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AMERICAN BLACKS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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The principal aim of this study will be to describe the responses of the major black American political organizations to the State of Israel between 1967 and 1970. The thesis will be advanced that a clear pattern emerges in the responses of these organizations or their leaders to the Arab-Israeli conflict whereby moderate organizations have tended to support Israel while radical groups have opposed her. The paper will also touch briefly upon the implications of black American support or non-support for Israel with a view to raising some issues for further study, concerning in particular the moderate black American outlook on the conflict and the involvement of Israel with African nations.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of groups and organizations to be studied has been based upon the results of a *Time-Louis* Harris Poll which questioned a cross-section of black America to discover which black organizations or individuals were most respected in the black community.¹ The groups described are consequently nationally recognized organizations which are supported by a significant number of black Americans, and which can be assumed to represent their major political tendencies. The groups comprise: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims), the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

Since the thesis of this paper is based on the use of the terms "moderate" and "radical," a clarification of the sense in which they are employed is necessary. "Moderate" is used to indicate a person who basically supports

* Lewis Young is a graduate in history from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. ¹ *Time*, April 6, 1970, pp. 28-29.

the structure of his political system, although he may favour reforms in institutions which he feels require change. His sympathy with the basic fabric of the political order entails a preference for gradual or evolutionary transformations rather than quick disruptive ones. In the above list, the moderate segment of black leadership can be said to be represented by NAACP, the Urban League and SCLC, whose programmes are based on the philosophy and tactics of reformism, gradualism, integration, moral persuasion, legalism, and nonviolent protest.

The radical, on the other hand, speaks of the need for fundamental alterations of the social structure, being more inclined to rapid abrupt change than to an evolutionary process; unlike the moderate, the radical foresees the probability of violence and the use of force in changing the political status quo. Of the above organizations, the Nation of Islam, the SNCC after 1966, the Black Panther Party, and CORE after 1967, constitute the "radical" element of black political leadership. These groups advocate the use of violence if deemed necessary, and urge the rejection of integration and the rapid and drastic alteration of the political system in the United States.

As regards attitudes to the Middle East, two different black advertisements placed in the *New York Times* during 1970 served as an illustration of these trends in the black community. In June, the A. Philip Randolph Institute sponsored a full page "Appeal by Black Americans for United States Support to Israel"² signed by the black notables, political leaders, union leaders, writers, educators and local and state government officials who constitute the major moderate leadership in black political thinking. The advertisement described Israel as "the most democratic country in the Middle East," and called on the United States to guarantee Israel's security to enable her to implement the ideals of democracy and social justice in the area.

In response to the appeal for support for Israel came an advertisement sponsored by the Committee of Black Americans for the Truth About the Middle East,³ entitled, "An Appeal by Black Americans against United States Support of the Zionist Government of Israel." These signatories regarded Israel as a country created on land stolen from the Palestinian Arabs, and equated it with South Africa, both being "privileged white settler-states." Israel to them was a racist government serving as an outpost of American imperialism in the Middle East.

A basic difference in attitudes to Palestine which emerges between moderates and radicals can thus be seen to relate directly to their perceptions of the nature of the United States itself, and especially of the role which it

² *New York Times*, June 28, 1970, p. 5.

³ *New York Times*, November 1, 1970, p. 4, sec. 4.

plays in the world. The black moderate sees America — and its ally — as a projector and safe-guarder of democracy in the Middle East, while the radical identifies the US as an exploitative and imperialist power.

THE VIEWS OF THE MODERATES

The ensuing section of this paper will outline the responses to Zionism of first the moderate, and then the radical, organizations of the black community. Since the aim of these sections will be to supply basic data without at this stage adopting a definite stance to these reactions, the approach adopted will be primarily descriptive.

1. *The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP]*

The NAACP, like other moderate groups discussed here, has been reticent in responding to the Middle East crisis and the reproduction of its views is necessarily rather sporadic; NAACP's official organ *Crisis*, for example, made no direct statements in support of Israel between 1967 and 1970.⁴

Relations between blacks and Jews in America, on the other hand, were discussed in the period, and domestic tensions between the two communities were the subject of an article written by the organ's editor, Henry Lee Moon, in April, 1967.⁵ Moon's view was that black anti-Semitism had been exaggerated and that blacks were not concerned with Jews as such but rather with the white community in general. Black anti-Semitism in New York City was, nevertheless, condemned in a later editorial, the "Canard of Black anti-Semitism" in 1969, in which no reference was made to Israel.⁶

An opinion on the conflict itself was registered by Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, in August 1967, when he criticized SNCC for a newsletter it published containing anti-Israel material.⁷ According to the *New York Times*, Wilkins condemned anti-Semitism and attacked SNCC for following a pro-Soviet line. On another occasion, at the biennial conference of the Jewish Labor Committee, Wilkins compared the alleged anti-Semitism of young black militants to that of George Lincoln Rockwell, the leader of the American Nazi Party.⁸ Although he did not specify his target, Wilkins was

4 The organ had published an article on Israel in 1956 by Hubert T. Delany about a trip he undertook to the country in order to study juvenile delinquency in Israel. The author gave a pro-Israeli historical account of events in which he praised Israeli dealings with Arabs and Oriental Jews. Delany, however, was not acknowledged as an NAACP official. Hubert T. Delany, "Hubert Delany Reports on Israel," *Crisis*, November 1956.

5 Henry Lee Moon, "Of Negroes, Jews, and Other Americans." *Crisis* LXXI, 3 (April 1967), pp. 146-150, 159-161.

6 "Canard of Black Anti-Semitism." *Crisis*, December 1969.

7 Thomas A. Johnson, "McKissick Derides Non-Violent Ghetto Protests," *New York Times*, August 18, 1967.

8 "Prejudiced Negroes Scored by Wilkins," *New York Times*, November 11, 1967, p. 18.

probably speaking of SNCC's anti-Israel newsletter. He was also a signatory to the paid advertisement in the *New York Times* in which moderate black Americans made an appeal for United States support for Israel.

Wilkins' most important and explicit statement on Israel appeared in his column in the *Philadelphia Afro-American* soon after the Six-Day War.⁹ From a viewpoint that "Peace with justice and honour will come only with the recognition of the fact of Israel as a nation," and that Israel was a "bastion of democracy" and had "made a land to bloom," Wilkins argued that Israel's nationhood must be protected and criticized Egyptian policies such as the closing of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping.

2. *The Urban League*

Like the NAACP, the Urban League has volunteered relatively few official statements in support of Israel. From the activities of its leader, the late Whitney M. Young, Jr., sufficient data can, however, be obtained to permit a judgement on its position towards Israel.

The Urban League condemned SNGG for its anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli newsletter of June-July 1967,¹⁰ which Young interpreted as anti-Semitic. He was quoted as saying that blacks had been victims of racism for too long to revert to racial hatred against the Jews, and that the ideas in the SNGC newsletter "resembled those of the American Nazi party on Arab-Israeli relations." ¹¹

After a visit to Israel in 1969, during which he presented a paper on technology and employment at a conference sponsored by the American Foundation on Automation and Employment, Young contributed a laudatory article to the Jewish periodical *Israel Horizons*.¹² Here he recorded his respect for the commitment of Israel's top leadership to the development of the country's resources, especially in the field of education. On racial attitudes, he was also highly complimentary to Israel, remarking that, while the people of the country came from all over the globe, and were of all different colours, they "mix freely without the hysterical colour-consciousness we find among too many Americans." Israel's "tolerance toward Arabs surprised me," Young added, reporting that "Israel's brilliant and charming Prime Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir," was making concrete efforts to provide the Arabs of Israel

9 Roy Wilkins, "Israel's Time of Trial Also America's," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, June 24, 1967.

10 Kathleen Teltsch, "SNCC Criticized for Israel Stand." *New York Times*, August 16, 1967, p. 28.

11 Ibid.

12 Whitney Young, "Israel As Seen by Whitney Young," *Israel Horizons*, August-September 1969, pp. 17-18.

with opportunity and education.¹³ The Urban League leader proceeded to make a comparison between the social concern of the Israeli and American governments, in which he maintained that the United States had lost "the nation-building spirit of adventure that was once so strong in America, but now seems smothered by affluence and social disinterest," while this spirit was still evident in Israel.

Young later appeared as one of the signatories to the *New York Times* advertisement appeal for the United States to provide Israel with jet aircraft in June 1970. (This stated that the signatories of the appeal signed as individuals, and their organizational affiliations were listed for identification purposes only.) In 1970, too, the American Jewish Committee distributed copies of a letter written by Young in response to a criticism of him for signing the pro-Israel advertisement. This is reported to have reiterated his support for United States military aid for Israel,¹⁴ and to have asserted that while Israel had provided great technical assistance to developing African nations, he did not "know of any real aid oil-rich Arab countries have given the struggling new nations of black Africa."

3. *Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)*

The moderate SCLC has similarly made few public commitments concerning Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. But SCLC's former leader, the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, did, on two occasions, evince responses dealing with Israel which are indicative of the moderate outlook.

The first of these responses was his signing of a paid advertisement in the *New York Times* in June, 1967,¹⁵ which called on President Johnson to honour American commitments to ensure Israel's security. In another minor incident at about this period, when other moderate civil rights leaders attacked the June-July SNCC *Newsletter*, King declined to comment because he had not read the newsletter and limited himself to expressing his concern for the welfare of the Jewish people.¹⁶

King made a second major statement after the 1967 New Politics Convention in Chicago, where a radical black caucus tabled a resolution condemning Israel for annexing Arab territory during the war.¹⁷ The *New York Times* disclosed that "Dr. King wrote [a letter] in response to a telegram

¹³ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴ "Israel Aid Backed by Whitney Young." *New York Times*, November 1, 1970.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, June 4, 1967.

¹⁶ Teltsch, *New York Times*, p. 28.

¹⁷ Warren Weaver, Jr., "Parley on New Politics Yields to Militant Negroes' Demands," *New York Times*, September 3, 1967, pp. 1, 18.

from ten Jewish organizations urging him to disassociate from views coming out of the recent New Politics Convention in Chicago."¹⁸ In this letter, sent to Morris Abram, president of the American Jewish Committee, King noted that SCLC had been most active in opposing the anti-Israeli resolution at the convention: "SCLC has repeatedly stated that the Middle East problem embodies the related questions of security and development. Israel's right to exist as a state in security is incontestable."

Finally, the secretary of SCLC, Marion Logan, was a cosignatory to the A. Philip Randolph Institute's advertisement in the *New York Times* urging the United States to send jet aircraft to Israel in 1970.

THE RADICALS

1. *The Nation Of Islam (Black Muslims)*

The Nation of Islam, led by Elijah Muhammad, has since 1956 consistently taken an anti-Israeli stance through its publication *Muhammad Speaks*;¹⁹ it was, in fact, the only black organization prior to the 1960's to manifest some concern for the Middle East conflict.²⁰ This Muslim concern is quite logical given the common religious basis of the organization with most of the Arab world. It was due primarily, however, to the late Malcolm X, who left the Muslims in 1964, that the foundations for this pro-Arab attitude were laid, through his articulation of an anti-Israeli resentment while still serving as the organization's national spokesman.²¹

The Nation of Islam perceives Israel as an appendage of Western imperialism in the Middle East,²² and is quick to point to interactions and parallels between Israel and South Africa. An article in *Muhammad Speaks* after the June 1967 war, for example, warned Africans that the Israeli "blitz" was a reminder of the potential South African threat to independent African countries.²³

Hardly an issue of *Muhammad Speaks* passes without a pro-Arab article treating the Middle East situation. Throughout 1967, *Muhammad* published

18 "Anti-Semitism Held Immoral by Dr. King," *New York Times*, October 11, 1967, p. 59.

19 American Jewish Committee, "Black Muslims — Source of Anti-Semitic Infection." *Currents* 12'(February 1972).

20 Robert Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter; The Afro-American and the American Jew* (Westport, Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1970), p. 89.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

23 Charles P. Howard. "Israel's Blitz in Mideast Reminder of Danger of Nazi South Africa's Power," *Muhammad Speaks*. June 23, 1967, p. 3.

numerous such contributions, including articles on why African nations see Israel as a base for Western imperialism, reports on third world countries that supported the Arabs in the Middle East conflict, excerpts from a speech made by Saudi Arabia's Dr. Jamil M. Baroody at the United Nations castigating Israel, and reports on the special SNCG *Newsletter*.^{24*}

In May 1968 the publication printed the first international communique-of al-Fateh, which attempted to clarify Patch's programme of armed struggle and explain the reasons for it.²⁵

One issue that has also been featured in *Muhammad Speaks* has been tin-relation of the black movement to Jewish finance. In a September 1967 issue of *Muhammad*, an article reported the Organization of Arab Students (in the United States) as coming to the aid of SNCG in face of heavy charges of anti-Semitism after SNCG's anti-Israeli newsletter in the summer of 1967.²⁶ The article reprinted a statement attributed to Ali Baghdadi, former president of the OAS, asserting that other black civil rights organizations would speak out as SNCG had done, had it not been for their concern with Jewish contributions to their organizations. Later, when the A. Philip Randolph Institute's advertisement in support of Israel appeared in 1970, the signatories were castigated by *Muhammad's* editor, John Woodford, as "traitors" to black and peace-loving people.²⁷ Woodford argued that there was a contradiction between the "nonviolent" position taken by the moderates in relation to the domestic civil rights movement, and the violent position implied in support for United States arms supplies to Israel, and that Afro-Americans who signed the advertisement failed to condemn Israeli atrocities towards the Palestinians of the same kind as those of the South African government against South African blacks. He noted a criticism made by an Arab-American leader, Dr. M.T. Mehdi, concerning Bayard Rustin, the black Executive Director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Mehdi had criticized Rustin's apparent departure from his pacifist philosophy in calling for jets to Israel and suggested that the reason for such a change was to gain financial support for the Institute.²⁸ Woodford himself also indicated his support for the view that Jewish economic aid influenced the moderate black leadership to make pro-Israeli statements by asserting that moderate black leaders "turn their hands against their brothers and sisters [the Palestinian Arabs] for a few pieces of silver."²⁹ He stated that

24 Sec Muhammad Speaks, June 23, 1967 and August 25, 1967, for these: articles.

25 al-Fateh, "Why Arabs Struggle Against Invader," Muhammad Speaks, May 17, 1968, p.7.

²⁶ Muhammad Speaks, September 8, 1967, p. 4.

27 John Woodford, " 'Negroes' Put Pro-Israel Ad in the X.Y. Times," Muhammad Speaks,'}uly 10, 1967, p. 3.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

the blacks who signed the pro-Israel advertisement had "obeyed orders" [Jewish] in doing so.

2. *Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC)*

Along with the Nation of Islam, SNCC exemplifies the radical perspective on Israel and the Middle East dilemma. In its June-July 1967 *SNCC Newsletter*, the organization made its first public response to the State of Israel and Zionism,³⁰ explaining that the purpose of its pro-Arab centrefold was to enlighten its readers on the Middle East conflict, because, as SNCC stated, "we know that the white American seldom, if ever, gives the true story about world events in which America is involved. . ."³¹

SNCC's stance on Israel as expressed in this centrefold reflected a new worldview in its political outlook.³² Under the sub-title "The Palestine Problem: Test Your Knowledge," SNCC listed thirty-two factual items aimed at giving a brief history of the State of Israel from its inception to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Among other questions, SNCC asked the readers whether they knew:

"That the US Government has constantly supported Israel and Zionism by sending military and financial aid to this illegal state ever since it was forced upon the Arabs in 1948?"

"That the Zionist terror gangs (Haganah, Irgun, and Stern gangs) deliberately slaughtered and mutilated women, children and men, thereby causing the unarmed Arabs to panic, flee and leave their homes in the hands of the Zionist-Israeli forces?"

"That the famous European Jews, the Rothschilds, who have long controlled the wealth of many European nations, were involved in the original conspiracy with the British to create the 'State of Israel' and are still among Israel's chief supporters? That the Rothschilds also control much of Africa's mineral wealth?"

The anti-Israeli centrefold provided photographs of members of pre-1948 Zionist terrorist groups and of Arab civilians killed en masse by Israeli soldiers in 1956, and a picture of a hand with a six-pointed star and a United States dollar sign on it, holding a hangman's rope around the necks of Gamal Abdul Nasser, late president of Egypt, and Muhammad Ali, former black heavy weight boxing champion. The *Newsletter* subsequently incurred vehement attacks from Jews and non-Jews, including moderate black civil rights leaders.

In the early 1960's Jews had, in fact, played a significant role in SNCC's protest activity. But after SNCC adopted a Black Power position and excluded

³⁰ Sec SNCC Newsletter June-July 1967). pp. 4-5.

³¹ Ibid., p. 5.

³² "SNCC and the Jews," Newsweek, August 28, 1967, p. 22.

whites from membership in the organization, Jews withdrew their support for it. The physical withdrawal by Jews meant that Jewish financial contributions to SNCC also declined, a process which was accelerated after SNCC moved to an anti-Zionist standpoint.³³

In reaction to the attacks on its *Newsletter*, SNCC called a press conference to clarify and restate its stand. The *Newsletter* statements were reiterated here, and a SNCC spokesman was quoted as saying: "Israel is and always has been the tool and foothold for American and British exploitation in the Middle East and Africa."³⁴ Later Ralph Featherstone, publicity director for SNCC, affirmed that SNCC rejected charges of anti-Semitism, and that the organization was not against Jews as a race, but limited its opposition to Zionism and the State of Israel.³⁵

Another controversial reflection of SNCC tendencies was seen when Stokely Carmichael, former chairman of SNCC, made an anti-Israeli speech at the Organization of Arab Students' Convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1968, at which he stated that he had moved from a position of once supporting the Israelis to one of being adverse to "their so-called State of Israel, which we all know to be an unjust and certainly immoral state."³⁶ Carmichael argued that the Jews were exploiting the killing of six million of their people as a justification for their actions in Palestine and that the fact that "six million Jews were murdered by Hitler does not give the Zionists the right to take Arab land." The right course to follow in the circumstances would have been for Jews to have instead taken land in Germany after World War II. Carmichael claimed that intensive Zionist propaganda had effectively persuaded people to support Israel and that anyone who disagreed was liable to be denounced as anti-Semitic. As a counter to Zionist propaganda, people should assert positively the Palestinian Arab claim to Palestine. To white radicals at the conference he declared: "if white people who call themselves revolutionary or radical want our support, they have to condemn Zionism."

Just as in the *Newsletter*, in his speech Carmichael remarked that Israel received assistance from the Western world because it played a role in Western imperialism; to Carmichael the June war of 1967 was a manifestation of Israeli aggression attempting to destroy the revolutionary governments in the Arab world. At one point in his address, Carmichael charged that there was a connection between the exploitation of Arabs in the Middle East and blacks

33 Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet*, pp. 103-L04.

34 Gene Roberts, "SNCC Charges Israel Atrocities," *New York Times*, August 15, 1967.

36 *New York Times*, August 19, 1967, p. 8.

36 Stokely Carmichael, *Stokely Carmichael: Black Power Back to Pan-Africanism* (New York; Vintage Books. 1971), p. 137.

in the United States: "the same Zionists that exploit the Arabs also exploit us in this country. This is a fact. And that is not anti-Semitic."³⁷

In September 1967 Carmichael had travelled to several Middle Eastern countries,³⁸ where he had also made speeches deploring Zionism and the Israeli occupation of Arab territory. In these he again drew attention to the link between Israel and the United States, viewing Israel as an extension of the latter.

3. *The Black Panther Party*

Like SNCC, the radical Black Panther Party has taken a pro-Arab position in its responses to Israel, and its organ *The Black Panther* has published numerous condemnations of the state since 1968. Stokely Carmichael, mentioned as the former chairman of SNCC, actually served for a short period as a ranking leader of the Panther Party and his speech at the OAS meeting at the University of Michigan was made while he nominally held the position of the Panthers' Prime Minister.

Eldridge Cleaver, exiled Panther minister of information, in 1969 denounced Israel as a puppet of the United States before a crowd in Algeria.³⁹ In another statement Cleaver declared that the Black Panther Party fully supported the Arab guerrillas in the Middle East conflict.

Although the Party made numerous references to Israel, early issues of *The Black Panther* are difficult to obtain. This paper will therefore rely in part on a report prepared by the American Jewish Committee on Black Panther statements about Jews and Israel.⁴⁰

With other radical black groups the Panthers charged Israel with racism, imperialism and expansionism:

The Israel government is an imperialist expansionist power in Palestine. The government is at fault, not all jews (*sic*). There are many non-Jews who support what Israel is doing. Pig Johnson is one of them. The term, Israel, is like saying racist United States, and it has the same policy as the US government has in the Middle East.⁴¹

The Panthers also saw an interrelation between the oppression of black Americans and the Palestinian Arabs:

37 Ibid., p. 137.

38 Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet*, p. 101.

39 New York Times, July 23, 1969, p. 13.

40 American Jewish Committee, *The Black Panther Party— The Anti-Semitic and Anti-Israeli Component* (New York, 1970). It should be pointed out that the purpose of the AJC's report was to expose and condemn supposedly anti-Semitic statements made by the Panthers.

41 "Israel Military Aggression," *The Black Panther*, November 16, 1968. Cited in the AJC report mentioned above, p. 4.

We recognize that our oppression takes different forms — Zionism in Palestine and fascism here in America — but the cause is the same: it's US imperialism.⁴²

In one article entitled "Zionism (Kosher Nationalism) 4- Imperialism = Fascism," the Panthers implied that the Israelis had stolen land from the Palestinians, declaring that "All of the property stolen by the Zionists with their fascist storm troopers . . . and the aid they received from the imperialists must be returned to the people of Palestine."⁴³

In a 1970 press conference Huey P. Newton, head of the Party, made several anti-Israeli remarks. Newton said that the Panthers were "not against the Jewish people," but "against the government that will persecute the Palestinian people."⁴⁴ Newton continued to make a distinction between the Israeli government and the Jews as people by stating:

We support a small group of people who are in Israel who are working to see that the Zionist government of Israel is transformed into a secular people's state instead of a religious state.⁴⁵

He went on to condemn the religious basis of Israel:

The way the country is operating at this time is the height of chauvinism and ethnocentrism. I say this because any state that requires its members to adhere to a certain religion is a reactionary state.⁴⁶

In another typical assertion at the same press conference, Newton claimed that Israel "was created by Western imperialism and maintained by Western firepower."

4. *Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)*

CORE has been included in the radical definition because of its espousal of violence if necessary, nationalist-separationist inclinations and Black Power, all of which combined could be expected to imply an unfavourable attitude towards Israel. CORE does, however, pose a special problem for the hypothesis of this paper since there is a lack of sufficiently precise evidence to permit the movement's being placed among the other radicals with regard to Israel.

CORE's ties with liberal Jews, like those of other organizations, loosened with the rise of the Black Power movement in the mid sixties, and white

42 The Black Panther, August 1, 1969. Cited in tin; AJC report, p. 4.

43 The Black Panther, August 30, 1969. Cited in the AJC report, p. 4.

44 Huey P. Newton, "Press Conference August 26, 1970," The Black Panther, September 5, 1970, p. 1b. ⁴⁶ Ibid.

withdrawal from it. "Jewish financial support for . . . previously racially mixed organizations [such] as CORE and SNCC . . . dropped accordingly."⁴⁷ This particular Jewish link with black organizations also became weaker with rising allegations of anti-Semitism among the organizations. A local CORE official in Westchester County, New York, for example, reportedly made an anti-Semitic statement in 1966,⁴⁸ and CORE suffered financially for this statement.⁴⁹

Statements on black-Jewish relations made by CORE leaders in the period under review included that attributed by the *New York Times* in August 1967 to the former national director of CORE, Floyd B. McKissick, affirming CORE's opposition to anti-Semitism.⁵⁰ No reference was made to Israel in the statement. On another occasion, Roy Innis, who succeeded McKissick as CORE national director, commented in an article published in the *Manhattan Tribune* on the apparent contradiction in the situation in which if a black criticized Israel or a Jewish group he was immediately labelled anti-Semitic, but in which Jews could criticize blacks without being accused of anti-black sentiments.⁵¹

As regards the Arab side of the conflict, in a 1970 editorial in the *Manhattan Tribune*, Innis criticized Arab guerrillas for holding Jews and other Americans hostage after hijacking American jets.⁵² He condemned guerrilla tactics as irresponsible, stating that they detracted from the credibility of the stated position of the Arabs that they were against Zionism and not the Jewish people. A spokesman for CORE said that Innis' pronouncement took neither a pro-Israeli nor a pro-Arab position.⁵³

Unravelling the policy of CORE towards Israel is consequently a complicated task. Statements issued by CORE do not take a stand on Israel similar to other radical groups and, at times, are contradictory in nature. This problem may have something to do with CORE's own highly nationalist beliefs, for CORE seems to be encountering the dilemma of favouring and

47 Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet*, p. 127.

48 Williams, *The King God Didn't Save*, pp. 135-136.

49 Lawrence P. Neal, "White Liberal vs. Black Community." *Liberator*, IV, 7 (July 1966), p. 5.

50 Thomas A. Johnson, "McKissick Derides Non-Violent Ghetto Protests," *New York Times*, August 18, 1967, p. 18.

51 *Manhattan Tribune*, November 30, 1968. Cited in Herbert J. Guns, "Negro-Jewish Conflict in New York City. A Sociological Evaluation," *Midstream* XV, 3 (March 1969).

52 Roy Innis, "Jews Must Not Stand Alone," *Manhattan Tribune*, September 17, 1970. Cited in C. Gerald Fraser, "CORE Assails Arab Guerrillas," *New York Times*, September 17, 1970, p. 15.

53 *Ibid.*

rejecting differing elements of Jewish nationalism in its approach to the Middle East conflict. This issue deserves separate study in itself.

IMPLICATIONS OF BLACK MODERATE SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

The author has attempted to present an impartial exposition of black American political views towards Israel and the Middle East conflict. The remainder of the essay will be devoted to raising briefly some important issues involved in moderate black American support for Israel from a more committed and radical viewpoint. The main issues raised will be: Jewish influence on black moderates exerted through financial contributions; Israel's contacts with African nations, especially South Africa; and finally the narrow international context in which black moderates see themselves as working.

Financial Influence

Although Jewish financial influence on black organizations is difficult to document, many radicals allude to this influence when criticizing black moderates. It would be pointless to argue that black moderate responses to Israel are solely conditioned by Jewish economic input. Black groups and individuals who have regarded the State of Israel favourably have done so according to a sincere, honest, personal belief in what Israel represents. On the other hand it is safe to assume that Jewish financial contributions do constitute an influence in eliciting certain expressions from black moderates. Eddie Ellis points out in *Liberator* that money from Jewish philanthropists played an instrumental role in forming and maintaining some of the major civil rights organizations and their programmes, and was conspicuous, for example, in the NAACP, Urban League, and the non-violent march on Washington in 1963.⁵⁴ John A. Williams in the tract *The King God Didnt Save*, states that Jewish aid to radical blacks dried up with the advent of Black Power and the aid was rechannelled to moderate black groups like SCLC:⁵⁵ according to Williams, SCLC director King once responded to this aid by making a plea for Soviet Jewry. Williams also cites an example of Jewish economic influence on the moderate King in connection with the 1967 New Politics Convention in Chicago:

When the New Politics Convention convened in Chicago in late summer 1967 and some of the black delegates sought a condemnation of Israel for annexing Arab territories during the Six-Day War, Morris S. Abram and the American Jewish Committee hurried to King (who had made

54 Eddie Ellis, "Semitism in the Ghetto," *Liberator* VI (April 1966), pp. 14-16.

55 Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

the convention's opening address) to request that he refute the stand taken by the black caucus on Israel.⁵⁶

The request came in a telegram sent to King signed by numerous Jewish organizations, and, according to Williams, "was not unlike a demand," and "cannot be described as anything other than a thinly veiled threat, most probably to withhold financial support from SCLC."⁵⁷

These are only some examples of Jewish influence on a section of the black movement. However, black organizations that depend on any other outside financial assistance, including Jewish, are a detriment to the Afro-American struggle. For economic dependence presupposes ideological control: "Where you get your money you get your ideas." As Larry P. Neal points out: "A movement which cannot furnish its own indigenous means of support cannot expect to be successful."⁵⁸

Israeli Relations in Africa

Moderate blacks, in giving their support to Israel, have not clearly appreciated the implications of Israel in relation to the African continent. Israel, on the other hand, has not hesitated to show concern for black-Jewish relations in the United States; indeed, she and the United States from time to time meet and attempt to co-ordinate programmes that affect them both, and the problems of black-Jewish relations have been one area of discussion between the two countries.⁵⁹

The pro-Israeli attitude of moderate blacks was seen in the statement by Whitney Young quoted earlier, in which Young commented approvingly on Israel's aid programmes to African nations. Deeper research conducted by the African Research Group in a study on this issue, however, presents an unfavourable view of Israeli aid to Africa.⁶⁰ The Group's study concludes that this aid is economically insignificant, but that its "strategic impact . . . demand(s) serious attention from anti-imperialist political forces." Israeli aid, "at least among radicals and revolutionaries . . . is gradually being exposed and resisted."⁶¹ Israel's aid to Africa has been used to control change and has been channelled "particularly in(to) specialized military training with direct "counterinsurgency (i.e., counterrevolutionary) applications."⁶² Close

58 Ibid., p. 137.

57 Ibid., p. 141.

58 NVal, *Liberator*, IV, 7 (July 1966), p. 5.

59 The Africa Research Group, "David and Goliath Collaborate in Africa," *Tri-continental*, 15, p. 16.

60 Ibid., p. 1.

61 Ibid.

82 Ibid., p. 15.

to half of Israel's aid programmes in Africa are financed by non-Israeli funds, and the United States "has been an important contributor to these."⁶³ Israel is used, the Group shows, as a "third force" for infiltration of Africa, being more compatible than the United States or other Western countries to a developing African nation because of its apparent neutrality as a source of assistance.⁶⁴

As with Africa as a whole, black moderates are also unaware of salient relationships between Israel and South Africa. Relations between Israel and South Africa have, in fact, been created on both military and economic levels.⁶⁵ Israel is involved in South African gold, copper, and diamond mining,⁶⁶ and not until July 1961 did she reverse an earlier policy and condemn the apartheid practised in South Africa.⁶⁷ Following this step, it is true that the South African government responded bitterly to Israel's anti-apartheid policy, and at least one South African newspaper questioned Israel's switch on the question of separate development, in view of Israel's own policy in relation to the Arabs. But, "while recriminations increased on the international level so did the volume of trade between the two countries."⁶⁸

The failure of black moderates to be guided by these considerations points to their lack of broad international perspective. This is a point already noted by some commentators: Robert Allen, urging blacks to broaden their political scope, wrote in *Black Scholar*: "The conflicts between accommodation and resistance, integration and separation, violence and non-violence, struggle and apathy can be understood only by transcending the immediate context and viewing these matters from a much broader perspective."⁶⁹ John Woodford in an editorial in *Muhammad Speaks* also wrote about the need for an international scope on the part of blacks when dealing with the recent black political convention in Gary, Indiana. Woodford emphasized the need for blacks to be aware of international political events, "problems and actions having a far more powerful influence over our future than the subjects of most newspaper headlines and TV news features have."⁷⁰

63 Ibid., p. 2.

64 Richard Stevens, *Zionism, South Africa, and Apartheid: The Paradoxical Triangle* (Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization Research Centre, 1969), p. 33.

65 Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York, 1967), p. 487.

⁸⁸ Stevens, *Zionism*, p. 24.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Robert Allen, "A Historical Synthesis: Black Liberation and World Liberation," *Black Scholar* III, 6 (February 1972).

70 John Woodford, "Convention in Gary," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 17, 1972.

In this context black intellectuals need to study seriously questions such as: What is the significance of black support or non-support to Israel? Does Israel play a beneficial or a neo-colonial role in Africa? And what tangible relations exist between Israel and South Africa? The community's intellectuals and organizations have delayed too long the need to consider the implications of Israeli relations with black Africans and Americans.