

RECIPROCAL MIGRATION A MEDITERRANEAN EXAMPLE

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THE theoretical background to the study of migration can in most cases be placed at the door of Ravenstein and his laws of migration.¹ One of his laws said that: 'Each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current'.² It is an aspect of this law that I am going to explore in this paper. His terms have changed with time and now the key words are stream and counterstream. That streams of migrations happen is a common observation, and can be demonstrated by the local examples of Maltese emigration to Australia, Canada, the United States and Britain. The counterstream can take various forms. Thus there is mainly the return of migrants who for some reason decide that opportunities are now better at home. The term 'returned migrants' is commonly used to describe this³ and these can include the children of returning migrants and migrants proper. By migrant in this paper I mean one who intended to settle permanently and has in most cases official permission to do so. I am not going to refer to illegal migration, nor to migration on renewed tourist visas. Counterflow can also include people indigenous to the area of destination who come with these returning migrants. These are normally thought of as having 'become aware of opportunities or amenities... through stream migrants'.⁴ I think this often over-relates the two migration systems. In many cases I feel it is better to describe the two peoples separately with both having streams and counterstreams connecting the same locations but with different groupings using each system. This set of two streams and two counterstreams flowing in reverse directions to one another I have christened reciprocal migration. I feel that such migrations are of great importance to the theoretical study of interethnic relations.

Interethnic relations are notoriously difficult to compare as eth-

nicity is such a wide term and found in so many social contexts and thus much has had to be done in the context of entire social systems.⁵ However it is possible in the case of reciprocal migration to study less than entire social systems as the roles of the minority and the majority are then reversed within two cultures. Thus, as in most cases the purely cultural features in the equation are fairly constant in the meeting of the two cultures, fewer cultural aspects have to be taken into account and factors relevant to the analysis can be emphasised. This is the main reason why I have ventured to add another term to the long list of terms to do with migration. By using the word reciprocal in the phrase 'reciprocal migration' I do not mean that there is any equivalence in the size of the two minorities involved and I am only using the word to show that there is a contemporaneous reversal of roles involving two peoples in minority and majority situations.

As my prime Mediterranean example of reciprocal migration I am going to discuss migration in and out of Malta. The country with the reciprocal migration relationship that I am mainly going to talk about is Britain.

MALTESE STREAM AND COUNTERSTREAM

The best studied section of Maltese migration is that done by Price (1954) who mainly covered the period 1842-1881⁶ for which, and indeed up until 1918, statistics of migration have had to be produced by the study of the records at the passport office. From 1918 onwards statistics are also available from the then formed department of emigration. The trouble with these figures is that they are not comparable. Those up to 1881 only deal with the native Maltese population. Then from 1881 onwards all civilians on the island were included. Then from 1901 the figures of the sizable British garrison on the island were also included. The Garrison were an extremely fertile group, due to the high proportion of wives in the child-bearing range and all their children born in Malta have thus counted as Maltese migrants in British statistics, making all figures of Maltese migration, especially to Britain, where most such families returned, highly suspect. Dench has, by means of assumed sex ratios of the actual Maltese migrants, produced some estimates of the actual size of this minority in Britain.⁷ Another complication is the fact that any migrant returning to Malta via Italy was put down in the figures as having come from Italy, when many had probably come overland from Britain. Many Maltese migrants also passed through Britain to both Canada and the United States and are

thus counted as British not Maltese in those countries' statistics. Given these complications I will only give an outline of the general patterns of movement and not figures.

An important feature of nineteenth century movement was a series of attempts to organise emigration from the Maltese Islands. The first which I have researched most sent them to the West Indies, between 1831 and 1840 to Guiana and Grenada. The former was a complete disaster, the second was not nearly as bad as claimed by contemporary Maltese accounts or by Price.⁸ In fact, given the art of indenture then it was probably as efficient as the first shiploads of emigrants from Madeira to the Caribbean. These Portuguese persisted in the westward migration and are now moderately numerous in the West Indies. The Maltese refused further offers to go to Jamaica, and Central America despite the fact that the early experiments with indentured labourers from Madeira had formed the ground rules for bringing labourers successfully into the West Indies. Subsequent plans to settle Maltese groups in Cyprus, Australia and America were equally disastrous. As a result over 90% of nineteenth century migrants only went as far as the coasts of the Levant and North Africa. This was mainly the result of three social factors: (i) the belief that America and Australia had strange and deadly diseases; (ii) the belief that they should go to areas with similar languages and (iii) a desire to be near enough to Malta to be able to return home when necessary. During this period the main pushes and pulls of migration were economic, both at home in Malta and on the Barbary and Levant. The Crimean War was a major period of prosperity in Malta but even then the Egyptian cotton boom was more tempting and for the period a record emigration took place. The end of this boom coincided with a depression on the Barbary coast effecting a major return to Malta. In the 1870s the recovery on the coast coincided with a slight recession in Malta sending migration up again but it diminished between 1875 and 1880 as a result of the poor economic state of Egypt. From the 1860s on the standard of living in Malta overtook that of most of the Mediterranean. Then in the 1880s schemes involving large-scale public expenditure in Malta increased employment opportunities and resulted in a net inward movement up to 1905 with labourers even being imported from Italy and Spain. In the meantime French and Italians expanded into the traditionally Maltese preserves in the Islamic coasts of the Mediterranean.

1906 saw the completion of major harbour and dockyard facilities and unemployment became rife. By then the Italians and French

had complete control of North Africa and other fields had to be investigated. An attempt in 1912 to send migrants to Brazil failed. Then in 1916 a disastrous attempt at migration to Australia resulted in an embargo on future movement, which was however lifted in 1920. Then vocational courses for intended migrants were introduced and eased many of the problems of migration. Short-term migration to Europe and North Africa declined rapidly and many migrants were forced to return as the result of restrictive practices there. Migration to Australia, Canada and the United States was controlled by quota systems that reduced potential movement. The slump of the 1930s restricted this further and there was little revival before World War II when all Maltese migration stopped. Migration to Britain had been slight throughout this period and Dench thinks there were less than a thousand Maltese in Britain before the War apart from service brides.⁹ After the war migration increased rapidly to Australia, Canada and the United States, Australia getting the lions share, except in the period 1951 to 1953 when Canada was favoured, during a period of economic difficulties in Australia.¹⁰ Migration reduced in the late 1960s as the result of an internal boom in Malta, but increased in the early 1970s but has now, due to the economic climate in recipient countries, reduced to be virtually non-existent, while counterflow has increased. Maltese minorities were expelled from newly independent Mediterranean countries in the 1960s, but many were not allowed back into Malta but instead joined the members of the excolonial powers in metropolitan countries or departed for Australia. Thus Tunisian-Maltese in both Britain and Australia.

The most fuzzy of all the migration pictures concerns the Maltese coming to Britain. As far as can be judged the pre-war Maltese concentrated at port cities such as Cardiff, Gillingham, Plymouth and Southampton with relatively small groups in London, South Shields, Bristol, Liverpool, Swansea and Manchester. Those in London were divided between the dock area and the West End. With the exception of the latter most of these clusters were of seamen and ex-seamen. The group in the West End of London were students and professional people. Many Maltese came to Britain after the war making probably 5,000 by the early 1950s, 10,000 by the early 1960s and perhaps 13,000 by the mid 1960s. The first substantial Maltese community was in London. This group was made up of both newly arrived migrants and pre-war migrants who seem to have moved there during the war. The major grouping was in Stepney with secondary developments in Tower Hamlets, Hack-

ney, Islington and to a lesser extent Brixton and parts of the West End. Small concentrations now exist in Manchester and Nottingham.

It should be emphasised that the sizes of groups are estimated after the British born in Malta have been subtracted by dint of guesstimate and that much of the Maltese migration up to the introduction of restrictions by the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts were for short periods with a quick return to Malta.¹¹ The Maltese were given a proportionately overlarge allowance by these acts which they never fully used. Thus in 1971 the allowance for 'A' employment vouchers was reduced from 1,000 to 500.

BRITISH STREAM AND COUNTERSTREAM

There has been a British minority on Malta since before the island's annexation by the British in 1801. An initial British merchant community has continued to this day in the form of various industrialists with factories and other businesses on the island. These are mainly transient and on renewable work permits and thus nowadays do not fit within the confines of migration studies if a definition involving an intention of permanency is included, as herein.

The major British presence from Annexation until very recently was that of British servicemen on the isle. These like the later invasion of British tourists were only temporary residents and thus outside the sphere of this discussion. Though it can be argued that much of the social relations between British and Maltese in Malta historically stem from the British Services.

The group of Britons, fitting the definition of migrants, and who are the subject of this aspect of the reciprocal migration between Britain and Malta are the so called British Residents who have permits entitling them to permanent residence in Malta as long as they do not work or enter politics in Malta. To cushion the economic consequences of a feared British military withdrawal tax benefits were offered to expatriates as from the year of assessment 1964. These included extra personal deductions, reduced tax rates (2.5% of income brought into Malta) and certain duty free concessions for persons with an income of originally £M800 per year and later £M1,400 p.a. These concessions produced an increase in Britons in the island, housing estates for them, a short lived spell of economic prosperity and partially inspired a tourist boom. The latter was in many ways due to Britons visiting retired residents in Malta.

The stream to Malta peaked around 1970 and then began to dec-

line. New permit rules came into effect as from 14 November 1972 which tended to reduce the flow even more. There were from then on two categories given permits. Those coming in under the first had to bring in at least £M4,000 a year and have capital worth £M20,000, purchase or lease a house in Malta and be liable to at least £M1,000 tax per annum. Those in the second category had to have capital worth £M100,000 with the same conditions as the first group. Their tax was to be the same as that of the Maltese but without surtax. The previous residents with the old style permits also had their taxes increased. This together with the tensions of the 1971-72 dispute over British bases on Malta increased the counterflow and remigration. Many of these, however, retained their residence permits and can and in some cases did return after the troubles were settled. A major problem from the point of view of the student of migration stems from this. The only readily available statistics of the British residents is the number of permits in existence and this does not take into account the counterflow. Thus while it is known that there were just over 3,100 permit holders in January 1976 it is not known how many of them are using their rights. It is probable that the peak population of British residence in Malta was one of about 5,000 in 1970, but this is ultimately a figure reached by guesstimate.

RECIPROCAL MIGRANTS

The fact that the cultures involved in the British/Maltese relations in both Britain and Malta are basically the same means that only a few items need be isolated out for discussion. In this paper I am going to compare the following: (1) some political considerations, (2) diglossia, (3) colonialism and the length of history of the minority grouping, (4) age factors, (5) status stereotypes, (6) acculturation and most important of all (7) attitudes to minorities.

(1) *Political Considerations*: a basic difference between the British and Maltese political system for dealing with their minorities is that Maltese system is more legalistically plural. By legalistic pluralism I mean that the minority has different legal and financial rights and obligations to that of the majority (this usage is of course different from that of Cox,¹² which is equivalent to 'pluralistic integration'). This term is not intended to refer to laws relating to migrant entry but to their status once arrived. The best example of the functioning of this is the way that the taxes of the existing residents were altered by the Maltese government in 1972. This has meant that the Maltese government as a result of this le-

galistic difference has found it easier to deal with the British minority, than has the British with the Maltese minority. Another factor in the policies of the Maltese towards their British minority that is relevant to the study of reciprocal migration is that the Maltese see or at least claim to see their emigration to Britain, and possible return to Malta from thence in terms of economic need.¹³ This view has resulted in the treatment of the British residents and attempts to integrate them being on economic terms with little reference to other factors.

(2) *Diglossia*: Malta is a society with a high degree of diglossia¹⁴ while Britain has little. This has resulted in most migrants being able to fit into the British linguistic system while the British in Malta have remained an almost completely English speaking group relying on the local majority's bilingualism. This means that it is possible to isolate the British in Malta by linguistic means, while the Maltese in Britain could not be so treated. It also means that the Maltese in Britain can use their language as an identifying trait.

(3) *The Colonial Past and History of the Groupings*: the fact that the British are the remains of Malta's colonial past and that they have been there as a grouping for over two centuries means that the Maltese had specific methods for dealing with them while the British with no such relationships have no specifically designed methods for treating the Maltese in Britain. This has produced problems for the Maltese in Britain as they are treated as any other group and thus assumed to have their own internal structure which they do not have. This has resulted in pressure on the Maltese to curb their co-islanders' less savoury traits. This has not produced Maltese social sanctions against offenders but instead the more respectable Maltese tend to pass as British and consider the British very prejudiced.¹⁵ The British colonial role in Malta and length of their presence there also means that the needs and requirements of the British in Malta are better understood and catered for than are those of the Maltese in Britain.

(4) *Age*: the age difference between the basically old British residents in Malta and the relatively young population of Maltese in Britain has produced some differences. Thus the British in Malta have to be continually replaced by new residents otherwise the group will soon die out. In contrast the Maltese in Britain are a viable breeding unit, or rather, given their tendency to hide their ethnicity, non-unit. The age difference has also had some effects

on the sixth factor to be considered, namely *acculturation*. Thus the Maltese in Britain by being younger are more ready to take on new traits and fashions, than are the older British residents in Malta who are in many cases, already set in their ways. This also explains why many of them do not attempt to integrate.

(5) *Status*: The difference of financial, hierarchical and stereotype status between the two minorities is a major factor in the difference. The British minority can in many cases afford to move out of Malta, though there is a sizable minority who as the result of fixed pensions and inflation would find it difficult. They can also in most cases afford the required luxuries and services to cushion themselves from many social problems. Thus Maltese migrants without this are far more affected by British governmental policies. The major factor, however, is their stereotype in Britain which is a key factor in the Maltese in Britain trying to pretend not to be Maltese.

(6) *Acculturation*: the different direction of acculturation involved in the two cases has made a major difference to the minorities under discussion. Thus in Britain the Maltese are acculturating in the local British culture, while in Malta the acculturation is also from the British (and not only the residents) to the Maltese. Thus in Britain the flow is from the majority to the minority while it is the reverse direction in Malta. The main result of this difference in the direction of acculturation in the context of interethnic relations has, however, been that this paper has talked about the ethnicity of the minority in Britain and the Maltese reactions to the minority in Malta. This is a fundamental difference that, while partially resting on the high status of the British minority is mainly due to the fact that they have a base culture that is considered more developed by many of the Maltese and is still relatively powerful. Thus while in the majority in Malta the Maltese often react as if they were the minority in Malta and the British in the majority.

(7) *The Attitudes to Minorities*: the most important factor in the comparison of these reciprocal migrants is I feel the comparison of their attitudes to minorities, as it determines the behaviour of both the British and Maltese as both majorities and minorities. The Maltese view of the British in Malta is far more one of taking them as individuals than is the British view of the Maltese in Britain who are mainly considered as a group. Thus there is a potential source of friction in Malta between the British view of themselves

as a grouping and with the Maltese less group oriented attitudes. The situation of the Maltese trying to be individuals in Britain without over considering themselves a group has, as Dench¹⁶ has shown already, caused conflicts with the British trying to treat them as a group.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

I feel that such comparisons of migrants in reciprocal migration situations have some importance in isolating factors in the analysis of interethnic relations. They certainly cut out the necessity of comparing total situations. I feel that similar studies of other cases of reciprocal migration with similar reversals of majority and minority roles should be similarly fruitful. In the Mediterranean another example to be studied at once springs to mind; that is the study of the British in Cyprus (or rather those recently in Cyprus) and the Cypriots in Britain. Such a study along with others would help answer the question as to how much the reactions of a minority are determined by their reactions as a majority at home and how much is due to the responses of their host culture?

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NOTES:

¹ Ravenstein, E.G. 'The Laws of Migration' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 43, (June 1885) pp. 167-227 & 'The Laws of Migration' (2) *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* vol. 52 (June 1889) pp. 241-301.

² Ibid. (1) p. 199.

³ Cf. Price, C.A. *Malta and the Maltese: a study in Nineteenth Century Migration* 1954, Georgian House, Melbourne, p. xix.

⁴ Lee, E. 'A Theory of Migration' in J.A. Jackson *Migration*, Sociological Studies No. 2, Cambridge University Press (1969), p. 293.

⁵ Cf. Lowenthal, D. 'Post-emancipation race relations: some Caribbean and American perspectives', *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 13, nos. 3-4 (1971) pp. 367-377; and van den Berghe, P.L. *Race and Racism: a comparative perspective* (1967) John Wiley & Sons, New York, London, Sydney.

⁶ Price *Malta and the Maltese*.

⁷ Dench, G. 'Maltese Immigrants in London: Analysis of some official Statistics', *Institute of Race Relations Newsletter* (January 1968) pp. 17-23; and *Maltese in London: a case-study in the erosion of ethnic consciousness*, Report of the Institute of Community Studies (1975) pp. 27-33, & 240-242.

⁸ Price, *Malta and the Maltese*, pp. 75-85.

⁹ Dench, 'Maltese in London', pp. 27-33 & 240-242.

¹⁰ Cf. Richardson, M. 'Population and Migration', in H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher *Malta: Background for Development* Geography Department, Durham University (1961) pp. 133-163, and Zammit, A.C. 'Malta and Migration', *International Migration*, vol. 1, no. 3, (1963) pp. 178-182.

¹¹ Cf. Dench, G. 'Maltese Immigrants in London', pp. 17-23, *Maltese In London*, p. 25; and 'The Commonwealth Immigrants Act and Maltese Immigration' *Institute of Race Relations Newsletter* (July 1968) pp. 289-292.

¹² Cox, O.C., 'The Question of Pluralism' *Race*, vol. 12 (1971) pp. 385f.

¹³ Cf. Zammit, E.L. 'The behaviour patterns of Maltese migrants in London with reference to Maltese social institutions' (B.Litt thesis, Oxford University 1970); 'A group of young Maltese workers in Britain - some Sociological observations' *Economic and Social Studies*, Malta, vol. 2 (1973), pp. 27-34; and 'The "Economic" orientations of Maltese migrants in London: work, money and social status' *Economic and Social Studies*, Malta, vol. 3 (1974) pp. 17-39.

¹⁴ For a definition of this term cf. Ferguson, C.A. 'Diaglossia' *Word* vol. 15, (1959) pp. 325-340 and for its more modern usage Fishman, J.A. 'The Sociology of Language: An interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society' Newbury House, Mas. (1972) pp. 91-106, also cf. Gullick, C.J.M.R. 'Maltese and Creole' *Belizian Studies* vol. 4 no. 3 (1976) pp. 25-36.

¹⁵ Cf. Dench: *Maltese in London* pp. 152f.

¹⁶ Dench 'Maltese in London', pp. 174f.

¹⁷ Cf. Gullick, C.J.M.R. 'London Maltese' *New Community*, vol. 4, no. 3, (1975), pp. 404-7.