

Leaflets are now being distributed on the Berkeley campus and elsewhere which attack the alleged relationship between Israel and South Africa, the "two Apartheid countries." So the publication of this book by Greenwood Press, authored by historians Robert G. Weisbord and Richard Kazarian Jr., could not be more timely. It is called Israel in the Black American Perspective.

The book begins by chronicling the support of Zionism by early Black American leaders. In the 19th century, Edward Blyden was called "more of a Zionist than most Jews." Booker T. Washington was pro-Zionist. And W.E.B. Du Bois, in his monthly magazine for Black children, often extolled Zionism -- and in 1929 wrote that "defenseless Jews were massacred in Hebron and Safed by ruthless and bloodthirsty evil-doers."

An apparent reversal in Black leadership attitudes came in the mid-1960s, when some Black American activist groups became "Third-world" radical in political orientation. Most dramatic was SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), which issued a famous newsletter in 1967 stating that "the Zionists conquered the Arab home and land through terror, force and massacres." It went on in that vein, revealing its political base line, anti-Americanism, by reporting that "the U.S. government has worked along with Zionist groups to support Israel so that America may have a toe-hold in that strategic Middle East location" for purposes of capitalist exploitation.

Some other Black leadership groups followed variations of that line. Even in less radical circles, there was a tendency to think of the Arabs as part of the exploited "Third world" (the history of Arab slave-trading conveniently forgotten), and of the Israelis as white interlopers.

Not all Black leaders followed this line by any means. Weisbord and Kazarian document the consistent support of Israel by Martin Luther King Jr. Just ten days before he was assassinated, Dr. King said: "We must stand with all our might to protect Israel's right to exist ... I see Israel as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done ..." The authors also make note of the fact that the Black Caucus in Congress has been in consistent support of Israel -- perhaps the most consistent pro-Israel group in Congress, apart from Jewish Congressmen themselves.

However, out of a "Third world" stance, some other Black leaders have continued to be among the country's most critical voices on Israel. The "Andrew Young Affair" is the subject of a chapter in this book, and so is the recent Jesse Jackson episode.

South Africa and Israel are the current focus of the conflict, and the authors give them the full treatment, describing the shifting relationship between those two countries. The book documents the basic anti-apartheid stand of Israel which has at times infuriated

the South African government, and points out that Israeli trade with South Africa is miniscule compared with South Africa's trade with both Black African nations and Arab nations.

This book, priced at \$29.95, is important, even indispensable, reading and resource material for those concerned with the current fray. However, Weisbord and Kazarian do fail to emphasize a couple of important areas of analysis. The research shows that the Black American population has been somewhat less anti-semitic than the white American population. Anti-Israelism came first, followed by some anti-semitism, not the other way around. And most rank and file American Blacks have not become either anti-Israel or anti-semitic. It is the Black elite which has been in conflict on this issue. We all have a stake in which segment of that Black elite wins the minds of the Black populace, because, as Weisbord and Kazarian point out, "both (groups) are still confronted by a common enemy: the bigot in whom anti-Semitism and racism are integral elements. Blacks and Jews who forget this do so at their own peril."