

RACE PREJUDICE—Continued

resultant hostility is liable to be discharged into race prejudice. This accounts for the fact that it is the lowest-paid and most marginal White workers who are usually the most bitter racialists—they can displace their economic frustrations on to non-Whites. Job reservation protects many Whites here from direct competition with non-Whites for work, and probably also insulates the non-Whites from some of the directly personal hostility. In American industrial cities when work is scarce, race-prejudice arising from these sources has been known to explode into violence against Negroes.

Another set of theories discounts historical traditions, for it points out that the child growing up in any particular society is largely ignorant of the historical reasons for prejudice, whatever they may be. Instead, every individual, and especially every child, has a strong need to be accepted by his group and so *conforms* to the customs and beliefs of that group. Children growing up in any society absorb, sponge-like, many beliefs and values without ever really being aware that they are doing so. And beliefs that are held because they have been absorbed in this way are highly unamenable to rational consideration: they are part and parcel of the "givens" of that society, and become an integral part of the personality of the individual.

Thus the Polish child may grow up with a prejudice against Russians, even though he had never experienced Russian pogroms himself and might well

be entirely ignorant of the Russian record in pre-1920 Poland. The South African child "absorbs" race attitudes, almost as it were from the atmosphere.

This need to conform explains also why English immigrants so frequently adopt South African race attitudes within a few years. To some extent, too, it illumines the findings that persons who move upwards in the social scale are frequently more prejudiced—being newly-arrived in a higher social class, they often over-conform, and while our stereotype of the vulgar *nouveau-riche* is sometimes correct, more commonly they go to exaggerated lengths to avoid advertising their humbler origins. Prejudiced attitudes towards non-Whites, Jews, Communists, etc., are over-accepted, and form part of a protective colouring. This, of course, applies where the higher-status groups in a community are marked by well-defined prejudices. In some communities the process works in reverse, and if the socially dominant group is unprejudiced, newcomers (whether immigrants or social climbers) conform to the pattern of non-prejudice.

Each of these theories accounts for some elements of prejudice and affords insight into certain aspects. None accounts for all, nor does any account for the fact that though all these processes operate on every one of us, not every individual is equally prejudiced. What is left out of account is the personal factor, the individual differences between the prejudiced and the unprejudiced in the same society. This topic, the personality of the bigot, will be discussed in a second article.

"I am frightened as I write . . ."

AN African whom the Black Sash has tried to assist, who is well known to the Sash, but whose name is withheld for obvious reasons, expressed his feeling in these words:

"I went through a painful experience when I was arrested without cause, handcuffed and sent to another town. Now we have nowhere to live and we sleep in the bushes and it is the Municipality that has done this. It is better to die than live in this manner and under such conditions. I am frightened as I write this and keep looking about to see if no policeman is coming.

"The rulers must know that we are all God's children; but we are thrown into prison with our wives and children. I do not know where the Municipal Authorities here come from, but one thing I know is, that to them a Black man is no better than a wild beast to be chased about and flung into a police van.

"I saw the way these raids are carried out only this Tuesday—the police barging into people's

houses, looking into every corner, even under the beds—looking for supposed 'illegal entrants' into the area. How would you (White people) feel if you were forced to leave your children behind? And yet you force us to leave our children—orphans while we still live.

"The Government advised us to legalise our unions and we did. We even called our ministers of religion and swore in their presence according to the Bible that 'until death us do part' when we regularised our unions, and yet in the name of that same God to whom we made these promises, the Government officials separate husband from wife and children.

"The Government will have to take another course, for the Blacks cannot continue to accept such treatment till the end of the world. Only recently four women were arrested in my town and each was fined £4 and thereby the Government collected £16 from these poor people—people who had committed no crime."