

'Renegotiating Jewish Social Contract!'



Sociologist Dr. Marshall Sklare hasn't informed historic Jean Jacque Rousseau about it, but the Jews of America are in the process of "renegotiating" a psychological "Social Contract" with life in America.

This has — and will have — far reaching effect on Jewish life in America; and, paradoxically enough, according to Dr. Sklare, the Negroes have given the Jews the inspiration to "negotiate" such a "Social Contract."

But "Scapegoating" within the Jewish community itself, says Dr. Sklare, by some divisive types could bring both great harm and danger to itself at a time when "Jewish solidarity" is a prime requirement to strengthen the Israel-dream-come-true, beset by enemy and by crisis in the Middle East.

"We need a call for Jewish solidarity," he said.

Further, American Jewish life itself is under stress, shoved and buffeted by other rising ethnic groups.

Sklare declared that "The position of the Jew is being challenged because of the rise of other ethnic groups...(in New York) by the Blacks and, not far behind, by the Puerto Ricans.

"They are challenging the Jewish positions, prerogatives, and accomplishments," Dr. Sklare said, noting that this is true for the entire white community, but is affecting those areas (such as education and social service) where Jews have been particularly active, prominent, and visible.

Sklare emphasized his warning:

"Watch the danger of splits in the Jewish community. We need Jewish solidarity particularly at this time in history."

There are dangers, he said, of a split between Jews, "between Uptown Jews and Downtown Jews" (i.e. those living in New York's changing neighborhoods subject to social buffets and crime in the streets, as opposed to those who live in comfortable, unaffected suburbs and neighborhoods, who can "afford" to bargain or "give" away the rights and support of their less lucky brethren).

It is ironic that the internalizing of such danger to the Jewish community itself



DR. MARSHALL SKLARE

'Beware the splitters.'

eases the emphasis on the concern of the WASP types (WASPim in bilingual jargon) who might be willing to sacrifice Jewish rights and positions in American life to appease more militant ethnic groups.

Dr. Sklare, a big fellow, whose broad, slightly hunched, fullback shoulders, placid face and mien, whiting hair, sparkling eyes, and quiet gentlemanly manners, belies a sharp, steel-trap, incisive mind, addressed "Identicom" at the Oakland Y-IKC Sunday.

"Identicom", sponsored jointly by the Y-IKC and the American Jewish Committee's Pittsburgh Chapter, was one of the most successful and thought provoking programs ever put together here to prove such social concerns as the changing Jewish family; new directions for Jewish community, the generational future of Jewish youth.

"Identicom" (identifying with community concerns) may well become a new word in the socio-psychic lexicon.

An anonymous donor sponsored the joint program and may point the way to other

People & Issues

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joint organization programming in this community.

In an interview with The Chronicle, Dr. Sklare, keen observer, author-sociologist and presently Professor of American Jewish Studies at Brandies University, ranged into other concerns in American Jewish life.

Asked if his writings on the Jewish role in the so-called New Left (even with its anti-semitic, anti-Israel prejudice exposed) and in social dissent might not provide a trigger for more anti-semitism, Dr. Sklare smiled and shook his head, almost vigorously.

"I don't think what any of us write or say has much to do with anti-semitism."

Anti-semitism exists independently, even almost independently of numbers of Jews, though it is convenient to the anti-semitite when there are Jews around, said Dr. Sklare wryly.

Addressing himself to his program text, "The Impact of Israel on the American Jewish Community," Dr. Sklare noted:

"The events of the spring of 1967 demonstrated that American Jewry is as dependant upon Israel, as Israel is upon American Jewry.

"Unless Israel's viability is assured, the future of American Jewry would be in doubt.

"While Israel's destruction might not endanger the physical security of the American Jew, the psychological effect would be devastating."

Dr. Sklare declared that the results of the Six Day War "seemed to indicate that although the Jewish people had been forced to endure the agony of the death camps just a few brief years before, it was nevertheless fated to triumph over those who would destroy the one ray of hope in its recent tragic history."

To Jews, the re-birth of Israel "is not just another happening.

"Rather, it can be seen as a wondrous event, a kind of recompense for ages of persecution, as assurance that to be Jewish brings triumph as well as suffering."

Israel is living proof to Jews and to the world that the "Jewish people are no longer weak and defenseless."

The virtue of the State of Israel firmly demonstrates to Jews that "being Jewish makes more sense—more psychological sense—than before."

Most notable aspect of the new relationships being hammered out between the two communities is the solid fact of immigration to Israel from the United States:

American "olim" rose to 4,617 in 1968; to 6,020 in 1969; and over 9,000 Americans and Canadians by the end of 1970.

Thus the number of Americans emigrating to Israel is not only rising, but has risen to much larger numbers than in earlier years.

This has an importance beyond numbers—it adds a different dimension to the philanthropic relationships of American Jews to Israel.

Beside, whereas in the past those going on "aliyah" to Israel were thought of making great sacrifice, nowadays the attitude has changed to the idea that Jews are fulfilling their highest Jewish aspirations by living in Israel. That it is fulfillment rather than sacrifice; that an "oleh" gives up only the crass material comforts and gains moral, spiritual, and societal advantages.

Furthermore, the rate of "aliyah" has increased despite the surrounding threat to Israel's security.

As Israel's Moshe Kol facetiously remarked to a group of us American Newspaper editors (in quotable quotes that we sent all over the world) the astringent observation:

"In America, your borders are safe and your cities are unsafe; in Israel, our borders are unsafe, but our cities are safe."

Whatever the combined reasons, Marshall Sklare noted that, "For the first time Americans constitute a significant segment of immigration to Israel."