

GINSBURG'S LAW AND SOUTH AFRICA

In a statement that reverberated throughout their country, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies has unanimously and vehemently called for the elimination of "all unjust discriminatory laws and practices" based on race and color.

Now that is an explosive statement in a country where Jews comprise less than 3 per cent of the white population; and where the supremacy of that white population is based on racially discriminatory laws supported by the white establishment. Why did the Jewish community decide to so loudly trumpet this call for a revolution in race relations? And what effect will it have? Will it modify Professional Third World attacks on Jews and Israel?

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies made its reasons clear, one member explaining that this kind of action "should be done for two major reasons: Jewish ethics and Jewish self-interest. A better society for all people in South Africa would be better, too, for Jewish survival and freedom: what you might call our political self-interest. On the ethical side: a renewal of our historical, prophetic dedication to social justice is necessary, not just in words and prayers but in deeds."

The Board of Deputies did *not* give as a reason that "now our enemies will have less reason to hate us." They are probably well aware of Ginsburg's Law: "Enemies have a primary reason for their enmity which will be satisfied only with your crushing defeat or demise; they will make up more negotiable public reasons, but as fast as you satisfy those public reasons, they will manufacture others."

Ginsburg's Law applies most dramatically these days to Israel and its enemies. Israel's enemies complain most bitterly about West Bank settlements, resolutions on Jerusalem, self-determination. These complaints may indeed be importantly right or wrong, but they are irrelevant to the enmity which will be satisfied only when Israel ceases to exist.

Ginsburg's Law also applies to Jews, Israel and South Africa. Some people have made Israel the central focus, when attacking trade with South Africa. The fact is that Israel only began to exchange ambassadors with South Africa in 1974, right after Arab blackmail had forced 29 African governments to break relations with Israel in an effort at strangulation. The fact is that trade with Israel represents about one half of one per cent of South Africa's trade. The fact is that trade between *black African* countries and South Africa is *eight times greater* than trade between Israel and South Africa. The fact is that Israel, unlike many countries, continues to publicly condemn racial discrimination in South Africa.

These facts will not prevent the attack from being centered on Israel by its enemies -- who would be more convincing if they would as vigorously call for a trade embargo on the Soviet Union, a massive violator of human rights. The target for these enemies is not human rights violations; the target is Israel. Ginsburg's Law applies.

There is a converse to Ginsburg's Law: our friends also have primary reasons for being friends, and will not turn against us for secondary reasons. However, as the South African Board of Deputies noted, something more is at stake: our own internal state of grace. And our self-knowledge.

Despite rumors to the contrary, the hard fact is that the American Jewish community continues to be this nation's only white group which disproportionately

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votes for civil rights and liberal social welfare measures. The reasons for such behavior have now been delineated by an embattled Jewish community a world away, in South Africa. Philip Tobias, a leader of the Jewish Board of Deputies who has been in communication with Miriam Levy of San Francisco, pointed out to that South African body that over here "the Jewish Community Relations Council (has accepted) the view that the Jewish community and its own freedom depend on a kind of Society in which the conditions for that freedom are strong."

No less strongly did he point out the imperative of Jewish religious values. He might well have quoted Spinoza: "Virtue is to be desired for its own sake." But, undoubtedly alert to Ginsburg's Law, he did not feature "public relations" as a reason for this strong action by South African Jews.

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