

Ronald Reagan seems determined to trash any residual good-will he may have accumulated those first years in Washington.

This presidency has descended into that madness which the Greeks warned the gods impose as the essential condition to absolute destruction.

Goaded by ultra-conservative Furies, Mr. Reagan opted to resume the "good" fight lost with Judge Robert Bork to carve in stone a right-wing presence on the Supreme Court.

At least with Judge Bork, it was possible to argue that most of the positions his opponents found objectionable arose from his role as an academic gadfly. His positions since ascending the federal bench provided little ammunition to his enemies.

It must be noted that Judge Bork's total record drew support from respected non-Republicans, those willing to face the blazing emotions that killed his nomination. There was substance behind his selection as a symbol of conservative hopes.

Judge Douglas Ginsberg, by comparison, has virtually nothing to recommend him, except his Jewish faith.

It is inconceivable to me that, in the 18 years since Abe Fortas resigned, the Court's "Brandeis chair" has remained vacant.

Louis Dembitz Brandeis, in 1916, became the first non-Christian named to the nation's highest court. Upon his retirement in 1939, Felix Frankfurter succeeded to his chair. When Justice Frankfurter stepped down (1962), Arthur Goldberg and Abe Fortas followed, in order.

Benjamin Cardozo, for a while (1932-38), sat beside Justice Brandeis; but his Jewish faith was not integral to his nomination process, as with the other associate justices I have named.

It would have been a singular act of sanity had Mr. Reagan sought to remedy past omissions, dating back to Mr. Nixon, by selecting a High Court candidate from among this nation's numerous highly-qualified Jewish jurists. Such an act of atonement could have gone far to restore our national unity, so shattered by the bloody battling over Judge Bork.

But naming the 41-year-old Judge Ginsburg, after less than 13 months service as a sitting judge, spits in the eye of the Jewish legal community, which deserves much better, if only in political terms.

Indeed, on first blush, it is difficult to conceive whom Judge Ginsburg's nomination might please, except Sen. Jesse Helms and his ilk.

Reportedly, the president's choice came over strong objections from his own advisers, especially former Sen. Howard Baker, Mr. Reagan's chief of staff.

Ironically, Mr. Baker took that position, after the Iran-Contra debacle, to help restore the nation's confidence,

sacrificing his own White House hopes for next year. Of all the figures in the present mess, the former senator draws the most sympathy as a forlorn "just" man.

Turning completely away from Mr. Baker, Ronald Reagan has dragged the nation further into leaderless darkness.

On the premise of this administration's tattered state, certainly most Americans would agree. There could be differences over causes. Timing is very much a matter of opinion.

A consensus could be corralled that selling weapons to Iran was unwise. In my view, it was one in a series of acts of desperation by men deadly determined to hold on to power. Bringing home America's Middle East hostages last October, as Col. Ollie North and other White House dealers hoped, could have helped Republicans retain control of the U. S. Senate.

Similarly, the widely cheered raids on Libya last summer had as their purpose those very cheers they evoked. Libya's Gadhafi was made impotent when the world's oil market crashed. Without money, he is the "idiot" (*al-majnoon*), the Arabs call him. His big mouth, rather than reality, gave him a role in terrorists' ranks.

However, there is no doubt that sending U. S. jets to kill Gadhafi boosted Mr. Reagan's popularity in the middle of 1986's campaigns, as intended.

At the same time, the raids increased the potential danger to Americans abroad. They led to bombings against our European allies, not in support of Gadhafi, but against the idea that the United States was free to attack weaker countries at its own discretion.

My present fear is that in the year remaining Mr. Reagan will be drawn, and will take this nation, into further misadventures, domestic and foreign, for the sake of restoring an illusion of his leadership.

In that light, Judge Ginsburg's nomination is a trifle, which will be handled on Capitol Hill. Those who think his confirmation is foregone because it follows on the Bork rejection do not know their history.

Richard Nixon lost back-to-back nominations to a Senate, considerably less combative than the present members. Furthermore, Mr. Nixon, for all his other faults, knew better than to throw down a direct challenge to his former colleagues.

Judge Ginsburg may grow in stature as he grows older, but not on the United States Supreme Court. Had the young man good sense, he would have declined the honor of his present place in the spotlight.

Had Ronald Reagan not retreated into some fantasy of his own creation, then this nation and its international partners would be in much better shape including the world's stock markets.

The dark days are no brighter.

Roy Meachum

There he

goes again

11/21/87

