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THE ISRAELI SOCIETY BETWEEN MEDIA AND POLITICS - SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL APPROACH

During the 60 years of the State of Israel the radio proved to be the most popular and probably the most important medium for the Israeli society not only in terms of education, entertainment or information. Its significance was evident also in such fields as national security and mobilization in the times of emergency. In a state of constant military readiness resulting from permanent conflict and ceaseless imminence of war, the Israeli people have developed a habit of 'sticking' to a stream of information anywhere it was available. In attempt to stay informed, especially during the most severe crises in their country's history, the Israeli people glued to radio receivers – some in order to recognize a necessity of evacuation, some waiting for orders to mobilize, and others searching for their relatives' names during the war-survivors or casualties listings¹.

The Israeli society's attachment to the national media is exceeding average levels typical for other westernized democracies – among other things because of a the strong sense of common national history and language which Israelis tend to enjoy expressing publicly. Israeli radio is bestowed with a great sense of trust and support thanks to the accuracy in which it expresses what Israelis fight and long for. The media can openly stand for Israeli rights despite any internal or external circumstances, even when the authorities choose stay silent for the sake of political correctness. Because of these reasons the Israeli society strongly believes in its media, which stand second to none on the list of the most trusted public institutions. Public trust in the national media exceeds even such authorities as the President or the Supreme Court, which in other democracies tend to be the most trusted institutions.² Ironically, the Israeli media system derives from more authoritarian models than it is the case in other western countries and therefore level of political control over media is incomparably higher.

These are the reasons why it is fascinating to look through the evolution of the Israeli Broadcasting System (and radio as its most important element in particular) in order to understand various interactions between different layers of the Israeli society and its media, and therefore expose a holistic scope of media influence on Israeli public and the country's politics.

PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE OF RADIO IN THE ISRAELI HISTORY

According to various independent reports and analysis the most popular (and therefore influential) medium in Israel is radio.³ In order to explain the popularity of this particular

¹ See Anis D. Pardes, Irek Grin, *Ich Miasto: Wspomnienia Izraelczyków, przedwojennych mieszkańców Krakowa*, Prószyński & S-ka, Kraków, 2004.

² Asher Arian, Shlomit Barnea, Pazit Ben-Nun, Yariv Tsfati, *The Media and Israeli Democracy*, The Israel Democracy Institute, The Guttman Center, Jerusalem, 1995, pp.9-29.

³ Also, pp. 11-56.

medium in Israel, it should be examined through the prism of radio's exclusive communicational features. According to certain assumptions of McLuhan's typology⁴, radio is a hot medium – the speed of information is highest while the level of engagement required for effective usage is lower than in the case of the cool media (television – requires to employ sight and hearing; or press⁵ – sight and usually also touch) allowing a listener to perform wider variety of activities while receiving a message. The advantage of radio over other types of media lies in its capacity to be used in situations, in which using newspaper or television would be problematic, like for instance driving a car or cooking. Hence, radio can be listened in a more usual manner not affecting other activities, and therefore may be found as 'an inseparable companion' of a listener. These features were very significant for the Israeli society longing for quick and efficient information, which could be provided anywhere and anytime, to some extent ensuring their security and sometimes even saving lives. The public broadcasting network was important for the State of Israel also from typically strategic reasons – in times of war, besides raising citizens' and soldiers' morale, it was used to mobilize reserve troops and warn the citizens of upcoming bombings.

The popularity of radio came along with its importance also to the policymakers. Forced by the specific social and political conditions of Israeli reality, which were especially severe during the nation-building period, they entrusted numerous tasks to the public broadcasting and with various tools of governmental control were continuously supervising their accomplishment. The grandeur of the work that laid before the Jewish people in Palestine, 'creating something from nothing' as a popular Zionist phrase said, required recruiting all the available means of social stimulation. The mass media, as one of the most significant society's influencing factors, and the radio in particular, constituted itself as the only agent fully capable of integrating and encouraging the society to put all the efforts in realizing the Zionist project.

Therefore, the Israel media in its early shape, and especially the radio as the most direct and personalized medium (at least for as long as television was absent), along with fulfilling other functions typical to the means of mass communication served as an active tool of national collectivization. It proved to be a gargantuan task, as the constant inflow of immigrants from diverse cultural backgrounds was a serious challenge for the Israeli policy of uniformization. In the course of the first decades of Israeli history the Zionist vision of unified Israeli nation have been facing the reality of more and more deepening social divisions: Arabs and Jews, *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim*, religious and secular Jews, new immigrants and veteran pioneers – these are just the major polarized segments of Israeli society among many lesser. It is important to note that only recently these highly diversified groups were given proper recognition in terms of mass communication policy⁶; for the most of Israel's history, that is until the 1990s, Israeli culture was perceived as a ethno-national culture created and lived by a "homogenous unity that encompasses all eras and

⁴ See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1964.

⁵ Though, according to McLuhan newspapers also belong to the hot media.

⁶ See Yossi Yonah, *Israel As a Multicultural Democracy: Challenges and Obstacles*, in *Israel Affairs* Vol.11, No.1 (January), Taylor & Francis Ltd, London, 2005.

places, reflecting upon each other⁷”. Such nationalizing narrative, which through the prism of a recently incorporated multicultural approach was rather ignorant towards the diversities in the Israeli society, was quickly seized by *Kol Yisrael* Station⁸ at the outset of its existence and for many years served as an element of its public mission.

Radio was particularly important for the Israeli society not merely from the point of view of preplanned influence it was designed to exert and certain impact it was calculated to make in order to keep the national progress within the framework outlined by the nation’s founders and governors. The national collectivization, whatsoever, is a process that only in a small part can be programmed and mostly proceeds naturally by collective experience of events, which by their spontaneous nature cannot be preplanned. However, radio for the most of Israeli history served as a tool, which corresponding to its designers’ will was supposed “to etch the experience of certain kinds of event onto the collective memory⁹”. In other words, radio delivered an event to the people’s perception and therefore multiplied and catalyzed the experience allowing listeners to ‘virtually’ participate. The Israeli turbulent history is full of such memorable events, crises and dramatic moments deciding on the future of the whole nation, reporting which radio played the role of constructor of collective identity. In order to explain the notion of national collectivization of Israeli society it is essential to give some of them a brief coverage.

The 29th of November 1947 was the day when all Jewish residents of Palestine gathered on streets, squares and courtyards in order to listen to the few available radio receivers as the results of the UN vote on partition of Palestine were being announced¹⁰. The unbearable suspense of waiting for a verdict of life or death and the shared feeling of unity in fate, whatever it may be, made it perhaps the most powerful radio experience for the Jewish people ever¹¹. Another historical event, that brought almost all Israelis to the radio receivers, was the Eichmann’s Trial¹² in 1961. According to a survey conducted by the Central Statistics Bureau, at the first day of the trial 60% of the Jewish population over fourteen was listening. A sensation of re-living the Holocaust trauma and re-identifying with the nation’s Diaspora history bound the listeners with the shared national experience of strong emotional catharsis. The ideological climate in the country before the Eichmann’s Trial was rather aversive towards the victimizing overtones within the Holocaust historiography and generally favoured alienating from the tragic history of the Diaspora; firstly, some people tended to associate the victims with the evil they suffered from, and secondly, common belief that the Holocaust victims “have gone like sheep to the slaughter” was to some extent damaging the picture of a strong and gallant Jew of the Zionist era. However,

⁷ Isaac Baar and Ben-Zion Dinur, *Our Orientation*, in “Zion” Vol.1, 1935, pp. 1-5. Quoted in Uri Ram, *Jewish Historiography and the Invention of Jewish National Narrative*, in Avi Bareli and Pinhas Ginosar (ed.), *Zionism: A Contemporary Debate*, Tel Aviv, 1996.

⁸ *Kol Yisrael*- *Hebr. the Voice of Israel*, the Israeli official radio, a governmental agency under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister’s Office.

⁹ Tamar Liebes, *Acoustic space: the role of radio in Israeli collective history*, pp. 1.

¹⁰ See Amoz Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, Harvest Books, 2005.

¹¹ Tamar Liebes, *Acoustic space: the role of radio in Israeli collective history*, pp. 79-82.

¹² Adolf Eichmann – SS Obersturmbannführer in the Third Reich responsible for the logistics of the Jews transportations during the Holocaust. After the war he lived in Argentina under a false identity until his abduction by the agents of Mossad in May 1960. He was trialed by the Israeli court, convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

the Eichmann Trial has succeeded in changing, or at least tempering those attitudes; with the voices of survivors, prosecutors and the High Court's sentence echoing everywhere from every radio receiver, the certain chapter of history could be collectively approved as closed¹³.

In order to properly emphasize the significance of radio in Israel, it is worth mentioning that *Kol Yisrael* Station, comparing to most of the other Middle-Eastern countries and even some Western states, was developing very rapidly in terms of technology and journalistic professionalism. The Israeli public broadcasting, despite its weaknesses resulting from extensive political control and elevated definition of public service, won several international broadcasting awards (Prix Italia for stereo music in 1962 and documentary feature in 1967, Monte Carlo award for entertainment feature in 1963¹⁴). Israel was one of the first countries in the world to use FM (VHS) transmission and one of the few, that in the outset of the 1960s already provided five radio services¹⁵. The course of the progress of the Israeli radiophony is yet another factor showing how important radio was for the Israelis: as for the citizens, the soldiers, as for the politicians.

POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Beside education and integration radio was also used for a propagandist purpose. Especially after the Six-Day War (June 1967), when a swift victory over the Arab armies resulting in capturing vast territories from Jordanian, Egyptian and Syrian control confirmed the Israelis in a conviction of their military, industrial and economic superiority¹⁶, propaganda of success muttered by the voice of Zionist ideology was ceaselessly echoing on the waves of the Israeli radio¹⁷. Numerous interviews with soldiers and officers discussing on their deeds and experiences were broadcasted in attempt to secure not only the fading Zionist myth of strength and determination, but also diminishing popularity of the leftist-religious coalition, which from the very outset of Israeli democracy have been successively ruling the country. Despite the outburst of enthusiasm after gaining control over Jerusalem, which concurred to *Maarach*¹⁸ outstanding triumph in the 1969 Knesset elections, the Israeli people were beginning to show the first signs of fatigue. The society was being gradually disillusioned with the Zionist epopee and exhausted with constant wars and unstable political climax. There was no ultimate victory that could secure peace forever, comments arouse,

¹³ Tamar Liebes, *Acoustic space: the role of radio in Israeli collective history*, pp. 79-82.

¹⁴ *Television and radio: In Israel*, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, t. 15, pp. 930.

¹⁵ *A Brief History of Radio in the Country*, at <http://www.israelradio.org/history/history.html> (May 15th 2007), pp. 3.

¹⁶ See Refael Bashan and Zmora Ohad, *The Victory: The Six-Day War of 1967*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1967.

¹⁷ See Joel Beinin, *Political Economy and Public Culture in a State of Constant Conflict – 50 Years of Israeli Statehood*, pp. 109-110, in *Jewish Social Studies* Vol.4, No.4 (Spring-Summer), Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 96-141. (earlier version appeared as *Israel at Forty: The Political Economy/Political Culture of Constant Conflict* in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 10, no.4, pp. 433-56).

¹⁸ *Maarach - Ha-Maarach ha-Avoda* - Hebr. The Labor Alignment; a block of left-wing political parties founded in 1965 originally including *Mapai* and *Ahdut ha-Avoda-Poalei Tziyon*; for the sixth elections for the Knesset (1969) joined by Ben Gurion's *Rafi* and later by religious *Mapam* and won 56 seats constituting a direct majority as a single party for the first time in Israeli history.

and as long as the Arab countries and Israel were standing against each other in uncompromising hostility, a threat of another war was real. The prevailing attitudes of the Israeli public along with some of the press headlines began to contradict the ultra-optimist, patriotic tone, which could be overheard from radio receivers. The protest movements aimed against the outcome of the Left's persisting rule were gradually evolving from the form of spontaneous outbursts of citizen discontent to legitimate organizational structures. Among relatively insignificant student movements like anti-Zionist *Matzpen*, leftist *Siah* or *Yesh*, the largest publicity aroused around *Panterim Shchorim* (The Black Panthers), who were actively protesting against mistreatment of certain ethnic groups, mainly the Moroccan Jews, who suffered pauperization, poor housing conditions and limited educational perspectives¹⁹. However, only after the Yom Kippur War movements proceeding from the ranks of civil society grew strong enough to gain considerable influence over the course of political life in the country.

The sudden and simultaneous invasion of Syrian and Egyptian armies in 1973 started the bloodiest conflict in the history of Israel – the Yom Kippur War. This time, the Arab generalships seemed to have learned from their previous failures. Thanks to Soviet strategic guidance and technological support Arab armed forces for the first time proved that they were a worthy and demanding challenger in the ways of modern warfare. During Day of Atonement, which is regarded as the holiest festival in Jewish calendar, most public activity in Israel including radio broadcasting is held, what in 1973 seriously handicapped the IDF's ability to mobilize²⁰. The advantage of surprise along with benefiting from Israeli overconfidence helped the Egyptian and Syrian forces (reinforced with men and equipment from Iraq, Morocco and Jordan as well as largely financed by the Saudis) cause dreadful losses to the Israeli side at the early phase of hostilities and led the Israelis to a verge of defeat. Heavy air strikes on Syrian positions and industrial facilities deep behind the lines weakened Syrian soldiers' morale and the following massive counterstroke smashed Syrian armoured brigades and opened way to reach Damascus. Following first unsuccessful efforts to stop Egyptian advance on the southern front, the government accepted gen. Sharon's plan to outmanoeuvre the enemy forces using a gap between 2nd and 3rd Egyptian Army. After an intense panzer battle at the Sinai Peninsula, Sharon successfully crossed the Suez Canal surrounding the Egyptian 3rd Army and rushed for Cairo. At that point, on a verge of capturing the capitals of the two enemy states, Israel was at a position of direct threat to the sovereignty of Egypt and Syria²¹. The Soviet Union, which was backing the Arab states, was left no choice but to join the fight herself or negotiate with the United States the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Facing a menace of direct conflict with the Soviets (the American intelligence reported activity of Soviet forces in the region) the Americans decided to pressure the Israeli government (via the UN resolution) into signing politically unprofitable peace accords.

¹⁹ Liran Denesh, *Israeli Protest Over War Blunders*, <http://www.amedia.org> (June 7th 2007), posted 5/11/2007.

²⁰ However, some historians argue on the issue of mobilization: during Yom Kippur there were hardly any traffic on the streets and most of the reserve soldiers stayed at home or in synagogue, so they were easy to be reached and transported to the army concentration points.

²¹ See Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1975.

Severe casualties²² and war damage, loss of territories captured in the Six-Day War, and the fallen myth of the IDF invincibility along with the display of General Staff's low efficiency had despicable impact on the Israeli people and their morale. The protest movements from all around the ideological spectrum gained further influence in the society with their point of view beginning to have wider coverage in the country's press. The marginal role of the extreme politics on the Israeli political scene was no longer the case. Causing the final breakdown in 'the operative consensus'²³, which have been successfully securing the uniformity of Israeli politics for the first two decades and marginalized the significance of political initiatives proceeding from the ranks of non-governmental environments, the civil movements began not only to shape the public opinion through extensive medial coverage, but also successfully restructure the very political scene²⁴. The press was openly talking about the crisis of authority and the people in numerous manifestations were demanding that certain politicians, ahead with the Prime Minister Golda Meir and the Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, step down from their offices immediately.

One of the first and the most significant of the post Yom Kippur War protest movements and the one eventually leading to Meir and Dayan's resignation was initiated by Capt. Motti Ashkenazi, field commander of the northern position at the Bar Lev line (east bank of the Suez Canal) and one of the few Israeli soldiers who had withstood the Egyptian surprise attack. Having stated in the press that the military authorities had committed a blunder, he started a one-man sit-in in front of the PM Office demanding unconditional dismissal of Moshe Dayan. Soon, he was joined by various people from very different layers of society: from regular labourers and *kibbutznikim*²⁵, reserve army officers of all ranks, managers, scientists and intellectuals, to the officials from political institutions of primary ranks. The one-man initiative spontaneously turned into massive protest movement reaching a number of 6,000 members during the demonstration at the Prime Minister's Office on March 24th 1974. Having assumed a name *Yisrael Shelanu* (Our Israel) and acquired support from integral units of IDF reserves it expanded into a symbolic expression of national discontent and frustration after the Yom Kippur War²⁶. Due to the *Yisrael Shelanu*'s extensive public activity, after publishing the report from Agranat Commission²⁷ the Meir's cabinet was forced to step down and leave the office of the Prime Minister to Icchak Rabin, future Peace Noble Prize winner, who due to an internal conflict with the orthodox environments resigned left the office to Shimon Peres three months before the 1977 elections. It cannot be left unmentioned that *Yisrael Shelanu*, as well as several other protest movements of leftist political orientation, received active support from the pirate radio station the Voice of Peace.

²² 2365 dead and approx. 6400 wounded according to the Israeli governmental sources.

²³ See Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery, Essays in Macrosociology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1975, pp. 164.

²⁴ Ehud Sprinzak, *Extreme Politics in Israel*, in „Jerusalem Quarterly“ No.5, 1977, reedited and published at http://www.geocities.com/alabasters_archive/extreme_politics.html (June 7th 2007), pp. 2-4.

²⁵ *Kibbutznik* - Hebr. member of a kibbutz, Israeli semi-socialist agricultural community.

²⁶ Ehud Sprinzak, *Extreme Politics in Israel*, pp. 4.

²⁷ Commission of the Israeli Supreme Court led by Shimon Agranat, established to investigate the circumstances leading to the outburst of the Yom Kippur War.

It did not take a long time before the aversive attitudes against *Maarach* political supremacy entered the actual political dimension reflecting on the Israeli people's votes. In 1974 the Dean of Law Department at the Hebrew University and former *Maarach*'s member Amnon Rubinstein founded *Tenua le-Shinui ve-Yozma*, a protest organization, which soon turned into a political party. Before the 1977 elections to the Knesset *Shinui* merged with Yigdal Yadin's democratic formation establishing *Dash*²⁸, which won 15 seats and entered coalition for the first right-wing government in the history of Israel (with *Likud*²⁹, *Shlomitziyon*³⁰, *Mafdal*³¹, and *Agudat Yisrael*³²). The leftist block was pushed into the opposition with only 32 seats (what, however, still situated *Maarach* as the second most popular political party). *Dash*, although relatively short-lived as a political entity, was very significant to the process of liberalization of Israeli democracy and deregulation of the Israeli audiovisual media, as it has entered the ruling coalition under the one condition of opening the country's media to free competition. Most of the political establishment before the 1977 elections, including Menachem Begin's *Likud* and some of the Labor Party members, have joined these anti-monopoly attitudes and in their campaigns committed themselves to liberalizing the media. However, at that point of the Israeli history it was not likely that these promises would be implemented, as it took next fifteen years for the opening of the second TV channel³³. Next elections in 1981 have not brought any significant transformations on surface of the Israeli political spectrum, as *Likud* reappeared as the victor with 48 mandates (getting ahead of *Maarach* with only one seat).

Despite the aggressive policy of building settlements on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the escalation of the nationalizing tone presented by the orthodox block, which had probably more influence in the rightist coalition than ever before during its alliance with the Left, it was for the Begin's government to enter and for the first time in the Israeli history succeed and in peace negotiations with its neighbour country resulting in peace treaty with Egypt (Camp David in 1978). However, the question of Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained unresolved and the PLO's presence in Lebanon along with Syrian involvement in Lebanese internal conflicts resulted in extensive military activities along the northern border of Israel, which eventually after the IDF entering the southern Lebanon in June 1982 assumed the form a regular war involving three countries plus the PLO. Israel succeeded in eliminating Palestinian military structures in Lebanon, but was unable to deal with the presence of Syrian army, which actively reinforced the Muslim fraction, what resulted in

²⁸ *Dash* - *Tenoaa Demokratit le-Shinui* - Hebr. Democratic Movement for Change; liberal party established by Yigdal Yadin in 1976. Due to internal tensions broke up into several lesser parties.

²⁹ *Likud* - Hebr. Consolidation; center-rightist party formed in 1973 from a number of lesser rightist parties including *Gahal* and *Herut*.

³⁰ *Shlomitziyon* - Hebr. Peace-Zion; rightist party founded in 1977 by Ariel Sharon. Merged into *Likud* prior to forming of the 1977 government.

³¹ *Mafdal* - *Miflaga Datit Leumit* - Hebr. National Religious Party; originally an orthodox Zionists' party of central affiliation founded in 1956 by Yosef Burg and Chaim Shapira from merging of *Mizrachi* and *Poalei Mizrachi*. Today constitutes a part of *Ha-Ichud ha-Leumi* (National Union) from the radical right-wing.

³² *Agudat Yisrael* - Hebr. Union of Israel; ultra-orthodox political party originating in a hasiddic movement from Poland. Today merged with *Degel ha-Tora* (Flag of Tora) functions under the name *Yahadut ha-Tora* (Tora's Judaism).

³³ Gideon Doron, *Three 'Traveling' Models...*, pp. 521.

failure in establishing a pro-Israeli government supposedly based on the Christian majority. Israeli military actions again awakened international resentments and the negative outcome of the war brought massive discontent in among the Israeli people. Many casualties on the Israeli side caused a critical drop in the army's morale as the Israeli soldiers for the first time faced horrors of urban warfare in densely populated areas. The light brought on the massacres in Sabra and Shatila (performed by Christian Phalanx under unofficial permission from the IDF) caused a severe shock in the Israeli public opinion and pulled almost half a million citizens from homes for the largest demonstration ever held in that country. Thousands of people outraged by the barbaric ways in which their government tended to solve the Palestinian problem marched under the banner of *Shalom Achshav* demanding immediate prosecution of the people responsible for the massacres. Soon the Prime Minister appointed a special commission under the chairmanship of the Supreme Court Judge Yitzchak Kahane, which in its report stated that a direct responsibility for the massacres was held by the Minister of Defence Ariel Sharon, the Head of the Staff and the field commanders stationing in Beirut and advised their unconditional dismissal. Ariel Sharon stepped down as the Minister of Defence but remained in the government as an unaffiliated minister.

Next years and following parliamentary elections brought further polarization of the Israeli society reflected by the ongoing balance between the Left and the Right (with the orthodox block on the background) on the political scene, what were not beneficial for solving the Palestinian question in either, military or political, way. After the 1984 elections neither *Likud* (41 mandates) nor *Maarach* (44) was able to create a government by allying with the religious parties, so the only solution was to create a national unity government with the Prime Minister's Office in the hands of the slightly more popular Labour Party (fulfilled by Shimon Peres and Yitzchak Rabin). The next elections in 1988 did not bring any changes onto the Israeli political spectrum and resulted in establishing a second national unity government, this time led by Yitzchak Shamir from *Likud*. Increasing terrorism, internal conflicts on the Right and economic depression deepened frustration of the Israeli society and concurred to the victory of the Labour Party in the next parliamentary elections. Yitzchak Rabin again took the office of the Prime Minister, this time for the entire term, and thanks extensive diplomacy involving politicians from many countries (mainly the USA) succeeded in entering peace negotiations with the PLO resulting in mutual signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

MEDIA CONTROL AND NATIONAL SECURITY

It is a common tendency even in most liberal countries that the democratic principle of free speech, which in everyday life marks out the area for the media activities and entitles each individual to liberty of expression, in a general, long-term course of a state's policy-making are not treated as absolute or inflexible. Depending on current political situation democratic governments have been assuming different approaches to the issue of the freedom of expression. In times of conflict or other national emergency when lives of the citizens are endangered it is common for democratic regimes to restrict the free speech to some extent in order to protect the (temporarily) fragile structures of their societies, whereas in times of peace such freedoms are or tend to remain unrestricted. It was said by one of the officials from the British Ministry of Defence during the Falklands War in 1982: "the

essence of successful warfare is secrecy; the essence of successful journalism is publicity³⁴. Expatiating on this phrase, the struggle between the those two branches of a democratic state (the media and the military), whose goals and methods from the point of view of exposure of information seem to contradict each other, is settled in favour of the former when no serious threats endanger national security and respectively turns to the advantage of the latter when such threats are or seem to be present³⁵.

Good overview and brief analysis of that notion from the point of view American juridical system was provided by US Supreme Court Justice Oliver W. Holmes in 1919. In his summations, which gave birth to a strong precedence for further legal discourse in the USA (especially up to date after the 9/11 terrorist attacks), he incorporated a clear criterion regarding the exercise of free speech in democratic societies: "When a nation is at war many things that might be said in the times of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight and that no Court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right. (...) I do not doubt that the United States constitutionally may punish speech that produces or intended to produce a clear and imminent danger that will bring about forthwith certain substantive evils that the United States constitutionally may seek to prevent. The power undoubtedly is greater in time of war than in time of peace because war open danger that do not exist at other times³⁶".

Whereas such clearly defined criterions of "imminent danger" or "times of war" are typical to the USA and other Western democracies, the Israeli case is far more complex. As emphasized in almost every work touching on the modern history of the Middle Eastern region, the emerging of the Jewish State in Palestine has started a continuous ethnic conflict resulting in a spiral of violence, which has been enduring for the entire Israeli existence and proved to be unstoppable until today. History books tell that until the present moment Israel waged six regular wars³⁷ what gives an average of one war per decade since the establishment of its statehood. However, due to frequent incidents along the Israeli borders, which have been happening incessantly for most of the Israeli history, as well as due to the ceaseless terrorist activity inside them it can be argued that – in contrast to the USA and other democracies, where there is a clear division between the times of peace and periods of war – in Israel a state of conflict (or at least a state of national emergency) is permanent. More precise point of view is provided by M. Sherman and S. Shavit, who stated in their essay, that "Israel has (...) maintained itself under (...) 'twilight' conditions, (...) [which] involve a constant on-going threat to its national security, which at times increases in intensity (...) and at times diminishes, igniting the hopes (usually unfounded) of

³⁴ At <http://www.newseum.org/warstories/essay/secrecy.html>, after Martin Sherman and Shabtai Shavit, *The Media and National Security...*, pp. 543 and 552.

³⁵ See Martin Sherman and Shabtai Shavit, *The Media and National Security: The Performance of the Israeli Press in the Eyes of the Israeli Public*, in *Israel Affairs* Vol.12, No.3 (July), 2006, pp. 547-552.

³⁶ *Schenk v. United States* and *Abrams v. United States*, 1919, at <http://www.lectlaw.com>, after Martin Sherman and Shabtai Shavit, *The Media and National Security: The Performance of the Israeli Press in the Eyes of the Israeli Public*, pp. 547-548.

³⁷ Defining 'war' as a conflict between two or more countries/nations, in which at least one of them uses its major military force in terms of open combat. Should other definitions be assumed, the mentioned number can change.

imminent peace³⁸. However, the authors add, the ongoing threat to the Israeli national security was fluctuating over time, but it has never faded below a certain level of intensity allowing the people to fully enjoy tranquillity of what in the Western societies is ascribed to a state of peace.

Faced by these assumptions, fundamental questions are raised on the issue of media freedom in Israel: what should be the prevailing approach to the free speech in a democratic country in which a state of national crisis is (relatively) permanent? Logically, if a conflict is permanent, political control over media for the sake of national security should be maintained continuously for as long as possible, what awakens serious dilemmas in terms of the principal rules of democracy. Respectively, whether there are certain areas of knowledge sensitive to national security, like information on military issues exposing which could jeopardize the progress of certain military actions or various messages which could provoke incitement or strike in the stability of a government, who or what in a democratic state should mark borders of such areas in order to prevent exploiting the control over the media for the individual advantage of certain political powers? There were two cases in the history of Israel in which the Supreme Court restricted the jurisdiction of the military censor, whereas most of the censorship activities either were undertaken jointly by the government and editors' committee or fallen under the responsibility of the editors themselves³⁹. Thirdly, if democracy is a political system which principally ought to reflect the collective will of the people, what is the prevailing voice of the Israeli society on the question of choice between defending the democracy from external attacks and preserving of democratic values against the domestic forms of infringement? In a poll conducted in 2001 by *TNS-Teleser* vast majority of respondents expressed an opinion that censorship on security grounds during national crises is more important than keeping to the principle of free speech and that the media should assume a more sensitive approach in criticizing authorities when a political situation requires maintaining stability in governmental environments⁴⁰. Moreover, the tendencies to control the media ever present in the political establishment of Israel were especially supported by various environments not internalized with the principles of democracy (like the Orthodox Jewry, the Muslim minority, and the new immigrants from Middle Eastern and African countries)⁴¹.

Another factor influencing the relations between the media and the politics, which is often pointed out by the communication scholars as a fundamental difference between modern times from the previous eras, is technology. In many works on that topic an equation is employed in order to explain the notion of technology versus the political control of the media: the more sophisticated are the means by which communication travels the less it is susceptible to being controlled. Nowadays, when speed and range of information is incomparably higher than before, it is required to considerably increase one's efforts if wanting (or needing) to keep it under surveillance⁴². This equation is especially up to date nowadays in the age of internet and satellite communication.

³⁸ Martin Sherman and Shabtai Shavit, *The Media and National Security*..., pp. 553.

³⁹ Gideon Doron, *Three 'Traveling' Models*..., pp. 519.

⁴⁰ Martin Sherman and Shabtai Shavit, *The Media and National Security*..., pp. 556.

⁴¹ Dan Caspi, *On Media and Politics: Between Enlightened Authority and Social Responsibility*, pp. 24, in *Israel Affairs* Vol.11, No.1 (January), Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2005, pp. 23-38.

⁴² Dan Caspi, *On Media and Politics*..., pp. 24-25.

SHIFTING OF THE MODELS

Many authors underline that development of the Israeli media system within the narrow framework of Israeli governmental agenda was a unique occurrence that cannot be easily compared to any of the models prevailing in the rest of the world. The specific conditions within the Israeli political life, which were absent both in Western European countries and in the USA, had prevented the Israeli democracy to follow their trace exactly step by step, though certain patterns were apparently incorporated. The political situation in the region was forcing the Israeli elites, both political and communicational, to resign from certain doctrinal values strictly followed by the Western World and assume less liberal but more 'real'⁴³ methods of policymaking. However, the very political system based on democratic principles is situating Israel far from totalitarian Soviet Union and the Third World regimes based on different forms of dictatorship (though in terms of militarism Israel is comparable to the most envenomed regions of the latter) and by all means cannot be compared to them. Therefore, the shape of the Israeli media – as a result of unique political and social circumstances – was itself unique and unparalleled.

The early mass media in Israel due to the lack of non-partisan press in the very first years of Israeli statehood were actually either a constituted part of political parties (party press) or a branch of a governmental office (national radio). The informal editors' committee established after the Independence War in 1948, which included head editors of all the newspapers published in Hebrew as well as Jerusalem Post, was being regularly invited to security briefings delivered by the Prime Minister and other governmental officials, during which certain information was being classified as restricted from public circulation. This included primarily the unofficial deals were made with foreign powers (like agreements with Ethiopia and Romania regarding immigration from these countries), Israeli involvement in military operations abroad (for instance the Kurdish rebellion), the nuclear program and other⁴⁴. Due to the evolution of the Israeli society caused by the massive absorption of immigrants, who were gradually integrating into the political system and extending its physical dimensions, the close relationship between the elites became extinct. The party press has died out (with exception to the religious press) and a strong triopoly of *Ha-aretz*, *Maariv* and *Yedioth Aharonot* filled its place on the market of daily newspapers, what was one of the first signs that the Israeli press was leaving behind "service orientation" to assume "profit orientation" and itself becoming a product for readers to consume⁴⁵.

In respect to audiovisual media, until the establishment of Israel Broadcasting Authority in 1965 the Israeli radio *Kol Yisrael* was a governmental agency under the direct supervision from the Prime Minister's Office, what secured compatibility between its agenda and the one of the government. However, even after 1965 any independency attitudes that might emerge inside the newly established public network were prevented due to the heavy political entanglement over the IBA⁴⁶. The only station that was not directly connected to government was the army radio *Galei Tzahal*, but it also had to follow the rules set up by the politicians and did not by any means remain beyond the political control.

⁴³ With loose reference to Ludwig von Rochau's doctrine of Realpolitik.

⁴⁴ Gideon Doron, *Three Travelling Models...*, pp. 518.

⁴⁵ Dan Caspi, *On Media and Politics...*, pp. 27.

⁴⁶ Gideon Doron, *Three Travelling Models...*, pp. 519-520.

The first steps towards the transformation of the political control model into the market regulatory model were undertaken after the Yom Kippur War (the middle 1970s). Anti-monopoly attitudes were especially apparent in the ranks of *Dash* party originating in post-war protests movements, which entered the governing coalition after the 1977 elections. Menachem Begin, leader of *Likud* and then head of the government, also held a very liberal stand towards the issue of opening the media market for competition. The leftist block politically could not afford to stray from this line and also made some commitments to liberalization in its political campaign. However, these concepts were debated more vigorously than implemented as it took fifteen years to launch the first commercial television. Cable television was officially introduced in 1986 and placed under supervision of Council for Cable and Satellite TV with a set of restrictions concerning broadcasting news. The successful adoption of the open market model now relied on initiatives, which accordingly to Peled Commission's report from 1997 included opening the third commercial television as well as five formatted channels targeting separate audiences: Russians, Arabs, Sephardim and religious Jews plus one all-news channel⁴⁷. This project reflecting the fragmentation of the Israeli society paved the way for incorporating the multicultural approach, which now serves as a main determinant for the further development of the Israeli media.

From this short review of the Israeli radio's historical evolution and policy it is possible to outline a model of how Israeli national and political collective responsibility developed throughout the 60 years of its existence. Israeli people use their media – both public and commercial – as a mean to realize their own model of a highly active civil society – ready to organise open protests and an independent critique of the governmental ways of communication. Especially after the Yom Kippur War bloomed the Israeli illegal broadcasting, independent press and in the last decade of the XX century also commercial television, which are competitive to official governmental agencies and their politically affiliated medial tubes.⁴⁸

It is obvious that there are still a few arguments often misused by Israeli politicians despite the rapid evolution of the Israeli society – for instance the Holocaust, the Second World War or destruction of the Jewish country. The structure of the modern Israeli society is in a state of permanent and dynamical transformation and some layers of the political establishment seem lack behind this great social change. It is expected (and to some extent already proved to be true) that this tendency in the Israeli society will caused a wild social and political need for reinventing new arguments and redefining the most important definitions for the whole Israelis: the Israeli country and the Israeli nation, far from the WW II, perhaps in the multicultural and multireligious perspective. This is where the media play one of their most significant role – to integrate the society around its most important goals.

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⁴⁷ Gideon Doron, *Three Travelling Models...*, pp. 521-523.

⁴⁸ The best symbol of the Israeli independent social movement against the official policy of Israel was 'Shalom Achshiv' Movement and Abie Nathan's 'The Voice of Peace' Pirate Radio Station.

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