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CULTURAL RELATIONS

INTER-NATIONAL AND INTRA-NATIONAL

It would be difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of the amount of time, energy and resources that have been devoted in recent years to the development of cultural relations among nation-states. Every large nation, — (and some smaller ones as well) — has something in the nature of a Department of Cultural Affairs, devoted to disseminating a favorable national image and winning the friendship of other peoples. The programs involved may include exchange of persons, such as fellowships for students, invitations to visiting professors, visits from specialized groups such as trade union leaders; information campaigns through radio broadcasts and publications; concerts and artistic exhibitions; economic cooperation; athletic contests, etc. At the international level the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, particularly UNESCO, engage in comparable activities. A major goal of such programs is to bring peoples closer together and encourage cooperation and understanding.

It is not usually realized that, within a nation, there may be similar problems of misunderstanding and hostility that might benefit from comparable programs, and it is only rarely that we find social scientists within a country showing sufficient concern for problems of intra-national understanding. There are a few exceptions; the United States, for example, with its emphasis on the relations between whites and blacks; or Canada, concerned with the conflict between the French and English speaking populations, particularly in the Province of Quebec. It is remarkable how little is known about the attitudes toward one another of the various sub-groups which constitute many contemporary nations.

Toward the end of 1965 we conducted a survey of the reactions of students in six African countries (Ethiopia, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Zaire — then known as Congo-Kinshasa). We were primarily interested in what we called the "social identity" of the students, and in the relative importance of tribal as compared with national identity. One of our items read as follows: "Please state briefly your opinion about relations between ethnic groups in your country today". We found striking differences among our various samples; at one extreme only 22% of the Ghanians considered that there were serious inter-ethnic tensions in their country, whereas as many as 92% of the Nigerian students expressed this opinion. It was not very much later that the Nigerian civil war broke out, and one may legitimately wonder whether something useful might have been accomplished if the Nigerian authorities had known and acted upon such information. (Otto Klineberg and Manisa Zavalloni, *Nationalism and Tribalism among African Students: A Study of Social Identity*. Paris: Mouton, 1969).

There are obviously many nation-states which might be described as "pluralistic" in character and in which ethnic conflict has occurred or is occurring, although the lines of demarcation are drawn in a variety of ways. Race or inherited physical appearance plays the dominant role in the United States, and even more markedly in Rhodesia and South Africa; language in Canada and Belgium; religion in Northern Ireland and on the Indian sub-continent (with linguistic factors entering as well); cultural background in Israel; regional differences between north and south in Italy. Although it would be presumptuous on my part to attempt any description of the situation in Yugoslavia, I suppose it would be safe to say that historical factors, supplemented by differences in language, economics, and to some extent religion, enter into the picture.

If it is true that with few exceptions more attention has been paid, both by governments and by social scientists, to international than to intra-national affairs, it might be of interest to raise the question as to whether anything can be learned from the one area which may be of relevance to the other. From the psychological, if not from the political point of view, they are in fact difficult to separate. A great many investigations (notably T. W. Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1950) have demonstrated that in general those individuals who are prejudiced against other ethnic groups in their own community also tend to dislike foreigners, and vice

versa; excessive nationalism or chauvinism is associated with ethnocentrism. One is reminded of a cartoon which appeared some years ago in an American humorous magazine, in which a man in a bar, who has evidently had too much to drink, declares in a loud voice: "I hate everybody, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin". Keeping in mind, therefore, the interdependence between pluralism within a country and relations between countries, the attempt will now be made to review briefly some of the considerations which seem most pertinent. I must add that I am writing as a social psychologist, with full recognition of the fact that there are important political, economic and historical aspects of this issue which should also be included, but which are unfortunately outside my own field of competence.

The development of effective and satisfactory cultural relations between different groups of people, both within and outside national boundaries, is complicated by a number of factors. Most of us, for example, have an immediately favorable reaction to the idea of exchange of persons, and particularly to studies abroad as contributing to international understanding. Recently some scepticism has been expressed, since the desired result is not always obtained. Some students return from their foreign sojourn disappointed and unhappy. This may be due to "culture shock", the inability to adjust to the new cultural situation, in part at least as a consequence of lack of knowledge as to what to expect; to the prejudice or "racism" encountered; to the lack of real, interpersonal contacts with people from the host country; to the low status occasionally ascribed to their country of origin; to academic failure, etc. (See I. Eide, editor, *Students as Links between Cultures*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1970). In our own recent study, however, of students from the developing countries attending European universities (O. Klineberg & J. Ben Brika, in press), we found that the large majority of the students interviewed *were* satisfied with their experience, and pleased that they had been able to spend some time abroad. Although it is difficult and dangerous to generalize, we do have reason to believe that the increased emphasis being placed in many countries on international university exchanges is indeed justified.

What about exchanges *within* a pluralistic society? One has the impression that this has so far been left largely to chance, although there may of course be programs in this field with which I am unfamiliar. If international cultural exchange is important, surely intra-national cultural contact may be equally so. The presence

of English-speaking Canadians at the universities of Laval or Montreal; of Sicilians in Turin or Milanese in Palermo; of Montenegrins in Zagreb or Belgrade; of Genevois in Zurich or Tamils in Delhi, should receive the same attention as is given to Iranians at the Sorbonne or Americans at the London School of Economics. These students may also have to face similar problems, although probably to a lesser degree; culture shock, prejudice, degree of contact with "others", and the nature of the academic experience, will exert their influence in the intra-national context as well, and may determine whether cultural relations within states will indeed prepare the way for better human relations.

Ideas about other nations or ethnic groups, in the absence of real information, may take the form of stereotypes, "pictures in our heads", generalizations based on what we have heard others say. One of the earliest of UNESCO's programs included enquiries into "the ideas which the people of one nation hold concerning their own and other nations", in the hope that as a consequence the tendency to think in terms of stereotypes might be reduced. Research in this field has dealt simultaneously with the stereotypes referring to other nations and also to minority groups within the same country. One of the very first empirical studies (Katz & Braly, 1933) reported on the stereotypes held by American students with regard to groups like the English, Italians, Chinese on the one hand, and Jews and Negroes on the other. The French have expressions and anecdotes referring to the stinginess of the Auvergnat, the laziness of the Corsican, the unreliability of the Gascon. In all these cases judgments are made on the basis of what one has heard, what people say; behavior in relation to other groups may be influenced as a result.

It has frequently been argued that stereotypes are not the causes but the consequences of intergroup relations; when the general situation is friendly and favorable, the stereotype will be positive, and in the opposite situation, negative. There is a good deal of evidence in favor of this position, but it can also be demonstrated that once the stereotype has developed, it may have a definite effect; in other words, the causal relation is a circular one. In a study conducted in Montreal, Canada, by W. Lambert of the English-speaking McGill University, students were asked to judge character and intelligence from the sound of the voice. The results showed that those who spoke in French (Canadian) were usually judged to be inferior to those who spoke in English. Actually, although this was of course not known by the students, the same bilingual

speakers were heard in both languages. It seems highly probable that the stereotype of the inferiority of the French Canadians was the consequence of generally inferior social and economic status, but at the same time it did affect the perceptions of the judges, and presumably their attitudes and actions as well. It is reasonable to conclude that such a stereotype plays a part in determining the relations between French and English speaking Canadians at the present time. I shall have to leave it to others to decide whether something similar may be found in the pluralistic society of Yugoslavia.

There appears to be no doubt that the mass media of any particular country (newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, cinema) frequently exert an important influence on the content of a particular stereotype, and its diffusion throughout the general population. An especially influential role is played by children's textbooks in history and geography. Content analysis of such texts has shown how frequently and how consistently "facts" are presented which glorify one's own people at the expense of others. One study (by Walworth in 1938) examined the treatment of the same wars and battles by American historians and by those of former enemy countries, including Great Britain, Canada, Spain, Mexico and Germany. The authors in all countries are in substantial agreement that their own leaders were honorable and their soldiers noble and courageous; when defeated, it was because of the overwhelming force of the enemy; whatever his identity, the enemy was usually seen as treacherous and cowardly, and one's own army and people as heroic and just. There has been some improvement in the writing of history since this study was conducted, but all too frequently the situation remains essentially unchanged.

It is clear that this problem may be of considerable importance in a pluralistic society as well as in the field of international relations, since in many cases such a society is composed of former "enemies". The handling in school texts of American Indians in Canadian or American history; of Spaniards and Aztecs in Mexico; of the Scots, Welsh and Irish in Britain; of the Chinese in Malaysia; of the British and French in Canada, may create a lasting effect on impressionable young minds. With regard to the last example, it should be added that history is taught differently in the schools within the Province of Quebec depending on whether the books are written in French or in English!

The interpretation of the history of one's own nation or ethnic group is part of a wider ten-

dency which has been labeled "ethnocentric perception". The phenomenon of patriotism too often takes the form of seeing the world from the standpoint of our own national identity, which becomes the measure of all things. It goes farther than "my nation, right or wrong", insisting that if it is *my* nation, it *must* be right. The very same behavior is interpreted differently depending on its origin. *We* help others because we are humanitarian; *they* help others in order to obtain political advantage. *We* build up our armaments for defensive purposes only; *they*, because they are planning an attack. It has been said that from the psychological point of view there have never been any offensive wars, since war is always represented to the people as defence against the aggression of others. The very language we use reflects this tendency. *Our* soldiers fight bravely, *theirs* fight like fanatics; *our* resistance is conducted by patriots and freedom fighters, *theirs* by terrorists. As Pascal expressed it "Vérité en deça des Pyrénées, erreur au delà"; truth on one side of the Pyrenees, error on the other. One of the most difficult attitudes to accept and adopt is that of *empathy*, the capacity to put ourselves in another's place, to see the world as he sees it — not necessarily to adopt *his* position, but at least to sense it and understand it.

The pluralistic society, divided by language, religion, race, culture, national origin or any combination of these, has its own symbolic Pyrenees. The acceptance of others on their own terms, with respect for their values, their traditions, their way of life, is a relatively rare occurrence; they should really be like us and follow our good example! This widespread attitude represents one of the most insurmountable obstacles to cultural relations on a basis of equality both between and within nation-states. George Bernard Shaw made a remark which is relevant in this connection, and which cannot be repeated too often. The Golden Rule, he said, should be revised to read: "Do *not* do unto others as you would they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same". It is precisely this recognition of the "tastes" of others which is a prerequisite to the establishment of a truly pluralistic society. There will obviously have to be some degree of conformity or unity within the nation-state, but this should be kept within limits which permit variations in culture for those who wish to retain and maintain their own cultural identity. Many groups are now facing this problem. The most recent example is that of American Negroes (or blacks), many of whom are insisting on the need to preserve a distinctive Afro-American culture. In this case it is difficult to determine the precise character of such a culture, and the differences in emp-

hasis found within the black community itself in this respect make the outcome of the movement unpredictable at the present time.

In theory, at least, many nation-states have accepted the idea of a pluralistic society. In the case of the United States, for example, one sociologist (M. M. Gordon. *Assimilation in American Life*. New York: Oxford, 1964) distinguishes three approaches to the complexity of American ethnic structure, particularly as it applies to the attitude toward immigrant groups. The first, which he calls *Anglo-conformity*, would demand "the complete renunciation of the immigrant's ancestral heritage in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group"; the second, the *melting-pot* idea, would envisage "a biological merger of the Anglo-Saxon people with other immigrant groups and a blending of their respective cultures with a new indigenous American type"; the third, *cultural pluralism*, seeks "the preservation of the communal life and significant portions of the culture of the later immigrant groups within the context of American citizenship and political and economic integration into American society". The last is regarded as the ideal toward which society is, or should be, moving.

The realization of such a pluralistic society in a healthy manner, free of prejudice and exploitation, depends on the full acceptance of pluralism by all the component ethnic groups. When a particular language or religion is considered a badge of inferiority in a hierarchical system, cultural pluralism becomes an excuse for conflict. Switzerland appears to be one of the few countries in which diversity in language and other characteristics coexists with substantial and practical equality of status. Just as many organizations (UNESCO, for example) have developed cultural and educational programs for the improvement of relations among nation-states, those nation-states themselves — governments, institutions, universities and individuals — might raise the question as to what programs might be directed to the improvement of relations among the ethnic groups within their own borders. Mention has already been made of some of the barriers to such improvement; stereotypes, ethnocentric perception, the role of the mass media, the kind of history which is taught in the schools, etc. The very listing of such factors indicates the direction which should be followed by programs designed to bring about improvement. A few additional points might be kept in mind.

There has been considerable agreement about the role played by information in improving intergroup attitudes. Many years ago it was demonstrated that when a series of radio broad-

casts entitled "Americans all; immigrants all" were designed to acquaint Americans with the contributions made by various ethnic groups, most people listened to what was said about their own group, and ignored all the others. On the other hand, school or college courses dealing with intergroup relations did have a positive effect in the majority of cases, presumably because students represent a "captive audience" who were not in a position to turn off their radios or change to another program. In any case, information about other ethnic groups represents the first essential step in the replacement of stereotypes by more accurate knowledge.

Mention has already been made of international cultural relations which take the form of contact through exchange of students and professors; it was suggested that more attention be given to such exchanges within the same nation. Contact in general is now regarded by most psychologists as an effective means of attitude change, particularly if the three following conditions are fulfilled. First, it must be equal-status contact; no amount of contact will help if it reinforces the hierarchical notion of superior and inferior groups. Second, it should last as long as possible. Finally, it will have its greatest impact when the two groups concerned depend upon one another, when the aims of both can best be attained through cooperation, when neither can succeed without the help of the other. (SHERIF has referred to "superordinate goals" in this connection). It is partly with this in mind that so many people have urged that the United States and the Soviet Union engage in cooperative space exploration instead of carrying out separate and competing programs. It should be a little less difficult to devise such "superordinate goals" within national boundaries.

In a volume prepared for UNESCO by two anthropologists (C. Wagley and M. Harris, *Minorities in the New World*. New York: Columbia Press, 1958) it is pointed out that it is only in relatively simple "primitive" communities that we find anything like ethnic homogeneity. People who live in modern states often act as if they were like a primitive tribe, believing that they ought to consist of a single physical or cultural type. Contemporary nation-states, however, are not homogeneous. The knowledge that at least some degree of cultural heterogeneity is a universal modern phenomenon may aid in persuading people to accept, and even to welcome, pluralism in their society.