

Greece

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of factors shaped Greece's destiny. The central problem of the state was its inability to provide the basic needs of its citizens. As a result, some 200,000 Greeks — most of them young men at the height of their productivity — left the country between 1891 and 1912. At virtually the same time, from 1864 to 1920, constant tension existed between Greece's urgent internal problems and pressure from ideologues who called for the expansion of the country's territory to encompass any and all places where Greeks resided, according to the definition of Greek nationality propounded by these ideologues. This concept, the *megali idea* (cf. chapter 7, p. 181), led Greece into a series of successful wars with neighboring Bulgaria and the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. As a consequence, Greece acquired Thessaly (1881); as a result of the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and World War I, it acquired the island of Crete,

⁸³ CZA, S25/3152, pp. 12–13.

⁸⁴ Avner Levi, "The Jews of Turkey," pp. 40–42; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, pp. 21–33.

the greater part of Macedonia, most of Thrace, and an enclave surrounding the city of Smyrna (İzmir).⁸⁵

Territorial expansion meant demographic growth as well. Yet, far from dissipating the country's problems, the ongoing military activity, entailing constant expenditures, contributed little by way of a solution. Indeed, the impressive accomplishments of the Macedonian wars and World War I lost some of their luster when the Turks managed to drive the Greeks out of Smyrna in 1922.⁸⁶ While Smyrna was still burning, tens of thousands of Greek refugees fled from Anatolia to territories under Greek control. The Treaty of Lausanne restored eastern Thrace to Turkey and mandated forced population exchanges between the two states. According to one source, 1.5 million refugees settled in Greece in the aftermath of the First World War.⁸⁷

85 On the role of the *megali idea* in the development of the Greek state, see G. Augustinos, "The Dynamics of Modern Greek Nationalism: The Great Idea and the Macedonian Problem," *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1973), pp. 444–453; A.A.M. Bryer, "The Great Idea," *History Today*, 15, no. 3 (1965), pp. 513–547; D. Dakin, "The Greek Unification and the Italian *Risorgimento* Compared," *Balkan Studies*, 10, no. 1 (1969), pp. 1–10; idem, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897–1913*; J.S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece 1821–1912* (Oxford, 1987); T.G. Tassios, *The Megali Idea and the Greek-Turkish War of 1897: The Impact of the Cretan Problem on Greek Irredentism 1866–1897* (New York, 1984); Veremis, "National State to Stateless Nation, 1821–1910," pp. 9–22; E. Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Salonika, 1964); idem, "The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation," *Balkan Studies* 27 (1986), pp. 157–172; idem, "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Macedonia," pp. 103–142; A.J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilisations* (London, 1922).

86 On the Greco-Turkish war of 1919–1922, see M. Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor 1919–1922*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1998).

87 The refugee statistics differ from one source to the other, and especially inconclusive are the figures for those who arrived in Greece before 1922. The number 1.5 million (including refugees from Bulgaria and Russia) is based on A. A. Pallis, "Racial Migrations in the Balkans during the Years 1912–1924," *Geographical Journal* 69 (October 1925), pp. 315–331. See also M. Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford, 1991), p. 43. Mazower himself (based on E.G. Mears, *Greece Today: The Aftermath of the Refugee Impact* [Stanford, Calif., 1929], pp. 299–300) estimates the number of refugees around half a million. The report, *League of Nations Commission for the Greek Refugee Settlement* (Geneva, 1926), gives the figure 1,400,000, including refugees from Thrace, Bulgaria, and Russia (p. 3). For a new reading of traditional sources see Michailidis, "The War of Statistics." On the population exchange, see also S. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York, 1932); D. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and Its Impact upon Greece* (The Hague, 1962); J.A. Petropoulos, "The

If we balance the demographic effects of the emigration, the departure of the Muslim population, and the wartime losses against the immigration from Anatolia, we find that the population of Greece rose by 500,000 from the late nineteenth century until 1924.⁸⁸

The greater portion of these refugees settled in northern Greece and had a decisive impact on the demographic balance of Macedonia. Before 1912, 47.4 percent of the population in this province was not Greek; by 1926, this figure had shrunk to 11.6 percent.⁸⁹ In 1913, Greek estimates placed the population of Salonika at 157,889, of whom only 36,956 were Greek. During the course of World War I, thousands of Greek refugees settled in the city.⁹⁰ This balance shifted dramatically in 1922, when most of the Turkish population left and at least 100,000 Greek refugees settled in the city.⁹¹ It was obvious to all that a new chapter was opening in Greece's history. The country's problems were now graver than ever: even before the events of 1922 (referred to as "the catastrophe" [η καταστροφή]), it had not managed to

Compulsory Exchange of Populations: Greek-Turkish Peacemaking," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1976), pp. 135–160; Kritikos, "Motives for Compulsory Population Exchange"; R. Hirschon ed. *Crossing the Aegean, An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey and Turkey* (London, 2003).

88 Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis*, pp. 42–43.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

90 Data sent in 1916 by the Greek Foreign Ministry to the Greek Ambassador in Paris in response to his inquiry. According to these figures, the number of Greeks in Salonika rose from 39,956 in 1913 to 68,205 in 1916, while the number of the Jews did not change. These statistics, along with others from different sources, are cited by Molho in *Les juifs*, vol. 1, p. 81.

91 The exact number of refugees who settled in Salonika itself is also inconclusive. It is estimated that between 1914–1923, some 200,000 Greeks passed through the city, though not all of them remained there. The figure 150,000 is generally regarded as the number of refugees who settled in the city during these years. *League of Nations Commission on Greek Refugee Settlements*; E.G. Mears, *Greece Today — The Aftermath of the Refugee Impact* (Stanford, Calif., 1929); C.B. Eddy, *Greece and the Greek Refugees* (London, 1931); Ladas, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities*, pp. 621–671; Pentzopoulos, *Balkan Exchange of Minorities*, pp. 28, 69–136; L. Leontidou, *The Mediterranean City in Transition: Social Change and Urban Development* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 72–75; E. Voutira, "Population Transfers and Resettlement Policies in Inter-War Europe: The Case of Asia Minor Refugees in Macedonia from an International and National Perspective," in *Ourselves and the Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity since 1912*, eds. P. Mackridge and E. Yannakakis (Oxford and New York, 1997), pp. 91–110.

ensure the subsistence of its inhabitants, and now it had taken in hundreds of thousands of destitute refugees.

Well before “the catastrophe,” the economy of Greece as a whole, including that of the Jewish community of Salonika, was marked by the concentration of most of the capital in the hands of a few individuals, creating a society composed of an extravagantly wealthy minority and an impoverished majority. Nor did the wartime profits that Greece enjoyed in the years following the Balkan Wars alter the situation. While there was a severe shortage of manpower in 1917–19 as a result of industrial development, the industries that arose were based on low wages and high protective tariffs, and brought little benefit to the masses.

In the first years following “the catastrophe,” there were several opposing forces operating on the Greek economy; yet, as before, their impact did not modify the economic picture described above. Foreign aid and generous loans, principally from Britain, helped to settle some of the refugees in the tobacco-growing regions of Thrace and Macedonia, but most of those who opted for the cities, particularly Salonika, did not enjoy the benefits of this efflorescence and lived under miserable conditions. A decline in tobacco prices on the world market as a result of the Depression (1929), coupled with the need to repay the loans granted them by the government and the cessation of foreign aid, led many of the refugees who had been living in the countryside to abandon their farms and seek their fortunes in the city.

The effect of the worldwide economic crisis on Greece was mitigated by the fact that its imports exceeded its exports, and import prices dropped more rapidly than those for exports. But by 1931, the ramifications of the crisis could no longer be ignored. Greece was forced to abandon the gold standard, and with great hesitation, the state imposed restrictions on imports. As a result, Greece’s creditors — rather than its prime ministers, who changed office at a dizzying rate — became extremely anxious. Beginning in the spring of 1932, the country’s economy as a whole began to tilt towards autarky. Oddly enough, this trend helped generate an economic recovery. The trade deficit was reduced and international trade was severely restricted. Concurrently, more land was devoted to farming, and industry developed and expanded. All of this output was directed toward internal consumption. Even at this point, the industrial growth was not accompanied by technological innovation and its success was based on the same elements that existed at the turn of the century: low wages, long working hours, and now, restrictions

on imports. In terms of income, the situation of the industrial workers was the worst in the country.⁹² Successive Greek governments refrained from intervening via legislation and were, therefore, obliged to use force to suppress the embittered workers.

Greece's political arena during this period was dominated by Eleftherios Venizelos, the central figure in Greek politics from 1912 until the 1930s. For the most part, Venizelos and his Liberal Party came from a social background similar to that of the supporters of the opposing party, the Conservatives. The difference between the two parties was that the Conservatives, along with their monarchist tendencies, were longtime bureaucrats who sought to preserve their power bases, while the Liberals, under the leadership of Venizelos, represented "fresh faces" who wished to take part in government. Moreover, Venizelos was the standard-bearer of the *megali idea* — an attention-getting, populist concept — while a portion of the Conservatives sought to focus on the problems of "old" Greece. In reality, the Conservatives managed to win the elections of 1920, not only by pledging to restore civil rights and bring back King Konstantine, but also by pursuing the *megali idea* even more enthusiastically than Venizelos himself.⁹³

The Anatolian "catastrophe" was the final nail in the coffin of the "great idea." Venizelos, competing against the Conservatives in his attempt to preserve his political power among the refugees generated by that event, unintentionally pushed the masses of immigrants who had settled in northern Greece towards the Left and social radicalism. It should nonetheless be stressed that radicalism of this type was not at odds with Greek nationalism, which was no less fervent among his supporters than those of the Conservatives.

This radicalism was more an outgrowth of resentment over the deteriorating economic situation in northern Greece than the result of communist-style class-consciousness. It is more than likely that the worldwide Depression, in combination with the *mélange* of Greece's problems both old and new, forced the country's politicians to confront problems that they were unaccustomed to addressing. The actual problems were not political as much as social and economic. During the years

92 See Hadar, "Carmen in Salonika"; idem, "Hebetim be-Ḥayei ha-Mishpaḥah ha-Yehudit be-Saloniqi: 1900–1943" (Aspects of Jewish family life in Salonika 1900–1943) (Ph.D. diss., Haifa University, 2003).

93 Gallant, *Modern Greece*, pp. 139–141.

1928–1932, Venizelos, who did not succeed in resolving these problems, turned more and more towards a centralized and authoritarian regime, which eventually resulted in a new fissure in Greek society: left against right. Having lost his power base among the refugees, Venizelos had to vacate his office. Several administrations came and went without a solution.⁹⁴

In 1936, Ioannis Metaxas was swept into power on the crest of these issues. During his dictatorship, important legislative steps were taken to solve some of these problems, such as the institution of national social insurance and compulsory arbitration of work disputes. But the dictator continued to be bound to the bourgeois order and any show of popular resentment was put down with an iron fist.⁹⁵ On the brink of World War II, Greece was still grappling with the same problems that it had faced at the beginning of the century — exacerbated by the urgent economic and social needs generated by 1.5 million refugees.

It is against this backdrop that events in Salonika and northern Greece, home to most of the country's Jewish population, must be viewed. The displaced refugees — along with the farmers who had abandoned their lands — settled in the city and took advantage of the prosperity of the mid–1920s, the availability of easy credit, and the assistance of the Greek judicial system to set up small independent businesses, groceries, coffeehouses, barbershops, and the like. Many earned their living as middlemen handling imported merchandise. In the early 1930s, the immigrant small-business owners found themselves in a hopeless situation. Inflation had been replaced by deflation; merchants who had borrowed on easy credit in order to stockpile merchandise had difficulty selling it; the banking system that had extended them credit stood on the brink of collapse; poor crop yields had reduced consumption in the rural sector; and the moratorium on farmers' debts only added fuel to the fire.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 153–157.

⁹⁵ On the Metaxas dictatorship, see R. Higham and T. Veremis, eds., *The Metaxas Dictatorship: Aspects of Greece, 1936–1940* (Athens, 1993); J.V. Kofas, *Authoritarianism in Greece: The Metaxas Regime* (Boulder, Colo., 1983); Gallant, *Modern Greece*, pp. 157–159.

⁹⁶ For overall surveys on Greece in the Balkan context during the interwar period, see L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, 1958), pp. 661–687; B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 134–138. On the political history of Greece during this period, see G.T. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Conditions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983). The socioeconomic

In studies of this period, the generally accepted theory is that these conditions led to a life-and-death struggle between the Greek merchants and the Jewish community in Salonika, the stronghold of Greek Jewry, and that this competition fanned the flames of antisemitism in the city.⁹⁷ But an examination of the sources dealing with the pre-“catastrophe” period and the archival material being uncovered in unexpected locales throughout Europe, offers a more accurate picture of the course of events. “Economic antisemitism” is not a very accurate term for describing the trends that molded the history of Salonika’s Jews in the interwar period.

Events in Salonika cannot be separated from what was taking place in Europe as a whole during this period — specifically, the rising tide of antisemitism. At the same time, what happened in Salonika must be seen not as an indigenous creation of the interwar period, but as an outgrowth of previously existing trends now being “nurtured” by history’s helping hand.⁹⁸ From the events of the decade preceding 1922, it was obvious that the Greek state would no longer agree to a continuation of Jewish hegemony in Salonika, a stand expressed with absolute clarity. The efforts of Salonika’s Jews to mobilize international support in face of their concerns were interpreted in Greece as besmirching their country, and only added to the growing resentment.

At the time, most of Macedonia’s population was comprised of Greeks who had been uprooted by the Turks from regions which they perceived as their homeland. They looked upon the Jews not only as economic rivals, but also as an element brought to the city by the despicable Turks. From 1922 onward, a series of measures were initiated on different levels, both to provide the displaced Greeks with an advantage over the local Jews, and to limit their strength and maneuverability in terms of political as well as economic power.

Between 1922 and 1923, the Jewish stevedores were dismissed from their

background cited here is based on Mazower, *Greece and the Interwar Economic Crisis*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

⁹⁸ By way of illustration, Demitrios Kalapothakis, an influential figure at the *Embros* newspaper and the probable author of the venomous article “Our Jews” (October 27, 1912), served as director of the Salonika Press Bureau from 1927 to 1931, in which capacity he shaped the Greek government’s perception of the Jewish community of Salonika during the 1920s (Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, pp. 126–194; see also pp. 421–422).

jobs and banned from working in the area of the port. Jewish wagon and carriage drivers (*arabaci*) were forbidden to continue in their occupations, and peddlers were only permitted to ply their trade in areas adjacent to Jewish establishments.⁹⁹ Concurrently, efforts were made as early as 1920 to limit the political representation of the Jews of Salonika. While initially this policy was carried out by local officeholders,¹⁰⁰ in the months preceding the 1923 elections, Venizelos issued a directive that elections be held by sectors of voters, such that only two representatives were allotted to the entire Jewish population of Salonika. Venizelos's policy was meant to avoid the recurrence of the defeat to which he had been subjected in 1920. The result was that the majority of Salonika's Jews boycotted the 1923 election.¹⁰¹

In 1924, the Greek government managed to implement what it had failed to accomplish in 1919.¹⁰² Saturday had been an official day of rest in Salonika and this was the major Jewish feature of the city. As a consequence of the declining Jewish demographic influence in the city, Sunday was declared the only official day of rest. Furthermore, the Jews were forbidden to open their shops on Sunday instead of Saturday.¹⁰³ Thus the Greek-Jewish conflict that developed was nurtured not only by economic fuel, but also, and not to a lesser extent, by deeply rooted religious as well as national motives, and a zeitgeist that was in vogue almost everywhere in Europe.

It was against this economic and political backdrop that Jewish political life began to take a new direction. Already in 1920, three distinct political

99 Emmanuel, "History," p. 212. Y. Molho, *Yama'im Saloniqayim be-Yisrael: Hazon ve-Hagshamah* (Salonikan seamen in Israel: vision and realization) (Jerusalem, 1951), pp. 37–38.

100 See A. Adossidis, Governor-General of Macedonia, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 12, 1920, Constantopoulou and Veremis, Documents, doc. 21, pp. 99–100.

101 Emmanuel, "History," p. 212. See also S. Hassid, "The 1920 Elections and Salonika's Jews," *Newsletter of the Jewish Museum of Greece* 41 (1996), pp. 2–4; 42 (1996), pp. 5–7; 43 (1997), pp. 5–6.

102 M. Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe: The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 171–172, 265, 291. Cf. chap. 7, note 97, and letters from D. Calcamanos (the Greek Minister to London) to the Conjoint Foreign committee, June 30, 1924; the committee to Calcamanos, July 3, 1924, and the memorandum on the relations between the Greek government and the Jewish community of Salonika written by Wolf himself in 1924 (*YIVO*, RG 348, folder 87. 713).

103 Emmanuel, "History," pp. 213, 342–351; *La Verdad*, November 8, 1924; *ibid.*, November 11, 1924.

blocs had crystallized in Salonika — the Zionists, the communists, and the assimilationists — with the masses having no outlet whatsoever to express their political preference, if any. Obviously, the balance of power among the three groups depends on which source one is relying upon.¹⁰⁴ With the passage of the Jewish Communities Law (July 27, 1920), the right to vote was granted to every male with Greek citizenship aged twenty-one and over, with the intention that the internal community elections would now reflect the genuine, and not the illusory, reality of Salonika. As it turned out, this assumption was a bit naïve. Those who belonged to the social classes excluded from political life during the Ottoman period were not aware of their new rights and most of them remained politically passive.¹⁰⁵ In the summer of 1926, fierce struggles took place between the assimilationists, the Zionists, and the communists. It is rather difficult to accurately estimate the actual number of core members in each of these groups, but the political map becomes clearer after analyzing the following data.

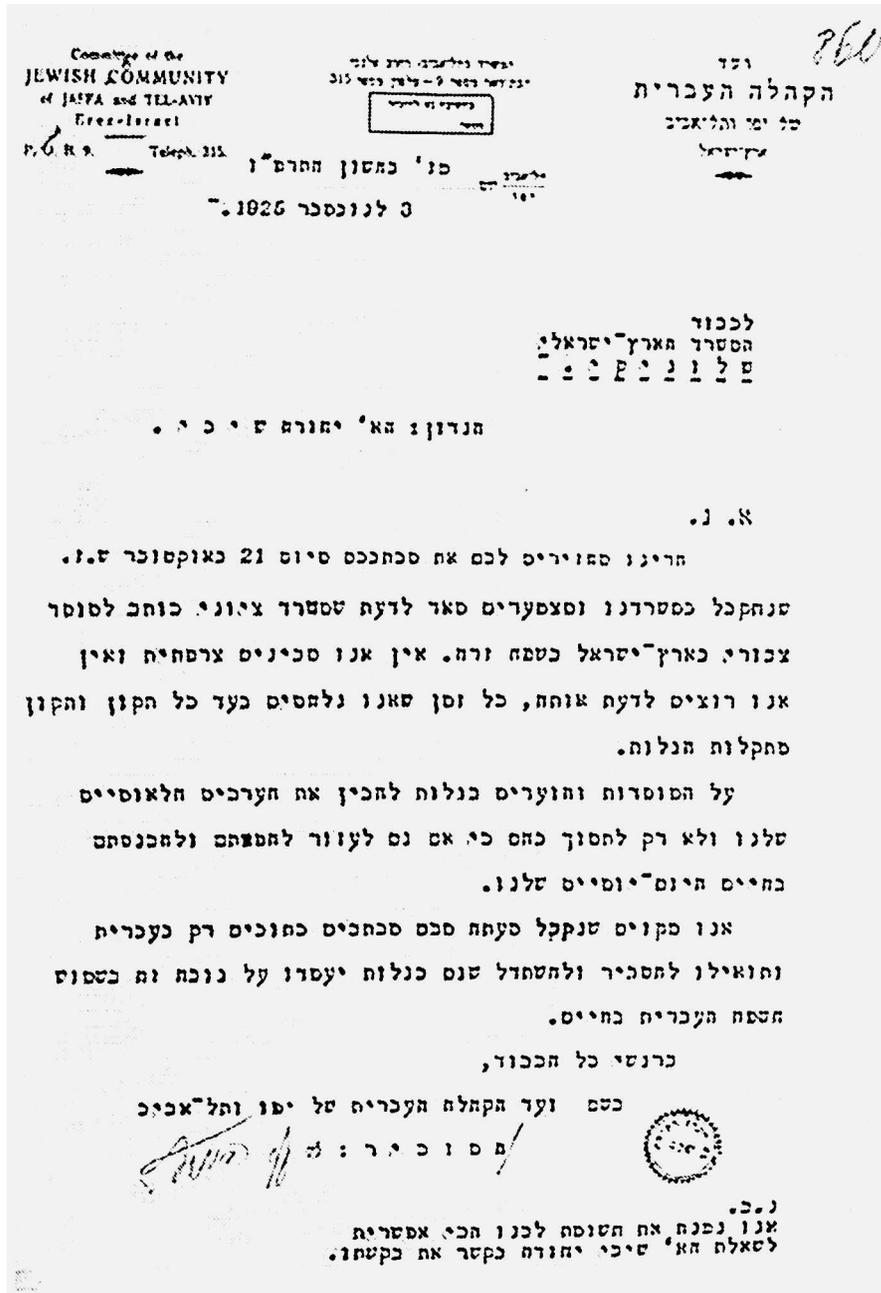
We have in our possession the accounts of the major Zionist newspaper of Salonika, *La Renassencia Djoudia*¹⁰⁶ (The Jewish renaissance) for the year 1927. The subscribers numbered 675 in mid-April of that year.¹⁰⁷ Assuming that every issue was read by another four people in addition to the subscriber, we arrive at a figure of 2,700 individuals who constituted the hard core of Salonika's Zionists. In addition to this newspaper, there were several other Zionist organs in the city. For the sake of argument, then, let us double the above number. Weighed against this figure is a total community population of some 68,000 souls. If we assume that the number of adult males in the community equals one-fifth of this total, 40 percent of the male voters, or about 10 percent of the total population (women were not yet enfranchised during this period), were exposed to Zionist propaganda. In the internal community elections held in November 1926, concurrently with the elections to parliament, a total of 1,000 individuals, or 8 percent, voted for the communist party. In other words, it is unlikely that the remainder of Salonika's Jews identified with the assimilationists, and, therefore, safer to assume that

104 See, for example, S. Protonotarios, Director of the Salonika Press Bureau, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 17, 1920 (Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 23, p. 102), and compare with Emmanuel, "History," p. 218.

105 See below.

106 Judeo-Spanish written in Latin characters.

107 *Moscow Institute*, f. 1435, op. 1, file 1, # 323, TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 3501.



22. A letter from "the Committee of the Hebrew Community of Jaffa and Tel Aviv" addressed to the Palestine Office in Salonika, November 3, 1926 (see appendix 2, no. 22).

they did not take a stand one way or the other. Outside of dramatic events such as the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, or the First Pan-Hellenic Zionist Congress, they were ready to follow anyone who promised them a livelihood and a good life.

The struggle among the factions took place on a number of levels. On one level, the communists battled the Zionists; on another, the Zionists battled the assimilationists; and on yet another, struggles were taking place between the Jewish community and the state, the city, and the larger Greek society.

Apart from the everyday municipal issues of drinking water, street-cleaning, housing, and the like — matters in which the Jews of Salonika were convinced they were being treated unjustly — three “larger questions” preoccupied them and became the focus of their political agenda during the 1920s. The first (not in order of importance) was education. The state wished to found a Greek–Jewish high school in Salonika to ensure that the Jewish community’s children would learn the country’s language and culture like other Greek children. The assimilationists supported this goal. The Zionists wanted the school to provide instruction in the Hebrew language, along with the Greek language and culture, while focusing primarily on Jewish culture.¹⁰⁸ When the Zionists realized that their control over such a school would, in any event, be limited, and that there were community bodies that were prepared to finance a purely Jewish high school, they began to advocate the establishment of an independent Jewish community high school, unaffiliated with the state.¹⁰⁹

The State Press Bureau in Salonika anxiously observed the battle

108 The Greek concern about Zionist education is expressed for the first time in 1920, following a conversation between the director of the Salonika Press Bureau, S. Protonotarios, and an anonymous interlocutor, an ardent socialist (Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 23, p. 102). The matter was addressed at length in the 1920s Law Concerning the Jewish Communities, article 5 of which allowed the community to maintain its own schools, but mandated the teaching of the Greek language and the teaching of history, geography, and science in that language. See below I. Minardos, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Office of the Governor-General of Salonika, August 21, 1926, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 27, p. 112.

109 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 24, 1926, *ibid.*, p. 113; Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 22, 1926, *ibid.*, doc. 28, pp. 114–116; Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Press Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 29, 1926, *ibid.*, doc. 29, pp. 117–118; Z. Kon, inspector of Jewish community schools in Salonika, to *El Pueblo* (September 29, 1926), doc. 29, pp. 118–120.

within the Jewish community between the Zionist leadership, which was attempting to gain control over education in the city, and the group that preached assimilation into the surrounding society. The Zionists urged the community not to accept state funds to finance instruction in history, geography, and science in the elementary schools so as to retain control over the indoctrination of the younger generation. In the eyes of the Greek administration, the Zionist educational concept promoted separatism and group chauvinism, which ran counter to the notion that the Jews were simply Greeks of a different faith. Greek public opinion considered the propaganda in favor of Zionist education; the obstacles placed in the path of Greek education; and even the desire to continue to teach the French language, to be further proof that the Jews of Salonika constituted a hostile foreign element. In the meantime, however, the Jewish community — many of whose notables, particularly the members of Benei Berith, were not noted for their support of the Zionist idea — was having difficulty securing government funding for the teaching of Greek in its elementary schools, where it was taught alongside European languages.

Interestingly enough, the most ardent assimilationists were not the community notables, who still wished to have their children learn foreign languages in addition to Greek as an investment in the future — an objective interpreted as a covert expression of lack of confidence in the Greek state. The “genuine” assimilationists were actually the socialists. In the December 10, 1921 issue of *Avanti*, a person calling himself Mishah published a lengthy article criticizing the community for neglecting the children of the poor and caring only that the schools teach more Hebrew than French. He called upon the Jews of Salonika to demand that the state establish Greek schools to be attended by the children of all peoples — Jews, Bulgarians, Greeks, Turks — where they would all learn Greek and be Hellenes.¹¹⁰

In 1930, the Greek government announced that it would finance all the expenditures of the Greek-Jewish elementary schools and placed them under its supervision. The community retained the right to propose candidates for the teaching staff. The Zionists were concerned, but in the end, very few pupils registered for these schools. The majority of the parents continued to send their children to “foreign” elementary schools that were not affiliated

110 “La question de las escuelas” (The problem of the schools), written in Judeo-Spanish mixed with French in Hebrew letters! (*Avanti*, year 11, no. 349).

with the state.¹¹¹ The eventual outcome of this struggle was that, at least until 1931, the Zionists succeeded in setting the educational agenda. The reason for this was not only their strength within the community's institutions, but also the fact that even the assimilationists found it difficult to give up on certain aspects of their children's education, which they considered important to their future (even if they were opposed to Zionism), for example, the ability to communicate on an international level, which to them meant learning a foreign language such as French.¹¹²

The struggle between the Zionists and the assimilationists was conducted not only with regard to the education of the younger generation, but also in relation to the political agenda of the Jewish community. The assimilationists, for their part, worked hard to convince the political power brokers that the sole desire of the Jews of Greece was to merge, body and soul, into the Greek state.¹¹³ The Zionists sought to dissuade the community from this notion, but they also grappled with the question of just how far they could go. In other words, how could they say to the Jews of Salonika that they had no future in Greece without angering the Greeks? This dilemma is reflected in the episode surrounding the visit of a delegation of Salonika Jews to the city's Aristotle University.

On the eve of the 1926 elections, a delegation (whose composition is unknown) met with the rector of the university, Mr. Sotriadis. Following the visit, an article, "The Submissiveness of Our Assimilationists — A

111 D. Kalapothakis, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 21, 1930, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 52, pp. 167–169.

112 Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 23, 1926, *ibid.*, doc. 30, pp. 120–121; Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Office of Governor-General of Salonika, December 16, 1926, *ibid.*, doc. 31, pp. 123–124; D. Kalapothakis, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 4, 1927, *ibid.*, doc. 32, p. 124; Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 2, 1927, *ibid.*, doc. 32, pp. 125–126; D. Kalapothakis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 8, 1927, *ibid.*, doc. 33, pp. 126–131; Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 3, 1929, *ibid.*, doc. 38, p. 139; Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 29, 1929, *ibid.*, doc. 38, pp. 139–142; I. Minardos, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 26, 1929, *ibid.*, doc. 39, pp. 142–144; D. Kalapothakis, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 21, 1930, *ibid.*, doc. 52, pp. 167–168, and attachment, pp. 168–169.

113 See "La reunion de los assimiladores judios" (The reunion of the Jewish assimilationists), *La Verdad*, year 9, no. 2335, December 10, 1928.

Good Lesson” by one Shim‘on Burla,¹¹⁴ appeared in the Zionist newspaper, *La Renaissance Djoudia*, and reported on the delegation’s actions in an unfavorable light. Burla stated that the members of the delegation expressed to the eminent professor “their strong desire to assimilate as rapidly as possible,” as well as their certainty that all sectors of the community believed in assimilation and that those who did not yet believe would soon be persuaded. They also voiced the conviction that “the day is close at hand when our people and your people shall be one soul and a mighty family, one body and one soul. With all our soul, we feel ourselves to be Hellenes.”

According to Burla, the rector responded that he was moved by their patriotic sentiments and that only drunkards and cheats would not believe their words. Even if the “super-patriots” should cry out in protest, he believed in the sincerity of the Jews’ intentions. In spite of this, the rector stated that this idea of assimilation was unfeasible and harmful, and asserted frankly that

among the intellectuals and individuals with common sense, the opinion prevails that such an assimilation is unworkable and destructive. From a sociological, historical, scientific, and logical point of view, such assimilation is not possible. A Jew cannot become a Greek, and a Greek cannot become a Jew. History and common sense demonstrate this. We Hellenes, who appreciate your great merits, wish for sincere affinity and natural cooperation between the two groups. The Jewish people, like the Greek people, must preserve its character and its uniqueness; and both peoples joining together, hand in hand, will strive for the glory of our shared nation. Linguistic, economic and cultural assimilation is sufficient to make you good Greeks. Take upon yourselves the same obligations, receive the same rights, and remain good Jews. One chain links your glorious past with our future. No one, and you least of anyone, can ask us to break it.¹¹⁵

114 Shim‘on Burla was an active Zionist; see *Moscow Institute*, f. 1437, op. 1, file 1, TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 2040, May 27, 1934; *ibid.*, p. 17a, doc. 2571, May 27, 1934. He became the director of the S.A. Salonique-Palestine, and the Bank for Small Loans (*ibid.*, file 4, p. 20, doc. 3665, January 1, 1937; *ibid.*, file 4, p. 22, doc. 3666, December 22, 1936; *ibid.*, file 4, p. 23, doc. 3667, February 5, 1937; *ibid.*, file 4, p. 24a, doc. 3669, March 26, 1935; file 6, p. 99, doc. 3724, June 26, 1935).

115 *La Renaissance Djoudia*, n.d.

It must be recalled that this entire dialogue is quoted — undoubtedly not firsthand — by Burla, a Zionist, so that one must relate to it with the proper degree of caution. Nevertheless, the Zionist attitude toward the subject of assimilation, as manifest in his version of the rector's remarks, is unmistakable: the assimilationists are worthy of contempt and are making a mockery of themselves before the Greeks. Burla assesses the rector's words and suggests that the members of the delegation learn something from the experience of the Jews of Germany and Hungary, who, for all their efforts at assimilation and all their contributions to the society of their host countries, earned only hatred in return.

Burla, like other Salonika Zionists, found himself torn between two poles. On the one hand, he saw the assimilationists as fools who make themselves into objects of scorn in order to curry favor with the Greeks; moreover, he cast doubt on the future of the Jewish community of Greece. On the other hand, he found it difficult to state decisively that, since no such future exists, there is no reason for them to try to assimilate into the Greek state. He finally suggested to the Jews of Salonika that they be good Jews and good Greeks, without being more royalist than the king. This ambiguous conclusion demonstrates his quandary, for the members of the delegation did not offer to convert to Christianity; they merely asked to be an integral part of the Hellenic nation — precisely the goal that Burla himself ultimately suggested. The line that he drew, like Sotriadis himself, between “bad assimilation” and “good assimilation” is extremely vague. More importantly, it mirrors his ambivalence, which was occasioned by the fact that, even if there was no future for the Jews in Greece, no other practical option was open to them at that time — a fact that as a responsible individual he could not ignore.

The third issue on the political agenda of the Jews of Salonika was their representation in Greek political life and its significance within the context of Greek-Jewish relations. As in 1923, the Jews voted in a separate sector in the 1926 elections. This time, however, it was decided to take steps to ensure that three Jewish representatives would be sent to parliament. Toward this end, the Jews of Salonika formed a Jewish Political Union, which brought together a number of candidates who appeared acceptable to most of the city's Jews. Of these, the Zionist leaders asked the Jewish community to elect three specific individuals, two of them Zionists: Mentesh Ibn Shanji and David Matalon. The third candidate, David Sulam, was aligned with the communists.



23. Jewish female tobacco workers (*tutundjias*), Salonika, ca. 1930. Jewish girls of the lower classes were an important work power in the tobacco industry. Most of them were recruited at the age of twelve and usually worked until their marriage. (Diaspora Museum photographs archives, no. 18004, Salonika Collection.)

To everyone's astonishment, the communists made important gains in this election, and the Greek Communist Party managed to obtain 10–15 percent of the vote in Salonika and in Kavala.¹¹⁶ Salonika's Jews, like the general population, were stunned. The Zionists blamed themselves for not paying enough attention to the communist propaganda and developing suitable responses to it. They could not comprehend how the residents of the poverty-stricken neighborhoods of Baron de Hirsch, 151, Teneke Mahalle, and Régie Vardar could vote against what they, the Zionists, saw clearly as the best interests of the poor.

It must be stated at this point that the breast-beating engaged in by the Zionists was excessive and tells us more about their importance in their own eyes than about their failure at propagandizing. In truth, they were not as important as they believed. The explanation for the surprising results of

¹¹⁶ Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis*, p. 127.

the 1926 election can be found not so much in the ineffectiveness of the Zionists as in other, totally different, factors.

As stated earlier, the tobacco industry was Macedonia's most important business, and its workers had been aware of their power as far back as the early twentieth century. A tobacco boom in 1925–26 led to a shortage of manpower, further strengthening the position of the tobacco workers. Yet, at this time of peak prosperity for the industry, the major tobacco producers were trying to keep wages low. It was the awareness of their own strength, coupled with a strong sense of injustice, which led the tobacco workers in the direction of class-consciousness and support for communism. Theirs was the only union totally under communist control.¹¹⁷

Kavala and Salonika were the major centers of tobacco processing in Macedonia and many of the tobacco workers in these cities were Jewish. It is not surprising, then, that the number of Jews among those voting for the Communist Party was relatively high, although more than a few Greeks also voted this way. Immediately following the elections, the fear was expressed among Salonika's Zionists that the strong support for the communists in Macedonia in general and Salonika in particular would be "accredited" to the Jews and interpreted as a desire to destroy Greek society.¹¹⁸

Indeed, the week after these fears were made public, an anonymously authored pamphlet appeared in Salonika signed by the Organization of the Macedonian People (*Makedoniki Ethniki Organosi*). Aimed at "Greek patriots," the pamphlet was a strange amalgam of antisemitic Marxist and nationalist slogans. Among other things, it asserted that the communists' success in Salonika made it appear that the city was a center of revolutionary communism. And the people to blame for this were the ones who "had caused a great uproar in the past with the idea of a Macedonia separated from Greece, and portrayed Macedonian citizens as wishing to separate from Mother Greece." The pamphlet declared:

117 Ibid., p. 126. The tobacco workers were the backbone of the socialist movement even before World War I. See, for example, the 1910 report of the Socialist Federation (Jewish Section). Out of 71 taxpaying members, 20 were tobacco workers (*Journal del Laborador*, year 10, no. 5, 9 Tishrei 5670/September 23, 1909). See also chap. 7, p. 156 above.

118 "Al laboro!", (To work!), *La Renassencia Djoudia*, November 12, 1926.

Citizens! These were people living among us, within our society, and becoming wealthier by the minute from the sweat and the toil of the working Greek citizen. **These are the Jews of Salonika** [emphasis in the original – M.R.]. These are the people who gave 5,000 votes to the Communist Party in the November 7 election.... They support parties that will not care about and work for the good of Greece and will not preserve the status quo — a status to which we brought the state after 100 years of toil and struggle for our freedom, a struggle that began in 1821. It is common knowledge that in the internal elections of the Jewish community, the communist parties received only 1,000 votes. And I ask how is it possible that within such a short span of time, 5,000 Jews voted for parties with such revolutionary ideas?¹¹⁹ This question, I leave to you, citizens of Greece. Try to answer it, and try to think logically and seriously of where the Jews are attempting to lead us.

Citizens! These are the people who, in the elections of November 1920, voted for the monarchy by a clear majority. If they had maintained the same ideology until today, we would respect their choice, but I ask: What was the reason that they left the Monarchist Party? What is the reason for their ideological shift to the left, against all rules of logic? I leave this to your judgment, citizens, to find the answer.

For the good of the state, for the good of Greece, I beg of you and ask your pledge, in the name of the Greek state and the future of your children. Do not allow the revolution to continue, or the revolutionary activities that flow from it. The time has come to teach them a lesson. Let us boycott their businesses so that no one buys even the smallest article from their shops. Favor the veteran Greek merchants, favor the pitiful refugees who became merchants, favor our brothers, the Albanian merchants, favor our brothers, the Armenian merchants. Favor all foreign merchants who live among us. Do not favor those who go against the good of the state.

119 The difference between the number of votes given to the communists in each of the two elections derives not only from the fact that Greeks as well voted for the communists in Salonika, but also from the fact that Jews who voted for the communists in the general elections voted for the socialists within the Zionist parties in the internal elections.

Citizens! Do not give in, and do not look the other way. Hear our plea, and consider that Greek hospitality always saw to the needs of the Jews. Greek society was always characterized by freedom of religion. But this time we shall not be silent, and we shall teach them, as I said, a good lesson, so that they will not be able to endanger the good of Salonika and of Greece. We are not antisemites, but if we accept this as well, then we have no self-respect — a respect that is worthy of a free people and a free state, a people with great self-respect.¹²⁰

Alarmed by the fiercely antisemitic tone of the pamphlet, the editors of *La Renassencia Djoudia* hastened to print words of reassurance, noting that there was no organization behind the pamphlet, but rather, solitary individuals. The authorities, they stated, were doing everything possible to locate those who had circulated it, while the Greek public and the press were full of expressions of sympathy for the Jews.¹²¹

While the ideological struggles between the Zionists and the communists, on the one hand, and the Zionists and the assimilationists, on the other,¹²² were taking place, the antisemitic incitement in the city continued. In 1927, the National Union of Greece (Ethniki Enosis Elas, or Tria Epsilon) was founded in Salonika. The bulk of its membership consisted of refugees from Anatolia. This organization was responsible for most of the antisemitic propaganda disseminated in Salonika during the interwar period. From 1927 to 1930, the organization distributed antisemitic pamphlets before each of the major Christian holidays.¹²³ The members of the organization published numerous polemical articles, primarily in the *Makedonia* and *Tachydromos* newspapers. They mainly dealt with issues already mentioned, namely, the Jews as disseminators of communism in Salonika and Macedonia; the Jews as a people sucking at the nation's teat and feeding off the Greek laborer. Their polemics also singled out the antipatriotic education provided to the children of the Jewish community.

120 See illustration no. 24.

121 *La Renassencia Djoudia*, November 26, 1926.

122 "Antisemitismo y antisionismo" (Antisemitism and anti-Zionism), *ibid.*, December 3, 1926; Robert Raphael, "Que quieren los asimiladores?" (What do the assimilators want?), *ibid.*, December 3, 1926; Dr. Buhumil, "Sionismo y comunismo" (Zionism and communism), *ibid.*, December 24, 1926

123 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 56, p. 175.

In the area of informal education, the Tria Epsilon also took umbrage with the highly successful Maccabi sports clubs established in Macedonia and Salonika. The fact that these organizations were imported from Bulgaria only reinforced the tendency to label them as antipatriotic. A more important reason for this outlook was the fact that they refused to affiliate themselves with the Greek scouting organizations and attempted to set themselves apart as a unique national group. Their splendid processions, fancy Betar-style uniforms, and promotion of the concept of a “new Jew” who fights for his rights and freedom were interpreted as a seditious, anti-Greek phenomenon. Fight for freedom from what? Fight against whom? Against the Greek state and the Greek people, maintained the members of the Tria Epsilon.¹²⁴

By the summer of 1927, the bulletin of the Zionist movement could no longer restrain itself and shifted from a policy of downplaying the presence of antisemitism (which it had adopted following the publication of the pamphlet by the Makedoniki Ethniki Organosi in Salonika) to condemning the silence of the other Jewish newspapers. Shim'on Burla published a stinging denunciation of those who closed their eyes to serious acts of injustice by the Salonika municipality against the Jewish community. He enumerated each of these incidents, while settling accounts with the communists as well. In his view, the Salonika municipality was deliberately discriminating against the Jewish community, using the excuse that all of its members were communists, at a time when thousands of Greeks had voted for the Communist Party.¹²⁵

The election of three Jewish members of parliament was not much help, since they were not included in any committees on the pretext that they were not affiliated with any political party and it was the parties that proposed candidates for the committees.¹²⁶

In October 1928, internal elections were conducted for the Jewish communal institutions. The votes were divided as follows: 2,128 people voted for the General Zionists, yielding 24 seats in the General Assembly; 1,724 for the Union Nacional (National Union), the Revisionist party founded in 1924 and headed by Avraham Recanati, for 19 seats; 1,015 for the Bloque Popular

124 Ibid., pp. 175–189.

125 S. Burla, “Non hay antisemitismo?” (There is no antisemitism?), *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, July 15, 1927.

126 D. Kalapothakis, Director of Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 29, 1928, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 35, pp. 134–135.

(Popular Bloc), another name for the Communist Party, granting them 11 seats in the Assembly; 864 for the Bloque Moderado (Moderate Bloc), which was in effect the assimilationists' bloc, for 10 seats; 327 for the Profesionales (Members of the Free Professions), equaling 4 seats; and 148 for a small party named Tiferet Yisrael, earning them 2 seats in the Assembly.¹²⁷ In other words, 61 percent of the Jews of Salonika voted for Zionist parties, 15 percent for the communist party, and roughly 7 percent for the assimilationists.

In the internal elections held in 1930, the leadership promised that the elections would be open to all, not just to those who paid community taxes. This assurance sheds light on all the elections held in the community from 1920 onwards, none of which were conducted according to the laws of Greece. Moreover, in the 1930 elections as well, the leadership saw to it that only the taxpayers voted: it did not bother to distribute information on voter eligibility. The results of these elections were almost a carbon copy of the balloting from two years previously.¹²⁸ What does this tell us about the Jews of Salonika?

It is beyond the scope of this work to examine in detail the internal politics of the community between 1912 and 1930, but two conclusive facts emerge from the available material. First, in the elections of 1928, the communists gained in power as compared to 1926. This can indicate both a tendency toward integration into the overall politics of the state and a belief that the solution for the wretched, impoverished laborers of Jewish Salonika lay in the communist/assimilationist ideology. The second fact relates to the success of the Zionist parties. Their leaders were the standard-bearers of the struggle on the part of the Jews of Salonika for civil rights in every area: the rights of those dispossessed by the fire of 1917; the war over the Jewish Sabbath; the displacement of Jews from their traditional sources of livelihood; the struggle over equal representation in the parliamentary elections; the battle against antisemitic organizations. The vote in favor of the Zionists expressed a very simple fact: the traditional leadership of tycoons from wealthy families was a thing of the past, and the upper middle class, which had generally identified with the assimilationist Bloque Moderado, was now perceived as looking out for its own interests and not those of the community as a whole. The vote for the communists served the social interests of the voters, but at the same time signified the

¹²⁷ *La Renaissencia Djoudia*, October 16, 1928.

¹²⁸ *El Popular*, October 10, 1930; October 22, 1930.

total abandonment of the traditional value system. Zionism was a solution that suited the culture and the social interests of most of Salonika's Jews.

Despite the assimilationists' efforts to convince the powers that be of Greek Jewry's loyalty to the state, already in November 1928, the Greek administration and the press viewed the Zionist leadership of the Salonika community as "leftist extremists," another way of saying "communist."¹²⁹ In light of this, it is possible to resolve the logical inconsistency between the communist label attached to the Jews of Salonika and the fact that none of the leadership had sprung from the ranks of the communists. On the contrary, they all came from middle-class and upper middle-class families, and were part and parcel of the city's bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, the Greek press observed with suspicion the repeated trouncing of the assimilationists on the issue of expanding Greek instruction in the schools of the Jewish community. Another source of distrust was the leadership's refusal to report on its efforts to abolish the "election districts, and on certain economic and personal issues."¹³⁰

The correspondence sent from Salonika to Athens on this matter does not mention the reason for these suspicions, but it is possible that the interest in the opposition's demand for an account of activities, which had never been provided in the past, stemmed from the belief that the Zionists did not really want a change in the electoral system, based on the Marxist dialectic that the worse it gets, the better it is (for them). Since the Greeks of Salonika were certainly not eager to grant the Jews greater influence in local political life, they left the matter unresolved despite their suspicions of the Zionists' motives.

In 1929, the prevailing atmosphere in the city allowed the editor of a major newspaper to attempt to extort the community in return for "sympathetic treatment" in his paper. Toward this end, he "suggested" to Asher Moisis, then a member of the Jewish Community Council, that the ownership of one of the many buildings belonging to the community be transferred to the paper. The heads of the community decided to reject this proposal in order to prevent future extortion attempts.¹³¹

129 D. Kalapothakis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 6, 1928, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 36, p. 136.

130 Ibid.

131 A.R. Moisis, "Makabi u-Fra'ot Qempbel" (Maccabi and the Campbell riots), in *Zikhron Saloniqi*, vol. 1, p. 361. In his article, Moisis did not mention the name of the newspaper or the editor, but it is clear that the person in question was Nikos Fradis, the editor of *Makedonia*.

That same year, and throughout 1930, the Tria Epsilon organization increased their attacks against Maccabi's activities. In the spring of 1931, the conflict between the Jews and the Greeks reached a new boiling point. In April of that year, a film about the life of Jesus Christ, entitled *The King of Kings*, was screened in Salonika.¹³² Avraham Recanati, founder of the Mizrahi Zionist organization and head of the National Union Party, published articles in the Jewish press in which he demanded that the authorities ban the film — which, in his view, contained obvious anti-Jewish incitement — or at least remove certain particularly problematic scenes, which, he asserted, involved deliberate distortion and falsification of history.

Recanati organized a public debate on the issue, to which he invited Salonika's journalists. On the morning of the debate, dozens of members of Tria Epsilon and another nationalist organization, Elas, appeared at the Mizrahi club. When Recanati stood up to begin his speech, the Greek police entered the hall, demanding that the members of the antisemitic organizations leave the premises. Recanati and his friends protested this move, asking that the others be allowed to remain in order to present their arguments, but in vain. Recanati continued his lecture and demanded the banning of the film and a halt to antisemitic propaganda.¹³³

This incident was interpreted by the Greek Press Bureau in Salonika — after the fact — as an overt provocation, which the Greek press could easily have exploited for its own ends had it been truly antisemitic. The fact that it did not make use of this provocation offered clear proof that it was fair-minded, that it reported the truth, and that it did not foment violence. Recanati's remarks, which according to the Greek Press Bureau, constituted a blow to the Christian faith, were quoted in the April 22, 1931, edition of the paper *Acción*:

132 The film, made by Cecil B. DeMille in 1927, implied that the High Priest of the Jews in Judea was responsible for the Christicide. Some members of the Jewish public in the U.S. considered the film an offense to the Jewish people as a whole, and boycotted it. (See V.P. Elefteriou, *Images et non-images: le juif dans le cinéma américain* [Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1988], vol. 1, pp. 90–93). I am grateful to Prof. Michal Friedman of Tel Aviv University for the information concerning this film.

133 H.A. Toledano, "Histadrut ha-Mizrahi be-Saloniqi: ha-Tenu'ah ha-'Amamit ha-Gedolah le-ma'an ha-Torah u-le-ma'an Zion" (Mizrahi organization in Salonika: the major popular movement on behalf of Torah and Zion), in *Zikhron Saloniqi*, vol. 1, pp. 435–436.

Our opponents have used this myth about the crucifixion to poison people's minds and to arouse passions against us over the last 2,000 years. And this lie, taught to young Christians and disseminated everywhere, from generation to generation, has been the cause of antisemitism among the masses of the people, and it is to this lie that we must attribute most of the misunderstandings between Christians and Jews, the incitement of hate in all forms against us, and the constant oppression and pogroms.¹³⁴

The involvement of the Salonika police in the affair indicates that the authorities were aware of the conflict's explosive potential and were careful not to let matters get out of hand. The commander of the city's police force even assured the members of Tria Epsilon that there had been nothing offensive to the Christian faith in Avraham Recanati's remarks. In response, they sent him the excerpt quoted above, as it appeared in the *Tachydromos* (The postman) newspaper, reprinted from *Acción*.¹³⁵

Alongside the *King of Kings* episode, a new affair began to unfold in Salonika — that of the Maccabi convention in Sofia and the supposed role of Salonika's Maccabi members in anti-Greek propaganda there. In early September 1930, the first reports of the Maccabi convention had already appeared in the Jewish press of Salonika. Immediately thereafter, the *Makedonia* newspaper published a report, based on the Bulgarian press, according to which another gathering — that of the Macedonian Youth Movement, a Bulgarian-inspired revolutionary movement aimed at establishing an independent Macedonian state — had taken place in Sofia concurrently with the Maccabi convention. According to *Makedonia*, the Maccabi members had sent a representative to this conference, an individual by the name of Arditti, who had promised the Bulgarian Macedonians that the Jews of Bulgaria would not cease fighting for the cause until the movement's banners flew throughout an independent Macedonia, from Skopje to Salonika. *Makedonia* called on the Greek members of Maccabi to sever all contact with the Bulgarian members of the organization, since the latter supported the Macedonian revolutionary movement. The Jewish press of Salonika denied any connection between the Maccabi clubs of Salonika and Bulgaria (*L'Indépendant*, September 3, 1930). The Athens newspaper

134 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 56, p. 183.

135 Ibid.

Ephemeris Vima (Spectator's rostrum) (September 1, 1930) noted, despite this, that "our own Zionists never declared themselves to be ready to lay down their lives for Greece and its rightful causes."

Some time later, the editors of *Makedonia* had discovered that the yearly publication of the Maccabi organization, *El Maccabeo*, had printed a description of the trip of the Maccabi representative in Salonika to the Maccabi convention in Sofia, along with the news that the Greek branch of the organization had joined World Maccabi. Since *El Maccabeo* appeared in Judeo-Spanish, the editors of *Makedonia* were unable to decipher the name of the representative, Yiḏḥaq D. Kohen. Nonetheless, they now viewed the Zionist coverage of the convention, from start to finish, as a maze of disinformation. The deception began, in their opinion, with the fact that the Jewish press had deliberately covered up the representative's trip to Sofia, not wanting the connection between Maccabi Greece and Maccabi Bulgaria to become known. Moreover, members of the Macedonian Youth Movement were about to arrive in Salonika. The significance of all this was that the Jews of Greece were supposedly backing the interests of a foreign state that was seeking to annex parts of Greece, under the guise of support for a national liberation movement.¹³⁶

The Jewish press responded forcefully to these accusations, its primary argument being that Kohen had been completely unaware that the Macedonian conference was taking place. Moreover, it was only convened after his departure from Sofia; therefore, he did not participate in it and had no knowledge of what may have been said there by Maccabi Bulgaria.¹³⁷ In addition, no member of the Macedonian Youth Movement was about to arrive in Salonika. Lastly, the idea that a Jewish representative from Greece should not have been sent to the Maccabi convention in Sofia, at which 2,000 Jewish athletes from around the world were participating, was ridiculous.¹³⁸

In the meantime, the Greek Minister of the Interior issued a statement published in the June 21, 1931, issue of the Salonika newspaper, *Ephemeris ton Valkanion* (The Balkan spectator), to the effect that Maccabi's activities in Greece were known and were being monitored. That same day, when asked

136 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Foreign Ministry, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 57, pp. 184–186.

137 Regarding this detail, see also Moisis, "Maccabi and the Campbell Riots," pp. 364–365.

138 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Foreign Ministry, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 57, p. 186.

by representatives of the press what conclusions he had reached from the information relayed to him by the Jewish community, the governor-general of Salonika, Stilianos Gonatas, gave the following reply:

I believe that the Jewish community ought to have issued an announcement, since it was in possession of more information, in order to clear up the matter, as they explained to me yesterday. I have formed the opinion that the representatives of the Maccabis sent from here did not take part in the discussions held in Sofia, and I hope that the Jewish community will issue the relevant announcement — today, at that — to set matters right.

The Greek public apparently expected an apology rather than an explanation. The following day, the heads of Maccabi in Salonika submitted a letter to the editorial board of *Makedonia*, which was obliged, under Greece's press laws, to publish it verbatim.

It is not correct that a member of our organization participated in a convention of *comitadjis*¹³⁹ in Sofia. Our Union, which is recognized by law, is an organization dealing with athletics only, and as such, it is a member of the federation of sports organizations of Greece. As an organization dealing with gymnastics, it has no connection or affiliation with any political movement whatsoever, all the more so a movement whose purpose is detrimental to the territorial integrity of the state. As for our member, Yizḥaq Kohen, he was sent by us to Sofia to meet Dr. Rosenfeld, the delegate of the World Maccabi Organization, in order to discuss with him our joining the World Maccabi Organization as well as the organization of common sporting activities for all Maccabi branches in the Balkan countries. The aforementioned Dr. Rosenfeld had gone to Sofia in order to participate in the festivities marking the 25th anniversary of Maccabi in Bulgaria.

In light of the facts and clarifications that we have cited here, we leave the readers of your newspaper the privilege of drawing their own conclusions regarding your reports on our activities. However, we cannot disregard the hateful words and accusations against our

¹³⁹ Mixture of Turkish, French, and Judeo-Spanish meaning members of a committee. In this particular case, the reference was to members of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee of Bulgaria, also called the Macedonian Youth Movement.

organization nor your denunciation of us as being engaged in sabotage against the state. We vehemently protest and declare that your insinuations are contrary to our innocent principles, which are identical to the principles of all athletic organizations all over the world. Not only did we not act against the interests of our state, but on the contrary, our main objective is to strengthen the love of the motherland in which we dwell, in the hearts of the members of our society.¹⁴⁰

It seems that this letter removed any inhibitions the Greek press may have had. The aggressive response of the Jewish press, drawing upon the resources of a self-confidence gained during 400 years of demographic superiority in the city, was interpreted by the Greek press and its official commentators as hubris.¹⁴¹ In their view, the letters from the heads of the Maccabi Union represented the height of insolence. The Maccabi members claimed that they had always preached love of the Greek motherland. The Greeks of Salonika were well aware that the Maccabi unions were Zionist organizations founded in order to educate the “new Jew” in the building of his national state, outside of Greece. Since it was clear to them that this aspect of the Maccabi leaders’ words was untrue, once again they did not bother to verify the rest. Rather than relating to the letter on a point-by-point basis, the attacks on the treachery of Maccabi in Salonika intensified over the next few days, with the Jewish press claiming, in response, that this was a childish accusation.¹⁴² The Salonika Press Bureau offered the following interpretation of the Maccabi organization’s letters, as well as the June 21, 1931, statements of the Minister of the Interior, as they appeared in the Greek press of June 22:

On the same day (June 22, 1931), *Makedonia* dealt more widely with the question and published a lengthy announcement from the Maccabi Association asserting, contrary to what had been stated in the review of *El Maccabeo*, that Mr. Cohen had not had a meeting in Sofia with Dr. Rosenfeld [sic], the representative of the Maccabi World Union. However, the announcement refrained from protesting the fact that statements in favor of the Bulgarian *comitato* had been made in the presence of the Maccabi delegate from Thessaloniki

140 See also Moisis, “Maccabi and the Campbell Riots,” pp. 361–362.

141 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Foreign Ministry, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 57, pp. 183–189.

142 *Ibid.*, pp. 186–187.

and failed to condemn them. However, *Makedonia* also published and commented on the statement by the Minister of the Interior confirming that the government was aware of the activities of the Maccabis. This statement had first been published in the *Ephemeris ton Valkanion* (June 21, 1931) in a report from Athens. The Jews of Thessaloniki described the statement as being forged and were heard to call for the prosecution of the newspapers that had fabricated it here in order to inflame the populace. This accusation is not accurate, since the statement by the Ministry of the Interior had been published in *Proti* (Athens, February 21, 1931) and was passed on to Thessaloniki after that publication. Apart from *Makedonia*, this statement was also commented upon in other newspapers. The *Ephemeris ton Valkanion* (June 21, 1931) wrote: 'The Minister of the Interior has stated that the activities of the Maccabis are known and are being watched.' In view of this official confirmation of a regrettable fact, we believe that measures should be taken to ensure that the gentlemen in question know that any treacherous action on their part will be ruthlessly stamped out. If they wish to become friends and collaborators of the *comitadjis*, they need do no more than immigrate to the country where the *comitadjis* live, where they can collaborate with them freely.

The *Makedonia Nea* (Macedonia News) added more of the same. The Jewish press called for an official investigation to defuse the poisoned atmosphere and warned that the entire matter appeared to be a loathsome plot. The director of the Salonika Press Bureau accused the Jewish press of publishing incendiary statements, summarizing as follows:

Thus faced with the general outcry on the part of Greek public opinion, the Maccabi Association not only failed to issue an announcement deploring what had been said in Sofia in the presence of its representative, but continued to speak of slanderous schemes, etc., and to demand the intervention of the judicial authorities so as to determine whether the Maccabis were liable, and if so, how.¹⁴³

That evening, the members of the National Student Union began to distribute antisemitic pamphlets in the city. The director of the Press Bureau noted that the pamphlets were written following provocations by Maccabi members, but

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 187–188.

he did not enter into specifics and even praised the students for not referring to these provocations. As a result of the dissemination of the pamphlets, what the Director of the Press Bureau termed “noisy disturbances” took place in the city on the evening of June 24, 1931.¹⁴⁴ These “disturbances” were actually an attack by members of Tria Epsilon and organizations of reserve army officers on the Maccabi clubhouse, occupied at the time by only six or seven individuals. The club was destroyed and Maccabi members injured in the ensuing altercation. Two of the rioters were arrested and released two days later for lack of evidence.¹⁴⁵ The Jewish press once again responded vehemently, despite the fact that, according to Asher Moisis, the editors of the Jewish papers received letters threatening them with harm if they reacted to the articles appearing in the Greek press. The Jewish press condemned the events, demanded punishment for those who had initiated the campaign of intimidation, and also called upon the governor of the city — and not the Jewish community — to issue a statement of explanation, since they had done nothing wrong.¹⁴⁶

The Greek press, along with the director of the Press Bureau, were stunned by the reaction of the Jewish press. They spoke of a Bulgarian-Jewish plot, while the Jewish press accused them of antisemitic machinations. The events of the next few days (June 25–29, 1931) did not merit commentary by the director of the Press Bureau nor even a detailed mention, and we are forced to rely solely upon the descriptions available from internal community sources, namely, a letter by Ḥayim Toledano written several days after these events, which became known as the Campbell riots,¹⁴⁷ and the memoirs of Asher Moisis, also based on his private archive.

At this point, the community leadership realized that the fact that Yiḏḥaq Kohen had not even been in Sofia during the gathering of the Macedonian Youth Movement was immaterial to the frenzied mobs in Salonika. The mobs wanted to see blood. Following the attack on the Maccabi club, scattered

144 Ibid., p. 189.

145 Ḥ.A. Toledano, “Ha-28 ve-ha-29 be-Yuni 1931” (The 28th and 29th of June 1931), in *Zikhron Saloniqi*, vol. 1, p. 357.

146 Moisis, “Maccabi and the Campbell Riots,” p. 362; Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 57, p. 189.

147 After the Jewish neighborhood situated in the former British military camp of that name, which was burned during the unrest. See below.

attacks on Jews began to take place, but the police did not intervene. The confidence of the community leaders began to waver.

On Friday, June 26, 1931, the community council dispatched a delegation of notables to the city's governor, Gen. Gonatas, requesting that he impose order in the city. Gonatas responded that it was difficult for him to control the situation as long as tempers were running so high, and suggested that the members of the delegation issue a declaration in the name of the Jewish community. A draft declaration was presented to the delegation, which stated that the Jewish community denounced the antipatriotic stance of the Maccabi representative from Salonika. The declaration in effect amounted to an admission of guilt and an apology on the part of the Jewish community. During a tumultuous debate lasting until midnight, it was decided to sign the declaration with slight corrections. But when the members of the delegation returned to Gonatas's home, it was already midnight and the governor refused to meet with them. They left the final version of the declaration with the gatekeeper, in hopes that it would be delivered to the governor and published the next day.¹⁴⁸ While they had still been debating the wording of the statement, gangs of rioters attacked the No. 6 neighborhood, but the residents, who fought back vigorously, managed to repel them.¹⁴⁹

On the morning of June 27, the declaration was not published and rumors spread through the city that the leaders of the community had refused to sign the statement given to them by the governor. Gen. Gonatas refused to receive the delegation and the worried community leaders sent a cable to Venizelos requesting his intervention. No response was forthcoming. On the evening of June 28, 1931, the No. 6, 151, and Baron de Hirsch neighborhoods were attacked. According to Moisis, the attacks were planned in conjunction with the local police. The attackers were turned back, leaving behind 34 injured compared with 18 injured among the neighborhood residents. Word spread on the street, writes Moisis, that the attacks had taken place after the Jews had assaulted Greek soldiers and policemen. The police arrested anyone who tried to defend himself and prohibited the Jews from using arms. The following night (June 29–30), the isolated Campbell neighborhood was attacked, along with the Régie Vardar, and Upper and Lower 151 neighborhoods. In these quarters, the attackers were repelled, but the resistance put up by

148 Moisis, "Maccabi and the Campbell Riots," p. 363.

149 Toledano, "The 28th of June," p. 358.

the residents of the Campbell neighborhood proved futile and it was set ablaze.¹⁵⁰

The Campbell affair was interpreted differently by the various camps. The Jews of Salonika saw it as an antisemitic plot that was arranged by the nationalist organizations and their newspapers in the city, with the active cooperation of the authorities. In their view, it was a scheme intended to frighten the Jews into leaving the city en masse. Asher Moisis writes that several weeks after the incident, two of the heads of the reserve officers' organizations in Salonika, Verbolis, and Ekonomides, visited him in his office and related that, the day after the Campbell riots, they and others had been summoned by Gen. Gonatas, who told them: "This little lesson was good, but don't take it any further."¹⁵¹

The Greeks saw the incident as stemming from the arrogance and audacity of Salonika's Jews as a whole, and the heads of Maccabi in particular. This was not stated explicitly, but the meaning is clear from the surviving documentation of the affair. The director of the Salonika Press Bureau, who began his report in an objective tone — pinning responsibility for the riots on the tactics employed by the press of both sides¹⁵² — concluded his remarks on an entirely different note:

Regardless of the seriousness of the subsequent sad and bloody actions against the Jewish population, the tactics of the Jewish press continue to be the same as those employed since the first day, with the guidelines of describing as slanders, provocations against the Jews, etc., the fact that the Greek press made use of a disclosure in a Jewish newspaper published in Thessaloniki to the effect that the festival or conference held in Sofia last year, during which the Jews of Bulgaria declared themselves in favor of the autonomy of Macedonia and the conquest of Thessaloniki, was attended — notwithstanding the assurance to the contrary given last year — by a representative of the Maccabis, who, not having protested at the time, continued to refuse to do so even when Greek public opinion, rightly or wrongly, took to the streets and engaged in acts of violence.¹⁵³

150 Ibid.; Moisis, "Maccabi and the Campbell Riots," p. 364.

151 Ibid.

152 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 5, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 56, p. 175.

153 Ibid., p. 192 (English translation by T. Veremis).

The Greek authorities in Salonika itself, as in Athens and at Greek legations overseas, found themselves in a somewhat awkward position. They labored under the delusion that there was an “international Jewish conspiracy” at work, and the notion that their country might be slandered abroad was disagreeable and even worrisome. They attempted to downplay the riots and to censor the information coming out of Salonika. The Jewish community saw this as proof of their collaboration in the plot against the Jews,¹⁵⁴ while the authorities considered the community’s efforts to publicize the Campbell affair as further evidence of lack of patriotism.

While Greece’s Consul-General in Buenos Aires was compelled, as part of his job, to deny all rumors of persecution against Jews in Salonika,¹⁵⁵ a document not intended for external consumption reveals the mindset referred to above. The reference is to a secret report sent by the head of the Salonika police to the Interior Ministry on July 10, 1931. The three principal points contained in the report are as follows: (a) the Jews’ description of the evils done to them is exaggerated; (b) they harbor the illusion that if the Greek authorities harm them, the states of Europe, Italy in particular, will come to their aid; (c) word of the Jews’ attempts to spread the news to the world press must not be allowed to reach the Greek press.

Embodied in each of these three points is an additional message that sheds light on the situation, as viewed by the Greeks. The significance of the first point was that it supposedly offered further proof of the lack of patriotism of the Jews, who were seen as perpetually seeking to harm the Greek state. The significance of the second concept was that the Greek government had nothing to fear: no foreign state was intending to come to the aid of the Jews and the government could act in Salonika as it wished, since it was “on home ground.” The days of Jewish rule were over. The third element contained a subtle but interesting prediction of how matters would evolve in Salonika if news of the Campbell riots actually reached the world press, and from there, the Greek press. In the opinion of the writer, the result would be “a fresh wave of high feelings.”¹⁵⁶ The words contained more than a hint of

154 Toledano, “The 28th of June,” pp. 359–360.

155 C. Xanthopoulos, Consul-General of Greece in Buenos Aires, to President of Emile Zola 2a Lodge, July 11, 1931, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 58, pp. 194–195.

156 Y. Calochristianakis, Police Director of Salonika, to Ministry of Interior, July 10, 1931, *ibid.*, doc. 57, pp. 192–194.

warning and their intent was to ensure that the central government in Athens prevented the news from reaching the rest of the world.

Efforts by the leaders of the Jewish community, who protested to the Greek government about what was taking place, led to a trial in which Yiḏḥaq Kohen's innocence was proven.¹⁵⁷ Yet events, once set in motion, could no longer be controlled. Elephterios Venizelos issued a rather halfhearted censure of the episode. He had little choice; his popularity among the refugees was declining as a result of his policy of conciliation with Turkey and the growing economic difficulties.

The Campbell affair served as a turning point in the history of the Salonika Jewish community. From this point onward, two opposing trends emerged: the self-image of Salonika's Jews continued evolving in one direction, while the self-image of the city's Greek inhabitants developed along an entirely different path. Until 1931, it can safely be stated that the Jews of Salonika considered themselves, for all intents and purposes, to be **Salonikans**. This was their identity, and they saw no contradiction between their Jewishness and their Salonikan identification. The fact that they were not Greek did not conflict with this identity, and even when they sang the traditional songs of longing and praise for Zion they continued to see themselves as Salonikans. Their sense of pride and self-confidence, nourished by centuries of demographic, economic and even political supremacy vis-à-vis the Greeks was expressed in both the aggressively superior stance of the Jewish press toward those who attacked the community and in the physical resistance of the residents of the neighborhoods that had been attacked. It was unthinkable that they would not "give as good as they got" — and then some. In contrast, the Greeks of Salonika looked upon the Jews as outsiders brought in by a hated, foreign occupier. They saw themselves as masters of the city, and the Jews as intruders or trespassers. Even if there was no concrete proof that they were plotting against Greece and Salonika, their very presence in the city recalled hundreds of years of subjugation and humiliation. In order to put this behind them, it was necessary to remove this constant reminder. The aggressive stance of the Jewish press and the physical resistance of the Jews only added fuel to the fire. Instead of acting like victims or underdogs, the Jews displayed arrogance. From the standpoint of the Greeks, the Campbell riots were only a well-deserved lesson to the Jews.

157 Regarding the trial, see S. Re'uven, "Mishpat Qempbel" (The Campbell trial), in *Salonika, a Jewish Metropolis*, pp. 229–231.

The Campbell affair is generally considered to be the culmination of economic antisemitism, motivated by both the presence of tens of thousands of immigrants from Anatolia who, having come to Salonika penniless, were now struggling to survive, and the worldwide Depression, which only compounded the situation.¹⁵⁸ I would like to suggest, however, that this episode and its evolution are yet another example of the difficulty — or even inability — of the modern nation-states that arose on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire to tolerate elements that were not identical to the ruling majority in all respects. The idea of creating a national, or even a municipal, identity detached from religious or ethnic origin proved to be very difficult, if not impossible, to implement here, as in the other successor states of the Ottoman Empire.

The Jewish leadership of Salonika, like the Greek government, understood the need to create a *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* that would express both the Jews' desire to maintain their uniqueness in a state where the native tongue was not their own and where God was worshipped in a different way, and the Greeks' desire to emphasize their culture and religion as national common denominators while retaining their old-new humanist ideals.

An interesting insight in this regard was expressed by a foreign visitor, Francesco Perilla, a short time after the Campbell riots:

La crise aiguë actuelle est aggravée à Salonique par un afflux trop considérable de réfugiés que la ville est impuissante à nourrir. Faisant état de ce malaise, quelques esprits chagrins ont fait retomber je ne sais quels griefs ou responsabilités sur les juifs auxquels la Grèce moderne doit pourtant la conservation du précieux patrimoine qu'elle a pu recueillir en délivrant la ville. Mais une sage politique gouvernementale, soucieuse des intérêts des deux races, s'efforce d'entretenir la fraternité nécessaire pour surmonter les difficultés actuelles et pourvoir aux besoins du grand emporium balkanique.

Aux nobles efforts concomitants que nous venons de mentionner, faut-il ajouter un souhait? L'abandon d'exodes utopistes, aussi bien vers les comptoirs d'Occident que vers le problématique Foyer Sioniste

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, the letter written by V. Dendramis, Director of the Press Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Ministry of Interior, warning against the dangers involved in the dissemination of a pamphlet published by the Panhellenic Anti-Communist and Humanitarian Social Union urging Greeks to buy merchandise and use the services of Greek Christians only, October 20, 1932, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 67, pp. 216–217.

palestinien. Les 80,000 Juifs d'avant 1912 ont été réduits à moins de la moitié, sans pour cela améliorer le sort de ceux qui restent à Salonique."¹⁵⁹

In late 1932, Salonika's Jewish leadership, which was largely Zionist, decided that in order to foster the necessary spirit of accommodation, the community must find a rabbi of stature with an impressive personality, preferably a Zionist as well as a Western-style intellectual, who could speak foreign languages and be able to handle this complex assignment. A search committee sought such a candidate throughout Europe, consulting with central figures in the Jewish world and with the Zionist leadership in various locales.¹⁶⁰ Eventually they settled on Rabbi Zvi Koretz, a graduate of the Theological Seminary in Berlin and an Orientalist with a broad education who mastered many modern as well as ancient languages. Even as efforts were being made to bring Koretz to Salonika, the opposing streams remained on a collision course that extended from the man in the street to the halls of government, only reinforcing the need for leadership of the type that Koretz could hopefully provide.

Outcries by Salonika's Jewish community against the German government in the wake of *Kristallnacht* led to attacks on the community's offices in the

159 F. Perilla, *A travers la Macédoine* (Athens, 1932), p. 65: "The current acute crisis in Salonika has been exacerbated by the massive influx of refugees whom the town is unable to feed. Taking advantage of this predicament, several malcontents have heaped all manner of accusations and grievances on the Jews, to whom modern Greece yet owes the conservation of the precious heritage it inherited upon liberating the town. However, a wise government policy, eager to ensure the interests of both races, is trying hard to maintain the spirit of brotherhood necessary to overcome the current difficulties and meet the needs of the great Balkan emporium. To the aforementioned noble efforts, may we add our wish that the utopian exoduses, whether to the fleshpots of the West or to the problematic Palestinian Zionist Homeland, be abandoned. The 80,000 Jews who [lived in Salonika] before 1912 have been reduced to less than half but this has done nothing to improve the lot of those remaining in the city."

160 Testimony of Mrs. Gita Koretz (Rabbi Koretz's widow) and her son Aryeh Koretz recorded January 1, 1976, *Yad Vashem*, Tel Aviv branch, Department for Collection of Testimonies (hereafter: Koretz testimony), 3527/-304-qof, pp. 3-6; confidential report of P. Dragoumis, Governor-General of Macedonia, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Salonika, February 14, 1933, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 71, pp. 223-224; memorandum from the Jewish community of Salonika to Governor-General of Macedonia, March 29, 1933, attached to Governor-General's letter to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 10, 1933, *ibid.*, doc. 72, pp. 225-226.

city by thugs associated with the Tria Epsilon and Elas organizations. Greek Prime Minister Tsaldaris threatened to disband Tria Epsilon and ordered that measures be taken to protect the Jews of Salonika. A certain segment of the Greek press, particularly the newspapers published in Athens, expressed the view that it was the natural right of Greek Jewry to protest the evils being committed against their brethren in Germany and to offer prayers on their behalf; a barbaric reaction such as the shattering of the windows of the community's offices simply could not be countenanced. Nonetheless, most of the papers questioned whether the attackers were indeed members of these two organizations.¹⁶¹ Some even hinted that the breaking of windows and daubing of venomous slogans in the name of Tria Epsilon were a provocation staged by the community itself, or by the communists, to harm Tria Epsilon or to damage relations with Germany, a friendly state.¹⁶² They also warned the Greek government that the idea of dismantling Tria Epsilon was futile and mean-spirited since the organization was entrenched throughout Greece and such an act could have dire consequences. As *Makedonia* wrote: "The government is ridiculous. Do they think that Tria Epsilon is a musical or literary society that can be dissolved like sugar in a glass of water? Tria Epsilon's strength does not derive from law but from the depth of the souls of Greeks who think nationalistically. Under such conditions, only fools can believe that they can disband an organization that has roots throughout Greece."¹⁶³

Rabbi Koretz arrived in Salonika on August 20, 1933, and immediately embarked on political activity aimed at forging ties with nationalist circles, which had traditionally been associated with xenophobic ideas.¹⁶⁴ Venizelos's rebellion against the royalist government headed by Tsaldaris caused a great deal of anxiety among the majority of Salonika's Jews. All the investments made by the mainstream of its political leadership in the royalist regime seemed to be evaporating in the face of this new development.¹⁶⁵ Venizelist

161 *El Pueblo*, April 7, 1933, citing the Greek newspapers *Proina* (Morning), *Vradini* (Evening), *Proina Nea* (Morning news).

162 *Ibid.*, citing *Nea Elithia* (New truth), *Eleftherion Vima* (Independent Rostrum), *Makedonia Nea* (News of Macedonia), *Makedonia*, and *Tachydromos* (Postman).

163 *Ibid.*, citing *Makedonia*.

164 See the letter sent by the editor of the nationalist newspaper *Ellas*, published in Athens, in response to Rabbi Koretz's letter of November 10, 1933. *Moscow Institute*, f. 1428, op. 1, file 156, pp. 185–187.

165 *Haolam* 24, no. 44 (November 14, 1935), p. 704.

circles in the city spread the rumor that, when the city falls into the hands of the rebels, the community will be taught a lesson.¹⁶⁶ The community leaders breathed a sigh of relief when the rebellion failed. Rabbi Koretz and Leon Recanati, the president of the Community, went to the governor to express the joy and happiness of the community in view of this victory.¹⁶⁷ Siding with the royalist camp was viewed as justified when antisemitic propaganda was prohibited by Gen. Kondilis's government.¹⁶⁸ Rabbi Koretz and the rest of the communal leadership hastened to congratulate the king upon his return to Greece. From now on Koretz became a close friend and ally of the king and his family. However, the Jewish press in the city was torn between the high hopes it nurtured in relation to the monarch and the news about the founding of a new antisemitic, Nazi-styled royalist party in Salonika.¹⁶⁹

With Ioannis Metaxas's rise to power (1936), Koretz found an ally in his quest to turn the Jews of Salonika into true citizens of Greece. It would seem that the Koretz-Metaxas duo was the wise political leadership Perilla recommended for Salonika.¹⁷⁰ Koretz's efforts to build a foundation of mutual trust between Greek Jewry and the government — one that would combine the right of the Jews to their own religious and communal lives with their loyalty to the Greek state and their right to aspire to a Jewish state of their own in Palestine — led to pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist declarations on the part of Metaxas and other politicians.¹⁷¹ But Koretz earned the resentment of the Zionist leadership, who saw his politics as a betrayal of the Zionist idea, since they laid the groundwork for a life in Greece as "Greeks of the

166 Ibid., no. 11 (March 14, 1935), p. 172.

167 Ibid., no. 12 (March 21, 1935), p. 192.

168 Ibid., no. 44 (November 14, 1935), p. 704.

169 Ibid., no. 47 (December 5, 1935), p. 754.

170 See Perilla's comment above, note 159.

171 Regarding the preparations for Metaxas's visit to Salonika following his rise to power, see *Moscow Institute*, f. 1428, op. 1, file 102, p. 159 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 16963). See also invitation to a festive lunch at the Town Hall of Salonika with the Prime Minister and the Crown Prince during the same visit, September 1, 1936, *ibid.*, p. 158. For Ioannis Metaxas's declaration in favor of Zionism, on the occasion of his inclusion in the Golden Book in Jerusalem, and Rabbi Zvi Koretz's speech at that ceremony, held in the presence of the head of the Salonika community, Asher Moisis; the head of the Athens community, Zakharias Vital; and the head of Benei Berith in Athens, David Sciacki, on November 10, 1937, see ceremonial booklet in Judeo-Spanish and Greek (no publisher, no date), Ben Zvi Institute, no. 18096. See also Koretz testimony, p. 14; and recorded testimony of Aryeh Koretz, *Masu'ah Archives*, cassette no. VP/192, 02:12:07.

Mosaic persuasion,” whereas the Zionists saw Jewish existence in Salonika as a temporary situation.¹⁷²

Thus a dichotomy existed on both sides: not only did the Greeks not know exactly what they wanted from the Jewish community, but the Jewish community did not know what it wanted from the Greek nation. For this reason, any action that seemed to strip the community’s rights or harm it in some way sparked a Zionist response of “We told you so!” along with protests against the state, the government, and the Greek public. Conversely, any display of conciliation by the Greeks immediately aroused suspicion among the Jewish leadership, now dominated by the Zionists, who feared that the Zionist cause might be harmed. It should be noted that the Greek state generally adhered to a policy that, “on paper” at least, appeared favorable and — after 1933 — even highly favorable, to the Salonika Jewish community, although in practical terms the pressure did not abate.

The conflict over the activities of the nationalist organizations in the city was only one aspect — and an unofficial one at that — of the attitude towards the Jews of Salonika, whereas other, very practical matters could not be ignored. In June 1934, the community leaders learned that new roads were being constructed, largely within the area of the Jewish cemetery, and that 400-year-old graves were being plowed under for this purpose. Rabbi Koretz’s protests fell on deaf ears.¹⁷³ The cemetery, which had once been on the edge of the city, now constituted an open space within its built-up area and, therefore, a virtually irresistible temptation to municipal developers.¹⁷⁴ In 1936, the Greek government expropriated numerous parcels of land in the surrounding area, some of which belonged to the Central Bank of Greece and to the Farmers’ Organization. At the same time, a large portion of the cemetery’s land was also commandeered, for the purpose of constructing the University of Salonika.¹⁷⁵ The Jewish community, unable to withstand the

172 See letter of Adolph Arditti to Yisrael Auerbach in Paris, complaining about Koretz and asking Auerbach to inquire about his past in Berlin and elsewhere, with the obvious intention of getting rid of him, October 17, 1935, *Moscow Institute, Keren Hayesod Archives*, f. 115, file 69, and Auerbach’s response of November 3, 1935, that he has only good things to say about Koretz, *ibid.* I am currently preparing a study on Rabbi Koretz’s political career, based on these and many other newly discovered documents.

173 Letter from Rabbi Zvi Koretz to Minister for Macedonian Affairs, June 22, 1934, *Moscow Institute*, f. 1428, op. 1, f. 115.

174 Cf. *Acción*, January 22, 1935.

175 Letter from Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to the president of the

pressure, eventually relinquished a parcel of 8,781 *dunam* (roughly 2,200 acres).¹⁷⁶

The significance of this concession from the standpoint of the ordinary Jew cannot be overestimated. Jewish belief prohibits any action that may disturb the dead or compromise their physical integrity, which is necessary to ensure their resurrection at the end of days and allow them to serve as faithful intermediaries between the living and the world to come. Anyone who allowed such a thing to happen faced disaster, and anyone who knowingly yielded on this principle, especially under pressure from outside forces, did so only under great duress. If physical threats were not involved, such a surrender signified the abandonment of ancient values deeply rooted in Jewish society and culture. For a Jew with traditional values, even if he was not outwardly observant, this meant the end of Jewish life, for his society was a circular one in which the living learn from their forebears, duplicate their value system, thus immortalizing them, while the dead look down from above and watch over the living.

The tension between the two poles, the one that favored improving the situation in Salonika and the other that preferred a Zionist solution, coupled with confusion about the term “improving the situation” and the true meaning of the relationship with the Greek state are well illustrated in a report written by Keren Hayesod emissary, Dr. ‘Ezra Zohar, and dated January 15, 1939, “On the Situation of Zionism in Greece”:

The Jews are of the opinion that antisemitism is non-existent in Greece, a sentiment which the authorities are careful to voice at every opportunity. They have even expressed their partiality toward Zionism on several occasions. In the final analysis, however, their goal is the total Hellenization of northern Greece, and this is something the Jews cannot countenance. For many years, they did not believe that the political changes would last and, in general, **prepared no constructive**

Jewish community of Salonika, Leon Gategno, October 12, 1936, *Moscow Institute*, f. 1428, op. 1, f. 115.

¹⁷⁶ Rabbi Zvi Koretz to Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, April 15, 1937, *ibid.* Cf. Prof. Ikonopoulou, Dean of Aristotle University, to Gategno, December 13, 1937; Gategno to Ikonopoulou, December 16, 1937, *ibid.*, and Ikonopoulou to the members of Salonika’s Jewish community council, December 22, 1937, regarding the community’s demand for compensation and the Dean’s suggestion to refer their demands regarding the confiscation of the land to the government.

plan on the issue of an independent Jewish policy. In this sense, they lived from one day to the next [emphasis mine, M.R.]. This explains the jumble of concepts, intentions and contradictory actions that exist at one and the same time. To this day, the Jews preserve their individuality, their national tongue (Judeo-Spanish), and their ties with Erez Yisrael. They simultaneously declare the need to be part of Greek society and acquire Greek culture (as stated, both the Zionist leaders and the Chief Rabbi are proponents of this view), while effectively clinging to French language and culture. Naturally, it is clear that all this destroys any possibility of creating a strong and effective internal policy that has both depth and direction... It is also understandable that all this turmoil does not help promote direct ties with the authorities on the basis of mutual respect.¹⁷⁷

In modern historiography, the Campbell affair serves as a reference point, and in its aftermath a noticeable trend of Jewish migration from Salonika (primarily to Erez Yisrael) begins to emerge. While this conclusion is not incorrect, it is important to examine it from several perspectives that have not been studied to date. One is the dichotomy in the bilateral relations between Greek and Jewish society, and in their perceptions of one other, which existed both long before and after the Campbell affair. Another point of view is that emigration from Salonika, and from Macedonia as a whole, was not a new or unknown phenomenon. Vast numbers of Jews left Macedonia, including Salonika, from 1890 onward. A lack of complete and well organized statistical data from Macedonia itself prevents us from constructing a precise breakdown on the basis of destination or socioeconomic status. In broad terms, one can state that the frequent wars, in particular World War I, led those who had foreign citizenship and assets to emigrate to their "protector states," in order to save what they could of their possessions. Among this group, for example, was the famous Allatini family.¹⁷⁸

Most of the emigrants, however, were apparently young people who saved enough money, penny by penny, to enable them to seek a better future overseas.¹⁷⁹ Only a few of them came to Erez Yisrael. Up to the early 1920s, immigration to Palestine can be attributed to a longstanding connection

¹⁷⁷ CZA, 2044 B4/KH.

¹⁷⁸ *Tribuna Libre*, October 14, 1910, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ See above, chap. 8, note 32; see also appendix 1.

between Salonika Jewry and the Holy Land. The Ginio and Cuenca families, for example, numbered among the latter group.

During the 1920s, there was a certain shift in the nature of the *'aliyah*. A group of Salonika fishermen and stevedores, who had been dismissed from their jobs at the port, immigrated to Erez Yisrael in 1924–1925.¹⁸⁰ In the same decade, several wealthier families, such as Venezia, Carasso, 'Uziel, and others, followed in their footsteps, leading to significant investments of capital via the Société Anonyme Salonique-Palestine (the Salonika-Palestine Society), founded in 1921.

A considerable change in the flow of *'aliyah* began in the early 1930s. The archives of the Salonika community, only recently opened in Moscow, afford us the opportunity to shed new light on the significance of the link between the Campbell affair and emigration to Palestine. One of the major sections of

180 See letter from Zionist Executive in Jerusalem to Palestine Office in Salonika, November 6, 1924, recommending that they postpone their arrival till spring as they will not have a suitable place to dock their ship in the present bad weather, *Moscow Institute, Salonika-Palestine Office Archives*, f. 1435, op. 1, file 13, p. 754 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 8263); Zionist Executive to Palestine Office in Salonika, February 15, 1925, announcing allocation of certificates to 16 families of fishermen from Salonika, *ibid.*, p. 1056 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 9009); Zionist Executive to Palestine Office, April 14, 1925, explaining that they are unable to organize the emigration at present, *ibid.*, pp. 1051–1052 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 9007); Zionist Executive to Palestine Office, July 26, 1925, confirming that members of the Zionist Executive's Department of Trade and Industry visited Acre, and it was decided to bring five expert fishermen from Salonika along with their families, wives, fiancées and children, *ibid.*, pp. 1325–1326 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 9265). With regard to the above, see also Palestine Office in Salonika to editors of *Avanti*, the communist newspaper in Salonika, July 11, 1933, in response to an article that appeared that same day, in which the Salonika fishermen in Acre were described as suffering from great poverty and referred to as people sent to die there. The Zionist Executive in Jerusalem explained that the fishermen had arrived (probably the initial group, consisting of Mordekhai Berakhah, Gavriel Mosheh Gategno, and Yizḥaq Alvo) on June 25, 1924. After inspecting several places ('Atlit, Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre), they chose Acre as the best site and decided to remain in Palestine because Greek refugees had taken their jobs. The Office gave them a loan of 726 pounds sterling. Nine months later, Alvo returned to Salonika and brought back with him to Palestine his family and a group of ten other fishermen. They clashed with the Arab fishermen and quarreled among themselves, but it is not true that they suffered from financial difficulties. On the contrary, they were also helped by the Sephardi Federation. In short, wrote the Zionist officials, the article in *Avanti* was nothing but "Red" propaganda, intended to undermine the Zionist efforts to colonize the Holy Land (*ibid.*, pp. 634–635 [TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 7239]).

this archive is that of the Bureau Palestinien, or Palestine Office, in Salonika. This is obviously an invaluable source with respect to the history of Zionism in Greece, but at the same time it is also a vast storehouse of material for socioeconomic research. Of the 5,293 documents recorded and catalogued up to the present time, 729 address various topics related to *'aliyah*. The earliest of these documents is from 1924, the latest, from 1939. It is interesting to note the breakdown of documents by year. For the years 1924 through 1929, there are a total of 43 documents, of which only 10 deal with Greek Jews; the remainder deal with Jews from Eastern Europe who passed through Salonika on their way to Erez Yisrael. The turnaround can be pinpointed at 1932, as demonstrated in Table 2 below:¹⁸¹

Table 2. Documents of the Palestine Office in Salonika dealing with *'aliyah*

1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
45	316	77	149	26	55	13	3

Even if the figures change as more data is processed, it is reasonable to assume that the relative proportions between numbers of documents and years will not be greatly altered. The large number of documents for the years 1933 and 1935 is particularly conspicuous. The conclusions drawn from this data are further corroborated by a letter written by the President of the Palestine Office, Yomtov Yaqoel (Yacoel), to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem on November 4, 1935, during his visit in Palestine. It stated that in 1930, 60 candidates for *'aliyah* were registered at the office. In 1932 the number rose to 100; in 1933, to 500; in 1934, to 1,050; and in 1935, the office decided to stop registering new candidates.¹⁸² The inevitable question is, what element existed in the early 1930s that had not been present in the latter part of the previous decade, given

¹⁸¹ *Moscow Institute*, f. 1435, op. 1 (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, f. 1435, op. 1).

¹⁸² *Moscow Institute*, *ibid.* (TAU DP, Salonika Archives, *ibid.*, file 11, p. 903; TAU DP 2368). The figures and information in this letter contradict data from another source, a report written only four days later by an emissary of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. According to this report, 2,530 immigration requests were registered in Salonika's Palestine Office up to mid-1933, with 2,038 of them having been submitted by Salonikan Jews. After this time, the office stopped accepting requests in spite of the great pressure of potential immigrants, due to the small quota

that efforts to force the Jews out of all aspects of economic activity had already gathered momentum in the early 1920s.

It may be assumed that the Campbell riots had a destructive effect on the self-confidence of Salonika's Jews. There is a huge difference between recognition of the dry facts of a situation and the comprehension of reality on an emotional level. In that sense, the changes in the economic and social reality around them were not enough. An emotional trigger was needed. The Campbell affair constituted such a trigger; it was a fatal blow to Salonika Jewry's sense of pride and their confidence that they "belonged." They finally grasped that being a Salonikan meant being a Greek. Among those who turned their efforts towards strengthening their "Greekness," one of the most outstanding was the teacher and historian Yosef Nehamah. The proponents of this approach exhorted forced use of the Greek language and raised once again the notion of Hellenization of the schools.¹⁸³ Others packed their belongings and made their way to the port.¹⁸⁴

The Campbell affair did indeed remold the collective psyche of Salonikan Jewry, but not in the manner described in the simplistic portrayal of *Zikhron Saloniqi*. The emotional upheaval was not the only factor at play, and in all likelihood, not the most important one.¹⁸⁵ At the end of 1930, most emigration destinations (U.S., Canada, South Africa, and Brazil) had closed their gates and the only countries still open to poor newcomers were Argentina and several other countries in South America.¹⁸⁶ During the course of 1932,

allocated to Greece by the Jewish Agency. (Yoshu'a Bakhar to Yizhaq Grünbaum, Report on visit to Greece (October 20–November 1, 1935, November 7, 1935, CZA, AM1012/2352.) Since other details in Bakhar's report are far from factual (such as the assertion that the number of Jews living outside Salonika was equal to the number of Jews residing in the city...), it seems that the internal source should be given greater consideration.

183 Toledano, "The 28th of June," p. 360.

184 See below, for example, *Acción*, October 25, 1933, on the immigration to France and Palestine; *Acción Prensa*, December 12, 1935, on the immigration to Palestine, and see more below pp. 300–309.

185 See especially the correspondence between Rabbi Ya'aqov Meir, then the *Rishon Le-Zion*, and the Executive of the Jewish Agency, November 2, 1932, CZA, S6/2533; Y. Ben-Zvi to Dr. V. Senator, member of the Executive, November 1, 1932, *ibid.*; Rabbi Ya'aqov Haviv, substitute chief rabbi in Salonika, to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, October 23, 1932, *ibid.*; and the memorandum presented by the Zionist Federation of Greece to the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, September 7, 1932, *ibid.*

186 *El Pueblo*, December 24, 1930.

restrictions were placed on immigration to France as well.¹⁸⁷ On February 14, 1931, restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine were lifted as a result of the 1929 riots of the Arab population, and the half-year *'aliyah* quotas were increased. In setting the quotas, the British High Commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, took into consideration the requests of the Jewish Agency, particularly those pertaining to immigrants from Category C, i.e., laborers — in other words, those without assets. Between October 1931 and April 1932, this quota totaled 2,000 immigrants, and from October 1932 to March 1933, 4,500 immigrants. In April-October 1935, the immigration quota in this category reached 8,000. From October 1935 onward, the quota decreased steadily, initially due to a drop in the number of immigrants with property (Category A), since the Mandatory government tied the number of laborers permitted to enter Palestine to the amount of capital being brought into the country. With the start of the 1936 riots, Wauchope decided to recommend the suspension of immigration until the Royal Commission had completed its work.¹⁸⁸

A comparison of the volume of correspondence on the subject of *'aliyah* (Table 1, above) with the foregoing demonstrates an almost perfect correlation between the size of the *'aliyah* quotas and the amount of correspondence. In other words, the large-scale emigration of people without means was dictated not only by the difficulties they faced in their country of residence, but also — and perhaps primarily — by the immigration opportunities available to them.

The correspondence of the Greek Foreign Ministry illuminates the issue of emigration from Salonika from another point of view. Beginning in August 1933, there are repeated references to the grim economic situation of the Jewish community. The first reference attributes the community's inability to come to the aid of its poorer members to its unsound financial and constitutional administration.¹⁸⁹ The sudden interest in the Jewish poor of Salonika might have remained an enigma if we did not have in our possession

187 Memorandum of the Zionist Federation of Greece to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, September 9, 1932, CZA, S6/2533, p. 1.

188 N. Gross, "Ha-Medinyut ha-Kalkalit shel Memshelet ha-Mandat" (The economic policy of the Mandatory government), in *Ha-Historyah shel Erez Yisrael* (The history of Palestine), ed. A. Shavit, vol. 9, *Ha-Mandat ve-ha-Bayit ha-Le'umi* (The Mandate and the national home) (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 102.

189 Director of Salonika Press Bureau to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 5, 1933, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 74, pp. 229–230.

the continuation of this correspondence. A confidential letter sent by the Foreign Ministry to the Governor-General of Macedonia reports that the Zionist Federation of Greece had appealed to the Greek government — by way of the senator from Salonika, Asher Malakh — for financial assistance to help Jews affected by the Depression emigrate from Salonika to Erez Yisrael.¹⁹⁰ The Foreign Ministry's position in this matter was based on three factors: first, the Greek government did not have the necessary means for such assistance; second, it was highly doubtful that the British government would permit the settlement of large numbers of penniless Jews in Palestine; and third, it would be more logical for the Jewish organizations in Salonika to turn to the leaders of the Zionist movement in London to solve the problem.¹⁹¹

A week later, the Governor-General of Macedonia, Gen. Dragoumis, replied to the Foreign Ministry that he agreed wholeheartedly with its position, adding that, in his opinion, the Greeks were suffering more than the Jews as a result of the Depression. Nonetheless, he went on, the Jews had become accustomed to controlling the economic life of the city under Ottoman rule and the fact that this was no longer the case compounded the ills of the Depression; this, he asserted, was the reason for their grievance. As for the matter of emigration, wrote Dragoumis, Greek Jews were in any event allotted a small 'aliyah quota by the Jewish institutions due to their unsuitability for the work force in Palestine.¹⁹²

Thus, it is clear that the pressure toward emigration was the result of the sense of economic and political oppression in Salonika. Moreover, the Greeks themselves were not only aware of this oppression, but also considered it natural and justifiable. They were also aware of the fact that the number of potential emigrants was much greater than the actual figure, not only because of the difficulty of financing emigration, but also due to the small number of 'aliyah certificates allocated to Greece in comparison to other countries.¹⁹³

190 Compare with *Acción*, January 7, 1935, complaint concerning the high cost of 'aliyah, which made it an option for the rich only.

191 Minister of Foreign Affairs to Governor-General of Macedonia, September 26, 1933, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 75, pp. 231–232.

192 Governor-General of Macedonia to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 3, 1933, *ibid.*, doc. 76, p. 232. See also S. Rossettis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Prime Minister's Office, October 3, 1934, *ibid.*, doc. 87, p. 245.

193 See, for example, the worldwide distribution of certificates from May 31, 1935; of a total of 3,050, 48 certificates were allotted to Salonika (*Moscow Institute*, f. 1435, op. 1, file 16, pp. 879–880 [TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 335]). Very

Were all those seeking to immigrate to Erez Yisrael Zionists? There were Salonikan Jews who not only processed, both logically and emotionally, the meaning of the changes that were taking place, but also deduced that the nation-state was the only solution. One of them explained the need to go to Erez Yisrael: "It is about building a safe haven for ourselves, the Jews of Salonika; this city is no longer such a haven for us...it is about our future and the future of our children."¹⁹⁴ However, even such an emotional declaration disguises an explicitly local truth: we have to leave Salonika because it is not a haven anymore; the only haven outside Salonika is the one we will create for ourselves in a country of our own, Zion. The question remains what would have happened if Salonika had remained a safe haven, and for how many was the national solution a matter of choice rather than happenstance?

In answer to these questions, documents from the Greek Foreign Ministry corroborate the impression that emerges from other sources, namely, that the sense of economic discrimination was a much stronger motivating factor than Zionism. A recent study on the immigration and settlement of Salonikan port workers in Haifa during the 1930s illustrates very clearly that the Zionist aura that cloaked this venture veiled the naked truth, namely, that this was a simple case of work related immigration.¹⁹⁵ An examination of the results of the election to the General Assembly of the Salonika Jewish community held on May 27, 1934, demonstrates the allegiance of the 7,070 eligible voters: 42.2 percent voted for the General Zionists; 19.5 percent for the "moderates," who advocated assimilation, apart from the matter of religion; 6.1 percent for the National Union party, i.e., the Revisionist movement; 9.5 percent for the two "suburban" parties, who promised to address the problems of their constituents; 15.6 percent for the Popular Bloc, apparently a front for the Communist Party; 3.8 percent for the "non-partisans"; 2.1 percent for the

revealing is David Florentin's description, written a few months earlier, in which he recounted how he and the other leaders of the Greek community in Palestine ('Oley Yavan), stood outside the offices of the Jewish Agency like beggars trying to extract this meager number of certificates. In fact they were promised 60 certificates for the winter of 1935. (Ibid., file 11, p. 937, March 14, 1935 [TAU DP Salonika Archives, doc. 2376].)

194 "Hityashvutam shel Yehudei Yavan be-Erez Yisrael" (The settlement of Greek Jewry in Palestine), *Erez Yisrael*, August 11, 1924.

195 S. Srugo, "Mi-Nemal Saloniqi li-Nemal Heifah: 'Aliyatam shel Po'alei Nemal Saloniqi bein Shetei Milhamot ha-'Olam" (From the port of Salonika to the port of Haifa: The immigration of Jewish port workers between the two world wars), (master's thesis submitted to the University of Haifa, 2003.)

Corporations Party, which represented business interests; and 1 percent for the Concord Party (the Union of Hearts).¹⁹⁶

קבלה

קבלתי מועד המשרד הא"י ביון, ק"ך
של חמשת אלפים דרחכמיות (5000) להוצאות
נסיעתי ביון (שלוניקי)

היום כ' לח' אול תרצג
11.941933

25. Receipt for 5,000 *drachmas* given by the Palestine Office in Salonika to Aba Hushi for expenses he incurred in Greece while checking the possibility of bringing Salonikan stevedores to Haifa (September 11, 1933). (*Moscow Institute*, Salonika-Palestine Office Archives, f. 1435, op. 1, file 16, # 767 [TAU DP, Salonika Archives, doc. 303].)

From these election results, we may conclude that close to half the voters cast their ballots for the Zionist candidates. The claim could ostensibly be made that these statistics, which are numerical and absolute, contradict the previously mentioned data, some of which are derived from documentation that reflects a particular interest or mindset. But these figures should not be understood as a vote in favor of Zionism as an ideology, but as a vote against the status quo. It must be kept in mind that two sizeable ideological blocs existed alongside that of Zionism, namely the assimilationists and the communists, and that, taken together, they constituted 35 percent of the vote.

Not only do the *'aliyah* requests for the years 1932–1936 provide insights

¹⁹⁶ E. Papandreou, Director of the Salonika Press Bureau, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 29, 1934, *ibid.*, doc. 81, pp. 237–238.

about the motivations of the emigrants, but they also cast the results of the elections for the General Assembly in a different light. Furthermore, the potential emigrants, when filling out an *'aliyah* request form, were obliged to answer a number of important questions regarding their occupation; the amount of money they were bringing with them to Palestine; their affiliation with a particular Zionist association; their membership in the World Zionist Organization.

In the 729 documents, most of them *'aliyah* requests, studied so far, the breakdown of occupations is as follows: 64 wagon drivers, 62 porters, 56 shoemakers, 45 stevedores, 42 tailors and seamstresses, 36 painters, 31 blacksmiths, 29 construction workers, 28 tinsmiths, 26 mechanics, 24 electricians, 19 bakers, 14 fruit vendors, 13 farm workers, 12 glaziers, 11 plumbers, 10 tobacco workers, 10 butchers, 9 fishermen, 9 restaurateurs, 8 teachers, 7 customs clerks, 7 soap makers, 6 coffee vendors, 5 clerks, 5 accountants, 3 oil manufacturers, 3 silversmiths, 3 mattress makers, 3 chicken vendors, 3 wool spinners, 2 cashiers, 2 journalists, 1 engineer, 1 brush maker, 1 carpenter, 1 paper vendor, 1 vendor of salted fish, 1 rubber worker, and 1 halva maker. The remainder were not identified.¹⁹⁷



26a. Mordokh Salomon Strougano (see appendix 2, no. 26).

Before we hasten to draw conclusions from this list, it is important to note its limitations. The immigrants were instructed to present themselves as self-supporting individuals with useful occupations, so there may have been situations where false information was supplied. Particularly suspect are the porters and stevedores, who were given priority as potential immigrants due to the efforts in Palestine to wrest the port work from the hands of the Arab porters. Similar suspicion has been cast on the various types of farm workers, who were also given preference in the awarding of entry visas.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Compare this breakdown of occupations with Mentesh ben Shanji's article: "Ba'alei Miqzo'ot be-Qehilat Saloniki" (Professions in the Jewish community of Salonika), in *Zikhron Saloniki*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 208–210.

¹⁹⁸ Yomtov Yaqoel to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem: "Most of the candidates are qualified workers: 450 port workers, 600 construction workers, 300 professionals and 100 pioneers." (*Moscow Institute*, f. 1435, op. 1 [TAU DP, Salonika Archives, f. 1435, op. 1, file 11, p. 903; TAU DP 2368]).

Nevertheless, there is certainly a connection between the high numbers of wagon drivers, porters, and dockworkers seeking *'aliyah* permits and the fact that they were forced out of the Salonika labor market from 1922 onwards.

But even if we take these reservations into account, it is clear from both the nature of the occupations presented here and the modest declarations of personal effects that most of these potential emigrants had little in the way of assets. In other words, even if some of them did not have the professions they had listed on their applications, but were instead small businessmen, i.e., shopkeepers, proprietors of coffeehouses, or peddlers, they were not in a position to bring any assets with them apart from their ability to earn a livelihood by the sweat of their brow. If we bear in mind that the actual number of *'aliyah* requests was much higher, the conclusion that emerges from this list is that not only small merchants were forced to the fringes of Salonika's economic life, as would appear to be the case from existing studies, but also various types of craftsmen and day workers. The Campbell affair, then, was perhaps a moral as well as an emotional shock and an omen, but not the primary reason that led these unfortunate laborers to prefer emigration to Erez Yisrael to life in Salonika; neither was Zionist ideology their main motivation.

An examination of the declarations regarding the ties of the *'aliyah* applicants with the Zionist organizations of Salonika confirms this picture: of the 484 requests for *'aliyah* permits examined thus far (91 from outside Salonika, primarily from various cities in Macedonia, Corfu, Crete and Zakynthos), only 93 were submitted by members of Zionist associations; of these, few were dues-paying members of the Jewish National Fund. Very few of the applicants declared that they were in possession of funds which they could bring with them. For those who did make such a declaration, the amounts ranged from 10 to 200 pounds sterling, and from 750 to 50,000 drachmas.

Certain key facts emerge from this abundant material: (a) The potential immigrants were characterized by a low socioeconomic profile; (b) Only some 19 percent of them had any active connection to Zionism prior to submitting their *'aliyah* applications; (c) The years 1933–1935 saw the highest *'aliyah* quotas allocated by the Mandatory government. The obvious conclusion, on the basis of these three factors, combined with Salonika Jewry's loss of a sense of economic and political security is that: (a) The

Chapter 9

Campbell affair in and of itself was not sufficient to generate such a wave of immigration to Palestine; (b) Zionism was not a major factor in the Jewish emigration of the 1930s.



27a Asher Rubin (Re'even) Benrubi and family (see appendix 2, no. 27a-b).

With regard to this last statement, it must be emphasized that no serious attempt has ever been made to investigate the number of Jewish emigrants from Greece who went to other parts of the world during this period (1931–1936),¹⁹⁹ or in the twentieth century in general.²⁰⁰ In addition, the

199 By way of example, see the arbitrary assortment of evidence on emigration from Salonika to other parts of the world after 1930, excluding Palestine, in *Acción*, October 25, 1933; on the scope of the immigration to France, see *Acción Prensa*, December 12, 1935. See appendix 1, section C.

200 Benbassa and Rodrigue (*Juifs des Balkans*, p. 305) cast doubt on the figures presented by J. Nehama ("The Jews of Salonika in the Ottoman Period," in *The Sephardi Heritage: The Western Sephardim*, eds. R.D. Barnett and W.M. Schwab [Grendon, 1989], vol. 2, p. 279).

activities of the Palestine Office and the generous immigration quotas of the early 1930s offered the penniless potential immigrants opportunities not available to them elsewhere.²⁰¹ In order to generate this flow of migration to Erez Yisrael, two other major conditions had to exist: the economic and political distress in Salonika both before and after the Campbell affair and the sense that it was now easier to gain entry into Palestine, even for the poor and the destitute.

The contradiction that ostensibly existed between the “Zionization” of the Salonika community, as reflected in the results of the elections for community institutions in the interwar years, and the reality is evident not only from an analysis of the aforementioned material. The above-mentioned report by Dr. ‘Ezra Zohar paints an extremely gloomy picture of the community, its leadership, and its cultural, religious, and social situation. Zohar describes Zionism in Salonika on the eve of World War II, as follows:

The Zionist institutions exist, operate, and rely on the sympathy of the public at large. Indeed, one could say that all Jews here, inasmuch as they support the building up of the land, are Zionists. The spirit of Zionism, on the other hand, is non-existent. Zionism exists here as a shell, without Zionist culture, training, or leadership. A penny for Erez

201 In effect, during the years 1932–1936, thousands of Salonikan Jews managed to emigrate to Palestine, some by means of certificates, many others using all sorts of imaginative methods to make the most of other people’s certificates. The 325 certificates allotted to Salonika in 1933 were used to bring 1,037 people to Palestine (*Moscow Institute*, f. 1435, op. 1, file 15, p. 232, January 1, 1934 [TAU DP Salonika Archives, doc. 9772]). In the early summer of 1935, David Florentin stated that it is well known in Palestine that the Palestine Office in Salonika sends 10–11 people on the same certificate and warned against the consequences. Out of the 250 permits given for the spring of 1935, 50 were allotted for pioneers and 200 for people with professions. All the pioneers were supposed to bring a spouse on their certificate, either a “real” or a “fictitious” one. Such a quota must have brought at least 1,500 people (*ibid.*, file 11, p. 905, June 13, 1935 [TAU DP Salonika Archives, doc. 2370]). Cf. Hayim Barlas to the Palestine Office in Salonika, June 14, 1935, CZA, S6/2536, and an excerpt of a letter written by Edwin Samuel, Acting Commissioner for Migration and Statistics, Acting Director, Department of Immigration of the Mandate Government, to the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem (first page missing, most probably dating from August or September 1935), protesting against misuse of certificates by means of false adoptions in Salonika. Attached to the letter are four pages full of examples of such misuse. Samuel threatened to conduct an inquiry into the management of that office (CZA, AM1012/2352); Yōshu‘a Bakhar to Yizḥaq Grünbaum, Report of Bakhar’s visit to Salonika, October 10–November 1, 1935, dated November 7, 1935 (*ibid.*).

בורו פאליקטיניאנו
 סאלוניקן
 ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ ΑΝΑΦΕΡΕΙΝ
 ΟΕΣΙΝΟΝΑΙΑ
 סאלוניקן, א' יוני 1935

ק"י
 בוך רוגאמוס די נוטאר קי קונסורמימנטו אלעס
 אינסטרומענטן טייל גראפיקאס קי ריסימאס די פארטו
 דילע אגניטיא גודיאה די ירושלים, לאס טאקסאס אה
 פאגאר פור לה אובסטאנסיין די און טירמי די אימיגראציע
 פארע ארץ ישראל, סן פור אינדילאנטרי לאס סיגוראטיס:

(1) טאקס די אינדאדע אין פאליסטאנה -
 דרמ' 900 פור קאדה פירסונה אינדאדע די 16 אנווס
 אי אריבה.
 דרמ' 300 פור קאדה פירסונה אינדאדע די טאנקן די
 16 אנווס.

(2) טאקס פור פרימה אינסטאלאציע, דאס די ריטו אה קיר
 ריקוביה אין אל "בית העולים" ינדי אל אימיגראנטי פואדי
 קידאר מיילטריס אונה קימאנה קון סו פאמיליה, סן טינד
 אה פאגאר ניגון גאקטי די קידר י די סאנפוניסיין.
 דרמ' 1200 פור קאדה פירסונה אינדאדע די 16 אנווס
 אי אריבה.
 דרמ' 600 פור קאדה פירסונה אינדאדע די טאנקן
 די 16 אנווס.

סימה אין טודו
 דראחמיס 2400 פור קאדה פירסונה אינדאדע די
 16 אנווס אי אריבה, יי דראחמיס 900 פור קאדה פירסונה
 אינדאדע די טאנקן די 16 אנווס, סן קונטאר לה טאקס
 ריגולארה דיל בורו פאליקטיניאנו די דראחמיס 250 פור
 קאדה פירמי אי אקיליה דיל פונדו נאקיונאל די דראחמיס
 60.

בוך רוגאמוס די קימוניקאר אה נוטאטורו פור
 אין אינטירבאלו די 8 דיאס לה דאנה די
 באקטרה פארטיניסייה אין אל קאבו קונטרא
 באקטרו פירמי קידה אנוולאדה.
 שלום!
 דיל בורו

28. An announcement of the Palestine Office in Salonika (June 4, 1935) informing potential immigrants about the various taxes levied on each person from the moment they embarked on their way to the Holy Land (see appendix 2, no. 28).

Yisrael, concern for the plight of the Yishuv, the publication in the local press of mostly out-of-date articles from the Palestinian press, and the desire on the part of the poor to emigrate to Erez Yisrael, that is the sum total of Zionism here... The desire alone exists, shorn of strength, vitality, flesh, or spirit.²⁰²

To summarize: On the brink of World War II, many among the Salonika Jewish community were ripe for migration. For most of them, the decision to immigrate to Erez Yisrael was more the utilization of an opportunity and less a matter of ideological choice.

The Southern Slavic Lands

The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (S.C.S.), which came into being in 1918, was pieced together from several regions and constituted a complex mosaic of peoples and nationalities, who did not necessarily identify with the state. As complicated as matters were in these lands at the turn of the twenty-first century, they were no less so in the early years of the twentieth century — from the Jewish perspective no less than the general. Residing within the borders of the S.C.S. was a population of 70,000 Jews. While the bulk of the Jews in the Balkans and Turkey were Sephardim, the Jews of the S.C.S. north of the Sava and the Danube were Ashkenazim. The Sephardim lived mainly south of these rivers. The Macedonian Jewish community spoke primarily Ladino and the Macedonian-Slavic dialect; Bosnian Jewry spoke Ladino, Serbo-Croatian and German; Serbian Jewry spoke Serbo-Croatian and Ladino; and the Croatian community spoke Serbo-Croatian, German and Hungarian. Against this backdrop, the Jews of these regions were attempting to rebuild their lives.

According to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the Jews of the S.C.S. were granted equal rights and the rights of a religious minority. Despite the differences between them, in 1919 they established the Federation of Jewish Communities, which was recognized by the state. The Orthodox communities founded a separate federation, which also gained official recognition. In addition to this fundamental division, unknown in any of the other Ottoman successor states, the Jews of each of the provinces that comprised the S.C.S. lived and thought differently from their co-religionists

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