



The L-word's dirty little secret

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

Public discussion of race and politics may have faded with the exit of candidate Jesse Jackson, but the issue has not faded. Instead, the race factor has become the dirty little secret of the 1988 election—and the political Stealth Bomber of the Republican Party. George Bush's exploitation of racial fears is one of the primary reasons he leads Democrat Michael Dukakis in the polls.

This crass strategy was tipped in July when various Republican mouthpieces began denouncing the Democratic ticket as a "three-headed monster" following the Atlanta convention. The Republicans denied any racist intent, but it was clear to all that the monster metaphor was fitted for Jackson's head. "We were concerned about spotlighting Jackson as a liberal, not as a black," explained Illinois Gov. James Thompson, the moderate chosen by Republican leadership to float the "monster" phrase.

But Bush's subsequent campaign strategy demonstrates that "liberalism" has become the preferred euphemism for the "race factor". "When Republicans use the word 'liberal' as a curse, they're telling whites—especially white

males—that blacks do not deserve special treatment and will not get it if their party is elected," contends Vernon Jarrett, black columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "Why else would white blue-collar workers support the flagrantly anti-labor policies of the Republicans?"

When Republicans recite the litany of liberalism's failings, they prominently include issues with strong racial components: affirmative action, busing, welfare programs, federal job programs, criminal rehabilitation and support for civil rights. Seldom do they mention Social Security, Medicare, the GI Bill or other more widely accepted fruits of liberalism.

Racial parties: "To my constituents, a liberal is a person who supports the blacks, plain and simple," explains William Krystyniak, a Chicago alderman and Democratic candidate for the Illinois Senate. "Quite frankly, that's why Dukakis is having such a hard time attracting support in my neighborhood." Krystyniak's candor is not surprising for a Chicago politician; open racial antagonisms have roiled this heavily segregated city at least since the election of its first black mayor, the late Harold Washington.

The alderman's continued identification as a Democrat is a bit surprising. The Cook County Republican Party is aggressively casting its net for disaffected "white ethnics." Several former leaders of the city's famed Democratic Machine changed parties in the wake of Washington's triumphs, and the process has been repeated in many rust-belt cities where blacks have gained increasing electoral clout. If those trends continue, some analysts predict, big-city politics may soon degenerate into contests between "black" and "white" parties.

There is considerable evidence that this polarizing trend is being repeated at the national-party level. Many trace this development to the mid-'60s, when the Democratic Party—through the Great Society programs of Lyndon Johnson—became an active supporter of the civil rights movement. Johnson's landslide victory in 1964, in fact, was the last time the Democrats won the majority of white votes.

Since then—through the campaigns of George Wallace, Richard Nixon-Spiro Agnew, Ronald Reagan and George Bush—political code words have been used effectively to court those turned off by the Democrats' agenda of racial equality.

Jesse's pitch: "Goldwater made 'states' rights' a code word. George Wallace made 'busing' one. Spiro Agnew's 'the silent majority' was a signal," explained Jackson in a recent speech. Jackson said Nixon used "law and order" as a code word and Reagan uses "national security." He said "increased military spending" is actually a code for "don't let those Third World, non-white nations push us around anymore."

The former Democratic candidate, who has upped his decibel level in recent days, said an entire generation of young Americans is being taught that "to grow up liberal is to be dirty, inadequate, un-American or subversive. There is something dangerous about that."

Jackson strongly defended liberalism's many achievements in the racial arena and raised a strong note of concern about Bush's tactics. "Despite the enormous civil rights gains of the past three decades, even the rawest forms of racism persist," he said. He noted that in the first six months of this year racial incidents against blacks were recorded in at least 20 states, and said such incidents had increased by 400 percent since the start of Reagan's reign.

"Something is happening in our country that saddens my heart," Jackson said. "It is frightening: overt racial aggression against blacks, overt anti-Semitic acts, class rejection of the poor and exploitation of women workers." Despite this, he added, "we have the nation's vice president running for president on the proposition that civil liberties are subversive."

Jackson's assertion of a resurgent racism is disheartening. After all, it was his candidacy that provided optimists with hope that racism may have loosened its grip on the U.S. electorate. "Jackson's candidacy represented the possibility that race-based appeals could be transcended

INSIDE STORY

in American politics. That's what made his campaign so promising," explained Robert Borosage, a top Jackson adviser and senior fellow of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, a left-leaning think tank.

Safire's thesis: Borosage is less certain about Bush's exploitation of racist sentiment than are some others in Jackson's camp. Still, he said he recognizes the power of racial symbolism to provoke powerful political passions. "There's no doubt that Republican strategists realize how effective appeals to racism are," Borosage noted, "and it's difficult not to utilize whatever works." He cited a piece by *New York Times* columnist William Safire as representative of many Republicans' thinking.

Safire's column in the paper's October 13 edition argued that the turnaround in Dukakis' support started during the Democratic convention. In the days leading up to it, Safire noted, Dukakis led in all polls by approximately 10 percent. At the time, the public still perceived the Massachusetts governor as Jackson's political foe. But by the end of the Republican convention those polling figures had reversed. Something happened between conventions that caused a lot of minds to change, Safire argued.

"For three days, all the American people saw and heard was Jesse Jackson," Safire wrote in the *Times* column. "What did Jesse want? See Jesse and his family. Watch the 'troika' of Dukakis-Jackson-Bentsen make up.... Watch the Jackson supporters, who were telecast as if they filled the hall, seem to dominate the convention."

Safire's implicit point is that a majority of white Americans turned away from the Democratic Party once they discovered it was serious about involving black Americans in the political process. Like others of his ideological persuasion, the conservative columnist seemed not at all troubled by this race-based reaction. Rather, he counted it as a Dukakis blunder.

The acceptance and exploitation of indigenous native American racism is not a strictly partisan affair. Dukakis' flight from the liberal label is a form of acquiescence to this pernicious feature of our national life. His headlong quest for "Reagan Democrats" ignores the race factor as a component in Reagan's popularity. When he fails to challenge Bush on the code-word issues, he lends to them an unnecessary credence.

By not speaking to the hidden but pervasive racism factor, this country's political leadership allows its perpetuation.

CONTENTS

Inside Story: the real meaning of the "L-word"	2
Israel's election and the <i>intifada</i>	3
In Short	4
Dukakis' missed opportunities	6
Family planning and the next president	7
The case for international workers' rights	8
Algeria—pointing the finger	9
Poland—Solidarity's comeback	10
Anselm Kiefer's scorched landscapes	12
Editorial	14
Letters Sylvia	15
Viewpoint: Flailing in the wake of the INF treaty	16
Ashes & Diamonds by Alexander Cockburn	17
Life in the U.S.: Prisons within prisons	18
Juggling perceptions with the Moscow Circus	19
Coverup—a contragate film primer	19
In Print: <i>Libra</i> —Don DeLillo's Kennedy assignation	20
Canada's center doesn't hold	21
Shapinsky's Karma, Boggs' Bills	21
Classifieds/Life in Hell	23
Debate grate	24

(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 472-5700. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright © 1988 by Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 12, No. 41) published Oct. 26, 1988, for newsstand sales Oct. 26-Nov. 1, 1988.

By Joe Lockard

JERUSALEM

The Israeli election's big shadow

THE INTIFADA, OR PALESTINIAN UPRISING, will be almost one year old by November 1, the day Israelis will go to the polls and decide which candidates from 27 parties will fill the Knesset's 120 seats and which major party—Labor or Likud—will lead them over the next four years. The *intifada* has affected the campaign's content and tenor, and, in turn, the campaign has affected the situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Just as their economies are intimately bound into a "binational economy," Israel, the West Bank and Gaza today constitute a single body politic. Much of the election controversy centers around the degree and extent to which these bonds will be either loosened or strengthened. It's an open question, however, whether Israel's parliamentary system is still capable of deciding the question of trading land for peace. Extra-parliamentary forces—settler groups from Israel's fundamentalist right and the Palestinian *intifada*'s underground leadership—increasingly appear poised to provide political impetus after the election.

Intifada images: As in the U.S. presidential campaign, a good TV campaign is the ticket to electoral success, and the *intifada* is a perpetual theme on the evening broadcasts here. By campaign's end, an estimated 98 percent of voters will have watched the numerous state-sponsored and officially monitored campaign commercials.

"The *intifada* has appeared in every piece of propaganda broadcast so far," says Mattiyahu Peled, Knesset member for the left-wing Progressive List for Peace. "The Likud advocates using brute force to put it down; Labor says that a political solution is necessary to put it down. 'These elections mean nothing for the Palestinians. Whatever constellation of power arises will have the same immediate policy toward the *intifada*.'"

The Likud coalition's TV campaign begins with the slogan: "Personal security!" The message is clear to those whose car windows have been broken by Palestinian-thrown rocks during the past year. A vote for Likud means "personal security" when driving in the West Bank and Gaza.

Likud's advertisements suggest that more Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Gaza are appropriate responses to the *intifada*. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir calls for using live ammunition against rock-throwers, and Likud's campaign manager, former Defense Minister Moshe Arens, has demanded wide use of the death penalty, mass expulsions and a range of exemplary penalties.

Such right-wing pressures, plus internal army demands, generated a strong response from Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a member of the Labor Party. In September he authorized the use of plastic bullets against Palestinian demonstrators. For several years plastic bullet stocks had been imported and then manufactured locally. Rabin's decision to begin using them did not result from a changed tactical situation, but from a campaign-generated need for a tough-line image. He could not afford to be tagged by the Likud with a "softy" label.

Thus the dozen-plus Palestinians killed in recent weeks by plastic bullets might aptly be described as victims of Israeli electoral violence.



What happens next in the Occupied Territories? The Israeli vote may answer that question.

The *intifada* has provoked other campaign tactics that play on anti-Palestinian attitudes even within moderate sectors of the Jewish electorate. The Labor party has emphasized

the "demographic problem" involved in retaining full control of the Occupied Territories. One campaign video opens with pictures of Palestinian schoolchildren ("nice,

clean ones," according to a Labor public relations official) and then cuts to a Jewish circumcision ceremony, intoning, "He may be born into a minority in the Land of Israel."

Transfer solution: A cruder message comes from the new right-wing Homeland party, headed by former Gen. Rehavam Zeevi (inappropriately nicknamed "Gandhi"). Its single-plank political platform answers the "demographic problem" this way: expel the Arabs. The party, which may succeed in entering the Knesset, Israel's parliament, with a seat or two, represents the growing political legitimacy accorded to the "transfer solution," which was once confined to the socially less-acceptable Kach movement headed by Rabbi Meir Kahane.

On October 5 the Central Elections Committee banned Kach from the elections. It found that the movement's philosophy was "racist" and "anti-democratic" under the terms of a law passed after the last election. Israel's High Court of Justice last week upheld the validity of the committee's decision. The Homeland party, essentially a home-grown version of the Kach ideology imported from New York, easily survived the committee vote.

The Homeland party differs with Kach in only one major way: instead of advocating immediate forceful expulsions, it proposes diplomatic negotiations toward a "peaceful" Arab population transfer.

But Kach spokesman Baruch Marzel criticizes the Homeland party's approach, saying, "They'll discover what Kahane already knows—the Arabs won't get up and leave peacefully." The Homeland party may capture the votes of those who are inclined to agree with Kahane's theses but are repelled by his blatant racism.

Israelis have grown more receptive to this message in recent years. A 1983 poll found 22 percent of the Jewish public agreed with the statement, "I support those working to make the Arabs leave Judea and Samaria." By 1986 the same poll registered 38 percent support for the same statement. A 1987 poll indicated 69 percent of the Jewish public wanted either annexation or permanent Israeli control of the Occupied Territories.

PLO may be waiting until after vote to make its move

The Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) major anticipated response to the *intifada*—the declaration of an independent state and a government-in-exile by the Palestine National Council (PNC)—may be postponed due in part to the November 1 Israeli election. Reports indicate that the Soviet Union and Egypt have successfully pressed the PLO to delay any such declaration, at least temporarily, because it is believed that the move would boost the conservative Likud party's election chances.

Salah Khalaf, the PLO's second-ranking officer, has sought to delay such a declaration, describing Labor as "more progressive," while PLO head Yassir Arafat recently stated in Cairo that "when the PNC convenes, it will take into consideration not what goes on in Israel, but what goes on for the good of the Palestinian people."

Israeli and American elections may provide a diplomatic excuse for postponing the declaration because Arafat

and the mainline PLO are concerned about internal Palestinian unity. But strong opposition to this step has been voiced by, among others Naif Hawatmeh, leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

In the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians say that the *intifada* will continue no matter what the election results, even possibly entering a fresh growth phase should a post-election hard-line policy be initiated by a right-wing government.

An Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) intelligence evaluation released two weeks before the election made headlines when it said that the PLO had instructed its operatives inside the Occupied Territories to refrain from inaugurating a new stage of armed attacks until after the election. According to the head of IDF's Southern Command, Gen. Yitzhak Mordecai, weapons caches have been found in Gaza, and Palestinians' recent use of grenades and large bombs there indicates that attacks will escalate soon. —J.L.

The *intifada* has affected the campaign's content and tenor, and, in turn, the campaign has affected the situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

One recent private survey of the West Bank and Gaza rabbinic leadership found 62 percent favoring forced transfer and 13 percent desiring the encouragement of voluntary Palestinian emigration.

The "transfer solution" has strong support from others in the ultranationalist right. Tehiya (Renaissance) party Chairman Yuval Neeman, for example, has demanded the immediate expulsion of at least 1,200 Palestinian administrative detainees. Tehiya has

Continued on page 10