an Australian wife but it is misleading to say, with Gamba<sup>8</sup>, that she was a self-effacing woman with no will of her own. She chose most of the furniture in the house, with the advice of her relatives and neighbours, and the nominal approval of her husband. She was responsible for the good management of the kitchen, kept the accounts and would be flustered if any of these were mislaid. If the husband went to the refrigerator without closing the door she would scold him. She regularly visited her relatives and brought her husband and children with her. The women in a family gathering could combine and outface the men. It was her right to expect

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<sup>8</sup>. The Italian Fishermen of Fremantle. p. 52-3.

maintenance from her husband, and her duty, given by God, to remain pure, and look after her children. The women accepted this role and maintained a moral standard which made them preferable as wives and mothers to Australian girls in the eyes of the Molfettese community. She would use no cosmetics when she went into the street, and would not stop to talk with men she happened to meet. She would never smoke. She considered drinking in Public vicious for women. She had no secrets from her husband. On being married she communicated any previous correspondence she might have had to her husband. Her fidelity and attentiveness endeared her to him. She sent parcels to relatives out of Australia, and kept the members of her family in touch with one another. All the letters received by any of the family became the common property of the family and were kept in a convenient place by her.

While he was still very young she told her son to respect his father. "Always respect him, for he works hard for you." The father who through his labour and sacrifice brought home food was the main link in the family with the outside world of non-relatives. It was not because he sometimes grew violent with his children that he impressed them, but because his wife showed deference to him on important occasions. He was the source of authority for his family, and the punishment or correction of children outside the family would be resented as an affront to his authority. He was known as capo di casa.

It is also an exaggeration to say with Gamba that the "average" Italian father was an autocrat who ruled his family

with an iron fist. In many families it was the women who punished the children physically while he only looked on disapprovingly. He associated with his children from an early age. He might control children by ordering them to do certain tasks, or confining them to the house. Since he was head of the family he had to be obeyed in all matters. He was most concerned with family welfare and had suffered most to preserve this materially. He had worked hard to bring and keep his family together. All matters affecting family welfare had therefore to be referred to him, and once he had made his decision *after* consulting the rest of the family there was no redress of grievance until he changed his mind. The father was not confided in to the same extent as the mother, and I knew one father who was mortified because his sons did not treat him with affectionate respect.

The father had a special place in the household, and the meal was delayed until he appeared. But the food was distributed communally and he did not receive the best portions of what was available. He frequently allotted these to the children. There was no questioning what he did, and while he spoke in a commanding voice others listened. If his sons disputed his authority or were periodically insolent to him, they would have to leave the house. He sometimes asserted in the presence of his family and strangers "I am the boss of this house."

In general both father and mother in the Molfettese family worked together to bolster up each other's authority. There was a clear division of labour between work in the home and work outside it. The complementary role of husband and wife, father



and mother was constantly being expressed in actions and anticipations. Children should be grateful to both parents. There was a saying : "One pair of parents can support one child, but ten children cannot support one pair of parents." It meant that children could never hope to repay their parents for the upbringing they received from them.

#### Segregation of the Sexes in Preparation for Future Roles.

The latter education of Molfettese children was directed to making a girl a good wife, and the boy a hard worker for his family.

Young children played together until the boy began work and put aside childish things. In any case the boy-girl play group would only persist until the complementary roles for which the future man and woman were destined were clearly marked off at puberty. Boys and girls were segregated to sleep in different rooms at the age of five not because the Molfettese were prudish about the nakedness of their children, but because this age marked off the differential education of children with their growing usefulness to their parents in two separate spheres.

Girls were stood up on the table, or taken up in the arms of an adult and taught to kiss and show affection. Girls were given dolls at an early age, and encouraged to fondle them. Girls, too, were encouraged to show affection to younger children, though boys received no instruction in this direction.

If the boy went out fishing he would associate with males for long periods of time, and at one stage of the emergence of the Molfettese community during the third period of migration some

young men would not see any women from one feast day to another. Young men who went to school in Italy during this period used to form themselves into rival play groups or gangs, and they were allowed out until late at night while their sisters were rigidly kept in the house.

The girl was trained by her mother in domestic tasks of cooking and sewing, and this period of her life was often prolonged from eight to ten years. Her knowledge of the world was generally very confined; she was always in the company of older women, and it was a relief for her when the men came home from work, or there was special work to be prepared for oncoming festás.

#### Chaperonage, Courtship and the Selection of Marriage Partners.

The rigid system of chaperonage for unmarried girls still applied in Port Pirie. It was a carry-over from Molfetta, where the place of the teen-age girl was in the home helping her mother to bring up a large family, and work in department stores, offices, and so on was done by men. Chaperonage was not continued in Port Pirie to protect the girl from the men who roamed the streets. This danger had not been conceived by the Molfettese when they kept up this custom. Chaperonage instead was bound up with attitudes and values towards marriage, family honour, and loyalty of wife to husband, which was strengthened by the religious symbol of the virgin who was able to bear God's child because she was pure. Sex was thus far in the realms of the sacred. The nuptial bedroom in the front of the house was the most sacred part of the house. The furniture in the bedroom was kept spotless while that in the kitchen was inclined to be dirty. The bed was often the most expensive article in the house and it was not purchased second-hand.

The value of virginity, supported by the institution of chaperon-

age,coexisted in Italy with prostitution. It was relatively more important to secure a chaste woman for a wife because some women were not chaste,and would not remain constant. If a desirable woman proved herself to be a virgin it was more likely that she would make an attentive and constant wife. The value was emphasizee because it could be dramatized - it could be threatened,protected by chaperonage,and finally proved.

The maturing girl was not instructed about the sexual functions of her body until immediately before the wedding night when she was taken aside by the bridesmaid,herself a married woman ,and told necessary details before the consummation of the marriage. Neither boys nor girls received any formal sexual education from their parents,though they must have picked up some miscellaneous,though imperfect knowledge,from listening to the chance remarks of adults. The saying "Tira iu un pielo di una donna chi cento paia di bovi" <sup>9.</sup> suggests that the Molfettese were not always fastidious in their talk before children.Nevertheless, the girl was expected to be pure,innocent,and a virgin until her wedding night when she passed her first test. The wedding sheets were placed on the line the next morning to advertize to enquiring neighbours that the girl would make a constant wife.

Then other married women would call and tell the girl what she must do to keep on pleasing her husband. These measures were more relevant for a woman married by proxy and living away

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9. One pubic hair of a woman has more strength (to attract) than one hundred bullocks.

from her parents. In the absence of a honeymoon during the depression a woman who had a large house in King Street, Solomontown, used to let it out to newly-married couples until they moved into a house bought by their relatives, or secured a room in a house near their relatives. The woman who let the house had also been prominent in arranging the town hall for wedding receptions.

The adolescent girl, receiving attention from a distance from the young man who dutifully called on her parents, and not always fully envisaging the implications of her courtship, was likely to behave in a giddy and headstrong manner and talk wildly about rejecting suitors suggested for her approval by her parents. During this stage of her life the girl was kept even more strictly in the house and had little chance to talk intimately about courtship with other girls of her age. She was "news" on the occasions that relatives and friends called. A bespoken girl would feel superior to other girls whose hands had not been sought in marriage as yet, and a neglected girl could feel jealous. A younger sister was not considered ready for marriage until her older sister was married, and usually the eldest son was the first married. If the bespoken girl proved unpure the Molfettese father might protect or support her for the rest of her life, or the husband-to-be might still accept her, though this was less likely when marriage was a contract cementing families, and the element of chivalrous romantic love in it only played a minor role. Engaged couples in the past had little chance of becoming intimate before marriage. They only knew that they were not disagreeable in looks to one another, and

that if they were trained properly each would play his part satisfactorily. A husband did not look for an intellectual partner and companion in his wife. In fact, the man was expected to be more astute and have more worldly knowledge than the woman.

Girls have gradually been granted more scope for expression as wives. In recent years some men born in Molfetta have married Australian-born women of Molfettese descent, and these have been able to help their husbands become familiar with certain elusive aspects of an Australian way of life. Engagements, too, have been protracted when there have been more available girls to choose from, and the engaged couple have had ample opportunity to get used to each other's ways before they were married.

The girl married young, from the age of 16 onwards; she was considered to be getting old by 21, and quite old by 30. The young man was considered ready for marriage from the age of 21 until 30; he was getting old by 35. There was not any appreciable change in the age of marriage over the past 40 years in Port Pirie until after the Second World War when men could afford to marry at an earlier age. Women tended to marry at a younger age in Port Pirie than they did in Molfetta, perhaps because their parents could afford to marry them earlier.

Because of the age difference between the marriage of men and women it was unreasonable to expect that the man would remain chaste until he was married. He was allowed in Italy to visit prostitutes, and young men have gone to prostitutes away from Port Pirie. Knowledge of sex was learned by most young men

before marriage, and communicated from boy to boy, often without the knowledge of the father. Much of the talk was of a substitutive kind, and some young men I spoke to assumed that another member of a sub-group to which they belonged was deriving vicarious sexual satisfaction from reading books.

Molfettese boys went by preference to non-Italian dances, partly because they need not commit themselves with an Australian girl. She was not, like the Molfettese girl, always thinking of becoming married to the first man who paid attention to her. Since he could not become independent until he was married and established in a home, the Molfettese youth was also anxious to keep his other sexual life apart from his family life, and to comply for the purposes of marriage with the courting behaviour of the group.

His family probably had a match in mind for him, and might suggest possibilities, but he was allowed to take the initiative and approach the parents of the girl he preferred. If there was no girl of marriagable age in the group, as frequently occurred in Port Pirie until the mid-thirties, negotiations were made through families in Italy. No agent in Molfetta, however, arranged marriages on behalf of the Port Pirie group. A man who returned to Molfetta to see his wife and family might have performed a proxy marriage in Italy on behalf of two or three men in Port Pirie. The particular form of courting institution presupposed a fair amount of gossip both in Molfetta and Port Pirie about opportunities for marriage. The bride-to-be was known about by letters sent by relatives of the bride-seekers in Italy, and her merits were discussed by

them, and at one time by the whole Port Pirie community.

The second-generation Molfettese male has through pressure from his family on occasion sought a wife from Italy, and in accordance with the established practice sent his photograph to her in exchange of hers to him. If the young couple did not actively disapprove of each other on receipt of the photographs the family of the man provided the passage money for the girl to migrate to Australia.

From the point of view of the parents-in-law in Australia this form of marriage was a good thing for the son because the girl would have been properly trained in Molfetta if she came from a good family, and, being dependent on her husband and his superior knowledge of Australia and the English language, she would be subservient and dutiful to him. Under these conditions they were prepared to give her all the assistance and advice that she needed. I know nothing of the points of view of the parents in Italy or of migrating women in regard to marrying a strange man in a strange country. The proxy marriages of the thirties seem a reversal of the previous migration pattern of the women. The reversal is explained by the fact that the women who migrated in this way had no established homes in Molfetta, and accepted the marriage on condition that they would find protection in Australia. Many of them came from poorer families, for they were surprised at the wealth displayed in Australian shops, while women coming from established homes in Italy remarked rather on the extensive shabbiness of Port Pirie.

The Australian parents-in-law were prepared to accept

any girl who came from Molfetta and was known and recommended by their relatives in Italy, though they often preferred marriages to take place between relatives and their son. The marriage planners went to great lengths to secure <sup>the</sup> happiness of their children. The stress on virginity might seem to suggest overtones of wife purchase—the man demanding the genuine article, but as the buyers were in reality the family of the man in conjunction with the family of the girl who provided a joint dowry, marriage was still an affair of family bargaining and honour rather than the purchase by the male sex of property to dominate. When the man approached the family of the girl the matter was fully discussed by them before her preferences were consulted. The girl's parents gave weight to the following factors : (1) the honour of the young man's family — were his relatives likely to be help and be reliable? (2) the fidelity of the young man — was he likely to neglect his wife in any way ? (3) the industry of the young man — was he likely to work hard for his family? (4) his presentability based on his good looks about which the girl would decide; (5) his age; (6) the health of the young man — upon which much more stress was placed than among Australians.<sup>10.</sup>

The citation was not explicit, and candidates were not marked as for an examination with scores and percentages. The less good-looking might usually get the plainer wife, but I do not know enough about Italian standards of beauty to confirm by instances what I was told to be a general rule by informants.

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10. In accordance with conditions in Italy. Unless a man was fit he was not likely to be able to support a family. Slight impairments in health could be important in a highly-competitive society.



There were almost no unmarried adults over 35 in the Molfettese community, whereas there had been several North Italians who had never married, or who, when their wives had left them, lived on their own, and kept their old houses. It was quite a common thing for Molfettese women with unmarried daughters to enquire about the age and prospects of any young man who came into their home, and to arrange a marriage if the young man appeared to be able to support a wife. Such questions were asked for general interest, too, with other people's daughters in mind. The initiative would be taken by the women if the young man was hesitant or bashful; his mere visiting the family could be taken as evidence of his desire to affiliate himself with it.

While the Molfettese dialect was spoken in the home and the men worked at their fishing trade, meeting few non-Italians in business capacity outside their group, there were few occasions when any non-Molfettese man would enter a Molfettese house as visitor or guest. In language, interests, and cultural background other Molfettese in Italy were more akin to the Molfettese in Port Pirie than their Australian neighbours. So the Molfettese group over the years recruited its members from Italy rather than by intermarrying in the host society.

#### Types of Marriage and Family Alignment.

Adopting the notation used by Wessel there were 56 (1-1) intra-marriages among the Molfettese in Port Pirie from 1915 until 1950; 14 (1-2) intra-marriages; nil (2-2) intra-marriages; 4 (2-1) intra-marriages; 6 (1-0) inter-marriages, of which three were made by the one man, and three again ended in divorce;

1 (2-0) inter-marriage ;and 2 (0-1) inter-marriages.<sup>11</sup> That is, the commonest type of marriage was between a first generation Molfettese male and female;and there were 125 first generation Molfettese married as compared with 19 second generation marriages. Contrasting these 77 Molfettese marriages with 28 Northern Italian marriages, there were 2(1-1) Northern Italian intra-marriages; 1(1-2) intra-marriages;6 (1-0) inter-marriages;9 (2-0) inter-marriages;and 9 (0-2) inter-marriages. From the figures it is apparent that the North Italians who settled in Port Pirie married outside their group more than they married inside it, while the reverse was true of the Molfettese. 86% of first and second generation North Italians married with Australians or third-generation Italians;only 7% of the first and second generation Molfettese married outside the group, and there were more separations among the Molfettese..The figures indicate the closure of the two groups - 91% of the present Molfettese group had married internally; 14% of the North Italian group had inter-married.

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11. B.Wessel : Ethnic Factors in the Population of New London, A.J.S. July 1929.

- 1-1 intra marriage was one where the partners were both first generation immigrants of the same stock.
- 1-2 intra-marriage was one where a first generation male married a second-generation female.
- 2-1 intra-marriage was one where a second generation male married a first generation female.....and so on.
- 1-0 inter-marriage was one where a first generation male married a female beyond the third generation of the migrant stock, that is a female of native stock for the purposes of this comparison.
- 0-1 inter-marriage was one where a first generation female married a male of Australian stock....and so on.

Four of the inter-marriages of the Molfettese had occurred before the depression — two before 1925. The men who made them were noted as individualists outside the Molfettese group, not because they had inter-married but because they would argue the point like Australians and were assertive. Subsequent estrangements and divorces confirmed the Molfettese into thinking that inter-marriage did damage to group institutions and values without replacing them with anything worth while and abiding. The early inter-marriages were not repeated during the third period of migration, and it is only since the 1950s that the subject of inter-marriage is being raised without disapproval. During the intervening period men who had discussed the marriage of Australian girls they had met at dances were warned off by their parents who substituted an Italian girl as partner for them. It was hinted of more than one of the inter-marrying families that they had no honour, that the man had been forced to marry the girl through his own indiscretion, or that other Molfettese families in the group would not ally themselves with his. Divorce was feared not only because it carried a religious stigma in Italy, but because it disrupted the family and made it no longer possible for yet unmarried children to find a source of love and affection within the home. None of the intermarrying men were fishermen and only one of them has remained within the community.

A mixed marriage involving a non-Italian girl was still generally feared, for the girl could come to despise her husband once the romance that inspired their odd union had worn off, and even if she remained neutral to his Italian ways she was not likely to adopt these ways fully herself, so that she could be

a companion for his Molfettese-speaking mother with the approval of her own family of origin. In such matters the Molfettese were inclined to be cautious and to follow the ways they knew and were sure of. Marriage, again, was an alliance between two families, not merely between two individuals. The disapproval of mixed marriages by the Molfettese reflected that they were not sure of themselves and of their acceptance by the host society. The mixed marriage in which the bride was Italian was not considered so objectionable although it could mean that a daughter would move away from her family if her husband found work outside Port Pirie. This point was not raised in the discussions of inter-marriage. It was considered that the girl could more easily adapt herself to the family of her husband than the family of the husband in the previous case could adapt itself to the ways of the young girl. Two things were implied in this attitude (1) that the training of Molfettese girls made them better and more adjustable wives than Australian girls, (2) that the host society would be prepared to recognize this superiority from the results of such marriages. Some recognition of the ultimate assimilation of the Italian minority in Port Pirie could be argued from this evidence, but perhaps the lack of a more rationalized objection to the Italian girls marrying a non-Italian man might only amount to there being fewer opportunities for her to do so. The mixed marriage involving an Italian girl was immediately after the war the commoner form of mixed marriages and the husband and wife in the cases I knew seemed to be happy, well-adjusted, and fit companions. One husband had been prepared to accept his wife's family as equals

and this fact may have led the Molfettese to regard mixed marriages as permissive, if the family of the non-Italian family were friendly and co-operative before the marriage. Marriages between Italians and other Europeans, however, were strongly disapproved of as serving no useful purpose, and implying that Italian girls were not good enough for Italian men.

Five per cent of the marriages between first-generation Molfettese were with first-cousins, for which a special dispensation had to be got from the Church. In addition to this, two families might repeatedly marry into one another, so that two brothers from one family might marry two sisters from another; a brother might marry his deceased wife's sister, or a sister her deceased husband's brother. Fig. 1 illustrates the intermarrying of two families in Italy and Australia. The members of the family have come mainly to Port Pirie. Here they established four households, three of which had ten people (including children) and the fourth household, which was adjacent to the third, contained four people. These families, in the opinion of a long-established resident in Port Pirie who knew fishermen well, kept to themselves more than the others and were seldom to be seen at parties given by other non-related families. The extreme intra-marriage of these families, it was suggested to me, was another result of the honour of the family motif. The families concerned were originally too poor to afford elaborate dowries and chose to dispense with the dowries by marrying, one family into another, about the same time. This meant that neither family would have to put up capital before the family was married, and that the man and

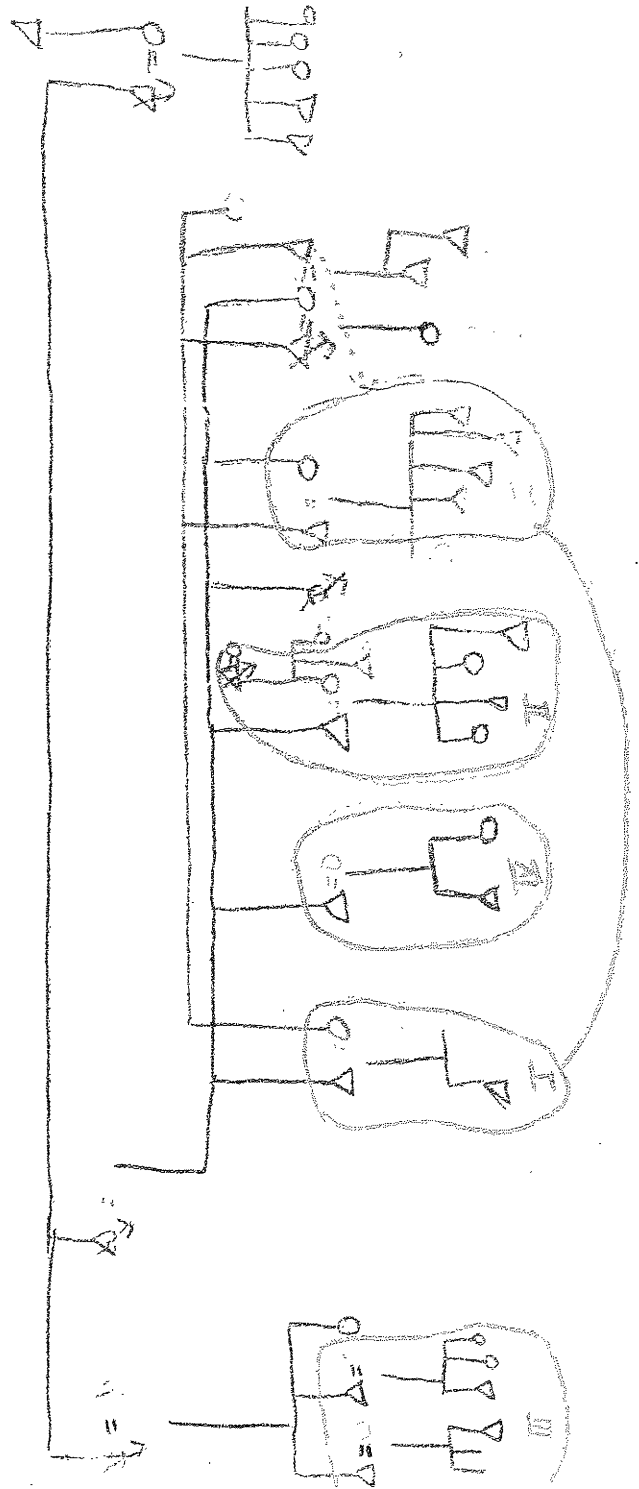


Fig. I.

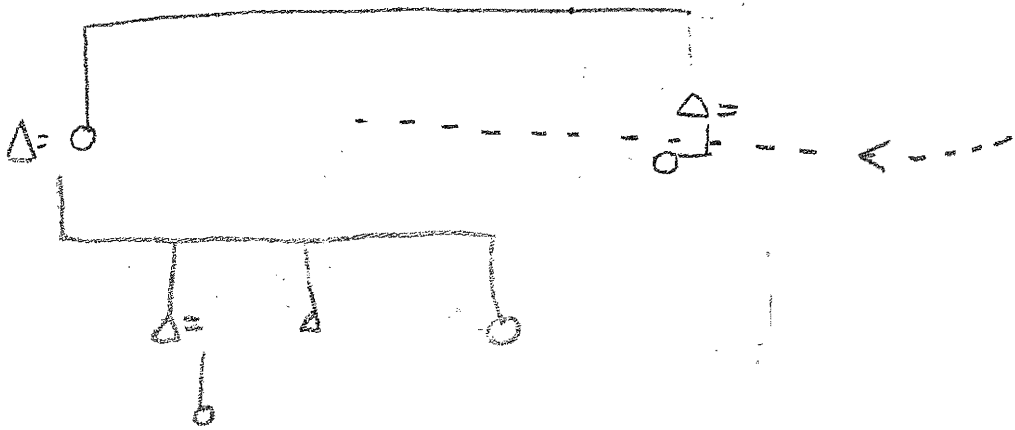


Fig II

his wife would have to buy their furniture and pay for their house after their marriage. The sister of one family died in Italy a few months after the brother of the other was drowned in Australia. It was considered bad luck, in any case, for a widow or widower to have a large wedding when they remarried. The widow would bring to her second husband the property from her first marriage and he would not have to provide the equivalent sum to help establish the new household. The widower would not demand a second dowry, and he could be sought after by a family that had no dowry to give. The question of family honour did not arise if he married a widow or a member of his deceased wife's family.

A further type of intr-marriage occurred when the son and daughter of one family married the daughter and son of the other, as illustrated in Fig.2. The explanation given for these marriages and those illustrated in Fig.1 was that the two families "got on" with each other, which in itself again suggested that the interests of the two families and not merely those of the marrying pair had to be considered in a projected union.

#### Family Solidarity.

To sum up, the Molfettese family had a large degree of solidarity because it was a closed and self-maintaining group. Children brought up into it prior to the second world war could not escape from the family and group. In reference to it most of their ideas and actions took shape and meaning. One member of the family had to be ready to help another. Tasks were given to its members as disciplines, and these were allocated according to the sex of the



person concerned. Girls, for example, might stay up late at night helping their mothers in their needlework. They made clothes for other members of the family. They might clean the shoes of their elder brothers, and wait on them. The norms held by the members of the family were clearly expressed, and were illustrated by proverbs and parables. The family remained responsible for its members even though they broke acknowledged group mores. Individuals would expect friends and associates to be untruthful if necessary to protect the good name of the family. The family was a multi-purpose group, and some members of it belonged to no other sub-group. Meals were an important communal occasion; and children (who were members of the family) were not put away when the family contacted other families.

This solidarity may be itemized: -

- (1) Respect and love expressed from one member to another, and appreciation of the services of each member of the family.
- (2). Constant consultation and co-operation over decisions.
- (3). Linguistic similarity - an agreement of all members of the family to speak dialect so long as there was any member of the family present who could not talk fluently in English.
- (4). Interest paid in family affairs, the health of kin and possible family alignments.
- (5). Development and maintenance of an "internal" economic system towards which all male members willingly contributed, and for which the female members conserved resources.
- (6) The cherishing of family portraits and religious symbols handed down through several generations, and kept in the most sacred parts of the house...the parlour and the best bedroom.
- (7). Intra-marriage, often with close relatives.

- (8). Contiguity of relatives, who were ready to assist on request both with labour and with money.
- (9) The covering up of any family disgrace by the members concerned.
- (10). Interaction mainly and at one time almost exclusively within the family and group.

Family solidarity has remained the dominant feature of the life of the Molfettese within Port Pire, and, although changes in the extensity of interaction have occurred gradually throughout the century both in Italy and Australia, the hold of the family over its members has continued, and is still strong today. The family is not so much the only group to which the member belongs of recent years, and community life has developed in the formation of sub-groups. I propose next to consider changes that have affected family life, and proceed to the discussion of social life within the group.

## CHAPTER FIVE.

## Changes in the role of the Family.

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In the early years of the century the Molfettese family dominated, <sup>over</sup> and restricted the liberties of, the individual to a very large extent. In Italy the women remained together in the house, visited, and were visited by relatives. When married they might be taken by their husbands on a Sunday morning to an Inn to drink a bottle of wine round a table with friends. They had little money to spend bartering at markets and stalls, and meat and fish were purchased by men. They would make macaroni, their substitute for bread, in the home. If she had strict parents the young girl would not be allowed to dance at weddings or feasts, would not be allowed to see the fairs that periodically visited Molfetta, and only escaped from the house, though not from the chaperonage of her relatives, when she went to Confession or Mass.

It is women with this restrictive upbringing who form the bulk of the Molfettese mothers in Port Pirie today, and who, although they appreciate the fuller amount of freedom made possible to them in Australia, are not always able to take account of this freedom in the upbringing of their children. They might, for example, desire their sons to have a trade, yet praise and encourage only the virtue of manual labour in men.

At the end of the last century the young boy, too, was sent to work at the age of six or seven, and had little prospects but continued work with his family. He received a quarter of a man's wage until he had served six month's apprenticeship, after which he would be entitled to a third share. Later in the century boys were given

increasingly more freedom in Italy. After 1930 those who were under twelve were sent to school for the most of the day, though they were hired out for a pittance to do cleaning jobs in the yards of tradesmen. Work, it was said, made a boy ~~strong~~ and prepared him for manhood. It also kept him off the streets. At the age of seven, when he first went to school, he could begin his apprenticeship in a trade. This consisted of his being present while men were working, in his watching them, carrying out smaller commissions and tasks, and tidying up after they had left. The boy would work from 6.30 until 8 o'clock in the morning, attend school from 8 until 1 p.m., and return in the afternoon to his work. After the age of twelve he began to work in earnest, and to pay his wages to his mother until he was called up for military training at the age of twenty-one. After the period of training he began to save, with the aid of his family, for his marriage and separation from his father's house. During the second world war there were not so many opportunities for casual employment of this type, and boys more frequently formed neighbourhood gangs. It had become increasingly difficult while most of the men were away, and the elder women were seeking employment in the men's jobs, to control the boys who were not yet old enough to be called up, or to receive permanent employment.

Changes in the Holding Power of the Family and the Authority Structure in Port Pirie.

The most important change that has come over the family, particularly since the last war, has been in what may be termed its holding power over the services of the young men working in the family as an economic and employing unit. This has involved import-

ant modifications in the authority of the father, and has increased the status of young men in the Molfettese community.

During the third period of migration the young man who went out fishing would be called upon to do all the dirty work, and was constantly abused and shouted at if he was slow. He was told by elder fishermen that conditions in the past had been more difficult, and that when they were young men the older fishermen had worked in their turn for thirty-six hours continuously without sleep. The authority of the father was manifested in his decisions. It was he who decided whether his son should return for some life on shore.

While he was out fishing the young man had no opportunity of mixing with Australian youths of his own age, or of learning the basic English that would enable him to mix. If during the feast days on shore he went to a dance, he would not know how to ask an Australian girl to dance with him. Molfettese men who had been in Adelaide and learned some English there found that they forgot it again when they went out fishing. While fishing they spoke only dialect to one another for long periods of time.

Italian law gave the father large powers to control his wayward children. In Port Pirie his control had been mainly exercised through his ownership of family resources until after the second world war. When I asked a discontented boy why he did not leave home and get a job on a farm or a factory he replied: "They will not let you," by which he meant that his father would not let him have the capital to provide for his keep while looking for a job away from home. "They will say: 'Who will cook for you? Who will mend your clothes?'" and exaggerate the difficulties that could occur, so

that the boy was controlled by his apprehension of the antipathy of the outside world, and reassured by the rehearsal of all the benefits that he derived from his family, and of their care and regard for him. In earlier years he might have been physically prevented from leaving home. One young man who had been out of a job for two months at the beginning of the war wanted to seek work in Adelaide. As he explained it to himself "I have come to Australia to make my fortune, to show what I can do." He approached a man who periodically came to Port Pirie selling marine engines, and asked if he could get him work in Adelaide. The man replied that he did not know, but promised he would tell him in a week's time when he returned. In the hope of being able to go to the bigger city, and to be in a better position to make his fortune, the young man wrapped up his spare clothes in a bundle, and waited anxiously for a week to pass. But his mother found his clothes in the mean time, guessed his intention of going away without consulting her, and demanded an explanation from him. When she heard that the man would return at the end of the week she snatched away the remaining clothes and hid them. "For she feared," explained her son, "that once I was gone she might never see me again." When the man returned he said there was a job in Adelaide, but the young man had to explain that he could not take it this week because his mother was ill. During the next week he managed to smuggle away some of his socks and a shirt, which he hid in a friend's place, so that he was ready to go off to Adelaide on the following week without his mother's knowledge.

Since the war the father who has wished to employ his sons has had to make concessions to them. One Molfettese father bought a Chevrolet for his two sons who had worked hard for him for over

two years ; another who wanted to take his son to court to recover small gifts now that his son was marrying contrary to his father's notions of family honour lost the services of two of his sons. Some fathers who still have sons fishing for them have allowed their sons to make some of the decisions ; others have not been strongly opposed to their sons wishes to find work ashore. The independence of young men is further illustrated by the increasing interest that they take in local and national affairs, their readiness, for example, to be called up for military training. They are more fully aware of the universe and of choice in it between alternative goals, and this has led them to criticize, if not openly, the methods used by their fathers. They are seeking independence to choose their own careers with the assistance but not the direction of their fathers.

It must not be assumed from the above that because they have gained some measure of independence that teen-age first and second generation Molfettese youths openly flout the authority of their fathers in the family. Sons who were aware of the further opportunities afforded them after the second world war were also aware of the difficulties that confronted an earlier generation with their lack of schooling, and the prejudices of Australians. One son said that he was grateful to his father, and would obey him, and do things his better judgement told him were unadvisable, because he wished to avoid any conflict with his father. Nevertheless, the control of the father over the sons has decreased with the son's capacity to get work away from the family. The father's authority is no longer absolute over his children.

Contributions from the sons are not now so urgently needed in the older-established Molfettese families. The increasing

generosity of fathers to their sons may be explained by this fact. Young men, notwithstanding, continue to pay in their money to their mothers, rationalizing when asked, that they were in this way prevented from squandering it. When pressed further they might defend the custom with the maxim often quoted by adults that "it is only after he is twenty-five that a man gets his sense." These sons kept no record of how much they paid into their families, and how much they received from it in turn. Such an account would begin with their birth in any case. The sons paid in their money because it was expected of them, and because if they did not they would receive the censure of the Molfettese group besides that of the family. A young man contrasted the Molfettese way of saving money with the Australian way of squandering it, and said that he thought that "we" (the community) were wisest in this respect. The members of a family no longer pooled their resources to obtain adequate food and shelter, but to maintain a standard of life comparable with that of other similarly-placed families. Increased prosperity has not appreciably-weakened the Molfettese family in Port Pirie as a co-operating, economic unit.

Changes attending Child-birth, and the Management of the House.

The second important change affecting the Molfettese family in recent years is that many of its functions have been transferred, or partly transferred, to outside institutions. Thus after 1941 children ceased to be born in the home, and mothers have come to accept the fact that the host society is concerned in the care of their children. They have ceased to dread hospital confinement as dangerous. One consequence of the compulsory confinement has been



that some women have gone out of their way to learn English so that it would be easier for them to make their wants known at the hospital.

After her children were a few months old the Molfettese mother now took them to be weighed at the Mothers' and Babies' Clinic. She enquired here about various diets, and was proud to exhibit her child. Her husband or some relative came with her at first to interpret for her. More lately two or more Molfettese women have come and gone together. "They like their children to put on a lot of weight. They dress them up in bright colours, and their children are usually big and healthy," was the impression of the Mothers' and Babies' Nursing Sister.

Considerable improvements have been noticed by Australians in the cleanliness of Italians in recent years. According to the Health Officer's report the Molfettese were the most unhygienic people in Solomontown before the war. Yet the same families who were reported as previously unclean have, on acquiring their own property, kept it washed and polished. Cleanliness did not seem to have the same value to Italians as it did to the more scrupulous Australians. It was something that they considered would come later, and, although preferable to uncleanness, it was not always and indisputably worth the effort. The Health Inspector's report was substantiated by observant Australians who described concrete instances of unhygienic practices and told me that one had to be careful where one walked in an Italian backyard in those days. Traces of such uncleanness as was revolting to Australians remained in some families who rented houses in 1953. A slop bucket was kept under the kitchen table, while members of the family spat in it, and the contents of the bucket when full, with

the contents of other utensils, were deluged out over the back door-way. The mess of dogs and fowls was left lying round near the back door. There were no fly-wire screens on some back doors, and vats of unemptied fishy water attracted flies in the hot weather. Because of the large number of children and adults in some houses the Molfettes had special problems relating to the disposal of sewerage.

The improved cleanliness of the women can partly be explained as an adaption to Australian conditions. Five or six women shared a landing in the houses in Molfetta, and took it in turn to clean the steps to the landing. Concrete and stone pavements kept the houses fairly clean, and the women only tidied them once a week. Their house-keeping by Australian standards was inefficient, and they did not have much to do. Consequently they made all their clothes and the clothes of their children. When they came to Port Pirie they had no pavements to keep their houses clean. Dust and mud were hard to keep out, and if they wanted their houses to be presentable they had to clean them every day. When they had a lot of young children they were unable to cope with the cleaning of the house. In addition to this it was more difficult to keep a house clean if the men who lived in it were engaged in a dirty profession. The backyard of any fisherman is likely to be littered with rubbish\*. Since the war many of the families who were establishing themselves in Port Pirie during the third period of migration have grown-up daughters who assist in the housekeeping.

#### The Increased Importance of School and Literacy.

As a rule Molfettese parents have been reluctant to keep their children at school any longer than they had to, and minimized the difficulties and advantages of acquiring knowledge. The world of

school was one apart from the world of family life. There was no interest taken in school work, and no place for books or book-learning in the home. The only books there were ragged romanzas or a few cheap comics. Every other Italian family received an Italian-Australian newspaper such as La Fiamma or L'Angelo Della Famiglia, and would pay for Italian periodicals if they were delivered regularly. Books as such were not relished or cherished by the Molfettese. One man who had a guide-book of Naples kept it in a sea-chest with his spare rope. A woman took back her children's school books to be sold at the school. These only fetched a few pence, and she had never been to the school before. Capable children were not encouraged by their parents, and a child who had shown promise and had pleaded to continue his schooling was withdrawn by his father. There was nowhere in the home for the children to study, and conditions in the schools were not prepossessing. The children would leave any homework they had to do and scribble it off in the morning.

The bulk of the children went to the Catholic Primary Schools until the age of twelve, when most of them left, though a few have recently gone to the Catholic Secondary School for two or more years. They were noisy and impulsive in class, according to their teachers, and when they came excited would find it hard to contain themselves. Younger children would refuse to come to school at all unless they were pampered and allowed to sit near their elder brothers and sisters. The teaching sisters said that parents would countenance their truancy and expect the nuns to mark them present, and get the family out of trouble with the truancy inspectors. They often came late. Some girls arrived exhausted at the schools. They had to cut their own lunches,

wash the dishes and clean up the house before they left, and sometimes they had stayed up late into the night helping their mothers with dressmaking. Most of the children stayed at school during the lunch hour and played with the other children, but out of school they played largely among themselves at Solomontown.

In the last three or four years there has been a fuller recognition of the advantages of education and literacy. Children have not been required to go down the street with their mothers in school hours and to act as interpreters. English is being spoken to a fuller extent in the home. Although only sixteen Molfettese families had regular orders in Solomontown for an Australian newspaper or periodical more families were buying the evening newspaper on a casual basis. One first-generation Molfettese sat for the Intermediate Examination and managed to get a good job at the Smelters. Some parents came to a school break-up in 1953. One father had hopes that his son would be a professional man and had told the nuns: "You learn him good. He is going to be a doctor."

Some girls, too were being sent after their primary schooling was completed to the technical school to learn dressmaking. Their teacher at this school thought they were competent enough but lacked finish. They had brought along their own work to do, such as clothes for babies, instead of the standard pieces of fancy needlework.

This recognition of the usefulness of the outside institution of the school meant that the family was relinquishing its sole right to the education of its children for their future roles in the community. It also meant that the children were to be given wider roles to play. The earliest years of instruction, however, were still the

province of the family, and no children as yet had been sent to a kindergarten.

Size of Family and Attitude to Children.

A large family was desired in the past by the Molfettese father for

- a) assistance
- b) the extension of his influence and importance
- c) his security in old age

This has given place gradually to the views that children are expensive to bring up, and that parents have duties to children in looking after the needs of the individual child rather than forcing him to conform to the group. In the past it was always possible to forecast the future role and profession of the son; now it is not so possible. Parents are becoming more ambitious for individual children, and in order to achieve these ambitions are restricting the size of their families. The continuity of the family is not so sure - that is there is less guarantee than in the third period of migration that children will remain in the community. There is an increasing tendency to practice birth control - a fact that might also be correlated with an increasing standard of living.<sup>1.</sup>

Increased freedom and leisure time given to women and girls.

The contact that the second generation Molfettese girl had with Australian girls made her discontent with the specially restricted environment of the home. She wanted to mix with other adolescent girls outside the home, and an outlet had been formed for such mixing in play groups at school and in opportunities for employment in Port Pirie from 1951.

1. The reduction in size of families was not manifest statistically until after 1950 since there were a lot of young mothers migrating after the war. Second Generation Families, however, had fewer children. See Appendix Six.

In 1953 ten Molfettese girls were employed by a clothing factory convenient to Solomontown after a married woman had been put on the payroll of the factory two and a half years earlier. The proprietor of the factory said that he preferred them to Australian girls since they were quick, industrious, adjustable, and competent workers. They mixed with the other girls and gave no trouble. At first many parents refused to allow their daughters to go to work, since this reflected on the abilities of the families to maintain their daughters, but the opposition broke down with the persistence of the girls. Daughters who still remained in the home followed the traditional custom of going with some other women or girl to dressmaking classes held by other women in their houses. The parents who conceded to their daughters' going out to work maintained the fiction that it was tantamount to learning dressmaking. The girls went to and from their work in a block, and did not talk to any one on the way. Due attention was thus paid to existing Molfettese customs and no challenge was directed against the institution of chaperonage. The girl kept the wages that she earned, and these helped to go towards her dowry. Then parents objected, <sup>next</sup> to their daughters' working overtime at the factory, but when the clothing manufacturer made it clear that he would not employ the girls unless they were prepared to work overtime the father compromised by conducting his daughter personally to work and calling for her afterwards. Angering from the analogy that no harm had come from the girls' working late, most families came to agree that no harm would come to

their daughters at other times so long as they kept in a group. Girls have, as a consequence, met more outside their homes and have been influenced more by girls from other families, both Molfettese and Australian. Their parents have begun to take a peripheral interest in their sporting activity, and to permit their daughters to go about freely in each other's company after they have done their household tasks.

Nevertheless, the employment of women and girls was limited. The Molfettese girl was at an educational disadvantage to the Greek girls who came top of their classes at the State Schools and frequently found work in offices. Once the pattern of the girl's going to work was allowed by the community no further objections were raised to it in principle, and more ambitious parents formed plans for their daughters to become typists after the lead of the Greek girls. The Molfettese girl was in no economic position to defy her father, or to leave home to seek employment in Adelaide or elsewhere. There was still little choice for women between an early marriage and dependence on the parental home for support.

As in any community where change is going on there were some examples of the old order as there were indications of a possible future course of events. There were the parents in Port Pirie who still kept a close watch on their daughters and were notorious for their choosing off suitors for their daughters. One particular man became the butt of some jokes by Australians on the wharf: "Are you sure that you've got the right man for your daughter this time, Joe? It's no good if you'll have to kick him out like that other fellow you chose."

Though they remained economically inferior and subject to men, women have generally acquired an increasing importance in the family. The love that children have for their mothers often leads them to seek the direction of their mother, who is in many cases replacing the father as the initiator of family interaction. The mother is more likely to be lenient and to consider the child's point of view. Their coming to Australia has meant that many older women have acquired freedom from the surveillance of their parents and relatives with whom they lived while their husbands were absent in Australia. The women who were conscious of the greater freedom and influence allowed them in Australia approved of further freedom for their children, and were prepared to accept Australia as offering greater opportunities for them and their families than Molfetta had. More leisure was also possible for many women when their families had matured, and there was a growing tendency for such women to interest themselves in the activities of the community outside the home.

Changes concerning attitudes to marriage, and husband-wife relations:

There was little if any change in the position of women in their roles as wife. Although women took a more active interest in conducting the economic affairs of the home, and might contact outside business agencies on behalf of their husbands, they still were theoretically subordinate to men politically, and would be advised by their husbands on such matters as voting.

Marriage procedure had not changed, but there was a growing inconsistency in the norms :

a). Marriage was not yet an individual or grand adventure, made between two ideally-suited partners.



But, from the intercourse with Australian girls, and perhaps through the suggestion of American films, or through radio plays, the ideal of romantic marriage was recognized and discussed by Molfettese girls. One spoke of a suitor who was chosen to strengthen an alliance between two families: "I am not at all that keen on him. If he doesn't want me I can find plenty of other boys." The valuing of independence in marriage choice was exemplified in the increasing number of marriages arranged without prior initiation from the parents of the prospective partners. It was indicated also in the inter-marriages projected with the consent of parents in 1953. Before the war the dangers of intermarriage were gravely debated by the families concerned.

b). Chastity and purity were expected. It was permissive for men to have sexual relationships before marriage, but not for women. It was permissive for neither to have such outside relationships after marriage.

But, although the institution of chaperonage remained many said that it had become obsolete in Molfetta.

The ideal of the "perfect" women remained, and women, as well as being morally pure, were not permitted to use meretricious make-up to attract men, to drink or smoke, to associate publicly with men. They were to set an unimpeachable example before their children.

c). The wife was still expected to "obey" her husband.

But, less importance was being placed on the urgency of all obedience.

d). Protracted courtships were designed so that both partners should learn each other's ways more fully before marriage, not so that they could choose a more suitable marriage partner.

But, such protracted courtship supported and allowed for the development of romantic love.

Changes concerning the Self-Sufficiency of the Family.

In the past the family tended to govern most activities the

in any way concerned the individual. It provided for procreational, educational, economical, health, religious, and recreational needs of its members.

It has already been described how important changes were affecting the sole efficacy of the family in economical and educational matters.<sup>2</sup> It might be added here that in its educational role the family was now more likely to fit children into a modern world than it was in the third period of migration. Much of the superstitions belonged to a medieval Italian world fraught with unexplained difficulties and diseases. Folk-lore was still passed on by old people, but the second generation and more informed Molfettese disbelieved in many of the superstitions, and thought it wrong to frighten children. The community was not of one mind, again, over the disciplining of the young, and some of the older Molfettese disparaged the practice of letting teen-age boys loose in the streets.<sup>3</sup>

Akin to economic changes there were several domestic changes in the management of the Molfettese household. Many Italian customs remained. Cooking still mostly followed Italian recipes. Sauces were made for macaroni dishes, though the macaroni itself was no longer made. Wines were bought in large quantity, though liqueurs were

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2. See above, pp. 80-4, 127-8.

3. Folsom considers that there is a general widespread devaluation in the modern family of parent-child obedience, in the reproductive process "conceived as a divinely-ordained ritual", in values pertaining to the home as such, and a more positive valuation of individual rights and differences in choosing marriage partners. Changing Values in Family and Sex Relations, A.S.R. 1937.

mixed from essences obtained at the chemist. Cakes from Italian recipes were considered appropriate for special occasions, but when the commercial products could be obtained as cheaply and more readily the laboriously-prepared articles could only be justified by the fiction that the home-made and traditionally-prepared articles and products were superior. Clothes were made in the home, and laundering was done by antiquated methods. There was little employment of labour-saving devices, and cooking preparations often took longer than those of the Australian housewife. In most Molfettese homes a radio was purchased before a gas stove or a refrigerator. The Molfettese had become wasteful in respect of food. Women said that they liked to cook afresh for each meal, and surplus food was thrown out, or given to animals. More food was usually cooked than would be consumed by the family, and women said that they hated to think that anyone should have wanted more. There was often enough food for a chance visitor.

As far as health was concerned outside institutions were consulted, though the responsibility of the family for the health of its members and the care of the aged was retained. A Molfettese woman said: "I think it cruel to abandon old people, and put them in an institution as many Australians do. They think that old people should look after themselves because they draw a pension." Nevertheless, more of the Molfettese aged were drawing a pension recently, although this may only be related to the fact that more were eligible to do so.

The family still had a religious aspect in being a sanctuary for women, and a guardian for their purity. There were more changes concerning the recreational provisions of the family. Visiting

still took a large part of the leisure time of members of the family; but the introduction of radio, the films, and other mass entertainments was a challenge to the family's previous monopoly in this respect. Dance recordings were commonly played at parties and community gatherings, and the accordion-player, the comic and mime who reminded the Molfettese of Italy were less in evidence. Occasions for the gathering of whole families to share in common recreational functions, to sing, dance, tell stories, and entertain one another were becoming scarcer. Some men went off to a recently-formed club; youths joined their gangs; and although the whole family went together to watch the soccer matches on a Sunday afternoon the members split up when they reached the sports ground. Here women left the men, and the young left the old. Membership in the Molfettese community was providing new outlets for individuals, and the community itself was becoming less homogeneous through rivalry and fission of sub-groups. It is this social life within the community and the disintegration arising from sub-group formation that now remains to be described.

## CHAPTER SIX.

Social Activity within the Molfettese Community

When they first came from Molfetta to Port Pirie before the second world war individual migrants were attached first of all to a family,<sup>1</sup> through a relative who had nominated them, guaranteed them an occupation and sustenance, financed their passage and given them protection. At first some of the migrants had no immediate knowledge of anyone in Port Pirie outside this family circle. As their knowledge extended they became aware of other similarly-placed families and individuals who spoke a similar dialect, engaged in similar activities, and were held together by a common background, residence, culture, and by attitudes of the host society towards them. These interlinking families formed the Molfettese community. Before the mid-thirties, when nearly all the migrants were in a similar poor condition, any one Molfettese would lend money and give assistance to any other in greater need, without bond or interest. One Molfettese trusted another, and this trust was a measure of community sentiment. The community shared its griefs and triumphs. Everyone soon knew everyone else in the community, and all were invited to dances and festivities. Through the system of nomination by relatives and intra-marriage everyone was in some way related to everyone else, and elder men still addressed each other by kinship terms, compare, zio, cugino, even when they were not sure of the exact relationship.

With the establishment of numerous Molfettese families in Solomontown during the thirties, the assimilative process was retarded. The energies of men were directed locally towards their homes and families. Mol-

1. Not entirely without exception. In the early days when the passage fare was less, more men financed themselves. After 1925 the Nato-di Atto *li Chiarata!* Commando restricted the entry of casual, penurious migrants. The immigration acts of 1910 and 1924 had imposed penalties for bringing migrants secretly to Australia.

fettese men made less contact with Northern Italians and Australians after the arrival of their wives, and certain internal rivalries and jealousies arose between families. The community mores enjoined on the individual were those calculated to preserve family cohesion. Any property acquired was family property, and the status of the individual was dependent on the status of his family. The interests of the individual and the family fairly nearly coincided; individuals belonged to few or no associations organized to facilitate specific interests of work and temperament; and the family organized its behaviour to meet with the expectations of, and to facilitate relationships with, other similarly-placed families.

#### The Community Defined.

The centre of the Molfettese community <sup>2</sup> was the corner of King and Park Street, convenient to the wharf and railway yards where most of the men worked. <sup>3</sup> It was significant that the two wealthiest men in the community lived opposite each other on the corner of these streets. One of them owned a shop on the corner, the other owned a shop in Alexander Street. The Molfettese community gradually spread out from this centre, and the Molfettese have remained residentially concentrated in the Solomontown area. Those living in David Street and its environs were more dispersed, and did not form so close a community as their relatives in Solomontown. In recent years most community activity has been initiated in Solomontown. In the past when the fisherman's wharf had been opposite David Street the centre of the fisherman's community had been in the rooms at the rear of Florence Street. A survival of this may be found in the location of the present Club.

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2. See above, p.10.

3. See Residence Maps, appendix Two.

Important changes in the composition and the boundaries of the community have occurred with the migration of many of the older families to Adelaide or its suburbs, and the arrival of large numbers of new migrants after the second world war.<sup>4</sup> There was an increase both in size and heterogeneity of the group, which accounted for the increased spreading of its boundaries residentially. Approximately one third of the Molfettese at present in Port Pirie arrived since 1945, and one hundred former residents had moved away. There was not such a close degree of inter-relatedness among the post-war migrants, either among themselves or with the Molfettese community remaining after the war. In 1953 fifteen Molfettese families lived at distances more than one half a mile from the centres of the two residential groups - measured from the corner of King and Park Street on the one hand, and from the Italian Club on the other. Many had cars so that they could visit their relatives and friends when they cared, so that in this respect the dispersal was not so significant for residential community solidarity, but others who lived apart from the main community said that they preferred to be away from the continuous gossip of Solomontown. The Molfettese living in the David Street area were not so implicated in each other's affairs as were the Solomontown group. The nucleus of the David Street group had lived longer in the area, and had more contacts with Australian families. They were also more diversely employed. They were still a part of the Molfettese community and shared in its institutions, and the ceremonies concerned with marriage and death and community self-expression, which grew up, with modifications of earlier Italian ceremonies, within the community.

4. See Appendix One a.

Marriage Ceremonial.

The most notable of these ceremonies, considering the time, expense and labour involved, was the marriage ceremony.

Courtship and marriage arrangements in Italy had been much simpler. Generally the girl did not know that she was favoured by a young man until he passed below in a blue suit while she sat out on the balcony. Arrangements were made passé parole ambascatore through the maternal aunt of the young man who visited the parents of the girl in question. If the ambassador was well received an engagement party was arranged in which all the relatives of one family would meet all the relatives of the other.

The marriage itself was seldom an elaborate affair, and usually only involved the immediate families concerned. It was paid for jointly by both families. Relatives would meet at the house of the bride, give presents and congratulations, and receive cakes and drink. They would then move to the house of the groom to pay their compliments, have supper, and dance if there was time. There would only be a honeymoon if there was enough money left over. Since it was extremely difficult to save in Italy for the poorer families, particularly after they began to have young children, the dowry virtually made the marriage possible. With it the married couple purchased their bed, kitchen utensils, and enough linen to last them until the time that their sons in turn would be helping in the upkeep of the family.

The first large wedding reception was given in Port Pirie in 1930 to an Australian-born Molfettese girl. Elaborate preparations were made for it by a group of interested women who hired out the Town Hall for the purpose, prepared vast quantities of food, prepared the bridal chamber, and so on. The success of the occasion caused it



to be imitated.

Although the actual selection of marriage partners was a family affair, involving family alliances, the community at large was interested and informed about future weddings, and after some of the old families dispersed a wedding became an opportunity for re-unions. Invitations to these weddings were extended to kin and friends in other parts of the State. Each guest was driven to the wedding or the reception by the family of the bride, while other members of the family prepared for the reception. Each guest was given a special parcel of cakes wrapped in a serviette. When the bride and groom arrived at the reception after having had their photographs taken they were showered with confetti. They came with a group of child pages, drawn from relatives, who were always photographed with the bride and groom. When the dancing began the bride and groom led the dancers, followed by the best man and his wife. In the mean time the hall was being cleared after the community meal. The bride and groom went round and round in front of the guests, becoming continually entwined in paper streamers. When the streamers were broken others could join in the dancing.

Older women and men sat round the sides of the hall mainly in family groups. As the evening advanced men and boys who were not dancing retired to the back and drank beer. Some of these joined together, singing hilariously or jiggling up and down in a mock dance. I was told many times at a particular wedding that "nobody gets drunk", and the wife of one man leading these festivities in the rear came to take away his bottle, but not shrewishly. Children joined in the merrymaking, and no-one upbraided them or wished them out of the way. At the conclusion of the reception the wedding cake was cut, and



pieces were thrown out to the crowd who scrambled for them. Finally the bride and groom ran through an arch of triumph.

A wedding reception was an occasion when the whole group enjoyed itself communally. Girls made elaborate preparations to dress themselves becomingly, and they spoke excitedly about a wedding for weeks in advance. The wedding preparations took months to arrange. The wedding dress itself was the subject of much admiration, and of some criticism from women skilled in dressmaking. A good wedding reception brought honour to the givers of the feast. A family quarrel once arose because the best man at a wedding had not performed his duty to the best of his ability. He arrived late, made a speech in Italian, and left early. "Whatever I had done to him," said the insulted party, "he should not have treated me thus."

#### Burial Ceremonial.

The whole Molfettese community paid their respects to the dead, and to the relatives of the dead. Women would sit for hours in a sick chamber, and one after another would come to visit the bereaved relatives. In the past women would wail, and men shuffle their feet, but many of the outward signs of excessive grief have been modified in recent years. Such signs were retained when the death was unexpected, violent, or when the dead person was a child. The parents or relatives sat in the front room and gave expression to their bereavement while any one who dared came into the room to view the corpse in the coffin. Then the coffin was taken to the church and a brief ceremony conducted, and incense burned over it. The coffin was taken from the church to the grave yard where a further brief ceremony was held among violent wailing and sobbing by some of the women present. After the body was

lowered there was a moment to cover it with clods of earth thrown into the grave. Finally the assembled group would return to the house of the relatives and file past brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, and aunts who sat drooped over their chairs and would silently give their hands to be shaken by other members of the community. The funeral service led to the cancellation of any planned festivity in the community. It was conducted in a very sombre fashion. There was no recognition of any person socially, and if a particular "friend" did not go to offer his consolation it was likely that his absence would be noted and remembered by the family and the group.

#### Religious Ceremony.

Religious ceremony referred directly back to Italy, and revived memories and experiences that had been planted there. In Australia it was more than anything else an occasion for community self-expression, and its sacred connotations were less clearly marked.

The Molfettese migrant had not been drawn to the host society through his participation in a common religion here. He had had religious experiences while in Italy, and held the general view that religion was "good". He acknowledged vaguely that in helping to support the Church he was in some way helping to buttress good against evil. His faith had been encouraged to grow through symbolic observances, the use of Holy water, the belief in miracles. In Italy every church was like a museum giving a sense of the timelessness of beauty, epitomizing Italy's historical richness. There was an obvious dichotomy between the sacredness of the church and the profanity of the competitive struggle for existence. The more elaborate the feast, the more jewels the Madonna had, the more priests and people in attend-

ance, the more religious the people of Molfetta became. They brought photographs of garish processions through Molfetta into Australia, and said that Molfetta had the most wonderful procession of any city in South Italy. On the feast day of Madonna dei Martiri the Molfettese expressed their pride in their city and themselves, and this pride was revived on the 8th. of September wherever they were.

On this day in Molfetta large business organizations lent money for the feast of Our Lady of the Martyrs. Men put on romantic dress and pulled a barge containing the statue from the Church of Our Lady. They rowed in small boats and so towed the barge containing the statue across the harbour. On the other side of the harbour the Statue was taken in procession from the wharf, and put into the old Cathedral, where it remained for the three days of the feast. Pyrotechnics lit the harbour at night; the band played, and there was general rejoicing and promenading in the streets.

The celebrating of the traditional Molfettese ritual only became a feature of the community life in Port Pirie after the second world war. The organization of the ceremonies and the collection of money for them was left to the women in Port Pirie, for only these had sufficient knowledge of the order of the events. The committee consisted of women who had migrated in the thirties, and whose children were fully grown. They met and discussed plans for future festas sometimes a year before the appropriate feast day. Their method of collecting money was criticized by men, and comparisons were made with the older and more ornate festivals held at Fremantle. "The women rushed in and demanded" such and such a contribution from such and such a family, based on their knowledge of the family income, and in effect antagonised the family, it was said. "Now the men

would go about it more discretely." The interesting thing was that the women had gained sufficient confidence in themselves to take the initiative in arranging a community affair. In Italy there had been no organized co-operative life for them, and any activity that involved them outside the family was led by the priest. It is doubtful, however, whether there would have been any ceremonial aspirations in Port Pirie if it had not been for the arrival of two Italian priests in South Australia after the war, who made occasional visits to Solomontown. The money collected for the feast day of Our Lady of the Martyrs was mainly spent in paying for the visits of these priests, and for special masses said by them in St. Anthony's Church. A statue of Our Lady had been brought out from Italy twenty five years previously, but only since the war was it carried in a procession.

The 8th of September was an occasion for re-union in Port Pirie. Molfettese women, particularly, liked to sing in the chants, and they might come from Adelaide, Port Adelaide, and sometimes time their visits from Sydney or beyond for this occasion. Men came to Port Pirie, too, who had no intention of joining in the procession, but who found that the feast was a convenient time for them to see old acquaintances, mainly at the Club or at the dance that followed the ceremonies. The ceremonies received little local publicity, but the Molfettese did not dislike publicity, and welcomed any interested Australian who cared to join in their festivity.

As in other Molfettese activities a place was allotted to children. On each night of the novena the priest gave a special address and mass - one of these was for the blessing of children. Young girls dressed in white and carrying flowers led the procession, followed by

a more disorderly group of young boys. Then came the women singing the traditional songs :-

O fiore di grazia gentile  
Signora dei Martiri bella  
Di mezzo alla fiera procella  
Del mal che s'infrange ai tuoi pie,  
Nei giorni a Te sacri i tuoi figli  
Soavi si prostrano a Te  
Al deprecante popolo  
Sorridi dolce pia.  
Vogli los sguardo, o vergine,  
A nostr'animo afflitte.....Ave Maria.

followed by the young men alternatively bearing the statue, followed by a few of the elder men, followed by the priests. The majority of the visitors stayed with relatives and friends while in Port Pirie, and frequently only a minimum notification was given by intending visitors. Room could always be made in houses, it was assumed, and sometimes in the past these had been filled with over one hundred guests. With the importation of traditional Molfettese ritual Port Pirie was in effect replacing Molfetta as the place of origin and most concentration of Molfettese culture in South Australia.

#### The Club.

In the centre of Florence Street in 1953 was the Italian Club, which had been owned by a Greek for the benefit of Greeks until 1950. There had been other Italian Clubs in Port Pirie, but these were only short-lived, and seem to have been relatively unimportant. The Club was open to any man, theoretically, but it was maintained and attended by men of Italian descent from 25 to 45 years of age. It was generally crowded on Saturday or Sunday. It was open from eight in the morning until midnight every day of the week. A Greek barber cut hair in a room in the front and dispensed gossip in English. Inside the club men played cards, usually in groups of four, for small stakes, generally black coffee paid for by the losers. The buying of

drinks partly financed the running of the club. The club was owned by one man who had aspirations to be the leader of the community, and who was able to conduct various small business transactions through his ownership of the club. Many men only came in, sat and watched, looked at newspapers and passed the time of day. A fisherman might come to see the club proprietor if dissatisfied over the price he received for his fish. The fishbuyer's property was adjacent to the rear of the club, and the club proprietor often engaged as a mediator. He was good-natured and on good terms with several business men in the town; he acted as interpreter in court, and was a central figure in so far as diverse communications were channelled through him. He was extremely cautious in his advice, and was for this reason liked by many who consulted him. He was on good terms with the more wealthy members of the Molfettese community who had businesses in the centre of the town and who spent a large part of their time in the club.

Going to the club was becoming a habit to some men who had regular work "on shore". At the club they heard more vital 'news' about business possibilities and relevant events than elsewhere. Some of the more regular evening attenders came from families where there was a disproportionate number of women in the household. The more elderly fishermen spent little time in the club, perhaps because it was farther for them to walk, and it was a recent innovation. It absorbed much of the new-found leisure of middle-aged men. Few youths visited the club, and when I asked them about their associational life many of these said that they thought an Italian Club should provide other more strenuous activities such as table tennis and billiards. Many of the young men have been forming an unofficial club under the

leadership of a young man who worked in the billiard saloon.

The Club strengthened the feeling of community among the Molfettese men who belonged to it. It kept alive matters of community interest, concentrated communications, and fostered a dependence-feeling in the individual who was surrounded in his leisure moments by familiar people and activities whose predictability gave him a source of security. Though individuality was greatly valued by the Molfettese community as the prerogative of the head of a household, there were few occasions when the individual need, as it were, become conscious of his individuality, and stand alone.

#### Name Days and Visiting.

Since the war many Molfettese families have begun to give name-day parties for some of their members. The custom was introduced with the influx of Molfettese after the war. Some families before the war were beginning to celebrate birthdays for children, and these have continued to follow the Australian habit. The name-day party presupposes some knowledge of the Italian calendar. Each man and woman was called after an ancestor and a patron saint, and each patron saint had a particular day set apart for his honour. All the men called after St. Salvatore, for example, would on their name-day receive visits from their friends, and men reminded particular friends to join the party given at their house. Young wives made elaborate preparations baking cakes, and comics and rimes were much in demand, and appreciated. Some visitors moved from one house to another. A youth who had no mother or sister to prepare for him could attach himself to another party, and one second-generation Molfettese boy said that he had celebrated



his name-day by "shouting" drinks to his friends after work.

The name-days did not mobilize the whole community as did the weddings, burials, and traditional ritual, but they mobilized various sectors of it on extra-family lines. Some of the Italians who lived away from Solomontown asked non-Italian neighbors to come to their parties, and the gesture was well-received by them.

Apart from the special case of the name-day party, visiting by families and friends was a well-established local Molfettese institution, and served perhaps more than the other forms of community expression to keep the community informed and aware of their common interests. It had not existed on such a wide scale in Italy, where fishermen had lived dispersed all over the town. In Port Pirie women visited each other periodically during the day, often merely to enquire after each other's health as an ostensible reason for their visit, sometimes to assist at sewing or cooking preparations for a first communion, a wedding, or a name-day celebration. A married woman told me that her mother would be worried if she did not call on her at least every other day. Important news spread quickly throughout the community, and children went from house to house to assemble any people who were urgently required.

Some fishermen still kept the same daily rhythm of life that they had been brought up under in Italy. They would rise about 5a.m., depending on the state of the tide and the weather, work until noon, and visit one another in the late afternoon if they were on shore. They would meet in little groups at about

five in the afternoon on the wharf, after having assured themselves that their boats were safe, and ready for departure. In the evening a man would visit some other household in company with his family

There was a formality about these visits similar to that concerning letter writing in some circles in modern society. People *took* the initiative in turn, and a family would tend not to visit a second time until its visit had been returned. If no visit was paid then this could be interpreted as a lack of good will, and resented. There need be no other purpose in the visit except to pass the time and to express good will. A family might return a visit immediately to another family with which it was on good terms saying: "We visit you tonight because you visited us last night." Most families kept a store of home-made liqueur to give visitors who formerly called upon them. Smaller-sized families might have meals communally, but there was not usually enough space for this to happen generally as part of the casual visiting procedure.

The pattern of family visiting had probably been encouraged by the exigencies of the fishing situation. Usually a man fished constantly provided the weather was fine. He would go out from 7 to 10 days, longer than which his fish and provisions would not keep, and stay on shore two days to prepare for another trip. He would arrange to be on shore for special feast days and weddings known months before. Otherwise he would only be on shore when he or his family were ill, or when there was bad weather and he could do little else but stay at home, mend nets, or visit other fishermen similarly detained.

During weddings, name-days, or casual visiting, the Molfettese usually grouped themselves on chairs placed near the walls

of the largest room in the house. They sat while music was played at full volume, spoke where they could above the noise, received refreshment that was brought round, and admired the precocity of children.

Since youths in long pants had now a fair measure of freedom they spent least of their surplus time about their own houses. It had become quite usual for boys over sixteen to visit each other on their own account and to play cards.

Visiting made for community solidarity, for it kept various families in the community constantly informed of developments in each other's affairs. But there was some evidence that this institution was outliving its usefulness as a means of uniting the community. The most common form of evening visiting was that between related or friendly families, though some members of the family might be absent when the rest of the family called on some other household. The visiting of men to men, or women to women during the day can be considered as variations to the main pattern. If the men initiated the visiting activity they tended to dominate, and to request that others should be silent while they were delivering their opinions. Although the topic discussed was not usually a motive for the visit, special interests of men, women and youths, could add zest to a visit. When fishermen visited fishermen they talked mainly of their livelihood, when youths visited youths they focussed their attention on sport, and women spent a large part of their time discussing clothes and dress-making. In more recent times the special interests of the young men have been looked on as something that all could discuss,

and this reflects the rise of status of the young men, and an orientation of community interest in their direction.

Young men, on the other hand, have said that dressmaking and household management were women's affairs, which did not interest or concern them, and women and young men have both commented on the limited range of interest of fishermen in fish and the weather. The insufficiency of the marriage, burial and religious ceremonies, the club, and the institution of family visiting, to provide for the social needs of young men has given rise to the formation of sub-groups centred mainly round the activity of sport.

#### Young Men's Sub-Groups.

The young men since the war have set up two soccer teams, which have won support and publicity both in the Molfettese community and in the wider community of Port Pirie. Even if a young man did not play he probably had aspirations to be included in the team, would attend soccer meetings even in summer, and ardently barrack during the season. The new arrivals mainly aspired to belong to the one team, and the longer-established Molfettese to belong to the other. But the membership of teams was complicated by various other alignments.

Three recently-arrived Molfettese introduced soccer into Port Pirie in 1948 with their team, the Savoys, which played against three other teams with an English-Scottish and a Greek nucleus. One of the earlier rival teams was not regular in attendance, and some hostility occurred with Greek teams. The Savoys was usually the most successful team and won for itself some fans among barrackers of Australian descent. Its players included some of the older and bigger of the young Molfettese males. In 1951 a rival Molfettese team, the

Virtus, was formed largely by those who thought that the Savoys had too much glory, and that there was scope for other players. The Molfettese supported the two teams largely through traditional family alignments, and the unexpected success of one team could result in recriminations and jealousy. During the soccer season the men who had worked in the Acid-Construction Works spoke little else but of soccer during their lunch hour together at the Smelters.

Besides the sub-groups of the soccer players and their supporters there were further sub-groups which banded the newly-arrived and relatively-unattached young men together against the first or second-generation Molfettese who had received a part of their education in Australia. The sub-group of the newly-arrived young men was in many respects merely a continuation of the play-group that had existed in Molfetta during the war, and it was introduced into Fort Pirie as such. One of the activities of the group was to divert themselves in a hide-and-go-seek game, where each player took it in turns to find out the others. The minimum of organization was required, and the players did not at first have to be familiar with one another. In fact the game played on the motive of unfamiliarity in the dark. There was no bar at first from excluding Australian-educated Molfettese from the games, but it was unlikely that they would play unless they happened to be conveniently at hand when the decision to play the game was reached by the newly-arrived young men meeting in sufficiently large numbers at the street corners.

The need for common association by the newly-arrived young men arose from the fact that they had few common interests with the established Molfettese community, and shared common goals to succeed

mainly through their own efforts in the new society, and not to be absorbed in the Molfettese community. It was common for these young men to have only one relative in Port Pirie, and to have known no-one in the city except members of Molfettese families who had, like them, migrated since the war. It was therefore only to be expected that they would form a group when they came to Port Pirie, having had similar experiences in the past, and being placed in a similar position in their new environment.

In the case of a young man who had been sponsored by an uncle whom he had known only nominally, it was unlikely that the uncle would assume much responsibility and control (unless, as was seldom the case, the young man worked for his uncle). The young man would send the bulk of his earnings to his mother in Italy, and only pay his board to his aunt. While he worked apart from his uncle's family and spent his leisure hours with age-mates the young man interacted only infrequently with his uncle's family, seldom confided fully in them, and did not identify his interests with theirs. At the same time he had no strong feeling of belonging to the Molfettese community, although he attended weddings, funerals, and other community gatherings.

Not being able to identify himself readily with the Molfettese community or the host society, a young man at first might have felt at odds with his environment, and often regretted his decision to come to Australia. The main thing that sustained him was his chance of making money quickly in the new country. Thus he focussed his attention on what Molfettese had earned previously, and was impatient if he did not have similar prospects after being a year in Australia. Most of the newly-arrived and unattached young men had received in Italy

an education superior to that of the second-generation Molfettese in South Australia, and this made them feel superior. Their higher aspiration level conflicted with the subservient role they were expected to fulfil by the established Molfettese community.

The sub-group of the new male migrants was thus in most respects an agglomeration of individuals, who felt inferior and needed to assert themselves. Thus they met conspicuously at the corner of Alexander and Florence Streets, wore gaudy clothes, spoke in loud voice in dialect, and appeared arrogant in their conduct and bearing. The structure of the group was a loose one since there was no recognized leader who initiated interactions, and there was little common activity in which individuals competed for status within the group.

Following the example of the newly-migrated young men there arose a sub-group of Australian-educated young men in opposition to the other group. They met on the wharf or in the billiard saloon, were not so conspicuous, and spoke in English. They resented the good fortune of the newly-arrived migrants whom they considered should be impressed by but not envious of their recent and hardly won leisure. "They want all that we have immediately they come here, and do not take any notice of the fact that it took us twenty years to save up for what we have." Their attitude was taken up by the older-established families, and many pre-war migrants declared that they would bring no-one out from Italy since it had been the experience of the group that new arrivals were by no means grateful for the help they had received, were not prepared to go fishing, could not be controlled by their nominators, and were too prone to complain. It was thought that if the young migrant did not show gratitude, he secretly blamed his nominator for misrepresenting conditions in Australia.

Family Rivalry and Alignments.

An increasing amount of social activity was concerned with family rivalry, which in turn helped to split the community. In the more dispersed and extravagant religious and wedding rituals there was an element of fission. The intensification of the "we" feeling brought about by the wedding reception could be followed by some relapse or sense of rivalry. Some family rivalry was latent in most community activities, and accounted for the lack of leadership in the Molfettese community since the establishment of families in the thirties. A member of one family was frequently prepared to interpret on scant evidence the actions of a member of another Molfettese family in an unfavourable light. In recalling a particular wedding reception some condemnation could be manifested in a comparison with other more successful weddings, and in some way there was always some detail in which the organizers of a feast day had betrayed their incompetence.

While all the Molfettese were equally poor and discriminated against by the host society, and migration was an interlude in the lives of men with the goal to return to Italy, individual migrants were prepared to help one another in co-operative endeavour as a kind of mutual benefit assurance. The co-operative life continued while newcomers to the group were related to one another and lived in close association with the older members of the group. But with the establishment of separate homes in the third period of migration men began to invest rather than to store their savings, and the extent of their success through their investments became manifest to all.

Men became jealous of their wives caring for other men, so that when more and more men brought their wives to Port Pirie



other men, who still had wives in Italy, were suffered rather than welcomed as boarders. Conspicuous display in the past had mainly been reserved for the time when the man returned to Italy, and one of the reasons why the return visits were frequently brief in duration was that if a man stayed longer he would be showered from petitions from destitute relatives. A similar state of affairs existed in Australia when some families began to improve their houses. Other and poorer Molfettese expected assistance from them.

In the third period of migration the man who was establishing himself in Solomontown found his security in his growing sons, rather than in more distantly-related men in the community who had their own family commitments. Each new family began to fend for itself economically. Every fisherman became the competitor of every other fisherman, so that the men were not able to act together for their common advantage. They were not able to combine for their joint benefit when the Fisheries Department tried to begin a Fishing Co-operative in Port Pirie after the war, which was to be modelled on a co-operative that was working among the Greek fishermen of Thevenard. As each Italian fisherman became an individualist in the catching and marketing of his fish, each took pride in his being a more skilful fisherman than his compatriots. When one boat went out all the other fishermen were anxious to follow it, and news of any large catch spread throughout the community.

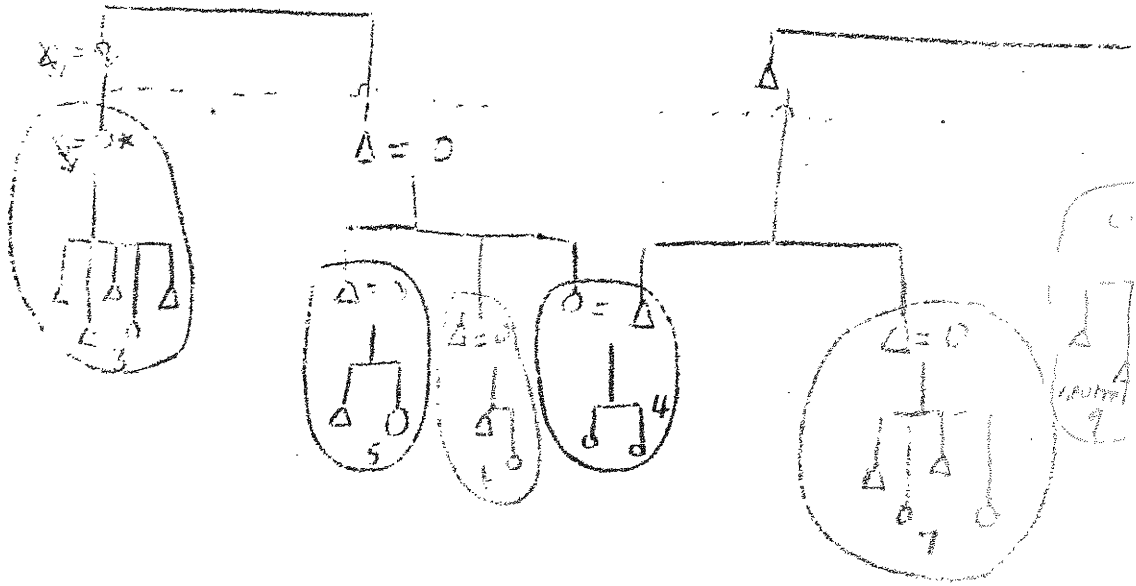
Family rivalry was based on the old theme of the honour of the family, and it found dramatic expression in the wedding receptions that indicated family prosperity. Sometimes newly-arrived families tried to ally themselves in marriage to wealthier, longer-established,

distantly related families. The alliances could be successful; but sometimes families, although related, severed connexions with each other. The bridegroom should feel himself obliged to pay the cost of a wedding reception back to his wife's people, but he often reasoned that they could afford to pay for the reception better than he could. Thus the community was further split by disappointed family expectations, by feuds and rivalries, and it did not present the close network of kin drawn together through residence and kinship bonds, as might be indicated from an analysis of intramarriage and residence charts alone. It was true in a general way that kin were drawn together through intramarriage and neighbourliness, but it should not be inferred that any particular kin were on good terms because they happened to live near each other. Thus two brothers who lived next door to each other for five years did not speak to one another. In the same way many Molfettese families had lived next to Australian families for years without communicating with them.

As an illustration of the pattern that family rivalries and alignments followed in the community I propose to analyse the groupings of some of the families who came from Molfetta through Port Said.

With the rise of Egyptian nationalism after the last war and with discrimination there against Europeans, several of the Molfettese families who had settled in Egypt have been seeking to join their relatives in Australia. Two families (5 and 6) represented in Fig. III arrived soon after the war under the nomination of the first family to come from Port Said to Port Pirie. Although intra-

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marriage had occurred between the families migrating from Port Said, rivalries and jealousies between the brothers of two wives had split the sub-group into two, so that members of some of the families would not speak to members of others, and in-group loyalty in the two segments of the sub-group was intensified.

In one segment (segment A) were those who had done well in Port Pirie - the family of the man who had migrated earliest from Port Said; two families of affinal in-laws (one of which was neutral); one of the families (family 7) brought out by the first family before the depression, and one of the two families (family 6) related through the wife of the other family of brothers migrating before the depression.

In the other segment were the families of those who had not done so well, the other fishermen who had migrated before the depression (family 4), who had no sons to help him; the family of a widow (family 3) with only one son working, and four children at school; and the family of another widow (family 8) recently arrived, who had two sons helping her, but who had not had sufficient time in Australia to save.

A family quarrel arose between family 1 and 2 over the dowry of the second daughter. Another estrangement occurred between families 5 and 6, who had migrated at the same time and been on good terms, until one of them obtained an easier and better paid job than the other. The breach was exacerbated by the wives of the two men. A further estrangement arose between families 2 and 7 over the nomination of a relative of family 2. Family 2 could not guarantee the accommodation and security for one year, and family 7 would receive

no benefit from pledging itself responsible for the proposed migrants from Port Said. Being uncertain whether family 7 would prove obliging family 2 had in the meantime approached family 4. Family 7 allied itself in fishing with family 6.

Fission occurred between families 5 and 6, 2 and 7, 2 and 1, and alliances occurred between families 1, 7 and 6. Family 5, which lived about a mile and a half from Solomontown, would visit family 2 to help preparations for a feast, and would stay over night; family 2 would make first-communication dresses for family 4, and so on. There was no breach between family 4 and family 7, but neither was there a strong alignment. Family 9 and family 10 were neutral in the disputes between the two segments, and would visit both sections impartially. It is interesting to note that alliances were usually made between women, and that family rivalry occurred almost invariably between families related only through males. Thus the two widows in family 3 and family 8 were sisters, family 5 and family 6 were related only through the male line.

The alignments worked mainly through the women, as could be illustrated through most genealogies. In the sample genealogy given in Appendix Five, families 4 and 6 were aligned through sisters who lived close to their parents in family 3. The men in family 6 and 8 visited their mothers-in-law more frequently than their mothers. Family 8 was strongly attached to the wife's people, with whom it was neighbours, and the man spent his evenings playing cards with his father-in-law. Families 7, 9, and 10, related through the women's line, frequently visited one another and were on friendly terms. The leader of

family 10, although he was born in Australia, showed many signs of marginality, kept more in the company of his brothers-in-law than of his own brother, who was in turn attached to his wife's people with whom he lived. Family 12 kept in close touch with families 11 and 14, related through the women's line. Families 12, 13, 14, allied through women, lived close to each other; and family 3, family 4, and family 6 lived close to them in the David Street area of the town. There was here a residential alliance between two sisters (from families 3 and 14) with their daughters (in families 4, 6, 12) and daughter-in-law (family 13) who had no other relatives in the community. Family 14 established itself prior to family 3 (the husband in which had been engaged in farming in Molfetta and had arrived fairly late), and family 3 deliberately settled near family 14. The ties between families 13 and 14 have become more distant since the decease of the first wife. Families 16 and 17 were attached to each other through family 14, and were allied again through women to families 11 and 12. Family 11, which lived some distance from family 13 and had a garage, used to keep a car owned by family 13, partly for the reason that it would be able to visit family 13. Family 17 was attached equally to the relatives of the husband and the wife, for the husband was the eldest son, his mother had only recently migrated and depended on him for advice. He had a truck, and would call on his mother and brothers, or bring them to call on him. He had a large number of relatives on his father's side with whom he had little intercourse, but his mother had no other direct relatives beyond her immediate family in Port Pirie. The young man who was engaged to her daughter already called his mother-in-law to be -"mother", and his family in turn was aligning itself to the prospective wife's family and to the brother-in-law's family, that is to family 17.

Family 18 was allied with family 19 through the relationship of two sisters, and was to a lesser extent aligned with the more distantly-related family 16, with which it was neighbours. The head of the family had refused his brother's request to call him out to Australia, but he was prepared to nominate his wife's people. His wife's sister came to keep house for him when his wife had her latest baby, although the wife's sister had a house and children of her own.

Household 20 worked as a team, and when the husbands of the two younger daughters disagreed with their mother-in-law's brother who was head over the household the whole family moved to Adelaide and effected a reconciliation. Families 24 and 25 related through two brothers were on good terms because the wives of the two brothers had no relatives of their own in Australia. They were of similar age and had migrated at the same time. They were too old to quarrel over their relative family status, and each of their husbands was on a par economically. Family 22 had intramarried with family 25; and two brothers in families 23 and 24 had intramarried with two sisters. The head of the family 28 had formed an alliance with his wife's brother, and so on.

The attachment of households to the parent's household of the wife's people was particularly marked when this latter household had been established first, and second-generation daughters married first-generation, more-recently-migrated men. Thus family 1 lived in Solomontown away from the wife's people in family 3 since the husband and wife had migrated about the same time, and both had been born in Italy. The husbands of families 4 and 6, on the other hand, had come to Australia at a later period and had married second-generation wives.

In this analysis of family alignments two principles that were borne out through all the genealogies have clearly emerged. Brothers were estranged, often through the rivalry of their wives, and families were aligned mainly through propinquity in the woman's line. The older-established families, particularly those with a large number of daughters, tended to visit each other, and so keep up a sense of community and co-operation, which the incursions of newly-arrived Molfettese had done much to destroy. Fission resulted from the rivalry of families or individuals unrelated through female lineages. Potential lines of fission existed where individuals were not related through women to other families within the community, and where the consolidating community interests of women in the home, extended to an interest in the welfare of kin in the woman's lineage, was not kept alive,

#### Status within the Community.

While a spirit of co-operation existed in the Molfettese community there had been an egalitarianism which resisted competition. Every man was in theory the equal of every other, and master of his own household. A man gained prestige through attending to his own affairs successfully without assuming superiority or taking offence. One man who had these virtues was still called b'ignaz, a contraction of good Ignazzio, as a term of address and reference. The status of individuals was of lesser importance than the status or honour of the family to which they belonged. The honour of the family was tied up with its fitness to provide and maintain its children, and its training them in the virtues of industry and purity according to their sex.



Much of this egalitarianism has remained. Thus a particular fish-buyer was extremely unpopular because he would not buy all the fish that fishermen brought to him in a period of glut, since he already had as much as he could handle. The increased wealth of his family was described with the significant words: "he forgets he was once a fisherman." Another buyer, who had not been a fisherman during the depression and who had not traded so extensively since, could state his terms of sale without risk of such opprobium.

The success of any member in the community was accompanied by disparagement rather than acclamation and congratulation, and those who had advanced themselves rapidly were not popular. The group in this respect maintained a level, and resisted the efforts of the individual to rise above it.<sup>5</sup> It was difficult to get any player in the soccer team to volunteer for the captaincy when it fell vacant, since the accepting of the post without group persuasion would be construed as arrogance on the part of the player. Every Molfettese in a group photograph of the victorious Savoy team taken in 1952 had some title or office, such as President, Vice-President, Deputy-President, Secretary, Assistant-Secretary, Treasurer, Captain, and so on. The only members of the team without these distinctions were a Dutch and an English "new Australian" who happened to affiliate themselves through soccer ~~with~~ the Molfettese.

There were frequent meetings of the soccer clubs, and the appointments of officials were continually being renewed. One young man used to write articles about the teams to La Fiamma, but had ceased to do so because he had not again been asked. Changes in

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5. See above pp.9-10.

office were frequently made for no other reason than that the Molfettese did not like any one of their number to represent them for too long. They did not want a leader. Assertion on the part of players frequently led to open brawls mostly along the fission line separating the post-war from the pre-war migrant. Excesses of partianship<sup>5</sup> were avoided when a Molfettese played a non-Molfettese team. In the play-groups originating out of the teen-age gangs in Molfetta one team made war on another and employed a strategy needing a leader; but a different leader was elected on every occasion, and each player had his turn to devise a plan and to pick his team.

Superior educational qualifications did not win the individual higher status within the group. They were looked on more as an arrogant display. It was unpractical to appoint a young Molfettese who could read and write both English and Italian to instruct in the migrant classes. "Who does he think he is ,putting on airs?" asked the young men who had made the request for the teacher.

The ostentatious display of some newly rich family was disapproved of in the phrase "putting on airs", although there was some recognition of a legitimate occasion for doing this as at parties when the occasion was described as "being flash". The most appropriate way of obtaining status in the community was through owning a business and through being in a position to further the economic advancement of others.

Property status was advertised through conspicuous leisure, the possession of a fine house and a late-model motor car, which would usually be parked in the street. The display of property

both recently-arrived and older-established migrants, though the new arrivals who knew nothing of the earlier poverty of the families concerned were more likely to be impressed. It is interesting to note in this connexion that the three wealthiest Molfettese men in Port Pirie in 1953 had each migrated independently, only had affinal relatives or cousins in the community, and had fewer relatives than most of the other Molfettese who arrived at the same time as they did to the local group. They were, in other words, more individualistic and less concerned with co-operation in the group economically.

Several men who had done well, and enjoyed the prestige of success with the Australian small-business sector of the community, might be approached to assist a Molfettese who had fewer business connexions, and had less knowledge of business procedure. But the same man would not be consulted each time, and a Molfettese who wanted advice about seeking legal aid might consult first one man, and then another.

The post-war migrants were accorded a lower status by the pre-war majority, although they did not always know it. They did not accept the low status, nor the low status given to the Molfettese as a group by the host society, by virtue of their poverty, ignorance and humility. As the Molfettese gained wealth they lost this excessive humility, which was enjoined on the poorer classes in Italy by the professional, wealthy classes. In their new-found wealth they imitated the behaviour of the wealthy classes in Italy who did not have to show "respect" to receive attention. But this show of arrogance did not bring status to the individual in Australia.

In brief, the requisites for higher status were not as yet clearly defined by the community. The individual had not replaced

the family as the responsible unit to which prestige and respect were habitually accorded. Egalitarianism was engendered in theory. But a man could obtain status and respect if he succeeded materially, had a fair and shrewd understanding of business ways in the host society, was likely to be informed of business deals, had property in the centre of the town, was an honorary official in group activities such as the soccer, was generous in donations to group causes, and above all had the modesty not to parade material acquisitions as if they had been only recently acquired.

#### Loss of Cohesion within the Community.

The formation of sub-groups and the loss of cohesion of the Molfettese community as a whole were inter-related factors, and they co-existed with the growth of rivalry within the community. The same features that could be cited to mark the formation of sub-groups could also be cited to explain the loss of cohesiveness. The emergence of young men's sub-groups, centred round the activity of soccer or the similar aspirations of new-comers, mobilized individuals with extra-family ambitions, and initiated interactions that cut across those initiated by the solidary family, and made for fission within the community. The sub-groups arose from :-

- 1). the increased size and heterogeneity of the group;
- 2). the diversity of occupation in the group, both with respect to further local opportunities for employment and to employment histories of migrants;
- 3). the residential spreading of the community;
- 4). the acquiring of new knowledge, interests, and skills outside the family;



- 5).the lessening of family control once the family had established itself, and the increased importance attached to leisure to mark successful migration ;
- 6).the regularization of leisure, no longer controlled by the vagaries of the weather ;
- 7).the disparity between the aspiration level of the newly-arrived young migrant, the role he was expected to adopt, and the status he was given;
- 8).the identification of many young men with "more progressive" Australian interests grouped them apart from their fathers, who had a confused loyalty to a situation or way of life that had existed in Italy in the past, but which had disappeared with the increasing industrialization of Italy ;
- 9).imitation, and identification of interests with age-mates.

Fission was mainly related with family rivalry, with the formation of sub-groups and rivalry between them, with the replacing of co-operation by competition, and with the antipathy between old and new arrivals.

Loss of cohesiveness was a progressive state of affairs. So long as the number of new arrivals was small, each new arrival was almost entirely dependent on the older-established group for forming a stable mode of response. The role of each new-comer had been clearly laid down by each intaking family. But only some of the post-war migrants completed, as wives or children, families that had been partly established before their arrival. Complete families, and young men who had fewer relatives in the community, arrived for the first time as migrating units after the war. The lack of any organization other than along family lines resulted in a loss of group cohesiveness, which was in effect the power of the group to induce its members to think and act in the same way. Subsequent migrants who

came to a group less coherent than it had been immediately after the war found less co-operation, fission lines created by family rivalry, sub-groups, competition, and some out-group attitudes between pre- and post-war migrants. Loss of cohesion was thus cumulative. The group had lost control over these late arrivals.

The newly-arrived young men were less amenable to group control and sought their main economic rewards outside the group. If they were too hard pressed by the group they would leave it and seek opportunities away from it. The cohesiveness of the group was nowhere upheld by them as a value, and the group lost its cohesiveness and became less well-integrated because it had become less attractive to some of its members. The strength of the group and group consciousness were dependent on group control, and as the group lost its control it became less well-defined, less homogeneous, less vital, less clear about its norms and values, and individuals within it came less resentful of out-group innovations and encroachments.

So the importance given to young men through soccer playing spread beyond soccer. The age-grade solidarity exemplified by the young men in the soccer team was undermining the authority of the older group by setting up goals and ideals for young men outside the family, and young men began to look for rewards additional to those offered by the family. The situation was a complex one admitting some dualism, in which one factor was balanced by another. The young men did not, as was indicated in the previous chapters on the family, often revolt openly against their fathers, but this authority had become less real and incontestable in the eyes of the community. In two family disputes, for example, the community sided alternatively with

the father and the son. When the son offended against the community by marrying some disapproved girl, then the community backed up the father's attempts to prevent the match through recalling gifts and money lent to his son. If the father was merely cantankerous and wanted absolute obedience and respect from his sons without special justification, then the community sided with the sons in naming the father old-fashioned.

Relationships with the host society.

As the Molfettese community changed from a co-operative to a competitive community further relationships were sought with the host society. Competition at first implies in theory an equality and degree of respect among competitors. It is only after one competitor has been ousted that the dissociative aspects of pride and envy are given way to. The winner still desires the approval of those he has beaten, although he may despise them at the same time, especially if his victory makes him seek other competitors. When competition becomes more fluid through the adoption of money and property as the only reference points, more and remoter competitors can enter the field, and the original stabilizing power of community approval is lost. Some such community anomie was beginning to make itself felt among the Molfettese at Port Pirie. The acceptance and use of money as a social reference point made an early appearance at wedding receptions. It showed nothing of the forethought or personality of the giver; and substituted a wide and diffusely-desired criterion of value for the more intimate expression of personal help which was still retained in the family. In other directions there was an appreciation of personal services as the marks of care and regard, and the Molfettese often desired to improve their relationship with

Australian neighbours through gifts of fish.

But the relationships that the Molfettese had with the host society extended further than the using and desiring of money, and bargaining competitively with Australians. There was a sharing of experiences with Australians that came from living in the same community as the Australians for a long period of time. Molfettese and Australians had similar memories, and in retrospect found much that had touched their lives jointly. The salt-water flood of 1934, for example, was followed by the evacuation of both Italians and Australians; a diphtheria epidemic and the depression were common experiences; so were the recent good times and inflation; the erection of the maternity block at the hospital was important to all women in Port Pirie equally; the burning down of the Cathedral called for contributions from all Catholics; and the gossip in the local paper interested both groups more than most <sup>items of</sup> remote news. Prominent citizens were known by both groups.

The growth of communications and the adoption of new techniques have lessened the social and physical distance between peoples, and while more people have listened to the radio, seen films made in and about foreign countries, and have travelled speedily, often at a mere whim, away from their particular community, the self-containedness and out-group hostility of community life as such has been lessening. The effects of most inventions facilitating communications have only made themselves felt locally since the depression. In the early years of the century it used to take twelve hours by train, through Peterborough, and on a narrow gauge railway-line, to get to Adelaide. The broad-gauge line giving a twice-daily, four-and-a-half hour service to Adelaide was completed in 1937. The highways were being bituminized in South



Australia at about the same time. What is to be a modern, fast highway connecting Adelaide to Port Pirie was still under construction. In 1932 two wireless stations (5 P.I. and 5 C.K.) giving a commercial and an A.B.C. regional programme were opened at Crystal Brook, 15 miles away. The air port was put into commission about the same time.

When the radio stations were first opened crystal sets with earphones were still being used to receive radio programmes, but the effect of the clear reception from two local relaying stations early encouraged the use of radio as an entertainment medium in Port Pirie. One of the first items of furniture that the Molfettese bought when they could afford it was the radiogram, and this seems to have been constantly used. Young people became quickly familiar with the latest hit-tunes. The less-direct uses of the radio to find out the state of the weather or the market had not recommended themselves to men affected by them, but, when it was pointed out that there was a special session of English lessons for new Australians broadcast each week, the session was eagerly followed, and covering booklets in demand. Older people might pick up phrases from the radio that they would repeat without any reference to context, but in other respects the radio was an educating medium.

The effects of listening to the radio were many and various, none perhaps solely due to the specific introduction of the mechanical technic, but combining with other converging forms in an interconnected process of inventional influence.<sup>6</sup> One invention encouraged and fitted in with the use of another. In general, the radio has made for homogeneity, a lessening of class consciousness, a reduction of regionalism -

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6. Ogburn and Ninkoff, *Sociology*, Chap. 26, p548, second edition 1950.

both among the Molfettese and the host society. In addition it has encouraged an interest in sport in Port Pire. It has probably lowered the educational gap between old and new migrants, and directly encouraged and assisted older migrants to learn some English. The learning of English has in itself given women more confidence to approach Australian shopkeepers, as it has lessened the necessity for them to go in groups to the shops in company of children interpreters. The radio also probably increased the Molfettese demand for advertised Australian goods, confirmed the desire of some families to go to Adelaide, which was the source of these goods, and gave fuller scope for the enjoyment of leisure. Thus, at the same time as there was a lessening of cohesion in the local Molfettese group there was a growing sense of belonging to the host society. There was an increase of confidence in the ability of the individual to succeed in the host society along with other Australians with whom he considered himself on a more equal footing. And more reference was made to the host society, and its objects and values.

CHAPTER SEVEN.  
Values and Value-Orientaticn

In a methodological note on valuations and beliefs Myrdal<sup>1</sup> stated that people's advertized opinions were "illogical, and contain conflicting valuations bridged by skewed beliefs about social reality. In addition, they indicate very inadequately the behaviour which can be expected and they usually misrepresent its actual motivation. " Later<sup>2</sup> he criticized the use of Sumner's term "mores" in sociology on the grounds that the term implied a "homogeneous, unproblematic, fairly static entity", not found outside primitive societies today. Without wishing to apply that the opinions of the Molfettese were logical or consistent I would argue that most inconsistencies in and skewing of valuations were likely to arise in a society, such as the one Myrdal studied, which was large in scale and had undergone and was still undergoing rapid changes in technics. I think that the term "mores" could be applied to traditional Molfettese values, and some degree of consistency might be expected in the values of a small-scale, fairly-static community.

The values were not compiled from advertized opinions but were abstracted from behaviour in which there was some consistency between action and perception of the results of such action. The values were objects to which were directed attitudes, or tendencies to action; the objects were invested with moral and ethical rationalizations. The value was something relative,<sup>3</sup> that was preferable to some other thing or object, something for which people took pains and worked, undergoing some unpleasantness and perhaps privation,

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1. Myrdal, Appendices 1 and 2 to An American Dilemma.  
2. ibid, pp. 1031-2.  
3. Polson, op. cit.

and values were always taken seriously. The values fitted into a pattern reinforcing one another so that it was possible to speak of value-orientation,<sup>4</sup> or the clustering of minor valuations round some integrating nucleus. Changes in individual values were not so significant as the re-orientation of values towards different ends, such as would be brought about by the replacement of co-operation by competition in the community, or the substitution of dominance for self-effacing attitudes.

#### Traditional Molfettese Values.

Many Molfettese values persisted through cultural inertia, and by reference back to Italy which was the source of the valuations. In this connexion could be mentioned the preference for Italian furniture styles, for heavy curtains, deep colourings of blue and red, numerous thick and cumbersome ornaments, vases, and artificial flowers that filled the house. A Molfettese-owned dwelling could be distinguished from an Australian-owned neighbouring house by the concrete paths leading to the back door and the light on the back porch. Since they brought few articles out with them from Italy, Italian goods possessed in Australia a scarcity value, and were proudly shown to guests. There was a sentimental preference for goods made in Italy, which was referred to as "the old country" or "over there", similar to the preference that many Australians have expressed for English goods and styles. Such values, beliefs or preferences, were widely held, and seemed to be acquired independently. Deviants from them did not meet with overt community criticism and condemnation. Neither was there any rivalry to own the most ornate furniture in the Italian

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4. Talcott Parsons, The Social System, chap. III.

style. Such beliefs were confirmed when other people shared them, or thought them desirable relative to other beliefs and modes of action, but as they were not challenged they were not consciously defended.

The preference for an Italian diet and recipes persisted largely because the Molfettese knew no other. But other values and preferences went farther than articles of diet and fashions in furniture. Such values concerned people and behaviour towards them. On this level, too, many of the Molfettese continued to refer back to Italy, although an Australian orientation was becoming more common, and was gradually replacing an Italian-orientation. Thus the Molfettese continued to seek the best medical attention for their sick, and to over-emphasize the dangers of ill-health. They had not forgotten that the G.P. was less qualified than the specialist in Italy, and that the first question that he would ask before he treated his patient would have been "how much money have you?" The G.P. who was often a government official would not show, according to the Molfettese, much skill or interest in saving the life of a person who was ill. In this connexion a Molfettese woman who ran a boarding house in Adelaide arranged appointments with Adelaide specialists for her Port Pirie and other associates. These stayed with her while they were in Adelaide, and she was helpful to those who could not describe their ailments by interpreting to the Australian doctors. The Molfettese continued to be suspicious of banks and life-assurance, which they did not properly understand, and which had not always been reliable in Italy. They obtained their security by saving their money within the family, and investing it in real estate and household property.

Some of the values that were oriented towards Italy obtained

a new significance in Australia, and when they involve relationships with Australians. Most notable in this direction were attitudes concerning religion, which will be considered separately. Another example would be the attitude towards bargaining and the market for which the Molfettese retained a zest.

Buying under market conditions had been the commonest form of purchase in Molfetta, and in earlier times what was known as a "steady price" was only to be found in the shops at Bari. The Molfettese shop-keeper would ask for more and the purchaser would offer less until an agreement had been reached through wrangling. The satisfaction that both obtained was through driving a hard bargain, and considering that a better economical advantage had been won. While they were strangers in Fort Pirie the Molfettese were permitted to strive for reduced prices without giving marked offence, and it was said when they bartered that they did not know any better. The market situation, where one buys or wants what another sells or has too much of, implies a difference between bargainers. In the market the stranger is not only tolerated but sought after. Molfettese vendors were so sought after by the host society when the only English that the Italian knew was the price of his fish. The Australians fancied that they obtained their fish more cheaply by buying it fresh and without the middleman; the Molfettese asked for a higher price than they would have obtained if they sold it wholesale. Two fishermen in 1953 would enact the scene of their retirement when they would go round with a basket of fish to Australian houses crying "Fish Ho", forgetful of the prohibitive local by-law. Fish vendors had made good money in this fashion in days gone by, and certain kindly memories

were retained by Australians for notable fish-vendors, now dead or returned to Italy. Australian shop keepers spoke highly of the Molfette as customers, saying they were honorable and paid their debts. The shop-keepers were sometimes prepared to make concessions to the Italians. Bargain sales in Australian shops were designed to accommodate the buying habits of Italian women. But the Italian tailor and hairdresser said they preferred non-Italian customers. The Molfette expected extra treatment and would delay payment when dealing with their fellow countryman. Their valuing probity of business relationships conflicted with their valuing help from relatives. Besides resenting the advance of one of their number who previously had a lowly status they irritated the newly-established "business man" by "patronizing" him. It was difficult to enforce payment from relatives or fellow countrymen without incurring ill-will.

Thus the Molfette value of help from kin underwent a transition in the new environment when a Molfette entered business and wanted to attract the custom of Australians. The value of help to kin was only retained by those who wanted to be helped, and who at the same time considered themselves to be superior to him whom they could trade with at their pleasure. Since there were only a few such business men in the community the traditional Molfette value of help to relatives was still operative.

Some of the traditional values were strengthened through the example of the opposite qualities displayed by Australians in Port Pirie. Thus they valued sobriety and thrift, without which they could not have established themselves, because they saw the effects of

disorder and waste of money in the host society. The main evidence of non thrift was (1) in the homes of the workers, which remained shabby and in poor repair in spite of the good money being earned in the Smelters, and (2) the fact that during the strike of January 1953 many strikers were living on credit from shops while they drank at hotels during the day. The Molfettese who worked in the Smelters prided themselves that they could have lived, had the strike lasted, for a much longer period on their savings.

Very few Molfettese drank at the hotels, and when after the war five young shopkeepers began to go to the hotel regularly during the rush period from 5 to 6 they announced that they only went "for business reasons", and that one or two drinks were enough for one session.

Some reinforcing of the Molfettese value of hospitality occurred when the Molfettese received little hospitality from non-kin in the host society. They frequently commented on the difference between the hospitality they had once received and that which was extended to them in recent years. Although they did not take in Australian boarders they treated any Australian who came temporarily into their family very handsomely. The value might have declined since there were fewer calls for such help recently, and newly-arrived migrants who had traded on the generosity of their relatives had abused this generosity.

The Molfettese in Port Pirie remained for some time a coherent and stable group because there was a large measure of consistency in traditional Molfettese values which reinforced each other. Thus community living and large families made it easy to care for the aged and residential propinquity among kin supported and was supported.



by such other values as owning one's house, the honour of the family, the delight in children, the purity of women whose place was "in the house" The institution of visiting acted as a safety-valve or way in which a woman could spend her increased leisure and still remain "in the home". The house of her mother or sister was an extension of her own home, and visiting strengthened the valuing of care for the aged and the sick, as it made for family and community solidarity. Men took delight in children because the community approved of such a fulfilment of a woman's destiny, because the tending of children justified the woman's place in the home, and because parents were thus assured of support and care in their old age.

The clarity of particular evaluations in relation to the choice of articles, standards of beauty, ways of investment, consultation of doctors, the disutility of book education; evaluations that led to the avoidance of such public actions as going to hotels, giving to charity; evaluations concerning actions in and of the home -hospitality, deference to parents, generosity to kin, respect to the aged; evaluations concerning face to face relationships outside the home and to more distant kin, such as ingenuousness and non-malicious concern -all had been effective in maintaining the community as an ethnic isolate, in so far as the values were derived from or referred back to traditional modes of behaviour in an Italian fishing community conceived of as being superior to other modes of behaviour in the community of adoption.

#### The place of Religion in the lives of the Migrants.

In Italy social life had been dominated by the omnipresent priest. Some of these were tyrannical, demanded respect of the poor,

and if they were not greeted with respect could channel gossip so that it was harmful to a family's reputation. In Italy many intellectuals were anti-religious by tradition. As a consequence the priest did not pose as an intellectual. He discouraged abstract thought. He made no other explanation for his pronouncements than: "This is God's Will!" God was not explained, or described as having attributes. He merely came to the Church when evoked by ceremony and pageant. The Italian priest was always reminding his parishioners that he was God's representative. He sought to stir up emotions through his eloquent denunciations, through painting the delights of paradise and the torments of Hell. Priests did not expatiate on religion. They merely dictated: "Do these things. Give these things." When a man migrated he broke away from the tyrannical aspect of a priest-ridden society, and having tasted freedom did not want to go back into bondage. From the point of view of the priest his religion gave place to materialism. The migrant had never seen so much money before. He prayed for health and sustenance, but forgot God when these were granted in abundance. The only wealth that the poor might have was that communally shared in the mediaeval richness of churches. When a man migrated he left that wealth behind.

The Catholic Church in Port Pirie neglected the Italian migrants when they first arrived. Until recently no priest understood special Italian ceremonies such as blessing the boat, and sermons were not preached in Italian. One man said: "Why should I confess to this priest? He could not understand me. I might as well confess to a door post." Another said bitterly that the priests had only come to call on him when he began to earn money. The local form of service was a

drab affair to him compared with the splendour of Italy. The Irish-Australian priest intellectualised religion and discouraged the expense of money on costly ritual. In the absence of the appropriate priest, time, and place, it simply did not exist for the Molfettese in Australia. From the point of view of the priest the migrant neglected God because he did not give to the Church. In not giving he was in danger of losing his belief in God, and hence of endangering his soul.

The Molfettese migrant valued religion because he valued Italy, and the essential belief in Catholic doctrine was deeply planted and not questioned. The migrant had not been given to discussion, or the questioning of any one in authority. As he made no intellectual revolt against religion he accepted the Catholic dogma, as far as he was familiar with it, in its entirety. We all came from Adam and Eve he would volunteer, and the creation, as it said on the Catholic Calendar, occurred 7,958 years ago. He accepted the outside world as too complicated for his control, and was content if his control was vested in and confined to his family. While he was out fishing it was not possible for him to attend church regularly and he lost the habit. Religion was also to him a matter of private conscience, and distinguished man from the animals. The Catholic stress on the necessity of faith as against good works was convenient for him; he was religious because he never took the trouble to doubt religion. One man replied when I asked him about religion that he was not going to die yet, and that he would consider these things more seriously in his old age.

Religion took a more superstitious and magical form for the majority of the older people. If their earthly fortunes were increas-

then they considered that the saints were protecting them, and that they had no immediate cause to worry. If they became ill they must appeal again to the saints. Horse shoes were tied on to posts to ward off evil influences, and a crab-claw effigy was worn on a ring while the claw itself was frequently displayed in the kitchen to keep off the evil eye. Older women believed that hypnotic powders could be mysteriously sent by post. In day to day affairs God was too remote and involved. The priest was not universally recognized in Australia as he was in Italy, and the Molfettese did not find him very approachable. So religion became a matter for the individual and his relationship with his intercessory saint. The religious person carried a picture of his patron saint about with him. The name-saint would be sure to protect a petitioner if a candle was lit in his honour, and the petitioner became mindful of him. Religion being an individual matter, fishermen did not talk about it generally, and children received only the minimum instruction from their parents.

Religion, however, began to occupy a place of more importance in the community after the arrival of large numbers of women, who had been regular church-attenders in Italy, and who were freed by the maturation of their children from the cares of looking after small children. Many women recently went regularly to Mass, though they brought few men and children along with them. Second-generation children educated at the Catholic Primary Schools used to go to church regularly while they were at school, but their church attendance dropped off once they left school. At a marriage ceremony in 1953 there were some fifty women but only three men present. But, during the novena and when the traditional Molfettese feast days were

presented with the help of an Italian priest, the church was crowded with men, women, and children. Only the women knew the traditional songs and many men waited outside the church while intercessions were being made, and collections taken.

The most religious young men in the community were those who had recently migrated, and who were successful in Australia. The more successful wanted to introduce a Catholic Club in Port Pirie similar to that they had attended in Molfetta. They wanted to stage plays and pageants in the club. They decried the lack of religious feeling in other Molfettese in Australia. And they turned to the Australian form of the Catholic church as equivalent to the Italian form. Their example was not widely followed, and other recently-arrived but unsuccessful migrants had little time for the church.

There was thus a considerable difference in the valuing of religion within the Molfettese community, and of sharing through religion a common ideology and set of related values about the meaning and purpose of life which would unite Australian and Italian Catholics. There was more reference made to the local church as a substitute for Italian churches once the local church was prepared to make concessions in regard to Italian ritual. Much depended on the effectiveness of the church, its ability to dramatize the role played in life by protective saints. While he remained with his father and went out fishing, religion as a topic was not broached by the first-generation Molfettese brought up in Australia. Younger children received more religious instruction when women taught them to pray, made clothes for their first communion, and delegated special religious instruction to the church. To the older migrant the Australian priest and the Italian

priest were two different persons claiming to be God's representative. One Molfettese man summed up the difference ... "Everyone looks to a different God. Which one is He to listen to? Everyone must pray for himself. Everyone must help himself. There are wars everywhere through dissatisfaction and propaganda. Old people take no interest in religion because they do not know what it means. They can take no interest without education. The main thing is to avoid trouble, and to work for production - everywhere." After his experience of internment the Molfettese man distrusted propaganda and humbug. He was further resolved to attend to his own affairs, and to have little to do with those he could not understand. His attitude towards religion was negative, and as such he rarely spoke of it or reminded his children of their religious obligations. Second-generation Molfettese discountenanced the superstitions of women, but they had as yet few ethical substitutes with which to replace them.

#### Changes in Values and Value Orientation.

The traditional values of thrift, industry, family aid, and resistance to the dispersion of the family were oriented towards the preservation of family ties, and they kept the community together. These values were being challenged with increasing prosperity and the use of technique to aid individuals by an increasing valuation of leisure, mobility, and conspicuous waste that were opposed to the previously held values that united the community. The valuing of leisure, for example was the antithesis of the valuing of hard work for stated ends, as conspicuous waste and unnecessary expenditure to advertise prosperity were the antitheses of saving. The Molfettese were not so wealthy that they could afford to neglect the future, or, <sup>not</sup> to make provision for

it. The period of prosperity following the war opened up new possibilities for them. The alternatives it offered were (a) to work less and maintain the same standard of living, (b) to take full advantage of the better conditions to achieve wealth and security, (c) to strike a balance between the extremes. By choosing a higher marginal utility for leisure relative to industry, in the sense that they would now prefer to play games rather than work overtime on holidays, the Molfettese were adopting an Australian value-orientation, stressing the desirability to have plenty of opportunities for sport and leisure. But they desired, at the same time, to make the most of the opportunities now offering in the new environment, and stressed the importance of achievement in material directions. The two attitudes indicated a new-found confidence, and a belief that the rewards offered by the host society were applicable to any who showed initiative in it. There was a further related belief that Australia was becoming a progressive country. The Molfettese were beginning to perceive themselves as progressive people. In migrating they had shown themselves progressive. In their enhanced perception of Australia as a young country with a future the Molfettese believed that any one could do well here provided he worked. There was plenty of time for development, and the urgency of immediate work was replaced by the desire to enjoy more leisure while achieving the rewards.

So they valued mobility, which was a means of getting to know the new environment, and making fuller use of what it had to offer. They were beginning to value new experiences as educative. The younger Molfettese were <sup>more</sup> mobile than their elders had been before them, and with the mobility went an increasing individuation. Most youths had bicycles whereas older fishermen walked. Young men travelled more frequently

as players or spectators at the soccer matches in neighbouring country towns. They eagerly looked forward to the time when they would be called up for military training. The buying of cars was another example of valuing mobility, and it fitted in with an Australian value-orientation where the number of car registrations in the five-year period since the war was in excess of the number of registrations in the previous fifteen years. An older Molfettese man who had succeeded in his Port Adelaide business early in the century was not prepared to accept the usefulness of mobility as an aid to progress. "What do they want a car for?" he asked. "A working man could not afford to buy a car in Italy." More Molfettese have bought cars in the post-war period in Port Pirie than have spent money by setting up a business, or in educating their children for a trade or profession.

The increased confidence of the Molfettese is reflected in their buying habits and their growing preparedness to discuss issues. Before the war the Molfettese never purchase an expensive article unless they could pay for it in cash, and had saved the requisite money beforehand. After the war they bought a large amount of their furniture by time payment and hire purchase means, which made it easy to invest and less necessary to save for the future. The value of saving as such has not been reinforced, and the Molfettese are approaching the position of many Australian workmen who spent what they have in the present and let the future take care of itself. The norm of thrift still remains, but the value must decline where it is less acted upon. These norms were expressed in the Smelters strike when the Molfettese had time to discuss the issues involved by the strike with Australian workers. The Molfettese were able to assert



that by putting money aside they were able to subsist through the strike without seeking credit from shops. By making the Italian norms explicit, and by becoming aware of the difference between the values implied in the Molfettese community and those found in the community of adoption, such a man was manifesting his faith that the differences between the two communities could be reconciled and bridged through discussion, by which both groups could learn from one another. Belief in discussion as a mode of reconciling differences, although it was only to be found in the young men who had contact with both Australians and Molfettese, meant a change in value-orientation, which was more significant for assimilation than the change in any single value.

The changes in values did not make for homogeneity, and there was less consistency between them than had existed in the co-operative, closed community which valued kindness to relatives, generosity to kin, and de-valued meanness, hardness, and aggressiveness. Some of these values have taken a new perspective. Thus the value of respect for the aged was met by addressing old men by respectful terms in the street, although there was little knowledge of the role that such men had played in establishing the community in the past. In other cases belief and actions have been at variance and the values confused. Some of the more prosperous men who by their actions had done most to set an example of conspicuous leisure to the newly-arrived young men were also among the strongest advocates of the virtues of industry, courtesy, patience, minding one's own business, and maintaining the status quo. Community values were upheld where more than one family was involved in the action they gave rise to. Thus attitudes towards church-going and thrift differed to a larger extent than attitudes towards

chaperonage. Church-going only mobilised the whole community when there was a feasta or a procession; chaperonage was an institutionalization of relations between contracting families, and deviations on the part of one family would implicate another.

On the whole there was a changing value-orientation in the community. The older group had taken a minimum part in the life of the host society, and had no wish to change the social order, for which they did not consider themselves responsible. They did not think of themselves as shaping their destinies. With few exceptions they did not sum up and evaluate their past and future from time to time or at will. Those who had no education did as they were told to do in Italy, by their family or the priest. Their way was to accept lightly, and with a happy disposition, whatever circumstances they found themselves in, being obedient to established order and not questioning it, and enjoying to the full their brief moments of recreation. The migrants who arrived early in the century did not conceive that the world had greatly changed since the time they first left home. They lived in a continuing present, which was an extension of the past, and when they thought of the past it was not of something that might have been, and was gone, but as something that existed still and could be again. A change of value orientation was indicated by the increasing individuation and rivalry for universally-desired material possessions. There was a stress on achievement and the making the most of transient opportunities which was incompatible with the previous co-operative, non-aspiring order of values. Further attention was given to mechanical observances. The value of respecting the aged, for example, was expressed in finding a bed for an old

in return for his rent obtained through his pension, and not so much by respecting his advice, seeking his opinion, and talking respectfully of him behind his back.

## CHAPTER EIGHT.

Assimilation: the relationship between the Italian groups and the host society.

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Much of the literature on assimilation has been concerned with a partial analysis of large numbers of migrants, considered individual and judged to be assimilated when they conformed to a set of arbitrary-derived criteria which "fitted" them into the host society. From such an analysis would come ideal or typical classificatory statements as Glass's: "It is mind not race that ensures national cohesion." <sup>1</sup> Bogardus's more detailed formulations of a race-relations cycle in his text-book on Sociology, ignored group pressures and internal social relations. Campesi's scale for the measurement of Acculturation was based on typical responses of three generation levels - so that the response "fear of pregnancy" was said to be characteristic of first-generation Italians, and the responses "some fear of pregnancy", "little fear of pregnancy" were characteristic of the second and the third generations respectively. <sup>2</sup> Such approaches to assimilation from the outside, or from the point of view of the host society exclusively, delineating an ideal state of affairs, or postulating a mechanically-working scheme of assimilation - based on many single, unrelated factors such as the size of the community, the length of residence of individuals in it, naturalization - do not seem to me to get very far.

Length of residence and naturalization criteria could have been misleading if applied to the Wolfottene. Length of residence did not determine the tenacity with which traditional values were held; other factors, as the proportion of sons to daughters, the number of relat-

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1. Glass D.V. The Cultural Assimilation of Immigrants, 1949.

2. Campesi P.J. The Italian Family in USA., A.J.S. May 1948.

ives in the community, as well as personality factors, and to a large extent intelligence, were in various degrees important. Length of residence, likewise, did not determine the amount of contact a man had with Australians. Some Molfettese who had been in Port Pirie for less than a year had more daily contact with Australians and knew more English than others who had been in Port Pirie over twenty years. Naturalization was likely to be a formality. Any meaning it had for migrants was enhanced by the interest that the host society took in such procedure. A large number of Italians became naturalized during the third period of migration, some immediately prior to returning to Italy, because the South Australian Fisheries Department insisted that they would have to be naturalized before they could take out a fishing licence. Most of the Molfettese learned the necessary responses off by heart in the order they came, or responded to prompting, without having any understanding of what an act of allegiance to Australia meant. Where naturalization was easy to obtain, and involved a minimum of preparation and expenditure, it gave little evidence of the real intentions of the migrant towards accepting the way of life of the host society as preferable to that of his community of origin.

To ignore group pressures that make for more or less group cohesiveness when such a group exists, and to consider assimilation apart from the complicated interplay of values and relationships within the group, seems to me to be simply unsociological. No mere listing of the increased number of naturalizations or intermarriages proves that such assimilation is occurring. These criteria are starting points for further investigation only. The real study is first one of group cohesion measured by the intensity and extensity of the group's influence

by the common values and goals shared by the members of the groups, maintained by the family, and expressed in group norms, such as proverbs, directions given to children, or statements evoked from situations of what ought to be. Assimilation occurs when barriers to interaction arising from out-group classifications on the part of the host society and inward orientation on the part of the minority group are removed through a sharing of a common frame of reference,<sup>3</sup> or system of values and norms. The common frame of reference will more nearly approach that of the dominant,<sup>4</sup> usually majority group, and for this reason the process of assimilation can best be approached from the point of view of the minority group, or the group which has to make the most adjustment. One of the main contentions of this thesis is that the particular nature of Wolfettese migration, the intensity of interactions within the family - itself contained in the wider community group - and certain activities of the community, set up barriers to the assimilation of the Wolfettese which were not apparent with the North Italians whose pattern of migration was different, and who did not form such solidary family units within a self-contained community.

#### A Comparison between North Italians and Wolfettese.

North Italian migrants were not strongly attached, as were the Wolfettese, to their families of origin. Their parents did not choose

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3. Ronald Taft: The Shared Frame of Reference Concept. Taft gives the formula  $C_t = f(A_t, B_t)$  where  $t$  is time,  $A$  is the frame of reference of the minority group,  $B$  the frame of reference of the majority group, and  $C$  the shared frame. Assimilation occurs when  $A=B=C$ . The adoption of criteria leads to a determination of a frame of reference. Although it is helpful as a map of the situation of assimilation I do not see how the criteria can be weighed or put to practical use.

4. The "more advanced", "less primitive", "more technical" society under conditions of colonization has been thought to be dominant, though it was not in a majority. I would class a dominant society as one which controlled most channels of communication.

brides or husbands for them, and courting procedure was open and individual. The men had been used to a wide variety of work on their farms, or ~~to~~ casual labour abroad. They were fairly adjustable and acted frequently on their own initiative. They were not so prepared to stint themselves for the sake of future rejoicing and reunion as were the Molfettese. They were not prepared to live for years in one country while their wives were in another. They had no institution to protect the chastity of women so left. Most of them had been to school, and had picked up smatterings of various languages before they settled in Australia. Any money they gained from migration would not be spent by dependent relatives outside the immediate nuclear family, and once a man had saved a narrow margin it was comparatively easy for him to resettle on a farm in Roceca. Thus the Northerners who came to Port Pirie mostly returned to Italy if they had wives in Italy, or married and settled in Australia if they were single on migrating.<sup>5</sup> They were not strongly oriented towards Italy if they were single, and were encouraged to find their security in their enterprise in whatever country they could find constant work. The same rationalization for migration could be found among both the Molfettese and the North Italians: "Italy is a small, resourceless country with too many people." The realization was more complete among the North Italians who decided that their success outside of Italy would depend on their ability to learn the language and to adopt the customs of the country in which they settled.

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5. As far as my evidence goes. I was not, of course, able to trace the career of every North Italian who came to Port Pirie during the twenties, nor was it necessary for me to do so. Some Italians subsequently went to the cane-fields of Queensland I know. Many men returned to Italy - whether they remigrated to the cane-fields I cannot say.

The two groups may be contrasted as follows:

| <u>North Italians</u>   | <u>Molfettese</u>   |
|---|---|
| 1. Fairly adaptable   | 1. Comparatively unadaptable  |
| 2. Rural workers attached to the land but prepared to take temporary employment away from it. | 2. Fishermen attached to the sea, and to their community of origin. |
| 3. Mostly literate.   | 3. Mostly ill-literate.   |
| 4. Freedom in marriage choice--less dependent on the family of origin.                        | 4. Extended family ties, involving courtship.                       |
| 5. Migrated as individuals  | 5. Migrated by family units.  |
| 6. Migration discontinuous  | 6. Migration continuous except for war periods.                     |
| 7. Migrated at an old age   | 7. Migrated when young.   |

It may be seen from the above comparison that there was little similarity between the North Italians and the Molfettese, and it was not likely that the two groups of migrants would form one community when they settled in Port Pirie. Residentially the Northern Italians have tended to move apart, while the Molfettese remained concentrated in two major areas. Much doubt is cast by these criteria as to whether the Northern Italians formed a group at all. They were not at present interested in their Italian descent, and many of them had little contact with the others. Yet they had acted in concert against the Fascist Consul when he came to Port Pirie in the thirties; they were similar in regarding the Molfettese as backward, and their actions often had a negative reference to the Molfettese. There had been a nucleus of the Northern group residentially, and that nucleus still remained. There was also some communication between the Northern Italians on a few items that were considered relevant to them as having been descended from Italian migrants. But there had been no



common activity or crisis, apart from the war, that united them and drew them into the one-time nucleus of their group, so that the North Italians could be pictured, as it were, as being on the periphery of a disintegrating group, only prevented by prejudice on the part of the host society, and by their own self-consciousness, from being completely assimilated. The withdrawing and self-consciousness was well indicated in the case of one old man who feigned a loss of memory. He seldom left his house, and seemed afraid (according to a member of his family) to meet anyone who would remind him of the past, or the fact that he had grown old. The case of the North Italians exemplifies the fact that a group can fall to pieces without assimilation closely following. The fact that undifferentiated, unassimilated Italians, recognized as belonging to a community, were multiplying in number in Port Pirie made it difficult for others who wanted to be assimilated to obtain this goal.

#### The Italian Orientation of the Molfettese.

The assimilation of the Molfettese was retarded first of all by their lack of knowledge of their Australian environment and their orientation towards Italy. The self-containedness of family and community life were probably sufficient alone to account for this orientation though the attitude of the host society towards migrants was important also.

Thus the Molfettese family cared for the basic needs of its members - for food, shelter, procreation, association; it was protective and solicitous over the health of its members, and was prepared to spend all its resources to attain its ends. In virtue of its functions the family needed to co-operate to amass property and wealth, to enable it

to provide for these needs. A family's reputation, marking its fitness to perform its institutionalized functions, was stabilized through its ownership of solid securities, such as houses and durable furniture.

While the bulk of a man's family was in Italy he was almost entirely oriented towards Italy. Thus the act of migration did not imply a correlative act of adoption, or an intellectualization of the consequences of migration. Economical and social factors, and the rhythm of life in the community of origin rather than known potentialities of the new country were important in motivating the original act of migration. Adoption became relevant after prolonged residence. Secondly, the nature of family ties influenced the pattern of migration and intramarriage in the adopted country, and the advantages of the adopted country were realized more completely when extended family ties did not confuse the issue. Thirdly, assimilation was not likely to occur while men had their wives and families in Italy. It would be retarded while women were mindful of many relatives in Italy with whom they communicated freely, and whose interest and approval they sought to maintain.

The South Italian family, in general, had a limiting effect on the actions of its members which was not conducive to assimilation. The family, however, did not exist in a vacuum. Its functions had been valued more particularly because no other institution cared for them as well. The stability of the home and constancy of women had increased in value when men were migratory. The Molfettese family was a solidary unit in reference to economic exploitation and lack of individual expression in Italy. Family solidarity became a patterned response aiding survival, and it was measured by reference to the solidarity of other similarly-placed families with which it had some extended relationships. The striving of one family in relation to another

confirmed the values which were assured by the activities of the family. The significant barrier to assimilation was not so much the self-contained Molfettese family, considered as an ethnic isolate, as it was the family which extended itself by making reference to an environment of other similarly-placed families. The Molfettese families in which brother/sister exchange in marriage had been practised gave examples of extreme familism and exclusiveness from the rest of the group which made for more rapid or retarded assimilation depending on whether the wives were in Australia or Italy. The families of the other Southern Italians of non-Apulian origin apparently differed sufficiently from the Molfettese to prevent family and cultural cross-reference, and their competition took the form of alignment and identification with typical Australian modes of expression, and a renunciation of all things Italian.<sup>6</sup>

Assimilation of the Molfettese was thus retarded because they formed a minority group whose apartness from the host society was emphasized by the specific economic roles allotted to the group,<sup>7</sup> and the inter-relatedness of families in the group making numerous cross-references one with another, and back to the community of origin through retained cultural forms. An Italian orientation in the Molfettese community was protracted through the continuity of the migrant stream. The more recently-arrived migrants revived memories of Italy in the earlier-arrived migrants, and they were not themselves able to share memories with Australians. In so far as the minority group accommodated more recently-arrived immigrants the assimilation of earlier-arrived migrants in the group was retarded.

The accommodating agency was the Molfettese family. The solid.

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 14

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 2.

erity of the family had no doubt been modified as its functions have been effectively performed by institutions outside of it. Compulsory school attendance, for example, reduced parent responsibility and control, and introduced a new competitive striving among children at an early age. Children were not encouraged at school as they were in the home to share with one another; those who looked over one another's shoulders for answers to exercises were described as "cheats". Children were no longer born in the home; free injections were given by the Government; department stores extended credit. The sole responsibility of the family for the good health of its members only existed as a fiction; and the banker/creditor function of the housewife was repeated on a larger scale by banks and department stores. Assimilation was aided by the increasing contact of women with institutions outside the home, and the evidence of modifications in family function was a much more important indication that assimilation was taking place than the introduction of minor imitations of Italian styling in cement work, or the planting of almond and fig trees in gardens, was evidence to the contrary.

Notwithstanding, there were still many examples of Italian orientation, particularly among the elder migrants, in Port Pirie in 1953. Four fifths of the letters delivered to them in Solomontown in a sample taken over a month came from Molfetta, and approximately a fifth came from Ethelton and Glenville near Port Adelaide. There were only a few stray letters from New York, Canada, and Argentina. This sample was weighted in favour of Italy, and not representative or random; many of the letters may have been acknowledgements of Christmas parcels, which, according to the Post Mistress, were usually only sent to Italy - rarely received from Italy, or sent to and received from any other

place. Again, many of the older men continued to send contributions to orphanages in Italy when so requested by Italian priests. They were superstitious enough to believe that if they gave to church-supported orphanages they were protecting their own families from becoming orphaned. When his complete family had come to Australia a man might promise to give money to Italian charities such as a flood relief fund, but he failed to make his contribution when the time for money payment fell due. Generosity was a value he had learned in a family setting, but it only had relevance when applied to the family, and to keeping it intact.

The maintenance of Italian institutions such as cheperonage, and Italian standards such as cooking and the like, pointed to an Italian orientation, as did more subtle attitudes such as humility towards established authority. The Wolfettese did not identify themselves with Port Pirie in sentiment, in the sense that they said that they had helped to build it, or to pioneer the fishing industry in the State. Though they might say "We were the first " to go to the West Coast for fishing, they referred to other Wolfettese fishermen and not to other non-Italian fishermen. A sentiment of belonging to the host society was not felt. Rather they associated early migrant days with the hostility of rival Australian farmers and part-time fishermen who cut their nets, or would fire upon them without any provocation, and without their being able to obtain any legal redress.

#### Migrant Perception of the Host Society.

From the point of view of the immigrant Port Pirie provided an adequate setting for the reception of large numbers of migrants. In the first place it was a port, busy with life, and there was enough

work available for the continuous stream of migrant fishermen. As the State expanded so did the demand for fish, and Port Pirie was convenient to some of the best fishing grounds in the State. Equally significant was the fact that the poverty of fishermen was not conspicuous in the shabby setting of Port Pirie. The standard of living of the labouring class here had not been high; there was little interference by Corporation or private enterprise with the freedom of individuals, who could come and go, construct their lean-to humpies, sleep in their boats or on the beach, entirely as they willed.

While the standard of living of the working class at Port Pirie was low, and while there were further opportunities for employment here than at Kolfetta, migrants chose to come to Port Pirie because it was sufficiently accommodating. There seems to have been an increase in the standard of living of the host society before there was a corresponding increase in the standard of living of the minority group. More and more Australian houses were fitted with bathrooms when the water supply became adequate in the late twenties. Conditions in the Smelters improved, and employment became selective. Electric light was connected to most houses inhabited by Australians at this time,<sup>8</sup> and the regional wireless stations were opened. The Kolfettese, on the other hand, still knew poverty; their houses were unclean; most of them still had few items of furniture, and sat round the table on wooden boxes. They spent their savings in bringing out relatives in the third period of migration, and the difference in their standard of living and that of the host society widened the breach between the two and retarded assimilation.

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After the war the standard of living of the Kolfettese increased.  
8. See above, p. 24.

sed more rapidly than that of the Australians in the neighbourhood, so that they became critical of Australian standards themselves. Many men with whom I discussed the health of the town said that they would be willing to pay double the rates for more efficient service. They referred to conditions they had known in Italy. Mussolini had given deep drainage to Molfette; the roads in Molfette were clean and well-swept. "What is wrong with this country?" they would ask, and would answer their question: "What is needed is a strong leader-like Mussolini."

Thus while there were noticeable differences for comparison in the standards of living of the host society and the migrant community, or while living standards were changing in one relative to the other, the Molfettese tended to regard the host society as something apart. There was still no equality between the two economically, and social discriminations existed despite the superficial classlessness of the host society. Educational handicaps<sup>too,</sup> acted as a barrier to the assimilation of the Molfettese, ~~for~~ they limited the range of migrant perception of the host society, reduced the confidence of migrants, and minimized the range of activity with which migrants could compete with members of the host society.

Not being literate the older Molfettese remained for a long time unaware of many local customs and expectations.<sup>6</sup> For literacy is essential for complete and rapid indoctrination in new national ideologies, and in order to make an accurate evaluation of the finer differences between an Italian and an Australian way of life. They had not developed a habit of looking for the different point of view

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9. See above, p.1.

of others with different interests and experiences. The old people were not much interested in books or papers referring to life beyond the community where they found themselves, and they had lived most of their lives without making such reference - except back to Wolfetta. Again, the Wolfettese were not craftsmen ; they did not readily master new skills and techniques, and many delayed buying a marine engine or other mechanical contrivances until they had sons who were old and confident enough to use them to advantage.

The perception of the Wolfettese as a community broadened when older people depended on the interpreting aid of younger to explain customs and technics in the host society. The adoption of technical amenities helped to precipitate attitudes - it did not directly cause assimilation. Without technical aids then certain alternatives would not have been opened. In this respect it would be misleading to point to any one criterion as decisive in determining migrant perception, or directing the predominant orientation of the community towards an Italian or an Australian frame of reference. It would be more adequate to say that as a result of the early accommodation of the Italians in Port Pirie, depending in turn on the perceptions that both migrants and the host society had of each other, that there was an initial balance between the low standard of living of the Wolfettese and the reception given by the host society. Any decrease in the standard of living of the Italians as measured by such variables as their wealth, education, clothing, housing or orderliness lead to cumulative prejudice on the part of the host society. Discrimination on the part of the host society encouraged migrants to look for their rewards within their own community, and this in turn made for group cohesion which discouraged assimilation. On the other hand, increases in the standard of living



of the migrants reduce initial discriminations and enabled further increases in orderliness, education, and so on. Literacy increased the aspiration level of migrants and made them view more favourably the possibilities of their adopted country. A favourable assessment of the adopted country aided assimilation.

#### Assimilation and Social Change.

The question of the adoption of Australia, or a part of it, by Italians as a home country became relevant with subsequent migration, further settlement, the realisations of economic possibilities of expansion in Australia, and the bringing of families to Australia. But assimilation did not follow as a consequence of the act of further settlement. On the contrary, the pattern of community settlement in which there was a minimum number of relationships with the host society retarded the assimilation of all Italians in the host society. Italians did not become progressively assimilated by virtue of their longer duration in South Australia. The process of assimilation did not run smoothly from a point of departure when there was theoretically no assimilation to a point of conclusion where there was complete assimilation.<sup>10</sup> The act of settling in a new country was accompanied by some loss in standard of living by the settling migrants. During the third period of migration there was a regression away from assimilation on the part of the Polifetrese in Port Pirie. Incidents of intermarriage, for example, had occurred more frequently during the second period of migration; host society discriminations increased with the aggression of Fascism, and culminated with active dislike and suspicion when Italy joined Germany against England in 1939.

<sup>10</sup> Assimilation was retarded by the arrival of large numbers of  
10. See above, p. 3.

women in the third period of migration, and by channelling of activities towards the establishment of interrelated closed family groups within a Volfettese community. This community growth can perhaps be explained by the fact that a migrant cannot enter a society as a whole if the society is of a considerable size. As such it is too diffuse for him,<sup>11</sup>. He must affiliate himself through his developed interests with smaller-sized secondary groups, and where he has few common interests or reference points with the host society a symbiotic relationship is likely to arise.<sup>12</sup>.

It has already been seen that formal religion was not a common reference point for Italian and Australian Catholics. Religion as such assumed a minor place in the lives of Italian migrants. Religious objects such as churches, relics, jewels, rich cloth and sculpture extended men's thoughts backwards towards Italy, and the resplendent displays of these at festas in processions helped to bring a sense of identity with the vast-abiding and continuing past, which is the quintessence of a religious experience. There was little possibility of identification with the verbally-abstract Catholicism of Australia, or of religion's becoming an intimate and precious experience for simple-minded fishermen who were often not approached by local priests. When the community increased in size and prosperity it was possible for them to hire Italian priests who were interested in the welfare of their fellow countrymen, and who advocated a policy of fuller expression for all Italians in Australia. This embraced the learning of English as a means towards the goal of assimilation.

Without a common religious point of reference or common interest with the host society the Volfettese community arose as an association

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11. MacIver, op. cit. p296.

12. See above, p.1

focus for individuals who were not able to be assimilated by the host society. It grew slowly and inconspicuously with little interest taken in it at first by any section of the host society. The homogeneity of the community life then became a barrier to assimilation. Homogeneity was given to this community by 1) the uniformity of occupation of its men; 2) the sharing of a common dialect, and set of values which were unknown to the host society; 3) a common participation in all social life; 4) the intercommunication and interaction of its members each of whom tended to know and be interested in the same set of objects. Residential propinquity facilitated the flow of information throughout the community and tended to reinforce the values.

Assimilation was aided by the growing heterogeneity of the group after the war. The war itself formed a break in the continuity of the migrant stream; it disorganized the economic life of the group; it subjected Wolfettese men to new and educational pressures in the army or internment camps; and it hastened a large-scale State developmental programme, which in turn gave a higher aspiration level to participant Italian workers. Without the challenge of the war and the possibilities of post-war expansion the Wolfettese would most probably have been living in 1953 in the symbiotic relationship with the host society that was characteristic of their adjustment to the host society in 1939.

In 1953 it was no longer possible to invite every Wolfettese in the community to each wedding, dance, or celebration. Men and youths found a subsidiary means of association in a club and sub-groups. At the same time they shared a much fuller social life with Australians. The interaction of the soccer games could be taken as an example. All the players were united in their desire for recreation, their similar interest, their being of similar age, and by their ability to respond

to the same symbols of skill, initiative, fair play, and rules. Before the war such a recreational outlet was not desired, language was a barrier, interest was not present, and age was not significant.

By becoming accepted, if only partially, by the Australian community through the playing of a common-reference game young Volfettese men were opening up the way for the whole Volfettese group to become accepted. In this they had the tentative approval of their parents, who recognised the young men's sub-groups as having a solidarity in their own right and did not resent the time spent away from productive work. Volfettese men with business connections criticised the groups and made vague statements to the effect "sport is best".

The soccer teams not only gave the Italians a common reference point with the Australian community but it boosted the confidence and pride that the Volfettese had in themselves. Each member of the team was united to each other not only in age, ability and interest, but in a desire to win and establish his team as the equal to Australian teams and the superior to other Italian teams in a form of activity that gave them all public recognition. An Australian-born Volfettese who had served in the army, worked in the Smelters, and referred to the Volfettese community as "they" and "them" throughout the course of an ordinary conversation, identified himself with the Volfettese when the conversation was directed towards sport. The intensity of such identification could be gauged from the intensity of the harracking at a net, and the detail with <sup>which</sup> each move of a game could be recalled.

Apart from recreation there were fewer face-to-face social relationships in the Volfettese community itself after the war. Different conditions of migration, for example, differentiated the community

and were dis sociative. Pre-war migrants had gone through a common experience of coming to a country about which they knew almost nothing, having few resources to help them, and being faced with the prospect of continuous hard work for vague goals. After 1945 some migrants came with government assistance; some came to well-established families; all were given a choice between alternative modes of action. New groupings occurred through occupational alignments. A timber firm or foundry with vacancies for only two men did not select those because they were related to one another. In trying to live near their work two such men might become neighbours, and have further extensive relationships. Dissociation occurred through random employment, between the old and the young, between recent and early migrants, between some families, and between rival sub-groups.

Most of the social life of the Polkettese was thus concerned with activities within the minority group, and the most significant effect of social change was the lessening of the cohesion of the group. The minority group itself was a barrier to assimilation for a variety of reasons :

- 1) It was a closed group through intra-marriage.
- 2) It had a special function of accommodating new migrants.
- 3) It was able to control its members through its omnipresence made more effective by residential propinquity.
- 4) There was a clarity in its norms that made for consistent behaviour within the group.
- 5) It maintained a level, and cut off any deviants from the norm, and hence discouraged would-be individualists who wanted to adopt Australian patterns.

All these aspects of group cohesion were being modified as a result of social change:

- 1) Theoretical objections to inter-marriage were being removed, and projected inter-marriages were being contracted.

- 2) Many families in the community were refusing to accept new migrants.
- 3) There was less group control, and a growing diversification in the residential pattern.
- 4) There was less clarity concerning group norms and more inconsistency in behaviour, both of individuals and of the group as a whole.
- 5) There was a further toleration of deviants as illustrated by the attitude of many of the older members of the group towards sport.
- 6) There was a general reduction in the intensity of group interaction and an increase in random face-to-face relationships outside the group and with members of the host society.

The assimilation of the Nolfette in Port Pirie was aided by :

- 1) The reduction of group cohesiveness.
- 2) Post war reconstruction and world concern.
- 3) Fuller random opportunities for employment after the war.
- 4) The cessation of the migrant stream, and by the migration after the war of more educated, skilled, and ambitious men.
- 5) The replacement of in-group co-operation by competition, which spurred to embrace the host society.
- 6) Freer social life for both men and women, which permitted extra-group activity.
- 7) The increase in confidence of the Nolfette from the forced associations that were imposed by the war and later by the government.

The humility and withdrawal of the earlier migrants had been consistent with their Italian orientation, of their keeping in their lowly station as was their lot through their inherited poverty. But as migrants it prevented them from taking the initiative in adjusting themselves spontaneously towards the host society, which was recognized as being superior to them, and which recognized itself as being superior. The attitude was illustrated by the unwillingness of older migrants to discuss past hardships if they had been unsuccessful - of their bearing, as it were, the burden in silence. Confidence and participation in Australian affairs were interrelated, and cumulative. If one Italian withdrew from an Australian enquirer then it would lead him to expect other Italians to do the same, and the expected withdrawal would result in the isolation of the minority group. If one particular Italian, on the other hand, was prepared to meet such an Australian enquirer on his

terms are at his own level than the whole group will be judged to be friendly, and the way would be open for further relationships with the host society. The preparedness of some of the younger Malfettese to discuss issues with Australians was of crucial importance, since it opened the way for mutual knowledge and acceptance by both the migrant and the host society, which according to definition was what was meant by the process of assimilation.<sup>13</sup>

The attitude of the host society towards the acceptance of Italian Migrants.

The Italians of Port Pirie were locally perceived as belonging to a group by their common association and co-activity. When a fishing boat came in a crowd of men might gather at the fishermen's wharf; when there was a sale at any of the shops Italian women would band together and grab at bargains more dexterously than unorganized Australian women. One woman would make for one counter and sweep up all the bargains there in her capacious arms; another would go to another counter and buy all that was there reduced in price. If the number of articles per customer was limited the Italian women would bring along her children (who ought to have been at school) on the pretext that they came to interpret for her, and these children would carry away her purchases, which she paid for in bulk in the usual way. It was suspected that Italian women, who always had ready cash for chance sales, pooled their money to buy their bargains in bulk; and the redistribution that was thought to go on after the sale was cited as evidence for this. After a sale of dress material women and children of different, supposedly unrelated, households would come out in dresses of the same fabric. Women commonly shopped together, consulting each other on the quality of goods, and when they

<sup>me</sup>  
13. See above, p. 1.

fortuitously in the street they became more visible to Australian observers by "jabbering and gesticulating in their own lingo." They were perceived as being Italians, often quite erroneously, from biosomatic, linguistic, and cultural traits. Italian men were short and dark, it was said; the women went to fat when they passed the middle age; you could smell the garlic when you got close to them; they frequently wore black; and were noisy when they came together. In reality all forms of stature and degrees of complexion could be observed among the Molfettese; they rarely ate garlic; and many women were well proportioned even after having had a large family. Parkiness, smallness, noisiness, fatness, and smelliness formed an Australian stereotype of the Italian. Italians did not belong to a group because they were noisy, smelly, or dark - although the fact that they were perceived by such erroneous criteria to belong to a group did have some influence on their acceptance by the host society, did encourage them to eat together, and affected their assimilation.

From the point of view of the host society there would be no complete assimilation of the Italians until biosomatic, linguistic, cultural and thought traits became less visible. Biosomatic traits would only disappear with inter-marriage, linguistic peculiarities after bilingualism made way for the employment of English in the home, and the further education of select members of the community led to the dissemination of new knowledge throughout the community.

The discrimination against dark complexion on the part of the host society had its effect on the acceptance of individuals in the minority group, and the way they regarded themselves. Judgments passed on the minority group were often likewise accepted as true by the minority group. Thus a second-generation Italian girl



rationalized that Italian girls did not go in for local bathing-beauty contests "because we have not the figures", and a voluble fisherman confessed that he did not like Molfettese people as a whole "because they were too noisy". The fair-skinned Molfettese thought of themselves as Australians when they could speak English fluently, whereas dark Molfettese who had been in Australia for about the same length of time but were more visibly Italian, still thought of themselves as "a bit of each." The fair-skinned Molfettese man seemed to have been affronted less by the Australian, and as imitation was made easier for him. He had more confidence in himself, even though he was more sensitive to racial discrimination. He tended to respond with hurt pride when signalled out as a "dago" or "grill", and to remember in detail the circumstances when he had been so treated. A darker man described a parallel affront as an example of bad taste. His response varied according to whether he wanted to correct the bad taste, or whether he took it as another example of characteristic Australian crudity.

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The acceptance of insults was frequently interpreted as "Italian gutlessness" by the Australians who were freest with insults. The Italian either did not want to associate with the Australian or he was a coward. The example of Italian unsociability most frequently quoted was the protective colony in King Street, referred to as "little Italy". This was taken as evidence that the Italians had deliberately put themselves off from Australians, and did not want to be helped by them. "They will be all right," it was said, "if they begin to mix with Australians, and get away from their colony."

Closely allied to the Australian prejudice against dark-complexioned Molfettese was the association of darkness with dirtiness.<sup>14</sup>

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The Molfettese, it is true, paid less attention to personal hygiene than did most Australians. The older members of the community probably had few occasions to keep clean before water was connected to Molfetta in 1917.<sup>15</sup> The uncleanness of the Molfettese had been accentuated by the settling-in difficulties of women with many children. Crude methods of excretion had become acceptable to men spending most of their time on small boats. The large number of people residing in each house had previously discouraged the frequent use of wash-rooms. But as more Molfettese bought their own houses, and fewer have been associated with fishing there, have been remarkable changes in cleanliness. With the improvement of cleanliness one more barrier to the association of the Molfettese with the host society was removed. The perception of Italians as potentially dirty still remained, in spite of many modifications in regard to the extent of this dirtiness. A woman's hairdresser, for example, who knew and liked Molfettese girls personally disliked them as customers because their hair was so thick, oily, uncombed and uncleaned for.

The low rating of Italians on a racial-preference scale<sup>16</sup> and the prejudices conceived against them could be listed as arising from:

- 1) The larger number of Italian migrants entering the host<sup>17</sup> society, both at one time and over a protracted period of time.
- 2) The illiteracy of the migrants - which hindered their adjustment to the host society.
- 3) Their low standard of living
- 4) The gap between the way of life of the Italian fisherman and the way of life of the Australian labourer, which increased during the third period of migration.

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15. See above, p. 41.

16. See Appendix

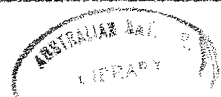
17. See above, pp. 4-6.

There was no citizen of good repute or local agency which actively espoused the cause or tried to explain the point of view of the Italians. The local newspaper preferred the Greeks, who invited the press to their functions.<sup>18</sup> Again, the Italians did not adopt Australian customs readily. They did not drink in the pubs as commonly as the Greeks, and they made fewer manifestations of their achievements to the small-business community which believed in progress, and admired the self-made man.<sup>19</sup> The stereotype of the Italian was not of a progressive or enterprising individualist, who could size up a situation with ease. His very unassimilation made him undesirable as an associate of the business men of the city. And whenever an Italian was mentioned to a business man it was probable that the example of the most unassimilated and "backward" was brought to his mind and mentioned. A stronger hostility was shown by women who while collecting for charities had been ignored by Italian women.

There were grades of hospitality extended to the Molfettese extending from hostility to complete acceptance. Those who were hostile discriminated Italians as inferior to Australians. A lesser degree of discrimination was shown by those who were indifferent to Italians, and who did not wish to associate with them. Their attitude could be expressed by the dictum: "They keep to their world, I to mine". These seemed to be the largest group in Port Pirie. An increasingly large group seemed to be those who recognized that points of difference did exist, but that these were unimportant. Such a group did not avoid association although they did not initiate it. They were interested in the differences between an Italian and an Australian point of view, and occasionally found the Italian way more acceptable. Their behaviour was

<sup>18.</sup> See Appendix

<sup>19.</sup> See above, p. 23.



nicely reciprocated by the Molfettese. And finally there were the few members of the host society who were prepared to approach the Molfette on an equal footing, to make gifts, and to invite them to their homes without patronizing them. Even this group recognized that there was a difference between the migrant and the native-born Australian, which extended beyond the family affiliations of the migrant. The numbers who were prepared to accept the Molfettese completely will no doubt increase after there have been many inter-marriages, and when the values of the host society have been accepted by the migrants.

At the present moment the knowledge of the Molfettese concerning Australia has its narrow limitations. Their acceptance of Australian values was curtailed by their lack of knowledge and discernment. The values implicit in an Australian working-class ethos were most dependent on nice definition, and were least understood by the Molfettese. The Molfettese, for example, did not argue religion or politics. They did not feel sympathetically with the Australian workman who gave generously to his mates, and placed his security in their fidelity and support against real or imagined encroachments of management and privilege. He did not reinforce this mateship through drinking in the front bars of hotels, and taking his turn to pay for a round of drinks. Some North Italians, on the other hand, had adopted the most visible Australian working class associational habits. They were to be found on a Saturday busily moving from hotel to betting shop, and the information they communicated on these occasions was of possible winners.

Notwithstanding, two of the young shopkeepers who had begun to drink in the hotels in moderation, and who were not fully occupied, took an interest in horse-racing, and attended country meetings in recently-purchased cars. There was a fuller financial trust by all in the Molfettese community of Australian banks and businesses, and less corey

was secreted or kept in the house. Certain concessions were made to Australian customs such as the giving of notice before quitting jobs. Notice had not been required in Italy when men were replaced for slight breaches of behaviour, and themselves sought out more favourable employment and accepted it immediately it was available. The failure to give notice had prejudiced them in the eyes of some Australian employers. The adoption of some "Australian" values was fortuitous. Their interest in the British royal family, which corresponded with the Australian interest, derived from their interest in the family. They preferred to be governed by an order that was personal, and extended backward through one family into the past. The example of solidarity given by this one family reinforced their valuing of the family. Much loyalty to Italy had been lost when Italy became a republic.

The acceptance of the Molfettese, which could be expressed as their nearer approach to an Australian frame of reference, was evidence in a spontaneous seeking of naturalization, which had not previously been significant, and the bilingualism of young men who before the war could only speak a sentence or two of English.

Assimilation was thus being effected by the mutual adjustments of the minority group and the host society. The Molfettese were giving less offence to Australian susceptibilities through approaching an Australian frame of reference in regards to cleanliness, sport, giving notice on quitting jobs, speaking English, discussing politics, gambling, and expressing loyalty to the Queen. An Australian adjustment was being made in the curtailment of bias against foreigners, and accepting the Molfettese in projected marriages.

The Australian objection to groups of foreigners speaking a

foreign language in the streets was probably being modified as Austre-  
 lians were becoming familiar with more and more Italians. The object-  
 ion was particularly strong in South Australia where isolation from  
 the main seaports of the Eastern States and Europe had produced a cer-  
 tain smugness and ethnocentricism. The bias was extended to "foreigner  
 as such. The bias had not been so particularly strong in Port Pirie  
 because of the continuous influx of sea-faring men. For this reason  
 many Molfettese preferred to remain in Port Pirie than go away for  
 employment on near-by farms. With the freer life and fuller acceptance  
 of migrants beyond Port Pirie Adelaide was becoming the place of  
 further expression in the eyes of many migrants. The question of assir-  
 milation into the host society of Port Pirie was becoming less relevant  
 as more and more migrants travelled beyond it. The bias against foreig-  
 ners in the past had increased with the low standard of living and hum-  
 ility of the migrants. The attitude was that "we" could learn nothing  
~~from "them", and "they" could learn much from us.~~

The intolerance was least in the residential area of Solomontov  
 itself where the experience of living in a bi-racial community tended  
 to allay fears and reduce racial prejudices. Here a Molfettese woman  
 refrained from punishing her children in public out of consideration  
 for what her Australian neighbours might think. This consideration for  
 Australians encouraged retaliatory consideration.

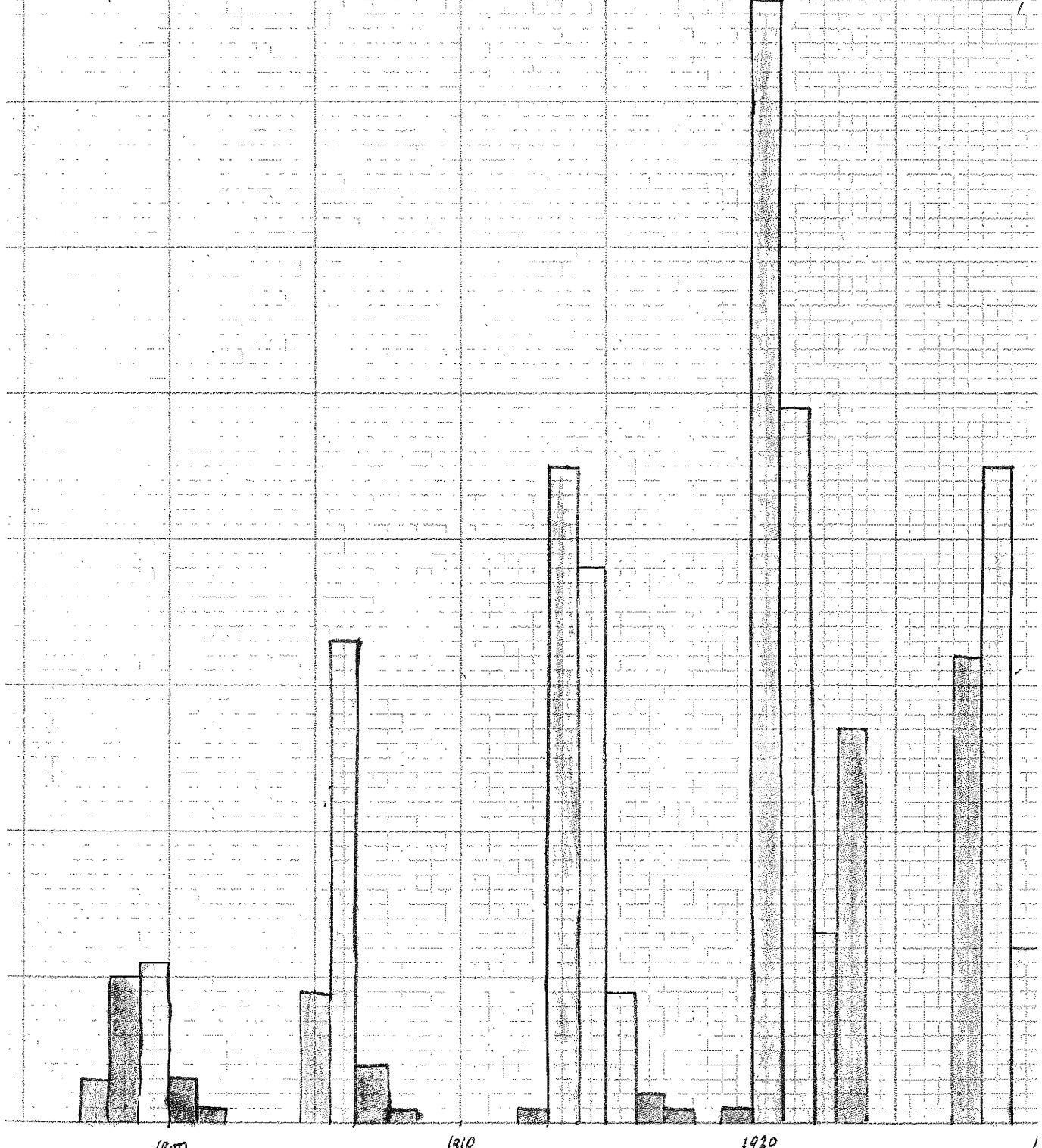
Finally, there were signs of growing toleration in the Austre-  
 lian attitude of superiority towards foreigners. There was an admission  
 that Australians could learn some things from other peoples, and that  
 much of their culture was interesting if not acceptable to Australians.  
 This was met in Port Pirie by a replacement of Molfette by Port Pirie  
 as the centre of Molfettese ceremonial life, vying with Fremantle in

Western Australia. Pride in Wolfette was being replaced by a cumulative pride for what had been built up in Australia.

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**PART ONE: The Estimated Number of Italian migrants arriving**

| Category         | Men | Women | Uncertain | Total |
|------------------|-----|-------|-----------|-------|
| Netese           | 110 | 45    |           | 155   |
| Other            | 162 | 4     |           | 166   |
| Southern-Italian | 42  | 1     |           | 43    |



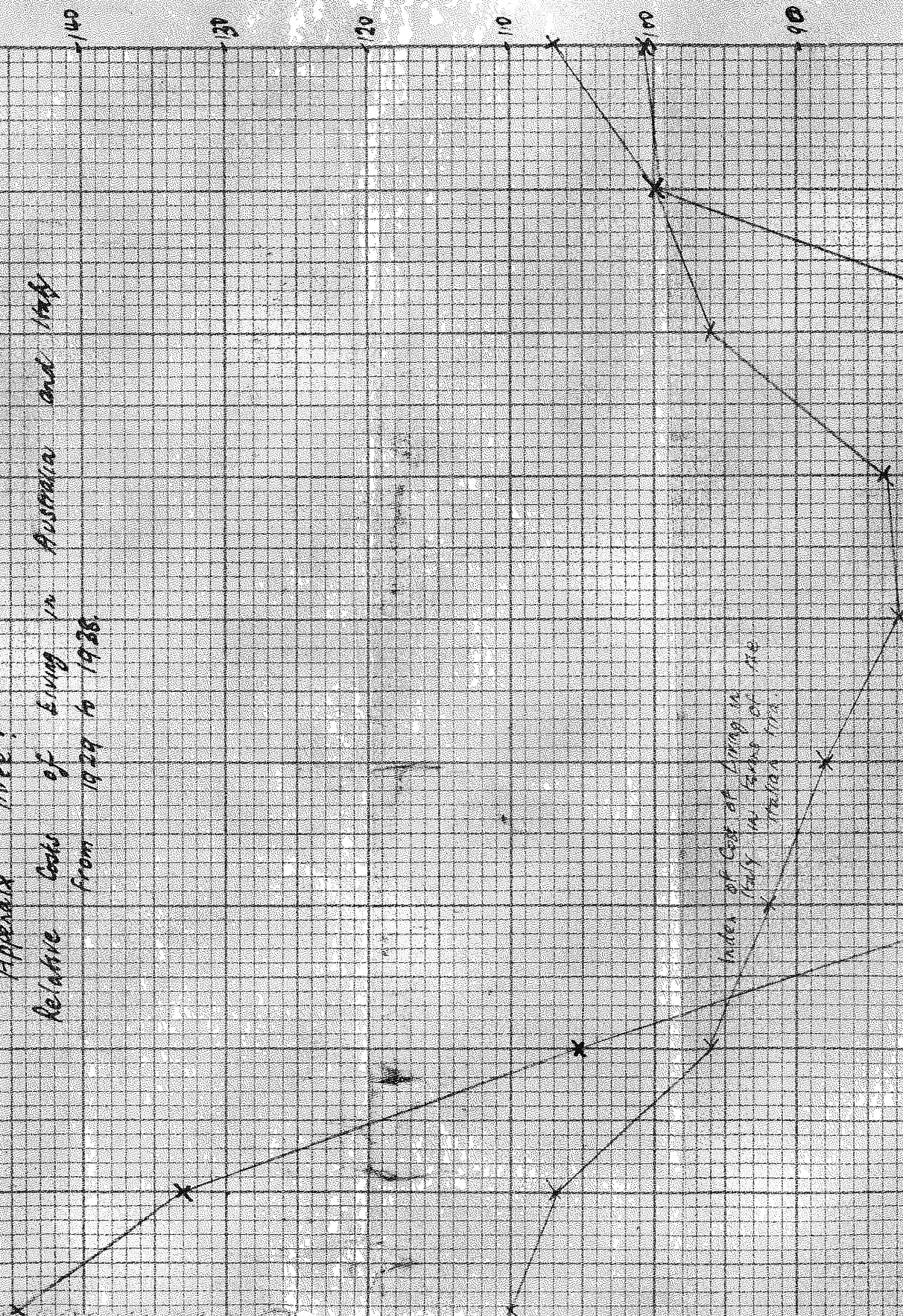


Appendix One (a)

Italian Population of Port Pirie, 1953.

| (1) <u>Molfettese.</u>       | Migrated<br>before<br>1945 | Migrated<br>after<br>1945 | Deceased<br>or left | TOTAL      |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Male                         | 228                        | 238                       | 142                 | 244        |
| Female                       | 81                         | 91                        | 63                  | 150        |
| Total                        | 309                        | 229                       | 205                 | 394        |
| Children born locally        |                            |                           | Male                | 161        |
|                              |                            |                           | Female              | 143        |
|                              |                            |                           |                     | <u>698</u> |
| (2) <u>North Italians.</u>   | Migrated<br>before<br>1945 | Migrated<br>after<br>1945 | Deceased<br>or left | TOTAL      |
| Male                         | 49                         | 11                        | 46                  | 14         |
| Female                       | 5                          | 11                        | 11                  | 5          |
| Total                        | 54                         | 22                        | 57                  | 19         |
| Children born locally        |                            |                           |                     | 51         |
|                              |                            |                           |                     | <u>70</u>  |
| (3) <u>Other Southerners</u> | 19 Male; 5 Female          |                           |                     | 24         |
| TOTAL                        |                            |                           |                     | <u>792</u> |

Appendix Three:  
 Relative Costs of Living in Australia and Italy  
 from 1929 to 1938.



Index of Cost of Living in  
 Italy in Terms of A.C.  
 Italian 1929

|    | Line  | #11   |     | Adjusted | Monthly | July | August |
|----|-------|-------|-----|----------|---------|------|--------|
| 25 | 5.258 | 455.2 |     |          |         |      |        |
| 29 | 5.238 | 482.8 | 110 |          | 118     |      |        |
| 30 | 5.238 | 471.3 | 107 |          | 111     |      |        |
| 31 | 5.219 | 411.1 | 96  |          | 100     |      |        |
| 32 | 5.136 | 305.9 | 92  |          | 95      |      |        |
| 33 | 6.414 | 277.1 | 88  |          | 92      |      |        |
| 34 | 6.554 | 389.8 | 83  |          | 94      |      |        |
| 35 | 5.251 | 391.7 | 84  |          | 95      | 76   | 90     |
|    | 7.662 | 394.0 | 96  |          | 97      | 86   | 95     |
|    | 5.263 | 392.9 | 100 | 100      | 100     | 100  | 100    |
|    | 5.263 | 396.1 | 100 | 107      | 100     | 107  | 100    |
|    | 5.200 | 375.9 | 104 | 111      | 104     | 102  | 100    |
|    | 5.051 | 228.5 | 122 |          | 107     |      |        |
|    | 5.074 | 222.4 | 141 |          | 112     |      |        |

Source: Statistical Year Book of the United Nations.

Appendix Four: A folk tale illustrating the subordination of the poor classes in Italy and their concern with the allocation of their resources.

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A poor man with a large family of children was diligently cultivating his land near the king's private walk when the king chanced to pass one day. Being interested in the lot of his people, the king stopped and addressed the poor man. "Good day, uncle countryman," he said. "Good day, man-of-war," replied the labourer. "How much do you get a day for working this land?" asked the king. "I get seventeen cents," said the man. The king wondered how it was possible to support a large family on such an amount. "How do you apportion the money you earn?" he asked. "Well, I eat, drink, pay off tick, and put down hard cash," said the man. "But in what proportions?" demanded the king. "Well I eat and drink myself," said the man, "my wife pays the tick, and my sons get the hard cash. For when they are old enough to go to work, they will help to pay for me." "Very fine," said the king, thinking he had got to the bottom of the matter. "I wonder if my wise courtiers know anything so practical." So he charged the man not to reveal to any living soul what had passed between them until he had seen his face again for one hundred thousand times. "If you tell anyone without this condition

being fulfilled," said the king, "I will send someone to kill you."

The next day the king had a meeting of all his ministers, and explained to them how a man on his land earned seventeen cents a day. "Now, tell me how he spends it," said the king. "You, who manage my estates, ought to know how a poor peasant can manage his affairs." "Who told you a man earns seventeen cents a day, oh king?" asked one minister. But the king did not deign to reply. "We have finished our business for the day," he said.

So the ministers had another meeting by themselves and the leading minister asked the others. "What road did the king take on his ride yesterday?" On learning the route he filled three bags of silver dollars and set off till he found a countryman working in his field near the king's private walk. "Good day, uncle countryman" said the minister. "Good day, man-of-war," returned the poor labourer. "How much do you earn a day?" asked the minister. "I receive seventeen cents," said the man. "Ah, that's the one," thought the minister. "How do you spend your money?" "That I cannot say," said the man. "And why not?" asked the minister. "Because I was bidden by him who came yesterday that I was not to reveal the way I divided my money until I had seen his face one hundred thousand times." "Is this the face?" asked the minister taking out a silver dollar on which the

king's visage appeared. "Why, yes," replied the man. And both he and the minister broke into hearty laughter. The minister counted out the coins and the man picked them up. "Now tell me the details," said the minister. "I eat and drink," said the man, "my wife gets the tick, and my sons get the hard cash. Thank you very much."

The Prime Minister goes his way and informs the king on the next day that the meeting is ready to answer the king's riddle. On the morrow, he answers the king. "Your majesty, we are ready to reply to what you asked. The man worked the land to earn money to eat and drink for himself, to pay the tick through his wife, and to support his sons with hard cash."

The meeting was dismissed. The king took down his gun, and mounted his horse, and rode off to find the man who had so readily disobeyed his king. He found the man working on the land as he had met him on the previous occasion. "Hold," cried the king, "what did I tell you when I left you the day before yesterday?" The man replied that the king had said that he must reveal to no one how he spent the money he earned until he saw the king's face one hundred thousand times. "Then why did you tell my minister?" demanded the king raising his gun to shoot. "Because I saw your face" said the man, explaining how the minister gave him the silver dollars. The king had to admit that both the man and his

minister had done no wrong, that the man had deserved the money, and the minister had proved himself astute in finding out how the poor managed their affairs.

Appendix Five: Proverbs told children as a means of  
justifying behaviour.

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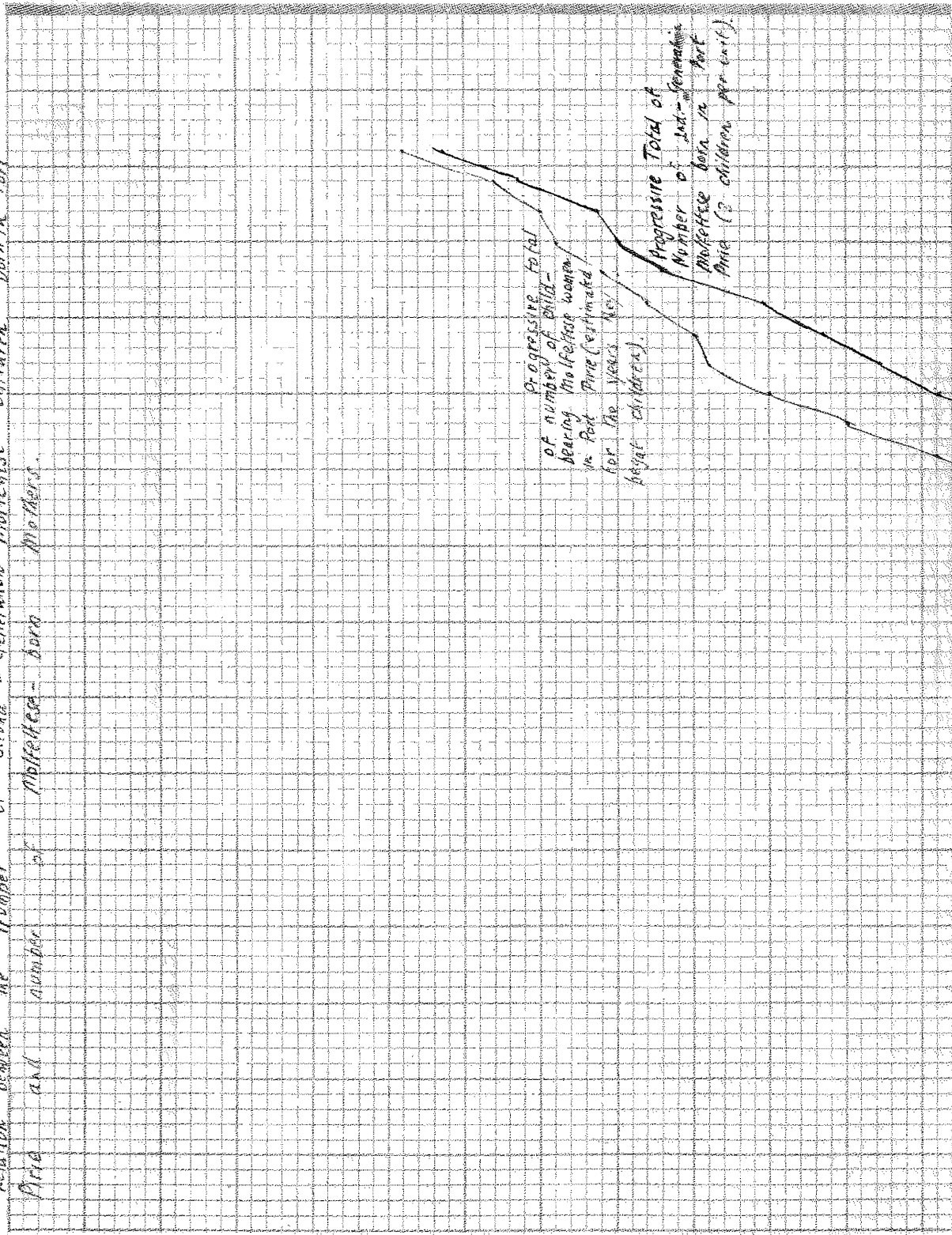
- 1) Chi va piano va sano e fa con buon cammino; chi corre  
per la via resta.  
He who goes slowly goes far; he who rushes stops on  
the road.
- 2) Chi troppo vuole nulla ha.  
He who wants too much gets nothing.
- 3) Non sputare in cielo che in faccia ti verrà.  
Do not spit upwards, or it will catch you in the face...  
i.e. Respect the 'high' things.
- 4) Tutt' i visi furono creato da deo.  
All faces were created by God... i.e. Do not blame  
people for their defects.
- 5) Sentenza senza colpe, da dove verrà si colloca.  
The guilty will be caught even if he is said to be not  
guilty.
- 6) Il figlio sapiente ferma la voglia di padre.  
The wise son obeys his father.
- 7) Pensare prima per non perdersi dopo.  
Know what you are about to do before you do it and you  
will not be disappointed.
- 8) I primi passi sono tristi. → *the first steps are sad*  
It is very hard to starve. \
- 9) Amo il prossimo tuo come te stessa.  
Love your neighbour as yourself.

Proverbs 1-3 and 5 justify the established order.  
Proverbs 4, 6 and 9 are more concerned with family and  
community sentiment. There are a number of more biblical  
proverbs commonly known dictating a man's duty to "Feed  
the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe those without  
clothes, give a house to the houseless, visit the sick and  
those in gaol, and bury the dead." Such precepts were not  
distinguished from the others, and were often obeyed.



Appendix Six

Relation between the Number of Second - Generation Mofette Children born in Port  
Area and number of Mofettes - born Mothers



Progressive Total of number of child-bearing Mofette women in Port Area (estimated for 100 years ago)

Progressive Total of Number of 2nd-Generation Mofette born in Port Area (3 children per unit)

Kind  
 Generous  
 Sport.  
 Religious.  
 Friendly.  
 Good-looking  
 Even-tempered.  
 Brave; Polite.  
 Wealthy; SKILLFUL.  
 Domestic (House-Work)  
 & Happy disposition

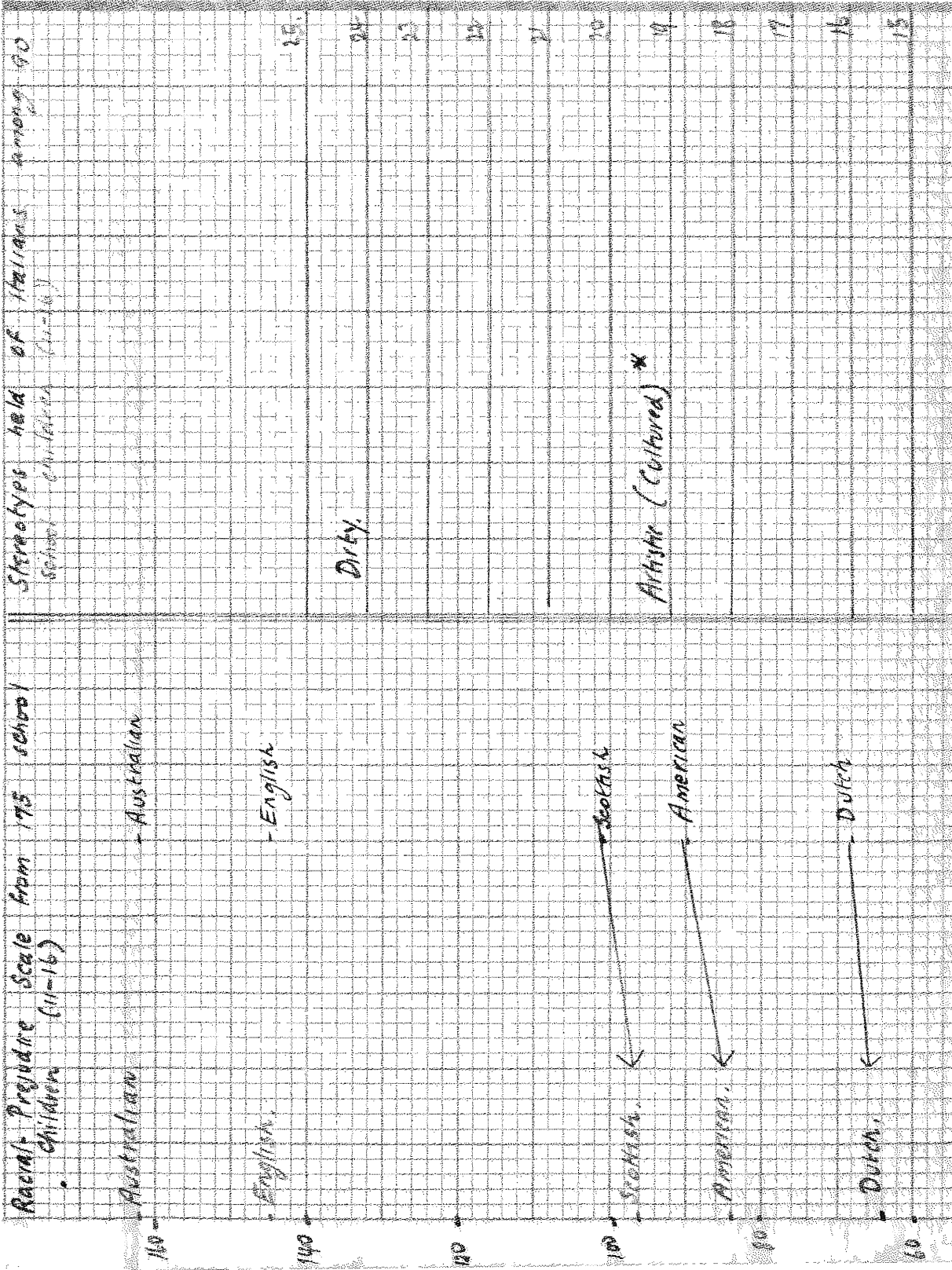
Brave  
 Generous; Friendly.  
 Sport; Cultured.  
 Industrious; SKILLFUL.  
 Kind.  
 Thrifty  
 Polite.  
 Honest.  
 Even-tempered; Witty; Religious  
 Wealthy; Good-looking.  
 Clean; happy disposition

Mean.  
 Hard.  
 Aggressive.  
 Bad-tempered.  
 Dirty.

Mean.  
 Dirty; Cruel  
 Drunken.  
 Aggressive.  
 Hard; Bad-  
 Unfaithful; C

\* higher rating because the test was conducted in a denominational school; the non-Molokahese going to ~~the~~ denominational schools was proportionately fewer.

Appendix Seven



Dirty

Artistic (Coloured) \*

Appendix Seven (d)

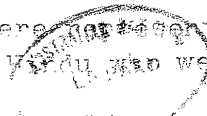
Rationale of a Method used to confirm Racial Prejudices, and its limitations.

---

It was assumed that the stereotypes of school children would reflect (a) the values taught them in the school, (b) the values taught in the home. Children under 14 would not have read widely or independently, or thought much about abstract qualities - their opinions would recapitulate what they had heard from their parents, and to a lesser extent their age-mates. Both Italians and non-Italians were subject while at school to the same influences, and a difference in their values would indicate a difference in the values of Italian and non-Italian groups. The readiness with which negative racial stereotypes come to the mind of children was taken, also, as a reflexion of the class-consciousness of the group to which they belonged, and the extent to which the instruction had been directed towards specific out-groups. A group which did not so instruct its children about their moral roles in relation to individuals of different racial origin did not so set up one of the common barriers to assimilation. There did not seem to be any such barrier on the part of Molfettese parents, and only some Australian children identified themselves with Australians, whom they placed highest on their list of preferential racial types, and ascribed qualities of generosity, kindness etc. One girl, with relatives in Italy, said Australians were the best people "because I am one"; another child who described Italians as being those who "make you laugh" was referring to some specific members of her group.

I did not take enough cases to make the results statistically significant in themselves, and I did not give the tests myself. The results, therefore, were biased to an unmeasurable extent and open to various suggestions. The errors were partly corrected by interviewing children three months after the tests, getting them to recall the content and questioning them on the grounds of their generalizations.

The tests both asked children to list the various nationalities in order of their preference, and to describe where possible characteristic traits which distinguished the respective groups. Twenty two separate groups were listed - some of which were ~~not~~ represented in Port Pirie, and a few groups such as Russians and ~~Vindus~~ ~~who~~ were unfamiliar to the majority taking the test.



Appendix Five : Statistical Data on Re-Migration.

Statistical data on which many generalizations were based was often extremely difficult to come by. It is only possible to know in a few cases when men left Port Pirie to go to Italy or other parts of Australia. No adequate records were kept. The shipping lists, for example were once compiled by the master or purser of the ship from information given verbally by passengers. Thus the Onuz, berthing at Port Adelaide on the 7th December, 1925, brought out the following passengers with the Molfettese names : G. Paparelli, A. Ciconni, M. Capurso, G. Gagliardi, A. Altamura, A. Giancaspro, ... There may have been as many as ten G. Pepparellis in Port Pirie at that time, and there were two Giuseppe Pepparellis to my knowledge at Port Adelaide. A similar list for October '21 has the names G. Paparelli and A. Giancaspro. One cannot infer that somewhere between 1921 and 1925 the same Paparelli and Giancaspro returned to Molfetta. The memories of fishermen as to exact dates or years of arrival and departure is most often confused. Early naturalization papers contain so many glaring inaccuracies that they are not worth using if the information has not been confirmed elsewhere.

## Appendix Ten : The Greeks and their reception in Port Pirie.

It is interesting to contrast the Greek migration to Port Pirie with the Italian. The Greeks came from various scattered islands in the Aegean, many of them as a result of Turkish encroachments in the Balkan wars. They came to Australia to settle permanently. Since they were not organized as families and shared certain common folkways and values, notably religious, they organized themselves as a community. The Greeks came as vegetable growers and shop-keepers. They mixed with Australians and were accepted by business men because they had succeeded. They did not at first compete with earlier-established Australians. Their children did well at the high school, and obtained secretarial posts.

Their success was contrasted with the Italian poverty. There was always a good deal of antipathy between Greeks and Italians. There had only been one intermarriage, and it had been vigorously opposed by the Italians, who were opposed to the Greek incursion into fishing, as the Greeks were opposed to the Italian encroachments into shopkeeping. In Thevenard, on Eyre's Peninsula the Greeks had established a co-operative in the fishing business, and the Italians were the shop-keepers, and the vegetable growers. One reason why the co-operative, which was projected among fishermen in Port Pirie, failed was that it was under the leadership of a Greek who was distrusted by the *Wolffettes*.

The Greeks spent much of their time in the hotels, and were not so self-conscious as the Italians. Their customs were often even more marked than the Italians, but they did not so impede the process of assimilation. The Greeks placed a high value on their children's acquiring knowledge of the Australian environment, they accepted many Australian ways while retaining the more vigorous and distinguishing aspects of their own culture. The majority of Australians in Port Pirie could not recognize a Greek from an Italian. The un hospitable called them both "dagos" or "grills" if they were dark, while others again assured that a migrant was Italian if they objected to him, or Greek if he were a little less objectionable. The North Italians were not distinguished as such in this dual identification... though they might be perceived as "dagos" by the poorly-disposed and ethnocentric as might Cypriots, Maltese or any other dark Southern European.

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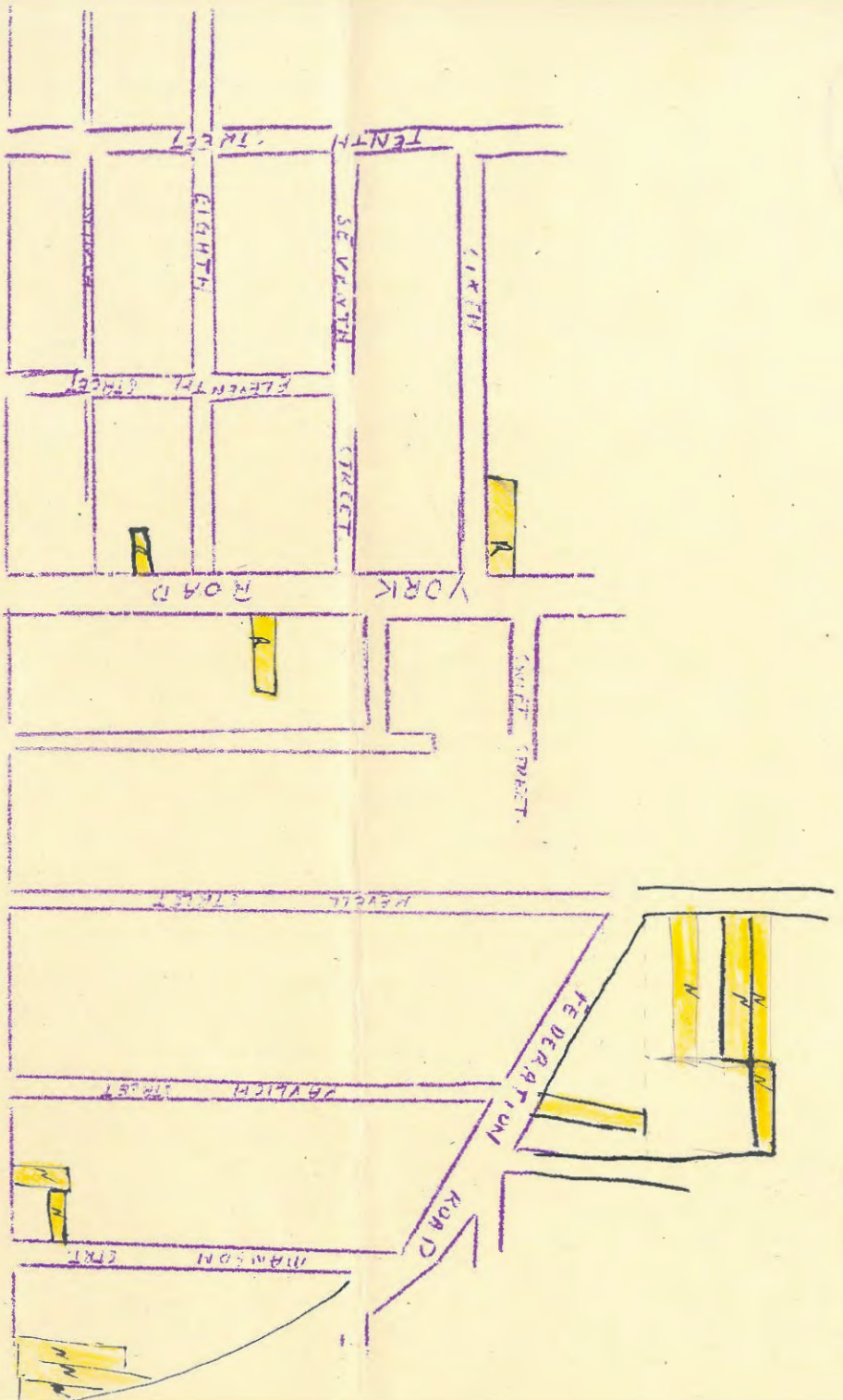






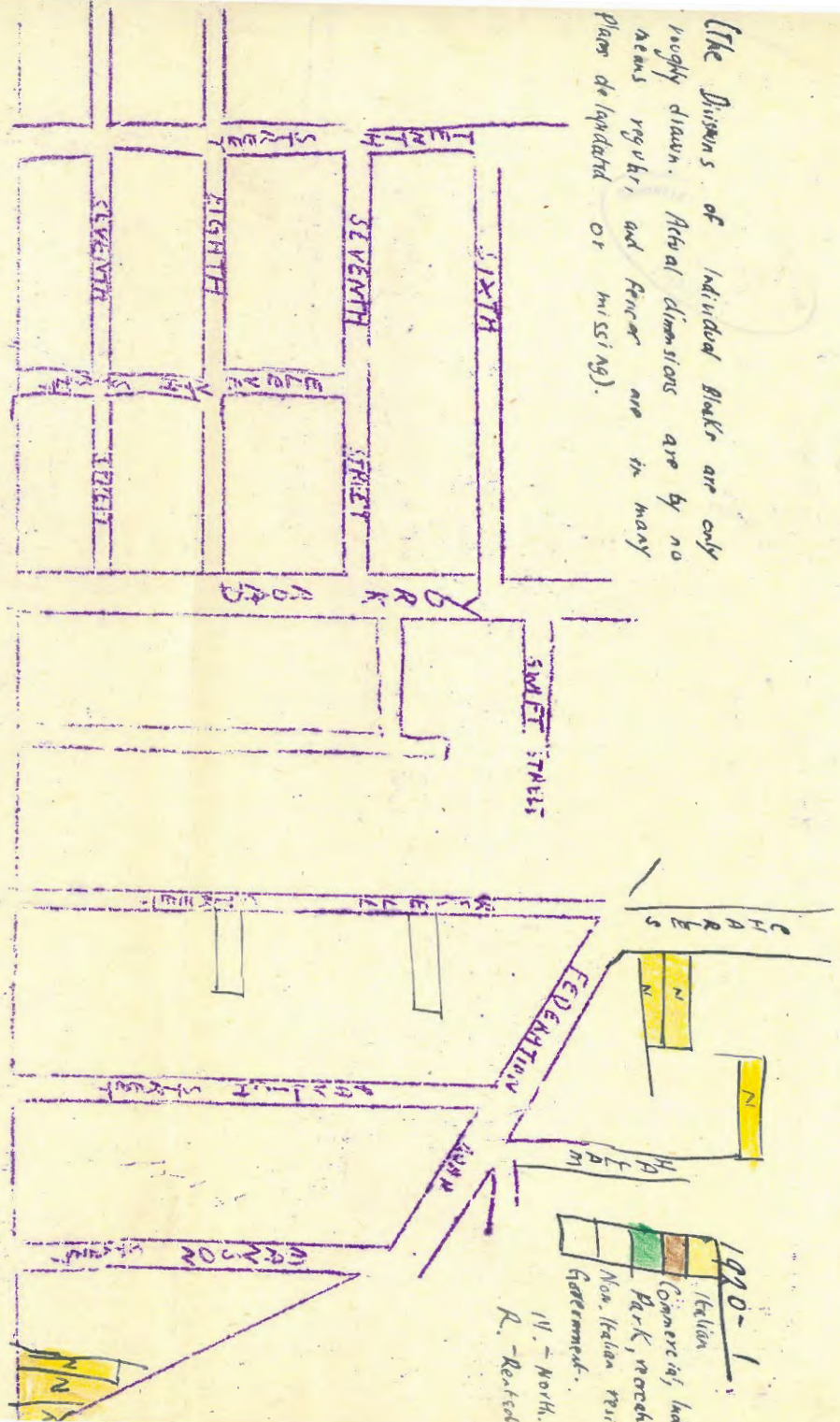
1949-50

Italian  
Non-Italian Resident  
Commercial Ch.  
Park etc.  
Governmental





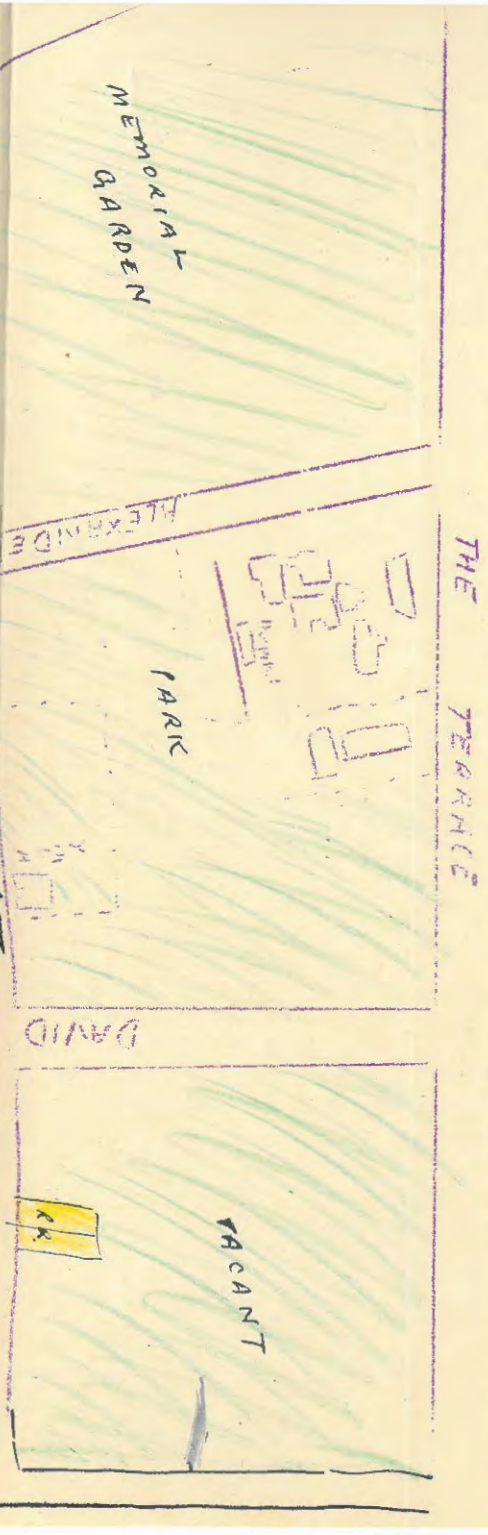
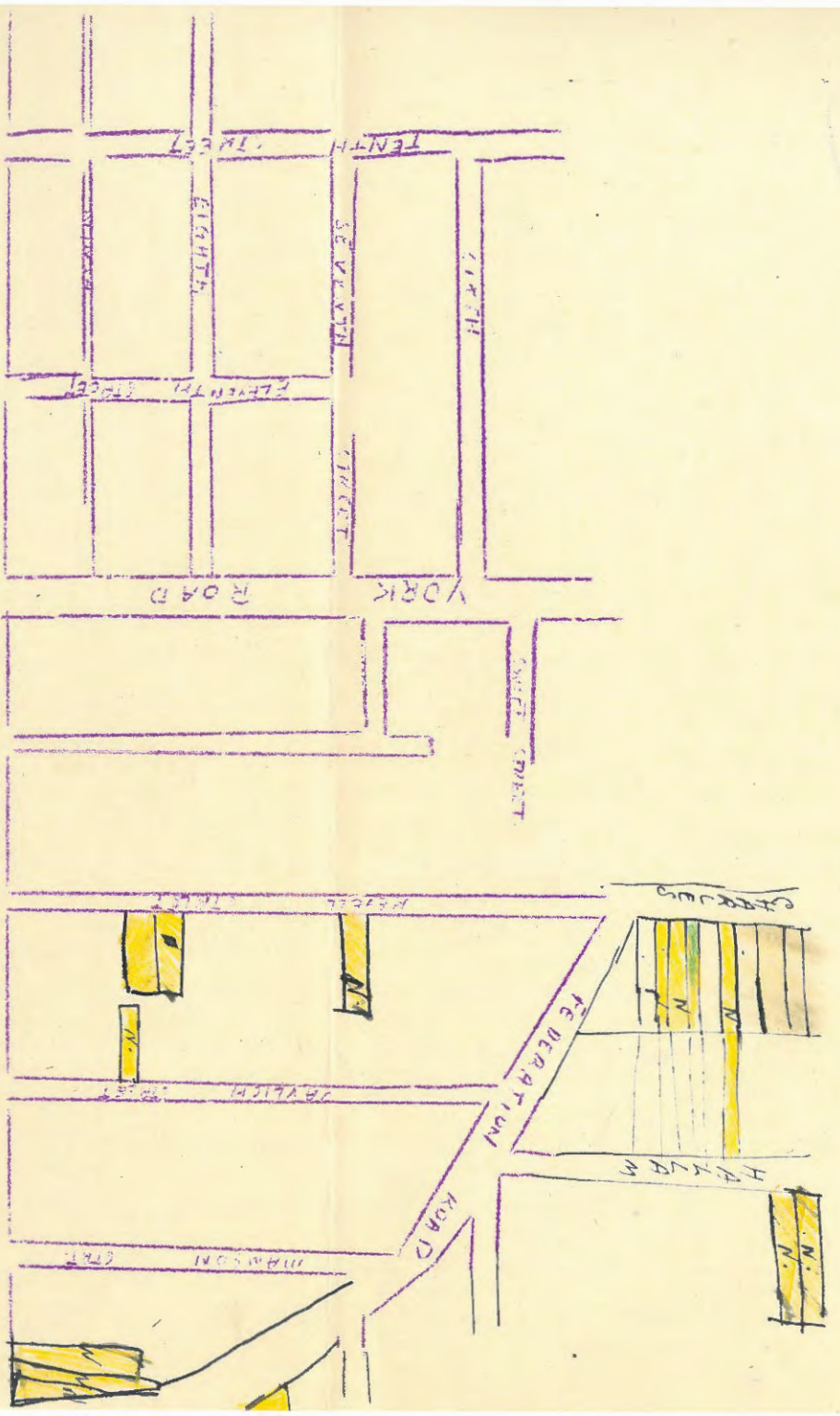
The Divisions of individual blocks are only roughly drawn. Actual dimensions are by no means regular, and fences are in many places de l'apudatid or missing).



Revised.


  
 Indian Residential  
 Industrial/Commercial  
 Recreational area.  
 Govt.

1925-6



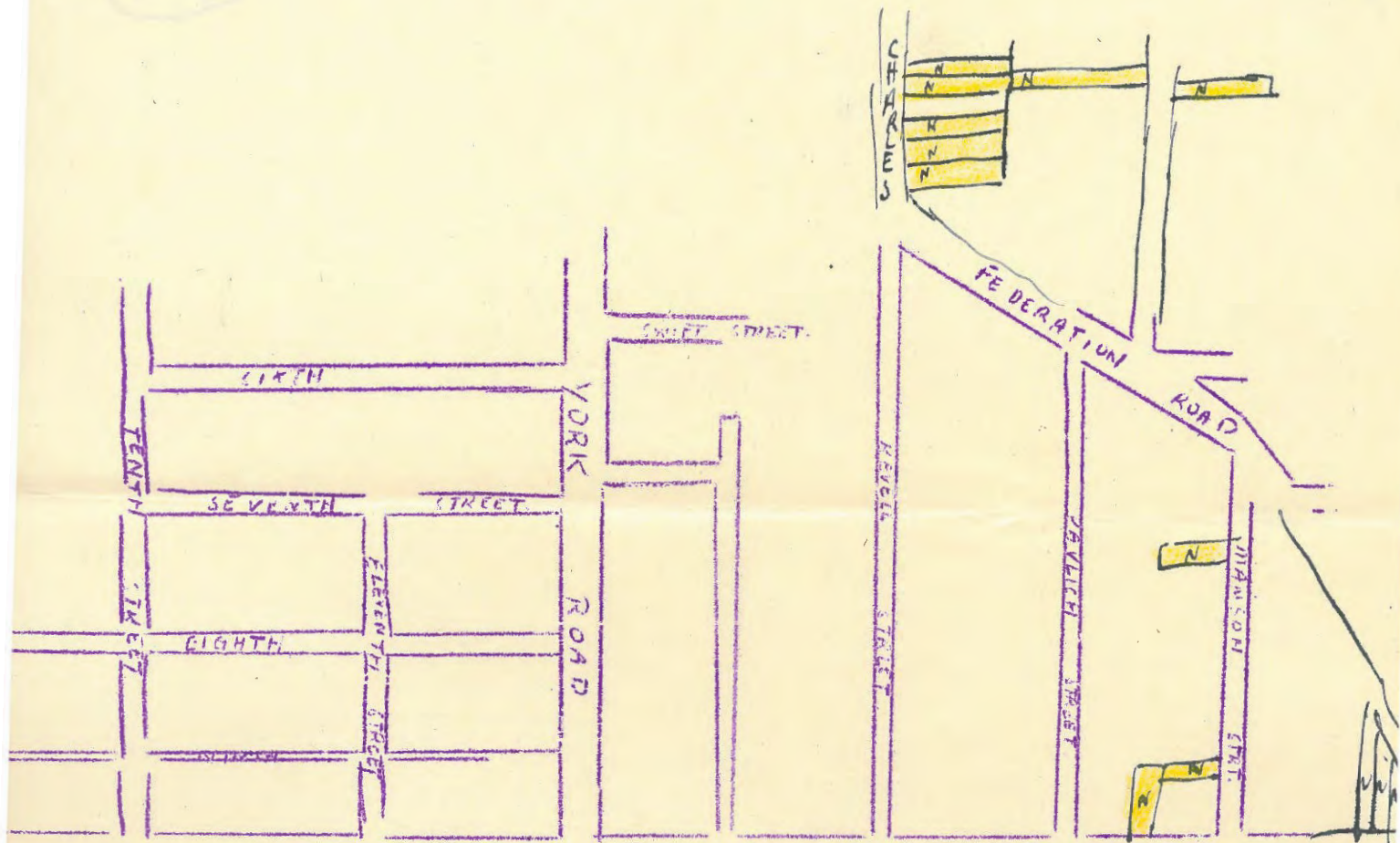








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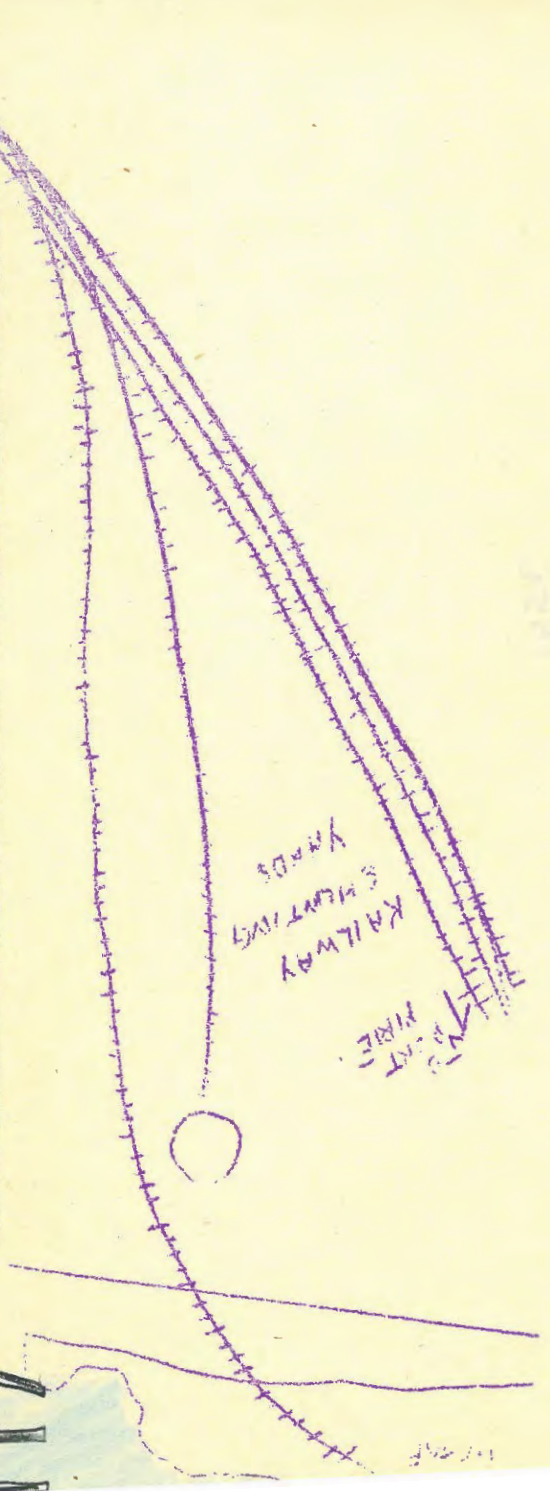
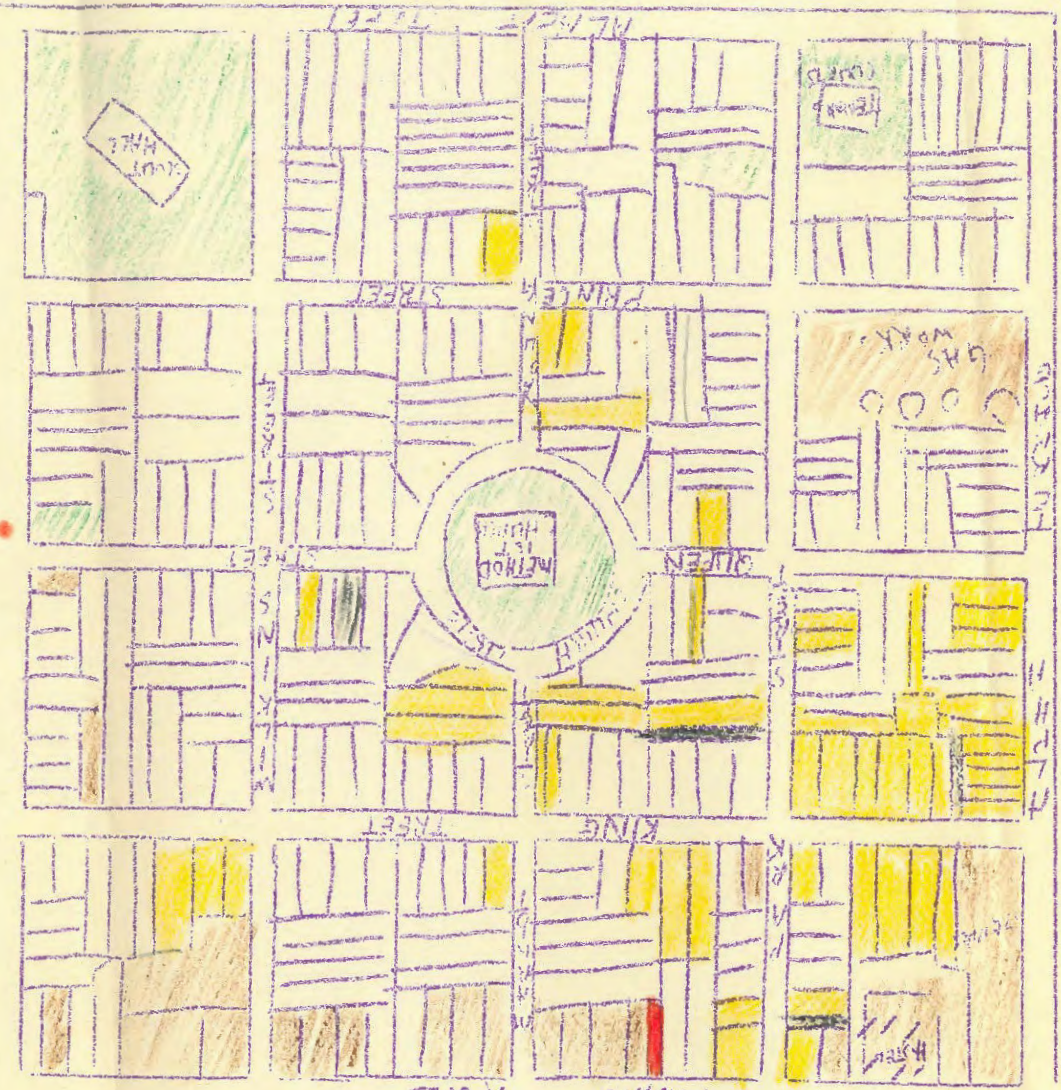


TO SCHEMATIC PLAN

PUBLIC SCHOOL



PERIPHERAL TO CURRENT PLANNING

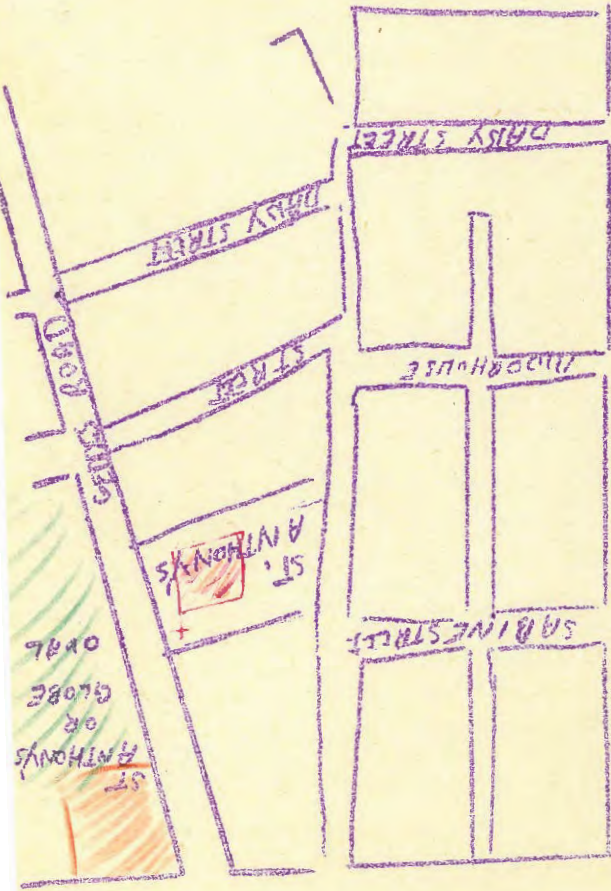


TO WATER TOWER IS ADEGRADE



Residential  
 Industrial, commercial  
 Recreational, v/c, parks  
 Government - Post office, school, Police

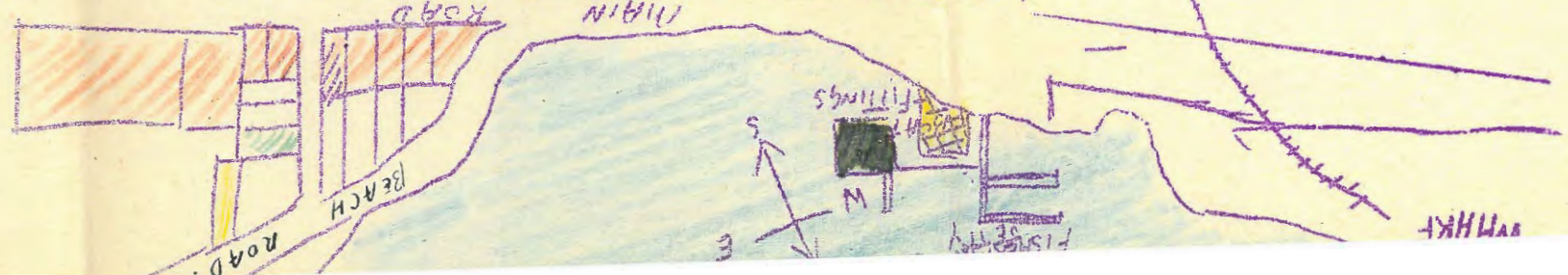
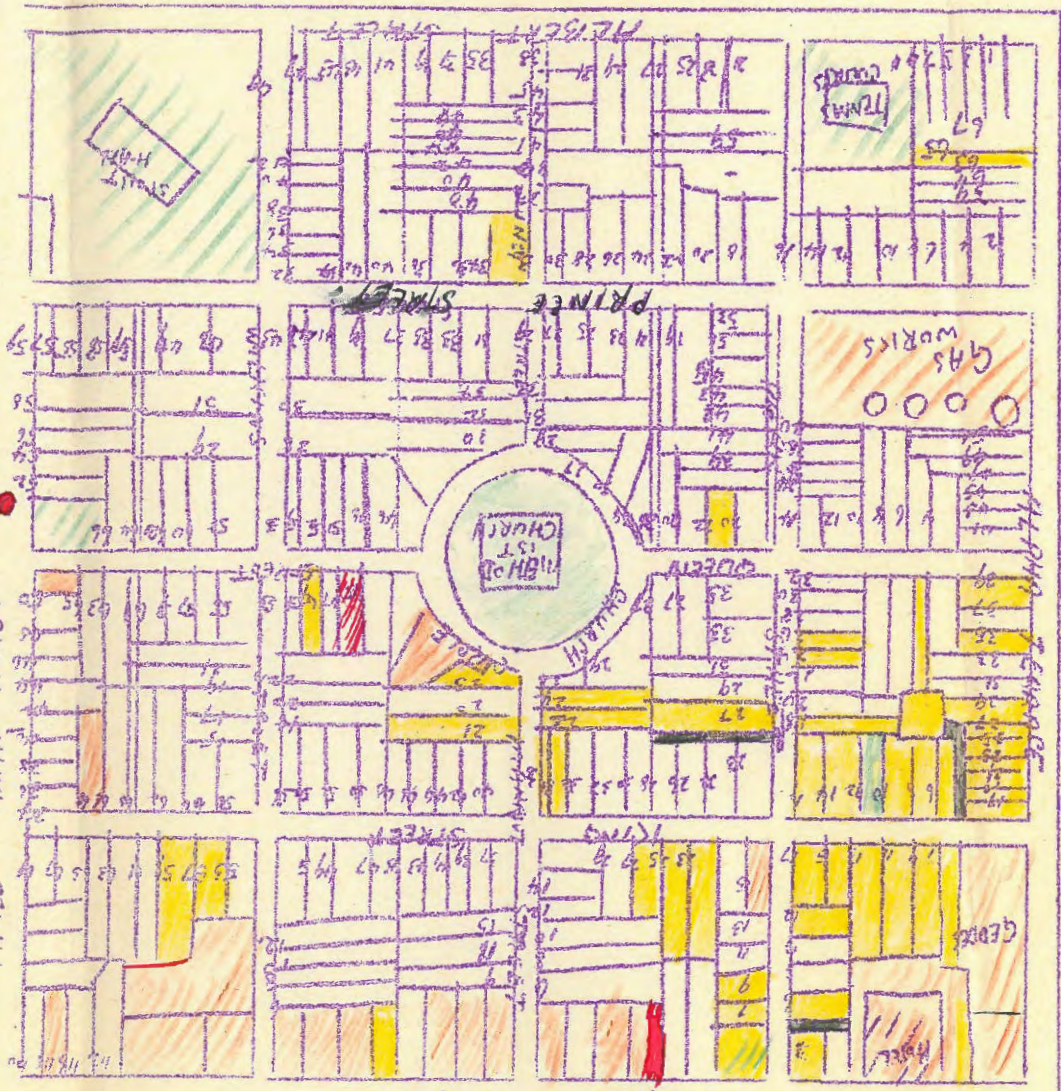
TO WARRERTOWN  
 & ARLAND



Public School  
 (with diagonal hatching)

PEPPER CORNS & CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

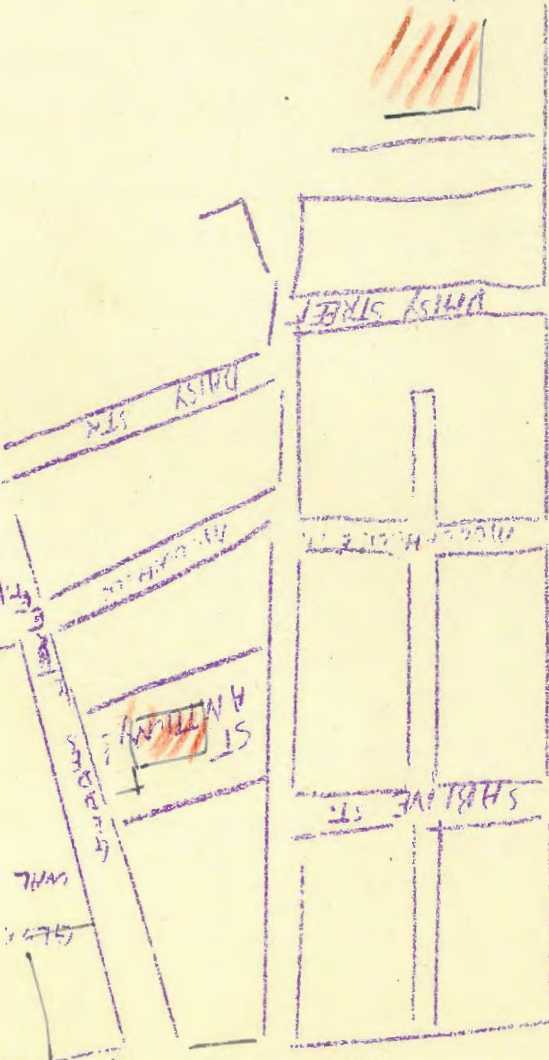
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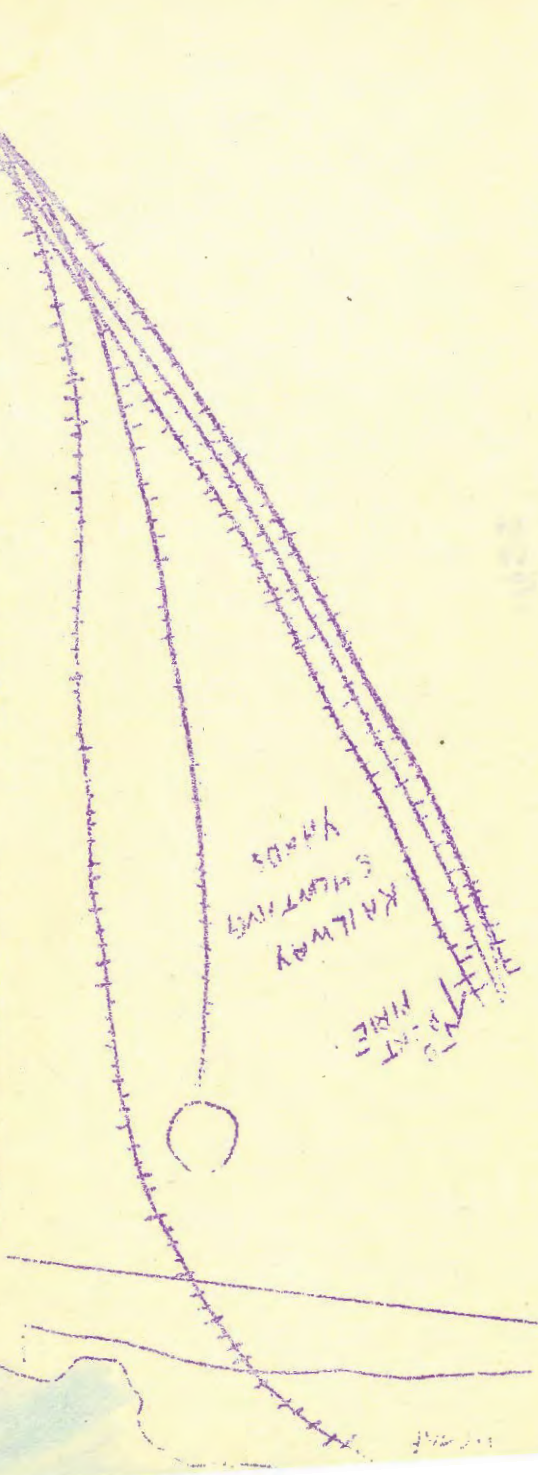
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TO SCHOOL WAY

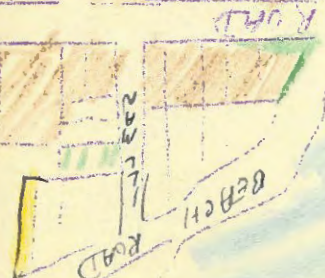
PUBLIC SCHOOL



REMEMBERING TO CHANGE PLANS AND



TOWN CENTER TOWNSHIP IS A DECADE



1930-31

- Non-Utilized Residential
- Utilized Residential
- Commercial, Industrial
- School, Post Office
- Vacant, Park Land
- Police

← TOWN CENTER



PUBLIC SCHOOL



WHIST STREET

DAISY ST

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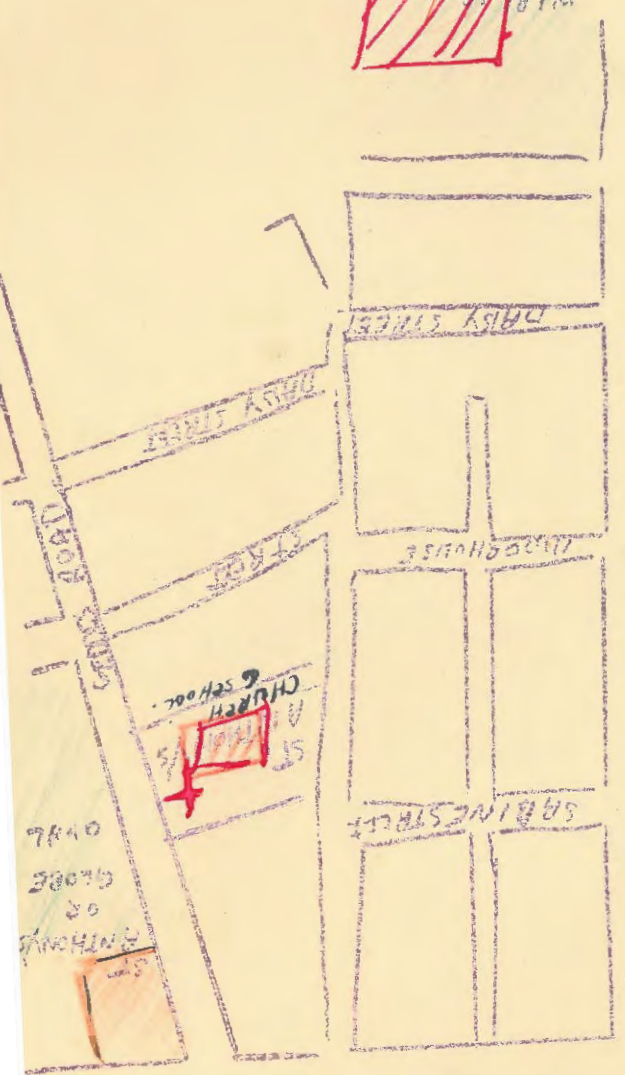
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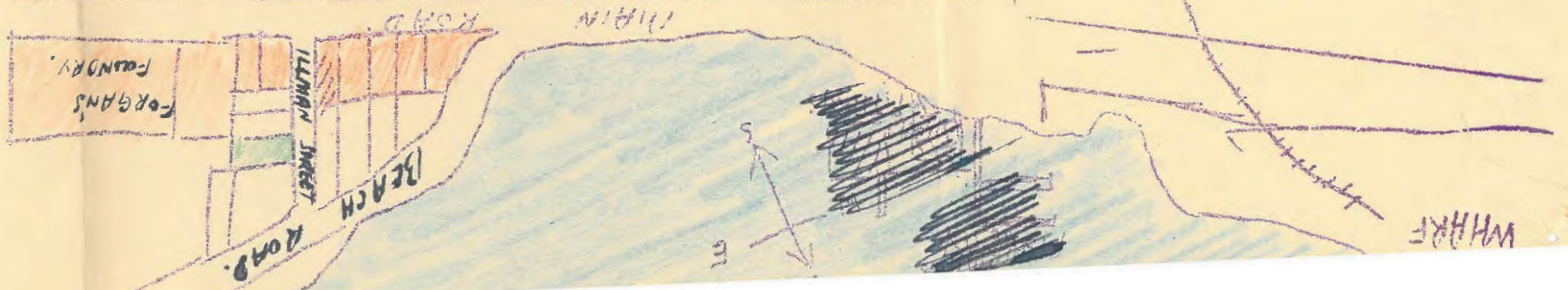
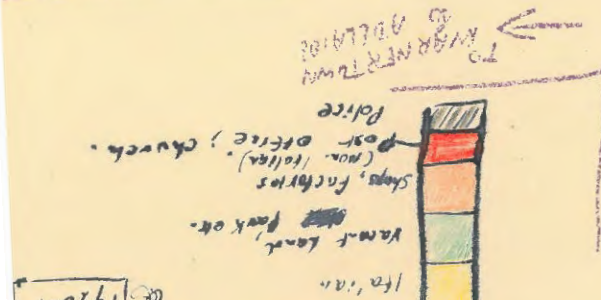
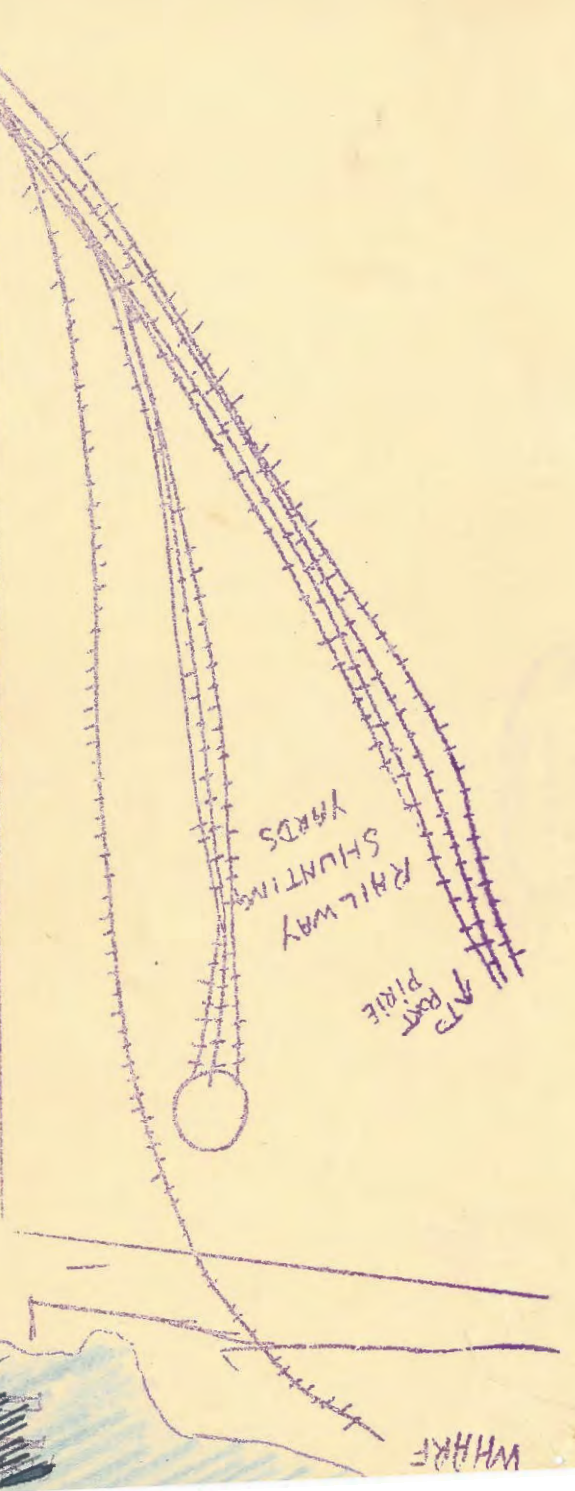
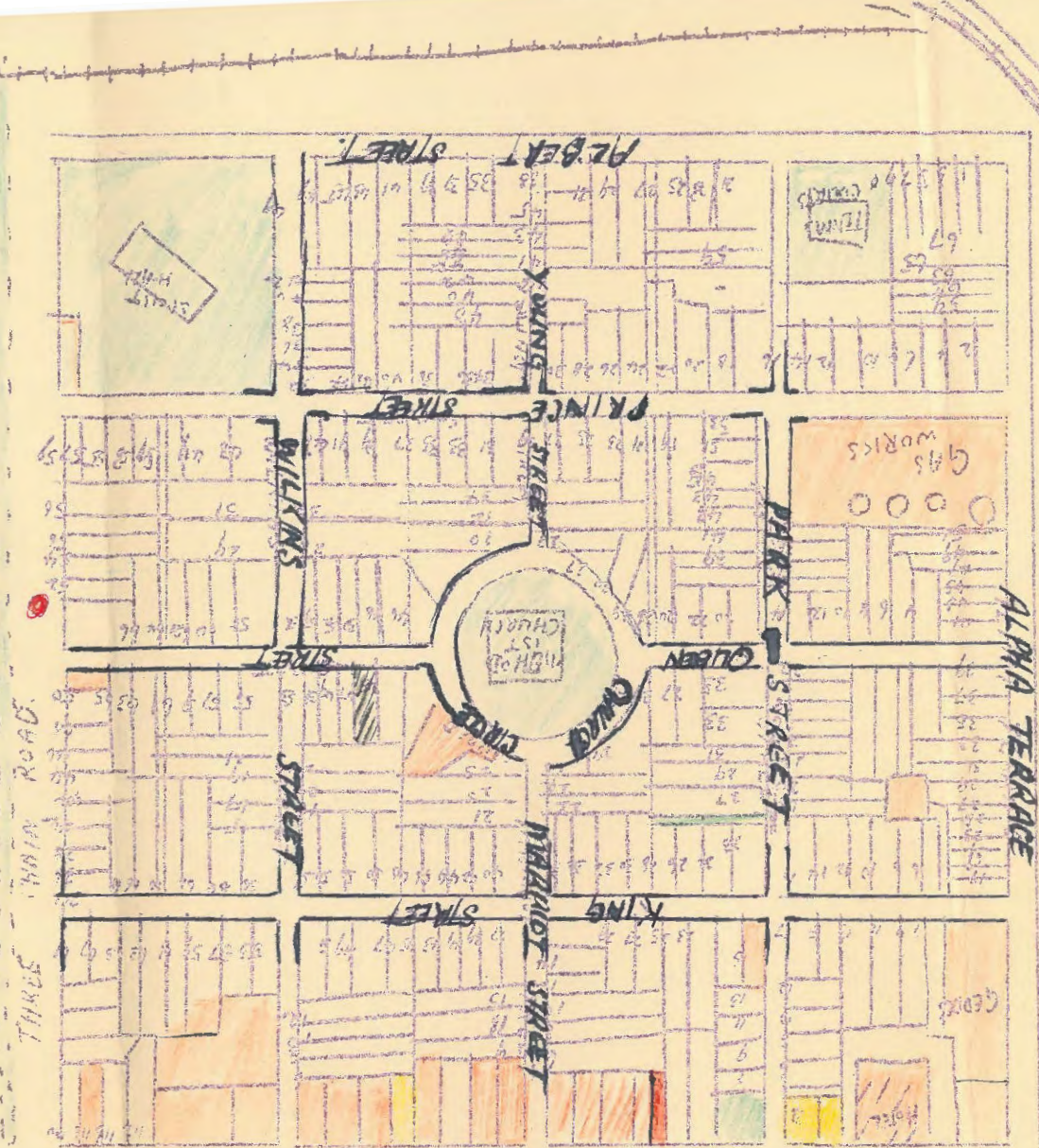
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PL B. H. SCHOOL




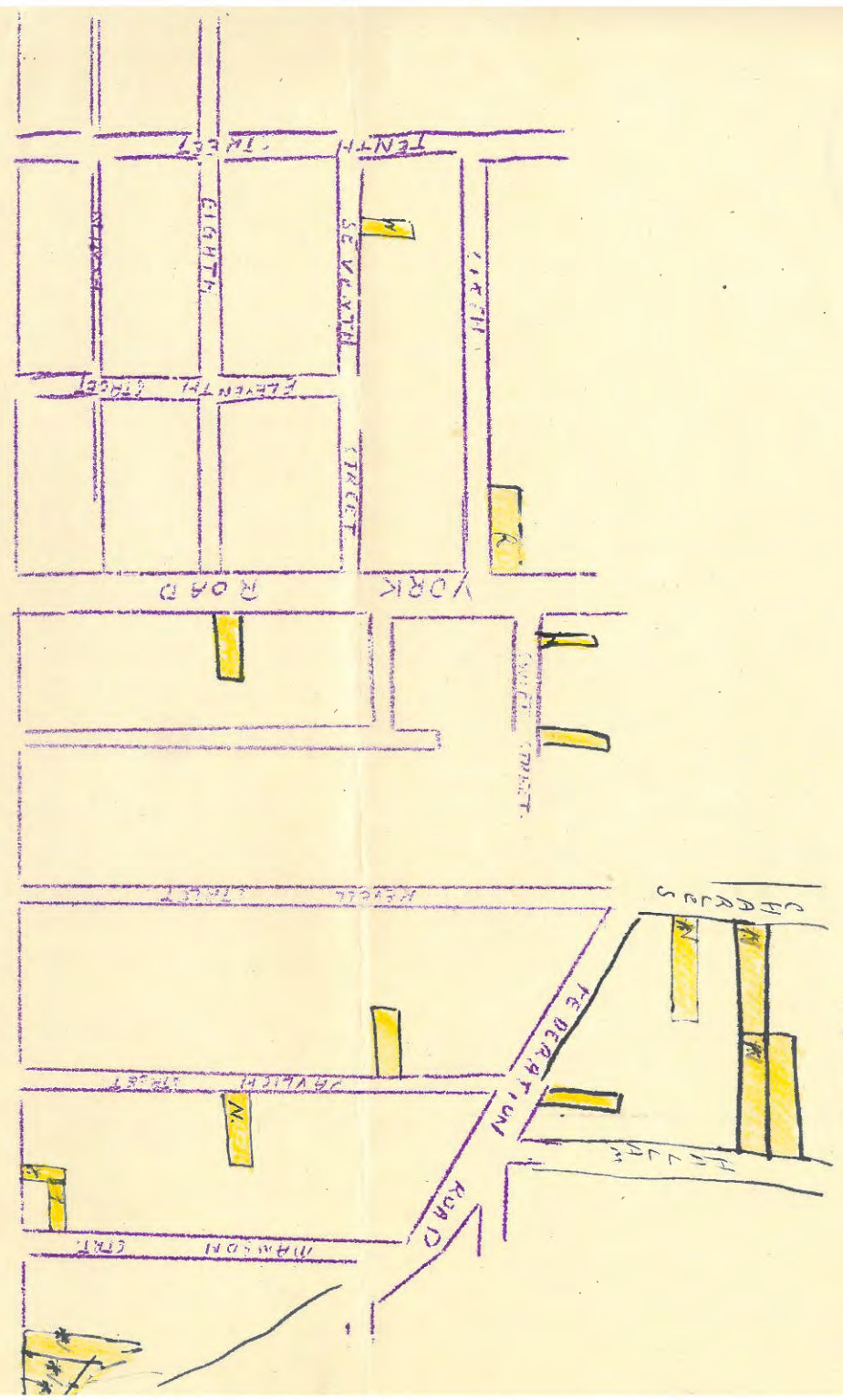
Peppers and childrens playground



1953

North


 Italian Residents  
 former Park str. Governmental  
 Park str. Governmental



THE TERRACE

MEMORIAL ARENS

PARK

VACANT LAND.

