

CONNECTIONS

Foreign ministers are not famous for their candor. Garret FitzGerald's assessment of the futures facing Ireland, however, is painfully straightforward. We would put it even more bluntly. Ireland may be sliding toward the mass slaughter of an all-out civil war within the next year or three. Read FitzGerald, then talk it over with others, especially with those Irish-Americans who are supporting "our brave boys in the sacred struggle against the British."

Janet Smith, as our long-term readers know, also has a thing about candor. She is concerned that the American people may be taken in by the terribly urbane Mr. Cooke's tour of our American past. (What we editorially give to the British with one hand we take away with the other.)

It is an unhappy tenth anniversary for the Free Speech Movement that began—only ten years ago?—back in Berkeley. Dale Vree was very much there. Now he tells us where he has been, personally and ideologically, since then. An instructive account with which many will be able to identify.

The general assumption is that Franco's end will mean the beginning of liberalization in Spain. Look at what's happening in Portugal, we're told. Stanley Payne offers some solid reasons for looking at Spain instead. Franco's is not the only cloud on the liberal horizon.

Surely not world federalism again! Not so fast, answers Alan Geyer. Sometimes the options once dismissed return in new and more usable form. What Geyer proposes we have not been through before.

That Jews and Blacks should "get back together again" was by no means a foregone conclusion at the recent meeting C. Eric Lincoln and Leonard Fein attended. (On every article we welcome letters to the editor; on some we expect them.)

Nor should it be lightly assumed that we know what freedom means. Gastil, Quigley, and Goulet have at the question (and perhaps at one another) in a lively exchange touching upon some of the most basic moral and political issues in our kind of world.

On the ethics of covert operations Berger checks out liberal feet for shoe sizes. Borowitz conducts what will surely be far from the last moral roundup on what Watergate was(?) all about. "Tsitsi Shaba" tells a chilling tale about Rhodesia, unfortunately only one of the many places where you cannot write under your real

name, not if you want to see your family again. Neuhaus makes the shocking proposal that Henry Kissinger is not indispensable. It appears to be a shock to Mr. Kissinger at least. On a happier, even whimsical, note, Martin Green dissects that rather odd little English world that produced the likes of Malcolm Muggeridge. Anything that promises to make Mr. Muggeridge even slightly explicable is to be welcomed.

And still much more. As a very proper New York publishing acquaintance of ours is fond of saying, it is an issue of which we need not be ashamed. More important, we hope it is an issue that you, the reader, will find rewarding. But now we have kept you from it too long. . . .

EXCURSUS I

Blacks and Jews Together

For four days this past June, about fifty Black Americans and Jewish Americans met at Fisk University. From Los Angeles and Chicago, New York and St. Petersburg, Atlanta, Nashville, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Providence and Durham, they came to talk to each other, to compare notes, to test each other's perceptions of reality. They made neither claim nor effort to represent all Blacks or all Jews. They conscientiously represented themselves, their own perspectives, and their own experiences, personal and intellectual.

The Jews and Blacks who came to Fisk were for the most part scholars or academics. Some were clergymen, but their status as religious leaders, or in some cases their identification with various civil rights agencies, was incidental to their status as scholars. Yale and Brandeis, Columbia and Vanderbilt, Hebrew Union, Fisk, Morgan, Temple, Duke, Hunter College, City University of New York, and Union Theological Seminary were all represented. Some names were familiar: James Cone, Irving Greenberg, Charles Copher, Bertram Kohn, Benjamin Quarles, Leonard Fein, Samuel DuBois Cook, John Henrik Clarke, Martin S. Rozenberg, and Robert Rotberg. Some such as Alvin Poussaint and Elliot P. Skinner could not attend but sent papers anyway. The occasion was billed as a Black-Jewish Consultation. It was intended to provide an opportunity for Jews and Blacks in the business of thinking to say what they'd been thinking about. It was not intended as an occasion for activists or politicians, although the public was invited to hear

the lectures and participate in the discussions, and some did.

The National Consultation on Black-Jewish Relations was sponsored by the Department of Religious and Philosophical Studies at Fisk University and the American Jewish Committee. The meeting grew out of a consciousness on the part of some Blacks and Jews that in recent years the traditional understandings between these two minorities have been quite seriously eroded. The intention was to examine some of the reasons why, and to discuss possible ways in which a new rapprochement could be reached which could take into account the changed and changing circumstances of each group. These changes affect their response to the world in general, to American society, and to each other. Thus the conference would range from issues with international implications, such as the status of black Jews in Israel, to more immediately personal concerns, such as the competition between Jews and Blacks for jobs and housing in New York, or to the implications of the De Funis case and the merits or perniciousness of racial or ethnic quotas.

One way to get proper perspective on contemporary issues, it was thought, was to review the historical relationships between Jews and Blacks. The relations begin with biblical times and include interaction between Jews and Africans, Jews and the African diaspora in the New World, and Jews and Afro-Americans down to the present. Scholars of each group were assigned to this task. By hindsight it was probably counterproductive to spend so much time and effort on "history"; it turned out to be an area of extreme sensitivity. There was little consensus of historical interpretation, and even less on the validity or reliability of the sources drawn upon. Scholars of comparable credentials reached startlingly differing conclusions based on contrary documentation of equal profusion.

One problem that emerged quite early, and one to which no one had apparently given any previous thought, was the problem of dealing with Jewish history and interpretation without at the same time dealing with Jewish religion. If, for example, the historicity of particular aspects of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt are called into question, critical religious values may be inadvertently impugned. Scholars often disagree on the minutia of history, but when that minutia happens to be the very essence of one's religious heritage, disagreement is suddenly more than academic. It becomes crucial to the integrity of the faith.

There was a similar problem in dealing with

black slavery. Jews may have been no better and no worse than the average slavemaster in colonial America, and their numbers may have been few. But to the slave and those joined to his experience there is but cold comfort in such an argument, and the Jew, in his turn, becomes the arch-villain of the piece.

Once the uncertainties of history have been dispensed with (they were never resolved, of course), the tone of the Consultation moderated somewhat, and attention was directed toward the more substantive issues of today. A panel of younger scholars, including Leon Watts of Yale, and Naomi Franklin, a black Jew who lectures in Jewish Studies at Brooklyn College, Steven Windmuller, the Executive Director of the Jewish Association of College Youth, and Benny Smith, a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary, focused on the status of black Jews as coreligionists with other Jews. The most critical concerns of the Consultation had to do with "The Issues Today" and "Prospectus: Black-Jewish Relations." The people who spoke to these issues were able, serious, and not always in agreement. A speaker from both groups addressed each issue from his own perspective and was in turn responded to by a speaker from the other group. The Consultation was concluded by brief summary addresses by Marc Tanenbaum and me as chairmen.

Obviously this brief description does not permit an assessment of the Consultation or of its value to Black-Jewish relations. That assessment will have to await a rendering of the Consultation minutes and a transcription of the many hours of tapes (no expletives deleted!). What can be said at this point is that in coming together to talk as they did, Jews and Blacks learned things about each other they had not known before. They discovered that *the bases for their relationship have changed* and that yesterday's understandings are no longer compelling, or even significant. Tomorrow's rapprochement, it seems certain, will derive from new categories of need and interest. Such needs and interests, while continuing to be "personal" to the group, will be progressively less parochial in scope. The Fisk Consultation scratched the surface. It was a first effort to see beyond the barriers thrown up by new times and new circumstances. What we learned was that there is so much more to know. The Fisk Consultation was a *first* consultation. There must be others.

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