

ON GROWING AND DESTRUCTIVE CRACKS IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

All of the documents about the failures of the American Jewish community during the Holocaust point to the fragmentation of the American Jewish community as a major cause.

Afterwards, the American Jewish community repaired that situation somewhat successfully. The unity of the Jewish community has been an indispensable factor in establishing the strength of American support of Israel.

That unity is showing dangerous cracks. One of the most dangerous of those cracks has to do with the impact of partisan politics within the Jewish community.

There is a reason for partisan politics to impinge on the Jewish community more than it has in the past. There is more impetus in the direction of the Republican Party within the Jewish community than ever before. It doesn't show up very much in the national statistics yet— but it shows up in the growing strength of Republican Party circles within the Jewish community.

Furthermore, that strength is not primarily the result of traditional economic conservatism among a richer population of Jews. More significantly, it is the result of increasing doubts within the Jewish community about the Democratic Party and American foreign affairs, affecting Israel among other issues. And, given the changing world, those new doubts are at least reasonably arguable, not "reactionary" in the old sense. That is what makes the emerging cracks in the Jewish community more significant.

Compounding that has been the growth of more explicit Jewish institutions in political activism. There has always been explicit Jewish political activism, but the formal Jewish institutions (which mirror the precipitous American development of political associations and PACs) are new. They have created new problems and have made the "cracks" in the Jewish community more visible.

The "preventive repair" which now has to be done, therefore, is of a double nature: The Jewish community as such has to open up a debate on these partisan issues in a way that will allow us to keep our basic consensus intact.

In other words, if we permit the Jewish community to become the same kind of arena for partisanship that exists in the political world, we are stupid and in trouble. There is no reason for it: the political world, in which many of us are

involved, still exists for that kind of partisan participation.

We cannot allow the Jewish community to be used by the political parties or their partisans - or at least we should minimize such use.

Needed without delay are some programs and some guidelines along these lines, which some of the pertinent leaders of the community should begin to come together to discuss.