

The Impact of the Six Day War on the Mexican Jewish Community

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On June 10, 1968, in the framework of the 27th Zionist Congress which met in Jerusalem, Arie Pincus, then head of the World Zionist Organization, while analyzing the conditions prevailing in the Jewish world 20 years after the creation of the State of Israel and a year since the events of June 1967, stated: *The Six Day War is not an integral cure for all diseases.*¹

It is evident that a statement of this nature sounds unusual. What does it mean that a warfare acts as a remedy? What diseases was it expected to treat?

The war's immediate impact was a generalized Jewish awakening. 1967 was able to turn the routine into passion, mechanical into organic solidarity. Moreover, the Six Day War seems to be the kind of event that is felt to be historic at the very time of its unfolding, given the growing perception of a life-threatening situation, the rapidity of the developments, the magnitude of Israel's victory as well as the type and intensity of the responses it elicited; it was defined as a watershed while it was happening. In this sense, the response evoked by the war seen as a remedy, meant to turn it into an everlasting renewal of Jewish life. Nevertheless, Pincus' statement may be seen as an emerging voice that expresses a concern shared by different sections of world Jewry in regard of the difficulty involved in turning such an rouse into a permanent phenomenon; in other words, it reflects

a generalized effort to minimize its accidental nature as an event in which it would be impossible to discern any permanence.

In Mexico, the response of the Jewish community to the outbreak of the hostilities was massive and enthusiastic both in human and material resources.² This effort involved the whole community, breaking institutional limits. It included fund raising as well as the collection of clothing and medicines. The pressing need for identification turned blood donation into a symbolic act. Young people were willing to participate directly in combat, even though the flux of volunteers to Israel was comparatively small (16). The prevailing atmosphere registered by memory was that of solidarity and willingness to sacrifice.³ With the Jewish state's military victory, the feeling was one of sharing in Israel's euphoria. *Hachshará* and medical internship reached significant numbers.⁴ The contributions to Keren Hayesod were outstanding.⁵

These responses indicate the way in which a moment in history can act as a "founding event" where different dimensions converge: reality, symbolism, and the imaginary. Discourse and social action met, and together stretched the boundaries that define the scope and meaning of *us*. In words of the own actors, each Jew was defined as a potential citizen of Israel and the menace to the State as a threat to the entire Jewish people: "the people of Israel is one undivided unit."⁶ Thus, the perception of the Six Day War as an historical watershed was due not only to Israel's victory but also to the expression of solidarity and the cohesion it brought about in world Jewry. In this sense, one may understand the perception of the war has having balsamic effects.

Nevertheless, a year later, the warfare was not seen as a remedy, as an integral cure. Therefore, one has to ask about the diseases on which it was called to have therapeutic effects. Were the afflictions related to the new conditions of Jewish life in general, or to the emerging situation that organized Zionism had to confront after the war? In the new situation of unity and increased mutual links between Israel and the Diaspora, the conversion of the Jewish excitement in an everlasting phenomenon, as well as the role each

part was called to play in the process, could be defined in different ways. Consequently, the perception and definition of the war as a remedy could mean diverse circumstances and be seen differently, that is to say, as a remedy for different types of ill.

From the vantage point of the World Zionist Organization, Pincus' message was geared towards the leaders of the State of Israel as well as to its public opinion. It came as a response to the doubts expressed regarding the relevance of organized Zionism, aroused precisely by the intensity of the awakening caused by the War, which apparently rendered its role unnecessary. This became evident when it was stated that from the 8,000 volunteers that arrived to Israel during the first year after the war, 50% had not had any previous contact with Jewish or Zionist organizations.⁷ In a parallel way, the absence of a massive *Aliyah* from the non-communist world after the war tended to reinforce the uncertainty surrounding the relevance of Zionism.

But precisely because of these arguments, for Pincus, the Zionist movement was still relevant and had a role to play. Notwithstanding, there were diseases for which the war was not sufficient a remedy. First, the immediate Jewish response to the war situation could be a temporary phenomenon and, therefore, the consolidation and expansion of Zionist activism had to continue. Second, the challenge of incorporating youth into Jewish life was still a task that Zionism had to confront; in this sense, Zionism defined itself once again as a means to continuity and as a tool against assimilation.

Organized Zionism in Mexico shared some of these concerns and had its own worries. Paradoxically, the challenges ahead emerged simultaneously with the State of Israel's new centrality among Diaspora Jews both as an organizational axis and as a source of legitimization. While the first dimension finds its frame of reference in significant transformations within the Jewish community, the latter points to its interaction with the society at large. The new emerging situation will eventually show that while the war's immediate impact was impressive, the concomitant changes it brought about were heterogeneous and even contradictory.

The Organizational Axis: redefinition of spaces.

One of the main paradoxes brought about by the magnitude of the response to the war was that it inaugurated a process which diluted the boundaries between Zionism and non-Zionism to the extent that a pro-Israeli attitude came to be equated with Zionism. As a result of the massive and spontaneous expressions of support during the conflict, Zionism's organizational boundaries and identity became diffuse and therefore the organized movement had to confront new ideological and organizational definitions regarding its validity as well as its specificity and self-definition.

Certainly, the war demonstrated that the ties that bound the Mexican Jewish community with Israel were of increased mutual links and legitimization. Through solidarity with Israel, the community expressed an implicit message regarding the legitimacy of its own existence. In the words of a community leader "the events of 1967 changed dramatically the relationship between the Diaspora and the State of Israel. They showed their unity, changing the vision of those in Israel who claimed that every Jew must live there. Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel are all members of a single and mutually dependent people."⁸

Solidarity meant responsibility and, by implication, the latter sought to legitimate the Diaspora's separate existence. For its part, the Jewish state, unwittingly, legitimated the Diaspora by attaching great importance to its support. In this sense, the Diaspora's solidarity legitimized its place and the channeling of energy into reinforcing its communities, mediated by the centrality of the State of Israel.

However, insofar as the state of Israel posed *Aliyah* as a central criteria to evaluate the success and limitations of the Zionist movement after the war, it confronted Zionism with new modalities of expression of its double and often contradictory historical objectives: its *final goal* and *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work in the present). After 1967, *Aliyah* offered both the possibility of converting the Jewish ferment into a permanent phenomenon

and of giving back to the Zionist idea its own specific profile. Paradoxically, for the organized movement, the absence of a massive *Aliyah* demanded the reinforcement of its activities, not necessarily along new lines, thereby justifying its permanence.

In this new context, Mexican Zionism found itself caught between two different perspectives: on the one hand, Israel's expectations of a massive affluence of immigrants were higher; on the other, while Zionist identity appeared as a synonym of Jewish continuity, involvement in Jewish life in the Diaspora was validated. Thus, the challenge meant how to transform the awakening into a stable form of participation in organized Jewish life in Mexico.

While approaching this dilemma, the first expressions of a generation clash emerged. In the framework of the Aliyah Congress that took place in Mexico in November 1967,⁹ youth movement spokespersons accused present Zionism as "comfortable" and demanded a reinvigorated *Hagshama* Zionism that should be headed by the Zionist leadership.¹⁰ For its part, the older generation justified a wider conception of the objectives of the movement based on the assumption that *Aliyah* is always a result of Zionist activism and education.¹¹ In this sense, Zionism in Mexico pursued continuity rather than change, reinforcing the prevailing pattern initiated during the twenties, when it aspired to *conquer the community* not only as a strategy to guarantee support for its cause but to ensure Jewish life in the new country. Certainly, the changing conditions and the new circumstances surrounding *Gegenwartsarbeit* were different, acutely emphasizing its ambivalence and contradictions.

From the point of view of Mexican Zionism's internal dynamics, the new developments added two more to this first and essential dilemma: one, referred to the inner democratization of the movement that took form in the demand for individual membership versus the traditional affiliation through political parties; the other, related to the loss of institutional relevance of the Zionist movement within the community *vis à vis* the emergence of other organizational spaces. These inherent dilemmas were intertwined in the

more basic question of whether the significance of Zionism and the communal relevance of the Jewish state were necessarily related.

In order to adapt itself to the new structural conditions, the World Zionist Organization called for the creation of new and more representative Zionist federations organized not only along party lines but also based on individual membership.¹² The Zionist Federation of Mexico, in its aim to protect its monopoly position, challenged this recommendation of the central authorities concerning the campaign of individual membership, thus behaving in a contradictory way.¹³ The generation clash that appeared on the ideological showed itself again at the organizational level, with the breaking away of a group of young members who created the "Renewal Front" for the advancement of individual membership and who demanded to hold elections both for the federation as well as for the 28th Zionist Congress.¹⁴

Throughout the membership campaign, there were confrontations between the Zionist Federation and the Renewal Front.¹⁵ The struggle between both groups was resolved through an agreement to respect the two membership recruiting structures and to hold elections.¹⁶ However, even though both electoral processes took place, participation was low,¹⁷ and the recruiting of new members was limited,¹⁸ pointing to the fact that it was difficult either to benefit from the Jewish awakening caused by the war or to regain a central role in community life. Hence, from the Zionist point of view, the effervescence caused by the warfare failed to be translated into a permanent circumstance, neither in terms of *Aliyah* nor in terms of communal participation, obviating the fact that the response to the hostilities appeared to have been a short term phenomenon. In this respect, one should remember that although 1967 brought about a growing demand for elections as a way to democratization, they never were a customary pattern of political behavior in the history of organized Zionism in Mexico. Voting continued to be an irregular praxis, for accords taken at the top remained the common rule. In this sense, the impact of the war had historical and structural constraints.

As part of the generation clash resulting from the radicalization of the youth movements, the Zionist Federation became the object of severe criticism. As a result of the war, the youth organizations became stronger: the existing ones increased their membership and new ones appeared, especially within the Sephardic groups. This was the case of *Lochamei Herut* among Syrian Jews' Maguen David community and of *Hatikwa* among other Sephardic groups. Due to this growth, youth movements claimed a more active role in organized Zionism as well as economic independence.¹⁹ Their ideological commitment, however, did not prevent them from encountering difficulties to advance *Hagshama*; for example, in 1972 their ranks consisted of 1,100 *chanichim*, and *Aliyah* was almost nil. Nevertheless, they acquired a significant presence within the community, which would increase throughout the decade. The Yom Kippur War would act as a catalyst in this process: while in 1967 Mexico recruited only 16 volunteers, during 1974 Mexico sent 120 volunteers to Israel for a period between six months to a year.²⁰ This reminds us of the importance of the cumulative and dynamic effects of historical events while evaluating their impact.

Simultaneously, regarding its institutional role within the Jewish community, the Zionist Federation based its actions on the awareness of its displacement in communal life and its loss of prestige and authority. It tried by different means to revert this trend, with its attempts varying in orientation and intensity during the early seventies.²¹ The Zionist leadership explained the self-perceived loss of space by way of contradictory arguments. Unaware of the structural changes that were taking place, they continued to refer, above all, to the lack of economic support and the excessive importance given to fund raising as the main reasons behind their functional shrinkage.²² Its discourse was increasingly critical of the apathetic attitude prevailing among its rank and file and could not come to terms with the fact that Israel's centrality would not be reflected through its traditional institutional framework.

The fact is that as a result both of the 1967 experience as well as the institutional differentiation and functional specialization prevailing, the community tended to a redefinition of the channels through which the links with Israel would take place, questioning the predominant role of mediator that organized Zionism historically had and bringing other existing institutions to play an increasing role in the community's relationship with Israel.

One of those institutions was the Central Committee, the umbrella organization of Mexican Jewry. Although this organism defined itself as an apolitical organization, after the Six Day War it expressed an increasing solidarity and identification with the State of Israel and urged the diverse community sectors it represented to show a more active stance *vis-à-vis* the State of Israel.²³ Simultaneously, it tried to maintain a balance between identification and autonomy, thus reflecting the changes in the community's dynamics as well as those taking place within the World Jewish Congress, with which it was affiliated.

Another institution which gained a recognized space for direct links between the community and Israel was Mexico's *Ashkenazi Kehila Nidje Israel*, which already during the war became the center for the collection of material aid and the enlistment of human support for Israel. Even though Zionists had "conquered" the *Kehila* at the outset, remnants of rival political parties and movements could still be found up to then. These ideological vestiges were marginalized by the 67 War.²⁴ At the same time, the *Kehila* had to confront the fact that the relation with Israel and Zionism did not belong solely to the Ashkenazi community. While the Sephardic community had established close bonds with Zionism in the past, 1967 attracted other communities to the cause, like the Arabic-speaking communities of *Alianza Monte Sinaí* and *Maguen David*. While an analysis of the impact of the war on these two sectors would require a specific study, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that their *rapprochement* with Israel and Zionism was complex. The growing identification with Israel was interwoven with a process of secularization which also included a generation clash: Israel offered the new generations the opportunity to move

away from religion as the only focus of identity and to stress political sovereignty as a complement of ethnicity.

Finally, the educational sphere would especially reflect Israel's rising profile as well as the redefinition of spaces for its expression. This sphere would be of increasing importance, notwithstanding the fact that the schools rejected the possibility of having the youth movements active in their framework immediately after the war.²⁵ Certainly, the impact of the '67 hostilities brought to the forefront profound ambivalence regarding the place of the Diaspora in the educational messages; as far as *Aliyah* was concerned, they were focused around the old-new polemics regarding the affirmation or denial of the *Golah*. Progressively, the State of Israel became active in different realms of educational life.²⁶ In order to coordinate educational efforts, the creation of a pedagogical center was recommended by the Zionist General Council in 1971, an idea which would not reach fruition before 1974.²⁷ From then on, Israel would become the axis of joint educational efforts with regard to human resources as well as educational projects. This new function also responded to the continuing growth of the student body in Jewish schools after the war.²⁸

Throughout this process of institutional change and redefinition, the Zionist Organization of Mexico was not able to achieve a proper equilibrium between autonomy and collaboration at the organizational level, precisely when it was most required. While ideologically Israel became a focus of identity for growing circles within the community, organized Zionism experienced a profound contradiction regarding the challenge to join efforts with other organizations without giving up its own specificity. This may be seen in different attempts which, while offering organized Zionism the possibility of widening its range of action, brought to the fore its dilemma regarding the dilution of its limits. Such was the case, among others, of the attempt to establish an *Aliyah Committee* formed by representatives of different institutions in the community, immediately after the war. This

experiment in collaboration between Zionist and community leaders preceded other attempts both at the local and worldwide levels.²⁹

In the framework of such a radical transformation within the Mexican community with regard to the nature and circuitry of its links with the Jewish state, it is essential to point out that there was another still side to this phenomenon. As a result of the war, Israel also went through transformations which, in turn, modified how it related to the Diaspora. Looking at it from a wide perspective, after the Six Day War, its ideological and political spectrum was redefined. Left and Right were gradually emptied of their ideological contents and would concentrate almost exclusively on topics such as the occupied territories and the Palestinian question.³⁰ This political trend would remove the subject of its links with the Diaspora from the center of the Israeli agenda. Thus, it reduced and weakened the Zionist dimension of the political parties in Israel and made them less relevant in the Diaspora precisely when the Six Day War brought Israel to the center of the community's agenda.

An Interactional Axis: Source of Legitimacy.

Since social and political life cannot develop marginally to acknowledgments and rationalizations, it becomes an object of legitimization. Individuals and groups must exchange symbolic goods, not only inside but outside the group as well. In this process, in which discourse has a central role to play,³¹ mutual recognition and legitimacy are shaped and nourished.

While Israel's transformations as an organizational axis threw light on the community's changing institutional patterns, its modifying image influenced its role as a source of legitimization for Mexican Jewry *vis à vis* the society at large.

The short and long term variations of Israel's image would confront the community with new tasks. The way in which they were undertaken defined the alternating realms of the public and the private as spaces of legitimacy, and expressed some of the profound dilemmas that follow the construction of the Mexican Jewish identity.

Identities must be seen as fluent junctures at which the past, the present and the future coalesce in such a complex way that they never become fixed images. Identities are also defined by boundaries and interaction: both are crucial to ascription and self-ascription.³²

With the war, an image of a triumphant Israel emerged; its accomplishments reinforced Jewish pride. The Jewish state became a source of self respect and a repairing factor of the historical image -reinforced by the Zionist diagnosis- of a diasporic weakness. Israel's accomplishments and triumphalism became those of the Mexican Jewish community.³³

Insofar as self-perception is nourished by the Other's discourse, the way in which, generally speaking, the press covered the conflict was consonant with the community's perception of Israel's achievements.³⁴ The Mexican press acted favorably towards Israel.³⁵ Its main traits were, first, that Israel displayed a defensive behavior both before and during the war³⁶, and second -in addition to Israel's technical and military proficiency- Israeli society and its army were seen as morally superior.³⁷

With the unfolding of the conflict, the Mexican government's positive stance to Israel seemed to propitiate an open and public identification of the Jewish community with Israel.³⁸ The community's comfortable feelings during 1967 were obvious as they requested President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz to mediate in the conflict. Thus, the war provided the Jewish community an unequalled opportunity for expressing its identification with Israel openly.

However, already during the war, some sectors of the Mexican press displayed certain negative traits that would become reinforced in the coming years. Among them, prejudices related to Jewish economic power were present.³⁹ Besides, while throughout the conflict criticism against the Arab world was focused on its leadership -its self interest, its ambitions, its errors-,⁴⁰ who was discerned from the people's behavior, Israel was perceived as a monolithic entity; this tendency would promote the exoneration of the Arab people as prisoner of the mistakes of its leaders, on the one hand, and the condemnation of Israel in

undifferentiated terms, on the other. Similarly, due to Mexico's alignment with the Third World, mixed feelings arose: during the war Israel was perceived as a perseverant, dynamic, modern and Western country, while the Arab world was characterized by social gaps, tradition and resistance to change. Eventually, this dichotomy would have a negative impact on Israel's image.⁴¹ Whereas Mexico would not join the Non-Aligned Movement, its foreign policy, especially during the term in office of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976), was not beyond a degree of opposition to the Western world and support for what was considered then part of the socialist block.

The growing complexity of the Palestinian question would play a central role in this process. Black September acted as a turning point. Solidarity became intertwined with anti-Imperialist discourse which justified terrorism as a legitimate means of expression.⁴² As highlighted in the writings of Jorge García Granados, in the past this had benefited the Zionists;⁴³ in the 1970s, however, it worked in favor of the Palestinians. Progressively, the concept of *guerrilla* would substitute that of terrorism, as opposed to that of Zionism.⁴⁴ This new situation was congruent with a worldwide tendency developed during this period.⁴⁵

The change in Israel's international position and its newly emerging negative image were built up in the Mexican press during the seventies. The questioning around Israel and Zionism gradually focused on the division between good and bad Jews, between the anti-fascists of the pre-state period and the imperialists and militarists of present day.⁴⁶ Progressively, Israel's repositioning modified the meaning of the hero's role in history, which is always related to the binomial interaction strength/weakness, good/ evil, etc. In other terms, within a short period of time, Israel went from hero to pariah.⁴⁷

In fact, right after the Six Day War there was a growing awareness of what was defined as the attempts to distort Israel's and Zionism's image. Already the 27th Zionist Congress of 1968 rejected the "antagonic enemy's propaganda from the Arab camp, neo-Nazi groups and certain communist movements."⁴⁸ At the same time, it denounced the

differentiation between Zionism and Judaism as a criminal attempt aimed at promoting a negative public opinion. The need to widen the *Hasbara* task was then accorded. Among other things, it was suggested to emphasize the perception of Israel as a State which searches peace, progress and international cooperation, and Zionism as a national liberation movement. For that purpose, the organizational instruments of Zionist institutions which were dealing with public opinion had to be strengthened, and training of activists in public relations had to be developed. The suggestion to modernize the methods of *Hasbara* had at its core the purpose to reach the Jewish youth.⁴⁹

The resolutions of the Zionist General Council of June-July 1971 continued this strategy and added new ones. It reiterated the need of Zionist Federations to strengthen the existing information committees or, if needed, to create new ones, and stressed the need to cooperate with other communal institutions. This time, however, the focus of attention was also directed to the need to work with international non official institutions and with students and intellectuals, Jews and non-Jews alike. Based on the awareness of the possibility that through the campaign against Israel the whole of the Jewish people was also under attack, other institutions within the Jewish world joined efforts to counteract the anti-Zionist propaganda.⁵⁰

Within the Mexican Jewish community there was a growing concern that the change in Israel's image could affect its own and would have a negative impact on Jewish life in Mexico.⁵¹ Therefore, the need to engage in the building up of Israel's image became not only a constant demand from Zionist central authorities but a common pressing concern.

However, confronted with this new task, the Mexican Jewish community was not able to fulfill its role neither ideologically nor organizationally. Paralysis as well as confusion characterized its lack of response. It failed to create the appropriate institutional tools and to develop a discourse oriented to satisfy the community's inner needs and to transcend its boundaries. This condition implied serious risks regarding the subject of legitimacy.

Even though communal institutions were conscious of the need to modify the existing dialogical structures ⁵², the task was never successfully undertaken. With respect to Israel's persistent calls for a more active stand regarding its image that was expected to act as a countervailing power, the recurrent answer coming from the local Zionist movement was that unless funds and guidelines were provided, there was no alternative but inaction.⁵³

Unable to carry out this task alone, and following the suggestions from the central authorities, the Zionist Federation sought cooperation with other institutions. Together with the Central Committee it agreed on the need to act jointly to counteract the growing impact of the damaging propaganda. Once again, the discourse emphasized Israel's need to provide the appropriate economic support for this purpose. After a long and difficult process of negotiation, both institutions decided the publication of a bulletin, *Forum*, which was first printed in December of 1974; in April of 1975 suggestions were made to improve its quality as well as to incorporate the Israeli embassy and the Institute of Cultural Relations Mexico-Israel in order to widen its reach.⁵⁴ Only five numbers were published. Surely, this short life effort was not neither sufficient to face the requirements to provide new arguments to counteract anti-Zionist propaganda, and surely failed to transcend the boundaries of the Jewish community itself.

Time and again, the idea to create a public relations and *Hasbara* office remained only as a blueprint.⁵⁵ With Schenker's visit to Mexico in May 1975, once more the idea of establishing an information center was brought up. It was accorded that this project will be financed by the Central Committee, the Zionist Federation and the Israeli Embassy;⁵⁶ but nothing came of it.

The slow pace and unclear nature of the community's response led Israel to become the main force behind the *Hasbara* task. This was evident in the Diaspora Convention held in Jerusalem, on April 1974.⁵⁷ The World Zionist Organization was forced to play an increasingly active role in this function.⁵⁸ However, its recommendations regarding political

strategy derived from its own perception and assessment of the conditions prevailing in Latin America which did not necessarily correspond to reality.⁵⁹

The overall lack of success of the *Hasbara* task may be measured by its internal as well as its external impact. The community was incapable to provide valid arguments and resources to be consumed by those sectors that were directly exposed to the questioning of legitimacy, as was the case with Jewish intellectuals and students in the framework of the Mexican universities.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the fact that after 1967 the topic of youth was at the forefront of the community's agenda -making Israel the focal point of the ideological, discursive and practical transformations required to attract the youngsters- it could not extend its reach into the realm of the convivial interaction with the non-Jewish society, limiting its role to the particular dimension of Jewish existence.

If we measure the external impact of *Hasbara* as the capacity to influence public opinion as well as to establish links of collaboration with political and social organisms, we have to say that proper channels of interaction and communication were never developed. This inability to create spaces of convergence with other social sectors that could act as allies to counteract the effects of the delegitimation of Zionism and its negative impact on Jewish identity had its utmost expression during 1975, when Mexico voted in favor of the UN resolution equating Zionism with Racism.

Therefore, a complex set of interrelated questions emerge: Was the lose of legitimacy of Israel and, consequently, of the Jewish linkage with it related to the failure in the *Hasbara* task? Was the negligence of the Mexican Jewish community to create appropriate institutional tools and to develop a discourse for inner and external purposes a consequence of its leadership's errors or was it due to a more substantive lack of ideological resources? Finally, was not this deficiency a product of the increasingly active role of the central authorities in Jerusalem that brought to the misjudgment of reality while simultaneously inhibited local action?

As the identification with Israel -the transit from the feeling of interdependence to that of unity⁶¹- grew within the community, so did the inability to harmonize the private and the public spheres as realms for expressing a legitimate collective identity. The difficulty inherent in reducing the distance between them reinforced the lack of public collective visibility.

Hence, the euphoria that accompanied the identification with the State of Israel stopped at the threshold of the Mexican society's expectation of homogeneity as a *sine qua non* requisite for national belonging. Therefore, the impact of the external constraints regarding the public manifestation of differences and the collective nature of Jewish life lie behind this situation. Its reality as a minority holding links with a "foreign country" made it more acute. Confronted with the complexity of this situation, the case might be that it was easier for the community's leadership to blame other causes for the paralysis rather than to recognize this fact.

In the last analysis, the community's legitimacy depended heavily on the conditions of the society at large. Its insertion as an enclave as well as the conception of Mexican national identity, defined as a terrain where diversity was seen as a challenge to national integration, made the acceptance of otherness difficult.⁶² Such was the normative image of the national subject. Due to this minority status as well as to the content of its alterity, the Jewish collective condition within the national society was especially difficult. The public sphere never came to be an adequate space for the Jewish community to manifest its collective identity.

Despite the fact that identities are not the product of sum-zero equations, its expressions are conditioned by cultural contexts that are naturally inclined to monolithic models. Nevertheless, the public sphere must be seen as the result of an encounter of discourses and interpretations, a space for hermeneutics, a mosaic of dominant and subordinate vocabularies.⁶³ Within it, images and self-images interact in complex modalities either weakening or reinforcing the legitimacy of diverse identities. Thus, the

inability to modify the discourse reduced the community's possibility to bring to the public realm subjects or values such as collective identity or autonomy, which could have acted as ulterior sources of legitimacy.

The events of 1967, then, modified the internal structure of Zionism and Jewish life in Mexico, and of its links with the State of Israel, but it did not modify the pattern of interaction of the Jewish community with the Mexican society. One is tempted to ask if indeed those events could have had a more significant impact on the conflicting understanding of individuality, community and public identity.

The answer has to do with volition and social action but also with historical structures. Surely, it did not contribute to minimize the tension among the different nuclei that articulate the collective identity of the Mexican Jewish community. Therefore, this problem may also be approached in terms of the difficulties inherent in building the links between claims concerning individuality and arguments concerning the value of community.

It is evident that this question is formulated from a different spatial, temporal and circumstantial condition. For the actors themselves, the possibility of a question such as this was limited by the contextual constraints. Nevertheless, its omission was of enormous consequence.

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¹ Arie Pincus, *The 27th Zionist Congress*, June 9-19 1968, Jerusalem, World Zionist Organization, 1969, p. 27.

² On May the 29th the Jewish Central Committee, the Zionist Federation and the Ashkenazi Kehila launched an Emergency Campaign and joined efforts in an Emergency Committee.

³ Vid. Gregorio Shapiro, President of the Central Committee, (MACC), July 4, 1967; Simón Feldman, President of the Ashkenazi Kehila, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Kehila Ashkenazi*, *Ashkenazi Kehila Archives (MAKA)*, June 19, 1967.

⁴ The same year, eleven doctors traveled to Israel as volunteers and more than twenty youngsters went to *hachshara*. An immediate increase in *aliyah* was reported, namely 55 people. Shraga Peri, *Report on Aliyah from Mexico and Latin- América during 1967*, *Ashkenazi Kehila Archives (AKA)*, México, January 8, 1968.

⁵ In the framework of the rise in the world campaign which increased from \$14,476,515 in 1966-67 to \$ 51,676,520 in 1967-68, Latin America's contribution raised from \$ 2,382,622 to \$ 29,012,284, *Keren Hayesod Report, 1966-1993*, Jerusalem, 1993.

⁶ *MAKA*, May 29, 1967.

⁷ Ricardo Levy, representative of the Volunteers Organization in Israel, *27th Zionist Congress...*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 54-55.

⁸ Horacio Jinich, *First Convention of Jewish Communities in Mexico*, Mexico, November 1973.

⁹ In the frame of the call for a massive Aliyah from the free world carried out by the World Zionist Organization together with the Government of Israel, the Department of Aliyah and Absorption invited the communities in Latin America to hold in different cities (Mexico, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro) congresses dedicated to the theme of Aliyah. Its main purpose would be "to channel the awakening which has rise in the communities of the Diaspora due to the Six Day War victory into an active force for Aliyah". Vid. *From the Department of Aliyah and Absorption to the Zionist Federation of Mexico*, *AKA*, September 25, 1967; Shraga Peri, *Op. Cit.*

¹⁰ A "state of emergency that demanded an immediate youth Aliyah" was declared. *Youth Declaration*, *MAKA*, November, 1967.

¹¹ In order to give an operative definition to the centrality of Israel it was agreed to encourage study trips and a year of service, among other ideas. Shraga Peri, *Op. Cit.*

¹² The Action Committee agreed in July 1969 to carry out a vigorous campaign of individual membership. Zionist Federations were asked to declare 1970 as the year of Zionist Affiliation. Vid. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Zionist Federation*, *Archives of the Zionist Federation (MAZF)*, October 7, 1970.

¹³ Mexico's Zionist Federation agreed to it on February 5, 1969. At the beginning, it opposed the first committee founded for such purpose by the Action Committee. By 1970 it was agreed to establish another committee in the Federation itself. *Ibid.* For the struggle regarding the establishment of a United Territorial Zionist Federation in Mexico following the resolutions of the 19th Zionist Congress, Vid. Judit Bokser, *The Jewish National Movement. Zionism in México, 1922-1947*, (Spanish) Mexico, UNAM, 1991, PhD Thesis, pp. 193-201.

¹⁴ The topic of lack of inner democracy and the demand for elections as a way to achieve it was also posed by *Sheliqj* Simja Genossar. He was in charge of the individual membership campaign and, in this framework, submitted not only the Zionist movement but also the community as a whole to a radical criticism in terms of the absence of efforts to reach democracy in its internal life. *Vid. MAZF*, February 3, 1971.

¹⁵ From the beginning of 1971 the Zionist Executive Committee in Jerusalem accepted the establishment of different organizational frames for this campaign. Actually, two structures were functioning: one, the Zionist Federation, consisting of the General Zionists, the Labor Movement, *Mizrachi* and *Herut*; the other, the Renewal Front, consisting of Mapam, the Sephardic Zionist Federation, the General Zionist Confederation, the women organizations and the youth movements.

¹⁶ *Vid. MAZF*, February 11, March 3 and 17, 1971.

¹⁷ In August 1971 elections were held by the Zionist Federation. Participation was low; from 3200 members, only 13% voted. *AZF*, August 18, 1971. Elections for the 28th Zionist Congress were held on November, 1971.

¹⁸ The total number of those affiliated was 3 329, of which 2 469 were recruited by the Federación and 860 by the Front. The final list, accepted by the Electoral Committee, numbered 3 113. *Report by the Department of Organization and Information, Archives of the Zionist Federation (AZF)*, August 18, 1972.

¹⁹ *Vid. Correspondence between the Latin American Section of the Organization and Information Department and the Mexican Zionist Federation, 1972-1973, AZF.*

²⁰ *Letter from A. Hazan to Rafael Rafalín*, June 11, 1975, *AZF*.

²¹ *Vid. AZF*, February 23, 1972; and *Annual Reports of the Zionist Federation, 1972- 1973, Ibid.*

²² *Letter to A. Schenker*, September 21, 1972, *AZF*; *MAZF* December 1, 1971. Throughout the seventies the Zionist Federation continued operating with lack of funds. *Ibid.*, March 29, 1973.

²³ *Vid. MACA*. March 5, 1968 and February 3, 1970.

²⁴ Such was the case of Bundism, represented in the Culture Department, which had to face new contradictions. For T. Maizel the priority of Jewish life continued to be focused on the Diaspora, especially in the educational field. Nevertheless, after the War, he understood that education became an instrument of support for Israel. This belief was reinforced by the Kehila's leadership, which considered that the youth response to the Six-Day War should be seen as part of the achievements of Jewish education. *Vid. MAKa*, June 19 and July 10, 1967.

²⁵ *MAZF*, September 8, 1971. This was not the case of the Tarbut school, whose director N. Syrkin took on the role of supporting the activities of youth movements. The New Israelite School, under the direction of Mr. Blachinsky, also took a positive attitude. *Interview with Ezra Shabot*, November 16, 1994.

²⁶ *Vid.*, for example, *MAZF*; *First Convention of Jewish Communities in Mexico*, *Op. Cit.*

²⁷ *MAZF*, July 5, 1972.

²⁸ In 1970, 4 400 pupils attended the 6 schools while in 1973 the number reached 5 370. *First Convention of Jewish Communities*, *Op. Cit.*

²⁹ A paradigmatic example of the latter would be the reorganization of the Jewish Agency that maintained a trend inaugurated by the war by bringing together Zionist and community leaders. *Vid. Daniel Elazar, People and Polity. The Organizational Dynamics of World Jewry*, Wayne State University Press, 1989, chapter 6.

³⁰ *Vid. S.N. Eisenstadt, "Changes in Israel's Society Since the Yom Kippur War", From War to Peace: 1973-1993*, Colloquium, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, October 24, 1993.

³¹ Pierre Ansart, *Ideología, Conflictos y Poder*, México, Premia, 1983, pp. 12-14.

³² *Vid. Fredrik Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (The Social Organization of Culture Difference)*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1970.

³³ Interviews with: O. Gorodzinsky, October 28, 1994; Ezra Shabot, November, 1994.

³⁴ Vid. Editorial "Report on U. Thant"; Ramón de Ertze Garamendi, "Danger of War", Miguel Guardia, "¿Victimizers or Victims?", *Excelsior*, May 29, 1967; Editorial, "The Development of the Crisis", May 31, 1967; "Russia and Palestine", *Excelsior*, May 31, 1967; Sergio Veraza, "Danger in the Middle East", *El Día*, May 30, 1967, and editorial, June 22, 1967; Octavio González Cárdenas, "Mexico and the Middle East", *Ovaciones*, June 24, 1967; José Alvarado, "Intentions and Chronicles. The Middle East: crisis in the UN", *Excelsior*, June 8, 1967; Editorial, *El Universal*, May 30, 1967.

³⁵ MACC, July 4, 1967.

³⁶ While we consulted various Mexican newspapers, our main work concentrated on *Excelsior*, a progressive journal that acted as a forum for diverse political opinions. The systematic follow up of one publication allowed us to discern the changing patterns of public opinion throughout the period of time analyzed.

Ramón de Ertze Garamendi, "Ten Against One"; Pedro Gringoire, "Israel Fights for its Existence Three Times in 19 Years", *Excelsior*, June 6; Raúl Carrancá y Trujillo, "Johnson's Five Points", *Excelsior*, June 24, 1967.

³⁷ Ricardo Garibay, "Israel: Fiction and Reality", *Excelsior*, June 9; Arturo García Formenti, "Arabs and Jews", *El Universal*, June 24, 1967.

³⁸ The government manifested its interest in finding solutions for a conflict that equally threatened two cultures and two peoples who had widely contributed to the development of humanity. *Excelsior*, June 6, 1967.

³⁹ Adjoining the discourse that points out to the interests of the super-powers in the zone, prejudice was displayed. Thus: "the Israelis do not need any help since they receive enormous amounts of money from Jews all over the world ...", Editorial, "Crisis in the Middle East", *Excelsior*, May 20, 1967. Another example is the argument that stresses that the support of the United States towards Israel is solely associated to the weight the Jewish vote has in that country. Armando Camacho, "Mexicans point of view", *Excelsior*, May 24, 1967.

⁴⁰ Vid. *Excelsior*, June 1 and 2, 1967.

⁴¹ Editorial "Mao in Egypt", *Excelsior*, May 24; Cartoons by Abel Quezada, *Excelsior*, May 27 and 31, 1967.

⁴² Froylan Lopez Narvaez, "Palestinians and Others. Battles of Today", *Excelsior*, September 9, 1970.

⁴³ Jorge García Granados, *The Birth of Israel*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.

⁴⁴ Vid. Letters to the Editor by Jacobo Mondlack and Hamdi Abouzeid, Ambassador of Egypt, *Excelsior*, September 21, 1972.

⁴⁵ Vid. Robert Wistrich (ed.), *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, London, McMillan, 1990.

⁴⁶ Fernando Carmona Nenclares, "Nasser. The Arab Heart Passed Away", *Excelsior*, September 29, 1970.

⁴⁷ Vid., for example, Irving Louis Horowitz, "From Pariah People to Pariah Nation: Jews, Israelis and the Third World", in Michael Curtis and Susan A. Gitelson (eds.), *Israel in the Third World*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1976, pp. 361-391.

⁴⁸ *The 27th Zionist Congress*, *Op cit.*, pp. 506-7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Vid. *Resolutions of the World Jewish Congress*, January 1970, AKA.

⁵¹ MACC, September 19, 1972.

⁵² See, for example, MACC, April 29, 1969; July 15, 1969; August 27, 1970.

⁵³ See, for example, MAZF, August-September 1970; MACC, June 8 and 15, 1971.

⁵⁴ MAZF, April 9, 1975.

⁵⁵ Vid. MAZF, August-September 1970. *First Convention of ...*, *Op. Cit.*

⁵⁶ MAZF, May 21 and 28, 1975.

⁵⁷ Vid. *Report of the Diaspora Convention*, Jerusalem, April 1974, AZF.

⁵⁸ Thus, for example, Israel asked for a list of non-Jewish intellectuals to whom information material could be sent. AZF, January 16, 1974. The Latin American Section of the Organization and Information Department sent documents informing about Arab activities in the Continent. Vid. February 13, and March 27, 1974, *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Vid., for example, *Report on Latin America*, written by Isaac Goldenberg, Herzl Inbal and Abraham Argov, AZF, Jerusalem, 1975. One should mention that this evaluation, by overemphasizing the economic motivations of the anti-Zionist attitudes and undermining its political dimension, could not provide an adequate strategy to face the problem.

⁶⁰ Mexican universities were the main space of action for the left. The members of the Mexican left were divided *vis-à-vis* the War: a minority, despite their identification with the Socialist world, expressed their support for Israel; many others perceived the conflict as an escape valve for the super-powers rivalry and tried to maintain equidistant arguments. For its part, the majority had a vision of Israel as an alien state in the region and defined the war as a conquest, bringing back echoes of colonialism. Vid. among others, Francisco López Cámara, "The Middle East War and the Political Technocracy", *El Día*, June 12 and "The Middle East: neither conquests nor genocide", *El Día*, June 27, 1967; Leopoldo Zea, "The Middle East and the Cold War", *Novedades*, June 27, 1967; Froylan Lopez Narvaez, "Palestinians and Others. Battles of Today", *Excelsior*, September 9, 1970.

⁶¹ The Yom Kippur War reinforced within the Community the awareness of unity as well as of the negative changes in Israel image. This awareness was all the more critical due to the fact that the transit from the feeling of interdependence to that of unity portrayed the concept of "a shared destiny" with a dramatic connotation. Vid. Papers by Fernando Jeno and Sergio Nudelstejer, *Ibid*.

⁶² Vid. Judit Bokser Liwerant, *Op. cit*.

⁶³ Vid. Roberto Alejandro, *Hermeneutics, Citizenship and the Public Sphere*, State University of New York Press, 1993.