

Earl Raab

October 22, 1979

TV: BLACKS, ARABS AND NAZIS

Does television make robots of us all? A couple of recent events would suggest that. But those events also suggest that television itself can be manipulated. So it's often hard to know exactly who we are being manipulated *by*.

Take the recent Nazi rally in Walnut Creek. Eight Nazis rallied. A few hundred people came to attack the Nazis. The anti-Nazi rally was primarily organized by pro-Arafat left-wing groups. Of course, a number of people who were *not* anti-semitic came to hoot the Nazis; but for a large part, we had the spectacle of anti-semites fighting anti-semites.

Do you know how many press passes were issued, on request, for this event? Ninety six! Ninety six representatives of the media came rushing to cover eight Nazis being pelted by hundreds, heavily organized by such estimable patrons as the Progressive Labor Party and the Jews Against Zionism.

The media had allowed themselves to be manipulated by the Nazis and the Progressive Labor Party. There are events of real significance, involving ten and twenty times as many people, which get four representatives from the media instead of ninety six.

Newspapers, by and large, handled the Nazi affair with some restraint; but it was spread all over television. It promised to be *entertainment*, and television news is still mainly an entertainment industry.

On a larger scale, the sudden "Black-Jewish" conflict of recent weeks was largely a "media event," manipulated by those who had a stake in fomenting such a "conflict." "Sources" in the White House, for example, promptly told the press that they hoped Young's resignation would not create Black-Jewish friction. The media are not dumb when it comes to sniffing a sexy issue; they picked up the cues. With the media holding their coats, there were some sharp exchanges between Black and Jewish spokesmen.

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Take the recent Nazi rally in a small city in Northern California. Eight Nazis rallied. A few hundred people came to attack the Nazis. The anti-Nazi rally was primarily organized by pro-Arafat left-wing groups. Of course, a number of people who were *not* anti-semitic came to hoot the Nazis; but for a large part, we had the spectacle of anti-semites fighting anti-semites.

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In the course of those exchanges, a very unfortunate thing happened: the PLO was given a step up towards respectability by a handful of black public figures; and those black public figures will be riding that gravy train for some time to come. That has more to do with a "PLO problem" than with a "Black-Jewish problem." *Most* black leaders have now dissociated themselves from Jesse Jackson and his Arafat trail.

Despite some differences which could be troubling if not watched, the natural relationship which still exists between blacks and Jews at large, is dramatically revealed in a recent survey of Congressional voting. Jewish Congressmen voted much, much more often for "black issues" (as identified by black Congressmen) than did non-Jewish Congressmen; and black Congressmen voted much, much more often for "Jewish issues" (Israel and Soviet Jewry) than did non-black Congressmen. That's just the way it still is. But the media gave the entertaining impression that Jews and blacks were locked in mortal combat.

A quite different note on media power is raised by a professor of mass communications at Southern Illinois University. His research has led him to believe that "to be an Arab in America today is to be an object of contempt and ridicule by television, under the guise of entertainment."

His research cited programs such as "Vegas," "One Day at a Time," "The Johnny Carson Show," "All That Glitters," "Rockford Files," "Chips," "Alice," "Get Smart" and "Tarzan," which he said defamed Arabs in a way that TV would no longer dare defame other groups.

One way and another, a TV station may be as powerful, and as dangerous, as a nuclear reactor.

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