David Eaton

made to just the same range of employers.

There are two main starting points in the search for jobs. A student may attend a "milk round" interview with an employer's representative, or he may apply direct. A student is automatically invited to attend a milk round interview if he puts his name on a list. The first hurdle is whether he is invited to attend a further interview or is rejected at this stage. The white respondents made 172 milk round applications and the blacks made 99. Sixty two of the white applications were rejected at the first interview, as against 80 of those made by the blacks. With a direct application, the question is whether the student is invited to attend an interview. In all, 172 direct applications were made by whites and 110 by blacks. Only 31 of the white applications were turned down outright, while 75 of the blacks' applications were rejected.

A total of 144 applications made by white students succeeded in getting the applicant up to the final interview, while only 41 applications by black students got this far. Forty seven white applications reaching this stage were rejected, as opposed to 27 black applications. In other words, most of the white applications were successful at every stage, while most black applications were rejected.

In order to check the statistical significance of the difference in rejection rates at each stage, the variable number of applications made by each individual must be taken into account. We tested the difference between the average rejection rates for each sample, the rejection rate being defined as the ratio between the number of rejections and the number of applications made by each student at each stage. (The test we used is known, technically, as the student's T test.) The differences between the average rejection rates for black and white students

were found to be highly significant at every stage.

Ultimately, 46 white applicants were offered a total of 97 jobs, while eleven black applicants were offered 14 jobs. Thus many white applicants could choose which job to take, while only three black applicants had an alternative to accepting the single job that they had been offered. It is also worth mentioning that a number of white applications were withdrawn halfway: 22 white applicants did not bother to attend 33 interviews to which they had been invited, usually because they had already accepted another job. In contrast, only three black applicants were in a position to turn down a total of four offers of interviews.

Our general conclusion from these figures is that black students were discriminated against throughout the process of seeking a job. The end result was that coloured students had many fewer offers of jobs (with half not having any at all), while many white students could *choose* which job to take. The fact that many applications were made by letter did not help the black applicants. Many were Asians and their names "gave them away." (In the case of others, various clues like birthplace served the same purpose).

To check whether this was really due to race, we analysed our data again by breaking it down into subsamples in terms of sex, age, class of degree, social class of parents, and (for our coloured sample) age when the respondent first entered Britain. We carried out the same tests as we did before. This analysis showed that the effect of these factors was never large enough to have a consistent impact of any significance on application success rates.

We cannot claim that these factors have *no* effect on success rates, as we might have been able to identify significant differences had our sample been larger. But we can say with confidence that the small variations produced by other factors cannot begin to account for the massive differences between the experience of black and white applicants. Even though our sample was small, the difference between black and white was always very great and it was not explicable in terms of other factors.

Our survey has revealed a wide discrepancy between the success rates of black and white graduates applying for jobs. The coloured students had excellent qualifications as well as great familiarity with British society after years of residence in this country, and for many the experience of repeated rejection was a disillusioning and profoundly depressing one. In informal interviews, many expressed surprise and increasing cynicism about their experiences, and were beginning to reassess their plans and expectations: some were trying to obtain places on postgraduate courses (although this may only postpone the evil day), while others were considering re-emigration. While the path through school and university had been relatively smooth, many became painfully aware of discrimination when they moved on to the job market: "No one made remarks like 'we don't employ coloured people,' but some obviously want to get rid of you as soon as they see you."

Since we investigated students and their applications rather than employers, we cannot say categorically why employers acted in the way they did, but the most reasonable explanation is that it is the outcome of straightforward racial discrimination: an employer will consider all the suitable white candidates first, and only turn to coloured applicants as a last resort.

We believe our evidence points to this conclusion,

but there is an alternative explanation which is worth considering. All the university careers officers we spoke to emphasised that formal academic qualifications are often less important for getting a job than such factors as personality, style and an ability to get on with others—"employability" was the term sometimes used. Clearly "employability" is important, but it seems to us there are two elements here—individual personality on the one hand, and social and cultural style on the other. Could it be that the lack of success of coloured students in finding jobs is the outcome of a difference in cultural behaviour? One careers officer argued explicitly that "getting a job depends on assimilating a culture . . . any member of a minority who wishes to maintain a separate culture may be making it considerably more difficult to get the kind of job which requires the sinking of cultural differences." Another careers officer referred with approval to one coloured student's lack of a "chip on the shoulder," and we were told by one of our respondents that he had been advised to play down his position as President of the West Indian Association by an employer's representative.

It seems clear that in the eyes of careers officers and employers, the best way for a coloured student to stress his "employability" is to be, or act as if he were, indistinguishable from his white contemporaries. Above all, he should not make an issue of his identity, or of his awareness of racial discrimination. This leads us to ask two further questions. Firstly, was the lack of success of our black respondents due to their failure to match up to this expectation; and, secondly, how far is it reasonable that they should try?

We have no means of assessing how our respondents presented themselves during interviews, but obviously they tried to project themselves in the most acceptable manner possible—after all, they all wanted jobs! However, we found that coloured students in our survey did no better when they wrote directly to employers, though at this stage they had not met face to face. In addition, we found no significant differences in success rates between students who had come to Britain at different ages. While we would accept that "employability" has some effect on a student's success in getting a job, our analysis shows that the vast differences between black and white students cannot be due to cultural factors alone. If this is so, a coloured graduate will always be at a disadvantage, because of the colour of his skin.

Despite its limited benefit, the strategy of presenting himself as indistinguishable from white people has serious disadvantages for the young black Briton. To follow it successfully, he must deny his own identity and pretend that somehow he is really white; he must deny the reality of his ethnicity and pretend that his family does not really come from India, the West Indies or wherever. Above all, the strategy demands that he should appear not to recognise or challenge the injustice from which he suffers, but simply pretend that racial discrimination does not exist.

The "culture" argument can neither explain our results nor solve the problem. We do not believe that there are any easy answers. However, undoubtedly the racism endemic in our society will not go away if we pretend it does not really exist, but only when it is exposed and challenged.

The Maltese in Britain

Geoff Dench

The Maltese are a revealing contrast with the situation Roger Ballard describes. Stereotyped as connected with 'vice,' they have abandoned group identity.

Maltese were among the first colonial citizens to arrive in Britain in substantial numbers at the end of the war. They played an important part in forming the pattern of race relations in the period leading up to the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act, enacted in 1962. But in spite of their interest and importance, they have not until now been the object of a detailed study. Indeed, outside the more lurid newspapers, there has been an almost total conspiracy of silence about them.

The reason is that they have had very bad public reputation for poncing—helped by hostile and narrow coverage in the popular press. This has deterred sympathetic observers from reporting on them at all. The reputation was not one which could be easily refuted. Nor was it possible to cite mitigating circumstances relating to their place in British society: other minorities in similar positions had not been affected in the same way. Between 1951 and 1959, for example, over one quarter of the men sentenced in London courts for living on immoral earnings were born in Malta. This is a rate of conviction at least 1,000 times greater than that for locally born men, and more than 30 times that of West Indians—another group sometimes identified with this offence.

A means to vindicate the Maltese in Britain

can be found if their specific colonial situation is taken into account. The British garrison in Malta created a voracious demand for prostitutes. Because of the very small scale of Maltese society, this could not be sealed off from local people as much as in other colonies. Given the strict religious principles of the Maltese and their code of sexual honour, this state of affairs engendered fierce jealousies and a deep sense of national humiliation. And what more fitting means of avenging this than by sexually aggressive behaviour in the "mother country"?

This perspective has not been adopted by non-Maltese observers here. Nor has it been often advanced by Maltese themselves. For most of them the sexual exploitation of their homeland by the British is too offensive to bear thinking about. So the vicious reputation has remained unchallenged. A consensus has prevailed, which holds that the best way to help the "decent majority" of Maltese in Britain is by ignoring the whole group.

If this was ever true, I think it no longer is. Persecution of Maltese was very fierce for ten years or so up to the early sixties. But since then, public interest and abhorence has abated. An examination of how the reputation developed, and how it affected Maltese people, may now even be

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W. W. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England* (Penguin, 1968)

D. J. Smith and N. McIntosh, *The Extent of Racial Discrimination* (PEP, 1974)

D. J. Smith, *Racial Disadvantage in Employment* (PEP, 1974)

Linda Dove, "The hopes of immigrant schoolchildren" (NEW SOCIETY, 10 April 1975)

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Cuttings from the "People's" exposure of the Messina brothers, which was largely responsible for identifying the Maltese with white slavery, in the early 1950's.

able to help improve their collective standing.

Let me make it quite clear at the outset that the Maltese were very unlucky to get such a bad name. This and the ensuing bitterness were largely due to a fortuitous combination of factors. They began with the affair of the "Messina Brothers" in 1950, when the *People* dramatically serialised Duncan Webb's exposure of an international vice ring organised from Soho. The five "Kings of Vice," whose empire this was, had declared themselves Maltese to qualify for British passports. Though they were eventually stated to be Italians, this was only after the Maltese had been firmly identified in the public mind with white slavery.

This set in motion a classic example of a self-propagating and self-fulfilling image. Its consequences go a long way towards accounting for the statistics of Maltese involvement in vice. A number of Maltese men had been convicted for vice offences in London and in the provinces before the exposure of the Messinas, and local stereotypes did exist. But in the wake of this affair a police drive was mounted against Maltese suspects. The volume of convictions grew rapidly, with a national reputation emerging almost overnight. In one court in Stepney, where a main colony of Maltese was located, their convictions on all charges rose from 22 in 1949, to 70 in 1950 when the exposure took place, and then to 105 in 1951. As the figures soared, the denunciations of Maltese from bench and pulpit grew more strident, and police efforts were redoubled. In 1955 there were 181 Maltese convictions at this court.

The surge of public interest in the Maltese was not carried forward simply by its own internal momentum. A further misfortune of the group was that they were thrust into prominence by the Messina affair when a groundswell of popular opinion against postwar immigration—in particular, coloured immigration—was beginning to look for public outlet. Responsible politicians were not prepared to espouse an overtly racialist cause. So this rising tide of xenophobic concern could not find legitimate direct expression. It was easily diverted onto any issue with a demonstrable bearing on immigration.

The reputation of the Maltese (and indeed of the Messinas *as* Maltese) rendered the "vice" problem such an issue. For as a *white* colonial group the Maltese were a convenient and safe target for an anti-immigrant lobby to form around. The problem of "growing vice" was widely debated during the fifties, culminating in the Street Offences Act, 1959. The ostensible purpose of the act was the concealment of prostitution. But much of the discussion on the bill dealt with the involvement of Commonwealth immigrants in vice—notably the "white Maltese"—and with the need to restrict their entry and provide for their deportation.

The real purpose of the debate was achieved when the government committed itself to drafting a scheme for the control of immigration. After this, as immigration and race relations came out as respectable topics for open discussion, public interest in "vice" flagged. But while it lasted the Maltese had been projected into the role of notional representatives for all the new minorities in British society. They were a major focus of compounded antagonism towards them. For a least a decade, anti-Maltese sentiments received an artificial boost which gave their reputation a singularly hostile and vitriolic character.

It is this added bitterness which gives the Maltese case much of its special interest. A key assumption underlying the long conspiracy of silence about the Maltese was that most of the community were earnestly and quietly trying to "assimilate" themselves to British society and that, in view of the bad name, publicity given to the group might hinder this process. But on the evidence of interviews I carried out with a sample of 140 Maltese men in London, the opposite appears to be the case. The desire to abandon Maltese identity seems to have been strongly backed up by the existence of a bad name attaching to it.

Several different effects should be separated out here. Firstly, and most obviously, there are the implications of simple stereotyping. Stereotyping is annoying for Maltese men, because it means that people who do not know them often treat them as ponces—which of course most are not. These tribulations can be largely overcome by cultivating a satisfactory individual image within a circle of personal acquaintances. This does not require the relinquishing of Maltese identity, though sensitive Maltese may adopt an alternative identity (usually Italian) as a cover until they have established themselves locally as respectable persons. As one nervous respondent put it:

"People don't say anything to me, but I know that they are thinking, 'He is Maltese—maybe he is one of those in Soho.' I am not like that, and when they know me better they will understand. As it happens, I am the Italian type to look at, and many people think I am Italian. When they know me better I may tell them I am Maltese."

Not all of the problems arising out of the bad name can be resolved so easily. One of the reasons why a poor reputation matters so much to a minority group is that it serves as a charter for wide-ranging discrimination. These reprisals, taken on the pretext of the reputation, can be directed at all and any members of the minority, regardless of individual blame. This implication of joint responsibility is very explicit in the minds of many white English. Most of a sample of 240 non-Maltese men I surveyed in London thought the Maltese were a close-knit community separate from the rest of British society. More than half of them asserted that members of this group should accept some measure of responsibility for their compatriots' behaviour here.

The experience of the Maltese confirms this lumping-together. Almost all those I interviewed complained that they were constantly treated by English people as representatives of the Maltese community, answerable for it to the rest of society. This treatment ranged from refusals by employers to consider giving them a job, to continual browbeating even by close English friends to "do something" to stop their fellow Maltese "preying on our girls." There is no easy let-out from this yoke of joint liability. Any group member is by definition potentially at risk for the actions of all others. Respectable individuals are no better placed. In fact, they may suffer *more*, because their personal influence in the group and representative status are assumed to be the greater.

This has been a great burden to Maltese active in communal affairs, and has helped inhibit the development of Maltese associations in London (which is where the largest concentration of Maltese are). One middle-aged migrant told me how he had been intensely patriotic when he arrived in London, and had tried to start a social club for young Maltese in the East End. But as soon as he was noticed locally as a "leading" Maltese, he was co-opted onto a committee concerned with the abatement of vice, who expected him to launch a crusade among his compatriots to bring them out of their moral wilderness. The demands made on him soon proved insupportable, and he retracted into a purely private life. At the time of my interview, he was insisting that he had renounced his ethnicity and was now "an Englishman."

This representative role forced on group leaders is not a problem, of course, for religious organisations. Priests are groomed to acceptance of responsibility for the sins of others. A mission of Maltese Fathers has been operating in the community in Britain since the early fifties, in an attempt to redress its sullied reputation. Unfortunately, very few ordinary settlers are responsive to their ministrations. Again, paradoxically, this is tied up with the bad name. Many Maltese are afraid to attend functions where they will meet other Maltese even in ostensibly respectable settings—lest they should inadvertently become contaminated by some evil types there. Though some settlers participate in the affairs of their neighbourhood Catholic church, a greater number lapse altogether.

Belief in the stereotype is so strong among Maltese themselves that many will go to great lengths to avoid contacts with compatriots they do not already know well. In several instances in my survey, Maltese families living a few yards from each other had the wildest mutual suspicion. This prevented them from daring to get to know each other. One pair of middle-aged brothers who were both, independently, selected in my sample, were each carefully keeping away from the other in the belief that he had become a bad influence.

The overall effect of the bad name is therefore to undermine the solidarity of the group, and to encourage members to pursue separate destinies in the local English society. This is reflected in the high rate of intermarriage with English girls. More than two thirds of married Maltese men in London have non-Maltese wives. This contrasts with an "out-marriage" rate of one quarter for Cypriots, with whom Maltese are sometimes confused or (as in official statistics) compounded. Similarly, and in spite of the recentness of most migration from Malta, only just over one third of the men I interviewed in my study still described themselves as Maltese. Many of even these "passed" as non-Maltese for certain purposes.

This virtual collapse of the group under the strain of its reputation may be due in part to the sheer speed and sharpness of the growth of that bad name. But the initial solidarity does not seem to have ever been very great. This is closely bound up with the nature of the migrant group. In the households of the men I interviewed, three quarters of the Maltese were male; two thirds of the sample members (all of them adult men) had arrived in Britain aged between 15 and 25; and four fifths had been bachelors on arrival. At the time of interview half had no close relatives in Britain, apart from wives and children. Thus the community contained very few parents or other figures of authority, and very large numbers of those who were largely *free* of all their personal ties and restraints.

Many Maltese consider this wholesale freedom to have been an important factor in the growth of criminal—or at any rate disorganised—tendencies. By the same token, when a bad name did arise, the group was ill-fitted to seek a collective solution. Most Maltese have chosen to resolve the issue on an individual basis by assimilating into British society and repudiating their Maltese origins. Assimilation and disorganisation have thus proceeded together; and the bad name has accelerated both of them.

As a result, the Maltese are unlikely to remain a visible minority in Britain for much longer. The settlement was never very large—certainly no more than 15,000 in all Britain at its peak in the mid-sixties, with perhaps 4,000 to 5,000 in Greater London. In the last ten years there have been few new migrants, and there is little prospect of a revival of movement in the future. What with re-migration, a toll of natural deaths, wholesale intermarriage, and rapid individual assimilation, the community is likely to dwindle into insignificant proportions very soon.

Hence, paradoxically, partly *because* of the *severity* of their bad name, the Maltese may have escaped the potentially most onerous effects such a reputation can entail. The creation of a bad name for a minority is usually likely to help *perpetuate* the subjugation of that group. The slur of criminality or subversion provides a majority with powerful weapons for obstructing a subordinate group's access to high social positions. The more time and energy spent by group members in mutual vigilance to salvage their ethnic honour, the less left for personal advancement. Such restrictions on individual initiative harm the group's collective standing. Unless it contains people respected and powerful in the wider society, it cannot share in designing what actually constitutes deviant or anti-social behaviour.

The case of the Maltese in Britain illustrates an alternative outcome, as they have done little self-regulation. But the special circumstances draw attention to the nature of the trap existing for other minorities.

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