

Greece has traditionally been one of the most ethnically and religiously homogeneous countries in the Balkans. In the last census to record religious affiliation and mother tongue, that of 1951, 97 per cent of the population gave their religion as Orthodox Christian and 95 per cent their mother tongue as Greek.

Yet there are small religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities in Greece, and the decade of the 1990s witnessed a large influx into the country of foreigners, mostly from Eastern Europe, amounting to as much as 10 per cent of the native-born population. Thus Greece, historically a country of emigration, has, within a few years, become one of immigration.

Little has been published in English about Greece's minority populations, a lack which this volume seeks to remedy. It contains chapters on the Old Calendarists, Catholics, Evangelicals, Jews, Muslims (Turks, Pomaks and Cypsiotes), Armenians, Vlachs, Slavs, Sarakatsani and Foreigners. Anyone with an interest in Greece, and in minority problems generally, will find the book fascinating and revealing.

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(Steven Bowman paper)

CLOGG — MINORITIES IN GREECE



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JEWS

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There are approximately 5,500 Jews in Greece today.¹ On the eve of the Second World War they numbered some 75,000.² This decimation and its ramifications constitute the single most important factor defining the contemporary identity of Greek Jewry. In order to understand their situation, we have to survey the historical essence of Greek Jews prior to the Second World War. Another section of the paper will delineate the tragic story of the war years, while the post-war emigration of Greek Jews will form the historical transition to the modern period. We shall begin, however, with an outline of the contemporary society to which the following sections will provide the requisite background for its understanding.

In 1941, over 55,000 Jews lived in Thessaloniki; then locally known as Salonica or Saloniki. Corfu, Ioannina, Larisa, Volos, Trikala and Rhodes had flourishing communities numbering several thousands each. Athens, on the other hand, had fewer than 1,000 Jews. Today over 5,000 Jews live in Athens, a thoroughly Hellenized community that tries not to acknowledge the high number of secularized youth and intermarriages with local non-Jewish women. Perhaps 1,000 Jews live in Thessaloniki amidst the homeless ghosts of their parents and siblings. In central Greece, only Larisa supports a viable little community of some 400 Jews. Jews are only a memory in Thrace and the Peloponnese. Some Macedonian towns may still have a family or two. Ioannina is in decline while the humble remnants of Corfu and Rhodes are ageing with sad dreams, if not nightmares. When I last visited Euboea some twenty years ago, I was introduced to the baby that brought the community's census to 101; today it numbers ninety. Crete has nearly disappeared from Jewish memory.

To understand contemporary Greek Jewry one has to comprehend another legacy of the war. In 1946, the Greek government passed a law restoring to the Jewish community the heirless properties of those Jews who

had been deported to the death camps of Poland.³ That act of a liberated state was the first of any European country to resolve justly the problem of Nazi-confiscated Jewish property; a problem about which Jewish organizations in Britain, the United States and Palestine were much concerned during the war, and occurred for a number of reasons which we cannot explore here. Many homes, however, remained in the hands of wartime squatters and refugees, not to mention collaborators. The surviving remnant of Greek Jewry, some 10,000 out of the pre-war 75,000, set up the major institution that has dominated local Jewish politics to this day: the Central Agency for Relief and Rehabilitation of Greek Jews, known as OPAIE. Its responsibility is to administer the thousands of homes and businesses, public buildings, schools, synagogues, hospitals, graveyards, bank accounts, etc. of the 60,000 who had been despoiled, deported and destroyed.

The problems involved in this matter are legion, and the documentation for it has not been critically examined, although much material is available in the archives of the World Jewish Congress now housed at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, in the American Joint Distribution Committee archives in New York City and Jerusalem, and in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. Suffice it for our purposes to note that the burden of administering this property is a heavy one and that the survivors of the Second World War still hold a tight rein on this organization. The property has become a symbol of power and wealth for this small clique. While undoubtably some good has been done for Greek Jews at large, that is the smaller and by now satellite communities that are daily declining in number, tensions have arisen on three fronts:

1. The perceived disenfranchisement of the younger generation which has, to a great extent, been ignored by the leadership in Athens and Thessaloniki.
2. The descendants of Greek Jews who immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s or to Israel after 1948. They rightly claim a share in this property of their relatives. Yet only recently has the Greek government allowed a percentage of the realizable Greek assets to be expatriated to Israel.
3. Descendants of Greek Jews in the United States who see the burden and the power of this administration as a corrupting influence on the future of Greek Jewry.

The Jewish community has a wide range of social services that sustain its religious autonomy. These include religious schools in Athens, Thessaloniki and Larisa with significant components of secular Greek subjects in the curriculum, synagogues (partially supported by the state); several museums including the internationally known Jewish Museum of Greece located in Athens, the latter the beneficiary of a government subsidy; a summer camp for children; benevolent societies for orphans, for marrying young women,

for burial in community graveyards, etc. On the local level the University of Thessaloniki is working with the Jewish community and with a recently established Society for Greek Jewry consisting of local scholars to explore the community's history and culture. In addition to Greek government aid, the American Joint Distribution Committee has been assisting Greek Jews since 1917. Other American support groups include the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the World Jewish Congress and the American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece. Israel sends emissaries (*shlimim*) to organise its programmes, teach Hebrew, and promote tours and emigration.

The Central Organization of Jewish communities (KIS) in Athens is the voice through which contemporary Greek Jewry speaks to the government of Greece and to concerned Jews in Israel and the western diasporas of Sephardi and Greek Jews. This facet of the leadership is yet another means of control by which the older generation excludes the younger from the mentoring necessary to succeed to leadership in the future. The legacy of the war which we shall explore later and the age of the leadership together produce extremely conservative and occasionally jingoistic statements and actions by this leadership.⁴ One more point needs to be noted. Greece is officially an Orthodox state which makes Jews and Muslims citizens of a different sort and that in turn obliges the community to maintain a low public profile. At the same time, the legacy of wartime German anti-Jewish propaganda coupled with arch conservative ecclesiastics or radical leftists raises the spectre of antisemitism through an occasional incident.⁵ The obverse of this tension, of course, is a kind of philosemitism that stems from interest in the Bible, business partnerships, social relationships and the presumption that Jews have influence with the media in other countries.

On the eve of the Second World War there were still three distinct worlds of Greek Jewry, each with its own layer of polyglot culture and historical experience. These three areas corresponded to 1) the South: the Peloponnese, Attica, and what, in ancient times, was Boeotia; 2) the West: Epiros and Akarnania; and 3) the North: Thrace and Macedonia stretching southward into Central Greece or Sterea Ellada. The islands of the Ionian and Aegean Seas were until the post Second World War period heavily influenced by Italian domination which effectively colonized the urban environment; Corfu and Rhodes respectively exemplify this tradition and Italian is still spoken by the older generation. And finally there was Crete. Subject to Venice and then the Ottomans, it became part of the new Kingdom of Greece in the early twentieth century.

The wealthy Hellenistic cities surrounding the Aegean attracted a large Jewish diaspora in the Roman period, but Jews may have been living in the area as early as the last days of the First Temple (sixth century BCE). The continuity of the Jewish settlement in the Peloponnese and Attica through the period of Roman domination is certain; however, data from the middle and late Byzantine periods, though scarce, is still suggestive of this continu-

ity. On the eve of the Ottoman conquest of the Peloponnese or Morea, Jews were still to be found from Thebes to Mistra, while during the Tourkokratia, or period of Turkish rule, they were located in all the major centres from Patras to Kalamata and Tripolis to Corinth with smaller settlements in Thebes and Euboea.⁶

The sketchy and still untold story of the Jews in the South came to an end with the Greek Revolution of the 1820s. Perceived as allies of the Turks, they fell victim to persecution and massacre by the insurgent Greeks. This is the only recorded massacre of Jews in Greece by Greeks and seems to be more a side-effect of the butchering of the Turks of Tripolis, the last Ottoman stronghold in the South where the Jews had taken refuge from the fighting, than a specific action against Jews *per se*. In general, Jews within the Greek lands and throughout Europe were supporters of the Greek revolt, using their money and their political and public influence in support of the Greek cause. In turn, the success of the Greek War of Independence was to stimulate the incipient stirrings of Jewish nationalism, which later metamorphosed into Zionism.

The newly established Kingdom of Greece attracted Jews to its capital Athens both from the Ottoman Empire and from Central Europe, a trend that was to continue until the middle of the twentieth century: Sephardi merchants from Smyrna (Izmir) on the east coast of the Aegean Sea and Volos on the north-west coast as well as Romaniotes from Yanina (Ioannina) in the western Epiros.⁷ An Izmirli Sephardi is even credited with the origins of the flea market in the Monastiraki section below the Acropolis which sits at the confluence of the Plaka, the older Byzantine and Ottoman section, and the modern nineteenth century town that grew up around it. The Greek government gave official recognition to the Jewish community in 1889. By this time a second generation of Greek Jews was matriculating from the University of Athens and entering professional life, especially law and journalism.

A few Central European Jews came as merchants and professionals to serve the new German King of Greece, Otto of the Bavarian Wittelsbach dynasty, alongside their Christian compatriots, such as a Jewish dentist (Levi) and a Christian brewer (Fuchs = Fix beer). The best known was Max de Rothschild, a financier who accompanied King Otto. Charles de Rothschild became president of the newly recognized community in 1890 and the leadership henceforth alternated between local Greek Jews and Central European Jews during the twentieth century. A British subject, David Pacifico, became the centre of a *cause célèbre* when his house was sacked by an angry mob in 1847. Britain pressured Greece to compensate him and ultimately sent warships to seize Greek merchant ships in Piraeus as indemnity. German Jewish and Christian scholars migrated to Greece to teach in the local university and schools and to excavate the antiquities of the new Kingdom. Perhaps the most famous was Professor Karo whose distinguished career as the head of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut spanned some

twenty years (until the mid 1930s). For a variety of political and economic reasons the years between the two world wars would see an influx of Central European Jewish scholars, businessmen and technocrats immigrate to Greece.⁸

By the First Balkan War a small but wealthy and influential community of Athenian Jews led by Ashkenazim (Central European Jews)⁹ was well integrated into the Kingdom of Greece and active in Greek society. Some of them, moreover, were active supporters of the Cretan politician Eleftherios Venezelos, whose post-First World War and interwar political career was to have such a great impact on the Jews of Thessaloniki. He himself maintained close relations with his Jewish colleagues and was described by Moise Caime in 1912 as his friend, a man who liked Jews and respected the Jews of Thessaloniki for their potential value to Greece, 'a superior man who had no race or religious prejudice'.¹⁰ Though small in number, the voices of Athenian Jewry were heard as lobbyists for Thessaloniki Jewry in the Greek parliament during the interwar period.¹¹

The Jews of the West, the Epiros ('peninsula'), have a shorter recorded history than those of either the South or the North. Primarily merchants, they settled on the two major routes that criss-crossed Epiros, the Via Egnatia, built by the Romans to connect the Ionian Sea with Byzantium on the Bosphoros, and the north-south route from Navpaktos (Lepanto), Preveza and Arta in the south through the metropolis of Ioannina into the villages of southern Albania and ultimately to Dyrrachium (Durrës or Durrazzo), the western emporium of Egnatia. Like the Jews of the South, the Jews of Epiros and Akarnania were Romaniote, that is, Greek-speaking citizens of the Byzantine Empire. They had their own synagogue rite and continued to speak a local patois of Judeo-Greek to the present day.¹² With the collapse of communism in Albania, several hundreds of these north Epirote Jews, who had been trapped there since the 1940s, were successfully repatriated to Israel.

The recorded history of Ioannina Jewry begins in the early 1300s (although local legends place Jews there in the ninth or tenth centuries) with two *chryso-bulla* of the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II, one of 1319 promising protection to the Jewish immigrants to the city, and one of 1321 confirming the rights of the Church over some local Jews.¹³ To these two groups must be added an unmentioned but implied veteran autonomous community of indeterminate ancestry. In later years immigrants from Corfu and Italy added their contributions to the complexity of Ioannina's Jewish community. Among the latter were the extensive Matsas clan which reputedly introduced *kaskaval* cheese as a family monopoly.¹⁴ Inter-marriage with Sephardim from Thessaloniki and Central Greece and the arrival of a few North African Jews added more traditions, but soon all spoke and prayed in a seemingly homogeneous community. The Jewish community lived alongside the Ottoman governors inside the walled *kastro*, a practice repeated throughout the smaller communities of Greece during the *Tourkokratia*.

By the end of the nineteenth century there were some 1,500 Jews in Ioannina with an equal number in the other towns of the *vilayet* of Ioannina.¹⁵ The main marketplace was burned in 1869, allegedly by the Turkish governor who wanted to modernize the city.¹⁶ This was a tragedy for the Jews proportionately as disastrous as the great fire of Thessaloniki in 1917 to their co-religionists in that city. Almost half of the Jewish community (840) was left homeless; most of the stores were burned. Three years later a series of riots against the Jews contributed to the decline of the community. With the opening of a highway between Ioannina and Preveza, Epirots began to emigrate, including the Jews of Ioannina. They left to join their co-religionists in Alexandria, Egypt and also were drawn to the great mecca of the *fin de siècle* – New York City. Despite the emigrations, there were still some 4,000 Jews in Ioannina according to the bulletins of the Alliance Israélite Universelle of 1904. In the following year 500 Jews emigrated to Bucharest, Alexandria, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and New York. Another 1,000 followed in 1906. The community thus lost its most energetic reservoir and was left with the more conservative and religious element which was to predominate through the next generation.

The Jews of western Greece shared with the Jews of southern Greece a Greek-speaking environment. However, the former was still pre-modern in that the Ottomans remained in control until the twentieth century. The latter became a newly established part of a thriving neo-classical civilization which, despite its German kingling, prided itself as a parliamentary democracy. The Jews of Athens, at least those raised and educated in the new environment, considered themselves Greeks of the Israelite persuasion and adopted a secularized veneer in public. Despite the predominance of Orthodox Christianity in Greek society, they did not feel themselves to be outsiders, whereas the Jews of western Greece suffered the vicissitudes of ethnic tensions with the subject Greek Orthodox that occasionally exploded in blood libels against local Jewish communities. The hysteria of these canards, which slowly spread west through the Ottoman Empire beginning with the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840, reached Corfu in 1891, paradoxically twenty-seven years after the island was annexed by the Athens monarchy. The Greek government, like the Ottoman regime that preceded it, extended its formal protection to the Jewish citizens, an attitude and policy that continued throughout the twentieth century.

The situation in northern Greece was quite different. The Greek-speaking traditions of the Jews of Macedonia, Thrace, and Central Greece, prominent in Hellenistic times and continuing through the Byzantine period, virtually disappeared with the Ottoman conquests of the fifteenth century. In 1455 Sultan Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople (Istanbul), ordered the deportation of the Greek-speaking Jewish communities of Thrace, Macedonia, and Central Greece to help repopulate his new capital. All of the tiny Jewish communities along the Via Egnatia from Kastoria to

Thessaloniki and east to Constantinople as well as south along the Aegean coasts were forcibly removed and identified for the next few centuries as *sürgün*, that is, forcibly deported, and hence not free to relocate. In the 1470 census of the capital, the Romaniote Jews numbered some 1,500 families or nearly 10 per cent of the city's population.¹⁷

In the decade following the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and during the generation following the forced baptism of the Jews in Portugal in 1498 (many of them Spanish refugees), Sephardim migrated eastwards to the Ottoman Empire and were encouraged to settle in those areas devoid of Jews. Hence in the northern tier of Greece, in that string of towns along the Via Egnatia with Thessaloniki as its centre, a transplanted medieval Spanish civilization flourished both commercially and intellectually until the twentieth century. From the fourteenth century onwards, Ashkenazi refugees from Central Europe and through the nineteenth century a flood of Jews from southern Russia, the two major branches of European Jews – Ashkenazim and Sephardim – intermingled in the homeland of the Greek-speaking Romaniotes and produced a vibrant renaissance of Jewish creativity that was intimately linked with the fate and fortune of the Ottoman realm that welcomed them. From Thessaloniki, Sephardi Jews radiated north to Bulgaria and Romania and south to the Land of Israel, both frontier provinces of the Ottomans, but their main settlements ringed the Aegean Sea from Larisa in Central Greece to Izmir in western Turkey. The islands of the Dodecanese, which stretch like a string of pearls off the western coast of Turkey, soon supported colonies of Sephardi Jews; the most important of these was Rhodes.

Thessaloniki, nestled in the north-west corner of the Aegean Sea, enjoyed her prosperity as the entrepot of the Balkans. Her Jewish population appeared shortly after the city was founded by Alexander the Great and was well known by New Testament times. From the twelfth century onwards (if not the tenth), sources suggest a continuity of settlement until the Ottoman conquest in 1430 when its Jewish population was deported to Edirne. By the sixteenth century, however, the community was growing and flourishing with a new Jewish element. In the sixteenth century Thessaloniki was the intellectual capital of the Jewish world, while her businessmen and manufactory sustained a textile industry that covered the trade routes of the Ottoman Empire. The Spanish-speaking Jews formed a majority in the city, outnumbering the Greek Christians and the Turkish Muslims. They were able to impose the rhythm of their religious calendar on the pulse of the city. Its scholars and academies supplied leadership to all the Jewish communities of the Balkans, so much so that Thessaloniki was known as the 'Jewish metropolis'. The second period was at the end of the nineteenth century when northern Greece began to westernize. The harbour walls of the new city were removed and replaced by a wide esplanade that provided a lovely *periptero* for the citizens of the Jewish quarters that bordered the port. The Jewish population subsequently spread east along the gulf with the older

Roman/Byzantine centre becoming separated from the modern new suburbs by the huge graveyard that had developed over the centuries east of the Byzantine walls. In the new suburbs, a rich secular literature in Judaeo-Spanish blossomed to compete with the Hebrew and Aramaic classics of the older centre that stretched within the remaining walls from the port to the Via Egnatia. At the end of the nineteenth century Jewish Thessaloniki seemed poised for a brilliant future as the capital city of a newly renaissance Balkans. History would decree otherwise.

Three islands define the borders of the Greek world: Corfu, Crete, and Rhodes.¹⁸ Subject to a congeries of rulers during late Byzantine and Ottoman times the predominant foreign influence was Venetian. Indeed, the Jews of Corfu spoke more Italian than Greek; likewise after 1912, the Jews of Rhodes spoke more Italian than Judaeo-Spanish; and, until the eighteenth century, the Jews of Crete constituted part of the urban orbit of a colonizing Venice. The same influence held true for the Jews of Euboea (Negroponte) which was heavily Italianized during the late Byzantine period. This intimacy of the island Jews with the Italians in the port cities of Corfu, Crete, and Rhodes would ill prepare them for the harshness of the German occupation that replaced that of the Italians in September 1943.

During the First World War, Venezelos succeeded in making Thessaloniki the capital of his provisional pro-Allied government in contradistinction to the king in Athens who sympathized with the Central Powers.¹⁹ Two events contributed to the crippling of the large and powerful Jewish community of the city. One was the great fire of 1917 which levelled the central portion of the city down to the port destroying homes, businesses, centres of learning, libraries, and commercial institutions. In the wake of this destruction, the Athens government confiscated much of the area as an archaeological site. From this blow the community never recovered. On the eve of their deportation in 1943 over half the Jews were indigent and still living in the temporary housing supplied by American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee funds after the First World War. The exodus of prosperous Sephardi merchants, which had begun at the turn of the twentieth century – many to France – continued and accelerated. The poor remained, subsisting on Greek government and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee subsidies.²⁰

The second blow followed upon the Greek *Catastrophe* in Asia Minor in 1922. Venizelos directed a large migration of Asia Minor Greeks to Thessaloniki, a measure which placed tremendous burdens on the infrastructure of the city. In addition, the Jewish community was pressured to Hellenize its school curriculum and to release needed areas to the civil government. In particular, the city demanded more and more of the huge graveyard located just east of the Byzantine walls. Part of this graveyard had been given over to the Ottoman administration for a school. Now the Greeks wished to expand this school into a university. The question was resolved during the Second World War when the city gained total control of the area. Today, the

university – centrally located in its prime real estate – occupies nearly all of the area of the former graveyard. Visitors can still see fragments of epitaphs in Hebrew and Judaeo-Spanish built into the walkways and embellishing the gardens of that prestigious institution.²¹

This last observation leads us to the agony of the experience of the Jews of Greece during the Second World War, a tragedy that brought to a close 450 years of a glorious Sephardi diaspora and nearly ended 2,500 years of a Jewish presence in Greece. First let me summarize the tragedy and then outline the Jewish contributions to Greece during the war and its aftermath.²² The outlines of Greece's agony under the Axis are not widely known. An excellent introduction to this period is now available in Mark Mazower's *Inside Hitler's Greece* (London, 1993), which contains, *inter alia*, the best summary to date of the Jewish fate under the Axis. More detailed information can be found in the author's articles in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*.

The dearth and death (to paraphrase Thucydides) brought to Greece from the north affected Jews and non-Jews alike, although the Jews received an extra measure of suffering due to the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazis and the enslavement of the young men of Thessaloniki who were sent out to repair the railroads that the British destroyed during their retreat in 1941.

The Bulgarian plot to depopulate Thrace, which it had been allowed to occupy as war spoils for supporting the Axis, resulted in the eviction of some 30,000 Christians, the killing of thousands of others, and the deportation of some 4,000 Jews from Serres, Kavala, Komotini, Xanthi and the island of Thasos. This deportation resulted from a deal made by the Bulgarians with Adolph Eichmann's emissary. Eichmann received the directive to remove the Jews from the Balkans now threatened by the expected Soviet advance. Following Rommel's defeat at El Alamein and the encirclement of the German army at Stalingrad, Hitler reorganized his defence of the Balkans. It was now time for the Jews to go. Most of those in Yugoslavia were already gone, either under Italian protection, butchered in Croatia, or killed by the Wehrmacht in reprisal executions, or deported to Auschwitz where they were mostly gassed to death. Theodore Danneker was sent to Sofia to organize the removal of the Bulgarian Jews. The Bulgarians agreed to the removal of 20,000 for forced labour in Germany. These would be supplied from Greek Thrace (4,000), Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia (8,000) and the rest from the pre-war kingdom of Bulgaria. The latter were never surrendered. The former, however, were arrested on Passover 1943 and entrained or barged to Vienna whence they were sent to Treblinka, the killing centre built for the Warsaw Ghetto. There were no survivors, although the crates of food they brought for their sustenance alleviated the famine that was decimating the few slave workers in that camp. The latter soon revolted in a mass escape which forced the Germans to close down that killing centre in favour of the megakilling factory in Auschwitz/Birkenau.²³

Since late autumn of 1941 the order for the deportation of the Salonican Jewish community was in the Wehrmacht pipeline.²⁴ The actual process was organized by Eichmann's emissary, Dieter Wisliceny. The Chief Rabbi of Saloniki, Dr Zvi Koretz, who had been hired in the mid 1930s after a rebellion among the younger generation of Jewish leaders who wished to modernize the rabbinate, had been made President of the *Judenrat* in December of 1942. He was brought back from a prison in Vienna where he had been interned by the Germans ostensibly for his public support of the Greek government during the Italian bombing attacks on Thessaloniki.²⁵ Eichmann's decrees were handed over by Wisliceny to Dr Max Merten, the German civilian liaison with the Greek communities, who, in turn, delivered them to Koretz for promulgation and enforcement.

Thus, throughout February 1943, the Nürnberg Laws were introduced into Thessaloniki. By mid-March the deportations began, despite the protests of the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Greek authorities. (It was not until June that the Germans were able finally to evict the former from his post).²⁶ Within three months the Jews of Greek citizenship, numbering some 48,000, were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau. In May, another train carried the Jews of Alexandroupolis, Didymoteikhon and Nea Soufli to their deaths. They were later joined by 1,500 Jewish males who had done slave labour near Thebes and other rail stations. Of these deportees over 80 per cent were gassed to death on arrival and cremated. The *Judenrat* and many Jews who held Spanish citizenship were deported to Bergen-Belsen in June where they were held for exchange, either for German detainees from the old German Templar colonies in Palestine or prisoners of war.²⁷

With the surrender of Italy in September 1943 the axe began to fall on the Jews of that zone of occupation. Previously, the Italians had refused to co-operate with the demands of the Gestapo and later of Eichmann to persecute and deport the Jews of their occupied zone. This complicated story has been told elsewhere, most recently by Jonathan Steinberg in his fascinating study of Italian-German relations entitled *All or Nothing* (London, 1990). It was not until Passover of 1944 that the Jews of the former Italian zone were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau. In June, the Jews of Crete mysteriously disappeared. Recent scholarship suspects their ship which also included Italian prisoners of war was sunk by a British submarine; the traditional view is that the Germans were responsible.²⁸ The Jews of Corfu and Rhodes were deported in June and July/August 1944 respectively.

In all, some 60,000 Greek Jews were deported. Twelve thousand were selected for slave labour or for usually lethal medical experiments either in Auschwitz or in other camps such as Majdanek and Dachau and a host of less well known camps. Of those deported only 2,000 survived the war to return home to a strife-filled Greece. We will examine the latter's fate after we rehearse the role of Jews in the Greek struggles against the Axis.

The story of the Jews in Greece during the war years has two aspects: one is the contribution of Greek Jews to the overall efforts both in military and civilian support; the other is the role of non-Greek Jews in Greece during the war years. Greek Jews are extremely proud of their service to Greece during the Second World War, both on the battlefield and in military and civilian support services. The nation honoured them during the Italian campaign in Albania, and Metaxas (dictator of Greece between 1936 and January 1941) raised Colonel Frizis of Chalkis to the rank of national hero following his death in battle. The government later tried to protect Jewish war invalids from deportation, a group otherwise covered by the Geneva Conventions, but to no avail. Their prosthetic limbs are prominently displayed in the museum at Auschwitz. After their demobilization, most of the Greek Jews walked home from Albania to their families and their pre-war occupations. Some however went to the mountains along with Cretans and Serbs and others who could not make it home.

During the rise and organization of the resistance movement under the aegis of EAM/ELAS (a combined republican, socialist and communist front), more and more Jews found their way into the mountains.²⁹ Few escaped from the forced labour battalions due to the heavy reprisals against those who remained. Many of the youth who were led to safety returned later to their homes out of familial obligations, a strong Sephardi trait – or were called back by their mothers who went into the hills surrounding Ioannina to reclaim their children. Throughout 1943 and 1944, a minimum of 600 to a maximum of 1,000 Greek Jews out of an estimated 30,000 *andartes* (guerillas) fought with the resistance.³⁰ Many thousands were in support facilities, such as logistics, or acted as translators, nurses, doctors or spies. Others were recruiters for the mountain fighters, while university students helped organize agricultural co-operatives in the villages. Others remained in the cities where they assisted EAM resistance through their educated skills. Too many others served and died anonymously, as Joseph Matsas has recalled recently in his stirring memorial. In all, the story of the Jews in the Greek resistance is still untold, but this is not the forum however to recount many fascinating and heroic tales. That has been done elsewhere.³¹

To the Greek Jews in the resistance we should add the following: refugees from Central Europe who were either trapped in Greece or were escaped prisoners of war from the British Expeditionary Force. Many of the latter fought in Yugoslavia as well as in Greece. Their contributions and identities are relatively unknown.³²

The non-Greek Jewish contribution to the war period is generally unknown. To begin with, some 2,500 Palestinian Jews (and some Arabs) were volunteers in the British Expeditionary Force sent to Greece in 1941. These constituted engineer and sapper units since Palestinian Jews, for political reasons, were not allowed in fighting units. Even so a special squad of highly trained Jews was sent on secret missions to Greece during the war.

The British Government felt that only fighting units, as in the First World War, were entitled to claim political spoils upon victory. Needless to say, many of these volunteers during the chaos of the semi-controlled retreat fought with discarded weapons in hand. About 1,500 of these Palestinians were abandoned on the beaches of Kalamata and became prisoners of war: some were sent to *Stalags* in Germany, others escaped to fight with the *andartes* and partisans for the duration of the war.³³

An interesting point that has yet to enter the literature is the role of two Jewish commanders who fought under the British flag. One was Colonel E. C. W. Myers who was drafted from the Haifa War College to command the special mission to blow up the Gorgopotamos railway viaduct.³⁴ After the successful completion of this mission, his brief was extended to harness the resistance to the British war effort. From November 1942 to the summer of 1943 he succeeded in forging a union of the National Bands of the resistance, whereupon he was relieved of his command and replaced by C. M. Woodhouse, a young Oxford classicist who followed a more political line.

The second was Myers' cousin, General Bernard Freyberg, who commanded the British defence of Crete during the terrible ten days of May 1941. The tragedy of that debacle was that it was more politically motivated than militarily controlled. On the very day that Freyberg was given the command to organize the defence of Crete, he was informed that the Royal Navy would offlift his fighting army to Egypt. At the same time he was fully informed through British intelligence that had cracked the German Enigma Code where and when the Wehrmacht would invade. In hindsight Crete could have been saved and countless Cretan victims avoided. But history does not countenance hindsight especially if one is competing uphill. In that situation only the brave dead are exploited for posterity. This is not the forum to rehearse the follies of British policies during the war. After all, the Allies won, and, in the Aegean, Britain fought alone, but less like a lion than a clever jackal. Nonetheless she fought, occasionally stupidly, to the detriment of her own subjects as well as to the detriment of the indigenous Christian and Jewish Greeks, for example in the abortive campaign to capture the Dodecanese in 1943, and in the process consciously sowed the seeds for the end of her empire.³⁵ History may well honour her choices more than the survivors.

But the historiography of Greece, at least until Mazower's aforementioned study, follows a Thucydidean pattern of Right-Left conflict.³⁶ Within this framework we must conclude our survey with the post-war vicissitudes of the Greek Jewish community which continue to affect its public posture to the present day. These follow two different tracks: one is emigration, the other is restoration.

The pattern of emigration was established during the war. Too few Jews escaped from the death warrant issued by Hitler and Himmler and implemented by the Gestapo and the Wehrmacht. Those that did escape were not drawn from the poor masses of Greek Jewry. Rather most of the escapees

were middle class Jews, many of whom held foreign passports whether Italian, Spanish or various South American ones.¹⁷ The story began in Thessaloniki with the blanket issue to Sephardi Jews of Spanish passports and continued with the open-handed aid of the Italian consulate, the last sympathetic non-German authority extant in the city.

Those who made it to the Italian zone succeeded in late 1943 and 1944 in being rescued through a unique Palestinian Jewish-ELAS agreement which paid one gold sovereign for each Jew transported from Euboea to Çeşme in Turkey. From there they were transported via Syria to Gaza refugee camps or to another detention centre in the Sinai desert. From these camps, some were drafted to British or Greek military service, others deserted or defected to the Palestinian Jewish community. In other words they returned to their ancestral homeland for which they later fought and otherwise contributed bravely to its resurrected independence. Not that the trip was easy; too many were betrayed, robbed by unscrupulous Greeks, or sunk in their caiques by German patrol boats. Incidentally, a number of Greek politicians, including George Papandreou, and high ranking military officers escaped via this network. According to sources, ELAS was paid one gold sovereign for these as well.¹⁸

When the Germans evacuated Greece, the civil war which had been festering under the scab of German occupation broke forth in all the fury which was to tear Greece apart for the next five years and poison its politics for the next half century. After the Varkiza Agreement, which concluded the 'second round' of internecine conflict, the Jews who were attached to ELAS units demobilized and returned home along with those who had hid in the mountains. There they found their homes occupied by Greek squatters while their wartime records were prosecuted by Rightist authorities. Many Jews were imprisoned; some others shot. The government recognized the necessity of Jewish participation in ELAS for the express purpose of survival and so exempted them from involvement in the incipient civil war. Yet local authorities continued their purge and many young Jews were drafted into government forces to fight against the Communists.

On a number of accounts, then, Jews welcomed the option to leave Greece. Many, who recognized the politics of the anti-Communist campaigns of 1946-49 yet loyally served in them, left for Israel where they could realize an ancestral dream of redemption. Added to these were the handful who returned from the camps. The first survivors from Auschwitz were deemed crazy on account of the incomprehensible stories they told. The average Greek exercises hyperbole as normative discourse. Hence the minimal description of the gas chambers and ovens must have seemed as hyperbole to those who stayed in Greece and who themselves had suffered tremendously in the resistance or in hiding. Indeed, the latter even accused the survivors of betraying their families by abandoning them to go to Germany! Such things happened and I only report them to the audience. History cannot perfect a reality based on hindsight.

The question is whether the pressure of the civil war, the psychological loss

of family and home, the hostility of the local population, and the call of the Zionist effort to establish a haven for survivors were sufficient to set in motion a mass exodus of Greek Jews to Palestine after 1945. True, there were in Greece some 10,000 Jews, most of whom had come out of hiding or out of the mountains after the German evacuation of Greece. Others consisted of survivors who came back, handful by handful, from the German camps, each with a different set of tragic experiences. But why did half of Greek Jewry leave Greece to migrate illegally and legally in the decade following the end of the Second World War?

This brings us to another story of the modern experience of Jews in Israel before the re-establishment of an independent state after nearly 1,900 years of minority status among the nations of the world. I refer here to the ingathering of the exiles, a biblical vision of redemption that was made concrete as a fundamental concept of modern Zionism and has been to the present day a central policy of the State of Israel as well as a priority agenda item of world Jewry. The question facing Jews was what to do with the 100,000 concentration camp survivors and the other 150,000 Jews who came out of hiding among the resistance or returned from the refuge they had taken in the Soviet cities of Central Asia? It was clear from post-war massacres that they were no longer welcome in eastern Europe.

The first stage of the solution was to bring as many Jews as possible to Palestine both for humanitarian and for practical political reasons. It should be remembered that the British White Paper which had restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine was still in effect until 15 May 1948. Thus the Palestinian Jews sent in agents to organize the potential illegal immigrants for flight (*brihab* as it is called in Hebrew or *Aliyah Beth*) to Palestine. Groups were organized and brought to the Mediterranean shores of Italy and Greece via snow covered mountain passes. From these ports unseaworthy ships overcrowded with destitute refugees who had suffered both the camps and post-liberation persecution challenged the Royal Navy in a contest in which the pen was mightier than the sword.

What is of interest to us here is that as these illegal groups approached national borders in eastern and central Europe as well as the Balkans, the participants were told to speak only Hebrew which was subsequently identified by the guides to the guards as Greek(!), since the latter were entitled to free transportation and unfettered border crossings in their capacity as repatriating forced labourers from the Third Reich. Contrary then to the actual figures of forced labour from Greece, the number of returnees to Greece and Italy formally identified as Greeks was clearly beyond any statistical reality. Paradoxically, there was no diplomatic protest from Greece to speak of, if we recall, in comparison, the pressures of the British Government on the Metaxas dictatorship to halt a similar flight of refugees to Palestine via Greece in the years immediately prior to the war.¹⁹

Hence I would suggest that in addition to the local reasons why Greek Jews

might have been willing to leave Greece after the German evacuation, no less should be taken into consideration the swelling numbers of Yiddish-speaking Jews whose exodus via Greece was efficiently organized by the Palestinian Jewish intelligence services and financed by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.⁴⁰ The former simply became part of the larger movement to Palestine. As an aside, these organizers entered Greece under cover of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) medical team which consisted of 34 Palestinian Jewish doctors, nurses, and aids.⁴¹ The team was divided into three groups, each under the banner of the Red Star of David medical symbol (to this day still not formally recognized by the Red Cross): one circulated through the Peloponnese dispensing medicines and giving treatment to the local population; a second remained in Athens to help reorganize the Jewish community and recover orphan children as well as treat medically the local population; and a third established itself at Siderokastro to treat and direct any refugees returning via Bulgaria.

This brings us to the close of our historical survey of Greek Jewry, the destruction of the age-old communities, and the exodus of most of the survivors. We can begin, I hope, to understand the politics and concerns of those who are in Greece today struggling with the twin burdens of managing the legacy of the war years and so sustaining an organized community in the face of declining numbers. It is no wonder that pundits of the past generation have prophesied the end of Greek Jewry. As an historian, it has been my task to outline the tremendous changes that have crippled the Greek Jewish community in the twentieth century. What will be tomorrow I leave to their successors to effect and to mine to chronicle. Their brief will have to include the story of Greek-Israeli diplomatic experience and joint economic adventures as well as the ramifications and pressures of the Arab-Israeli dispute on the Greek Jewish community of Athens. But we have to stop somewhere. . .

Notes

1 A list forwarded to me by Dr Michael Matsas, whom I wish to thank here for his courtesy and assistance, contains the following current figures:

Athens	3,524
Thessaloniki	1,012
Larisa	405
Volos	128
Trikala	80
Khalkis	90
Karditsa	11
Kerkyra	45
Ioannina	92
Rhodes	35
Total	5,419

I cannot account for the discrepancy of three (5,422 is correct sum).

- 2 A list of all the demographic information then available from the end of the 19th century to 1980 may be found in my essay 'Jews in War-Time Greece', *Jewish Social Studies* (1986), 46-62.
- 3 This is an intriguing story that involves local post-war Greek politics and negotiations with the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem based on mutual war-time activities between the Cairo based Greek government-in-exile and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and their respective counterparts in London.
- 4 The leadership emerged out of a strong group of Zionists who spent the war years with the Resistance and who almost single-handedly preserved contacts after the war between Greece and Israel.
- 5 The Arab-Israeli dispute has been the cause of a number of violent terrorist incidents in Athens in the past. On the other hand, I recall discussions with Greeks displaced from Egypt who supported Israel as God's rod against Arab xenophobia. In depth studies of Israeli-Greek relations have been noticeably lacking from the scholarly literature.
- 6 There is a dearth of material in western languages on Greek Jewry during the Tourkokratia. The reader of Hebrew is better serviced. For the earlier Byzantine period, the works of Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641-1204* (Athens, 1939), and of the author, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204-1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), contain the basic documents and orientation.
- 7 Sephardim were descendants of the Iberian exiles of 1492 and later Spanish-speaking migrants to the Ottoman realm. Romaniotes were descendants of the Greek-speaking citizens of Byzantium.
- 8 This topic is explored more fully in my 'Germans and Jews in Interwar Greece' (see note 32 below).
- 9 Ashkenazim refer to Yiddish-speaking Jews of northern Europe, the bulk of whom come from Poland. The migration to Greece of Central European Jews followed in the wake of the general migration mentioned previously.
- 10 Alliance Israélite Universelle, Grèce, IBI Athènes 1887/1932: letter Caimé to Bigart.
- 11 The otherwise excellent study of George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley, 1983), is occasionally misleading about the Jewish story. Joseph Nehama wrote extensive reports on the local situation which are housed in the archive of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris. A censored summary of these appears in his multi-volume *Histoire des Juifs de Salonique*. Several of his reports have been published by Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939* (Seattle, 1993), 236, 248ff.
- 12 Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, (Philadelphia, 1990), 105-12.
- 13 Cf. my *Jews of Byzantium*, 25ff.
- 14 Family tradition related to me by Dr Michael Matsas.
- 15 The outline for the following section is indebted to the late Rachel Dalven's *The Jews of Ioannina*.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 31f.
- 17 Cf. *Jews of Byzantium*, 174ff, 184, 193.
- 18 We exclude Cyprus from this discussion since its connection with Greek and Palestinian Jewish history dates from the period after the Second World War.
- 19 Cf. Rena Molho, 'The Jewish Community of Salonika and its incorporation into the Greek State 1912-19', *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXIV (1988) 391-403.
- 20 Cf. author's 'The Great Powers and the Jews: British and French Consuls on Interwar Greek Jewry', *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, II (Jerusalem, 1990) 379-86.

- 21 Cf. J. Nehama and M. Molho, *In Memoriam* (Thessaloniki, 1948) and subsequent editions in Hebrew and Greek. The curriculum dispute is outlined in excruciating detail in the Nehama files located in the AIU archives in Paris.
- 22 A preliminary outline of this tragedy is contained in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, s.v.: Greece, Salonika, Athens, Thrace, etc.
- 23 The Bulgarian story has been oft told although never in connection with the total Balkan picture or within the context of the whole eastern front. The most detailed study in English of the Bulgarian archival material is in Frederick B. Chaty, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution* (Pittsburgh, 1972). The last contribution of Thracian Jewry at Treblinka was recorded by Claude Lanzmann in his film *Schoah*.
- 24 Reported to me by Professor Christopher Browning.
- 25 His son Arie Koretz told me that it was because the Germans thought him part of the Masonic conspiracy in Greece.
- 26 The story, based on documents in Geneva, is given in my 'Another righteous gentile', *Cincinnati Jewish Review* (Spring 1994); *Tbetis*, III (1996). Cf. Jean-Claude Favez, *Une mission impossible? Le CICR, les déportations et les camps de concentration nazis* (Lausanne, 1988), 253–6.
- 27 Cf. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, s.v., Greece, Salonika, Thrace.
- 28 Judith Humphrey, 'The Jews of Crete under German occupation 1941–44 : I', *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*, V (1989), 18–26; 'The sinking of the Danae off Crete in June 1944', *ibid.*, IX (1991), 19–34.
- 29 The story is more fully examined in Michael Matsas, *The Illusion of Safety*, (New York, 1997).
- 30 The lower figure is the cautious estimate of Joseph Matsas, cf. 'The participation of the Greek Jews in the National Resistance', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, XVII (1991) 55–68. He died before publishing more detailed figures. Michael Matsas has collected considerable oral data in his *The Illusion of Safety*.
- 31 The issues of *Chronika*, the organ of KIS in Athens, often have articles on the Jews in the Resistance. Miriam Novitch collected a number of Resistance memoirs in 1959, *Le passage des barbares*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1967). See previous note.
- 32 Some of their story from the 1930s is in my 'Germans and Jews in interwar Greece', in I. K. Hassiotis, ed., *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe from the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II* (Thessaloniki, 1997), 75–86; further material will appear in my book *The Agony of Greek Jewry*.
- 33 Most of the material on these units is in Hebrew in the form of memoirs.
- 34 See E. C. W. Myers, *Greek Entanglement*, 2nd ed. (Gloucester, 1985).
- 35 Cf. author's 'Could the Dodekanisi Jews Have Been Saved?' *Newsletter of the Jewish Museum of Greece*, 26 (Winter 1989) 1–2.
- 36 See Mazower's comments, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 427.
- 37 The Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem contain the lists of Jews escaping from Greece to Turkey with their passport affiliation.
- 38 Cf. Zeev Venia Hadari, *Against All Odds Istanbul 1942–1945* (Israel, Ministry of Defence, 1992) 63f (in Hebrew). Ehud Avriel, *Open the Gates* (New York, 1975) was the first to relate the Papandreou story.
- 39 See my 'Germans and Jews in Interwar Greece' and in general Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (London, 1979).
- 40 Cf. Tad Szulc, *The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Story of the Rescue of the Jews since World War II* (New York, 1991). Though the book is popular, the author provides a sweeping overview of material that can be substantiated from archival sources; cf. Yehudah Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945* (Detroit, 1981).
- 41 The documentation for this story is in the Haganah Archives in Tel Aviv.