

For the Sake of My Brothers: The Great Fire of Salonika (1917) and the Mobilisation of Diaspora Jewry on Behalf of the Victims*

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Introduction

The Great Fire of Salonika has already been studied and discussed from a number of perspectives, primarily the tremendous damage caused to the city's Jewish community and the impact on its standing;¹ the fire as a turning point in Salonika's urban history;² and the plausibility of the conspiracy

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1. Ρένα Μόλχο, *Οι Εβραίοι της Θεσσαλονίκης 1856-1919: Μια ιδιαίτερη κοινότητα* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Θεμέλιο, 2001) [Rena Molho, *The Jews of Salonika, 1856-1919: A Special Community* (Salonika: Themelio, 2001)], 120-122; Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'A Mediterranean City in Transition: Thessaloniki between the Two World Wars', *Facta Universitatis, Architecture and Civil Engineering* 1 (1997): 495-507; Rena Molho, 'On the Jewish community of Salonika after the Fire of 1917: An Unpublished Memoir and Other Documents from the Papers of Henry Morgenthau', in *The Jewish Community of South-eastern Europe from the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), 147-174; Gila Hadar, 'Régie Vardar: A Jewish "Garden City" in Thessaloniki (1917-1943)' (paper presented at 7th International Conference on Urban History: European City in Comparative Perspective, Panteion University, Athens-Piraeus, Greece, 27-30 October 2004); Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Urban Aesthetics and National Identity: The Refashioning of Eastern Mediterranean Cities between 1900 and 1940', *Planning Perspectives* 26.2 (2011): 153-182, esp. 154, 164, 168, 172.

2. James W. Mawson, 'The Salonika Town Planning Act', *The Town Planning Review* 9.3 (Dec., 1921): 147-54; Pierre Lavedan, 'Un problème d'urbanisme: la reconstruction de Salonique', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts series* 64.5 (1921): 231-248. http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/cgi-bin/digi-downloadPdf.fcgi?projectname=gba1922_1&firstpage=248&lastpage=265 (accessed 18 August 2017); Αλεξάνδρα Καραδήμου - Γερολύμπου, Βασιλης Κολώνας,

theory whereby the replanning of the so-called Burnt Zone was intended to undermine the status of the city's Jewish community and facilitate its Hellenisation.³ Likewise, the role of the community's leadership and economic elite in the decision-making process on the rebuilding of the Burnt Zone, as well as the construction itself, have been examined.⁴

Zionist circles in Salonika, who were largely made up of the middle class, along with many of the landowners in the Burnt Zone who were not Zionist, saw the rebuilding plan, at the very least, as an economic disaster, if not a political fiasco as well, and labored mightily to thwart it.⁵ The efforts of various

“Η ανοικοδόμηση της Θεσσαλονίκης μετά το 1917 από την κοινωνική και πολεοδομική ουτοπία”, *Οι Εβραίοι στον ελληνικό χώρο: Ζητήματα ιστορίας στη μακρά διάρκεια*, Πρακτικά του Α΄ Συμποσίου Ιστορίας της Εταιρείας Μελέτης Εβραϊκού Ελληνισμού: Θεσσαλονίκη, 23-24 Νοεμβρίου 1991, επιμέλεια: Έφη Αβδελά, Οντέτ Βαρών - Βασάρ (Αθήνα: Γαβριηλίδης, 1995) [Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolympos and Vasilis Kolonas, ‘The Reconstruction of Salonika after 1917’, in *The Jews in Greece: Historical Themes*, ed. Efi Avdela and Odette Varon-Vasar (Athens: Gavrilides Publishing House, 1995)], 231-254, esp. 233; Alexandra Yerolympos, *Urban Transformation in the Balkans (1820-1920): Aspects of Balkan Town Planning and the Remaking of Salonika* (Salonika: University Studio Press, 1996), 106-108; Yerolympos, *The Replanning of Thessaloniki after the Fire of 1917: A Turning Point in the History of the City and the Development of Greek City Planning* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1986, 1995); Yerolympos, *Between East and West. Planning in the Ottoman Reform Era* (Athens: University Studio Press, 1997; Thessaloniki, 2004); A. Yerolympos, C. Pedelahore de Loddis, and H. Yiakoumis, *Ernest Hébrard, La vie illustrée d'un architecte* (Athènes: Potamos, 2001); Yerolympos, ‘Thessaloniki before and after 1917: Twentieth Century Planning Versus Twenty Centuries of Urban Evolution’, *Planning Perspectives* 3.2 (1988): 141-166; Lila Leontidou, *The Mediterranean City in Transition: Social Change and Urban Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11; Hastaoglou-Martinidis. ‘Mediterranean City’, 495-497; Charalampos K. Papastathis and Evangelos A. Hekimoglou, *The Great Fire of Salonika, August 1917* (Salonika: E. N. Manos Ltd., 2010); Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 301-309.

3. See below, nn. 40, 42. Vassiliki G. Mangana, ‘Westernization and Hellenicity: Form and Meaning in Thessaloniki, Greece, 1850-1940’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995), 17-83; Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos, ‘Monumental Urban Space and National Identity: The Early Twentieth-Century New Plan of Thessaloniki’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 31.1 (2005): 61-77.

4. Minna Rozen, ‘Money, Power, Politics and the Great Salonika Fire of 1917’, *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 74-115.

5. *Ibid.*, 81-82.

circles in the Salonika Jewish community to enlist well-known individuals and international Jewish organisations in the fight to rescind the plan, or at least mitigate its potential damage, are illustrated clearly in correspondence from the Greek Foreign Ministry Archives published by Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis in their book *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews*. The documents relate to the Jewish community as a monolithic body that is unanimously opposed to the reconstruction measures, maligns Greece around the world, and makes use of international entities to challenge the world's recognition of Greece's right to Salonika.⁶ The present study highlights Greek government efforts to address the problem laid at its doorstep by the Jewish community. The complex nature of the local Jewish response to the rebuilding plan has already been discussed by me in a recently published article;⁷ but the involvement of Jewish Diaspora organisations, and the ramifications of their role with regard to both the building plan itself and the rehabilitation of those left homeless by the fire, have yet to be examined in depth. This study sheds further light on the subject, yielding a fascinating portrait of a broader issue, namely, the response of diasporas in general when one of their communities is in distress. Accordingly, this paper can serve as a case study of the motivations and actions of diasporas in such situations: At what point do they become involved on behalf of their injured kin? How far do they take this involvement? And does such intervention always prove worthwhile?

The Sources

The primary sources used in this paper can be divided into two types, each with advantages and disadvantages that were taken into account during the writing process. I relied heavily on newspapers from the period in all languages published in Salonika (Judeo-Spanish, Greek, and French). The local press represents the political opinions of the newspaper owners and editors as well as the writers themselves. The notices in the Greek press announcing auctions of parcels of land in the Burnt Zone are of great importance.⁸ In

6. Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis, eds., *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews, Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1998), doc. 1, 71; doc. 3, 75; doc. 4*, 76; doc. 5*, 77; doc. 6*, 77; doc. 7, 79; doc. 8, 80; att. to doc. 8, 81; doc. 9, 82; doc. 10, 83.

7. Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics'.

8. See below, pp. 229-234.

addition, the 1910 commercial directory of Macedonia provides us with a realistic picture of the community institutions and major businessmen of the time.⁹ The archival material on which this article is based includes documents from the Greek Foreign Ministry Archives, which have been published by Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis in Greek and English versions that are virtually identical. Both versions were compared before being referenced here. Nearly all citations are from the English edition; when I cite the Greek edition (due to a disparity between the versions), this is mentioned in a footnote. Most of the material in this archive naturally reflects the positions of the Greek government on the subjects in question.

I also made use of Salonika Jewish community records that were confiscated by the Nazis and found their way to Moscow. This section of the Archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika has been part of the Russian State Military Archive in Moscow since 1945, within the collection entitled OcoByi Arkhiv (Special Archive). Since 1992, this entire archive has been referred to as the Centre for Preservation of Historical Collections (Tsentri Khraneniia Istoriko-Dokumental'nykh Kollektcii, or TsKhIDK, hereafter: Moscow Archives). It was photographed in video form for the Tel Aviv University Documentation Project of Turkish and Balkan Jewry of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center. This portion of the archive contains 500,000 documents, of which 50,000 have been analysed and digitised. Citations from the digitised material in this archive appear as follows: Moscow Archives, fond (no.), opis (no.), file (no.), document number in the file of the Moscow Archives (no.), document number in the digitised archive (no.). A different portion of the Archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika is held in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (hereafter: CAHJP). Documents from this part of the archive are presented as follows: GR/SA file (no.). In some cases, internal protocol numbers of the Salonika Jewish community or of various Greek government ministries also appear, following the file number. The file numbers in the CAHJP were changed in 2015. Although the new classification makes it much easier for contemporary researchers to find their way around the archives, it constitutes a problem for those who have worked in the archives previously and those searching for

9. Γεώργιος Χατζηκυριάκος, *Τμήμα Δεύτερον - Μέρος Έκτον - Μακεδονία μετά του παρακειμένου τμήματος της Θράκης* [Θεσσαλονίκη, 1910] [Georgios Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, vol. 8, *Macedonia and Part of Thrace* (Salonika, 1910)].

material based on publications that predate the change in the catalogue. Unfortunately, the comparative table with the old and new numbers is not without errors, and at times it is very difficult to locate documents identified by their old file number under the new one. For the reader's convenience, I have cited the new designation followed by the old one. In cases where I was unable to locate a document by its new number, or in cases of doubt, this is stated explicitly.

The various sections of the Salonika Jewish Community Archives generally recount the basic facts and figures. These are supplemented here by the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris, which contain fascinating material about the efforts of Salonikan Jews with close ties to the Alliance to mobilise that body in the fight against the reconstruction plan for Salonika put forward by the Greek government.¹⁰ The correspondence of the Conjoint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, found in the YIVO Archives in New York, reflects the response in Great Britain to the plight of Salonikan Jewry following the 1917 fire.¹¹ Rounding off the sources is the material contained in the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives in New York, which forms the basis of this study.

The Great Fire

In the summer of 1917, Salonika resembled a pot about to boil over. The city, which was constructed largely of wood, was filled to overflowing with local residents, Greek and Muslim refugees, Jews from Thrace and Macedonia, and tens of thousands of soldiers of the Armée d'Orient (the multinational force stationed in Salonika during World War I) of the Entente Powers. On Saturday, August 18, 1917, at approximately 2:00 p.m., a fire broke out in the Agua Nueva ('new waters' in Ladino) neighbourhood in the northwestern part of the city which was crowded with large numbers of refugees. Many and varied rumours circulated regarding the cause of the fire. One stated that a housewife at 3 Olympiados St. had been frying eggplants when a spark from the fire ignited a pile of fodder stored nearby, spreading from there to the adjacent houses.¹² A different version identified

10. Alliance Israélite Universelle Archives, Greece (hereafter: AIU GRÈCE).

11. YIVO Archives, RG 348.

12. Papastathis and Hekimoglou, *Great Fire*, 12; A. J. Mann, *The Salonika Front* (London: A. & C. Black Ltd., 1920), 16. Mann identified the neighbourhood by its Turkish name, Yilan Mermer (the marble column of the snake).

this housewife as a Greek refugee.¹³ A third rumour attributed the fire to a Jewish widow,¹⁴ while another blamed it on a person of unknown ethnic origins who made his living selling fried eggplant.¹⁵ Yet another claimed that it was a Greek refugee with the same occupation,¹⁶ while a different version spoke of a Greek male and nothing further.¹⁷ A different rumour, circulated by a British army officer, claimed that he himself had thrown a lit cigarette, igniting the inferno.¹⁸ Finally, there was no shortage of conspiracy theories: an act of arson aided by enemy bombings,¹⁹ as well as arson by Greeks who only sought to ignite a particular building that the Serbian army had their eyes on but ultimately found themselves facing a giant conflagration.²⁰ The commander of the Armée d'Orient, General Sarraïl, recounts in his memoirs that the Greek government blamed the Entente

13. Yosef 'Uziel, 'Salonika on Fire', in *Salonika: A Jewish Metropolis* (Tel Aviv: Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, 1967), 223 (Hebrew).

14. Luigi Villari argues that the fire originated in the home of a Jewish widow in the center of town. Villari, *The Macedonian Campaign* (London: T. F. Unwin, Ltd., 1922), 179.

15. An anonymous description of the fire, covering the interval from 18 August at 5:00 p.m. to 20 August at 1:00 p.m., can be found in the Alliance archives under the title: 'Ce que j'ai vu de l'incendie de Salonique'. AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33. It was sent in the form of a memorandum on 23 September 1917 to the Alliance secretary in Paris. Attached is a letter bearing the same date from Samuel Saltiel, a teacher at the Alliance school, to the Alliance secretary in Paris, in which he details his hardships in the wake of the fire and asks to be transferred to Morocco. It is possible that he was the author of the above description. See below, n. 44.

16. Isac De Buton and Albert Barzilay, *The Fire of August 1917: Unforgettable Memories, Harsh Truths, Authentic Details, Facts and Occurrences Which Happened During and After the Catastrophe in Salonika* (Salonika: Jewish Benevolent Society-'Ezrat Ahim, 1919), 20 (Ladino). Douglas Walsh makes a similar claim in his book *With the Serbs in Macedonia* (London and New York: John Lane Company, 1920), 36.

17. This version appears in a Ladino folk song sung by Mosheh Attias from the *Judeo-Spanish Song Book: Folk Songs in Judeo-Spanish* (Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, 1972), song no. 145, 246-247 (Ladino).

18. Vincent J. Seligman, *The Salonica Sideshow* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1919), 64.

19. Gordon Smith, *Serbia to Yugoslavia, Serbia's Victories, Reverses and Final Triumph, 1914-1918* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 262.

20. 'Uziel, 'Salonika on Fire', 225.

Powers for the fire.²¹ A historical study of fires in urban spaces indicates that conspiracy theories, often emphasising ethnicity, are a regular feature of such events, and are not unique to the case of Salonika.²²

Fanned by the Vardar northwesterly winds (known to the Jews as *Tramontana*), the fire leapt rapidly from house to house, feeding on the combustible clay bricks and wooden beams from which most Salonika homes were constructed. The fire quickly consumed the entire neighbourhood and spread swiftly to the historic center of the city. Firefighters attempted to halt the blaze, but the limited supply of water, as a result of overcrowded living conditions and the fact that it was channelled in part to the armies of the Triple Entente stationed in the city, prevented the fire from being extinguished while it was still possible to do so.²³ General Sarrail was an impassive onlooker, and mentions the fire only in passing in his memoirs.²⁴ Even as the blaze was rampaging through the Greek refugee neighbourhoods and the upper, Muslim-populated quarters and advancing toward the center of town, throngs of people continued to stroll along the boardwalk by the sea and on Campagnias Avenue (today Vasilissis Olgas) dressed in their holiday best, as was the custom on Saturday afternoons. The cafés, restaurants, hotels, and gardens were filled with people leisurely enjoying the plentiful food and drink.²⁵ At 5:00 p.m., the café goers had yet to realise what was happening on the other side of Egnatia Street. The Italian Army orchestra was playing cheerful tunes in Eleftherias Square.²⁶ An unnamed person who was making his way from Boulgaroktonos Street up Venizelos Street toward the Square to enjoy the music, later wrote that he did notice an unusual number of porters and mules laden with household items and furniture, but the thought of a fire never occurred to him. At 8:30 that evening, there was still hope that

21. Maurice Sarrail, *Mon commandement en orient, 1916-1918* (Paris: Flammarion, 1920), 280.

22. Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, 'Great Fire in the Metropolis: The Case of the Istanbul Conflagration of 1569 and its Description by Marcantonio Barbaro', in *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter*, eds. David Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon (New York: Routledge, 2006).

23. Walsh, *Serbs in Macedonia*, 36-42.

24. Sarrail, *Mon commandement*, 271, 280.

25. 'Uziel, 'Salonika on Fire', 223; De Buton and Barzilay, *Fire of August 1917*, 22, 30.

26. Anonymous, 'L'incendie de Salonique'; Villari, *Macedonian Campaign*, 179.

Egnatia Street would somehow stop the blaze in its tracks.²⁷ But it was not long before here too, closer to the water, people understood that the fire was liable to reach them. By 10:00 p.m., it was clear that the large modern buildings along the seafront were also in danger.²⁸ Officers who had been staying in the hotels along the sea hastily packed their things, not knowing where they would spend the night, and the director of one of the major hotels served free whisky to his guests, remarking with a stoic sense of calm: 'Gentlemen! Here's to the last drink you'll be having in my establishment!'²⁹ A human river of men, women, children, and old people began to stream from the alleyways, lugging all that they could carry, 'pillows and down quilts being particularly favoured'. Women wrung their hands and wailed in despair. Screaming was heard from every corner, as mules, oxen, and wagons clattered over the paving stones amid the whistling of the wind and the roar of the fire. 'Satan's orchestra played a symphony beyond the wildest dreams of Richard Strauss against a backdrop of a mix of languages and tears' wrote a shaken Douglas Walsh.³⁰ Terrified families surrounded local wagon owners, begging to rescue something of their worldly possessions. Payment was in advance, of course, and the price was sky-high. Gradually, the Entente Powers understood the seriousness of the situation. Initially, it was British soldiers acting independently who extended help to anyone in need. British and French sailors took out pumps and stretched hoses, making the first organised attempt to douse the flames. But it was too little too late. Later on, Entente soldiers, in particular the British, mobilised to help the survivors reach temporary shelter. At first, refugees from the fire were directed to schools and churches that were unharmed, and later, to makeshift tent camps that were set up on the city's outskirts. Simultaneously, acts of looting by both soldiers and residents were taking place.³¹

By the evening hours of August 19, the fire had decimated most of the area where Jews had resided since 1492, that is, from the water's edge until Egnatia Street. Among the structures consumed were the post and telegraph offices, city hall, the gas and water companies, the Ottoman Bank, Athens

27. Anonymous, 'L'incendie de Salonique'.

28. Anonymous, 'L'incendie de Salonique'; Villari, *Macedonian Campaign*, 39.

29. *Ibid.*, 41-42.

30. Walsh, *Serbs in Macedonia*, 38 (see above, n. 16).

31. *Ibid.*, 39-44; Papastathis and Hekimoglou, *Great Fire*, 13-14.

Bank, part of St. Demetrius Church, two other churches, and 12 mosques. The Great Talmud Torah (a synagogue and religious school) was detonated by the French Army in hopes of halting the blaze, causing the loss of its huge, centuries-old library and the community archives.³² Sixteen of Salonika's 33 synagogues, the printing presses of most of the city's newspapers, hotels, restaurants, coffeehouses, cinemas, and the lion's share of the city's businesses were also burned to the ground. The fire had a major impact not only on the urban history of Salonika but also, and especially, on the robustness of the Jewish community. Some 73,448 individuals (52,000 of them Jews) were left without a roof over their heads. Of these, 40,000 were unable to help themselves. Of the 5,400 property owners in the area of the fire, 84% were Jews.³³ Damage from the fire was estimated at roughly 1 billion francs, with 75% of the losses sustained by Jews. Among the properties burned were most of the Jewish community's public buildings.³⁴

But, as always, life goes on. On the morning of August 20, the Floca café rose from the ashes and opened its doors. Chairs and tables were set up on the sidewalk, and it returned to being a meeting place for Entente soldiers, as if nothing had happened.³⁵ A day or two after the flames had died down, merchandise that had been rescued from the flames was offered for sale on the sidewalks or hung on fences, and all of Salonika became a city of peddlers and street vendors. Cafés, restaurants, and hotels that had survived the fire earned undreamed-of profits. Rooms for rent became a goldmine. Tiny, filthy shops by day charged deluxe hotel prices at night. Crowds of people squeezed into long lines each day to receive food distributed by the Entente armies, the Salonika municipality, and the Jewish community.³⁶

32. Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics'.

33. Joseph Nehama to the president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 16 January 1921, AIU GRÈCE XVIII E 202; Papastathis and Hekimoglou, *Great Fire*, 13-15.

34. Molho, *Jews of Salonika*, 120-122. For a detailed list of the streets affected by the fire, see 'Invitation of the Second Commission', *El Pueblo*, 9 December, 1918, 1 (Ladino).

35. Mann, *Salonika Front*, 15.

36. Walsh, *Serbs in Macedonia*, 45-46; Papastathis and Hekimoglou, *Great Fire*, 15-16; Villari, *Macedonian Campaign*, 182.

The reconstruction plan as seen by the refugees from the fire

Only a few days after the fire, the government of Eleftherios Venizelos announced that it would not allow the city to be rebuilt as before and would instead initiate the replanning of Salonika. Law No. 823 of 1917 was drawn up by Transportation Minister Alexandros Papanastasiou (1876-1936), who was entrusted with the reconstruction of the Burnt Zone. Papanastasiou established the International Committee for the Replanning of Salonika, with a team of architects appointed for this purpose under the direction of French architect Ernest Hébrard (1875-1933) and British town planner Thomas Mawson (1861-1933). On 29 June 1918, the plan was submitted to the General Administration of Macedonia as Law No. 1394. The original plan of the Venizelos government was to rebuild Salonika as an ideal European city. To this end, not only were the burnt areas expropriated but large swathes of the city that were not burned were slated to be razed and reconstructed. A total of 52% of the area was designated as public spaces, giant squares, and wide boulevards intended to make room for transportation for 350,000 people. Plans called for impressive edifices fronted by colonnades (as was the custom in the modern sections of Paris) that would form the basis of 'garden cities' for the middle class and well-planned neighbourhoods for 'the masses'.³⁷ The area was rezoned into large parcels of land, with prices to match. Those who had owned land in the Burnt Zone were given bonds based on the previous value of these parcels. The new plots were sold at auctions, where bond holders who showed that they had previously owned part of the new parcel could compete for its acquisition and use their bonds to pay a portion of the cost. The bonds could not be traded for several years, and people who were in immediate need of a place to live and had no intention of taking part in the auctions were forced to find roundabout ways of receiving something in return. Plots in the highest category, slated for commercial purposes, carried a high starting price, and the auctions were open to all. Generally speaking, the bond's value never covered the cost of a new parcel created by the redivision of the Burnt Zone.³⁸ Three years after the fire, only several dozen parcels out of the old 4,200 plots had been purchased for the purpose of rebuilding.³⁹

37. Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 79.

38. *Ibid.*, 79-80.

39. Joseph Nehama to the president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 16 January 1921, AIU GRÈCE XVIII E 202.

The Jews of Salonika were left dumbfounded by the news of the reconstruction. All the explanations of the need to modernise the city and of the new opportunities offered by the fire, not to mention the prospect of getting rich, fell on deaf ears. The Jewish community saw the rebuilding plan as an obvious scheme to disinherit them from their homes in the center of the city.⁴⁰ Indeed, of the seven neighbourhoods built to house Jewish refugees from the fire, in the end only one was near the Burnt Zone.⁴¹ For the ordinary man in the street, the rebuilding plan was a disaster.⁴² Many of the Greeks and Muslims who had lived in the Burnt Zone opposed the plan for the same reasons as most of the Jews. The immediate consequence of the plan was that most of the refugees from the fire were forced to seek a new place to live, which –if they were able to find one at all– cost them a great deal of money; likewise, many of them also lost the physical space where they had earned their livelihood. The refugees were housed in schools, churches, and synagogues, and were gradually dispersed beyond the traditional urban space where they had previously lived. These temporary shelters followed the route of the Entente army barracks, which surrounded the city. Thousands of people were housed in the barracks, in shacks, and in tents.⁴³ Rent prices in

40. JDC Archives, Records of the New York Office of the American Joint Distribution Committee [hereafter: JDC Archives], 1919-1921, Folder #146.1, report by Hetty Goldman to JDC Executive Committee, 8 July 1919. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1921/00015/NY_AR1921_00491.pdf

41. Rena Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods in Salonika Following the 1890 and 1917 Fires', in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, vol. 2, ed. Minna Rozen (Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, 2002), 188, n. 52.

42. For various opinions on the significance of the building plan, see Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 82, n. 34.

43. Apostolos Papagiannopoulos, *History of Thessaloniki* (Athens & Thessaloniki: John Rekos & Co., 1982), 231, citing a report dated 10 September 1917 by Alexandros Pallis, who was in charge of assisting the homeless families. Pallis reported that 7,529 individuals (1,733 families) were living in tents, and another 56,856 individuals (12,516 families) had found temporary shelter in houses and public buildings. De Buton and Barzilay, *Fire of August 1917*, 47-65, 87; Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'On the State of the Jewish Community of Salonica after the Fire of 1917: An Unpublished Memoir and Other Documents from the Papers of Henry Morgenthau', in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe from the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II*, ed. Ioannes K.Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), 149, n. 3.

the city, which had already been driven up due to the presence of the Entente soldiers, now skyrocketed. A squalid, unfurnished room rented for 150-200 francs a month. Since these rooms had no kitchens, residents were forced to eat out, and a daily meal at even the lowliest restaurant cost roughly 200 francs per month.⁴⁴ For many people, these 'temporary' shelters became their permanent places of residence. In December 1917, 10,000 families were still homeless, 3,200 of them in tents, 1,450 in stables, and 420 in the open air, exposed to the elements.⁴⁵ Less than a month after the fire, people realised that things would never be the same. Samuel Saltiel, a teacher at the Alliance school in Salonika, who understood that he could rent only a meager room for his family at an exorbitant price, asked the Alliance secretary in Paris for a transfer to Morocco.⁴⁶ Dr. Isac Cohen, a gynecological surgeon whose clinic with all its expensive equipment had gone up in flames, begged the Alliance secretary in Paris to grant him a loan so that he could purchase new equipment and continue to work in his profession, enabling him to put a roof of some kind over his family's heads.⁴⁷

Between London, Paris, Rome, and New York

Immediately upon publication of the government edict on the rebuilding of the city, in the autumn of 1917, Paris and London were flooded with protests from the Jews of Salonika, who viewed the plan with a mixture of anxiety and fury. Letters and communiqués sent to the Alliance administration in Paris led to a memorandum to Lucien Wolf (1857-1930), secretary of the Conjoint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Wolf took this memorandum to the Greek ambassador in London, Ioannis Genadios (1844-1932), to see what could be done to mitigate the damage. At

44. Letter from Samuel Saltiel, a teacher at the Alliance school, to the secretary of the Alliance in Paris, dated 20 September 1917. AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33. In 1917, the drachma was valued at slightly less than the franc. <http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html> (accessed 16 April 2017).

45. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, letter from C. Salem (presumably Emmanuel Salem) in Paris to David Lubin in Rome, 10 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03002.pdf#search=

46. Letter from Samuel Saltiel, 20 September 1917. AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33 (see above, n. 44).

47. Letter to the Alliance in Paris, 16 January 1918. AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33.

this point, Wolf made do with grievances against the anticipated fate of the expropriated property. He found Gennadios to be warm and courteous, with the ambassador assuring Wolf that the Greek government had no plans to strip the Jews of Salonika of their assets. Venizelos would never contemplate such a thing, and would certainly not allow the plan to be exploited by profiteers. In the opinion of Gennadios, it was all a misunderstanding, and the contrary was in fact true. The government of Greece intended to turn Salonika into the country's showpiece in Europe. Wolf raised the possibility that the grand plan had deteriorated in the hands of the officials tasked with its implementation, as often happens in government. In any case, he argued, the entire plan had been formulated without consulting the people of Salonika themselves. In a matter so vital to the residents, in particular the Jewish ones, he recommended that nothing be done without including the city's leaders and that any steps be taken on the basis of the interests of both Jews and Greeks, bearing in mind the prominent role of the Jews in Salonika's commerce. Wolf emphasised that if this had been done from the outset, no complaints would have come to 'our friends in Paris'. Gennadios promised to relay this information to Athens, stressing in particular the need to involve Salonika's Jewish leadership in the reconstruction plan. He himself, Gennadios stressed, felt great admiration for the Jews, as did Venizelos, who recognised the value of the 'Jewish element' in Salonika. He further noted the Greek government's cooperation with the British insurance companies, through which much of the burned property had been insured, and the involvement of the British architect Thomas Mawson in the replanning committee. Wolf, for his part, emphasised the great interest of the French government and public opinion in the future of Salonika, and the wisdom of resolving the problem of the Jewish community in an amicable manner.⁴⁸

This diplomatic exchange marked the first in a series of decreasingly polite conversations and correspondence between Wolf and other leaders of world Jewry, on the one hand, and Gennadios and Venizelos, on the other. In the meantime, autumn passed, and winter in Salonika painted everything in a worse light. Bitter complaints were accumulating over what seemed to

48. Letter from Lucien Wolf to the president of the Conjoint Foreign Committee, Claude Joseph Goldsmid Montefiore (1858-1938), 17 October 1917. AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33.

the Jews of Salonika to be highway robbery and left thousands of Jewish families homeless. Over the cold and rainy winter months, conditions in the tent cities became unbearable, exacerbating the need for a speedy solution to the problem of the fire victims. The question was not just political –how would the Greek government handle the rebuilding of the city– but also humanitarian, that is, how would it resolve the crisis created by the fire as rapidly as possible. The survivors of the blaze were added to the thousands of refugees who had earlier fled the fighting on the Balkan front, in particular the city of Monastir (today Bitola) in the Republic of Macedonia, which was emptied of all its inhabitants.⁴⁹ During the winter of early 1918, Rabbi Ya'akov Meir, the Chief Rabbi of the Salonika community, continued his efforts to enlist outside forces in abolishing the building plan, appealing to several influential individuals and Jewish organisations in Europe and the United States, while the official president of the community, Jacob Isac Cazes, did not protest or get involved.⁵⁰ Rabbi Meir was a Zionist by inclination, and the Zionists saw themselves as fighting for the lower and middle classes –the majority of the Jewish community in Salonika– whom they believed stood to lose the most from the building plan. The rabbi therefore saw himself as representing Salonika's Jews as a whole in his appeal to the Jews of the world. He did not trust the Greek government in the least, and a look at the community's archives may explain why.

49. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, summary of decisions of the subcommittee appointed on 6 May 1918 to discuss the situation in Salonika. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00001/NY_AR1418_02728.pdf

JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #149, translation of letter from Rabbi Meir regarding the situation in Florina and Monastir, 30 November 1916. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00004/NY_AR1418_03707.pdf#search=

JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #92, translation of cable from Rabbi Meir regarding the refugees from Monastir, received in New York 20 January 1917. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_01870.pdf

JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #92, excerpt from a letter by A. Solal (a Jew, based on his name), signing as an officer of the Armée d'Orient, 16 November 1916 (translated from the French). http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_01869.pdf#search=

See Solal's original letter: http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_01866.pdf#search=

50. Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 89-91.

Since the bulk of the fire victims were Jews, the archives would be expected to contain numerous documents attesting to the interest of the Greek government or the general administration of Macedonia in their fate. Surprisingly enough, however, in all sections of the archive only three such documents can be found. The first is an invitation sent to Rabbi Meir to participate in a meeting of the committee established by royal decree of King Alexander of Greece to collect contributions for those harmed by the fire.⁵¹

The committee included a government representative, the Mufti, the Chief Rabbi, the Metropolitan, the mayor of Salonika, the governor-general of Macedonia, and heads of the organisations of former residents of Thrace and Asia Minor. Several committee members were listed by name: Georgios Pentzikis, Kiros Kirtsis, Georgios Kavounidis, Athanasios Makris,⁵² Georgios Chrisafis, Eli Benouzilio, Joseph Misrachi, Saul Amar, Samuel D. Modiano, Jacob Cazes (president of the Jewish community), Ugo Mosseri, Rahim Efendi, Osman Sayit (the mayor), and Ali Demir. Also invited to sit on the committee were the ambassadors of France, England, Russia, Italy, the United States, Spain, Romania, and Serbia. The committee was headed by the government representative and, in his absence, by the Metropolitan. It is difficult to arrive at a precise total of the committee members since some of them are listed both by name and position; but given the fact that the overwhelming majority of those affected by the fire were Jews, it is noteworthy that only seven members of the committee were Jewish: Rabbi Meir, Jacob Isac Cazes,⁵³ Joseph Misrachi,⁵⁴

51. CAHJP, GR/SA 2, communications from the Greek authorities regarding assistance to victims of the 1917 fire, 7 September 1917.

52. Makris was an important textile manufacturer and one of the founders of the Salonika Manufacturers Association and of the city's Chamber of Commerce, serving as its first president as of 16 May 1919 (Alexandros Dagkas, *Recherches sur l'histoire sociale de la Grèce du nord: le mouvement des ouvriers du tabac 1918-1928* [Paris: Association Pierre Belon, 2003], 76, 284, 288).

53. On Jacob Isac Cazes, the president of the Jewish community, see Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 85-86.

54. Joseph Misrachi was a member of the Community Executive Council in 1902 and 1911. He was actively involved with the Hirsch Hospital and was a member of the Executive Committee of the Great Talmud Torah. His wife, Angelique, appears on a list of contributors for the construction of the Great Talmud Torah in 1902. *El Avenir*, 4 May 1902 (Moscow Archives, fond 1435, opis 1, doc. 8654) (Ladino). Misrachi also served as president of the Alliance office in Salonika. He was co-owner of the Olympos brewery with

Samuel Daniel Modiano,⁵⁵ Saul Amar,⁵⁶ Ugo Mosseri,⁵⁷ and Eli Benouzilio,⁵⁸ most of whom held key positions in the community. Jacob Cazes, Joseph

the Allatini and Fernandez Diaz families, a spinning mill together with the Tores family, and a burlap sack factory with the Fernandez Diaz and Tores families. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Bank of Salonika and of the city's Chamber of Commerce, and was a founder and second president of the Manufacturers Association of Macedonia. He also served as director of the Salonikan Commercial Society, which traded in tobacco. His personal fortune was estimated at £10,000-15,000. Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 82. For more on Misrachi, see below.

55. Mario Modiano, *Hamehune Modillano: The Genealogical Story of the Modiano Family from ~1570 to Our Days* (Athens, 2000), chart 20. http://www.themodianos.gr/The_Story.pdf (accessed 25 August 2017).

Mario Modiano claims that he was elected president for life, and for this reason renounced his Italian citizenship, but I was unable to find evidence to support this. For Samuel David Modiano (1845-1930), see *ibid.*, 88, 100. He was a member of the Community Executive Council in 1902, 'Inquest: The Crisis in the Community', *La Epoka*, 31 January 1902 (Ladino). In 1910, he served as president of the Jewish community, Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, 29. Modiano also sat on the Executive Committee of the Salonika Chamber of Commerce.

56. Saul Abraham Amar (1881-1943) was the owner of a bank in Salonika and also in Paris. Μαργαρίτα Δρίτσα, «Πολιτισμική ιδιαιτερότητα και επιχειρήσεις: η περίπτωση των εβραϊκών δικτύων», στο: Εταιρεία Σπουδών Νεοελληνικού Πολιτισμού και Γενικής Παιδείας, Ο Ελληνικός Εβραϊσμός. Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο 3-4 Απριλίου 1998 (Αθήνα, 1999) [Margarita Dritsa, 'Cultural Specificity and Enterprises: The Case of Jewish Networks', The Company for Study of Neo-Hellenic Culture and General Education, Scientific Symposium on Greek Jewry, 3-4 April 1998 (Athens, 1999)], 317, 341, n. 24; Ευάγγελος Χεκίμογλου, 'Δύο τραπεζικές ανώνυμες εταιρείες στη Θεσσαλονίκη του μεσοπολέμου: Τράπεζα Αμάρ και Τράπεζα Ένωσις', *Χρονικά* 241, Ιούλιος-Σεπτέμβριος 2013, 9-14 [Evangelos Hekimoglou, 'Two Joint Stock Banking Companies in Mid-War Thessaloniki; Amar Bank and Union Bank', *Chronika* 241 (July-September 2013), 9-14]; Orly C. Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship in Salonika 1912-1940: An Ethnic Economy in Transition* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), 4, 56-57. In 1911, Amar served on the community's Executive Committee and on the Auditing Committee managing the community's assets, *Almanach national au profit de l'hôpital de Hirsch* (Salonique, 1911), 100. In 1913-14, he served as honorary translator of the French Consulate in Salonika, where he presumably obtained French citizenship, *Almanach national au profit de l'hôpital de Hirsch* (Salonique, 1914), 61. In 1919, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Salonika Chamber of Commerce, serving as vice-president of its Executive Committee. (My thanks to Paris Papamichos Chronakis, who provided me with a list of members of the Executive Committee of the Chamber of Commerce.) In 1922, he moved to France, and

Misrachi, Saul Amar, Ugo Mosseri, and Samuel Daniel Modiano were also wealthy businessmen with numerous assets.

The second document dealing with the fire is a letter dated 19 September 1917 from the Governor-General of Macedonia to the Central Committee for Aid to Jewish Fire Victims regarding the relocation of some of them, who were tobacco workers, to the city of Volos.⁵⁹

And lastly, there is a letter from 28 October 1919 to the Jewish community orphanage asking for information on its residents and activities, apparently in response to a request for support following the fire.⁶⁰

It is reasonable to assume that the community archives contained other documents from the state authorities relating to the fire, but if there were a large number of such records, more than three would have been found, and the lack of documentation is suggestive of a lack of interest on the part of the state in the fate of the Jewish victims –the very indifference that led Rabbi Meir to turn to world Jewry for help. Hetty Goldman, who was sent by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (hereafter: JDC) in 1918 to

was murdered by the Germans in 1943, 'Saul Amar', The Central Database Of Shoah Victims' Names (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem) http://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=he&s_lastName=AMAR&s_firstName=SAUL&s_place= (accessed 25 August 2017).

57. Ugo Mosseri (1878-1943) served as director of the Banque de Salonique, Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, 147. In 1916, he was the Dutch consul in Salonika, *Almanach national au profit de l'hôpital de Hirsch* (Salonique, 1916), 60. In 1917, his family founded the Mosseri & Cie Bank, a medium-sized institution, which became Banque Union in 1926 and developed ties with the U.S. and, primarily, with France. This is likely the reason why he moved to France, where he was later murdered by the Germans in 1943 (based on a list of deportations from France found in: Béate et Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de France* [Paris, 1978]); 'Ugo Mosseri', The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem) <http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=3205023&ind=0> (accessed 25 August 2017).

58. Eli (Eliyahu) Benouzilio was president of the community from 1930. See Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics,' 113, n. 123. See further: Minna Rozen, 'The Jewish Community of Salonika, 1912-1941: Organizational Patterns', in *Αρχείων Ανάλεκτα: Περιοδική έκδοση μελέτης και έρευνας αρχείων (δεύτερη περίοδος)* (Θεσσαλονίκη 2016) [Archives, Collected Papers: *Periodical of Studies and Archival Research* (Second Series) (Thessaloniki, 2016)] 1, 338-340.

59. CAHJP, GR/SA 2, communications from the Greek authorities regarding assistance to victims of the 1917 fire, 1917-1919.

60. Ibid.

assist in the rehabilitation of victims of the fire, described the efforts of the Greek government as follows: 'They did not do anything energetic'.⁶¹

Rabbi Meir's letters were sent to the N. M. Rothschild & Sons banking house in London, and passed on to Lucien Wolf. Likewise, letters were sent by Rabbi Meir and the American consul in Salonika, George Horton (1859-1942), to the JDC leadership in New York. Joseph Misrachi, president of the Executive Committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Salonika, appealed to the Alliance leadership in Paris. In April 1918, Lucien Wolf once again approached the Greek ambassador in London, Gennadios, bemoaning the situation of the Jews of Salonika. The complaint was (again) passed on to the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who promised to address their wretched situation.⁶² At the same time the government of Greece was forced to contend with pressures emanating from American Jewry. The letters reaching the leadership of the JDC from Rabbi Meir and the American consul in Salonika led the JDC to the conclusion that a person of political influence must be sent to Salonika to assess the situation. They approached David Lubin, a Jewish businessman from California who had earned his fortune on large-scale agricultural projects; many of his business ventures involved emigrants from Italy. In 1908, under the auspices of Victor Emmanuel III, the King of Italy, he had established the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome. (After World War II, its powers were given over to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.) Lubin also spearheaded an international conference in Rome aimed at establishing a world bank, an endeavour that brought him to that city in May 1918.⁶³ This

61. Report by Hetty Goldman to JDC Executive Committee, 8 July 1919 (see above, n. 40).

62. Lucien Wolf to Gennadios, 19 April 1918, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 4*, 76; Gennadios to Lucien Wolf, 22 April 1918, *ibid.*, doc. 5*, 77; minutes of meeting between Venizelos and representatives of the Jewish community in London, 23 April 1918, *ibid.*, doc. 6*, 77-79; Gennadios to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 25 April 1918, *ibid.*, doc. 7, 79-80.

63. 'Plans Financial Peace: David Lubin Suggests an International Reserve After the War', *New York Times*, 27 June 1918, 1. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9E0DEEDB173EE433A25754C2A9609C946996D6CF&legacy=true> (accessed 20 August 2017); 'Asks Reserve Board for All Nations; David Lubin Sees Need of Worldwide System to Meet Needs After War. Fears Panics Otherwise. Says Board Would Serve as International Policeman, Keeping Financial Peace of Allies', *The New York Times*, 28 July 1918, 1.

body went on to become the World Bank that we know today. He was thus an individual with international ties and no small amount of influence in the United States and various circles.

On 22 May 1918, a cable came to the United States Embassy in Rome from the JDC Distribution Committee in New York, quoting the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing. The missive (see below), which was meant for David Lubin, was immediately relayed to him by the Embassy:

Washington, May 21, 1918.

AMEMBASSY - ROME.

1319 May 21, noon (GEBVI) For David Lubin from Joint Distribution Committee New York City. Quote. Reports from Grand Rabbi Meier and Consul Saloniki very distressing. They ask us send someone from here investigate and report us direct. If you would undertake this nobody better qualified could possibly be found and we deeply appreciate. Prepared make substantial appropriation after receipt specific information.

LANSING⁶⁴

Lubin understood from the cable that Lansing was asking him to travel to Salonika, but a conversation with an official at the embassy made it clear that while Lansing had in fact sent the cable, the request came from the JDC, and the astonished Lubin had no idea who or what the JDC was.⁶⁵ Despite his bewilderment, the situation appeared quite serious and he consulted with several individuals and organisations in Rome, among them the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Dr. Angelo Sacerdoti;⁶⁶ Comandante Ernesto Nathan, the previous

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9E00EED8143EE433A2575BC2A9619C946996D6CF&legacy=true> (accessed 20 August 2017).

64. For the original cable as received by the American Embassy in Rome, see JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_02994.pdf

65. See letter from JDC Secretary to David Lubin, 20 May 1918, JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_02984.pdf

66. Dr. Sacerdoti served in this position from 1912 to 1935. Filomena Del Regno, 'Gli ebrei a Roma tra le due guerre mondiali: fonti e problemi di ricerca', *Storia Contemporanea* 1 (February 1992), 11-15, 19-20; Nicola Bertini, 'La comunità ebraica de Roma, aspetti dello "spirito pubblico" 1930-1939' (tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Roma 'La Sapienza', 1993-1994); David Gianfranco Di Segni, 'Angelo Sacerdoti, "Il

mayor of Rome;⁶⁷ the American Red Cross in Rome, Comandante Avvocato (Adv.) Angelo Sereni, president of the Jewish community in Rome and chairman of the Association of Jewish Communities in Italy;⁶⁸ Vitale Milano, a businessman and, after World War II, also president of the Jewish community in Rome;⁶⁹ and Dr. Dante Lattes, an Italian Jewish rabbi, journalist, publisher, and politician.⁷⁰ After speaking with Lubin, these individuals set up a

Reggitori” degli ebrei d’Italia: la vita, gli studi e la nomina a rabbino capo di Roma’, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 79, no. 1/3 (January-December 2013): 47-69.

67. Ernesto Nathan (1848, London-1921, Rome) promoted secular education in Rome. During his term as mayor (from 1907 to 1913), a public transport network (ATAC) was created in 1911, as well as a city energy company (ACEA), in 1912. ‘Jew To Be Mayor of Rome; Outcome of Anti-Clerical Victory in Recent Election’, *The New York Times*, 22 November 1907.

<https://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9807E0D7103EE033A25751C2A9679D946697D6CF> (accessed 24 April 2017); Maria Mantello, ‘Giustizia, libertà e laicità: la lezione di Ernesto Nathan’, *Micromega* 22 (January 2013). http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/giustizia-liberta-e-laicita-la-lezione-di-ernesto-nathan/?refresh_ce (accessed 20 August 2017).

68. Angelo Sereni (1862, Rome-1936, Rome). <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persone/detail/person-cdec201-327/sereni-angelo.html?persone=%22Sereni%2C+Angelo%22> (accessed 23 April 2017).

69. Vitale Milano (1874, Rome-1955, Rome). <http://x.liebowitzes.com/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I3463&tree=OurFam> (accessed 23 April 2017). I am indebted to Mr. Angelo Piattelli of Jerusalem for this information.

70. Dante Lattes (1876, Pitigliano-1965, Dolo) was an outstanding spokesman of the Italian Zionist movement. He founded the periodical *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* (1925), was a member of the Executive Committee of the Jewish communities of Italy (1933), and was among the founders of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva (1936). He left Italy and settled in pre-State Palestine in 1938, returning to Italy in 1946. He became the vice-president of the Union of Jewish Congregations in Italy, and served as director of the Rabbinic Seminary in Rome. Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Dante Lattes, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 64 (2005). [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dante-lattes_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dante-lattes_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed 20 August 2017); Cecil Roth, ‘Lattes, Dante’, in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971); Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, ‘Dante Lattes, Ebraismo, Ebraismo, nazione e modernità prima della Grande Guerra (1898-1914)’, *Bailamme* 8 (1990): 113-138; Valentina Piattelli, ‘Il nazismo e la “questione ebraica” attraverso le pagine di “Israel” (1933-1938)’ (tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Firenze, 1999); Augusto Segre, Dante Lattes, *Breve biografia* <http://www.archivio-torah.it/ebooks/salmi/dantelattes.htm> (accessed 23 April 2017); D. Fubini, ‘Dante Lattes e

committee to assist in the Salonikan matter. Lubin also spoke with the Greek ambassador in Rome, Lambros A. Koromilas, 1867-1923). The results of his consultations, which were sent to the banker Jacob Schiff⁷¹ in New York, reveal a nuanced understanding of both the situation in Salonika and of what could be done to aid the Jewish community there. As Lubin wrote to Schiff:

Substantially, the ground which four centuries of commercial activity has rendered valuable 'downtown' property, is to be expropriated at a value to be fixed for the owners by a government commission; the owners to be paid in bonds maturing in twenty years. They are then to be offered ground for settlement in a suburb of the city, and begin over again a new start.

*All this will afford the Government a chance to turn the valuable 'downtown' property over to a new group of owners. Against this the sufferers seem to put up whatever protest is possible for them under the circumstances.*⁷²

Lubin had no information other than the cable from Lansing and whatever he had managed to glean from the people whom he had consulted. Nonetheless, the portrait that he painted is surprising in its clarity and sharpness. Also unexpected is the speed with which he acted and the quick solutions that he immediately attempted to implement with regard to his authority. He wrote to Schiff that there was no point in his traveling to Salonika to move the humanitarian issue forward. This could be done by local committees in conjunction with the Red Cross, for example. He felt that it was more important to attend to the legal aspect, and to this end, he needed genuine powers. Since the U.S. wanted American capital to replace German capital in the Italian economy, which was the reason a special envoy named Nelson Brown had been sent to Italy, Lubin suggested that Brown's sphere of

la ricostruzione culturale delle comunità ebraiche italiane dopo la Shoah' (Tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Pisa, 2000).

71. For more on Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), see Naomi Wiener Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999).

72. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, letter from David Lubin to Jacob Schiff in New York, 29 May 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_02994.pdf#search=Ibid., letter from David Lubin to Felix Warburg in New York, 28 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03018.pdf

activity be expanded to include additional parts of the devastated continent, for instance Greece, and began pushing for this in concert with the American Ambassador Thomas N. Page. Further, Lubin proposed that he himself be sent to Greece, along with Brown, for the same purpose, granting him an official status of sorts in that country. Lubin recounted his idea to the American ambassador in Rome, telling him that in his conversations with the Greek ambassador in Rome, the latter had sounded very interested in American investment in his country. Lastly, Lubin requested the names and addresses of the heads of the JDC in New York.⁷³

As relayed by Koromilas and understood by the Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, his conversations with Lubin did not include the latter's concerns about his lack of formal standing. Lubin had told him that the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing had instructed him to travel urgently to Salonika to investigate the circumstances of the city's Jews, which was described as 'catastrophic'. Lubin had asked Koromilas for precise details, noting that if it emerged that the situation was not good, this would harm relations between the United States and Greece. If he would receive detailed information, he stated, there would be no need for him to travel to Salonika.⁷⁴

From the Greek perspective, Lubin seemed to feel safe enough in his standing to threaten Greek interests. Koromilas was not only the Greek Ambassador to Rome but an influential figure in the history of Greek Salonika. From 1904 to 1907, he had served as the Greek consul in Salonika and was responsible for intensive activity aimed at advancing the city's Hellenisation as well as preparing the city for the impending war. Between 1907 and 1910, he was Greece's ambassador to Washington. During the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), he served as the Greek Foreign Minister, and from 1915 to 1920, was Greece's ambassador to Rome.⁷⁵ He was thus familiar not only with Salonika and its problems but with the United States and its political thinking. Koromilas sent urgent requests to the Greek Foreign Ministry to clarify those

73. Ibid., letter from David Lubin to Jacob Schiff in New York, 29 May 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_02994.pdf#search=

74. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 10, 83-85.

75. Αντώνης Μακρυδημήτρης, *Οι υπουργοί των εξωτερικών της Ελλάδας 1829-2000*, εκδ. Καστανιώτης, Αθήνα, 2000 [Antonis Makrydimitris, *The Foreign Ministers of Greece* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2000)], 73-74.

points for which he had insufficient information, in particular concerning the fire and its consequences – an event that had taken place when he was no longer in Salonika. The Greek government related with the utmost seriousness to Lubin's questions, with various government ministries being asked to respond.

In an undated memorandum from 1918 found in the archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry (apparently an appendix to correspondence with various individuals at Greek embassies around the world), it is stated that the information imparted to Koromilas by Lubin was false and without foundation. According to the memorandum, this included allegations that the Greek government planned to destroy the entire southern section of the city. Reading between the lines, it appears that the reference is to the burnt sections as well as others, as laid out in the Hébrard plan.⁷⁶ Echoing Lubin's letter to Jacob Schiff, there were also accusations that, after expropriating the land and razing the existing buildings, the government would set a price for the land, which then would be sold to a private Greek company.

The response of the Greek government to these claims was that under the plan, as stipulated in the law enacted for this purpose, the value of each plot was to be determined by a committee consisting of municipal representatives, landowners, and a judge. In cases where the landowner was dissatisfied with the price that was set, he could appeal to the courts. Every landowner who had in his possession documents proving ownership was entitled to demand a price equal to three quarters of the 'true' price of the land (namely, the one determined by the committee). After the routes of the new roads and the boundaries of the new plots had been decided, the latter would be offered for sale at auction. The former landowners would have first bidding rights. Only the areas where new stores and commercial zones were slated to be built would pass into the hands of the tycoons, and this only after an auction had taken place. An individual buyer was forbidden to purchase more than two parcels of land. At the same time, a citizen who had owned more than two parcels of land prior to the fire would be entitled to purchase an identical number of plots at auction. The revenues from each parcel would be divided as follows: The holder of the bond would receive the value of the land; the municipality would receive a sum of money for the costs of paving new roads and installing a sewage system; and the remaining amount

76. See above, p. 192.

would be divided equally between the former owner and the municipality – on condition that the latter invest the money for the benefit of the area. In answer to the question posed by Koromilas, the authors of the memorandum responded that they did not know how many Jewish landowners applied to repurchase their plots of land in the central commercial district, and in their opinion, many would wish to purchase land in other sections of the city.

A separate memorandum (also undated), which appears to be a revised version of the previous one, explains in greater depth the auctioning-off of properties in the Burnt Zone, and responds to additional claims that were apparently raised by the Jewish community. In this later memo, it was written that the proceeds from the auction would be used, first and foremost, to redeem the bonds issued to those who had owned properties in the Burnt Zone and had not repurchased plots of land there. The cost of replanning the city, as well as a third of the cost of the new infrastructure, would be deducted from this amount. Whatever remained would be divided into two equal parts: one for the Salonika municipality, provided that it use the sum for infrastructure; and the other, to be divided among the previous owners in direct proportion to the size and value of their parcels prior to the fire. Moreover, it was explained, the plan had been drawn up in such a way that the former landowners could only benefit from it. It was emphasised in particular, in this version of the memo, that the allegations that Jews had been advised to purchase plots outside the Burnt Zone were incorrect.⁷⁷

On 16 May 1918, the Greek Ministry of Transportation, which was in charge of the reconstruction plan, responded to the charges by the Jewish community that the Greek survivors of the fire were being favoured over the Jews. The Ministry stated that Salonikans who had been harmed by the fire had received a special budget of 1,150,000 drachmas from the Ministry of the Interior. The money had been placed in escrow with the committee established to tend to the victims of the fire. As far as they were concerned, there had been no discrimination by religion in the allocation of funds. From 2 August 1917 until 31 March 1918, the survivors were given food, blankets, and medicines worth a total of 1,338,880 drachmas. In addition, 263,000 drachmas were allocated for initial repairs. According to the Transportation Ministry, this left the sum of 166,845.98 drachmas in the committee's treasury. To aid in the committee's work, every religious group set up its own subcommittee that raised

77. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 1, 71-72.

funds to assist its members. The Jewish community raised the sum of 677,614 drachmas and collected goods in the amount of 126,395 drachmas. The Transportation Ministry decided to provide a loan of 5,200,000 drachmas for the municipality to build homes for refugees from the fire without regard to religious affiliation, as well as an open-air market, schools, and public buildings for both Greeks and Jews. Part of this same sum was also to be devoted to cleaning up the streets and the destroyed buildings, and constructing the infrastructure needed to resettle the refugees.⁷⁸

The document attached to the earlier memorandum noted that the state was providing a loan of 5 million drachmas to build new homes for those harmed by the fire. Here too, there would be no religious discrimination. The Chief Rabbi's request for special new homes for the rabbis was granted. Large commercial establishments received permits for rebuilding or renovations – a move that, according to the Ministry, was highly favourable to the Jewish businessmen.⁷⁹

The General Administration of Macedonia was expected to provide answers as well, and its director, Periklis Argyropoulos (1871-1953), responded to the Foreign Ministry on at least two occasions with slight, but telling, differences. On 22 May 1918, he wrote in answer to the question of how much had been spent to rehabilitate the Jewish survivors of the fire that he was unable to provide exact figures. However, he was able to report that in September 1917, the number of persons receiving free bread from the Aid Committee was 8,374 Christians, 24,950 Jews, and 8,446 Muslims. The same proportions can be applied to other expenditures, since the number of persons receiving free bread was used as the basis for calculating this assistance. Hence it could be concluded that at least sixty percent of the Aid Committee's funds was being spent on Jews. Fifteen Greek families and 172 Jewish families were still living in the temporary shelters provided by the city. A total of 70 Greek and 113 Jewish families were living in requisitioned Greek schools, 243 Greek and 325 Jewish families in shacks built by the state, and 530 Jewish families in tents. It was hoped that 200 of these would be housed within two months and the remainder within five, depending on the progress in constructing new buildings.⁸⁰

78. *Ibid.*, doc. 8, 80-81.

79. *Ibid.*, att. to doc. 8, 81-82.

80. *Ibid.*, doc. 8, 82-83.

Argyropoulos also wrote that he had no objections to an American representative coming to Salonika to investigate the situation in an impartial manner. For this purpose, he could speak with the local Red Cross representative, who was well aware of the work being done, and valued it greatly. Argyropoulos noted that any contradictory reports came from Rabbi Meir, who complained unceasingly and suspected prejudice on racial grounds.⁸¹ Not long afterward, on 1 June 1918, Argyropoulos sent an additional letter; this missive is not found in the English version of Constantopoulou and Veremis's book, but only in the Greek version, in which the letter of 22 May is omitted. In the June letter, Argyropoulos repeated all the data included in the earlier communiqué, but, in contrast with the previous one, he now wrote that the American envoy's visit to Salonika should be prevented, as its sole purpose was to level criticism at the work being carried out. In his opinion, the inaccurate information that had been conveyed to the Red Cross came from Rabbi Meir, who constantly complained of religious discrimination.⁸²

On the assumption that both documents are in fact found in the Greek Foreign Ministry archives, we are left with the impression that on 22 May, Argyropoulos believed that the Red Cross representative took a favourable view of the work of the Greek government in rehabilitating the survivors of the fire and he was therefore unopposed to a visit by an American envoy; however, by 1 June, he became aware that the representative had changed his mind, and in a situation where the Chief Rabbi, the American consul, and the Red Cross representative all felt that the Greek government was not doing enough, and was perhaps discriminating against Salonika's Jews, he preferred to recommend the cancellation of the visit, which appeared highly damaging to Greek interests.

While Argyropoulos, Gennadios, and Venizelos were struggling with how to handle Greece's public relations overseas, wealthy members of the Jewish community, who understood the commercial potential of the reconstruction, became aware of the correspondence with David Lubin and may

81. *Ibid.*, doc. 9, 82-83.

82. Φωτεινή Κωνσταντοπούλου, Θάνος Βερέμης, *Οι Έλληνες Εβραίοι, Στοιχεία της ιστορίας τους μέσα από διπλωματικά και ιστορικά έγγραφα του ΥΠ. ΕΞ* (Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης, 2000) [Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis, eds., *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2000), doc. 9, 92-93.

have feared that he would throw a monkey wrench into their plans. One of them is mentioned as the person who passed along the information on the contact with Lubin to Adv. Emmanuel Salem in Paris. The informant was someone from the Fernandez Diaz family whose first name is not noted in the document before us. Almost certainly, it was Dino Fernandez, who was a key figure in the family at the time. This Franco⁸³ family, who were Italian subjects, were co-owners of the Olympus brewery,⁸⁴ a burlap sack factory,⁸⁵ a textile mill,⁸⁶ and various banks and commercial enterprises in Salonika and Istanbul.⁸⁷ Their daughter had married into the Camondo family when it re-

83. Jews of Portuguese origin, who had been living in Livorno under the aegis of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany since the end of the sixteenth century and whose scions settled in Salonika at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They were referred to as Francos by the local Jews, either because they came from Catholic Europe (Franjistan, in Ottoman Turkish), or because they were exempted from the Ottoman taxes due to their foreign allegiance ('Franco' means free in Spanish). See Minna Rozen, 'France and the Jews of Egypt: An Anatomy of Relations, 1683-1801', in *The Jews in Ottoman Egypt (1517-1914)*, ed. Jacob M. Landau (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 1988), 421-470 (Hebrew); Minna Rozen, 'Contest and Rivalry in Mediterranean Maritime Commerce in the First Half of the 18th Century: The Jews of Salonika and the European Presence', *Revue des Études Juives* CXLVII (1988): 309-352.

84. Meropi Anastasiadou, *Salonique, 1830-1912: Une ville ottoman a l'âge des réformes* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 197.

85. Donald Quataert, 'The Industrial Working Class of Salonika, 1850-1912', in *Days of the Crescent: Chapters in the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Minna Rozen (Tel Aviv: The Diaspora Research Institute-Tel Aviv University, 1996), 311-31, esp. 315-16, 321-23 (Hebrew); Αλέξανδρος Δάγκας, *Συμβολή στην Έρευνα για την Οικονομική και Κοινωνική Εξέλιξη της Θεσσαλονίκης: Οικονομική Δομή και Κοινωνικός Καταμερισμός της Εργασίας, 1912-1940*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Επαγγελματικό Επιμελητήριο Θεσσαλονίκης 1998 [Alexandros Dagkas, *A Contribution to the Study of the Economic and Social Development of Salonika: Economic Stratification and Social Division of Labor, 1912-1940* (Thessaloniki: Epaggelmatiko Epimelthrio, 1998), 62; Anastasiadou, *Salonique*, 197.

86. Αναστασιάδης, Γιώργος και Ευάγγελος Χεκίμογλου, *Όταν η Θεσσαλονίκη μπήκε στον 20ό αιώνα: Τα διακόσια σημαντικότερα γεγονότα που συνέβησαν στην πόλη από το 1900 ως το 1910* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 2000) [Georgios Anastasiadis and Evangelos Hekimoglou, *When Thessaloniki Entered the Twentieth Century: The Two Hundred Most Important Events in The City from 1900 to 1910* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2000)], 76; Dagkas, *Recherches*, 77.

87. Dritsa, 'Cultural Specificity', 334; Dagkas, *Contribution*, 113-114. Solomon Fernandez was one of the founders and the director of the Société Générale de l'Empire Ot-

sided in Istanbul, and were related by marriage to the Allatini, Modiano, and Misrachi families in Salonika.⁸⁸ Dino Fernandez had founded the Manufacturers Association of Salonika (15 January 1914), and served as its vice-president in 1915.⁸⁹ That year, he also became president of the Association of Fire Insurance Companies of Salonika.⁹⁰

There is reason to believe that Lubin's involvement in the Salonika reconstruction plan was not unknown to Dino Fernandez. Fernandez was familiar with the doings of the local JDC office, which was run by a fellow Italian Jew and a family member of his, Moise Morpurgo.⁹¹ On 11 July 1919, when it became apparent that Dr. Leon Modiano, a relative of both of theirs

toman, *Journal officiel de la République française*, 5th year, no.1, 6 January 1873, 78; 24 January 1873, 414.

88. For the close marital ties between the Fernandez, Allatini, Morpurgo, and Misrachi families, see Evangelhos Hekimoglou, 'The "Immortal" Allatini; Ancestors and Relatives of Noemie Allatini-Bloch (1860-1928)', (Thessaloniki: Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, 2012), 4-8. On the marital ties between the Fernandez and Modiano families, see the family tree of the Modianos: <http://www.themodianos.gr/Tree.pdf> (accessed 20 August 2017). Nissim de Camondo (1839-1880) was married to Alice Fernandez (1840-1910). <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/musees/musee-nissim-de-camondo/la-famille-camondo/la-genealogie/l-arbre-genealogique> (accessed 20 August 2017).

89. Dagkas, *Contribution*, 525.

90. *Ibid.*, 305-306. In 1924, the Dino Fernandez Co. was a member of the Manufacturers Association of Macedonia. In July 1927, the Olympus Naoussa brewery was acquired by the Fix Co. from Athens for the sum of roughly 45,000 pounds sterling. According to a 1942 report by the Italian consulate in Salonika, Fernandez was one of three Jews whose jointly owned factories were valued at 32 million drachmas (in 1939 terms). See below, p. 232. He and his family, along with a group of fellow Jews from Salonika who held Italian citizenship, were murdered by the SS Panzergrenadier Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler at the Meina Hotel on Lake Garda on 15 September 1943. See Daniel Carpi, 'A New Approach to Some Episodes in the History of the Jews in Salonika during the Holocaust - Memory, Myth, Documentation', in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans 1808-1945*, ed. Minna Rozen, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), 286-289; Marco Nozza, *Hotel Meina. La prima strage di ebrei in Italia* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2008), 3, 17, 64, 115; Carlo Gentile, 'Settembre 1943 Documenti sull'attività della divisione "Leibstandarte-SS-Adolf-Hitler" in Piemonte'. https://www.academia.edu/1351580/Settembre_1943_Documenti_sullattivita%20della_divisione_Leibstandarte-SS-Adolf-Hitler_in_Piemonte (accessed 20 August 2017).

91. For more on Morpurgo, see below p. 233.

and a member of the JDC's Executive Committee in Salonika, had left the city, Dino Fernandez was chosen to replace him.⁹² However, his standing and contacts were such that the matter was brought to his attention also by way of the American or Italian consuls in Salonika. In any event, he hastened to write to his friend, a respected Salonikan Jew who had moved to Paris. The recipient of the letter appears in the archives of the JDC as C. Salem; but since we have in our possession only an English translation of the letter, we cannot confirm the accuracy of the signature. There is no question that the reference was to the well-known Salonikan lawyer Emmanuel Salem, who specialised in commercial and international law, and was trusted by both the Hamidian regime and the Young Turks. Salem was considered one of the most important lawyers in the Ottoman Empire, if not the most important one. Not long after the Greeks entered Salonika, he had relocated with his family to Paris.⁹³

Salem, who was actually acting on Fernandez's behalf, put himself forward as someone who was interested in the matter, had studied it in depth, and could offer further clarification. He wrote to Lubin that when Venizelos had arrived in Paris (for the Peace Conference), he himself, M. Sée (president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle), the banker Solomon Reinach (who was married to Beatrice de Camondo, a descendant of Alice Fernandez of Salonika),⁹⁴ Carl Netter,⁹⁵ Rabbi Yisrael Lévi (Chief Rabbi of France), Prof. Syl-

92. JDC Archives, 1919-1921, Folder #146.1, letter from the president of the local JDC branch in Salonika, Moise Morpurgo, and the secretary, Mr. Veisi, to the JDC Executive Committee in New York, 11 July 1919. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1921/00015/NY_AR1921_00510.pdf#search=

93. For more on Emmanuel Salem (1859-1940), see Yosef ben Pinhas 'Uziel, *The White Tower* (Tel Aviv: Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, 1978), 87-89 (Hebrew); J. J. O'Connor and E. F. Robertson, 'Raphaël Salem'. <http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/Biographies/Salem.html> (accessed 22 April 2017); Gershon Lewental, 'Salem, Emmanuel Raphael', in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/salem-emmanuel-raphael-SIM_0018970 (accessed 27 August 2017).

94. See above, n. 88.

95. Probably Carl Leopold Netter (1864, Bühl-1922, Baden Baden), Dionys Höß, 'Carl Leopold Netter-ein Mann, in welchem Geist ist', in *Jüdisches Leben. Auf den Spuren der israelitischen Gemeinde* (Bühler Heimatgeschichte, Band 15) (Bühl: Stadtgeschichtliches Institut, 2001), 22-28.

vain Lévi (Chaire de langue et littérature sanscrites at the Collège de France, who represented French Jewry at the Paris Peace Conference),⁹⁶ and M. Jacques Bigard (secretary of the Alliance) had spoken with him. According to Salem, Venizelos emphasised that the expropriation project was his personal initiative, and that it was dictated by the desire not only to quickly rebuild the city but also to safeguard the rights of those harmed by the fire. Venizelos informed them that he planned to travel to Salonika himself to persuade the Jewish community of this. It was Salem's impression, he wrote to Lubin, that there was no way whatsoever to cancel the expropriation as Mr. Venizelos was extremely determined on that score. In any case, the members of the delegation were satisfied that any profits arising from the auctioning of the plots would be paid to the injured parties, and that the bonds that had been issued to the landowners in the Burnt Zone would serve in place of money in these sales. He explained to Lubin that there were two groups among those harmed by the fire: one, the destitute, who had no means of finding shelter through their own efforts; and two, the landowners, who wished to utilise their plots as quickly as possible to at least partially offset the damage they had suffered.

Salem had several ideas on how to solve the problems of the homeless. He wrote that it had been brought to his attention that the Greek government was engaged in building 300 cottages with 1,200 rooms in total, intended for 1,200 families. Of these, he stated, some 700-800 rooms were designated for Jewish families. According to his calculations, after this project, roughly 3,400 families would still be living in untenable conditions. For this reason, it had been proposed by the Jewish community to build 300 additional cottages for a further 1,200 families who were capable of paying a low rental fee. The projected cost of building these residences was 2.5 million francs, with a half million to be raised in Salonika itself and the remainder by going 'door to door' elsewhere. Salem suggested setting up a stock company with initial capital of a half million francs. This money would be used to purchase land for residential construction, and the company would issue shares

96. Lyne Bansat-Boudon et Isabelle Ratié, *Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935): études indiennes, histoire sociale: actes du colloque tenu à Paris les 8-10 octobre 2003* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 10, 31-32, 272; 'Prof. Sylvain Lévi Dies in Paris at 72', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1 November 1935. <http://archive.jta.org/1935/11/01/archive/prof-sylvain-levi-dies-in-paris-at-72> (accessed 27 April 2017).

with a 3% yield. The capital raised by the initial offering would be used to construct these residential buildings. Rental payments would be used to pay off the interest on the shares and to create an expendable fund (perhaps for maintenance and upkeep; Salem did not explain the intended purpose). He added that the Alliance in Paris had agreed to allocate 200,000 francs towards the undertaking, and the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) had consented to allot another 100,000 francs, which still left a shortfall of 1.7 million francs for financing the project. Salem did not make it clear what would become of the 2,200 families who would remain homeless after this undertaking had been completed. When he had finished discussing a remedy for the helpless injured parties, Salem turned to the problems of the landowners in the Burnt Zone. He repeated the remarks of Venizelos, which were identical to the Greek Foreign Ministry memorandum that had been circulated (as noted above) to Greek embassies worldwide. Interestingly, a timetable was now added for carrying out the plan, as projected by Venizelos: three months for drawing up the plan, and three months for the expropriation process. In Salem's view, the only two questions remaining were whether the government bonds issued for the expropriated plots would carry interest, and until what date the bonds held by landowners who did not take part in the public auction could be redeemed. Salonika's Jewish community would have to clarify these issues for themselves. In any event, Salem advised that the program be carried out as soon as possible so as to reduce the damages to the landowners. Like any cautious lawyer, he concluded by stating that, although he had studied the subject extensively, he believed that if Lubin would travel to Salonika he would gain a greater understanding of where the best interests of the community lay.⁹⁷

Salem was not the only person who wrote to Lubin. The latter apparently received additional information from the U.S. State Department, supplied by Jacob Schiff, that the situation in Salonika was 'complicated' – diplomatic-speak for 'not worth getting involved in'. It is safe to assume that the complication was not only a matter of clashing with the Greek government over an internal Greek matter but also the fact that there was not really a consensus in the Jewish community regarding the expropriation plan, and

97. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, letter from Emmanuel Salem in Paris to David Lubin in Rome, 10 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03002.pdf

powerful members of the community were working to see it carried out. The American consul in Salonika, George Horton, who was aware of this, wrote to Lubin that he did not want to take issue with the distinguished gentlemen from Washington, but in his opinion what had happened in Salonika was a disaster of catastrophic proportions that, in other times, would have been plastered across newspapers around the world. This tragedy, Horton wrote, had wiped out all the property of the Sephardic Jewish community in the city. He supported the view of Rabbi Meir that American Jews should send an emissary or delegation to Salonika itself to get to the bottom of the matter.⁹⁸

Before he had even received Horton's letter, Lubin wrote to Schiff once more. This time, Lubin had both a great deal of factual information and several estimates. According to him, out of the 73,000 people harmed by the fire, 73% were Jews. A total of 120 hectares were burned, 80% of them owned by Jews. The financial losses as a result of the fire were estimated at 800 million francs, of which 350 million represented buildings that were burned, 85% of them Jewish-owned. His conversations with local legal experts indicated that, if all the information reaching him was correct, an attempt was taking place to perpetrate an outrageous injustice on an unprecedented scale. Nonetheless, Lubin wrote, it was hard for him to believe that the government of Greece would be a party to such an injustice.⁹⁹ Be that as it may, Lubin was now well aware of the workings of the JDC, and continued simultaneously to take steps via the American ambassador in Rome, Thomas N. Page, to secure some kind of official status for himself prior to his trip to Salonika. In a letter written to Lubin by the well-known New York Banker Felix Warburg, originator of the idea to establish the JDC (whom Lubin had apparently become closely acquainted with only recently),¹⁰⁰ Warburg agreed that it was hard to

98. Ibid., Folder #110.3, George Horton in Salonika to David Lubin in Rome, 18 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03058.pdf#search=

99. Ibid., Folder #110.2, David Lubin in Rome to Jacob Schiff in New York, 19 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03009.pdf

100. For more on Felix Warburg (1871, Hamburg-1937, New York), see Pinhas Ya'aqov HaKohen, 'Page of Unknown Heroism', *Beit Ya'aqov, A Monthly Magazine on Education, Literature and Thought*, year 6, 4.68 (Teveth 1965), 10 (Hebrew); 'Tells Sad Plight of Jews. Felix M. Warburg Says They Were the Worst Sufferers in War', *New York*

believe that the Greek government would be involved in such an abominable injustice toward the wretched survivors of the fire.¹⁰¹

Lubin, who sent a long and detailed letter to Warburg on 28 June 1918, had already (as mentioned) set up a committee for Salonika in Rome, most of whose members he had consulted with when he had first received the original cable from Lansing. Apart from his efforts to obtain some sort of official appointment that would enable him to act in Salonika, he had discussed with the committee members the possibility of sending a representative on behalf of the King of Italy to investigate the situation in Salonika. The individuals proposed were Eli (Elio) Morpurgo, Italy's Under-Secretary of State for Commercial Affairs,¹⁰² and Senator Leone Wollemborg.¹⁰³ Lubin committed to covering the cost of their trip to Salonika in the amount of 500 dollars. He also suggested that the Salonika Jewish community send an emissary to Rome to update the committee in full. In the meantime, Lubin continued to correspond with Rabbi Ya'akov Meir, with Consul Horton acting as intermediary. Lubin wrote to Rabbi Meir, inter alia, that he found a contradiction between what he had been told verbally about the unjust treatment of the landowners, and the information relayed to him in writing by Adv. Salem from Paris. Lubin passed along the following advice from the committee in Rome:

Times, 12 November 1919; Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929-1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974); Ron Chernow, *The Warburgs: A Twentieth Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 162-164.

101. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, Felix Warburg in New York to David Lubin in Rome, 16 July 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03015.pdf

102. Elio Morpurgo (1858, Udine-1944). <http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.nsf/643aea4d2800e476c12574e50043faad/a091d8d2138081ea4125646f005db62e?OpenDocument> (accessed 21 August 2017); Valerio Marchi, 'Verso Auschwitz: la tragica fine del senatore Elio Morpurgo', *Messaggero Veneto*, 26 January 2011, 15 (accessed 21 August 2017).

103. Leone Wollemborg (1859, Padova-1932, Camposampiero) was an Italian economist and politician. He made significant contributions to the spread of cooperative enterprises, specifically rural credit unions and agricultural cooperative banks. From 1892, he was a member of the Italian Parliament, and from 1913, a Senator. In 1901, he served as Minister of Finance (see Ruggiero Marconato, *La figura e l'opera di Leone Wollemborg* [Treviso, 1984]).

*The Rome Committee favours asking that the injured land-owners serve as the company in the matter of the expropriation, selling the land back to themselves and bonding their equities so as to obtain the cash required for rebuilding.*¹⁰⁴

The problem was, of course, that the Greeks wanted the reconstruction to take place immediately, whereas most of the individuals affected did not have the money for this, and the proposed plan would not yield a profit until the war had ended. For this reason, it was necessary to at least obtain permission to delay the construction, or to build temporary structures for an interim period of several years. At this point, the committee in Rome asked to clarify how much money was required for immediate humanitarian needs and to ensure permission to build temporary structures with a commitment to build permanent ones after the war.¹⁰⁵

In the meantime, the industrious and resourceful Lubin found himself at an impasse: for one thing, he had not yet obtained any official document from the U.S. government that would empower him to talk with the Greeks without being dishonest about his status; for another, his wife, who was concerned about his poor health, was apparently placing pressure on him not to travel to Salonika. On 19 July 1918, he took advantage of this fact to write to Ambassador Page reminding him of the famous cable and stating that he was ready and willing to travel to Salonika but that at the moment his wife and friends were dissuading him from doing so as his health was frail. He therefore suggested that someone travel there in his stead, with him paying the cost of their journey, but so far no one had been found who was willing to take on this mission. In the interim, Lubin received a letter from George Horton pushing for an impartial individual to investigate all aspects of the situation immediately and in person.

Lubin asked Page's advice about what to do.¹⁰⁶ Three days later, Lubin received a cable from the JDC in New York in which he was asked directly if he would consent to travel to Salonika as a representative of the JDC and to

104. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, David Lubin in Rome to Felix Warburg in New York, 28 June 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03018.pdf

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., David Lubin to Ambassador Page, 19 July 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03036.pdf

work together with Consul Horton and Chief Rabbi Ya'akov Meir.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Nelson Brown, the official who had been about to travel to Greece in any case on assignment for the American Ministry of Commerce, and with whom (or in his stead) Lubin had wished to travel, had returned to Italy from Greece. He now wrote to Lubin, who was vacationing in Sorrento, Italy, suggesting that he refrain from traveling to Salonika because conditions were very difficult there. The journey from Rome to Athens had taken five days, and Brown had not travelled to Salonika because the trains came and went as they pleased and the trip from Athens to Salonika normally took two days. However, he had met with the American ambassador to Greece, Garrett Droppers, and with Venizelos, a meeting that he described as delightful, during which it was explained to him that the Greek government had resolved to rebuild the Burnt Zone, which had suffered from terrible sanitary conditions in the past and been incredibly overcrowded, and to turn Salonika into a modern city. This was a fact. If the Jews would be treated fairly or not was still undecided, Brown remarked. In the meantime, a renowned French urban planner (presumably Hébrard) had completed his blueprint, and it appeared so ambitious and grandiose that it would take years to be carried out.¹⁰⁸ From the remainder of Brown's letter to Lubin, it appears that the two families shared a close friendship. In light of this, and the following sequence of events, it would appear that Brown was telling him in a more sensitive manner what the State Department would be saying to him several days later in unequivocal terms. In a cable to the U.S. Ambassador in Rome, he was instructed to relay the following to Lubin:

*The Department of State instructs you to inform Mr. Lubin that it is not considered advisable that he go to Salonica. According to latest reports the trouble there is a peculiar and internal one which affects the Greek Government only and in which he could not properly interfere as an American citizen in an official capacity.*¹⁰⁹

107. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.2, cable dated 22 July 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03037.pdf

108. Ibid., Brown in Rome to Lubin in Sorrento, 29 July 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03056.pdf

109. Ibid., Folder #110.3, David Lubin in Sorrento to Felix Warburg in New York, 7 August 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03045.pdf

Lubin was furious. His secretary in Rome obtained a copy of the Expropriations Law from the French Embassy (for one day only), and copied it for him. Lubin read the twenty pages of the law, which were filled with technical details, and came to the same conclusion as the small landowners in Salonika:

It seems to me at this writing that the Greek has the best of the situation. He seems to have an elastic Bill, with plenty of 'blanket' in it, susceptible, on the one hand, of eliciting a sympathetic interpretation from the average questioner, and on the other hand leaving himself ample room to put the screws down to any degree he may see fit. And all this is so secured that at this time there does not seem to be any loop-hole [sic] whereby poor equity may get in a word edge-wise [sic].

Ask the Grand Rabbi at Salonica, and you learn that he is muzzled; ask the American Consul and you will see that he is muzzled; (see exhibits B and C).

So far as I can see there is but one thing that the Greek fears, the one thing that the Greek Minister 'took notice' of in my meetings with him, and that is the fear that the effects of the purposed inequity may, in some mysterious manner, 'come home to roost' when all are seated round the 'green table'. So far as I can see the Greek is not moved by a sense of equity in the case of the Jews nearly as much as by a sense of what may turn up at the 'green table'; for this 'green table' he seems to have a very genuine respect.¹¹⁰

Lubin thus believed that the sole preoccupation of the Greeks was not if the expropriation was unjust but whether the international activities of those opposed to it would generate a negative attitude towards Greece's objectives at the Peace Conference in Paris. In his opinion, since the entire struggle of the Entente Powers in the First World War had been for justice, Jewish rights should take priority in this case; moreover, Lubin felt, the power of world Jewry in this battle for justice was certainly greater than the power of the Greeks to employ the diplomacy of false justice. The mantle of justice being donned by the Greek government was intended to deceive not only the Jewish observer but also supporters of Greece in the U.S. and England. An international campaign should be launched against this effort and a competent individual should be sent to Salonika and Athens to obtain and verify the details of the matter. The person who was sent should be

110. Ibid. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03045.pdf

‘impervious to deception’, that is, not misled by the pretense of justice in which the Greek government has cloaked itself, and capable of unearthing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He suggested sending Herman Bernstein, a Jewish journalist who was covering the Paris Peace Conference, and recommended that he travel to Salonika by way of Rome so that he could advise and assist him.¹¹¹

George Horton’s support was thus of no avail to the Jews of Salonika, and Lubin was unsuccessful in securing an official appointment to deal with the situation. The idea of sending Bernstein to Salonika reduced the issue to a global Jewish problem whereas Lubin had sought to raise it to the level of international relations between the U.S. and Greece. Lubin continued to pursue the matter energetically, unaware that he had only a few months to live. He refined his proposal to turn Salonika into one of the most important post-war industrial centers, in which the U.S. would invest special funding, and exploited the fact that the former president of Salonika’s Chamber of Commerce, Kleon Hadjilazaros, was also vacationing in Sorrento (in the summer of 1918, he was in a self-imposed exile because of his opposition to Venizelos) to interest him in the idea.¹¹² Hadjilazaros was of course very attentive. Lubin thought that the plan would be helpful in softening the blow of the expropriations to the Jews of the city.¹¹³

111. Ibid.

112. Kleon Hadjilazaros was also director of the Orient Bank, president of the Red Cross, and the American Consul in Salonika, See Ευάγγελος Α. Χεκίμογλου, *Θεσσαλονίκη Τουρκοκρατία και μεσοπόλεμος: Κείμενα για την ιστορία και την τοπογραφία της πόλης* [Evanghelos A. Hekimoglou, *Thessaloniki under the Ottomans and between the Wars: Contribution to the History and Topography of the City* (Athens: University Studio Press, 1996)], 279. He was the former president of the Federation of Industries of Northern Greece, and former president of the Land-owners Associations as well, see Ευάγγελος Α. Χεκίμογλου, *Σύνδεσμος Βιομηχάνων Βορείου Ελλάδος 1915-2015: Τα πρώτα εκατό χρόνια* [Evanghelos Hekimoglou, *Industrialists Association of Northern Greece 1915-2015: The First Century, Thessaloniki*: IANG, 2015], pp. 32-36.

113. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.3, excerpts from a letter from Lubin in Sorrento to Rabbi Ya’akov Meir in Salonika, 22 August 1918, relayed through Felix Warburg in New York. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03076.pdf

Ibid., Lubin in Sorrento to Greek Ambassador in Rome, Lambros Koromilas, 11 November 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03149.pdf

In the meantime, Lubin returned to Rome, where he learned that the JDC had appointed Hetty Goldman to coordinate its activities in Salonika.¹¹⁴ Miss Goldman came to Rome, and a brief conversation with her was enough to convince Lubin that she had no idea what she was up against. Her understanding was that she was being sent to deal with humanitarian assistance for disaster victims and that the Greek government would warmly welcome her and her good intentions. Lubin explained the major problems to her, noting that even to provide strictly humanitarian assistance she would need to arm herself with diplomatic skills and finesse. Lubin took her with him to meet with Ambassador Koromilas, and when they left he believed that she understood very well that she would be unable to help the Jews of Salonika without engaging in diplomatic maneuvering. She was not the person Lubin had dreamed of for the mission to Salonika. She did not see delving into the truth as part of her mandate, and in fact, it was not. She was being sent to organise the assistance efforts in the city, and nothing more.¹¹⁵ The meeting with Koromilas was apparently one of Lubin's final acts on behalf of the victims of the Salonika fire. Before he passed away, on 1 January 1919, he managed to convince the Italian government to transfer to the Salonikan Jewish community the Italian army barracks in Salonika for a nominal fee to help house refugees from the fire.¹¹⁶

114. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #25??. 'Goldman, Miss Hetty. JDC Representative to the American Red Cross Commission sent to Greece (October 1, 1918)'. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00002/NY_AR1418_00293.pdf#search=

115. JDC Archives, 1914-1918, Folder #110.3, Lubin in Rome to Felix Warburg in New York, 12 November 1918. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1418/00003/NY_AR1418_03151.pdf

116. Cable dated 10 March 1919 to Greek Foreign Minister Nikolaos Politis, with a Greek delegation to Paris, and his response to the Foreign Affairs and Transportation Ministries and the army, on 30 April 1919. The latter documents appear in English in Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 18, 94-97, and in the Greek edition of the book as doc. 18, 104-107. See also the letter from the Governor-General of Macedonia, Anastasios Adosidis, to Rabbi Ya'akov Meir from 27 April 1919, copied in a letter from the Governor-General to Moise Morpurgo dated 25 June 1919, JDC Archives, 1919-1921, Folder #146.1. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1921/00015/NY_AR1921_00484.pdf

See also report by Hetty Goldman to JDC Executive Committee, 8 July 1919 (n. 40, above).

As stated, the U.S. and England were not the only arenas in which the Jews of Salonika attempted to take action. Concurrent with the intensive work of Lubin, the president of the local branch of the Alliance in Salonika, Joseph Misrachi, also sought help in France. Is it possible that he was unaware of the contact between Dino Fernandez and Emmanuel Salem, and hence approached the council of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris with a request for legal advice? It is difficult to believe that he had no knowledge of the matter. The tone that emerges from Misrachi's words is much less positive than that of Salem's in his letter,¹¹⁷ and if he was aware of the contacts between Fernandez and Salem, he was not in agreement with Salem's advice.

In letters to the Alliance on 21 and 29 August 1918, Misrachi explained the demands of the landowners. His words seem to reflect the position of the owners of valuable parcels of land, who did not see a chance for huge profits as a result of the redivision of the Burnt Zone and the auctioning of the new plots. They were interested in retaining their land, but were also willing to accept smaller plots in exchange for fair compensation. When they understood that this demand would not be met, they asked for what they were entitled to under the Constitution. Once they realised that the government would be unable to pay them for the land, they did not seek compensation but were willing to accept payment for the land's worth in installments. After this offer was also rejected, it was proposed that an association of landowners be established under government supervision through which they themselves would decide on the distribution of land. They also requested that they be permitted to trade the land equities (as Salem had advised!). This request was also rejected at the time. Misrachi, like most people, did not believe that the auction approach would leave anything for the landowners. According to him, everyone involved would be willing to hand the government the profits as a gift if it would purchase the plots from them at 1917 prices.¹¹⁸

117. See above, n. 45.

118. Karadimou-Yerolymou and Kolonas, 'Reconstruction', 236-237. See also the relevant documents stamped with the date 17 September 1918 on the same topic: 'Exposé des motifs; Question des terrains et immeubles sinistres, Démarches faites par les propriétaires depuis l'incendie jusqu'à ce jour; Solutions proposées par les propriétaires', AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33. See document stamped 19 September 1918: 'Avant-projet de constitution d'une société de liquidation des propriétés sinistres le 18.8.1917 · Salonique', *ibid.*

Meanwhile, the unrelenting attacks on the reconstruction plan by Jewish individuals and organisations in England and the U.S. led Greek Foreign Minister Nikolaos Politis to issue a communiqué on 21 September 1918 to all Greek embassies around the world containing a detailed guide on how to respond to accusations regarding the Greek state's treatment of the Jews of Salonika, and in particular its handling of the fire victims. The message mentioned the urgent and embarrassing appeals of the Foreign Affairs Committee in England and of David Lubin of the United States. If asked, the ambassadors were instructed to answer that the claims being made were untrue, specifically: (a) it is incorrect that the government of Greece aims to turn a profit on the backs of the survivors of the fire; (b) the objective of the reconstruction of Salonika is to ease conditions for the refugees and not to profit from their tragedy; (c) in response to appeals, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos had promised that the Burnt Zone would be reconstructed, the new homes would be sold, and half the revenues from the sale would be transferred to the former landowners.

Politis added that the president of the Salonika Jewish community (Jacob Cazes) had visited the Jewish neighbourhoods, and the residents who spoke with him had expressed satisfaction with the government's handling of their situation. Moreover, the Chief Rabbi of Salonika, Rabbi Ya'akov Meir, who had been mentioned in earlier correspondence as the source of the incessant complaints over the Greek government's treatment of the Jews of Salonika, had recently visited the Foreign Ministry in Athens, where he asserted – citing the American Consul in Salonika as a witness to the accuracy of his statement – that he had never complained against the government of Greece, whose fair treatment of, and concern for, the Jews of Salonika, he was pleased to acknowledge. The only thing he asked of America was financial assistance and building materials...¹¹⁹

This information concerning Rabbi Meir's retreat from his opposition to the rebuilding plan for the Burnt Zone is inconsistent with what is written in the American Jewish Year Book for 1918/1919, where it is recorded

119. Document from the Greek Foreign Ministry Archives in Athens, and Constantinopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 10, 83-85. One detail from the English-language version is inconsistent with the Greek version; in the English version it was Venizelos himself who visited the neighbourhoods of those forced out by the fire, and not the president of the Jewish community. The English translation can be compared with the Greek original as published in the Greek version of the book, doc.10, 93-96.

that on 19 October 1918, following a mass gathering of the Jews of the city it was decided to send a delegation to Athens, with Rabbi Meir as a member, to request that the parliament annul the expropriation of land in the Burnt Zone that belonged to victims of the fire.¹²⁰ The subject continued to arise, and in 1919 an irritated Venizelos declared to the Greek parliament: 'Rest assured that we all hope that the longtime residents, of all religions, will be rehabilitated, and we are working towards this end with all our might. Do not complain. I have already been to London many times to discuss these matters. People are blaming the government.... We are doing everything that we can so that there will not be even a hint of accusations in this regard'.¹²¹

The fate of the fire's survivors, 1919-1941

When it became apparent that the Greek government was determined to rebuild the Burnt Zone in a modern style, as it saw fit, the leaders of the Salonika Jewish community realised that there was nothing more to be done; they were forced to agree to the relocation of the refugees from the fire in the areas allocated for this purpose on the outskirts of the city. The destitute and middle-class survivors had no choice, and many of them were fortunate if they even managed to find a place to live in the neighbourhoods built to accommodate them. For the very poorest, finding a place to live did not always mean the end of their tribulations. According to Hetty Goldman, in July 1919 roughly one half of the Jewish victims of the fire, that is, some 25,000 people, were still without a roof over their heads, and many of them were living in the ruins of their burned homes.¹²² Four hundred homeless families, comprising about 2,000 people, had found shelter in the remnants of the Burnt Zone. With the sale of these plots, they were turned out of their miserable 'havens' and thrown into the streets in the dead of winter in 1922.¹²³ As

120. *The American Jewish Year Book* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1920), vol. 20 (7 September 1918 to 24 September, 1919), 245. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23600995.pdf> (accessed 21 August 2017).

121. Karadimou-Yerolimpou and Kolonas, 'Reconstruction of Salonika', 232.

122. Report by Hetty Goldman to JDC Executive Committee, 8 July 1919 (see above, n. 40).

123. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, Chief Rabbi of Salonika, Ben Zion 'Uziel, to JDC Executive Committee in New York, 1 January 1922. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04254.pdf#search=

we will see below, they were not the last. When Hetty Goldman reported about the situation in Salonika, all of the Christian and Muslim refugees had already been placed back on their feet.

The municipality authorities established the Angelaki neighbourhood (closer to the center of the city) and Neighbourhood No. 6 (near the streetcar line, at the eastern outskirts of the city) for the rehabilitation of the Jewish refugees. The state set up the Vardar and Agia Paraskevi quarters (the latter near the cemetery of the same name), and the Jewish community established the Karagatch (from the Turkish for 'elm tree', Karaağaç), Nerechkiné, and No. 151 neighbourhoods. All told, these neighbourhoods were home to 2,792 families out of the 10,000 who had registered following the fire.¹²⁴ Even if we assume that some of the roughly 7,000 remaining families were people of means, or had migrated from Salonika, this still does not tell us what became of the others. Many of them were left homeless.

In the **Angelaki** neighbourhood, 162 Jewish families and 8 Christian families, all victims of the fire, lived in 160 rooms in condemned shacks built on land belonging to the municipality.¹²⁵ Despite the run-down condition of these hovels, many laborers and craftsmen had agreed to live there for their proximity to the city and their workplaces. To speed up the removal of the families prior to demolition, sanitation trucks of the municipality began to empty the sewage of the nearby Agia Fotini refugee quarter into the area. Some of the quarter's residents were forced out in 1931.¹²⁶

Neighbourhood No. 6 was named after the Armée d'Orient Hospital No. 6 located there. It was built on municipal land purchased from the French government and rented to the Jewish community by the municipality.

Near Agiou Dimitriou and Kassandrou Streets, 45 brick structures were erected, each of them containing two apartments with four rooms and a kitchen.¹²⁷ In these 360 rooms, 350 families who had escaped the fire were

124. Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighbourhoods', 188-190. See also Joseph Nehama's letter to the secretary of the Alliance in Paris, 10 March 1920, AIU GRÈCE VII B 27-33.

125 'Municipal Assistance and the Jews', *El Mesajero*, 24 November 1935 (Ladino).

126. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonika', 158-159; 'Cleaning in the Angelaki Quarter', *El Popular*, 10 July 1930, 3 (Ladino).

127. Letter from Joseph Nehama to secretary of the Alliance in Paris, 10 March 1920 (see above, n. 124).

settled. The Jewish community took upon itself the management of the quarter, including the installation of a sewage system. Sanitary conditions there were adequate, and the neighbourhood was connected to electricity, but many of the impoverished residents did not pay rent. In 1925, the municipality raised the rental fees, and the Jewish community decided to give back the land.¹²⁸ Families who did not leave of their own accord were evicted by the municipality between 1928 and 1929.¹²⁹

The **Régie Vardar** neighbourhood was planned by the state next to Vardar Gate as an ideal 'garden city' for 1,200 families, who would reside in 200 brick homes of various sizes. But this garden city was never built. In the end, work was started on 800 rooms for 800 families. According to Hetty Goldman (July 1919), construction on the project was halted in midstream and the government refused to resume building. She was unable to say whether this was the result of neglect alone or of bad intentions. The intended occupants, who were tired of broken promises to finish the construction, squatted in the half-built structures.¹³⁰ By 1920, construction still had not been completed.¹³¹ In 1921, there were 75 tenements on the site, with a total of 775 rooms housing 5,000 people, the poorest and neediest of Salonika's Jews.¹³² In 1921, Régie Vardar was home to 81 orphaned children aged 5, 152 aged 10, 179 aged 15, and 56 orphaned girls aged 18, all of whom required

128. Michael Molho, 'The Jewish Neighborhoods of Salonika', in *Memoir of Salonika*, vol. 2, ed. Avraham Recanati, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Ha-Va'ad le-Hotza'at Sefer Qehilat Saloniqi, 1972-1986, 30 (Hebrew); Yitzhaq Shemuel Emmanuel, 'History of the Jews of Salonika', in *Memoir of Salonika*, vol. 1, 225 (Hebrew); 'Quarter No. 6 Will be Returned to the Municipality', *El Tiempo*, 10 July 1925 (Ladino).

129. Gila Hadar, 'Aspects of Jewish Family Life in Salonika, 1900-1943' (Ph.D. diss., University of Haifa, 2004), 77-80 (Hebrew).

130. Report by Hetty Goldman to JDC Executive Committee, 8 July 1919 (see above, n. 40).

131. Letter from Joseph Nehama to secretary of the Alliance in Paris, 10 March 1920 (see above, n. 124).

132. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from 'S.B', administrative official of the Régie Quarter; J. Jeida, secretary of the Jewish Medical Relief organisation; and Jacob Cazes, president of the Jewish community, to Capt. Henry, Administrative Officer, American Red Cross in Salonika, 23 May 1921. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04265.pdf

food, clothing, and medicine.¹³³ The buildings in the Régie neighbourhood were American and French wooden shacks.¹³⁴ Each family was given one room, with outdoor toilets shared by several families. The families each added a balcony of sorts, where they set up a kitchen.¹³⁵

During the 1930s, Régie Vardar grew into a sprawling slum as victims of the fire were steered there following eviction by the municipality from the housing they had found in order to make way for the Anatolia refugees. The Jewish community had earlier added its own shacks. In 1928, the Jewish community had 367 rooms in the Régie. Rents were very cheap (78 drachmas a year), but even this was too high for many of the residents.¹³⁶ The neighbourhood was adjacent to a planned industrial zone, and took its name from the Régie tobacco processing plant, where many of the local residents worked. The Régie neighbourhood was built on swampland, and cases of malaria, smallpox, and tuberculosis were common. In a letter to the representative of the American Red Cross in Salonika, the secretary of the Jewish Medical Relief organisation, J. Jeida, wrote that in 1920, 2,000 out of 5,000 neighbourhood residents had been stricken by malaria, and the daily mortality rate was between 2 and 5 people.¹³⁷

Several smaller neighbourhoods existed within the Régie quarter, whose names in Turkish sometimes testified to their nature: Kabristan (cemetery), Teneke Mahalle (tin), and Mustafa Arif. The water in Teneke Mahalle was not potable, and its residents consisted mainly of the ill, handicapped, destitute, and widows. The quarter was immortalised in a contemporary novel by S. Revah, *Sojeta Pudrida* (Rotten society) which describes a tenement populated by

133. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from 'S.B', administrative official of the Régie Quarter; to Capt. Henry, Administrative Officer, American Red Cross in Salonika, 23 May 1921. From the table presented in the letter, is unclear if the ages are 0-5, 5-10, etc., or exact ages. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04267.pdf

134. 'The Barracks', *El Puevlo* 8 December 1918 (Ladino).

135. Letter from Joseph Nehama to secretary of the Alliance in Paris, 10 March 1920 (see above, n. 124).

136. Hadar, 'Aspects', 78-79 (see above, n. 129); Hadar, 'Garden City' (see above, n. 1).

137. Letter from 'S.B', administrative official of the Régie Quarter; J. Jeida, secretary of the Jewish Medical Relief organisation; and Jacob Cazes, president of the Jewish community, to Capt. Henry, Administrative Officer, American Red Cross in Salonika, 23 May 1921 (see above, n. 132).

individuals unable to cope with the poverty and unemployment, addicted to drugs, drinking themselves to death, and descending into a life of crime. Young girls often fell into prostitution.¹³⁸ The above three neighbourhoods were cleared out between 1934 and 1937, leaving their residents homeless.¹³⁹

The **Agia Paraskevi** neighbourhood, established by the government in the northwestern section of the city, contained 50 houses intended for 200 families. The residents were responsible for the upkeep of the quarter, and they owned their homes. These were buildings without roofs or inner walls. Sacks provided minimal shelter from the rain. Over time, the residents improved their living conditions, each according to his means. They put up roofs, built inner walls, and added a kitchen and bathroom. Numerous families who had been evicted, as a result of the reconstruction, from the meager shelters they had created for themselves following the fire also flocked to Agia Paraskevi. They added dozens of small structures, some of whose walls leaned against the sides of existing buildings, where people and animals lived together. The quarter was not hooked up to electricity, the school was too small for all the local children, and many of the children walked the streets barefoot, neglected and idle. There was no clinic or pharmacy in the neighbourhood, and residents in need of medical care had to make their way on foot to Afroditi Street.¹⁴⁰

Karaagach was a small neighbourhood established by the Jewish community containing eight brick buildings, each of which housed three apartments with three rooms and a kitchen. The neighbourhood was in the Campagnias

138. S. Revah, *Sojeta Pudrida* (Salonika: No publisher, 1931) (Ladino).

139. Minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Advisory Committees of the Jewish community, 20 June 1937, CAHJP, old catalogue GR/SA 181A, new catalogue GR/SA 39; 'A New Fire: 800 Families without Shelter', *El Puevlo*, 11 November 1934 (Ladino); 'Η μέριμνα της Γενικής Διοικήσεως υπέρ των Ισραηλιτών - Ο Κ. Καραθόδωρος επισκέφθηκε τον Τενεκε-Μαχαλάν' [How the General Administration Takes Care of the Jews - Mr. Karathodoros Visits Teneke Mahalle], *Makedonia*, 23 July 1937, 5.

140. Alfons Levi, 'The Destruction of Salonika's Jewish Community', in *Greek Jewry and Its Destruction* (Tel Aviv: Institute for Research of Salonikan Jewry, 1988) <http://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=16347> (accessed 26 August 2017) (Hebrew); 'A letter from the Association of Fire Victims', 1 January 1919, Archives of the Palestinian Office in Salonika, Moscow Archives, fond 1435, opis 1, file 16, doc. 2786 in the digitised collection (Ladino); 'In the Suburbs', *Aksion*, 8 December 1929 (Ladino); 'In the Suburbs', *Aksion*, 25 October 1933 (Ladino).

area, not far from the streetcar line.¹⁴¹ The **Nerechkin** neighbourhood had previously housed a hospital for the Entente armies, and contained three well-constructed army barracks.¹⁴² **Neighbourhood 151** was named after Hospital 151 of the Italian government, which had sold the structures to the Jewish community for a paltry sum already in 1919.¹⁴³ The Jewish community divided the hospital buildings, one hundred in all, into 980 rooms housing 900 families comprising roughly 4,500 individuals.¹⁴⁴ In 1923, the Jewish community established a neighbourhood of better-quality two-family homes near the Cazes School with the help of the JDC, offering shelter to 45 families.¹⁴⁵ The land on which the structures were built did not belong to the Jewish community, which had tried to secure the necessary funding from the JDC to purchase the property.¹⁴⁶ The neighbourhood, which earned the nickname 'Las kasitikas de sien y sinkuanta y uno' (the little houses of 151), was located near the Hirsch Hospital, facing the Toumba quarter of Greek refugees. No. 151 was a relatively well-tended quarter, and rent there was 427 drachmas a room, five times the rent for a room in the Régie neighbourhood. Nonetheless, in 1928 Henry Morgenthau reported on crumbling buildings in blocks 21 and 22, sewage flowing in the streets, and a burst water pipe in block 86 that flooded the street for many days without being repaired.¹⁴⁷

It is noteworthy that in a letter sent by Joseph Nehama on 10 March 1920 to the Alliance in Paris, he opined that almost all the lower-priced neighbourhoods were situated in excellent locations in terms of climate and proximity to the city, and should not be compared to the wretched, overcrowded housing that was the lot of the residents in the historic center

141. Letter from Joseph Nehama to secretary of the Alliance in Paris, 10 March 1920 (see above, n. 124).

142. Ibid.

143. Report by the Governor-General of Macedonia, Anastasios Adosidis, to the Foreign Affairs and Transportation Ministries and the army, 30 April 1919, Constantinopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 18, 94.

144. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', 158 (see above, n. 43).

145. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Walter R. Montesper to Leonard G. Robinson, 23 June 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04321.pdf

146. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', pp. 150-51.

147. 'Visit to 151 Quarter', *La Verdad*, 1 February 1928 (Ladino).

of the city. But in a letter that he wrote to the Alliance on 16 January 1921, he asserted that 10,000 Jewish families harmed by the fire were living in conditions that were unacceptable.¹⁴⁸ This last description is consistent with the eyewitness testimony of Hetty Goldman in 1919,¹⁴⁹ and with contemporary press reports cited above.

As the efforts to settle the fire victims continued, Venizelos lost the 1920 elections in the wake of the increasing fatigue felt in Greece after ten years of wars. He was succeeded as prime minister by Dimitrios Rallis (18 November 1920-6 February 1921), who came from the ranks of the conservatives. With the accession of Rallis, the 'climate' in Salonika changed, paving the way for King Konstantine to return from exile. A delegation of Jews from Salonika, headed by Jacob Cazes, travelled to Athens to greet him, and he granted the sum of 10,000 drachmas to the Jews of Salonika, for the benefit of the survivors of the fire. The Greek National Bank followed suit, giving the Jewish community a loan of 400,000 drachmas.¹⁵⁰ Rallis sent Dimitrios Gounaris – a key supporter of the king, and Rallis's successor as prime minister (26 March 1921-3 May 1922) – to check on what was happening in Salonika. On Gounaris's recommendation, a substantial portion of the Salonika building plan was abandoned, relating primarily to the sections that were not burned and had been expropriated by the Venizelos administration. Likewise, the vast public spaces were reduced in size, and the architectural demands made by the Hébrard committee to the previous owners who had repurchased plots in the Burnt Zone were scaled down. Property owners were also relieved of the burden of land development costs, which had been included in the earlier law. A joint committee of property owners from the Burnt Zone, members of the City Council, and municipal functionaries traveled to Athens to see to it that the expropriation order was amended.¹⁵¹ All of these amendments were highly beneficial to wealthy individuals, Jews and non-Jews alike, who had owned plots of land in the Burnt Zone; but for the average citizen, there was no redress.

148. AIU GRÈCE XVIII E 202 E 0046.

149. Report by Hetty Goldman, 8 July 1919 (see above, n. 40).

150. 'In Salonika', *Doar Ha-Yom*, 7 February 1921 (Hebrew).

151. Joseph Nehama to president of Alliance Israélite Universelle, 16 January 1921, AIU GRÈCE XVIII E 202.

A study of the official announcements published between 1919 and 1924 in the *Makedonia* newspaper containing information on the creation of new plots and their purchase by various individuals, demonstrates how the redrawing of Salonika's residential map was carried out in practice. First, separate plots that had belonged to many different owners were united into one parcel.¹⁵² This meant that in order to purchase it, the previous owners had to band together under joint representation, and if they could not meet the minimum price for the plot, others could step in instead, leaving them no choice but to sell the bond they had been issued for the land.

On 15 July 1920, it was stipulated that properties whose value exceeded 30,000 drachmas, regardless of the number of owners, could be sold without restriction. Properties worth between 10,000 and 30,000 drachmas, irrespective of the number of owners (provided that the value of each individual plot was greater than 10,000 drachmas), were also permitted to be sold without restriction. Property in the same category, where the portion of each of the owners did not exceed 10,000 drachmas, were also permitted for sale, but with limitations as set forth in Law No. 2121. The Law defined several groups of people as the only ones to whom these properties could be sold: (a) individuals listed as belonging to the 'public sector', meaning the Jewish community, the Greek Hospital, and the like; (b) the Salonika Municipality; (c) the Popular Bank (Ethniki Trapeza) and certain other banks, subject to the decision of the Minister of Transport.¹⁵³ On 16 December 1921, a portion of the plots from the first group (that is, those whose value was greater than 30,000 drachmas) were sold at auction. The list of purchasers substantiates the new image of the city. Joseph Sides purchased three parcels at a price of 185,000 drachmas each, for a total of 550,000 drachmas. Sides had been the owner of one of the largest cotton mills in Salonika, which he had sold in 1919.¹⁵⁴ A portion of the capital from this sale was apparently invested in buying these parcels of land.

152. 'The real estate commission in Salonika reports that forms have been submitted by owners of lots 159, 160, 161, 171', 'Πρόσκληση', *Μακεδόνια* [Invitation, *Makedonia*], 16 October 1919.

153. 'Γνωστοποίησις', *Μακεδόνια* ['Update', *Makedonia*], 15 July 1920, 2.

154. Quataert, 'Working Class', 317 (see above, n. 85); Ευάγγελος Χεκίμογλου, *Ιστορία της επιχειρηματικότητας στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Τόμος τρίτος: Η επιχειρηματικότητα στην*

The second major buyer was Beniko Saltiel, who purchased a plot for 272,600 drachmas. Saltiel was one of the most important businessmen in Salonika, and the city's major wood trader.¹⁵⁵ He was owner of an insurance company, and had served as vice-president of the Jewish community's Assembly in 1910.¹⁵⁶ Among his other roles, he was a member of the Executive Committee of Salonika's Chamber of Commerce from 1914 to 1919, a member of the Honorary Committee of the Society of Alliance Graduates in Salonika (1908-1910), and one of the founders of the city's Club des Intimes, an elite social club.¹⁵⁷ In addition, he served as president of the Hirsch hospital and was highly involved in its work.¹⁵⁸ In 1932, a tax of 10,000 drachmas was levied on his company to benefit the municipal soup kitchens. On a list of 99 taxpayers from that year, the highest tax levels were 14,000-15,000 drachmas. One third of those appearing on the list were taxed at this level. The lion's share of the remainder were taxed at levels below 10,000 drachmas.¹⁵⁹

*περίοδο 1900-1940, Θεσσαλονίκη: Πολιτιστική Εταιρεία Επιχειρηματιών Βορείου Ελλάδος, 2004 [Evanghelos Hekimoglou, 'History of Entrepreneurship in Thessaloniki', vol. 3, *Entrepreneurship in 1900-1940* (Thessaloniki: Entrepreneurs Cultural Societies in Northern Greece, 2004), 240-242; 'Social Movement of the Bakers,' *Avanti*, 27 October 1921, 2 (Ladino). Orly C. Meron makes the claim that the spinning mill was burned down in the fire (Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship*, 65). If that is the case, he presumably used the bonds issued to him for the plot he had lost in order to buy the new plot.*

155. Interview with Mico Alvo from Salonika, conducted there by Paris Papamichos Chronakis between October 2005 and March 2006.

<http://www.centropa.org/search/site/mico%2520alvo> (accessed 21 August 2017).

156. Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, 33, 35.

157. Rena Molho, *Jews of Salonika*, 218. In 1911, Saltiel was mentioned as vice president of the Hirsch Hospital (Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, 33), and as an important businessman (ibid., 29). See also Πάρις Παπαμίχος Χρονάκης, *Οι έλληνες, εβραίοι, μουσουλμάνοι και ντονμέ έμποροι της Θεσσαλονίκης, 1882-1919, Ταξικοί και εθνοτικοί μετασχηματισμοί σε τροχιά εξελληνισμού, Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης, Φιλοσοφική Σχολή, Τμήμα Ιστορίας και Αρχαιολογίας*, 2011 [Paris Papamichos Chronakis, 'Greeks, Jews, Muslims and Donme Traders of Thessaloniki, 1882-1919: Class and Ethnic Transformations in the Track of Hellenization' (Ph.D. diss., University of Crete, 2011)], 88, 100, 223, 397, 393.

158. Molho, *Jews of Salonika*, 101; Hatzikiriakos, *Commercial Guide*, 34.

159. 'New Tax for the Soup Kitchens: A Complete List of the Tax Placed on the Jews and the Limited Companies', *El Puevo*, 5 May 1932, 104 (Ladino).

Isakito Alhanati bought a plot together with Emrullah Mehmet for which they paid 273,600 drachmas. The name of Alhanati appears on the 1912 list of taxpayers entitled to vote for and be elected to the Jewish community council. His son, Dr. David ben Isak Alhanati, was a member of parliament for the United Opposition party of Gounaris in the 1920 elections.¹⁶⁰ Aron and Abram Misrachi, who purchased a plot for 171,000 drachmas, were the scions of a wealthy family of distinguished lineage. As stated, Joseph Misrachi was one of the founders of the Olympus brewery as well as co-owner of a cotton mill and numerous other enterprises.¹⁶¹ Haim and Aron (Enrico) Misrachi were the sons of Abram Misrachi, who was apparently the brother of Joseph, since, after Joseph Misrachi emigrated to France, the brothers Aron and Haim remained the partners of Dino Fernandez and Elia Torres in the factories jointly owned by the three families. (In 1942, these enterprises were valued by the Italian consul in Salonika at 32 million 1939 drachmas.)¹⁶² Beatrice, the wife of Haim Abram Misrachi, had been among the women who contributed to the reconstruction of the Great Talmud Torah (a central place of prayer and study) in 1902, along with Celia, the wife of Enrico Misrachi (daughter of Joseph Fernandez Diaz).¹⁶³ In the 1932 tax valuation for the municipal soup kitchens, Enrico Misrachi was assessed only 8,000 drachmas.¹⁶⁴

Jak Nahmias and Jacob Modiano purchased a plot of land for 140,000 drachmas. Sabetai Serero and the brothers Isak and Jacob Modiano bought a plot for 165,000 drachmas, while their nephew Liatchi (Eliyahu), son of Daniel, made do with a tiny joint holding that was valued at slightly over 8,000 drachmas. (A group consisting of Ahmet Bekir, Husein Emin, Yomtov Leon, Liatchi, and Modiano bought a different plot for 26,000 drach-

160. Λέων Ναρ, *Οι ισραηλίτες βουλευτές στο Ελληνικό Κοινοβούλιο 1915-1936* (Αθήνα: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2011) [Leon Nar, *The Jews in the Greek Parliament* (Athens: The Foundation of the Greek Parliament, 2011)], 64.

161. For the Misrachi family, see Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics', 82. See also above, nn. 54, 88.

162. Daniel Carpi, *Italian Diplomatic Documents on the History of the Holocaust in Greece (1941-1943)* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999), doc. 1942.9, 94. It should be noted that although Enrico Misrachi appears on this list, he was not an Italian citizen; his name is shown there because he was a partner of Dino Fernandez and Elia Torres.

163. *El Avenir*, 4 May 1902. Moscow Archives, doc. no. 8654 (Ladino).

164. *El Pueblo*, 5 May 1932, 104 (Ladino).

mas.)¹⁶⁵ Salties Angel and Yuda Isak purchased a plot for the sum of 160,200 drachmas. Yuda Isak appears on the list of taxpayers for 1912, with the right to vote and be elected;¹⁶⁶ however, he does not appear on the list of those taxed to fund the municipal soup kitchens in 1932. Salties Angel does not appear on either list.¹⁶⁷

At the 1921 auction, a woman named Rikoula Datsa bought a plot for 90,700 drachmas, and Nikos Darveris purchased land for 201,000 drachmas. Moise Morpurgo, who purchased a plot for the sum of 151,000 drachmas, belonged to a family of Francos originally from Ancona who had migrated to Salonika and extended their reach throughout the Mediterranean basin. During World War I, Moise had served as director of the Commercial and Industrial Company of Salonika.¹⁶⁸ He appears on the rolls of the American Levant Co. for 1923 as one of its representatives in Salonika, where he traded in cotton.¹⁶⁹ He also ran a branch of the Assicurazioni Generali insurance firm,¹⁷⁰ and represented additional insurance companies. Likewise, he served as president of the syndicate of fire insurance companies that operated in Salonika from the Ottoman era until well into the Greek period.¹⁷¹ In the list of Jews obliged to pay the municipal tax to fund the establishment of soup kitchens, published in 1932, Moise Morpurgo was assessed in the amount of 14,000 drachmas.¹⁷²

165. In 1932, each member of the Modiano family was assessed 15,000 drachmas toward the cost of running the municipal soup kitchens, *El Puevlo*, 5 May 1932, 104 (Ladino). In 1942, the Italian consul in Salonika estimated the value of the underwear and socks factory of Giacomo, Umberto and Armando Modiano as being worth 12 million 1939 drachmas, Carpi, *Italian Diplomatic Documents*, doc. 1942.9, 94.

166. *El Avenir*, undated list from 1912, Moscow Archives, fond 1435, opis 1, doc 8655 in the digitised collection (Ladino).

167. I believe that the reference is not to individuals but to a firm, Anjel and Salties, that traded in paints and assorted chemicals, Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship*, 153-154.

168. Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship*, 63.

169. *Levant Trade Review* 11, no.7 (July 1923), XVI, Charles Clafin Davis Papers, 1917-1923, series II: papers, 1897-1, Harvard Law School Library, Cambridge, MA., seq. 417 [https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:13349349\\$417i](https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:13349349$417i) (accessed 21 August 2017); seq. 501 [https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:13349349\\$501i](https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:13349349$501i) (accessed 21 August 2017).

170. Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship*, 27.

171. Dagkas, *Recherches*, 339; Meron, *Jewish Entrepreneurship*, 76.

172. *El Puevlo*, 5 May 1932, 104 (Ladino). In an appendix prepared by the Italian Consul General in Salonika and sent to the Italian Embassy in Athens, he estimated the

It is possible that Jak Nahmias and Sabetai Serero, who are not mentioned anywhere as men of great wealth, and who purchased plots of land together with members of the Modiano family, served the latter as an 'entry ticket' to the public auction. Most of the purchasers of plots in this category were the wealthiest Jews in Salonika. Of 19 buyers, 14 were Jews, along with 3 Muslims and 2 Christians. All three of the Muslims bought land in partnership with Jews.

At a different auction, on 14 April 1923, 39 parcels of land were sold. In contrast to the previous sale, where only the price paid for the plot was noted, here the minimum value of the plot as determined by the Salonika Real Estate Committee, was also listed. Most of the plots were sold at very close to the value set by the Committee, and none of them exceeded a price of 60,000 drachmas, with most ranging around 30,000 drachmas. Eighteen of the transactions involved Jacob Cazes and Eli Modiano; the remainder, with two exceptions, were with the Greek Theagenio Hospital.¹⁷³ At the time, Jacob Cazes was president of the Jewish community, and the architect Eli Modiano, son of Jacob Modiano, was a member of the community's Executive Committee. In light of the fact that most of the other transactions were with the Greek hospital, Cazes and Modiano may have acted as the proxies of the organised Jewish community, and made use of their right to purchase assets as 'representatives of the public sector', as stipulated in Law no. 2121.¹⁷⁴ All buyers until April 1923 were listed in the Land Registry. Out of 3,350 sales, 57.6% were to Jews, 29% to Christians, and 12% to Muslims. Five Armenian buyers were also listed, along with 29 large commercial enterprises.¹⁷⁵ In this way, the Greek government kept the poorer members and the middle class of the Jewish community away from the center of town, and drove them out in favour of the 'beautiful people'. The rich got richer, and the poor got poorer.¹⁷⁶

assets of Salonikan Jews holding Italian citizenship (23 July 1942). Morpurgo's widow, Fanni, who appeared on this list, was assessed as being worth 3 million 1939 drachmas, and his son's assets were estimated at 10 million drachmas. Daniel Carpi, *Italian Diplomatic Documents*, doc. 1942.9, 93.

173. 'Δημοπρασία 13 Απριλίου 1923' [The public auction of 13 April 1923], *Makedonia*, 14 April 1923.

174. 'Τνωστοποίησης' [Update], *Makedonia*, 15 July 1920, 2.

175. Karadimou-Yerolympou and Kolonas, 'Reconstruction', 237.

176. Alexandra Yerolympou, *Urban Transformations in the Balkans (1820-1920): As-*

The Joint Distribution Committee and financial support for Salonika's Jewish community

With the failure of the attempt to cancel the plan to rebuild the Burnt Zone, the Salonikan Jewish leadership looked for sources of funding with which to resettle the refugees from the fire who were unable to find homes on their own –which was the case with most survivors of the fire. The Alliance in Paris consented to allocate 200,000 francs to this endeavor, and the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) agreed to earmark an additional 100,000.¹⁷⁷ But the primary source on which the community leaders relied was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which had been established specifically to assist Jews in need as a result of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1918, American Jews succeeded in raising \$25 million for this purpose.¹⁷⁸ It is not surprising that the heads of the Salonika Jewish community saw them as the ultimate resource for funding to rehabilitate those harmed by the fire. In the eyes of the community's leaders, the Great Fire of 1917 came under the heading of war-related damages, and it seems that in this specific case the JDC heads agreed with them. As noted earlier, they sent Hetty Goldman to Salonika to handle humanitarian assistance there. Upon her return to New York on 8 July 1919, she summed up her impressions of the activities of the Jewish community leadership as follows:

*They were not raising any funds while I was there. I think in general they are not particularly liberal. They go on making the same effort. They had not risen to meet this peculiar situation at all. Their attempts were all concentrated to get army barracks in order to house the people.*¹⁷⁹

pects of Balkan Town Planning and the Remaking of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1996), 118.

177. Letter from Emmanuel Salem in Paris to David Lubin in Rome, 10 June 1918 (see above, nn. 45, 97).

178. JDC Archives, 1919-1921, Records of the New York Office, General Files, Folder #1, Albert Lucas, 'Jewish War Relief in America', 1 July 1919 (date marked as June in the original document). http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR1921/00006/NY_AR1921_00226.pdf

179. Report by Hetty Goldman, 8 July 1918 (see above, n. 40).

Based on JDC correspondence, it appears that establishing Neighbourhood 151 to house the refugees was the first task that the JDC took upon itself in Salonika. Albert Lucas, the JDC Secretary at the time, stated at the meeting where Goldman presented her report: 'We have sent a cable to the Committee in Salonika that we will contribute 300,000 francs for barracks, provided the Community gives 400,000 francs'. Goldman, disappointed with the community leaders, responded at this same session:

I feel very strongly about that community. They need a little urging, as far as the work goes. I think that a conditional gift is what they need. When I was in London I asked about those building materials, and they said it was going to be shipped immediately. It took about a year to get them out there. By that time, they had abandoned the idea of building and I think they were going to try to sell these building materials. They could use them in remodeling those barracks. They are going to make one house barracks.¹⁸⁰

The Jewish community leadership in Salonika did not see things as Miss Goldman did, and continued their efforts to secure more funding from the JDC. Rabbi Ben Zion 'Uziel, chief rabbi of Salonika, wrote an emotional letter to the JDC leadership, and apparently recruited Rabbi Aharon Teitelbaum from New York to the cause. The latter wrote to Col. Herbert Lehman,¹⁸¹ one of the founders of the JDC, that it seemed to him that the Jewish community in Salonika had made a tremendous effort to rehabilitate its institutions, congregations, and schools, and that it could no longer stave off disaster without assistance.¹⁸²

180. Ibid.

181. Herbert Henry Lehman (1878-1963), the head of the Reconstruction Committee in New York, was the son of Meir Lehman, one of the founders of the Lehman Brothers bank. He was a Democratic Party politician from New York, serving from 1933 until 1942 as the 45th Governor of New York, and represented New York State in the U.S. Senate from 1949 until 1957. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/rbml/lehman/pdfs/0530/ldpd_leh_0530_0277.pdf (accessed 21 August 2017); <http://www.jta.org/1963/12/06/archive/herbert-h-lehman-dies-in-new-york-mourned-by-jewry-funeral-sunday> (accessed 21 August 2017).

182. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, letter from Aaron Teitelbaum to Col. Herbert H. Lehman, 5 April 1922. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04255.pdf See also *ibid.*, letter from Mr. Hyman to

In a letter dated 26 February 1923 to the Sephardic Brotherhood of America, William Mack informed them that in June 1922 the JDC had dispatched the amount of \$10,000 for purposes of building housing for the refugees from the fire. A further \$5,000 went to purchasing the building materials mentioned by an angry Hetty Goldman.¹⁸³ (The date when the money was sent may be mistaken, since in early September 1922 such an amount was promised to the community;¹⁸⁴ or the reference may have been to two separate sums for the same purpose: building homes for the survivors of the fire.)

But the community leadership had much bigger plans with regard to the JDC, and as a result of these contacts Dr. Frank Rosenblatt, director of the European Section of the JDC, and Mr. Walter Monteser, the JDC representative in Istanbul, came to Salonika. On 7 September 1922, they visited the different neighbourhoods and community institutions, and that evening sat down for a meeting in the offices of the Jewish community attended by the Executive Committee under the leadership of Jacob Cazes. Rosenblatt's opening remarks were encouraging:

*I further take pleasure in saying to you that we are filled with just pride at the efforts of this Community - which is everywhere considered as one of the glories of world-wide Jewry - in the work it has done along relief lines and also in the Communal Living Quarters.*¹⁸⁵

Nonetheless, he made it clear to those assembled that despite the great suffering that he had witnessed in Salonika, the JDC had decided to concentrate its efforts on Russia, where the situation of the Jewish population was more dire than in any other community of the Diaspora. Their visit to the lower-class quarters and the orphanage had led them to the conclusion

Herbert H. Lehman regarding Mr. Rieur's report of 1 December 1921 on the Near East and Balkan States, 21 February 1922. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04250.pdf

183. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, letter from William. J. Mack to Sephardic Brotherhood of America, 26 February 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04308.pdf

184. See below, n. 187.

185. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Jewish Community Held on September 7, 1922, at 7 p.m. in the Offices of the Community'. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04268.pdf

that this was not a situation of war refugees and war orphans. Hence the community itself should see to their needs. Jacob Cazes reminded the distinguished guests of the fire of 1917, which had destroyed the homes of numerous Jews who were unable to rehabilitate themselves, and Rabbi 'Uziel corroborated his words, describing the terrible state of many families and the enormous damage caused to the community's institutions, and asking for the JDC's help in easing their misery. Rosenblatt and Monteser asked the community leadership for a detailed report explaining their needs in two areas: reconstruction and humanitarian relief. A report was swiftly drawn up and submitted.¹⁸⁶

On 9 September, an additional meeting was held at which the questions that had arisen during the first meeting were discussed, along with the report. Cazes explained that there was no point in tallying the number of war orphans because the community had no resources with which to help them in any event. However, based on Rosenblatt's comments about the report, the community was requesting significant sums of money to reestablish the two vocational schools in the city that had been destroyed in the fire. Rosenblatt wished to know which occupations were taught in these schools, and whether the graduates could earn a livelihood with the tools they had acquired in these schools. The reference was to a girls' schools supported by the local council of the Alliance, where 250 girls studied various aspects of sewing, and a boys' school financed by the community, where 150 boys learned carpentry, tailoring, metalworking, shoemaking, bookbinding, and woodworking. All of them earned a decent living upon completion of their studies.¹⁸⁷

It emerges from Rosenblatt's queries that the Jewish community had also requested a sum of money from the JDC to set up a free loan association, and Rosenblatt questioned the benefit of such an undertaking. Cazes explained to him that the purpose of the loan fund was to assist craftsmen and professionals in reestablishing their businesses or opening new ones. He pledged that the community would underwrite these loans. But the most interesting

186. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, report by David Matalon and Jacob Cazes on the needs of the community, submitted to Frank Rosenblatt from the JDC during his visit to Salonika, 8 September 1922. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04273.pdf#search=

187. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder #209, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Jewish Community Held on September 9, 1922, at 7 p.m. in the Offices of the Community'. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04283.pdf

subject discussed at this last meeting was the loan that the community hoped to obtain from the JDC to rejuvenate itself as an organisation. The community requested a loan in the sum of \$300,000 from the JDC to construct profitable buildings on the land in its possession whose yields would enable it to solve the problems of needy Jews in Salonika. This extraordinary request was rejected outright by Rosenblatt, who explained once again at length that the JDC had been established not to strengthen the community's institutions but to solve the problems of war refugees. This request, more than any other, reflected the leadership's way of thinking. Its considerations were not based on providing immediate assistance to those harmed by the fire; rather, it functioned as a business organisation in every sense.

Rosenblatt was in fact ready to discuss a different request from the Salonika community, for assistance in building homes for the one thousand families who remained homeless. He promised that if construction began immediately, he would see to it that \$10,000 was transferred for this purpose. Cazes responded that this amount would help in building homes for 60-70 families. The sum was to be provided to the community as a loan, of which they were obligated to repay 20%; the remainder was to be paid off with the monies collected from the recipients of the loans granted from this amount. The JDC further demanded that the community's assets serve as collateral for the repayment of the debt. The JDC would collect from the community an annual interest of 2.5%, and would permit the community to collect no more than 6% a year from the loan recipients. Eli Benouzilio requested permission to collect 9% interest from the loan recipients since, he claimed, this was the official interest rate in Greece, and the community would have other expenses surrounding the financial transactions. Rosenblatt agreed to this as well as to the transfer of \$20,000 to set up a loan fund, to be repaid by the community in ten years. In exchange, the community had to commit to putting \$5,000 of its own money into the loan fund; this fund would not be used for loans to merchants but only to the destitute and victims of war. The community also requested the sum of \$15,000 for construction of two vocational schools, but Rosenblatt agreed to transfer only an amount sufficient for the schools' upkeep for three years, if the schools were indeed opened. He pledged that the support for the other community schools and for orphans would be discussed by the JDC leadership.¹⁸⁸

188. *Ibid.*

In the meantime, from August 1922 through 1923 some 100,000 refugees from Asia Minor swelled Salonika's population in the aftermath of the Greek adventure there, and the Salonika municipality became preoccupied with housing them. The situation of the fire victims, which already received scant attention, was shunted aside even further. With the approach of the winter of 1922/23, the tables were turned in the relationship between the Jewish community and the Greek government on the housing issue. Whereas until then, the Jews of Salonika had been the ones requesting financial assistance for housing the victims of the fire, they were now being called upon to provide financial aid for the Asia Minor refugees.

In the same months that refugees from Anatolia were streaming to Salonika, there were still more than 1,000 Jewish families living in horrendous conditions, described as 'breeding grounds for disease' and 'ruins'.¹⁸⁹ In light of the new social/political reality created in the city, and the enormous needs of the tens of thousands of refugees flocking there, many of them hostile towards the Jews (who were seen as siding with the Turks –the architects of their disaster– and were now 'living the good life' in Salonika), the JDC feared the ramifications of continuing to rehabilitate the victims of the fire, and decided to suspend their efforts.¹⁹⁰ In the spring of 1923, when the political situation in Salonika had stabilised, the JDC felt it was time to resume construction, and 45 new buildings were constructed in the upper section of the 151 quarter near the Cazes School, where the malaria hadn't spread. The houses were made of brick with shingled roofs. Each family received a room measuring 16.7 square metres with a small entrance hall and a kitchen shared by every two families. On 23 June 1923, Walter Monteser, the JDC representative for the Near East, wrote to Leonard G. Robinson, the JDC's European Director for Reconstruction, located in Vienna, that in his opinion many homes that had been damaged in the fire could be renovated at relatively low cost. He proposed that the \$20,000 earmarked for the general loan fund be redirected to a special loan fund dedicated to this purpose, with the houses serving as collateral for the repayment of the loan. In his view (which, in light of Greek government policy, does not appear well-founded), many of the

189. Report by Matalon and Cazes to Rosenblatt. See above, n. 186.

190. Letter from William. J. Mack to Sephardic Brotherhood of America, 26 February 1923 (see above, n. 183); *ibid.*, letter from Walter R. Monteser to Leonard G. Robinson, 23 June 1923 (see above, n. 145).

refugees from the fire still owned the plots on which their homes had previously stood, and for the sum of \$3,000 per family they could rebuild their homes.¹⁹¹

In practice, the Jewish community was apparently unsuccessful in setting up the vocational schools for which it had requested assistance from the JDC, and Jacob Cazes made the following proposal to Monteser: In Neighbourhood No. 151, construction of the Cazes School, to which the family of the Jewish community president had been the major donors, was already underway, and the community's Education Committee had designated four of the 15 classrooms in the school for vocational training for girls. Cazes had promised that if he received assistance in setting up work rooms for the young women, the classes would be separated from the academic part of the school, and a girls' trade school with six classrooms, including three large work spaces, would be established. He requested an unspecified sum to install the work rooms and purchase the necessary equipment. So as not to give the wrong impression, he noted that the community itself was absorbing the heavy cost of providing vocational training for 50 boys.¹⁹²

In Vienna, Robinson received Monteser's report and the various requests of Cazes, and wrote to Col. Lehman, Chairman of the Reconstruction Committee in New York, that in his opinion, Monteser was correct in his recommendations; moreover, the central problem in Salonika was housing, and he believed that his proposal to earmark the \$20,000 intended for the loan fund to a special fund that would offer loans for residential purposes only should be accepted. It turned out that Monteser had recommended granting an additional \$20,000 to the Salonika Jewish community, for this very purpose, and Robinson had seconded his recommendation. It emerges from this letter that the first \$10,000 transferred to the community by the JDC for building Neighbourhood No. 151 was given as a grant and not a loan.

Meanwhile, it became obvious that the monies were not enough, and Robinson proposed increasing the amount by \$5,000 for this purpose, to be

191. *Ibid.*

192. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Jacob Cazes to Walter R. Monteser, 10 June 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04318.pdf

See also letter from Walter R. Monteser to Leonard G. Robinson, 23 June 1923 (see above, n. 145).

deducted from the second sum of \$20,000 that he had recommended loaning to the community. Further, it appears from this same letter that \$3,000 had been provided towards the vocational school. Robinson approved the transfer of \$20,000 for housing purposes, but cautioned Monteser that the additional \$20,000 would likely not be approved. Robinson in fact asked to make it crystal clear that the Jewish community of Salonika should not expect a second sum of \$20,000 in order to set up a loan fund.¹⁹³

To summarise, between 1919 and 1923, the JDC gave the Jewish community of Salonika a grant of \$10,000, construction materials worth \$5,000, loans amounting to \$20,000, and a grant for vocational training in the sum of \$3,000. An additional loan of \$20,000 was still pending.¹⁹⁴ Monteser returned once again to Salonika to discuss the construction plan with the community leaders, and this time he appears to have grasped exactly what was happening there. He was convinced that the leaders were not engaged in philanthropy but in business, and understood that the victims of the fire would not be able to build their homes at their previous locations. He realised that the bonds they had in their possession, which were supposed to represent the value of their original plots of land, had now dropped sharply in value due to the devaluation of the drachma. Monteser gave an accurate representation of what the Jewish community had done: It had bought land on the city's outskirts at low prices and offered it for sale at reasonable prices to those people who could cover the cost of their plots through the bonds that had been issued to them. The Jewish community would be constructing the buildings in one concentrated area, and the community would have a lien on them until payment of the remainder of the debt by the mortgage holders. Monteser stipulated that there would be no further monies added to the JDC loan, that the loan would be paid in gold, that the community would issue loans to the

193. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Leonard C. Robinson to Walter Monteser concerning realty reconstruction loans in Salonika, 3 August 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04328.pdf

194. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Leonard G. Robinson to Herbert H. Lehman on the subject of Salonika, 31 July 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04326.pdf See also letter from JDC's European Director for Reconstruction to Herbert H. Lehman on the subject of Salonika, 31 August 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04343.pdf

mortgage holders in gold, and that the loans would be repaid in gold. The JDC would be paid an interest rate of 2% a year, while the community, for its part, could collect an annual interest of 7% from the residents plus a 2% one-time interest payment. The entire loan would be repaid to the JDC within ten years, and the mortgage holders were obligated to repay their loan within five years. In no case would an individual receive a loan totalling more than 50% of the value of the building he acquired.¹⁹⁵

Col. Lehman, who had received copies of the above, hastened to stress that there would be no additional loans. He argued that the needs of Russian Jewry were more numerous and pressing than those of the Jews of Salonika; furthermore, he wondered why construction in Salonika was so expensive. With the sum of money being requested to house a family in Salonika, he asserted, it would be possible to house several families in other countries, meaning that loans or grants to Salonika were a misguided policy.¹⁹⁶ Lehman had further doubts: In all the countries where the JDC operated, monies slated for construction were transferred to a commercial entity created specifically for this purpose. In Greece, for regulatory and tax reasons, it was not possible to do so, and the money was given to a subcommittee of the Jewish community. Lehman was not pleased with this arrangement. He argued that a commercial body that did not meet its obligations could be sued, but that suing a community was a totally different story. Nonetheless, he made it clear to Monteser and Robinson that since they were on site, and knew the conditions firsthand, he accepted their opinion. In doing so, he in effect made them responsible for what would happen if the Salonika deal ran into difficulties.¹⁹⁷

At the very end of 1923, Robinson sent one of his functionaries in Vienna to 'the East' to close the JDC office in Istanbul. This individual, Harry Viteles, took the opportunity to visit Salonika, and Robinson was happy to

195. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Walter R. Monteser to Leonard G. Robinson on the subject of Salonika, 13 August 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04333.pdf

196. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from chairman of Construction Committee to Leonard C. Robinson, 24 August 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04340.pdf

197. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from chairman of Construction Committee to Leonard G. Robinson, 22 September 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04347.pdf

pass along to Col. Lehman the impressions of Viteles on the work being carried out there. In Viteles's view, the Jewish community of Salonika had ample experience with dealings 'of this type' (meaning real estate), and they assured him that the monies from the JDC were not being placed at risk. Unlike Lehman, Viteles felt that the loans to the community were an excellent idea. Robinson suggested that the question of the additional \$20,000 be discussed by the new foundation shortly to be established by the JDC.¹⁹⁸

While all these letters were going back and forth, Henry Morgenthau (1856-1949) was appointed Chairman of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission, and was about to leave for Greece. Felix Warburg ordered the sum of \$10,000 to be placed at Morgenthau's disposal to be delivered to the Near East Relief Committee, 'with the stipulation that when used, the fact that the funds were provided by the Joint Distribution Committee be made public'.¹⁹⁹ Warburg, of course, saw the benefit to the JDC's activities in Greece that could arise from such a move, and the potential for improved relations between the war refugees and the Jews of Salonika.

In the meantime, the state of affairs in Salonika had not changed to a noticeable extent. One thousand Jewish families were still without a roof over their heads. The situation was still the same in November 1923, when Morgenthau arrived in Salonika. Henry Morgenthau was a Jewish businessman who had made his fortune in real estate and was a major contributor to Woodrow Wilson and a close personal friend of his. Between 1913 and 1916, Morgenthau had served as U.S. Ambassador in Istanbul, and, following the war, had been an advisor on East European and Middle Eastern affairs at the Paris Peace Conference. He had subsequently been appointed to head the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission.²⁰⁰ The Jews of Salonika were amazed

198. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 446, letter from Leonard G. Robinson to Herbert H. Lehman on the subject of Greece and Turkey and Mr. Viteles's report on his trip to the Near East, 7 December 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04358.pdf

199. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Felix Warburg to JDC, 15 October 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04354.pdf

See also JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from William J. Mack to Near East Relief Committee, 17 October 1923. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04355.pdf

200. See Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Cleveland, OH:

to see a Jew holding such a lofty position. This, coupled with the fact that he was a very wealthy man who presumably rubbed shoulders with other very wealthy men, led them to believe that he could be useful to them in their dealings with the Greek government, including the matter of the refugees from the fire who still lacked permanent shelter. The thought of the millions that would flow towards the goal of settling the Asia Minor refugees led them to the conclusion that their concerns, which were being steadily marginalised, could benefit in some way if Morgenthau could be made to understand their plight.

The Jewish community sought Morgenthau's involvement in their affairs on two levels: one, political; and two, financial. The community was facing a nasty wave of antisemitic attacks and legislative moves that it viewed as a deliberate campaign against it, among them an antisemitic crusade being waged by the *Makedonia* newspaper; *The National Herald* (*Ethnikos Kiryx*, the newspaper of the Anatolia refugees); and an organisation called Georgios V, described as an 'anti-Jewish league'.²⁰¹ As it turns out, Morgenthau's intervention was useful, at least temporarily. The attacks in *Makedonia* ceased, the refugee newspaper stopped appearing due to lack of money, and the aforementioned league disappeared. Additionally, steps were initiated to establish a Jewish-Greek league for rapprochement between the two peoples.²⁰² Another political issue in which Morgenthau was asked to intercede were the results of the parliamentary elections of 1923. Prior to the election, the Jews of Salonika had been separated from the rest of the electorate and permitted to vote for only a limited number of parliamentary representatives, inconsistent with their proportion of the population. A majority of the Jews of Salonika had boycotted

Pickle Partners Publishing, 1918 / Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003); Henry Morgenthau, *I Was Sent to Athens* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1929); Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', 150-151.

201. Georgios Angelopoulos was Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople from 1797 to 1798, from 1806 to 1808, and from 1818 to 1821. Accused by the Ottomans of supporting the Greek uprising, he was executed, and his body dragged through the streets of Balat by Jews. Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century*, vol.1, 134; Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, *Greece - A Jewish History*, Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 16.

202. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Richard B. Juda to Henry Morgenthau, 1 January 1924. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04371.pdf

Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', 151-153.

the election, and the community was now asking for the four Jewish representatives who had been elected to be disqualified, and for the special electoral category (or collegium) of the Jews of Salonika to be abolished.²⁰³

Other matters in which Morgenthau was asked to intervene were the stipulation that Sunday be the mandatory day of rest in Salonika, and the master plan for reconstruction of the Burnt Zone, specifically regarding the plots included in what was defined as Category C (the expensive commercial sections), whose resale had harmed the interests of numerous Jews who had previously owned land in this area. On these issues, Morgenthau dealt in turn with Prime Ministers Nicolaos Plastiras (1883-1953) and Alexandros Papanastasiou, receiving firm assurances that all would be resolved in the best manner possible.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the special electoral category was abolished only in 1933, and Sunday became entrenched as the mandatory day of rest, in large part due to the powerlessness of the Jewish community.²⁰⁵

The second area of concern brought to Morgenthau was the repeated request by the Jewish community leadership to use JDC funds to resolve the problem of the homeless, provide financial assistance to the community's educational and social welfare institutions, and strengthen its own financial base as an organisation. A lengthy memorandum sent to Morgenthau on 2 March 1924 described the problems concerning the community, its institutions, its assets, and its sources of income. Particular emphasis was placed on improving the housing situation of the fire victims, with a list of the locations where they were resettled and the financial resources available for this effort. According to his report, the community had managed to see to it that 2,500 families harmed by the fire had a decent roof over their heads for an acceptable rent, or with no rent at all.

203. Rozen, *Last Ottoman Century*, vol. 1, 262; Δημοσθένης Δώδος, Η εκλογική περιφέρεια της Θεσσαλονίκης. Κόμματα και υποψήφιοι, Θεσσαλονίκη: διδακτορική διατριβή, Νομική Σχολή, 1989 [Dimosthenis Dodos, 'The Electoral Periphery of Thessaloniki, Parties and Candidates' (Ph.D. diss., University of Thessaloniki, 1989)], 68-70; Nar, *Jewish Members of Greek Parliament*, 70-75.

204. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', 151-153.

205. For more on this topic, see my book *A Very Narrow Bridge: The Jews of Salonika under the Greek Government (1912-1943)* (forthcoming), chap. 2, 'The Outer Circle: Looking from the Inside Out - Existential and Political Struggles', and chap. 5, 'The Metaxas Era (1936-1941)'.

The community leaders brought to Morgenthau a business proposal that had actually been raised earlier in one form or another.²⁰⁶ Under this plan, the JDC would loan them the following sums of money: \$125,000 for profit-generating real estate construction on lots owned by the community, whose yields would be used to provide services to the community members; \$50,000 to build a neighbourhood in a 'healthy' location (that is, one not infested with malaria) for over 1,000 families; and \$35,000 to purchase the land on which Neighbourhood 151 stood, which was the property of the Greek government. All told, the community requested a loan of \$210,000,²⁰⁷ as opposed to the \$300,000 that it had asked for earlier to build profitable real estate. The leaders asked to use the community's assets as collateral for the repayment of the loan, and presented a formal business plan. There is no indication that the JDC responded favourably to the request; however, the subject was raised again with greater emphasis two years later. At that time, the community leaders turned to Dr. Bernhard Kahn, then-director of the Refugee Department of the JDC, in a lengthy memo in French describing the deteriorating situation of the homeless, whose numbers had not diminished in the interim. One thousand Jewish families in Salonika were still homeless. The tone of this memorandum was much more dismal than that of the document submitted to Morgenthau. According to its authors, even those fortunate enough to have found shelter were living in extremely grim conditions, without electricity or running water, frequently on unpaved dirt roads, and far from public transportation. The community's housing problems had worsened greatly, primarily due to the intensive efforts to house the Asia Minor refugees. The latter had become an enormous undertaking throughout the city, in particular on the fringes of the Burnt Zone, where thousands of homeless Jews had found a place to live in the ruins and in improvised shelters:

Toute la ville est en reconstruction. Le nouveau plan exige le percement des nouvelles artères, la démolition des maisons en ruines ou a moitié brûlées, le nivellement des terrains, la construction des égouts et la pose des conduits d'eau. Ces travaux commencent depuis quelque temps un peu partout ainsi que les expulsions opérées dans des maisons turques en faveur des réfugiés grecs avaient déjà refoulé des habitants juifs d'autres quartiers,

206. See above, p. 56.

207. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 'Jewish Community of Salonica', 154-165.

*vers ce centre populeux qu'était Aktche-Mesdjid en faisant une agglomération sordide ou la promiscuité atteint un degré indescriptible.*²⁰⁸

According to the authors of the report, despite the desperate situation of the residents of Aktche-Mesdjid, they were content to remain in these squalid conditions, but the new construction had caused the quarter to be cleared out. In mid-1925, 100 Jewish families left homeless by the fire had been evicted from the area and thrown into the street. In late December 1926, 900 additional families who had been living in Aktche-Mesdjid in the ruins left by the fire were now facing eviction. The Jewish community's coffers were empty; all of its institutions were in debt, and the rate of collection of the *petcha*, the progressive tax on assets and income, was in constant decline. Nevertheless, the community had managed to raise 306,000 drachmas, and the government, despite its dire straits, had promised a similar amount, which was enough to offer shelter to 38 families.

But what of all the rest? The municipality and the Committee for Aid to Jewish Fire Victims were not paying their share, and the only apparent solution was to purchase a plot of land at a reasonable price to build housing for the other evacuees of Aktche-Mesdjid. Despite the financial crisis in Salonika, the Jewish community decided to launch a fundraising campaign. The most optimistic forecast was that it would bring in half a million drachmas, but thanks to the generosity of Salonika's wealthier residents there was a chance of reaching 1 million drachmas, the cost of a parcel of land for construction. The authors of the memorandum hoped that 450 families would be able to obtain housing on their own, leaving the community to provide homes for a minimum of 400 families. Construction was estimated by them to cost 8 million drachmas, or \$100,000. They hoped to secure this sum from the JDC, half of it in the form of a grant and the other half as a loan.

Their idea was more complicated than providing 400 families with a place to live. The details of the proposal included construction of 200 small homes, each containing two rooms and a kitchen, with each room housing one family. The neediest –widows, orphans, the disabled, the destitute–

208. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, 31 December 1926. A lengthy memorandum in French, apparently from the leaders of the Salonika community to Dr. Bernhard Kahn (1876-1955). Beginning in 1912, he served as director of the Refugee Department of the JDC. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04384.pdf

would be housed in fifty of these homes. The remaining 150 houses would be sold to residents of Aktche-Mesdjid or other neighbourhoods, enabling a portion of the loan to be repaid to the JDC; the remainder would be repaid with interest by the Jewish community. According to them, the sale of 150 homes would bring in a sum of 6,750,000 drachmas, meaning that the community would be left with a debt of 1,250,000 drachmas.²⁰⁹

Also in Berlin when the memorandum reached Bernhard Kahn was Senator Asher Malach, who tried to convince him to present the memo to the JDC leadership in New York. He indeed promised to do so, but his recommendation to the JDC was to loan the community only \$25,000.²¹⁰ In the end, the Executive Committee in New York approved a loan of just \$20,000 to construct housing for 400 families left homeless by the fire.²¹¹

Based on a reference to these same homeless Jews in 1929, the Jewish community was apparently unable to raise the remainder of the funds needed to house them and may have given up on the notion.²¹² From the community's correspondence with the authorities, it is clear that the problem was seen by the latter as an internal Jewish issue. The Greek government looked with suspicion at the community's financial affairs, and held that at least some of the complaints against the state for not acting on behalf of the

209. Ibid.

210. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from the heads of the B'nai B'rith office in Salonika [apparently including Asher Malach] to Henry Morgenthau, 5 January 1927. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04375.pdf

See also JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from the heads of the B'nai B'rith office in Salonika to Alfred M. Cohen, president of B'nai B'rith in Cincinnati, 7 February 1927. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04407.pdf

211. JDC Archives, 1921-1932, Folder # 209, letter from Joseph C. Hyman to Dr. Bernhard Kahn, 18 March 1927. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04411.pdf

See also *ibid.*, letter from Joseph C. Hyman to Dr. Boris D. Bogen, 22 March 1927. http://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR2132/00036/NY_AR2132_04410.pdf

212. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 221, no. 11,232 in digitised archive, declaration on the status of the family of Abram and Allegra Bibas, 12 November 1929; *ibid.*, article by Yitzhaq Shaul in *Ba-Ohalim* [In the tents], no. 23,031 in digitised archives (undated, with photos of tent).

homeless Jews were unjustified, and were based, at the very least, on a lack of knowledge of the facts.²¹³ Over the years, there were recurring claims about a lack of solutions for this group, and even in 1936 there is still mention in the protocol of an Executive Committee meeting of the need to help those who had been homeless since 1917.²¹⁴

The problem of the homeless continued to be a thorn in the side of the community. Anything said about the shoddy or ineffective handling of the problem by the Jewish community as an organisation must be viewed in the context of the overall housing problems in Salonika. The situation of the Greek refugees was no better, despite the fact that the Greek state would be expected to attend devotedly to their needs. Refugees were forced to pay *bak-sheesh* (bribes) to municipal clerks in order to be registered as entitled to assistance. In June 1925, 25,000 of them were housed in barracks of the Triple Entente armies in conditions similar to those fire victims who had been 'fortunate' enough to be housed in Quarters 6, 151, and Campbell. Another 25,000 were encamped in the cemetery. By 1926, halls measuring 350 square metres had been built in the Charilaou quarter, far from any public transportation, with cement floors, no internal walls, and cardboard covering the windows. Fifty people were housed in each of them. In the winter, the halls were like refrigeration rooms. To make matters worse, Agia Fotini was filthy and plagued by disease-bearing mosquitos. In the Vardar quarter, small houses resting on a collapsed rampart were built for the refugees, endangering the lives of the residents. Between 1926 and 1928, the situation of the Asia Minor refugees did not improve. In 1928, 35,000 refugees were living in the Toumba quarter in extremely difficult conditions, far from any public transportation, on unpaved streets covered with puddles in winter, without sufficient water and certainly without electricity.²¹⁵ Knowing this, the struggle of the Jewish community to rehabilitate the refugees of the Great Fire after 1922 takes on an entirely new dimension.

213. Stilianos Gonatas, Governor-General of Macedonia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki, 7 April 1930, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, doc. 44, 149-154, and especially, 150-153. In the Greek version, 162-167.

214. Protocol of the Executive Committee meeting of 8 March 1936, CAHJP old catalogue SA/GR 160. The concordance between the new catalogue and the old one does not mention file 160. Possible files in the new catalogue in which the old file 160 may be found are SA/GR 31-52, especially 39-44.

215. Dagkas, *Recherches*, 419-422.

It should be noted, in any case, that the international battle waged by the Jewish community against Greek government policy on the restoration of the Burnt Zone ultimately benefited only a very small group. The majority, who included the poorest members of the community, were pushed to the slums, where at least 5,000 of them remained without a proper roof over their heads until World War II and the final days of the organised Jewish community. Members of the middle class lost the bulk of their property, having been forced to sell the bonds issued to them for their plots in the Burnt Zone in order to secure immediate shelter for their families. For the wealthy, however, this policy ensured them a greater piece of the restoration pie. But if until August 1922, the community had clung to the slimmest of hopes that the city and state would aid in rehabilitating the refugees from the fire, the magnitude of the catastrophe that year put an end to any such optimism. The Jewish community was forced to cope with the problem of the fire victims on its own, and had difficulty doing so. Moreover, the fight against the reconstruction plan for the Burnt Zone caused the community as a whole tremendous political damage. It strengthened the general feeling in Greece –already reinforced by the international activity initiated by the community on the question of Salonika’s status, in response to the anti-Jewish pogroms following the entry of the Greek army into Salonika– that the Jewish community was a foreign entity that was seeking outside support against the government of Greece and the Greek nation. The broad network of contacts (of the community as an organisation, and of several of its distinguished members as individuals) with influential Jewish personalities in France, Great Britain, Italy, and the U.S., and with international Jewish organisations such as the Alliance, B’nai B’rith and the JDC, gave further validation in the Greek imagination to the fiction of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Some thoughts on imagined empathy and the actions of diaspora communities

In her book *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hunt talks about the ‘imagined empathy’ created as a result of new literary and artistic forms that emerged in the late 18th century in Western Europe. The notion of imagined empathy rests on the definition proposed by Benedict Anderson of nationalism as an ‘imagined community’ in which the nation is seen as a group of people who do not know one another by face or name but imagine

a shared origin and destiny.²¹⁶ According to Hunt, it was in fact not the rational aspect of the late 18th century that led to the recognition of human rights but the emotional aspect, which caused man to look inward and to come to the realisation that every person has rights. This abstract understanding is, according to Hunt, a product of imagined empathy: the ability to 'feel' the suffering of individuals who are thousands of miles away – people you have never seen and will never see– and, in so doing, to grasp that they have rights that are the same as your own.²¹⁷ I am relating here not to her thesis regarding the origins of the recognition of human rights but only to the notion that imagined empathy is possible – an idea that is certainly reasonable. At the same time, I wish to qualify her theory that emotions are the foundation of imagined empathy. The ability to empathise is limited, in my opinion, by generally subconscious rational factors that help us to survive. The broader a person's field of vision, the less likely he is to empathise with others on the margins of his awareness.

For example, if you came across a two year old wandering alone in the street, the immediate and normal reaction would be to bring him to a safe place and take care of him until his parents or family members could be found and the situation was resolved. The knowledge that there are millions of toddlers dying of starvation somewhere on the planet at this very moment will not lead the person reading these lines to grab his passport and rush to the airport to travel to a remote location to save them, or to donate all his worldly goods for this purpose. The reason for this is that the toddler we encountered in the street could have been our child or grandchild. And if it were our loved one in trouble, we would want someone to take care of him the same way that we would take care of this imaginary child. But children in Somalia or Sudan? What do we have to do with them? What good would it do us to save them? We need a great deal of imagination in order to empathise with them.

The question of imagined empathy is closely connected with the efforts of Salonika's Jewish community to enlist Jewish notables and organisations in the Diaspora both in blocking the plan to reconstruct the Burnt Zone

216. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and expanded ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

217. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York NY: Norton and Co., 2007), 1-34.

and in providing concrete financial assistance for housing the victims of the fire. Both efforts shed light on a much broader issue. Taking an overview of this struggle leads us to the concept of the Diaspora in general, and the relationship its branches in particular – ties that should be considered in light of the argument of imagined empathy and its source. Until the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish Diaspora revolved around an imagined center existing on an ideal plane that was destined to become reality at the End of Days. The relationship of mutual concern among different Diaspora communities was reflected primarily in economic ties and the redemption of captives. The material basis for the financial ties is self-evident.²¹⁸ In my study of the business aspect of redemption of captives in the Mediterranean Basin in the early modern era, I illustrated the concrete connection between imagined empathy and the physical or utilitarian distance between the object of the empathy and the empathiser.²¹⁹ In the late 18th century, as equal civil rights for Jews were starting to become a reality, the notion that ‘all Jews are responsible for one another’ went from an expression of the responsibility of Jews for each other’s religious observance to a case of imagined empathy stemming from a very practical need. A Jewish collective that enjoyed civil rights saw itself as obligated to come to the assistance of other communities that were not so fortunate, since the discrimination suffered by the latter could also harm the welfare of Jews who were living, for now, in a place where peace and brotherhood reigned. Thus the fact that there were Jews anywhere in the world who lacked rights had an impact on the rights of Jews who did benefit from these freedoms. The establishment of the Alliance Israélite Universelle was an outgrowth of this belief, with the effort to ‘westernise’ Oriental (and later, Romanian) Jewry, stemming from the fear that their inferior standing would jeopardise the

218. See for example Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World of Maritime Empires (1540-1740)* (Leiden: Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, 2002); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

219. Minna Rozen, *The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century: Captives, Pirates, and Ransomers at the Juncture Between Religion, Politics, Economics, and Society* (Palermo: Quaderni-Mediterranea - Ricerche storiche, 2016).

achievements of Western Jews.²²⁰ The activities of the Conjoint Foreign Committee in London,²²¹ and the founding of the Joint Distribution Committee in the U.S.,²²² reflected similar concerns, which had an entirely rational basis.

Thus the Salonikan Jews' appeal to Diaspora Jewry in their efforts to abolish the Greek government's construction plan had great practical significance from the perspective of the Jewish communities and leaders that they approached. A map of these Diaspora communities reveals varying degrees of affinity Salonika's Jews and their coreligionists elsewhere. In terms of ties with the Salonika community, the first circle was that of Jews (or their ancestors) who had migrated from Salonika to other locales; this included former Salonikan Jews in Paris. In the second circle were Sephardic Jews as a whole (not necessarily descendants of Salonikans) in Paris, London, and possibly, Rome. The third circle was American Jewry, most of whom were Ashkenazi Jews. Using the emotional foundation of Lynn Hunt's hypothesis as our starting point, the Salonikan community in Paris (and with it, the Alliance) should have been the most strongly committed to the Jews of Salonika. In fact, the Alliance, inspired by the nucleus of Salonikans in Paris, contributed substantial sums of money for immediate assistance to the victims of the fire. With regard to diplomatic activity against the construction plan, the Salonikans in Paris and the heads of the Sephardic community there were extremely moderate. They quickly became convinced that there was no chance of dissuading the Greek government from its plans, and sought ways to make the best of a bad situation. A broader circle consisted of the Jews of Great Britain, whose organisations included both Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews and whose stance was more resolute than that of the Paris Jews. And in the farthest circle were the

220. Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925 (The Modern Jewish Experience)* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 108; Rodrigue, *Education, Society and History, Alliance Israélite Universelle and Mediterranean Jewry 1860-1929* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1991), 13-31 (Hebrew).

221. Mark Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), especially 1-19.

222. Mark Rosen, *Mission, Meaning, and Money: How the Joint Distribution Committee Became a Fundraising Innovator* (Bloomington-New York: (Universe, 2010), 7; Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 21-34.

Jews of the U.S., who initially found themselves tied to the Jewish community in Rome as well, solely by dint of circumstance. David Lubin, who was enlisted by the heads of the JDC in the U.S., in turn recruited key political and intellectual figures among the Jews of Rome to combine the interests of the Italian government with his goals regarding the Salonika rebuilding plan.

Observing the international efforts from any perspective, it seems that the American Jews, who were emotionally the most far-removed from Salonikan Jewry, were the most active in their cause. This may stem from the fact that the United States had emerged from World War I as the major victor and was in a position to dictate the global agenda, undoubtedly facilitating American Jewish efforts. But the question remains of why the lowest level of activity took place in Paris, followed by London, while the strongest involvement was in New York. It was actually Ashkenazi Jews across the Atlantic Ocean who were the most radical in the struggle against the construction plan. The answer to this question lies not in the emotional realm but the practical one. The Salonikan Jews in Paris identified with the interests of their peers in Salonika – the city's financial elite, who stood to profit immensely from the plan. By contrast, the leaders of British Jewry, and more so, of the American Jewish community, looked at the entire affair through a completely different lens. The blatant disregard for the civil and property rights of the Jews of Salonika was an ominous sign for Jews in democratic countries who had no material interests in Salonika itself. The fear was that curtailing their rights was liable to create a climate of 'acceptability', even in places where their civil rights were still being honored; for this reason, it was necessary to fight against this phenomenon in the same way they battled antisemitism in Romania or Russia. In other words, common interests create imagined empathy.

The positions shifted, however, when financial assistance was involved. There is no question that American Jewry was inestimably better off than the Jewish collectives in Western Europe, which explains the repeated appeals to the former by the Salonika community. Yet the preference given by the JDC to Russian and East European Jewry as a whole was clear to see. The latter were blood relatives of American Ashkenazi Jewry, and were viewed as victims of war – which was not the case with regard to the Jews of Salonika. The willingness of the JDC to solve the problems of the destitute Jews of Salonika was thus limited in scope. In this case, imagined empathy grounded on emotions did not come into play, since there were no blood ties and the underlying common interest was only in the realm of legal and civil rights. The JDC

saw the Salonikan Jewish leadership as the sole party responsible for handling the city's poor, and moreover, as highly skilled leaders in the world of business who were up to the task. On the other side of the scale were the masses of Eastern Europe. They may have been faceless as a group, but almost every Jew in the U.S. had someone there with a face and a name who was a family member or acquaintance, and their suffering could not be solved without outside assistance. Here, imagined empathy based on emotions played an active role, precisely as proposed by Lynn Hunt.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Για χάρη των Αδελφών μας: Η μεγάλη πυρκαγιά της Θεσσαλονίκης (1917) και η κινητοποίηση των Εβραίων της Διασποράς υπέρ των θυμάτων

Μίνα Ροζέν

Η πυρκαγιά του 1917 στη Θεσσαλονίκη έχει συζητηθεί ευρύτατα στην ιστοριογραφία για τις πολιτικές, κοινωνικές και οικονομικές επιπτώσεις της. Η καταστροφή του ιστορικού κέντρου της πόλης που άφησε άστεγους 73.448 ανθρώπους, ανάμεσα στους οποίους και 52.000 Εβραίοι, θεωρείται σημείο καμπής στην ιστορία της πόλης από πολεοδομική άποψη, αλλά και σε σχέση με τον εξελληνισμό της και σε σχέση με το πλήγμα που υπέστη η εβραϊκή κοινότητα. Η παρούσα μελέτη εστιάζει σε μιαν όψη λιγότερο γνωστή: Την κινητοποίηση, με πρωτοβουλία των θεσσαλονικιών Εβραίων, διεθνών εβραϊκών οργανώσεων που κλήθηκαν να παράσχουν βοήθεια για την αποκατάσταση των θυμάτων. Οι ενέργειες και οι συζητήσεις που σχετίζονται με τη δράση αυτών των οργανώσεων φωτίζουν από διαφορετική σκοπιά την πολύπλοκη ιστορία του διεθνούς πολιτικού σκηνικού, την τοπική ιστορία, καθώς και την ιστορία της εβραϊκής κοινότητας, ενώ επαναθέτουν με ιστορικούς όρους το ζήτημα της «φαντασιακής ενσυναίσθησης».

Η μελέτη στηρίζεται σε μια σειρά από πρωτογενή τεκμήρια και αρχεία: Τοπικές εφημερίδες (στα εβραίο-ισπανικά, στα ελληνικά και στα γαλλικά), δημοσιευμένο υλικό από το αρχείο του Ελληνικού Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών και υλικό από το αρχείο της εβραϊκής κοινότητας της Θεσσαλονίκης · ένα

μέρος του κοινοτικού αρχείου διασώθηκε στα αρχεία της Μόσχας (και φωτογραφημένο φυλάσσεται σήμερα στο πανεπιστήμιο του Τελ Αβίβ) και ένα άλλο μέρος του στα Αρχεία του Εβραϊκού Λαού, στην Ιερουσαλήμ. Το αρχειακό υλικό συμπληρώνεται με τις συλλογές των αρχείων των εβραϊκών οργανώσεων και συγκεκριμένα της Alliance Israélite Universelle στο Παρίσι, της YIVO και της American Joint Distribution Committee, στη Νέα Υόρκη.

Το άρθρο εξετάζει αναλυτικά τα διαβήματα που έγιναν στο Λονδίνο, το Παρίσι, τη Ρώμη και τη Νέα Υόρκη και την εμπλοκή ηγετικών μορφών των εβραϊκών οργανώσεων, ελλήνων και ξένων διπλωματών καθώς και προσωπικοτήτων της εβραϊκής κοινότητας της Θεσσαλονίκης. Οι συζητήσεις και οι ενέργειες στις οποίες προέβησαν διπλωμάτες και ιδιώτες αφορούσαν αφενός μεν την άμεση αρωγή των πυροπαθών, αφετέρου την διαχείριση της οικονομικής εκμετάλλευσης της γης, σε σχέση με το νέο πολεοδομικό σχέδιο και τις αποζημιώσεις των ιδιοκτητών. Οι διπλωματικές διαπραγματεύσεις ελάμβαναν χώρα στο πλαίσιο των ελληνικών διεθνών σχέσεων, ενόψει και της Συνδιάσκεψης για την Ειρήνη στο Παρίσι, καθώς και στο πλαίσιο των εμπορικών συμφερόντων που απέρρεαν από τη δυναμική της ανοικοδόμησης. Η μελέτη σκιαγραφεί τη δράση προσωπικοτήτων της πολιτικής και της οικονομίας σε διεθνές και τοπικό επίπεδο, όπως ο εκπρόσωπος των Βρετανών Εβραίων, Lucien Wolf, ο πρέσβης στο Λονδίνο Ιωάννης Γεννάδιος, ο Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος, ο ραβίνος Ιακώβ Μείρ, ο πρόεδρος της κοινότητας Ιακώβ Καζές, ο αμερικανός πρέσβης Georges Horton, ο αμερικανός επιχειρηματίας David Lubin, ο πρόεδρος της Αλιάνς στη Θεσσαλονίκη Γιοσέφ Μιζράχι, ο πρέσβης στη Ρώμη Λάμπρος Κορομηλάς, ο Διοικητής της Μακεδονίας Περικλής Αργυρόπουλος, ο Θεσσαλονικιός δικηγόρος στο Παρίσι Εμανουέλ Σαλέμ, ο υπουργός Εξωτερικών Νικόλαος Πολίτης, ο αμερικανός πρόεδρος της Επιτροπής Αποκατάστασης Προσφύγων Χένρυ Μόργκενταου.

Τρία χρόνια μετά την πυρκαγιά, αφού ο Βενιζέλος έχει χάσει τις εκλογές του 1920 και μετά την άφιξη των προσφύγων από τη Μικρά Ασία οι οποίοι διεκδικούσαν και αυτοί οικονομική βοήθεια για να στεγαστούν, χιλιάδες εβραϊκές οικογένειες πυροπαθών ζούσαν ακόμη σε δυσβάσταχτες συνθήκες. Ωστόσο, οι πλουσιότεροι Εβραίοι και μη Εβραίοι ευνοήθηκαν από τις νομοθετικές ρυθμίσεις, για την αγορά της γης και τις ανακατατάξεις του οικιστικού σχεδίου της πόλης. Το χάσμα πλουσίων και φτωχών οξύνθηκε. Τα μεσαία και φτωχότερα στρώματα των Εβραίων εξοβελίστηκαν μακριά από το κέντρο της πόλης. Στο τέλος της δεκαετίας, όταν η ελληνική κυβέρνηση έχει

πλέον να ασχοληθεί με τη στέγαση των προσφύγων από τη Μικρά Ασία, η αλληλογραφία της κοινότητας με τις αρχές μαρτυρεί ότι το ζήτημα των άστεγων Εβραίων θεωρείται πλέον εσωτερικό εβραϊκό πρόβλημα.

Η μελέτη ολοκληρώνεται με μια ερμηνεία που αφορά την ικανότητα της *φαντασιακής ενσυναίσθησης* όπως εκδηλώθηκε με τη δράση των διεθνών εβραϊκών οργανώσεων. Αντίθετα με ότι θα περίμενε ίσως κανείς, η βοήθεια δεν ήρθε τόσο από τους κοντινούς, «αδελφούς», θεσσαλονικείς Εβραίους της Γαλλίας οι οποίοι ταυτίζονταν με την ελίτ των θεσσαλονικιών Εβραίων και με τα συμφέροντά τους, όσο από τους μακρινούς αμερικανούς Εβραίους. Οι τελευταίοι, στο όνομα των πολιτειακών δικαιωμάτων που έπρεπε να απολαμβάνουν όλοι οι Εβραίοι, συνέτρεξαν στους Εβραίους της Θεσσαλονίκης, βοηθώντας τους φτωχότερους από αυτούς μέσω της κοινοτικής ηγεσίας, ασχέτως αν η κοινοτική διοίκηση επέλεξε τις επενδύσεις προς όφελος της κοινοτικής περιουσίας και όχι την άμεση στέγαση των πυροπαθών Εβραίων. Η *φαντασιακή ενσυναίθηση* δεν στηρίζεται μόνο σε συναισθήματα, αλλά επηρεάζεται και από συμφέροντα.