

The rapid influx of immigrants by means of both legal and illegal immigration has brought with it the dilemmas of assimilation: parents who want their children to become culturally American facing off against school officials intent on maintaining the culture of origin; the inclusion of recent immigrants in affirmative action programs designed to redress wrongs that did not involve them; disputes over the role of language in maintaining culture vs the need for a common tongue; and so on.

The following article is a valuable reminder for Americans of the political and cultural contexts in which assimilation takes place. Ira Mehlman, who has lived and worked in Israel, is currently Director of Research and Publication for FAIR, the Federation for American Immigration Reform. This monograph was originally published by the 21st Century Fund.

ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES: A COMMON PROBLEM OF ASSIMILATING IMMIGRANTS

by Ira H. Mehlman

Parts of the United States are currently undergoing a radical demographic and cultural transformation rarely experienced in the annals of human history. Demographers have documented that, as a result of large-scale immigration, California - the country's most populous state - will be composed of a majority of minorities by the first decade of the next century. Moreover, unlike the waves of immigration that transformed the major urban areas of the East Coast and Midwest in the early part of this century, the immigrants flooding into California do not share a common European heritage with the more established population.

Such dramatic demographic and cultural changes will undoubtedly produce, even under the best of circumstances, profound social changes. If current patterns persist, in which large numbers of Latin American and Southeast Asian immigrants continue to lag well behind the Anglo population educationally and economically, the changes are likely to cause severe stress on the social fabric of California and other parts of the country undergoing similar transformations.

As is the nature of social science, demographers and sociologists and immigration reform advocates are searching for some historical precedent to which they can compare the social changes now occurring in California. Because the Anglo population will shortly cease to be the majority in California and is unlikely to relinquish control of the state's economic infrastruc-

ture, some have warned that a form of American apartheid will develop. The white minority in South Africa controls most of the wealth and the economic infrastructure of the country. Whites enjoy better housing, education and a significantly higher standard of living than does the nonwhite majority. The same is likely to be true of California's Anglo minority whose standard of living will remain well above that of the black, Hispanic and (some of the) Asian population, who, combined, will constitute the majority.

That, however, is about as far as the comparison legitimately goes. South Africa is a police state in which the majority population is afforded very few civil rights and virtually no political power. Apartheid, as political philosophy, advocates the continued separation of races and cultures. It is not the objective of the apartheid regime to assimilate the various cultures in South Africa into a single cohesive unit.

California (and the United States) is a democracy. The civil rights of all segments of the population are guaranteed (if not always perfectly enforced) and every citizen has the right to vote. Minorities can, and do, wield political power in California and throughout the country. Furthermore, the societal objective of the United States (and by extension California) is the incorporation of all elements of society into a cohesive, unified entity. We may not have succeeded in achieving this goal, but clearly, the motives of the two societies are

as different as night and day.

Apartheid is an insidious political philosophy unique to South Africa. Despite some superficial similarities with that system, drawing comparisons between American pluralism and apartheid is more than just inaccurate - it's slanderous. To make legitimate comparisons we must choose a society that is similar to our own in political philosophy and societal objectives.

Israel may offer us a valid comparison. The similarities between what is currently happening in California and what has already occurred in Israel, are striking. Israel is both a democracy and a nation that has been radically transformed (in a relatively short period of time) by immigration. The State of Israel was founded by Jews from Europe, who were Western in their culture and orientation. European Jews, as a result of large-scale immigration and higher birth rates, were subsequently supplanted as the majority by Jews from North Africa and the Middle East whose culture and orientation were significantly different. Like the United States, Israel's objective is to assimilate these immigrant groups into the political and economic mainstream. And, like the United States, their success has been marginal at best. An examination of Israel's affluent Ashkenazic minority and poorer Sephardic minority may provide a valid comparison for what is likely to occur in California and other regions of the United States.

(For the purposes of this essay, Ashkenazic Jew will be used as a generic term for Jews of European or North American ancestry. The term Sephardic Jew, though technically including Jews of Southern European heritage, will be used only to mean Jews who trace their ancestry to the Moslem nations of North Africa and the Middle East. In looking at many of the social pathologies common to our two societies, it would not be entirely invalid to substitute Anglo for Ashkenazic and Hispanic for Sephardic. In fact, Sephardic is a derivative of the Hebrew name for Spain.)

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY AND CULTURE

Israel was conceived, founded and settled by European Jews - identical in culture and origin to most American Jews. The founders of Israel, like their American Jewish counterparts of that era, were dedicated to the same humanist, secular values that helped spawn the labor movement and the American left. People like David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Mosha Sharrett and Levi Eshkol were not merely Zionists - they were dedicated socialists who were as intent on creating a democratic socialist state

as they were a Jewish state. In addition, they were decidedly secular, even anti-religious in their outlook. These were the principles and ideals on which Israel was founded (and which have been undeservedly romanticized).

As is universally true, those who arrive someplace first establish the societal and economic rules which, of course, favor themselves. Israel was certainly no exception. Having settled in Palestine first, Ashkenazic Jews claimed the best land, created the economic infrastructure and created a political system designed to protect those interests. After the establishment of the state in 1948, there was massive migration of Jews from North Africa and the Middle East (both voluntary and through expulsion) to Israel. By 1961, as many Jews had immigrated to Israel as had lived there prior to 1948. The vast majority of the immigrants were Sephardim. (Though Ashkenazim make up more than 80 percent of world Jewry, most either couldn't or didn't want to emigrate to Israel.) By about 1965, as a result of immigration and higher birth rates, Sephardim became the majority population of Israel.

The cultural orientation of this emerging majority is much different than that of Ashkenazic Jews. While Ashkenazic Jews were influenced by (and had an influence on) the liberal movements of Europe and America, the Sephardim were very much a product of the Islamic cultures in which they had lived for centuries. Their attitudes about work, education, family, the role of women, etc. are very similar to attitudes found in Moslem countries and not all that much different from Hispanic attitudes about these institutions. Moreover, beyond the concept of a Jewish state, Sephardim do not share the founding Ashkenazic dedication to a political philosophy. To the Ashkenazic founders, humanist values were as important as the Zionist values. To the Sephardim, Zionist nationalism is, and continues to be, the primary concern.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SEPHARDIM

Like Hispanics in California, Sephardim in Israel are guaranteed equal protection under the law and the right to vote is not only guaranteed, it is actively encouraged. Also, like Hispanics in California (and elsewhere in the U.S.), the Sephardim have always been subject to a subtle form of discrimination. From the time the early Sephardic immigrants arrived in Israel - and were sprayed with DDT for fear they carried lice and other vermin - they were made to feel that their culture was inferior. While, perhaps, it cannot be characterized as outright racism, the

attitudes of the Ashkenazim toward the Sephardim is very similar to the attitudes of Anglos toward Hispanics. Paternalism, condescension or patronization, might more accurately describe the attitudes of Ashkenazim or Anglos. Whatever the correct term, and however subtly it is expressed, such attitudes do not go unnoticed or unresented by either Sephardim or Hispanics. Thus, the natural human reaction is to reject the culture and the values of those you perceive are scorning you. Consequently, significant social rifts persist and longstanding bitterness continues to fester between Sephardim and Ashkenazim as it does between Hispanics and Anglos.

Israeli novelist/journalist Amos Oz (who is Ashkenazic and one of the leading voices of the Israeli left) recounts some of the hostility and deep-seated resentment of the Sephardim toward the Ashkenazim in his book, *In the Land of Israel*. Sitting in a cafe in the predominantly Sephardic development town of Bet Shemesh, Oz, who is a well-known public figure in Israel, recorded some of the comments made to him by town residents: "My parents came from North Africa...So what? They had their dignity, didn't they? Their own values? Their own faith?...Why did you make fun of their beliefs? Why did they have to be disinfected with Lysol at the Haifa port?" In the words of another resident: "I'll tell you what the shame is: they gave us houses, they gave us dirty work; they gave us education and they took away our self-respect. What did they bring my parents to Israel for?...Wasn't it to do your dirty work?...If they give back the territories, the Arabs will stop coming to work, and then and there you'll put us back into the dead-end jobs, like before. If for no other reason we won't let you give back those territories...that's why we hate you."

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Dr. Daniel J. Elazar, Director of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the author of several books on the role of Sephardim in Israeli society, has done more scientific research on the attitudes of Israeli Sephardim and finds the emotional outbursts recorded by Oz to be more or less accurate. "Sephardim are still very angry at Ashkenazim," says Elazar. "I think they are more angry at them for cultural imperialism than they are for eco-

nomic imperialism. The Ashkenazim told them, in effect, that 'you are culturally inferior to us,' therefore, to get ahead in our society you must become like us because your own ethnicity is not deserving of respect, consideration or equal treatment."

The feeling that one's culture is being denigrated retards the assimilation process, causing the scorned to turn inward and to resist the natural process of acculturation. These feelings are perceptively described by Richard Rodriguez, the son of Mexican immigrants to California, in his autobiographical book, *Hunger for Memory*: "Like others who have known the pain of public alienation, we transformed the knowledge of our public separateness and made it consoling - the reminder of intimacy." These sentiments are echoed by Richard Estrada, a Mexican-American columnist for the Dallas Morning News, who talks of the need and desire of Hispanic Americans to have their culture validated by the majority population. Without the psychic assurance that American society recognizes the positive aspects of their culture, many Hispanic-Americans find it difficult to embrace American culture.

With the passage of nearly 30 years since the end of massive immigration of Jews from Islamic countries, there is virtually universal agreement that the feeling of wounded pride on the part of the Sephardim is the single greatest obstacle to overcoming the social gaps that persist in Israel. Feelings of distrust and alienation, if allowed to persist over several generations, can develop into a culture of their own. Dr. Shlomo Elbaz, President of a left-wing Sephardic organization, "East for Peace", describes what he fears will become a social pathology among Israel's disadvantaged Sephardim. "They were treated as outsiders, they felt themselves as outsiders, and more than that they developed a psychological inferiority complex because of the superiority complex of the absorbers. That is the worst thing that could happen to a human group."

EDUCATION AND POVERTY

The Ashkenazic Jews of Israel, like their American counterparts, are of a culture that places a premium on education. The Sephardic culture, like the Hispanic culture, has traditionally placed less emphasis on education. Moreover, Israeli society, like American society, tends to reinforce this difference in the way it treats children from these cultures. In both cases, the societal attitude is that children from these cultures are predisposed to fail, and more often than not, it becomes a self-

fulfilling prophecy.

Schools in Sephardic neighborhoods, like those in Hispanic neighborhoods, are demonstrably inferior. An Israeli Education Ministry study found that the top seventh graders in schools in Tel Aviv's mostly Sephardic Hatikvah section could not do third grade arithmetic. This is both a product of family life which does not emphasize the importance of education, and a school system that expects Sephardic youngsters to perform poorly. Consequently, most of these children are tracked away from academic high schools and toward vocational schools which, in the words of Israeli sociologist David Hartman, were set up "to keep them (Sephardic children) off the streets."

Though a greater effort is now being made to upgrade the quality of education for Sephardic youngsters, Dr. Elazar blames past failures on the cynical attitudes of the Zionist socialists who ruled the country until 1977. The ruling socialists "encouraged" immigrants from the "backwards" cultures of North Africa and the Middle East to pursue the socialist goal of working the land and building the country with Jewish manual labor while they were sending their own offspring to college to become white collar professionals. "The establishment was telling them, in a sense, to become hewers of wood and drawers of water. They were telling them that because in principle they wanted all Jews to do that but, of course, not their child," says Elazar.

In 1979 Sephardic children comprised 57.7 percent of the 14 to 17-year-old age group in Israel. However, they represented 64.3 percent of vocational school enrollment and 64.7 percent of agricultural school enrollment. Conversely, only 38.7 percent of children in academic high schools were Sephardim. Even worse, 70 percent of vocational high school graduates could not qualify for employment in the trades for which they were trained. The high school students in the 1979 survey are today's young adults who have now completed their military service, are starting families and entering the workforce.

Ten percent of Sephardic youngsters age 14 to 17 were neither in school nor working, compared with only 3.4 percent of Ashkenazic youth in the same age group. In some of the most depressed Sephardic areas, like the Hatikvah section of Tel Aviv, the high school dropout rate is more than 50 percent. All this translates into university enrollment that is 71.8 percent Ashkenazic and only 17.5 percent Sephardic. (The rest is Arab.) Among Israelis whose parents were born in Europe or

America, 22.6 percent have 16 or more years of formal education compared to only four percent of those whose parents were born in Africa or Asia. In fact, according to Dr. Elazar, who is on the faculty of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Arabs have proportionally greater representation on Israeli campuses than do Sephardim.

These same lopsided differences can be seen in comparisons of Anglo and Hispanic educational attainment in the United States. More than one-third of Hispanic-Americans have less than eight years of schooling compared with only 12 percent of whites. Conversely, while 20.5 percent of Anglo adults have completed four years of college, only 8.6 percent of Hispanics have four years of college to their credit.

As is the case with Hispanics in California, educational failure among Sephardim has contributed to a cycle of poverty. This is becoming increasingly true as the nations of the West move into the post-industrial period where high-skill white collar and technological jobs command rapidly-increasing salaries, while lower-skill industrial jobs are becoming less financially rewarding. A 1958 study conducted by Dr. Ya'acov Nahon of The Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies found that for each self-employed white collar Ashkenazi professional, there were only 38 such Sephardim. Among those white collar workers drawing a salary, there were only 40 Sephardim for every 100 Ashkenazim. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the income gap between second generation Sephardim and the second generation Ashkenazim is greater than that of their parents - and the gap continues to grow. Official Israeli government statistics show that in 1985 Jews of African-Asian heritage earned only 80.7 percent as much as the average Israeli of European or American descent. Moreover, because Sephardim tend to have larger families, that smaller income supported an additional 1.1 persons per household. In the United States, the income discrepancy between Anglos and Hispanics is even greater: In 1987, the median Hispanic income was only 65 percent of the median for Anglos. Consequently, 27.3 percent of Hispanics live below the official poverty level compared with only 11 percent of whites.

SOCIAL BREAKDOWN

Like their Hispanic counterparts in the United States, many Sephardic youngsters are caught between cultures. They have not acquired the skills to make it in Israeli society and they feel alienated by what they

perceive as chauvinism on the part of Ashkenazim. However, they are also rejecting the traditional Sephardic culture of their parents as being anachronistic and irrelevant to their new world. This phenomenon is especially prevalent among the children of immigrants from Morocco, the largest and least successful of the Sephardic immigrant groups.

Like Hispanic culture, traditional Sephardic culture is highly paternalistic, a trait that was obviously functional throughout the centuries they lived in the Moslem world. However, that culture has not been adaptable to a Western-oriented society like Israel. Colonel Ami Gluska, an immigrant from Yemen, explains in a New York Times article that upon arrival in Israel, "the whole 'valued' system was smashed, the whole system which gave security - the father, the grandfather, who had such authority. The family, which had strict rules, the hierarchy in which everyone knew his place everything was blown to pieces because the father, who could not read or write Hebrew, couldn't communicate with the authorities. Suddenly the little children found they were more advanced and were explaining things to their father."

The Sephardic immigrants themselves, like most immigrants, were willing to settle for whatever scraps their adopted country threw them. They were aware that the Ashkenazim had more than they did, but life, in most cases, was still considerably better than it was in the countries from which they had emigrated. Their children, however, have been less reticent about making demands on their native country and more resentful of the differences between themselves and the Ashkenazim.

Daniel Shimshoni, who writes extensively about the social and political development of Israeli society, makes a cogent point about the dangers of rising expectations that go unfulfilled. His observations are relevant both with respect to the children of Sephardic immigrants to Israel and Latino immigrants to the United States. In his book *Israeli Democracy: The Middle of the Journey*, Shimshoni states that "while [the immigrants'] absolute standard of living rose...their relative status, for the most part, declined and they felt themselves to be at the bottom of the social ladder." Historically, the frustration of inflated expectations has produced profound consequences. In its more dramatic forms, frustrated expectations have led to the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and the near-revolution in China in 1989. In its less dramatic forms, it produces a social

malaise of apathy, chronic poverty, drug and alcohol dependency and alienation which also serve to undermine the society it afflicts. When the latter condition begins to entrench itself, says Shimoni, "benefits are looked upon as rights and people rapidly become accustomed to the provision of their needs by a top-down administration."

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experience is caution."***

While traditional Sephardic values of family, respect for authority and self-sufficiency were being undermined, young Sephardim have not adopted the Western values of the Ashkenazim. Like second-generation Hispanics in the United States, native-born Israeli Sephardim have rejected their ancestral cultures while remaining deeply suspicious and resentful of the dominant culture.

The *Encyclopedia Judaica*, in its article about Sephardic immigration to Israel, succinctly summarizes the experience of many of the immigrants: "The immigrants from Islamic countries...quickly became an economic, social and especially cultural proletariat in Israel. They felt uprooted in their new surrounding, where the dominant social focus demanded that they abandon their traditions and culture and assimilate unconditionally into modern Israeli society, which was basically Western...The prevailing public opinion in the country tended to regard the older generation of new immigrants from Islamic countries as a lost generation that would eventually die off, and their main concern was to help the younger generation throw off the burdens of its paternal-stoic traditions. Israeli society, however, was successful in many instances only in shattering the patriarchal family structure, which was the principal framework of the immigrants from Islamic countries, and thus destroying old values without simultaneously transferring its own value system as an integral part of the newcomers' personality. In effect, this resulted in the creation of a society that was socially displaced, living on the fringes of two cultures, and attracted to the glittering commercial aspects of modern materialistic culture."

In analyzing the social pathology that has developed among many Sephardic immigrants and their children, David K. Shieler, former New York Times correspon-

dent in Israel, observed:... "Welfare programs have not prevented a cycle of poverty from evolving. It now limits the horizons of the children of the poor, dooming many to repeat their parents' unsuccessful struggle against the handicaps of inferior education, cramped and shoddy apartments, low-paying jobs and mean streets." Shipler could just as easily have been writing about the children of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles as the children of Sephardic immigrants in Tel Aviv.

EMPLOYMENT AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Among the most common arguments used by those in the United States who advocate maintaining or increasing the current high levels of immigration (600,000 legal immigrants per year and possibly an equal number of illegal immigrants) is the assertion that immigrants are required to do jobs that Americans are unwilling to do. Whether American workers are rejecting menial and back-breaking jobs, or simply rejecting the low wages many industries offer, is the subject of considerable debate. Nevertheless, the experience of Israel points up the danger of viewing immigrants as solutions to short-term goals instead of as people who have long-term needs and desires.

During the 1950's, the peak years of North African and Middle Eastern immigration, the Israeli government decided that it was in the national interest to populate the unsettled regions of the Galilee and the Negev. In an effort to meet those goals, the government "encouraged" new Sephardic immigrants to move to settlement towns in those regions. Today, many of the blue-collar industries that were established in those towns have been forced out of business by low-wage competition from the Third World. Half of Israel's unemployment today is among the ten percent of the population that lives in those development towns. Yesterday's solution to manpower and settlement needs has become Israel's enormous social problem of today. Similarly, many of the disenfranchised Hispanic youth in the United States are the children of immigrants this country "needed" to pick lettuce or sew collars on shirts.

Of those Sephardic immigrants who settled in Israel's urban centers, many found themselves in situations similar to those Hispanic immigrants now face in the United States. Like the Spanish-speaking barrios of many major American cities, Sephardic immigrants had limited social contact with the dominant culture with which they needed to interact. Because of how and where they settled, says Dr. Shimshoni, the immigrants

were "suddenly placed by themselves in a new environment," where they had "no close neighbors from whom they could learn, or through whom they could integrate into the larger society, so that progress was slow" and problems persisted. The same ghetto problems that plague a growing

number of Hispanic youngsters - lack of access to the best schools and teachers, inadequate recreational facilities, isolation from the cultural enrichment of museums and concert halls - also afflict the children of Sephardic immigrants.

On the other hand, those Sephardic immigrants, like Hispanic immigrants, who settled outside the ethnic ghettos of the cities or isolated rural and development towns, have been far more successful in finding their niche in their adopted societies.

POLITICAL POWER

All the troubling social pathologies described to this point have already been felt in California and other parts of the United States. Where Israel is ahead of California is in the political impact of the new demographic order. Israel's Sephardim are at least two decades ahead of California's Hispanics in making their political clout felt.

Likud has held power in Israel for 10 out of the last 12 years (the exception being the two-year stint of Shimon Peres as Prime Minister under a rotating prime ministership arrangement) primarily because of the Sephardic vote.

For the first 29 years of its existence, Israel was ruled by the left-of-center Labor Alliance. (Labor is not one party but an alliance of parties, as is Likud.) Labor finally lost control of the government in 1977 for three primary reasons: 1) They had been caught off guard by the Yom Kippur War in 1973. 2) Socialism was no more successful in Israel than anywhere else it has been tried. 3) The Sephardim represented a majority of the voting-age population, and perceiving Labor as the party of the Ashkenazim, voted for Menachim Begin's Likud Alliance. Begin came to office in 1977 with just 25 percent of the Ashkenazic vote, but 57 percent of the Sephardic vote.

Whatever else one might think of Begin, he was a strong charismatic leader who was able to hold together a shaky coalition of right-of-center religious parties and implement some of his own political agenda. Since his retirement in 1983, however, the inadequacies of a divided electorate have become glaringly obvious. For

the past six years Israel has had government by paralysis. Dr. Elazar in his 1989 book, *The Other Jews - The Sephardim Today*, asserts that "Israeli Menachem Begin's Likud bloc succeeded in breaking what had been a Labor monopoly on political power with the help of a huge Sephardic vote In 1984, over two-thirds of Sephardim voted Likud and more than two-thirds of Ashkenazim voted Labor".

Israeli politics has become a stalemate between the economic power of the Ashkenazim and the voting strength of the Sephardim. As one of the residents of Bet Shemesh pointed out to journalist Amos Oz: "To this day the real power is not in [Sephardic] hands. You've got the Histadrut (Israel's enormously powerful labor union) and you've got the newspapers and the big money, and you've also got the radio and TV. You're still running the country." These divergent interests seem to be pulling in opposite directions and, at least for the time being, they are cancelling each other out. The result is a government that cannot address its external problems, i.e., what to do with the West Bank and Gaza, nor can it effectively address its pressing domestic issues such as the failing economy. This standoff is due in part to the divergent interests of the wealthier Ashkenazic minority and the less affluent Sephardic majority. The result is that Israel is a country in limbo - and a country that cannot steer a steady course often finds itself adrift.

DIFFERENCES AS IMPORTANT AS SIMILARITIES

Perhaps more than the similarities, it is the differences that make the analogy between the Israeli assimilation problem and the American assimilation problem all the more compelling. The mere fact that Israel has had (and continues to have) an assimilation problem, should make any immigrant-receiving country sit up and take notice. Israel's difficulties in assimilating large numbers of non-Westerners into what is essentially a Western, post-industrial society, is convincing evidence that such processes are difficult and require a great deal of effort and understanding on the part of both the receiving society and the immigrants themselves. Despite their many differences, Sephardim and Ashkenazim share far more in common than do the current wave of immigrants and older population of the United States.

Despite nearly two millennia of diaspora, the ethnic and religious identity of the dispersed Jewish commu-

nities remained remarkably in tact. While the cultural and political development of the disparate Jewish communities of the world were strongly influenced by the societies in which they lived, all Jews maintained some powerful common bonds. There is a core of religious, social and ethical beliefs that are common to Sephardim and Ashkenazim despite thousands of years of separation. And though it was the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe who reestablished the Jewish state, the aspiration of returning to Zion was a powerful and recurring theme in the literature and liturgy of all segments of world Jewry.

Unlike the current wave of immigrants to the United States, the Sephardim faced no identity crisis upon arrival in Israel. The vast majority of immigrants to the United States come in the hope of improving their economic condition. They have strong cultural, ethnic and familial ties with the countries they leave behind. It will take several generations, at least, before they and their descendants cease to think of themselves as hyphenated Americans. Sephardic immigrants immediately identified themselves as Israelis. There were no lingering allegiances to the countries they left behind. For the most part, they had lived for centuries as outcasts in those societies - never as Moroccans or Iraqis or Yemenite, rather as Jews who happened to be living in those countries. Their allegiance to Israel was immediate and unequivocal, even to the point of the immigrants themselves adopting Hebrew as their spoken language. In their own estimation the Sephardim had not immigrated, rather they had returned home after a 1,900 year absence.

There are also important differences between how the Anglo population views the current wave of immigrants to the United States and how the more established Israeli population viewed the immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. At best, Americans view immigrants with antipathy, at worst as unwelcome intruders. Their attitude of cultural superiority notwithstanding, the Ashkenazim recognized the Sephardim as an integral part of the nation they were attempting to reconstitute. No one ever questioned the right of the immigrants to settle in Israel.

Finally, Israel has had one additional (and very powerful) incentive for avoiding internal disunity. A country whose very survival is in constant and immediate peril can ill-afford deep social divisions. Yet, in spite of all the reasons Israel has had to achieve a rapid and amicable assimilation of its immigrants, the proc-

ess has been slow and painful, and the ultimate objective still eludes that country. Israel is proof that even when all elements of a society want assimilation to take place and understand that the failure to do so is like playing Russian Roulette with their national existence, creating a harmonious synthesis of cultures is a monumental task.

CONCLUSIONS

The lesson the United States can learn from the Israeli experience is caution. We cannot absorb unlimited numbers of people who are culturally very different from ourselves and expect the assimilation process to go smoothly, no matter how noble our intentions are. Israel proves that even under the best of circumstances, assimilating people into a postindustrial, technological society can cause significant social friction. Unless we in the United States begin incorporating our large Third World immigrant population into the economic and cultural mainstream, we are asking for trouble down the road.

Though certainly not a perfect model, we ought to

look very closely at the ongoing process of cultural assimilation in Israel. Other countries are being affected by immigration from societies whose cultures are radically different than their own. However, the United States and Israel are unique in that they view immigrants as Americans or Israelis - people who somehow have to be brought into the mainstream. In this respect we are different from countries like France and Germany which see their immigrants as alien populations living within their borders. It is certainly different from the way the government of South Africa views blacks and other racial and ethnic groups living in that country.

Israel meets all the criteria for a valid comparison. It is a political democracy; its founders were Western; the new majority did not create the political or economic infrastructure and yet, by virtue of being the majority, they have legitimate claims to make on the system; the cultural and economic gap between the more established population and the newer arrivals persists after several generations; and the stated goal of the society is to create a country based on Western values.

Originally printed in the Kettering Review, this call to the re-building of a sense of community in the various segments of our American society is a much-needed antidote to present day fragmentation. John Gardner is presently the Miriam and Peter Haas Centennial Professor at Stanford Business School. He was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare from 1965 to 1968 and is the author of the newly published book ON LEADERSHIP.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

by John W. Gardner

We know that where community exists it confers upon its members identity, a sense of belonging, and a measure of security. It is in communities that the attributes that distinguish humans as social creatures are nourished. Communities are the ground-level generators and preservers of values and ethical systems. The ideals of justice and compassion are nurtured in communities. The natural setting for religion is the religious community.

The breakdown of communities has had a serious disintegrating effect on the behavior of individuals. We have all observed the consequences in personal and social breakdown. The casualties stream through the juvenile courts and psychiatrists' offices and drug abuse clinics. There has been much talk of the breakup of the nuclear family as a support structure for children. We must remind ourselves that in an earlier era support came not only from the nuclear family but from extended family and community. The child moved in an environment filled with people concerned for his future - not always concerned in a kindly spirit, but concerned. A great many children today live in environments where virtually no one pays attention unless they break the law.

We have seen in recent years a troubling number of very successful, highly rewarded individuals in business and government engage in behavior that brought them crashing down. One explanation is that they betrayed their values for some gratification they couldn't resist (e.g., money, power, sensual pleasure). Another possible explanation is that they had no values to betray, that they were among the many contemporary individuals who had never had any roots in a framework of values, or had torn loose from their roots, torn loose from their moorings. Shame, after all, is a social emotion. Individuals who experience it feel that they have

transgressed some group standard of propriety or right conduct. But if they have no sense of membership in any group, the basis for feeling ashamed is undermined. And there is an African proverb, "Where there is no shame, there is no honor."

In World War II studies of soldiers in combat, the most common explanation given for acts of extraordinary courage was "I didn't want to let my buddies down." Reflect on the number of individuals in this transient, pluralistic society who have no allegiance to any group, the members of which they would not want to let down.

We know a great deal about the circumstances of contemporary life that erode our sense of community. And we are beginning to understand how our passion for individualism led us away from community. But so far there has been very little considered advice to help us on the road back to community. Many of us are persuaded of the need to travel that road and have no doubt that it exists; but finding it will require that we be clear as to what we're seeking. We can never bring the traditional community back, and if we could it would prove to be hopelessly anachronistic.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY

The traditional community was homogeneous. We live with heterogeneity and must design communities to handle it.

The traditional community experienced relatively little change from one decade to the next and resented the little that it did experience. We must design communities that can survive change and, when necessary, seek change.

The traditional community commonly demanded a high degree of conformity. Because of the nature of the world we live in, our communities must be pluralistic