

EDITORIAL/ OPINION

January 20: A day to remember

January 20th was a busy day -- the hostages were freed, the Oregon Supreme Court declared the Oregon death penalty law unconstitutional, the House Committee on Aging and Minority Affairs met in Albina for the first time, a state-wide organization of welfare clients and the poor was established, and the nation got another new president.

So although the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as president is ominous for Blacks and others minorities and the poor -- the day was tempered with other positives.

The end of the death penalty is significant, not only because the poor are executed, but because it is immoral for the government to kill.

The organization of a state-wide organization of low income people and welfare recipients is an important move toward organization to demand that the government provide the basic essentials for those in need. The current welfare budget does not even provide the basic constitutional right to life. Perhaps this new organization will pick up the spirit of King's Poor People's March and that of the organizations of the '60s.

The hostages were freed, but while the nation celebrates we should remember that our nation is preventing the freedom of other peoples through the provision of arms and through economic domination.

While the hostages were freed, we should

remember that the US has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world and that Oregon has the second highest incarceration rate of Blacks among the states, with Washington first. The press is concerned about the psychological effects of the hostages' long isolation and their return home. But is there concern about the prisoners who leave OSP with \$100 and no place to go? Is there attention to the causes of the crimes that send them to prison in such great numbers?

The meeting of the House Committee in

Albina was significant -- not only as a gesture in bringing the people's representatives to the community, but in allowing the community to set the agenda for the committee work.

Whether the sum of Tuesday's events will be plus or minus depends on us. If those who are concerned about social programs, education, welfare and bills of particular importance to Blacks like the racial harassment bill and the Black Commission, and those who oppose reinstatement of the death penalty don't show up in Salem to lobby; if the people who are worried about the problems of the poor, of education and of justice do not organize and work together; if we do not inform our government that our concern for freedom includes all the peoples of the world -- then the net effects of the incidents of January 20th will be negative.

Black-Jewish unity

(Editor's Note: This editorial was originally published in the Afro-American newspapers.)

The rise of right-wing political religion -- racist and anti-poor politics masquerading as Evangelical faith -- may be creating a quite unexpected reaction: the rejoining of Blacks and Jews.

If so, far right, "believers" may be contributing to the very "backlash" that will prove to be their undoing. Not only Blacks and Jews, but also much of the old-line liberal coalition, may be forced to combat politico-religious fundamentalism.

Ever since the Seventies began, that venerable coalition (which engineered much of the civil rights legislation) has been falling apart:

- A liberating and affirming sense of racial dignity caused Blacks to forego alliances with whites, following the purging of whites in SN-CC.

- Growing bureaucracy in the unions, joined by racist resentment against affirmative action decisions, such as the Philadelphia Plan, alienated trade unionism from the Black struggle in some places.

- Most important, the Bakke and Weber court decisions, symbolic of many Jews fear of racial quotas (due to the use of such quotas against Jews) served to complete the Black-Jewish break.

Because of these and other events, the soothsayers have long announced the death of the Black-Jewish liberal-union coalition.

But the elections have scared some into seeing, once anew, the need for allies.

The Atlanta leadership recoiled in disbelief as white Baptist announced that God didn't hear prayers of Jews. And both Blacks and Jews have become alarmed by threats to turn the United States into a "Christian nation"

(meaning, of course a WASP nation).

A pre-election assembly of Black clergy in Washington, D.C., also sounded the alarm against the Moral Majority, as did Patricia Harris and other Blacks in government.

Now comes word that Jews (who have felt estranged from most of the Black movement for some time) have taken notice of this Black concern for religious (as well as racial) pluralism.

It is almost as if the Moral Majority has caused Blacks to reaffirm commitment to religious diversity -- meaning, of course, especially the Jewish and Muslim minorities. Thus, it was with much happiness that we heard Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, call on Jews to rejoin Blacks in "coalitions of decency against the chilling power of the radical right."

Rabbi Schindler went even further. He said, "We will disagree with Blacks on racial quotas, but we will continue to share a vision of compassionate society and work together in support of national health insurance, youth employment, decent housing, and similar programs."

This clarion call to unity and alliance-building is perhaps one of the most promising things to happen in recent days.

It is a positive sign that all may not be lost, that the forces of the right wing may not rule for long, and that even Blacks and Jews may be headed toward healing times.

Surely this past election has taught us (and all who want to see a just and humane and pluralistic society) that coalitions are absolutely mandatory in order to combat conservatism and racism. It is time for a massive "homecoming" of all who once shared in the civil rights family.



Namibia: It's the same old song...

By Fungai Kumbula

It was naive to have expected anything different. For all the hoopla the illegal South African regime has received lately, it still has its collective head buried in the sand. The only thing that has happened is that a few of the grains of sand has been blown aside but all it revealed is that even after almost four hundred years, the head in the sand is still as hard as concrete.

In spite of the lessons of Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, the "thinking" if one can call it that, still is: one step forward and four steps back. The latest backsliding involves South Africa's latest answer to the on-again, off-again Namibian issue. Since 1977, the United Nations has been negotiating with South Africa to allow the holding of UN supervised elections in the UN trust territory South Africa has occupied illegally for the last 61 years. In 1978, 1979 and 1980, South Africa agreed to let these elections be held but each time brought up one or more of its endless array of stalling tactics. The result has been that the Namibian question has been in limbo ever since.

After the people's victory and the eventual ascendency of the Mugabe government and its pledge to build a nation for all Zimbabweans regardless of colour, there was speculation in the international arena that South Africa would take this as a valuable lesson and quickly move to resolve the Namibian problem and even begin to make genuine concessions within South Africa proper. The latest development should put an end to any such misplaced hopes. The South African regime is still mired in the 16th century and stubbornly refuses to deal with 20th century reality. Slavery is still legal in South Africa and the apartheid regime has no intention of changing the status quo in either South Africa

or Namibia. All along South Africa had promised to allow the Namibian elections to proceed this year. The UN Under Secretary, Brian Urquhart had even made a special trip to Pretoria, the South African capital, to assure the South Africans of the UN's impartiality since South Africa had charged the UN was biased in favour of SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement that is expected to win any free and fair elections. The UN had gone so far as to cut off funding for SWAPO's mission at the UN and, the liberation movement and its Front-Line supporters (Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania) had suspended military operations in Namibia as a gesture of their commitment to finding peaceful solution to the Namibia issue.

Even with everyone concerned bending over backwards to accommodate her like this, South Africa still found a way to renege on her pledge. She refused to set a firm date for the proposed Namibian elections claiming that she needed more time to be convinced that the UN was impartial. The Africans immediately headed for the UN where they pressed for immediate punitive measures against South Africa. They are once again asking for the imposition of a total economic boycott of South Africa including a cutoff of oil. In the past such sanctions have been vetoed by none other than the "land of the free and home of the brave," the US along with her other Western allies; Britain, France, West Germany and Canada. The Western argument then was that sanctions should only be used as a last resort after all other methods had failed. The African nations are now pointing out that

they have tried every conceivable peaceful method there is; the only other alternative left would be a military confrontation. The African measure is likely to be passed by the General Assembly which has a Third World majority and is consequently more sympathetic. It is in the Security Council where the Africans are waiting to see whether the West will once again come to the rescue of the beleaguered South African regime.

Shortly after South Africa delivered her negative response to the UN on the Namibian elections, SWAPO President, Sam Nujoma, flanked by ambassadors from Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, held a news conference at which he declared SWAPO was going to intensify the armed struggle because that was the only way left to liberate Namibia and her oppressed peoples. He also expressed the hope that Western nations would heed the African call for a total economic boycott of the apartheid regime and so be counted on the side of those who fight for justice and equality for all peace loving people all over the world.

So in Namibia, as has happened so many times before, it's back to the drawing board. Analysts say South Africa may have decided on the latest stalling tactics because she expects a friendlier ear in Washington with the incoming administration. The Africans are, therefore, also anxiously watching to see if the new administration will stand on the side of dignity and equality for all or if it will instead be swayed by the current wave of right wing rhetoric trying to turn back the hands of time. More than likely, Namibia will be Reagan's first test in Africa.

The Red Year 1980

By Dr. Manning Marable
Part II

The last months of 1979 and the year 1980 brought a reemergence of a particularly virulent white racism to the very center of American society and politics. Throughout U.S. history, there have been periodically groundswells of mass support for anti-Black, anti-Semitic, and/or anti-Catholic ideas; the nativist Know Nothing movement in Northern cities during the 1840s and 1850s; the white reaction against Black Reconstruction in the late nineteenth century; the xenophobia and racist/anti-Semitic dogma of the "second" Ku Klux Klan of the Harding and Coolidge administrations; the segregationist South's "Massive Resistance" to the civil rights legislation of the 1950s and 1960s. Only the terrible Red Summer of 1919, when hundreds of Blacks were slaughtered, lynched and in some instances publicly burned, outdistanced the racial crisis of the more recent past.

Examples of this new level of racist terror are almost endless; a cross burning at the home of a Somerset, New Jersey, Black community activist in November, 1979; the vicious execution of 22 year old Jimmy Lee Campbell, a Black deaf man, by two white hunters because "they failed to bag a deer in their day's hunting trip," in Oroville, California, January, 1980; a nine year old Black girl shot in Wrightsville, Georgia, in the wake of a rally demanding an end to housing and job discrimination; four Black churches firebombed in Far Rockaway, New York, in May, 1980; two Black teenagers killed by sniper fire in Cincinnati as they walked to a neighborhood store in June, 1980; the near-fatal shooting of Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, at a motel in Fort Wayne, Indiana; two young Black men killed by sniper fire in Salt Lake City, where only days before a burning mattress was thrown on the steps of a Black church and a burning cross was planted at a transit authority workshop where a Black man worked, in August, 1980; the mysterious murder of at least eleven Black children in Atlanta, Georgia. Particularly tragic were the racial incidents in Youngstown, Ohio. Throughout October, 1980, there were widespread rumors that the Klan intended to plant a bomb at a Black high school. Several Blacks were chased off the streets by gun-

welding whites. Black owned automobiles were deliberately shot. Finally, a group of white youths decided to shoot "a couple of niggers" at random. Their victim was a young teenaged Black girl who had been playing along the sidewalk in front of her home. The father of one of the white youths admitted later that he allowed them to use his truck, even though he knew of their plans in advance.

At the root of many of these incidents was the Black community's historic enemy, the Ku Klux Klan. In its "glory days" of the early 1920s, the KKK entered state and local elections with great success. During 1922 and 1923 the Klan elected governors in Oregon and Georgia, a U.S. Senator in Texas and hundreds of sheriffs, state attorneys, mayors, judges and police commissioners. In 1924 it helped elect governors in Colorado and Maine, won almost complete control of the state of Indiana, and claimed between 3 to 5 million members. On one notorious occasion in August, 1925, over 40,000 robed Klansmen marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. Between the Great Depression and the eve of the modern Civil Rights Movement, the Klan almost disappeared as a national force. Yet according to U.S. Justice Department statistics, from 1945-1965 the KKK was "responsible for 70 bombings in Georgia and Mississippi, 30 Negro church burnings in Mississippi, the castration of a Black man in Birmingham, 10 murders in Alabama, and 50 bombings in Birmingham."

After a brief period of decline, the Ku Klux Klan returned as a national force of political importance in the mid-1970s. The hallmark of this newest version of the Invisible Empire might be termed "respectable racism." Klan leader David Duke is typical of the trend. (Exchanging) his mask and white robe for a three-piece business suit, (Duke) cloaks white supremacy in misleading slogans such as "reverse discrimination" and "neighborhood schools." He urges his followers to file law suits and to "use the legal system to reverse the gains of the civil rights movement." Even though the facade of respectability exists, the gutter tactics of Klan terrorism remain the same. In 1977 the Klan made headlines by running vigilance patrols along the U.S. Mexican border, in a well-publicized effort to keep undocumented Mexican laborers from entering the country. In 1978 the

Klan mounted a major political offensive in northern Mississippi against the United League, a grassroots coalition of Black activists and residents. In 1979, the Klan was active in the U.S. Navy yards in Norfolk, Virginia, distributing racist literature and attempting to incite riots between Black and white sailors; worked closely with anti-busing forces in campaigns to halt public school desegregation; brandished sawed off shotguns and submachine guns, shooting at SCLC marchers at a Decatur, Alabama Civil Rights demonstration; cruised through the Black neighborhoods of Birmingham while shooting randomly into Blacks homes; firebombed houses in Atlanta and burned crosses at Black churches, schools and homes in hundreds of cities across the country. In April, 1980, two Klansmen fired their shotguns and wounded four Black women on a street in Chattanooga, Tennessee, shortly after two burning crosses were discovered in the Black community. In July, one of the klansmen was convicted on a reduced charge after he admitted shooting his gun. The other two Klansmen were acquitted on all charges.

The most publicized incident of Klan violence occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, on November 3, 1979. Approximately 75 anti-Klan demonstrators were meeting in a Black housing project in preparation for a march. About forty armed Klansmen and Nazis drove into the project and provoked an argument. As demonstrators scattered, the racists began shooting. Five unarmed people, all members of the Communist Workers Party, were killed and eleven were wounded. Only 16 out of 40 Klan and Nazis at the shooting were indicted, and of that number only 6 were eventually tried. The district attorney refused to order two U.S. government agents who had infiltrated the groups to testify as witnesses. Defense attorneys forced all Blacks off the jury, and an anti-communist Cuban exile was selected as jury foreman. Despite overwhelming evidence on television videotape, the all-white jury found the two Nazis and four Klansmen not guilty of riot or murder. The Greensboro executions and the subsequent acquittal of the murderers seemed to many activists to provide legal approval of the future Klan/Nazi terrorism.



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The Portland Observer is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social ills; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist practices and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the minority population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality; unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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