

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

THE COLUMBUS CENTRE AND ITS RESEARCH PROJECT

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The Minutes of the Meeting of Trustees of the Columbus Trust held on 17th May 1972 include the following item: "Professor Wilson suggested that, when it was possible to survey the final outcome, it might be of interest to produce a memorandum, for restricted circulation, briefly outlining the history of the project. The Director undertook to give consideration to this possibility at the appropriate time." As my appointment as Astor-Wolfson Professor in the University of Sussex and Director of the Columbus Centre is due to terminate on 30th September 1980, the present seems an appropriate time to discharge this long-standing obligation.

David Astor's Initiative

In April 1962, at a meeting held in commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943, David Astor delivered an address which was printed in Encounter in the following August. It argued that we were still far from grasping the full implications of "the destruction by the Nazis and their accomplices of nearly all the men, women and children of Jewish descent in Continental Europe," and called for an "academic study of the political and psychological processes which produced this terrible manifestation." It also pointed out that that great killing could not have been carried out without the participation of vast numbers of people who were by no means clinically insane, and concluded from this that the massacre of the Jews could most fruitfully be studied as a supreme example of potentialities which are latent in all mankind. To achieve this it would be necessary to study this massacre not in isolation but alongside other similar killings, and to bring to bear on all this material not only the techniques of historical scholarship and sociological analysis but also the insights of dynamic psychology.

The publication of the address evoked many expressions of interest, and from the most diverse quarters. During 1962 - 1963 various discussions took place amongst those interested, including myself. The upshot was that in 1963 David Astor made me an offer such as can seldom have been made to any scholar: he gave me an undertaking that if I would resign the professorship which I then held in the University of Durham and devote myself to implementing the suggestion contained in his address, he would see to it that I would not suffer financially. For some weeks I debated with myself whether I could reasonably expect to justify such extraordinary generosity. In the end I decided to accept the offer and the challenge; gave up my appointment at Durham; and set about trying to translate David Astor's suggestion into a concrete institution engaged on a specific programme of research.

The Original Programme of Research

In his address in 1962 David Astor had urged that the political and psychological processes which produced the near-extirmination of people of Jewish descent in Continental Europe - in other words, the preconditions of what nowadays is known as the Holocaust - should be studied not in isolation but along with the preconditions of other similar killings. The suggestion was much to the point but at once evoked the question: which, out of the countless one-sided mass killings that punctuate human history, would most appropriately be compared with the Holocaust?

The Holocaust could not be regarded as simply an expression, however extreme, of inter-ethnic tensions. Only a minute proportion of the Jews killed came from Germany or Austria; the vast majority being taken from the occupied territories by people who had previously had no contact with them whatsoever. Nor was the Holocaust primarily inspired by the utilitarian calculations, so common amongst conquering peoples throughout history, which result in the decimation or extermination of the conquered. The fate of many millions of Russian, Polish and Yugoslav civilians killed in the war might be interpreted in such terms, but not the Holocaust.

During the years 1963 - 1965 I carried out research for, and wrote, a book entitled Warrant for Genocide: the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. There I argued that the plan to kill every single person of Jewish descent could be understood only in terms of an ideological conviction to the effect that such people were, in virtue of their 'blood', united in a conspiracy first to debase and weaken, then to dominate, mankind. After perhaps a hundred hours of discussion with representatives of the most varied disciplines, I came to the conclusion that by far the nearest parallel was presented by the official killings of alleged witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For these killings, which in all claimed some tens of thousands of victims, were inspired by a belief that the 'witches' formed a conspiratorial body devoted to Satan and intent on the ruination of Christendom.

Many other suggestions were considered, only to be abandoned as less appropriate. When I came to give my first lecture in the University of Sussex, in January 1967, I was able to announce that the research which was just then starting up would concentrate on two problems: what were the motivations behind the Holocaust? And what were the motivations behind the great European witch-hunt?

Finance and Organisation

To carry out such a programme it would not have been enough to persuade some publisher to commission a number of books on the Holocaust and on the great witch-hunt. It was necessary to find a number of specialists on the Holocaust and on the witch-hunt who were not only very knowledgeable but who could be persuaded to undertake original research into, and write books on, the problem of motivation. Moreover, those specialists ought to be encouraged to collaborate in the sense of discussing their findings and hypotheses with one another. These requirements made it necessary, firstly, for those engaged on the research to be paid salaries, or given grants, such as would enable them without financial loss to withdraw part of their time from their usual occupations; and, secondly, for the whole enterprise to be given an institutional framework, preferably by affiliation to a university.

Thanks mainly to the enthusiasm and energy of David Astor, the financial requirement was quickly met. By 1966 promises of contributions amounted to £163,000 - at that time of course a far more substantial sum than it would be today - payable over a period of seven years. (A full list of donors is included in the Editorial Foreword to the various volumes which in due course resulted.) These contributions were paid into the Columbus Trust, which was set up, under the chairmanship of Lord Butler, early in 1966.

Affiliation to a university presented no problem. From a very early stage both the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex, John Fulton (now Lord Fulton) and his successor Asa Briggs (now Lord Briggs) had taken a keen interest in the project and shown much goodwill towards it. As early as 1965 the Senate and Council of the University expressed approval of the proposed affiliation; and on 1st October 1966 the Centre came into being as part of the University of Sussex. Originally called the Centre for Research in Collective Psychopathology, it was later given the more neutral name of the Columbus Centre, after the Trust which financed it.

By the time the Centre was set up some highly qualified persons had already agreed to devote a substantial part of their time to carrying out the proposed research. Although they were given appointments in the University, they lived and worked in various parts of Britain and of Continental Europe. This was unavoidable; for their principal appointments or occupations necessitated their presence elsewhere than at the University, and most of them also required constant access to particular libraries and archives. It was however possible to make some return to the University for its sponsorship. The first seven volumes produced by the Centre all bore the imprint of the University Press. Moreover I gave numerous courses of lectures in the University, based on my own research, which at different times ranged over both the topics in the original programme.

Administration was carried on from a small office in London, with the help of an administrative secretary. From time to time the whole international team came together at the University, to compare and discuss findings and hypotheses. In addition, a constant exchange of ideas was carried on by letter and in smaller meetings.

The Authors of the Books Included in the Centre's Original Programme

In each of the two parts of the Centre's original programme, one book was produced by myself. The individuals responsible for producing the other books were selected without advertisement, but after long and exhaustive enquiries, as being the ones best qualified to deal with those particular topics.

That part of the original programme which was concerned with the motivations behind the Holocaust was conceived as consisting of four books, dealing respectively with (1) the ideology of 'Aryan' racial superiority, set in the widest context of European racist thinking; (2) the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy; (3) the functioning of the bureaucratic mentality when faced with the task of organising the Holocaust; (4) the psychology of individuals who took part in the actual killings - to be based on psychiatric interviews with a few individuals who had been sentenced by the German courts for 'crimes against humanity', who were still in prison, and who were willing to be interviewed.

Book (2) was my Warrant for Genocide, mentioned above, which was published shortly after the Centre came into being. The qualifications at that time of those responsible for producing the other books can be gauged from the following summaries:

Book (1). Léon Poliakov. Doctor of History of the Sorbonne; Doctor of Letters. A senior member of staff at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. Participated in the creation of the clandestine Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in 1943 and in its development since the war into one of the greatest collections of documents on the Holocaust. Active in the French Resistance. Expert in attendance at the Nuremberg Trials of the major war criminals. Author of L'Etoile Jaune, Paris 1948; Bréviaire de la Haine, Paris 1951, translations New York, Buenos Aires, Turin, London, 1954 - 1956; Das Dritte Reich und die Juden (with J. Wulf), Berlin 1955, translations Paris and Barcelona 1959; Le Procès de Jérusalem (on Eichmann), Paris 1963; Auschwitz, Paris 1964, Histoire de L'antisémitisme (at that time two volumes published, Paris 1955 and 1961, with translation forthcoming in New York; further volumes and translations since).

Book (3). Wolfgang Scheffler. Graduate and D.Phil. of the Free University, Berlin. After some years on the staffs of the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik, Berlin, and the Otto-Suhr-Institut of the Free University, was by 1966 engaged on research on National Socialist policy towards the Jews, under the auspices of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Had been a member of the German delegation at the Eichmann trial, and was about to become the expert witness for the prosecution in the German trials of war criminals - a function which he has continued to discharge ever since. Author of Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich (Persecution of Jews under the Third Reich), which ran to six editions between 1960 and 1966, and of numerous papers and articles on the same subject, some already then based on extensive archival research.

Book (4) Henry V. Dicks M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P., R.B. Ps.S. At that time and since many years, the senior consultant at the Tavistock Clinic. Previously, Nuffield Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Leeds; Adviser on Psychological Warfare to the War Office and SHAEF; Lt.Col. R.A.M.C.; Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Relations, Harvard; Consultant to the RAND Corporation. Author of Clinical Studies in Psychopathology, London 1939, revised edition 1947, and joint author of The Case of Rudolf Hess, London 1947. Author of papers on Nazi, German and Russian personality-types.

As for the part of the programme which was concerned with the motivations behind the great witch-hunt of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I originally intended to cope with it single-handed. A couple of years' work sufficed to convince me that the subject was too vast for any one scholar. I decided, instead, to produce a wide-ranging survey which would be mainly concerned with the formation of the stereotype of the witch, the fascination which that stereotype exerted, and the way in which criminal law was altered to accommodate it. Meanwhile I would look round for someone who would be willing and able to make a detailed study of the actual operation of witch-hunting in a single area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By 1970 my enquiries had led me to a remarkable thesis on Scottish witchcraft beliefs, which in 1962 had brought its author the degree of Ph.D. at Edinburgh. By 1974 I had persuaded its author, Christina Larnier, to resume research in this field. The Columbus Trust had no more funds available, but fortunately the Social Science Research Council stepped into the breach. After seven years' research a book has just now been completed.

Christina Larner has an unusual combination of qualities. She took First Class Honours in Modern History at Edinburgh; her thesis was on "Continental Influences on Scottish Demonology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries"; her numerous articles and contributions to books include several on the Scottish witch-hunt - yet she has made her career as Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the University of Glasgow. Her book could only have been written by someone who was both a historian and a sociologist.

The books included in the Centre's Original Programme

Except for my Warrant for Genocide, which was finished just before the Centre came into being, all the works produced under the Centre's original programme were published in this country by Chatto - for the Sussex University Press so long as that Press was in existence. In the United States the works so far completed have all been published, as a series, by Basic Books, New York. Particulars of translations are given below, under the separate titles.

I. Works bearing on the motivations behind the Holocaust

1. Léon Poliakov. The Aryan Myth: a history of racist ideas in Europe

This study deals with the long-term ideological preconditions. In a long introductory survey it shows how each major European people has developed a fictitious genealogy, or myth concerning its own origins. It goes on to show how, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the traditional Christian view, which saw the origin of all mankind in Adam, was replaced by a variety of pseudo-scientific theories, all of which treated the European as the norm and coloured peoples as inferior; how this tendency was reinforced by the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages; how in Germany, at the time of the Napoleonic wars, a 'Germanic race' was invented and contrasted with a 'Jewish race'; and how, in the nineteenth century, the doctrine of the superiority of the White man, now called 'Aryan', was reinforced by Social Darwinism. It also points out that responsible scientists were querying the validity of these notions half a century before, under Hitler, political consequences were drawn from them. All through the book, these changing 'scientific' ideas are treated as expressions of collective emotional needs, which in turn reflect changing social and political situations.

The Aryan Myth was originally written in French, and its French version probably made the greatest stir of any of the publications emanating from the Columbus Centre. It was displayed on a massive scale in the windows of Paris booksellers, was discussed on television and radio, and brought its author an award from the Ligue internationale contre le racisme. Some idea of its reception can be gathered from the opening words of a review in Le Monde: "This is a work to read at one go. When you start it, you want to know where the author is going to end. And the ideas link together, analyse one another, fit into one another so well that you are held captive, as by the plot of a detective story. It can never be sufficiently stressed that ideas, great ideas, must and can become as familiar to the man in the street as the spiciest details in the life of a film-star. When you have read Poliakov, the mystery of racism vanishes. The author has used a psychoanalytical approach to unravel the motivations behind the Aryan myth."

Apart from the English translation, The Aryan Myth was translated into German, Italian and Portuguese.

2. Norman Cohn. Warrant for Genocide: the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

After pointing out that already in medieval Christendom Jews were widely regarded as forming a conspiratorial body in the service of Satan, the book shows how this ancient belief reappeared in modernised guise after the French Revolution; how it was embodied in a whole series of forgeries, culminating in the Protocols; how it helped to provoke pogroms during the Russian civil war; how it swept the world in the 1920's; and how, in the 1930's, it provided the ideology for an international movement and prepared the way for the near-extermination of European Jews under the auspices of the Third Reich. The concluding chapter analyses the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy as a form of collective psychopathology which quickly becomes murderous when exploited for political purposes. The intention of the book was to bring into the light of day an aspect of the modern world which, despite its importance, had remained largely unacknowledged.

Warrant for Genocide was published in this country by Eyre & Spottiswoode, and as a paperback by Penguin Books. In the United States it was published by Harper & Row, and gained the Anisfield-Wolf Award for its contribution to the study of 'race relations'. It has been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Hebrew.

3. Wolfgang Scheffler. Provisional title: The Perfection of Chaos

This study, the manuscript of which is not yet to hand, deals with the inner history of the exterminatory 'apparatus' which operated under the Third Reich. While accepting the importance of the ideological preconditions analysed by Léon Poliakov and myself, Wolfgang Scheffler insists that the 'final solution of the Jewish question' cannot be explained simply as the logical consequence of traditional antisemitic doctrines. It was intended to be the first stage in a total reshaping of the population of Europe on 'racial' lines - a policy which Hitler and Himmler intended to carry on after the war had been won. Moreover 'the final solution' was a huge administrative operation in which not simply the party organisations but the ordinary state bureaucracy co-operated. This co-operation was given willingly; and its psychological basis lay in a specific kind of relationship between the individual and the state, which in turn reflected the highly authoritarian structure of German society. The argument rests on massive research on unpublished archival material - whereas previous studies in this field have relied on published material, e.g. the proceedings of the Nuremberg trials.

4. Henry Dicks. Licensed Mass Murder: a socio-psychological study of some SS killers

This study presents observations and inferences based on interviews with a small sample of former members of the SS concentration camp personnel, Gestapo units, etc., convicted of crimes against humanity. It includes the life-stories and psychological profiles of the individuals interviewed, and aims at (a) identifying personality traits correlated with the scales for measuring degrees of Nazi fanaticism which were devised, during the war, on the basis of interviews with German prisoners of war; and (b) discovering what inner and external forces impelled these particular people to carry out these particular roles. The evidence assembled suggests that neither fanaticism nor identifiable psychiatric disorders were crucial. These people turned out to be mostly weak-egoed, emotionally deprived individuals. When they were acting

their SS roles, and were supported by group sanctions favouring conformity and unquestioning obedience, their secret resentment broke surface, causing them to abrogate their earlier levels of 'civilised' behaviour.

Licensed Mass Murder was very widely and favourably reviewed, not only in psychiatric journals but in the press. Stuart Hampshire, writing in The Observer, expressed what seems to be the general view: "Dr. Dicks is in command both of the case material and of the relevant theoretical literature. His book must become a standard source and a standard authority."

Licensed Mass Murder has been translated into French and Italian.

II. Works bearing on the motivations behind the great European witch-hunt.

1. Norman Cohn. Europe's Inner Demons: an enquiry inspired by the great witch-hunt.

This study deals with the history of a stereotype. Accusations of child-eating and promiscuous orgies have been levelled against minority groups many times in the course of European history. Such charges were made against Christians in the second century, and they were also made, along with charges of Devil-worship, against various heretical sects as well as the Knights Templar in the later middle ages. After tracing the early history of the stereotype, the book goes on to show how, at the close of the middle ages, it contributed to a new notion - that of a secret organisation of witches, with periodical 'sabbats'. The book also shows that there are no serious grounds for thinking that any organisation of witches really existed, let alone that it was a survival from an ancient, pagan religion. But nor was the witches' organisation an invention of fourteenth-century inquisitors: that notion is disproved by the unmasking of a number of previously undetected forgeries. The book argues, instead, that the notion of 'demonic' witchcraft was created and propagated by members of the upper strata of society at the very end of the middle ages and in the early modern period. The question of why it was created and propagated is taken up by Christina Larner in her book.

Europe's Inner Demons has been translated into French, Spanish and Japanese.

2. Christina Larner. Enemies of God: the witch-hunt in Scotland

This is a minutely documented study, based on archival research, of the witch-hunt in Scotland, which was concentrated in the period 1590 - 1700. It covers the rise and fall of judicial activity under which more than a thousand individuals, mostly peasant women, were executed for witchcraft and three times that number accused. It analyses the position of accuser and accused in the social structure, with particular reference to the position of women; the content and meaning of the system of belief; and the function of witch-hunting as a way of controlling society. It also deals with the relationship of witch-hunting in Scotland to the witch-hunt in continental Europe; and with the relationship of Scottish witch-beliefs to the witch-beliefs of other cultures. It suggests that the overall explanation for the European witch-hunt (of which the Scottish witch-hunt was an integral part) was that the new regimes of early modern Europe demanded a much higher level of conscious ideological conformity from the ordinary populace than did the old diffused authorities of medieval papacy and monarchy. Orthodoxy was important to these regimes because it implied acceptance of their own legitimacy. The (imaginary) crime of witchcraft

represented a total rejection of orthodoxy, a suspected witch represented the concentrated essence of every form of deviance and dissent. The pursuit of witches was therefore a most economical way by which a new-type regime could demonstrate its control over the populace.

Enemies of God is finished but has not yet been published. Although it cannot appear as formally part of the Centre's series, it is to be published by the publishers of that series, Chatto, and is to carry on introduction by me, linking it with the Centre's work.

The works listed above represent the Centre's attempt to cope with its original programme. But additional explorations were undertaken - in various directions, but always in conformity with the purpose for which the Columbus Trust and the Columbus Centre had been established.

"The pathological possibilities of the normal mind"

In his address in 1962 David Astor stressed that the Holocaust was carried out, at all levels, by people who were not at all mad in the medical sense; and suggested that what here became manifest was "the pathological possibilities of the normal mind." This view has been fully confirmed by the findings of Henry Dicks and Wolfgang Scheffler, as will be apparent from the foregoing descriptions of their books. Nor does Christina Lerner's work suggest that the people who carried out the great European witch-hunt were in the least insane. Moreover, the work of Dicks, Scheffler and Lerner taken together throws considerable light on the nature of those "pathological possibilities of the humand mind" that found expresssion in those great killings.

That light is however oblique; inevitably so, since neither Dicks nor Scheffler nor Lerner was called upon to make general statements about human nature and its potentialities. But from the very start of the project I hoped that it might be practicable to apply the accumulated insights of almost a century of social psychology and of dynamic psychology to this central problem. In my introductory lecture at Sussex I mentioned the possibility that, amongst the volumes to be produced by the Centre, one might consist of papers, written from diverse standpoints, on those features of human psychology which make it so easy for ordinary people, in certain circumstances, to behave with the utmost cruelty.

My first effort in that direction met with very limited success. Although a small group of highly qualified individuals did indeed hold many discussions, under the Centre's auspices, for a couple of years, in the end only one of those individuals felt able to put anything down in writing. Unsupported by any of the expected papers on the societal aspect of the matter, Dr. Anthony Storr's little book Human Destructiveness could make only a minor contribution to the purposes of the project. However, so far as it goes it does tend to confirm the findings of Dicks, Scheffler and Lerner. For, writing as a psychiatrist, Storr argues that cruelty is likely to be exercised above all by persons of a paranoid character; and considers the possibility that a latent paranoid character structure is a consequence of the biological peculiarities of man, and that the potentiality for cruel behaviour is therefore quasi-universal. Despite some misgivings (fully shared by Storr himself) I accordingly decided to accept the book for publication in the Centre's series; a decision which its immediate translation into French, Italian and Spanish suggests to have been

the right one.

A second effort was much more successful. As early as 1966 the Trustees had, on my recommendation, make a grant of £7,000 to Professor Nevitt Sanford, then at Stanford University, California, to encourage him to launch, in the United States, an extension of the project then being undertaken at the Centre. The many long conversations which Sanford and I had, some at Stanford, others in London, and the many letters and memoranda we exchanged, resulted in the publication in 1971 of a 400-page volume entitled Sanctions for Evil: sources of social destructiveness (a copy of which was sent to each Trustee at the time.) The book consists of eighteen chapters by leading American sociologists, psychiatrists, psychologists and political theorists. Its main concern is with the socio-psychological process by which a group, acting with the sanction of higher authority, can come to see a specific category of human beings as less than human, and so fair game for any form of cruelty, up to and including extermination. Although not all the chapters are equally valuable, and although the then dominant American preoccupation - with the war in Vietnam - is perhaps unduly obtrusive, the work as a whole does come nearer than any other known to me to defining "the pathological possibilities of the normal mind." Indeed, to judge by the frequency with which I see it referred to, it would seem to have established itself as the standard work on that subject.

Extension of the project into the field of inter-ethnic relations

At no time was the scope of the project limited in principle to the motivations behind huge killings, such as the Holocaust and the great witch-hunt - on the contrary.

Shortly after delivering his address in 1962 David Astor produced a memorandum entitled 'Project for a study of social and political psychopathology', in which he suggested that three studies should be undertaken. One study was to be concerned with the motivations behind the exterminations carried out under the Third Reich, another was to be concerned with an analogous case taken from past history - desiderata which were taken into account in the planning of the Centre's original programme. The third study, on the other hand, was to concentrate on a current situation; and here "smaller scale situations which produce racial and religious persecution" were expressly mentioned as possible subjects for investigation.

As a historian, I naturally began by reflecting on the possible origins of certain situations which in the present-day world make for religious or racial persecution. Which amongst such situations, I wondered, would best lend themselves to a historical approach? In this matter I was assisted by a couple of fortunate accidents. Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon were engaged in producing a history of the Gypsies in Europe; and having exhausted a research grant from the Institute of Contemporary History, they turned to me for advice. On my recommendation the Columbus Trust awarded them a grant of £800, on condition that the Centre would have the option of publishing their book in its series. It proved an excellent investment.

The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies, which is largely based on unpublished material, was the first scholarly history of the Gypsies viewed as a minority. It concentrates on the changing relations of Gypsy and Gajo (i.e. non-Gypsy). After dealing briefly with the Indian origins of the Gypsies and their arrival via the Middle East in eastern and western Europe, it considers in more detail their fate in various parts of Europe from 1300 to 1930, from 1930 to 1945, and since 1945. It describes the fluctuations of official policy, from expulsion to extermination, from attempts at control to attempts at assimilation. It also describes the varieties of popular beliefs about Gypsies, which have ranged from defamation to idealisation. Nor are the changing attitudes of Gypsies to their host communities neglected.

In the spectrum of the Centre's publications, The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies bridges the gap between the works dealing with situations making for persecution and the works dealing with the Holocaust. For while four of its chapters are devoted to the usual situation of the Gypsies in Europe, as a conspicuous minority which is frequently an object of harassment, five chapters deal with their fate in the Nazi period, when over a quarter of a million Gypsies were killed - at the same time, and in the same ways, as the Jews.

The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies was also published in the United States, and was translated into French, Italian and Spanish. It is at present being translated into German.

It was also chance that brought Albie Sachs to the Centre. A man of mature years, and a former advocate of the Supreme Court of South Africa, Mr. Sachs was at work on a Ph.D. thesis for the University of Sussex, and I was appointed as a supervisor. By the time the thesis was finished, Mr. Sachs felt that it owed a good deal to the interdisciplinary habit of mind which had developed at the Centre; while I felt that it would be wholly appropriate that a book based on the thesis should appear under the Centre's auspices. The resulting book, Justice in South Africa, was the fruit of five years' work; and it cost the Columbus Trust nothing at all.

South Africa is unique in being the one country in which racial discrimination is still openly supported by the government and expressly written into the laws. Justice in South Africa deals with the role of the courts in enforcing such laws. It begins with an analysis of the system of justice in the poorly developed Dutch slave-holding settlement of the seventeenth century, and ends with a discussion of the responsibility of the judges for the implementation of apartheid laws in the highly industrialised modern state. One of the book's main themes is the manner in which the courts have attempted to reconcile the common law theory of equality with the practice of racial inequality. Another is the extent to which industrialisation has intensified rather than reduced legal segregation. Other subjects discussed are torture, the formation of race attitudes, and traditional African adjudication.

Justice in South Africa was also published in the United States.

Extension of the project to embrace field-work in inter-ethnic relations

Situations productive of persecutions could not, of course, be adequately understood in historical terms alone.

Already when the Columbus Centre first came into being, it was taken for granted that it ought to sponsor field-work on inter-ethnic relations (commonly, though inaccurately, called 'race relations'). At first it was hoped that Professor Nevitt Sanford would be able to organise field-work on relations between 'Whites' and 'Blacks' in the United States; but it soon became apparent that the time when such a study would have been feasible in that country was already past, and that the grant which the Trust had made Nevitt Sanford could more profitably be used for other purposes (see above). So the question arose whether the Centre itself should undertake a programme of field-work. At the Meetings of Trustees in May and September 1967, in the very first year of the Centre's existence, some Trustees argued that it should. This raised dilemmas which I had never foreseen. On the one hand I was of course totally unqualified to plan or organise field-work. On the other hand, I could not but sympathise with the wish expressed by several Trustees that the Centre should give some attention to the threatening tensions in present-day Britain, and not confine itself to the irremediable catastrophes of the past.

By October 1968, when the original programme was well on its way to completion, I had found a way of resolving this dilemma. If I felt able to recommend to the Management Committee and to the Trustees that the Centre should indeed embark on field-work in inter-ethnic relations in this country, that was because I had once again had the good fortune to find individuals who possessed, in high measure, the qualifications I lacked. Miss Pearl King, a psychoanalyst and social psychologist who had been associated with the Centre in an advisory capacity ever since its inception, made a careful study of the research that had already been carried out, and the publications which already existed, in the field of race relations. As a result, by May 1969 I was able to report that, despite all the work that had been done, a major gap remained: little or no attention had been given to the psychological and psycho-dynamic dimension in 'race relations'; the anxieties aroused in situations of inter-ethnic tension, and the ways in which people defended themselves against those anxieties, had not been explored. It seemed clear, too, that research designed to fill this gap would be fully in accord with the purposes of the Trust and of the Centre.

Already in May 1969 a draft plan of research submitted by Pearl King was favourably received by the Management Committee and the Trustees. During the following months the plan was extensively revised in consultation with Professor Marie Jahoda. Professor Jahoda, who is perhaps the most eminent social psychologist in the country, and certainly the one most at home with dynamic psychology, had also been associated with the Centre ever since its inception, as a member both of the Management Committee and of the Academic Advisory Committee. It was largely thanks to her exceptional experience in the relevant field of research, and to the generosity with which she gave of her time and energy, that the version of the plan which was submitted to the Management and the Trustees in October 1969 was of such outstanding quality.

It is true that, compared with the historical research embodied in the Centre's original programme, the research now proposed seemed modest in scope. But if the insights of dynamic psychology are to be applied to social problems with the aim of producing convincing and verifiable findings, and not merely general hypotheses however stimulating, it can only be done through prolonged contact with particular individuals. This means that any research planned with this aim in mind must of necessity be small-scale. Certainly the programme designed by Marie Jahoda and Pearl King offered the possibility of bringing the insights of dynamic psychology to bear, in a far more empirical fashion than was possible in any other part of the Centre's work, on a specific problem which is not only of great interest but of great practical importance for the present and the future.

The carrying out of the programme, however, brought great problems. The programme was planned to extend over three years, two of which were to be devoted to field-work, one to analysing and writing up the results. According to the estimates which I submitted to the Trustees in October 1969, the cost would be £35,000 more than what the Trust had at its disposal. On the strength of advice which they had received from other quarters, some of the Trustees were confident that this sum could be raised. Indeed, the atmosphere at the Meeting in October 1969 was so optimistic that further possible extensions of the project, into field-work on Gypsy-non-Gypsy relations and even into field-work in Northern Ireland, were discussed at some length - even though such extensions would have necessitated the appointment of still more new staff, including (as I pointed out) an additional Director with qualifications quite different from my own.

Meanwhile I was faced with a specific and unavoidable obligation: I had to decide whether to proceed with the appointment of staff for the programme which was already prepared. Despite the prevailing optimism, I should have preferred to wait and see - if it had not been that by doing so I would have lost the services of Dr. Rae Sherwood, an experienced social psychologist who combined a psycho-dynamic orientation with a keen interest in inter-ethnic relations, and who had held senior positions at the universities of the Witwatersrand, Harvard and Brunel. Such people are not easily come by. So on consideration I decided to proceed with staffing - though naturally I saw to it that all appointments were made for a single year in the first instance.

In the event, hardly any funds were forthcoming. The Social Science Research Council, after greeting a first application for a grant, in April 1970, in a most encouraging manner, and merely suggesting a reduction in the scale of the programme, rejected out of hand a second application in the following October, when the reduction had duly been made. Nor was the Trust able to raise anything from any other quarter in the year between my submission of estimates and the date when field-work was due to begin (September 1969 - September 1970). The appointment, in May 1970, of an additional Trustee for the special purpose of fund-raising was also of no avail. The one and only contribution was received later: in response to an initiative by David Astor, a grant of £3,700 was made by an American foundation in August 1971. It was used to prolong the appointment of Rae Sherwood, at the time when she was beginning to write up the results.

The situation when field-work began, in October 1970, was grim. First the two-year programme of field-work had to be reduced to a six-month programme - no easy matter in itself. And even when that was achieved, the new members of staff who had been appointed to carry it out were bound to feel both disappointed

and insecure. The result could easily have been a fiasco. That nothing of the kind happened is due above all to the extraordinary devotion of Rae Sherwood, who not only organised and supervised the field-work and did much of it herself, and encouraged and inspired her colleagues, but also continued to work at writing up the results for some seven years after she had ceased to draw any salary. And I must also - not for the first time - pay tribute to the combination of enthusiasm, technical skill and human understanding which Dr. Robert Gosling brought to his task as chairman of the committee appointed to advise and assist Rae Sherwood.

The results of these labours are embodied in a 600-page book by Rae Sherwood, entitled The Psycho-dynamics of Race: vicious and benign spirals, which was published in the summer of 1980 by the Harvester Press in this country, and in the United States by the Humanities Press, New Jersey; with an editorial foreword by me, linking it with the Columbus Trust and the Columbus Centre, and a more widely ranging introduction by Dr. Gosling. This study explores in depth how people of three different races, sharing a common neighbourhood, come to feel about each other both consciously and unconsciously; and reveals how emotional interactions between the three groups constantly change and develop. The method involves a detailed analysis of unstructured life-history interviews with members of each group. The analysis focuses on unresolved identity conflicts, and shows how these can express themselves in hostility towards members of racial outgroups. This hostility in turn can affect any unresolved identity conflicts there may be within the group against which it is directed; and these intensified conflicts, again, can express themselves in hostility towards racial out-groups. In a final chapter Rae Sherwood builds a theoretical model in the shape of a spiral. The model shows how identity conflicts, in interaction with other important factors, such as social ideology, social change and social stability, can move the spiral in either a vicious or a benign direction. The model is in fact an interdisciplinary one, in that it relates psychodynamic and psychological processes to the social and cultural environment.

The quality of The Psycho-dynamics of Race can be gauged from what Marie Jahoda wrote about it after reading the completed manuscript: "Not since Dollard published his classic forty years ago has anybody else dared to take the full experience of being black or white in a mixed society so seriously The case study material is brilliantly presented ... I regard it as a great achievement that (Rae Sherwood) has been able to write a scientific book without violating the totality of human experience, or her own humanity. The book deserves to be read widely both by the social science community and by the concerned public." Such praise, coming from such a source, certainly suggests that the second part of the Centre's work has been carried out no less successfully than the first.

Misfortunes, uncertainties, bonuses, and the final balance

It was not to be expected that so wide-ranging a project, involving so many individuals, and continuing over several years, could be carried through without mishap. It would be inappropriate, in a non-confidential document, to go into details. The Trustees may however remember, from the reports which I made at the time, that one member of staff found himself unable to complete his book for emotional reasons - reasons which an ad hoc committee appointed by the Trustees accepted as compelling; and that another member of staff was struck down by an incapacitating illness, with the research done but no manuscript to

hand. Fortunately, neither of the books concerned was essential to the project. Moreover, in the second case the material assembled proved useful to other members of the staff.

One contribution of vital importance - Wolfgang Scheffler's study of the exterminatory 'apparatus' which operated under the Third Reich - is still expected. As things stand at present, the completed manuscript is promised for early in 1981.

Against these misfortunes and uncertainties must be set the fact that three works which were either wholly or predominantly financed from sources other than the Columbus Trust would certainly not have existed in their present form if the Columbus Centre had not existed. And one of those books - that by Christina Lerner - makes not just a contribution but a most important contribution to the Centre's original programme.

It therefore seems fair to say that on balance - and assuming that Wolfgang Scheffler does indeed deliver a completed manuscript - the Centre will have achieved decidedly more than it would have achieved if things had merely gone according to plan in every respect. It will also have carried out, within the limits imposed by financial considerations, a three-part programme of precisely the kind suggested by David Astor in his memorandum 'Project for the study of social and political psychopathology'.

As for the book on which I myself have been engaged since 1974, and on which I have reported in some detail in my annual reports to the Trustees - I can only repeat that I am resolved, given health and strength, to complete it after my retirement. David Astor and the Wolfson Foundation have enabled me to persevere with it so far. I hope and believe that when it is completed, it will be considered to have justified their generosity.

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Norman Cohn