

poor go on being poor because they are unproductive. Its ethic of anticompassion is more deeply rooted than that. Its real argument is that in a period of economic contraction the nation works best if the poor remain poor and the struggling middle class continues on an economic tightrope. The Reagan cuts—particularly those involving loans for college students, food supplements for pregnant mothers, job training for young blacks—are not designed to promote an economic race in which the competitors have an equal start any more than its massive budget is designed for austerity. The Reagan cuts are made in order to be sure there is money available for those at the top of the

economic ladder, who are the major beneficiaries of its programs.

It is the lure of inequity the Reagan administration is selling, and it is in this commitment that its relationship to power chic is most intense. As 1984 approaches, Reagan policy seems in fact likely to need, as never before, the imagery and gloss of power chic for the constituency it requires to remain in office. Certainly nothing else, neither a belief in classic *laissez-faire* nor a genuine conservatism, will do. For what is being proposed by this Administration is that in an economy of declining expectations the poor must take even less so that others, already better off, may have more. □

Jack Greenberg

## The Blacks, Reaganism, and 1984

**A**ffirmative action, school integration, black economic status, the Reagan administration's attack on civil rights, and the exercise of black political power: these are some of the matters that now concern the civil rights community. Together, they may suggest a picture of meaningless Brownian movement. Some think that years ago issues were crisper, progress was achieved more readily. In fact, however, civil rights issues always have been difficult and complex. Indeed, it might be argued that today they converge so that legal and political questions bear a comprehensible relationship to one another. We may, as a result, be on the verge of critical black political involvement.

First, it may be useful to dispel the myth that in the past things were easier and simpler for civil rights advocates. *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) resolved what today can be stated as a simple question only after a quarter-century courtroom campaign. That issue was whether state-imposed segregation in education should be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In the 1940s and '50s, however, there was great uncertainty about the outcome (*Brown* was argued three times). We forget how deeply rooted were the obstacles of federalism, which stood as a barrier to invalidating state laws; the iron grip the South held on Congress; the depth of racial prejudice, and fear

of precipitating racial violence. As if to manifest the substance underlying these fears, Little Rock and other communities staged insurrections, Congress came within a hair's breadth of incapacitating the federal courts, "Impeach Earl Warren" movements erupted, and very little school integration took place until the early 1970s.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s early crusade, which focused on voting rights and public accommodations, seems uncomplicated today: apartheid was wrong, the demonstrations were right. But President Kennedy, fearing violence and promising corrective legislation, attempted to persuade the Freedom Riders not to ride. Others, opposed to discrimination in theory, objected to trespass on private property, asserting that law enforced in neutral fashion required convicting sit-in demonstrators and that peaceful demonstrations provoked violence. A few of the demonstrators were indeed violent or had short tempers.

As the '60s progressed, Vietnam issues mingled with civil rights concerns created enormous tensions and confusion. Nevertheless, the great civil rights legislation of the '60s emerged from this situation and became the basis of the rights of blacks, other minorities, and women today. Whether the laws would be enacted, however, was uncertain. Then the assassination of John Kennedy

and Martin Luther King, Jr. provided impetus without which these laws would not have been adopted at the times they were. Some leading proponents of civil rights opposed the Equal Employment Opportunities Act, fearing it would bring down the entire effort. Opponents introduced coverage of sex discrimination to defeat the bill. But it was enacted and has become the legal mainstay of the civil rights and women's rights movements.

THIS RECITATION of happy endings following crises and uncertainties is hardly set forth to argue that everything turns out for the best. But it does suggest that issues of race have been at least as deep and difficult in the past as they are now and that, nevertheless, progress has been made. If there is a center of gravity to the racial issues of today, it is to be found in the policies of the Reagan administration. Its economic policies have hurt racial minorities. In its social policies, it has fought blacks and other minority groups virtually every inch of the way. In part this stems from the Administration's perception that there is political advantage in fighting against affirmative action and school busing, two controversial civil rights remedies.

The Administration also has taken anti-civil rights positions that have been quite unpopular, suggesting a commitment deeper than expediency. It withheld support from reenactment of the Voting Rights Act in a form that would have made it effective until reenactment by overwhelming majorities was certain. President Reagan restored tax exemption to segregated schools from which the Internal Revenue Service had removed it, provoking enormous public outrage; this was followed by a Supreme Court decision in the *Bob Jones* case, which thoroughly repudiated what the president had ordered. At this writing, he has attempted to depose three members of the Civil Rights Commission with whose views he disagrees on busing and affirmative action, precipitating bitter opposition in the Congress and from civil rights advocates. Indeed, so antagonistic has the Administration been to black aspirations that some believe it has offended white moderates. In late July, the Department of Justice and the White House engaged in a spate of pro-civil rights activity—including a lawsuit against Alabama's higher education system, and advocating a fair housing bill—which civil rights groups claim was designed to combat this impression.

The hostility that Administration civil rights positions engender in the minority community comes at a time when blacks are registering and voting more than ever before and may be poised on

the edge of a quantum jump in their political participation. To some extent, at least in the South, this is a function of the Voting Rights Act. Even in the North, the Voting Rights Act (as in New York) and constitutional principles of one-man one-vote facilitate fuller black participation. And in the North the example of what has happened in the South has been important. But more significant, I think, may be the fact that the Administration's attack on affirmative action is aimed at that part of the black community that is most advantageously situated and most capable of fighting back.

Despite opposition by a few conservative black economists and writers, most blacks support affirmative action because growing numbers of them have higher education and professional and managerial positions as a result of it.

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT that the proposal for a black presidential candidacy becomes interesting. Undoubtedly, black candidacies have been the greatest single factor in bringing out large numbers of black voters. The experience in Chicago—where Harold Washington's candidacy increased the black registration from about 400,000 to over 700,000—is the most striking example. If a comparable increase in registration could be achieved elsewhere, the increase in black votes could far surpass majorities by which Ronald Reagan carried a perhaps critical number of states. Were this attempted by a black candidate running for president, it would, however, present some downside risks as well. It might stimulate an increase in registration of whites opposed to minority aspirations; it might split the liberal vote in the primaries, thereby assuring the selection of a conservative white candidate; it might split the Democratic vote in the election, assuring the victory of the Republican candidate.

Assuming that, in the primaries, a black candidate won an important number of delegates, he or she might be in a position to negotiate at the convention to assure the ultimate selection of a nominee committed to positions the black candidate advocated. And there is no more need for a black candidate, defeated in the primaries, to run as a candidate in the general election than there is for a defeated white. The Democratic candidate in this election surely will be white, and so he will not attract the same degree of antiblack animus that, for example, was directed against Harold Washington in Chicago.

The vagaries of the primary process are so numerous that there is no way of telling whether, in the last analysis, a more or less conservative Demo-

cratic candidate would be selected if one of the principal players were black. But, in any event, any Democratic candidate would be in a position to benefit—possibly enough to achieve election—from the increased black registration. And any Democratic position on racial issues would be more congenial to minorities than those of the present Administration.

Late in June I attended a meeting in Birmingham with civil rights lawyers and community activists interested in removing barriers to voting in the South and in a black presidential candidacy. The meeting of over a hundred persons was called on short notice, and the people who attended were busy, important figures in their communities. Nevertheless, the acceptance rate was extremely high and there was a kind of electricity in the air, a kind of tension and energy that I have not seen since the days of the “movement” in the '60s. To me it suggested that an effort to get out the vote, perhaps centered on a black presidential candidacy, would be very successful.

While politics is at center-stage, supportive legal action to prevent the undoing of the gains of the past with regard to schools, affirmative action, and other questions is also being fought hard. Civil rights lawsuits to eliminate barriers to voting will be particularly important throughout the South. Burdensome registration procedures (for instance, many Mississippi voters must register twice) are impediments to the unregistered—that is, to blacks.

The mix of other civil rights issues and the way to resolve them now presents varying degrees of difficulty, especially in face of attacks by the Department of Justice. Nevertheless, civil rights lawyers and their supporters in Congress, so far, virtually have held the line. The economic issues, however, will be determined in large part by the political struggle. Because of all these challenges, the coming election may see a new, high level of minority political participation. A political breakthrough may move the quest for equal treatment to a new plateau. □

Benjamin Martin

## Spain, the U.S., and Latin America

**S**ince taking office last December, Spain's new Socialist government has accorded foreign policy a central role. This signifies quite a turnabout. For, ever since the beginning of this century—excepting the Civil War of the 1930s—Spain has been rather a passive witness than a participant on the international scene. The disrepute of the Franco dictatorship consigned the country to still greater, enforced international isolation, which was partly alleviated in the '50s, when it submitted to a client-state relationship with the United States. More recently, in the years of post-Franco democratization, 1976–82, an overwhelming preoccupation with the new parliamentary structure and domestic problems—together with the fact that for the last two of those years an increasingly indecisive center-right government held office—resulted in further neglect of most foreign-policy issues.

Much of the new Spanish activism is sparked by Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, who has a thorough and exceptional grounding in foreign-policy matters. Over the past four years, “Felipe” has been serving as vice-chair of the Socialist International, charged with the direction of its activities in Latin America.

SPAIN'S NEW FOREIGN-POLICY APPROACH has a three-pronged thrust:

(1) To gain recognition as a full-fledged participant in European affairs through entry in the Common Market. (A related matter, what sort of conditional collaboration in the Western defense system the government should institute, is now under study.)

(2) A recasting of the relationship with the