

POLITICS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY  
OF SALONIKA IN THE INTER-WAR YEARS:  
PARTY IDEOLOGIES AND PARTY COMPETITION

THESIS SUBMITTED BY MARIA VASSILIKOU  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

OCTOBER 1999



## ABSTRACT

Throughout four centuries of Ottoman domination, Salonika Jews had managed to preserve their particular ethnic identity and to occupy an important position in the economic life of the city. In 1912 Salonika was annexed to the Greek nation-state, and only decades later various sources of the early 1930s were emphasising the economic and social degradation of the Jewish community. Existing bibliography has tended to underline almost exclusively the role of Greek politics and Greek society as the major explanatory factor of the community's decline.

This thesis challenges this approach and argues that intra-communal politics within the inter-war years had a significant share of responsibility for the crisis which threatened Salonika Jews in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, Jewish political elites were deeply split over issues of fundamental importance for the community, resulting in political deadlock. Consequently, the community was caught up in fierce ideological debates and was deprived of a solid communal leadership able to steer them through unsettled waters.

In order to account for this explanation, the thesis reassesses as a first step Greek majority policies and argues that notwithstanding the numerous constraints which they imposed on the status of the Jews, the latter were left significant room in which to influence their own affairs. Secondly, this thesis explores the ways in which communal political leaders responded to and made use of their 'power'. By analysing the four major Jewish political parties in the inter-war years - the Zionists, the Assimilationists-Moderates, the Radicals (Mizrahi-Revisionists) and the Communists - on the basis of party competition and party ideologies which set 'Jewishness' at the centre of political

discourse, it is shown that their constant ideological struggles over this issue rendered them unable to build up constructive political coalitions and find answers to the pressing economic and social needs faced by the community.

<i>ABSTRACT</i>	2
<i>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</i>	7
<i>FOREWORD</i>	9
<i>INTRODUCTION - FROM COMMUNITY TO MINORITY: THE CASE OF SALONIKA JEWRY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY</i>	17
<i>GREEK MAJORITY POLICIES TOWARDS SALONIKA JEWS DURING THE INTER-WAR YEARS</i>	50
3.1. Introduction	50
3.2. Aspects of a puzzling co-existence between Greeks and Salonika Jews	57
3.3. The threat of antisemitism and ongoing modernisation	82
3.4. Conclusion	115
<i>SALONIKA ZIONISTS: THE VOICE OF POLITICS IN INTER-WAR SALONIKA</i>	117
4.1 Introduction	117



4.2. Zionism in Greece before 1923	121
4.3. 1923 - 1928: Salonika Zionists balancing between assimilation and nationalism	129
4.4. Emigration to Palestine: Exit from Salonika and exit from the crisis	146
4.5. Conclusion	170

***THE GROUP OF SALONIKA MODERATES: THE POLITICS OF ACCULTURATION*** 173

5.1. Introduction	173
5.2. Actors and background of assimilationist politics	176
5.3. The road to party formation	183
5.4. Conclusion	208

***THE GROUP OF THE RADICALS IN SALONIKA*** 209

6.1. Introduction	209
6.2. A national-religious definition of Jewish identity	211
6.3. Jewish religion and Hebrew language as elements of a Jewish identity	218
6.4. Jews as temporary sojourners in Greece	235
6.5. Conclusion	255

***JEWISH COMMUNISTS IN INTER-WAR SALONIKA: BALANCING BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM*** 257

7.1. Introduction	257
7.2. Pre-1923 Jewish Socialism: A case of federal socialism	262
7.3. Bundist-like Communism in Inter-war Salonika	273
7.4. Conclusion	300
 <i>CONCLUSION</i>	 302
 <i>APPENDIX</i>	 306
 <i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	 309

*List of Tables*

1	Curriculum of Jewish primary schools	65
2.	Election results	306-308

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a great pleasure for me to express my gratitude and appreciation to the many individuals who have supported me in this scholarly endeavour. First, I wish to thank my two supervisors at University College London: Professor Kathleen Burk in the Department of History for her insistence on clarity and balanced usage of sources which helped me to organise and profit from an increasingly heterogeneous archival material; and Professor John D. Klier, in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, who gave me the benefit of his erudite learning in Jewish studies and who was kind enough to answer dozens of questions and discuss with me some of the broader conceptual themes raised in this thesis.

I wish to thank David Massel, whom I was fortunate enough to meet one day before he retired, and who enabled me to consult the Archive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. I would also like to thank the Public Record Office and the Wiener Library in London. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Jean Claude Kuperminc for giving me permission to consult the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. I would also like to thank the Archives of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris as well as the Archives Diplomatiques in Nantes. In Israel I had the pleasure of conducting research at the Ben-Zvi Institut Library in Jerusalem where I enjoyed the remarkable presence and assistance of Robert Attal. I would also like to thank the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People and the National and University Library in Jerusalem. Many thanks go to the staff at the Gennadeios Library, the Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Minister in Athens and the Greek Literary and Historical Archive in Athens as well as to the archivists working

at the Archive of the General Governance of Macedonia.

At various stages of research and writing Kostas Skordyles, Michael Silber, Rick Halpern, David Walkowitz and the late Judith Humphrey gave advice, comments and suggestions which helped me to steer through many difficulties and for which I am deeply grateful. Jack Strumsa, the ‘violinist of Auschwitz’, shared with me his memories from Salonika and, together with Gila Hadar, helped me immensely by translating a few newspaper articles from Judeo-Spanish. I was generously helped in my research by the scholarship I received from the Israeli Foreign Ministry which allowed me to spend one academic year at the Hebrew University and to profit from the multi-faceted stimulating environment in Jerusalem. At the very end of my research a grant from the Graduate School at University College made a second trip to Israel possible.

I am grateful to University College London, its History Department and its Jewish Studies Program for providing me with a stimulating and always supportive environment. Finally, I would like to thank my family in Germany and my family in Greece, and especially my parents, Iro and Demetres Vassilikos, for their constant support and belief in my work. I only wish I could have found a better place to express my gratitude to Stephan Stetter for his invaluable contribution to my life and to my academic work.

My greatest debt of all, however, is to my uncle, Giorgos Pateras, for his generous economic and emotional support throughout these four years. I dedicate this thesis to him.

MARIA VASSILIKOU



## FOREWORD

Samuel Usque, a sixteenth century Jewish poet of Portuguese origins,<sup>1</sup> called Salonika “Jerusalem of the Balkans”, thus pointing to the unparalleled economic and cultural dominance of Salonika Jews who had settled in the Ottoman-ruled city in the aftermath of their expulsion from Spain in 1492. In the next three centuries the history of Salonika Jewry became linked to the developments taking place in the Ottoman Empire. As a consequence, the end of Ottoman rule over Salonika and the city’s annexation to the Greek state in 1912 meant to alter radically the life of Salonika Jews. Indeed, after only two decades of Greek rule various sources of the early 1930s emphasised the devastating economic and social degradation of the Jewish community, imputing the responsibility for its current plight on different factors. The Jewish daily *Action* ascribed the blame on the lack of competent communal leaders.<sup>2</sup> Petros Minardos, the Director of the Bureau de Press in Salonika, blamed the insufficient knowledge of the Greek language and the unwillingness of the Jews to integrate in Greece.<sup>3</sup> Mentech Bessantchi, the militant Zionist, alluded to intra-communal disagreements and lack of organisation.<sup>4</sup> Ten years later, in 1943, the community was dealt a fatal blow when Nazi extermination policies reached Salonika, leading to the murder of almost ninety-five per cent of Salonika Jews in Auschwitz Birkenau.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ch. Raphael, *The Sephardi Story* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1993), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Action*, 21 July 1933. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to the Greek Foreign Ministry, July 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV., Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry (thereafter HAGFM). Unless indicated in footnote reference I am responsible for all translations.

<sup>3</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Governor General of Macedonia, 13 December 1932, Jews of Salonika (1932-1933), File 38, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes.

<sup>4</sup>Ph. Konstantopoulou and Th. Veremes (eds.), *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews. Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotes, 1998), p. 208.

This thesis will deal with the history of Salonika Jews in the inter-war years (1923-1936) and by providing an analysis of Jewish politics during this period it will show that the conduct of the main Jewish political parties in the city had its own share of responsibility for the crisis in the early 1930s. When taking into consideration that in the face of archival difficulties there is only little information concerning the social history of the community, that is a history dealing with the cultural, intellectual and economic situation of 'ordinary' Salonikan Jews, this thesis will fill this historiographic gap partly by examining developments occurring within the political strata of this community.<sup>5</sup>

The advantage of this approach is that it breaks with the traditional bipolar historiographic frame which has viewed the history of Salonika Jews in the inter-war years as a mere outcome of external conditions. Although it is true that this type of history written 'from without' *does* provide useful insights into Jewish history, it risks ignoring equally relevant explanatory schemes, which can only be discovered by an analysis of forces operating 'from within'. A brief look at the existing bibliography will suffice to corroborate this deduction.

There is a first category of bibliographic references which can be termed as 'episodic', since it does not deal with the history of Salonika in a continuum but touches upon only some of its 'episodes', that is individual aspects of communal life separated from the wider context of the communal history. This category includes a number of articles which have sought to examine how individual issues (e.g. the imposition of

---

<sup>5</sup> It is only nine years ago that historians traced in the former Soviet Union parts of the 'lost' communal archive of the Jewish community which - at first sight - seems to contain information allowing scholars to write the social history of Salonika Jewry during the inter-war years. However, researchers have still to wait for the archive to be catalogued and computerised before they can have access to its precious content. M. Vassilikou, "The Archive of the Jewish Community of Salonika", *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*, 21 (1997-1998), pp. 35-37.



Sunday Closing Day in Salonika in 1924, the establishment of a separate electoral college in 1923, the decision to expropriate the old Jewish cemetery, the rise of antisemitism in Salonika, etc.) affected the status of Salonika Jews in the years under consideration. Moreover, given the community's importance for the socio-economic and political profile of the city itself, the same bibliographic category includes scholarly writings, which have dealt with aspects of the community's life as a side-effect of their efforts to write the history of Salonika itself, or to analyse the issue of antisemitism in Greece.

The second category is one which aims to reproduce the entire historical narrative of the period. The only representative example of this trend is Bernard Pierron's recently published book, *Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce moderne: Histoire des relations intercommunautaires de 1821 à 1945*, which provides useful insights into the legal, political, and social framework defining the status of the Jews as citizens of the Greek state. However, this book is a history of the community written largely 'from without'; namely Salonika Jews are presented through the lens of the Christians, that is as a compact ethnic bloc subjected to a series of external and, occasionally, uncontrollable conditions, in the form of legal measures, social attitudes and economic pressures. This type of history leads not only to a levelling of important differences existing in both 'host society' and 'Jewish community' but also risks depriving Jews of their role as historical subjects, namely, of their ability to assess external conditions and make binding decisions for their future. It is true that some of these shortcomings with regard to aspects of intra-communal history are covered by the collective work *Zikharon Saloniki* published in 1972 in Tel Aviv, which gives - *inter alia* - precious information with regard to the movements of Zionism, Mizrahi, Revisionism and

Socialism/Communism that appeared among Salonika Jews during the period. However, the fact is that the two volumes are written in a largely nostalgic, non-scientific way, based on little primary research, occasionally lacking chronological accuracy, and suffering from poor citation of sources.

It is the aim of the third chapter to strike a balance between the two historiographic 'schools' by giving an overview of the main issues of Greek politics towards the Jews and assessing their importance for the conduct of Jewish politics. Starting from the deduction that the array of forces operating within the surroundings of a minority draw the lines along which the spectrum of the choices of the minority can expand<sup>6</sup>, this chapter will show that Greek politics evolved in a rather frustrating way<sup>7</sup>, leading to a double-sided effect: on the one hand, they made Salonika Jews aware of their 'otherness' within Greek society, while on the other hand, they left considerable 'elbow-room' for the Jews to decide what this 'otherness' was all about. In other words, the history of Salonika Jews in the inter-war years "cannot be divided into distinct periods of power and powerlessness" and in order to assess how Salonika Jews used their elbow-room the "wide spectrum of persistent and ongoing political activism"<sup>8</sup> in this community becomes of vital importance.

Thus the hitherto dominant historiographic frame 'host society vs Jews' will be enlarged to include a second frame, that is 'Jews vs Jews'. In other words, this thesis will follow the same historiographic principle advocated in the work of Birnbaum and Katznelson's *Paths of Emancipation* published in 1995. According to this principle

---

<sup>6</sup>Ch. Woodhouse, "Minorities and Politics - An Introduction", in H. Tobias and Ch. Woodhouse (eds.), *Minorities and Politics* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Similarly frustrating were Greek politics followed *vis-à-vis* the Slavomacedonian minority residing in northern Greece. P. Carabot, "Slavomakedones kai Kratos sten Ellada tou Mesopolemou", *Histor*, 10 (December 1997), pp. 259.

<sup>8</sup>D. Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 6.



Jewish history should be written not only as a depiction of “large-scale processes” which were occurring in different parts of the Jewish Diaspora and being beyond Jewish control, but also through the emergence of Jews as anthropological subjects, “that is, as social actors with identities, dispositions, and intentions who sought to find their way and to construct their fate within [...] radically altered contexts and possibilities.”<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, during the inter-war years Salonika Jews along with the rest of their fellow Jews in Europe grew increasingly restless as far as their future was concerned. Although the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 had sought to ameliorate through the creation of the League of Nations the living conditions of all minorities living in post-war Europe, the rise of totalitarian ideologies and the violation of minority rights perturbed Jewish communities and their leaders all over Europe as to what their future would be. Salonika Jews, in particular, started facing during this period the consequences originating from the city’s annexation to the Greek state in 1912. All Greek governments which rose to power during the inter-war period passed a number of different laws which affected the educational, political and religious life of Salonika Jews, thus bringing dramatic changes to their status. Facing such a cascade of new conditions, Jewish political elites articulated their voices and sought to influence accordingly the course of events. Their responses were commensurate with a variety of identities, dispositions, and intentions, as these had developed throughout the community’s long history and the presentation of which is the goal of the introductory chapter.

The principal characteristic of these voices was that they had direct relevance to the ideological designs and political attitudes existing among the Jews in the Diaspora. Thus, some chose to advocate acculturation or even assimilation to the Greek

---

<sup>9</sup>P. Birnbaum and I. Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation. Jews, States and Citizenship* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 26.

surroundings while others opted for a “revolutionary collective exit either in a universalist Marxist or particularist Zionist dimension.”<sup>10</sup> Finally there were those who followed their own individual destinies and emigrated not necessarily to Palestine but to France, Italy, Switzerland and South America, motivated by personal interests rather than by ideological commitments.

It was the arena of Jewish politics in inter-war Salonika which reflected best this ideological fragmentation as it led to fierce struggles over the cultural and political hegemony within the community. Given the very definition of parties as strategic and adaptive actors constituting independent forces and being able to initiate change as well as to alter the direction of the political system to their own advantage<sup>11</sup> it becomes obvious that the analysis of Jewish political parties in Salonika provides the ideal field for the scholar who wishes to promote an understanding of the Jews as cognitive and self-motivated individuals. Throughout this period 10 Jewish parties were formed, by all means, a large number for such a small community. This can be related to Sartori’s observation according to which “it does matter how many are the parties. For one thing, the number of parties immediately indicates, albeit roughly, an important feature of the political system: the extent to which political power is fragmented or non-fragmented, dispersed or concentrated.”<sup>12</sup> Most of them had their own mouthpiece propagating each party’s preferred courses of action and their own centres of power, both in Greece and abroad.

---

<sup>10</sup>Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>G. Smith, “A System Perspective on Party System Change”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1/ 3 (1989), p. 356. Smith’s analysis of political parties refers to post-WWII liberal democracies. However, his general considerations on parties, party-formation and party-competition are applicable to a wider range of political constellations, such as minority and local politics.

<sup>12</sup>G. Sartori, “A Typology of Party Systems”, in P. Meir (ed.), *The West European Party System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 317.



Since the Jewish electorate played a decisive role in the ultimate distribution of political power within the community, this thesis will not be a mere study of political élites but will also consider wider societal trends existing amongst ordinary Salonika Jews. It is a common-place amongst scholars that electoral choice and party politics are intimately interwoven. Thus on the one hand, “the electorate does not act autonomously, since voters are directly affected by the implementation of party policies, by the mobilising efforts of the parties, and by the more general impact of parties on society.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, parties themselves often adopt their policies to meet the expectations of potential voters while bearing in mind that “possible electoral benefits have to be set against ideological costs, and the failure to find the right balance may lead either to electoral decline or internal disunity, even fragmentation.”<sup>14</sup> In other words the position of the electorate as determinants as well as receptors of party politics creates a link between the nature of party politics and larger structural changes happening in society.

In order to be able to reach conclusions on party politics and wider social trends chapters four to seven will deal with the four main parties, namely the Zionists, the Assimilationist/Moderates<sup>15</sup>, the Mizrachi/Revisionists or Radicals and the Communists. The choice of these four parties is in no way accidental but it is based on qualitative criteria, and follows Sartori’s proposition that one should count only those parties which are of relevance within a political system due to their “governing or

---

<sup>13</sup>Smith 1989: p. 355.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 356.

<sup>15</sup>Although the ideological discourse of this group did not favour assimilation *per se* but rather acculturation (see Introduction of Chapter 5) this thesis will refer to this group as ‘Assimilationists’ or ‘Moderates’ on the basis of their characterisation as such by their contemporaries.

coalition potential” or due to their “blackmail potential”.<sup>16</sup> The Jewish Communists in Salonika qualified for the latter while the other three parties stood for the former.

The three major variables which will constitute the main axes of the chapters on the four parties are: party ideologies, “the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition” and electoral choices.<sup>17</sup> These three variables acquired particular importance during the numerous electoral campaigns which took place in Salonika from 1923 to 1936.

As had been the case in other Jewish communities, Salonika Jews did not step back from history. The fact that they were a minority facing certain constraints did not mean that they had no power at all and that their history was entirely conditioned upon external forces and decisions of outsiders. Although it is true that on certain occasions they were powerless *vis-à-vis* Greek policies, most of the time they were able to exercise power, that is the “exercise [of] strength and authority within a collective framework, informed by conscious political goals.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, the two central questions of this thesis are: How did Jewish political elites in Salonika exercise their share of power? and, How did they define their political goals in the process of local politics? In order to answer these questions, this thesis will touch upon issues of ideology and political competition, which have long been neglected or even passed over in silence.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Sartori 1990: pp. 320-321.

<sup>17</sup>As cited in Smith 1989: p. 349.

<sup>18</sup>Biale 1986: p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>A case in point was Moissis’ s encouragement “not to talk about painful stories” when referring to party competition in Salonika. A. Moissis, “Ha-Tnua ha-Zionit Be-Saloniki Ve Bitar Kehillot Yavan”, in D. Recanati (ed.), *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruycion de de Yeruchalayin del Balkan*, (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972), p. 389.



## INTRODUCTION - FROM COMMUNITY TO MINORITY: THE CASE OF SALONIKA JEWRY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Aron Rodrigue has argued that “the fortunes of Salonika Jewry followed those of their Ottoman overlords”<sup>20</sup> while Michael Molho, a Rabbi from Salonika, has maintained that the “the fate [of Salonika Jews] came to be identified with the fate of the city itself.”<sup>21</sup> It is the fusing of the two statements that reflects best the history of Salonika Jews until the annexation of the city to the Greek state in 1912.

Indeed, the Pax Ottomana that lasted for more than three centuries had helped the Judeo-Spanish communities of the Empire to preserve their existence as well as their particular religion, culture and language (Judeo-Spanish). As will be shown, these communities, notwithstanding their social and juridical inferiority as non-Muslims, lived under a relatively tolerant regime and their communal profile was shaped by their contact with other groups of subject peoples within the Ottoman realm.<sup>22</sup> Any change that took place within their *milieu* influenced their status, gave birth to new forms of responses and opened new paths of existence. Consequently, as soon as the Empire entered a period of non-reversible decline from the middle eighteenth century onwards, Salonika Jews became receptors of a variety of path-breaking cultural and political influences. The options the Jews took were dictated by the two basic and inextricably interwoven trends of modernisation and nationalism that had developed within the Empire as well as beyond it. In the light of these new developments emerged the

---

<sup>20</sup>A. Rodrigue, “The *Sephardim* in the Ottoman Empire”, in E. Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and After* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 177.

<sup>21</sup>M. Molho, *In Memoriam* (Thessalonike: Jewish Community of Thessalonike, 1976), p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>A. Rodrigue, “From *Millet* to Minority: Turkish Jewry”, in Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: p. 239.

*Alliance Israélite Universelle* with its Franco-centred *Weltanschauung*, the *Federacion Socialista Laboradera*, and the Zionist movement.

The annexation of Salonika to the Greek state in 1912, a case of transition from an imperial context to the context of a nation-state, was destined to bring dramatic changes to the status of Salonika Jews, thereby creating a situation which confronted them with various dilemmas. This is not surprising when considering that the imperial political setting represented a prototype of a multi-cultural or plural society which left considerably more space and “freedom for the application of local or community laws and for the preservation of local autonomy”,<sup>23</sup> while the nation-state was based on the creation of a homogeneous ‘ethnos’ achieved by cultivating via different agents a feeling of national identity important for the survival of the state.<sup>24</sup> Although it was not until 1923 that Salonika Jews felt heavy upon them the effect of this dramatic change, in the period 1912 - 1923 certain events took place, which revealed the incompatibility between the interests of the Greek state and those of the Jewish community, thus rendering this period the ‘test tube’ of Greco-Jewish symbiosis in Salonika.

On 31 March 1492, three months after the capitulation of Granada which marked the end of the Spanish *Reconquista*, the Catholic monarchs King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain issued the Alambra decree which dictated that, unless Jews converted to Christianity, they should leave their united realms. The promulgation of the decree marked the culmination of the persecution against the Jews that had been going on for at least three centuries.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>This definition has been suggested by D. Gadgil to cover both the multi-national states of the Roman and the Ottoman Empires. D. Gadgil, “The Protection of Minorities”, in W. Mackay and A. Verdoot (eds.), *The Multinational Society* (New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1969), p. 75.

<sup>24</sup>B. Lewkovicz, “ ‘Greece is my Home, but...’ Ethnic identity of Greek Jews in Thessaloniki”, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 4/ 2 (1994), p. 227.

<sup>25</sup>For an analysis of the different reasons which led to the promulgation of the decree see E. Gutwirth, “Towards Expulsion: 1391-1492” in Kedourie 1992: pp. 51-91.



The Ottoman Empire received a vast number of exiles from both Spain and Portugal. Others went by sea to North Africa and thence to Italy. By that time the Ottomans had consolidated their dominance over the Balkans while by the middle of the sixteenth century they came to control the greatest part of the Middle East and North Africa. Sultan Bayezid II himself, driven by political and economic considerations,<sup>26</sup> encouraged the Jewish exiles to come to his Empire and restart their lives.<sup>27</sup> The exiles settled throughout the Empire; Salonika,<sup>28</sup> Constantinople, Edirne, and Smyrna emerged as the four major urban centres of the Balkans, where numerous *Sephardim* lived as distinct groups alongside the other religious and ethnic groups of the Ottoman Levant for four centuries.<sup>29</sup> These Sephardi communities later accepted another wave of exiles, the *conversos* who fled Portugal after the establishment of the Inquisition there in 1547.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>As Pearson has pointed out, attracting “foreign ethnic or religious groups of a higher economic or social standard in order to raise the national average and undermine the position of truculent resident groups” has been one of the options available to dynastic Empires concerning the “geographical location of ethnic minorities”. R. Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe 1848-1945* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 10-11.

<sup>27</sup>B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 50.

<sup>28</sup>Sources testify that the origins of the Jewish settlements in Salonika date back to 140 BC, when the first Jews came from Alexandria. They were mostly Romaniote Jews who spoke Greek. In the places where the *Sephardim* settled, there were autochthonous Romaniote Jews, who had endorsed different interpretations of Jewish religious law and different customs and cultural life in general. They stood in conflict with the newcomers for a long time, but the latter managed to gain the upper hand and impose their authority upon the ‘old guard’. E. Benbassa and A. Rodrigue, *Juifs des Balkans. Espaces Judéo-ibériques XII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1993), pp. 71-78. For the origins of the Jewish presence in Greece in general see A. Nar, *Keimene epi Aktes Thalasses... Meletes kai Arthra gia ten Evraike Koinoteta tes Thessalonikes* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, Ekfrase, 1997), pp. 18-19.

<sup>29</sup>Rodrigue 1995: pp. 238-239.

<sup>30</sup>Term used to characterise Jews who had converted to Christianity. Another term used was Marranos. Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 30.

Upon the arrival of the 20,000 *Sephardim* in Salonika, they found few Jewish residents.<sup>31</sup> The 1478 census shows a total absence of Jews in Salonika<sup>32</sup> as the Ottoman rulers had already applied the policy of *sürgün*<sup>33</sup> and transferred them to Constantinople.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Spanish exiles who came to the city found only some Jewish communities of Ashkenazi origin that had come to Salonika, from western and central Europe. Despite the initial absence of any numerically substantial Jewish presence in Salonika, the newcomers managed to regenerate the presence of the Jewish element of the city and made it thrive in all walks of life, thereby transforming Salonika into the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans'. This is how the poet Samuel Usque chose to characterise the city in his writings:

It is the mother of Israel, which is founded on the basis of religion, [and which] produces excellent plants and fruitful trees, like nowhere else in the entire world. Its fruits are delicious because [its soil] is being watered by the rivers. Jews from Europe and from other countries, persecuted and expelled, have come here looking for a shelter, and this city has received them with love and cordiality, as if it had been our respectable mother Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup>

Until the mid seventeenth century hardly any ship entered the port of Salonika, from which a family or a group of marrano exiles did not disembark.<sup>36</sup>

As the passage quoted above has alluded to, it was the combination between geographic and political factors which accounted for the flourishing of the *Sephardim* in

---

<sup>31</sup>J. Ancel, *La Macedoine. Son Évolution Contemporaine* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1930), p. 286.

<sup>32</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 69

<sup>33</sup>"This Turkish word means exile or deportation, or simply compulsory transfer from one place to another.... It was more frequently imposed for reasons of state policy, because it was believed that the interests of the Empire would be served better by transferring certain populations from one place to another." Lewis 1984: p. 121

<sup>34</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p.69.

<sup>35</sup>As cited in *ibid.*: p. 67.

<sup>36</sup>P. Risal, *La Ville Convoitée. Salonique* (Paris: Librairie Academique, 1917), p. 191.



Salonika. In particular, Salonika's favourable geographic position as an opulent continental city lying within the fertile valleys of the Vardar and Vistritsa and being "the only noteworthy Mediterranean port for Balkan trade"<sup>37</sup> allowed Salonika Jews to involve themselves in trading activities thereby utilising the experience they had brought with them from the Iberian peninsula. Their commercial dexterity, largely involving trading of food and war commodities, was boosted by their connections with other commercial centres in Europe, that is New Christians in the Iberian Peninsula and the Sephardi Jewish centres in northern Europe, Bordeaux, Italy, Constantinople, the towns of the Levant and North Africa and created "an important economic and social network based on family ties, tradition and language."<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the theocratic political setting of the Empire which characterised the Jews, along with other non-Muslims, as *dhimmi*<sup>39</sup> allowed the former to enjoy security as well as a high degree of communal autonomy, thereby facilitating even more the development of the urban skills of the Ottoman *Sephardim*.<sup>40</sup> A case in point was the extremely successful involvement of Salonika Jewry in the already existing textile industry. Indeed, not only did Salonika Jews become the exclusive producers of the uniforms worn by the corps of the

---

<sup>37</sup>M. Mazower, "Salonika between East and West 1860-1912", *Dialogos*, 1 (1994), p. 106.

<sup>38</sup>S. Ettinger, "The Modern Period", in H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 734.

<sup>39</sup>"In Muslim law and practice, the relationship between the Muslim state and the subject non-Muslim communities to which it extended its tolerance and protection was regulated by a pact called *dhimma*, and those benefiting from this pact were known as *ahl al-dhimma* (people of the pact) or more briefly, *dhimmi*." The different communities had to recognise the superior status of the Muslims and Islam and express their recognition "in the payment of the poll tax and obedience to a series of restrictions defined in detail by the holy law." Lewis 1984: pp. 21, 59-62.

<sup>40</sup>However, as H. Kamen has argued, being a wealthy town dweller was only one of the occupations of the Jews, which varied substantially according to the place of their residence and the prevailing social conditions. H. Kamen, "The expulsion: purpose and consequence", in Kedourie 1992: p. 88. See also. A. Mackay, "The Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages", in Kedourie 1992: p. 34.

*janissaries*<sup>41</sup> but the capital tax on the community was regulated in the mid sixteenth century according to the fabric with which the *janissaries* were supplied.<sup>42</sup>

It was to be expected that the political and economic power which some members of the *Sephardim* enjoyed was not viewed favourably by those who failed to enjoy the same privileges, or even by their competitors.<sup>43</sup> These Jews were identified with the power of the established order and the authority of the Ottoman ruler - what is known as the "royal alliance". Consequently, this relationship triggered feelings of contempt in the local population which led to occasional eruptions of antisemitism most frequently under the accusation of blood libel.<sup>44</sup>

The high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Jews was reflected in the way they organised their existence. All Spanish immigrants grouped around synagogues that carried the names of the place of origin.<sup>45</sup> Each group had its own spiritual leader (*haham*) who was elected by an assembly of notables of the community. Charitable, religious and cultural institutions were run by the community which also had its own burial site, school, seminary and court of law. The administration of the community was implemented via ordinances (*haskamoth*) "which the Chief Rabbi enacted with the council's agreement" and whose *raison d'être* was the maintenance of peaceful relations among the members of the community, the dictation of its duties, obligations

---

<sup>41</sup>The *janissaries* were the elite military corps constituted of Christian boys who had been taken away from their families according to the *devshirme* system, then converted to Islam and finally recruited into the Ottoman army. Rodrigue 1992: p. 163 and Lewis 1984: p. 133.

<sup>42</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1992: p. 108.

<sup>43</sup>Lewis 1984: pp. 131-139.

<sup>44</sup>For an analysis of Christian antisemitism in the Ottoman Empire see S. Shaw, "Christian Antisemitism in the Ottoman Empire", *Bebbeten*, Cilt: LIV Sa 211, Aralik (1990), pp. 1073-1149 as well as J. Barnai, "Blood Libels' in the Ottoman Empire of the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries", in S. Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford et al.: Pergamon Press, 1988), p. 419.

<sup>45</sup>For a history of the Salonika synagogues, see Nar 1997: pp. 11-119.



and rights, and, finally, the preservation of order, discipline, decency and morality.<sup>46</sup> There was also a committee responsible for gathering the necessary resources, which would suffice to pay the taxes of the community. The latter in order to cover the costs for the running of its own institutions had imposed a special tax on its members, the *pesha*.<sup>47</sup> Finally the issues of “marriage, re-marriage, repudiation, pensions, inheritance and the re-marriage of a widow by her brother-in-law” were dealt with by the court that carried the name *Beth Din* and which consisted of three judges (*dayyanim*) and a recorder.<sup>48</sup>

However, from the early seventeenth century Salonika Jewry experienced a gradual decline as the result of the multi-faceted decay of the Empire. In its interior, central rule represented by the sultans was seriously undermined by the arbitrary governance of powerful and greedy local overlords, whereas a simultaneous price inflation- stemming from the flow of Spanish bullion- disrupted the financial system. At the same time, the discovery of new commercial routes by European powers enhanced the latter’s role in the Ottoman economy and deprived the Jews of their intermediary role. They were replaced by the English, the French and the Dutch, to whom the Ottomans gave certain commercial privileges through the signing of the capitulation treaties. Finally, the parallel ascendance of Greek and Armenian elites challenged even more the dominance of the Jews in trading relations with the West.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the hitherto profitable textile industry of Salonika proved unable to compete with the more advanced English textile industry which flooded international markets with English

---

<sup>46</sup>J. Nehama, “The Jews of Salonika in the Ottoman period”, in R. D. Barnett and W. M. Schwabs (eds.), *The Western Sephardim* (London: Gibraltar Books, 1989), pp. 210-211.

<sup>47</sup>“An annual tax on the supposed capital or, failing that, on the annual profits which a tax-payer was normally supposed to realise.” Nehama 1989: p. 213.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 213.

<sup>49</sup>Rodrigue 1992: p. 177.

cloth and made the Salonika textile industry to go “into a serious decline surviving as a pale shadow of its former self until the nineteenth century.”<sup>50</sup>

It is against the background of a profound crisis experienced by the community as well as of important intellectual developments, connected with the shock of The Expulsion and encouraging the spreading of messianic hopes throughout the *Sephardim*, that the movement of Sabbateanism erupted in the mid seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> Shabbetai Zevi, claiming to be the true messiah, came from Izmir to Salonika in 1657. He was received enthusiastically by many Jews who “stopped work and sold all their belongings in preparation for the ingathering of the exiles in the Holy Land.” While initially tolerated by the Ottoman authorities, some of Shabbetai Zevi’s opponents pointed to the officials the revolutionary danger of his enhanced popularity. Alarmed by this prospect, Sabbetai Sevi was asked in 1666 to choose between conversion to Islam and death, whereupon he became a Muslim.<sup>52</sup> Along with him, some 300 Jewish families converted to Islam. These converts formed the *dönme* (Turkish for the word to turn) and until the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately 20,000 *dönme* resided in Salonika.<sup>53</sup>

With the rise of the nineteenth century new dramatic changes awaited the life of Salonika Jews whose status altered significantly as a result of the enhanced and omnipotent presence of the West in the Ottoman Empire. “Both the modernising reforms [known as Tanzimat] instituted by the Ottomans and the creation of new states

---

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 178. Biale’s interpretation of the Shabbetaian movement does not accept its messianic dimension. On the contrary, he attributes to it the “urge to set up a Jewish state somewhere in the Diaspora, without any direct connection to the messianic desire for a future renewal of sovereignty in the Land of Israel.” Biale 1986: p. 84.

<sup>52</sup>Rodrigue 1992: p. 178.

<sup>53</sup>V. Papacosma, “The Sephardic Jews of Salonika”, *Midstream*, XXIV (1978), p. 11.



in areas where Ottoman rule fragmented were the result of the massive incursion of triumphant western might into the region.”<sup>54</sup>

Of exceptional influence upon the instigators of the reforms proved to be the ideas of civic equality and religious tolerance, as these were propagated by the French and American Revolutions, as well as the emergence of the nation-state as the only viable political entity of post-revolutionary Europe.<sup>55</sup> In the light of these cataclysmic developments in the West, Ottoman officials embarked upon the *Tanzimat* imperial rescripts which sought to revive the decaying Empire, by building a centralised state based on the principles of rationalisation and organised along a central bureaucratic system able to contain the dangerous centrifugal local forces.<sup>56</sup> It was in 1839 with the *Hatti Serif* of Gülhane that a certain degree of equality between “believer” and “unbeliever” was guaranteed.<sup>57</sup> The decisive step was the reform decree of 1856 (*Islahat Fermani*) which - *inter alia* - consolidated the equality of non-Muslims, and declared that all citizens of the Empire were eligible for admission to public offices as well as to civil and military schools independently of their religious persuasion.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the 1856 decree asked non-Muslims to reorganise the system of their communal administration. As a result secular leaders gained a major say in the decision making within the community and the religious leaders became its official representatives. In 1869 a new law was passed which “formulated explicitly the new conception of Ottoman citizenship which included all the subjects of the Sultan.” The

---

<sup>54</sup>Rodrigue 1992: p. 180.

<sup>55</sup>The end of the eighteenth century witnessed the creation of a new American Republic with a constitution that institutionalised free admission to offices, independently of religious persuasion; during the same period the French National Assembly abolished all legal barriers to citizenship “affecting individuals of the Jewish persuasion.” Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: p. 3.

<sup>56</sup>Rodrigue 1995: p. 241.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 242.

<sup>58</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 146.

outcome of these legal developments was that the status of the Jews as *dhimmi* was dealt a fatal blow while the reorganisation of the *millet* administration, which withheld its authority, “added legitimacy to group identity and jeopardized the creation of a united Ottoman citizenry.”<sup>59</sup> This was of particular importance for the Jewish subjects who, lacking the support of a government or a state, perceived the community as the only legal *milieu* of their existence.<sup>60</sup>

It was the field of education which reflected best the novel influences brought about by nationalism and modernisation. New schools were built by Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs Romanians, Italians, French and English, each one fighting a bitter war for the propagation of national and religious interests.<sup>61</sup> Increased preference for these new establishments were shown by Salonika Jews. As a result more than 3,500 young Salonika Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century were attending the two French schools (*Mission Laicque Francaise, College des Frères des écoles Chrétiennes Jean Baptiste de la Salle*)<sup>62</sup> and the two Italian schools Royal College for Boys and Girls’ Royal College.<sup>63</sup>

In parallel to these western-inspired developments implemented by the Ottoman officialdom, the status of Salonika Jews was also affected by initiatives taken by western ‘emancipated’ Jews *themselves* who, as powerful individuals or as organised groups, tried throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century to ameliorate the situation of their fellow Jews in the rest of the world.<sup>64</sup> Although their efforts were

---

<sup>59</sup>Rodrigue 1995: p. 181.

<sup>60</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 171.

<sup>61</sup>P. Agrafiotou-Zachopoulou, *Scholia tes Thessalonikes* (Thessalonike: Ianos, 1997), pp. 132-133.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 139.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 147.

<sup>64</sup>For a discussion on the term ‘emancipation’ see J. Katz, “The Term ‘Jewish Emancipation’. Its Origin and Historical Impact” in A. Altmann (ed.), *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 1-25. In France the emancipation of the



inspired by the humanitarian work and the vision of the Universal Evangelical Alliance established in London in 1865, what they emphasised was the particular Jewish identity of their fellow Jews thereby seeking to prevent them from joining the ranks of Protestantism.<sup>65</sup> The Damascus Affair in 1840 occasioned the first instance of collective action undertaken by the Jews in the West on behalf of their fellow Jews in the East.<sup>66</sup> A great many articles circulated in the Jewish press all over Europe which depicted as alarming the situation of Oriental Jewry and underlined the need for regeneration.<sup>67</sup> In 1858 the concern of western Jewry for their fellow Jews grew further as a result of the Mortara Affair in Italy.<sup>68</sup> In order to organise their intervention emancipated French Jews established the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Paris in 1860 (hereafter AIU)

---

Jews was achieved in 1790 and 1791 when the French Revolution “abolished the juridically accepted Jewish ‘nation’ ”, Rodrigue 1995: p. 239. Another fruit of the French Revolution was the implication it had upon the status of Dutch Jewry, who gained full emancipation by the decree of 2 September 1796 passed by the first National Assembly. H. Daalder, “Dutch Jews in a Segmented Society”, in Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: p. 42. In Germany the road to civic equality was a gradual process that bore its fruit since 1871. In England after successive gains Jews were conceded as late as 1858 the “last civic right..., that of sitting in the House of Commons.” “In Italy there was a first emancipation period under French aegis”, and a second one in 1848 when the Jews actively participated in the nationalist movement in Piedmont, proving themselves “not [to be] alien to the new modern state but implicated integrally with its fragility and fate.” Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: pp. 24-25.

<sup>65</sup>A. Chouraqui, *Cent Ans d'Histoire: L'Alliance Israélite Universelle et La Renaissance Juive Contemporaine* (1860-1910) (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1965), p. 27.

<sup>66</sup>The Jews of Damascus in 1840 were accused of having murdered a Capuchin friar for religious purposes. Many Jews were arrested, others were tortured while some died. The French consul complied with the Syrian authorities, helped in the diffusion of the charges of the monastic order, and was later backed by his government. Western Jewish notables, e.g. members of the Rothschild family, Moses Montefiore and Adolph Crémieux, summoned their efforts to voice their opposition against the unjust accusations. D. Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 14 . See also Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder', Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>67</sup>The *Archives Israélites* (1840) in France, the *Voice of Jacob* and the *Jewish Chronicle* (1841) in England appeared in the light of the Damascus affair. Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 151.

<sup>68</sup>An Italian Jewish boy called Edgardo Mortara was secretly baptised, snatched away from his parents and handed over to a monastery. Biale 1986: p. 124.

which thus added to the list of international movements which came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> The AIU assigned to Charles Netter, Élie-Aristide Astruc, Isidore Cahen, Eugène Manuel, Narcisse Leven and Jules Carvallo the accomplishment of its universal vision<sup>70</sup> which included the setting up of a network of primary and secondary schools in northern Africa and the Near East,<sup>71</sup> profiting thus from the *Tanzimat* edicts that had favoured the opening of schools.<sup>72</sup> By 1913 the AIU ran 183 schools with 43,700 pupils attending a programme of French-oriented instruction, which emphasised the importance of French culture for the overall programme of Jewish regeneration and underlined in a bombastic tone that it was “... Paris where the Jewish civilisation should establish its joint co-operative council and hold its meetings.”<sup>73</sup> The syllabus also contained the teaching of the history of the Jewish people as well as that of the Jewish religion and the Hebrew language.<sup>74</sup>

Being a major urban centre with a compact Jewish population, Salonika could not have escaped the attention of the AIU which set up its first school for boys there in 1870.<sup>75</sup> The schools run by the teachers of the *Alliance* sought to propagate the assimilationist doctrine and to encourage the complete integration of the Jewish population in the environment of the host country. The high standard of teaching methods and the acclaimed quality of its staff rendered *Alliance* a pivot around which evolved and developed the overall educational life of Salonika Jewry. Indeed, *Alliance*

---

<sup>69</sup>Along with AIU one could cite the Freemasonry which secretly expanded its activities all over Europe; the formation of the Socialist ideology under the influence of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Proudhon; the creation of the First International in 1864 by Marx and Lassalle and the founding of the Red Cross in 1860 by Henri Dunant. Chouraqui 1965: p. 20.

<sup>70</sup>For an elucidating biographic account of these individuals see Chouraqui 1965: pp. 30-41.

<sup>71</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 165.

<sup>72</sup>Risal 1917: p. 241.

<sup>73</sup>As cited in Chouraqui 1965: p. 27.

<sup>74</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 165.

<sup>75</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 112.



exerted a profound influence upon the seven Jewish communal schools (Talmud Torah, School of Baron Hirsch, School of Regie Vardar, School of Agia Paraskevi, School of Kalamaria, School in Quarter 6, Schools of Kazes) and upon five other private schools (Gattegno, Alcheh, Bernadout, Meir Pinton, Solon Tzachon).<sup>76</sup> As the fifth chapter will show, the Alliance played a very important role in shaping the cultural, social and political life of Salonika Jews before and after the community's annexation to the Greek state.

In addition to the *Alliance* establishments there was also the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, a German-Jewish organisation founded in 1901 for the amelioration of the conditions of the Jews in eastern Europe and of the Orient. This move, which was considered the German answer to the French-inspired programme of emancipation, was encouraged by the Kaiser himself who considered the Oriental Jews as important allies for the implementation of his *Drang nach Osten* policy. The latter was in need of a population willing to support the flow of German capital in the Ottoman lands and it was the Jews who assumed eagerly this responsibility.<sup>77</sup> This is the background of the establishment of the first school in Salonika by the Austro-German railway company in 1887 aiming at training the staff.<sup>78</sup>

The establishment of intellectual centres constituted just one aspect of the whole network of relations that linked the recipients with their foreign benefactors. There were local forces at work among Ottoman Jewry that assisted the educational work of the *Alliance* establishments because of their close commercial ties with the West, which made even more urgent the need for modern education, with special emphasis on the

---

<sup>76</sup>Agrafiotou - Zachopoulou 1997: p. 136.

<sup>77</sup>M. Öke, "Young Turks, Freemasons, Jews and the Question of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1913)", *Studies in Zionism*, Vol. 7, no 2 (1986), p. 207.

<sup>78</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 116.

teaching of foreign languages (French and Italian) and secular subjects (mathematics and geography). In Salonika a group of foreign Jews called *Francos*, most of them of Italian origin who had settled in the Levant on account of their trading activities, welcomed and buttressed the educational efforts of the *Alliance*.<sup>79</sup> The latter, in addition to their educational work, could bring the *Francos* into contact with foreign commercial agents, helping them to moderate the isolation that the ethnic division of labour had imposed on them thus enabling them to compete with the other economic élites of the city, the Greeks and the Armenians, who had managed to ascend in the Ottoman bureaucratic and commercial world.<sup>80</sup>

Last but not least, the influence of the *Alliance* was also evident in the spirit of communal solidarity reflected in the existence of an advanced system of communal welfare amongst Salonika Jewry. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a hospital and a dispensary as well as specialised organisations such as the *Yechoua Verahamim*, which saw to the distribution of coal and foodstuffs to destitute families. The medical care of the poor was guaranteed by the generosity of various charitable organisations which embodied the humanitarian principles of the *Alliance* teachers. By

---

<sup>79</sup>The origins of the *Francos* date back to the end of the sixteenth century when persecuted Jews found refuge in Livorno. The influx of Jews as well as of other persecuted groups (Catholics from England, Moors from Spain, Spanish and Portuguese *Marranos*) went on throughout the 16th and 17th century rendering Livorno a prospering port able to compete with Salonika and Venice. During the 18th century, Livornian Jews settled in Salonika, where they enjoyed foreign protection, and assimilated western culture. Because of their holding foreign citizenship, they did not have to pay taxes raised both by the community as well as by the Ottomans; moreover, they could enjoy the benefit of guarantees and “privileges granted to foreigners by the capitulations regime: consular protection, fiscal facilities, and all kinds of immunities. The connections that they possessed with foreign communities (Trieste, Venice, Ancone, Genoa, etc.) ensured them a dominant position in the Salonika market”. P. Dumont, “The Social Structure of the Jewish Community of Salonika at the End of the Nineteenth Century”, *South-eastern Europe*, 5/ 2 (1979), p. 56.

<sup>80</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 118, pp. 153-154.



providing for the needy, the effort was made to contain social discontent which might endanger the community's unity.<sup>81</sup>

The rapid change of the profile of the city during the last decades of the nineteenth century worked for the benefit of the Jewish economic élite of Salonika. Although around the middle of the nineteenth century the economic life of Salonika did not fare well, two decades later there was a substantial increase in the city's shipping activity. The construction of a network of railways that connected Salonika to Constantinople and also to Vienna and Paris through Serbia and Bosnia stirred up the economic activity of the area but at the same time "exposed the fragile condition of the Macedonian economy."<sup>82</sup> A number of public works undertaken from the late 1860s onwards by Sabri Pasha, the governor of the city, led to the urbanisation and modernisation of the city, which was endowed with "street-sweepers, a distribution network of drinkable water, a gas lighting system (1890), electrically propelled tramways (1893), theatres and cinemas".<sup>83</sup> During the same period the first theatrical pieces in Judeo-Spanish were performed in Salonika.<sup>84</sup> The increase of the population is indicative of the development of the city; at the end of the nineteenth century, the total population was around 120,000 people, including 60,000 Jews, 25,000 Moslems (together with the *dönme*), 20,000 Greeks, 10,000 Bulgarians, and 5,000 of various other nationalities.<sup>85</sup>

As striking as the numerical predominance of the Jewish community was the social composition of its members who "encompassed the entire spectrum of a fairly

---

<sup>81</sup>Dumont 1979: pp. 47-48.

<sup>82</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 110.

<sup>83</sup>Dumont 1979: p. 33.

<sup>84</sup>Y. Kerem, "The Greek-Jewish Theater in Judeo-Spanish, ca. 1880-1940", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 14 (1996), pp. 32-33.

<sup>85</sup>Dumont 1979: p. 34.

industrialized urban class structure, from bourgeois to proletarian and lumpenproletarian".<sup>86</sup> The *Francos*, who constituted part of the Jewish aristocracy, profited from the development of the city and amassed huge fortunes. The Allatini excelled in international commerce and banking ventures and, together with the Modiano, they traded in cereals and the production of flour. Their activities culminated in the establishment of the first large flour mill in Salonika in 1857. They also invested in the tobacco trade and together with their foreign partners established the *Banque de Salonique*.<sup>87</sup> The families of the Capandji, Jehiel and Bensussan set up a lingerie factory in 1911 while Modiano and Fernandez founded the famous Olympos distillery.<sup>88</sup> Out of a total of more than fifty large enterprises in Salonika thirty-eight were run by Jews - who also specialised in imports and exports - eight by *dömme* and another eight by Greek families.<sup>89</sup>

The remarkable economic prosperity of the city which had attracted foreign capital in railway construction and the trade sectors created new needs that were to be covered by white collars workers. The latter, known as the *medianeros* - trade agents, brokers, small bankers, retailers, etc.- were either educated at the *Alliance* schools or studied abroad, and constituted a motley group of people and specialisations which helped Salonika to become one of the main trading centres of the Near East from the

---

<sup>86</sup>G. Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 254.

<sup>87</sup>This bank was set up in June 1888 with the co-operation between the brothers Allatini and the three banks *Comptoir d'Escompte de Paris*, *Banque Imperiale et Royale Privilegiée des Pays Autrichiens*, *Banque de Pays Hongrois*. The base was in Salonika but in 1909 was transferred to Constantinople. E. A. Chekimoglou, *Thessalonike Tourkokratia kai Mesopolemos* (Thessalonike: Ekfrase, University Studio Press, 1995), pp. 226-227.

<sup>88</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 162.

<sup>89</sup>Dumont 1979: p. 56.



late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>90</sup> Finally, the economic development of the industrial sector of Salonika and its suburbs gave birth to the formation of a strong working class, the only proletarian force of the whole Sephardic world which organised itself in 1909 in the *Federacion Socialista Laboradera*.<sup>91</sup> It is the last chapter of the thesis that will explore the ideology and politics of Salonika Jewish Socialists- and from 1920 on Communists- from the early twentieth century until 1936 when the establishment of the Metaxas' dictatorship suppressed all sorts of political activities.

Within each of the three major "classes" - aristocracy, middle class, lower class - into which the Jewish community can be roughly divided, there existed a number of heterogeneous social groups. Indeed, these "classes" rarely constituted unanimous blocs and on a number of occasions ideological and political cleavages created factions and clans. The old and powerful families of the Nahmias and Covos competed for judicial and religious power, whereas among the notables the parties of *modernists* and *traditionalists* triggered off many disputes over communal issues.<sup>92</sup> The involvement of lay members of the community in educational matters caused increasing tension between the traditionalists - as they were expressed in the rabbinical authority - and their opponents. The first came to realise that they were losing ground for the sake of

---

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 58.

<sup>91</sup>According to Risal, there existed at the beginning of the twentieth century "two spinning mills, one model mill, one brick factory, two breweries, about ten soap factories and, especially, important plants for the processing of tobacco." As cited in Dumont 1979: p. 33. However, notwithstanding the overall amelioration of the economic situation of the Jewish community, there was at the bottom of the social ladder "a crowd of peddlers, hawkers on the brink of destitution, an industrial proletariat in its formative age, and important disinherited element composed of porters, water carriers, donkey drivers and domestic servants". *Ibid.*: p. 46.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 55.

modernisation and progress, a situation which had many similarities with that prevailing in the Greek and Turkish communities of the city.<sup>93</sup>

An indicative picture of the internal disputes that tore the community apart can be drawn from the circulation of newspapers and journals of different affiliations. One could cite selectively *La Epoca*, written in Judeo-Spanish and first published in 1878 by Saadi Halevi.<sup>94</sup> This paper was “the mouthpiece of the liberal Jewish bourgeoisie until its demise in 1912”. Its opponents, *El Avenir* (1897) and the periodical *Revista Popular*, also published in Judeo-Spanish first supported the religious opposition and later won the Zionist tendency over.<sup>95</sup> In 1895 the first French-speaking newspaper, called *Journal de Salonique*, made its appearance in Salonika. In 1900 and 1909 two more French-speaking newspapers were published by Salonika Jews, *Le Progrès de Salonique* and *L'Indépendant*. During the same period *La Solidaridad Ovradera* marked the beginning of a long publishing activity on behalf of the Jewish-dominated *Federacion*. In 1912 the socialist weekly was renamed *Avante*, which continued to be published until 1934.<sup>96</sup>

Thus the dawn of the twentieth century found the Jewish community of Salonika undergoing a modernisation process at the same time as the other ethnic groups of the city. By that time all the prerequisites were present for the setting up of different Masonic lodges in Salonika. The first and foremost was the presence of a flourishing middle-class that carried many of the trappings of a European life-style, both in their

---

<sup>93</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 111.

<sup>94</sup>For a brief account on the publishing material and the political orientation of *Epoca* see R. Molho, “Ta Ispanoevraika sten Kathemerine Zoe tes Thessalonikes”, *Ta Historica*, 15/ 28-29 (June-December 1998), pp. 129-131.

<sup>95</sup>Mazower 1994: 118.

<sup>96</sup>Apart from these major publications one could also cite journals of a minor importance, such as *Selanik Ahali*, *El Tzornal del Lavorador*, *La Nation*, *Emparsial*, *La Libertad*, *La Tribuna Libra*, *La*



secular and their religious activities.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, there was a flourishing bourgeoisie, a network of remarkable primary and secondary schools, a mature and active intelligentsia as well as an effective network of transport and communication (maritime lines and railways) with the outside world. Amongst all the Masonic lodges the most interesting - on account of its exclusively Jewish membership - was the lodge *Veritas* which contributed occasionally to the maintenance of charitable institutions, scholarly establishments and last, but not least, assisted the community in case of fire, economical crisis, epidemics, flooding, etc. Established in 1904 under the auspices of the *Grand Orient de France*, its founding members Isaac Vita Modiano, Isaac Rabeno de Botton, Jacob M. Mosseri, David Joseph Cohen and Paul Isaac Modiano were all Jewish notables. By 1908 four Greeks, two Armenians and around 15 Muslims joined in without however erasing the predominance of the Jewish element.<sup>98</sup>

The lodges were also the suitable arena for the Young Turks to conduct their clandestine activities, since they operated under the capitulations regime and thus were free from the penetration of Ottoman police. By overthrowing the absolutist regime of Abdul-Hamid II and reintroducing the 1876 Constitution, the Young Turks thought that parliamentarism would succeed in impeding the national-separatist movements and at the same time prevent the foreign powers from interfering “in the affairs of the Empire on behalf of [their] minorities.”<sup>99</sup> Although many of the liberal declarations voiced by the Young Turks were never implemented, one cannot fail to observe that at the outset this liberal atmosphere created great enthusiasm amongst the subject peoples of the

---

*Revista Popular* and “*Oriental*”. There were also satirical newspapers such as *El Pountson* and *El Kirbats*. M. Kandylikes, “O Evraikos Typos tes Thessalonikes”, *Parateretes* 25-26 (1994), pp. 112-114.

<sup>97</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 114.

<sup>98</sup>P. Dumont, “La Franc-maçonnerie d’Obédience Française à Salonique au Début du XXI<sup>e</sup> Siècle”, *Turcica*, 16 (1984), pp. 67-73.

<sup>99</sup>Öke 1986: p. 202.



Empire who saw in it a chance to claim their rights. The principal motto of the Young Turks was that since all Ottoman minorities would be represented in the parliament, they would have the opportunity to express their grievances through peaceful means. As long as the ethnic groups were satisfied with their political life in the Empire, there would be no reason for European powers to intervene in the domestic politics of the Empire.

Without wishing to downplay the importance of the overall policies of the Young Turks, when one focuses on the change they brought to the status of the minorities one is confronted with a paradox: namely, that while the granting of civil rights to the ethnic groups of the Empire aimed at keeping them under the Young Turks' control, the minorities took advantage of this atmosphere of politicisation and liberalism and claimed their freedom from Ottoman rule. The proclamation of the Constitution of 1908 was followed by the national mobilisation of Greeks, Albanians, Arabs, Kurds and Circassians who through the setting up of nationalist clubs aspired to propagate their claims.<sup>100</sup> As far as the Jews were concerned, the same years witnessed the spreading of the Zionist ideology amongst the Jewish population in Salonika. Indeed, Zionism was both a 'political' and a 'national' option since it could provide many Jews with the possibility of emancipating themselves from the oligarchic rule of communal notables and/or of confirming their national identity. The Zionist movement in Salonika had to wait for the annexation of the city to Greece in 1912 in order to achieve considerable progress and expansion.

After the turmoil of the Balkan Wars which established the status of Macedonia as a *casus belli* amongst the states of the Balkans, Greece emerged as the big winner. It

---

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 203.

annexed approximately 50 per cent of the Macedonian region<sup>101</sup> thereby promoting substantially its nationalist vision known as the Great Idea (*Megale Idea*).<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the Greek state increased its territory by 70 per cent, while “its population rose from 2,800,000 to 4,800,000.”<sup>103</sup> However, the new citizens of the so-called New Lands, were far from being ethnic Greeks, since these territories were inhabited by substantial numbers of Slavs, Muslims (mainly Turks) and Vlachs, let alone the compact Jewish population of Salonika numbering by that time 70,000 people.<sup>104</sup> However, it would take ten years of constant fighting and internal political turmoil until the Greek governments of the inter-war years placed the minority issue at the centre of their political agenda. Nevertheless, the interim period proved a ‘test tube’ for Greco-Jewish relations, thereby providing useful insights for the years to come.

For one thing, the annexation of Salonika to the Greek state was interpreted in unfavourable terms by many Jews who saw in it a threat to their commercial interests. In particular, the isolation of the city from its commercially important Balkan hinterland, representing a market of four million people as well as the emerging importance of the new ports of Volos and Piraeus over Salonika, spelled troubles for the Jews’ economic dominance. On the other hand, the issue of the huge debts owed to Jewish merchants by the Turks was likely to be left unsettled, the precedent for that

---

<sup>101</sup>E. Kofos, “National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth- century Macedonia” in M. Blinkhorn and Th. Veremes (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage Eliaep, 1990), p. 115.

<sup>102</sup>The Great Idea was coined by Ioannes Kolettes, a Hellenised Vlach, in 1844 during his speech before the Greek constituent assembly. It was his firm belief that the recently established Greek kingdom had to be enlarged in order to incorporate other unredeemed Greeks who still lived under the Ottoman rule. R. Clogg, *A Concise History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 43.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 83.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 85.



being the annexation of Thessaly.<sup>105</sup> Finally, the antisemitic incidents which took place once the Greek troops entered the city created a hostile atmosphere which poisoned the relationships between the Christians and the Jews.<sup>106</sup> In light of these shattering events the publishing activity amongst Salonika Jews was greatly enhanced. Amongst the newly-appeared newspapers one could cite *La Vardad*, *La Boz de Pueblo*, *El Tiempo*, etc.<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, the Greek state was perturbed by Salonika's geopolitical importance and mixed ethnic composition, which were potential pretexts for neighbouring regimes to lay irredentist claims to the area. Being thus in a precarious position, the Greek state embarked upon the first stage of a modernising process a vital aspect of which was the Hellenisation of the newly-acquired city as a means to discourage any of the aforementioned irredentist programmes. As in the case of Romanian nationalistic policies, Greek officialdom would seek to Hellenise Salonika's economic and demographic profile thereby changing the status quo of the Jewish community and engendering cardinal changes in its overall profile.<sup>108</sup>

Thus on 3 January 1913, a memorandum prepared by Jewish communal leaders affirmed that the best solution, from the Jewish perspective, was that Salonika should be annexed neither to Bulgaria nor to Greece and should come under international

---

<sup>105</sup>R. Molho, "The Jewish Community of Salonika and its Incorporation into the Greek State 1912-19", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 84/ 4 (1988), pp. 392-393.

<sup>106</sup>See K. Skordyles, "Réactions Juives à l'Annexion de Salonique par la Grèce (1912-1913)", in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 501-516, and R. Molho, "Popular Antisemitism and State Policy in Salonika during the City's Annexation to Greece", *Jewish Social Studies*, 50/ 3,4 (1988-1933), pp. 253-264.

<sup>107</sup>Kandylakes 1994: pp. 114-115.

<sup>108</sup>M. Levene, *War, Jews and the New Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 170.



auspices.<sup>109</sup> Swiss and Belgian experts would be responsible for public safety and the administrative organisation. Finally all nations would have access to the port which would be free and neutral. The plans for the internationalisation of the city were warmly received not just by Zionist circles in Salonika who considered it a way to preserve the Jewish character of the city and to avoid the danger of the Hellenisation process; this plan made a favourable impression on official quarters of European diplomatic circles as well as on prominent leaders of international Zionist circles, who did not want Salonika to lose its Jewish character. However, political and economic differences among the countries interested in the internationalisation scheme as well as the mutual suspicion between the Balkan states and the breaking out of the Second Balkan War in July 1913 brought the scheme to an end. The treaty signed between Turkey and Greece on November 14 after the Second Balkan War ceded Salonika to the Greek kingdom.<sup>110</sup>

In the meantime, the Greek authorities strove to allay Jewish fears thereby creating a favourable image of the country amongst the Great Powers, particularly France and England, whose support was necessary for Greece to proceed with its plans for modernisation and with its territorial ambitions.<sup>111</sup> Not only did the Greeks appoint officials who gained the trust of the Jewish community, but in December 1912 they offered official assurances to representatives of the AIU to the effect that the Jews' rights would be respected. More specifically, the Greek government would strive "to favour the commercial enterprise of their new citizens whom they recognise as important elements of public prosperity". In July 1913 Ioannes Gennadius, the *chargé*

---

<sup>109</sup>The *dönme* of Constantinople, competing with the Greeks, sent money to Viennese circles so that the latter would intervene in favour of the internationalisation scheme. Document no 13730, 1914, A/Politike, HAGFM.

<sup>110</sup>N. M. Gelber, "An attempt to internationalize Salonika", *Jewish Social Studies*, 17 (1955), pp. 105-120. See also R. Molho, "Thessalonique après 1912. Propagandes étrangères et la communauté juive", *Revue Historique*, 287 (1992), pp. 127-140.

<sup>111</sup>Clogg 1992: p. 87.

*d'affaires* in London, gave similar assurances to the Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jews<sup>112</sup> while in the Peace treaty with Turkey in 1913, Greece pledged herself to “scrupulously respect” not only the “life, honour and religion” of the inhabitants of the ceded territories, but also their “customs”. Finally, similar assurances were given by Eleftherios Venizelos, the current Prime Minister, in a letter he addressed to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* in London on 5 January 1913.<sup>113</sup>

World War I and internal Greek politics complicated the situation for the Jews, even more so since the situation of the country was far from providing guarantees of political stability and economic prosperity. By 1915 the Greek populace was politically divided between the supporters of Venizelos, who favoured intervention in the War on the side of the Entente, and those of Constantine I, who advocated continued neutrality. Venizelists concentrated their forces in Salonika, while at the same time, the city became the disembarkation point for over 150,000 Allied troops from October 1915 onwards. The British and French forced Constantine to leave the country in June 1917, some days later Greece under Venizelos entered the war officially.

While the war was raging, the Jews of Salonika, who had been touched and motivated by the American initiative taken in March 1916 in Philadelphia to create an American Jewish Congress aiming at ameliorating the living conditions of the Jewish Diaspora, convened their own first congress. Its goal was to draft a memorandum the main points of which would define their stance during the future Peace Conference and

---

<sup>112</sup>The Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jews was set up in 1878 and consisted of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association. In December 1917 the ‘Conjoint’ ceased to exist and its previous ‘diplomatic’ role was played by the Joint Foreign Committee. Levene 1992: pp. 2-6 and 154-157.

<sup>113</sup>Archive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (hereafter ABDBJ), ACC 3121/ 13/ 21/ 1. See also Molho 1988: pp. 391-401, and R. Molho, “Venizelos and the Jewish Community of Salonika, 1912-1919”, *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 13/ 3-4 (1986), pp. 113-123.



come up with proposals concerning the issue of Jewish development in Palestine.<sup>114</sup> Of particular importance were the resolutions adopted which sought to bring together Jews from different social strata and different political opinions. This occasion marked the first public acceptance on behalf of Jewish political leaders pointing to the intense ideological fragmentation of the community and warning against its dangerous repercussions for their future.<sup>115</sup>

While the Salonika Jews were working on how to find ways to guarantee a better future for themselves, an unfortunate event dealt a grave blow to the life of the community. This was the Great Fire of August 1917 which destroyed 120 hectares of the historical centre of the town and rendered almost 72,00 people homeless.<sup>116</sup> Amongst all of the victims of the Fire the Jews were the worst affected; “they lost eight oratories, most of the thirty-seven synagogues, all the libraries, schools and club buildings and most of their homes.”<sup>117</sup> Their plight was so dreadful that Baron Rothschild sent £5,000 to relieve them,<sup>118</sup> while two years later approximately 3,000

---

<sup>114</sup>*Le Congrès Juif et ses Buts*, Salonique (1917).

<sup>115</sup>Speech delivered by L. Gattegno according to which it would be a pity if the Jews of Salonika failed to imitate the ideological uniformity of their foreign fellow Jews and let their differences undermine the feelings of concord and harmony which were of utmost importance for the implementation of their sacred goal. *Pour le Congrès Juif de Salonique*, Salonique (1917), pp. 3-4.

<sup>116</sup>A. Gerolymbou, “To Meridio tes Fotias” in Veinstein Gilles (ed.), *Thessalonike 1850-1918. He ‘Pole ton Evraion’ kai he Afupnise ton Valkanion*, (Greek translation) (Athens: Ekate, 1994), p. 285.

<sup>117</sup>Mazower 1994: p. 105. More detailed information about the destructive consequences of the Fire upon the Jewish population can be found in the answer prepared by the Jewish community to the questionnaire submitted to her by the Hoover Mission. According to it the community had suffered the following losses: 32 synagogues and their furniture, 17 public oratories, 64 private oratories, 450 sacred scrolls, 1 dispenser, 1 electric oven for the azymes, 10 rabbinical libraries, 5 schools of the *Alliance*, 3 communal schools, 5 yeshivots and 1 seminary place, the locality of the “*Association des Anciens Élèves de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle*”, the building of the *Club des Intimes*, of the *Society Kadimah*, and of 3 sport clubs. The total cost of the destroyed area rose up to 6,505,000 Drachmas. Doc. no 6848/3, 1 April 1919, Grèce II C 53, Archives of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (hereafter AAIU).

<sup>118</sup>Foreign authorities as well as local forces offered important economic assistance. The Commander of the Allied Army gave 100,000 francs to the Jewish victims of the Fire; 10,000 to the Turks and an equal



Jewish families were still living in tents.<sup>119</sup> The new plan for the reconstruction of the town was drawn by an International Committee headed by Ernest Hébrard, and aimed at creating a modernised urban centre which would be able to meet the requirements of a new westernised *modus vivendi*.<sup>120</sup> Such a plan can be considered as the first attempt of the Greek state to intervene actively in the public sphere of town planning, by assuming the role of the co-ordinator of the urban life. As far as the fate of the burnt area was concerned, the government decided to expropriate the burnt zone to the profit of a broker's agent association, which comprised all the owners of the burned zone. Each owner received an amount equivalent to the value of his plot while nobody had the right to turn down this offer. Although the new city plan was initially praised as an achievement of modernisation, a great number of Jews - who were the owners of the seventy-seven per cent of the would-be expropriated land - did not hold the same opinion and their fears were not unwarranted. On the one hand, the plan of the expropriation did not allow for individual indemnities while, on the other hand, all fire victims were legally obliged to invest the money they would receive exclusively in the scheme for the reconstruction of the town. The Jewish community considered this plan an effort on behalf of the government to expel them from the centre of the commercial life of Salonika and they protested vehemently by addressing continuous appeals to Jewish organisations in England and France.<sup>121</sup>

---

amount to the Greeks. Moreover 20,000 francs were given to M. Nehama and 10,000 to the Mission Laicque. Finally the under-secretary of the Service of the Military Health gave 60,000 francs to the Chief Rabbinate. French Consul (Salonika) to Rober de Billy, 12 July 1917, Salonique 22, Archives Diplomatiques (hereafter AD).

<sup>119</sup>Doc. no Z 325-4, 19 February 1919, Europe - Grèce 69, Archive of the Quai d'Orsay (hereafter AQDO).

<sup>120</sup>Gerolymbou 1994: pp. 283-284.

<sup>121</sup>At the beginning Venizelos assured the Joint Foreign Committee that the "the State Bonds given by way of compensation to the owners of the property in the burnt area would be easily convertible, and that they would be accepted on their face value in payment for sites in the area of reconstruction which their

As the Great War moved to its end the issue of peace came to the forefront of international concern. In 1919 the Paris Peace Conference was attended by representatives of thirty-two states - Venizelos included - who took decisions that dramatically changed the international map. President Wilson's Fourteen Points invoked the principle of self-determination, which granted every nation the sacred right to form an independent state. The forces of nationalism and self-government, which had characterised the political setting of the nineteenth century, constituted the ideological arsenal of the nationalities which were aspiring to independence at the peace discussions following the First World War. However, the application of this principle comprised inherent difficulties, for not all ethnic and cultural groups were enough advanced in the 'life-cycle' of minorities to be regarded as qualifying for nationhood and hence statehood.<sup>122</sup>

A product of the peacekeeping machinery at the Versailles Conference was the creation of the League of Nations. Though it proved in hindsight unsuccessful, it was created in order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security. Moreover, it was charged by the various Minority Treaties to supervise efficiently the protection of national minority groups, who were part of the demographic reality. Such a settlement was regarded as a deterrent to future inter-state conflicts, which had arisen in the past as result of ill-treatment and oppression. What previous

---

owners might wish to acquire." The same committee was also reassured that all the profits realised from the expropriation and the re-sale of property would be applied for the benefit of the town of Salonika. However, one month later the same committee cabled to Jacques Bigart, the secretary of the AIU, that Venizelos changed his initial stance. By that time he had stated that only half of the profits deriving from the sale of the buildings in the burnt area would be handed back to the victims of the fire. Moreover he mentioned something about a "Betterment Tax" on houses in the vicinity of the reconstruction quarter. Wolf to Bigart, 14 January 1918, ACC 3121/13/21/1, ABDBJ.

<sup>122</sup>L. Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups", in R. Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 366-367.



experience had shown was that, more often than not, the situation was particularly complicated when the oppressed minority belonged to the same nationality as that of a majority in another state - the status of the Jewish minority constituted the only exception - which projected itself as the protector of the oppressed. When the two states involved happened to be neighbouring countries this often worked as a *casus belli*. Thus the *internationalisation* of the protection of minorities was propounded as the suitable means to avoid the repetition of similar disputes.<sup>123</sup>

According to the memorandum of the League of Nations, guarantees were provided as far as the protection of life, liberty and equality of the minority groups were concerned. All citizens of the country were entitled to legal, political and civil equality, whereas admission to public posts, functions and honours was open to all residents. In the public sphere all nationals could set up, manage and control all kinds of institutions - either charitable, religious or social - wherein they could use their own language and practise their religion. Moreover, certain provisions guaranteed the employment of any language in private intercourse, commercial dealings, religious practices, printing activities or at public gatherings.<sup>124</sup> This new regime was also accepted by powerful Jewish representatives who took part in the deliberations during the Peace Conference and who correctly understood the following inherent disadvantage of the Jewish minority with regard to the rest of the minorities: while it was evident that all non-Jewish minorities could, in a way, rely on the government of a neighbouring country - where they constituted the majority of the population - and whose government had different good reasons to intervene and protect that minority, the Jews were the only minority which had no one to speak on their behalf if they raised their grievances

---

<sup>123</sup>P. de Azcarate, *League of Nations and National Minorities, an Experiment* (Washington: Cornegie Endowment for International Peace Division of Internal Law, 1944), pp. 14-15.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 60.



against the government of the country in which they lived.<sup>125</sup> To this effect, Zionist representatives attempted to promote the solution of the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine, according to the Balfour Declaration of October 1917, but to no avail. On the other extreme stood the AIU, whose traditional unwillingness to challenge French national interests<sup>126</sup> resulted in a formula “asking simply for equal rights.” Consequently, the AIU was isolated from the rest of the Jewish delegations thereby depriving itself of the ability to influence the status of European Jews in the “New Europe”.<sup>127</sup>

In the end, it was the politics and the programme of Lucien Wolf, the permanent secretary of the Joint Foreign Committee since December 1917, who succeeded there where the others had failed. He asked that the Jews be granted a “national minority status” which would: a) place them on equal civic status with the majority population; b) allow them to use the language of their preference in “speech, writing, contracts, and court procedure”; c) permit them to run their own “Jewish religious, educational, charitable, and other cultural institutions” and d) enable them to rest on Saturday and work on Sunday.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, he fought for “international protection”, namely the placement of “the rights and security of Jews and other minorities under the protection of the League of Nations, and in particular... their right of direct appeal in case of treaty infractions.”<sup>129</sup> Wolf’s points constituted the backbone of the drafting of the Polish

---

<sup>125</sup>ANNEXE III, ACC 3121/C11/7/2/2/I, ABDBJ.

<sup>126</sup>Given the vital economic and cultural French interests in the Levant *and* in Europe, it was inevitable that France would not support “a Wilsonian peace but a peace of security”. Levene 1992: p. 266.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 265.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 202-203.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 294. See also L. Divane, *Ellada kai Meionotetes To Systema Diethnous Prostatias tes Koinonias ton Ethnon* (Athens: Nefele, 1995), p. 28.

Minorities Treaty on 28 June 1919 which became the model for other Treaties signed between the Allies and “the ‘new’ or defeated states in the ‘New Europe’”.<sup>130</sup>

A case in point was the Special Treaty of Sèvres signed on 10 August 1920, which sought to regulate the status of minorities residing in the New Lands recently annexed by Greece, Salonika Jews included. However, the latter would remain officially ‘unprotected’ since it was not until 6 August 1924 that the Greek Minorities Treaty was ratified. The ensuing insecurity felt by all minorities, was further accentuated by the common knowledge that the Greek political establishment had been sceptical with regard to the actual level of ‘national autonomy’ granted to the minorities. In March 1919 Nikos Polites, the Greek Foreign Minister, had informed Jacob Meir, the Chief Rabbi, that the Jews of Salonika should be prompted to act as the Jews of Old Greece, thereby implying their high degree of assimilation, and that the Greek state would never consider the Jews as a national minority but only as a religious minority. At the same time, however, the Greek state recognised the Jews as a nation since it declared its support for the national movement of the Jews in Palestine and for the establishment of an independent Jewish state in the East.<sup>131</sup> It was in the 1920s that this two-fold contradiction, between autonomy rights and assimilation and between the support for the Jewish national aspirations abroad and the suppression of Jewish national status in Greece, became most explosive.

The Armistice in November 1918 and the international repercussions it brought about certainly affected Greece, but failed to end the country’s military entanglement. Mustafa Kemal’s nationalist forces in Asia Minor vigorously, and in the event successfully, resisted Greek efforts to bring the region under Greece’s control. While

---

<sup>130</sup>Levene 1992: p. 312.

<sup>131</sup>Similar statements had been previously addressed to Nahum Sokolow. Polites to Greek Foreign Ministry, 11 March 1919, 1919 A/5, HAGFM.



the embroiled political situation of the country left the status of the Jews more or less intact, many well-off Jews decided to leave Greece and emigrate to Italy, Switzerland or France, the last of which attracted the majority of these emigrants because of their knowledge of the French language and the French customs. Once there, they settled in big cities, such as Lyon and Marseille; however, in their overwhelming majority they settled in Paris which was characterised as the most tolerant and hospitable of all.<sup>132</sup> Thus since the spring of 1919 more than 2,500 Salonika Jews had come to Paris with the intention to create a centre of reunion, build a synagogue and, of course, continue with their commercial activities.<sup>133</sup> Although according to the official communal discourse what triggered off this emigration wave were the lack of accommodation in the aftermath of the Great Fire, the high cost of living and the commercial stagnation, it was the opinion of the French Consul that the main reason behind it was the rising antipathy between Greeks and Jews ever since the establishment of the former in Salonika. In the Easter of 1921 this antipathy appeared in the cloak of the notorious blood accusation which brought the two sides in sharp confrontation. Jacob Cazes, the

---

<sup>132</sup>Graillet to Millerand, 18 August 1920, Europe-Grèce 69, AQDO. In France, the French consul continued, all emigrants were given very quickly the emigration permit and did not have to go through a confusion of administrative proceedings.

<sup>133</sup> It is interesting to note, that although the French consul regarded this emigration as a rather positive fact for the commercial life of the city - given the active, laborious, intelligent and wealthy character of these emigrants, as well as their knowledge of the Levant - he also pointed to a couple of negative side-effects. From a political point of view, Salonika Jews did not have the notion of Fatherland and thus would not try to become French, thereby aggravating their assimilation into the French society. From an economic point of view, many of these Salonika emigrants nourished Germanophile feelings and were agents of German economic propaganda. It was the Consul's belief that this fact might prove fatal for the French economy should these emigrants fail to integrate themselves into the French economic life and start propagating German economic interests. Graillet to Millerand, 18 August 1920, Europe-Grèce 69, AQDO. For an anthropological analysis of the settlement of Salonika Jews in Paris, see A. Benveniste, "Identité et Intégration: Parcours d'Immigration des Juifs de Grèce", *Pardés*, 12 (1990), pp. 210-218. See also I. Skourtes "Metanastefse ton Evraion tes Thessalonikes ste Gallia kata ton Mesopolemo", *Thessalonike*, 3 (1992), pp. 235- 247.



president of the community, urged the commandant of the Army Corps in Salonika to send his men and scatter the furious crowds of the Greeks, while the communal assembly protested against the unacceptable tolerance of the police forces towards the rioters.<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, the Greek political world, was solid in its condemnation of the sad events and blamed them on popular superstitions and illiteracy.<sup>135</sup>

Until that moment it was obvious that the Greek state had not dealt seriously either with the Jews or with the other minorities residing in Greece. However, Greco-Jewish relations in Salonika had already been tested and were found wanting from many aspects. For one, declarations of Greek officials made Salonika Jews aware that they were no longer a community residing in the multi-ethnic context of the Ottoman Empire but a minority living in a nation-state. As a result, the community's multi-lingual and multi-cultural profile, evident in the variety of school systems and newspapers, stood in actual or potential conflict with the new nationalist-oriented environment. At the same time, communal life had to cope with a serious accommodation problem, which was the sad legacy bequeathed to it by the Great Fire. To make matters worse, the emigration wave which was meant to continue during the inter-war years was an economic haemorrhage which deprived the community of vital communal income. What gave Salonika Jews comfort in this difficult setting was the presence of the international system of protection of minorities and Greece's stated intention to comply with international provisions for the sake of her national interests.

From 1923 onwards all these issues would exert a profound impact on the course of Greco-Jewish relations. Indeed, with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which sent over 400,000 Turks (and *dönme*) to Turkey and brought 1,300,000 Greeks from their ancestral homes in Asia Minor and eastern Thrace to Greece, the Greek state

---

<sup>134</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 16 April 1921 and 18 April 1921.

<sup>135</sup>*L'Opinion*, 20 April 1921.

was forced to give up for good the grandiose scheme of the Great Idea, accept its identification with the Greek nation and focus on the area of domestic politics, an important part of which was the status of Salonika Jews. And if Lord Acton's dictum "by making the state and the nation commensurate with each other in theory, it reduces practically to a subject condition all other nationalities that may be within the boundary" is taken into consideration, the future of Salonika Jewry within the Greek state would not be ideal.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup>As cited in: Gadgil 1969: p. 70.





# GREEK MAJORITY POLICIES TOWARDS SALONIKA JEWS DURING THE INTER-WAR YEARS

## 3.1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the Lausanne Treaty, the overall picture of the Greek situation was utterly disappointing. As Konstantinos Paparregopoulos, a Greek historian, eloquently put it in 1932:

Greece, defeated and sunk in the economic consequences resulting from a five years' war and a two years' mobilisation, instead of all other indemnity inherits the burden of a sudden over-population, the bulk of which was constituted by destitute urban classes [...]. The Pay Office, emptied by the needs of the campaign and of the ensuing social conditions, could no longer afford neither the most elementary needs of the new population of the country nor its general relief.<sup>137</sup>

Therefore the need for setting up a new economic, political, and social infrastructure which would help the country overcome its current plight was imperative. For this reason, the successive Venizelist governments of the inter-war years embarked upon the second stage of the modernisation plan whose principal goals were the complete assimilation of the territories which had been annexed in the course of the two Balkan Wars and the Great War - the assimilation of which the Greek government had postponed for the sake of the implementation of the Great Idea<sup>138</sup> - and the rehabilitation of Asia Minor refugees. This major political project was doomed to influence the lives of all Greek citizens, and, in particular, those of Salonika Jews whose 'double status' as

---

<sup>137</sup>As cited in N. Pandelakes, "Ta Polemika Daneia 1918-1919. Paragondas Exoterikes Oikonomikes kai Politikes Exarteses", in G. Th. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemeiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1988), p. 409.

<sup>138</sup>G. Mavrogordatos, "Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos", in G. Th. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemeiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1988), p. 10.

non-ethnic Greeks *and* residents of a city-center of refugee settlement placed them at the intersection of the goals of the modernisation plan. In other words, Greek policies towards Salonika Jews throughout the inter-war years were not a means in themselves but were considered as necessary vehicles leading to the modernisation of the state. In particular, the assimilation programme confronted the community with questions of identity and national loyalty, while the sudden crisis which erupted with the influx of the 80,000 refugees in Salonika provoked intense economic and political disruptions.

The first part of this chapter will discuss Greek majority policies towards the Jews in the years 1923 to 1928, that is, the way in which the Greek host society chose to deal with the Jewish minority, whether this way pertained *either or both* to official politics and popular trends.<sup>139</sup> During this period, Greek majority policies were overwhelmingly dominated by official politics, as indicated by the voting of a number of laws passed which aimed, by altering the educational, social, economic and political status of Salonika Jews, at serving and protecting the national project of modernisation.

For one the Greek state, by integrating the Jews into the Greek army, gave proof of a policy of “peaceful assimilation”, which sought to use the army as the breeding ground of dominant patterns leaving the Jewish minority the time and the space to absorb them in their own individual way.<sup>140</sup> A greater degree of tolerance was shown by the Greek educational policies towards the Jews which could be characterised as “pluralistic” because, without suppressing the particular linguistic identity of the Jews, they favoured their linguistic assimilation. Relevant to the pluralist regime was the official recognition of the Jewish community as a legal person in public law able to

---

<sup>139</sup>G. E. Simpson and Y. J. Milton, *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*, (New York, London: Plenum Press, 1953), p.26.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*



maintain and run its own communal schools, charitable institutions and communal political life.<sup>141</sup>

However, a less benevolent image of Greek majority policies arises when looking at two other issues. Thus during the same period under refugee pressure the Greek state imposed Sunday as the day of rest in Salonika, thereby showing signs of a policy of “forced assimilation”, that is, an “extreme manifestation of ethnocentrism developed into an active policy for the supposed benefit of a national state.”<sup>142</sup> Additionally, electoral considerations operating at a national level were responsible for the voting of a separate electoral college for the Jews, thus attesting to policies of “subjugation”, which implies that the majority group wants “the minority groups around, but it wants them kept ‘in their place’ subservient and exploitable.”<sup>143</sup>

When confronted with the two contradictory sets of majority policies Salonika Jews became increasingly frustrated as to what their status in Greece was and, as the next four chapters will argue, different political groups gave fundamentally different answers to the dilemmas surrounding them. What enhanced the contradictory character of Greek policies was the gap between legal measures and their implementation. A case in point was the issue of assimilation via education which, due to administrative inefficiencies and economic difficulties, was significantly delayed. As a result, one could argue that Salonika Jews had, most of the time, enough autonomy to make their own policies and take their own decisions, always, however, bearing in mind that their “elbow-room” was delineated by confines imposed upon on them by their external environment. However, most of their frustration disappeared once Greek majority

---

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 28.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 26.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 26-32.

policies abandoned their pre-1928 non-patterned line and followed a consistent and single-minded programme.

This evolution will be discussed in the second part of this chapter which is devoted to the period 1928 - 1934. Thus, although the pre-1928 legalistic-dominated context continued, popular trends seemed by then to have become the factor determining the course of Greek majority policies. Jumping on the bandwagon of popular antisemitic tendencies, triggered by the economic crisis and tolerated within an atmosphere of increased xenophobia, Venizelism sought to maintain its political hegemony. In order to account for this shift this chapter will provide an analysis of the foregoing issues, which were the cultivation of a nationalist atmosphere by Greek officials and the Greek press, the emergence of fascist groups and social discontent, the rise of antisemitism and its protean image, as well as moments of antisemitic explosion. However, identification with antisemitic popular trends did not lead to the passage of antisemitic laws. Greek officialdom was too sensitive over its image abroad to take legal measures which could stain its international profile. A case in point was the non-implementation of the proposed plan of expropriation of the Jewish cemetery in 1929 for reasons of urban planning as it foundered in the face of numerous problems. The third period spanning from 1934 to 1936 saw a relaxation in Greco-Jewish relations, which can be explained by the departure of Venizelos from government and the ensuing absence of issues which might trigger confrontation between the two sides.

Before discussing major political issues which affected Salonika Jewry it is paramount to highlight the context in which both the Greek state and the Jewish community operated because political action by both sides was taken always with reference to key elements of this contextual frame.



First it was the issue of the status of national minorities living in the northern provinces of the country which influenced profoundly Greco-Jewish relations. Although the Greek state refused to recognise these groups as *national* minorities, it did consider them as compact “ethnic groups ... [that is]... as Greek citizens distinguished only by religion or language - as Moslems rather than Turks, as Slavophones rather than Slavs”,<sup>144</sup> as Albanian-speaking Moslems rather than Chams or Albanian nationals and strove to assimilate or neutralise them. This need became all the more important given the fact that certain of these minorities were “actually or potentially identified with majority populations in neighbouring countries” whose relations with the Greek state were far from ideal, thereby rendering these compact ethnic groups potential or actual fifth columns of foreign interests.<sup>145</sup> Although Salonika Jews were lacking connection to a particular nation-state they were also considered eligible for assimilation by their qualification as ‘national minority by association’, that is as an ethnic minority concentrated in a border area where other ‘national minorities’ were resided.

Similarly important proved the issue of the rehabilitation of 1,500,000 refugees “who arrived in Greece with little more than the clothes or rags they were wearing” and whose deliberate settlement in the nationally contested area of Macedonia boosted the Hellenization of the area.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, however, their presence signified an increased demand for accommodation which aggravated the country’s long-standing demographic problem and pushed for radical changes in the organisation of space. Finally, the influx of the refugees went in tandem with an increased demand for labour

---

<sup>144</sup>Mavrogordatos 1988: p. 228. See also Carabot 1997: p. 257.

<sup>145</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 228.

<sup>146</sup>This deduction is drawn by the situation of almost 750,000 who came to Greece in the immediate aftermath of the Asia Minor Disaster. *Ibid.*: pp. 186-187.

which, in the case of Salonika, was expressed in the competition between Jews and refugees over the control of the economic life of the city.

However, “there was another wartime inheritance” intimately related with the aforementioned issues and “one which poisoned the political system for the entire inter-war period”, casting a dark shadow on many aspects of the programme of national reconstruction.<sup>147</sup> This was the *ethnikos dichasmos* (national schism), which arose over the issue of Greece’s stance in the First World War, and which continued to divide politicians and the Greek electorate for the entire inter-war period. What added fuel to this rift was the identification of national or social groups with each of the two major parties. National minorities, Salonika Jews included, had thrown their votes mostly behind the Popular Party in the elections of 1915 and 1920, thereby showing their opposition to Venizelism, the perceived agent of Greek nationalism. This political stance brought them into direct opposition to the refugees, who identified in their overwhelming majority with Venizelism and, in particular with Venizelos himself who, ever since their days as unredeemed Greeks and up to the time of their arrival and settlement as destitute refugees upon Greek soil, had stood by their side in theory and in practise.<sup>148</sup> As a result, anti-Venizelism, “became the vehicle of native defensive reaction”,<sup>149</sup> in this case, of Jewish reaction in Salonika. In times of tense political atmosphere and fierce pre-electoral campaigns the political tension between refugees and Jews led to serious antisemitic outbursts.

Notwithstanding the conspicuously domestic dimension of the project of post-war reconstruction it was also connected with the role of the League of Nations whose economic and political support were of paramount importance for its accomplishment.

---

<sup>147</sup>M. Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-war Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 19.

<sup>148</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: pp. 198-207.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 231.



Firstly, given Greece's negative relations with its Balkan neighbours and its isolation from the Great Powers, the League of Nations was the only centre of power abroad which could provide the country with collective protection, thereby helping Greece to make up for the loss of allies.<sup>150</sup> Similarly important was the urgently needed loans coming from the Refugee Settlement Commission and without which the rehabilitation of the refugees would have, probably, never been accomplished. For these reasons, the Greek state focused its efforts on keeping a good profile in Geneva, which required that it adhered to the Peace Treaties, and in particular, that it respected and applied the stipulations concerning minority issues.<sup>151</sup>

Indeed, the dependency of Greece on the League of Nations had a very important impact on the Greco-Jewish relations. On 28 June 1923 the official *Gazette* published the "Memorandum of the Jewish Community of Salonika", which consisted of 135 articles regulating the status of Salonika Jews as citizens of the Greek state and revealed the intention of the Greek officials to live up to the international provisions *vis-à-vis* the rights of minorities. These articles dealt *inter alia* with issues of communal taxation, with the status of the communal assembly and the communal council, with the right of the community to appoint committees eligible to run communal charitable institutions, with the status of the Chief Rabbi and the Religious Council, etc. As a result, Salonika Jews were recognised as a legal person in public law and were awarded the space and a high degree of autonomy to run their own communal affairs.

---

<sup>150</sup>As far as Bulgaria was concerned, it refused to accept as definite the territorial status as this was defined by the Peace Treaties and continued to seek an outlet in the Aegean Sea, e.g. the port of Alexandroupoles. Yugoslavia, on the other hand, had emerged really strong after World War I with tremendous territorial gains. Furthermore, with the support of France, Yugoslavia could afford an intransigent stance during her negotiations with Greece *vis-à-vis* the free Serbian zone in Salonika and the railway line of Salonika-Gevgeli. L. Louve, "Mechanismoi tes Hellenikes Exoterikes Politikes meta te Syntheke tes Lozannes (1923-1928)", in Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef 1992: p. 396.

<sup>151</sup>Divane 1995: p. 88.

Having granted them this possibility the Greek state had to consider twice before taking discriminatory measures against the Jews limiting or violating their aforementioned autonomy, since their appeal to the League of Nations could deprive Greece of vital support. On the other hand, Salonika Jews themselves needed to assess losses and gains, since their appeal to the international organisation might help them avoid the implementation of a specific measure, but it would also stain them with the allegation of 'anti-patriotic behaviour'. As will be shown, the choice over such a dilemma, for both sides, depended on which issues were higher in priority at the crucial moment of action.

### **3.2. Aspects of a puzzling co-existence between Greeks and Salonika Jews**

Starting with the issue of assimilation, one of the first steps taken to assimilate Salonika Jews was to integrate them into the Greek army. Thus, as had happened during the first years that had followed the establishment of the Greek state, when the army had been used as a means for "bringing society under the control of the new state" by creating a value system common for all recruits, it was thought that the completion of military service by Salonika Jews would fortify their Greek national consciousness.<sup>152</sup> The question of military service for Salonika Jews was already being discussed in 1913, one year after the annexation of the city to the Greek state, when Jacob Meir, the Chief Rabbi, had asked King Constantine to postpone for a period of ten years the drafting of Salonika Jews for Greek military service. The King agreed but shortened the said period to five years. It was in 1916 that Venizelos's Salonika-based government ordered all Jews of classes 1913, 1914, and 1915 to join the Greek army within three days, or be

---

<sup>152</sup>P. Kitromelides, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", in Blinkhorn and Veremes 1990: pp. 36-37.



charged with desertion.<sup>153</sup> Two years after the end of the Great War and amidst the turbulent events taking place in Asia Minor a law was passed (no 2400, 23 June 1920) which provided for the exemption of Jews and the Muslims in exchange for a payment of 3,000 Drachmas.<sup>154</sup>

However, once the vision of the Great Idea had withered for good on the coasts of Asia Minor, the military exemption of compact ethnic blocs was considered incompatible with the intention of the Greek state to integrate them. Trying in a way to force the drafting of the Jews into the Greek army a law was passed in 1924 (no 3108 18 July 1924) which raised the price of exemption to 5000 Drachmas<sup>155</sup>, an amount which only very few Jews could afford to pay within the limited time of two months. Once the law was communicated to the Salonika authorities<sup>156</sup> the community remonstrated with General Kondyles and other Greek officials, trying to gain time so that they could modify the law with the help of Jewish jurists such as Yomtov Yacoel, who was at the time the legal advisor of the community.<sup>157</sup> Their efforts bore fruit and in March 1925 a new law was passed (no 3298, 8 March 1925) which provided for the payment of the exemption price in three instalments (March-April 1925, December 1926 and December 1927) as well as for the subtraction from it of any amount which had been paid in view of the law 2728/1921. Once the last instalment was paid, the right

---

<sup>153</sup>B. Pierron, *Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce moderne - Histoire des Relations Intercommunautaires de 1821 à 1945* (Paris: Harmattan, 1996), p. 132.

<sup>154</sup>In 1921 another law was voted with a clearly provisional character (no 2728, 6 August 1921) according to which the price of exemption was regulated according to the financial situation of the person involved. Thus the minimum amount of this price dropped to 1000 Drachmas. *Ibid.*: p. 133.

<sup>155</sup>*Le Progrès*, 4 August 1924.

<sup>156</sup>Pierron 1996: p. 134.

<sup>157</sup>*Le Progrès*, 13 October 1924.

of exemption was no longer valid and from that moment onwards Salonika Jews would serve the army like all other Greeks.<sup>158</sup>

When compared to military service educational assimilation proved to be a much more complex and difficult issue. This is not surprising given the very different nature of the two policy areas. The obligation of military service is a formal issue decreed by the state authority and implemented within a specific period of time leaving the would-be conscript almost no room for discussing - let alone opposing or rejecting - the order, which is connected by definition with the highly sensitive issues of national security and national loyalty. On the other hand, assimilation via education is a long-term cultural process incorporating more than two sets of actors and depending largely on the degree of co-operation shown by all parties involved. A case in point was the thorny path to the linguistic assimilation of Salonika Jews.

The inter-war Greek state followed the traditional way of integrating non-Greek ethnic groups, that is via education, which has been defined as “the process through which a community safeguards and reproduces its material and spiritual character.”<sup>159</sup> Following once again the footsteps of its earlier years, the Greek state chose education as a means by which to forge a collective identity, by struggling against the problem of linguistic diversity evident amongst the minorities in northern Greece. As a result the teaching of the Greek language turned out to be a ‘national question.’ However, parallel efforts had to be made in order to reform the educational system of the entire country and thereby respond to the new economic and social conditions created in the aftermath of the influx of the refugees. During this period, the school was considered an important contributor to national progress, the two basic bastions of which were economic

---

<sup>158</sup>Pierron 1996: p. 135.

<sup>159</sup>As cited in P. Lekkas, *E Ethnikistike Ideologia. Pende Hypotheseis Ergasias sten Historike Koinoniologia* (Athens, Mnemon, 1992), p. 139.



development and social justice.<sup>160</sup> As Achilleas Kalevras, the Governor General of Macedonia, put it in 1927, new buildings had to be built and old ones had to be restored, especially in northern Greece, as a means of accomplishing the residential rehabilitation of the refugees<sup>161</sup> and of fighting the problem of linguistic diversity amongst the Slavophones who, despite their Greek citizenship, could hardly speak Greek.<sup>162</sup>

Such a project requested as a precondition the existence of an affluent national fund and a determined central authority. However, neither seemed to exist in inter-war Greece. Between 1920 and 1928 thirty-four different governments came to power and twenty-five Ministers of Education were appointed.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, it would take some years before Greek officials were able to talk about having achieved ‘some degree’ of educational reform and linguistic assimilation.

If domestic considerations dictated the need for the linguistic assimilation of Salonika Jews, Greece’s political and economic dependency on the League of Nations set its limits, since according to the provisions of the Minority Treaty of August 1920 Greece had pledged - *inter alia* - to respect the free use of the minority language.<sup>164</sup> In order to be able to meet this double set of considerations, on 18 September 1923 a special meeting took place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which decided to promote co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “in order to accomplish the prompt diffusion of the Greek language to all non-speaking

---

<sup>160</sup>A. Demaras, “Charakteristika Astikou Fileleftherismou sta Ekpaideftika Programmata ton Kyverneseon tou Venizelou” in Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef 1992: p. 2.

<sup>161</sup>Many refugees unable to find a place to stay had occupied school buildings.

<sup>162</sup>For an interesting account on the status of Slavomacedonians in inter-war Greece see: Carabott 1997: pp. 235-278.

<sup>163</sup>S. Bouzakes, *Neoellenike Ekpaidefse 1821-1985* (Athens, 1987, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), p. 76.

<sup>164</sup>Divane 1995: p. 32. Interesting information concerning the education of the Muslims in western Thrace can be found in E. Kanakidou, *He Ekpaidefse ste Mousoulmanike Meionoteta tes Dytikes Thrakes* (Athens: Hellenika Grammata, 1994).

inhabitants.”<sup>165</sup> At the same time it was suggested that “books had to be printed in Greek, which without insulting the religious and national feeling of the minorities will cultivate their love for Greece.”<sup>166</sup> The way in which the Greek legislation regulated the operation of Jewish communal schools in Salonika lends itself as an example of the efforts to strike a difficult balance between assimilation and cultural tolerance.

As has already been said Jewish children in Salonika<sup>167</sup> were attending two different categories of schools. First it was the communal schools (the *Alliance* schools and the private schools) attended by 3,214 pupils in 1926 and second, the foreign schools attended by more than 3,000 children.<sup>168</sup> As far as the category of communal schools was concerned their operation was regulated by the laws 568 “As regards the operation of Jewish and Ottoman schools” and 2456 “As regards Jewish communities”. The latter was passed in 1920 and provided for the right of the Jewish communities to establish and preserve schools for the Jewish children.<sup>169</sup> They were left free to draft a syllabus which should not oppose the laws of the state and were also allowed to choose the teaching language of all lessons except for history, geography, mathematics and physics which should be taught in Greek. Greek should also be taught as a lesson itself. In turn the Greek state kept the right to appoint an inspector who would supervise the operation of the Jewish communal schools. Were these provisions respected, the graduates of the Jewish communal schools were considered as equally qualified with

---

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 78.

<sup>166</sup>During the same meeting it was also decided to set up a Ministry of New Lands in order to decentralise the administrative machinery for the benefit of greater flexibility and efficiency and to motivate competent civil servants to work in these areas. *Ibid.*: pp. 75-78.

<sup>167</sup>In the whole of Greece the Jewish communities were running 15 lycees and 28 primary schools. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Drummand, Minorities, B/37 1925, HAGFM.

<sup>168</sup>Jewish community of Salonika to Pearson, 13 September 1926, *Repose au Questionnaire de M. Le Consul d'Amérique*, Thessaloniki 196, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (hereafter CAHJP).

<sup>169</sup>*Official Gazette*, Vol. I, no 173, 2 August 1920.



the graduates of the public schools of the same degree and were then able, after introducing exams, to register in schools of public secondary education.

The voting of the aforementioned law revealed the intention of the Greek officials to combine their commitment to international provisions *vis-à-vis* the issue of cultural tolerance with the project of linguistic assimilation. Indeed, by allowing the Jewish community to maintain and run, with guaranteed autonomy its own schools, the Greek state left Salonika Jews enough space to preserve their particular ethnic language: on the other hand, by decreeing the supervised teaching of the Greek language in the Jewish communal schools Salonika Jews were automatically put on the path of linguistic assimilation. As far as the Jewish side was concerned, the situation was more complicated. Although most of the Jewish political groups did comply - some more some less enthusiastically - with the necessity of teaching the Greek language, they were deeply split on the issue of the minority language. Zionists stood for Hebrew, the Moderates stood for French, while the Communists opted mainly for Judeo-Spanish. As the following chapters will show, this intra-communal linguistic struggle reached explosive dimensions throughout the earlier inter-war years thereby provoking a deep political crisis amongst Jewish political elites.

An indication of the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Jewish communal schools is given by a report compiled in 1926 by Jadock Kohn, the president of the Communal Educational Committee. Here, the intervention of the government in the dispatching of school duties was described as minimal and the material used for teaching (e.g. maps, tables, tools) was being purchased in its totality by the community in France or Germany. The medical inspection of the schools was organised by the sanitary service of *Bikur Holim*, which was responsible for the medical care of the

needy members of the community. Amongst the various allowances granted to the children was the supply of food to indigent pupils once a day, preferably at noon, by a beneficiary society called *Matanoth Levyonim*. The latter operated under the guidance of Abraham Revah and was responsible for the nourishment of almost 800 destitute pupils daily.<sup>170</sup>

However, not only did Greek legislation allow a certain degree of autonomy, but it also included the Jewish communal schools in a wider state supervisory framework by providing for their regular funding. The origins of such a provision dated back to the law voted in 1882 which sanctioned the establishment of Ottoman and Jewish schools in Epirus. This law underwent various modifications and finally resulted in Laws 1242, 1242a and 1242b, which provided that the Greek state should contribute to the preservation of all educational and beneficiary institutions of the heterodox communities with regular amounts drawn from the annual budget. Overall the costs for running these schools were estimated at about 2,400,000 Drachmas. Besides regular funding, the Greek state had also assumed the responsibility for contributing with non-regular allotments. This one was registered in art. 4 of chapter 32 of the budget of the Ministry of Religion (1924-1925).

Given the obligation of the communal schools to teach young Jews the Greek language, it can be assumed that, had the communal schools started operating in accordance to the aforementioned provisions as early as 1924, the linguistic assimilation of young Salonika Jews would have been a *fait accompli* by the late 1920s. However, as far as the policies of the Greek state were concerned, two major problems arose which impeded the proper operation of the schools, thereby delaying in many ways the process

---

<sup>170</sup>M. Molho, *Le Judaïsme Grec en Général et la Communauté de Salonique en particulier entre les deux Guerres Mondiales* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956), p. 34.



of assimilation and increasing the space for the preservation of the much-debated Jewish linguistic identity.

First was the teaching of the Greek language itself, which, according to the opinion of the Greek inspector of the primary schools in Salonika, had suffered greatly because the laws regulating this issue were vaguely worded, leaving a lot of space for different interpretations by different authorities with overlapping fields of competence.<sup>171</sup> In particular, the Greek inspector stated that, although the legal decrees *did* provide for the teaching of certain lessons in Greek, they failed to specify the exact number of hours devoted to the teaching of the Greek language itself. Given this ambiguity it was the executive of the Law 568 of 1915 which was applied and according to which the Greek language was taught only ten to thirteen hours a week while French was taught sixteen hours a week. Apart from criticising the few hours devoted to the teaching of Greek, the inspector also pointed to the poor quality of the teaching for which he blamed the unwillingness of the Jewish educational committees to promote the project of assimilation. A case in point was the school syllabus drafted by Jewish officials themselves, according to which Hebrew and French, the so-called 'popular languages', would be taught during the first hours in the morning and the afternoon, namely when pupils had a relatively sober and relaxed mind, hence leaving the teaching of Greek, which was a completely unknown and undoubtedly difficult language calling for lots of effort by the pupils, to take place during the other hours, when the pupils were rather tired.<sup>172</sup>

The criticisms of the inspector bore fruit and in 1925 it was decided that the teaching hours of Greek be increased to twelve in the lower classes and fourteen in the

---

<sup>171</sup>*Report concerning the operation of Jewish and foreign schools in Salonika*, 10 July 1929, File 61, Archives of the General Governance of Macedonia (hereafter AGGM).

<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*

higher ones. It was also decided that the Greek language should be taught three times a week during the first hours of teaching (morning and noon). Finally they all agreed that three times a week during the break it would be compulsory that the pupils talk in Greek, a process which would be supervised - albeit not in a spying way - by the Greek teachers. In 1926 the teaching hours of Greek increased to sixteen to the detriment of French, which was reduced to eight. In the same year the curriculum of the Jewish communal schools during the first five elementary classes was arranged as follows.<sup>173</sup>:

**Table 1 Curriculum of Jewish primary schools**

Subject / Class	2 <sup>nd</sup> Elm	3 <sup>rd</sup> Elm	4 <sup>th</sup> Elm	5 <sup>th</sup> Elm
Hebrew	10	10	9	8
Greek	14	14	15	16
French <sup>174</sup>	7	7	8	8
Gymnastics <sup>175</sup>	1	1	1	1
Design	1	1	1	1

If the linguistic assimilation of Salonika Jews was delayed because of legal obscurities, similarly detrimental, albeit in a less direct way, was the dire economic situation of the Greek state which prevented it from contributing to the operation of the Jewish communal schools, thereby affecting the operation of a potential agent of

---

<sup>173</sup>Jewish community of Salonika to Pearson, 13 September 1926, *Réponse au Questionnaire de M. Le Consul d'Amérique*, Thessaloniki 196, CAHJP.

<sup>174</sup>The teaching of Judeo-Spanish (the mother language of Salonika Jewry) was confined to a minimum of 1-2- hours. Jewish Community of Salonika to Committee of Jewish delegations, 10 July 1929, Thessaloniki 150, CAHJP.

<sup>175</sup>The lesson of physical education included Swedish gymnastics, volleyball and football for both sexes. Jewish community of Salonika to Pearson, 13 September 1926, *Réponse au Questionnaire de M. Le Consul d'Amérique*, Thessaloniki 196, CAHJP.



linguistic assimilation. Thus, although the Greek state had agreed to contribute with regular and irregular funds to the operation of Jewish communal schools, until 1927 the only financial source of their operation was the community. The communal budget provided that the Salonika Jewish community should spend 2 million Drachmas annually for the education of the poor members of the community,<sup>176</sup> while the financial contribution of the Greek state was confined to its payment of the teachers for the Greek language<sup>177</sup> and to occasional allocations for the sake of repairing schools buildings which had suffered damage because of different reasons.<sup>178</sup> A case in point was the request for 185,000 Drachmas in 1927 for the repair of eight teaching buildings which were in a dreadful condition.<sup>179</sup>

From 1926 onwards Jewish communal authorities started asking for the regular contribution of the Greek state, seen as necessary to improve the standard of Jewish communal education. The Greek officials reacted to this request in two ways. On the one hand, there were those who agreed with their Jewish counterparts on the shocking situation of Jewish communal education but went further and stated that the level of Greek schools was hardly any better, trying in this way to play down the acute grievance of the Jews, who considered their situation as unique. A case in point was Kalevras who in 1927 described to the municipal council the tragic situation of most of the educational institutions and asked for their heroic efforts in order to remedy this situation.<sup>180</sup> His comments were not without grounds, for according to numerous reports

---

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Inspector of Primary Schools in Salonika to Greek Foreign Ministry, 10 July 1929, File 61, AGGM.

<sup>178</sup> Jewish Community of Salonika to Minister Governor of Macedonia, 17 February 1927, Thessaloniki 47, CAIJP.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> For the year 1928 the state budget included a sum of 488 million Drachmas for the Public Education of the country. The percentage which corresponded to the Jewish population of Greece (110,000 inhabitants)

addressed to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the years 1924 and 1925 the situation of the schools in the New Lands was quite disappointing.<sup>181</sup>

However there were also some local Greek officials, such as the director of the Press Bureau in Salonika, who expressed serious doubts as to whether state support was deserved. He based his reluctance upon his overall experience which indicated that the Jewish school administrations had considered the teaching of Greek as of secondary importance and hence were unworthy of the bestowal of Greek public money.<sup>182</sup> The latter should only be spent for the education of Greek citizens and for the teaching of the Greek language, which, however, did not seem to them to be the case with the Jews. It was only as late as 1928 and after intense efforts made by communal authorities that the community started receiving a state subvention.

A fourth impediment on the way to linguistic assimilation was the high attendance of Jewish children at the foreign schools existing in Salonika, which were seen as agents of foreign propaganda largely ignoring the teaching of Greek language. Indeed the British consul reported in 1925:

The Greek Government decided to apply more strictly certain measures, according to existing laws and decrees, respecting foreign educational establishments in Greece. It is an open secret that the measures in question aimed at restricting the spread of Italian educational-propagandist institutions in this country.... It is natural that the Greeks should object to the propaganda in direct proportion to the propinquity of the propagandist country, and for this reason Rumanian and Italian propagandist activities are

---

was about 1,66 per cent of the budget. Jewish community of Salonika to Jewish delegations, 23 July 1929, Thessaloniki 150, CAHJP.

<sup>181</sup>Thus according to the figures of public expenses no provisions were made for the Salonika public schools, while two isolated cases of state allotments had not been reimbursed up to April 1928. At the same time at a national scale level Salonika was also underrepresented. Over the country as a whole there were 636,446 pupils in 7529 public schools. For every 1,000 pupils there were 12 schools with 47 classes (12, 47 c/c). In this list Salonika was the last with 4,46 c/c whereas it should have at least 12,47.c/c. [Athens had 17,71 c/c, Kalavrita 22,26 c/c]. *Le Progrès*, 5 April 1928.

<sup>182</sup>Bureau de Press, Salonika, to Greek Foreign Ministry, 25 December 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM.



the most feared.... On the other hand, there is little objection amongst Greeks to such French (secular) propaganda as may exist, British are even welcome, as well as German.<sup>183</sup>

In general, accusations of propagandist activities consisted of a) an unwillingness to conform with the Greek law; b) inadequate teaching of the Greek language and of other Greco-centric lessons; and c) cultural events of non-Greek character.<sup>184</sup> Such issues were considered as incompatible with inter-war Greek ideology which viewed the schools as very important agents for the task of national fulfilment. However, four years had to go by before measures were taken to control the operation of foreign schools in the country thereby facilitating the cultural integration of Salonika Jews to their surroundings.

Until now it has been argued that the way in which the Greek state dealt with the issue of assimilation of Salonika Jews revealed its double intention to support their smooth integration into Greek society *and* to help them preserve their Jewishness. However, two events took place during the first period of the inter-war years which undermined all good impressions created by the foregoing liberal attitude.

First was the imposition of Sunday as the obligatory day of rest in Salonika on all citizens irrespective of religious persuasion. This measure, which revealed a state policy of 'forced assimilation' towards Salonika Jewry, caused a lot of tension between the two people and enhanced the frustration of the Jews as to the way in which the Greek state was intending to deal with their status.

---

<sup>183</sup>Chessman to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 3 February 1925, 371/10770/C 2176, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO). "A Rumanian school at Grevena, in Macedonia, where there is a fairly numerous Koutzo-Vlach population has recently been shut down owing to the propaganda carried on by the schoolmaster".

<sup>184</sup>*Le Progrès*, 6 April 1928.

The origins of this law were to be found in the decision of the municipal council of Salonika, on 7 May 1924, to ask the government of Alexandros Papanastasiou to impose Sunday as the compulsory day of rest in Salonika. Of the 17 council members, only the 6 Jewish members voted against. Two months later, on 12 July 1924, the same government passed a law which made Sunday the obligatory day of rest for all the population of Salonika.<sup>185</sup>

The law imposing Sunday as the obligatory day of rest affected the status of Salonika Jews who thus lost their existing right to do business on Sundays. With the proclamation of the new law, they were immediately faced with the alternative of abandoning their religious orthodoxy and working on Saturdays, or suffering economic damage by resting twice a week. Many Jewish groups and individuals reacted hoping either to nullify or - at least - to change the text of the law. Notwithstanding their strenuous efforts the law was applied *in verbatim* from January 1925 and only in April 1925 did the Minister of National Economy express his intention to modify the law and accord certain concessions. His proposal, however, which did not apply to the case of Salonika - since it only referred to areas with 8,000 inhabitants - was never implemented.

From information available it seems that the issue of Sunday closing day was neither new nor sudden. It had, in one way or another, troubled many Jewish communities and their leaders in the past, within Greece as well as abroad. Thus as far as the Salonika Jews were concerned, since the annexation of the city to the Greek state in 1912, a number of promises and legal measures had proved the good intentions of the Greek government to protect the Jewish *Shabbat*. A case in point were the assurances of Ioannes Gennadius to the Board of Deputies of British Jews as early as 1913. The same

---

<sup>185</sup> *Official Gazette*, 165, 21 July 1924.



issue emerged once more during the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919 when, on 10 May 1919, the Committee of the Jewish Delegations, which consisted of representatives from the United States, Canada, eastern Galicia, Italy, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Greece, Transylvania and Bukovina, submitted a memorandum which sought to protect the rights of the various national, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities of Bulgaria, Esthonia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia and other countries.<sup>186</sup>

Moreover, the Peace Treaty signed with Poland and with the United States, France, England, Italy and Japan on 28 June 1919 included article 11 which stated as follows:

Jews shall not be compelled to perform any act which constitutes a violation of their Sabbath, nor shall they be placed under any disability by reason of their refusal to attend courts of law or to perform any legal business on their Sabbath. This provision, however, shall not exempt Jews from such obligations as shall be imposed upon all other Polish citizens for the necessary purposes of military service, national defence or the preservation of public order. Poland declares her intention to refrain from ordering or permitting elections, whether general or local, to be held on a Saturday.<sup>187</sup>

At the same time the Delegation of Lithuania submitted a declaration to the committee of the Jewish delegations which was signed by Prof. A. Voldemar (President of the Delegation) and Mr. Klimas (Secretary of the Delegation) and which provided that the "... right of the Jews to observe the Sabbath and other holidays as well as other provisions of their religion will not be limited either directly or indirectly".<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup>As cited in *Pro-Israel*, 16 May 1924.

<sup>187</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*

The same liberal and tolerant spirit characterised the correspondence between Lucien Wolf and Venizelos. The latter, when asked to define the position of the Greek government *vis-à-vis* the Jews of Salonika and their right to observe the Sabbath, answered that, given the liberal and tolerant stance of the Greek government shown towards the Jews until 1919 no additional assurance was necessary. He also suggested that, if necessary, his written word could be invoked and used as a guarantee.<sup>189</sup> Thus, when the Greek Minorities Treaty was voted in August 1920 a law defining the legal status of the Greek Jewish communities was enacted which comprised the following: “The Jews have the right to abstain from work on the Saturday of each week instead of the Sunday.” (author’s underlining). “The observance of the Saturday Day of Rest by Jews is submitted to the same legal dispositions as those which regulate the Sunday Day of Rest for Christians; but Jews who wish to abstain from work on Sunday instead of on Saturday have the right to do so, on condition that they previously advise the police authorities.”<sup>190</sup> In 1923 the question was again dealt with in a Royal Decree relating to the Jewish community of Salonika. Here it was specifically laid down (Art. CXXXV) that the “weekly Day of Rest for the Jews of Salonika is Saturday.”<sup>191</sup>

Given the series of solemn pledges afforded by different Greek officials, within Greece as well as abroad, written or verbal, the decision of the Greek government in 1924 to defy the commitments of their predecessors, impose Sunday as the Day of Rest on all residents of Salonika and thus insult the religious customs and feelings of the Jews is somewhat surprising. However, different arguments were heard by Greek officials who sought to justify the voting of this measure. Both the Minister of the

---

<sup>189</sup>Venizelos to Wolf, 27 August 1919, ACC 3121/E3/158/2, ABDBJ.

<sup>190</sup>As cited in Joint Foreign Committee to League of Nations, 11 August 1924, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>191</sup>Venizelos to Wolf, 27 August 1919, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/2, ABDBJ.



National Economy, M. Douzinas, and the President of the Council, Alexandros Papanastasiou, insisted on the 'socialist dimension' of the new law and argued that it sought to place all citizens on an equal legal footing and that the special privileges which the Jews had been enjoying until that moment were incompatible with the principle of civil equality.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, Douzinas did not mince his words and accepted that local forces in Salonika had exerted pressure on the Greek government to impose Sunday as the day of rest. The same reason was invoked by Papanastasiou who went a step further and identified the 'local forces' with the refugees whose preferences could not be overlooked for the sake of the Jews.<sup>193</sup> Similar was the argument used by Demetres Kaklamanos, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Greece, in his correspondence with the Anglo-Jewish Association.<sup>194</sup>

In another words, it was clearly stated that the refugees were the ones who had insisted on making Sunday the resting day for all the people in Salonika. This deduction touches upon the issue of the fierce economic antagonism which characterised the relations between Jews and refugees, who felt that they would be financially harmed if Jews were allowed to work on a Sunday. The way in which the government of Papanastasiou chose to deal with the economic tension in Salonika, was to implement a populist policy and satisfy the demand of the masses of the refugees, whose electoral support throughout the entire inter-war period "constituted the only compact voting bloc of nation-wide importance which could be compared to a Dutch *zuil* or an Austrian *lager*. Moreover, this bloc was clearly the arbiter of inter-war elections..."<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 2 July 1924.

<sup>193</sup>*B'nei Brith* (Salonika) to *B'nei Brith* (London), 6 June 1924, ACC 3121/E3/158/2, ABDBJ.

<sup>194</sup>Kaklamanos to the Joint Foreign Committee, 30 June 1924, ACC 3121/E3/59, ABDBJ.

<sup>195</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 185.

The reactions of the Salonika Jews came with no delay, both within Greece and abroad. There were protests from the Jewish community, as a legally recognised body, as well as from different groups and individuals. On 8 May 1924 a resolution of the Jewish communal assembly was circulated which emphasised the importance of the Sabbath for the religious and national life of the Jews and which condemned the resolution of the municipal council. The same text considered that measure a violation of the freedom of conscience and utterly incompatible with the liberal tradition of the Greek people. The law 2456 was invoked and a plea was launched to the communal council to continue its fight for the rights of the Jews, which were a *sine qua non* for their very existence in Salonika. Finally, in an effort to make up for intra-communal divisions the communal assembly reassured the council that it could always count on the support, devotion and self-sacrifice of the entire Jewish population as if they were one person.<sup>196</sup> On 7 July 1924 the rabbinical council decided to keep the synagogues closed and handed the keys to the mayor, M. Vallalas. At the same time the community sent a delegation to Athens to make contact with officials of Greek religious and political circles as well as with other intellectuals in order to put some pressure upon public opinion and the government. On 18 August 1924 the president of the Jewish community sent a letter to the President of the government asking that the said law would not be applied on certain Jewish manual workers, food and retail merchants, and that Jewish wholesale dealers, banks, law offices, commission merchants and estate agents, who would rest on Saturday, could work on Sundays from morning until 2 p.m.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 9 May 1924.

<sup>197</sup>President of the Communal Council to the President of the Greek government, Thessalonike 47, CAIHP.



The responses from abroad to the pleas of Salonika Jews came with no delay. In England the first step taken by Wolf, was to summon international support. Thus Louis Marshall, the president of the American Jewish Committee and Henry Morgenthau - Former United States Ambassador to Turkey and the First Chairman of the League of Nations Commission for the Settlement of Greek Refugees - were informed and asked to intervene immediately. In London a meeting was arranged between the presidents of the Joint Foreign Committee and Kaklamanos. The issue of the Sunday law was discussed without however succeeding in receiving any clear answer from the Greek official.<sup>198</sup> Once such an answer reached the Joint Committee on 30 June, Wolf expressed his utter disappointment at the intractable position of the Greek government and announced his decision to “submit the whole case to the League of Nations when the question of the Guarantee of the Minorities Treaty of August 10th, 1920, comes up for consideration.”<sup>199</sup>

Following that, Wolf addressed two memorials to the League of Nations. Firstly he wrote to Eric Drummond - General Secretary of the League of Nations - urging him to intervene in favour of the Salonika Jews. In order to support his stance a memorandum<sup>200</sup> was submitted which characterised the measure as an “act of injustice and religious intolerance ... [as well as] ... a violation of solemn pledges given by the

---

<sup>198</sup>Memorandum of an interview with the Greek minister in London, on 3 June 1924, on the Sunday closing question in Greece. ABDBJ, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/ 2.

<sup>199</sup>Joint Foreign Committee to Kaklamanos, 3 July 1924, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>200</sup>The same memorandum was also sent by L. Wolf to F. Nansen, High Commission for refugees adding that “the action of the Greek government and more particularly of the Refugees has created a very painful impression in the Jewish communities of their country and the United States, in view of the very considerable part taken by Jews in the work of relieving the sufferings of the refugees.” Joint Foreign Committee to High Commissioner for Refugees, 11 August 1924, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

Hellenic Government ... and an infraction of the spirit of the Minorities Treaty signed by Greece on August 10, 1920...”<sup>201</sup>

The purpose of this memorandum was to alert the leadership of the League of Nations and gain its support, by presenting the case of Salonika as a potential European problem which might threaten peace and stability in a wider area. Wolf argued that the Greek law was a case of religious persecution of a minority who, threatened and underrepresented, would opt for emigration aggravating “the crying evil of uprooted and semi-nomad populations, from which Eastern Europe [was] already suffering, and which [was] once of the most difficult problems with which the League of Nations [was] now dealing.”<sup>202</sup> Additionally, the stance of the Greek state *vis-à-vis* the Jews of Salonika was depicted as a case of religious persecution by a state which, if tolerated, would create a dangerous precedent and would endanger the preservation of peace in “a region already dangerously distracted by the strife of rival nationalities and creeds.”<sup>203</sup> To corroborate his argument Wolf invoked the example of a harsher law which had already been voted in Turkey and suggested that “... such a measure, together with its Greek parallel, can only tend to embitter the racial and religious feuds of south-eastern Europe and western Asia, and thus to postpone the social and political pacification of which the whole of that maelstrom of mixed populations stands in urgent.”<sup>204</sup>

In order to avoid such dangerous developments Wolf considered this memorandum as relevant to the question of placing the Greek minorities treaty of August 10, 1920 under the guarantee of the League, although he was aware that the Greek law was not “in any way, an infraction of the letter of the Minorities Treaty” but

---

<sup>201</sup>Joint Foreign Committee to League of Nations, 11 August 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 519, ABDBJ.

<sup>202</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup>*Ibid.*



that it was only “manifestly contrary to the spirit of that Instrument”. In view of this weakness any appeal to competent authorities seemed useless. However, he *did* argue that the “enclosed Memorandum .... discloses a very serious case of oppression of Minorities and, in view of the solemn Resolution of the Third Assembly recognising, ‘the primary right of the Minorities to be protected by the League from oppression’ my committee feels confident that the Council of the League will welcome an opportunity of endeavouring to find a remedy for the grievances therein set forth.”<sup>205</sup>

In their effort the Joint Foreign Committee were supported by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. The latter as early as June 1924 had come in contact with Nikos Polites - the Greek ambassador in Paris - who had reassured them that the Greek government would never vote such a law which was against the principles of liberty and tolerance.<sup>206</sup> One month later, on the eve of the voting of the law, Alfred Berl - member of the Central Committee of the AIU- wrote a letter to Polites, where he expressed his disappointment at the way in which previous pledges given by M. Romanos to the president of AIU in 1912 were invalidated some years later by actions of the Greek government.<sup>207</sup> He also said that, unlike in the rest of western Europe which had just adopted the weekly day off, it was only Romania and Poland where the day of Sunday Rest was instituted. Berl interpreted the adoption of such a measure as the proof that antisemitism had made its way in Greece and that the Jews had become prey to caprices and instincts of completely primitive groups. Finally he reiterated the pro-assimilationist discourse of the *Alliance* and argued that such situation would not only deal a blow to both Judaism, which would resort to emigration, but also to Hellenism, since it would

---

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> The Secretary of Alliance to Rich, 16 June 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/158, ABDBJ.

<sup>207</sup> Berl to Polites, 7 July 1924, ACC 3121/E3/158/2, ABDBJ.

give the green light to states, where Greeks were *themselves* a minority, to suppress their cultural identity.<sup>208</sup>

However, if the Joint Foreign Committee and the AIU saw favourably the case of the Salonika Jews and consequently offered their support, the American Jewish Committee seemed to hold a different approach to the issue. When Marshall was approached by Morgenthau, he did not commend the intention of the Anglo-Jewish Association to take the measure to the League of Nations. Although Marshall did *agree* that such a law was “unjust, and harmful not only to the Jews but also to Greece” he believed that the whole matter represented “a local problem” which fell only within the jurisdiction of the Greek state and its legislative structure and which did not allow for any interference neither by the American Jewish Committee nor by the Anglo-Jewish Association.<sup>209</sup> Moreover he rejected the argument that the case of Salonika Jews was unique by invoking the example of the Jews of New York whose position was similar to Salonika Jewry. “If, therefore, the various States of the Union, in the exercise of their police powers, require all inhabitants within their boundaries to observe the Sunday laws, regardless of whether they also observe another day as Sabbath, we cannot ask Greece or any other Government to lay down any different rule with regard to the Jews living in Greece.”<sup>210</sup>

One more argument which he used to abet his refusal to support the efforts of his English fellow Jews was the Treaty with Poland which comprised no law granting the

---

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> “It is not a matter in which either the European or American Government can intervene, any more than they can with regard to questions relating to immigration into Greece or as to its customs laws or any of its police regulations”, Marshall to the Joint Foreign Committee, 21 August 1924, ABDBJ, ACC 3121/E3/ 158.

<sup>210</sup> However he *did* not fail to mention the previous numerical predominance of the Salonika Jews which was a point of differentiation between them and the Jews in New York. “Except for the fact that for a long



Jews the right to work on Sunday as well as the abortive efforts made in the United States to protect the Jewish Sabbath.<sup>211</sup> Taking these precedents into consideration he was of the opinion that “an adverse decision is a foregone conclusion” and that there was no reason worth to “weaken [themselves] before that tribunal by advocating an impossible contention”. He believed it worthwhile to save their intervention for other cases where they would stand on safer ground and which would be discounted in advance should the ideas become prevalent that claims were being made with no legal merit to sustain.<sup>212</sup>

While trying to avoid being reprimanded by the Board of Deputies for having shown indifference and impassivity Marshall discreetly saddled Wolf with the responsibility for the problem which the Salonika Jews were facing, thus raking up the tension between the two individuals since the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>213</sup> Wolf was implicitly reprimanded for not having supported Marshall’s efforts to “secure the adoption of a clause in the Minorities Treaties which would cover the subject of Sunday observance and which if adopted, would have obviated the present difficulty.” Wolf was depicted as having complied with the decision of the advisers of His Majesty’s government to abstain from favouring such a clause. Given the existing situation,

---

time a majority of the population of Salonika consisted of Jews, a condition which no longer obtains...”  
*Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup>“For many years a determined effort was made before the Legislature of our State to procure an amendment of our Penal Law which would enable those who observe the seventh day or any other day as the Sabbath, to engage in their regular occupations on Sunday. These efforts proved futile, even though in 1913 Governor Sulzer indicated his desire that such a law should be passed. At his request I prepared a memorandum, of which I enclose a copy, which he brought to the attention of the various members of the Legislature. The Democratic Party was at that time in the ascendancy. Mr. A.J. Levy, who introduced the bill, was the Democratic leader of the Assembly, but he was unable to secure sufficient votes even in his own party to enable him to pass the bill.” *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup>Levene 1992: pp. 297-300.

Marshall suggested that the only people appropriate to help the Jews in Salonika were the Jews themselves by intervening tactfully and shrewdly to the Greek government.<sup>214</sup>

Once the issue finally reached Geneva in September 1924 it was proved that the unsentimental and pragmatic attitude of Marshall was the one which represented the prevalent mood. During the Fifth Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations which opened on September 1, 1924 and closed on October 2, the issue of the Sunday Rest in Salonika was the first amongst the specifically Jewish questions dealt with.<sup>215</sup>

Though there was a general consensus that the moral case for Salonika Jews was very serious and urgent, it proved that 'all the technical advantages rested with the Greek Government.' In other words, the whole question was viewed as one of domestic concern excluding foreign intervention. Additionally, the existence of solely verbal assurances was not a reliable argument. Finally, the fact that neither the Greek Minorities Treaty had been guaranteed nor included an article of which the measure of the Greek Government was a definite infraction barred an appeal to the League of Nations. The 'technical weakness' of this case was proved by the refusal of the Queen and of the Council of the League to use their good offices for the settlement of the question.<sup>216</sup> The only expedient left was an appeal to public opinion, which was, however, rapidly abandoned, because it was feared that it would endanger the floating of the Greek Refugees Loan, which was then under the consideration of the Council of the League. "Such a result of the Jewish agitation would have been deplorable in as much as it would have caused widespread suffering in Greece without perhaps, bringing

---

<sup>214</sup>Marshall to Morgenthau, 3 August 1924, ACC 3121/E3/158/2, ABDBJ.

<sup>215</sup>Report drafted by Wolf, 10 December 1924, ACC 3121/E3/158/3, ABDBJ.

<sup>216</sup>*Ibid.*



relief to the Salonika Jews. Indeed, not only would it have brought them no relief, but it might have seriously embittered their relations with their Greek fellow country men.”<sup>217</sup>

Thanks to Morgenthau, a series of friendly conferences with the leading members of the Greek Delegation was arranged who promised to do their best to set forth the minimum requirements of the Jews of Salonika. The upshot of the negotiations was that Wolf received assurances from Tsouderos that the “Greek Government realised that the existing Sunday Rest Act could not remain as it was and that with a view to satisfying the legitimate requirements of the Jews of Salonika an Amending Bill would be introduced into the Greek Chamber.”<sup>218</sup> Such a Bill, however, was never introduced and the law was applied in Salonika from January 1925.

One year later, on 24 May 1925, once all efforts to reverse the law proved fruitless, the Communal Council resigned in protest. Beforehand it circulated a manifesto which stated that the new measure endangered the very existence of the Jewish community which had always enjoyed the right to practice its religious customs and traditions. Faced with such a situation, the Communal Council considered it appropriate to resign in order to make place for a new council, representative of all the trends. The new council would be able to unite all the different forces of the community for the sake of the defence of the right to exist as a Jewish minority.<sup>219</sup>

If the issue of Sunday Closing Day was justified by Greek officials as a measure aiming to place - though in a crude way - Christians and Jews on equal legal footing as well as to facilitate the latter’s ‘assimilation’, Greek politicians could not say the same for the establishment of a separate electoral college for Salonika Jews, which

---

<sup>217</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup>*Le Progrès*, 25 May 1925.

automatically separated them from the rest of the population and could only forestall their blending into Greek surroundings.

In order to account for this contradiction it is necessary to draw the political background of this law. As has already been argued, “inter-war Greek politics were dominated by the polarisation between two major political camps or blocs: Venizelism and anti-Venizelism.”<sup>220</sup> Along with other national minorities in northern Greece, the Jews had voted *en masse* for anti-Venizelism in 1915 and 1920 and their vote was interpreted as a “vote against Greek domination and sovereignty, embodied by Venizelism”.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, the existence of a strong Jewish left whose origins dated back to the *Federacion Socialista Laboradera* in 1909 was viewed suspiciously by bourgeois Venizelism. In response, in October 1923 a separate electoral college was voted for the Jews and the Muslims (in western Thrace) which the Jews perceived and “resented as a political ghetto”.<sup>222</sup>

The official reaction of the community came with no delay. The President of the Jewish community confessed to the Governor General that “every section of the Community was resolute to abstain from any participation in the elections” destined to take place in December 1923. At the same time it was reported that “... the various sections of the Jewish population, ... have sunk their numerous internal dissension to unite in the strongest protest.” Efforts were made by the Greek government to propitiate them by the grant of a further seat, and the Governor General tried to persuade them to accept this sop. However, these attempts proved abortive. Jewish feelings had been additionally perturbed by the manifesto of the Republic Union “which stated openly that separate electoral colleges have been created to protect the country from the ‘hostile

---

<sup>220</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 25.

<sup>221</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 256.

<sup>222</sup>*Ibid.*



alien elements of the electorate.” It was Zafiriou, the President of the Republican Association, who tried to rectify the unfortunately worded phrase by saying that “... [it] referred exclusively to the Muslims, [and] that the republican party regards the Jews with most amical feelings as faithful citizens and as element of order and prosperity...”<sup>223</sup> Immediate was the reaction of Leon Gattegno, the president of the Jewish community, who on 19 December 1924 sent a telegram to the Hellenic government stating the surprise of the community at the government’s decision and asking for the cancellation of the measure.<sup>224</sup>

Although the issue was debated fiercely in the National Assembly in 1925 no change was brought. During September 1925 a parliamentary commission, set up to re-examine the issue of the Constitution, decided to abrogate the paragraph of article 17 providing for the separate electoral college of Jews and Turks. However, two months earlier, on 10 July 1925 law 3355 was already passed whose article 28 provided for the separate electoral college for the Turks. Except for the legislative elections in November 1926 the separate electoral college remained in force during all electoral competitions between 1928 to 1932, causing feelings of animosity between Venizelos and the Jewish community. It was only in March 1933 and in the wake of the sweeping electoral triumph of anti-Venizelism that the electoral segregation of Salonika Jews was nullified.

### **3.3. The threat of antisemitism and ongoing modernisation**

As has already been argued the foregoing issues and the complicated conditions around their implementation were a proof that Greek majority policies towards Salonika Jews during the early inter-war years did not aim at shaping in a definite way the status of the Jewish minority, but rather made use of it for the sake of implementing the broader

---

<sup>223</sup>Hole to Bentick, 30 November 1923, 371/8830 C 21292, PRO.

<sup>224</sup>Copy of a telegram, 19 December 1924, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

scope of the modernisation plan. During the period 1928 - 1932 although this trend of Greek majority policies *did* continue the special weight moved away from the official legalistic aspect of these policies to the more popular dimension. Within an atmosphere of increased economic problems, social discontent and rising nationalism, official Venizelist discourse 'borrowed' xenophobic and nationalistic slogans and used their popular appeal in order to preserve its political hegemony in the Greek political scene.

One of the areas which first experienced the strongly nationalist hand of Venizelos's government was the education of Salonika Jews. Indeed, the programme of their linguistic assimilation was given a serious boost as a result of the educational reform initiated in 1929 by the Ministry of Education under K. Gontikas.<sup>225</sup> In particular, according to law 4397 voted on 16 August 1929, Night Schools were established in order to "encourage the linguistic development of the non-Greek speaking [citizens] and their acquiring educational elements [deriving from] the modern life of the nation."<sup>226</sup> In the Jewish communal schools, in particular, with the intervention of the Greek Inspector of Primary schools in Salonika, the hours of Greek were increased to eighteen for the academic year 1928-1929 and then to twenty for 1930 onwards.<sup>227</sup>

Similarly vigorous decisions were taken to eliminate the anti-national role played by foreign schools which were largely attended by Jewish children. In 1929 the Inspector of Education described the situation as quite alarming: "... we are asking for stricter measures to be imposed so that both the Jewish and the foreign schools adjust to the existing laws of the country. Only in this way shall we overcome the present situation which shows that the pupils' consciousness and their perception of State power

---

<sup>225</sup>Bouzakes 1987: p. 81.

<sup>226</sup>As cited in A. Demaras, *He Metarrythmise pou den egine. Tekmeria Historias* Vol. II (Athens: Ermes, 1990), p. 172.

<sup>227</sup>Inspector of Primary Schools to Greek Foreign Ministry, 10 July 1929, Report concerning the operation of Jewish and foreign schools in Salonika, File 61, AGGM.



and the State laws is deeply shattered. Such a situation is an insult to the dignity of the State while at the same time it undermines the moral existence of the whole country.”<sup>228</sup>

During the last years of the 1920s both the Greek state and the local Greek authorities came up with specific proposals which aimed at restraining the propagandist activities of the foreign scholarly institutions.<sup>229</sup> The decisive step was the law 4373, voted on 13 August 1929, according to which all Greeks were forbidden from attending foreign schools during the first six years of primary education.<sup>230</sup> Such a law, which was again part of the educational reform of 1929, boosted immensely the linguistic and cultural assimilation of young Jews.

Although these measures demonstrate that by the late 1920s there was a strong centralised authority determined to proceed with the project of linguistic assimilation of Salonika Jews, new problems arose, this time of an economic nature. On the one hand the operation of the Jewish communal schools was deterred by the dire economic situation of the community which, in 1929, requested that the state subvention be increased to 2,000,000 Drachmas and that the state give 500,000 Drachmas for the construction of three primary schools, one communal gymnasium and one communal commercial school.<sup>231</sup> Although for the year 1930 the Greek Government did increase its subvention from 1,090,000 to 1,200,000 Drachmas and did put aside 500,000 Drachmas for the construction of a Jewish school building, in December 1932 the state subvention was reduced to 900,000.<sup>232</sup> The communal authorities, in order to make up

---

<sup>228</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup>Demaras 1990: p. 169

<sup>231</sup>Jewish community of Salonika to Ministry of Public Instruction, 28 October 1928, Thessaloniki 90, CAHJP.

<sup>232</sup>According to a report of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency the total of Government subsidies to the Jewish schools of the country has been increased from 1,400,000 to 1,800,000 Drachmas. 13 June 1930, E3/158, ABDBJ.

for the withdrawal of the state's allotment, proceeded to a liquidation of communal real estate. Such an act had a double-sided effect; on the one hand it could cover the immediate expenses for the running of the schools but in the long run it would prove to be to the detriment of the community since it reduced its standard financial sources, from which the necessary funding for the maintenance of its educational and philanthropic work mainly derived. Thus the liquidation of communal property was a very hasty measure which would inevitably create larger deficits in the communal budget. The communal authorities protested vehemently against the lower subvention and asked for more support (1,200,000 Drachmas), without however getting their complaints met.<sup>233</sup>

Educational politics apart, the same nationalist spirit was evident in the official and popular discourse of the period which culminated in the antisemitic atmosphere of the early 1930s. However, it is noteworthy that this antisemitic rhetoric did not translate into a legal manifestation of antisemitism which would expose the country's profile to criticism abroad. On the contrary, Greek officials castigated antisemitic expressions and declared themselves publicly to be the most reliable guarantors of Jewish interests. As a result, Salonika Jews received once again contradictory signals as to what they could expect from Greek officialdom, thereby intensifying their quest for adequate and successful ways of protecting Jewish interests.

As has happened elsewhere in Europe during the early twentieth century, antisemitism in Salonika reflected "... the problematic role Jews played in Christianity's grand narrative, and the anomalous status of Jews as a nation without a territory."<sup>234</sup>

---

<sup>233</sup>Jewish community to Governor General of Macedonia, 31 December 1932, File 38, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes. See also Jewish community to Vice-President of the Greek government, 1 July 1932, Thessalonike 90, CAHJP.

<sup>234</sup>Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: p. 36



The particular form of antisemitism which developed in this city was commensurate with the different narratives that constituted the cognitive, cultural and political life of the society surrounding the Jews as well as with aspects of Jewish life during that period. This type of “antisemitic mimics” has been analysed by Daniel Goldhagen who has argued that even “a cursory glance at the qualities and powers that anti-Semites through the ages have ascribed to Jews - supernatural powers, international conspiracies, and the ability to wreck economies; using the blood of Christian children in their rituals, even murdering them for their blood; being in league with the Devil; controlling simultaneously both the levers of international capital and of Bolshevism - indicates that antisemitism draws fundamentally on cultural sources that are independent of the Jews’ nature and actions, and the Jews themselves then become defined by the culturally derived notions which anti-Semites project onto them.” However, the same author continues, “antisemites typically cast their deep-seated hatreds in the prevailing terms of their era, by incorporating some actual cultural characteristics of Jews or certain elements within the Jewish community into the antisemitic litany.”<sup>235</sup>

Thus in order to analyse the phenomenon of antisemitism in Salonika it is important to trace the basic cultural models that constituted the *Weltanschauung* of the anti-Semites and to explore the degree of relationship between these models and actual features of Jewish communal life. This analysis will inevitably touch upon continuities and discontinuities of the Greek society as well as of the Jewish community, thus underlining the dynamic and protean character of inter-war antisemitism. Indeed, during the inter-war years in Salonika long-lasting latent antisemitic feelings embedded in the popular Greek consciousness “shed much of [their] religious medieval grab and adopted

---

<sup>235</sup>Goldhagen 1997: pp. 39-40.

new, secular clothing” which was, in turn, defined by the dominant social and political conditions.<sup>236</sup>

First of all it is important to say that Greek society, like many other Christian societies, had its own “cosmological and ontological beliefs ... which seemed to be so self-evidently true that they formed parts of the people’s ‘natural world’, of the ‘natural order of things’”.<sup>237</sup> One of these beliefs pointed to the evil of the Jews as the deicide people held responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion.<sup>238</sup> This belief became an axiom within popular Greek consciousness and provided the ground for the emergence of an antisemitic discourse which manifested itself in different contours throughout modern Greek history.

In the Greek folk songs all the stereotypical attributes which had formed the stereotypical image of the Jews in medieval Europe are ascribed to Jews: Jews are unclean, leprous, witches, while Jewish women are witches and children killers. With similar negative colours is portrayed the image of the Jew in *Karangiozi*, the Greek shadow theatre, where the Jewish character is presented with all the disagreeable characteristics of the Turkish *Karangiozi*, namely that he is a miser, a coward, crafty, and a vulture.<sup>239</sup>

In the folk tradition, the most basic accusations against the Jews are connected with the accusation of deicide. “For the Greek Christian, the symbolic representation of the Holy Passion and the Crucifixions taking place during the Holy Week received dimensions of a drama which the people were experiencing with original expressions of

---

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 43.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 28-29.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 29.

<sup>239</sup>F. Ambatzopoulou, *O Allos en Diogmo. He Eikona tou Evraiou ste Logotechnia. Zetemata Hestorias kai Mythoplasias* (Athens: Themelio, 1998), p. 197.



mourning.”<sup>240</sup> Connected with this was the burning of Judas, a custom which appeared with different versions in different areas in Greece and which was forbidden in 1891, the year of the Zakynthos and the Kerkyra pogrom, by a decision signed by the Athens Metropolitan Germanos in his effort to protect Jewish citizens.<sup>241</sup> No less important was the notorious blood libel accusation; indeed from 1840 until 1930 more than thirty cases of accusation for blood libel were recorded in the Greek and Jewish press.<sup>242</sup> Finally the Jews were accused of anti-Hellenic attitudes at the occasion of the hanging of the Patriarch Gregorios V in Constantinople in April 1821. Many of these motives were reproduced in Greek books and magazines of the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>243</sup>

The annexation of Salonika and its large Jewish population to the Greek state in 1912 recast the issue of the negative stereotypical image of the Jew which transcended popular consciousness and literary writings, and started appearing in different areas of public life. What gave birth to the mutations of the antisemitic discourse was the alleged incompatibility between the particular status of Salonika Jews and inter-war Greek national ideology which viewed suspiciously and, occasionally with increased hostility, different versions of ‘otherness’. Indeed as Paschales Kitromilidis has already pointed out when commenting upon the content of Greek nationalism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its unflagging insistence on national unity resulted in a general intolerance in Greek political life, “which gradually elevated the exigencies of nationalism to the only acceptable ideological orthodoxy. Thus nationalism acted as a conservative force in domestic politics by denouncing as national heresies all types of

---

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 199.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 200.

<sup>242</sup> Pierron 1996: pp. 116-122.

<sup>243</sup> Y. Kerem, “The Influence of Antisemitism on Jewish Immigration Pattern from Greece to the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century”, in Ceasar E. Farah (ed.), *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, (Kirksville, Mo. : Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northeast Missouri State University Press, 1993), p. 306.

questioning its maximalist goals.”<sup>244</sup> The adoption of such an intransigent ethnocentric attitude emphasising national unity and social cohesion became all the more important during the inter-war years, thereby corroborating the fact that any intense effort at an economic level presupposes a high degree of social consensus. This attitude was witnessed with enhanced intensity in the ‘nationally vulnerable’ northern provinces of the country which held a central role in the project of national reconstruction.

The immediate outcome of this Greco-centric nationalism was the creation of a xenophobic atmosphere which surrounded with increased suspicion all ‘others’, namely all those who, in one way or another, did not carry the trappings of a ‘real Greek.’ The fact that Salonika Jews constituted a compact ethnic bloc inhabiting an area of national importance placed them in the centre of this xenophobia with disastrous repercussions for their social and political status.

A case in point was the ethnocentric discourse used in the reports compiled by the Inspector of Primary Schools in Salonika who emphasised the national loss deriving from the non-Greek-oriented education of young Jews. A parallel case were the reports sent by Petros Minardos, the director of the Bureau de Press in Salonika, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who questioned the ‘Greekness’ either of aspects of Jewish public life or, in more extreme situations, of the Jews themselves. Thus in 1928 Minardos warned against the high circulation of foreign newspapers by Salonika Jews since it could create the false impression that Salonika was not a Greek city but a cosmopolitan centre thereby encouraging non-Greek claims to the city’s ‘true’ national identity.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, the same report continued, these newspapers were complementing the

---

<sup>244</sup>Kitromilidis 1990: p. 42.

<sup>245</sup>The fact that *Opinion* ceased to be published proved the shrinking of the readership. He also wrote that every now and then he had to answer the questions of foreign journalists and explained that the existence of them dates back to the Ottoman years when the Jews were learning French. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Governor General of Macedonia, 30 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.



pernicious role played by the foreign schools “which contribute to the development and boosting among the Jews of this mentality which shares nothing in common with anything Greek”. Finally, certain Jews were accused of harming Greek national interests. Thus Minardos’ report questioned the Greekness of the Jewish daily *L’Indépendant* on the premises that its Francophile attitude was only complementing the disastrous blow dealt to Greece by the signing of the French-Serbian treaty.<sup>246</sup> The same allegation was voiced against the Zionist *Flambeau*, which started appearing on the eve of the parliamentary elections of August 1928. It was feared that the Jewish daily, for the sake of mobilising international opinion around the Zionist cause, would depict in dark colours the status of Salonika Jews; that is, suffering under discriminatory minority terms, deprived of all kinds of governmental help whose only salvation lie in their emigration to the Holy Land. Such a stance would automatically present Greece as violating the stipulations of the minority treaties thereby exposing its profile within the

---

<sup>246</sup>Similar anti-French feelings were expressed two years later when the decision to set up an organisation of Jewish Greek Citizens Fighters in the French Army was interpreted by the Greek daily *Fos* (6 December 1930) as an attempt by Salonika Jews to create an issue of French minority. However, such allegations were later discredited by Jewish newspapers in Judeo-Spanish which wrote that the aim of this club would be to raise money for the sake of erecting a monument within the yard of the Hirsch Hospital commemorating three Jewish fighters from Salonika, who had fought with the French in the battle of Bou-Denib in Morocco in 1921, and that the monument would also include the names of those Jews who had fought during the Asia Minor campaign defending the Greek flag. *El Pueblo*, 4-5 December 1930, *Action*, 4 December 1930 (French translations sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 23 December 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM. Of particular importance was the article published in the French-speaking *L’Indépendant* (8 December 1930) which could be read by a wider readership, thereby allaying even more the fears of all those who viewed suspiciously the establishment of the “Association of Veteran French Soldiers”. In particular, it was written that the said organisation would also include orthodox Greeks and that the project had gained the full-hearted support of Stylianos Gonatas, the Governor General of Macedonia. It also gave a proof of the patriotic behaviour of Jacques Nahmias, the president of the Jewish section of the organisation, who had fought in the Greek army from 1916 until 1918 and who had been promoted to non-commissioned officer because of his bravery during the battle of Skra. The whole issue continued to trouble the Bureau de Press in Salonika which informed

League of Nations whose support was indispensable for the post-war reconstruction of the country.<sup>247</sup> Four years later, in December 1932, the director of the Bureau de Press in Salonika warned Filippos Dragoumes, the Governor General of Macedonia, against the intention of Salonika Jews to appoint a foreign person as the Chief Rabbi.<sup>248</sup> Although he was aware that in due time the Chief Rabbi would become a naturalised Greek citizen, Minardos expressed serious doubts as to whether it was “advisable for a compact group of Greek citizens to have as their spiritual leader someone who not only had nothing in common with Greece but was also alien to the country, having no special bond with Salonika, [the proof for that being] that he would immediately depart from Salonika once the Jewish community would not be able to pay down his costly wages.”<sup>249</sup> In order to corroborate his suspicions Minardos pointed to the fact that Dr. Ehrenpreis would have been appointed in 1925 as the Chief Rabbi of Salonika, although

---

the Greek Foreign Ministry that the said organisation did not include any orthodox Greeks. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 16 December 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>247</sup>In 1931 in November a report titled “As regards Jewish propaganda in eastern Macedonia and western Thrace” stated that the propaganda was aiming at the protection and the service of the interests of the Jews, at the dissemination of the Jewish language and history and at the development of their own national consciousness. According to this report, in Didimoticho there was a Jewish association called “*Rennassence*” which through different means (raising money, organising dancing parties etc.) had managed to increase the number of the teachers at the Jewish communal school thereby contributing to the uplift of the Jewish national morale. It was also stated that “the Jews nourish a bitter hatred against anything Greek and it is obvious that they were not animated by any philhellenic feelings. Such a thing was obviously put upon to the fact that they view the Greeks as the only serious opponents and competitors in their commercial business in the East and in particular in the Balkans.” MB the General Staff to the Greek Foreign Ministry, A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>248</sup>As Minardos pointed out it was not uncommon for a Jewish community to appoint a foreign person in the position of the Chief Rabbi. A case in point was Sabbetai Dzachon, the Argentina-born Chief Rabbi of Bucharest. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Governor General of Macedonia, 26 December 1932, Jews of Salonika (1932-1933), File 38, Personal Archive of Filippos Dragoumes.

<sup>249</sup>This was in accordance with law 4837 “As regards Jewish communities” - this law was meant to complete the law 2456 of 1920 - which provided that the Chief Rabbi should be a Greek citizen. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Governor General of Macedonia, 26 December 1932, Jews of Salonika (1932-1933), File 38, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes.



it was a common secret amongst the communal authorities that the very same person had stated in 1913, as the current Chief Rabbi of Sofia, that it would be for the interest of Salonika Jews if Salonika was not annexed to Greece.<sup>250</sup>

However, the reports of the Greek official, which were mostly confined to suspicions and warnings against single aspects of specific Jewish activities, paled before the writings of certain Greek newspapers which throughout the years under consideration were teeming with fierce antisemitic libels encumbering the entire collectivity of Salonika Jewry with all versions of anti-national behaviour. Thus in 1927 the Greek daily *Fos* openly blamed Salonika Jews for harming vital political interests of the Greek state. In particular, a series of articles were published, which vehemently protested against the decision of the communal Jewish council to organise a demonstration and protest against the antisemitic events which had erupted in Romania at that time, for in this way the Salonika Jews would endanger the friendly Greco-Romanian relations.<sup>251</sup> Thus Jews were openly blamed for anti-patriotic behaviour, in other words for “conducting Jewish politics against Greek politics” suggesting the utter incompatibility between the two.<sup>252</sup>

---

<sup>250</sup>See Levene 1992: p. 171. However, his appointment was cancelled because the Salonika Mizrahis, the so-called Salonika Radicals, considered him too modern. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Governor General of Macedonia, 26 December 1932, Jews of Salonika (1932-1933), File 38, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes.

<sup>251</sup>*Fos*, 23 December 1927. Another daily picked up the patriotic stance and elaborated further stating that unlike big countries, such as Germany and France, Greece was too small a country to afford such risks. “The states live for themselves and their life is tough.... There is no time for older forms of romanticism... We cannot possibly get touched because some students destroyed the shops of some Jews in some city in Transylvania...” *Aggelioforos*, 27 December 1927. It was thus *Realpolitik* which suggested this rational choice and which should not be mistaken for lack of human solidarity since then, protests should be voiced against the persecutions of the Chinese by Koreans. *Aggelioforos*, 27 December 1927

<sup>252</sup>*Aggelioforos*, 27 December 1927.

In 1929 at the occasion of the visit of Fernand Corcos, the French Zionist leader, in Salonika, *Makedonia* charged Salonika Jews with the attempts “to present to a stranger that they are oppressed and tyrannised”.<sup>253</sup> On the contrary, the Greek daily continued, the Greek state has shown towards the Jews the most magnanimous stance since it had turned a blind eye to their inability to speak Greek and their anti-patriotic feelings and had placed them on equal footing with the other citizens.<sup>254</sup> Allegations of anti-patriotic behaviour were clothed within expressions of racial antisemitism. Jews were accused of being ‘exceptionally evil’ given the fact that their persecution was an ever lasting phenomenon, staring long before Jesus’ crucifixion with the exit from Egypt and Babylonian captivity.<sup>255</sup> In February 1928 feelings of popular antisemitism were further roused by the publication of the false Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, the classic work aiming to prove how international Jewry was conspiring to conquer the world.<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup>*Makedonia* also wrote, that Corcos had regretted the difficult conditions in which Salonika Jews were living and had used as a proof the dismissal of three Jewish tobacco workers simply because they were Jews. *Makedonia*, 4 October 1929.

<sup>254</sup>*Makedonia*, 4 October 1929, as cited in Delage to Briens, 9 October 1929, Europe-Grèce 69, AQDO. With a letter written to *Makedonia*, Corcos refuted such allegations and stated that “... Salonika Jews have the intention deeply in their hearts to become the best actors of all Greek national tasks.” *L'Indépendant*, 9 October 1929.

<sup>255</sup>“Jews are being persecuted not only by the Christians, but by the Turks and the Chinese and by all the races of the world.” *Aggelioforos*, 27 December 1927.

<sup>256</sup>*Fos*, 20-23 March 1928. This book appeared in 1903 in Saint Petersburg and was published in a newspaper in the form of feuilleton. Throughout its pages the reader could finally find out that the Jews were the ones responsible for their current plight. In 1921 *London Times* revealed the author, who was a member of the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police. An officer called Rachkovski had fabricated it from the book of Maurice Joli with the title, “Dialogue in Hell between Montesquieu and Machiavelli”. This was a political title and was directed against Napoleon III who was identified with Machiavelli. *Le Progrès*, 22 February 1928. For an enlightening account on the origins, development and utilisation of the Protocols see N. Cohen, *Warrant for Genocide. The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996).



However, it should be noted that racial antisemitism, namely the emergence of a new type of antisemitic discourse the basis of which was the development of racial theories, did not succeed in striking roots in Greek society as it had done in certain western European societies. As it has been elegantly put by Giorgos Ioannou the “... still fluid neo-Greek society, bedevilled in its unbearable misfortune, did not have the time, or the power, to muster in its soul the poisonous luxury of antisemitism and racial discriminations. It was simply uninterested; and it still is. It has other longings.”<sup>257</sup>

It did not take long before Jewish anti-patriotic behaviour was explicitly taken to signify a pro-Turkish attitude, touching thus another sensitive aspect of Greek national ideology. However, this time it was the Jews of Didimoticho who had to bear the consequences. Once again *Fos* took the lead and published the report of a Greek teacher working in a Jewish communal school, according to which the Directress of the school was waging pro-Turkish propaganda by allowing pupils to keep “notebooks with a picture of Mustafa Kemal on the cover and Turkish flags inside as well as with a poem praising the heroism of the Turks during the occupation of eastern Thrace and vilifying the Greek army and the Greek people”.<sup>258</sup> The school was closed by the order of the prefect of Evros whose negative disposition towards the Jews was well known<sup>259</sup> and the said teacher was sued for having tried to overthrow the regime.<sup>260</sup> A trial took place in Didimoticho which acquitted the directress and proved that the whole issue was a vendetta between her and the teacher.<sup>261</sup> Immediately afterwards the Communal Council protested to the Governor General of Komotine about the closure of the school and the

---

<sup>257</sup>As cited in Ambatzopoulou 1998: p. 198 .

<sup>258</sup>*Fos*, 7 November 1928.

<sup>259</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 9 November 1928.

<sup>260</sup>In particular, she was accused of having violated article 150/151 of the Penal Code. *Flambeau*, 11 November 1928.

<sup>261</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 11 November 1928.

Greek official, who was praised by the Jewish authorities for his “spirit of justice and fairness”, gave permission for the school to reopen.<sup>262</sup>

However, if these articles confirmed the baneful role played by certain Greek newspapers in Greco-Jewish relations they also showed that the official Greek leadership did not share the antisemitic propaganda of the Greek press. Thus in the case of the anti-Romanian protest not only did Kalevras allow Salonika Jews to protest against the antisemitic outbursts in Romania but reassured Mentech Bessantchi, a prominent Zionist leader of the community, that “... he had been very touched by the anti-Jewish pogroms in Romania and that .... the Jews had every right to raise their voices against such acts.”<sup>263</sup> Similar was the reaction of the judge in Didimoticho. Nevertheless, this tolerant and liberal attitude of certain Greek officials would soon disappear once opportunistic political tactics suggested the endorsement of antisemitic mottoes as a means of mobilising popular support and winning elections.

Within such a traditional context of antisemitic discourse it was to be expected that Jews would be accused of the anti-national crime *par excellence* of the period under consideration, that is communist propaganda. The anti-communist motto was in tune with the official anti-communist policy of the Venizelos’s government reflected in the voting of the notorious *Idionymon* on 18 June 1929.<sup>264</sup> Thus, on 18 October 1929, the *Jewish Chronicle* published a protest against the circulation of antisemitic pamphlets among Greek soldiers stationed in Northern Greece, which had accused Jews of horrid Bolshevik activities:

---

<sup>262</sup>*L’Indépendant*, 9 November 1928.

<sup>263</sup>*L’Indépendant*, 27 December 1927.

<sup>264</sup>*Idionymon* was aimed primarily against the Communists and punished “whoever seeks the implementation of ideas whose manifest purpose is the overthrow of the established social order by violent means or the detachment of part from the whole of the State’s territory, or proselytizes in favour of these ideas....” As cited in Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 99.



A violent, antisemitic manifesto has been circulated among the Greek troops stationed in the garrison town of Serres, fifty miles Northeast of the city. Under cover of anti-Bolshevik propaganda, the manifesto accused the Jews of every abominable crime, declaring that they are responsible for the butchering of millions of innocent Russians, for the sacrilegious confiscation of Russian churches which have been converted into cinemas and drinking dens, and that the Jews have deliberately spread infectious diseases in Russia to aid them in keeping the Russian people under the yoke of Bolshevik tyranny. This ridiculous manifesto then goes on to warn the Greek soldiers that Jewish Bolshevik agents here are seeking to corrupt society so as to ruin Greece and bring her under the domination of the Kremlin. It also accused the Jews of being entirely responsible for the catastrophe in Asia Minor. As a result of the circulation of this wild libel, Jewish soldiers in the garrison at Serres have been subjected to insults and threats, and their lives have been made unbearable by their fellow troops.

The Greek Foreign Minister, alarmed by the publication of such news in the foreign press, which could harm the country's profile abroad, contacted military authorities and asked for explanations. After an intense correspondence between Greek military officials he was reassured that, although there was a circulation of anti-communist pamphlets by the Panhellenic Bourgeois Union in some units of the Serres, it was very limited, confining its antisemitic allegation solely against Russian Jews and saying nothing about Greek Jews.<sup>265</sup> As far as official reactions were concerned Venizelos himself rebuked the action as "absolutely irregular."<sup>266</sup>

The hideous antisemitic role exercised by certain sections of the Greek press was complemented by the activities of fascist or proto-fascist groups which were set up during the inter-war years and which adopted a fierce anti-communist and antisemitic programme, summing up all aforementioned versions of antisemitic discourse. The members of these youth organisations came in their vast majority from lower social strata and particularly from young refugees, who were facing serious social and

---

<sup>265</sup>MB the General Staff to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 November 1929, 1929 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>266</sup>As cited in Mavrogordatos, 1983: p. 258.

economic problems<sup>267</sup> and whose settlement in border areas rendered them susceptible to nationalist sermons.<sup>268</sup> For these socially and economically deprived youngsters, lacking any sort of political orientation and social cohesion, antisemitism was, what Jean Paul Sartre has characterised, a “poor man’s snobbery.”<sup>269</sup> As a result, they became pawns in the hands of nationalist organisations whose ideological content focused on chauvinism, xenophobia and antisemitism. The latter could offer them the much-needed ideas to believe in, disorienting them simultaneously from the real problems of their life.

Thus, as early as December 1923, the Central Union of anti-Jewish Youth was founded and their target was the Jews of the city who had abstained from the elections.<sup>270</sup> From this point onwards more fascist organisations made their appearance such as the Anti-Communist Organisation of Youth of Macedonia -Thrace established in 1931 with the goal of “fighting with all legal means against communism as well as against all other sorts of propaganda aiming at the distortion of the historical truth of our country and of our ancestors.”<sup>271</sup> Other nationalistic organisations of ‘patriotic character’ were the Greek National-Socialist Party, the National Socialist Party of Macedonia, and the All-students’ Association.<sup>272</sup>

However, the most notorious of all was the National Union of Greece (*Ethnike Enosis Ellas*, known as EEE or 3E) set up in 1927 in Salonika. This organisation was

---

<sup>267</sup>Twenty-six per cent of Asia Minor refugees were young people under fifteen. A. Liakos, *Neanikes Organoseis* (Athens: Lotos, 1988), p. 16.

<sup>268</sup>As A. Paasi has argued it *does* matter where somebody dwells when it comes to development of nationalist feelings. A. Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Boundary* (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1995), pp. 39-61.

<sup>269</sup>J. P. , Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 26.

<sup>270</sup>Liakos 1988: p. 40.

<sup>271</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup>G. Andrikopoulos, *Oi Rizes tou Hellenikou Fasismou. Stratos kai Politike* (Athens: Diogenes, 1997), pp. 12-13.



organised along military lines and its youth wore bronze helmets and uniforms, like the Hitler Youth.<sup>273</sup> Its president was Giorgos Kosmidis, a tradesman in Salonika, and its General Secretary was Demetres Charitopoulos. As the leaders of the organisation confessed “one of the principal reasons behind the formation of patriotic organisations was the imposition and the respect of the meaning of Fatherland (Patriida) and, in turn, of its public representatives, to the alien (different ethnos) citizens of the State... as well as to serve the interests of the state when they were neglected by its officials.”<sup>274</sup>

It was in March 1931 that the leaders of the EEE took their first official action and expressed their utter opposition to the decision of the Minister of Education which had obliged Greek teachers working at Jewish communal schools to work on Sundays under the justification that a) the schools cannot work only 4 days (Monday to Friday noon) and b) the Greek staff be considerably less engaged than their colleagues working elsewhere. However, the report continued, this decision was seriously undermining the Greco-centric education in the schools, since it would indirectly promote the teaching of Hebrew and help the Jewish national feeling.<sup>275</sup>

In June 1931, members of the EEE spearheaded the antisemitic disturbances in the Jewish quarter of Campbell in Salonika. These riots provide ample evidence for the fact that in periods of crisis underprivileged individuals are keen on finding some to be held responsible for their misfortune.<sup>276</sup> The events started on 23 June 1931 and the pretext was the discovery that a representative of the Salonika Macabbee took part in a conference in Sofia when a resolution was adopted in the favour of the autonomy of

---

<sup>273</sup>As cited in Liakos 1988: p. 41.

<sup>274</sup>Kosmedes and Charitopoulos to the Political Office of the Prime Minister, 4 May 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>275</sup>Kosmedes/Charitopoulos to Minister of Education , 19 March 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>276</sup>For an analysis of the Campbell riots as a case-study of scapegoating theory see M. Vassilikou, “Ethnotikes Antitheseis ste Thessalonike tou Mesopolemou. He Periptose tou Empresmou tou Kampel”, *Histor*, 7 (1995), pp.153-174.

Macedonia.<sup>277</sup> At the same time, the appearance of four Bulgarian citizens in Salonika was interpreted by *Makedonia* as the proof of Bulgarian revisionist policies.<sup>278</sup> Once the National Union of Students (NUS) received the news it issued a violently worded appeal, thus encouraging the boycotting of the Jews who were portrayed as being mostly foreigners, making money in Greece and co-operating with Communists and *comitadjis*<sup>279</sup>. Extra fuel was added to the fire when on 25 June 1931 *Makedonia* published an announcement of the NUS which explained the reasons of the antisemitic movement:

The turmoil is due to the accumulation for years of the indignation in the Greek soul of the incredible behaviour of the Jews. And in particular 1) Because  $\frac{3}{4}$  are foreign citizens. 2) Because the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Communists are Jews. 3) Because they publish three French-speaking newspapers and none Greek. 4) Because they induce the soldiers to revolt. 5) Because they threw away the crosses from the flags of their shops, because they tried to shed the responsibility for decking with flags their shops during our religious holidays. 6) Because they worked and paid foreign journalists in order to make Salonika an autonomous city with Jewish feasts. 7) Because they oblige with no exception the Greek teachers of their schools to work on Sundays. 8) Because even the smallest issue is brought to the attention of the League of Nations, disparaging Greece. 9) Because for the issue of Sunday Closing Day, they turned everything against Greece. 10) Because they brought the issue of the Jewish cemeteries to the attention of the League of Nations without any excuse. 11) Because in order to avoid military service they create hundreds of synagogues and alleged cantors. 12) Because they became the heroes of the episode of *Mission Laicque*. 13) Because the leaders of Macabbee declared to the Zionist leader Jabotinski that they teach the deepest national Jewish principles and the Jewish

---

<sup>277</sup>These allegations however were refuted by A. Tajar, the president of the Central Consistory of Bulgarian Jews who reassured the Greek Ambassador in Sofia that "... Mr. Cohen did not make any sort of anti-Hellenic announcement..." *Légation Hellénique en Bulgarie to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 10 July 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>278</sup>During late June 1931 four Bulgarians arrived in Salonika, Itso and Kyrillo Abof, Demerzief, and Stogiannof. They all carried certificate papers of the Greco-Bulgarian Committee since they all came from Doirani and Kilkis. After a couple of days they left for Bulgaria. *Gendarmerie to Ministry of Interior*, 16 July 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>279</sup>Derisive term used extensively by Greek nationalists when referring to members of the Bulgarian nationalist movement.



national spirit to the Macabbees. 14) Because under the name of Mizrachi, they grew so insolent that they asked the interruption of the film "The Passion of Jesus". 15) Because they declared to a French-Jewish teacher that they hate the Greeks. 16) Because generally they all abstain from celebrating the 25th March. 17) Because they boycott everything Greek. 18) Because they avoid the Greek education by running a number of foreign schools. 19) Because they refuse with impudence and obstinacy to speak the Greek language and prefer Spanish, which does not remind them of anything but a very bad period of their life. 20) Because they held a scandalous position during the destruction of the Asia Minor. 21) Because finally they sent to the *comitadji* conferences representatives in order to declare in favour of the autonomy of Macedonia.

An attempt on the part of the Jews to prevent the circulation of the pamphlets ended in scuffles. The moment the Governor General was informed of the disturbances, he ordered the pamphlets to be seized and the ring leaders to be arrested. However, the excited crowd of students announced its intention of continuing its struggle in which they had the support of several patriotic organisations.<sup>280</sup> On 25 June 1931, members of the national organisation EEE entered the offices of the Jewish Society of Macabbee, causing serious damages. A committee of the Jewish community asked from Kalochristianakes, the police officer, the application of added measures of security, while severe protests were forwarded to the Governor General. On 29 June new disturbances took place between Jews and Greeks. Later that day a body of men estimated at about 100-200 people set out for the Jewish settlement near the refugee quarter of Toumba with the intention of setting it on fire. They were prevented from doing so by guards of police and troops. From there they made their way to the Campbell quarter, joined now by another 1,000 to 2,000 civilians from the refugee encampments. Shortly before 11.30 p.m. a fire broke out in the Campbell quarter. The total of the casualties of the deplorable scenes were two dead, one Greek and one Jew,

---

<sup>280</sup>Ramsay to Henderson, 26 June 1931, 371/ 15240 C4937, PRO.

and twenty-six wounded.<sup>281</sup> The following days the establishment of martial law was under consideration, but the Governor General and the military authorities of the town were strongly opposed to it, as a measure likely to instigate further disturbances, and as [the former] hinted it was difficult to enforce *par ces temps de chaleurs*.<sup>282</sup> Finally on 2 July 1931 the storm that had troubled Salonika for over 10 days was brought to an end. The Minister agreed on an indemnity of 500,000 Drachmas for the reconstruction of the burnt huts while the Jews were encouraged to return to their houses.

The community expressed its utter disappointment and voices of indignation came from all over the world. Jewish organisations in Paris, Rome,<sup>283</sup> and Buenos Aires<sup>284</sup> sent telegrams expressing their concerns about their fellow Jews in Salonika and asking the Greek authorities to take all appropriate measures in order to protect Salonika Jews. Immediate was the reaction of the Anglo-Jewish Association who intervened by speaking to the Greek Ambassador in London. The latter sent to him the speech of Venizelos in the Greek chamber thereby showing that the disturbances in Salonika were provoked by Greeks who did not act like true Greeks, that is as liberal and tolerant people. Moreover, John Rich, the Secretary of the Joint Foreign Committee, was reassured that the Greek authorities would always be there to check possible disturbances in the future thereby making sure that the project of the moral assimilation of the Jews would continue.<sup>285</sup> The idea of placing the disturbances “as an infraction of a Minorities Treaty” to the attention of the League of Nations was quickly abandoned because although it was “true that Treaty guarantees to Minorities the right

---

<sup>281</sup>General Governance of Macedonia to Greek Foreign Ministry, 3 August 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>282</sup>Meade to Ramsay, 30 June 1931, 371/ 15240 C4943, PRO.

<sup>283</sup>Greek Ambassador (Italy) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 6 July 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>284</sup>La Logia Emilio Zola to Greek Consul in Argentina, 7 July 1931, A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>285</sup>Kaklamanos to Rich, 2 July 1931, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.



to life and security.... that refers to Governmental action” which was not the case with the EEE.<sup>286</sup>

On 18 July 1931 a meeting was arranged on the initiative of the Anglo-Jewish Association between Venizelos and O.E. d’Avigdor Goldsmid, Leonard Montefiore (both Presidents of the Joint Foreign Committee) and Rich. The former reassured them once again that the Greek political world had condemned in its entirety the outrages of June and confessed in a strictly confidential manner that judicial Greek authorities had been “considering whether legal grounds existed for the dissolution of the nationalist organisation responsible for the anti-Jewish propaganda. If their answer was in the affirmative, the organisation would be dissolved.” He insisted on how harmonious had always been Greco-Jewish relations except for the “unfortunate incident some years ago in Corfu [pogrom of 1891] which everyone deplored.”<sup>287</sup>

As a gesture of ‘goodwill, George Mares, the Greek Minister of Finance, placed 500,000 Drachmas (\$ 65,000) at the disposal of the Governor of Salonika in order to use it for the reconstruction of the Jewish quarter of the city.<sup>288</sup> More assistance came from the AIU which contributed 25,000 francs.<sup>289</sup> In April 1932 the ones responsible for the arson of the Campbell quarter were put on trial in Verria but were acquitted because of lack of evidence.<sup>290</sup> As it was expected, the verdict was received by the Jewish communal authorities with increased dissatisfaction thus shaking further the confidence of Salonika Jews in Venizelos and his party.

---

<sup>286</sup>Rich to Bigart, 17 September 1931, ACC 3121/E3/ 519, ABDBJ.

<sup>287</sup>Rich to Kaklamanos, 20 July 1931, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>288</sup>*Jewish Forum*, 3 September 1931.

<sup>289</sup>AIU to Anglo-Jewish Association , 9 July 1931, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>290</sup>K. Tomanas, *Chroniko tes Thessalonikes 1921-1944* (Thessalonike: Nesides, 1996), p. 139.

In September 1931 another article was published by *Makedonia*<sup>291</sup> which recast the allegation of anti-national behaviour by the Jews. The article was titled “Two wandering Jews” and reported that two Jews from Salonika, named Cohen and Eltsfer and carrying letters of reference had arrived in Geneva in order to represent their community in the congress of minorities and ask for the recognition of the Jews as a national minority. However, they were forced to abandon their plans which were disapproved of by Skives Zeros, who said that “their intention to speak in the congress of minorities would have lamentable consequences, since it would inflame once again the popular feelings in Salonika.” *Makedonia* warned its readership that had the two Jewish representatives succeeded in their goal, “we would have suffered a new treasonous blow, while the insolent and impertinent Jews would become more provocative...” The antisemitic libel was concluded with the implicit characterisation of the Jews as “a snake within our [the Greeks’] bosom waiting for the chance to bite us.” Immediate was the reaction of Elie Benusiglio, the president of the Jewish community of Salonika, who asked *Makedonia* to publish an announcement according to which the communal council denied having sent any representative to the League of Nations let alone having provided them with reference letters.<sup>292</sup>

It has been shown that despite constant refutations by the community and despite the officials’ denunciation, antisemitism clothed in different versions had proved to appeal across certain sections and mobilise their support. However, from 1932 moment onwards antisemitism remained no longer the monopoly of the press but was adopted as a political motto for the sake of electoral gains. In both Chamber and Senate elections of 1932 and again in March 1933, the Jewish community voted *en masse* for the ticket of the Anti-Venizelist Popular Party, thus protesting against the tolerance of

---

<sup>291</sup>*Makedonia*, 13 September 1931.

<sup>292</sup>*Makedonia*, 18 September 1931.



Venizelos's government towards antisemitism. With the abolition of the separate electoral college in May 1933 and the holding of the by-elections in July 1933 it was "the first and only time in the inter-war period, [that Salonika] Jews appeared as a possible arbiter of Greek politics."<sup>293</sup> The electoral campaign opened in Salonika on a distinctly antisemitic tone by the Salonika Venizelists. Venizelos himself, after initial hesitation, endorsed antisemitism and insisted "on the theme of 'the alien as arbiter' and on the reinstatement of electoral segregation."<sup>294</sup> Similar antisemitic slogans were heard during the municipal elections held on 11 February 1934 which resulted in the election of Nicolas Manos, the anti-Venizelist candidate. Immediately afterwards Salonika Jews started receiving the first signs of a 'retreating antisemitism'. In March 1934 the EEE split into two factions thus losing part of their power, while Venizelos's departure from the Greek political scene in the aftermath of the elections of April 1935 signified the end of antisemitism as an issue of electoral competition.<sup>295</sup> Finally, it was Metaxas's fascist dictatorship of 4 August 1936 which by suppressing all forms of political opinion - antisemitic *Makedonia* and nationalist organisations included - removed the principal agents of inter-war antisemitic discourse in Salonika.

At the height of the antisemitic climate, the Jewish community was threatened by the decision of the Greek government in 1929 to expropriate parts of the Jewish cemetery in Salonika. This event had the potential to translate the new unfavourable societal climate into concrete governmental policies. However, this initial menace soon disappeared and the reasons for the subsequent withdrawal of the cemetery-law are of

---

<sup>293</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 259.

<sup>294</sup>*Ibid.*: 260.

<sup>295</sup>The EEE were divided over the issue of their participation in the municipal elections. The section which opted for participation started circulating their own newspaper called *Drassis*. This newspaper had such a strong antisemitic orientation that the Governor General, for the sake of protecting Greco-Jewish relations, intervened to the Public Prosecutor's office. Dragoumes to Greek Foreign Ministry, Bureau of Political Affairs, 20 March 1934, A. 21. IV. , HAGFM:

paradigmatic character for Greco-Jewish relations. While the plan to expropriate the Jewish cemetery was related to the second goal of the modernisation scheme, that is measures taken by the Greek officialdom to help the country deal with the conditions created in the aftermath of the refugee influx and become a feasible option in the light of worsening relations between the two parties, the Greek government decided to set back its modernisation plans due to more important foreign policy considerations.

The first decades which followed the annexation of the northern provinces to Greece were characterised by attempts by the Greek state to modernise the urban centres and the country side and thus support the work of national consolidation. The modernisation scheme aimed at reshaping the space so that it could be able to respond to the new social, political and economic conditions, which had been created by the annexation of the northern provinces in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars. Although this trend was followed by almost all governments of the inter-war years, it was the Venizelos's governments which expressed this trend most eloquently. The latter was compatible with the political line of the Liberal Party since its electorate consisted of a numerous emerging bourgeoisie and middle classes, whose interests complied with the modernisation plan.<sup>296</sup>

As early as November 1912 Venizelos appointed Konstantinos Raktivan as Governor General of Macedonia and assigned to him “the consolidation of Greek sovereignty [in the northern areas of the country], the establishment of administrative mechanisms and the distribution of space which went in tandem with the designing of correct town planning for the sake of reconstructing destroyed settlements and arrangement of cities.”<sup>297</sup> The stimulus for such plans to come into practice was given

---

<sup>296</sup>N. Kalogerou, “E Geografia tou Eksynchronismou: Oi Metaschematismoi tou Voreioelladikou Chorou sto Mesopolemo”, in Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef 1992: p. 87.

<sup>297</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 87.



by the destruction of the town of Serres, the fire in Salonika in 1917 and the programme of the rebuilding of the destroyed settlements of eastern Macedonia in 1919.<sup>298</sup>

However, it was especially after the rebuilding of Salonika that it became obvious that a successful modernisation scheme did not merely ask for some lines to be drawn on a map but required direct application of all modernising measures. According to this ideology all remnants of the Turko-Ottoman-Byzantine periods were considered incompatible with the modern housing plans,<sup>299</sup> which thus aimed at the “Deturkisation” and the “Hellenisation” of the space.<sup>300</sup> Such a plan was also dictated by the need to preserve good hygienic conditions and thus to implement a successful programme of social politics.<sup>301</sup>

During the inter-war years, the content of space modernisation was revised in order to deal as quickly and as effectively as possible with the influx of 1,500,000 Asia Minor refugees which changed dramatically the demographic situation of the country. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the state and the Refugee Settlement Commission to diffuse the bulk of the newcomers to the countryside, they ultimately ended up in the urban centres where the chances for occupational rehabilitation were larger.<sup>302</sup> In order to deal with this phenomenon, a large number of refugee quarters sprang in the countryside as well as in the urban centres during the years 1923-1928, without however taking into consideration local particularities and without being based on an organised designing of space.<sup>303</sup> What this policy practically meant was that “as the

---

<sup>298</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 90. See also V. Chastaoglou, “E Anadyse tes Hellenikes Poles: E Syllepse tes Mondernas Poles kai o Eksynchronismos tou Astikou Chorou”, in Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef 1992: p. 100.

<sup>299</sup>Chastaoglou 1992: p. 101.

<sup>300</sup>A. Karademou-Gerolymbou, N. Papamichos, “Rythmise tou Chorou: Politikes Protovoulies kai Thesmikes Rythmiseis”, in Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef 1992: p. 118.

<sup>301</sup>Chastaoglou 1992: p. 101

<sup>302</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 105.

<sup>303</sup>*Ibid.*

urban quarters are put with almost mathematical accuracy outside the plan of the town, problems of building discontinuity... are being permanently created as far as the integration [of the refugee quarters] into the previous urban frame is concerned.”<sup>304</sup>

This was the context which surrounded the decision issued by the Ministers of Welfare and Agriculture on 12 August 1929 (no 69789) according to which an area of 6850c<sup>2</sup> which belonged to the old Jewish cemetery and located in the Choratzedes quarter, had been singled out for expropriation.<sup>305</sup> This decision was a step towards implementing Hebrard’s plan which was drafted in 1919 in the aftermath of the Great Fire and provided for the transfer of all cemeteries regardless of religious doctrine for the sake of creating a park in the middle of which the University building would be erected. An entire plan was being designed which was supposed to be gradually implemented and the work of which amounted to around 500 million drachmas.<sup>306</sup> The first step was taken in 1925 with the transfer of the Muslim cemeteries<sup>307</sup> and by 1929 it was the turn of the Jewish burial grounds as well as of the Greek cemetery of Evaggelistria<sup>308</sup>.

Immediate were the reactions of the Judeo-Spanish Jewish newspapers in the town which emphasised the fact that the transfer of a Jewish burial ground was a violation of the Jewish law, and that the said cemetery included old tombstones of prominent Jews which rendered the cemetery an ‘archaeological site’.<sup>309</sup> On the other

---

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 106.

<sup>305</sup>Bureau of City Plan of Salonika to Governor General of Macedonia, 15 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>306</sup>Bureau of City Plan of Salonika to Governor General of Macedonia, 13 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>307</sup>Pierron 1996: p. 201.

<sup>308</sup>Bureau of City Plan of Salonika to Governor General of Macedonia, 13 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>309</sup>M. Molho ,“El Cementerio Judio de Salonica, Verdadero Museo Epigrafico, Historico y Arqueologico”, *Sefarad*, 9 (1949), pp. 107-130.



hand, Stylianos Gonatas, the Governor General of Macedonia, underlined the practical advantages of the expropriation scheme and stated that “given the current [urban] situation within Salonika, the stay of the Jewish cemeteries in their present area<sup>310</sup> is impossible [because after the new extension of the city the Jewish burial cite could be considered as centre] and that it is necessary for it to be transferred outside the city”, underlining that “similar will be the case of the Greek cemetery in due course”.<sup>311</sup> The Managing Clerk went further and suggested “that given the high degree of difficulty in finding suitable areas for the erection of refugee quarters as well as the urgent need for accommodating homeless refugee families the retention of such a large and disused area within the city was unfair”, and continued that once the cemetery was expropriated both the refugees and the State would profit immensely thanks to the ensuing amelioration of material (lighting, water, road works, transport) and hygienic conditions.<sup>312</sup> And while every side was arguing in favour of its interests, in June 1930 Gonatas repeated the argument of urban necessity, which had dictated the transfer of cemeteries elsewhere, and informed the Foreign Ministry that a new area was chosen where all cemeteries would be transferred at the expense of the state. At the same time, in order to allay some of the objections raised by the Jews, he proposed to assist in the transfer of all historically important tombstones to a new special area and in the collection of all historical inscriptions to a museum.<sup>313</sup>

In order to strengthen the crucial argument of public utility the Greek Foreign Ministry from that moment onwards engaged in an intense correspondence with Greek

---

<sup>310</sup>The Jewish cemeteries of Salonika lay in the south-eastern part of the city, and bordered in the north and in the south on the Greek and the Muslim cemeteries respectively. Pierron 1996: p. 199.

<sup>311</sup>Governor General of Macedonia to Political Section of the Greek Foreign Office, 18 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>312</sup>Bureau of City Plan of Salonika to Governor General of Macedonia, 13 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>313</sup>*Ibid.*

Consuls and Ambassadors stationed in different capitals, who were asked to explore the way in which other governments had dealt with the issue of expropriation. The information which the Greek officials abroad communicated to their counterparts in Greece was so diversified that it forced the latter to reconsider and delay the project of expropriation.

Thus in Hungary, it was the case of Budapest which drew many parallels with Salonika since at that time the municipal authorities had transported at their own expense all cemeteries in the quarters of Tamban, Kristinavaros and Vizivaro for reasons of embellishment and for hygienic reasons. Measures were taken to record the names of the tombstones which would later be examined by museums and libraries lest they belong to famous men or carried special historic or artistic value.<sup>314</sup> The same practice was adopted by the Municipality of Varne in Bulgaria, which in the 1910s had decided to transport the Jewish cemetery without offering any indemnity and turning a deaf ear to the protests of the big Jewish community. A period of five years was awarded before the implementation of the expropriation in order for the relatives to transfer at their own expense the corpses to the new cemetery.<sup>315</sup> According to another report received by the Consular Depute in Pyrgo in Bulgaria, in the 1920s all cemeteries of the town had been transported because the burial area had been included in the city plan. For some years before the expropriation an order had been issued which forbade all burials, while a deadline was accorded for the relatives of the buried to undertake the removal of the relics at their own expenses and transport them to the new cemetery. The Jewish community was presented as the one complying best with this decision.<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>314</sup>Greek Ambassador in Budapest to the Political Section of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 24 June 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>315</sup>Greek Consular in Varne to the Greek Embassy in Sofia, 24 June 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>316</sup>Consular Depute in Pyrgo to Greek Embassy in Sofia, 25 June 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM. Finally, the same practice had been followed in another Bulgarian town Philippopoli, where at the



In Turkey in Smyrna, unlike in Istanbul where there had been no expropriation, it was argued "that whenever there was public or private need, the burial areas of religious persuasion which were found within the city had been expropriated without having misgivings as far as their holy character was concerned".<sup>317</sup> However, no expropriation had taken place in Istanbul. Similar was the case in Romania where the General Secretary of the Town Hall in Bucharest insisted that this could not be the case given the provisions of the Mosaic religion.<sup>318</sup> Finally in France it was reported that there had been no expropriation of Jewish cemeteries for the sake of town embellishment and that the only reason which could justify this policy would be hygienic reasons. Once the expropriation was decided the community would be responsible for the removal of the relics and their reburial in the new cemetery but would not be charged with other expenses.<sup>319</sup>

It is clear that the type of information received by the Greek Foreign Ministry did not encourage Greek officials to proceed with the expropriation of the cemetery without having second thoughts. Moreover, extra pressure was put on them by continuous efforts of prominent Jewish organisations abroad which sought to delay or even impede the expropriation of the Jewish burial ground. Thus in May 1930 Wolf of

---

beginning of the twentieth century the nine tenth of the Jewish cemetery, along with the Muslim cemetery had been expropriated and then made into plots of land used to build new settlement and to a seedbed. Greek Consular in Philippopoli to Greek Embassy in Sofia, 26 June 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM. However, it was also reported that since then there had been no cases of transport of Jewish or other cemeteries. In case this need appears in the future, the Religious Section of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry had decided to assess the value of the would-be expropriated land and then pay a indemnity to the religious community. Greek Ambassador in Sofia to the Political Section of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 4 July 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>317</sup>Greek Consular in Smyrna to the Greek Embassy in Ankara, 8 July 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>318</sup>Greek Ambassador in Bucharest to the Political Section of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 30 June 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>319</sup>Greek Legation in Paris to the Political Section of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 5 November 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

the Joint Foreign Committee contacted Kaklamanos on behalf of the Jewish communities of the British Empire and expressed "... the profound concern with which they have learned of the intention of the Hellenic Government to expropriate the ancient cemetery of Salonika in which, for nearly four and a half centuries, the local Jewish community have laid their dead to rest." Wolf underlined the historical and archaeological value of the cemetery and expressed the hope "... that before a final decision is reached, due weight will be given to the deeply rooted religious susceptibilities and the historic sentiments which render the proposed expropriation so distressing to the Jews of Salonika and also to their coreligionists in other countries."<sup>320</sup>

In an effort to prevent Greece's name from gaining a negative reputation, Kaklamanos reassured Wolf that "... the Greek Government have taken the greatest interest in the historical and sentimental reasons invoked against the expropriation of the ancient Jewish cemetery of Salonika and their reasons have been fully taken into consideration before any decision was reached on the matter." However, he insisted on the argument of "public interest" which "... has been found prevalent, and consequently... has necessitated the transfer of the cemeteries of any religious creed outside the city."<sup>321</sup> Finally he promised that "... previous to the execution of the proposed transfer, every measure would be taken in order that monuments and inscriptions of historic interest as well as the religious feeling of the Jewish Community of Salonika would be safeguarded."<sup>322</sup> Wolf's response, which was worded in utterly appreciative tone "of the benevolent intentions of the Hellenic Government", expressed

---

<sup>320</sup>Wolf to Kaklamanos, 16 May 1930, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>321</sup>Kaklamanos in his report stressed the fact that due to the increase of the population and the ensuing extension of the city cemeteries which used to be situated outside the city had then become intramural thereby provoking a situation "quite incompatible with modern exigencies of public welfare." Kaklamanos to Wolf, 4 June 1930, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>322</sup>*Ibid.*



the hope "... that [the Hellenic Government] will also endeavour to arrive at a friendly and equitable settlement of the monetary claims arising out of the ownership of the land."<sup>323</sup>

Similar pressure was exercised from Paris where Salonika Jews had been emigrating in consecutive waves since 1912. This time it was Alfred Berl who intervened to Andreas Michalakopoulos, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, thereby conveying the feelings of the large and important group of Salonika Jews established in Paris. Berl repeated the arguments stressing the historical and archaeological significance and asked that, in case the expropriation was deemed absolutely necessary, the Greek government should delay the implementation so that the Jewish community would have the time to raise and photograph the inscriptions found on tombstones of prominent Jewish dead." Otherwise, Berl continued, the expropriation would be a "destruction done for free", endangering the good relations between Greeks and Jews.<sup>324</sup>

Michalakopoulos' answer came promptly from Geneva reassuring Berl that he would make sure that competent Greek authorities would examine the issue of delay "... with such a high degree of benevolence that reached the extreme limits of legal possibilities."<sup>325</sup>

Following this decision the Jewish community in Salonika reacted on the premises of the Jewish religion which forbids the transfer of the remains and regards the cemeteries as holy places. However until the following February nothing was done.<sup>326</sup>

Rather belatedly came the official reaction of the community. In December 1930, one and a half year after the Council of the Ministers (Agriculture, Assistance and

---

<sup>323</sup>Wolf to Kaklamanos, June 1930, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

<sup>324</sup>Berl to Michalakopoulos, 9 May 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>325</sup>Michalakopoulos to Berl, 14 May 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>326</sup>Governor General of Macedonia to Political Section of the Greek Foreign Office, 18 February 1930, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

Social Affairs) had declared its intention to expropriate the Jewish cemetery, Jacob Cazes, the president of the Community and Haim Habia, the *Locum Tenes* of the Chief Rabbi, addressed a memorandum to the President of the Council in Athens.<sup>327</sup> By that time the community had made its own inquiry abroad which allowed a certain, though not a high, degree of optimism. Apparently in an effort to silence all accusations of inertia it was written that only very lately had the community been informed about the expropriation scheme and on 12 November 1930 sent a telegram protesting against the expropriation and asking for the revocation of the government's decision. Once the scheme was put in track and the process had started concerning the fixation of the indemnity a memorandum was sent. While a minor part of the argument presented by the communal authorities focused on the significance of the grave stones, which constituted historical monuments of international recognition and therefore should not be expropriated, the memorandum laid the bulk of the emphasis upon the religious aspect of the issue thereby endorsing the official characterisation of Jews as a religious minority. On the other hand the communal memorandum used information from its earlier correspondence with the Jewish community in Vienna and invoked the example of this city where in 1898 the construction of a tram via the Jewish cemetery of Vahrangen was cancelled because of the religious Jewish prescriptions and the Austrian legislation which chartered the eternal and inviolable character of the Jewish cemeteries. Of course, they were shrewd enough not to make any reference to the case of the expropriation of the 900 years old cemetery in Prague around 1904 for hygienic reasons, an event which the Salonika community was aware of since it was mentioned

---

<sup>327</sup>President of the Community Salonika to President of the Council Athens, 24 December 1930, ACC 3121/E3/158/3, ABDBJ.



in the very same correspondence they had with Vienna.<sup>328</sup> In France the question had never been raised concerning the expropriation of Jewish cemeteries on the grounds of their holy character although needs of public interest had already arisen. This was the reason that the cemeteries in Bordeaux, Abilene Alsace and elsewhere had been preserved despite the fact that their usage had long ceased. The memorandum finished by expressing the hope that the Greek government, which had espoused this measure in ignorance of the religious texts, would hurry to cancel the expropriation and return the matter to its old position.

This proposal was followed five months later by the intention of local Greek authorities in Salonika to advance the expropriation scheme in order to complete the project of the erection of University buildings. Once Gonatas informed the president of the community as well as the Jewish senator they confessed confidentially that as individuals they recognised that the “needs of the living have a priority over the needs of the dead”. Moreover, they alluded to the critical economic situation of the community and said that the price of indemnity would have helped the community to cover many of the expenses. However, they were not competent to answer as *only* the communal council was responsible for such a decision; nevertheless they expressed their fears that because of the religious regulation the community would never consent to it.<sup>329</sup>

---

<sup>328</sup>In the same correspondence information was also given concerning the legal status surrounding the expropriation of Jewish cemeteries in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and in the German Land of Prussia. Thus, it was said, that in all cases there was no law forbidding the expropriation of Jewish cemeteries and that there was a latent tension between promoting plans of urban development (e.g. expansion of urban infrastructure and creation of proper hygienic standards) and respecting Jewish religious law. Since national law enjoyed supremacy over religious customs, it is obvious that avoidance of expropriation in the said countries depended largely on bargaining skills of the Jewish community. Vienna to Jewish Community of Salonika, 3 December 1929, Vorstand der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde, Thessaloniki 374, CAHJP.

Due to the numerous complications entailed by the expropriation plan as well as due to the critical economic situation of the country in the early 1930s the status quo of the Jewish cemetery remained unaltered until the establishment of the fascist regime of Metaxas. By that time the pressure to find space for the University had increased. After new deliberations between the Jewish communal authorities and the government, it was decided that 33,000 hectares would be given to the University, which would in turn be responsible for the excavation of the tombstones, the collection of the corpses and their transport to another part of the cemetery. On 29 September 1937 a law was passed (no 890) which provided that once the law was published in the *Official Gazette* 12,3000 hectares would be immediately allocated to the University. The rest would be given for the construction of a park by the municipal authorities who pledged themselves not to touch the remaining tombstones. On 26 February 1938 the transport of the bodies started.<sup>330</sup> On 6 December 1942 the destruction of the cemetery was carried out by Greek workers under the indifferent eyes of the German occupation authorities.<sup>331</sup>

### 3.4. Conclusion

When considering the foregoing Greek majority policies in the continuum of the inter-war years the following conclusion can be drawn. During the early years of the period, the status of Salonika Jews was affected by the sporadic voting of contradictory legal measures which confronted Salonika Jewry with many dilemmas over their future in Greece. On the one hand, the duty of Salonika Jews to join the army coupled with the legal decrees providing for their linguistic Hellenisation encouraged their assimilation;

---

<sup>329</sup>Governor General of Macedonia to Political Office of the Prime Minister, 21 November 1931, 1931 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>330</sup>Pierron 1996: p. 202.

<sup>331</sup>M. Molho, *In Memoriam* (Salonika: Jewish Community of Salonika, 1974), p. 80.



on the other hand, the procrastination of the Greek state, as far as the implementation of these decrees were concerned, together with Greece's dependency on the League of Nations spoke volumes for the potentiality of Salonika Jews to preserve their Jewishness by interpreting and administering the project of assimilation as they wished. At the same time, however, the imposition of Sunday Closing Day and the electoral segregation of Salonika Jewry delineated the confines of the 'assimilation offer' and showed to them that the Greek state was willing to accept only those expressions of 'Jewishness' which did not clash with more important national interests. From 1928 until 1932, however, the combination between nationalism and popular antisemitism marked a shift from the previous contradictory majority policies. Consequently, all dilemmas which might have troubled Salonika Jews with regard to their position in Greece disappeared, as they realised that their status was explicitly being used as a means to preserve Venizelist hegemony at all costs. As the following chapters will show, Jewish political elites took advantage of the space for manoeuvring created for them during the early inter-war years, and articulated their own responses as to what the notion of Jewishness was all about. These responses became so varied and dogmatic in character that long before Salonika Jewry was confronted with an increasingly hostile environment the community was already enfeebled by a serious political deadlock between the main political parties.

#### 4.1 Introduction

For an historian dealing with the Zionist movement in Salonika there seems to be no better description of the movement's character than Zygmunt Bauman's characterisation on "Zionism ... as the only alternative to both socialism and the project of individual acculturation... as the only modern and secular form of reaffirmation of Jewish identity or the only programme of perpetuating Jewishness under modern conditions."<sup>332</sup> Indeed, Salonika Zionists in the inter-war years sought to capitalise on their pre-1923 political course which had proved their ability to outflank Assimilationists (the so-called Moderates) and Socialists and establish themselves as the only political group able to voice and preserve the Jewish identity. Because of their intention to continue monopolising the course of political life in the city Salonika Zionists found themselves embroiled in a network of complicated and - occasionally - contradictory political relations which, although rendering them the focal point of the community's political life, over time undermined their credibility and ensuing popularity.

Zionism came into existence with the advent of Jewish nationalism, thereby uniting its fortune with the course of other European nationalist movements. Jewish nationalism was first expressed in the writings of three Jewish intellectuals, Rabbi Kalisher, Moses Hess and Rabbi Alkalay, who put forward the idea of Jewish national rebirth by defining the notion of Judaism, the need for territorial rehabilitation of the Jews, and the revival of the Hebrew language.<sup>333</sup> Jewish nationalism received a great

---

<sup>332</sup>Z. Bauman, "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation", *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988), p. 75.

<sup>333</sup>G. Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Brandeis University Press: University Press of New England, 1995), pp. 71-78.



boost with the publication of *Autoemanzipation* by Leo Pinsker in 1882, in which he argued that the road to salvation through emancipation was a mere illusion and presented emigration to another land as the only solution for the Jews, should they wish to end their status as *aliens*.<sup>334</sup> Fourteen years later in 1896 Theodor Herzl published the *Judenstaat* which became the blueprint of Jewish nationalism. The path-breaking text indicated the urgent need for the Jews to establish a home of their own, and outlined the structure and the organisation of the future state.<sup>335</sup> In August 1897 the first Zionist Congress was convened in Basle leading to the establishment of the World Zionist Organisation.<sup>336</sup> During the next decades Jewish nationalism - like all other nationalist movements - was split into various sub-movements with different ideological content. The groups of General Zionists, Revisionists, Mizrahists, or Left-wing Zionists (*Poalei Zion*) were engaged in numerous intra-communal struggles often resulting in deep splits among Zionist leaders. Although the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 signified - nominally at least - the accomplishment of the Zionist vision, it failed to bridge many of the pre-1948 internal conflicts which continued to form part of the political and ideological legacy bequeathed to the newly-founded state up to the present.

As far as the course of Salonika Zionism is concerned, the intention of the Zionists to preserve their status as the political voice *par excellence* of the Jewish community dictated their simultaneous involvement in both Jewish and Greek politics. In order to implement their double role, Salonika Zionists developed a political agenda flexible enough to endorse issues and implement politics which fitted into the currently changing surrounding conditions. Although their adaptable political profile meant that Salonika Zionists were not bound to a hard-core ideological frame with little room for

---

<sup>334</sup>W. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), pp. 70-75.

<sup>335</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 84-96.

<sup>336</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 103-108.

political manoeuvring, it should also not be mistaken for sheer opportunism. On the contrary, the course of inter-war Zionist politics in Salonika reflected their intention to strike a balance between pragmatism and Zionist vision and separated them from all other groups which examined most of the communal issues through the stable lens of their ideological legacy.

Although until 1926 this type of Zionist politics proved rewarding, later on it gradually lost its popular appeal. The first signs of dissatisfaction came from within as during the short period of four years (1926 - 1930) the once united bourgeois Jewish camp led by the Zionists split into four other groups. It is the aim of the first part of this chapter to provide an overview of pre-1923 Zionist politics and then to proceed to an analysis of Zionist politics during the early inter-war years.

In particular, this section will firstly discuss the way in which Zionists had managed to establish themselves as the main political party in Salonika during the first years of the integration of the city into the Greek state. Then it will explore how shifting interpretations of assimilation, Jewishness and Communism proposed by the Zionists at crucial moments turned out to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they succeeded in becoming a 'catch-all party'<sup>337</sup> able to rally around them supporters of assimilation and advocates of Jewish nationalism. As a result they managed to keep the upper hand in the Greek political scene as is indicated by their successful electoral campaigns in 1926, 1928 and 1929.<sup>338</sup> When turning to intra-communal politics, the cost for the political oscillation of Salonika Zionists was the almost simultaneous defection from the Zionist-led alliance of the Jewish Radicals and the Jewish

---

<sup>337</sup>Term used by the political scientist Otto Kirchheimer to describe a party with a relatively weak ideological profile whose main goals and policies are oriented on the basis of electoral considerations. A third criterion is that this party has managed to gain wide electoral support from almost all societal groups. M. Schmidt, *Wörterbuch zur Politik* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1995), pp. 24-25.

<sup>338</sup>For all electoral results compare Table 2 in the Appendix.



Moderates. As far as the former were concerned their principal concern was not how to be represented in the Greek and Jewish political bodies but how to guarantee the protection of Jewish interests, these being the Jewish religion, the Hebrew language and the immediate implementation of the Zionist vision. Facing such an internal challenge Salonika Zionists chose to radicalise slightly their communal politics, which despite all efforts remained a pale imitation of the sermons of the Jewish Radicals. As far as the Moderates were concerned, although they *did* concur with the Zionist leaders in their preference for Venizelos's Liberal Party, they felt menaced by the radicalised educational politics of the Zionists which threatened their vested interests in the French-oriented schools of the *Alliance*.<sup>339</sup>

By 1930 the rift between Salonika Zionists and their previous political satellites was too wide to be bridged by the usual mottoes of 'anti-Communism' and 'Jewish unity'. Indeed, as the second part of this chapter will show the results of the communal elections of 1930 dealt a fatal blow to the political hegemony of the Zionists, while the high percentage of abstention (fifty per cent) revealed the disillusionment of the Jewish population towards their political leaders.<sup>340</sup> Two years later the electoral débâcle of the Zionist representatives in the parliamentary elections of September 1932 meant the end of their presence in Greek politics as well. Their defeat should be also interpreted as the people's verdict via the ballot box on the alliance of the Zionists with Venizelos, who by 1932 had been associated with the rising antisemitism. It would take them two years and their whole-hearted support for the most popular motto of the period, that is

---

<sup>339</sup> It is important to note that during the inter-war years and until 1932 Salonika Salonika Zionists changed their earlier anti-Venizelist behaviour. This shift was dictated by their intention to be active in the political scene currently dominated by Venizelist governments.

<sup>340</sup> Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.

emigration of Salonika Jews to Palestine, to rehabilitate themselves and secure their position as the main political power in the community.

The narrative of this chapter will evolve mainly chronologically. Indeed, the analysis of the different facets of the Zionist movement in Salonika during the inter-war years helps to demonstrate that their political twists and turns were not the outcome of an *a priori* rigid ideological framework but were the by-products of various developments taking place in their surroundings. Only by carefully following the evolution of Zionists politics can one understand how certain issues were warmly endorsed by Zionists at certain times only to be abandoned some time later when new conditions appeared and new decisions had to be taken.

#### **4.2. Zionism in Greece before 1923**

A brief account of the Zionist movement in pre-1912 Greece indicates that Zionism appeared in Corfu in the years 1899 - 1901 when Moshe Chaimiss, the Jewish teacher and journalist, published the monthly magazine *Israeli Chronicle*.<sup>341</sup> However, until 1902 no Zionist union was established in any Greek town and Zionist activity was confined to the contribution of a few shekels by some rich Jews.<sup>342</sup> It was in 1902 that the first Zionist society was set up in Larissa as a response to Herzl's request to "... establish a committee which would disseminate shekels and stamps of the Jewish National Fund"<sup>343</sup> founded in 1901 for the sake of collecting money for land purchases

---

<sup>341</sup>In this newspaper he spread Herzl's ideas to the Jews of southern Greece and to the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt, America etc. Then he moved to Athens where he continued his publishing activities. In 1912-1916 he published a monthly Zionist magazine in Greek (and partly in French) called *Israeli Review*. Moissis 1972: pp. 366-367.

<sup>342</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 367.

<sup>343</sup>Donations took place during the Jewish holidays, social events and family gatherings. Moissis 1972: p. 374.



in Eretz Israel.<sup>344</sup> In the summer of 1902 Jacob Kalev, the Bulgarian Zionist, visited Larissa, Trikala, Volos and Athens and, as a result of his visit, the first Greek Zionist Union was established in Larissa under the name 'Zion' and then 'Lovers of Zion'.<sup>345</sup> In 1910 the socialist Zionist society *Poalei Zion* (Workers of Zion) was set up in Volos.<sup>346</sup> During the course of the Balkan Wars and the First World War many more Zionist unions were formed all over Greece from Crete and Athens<sup>347</sup> to Chalkis, Trikala, Kavalla, Ioannina, Arta, etc.<sup>348</sup>

When addressing the Salonika case one could argue that it was the combination of favourable geographical conditions and initiatives taken by different individuals, both in Salonika and abroad, which accounted for the vitality of the Zionist movement in the city. For one the city's proximity to Bulgaria, the centre of Sephardi Zionism in the Balkans, helped the propagation of Zionist ideology.<sup>349</sup> For another, the modernising effect brought about by the educational and social work of *Alliance* had resulted in an increased political and national awareness amongst certain members of the Jewish bourgeoisie who wished to give an end to the authoritative ruling of a handful of communal - religious or secular- notables. Indeed, Zionism offered them the way out of

---

<sup>344</sup>D. Vital, *Zionism: The Crucial Phase* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 43.

<sup>345</sup>In 1906 as a result of the visit of the Russian Hebrew teacher Bezalel Davidson to Corfu, the second Greek Zionist union was set up in Corfu under the name 'The waker of the Dormants'. In 1913-1914 another Zionist organisation was set up in the same island by the young Zionist Chaim Shmuel Mizrahi called 'The Hope of Zion'. Both unions ceased to exist during the First World War because their main founders emigrated to Palestine. Moïssis 1972: pp. 367-368.

<sup>346</sup>With regard to this union it is important to note that it succeeded in establishing direct contact with the International Zionist Organisation then based in Cologne in Germany. It was also recognised as the main representative of all Jewish communities and unions in southern Greece. *Ibid.*: p. 368.

<sup>347</sup>In 1913 Jews from Athens and Thessalia, who numbered no more than 2,650 souls, raised the amount of 2,650 golden Francs for the Jewish National Fund (the overall collection was 685,735 golden Francs). This amount was rather high when considering that the Bulgarian Jews, who numbered more than 30,000, had donated 900 golden Francs. *Ibid.*: p. 373.

<sup>348</sup> For an enumeration of these Zionist unions see *Ibid.*: pp. 368-370.

<sup>349</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 238.

this political stagnation as it represented both a mass movement and a nationalist ideology. As a result in 1899 David Florentin<sup>350</sup>, Abraham Gattegno and Beniko Ben-Yacob set up the first Zionist association called *Kadima*, enriched almost 10 years later by the *Kadima* Jewish Library containing 7,000 - 8,000 works in modern Hebrew as well as Talmudic and rabbinical literature.<sup>351</sup>

Within the context of nationalist politics followed by the Young Turks, and after a period of initial scepticism, a new boost was given to the Zionist movement, mainly by the activities of David Wolffsohn, the president of the Zionist Organisation.<sup>352</sup> Indeed, in the beginning the Ottoman nationalist movement did not view favourably Jewish nationalism as this was expressed in the Zionist ideal, since the latter had “ultimately in view the carving out of a separate state.”<sup>353</sup> However, early doubts dispersed as Young Turks sought any foreign force which could grant them support, thereby helping them to escape from isolation. This kind of help was afforded by the Zionists, who were informed that the Young Turks “would welcome Jewish immigration to the Empire, not in Palestine but in Mesopotamia.”<sup>354</sup>

---

<sup>350</sup>Born in Salonika in 1874 and died in Tel Aviv in 1941, Florentin was a graduate of the Talmud Torah school and the *Alliance*. In 1897 together with Moshe Mallah published *El Avenir* and he later developed a prolific journalist activity as a contributor to *La Epoca*, *La Vardad*, and *La Tribuna Libra*. He was a militant Zionist, he travelled to Palestine three times and participated in no less than eleven Zionist conferences as a representative of the Greek Zionists. In 1933 he emigrated to Palestine and settled in Tel Aviv. Florentin played an important role in the founding of the village of Mosav Chur Mosse, created in the memory of the Greek Zionist Mosse Koffina. *Konstantopoulou* and Veremes 1998: p. 422.

<sup>351</sup>R. Molho, “The Zionist Movement in Thessaloniki, 1899-1919”, in I. K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997): p. 329.

<sup>352</sup>For an illuminating account on Wolffsohn’s pro-Zionist propaganda in the Ottoman Empire and on the role of the press in the diffusion of Zionism see: E. Benbassa, “Presse d’ Istanbul et de Salonique au Service du Sionisme (1908-1914)”, *Revue Historique*, 276 July-Dec (1986), pp. 337-365.

<sup>353</sup>Öke 1986: p. 204.

<sup>354</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 204-205.



In 1908, as a result of the liberalised atmosphere brought about by the Young Turks' Revolution and of the antisemitic outburst provoked by the Greeks, the second pro-Zionist union came into being in Salonika. It was called *Club des Intimes* and aimed "at checking the Greeks' attempted boycott of Jewish traders and workers and taking a stand against the antisemitic campaign launched by the newspapers *Pharos* and *Alithia*."<sup>355</sup> The spreading of Zionist ideas was considerably assisted by the charismatic and erudite personalities of Jacob Meir, the Chief Rabbi of Salonika, and of Rabbi Dr Itzak Epstein, the Director of the Talmud Torah, at whose initiative in 1908 the Zionist organisation *B'nei Zion* was founded.<sup>356</sup> However, the founding fathers of this association, cautious about how pro-Zionist activities would be interpreted by Ottoman officials, made clear "that their initiative sprang from their sympathy with 'the deplorable situation of the greater number of our fellow Jews all over the world' clearly implying that they themselves were not included in this persecuted category".<sup>357</sup> In 1908 the Maccabi sporting association was set up with the aim to promote physical education and fortify the Jewish identity of young Jews. In the aftermath of Salonika's annexation to the Greek state Maccabi's popular appeal became broader with a membership of 600 individuals and the publication of an annual sixty-page bulletin called *El Maccabeo*.<sup>358</sup> Thereafter, ideological conflicts within the Zionist Federation coupled with material damages inflicted upon Maccabi's premises by the Great Fire in 1917 caused the association's decline.

From 1908 until 1913 the course of Salonika Zionism was decisively influenced by intra-communal as well as external political developments. Thus on the eve of the

---

<sup>355</sup>Molho 1997: p. 331.

<sup>356</sup>Epstein's instigation was connected with the first visit of Vladimir Jabotinski, the Russian Zionist leader, in Salonika in 1908. *Ibid.*: p. 332.

<sup>357</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 333.

<sup>358</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 335.

communal elections of June 1911 Zionists together with members of the socialist *Fedecation* asked that “the franchise be extended to all social classes [and] provoked street fighting against the assimilationists who at that time constituted the majority of the community’s leadership.” A side-effect of this internal conflict was the departure of the Zionist members from *Intimes* who thereafter set up a new “scholarly, scientific and literary association called the Nouveau Club.”<sup>359</sup>

During the first months which followed the entry of the Greek troops into Salonika and which witnessed an intense diplomatic struggle as to what the status of the city would be, Salonika Zionists supported the “creation of a politically neutral state, which would comprise the city and the Balkan hinterland, have no armed forces, and be protected by international guarantees.” They submitted relevant memoranda to the Central Zionist Organisation as well as to the Vienna and Budapest Chambers of Commerce. The popularity of Salonika Zionists was enhanced further by the visits of prominent Zionist leaders and by the creation of more Zionist associations, such as the *B’nei Brith* (1912) and the Max Nordau, a merging of “three local Zionist sports associations, Pirhei Zion, Atikva, and Ahvat Ahim.”<sup>360</sup> What boosted even more the local profile of Salonika Zionists was the fact that “the pro-German feeling that suffused the Zionist movement as a whole at that time” was complementary with the unparalleled charitable activities of the *Hilfsverein* for the Jewish community. The success of Salonika Zionists was confirmed by their victory in the communal elections of 1913 when for the first time they won the majority of communal seats.<sup>361</sup>

During the turbulent years of the First World War Salonika Zionism went through different phases. At the beginning they allied with the Central Powers hoping

---

<sup>359</sup>As a reaction the *Intimes* association became the centre of die-hard anti-Zionists. *Ibid.*: pp. 336-337.

<sup>360</sup>Later Nordau merged with *B’nei-Zion* to form *Mevasseret Zion*. Molho 1997: p. 342.

<sup>361</sup>*Ibid.*



that an Austro-German victory would also mean the reunification of the Balkans. Thus in the 1915 elections they supported the ticket of the Popular Party who, unlike the Liberal Party of Venizelos, stood for Greece's non-involvement in the war.

One year later their attitude changed dramatically in the face of new developments. Their trust in the Austro-German Alliance was shattered once it was made clear that it was following a rather opportunistic policy towards the Zionist movement and that the German government did nothing to thwart rampant domestic antisemitism. Furthermore, the interest shown by the Entente "to implement a direct interventionist policy [in order] to secure the autonomy of the Ottoman Empire's minorities in the Middle East" made the Entente a better ally for international Zionism.<sup>362</sup>

The enhanced popularity of Salonika Zionists was confirmed by the emergence of two new associations, that is *Hateya* (1916) and the *Association des Jeunes Juifs* (1916), both on the initiative of Abraham Rekanati. Three years later Rekanati would create the Zionist organisation called Mizrahi, an organisation which by embracing radical nationalism offered itself as the suitable progenitor of Salonika Revisionism, the Jabotinski-led branch of Zionism. Together Mizrahi and Revisionists would constitute the voice of Salonika Radicals who, as chapter six will show, became the most dangerous challengers of Zionist hegemony.

Not less important for the advance of Salonika Zionism was the pro-Zionist stance of the Greek officialdom which, through the mouth of Nikolaos Polites, expressed in April 1917 - seven months before the Balfour Declaration - its support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine<sup>363</sup> and consented to the conscription of

---

<sup>362</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 343.

<sup>363</sup>Moïssis 1972: p. 376. See also G. Apostolatos, 1917: *The Greek Government was the First to Support the Creation of a Free Jewish State* (Thessalonike: Society for the History of Greek History, 1997).

300 Jewish volunteers from Salonika to fight along with the British in the Middle East. Polites's declaration was celebrated enthusiastically with articles published in different Greek and Jewish newspapers circulating in Athens (*Patris*), Ioannina (*Eleftheron Vema*), Trikala (*Israel*), and Salonika (*Fos*) while Maurice Coffinas, the Zionist member of the Greek parliament, made a speech applauding Greece's support for the Zionist ideal.<sup>364</sup>

However, the presence of Salonika Zionists in Paris during the Peace Conference alarmed Greek political circles who saw in it an effort by Jews to single themselves out from Greek officialdom and fight for their own interests. Indeed, shortly before the opening of the conference, certain rumours circulated in Salonika according to which powerful Jewish circles of the city had been in contact with Jewish organisations in Paris, London, Washington and Rome so that they put pressure on their governments to ask for the establishment of an autonomous status in Macedonia for ethnological and economic reasons.<sup>365</sup> The Jewish community tried to ward off the danger lest Salonika Jews were accused of disloyalty and Jacob Meir, the Chief Rabbi, tried to allay the fears of the Greek officials by saying that what Florentin might have asked for - the creation of a free port or a free zone comprising the whole city - had also

---

However, one cannot help feel the bitterness echoed by Moissis, who compared the huge difference between Greece's pro-Zionist stance in 1917 and that of 1947. Indeed, on 29 November 1947, when the general conference of the United Nations voted in favour of the establishment of the state of Israel, Greece was the only European country which voted against. What warranted this anti-Zionist attitude in the eyes and the discourse of the Greek state was the fear that Arab reprisals would fall on the Greeks living in Alexandria. Moissis 1972: p. 377.

<sup>364</sup>The national poet Kostas Palamas published an article in the Athenian daily *Empros* relating the Zionist dream. Moissis 1972: p. 386. However it is important to say that some Greeks and especially the ones connected with financial circles feared that the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East would challenge vested economic interests. Moissis 1972: p. 387.

<sup>365</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 29 December 1918, 1919 A. V., HAGFM.



been voiced in the past by Greek officials as well.<sup>366</sup> During the inter-war years Salonika Zionists would stand in their overwhelming majority for good relations with the Greeks and denounce all sorts of anti-patriotic activities.

If their militant stance concerning the future of their fellow Jews enhanced the popularity of the Zionists, their active and bold attitude towards the Greek authorities at the occasion of the Great Fire established them as the political voice *par excellence*. They reacted to the expropriation scheme and became the vehicle of Jewish popular discontent felt by the Jewish victims of fire who had lost their property and had to live in tents or pay exorbitant rents. Salonika Zionists charged Greek authorities with discriminatory politics as “almost all the Orthodox Christian refugees had been rehoused, while there were many more Jewish victims, only 10 per cent of whom had been resettled, leaving 20,000 still homeless.”<sup>367</sup>

In 1919 the General Federation of Zionists in Greece was founded. Its governing board consisted of thirteen representatives of the country’s major Jewish communities and was to meet in Salonika every six months. The first mouthpiece of the Zionist organisation was its official newspaper in Judeo-Spanish, *Esperanca* (which had existed since 1915), later replaced by the *Renaissencia Djoudia* (1917-1937) and by two short-lived publications in French, *Tribune Juive* in 1924 and *Opinion*. In March 1919 the First Panhellenic Zionist Congress was held in Salonika, which laid the founding stone for the course of Zionist politics in the inter-war year.

---

<sup>366</sup>Moreover, the Grand Rabbi submitted a memorandum prepared by the Zionist Federation (31.1.1919) according to which Florentin was sent to London with the mission only to represent the Federation in the Zionist Conference held in the city, and afterwards to go to Paris to attend several meetings concerning solely the status of Palestine. Doc. no 5, 9 February 1919, 1919 A. V., HAGFM.

<sup>367</sup>Molho 1997: p. 345.

#### 4.3. 1923 - 1928: Salonika Zionists balancing between assimilation and nationalism

During the first years of the inter-war period, Zionist activities in Salonika focused on cultural Zionism, that is, promotion of a Jewish secular identity as had been propagated by Ahad- Ha-am. As has been rightly pointed out, a particular kind of Zionism evolved which was closely related to the local situation and bound up with the refusal by a good part of the Jewish population to lose its privileged position in the town as this had constituted for centuries the landmark of their distinctive ethnic identity.<sup>368</sup> As a result they dealt with cultural issues and in particular with the education which 3,200 young Jews were receiving at the Jewish communal schools. While this issue was a continuation of the pre-1923 cultural conflict between Zionists and *Alliancists* it became salient again because of the minimum degree of intervention of the Greek state in communal affairs. It took almost fifteen years after the annexation of Salonika to the Greek state and the strong hand of the Venizelos's government (1928-1932) for Jewish education to be determined according to firm Greek laws leaving little room for communal manoeuvres. Having this external 'tolerance' or even indifference in mind - the choice of terms depends on whether state intervention in minority issues is considered positive or not - one can follow the deliberations of the V Zionist Congress convened in Salonika in 1925 which concluded the following:

Attention should be given to the development of the national tendencies and feelings of the Jewish people by intensifying and increasing the hours of Hebrew in the communal schools and in the schools of *Alliance*....[we should also encourage] the creation of a Jewish national secondary school and of a school for the young girls.... [additionally we should see to the] teaching of the Hebrew language and Jewish history in the non-Jewish schools attended by Jewish pupils. [We should also set up] an association of graduates of the communal schools as well as a circle of Hebrew courses taking place after school... [Furthermore we should demand] that the central committee of education obtain the right to impose Hebrew as the only

---

<sup>368</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 247.



language of teaching in the elementary schools... [Finally we should promote] the creation of a central Zionist library.<sup>369</sup>

From the resolutions adopted above one could draw the conclusion that cultural Zionism dictated that Jewish national values could be propagated in the Jewish communal schools where sufficient hours should be devoted to the teaching of the Hebrew language and the Jewish religion. However, the Zionists were not alone in defining patterns of communal education, which turned out to be the bone of contention among the different ideological trends of Jewish elites in Salonika.

Throughout the summer of 1926 there was a fierce debate between Salonika Zionists and Moderates over the character of the proposed Jewish Gymnasium, which was missing from the community and whose final status had not yet been defined. Namely, it was not clear whether the communal Gymnasium would offer an amalgam of Hebrew *and* Greek studies or whether it would be exclusively Greek or Hebrew. For the sake of defining the future role of this institution a committee had been set up comprising both Greeks and Jews. Facing such an open challenge, the Zionists seized the chance to ignore the establishment of a Greco-Jewish Gymnasium and advocate the founding of a clearly Jewish Gymnasium which would operate independently of the Greco-Jewish school.<sup>370</sup> According to the Zionist predictions, this scholarly institution should continue the Hebrew-oriented programme of the elementary Jewish communal schools and become the progenitor of Jewish intellectuals who once ready with their studies would then be able to serve the community, in particular, and wider Judaism in

---

<sup>369</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 22 October 1926. (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).

<sup>370</sup>Minardos to Governor General of Macedonia (confidential ), 4 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM.

general.<sup>371</sup> In this way, not only would they solidify the creation of a strong Jewish national identity but at the same time impede the advancing assimilationist trends which sought to Hellenize linguistically the young Jews.<sup>372</sup>

The issue of the creation of the Jewish Gymnasium was the pretext for the Zionists to launch an attack against the beneficiary association of *B'nei Brith* which, despite its Zionist origins, became later on a vehicle of linguistic assimilation of the Jews by supporting Jewish schoolchildren to attend and graduate from private Greek schools.<sup>373</sup> Zionists saw in this initiative a mere waste of money which instead should be given to promote Hebrew education.<sup>374</sup> As early as 3 September 1926 *La Renaissencia Djoudia* wrote that the “Social Education should not forget that it [was] a Jewish institution protected by Jewish organisations and that its activities should aim at strengthening the national characteristics of our population and not at loosening them.” However, according to the Zionists, this was far from the truth for the *B'nei Brith*, whose bursars were the “future traitors of Judaism”, and who once graduated from the

---

<sup>371</sup>It is interesting to note that most of the publications concerning the dispute over the communal Gymnasium appeared only in the Judeo-Spanish press, while the French newspapers - occasionally read by Greeks as well - remained aloof. This attitude was viewed suspiciously by the Greek officials of the Bureau de Press in Salonika who interpreted it as an effort of the Zionists to keep intra-communal conflicts unknown to the Greek public. Minardos to Bureau de Press of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM.

<sup>372</sup>The Director of the Bureau de Press in Salonika wrote, that according to information he had received, the Zionists had deliberately not invited three members of the said committee, Zadock Kohn, Salvator Djahon, and Sam Modiano who were known as Assimilationists. Minardos to Governor General of Macedonia (confidential), 21 August 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM.

<sup>373</sup>According to the Zionist press during 1925 42 Jewish students had been educated in non-Jewish schools with grave consequences for their Jewishness. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 17 September 1926. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike HAGFM).

<sup>374</sup>As far as the funding of the Jewish Gymnasium was concerned, *La Renaissencia Djoudia* suggested different sources, communal and private. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 3 September 1926. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).



Greek schools would have lost completely their Jewish identity. Nor could parallel courses of Hebrew make up for this insufficiency since the time and the special conditions of teaching were too little to lead to a comprehensive knowledge of Hebrew.<sup>375</sup> Finally, not only were these students estranged from Jewish national ideals but they became prey in the hands of the Communists whose propaganda could more easily strike roots among persons with a feeble national consciousness.<sup>376</sup>

While the differences over educational issues between Zionists and Moderates demonstrated the huge cultural gap which divided many Jews in Salonika at that time, another force proved strong enough to unite them. This was the need to unite all Jewish bourgeois forces in one political party strong enough to beat down the Communists in the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on 7 November 1926. This was achieved by the creation of an alliance between the Zionist Mentech Bessantchi<sup>377</sup> and the Moderate David Matalon.<sup>378</sup> The outcome of this alliance was a party called 'Jewish Political Union' which sought to work as an umbrella party and attract as many Jewish voters as possible. In order to succeed in their centripetal political role the Zionist press

---

<sup>375</sup>Two to three hours of Hebrew lessons a week taking place outside the school were not enough, given the intellectual fatigue of the student after a long day at school. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 17 September 1926.

<sup>376</sup>*El Pueblo*, 20 September 1926. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).

<sup>377</sup>Mentech Bessantchi was educated in the Talmud Torah school and then in *Alliance*. His ability to speak 10 languages and his highly acknowledged journalistic talents rendered him one of the most important and prolific Jewish journalists in Salonika. He wrote for the French-language newspaper *Journal de Salonique*, the Ladino *Libertad*, *La Epoca*, *L'Indépendant*, etc. In the aftermath of the Great Fire of 1917 he co-operated with Elie Veissy and published together *El Pueblo*. Due to ideological conflicts their co-operation ended in 1927. Bessantchi served - *inter alia* - as President of the Greek Zionist Federation, and as member of the Greek Parliament. During the first years of the German occupation Bessantchi fought with the resistance groups in Crete until May 1943 when he was deported and killed in a death-camp in Poland. *Konstantopoulou and Veremes* 1998: pp. 420-421.

<sup>378</sup>David Matalon was the founding father of the *Nouveau Club Sioniste* and the President of the *B'nei Brith* in Salonika. *Ibid.*: p. 427.

abandoned for a while its strong nationalist discourse, which had separated them from other Jews, and used rather moderate-like arguments which seemed to enjoy a wider consensus amongst the Jews. Thus references were made to Greco-Jewish relations, recently damaged by the imposition of the Sunday law, and emphasis was laid on the need for reconciliation between Jews and Greeks [under the condition] that this brotherhood was sincere. “We have to come into the social and political life of the state with all the characteristics of our people.”<sup>379</sup> By employing such arguments, Salonika Zionists could attract to their ranks many Jews who, although non-Zionists, had an interest in preserving good relations with the Greeks.

At the same time, shrewdly enough, the Zionists refrained from defining in detail what this ‘brotherhood’ implied, and contented themselves with statements of a rather general character. This vagueness of the Zionist discourse was an additional indication of the latter’s intention to group around them as many assimilationist and nationalist Jews as possible in a united bloc against the Jewish Communists and thus see themselves represented in the Greek parliament. Indeed, during the entire pre-electoral campaign, the Zionist press presented the project of the two Zionist candidates as an essentially ‘Jewish programme’, without, however, attempting to deconstruct the term ‘Jewish’. Moreover, they kept silent as far as the political background of the two leaders was concerned and chose to underline alone their suitability for public office. Articles recalled the long-standing engagement of the two candidates in the sphere of public affairs thanks to which they had gained precious experience and had built a highly popular profile across all social strata and professional occupations. Last but not least, the two candidates were presented as highly educated people whose fluency in the

---

<sup>379</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 5 September 1926. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1926, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).



Greek language had rendered them the most promising of possible representatives of Salonika Jews in the Greek parliament.<sup>380</sup>

While trying to argue in favour of the 'pan-Jewish' character of the 'Jewish Political Union', the Zionists also tried to minimise communist influence by adopting arguments which echoed the same rationale. Namely, the Communists were discredited not only because they had waged a war against the Zionists, but more importantly, because they had waged an essentially anti-Jewish campaign by discrediting the Jewish communal authorities in the communist press.<sup>381</sup> On the eve of the elections the anti-communist fervour was running high with slogans such as "Down with the Communists" and "Down with the traitors" showing an extreme polarisation within the community between the Jewish bourgeoisie and Jewish Communism.<sup>382</sup> Out of 10,081 votes the 'Jewish Political Union' received 62 per cent leaving the Communists behind with 39.07 per cent.<sup>383</sup> However, to the distress of the Zionists who had not reckoned so high the probability of a communist success, the system of proportional representation allowed each of the two Jewish parties to send two representatives to the Greek parliament.<sup>384</sup>

As it will be shown in the course of this chapter this 'national' and all-encompassing effort of 1926 became a point of reference for the Zionists during subsequent electoral showdowns without, however, their succeeding in implementing it again. In order to account for this failure it is necessary to move away from the field of rhetoric to the field of action and examine how the emergence of new ideological and

---

<sup>380</sup> *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 29 October 1926. (As translated by Gila Hadar).

<sup>381</sup> The Communists were accused of having launched an anti-Zionist campaign which since 1923 had been portraying the Zionists as devils. *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 10 July 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>384</sup> It was the first time that the system of proportional representation was adopted in Greece. It was in force again in 1932 and 1936. *Ibid.*

political issues, within the community as well as outside, weakened the previous ability of the Zionists to forge - at least for the period of the elections - successful political alliances.

In the immediate aftermath of the elections the issue of a Jewish Gymnasium surfaced once again, carrying openly the signs of the recent electoral struggle. The bourgeois alliance had its impact on the post-electoral Zionist discourse, which no longer centred on differences between Salonika Jews but placed a lot of emphasis on the importance which the Jewish Gymnasium had for the education of the lower class masses revealing thus the intention of Salonika Zionists to minimise the possibility of repetition of the 1926 communist 'victory'.<sup>385</sup> According to the Zionists, communist voters, once educated along Jewish national principles, would abandon communist ideology and approach the Zionist party. As the Zionists themselves confessed, their national programme had failed until that moment to include economic and social issues, alienating thus many potential voters who cared mainly about the latter.<sup>386</sup> Thus, while they continued their war against the communist leaders, whom they called 'agents of Moscow', 'liars', 'real leeches wishing to destroy slowly the communal organisms' and 'destroyers of the Jewish nation', they tried to attract to their ranks the voters of the Communist Party. Zionist appeals were basically directed towards Jewish workers who were considered to have genuinely good intentions but who had been misguided by the communist leadership.<sup>387</sup> Thus on 11 November 1926 the organisation *Ahadouth* was

---

<sup>385</sup>The Zionists characterised the Jewish Gymnasium as the indispensable complement and capping stone of the Jewish educational work, without which the money spent on schools as well as the devotion and the self-denial of the Jewish teachers were fruitless. In the case that the whole project remained unrealised, the Zionists claimed that no one would have the right to say that enough efforts had been made for the education of the poor Jewish children. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 22 November 1926. (English translation found in Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: pp. 115-116).

<sup>386</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 12 November 1926. (As translated by Gila Hadar).

<sup>387</sup>*Ibid.*



set up “having as a goal the ascent of the Jewish national feeling amongst the Jewish youth, and particularly, amongst those of the lower class quarters.... [This method was considered] as the best way to fight Communism.”<sup>388</sup>

It is against the background of the political conflict between Zionists and Communists in Salonika that one should read two theoretical expositions published in the Zionist press and seeking to underline the socialist orientation of the Zionist dream. In December 1926 an article appeared in *La Renaissencia Djoudia* which analysed the relations between Zionism and Communism and which, to a certain degree, employed the very same populist tone of the communist press. The effort was made to present Palestinian society as a society based on the ‘hammer and the reaping hook’ and serving both the Jews *and* the rest of humanity. According to this article, the Zionist organisations in Palestine were performing a genuinely socialist work without exploiting the workers and -unlike what was happening in the Soviet Union - without tyrannising them. The aim of Zionism was to create a new society in Palestine, based on the spirit of social justice and sustained by the sacrifices and efforts of its own members. On the other hand, the article attacked explicitly the Salonika Communists whose calls for violent revolutionary methods rendered their movement “reactionary and counter-revolutionary”. Finally, unlike the lofty sermons of the Salonika Communists, Zionism guaranteed liberty and emphasised down-to-earth expectations.<sup>389</sup>

It is true that if their impassioned anti-communist ideology helped the Zionists to reinforce their position within the community, it also helped them to establish a credible political profile as communal representatives in the sphere of Greek politics and thus negotiate on favourable terms communal issues which depended partly on the will of the Greek officialdom. Indeed, during the inter-war years - and especially during

---

<sup>388</sup>Ahadouth to Superior Committee of Instruction, 6 April 1927, Thessaloniki 196, CAHJP.

<sup>389</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 24 December 1926. (As translated by Gila Hadar).

1928-1932 when Zionism had its hey-day as partners in the anti-communist government of Venizelos - being a confirmed anti-communist was the *sine qua non* for any successful involvement in the Greek political scene.

Within the same context of political manoeuvring the Zionists cast an anathema on Jewish communist leaders for staining the entire profile of the community. According to an article published in *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, the great number of votes given to the Jewish Communist Party in 1926 had triggered off a wave of antisemitism which used this high percentage of communist ballots to accuse Jews collectively of anti-Greek feelings.<sup>390</sup> However, the Zionist press was careful enough not to blame the Jewish masses for having voted for the Communists; quite to the contrary, they put the blame on themselves for not having assessed in time the extent of the communist danger and for having let the lower classes to fall prey to communist propaganda.<sup>391</sup>

Given this situation, the Zionists made obvious their intention to enlighten the masses about their national Jewish identity and thus prove the total incompatibility between international Communism and Jewishness, as this was defined by Zionism. The emergence of a Jewish national discourse on behalf of the Zionists was also seen as a way to respond to the challenge posed to them by the so-called Jewish Radicals, that is the Union between Mizrahi and Revisionists, whose popularity had been greatly boosted by the visit to Salonika in the end of 1926 of Vladimir Jabotinski, the leader of Revisionist Zionism.

---

<sup>390</sup>The Zionist press expressed its hope for the existence of a calm relationship between the Greeks and the Jews. It also showed confidence in the work of the Greek Police which would eventually impose control upon the members of the National Union of Macedonia and prove in practise the benevolent comments uttered by the Greek population, the Greek press and the Greek political parties towards the Jews. *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 12 November 1926.



Inevitably, this national effort was viewed with increased suspicion by the Moderate Jews, who realised that the elimination of Communism alone was not a cause strong enough to make them bury their cultural differences with the Zionists. The former, who were responsible for the smooth operation of the Paris-based *Alliance* schools, interpreted the dissemination of Jewish national ideas as a threat to their own schools which - unlike the communal schools - focused on the teaching of French and Greek and preserved the teaching of Hebrew mainly as a religious language. Thus, in the aftermath of the 1926 elections the official Zionist mouthpiece published a series of articles of fierce anti-assimilationist character which stated that along with antisemitism, which threatened Jewish people from 'outside', assimilation was an enemy from within. "The disgraced Jewish people have certain moments in their tragic history that besides exterior strokes they are dealt internal blows as well, which, although they caused no bleeding, hurt a lot." One of these blows, the article continued, was the dissatisfaction which many Jews showed *vis-à-vis* the Zionist work accomplished in Palestine. Additionally, the supporters of the idea of assimilation believed that Zionism was constantly erring without offering any solution to the 'Jewish question'. The latter could only be solved if the Jews assimilated into the life of the nations amongst which they lived so that the only difference remaining between them and their surroundings was religion.<sup>392</sup>

In order to rebuke the assimilationist ideology articles appeared in *La Renaissencia Djoudia* which embarked upon a theoretical discussion concerning Jewishness. The latter was presented as a more complicated phenomenon than a purely religious identity, which, as the history of Jewish conversions to Christianity had shown, was itself no indelible and lasting guarantee of Jewishness. On the contrary,

---

<sup>392</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 3 December 1926. (As translated by Gila Hadar).

Judaism “was the personification of tolerance and spiritual liberation, ..., the happiness people feel when a son of the Jewish nation donated a discovery or a new idea to the world, ..., the personification of the faith that one nation had survived through two thousand years against persecutions and assaults.”<sup>393</sup> This predominantly secular perception of Jewishness gained momentum, the Zionist journalist continued, given the regression of the religious feeling in the world, as young people in particular - Jewish included - had started deserting religious doctrines and adopting mundane habits and secular beliefs.<sup>394</sup>

It is true that if the liberal understanding of a Jewish national identity helped the Zionists to offset the sermons of the Moderates who perceived Jewish identity in the same liberal spirit but not along the same national terms, it did not succeed in reconciling them with the Jewish Radicals and their definition of Judaism along religious and national lines. In order to mend this internal gap *and* to keep close as many Moderates as possible they borrowed slogans of both groups. Namely they spoke in favour of the teaching of Hebrew *and* of Greek, which had been the ideological core of the Radicals and the Moderates respectively. The Zionists believed that both languages were important for the pursuit of different reasons. Greek could help Salonika Jews smooth over their relations with their Christian co-citizens, while Hebrew could help them preserve their ethnic identity.

A case in point was an article written by the Zionist deputy Bessantchi in *El Pueblo*.<sup>395</sup> The article, which carried the title “Do we want Jewish education?”, repeated in more concise terms the role of education for the Jews which stretched along three

---

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *El Pueblo*, 14 September 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 28 September 1927, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).



existential axes. The first touched upon humanitarian principles and viewed education as the means to create literate human beings characterised by an innovative spirit and armed for the life struggle. Secondly, education represented a means of attaining the civic objective, namely, of shaping good citizens devoted to the country where they lived, a goal which could be attained by teaching the language of the country.<sup>396</sup> Last, but not least, came the national dimension of education which viewed education as the vehicle through which the Jews would learn Jewish history and language and thus become part of the 'imagined Jewish community'. It was against the background of this tripartite goal that the Zionists underlined the importance of the Jewish communal schools and asked to receive regular funding from the Greek government.<sup>397</sup>

The ways in which the discourse of the Zionists evolved towards the issues of assimilation and national identity until 1927 showed their exclusive preoccupation with theoretical discussions which attempted to strike a balance between Greekness and Jewishness, between integration into the surroundings and preservation of national characteristics without, however, specifying which of the two was more important. They did so on the eve of the parliamentary elections in August 1928 which showed that the political scenery had dramatically changed for the Zionists, forcing them to take a definite stance and to abandon their oscillation between Hellenisation and Hebraisation. During these elections the Zionists had to fight not only against their traditional political opponents, the Communists, but also against a newly formed Jewish group, led by Elie Veissy and Isaak Sciaky. The main motto of this new party was the assimilation of the Jews which signified the adoption of all cultural and national characteristics of the

---

<sup>396</sup>The importance of learning Greek was also stressed by *La Renaissencia Djoudia* in May 1927. *Le Progrès*, 27 May 1927.

<sup>397</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 23 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 28 September 1927, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM)

Greeks except for religion. At the same time, the Zionists were subjected to strong criticism by the Jewish Radicals - a merging of Mizrahis and Revisionists - whose national radical political line could not possibly accept any sort of assimilationist discourse. In order to attract the voters of this extreme group the Zionists decided to give up for a while that part of their political discourse which was in favour of assimilation, and instead to raise high their nationalist banner.

They formed a party called 'Jewish Union' and participated in the elections with the candidatures of Bessantchi and Matalon who, unlike the candidates of the rest of the Jewish parties, did not promise to follow the line of any of the Greek parties and ran as independents. During the electoral campaign the two 'Jewish Union' candidates took up many of the issues of the ideological programme of the Radicals, hence promising to fight for the recognition of the Jews as a national minority, boost their national ego and eliminate assimilationist trends within the community.<sup>398</sup> A state of national alert was declared for the Salonika Jews who read in the Zionist press that "...[if the two Zionist candidates did not win] the Jewish schools would be closed, the Jewish names would be changed..."<sup>399</sup> Finally, the 'Jewish Union' was reported to have the support of the Association of the Teachers of Hebrew in Salonika who saw in the Zionist victory the only guarantee for the preservation of the endangered Jewishness of the community.<sup>400</sup>

The electoral results showed that the slogan for national mobilisation had born fruit. Out of 11,339 Salonika Jews registered in the electoral lists 9,570 exercised their right to vote. Bessantchi and Matalon were the winners who received 5,288 and 5,116

---

<sup>398</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 24 August 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 25 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>399</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 6 August 1928.

<sup>400</sup>*EL Pueblo*, 16 August 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 23 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).



votes respectively.<sup>401</sup> Once confident about their victory, the two Zionist representatives declared in the immediate aftermath of the elections their adhesion to the Venizelist party which had won the elections with 56 per cent and had expressed its gratitude for the choice of the Salonika deputies. The official integration of the two Zionist leaders into the most representative body of Greek political life meant that in addition to being defenders of the Jewish communal interests, they had to act as members of the Greek Parliament. Indeed, from that moment onwards and until the next parliamentary elections of 1932 the Zionists tried to play this double role as successfully as possible.

The first sign of this balance between Greekness and Jewishness was evident in the immediate statements made by the Zionist press in the aftermath of the elections. On the one hand, the success of the two Zionist candidates was greeted as a double victory against both assimilation *and* Communism.<sup>402</sup> Assimilation they defined as the process leading to “resignation, betrayals, loss of our dignity and honour, subjugation, deplorable bending and moral fall, which instead of raising us, lowers us in... the eyes of all our administrators, and of the Greek public opinion which demands from us sincerity, enlightened patriotism and devotion to the country. Our population [rejected] all the Assimilationists [who fell in the category] of the failed candidate.”<sup>403</sup> On the other hand they pushed forward a Zionist type of assimilation called ‘political’, which signified the “recognition of all the civic rights and duties” amongst all citizens irrespective of religious differences.<sup>404</sup>

The effort to strike a balance between being ‘good Jews’ and ‘good Greeks’ signified a shift from the pre-electoral nationalist discourse of the two Zionists and was

---

<sup>401</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 23 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>402</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 24 August 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 25 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>403</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>404</sup>*Ibid.*

fiercely attacked by political circles, Jewish and Greek, as a sign of double-faced behaviour and political opportunism. With remarkable political manoeuvring, which revealed a man of incredible political qualities, Bessantchi undertook personal efforts in order to persuade the public of the sincerity of his party. His first reaction was to deny the fact that it had been the handling of the assimilation issue which had proved decisive for the elections<sup>405</sup> and to declare that there was no relationship between the way in which the Jews understood Judaism and the way in which they viewed their role in Greek politics.<sup>406</sup> The upshots of these efforts were his personal visit to the offices of *Makedonia*<sup>407</sup> and two letters published by the Greek paper<sup>408</sup> where he repeated his theory about the Jews being only an ethnic and religious element and not a political minority.

The rapprochement between the Salonika Zionists and the Liberal Party was sealed by the interview given by Petros Louvares, one of the winners of the Liberal Party, deputy of Salonika and Director of *Makedonika Nea*, to the Jewish newspaper *Flambeau* which was another daily run by Bessantchi. During the interview, the Greek politician reassured the Jews of Salonika of the good intentions of the Liberal party towards the Jews and stated that "... the co-operation would never insult the religious traditions of the Jews, their customs as well the interest which they might have for their general national issues....These views [were] the same as the ones we had as far as our Greek brethren [were] concerned." This interview was even more impressive because it

---

<sup>405</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 25 August 1928.

<sup>406</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 26 August 1928 and *El Pueblo* 30 August 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 31 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>407</sup>*EL Pueblo* 6 September 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 8 September 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>408</sup>*Makedonia*, 8 September 1928, and *Makedonia* 10 September 1928.



was given to a newspaper which had been created to fight *Echo de Salonique*, the newspaper which had offered unflinching support to the Liberal party of Venizelos.<sup>409</sup>

Later on Bessantchi himself reassured his Greek colleagues in the Parliament about the sincere and warm feelings of the Jews towards Greece. He recalled an article which he had written in the past and in which he had spoken explicitly about ‘complete assimilation of the Jews’ and about the Greek language being the ‘mother language’ of the Jews. He described as ‘hundreds’ the number of Jews reading Greek newspapers and assured everybody that, given the eighteen hours of Greek a week<sup>410</sup> and the admission of Jews into Greek schools, assimilation was only a matter of time. As far as the Zionist work in Palestine was concerned, Bessantchi continued, it was not a proof of disloyalty towards Greece or of negligence of their duties as Greek citizens. Neither did Zionist activities impede assimilation, for building Palestine was an ‘external project’ which did not interfere with the process of integration of the Jews in Greece. As had happened in America, France and England, Bessantchi continued, Jews could preserve their attachment to the Jewish race and still be good citizens.<sup>411</sup>

The explicit shift of the Zionists towards acculturation was sealed two years later by the Zionist Yomtov Yacoel,<sup>412</sup> who published an article in the Greek periodical *Ergasia* stating the following:

---

<sup>409</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 31 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM..

<sup>410</sup>Bessantchi also said that during the Ottoman rule Turkish was taught only three hours a week. Archive of Filipos Dragoumes, Politics/ Elections 1928-1933, File 38, 11 December 1928.

<sup>411</sup>Archive of Filipos Dragoumes, Politics/ Elections 1928-1933, File 38, 11 December 1928.

<sup>412</sup>He was born in Trikala in 1899 and studied in Athens. He settled in Salonika in 1923 and ran a lawyer’s office with his two friends, A. Moissis and S. Papadimas, who also came from Trikala. He was a distinguished lawyer and for twenty years he worked as the legal adviser of the Jewish community of Salonika and president of the *B'nei Brith*. He also taught political economy in the commercial department of the school of Alcech. He wrote articles for the Big Greek Encyclopaedia of *Pirsos*, and amongst others his article for Zionism. During the German occupation he was involved in acts of the Greek Resistance in

With the term assimilation one should not understand the fusion and the absorption of a racial minority by the dominant majority. Instead, I imply the adaptation of the Jewish element which connotes the acquisition of Greek education and consciousness. Jews should accept the influence of modern Greek civilisation and contribute to the common joys and griefs of the country without, however, sacrificing their religion, language, traditions and racial solidarity.<sup>413</sup>

As far as the first part of “assimilation” was concerned, namely the familiarisation of the Jews with the content of Greekness, a policy of Hellenisation was indispensable which should aim at diffusing the aforementioned values to the Jews. However, it was his conviction that Hellenisation had been seriously delayed by a series of unfortunate events which had taken place after annexation. The turbulent political situation in the interior of the country, which had been aggravated by the war effort and the great Fire of 1917, had prevented the Greek state from following the implementation of a concise political program. On the other hand, the stay of the Allied Powers in Salonika from 1914 to 1917 and the cosmopolitan atmosphere which sealed their presence obstructed the Hellenisation of the city, which had to wait until 1924 when the departure of the Turks and the settlement of the Greek refugees reinforced the Greek character of the region. From this point onwards important steps towards assimilation were made. For one, the military service of the Jews in the Greek army, which became a *fait accompli* from 1927 onwards, had brought together the Jewish and Christian youth. Last but not least Yacoel referred with increased satisfaction to the way in which the University of Salonika under the initiative of Professor Papadopoulos had served the Greeks national interests in Macedonia and had boosted the Hellenisation of the region.

---

Athens. In December 1943 he was arrested by the Germans and was later killed in Auschwitz. E. Kounio-Amarilio and A. Nar, *Proforikes Martyries Evraion tes Thessalonikes gia to Olokaftoma* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1998), p. 429.

<sup>413</sup>*Ergasia*, 19 April 1930.



#### 4.4. Emigration to Palestine: Exit from Salonika and exit from the crisis

From this moment onwards the signs of the rapprochement between Greek officials and Zionists increased, proving to be a double-edged sword for the future of Zionist politics in Salonika. On the one hand the pursuit of friendly and smooth relations with the Greeks gave them power and confirmed their superiority over all other communal political groups. On the other hand, however, their reinvigorated political status triggered the dissatisfaction of the Moderates and the Radicals, as the former opposed the eventuality of Zionist domination and the latter viewed with increased hostility and suspicion relations with the Greeks.

Two years after the victory of the Zionists in the parliamentary elections of 1928, elections were held in the Jewish community for the appointment of the new communal assembly which would in turn elect the new communal council. The communal council in power at that time had received often in the past fierce criticism by the Zionist press “for being indifferent towards communal issues<sup>414</sup>, ... unable to follow a specific programme of action, having no goal or orientation, showing no action towards reformation and creative spirit and finally for being driven by events rather than shaping them.”<sup>415</sup> The Zionists, who had foreseen in this situation a “tempest approaching”, participated in the elections of 1930 with a programme aiming at healing the existing inefficiencies of the communal leadership. This promised to be a bitter struggle for the Zionist party because, unlike the previous electoral competitions within the community, which had witnessed a bipolar competition between two compact blocs

---

<sup>414</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 30 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>415</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 27 December 1927. However, in contrast to their ‘collective guilt’, credit was given to the council members as individuals.

of communist and anti-communist Jewish forces, in 1930 the latter was no longer a unified bourgeois camp. Thus the Zionist proposal put forward three years before for the regrouping of all active Jewish forces in a single political party, which would have a concise national line - as had happened in Poland, Romania and Austria - and the mission to fight for the rights of the Jewish communities in Salonika as well as of all the Greek Jews, was no longer valid.<sup>416</sup> New political forces had emerged from within the previously united anti-communist bloc, which wished to have an individual say in the decision-making of the community and posed a serious threat to the predominance of the Zionists in the communal assembly. In order to analyse and assess the electoral programme of the Zionists it is essential to place it within the current political and ideological atmosphere which had given birth to it.

On the one hand, the Zionists had to compete against two 'external' enemies whose ideological and political profile were diametrically opposed to the politics the Salonika Zionists had been following these years. The first and most known were the Jewish Communists, who had been the traditional contestants of Zionist politics since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, as the parliamentary elections of 1928 had shown, the "blackmail potential" of the communists had substantially decreased since their triumphant victory in 1926, mainly due to internal problems. Thus the Zionists seemed to be more concerned about the participation in the elections of the 'Moderate Party' which had been set up by members of the *Association des Anciens Élèves de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle* with the goal of restraining the extensive Zionist influence in the community. This newly-founded group drew its popularity from the much-appreciated educational work of *Alliance* and from the extensive network of beneficiary institutions connected with it.

---

<sup>416</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 8 August 1927.



On the other hand the Zionists had to fight against an 'internal enemy', the party of the 'National Union', which had been formed by members of the other two Zionist organisations existing in Salonika at that time, the Mizrahis and the Revisionists, and by other nationalist Jews who were dissatisfied with the course of local Zionism. Under the charismatic leadership of Abraham Rekanati this group claimed to be the original representative of the Zionist cause and sought to promote a more radical form of Jewish nationalism. To put it in more concise terms these elections witnessed a tug of war between Assimilationists and Radicals, where the Zionists had to stand in the middle if they wished to attract as many voters as possible from both camps. And that was what they did. They developed an 'umbrella' programme which consisted of political messages inherent in the ideological programmes of all parties taking part in the elections. For the sake of waging their pre-electoral campaign successfully the Zionists deliberately kept their tone as discreet as possible when it came to the Radicals, lest the Jewish public feel disappointment at the weaknesses of the Zionist movement and its internal divisions and give their preferences to an altogether non-Zionist party.

Thus on the one hand they focused on communal issues and projected themselves as a democratic and pluralistic group encompassing all Jews irrespective of their Zionist affiliation. A proof of their liberal attitude was the warm-hearted support they had expressed for the system of proportional representation which gave all parties the right of representation in the Assembly. Zionist statements referred also to the efforts of the Zionist deputies in the Greek parliament, who as 'conscientious representatives' of the Jewish community, had done their best to preserve and promote the communal interests e.g., modernisation of the communal schools, free education for 3,700 children, a solution to the accommodation problem of the lower social classes,

and regeneration of the community by creating an air of idealism and optimism. In opposition to this exemplary communal profile of the Zionists stood the image of the Moderates who, according to the allegations voiced by the Communists, had been involved in scandals concerning the administration of the Baron Hirsch Hospital.<sup>417</sup>

While this part of the Zionist programme could help them decrease the high communal status of the Moderates and, to some extent, of the Communists, there was a second part, which dealt with the issue of Jewish nationalism, thus allowing them to contain the national appeal of the radical National Union. This was achieved by attacking the Moderates as essentially anti-Zionists - there was no known Zionist in their list - proving the commitment of the Zionist party to the Jewish national ideal. "The deeper aim of the Moderates was to fight the politics of the Jewish renaissance, to confine all Jewish education to some crumbs of the holy language and of the religion, to efface as much as possible in the new generations the conscience to constitute a party of the Jewish nation.... The fight was between the two doctrines; on the one hand the doctrine represented by complete assimilation and policy of cowards, and on the other hand, the policy of preserving Jewish consciousness and Jewish national pride."<sup>418</sup>

Out of more than 11,000 electors only 6,201 presented themselves at the ballot boxes. The Zionist party received 2,123 votes, namely 34.24 per cent of the total number, and thus occupied 24 out of the 70 seats in the communal Assembly.<sup>419</sup> Although they celebrated their victory as "the triumph of the national ideal against anti-Zionism in its different manifestations",<sup>420</sup> the Zionists realised that their attempt to

---

<sup>417</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 10 October 1930.

<sup>418</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>419</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.

<sup>420</sup>*El Pueblo*, 13 October 1930. "The Zionist party fought like a giant... It fought not only against the Communists of the Popular Bloc, against the Assimilationists of the Moderate Bloc, against the *rénégats* of the National Union, but it mainly fought against the corruption in all its forms ... The Zionist party



attract the majority of the Jewish bourgeois voters by proposing a pro-Jewish moderate national programme was not as successful as they had expected. A not inconsiderable number of Salonika Jews had expressed openly their support for the radical national programme of the National Union which had received 1,724 votes and thus gained 19 out of the 70 seats of the National Assembly.<sup>421</sup> The party of the Jewish Radicals, by advocating recognition of the Jews as a national minority and immediate emigration to Palestine, echoed favourably in the ears of many Salonika Jews whose critical economic and social problems could not be solved through the accommodating and moderate policy of the Zionists. At the same time the high percentage of abstention (50 per cent) revealed the intense disillusionment of the population who had lost its trust in the communal leaders as the ones able to represent them and fight for their rights. From this moment onwards local Zionism would change its course of action and respond to the popular need for communal unity and active politics. This turn of Zionist politics would be encapsulated in the fervid support of Salonika Zionist leaders for emigration to Palestine.

If the strikingly high percentage of votes given to Jewish Radicals was for the Zionists an indication that their temperate politics had by 1930 lost their popularity, a series of other developments taking place mainly outside the community were responsible for the radicalisation of their politics thereafter. On the one hand, the increased antisemitic climate of the late 1920s in Salonika had caused a lot of concern among many Salonika Jews and had shaken the political profile of the Zionists who had been part of the Venizelos cabinet since 1928. On the other hand, the disastrous repercussions of the international economic crisis, which had just started becoming

---

[could] be proud of having given to all parties... a lesson of civic behaviour, purity and idealism." (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928, A/Politike, HAGFM.)

<sup>421</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.

evident in the economic life of the Jewish population, had created an atmosphere of misery and despair. By 1930 around 20,000 Salonika Jews had already emigrated to France, in two waves (1921-1927) and (1927-1930), mainly under the instigation of articles published in many newspapers circulating in Salonika - with the exception of *Avante*, the communist mouthpiece.<sup>422</sup> However, by 1931 France was no longer an option, since the international economic crisis had reached this country as well. At the same time, the amelioration of the economic conditions in Palestine and the gradual recovery from the serious economic crisis of 1924-1926, the so-called “worst economic crisis<sup>423</sup> experienced by the Jewish population of Palestine during the British Mandate [and likely to jeopardise] the entire Zionist endeavour” rekindled Zionist hopes of the feasibility of the ‘Return to the Holy Land’ which could save many Jews from the scores of problems they had been facing in the Diaspora.<sup>424</sup> It is against the background of these external and internal conditions that one should place the inclusion of the issue of Jewish emigration to Palestine on the political agenda of the Salonika Zionists from 1930 onwards. Thus unlike the Jewish Radicals, who had regarded emigration to Palestine as a *sine qua non* of their ideological programme ever since their early appearance in the political scene of the community, the Zionists took over the same issue out of a combination of pragmatism and careful consideration of the existing conditions.

As they themselves confessed apologetically in an article published in *L'Indépendant*, their belated endorsement of emigration was warranted by the

---

<sup>422</sup>Skourtes 1992: p. 238.

<sup>423</sup>After three waves (*Aliya*) of Jewish emigration to Palestine, (pre-First World War, 1905-1914, 1919-1920) which had increased the Jewish population to 89,660 out of 670,381 citizens (13.4 per cent), a fourth migratory movement started in 1924 which because of its ‘novelty’ brought the country into a short period of economic prosperity followed by a severe economic crisis. B. Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine. British Economic Policy, 1920-1929* (London and New York, 1993), : pp. 64-81.

<sup>424</sup>As cited in *Ibid.*: p. 80.



unfavourable economic conditions governing in Palestine until 1931. However by 1929 the economic crisis of the years 1924-1926 was overcome. The influx of immigrants in 1929 was 5,249 compared to the 2,178 of 1928,<sup>425</sup> opening thus the “doors of Palestine ... for a certain class of the Jewish population” who had the additional privilege of inhabiting a city which, because of a conjuncture of favourable geographic and political conditions, could play an important role in facilitating the migratory movement. Salonika was a so-called ‘ideal port’ in the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea, which could be used by many Jews coming from eastern and northern Europe, who had until that moment used the port of Trieste in Italy.<sup>426</sup> According to the Jewish press, this proposal had found warm support among Jewish business circles who were about to examine the existing possibilities and who had given new life to the older idea of establishing a maritime company running from Salonika to Yaffo and to Haifa. The Zionists were even positive that their plans would enjoy official Greek support, since “the Greek government would see favourably the transit movement in the port of

---

<sup>425</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 65. In the late 1928 emigration regulations were relaxed defining the persons of independent category as those possessing a minimum of P£1,000 (whereas from September 1925 until the end of 1928 it had been around E£1,500). Smith 1993: pp. 79 -85. Following that there was a new influx of Jewish capital, “P£31 million in 1932-35, in comparison with P£20 million during the eleven preceding years.” Laqueur 1989: p. 320

<sup>426</sup>The other ports used until that moment had been Trieste and Constanca, whose far distance from Palestine rendered them rather inappropriate. Salonika was closer and, moreover, it was politically more privileged. Romanian antisemitism had had its toll on the way in which Jews wishing to emigrate were treated at the Romanian-Polish borders and in Constanca. Trieste, on the other hand, might have been a favourable choice for Jews from Czechoslovakia, Austria-Hungary and Germany but not for those from Poland because it involved too long a journey to reach the port. The option of Constantinople was equally discredited because of certain technical difficulties and because of the Turkish animosity towards busy traffic in the country. *La Renaissance Djoudia*, 29 June 1928. (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 10 July 1928, 1928 A/ Politike, HAGFM).

Salonika, which would also boost tourism and commercial traffic,” thus contributing to the growth of the Greek economy.<sup>427</sup>

From 1931 articles started being published regularly in the Zionist press inciting the Jewish population to opt for emigration. In August 1931 the Zionist Federation in Greece applauded the initiative of some Salonika Jews who had already settled in Palestine - Sabetay Affias, Salomon Venezia, Abram Matarasso, Joseph Ouziel, Daniel Saporta, Mosse Carasso and Menaham Confortes - in setting up an organisation aiming at facilitating the emigration of the Greek Jews to the Holy Land. This organisation was called *Hassedteroth ole Salonique* and had 200 members. By proclaiming their intention to work for the smooth assimilation of the new immigrants in their new political and social environment they boosted the *aliya* plans of many Salonika Jews looking for an outlet from the economic and social dead-end.<sup>428</sup> Particularly impressive was the visit paid by Victor Chaim Arlozorof, the head of the political department of the Jewish Agency, to the Greek consulate in Palestine in order to ascertain the official mood of the Greek government towards the issue of Jewish emigration.<sup>429</sup>

Appeals in favour of immigration to Palestine were voiced by prominent Salonika Zionists, who took a trip to the Holy Land and once back in Salonika expressed publicly their excitement at what they had experienced there. A case in point was Ascher Mallah who assured those interested that their emigration to Palestine would be an overall positive experience given the amelioration of the social and economic conditions and the warm reception reserved for them by Jewish officials and

---

<sup>427</sup>Certain Jewish business people had even thought of buying a luxurious boat. This idea was complementary with the efforts of the Greek Committee of Tourism to attract American tourists passing via Greece. *Ibid.*

<sup>428</sup>*La Renaissance Djoudia*, 21 August 1931. (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1931 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>429</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 18 October 1931, 1931 A. 21. IY. , HAGFM.



ordinary people.<sup>430</sup> In particular, Mallah continued, the Jewish National Fund had decided to accord to the future Salonika immigrants two big areas which could be used either for agriculture and breeding of animals, or for other semi-urban activities. His commentary insisted on the ‘special’ type of work accomplished by the *Halutzim* who were toiling on the barren Palestinian soil without neglecting their intellectual advance.<sup>431</sup> Their commitment to the vision of Palestine was so deep that it helped them to overcome difficulties arising from the Spartan type of life. Mallah’s description referred to the increased spirit of altruism and solidarity of the Jewish pioneers engaged in the arduous task of building a “harmonious society taking care of the needy, supporting the children and providing all of its members with remarkable hygienic conditions.”<sup>432</sup> Last but not least, always concerned about the way in which their Greek surroundings, official and popular, would interpret all sorts of Zionist initiatives, Mallah added, that in view of the severe economic crisis tormenting Salonika at that time, emigration would also be profitable for the Greeks for it would decrease the city’s population and in turn, blunt the high degree of economic antagonism.<sup>433</sup>

Such an ideal picture of Jewish life was only one side of the coin, considering the lack of infrastructure within the country, the problems with the Arab population - which had caused many bloody events in the past - and the occasionally discriminatory behaviour of the British authorities. However, what Mallah, along with other Zionist

---

<sup>430</sup>Ascher Mallah was a lawyer with a long-standing political career dating back to the years of the Ottoman rule in Salonika. His political involvement cost him serious problems with the government of the Young Turks. He served as a member of the City Council of Salonika in the aftermath of the Greek annexation of Salonika and his political affiliation laid with Venizelos and the Liberal Party. He emigrated to Palestine in 1934 and then to France. He came back to Greece in 1947 to support the rehabilitation of Holocaust survivors. *Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: pp. 426-427.*

<sup>431</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 16 October 1931.

<sup>432</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup>*Fos*, 19 October 1931.

leaders, wished to do was to highlight the positive aspects of Jewish emigration to Palestine and thus respond to the public demand for active politics. Indeed, by emphasising both the economic and ideological dimensions of Jewish life in Palestine, the Zionist call appealed, on the one hand, to certain Jews who considered exit from Salonika as a relief from a suffocating economic situation, as well as to other Jews, who viewed emigration as a step towards the implementation of the Zionist vision. “The Jews of Salonika, who had lost all ideas of joy and live in a situation of continuous misery, [had] above all the need to come in contact with life in Palestine, in order to get to know the ingenuous and pleasant smile deriving from happiness. We found in Palestine what [was] called joy of life and, believe us, the contact had been salutary.”<sup>434</sup> In this way, not only would they prove their ideological consistency as genuine Zionists, but, probably more important, regain the ‘upper hand’ in communal politics. As Florentin put it in the VII Zionist Congress of Greece in December 1931 “... all over the world the Zionists strove to secure majorities in the Communities. It is impossible ... to conceive of good Zionist work without widespread representation of the Zionists in the Community.”<sup>435</sup>

Much as the enthusiastic appeal for emigration may well boosted the local profile of Zionist politicians, so this appeal contradicted their ideological identification with Weizmann’s policies favouring selective emigration. However, this issue was to be discussed mainly within strictly Zionist circles and, for the time being, not publicly emphasised. It was in late 1933 and only after being confronted with the results of their

---

<sup>434</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 16 October 1931.

<sup>435</sup>*Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 208.* Already during the VI Conference of the Greek Zionists in 1929 Bessantchi had stated that the failure of the Zionists to engage themselves in communal affairs “... was tantamount to suicide.” *Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 201.*



pell-mell politics that local Zionism made public its commitment to restrained emigration.

Having pledged themselves to re-conquer their hegemony in the communal scene no effort was spared to fulfil their goal, not even their traditional hostility towards the AIU. Indeed, in the summer of 1932 the Zionists believing that ‘the goal justifies the means’ addressed themselves to the organisation’s office in Paris whose financial contribution was deemed necessary should a handful of agricultural trainees be admitted to the agricultural institution of *Mikveh-Yisrael*. They appealed to the humanitarian, pro-assimilationist principles which had inspired the work of *Alliance* and were careful to say that it was the lamentable economic situation of the Jewish community and not Greek antisemitism which drove so many people to emigration.<sup>436</sup>

Two months later a new blow was dealt to the status of Zionist politics in Salonika by the loss of the two Zionist representatives in the elections for the Greek Parliament and the Senate, thereby accentuating their belief that adoption of emigration was the only means which could help them make up for the ‘lost ground’. Indeed the pro-Venizelist Bessantchi, who had run as a Deputy on the ticket of the Liberals, received 1,418 out of a total of 11,158 votes and came second to Daniel Allalouf who got 2,867; Mallah, who had run as a Senator, received 1,100 out of 9,214 and was third in his list which was led by Isaac Sciaky with 3,932 votes.<sup>437</sup> *La Renaissencia Djoudia* with an article published on 9 October 1932 deplored the defeat of the Zionist leaders and called for the active engagement of the Zionists in the communal work as a precondition of the reconstitution of Palestine.<sup>438</sup>

---

<sup>436</sup>Greek Zionist Federation to AIU, 21 July 1932, Grèce I G 3, AAIU.

<sup>437</sup>Nehama to AIU, 29 September 1932, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

<sup>438</sup>*Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 215.*

The issue of emigration blew out of proportion at the occasion of the visit of Dr. Werner Senator to Salonika, the delegate of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency.<sup>439</sup> Florentin stressed that it was the first time that a member of the Jewish Agency had visited Greece, while the Zionist press interpreted this exceptional event as the proof of the high prestige which Salonika Jewry held within the Jewish Diaspora.<sup>440</sup> At the same time *La Renaissencia Djoudia* published Senator's positive impressions as far as the strong ethnic identity of the Salonika Jews was concerned, as well as his promises to do everything in his power to support their emigration to Palestine.<sup>441</sup> Particular importance was laid upon the possibilities of emigration for the Salonika port workers<sup>442</sup>, who could transfer and apply their skills in the port of Haifa as well as for the tobacco workers, who could engage themselves in the potential tobacco industry.<sup>443</sup> Senator was also asked to double the emigration quotas for Greek Jews for the semester October 1932 to March 1933 which - according to their calculations - would reach 200

---

<sup>439</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 16 December 1932. (Greek section of the paper).

<sup>440</sup>*El Pueblo*, 14 December 1932. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 20 December 1932, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>441</sup>It was stated that the reason why Senator pledged himself to help emigration was not only the difficult economic situation of Salonika Jews but also because he strongly believed that they could play an important role in the work of Jewish national renaissance taking place in Palestine. In contrast to Ashkenazi Jewry, whose national Jewish character had been on the wane for many years because of increasing assimilation through conversions and mixed marriage, Senator continued, the Sephardi were by all means a 'healthier' part of World Jewry with regard to the preservation of national Jewish identity. *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup>As early as 1921 a few hundred Jewish fishermen from Salonika had settled in Ako without however succeeding in striking roots there. Some of them then left Ako and went to Haifa or to Tel Aviv. Moïssis 1972: p. 378

<sup>443</sup>*Le Progrès*, 13 December 1932. The funding of the Haifa Harbour project [which was to be constructed for Imperial purposes] was provided by the Palestine loan following the enactment of the Palestine and East Africa Loans Act of 1926. In the last month of 1928 the execution of the project was entrusted to Palestine's Public Works Department. Although until 1930 it was mostly Arab workers hired in the quarries from 1930 onwards Jewish workers were also assigned a certain amount of piecework. In the



among the overall 4,500 permits.<sup>444</sup> At the same time other articles were written in the Zionist press emphasising the work accomplished by the *Salonika* Zionists throughout 1932 and aiming at restoring their status as communal leaders. They took pride in having engaged more than fifty Salonika young Jews in different sorts of agricultural activities in Palestine and worked for the spreading of the Hebrew language and the Jewish culture in the city.<sup>445</sup>

At the end of 1932 the Zionists claimed to have been responsible for an emigration wave of 5,000 Salonika Jews, although more moderate sources reduced this number to 2,000.<sup>446</sup> However, it is important to note that only a minority of these Jews were travelling as ‘emigrants’, while the overwhelming number of travellers were reaching the Palestinian shores as ‘tourists’, who, once there, tried to prolong their stay indefinitely.<sup>447</sup> This deduction is becoming even more credible when considering that a) the number of emigration permits given to all Greek Jews was not more than 110 for March 1932 to October 1933<sup>448</sup> and b) that probably only the one third of these permits were accorded to Jews from Salonika.<sup>449</sup> Notwithstanding the low degree of actual

---

same year “Jews accounted for above 20 per cent of the entire work force with over half earning between 250 and 500 mils a day”. Smith 1993: p. 158.

<sup>444</sup>*Le Progrès*, 18 December 1932.

<sup>445</sup>Amongst them 25 were working in *Mikveh Israel*, 20 were working like *Halutzot* and *Halutzim* in *Kibutzim* and *Mechke Poaloth*, 2 Salonika Jews were pupils at the agricultural school of Nahalal and other 2 in the agricultural school in Kfar Hanoar in Benshemem. *Le Progrès*, 18 December 1932.

<sup>446</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 20 December 1932, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>447</sup>The Palestine Administration had from early on viewed favourably the granting of visas to “pilgrims, tourists, travellers on business or visitors to their friends and relatives settled in Palestine” who were an asset for the “economy of the country, if only as a source of invisible exports.” However in the early 1934 new regulations were imposed in order to reduce “the entry of immigrants disguised as temporary visitors to the country” and thus keep immigration under control. Hyamson, 1976: pp. 60-65.

<sup>448</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 16 December 1932.

<sup>449</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 5 May 1935. (Greek section of the newspaper).

Zionist contribution to the emigration of their fellow Jews, the Zionist press would continue to present this as their own achievement.<sup>450</sup>

On the other hand, during the IX Congress of Greek Zionists in Salonika in January 1933, self-praising comments were put aside and decisions were made revealing the determination of Salonika Zionist leaders to combine their ideological convictions, namely their support for Weizmann's moderate policies *vis-à-vis* emigration, with less ideologically - though not totally forbidden - accepted ways of emigration, as it was 'tourist emigration'. Such a policy, which did not exclude either, would continue until late 1933 thus allowing Salonika Zionists to 'stand by' the majority of Salonika Jews wishing to emigrate and succeed in re-establishing themselves as the main political power in the community.

One of these decisions laid the founding stone for the pursuit of 'selective emigration' which could serve local Zionism for two major reasons. Firstly, it could cover the various shortcomings of Zionist politics with regard to the implementation of a massive migratory movement and, secondly, it increased the legitimacy of the Zionist movement by placing it along the lines of the Weizmannite policy - the main stream of Zionist trends at that time - which had always wished to avoid uncontrolled emigration lest it trigger off the condemnation of the British Mandatory authorities and the anger of the Arabs.

Thus the Zionist Congress resolved that emigration should be carried out according to "the needs of the Greek Jewish population and the special possibilities of

---

<sup>450</sup>According to a letter sent by the President of the Greek Zionist Federation to Filipos Dragoumes, the Governor General of Macedonia, on 6 November 1935 3,900 Greek Jews had emigrated to Palestine from 1920 to 1934. About Jewish Settlement- *Keren Hayessod* 1935, File 38, Archive of Filipos Dragoumes. Given personal testimonies, which bring the number of emigrants to 15 or 18,000 Jews, the conclusion can be drawn, that the 80 per cent of Salonika emigrants had arrived in Palestine as tourists and illegal immigrants.



their installation in Palestine.” One of the resolutions was to work for an increase in emigration permits for the age group between eighteen and forty-five. Additionally the Zionist Congress dealt with the issue of the two categories of immigrants created by the Jewish Agency, namely the ‘capitalists’ and ‘labour workers’. It was their firm belief that certain categories of emigrants, those whose professional and technical qualities were particularly appreciated, should not be included in the restrictive measures. It is highly likely that this clause referred to the emigration of Salonika port-workers, who later attracted the attention of the Zionists. Last but not least, they asked for the encouragement of the tourist movement which could advance the tourist business in Palestine.<sup>451</sup> It is interesting to know that both the president and the secretary of the Jewish communal council in Salonika expressed their acknowledgement of the Zionist work which could help the community recover from its exceptionally bad situation.<sup>452</sup>

Notwithstanding the theoretical commitment of the Zionists to selective emigration new steps were taken to promote emigration. In March 1933, the company Salonika-Palestine was founded by Angel Beja, member of the Zionist Federation in Greece, who came into contact with the Anglo-Palestine Bank in order to arrange the distribution of some land bought by 70 Salonika Jews. Moreover, 33 dounamns would be made available to Salonika Jews who would create a Salonika quarter in Tel-Aviv. It was again time for the Zionists to engage in far-fetched calculations which predicted that the emigration certificates would increase to 250, since 1,200 urgent requests had been submitted.<sup>453</sup>

At the same time new articles appeared in *La Renaissencia Djoudia* which invited as many Jews as possible to prepare themselves for emigration promising to

---

<sup>451</sup>Mallah to communal council, 8 February 1933, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.

<sup>452</sup>Communal council to Mallah, 26 January 1933, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.

<sup>453</sup>*Le Progrès*, 18 March 1933.

enable annually 1,000 to 1,500 Jews from Salonika - that is 12,000 to 18,000 Jews in the course of the next ten years - to emigrate to Palestine.”<sup>454</sup> In the summer of 1933 under the pretext of the transfer of Koffinas’s body to Palestine (he had died in 1923), more than 350 tourists emigrated to Palestine.<sup>455</sup>

In June 1933 the Zionist press took advantage of the forthcoming parliamentary elections in order to fortify the position of the Zionists in Salonika. Indeed, in view of the antisemitic tone which opened the electoral campaign of the Liberal Party, it was clear that this time, unlike the 1932 elections, the Zionists could only win by concurring with their fellow Jews in their anti-Venizelist anger. While doing so they also dealt a blow to the anti-Zionist Moderates who preached acculturation and reconciliation with Venizelos. As it was eloquently put by the Zionist mouthpiece “we wish to remind [our public] that our anti-Semites are not self-taught in their war against us [the Jews] ... but that they have been taught ... probably by the Jews [themselves] .... who for the last three or four years in their wish to strike both Zionism and Zionists have found a miserable weapon, [that is] treason, machination, distortion of our actions, and presentation [of Zionists] as anti-patriotic and enemies of the State, etc.”<sup>456</sup>

In July 1933, on the occasion of the Zionist elections held in Salonika, the pre-electoral discourse of the General Zionists reflected their intention to capitalise on what they had achieved - or believed to have achieved - until then.<sup>457</sup> Thus, although the emigration permits for all Greek Jews from April to December 1933 were 325, the Zionist mouthpiece refused to acknowledge the restricted number of emigration quotas,

---

<sup>454</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 10 March 1933. (Greek section of the newspaper).

<sup>455</sup>A. Rekanati, “Ha-Zionim ha-Revisionistim Be-Saloniki”, in D. Rekanati, (ed.), *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruyicion de Yeruchalayin del Balkan*, 463-494 (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972), p. 379.

<sup>456</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 9 June 1933. (French translation, Bulletin de la Presse Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).

<sup>457</sup>They called themselves ‘General Zionists’ only when participating in Zionist elections.



and spoke about 'imagined' figures of 5,000.<sup>458</sup> Then, shrewdly enough, the General Zionists did their best to make this emigration success seem their own achievement, usurping in a way the deftness and ingenuity of many ordinary Salonika Jews whose successful emigration to Palestine was primarily a result of individual means and personal efforts rather than the outcome of the official politics of the Jewish Agency.<sup>459</sup> At the same time, an effort was made to 'sweeten the pill' of 'selective emigration', by presenting it as a necessary precondition for the smooth integration of Jewish emigrants to Palestine which asked for agricultural preparation and the learning of Hebrew.<sup>460</sup>

It is true that, as far as the electoral results were concerned, the elections were a clear triumph for the General Zionists who won in Salonika 590 out of 942 votes. The rest of the votes were distributed among the other four Zionist organisations, which received the following: 134 for the Revisionists, 94 for the Mizrahis, and 124 for the Tseire Mizrahis and the Radicals together.<sup>461</sup> However, if taken into consideration the fact that only 937 Salonika Zionists had voted, one could hardly speak of 'triumph'. The figures revealed that only 2,043 Jews out of a population of more than 50,000 people had shown interest in the Zionist work and paid the *shekel* which granted them the right to vote. More gloomy comments would go as far as to state that even this fourteen per cent was too optimistic a percentage when considering that amongst the 2,043 *shekalists* listed in Salonika only half of them actually practised their right to vote and 50 per cent

---

<sup>458</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 10 March 1934. (Greek section of the newspaper).

<sup>459</sup>According to the Zionist campaign, it was due to their vital contributions, moral and financial sacrifices as well due to their personal efforts, that the Greek Jews had obtained the number of 230 permits during 1933, which was considered a relatively high number in relation to the number of the Jewish inhabitants in Greece. The estimated number would have been 20 permits *per semester*. Thus Salonika had become the fourth centre of emigration to Palestine after Poland, Germany and Romania. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 14 July 1933. (French translation, Bulletin de la Presse Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippou Dragoumes).

<sup>460</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 26 July 1933.

<sup>461</sup>*La Volonté*, 31 July 1933.

abstained.<sup>462</sup> The low popular interest in the Zionist work was emphasised by Isaac Grunbaum, the Polish Zionist leader, who visited Salonika in August 1934 and pointed to Leon Rekanati, the president of the community, that the Zionist achievement of Salonika Jews was not satisfactory.<sup>463</sup>

A new blow was dealt to Jewish emigration in the summer of 1933 when Palestinian authorities imposed new restrictions on emigration which affected the 'tourist-emigrants'. In Salonika many articles were published in the Jewish press describing the agonising situation of many *Salonika* emigrants, who, after having sold their property and bought expensive tickets, were not allowed to disembark in any of the Palestinian ports and were sent back to Salonika.<sup>464</sup> Following the stopping of the emigration movement voices of protest came from the Greek Zionist Federation which talked about 3,000 Greek Jews (mostly from Salonika) left stranded in Palestine.<sup>465</sup>

Despite - or because of - these depressing developments in the emigration of Salonika Jews the Zionist press continued to attempt to excite the Jewish population. In August 1933, *La Renaissencia Djoudia* wrote: "The movement of emigration [was]

---

<sup>462</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 2 August 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>463</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 16 August 1934. (Greek section of the newspaper). Grunbaum expressed his hope that Salonika would occupy once again the high position it used to have among the other communities of the Jewish Diaspora.

<sup>464</sup>According to a report of the Governor General of Macedonia, the majority of these 'tourists' had sought after emigration as a way out of the economic crisis in Salonika. In order to have their passports stamped by the English Consular they had: a) to hold 'return tickets', b) to pay in £10-15 as a guarantee for their non-permanent stay in Palestine and c) to show that they carried foreign currency of £30. Once restrictions affected these tourists who were refused disembarkation, some of them came back to Salonika while others went to Beirut or elsewhere waiting either to get a permission and enter Palestine or to find the financial means to come back. Governor General of Macedonia to Greek Foreign Ministry, 31 July 1933, 1934 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM. On 4 August 1933, 27 excursionists, who were sailing with 'Kerkyra' and were forbidden to disembark, returned to Salonika. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 8 August 1933, 1934 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>465</sup>Arditti to communal council, 21 November 1933, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.



being strengthened daily among the Jews. More than 1000 families (5000 persons) have left Salonika in the last 3-4 years. The ones who left have created in Palestine a new life and like new 'Americans' have started sending money to their relatives left in Salonika, which [was] a great relief for the community [because they were the needy who were depending on communal support].<sup>466</sup>

Problems with the Palestinian authorities apart, more difficulties started appearing which exposed the weaknesses of Zionist politics and their disorganised character. To begin with, in the summer of 1933 the Zionist leadership confessed in a letter written to the president of the Jewish community of Salonika that their annual budget of 100,000 Drachmas no longer sufficed for the preparation of *Halutzim*, the individual cost of which had risen to 2,000 Drachmas, and asked that the community contribute an annual amount of 25,000 Drachmas.<sup>467</sup> In order to succeed in their request they repeated the standard argument that the annual emigration of lower middle-class Jews and of 200 poor Jewish children, besides being a step closer to the Zionist vision, could relieve economically the communal budget.<sup>468</sup> Moreover, the preparation of emigrants was impeded by the lack of space within Salonika suitable for their agricultural training. According to a report from a Greek official the Zionists had constantly searched for a place around the district of Salonika without finding one.<sup>469</sup> A case in point was Mallah's efforts in August 1933 to arrange that Jewish workers and members of the Zionist organisations *Ageoula* and Max Nordau take upon themselves

---

<sup>466</sup>*La Renaissance Djoudia*, beginning August 1933. (French translation, Bulletin de la Presse Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes). See also Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 August 1933, 1934 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>467</sup>Mallah to communal council, Salonika, 2 February 1934, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.

<sup>468</sup>Allalouf to communal council, Salonika, 31 August 1933, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.

<sup>469</sup>Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 18 March 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

the cultivation of the big garden of Robert Donalson, the Secretary of the English Consulate.<sup>470</sup>

In an effort to find a way out of the crisis while continuing their contribution to the politically popular emigration movement, General Zionists showed great decisiveness in promoting emigration of tobacco and portworkers who could be professionally absorbed in Palestine without needing costly agricultural experience. Indeed, the former had felt heavy upon them the disastrous consequences of the crisis of the 1930s, while the latter had lost much of their *raison d'être* since the importance of the port of Salonika for the Greek economy had decreased for the sake of the ports of Piraeus and Patras. Florentin in person undertook a trip to Palestine in the summer of 1933 for the sake of exploring the possibilities of emigration of port-workers for the ports of Haifa and Yaffo.<sup>471</sup>

During 1934 the role of Salonika Zionists in the emigration movement reached its limits. Financial problems within the Greek Zionist Federation increased as more requests for urgent financial contributions by the community for the preparation of the *Halutzim* were submitted.<sup>472</sup> At the same time the need for the emigration of German Jews in the light of increased antisemitism in Germany resulted in a lower priority for the emigration of other European Jews, Salonika Jews included. Thus by 1934, it was obvious that selective and gradual emigration had changed its 'nature', focusing less on professional and economic conditions and more on geographical origins. Given this tight situation the Salonika Zionists strove to maximise the benefit they could draw from the possibilities available to them by promoting even more the emigration of port-

---

<sup>470</sup>Police Headquarters, Salonika, to Gendarmerie Station, 28 August 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>471</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 23 March 1934.

<sup>472</sup>In February 1934 they asked urgently for 10,000 Drachmas. Mallah to communal council, 2 February 1934, Thessaloniki 308, CAHJP.



workers. It is true that upon Florentin's arrival in Salonika their hopes for emigration were raised very high. He declared that it was the intention of the Greek Zionist Federation to channel around 400 to 500 of the emigration permits to Salonika port-workers with the intention of settling them together with their families in Haifa.<sup>473</sup> Their life there was described in positive terms, enjoying high social status and earning monthly from P£8 to 14. However, once again their intention to push forward a plan able to rise their local profile was conditioned upon financial considerations. Namely, around 1,500 pounds had to be raised by the Zionist Federation as well as by communal and other sort of contributions in order to cover the costs of the emigration of the port-workers which included passport, taxes and transport.<sup>474</sup>

The consensus of Salonika Zionism over selective emigration was also evident in their 'understanding' towards the decreased number of emigration permits issued by the British authorities for the first semester of 1934. Unlike the Revisionists, Florentin did not condemn them as a measure of political character opposing emigration, but even praised the measure as the necessary means for the preservation of harmony between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.<sup>475</sup> He tried to allay those fears that presented Greek Jews as being discriminated against by the argument that in 1933 the quota for Greek Jews had been the same as the quota for German Jews.<sup>476</sup> Florentin also attacked illegal immigration carried under the pretext of tourism and stated that only true tourists were welcomed in Palestine.

---

<sup>473</sup>It had already accepted 120 skilful workers from Salonika..

<sup>474</sup>The emigrants would probably be able to contribute with the half so they had to raise a capital of 1500 to 2000 pounds. And the Salonika Jews already settled in Palestine had also been working on that. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 23 March 1934. (Greek section of the newspaper).

<sup>475</sup>"The Palestinian government had never had the intention to oppose emigration. The only thing to be taken into consideration, [was] to go ahead gradually." *Ibid.*

<sup>476</sup>Until 1933 7,000 Greek Jews were in Palestine: 5,000 in Tel-Aviv, 600 in Haifa, 400 in Jerusalem and the rest in the other places in Palestine. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 23 March 1934.

In a city where Zionist appeals for emigration had found a warm response among the local population but had fallen short of legal possibilities and financial means, it was but natural that political forces opposing Zionism would seek to exploit this inconsistency. Moreover, even these very achievements of Zionism were adding extra fuel to the political fire in Salonika, for amongst the people who had emigrated there were many Jewish business people and middle-class Jews whose absence from Salonika had deprived the community of an economically strong element. As a result of their emigration communal contributions via taxes - which had been the foundation of a strong communal network of beneficiary institutions - were reduced, placing an extra burden on the Jewish poor who could no longer rely on a strong communal purse. On account of the increased degree of poverty and misery of the local Jewish population a verbal civil war erupted once again between Zionists and Communists. Communist discourse accused Zionists of having dragged Salonika Jews into a hazardous adventure without offering them any actual support. This intra-communal conflict surfaced on the occasion of the last communal elections, which took place in May 1934. The Zionists during their electoral campaign ignored the issue of emigration - which was no longer of use - and insisted on their pre-1932 political agenda which had mainly dealt with intra-communal politics. This shift was evident in the new composition of the Zionist list which included certain Jews known for their commitment to the communal cause. A case in point was Yomtov Yacoel who had sought accommodation with the Greek authorities as a means of achieving the fully-fledged integration of the community to the Greek state. The Zionists repeated their proposal of 1927 to create a National political party<sup>477</sup> and in an effort to attract communist votes they stated that they would even

---

<sup>477</sup>This unity would bring together all constructive and conservative forces of Judaism which would agree on an programme enjoying consensus and being able to overcome stagnation and inactivity. *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 11 May 1934. (As translated by Gila Hadar).



accept the representation of people from the communist-dominated lower class quarters in the communal assembly as long as they abandoned their non-Jewish discourse and proved that they understood not only “quarter problems but also problems that [affected] all of Judaism.”<sup>478</sup>

The results of the elections gave the Zionists 21 out of the 50 seats of the communal assembly, without however giving them the majority they had asked for.<sup>479</sup> However, if these elections showed that their position remained strong among the communal voters, not equally strong was their position among the Zionist voters who in the Zionist elections of 1935 showed their discontent at the course of Zionist politics. After two years of a migratory movement, whose success was great but its dependence on Zionist policies minimal, 1934 and 1935 were the years when the Zionists tried to overcome the intense financial problems and to make up for the discrepancy between the need of the local population to emigrate and their inability to provide them with enough emigration permits. Following Grunbaum’s visit new attempts were made by *Salonika* Zionists to increase the ‘forgotten’ budget of the Greek Zionist Federation. Bessantchi, who in September 1934 was the representative of *Keren Hayessod*, made a tour in New Greece, in Serres, Drama, Kavalla, Komotene, Nea Orestiada, Didimoticho and Alexandroupole, for the sake of raising money for this organisation.<sup>480</sup> At the same time Yomtov Yacoel tried to persuade the Greek Jews during the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the *Keren Hayessod* of its importance for their emigration plans to Palestine and to indicate the compulsory and annual nature of the contribution to *Keren Hayessod*. Once again Jewish nationalism was converging with Greek nationalism as Yacoel pointed to the efforts of *Filike Etairia*, which had supported the Greek War of

---

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 239.

<sup>480</sup> *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 14 September 1934. (Greek section of the newspaper).

Independence in 1821, and to the self-sacrifices of the Greeks which brought the absorption and rehabilitation of the Asia Minor refugees in 1923.<sup>481</sup>

Financial problems apart, the General Zionists had to cope with the further tightening of emigration regulations as it was stated during October 1934 in the X Committee of the Zionist Federation in Greece. However, Dr Helfman, representative of the Zionist Executive of Czernowitz and delegate of the Central Bureau of the Jewish National Fund, did not accept the argument uttered by Revisionist circles according to which the British government did not want the creation of a Jewish majority, and proposed as counter-argument the fact that the Jewish population in Palestine had doubled from 1922 to 1931.<sup>482</sup>

The end of 1934 marked the end of the active presence of Salonika Zionists in local Zionist politics. The Zionist elite in Salonika had finally become aware of the minor degree of actual help it could offer to Salonika Jews who almost by themselves had managed to find their way out from the crisis. The electoral campaign for the election of the last Greek Zionist representative to the XIX Zionist Congress, convened in Luzern in August in 1935, opened with a strongly apologetic stance on behalf of the General Zionists, who focused on the by that time banal issues of preparation of *Halutzim*, *Keren Kayemet*, *Keren Hayessod* and emigration to Palestine. Finally they were sincere enough to accept that the greatest part of their progress in Palestine had been accomplished because of private initiative, although they did claim some credit for the work done by the Zionist Executive. The only thing that the General Zionists in Salonika could boast about was what General Zionism had done for other Jews e.g. the efforts to help 25,000 German Jews settle in Palestine and save them from the Hitler's tempest.

---

<sup>481</sup> *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 3 January 1936. (Greek section of the newspaper).

<sup>482</sup> *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 12 October 1934. (Greek section of the newspaper).



In a rather self-excusing tone they warranted selective emigration as the only way to avoid problems with the Arab population. At the same time attacks were voiced against the Revisionists who were a kind of scapegoat since, according to the Zionist press, it was because of their rebellious stance within the World Zionist Organisation that so much discord had erupted and so much time had been wasted. Finally they asked that should Weizmann return to office the jurisdiction of the executive should last four years.<sup>483</sup> During these elections 2,264 Salonika Jews voted, almost double that in 1933. However, the results were a great débâcle for the General Zionists who for the first time in their long presence in Zionist politics came second. They received 735 votes and the Mizrahis with their plans for massive emigration were first with 790. Third were the Revisionists with 318 votes and then came the Tseire Mizrahis with 388 votes.<sup>484</sup> Four years later Zionist activities had faded away. The Jewish communal schools did not attract Jewish pupils any longer and only a few attended gatherings in Zionist clubs. During Metaxas's dictatorship Zionist leaders - the ones who had remained in Salonika - pleaded for assimilation while the poor still wished to emigrate to Palestine. On the eve of World War II "there was just silence."<sup>485</sup>

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to show the various facets of Zionist developments in Salonika during the inter-war years. Starting as the main political force representing the community, Zionism came to lose over time its dominant position within local politics in the light of events occurring in Salonika as well as abroad. The main factor which accounted for this gradual loss of power was their inability to uphold their initial

---

<sup>483</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 26 July 1935. (Greek section of the newspaper).

<sup>484</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 2 August 1935.

<sup>485</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 248.

'umbrella' role once new political groups emerged from within the previously united Zionist-dominated Jewish bourgeois camp. These groups represented opposite ideological programmes which went beyond the 'stretching ability' of the Salonika Zionists as was clear with assimilation and Mizrachism/Revisionism respectively.

It is true that until 1930 the Zionists, by shifting the special weight of their flexible ideological programme from the one pole to another and by propounding 'a Jewish identity in progress', succeeded in forming victorious alliances with other groups and thus guaranteeing their central presence in communal politics. In the 1926 elections this goal was implemented by adopting the all-encompassing anti-communist motto thereby minimising the "blackmail potential" of the Communists, while in 1928 the same result was achieved by emphasising Jewish nationalism. From that point onwards simultaneous defections on the fringes of the Zionist movement were taking place. At the same time, economic, social and political problems overwhelmed Salonika Jews and challenged the efficiency and reliability of Zionist politics. The electoral results of this period clearly showed that voters in Salonika were attracted by parties which provided a clear ideological profile, given that when combined Radicals and Moderates succeeded in getting up to fifty per cent of Jewish votes in the various elections.

In other words Salonika Zionists found themselves trapped in their own political legacy and in a conjuncture of unfavourable conditions and changing demands on behalf of Salonika Jewry. The fact that the Zionists were the main political force in the community constantly preoccupied with 'games of power' inevitably influenced the entire political setting of the community. The latter found itself torn apart by micro-politics over ideological discussions and unable to address the burning existential issues



confronting Salonika Jewry from different directions. Given this high degree of polarisation and political disintegration, the community failed to possess the minimum degree of unity which was essential for the successful pursuit of a communal cause.

# THE GROUP OF SALONIKA MODERATES: THE POLITICS OF ACCULTURATION

## 5.1. Introduction

Less concerned about ‘voice’ and more concerned about ‘loyalty’<sup>486</sup>, towards both the community and the Greek state, were Salonika Jews who felt that integration into Greek society was the answer to the problems the Jewish people were facing during the inter-war years. Worried by the political and in turn cultural hegemony of Salonika Zionism these Jews set up their own party in 1930 called the Moderate Party. In order to understand, explain and assess the emergence and consolidation of this party this chapter seeks to address the following questions: Who were these individuals and how did they come to form a solid political group within the community? What was the ideological programme of this party? How did this ideology influence their relation to other Jewish political parties? What was their relevance for the course of political life in Salonika when considering electoral results?

The option for integration in the host society is a recurrent theme in minority studies, Jewish including. For central and western European Jews this option became available from the late eighteenth century onwards, when profound intellectual, social, political and economic changes, had altered the European reality and lifted the scene for the process of modernisation,<sup>487</sup> thereby shattering the foundations of a society hitherto rooted in traditions.<sup>488</sup> ‘Enlightened’ scholars argued for the full separation of Church

---

<sup>486</sup>See A. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>487</sup>For a definition of the term “modernisation” as well as of its components, S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (London: Wiley-Interscience Publication, 1973), pp. 23-29.

<sup>488</sup>J. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1989), p. 11.



and State, encouraged religious toleration and scientific progress, while at the same time sowing the first seeds for political liberalism. Within such an atmosphere the social, economic and cultural segregation of the Jews was depicted as incompatible with the current notions of citizenship and civil equality.<sup>489</sup> This process culminated in the declaration of Count Clermont Tonnerre in the French National Assembly in 1789-91 according to which “the Jews should be denied everything as a nation but granted everything as individuals...”<sup>490</sup> From that moment onwards the liberal offer spread in other European countries as well, changing forever the situation of the Jews .

One of the multiple consequences of this new chapter in Jewish history was that many Jews took this liberal offer on its word, and sought integration in their host surroundings. Thus the efforts of the assimilated Jews to speak French, German or Russian aspired at achieving *behavioural or cultural assimilation*, or in other words, at *acculturating*.<sup>491</sup> Once they accomplished their goal the next step they took was to join different institutions of the host society, namely to become part and parcel of their surroundings. They also sought *amalgamation* by intermarriages, while at the same time they declared their fervent patriotism for their country and showed what is called *identificational assimilation*. At the beginning of the assimilation experiment and in the absence of anti-Semitism enthusiasm was widespread.<sup>492</sup> However, the rise of antisemitism in all its virulent forms during the last decades of the nineteenth century, in France, Germany, Russia, proved the numerous weaknesses of the “assimilation experiment” and led many Jews to reflect on new paths of social and political existence.

---

<sup>489</sup>For a description of the Jewish life in the ghetto during the Middle Ages see J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770-1870* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), pp. 3-63.

<sup>490</sup>Berkovitz 1989: p. 71

<sup>491</sup>See Table: *The Assimilation Variables*, as proposed by G. M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 71.

<sup>492</sup>Berkovitz 1989: pp. 111-112.

Along similar but not identical lines developed the case of the moderate Jews in Salonika. In particular, they sought to achieve acculturation, that is adoption of “the culture of the host society, including its memories, sentiments and attitudes” without, however, going as far as advocating assimilation, namely the process which “leads to the attenuation of loyalties to the former culture and ultimately, to the disappearance of group identity.”<sup>493</sup> Indeed as the first part of this chapter will show, Moderate Jews developed a pro-acculturation discourse which emphasised steadily the need for harmonious co-existence between Jews and Greeks. They also claimed that what could guarantee unruffled Greco-Jewish relations was the feelings of loyalty and patriotism which the Jews nourished for the Greek Homeland. Parallel to that, however, the moderate Jews took drastic steps to protect Jews from antisemitism and to help them maintain their particular identity, as this could be preserved by the observation of the Sunday Rest.

The efforts of the Moderates to equalise being ‘good Greeks’ and ‘good Jews’ found their most telling expression in the field of linguistic acculturation, namely the simultaneous learning of Greek and French which were, in the opinion of the *Alliancists* - the most important group of the Jewish Moderates - the national and ethnic languages respectively of Salonika Jews. It was only too obvious that, while learning Greek in order to be a ‘good Greek’ was a common place amongst the majority of the Jews, learning French in order to be a ‘good Jew’ separated the Moderates from the Zionists who considered Hebrew to be the ethnic language of the Salonika Jews. When combined with the current political situation within the community, the linguistic conflict between Zionists and Moderates led the latter to break their political alliance with the Zionist party and create their own party, seeking to have their own political say

---

<sup>493</sup>Berkovitz 1989: p. 68.



in the political course of communal affairs.

## 5.2. Actors and background of assimilationist politics

The tune of moderate discourse through the years under consideration was played mainly by the supporters of the Paris-based organisation *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (hereafter AIU) which from the early years of its establishment had sought to propagate the assimilationist ideology amongst all Jews living in its spheres of influence. However, it was explicitly stated that assimilation should not be “servile, tending to disappear under a factual uniformity the hereditary characters which we [the Jews] have from our past; on the contrary, we are committed to preserve them as an integral part of our human patrimony which has been given to us by our ancestors and which we have to transmit to our descendants.”<sup>494</sup> The *Alliance* was represented in Salonika by the *Association des Anciens Élèves de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle* established in 1898 by the first graduates from the *Alliance* schools. This association throughout the years under consideration took many initiatives and shouldered many projects of cultural and charitable character. It ran a Library, which occasionally exceeded the number of 1,000 volumes per annum, and organised literary evenings which focused on literary and artistic issues. Moreover, a special commission was set up in order to organise on a regular basis public and private fund raising for the sake of subsidising the Allatinini Orphelinat and the Hirsch Hospital.<sup>495</sup> A leading figure in this work was M. Morpugo,

---

<sup>494</sup>As cited in Chouraqui 1965: p. 255.

<sup>495</sup>Nehama to AIU, 4 April 1929, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

who also acted as a president of the Central Commission for the Help to the homeless people of the lower class quarter of Akdge Medjid.<sup>496</sup>

Though not as influential as the *Alliancists* there was a second group of moderate Jews who steadily worked for the acculturation of Salonika Jews to their Greek environment. This group was represented by members of the *B'nei Brith*<sup>497</sup>, which, although it *did* start as a Zionist organisation, its pro-assimilationist politics during the inter-war years brought them into serious conflict with the Salonika Zionists. When considering the simmering tension between AIU and *B'nei Brith* over the issue of emigration of Russian Jews to the US in the 1860s and the ensuing conflict due to the “German schism” which had resulted in the creation of the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*,<sup>498</sup> the complementary work of *Alliance* and *B'nei Brith* in Salonika lends itself as the only example of co-operation between the two groups in the Jewish Diaspora

Both the *Alliance* and the *B'nei Brith* adopted a moderate discourse which steadily emphasised the need for harmonious relations between Greeks and Jews. In order to present and analyse the moderate discourse this chapter will draw precious information from the Jewish daily *Le Progrès* (1925-1939) which, although it cannot be considered as the official mouthpiece of these groups, echoed more often than not a philo-moderate discourse. This deduction is also confirmed by the fact that since 1926 and until September 1933 *Le Progrès* was used by the General Governance of

---

<sup>496</sup>In 1927 an appeal to support the work of the aforementioned committee found great public response. *Le Progrès*, 26 May 1927.

<sup>497</sup>*B'nei Brith* was founded in New York in 1843 on the Freemason model with the aim to support moral conduct and Jewish solidarity whose importance in a country of immigration cannot be overemphasised. From 1880 onwards *B'nei Brith* expanded its activities beyond the United States. S. Ettinger, “The modern period”, in H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 852. In 1912 a *B'nei Brith* Lodge was opened in Salonika. Molho 1997: p. 341.

<sup>498</sup>Chouraqui 1965: p. 61.



Macedonia as the official agent of information for public opinion which wished to be enlightened about “the official stance of the Greek government”.<sup>499</sup> Moreover, the fact that *Le Progrès* celebrated with enthusiasm the formation of the Association of Assimilationists in December 1928 corroborates the qualification of this daily as a reliable source of moderate ideas.

In order to be able to follow and appraise the evolution of the Moderates during the inter-war years it is essential to give a short overview of the work accomplished by the AIU in the pre-1923 years. As it has already been mentioned the AIU had envisaged the intellectual and social advance of Oriental Jewry which, when compared to the emancipated western Jewry, were considered to be backward and non-enlightened.<sup>500</sup> Copying in a way the very emancipatory formula offered to them by the Enlightenment the *Alliancists* decided to establish a broad network of primary schools in North Africa and the Near East in order to elevate the intellectual and social status of Jews living in these areas and propagate the assimilationist doctrine.<sup>501</sup> In Salonika, the AIU set up its first school for boys in 1870.<sup>502</sup> Between 1873 and 1910 the *Alliance* set up in Salonika 9 more schools which were attended by 3,046 pupils, of both sexes. The main language of instruction was French which was considered not only the “the civilising language

---

<sup>499</sup>One can only assume that a Greek official institution would use as its mouthpiece a moderate instrument. In order to accomplish its role this daily was granted by the General Governance of Macedonia a monthly allocation of 7,000 Drachmas. General Governance of Macedonia to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 15 September 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>500</sup>For a critical approach of the ‘alleged superiority of the West over the Orient’ see E. Benbassa, “Israël face à lui-même: Judaïsme Occidental et Judaïsme Ottoman (XIXe-XXe siècles)”, *Pardès*, 7 (1988), 105-129.

<sup>501</sup>Ibid.: p. 109.

<sup>502</sup>For a more detailed account of the conditions and the forces which gave birth to the establishment of the *Alliance* schools in Salonika see Chapter 1.

*par excellence*”<sup>503</sup> but also “the common and commercial language of the Mediterranean basin.”<sup>504</sup> Another popular language was Italian which, when coupled with Hebrew and Turkish, rendered the *Alliance* “the Emporium of Languages”.<sup>505</sup> The curriculum adopted in these schools was subjected to changes as these were dictated by the Central Board from Paris; the latter also appointed an inspector who supervised the operation of these schools. The most famous inspector in Salonika was Joseph Nehama, historian and President of the Alliance Bank.<sup>506</sup> In general, the syllabus included the teaching of the local (Ottoman) history, “Arithmetic, Physics, Geography, Natural Sciences, World and Jewish History and Painting. Music or Gymnastics were also taken only if the day’s schedule did not exceed 6-7 hours. In the Girl’s school Sewing, Linear Painting and Home Economics subjects were mandatory.”<sup>507</sup>

Last but not least the *Alliance* established in Salonika in 1877 its first vocational school which, along with that of Istanbul, aimed at providing the poor working Jewish classes with vocational training thereby boosting their social regeneration. Ten years later the same type of school was set up for girls followed in 1910 by another school called *Nouvelle*. These institutions, which bore the name “*Ateliers*”, offered the girls the chance to learn how to make clothing accessories (hats, girdles and bras as well as

---

<sup>503</sup>A. Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance israélite universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 88.

<sup>504</sup>G. Weil, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Emancipation of the Jewish communities in the Mediterranean”, *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 24 (1982), p. 24.

<sup>505</sup>Rodrigue 1990: p. 85.

<sup>506</sup>Joseph Nehama (1881-1971) was one of the most influential Jewish leaders of the community. During the first years of the circulation of *Avante* he contributed regularly with several articles. It was also thanks to his intervention that *Avante* could restart its circulation after having been closed down by General Sarrail, commander-in-chief of the French and British Forces in Salonika. Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1997: 427. Nehama wrote the book *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique* (Salonique, Paris: 1935-1978). After his return from Bergen-Belsen he wrote together with Michael Molho *In Memoriam*.

<sup>507</sup>R. Molho, “Education in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki in the beginning of the Twentieth Century”, *Balkan Studies*, 34/2, 1993, p. 264.



dresses). As a result, the female apprentices could after their studies give up their prior household activities, engage in production and thus be able to change their social status.<sup>508</sup> In general, one could argue that the educational network of AIU altered both the intellectual and social<sup>509</sup> predicament of Salonika Jews as well as their identity, which came to bear signs of a French cultural tradition. However, according to scholarly opinion, it did not lead to a complete “Gallicization” of Salonika Jewry, since the ability to speak French became an additional characteristic of the community, the identity of which seemed to maintain primarily its Judeo-Spanish features.<sup>510</sup> “Thus the boundaries of Judeo-Spanish ethnicity shifted, and appropriated, coopted, domesticated, and Judeo-Hispanicized French.”<sup>511</sup>

Additionally, the *Alliance* education exerted a profound influence upon the Jewish communal schools. Indeed, local authorities appreciated the educational benefits deriving from the *Alliance* education and set forth to reform the existing communal school of Talmud Torah. For the sake of this purpose in 1887 “extra taxes were voted, one on kosher meat and another on the communal contribution, while everyone, rich and poor, the non-Jews, the synagogues as well as the *Alliance*, raised money.”<sup>512</sup> However, a radical reformation of the Talmud Torah did not happen until 1910 when the Rabbi Dr. Itzhak Epstein became headmaster of the school. He applied teaching principles of the *Alliance* schools while at the same time he promoted the teaching of

---

<sup>508</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 265.

<sup>509</sup>The *Alliance* establishments did not confine their work to educate the masses and offering chances of apprenticeship. They also created a certain idea of socialisation which was in harmony with the presence of a dominant bourgeoisie and which was reflected in the setting up of a number of clubs of varied political orientation. Benbassa and Rodrigue 1993: p. 86.

<sup>510</sup>“As one of the foes of Judeo-Spanish, Moise Fresco, put it, French was like a ‘gala dress’ while Judeo-Spanish was the ‘old, comfortable dressing gown’ ”. As cited in: Rodrigue 1990: p. 86.

<sup>511</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1995: p. 89.

<sup>512</sup>Molho 1993: p. 266.

the Hebrew language. Meanwhile the *Alliance* influence became evident in the rest of the schools of Salonika. A number of private schools such as H. Salem, Abr. Varrios, Gattegno, Pinto, Altech, Ovadia, El Progresso, Hahinouh and Ezra followed the educational methods applied in the *Alliancist* schools. “By 1917 the *Alliance* had also taken under its control all the communal schools....The upkeep of their financial support depended on the trimestrial report of school inspectors who saw that the *Alliance* instruction were duly followed.”<sup>513</sup>

Another branch of the education of the Salonika Jews which bore the mark of the influence of the *Alliance* was “the private religious educational sector composed then of 28 one-room schools “*hadarim*” and “*hevroth*” comprising 3,000 students, taught under deplorable conditions. In 1911 with the initiative as well as the financial support of the *Alliance*, the Ottoman government and the community “the old schools fused into 7 new establishments following the Talmud Torah model”.<sup>514</sup> However these new schools proved short-lived and when in 1914 the *Alliance* removed its financial support they were forced to close down.

The importance of the educational work accomplished by the *Alliance* was also evident in the political power of this group within the community in the pre-1923 years. Thus until 1911 it was the Moderates who were running the communal affairs proving the resilience of the assimilationist ideology over Zionism and socialism alike.<sup>515</sup> However, it did not take long before Zionist ideology struck roots in Salonika thereby making Zionism the most popular political force amongst Salonika Jews. The political predominance of the Zionists and the subsequent marginalisation of the Assimilationists

---

<sup>513</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 267.

<sup>514</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup>*Ibid.*



were confirmed in the communal elections of 1913 - the first time that the Zionists constituted the majority in the communal council.<sup>516</sup>

With the annexation of Salonika to the Greek state and the subsequent political turmoil, Salonika *Alliancists* took measures whose double goal was to protect their status in Salonika, as this was guaranteed by the smooth operation of the schools, and to contain the rising 'Zionist menace.' In 1912 and later during the Paris Peace Conference Salonika *Alliancists* contacted French circles abroad and asked them to intervene in favour of the Salonika Jews and thus deter the Greek government from taking any measures which would impair the status of their community. One of their main arguments was that the Hellenisation scheme of Salonika would ultimately prove to be detrimental to French cultural interests, which had been - hitherto successfully - advanced via the French-oriented educational system of the *Alliance*. As it was eloquently put "wherever the Alliance creates a school, there comes into being a small home of French culture."<sup>517</sup> Cultural benefits apart, France could also safeguard its political interests by not letting the Gallicised profile of Salonika fade away. Were this to happen, many Jews would "slide" to the Zionist camp the ultimate goal of which - the establishment of a Jewish state - was unlikely to be under French jurisdiction.<sup>518</sup> A more elaborate version of this position was expressed in a memorandum addressed by the Vice President and the Secretary of the AIU to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The former made an appeal to the French liberal spirit, expressed the inauspicious situation of Salonika Jews and suggested the following: a) the administration of the city

---

<sup>516</sup>Molho 1997: p. 342.

<sup>517</sup>As cited in Rodrigue 1990: p. 154.

<sup>518</sup>Doc. no Z-3284, Europe-Grèce 69, AQDO. See also C. Levigne, "Le Mouvement Sioniste en France et la Politique Française au Levant, 1900-1920", *Relations internationales*, 12 (1997), pp. 281-306. This article - *inter alia* - comments on the political setback which was inflicted upon France by the military victory of general Allenby, who liberated Palestine and Syria without the French, and by the Balfour Declaration.

should be entrusted to an elected administrative body with a strong Jewish presence and b) the Jews should be allowed to preserve their autonomy in the conduct of all cultural and educational activities.<sup>519</sup> No matter how luring this proposal might have been for the French Foreign Ministry, France did not support the plan of rendering Salonika a free port because it “did not believe that the Alliance would be able to resist the Zionists there.”<sup>520</sup>

### 5.3. The road to party formation

With the end of the Asia Minor campaign and the subsequent engagement of the Greek officialdom in minority issues, Salonika Moderates came to terms with the new situation and tried to make the best of it. They adopted a political discourse which could allow them to maintain good relations with the Greek officialdom whose support or even tolerance was necessary should the *Alliance* schools be able to continue operating in Salonika. In addition to practical advantages, the endorsement of a pro-acculturation discourse was in agreement with the ideology of assimilation, the blueprint of the *Alliance*.

One of the most salient characteristics of the inter-war moderate discourse was the trend to go beyond acculturation and identify Greeks with Jews. The outcome of this attempt was the creation of a theory of Greco-Judaism which implied the existence of a ‘special relationship’ between the two people.<sup>521</sup> Following up the belief of Eugène Manuel, the author of the first manifesto of AIU, who had suggested that the Roman,

---

<sup>519</sup>Additionally, the Hellenization programme for the city was at odds with the French oriented educational work of the *Alliance*, while the fact that it was only the schools of the *Alliance* which were requisitioned for the accommodation of Greek soldiers or refugees was a proof of the hostile attitude of the Greek state towards the educational work of the *Alliance*. The President of the AIU to Pichon, 12 February 1919, Europe-Grèce 69, Z-325-4, AQDO.

<sup>520</sup>Rodrigue 1990: p. 154.

<sup>521</sup>*Le Progrès*, 23 July 1924, and 25 May 1927.



the Greek and the Jewish cultural legacies constitute the pillars of modern civilisation,<sup>522</sup> *Le Progrès* wrote in 1925 that “Hellenism, like Judaism, had lived in many countries of the old and the new world and had been able to preserve their language, religion and national soul, while at the same time both [Greeks and Jews] have become loyal patriots wherever they lived.”<sup>523</sup>

Patriotism and the preservation of ethnic characteristics in the Jewish and Greek Diaspora were not the only connecting links between Jews and Greeks. They also had a common share in persecution, martyrdom and oppression, while not few were the occasions when the two peoples had supported each other in difficult moments. Thus many famous Jewish persons such as Joseph Reinach, Max Nordau, and Henry Morgenthau had protested against the sufferings of Greeks and the Armenians under the Ottomans, whereas Eleftherios Venizelos, was among the first leaders to support the Balfour Declaration.<sup>524</sup>

Having established the close resemblance between Greeks and Jews in general, the moderate discourse pointed to the harmonious co-existence between the two peoples in Greece by praising the patriotic feelings of the Jews for the Greek homeland. Thus “patriotism, the intoxicating pastime of the populations of the European powers,”<sup>525</sup> was the trapping of the new Greek Jew whose loyalty to the Greek nation should be beyond any doubt. Via writings in the press and public speeches the Moderates emphasised the patriotic and self-sacrificial fight of the Jews in all critical moments of modern Greek history.

---

<sup>522</sup>Chouraqui 1965: p. 33.

<sup>523</sup>*Le Progrès*, 26 May 1927.

<sup>524</sup>*Le Progrès*, 29 October 1933.

<sup>525</sup>M. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 97.

Particular emphasis was laid upon the historic moments during which the Jews had been accused of having shown little support for the Greek cause, answering thus to the contemporary antisemitic discourse which blamed the Jews for traitorous behaviour. During successive celebrations of the national feast of 25th March - which commemorated the struggle of the Greeks against the Turks for independence - various writings appeared in the moderate Jewish press which glorified the national efforts of the Greeks and exalted the aid and support which the Jews had shown for their national struggle. By applauding the philo-Hellenic attitude of the Jews an answer was given to all those who regarded the Jews as supporters of the Turks and as responsible for the atrocities which the Greek Patriarch had suffered in Constantinople in 1821.<sup>526</sup> A more recent proof of the Jews' loyalty to the Greek nation was their patriotic behaviour in 1912-13 when Salonika was annexed to the Greek state. Articles were published in *Le Progrès* which treated the national event as a glorified page of Greek history overturning thus the antisemitic argument which suggested that the Jews had opposed the Greek annexation of the city and had asked for the imposition of international status.<sup>527</sup>

Celebration of national events was not the only cause for references to patriotism. In 1927, in his effort to rebut an antisemitic article written by Orologas and published in the Greek daily *Tachydromos*, Daniel Allalouf, a prominent Jewish member of the community, pointed out in touchingly worded language the following:

Since the heroic Hellenic army hung the noble and proud white and blue flag in Government House in Salonika the Jews of the city knew ... which were the sacred rights of Hellenism upon the metropolis of Macedonia and

---

<sup>526</sup>In 1932 extracts from the Macedonian diary of N. Dragoumes were published praising the Jews for having fought so gallantly during the Greek War of Independence. *Le Progrès*, 23 December 1932.

<sup>527</sup>*Le Progrès*, 4 June 1933. The year before a number of pictures were published which depicted scenes from the struggle for Macedonia. *Le Progrès*, 26 October 1932.



did not doubt for a single moment that this flag should be installed for ever on the pearl of the Aegean.... And once the Bulgarians burnt by their traditional hostility towards Hellenism flooded the western press with articles accusing the brave Greek army of persecutions and massacres of the inhabitants of this country in order to achieve desired political results, it was the Chief Rabbi J. Meir who spontaneously and under his own proper signature gave a telegraphic *dementi* of all these writings. His *dementi* was published in all the European and American Press for the sake of the Hellenic nation and for the love of the truth.... Finally, this gesture was applauded by King George himself who said how deeply touched he was by the loyalty of the Jewish community.<sup>528</sup>

Even when Papanastasiou tried in 1932 to minimise politically the Jews and said that the latter had opposed the annexation of the city in 1912, Sam Modiano, the editor of *Le Progrès*, denied the accusation and stated that the “Jews cannot be traitors towards a nation with which they have lived for centuries.”<sup>529</sup>

Official representatives apart, simple Jews were also praised for having contributed actively in the difficult hours of the nation, as in the aftermath of the Greco-Bulgarian war in June 1913. The fact that the appeal of the Metropolitan Bishop Gennadius for popular help had found a spontaneous response among many Jews, who assisted the work of organising hospitals and clinics, was praised by the Jewish press; particularly noteworthy was the contribution of many Jewish women who had worked as nurses in the hospitals improvised for the occasion. Moreover, the article reported that the devotion of the Jews had provoked the admiration of thousands of soldiers who had benefited from their care and support, while the Greek General Bayras when visiting the hospitals said with emotion that he “could never imagine that the Jews would have manifested such a cordial and spontaneous feeling in favour of Hellenism.”<sup>530</sup> Finally, quite a few references were made to the heroic efforts of Jewish soldiers who had done their duty to their Greek Homeland and had fought bravely under

---

<sup>528</sup> *Le Progrès*, 26 May 1927.

<sup>529</sup> *Le Progrès*, 4 June 1933.

<sup>530</sup> *Le Progrès*, May 1927.

the Greek flag.<sup>531</sup> Jews showed also their sympathy for the struggle of the Cypriot people for independence, when in September 1931 the Cypriot Autocephalus Church was attacked by the English authorities.<sup>532</sup> However, the nationalist speeches of the moderate Jews did not go as far as advocating war-like nationalism, sensing maybe in a way - like their French fellow Jews four decades before - the fear which a supranational fervour could entail for their status as 'non-genuine Greeks'.<sup>533</sup>

Finally, Jewish writers gave vent to their patriotism in discussions of Communism. It was their belief that the source of the communist evil was Moscow and that, since the politics of Moscow had failed in Germany, they had oriented their activities towards the Balkans, that is Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece. Bulgarian and Greek Communists were accused of stirring up the fanaticism of all the "hated, despised, molested, terrorised albeit rebellious men" against the Jews who were the "undisputed bourgeois element extremely conservative, highly loyal both to its traditions and its past" and thus immune to the hallucinations of bolshevism. In order to strengthen their argument of the co-existence between antisemitism and Communism the case of Germany was invoked, which proved that the stronger Communism was the more virulent the appearance of antisemitism became. Finally they believed that a war against antisemitism could be effective only and *if* it was simultaneously waged against Communism. If such a practice was to bear results an active state intervention was indispensable, and for this reason they invited all successive governments of the inter-

---

<sup>531</sup>*Le Progrès*, 20 May 1927.

<sup>532</sup>*Le Progrès*, 7 November 1931.

<sup>533</sup>As it had happened with the pro-assimilationist French Jews "... the patriotism enunciated within the Jewish community steered clear of la revanche, of the militant advocacy of a war against the Germans.... Perhaps sensing that the inflamed nationalism of the period held a potential danger for the Jews...." Marrus 1971: p. 100.



war years to oppose and suppress antisemitism, since “all governments were responsible for keeping their country clear from social troubles”.<sup>534</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn was that Communism was at the same time anti-Greek and antisemitic, since it was believed to split the Greeks on the one hand and present the Jews as convenient scapegoats on the other. As far as the anti-Greek character of Communism was concerned, the Moderates were once more in striking agreement with the Greek national ideology of the inter-war years which focused on anti-Communism as well. Thus when in 1932 the Greek Communist Party presented itself as a supporter of Jewish interests, it was written that no Greek Jew would ever accept to see Communists in defence of their interests, for such a thing was deplorable and would only serve the anti-Semites.<sup>535</sup>

The sphere of politics was not the only area which offered signs of Jewish patriotism. The Jews were also praised for conducting an exemplary life as citizens. The fact that in a percentage of 100 Jewish taxpayers there was not a single one who had neglected his paying obligations and that the appearance of Jews in courts and the Police stations was, when compared to their proportion among the Salonika population, very low was used to draw the conclusion that they were good citizens.<sup>536</sup>

Cultural assimilation apart, Salonika Moderates fought for the political assimilation of their fellow Jews, which meant that Jews and Greeks should be placed on equal footing before the law and that there should be no ‘special’ legal provisions regulating the civic life of the Jews. This also meant that they refuted their characterisation as a national minority since such a status would place them on a different status from the rest of the population and obstruct the policy of acculturation.

---

<sup>534</sup>*Le Progrès*, 2 August 1924, and 4 August 1924.

<sup>535</sup>*Le Progrès*, 28 December 1932.

<sup>536</sup>*Le Progrès*, December 1932.

Once again, they concurred with the official position of the AIU which had been expressed during the Paris Peace Conference and which had categorically rejected the official recognition of the Jews as national minority.<sup>537</sup>

A case in point was the total opposition of the Moderates to the establishment of a separate electoral college for Salonika Jews in 1923. The first reactions were recorded in November 1923 when Joseph Nehama contacted the AIU and insisted on the need to abolish any kind of “moral ghetto and of civic restriction” thereby asking for “equality in front of all obligations like in front of all rights.”<sup>538</sup> Five years later he contacted again his fellow Jews in Paris and repeated his utter disavowal of the existence of a separate electoral college which not only signified “the political ostracism of the Jews but also ... alienated the results by inverting the actual truth.” However, as a committed advocate of the spirit of liberalism and of the need for harmonious co-existence in Salonika between Greeks and Jews, Nehama stated that the measure was neither a proof of hatred and malevolence nor an antisemitic act. Its adoption was attributed to “arithmetic consideration”, that is for the sake of achieving desired political results.<sup>539</sup>

On the occasion of the parliamentary elections of 1928 *Le Progrès* seized the chance to denounce once again the characterisation of the Jews as a national minority and wrote that the Jews did not wish to enjoy any special status. The same daily continued that the intention of the Jews was to assimilate linguistically and to clear all barriers dividing them from the Greeks.<sup>540</sup> A few months later, in the aftermath of the elections in 1928, which had proved that the Jews were clear from all kinds of monarchist virus since they had voted for the Venizelist party, Nehama viewed with

---

<sup>537</sup> Chouraqui 1965: p. 228.

<sup>538</sup> Nehama to AIU, 19 November 1923, Grèce II C53, AAIU.

<sup>539</sup> Nehama to AIU, 8 August 1928, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

<sup>540</sup> *Le Progrès*, 13 July 1928.



increased enthusiasm the prospect of the abolition of the separate college during the next elections, since there was no longer the need to “protect republicanism from the monarchist Jews”.<sup>541</sup>

Their denial to be characterised as a national minority was explicitly stated in 1929 when the Greek government submitted a draft of a law proclaiming the creation of the position of inspector of the minorities residing in Greece.<sup>542</sup> Immediately the Moderates deplored the measure, which they considered “purposeless”, since Greece was the only country in the Balkans which had solved the problem of minorities. In their opinion, the exchange of population in 1923 and the settlement of the refugees, despite being sad chapters in the history of the country, had contributed to the creation of an homogeneous Greek Macedonia and to the abolition of the minority problem. The Moderates approved the appointment of the inspector of minorities only for a tiny minority of people who were delayed in the process of assimilation.<sup>543</sup>

When bearing in mind the aforementioned similarities between the discourse of the Jewish Moderates and this of inter-war Greek national ideology one is not surprised to discover that the pro-assimilationist Jews proved fervent supporters of Venizelos, the incarnation of inter-war Greek nationalism *par excellence*. Indeed, in all electoral

---

<sup>541</sup>Nehama to AIU, 11 October 1928, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

<sup>542</sup>The law (4125), which was passed in April 1929, provided for the creation of a position of “Inspector of national, religious or linguistic minorities”. The position was dependent on the Political Bureau of the Prime Minister and aimed at “ ‘healing’ the complaints, ‘except for the judicial ones’ , submitted by the members of the minorities to the local authorities.” Carabott 1997: p. 258.

<sup>543</sup>*Le Progrès*, 10 February 1929. The same issue bothered the daily *Echo de Salonique*, which despite acknowledging the fact, that should the Jews be defined as a national minority they would be granted certain privileges, preferred to stress the negative aspect of such an eventuality, which was the separation of the Jews from the rest of the Greeks and their ensuing inability to claim positions reserved for the majority of the population. Moreover it was stressed that the Jews should also abjure their recognition as a linguistic minority and accept the Greek language as their mother language. It was only the religious aspect which could somehow justify their relations with the inspector of the minorities. *Echo de Salonique*, 11 February 1929.

competitions which took place throughout the years under consideration the Moderates opted for the leader of the Liberal Party, who stood in contrast to the two extremities of monarchy and Communism and whose widely acclaimed liberalism was viewed as the precondition for the country's progress.

And although this electoral consistency is not surprising for the early inter-war period (1923-1930) given the rather half hearted co-existence between Venizelist governments and Salonika Jews, it becomes revealing when considering that the Moderates continued to vote for the Venizelist party in the period between 1930 and 1933, that is the years, when Venizelos was explicitly associated with antisemitic actions. Indeed, during the electoral campaign for the legislative elections for the Senate and the Chamber on 25 September 1932 fierce antisemitic slogans appeared in the Venizelist press which were met with fury and resentment by the overwhelming majority of the Jewish press. Against such a background the Moderates alone did not give up their efforts for reconciliation with Venizelos and pressed in vain for the inclusion of a Jewish candidate in the Venizelist List. In July 1933, when the complementary elections were proclaimed for the district of Salonika, the Moderates were, again, the only Jews who did not declare a "total war" against Venizelos.<sup>544</sup> Notwithstanding their condemnation of the antisemitic writings of *Makedonia*, the Moderates preferred to emphasise the need for moderation, equanimity and the unity of all citizens independently of distinction of race or religion. Their patriotic feeling surfaced again as they insisted that such high tensions were the least desirable thing given the generally unfavourable situation of the community and the difficult economic

---

<sup>544</sup>*Le Progrès*, 19 November 1933.



situation of the country.<sup>545</sup> The proposal was made for abstention in an attempt to slow down passions and high feelings.<sup>546</sup>

In order to account for this at first sight puzzling electoral behaviour it is necessary to examine the cultural background and political setting that moulded the world of the Moderates. For one thing, the Moderates committed themselves to fighting for the integration of the Jews into the Greek society, a value which, as early as 1912, had been one of the founding stones of the Venizelist programme. Venizelism was also the embodiment of Greek nationalism, and given the nationalist feelings of the Moderates they could not but identify themselves with the Liberal Party. Political reasons apart, the Moderates were also attracted by the charismatic personality of the Greek leader. Venizelos was referred to as “the big Cretan”<sup>547</sup> whose profile among international political circles enjoyed a very high esteem and whose influence upon European leaders was unquestionable. Moreover, the Moderates never forgot the sympathy and goodwill which the Venizelist party had shown in the past towards the Jews and their interests.<sup>548</sup> Finally, the Venizelist party was the only alternative to the monarchist camp represented by the Popular Party. However, monarchy was considered by the Moderates as “pestiferous contamination” and the populist party was referred to as “an enemy of the people”<sup>549</sup>. This political line was in tune with the republican tradition which had accompanied the establishment and the work of *Alliance* and which,

---

<sup>545</sup>*Le Progrès*, 13 June 1933.

<sup>546</sup>*Le Progrès*, 15 June 1933.

<sup>547</sup>Nehama to Half, 11 October 1928, Grèce III C55, AAIU.

<sup>548</sup>Nehama to AIU, 25 July 1934, Grèce III C56, AAIU. It was with particularly touching language that *Le Progrès* commented on the assassination-attempt against Venizelos in August 1933. “It is not a real Hellene the one who does not regret profoundly at this very moment the incestuous act of these criminals who believed that they could rekindle the most shameful and appalling hatred of the country, there is not a single citizen who does not wish that the guilty will be quickly arrested and punished in an exemplary way.” *Le Progrès*, 8 June 1933.

<sup>549</sup>Nehama to Bigart, 8 August 1928, Grèce III C55, AAIU.

in turn, had shaped the political profile of the most prominent *Alliancists*, such as Eugène Manuel,<sup>550</sup> Narcisse Leven and Adolphe Crémieux.<sup>551</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Moderates to disallow the threat of antisemitism in Greece they could not turn a blind eye to the fact that there *did* exist certain causes which occasionally exasperated the relations between the Jews and the Greeks and damaged Jewish interests. However, in their public discourse they refused to attribute these moments to latent antisemitism.<sup>552</sup> On the contrary they evoked their ‘Greco-Jewish’ theory, pointing this time to its less ideal aspect. Namely, they presented Jews and Greeks as two commercially competent peoples who frequently engaged themselves in fierce economic antagonism which had become really acute since the arrival and the settlement of the repatriates of Smyrna and Istanbul.<sup>553</sup> Nevertheless, when such ‘difficult moments’ appeared the Moderates did not remain inactive. They used all the means in their disposal in order to protect the endangered Jewish interests, trying at the same time not to aggravate irreparably the Greco-Jewish relations. This was made possible by keeping a low profile within Greece on the one hand, while striving to requisite the services of their centres of power abroad, that is the *B'nei Brith* in England and the AIU in Paris.

A case in point was the efforts of the Moderates to shun the imposition of Sunday as the obligatory day of Rest in Salonika in 1924. As far as the moderate press was concerned, articles published in *Le Progrès* stated that the measure was not attributed to official antisemitism but was rather an act of intolerance solely instigated by economic reasons.<sup>554</sup> Greece continued to be praised as ‘New Greece’, ‘liberal

---

<sup>550</sup>Chouraqui 1965: p. 33.

<sup>551</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 146.

<sup>552</sup>*Le Progrès*, 23 July 1924.

<sup>553</sup>Rodrigue 1993: pp. 232-235.

<sup>554</sup>*Le Progrès*, 5 May 1924.



Greece', 'Republican Greece', which could not afford to harm the Jews.<sup>555</sup> Once the measure was officially submitted and the government was severely criticised by all newspapers *Le Progrès* was the only Jewish daily which kept its moderate tone and accepted the imposition of the law as a *fait accompli*.<sup>556</sup> In 1929 Jacques Amariglio, a member of the *Association des Anciens Élèves de l'AIU*, went as far as to describe the Sunday Law a positive "step towards assimilation."<sup>557</sup>

At the same time the Moderates of the *B'nei Brith* spared no efforts to impede the voting of the Sunday Law. Thus when first contacting his fellow Jews in London in April 1924, the president of the Salonika Lodge did not question for a single moment the liberalism and tolerance of the Greek government. On the contrary, he presented the Greek officialdom as a prey to the ill-will of the refugees and their supporters who by manipulating the press had tried to push forward such a measure. The president of the Salonika Lodge asked his English counterparts to approach the English authorities and in a discreet way ask for their help in order to avoid the *coup de grâce* to the already precarious economic situation of the Salonika Jews.<sup>558</sup>

The *B'nei Brith* did not confine its efforts only to London, but contacted the AIU in Paris as well. It is important to note that the arguments used to persuade the elite of

---

<sup>555</sup>*Le Progrès*, 5 July 1924. The same moderate line was followed by *Le Progrès* three years later on the occasion of the rally organised by Salonika Jews to protest against Romanian antisemitism and the complication of the whole issue by the arrival of the Romanian football team Tricolore in Salonika in order to play a match with the Salonika team Hercules. Indeed, the Jewish daily was the only newspaper which, while standing by their fellow Jews in Romania, encouraged all Jews to be present and to support the Greek team as enthusiastically as possible, and to turn a deaf ear to the suggestion made by the Zionists to boycott the game. Only in this way, *Le Progrès* argued, would Salonika Jews prove their loyalty and their pride in being citizens of a civilised country which, unlike Romania, had never been involved in any antisemitic activities. *Le Progrès*, 21 December 192, 27 December 1927, and 28 December 1927.

<sup>556</sup>*Le Progrès*, 4 October 1924.

<sup>557</sup>Nehama to AIU, 4 April 1929, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

<sup>558</sup>*B'nei Brith* Salonika to *B'nei Brith* London, 28 April 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/ 2, ABDBJ.

the French Jews varied from the ones used towards their English fellow Jews. Thus in accordance with the spirit of assimilation and intellectual advance which had been the blueprint of the establishment of the AIU, all reports sent by the Salonika Lodge stressed the unique character of the Salonika Jewry by presenting it as one of the most compact and most homogeneous Jewish communities of the world, which had managed to preserve its religious and national traditions without losing at the same time the spirit of progress and open-mindedness. They also wrote that the imposition of such a law had absolutely no social or public character but it was, on the contrary, an antisemitic measure aiming directly against the existence of the Jews in Salonika and forcing them to emigrate.<sup>559</sup> In this way they assured their French co-religionists that the Jews of Salonika did not oppose a measure aiming at social justice and peaceful co-existence but a measure seeking to harm them.<sup>560</sup> All ideological and - in a way - emotional arguments apart, the *B'nei Brith* used pragmatic reasoning as well and invoked the existing - albeit verbal - pledges exchanged between Lucien Wolf and Venizelos during the Peace Conference in 1919.<sup>561</sup>

The rather moderate tone of the early correspondence changed dramatically, once the scales seemed to turn against the Jews in Salonika. In a desperate effort to sensitise their fellow Jews in London *B'nei Brith* did not hesitate to write that the great majority of the Greek press, which had worked to stir up the hatred, had started to talk openly about pogroms. Moreover it was also written that in the "Greek parliament in Athens the greatest part of the deputies was against them and that antisemitism, which had always been part of the natives and which had never touched public offices, has

---

<sup>559</sup> *B'nei Brith* Salonika to AIU, 12 May 1924, Grèce II C 53, AAIU.

<sup>560</sup> *B'nei Brith* Salonika to *B'nei Brith* London, 28 May 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/ 2, ABDBJ.

<sup>561</sup> Juda Richard to Lord Swaything, 2 June 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/ 2, ABDBJ.



now [at that time] made its way through the Ministers and the President of the council.”<sup>562</sup>

Once the tempest was over *B'nei Brith* took new steps to rehabilitate the damaged Greco-Jewish relations. In April 1925 the *Oeuvre d'Education Sociale* was established. As described in the preamble the goal of the work of the Social Education was as follows:

1. To guarantee the preservation of the good relations between Jews and non-Jews.
2. To defend the honour of the Jews.
3. To fight antisemitic prejudices, as well as all social prejudices and antisemitic manifestations.<sup>563</sup>

The official mouthpiece of the new organisation was a weekly periodical published in Greek and French with the title *La Tribune Juive de Grèce*. The founding of this new Greco-Jewish instrument was considered imperative, since Hellenic Judaism was lacking an authorised representation, which could speak on its behalf and be alert in order to defend the general interests of the two peoples. The work was not solely confined to the Salonika district but aimed to represent all twenty-seven Jewish communities of Greece with a population of over 120,000 Jews who - unlike in other countries - were living in utter isolation from each other.<sup>564</sup>

In 1925 new steps were taken by Salonika Moderates in order to protect the interests of their fellow Jews in Salonika. In 1925 the Greek newspaper *Eleftheros*

---

<sup>562</sup>This letter quoted the words of the Minister of Public Instruction who, when being asked by a representative of the Lodge to support the rights of the Jews, said the following. “I am sincerely against you. The Israelites have already a more powerful economic position than the Greeks, you [the Jews] are superior to us [the Greeks] in the commerce and it is just that you work five days a week.” *B'nei Brith* Salonika to *B'nei Brith* London, 30 May 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 158/ 2, ABDBJ.

<sup>563</sup>AIU, Grèce II C 53, 20.March 1925.

<sup>564</sup>*Ibid.*

*Typos* published thirty-two articles of antisemitic content written by M. Andronikos,<sup>565</sup> which presented the Jews as accomplices in the Russian revolution, as responsible for the assassination of the Tsarist family by the Jewish Bolsheviks and as accomplices in the massacres of the Turks against the Greeks and the Armenians. As a response, articles were published in *Le Progrès* proving that all these allegations were utterly false. However, in order to present better documented answers, Matalon asked the *Alliance* in Paris to provide the Salonika committee with the right documents in order to assess the real participation of the Jews in the movements of Bolshevism and Communism, both in Russia and elsewhere.<sup>566</sup>

Six years later once the antisemitic line of the pro-Venizelist daily *Makedonia* resulted in the Campbell riots in June 1931, the politicians from the moderate camp and the moderate *Le Progrès* condemned fiercely the events. However, at the same time, they expressed their confidence in the laws of the country and repeated the standard argument that the Jews were a sincere, loyal and obedient population. Moreover, *Makedonia*, the daily responsible for the riots, was presented as collaborating with Greece's worst enemies, the Bulgarian *comitadjis*, thereby proving the anti-Hellenic role of antisemitism.<sup>567</sup>

Once again help was asked for from abroad. Nehama contacted Jacques Bigart, the secretary of the *Alliance*, and portrayed to him the situation of the Jewish population as lamentable for a number of reasons: the actors responsible for the last antisemitic troubles were still unpunished; the victims of the Campbell arson were camping in the Jewish communal schools and in the synagogues; meanwhile, no indemnity had been given despite the pledges of the State. According to confidential report, the Jews were

---

<sup>565</sup>General Consular of Greece in Russia to Matalon, 4 March 1925, Grèce II C53, AAIU.

<sup>566</sup>Matalon to AIU, 4 March 1925, Grèce II C53, AAIU.

<sup>567</sup>*Le Progrès*, 24 June 1931.



in panic and terror because they could not flee Salonika and emigrate, since all the countries of the world had closed their doors. Once he had proved the urgency of the issue Nehama took the next step and suggested ways and means of improving the antisemitic atmosphere in Salonika. In very ingenious terms, which revealed a person of great political shrewdness and high diplomatic abilities, he suggested that Bigart should approach Michalakopoulos and Venizelos and draw their attention to the critical situation of the Salonika Jews. The two Greek politicians were at that time in Geneva in order to defend very important national interests for the sake of which they relied upon the favourable opinion which the Great Powers had of Greece. Nehama believed that Greece's dependency on foreign countries was a fact which should not be left unexploited, since it was likely that the intervention of the French would have the Greek officials' ear who could not afford to turn a blind eye to the situation of the Jews and who would in turn contemplate ways and means to stop the antisemitic climate in Greece. However, notwithstanding the alarming tone of the report, he remained loyal to his pro-Venizelist orientation, and did not condemn the Greek Premier in person of being guilty of the Campbell riots. He only reported that Venizelos should be informed about how endangered the situation of the Jews was because of the unrelenting antisemitic campaign of the official organ of the Venizelist party in Makedonia<sup>568</sup>, and because of the unflagging antisemitic hatred of the 3E.<sup>569</sup>

Finally in 1932 and in light of rising antisemitism Nehama was interested in finding out the legislative provisions which existed in other countries, for suppressing antisemitic propaganda. He also referred to the examples of Mussolini's Italy, the USSR

---

<sup>568</sup>The *Makedonia* was said to continue to stir up the spirits by appealing to the hatred and by propagating execrable libels. It was also stated that every day entire columns of the newspaper advocate openly the extermination of the Jews and, given the feeling of the thousands of refugees, such things could lead to devastation. Nehama to AIU, 25 July 1934, No 8175, AAIU.

<sup>569</sup>Nehama to AIU, 3 September 1931, ACC 3121/E3/519, ABDBJ.

and Yugoslavia which had inserted in their legislation provisions in order to protect the ethnic, linguistic and confessional minorities.<sup>570</sup>

The attempt of the Moderates to strike a balance between being ‘good Greeks’ and ‘good Jews’ found its most telling expression in their efforts to achieve the linguistic acculturation of the community which consisted of the simultaneous learning of Greek and French. As it was often stated, both in writings of the local press as well as in official reports, the aim of the AIU schools was “to assimilate linguistically the Jews [and] to make the Jewish children very devoted and very attached citizens to the country where they live and where they were born.”<sup>571</sup> At the same time however, it was the credo of the Moderates that while learning Greek would help the integration of Salonika Jews to the Greek society learning French, “the language which had done everything for the liberty of consciousness”,<sup>572</sup> would help them preserve their particular Jewish linguistic identity, as this had developed after a forty years’ educational work of the *Alliance* in Salonika. It goes without saying that the fact, that the Moderates defined French as the language of communal education created a cultural rift with both Zionists and Communists who opted for Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish respectively. With the consolidation of the Zionists as the main political voice of the community in the aftermath of the 1928 parliamentary elections the French-dominated education in the schools of *Alliance* was threatened and the whole situation became reminiscent of the conflict between *Alliance* and Zionism in Bulgaria where by 1913 the AIU had lost control of all but two of its schools, now under Zionist hegemony.<sup>573</sup> In order to avoid similar developments in Salonika, the Moderates gave up their previously conciliatory

---

<sup>570</sup>Nehama to AIU, 19 July 1933, Grèce III C 53, AAIU.

<sup>571</sup>*Le Progrès*, 24 May 1927.

<sup>572</sup>As cited in Chouraqui 1965: p. 157.

<sup>573</sup>Rodrigue 1990: pp. 137-140.



policy towards the Zionists and by taking an active political stance sought to limit Zionist influence to a minimum.

In particular, as early as 1924 the *Alliancists* had declared their opposition to the doctrines of Communism and Zionism, let alone when combined. Thus they did not comment in enthusiastic terms on the propaganda waged in favour of *Keren Hayessod* and *Keren Kayemet* in Salonika whereas they declared themselves tired by the successive visits of the Russian Zionist leader, Menahem Ussishkin, and even more of the French Zionist intellectual, Henry Marx,<sup>574</sup> who was considered a ‘curse of nature’ and a representative of the utterly abominable communist Zionist doctrines.<sup>575</sup> The tension between Moderates and Zionists increased in the aftermath of the communal elections of 1926. The latter, after having shrewdly secured the votes of the *Alliancists* and having obtained the overwhelming majority in the communal council, not only passed over all the moderate Jews who had sided with them but also struck Nehama’s name from the candidate-list of the Jewish bloc.<sup>576</sup>

More problems arose on the pretext of the efforts of the *B’nei Brith* to encourage the attendance by Jewish children at Greek schools. Indeed, although from 1912 until 1925 no Jewish child was attending any of the thirty-two Greek primary schools<sup>577</sup> from 1925 onwards thanks to scholarships granted by the *B’nei Brith* some Jewish children started attending Greek private schools, such as the Greek-French commercial school of Athanassiou Konstantinide founded in 1907.<sup>578</sup> In 1925, on the occasion of the graduation of some Jewish children who were bursaries of *B’nei Brith*, Aaron Sciaky,

---

<sup>574</sup>*Pro-Israel*, the mouthpiece of the Salonika Radicals until 1926, devoted a good four pages of its editorial on 1 June 1924 in order to present the work and the personality of Henry Marx.

<sup>575</sup>Nehama to AIU, 27 May 1924, Grèce II C 53, AAIU.

<sup>576</sup>Nehama to AIU, 4 April 1929, Grèce III C 55, AAIU.

<sup>577</sup>*Le Progrès*, 2 June 1925.

<sup>578</sup>The term ‘French’ implied that the teaching of the French language was included in the syllabus and not that it was the main language of education. Chekimoglou 1996: p. 301.

member of the communal council, described these students as the ones called to introduce the education and the Greek spirit to the Jewish population. During the same occasion the director of the Greek school, Athanassios Constantinides, said that the attendance at Greek schools by Jewish children was the best way to achieve the important goal of the rapprochement between Greeks and Jews.<sup>579</sup>

Gradually, but still at a very low pace, the attendance of Jewish children in Greek public and private schools grew and in 1929 it was reported that there were 9,000 to 10,000 Jewish children amongst whom 412 Jewish children went to governmental schools and sixty-seven to the other secondary, gymnasium and commercial schools. While until 1927 the universities had no Jewish students, in 1929 seven Jewish children were admitted in the University of Salonika to pursue higher studies.<sup>580</sup>

The pro-assimilationist efforts of the *B'nei Brith* provoked the anger of the Zionists who by holding the majority of the seats in the communal assembly felt strong enough to push for Hebrew to become the communal language. Although they did not go as far as neglecting the importance of the teaching of Greek - for such a stance would automatically render them unpopular in the eyes of Greek officialdom, thereby undermining their plans for holding in their hands the communal leadership - the Zionists accused *B'nei Brith* in 1925 of supporting exclusively the assimilation of the Salonika Jews without showing any interest in the preservation of the national Jewish tradition and culture. It was the inspector of the Jewish Communal schools Zadock Kohn - well-known for his moderate attitude - who took over the task of defending the work of the Jewish beneficiary group. In a very definite way he denied the claim according to which the work of the *B'nei Brith* was used for the assimilation of the

---

<sup>579</sup>*Le Progrès*, 1927 (exact date illegible).

<sup>580</sup>Jewish Community of Salonika to Committee of Jewish delegations, 10 July 1929, Réponse au questionnaire. (Comité des délégations juives), Thessaloniki 150, CAHJP.



pupils attending the Greek schools. On the contrary, he underlined the clear and indisputable Jewish character of the aforementioned work and reassured the Jewish community that an excellent Jewish teacher had been entrusted with the duty to teach the Jewish children everything about Judaism.<sup>581</sup>

The cultural rift between Moderates and Zionists was further widened by intense disagreements over the creation of a Jewish Gymnasium. Although the Zionists believed that the community needed a Jewish Gymnasium which would follow, more or less, the syllabus of the primary communal schools, Kohn gave his preference for the creation of a Greco-Jewish school for a number of reasons.<sup>582</sup> First of all he believed that the multi-lingual educational system of the primary schools was incompatible with the requirements of a Gymnasium which should devote eighty per cent of the weekly programme to the teaching of different disciplines and only ten per cent to the teaching of foreign languages. At the same time Kohn did not exclude the eventuality of making a compromise by including the teaching of Hebrew and French in the syllabus. On the other hand, he invoked the restrictive provisions of the Greek Law as far as the operation of foreign schools was concerned and argued that, were the Jewish Gymnasium founded according to the Zionists' standards, it would never be recognised by the State, thus depriving all graduates from enrolling in the University.<sup>583</sup>

In parallel to these intra-communal struggles the position of *Alliance* in Salonika was undermined by Greek legislation of 1926 which led to an increase of the hours of

---

<sup>581</sup> *Rennesaincia Djoudia*, 17 September 1926.

<sup>582</sup> At the same time however, he did not disregard the vital importance which the creation of a Jewish Gymnasium had for the community.

<sup>583</sup> "No matter how fiercely we protest we will never achieve the transformation of such a fundamental law which defines the operation of the public schools in Greece, as well as in the rest of the world. The example of France where no matter how good the education received in private schools its is necessary to have *baccalaureat* from a public schools which is only granted by the State." *El Pueblo*, 27 September

Greek in its schools and, in turn, to a decrease of French. At the same time the implementation of Zionist politics had resulted in the supplanting of the French language within the communal schools by Hebrew thereby causing the distress of the Salonika Moderates. In June 1927 Nehama alerted his fellow Jews in Paris as to how disastrous this new trend would be for the *Alliance*, since its Salonika clientele would prefer to attend the congregationist schools (*Mission Laicque Francaise*, Italian School, and the two good private schools of Cattegno and of Altech) where French remained the top priority of their syllabus. First of all he pointed to the terrible moral and intellectual blow which this situation would inflict upon the status of the community.<sup>584</sup> Then he also raised the issue of economic interests of the AIU and wrote that the lack of a large clientele in Salonika would cause a diminution of the organisation's income and an increase of its deficit. An atmosphere of Cold War - blessed by the Central Committee in Paris - dominated the relations between *Alliancists* and Zionists which prevented any possibility of contact between the two groups.<sup>585</sup>

However this attitude did not prevent them from supporting in the parliamentary elections of 1928 the candidature and the eventual victory of Bessantchi and Matalon, whose Zionist affiliations could be overcome by the moderation of their character, their status in the community and their anti-communist ideology. The support which the two

---

1926. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A/Politike, HAGFM).

<sup>584</sup>A more extreme trend which was a rather isolated example, considered the teaching of Hebrew inefficient and useless since it offered no actual benefit to the Jews. *El Pueblo*, 1 March 1927 See also Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of the Greek Foreign Ministry, 8 April 1927, 1928 A/Politike, HAGFM.

<sup>585</sup>They utterly refused to accept a committee of Florentin and Jacques Nahmia - even when the former was replaced by Moise Benusiglio - because of its Zionist colours. However they did not inform the Council immediately because they wanted to avoid any atmosphere of dissension inside the community and because they wanted to receive a communiqué from Paris. Florentin was called a militant Zionist and a sworn enemy of the *Alliance*. Nehama to AIU, 2 June 1927, Grèce IG3, AAIU.



Jewish leaders had received from the Zionist camp was seen by the Moderates as a *conditio sine qua non* if somebody wished to seize communal power, for the Zionists were the ones able to mobilise and organise the electorate. Thus, according to Nehama's report, the victory of the two Jewish candidates should not be celebrated as a Zionist victory but as the triumph of two moderate persons who represented the Jewish elite of the town. While the Moderates on the one hand applauded the electoral victory of the two Zionists they rejected the other candidate, Elie Veissy, who despite his identification with the pro-Venelist assimilationist party was a person of low morality and a declared enemy of Zionism.<sup>586</sup>

Once the Moderates realised that the victory of Matalon and Bessantchi was publicly celebrated as a Zionist victory,<sup>587</sup> thus endangering Greco-Jewish relations and risking to lose for good what was left of their strong position in the area of communal education, they decided to set up their own anti-Zionist party and thus constrain Zionist activities. The first step was to create on 5 December 1928 the Association of Jewish Assimilationists which, although comprising Jews of different social origins, was primarily a bourgeois organisation. Its goal was "to create and develop amongst Salonika Jews feelings utterly identical with those of their fellow citizens irrespective of religious persuasion, without, however, distancing themselves from the Jewish faith, the Jewish tradition and the spirit of Jewish solidarity." Moreover, this Association would seek to "strip all Jews of every sign of extreme nationalism and of all exaggerated particular characteristics." It would "re-establish all bonds between Greeks and Jews by promoting the gradual assimilation of [their] coreligionists to the Greek language and culture and by encouraging them to participate in the political life of the country. [These] were indispensable conditions for should [the Jews] be able to survive and

---

<sup>586</sup>Nehama to Bigart, 8 August 1928, Grèce III C55, AAIU.

<sup>587</sup>*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, 24 August 1928.

avoid being supplanted in all branches of social activity.”<sup>588</sup> For the sake of implementing their goals they made efforts to increase the attendance of Jewish children at Greek schools. As far as the political orientation of this association was concerned they followed their tradition of moderation and stated that they would “remain neutral to Greek politics, they would refrain from expressions of public opinion, and would leave all members free to vote according to their convictions.”<sup>589</sup>

The Jewish Assimilationists also set up a programme which revealed that a new political party was about to be created, with a new ideological programme aiming at gaining political power within the community by fighting Communists, Zionists and Radicals alike. In particular, this programme endorsed a rather popular tone which would make it a pole of attraction for communist voters. Thus, it was declared that the Association would see to the acceptance of its supporters in all communal institutions, the communal council including. Moreover, the Jewish Assimilationists pledged themselves to propagate the ideology of assimilation “to the Jewish masses by organising for free lessons of the Greek language in the lower class quarters and lectures for the political education of the Jewish masses.” Finally in an effort to prove the value and the importance of assimilation for the well-being of Salonika Jews, it was underlined that the linguistic assimilation within the communal schools and the creation of assimilationist clubs, libraries and women’s associations would lead to the improvement of Greco-Jewish relations and, in turn, to the overall amelioration of the life of Salonika Jews.<sup>590</sup>

---

<sup>588</sup>Nehama to AIU, 4 April 1929, AAIU, Grèce III C 55.

<sup>589</sup>I. Skourtes, “The Zionists and their Jewish Opponents in Thessaloniki between the Two Worlds Wars”, in Hassiotes 1997: p. 521.

<sup>590</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 522.



By 1929 the fears of the Moderates over the hegemony of the Zionists in the community proved vindicated. The Zionists had taken over the communal schools and the teaching hours of French were diminished [for the sake of Hebrew]. In the meantime a war broke out between the director of *Alliance* schools Saltiel and Abraham Rekanati, the leader of the Salonika Mizrahis. The former was accused of having allowed the propagation of anti-religious ideas in the schools thereby “damaging Judaism in an irreparable way.”<sup>591</sup> In his defence, Saltiel called Rekanati “an original zealot, sincere, passionate and active; [a man] of an incessant devotion to and ardour for an idea. He is driven in particular by such a high degree of religious fanaticism that even the most fanatic rabbi cannot be compared with him.... [and] although the members of the rabbinical body have always expressed their positive feelings and admiration for the work of *Alliance* by sending their children to its schools, Rekanati, a secular man, is the sworn and inveterate enemy of *Alliance* and its schools.”<sup>592</sup>

In 1930 the previous cultural rift between Moderates and Zionist had turned into a fierce political struggle over ideological issues encouraging the former to set up their own party. The newly-founded party was called *Bloc Moderé* and consisted of the *Association des Anciens Élèves de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle* and of those “who wanted to eliminate from the community the nefarious influence of the sectarians”. Their programme was the creation of an intellectual elite which would give birth to the creation of a Greco-Jewish Gymnasium and contribute to the work of the *B'nei Brith*. They intended to raise the prestige of the rabbinical corps by providing material help and by seeing to its traditional and humanist formation. For the sake of religious reform a modernised seminar was to be organised which would prepare spiritual leaders and teachers of the Jewish language and religion. Last but not least they declared their

---

<sup>591</sup>Rekanati to AIU, 17 July 1930, Grèce I G III, AAIU.

<sup>592</sup>Saltiel to AIU, 26 August 1930, Grèce I G III, AAIU.

determination to ameliorate the economic state of the lower class Jewish quarters, the management of which had proved deficient. In short they committed themselves “to eliminate all kinds of extremism, to ameliorate the administration, to unify the charitable institution, to multiply the primary and secondary schools, to educate rabbis, to promote the creation of an elite and to solve the question of the quarter.”<sup>593</sup>

In order to increase their chances of being elected they replied to the accusations sent off by the Zionists according to which the *Bloc Moderé* consisted of anti-Zionists who were not interested in protecting the rights of the Jews. Instead, they projected themselves as “good Jews of all tendencies who gave their hands in order to raise the community on the basis of a very precise programme.” In order to prove their devotion to the community they exposed their former contribution to the communal life by citing different examples. For one they stated with pride that amongst forty-three candidates of the *Bloc Moderé* twenty-one were members of different communal commissions, while with equally appraising tone they emphasised their support of the Allatini Orphanage and the Hirsch Hospital. But above all they praised the educational and cultural work of the *Alliance* for the Salonika Jews which had so positively changed the profile of the community. Notwithstanding their strenuous efforts to raise their popular appeal in the 1930 communal election, the Moderate Party received only 13.93 percent of the votes.<sup>594</sup> Their poor performance made clear that the overwhelming majority of Salonika Jews rejected all sorts of ‘moderate solutions’ which could not help them overcome the acute economic and social problems they were facing.

---

<sup>593</sup>*L'Indépendant*, 6 October 1930.

<sup>594</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.



#### 5.4. Conclusion

The inability of the Jewish Moderates to make their voices heard can be explained by a variety of reasons. For one, the decline of the *Alliance* in Salonika deprived them of its most important local buttress since by 1935 its schools had merged with the communal schools<sup>595</sup>. Moreover, the appearance of a threatening antisemitic climate invalidated their sermons for acculturation and smooth Greco-Jewish relations. From a practical point of view, the absence of a mouthpiece able to propagate their ideology on a constant basis alienated them from the Jewish electors and contributed to their minimal appeal. However, they managed to come back to the communal scene by 1934, as indicated by the results of the communal elections of this year, which gave them almost 20 per cent of the votes.<sup>596</sup> Their reappearance can be explained by the gradual disappearance of some of the factors which had led to their decline. Indeed, in the late inter-war years Venizelos's departure from the national political scene resulted in a retreat of antisemitism, while the emigration of Zionist leaders created room for the voices of the Moderates to be heard again.

---

<sup>595</sup>Molho 1956: p. 104.

<sup>596</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 239.

### 6.1. Introduction

Much as inter-war General Zionist politics may have had a profound effect on the life of Salonika Jews during the inter-war years, so Religious and Revisionist Zionists seem to have left their mark on the course of communal life. The former were represented by the Salonika Mizrahi - an acronym for *merkaz ruhani*, signifying “‘spiritual center’ but at the same time connoting ‘east’ the traditional direction of prayer to Jerusalem”<sup>597</sup> - who set up their own organisation in 1919. The same year the organisation *B’nei Mizrahi* was established aiming at organising the Jewish religious youth.<sup>598</sup> Under the militant and tireless leadership of Abraham Rekanati<sup>599</sup> the Mizrahi became in 1925 the progenitor of another Zionist group, the Salonika Revisionists. Other organisations affiliated with the Radicals were *Chibbat Zion* in the quarter of Baron Hirsch, *Tiferet Israel* in the quarter 151, *Gheoula* in the quarter of Agia Foteine, *Htehya*, *B’not Zion* and *Arzeinou*. From 1925 until 1933 one can talk of a merging of the Mizrahi and the Revisionists, an evolution unique to Salonika Jewry. In 1928 the *B’nei Mizrahi* was renamed *Torah Veavoda* and was reorganised with the contribution of Zvi Herkevi from

---

<sup>597</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 128.

<sup>598</sup>Moissis 1972: p. 369.

<sup>599</sup>The contribution of Abraham Rekanati to the movement of Salonika Zionism was exceptional. A student of the AIU he later opposed all kinds of pro-assimilationist ideas. He wrote articles in *L’Avenir* and *L’Epoca* and he was an active member in the committees of *Kadima* and *B’nei Zion*. He was also a leading figure in the foundation of Salonika Maccabi. In 1911 he was at the head of this organisation. In 1917 he was the president of the union Theodor Herzl. Thanks to Rekanati’s efforts *Hatehya*, the first Jewish organisation for women, was established in Salonika. From 1918 onwards together with Itzhak Molho published *Pro-Israel*. In 1919 he was married to Doudoun Hasson, the secretary of *Hatehya*. *Pro-Israel*, 14 March 1926. In August 1923 his name was written in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund. *Pro-Israel*, 31 August 1923. In the summer of 1933 he emigrated to Palestine.



Jerusalem who stayed in Salonika. The general secretary of this organisation was Moshe Barzilai.<sup>600</sup>

For reasons which will be analysed in the course of this chapter, in 1933 the Union came to an end and together with it the active presence of Mizrahi and Revisionists in the bodies of communal representation. Both the common origins *and* the fervent militant spirit with which both groups pursued their political and cultural goals within the Jewish community and the Greek state allow their grouping under the label “Radicals” which will be used to refer to these individuals and their actions during the years of their close co-operation. Along with other sources, it is *Pro-Israel*, the French-speaking mouthpiece of the Mizrahi for the years 1918 to 1926, which will be the main source of this chapter and especially the articles published by Kalev, the pseudonym of Rekanati.<sup>601</sup> The *raison d'être* of this newspaper, which was to keep the Allied troops informed about developments occurring in Salonika in 1917, was compatible with the very political career of Rekanati.<sup>602</sup> Indeed, the leader of the Radicals, throughout the inter-war years and at different occasions, stayed in contact with diametrically opposed figures, that is the moderate and discreet Lucien Wolf and the impassioned and outspoken Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinski, constantly informing them about issues troubling Salonika Jews and asking for their help.

The first part of this chapter will present the ideological frame which dictated the way in which Salonika Radicals viewed their position *vis-à-vis* their fellow Jews, the General Zionists and finally the Greek state. The second part will deal with the Jewish religion and the Hebrew language which together represented the quintessence of the Jewish national identity as this was advocated by the Radicals. The importance which

---

<sup>600</sup>Moïssis 1972: p. 369.

<sup>601</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 389.

<sup>602</sup>Molho 1997: p. 344.

the Salonika Radicals placed upon these two aspects made them follow a radical programme which brought them in conflict with other Jewish and non-Jewish forces of their environment. The third part of this chapter will focus on the crucial position which the vision of Palestine held within the ideological and practical programme of the Radicals.

## **6.2. A national-religious definition of Jewish identity**

As has happened in other places of the Jewish Diaspora, the establishment of the Mizrahi movement in Salonika in May 1919 revealed the dissatisfaction of a group of Salonika Zionists with current Zionist politics and expressed their intention to open a new path of Zionist politics by fighting for the “religious accommodation of [Jewish] nationalism.”<sup>603</sup> At the same time this new development gave birth to new manifestations of Jewish identity which were doomed to shatter the initial complementary activities of the two groups and create a yawning gap between them.

The reasons which accounted for the appearance of the Mizrahi in Salonika out of the core of Salonika Zionists in 1919 should be searched for in both local and international conditions. It is true that until 1919 Salonika Zionism represented the group which was regarded as the guarantor of the continuation of the special status which the community had enjoyed during four long centuries of Ottoman rule and which, since 1912, had been threatened by the Hellenisation of the city. By preaching in favour of Jewish nationalism the Salonika Zionists aimed at rendering the Salonika Jews aware of their ethnic particularity and distinct identity, which were of vital importance should the Jews wish to maintain their dominant and distinct role in the city. However, the predominantly secular character of Salonika Zionism worried certain Jews

---

<sup>603</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 129.



who felt that there could be no Jewish revival without Jewish religion. Indeed, the belief that “the unit of mankind contemporarily known as ‘Jews’ was created by God through the revelation of his covenant (*brit*) with their ancestors, the Children of Israel”, was shared by many religious Jews in Salonika, who wished to see their belief integrated in the Zionist discourse. What triggered the search for new and - for certain Jews - more sound expositions on the nature of the Zionist goal was the current nationalist fervour which swept across many Jewish communities in Europe in 1919 as a result of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 which had transformed the far-fetched Zionist vision into a political feasibility.

It is thus against the background of increased dissatisfaction with regard to the Zionists’ work and of the intense Jewish nationalist atmosphere that one should view the creation of the Mizrahi group, which in May 1919 announced their intention to “work for the moral ascension of the Jewish people, be alert for its education, the preservation of the Jewish traditions and the diffusion of the Jewish knowledge characterised by the Biblical spirit.”<sup>604</sup> The Salonika Mizrahi declared their affiliation to the Mizrahi movement of the Zionist Organisation<sup>605</sup> and committed themselves to work

---

<sup>604</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 May 1919.

<sup>605</sup>The contribution of the Mizrahi to the International Mizrahi movement was significant. They sold stocks of the Bank Mizrahi and then offered them to the *Keren Eretz Israel shel Mizrahi*. For the sake of supporting the latter a specific day was chosen every year (*Hag le Omer*) when the annual activity was renewed and a fund raising was organised. This celebration was advertised in the local newspapers and the synagogues. Moreover the Salonika Mizrahi contributed to the international Mizrahi movement by purchasing the weekly *Ha-Tor*, issued by the International Mizrahi, and the monthly *Nativa* of the Tseire Mizrahi in Eretz Israel. The majority of these periodicals were only understood by the teachers of Hebrew. As far as participation was concerned in times of feasts big assemblies were convened with a participation of 20 rabbis and 250 members. Among the rabbis, one could cite Rabbi Yitzhak Broudo (from the *Beit-Ha Din*) Abraham Kamahi, (the rabbi of the Monasteriotes) Eliahu Frances (later he became the rabbi of the Sephardi community in Amsterdam) Rabbi Mordechai Saias (afterwards he became rabbi in the *Kehilla* in Antwerp). H. Toledano, “Ha-Histadrut Ha-Mizrahi Be-Saloniki”, in D. Recanati 1972: pp. 428-429

for the programme of the First Zionist Congress convened in Basle in 1897 by supporting the work of the Zionist institutions.<sup>606</sup> Throughout the inter-war years the Mizrahi would constitute the voice of Religious Zionists in Salonika, who would fight for the propagation and implementation of their ideas.

The ideological manifesto of the Salonika Mizrahi was an amalgamation of the principal ideas advocated by the most salient spokesmen of National-Religious Zionism who had sought to “accommodate the concept of nationalism to their universe of discourse.”<sup>607</sup> This effort was a difficult task because it could potentially contradict the “transcendental understanding of Jewish identity”, according to which religion was not simply *one* of *many* elements moulding the wider notion of nation but the “*very* source of the nation.”<sup>608</sup>

Indeed, the writings of Mizrahi luminaries in Salonika on the dialectical relationship between Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism is a case in point. Moise Benveniste, the ‘ideological architect’ of Salonika Mizrahi, reiterated the exposition of Yitzhak Yaacov Reines, the founding father of the Mizrahi movement, and accepted the “ ‘ethnic-national’ entity as one broader than religion”<sup>609</sup>. In his writings Benveniste frequently used the term ‘tradition’ in order to connote the existence of a Jewish ethnic identity the main components of which were the Hebrew language, the Jewish religion and the connection of the Jews to the Holy Land. At the same time, however, he gave primacy to religion, arguing that Jewish religion preceded the appearance of Jewish nationalism by helping the Jewish people to “... stand so many persecutions, survive a long history of martyrdom and perpetuate with pride their title as God’s chosen

---

<sup>606</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 May 1919.

<sup>607</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 129.

<sup>608</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 130.

<sup>609</sup>*Ibid.*



people.”<sup>610</sup> In order to corroborate his thesis with current examples he referred to the resilience of Jewish religion in the atheistic environment of Soviet Russia.<sup>611</sup> In a final attribute to the leverage of Jewish religion, he stated that, “... if the sacred fire of the Torah burns out the national sentiment will weaken ....”<sup>612</sup>

The belief in the uniqueness and the importance of the Jewish religion, and in turn, of the Jewish nation, created a deep ideological cleavage between Salonika Mizrahi and other Zionists who advocated a secular and a so-called “liberal” interpretation of Jewish identity. In particular, General Zionists<sup>613</sup> were accused by Benveniste of dealing with the Jewish question as with any “national question” and of neglecting issues related to spiritual Judaism. As far as the former was concerned, Benveniste concurred with Rabbi Yehuda Leib Ha-Cohen Fishman, another Mizrahi theoretician who had refused to “seek integration into the national tissues of the gentile host society”, and had accused the General Zionists of making up their ideological profile by borrowing elements from non-Jewish intellectuals.<sup>614</sup> Benveniste upheld the Mizrahi principle and argued that the Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism were unique to the Jewish people.<sup>615</sup>

As far as Rekanati’s perception of the Jewish religion was concerned, it bore certain similarities to the voice of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, the “foremost mystic luminary of Jewish orthodoxy” and critic of the Mizrahi, who had pointed to the universal character of Jewish religion.<sup>616</sup> Thus Rekanati praised the uniqueness of the Jewish religion as the one “... which has shown the road to humanity,

---

<sup>610</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 November 1923.

<sup>611</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 28 December 1926.

<sup>612</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 21 November 1923.

<sup>613</sup>The characterisation General Zionists starts appearing in the pages of *Pro-Israel* from 1923 onwards.

<sup>614</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 131.

<sup>615</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 21 November 1923.

<sup>616</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 145.

which has assured the superiority of our nation and which has given the famous thinkers, the deepest philosophers, the most gifted doctors of the middle ages and of the modern times.... which has given birth to monotheism and has shaped the moral of the Universe.”<sup>617</sup>

In addition to their arguments emphasising the exceptional importance of the Jewish religion, Benveniste used different arguments in order to prove the complementary character between Jewish religion and Zionism.<sup>618</sup> For one, he pointed to the existence of a common denominator between Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism, namely their strong correlation with Jewish popular consciousness. A case in point was the connection of all Jewish religious feasts either with national history or with nature, such as the celebrations of Hanouka, Pessah and Succoth. Then, Benveniste pointed to the fact that the return to Zion has always constituted an inseparable element of Jewish tradition, and warned against the stripping away of the Jewish religion from the Zionist ideals for the result will be a “phantom of Zionism”.<sup>619</sup> Moreover the Mizrahi regarded themselves as the only organisation “able to make Israel reborn in the spirit of the Jewish morale.”<sup>620</sup>

However, it did not take long before the pressure of inter-war European nationalism made Religious Zionism in Salonika skirt the overriding emphasis on religious doctrines and realise that the only guarantee for the protection of their religious traditions was the establishment of a Jewish state. Indeed, in September 1924, soon after the imposition of the law of Sunday Rest in Salonika, Isaac Emmanuel, one

---

<sup>617</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 4 June 1926.

<sup>618</sup>The unique value of Jewish religion had been also underlined by Rekanati who pointed to the contribution of the strict hygienic rules of Judaism to the preservation of better health conditions amongst the Jews. *Ibid.*

<sup>619</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 November 1923.

<sup>620</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 4 June 1926.



of the founding fathers of *Chibbat Zion* in Salonika and a student at the Breslau Rabbinical seminary, stated that “being in the Galouth means not only suffering but fighting as well”, and given the rekindling of Christian antisemitism in the “so-called civilised countries”, Emmanuel proposed the only solution possible, namely the famous Mizrahi slogan “the land of Israel for the people of Israel according to the law of Israel.”<sup>621</sup>

It was their commitment to the implementation of the Zionist vision that ‘helped’ Salonika Mizrahi to ‘turn a blind eye’ to the secular identity of Salonika Zionists and sought their co-operation on the basis of their being the only organised Zionist group in Salonika. Indeed, as early as 1920 the Mizrahi accused local Zionism of being docile and low key, unable to take initiatives and apply a determined political line and finally of being committed solely to political opportunism and siding with forces utterly destructive to the national identity and the spiritual patrimony of the Jews.<sup>622</sup> Notwithstanding these allegations, however, their self-perception as local saviours of Judaism<sup>623</sup> resulted in the affiliation of the Mizrahi to the Greek Zionist Federation which took place during the II Congress of the Greek Zionists in 1920.<sup>624</sup> In order to sanctify their movement *vis-à-vis* the Zionists and to answer the attacks directed against the Mizrahi by Isaac Alvo, Rekanati made it very clear, during a conference held in February 1923, that it was Herzl himself who had supported the Mizrahi both spiritually *and* materially and had called them the *avant-garde* of Zionism.<sup>625</sup> This half-grudging alliance was dealt a severe blow by the appearance of

---

<sup>621</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 19 September 1924.

<sup>622</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 31 October 1920. This allegation obviously referred to the co-operation of the Zionists either with *Alliance* or with Greek officials.

<sup>623</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 November 1923.

<sup>624</sup>*Pro-Israel*, January 1921.

<sup>625</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 9 February 1923.

the Revisionist Movement in Salonika in 1925 which together with the Mizrahi challenged the vested authority of Salonika Zionists in communal affairs.

If different interpretations concerning the 'formative' and 'operative' levels of Jewish nationalism created problems with other Zionists, different ways of interpreting the status of the Jews as citizens of the Greek state created problems with nationalist Greeks. The Mizrahi represented, together with the Jewish Communists, the two Jewish groups in Salonika which held the firm belief that the Jews were a national minority like the ones existing in Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia.<sup>626</sup> However, when compared to the 'ethno-class' communist interpretation of the term 'national minority', the Mizrahi definition of the much-disputed term was something utterly different. Thus, according to the Mizrahi the Jewish community of Salonika should be regarded as a "national separate organisation enjoying a cultural communal autonomy having its own needs and own aspirations consecrated by the Versailles Paris Conference as had happened with other minorities..."<sup>627</sup> For this reason they supported in July 1920 the creation of a Jewish national organisation and of a Jewish national council which could represent all Jewish communities in Greece. With their proposal they showed their objection to official Greek discourse which preferred and - indeed - decreed the recognition of the Jews as a religious minority by proclaiming that it was the Chief Rabbi, namely a religious authority, who had the right to represent the Greek Jews.<sup>628</sup>

This attitude was explicitly stated in 1924 when, at the occasion of a communal discussion over the separate electoral college, two ardent Jewish Radicals, Moise Benusiglio and Rekanati, despite considering the measure discriminatory, declared that

---

<sup>626</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 27 June 1919

<sup>627</sup> *Pro Israel*, 23 February 1923

<sup>628</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 5 July 1920.



the separate electoral college should be accepted under the precondition that the Jews inform the government that they “see in it the implicit acknowledgement of [their] rights of minority”.<sup>629</sup>

### **6.3. Jewish religion and Hebrew language as elements of a Jewish identity**

Their self perception as protectors of Jewishness and their increased awareness of being - as well as of wanting to be - ‘others’ within the Greek society constituted the two main poles around which the political programme of the Mizrahi evolved. With regard to the former, as early as 1919, the Mizrahi explicitly stated that Salonika Jews should first return to Judaism and then return to the Holy Land. For the sake of accomplishing this goal they tried to protect the Jewish religion and diffuse the Hebrew language which in their nationalist discourse constituted the very essence of Jewishness. For the accomplishment of such a goal the status of the Jews as a national minority was imperative since it could keep Greek Hellenisation plans to a minimum, and make space for the implementation of a Jewish national programme.

For the sake of protecting, preserving and encouraging the attachment of Salonika Jews to the Jewish religion the Mizrahi projected themselves as the defenders of the Jewish faith which was at stake because of the liberal stance of General Zionists. As it was eloquently put by Benveniste, “... local Judaism owes much of its decadence to the Liberal Zionists. Our temples, our *midrachim* are empty. The religious feasts go by without being noticed, and they slowly fall into oblivion.”<sup>630</sup> In 1926 the Zionist group Max Nordau was attacked for organising on the first and second day of Pessah a theatrical organisation.<sup>631</sup> Thus in the first conference of the Jewish National Fund of

---

<sup>629</sup>Minutes of the Communal Assembly, 17 December 1924, ACC 3121/ E3/ 519, ABDBJ.

<sup>630</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 November 1926.

<sup>631</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 29 March 1926.

Greece held in Salonika in December 1922 the Mizrahi, who had contributed with thirty per cent of the JNF, were able to impose their views which provided that “no political action would be undertaken by the Federation insulting the religious feeling of the population and that the minutes of the conference would not be printed on a Saturday [the Jewish day of Rest].”<sup>632</sup>

It is against the background of pious religiousness that one should view and explain the anti-communist mood of many radical Jews. Thus, unlike the General Zionists for whom the spreading of Communism amongst the Jews represented a local political threat rather than a cultural danger, the Mizrahi employed a more international discourse which considered Communism and its anti-religious preaching an attack on the Jewish religion and a dangerous, moral threat to Jewishness. Their anti-communist attitude was expressed both theoretically and practically under different occasions, abroad and at home. Thus in May 1922 *Pro-Israel* stood by the decision of the communal council to protest against the persecution of the Jews in Soviet Russia, thereby rejecting the arguments of the communist *Avante*, which viewed this decision as one based on false sources.<sup>633</sup> Although it was acknowledged that the Soviet regime had put a stop to physical antisemitism, the Soviet government was nevertheless severely castigated for waging a serious ‘moral pogrom’ against the Jews in Russia and Ukraine, evident in the imposition of religious limitation, in the arrest and imprisonment of Zionist leaders, in the confiscation of Zionist literature and, finally, in the requisition of their offices.<sup>634</sup>

In Salonika, in particular, the anti-communist attitude of the Mizrahi was evident in their efforts to counterbalance the social influence which some Jewish Communists

---

<sup>632</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 15 December 1922.

<sup>633</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 19 May 1922.

<sup>634</sup>*Ibid.*



exerted among their fellow Jews, hence showing that Greek and Jewish nationalist discourse shared the same aversion to Communism. Thus the Mizrahi did not view favourably the activities of some Communists who, by founding a medical organisation for the Jews called *La Union Mutualla*, intended to use it for the propagation of communist and socialist values. In response to that the Mizrahi founded their own charitable group called *B'nei Avraham*.<sup>635</sup>

Except for activities aiming at limiting communist influence, the Mizrahi took also other measures which showed their attachment to the Jewish religious law. Thus in the early 1920s with the support of the women's organisation, *Hateyia*, members of the Mizrahi group gathered four Jewish orphans in the Mizrahi building in order to save them from being settled in Christian orphanages. This initiative evolved further and by 1925 an orphanage was created which was named after Meir Aboave who had contributed generously to the purchase of the building. Almost forty children found accommodation, food and basic education in this orphanage throughout the inter-war years. In March 1926 the Mizrahi took steps to preserve another Jewish religious custom, that of kosher meat. Thus, when some Jewish butchers raised the prices of kosher meat thus making it too expensive for lower-class Jews, the Mizrahi persuaded the butchers to form a co-operative and agree on a central price which could allow both profit and the continuation of the religious custom.<sup>636</sup>

Moreover in February 1926 the Salonika Radicals opposed the plans of Zionist communal leaders to appoint the Chief Rabbi of Stockholm, Dr. Ehrenpreis, as Chief Rabbi of Salonika on account of having been a non-religious figure<sup>637</sup> intending to

---

<sup>635</sup>Later on this group came together in Tel-Aviv and founded the *Koupat-Holim B'nei-Avraham*. Toledano 1972: p. 433.

<sup>636</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 29 March 1926. See also Toledano 1972: p. 433.

<sup>637</sup>As cited in *Pro-Israel*, 22 April 1926.

establish an absolute *hierocratie*.<sup>638</sup> When combined with the xenophobic feelings of Greek officials *vis-à-vis* the appointment of a foreigner as Chief Rabbi, intra-communal disagreements over the same issue resulted in the absence of a religious leader from the Salonika Jewish community for the years 1923-1933 with serious consequences for its profile. Indeed, the very definition of the Jews as a religious minority was deprived of its potential because the community was missing its official representative able to use his prestige and intervene to the Greek authorities for the sake of protecting Jewish interests, as had been the case of the Chief Rabbi Jacob Meir.<sup>639</sup> Practical measures apart, the Mizrahi assisted the intellectual activities of religious Jews in Salonika. A case in point was their support for the organisation of *Lomdei-Ha Torah*, established in 1876 with the aim of studying sacred texts, and for *Naim Vezimiroth*, a branch of *Lomdei Ha-Torah*, which worked for the conservation of religious songs.<sup>640</sup>

The most telling proof of the religious devoutness of the Mizrahi was shown *vis-à-vis* the issue of the Sabbath, which meant that the Mizrahi often involved themselves in serious conflict with all individuals or organisations, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who did not observe the Jewish day of Rest. On the one hand, foreign schools in Salonika were frequently accused of not respecting the Sabbath. No less adamant were allegations expressed against other Zionists for violating the Jewish holiday by smoking or hanging around instead of performing their religious duties.<sup>641</sup> It was only too obvious that the Salonika Mizrahi would show the same stance when the Sabbath rest was threatened on a massive scale, as it was the case of the preservation of the Sabbath in the commercial domain. When in March 1922 Greek legislation imposed Sunday as

---

<sup>638</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 5 March 1926.

<sup>639</sup>G. Tousimes, *He Elleipse Archiravvinou sten Evraike Koinoteta tes Thessalonikes kata to Mesopolemo kai oi Synepieies tes*, *Histor*, 2 (September 1990), pp. 109-120. See also Nar 1997: p. 145.

<sup>640</sup>In the inter-war years this organisation was led by Baruch Ben-Jacob. *Pro-Israel*, 5 March 1926.

<sup>641</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 November 1923.



the obligatory day of rest in Florina, a city in northern Greece, the Salonika Mizrahi sympathised with their fellow Jews and accusations were even voiced against the Salonika Jewish deputy Isaac Sciaky for having done little to protect the interests of the Jews of Florina.<sup>642</sup>

One year later the Mizrahi reacted again when the threat to the Jewish day of rest came from the Jews themselves. In October 1923 the director of the Bank Amar, Mr Allallouf, announced that, given certain financial necessities and after having received specific instructions from Paris, the Bank would work on Saturdays. Such a stance, besides being used as a proof of assimilation, was fiercely attacked in the pages of *Pro-Israel* as “culpable materialism” which discredited the struggle of the Jews *vis-à-vis* the Greek government, since it provided the enemy with the very weapons it needed.<sup>643</sup>

Both incidents in Florina and Salonika alerted many religious Jews in Salonika who decided to set up a commission in November 1923 for the protection of the Sabbath.<sup>644</sup> This committee comprised Haimaki Cohen, Abraham Pelossof, Saltiel Cohen, Salmon Modiano, Aaron Pipano, Rekanati, and Benveniste, who was the most influential of all. The goal of the committee was to contact Jewish bankers, such as Mrs Mosseri and Cia, Modiano and Sides, Charles Beraha, Jacov Assael, Moise Levy, etc., and enlighten them with regard to the importance of Sabbath.<sup>645</sup>

Almost half a year after the founding of this committee Papanastasiou's government passed a law which dealt to the Sabbath rest in Salonika the fatal blow. The

---

<sup>642</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 12 April 1922.

<sup>643</sup>The argument used by the manager of the government according to which the Bank was an Anonymous Hellenic Bank which had to obey the Greek laws - even when that meant the defiance of the Jewish religious laws - was rejected by the counter argument that the clientele of the Bank were 100per cent Jews. *Pro-Israel*, 21 October 1923.

<sup>644</sup>A similar committee existed in Poland and one of its which in July 1925 decided to ask the directors of the Jewish newspapers to observe the Sabbath. *Pro-Israel*, July 1925.

<sup>645</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 30 November 1923.

discourse and the measures taken by the Mizrahi in order to prevent the law from being implemented show not only their uncompromising attitude but, in addition, their increased alienation from Greek society and the Greek state. It is true that if the disagreement over educational issues had created tension in the relations between Greek officials and Jewish Radicals, the imposition of Sunday as the obligatory day of rest in Salonika signified the huge abyss which divided the two camps. *Pro-Israel* considered the measure a “crime of conscience” committed for the sake of electoral gains and asked openly for the dismissal of the Greek Minister of National Economy who by this action had demoted himself to the level of the intolerant behaviour of Isabel and Ferdinand of Spain. One could not help noticing that the Mizrahi, under the leadership of Rekanati, and the *Chibbat Zion*, led by Nissim Houli, were the only Jewish organisations which, when protesting against the Sunday Law, referred to the Jews as ‘a national minority’. At the same time the Mizrahi press openly requested that the issue should be decided upon by the League of Nations, which was the official protector of minority rights during the inter-war years.<sup>646</sup>

Both the discourse *and* the practices of the Salonika Mizrahi *vis-à-vis* the issue of Sunday Closing Day proved of decisive importance for the way in which the Jewish group fared in Salonika in the future. On the one hand, they realised even better that, if there was something that could influence Greek politics, it was the League of Nations or other political bodies with an international profile. At the same time, they were aware that the possibility of appealing for help from abroad whenever Jewish interests were threatened could prove counterproductive for the Jews, given the ‘delicate’ relationship between inter-war Greek national interests and the League of Nations. This double-edged deduction seems to have been well encapsulated by the radical Jews who adjusted

---

<sup>646</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 11 July 1924.



their practises to the new conditions.

This new political line was reflected in the measures they took to stop the expropriation of the old Jewish cemetery proposed by the Greek government in 1930. The Jewish Radicals reacted vehemently on account of the provisions of the Jewish religious law - which is against any transfer of the buried - and of the fact that the cemetery represented the only store house of documents relating to Salonika, because in the Great Fire the archives of the local Jewish community and the stores of written documents had been completely lost. Thus Rekanati contacted immediately Lucien Wolf in London and asked for his intervention, showing that despite ideological differences, which separated the two individuals, Wolf's international diplomatic profile was a source of power for Jewish endangered interests.

Being aware of the antisemitic mood of Greek nationalism of the late 1920s, Rekanati did not fail to mention that "that the whole issue was very delicate and that it would not be advisable [for Wolf] to make official representations. The latter should only submit the relative memorandum which had been submitted to the Greek government and which could be used as the basis for reference for any representation done to the Greek Premier from the Anglo-Jewish Committee."<sup>647</sup> By calling for discretion the leader of the Mizrahi could make sure that the image of the Salonika Jews was irreproachable since there could be no official proof that Salonika Jews had taken the initiative to contact people abroad and expose in their eyes the image of Greece.

Rekanati's shrewd remark was followed by Wolf as well. Thus, when the latter contacted Demetres Kaklamanos, the Greek Ambassador in London, he did not mention at all his correspondence with Rekanati and said only that "his intervention was not on behalf of the Salonika Jews but on behalf of the Jews of the British empire, who were

---

<sup>647</sup>Rekanati to Wolf, 10 February 1930, ACC 3121/456, ABDBJ.

concerned once they were informed about the plan of the Greek government to expropriate the Jewish cemetery in Salonika.” Moreover he showed trust in the well-intentioned attitude of the Greek state and did not doubt that the plan of expropriation was based solely on public purposes and should not be viewed as an antisemitic measure. Finally he raised the issue of indemnity and hoped that the “Government would endeavour to arrive at a friendly and equitable settlement of the monetary claims arising out of the ownership of the land”.<sup>648</sup>

One more effort was taken some months later by Isaac J. Alcheh, the President of the Burials Commission of the Salonika Jewish community and director of the School of Alcheh, which had often been praised by the Jewish Radicals for its adherence to the Jewish national values. During a meeting held in London with Sam Levy - a leading member of the congregation of Salonika Jews in Paris- Wolf and Alcheh, the latter did not mince his words and attacked fiercely the Greek government for its intolerance. At the same time he proposed the establishment of a commission whose task would be to examine all 300,000 monuments and tombstones and draw up a report on them, preserving thus precious epigraphic information deriving from them.<sup>649</sup> Besides gaining practical results, such a process would allow Wolf to approach Venizelos during the deliberations of the League of Nations in Geneva. However, such a proposal crumbled against the unwillingness of the Joint Foreign Committee to challenge the power of a country to deal with its domestic affairs,<sup>650</sup> since the whole issue could evolve into a wrangle “over the degree of historic sanctity attached to the

---

<sup>648</sup>ACC 3121 E3 158, ABDBJ (date illegible).

<sup>649</sup>According to his plan this Jewish Commission would be guided by an Englishman, Frenchman or American archaeologist paid by foreign Jewish communities. This committee would also include workers and assistants provided by the community. Wolf to Jewish Historical Society, 18 July 1930, ACC 3121/657, ABDBJ.

<sup>650</sup>Wolf to Rekanati, 18 March 1930, ACC 3121/456, ABDBJ.



Salonika Cemetery on the one hand, and the precise strength of the public necessities alleged by the Greek Government on the other.”<sup>651</sup>

Besides efforts to preserve the Jewish religion, Salonika Mizrahi fought for the linguistic nationalisation of the community thereby changing its multi-lingual profile. For the Mizrahi, being able to speak Hebrew represented an important credential of their Jewish national identity and should be preserved as a shield against all non-Jewish influences. Indeed, throughout the long history of Ottoman domination foreign cultural influences had penetrated Salonika Judaism which were best reflected in the speaking of so many different languages, such as Italian, French, Ottoman, Judeo-Spanish and Hebrew. At the same time, the immense importance laid upon the revival of the Hebrew language as a cultural-ethnic characteristic rather than as a religious feature attributed to the Salonika Mizrahi a rather secular character which helped them to embrace and merge for a long period with the secular movement of Salonika Revisionism.

Thus the Mizrahi stood by the decision taken during the first Greek Zionist Congress in 1919, which recognised the Hebrew language as the “national language of the Jewish people”<sup>652</sup>, and did their best to promote and protect the teaching of Hebrew in Salonika. They organised evening courses of all levels of Hebrew which lasted the entire year. A case in point was the Mizrahi organisation *Gheoula* which under the leadership of Isaac Cassouto organised lessons of Hebrew for its 100 members.<sup>653</sup> In general, Hebrew courses were open to all age groups and were largely attended by the Mizrahi themselves. In all their public and private appearances the Mizrahi spoke mainly in Hebrew, including a number of plays which were performed in Hebrew such

---

<sup>651</sup> Kaklamanos repeated the argument of public need and reassured Wolf that all measures would be taken to safeguard the religious and historical monuments as well as the religious feeling of Salonika Jews. Kaklamanos to Wolf, 6 January 1931, ACC 3121/456, ABDBJ.

<sup>652</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 21 March 1919

<sup>653</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 9 April 1926.

as “David and Goliath”, “Rabbi Ackiva” and “Shulamit” in 1925.<sup>654</sup> During these performances poems written by famous Jewish poets were recited and during 1923 the Mizrahi issued every month the only Hebrew newspaper in the city, called *Ha-Shachar* (The Dawn) which could - to a certain extent - offset the spreading of the French influence via the French-speaking *Pro-Israel*.<sup>655</sup> For the sake of defending the preservation and diffusion of the Hebrew language a group of young people set up the organisation ‘Battalion’, while, at the same time, the Mizrahi supported quite often the teachers of Hebrew in the Jewish communal schools in Salonika.<sup>656</sup>

Part of the efforts of the Mizrahi to promote the teaching of Hebrew was to try to marginalise other forces which opposed the linguistic nationalisation of the community. As far as ‘internal enemies’ were concerned, the AIU seemed to have been the most dangerous and it would not be an exaggeration to argue that in the early 1920s an atmosphere of cultural war had broken out in Salonika between the Mizrahi and the *Alliance* over the latter’s efforts to work for the linguistic assimilation of the Jews.

The reasons which triggered off this cultural strife could be traced in the different ideological programme of the two groups, the main aspects of which pertained to educational and cultural issues. As has already been argued the *Alliance* ideology viewed education as the principal means to help the Jews integrate themselves in their environment both in economic and social terms. Whether this choice meant Francosation of the Jews in the Ottoman years, or, later, Hellenisation, was equally

---

<sup>654</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 3 July 1925.

<sup>655</sup>The circulation of the weekly Hebrew periodical was announced by *Pro-Israel* on 9 October 1923. Such an initiative was considered a Herculean task given the high degree of indifference of the Jewish masses towards any charitable action. However, the newspaper expressed its confidence in the group of the ‘brave Herbalists’ who together with members of the Kadima- a group of scholars striving for the diffusion of Hebrew at the beginning of the twentieth century - would try to wake up the Jewish masses from their lethargy.

<sup>656</sup>Toledano 1972: pp. 425-426.



unacceptable for the group of Jewish nationalists who viewed anything non-Jewish as the preamble to catastrophe. Although there was a large consensus as far as the detrimental effect of the *Alliance* was concerned, it is important to note that publications in the French-speaking *Pro-Israel* were more caustic when referring to the work of *Alliance* outside Salonika than when criticising its work at home. At the same time it was made clear that all sorts of complaints voiced against *Alliance* referred to the latter's activities in the years under consideration and not to its earlier work which had been in many aspects in conformity with Jewish national values.<sup>657</sup> In this way a profile of 'political correctness' could be kept within the community, not least to spare personal embarrassment, since certain Mizrahi - such as Rekanati - were former graduates of *Alliance*.<sup>658</sup>

As early as 1920 on the occasion of the efforts of some Tunisian Jews to get rid of the *Alliance* schools a series of articles were written in *Pro-Israel* sympathising with the struggle of their fellow Jews in Tunisia. Extremely harsh language was used towards the *Alliancists* to whom were attributed the least flattering adjectives of being "the apostles of assimilation, the pioneers of the dissolution of the Jewish people amongst the nations." They were called a "curse from God, who continued their horrible work of dejudaising the Jewish children, of denationalisation, of taking them away from [their]

---

<sup>657</sup>A deep appreciation was expressed for the work of Charles Netter, the founding father of the *Alliance*, who had been animated by the best feelings for the regeneration of the Jews and who by founding *Mikveh-Israel* had given ample evidence of his attachment to the Holy Land. The same laudable comments were expressed for the previous work of other committed *Alliancists* like David Morpugno, Joseph Nehama, Moise Allattini. *Pro-Israel*, 19 November 1920.

<sup>658</sup>Similar was the situation in Istanbul where *L'Aurore* and *La Nation*, the two most important Zionist newspapers, were published in French and addressed a "Francophone class" which had been created "as a result of the activities of the *Alliance*". Rodrigue 1990: p. 131.

people, of creating out of them forces of dissolution, and instruments of destruction of the ethnic entity.”<sup>659</sup>

As far as allegations at home were concerned the tone was conspicuously more moderate. The management of the *Alliance* schools were accused of offering only three hours of Hebrew per week- a so-called “weekly beggary”<sup>660</sup>- and of applying discriminatory behaviour *vis-à-vis* pupils who showed preference to Hebrew and not to French.<sup>661</sup> Only in extremely rare occasions did the allegations become personal. A case in point was the public request of *Pro-Israel* in 1920 to remove Joseph Nehama - the director of the *Alliance* Schools in Salonika - from the Superior Committee of Instruction because he was harmful to Jewish national interests.<sup>662</sup> Finally in January 1921 Rekanati asked for the *Alliance* schools to pass to the community, that is under Zionist guidance, as had happened in Aleppo in Syria.

Parallel to the condemnation of the French language as such came the condemnation of French culture which had infiltrated the Salonika Jews as the side-effect of their linguistic Francosation. The Jewish nationalists deplored not only the fact that French had become the *lingua franca* of Salonika Jews but that all manners and customs had become French and that Jewishness was considered nothing more but “a routinary and out of fashion mode” of existence.<sup>663</sup> This situation reminded the Jewish traditionalists in Salonika of the threat of modernisation which two centuries before had

---

<sup>659</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 2 January 1920.

<sup>660</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 7 November 1924.

<sup>661</sup>It was reported that the director of the girls’ school would refuse to accept girls who had previously attended a Hebrew school unless they gave up their evening courses of Hebrew and ceased to socialise with pupils of the Hebrew schools. Moreover, any pupil who would not speak French outside the school hours was also punished. The example was offered that the pupils should forget the word ‘Shalom’ and stick to ‘Bonjour’. *Pro-Israel*, 21 August 1923.

<sup>662</sup>*Pro-Israel*, November 1920.

<sup>663</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 21 August 1923.



permeated western Jewry, resulting in massive conversions of German Jews to Christianity.<sup>664</sup> It is within the same background of Jewish nationalist discourse that one should view the accusation against the *Association des Anciens Élèves de l'AIU* who were no less reprehensible for encouraging a foreign cultural identity<sup>665</sup> and for not obeying Jewish religious law.<sup>666</sup>

Finally the work of the *Alliance* was the 'red rag' for the Mizrahi who accused them of having opposed different aspects of Jewish nationalism.<sup>667</sup> In order to corroborate this argument the example was used that in 1908 the General Secretary of AIU, described to the delegation of the Young Turks in Paris the Zionist movement as "an anti-patriotic movement, aiming at detaching Palestine from the Ottoman Empire."<sup>668</sup> In 1919 the *Alliance* was represented as having taken further action against Jewish nationalism when a) it opposed the memorandum presented by the Committee of the Jewish Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference which sought to gain recognition of the Jews as national minorities<sup>669</sup> and b) through the mouth of Sylvain Levy, the president of the committee of AIU, serious doubts were expressed as far as the feasibility of the Zionist dream was concerned.<sup>670</sup> However, it is important to note that although the nationalist mouthpiece in Salonika attacked these groups for ideological reasons in front of a Jewish audience, the Mizrahi considered both the AIU and the

---

<sup>664</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 21 April 1923.

<sup>665</sup>On 13 March 1920, *Pro-Israel* wrote that the AAIU organised literary evening which concentrated exclusively on foreign - namely non-Jewish - issues.

<sup>666</sup>On 5 March 1926 *Pro-Israel* accused the AAIU of organising their bal on a Friday evening.

<sup>667</sup>However *Pro-Israel* was fair enough to applaud the decision of the *Alliance* in 1919 to recognise Hebrew as the language of teaching at the agricultural schools of *Mikveh Israel* where around 100 orphans of the war lived. *Pro-Israel*, 10 January 1919.

<sup>668</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 2 January 1920.

<sup>669</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>670</sup>For an analysis of the motives and stance of Levy's arguments as well as of the reactions caused by his speech see Chouraqui 1965: pp. 223-227.

Anglo-Jewish Committee as precious allies in solving conflicts with non-Jewish forces, that is when trying to avoid the voting of the Sunday Closing Day and the expropriation of the Jewish cemetery.

Its anti-nationalist attitude apart, the *Alliance* was additionally accused of being an elitist group, a so-called ‘monstrosity’ set up by the civilised, emancipated, aristocratic western Jews who, while being committed to the principle of Jewish material solidarity, wished to regenerate the poor and backward Orientals by providing for them a European education and thus help them assimilate completely to the Christian nations.<sup>671</sup> The Jewish Radicals opposed such an intention by arguing that the alleged superiority of the West was discredited by its complete indifference *vis-à-vis* the persecution of the Jews.<sup>672</sup> Finally they suggested that the *Alliance* should confine its efforts strictly to charitable activities, since its educational work would give birth to generations of “emaciated, castrated, degenerated Jews.”<sup>673</sup> Thus on grounds of cultural and political differences the main motto of the Jewish nationalists was, as early as 1920, “Against the *Alliance*”.<sup>674</sup>

If the *Alliance* schools were accused of alienating the Jews from the Hebrew language and Jewish culture, the foreign schools existing in Salonika at that time and which were attended primarily by Jewish children represented an additional danger for the Mizrahi and their commitment to the creation of a Jewish national identity. The sparkle was given in 1922 with the episode in the *Mission Laicque Francaise*, when allegations were voiced against a certain Ozou, the General Director of the schools of *Mission Laicque Francaise* in Salonika, for having removed all Jewish flags from the

---

<sup>671</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 30 January 1920.

<sup>672</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 21 April 1923.

<sup>673</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 30 January 1920 republished an article which had been published by the Romanian Journal *Mantuirea*.

<sup>674</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 January 1920.



hall which hosted the Purim ball of the Sporting Club - whose members were mostly graduates of the French school - while leaving untouched the French and the Greek flags.<sup>675</sup> In the years to come the foreign schools attracted the most vitriolic attacks of the Mizrahi who considered them the principle “breeding-grounds of dejudaisation”, since not only did they strive “to propagate the language, the ideals and the patriotic aspirations of the countries they represented but aimed at converting others to their national and religious cause.”<sup>676</sup> Accusations included the adoption of a Christian calendar which excluded Jewish holidays<sup>677</sup> as well as the absence of the teaching of the Hebrew language and religion.<sup>678</sup> In 1923, by alluding to an incident which had taken place in Alexandria, *Pro-Israel* tried to alert all religious Jews in Salonika and referred to an imminent danger of conversion threatening Jewish children who were attending Christian schools.<sup>679</sup>

The anti-assimilationist attitude of the Mizrahi continued throughout the inter-war years but their discourse was influenced by the radical changes which took place in their surroundings from 1923 onwards. For a number of reasons which have already been mentioned in the third chapter, 1923 constituted a turning point in the history of

---

<sup>675</sup>*Pro-Israel*, April 1922. The same episode resulted in the expulsion of Charles Nehama from the *Association des Jeunes Juifs* because he did not react to this act being a Secretary of the Sporting Club.

<sup>676</sup>According to the opinion of the Jewish Radicals, the widely believed idea that these schools were set up in order to serve humanitarian and civilisationist reasons was pure propaganda. It was their firm belief that the *raison d'être* of these schools was to inculcate the principles of a Christian civilisation which aimed at the assimilation of the body and the spirit and at the total extinction of the basic characteristics of Judaism. *Pro-Israel*, 9 February 1923.

<sup>677</sup>In 1922 the Mizrahi organisation addressed an appeal to the Headmaster of the *College of the Frères of Saint-Jean Baptiste* asking that Jewish pupils were granted the right not to attend school on Saturdays. *Pro-Israel*, 30 November 1923. Another accusation referred to the decision of an Italian school to place the symbol of the cross in the top of every class while, the Mizrahi insisted, these schools were committed to providing secular education. *Pro-Israel*, 21 April 1923

<sup>678</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 9 February 1923.

<sup>679</sup>According to an article published in *Pro-Israel*, six Jewish students had converted to Christianity in the College of the Mozrarrem-Bey in Alexandria. *Pro-Israel*, 13 September 1923

Salonika and its Jewish inhabitants, who witnessed a radical alteration in the ethnographic profile of the city, since around 200,000 Asia Minor refugees of Greek origin came and settled in Salonika and its surrounding areas. From this point onwards the Greek state, which for eleven years had been engaged militarily in two Balkan Wars, the First World War and the Asia Minor campaign, directed its attention to the linguistic assimilation of all non-Greek speaking minorities. As a result, the Mizrahi turned their eyes away from the *Alliance* and viewed the Greek intervention as the newly-emerged cultural and, in turn, national enemy. Thus the previous anti-Francosation fervour was succeeded by the motto of anti-Hellenisation which found its expression once again in the explosively debated field of education.

Even before the influx of the refugees and the decision of the Greek state to promote the linguistic assimilation of the Jews *Pro-Israel* accused in early 1920 the Greek state of trying to impose a process of “forced Hellenisation” by decreeing that all Jewish communal schools had not only to teach Greek as a linguistic lesson but also to use it for the teaching of history, geography, physics and mathematics as well.<sup>680</sup> Such a provision, which was not in agreement with the desired status of the Jews as a national minority, was interpreted by the Mizrahi as the intention of the Greek state to limit the educational autonomy of the community and to suppress its cultural national particularity.<sup>681</sup> In other words, what the Jewish Radicals rejected in Salonika was not the teaching of Greek - such a clause was sanctified by international regulations which

---

<sup>680</sup>The Greek state was described as “intending to destroy the basis of the Hebrew education, by banning Hebrew in the asile, by providing for the teaching of courses in Greek language and by placing Hebrew really in an inferior position.” *Pro-Israel*, 31 October 1920.

<sup>681</sup>In contrast to the attitude of the Greek government the Mizrahi praised the example of the Polish legislation which had remained loyal to the stipulations of the Polish Minority Treaty. The Polish state had agreed to recognise the Polish Jews as a national minority and had decreed that the Jewish communal



they largely applauded and was even asked for by the Jewish communal assembly - but the *extent to which* the Greek language was taught placing Hebrew, the national language of the Jews, in an inferior position.

The opposition of the radical Jewish discourse *vis-à-vis* Greek official politics inevitably included other Jewish groups or Jewish individuals who were tolerating, let alone encouraging, the programme of Hellenisation. Thus in the summer of 1922 *B'nei Brith* was scolded for giving young Jews scholarships and enabling them to continue their studies in a Greek Gymnasium or in Athens University.<sup>682</sup> Similar allegations were voiced against the *Renaissencia Djoudia*, the official mouthpiece of the Greek Zionist Federation, for not taking an active stance against *Nouvau Club Sioniste* which was also giving similar scholarships.<sup>683</sup> Moreover, within the spirit of opposing the Hellenisation of the communal schools the Jewish Radicals asked for the dismissal of Jadock Kohn, the Jewish inspector of the Jewish communal schools, on account of his inability to speak Hebrew and his support for the programme of Hellenisation.<sup>684</sup> Within the spirit of preserving the educational autonomy of the community, *Pro-Israel* attacked *Le Progrès* for yielding the administration of the schools into the hands of the government, and thus undermining the schools' autonomy.<sup>685</sup> Finally, the Radicals were the first to come up with the idea of the creation of a Jewish Gymnasium which could help the current educational system make up for its shortcomings<sup>686</sup>.

In 1924 it was written in completely disappointing terms that the Jewish communal schools, which had constituted the actual bulwarks of Jewishness and of the

---

schools had to teach Polish only as a language lesson and that the Jews had the right to teach the rest of the courses in any language they wished. *Pro-Israel*, 5 July 1920.

<sup>682</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 30 June 1922.

<sup>683</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 29 October 1926.

<sup>684</sup>*Pro Israel*, 24 November 1923.

<sup>685</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 19 June 1925.

<sup>686</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 23 February 1923.

Hebrew language, were on their way to Grecoisation, risking the loss of their *national Jewish character* (underlined in the original)<sup>687</sup>. According to the same article, the “hideous assimilation was infiltrating in a clandestine way” and the most indicative example of this situation was the school of Cases where the assimilation was progressing quickly since Greek was taught 14 hours and Hebrew only 8 or 6 and sometimes even 4 hours per week.<sup>688</sup> In contrast to this harsh language favourable comments were expressed by the Mizrahi for the work accomplished in the private school of Alcheh and in the Talmud Torah in the quarter of Vardar which was in accordance with Jewish national values.<sup>689</sup>

#### **6.4. Jews as temporary sojourners in Greece**

The different efforts which the religious Jews in Salonika made in order to protect the Jewish religion and serve the Hebrew language had a two-fold goal. On the one hand, they believed that the preservation of language and religion was essential should the Salonika Jews preserve their status as national minorities within the Greek state and avoid being assimilated to their surroundings. On the other hand there was a far-reaching goal which was intimately connected with the first goal and could be implemented only if the Jews remained attached to a distinct Jewish identity. This goal was the return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land and was viewed as the definite solution to the problems the Jews were facing all over the Jewish Diaspora. For the Salonika Mizrahi emigration to Palestine was even more imperative because sooner or later Salonika Jewry risked the loss of its Jewish national identity. The same alarming

---

<sup>687</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 2 April 1924.

<sup>688</sup> According to the confession of David Yakar, a teacher working in the communal schools, both the hours of Greek and the Greek teachers were so many that the Greek inspector had appointed a director in each school solely responsible for the Greek professors exclusively. *Ibid.*

<sup>689</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 20 September 1920 and 6 October 1922.



tone was carried by the words of the Zionist leader Mehamem Ussishkin who during his visit to Salonika on 5 September 1924 stated that he had found the city “at the period of its national decay.” Such a deduction, Ussishkin continued, was in contrast to the stereotypical image of Salonika as “Jerusalem of the Balkans”.<sup>690</sup> Thus during the second public reunion organised in Salonika in 1926 by the Mizrahi, Rabbi Liau Francès declared the attachment [of the Mizrahi] to the vision of Palestine and stated that “it [was] in the Torah that [could] be found the secret of [the Jews’] existence, and it is via this [the Torah] that one day [they] would definitively find [their] national home.”<sup>691</sup>

For the Salonika Mizrahi it was a commonplace that the future of the Jews did not lay anywhere in the Diaspora but in Palestine.<sup>692</sup> As far as Salonika was concerned, they believed that it had nothing positive to offer to the Jewish population except for the memory of a remote and glorious past which had, however, come to an end with the Greek domination of the city. In 1924, when the law of Sunday Closing Day was imposed, nostalgic articles published in *Pro-Israel* referred back to the Ottoman years, when Salonika had become the centre of Sephardi life. The Ottoman regime was glorified for having allowed the Jews to thrive and maintain their communal autonomy in the areas of education, culture and justice.<sup>693</sup> On the contrary, the Greek government of Papanastasiou in 1924 was projected as the personification of political opportunism

---

<sup>690</sup>Ussishkin said that the Hebrew language was on the wane and that the numerical predominance of the Jews in the city no longer existed since they had been outweighed by the Greek refugees. In the communal schools, the teaching of Hebrew had shrunk and children of 4 or 5 years old sang songs in both Greek and Hebrew. In all Jewish institutions, synagogues and schools there were inscriptions in Judeo-Spanish, sometimes French and Greek but never in Hebrew. The local journals, except for the one periodical published by the Mizrahi, were published either in French or in Judeo-Spanish.

<sup>691</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 4 June 1926.

<sup>692</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 18 November 1922.

<sup>693</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 28 May 1925

and traditional governmental antisemitism which aimed at exterminating the Jews,<sup>694</sup> leaving them with the options of “struggle or exodus”.<sup>695</sup> Six years later the discourse employed by Rekanati and Alchek in their efforts to delay- and in the best case to prevent - the expropriation of the Jewish cemetery showed how suspicious they were as far as the credibility of the Greek government was concerned.<sup>696</sup> The latter was accused of showing intolerance towards anything non-Greek in the city in general, and in particular, of suppressing the ethnic particularity of the Jewish population. “The attack upon the Jewish cemetery was only one further step in a long settled and resolutely pursued plan, not only for the destruction of Jewish and of other non-Hellenic influences in Salonika and the surrounding country, but also for the complete effacement of all evidence of their historic association with the land”.<sup>697</sup> Finally, in the aftermath of the Campbell riots in July 1931, Rekanati cabled “in rather hysteric terms”<sup>698</sup> to J. M. Rich, the successor of the deceased Lucien Wolf, and accused the Greek governmental authorities not only of having tolerated the disturbances but of actually having complied with the rioters. The leader of the Radicals compared the situation with the Tsarist era when “the authorities were helping the hooligans” and asked for the support of the League of Nations.<sup>699</sup>

In addition to allegations referring to official antisemitism the Salonika Mizrahi felt that there were no bonds between the Greeks and Jews at the level of social interaction either, that is, bonds which could guarantee any sort of mutually tolerant and supportive co-existence. For Rekanati it was clear that the Jews had absolutely no

---

<sup>694</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 11 July 1924

<sup>695</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 24 July 1924.

<sup>696</sup>Alchek saw utterly suspiciously the possibility of an adequate compensation given the sad precedent of the Fire in 1917. Wolf to Rekanati, 8 February 1931, ACC 3121/ E3/ 519, ABDBJ.

<sup>697</sup>The Muslim cemeteries had already been expropriated.

<sup>698</sup>Rich to Bigart, 17 September 1931, ACC 3121/ E3/ 519, ABDBJ.

<sup>699</sup>Rekanati to Rich, 3 July 1931, ACC 3121/ E3/ 519, ABDBJ.



interest in involving themselves in Greek affairs, and this stance was obvious in the numerous articles published in *Pro-Israel* showing utter indifference to what was happening in Greece. Thus, although being a newspaper published in a town with paramount importance for Greek national history, *Pro-Israel* wrote nothing about the dramatic events taking place in Asia Minor in the summer of 1923 or later about the turbulent political and economic situation of the country. Unless Greek politics had something to do with the Jews, e.g. similarities between the Greek and Jewish national struggles,<sup>700</sup> *Pro-Israel* was concerned exclusively about the course of the Zionist movement, both at home and abroad, teeming with reports on the agricultural and economic progress in Palestine and on the efforts of different Zionist leaders.

As far as the Greeks were concerned the Mizrahi believed that all efforts to achieve fraternisation and peaceful co-existence were utterly in vain because of their intolerant stance. A proof of this situation was the negative reception which the Greeks had shown towards the organisation Social Education and its main organ *La Tribune Juive*- the organisation created in 1925 by the Jews in order to achieve a Greco-Jewish rapprochement. As the Mizrahi press eloquently put it “the Greeks had boycotted the new instrument and had contributed to its death.” Thus, it was argued, “the more the Jews sought fraternisation the more the Greeks turned their eyes away from them. For an accord to be effective there should be the consent of both parties. The Greeks considered the Jews as inferior citizens, [citizens] of second category, a belief which was sanctioned by the antisemitic politics of [the Greeks].” Finally, responsibilities were put upon the “Greek intellectuals who should try and clear all prejudices against

---

<sup>700</sup>One parallel could be drawn between the misery of the Asia Minor refugees and this of the Jewish dispersed nation. Another parallel was the close co-operation between the two peoples which found its expression in the support of the Jewish leader Henry Morgenthau for the rehabilitation of the Asia Minor refugees and in the support which Venizelos had expressed in verbal terms for the work in Palestine. *Pro-Israel*, 30 November 1923.

the Jews, persuade other Greeks to show tolerance, liberty of conscience, equality and justice, thus putting an end to the pariah status of their Jewish co-citizens.”<sup>701</sup>

In short one could argue that the Mizrahi considered themselves as temporary sojourners in Greece who had their physical existence in Salonika and their soul in Palestine, waiting and working for the transformation of the Holy Land into a Jewish National Home. It was their firm belief that Palestine should not remain a vision but become reality. In order to accomplish this goal the Salonika Mizrahi called for militant spirit and action thus leaving aside big words and theoretical issues. It is true that very few were the articles published in *Pro-Israel* which dealt with theoretical issues on Zionism, whereas the overwhelming majority of the published material referred to practical Zionism. Indicative examples of this attitude were the numerous references made to the creation of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925; to the financial contribution of Bulgarian Zionists to the Zionist movement who had imposed a communal tax for *Keren Hayessod*;<sup>702</sup> and finally to the work of the Greek Zionist deputy Maurice Koffinas and his successful fund-raising for the sake of creating a colony of Greek Jews in Palestine.<sup>703</sup> Such examples were the beacons which should show the way to the rest of the Greek Zionists accused of passivity and laziness, and of having done next to nothing in order to support materially the emigration of Salonika Jews to the Holy Land.<sup>704</sup> In particular, *Pro-Israel* accused the Zionists of sticking to matters of appearance, such as paying the shekel, organising social events and

---

<sup>701</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 24 July 1925.

<sup>702</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 30 January 1925.

<sup>703</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 16 May 1919. The Mizrahi mouthpiece applauded Koffina's effort to raise around 30,000 Drachmas from Athens, Volos, Ioannina and Trikala for the sake of establishing a colony of Greek Jews in Palestine.

<sup>704</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 22 August 1919. In 1924 it was severely deplored the fact that only 10-20 Greek Jews were living in Israel.



convening conferences and unions, while having done nothing to establish a group of Greek *Halutzim* in Palestine or to contribute to the work of *Keren Hayessod*.<sup>705</sup>

However, for the Jewish Radicals the hope lay in the people. They believed that, as the opposition of the Jews to the law of Sunday Closing Day had shown, the will of the Jewish population to remain loyal to the Jewish traditions was still very strong and could be used in the successful pursuit of the Zionist ideal. They also believed that the vision of Palestine was feasible thanks to the great potential found among the Salonika Jews. Thus, on different occasions *Pro-Israel* stressed the community's inherent dynamism which had rendered Salonika Jews vital factors in the progress and the development of the city.<sup>706</sup> Moreover, Salonika Jews were glorified on account of their Sephardi identity and its unique cultural contribution to the Jewish Diaspora. A case in point was the publication by *Pro-Israel* of the appreciation of Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinski, the leader of Revisionist Zionism, for Sephardi Jews and their special role in the implementation of the Zionist dream. "Jewish people are not a line of uniform soldiers, looking alike like pieces of paper; we are a nation comprising many creative elements which have to offer their own individual ingenuity to the common treasure."<sup>707</sup>

Throughout the inter-war years the Mizrahi never stopped referring to Palestine and came up with important ideas which were vital for the success of the emigration movement. Although it has been argued that the Mizrahi supported unrestricted emigration to Palestine irrespective of the economic and social background of the emigrants, data available show that in the early 1920s they endorsed a more calculating

---

<sup>705</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 19 July 1920.

<sup>706</sup> *Pro-Israel*, 25 July 1924. The famous example was invoked when Bajazet II expressed his amazement at the decision of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to expel the Jews and by doing so to enrich his own Kingdom which welcomed them. According to the same article the Turkish leader Kemal tried to keep the Jews in his country and the Bulgarian leaders understood - only too late - that the fleeing of Bulgarian Jews had proved detrimental for the commercial and banking life of the country.

<sup>707</sup> *Pro-Israel*, June 1923.

attitude concerning the issue of emigration. At a period when antisemitism had not still made its headway in Europe thereby rendering emigration ‘a matter of life or death’, articles published in *Pro-Israel* actually *did* confine possibilities of emigration to special categories of Jews, whose skills and professional background could fit the economic needs of Palestine. For example, special references were made to the numerous tobacco workers in Salonika who could be engaged in the culture and manipulation of tobacco as well as in the manufacture of cigarettes.<sup>708</sup> Moreover, the Mizrahi were pragmatic enough to ask for the contribution of the upper social classes of Salonika Jews who could support the Palestinian economy by employing indigenous workers in soap and oil factories; in the knitting of flannels; in cotton and silk tanneries; in the commerce of cereals and grains.<sup>709</sup>

In order to cultivate a closer relationship between Salonika Jews and Palestine, on 19 May 1922 the Siona company was established and put under the guidance of the Chief Rabbi Bension Uziel. This company was responsible for organising trips to Palestine by arranging all sorts of technical details (e.g. getting visas, passports, organising hotels).<sup>710</sup> Finally, for the sake of exploring economic possibilities for the Salonika Jews in Palestine, *Pro-Israel* supported the work of the Salonika-Palestine company established in March 1922 by a private initiative. According to an interview given by a member of the Executive, the company “aimed at creating economic relations between Greece and Palestine”.<sup>711</sup>

---

<sup>708</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 8 August 1924

<sup>709</sup>*Ibid.* In an effort to motivate the rich Jews to work for the Zionist cause the proposal was made in October 1923 that they should support the work of Israel Belkind who had sent and accommodated many Jewish orphans in Palestine. The same thing was proposed to be done for Salonika orphans who while profiting materially they would at the same time keep their Jewishness alive. *Pro-Israel*, 9 October 1920.

<sup>710</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 22 September 1922.

<sup>711</sup>*Pro-Israel*, March 1922.



However, the most important characteristic of the Salonika Mizrahi concerning their policy in Palestine was the militant spirit with which the Zionist ideal should be pursued, and once achieved, efficiently protected from external attacks. This was nothing new for the Mizrahi who- at least as far as at home politics was concerned- had proved that they did not mince their words independently of whom they were addressing. At the same time militancy was a recurring theme in their discourse which included references as old as the struggles of the Jews against the religious persecution of Antiochus the Epiphanis.<sup>712</sup> Radical discourse in 1919, which unfolded in the midst of the triumphant echo of the Paris Peace Conference, expressed the conviction that the Jewish people constituted a nation with their own state which should be admitted in the League of Nations and be placed on equal footing with the rest of the member states.<sup>713</sup> However, it was their firm belief that the Zionist movement and its leaders, both in Salonika as well as abroad, fell short in many respects of the ‘great expectations’ which Salonika Radicals nourished for the vision of Palestine.

First of all they deplored the attitude of the leaders of the Zionist Executive, Nahum Sokolow and Chaim Weizmann, who had succumbed to the idea propounded by the British according to which Palestine was placed under tight British control, rendering thus the Holy Land “the most brilliant jewel of the English crown”.<sup>714</sup> The concessions awarded by the British to the Jews were viewed by the Salonika Mizrahi as weak schemes of confined colonisation, simple projects of local autonomy, missing solid and credible guarantees necessary for the future creation of a Jewish state.<sup>715</sup> Their mistrust of the British was increased by the comments made by Palestinian Jews

---

<sup>712</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 11 July 1924.

<sup>713</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 10 January 1919.

<sup>714</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 5 December 1919 and 14 February 1920.

<sup>715</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 5 December 1919.

concerning the British administration. In 1920 *Pro-Israel* published a series of articles which portrayed the situation of Palestinian Jews as quite unfavourable since they were discriminated against by the British Mandatory authorities and their administrative machinery.<sup>716</sup> It was on this occasion that Jabotinski's name appeared in the Jewish newspaper for the first time which linked its voice with that of the Revisionist Jewish leader, who encouraged Palestinian Jews to continue their struggle for the preservation of the Hebrew language.<sup>717</sup> Cultural militancy apart, Salonika Radicals supported the idea of armed struggle too, highlighting thus an additional common point which they shared with Jabotinski's ideology. Their spirit of effervescent militancy was expressed in March 1920, when the isolated Jewish settlement in Tel-Hai was attacked by the Arabs resulting in six fatalities among the Jews and five injured. Among the former was Joseph Trumpeldor, an ex-officer of the Russian Army, who thereafter became a symbol of Jewish heroism.<sup>718</sup> *Pro-Israel* laid responsibility not only on the British administrative and military machine for having done little to save the Jews and for having shown 'criminal culpability' but on the Zionist leaders as well, for having done nothing to preserve and increase the power of the Jewish Brigade which was considered "an illegitimate child."<sup>719</sup> Once again the Zionist leaders were accused of inertia and passivity and of seeking the creation of a Palestinian 'ghetto' for the Jews.<sup>720</sup>

As far as local conditions were concerned, Salonika Radicals viewed with similar - if not increased - suspicion the General Zionists and their ideological programme. For one they were deemed 'guilty by association' for endorsing unquestionably the lines of the meek Weizmannite policy. With articles published in the

---

<sup>716</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 14 February 1920.

<sup>717</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 27 February 1920.

<sup>718</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 238.

<sup>719</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 8 April 1920.

<sup>720</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 23 April 1920.



official mouthpiece of the Greek Zionist Federation the Salonika General Zionists held the firm belief that the “Jewish nation [was] not yet capable of creating immediately a Jewish state in Palestine.”<sup>721</sup> When coupled with the complaints expressed concerning the cultural profile held by the Zionists in Salonika by 1924 the Mizrahi felt that a big rift separated them from General Zionism. It was against the background of intense disillusionment at home and of the general crisis of the Zionist movement that one should view and analyse the emergence of the Revisionist Movement in Salonika.

The founding stone was laid during the XII Zionist Congress in Carlsbad in March 1922 when Rekanati, the delegate of Salonika Mizrahi, was confronted with the acute conflict between different Zionist groups and became aware of the need for a new political voice which could save Zionism from dissolution. This voice was found in Jabotinski, who presented himself as the leader willing to ‘revise’ the current course of the Zionist movement and offer “an alternative to Weizman’s leadership”.<sup>722</sup> As a result *Pro-Israel* commented in February 1923 with increased adulation on Jabotinski’s resignation from the Executive Body of the Zionist Organisation, and his action was characterised as the vindicated reaction of a conscientious Zionist.<sup>723</sup> One year later, on 24 April 1924, *Pro-Israel* greeted with relief and regenerated hope the grouping of the Zionist dissidents around Jabotinski. During the same year Rekanati took the decisive step and founded the Revisionist movement in Salonika.

In the first Revisionist assembly organised in Paris in April 1925, Salonika was represented by Isaac Cohen, who reassured his fellow Jews that the Revisionist movement in Salonika “was well organised, that its activities were rapidly gaining ground and that they were in constant contact with [Jews in] Sophia in order to establish

---

<sup>721</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 27 February 1920.

<sup>722</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 238.

<sup>723</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 9 February 1923.

a regional organisation of Revisionism in the Balkans".<sup>724</sup> In August 1925 the XIV Zionist Congress was convened in Vienna where the Revisionists were represented mainly by Sephardi Jews, namely Dr. Saul Mezan from Sophia, the lawyer Meir Laniadou from Palestine, Rekanati from Salonika and Jabotinski. The latter, in an interview with Rekanati as the editor of *Pro-Israel*, repeated his thesis on the importance of Sephardi Jewry for the Jewish revival<sup>725</sup>, which was destined to take place in the lower Mediterranean where the *Sephardim* originated from.<sup>726</sup> The active ushering of the popular Mizrahi leader to the international Revisionist scene boosted the Revisionist activities in Salonika to such an extent that on 17 December 1925 Jabotinski wrote a letter to Rekanati congratulating Salonika Revisionists on their brilliant achievements. The newly-established group gained the support of prominent individuals, such as Itzhak Altchec and Yehuda Perahia, as well as of the union members of *B'nei Israel*, *Tikvat Israel*, *Artzeinou*, *Association des Jeunes Juifs*<sup>727</sup> and *Hibbat Zion*, which in March 1926 extended its actions in the lower class quarter of Vardar where it established a football team called Jabotinski.<sup>728</sup>

From early 1925 until 1933 one can talk of the merging between Mizrahi and Revisionists, an alliance made possible only in Salonika. Indeed, similar efforts were made to implement this union outside Salonika but all foundered in the incompatibility between Jabotinski's secular ideology<sup>729</sup> and the rhetoric of Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar-

---

<sup>724</sup>Rekanati 1972: p. 470.

<sup>725</sup>In a letter sent to *Pro-Israel* at the end of 1925 Jabotinski characterised the Spanish Jews as the 'salvation unit' of the Revisionist movement since it was their militant presence which helped to outweigh the reactions of the Weizmannian wing. *Ibid.*: p. 472.

<sup>726</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 471.

<sup>727</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>728</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 29 March 1926.

<sup>729</sup>When approached for the sake of the merging between Mizrahi and Revisionist Jabotinski said: "... although I am myself distant from traditional life, I can appreciate the purifying magnetism of the Jewish tradition; I hope that our next generations will rediscover the religious feeling and then their soul will be



Ilan) who, although being “the most down-to-earth and politically hardened of Mizrahi’s political leaders”,<sup>730</sup> considered religion *a sine qua non* for the implementation of the Zionist ideal.<sup>731</sup> However, the case of Salonika Mizrahi was different. Rekanati, was not a rabbi; namely, he was bound by no divine commitment to the Jewish religion. Then, not only was the very ideological exposition of the Mizrahi deprived of a messianic dimension but it had laid emphasis on the importance of ‘Jewish tradition’, a term which despite including the Jewish religion created space for the incorporation of secular elements as well. Indicative example of this stance were the persistence of the Mizrahi in the teaching of Hebrew in the secular Jewish communal schools and their commitment to a policy of active Zionism. Finally, one could argue that this merging owed a lot to the personal charisma of Rekanati, a man of unique political activism constantly working for the advance of the Zionist ideal among his fellow Jews in Salonika even at the expense of ideological inconsistencies. The merging of the two ideologies was evident in Rekanati’s speech made at the occasion of Jabotinski’s visit to Salonika in November 1926. “The Jewish nation will only find complete salvation by being loyal to the principles of the Jewish tradition and by following an activist Zionist policy for the liberation of the Homeland and the rise of the kingdom of Israel on both banks of the Jordan river.”<sup>732</sup>

---

healthier, more complete and harmonic.... Yet the most important point ... is the problem of the Jewish Agency. As cited in Rekanati 1972: p. 474.

<sup>730</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 149.

<sup>731</sup>When Rabbi Bar-Ilan, was approached for the same reason as Jabotinski, he answered: “... the living spirit in the Revisionism of Jabotinski does not understand and does not appreciate the religious side and the eastern value in our movement [the Mizrahi movement], more than *Weizmann* and his colleagues. Along with them, Jabotinski views the Zionist movement, according to his method, inspired by the idea that ‘there should be a home for Israel’ as there is one for the non-Jews, and nothing more.” As cited in Rekanati 1972: p. 474.

<sup>732</sup>Rekanati 1972: p. 484.

It was only too obvious that this merging would alert mainstream Salonika Zionists, who perceived in it a threat to their dominant political position. No sooner was the V Congress of Greek Zionists convened in Salonika in August 1925 than the Radicals, represented by ten members, including Rekanati and Muiz Ben-Uziel, criticised - *inter alia* - the position of the General Zionists towards Great Britain and proposed ways to achieve the ultimate goal. In November 1926 Jabotinski's long-remembered visit in Salonika electrified more than 4,000 Salonika Jews who heard him say, " ... we are trying to establish in Israel something which is similar to what our eyes see in Salonika",<sup>733</sup> and alerted the General Zionists who asked for the visit of Weizmann or Sokolov as a countermeasure to the presence of the Revisionist leader.<sup>734</sup>

The momentum of Salonika Revisionism was so great that Rekanati took pride in his article in having managed to shape many of the issues adopted by international Revisionism, such as "the whole of Israel for the Jews, the adoption of a non-compromising position against the betrayal by Britain, the idea of establishing a revolutionary organisation of the salvation of our land." This was made explicit by Rekanati himself who, together with Isaac Cohen<sup>735</sup>, represented Salonika Revisionists in the II Revisionist Conference in Paris in December 1926. In his inflamed speech he referred to the aforementioned issues as the only way to save the Jews from pending catastrophe:

We must not forget that time is running against us in Israel and in the Diaspora. The land of Israel is turning, slowly but surely, into an English settlement.... The process of disintegration is developing everywhere in the Jewish world. Destructive forces, internal and external, are helping to bring our end as a nation. Death awaits us everywhere; the ability of the nation of Israel to resist becomes weaker and weaker. We have to quicken the return

---

<sup>733</sup>Moissis 1972: p. 384.

<sup>734</sup>Rekanati 1972: p. 473.

<sup>735</sup>Cohen was the replacement for Moise Benusiglio. *Pro-Israel*, 17 December 1926.



of our nation to its land.... It seems to me that it is the duty of the Revisionists to do this respectful task. It may be that we will have to establish a special organisation beside our movement. In special cases one must use special means.... I know that there are obligations by England. Yet what means should we use to make England keep its promises? We do not have a navy or cannons. We are not concentrated in Israel. But nonetheless it is clear to me that small nations managed to win over great ones thanks to their devotion and bravery....We shall cling on to this great myth, which should be engraved in our hearts. What is true...in relation to the other nations could be also true in relation to the Jews. If possible, we could fulfil Herzl's dream - land of the Jews - with England, and, if impossible without England!<sup>736</sup>

Four years later in the Prague committee of the Revisionists in 1930 Rekanati would talk openly about a rebellion against England thereby paving the way for the secession of the Salonika Revisionists from the Union in 1933.<sup>737</sup> Indeed, "Jabotinski's strategy, sustained from the start to the finish of his career ..., rested on the premise that the Jewish state could and would be attained through the medium of Great Britain's mandatory responsibilities over Palestine."<sup>738</sup> Rekanati, on the other hand, did not let a chance go by without expressing his belief that British support was only *one* of many means available and able to lead the Jews towards the attainment of Jewish statehood. Finally, when considering Rekanati's call for armed struggle one cannot help but consider his words as reminiscent of the radicalism of Abraham Stern and Menahem Begin who, in the late 1930s, became actively involved in the underground military organisation of *Irgun Tzvai Leumi* (IZL, National Military Organisation) which aimed at driving out the British from Palestine.<sup>739</sup>

Notwithstanding Rekanati's impassioned speeches against all forces running counter to the immediate return of the Jews to Palestine, his political options within

---

<sup>736</sup>Rekanati 1972: p. 476.

<sup>737</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 479.

<sup>738</sup>Shimoni 1995: p. 264.

<sup>739</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 263.

Salonika were less dramatic as they were dictated by short-sighted political tactics. Thus despite numerous ideological and practical differences which separated the Mizrahi-Revisionists from the General Zionists and kept a simmering tension between them, the former *did* support the electoral programme of the General Zionists in all communal and parliamentary elections until 1930. Although at first sight such a collaboration seems incomprehensible, a closer look at the local political condition makes this collaboration look rather justified.

For one, the young age and the turbulent course of the group of Radicals did not allow them to compete with the General Zionists who represented the ‘old-guard’ of Jewish politics in Salonika and whose profile was deeply rooted in the history of the community. At the same time such a collaboration was not particularly distressing for the Radicals since in all electoral competitions until 1930 one could talk of a ‘United nationalist Jewish bloc’ excluding Communists and - in the case of 1928 - excluding Communists and Assimilationists alike. Indeed, during the parliamentary elections of 1926 this bloc was represented by the Party of the National Union which was in agreement with the nationalistic discourse of the Salonika Radicals, according to which the Jews were a unified national body with a distinct national identity. As far as the 1928 election was concerned, the collaboration with the General Zionists can be explained by so-called tactical voting. Having to choose between a party, which was represented by the Zionists who had promised “to fight with all means in their disposal in the Greek parliament to ensure that the Jews are accorded rights of national minorities” and a party which stood for the “criminal assimilation”, the Salonika Radicals chose the lesser evil.<sup>740</sup> On the eve of the elections, Rekanati encouraged all Jews “who [did not] want Judaism to vanish and [who wished] that the Jewish

---

<sup>740</sup>*El Pueblo*, 31 August 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 2 September 1928, A. 21. IV., HAGFM.)



community found again its previous glory” to vote for the Zionists Mentech Bessantchi and David Matalon. The victory of the latter was “a matter of life and death ... and from their success depend[ed] the fortune of the entire community.”<sup>741</sup>

However, once the electoral victory was safeguarded and the General Zionists attempted a policy of conciliation with Venizelos speaking at the same time in favour of assimilation, the Radicals declared their total opposition to the programme of the Zionist deputies. In the Jewish daily *La Vardad* it was written “that the spiritual assimilation about which the Zionists talk[ed] with unforgivable ignorance constitute[d] a crime against the nationalisation of the Jewish population”, and Rekanati expressed his utter distress at the fact that “the Zionist organisations of the lower class quarters tolerated unquestionably the attendance of many Jewish children at the Greek schools.”<sup>742</sup> For the Jewish Radicals such a stance was inexcusable since it would accelerate the pace of assimilation leading to the utter extinction of Jewish national values.

The years 1928 to 1933 constitute by all means the glamorous period of the Radicals in Salonika who managed to make their presence felt in the city and beyond. In particular they organised lectures on Jewish religious matters and gave lessons in Hebrew without neglecting their duties *vis-à-vis* their fellow Jews who fell victims to antisemitism. On 28 October 1928, Shlomo Amir on behalf of the Radicals, together with Florentin on behalf of the Zionist Federation, wrote to the Colonial Office in Palestine and protested against the bloody events which had taken place on the Day of

---

<sup>741</sup>*El Pueblo*, 19 July 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 2 September 1928, A. 21. IV., HAGFM.)

<sup>742</sup>*La Vardad*, 1 September 1928. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 5 October 1928, A. 21. IV., HAGFM.)

Atonement next to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.<sup>743</sup> On 31 August 1929 a major demonstration was organised in order to protest vehemently against the inability of the English authorities to protect the Jews from Arab antisemitism which had culminated in the massacres of the Jews in Hebron and in Safed.<sup>744</sup>

It was the triumphal electoral results achieved by the Radicals in the communal elections of 12 October 1930 that proved the high degree of their popularity amongst Salonika Jews and established them as a major political power within the community. Their party was called “Party of the National Union” and incorporated all Zionists who felt that the General Zionists were no longer able to represent them, namely some dissidents of the Zionist Federation led by Elie Frances and Moise Benusiglio and some small organisations which had been created in the eve of the legislative and municipal elections. The Party of the National Union emerged as the second victorious party with 1,724 votes, namely the 27.80 per cent of the total communal votes, winning 19 out of the 70 seats of the Communal Assembly.<sup>745</sup> However, according to the comments of Joseph Nehama, the party of the National Union was not expected to live long since it was deeply divided and lacked coherence and unity of views.<sup>746</sup>

For the next two years the presence of the Radicals in the political scene of the Salonika community was undisputed, due to three factors which were closely related. To begin with, the Radicals projected themselves as the only political force in Salonika which could literally save Jews from the rising antisemitism. In the aftermath of the Campbell riots the Radicals expressed their outspoken condemnation of the apathy and

---

<sup>743</sup>It was the custom for the Jews to gather on the Day of Atonement at the Wailing Wall and pray. With the emergence of Arab nationalism in the late 1920s this custom was attributed political significance and led to Arab-Jewish conflict in 1925 and 1928. Laqueur 1989: p. 255.

<sup>744</sup>The troubles started in Jerusalem in the summer of 1929 and spread in Hebron and Safed killing around 100 Jews. *Ibid.*: p. 256.

<sup>745</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.

<sup>746</sup>Nehama to AIU, 5 November 1930, Grèce II C 53, AAIU.



the idleness of the Greek authorities in failing to protect the Jews and, in accordance with their militant spirit, they proposed the appointment of Jewish night guards who could watch over the Jewish lower class quarters.<sup>747</sup> Secondly, they managed to enlarge their membership by attracting to their ranks younger generations of Salonika Jews thereby boosting the movement of Jewish nationalist youth as an active response to the appearance of Greek nationalist antisemitic youth. At the end of the first international conference of *Betar*<sup>748</sup> (an acronym for Brit Trumpeldor) in Danzig in 1931 a branch of *Betar* was established in Salonika and together with *B'nei Mizrahi* they formed the largest youth organisation, *B'nei Mizrahi-Brit Trumpeldor* (Sons of Mizrahi-Trumpeldor Alliance) which nominally secured the merging between Mizrahi and Revisionists.<sup>749</sup> This moving, which was acclaimed by Jabotinski himself, enabled the leaders of the Union to embark upon educating Salonika youth according to their principles. Activities of cultural and political character were undertaken by Itzhak Cohen and Leon Philosoph, (both of them made *aliya* at the end of 1932). For one year starting in December 1932 the monthly periodical *La Nation* started appearing.<sup>750</sup> Finally, the Jewish Radicals became the most ardent supporters of massive emigration to Palestine. Either legally or illegally, Salonika Jews were encouraged [by the Radicals] to leave Salonika and sail to the Promised Land.<sup>751</sup>

However from the early 1933 onwards the ascending course of the Union had reached its limits. On the one hand, the issue of emigration was destined to widen even more the gap between Radicals and the General Zionists who were accused of opposing

---

<sup>747</sup>This idea was inspired by Rekanati himself. Rekanati 1972: p. 480.

<sup>748</sup>*Betar* was a "massive paramilitary youth" created in 1926 at Jabotinski's initiative. Its first unit consisted of young students of Riga, the Latvian capital. Shimoni 1995: p. 238.

<sup>749</sup>Benbassa and Rodrigue 1995: pp. 140-141.

<sup>750</sup>This periodical enjoyed the regular contributions of Rekanati, Chaim Toledano, Schlomo Reuven, and even Jabotinski. Rekanati 1972: p. 483.

<sup>751</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 478.

massive emigration. As a result problems appeared in the Palestinian Bureau in Salonika as to the distribution of emigration permits. Moreover, in the summer of 1933 internal problems appeared between the Mizrahi and the Revisionist sections of the Union. The Revisionist leaders, Cohen and Reuven, left the Union and declared their exclusive allegiance to *Betar* in Paris and not to the Mizrahi. Rekanati himself resigned from his role as the leader of the Greek Revisionists as well as from the Central Committee of the International Revisionists and in the summer of 1933 he emigrated to Palestine.<sup>752</sup> At the same time the murder of Victor Chaim Arlosoroff in Tel Aviv on 16 June 1933 and the charges pressed against the Revisionists for the crime, stained the profile of the Salonika Revisionists as well.

The elections for the Greek Zionist representative to the XVIII Zionist Congress, scheduled to take place in Prague in the summer of 1933, were held in an atmosphere of intense conflict within the Radicals in Salonika. The group of the Revisionists were represented by Jabotinski himself and Chaim Ben Chemouel Mizrahi who called for free emigration to Palestine in order to save Jews from the intensifying antisemitism. The Mizrahi were represented by Rekanati and Rabbi Bension Uziel and their programme called for the reconstruction of Palestine according to the Torah. Then there as the party of the *Tzeire Mizrahi*<sup>753</sup> under the leadership of Moise Barzilai which stood

---

<sup>752</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 484-485.

<sup>753</sup>The first *Tzeire- Mizrahi* (young Mizrahi) group was created by young Mizrahis in Poland after the First World War. Simoni 1995: p. 128. In order to boost the appeal of the *Tzeire-Mizrahi*, Sevi Arshambi, a representative of the Palestinian *Tzeire-Mizrahi* visited Salonika. In his declarations he spoke in favour of the emigration of religious agricultural workers, which did not seem to be the case with Salonika emigrants and their urban background. Hence he deplored the fact that most of the Salonika Jews, who had emigrated to Palestine, had chosen to settle in Tel Aviv, creating "a real ghetto where only ladino was spoken" and making their living as tradesmen. However, Arshambi continued, Palestine does not "need tradesmen but farmers." Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 26 July 1933, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.



by the *Torah Veavoda*.<sup>754</sup> Finally there were the party of the Radicals Zionists represented by the organisations *Arzeinou* and *Judit* and led by Elie Francès and Abrahm Maalele the president of the organisation *Arzeinou*.<sup>755</sup>

Since it was the first time that this party participated in the Zionist elections it is necessary to outline its programme which consisted of six main points: a) the democratisation of the Zionist Organisation, b) free emigration to Palestine, c) transformation of the Jewish Agency, d) nationalisation of the Jewish masses and convocation of an international congress for the defence of the rights of the Jewish minorities, e) the reorganisation of the Zionist Organisation, in order to be able to combat the separatist tendencies of the Revisionists which violated the Zionist discipline, f) the adoption of a social policy in Palestine which would unite all classes of the Jewish people for the sake of the re-establishment of the Jewish and, last but not least, the Zionist Radicals asked that the Palestinian politics of Great Britain be inspired by the spirit and the letter of the Mandate.<sup>756</sup>

The elections, which resulted in the landslide victory of the General Zionists, were followed by the creation of the Union of the Greek Revisionists and their mouthpiece *La Boz Zionista*, published from November 1933 until October 1934. Three Revisionist organisations, called *Menorah*, *Tikva* and *Yarden*, were set up and, in turn,

---

<sup>754</sup>The *Torah Veavoda* (Torah and labor) movement consisted of *Ha-poel Hamizrahi* in Palestine (a branch of *Tseire Mizrahi* consisting of orthodox youth) and *Tseire Mirzahi* and *He-halutz Hamizrahi* in the Diaspora. In 1925 it allied with the Mizrahi to form the World Mizrahi Organisation. Shimoni 1995: p. 163.

<sup>755</sup>Elie Francès was director of the *Action* member of the Jewish communal council and of the Union of Communities. In 1917 he had also been one of the founding fathers of the *Jeunesse Juive*, the first organisation of young Zionists in Salonika, which, after the Fire of August 1917 reappeared under the name *Association des Jeunes Juifs*. He had also served as the general secretary of the Greek Zionist Federation and, at the time of the 1933 elections, he was the vice-major. *La Volonté*, 22 July 1933 and 26 July 1933.

<sup>756</sup>*La Volonté*, 26 July 1933.

established connection with Revisionist branches in Kastoria, Drama and Volos. However, their popularity was not as high as before the split of the Union. In the 1934 communal elections their party of National Action received 437 out of 7,070 votes and gained only 3 communal seats.<sup>757</sup> Two years later, in a letter sent by Isaac Cohen on 3 February 1936 to the International Committee of the Revisionists he asked for their contribution to “bring order out of chaos”. In the meantime the architects of Salonika Revisionism Cohen and Reuven had emigrated to Palestine, leaving behind them a leader-less movement.

## 6.5. Conclusion

Having stressed the important points of the ideological programme of the Radicals it becomes obvious that they represented a party with strong nationalist principles. Their commitment to the diffusion of the Hebrew language, to the protection of the Jewish religion as well as to the implementation of the Zionist ideal brought them into serious conflict with Jews as well as with non-Jews who viewed differently the aforementioned cultural and political matters. During their first years they clashed with *Alliance* primarily on account of cultural differences. The latter’s cosmopolitanism and Francophilia were viewed suspiciously by the Jewish Radicals who pledged to fight against any force which stood in the way of the linguistic and cultural Hebraisation of the community. As far as the strife between Radicals and General Zionists was concerned it was a mixture of cultural *and* political disagreements. For one the General Zionists were accused of keeping a cultural profile which did not fit with the prescription of a ‘good Zionist’. Next to that, the different games of tactic and the political flexibility shown by the General Zionists with regard to all issues troubling the

---

<sup>757</sup>Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 239.



community - education, elections, antisemitism, economic difficulties, emigration - were rejected by the Jewish Radicals who remained uncompromising advocates of their passionate nationalist programme.

On the other hand, the same militant spirit characterised the stance of the Jewish Radicals towards the Greek state. The existence of the Jews within Greece could be somehow tolerated only if the Jews were recognised as a national minority. This aspect of the national programme of the Radicals was utterly incompatible with the main stream of official Greek nationalism which insisted on granting the Jews the status of a religious minority. Moreover, their alleged status of national minority coupled with Rekanati's contacts with foreign circles were used by antisemitic circles which portrayed the Jews as the fifth column of forces harmful to Greek national interests. Thus, although the vision of Palestine was from the early start part and parcel of the ideological programme of the Radicals, given the political and social conditions in Greece in the late 1920s, the implementation of this vision became even more imperative.

In short, the Jewish Radicals throughout the inter-war years acted as members of a 'Jewish imagined community' which was anticipating their salvation in the Holy Land. As long as this goal was pending the Jews were at the mercy of states whose arbitrary and increasingly nationalist rule could not be contained by either the League of Nations or by any other international organisation. In the light of the tragic events which befell the community in 1943, one could argue that the Jewish radicals were not overreacting when accepting the definition attributed to them by their opponents as "prophets of misery".<sup>758</sup>

---

<sup>758</sup>*Pro-Israel*, 20 April 1920.

# JEWISH COMMUNISTS IN INTER-WAR SALONIKA: BALANCING BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM

## 7.1. Introduction

We are sending warm Bolshevik greeting to Avante, the militant instrument of the Jewish workers in Salonika, and of the entire country, which for twenty years has been standing unyielding amidst the revolutionary trenches of the struggle against the national oppression and the anti-Jewish pogroms, against the exploitation of Greek capitalism and Jewish high-bourgeois, [fighting] for the national liberation of Macedonia and the revolutionary proletarian education and the organisation of the Jewish workers and employees. We are confident that also in the future ... Avante will hold proudly the banner of the CI Communist International and of the KKE [Greek Communist Party] in the struggle against national oppression and fascist pogrom, in the struggle against the capitalist exploitation of the Greek and the Jewish pot-bellied [and we are confident that] the Greek proletariat and the working classes will stand by the Jewish workers who are the victims of Greek capitalism. Long live the class solidarity of the Jewish and Greek workers! Long live Avante, the Bolshevik instrument of struggle of the Jewish workers and of the Jewish poor! Down with bloody Greek chauvinism and fascism! Long live Soviet Greece!<sup>759</sup>

This was the greeting sent on 11 February 1933 by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KKE to *Avante*, the official mouthpiece of the Jewish Communists in Salonika.<sup>760</sup> Besides being the only evidence available proving the solidarity between Greek Communists and their Jewish counterparts in Salonika, this text was chosen for an additional reason. It touches upon two conceptual categories which constituted the backbone of Jewish communist discourse and shaped the course of Jewish communist politics during the inter-war years. On the one hand, the above quotation underlines the class dimension of Jewishness, thus creating an alliance between Jewish and non-Jewish workers fighting a common struggle against Jewish and non-Jewish bourgeoisie. On the

---

<sup>759</sup>KKE, *Episema Keimena* Vol. III (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1975), p. 501.

<sup>760</sup>Since the KKE, which was the party to which the Jewish Communists in Salonika paid allegiance, was established in 1924 this chapter will use the term 'Jewish Socialists' for the pre-1924 years and the term 'Jewish Communists' for the post-1924 years.



other hand, special emphasis is laid on the 'national question' which alludes to the Jews as a distinct national category enjoying minority status implying their differentiation from the ethnic majority of the Greeks and their ranking along with other national minorities. It is the merging of the two patterns that gave birth to an "ethno-ideological movement called 'Jewish communism'" which influenced profoundly the course of communal politics of Salonika Jews.<sup>761</sup>

"What bourgeois liberalism achieved for the Jews in Western Europe", wrote Isaac Deutscher, "only Bolshevism was able to achieve for them in Eastern Europe."<sup>762</sup> And although the conventional interpretation of geography does not include Salonika in eastern Europe the case of the Jewish Communists in Salonika exhibits certain similarities as well as differences with the case of their fellow Jews in eastern Europe.

As Bauman has pointed out, when discussing 'roads in modern Jewish history' beside the paths of Jewish nationalism and assimilation there were two more paths opened for and by the Jews, those of universal and Jewish socialism respectively. With regard to the former, it was initially adopted in western Europe by the Jewish poor who, due to the class dimension of the assimilation project, were deprived of its 'redeeming' effect; in eastern Europe universal socialism was opted for by those who were denied the liberal offer of assimilation altogether. "Once inside the socialist movement, Jews immediately turned into 'men as such'", that is human beings set free from the 'messianic drive of Judaism' and Jewish distinctiveness. When now considering the path of Jewish socialism, Bauman continued, "... it was not a means of emancipation from Jewishness or an alternative version of assimilation, whose other variety failed or

---

<sup>761</sup>This expression was used by Henry Felic Srebnik in his analysis of Jewish Communists in the East End in London. H. F. Srebnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>762</sup>I. Deutscher, *The non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 87.

turned out to be impracticable. On the contrary, it was bent on redeeming the Jewish tradition by liberating it from the domination of class enemies” both Jewish and non-Jewish. As he wisely pointed out, not only did followers of Jewish socialism not attempt to suppress their Jewishness but found in it the quintessence of their ideology.<sup>763</sup>

The case of the Jewish Socialists in Salonika stood at the crossroads between universal and Jewish socialism. As it will be shown in the first part of this chapter, Jewish Socialists in the initial phase of their organised activity, namely from the foundation of the *Federacion Socialista Laboradera* (FSL) in 1909 until its incorporation into the KKE in 1920, opted for the road of ‘universal’, or to be more precise, ‘federal’ socialism. This path, which would lead to the formation of a socialist federation of all peoples living in the Ottoman Empire, would also allow its members to keep their distinctive ethnic identity. In other words, despite the numerical predominance of the Jews in the organisation and the ensuing efforts to support Jewish interests, Jewishness as such did not play any central role but was ‘one of many’ identities within the melting-pot of the would-be Socialist federation. On the contrary, during the inter-war years Jewish Communists, who were no longer members of a multi-ethnic *milieu* but citizens of a rather homogeneous nation-state, rediscovered their Jewishness, adopted the popular national-based discourse of the Zionists and adapted it to their own political programme. As the second part will argue, Jewish Communists dealt extensively with Jewish issues, namely the questions of Jewish assimilation, economic problems troubling Salonika Jews, antisemitism, emigration to Palestine, and so forth, thereby seeking to emancipate themselves from ‘Jewish and non-Jewish exploiters’.

Their transformation from ‘federal’ Socialists to ‘Jewish’ Communists allows in

---

<sup>763</sup> Bauman 1988: p. 75.



many ways their comparison with the early Bundists.<sup>764</sup> The latter were Russian speaking Marxist *intelligenti* who found themselves operating in a Yiddish-speaking milieu and who in the course of various development decided to commit themselves to the route of Jewish cultural nationalism, which insisted that Jews were a nation like others and which elevated Yiddish to a new level of dignity.<sup>765</sup> The same process was witnessed among the Jewish Communists in Salonika, who turned to their fellow Jews out of their need to deal successfully with political considerations and pressing party interests. In other words, they used the popular 'Jewish national question' as an expedient of strengthening their position in the city and, in turn, promote the KKE's political goals.

It was the Bundist-like political line of the Jewish Socialists in inter-war Salonika that increased their popularity and guaranteed their stable presence in communal political life. Indeed, different electoral results from communal and national elections held during the inter-war years evince the ability of the Jewish Communists to attract a stable number of votes ranging from 15 to 18 per cent on average. In particular, in the 1926 national elections the Jewish Communists had their heyday and received 39,07 per cent.<sup>766</sup> As a result, two of the ten deputies who represented the KKE in the Greek Parliament were Jacques Ventoura and David Ben Solan, both Jews from Salonika.<sup>767</sup> Less impressive but still indicative of their popularity were the results of

---

<sup>764</sup>Members of the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland and Russia founded in 1897 in Vilna and known in Yiddish as *Der Bund*. Ettinger 1994: p. 910.

<sup>765</sup>J. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 171-257, and Mendelsohn 1970: p. 29, p. 155.

<sup>766</sup>Amongst 10,081 Jews who voted in the elections on 7 November 1926 3,802 voted for the KKE. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 20 July 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV., HAGFM.

<sup>767</sup>G. Katsoules, *Historia tou Kommounistikou Kommatos Helladas* Vol. III (Athens: Nea Synora, 1976), p. 184

the 1928 and 1932 elections, when the Jewish Communists in Salonika received 15.42<sup>768</sup> and 21.73 per cent respectively.<sup>769</sup> Turning now to communal politics in 1930 and 1934 the Jewish Communists received 16.37<sup>770</sup> and 15.64 per cent respectively.<sup>771</sup> It can be safely argued that this standard electorate gave them a definite precedence over their Greek comrades in the rest of the country, who even at their best moments did not manage to attract more than 5 per cent of the overall votes.<sup>772</sup>

This comparative approach challenges the opinion of Ioannes Kakoulides, who has argued that the special contribution of the Jewish Communists to the movement of Greek socialism ended in 1924 with the creation of the KKE.<sup>773</sup> It is the aim of this chapter to show that the stable political course of the Jewish Left in Salonika continued to exert a decisive influence on the political profile of the KKE, which could always count on a steady number of Jewish communist votes in the Salonika constituency. In order to do that it is important to analyse the reasons which made Jewish Communists in Salonika more popular than the KKE and which can be summarised as their ability to

---

<sup>768</sup>In the elections held on 19 August 1928 1465 Jews voted for David Ben Solan and Ovadia Ovadia who represented the Communists in the Jewish separate college. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 23 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>769</sup>Nehama to Bigart, 29 September 1932, Grèce III C55, AAIU. One of the ten deputies who represented the KKE in the Greek parliament was Michael Kazes, a Salonika Jew. Katsoules Vol. III 1976: pp. 187-188.

<sup>770</sup>Out of 6,201 Jews 1,015 voted for the communist party called the 'Popular Bloc' which thus received 11 out of 70 seats in the Communal Assembly. Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170.

<sup>771</sup>Out of 7,070 votes the Popular Bloc of the Communists received 1,106 votes and got 8 out of 50 seats in the Communal Assembly. Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 239.

<sup>772</sup>In the 1926 elections the Greek Communists received 4.38 per cent (41,982 votes) and sent 10 deputies to the Greek parliament. A. Solaro, *Historia tou Kommounistikou Kommatos Hellados* (Athens: Pleias, 1975), p. 62. In 1928 the KKE received only 1.41 per cent (14,325 votes) and failed to be represented in the Greek parliament. Solaro 1975: p. 67. In 1932 the KKE (United Front of Workers and Peasants) got 4.97 per cent (58,223 votes) and sent 10 deputies to the Greek parliament. Katsoules Vol. III 1976: p. 185.

<sup>773</sup>I. Kakoulides, "La contribution des Hébreux à l'histoire du parti socialiste-ouvrier de Grèce (1918-1924)", *Balkan Studies*, 32 /1 (1991), p. 69.



make their political programme conform with a set of social conditions and ideological tensions pertaining to the life of Salonika Jews at that time. Since the ideological profile of the Jewish Communists brought them into serious conflict with all other Jewish political parties thereby proving their important “blackmail potential” and thus forcing other parties to respond or contain the ‘communist threat’, this chapter will also challenge the opinion of Moïssis who suggested that the political role of the Jewish Communists was not important for communal developments.<sup>774</sup>

## **7.2. Pre-1923 Jewish Socialism: A case of federal socialism**

Unlike Zionism, which largely developed after the Greek annexation of Salonika, the relationship between Jews and socialism had its peak before 1912. By the end of the nineteenth century 20,000 people of different ethnic origins were busy working in the industries of Salonika and together with some 500 transport employees formed a substantial proletariat whose working conditions were far from ideal. The three quarters of these workers were Sephardi Jews employed as tobacco workers, shop-assistants, carpenters, printers, soap-makers, etc.<sup>775</sup> From 1904 onwards Salonika witnessed a period of social unrest as a result of a combined crisis of ideology and identity. Successive waves of national delirium, which had driven Greeks, Bulgarians and other ethnic groups to so many bloody escapades throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, were unable to respond to and assimilate in a permanent and organic way innovative westernised forms of social organisation. Consequently, social and economic problems continued ravaging the declining Ottoman Empire thereby exposing its

---

<sup>774</sup>Moïssis 1972: p. 372.

<sup>775</sup>A. Benaroglia, *He Prote Stadiodromia tou Hellenikou Proletariatou* (Athens: Kommouna, 1986), p. 43.

antiquated character.<sup>776</sup> In 1904 250 tobacco workers went on strike following the examples of Kavalla and Monastir, while in 1905 and 1906 strikes became more frequent.<sup>777</sup> The aforementioned social activities, which revealed the existence of a political and social consciousness amongst the working class stimulated by the early liberalism of the Young Turk's Revolution, was put under the experienced guidance of Abraham Benarogia,<sup>778</sup> who, with the participation of other Socialists (Alberto Judas Arditti, David Recanati, Joseph Hazan, the Bulgarian A. Tomov and the Macedonian Dimitar Vlahof), created the *Federacion Socialista Laboradera* (FSL).<sup>779</sup> In June 1909 FSL became a part of the Second International and gained the right of participating with a single vote in the International Socialist Bureau (ISB). Within one year it had managed to accomplish remarkable work: "it included ... fourteen syndicalist organisations, its sympathisers numbered some thousands, it possessed a newspaper [*Avante*] which during some months appeared in four languages<sup>780</sup>, the evening classes which had been set up were followed by a large number of regular students, [and] it

---

<sup>776</sup>S. Marketos, "He 'Fenderasion' kai he Hedraiose tou Hellenikou Sosialismou" in Etaireia Meletes Hellenikou Evraismou (ed.), *Oi Evraioi ston Elleniko Choro: Zetemata Istorias ste Makra Diarkeia* (Athens: Gavrielides, 1995), p. 155.

<sup>777</sup>K. Moskoff, *Eisagogika sten Historia tou Kinematos tes Ergatikes Taxes. H Diamorfose tes Ethnikes Syneideses sten Hellada* (Athens: Kastaniote, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1988), p. 335.

<sup>778</sup>Abraham Benarogia was born in Bidini in Bulgaria in 1887. He was involved in the wing of the Bulgarian Socialist movement which later became the Bulgarian Social-democratic Party of Dimitar Blagoef. In the immediate aftermath of the Young Turks' Revolution Benarogia settled in Salonika in 1908 where he worked as a teacher and a printer of the Jewish community. In 1905 he founded *El Journal del Laborador* which was the first socialist newspaper published in the Ottoman Empire. His socialist activities established him as one of the most important figures of Balkan and Greek socialism. During the German occupation he was transported to a German concentration camp. Unlike the fate of most of his fellow Jews he survived and returned to Greece in 1945. In 1953 he repudiated his initial anti-Zionist fervour and emigrated to Israel where he died at an advanced age. Benaroya 1986: pp. 8-10.

<sup>779</sup>P. Dumont, "La Structure Sociale de la Communauté Juive de Salonique à la Fin du dix-neuvieme Siècle", *Revue Historique* 534, (April-June 1980), p. 383.

<sup>780</sup>The Judeo-Spanish title of the newspaper was *El Tzornal del Laborador*. Kandylakes 1994: p. 113. In the autumn of 1912 *Avante* was selling 5000 copies. Dumont 1980: p. 383.



finally hoped to be able to create in the short-run a network of co-operatives of consumption....”<sup>781</sup> By 1910 the *Federacion* was so successful that it created a branch for young Socialists as well, called the Socialist Youth.<sup>782</sup> Four years later the *Federacion* had its own drama group performing in Judeo-Spanish Molière’s comedy *Garonudo* and another comedy *El hastron*.<sup>783</sup> The membership to the organisation cut across ethnic boundaries and religious difference and included Jews along with Bulgarians, Macedonians, Turks and even some Greeks, thus being a microcosm of the multi-ethnic profile of its birthplace.

Having said that it was no wonder that the Jewish members of the *Federacion* had the same numerical superiority which they had also been enjoying within the overall Salonika population at that time. However, this did not imply that the organisation was dealing only with Jewish issues. Of principal importance for its programme was the issue of the class struggle which embraced workers of different ethnic backgrounds. As Paul Dumont has argued, “the leaders of the socialist organisation had advocated in their majority a kind of moderate socialism which echoed the line of the right wing of Jauresian thought. Its members considered their organisation as an aggregation of all working organisations having set the defence of the latter’s interests as one of their principal goals.”<sup>784</sup> At the same time they were concerned about the ‘national question’, that is the way in which the socialist movement should deal with the question of the different ethnicities residing either in nation-states or in multi-ethnic Empires. In this respect, they were influenced by the Austrian school of Marxist thought and its spokesmen, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. While searching for

---

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>782</sup> Liakos 1988: p. 27.

<sup>783</sup> Kerem 1996: p. 38.

<sup>784</sup> Dumont 1980: p. 384.

a solution to the problem of ethnic identity within a multi-national *milieu*, Renner accepted the principle of “*personal autonomy*” according to which “the ethnic character of every citizen was a matter of personal choice”. What could protect this principle, Renner continued, was cultural self-governance, as had been the case in the Ottoman *millet*.<sup>785</sup> Likewise, for the Salonika Socialists the solution was ‘federalism’, namely “‘a formation’ which all the nationalities could belong to without having to give up either their language or their culture.”<sup>786</sup>

Nevertheless, because of the numerical predominance of the Jews within the *Federacion*, it was inevitable that the line of the organisation would be influenced and occasionally dictated by the interests of the Jews. Hence until 1912 the line of the Salonika Socialists *vis-à-vis* the Macedonian question was in agreement with the beliefs of the majority of the Jews. Thus the Salonika Socialists supported the preservation of Ottoman rule in Macedonia and did not wish to see any of the competing Balkan countries annexing the area. However, once Salonika was officially annexed to the Greek state in 1913 the *Federacion* felt that it should give up its Ottoman profile and started to transform itself into a Greek organisation.<sup>787</sup>

The course of transformation was not unimpeded. The antisemitic atmosphere which reigned in Salonika in the aftermath of the entrance of the Greek troops into the city on 9 November 1912 perturbed Hazan, who undertook a long correspondence with the International Bureau in Brussels. In his letters he pointed to the antisemitic actions, and stated that the *Federacion* had never been on good terms with the Greeks, who as early as 1910 had expressed little support for its founding. What made things worse for

---

<sup>785</sup>A. Liakos, *H Sosialistike Ergatike Omospondia Thessalonikes (Federasion) kai he Sosialistike Neolaia. Ta Katastatika tous* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1985), p. 23. See also Marketos 1995: p. 162.

<sup>786</sup>Dumont 1980: p. 384

<sup>787</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 384-385.



the Salonika Socialists was that they did not share the high nationalist feeling of the Greeks and thus risked being accused of anti-patriotic behaviour. Moreover, the socialist leader referred to the dreadful economic consequences which the Greek annexation had brought upon the city and sought the support of the Socialist International.<sup>788</sup>

Once the Greek annexation of the city was a *fait accompli* the reports sent to the Bureau in Brussels by the *Federacion* grew in numbers while their tone became increasingly alarming. *Inter alia* it was reported that some workers were arrested and imprisoned without trial, others were severely persecuted and a not inconsiderable number amongst them were beaten up by members of the Greek Gendarmerie. Not only did the *Federacion* find itself in a hostile and suspicious environment but it was also accused of working for the autonomy of Macedonia. “[With the new war] the situation of siege has become more fierce, the number of spies had increased and all our representations have been spied upon. What has happened additionally is that we have been suspected of working in favour of the autonomy of Macedonia. Thus we are being threatened with terrible reprisals.”<sup>789</sup> Such an allegation placed the *Federacion* ‘on the razor’s edge’ of Greek nationalism with serious repercussions for the future of its members.

As Dumont has argued, whether such an accusation was reasonable and sound at that time has yet to be proved, for it was not until later that the Salonika Socialists adopted openly the idea of the autonomy of Macedonia.<sup>790</sup> It was believed that the creation of an autonomous Macedonian state within a Balkan federation would spare the contested area from its economic decay, and at the same time guarantee the

---

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 388.

<sup>789</sup> As cited in *Ibid.*: p. 394.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*

independence of all confessional and ethnic minorities residing in the area.<sup>791</sup> For the sake of advancing their project, the Salonika Socialists put all their efforts into gaining the support of the International Bureau whose ideological basis at that time was friendly towards federal solutions.

After a short period of tranquillity the socialist scene in Salonika was radically changed and gave birth to new developments. The winter of 1914 which had witnessed a protracted mood of social unrest made the Greek authorities take a severe stance and harass the Socialists who were viewed as the instigators of the social agitation. After having been contacted by Hasan for some times, the Socialist International considered the time appropriate to take an active role and supported publicly the persecuted members of the *Federacion*.<sup>792</sup>

Camille Huysmans, the secretary of the Socialist Bureau in Brussels, took the lead in this intervention. Despite the active intervention of renowned Socialists and official agencies the Greek authorities did not relent. The list of arrests became longer and came to include names such as Arditti (1891-1943), one of the founding fathers of *Federacion*, responsible for the press and for dealing with the working corporations, Samuel Yona and Benarogia. The Salonika Socialists did not give up and insisted on trying to activate their comrades in Europe. At the same time the first signs of an incipient co-operation between Jewish and Greek Socialists became evident. On the occasion of the visit of Venizelos to Brussels in July 1914 Platon Drakoules, one of the principal leaders of Greek socialism, decided to stand publicly by his Salonika comrades and defy the high cost of his bold attitude, that is imminent arrest. The same stance was followed by other socialist organisations in the rest of the country. The drastic steps which had been taken by the International remained fruitless. The Greek

---

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 395.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*: pp. 401-402.



Premier had to cancel his visit to Paris because of the unrest created between Serbia and Austro-Hungary.<sup>793</sup> Immediately thereafter the clouds of war spread above Europe rendering all other issues of secondary importance.

Once the issue of Greece's entry into the Great War surfaced the *Federacion* interpreted it as an antagonism of imperialist powers which, instead of solving the national question in Europe, would aggravate the situation of minorities caught in the middle of the military embroilment. Consequently, the Salonika Socialists, together with the majority of their fellow Jews in Salonika but motivated by different reasons, adopted the minimalist national programme of the anti-Venizelists, who defended the idea of a "small but decent Greece", and advocated neutrality.<sup>794</sup> In 1915 they voted against Venizelos and showed that *their* way to social emancipation was different from his 'ethnic-inspired social legislation', voted by his government in 1912 in an effort to "usurp [*Federacion's*] social space".<sup>795</sup> This 'anti-nationalist' stance stained the profile of the *Federacion* in the eyes of the Venizelists, who, in the years to come, would strive to eliminate communist activities.

Before the Great War came to an end, thereby allowing for pre-war political developments to resume their importance, reference has to be made to the Great Fire of 1917 which was doomed to change for ever the life of all Salonika Jews, Jewish Socialists included. One of the most important aspects of the new city plan drawn in the aftermath of the Fire, was that "the poorest and mostly working-class part of the Jewish community, more than a third of the total, [...] moved to certain suburbs under miserable housing conditions." As Mavrogordatos has argued, "these ghetto-like peripheral settlements became both the strongholds of the Jewish Left and the target of local Greek

---

<sup>793</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 402-405.

<sup>794</sup>Benaroglia 1986: pp. 9-10.

<sup>795</sup>Marketos 1995: p. 159.

antisemitism.”<sup>796</sup> Indeed, during the inter-war years in the lower class quarters of *Angelakes, Hirsch, Quartier Orient, Ténékémalé, Régie, Quarter 151* Associations were set up by the Jewish Socialists which organised general assemblies and came together in congresses where they dealt with issues, mainly of an economic nature, troubling the poor Jewish inhabitants of these quarters.<sup>797</sup> Despite the lack of sufficient documentation, one could assume, that given the dominant presence of these leftist associations within the lower class quarters, these organisations also functioned as the mobilising forces on the eve of elections thereby succeeding in guaranteeing the stable presence of Jewish Communists in the communal assembly.

The acute accommodation problem bequeathed, especially, to the lower class Jewish inhabitants must have played an important role in the decision of the *Federacion* to overlook national differences and pursue a co-operation with their Greek counterparts, in order to strengthen their local social struggle.<sup>798</sup> In 1918 the *Federacion* transferred its activities to the Greek socialist scene and became an integral part of the Socialist-Working Party of Greece (SEKE), established in November of that year. During the founding congress of the party the “*Federacion*, the biggest socialist organisation in Greece at that time (800 members altogether), sent 10 delegates.”<sup>799</sup> Of particular importance was the presence of Jewish delegates who numbered seven out of thirty-four delegates. A. Pekhna was elected as the president of the congress. Other prominent Jewish leaders, such as Benarogia, Kouriel and Arditti, participated actively in the different committees, discussions and decisions. In 1919 the General

---

<sup>796</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 254. The very existence of lower class, middle class and upper middle class Jewish neighbourhoods within Salonika revealed the deep social conflict simmering amongst Salonika Jews. See K. Tomanas, *Oi Katoikoi tes Palias Thessalonikes* (Athens: Exantas, 1992), pp. 36-37.

<sup>797</sup>*Avante*, 23 November 1926. (As translated by Jacque Strumsa).

<sup>798</sup>Marketos 1995: 153.

<sup>799</sup>Kakoulides 1991: p. 60.



Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) was founded. The influence which the members of the *Federacion* succeeded in exerting was indisputable, since they managed to structure the organisation of the newly-born group according to the principal of the class struggle, which had always been the fundamental principal of the Salonika Socialists.<sup>800</sup>

According to Ioannes Kakoulides the general trend of the Jewish Socialists could be characterised as belonging to the central wing of the international working movement of the period (Second International) and had little to do with the principle of Bolshevism which was hardly known in Greece at that time. It was during the first national council of SEKE in May 1919 that the issue of the future ideological orientation of the party came to the surface, setting off a number of internal conflicts which destroyed the cohesion of the party for some years. Thus the members of the SEKE were confronted with the dilemma of whether their organisation should adhere to the Third International or follow an independent course. A strong dispute broke out among the Jewish Socialists (Benarogia, Pekhna and Arditti versus Kouriel), which resulted in 1924 in the expulsion of Benarogia and Pekhna from the party.<sup>801</sup>

In April 1920 the SEKE joined the Communist International (CI), thus proving that the left faction of the organisation had predominated over the right wing. In 1921 the *Federacion* continued to be divided between those who thought that Greece should accept the twenty-one positions of the CI and those who believed that Greece had not yet achieved the required level of capitalist evolution and was thus immature to head for Bolshevism. The necessary turning point was the first Panhellenic Conference of the SEKE in February 1922, when it was decided *inter alia* that the party recognised the value of the decisions of the CI but that these communist provisions would be applied in

---

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*: pp. 59-60.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*: pp. 62-63.

Greece according to the particular conditions of the country. During the convention of the National Council of the SEKE in May 1923 it was further decided that the party should adapt itself to the decisions of the CI which had been taken during the IV Conference (1922-1923) and had produced the principle of the “United front” of the working class. The class question apart, it was the first time that the political agenda of the SEKE included the ‘national question’ and pledged itself to fight for the “right of the minorities for the free disposition of their fate ”.<sup>802</sup> Both questions merged one year later during the III Extraordinary Congress of the SEKE (2 November until 3 December 1924) when the organisation took the name KKE and became a section of the Communist International. One of the resolutions taken during this conference provided for the creation of a “united front of workers, peasants and oppressed ethnicities in the struggle against the oppressing bourgeoisie, for the sake of the right of the self-determination of the ethnicities in favour [of the inclusion] of the Balkan people in the Balkan Federation...”<sup>803</sup> As was declared elsewhere, the right of self-determination could result in “the secession [of the Macedonian and Thracian people] from Greece and the creation ... of a united and independent state....”<sup>804</sup>

The importance of this decision was multi-fold. On the one hand, it helped the KKE increase its legitimacy abroad since it thereby proved its allegiance to the political atmosphere prevailing in Moscow and in other communist circles at that time. Indeed recent developments had highlighted the popularity of the ‘national’ issue and its importance for the manipulation of public opinion. A case in point was the Polish Communist Party whose indifference towards the national question had made Grigori Zinoviev, a representative of the Comintern, accuse the Polish Communists of ‘national

---

<sup>802</sup>Katsoules Vol. II 1976: pp. 32-37.

<sup>803</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 128-129.

<sup>804</sup>*Ibid.*: p. 131.



nihilism', thereby pointing to their failure to incorporate in their agenda national issues which would appeal to national minorities (Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, German and Jews) and bring them closer to the Party. According to the Comintern official the dominant internationalist discourse of the Communist Party should be held back and make room for the 'national issue' to appear on the scene. This issue was a potentially powerful political weapon which, if properly used, could bring substantial benefits for the Communists' struggle. As Zinoviev expressed it in eloquent terms, "... our main criterion should be the best way to attack the bourgeoisie, to grip the enemy by the throat."<sup>805</sup>

Similar developments in Balkan countries had encouraged the KKE to take up the 'national question'. The first, albeit abortive, attempt to discuss the issue of national oppression in the multi-ethnic region of Macedonia and propose as solution the creation of an independent Macedonia was made by Vassili Kolarof, the Bulgarian representative to the III Congress of the Communist International, in 1921. The issue was again discussed in 1922 during the IV Conference of the Balkan Communist *Federacion* but met the negative reaction of the Greek (Giannes Petsopoulos), Yugoslavian and Romanian representatives.<sup>806</sup> Despite these failures, in the autumn of 1923 Kolarof and Georgi Dimitrof pressed again for the motto of an independent Macedonia, which, after having secured the support of Dimitri Manouilski, a Comintern specialist in Balkan issues, was adopted by the Executive Committee of the Balkan

---

<sup>805</sup>As cited in J. Brun-Zejmis, "National Self-denial and Marxist Ideology: The Origin of the Communist Movement in Poland and the Jewish question: 1918-1923", *Nationalities papers*, XXII /1 (1994), p. 40.

<sup>806</sup>He answered that the "communist parties of the other Balkan countries cannot adopt mottoes, which had been ushered and exploited by the Bulgarian bourgeois governments since the time of their defeat in 1913. [No more can these parties accept these mottoes in a period] when hundreds of gangs of *comitadjis* armed and financed by these very same governments, continue their action in the Greek and Serbian sections of Macedonia." As cited in D. Kousoulas *KKE. Ta Protota Trianta Chronia, 1918-1949* (Athens: Hellenike Evroekdotike, 1987), p. 87.

Communist Federation. The initial reluctance of the Greek side was overcome during the V Conference of the Third International in June 1924 when Seraphim Maximos accepted the suggestion made by Manouilski. The Greek representative made clear that the motto for an independent Macedonia should not only imply ethnic liberty but the end of bourgeois suppression as well.<sup>807</sup>

On the other hand, although the final acquiescence of the KKE to the political line shaped by Moscow *did* endow the newly founded party with certain benefits, it also placed high political costs upon the party's profile at home since, by appealing for the unification of all three parts of Macedonia (Greek, Yugoslav, Bulgarian) into a single autonomous state within the context of a Balkan Federation, it had been actually assenting to a dismemberment of Greek territory.<sup>808</sup> This political line "emphatically confirmed existing suspicions about its anti-national character and provided the most virulent foundation for anti-Communism in Greece. It immediately provoked a wave of persecutions, which were to continue thereafter and which could now be based on the concept of treason."<sup>809</sup>

### **7.3. Bundist-like Communism in Inter-war Salonika**

As far as the Jewish Communists in Salonika were concerned, one could argue that the decision of the III Congress of the KKE to fight for the creation of a united front between workers, proletarians and national minorities was bound to influence them decisively. The reason for that was that both the 'class' and 'national' issues of the KKE's political line bore direct relevance to the social diversity and ethnic

---

<sup>807</sup>*Ibid.*: pp. 77-82.

<sup>808</sup>KKE Vol. IV 1975: p. 157.

<sup>809</sup>Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 233.



heterogeneity of Salonika Jewry which the Jewish Communists aspired to represent at a local and national level.

Indeed, on the one hand, the multi-social profile of the Jewish community exposed many Jews to a variety of economic measures and social conditions, thus placing them on equal footing with other social classes who, irrespective of their ethnic origins, faced the same socio-political conditions. In other words, unlike Karl Marx's characterisation of the Jews as the "agents of market economy in non-capitalist societies"<sup>810</sup>, being Jewish in Salonika could be a synonym for rich or poor, for 'exploiter' or 'exploited'. It was this intra-communal social cleavage that the communist press pointed to in December of 1932 by ironically referring to the Jewish bourgeois as 'our Jewish brothers' who, along with non-Jews, carried the same share of responsibility for the current plight of the community.<sup>811</sup> Such an attitude echoed Karl Kautsky's completion of the Marxist exposition which had recognised the existence of class division amongst the Jews and had concluded "that development of capitalism transformed part of the Jewish population into the working class opposed to the Jewish bourgeoisie."<sup>812</sup>

But if the class dimension was only too evident for the discourse of a Communist Party, the endorsement of the 'national question' proved more problematic

---

<sup>810</sup>Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question", written in 1844, had attempted a macro-economic analysis of the social presence of the Jews in the historical course of "Western civilisation". In his effort to account for the "historical survival of the Jewish national identity", he pointed to "their devotion to the Jewish faith and attachment to their national idea". When coupled with their specific economic function in non-capitalists societies as traders and money-lenders, Marx continued, "Jews' nationality was solely defined on the basis of their social and economic functions... and the essence of Judaism, stripped of the superstructure of both nationality and religion, was reduced to a purely capitalistic function." Brun-Zejmis 1994: pp. 32-33.

<sup>811</sup>*Avante*, 10 December 1932. (French translation, Bulletin de la Press Israélilte à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).

<sup>812</sup>Brun-Zejmis 1994: p. 34

since it was at first sight incompatible with the internationalist discourse of the Jewish socialist movement before 1924. However, the Jewish Communists in Salonika succeeded in bridging the gap between the two patterns by proposing an ‘international’ definition of the ‘national’ question. Namely while, on the one hand, Jews were assigned the characterisation of an ethnically distinct group, they were at the same time an ‘ethnic group among many’, that is, among other national minorities living on Greek soil and facing the same kind of official Greek behaviour. As the third chapter has shown, it is true that until 1924 Salonika Jews had not reached any high degree of linguistic, political and social assimilation within the wider Greek society. The community had thus preserved its closed autarkic common life and intensified the feeling of ‘otherness’ amongst many of its members. Similar was the situation of the Slavomacedonians, the Vlachs and other national minorities residing in northern Greece who, having only recently been incorporated into the Greek state, had achieved only a very low level of integration and were thus constantly aware of their status as ‘others’.<sup>813</sup>

It was exactly the motto ‘otherness versus Greekness’ that the Jewish Communists referred to during the inter-war years in order to show that the status of ‘other’ was not a ‘Jewish privilege’ but was shared by other national minorities whose distinctive ethnic profile had rendered them, along with the Salonika Jews, off key to Greek nationalism. For the Jewish Communists, the self-awareness as ‘others’ was the vehicle that could potentially unite the Salonika Jews with other national groups in their struggle for national independence, the sole guarantee of which was the creation of an independent Macedonia.

To sum up, one could argue that Salonika Jews represented an important point

---

<sup>813</sup>Carabot 1997: pp. 242-245.



of reference for communist politics since, as Vladimir Lenin had argued in 1924 in relation to Russian Jews, “the Jewish workers are suffering under a double yoke, both as workers and as Jews.”<sup>814</sup> Thus Salonika Jewry, because of its double status as social actors or/and as non-assimilated citizens, had a special mission to play in the implementation of communist politics throughout the inter-war years. In order to be able to assess the relatively high influence of Jewish Communists in Salonika it is important to see the way in which they tried to legitimate their double role and to prove its complementary character.

It has become obvious in this chapter that Jewishness held a conspicuous position in inter-war communist discourse and for this reason it had to be maintained at all costs. On the other hand, Jewish Communists did not wish to conduct exclusively Jewish politics but saw themselves as agents of the ideological programme of the KKE. Their loyalty to the party dictated that they should use Jewishness as a means to implement the KKE’s programme, that is, to use Jewish identity as a political weapon to intensify the feeling of solidarity between Jews and non-Jews, which was essential for the creation of an independent Macedonia. What made this combination possible was the way in which Jewish Communists dealt with the convoluted issue of Jewish identity. Thus, unlike the rest of the political groups which had referred to the Jews as a compact national group bound together more or less by a common religion and a common history, the Jewish Communists came up with their own interpretation of Jewishness, the main characteristic of which was its geographic dimension. In particular, Jewish Communists did not pretend to speak on behalf of the ‘imagined Jewish community’ scattered all over the Jewish Diaspora, but saw their role only in relation to Salonika Jewry. By stressing the local dimension of Jewish identity Jewish Communists could

---

<sup>814</sup>As cited in Brun-Zejmis 1994: p. 34.

easily point to other ethnic groups which lived in the same area and shared the same regional history.<sup>815</sup>

In particular, the first pillar of the communist version of Jewish identity was the cultural distinctiveness of Salonika Jewry. Although this was an idea widely shared by all political groups within the community, the Jewish Communists were the only ones to choose the Judeo-Spanish language as the characteristic *par excellence* of this cultural particularity. As they themselves admitted, Salonika Jews were considered as a 'national minority'<sup>816</sup> with Judeo-Spanish being their national language, which should never be abandoned.<sup>817</sup> Indeed, both *Avante* and *El Jiovenno*, the latter issued by the Federation of Greek Communist Youths (OKNE) and addressed to the Jewish youth in Salonika, were published in Judeo-Spanish.<sup>818</sup> And although *Ladino* was not a monopoly of the communist press there was a qualitative difference between communist and non-communist use of the language. Thus, while for both political worlds Judeo-Spanish was essential if they were to increase their readership, the Jewish Communists chose this language because they also wanted to show that they supported the language of the people, which was taught at home and spoken in the lower class neighbourhoods by ordinary individuals. The selection of Judeo-Spanish from within the linguistic melting pot of Salonika Jews was a political choice - as it has been for the Bundist Jews

---

<sup>815</sup>The local dimension of a particular form of identity propounded by the Jewish Socialists has been also emphasised by E. Abdela in her analysis of the strike of the tobacco workers in Salonika in 1914. E. Abdela, "Thessaloniki: O Sosialismos ton Allon", *Ta Historica*, 18/19 (June-December 1993), p. 202.

<sup>816</sup>*Avante*, 22 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>817</sup>*Avante*, 24 February 1929. (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1929 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>818</sup>Katsoules Vol. II 1976: p. 219.



in the choice of Yiddish<sup>819</sup> - and aimed at showing that the Jewish Communists had nothing in common with the Jewish middle class who despised the language of the people as being “miserable” and “mean” and who, more often than not, chose to communicate in French and Italian, the languages of the ‘aristocracy’.<sup>820</sup> No less was the contempt of the Jewish Communists for Hebrew and Greek, which had no roots within the popular cultural legacy but were connected with the “anti-democratic” Zionist politics and the oppressive Greek laws respectively.

The establishment of the importance which Jewish Communists placed on the preservation of Jewish cultural particularity is also important if one wishes to explain what seems at first sight to be inexplicable, namely the struggle waged by the Jewish Communists in 1925 against the passing of the law which violated the Jewish Sabbath and imposed Sunday as the obligatory Closing Day in Salonika. It was clear that this attitude was by no means a proof of religiosity or acceptance of an individual aspect of the Jewish religion for at different occasions, before and after the imposition of Sunday Closing Day, the Jewish Communists had lived by the communist principle of irreligiosity.<sup>821</sup> Thus, according to the communist press, what warranted the non-participation of the Jewish Communists in the communal elections held in 1920 was their assumption that the elected bodies would deal with religious issues which did not matter to them at all.<sup>822</sup> At another occasion they questioned the *raison d'être* of the

---

<sup>819</sup>During the eighth conference of the Bund held in Lvov in 1910 the demand was voiced that Yiddish become “the language of the Jews”. Ettinger 1994: p. 911.

<sup>820</sup>As cited in Rodrigue 1990: p. 85.

<sup>821</sup>An indication of the anti-religious feeling of Jewish Communists was given by Lauer-Brand in Poland who argued that “[the demand for the Jewish Sabbath] goes against the interests of the Jewish worker ... Religious belief separates him from the Polish proletariat. Thus we should fight against such nationalist Jewish demands.” As cited in Brun-Zejmis 1994: p. 44.

<sup>822</sup>*Avante*, 23 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

Chief Rabbi whose maintenance in office (350,000 Drachmas annually) was too heavy a burden for the communal budget.<sup>823</sup> Finally in 1934, three years after the Campbell riots, *Avante* took pity on all those Jews who had asked for God's help to save them from the antisemitic attack.<sup>824</sup> However, the issue of Sunday Closing Day was slightly different for it was not only a religious issue but combined social and economic considerations affecting all Jews irrespective of their degree of religious affiliation. Thus the Jewish Communists seized the chance and supported this highly popular issue which could enable them to widen their political appeal and thus strengthen the position of the Communist Party in Salonika. Once again they concurred with the Bundists who for the sake of succeeding in transforming Russia into a national federation, where each nation would enjoy its own national autonomy and territorial independence, had asked the Russian government in 1910 to "grant the population the right to choose their own day of rest (Friday for Moslems, Saturday for Jews, Sundays for Christians)."<sup>825</sup> Driven by similar considerations the Jewish Communists in Salonika decided to organise a demonstration and protest against the new measure<sup>826</sup>; in this way not only did they not deviate from the secular communist ideology but proved the high degree of their commitment to the political lines of the KKE which had given them the green light to make use of all measures able to advance the communist struggle.

Cultural distinctiveness apart, Jewish Communists placed extra emphasis on the second pillar of Jewish collectivity which referred to communal institutions. The latter included the communal assembly and the communal council which were established in 1920 and whose functions were regulated by the memorandum voted the same year. For

---

<sup>823</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934. (As translated by Jacob Strumsa).

<sup>824</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>825</sup>Ettinger 1994: p. 911.

<sup>826</sup>I. Skourtes, "Oi Evraioi tes Thessalonikes kai he Kathierose tes Kyriakes Argias (1924-1925)", in *XII Panellenio Istoriko Synedrio May 1991* (Praktika Thessalonike: 1992), pp. 393-394.



the Jewish Communists the two institutions represented the nominal guarantors of communal autonomy since “the Jewish community came to form a kind of an autonomous small state with its own parliament - the communal assembly - its own ministry - communal council - chosen with the proportional system by the whole Jewish population irrespective of class and nationality.”<sup>827</sup> Additionally, the Jewish Communists placed extra value on this administrative frame for it allowed the community to preserve a semi-independent political profile which was of the utmost importance, should the community be able to oppose assimilationist trends and preserve its ethnic identity.<sup>828</sup> It is important to note that by paying attention to this propitious legislative context the Jewish Communists did not wish to emphasise the tolerance of the Greek State and thus risk losing voters who might prefer to support Greek bourgeois politics. According to them, the 1923 memorandum was far from being a conscientious gesture of good will on behalf of the Greeks; it was rather “a blessing from Heaven” deriving from the desire of the Greek government to relieve itself from the control of the League of Nations as far as the issue of the handling of Macedonian minorities was concerned.<sup>829</sup>

In short, one could argue that according to the Jewish Communists, the Salonika Jews were perceived as a minority carrying a secularised form of ethnic identity, the principal characteristics of which were linguistic diversity and a status of semi-autonomous communal life. Since the existence of both features were unique to the Jews of Salonika the Jewish Communists tried to emphasise the inextricable ties

---

<sup>827</sup> *Avante*, 23 December 1927.

<sup>828</sup> According to them the *very* fact that the Greek government considered that it was appropriate to forbid the formation of a council of all Jewish communities was indicative of the fact that the Greek authorities understood the importance of the weapon delivered to the Jews of Salonika in the time of their insecurity. *Ibid.*

<sup>829</sup> *Avante*, 22 December 1927.

between the very existence of Salonika Jews and their immediate local environment. This geographically defined role of Salonika Jews placed them in the centre of local politics which also included the presence of other ethnically distinct groups. Thus, as had been the case with Russian Jews, the emphasis on the national question should not be mistaken for Bundism that is the advocating of national-cultural autonomy, but should be viewed as an agent of communist tactics which sought to create solidarity between Jews and other national minorities living in northern Greece. It certainly bore great similarities to the way in which Maksimilian Horwitz-Henrky Walecki had chosen to approach the Jewish question in Poland. His efforts to find a 'Marxist solution to the Jewish question' "distinguished a special category of 'cultural nationality', which would fit the description of the Jewish minority, as opposed to 'political nationality' that was the Zionist movement."<sup>830</sup>

Indeed, it was the fight of Jewish Communists against Zionism which encapsulated their overall political line. Anti-Zionist allegations included the mishandling of communal affairs which were to a large extent the responsibility of a pro-Zionist communal council. Thus in December 1927, amidst the political tension triggered off by the issue of state-subvention to communal schools, the communist press seized the chance and attacked Zionist politics for having fragmented the community and weakened its unity. The Zionists were described as a "filthy clan of gangsters" whose administration of communal affairs "had destroyed the memorandum of 1923, ... the very spirit of the community, the ideal of uniting all Jews in order to be ruled by the Jews and for the benefit of the Jews."<sup>831</sup>

---

<sup>830</sup>Brun-Zejmis 1994: p. 38

<sup>831</sup>Particularly harsh were the comments against the Zionist leader, Mentech Bessantchi, who was called "the step-father of Jewish division". *Avante*, 22 December 1927.



Moreover, *Avante* held the communal assembly responsible for having stayed in power illegally and disdaining the popular call for the holding of new communal elections. The motive which, according to the Communists, accounted for the council's anti-democratic behaviour, blemished the council's profile even worse. According to the communist mouthpiece - information confirmed by Greek sources as well- the communal assembly, which had risen to power in 1921 and which did not include any communist members because of the abstention of the Communists from the elections, did not surrender its power before making sure that the right to vote would be confined exclusively to the Jews paying the communal tax.<sup>832</sup> At the same time *Avante* accused the Zionists of having bought off the votes of the poor, by distributing free electoral booklets to the residents of the Regie lower class quarter.<sup>833</sup> One of the immediate consequences of this openly anti-democratic measure was that almost one third of Salonika Jews, who were unable to support themselves let alone pay the communal tax, did not vote in the communal elections of 1925. Thus a great many Jews were deprived of the right of influencing the communal decision-making and had to face decisions taken for them but not by them.

Social exclusion apart, the communal assembly of 1925 was accused - with the exemption of the Communists - of having mishandled financial affairs, conspiring behind the Communists' back and spending money on issues which did not enjoy their

---

<sup>832</sup>*Avante*, 25 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928, A. 21. IV. , HAGFM). The same piece of information is given by the Director of the Bureau de Press in Salonika. Thus, although it was known that Law 2456 regulating the status and operation of Jewish communities in Greece provided for universal suffrage, the special law concerning Salonika and validated during Pangalos's short dictatorship included a new provision which confined the right to vote only to those Jews who paid the communal tax. Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Bureau de Press of Greek Foreign Ministry, 28 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM.

<sup>833</sup>It was estimated that around 25,000 Drachmas were spent on this occasion. *Avante*, 25 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

approval. The Communists believed that, instead of selling communal real estate without having the assembly's permission and using the money for the creation of a Greco-Jewish secondary school, this money should have been spent on urgent communal needs, e.g. accommodation issues and elementary education.<sup>834</sup> Finally in 1934 the Jewish Communists did not hesitate to call the Zionist group of Macabees "Jewish fascists" and asked that the Jewish inhabitants of the lower class quarters to jeer at their forthcoming parade along the streets of Salonika.<sup>835</sup>

In parallel to accusations over the mishandling of communal affairs at home, Jewish Communists attacked Zionists for their work in Palestine. Since it was only in the early 1930s that Salonika Zionists adopted emigration as part of their Zionist programme, it was the case of Polish Zionists and their migratory schemes to the Holy Land which attracted *Avante's* attention as early as 1926. Thus unlike the Polish Zionist leaders, who had encouraged emigration as a measure able to heal the difficult situation of the Jews in the Diaspora, the communist newspaper published a fierce article entitled "No man, no smile for the Palestinian adventure" in which three basic reasons were given for the failure of the Zionist movement. For one, the massive emigration of Salonika Jews to America at the beginning of the twentieth century had placed Palestine second in the preference list of the emigrants, while, on the other hand, fresh hopes had arisen for the Jews with the implementation of the Russian Revolution which had given "a radical and fair solution to the Jewish question".<sup>836</sup> Last but not least came the bad economic situation in Palestine<sup>837</sup> which had affected many local industries and had triggered off a fierce problem of unemployment. At the same time the financial situation

---

<sup>834</sup> *Avante*, 26 December 1927. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928, A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>835</sup> *Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>836</sup> *Avante*, 23 November 1926.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*



of the Executive Committee of the World Zionist Organisation was too meagre to support sufficiently the life of the newcomers and, as it was eloquently put, “the sums of money which reached the Executive with great difficulty were devoured by the thousands of emigrants in whose eyes Palestine had been presented as a rich [country] where milk and honey flow[ed].” In order to corroborate its anti-Zionist mood the communist mouthpiece published the comments of Hon Halon, a Polish emigrant who had returned to Warsaw after having failed to settle in Palestine. Mr Halon, along with other disappointed Polish emigrants, referred to Palestine as “exile” and not, as the Zionist leaders might have wished, “Jewish land” and once back in Poland, tried to develop a counter-migratory movement by discouraging other Polish Jews from leaving for Palestine. According to the communist mouthpiece this campaign was so strong that it risked “sinking totally the Polish Zionist movement” and raised the concerns of Zionist leaders who, as a countermeasure, organised a meeting and called as speakers other emigrants who had only positive things to say about Palestine.

And that [was] how Zionism aspired at solving the thorny Jewish question, [by] recruiting *Haloutzim* for a country which produced nothing, increasing the blood of the dissatisfied and the poor, making them believe that Zionism was not responsible [for their misfortunes] and canalising [their] discontent towards the Muslim element, [sometimes] even towards England....<sup>838</sup>

Six years later it was the turn of Salonika Zionists to face the communist allegations over their politics in Palestine. As early as 1928 *Avante* had disapproved of the emigration of Salonika Jews to France because it enfeebled the social struggle in Salonika.<sup>839</sup> In the summer of 1933 the tightening up of emigration control through the restriction of the ‘tourist’ emigrants had resulted in many Salonika Jews being left

---

<sup>838</sup> *Avante*, 23 November 1926.

<sup>839</sup> Skourtes 1992: p. 238.

stranded in different shores of the Middle East. With a vehement article titled “Criminal politics”, *Avante* put the blame for the plight of these ‘wandering Jews’, deprived of their fortune at home and unable to continue their lives abroad, exclusively on the negligent and careless politics of Salonika Zionists. The latter had triggered off the idea of emigration to Palestine, which had subsequently overwhelmed many Salonika Jews, but had failed to provide them with the necessary qualifications. The results of this hazardous work were utterly destructive for the masses who were left destitute with no hope and no work.

The first signs of the criminal policy of Zionism become visible. A large section of indigenous Jews have lost their minds because of the terrible emigration propaganda waged by the newspapers, have liquidated their accommodation and even their clothing and brought themselves to Palestine. Many letters sent by emigrants from the coffee shops in Tel Aviv refer with bitterness to their situation and unveil the criminal politics of Zionism. They anathematise those responsible for having made their position much worse. And we are just at the beginning. In the near future the consequences of the criminal politics of Zionism will be worse. The emigrants, who clustered in the streets of Tel Aviv and whose life is terribly lamentable, once their savings are used up will have to come back. It is impossible to be otherwise..... The Jewish worker of Salonika, desperate, economically and politically suppressed by antisemitism and having lost all his hope for a better future, is more vulnerable to exploitation by the worst vagabonds, by different kings of “ideologists” of Zionism, by the “defenders” of the Jewish nation. By reinforcing the wave of emigration the vagabond Zionism is trying to apply a point of its programme, that is to settle Palestine with Jews without caring if Palestine could guarantee the maintenance of the emigrant. Furthermore emigration is being used as a source of income to all the Zionist organisations who as a band of *simmorites*<sup>840</sup> who peel off all Jews interested in emigrating.<sup>841</sup>

Moreover, Salonika Zionists were accused of corruption and bribery when allocating the emigration permits granted to them by the Palestinian Bureau. A case in point was recorded in August 1933 when an emigration permit destined for a cart-driver

---

<sup>840</sup> A derisive term used to characterise members of a gang.

<sup>841</sup> *Avante*, 22 July 1933. (French translation Bulletin de la Presse Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).



named Saltiel from the Regie Quarter was given instead to Dr Jacques Allalouf for the sum of 12,000 Drachmas.<sup>842</sup>

However, if Jewish Communists rejected Zionism, which was the Jewish answer *par excellence* to the Jewish Question, they did not assess any more favourably the path of assimilation which encouraged Salonika Jews to overlook their distinctive ethnic identity and seek integration in their surroundings. As has already been argued, it was the intention of the Jewish Communists to fight for the preservation of the ethnic particularity of the Salonika Jews which was the *sine qua non* in order that they become aware of their status as 'others' and seek co-operation with other national minorities living on the fringes of Greek society. Additionally, Jewish Communists rejected assimilation as an effective weapon against antisemitism and supported their argument by referring to two exceptionally dramatic events which had sealed the history of Greek Jews. First and foremost was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 which had resulted in the uprooting of almost 250,000 Jewish people from the Iberian Peninsula, and second was the fierce antisemitic pogrom waged against the Corfiote Jewry in 1897 who had been accused of blood libel. In both cases Jews were the victims of fierce antisemitic attacks which were not prevented by the high degree of Jewish assimilation in their surrounding societies.

The balloon of assimilation is already deflated....The movement in favour of the buried assimilation is not a reason to abandon the struggle against the ideology of assimilation. On the contrary, we have to learn how to know closely this form of defeatism which disorganises the front of the national minorities, weakens them, renders them unable to organise their self-defence against the exploitation of the dominant class. This is a truth which shines even in the eyes of a blind man.... This is a proof that assimilation of the language and the customs of the dominant nation will not put an end to the competition amongst the people. We have it in front of us: it is the

---

<sup>842</sup>*Avante*, 12 August 1933. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1933 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

history of our people of the Jews of Spain. We have become so deeply assimilated, in the Spanish culture that even five hundred years after our exile from Spain, Spanish remains our mother language. And it is because of that that we had been persecuted and exiled from Spain. In a recent past.... the Corfiote Jews, assimilated to the extent of speaking no other language but Greek, suffered pogroms. Here, in Salonika, the conflict between Greeks and Jews has not entered its most acute phase. But as soon as the Jewish minority begins to speak Greek and the Jew starts being a concurrent for the lawyer and the Greek functionary, we will see.<sup>843</sup>

The ascertainment of the Jewish Communists that neither a 'pro-Jewish' nor a 'pro-Greek' solution could save Salonika Jews from their current plight showed that, unlike the rest of political parties within the community, their *Weltanschauung* did not evolve within the traditional frame of Greco-Jewish relations but rather contained this bipolar set within the wider context of relations between the Greek government and national minorities. In other words, while the newly proposed scheme did not affect the class solidarity between Jews and other economically and socially oppressed non-Jews, at the same time, it created an ethnic alliance between Jewish and other national minorities. As had happened with the "most politically active East End Jews in the period between 1918-1939, who had rejected "'Jewish solutions' which implied their 'political separatism' from the rest of non-Jewish society and espoused with great fervour issues which appealed to non-Jews as well",<sup>844</sup> Jewish Communists in Salonika used 'Jewish issues' to point to the more general economic and social context which characterised the lives of other destitute individuals and oppressed minorities as well.

A case in point was the assumption of the Jewish Communists that many of the measures espoused by the Greek state and aimed at altering the status quo of the Jewish

---

<sup>843</sup> *Avante*, 24 February 1929.

<sup>844</sup> E. Smith, "Class, ethnicity and politics in the Jewish East End, 1918.1939", in *Jewish historical Studies, Transactions of the Jewish historical society of England*, Volume XXXII, 1990-1992, pp. 358-359.



community were a proof of its coercive attitude towards minorities. In 1928 the communist mouthpiece protested vehemently against the refusal of the government of Michalakopoulos to increase the state subvention to the Jewish communal schools and thereby help the community preserve its distinct identity. As it was eloquently put by the communist journalist, the government had “a programme of extermination of the Jewish communal work” while at the same time the note of warning was sounded for the Turkish and Armenian minorities who would, sooner or later, suffer the consequences of the same intolerant policies.<sup>845</sup>

Even antisemitism, the Jewish issue *par excellence*, was not seen as a specifically Jewish problem but as a typical case of national oppression. According to the inter-war communist discourse the national minorities living in the Balkans were compact and ethnically distinctive populations suffering the tragic consequences of competing Balkan nationalisms.<sup>846</sup> This was the result of the emergence of nation-states whose borders were delineated according to political considerations without taking into account the ethnic composition of the said areas. As a result, ethnic groups were found living in two or even three different states which more often than not showed little tolerance for the preservation of the groups’ distinct cultural identities and aspired at assimilating them into the dominant national culture. In particular, during periods of nationalist outburst these groups were chosen as scapegoats and blamed for anti-patriotic behaviour. It is against the background of minority oppression and not of pure antisemitism that Jewish Communists evoked the Campbell riots and other incidents of national oppression committed against the Vlach and Macedonian peasants in

---

<sup>845</sup>*Avante*, 2 April 1928. (French translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1928 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>846</sup>*Avante*, 10 December 1932. (French translation Bulletin de la Press Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).

Macedonia.<sup>847</sup> According to the Jewish Communists the only effective struggle against antisemitism, and in turn against anti-minority behaviour, must be waged along the lines of the Communist Party which had proved with deeds its sensitivity to all ‘national questions’. Starting with the communist press, the Communists exemplified their pluralistic attitude, which, unlike the rest of the bourgeois newspapers, was the only one which had not had participated in the “game of mutually annihilating nationalisms in the Balkans.”<sup>848</sup> Moreover, communist parliamentarians, who had been alarmed by the latest antisemitic writings of certain Greek newspapers in December 1932, tried to warn the government of Tsaldares against the danger of imminent pogroms and promised to start in the short run a campaign against the oppression of national minorities and of the Jews in particular.<sup>849</sup> Finally the Communist Party had supported three Slavomacedonians from Florina who were tried in December 1932 on the charge of anti-Greek behaviour.<sup>850</sup> Official communist policies apart, *Avante* used antisemitism along with other expressions of ethnic suppression in order to foster feelings of solidarity between Greek workers and Jews. In particular, it was reported that Greek workers had warned the poor Jewish inhabitants of the Campbell area that fascist members of the EEE organisation were approaching their neighbourhood with

---

<sup>847</sup>*Avante*, 17 December 1932. (French translation Bulletin de la Press Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).

<sup>848</sup>This article was written to corroborate the comments of Niko Fardes in *Le Progrès* where he had referred to the nefarious role of the press against the sincere collaboration of the Balkan people. “The Balkan press had no morality but represented a commercial enterprise like all the rest in the bourgeois regime. All the time that capitalism will govern the states and the peninsula and [that] the Balkan states will be dependent on the big capitalist states, the press will always be in the service of ... the international exploiters of the people’s ignorance.” *Avante*, 23 November 1926.

<sup>849</sup>*Avante*, 31 December 1932. (French translation Bulletin de la Press Israélite à Salonique, File 39, Archive of Filippos Dragoumes).

<sup>850</sup>*Avante*, 17 December 1932.



unfriendly intentions.<sup>851</sup> The philo-minority stance of the Communists and the workers gained further momentum when compared with the nonchalant attitude of the Tsaldares government in 1932 which was reported to have shown little interest in national issues.<sup>852</sup>

If parliamentary action was used to bring Jews and other national minorities closer to the Communist Party, it was the very ideological programme of the KKE which aspired to save the Jews, along with other national minorities, from their miserable plight and to help them maintain their distinctive cultural image. The KKE's motto for the creation of a free and independent Macedonia would distance the minorities of northern Greece from the oppressive politics of the Greek state and render them citizens of a multi-cultural federal state. As the Jewish communist deputy Michael Kazes put it in December 1932,

... the Communists fight against the national oppression of the Macedonians, the Vlachs, the Jews etc.... [they fight] for the immediate vindication [of the national minorities] such as the question of the schools, the recognition of their language, their culture, etc. and this can be achieved exclusively via their struggle under the flag of their party, the Communist Party, leading even to a free Macedonia.<sup>853</sup>

In order to allay the fears of those who argued that an independent Macedonia would be put under Bulgarian control and be manipulated by the Bulgarian *comitadjis*, Kazes reassured them that the Greek Communist Party had no sympathy for the cause of Bulgarian *comitadjis* who were accused of having massacred more than 30,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria.<sup>854</sup> Moreover, he stated that the KKE "was against the

---

<sup>851</sup> *Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>852</sup> *Avante*, 23 December 1932.

<sup>853</sup> *Avante*, 10 December 1932.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*

autonomy of Macedonia which is being propagated by the Bulgarian *comitadjis*, and which would serve only Italian and Bulgarian interests. The autonomy of Macedonia does not signify its forced annexation by the Bulgarian imperialism. [This is something which is] opposed by Bulgarian Communists as Greek Communists oppose the annexation of Bulgarian Macedonia by Greece.”<sup>855</sup>

Ethnic oppression apart, Jewish Communists pointed also to the issues of class inequality and social repression which had taken a heavy toll on Salonika Jews. Once again, by campaigning against anti-working measures, unemployment, high rents and ‘slum-housing’ conditions, which affected Jews and non-Jews alike, the Jewish communist discourse in Salonika served not only Jewish local politics but appealed to non-Jews as well. At different occasions the communist mouthpiece expressed its solidarity with the struggle waged by all workers irrespective of their religious affiliation or ethnic origins. Being the bulwark of the Greek working class, the Salonika tobacco workers of the tobacco factories of Greogoriades and Kostatzoglou received in 1926 the warm support of the Jewish Communists who made an appeal and called all workers to participate in a meeting organised by the committee of the tobacco strikers.<sup>856</sup>

Towards the end of the 1920s the social and economic situation of the workers was further aggravated by the international crisis. To make matters worse, the tough social and political atmosphere initiated by the Venizelos government of 1928-1932 showed no tolerance towards expressions of social discontent while the voting in of the notorious anti-communist *Idionymon* law on 19 June 1929 intensified the atmosphere of social terror. The succeeding of Venizelos by Tsaldares in September 1932 did not make the situation any better and the economic problems continued to intensify.

---

<sup>855</sup>*Avante*, 17 December 1932.

<sup>856</sup>*Avante*, 23 November 1926.



According to a report from the Working Help of Greece, for the period spanning July 1929 to 31 December 1932, “12,000 arrests took place, and 2,203 sentences with a total of 1,936 years imprisonment and 785 years of exile were imposed. Around 120 left-wing soldiers were exiled to Kalpaki. 1,355 workers and peasants had been wounded and beaten up by the police and the gendarmes. 8 were murdered. Three were sentenced to death and executed.”<sup>857</sup> In Salonika, in particular, *Avante* reported in 1934 the beating of Abraham Ezrati because of selling the communist mouthpiece.<sup>858</sup> The Salonika Communists defied the climate of political terror and adopted the heroic and optimistic pattern of their Greek comrades, thereby stating that these measures would not cause the fighting spirit of the workers to buckle. “The imprisonment and the exile, the assassinations and the oppressive measures, the defamation against our party and its members, have no other effect but to increase its influence among the ranks of the working masses, and contribute to their persuasion about the politics of the party.”<sup>859</sup>

Additionally, the Jewish communist press castigated the anti-working policies of the governments which had induced the high rate of unemployment and poor living conditions. In December 1932 *Avante* reckoned the number of unemployed workers to be some tens of thousands, which was quite a high number in relation to the relatively small population of 6 million. According to the same article the situation appeared to be particularly critical in Salonika, for there were more than 10,000 unemployed, if taking into consideration “the 3500 tobacco workers, 2000 metallurgists, 4000 builders, 1000 shoemakers, and 1000 employees.”<sup>860</sup> Two years later the Jewish Communists expressed their support for the Jewish workers working in the printing houses of the

---

<sup>857</sup>As cited in Solaro 1975: pp. 78-79.

<sup>858</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>859</sup>*Avante*, 10 December 1932.

<sup>860</sup>*Avante*, 17 December 1932.

Jewish dailies *Action* and *La Volonté*, who were reassured that their 'class brothers', the Greek printers and the Bourse of United Workers, supported their strike unanimously.<sup>861</sup>

Moving away from the specific problems of the working class the Jewish Communists dealt extensively with the problems of accommodation which tormented the Jewish inhabitants of the lower class quarters. According to the communist mouthpiece the former had been repeatedly deluded by the hollow words of different governments, who had promised them to see to their plight and ameliorate their standards of living. When in December 1932 representatives of the Tsaldares government visited the wretched lower class quarters and reflected on measures likely to improve their situation the communist mouthpiece regarded this gesture as a sly measure of political opportunism. In this way the Jewish Communists differentiated themselves from the rest of the Jews, who attributed to this gesture a philo-Semitic character. The Communists believed that by throwing some 'crumbs' of happiness and political equality to the Jews - these were economic aid in the lower class quarters and suppression of the separate electoral college - the Popular Party was aiming to attract Jewish voters and thereby help to consolidate its precarious political position in the district of Salonika.

We have had enough with promises. The experience of promises is too great among the workers of the quarters. And as we have cited in our columns, the position of the Popular Party towards the masses is dictated by the interest of Mr. Tsaldares. He wants to win for the profit of his party the trust of the Jewish masses and we do not exclude that he might even throw us some crumbs. We had explained that with the promise of the suppression of the separate electoral college the Jewish bourgeois press had tried to present Tsaldares' party as the party the most loyal to the Jews. But until now we had seen nothing but promises.<sup>862</sup>

---

<sup>861</sup> *Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>862</sup> *Avante*, 17 December 1932.



For the Jewish Communists the fact that the accommodation problem was persisting as late as 1934 lent itself not only as an additional proof of the purely rhetorical philo-Semitic policy of Tsaldares but of the negligence of communal authorities towards all 'real problems' troubling Salonika Jews. Instead of taking action and compensating for their 'criminal inactivity', the so called 'small emperors' preferred to deal with their petty affairs. The situation became really explosive in August 1934, when 60 huts in the neighbourhood of *Ténékémalé* were about to be demolished while dozens of inhabitants of Regie were threatened with eviction.<sup>863</sup>

Although unemployment and lack of proper accommodation were beyond any dispute the most acute economic problems faced by the Jewish masses during the inter-war years, they were not the only issues which attracted the attention of the Jewish Communists. The latter included in their political agenda the thorny issue of military exemption of the Jews, whereas in 1934, in particular, they used it to discredit the Tsaldares government and to expose once again the indifference of the Jewish communal authorities. As *Avante* wrote, although one of the pre-electoral promises of Tsaldares was the annulment of *Bedel* (payment in order not to serve in the army), his promise remained a dead letter after the elections. No more consistent was the attitude of the communal council which had refused to accept the commission of *Bediglis* with the excuse that this was not an exclusively Jewish issue. "The small emperors have declared cynically, via the mouth of Moissis, that the question of *Bedel*, where hundreds of fathers with families will be enrolled in the army for not having paid the tax and will [have to] abandon their families, is not their work because there were also *Bedelgis* Greeks."<sup>864</sup>

---

<sup>863</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>864</sup>*Ibid.*

An indicative proof of the ethno-social discourse of Jewish Communists discourse can be found in an article published in *Avante* on 11 January 1933, which by exemplifying the political programme of the KKE attempted to foster strong bonds between national minorities and the lower social classes.

Comrades, brothers, We, the workers of the minority of Verria, who had not realised unfortunately until now the role which the bourgeois class had been playing to the detriment of the national minorities, who had been following blindly the bourgeois parties and particularly the Popular Party, headed in our district by the Vlach deputy Chatzinotaw, we underlined to you, that after having suffered so many oppressive measures, the only party which is genuinely interested in us is the communist party. That is proved by its work and daily struggles in favour of the national minorities. We hold the opinion that our position as poor, as national minorities, dictates our union with all the exploited and oppressed of the country, Greeks, Jews, Macedonians and Vlachs, etc. Our position should be under the communist flag and in the struggle in favour of our issues, against the national exploitation and oppression, for the bread, for work and for freedom, in order to work for the overthrow of hunger and calamity, for the sake of establishing the regime of workers and peasants and of the communist Federation of the Balkans. .... Long live the united front of all the oppressed and exploited! Long live the Communist Party!

Another issue which was included in the inter-war political agenda of Jewish Communists and which appealed to Jews and non-Jews alike was a strong anti-war attitude. The pacifist attitude of the Jewish left in Salonika evolved in parallel with the anti-war campaign waged by the KKE, which as early as 1924 had declared its position “against the bourgeois militarism, against the revisionist plans, [in favour] of the disarmament of the bourgeoisie and of the fascists lobbies, for the dissolution of the permanent army....”<sup>865</sup> This attitude surfaced with greater tension in the summer of 1929 when the Comintern had started an international anti-war campaign and the Central Committee of the KKE decided to “fight against the military preparation of the Greek

---

<sup>865</sup>As cited in KKE, Vol. II: p. 124.



bourgeoisie and of the imperialists, to defend the Socialist homeland and to transform the imperialist war into a civil war [aiming at] the establishment of a government of workers and peasants.”<sup>866</sup> During the same period an article of anti-war content was published in *Avante* proving - *inter alia* - the identical political line between Jewish and Greek Communists. The article carried the title “War against the War” and declared the following:

Here, especially in Salonika among the Jewish minority, which can not even tolerate the fire of powder, the protest of the first of August will definitely have an imposing character. The times have gone when they were extolling the love for peace and singing the four-verses of the Marselleise. Today we have to oppose the most solid forces against those, who want to strangle us, in order to satisfy the imperialism of the foreigners. We have to know how to fight in order to defend our peace and our skin.<sup>867</sup>

Apart from being ideologically committed to preserving peace the Jewish Communists by the end of the 1930s tried to show that arms build-ups and an armaments race would lead to a new military conflict which would be to the utter detriment of the unemployed, the workers and the poor who should instead be the principal recipients of the exorbitant amounts of money being spent on weapons. This allegation was directed in December 1932 against the Tsaldares government while, two years later, the anti-war attitude of Jewish Communists went beyond the Greek borders and dealt with the intense military efforts of other Balkan countries such as Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.<sup>868</sup>

However, in their traditional efforts to make their programme appealing to Greeks and Jews alike, the anti-military stance of Jewish Communists was connected

---

<sup>866</sup>As cited in Kousoulas 1987: p. 2.

<sup>867</sup>*Avante*, 19 June 1929. (Greek translation sent by Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 1929 A. 21. IV. , HAGFM).

<sup>868</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934.

with the cruel life of Jews in the Greek army who suffered under their double quality as soldiers and as Jews. Indeed an article published in *Avante* claimed that the soldiers were forced to lead a difficult life, deprived of good nutrition and politically suppressed, unable to read a newspaper and discuss political issues. The anti-military stance of the Jewish Communists was intimately connected with the cruel sporadic appearance of antisemitic incidents in the Greek army. On 10 May 1930 *Avante* described in utterly dark colours the life of the Jewish soldiers who were “imprisoned for no reason, insulted and bitten for not having paid enough attention to theoretical lessons.” Moreover, Greek military officials were accused of exploiting every possibility in order to spread amongst non-Jewish soldiers their antisemitic propaganda. This included all negative images of the evil Jews, that is the Jews “ ‘as the wicked Jewish race, as the ones with no country, the Bolsheviks, the ones who want to dominate the world and kill the Christians in Russia’, the Christian killers.”<sup>869</sup>

With the rise of an openly fascist regime in Germany on 30 January 1933 the possibility of a world conflict alarmed the communist parties in different European countries and on 4 March 1933 the Communist International published an appeal calling for all workers to unite in the struggle against fascism and in support of the German proletariat.<sup>870</sup> In October of the same year Hitler declared that Germany was no longer a member of the League of Nations and withdrew its membership from the Disarmament Conference. In Greece the parade of the fascists of the EEE in Athens intensified the communist anti-fascist mood and in March 1934 during the V Conference of the KKE it was decided that “‘fascism and war become every day a more tense threat and reality’ and [it is] the central duty of the KKE to create an anti-fascist front of struggle which

---

<sup>869</sup>Greek translation found in Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 157.

<sup>870</sup>KKE, Vol. III: p. 642.



will block the road to fascism.”<sup>871</sup> Following this decision the KKE along with prominent Greek intellectuals in April 1934 launched a campaign for the convening of the Panhellenic Anti-fascist Congress.<sup>872</sup> Police forces intervened and cancelled the congress which took place as the Panhellenic Anti-fascist Conference later, on 5 June 1934.<sup>873</sup>

During this period, the Jewish press adopted the anti-fascist motto with great fervour. Fascism was accused of “stifling the Soviet revolutionary movement; filling even more the glasses of the capitalists.... and of the foreigners... of preparing the new massacre [and of helping] capitalism exit from the crisis.”<sup>874</sup> According to the communist mouthpiece, the only way to fight effectively against fascism was the alliance with the Communist Party whose militant spirit was not decreased by terror and whose heroic attitude was continuing without break. One expression of the Jewish Communists’ anti-fascist struggle was their support for Demetre Partsalides, the communist mayor of Kavalla,<sup>875</sup> who stood trial on the charge of “having transformed the town hall into a communist centre.”<sup>876</sup> *Avante* invited the Jewish workers to support the communist Mayor, the so-called “guardian of the interests of the working class”:

The workers had to react in view of what was being done by the “tsiflico<sup>877</sup> capitalist” government of Tsaldares who was about to expel the communist mayor of Kavalla, the comrade Patsalides, who had been loyal to the

---

<sup>871</sup>KKE, Vol. IV: p. 508.

<sup>872</sup>Some of these intellectuals were Demetres Gleno, Kostas Varnales, Nikos Karvounes, Galatia Kazantzake, Elle Allexiou. KKE, *Syntome Historia tou KKE, Schedio*, Vol. 1 1918-1949 (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1988), p. 105.

<sup>873</sup>Ibid.

<sup>874</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>875</sup>He was elected mayor of Kavalla during the municipal election held in Kavalla on 11 February 1934. KKE, *Syntome Historia tou KKE, Schedio*, Vol. II 1918-1949 (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1988), p. 106.

<sup>876</sup>KKE, Vol. IV: p. 510.

<sup>877</sup>Derisive term used to characterise the owners of large property during the Ottoman period.

working masses and his party, and who during the duration of his office has followed a policy of relief - to the degree that it was possible - [aiming at improving the] miserable situation of the workers in Kavalla. In particular he had given 150,000 Drachmas at the occasion of Easter, 200,000 for all the unemployed... and ... 25,000 for the families without support. [This socially sensitive policy was in direct opposition to the bourgeois politics] followed by [the Salonika Mayors] Manos, Vamvakas and Mercouri who had let the workers starve. The Jewish workers should organise reunions and demand the annulment of the condemnation of Partsalides.<sup>878</sup>

Even more fierce were the Jewish communist attacks against German fascism. In the summer of 1934 Hitler's regime was buffeted by internal conflicts which were due to the economic crisis in industry, commerce and the German monetary system. Again, a policy described as the only way out was offered by the Communist Party:

Interior commerce is losing ground; unemployment hits the people; there are strikes ... [But] neither the numerous arrests nor the numerous death sentences could stop the revolutionary movement... the Communist Party mobilises in an illegal and systematic way the working class and others [in a struggle] against bloody fascism and [in favour] of the Soviet regime. And as von Papen's speech against Hitler indicated, it is the rising influence of the Communist Party which stimulates the increase in the discontented. But [we should be careful] not to deflect this discontent wrongly, but only within the Communist Party [fighting] for the victory of Soviet Germany.<sup>879</sup>

The publication of such texts in the communist press sought to establish a parallel between Greek and German fascism. Thus it is no wonder that all sorts of coercive anti-working measures espoused and applied by the Greek government were characterised as 'Hitlerian'. Given the strong antisemitic character of the Nazi dictatorship, this comparison could mobilise Jewish support for the KKE and strengthen its struggle against domestic fascism.

---

<sup>878</sup> *Avante*, 30 June 1934.

<sup>879</sup> *Avante*, 30 June 1934.



There was no day going by without the organisations of the working being humiliated, the working press being pulled in front of the tribunals, dozens of fighters of the working class being imprisoned or exiled for many years, without their advisors being persecuted and arrested and the conscientious intellectual being threatened with the loss of their work.... These are daily words of the international bourgeois, as well as of the bourgeoisie at home, waiting for the integral restoration of the Hitlerian regime with the establishment of a military-fascist dictatorship. ... But the working class... would not tolerate [all that] without resisting the installation of the Hitlerian hell. They are convinced, by their experience and fight against fascism, that despite its degree of barbarism and tyranny, it was not unbeatable. The working class is persuaded that fascism can be eliminated only by the united front of struggle comprising workers, villagers, working suppressed masses, moderately poor masses, honest intellectuals.... There is no doubt [that the plebiscite published in *Rizospastes*<sup>880</sup>] will be warmly received and that the Popular Bloc, the militant organism of the Jewish suffering masses, will greet enthusiastically the plebiscite [organised] against antisemitic fascism,.... exploitation, oppression, ... and pogroms.<sup>881</sup>

#### 7.4. Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Jewish Communists in Salonika adopted a radical ideological programme which allowed them to hold a strong political position within the community, differentiating thus their political performance from that of their Greek comrades whose popular appeal remained rather low. By consistently defending both national *and* class interests of the Salonika Jews, the Jewish Communists achieved a double goal. On the one hand, they maintained their status as legitimate representatives of Jewish politics and, on the other hand, they proved their class comradeship with the CP thereby being able to appeal to non-Jews as well. What made this combination possible was the belief that the ethnic profile and the social status of Salonika Jews were inextricably associated with the very city which they had been inhabiting for longer than four centuries. The sense of belonging in Salonika was the catalyst which placed the Jewish minority next to other minorities residing in the area, advancing thus the KKE's

---

<sup>880</sup>The official mouthpiece of the KKE.

<sup>881</sup>*Avante*, 30 June 1934.

motto which advocated the creation of the 'United front of workers, peasants and national minorities'.

Moreover, the considerable electoral success of the Jewish Communists in Salonika made them a point of political reference for the other political parties. Their fierce struggle against Zionism alarmed the Zionists who took measures to advance the national feeling of the Jews - namely the belonging of the Jews to a wider Jewish Diaspora - and thus contain the communist danger. No less worried were the assimilationist Jews who tried with charitable activities to improve the standard of living of many Jews and thus prevent them from joining the CP. What united the Jewish anti-communist opposition was their belief that Communism was the least appropriate guarantee for peaceful co-existence with the Greeks. Finally, the fierce anti-communist mood of the inter-war years rendered Communism the vehicle for the deterioration of Greco-Jewish relations and occasionally for outbreaks of antisemitism.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has provided an explanation for the political life of the Jewish community of Salonika during the inter-war years and has given back to Salonika Jews their forgotten role as historical subjects. Indeed, there is nothing which can demonstrate this role better than the Jewish involvement in the complicated dynamic of inter-war Greek and communal politics, a task which encouraged a willingness and an ability to assess external conditions, make decisions and take steps to influence the lives of their fellow Jews.

There are three major conclusions to be drawn from this thesis. One pertains to the nature of Greek majority policies towards the Jews, the second to Jewish politics themselves and the last to the effect of these politics on the overall situation of communal life.

As far as Greek majority policies towards the Jews are concerned, the third chapter has shown that they did not follow any of the traditional paths proposed by minority studies. Majority policies had a rather episodic character which implemented changes to the status of Salonika Jews in an effort to serve the overall programme of national reconstruction as this was defined by inter-war Venizelism. Thus Salonika Jewry was embedded in a policy programme which did not aim at them as a group *per se* but considered them as one of many central pillars of Greek society which had to be reformed for the sake of Venizelist hegemony. At the same time, the vital importance which was attributed by Greece to the League of Nations and to her international standing within it set the limits of Greek rule over Salonika Jews. The effort to strike a balance between national and international interests resulted in a number of measures

and policies which sent rather contradictory signals to the Jews as to what actually was their status in Greece. Sermons in favour of assimilation were seriously undermined by antisemitism; official recognition of the Jews as a religious minority was muddled by the establishment of a separate electoral college, a measure attributing to them the implicit characterisation of a national minority; official declarations assuring the Jews of cultural tolerance were invalidated by the passing of the Sunday law and the moves to expropriate the Jewish cemetery.

Confronted with this frustrating lattice of political and ideological conditions Salonika Jews drew different conclusions on their position in Greece and their ensuing responses brought to the forefront previously latent intra-communal divisions. What allowed the emergence of a variety of Jewish responses and their subsequent consolidation into political parties was the space for manoeuvring left to the Jews by the Greek state as a proof of the latter's compliance with the provisions of the League of Nations. As a result, Salonika Jews, notwithstanding their minority status and the limits this status bears for political action, were given power and a certain degree of autonomy to conduct their own communal affairs.

However, until 1930 the main Jewish political parties spent all their energy in debating ideological issues and engaging amongst themselves in fierce party competition. Each of them invoked their own ideological legacy and propounded different definitions of 'Jewishness'; for the Zionists, who were adamant in preserving their political hegemony, 'Jewishness' was defined in a flexible way depending on the constantly changing external and internal surroundings; the Moderates supported acculturation to the Greek society and referred to 'Jewishness' only as a way to preserve parts of their cultural identity; the Jewish Radicals stood for a perception of Jewishness



based on national lines, which were the Jewish religion, the Hebrew language and the implementation of the Zionist vision. Last but not least, the Jewish Communists supported a class-based definition of 'Jewishness', one which pointed to the double suffering of Jews as Jews *and* as individuals 'exploited' by the Jewish and Greek 'bourgeois classes'. While disputing 'Jewishness', Jewish politicians touched upon a variety of issues linked to this concept: the status of the Jews within Greek society, the role of the Jewish religion, the importance of the Hebrew language, the need for emigration to Palestine, the threat of antisemitism and the relevance of communist ideology for Jews.

When coupled with the dogmatic way in which party competition took place, the multi-dimensional character of the competing definitions of Jewishness put each party in serious conflict with all the others which culminated in the political deadlock made evident in the communal elections of 1930. This election sealed the end of Zionist dominance, as Salonika Zionists proved unable to contain in their pragmatic approach to politics the emergence of strong *Weltanschauung*-parties. Moreover, it revealed the high degree of disillusionment felt by ordinary Jews with regard to their political leadership. More than fifty per cent of Jewish voters abstained from this election which was the end-point of increasing abstention rates since 1923. In addition, from the early 1930s onwards many Jews, disappointed by the course of Jewish politics and threatened by rising antisemitism, expressed openly their yearning for Palestine and with private initiative they managed to implement what their leaders had been unable to offer them: a solution to their problems.

Challenged by the loss of power Salonika Zionists relinquished their role as 'ideological referees' amongst different political parties and 'lent a good ear' to the

peoples' needs. By taking up warmly the issue of emigration they succeeded in retrieving their reputation as the communal political leaders *par excellence*. Together with the relaxation of Greco-Jewish relations and the disintegration of the Jewish Radicals the return of the Zionists as the dominant party in the communal scene in 1934 brought stabilisation to the political life of the Jewish community in Salonika.

This thesis has been about 'power and powerlessness' in Jewish history. While it acknowledges the importance of Greek politics for the status of Salonika Jews it rejects them as the only framework for analysing inter-war Jewish history in Salonika. Instead, it reveals the importance of Jewish politics in the course of Jewish history, thereby challenging existing historiography which has perceived Salonika Jews as mere recipients of external influences.



Table 2 *Election results*

Party	Year	Election	% of vote	N of vote	Seats	Deputies to Parliament / Senate
<i>Zionists</i>						
Jewish Political Union <sup>882</sup>	1926	Communal	n.a.	n.a.	58	
Jewish Political Union	1926	Greek Parliament no SEC <sup>883</sup>	62	6,250	2	David Maralon and Mentech Bessantchi
Jewish Union <sup>884</sup>	1928	Greek Parliament	55.01	5,202	2	David Maralon and Mentech Bessantchi
Zionists	1929	Greek Senate	63.47	n.a.	1	Ascher Mallah
Zionists	1930	Communal	34.24	2,123	24 <sup>885</sup>	
Zionists	1932	Greek Parliament <sup>886</sup>	17.05	1,100	0	-
Zionists	1932	Greek Senate	18.15	1,418	0	-
Zionists	1933	March Elections for Greek Parliament	71.08	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Zionists	1933	July Elections for Greek Parliament	84.04	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Zionists	1934	Communal	42.28	2,989	21	
Zionists	1936	Greek Parliament	70.09	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

<sup>882</sup>The Jewish Political Union was the anti-communist party led by the Zionists.

<sup>883</sup>SEC stands for Separate Electoral College which was in force for all national elections from 1928 to March 1933. The abstention rate in this election was 9.82%.

<sup>884</sup>The Jewish Union was a party led by the Zionists and supported by the Radicals. The abstention rate in this election was 17.05%.

<sup>885</sup>This election had a high abstention rate of around 50%.

<sup>886</sup>The abstention rate was around 30%

Party	Year	Election	% of vote	N of vote	Seats	Deputies to Parliament / Senate
<i>Moderates</i>						
Jewish Political Union	1926	Communal	see Zionists			
Jewish Political Union	1926	Parliament	see Zionists			
Moderates	1928	Parliament	5.05	478	0	-
Moderates	1929	Senate	see Zionists			
Moderates	1930	Communal	13.93	864	10	
Anti-Zionists <sup>887</sup>	1932	Parliament	52.54	4,104	1	Daniel Allalouf
Anti-Zionists	1932	Senate	60.96	3,932	1	Isaac Sciaky
Moderates	1933	Parliament (March)	9.38	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Moderates	1933	Parliament (July)	1.58	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Moderates	1934	Communal	19.46	1,376	10	
Moderates	1936	Parliament	17.75	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<i>Radicals</i>						
Jewish Political Union	1926	Communal	see Zionists			
Jewish Political Union	1926	Parliament	see Zionists			
Jewish Union	1928	Parliament	see Zionists			
Jewish Union	1929	Senate	see Zionists			
Radicals	1930	Communal	27.80	1,724	19	
Anti-Zionists	1932	Parliament	see Moderates			
Anti-Zionists	1932	Senate	see Moderates			
Radicals	1933	Parliament (March)	see Zionists			

<sup>887</sup>The Anti-Zionists were a protest party against the Zionist hegemony and its association with Venizelism. Although not directly related to a particular party, one can argue that Moderates - the ones who did not abstain - have voted for them because of their anti-Zionist orientation, while Radicals have supported them for their anti-Venizelist profile.



Party	Year	Election	% of vote	N of vote	Seats	Deputies to Parliament / Senate
Radicals	1933	Parliament (July)	see Zionists			
Radicals	1934	Communal	6.18	437	3	
	1936	Parliament	-	-	-	-
<b><u>Communists</u></b>						
Communists	1926	Communal	n.a.	n.a.	12	
Communists	1926	Parliament	39.07	3,802	2	Jacques Ventoura and David Ben Solan
Communists	1928	Parliament	15.42	1,458	0	-
Communists	1929	Senate	-	-	-	
Communists	1930	Communal	16.37	1,015	11	
Communists	1932	Parliament	21.73	1,697	1	Michael Kazes
Communists	1932	Senate	21.98	1,418	0	-
Communists	1933	Parliament (March)	15.34	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Communists	1933	Parliament (July)	14.38	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Communists	1934	Communal	15.64	1,106	8	
Communists	1936	Parliament	12.16	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

NOTE: For the results in the communal elections of 1926, 1930 and 1934: Konstantopoulou and Veremes 1998: p. 170, 171 and 239. The total number of communal seats was 70 in the communal elections of 1926 and 1930. In 1934 the seats were reduced to 50. For the elections to the Greek Parliament of 1926: Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 13 July 1928, 1928 A. 21. 1V., HAGFM and Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 10 July 1928, 1928 A. 21. 1V., HAGFM. For the elections to the Greek Parliament of March 1933, July 1933 and 1936 and for the elections to the Greek Senate of 1929: Mavrogordatos 1983: p. 262-263. For the elections to the Greek Parliament of 1928: Bureau de Press (Salonika) to Greek Foreign Ministry, 23 August 1928, 1928 A. 21. 1V., HAGFM and Nehama to Bigart, 8 August 1928, Grèce III C 55, AAIU. For the elections to the Greek Parliament and the Greek Senate of 1932: Nehama to Bigart, 29 September 1932, Grèce III C 55, AAIU. For the Communist deputies in 1932: Katsoules 1976, Vol. III: p. 184.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Primary sources*

Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens. (HAGFM).

Personal Archive of Filippos Dragoumes, Gennadeios Library, Athens.

Archive of the General Governance of Macedonia, Salonika. (AGGM).

Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris. (AAIU).

Archives of the Quai d'Orsay, Paris. (AQDO).

Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes.

Public Record Office, London. (FO).

Archive of the Board of Deputies of the British Jews, Greater London Record Office, London. (ABDBJ).

Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.(CAHJP).

Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem.

### *Newspapers*

*Avante*, Salonika (1912-1934).

*La Renaissencia Djoudia*, Salonika (1917-1937).

*Le Progrès*, Salonika (1925-1939).

*Pro-Israel*, Salonika (1917-1926)



## *Secondary Sources*

- Agrafiotou-Zachopoulou, Persa. *Scholia tes Thessalonikes* (Thessalonike: Ianos, 1997).
- Ahmad, Feroz. "Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914", in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Vol. I (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 401-434.
- Almog, Shmuel (ed.). *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford et al.: Pergamon Press, 1988).
- Altmann, Alexander (ed.). *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964).
- Ambatzopoulou, Frangiske. *O Allos en Diogmo. He Eikona tou Evraiou ste Logotechnia. Zetemata Historias kai Mythoplasias* (Athens: Themelio, 1998).
- Anastasiades, Giorgos. *He Thessalonike ton Efemeridon* (Thessalonike: Ekfrase University Studio Press, 1994).
- Anastasiades, Giorgos. *Anexantlete Pole. Thessalonike 1917-1974* (Thessalonike: Efrase, Studio University Press, 1996).
- Ancel, Jacques. *La Macedoine. Son Évolution Contemporaine* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1930).
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London New York: Verso, 1992).
- Andrikopoulos, Giannes. *Oi Rizes tou Hellenikou Fasismou. Stratos kai Politike* (Athens: Diogenes, 1997).
- Ankori, Zvi. "Ha-tnua ha-Zionit be Saloniki", in University of Tel-Aviv (ed.), *In the*

- Era and Today. Annual Conference on the Jews of Greece (1977-1983)*, pp. 85-106.
- Apostolatos, Gerassimos. *The Greek Government was the First to Support the Creation of a Free Jewish State* (Thessalonike: Society for the History of Greek History, 1997).
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Jew as a Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978).
- Armstrong, David. *The Rise of the International Organisation: A Short History* (London: Mac Millan, 1982).
- Avdela, Efe. "Thessalonike: O Sosialismos ton Allon", *Ta Historica*, 18/19 (June-December 1993), pp. 171-204.
- Azcarate, Pablo de. *League of Nations and National Minorities, an Experiment* (Washington: Cornegie Endowment for International Peace Division of Internal Law, 1944).
- Barnai, Jacob. "'Blood libels' in the Ottoman Empire of the Fifteenth to Nineteenth centuries", in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism through the Ages* (Oxford, et al.: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 189-194.
- Barnett, Richard and Schwabs, Walter. *The Western Sephardim* (London: Gibraltar Books, 1989).
- Barth, Frederik (ed.). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation", *Telos*, 77 (Fall 1988), pp. 45-78.
- Beinart, Haim. "The Conversos and their Fate", in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and the*



- Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 92-122.
- Benaroya, Avraham. *He Prote Stadiodromia tou Hellenikou Proletariatou* (Athens: Kommouna, 1986).
- Benaroya, Avraham. *Elpides kai Planes* (Athens: Stochastes, 1989).
- Benbassa, Esther and Rodrigue, Aron. "L'Artisanat Juif en Turquie à la Fin du XIXe siècle: L'Alliance Israélite Universelle et ses Ouvres d'Apprentissage", *Turcica*, 17 (1985), pp. 113-126.
- Benbassa, Esther. "Presse d' Istanbul et de Salonique au Service du Sionisme (1908-1914)", *Revue Historique*, 276 July-Dec (1986), pp. 337-365.
- Benbassa, Esther. "Israël face à lui-même: Judaïsme Occidental et Judaïsme Ottoman (XIXe-XXe siècles)", *Pardès*, 7 (1988), pp. 105-129.
- Benbassa, Esther. "Zionism in the Ottoman Empire at the End of the Nineteenth and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century", *Studies in Zionism*, II/ 2 (1990), pp. 127-140.
- Benbassa, Esther. "L'Alliance Israélite Universelle et les Sionistes en Orient", *Pardès*, 12 (1990), pp. 190- 195.
- Benbassa, Esther and Rodrigue, Aron. *Juifs des Balkans: Espaces Judéo-ibériques XIVe-XXe siècles* (Paris. Editions La Découverte, 1993).
- Ben-Sasson, H. H. (ed.). *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994).
- Ben-Sasson, H. H. "The Middle Ages", in H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 385-726.

- Benveniste, Annie. "Identité et Intégration: Parcours d'Immigration des Juifs de Grèce", *Pardés*, 12 (1990), pp. 211-218.
- Berkovitz, Jay. *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1989).
- Biale, David. *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).
- Birnbaum, Pierre and Katznelson, Ira (eds.). *Paths of Emancipation. Jews, States and Citizenship* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- Blinkhorn, Martin and Veremes, Thanos (eds.). *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage Eliamep, 1990).
- Bonfil, Robert. "The Devil and the Jews in the Christian consciousness of the Middle Ages", in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 91-98.
- Bouzakes, Speros. *Neoellenike Ekpaidefse 1821-1985* (Athens, 1987, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).
- Bowman, Steven. "Germans and Jews in Inter-War Greece" in Ioannes Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 75-86.
- Braude, Bernard and Lewis, Benjamin (eds.). *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, II Vols. (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982).
- Brun-Zejmis, Julia. "National Self-Denial and Marxist Ideology: The Origin of the Communist Movement in Poland and the Jewish Question: 1918-1923", *Nationalities Papers*, XXII/ 1 (1994), pp. 29-54.
- Burrows, Mathew. "'Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East,



- 1860-1914”, *The Historical Journal*, 29/ I (1986), pp. 109-135.
- Carabot, Philippos. “Slavomakedones kai Kratos sten Ellada tou Mesopolemou”, *Histor*, 10 (December 1997), pp. 235-278.
- Chaliand, Gérard (ed.). *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States* (London: Pluto Press, 1989).
- Chastaoglou, Vilma. “He Anadyse tes Hellenikes Poles: He Syllepse tes Mondernas Poles kai o Eksynchronismos tou Astikou Chorou”, in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992), pp. 93-112.
- Chekimoglou, Evaggelos A. *Thessalonike Tourkokratia kai Mesopolemos*. Keimena gia ten Historia kai ten Topografia tes Poles (Thessaloniki: Ekfrase Studio University Press, 1995).
- Chekimoglou, Evaggelos A. “The Jewish Bourgeoisie in Thessaloniki 1906-1911: Assets and Bankruptcies”, in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 175-183.
- Chouraqui, André. *Cent Ans d’Histoire: L’Alliance Israélite Universelle et La Renaissance Juive Contemporaine (1860-1910)* (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1965).
- Clogg, Richard. *A Concise History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- Cohen, Norman. *Warrant for Genocide. The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996).

- Connor, Walker. "When is a Nation?", in John Hutchinson and Antony D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 154-160.
- Constantopoulou, Photine and Veremes, Thanos (eds.). *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews. Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotes, 1998).
- Covo, M. "Imprimeries à Salonique au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle", *Études Saloniciennes*, August 1928.[Tirage à Part du Bulletin Annuel "El Maccabeo".]
- Covo, M. "Sur les Origines de la Dispersion d' Israël. Premiers Établissements Juifs à Salonique", *Études Saloniciennes*, Septembre 1930.[Tirage a part du Bulletin Annuel "El Maccabeo".]
- Daalder, Hans. "Dutch Jews in a Segmented Society", in Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation. Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 37-58.
- Davison, Roderic H. "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century", *American Historical Review*, LIX/ 59 (1954), pp. 844-864.
- Deutscher, Isaac. *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968).
- Demaras, Alexes. *He Metarrythmise pou den egine. Tekmeria Historias II Vols.* (Athens: Ermes, 1990).
- Demaras, Alexes. "Charakteristika Astikou Fileleftherismou sta Ekpaideftika Programmata ton Kyverneseon tou Venizelou", in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992), pp. 21-32.
- Demos, Thessalonikes. *He Thessalonike meta to 1912, Symposia* (Thessalonike: Kentro



- Historias Thessalonikes, 1986).
- Divane, Lena. *Ellada kai Meionotetes. To Systema Diethnous Prostasias tes Koinonias ton Ethnon* (Athens: Nefele, 1995).
- Dumont, Paul. "The Social Structure of the Jewish Community of Salonika at the End of the Nineteenth century", *South-Eastern Europe*, 5/2 (1979), pp. 33-72.
- Dumont, Paul. "Une Source pour l'Étude des Communautés Juives de Turquie. Les Archives de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle", *Journal Asiatique*, 267 (1979), pp. 101-135.
- Dumont, Paul. "La Structure Sociale de la Communauté Juive de Salonique à la Fin du dix-neuvieme Siècle", *Revue Historique*, 534 (April-June 1980), pp. 351-393.
- Dumont, Paul. "La Turquie dans les Archives du Grand Orient de France: Les loges Maconniques d' Obédience Francaise à Istanbul du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siecle à la Veille de la Premiere Guerre Mondiale", in *Économie et Sociétés dans l' Empire Ottoman (Fin du XVIIIe - Début du XXe siècle)*, Actes du colloque de Strasbourg (1er - 5 juillet 1980) Publiés par Jean-Louis Bacqué Grammont et Paul Dumont, (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1983), pp. 171-201.
- Dumont, Paul. "La Franc-Maconnerie d'Obédience Francaise à Salonique au Début du XXE siècle", *Turcica*, 16 (1984), pp. 65-94.
- Dumont, Paul. "A Jewish, Socialist and Ottoman Organization: the Worker's Federation of Salonika.", in Tuncay, Mete and Zürcher, J. Erik (eds.), *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1923* (London, New York: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 49-75.
- Dumont, Paul. "La Correspondence de Joseph Nehama avec l' Alliance Israélite

- Universelle”, in Etaireia Meletes Ellenikou Evraismou (ed.), *Oi Evraioi ston Helleniko Choro: Zetemata Istorias ste Makra Diarkeia* (Athens: Gavrielides, 1995), pp. 131- 150.
- Efthymiou, Maria. “The Jews of Thessaloniki in the Sixteenth Century and the Organisation of Production: Aspect of Adaptability”, in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 105-114.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel Noah. *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (New York et al.: Wiley-Interscience Publication, 1973).
- Elazar, Danier J. and Friedenreich, Harriet P. and Hazzan, Baruch and Liberles, Adina W. *The Balkan Jewish Communities, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (Centre for Jewish Community Studies of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs: University Press of America, Inc. , 1984).
- Ettinger, Shmuel. “Jew-Hatred in its Historical Context”, in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford et al. : Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 1-12.
- Ettinger, Shmuel. “The Modern Period”, in H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 727-1075.
- Evangelopoulos, Speros. *Historia tes Neoellenikes Ekpaidefses* (Athens: 1987).
- Frankel, Jonathan. *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Frankel, Jonathan. “The Roots of Jewish Socialism” (1881-1892): From “Populism” to “Cosmopolitanism”?”, in Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 58-77.



- Frankel, Jonathan. *The Damascus Affair. 'Ritual Murder', Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Gadgil, D. "The Protection of Minorities", in William Mackay, and Albert Verdoot (eds.), *The Multinational Society* (New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1969), pp. 64-86.
- Gelber, N. M. "An Attempt to Internationalize Salonika", *Jewish Social Studies*, 17 (1955), pp. 105-120.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1992).
- Gerolymbou, Alexandra. "To Meridio tes Fotias" in Veinstein Gilles (ed.), *Thessalonike 1850-1918. He 'Pole ton Evraion' kai he Afupnise ton Valkanion*, (Greek translation) (Athens: Ekate, 1994), pp. 281-290.
- Gilman, Sander. "Dreyfus's Body - Kafka's Fear", *Jewish Affairs* (Summer 1994), pp. 20-29.
- Gilman, Sander and Katz, Steven T. *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis* (New York, London: New York University Press, 1995).
- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Abacus, 1997).
- Gordon, Milton M. *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- Grosser, Paul and Halperin, Edwin (eds.). *Antisemitism: Causes and Effects: An Analysis and Chronology of 1900 Years of Antisemitic Attitudes and Practices* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1983).
- Gutwirth, Eleazar. "Towards Expulsion: 1391-1492", in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and*

- the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 51-73.
- Hassiotes, Ioannes K. (ed.). *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997).
- Hastaoglou-Martinides, Vilma. "On the State of the Jewish Community of Salonica after the Fire of 1917: An Unpublished Memoir and Other Documents from the Papers of Henry Morgenthau Sr", in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies), pp. 147-174.
- Hirschman, Albert. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- Hutchinson, John and Smith, Antony D. (eds.). *Nationalism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Hyamson, Albert M. *Palestine under the Mandate 1920-1948* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976).
- Janowski, Oscar. *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898-1919)* (New York: AMS Press 1966).
- Kakoulides, Ioannes. "La Contribution des Hébreux à l'Histoire du Parti Socialiste-Ouvrier de Grèce (1918-1924)", *Balkan Studies*, 32/ 1 (1991), pp. 59-69.
- Kalogerou, Nikos. "He Geografia tou Eksynchronismou: Oi Metaschematismoi tou Voreioelladikou Chorou sto Mesopolemo", in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos*



- (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992), pp. 83-92.
- Kamen, Henry. "The Expulsion: Purpose and Consequence", in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 74-91.
- Kanakidou, Helene. *He Ekpaidefse ste Mousoulmanike Meionoteta tes Dytikes Thrakes* (Athens: Hellenika Grammata, 1994).
- Kandylakes, Manoles. "O Evraikos Eypos tes Thessalonikes", *Parateretes* (1994), pp. 25-26.
- Karademou-Gerolymbou, Aleka and Papamechos, Nikos. "Rythmise tou Chorou: Politikes Protovoulies kai Thesmikes Rythmiseis", in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992), pp. 113-332.
- Karady, Victor. "Antisémitisme et Strategies d'Intégration. Juifs et non-Juifs dans la Hongrie contemporaine", *Annales, Économies, Sociétés et Civilisation*, 48/ 1 (1993), pp. 239-264.
- Karathanasses, Athanassios E. "The Relations between the Jewish Community and Metropolitan Gennadios of Thessaloniki (1912-51)", in I. K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies), pp. 223-228.
- Katsoules, Giorgos. *Historia tou Kommounistikou Kommatos Helladas I-V Vols.* (Athens: Nea Synora, 1976).
- Katz, Jacob. "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation'. Its Origin and Historical Impact" in Alexander Altmann (ed.), *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 1-25.

- Katz, Jacob. *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770-1870* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).
- Kedourie, Elie. "Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 7 (1971), pp. 89-104.
- Kedourie, Elie (ed.). *Spain and the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).
- Kentro Historias Thessalonikes, *He Thessalonike meta to 1912* (Thessalonike: Demos Thessalonikes, 1986).
- Kerem, Yitzchak. "The Influence of Antisemitism on Jewish Immigration Pattern from Greece to the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century", in Ceasar E. Farah (ed.), *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, (Kirksville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northeast Missouri State University Press, 1993), pp. 305-314.
- Kerem, Yitzchak. "The Greek-Jewish Theater in Judeo-Spanish, ca. 1880-1940", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 14 (1996), pp. 31-45.
- Kitromilides, Paschales M. "The Dialectic of Intolerance: Ideological Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict", *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, VI/ 4 (1979), pp. 5-30.
- Kitromilides, Paschales M. "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", in Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremes (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage Eliamep, 1990), pp. 23-66.
- KKE, *Episema Keimena* I-IV Vols. (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1974-1975).
- KKE, *Exenta Chronia Agonon kai Thysion. Chroniko tou KKE*, Vol. I 1918-1945 (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1978).



- KKE, *Syntome Historia tou KKE, Schedio*, Vol. 1 1918-1949 (Athens: Sychrone Epoche, 1988).
- Kofos, Evaggelos. "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth- Century Macedonia" in Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremes (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage Eliamep, 1990), pp. 103-142.
- Kokosalakes, Nikos. *Ethnic Identity and Religion. Tradition and Change in Liverpool Jewry* (University press of America, 1982).
- Kounio-Amarilio, Erika and Nar Albertos. *Proforikes Martyries Evraion tes Thessalonikes gia to Olokaftoma* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1998).
- Kousoulas, Demetres. *KKE. Ta Protota Trianta Chronia, 1918-1949* (Athens: Hellenike Evroekdotike, 1987).
- Koutsoukales, Alekos. *He Deftere Dekaeitia tou KKE 1929-1939* (Athens: Gnose, 1984).
- Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989).
- Lazare, Bernard. *Antisemitism. Its History and Causes* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
- Le congrès juif et ses buts*, Salonique 1917, Bibliotheque Salonicienne. Archive of Ifigenia Anastasiadu, stationed in ELIA.
- Lekkas, Panteles. *He Ethnikistike Ideologia. Pende Hypotheseis Ergasias sten Historike Koinoniologia* (Athens: Mnemon, 1992).
- Levene, Mark. *War, Jews and the New Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- Levigne, Catherine. "Le Mouvement Sioniste en France et la Politique Francaise au

- Levant, 1900-1920”, *Relations internationales*, 12 (1997), pp. 281-306.
- Lewin, Kurt. *Resolving Social Conflicts: and, Field Theory in Social Science* (Washington D. C. , American Psychological Association, 1997).
- Lewis, Bernard. *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: University Press, 1984).
- Lewkovicz, Bea. “ ‘Greece is my home, but...’ Ethnic Identity of Greek Jews in Thessaloniki”, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, Vol. 4 no. 2 (1994), pp. 225-240.
- Liakos, Antonis. *H Sosialistike Ergatike Omospondia Thessalonikes (Federasion) kai he Sosialistike Neolaia. Ta Katastatika tous* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1985).
- Liakos, Antonis. *Neanikes Organoseis* (Athens: Lotos, 1988).
- Linton, Ralph (ed.). *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945).
- Louve, Lina. “Mechanismoι tes Hellenikes Exoterikes Politikes meta te Syntheke tes Lozannes (1923-1928)”, in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksychronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992), pp. 391-404.
- Löwy, Michael. “Revolution against ‘Progress’: Walter Benjamin’s Romantic Anarchism”, *New Left Review*, Vol. 2 (1985), pp. 42-56.
- Maccas, Leon. *La Grèce et les Israélites*. Extrait du “*Messenger d’ Athenes*” (Athens, 1913).
- Mackay, Angus. “The Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages”, in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 33-51.
- Mackay, William F. and Verdoot, Albert (eds.). *The Multinational Society* (New York:



- Newbury House Publishers, 1969).
- Mardin, Serif. "Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 11 (1969), pp. 258-281.
- Marketos, Speros. "He 'Fenderasion' kai he Hedraiose tou Hellenikou Sosialismou" in Etaireia Meletes Hellenikou Evraismou (ed.), *Oi Evraioi ston Elleniko Choro: Zetemata Istorias ste Makra Diarkeia* (Athens: Gavrielides, 1995), pp. 151-172.
- Marrus, Michael R. *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
- Mavrogordatos, Giorgos Th. and Chatzeiosef, Chrestos 1988 (eds.). *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992).
- Mavrogordatos, Giorgos Th. *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1983).
- Mavrogordatos, Giorgos Th. "Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos" in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chatzeiosef, Chrestos (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992) pp. 9-21.
- Mazower, Mark. *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford, 1991).
- Mazower, Mark. "Oikonomike Politike sten Ellada, 1932-1936", in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1992) pp. 171-182.
- Mazower, Mark. "Salonika between East and West 1860-1912", *Dialogos*, no 1 (1994), pp. 104-127.
- Meir, Peter (ed.). *The West European Party System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

- Mendelsohn, Ezra. *Class Struggle in the Pale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
- Mendelsohn, Ezra (ed.). *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
- Meyer, Michael A. *Jewish Identity in the Modern World* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1990).
- Moïssis, Ascher. "Ha-Tnua ha-Zionit Be-Saloniki Ve Bitar Kehillot Yavan", in David Recanati, (ed.), *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruyicion de Yeruchalayin del Balkan* (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972), pp. 366-395.
- Molho, Michael. "El Cementerio Judio de Salonica, Verdadero Museo Epigrafico, Historico y Arqueologico", *Sefarad*, 9 (1949), pp. 107-130.
- Molho, Michael. *Le Judaisme Grec en Général et la Communauté de Salonique en particulier entre des deux Guerres Mondiales* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1956).
- Molho, Michael. "Tumbas de Marranos en Salonica", *Sefarad*, 13 (1958), pp. 325-335.
- Molho, Michael. *In Memoriam* (Thessalonike: Jewish Community of Thessalonike, 1976).
- Molho, Rena. "The Jewish Community of Salonika and its Incorporation into the Greek State 1912-19", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 84/ 4 (1988), pp. 391-401.
- Molho, Rena. "Popular Antisemitism and State Policy in Salonika during the City's Annexation to Greece", *Jewish Social Studies*, 50/ 3,4 (1988-1933), pp. 253-264.
- Molho, Rena. "Thessalonique après 1912. Propagandes étrangères et la communauté juive", *Revue Historique*, 287 (1992), pp. 127-140.



- Molho, Rena. "Education in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century", *Balkan Studies*, 34/2 (1993), pp. 259-269. ?
- Molho, Rena. " 'Le cercle de Salonique' 1873-1958", in Etaireia Meletes Ellenikou Evraismou (ed.), *Oi Evraioi ston Elleniko Choro: Zetemata Istorias ste Makra Diarkeia* (Athens: Gavrielides, 1995), pp. 103-127.
- Molho, Rena. "The Zionist Movement in Thessaloniki, 1899-1919", in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 327-350.
- Molho, Rena. "Venizelos and the Jewish Community of Salonika, 1912-1919", *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 13/ 3-4 (1986), pp. 113-123
- Molho, Rena. "Ta Ispanoevraika sten Kathemerine Zoe tes Thessalonikes", *Ta Istorika*, 15/ 28-29 (June-December 1998), pp. 123-146.
- Morcillo, Rossilo Matilde. "Essai sur la Communauté Séfardie de Salonique durant le Premier tiers du XXe siècle", in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-eastern Europe* (Thessalonike, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 351-364.
- Morin, Edgar. "Vidal and his People", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 4/2 (1994), pp. 330-343.
- Moskoff, Kostas. *Eisagogika sten Historia tou Kinematos tes Ergatikes Taxes. H Diamorfose tes Ethnikes Syneideses sten Hellada* (Athens: Kastaniotes, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition).
- Moutafes, Giorgos. *He Oikonomike kai Koinonike Dome tes Thessalonikes, 1929-1933. Mia Prokatartike Exetase* (Thessalonike: Demos Thessalonikes, 1990).
- Muller, Jerry Z. "Communism, Antisemitism and the Jews", *Commentary*, 86/ 2 (1988),

pp. 28-39.

- Nar, Almbertos. *Meletes kai Arthra gia ten Evraike Koinoteta tes Thessalonikes. 'Keimene epi Aktes Thalasses...'* (Thessalonike: Ekfrase University Press, 1997).
- Nar, Almbertos. "Mia Anekdote Ekthese tou 1942 gia te Dome tes Israelitikes Koinotetos Thessalonikes sten periodo 1912-1940" in *Demos Thessalonikes, He Thessalonike meta to 1912, Symposia* (Thessalonike: Kentro Historias Thessalonikes, 1986), pp. 303-323.
- Néhama, Joseph. *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, Vols. I-VII (Salonika and Paris 1935-1978).
- Néhama, Joseph. "The Jews of Salonika in the Ottoman period", in Richard Barnett and Walter Schwabs (eds.), *The Western Sephardim* (Gibraltar Books: 1989), pp. 203-242.
- Öke, Mim K. "Young Turks, Freemasons, Jews and the Question of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1913)", *Studies in Zionism*, 7/ no 2 (1986), pp. 199-218.
- Paasi, Anssi. *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Boundary* (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1995).
- Pandelakes, Nikos. "Ta Polemika Daneia 1918-1919. Paragondas Exoterikes Oikonomikes kai Politikes Exarteses", in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrestos Chatzeiosef (eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 1988), pp. 405-416.
- Papacosma, Victor S., "The Sephardic Jews of Salonika", *Midstream*, XXIV (1978), 10-14.
- Papazoglou, Ares. *Evraikoi Koinotikoi Thesmoi ste Thessalonike tes Tourkokratias* (Thessaloniki: Megatype, 1994).



- Pearson, Raymond. *National Minorities in Eastern Europe 1848-1945* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1983).
- Petropoulos, Elias. "Oi Evraioi tes Thessalonikes", *Scholiastes*, January 1986, pp. 53-55.
- Petropoulos, Elias. "Baino sto 151", *Scholiastes*, 13 May 1988, pp. 65-67.
- Pierron Bernard. *Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce Moderne - Histoire des Relations Intercommunautaires de 1821 à 1945* (Paris: Harmatan, 1996).
- Pizaniyas, Petros. *Oi Ftochoi ton Poleon. He Technognosia tes Epivioses sten Hellada to Mesopolemo* (Athens. Themelio, 1993).
- Plaut, Joshua E. *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983. Patterns of Jewish Survival in the Greek Provinces before and after the Holocaust* (London: Associated University Press, 1996).
- Polonsky, Antony. "The Bund in Polish Political Life, 1935-1939", in E. Mendelsohn (ed.), *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 166-197.
- Pour le Congrès Juif de Salonique*, 1917, Bibliotheque Salonicienne. Archive of Ifigenia Anastasiadu, stationed in ELIA.
- Raphael, Chaim. *The Sephardi Story* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1993).
- Recanati, David (ed.). *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruyicion de Yeruchalayin del Balkan*, (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972).
- Reinharz, Yehuda and Shapira, Anita (eds.). *Essential Papers on Zionism* (New York, London: New York University Press, 1995).
- Rekanati, Avraham. "Ha-Zionim ha-Revisionistim Be-Saloniki", in David Recanati

- (ed.), *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruyicion de Yeruchalayin del Balkan*, (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972), pp. 463-494.
- Risal, Pierre. *La Ville convoitée. Salonique* (Paris, Librairie Academique, 1917).
- Rodinson, Maxime. "The Notion of Minority and Islam", in Gérard Chaliand (ed.), *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), pp. 55-75.
- Rodrigue, Aron. "Jewish Society and Schooling in a Thracian Town: The Alliance Israélite Universelle in Demotica, 1897-1924", *Jewish Social Studies*, 45 (Summer-Fall 1983), pp. 263-286.
- Rodrigue, Aron. "The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire", in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Spain and the Jews. The Sephardi Experience 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 162-188.
- Rodrigue, Aron. "From *millet* to Minority: Turkish Jewry", in Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 238-261.
- Rodrigue, Aron. *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).
- Rokéah, Zefira Entin. "The State, the Church, and the Jews in Medieval England", in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford et al.: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 99-126.
- Sartori, Giovanni. "A Typology of Party Systems", in Peter Meir (ed.), *The West European Party System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 316-349.



- Sartre, Jean Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).
- Schaefer, Richard. *Racial and Ethnic Groups* (London 3<sup>rd</sup> edition: Scott Foresman and Co. , 1988).
- Schmidt, Manfred G. *Wörterbuch zur Politik* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1995).
- Schroetter, Daniel J. “Orientalism and the Jews of the Mediterranean”, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 4/ 2 (1994), pp. 183-196.
- Shaw, Stanford J. “Christian Antisemitism in the Ottoman Empire”, *Bebbeten*, Cilt: LIV Sa 211, Aralık 1990, pp. 1073-1149.
- Shaw, Stanford J. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1991).
- Shilo, Margarit. “The Immigration Policy of the Zionist Institutions”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30/ 3 July (1994), pp. 597-617.
- Shimoni, Gideon. *The Zionist Ideology* (Brandeis University Press: University Press of New England, 1995).
- Simpson, George E. and Milton Yinger J. *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*, (New York, London: Plenum Press, 1953).
- Skordyles, Kostas. “Réactions Juives à l’Annexion de Salonique par la Grèce (1912-1913)”, in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 501-516.
- Skourtes, Ioannes. “Metanastefse ton Evraion tes Thessalonikes ste Gallia kata ton Mesopolemo”, *Thessalonike*, 3 (1992), pp. 235- 247.
- Skourtes, Ioannes. “The Zionists and their Jewish Opponents in Thessaloniki between the Two Worlds Wars”, in Ioannes K. Hassiotes (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of South-Eastern Europe* (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), pp. 517-

- Skourtes, Ioannes. "Ta Gallika Scholeia tes Thessalonikes kai tes Perifereias tes meta to 1912" in *Kentro Historias Thessalonikes, E Thessalonike meta to 1912, Symposia* (Thessalonike: Kentro Historias Thessalonikes, 1986), pp.341-361.
- Skourtes, Ioannes. "Oi Evraioi tes Thessalonikes kai he Kathierose tes Kyriakes Argias (1924-1925)", in *XII Panellenio Istoriko Synedrio (May 1991). Praktika Thessalonike 1992*, pp. 387-406.
- Skourtes, Ioannes. "Evraioitalike Ekpaideftike Drasterioteta ste Thessalonike: He Metexelixe tou Evraikou Scholeiou Thessalonikes se Italiko (1870-1926)", in *Proceedings of the XIV Panhellenic Historical Congress, Thessalonike*, pp. 365-388.
- Smith, Barbara J.. *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine. British Economic Policy, 1920-1929* (London: Tauris & Co ltd. , 1993).
- Smith, Elaine R. "Class, Ethnicity and Politics in the Jewish East End, 1918-1939", in *Jewish Historical Studies, Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Volume XXXII (1990-1992)*, pp. 355-369.
- Smith, Gordon. "A System Perspective on Party System Change", *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1/ 3 (1989), pp. 349-363.
- Solaro, Antonio. *Historia tou Kommounistikou Kommatos Hellados* (Athens: Pleias, 1975).
- Srebnik, Henry Felix. *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1995).
- Stavrianos, L. S. "The Jews of Greece", *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 8 (1948), pp. 256-269.



- Stavroulakes, Nikos. *The Jews of Greece* (Athens: Talos Press, 1990).
- Stavroulakes, Nikos. "Shabbetai Zevi and the Dönme of Thessaloniki", *Forum*, 53 (Fall 1984), pp. 103-114
- Stavroulakie, Nikos. "Review of B. Pierron, Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce Moderne - Histoire des Relations Intercommunautaires de 1821 à 1925", *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*, No 19, Winter 1996, pp. 27-29.
- Szajkowski, Zosa. "Jewish Diplomacy: Notes on the Occasion of the Centenary of the Alliance Israélite Universelle", *Jewish Social Studies*, 22 (July 1960), pp. 131-158.
- Teich, Mikulas and Porter, Roy (eds.). *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Thobie, Jacques. "La France a-t-elle une Politique Culturelle dans l' Empire Ottoman à la Veille de la Première Guerre Mondiale?" *Relations internationales*, 25 (Spring 1981), pp. 21-40.
- Tobias, Henry J. and Woodhouse Charles E. (eds.). *Minorities and Politics* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969).
- Tobias, Henry. "The Reassessment of the National Question", in Ezra Mendelsohn (ed.), *Essential papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 101-119.
- Toledano, Haim A. "Ha-Histadrut Ha-Mizrahi Be-Saloniki", in David Recanati (ed.), *Zikhron Saloniki, Grandeza I Destruyicion de Yeruchalayin del Balkan*, (Tel Aviv: El Commitato por la Edition del Livro Sovre la Communita de Salonique, 1972), pp. 426-453.
- Tomanas, Kostas. *Chroniko tes Thessalonikes 1921-1944* (Thessalonike: Nesides,

- 1996).
- Tomanas, Kostas. *Oi Katoikoi tes Palias Thessalonikes* (Athens: Exantas, 1992), pp. 36-37.
- Tonnet, Henry. “De la Calomnie à l’ Incomprehension: Apercu sur l’Évolution du Theme Juif dans la Litterature Grecque Moderne”, *Cahiers Balkanique*, 5 (1983), pp. 77-82.
- Tousimes, Georgios. *He Elleipse Archiravvinou sten Evraike Koinoteta tes Thessalonikes kata to Mesopolemo kai oi Synepeties tes*, *Histor*, 2 (September 1990), pp. 109-120.
- Tsombatze, Georgios. *Hos tes Evraikes Paliggenesias apo Hellenikes Skopias* (Athens: Eleftheroudakes, 1925).
- Valensi, Lucette. “La Tour de Babel: Groupes et relations Ethniques au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord”, *Annales Economies, Societés, et Civilisations*, 4 (July-August 1986), pp. 817-838.
- Vassilikou, Maria. “Ethnotikes Antitheseis ste Thessalonike tou Mesopolemou. He Periptose tou Empresmou tou Kampel”, *Histor*, 7 (1995), pp.153-174.
- Vassilikou, Maria . “The Archive of the Jewish Community of Salonika”, *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*, 21 (1997-1998), pp. 35-37.
- Veinstein, Gilles (ed.). *Thessalonike 1850-1918. He ‘Pole ton Evraion’ kai he Afupnise ton Valkanion*, (Greek translation) (Athens: Ekate, 1994).
- Veremes, Thanos. “From the National State to the Stateless Nation”, in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremes (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage Eliamep), pp. 9-22.
- Vital, David. *The Future of the Jews* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University



- Press, 1990).
- Vital, David. *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
- Vital, David. *Zionism: The Crucial Phase* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
- Vital, David. *Zionism: The formative years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
- Vital, David. "A prince of the Jews. The legacy of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* to modern Israel", *The Times Literary Supplement*, (June 1996), pp. 6-7.
- Wasserstein, Bernard. "Wayward gangster", *The Times Literary Supplement*, (June 1996), p. 8.
- Weil, Georges. "The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Emancipation of the Jewish Communities in the Mediterranean", *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 24 (1982), pp. 117-134.
- Wirth, Louis. "The Problem of Minority Groups", in Ralph Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 347-372.
- Woothouse, Charles E. "Minorities and Politics - An introduction", in Henry J. Tobias and Charles E. Woodhouse (eds.), *Minorities and Politics* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), pp. 1-18.