



# Αρχείων Ανάλεκτα

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**Σωματείο «Φίλοι Κέντρου Ιστορίας Θεσσαλονίκης»**

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# Αρχείων Ανάλεκτα

Περιοδική έκδοση μελέτης  
και έρευνας αρχείων  
(δεύτερη περίοδος)

**1**

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*Minna Rozen*



## The Jewish Community of Salonika, 1912–1941: Organizational Patterns\*

**T**he goal of this article is to describe the changes experienced by the Salonika Jewish community as an organization during the years under Greek rule, from the Balkan Wars until the entry of the German army into the city. During this brief time span, the leaders and members of the community were obliged to adapt to a series of far-reaching changes. The first of these was the transition from life under the Ottoman Empire, with its multiple nationalities, Turkish-speaking Muslim rulers, and autocratic tradition, to life in the Greek nation-state, which championed democratic and liberal ideas. The second change concerned their identity as Salonikans. Under the Ottoman regime, and with its support, they had become accustomed to seeing Salonika as their city. They did not see themselves as guests passing through but as native residents no different than Christians or Muslims, and—owing to their demographic advantage—even as the city’s ‘proprietors’. All of this was about to change over the next 20 years.

When the Greek army marched into Salonika in 1912, this marked not only a transition from a multinational empire to a nation-state but from one worldview to another. The concepts and values of the Ottoman world were about to be consigned to the dust bin of history. The persons born and raised in this system may have understood this shift in formal terms, but there is no question that emotionally and cognitively they were far from comprehending it. Amid this political and emotional morass, two powerful forces were battling within the community: the external pressure for change, and the inertia born of a 430-year-old tradition that favoured the status quo. All of these will be addressed below.

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\* This article was translated from the Hebrew original by Karen Gold.

### a. The sources<sup>1</sup>

The Great Fire of 1917 destroyed a large portion of the archives of the Salonika Jewish community, meaning that we lack systematic documentation of what took place there from 1912 to 1918. In fact, documentation of any type exists solely from 1918, and is continuous only from 1925 onward. The present clause utilises, for the first time, portions of the archives of the Jewish community that were confiscated by the Germans during World War II, which are dispersed throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> Researching the various parts of the archive

1. The names of people and places in Judeo-Spanish that were written in Hebrew characters in the original have been transliterated into Latin letters based on how they appeared in the original documents in which the Hebrew was rendered in Latin form. The system of transliteration is not that of modern Spanish but reflects the way in which Salonikan Jews pronounced these terms. The names of people who came to Salonika from the Land of Israel and whose language was Hebrew, as well as terms in Hebrew, have been transliterated in accordance with the system of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Names of people that were written originally in Judeo-Spanish in Latin letters are given here as they appear in the original documents. Places that have retained their Turkish origin appear in modern Turkish with a translation in brackets. Greek names have been transliterated into Latin characters in keeping with accepted practice in Greek academic literature.

2. A few words about the method of citation from the archives of the Salonika Jewish community: Two portions of the archives were utilized for this article. The first part of the Salonika Community Archives has belonged since 1945 to the Russian State Military Archive in Moscow, within the collection entitled Ocobyi Arkhiv (Special Archive). Since 1992, this entire archive is referred to as the Centre for Preservation of Historical Collections (Tsentr Khraneniia Istoriko-Dokumental'nykh Kollektzii (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 (hereafter: TAU DP, Salonika Archives). This portion of the archive contains 500,000 documents, of which 50,000 have been analysed and digitised. For purposes of this article, I made use of both the portion that has been analysed and digitised and the videos, which contain a vast amount of material that has not yet been analysed. 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 digitized archive (no.). Documents from material that has not yet been digitized appear as follows: Moscow Archives, fond (no.), opis (no.), file

took me to Moscow, New York, Jerusalem, and Budapest. I have also made use here of material gathered by the institutions of the emergent Jewish state in Israel, and preserved in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; the archives of the governor of Macedonia from 1932 to 1934, Philippos St. Dragoumis, located in the Gennadius Library in Athens; the archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry; and the contemporary Jewish and Greek press of Salonika.

#### b. The crisis and return to normalcy (1912-1933)

The Jewish community's organizational framework inherited by the Greek regime was created in the mid-19th century, undergoing only minor changes prior to 1912. The Ottoman Empire reforms (known as the *Tanzimat*, or 'reorganization' in Turkish) were slow to be implemented in the Jewish communities. In 1856, following the sultan's reform edict (*hatt-ı şerif hümayun*), which equalised the status of all imperial subjects and called for the reconstitution of the various religious groups living in the Empire, some well-to-do Italian merchants (known as *Francos*) established a fund called *Hesed 'Olam*. Its aim was to introduce changes in the way the Jewish community was organised, in particular with respect to its social services. The motivations underlying the efforts of these foreign subjects were primarily financial and political; thriving businesses such as theirs,

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(no.), document number in the file of the Moscow Archives (no.), videotape (no.), timestamp (0:00:00). A different portion of the archive appears in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (hereafter: CAHJP). Documents from this part of the archive appear 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. Such numbers appear after the file number. The file numbers in the CAHJP were changed several months ago. Although the new classification makes it much easier for the contemporary researcher to find his/her way around the archives, it constitutes a problem for those who have worked in the archives before now and those searching in the archives for 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 designation, or in cases of doubt, this is stated explicitly.

based on international trade, were dependent on social stability and on the backing of individuals with a modern education, which the existing Jewish educational institutions in Salonika at the time were not capable of providing. The Francos functioned as an advisory committee of sorts alongside the community's executive committee. Since they were not Ottoman subjects, they could not operate from within the community establishment, and in fact did not wish to, so that they would not be bound by the constraints of Ottoman citizenship.<sup>3</sup> It was only in 1867, with the edict (*irade*) establishing the organic constitution of the Jewish community, that the structure of its institutions was formalised. The community was managed by several bodies that acted as a set of checks and balances: (a) the Meclis Umumi, or General Assembly, made up of all those who paid the *petcha*<sup>4</sup> (a direct, progressive community tax, which did not go above a certain ceiling); the assembly served as a type of legislative council; (b) the Meclis Cismanı (Mejlis Gashmi or Consiglio Communal in Ladino),<sup>5</sup> a secular body that functioned as an Executive Committee and was elected from among the Meclis Umumi members; and (c) the Meclis Ruhani, or Religious Council (similar to a *beit din*, or religious Jewish court) that dealt with all community matters relating to Jewish religious law (in the period under discussion, this became limited to marriage, divorce, and sometimes inheritance). A president of the General Assembly was elected from among its members, as was a president of the entire community, who also headed the Executive Committee. The chief rabbi was appointed with the consent of all

3. Joseph Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, vol. VII (Thessaloniki: Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique, 1978), 654-665.

4. *Petcha* in Judeo-Spanish, from the Portuguese *peça* and Turkish *peçeta* (see: *Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary*, 9th ed. [Istanbul: Redhouse Press, 1987], s.v.), meaning 'piece', the term for a silver coin used in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th-18th centuries, whose value changed over the years. See for example, R. Mosheh Mi-Trani, *Responsa*, pt. 1 (Jerusalem 1974, photo printing: Lvov 1864, sec. 7 (litigation in Safed 16th century); R. Yahya Tzalah, *Responsa, Pe'ulat Tzadiq*, pt. 1, Jerusalem 1975, photo printing: Jerusalem 1946, sec. III (litigation in Sana, Yemen, 18th century).

5. A phonetic transliteration is used here, since the expression as it appears in the community's records does not accord with any pronunciation in modern languages. The manner in which the term was transliterated into Hebrew characters yields a pronunciation similar to southern Italian dialects.

the above bodies.<sup>6</sup> Ostensibly, this was a democratic process that ensured the proper management of the Jewish community; but in practice, formal political life remained the province of a very narrow group: those who paid the *petcha* tax. None of the institutions were actually elected; rather, they were appointed through negotiations and compromises between all interested parties. Once every three years, a committee was chosen from within the General Assembly to assess the community members and determine the level of *petcha* tax they were to pay. In truth, the assessment was not performed in an organised fashion, and when there was reason to suspect that the *petcha* would not be paid, the previous valuation was left in place. Over time, the number of *petcha* payers shrunk drastically, and the General Assembly ended up consisting of an advisory committee and members of the Executive Committee who gathered whenever there was a need for discussion in a wider forum.<sup>7</sup> Already in March 1911, the socialists called for extensive changes in these procedures. They asked to see the formal community by-laws and an orderly list of eligible voters, and demanded voting rights for all—that is, for all men.<sup>8</sup> Their appeals were, of course, ignored. Prior to the 1912 community elections, a proposal to change the community's constitution was sent to all 84 members of the General Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

In early 1912, elections to the community institutions were held for the last time under Ottoman rule. In the electoral rolls published in the *El Pueblo* (the people) and *El Avenir* (the future) newspapers, 794 names are listed as eligible to participate in the community elections.<sup>10</sup> Those who paid 100 kuruş or more in taxes were entitled to vote as well as to be elected, while those who paid 50-99 kuruş were only permitted to vote. Over 90% of those listed fell into the first

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6. Nehama, *Histoire*, 730-733.

7. Daut Levi, 'Essay on Salonikan Jewish Community', translated into Greek by David Benvenisti in May/June 1971 when he served as president of the community, 12-13 (photocopy in my possession). For the unique circumstances in which this essay was written, see: Minna Rozen, 'Jews and Greeks Remember Their Past: The Political Career of Rabbi Tzevi Koretz, 1933-1943', *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 1 (2005): 111-165, esp. 112, n. 4.

8. *Journal del Lavorador*, no. 3, 3 March 1911.

9. 'Our Community: New Laws Project', *El Avenir*, year 15, no. 7, 17 January 1912 (Ladino).

10. List from 1912, without exact date. Moscow Archives, fond 1435, opis 1, doc. 8655 in digitized archives.

category, meaning that only a small number were only permitted to vote. The community members who enjoyed full suffrage came from just 210 families, 50 of whom had more than four representatives on the list (with some having 8 or even 10 family members). Members of these same 210 families also appear in a 1910 commercial directory of Macedonia as key officeholders of the community.<sup>11</sup> All of these individuals were closely related by blood or marital ties.<sup>12</sup>

In 1913,<sup>13</sup> and again in 1920, Jews who belonged to the socialist party complained that general elections had not taken place in the community since the Ottoman period. In addition, they argued that those who did not appear to be paying the *petcha* tax were in fact paying it indirectly through taxes on meat, wine, matzahs, and dairy products, and should therefore be eligible to participate in the community's political life.<sup>14</sup> Daut Levi, who was responsible for the community's real estate holdings from 1910 to 1919, and served as its director-general from 1919 to 1935, recounted that at a certain stage the number of *petcha* taxpayers grew to 2,000-3,000 people. Accordingly, an arrangement was instituted whereby those who paid the *petcha* elected the 100 members of the General Assembly, and these in turn voted in two separate rounds for the members of the executive committee and of the advisory committee.<sup>15</sup> In the document authored by Levi, no date or even decade when the number of *petcha* payers rose is noted. I tend to believe that the increase stemmed from the passage of the Jewish Communities Law by the Greek government in 1920, which led those who had heretofore evaded payment to take on the burden so as to ensure their influence in the

11. Γεώργιος Χατζηκυριακού, *Μακεδονία μετά του παρακειμένου τμήματος της Θράκης, στο Οδηγός της Ελλάδος*, τόμ. Α' 1910-11, τμ. 2<sup>ο</sup>, Μέρος Έκτον, Έκδοση Νικόλαου Γ. Ιγγλέση, Αθήνα 1911, σ. 29 (Georgios Hadzikyriakou, *A Guide to Greece, Part I. 1910-11 : Macedonia with the Adjacent Part of Thrace*, Athens : N. G. Inglessi, 1911,29).

12. See my book: Minna Rozen, *A Very Narrow Bridge: The Jews of Salonika Under Greek Rule, 1912-1943* (forthcoming), chap. 3.2.2.

13. *El Avenir*, 11 April 1913 (Ladino).

14. 'Concerning Community Revenues', *Avanti*, 11 April 1913 (Ladino). Letter from director of Salonika's Press Office, Stylianos Protonotarios, to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 17 May 1920 (Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis, *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* [Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1998], doc. 23, 101-102).

15. Levi, 'Essay', 14.

community. This new arrangement, which was ostensibly intended to simplify the voting process, in reality maintained the power of the traditional oligarchy.

This aspect of Ottoman life did not change for a considerable part of the Greek period. Formal political life continued to be the domain of a very small portion of the population, and managing the affairs of the community remained an internal—even familial—matter, within the same social circles as the taxpayers; the others were unable to grasp the connection between the reality in which they lived and the way the community was run. In the Ottoman world, this had been the natural order of things; but the Greek state saw itself as the standard bearer of the ideals of the French Revolution, which was certainly the case when those ideas served its own interests. First and foremost, Greece demanded what any ‘Western’ state expected, that is, a clear constitution, logical procedures, audited account books—in short, transparency. The Ottoman Jewish community, and not only in Salonika, generally endeavoured to maintain a certain ambiguity, especially where financial matters were concerned. At the same time, the Greek government demanded that all males aged 21 and over enjoy the right to vote for community institutions, regardless of the amount of taxes they paid. The Jewish community establishment, for its part, attempted to preserve the old order, in particular the practice of allowing only taxpayers to participate in the community’s political life, and hence in the elections to its institutions. Nonetheless, the political freedom enjoyed by Jewish society for the first time since the refugees from the Spanish Expulsion settled in the city in 1492 (with the exception of a brief period during the Young Turks revolution of 1908), coupled with the inertia that took hold of the traditional leadership with the Greek entry into the city, led to a major change in the organizational life of the community.

A recurring theme during the Greek period was the politicization of all aspects of the Jewish community’s organizational and public life. This process began with the circles that had run the community during the Ottoman era stepping down from the stage and even departing the city and the state. These were the major industrialists, the bankers, and the businessmen, some of whom were foreign nationals. Their withdrawal was evident in the fact that, following the riots that accompanied the Greek entry into the city in 1912, the primary response of the community and its representatives before the authorities was spearheaded not by the secular institutions but

by Rabbi Ya'akov Meir, who was closely connected with Zionist circles in Salonika. The paralysis that seized the leadership, which included such individuals as Samuel Daniel Modiano and Jacob Joseph Cazes,<sup>16</sup> created a vacuum that was filled by the Zionists. Once this happened, there was no turning back. Three principal groups vied for the community leadership during the Greek period—the Zionists, the socialists, and the members of the mainstream (or as they referred to themselves in Judeo-Spanish, the *Bloc Moderado*)—each defining themselves in rather clear-cut ideological terms. The Zionists called for actions aimed at establishing a Jewish state in the Land of Israel while at the same time fighting for the rights of Jews everywhere, in this case Salonika itself. The more radical among them did not shy away from a full-on collision with the state, the city, and Greek society, based on their thinking that this was a zero-sum game in which they would always have the upper hand: If they improved the lives of Salonika's Jews, so much the better; but if not, this would be further proof of the necessity of establishing a Jewish state. Until 1934, the radicals enjoyed the advantage. From 1935 onward, when the gates to pre-State Palestine were closed, the Zionist movement was forced by circumstances to turn its attentions to finding a path to coexistence with the Greeks. The Zionists belonged mainly to the middle and upper classes, and most of them saw their Jewishness as an essential component of their identity; this was one of the reasons for their resistance to the introduction of Greece's state educational system into the Jewish community. Another important reason (for the moderate Zionists) was their desire to have their children learn not only Hebrew but also European languages, which were vital for those wishing to engage in commerce or the free professions—the common occupations in this group.

The socialists, for their part, were concerned mainly with social justice; religion and tradition were seen by them as private matters. They wanted free elections open to all, maximum transparency in the running of the community, and equal access to its resources. Likewise, they advocated integration into the Greek state and society, and in particular, favoured the introduction of Greek state education into Jewish schools, both because this was an important step in their eyes on the road to integration and because it ensured the same education for all, not only the children of the wealthy. The socialists

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16. For further information about them, see my article: Minna Rozen, 'Money, Power, Politics and the Great Salonika Fire of 1917' (forthcoming).

formed their own party to fight for control of the Jewish community, calling themselves the Bloc Popular in Judeo-Spanish. This populist bloc represented the interests of the new neighbourhoods that had sprung up outside Salonika in the wake of the Great Fire of 1917. Some of these suburbs contained dilapidated tin shacks, and others, public housing belonging to the Jewish community. These were the homes of the day workers, the indigent, and the unemployed.

The third group, the Bloc Moderado, belonged to the same social circles as the Zionists, that is, the middle and upper-middle classes; but unlike the Zionists, these ‘moderates’ supported integration into Greek society, at least formally, and saw their future in Greece or in Europe at large, but in any case, not in the Land of Israel.<sup>17</sup>

The leadership vacuum after 1912 was clearly expressed in the relationship between the Jewish community and the Greek regime. Though Ya‘akov Meir was the dominant figure in 1912-1919, he was not the only person in the picture. Just as he was a carryover from the Ottoman era, so too was Jacob Joseph Cazes, president of the community, who was elected in 1912 in the last elections under Ottoman rule. Cazes had no interest in quarrelling with the Greek state. He was an important merchant, and a member of Salonika’s Chamber of Commerce in both the Ottoman and Greek periods).<sup>18</sup> Cazes’s sister, Fakima, was the wife of the well-known banker, Saul Modiano,<sup>19</sup> connecting Cazes not only with one of the richest men in Salonika and the entire Ottoman Empire but with the president of the community’s Executive Committee in 1910, Samuel Daniel Modiano.<sup>20</sup>

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17. On the community’s political parties, see: Rozen, *Narrow Bridge*, chap. 2.3.1. On the education of the Jewish children of Salonika, see my article: Minna Rozen, ‘Jewish Education in a Nation-State: The Case of Salonika, 1912-1941’ (forthcoming).

18. I wish to thank Paris Papamichos Chronakis for providing me with a list of members of the Chamber of Commerce. Cazes served as president of the community till 1930, and died at a ripe old age in 1935. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 221, doc. 11554, dated 27 June 1929; and doc. 10954 dated 9 July 1935.

19. *El Puevlo*, 4 May 1902, Moscow Archives, fond 1435, opis 1, doc. 8654 (Ladino). Nehama, *Histoire*, 702.

20. *Commercial Directory of Macedonia 1910*, 29. ‘Fakima Modiano Has Died’, *El Avenir*, 23 January 1911, year 14, no. 10. Ευάγγελος Χεκίμογλου, *Υπόθεση Μοδιάνο - Υπόθεση Μοδιάνο: Τραπεζικό κραχ στη Θεσσαλονίκη το 1911*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Τυπογραφείο Θαν (Evangelos Hekimoglou, *The Modiano Affair: A Banking Crash in 1911* [Thessaloniki; Thanasis Altinji Pub-

Cazes was a business partner of the Modiano family but was also a successful merchant and owner of a great deal of property in his own right. It would appear that the collapse of the Modianos' bank in 1911 did not harm him personally, just as it did not deal a mortal blow to his relatives-by-marriage from the Modiano family, some of whom left the city but remained major businessmen in Europe.<sup>21</sup> Cazes belonged to the traditional ruling class not only from a historical and family perspective but also from an ideological one. This class had espoused absolute loyalty to Ottoman rule, and now some of its members shifted to total allegiance to the Greek state; to those in power, loyalty was due. These were people who saw Zionism as an ideology liable to make the community suspect in the eyes of the Greeks; hence they made every attempt to distance themselves from the movement and its supporters. In the first conflict between the Greek state and the Salonika Jewish community following the attacks on the city's Jews in November-December 1912, Cazes remained silent. One can assume that he was waiting to see which way the wind was blowing and how strongly, leaving Rabbi Meir to face the tempest. After all, he himself had businesses at stake. Rabbi Meir had no companies to worry about, and he appeared to derive pleasure from standing up to the Greek city and state.<sup>22</sup> But when the problems

lishing, 1991]). <http://tinyurl.com/http-academia-edu>. For the connections between Jacob Cazes and Saul Modiano, see my article: Rozen, 'Money, Power'.

21. The son of Saul, Samuel Modiano (not to be confused with Samuel Daniel Modiano, who was his second cousin), contributed a large sum of money to an old age home named after his father: 'Owing to the work of Jacob Cazes, head of our community, and a contribution of 400.000 liras from Samuel Modiano, originally from this city, now living in Italy, two building have been bought in the Campagnias, with six rooms in each and a large yard'. *La Verdad*, 1 June 1928, no. 2200 (Ladino). See also: Mario Modiano, *Hamehune Modillano* (He who is called Modillano), 56-57 ([http://www.themodianos.gr/The\\_Story.pdf#page=341](http://www.themodianos.gr/The_Story.pdf#page=341)). Near the Cité Saul, which burned down in 1917, the architect Elie Jacob Modiano, grandson of Saul Modiano, planned and built the commercial centre known even today as the Modiano Market (Αγορά Μοδιάνο), which contains 143 stores spread over 3,300 sq. m.

22. See my article: Rozen, 'Money, Power', and for example, letter from Pericles Argyropoulos, governor of Macedonia, to the Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 22 May 1918. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 83, doc. 9; telegram from Alexandros Pallis, deputy governor of Macedonia, to the Greek Foreign Ministry, 19 February 1919, 88, attachment A to doc.

began to accumulate, and it emerged that Zionist circles were acting in place of the community as a whole—and at times, in opposition to what the president of the community considered to be his own interests and those of his class—he understood that he had to assuage the concerns that the Zionists had managed to provoke outside of Greece over the Greek government's treatment of the Jews of Salonika. This discontent related to the rehabilitation of the refugees of the Great Fire of 1917, and the preservation of Saturday as the city's day of rest, not to mention a host of smaller problems. Perhaps it was possible to lower the flames, but it was not possible to douse the fire and bring a halt to the politicization of the community.

In March 1919, the first Pan-Hellenic Jewish Congress convened in Salonika, and Cazes, who graciously consented to serve as its president, realised to his dismay that the Zionists had taken it over, placing him in a very uncomfortable position with the Greek authorities.<sup>23</sup> At this point, the Greek government's plan to rebuild the so-called Burnt Zone of Salonika was already in high gear, and he, Modiano, and others had formulated ideas that would enable them to profit hugely from this plan. A clash with the Greek government would thwart their efforts. On 17 March 1919, Cazes wrote to the governor of Macedonia informing him that a 'decision-making body' had been set up four days earlier at the Congress—a committee that he did not belong to. He did not see eye to eye with its members, and explained that the Jews of Salonika wanted autonomy as a national minority while he and others were satisfied with their status as regular Greek citizens. Furious that his interests, and those of others, had been undermined, he announced his resignation as president of the Congress, thereby distancing himself from the Zionists and their belligerent stance vis-à-vis the Greek government.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, he continued serving as president of the community until 1930 (except

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14, *ibid.*; telegram from Frangistas, director of the Salonika Press Office to the Greek Foreign Ministry, 22 February 1919, 89, *doc. 15, ibid.* (first name of the sender is not noted; it may have been Charalampos Frangistas, who later became Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs (October 1952-19 November 1952)); 'The Liberation of Salonika, the Balkan Alliance Against Turkey, the Entry of the Greek Army, Relations Between Greeks and Jews in Salonika', a pamphlet published in 1931, appended to the newspaper *Aksion*, no. 23, 39-42 (Ladino).

23. On the organization of the Congress, see my article: Rozen, 'Money, Power'.

24. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 92, *doc. 16*.

for brief intervals), constituting a lengthy bridge between the Ottoman and Greek eras.<sup>25</sup> It was Rabbi Meir, still locking horns with the Greek authorities, who ended up leaving the city in September 1919.<sup>26</sup> His fellow travellers tried desperately to bring him back, but Meir agreed to return only if he was given the powers he had held prior to his departure, that is, ‘on condition that everything be as it was, that all things be in accordance with his decisions and opinions’.<sup>27</sup> Yet even some of the Zionists were not sure that they wanted one man, as admirable as he might be, to have unlimited power over them.

In the meantime, Jacob Cazes managed to extract from the Transportation Minister, Alexandros Papanastasiou, who was in charge of rebuilding the city, a promise that 600 homes (or more precisely, shacks) would be built for the refugees from the fire.<sup>28</sup> He also succeeded in getting the Jews of Salonika exempted from military service.<sup>29</sup> When he realised that while he had been preoccupied with the above, the Zionist leadership (which did not trust him) had sent emissaries to Europe to mobilise the Zionist institutions there to bring about the removal of the mandate for Salonika from the Greek government and establish an independent city, he hastened to write to the Greek Foreign Minister, emphasising ‘that our community did not send any of its representatives in Europe, since the city was liberated, to act in this matter. Moreover, the community strives for the Greek and Jewish populations to live together in brotherhood. The Executive Committee of the community rejects any such effort, whose goal is to damage relations between the Greek state and the

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25. He was succeeded as president by Eliaou Benosiglio. On 3 October 1930, Benosiglio still appears as vice-president of the community, despite the fact that he had long since been running the meetings of the Executive Committee and signing official documents (CAHJP, GR/SA file 241 [old file 374], protocol no. 194).

26. *El Puevlo*, 7 September 1919 (Ladino).

27. ‘General Assembly - Laws - Chief Rabbi’, *La Renessancia Djoudia*, 16 February 1920 (Ladino).

28. ‘Διαφορά’ *Εφημερίς των Βαλκανίων*, 8.5.1920 (‘Miscellaneous’), *Newspaper of the Balkans*, 8 May 1920, 2.

29. Letter from director of Salonika Press Office, Stylianos Protonotarios, to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 17 May 1920, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 101-102, doc. 23.

Jewish community of Salonika'.<sup>30</sup>

In March 1920, Cazes delivered a speech before a large crowd, stating: 'Now that the government has reached a commendable decision in the matter of our military service, one could say, were it not for the rebuilding plan, that we are living in a paradise here'.<sup>31</sup> While Dr. Leon Modiano, Cazes's nephew, was raising a hue and cry in Salonika regarding alleged discrimination against the Jews in the rebuilding efforts, his brother, Jacob Modiano, had been sent by the community to Athens to negotiate with the government. At the same time, Cazes himself returned from Athens to Salonika, where he appealed to the masses to 'help him moderate the community's demands from the government'—demands that had been imposed on him, in his words, by the affluent Jews of his community.<sup>32</sup> An agreement was ultimately reached that caused great harm to the lower classes, and enabled the well-to-do of Salonika, Jews and non-Jews alike, and the Jewish community as an organization, to acquire numerous properties in areas that later became the expensive neighbourhoods of the city.<sup>33</sup>

### c. Jewish Communities Law and its ramifications

On 27 July 1920, King Alexander of Greece enacted Law No. 2456 regarding the Jewish communities of Greece.<sup>34</sup> Although the documents surrounding this legislation are not in our possession, it can be assumed that these same individuals who travelled back and forth from Salonika to Athens, in particular Jacob Cazes, were in the know about it. In essence, the law created the legal basis for

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30. Letter dated 22 July 1919, unsigned photocopy. Archives of Greek Foreign Ministry (kindly provided by Manolis Kandilakis).

31. Letter from director of Salonika Press Office, Stylianos Protonotarios, to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 24 March 1920, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 100-101, doc. 22.

32. Letter from director of Salonika Press Office, Stylianos Protonotarios, to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 17 May 1920, Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 101-102, doc. 23.

33. See my article: Rozen, 'Money, Power'.

34. Gennadius Library, Philippos St. Dragoumis (1890-1980) papers, Collection No. GR GL PSD 025 (hereafter: Philippos St. Dragoumis papers), file 38, doc. 1. Appears also in Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 103-110, doc. 24.

the organization of the Jewish community under Greek rule. We will present below those clauses of the law that pertained to the organization of the community:

The first section of the Law described the nature of the communities, their powers, their assets, and their educational institutions. It stated that a Jewish community could be established at any location in Greece where more than 20 Jewish families resided and there was a synagogue. There was to be only one community in a given location. Any and all property found in any community was to be the property of the Jewish community as a whole. Jews residing in Greece were to be subject in religious matters to the spiritual authority in their place of residence. The community could accept gifts and bequests to manage its affairs, and could levy direct and indirect taxes. Of particular interest is the clause stating that ‘if stipulated by royal decree, and provided that the royal decree establishes the manner of collection and level of fees in subclauses (b) through (d) [that is, taxes and payments of various types-MR], these monies will be collected in accordance with the Public Revenues Collection Law by request of the community.<sup>35</sup> The import of this clause was that if the community wished, it could designate the taxes it imposed as having the status of state taxes for all intents and purposes, with all the sanctions normally entailed for refusal to pay or arrears in payment. The clause sheds light on the negotiations underlying these ordinances. The Jewish community wished to retain the right to decide whether or not to turn to the state to enforce its authority. Clause 5 of these regulations, stating that the community had the right to establish special schools for Jewish children, was particularly important. The community was also entitled to set the curriculum of these schools; however, it could not conflict with the educational principles of the Greek state, and Greek language instruction was required to be on a satisfactory level. In addition to teaching the language itself, the subjects of history, geography, and science had to be taught in Greek, and those teaching these subjects were to be appointed in keeping with the requirements of the state and Greek law.<sup>36</sup> The implications of this clause were far-reaching. In practice, it stipulated that much of the subject matter be taught by Greek teachers. The teaching of history and geography by such teachers meant, in effect, an education consistent with the national goals of

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35. *Ibid.*, 104.

36. *Ibid.*

the Greek state. This clashed with Zionist ideology for two reasons, the basic one being that educating the younger generation toward a certain nationality conflicted with educating them to a different nationality. The second reason was the emphasis on teaching the Greek language and the fact that it became the primary language of instruction. The Zionists belonged, for the most part, to the upper middle class. The majority dealt mainly in commerce or related free professions. Such occupations were not possible without knowing two or three foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, which was Judeo-Spanish. French or Italian, for example, were essential to these occupations. Emphasising the Greek language meant pushing aside these languages as well as Hebrew. A further ramification of this clause was that it harmed the livelihood of many teachers in the Jewish school system who had no knowledge of Greek. The socialist assimilationists were avid supporters of this clause, as were the assimilationists of the Bloc Moderado.<sup>37</sup> Clauses 6 through 8 granted the community the authority to manage all its affairs, assets, and educational and religious institutions, and to appoint committees for this purpose.<sup>38</sup>

The second section of the Law dealt with the community's representation before outside bodies. As evident from this section, Rabbi Meir's tenure as community representative to the Greek government in 1912-1919 satisfied the requirements of Greek law. The Greek state considered the Chief Rabbi to be the sole official representative of the Jewish community, to be appointed and dismissed by royal decree; only in his absence could his role be filled by the president of the community. In the absence of both parties, the vice-president of the community was authorised to act as its representative.<sup>39</sup>

The third section of the Law dealt with the judicial authority of the Chief Rabbi and his religious court, granting him the right to adjudicate in all areas of family and inheritance. The fifth section concerned the General Assembly of community members. According to this section, the supreme authority in each Jewish community was the Assembly, to which both the Chief Rabbi and the Executive Committee of the community were subordinate. The Assembly was to include a certain number of representatives to be determined by the community's regulations, who were to be elected from among all

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37. See my article: Rozen, 'Jewish Education'.

38. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 105, doc. 24.

39. *Ibid.*, 105-106.

males who were permanent residents of the community's jurisdiction and Greek citizens 21 years of age or older who had not been stripped of their civil rights for any reason (apparently criminal). For ten years only, in an exception to the norm, Jews who were foreign nationals and who had been members of the previous Executive Committee at the time the Law was enacted, could participate in the General Assembly of their community and vote for, or be elected to, its institutions and committees.<sup>40</sup> This section was the bridge between the Ottoman past and the Greek present, since the Greek legislator did not differentiate between the members of the Advisory Committee, who also included foreign nationals, and those who were members of the Executive Committee. At the same time, it marked a radical shift in that it granted the right to vote to all males aged 21 regardless of the amount of tax they paid to the community—or whether they paid any tax at all. In practice, this clause was not implemented until at least 1928 since the circles who controlled the community endeavoured to keep its existence a secret.<sup>41</sup>

The sixth section of the Law called for each community to submit its ordinances to the Ministry of Religion for approval, after which they would be ratified by royal decree and publicised in the official gazette. The significance of this stipulation was that the community could now base its authority on the Greek state when imposing its decisions on its members.<sup>42</sup> The constitution of the community was required to specify its governing mechanism and the rights, obligations, and judicial authority of the General Assembly, the Chief Rabbi and other rabbis, the Executive Committee of the community, the special committees, and the subdepartments of the Chief Rabbinate. It also had to enumerate how the taxes and assorted payments were to be collected from the community members; the procedure for electing the Rabbi and the lay representatives to the General Assembly; the number of members of the Executive Committee, the Religious Council, and the religious court; and the manner in which the Chief Rabbi and the Religious Council would appoint the remaining religious functionaries.<sup>43</sup> The seventh section dealt with the penalties to be imposed on those who violated the rights granted to

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40. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 107, doc. 24.

41. See below.

42. Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*, 107, doc. 24.

43. *Ibid.*, 107-108.

the community and its institutions.<sup>44</sup>

Roughly a year after the Law was enacted, essential sections of it remained a 'dead letter'. The socialist newspaper *Avanti* pointed out two aspects of the community's situation that were not in keeping with the demands of the Law. The first was the matter of the education system.<sup>45</sup> Here, the socialists found fault with the community institutions as well as the Greek government. To their way of thinking, the Zionists had taken over the institutions and were dictating the school curricula. It is clear that the provisions of the Law were not being implemented. The language of instruction was French, with Hebrew and Greek each receiving the same number of classroom hours. The socialists argued that the lower classes could not earn their daily bread using French, and certainly not Hebrew; that the level of the teachers (young girls without training) was poor; and that there were not enough schools in general. The community was not establishing decent schools despite its pre-election promises, leaving no choice but to turn to the state. The government needed to open good schools in impoverished neighbourhoods, but the writer stated sarcastically that it was more interested in the foolish and unnecessary war in Asia Minor.<sup>46</sup>

The second area in which it emerged that nothing had been done to fulfil the demands of the Law was the community constitution. No such charter was enacted, and no voter roll was published, meaning that the majority of the community were left in exactly the same position as they had been during the Ottoman era, without a voice in the political life of the community and with no control over their fate.<sup>47</sup> Though many Zionists now participated in the community institutions, ostensibly taking them over, this aspect of the community's organization did not change. The Zionists, who had belonged to a social class close to that of the ruling establishment in the Ottoman era, were opposed to the democratization of the community no less than their assimilationist rivals from the Bloc Moderado. This resistance rested on two foundations, one overt, the other covert.

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44. *Ibid.*, 108-109.

45. 'In Favour of Education for the Poor', *Avanti*, no. 197, 6 August 1921 (Ladino).

46. 'The Problem With the Schools', *ibid.*, no. 219, 29 September 1921 (Ladino). 'The Problem With the Schools', *ibid.*, year II, no. 394, 10 December 1921 (Ladino).

47. *Ibid.*, 3 March 1921 (Ladino).

The outward reason was the leadership's fear of greater power for the socialists, who in the eyes of Greek society in general (even advocates of socialism) were the wrong type of socialists, that is, anti-nationalist, cosmopolitan, and tied to foreign elements. The ascension of the socialists was presented by the middle class—Zionists and assimilationist members of the Bloc Moderado alike—as something that would generate antagonism in the Greek state and society toward the Jewish community.<sup>48</sup>

The second, less apparent basis for the resistance to democratization was much stronger, and more entrenched in the political traditions of Salonikan Jewish society: the community was the owner of many and vast real estate holdings, which it had amassed during 430 years of Ottoman rule. This property was very profitable for those who managed it, and they were not eager to share their power or provide any accounting.<sup>49</sup> Their reaction was to close ranks and try to retain their control. To understand this move, we must consider the endogamous—or at the very least, intraclass—marriages, the synthesis of family and business, and the ancient custom of government by cooptation, if not in theory then in practice. As a result, even when it came to the community's primary concern at the time, decisions were made within these closed circles.

Following the agreement to rebuild the Burnt Zone, the community received deeds worth 4 million drachmas for the public property that had been burned. These documents were negotiable tender in the bidding to purchase lots in the burnt area. The community members were split over the question of what to do with these deeds

48. Λέων Α. Ναρ, *Οι ισραηλίτες βουλευτές στο ελληνικό κοινοβούλιο (1912-1936)* (Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων για τον Κοινοβουλευτισμό και τη Δημοκρατία, 2011), σελ. 28-34 (Leon A. Naar, *Jewish Members of Parliament in the Parliamentary Life of Greece (1912-1936)* [Athens: Greek Parliamentary Foundation, Parliamentarism and Democracy, 2011], 28-34). 'To Work', *La Renaissance Djoudia*, 12 November 1926 (Ladino). Letter from I. Minardos [first name unavailable], director of the Salonika Press Office, to Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens, 23 November 1926. Φωτεινή Κωνσταντοπούλου, Θάνος Βερέμης, *Οι Έλληνες Εβραίοι Στοιχεία της ιστορίας τους μέσα από διπλωματικά και ιστορικά έγγραφα του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, 2000) (Constantopoulou and Veremis, *Documents*), 474-476, doc. 17a. See also my article: Minna Rozen, 'Jews in Greek Politics: The Fight for Political Representation, 1912-1936' (forthcoming).

49. Rozen, 'Jews and Greeks', 136-139. For a much broader discussion of this topic, see also my book: Rozen, *Narrow Bridge*, chap. 2.2.2.

and rights. In practice, only some 100 people were involved in this discussion. Some felt that the community should use half the deeds to buy lots and build on them, and sell the other half outright for cash that could be used to purchase property in future as decided by the Executive Committee. The other faction held that the community should purchase lots with all of the money. The latter approach won out, and the community bought lots in the full value of the deeds in its possession. It built on some of them and rented them out, and the lesser quality lots were sold over time. Management of the community's property following the Great Fire brought in 8 million drachmas, which served to construct other profitable buildings.<sup>50</sup> Whichever way one looks at this internal debate, the result is the same: those individuals who ran the community were in an excellent position to benefit from this move.

The poorer classes responded with a tax revolt, both open and subtle. The overt aspect was the refusal of the butcher store owners to cooperate with the community institutions in collecting the *gabella*—the indirect tax on all kosher foods, in particular meat. The hidden aspect of the rebellion was a drop in consumption of meat in general, and kosher meat in particular. In 1923, the community decided that tax collection via the butchers would no longer work, and they transferred this responsibility to the community functionaries, but this proved ineffective in filling the community's coffers. In 1941, the community's revenues from the *gabella* were 10% of what they had been in the late nineteenth century. Proceeds from the tax on cheese and wine had long since dwindled to nothing.<sup>51</sup> The decision regarding the *gabella* was part of numerous changes incorporated in the Constitution of Jewish Communities issued by the Greek government on 26 August 1923, a fair share of which (135 clauses, to be exact) pertained to the Salonika community alone. This new constitution was apparently a product of the struggle between the Bloc Moderado and the Zionists, on the one hand, who sought to preserve the traditional political climate, and the Greek state, which was pushing for the democratization of the community, on the other. The state's demands provided encouragement to the socialist assimilationist circles which, in other circumstances, did not enjoy this support.

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50. Daut Levi, 'Essay', 30-32. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see my book: Rozen, *Narrow Bridge*, chap. 2.2.2.

51. Levi, 'Essay', 25-28.

We have in our possession three versions of the 1923 constitution: the official version referred to above, found in in the Philippos St. Dragoumis collection in the Gennadius Library in Athens, and written in Greek;<sup>52</sup> a draft of the constitution in Judeo-Spanish, preserved in the community archives looted by the Nazis 1941, which eventually found their way to Moscow;<sup>53</sup> and another in French, in the same archives, dated 21 April 1923.<sup>54</sup> The French version is entitled: ‘Constitution: Establishment of the Jewish Community in Salonika: Approval of Charter’, and begins as follows: ‘George II King of the Greeks: Pursuant to Law No. 2456 before us in the matter of the Jewish communities, and as proposed by our Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education, we order the establishment in the city of Salonika of a Jewish community whose ordinances we hereby approve’. This version bears the typed signature of the Minister of Religion and Education, Constantinos Gondikas. The fact that the proposed constitution was submitted to the community in French certainly points to the foreign status of the entire community in the Greek context. It would seem obvious that the Greek authorities assumed that communication with the community leadership could not take place in Greek. From the fact that there are interesting differences between the version of 21 April and that of 26 August, which was eventually incorporated in the Constitution of Jewish Communities, we can conclude that the French version was part of negotiations that took place between the community leadership and the Minister of Religion, and that it represents the Salonika community’s proposed wording. It is clear that the central government tried to avoid granting what it considered excessive authority to the community’s institutions, while those who led the community tried to accrue more power, and even rights that the Greek legislature refused to grant them. First and foremost, these amendments expanded the instances of dispensation for foreign nationals, stipulating that they would all be considered as if they had been Greek citizens for ten years from the date the new law was enacted, for purposes of membership in the community and its leadership. This

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52. Philippos St. Dragoumis papers, doc. no. 5, file 38.

53. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 115, videotape no. 122, 0:46:22, pp. 593-600 (photocopied archive, not yet digitised).

54. French version in Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 115, videotape 122, 01:01:17, 79-90 (photocopied archive, not yet digitised).

in effect added three years to the ten granted in 1920 to foreign nationals who held elected positions in the community. The idea was that ten additional years—and over 20 years since the Greek army's entry into Salonika—was a reasonable amount of time for these foreign nationals to decide what they were choosing: Greek citizenship or withdrawal from the community's political life. The generation of leaders from this group was expected to fade away naturally.

The differences between the French and Greek versions of the Law are not great; however, they are significant. If we examine clause 5, it is stipulated in both versions that all males aged 21 and over are obligated to pay the *petcha* tax. In the French version, however, the poor as well as religious or secular functionaries of the community are exempted from it. By contrast, in the Greek version, only the poor and members of the clergy are exempted from the tax; salaried officials who are not clergymen are still required to pay it. Likewise, in the French version, the amount of tax is not stated explicitly; the reader is referred to clauses 114-130, where it emerges that the minimal amount of tax is 100 drachmas for property assessed at a value of 50,000-62,000 drachmas (clause 124, table 1). In the Greek version, it is stated already in clause 5 that the minimum tax will be 15 drachmas, but clause 135 stipulates that those whose property is appraised at less than 50,000 drachmas will pay 20 drachmas in *petcha* tax. In other words, the Greek version of the amendment lowers the level of taxes and raises the number of eligible voters. It should be recalled, however, that in 1923 the wages of an unskilled laborer were between 40 and 50 drachmas a month, and this sum provided only the barest form of livelihood.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the amendment to the law, like the law of 1920 in the French and certainly the Greek version, was known only to those individuals who in any case were involved in community affairs. When the socialist activists became aware of it, they tried to disseminate this information, but implementation of the clauses pertaining to the linkage between payment of the *petcha* and eligibility to vote was dependent on the application of an entire series of other clauses (73 to 88 in the Greek as well as the French versions), all of which dealt with electoral arrangements. We have no actual confirmation that these clauses were indeed carried out in full.

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55. E. G. Mears, *Greece Today* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1929), 114.

Elections were supposed to take place once every three years, at the time of the Sukkot holiday. In the Jewish month of Av (generally in July or August), half of the members of the General Assembly were appointed to check the voter rolls and oversee the polls on the day of the election. As shown in clause 80, the community was required to distribute a voter registration card to anyone who paid the *petcha*, and the polls were supposed to be set up in the various synagogues. Of great interest is the difference between clause 77 in the French version and this same clause in the Greek version. In the former, there is a lengthy explanation of the intent of the Jewish formulators of the law, according to which all voters would vote for the entire list of 70 candidates, and the votes would be divided among them as follows: If 4,000 people voted in the elections, every candidate would have 57 voters. If we assume that Party A received 2,000 votes, Party B, 1,200 votes, and Party C, 800 votes, these numbers would be divided by 57, thus determining the number of representatives of each party in the General Assembly, that is, 35, 21, and 14 representatives, respectively. In the Greek version, this explanation does not appear; however, clause 77 stipulates that every synagogue has the right to send a representative to the General Assembly. It would appear that the ancient meaning of synagogues as the heart of the historical congregations was no longer valid, in particular after the Great Fire; but the fictitious representation of the old-time congregations actually had great practical significance. Each of them was the owner of properties allotted to it, or purchased by its leaders for public purposes, from time immemorial, and the descendants of its worshippers (even if they did not attend synagogue on a daily basis, or even once a year) did not want to see the demise of their golden goose. This was especially true of the synagogues that had vast property holdings but whose individual members had fallen on hard times.<sup>56</sup>

The affair of the properties of the Italia Yashan (Old Italy) congregation is an excellent example of this situation.<sup>57</sup> Clause 86 of the Greek version indicates that the accounting presented in clause 77 of the French version were not acceptable to the Greek lawmakers, who stated simply that candidates would be elected by a majority vote in descending order, and if two candidates earned the same number of votes, the winning candidate would be determined by

56. See for example: ‘Concerning Community Revenues’, *Avanti*, 11 April 1913 (Ladino).

57. See Rozen, ‘Greeks and Jews’, 136-138.

lottery. These differences indicate that the Greek lawmakers wished to give more substantial expression to the wishes and interests of a majority of the voters, and not those of the community leadership. The names of the candidates were to be posted in the synagogues ten days prior to the election, after being submitted to the Election Committee five days earlier. Voters were to present their voter registration card to the Ballot Committee, and the counting of the ballots was to be done publicly and the results publicised immediately, at the latest eight days following the elections. Within that time frame, the Assembly was also supposed to select from its own ranks an Executive Committee comprising 12 members as well as an Advisory Committee numbering six members (according to clause 11 of the French version), and nine members (according to the same clause in the Greek version). In the French version, the members of the latter did not have to belong to the General Assembly, which left a window open to individuals whom the community establishment wished to involve in community affairs but did not want to submit for election, or those who had been elected in the past and not voted in since, yet the community wished to make use of their experience and contacts. The difference between the French and Greek versions apparently resulted from the desire of the Greek government to expand the circle of decision makers. At its first session, the Assembly was also supposed to elect its own president, a vice president, two secretaries, and two advisors. From that point onwards, the president or his deputy were the ones authorised to convene the Assembly (clause 12 in both versions). In clause 26, it was stated that the Executive Committee would elect from among its members the president of the community, the vice president, two secretaries, a treasurer, and a comptroller. The president was responsible for representing the community before the judicial establishment, signing all documents together with the secretary, and representing the community alongside the Chief Rabbi at public events. In cases where the president was called upon to represent the community before the government, he had to receive the consent of the Executive Committee (clause 27 in both versions). Clauses 39 and 86 in both versions stated that members of the same family—that is, fathers and sons, brothers or brothers-in-law—could not serve on the Executive Committee. This marked a change from the Ottoman period. In addition to these two committees, the Assembly was expected to elect 14 additional committees focused on various community matters, each with its own chairman.

The committees dealt with the following areas: (a) education; (b) *gabella* tax; (c) visiting the sick; (d) Baron de Hirsch Hospital; (e) *petcha* tax; (f) neighbourhoods; (g) orphans; (h) real estate; (i) chevra kadisha (burial society); (j) assistance to the needy; (k) synagogues; (l) the Carlo Allatini orphanage; (m) the psychiatric hospital; and (n) Matanot la-Evyonim - donations to the poor.<sup>58</sup> The number of committee members ranged from 3 to 12, and a person was not permitted to sit on two committees at once (clause 40). It was decided that the Executive Committee would oversee the various committees. The committees' tenure coincided with that of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee, and the latter could replace committee members as needed. Every November, the committees were required to submit their budgets and reports through their chairman, which formed the basis for the budget of the entire community as determined by the Executive Committee. Irregular expenditures by the committees were not permitted to exceed 5% of the budget, and the committee report was expected to explain in detail every outlay, in particular irregular ones (clauses 44-48). Minutes of committee meetings had to be recorded, with the protocols subject to examination by the Executive Committee. It is unclear whether the committee members themselves were permitted to examine the minutes (clause 92).

Four committees were described in greater detail. The first of these, the education committee, was required to have two representatives from the Religious Council (i.e., the Chief Rabbinate) as permanent members (clause 41). Its powers were precisely described: setting the curriculum of the community's schools, enlarging the number of schools as needed, and hiring teachers. It was also authorised to set up subcommittees with the approval of the Executive Committee.

The second such committee, concerning the *gabella*, was charged with overseeing revenues from the tax on kosher meat and on the various slaughterhouses, and kashrut certification (upholding of

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58. The committee in charge of donations to the poor engaged in supplying warm meals to needy schoolchildren and supporting the schooling of orphans. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 28 February 1936 (CAHJP GR/SA file 160 in old catalogue; the file does not appear in the comparative table between the two systems; photocopy in my possession). Letter from vice-president of the community to Executive Committee of the municipality via the Mayor, 10 July 1928 (CAHJP GR/SA file 301 in old catalogue, GR/SA 9 in new catalogue).

Jewish dietary laws). All expenditures of this committee required the approval of the General Assembly (clause 42). This was the first time in the history of the community that the collection of this tax shifted from the butchers (like the present-day Value Added Tax) to the community itself. Clauses 131-134 dealt in detail with the various *gabella* taxes. As stated in clause 131, 'the proceeds from the *gabella* taxes are to serve the community for payment of wages of kashrut supervisors and rabbis, and the dissemination of Judaism among the weaker social classes'. The Executive Committee and the Chief Rabbi were permitted to change the level of the *gabella* (clause 134). The significance of these clauses is that the people who collected this tax were in effect also sharing in it! Moreover, included in clause 131 was the notion that imparting knowledge of Judaism was a matter for the 'weaker' classes, and that the rabbinate was responsible for it. The constitution obviously reflected the existing situation; yet this clause stands out in light of the history of the community, which had previously seen itself as responsible for the Jewish education of all its children and had spared no effort or expense in this regard. In 1923, Jewish education was once again not available equally to all, nor was it the responsibility of the community, despite the fact that it had the right to maintain special schools.<sup>59</sup>

The third committee that was dealt with individually was that of synagogues. This committee was to be appointed by the Meclis Ruhani, and was responsible for organising the services provided by the various synagogues and for their ongoing functioning. Its expenditures required the approval of the General Assembly (clause 43).

The committee that garnered the greatest amount of attention and space in the new constitution was the one dealing with the *petcha* (clauses 114-130). As noted above, all males aged 21 and over were required to pay the *petcha*, with the exception of clergymen and the needy. Every three years, the Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee were required to convene and to elect by secret ballot between 8 and 12 assessors who were tasked with determining the tax to be paid by each member of the community. The assessors were entitled to utilize the services of any person who in their opinion could help them in setting the level of taxes for each individual. In practice, this implied that gossip and informing were legitimate means in this process. The assessors also examined the income of the taxpayer from fixed assets as well as wages. Each of the assessors

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59. See my article: Rozen, 'Jewish Education'.

issued his own appraisal of each of the taxpayers. If there were significant differences between the assessments regarding a particular taxpayer, the final assessment was the average of the assessments of all members of the committee. The assessors pledged before the Chief Rabbi or his deputy to carry out their work faithfully (clause 118). Community members were divided into groups according to a graduated tax scale. This scale could not be altered except by agreement between the Chief Rabbi, the Executive Committee, and the Advisory Committee. The General Assembly was not authorised to do so even by a two-thirds majority (clauses 123, 125). The tables for calculating the tax scale were to be published in the Judeo-Spanish press (clause 126). These tax brackets corresponded with various occupations, most of which were not spelled out in the law; however, in clause 119 it was stated that the assessors had the right to change the ranking of a certain group within the scale. In effect, what this meant is that if in a given assessment tobacco merchants, for example, were placed in the group paying the second highest tax rate, that is, 600 drachmas a year, and that year the world market was glutted with tobacco from a different part of the world such that profits were driven down, the assessors could decide that for that period of time, tobacco merchants would be placed in the fourth highest tax bracket, that is, 400 drachmas. Physicians, attorneys, and real estate brokers were the sole professionals mentioned specifically in this section of the constitution, and it was stipulated that they belonged to the same tax bracket, though it was not stated what level that was (clause 117). It should be noted that the tax brackets that the community leaders sought to establish were not the ones the Greek state eventually approved. The minimum payment that was ultimately approved (15 drachmas) was lower than what the community sought to impose (100 drachmas) while the maximum payment set by the state was lower (3,500 drachmas) than the maximum envisioned by the community leaders (3,700 drachmas) (clause 125). The assessors' appraisals were valid only if at least seven assessors were present at the session (clause 120). Those who did not pay their taxes during the designated time frame would pay a penalty interest of 10% (clause 121). People who wished to contest their assessment were required to take an oath before the Chief Rabbi or his deputy, and to submit forms in which they declared their inability to meet the tax payment (clause 122). Those who left the city had to arrange for the payment of their tax debt prior to their departure (clause 124). The *petcha* was paid in two instalments, in the Jewish months of

Adar and Elul (roughly March and August). Those who were three months late with the first payment would receive a written warning, and if the debt had still not been paid within the next 30 days, the community could call on ‘professional collectors’ who operated by special dispensation of the state and who took a commission from the monies collected (clause 128). Last but not least, the community had the right to raise the *petcha* tax on condition that the situation justified it (clause 130).

Clauses 103-113 dealt with the community’s clergy. The community was to have six categories of salaried clergymen: religious court judges, rabbis, ritual slaughterers, ritual circumcisers, cantors or liturgical singers, and supervisors (clause 103). The functions of each of these were set forth in the constitution: The judges were experts in Jewish religious law and members of the community’s religious court (clause 104). The rabbis were to conduct ceremonies such as marriage, circumcision, and funerals as well as deliver sermons in their synagogues and be responsible for all that took place there. They could be members of the community’s religious court (clause 105). Ritual slaughterers were responsible for slaughtering animals in accordance with Jewish law (clause 106). The *mohel* circumcised male infants according to Jewish religious law (clause 107). The liturgical singers took part in the running of the synagogue and the prayers at the appointed times on weekdays, Sabbaths, and holidays (clause 108). The supervisors were responsible for overseeing observance of the dietary laws in the community, meaning they ensured that stores with a kashrut certification from the community did not sell non-kosher meat (clause 109). In addition to the religious court judges and the rabbis, who enjoyed a special status, all other officeholders could come from among the regular, ‘lay’ population, if they were expert in their fields (clause 110). The appointment of all these functionaries was dependent on the rabbinic ordination exams of the Religious Council, with the approval of the Chief Rabbi, who was also authorised to revoke their licenses if they did not perform their tasks properly (clause 111). Clauses 112 and 113 stated that rabbis who conducted weddings, funerals or circumcisions without the approval of the Chief Rabbi were liable to penalties imposed by him as well as by the state.

#### d. The new arrangements in action

In the elections held in the autumn of 1923, Leon Gattegno, from a family of important merchants who traded in goods from the New World and other colonies, was elected head of the community's Executive Committee.<sup>60</sup> Since the Ottoman period, the family had been well represented among those eligible to vote for community institutions or be elected to them.<sup>61</sup> Gattegno was also elected to the Greek parliament in the election of 6 December 1915 in which Venizelos and the socialists did not run, but the government did not serve long.<sup>62</sup> Gattegno's tenure on the Executive Committee was also short-lived; within a year, under circumstances that remain unclear to us, Jacob Cazes returned to his position as head of the Committee and president of the community.

The period of 1925-1926 was marked by severe conflicts, which the community leadership proved incapable of handling. The primary bones of contention were the deteriorating financial situations of most of the community members, and the complex issue of managing the community's property. It was clear that in order to negotiate with the Greek government, the community had to be headed by individuals whom the Greek government favoured, such as Cazes, Gattegno, and Ascher Malah; on the other hand, factions of every stripe, both Zionist and socialist, did not trust these men, each for their own reasons. They accused Cazes of acquiescing to the limitations placed by the Greek government on Salonikan Jews' voting rights in the general election (namely, including them all in a sector eligible to elect only two or three parliamentary representatives

60. Orly C. Meron, 'Sub-Ethnicity and Elites: Jewish Italian Professionals and Entrepreneurs in Salonica (1882-1912)', in *Rabbini e maestri nell'ebraismo italiano*, ed. D. Malkiel (Firenze: Editrice La Giuntina, 2005), 199; *Commercial Directory of Macedonia 1910*, 35.

61. List appended to *El Avenir* and *El Puevo*, without exact date, Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, doc. 8655.

62. Λουκάς Παν. Πάτρας, 'Ελληνες Ισραηλίτες στην ελληνική πολιτική ζωή και στο ελληνικό Κοινοβούλιο', *Χρονικά 199* (πόλεμος 1940), Σεπτέμβριος - Οκτώβριος 2005, σ. 4-16 (Luka Pan. Patra, 'Greek Jews in the Political Life of Greece and the Greek Parliament', *Zikhronot 199* [War of 1940], September-October 2005, 4-16).

in total rather than taking into account their relative proportion of the city's population); in particular, they felt that Cazes had not bargained strongly enough with the Greek Transportation Minister, who was appointed to deal with the rebuilding of the city.<sup>63</sup>

In the meantime, Salonika's poverty worsened as a result of the settlement of tens of thousands of refugees from Asia Minor. The result was a drop in the wage level of unskilled labourers. In September 1926, thousands of tobacco workers and their families marched through the streets of the city carrying black flags; that month, the tobacco workers' unemployment fund distributed 750,000 drachmas to the strikers.<sup>64</sup> Amid the growing distress, voices rose accusing the Executive Committee of indifference to the hardship of the poor. Against this backdrop, we can understand the surprising success of the socialist party among the Jews of Salonika in the general elections of November 1926. One of the reasons for this was that the Greek government made a point of providing all eligible voters with a voter registration card and information on voting procedures; nearly 4,000 people out of some 10,000 eligible voters voted for the socialists.

In the community's own elections, meanwhile, the situation was different. In all internal elections, including those of 1930, the voter rolls that were published consisted solely of the *petcha* taxpayers; only after they had voted were the others allowed to vote. Many of those who had not paid the tax did not even come to the polls, based on their understanding that they would not be eligible to vote.<sup>65</sup> As a result, in the internal elections of 1926, only 1,000 people voted for the socialists, and the Zionists scored an impressive victory.<sup>66</sup> Residents of the more disadvantaged quarters were the ones who voted for the socialists in the general elections. They did not wait for the neighbourhood councils designated by the community's Executive Committee to see to their needs but banded together in groups of their own, founding the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations so that they could fight for their rights more effectively, both vis-à-vis the community itself and the city of Salonika. This move

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63. Letter from General Directorate of Salonika to Press Office of Foreign Ministry in Athens, 10 December 1925. Greek Foreign Ministry Archives, protocol no. 1644, 1925 Θ 100, 2 Δελτία Γ.Δ. Μακεδονίας.

64. 'Arrests', *El Tiempo*, 5 September 1926 (Ladino).

65. 'The General Assembly', *El Popular*, no. 55, 14 July 1930 (Ladino).

66. 'To Work', *La Renessancia Djoudia*, 12 November 1926 (Ladino).

highlights the extent of the rupture between the masses and the Executive Committee.<sup>67</sup> In 1926, Mentech Bessantci was elected to parliament from Venizelos' party, and at the same time, to the Jewish community's Executive Committee on behalf of the Zionists. Several weeks later, the newspaper that represented the interests of the poorer residents, *El Foburgo*, mocked those who had voted for Bessantci in the general and the community elections. It argued that the Executive Committee was concerned solely with the interests of its inner circle.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the precisely worded election regulations, matters did not proceed accordingly. Two elections took place as scheduled, in 1923 and 1926; but on 26 December 1926 an amendment to the community constitution was passed making it possible in exceptional cases to postpone the elections from the date prescribed by law (during the Sukkot holiday) to a later date. The elections slated to take place in 1929 were pushed off since the community asked to wait until a specific law (No. 4837) was passed on the voting rights of holders of foreign citizenship, which in fact took place on 25 July 1930. This new law, an amendment to No. 2456, modified clause 3 of the earlier law to read that 'all Jewish residents of the city are considered members of the community'. In other words, all Jews of Salonika, whether or not they were citizens of Greece, now had the status of community members. This held true in terms of their obligations—but not in terms of their rights. Clause 2 of the amendment revised clause 6 of the earlier law, as follows: 'Each Jewish congregation is to be run by an administration whose members were elected to the General Assembly and are over 25 years of age. Members of the Executive Committee are to be individuals with Greek citizenship. This body is to manage all matters related to the community, for example, its property and all its philanthropic and educational organizations'. The importance of the change was that citizens of foreign countries could elect, though not be elected to, the Executive Committee of the community. The rationale was most likely to encourage foreigners to pay the *petcha*, or at least not to lose them from the outset as taxpayers, in exchange for the right to indirectly influence the structure of the presidency.

Clause 3 of the amendment changed the end of clause 9 of the

67. 'Life in the Neighbourhoods', *Avanti*, 23 November 1926 (Ladino).

68. 'Our View: Anarchy', *El Foburgo*, 4 December 1926 (Ladino); 'Victory of Jewish Union', *ibid.*, year 1, no. 13, 14 December 1926 (Ladino).

previous law, stating that ‘anyone who previously occupied the position of Chief Rabbi and did not meet the criteria set forth in clause 17 of Law No. 2456 shall henceforth be referred to as Rabbi [not Chief Rabbi–MR]. The Chief Rabbi and other rabbis must hold Greek citizenship’. Clause 4 of the amendment modified clause 16 of the previous law so that from now on ‘the supreme body of each Jewish community, to which the Chief Rabbi and the Executive Committee are subordinate, is the General Assembly. The number of members of the General Assembly of each [city’s] community is dependent on the number of members in the overall Jewish community [of Greece]. Members of the Assembly must be 21 years of age. Only men are eligible to vote’.

Elections took place on 12 October of that year.<sup>69</sup> Listed on the voter rolls were 7,000 eligible voters,<sup>70</sup> but as noted earlier, many of them did not appear at the polling stations since only those who had paid the *petcha* tax were initially permitted to vote.<sup>71</sup> Three weeks after the elections, 200 ballots were declared invalid since the voters had not written the name of the candidate’s father as required. Many residents of Salonika carried the same first and last names, causing the socialists to lose one vote for the General Assembly to the Zionists.<sup>72</sup> On 10 November (less than one month after the election, as stated by law), the General Assembly convened to elect the Executive Committee, the president, the secretaries, and the comptroller.<sup>73</sup> One week later, 60 of the 70 members met and elected the following members to the Executive Committee: Jacob Angel, Moïse Benveniste, and Alberto Tcenio (nonaffiliated); Leon Gattegno, Leon Recanati (General Zionists); Haimaki Cohen, Moïse Benosiglio, Salvator Tcahon, Ovadya Sciaky, and David Matalon (Union Nacional - Revisionists<sup>74</sup>); and Isac Amariglio, Ascher Malah (Zionist Federation).

69. ‘First Session of the New General Assembly: The Communists Spark Provocations - «Hatikvah» Drowns Out «Internationale»’, *Aksion*, 10 November 1930 (Ladino).

70. ‘Αι Εκλογαί της Ισραηλ. Κοινότητος’, *Ταχυδρόμος*, 10.10.1930 (‘Jewish Community Elections,’ *Tachydr mos*, 10 October 1930).

71. See above, note 70.

72. ‘Denying Voters’ Votes: Masses Vote with Self-Restraint: Total Anarchy on National Union list and the Professionals’, *El Popular*, year 2, no. 137, 22 October 1930 (Ladino).

73. See note 70, above.

74. ‘Election Platform: Ben Ya’akov, Zionism is a Popular Movement,

Of these 12, there at least 9 were representatives of Zionist parties.<sup>75</sup> Almost immediately after the elections, Alberto Tcenio resigned, and Elie Franses was called to take his place. Franses refused, and Haimaki Cohen also announced that he would not take on the position since in his opinion the Union Nacional had no power in the Executive Committee, and why should he serve on a body where he could not influence anything.<sup>76</sup>

Another month passed, and it seemed as though an agreement was taking shape regarding the composition of the Executive Committee. After lengthy debate, it was decided that the new committee would be action-oriented and would be replaced every three to six months. It was to include five representatives from the Zionist Federation, four from the Union Nacional, two from the Bloc Moderado, and one neutral representative.<sup>77</sup> This arrangement was based on mutual consent and not on elections, and provided an opportunity to a larger group of Committee candidates who had not been elected (such as Mentech Bessantci, Eliaou Benosiglio, David Florentin, Abram Recanati, Isac Altchek, Isac Aroesti, Daniel Allalouf, Elie Franses, Haim Pinhas, Ascher Israel, and Hananel Naar) to also participate in running the community.<sup>78</sup> Eliaou Benosiglio was elected president of the community and the Executive Committee.<sup>79</sup>

The ensuing months were marred by rising antisemitism in Salonika, including riots in the Campbell quarter (June 1931) and related incidents.<sup>80</sup> The demand to elect a Chief Rabbi who could cope with such problems increased. The community was having difficulty

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but in Salonika...’, *Aksion*, 17 May 1933 (Ladino).

75. ‘Meaning of Elections for the Community’s Executive Committee: Toward a Period of Peace and Work’, *Aksion*, 17 November 1930 (Ladino).

76. ‘Crisis in the Community’, *Aksion*, 25 March 1931 (Ladino).

77. ‘Crisis in the Community: Toward an Agreement Between the Parties’, *Aksion*, 20 April 1931 (Ladino).

78. ‘Meaning of Elections for the Community’s Executive Committee: Toward a Period of Peace and Work’, *Aksion*, 17 November 1930 (Ladino).

79. ‘Solution for the Housing Issue? Lack of Tact toward the Executive Committee’, *Aksion*, 7 June 1931 (Ladino).

80. See my book: Rozen, *Narrow Bridge*, chap. 2.1.1 regarding the General Directorate of Macedonia and its governor (forthcoming); see also discussion and sources in Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews of Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945*, vol. I (Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, 2005), 277-290.

funding its growing needs in the areas of education, health, welfare, and aid to the poor, whose numbers were swelling, now compounded by the pressing need to finance a Chief Rabbi with all the attendant costs. In the fall of 1932, when contacts with Rabbi Tzevi Koretz were at their height,<sup>81</sup> and it was already clear that the community had made its choice, the Constitutional Committee formally notified the Chief Rabbinate that the position of Chief Rabbi could not remain vacant for more than one year, and that the Executive Committee had to elect a rabbi. Since a Chief Rabbi had not served the city for many years,<sup>82</sup> a number of revisions were necessary in the structure of the institutions now demanded of the rabbinate, which the General Assembly was obliged to ratify. The financial burden that would be added was obvious to all.<sup>83</sup> According to the community ordinances of 26 June 1926, the budget was to be submitted for approval by the General Assembly in March of every year. Presenting the budget on time was evidently not a hard-and-fast requirement in the eyes of the leadership. The budget for 1933 had been in preparation since early January. It was approved by the Executive Committee only on 3 August 1933, and submitted to the General Assembly on 20 August at a special session, since the Assembly was in recess until September.

Rumour had it that there was a projected deficit of 250,000 drachmas, and the squabbling over solutions to this shortfall stood

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81. See letter of recommendation dated 21 July 1932 from Prof. Naftali Hertz Torczyner (later Tur-Sinai), chairman of the Teachers Society at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, in wake of contacts with Kurt Blumenfeld, head of the Zionist Federation in Berlin, to whom the Salonika community turned in its search for a rabbi (CAHJP, GR/SA file 67 [old file 186]. See also *ibid.*, old file 374 (comparative table lists new file number as GR/SA 241, but file description does not correspond with content of document in my possession). See also: Rozen, 'Jews and Greeks', 160-161, notes 108-110.

82. Following the resignation of Rabbi Ya'akov Meir (1919), Rabbi Ben-Tzion 'Uziel came from pre-State Palestine to take up the position (1921), but was not recognized by the Greek authorities as Chief Rabbi on account of his foreign citizenship. He returned to Palestine in 1923 to serve as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi, after which there were local rabbis who served as *locum tenens*.

83. Tzipori, 'Question of Chief Rabbi: From Where Will the Executive Committee Raise the Missing Funds?' *El Puevo*, 7 January 1930 (Ladino); *El Puevo*, 28 November 1932 (Ladino).

in the way of approving the budget. This problem brought others in its wake: Elections to the General Assembly and the Executive Committee were supposed to take place around Sukkot 1932; while according to the 1926 amendment, these could be postponed till Pass-over under special circumstances, on 28 May 1933 the Assembly was still debating electoral arrangements.<sup>84</sup> And in June of that year, the various factions of the Executive Committee were still arguing over the composition of the new Committee. From the nature of the disputes, it is clear that the community was reverting to the customary patterns of the Ottoman period. An agreement took shape whereby representatives of all parties with the exception of the Communists would be elected to the Committee, and the president of the community would be Eliaou Benosiglio or Leon Recanati—all this before the elections had actually taken place.<sup>85</sup> By August 1933, the Executive Committee was still dragging its feet, and was in no way ready for elections.<sup>86</sup> When they finally took place (in March 1934), the elections launched a new period in the organization of the community, characterized by the new Chief Rabbi who had taken up his post in May 1933 and was officially appointed in September of that year.

#### e. Structure and functioning of the community, 1912-1933

The negative impression arising from the gap between legislation and actual practice, as reflected in the contemporary press, calls for a certain balance. Rather than playing a reporting role, the press at the time served the political interests of the newspaper owners, whether at the individual or party level. It is important to recall this when looking at the overall picture. Moreover, during World War II the community archives were scattered to the four winds, and essential aspects of the community's structure and functioning can be reconstructed only by examining thousands of documents, compared with the usual situation where such points can be clarified through a simple examination of the archives. The laws and ordinances that established the community's institutions do not offer

84. Philippos St. Dragoumis papers, file 38.2.

85. 'Will We Have a Coalition-Based Executive Committee?' *Aksion*, 3 June 1933 (Ladino).

86. Letter from director of the Press Office in Salonika to the Press Office in Athens, 5 August 1933, doc. 225, protocol no. 2061, Philippos St. Dragoumis papers, file 38.2.

the whole story of its structure. As a rule, they relate to the elected or appointed institutions of the community and not to its functioning in practice; further, the minutes of meetings, as well as relevant correspondence, are not in sequence.

The community as an organization encompassed a large number of salaried officeholders. The reference here is not to teachers, clergymen or physicians, who received their salaries from the community, but to the complicated network of clerks and officials that enabled the implementation of the above laws and ordinances and the provision of various services to the community members. This clerical system had also existed in the Ottoman period. Despite the fact that our knowledge of it is limited, it is clear that it constituted the foundation of the clerical structure in the Greek period. One of the important innovations during that period was the decision of the Executive Committee in 1919 to appoint a general secretary to make its operations more efficient. We have reason to assume that the position was created at the end of Rabbi Meir's tenure. The person appointed was Daut (David) Levi, who had already been serving the community since at least 1882, when the Ottoman government conducted a census in Salonika and he had been a member of the committee that went from house to house collecting data.<sup>87</sup> Beginning in 1910, he had been in charge of the community's real estate holdings,<sup>88</sup> and in 1917, if not earlier, he took upon himself additional responsibilities.<sup>89</sup> In 1933, he was promoted to the level of 'chancellor', which can be understood as director-general (more of an honorary than a substantive title), and his wages were set at 1,200 drachmas a month.<sup>90</sup> Daut Levi was a salaried clerk who managed an extensive and intricate system that carried out the actual work generated by the elected committees enumerated in the above ordinances. This mechanism was not created ex nihilo but was based on layers of responsibility that had been in place prior to Levi's appointment. Thus for example, we are aware of the existence of detailed registers containing the personal information of all members of the community, including their addresses, family status, and tax assessment. These registers were

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87. Levi, 'Essay', 34.

88. *Ibid.*, Introduction.

89. 'How Many Jews Are There in Salonika?' *El Messagero*, 26 January 1938 (Ladino).

90. 'Changing of Community Chancellor', *Aksion*, 8 February 1935 (Ladino).

based on the Ottoman census of 1884, whose results were provided to the community.<sup>91</sup> Following the Great Fire of 1917, the community leadership realised that the bulk of the information concerning its members had been lost in the flames. The absence of these records made it impossible to collect taxes or to verify the personal status of community members when necessary. Accordingly, immediately after the fire the community took it upon itself to begin recreating this information. Two months after the fire, Daut Levi organised the teachers from the Jewish schools, who were now unable to work and were in any case drawing salaries from the community, to conduct a census. The teachers went from house to house, from shelter to shelter, and attempted to record once again all members of the community together with their families, personal status, and address. This information was compared with the scraps of paper in Levi's possession and to government records. All of the statements were then copied into registers arranged alphabetically by family name. Several months later, before Passover 1918, when most members of the community came to its offices to receive matzah and financial assistance for the holiday, Levi took the opportunity to record once again the names of the welfare recipients and their family members. In the ensuing years, diligent clerks continually updated these registers with information on births, deaths, marriages, and divorces.<sup>92</sup> The nature of these updates indicates that the registrars were evidently part of the mechanism of the Executive Committee, but the records were collected through statements submitted to the rabbis, who were members of the Religious Council. A different clerical mechanism dealt with the record-keeping, verification, and oversight of the rights of individuals and families to financial and other assistance from the community due to poverty. This process as well was based on a level of clerical activity that preceded the appointment of Daut Levi. Under this system, the office received requests for support, opened files for those who requested help, and gathered all the relevant material. The clerks who handled this were part of the structure of the Executive Committee. A rather cumbersome support system dealt with the traditional holiday allowance at Passover time, known as *kimha depis'ha*. In the spring of 1918, the allocations were handled in a somewhat spontaneous fashion, with those who felt they qualified

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91. Levi, 'Essay'.

92. 'How Many Jews Are There in Salonika?' *El Messagero*, 26 January 1938 (Ladino).

for this assistance simply presenting themselves at the community offices, but the needy were later divided into three groups and given an account book that showed their level of eligibility.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, up until 1935 we have not found evidence that the same mechanism that saw to the needy in general was also connected to the distribution of matzah, though this would be logical.<sup>94</sup>

The handling of the community's real estate holdings necessitated a great deal of clerical work, which centred on the maintenance and leasing of these properties as well as the collection of rental fees. After 1917, a sizeable proportion of Salonikan Jews lived in public housing. In practical terms, this meant that the community was the largest landlord in the city and consequently bore the burden of the administrative work that this entailed. It should be noted that the clerks who dealt with this did not have decision-making authority in these areas and only carried out the decisions made by the various elected committees.

Paying all the salaries—of teachers, clergy, physicians, and employees of Baron de Hirsch Hospital and other community institutions—also necessitated a clerical system. These wages made up a hefty portion of the community's expenditures, and as the years passed the mechanism grew and so, too, the expenses. The clerks through whom the money passed hands were naturally the first to receive their wages, with salaried employees of the community who were not part of this system being the last.<sup>95</sup> Complaints by teachers of payment delays were commonplace.<sup>96</sup> Cutting the salaries of clerks, or dismissing officials whose work did not meet expectations, was highly problematic since a fired official immediately joined the chorus of criticism over the way the community was being managed,

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93. CAHJP, GR/SA, new file 41a, old file 73, subfile 068 (Campbell Affair).

94. CAHJP, GR/SA, new file 263, old file 351a regarding matzah for Passover; letters to surrounding communities about matzahs, work, and supply.

95. Tzipori, 'Question of Chief Rabbi: From Where Will the Executive Committee Raise the Missing Funds?' *El Puevlo*, 7 January 1930 [published as part of the 'Tribuna Libre' (Free Platform) section] (Ladino).

96. Director of Salonika Press Office to Foreign Ministry, 29 September 1929, Greek Foreign Ministry Archives, 139, attachment to doc. 38. In late September, the salaries for July and August had still not been paid. 'The Teachers Can't Wait'; 'February and March Salaries and Passover Bonus Have Still Not Been Paid!' *Aksion*, 25 March 1931 (Ladino).

and a group of discharged clerks could stir up waves of disapproval, to the point of deposing the community leadership. Such was the case in 1928, when a group of fired clerks managed to join forces with the political opposition of the community leadership and bring about the removal of the Executive Committee.<sup>97</sup>

#### **f. Return of the Chief Rabbinate, and decline of the organized community (1933-1941)**

Following the Campbell riots of 1931, the entire leadership was in agreement that a Chief Rabbi needed to be appointed. The acknowledgement of such a need stemmed from the fact that the traditional leadership of the community, of which Cazes and Benosiglio were among the last members, had given way to ‘operators’ who were involved in Greek politics, such as Mentech Bessantci and Alberto Tcenio. Like their predecessors, they were not happy to clash with the Greek government and its politicians, but for their own reasons, which differed from those of the earlier leaders. The hard-core Zionists had already packed their belongings for the Land of Israel, and leaving the leadership vulnerable to democratic political games seemed like a dangerous idea that would give the socialists the upper hand.<sup>98</sup> A more objective look at the processes that led to the appointment of the Chief Rabbi indicates that the parties involved had no clear-cut idea of what they wanted. In very general terms, they wished to find a man with a modern academic education who could deal successfully with kings and heads of state and would do what they, the community notables, would tell him. Stated otherwise, he would follow their instructions, but he would bear responsibility. They forgot that according to Greek law he had supreme authority over the community, and did not reckon with the fact that the recipe they had devised did not make sense.

They brought over from Berlin Rabbi Tzevi Hirsch Koretz,<sup>99</sup> who came from a well-to-do family, part of a long line of renowned rabbis in Ashkenaz. When he arrived in Salonika, he was 38 years of age,

97. ‘Dismissal of the Executive Committee’, *La Renaissance Djoudia*, 26 October 1928 (Ladino).

98. ‘Election Platform: Ben Ya’akov, Zionism is a Popular Movement, but in Salonika...’, *Aksion*, 17 May 1933 (Ladino).

99. On the career of Rabbi Tzevi Koretz, see my article: Rozen, ‘Jews and Greeks’, III-165.

held degrees from the University of Vienna and the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, and had been seeking a public position since completing his doctoral studies in the philosophy of Islam. He arrived in Salonika in February, and by May was already hard at work, though it was only on 20 August 1933 that he officially took up his post.<sup>100</sup> Within a short time, it became clear to those who had invited him, and to his new employers, that he was a highly independent individual who would be difficult to control. I will not go into detail here on this subject and its broader implications, but will confine my remarks to the manner of organization of the community.

The new rabbi interpreted his position precisely as it was defined under Greek law, and immediately upon taking office turned his attentions to putting the complicated affairs of the community in order, as he understood the concept. But despite his powerful image, his ability to effect change was very limited, as we shall see below. The major subjects that interested Koretz, from an internal community perspective, were educating young people, improving the situation of the homeless, organising the register of community members, and systematising the management and handling of the assets belonging to the historical congregations. The area of formal education met with fierce resistance on the part of the Greek Ministry of Education, and Koretz, whose power rested with the Greek government, conceded defeat, though not when it came to informal education.<sup>101</sup> Throughout his tenure, remedying the situation of the homeless remained a cause to which he devoted a great deal of energy, even achieving some success; but in the initial stage of his term, he was unable to make significant progress.<sup>102</sup> A key administrative area in

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100. Letter of appointment of the rabbi in Hebrew from this same date. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 104, no. 677.

101. See for example the initiative to set up bar mitzvah courses for neighbourhood children. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 12 March 1936, p. 2. CAHJP, GR/SA 160 [this is the old file number; it does not appear in the comparative table, and can only be located by going through the protocols by hand; photocopy in my possession].

102. See for example the Rabbi's visit to the governor of Macedonia, Ioannis Rallis, concerning the homeless. 'Chief Rabbi at Mr. Rallis', *Aksion*, 8 February 1935 (Ladino). Regarding the visit by the Rabbi and Haimaki Cohen to the mayor of Salonika, and their lobbying efforts for the construction of public housing for the homeless, see minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 8 March 1936, p. 4. CAHJP, GR/SA, old file no. 160 (see note 101, above).

which he left his mark was the updating of the rabbinate's registers, which had begun to gather momentum even before his arrival in Salonika and was apparently demanded by the Greek government. Beginning in May 1933, there is a noticeable rise in the number of such records, with a substantial spike in November of that year. Koretz's ongoing involvement with this matter from the beginning of his tenure emerges from a letter that he wrote on 13 August 1934 to the Executive Committee regarding the need to update the registers and requesting administrative help for this purpose. The Executive Committee responded favourably, and allocated two more clerks in addition to those already engaged in this task, to work full time for a period of two months.<sup>103</sup> From 1933 to 1940, the records were meticulously revised, with Rabbi Koretz orchestrating the project. The registers were written simultaneously in Greek and in French, and were personally signed by him.

The other administrative matter that gained new significance under Rabbi Koretz was that of the real estate holdings of the historical congregations. The latter were actually organizations that revolved around synagogues, with numerous individuals contributing assets to them over the generations. During the Ottoman period, these assets had been registered in the names of the treasurers of the different congregations, to prevent the possibility of their being expropriated to cover taxes owed by members. This arrangement continued even when it no longer made sense, and was not altered during the Greek period. Obviously, this left the door open to corruption, and specifically to vested interests when it came to the use of these assets. Koretz attempted to change this situation, thereby opening a Pandora's box of disputes over who controlled the assets of the historical congregations—the Chief Rabbinate or their elders and treasurers. First, Koretz examined the account books, and it became clear to him that the holdings that had been allocated to the community in place of the plots where the burnt community buildings had stood were not yielding profits for their owners, which were the various congregations and the city's Jewish community as a whole. The primary piece of property was of course the Great Talmud Torah, which burned down in 1917 and was never rebuilt. Rabbi Koretz set up a committee within the Religious Council to investigate this,

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103. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 19 August 1934, p. 1. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 247a. Based on the comparative table, this is new file no. 009, but according to the content of the files, it is new file no. 38.

bringing its recommendations to the Executive Committee session of 2 November 1934. There is no indication in the minutes of the Executive Committee that these were discussed. Koretz appealed to the committee once again on 26 February 1935 regarding this same subject, but nothing happened. His third appeal took place on 26 July 1935. This time, the matter was discussed, and it was proposed that a sum of 1 million drachmas be allotted in the 1935 budget as an initial allocation for the rebuilding of the Great Talmud Torah. At its 12 March 1936 session, the Executive Committee promised a half million drachmas drawn from the 1935 budget, and a further 900,000 drachmas on account of the following year's budget. Likewise, Koretz was promised a thorough examination of the revenues from the disputed properties. At that same meeting, Koretz requested funding for several synagogues, Ciana among them.<sup>104</sup> None of this was acted upon.<sup>105</sup> The difference of opinion over the Great Talmud Torah properties was not the sole area in which a conflict surfaced between the rabbi and the dignitaries who controlled the congregation's assets. In late 1935, a lengthy scandal erupted surrounding the property of the Italia Yashan ('Old Italy', in Hebrew) congregation, which apparently continued until the community's destruction in the Holocaust. That year, the treasurers decided to build a new synagogue for the community, with funding for the construction to come from a contribution of 500,000 drachmas from one of the members. In early 1936, rumours began to spread that assets of the congregation had been sold to cover the building costs, and that the sale was tainted by 'irregularities'. In addition, a dispute arose

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104. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 12 March 1936. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 160 (see note 101 above).

105. See for example 'On the Deception of the Talmud Torah Congregation', *El Messagero*, 7 June 1936: 'The family of the deceased, Yom Tov Saporta, has contributed 1,000 drachmas toward the rebuilding of the Talmud Torah. Now is the time to reawaken the idea of constructing it, which has been dormant for so long. The Executive Committee of the community should recall that when the question arose of selling the real estate holdings of the congregations, it promised at a well-attended meeting to devote roughly 500,000 to 1 million drachmas to building a central synagogue. The last parcel owned by the community was sold this past Friday evening for 140,000 drachmas. It is therefore time for the Executive Committee of the community to organize a fund for construction of the Talmud Torah, and once they start construction it will undoubtedly continue. But if we do not start, and we do nothing to advance this idea, nothing will happen'.

both within and outside the congregation over the need to build a synagogue where very few worshippers prayed, even on the High Holy Days. The opponents from within pointed to a tasteless waste of money, while the detractors from without, led by the Chief Rabbi, argued that the monies should be used to establish a central place of prayer and study (apparently the Great Talmud Torah). Those in favour claimed that their congregation had always had their own festival prayer book and unique liturgy, and could not take on the Sephardic prayer ritual. Rabbi Koretz set up a committee headed by Rabbi Hayyim Habib to examine the account books of the Italia Yashan congregation. The heads of the congregation continued to dodge this inspection until late 1939, arguing that the insinuations of irregularity were baseless and stemmed from opposition to the community president Aron Jacob Florentin, and the community treasurer, a relative of his, Samuel David Florentin.<sup>106</sup> The problem was, of course, the liberties they had taken with the property without the Rabbi's approval, and not the suspicion of irregularities. The matter was never resolved.

On 9 August 1939, Koretz complained to the Executive Committee that assets of the ( Sicilia Hadash (New Sicily) congregation had been sold without his authorization.<sup>107</sup> The fact that this fight dragged on throughout the Metaxas regime, during which Rabbi Koretz ostensibly ruled the community with an iron fist under the patronage of the dictator, indicates the limits of his power. A reading of the Executive Committee minutes shows that the relationship between his political status and public standing in Greece itself, on the one hand, and his actual power in the politics and management of the community, on the other, was far from equal. During his tenure, important changes took place in the way the community was run, but he does not appear to have played a role in them. Instead, they were tied to outside political, constitutional, and economic pressures. Protocols of the Executive Committee sessions exist since at least 1921,<sup>108</sup> with detailed minutes as of 1934.<sup>109</sup> From 1935 onward, there are protocols

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106. Rozen, 'Jews and Greeks', 137-139.

107. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 115, no. 91 (file no. 30456 in the video archives that have not yet been digitised).

108. CAHJP, GR/SA new file nos. 31-52.

109. See for example Minutes of Executive Committee meetings of 15, 16, 19, 21 August 1934. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 247a. Based on the comparative table, this is new file no. 009, but according to the content of the files,

of meetings every few days.<sup>110</sup> The minutes were recorded in those years in Judeo-Spanish; but from 1936, their summaries (at least) were translated into Greek;<sup>111</sup> and from 1938, if not earlier, they were written concurrently in Greek as well.<sup>112</sup>

The frequent meetings of the Executive Committee, the detailed minutes, and finally, the addition of the Greek to the Judeo-Spanish records, indicate the success of outside pressure in imposing transparency on the community's administration, at least with respect to the government. This is consistent with Rabbi Koretz's efforts to update the community registers and to verify the holdings of the historical congregations. All of this was coupled with a significant rise in the number of committees in the community, beyond what was required under Greek law.

In 1934, the following committees were added to the 14 mentioned in the 1923 law: (a) cemeteries; (b) hospitality (added to the responsibilities of the welfare committee); and (c) small loans;<sup>113</sup> 1936 saw the addition of the (d) budgetary committee; (e) audit committee of the small loans fund; and (f) matzah committee.<sup>114</sup> In 1937, we find three additional committees, dealing with (g) housing; (h) reorganization of administrative services of the community; and (i) construction.<sup>115</sup>

The aforementioned administrative improvements, along with the creation of these new committees, shows an attempt to provide better services; yet at the same time, these processes indicate that the public was growing poorer and more dependent on community institutions, and the community was being called upon to provide an increasing number of services. The cemetery committee was formed due to heavy pressures on the community to relinquish at least part of the land on which the Jewish cemetery stood for purposes of constructing the University of Salonika. The need to deal with the various levels of the Greek government entailed the establishment of

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it is new file no. 38.

110. Minutes of Executive Committee meetings of 26, 28 February 1936, and 1, 8, 10, 12, 16, 19 March 1936. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 160 (see note 106, above).

111. *Ibid.*, new file no. 45.

112. *Ibid.*, new file nos. 48-50.

113. *Ibid.*, new file no. 151 (old file no. 247).

114. *Ibid.*, old file no. 160 (see note 101, above).

115. *Ibid.*, new file no. 230 (old file no. 181).

an organised body to handle these matters. The hospitality role that was added to the welfare committee resulted from the increase in the flow of refugees arriving in Greece from Germany.<sup>116</sup> The small loans committee was founded in response to the growing number of requests for loans from the fund. The audit committee of the loan fund was needed due to claims of discrimination in the disbursement of loans, and the need for oversight of income and outflow. The matzah committee was an outgrowth of the rise in the price of flour and in the number of people needing assistance from the *kimha depis'ha* charity fund. The budget committee resulted from the expanded range of matters that the community was involved in, which complicated the budget to the extent that it became necessary to have a group of people devoted solely to this purpose. The housing committee was established in response to the rise in the number of homeless, and the construction committee arose from the need to build housing for them and to address the subject of schools, which had never been sufficient for all the children of the community.

Last but not least was the reorganization committee. At the Executive Committee session of 28 August 1934, Ascher Moissis described the pressing need for an administrative reorganization of the community, a restructuring of its services, and a clear division of labour between the various officeholders. He also presented an organizational plan that he had constructed. Some of the members stated that they needed to study the subject more thoroughly before reaching any decision, and it was therefore decided to reconvene one month later to discuss the issue.<sup>117</sup> Though there is no evidence that any discussion of Moissis' recommendations took place, some changes were made. In 1936, the position of chancellor was abolished under the pretext of budgetary constraints.<sup>118</sup> But just one day after

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116. Hagen Fleischer, *Greek Jewry and Nazi Germany: The Holocaust and Its Antecedents* (Athens: Gavriialides, 1995), 8-9; Katherina Lagos, 'The Metaxas Dictatorship and Greek Jewry, 1936-1941', Ph.D. dissertation, submitted to St. Anthony's College, Oxford University, 2005, 221-222. By October 1940, there were already 3,000 refugees from Central Europe in Greece. See letter from the Refugee Committee to the Athens Jewish community, 22 October 1940. Moscow Archives, fond 1427, opis 1, file 113, doc. no. 192, doc. 16688 in the digitised archive.

117. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 247a. Based on the comparative table, this is new file no. 009, but according to the content of the files, it is new file no. 38.

118. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 26 February 1936, p.

the post was eliminated, the salary of Salomon Bitti, Daut Levi's deputy, was raised by 12,000 drachmas a year. The reason given for the raise was the Executive Committee's satisfaction with Bitti's devoted work.<sup>119</sup> Given the fact that the protocols of the community from that year until 1939 show very intensive work by Bitti, there is reason to assume that the replacement of the chancellor with a deputy who cost the same as his predecessor, if not more,<sup>120</sup> was done to preserve the dignity of the elderly Daut Levi and was part of the effort to streamline the community's activities. Nonetheless, after the establishment of the reorganization committee in 1937, the only clear signs of a restructuring of community services were the initiative to move the community offices to a location above the Cedid Han (Turkish for 'the new khan') and the appointment of Joseph Nehama to oversee the construction of the new offices.<sup>121</sup>

From 1936 onward, Jewish Salonika could be likened to a pressure cooker, and the burden on the community leadership only grew. That year, Elie Veisi, the perpetual antagonist, founded the newspaper *El Messagero*, where the drama—or more correctly, the farce—of that period has been preserved. In April 1936, six members of the Executive Committee stepped down, only to rescind their resignations when no one was willing to replace them.<sup>122</sup> The leaders of all the parties represented in the General Assembly suggested all manner of proposals to resolve the crisis, but according to *El Messagero* none of them was credible since every member of the Assembly was tainted by corruption involving either the commu-

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1, on the subject of the community's budget. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 160 (see note 101, above).

119. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 8 March 1936, p. 1. Ibid.

120. Thus for example in 1937 Bitti received, in addition to his regular wages, another 4,000 drachmas for his dedicated handling of the provision of matzahs that year. Minutes of Executive Committee meetings of 8 August 1937, p. 2. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 181b. Based on the comparative table, this is new file no. 230, but according to the content of the files, it is new file no. 47.

121. Minutes of Executive Committee meetings of 2 August 1937, p. 2. Ibid.

122. 'The Executive Committee of the Community is Remaining in Place', *El Messagero*, 21 April 1936 (Ladino).

nity's real estate holdings or cronyism and nepotism.<sup>123</sup> None of the members of the General Assembly consented to serve on the Executive Committee, and the Assembly refused to disband. In the end, a provisional committee was set up, the Assembly was disbanded, and elections were announced for September 1936.<sup>124</sup> The temporary committee included Leon Gattegno as president, Haimaki Cohen as vice-president, Dr. Albert Menache and Avraham Levi as secretaries, Aron Florentin as treasurer, and Isac Nahmias serving as comptroller. Pepo Benosiglio and Hayyim Benroubi promised to assist. Following discussions, the elections were moved up to 6 August 1936, but some members of the General Assembly still refused to give up their seats.<sup>125</sup> Leon Gattegno had second thoughts, and attempted to renege on his commitment to be president. One of the proposals that circulated in the community as a remedy for the abysmal image of the Executive Committee was expanding the advisory committee.<sup>126</sup>

In light of the fact that respected individuals were not agreeing to serve on the Executive Committee, the Zionists and the Bloc Moderado proposed offering financial compensation for holders of these offices, first and foremost the president of the community with the sum of 60,000 drachmas per year<sup>127</sup>—a paltry amount compared with the salary of the supervisor in charge of education, Zeev Wolodarsky, who was brought from pre-State Palestine (174,000 drachmas a year),<sup>128</sup> or Rabbi Koretz (300,000 drachmas a year). At the same time, the provisional Executive Committee had to contend with the drastic decline in the community's revenues, in particular the

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123. 'Elections! The Only Solution, The Only Way Out', *El Messagero*, 26 April, 1936 (Ladino); 'Disbanding of the Community's General Assembly', *El Messagero*, 3 May 1936, p. 2 (Ladino).

124. 'The Community Crisis Has Not Been Resolved', *El Messagero*, 7 May 1936 (Ladino); 'Executive Committee of the Community: Elections in September', *El Messagero*, 24 May 1936 (Ladino).

125. 'Looking Towards the Community Elections', *El Messagero*, 1 June 1936 (Ladino); 'Disbanding of the General Assembly', *El Messagero*, 3 June 1936 (Ladino).

126. 'Advisory Committee To Be Expanded', *El Messagero*, 22 September 1936 (Ladino).

127. 'The Executive Committee Will Be Indemnified for 60,000 Drachmas a Year', *El Messagero*, 20 June 1936 (Ladino).

128. 'The Community Schools', *Aksion Prensa Reunidos*, 24 November 1935 (Ladino).

income from the *petcha* tax, finding itself forced to establish committees to convince debtors to pay the direct tax on which all community activity depended. At the same session, it was also decided to compensate the president, Leon Gattegno, with an annual sum of 36,000 drachmas.<sup>129</sup> Elections did not take place that August, nor in September, because on 4 August 1936 Ioannis Metaxas seized power, and the entire democratic apparatus ground to a halt. Despite Gattegno's pleas, on 6 November 1936, Pepo Benosiglio and Hayyim Benroubi resigned.<sup>130</sup> On 31 January 1937, a new Executive Committee was elected consisting of Leon Gattegno (president), Isac Angel, Isac Amariglio, Isac Nahmias, Alberto Brudo, Isac Cabeli, Hayyim Benroubi, Mentech Bessantci, and Haimaki Cohen.<sup>131</sup> I was unable to find evidence that elections were held for the General Assembly, and it is possible that the Executive Committee was elected from among the Assembly that was still in power from 1934 and refused to disperse.

Weakening the already-tenuous democracy that existed in the community was one of the noticeable effects of the Metaxas regime.<sup>132</sup> This was reflected on several levels, one of which related to the tenure of Rabbi Koretz. Even if the community leadership in Salonika had wished to unseat Rabbi Koretz (and it did indeed want to), it was unable to do so as long as he desired to remain at his post. Moreover, the ties he had cultivated with the royal court and with Metaxas himself prevented this.<sup>133</sup> At the same time, an amendment enacted on 1 August 1938 to clause 15 of Law No. 2456 stated that 'the General Assembly has the right to extend its term by two additional years in the event that 30 members of the Assembly vote in favour', thereby acceding to the request of the Jewish community of Salonika. Likewise, the following sentences were added to clause 84 of that same Law: 'The General Assembly of the community must elect by secret ballot within eight days of the completion of elections nine members who will comprise the Executive Committee of the

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129. 'Meeting of the Community's Executive Committee', *El Messagero*, 22 September 1936 (Ladino).

130. 'Resignation of the Community's Executive Committee', *El Messagero*, 6 November 1936 (Ladino).

131. Document dated 8 November 1939/ CAHJP, GR/SA new file no. 45 (old file no. 204b).

132. 'Reflections', *El Messagero*, 28 September 1937 (Ladino).

133. See my article: Rozen, 'Jews and Greeks'.

community, and an advisory committee to consist of six members. The ballot boxes will be kept in the offices of the community, and the votes will be counted only on the day following the secret ballot. In the event that half the members of the Assembly do not vote, the elections will not be valid and will be held again within several days'.<sup>134</sup>

The primary consequence of this amendment was that the Greek government aligned itself with the traditional approach of the community, which now suited it, and diminished the influence of the impoverished masses on the leadership of the community since it was in effect postponing elections by two years, thus determining that the same group of people would elect the Executive Committee. In addition, the number of members of the Executive Committee was reduced from 12 to 9. In late 1939, one of the members of the Executive Committee, Raphael Halevy, was appointed to act as the government's representative on the Committee, giving him a great deal of power compared with both the community president and the Chief Rabbi. Isac Sciaky was appointed comptroller of the community on behalf of the government. From his subsequent actions, it appears that his auditing responsibilities encompassed only the philanthropic institutions of the community.<sup>135</sup> Concurrently, other changes took place: Mentech Bessantci was appointed secretary (essentially chairman) of the education committee, with a monthly salary of 6,000 drachmas. Salomon Bitti was removed from the post of chancellor and demoted to that of secretary, at a monthly salary of 3,800 drachmas. He was replaced by Sabi Saltiel, with a monthly salary of 6,500 drachmas.<sup>136</sup> In the first half of April 1940, the full membership of the Executive Committee, along with the advisory committee and the Chief Rabbi, met for two sessions, one of which included the Religious Council as well. At the first session, the conscription of clergy was discussed, and at the second, the prohibition imposed on the community by the governor of Macedonia against taking any

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134. Document dated 12 September 1938. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 202. Protocol no. 322 (of the Greek Ministry of Religious Affairs). A parallel file was not found in the comparative table.

135. 'Jews Express Their Gratitude to the Governor', *El Messagero*, 29 October 1939 (Ladino).

136. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 31 October 1939. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 144, doc. 666, doc. 35635 in digitised archive.

budgetary or constitutional steps from this point forward. Based on these meetings, we can learn about the composition of the entire community leadership on the eve of the war with Italy:<sup>137</sup>

In 1939, the community sank deeper and deeper into obligations that it could not meet, as evidenced from both the frequent discussion of ways to obtain sources of funding and the nature of the specific topics brought before the Executive Committee. One outstanding example of faulty functioning as a result of lack of funds involved the charitable and benevolent institutions of the community. Isac Sciaky, who oversaw them, suggested transferring all their activities to his private office to save administrative costs, but the Executive Committee did not agree.<sup>138</sup>

On 10 July 1939, Daut Levi presented to the Executive Committee (at its request) a detailed appraisal of its assets and the monetary value that could be accrued by selling them to finance the needs of the community. The bottom line was that 100 families living in shacks in the Baron de Hirsch quarter should be evicted, and houses that would yield profits should be built in their stead. The construction would not be intended for the evacuees but in order to sell the houses to make money for the community. He also suggested selling five plots belonging to the Great Talmud Torah that were not built on after the Great Fire, two of them on Ermou Street and three on Irakleiou Street. According to him, such a sale could immediately yield between 3 and 3.5 million drachmas. He further proposed selling a plot on Aristotelous Street that was jointly owned by the community and the Alliance Israélite Universelle which, in his estimation, would fetch 1.3 million drachmas. Other parcels mentioned in the report were not appraised. The message, at any rate, was clear: assets needed to be sold.<sup>139</sup>

Concurrent with the assessment of the community properties and their potential, an effort was made to change the method of fundrais-

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137. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 9 April 1940. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 112, doc. 141, videotape 120, 1:16:32 (in video archive, not yet digitised). Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 14 April 1940. *Ibid.*, doc. 440, videotape 120, 1:16:23 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

138. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 30 August 1939. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 721, videotape 129, 0:01:23 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

139. Report to Executive Committee. Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 145, doc. 1918 (doc. no. 14576 in video archive).

ing for the community's orphans. The new director-general, Salomon Bitti, suggested that for every *ketubah* (marriage contract) registered at the Chief Rabbinate, the community grant sums of money for their support. But the method of calculation was such that for the first 10,000 drachmas of the *ketubah*, a tax of 750 drachmas was to be paid, and for any sum over and above 10,000, a lesser proportion would be paid for the benefit of the orphans. What this meant is that the higher the amount listed in the *ketubah*, the lower the amount granted to the orphans relative to that of a basic *ketubah*. Rabbi Koretz was adamantly opposed to this change, and insisted that the previous method of calculation be retained. Since we do not have information about the previous method, we can only assume that it was a progressive system under which the support paid was relative to the amount of the *ketubah*, without an automatic reduction of support above a particular ceiling. Since the financial support for the orphans was in effect collected from a tax paid to the community by couples getting married, this form of calculation was a perk of sorts for the wealthy at the expense of the poor (the truly destitute did not pay a tax on their *ketubah*).<sup>140</sup> In this way, the community leadership continued the course it had followed throughout the Ottoman era, since the end of the seventeenth century. Several months later, the community agreed to Rabbi Koretz's proposal to raise the tax on all *ketubot*.<sup>141</sup>

The effort to fill the community's coffers led to an eligibility check for those living in public housing provided by the community. In November 1939, the Executive Committee decided that the income from the public housing was too low to cover the maintenance costs. In light of the significant financial investment in establishing these neighbourhoods, and the large loans that the community had taken to set them up (which they were unable to pay back), the Executive Committee decided to verify the financial status of all public housing residents and to substantially raise the rental fees for all those whose financial state permitted it. In essence, the Executive Committee presented the neighbourhood committee with a *fait accompli*. It hired, on its own initiative, two auditors whose task was to go from door to door and check the financial status of the renters, and demanded

140. See note 131, above.

141. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 10 March 1940. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 786, videotape 129, 0:09:13 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

a loan of 7,000-8,000 drachmas from the neighbourhood committee for a period of three months to carry out the means test.<sup>142</sup>

At the same time, the tireless Isac Sciaky carried out a study of his own, and on 15 January 1940 presented a list of recommendations aimed at streamlining the community's welfare systems by tightening the oversight of its charitable and benevolent institutions, both private and communal. Sciaky suggested establishing a central committee that would supervise and coordinate all the philanthropic organizations, and navigate between them and the pressing needs of the community. He was particularly concerned with the alarming rise in the number of tuberculosis cases among the Jews of Salonika. With the proliferation of tobacco factories early in the twentieth century, the illness had become an inseparable part of the workplace.<sup>143</sup> In 1936, the number of tuberculosis patients in the Reji Vardar quarter was estimated at 15% of its entire Jewish population.<sup>144</sup> The community archives as well as the press are full of stories of family tragedies stemming from this ailment.<sup>145</sup> The Meir Tcenio Tuberculosis Association collected a sizeable sum of money to establish a Jewish hospital for tuberculosis patients, but apparently it could not meet the challenge and did not erect the building. Ultimately, the monies went to loans to the Baron de Hirsch hospital and to other

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142. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 3 November 1939. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 227, protocol no. 6960. (Comparative table lists the new file number as GR/SA 375, but the file description does not correspond with the content of the document in my possession.) One of the auditors, Samuel Acunis, who was paid 50 drachmas for each verification, was later accused of receiving 'envelopes' from tenants who wanted favourable treatment, and of preventing others from clarifying their rights at the community offices (letter from Leon Capon to the Executive Committee, dated 24 September 1940, CAHJP, GR/SA new file no. 368 [old file no. 259]).

143. Gila Hadar, 'Jewish Tobacco Workers in Salonika: Gender and Family in the Context of Social and Ethnic Strife', *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History* 15 (2007): 127-151, esp. p. 130.

144. A Concerned Resident, 'To Put an End to the Campaign [Against the Residents of the Quarter]: The Real Situation of the Reji Residents', *Akshion Prensa*, 3 May 1936 (Ladino). Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 9 February 1936, where Leon Gattegno presents the situation of the homeless. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 160 (see note 101, above).

145. Gila Hadar, 'Carmen in Salonika: Gender, Family and Tension Among Jewish Women Tobacco Workers', *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry* 107 (2006): 5-37, esp. p. 10, note 24.

urgent medical needs.<sup>146</sup> Sciaky argued that the Committee needed to formulate an organised plan to combat the illness, decide which organization would handle this issue, and guide it in coping with the disease, as follows: (a) informing the Jewish neighbourhoods about preventive medicine; (b) preparing a pool of doctors willing to treat tuberculosis patients; (c) auditing the organization's budget (and that of the other groups); (d) deciding on the scope of its activities, and (e) arranging fundraising drives.

In general, Sciaky believed that the financial management of all the philanthropic organizations needed to be removed from their hands and transferred to the committee that he proposed (which he evidently wished to head). In his opinion, all purchases of goods and services needed by the philanthropic organizations should be carried out by the proposed committee and not by the organizations themselves, since the committee, as a large-scale purchaser, could obtain better prices.

Sciaky was aware of a phenomenon that was spreading in 1939-1940, namely, the appearance of crowds of unfortunates who gathered outside the community's offices in a desperate attempt to secure assistance. Some were truly destitute, while others (especially women, according to Sciaky), found the community to be an easy source of money. In his view, it was necessary to conduct an individual mapping of the needy, which would be updated frequently, both to prevent the distribution of monies to people not in genuine need and to prevent the embarrassing sight of mobs charging the doors of the community offices. The mapping that he envisioned was to include the ability to pay rent. In his opinion, there were many people who claimed that they were poor, yet it was possible to prove that they were capable of paying rent, if only a minimal fee.<sup>147</sup> This conclusion was in line with that of Daut Levi.

The Executive Committee did not accept most of Sciaky's recommendations; in fact, it appears to have ignored them. The Baron de Hirsch Hospital regularly faced bankruptcy.<sup>148</sup> The Carlo Allatini

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146. See note 131, above. 'The Community Has No Money!' *Aksion*, 10 February 1938 (Ladino).

147. Report of Jewish community's supervisor of philanthropic organizations. CAHJP, GR/SA new file no. 26 (old file no. 94).

148. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 20 January 1940. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 158 (this file does not appear in the comparative table). Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 10 March 1940. Moscow

Orphanage did not accept new wards as it was also on the verge of financial collapse.<sup>149</sup> The board of the Malbish Orchim charitable organization resigned due to its terrible financial state.<sup>150</sup> Mandatory payments were met by taking out loans from various banks<sup>151</sup> as well as the sale of land.<sup>152</sup> Only one of Sciaky's recommendations was

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Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 786, videotape 129, 0:09:13 (in video archive, not yet digitised). Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 May 1940. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 777, videotape 129, 0:08:11 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

149. See note 131, above.

150. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 31 March 1940. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 781, videotape 129, 0:08:40 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

151. The community would take out the following loans: 70,000 drachmas from the Ionian Bank for the Baron de Hirsch Hospital (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 10 March 1940; see note 148, above); 50,000 drachmas from the same bank (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 17 March 1940, Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. 784, videotape 129, 0:08:59 [in video archive, not yet digitised]); 50,000 drachmas from the same bank for three months at 9% interest, with Alberto Tcenio signing on the loan (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 31 March 1940, *ibid.*, doc. 781, videotape 129, 0:08:40 [in video archive, not yet digitised]); 2,050,000 drachmas from the same bank to pay for the Passover matzahs for 1940 (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 April 1940, *ibid.*, doc. 780, videotape 129, 0:08:35 [in video archive, not yet digitised]); 300,000 drachmas from the Lay Bank (Laiki Bank) (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 30 June 1940, *ibid.*, doc. 763, videotape 129, 0:06:16 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). The governor of Macedonia will ask the Jewish National Fund, Keren Hayesod, and the director of the Palestine Office in Salonika for a loan in the amount of 2 million drachmas for assistance to the community (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 July 1940, *ibid.*, doc. 761, videotape 129, 0:05:58 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). The five loans taken from the Ionian Bank (in the amounts of 25,000, 50,000, 75,000, 75,000, and 20,000) would be paid back on 20 October 1940 (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 18 August 1940, *ibid.*, doc. 754, videotape 129, 0:04:55 [in video archive, not yet digitised]).

152. 'The community takes out a loan of 125,000 drachmas from two philanthropic associations...and is thinking about selling a piece of land or the matzah factory. This is how the community has been running for a long time. And what will happen when there is no more real estate to sell?' 'The Community Has No Money!' *Aksion*, 10 February 1938 (Ladino). Regarding the sale of land belonging to the Sicilia Hadash congregation, see minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 3 September 1939, Moscow Archives,

acted upon: in late March 1940, it was decided to raise the rent for the public housing units. One week later, the neighbourhood committee quit in protest.<sup>153</sup>

The attempt to improve the situation of the affluent by reducing the tax on high *ketubah* amounts, and the suspicions cast on the public housing residents, evoke a certain feeling of discomfort, which is only intensified when delving into the minutes of the Executive Committee and counting the number of benefits and assorted payments granted at the time to community officials, both elected officeholders and insiders with connections.<sup>154</sup> This is in addition to the

*ibid.*, doc. nos. 724-729, videotape 129, 0:01:39 (in video archive, not yet digitised). On the sale of houses in Quarter 151 to public housing residents, see minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 6 January 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 805, videotape 129, 0:11:41 (in video archive, not yet digitised); minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 17 March 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 784, videotape 129, 0:08:59 (in video archive, not yet digitised); minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 May 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 777, videotape 129, 0:08:12 (in video archive, not yet digitised); minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 15 August 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 754, videotape 129, 0:05:07 (in video archive, not yet digitised). The community will sell the parcel of land at the corner of Analipseos and Delfon Streets; if it is unsuccessful, it will take a loan of 50,000 drachmas from the Ionian Bank (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 17 March 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 784, videotape 129, 0:08:59 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). For the announcement regarding this sale, see *L'Indépendant*, 15 February 1940. The lot was 1,150 sq. m. in size, and was offered for sale in whole or in part. It was sold in June 1940 to Mr. Ioannis Nicolaidis (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 9 June 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 766, videotape 129, 0:06:58 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). Raphael Halevy, president of the Baron de Hirsch Hospital, suggested mortgaging the Caldron building at 3 Ermou St. to cover the hospital's enormous deficit; if not, he 'would resign from his position' (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 May 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 777, videotape 129, 0:08:11 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). On 14 July 1940, it was decided to sell the plot where the Great Talmud Torah had previously stood, which was not bringing in any profit to the community at this time of such great hardship (minutes of Executive Committee meeting on that date, *ibid.*, doc. no. 760, videotape 129, 0:05:50 [in video archive, not yet digitised]).

153. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 31 March 1940, Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. no. 781, videotape 129, 0:08:40 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

154. The salary of the community officials was raised (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 1 October 1939, item 7, Moscow Archives, *ibid.*,

doc. no. 710-713, videotape 129, 0:00:11 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). *Petcha* tax collector, Mr. Isac Covo received a loan of 2,000 drachmas from the community, *ibid.*, item 13. At the same time that the community was struggling to sell its holdings in Quarter 151, it bought the home of Mercado Yacoel (no. 41) in the same neighbourhood for the sum of 40,000 drachmas in cash (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 6 January 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 805, videotape 129, 0:11:41 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). At this same meeting, the Executive Committee decided to sell to Rachel Tazartes, a teacher in the community's school system, a plot of land in the same neighbourhood, opposite the Torbali factory, for the sum of 10,000 drachmas. She received a loan of 20,000 drachmas from the community to purchase the land and build a house on it (compare with the list of workers in the community's school system, dated 1 January 1936, Moscow Archives, fond 1428, opis 1, file 110, doc. no. 39, doc. no. 20215 in digitised archive). The community sold land in the same neighbourhood, and for the same amount, to Lazar Menache, whose financial situation was very bad, and gave him a loan of 14,000 drachmas (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 6 January 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 805, videotape 129, 0:11:41 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). Mrs. Hasson, a community employee, asked for a 'serious' gift from the community in honour of her marriage (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 23 March 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 783, videotape 129, 0:08:52). Jacques Hasson, also a community employee, requested a loan of 30,000 drachmas to build a home. The loan was approved. The only one to disapprove was Moïse Benvenisti, who argued that the financial state of the community was so grave that that it should absolutely not grant loans to workers (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 May 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 777, videotape 129, 0:08:11 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). At the same meeting, it was also decided to give a gift of 3,000 drachmas to Isac Sciaky, whose daughter was getting married. The matter of the young lady's marriage is well documented in the minutes of the Executive Committee over a span of several months. On 25 February 1940, her father informed the Committee of her plans, and requested a loan of 20,000 drachmas from the community so that he could marry her off in a manner befitting her. In light of the opposition of several Committee members, who commented on the serious situation of the community and recalled that Sciaky had also received 15,000 drachmas from the Salonika-Palestine Bank, it was decided to offer him collateral for a loan of 15,000 drachmas from the Amar Bank (minutes of Executive Committee meeting, *ibid.*, doc. no. 792, videotape 129, 0:09:54 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). By September 1940, the loan had still not been repaid, and Sciaky renewed his loan from the Salonika-Palestine Bank, which the community had also guaranteed, without repaying his debt to the Amar Bank (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 8 September 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 750, videotape 129, 0:04:24 [in video archive, not yet digitised]). Moïse Grotas, a community

new appointments of late 1939.<sup>155</sup> In the end, the director-general of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs intervened, instructing the new director-general of the community, Sabi Saltiel, to cease these practices. A decision in the matter was made by the Executive Committee at its meeting of 11 August 1940.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, at this same session, a member of the Executive Committee, Avram Levi, demanded special payment for his efforts regarding taxes owed by the Yosef Nissim School.<sup>157</sup> At the meeting of 18 August 1940, the Executive Committee decided that this same Avram Levi would receive a commission of 10,000 drachmas for his success in exempting the school from a tax payment of 160,000 drachmas. It was also decided that the members of the various committees would receive salaries for their work. Isac Sciaky, who oversaw the philanthropic organizations of the community, was the first to demand a salary for his activities.<sup>158</sup>

All of these allocations were problematic from an additional perspective. As stated, in August 1938 it was decided that the Executive Committee could serve for a two-year term, and in fact it took advantage of this extension. But in April 1940, the governor of Macedonia informed the members of the Executive Committee that they were barred from extending their tenure; he would see to the matter personally, and the community could not submit a new budget until he approved it. On the other hand, he later instructed the Executive Committee not to dare dismiss any of its workers in light of Greece's harsh financial situation.<sup>159</sup>

As a result of the governor's decisions, and so that the community could continue to function, it was decided to take the total budget for 1938-1939 and divide it into 12, and to continue allocating monies

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employee, also received 4,000 drachmas on the occasion of his marriage (minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 7 July 1940, *ibid.*, doc. no. 761, videotape 129, 0:05:58 [in video archive, not yet digitised]).

155. See note 136, above.

156. Moscow Archives, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. no. 756, videotape 129, 0:05:16 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

157. *Ibid.*

158. *Ibid.*, doc. no. 754, videotape 129, 0:04:55 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

159. Letter from governor of Macedonia to the Executive Committee, 14 April 1940. *Ibid.*, fond 1428, opis 1, file 112, doc. no. 440, videotape 120, 1:16:23 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

this way for 1940-1941.<sup>160</sup> By September 1940 the mandatory expenses of the community, which included payment of debts, wages, and taxes as well as aid to the poor, had risen to the sum of over 1 million drachmas while its revenues were only 150,000 drachmas. The elderly Daut Levi indicated that this state of affairs could not continue, and advised the community to sell off its property as quickly as possible. Moïse Benvenisti reminded him that in the present economic situation no one was buying real estate. It was agreed to appeal to the governor of Macedonia.<sup>161</sup> It is not surprising that by October 1940 no new Executive Committee had been elected. On the 16th of that month, the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs ordered the establishment of a new Executive Committee, with Raphael Halevy (who was in any case the government's representative) as president and Aron Sciaky as vice-president. The secretaries were Alberto Tcenio and Shelomo Uziel; the treasurer, Alberto Amariglio; and the comptroller, Charles Beraha. Additional members were Benico Saltiel, Saltiel Cohen, and Isac Cabeli. Albert Arditty was appointed director-general of the community.<sup>162</sup> This was doubtless the first time since 1492 that a foreign government had appointed the community's leadership. We can conclude from the fact that elections were not held, even given the prospect that the Greek government would appoint the Executive Committee, just how desperate the community's situation was on the eve of the Italian invasion. True, it had real estate holdings, but under the circumstances, it was without value. In effect, the community had gone bankrupt.

From that point until the entry of the German army into the city, the community was preoccupied with virtually one matter: assisting the thousands of needy who massed outside its offices, starving and without hope. Following the outbreak of the war with Italy (on 28 October 1940), an assessment was made of the poverty level in the Jewish neighbourhoods. It was found that of the roughly 50,000 Jews residing in Salonika, a total of 31,036 were destitute.<sup>163</sup> This

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160. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 15 September 1940. *Ibid.*, fond 1458, opis 1, file 145, doc. no. 849, videotape 129, 0:16:55 (in video archive, not yet digitised).

161. *Ibid.*

162. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 158 (no file of this number in comparative table).

163. Table detailing the state of poverty in the Jewish neighbourhoods following the outbreak of war with Italy (1940). CAHJP, GR/SA old file

figure reflects individuals who were unable to help themselves in any way, orphans and widows from the war with Italy, families of soldiers who were the sole breadwinners, tuberculosis patients and their families, the unemployed, and the elderly.

The state of Salonika's Christian citizens was not much better. Beginning in November 1940, the government organised soup kitchens that provided hot meals to the poor, who signed up through the schools. Based on the calculations of Evangelhos Hekimoglou, some 13,000 Jewish needy registered, though it is unclear how many of these actually benefited from the meals through this welfare network.<sup>164</sup> In parallel, the Executive Committee established its own group, headed by Leon Gattegno, to set up soup kitchens in the Jewish neighbourhoods.<sup>165</sup> This mechanism is not entirely clear, and it is difficult to determine the connection between the government network and the community's system. Even as the community soup kitchen continued to function, the sessions of the Executive Committee were devoted to verifying the requests of various people for financial assistance (the welfare payments that were provided were extremely meagre, between 50 and 75 drachmas a month).<sup>166</sup> Among the requests submitted to the Executive Committee were appeals for approval of the right to eat in a soup kitchen. It would seem that those who were registered as needy were not automatically entitled to meals at the soup kitchens, and that this entailed a separate procedure—a fact that testifies to the extremely limited resources

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no. 227 (comparative table lists the new file number as GR/SA 375, but the file description does not correspond with the content of the document in my possession.) The table is undated, but it relates to the war as an existing situation. The figures in this document are lower than those cited by Evangelhos Hekimoglou (based on unsourced documents of the Jewish community) in his article 'Jewish Pauperism in Salonika, 1940-1941', in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945*, vol. II, ed. Minna Rozen (Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University, 2002), 203.

164. *Ibid.*, 199.

165. Letter from the Executive Committee to Rabbi Koretz, 9 December 1940. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 154, protocol no. 290171 (new file number listed in comparative table is GR/SA 24, but according to the file description it includes records only up to 1939).

166. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of 19 January 1941. CAHJP, GR/SA new file no. 370 (old file no. 225).

at the community's disposal.<sup>167</sup> On 29 January 1941, Leon Gattegno, president of the committee for providing food to the poor, requested the sum of 25,000-30,000 drachmas from the Executive Committee so that he could continue to distribute food. He received approval on 3 February for 17,500 drachmas.<sup>168</sup> On this sad note, the story of the organized community in essence comes to a close. On 9 April 1941, the Germans entered Salonika, launching a very different chapter in the history of the city's Jewish community.

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167. The director-general of the community informed S. Aelion (whose position is not noted) that Moche Malo had a son serving in the Greek army. Malo was listed in the community records as needy (number 20 on the list). Aelion was asked to allow Malo to receive food from the community's soup kitchen (5 March 1941, CAHJP, GR/SA new file no. 368 [old file no. 259]).

168. CAHJP, GR/SA old file no. 72, protocol no. 587 (new file number listed in comparative table is GR/SA 9, but according to the file description it includes records only up to 1940).

## Περίληψη

### Η εβραϊκή κοινότητα της Θεσσαλονίκης (1912-1941): Μορφές οργάνωσης

Το άρθρο εξετάζει τις αλλαγές στην οργάνωση της εβραϊκής κοινότητας της Θεσσαλονίκης, από την εποχή της ένταξης της πόλης στο ελληνικό κράτος έως την είσοδο των Γερμανών, τον Απρίλιο του 1941. Το αρχείο της κοινότητας, αφού υπέστη τις συνέπειες της μεγάλης πυρκαγιάς του 1917, εκλάπη από τους Γερμανούς, στις πρώτες ημέρες της Κατοχής. Η παρούσα μελέτη στηρίζεται σε τμήματα του αρχείου που διασώθηκαν και βρίσκονται σκορπισμένα στην Μόσχα, τη Νέα Υόρκη, την Ιερουσαλήμ, το Άμστερνταμ και τη Βουδαπέστη, καθώς επίσης και σε υλικό που συγκεντρώθηκε στο Σιωνιστικό Αρχείο της Ιερουσαλήμ ή εντοπίστηκε στην Ελλάδα, στο Ιστορικό Αρχείο Μακεδονίας, στη Γεννάδειο Βιβλιοθήκη, στο ιστορικό αρχείο του ελληνικού Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, και τέλος στις ελληνικές και εβραϊκές εφημερίδες της εποχής.

Η μετάβαση από το παραδοσιακά αυταρχικό καθεστώς της Οθωμανικής, πολυεθνικής, αυτοκρατορίας, στο οποίο η διοίκηση βρισκόταν στα χέρια Μουσουλμάνων που μιλούσαν τουρκικά, στο ελληνικό εθνικό κράτος που διαπνεόταν από φιλελεύθερες και δημοκρατικές ιδέες δεν άφησε ανεπηρέαστη την εβραϊκή κοινότητα. Οι αλλαγές που επήλθαν αφορούσαν τόσο τις σχέσεις της κοινότητας -και ειδικότερα της ηγεσίας της- με το κράτος, όσο και τις σχέσεις ανάμεσα στις διαφορετικές ιδεολογικές και κοινωνικές ομάδες στο εσωτερικό της κοινότητας. Αλλαγές σημειώθηκαν, άλλωστε, και στην αίσθηση της ταυτότητας των Εβραίων της Θεσσαλονίκης, οι οποίοι απώλεσαν την δημογραφική τους υπεροχή έναντι των Χριστιανών και Μουσουλμάνων συμπολιτών τους.

Από τα μέσα του 19<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα έως και το 1912, η διοίκηση της κοινότητας στηριζόταν στη Γενική της Συνέλευση, το Διοικητικό Συμβούλιο και μια Γνωμοδοτική Επιτροπή. Το δικαίωμα του εκλέγειν και εκλέγεσθαι περιοριζόταν σε όσους πλήρωναν τον κοινοτικό φόρο, με άλλα λόγια η κοινότητα διοικούνταν από μια πολύ μικρή και κλειστή ομάδα εύπορων Εβραίων. Η βασική οργανωτική δομή της κοινότητας

διατηρήθηκε έως το 1920 χωρίς να γίνουν εκλογές. Ωστόσο, στο διάστημα αυτό, η παλαιά κοινοτική ηγεσία υποχώρησε, η εκπροσώπηση απέναντι στο κράτος περιήλθε στις θρησκευτικές αρχές και η ομάδα των σιωνιστών απέκτησε μεγαλύτερη δύναμη στο εσωτερικό της κοινότητας. Οι κοινοτικές εκλογές το 1920, διενεργήθηκαν σύμφωνα με τον νέο νόμο που διείπε την αναδιοργάνωση των εβραϊκών κοινοτήτων στην ελληνική επικράτεια, παραχωρούσε δικαίωμα ψήφου σε όλα ανεξαιρέτως τα μέλη άνω των 21 ετών, και επέφερε αλλαγές στους κοινοτικούς δεσμούς και στην εβραϊκή εκπαίδευση. Η πολιτικοποίηση της δημόσιας ζωής ενίσχυσε τα ιδεολογικά ρεύματα και τις κοινωνικές ομάδες που τα εκπροσωπούσαν: τους σιωνιστές που οραματίζονταν μια εθνική εστία στη Γη του Ισραήλ, αλλά υπερασπιζόνταν και τα δικαιώματα των Εβραίων στην πόλη, τους αφομοιωτικούς (ή «μετριοπαθείς») που όπως και οι σιωνιστές εκπροσωπούσαν τα μεσαία και τα ανώτερα κοινωνικά στρώματα, αλλά έβλεπαν το μέλλον τους στην ενσωμάτωση των Εβραίων στην ελληνική κοινωνία, και τους σοσιαλιστές που προέτασσαν το ιδανικό της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης και την ενσωμάτωση των Εβραίων στην ελληνική κοινωνία. Οι διαμάχες αναμεταξύ τους, με αφορμή λ.χ. την εκπαίδευση, οξύνονται.

Οι πηγές μας αναδεικνύουν τη νομοθετική βούληση και την ιδεολογική γλώσσα του κράτους, αλλά και την πολιτική κουλτούρα της κοινότητας και των δεσμών της. Μαρτυρούν τον εκδημοκρατισμό που επέφερε το κράτος στην οργανωτική δομή της κοινότητας, αλλά και την υποχώρησή του στα χρόνια της δικτατορίας του Μεταξά. Οι πηγές φέρνουν επίσης στην επιφάνεια τον αγώνα των πλουσιότερων μελών της κοινότητας (σιωνιστών και αφομοιωτικών) να διατηρήσουν τη δύναμη και την πολιτική τους θέση μέσα στην κοινότητα, απέναντι στη μεγάλη πλειονότητα του εβραϊκού πληθυσμού που αποτελείται από φτωχούς και πολύ φτωχούς πολίτες.

Τις κρίσεις της δεκαετίας του 1920 και τις οικονομικές δυσχέρειες της κοινότητας, τα προβλήματα διαχείρισης της κοινοτικής περιουσίας και τη μεγάλη επιδείνωση της κατάστασης των εργατών, τις διαδέχθηκε η αντισημιτική έκρηξη με τα γεγονότα του Κάμπελ το 1931. Η δεκαετία του 1930 είδε την οικονομική παρακμή του κοινοτικού δεσμού και κλόνησε την κοινωνική της συνοχή. Από το 1939 η κοινότητα καλείται να ανταποκριθεί με πολύ λιγότερα μέσα σε ολοένα αυξανόμενες ανάγκες. Τις παραμονές της γερμανικής Κατοχής, το κοινοτικό συμβούλιο καλείται να ανταποκριθεί στις συνθήκες ακραίας φτώχειας που πλήττουν πολύ μεγάλα τμήματα του εβραϊκού πληθυσμού.