A SPECIAL REPORT

Sanctions

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gung-ho on the NJCRAC [prosanctions] position, will press for a waiver of sanctions.

"We are pleased by the progress which has been made and clearly we are talking about qualitative change here," says Kenneth Jacobson, director of international affairs for the ADL. "My guess is that if South Africa met the conditions, we would be likely to support the president in his move towards a waiver."

An informal survey of representatives of Jewish organizations attending the NJCRAC Plenary in Miami last February showed that the ADL was in the minority.

In sharp contrast to Jacobson's position was Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Washington, D.C.-based Religious Action Center, the political arm of the Reform movement. "If sanctions are to be reviewed and reassessed, we believe that the Jewish community should not be out front on the issue in terms of the perception in the black community," Saperstein says. "This is not something that the Jewish community is going to have a unique perspective on. When the time comes, we would want to reassess sanctions in coalitional politics."

Perhaps to counter this attitude, the organized Jewish community of South Africa dispatched veteran Jewish communal leader Hanns Saenger to lobby American Jews. He met with both ADL and NJCRAC in February. "The constituency here plays to the [national] black caucus," says the bow-tied Saenger, immediate past chair of the Transvaal Council of the South African Board of Jewish Deputies.

He questions the depth of American Jewish anti-apartheid sentiment and maintains that the American Jewish community "plays to the black caucus because the greatest amount of anti-Semitism in this country comes from the blacks. But if anybody thinks you can buy the goodwill of the blacks as far as anti-Semitism is concerned, you are naive." Saenger says that once South Africa complies with the CAAA, the legislation "should not be interfered with."

Campaigned actively against apartheid, Americans now have a contribution to make in ensuring that a durable democracy takes place. While aid is obviously welcome, the lifting of federal, state and local sanctions will of itself create economic opportunities to the benefit of all South Africans."

Schwarz was chosen as ambassador because he would have more credibility than anyone else, they could have chosen who would have accepted," says Howard Sacksstein, a former vice president of the anti-apartheid Jews for Social Justice and a former president of the South African Union of Jewish Students.

"Schwarz has credibility because he was a member of the opposition, and he has credibility because he is Jewish," says Sacksstein. "Sacksstein, a lawyer studying for a degree in Jewish communal service at Brandeis University, says that many people in South Africa 'think that Jews have a great deal of influence in Congress. I'm sure there is some sort of perception in Pretoria that Schwarz will be able to talk to the Jewish community and gain the Jewish community's support."

Schwarz spoke before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on April 24. That meeting was closed, but the ambassador told me beforehand that "there is no reason why sanctions should continue. And if you do allow sanctions to continue, you will be doing harm to the new South Africa."

"Because," he continued, "if you are going to invest in South Africa, the result of any investment made now would not become effective for another two to three years."

Randall Robinson, executive director of the American anti-apartheid organization TransAfrica, said in a recent Washington Post article that he fears Schwarz will be used to divide Jews and blacks, traditional allies against apartheid. But Anne Griffin, legislative director of TransAfrica, says that "I think that our old Jewish friends that were actually very active in the anti-apartheid movement in the states and in South Africa, are going to stay with us. I think they cannot switch sides merely because Schwarz is there."

Sincerely,

Jack Brown