

With All Deliberate Delay

By Robert E. Segal

They were three young idealists determined to act upon their convictions. One, James Chaney of Mississippi, was black. The other two, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner of New York, were Jewish. In the summer of 1961, seeking to learn the facts in the bombing of a black church in Neshoba County, Mississippi, they were murdered.

The three young martyrs had come into the world at approximately the same time that the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that segregation in public schools was "inherently unequal."

That historic decision came down May 17, 1954. Allowing time for the machinery to desegregate the schools to be set in motion, the court on May 31, 1955, declared the process was to go forward "with all deliberate speed."

This dramatic series of historic events was recalled a few weeks ago when Blacks and Jews gathered in the chapel of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations "to reappropriate the bonds of covenant and commitment which brought the three to their deaths."

The 1954 and 1955 Court decisions had to do with the schools. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a much more comprehensive measure. It prohibited discrimination for reason of color, race, religion, or national origin in places of public accommodation covered by interstate commerce. It also prohibited discrimination in jobs.

Keeping the heroic sacrifices of Jim Chaney, Andy Goodman, and Mike Schwerner in mind and recalling the determination of our chief executives, lawmakers, and judges in the 1950s and 1960s to

concretize the imperative of equality of opportunity for all, we are now saddened and alarmed to behold vast retrogression in the areas of ethnic, racial, and religious amity and bold frontal attacks on enforcement of civil rights laws.

As to ethnic "bonds of covenant and commitment," the ominous overtones marking the current Presidential campaign cut deep wounds in Jewish-Black relations. The Rev. Carl McCall, director of the New York State Commission on Human Rights, speaking at the June 20 service honoring the memory and celebrating the valor of the trio slain in Mississippi, was justified in stating that both the Black and Jewish communities stand as threatened communities now. His reference was to the current federal erosion of commitment to civil rights and to sporadic but persistent anti-Semitic incidents.

It is unfortunate that mass media portrayals of the fall-out from the Jessie Jackson-Louis Farrakhan relationship rubbed sore the feelings of Blacks and Jews. Where an altruistic and effective alliance had written a brilliant chapter in intergroup understanding over 40 years, now the

misstatement, innuendoes, harsh public campaign statements, and heated hostility weakened the stout fabric of a historic coalition. This is a needed alliance that must be reconstituted.

However, an even graver concern arises in that larger theater of activities having to do with civil rights. The Reagan Administration's mode of dealing with this sector of the law is a bugle call of retreat.

One example should suffice. Recall the Supreme Court's 1955 "with all deliberate speed" dictum; then compare it with the startling pronouncement made in July by William Bradford Reynolds regarding the new federal fair housing law. Said Mr. Reynolds, U.S. Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division: "The government ought not to be in the business of trying to bring integration about."

Where have all the pretty flowers of civil rights laws enforcement gone? Why is the memory of the gallant trio of martyrs in Mississippi no longer green?

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TEL AVIV (WNS) — A 19-year-old Israeli soldier, Danny Gortler of Ramat Gan, has been selected as one of the three finalists in the 40th Geneva competition for young pianists, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation has announced. Gortler has been one of the four Israeli contestants from among the 90 who entered the competition. The field has been narrowed to Gortler, a Brazilian and a Japanese.



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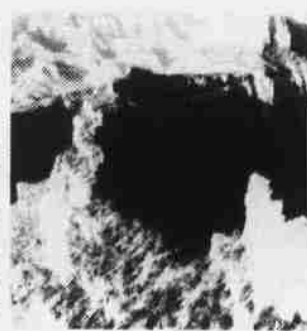
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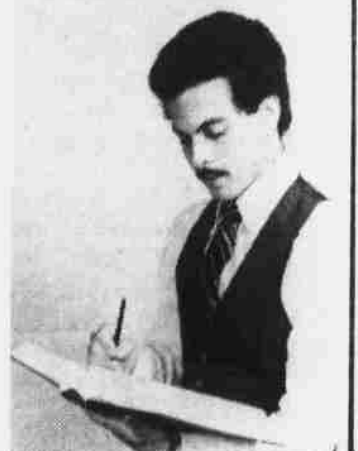
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