

Blacks and Jews Asunder?

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When leaders of a privileged class and leaders of a disprivileged mass get together, that is the time to watch out. That is the historic intermarriage which can spawn a political movement of repression and bigotry. There was just such an arrangement for a while in the 1920s between respectable Republican leaders and working class KKK followers: it led to racist legislation.

Some of the events and rhetoric that followed the Andrew Young resignation set up grounds for the same kind of dangerous design. Some black leaders were playing the game of the oil company elite and the white White House. Jewry was the live target that served that objective alliance in a classic pattern of ideological anti-Semitism.

Many Jews were shaken. Something seemed to have fundamentally shifted on the American scene. What had finally happened to the old "coalition"? By what process had it turned into such outright hostility? What strategy was to replace it? What new dangers lay ahead? In this watershed, the answers to these questions are more than normally important — and require a backward look at the relationships between the blacks and the Jews over the last half-century, a prime case-history in American intergroup relations.

There is a legend — a Grand Coalition among disadvantaged and mutually sympathetic groups in America that started in the early 1930s, helped bring the country to new plateaus of social progress, and came to an untimely end in the late 1960s, or, for some late-bloomers, in August, 1979. The blacks and the Jews were not the whole of that legendary coalition by any means, but they were at its symbolic center. Now, the legend continues, the blacks and Jews are at loggerheads, a falling-out that symbolizes the break-up of that coalition.

This legend, as usual, contains some truths and some distortions. Scrutiny of the legend amounts to scrutiny of differences between the 1930s and the 1970s — and the difference between both of them and the 1950s. It also touches on the nature and utility of political coalitions in general.

Coalitions can be based, most strongly, on common interests, even where there are different motivational origins; or, less strongly, on *quid-pro-quo* arrangements, where there is general compatibility. Within a stabilized union of disparate groups, there are often shifting coalitions — and, indeed, states of detente.

But all states of political friendship start with this premise: political relationships among disparate groups are based on self-interest. That is not a cynical statement, nor even just a realistic one; it is a statement of the ideal. The principle of self-interest is central to a democratic society; it distinguishes a democratic society from an undemocratic society. The principle of self-interest distinguishes a society in which people decide what is best for them, as distinct from letting ideologues or experts decide what is in everybody's best interest. The latter is the principle of "the general will of the people," as beneficently proclaimed by visionaries like Rousseau, Lenin, and Hitler.

For a coalition to exist certain areas of group self-interest must coincide significantly. That was the case in the early 1930s for the blacks and the Jews. In 1933, both were economically disadvantaged groups. The Jewish experience was still dominantly an immigrant experience. In 1905, Peter Wiernick, editorial writer of the *Jewish Morning Journal* of New York City, wrote: "The truth is that 85 or 90 percent of the Russian Jews are so much below everything we know here that we would have to go to the Southern Negro for a familiar example. . . ." The Jews were an economic under-class not only because of their background, but because of discriminatory bars. Job ads read "Gentiles Only" just to make sure. It wasn't even necessary for the ads to say "Whites Only."

The common cause was primarily economic: to break down the barriers of "economic royalism," as Roosevelt called it; to get a piece of the apple pie; to assure a measure of economic security. This was the basis of the FDR coalition. The labor, black, and Jewish communities were highly visible elements of that coalition.

The membership of organized labor grew from less than three million to over eight million between 1933 and 1940, with the help of that political coalition and the laws and climate that it promulgated. Many of the skilled crafts unions rigorously excluded blacks, but some of the large new industrial unions, such as the steel workers and the auto workers, provided a first mass entry into the labor movement for blacks. The public works projects created by the new political coalition also provided a new entry into organized labor for blacks. Jews had been part of the industrial labor movement through the specialized unions they had helped to create, such as in the needle trades. Many ethnic groups were of course part of the growing labor movement. But the blacks had some forms of organization as blacks; the Jews, as Jews. So, labor, blacks, and Jews were each

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self-interest groups that had a strong organizational identity of their own. They were a vanguard coalition on economic progress within the larger coalition of the Democratic Party.

The post-World-War-II 1950s scene was different. In a sense, the labor unions had "made it." In 1933, only about 5 percent of the total labor force had been labor union members. By the early 1950s, about 25 percent of the total labor force was in the organized labor movement. In fact, the percentage of membership levelled out, and even dropped, from that point on. But it dropped partly out of success. Many of labor's goals had been institutionalized, and even taken over by law and government. The prevailing wage level had risen by over 50 percent between 1939 and 1954. Much of the labor force had moved over into a middle class economic style.

In that sense, the Jewish population had also made it economically in the same 15 year period. The post-immigrant Jewish population had accomplished this mainly in the self-employed professions, and in certain marginal industries, but the general bars of economic discrimination had also begun to drop considerably for the Jews. By the 1950s, the average personal income of the Jewish population compared favorably with all but the most WASPish groups in America. It was a misleading statistic: the Jews still did not have access to the centers of financial power in the country, being excluded from the executive circles of the burgeoning industrial and financial corporations. But in terms of personal income, the Jews as a group were not economically deprived, even though there were still pools of residual poverty.

There had been no such breakthrough, however, for the blacks. There had been some statistical progress resulting from the earlier political efforts. In 1939, the median wage of the black worker was little more than a third of that of the white worker; in the middle of the 1950s, it was little more than half. That kind of statistical progress only raised expectations — and frustrations. The black population was still in a severe state of economic depression — clearly, discriminatory bars were still a major impediment to black progress.

This set the stage for the civil rights revolution, which started, significantly, as a legislative revolution. From the close of World War II to 1964, about 40 industrial states passed laws forbidding discrimination in private and public employment, and in other areas. That movement culminated in 1964 with the passage of the federal civil rights act. During this period of activity, the pattern of discriminatory bars against blacks dropped more significantly than ever before: while another 7 percent of the white labor force was moving into middle class occupations, an additional 17 percent of the black

labor force was moving into middle class occupations.

This movement was associated with the civil rights legislative drive; there was frequent reference to the "coalition" that spearheaded it, with the labor, black, and Jewish communities prominently in evidence. Still, there were some significant differences.

The priority objective of the First Coalition had been economic security and a place in the economic mainstream of America. The unifying political principles had centered around social security and fair labor practices. These were the principles around which the self-interest of these several groups had coalesced. Now, in the 1950s, the objective was, specifically, equal opportunity for those who had been the victims of deliberate group discrimination. Some Latino and Asian groups began to join this coalition as it gained momentum, but the initial and overwhelming image was equal opportunity for the American black community.

Labor did not have the same clear self-interest in the objectives of the Second Coalition as it had in the First. Indeed, there were still large craft unions at the beginning of the 1950s that virtually excluded blacks. But labor leadership had a strong sense of its political stake in maintaining the coalition within the Democratic Party. To some degree the coalition, for labor, was now a *quid-pro-quo* coalition rather than a common interest coalition.

Both the black and the Jewish elements of this coalition were stronger, in themselves, than they had been during the First Coalition. Even in the southern states the number of black citizens registering to vote rose from about 300,000 in 1938 to 600,000 in 1948, and to a million by 1954. The black population was obviously becoming an important political factor. The Jews, for their part, had become disproportionately active in politics during the 1930s and 1940s, and organized Jewish groups had become skilled in the political process. In state after state, as the civil rights legislative movement gained momentum, Jewish groups were prominent along with black groups in its leadership. Indeed, the Jewish public affairs apparatus around the country, which had grown considerably during the Hitler years, expended most of its energy and resources on the civil rights agenda during the 1950s and early 1960s. The intensity of the Jewish effort during this period indicated that this was, for them, a common cause coalition, not just a *quid-pro-quo* coalition.

But what was the common cause? A survey by the California State Employment Service around 1950 found that about 25 percent of all California employers seeking white-collar workers indicated that they would not hire Jews no matter how well qualified. But the Jews were heavily in the professions and self-employed by this time; there were plenty of non-discriminatory opportunities open to them, and these were clearly on the increase. In short, as a group, Jews were not suffering economically because of discrimination. What then was

the compelling self-interest of the organized Jewish community in the civil rights battle?

Voting analysts have constantly pointed out, sometimes to their own astonishment, that Jews seem to be the only ethnic group in the country that does not vote its pocketbook. For example: among those of Irish or Italian descent, the more affluent middle class tends to vote Republican, the less affluent tend to vote Democratic in national elections. Jewish voting does *not* follow this pattern. In the last Nixon Presidential campaign, for example, the Jewish Republican vote was somewhat higher than it had been in most previous Presidential elections; but two-thirds of the Jews still voted for McGovern, and were the only white ethnic group in the country to vote a Democratic majority.

The black vote that year was instructive. In the inner rings of the cities, the black vote for the Democrats was down to about 80 percent. But in the suburbs, where 15 percent of the black population now lived, often in relatively affluent ghettos, the black vote for the Democratic candidate was a couple of percentage points below that of the Jewish Democratic vote. According to the precinct analyses, the defection from the Democratic Party, such as it was, took place more among lower-income Jews than among higher-income Jews.

On social issues, the same pattern is invariable. For example, the Public Opinion Research office at Princeton did a survey of various religious groups and their support of the political principle of guaranteed economic security. In each case, except for the Jews, the percentage in favor of guaranteed economic security corresponded almost exactly with the percentage of urban manual workers in that group. Thus, 51 percent of the Baptists were manual workers, and 51 percent of the Baptists supported guaranteed security; 55 percent of the Catholics were manual workers and 58 percent supported guaranteed security; 28 percent of the Congregationalists were manual workers and 26 percent supported guaranteed security, and so forth. But while only 27 percent of the Jews were manual workers, 56 percent of them supported guaranteed security.

There is a similar kind of pattern, of somewhat less significance, with respect to civil rights issues. The Jews were the only white ethnic or religious group to vote in favor of civilian review boards in New York; the only white ethnic or religious group to vote against the referendum in California that tried to overturn that state's fair housing laws. Incidentally, the Jews were the only white ethnic group to vote against that famous Proposition 13 "tax revolt" in California, contrary to what seemed to be their pocketbook interests.

This pattern of Jews voting against their pocketbook interests sometimes led to an over-simplified self-congratulatory tone within the Jewish community. The theory has been proposed that the Jewish religious

commitment to prophetic social justice is so strong that their altruistic convictions override their self-interest. There is, however, a much more compelling theory: the Jews have a group self-interest in the political arena, which is at least as strong as their economic well-being — that is, a self-interest in a *kind of political society* that will protect the Jews from political oppression.

Racial, ethnic, and religious groups tend to act politically and consciously as economic self-interest groups only when they are predominantly deprived. If they become very mixed in their economic status, or if they become predominantly affluent, their members will act on their *economic* self-interest through associations other than their racial, ethnic, or religious associations — and the group itself will no longer act effectively as a group on economic issues. It is for that reason that some ethnic and religious groups whose political group identity was mainly centered in matters of economic self-interest have lost their political identity as groups.

The Jews had a group economic self-interest identity in the 1930s that they no longer have. But the Jews have always had a special *political* self-interest as a group that has existed separately and more durably. This fact does not require much elaboration. At least since their dispersal over 19 centuries ago, Jews have lived in a wide variety of political societies as a minority. This Jewish historical experience has taught them that their prime self-interest as a group lies in those societies whose institutions are committed to political freedom — that is, the freedom of *both* individual and group differences. To put it another way: Jews have learned that their security depends less on whether people like or dislike Jews, than on whether Jews live in the kind of society where their rights to individual and group differences are protected, whether liked or not.

None of this emphasis on self-interest is meant to disparage the effect of religious values and commitments. The countervailing effect of religious commitments on any given individual cannot be dismissed. However, the behavior of the organized Jewish community — or any other organized community — and its participation in the coalitions of the 1930s and of the 1950s, and its stance in the 1970s cannot be realistically understood without strong reference to the nature of its group self-interest.

The Jewish community was so heavily involved in the Second Coalition, the civil rights coalition, not because of its own economic self-interest, or because of altruistic desires to gain social justice for the blacks; it was centrally involved because of its political self-interest: its instinct that the civil rights revolution would solidify the kind of society in which Jews would be protected as a minority. The Jewish community was in the civil rights coalition because its self-interest coincided with the self-interest of the black community, even if the two

were not identical in origin.

In the last dozen years, this particular coalition has virtually ceased to operate because that same self-interest of the Jews did not seem to coincide with the new strategies of the post-civil-rights-movement. There are subsidiary reasons, but that is the central reason.

In the middle 1960s, the organized Jewish community began to call for affirmative action. Along with the rest of the civil rights movement, it recognized that the civil rights revolution would never catch up with historic oppression of blacks unless extraordinary efforts were made. Society now had to become beneficently race-conscious. Employment tests and standards had to be revised to become job-relevant. Active searches had to be made for qualified black workers. Special training programs had to be set up for qualified black workers. And employers had to be pushed towards fulfilling equal opportunity laws, so that they wouldn't drag, or be dragged by their middle-level personnel people. The idea of goals and timetables was introduced to keep the heat on employers. The organized Jewish community supported all these developments.

Then gradually these affirmative action proposals evolved into normative quota proposals. It wasn't the absolute idea of employment quotas which frightened the Jewish leaders. There were not the same negative reactions to specific quotas imposed as the only remedies for recalcitrant employers who resisted affirmative action. As far back as the 1930s, Harold Ickes had imposed a quota in construction jobs for public works because the craft unions had refused to open their ranks effectively. In the 1960s and 1970s, courts imposed temporary quotas on private and public employers who had refused to implement an affirmative action program. Those were specific remedies, and were generally not found disturbing.

What was disturbing was the developing image of an America in which proportional group representation would be the prevailing pattern, not just in jobs, but in politics and in other spheres of American life. This image was antithetical to the Jewish self-interest in a kind of society characterized by individual freedom as well as by pluralism.

The Jews had lived in societies in which only groups were assigned rights and an individual's rights and identity were defined only through his membership in a group. They had learned that that was not the kind of society in which political freedom could flourish, nor in which they could live in freedom.

In the black-Jewish context, the "quota controversy" is primarily a mismatch between the *economic* self-interest of the black community, and the *political* self-interest of the Jewish community, as the latter perceives the imperatives of political freedom.

The black community, of course, perceives the quota question quite differently. They are not pursuing a political ideology, a group-proportion ideology

through their support of the quota; primarily they are extending their pursuit of economic justice. The black experience with the lack of political freedom is as intense as, if less varied than, that of the Jews. But the black relationship to American freedom has been substantially different from that of the Jews. The Jews came to this country having been in a state of oppression elsewhere. The blacks were brought to this country for oppression by *this* society. The Jews have a sense of the potential of American political freedom, which they are interested in strengthening and maintaining. There is less reason for black Americans to have a sense of that potential, and there is little reason for American blacks to believe that economic progress will be maintained without the most severe and mandatory measures.

More than that, it has always been axiomatic that for the economically deprived, economic aspirations will take priority over the imperatives of political freedom. In brief, economic justice is still the *first* priority self-interest consideration of the black community.

Political freedom, rooted in individual freedom, is the first priority self-interest consideration of the Jewish community. These two different priority self-interests were operative in the Second Coalition, but in that civil rights context they were totally congruent with each other. Today, in a group proportion context, these same self-interests are not seen as congruent with each other. There is probably no way in real life fully to reconcile these priority self-interests.

This explains the virtual dissolution of the old working coalitions, but it does not explain the quick flash of intense hostility towards the Jewish community from some black quarters in August, 1979 — fed, to be sure, by media gluttony, but real nonetheless.

Direct economic competition does not explain the phenomenon. There is such competition in many situations where upwardly mobile blacks are vying for posts held by Jews who are one mobility-step ahead. But in most cases, there are not that many Jews involved: the quantitative nature of the competition is relatively slight and does not warrant the kind of rhetoric that has emerged. There is more direct competition between blacks and other ethnic minorities. Even in the dramatized quota situations, not very many Jews are directly involved. Bakke is not Jewish, nor is Weber.

But even in the one notable case in which a large number of Jews were directly involved — the Ocean Hill-Brownsville imbroglio — the rhetoric of the attack took on a character that went beyond the numbers. The question of whether Jewish teachers with more seniority were to be displaced by black teachers with less seniority — a legitimately thorny question — was transformed into the charge that "the Jewish establishment" was intent on depressing the education of black students. It was this kind of ideology that led to an alarm sounded by

this writer ten years ago ("The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question," *Commentary*, January, 1969):

This is not the folk anti-Semitism that the Black population shares with the white population. It is, rather, the abstract and symbolic anti-Semitism which Jews instinctively find more chilling. . . . "This is not anti-Semitism," (some) Blacks say. "The hostility is towards the whites. When they say Jew, they mean white." But that is an exact and acute description of political anti-Semitism: "The enemy" becomes the Jew. . . . "Don't be disturbed," the Jews are told, "this is just poetic excess." But the ideology of political anti-Semitism has precisely always been poetic excess, which has not prevented it from becoming murderous.

That 1969 alarm pointed out that "Third World" ideology had become entangled with the new anti-Semitism emerging from some black intellectual circles. Jewish schoolteachers in New York were told in one tract that "the Middle East murderers of colored people" could not be allowed to teach black children.

And now in 1979, that classic chestnut of right-wing anti-Semitism, the charge of dual loyalty, is raised against the Jews by the president of a large black sorority, immediately upon the resignation of Andrew Young.

"We have been patient and forbearing," she said of the Jews, "in their masquerading as friends under the pretense of working for the common purpose of civil rights. This latest affront reveals clearly that their loyalties are not compatible with the struggle of black Americans for equal opportunity under the law. Indeed, we question whether their loyalties are first to the State of Israel or to the United States. The loyalties of black Americans have never been questioned."

There has been much and there will be more written about the circumstances of Young's resignation. He was severely castigated by the Secretary of State for his meeting with a PLO representative — although it is not clear that Young's meeting violated the spirit of Vance's own directions. Whatever else one may think of him, it was not outlandish to believe that Young served as a kind of scapegoat in this case for the administration's own follies. Certainly, American Jewish organizations expressed dismay at the administration's flirtation with the PLO in general, and with this flirtation in particular. But by what logic did some black spokesmen leap so swiftly and intensely to laying exclusive blame on "the Jews" for his departure? And how did this blame so often and so naturally take on an ideological cast?

The quota controversy during the preceding years does not explain it. Here again, the defeat of quota schemes, where they were defeated, have been no more the primary product of Jewish endeavor than was the resignation of Andrew Young.

What did happen during that period was the rapid growth of the black middle class. In 15 years, more than a million non-whites entered into professional, techni-

cal, or managerial status, more than tripling their numbers in those occupational fields.

And when a black businessman said recently that "I have never seen the black community so lost, so depressed," he was referring to the black middle class, not to the ghetto poor. Conversations with members of the black middle class reveal a persistent thread. Having just made it, they are afraid of losing it. And there is some basis for their fear. By comparison, when the Jews began to make it, the American economy was on the up and up. Now the new middle class is not only faced with the kind of inflation which makes the fruits of its new status suspect, but with a general economic crunch.

Middle class disaffection of that kind — and "displacement anxiety" in general — has always had a special political significance in America. The second Ku Klux Klan grew out of such displacement anxiety among Americans who had made it and were afraid of losing it. So did the Know Nothings, the American Protective Association, and other extremist movements. They all explained their imminent loss of status with the same kind of baggage: an ethnic scapegoat and a conspiracy theory.

In those cases, the targets were newcomer groups. The Catholic immigrants were largely used for this purpose in 19th century America. Although they were poor and miserable, they were associated with the power of the Catholic Church and the Vatican. They were accounted part of the conspiracy to take over the country, and to displace native Americans. In the 20th century, the Jews were allotted that accustomed role in the conspiracy theories.

Disaffected, status-anxious members of the black middle class would have difficulty incorporating newcomers into a classic extremist ideology. There have been signs of such an impulse. There was the occasion, for example, when a special affirmative action program for Latinos, severely under-represented in governmental white collar jobs, was the target for the official wrath of black organizations. And there have been the grumblings by some black spokesmen about the influx of Vietnamese refugees. But any black movement would be too close to its own past, and too close to Third World concepts, to easily systematize such impulses. However, there *are* the Jews.

Black attitudes, when measured, have always indicated a particularly hostile attitude towards the Jews' economic role and "power." The University of California/ADL study found that 44 percent of the blacks subscribed to negative economic images of the Jews, compared to 31 percent of the whites. On the non-economic items, the average acceptance rate for the blacks was 35 percent as against 36 percent for the whites.

When that study was made, the traditional economic

confrontation between just-made-it Jews and poor blacks was already well on the wane. The Jews who had recently departed the neighborhood were no longer predominantly the landlords. The Jews who had had small stores in the neighborhood were vacating them rapidly. Those particular Jews had never been very powerful in the scheme of things or much responsible for economic oppression, but they were *visible*; to the poor blacks they represented direct economic power. The image of Jewish power lingered. The concrete tended to become the symbolic.

Such is now often the case for the black middle class, on another front, drawing partly on an older tradition. A disproportionate number of Jews are in professional, technical, and managerial positions. This suggests economic confrontation. But by no mathematical logic can it mean direct quantitative confrontation. A large number of these Jews are self-employed, in non-competitive roles. Even if Jews are in competitive middle class positions to an extent twice disproportionate to their numbers; even if they are in *choice* competitive middle class positions to an extent four times disproportionate to their numbers, they do not normally represent the bulk of the competition. But they *seem* to. They are visible, for many reasons; they *symbolize* the competition.

One is whimsically reminded of those old-time Jews who used to say: "Jews should not run for office, Jews should not take public or prominent appointments, Jews should stay behind the scenes and out of sight." These soothsayers were pointed in a surely disastrous direction — but their initial instinct was accurate enough. Jews are visible because they are so identifiable, because they have a bent for the public and the vocal, because they are objects of animosity to begin with.

The disaffected middle class has always been preoccupied with this Jewish visibility, this apparent Jewish prominence. Many members of the black middle class have coupled this middle class tendency with their own special anxiety for their future and future mobility. This has led to the classic temptation for ideological anti-Semitism, portraying the Jews as a symbol of hindering power. This was the import of Jesse Jackson's statement that "Jews were willing to share decency but not power."

For some blacks, this temptation was also linked to the vague Third World ideology of the 1960s. The University of California study had found that 20 percent of northern whites with some high school education scored high on anti-Semitism, as compared with 17 percent of northern blacks; but only 8 percent of northern whites with at least some college scored high on anti-Semitism, as compared with 16 percent of northern blacks. (There were no college figures for southern blacks.) This disparity suggested the special ideological element.

In fact, the surveys have consistently showed that the

majority of American blacks have favorable feelings towards Israel, but not to the extent of American whites. It has been typical to find active pro-Israel sympathies among over half of the whites, and about one-third of the blacks; active pro-Arab sympathies among about 6 percent of the whites and 12 percent of the blacks.

More to the point, the Yankelovich survey of local black community leaders in 1976 summarized its findings in this way: "About Israel itself, the feeling is ambivalent when not negative. The very people who think it right that there should be a Jewish state can also think of Israel as the enemy of the dark-skinned Arabs, who are in some sense fellow non-whites. Israel is disliked only a little less than China, South Africa and the Soviet Union."

This is by way of identifying the potential element of Third World ideology, as it specifically attaches to the issues of the Middle East. In fact, during the past decade, there developed no major pro-Arab movement or sentiment in the black community. Indeed, when asked in 1976 about specific support of Israel, a selection of *national* black leadership, in political or civil rights positions, former members of the "coalition," were overwhelmingly supportive of Israel, to a degree almost equal to that of a sampled white elite. The Jewish community had no reason to complain about the overall conduct of the Black Congressional Caucus on matters related to Israel.

What had been growing during those years was the black middle class and its anxieties, against the background of American economic constriction. Also growing, for those with their ears to local ground, were expressed concerns about "Jewish power," at middle class and public management levels. The complaints about Jewish positions on quotas were themselves derivative and symbolic of those hard concerns.

When the black reaction to the Andrew Young resignation burst upon the scene with its startlingly intense anti-Jewish content, some of the passion must be ascribed to the special middle class black disaffection. That is where much of the black rage is today. At least, there is the fertile ground for a classic design of ideological anti-Semitism.

And that is what flared alarmingly, at least for the moment, after the Andrew Young resignation, which some blacks wanted to take as the definitive symbol of Jewish power obstructing and retracting higher black advancement.

For a glaring moment, the classic design was there. The Jews were the symbolic target — powerful, conspiratorial. And the objective alliance was there, and timely, as foreshadowed a decade earlier. America's most powerful elite, the oil companies, with the Arabs behind them and the State Department in front of them, had a common objective with Jesse Jackson. In a

famous outburst, Brzezinski had earlier complained about the obstructiveness of American Jewry. It was not hard to elicit that sentiment anonymously from different quarters in the White House. But the president of that black sorority said publicly what no leading politician could say.

So, from the viewpoint of coalition arithmetic, to what extent are the blacks and the Jews now natural antagonists and to what extent are they natural allies?

No one can speak for the blacks, one hastens to say, except themselves. But there may be several kinds of spokesmen. Local discussions already reveal that neither the PLO nor the Palestinians nor the Middle East in general is of much interest to the black rank-and-file, middle class or not.

However, Andrew Young now has a great deal invested in the Palestinian issue, as do the oil companies. The black middle class may not follow Young forever down such a narrow path, but if he and others mix the PLO with some bread-and-butter economic issues, the formula will be the classic one, and formidable. The issue of the PLO and of the Palestinians will provide the perfect vehicle for staging the Jew as the villain on both the domestic front and the foreign front.

The ideology really doesn't take much imagination. The Soviet propagandists have already provided that: the Zionists are the engineers of oppression on the American front who are extending that oppression to the Middle East, using Israel as a tool of that American imperialism of which the Jews are an important part. That image of the Jew will serve some of the needs of the black middle class and population. It will also serve the

needs of the oil companies and Arabists.

There is another arithmetic, however; some black leaders, one can hope, will see it. The economic security and advancement of the black middle class and general population is still the top item on the black public affairs agenda. The Jew as scapegoat is a diversion. The kind of society in which that economic advancement will take place most durably is still the kind of society in which Jews are politically interested. There is *that* basis for a natural alliance.

However, the direct relationship between political freedom and economic progress is the kind of sophisticated concept that never sets any social movement on fire. It doesn't move blacks, any more than, conversely, the direct relationship between economic progress for blacks and political freedom moves the Jews. To some degree, both parties lack the full understanding of their own self-interest that would make credible this basis for coalition. To a Martian the coincidence of black and Jewish self-interests would still seem more weighty than not. Unfortunately we are not Martians; such perceptions may not prevail.

But there is one specter that should frighten *everyone* concerned. If some black ideologues pull a black social movement in those classic extremist and bigoted directions, in harness with a powerful section of the elite establishment, they will have helped create a monster they will not be able to control. The events of August may well have been overheated, partly by the media, abetted by a few especially vocal citizens. But, they revealed the lineaments of an ancient horror — for blacks as well as for Jews. ■