



THE HISTORY OF THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by

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Referee, Professor Ellis Rivkin

To my father -- a leader of Bulgarian Jewry

## DIGEST OF THESIS

The Bulgarian Jewish Community was the only European Jewish community of a country involved in the war to survive the Nazi holocaust, in its entirety (the author does not consider Thrace and Macedonia as part of Bulgaria). This thesis represents a study of the history of this community based upon analyses of first hand source material, primarily Nazi documents.

In order to offer to the reader a better understanding of the history of the Bulgarian Jews during the war, a short introduction of the general history of the community has been offered in this thesis.

Bulgaria was Germany's ally and it fully cooperated with the Germans in the execution of the various anti-Jewish measures. Professor Hilberg in "The Destruction of the European Jews" defined the Nazi destruction of the Jews to follow the pattern of a) definition b) expropriation c) concentration d) annihilation. The Jews of Bulgaria were saved from annihilation on two different occasions during the spring of 1943.

Two main theories have so far been advanced to explain the causes for the salvation of the Jews of Bulgaria. Both theories try to explain the survival of the Bulgarian Jews in terms of intervention on their behalf. The more popular theory dwells upon the contention that it was the Bulgarian people who through their vigorous protests against the expulsion of the Jews had saved the Jews. The second theory attributes the redemption

of the Jews to Czar Boris' benevolence.

The author of this thesis accepts neither of the above theories to be a substantial explanation for the survival of the Jews of Bulgaria. They may only be considered, in his opinion, as supporting reasons to the primary cause for the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews, the turn of the war tide against Germany during the winter and spring of 1942-1943, which eventually resulted in the total defeat of the Nazi State.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Jewish scholar, as well as the layman, is presently flooded with a multitude of publications dealing with the destruction inflicted upon the European Jewish communities during the Second World War. Keeping in mind that the majority of these works deals with the tragic fate of the great Jewish centers of Europe, one may justifiably ask why one would write the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community — a community rather unimportant and unknown to most present day scholars.

The importance of the Bulgarian Jewish Community, unlike that of many of the European Jewish communities, is not found in its contributions to creative Jewish life, but rather it is signified by the fact that the Bulgarian Jewish Community, the only European Jewish community in a country that was a Nazi ally, survived the war in its entirety. This is a very broad statement, and it must be qualified. When I refer to the Bulgarian Jewish Community I mean the Jews living within the geographic borders of Bulgaria at the beginning of the Second World War. I exclude from the definition of Bulgarian Jewry the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia. These two territories were conquered by Hitler and were given to Bulgaria. The Jews of these two territories, however, had not been granted

citizenship by the Bulgarian Government. As a consequence, the twelve thousand Jews residing in Thrace and Macedonia met the tragic fate of complete annihilation.

An intelligent discussion about the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War necessitates a brief history of the community up to that period. This history can be divided into four major periods:

1. The history of the community from its beginning till the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878.
2. The beginning of the modern period, from 1878 till the end of the First World War.
3. From the end of the First World War till the rise of Hitler in 1933.
4. The period of uncertainty — the time between the rise of Hitler and the outbreak of the war.

The remainder of my thesis will be concerned with the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War.

## PREFACE

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore in a scientific manner the events experienced by the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War. To the best of my knowledge, no similar work exists at present in the English language. A number of histories have been published about this subject in the Bulgarian and Hebrew language, but with one or two exceptions, their scope is narrow and fragmental.

My attempt to write the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War is a pioneer work in a twofold sense. First, due to the lack of published bibliographies on the subject, I had to correspond with every Jewish historical archive, library, and center of documents in this country as well as in Israel and Europe, in search for source materials. After amassing documents and sources, I was faced with the problem of selecting and ordering the relevant material. Second, once the documents had been made available in the form of microfilms or photostats, there remained the problem of translating them into English before they could be used and incorporated into this work.

In the course of research, I was unselfishly assisted by a number of people. First, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ellis Rivkin, Professor of Jewish History, of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion for his initial encouragement,

continuous assistance, and invaluable suggestions.

I am grateful to Mr. Herbert Zaffren, chief Librarian of the Cincinnati School of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, who facilitated my work by purchasing, on behalf of the college library, the microfilms and photostats needed for my research.

The following persons from the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem rendered valuable help: Miss Ora Alcalai, Mrs. M. Rositzkah, Mrs. B. Klibanski, and Dr. Joseph Kermish.

To Messr. Eli Baruch, Benjamin Arditti, Nathan Greenberg, Rabbi Daniel Zion, and Mrs. Shoshana Ben Yoseph, all of them past leaders of the Bulgarian Jewish Community and at present citizens of Israel, my sincere thanks for the valuable time they allotted me in the course of my research, and for the permission to quote from their publications.

The Consistorie Central des Juifs en Bulgarie, Sofia, Bulgaria and the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris made available to me all their materials pertaining to the Bulgarian Jewish Community.

Another institution, which lent me assistance in my work, was YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

And last but not least, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Elaine, my helpmate in life and partner in this work.

## I. FOUNDATIONS

### A. The History of the Community From Its Beginning Till the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878

The oldest reference to the existence of a Jewish community in the general locale of Bulgaria is found in the commentary on Judges (20:15) by Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak). The twentieth chapter describes the defeat of the Tribe of Benjamin by the other tribes of Israel. Verse fifteen states the number of Benjaminite warriors as 26,000 men, and the next verse (20:16) adds to this number another 700 "left-handed" warriors, bringing the total number to 26,700. Verse thirty-five of the same chapter states that 25,100 Benjaminites were killed in the battle. Rabbi Kimhi, in his commentary to Judges 20:15, accounts for the missing 1,600 warriors by saying that 600 of them escaped to a certain location named, in Hebrew, "Selah HaRimon." He assumed that the other 1,000 warriors had been killed in the battles previous to the major battle, or, as the Midrash relates, these 1,000 warriors journeyed to the land of "Romania" and settled there.

The above commentary would have been meaningless were it not for the fact that the Encyclopaedia Hebraica (Volume 7, p. 798) mentions that the Jews of Bulgaria, during the twelfth century, were under the influence of the Greek culture and were called "Romaniotim." Rabbi David Kimhi lived during the twelfth century, and one may safely assume that in his

commentary, "Romania" refers to the land of Bulgaria.

Mr. Benjamin Arditti, on the basis of Dr. Levi Herzfeld's historical research, comments that Jews took an active part in the Phoenician trade, and that some of these Jewish Phoenician traders settled in the different European countries before the destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Klausner comments that there has been found a Jewish-Greek inscription dating from the year 81 C.E. from the city of Panticapaeum — now Kerch — near the Cimmerian Bosphorus. Furthermore, Dr. Klausner thinks that Jews may have reached the north shore of the Black Sea as early as the days of the Hasmoneans.<sup>2</sup>

It is reasonable to say, therefore, that a Jewish community, or communities, may have been found in the Balkan lands before the destruction of the Second Temple. We have, however, no sources which would delineate the size and nature of this community.

Mr. Benjamin Arditti quotes Rabbi Solomon Rozanes, the well-known Bulgarian Jewish historian, who conclusively proved that during the fourth century of the Common Era there was a sizable Jewish community in the Balkan lands. As evidence, Rozanes quotes the Codes of Theodossius of Emperor Theodosium, the First; in this Code the Emperor commands the governors of the provinces of the Balkans to prevent further persecution of the Jews and to restore their civil and religious rights. Furthermore, the Code states that these local administrators

were to be held responsible if these persecutions continued.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 811, the Bulgarian Czar, Krum, brought to Bulgaria a large number of military prisoners, amongst whom were Jews from Salonika. Benjamin Arditti, on the basis of a Papal response issued in the year 866 (seemingly prompted by the threatening influence of these Jews) concludes that these Jewish prisoners, once liberated, engaged in proselytism in their new homeland.<sup>4</sup>

The Encyclopaedia Hebraica sheds further light on this period by citing that in the year 865, King Boris I accepted Christianity, which at the time was an odd mixture of Christian, Jewish, and pagan practices and beliefs. As proof of the religious confusion that prevailed among these new Christians we have the request on the part of these new Bulgarian Christians directed to Pope Nicolai I asking for clarification and guidance concerning the practices of their new religion. This request was formulated in one hundred and six questions, including: What is the correct ritual of the bringing of the first fruits? What animals and poultry are considered ritually pure? What should be the day of rest, Saturday or Sunday? Is it permitted to eat the flesh of animals who have not been slaughtered prior to their death? What is the burial law concerning people who have committed suicide? How soon after birth can the husband come to his wife? Is it necessary to fast during a drought? Must women cover their heads in the House of Prayer? The content of these questions, and the typically Hebrew names

of the Bulgarian princes -- David, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, Simeon -- indicate a degree of Jewish influence in Bulgaria during the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

One may safely assume that this Jewish influence presupposes the existence of a sizable and active Jewish community in Bulgaria during the period. We can also exclude the possibility that the Bulgarian confusion between Judaism and Christianity was due to an infantile stage of Christianity, for by the eighth century, Christianity was already a systematized religion. The only reason for the admixture, in my opinion, is that Jews engaged in proselytism, just as the Christian missionaries did, and different parts of the population were converted to different religions.

Additional proof of the influence of a Bulgarian Jewish community in the ninth century is advanced by Benjamin Arditti when he quotes Mr. Solomon Rozanes. Rozanes indicates that Saint Kyril, one of the most zealous Christians who worked among the Slavs, had to learn Hebrew in order to hold debates with the rabbis.<sup>6</sup>

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, large numbers of Jews from the Byzantine lands found refuge in Bulgaria and established Jewish communities in the larger cities stimulating synagogue construction and some Jewish scholarship. One of the ancient synagogues of Sofia is the "Kahal de los Gregos" (Synagogue of the Greek Jews), which dates back to this period.<sup>7</sup> In the year 1097, Rabbi Toviah Ben Eliezer of Castoria wrote

"Lekach Tov," the first known work of Jewish scholarship of the Bulgarian Jewish Community.

During the following centuries the size and the influence of the Bulgarian Jewish Community increased considerably. Arditti, quoting Professor Konstantin Jirecek, indicates that during this period one of the important members of the Church translated from the Greek into Bulgarian "Six Sermons Against the Jews," a measure devised to decrease the influence of the Jews on the Christian believers.<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain the success of these attempts to diminish the influence of the Jews during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One indication, however, that points to the failure of such measures is the fact that Czar Ivan Alexander, in the year 1346, divorced his first wife, Queen Theodora Vlashka, in order to marry a Jewess named Sarah, who, upon her conversion to Christianity, assumed the name Theodora (Glorious or Enlightened) and became Queen of Bulgaria and Greece.<sup>9</sup>

There are conflicting opinions expressed by historians concerning the state of the Jews in Bulgaria during Queen Theodora's reign. Arditti credits her with intervention on behalf of the Jews,<sup>10</sup> while Mr. Eli Baruch indicates that during her reign the Jews were expelled from Turnova, the capital city of Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia discusses the state of the Jews at the time of Queen Theodora's reign:

According to Christo J. Poppof, an ecclesiastical historian of Bulgaria, the Jews of Turnova, taking advantage of the fact that one of their number sat on the throne, and presuming on the queen's favor, set no limits to their insolence, profaning the icons, the churches, even the eucharist itself, and blaspheming all that is most sacred to Christianity; so that their evil deeds encouraged heretics and fomented popular disturbances.

By the advice of the patriarch Theodore, Ivan Alexander called a national council in 1352, which was attended by all the prelates of the country; and in the presence of the czar himself and of Queen Theodora and her children a solemn anathema was pronounced against all heretics and Jews, and their expulsion from the country was decreed. Owing to the entreaties of Theodora, however, three Jews who had been condemned to death for blasphemy were reprieved, their sentences being commuted to other punishments; but in accordance with the decree of the council, the community of Turnova, which had long inhabited a ghetto at the foot of the citadel of Trapesitza, was dispersed, and Jews never settled again in the city. According to another account they emigrated to Nicopolis on the death of Ivan Chichman.<sup>12</sup>

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Jewish community of Bulgaria was increased considerably by the influx of Jewish refugees from the Hungarian and Bavarian lands resulting from the expulsion of the Jews from Hungary by Ludwig I. Many of these Jews settled in Bulgaria and established an Ashkenazic Jewish community, which increased considerably in 1450 after the expulsion of the Jews from Bavaria by a decree from the Bavarian Herzog -- a decree that was prompted by Pope Nicolai V and Father Capistrano. The exiled, Bavarian Jews traveled southward on the Danube River and settled in the Bulgarian cities along the river.<sup>13</sup>

By the fifteenth century Bulgaria had been subjugated by

the Ottoman Turks, who proved to be tolerant to the Jewish religious minority. Under Ottoman rule the Jewish community grew and prospered. When the Jews of Spain and Portugal were forced to leave their lands, many of them settled in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, which included Bulgaria. These refugees from Spain and Portugal brought with them rich experiences in autonomous Jewish communal living. Many of the newcomers were educated in the arts and sciences. Because of their cultural and social and economic superiority, they became leaders in their new communities. Many of their customs and folkways, including the Ladino language, became dominant in the various Jewish communities.

One of the greatest Jewish scholars of all times, Joseph Karo, the compiler of the Shulchan Aruk, resided in Bulgaria for thirteen years (1523-1536), while he was writing his Beth Joseph.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many of the Jews of Bulgaria became successful, international merchants. Arditti, on the basis of Professor Konstantin Jirecek's work, concludes that during the middle of the seventeenth century the Jewish merchants of Sofia completely displaced the Dubrovnic merchants (non-Jewish merchants), who, up to that time had virtually monopolized import and export trade.<sup>14</sup> The fact that most of the traders of the other commercial centers of the Ottoman Empire were also Jews may have helped the Bulgarian Jewish merchants to prosper as they did. Further

evidence of Jewish success in commerce and financial matters is cited by Arditti, who on the basis of Professor Jack Nathan's research, concludes that the Jews from Rusjuk, a harbor city on the Danube, had acquired from the Turkish authorities the right to collect taxes for travel on the Danube.<sup>15</sup>

Generally speaking, there is ample evidence that during the first three hundred years of the Ottoman rule over Bulgaria the Bulgarian Jewish Community fared well economically. Although prosperity brought with it considerable cultural growth, the small number of Jews in Bulgaria with virtually no intellectual traditions failed to develop into a center of learning. Every Jewish community, regardless of its size, had a synogogue, but only the larger communities had a Milder, a Jewish school, which was equivalent to the Eastern European cheder.

The best known among the teachers of these schools during this period is Moses Ben Joseph Ventura, also called Ventura of Tivoli and Ventura of Jerusalem. He was educated in Jerusalem, and in the latter half of the sixteenth century, he settled in Silistria, Bulgaria. Rabbi Ventura was the author of Yemin Moshe, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruk, Yore De'ah.<sup>16</sup>

The French Revolution and the European wars following it, brought unrest to subjugated Bulgaria, a country that had been under the rule of the Turkish Empire for four hundred years. In the first part of the nineteenth century there began an active resistance by Bulgarian nationalists against the

Turkish rulers. It is difficult to ascertain what part the Jews of Bulgaria played in the Bulgarian struggle for liberation, which was greatly intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Arditti asserts that the Jews who enjoyed an autonomous community status under the Turks were reluctant to lend support to the struggle for liberation. Since this struggle was supported by the Russians, who were notorious for their harsh treatment of the Russian Jews, the Bulgarian Jews realized that conquest and liberation of Bulgaria by Russia might bring an end to the tolerant policies of the Turks.<sup>17</sup> Arditti indicates, however, that despite their reluctance to support Bulgarian independence, the Jews did foresee that the future Bulgarian victory; and they, therefore, supported the Bulgarian national movement indirectly. It should be noted, however, that Arditti brings no evidence in support of these conclusions.

Baruch, on the other hand, tries to prove that the Bulgarian Jews had patriotic feelings toward their enslaved fatherland, and he states that Bulgarians and Jews worked actively together toward this revolutionary goal.<sup>18</sup> Baruch's conclusion concerning the alleged patriotism of the Jews is not convincing, for it is difficult to see how a minority group would work toward the independence of the country, when the existing foreign ruler of the country assured it a secure economic and social position. Baruch does not

support his conclusions except for a reference to the fact that Vasil Levsky, the hero of the Bulgarian underground movement, did hide a number of times in Jewish homes while pursued by the Turkish authorities.

As mentioned above, neither Arditti nor Baruch bring evidence to support their conclusions; Arditti does, however, present a more coherent explanation of the activities of the Jewish minority during the Bulgarian War of Liberation. Additional support to the opinion that the Jews were not active during the struggle against the Turks is found in Mr. N.M. Gelber's statement that during the 1880's there existed strong anti-Semitic tendencies in Bulgaria, which could be traced to the neutral attitude of the Jews during the struggle against the Turks.<sup>20</sup>

B. The Beginning of the Modern Period-  
From 1878 Till the End of the First World War

The years commencing with the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 and terminating at the end of the First World War, for the sake of conceptualization, can be considered as one unit, despite the fact that not all events and conditions of these forty years can be synthesized into a unitary historic pattern. The outstanding characteristic of this forty year period is the relative freedom that the Bulgarian Jewish Community enjoyed, a freedom that the Bulgarian Jewish Community did not experience again for the rest of its existence, except for a short interval under the liberating Russian armies in 1944.

The Modern Period is divided into five major headings, each intrinsically related to the other:

- A. The Internal Structure of the Bulgarian Jewish Community.
- B. The Educational System of the Bulgarian Jewish Community.
- C. The Economic and Social Conditions of the Bulgarian Jewish Community.
- D. Anti-Semitism in Bulgaria.
- E. The Zionist Movement in Bulgaria.

A. THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

In 1878, the Congress of Berlin recognized the independent principality of Bulgaria. Article VII of the Treaty of Berlin required the newly-founded principality to grant equal civil and political rights to all of its subjects, including

the Jews.

According to N. M. Gelber:

The status of the Jewish and other minorities was governed by a new program, following Western European models, which was initiated by Dr. Konstantin Jirecek. The 'Provisional Law for the Cultural Administration of Christians, Muslims, and Israelites,' drawn up in 1880, included a code for the Jewish minority. Article III, Sections 40-47 recognized the synagogue as the local unit. Each synagogue was to be headed by a council of three to five members elected with the assistance of the rabbi.<sup>1</sup>

In 1902, in a democratic vote taken by the Bulgarian Jewish Community, the Central Jewish Consistory was established as the official representative of the Jews of Bulgaria. Four years passed, however, before the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Religions would grant recognition to the Consistory as the official spokesman for the Bulgarian Jewish Community.<sup>2</sup> The Consistory, from its establishment until 1919, was headed by the Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria. The Jewish community was thus under a religious authority -- an internal structure similar to the system which prevailed in the majority of the Jewish communities of Western Europe prior to the modern period. This semi-autonomous arrangement was not always an amiable one. There was a constant conflict between the Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria and the membership of the Central Consistory. The first Chief Rabbis in Bulgaria were Gabriel Almozano and Moshe Tadger. In 1886, Dr. Simon Dankowitz was appointed to this post, and he was succeeded by Dr. Moritz Gruenwald who in

turn was succeeded by Dr. Marcus Ehrenpreis.<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish community in Bulgaria had its own judicial system which was authorized by the Bulgarian Government to deal with matters pertaining to domestic relations and religious questions. The community was governed by the National Jewish Council called Sbor. The Sbor was made up of delegates who represented every single Jewish community, and its most important function was to elect the twenty-one members of the Central Consistory once every three years.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Prior to the liberation of Bulgaria the level of schooling of the small Jewish community of Bulgaria was generally low. There were Jewish schools of the traditional type in all Jewish communities, but Jewish children rarely, if ever, received any secular education.<sup>5</sup>

The Alliance Israelite Universelle established its first elementary school in Bulgaria in 1870. After 1878 the number of the Alliance schools increased considerably, and by the turn of the century there were fourteen such schools operating in Bulgaria. These schools stressed, in addition to the Bulgarian studies, the study of the French language, and it also included a very limited number of Hebrew subjects. There is no question that the study of the French language in the Alliance schools enabled some of its graduates to develop successful export-import businesses in the beginn-

ing of the present century. French was at that time the commercial language of Europe, and proficiency in the French language was a necessity for those who were involved in international trade.

As early as 1903 the Zionists' faction within the Consistory demanded that the Alliance schools devote a greater part of their curriculum to the study of Jewish subjects.<sup>6</sup> The conflict between the Zionists and the Alliance continued until 1920, when the Zionists gained control of the Consistory as well as of the individual Jewish communities. This victory of the Zionists brought about a complete reorganization of the Jewish system of education.

It is possible to sum up the development of Jewish education in Bulgaria during this forty year period in a few words. In the late nineteenth century the function of Jewish education was in the hands of the local synagogues (through the Mildar system, which is the equivalent to the Eastern European Talmud Torah). With the liberation, the Alliance system gained a predominant place. Its neglect, however, of Hebrew and Jewish subjects caused such dissatisfaction that the educational system was centralized under the Consistory, which in turn resulted in an increased emphasis on Hebrew and subjects of Jewish importance.

C. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

In 1881 the first census of independent Bulgaria was taken. At the time there were in Bulgaria 14,342 Jews out of a total population of 2,607,919. The 1887 census, after Rumelia had become a part of Bulgaria found the number of Jews to be 24,352 out of 3,154,375. Expressed in percentages, the number of Jews in Bulgaria in 1887 was 0.8 per cent of the total population.

Despite the fact that the number of Jews in Bulgaria doubled during the half century following the 1887 census, the percentage of Jews as part of the total population never exceeded 0.9 per cent.

The Jewish population of Bulgaria was concentrated primarily in a number of the larger cities. Those Jews who lived in the small villages and earned a living as "the middle man" between the farmer and the city merchants were forced out of their economic functions by the farmers' cooperatives between the years 1910-1926.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. N. M. Gelber presents an accurate description of the economic life of the Bulgarian Jewish Community:

The general economic situation of the Jews in Bulgaria resembled that of the Jewish minorities throughout central and southeastern Europe. They were pre-eminently engaged in trade, but, industrious and persistent as they were, did not dominate commerce or banking. In a few enterprises leading positions were occupied by Jews, but not in the country's infant industry. They were typical tradespeople and only in a few cases merchants of higher rank. The economic structure of Bul-

garian Jewry was, in fact, not particularly diversified. The Jews had clung to certain occupations for decades, if not for centuries. Jewish business leaders, such as appeared in Germany, Austria, or Czechoslovakia, simply did not emerge from the small Bulgarian-Jewish group. Even where a particular branch was exclusively controlled by Jews, they did not dominate the field in question as a whole. This circumstance is to be attributed to the activity of the Greeks and Armenians as well as of the Bulgarians in commerce, industry, and later also in banking, which surpassed that of the Jews. The weakness of the Jews' social and political position in Bulgaria during these decades made them no match for their Christian competitors. Emancipation had indeed opened up for them careers in the medical, legal and engineering professions, but even there Jews were not well represented.

The census of 1920 enumerated 13,444 gainfully occupied Jewish persons (11,522 men and 1,922 women), or thirty per cent of the total Jewish population. As may readily be seen from Table II, the wage-earners outnumbered the self-employed class to some extent, while in the category of commerce, on the other hand, comprising somewhat more than half of the gainfully occupied Jewish population, the self-employed merchants formed the majority (63 per cent). In this connection it may be noted that among all persons engaged in commerce the Jewish merchants formed 10.6 per cent of the self-employed class.<sup>9</sup>

In banking, the Jews played a negligible part. The only banks that employed Jews were those which operated with foreign capital. Some Jews acted as brokers for the insurance companies prior to 1918; most of them, however, were displaced by demobilized officers and Russian refugees.<sup>10</sup>

#### D. ANTI-SEMITISM IN BULGARIA

The Jews of Bulgaria took an active part in the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885, and for their devotion to their fatherland many of them were cited for heroism by Prince Alexander

Batemberg. The participation of the Jews in this war dissipated some of the anti-Jewish feelings that had become manifest when Jews remained neutral during the Bulgarian War of Liberation.

According to N.M. Gelber, additional reason for the presence of anti-Semitism in Bulgaria following the establishment of the independent state, was the hatred felt against Benjamin Disraeli, Britain's representative to the Congress of Berlin, who was held responsible for the territorial sacrifices imposed upon Bulgaria under the Berlin Treaty.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1880's there were two ritual murder accusations levelled against the Jews. Also in a number of towns, the market day was held on Saturday -- the equivalent of an economic boycott on the Jews. There was no overt anti-Semitism in Bulgaria, however, until the economic crisis after the First World War. All evidence indicates that the Bulgarian people, who had been persecuted by the Turks were, on the whole, tolerant toward the Jewish minority during the first half century of their independence. One can account for the small number of Jews who were employed by the Bulgarian Civil Service during this period by the better opportunities found in the private enterprise. In addition, the Civil Service positions were distributed according to party allegiance, and very few Bulgarian Jews were actively involved in the Bulgarian political life.

### E. THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT IN BULGARIA

The first local Zionist organizations in Bulgaria were established in 1895 by Mr. Joseph Marco Baruch in Sofia, Pazarjik, and Plovdiv. During the following year a National Zionist Organization was set up with central offices in Sofia.

Herzl's Jewish State had been translated into Bulgarian shortly after its publication in German. Herzl himself visited Bulgaria twice in 1896, and he was welcomed by the Jewish community as though he were the Messiah.<sup>12</sup>

In 1897 Herzl invited delegates from the Bulgarian Zionist Organization to participate in the First Zionist Congress. Delegates from Bulgaria continued to participate in every one of the World Zionist Congresses.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the Jews of Bulgaria became ardent Zionists. Internal struggles between the members of the different factions within the communities continued taking place until the meeting of the Second Congress of the Bulgarian Jews in 1920. At that time the Zionists claimed a majority, and new statutes were adopted that proclaimed the national and religious solidarity of all Jewish inhabitants of the country.<sup>14</sup>

The principles of the Zionist movement served as guidelines for the Bulgarian Jewish Community. Thus, the Bulgarian Jewish Community proclaimed itself an integral part of the Jewish people of the world. This meant that each Jewish community in Bulgaria had to allocate a portion of its budget to the Jewish

national organization. Despite the victory of the Zionists, the internal struggles between the different factions continued. On the extreme right were the so-called "notables" (the wealthy Jewish element), who remained anti-Zionists. Their antithesis was made up of socialists and communists, who, following the "Bund" principles, desired to abolish the religious life of the communities and substitute the Ladino language for Hebrew.

The Zionists were the only group who could present a united front, and for that reason they became the leaders of the Jewish community of Bulgaria until 1948.

C. FROM THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
TILL THE RISE OF HITLER IN 1933

Bulgaria was Germany's ally during the First World War, and the defeat of Germany was also the defeat of Bulgaria. From that time on these two countries -- these partners in defeat -- were joined in destiny. One can hardly say that this comradeship between Bulgaria and Germany was brought about by sheer idealistic convictions, but rather, it was based on a number of practical considerations which will be explored in this chapter.

The German-Bulgarian alliance during World War II seems to account for the salvation of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the war. This alliance dated back to their common fate during World War I. Had Bulgaria been on the victorious side, that is, on the British-French side during the First World War, chances are that it would have remained neutral during the Second World War, relying upon its mutual defense pacts with England and France. Hitler would have overrun neutral Bulgaria, just as he overran the other neutral countries. And once Bulgaria would have become a conquered territory, nothing could have prevented the annihilation of the Bulgarian Jews by the Nazis.

History does have its paradoxes. The defeat of Bulgaria in the First World War, a defeat highly lamented by the Bulgarian Jews who had taken an active part in this war, indirectly brought salvation to the Jews twenty-five years later.

In this chapter I intend to discuss primarily two sub-

jects: first, Bulgaria's internal position in the post First World War Europe, its relationship with Germany, and the rise of anti-Semitism in Bulgaria; second, economical, social and political changes that took place within the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the fifteen years 1918-1933.

#### 1. Bulgaria's Internal and External Conditions From 1918-1933

At the end of the First World War the European nations were divided into two camps, the victorious nations, and the defeated nations. Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria were among the defeated nations. The victors were not concerned with the fate of the victims and were not willing to help them rehabilitate their ruined economies. There was no Marshal Plan, nor the flow of private investment capital into the defeated countries. Bulgaria, having suffered territorial annexation and having undergone severe financial strain during the war, was left with a shattered economy.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Bulgaria witnessed the rise of a number of super-nationalistic organizations.<sup>1</sup> The first such organization, the Kobrat, was not anti-Semitic; indeed, it even welcomed Jews into its ranks.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1920's, the Homeland Defense (Rodna Zashtita) and the National Society for Political Renaissance (Natzionalna Zadruga Za Politichesko Vozrazhdane), under the leadership of Dr. Alexander Stalinski, were established. Both of these organizations were anti-Semitic.<sup>3</sup>

In its publications, The Homeland Defense continuously printed news about the pogroms and persecutions which were taking place against the Jews in the different parts of the world, hoping, thereby, to lay the foundations for similar treatment of the Jews in Bulgaria. Gelber says that at that time, the majority of the Bulgarian journals, realizing the goal desired by the anti-Semitic publications, protested vigorously by pointing out the loyalty of the Bulgarian Jews toward their homeland.<sup>4</sup>

The infamous Der Stuermer was already appearing in Germany; many of its cartoons were being reprinted in the Bulgarian language by the Homeland Defense and similar organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The State of Bulgaria never had enough academic facilities to train its professional and academic cadres; subsequently, many Bulgarian students were studying in German universities. Many of these students, who during their stay in Germany were exposed to the ideology of the National Socialist Party, became active supporters of the Bulgarian anti-Semitic movement upon their return to Bulgaria.

The climax of tension between the anti-Semites and the Jewish community was reached in 1932 with the Kalpakchief Trial.

Dimitri Kalpakchief was one of the leaders of the Homeland Defense in Sofia. During the fall of 1931, he and some of his strongmen began attacking Jews at random. Most of the victims were attacked while on public premises (streets, parks,

etc.). In December, 1931, the police finally apprehended the young criminals and their leader, and on the 6th of June, 1932, the trial was held. The trial was more than an ideological duel between the anti-Semites and the Jews. During the trial violent scuffles took place outside the court house between the members of the Homeland Defense and the members of the Jewish youth and Jewish veterans organizations. The court found Kalpakchiev guilty of violence, kidnapping, and attempt to kill, and sentenced him to fifteen years in jail.<sup>6</sup>

The general economic and political conditions in Bulgaria during the early 1920's made good soil for an active Communist Movement. Fearing Communism, extreme right elements toppled the democratic government in 1924 and put an end to democracy in Bulgaria for the following four years. There is no evidence that the dictatorial government was anti-Semitic; the atmosphere generated by the ruling elements, however, was not favorable to socialistic ideals or movements, and for that reason the Zionist socialists, "Poalei Zion," suffered a temporary setback in their attempts to unite all of the Bulgarian Zionists under the Poalei Zion leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Democratic life in Bulgaria was restored in 1927, but not for long. In 1934, seven years later, another coup d' etat took place, and this was the end of true democracy for Bulgaria.

## 2. THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY FROM 1918-1933

Bulgaria always was, and still is, primarily an agricultural country. Industry has always been scarce and of little importance to its national economy. Bulgaria, since the Industrial Revolution, received its industrial goods from other European countries, and it exported agricultural products in exchange. When, therefore, European agriculture as early as 1922 sank into economic depression Bulgaria was especially hard hit by the depression.

The restriction on foreign currency and foreign trade, brought about by the defeat in the war and the depression that ensued after the war, jeopardized the economic solvency of the Bulgarian Jews. Many Jews during the 1920's, primarily the petty merchants, were thrown into the ranks of the working class. This displacement of the Jewish merchants was also accelerated by the establishment of a large number of purchasing and marketing cooperatives among the Bulgarian farmers, which, by eliminating the need for the middle-man, deprived many Jews of their livelihood. N. M. Gelber indicates in his statistical tables that between the census of 1920 and that of 1926 the number of self-employed Jews decreased from 49.3 per cent to 41.2 per cent.<sup>8</sup> This sixteen per cent decrease of self-employed Jews in the short span of six years indicates a severe economic crisis.

Astruk Caleb, who wrote the chapters pertaining to the demographic and economic conditions of the Jews of Bulgaria in Eli Baruch's book, sums up the situation during this period with two

important observations: first, the percentage of Bulgarian Jews in relation to the total population was decreasing; and second, the Jews each year were becoming poorer and poorer.<sup>9</sup> The consequence was stepped-up emigration. As Gelber puts it, "the economic crisis, accompanied by manifest tendencies to oust Jews from economic positions, prompted them (the Jews) to leave the country."<sup>10</sup>

The deterioration of the Bulgarian economy, which brought with it economic sanctions against the Jews, coupled with the rapid development of the cooperative movement in Bulgaria, spurred the Jews to pool their available economic resources into the newly-organized Jewish cooperative banks.<sup>11</sup>

Eli Baruch, who in 1931 wrote a thesis on the Jewish cooperative banks, states that the capital of the largest Jewish bank, Bank Geula of Sofia, was in that year in excess of 100,000,000 leva.<sup>12</sup> Bank Geula served as the central clearing house for all the other Jewish banks.

Gelber estimates that the total capital of all the Jewish banks in Bulgaria in 1931 to have been 130,000,000 leva (which at the prevailing rate of exchange was roughly \$900,000).<sup>13</sup>

The Jewish banks made an important contribution toward the economic improvement of the Bulgarian Jewish Community at a time when the commercial banks were either bankrupt or unable to extend credit. Despite the desire of the Jewish cooperative banks to expand their capital and activities, the changing political conditions in 1934 greatly curtailed their plan and brought about a

decline in the resources of the Jewish cooperative banks.

The deteriorating economy of Bulgaria, and the difficulties that this deterioration brought upon the economic status of the Jews, did not have its immediate effects on the organization and morale of the Jewish community. In 1920 the community became solidified with the Zionists occupying the key positions in the Consistory, as well as in the local communities.

The reorganized Jewish schools became the pride of the community. Hebrew became a spoken language among the pupils. Jewish vocational schools were opened to provide the students who were inclined toward the vocations with means of earning a livelihood.<sup>14</sup>

The period between the end of the First World War and the 1934 Revolution in Bulgaria was a period of great internal activity within the Bulgarian Jewish Community. Most Zionist youth organizations (HaShomer HaTzair, Maccabi, HaTzophe) were established and prospered during the 1920's.<sup>15</sup> A number of Jewish newspapers and publications of Jewish interest were printed during this period.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the assimilation of the Bulgarian Jewry, Gelber says, "the trend toward assimilation, so characteristic of large sections of European Jewry, was virtually non-existent in Bulgaria."<sup>17</sup>

To summarize: Shortly after the First World War the Bulgarian economy fell into a depression which affected the economic position of the Jews. The Jews of Bulgaria were not able to

preserve their economic status. The Jewish banks served as a temporary "shot in the arm" to help the Jewish merchants weather the storm. Despite the complications felt in their economic status during these years, or perhaps because of them, the Bulgarian Jewish Community made great progress toward its solidification, primarily with respect to its educational, political, and cultural aspects.

D. The Period of Uncertainty-  
From the Rise of Hitler till the Outbreak of the War

A brief resume of events preceding 1933 will be helpful for understanding the impact of Hitler's success on Bulgaria. The defeat of Bulgaria in the First World War had given rise to extreme elements at both poles of the political spectrum. The communists of Bulgaria, greatly encouraged by the successful revolution in Russia, were hoping for a similar success in Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> The nationalist elements, for their part, realizing the possibility of a communist revolution in Bulgaria, toppled the democratic government in 1924. Economic depression and political uncertainty were rarely absent in the 1920's.

Bulgaria, as yet, had no leader in the international arena to follow, nor a power to identify with, in its nationalistic aspirations. The National Socialist Party of Germany was still an object of mockery, while Mussolini's success in Italy called for a "wait and see" attitude.

Hitler's rise to power on March 23, 1933 gave Bulgaria the needed impetus and unleashed its latent nationalist Fascist

forces.

According to Baruch, King Boris had never been overfond of the constitutional monarchal democracy. He, therefore, could not be expected to offer resistance to the collapse of parliamentary government. On the 19th of May, 1934, a little over a year after Hitler's ascendancy to power, the coalition government of Bulgaria, which was made up of three political parties, was overthrown.<sup>2</sup>

There were no battles in the streets, nor mass executions of traitors. The Military Council of Bulgaria became the ruling power of the state. The head of this council was the king, Czar Boris III. The new regime declared all political parties illegal and enacted legislation which curtailed the democratic freedoms of the people.

The new regime was at first not anti-Semitic. This is evident from the fact that although all Bulgarian political parties were disbanded, the Zionist Socialist Poalei Zion was allowed to continue its political activities, after petition was served to the government to the effect that Poalei Zion was an apolitical organization.<sup>3</sup> Had the government wished to suppress Jewish life in Bulgaria, it could have declared the Poalei Zion, which by then had become the ruling political party in Bulgarian Jewish life, to be an illegal party.

One, however, may present a different explanation for this tolerance. Any student of the history of the German Jewish Community under the Third Reich, but prior to 1939, knows that

the Nazi government encouraged the emigration of the Jews from Germany. The preservation of the Jewish political life in Germany, and the maintenance of branches of the Jewish Agency in the large German cities, were a necessity for the actual organization of Jewish emigration. Thus, the Germans permitted the existence of the Zionist Organization for their own purpose.

The Bulgarian Communists, who had been under Turkish rule for 500 years, and whose liberation was still remembered by many of the older citizens, had always understood the deep sentiment and yearning that the Jews of Bulgaria had for Palestine. And this is probably one of the reasons that the Jews of Bulgaria were the most Zionist inspired Jewish community in Europe. It is possible that the Czar and his Junta saw no advantage whatsoever in the prohibition of the Zionist movement, while on the other hand, they saw in its existence some possible advantages for the future should a Jewish emigration from Bulgaria take place en masse.

An additional word of explanation is needed so as to understand the Bulgarian view of Zionistic aspirations. Bulgaria is a nation composed of many minorities -- Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Gypsies, Jews -- minorities which had been living in Bulgaria for many generations. Each of these groups had preserved its folk customs and traditions. While many Western European nations, much more homogeneous demographically, would have considered active Zionism as an expression of disloyalty on the part of the Jews toward his country, in heterogeneous Bulgaria, Zionism was

considered a natural manifestation of the feelings of the Jews for their ancient homeland.

The fact, however, that the new government and the Czar treated the Jews tolerantly did not mean that all was well with the Jews during this period. The spread of anti-Semitic propagan- da, which had begun in the 1920's, intensified after Hitler's ascendancy in Germany. As early as March 31, 1933 (two weeks after Hitler's victory) the biweekly publication Prelom, in its first issue, demanded the expulsion of the Jews from Bulgaria.<sup>4</sup> Another anti-Semitic publication, Attack, demanded that the Jews of Bulgaria surrender their economic power by resigning from their key positions in industry and banking.<sup>5</sup> Since at that time there were very few Jews in key industrial positions, and almost none in the financial world, it appears that the demands expressed in Attack were borrowed verbatim from some anti-Semitic German publication.<sup>1</sup>

Following the 1934 coup d'etat complete censorship was imposed on the communication media, and the newly-established Department for National Propaganda was used by the government as an instrument for brainwashing the population.<sup>6</sup>

According to Baruch, the Department of National Propaganda was directly responsible for the eruption of the Bulgarian chauvinistic spirit. Radio programs broadcasting Fascist ideology and anti-Semitic ideas helped achieve the goal of the new govern- ment.<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between the Nazi Government of Germany and

the new government of Bulgaria had more in common than ideological similarities. According to statistics presented by Arditti, 52.60 per cent of Bulgaria's total exports in 1935 went to Germany, whereas in 1926 only 19.49 per cent of Bulgaria's total exports had been shipped to Germany. This constituted an increase of over 150 per cent in less than ten years.<sup>8</sup>

During the six years, 1934-1940, the Bulgarian Jewish Community concentrated all its resources on achieving two goals:

1. The establishment of a united Jewish community
2. The mobilization of all available means to dissipate the increasing anti-Semitic atmosphere among the Bulgarian people

The leaders of the Bulgarian Jewish Community were aware of the difficult times that awaited the Jewish community. The uncertain future called for a united front, free from internal strife. The conflict in the Jewish community was twofold: among the Zionists groups themselves, and between the Zionists and the non-Zionists. In 1935 David Ben Gurion and Zeev Zabotinsky signed an agreement calling for cooperation between the two opposed Zionist factions in the face of the Nazi danger in Europe. The Ben Gurion-Zabotinsky Agreement, which later was rescinded, was not accepted by the Bulgarian Poalei Zion.<sup>9</sup>

Poalei Zion, however, finally realized the gravity of the situation, and on May 22, 1938, the Poalei Zion Newspaper called for internal armistice because of the external danger.<sup>10</sup> The practical results of this proposal were that Poalei Zion tried to include in the Jewish community, councils, and in the Con-

sistory, representatives of the opposition parties (the non-Zionists and the revisionists), even though the votes of these representatives were not needed since Poalei Zion had a majority without them.<sup>11</sup>

As early as 1934 the Bulgarian Jewish Community, through its elected representatives, appealed to the government to put an end to the increasing anti-Semitic propaganda. The government consented to these appeals, and, for a time, intervened in the activities of the organizations, which under the mask of nationalism, were spreading anti-Jewish propaganda among the population. The government's intervention was short-lived and ineffective.

The most important attempt to fight the increasing anti-Semitic propaganda and feelings among the Bulgarian population was undertaken by Buko Piti, a Jewish journalist, who in 1935 and 1936 interviewed fifty-seven of the leading Christian Bulgarians, asking them the following questions: "What is your opinion about the race theory? How do you explain the occurrence of anti-Semitism? What is your opinion about the Jews in general, and the Bulgarian Jewish Community in particular?" The personalities interviewed by Piti included previous prime ministers, former secretaries of government departments, generals of the army, and leading representatives from the arts and sciences. All those interviewed expressed themselves clearly and unequivocally against anti-Semitism. In 1937 Piti published the results of his interviews under the title, Bulgarian Public Opinion About the Race Theory and Anti-Semitism.<sup>12</sup> Piti's book was published

at a proper time; it could not, however, influence the official position of the government, which was becoming completely dependent upon Nazi Germany economically.<sup>13</sup>

On the 19th of July, 1936, the Ratnik Movement was founded by nine prominent anti-Semites, including Peter Gabrovski (who became the Secretary of the Interior during the war), Alexander Belev (who in 1942 was appointed as the head of the newly established Commissariat for Jewish Affairs), Kalitzin (who became Belev's assistant in the Commissariat) and others.

Ratnik was anti-Semitic, and its leaders were responsible for the wording of the anti-Semitic legislation passed by the government in 1940.

Another anti-Semitic movement, Branik, was founded early in 1940. It was sponsored by the government and its ultimate purpose was to indoctrinate the Bulgarian youth into serving their country faithfully. Branik was financially supported by the government, and shortly after its establishment, it became an effective tool for the Bulgarian Fascist Government.<sup>15</sup>

## II. THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF BULGARIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

### A. Bulgaria's Role in the Second World War

The study of the Nazi holocaust demonstrates that the fate of the Jews in a particular country at war was directly related to the war enthusiasm in that country. To know and understand the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the war, therefore, necessitates a short discussion of Bulgaria's participation in this war.

Bulgaria is a Slavic country; the ethnic origin of its population is closer to that of the Russians than to that of any other people. In addition to this ethnic relation, the Bulgarian people had for the past two generations been grateful to the Russians for liberating them from the Turks in 1878. Three factors, however, alienated the Bulgarian people from their Russian ethnic brothers and persuaded Bulgaria to join the Tripartite Pact. First, the Russian Revolution put an end to its monarchical system, while Bulgaria, despite the dissatisfaction of a considerable part of its population, remained a monarchy. The monarchical family was a cross between the German-English house, on one side, and the Italian monarchical family on the other. Second, Bulgaria, which had territorial grievances against its neighbors, primarily Roumania and Greece, for the annexations imposed upon it during the Balkan War and World War I, was hopeful to retrieve its losses, in the event that Germany conquered the Balkans. And third, Bulgaria's economy had become

totally dependent upon Germany, during the late 1930's.

In February, 1939, a special envoy of Hitler visited Czar Boris with the purpose of persuading him to join the Tripartite Pact. This visit was partially successful. Despite the fact that Bulgaria did not join the pact until the 1st of March, 1941, a pro-German cabinet was established in Bulgaria on the 23rd of October, 1939. It seems, however, that the Prime Minister of this pro-German cabinet, Giorgi Kioslivanov, was not considered loyal enough by the Germans and their Bulgarian supporters; and on the 15th of February, 1940, a new cabinet was established with Professor Filov as Prime Minister. Gabrovski, who was the leader of the Ratnik movement, was appointed Minister of Interior.<sup>1</sup>

Bulgaria was now ready to play the game, but not until she received her reward. On the 9th of September, 1940, Bulgaria was given Dobrudja, which had been under Roumanian rule since its annexation from Bulgaria at the end of World War I. It was now Bulgaria's "turn to deliver." On February 8th, 1941, a secret agreement was made between Field Marshal List and the Bulgarian General Staff. According to this agreement, Bulgaria was to obtain Greek territory to the south, and access to the Aegean Sea, in return for which Bulgaria would permit the passage of German armies through Bulgarian territory. On the night of February 28, 1941, German army units crossed the Danube into Bulgaria, which on the next day, March 1st, became a member of the Tripartite Pact.<sup>2</sup> As reward for its cooperation, Bulgaria acquired in April, 1941, Macedonia from Yugoslavia and Thrace from Greece.

Bulgaria was and still is one of the least significant countries in Europe, and yet during the Second World War, Bulgaria played its cards so well, that despite its insignificance, it can be said that it was treated by Germany as if it were an important ally which Germany needed for its war plans.

Bulgaria, unlike Roumania, never sent troops to fight the allied forces. Despite its geographic proximity to the Eastern Front, not one Bulgarian soldier fought against the Russian armies. Furthermore, Bulgaria, even though a member of the Tripartite Pact since February, 1941, never declared war against Russia. It is possible that Czar Boris, who was a master politician and a very shrewd person, had convinced the Germans that it might have been demoralizing for the people of Bulgaria if they had to fight their ethnic brothers, the Russians.

Another anomaly was the continuation in Bulgaria both prior to and throughout the war, of its parliamentary system. As mentioned in the previous chapter, constitutional democracy ceased to exist in Bulgaria with the coup d'etat of 1934. Subsequently, Bulgaria cultivated its own form of parliamentary government. And throughout the late 1930's and during the war years, the parliament continued to function as the legislative arm of the state. This parliament was no mere rubber stamp for the power behind the government; it contained an opposition, which often fought, however unsuccessfully, against the passing of certain laws. It is true that such political parties as the Social Democrats and the Communists were outlawed; other parties,

however, such as the Democratic Party, were legal and constituted the opposition in Parliament. The cabinet posts, of course, were divided among the members of the pro-German party, the majority party.

#### B. The Anti-Jewish Laws of Bulgaria

The first anti-Jewish laws in Bulgaria passed their first reading by the Sobranje on the 7th of October, 1940, five months before Bulgaria joined the Tripartite Pact; a month later, however, Dobrudja was delivered over to Bulgaria. The final reading of the law took place on the 24th of December, 1940. During the three months which elapsed between the first reading of anti-Jewish laws and their final reading, the Bulgarian Jewish Community, lead by the Consistory, did its best to prevent the final passing of the law. A committee was established to seek public support against the law, while another committee was appointed to gather, in a scientific manner, materials concerning the Jews and their contributions to society, and to prepare arguments proving the inequity of the law.<sup>1</sup>

The Bulgarian Jews were supported by a number of prominent, secular and religious non-Jewish organizations, such as the Literary Guild of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Bar Association, the Bulgarian Medical Association, the Greek Orthodox Church, particularly Metropolitans Stephan from Sofia, Kyril from Plavdiv, Sofroni from Vratza, Neofit from Viddin, and many other private citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Additional opposition to the law came from the Workers Party and their members in the Sobranje. On the other hand, the veterans' organizations were on the whole very enthusiastic about the law and saw in it a measure of protection for the state.<sup>3</sup> Despite the opposition, the law was passed and enacted on January 21, 1941, and was published in the Bulgarian official Gazette, number 16, on January 23, 1941.

These anti-Jewish laws formed part of the broader "Law for the Protection of the Nation." The first section of this law deals with secret and subversive organizations, the second section with persons of Jewish descent, and the third section with anti-national activities. The fourth and final section contains mostly penal provisions.

The translation of Section 2 of the law and of article 47 of Section 4 of the law is rendered in appendix A of this thesis.

### C. The Implementation of the Anti-Jewish Laws

Since the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was not established until September, 1942, the Department of Interior was the government agency responsible for the implementation of the law in the interim. The person in charge of the Jewish division in the Ministry of the Interior was Belev, who eventually became the Jewish Commissar.

The task imposed upon the Jews was overwhelming: there were forms to be filled, cards to be issued, property declarations to be made, birth certificates to be sent for, and all in a limited number of weeks. The original deadline for all

registration was April 17, 1941. The government, realizing the impossibility of the task, extended this deadline a month till the 17th of May, 1941.

The most difficult part of the law was Chapter V, article 25, which imposed the "numerus clausus" upon the Jews. The Jews were only one per cent of the total population; hence the basic "numerus clausus" was also one per cent. The merchants and the professionals among the Jews exceeded one per cent of the memberships of their profession, especially in Sofia. This would have meant that a large number of the Jewish merchants and professionals would become unemployed.

Another restriction forbade Jews to be employed in the fields of; the sale of pharmaceuticals and their preparation,<sup>1</sup> the movies and theater business, the publishing business, the production and distribution of musical records and movie films, the ownership of houses of entertainment, and the acting as customs agents.<sup>1</sup>

Additional restrictions against the Jews were passed during the months of June and July, 1941. First, every Jewish family had to surrender its radio to the post office for storage. It is worthwhile to indicate at this point that in Bulgaria, which was at the time one of the most backward European nations, the possession of a radio was a luxury, which only the well-to-do could afford. During the same period, a nine o'clock curfew was imposed by Gabrovski, the Minister of the Interior, without the Sobranje's legislative action.<sup>2</sup>

On June 13, 1941, the Sobranje passed an additional tax law against the Jews. Every Jew, regardless of his age or citizenship, residing in Bulgaria, had to fill a declaration of his total assets, real or moveable, within a month. The property declared was subject to twenty per cent tax on its value. The declaration of one's total assets had to include assets one possessed in Bulgaria, as well as abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The officials charged with the execution of the new law were to make the evaluation of the property listed. Since the estimates given by these officials were very high, Jews were compelled to offer heavy bribes to bring them down to realistic levels.<sup>4</sup>

The new law brought to the Treasury of the Bulgarian Government close to one and a half billion leva, and economic ruin to Bulgarian Jews.

Ironically, at the very moment that the Jews in Bulgaria were being forced to close their businesses, Bulgarian citizens of Jewish origin, residing in countries occupied by Germany were receiving protection from the Bulgarian Legation. Thus, Menachem Abraham Confino was accorded protection by the Royal Legation of Bulgaria in Paris:

In view of the anti-Jewish legislation issued by the (occupational) authorities (in France) the Bulgarian citizens of Jewish origin enjoy the same protection as the Bulgarian citizens (residing in France) of Aryan origin.

Therefore, the Royal Legation issues upon request this letter to Mr. Menachem Abraham Confino, a Bulgarian citizen who resides in Paris, bearer of Bulgarian passport

number 132/1940.

This protection document issued in Paris, January 14, 1941.

Signed: Charge de Affairs of Legation, Mr. Contier<sup>5</sup>

The following document of September 24, 1942 testifies to the termination of the privileged status of the Bulgarian Jews in France:

From: the German Embassy in Paris  
To: Gestapo  
Subject: Jews who are citizens of Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary living in occupied France

\*\*\*  
The Roumanian Government consented that its Jewish subjects in France be treated as all other French Jews (i.e., can be sent to the East with the rest of the French Jews). Bulgaria also agrees to similar treatment of its subjects, however, demands a detailed list of all the candidates for deportation of its Jewish subjects who live in France.

Signed: Dr. Zeitschel<sup>6</sup>

The interventions of the Bulgarian Legation on behalf of the Bulgarian Jews in France can be explained as follows.

1. From an economic point of view, the Bulgarian Legation was not willing to let the Germans capitalize from the property of the Bulgarian Jews in France, and when the Jewish businesses in France were placed under non-Jewish administrators (the Germans prepared a pool of trained personnell for this particular purpose), the Bulgarian Legation insisted that the businesses of the Bulgarian Jews in France be placed under Bulgarian (non-Jewish, of course) administrators, rather than the administrators appointed

by the Germans.<sup>7</sup>

Additional evidence that economic factors were the primary motives behind the Legation's protection of the Bulgarian Jews in France is found in a document from the German authorities instructing the General Commissioner for the Jewish question in France. The document reads:

...  
In the case of Bulgaria and other states..., their legations will protect their Jews and their businesses in France...The total monies resulting from the sale, liquidation or operation of Jewish businesses must be deposited in the consulate's bank account.

2. Besides the economic reason, there was also the factor of Bulgaria's reluctance to abandon its sovereignty by surrendering its subjects. It was only when other countries consented to have their Jews treated as French Jews that Bulgaria altered her policy.

#### D. Further Anti-Jewish Decrees in Bulgaria and The Desire for a Continental Solution to the Jewish Problem

The persecution of Jews has had a long tradition in Christian Europe. And yet, the persecution during the Second World War had no antecedents. It was not a mere pogrom or spontaneous short-lived riot brought about by accusations of ritual murder. Because of their lack of precedent, the persecutors themselves were confused at first; they had no past experience on which to draw. This confusion was evident also to Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Popov, visited Foreign

Minister Ribbentrop in Berlin on November 26, 1941. Popov told Ribbentrop, among other things, that the Bulgarian Government was encountering difficulties in the implementation of its anti-Jewish laws. Many of the Jews living in Bulgaria were foreign Jews, Hungarian, Roumanian, Spanish and others. These countries demanded for their citizens the same rights and treatment accorded non-Jewish citizens residing in Bulgaria. Thus, the solution to the Jewish problem, Popov suggested, had to be worked out together, in a uniform manner, by all European nations. Ribbentrop answered Popov that it was Hitler's decision, that at the end of the war all Jews would have to leave Europe; the Bulgarian Government, therefore, should not pay much attention to the protests of nations complaining of the treatment of their citizens of the Jewish faith in Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup>

A number of months before Popov's discussion with Ribbentrop concerning the need for a joint solution to the Jewish problem, the Germans themselves had become aware of the need for such action. On the 29th of November, 1941, the Lieutenant General of the S.S. Heydrich wrote the following letter to Understate Secretary Martin Luther:

Dear Party Comrade Luther:

On July 31, 1941 the Fuehrer assigned upon me, with the cooperation of other interested agencies, to do all the necessary organizational and economical preparations for the broad solution of the Jewish problem in Europe....

I am inviting you to participate at a meeting to take place on the 9th of December, 1941, at twelve o'clock noon at the International Criminal Police Offices at Wannsee

number 56-58.

Similar letters were sent to a number of other high S.S. officers and foreign ministry officials.<sup>2</sup>

Because of technical difficulties, the intended meeting did not take place. This is clear from Heydrich's letter of January 8, 1942, for in this self-same letter Heydrich calls for the meeting with the same participants for the 20th of January, 1942 at the same place.<sup>3</sup>

The conference did take place on this date and became known as the famous Wannsee Conference. The Wannsee Conference decided what the final solution for the Jewish problem would be, and launched the implementation of this final solution. The credit for the final solution, however, must not be given to the Wannsee Conference, since it had already been decided by the Feuhrer. The conference only had to decide the ways and means of achieving its realization.<sup>4</sup>

According to William Shirer, no written copy of the final solution orders has ever been found. It was probably given verbally to Goering, Himmler, and Heydrich.<sup>5</sup>

The only part of the discussion of the Wannsee Conference that relates directly to Bulgaria is a comment by Luther that the Foreign Ministry expected certain difficulties during the execution of the final solution in the North European countries; "on the other hand, the ministry could not foresee great difficulties for Southwest and Eastern Europe."<sup>6</sup> Bulgaria is in Southwest Europe, and was one of the countries where the Foreign

Ministry, according to Luther, foresaw no difficulties.

To the Wannsee Conference there was enclosed as an appendix, an eight point plan for action written by Luther and Franz Rademacher, the Amtsleiter of Department Deutchland III (Inland III). Point number five of the appended proposal states:

A declaration to be sent by us to the Roumanian, Slovakian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian governments that we are prepared to "evacuate" to the East the Jews living in these countries.<sup>7</sup>

The Wannsee Conference was for many Jewish communities the beginning of the end. It is true that the systematic extermination of Jews in Europe began with the German invasion of Russia six months before the Wannsee Conference. The executors of this extermination, the Einsatzgruppen, however, were small mobile units, who despite their efficiency, could not solve the Jewish problem of the entire continent. For that task a more efficient machinery was needed, and the Wannsee Conference initiated the construction of this machinery.

The decisions reached at the Wannsee Conference no doubt were communicated by either Luther (via the German Foreign Ministry personnel in the different German embassies of the European capitals) or Heydrich (via the S.S. police attachés in the embassies) to the governments mentioned in the Luther-Rademacher plan.

A month after the Wannsee Conference on the 17th of February, 1942, the Bulgarian Sobranje legislated a new anti-Jewish law. Paragraph seven of this law ruled, "that it is forbidden for people of Jewish origin to own real property, with the excep-

tion of the property needed for personal shelter and employment."

All property which the Jews could no longer own was confiscated by the state for the state, and compensations were to be given to the Jewish owners in the form of twenty year, three per cent government bonds, for the total value of the property confiscated. The value of the confiscated property was determined on the basis of the declaration by Jews in the total assets' statement of 1941.<sup>8</sup> The government refused to acknowledge the fact that inflation, meanwhile, had rocketed prices by about 250 per cent. Since the bonds were never issued to the owners of the confiscated property anyhow, the failure to compensate for inflation made no difference whatsoever.

At the time when the Wannsee Conference laid down the decision as the ultimate fate of the eleven million Jews of Europe, Hitler's armies in the East were still riding high, even though they had not conquered their targets, Stalingrad and Moscow. Hitler's victory seemed certain, and yet the Bulgarian Government, unlike the Roumanian Government, was not ready to implement the Wannsee Conference decisions.

Two reasons brought about that delay, a delay which ultimately resulted in the salvation of the Jews of old Bulgaria: First, Bulgaria was not fighting a war; there was no electrifying tension or war paralysis in the air. There were no military justifications for the disposal of the Jews, as in Roumania where over 100,000 of the Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia were in the way of the Roumanian-German armies. On October 17, 1941,

the German Legation in Roumania, reported:

According to information received today from General-direktor Lecca 110,000 Jews are being evacuated from Bukovina and Bessarabia into the forests of the Big River area. So far as he (Lecca) could learn, this "Aktion" is based upon an order issued by Marshal Antonescu. The purpose of the action is the liquidation of these Jews.<sup>9</sup>

Second, Bulgaria had no reason to dispose of its Jews; their property was being steadily confiscated by the state. What other benefits could result from execution? But Bulgaria, even if there would have been the need for the disposal of its Jews, could not have done the job alone. Mass execution takes executors, as well as many other resources, and the majority of the Bulgarian people would not have cooperated in such a venture. The Jews could have been disposed only if there had been a strong demand on the part of the masses. But in 1941 there was very little of this type of pressure. Thus, disposal of the Bulgarian Jews in 1942 would have been possible only by the exportation or evacuation of the Bulgarian Jews to Germany. This, the rulers of the country, the Nazi Bulgarians, would have considered as a goal which was possible to attain, if public reaction could have been eliminated. Fortunately for the Bulgarian Jewish Community, the "relocation" of the Bulgarian Jews by the Germans in 1942 was impossible, as is evident from the following document sent by Luther on the 19th of June, 1942 to the German Legation in Sofia:

If eventually (during negotiations between the Bul-

garian Government and the German Gestapo in Sofia] it is asked [by the Bulgarians] whether Germany is willing to accept the [Bulgarian] Jews for their evacuation to the East, answer in the affirmative. Concerning the time of evacuation, the answer should be evasive and accompanied with the explanation that the present evacuation of the Jews from Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and Roumania have already reserved all our transportation facilities to such an extent that it is most likely that the acceptance of the Bulgarian Jews [by the German Government] would be impossible this year.

...What would be the sum that the Bulgarian Government would have to pay [per head for the removal of the Jews] is not clear yet.

Please bring up the problem of compensation without agreeing upon a specific sum [as yet].

Signed: Luther<sup>10</sup>

The German destruction machinery in mid-1942 was not functioning as yet at its optimal capacity. The main bottleneck was the scarcity of transportation facilities which were employed around the clock supplying war materials to the Russian front. The Germans, however, were willing, and would have been able, after 1942, to relieve Bulgaria of its Jews. The international picture had changed radically, however, during the six to eight months following mid-1942. Thus, despite the fact that in the beginning of 1943 Germany was ready and able to take the Bulgarian Jews, their plans did not materialize, for by 1943 the Bulgarians could see the "writing on the wall," and their opportunistic foresight helped them discern which way the "wind was blowing."

On the 21st of July, 1942, the German Legation in Sofia sent the following letter to Luther in Berlin:

On the occasion of the birthday of the heir of the throne [Prince Simeon] the President of the Central Jewish Consistory

in Bulgaria, Joseph Geuron, sent a congratulatory telegram to the Czar who answered the telegram with the following text as published in the Consistory Bulletin of the 7th of July, 1942:

To: Joseph Geuron, the President of the Central Consistory of the Jews in Bulgaria

I sincerely thank you and the Bulgarian Jewry for the regards and good wishes which you have expressed upon the occasion of the heir's birthday.

Signed: the Czar<sup>11</sup>

The above reply on the part of the King, printed in the Consistory Bulletin, reached the hands of Beckerle, the German Minister in Sofia, and its text was forwarded to Berlin.

I don't know how to interpret the public expression of thanks toward the Jewish community on the part of the Czar. It may be seen as a desire on the part of the head of state publicly to manifest the fact, especially for the benefit of the anti-Semites in the government, that he, the King, still considered the Jews as Bulgarian citizens. Whatever the spirit of the Czar's message was to express, it had no immediate effect upon the Government's official policy against the Jews, as we see from the additional anti-Jewish laws published during the summer of 1942. These laws were confirmed by the cabinet on the 26th of August, 1942 and printed in the Official Gazette on the 29th of the same month. The new decrees, which were to supplement the original anti-Jewish decrees of January, 1941, were much more severe than their antecedents.

The translated rendition of the new anti-Jewish laws can be found in Appendix B of this thesis.

Article one of the new law created a Commissariat for Jewish Affairs -- an independent agency to deal with the Jewish affairs.

Article four decreed that there was to be no right of appeal concerning the decisions of the commissioner.

Article twenty-nine concerns the Jewish community of Sofia (50 per cent of the Jewish population of Bulgaria), and decreed their deportation from Sofia to the provinces or outside the country, i.e. to the Eastern territories. Article twenty-nine was the first hint given to the Bulgarian Jews, or to part of them, that deportation out of Bulgaria awaited them.

The Bulgarian Government and the German authorities were getting ready for the final solution of the Bulgarian Jewish Community.

On September 24, 1942, less than a month after the new decree became effective, Undersecretary Luther sent the following letter to Baron Von Ernst Weizsaecker, the State Secretary of the German Foreign Office:

The Foreign Minister [Ribbentrop] ordered me by telephone today to hasten, as much as it is possible, the evacuation of the Jews from the different European countries. In reality, the Jews everywhere [in Europe] are becoming active against us, and we must consider them guilty [responsible] of sabotage [against us].

After the minister heard my report as to the evacuation measures against the Jews of Slovakia, Roumania, and the occupied territories, the minister [Ribbentrop] issued an order that negotiations should be established with the governments of Bulgaria, Hungary, and Denmark in order to implement the plans for the evacuation of the Jews of these countries immediately.

Signed: Luther<sup>12</sup>

A clear cut change in the German policy toward the Bulgarian Jews took place with this new order from Ribbentrop to Luther. Exactly a month prior to Luther's letter, the German Government had not as yet been prepared to act upon the Jewish problem in Bulgaria. This is evident from the following letter sent from Ribbentrop, via Feldmark, to Luther on the 25th of August, 1942:

4. With regard to Bulgaria [the Jewish community of Bulgaria], at present we should not go further than the concluded agreement of July 6 and 7, 1942.<sup>13</sup>

The agreement concluded on July 6th and 7th between the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Shishmanov, and Beckerle had taken place in Sofia. The Bulgarian Government agreed that all Jews of Bulgarian citizenship living outside of Bulgaria in the German sphere of influence should no longer enjoy protection from the Bulgarian Legations in the countries of their residency. As for the Jews in Bulgaria proper, the eventual solution of the problem was agreed upon in principle without any details being discussed with respect to implementation.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, a decisive change had taken place between the end of August and the end of September, 1942. The Germans were now willing and able to take care of the Jews of Bulgaria.

Even less than ten days before Luther's letter to Weizsaecker of September 24, 1942, Ribbentrop was still not ready to deal with the Bulgarian Jews, as we see from the following letter from Ribbentrop's office to Luther from September 15, 1942:

The Foreign Minister [Ribbentrop] is of the opinion that concerning negotiations with the Foreign Bulgarian Minister about the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews, we must still wait.

Signed: Von Sonnleithner<sup>15</sup>

A search through all the documents available from this period has failed to reveal the reason for Ribbentrop's change of mind with respect to Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Danish Jews. It is possible that the German National Railroad Company and the S.S. destruction machinery had given Ribbentrop the green light; there is no evidence, however, to this effect.

The Bulgarian Government and the German Government had been discussing, in general terms, the possibility for a final solution for the Jews of Bulgaria since the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Popov's visit to Berlin in 1941; nothing concrete, however, had ever been mentioned in their negotiations. It was always on "agreements in principle" without specific plans or offers and counteroffers being made.

The end of the generalities and preliminaries came with Luther's telegram #1769 of the 16th of October, 1942, to the German Legation in Sofia:

In accordance with the conversations held here [Ribbentrop's decision] please come in contact with the Bulgarian Government and discuss with them the question about the evacuation of their Jews to the East in accordance with their new laws [referring most likely to paragraph 29 of the August, 1942 edict]. We are ready to accept these Jews. The forthcoming evacuation [of the Jews] from Roumania does establish the possibility for technical cooperation between the two "aktionen"...To make up for the expenses involved, we suggest that the Bulgarian Government take part in these expenses and

as a starting point we may agree upon the sum of 250 marks [per Jew]. Judging from the attitude with which this notice [to the Bulgarian Government] is accepted please also notify them [once they agree to the deportation] that we are willing to make available for the actual execution of the deportation one of our advisors [experts] on the Jewish problem who is at present working abroad [in one of the other European countries].

Signed: Luther<sup>16</sup>

At long last the Germans were ready for the Bulgarian Jews, but certain events had taken place meanwhile in the war arena. The Axis countries were already losing the war in the last months of 1942. General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery and General Sir Harold Alexander, the two newly appointed British commanders in Africa, began their El-Alamein offensive on August 31, 1942, and neither Rommel's "Afrika Korps" nor the Italian divisions could stop them. During the months of September and October there was an expectancy in the air concerning allied landings in the Mediterranean, and on November 8, 1942, Anglo-American troops under General Eisenhower embarked on the beaches of Morocco and Algeria. Meanwhile, the summer of 1942 was coming to an end, and Hitler's armies had made no real progress during these months most favorable for Germany's offensive action. With the onset of winter, Russia was gathering strength and getting ready to take the offensive.

Bulgaria followed the war news closely. Was it possible that they had "bet" again on the wrong ally? Perhaps it was not too late; after all, Bulgaria was Germany's ally, but its armies were not fighting on any front. It may be that for the near future, until the war clouds would clear up a bit, and permit one

to evaluate future possibilities, a caution and moderation by the Bulgarian Government would be judicious. And it was exactly caution and moderation that the Bulgarian Government expressed in its reply to Beckerle concerning the evacuation of the Jews.

The German Legation in Sofia sent on the 2nd of November, 1942 the following telegram #1839 as a reply to the Berlin telegram #1769. In the telegram Beckerle said:

I have discussed the matter [of the evacuation of the Jews] extensively with the [Bulgarian] Prime Minister [Filov]. He brought to my attention the fact that the Bulgarian Government relies upon the Jewish labor power, which they will mobilize and use for the construction of roads. Otherwise, the German proposal concerning the rest of the Jews [i. e. those who cannot be mobilized for labor groups] deserves congratulations [is welcome].

He [the Prime Minister] told me that he will bring up before the Cabinet the German proposal (which he has done meanwhile). Because at present there is a great shortage of labor power, especially for road construction projects, it seems that for the time being the Cabinet has not reached a decision concerning the problem [Jewish problem] since I have not as yet received their final decision.

An additional telegraphic report will follow as soon as possible.

Signed: Beckerle<sup>17</sup>

Additional information about the Jewish problem was sent to Beckerle from the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry via verbal notes dated November 12, 1942:

The Bulgarian Government is very content that its desire to bring the Jewish problem in Bulgaria to its solution has aroused such an interest on the part of the German Government. [Judging from document Yad Vashem 486234 quoted above, it was Ribbentrop's decision of September 24, 1942 that the time for the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews had come, thus

the opening statement of this verbal note is absolutely deceptive] While reconsidering the matter [the Jewish problem] in the past the Bulgarian Government always met with difficulties since it was impossible for it up to now to evacuate the Bulgarian Jews in whole or in part. [This statement is likewise deceptive in that no such evacuation attempt had ever been undertaken or considered]. For that reason the Bulgarian Government very readily agreed to the German proposal that a general evacuation of the Jews of Bulgaria and Roumania take place, without the creation of difficulties in the political and economic stability of the country. On the other hand, the utilization of the labor of the Jews, which is cheap labor power for the public roads construction projects, must not be delayed any longer. It must be utilized at present since we cannot divert agricultural labor power to these projects.

The Bulgarian Government will be grateful if the German Government would inform us about the plans for the evacuation of the Jews of Roumania, so that we would be able to pass similar regulations for the fundamental solution of the problem.

The Bulgarian Government in principle is ready to pay a total sum for the removal of the Jews but feels that the proposed 250 marks per person is a very high sum.<sup>18</sup>

The content of the above verbal note was forwarded by Beckerle to Berlin on the 16th of November, 1942.<sup>19</sup>

A thorough analysis of the above-quoted documents does convey the impression that a certain progress toward the solution of the Jewish problem in Bulgaria was taking place. The German Minister, Ribbentrop, initiated this development by indicating that Germany was now ready to help Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Government, following Germany's lead, was now acting toward the solution in what seemed to be a manner satisfactory to the Germans. And yet, certain events occurred in Bulgaria during the fall of 1942 which must be interpreted by a keen observer as a relaxation of the anti-Jewish measures.

What were these events that serve as the complete antithesis to the conclusions that may be drawn from the documents just cited? First, on September 27, 1942, about 350 Jews gathered before the Ministry of the Interior (Gabrovsky's office) to protest their expulsion from Sofia to the small towns in the country. (See regulation #29 of the August, 1942 laws, in Appendix B of this thesis). The date for this expulsion for all the unemployed Jews of Sofia was two days later, September 29, 1942.

To the amazement of all the employees of the Ministry, Secretary Gabrovski, instead of issuing an order to the police to disperse the Jews away from his offices, came to meet the protesters and delivered a half an hour speech to calm the Jews. Among other things, Gabrovski said that the worst was already over. At the completion of his speech Gabrovski personally accepted from each and every one of the Jewish persons assembled there their petition for the postponement of the expulsion decree.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, according to both Arditti and Hilberg, on the following day, September 28, 1942, Gabrovski ordered that the press abstain from publishing any articles about the Jewish problem (In 1941-42 the press was the primary instrument in the anti-Jewish public opinion campaign), since the Jewish question in Bulgaria had already been regulated.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to lifting the anti-Jewish campaign of the press, Gabrovski told Commissar Belev, on a number of occasions during this period, that the Cabinet and the Czar desired an alleviation of the anti-Jewish activities and a less severe treatment of Jews.<sup>22</sup>

Was Gabrovski's speech, warm reception, and order to the press just a bluff, a clever device employed to disperse the fears of the Jews and make them forget the coming danger? The following German source, quoted by Hilberg, would prove that perhaps Gabrovski was not bluffing, i. e., that the Bulgarian Government was procrastinating to gain time. Hilberg says:

On November 9, 1942 the RSHA [Reich Security Main Office] Foreign Intelligence Chief, General Schellenberg, sent a report on Bulgarian anti-Jewish developments to Luther. The report revealed evidence of deliberate procrastination. The Bulgarian Government said the RSHA had come to the conclusion that with the latest anti-Jewish ordinances the "point of toleration" [das Mass des Ertraglichen] had already been exceeded. [i.e., that the Bulgarian Government does not feel the need for further anti-Jewish measures] 23

Any student of the German war machine during the Second World War knows that there was great jealousy and rivalry between the departments of the different services. Often, officials from different departments worked on the same assignment with or without each others' knowledge. Beckerle was a S.A. man, while Hoffman, who was the police attaché in the German Embassy in Sofia, was an S.S. man. In this capacity Hoffman served as the Bulgarian S.S. representative, and it was his duty to report to the RSHA.

It is possible that the RSHA complaint was based upon reports from S.S. Hoffman, rather than upon information which was sent by Beckerle to the Foreign Office and then passed on to the RSHA. Perhaps the S.S. was getting impatient with Ribbentrop's postponement of the solution of the Bulgarian Jewish problem. It is also

possible that the RSHA complaint was based upon information sent by Beckerle to the S.S. Office rather than the Foreign Office. Generally speaking, this usually was not the case since the Foreign Ministry attachés could communicate only with their home office in Berlin. Hilberg indicates, however, that Beckerle was in good relations with the S.S., despite his S.A. affiliation.<sup>24</sup> Beckerle, seeing that the Foreign Office (Ribbentrop) was reluctant to take action against Bulgaria's Jewry, may have tried to change Ribbentrop's mind by applying pressure upon him through the S.S. (RSHA).

Additional evidence for some relaxation of the anti-Jewish Laws in Bulgaria during the fall of 1942 comes from Arditti, who, on the basis of an unquoted source, says:

The Minister of Justice, Partov, met with Commissar Belev on the 30th of September, 1942. Partov insisted that the Jews should not be forced to wear the "yellow star" nor should they be evacuated from their homes [referring to the Jews of Sofia]. Also the Minister demanded from Belev that the pressure upon the Jews be eased.<sup>25</sup>

A difficult phenomenon to explain with relation to the Jewish problem was taking place in Bulgaria during the months of September, October, and November of 1942. The Bulgarian Government, as stated by Beckerle on November 16 in his report to Berlin was satisfied that the Jewish problem in Bulgaria was going to be solved soon. At the same time we have internal evidence (Gabrovski's speech as well as external evidence, the RSHA report) that the pressure upon the Jews in Bulgaria was being reduced. The lack of enforcement of the wearing of the yellow star is further

evidence which attests to this fact. At the beginning of October, 1942, about 20 per cent of the Bulgarian Jews received the yellow star. At the same time, although 80 per cent of the Jews still had not received the star, the government ordered that the production of the stars be halted. The government's order was justified on the grounds that it was necessary to economize on electrical power. The factories producing yellow stars were shut down.<sup>26</sup>

Hilberg says that following the halt in the manufacturing of stars "many Jews who had already been wearing the star took it off again, while others continued wearing it in an arrogant manner, pinned next to a patriotic symbol, such as a picture of the Czar or the Queen."<sup>27</sup>

In an additional report from the RSHA, Schellenberg reported to Luther that a partial explanation for the reduction of the pressures on the Jews of Bulgaria is to be found in the protest of some foreign powers such as Italy, Hungary, Roumania, France, and Spain. These countries expressed dissatisfaction concerning the measures taken against their subjects of Jewish faith who were temporary residents of Bulgaria. The protest notes were served to Foreign Minister Popov by the legations of the respective countries, who in turn showed them to Belev with the intention of convincing him to reduce the pressure upon the Jews.<sup>28</sup>

The events in the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the concluding months of 1942 are permeated with contradictions. Despite the fact, however, that there are evidences

pointing to a certain relaxation, the official machinery, the Commissariat, under Belev, was planning for the final solution.

#### E. The Final Solution

It is befitting that I begin the writing of this tragic chapter by quoting from the personal experiences of my father, Abraham Asa, who during 1943 was the Vice President of the Jewish community of Burgas:

One morning about mid-February, 1943, a telegram addressed to the Burgas branch of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was delivered by mistake to the office of the local Jewish community. Not realizing that the telegram was not for us I opened it and read the following order sent from the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs in Sofia to the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs in Burgas:

'Please arrange that a Medical Doctor of the local office of Public Health visit the Jewish homes in Burgas for the purpose of performing delousing [it is my father's contention that the Commissariat wanted to justify the evacuation of the Jews from their cities on the basis of medical necessity, i.e., by proving that the homes of the Jews were a menace to the health of the public]. The results of the delousing must be reported to Sofia since this information is necessary for the planning of the forthcoming expulsion of the Jews.'

To my fortune the local director of the post office was a very good friend of mine. I brought the telegram to his office, explained the mistake that had occurred, and he promised that his office would correct the situation by re-typing the telegram and sending it to its addressee.

The next morning I visited Mr. Gershev, the local Commissar of Jewish Affairs who was a good friend of mine since our joint military service during the First World War. I used to visit Gershev at his office a number of times weekly and was always welcomed there. That particular morning the Commissar seemed nervous. As soon as I sat down he told me that he was going to share with me some secret information pertaining to the Jewish community of Burgas, and that I, under the risk of losing my own life, must not reveal to anyone the source that made this information available to me.

Then he showed me the telegram which by mistake I had already read the previous day. After reading the telegram and being told by Gerschev that deportation of the Jews of Burgas would ensue, I asked Gerschev for a travel permit [by that time Jews could travel only with a permit card issued by their local commissar] to Sofia so that I could inform the Central Consistory about the forthcoming evacuation [of course without revealing the source of my information].

I left for Sofia where I met with the Central Consistory members and informed them about the evacuation. At the time they had no knowledge of it as yet; I was told, however, by the members of the Consistory that they would employ sources of information and would inform the different Jewish communities about the future. I returned to Burgas.

During the last week of February, Commissar Gerschev called me to his office to show me a telegram sent from Sofia demanding that the local commissariat should send to Sofia a list of those Jews of Burgas who were considered to be the leaders of the Jewish community, political enemies of the regime, and wealthy and influential members of the community.

I left for Sofia again to see the members of the Consistory. This time I was told by them that they had also received information that "something" was in the planning. The members of the Consistory were going to try to meet with some of the philosemitic influential Bulgarians, asking for their intervention in the matter.

I returned to Burgas where we began preparing the Jewish community for the evacuation which was to take place for the Jews of Burgas on the early morning of March 10, 1943.<sup>1</sup>

What stages of preparation and planning preceded the above orders for the evacuation of the Bulgarian Jewish Community? On December 4, 1942, the following letter was sent by Klingefus to Beckerle in Sofia:

We have come to an agreement with the Gestapo that S.S. Hauptsturmführer Dannecker will be attached to the German Police attaché in Sofia to be available for all the arrangements concerning the evacuation. Dannecker has already worked

in this capacity in France and is well equipped to deal with all problems that may come up.

With respect to the claim [on the part of the Bulgarian Government] concerning the rate of payment [demanded by us] for the expenses involved [in the evacuation] please make it clear that this sum has been arrived at after considering transportation, food, and camp expenses. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Government will handsomely profit from the expropriation of the assets of the Jews [after the evacuation].

It is left up to you to negotiate with the Bulgarian Government for the reduction of the asked price, however, without making a counter offer that will obligate us. As a minimum sum we would accept 100 marks per person.

Signed: Klingenfus<sup>2</sup>

Dannecker arrived to Sofia on Thursday, the 21st of January, 1943.<sup>3</sup>

On January 22, Beckerle sent the following report to Berlin:

The Minister of the Interior, Gabrovski, and I had a long conversation about the situation in Bulgaria. He dwelt on the Jewish problem and said that there is no point in having a discussion in public about the problem, but rather he calls for action. He has already done much in the past and will continue in the future....

In the course of our conversation we also spoke about an anti-Jewish exhibit, to which Minister Gabrovski objects. In my opinion the Minister is completely mistaken [with respect to the exhibit]. There is no question that the Bulgarian public shows enthusiasm in the execution of the economic anti-Jewish laws. But the true meaning of the Jewish problem, they still don't understand. In Bulgaria there are only a few rich Jews but a rather large number of poor Jews who earn their livelihood as workers or artisans. The common Bulgarian who has been raised with Greeks, Turks, and Armenians does not comprehend the true meaning of the Jewish problem and has no understanding concerning the race question....

...Gabrovski's position concerning the evacuation of the Jews is that we must first expel the Jews that reside in the liberated provinces [Thrace, Macedonia]. Since Dannecker is

about to arrive [at Bulgaria], I preferred not to enter deeply into the discussion on that subject without first informing you about it.<sup>4</sup>

Gabrovski, thus proposed that the final solution be applied for the time being only toward the Jews residing in Thrace and Macedonia. The Bulgarian Government including Gabrovski must have known well in advance, however, that the expulsion of the Jews from Old Bulgaria (which would have followed after the completion of the expulsion of the Jews from the new lands) would have caused considerable protest on the part of a large segment of the population, and that such an expulsion could have been conducted successfully only if carried out suddenly. The evacuation of the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia would have afforded an opportunity for these philosemitic elements in the country to organize in protest against the expulsion of the Jews from Old Bulgaria, and this would have brought about results the very opposite of that which Gabrovski desired -- swift, orderly evacuation. Thus, it seems that as early as January, 1943, almost two months before the planned expulsion date, the government had already decided that only the Jews of the liberated provinces would be sacrificed on the altar of German-Bulgarian friendship. So much and no more. But this could not be told to the Germans; the game had to be played to the fullest, and so the Bulgarian Government did.

On February 8, 1943 Beckerle sent an additional report to Berlin:

Enclosed you will find two reports by Dannecker, the

first dealing with the evacuation of the Jews from Bulgaria and the second with the treatment of the Jews of foreign citizenship and converts to Christianity.

...Gabrovski again confirmed his desire to evacuate all the Bulgarian Jews, but for the time being we limit ourselves to the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia since the Jews of Old Bulgaria can be used as a labor force in Bulgaria proper.<sup>5</sup>

Before presenting the text of Dannecker's reports, I would like to raise the following question: If the Bulgarian nation was in such dire need for labor forces that its Jews could not be evacuated, why didn't the Bulgarian Government think about utilizing the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia for labor purposes, too? They were at least as healthy and capable of road construction projects as the Jews of Old Bulgaria. Second, the Jewish labor force that was mobilized never amounted to more than a few thousand men between the ages of 20 and 40 (In 1942 the age limit was raised to 42 years and in 1943 to 46 years). It is difficult to believe that these few thousand laborers (which by the way in January, 1942 were not as yet mobilized for the current labor season) were so essential to the economy, that for the sake of their utilization Bulgaria had to put up with over 40,000 unproductive Jews. Germany desired an expulsion of the entire population, rather than of its unproductive element only. Thus, in my opinion, the indispensability of the Jewish labor to the economy of the country was not the real reason for the postponement of the evacuation of the Bulgarian Jews.

The following is the number on report of Dannecker to LV B4

(Eichmann's office) of February 8, 1942:

On February 2, 1942, I was introduced before Minister Gabrovski who expressed the desire for the evacuation of the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia...but he made it clear that according to him there is no possibility for the evacuation of the Jews of Old Bulgaria since he would like to utilize their labor for public works...

Finally, the Minister said that all the details [concerning the evacuation] should be worked out with Belev.

Meanwhile, Belev sent the following report to the Minister's Council for their approval: [Dannecker summarized the Belev report rather than enclosing the full text]

- A. The problem of the evacuation of the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia including undesired Jewish elements from the border provinces of Bulgaria [proper]. Thrace and Macedonia have about 14,000 Jews. Belev foresees the total number to be evacuated as 20,000.
- B. Later Belev [in his report] considers the eventual evacuation of all the Jews and expresses the opinion that caution must be used while the evacuation of part of the Jews is taking place so that the Jewish men will not join the resistance movement [the underground]. For that reason Belev suggests that immediately all Jewish men between 17 and 46 years from Old Bulgaria -- from Sofia first -- be called to labor groups and be put into labor camps. [This was Belev's report to the Council, and now Dannecker continues with his report to IV B4]

The forthcoming evacuation of the Jews depends upon the length of time used by the Minister's Council to approve Belev's proposal. This approval is necessary since orders must be given to the Department of Railroads [In Bulgaria the railroad was run by the state], the Department of Food and Provisions, the Department of Police, and eventually -- for there will be need for army trucks -- to the Department of Defense.

According to Belev, the culmination of the preliminary preparations [i.e. the gathering of the Jews in transitory camps in the railroad stations] may take 4-6 weeks. As soon as exact numbers of Jews and the railroad stations are decided upon, I will sign a written agreement [about the matter]

with Belev.

...Further reports will follow.

Signed; Dannecker<sup>6</sup>

It can be clearly seen from the Gabrovski-Dannecker conversation on February 2, 1943, that the Bulgarian Government was willing for the present to evacuate the Jews from the new territories only.

As soon as Dannecker heard the decision, in principle, as conveyed by Gabrovski on February 2nd, he managed to see Belev on the same day to work out with him the technical details about the expulsion.

The following is the report sent by Belev to his superior, Gabrovski, regarding his February 2nd meeting with Dannecker:

...According to Dannecker...

1. The evacuation must begin in March and approximately 10,000 to 20,000 Jews must be evacuated every month.

...The evacuees will lose their Bulgarian citizenship upon their transfer to the German authorities....

...Dannecker declared before me that according to his understanding the issue has been solved in principle between you [Gabrovski] and Beckerle. I told Dannecker that I am not informed about that agreement, and that I will report our conversation [between Dannecker and me] to you, hoping to come to an arrangement between us as soon as the Minister's Council approves the plan.

2. [The following is Belev's opinion and not the report on his conference with Dannecker].

If the evacuation of the Jews begins, it would be wise if it includes the Jews of Old Bulgaria. After the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia and Thrace, the

Bulgarian [Old Bulgarian] Jews would constantly live under the fear that any minute they may be expelled, and this fear may cause them to react in a way that will cause many difficulties...7

Belev, unlike his superior, Gabrovski, would have liked the deportation to include, in addition to all the Jews from the liberated lands, some 6,000 Jews from Old Bulgaria. In this respect, there was some difference in opinion between the Minister's Council, on the one hand, and Belev, on the other, as we see from the following reports. The first is from Dannecker to Eichmann sent on February 16, 1943:

On February 12, 1943, the [Bulgarian] Minister's Council after prolonged discussion approved fully Belev's plan. This means that simultaneously with the deportation of the Jews [i.e. of the new areas] the Jewish males [of the old areas] would be mobilized for labor projects.

...In order to reach the number of 20,000 Jews, Belev, in line with my proposal, will add [to the list of the deportees from the new lands] the "undesired Jews" from Bulgaria.<sup>8</sup>

A second report was sent the same night by Beckerle to the Foreign Office in Berlin:

Today the Prime Minister informed me that the Council has approved the evacuation of 20,000 Jews from the liberated lands, while the Jews from Sofia and Old Bulgaria for the time being will be mobilized into labor groups for the benefit of Bulgaria....

Signed: Beckerle<sup>9</sup>

As indicated in the first document, Belev told Dannecker that some Jews of Old Bulgaria would be used to make up for the total of 20,000 Jews, the number designated in the Minister's decision.

The second report, based upon information by Filov, the Prime Minister, states that according to the decision of the Council, only the Jews from new Bulgaria were to be deported.

There is no question that the decision of the Minister's Council, as conveyed by Filov to Beckerle, is the authentic decision, while Belev's communication to Dannecker concerning the same decision, is distorted. Belev's distortion, however, was not baseless. Belev, because of his position as the Commissar of Jewish Affairs, knew that there were not 20,000 Jews in new Bulgaria; as a matter of fact, there were hardly 14,000 Jews there. Since Belev knew that 20,000 Jews was the number that was designated for deportation by the Minister's Council, it was obvious to him that somehow he, through his field commissars in the different towns of Old Bulgaria, could add about 6,000 Jews to make the total 20,000 Jews as decided by the Council.

That the deportation of Jews from Old Bulgaria was Belev's idea, is proven by the following. On February 22, 1943, a written agreement was reached between Belev and Dannecker about the forthcoming deportation of the Jews. Hereby, follows an exact translated transcript of the first paragraph of the original agreement:

An Agreement

concerning the deportation for the time being  
of 20,000 Jews ~~from the new-Bulgarian-lands,~~  
~~Thrace and Macedonia~~ \* to the German Eastern  
territories.

---

\*The original document contains the phrase "from the new Bulgarian lands, Thrace and Macedonia," which were subsequently crossed out as shown here.

## Reached Between

The Bulgarian Commissar of the Jewish Affairs,  
Alexander Belev, on the one hand and

The German Plenipotentiary Captain of the S.S.  
Theodor Dannecker on the other hand.

1. Following the confirmation of the Minister's Council ~~from the new-Bulgarian-lands, Thrace and Macedonia~~ 20,000 Jews -- without the disdinction of age or sex -- will be prepared for resettlement.

The German Reich is ready to accept these Jews in its Eastern territories.

(The rest of the agreement, paragraphs 2,3,4,5,6,7, 8 and 9, deals with the technical side of the deportation)

Sofia, the 22nd of February, 1943.

Signed: Belev  
Beckerle<sup>10</sup>

The original text of the agreement contains the following words repeated twice, which were then crossed out, "from the new Bulgarian lands, Thrace and Macedonia." The meaning is certain; the agreement originally was to include the Jews from the new provinces. The question is, who crossed out, in each case, these seven words from the original text? I possess only a photocopy of the original document; scholars, however, such as Nathan Greenberg and Benjamin Arditti, who have seen the original document, concur that the crossing of the seven words was made

by Belev, the proof being that Belev's signature of the document and the crossing of the seven words are both in black ink, while Dannecker's signature was made with green ink.<sup>11</sup>

Following his agreement with Dannecker, Belev and his assistants began sending orders and instructions to the commissars of Thrace, Macedonia, and the Bulgarian cities from which the 6,000 additional Jews were to be evacuated. The plan called for 3,500 Jews from Sofia and the suburbs. An additional 1,000 to 2,000 Jews were to be evacuated from ten other cities.

Who were to be the 6,000 Jews to be deported from Old Bulgaria?

Memo #5712 sent by Lukov, one of Belev's assistants, from Sofia to the commissars in the ten cities from which 1,000 to 2,000 Jews were to be deported asked for:

1. A list of all the wealthy and influential Jews must be prepared within twenty-four hours.
2. The list is to include those considered to be the leaders of the community as well as those who are known to be enemies of the present regime.<sup>12</sup>

On March 2, 1943, the Minister's Council voted upon order #127, and according to Protocol #32 decided to, "assign to the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs, the deportation from the borders of our country, in agreement and cooperation with the German authorities, up to 20,000 Jewish residents of the newly-liberated lands (The following decision is not to be published in the Official Gazette)."<sup>13</sup>

So far, I have not found any evidence that anyone except

Belev, Dannecker, and their assistants knew that 6,000 Jews from Old Bulgaria had been included in the total number of 20,000 Jews. On March 2, 1943, however, the Minister's Council passed order #116, which was based upon a motion presented by Gabrovski. Order #116 reads:

...All the persons of Jewish origin who will be deported outside of the borders of this country are thereby automatically being deprived of their Bulgarian citizenship, assuming that up to that time they have had Bulgarian citizenship.<sup>14</sup>

The reason that makes one suspect that at least Gabrovski, and perhaps some of the other ministers, knew of the inclusion of some of the Jews from Bulgaria (proper) in the forthcoming expulsion is based upon the fact that the Jews from the liberated lands could not have been considered as Bulgarian citizens according to order #3156 from June 10, 1942. This order stated as follows:

All the Yugoslvaian and Greek citizens that resided in the newly liberated lands in 1941 thereby automatically become Bulgarian citizens. This decree does not apply to people of Jewish origin.<sup>15</sup>

The question that should be asked here is: If the Jews of the liberated lands were not Bulgarian citizens, as we see from the June 10, 1942 decision by the government, then why did Gabrovski propose to the Cabinet that the Jews destined for deportation were to lose their Bulgarian citizenship? If Gabrovski had in mind for deportation only the Jews of the new

lands, then obviously his motion to the Cabinet would not make sense since these Jews were not Bulgarian citizens anyway. Therefore, I must conclude that by March 2, Gabrovski had accepted Belev's proposal that some 6,000 Jews from Old Bulgaria be included in the March expulsion. It was for the sake of these 6,000 Jews that Gabrovski presented his motion before the cabinet members who approved it.

Following the approval of the Belev plan by the Minister's Council on March 2, 1943, the Commissariat was given a free hand to implement its plan.

The concentration of the Jews from Thrace into temporary camps was the first stage of the master plan of the Commissariat, and it began on March 4, 1943.

On March 9, Druger, the German attache in Kavalla, Thrace, sent the following report to Berlin via Beckerle in Sofia:

...So far, 4,500 Jews have been concentrated in Gorna Djumaya [railroad shipping point] ...The Greek population exhibited empathy for the deported Jews and in Kovalla and Drama they brought presents to the Jews.

...The Bulgarians living here, generally speaking, congratulated the removal of the Jews, who almost without an exception were Greek citizens, from this part of the country.

Signed: Druger<sup>16</sup>

The master plan called for March 9th, five days after the "aktion" in Thrace was completed, as the time designated for the beginning of the "aktion" against part of the Jews from Old Bulgaria. There are no original documents at hand enabling one to

reconstruct the events that took place during these five days. Only secondary sources are available, primarily the correspondence and reports sent by the German Embassy of Sofia to Berlin. Also available are the memoirs of Bulgarian Jews who lived in Sofia at the time, but these memoirs, as we shall see, are highly subjective.

Before I describe the events that took place in Old Bulgaria, the question may be asked as to the reasons for the seeming callousness and indifference on the part of the Jewish Consistory in Sofia and the Jewish community of Bulgaria in general for the fate of the Jews of the newly-liberated lands.

As indicated previously, despite the fact that the newly liberated territories were "returned" to Bulgaria by the Germans, their political status, and subsequently the status of their Jews, was not the same as that of the Jews of Bulgaria proper. The Jewish community of the new territories were not represented in the Central Consistory. Complete lack of communication existed between the Jewish community of Old Bulgaria and that of new Bulgaria. Another factor that complicated the fate of the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia was the fact that these areas were not politically represented in the Bulgarian Sobranje, and as it will be seen, the first actual step toward the prevention of the expulsion of the Jews of Old Bulgaria was taken by a delegation of political deputies in the Sobranje. Thus, it may be said that the tragic fate of the Jews of the new lands took place because they were the residents of "no-man's land," so to speak. We have

already seen that the Bulgarian Government had denied the Jews of the new lands citizenship, making them "stateless" Jews. The Bulgarian Government had to cooperate to a certain minimal extent with the Nazi destruction machinery, and these 13,000 Jews made an easy target.

It is necessary at this time to discuss the events that took place in Sofia between the 4th and the 9th of March, 1943.

All sources indicate that the first step protesting the expulsion of the Jews from Old Bulgaria was taken by a delegation from the city of Kyustendil, headed by the Vice-president of the Sobranje, Peshev, who was the elected representative from Kyustendil. Peshev intervened before Gabrovski, the Minister of the Interior, on behalf of the Jews of Old Bulgaria. The report of Hoffman, the police attaché of the German Embassy in Sofia, testifies also that Peshev was the initiator of that protest. Since Hoffman's report directly pertains to the entire problem of the Bulgarian Jewish Community, I have rendered here its full text.

The following is the report sent by Hoffman from Sofia to the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin on April 5, 1943:

I am able to report that a total of 11,434 Jews have been deported. Out of this total, 4,221 Jews from Thrace were transported by ships from Lom to Vienna [on the Danube River] and 7,122 Macedonian Jews were shipped by rail....

Here is a short report concerning the Jewish problem in Bulgaria:

1. The starting point was Gabrovski's announcement that

the Bulgarian Government was willing to evacuate the Jews of the new territories. 14,000 Jews were destined for this deportation. Belev, who is a convinced anti-Semite, from the very beginning [of the evacuation plan] included 6,000 Jews from Old Bulgaria. Gabrovski consented to this inclusion [for a total of 20,000 deportees]. The plan for the deportation of 20,000 Jews was approved by the Minister's Council....

2. Everyone who is familiar with the local conditions [in Bulgaria] knew that difficulties would develop with the approach of the time for the evacuation of the Jews. These difficulties developed with respect to the evacuation of the Jews from Old Bulgaria. Belev foresaw the coming of these difficulties and removed the influential Jewish leaders from the cities of Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Rusjuk, and Varna, and interned them in a local concentration camp. Belev was planning to do the same thing for [the Jews of Sofia]. The fact that some Jews of Old Bulgaria were also to be included in the "aktion" became known. Bulgarian political circles which were in disagreement with the government's anti-Jewish policies began to exercise pressure upon Gabrovski. Especially, a delegation from Kyustendil, headed by Peshev, the Vice-President of the Sabronje, intervened for the Jews before Gabrovski. It must be further admitted that Gabrovski received a hint from the highest source that the evacuation of the Jews from Old Bulgaria be stopped. At any rate, on March 9th, Gabrovski ordered, without consulting Belev, that the Jews from Old Bulgaria, who were already gathered [for the evacuation], be released. This [the release] took place on March 10th. The release of these Jews caused serious unease [feeling of insecurity] to the police chiefs of the towns concerned.
3. Despite these facts, it would be erroneous to suppose that the Bulgarian Government, and especially Gabrovski tried seriously to sabotage the "aktion." The German Ambassador intervened several times when some difficulties arose, for example, when he saw that the "aktion" did not progress.

With his repeated interventions before Filov, Beckerle secured the promise of Filov that the Bulgarian Government is resolved to deport all Jews. In order to understand properly the Jewish policy of the Bulgarian Government, it should be stressed that the Jewish problem which existed in the Reich does not exist in Bulgaria. Surely, there are Jews in Bulgaria who have succeeded in attaining key positions in the Bulgarian economy, but their number is very small.

There doesn't exist here in Bulgaria the ideological and racial preconditions which are needed in order to motivate the people toward an immediate settlement of the Jewish problem, as was the case in the Reich.

The policy which the Bulgarian Government follows with regard to the evacuation of the Jews is based mainly on materialistic interests, for example, the distribution of the property of the deported Jews to reliable Bulgarians for the purpose of satisfying them, and at the same time, especially in the newly acquired territories, replacing the restless Jewish element with reliable Bulgarians.

The Bulgarian Government is without doubt ready to deport the Jews from Old Bulgaria, too, but it has decided to avoid by all means the possibility that the Jewish problem in Bulgaria be in the focus of the world press. Only thus, can we explain why the Bulgarian Government declared to the Swiss Ambassador, for example, its readiness to permit the immigration of several thousand Jewish children to Palestine. But at the same time the German Ambassador, who went immediately to see the Bulgarian Prime Minister [concerning the promise made to the Swiss Ambassador], received a declaration [another promise] that the transport of the Jewish children, to which the Bulgarian Government agreed in theory, will be sabotaged in practice.

The Bulgarian Government tries to save face in the outside world, but they will not obstruct the deportation of their Jews. Certainly, the German Ambassador must from time to time pursue the matter in order to keep it moving.

That this is the real attitude of the Bulgarian Government is seen from the following case:

Prime Minister Filov declared to the Swiss Ambassador, who represents the British interests in Bulgaria and in this capacity protested against the deportation of the Jews, that the Bulgarian Government is definitely resolved to carry out the deportation of the Jews since this is more human than the air bombardments carried out by the allied air forces against non-military objects, such as old people, women, and children. Also with regard to the question of permits for immigration to Palestine, Filov declared to the Swiss Ambassador that there are not any unemployed Jews in the State [The Swiss Ambassador was inquiring about possible immigration of unemployed Bulgarian Jews].

Furthermore, the anti-Jewish propaganda which was relaxed for a certain period is now gaining full speed.

As to Peshev, he submitted together with forty other deputies from the coalition parties a petition against the supposedly bad treatment of the Jews from the new territories during evacuations. During a secret meeting of the government parties [coalition] the government received the full confidence of the Sobranje for its treatment of the Jewish question. In a public session the Sobranje vice-president, Peshev, was deposed from his office as Vice-president of the Sobranje [He was the first one to sign the petition protesting the treatment of the Jews].

If we consider the fact that in Italy, Hungary, and Spain all three countries are German allies the Jewish problem is not yet actively treated at all [i.e. the deportation of the Jews here has not been initiated yet], then we can conclude that the Bulgarian Government works actively in the solution of the Jewish problem despite the restrictions which usually arise in the Balkan countries [Hoffman is referring to the inefficiency of the Balkan countries' governments].

4. In addition to the Swiss Ambassador, who intervened in the capacity of acting representative of England, the Spanish Ambassador tried to protest to Prime Minister Filov against the deportation of Jews of Spanish nationality including Spanish nationals.

Also, the Catholic Bishop of Skopje, Macedonia, intervened with the chief of police in Skopje in favor of Jews who had converted to the Catholic faith. In cases where converted Jews were already interned in the camps he, the bishop, asked that he be allowed to render them religious guidance.

We have to assume that other foreign diplomatic missions in Sofia intervened against the deportation of the Jews, but the Bulgarian Government has not changed its attitude.

5. The repercussions of the deportation on the public opinion may be evaluated as being positive since there are many people here who have no steady income. It is hoped that with the removal of the Jews from the economy Bulgarians could profit by taking over the Jewish position in business.

6. Taking into account these circumstances, we must regard the accomplished deportation of 11,343 Jews thus far as satisfactory. Since 20,00 Jews was agreed upon, over 50 per cent was achieved.

Because of the diplomatic reasons of tact, the [German] Ambassador will be temporarily forced to refrain from active pursuit of the deportation of the Jews from Old Bulgaria as he mentioned in our last private talk.

But since Prime Minister Filov promised unequivocally to the German Ambassador that the Jews of Old Bulgaria will be deported, therefore, the Ambassador will at a time which will seem proper and fitting, try to intervene again for the solution desired.

Meanwhile... Dannecker is in constant contact with Belev in order to ascertain that Belev provides Gabrovski, the Minister of Interior, with an acceptable plan for further additional deportation.

Based on this situation, we may assume that the deportation from Bulgaria will be continued in the near future.

Seen and approved by:

Beckerle

Signed: Hoffman<sup>17</sup>

The above report from Hoffman to Berlin indicates that the "aktion" against the Jews of Old Bulgaria had been temporarily halted for two reasons. First, pressure was applied by members of the So-branje upon Gabrovski; and second, Gabrovski was given a "hint" from the highest source. The highest source in a monarchy is the King, in this case Czar Boris.

There is no difference of opinion among the number of scholars who have written on the subject of the Bulgarian Jews during the war as to what was the "ultimate cause" that prevented the implementation of the deportation of the Jews. There is, however, disagreement among the scholars concerning motives.

Benjamin Arditti is of the opinion that this "ultimate cause" was the Czar, who never shared any anti-Semitic feelings, and who could not sacrifice a part of his people for the sake of better German-Bulgarian relations.

Nathan Greenberg, on the other hand, pictures King Boris as a convinced anti-Semite, who in the face of a strong protest and the possibility of internal disharmony, decided to postpone the "aktion" at least temporarily.

Before I proceed with an alternative explanation, it may be helpful to add a number of personal details about Arditti and Greenberg.

Arditti was, and always has been, a member of the Revisionist Movement in Zionism. At present, he is in Israel where he serves as a member of the Knesset representing the "Herut" Party, which is the extreme right wing party in Israel.

Greenberg, on the other hand, has political leanings diametrically opposed to those of Arditti. Thus, Arditti, due to his personal political views, is trying to prove in his work that the Bulgarian people, though helpful, had no part in the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews. This credit was given to the Czar. Greenberg, on the other hand, gives credit to the people, who through the protests of their political representatives, forced the Czar to change the expulsion decree.

It is my opinion that both Arditti and Greenberg are mistaken in the sense that they seek for the motives of action on the part of the Czar in the wrong direction. It is not likely that personal

like or dislike of Jews by the Czar had anything to do with his intervention. The world of politics in general, and in the 20th century in particular, is rarely, if ever, conducted according to one's conscience, morals, likes or dislikes. Boris, as indicated previously, was a shrewd politician who carefully weighed the outcome of every action he attempted. What benefit to the state could he have derived from the deportation of the Jews of Old Bulgaria in spring of 1943? As far as his German ally was concerned, the 11,000 Jews from the new territories convinced them that he was with them. The Germans were pacified for the present, and as to the future, Boris already knew during spring, 1943, that he would not have to account to them for too long in the future. Germany, in spring, 1943 was through, and Boris knew it, as we see from the following entry in the personal diary of Prime Minister Filov. Filov wrote on the 28th of March, 1943:

Sevov [Boris' personal advisor] notified me that the King has received an invitation to visit Hitler; he is to take with him to this meeting the Commander of the Armed Forces.<sup>18</sup>

On March 29, Filov wrote:

This morning I spoke to the Czar about his trip [to Berlin]...We discussed our situation and established a point of view concerning some important matters.

...The Czar this time is not anxious to go [to Berlin]; he is going without his heart being in it. He considers in the long run the German cause to be already lost.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, it may be said that during March, 1943, King Boris was

already aware that Germany was not going to win the war.

On March 26, 1943, a number of days before the King's departure for Berlin, Beckerle sent telegram #456 to Berlin, reporting:

About a week ago Peshev served the Prime Minister with a petition signed by him and forty-two other members of the Sobranje protesting the deportation of the Jews by the Bulgarian authorities.

In Peshev's petition it was said that measures against the Jews should be dictated by the present needs of the State and the people, and that the moral positions of the Bulgarian people must not be ignored. The petition does not protest against measures which are necessary for security's sake. The right to remove all obstacles, so that a successful implementation of the government's policies should be made possible, is not questioned by anyone. Furthermore, the petition said that the borderline of the actual needs [of the government] must not be overreached since this will bring about an unnecessary evil. In addition, the existing laws against the Jews in Bulgaria make new laws against them at present unnecessary. The [Peshev] petition was discussed during the majority [party] session in the Sobranje. The Prime Minister after a long speech called for a vote of confidence in the government and in its policy against the Jews. The vote of confidence was unanimous. Then Filov presented a motion that lack of confidence be expressed concerning Peshev. The majority voted for the lack of confidence motion. As a result of this vote Peshev resigned from his post as Vice-president of the Sobranje....

Among those members of the Sobranje who signed the [Peshev's] petition are many who are of friendly disposition toward Germany, as for example, Alexander Tsankov. He [Tsankov] told a person from the German Embassy [here] that his signature [of the petition] does not in any way express a principle decision against the expulsion of the Jews, but rather his signature of the petition expresses his criticism of the manner in which the evacuation was conducted by the Bulgarian authorities, who, by their brutal behavior, are only hurting the German cause [i.e. total expulsion]. Tsankov's point of view explains in principle his opposition to the expulsion decree.

Signed: Beckerle<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the King left for Berlin for his talks with Hitler

and Ribbentrop. The only source of information concerning the content of these talks is Ribbentrop's telegram to Beckerle in Sofia dated April 4, 1943. This telegram has six points of which only point #4 deals with the Jewish question. I will, however, quote point #6 in part, also, for a different purpose:

4. Concerning the Jewish question in Bulgaria, the Czar declared that so far he has given his consent only for the deportation of the Jews from the new lands. As to the Jews of Bulgaria [proper], he wants to deport only a small group of Bolshevik-Communist Jews. The remaining 25,000 Jews he, the King, wants to concentrate in camps located in Bulgaria because they are needed for road construction. I [Ribbentrop] did not discuss details with the King about his plan, but I emphasized to him that according to our point of view we consider a radical solution concerning the Jewish problem to be necessary .
6. I [Ribbentrop] asked the Czar to explain the travel of Mr. Puljev, a Bulgarian foreign office official to Turkey to meet with Mr. Earle. The King replied that Puljev is not an important official in the diplomatic service, and that he has had a diplomatic passport for many years and that during his visit to Turkey he was not on an official mission.

Signed: Ribbentrop<sup>21</sup>

A number of points made in the above document have relevance to our subject matter. First, the King openly declared that so far he had consented only to the deportation of the Jews of the new lands, which indirectly indicates that it was his order that stopped the deportation of the 6,000 Jews of Old Bulgaria. Second, and this point is rather ambiguous, he planned the concentration of 25,000 non-Communist Jews in camps in Bulgaria proper, which means that the remaining 23,000 Jews (as indicated previously,

there were 48,000 Jews in Bulgaria proper at the time) were considered in his eyes as dangerous Jews who had to be deported. Either the King was mistaken about the total number of Jews living in Bulgaria at the time, or else he was trying to deceive Ribbentrop. The 23,000 Jews, whom the Czar calls a small number of Jews, whom he would have liked to have deported, constituted at the time almost fifty per cent of the total Jewish community in Bulgaria and certainly cannot be called a small number. It would seem that the Czar knew exactly that the removal of a small number of Communist Jews from Bulgaria was likely to leave approximately 45,000 Jews in Bulgaria, rather than the 25,000 quoted; in order, however, to point to the insignificant size of the Bulgarian Jewish Community he quoted 25,000 instead of 45,000.

A third point made in Ribbentrop's telegram which is of interest is that a certain Bulgarian diplomat, Puljev, met with a certain Earle in Turkey. Judging from the name Earle, he must have been either a British or an American diplomat, and despite of the Czar's deprecation of Puljev's position in the Bulgarian Foreign Office, it is most likely that Ribbentrop had concret evidence about a meeting between Puljev and Earle, otherwise he would never have brought the matter up. Indeed, I have come across a number of references and hints about secret negotiations between Boris and the western powers during 1943; I have, however, no concrete evidence as yet to explore these possibilities.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note the way that both Arditti and Greenberg distort the meaning of the report. Arditti only quotes

the passage referring to the Czar's plans to deport from Bulgaria only a small number of Jewish Communists, without fully quoting the next sentence of Ribbentrop's telegram where the number of remaining Jews (the non-Communists) is given as 25,000. On the basis of his incomplete translation, Arditti proves that the King wanted to retain all of Bulgaria's Jews except for a small group.

Greenberg, on the other hand, uses the complete text of Ribbentrop's telegram to prove that Boris wanted to deport 23,000 Jews from Old Bulgaria, without even questioning the fact that the King may have intentionally distorted the statistics in order to deceive Ribbentrop.

#### F. The Second Attempt

The March plan for the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews of greater Bulgaria was only partially successful. More than 11,000 Jews from Thrace and Macedonia were sent to Auschwitz where they were most certainly exterminated. The planned deportation, however, of 6,000 to 8,500 Jews from Old Bulgaria met many obstacles and did not materialize.

Both Dannecker and Belev and all their subordinates were greatly upset due to their partial failure. Belev, to prove his disappointment with the government and the Czar, handed in his resignation to Gabrovski, his superior. A number of days later, however, Belev, perhaps realizing that there was still a chance for him to fulfill his supreme mission on this earth -- the utter

destruction of every Jew in Bulgaria consented to continue serving as the Commissar of Jewish Affairs.

His plan this time was first, to try to remove the Jews from their homes in the cities, to isolate them from the reach of public opinion and non-Jewish friends, and then deportation might be tried again, and perhaps this time successfully.

To provide for concentration camp facilities in Bulgaria proper, where the Jews could be interned, Belev needed supplies from the different government departments as well as their cooperation. On April 15, 1943, Belev wrote the following materials requisition to Gabrovski:

Honorable Secretary,

For the construction of twenty-five wooden barracks, each of one hundred persons' capacity, to be used for the accomodation of persons of Jewish origin, is needed 625 cubic meters of lumber...<sup>1</sup>

Gabrovski sent this requisition to Filov after enclosing to it the following comment:

The Honorable Prime Minister,

It is high time that those Bulgarian Jews who held opinions contrary to the government's policy [Communists and etc.] and who are unemployed be interned in camps. For that purpose it is necessary for the time being to construct twenty-five wooden barracks for 2,500 persons.<sup>2</sup>

At that time Belev and his commissars, and most likely with Dannecker's assistance, worked out another plan for the expulsion of the Jews from Bulgaria. The plan reads as follows:

## 1. THE PURPOSE

The deportation to the outside of the monarchy [Bulgaria] of all of the Jews except: a) Jews who are foreign citizens, excluding German and other German-occupied countries citizens; b) Jews who are deemed to be absolutely indispensable to the State; d) Jews who are sick with contagious diseases.

## 2. GENERAL PLAN

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| a) Subject to deportation are | 25,000 Jews from Sofia |
| and from the provinces        | 23,000 Jews            |
| Total                         | <u>48,000 Jews</u>     |
- b) discusses transportation details
- c) 16,000 Jews will be deported every month...
- d) It is undesirable that the removal of the Jews from the cities be done in a piecemeal way. From the decided upon date, for example, May 30, 1943, all Jews would have to be in concentration camps [the intent of this regulation was to prevent uprising and escape of Jews to the partizan's groups which would have been the case if a piecemeal removal from the cities would have been adopted].
- e) ...The deportation of the Jews from Sofia to the inland must take place first. This will remove any suspicion that deportation to Germany is planned. The local and police authorities of the provinces to which the Jews of Sofia will be deported should be notified that the Jews' presence there will be only temporary.

Regulations e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, deal with the technical arrangements such as food and etc, noting that the same plan of organization and arrangements that were used for the deportation of the Jews of Thrace would be used again.<sup>3</sup>

About the same time that this plan was being prepared, a Sofian Jew, Menachem Leon Papo, who was a member of the underground, killed Kultso Yanakieff, a radio engineer working for the government and who apparently was a supporter of the Bulgarian Fascist regime. Gabrovski, ten days after the murder of Yanakieff on May 15, 1943,

published the following public statement:

The enemies of Bulgaria do everything possible to destroy the order and security of the country. These [enemies] are foreign agents who want to bring chaos to the country, and they deprive Bulgaria of its best sons [referring to the assassinated Yanakieff]...The role of the Jews in these occurrences [against the government] is very important. The assassin of Kultso Yanakieff, for example, was a Jew, Menachem Leon Papo. He has already participated in another sabotage and assassination for which he has been sentenced to death [in absentia]. Yesterday in the hinterland a group of seven saboteurs was apprehended. They were armed and ready for their destructive activities. Six out of these seven saboteurs were Jews.<sup>4</sup>

All indicators point to the fact that the possibility for the expulsion of the Jews was getting better. On May 17, Gunter, Eichmann's assistant at IV B4, sent the following note to Von Tadden from the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin:

I have taken note of your May 24th telephone conversation with Beckerle [Von Tadden phoned Beckerle in Sofia on March 14th prompting him to bring the Jewish problem in Bulgaria to a successful solution]; and I declare that the following attitude must be adopted in your communications with Beckerle:

The still present 51,000 Jews following the expulsion of the 11,500 Jews from the new territories, constitutes a great danger in the rear [back] of the German armies in southwestern Europe. As the major pretext against their deportation [of Jews] to the East, Czar Boris has stated on different occasions that these Jews are absolutely indispensable for the construction projects of Bulgaria.

So far, 6,000 Jews are included in the labor forces. It seems that in the near future another 8,000 Jews will be mobilized for the labor groups; thus, in the very near future the entire Jewish population which is capable of labor would be mobilized into labor groups.

With the above mobilization, the entire Jewish population of Bulgaria would be bound up [i.e. every Jewish family would have some family representative mobilized and

thus become not available for deportation], since in the case of deportation to the East a separation of the families is undesirable and does not correspond to the underlying basis of the final solution [It was the German practice never to separate families during deportation, especially in the case where the men were left behind, since separation always resulted in riots and disorders by the remaining members of the family. In addition, I suspect that the Germans wanted primarily the men who were capable of labor, and during 1943 Germany was experiencing a shortage of labor in their factories which were adjacent to the death camps].

The results of the labor of the Jews in their construction of railroads and highways has been so far very insignificant. For example, in the count of Stara-Zagora 2,000 Jews are working under very poor supervision by a personnel which is politically ignorant [i.e. the officers and guards were not politically trained anti-Semites]. These Jews have succeeded in attaining a day of labor of only a number of hours, and in general, they lead very good lives. In the same vicinity there is a labor camp for Greeks who, contrary to the Jew's situation, are forced to work twelve hours daily. Even the Bulgarian Commissar of Jewish Affairs [Belev] is of the opinion that Bulgaria is not receiving any significant [worthwhile] results from the labor of the Jewish groups. In addition, it must be said that by the mobilization of the Jewish males, families are separated which results in a propaganda against the government and the policy of the Axis which is blamed for all anti-Jewish measures [text not clear].

In conclusion, it must be indicated that the Bulgarian Government, in a rather clear manner, by its mobilization of the Jews into labor forces, is seeking a pretext against the evacuation proposed by Germany and is making this evacuation at present more or less impossible.

For the sake of a speedy final solution as desired by the Reich Fuhrer, the German-Bulgarian negotiation for the deportation of all the Jews of Bulgaria eastward must utilize the extremely favorable [for that purpose] present climate which was created by the last assassination that took place in Sofia [referring to Yanakieff's assassination by Papo].<sup>5</sup>

The German Government began putting the pressure on its representatives in Bulgaria, who in turn did the same to the Bulgarian Government officials.

Beckerle needed no prompting on the part of the Gestapo or the Foreign Office in Berlin concerning the solution of the Jewish problem in Bulgaria. He was personally interested in the issue. Von Tadden's telephone call from Berlin, however, gave him additional reason to see Gabrovski and to indicate to him the urgency of the matter. He went to see Gabrovski immediately, and as a result of their conversation, Gabrovski made a declaration to the press, which was published in the Bulgarian press on May 15, 1943. The general content of the press release is conveyed by telegram #746 sent from the German Legation in Sofia on the day of the press release, May 15th to Berlin. Telegram #746 reads as follows:

The statement of the Minister of Interior, Gabrovski, in today's press concerning the current government action against the terrorists [partisans] has brought about many comments in the political circles here...

Gabrovski said that all the recent assassinations can be linked to the same group whose members are directed by a central agency abroad. Further, [in his statement] he officially declared that the assassin of Yanakieff is a Jew, a fact which thus far has been kept a secret by the police from the public. Also he said that six out of the seven terrorists caught yesterday in Rusjuk were Jews...<sup>6</sup>

Gabrovski made the above facts publicly known during his press conference following his conversation with Beckerle. The question is, why did the police withhold from the public the identity of Yanakieff's assassin for ten days, from May 5th until May 15th? If the government was interested in psychologically conditioning the public to the fact that the Jews constituted

danger to the State (and thus facilitate their eventual expulsion), then one may safely assume that all news that would contribute to that effect would be immediately used, rather than "kept as a secret by the police" for ten days. Apparently the government during the first week of May was not yet ready for a public smearing of the Jews.

Concerning the second accusation by Gabrovski, i.e. that six out of the seven terrorists caught were Jews, Arditti claims that the whole story about the terrorists having been caught was a fabrication (on the part of Gabrovski and his underlings).<sup>7</sup>

Assuming the correctness of Arditti's statement, it further points to the fact that suddenly anti-Semitic ammunition was needed, and stale news as well as fabricated accusations were used to that end. As Beckerle indicated above, Gabrovski's statement caused many comments in the political circles, and the Jewish problem was brought into focus again. A decision about the Jewish problem had to be made, and the only one who could make it was the Czar. On May 20, 1943, Gabrovski went to see the Czar and presented him with two different plans concerning the Jewish problem, both of them prepared by Belev. Plan number one called for the deportation of all of Bulgaria's Jews to the East. Plan number two called for deportation of the Jews of Sofia to the provinces and was to serve as an alternative should plan number one be rejected by the King. Gabrovski, under Belev's influences, was in favor of plan number one, which the King rejected in favor of plan number two.<sup>8</sup>

The day following the Czar-Gabrovski meeting, on May 21, 1943,

the Minister's Council met and passed resolution #70, declaring:

The Commissariat of Jewish Affairs is empowered in accordance with paragraph twenty-nine of the August 26, 1942 Law to resettle into the hinterland all the Jews living in Sofia excluding those Jews who are either of the following: married to non-Jews; or are under civil mobilization [Indispensable to the State through their service]; or have converted to Christianity before August 29, 1942; or suffer from contagious diseases.

This decree is not subject to publication in the Official Gazette.<sup>9</sup>

The Jewish community of Sofia found out about the proposed resettlement of the Jews of Sofia to the hinterland from two sources independent of each other. First, a worker from the government printing office brought to Mr. Leon Farhi, one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Sofia, a sample copy of the expulsion order which the printing office was to print. Second, Miss Lilliana Panitsa, Belev's secretary, informed Dr. Buko Levi, a member of the Consistory, that all the employees of the Commissariat were ordered not to leave their offices (since the expulsion would have required round the clock activity of the Commissariat people).

Orders of expulsion were delivered to 2,000 families on the afternoon of May 21st. More orders continued to be delivered on May 22nd. The order notified its recipients that they had to leave Sofia within seventy-two hours. The destination designated in the order varied; all of the Jews, however, were being resettled in small towns in the hinterland. Every person was allowed to take 30-40 kilograms (60-80 pounds) of personal belongings; all other possessions were to be left behind.

The members of the Consistory gathered on May 21st to discuss possible ways and means for action. Many prominent non-Jewish Bulgarians were visited by members of the Consistory and urged that they intervene with the Czar for the Jews. On May 23rd, an important meeting took place in the home of General Damyan Veltchev, former Chief Commander of the Bulgarian Armed Forces, which sought immediate intervention with the Czar on behalf of the Jews of Sofia. To this meeting were invited twenty persons, most of whom were either former secretaries of departments in the Bulgarian Government or generals in the reserves. Their decision was to seek an appointment with the King and that the following petition be served to Czar Boris:

For the past two days the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs has been ordering Jews from Sofia...to leave Sofia within three days for the hinterland towns...and eventually probably to be expelled outside of the borders of the State.

This expulsion of innocent Bulgarian citizens who possess equal rights and whose expulsion is executed by force...is unwelcome to the majority of the Bulgarian people and is accepted with anger.

The decision for this inhuman treatment [of the Jews] can be revoked only by His Majesty since His Majesty is [on the final account] the government; otherwise, [if the expulsion takes place] the responsibility would be placed upon His Majesty.

We see it as our supreme duty to make it known to His Majesty the fate that awaits our compatriots, the Jews, who are destined for expulsion for no wrong committed by them, just as the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia were expelled.

We rest assured that His Majesty will revoke the fateful decision [awaiting the Jews], and we incline his ear to our warning and cancel the [expulsion] order.<sup>10</sup>

May 24th is a national holiday in Bulgaria, and in 1943 it was going to be celebrated as usual with military parades and public manifestations, all reviewed from the grandstand in Sofia by the King and other dignitaries. This year, however, May 24th was to be the decisive day for the Jewish community of Sofia.

There is great divergency of opinion as to what exactly took place in Sofia on May 24, 1943. I shall not attempt to examine and to reconcile the different versions describing the day's events. I will merely cite them.

Joseph Tenenbaum writes:

Whatever measures were adopted, the people invariably offered resistance and foiled the German designs. On May 23, 1943, the decree of Jewish evacuation from Sofia to the provincial towns was promulgated by the government at the instigation of the Nazis. Next day a huge demonstration of the population converged on the Royal Palace in protest against the evacuation of the Jews. The police broke up the demonstration and four hundred demonstrators and ring-leaders were jailed. The orthodox Metropolitan and the Papal Nuncio also made representations to the government against some of these measures.<sup>11</sup>

In Hitler's Ten Year War on the Jews, the following account of May 24th is given:

On May 20th, the Berlin radio made the startling announcement that the entire Jewish population of Sofia numbering some 25,000 had to be out of the city within three days. The German news agency DNB reported that Jews who did not leave within the prescribed 72 hours 'will be compulsorily transferred to Poland by virtue of an agreement made between the Bulgarian and German governments.' The Minister of Interior explained that 'The measure has become necessary in the interests of the nation.'

The announcement of the deportation order brought

turmoil in the capital. Crowds of Bulgarians massed in various parts of the city, shouting, 'We want the Jews to remain!' and charging that the government was a tool in the hands of Germany. In the district around Klementina Stree, several thousand Jews formed a procession and marched through the streets in protest until they were dispersed by police clubs. At 6 o'clock on the evening of May 26th, when the first group of 4,000 Jews was being marched off to the railroad station, the column was blocked by a great throng of Bulgarians singing their national anthem. Another crowd converged upon the Ministry of the Interior building, shouting anti-Axis slogans. When the police charges broke up the demonstration, the protesting crowd regrouped to parade before the Sofia synagogue. In the scuffle that followed, the police finished second, and the military had to intervene. Several hundred demonstrators were arrested. The people of Sofia won a brief reprieve for about half the Jews scheduled for expulsion that evening.<sup>12</sup>

Rabbi Daniel Zion, who was at the time a rabbi in Sofia, relates in his memoirs, that on May 24th, thousands of Jews decided to express their protests against the expulsion by marching toward the Royal Palace. Their protest march, however, was dispersed by armed police.<sup>13</sup>

Nathan Greenberg is of the opinion that the demonstration did take place, and furthermore, that the Jews who were marching toward the palace were joined by passersby (non-Jews) who made the Jews' protest their own cause. Greenberg thinks that it was this manifestation of brotherhood that proved to the Czar and the government that the Jews of Bulgaria were part and parcel of Bulgaria.<sup>14</sup>

Arditti, it is not surprising, is of the opposite opinion. He was a member of the Consistory in 1943, and he maintained the position of the Consistory concerning the events of May 24th, 1943.

His account follows:

It is true that a protest march was scheduled to leave from the synagogue of Yetzch-Bunar [The Jewish ghetto of Sofia, primarily populated by the low socio-economic Jewish families of Sofia]; a delegation, however from the Consistory made up of Haimov, Fintsi, and myself [B. Arditti] tried to influence the multitude not to demonstrate. The members of the Zionist youth group formed a human fence around the gathered crowd and assisted us in our efforts to prevent the demonstration. At that time [While the crowd was still gathered before the synagogue], armed police units attacked the crowd and dispersed it. About 250 demonstrators were jailed. All of the arrested were Jews.<sup>15</sup>

Arditti brings additional evidence from four sources independent of the Consistory to prove that first, the contemplated demonstration never left the Yutzch-Bunar Synagogue; and second, that there were no non-Jews among the gathered crowd.

The question may be asked, what prompted the Jewish community of Sofia, its Consistory, groups of prominent Bulgarians, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Stephan of Sofia, the Papal Nuncio, and many others to protest the Czar's order, if the purpose of the proposed decree was only for the resettlement of the Jews of Sofia in the towns of the hinterland, rather than their expulsion from Bulgaria? It is very likely that the protests on the part of the Jews, as well as non-Jews, were due to misinformation on the part of the demonstrators and protestors. It was the general opinion that the expulsion from Sofia was only the first stage toward the final solution, to be followed by expulsion to the Eastern territories. The suspicion that the removal from Sofia was to be followed by total expulsion from the country was based

upon Belev's plan and intentions, which were well known to the public. As we will see from Hoffman's report of June 7, 1943, whose text will shortly follow, the above suspicion regarding Belev's ultimate intentions was not unfounded. The protestors and demonstrators, both Jews and non-Jews, however, were not familiar with the Czar's decision to adopt plan B, namely, resettlement of the Jews of Sofia in the hinterland.

The Jewish community of Sofia was informed about the Czar's decision that the Jews of Sofia would not be expelled outside of the borders of Bulgaria through Metropolitan Stephan on May 24, 1943. The Metropolitan made the following statement to Rabbi Daniel Zion:

Go and tell your people that the Czar gave solemn promise before the Prime Minister [Filov] and me that the Jews of Bulgaria will not be expelled outside of the country. Go and communicate to them this message; comfort them; and may they [your people] believe in the providence of God who never forgets his children. Go in peace.<sup>16</sup>

Rabbi Daniel Zion communicated the Metropolitan's message to the crowd that was gathered awaiting the return of the Metropolitan from the Royal Palace.

The next day, May 25th, marked the beginning of the Jewish exodus. During the following twelve days, 19,153 Jews left Sofia and were resettled in over twenty small and middle-sized towns in the hinterland of Bulgaria. A few hundred Jews, for various reasons, were taken to the concentration camp, Somovit, in Bulgaria. About 2,300 indispensable Jews were left in Sofia.

An excellent summary of the events that took place in Bulgaria during the months of April and May of 1943 was prepared and sent by police attaché Hoffman to the Gestapo in Berlin on June 7th. The Hoffman report to the Gestapo was enclosed in the report sent on the same date by Beckerle from Sofia to the Foreign Office in Berlin. The following is the translation of both reports, first Beckerle's and then Hoffman's:

From: Beckerle in Sofia  
 To: The Foreign Office in Berlin  
 Subject: The Jewish Problem in Bulgaria

I refer you to the report which was sent today from here by Hoffman, the attaché for police questions. I want to emphasize that you should be convinced that we are doing here all that is possible concerning the Jewish question in order to achieve the final clarification of the issue.

Concerning the productivity factor of the Jews [labor factor], I point to the fact that the King, as well as the Prime Minister and other important personalities, have emphasized the importance of the Jewish labor force for the Bulgarian economy. Also, there are no complaints about the productivity of the Jews employed in the road and rail construction, but to the contrary, always the necessity to employ additional forced labor brigades is stressed because of the scarcity of manpower which makes them indispensable. The reports of Commissar Belev should not be valued as absolute and reliable because Belev belongs to the opposition movement which is in an antagonistic relationship to the Prime Minister... [Belev was more extreme in his Fascism than Filov and the rest of the government which brought about antagonism]. Many times I had doubts about Belev's activities because he did not foresee or pay regard to important issues. In fact, the development of the Jewish question in Bulgaria proved me to be right.

I am firmly convinced that the Prime Minister, as well as the government desire and strike for a final absolute solution to the Jewish question, but they are hand-tied by the mentality of the Bulgarian people who lack the ideological enlightenment which we [Germans] possess.

The Bulgarian people, who have been raised among Armenian, Greek, and Gypsy minorities see in the Jews nothing abhorrent that will justify action against them. Since the majority of Bulgarian Jews are artisans and laborers, and in contrast to the other [non-Jewish] laborers, they are regarded as diligent workers. The Bulgarian Government, in my opinion, is right in approaching the Jewish problem from a different point of view, [not by trying to prove that the Bulgarian Jews were parasites], namely, the participation of Jews in the armed political assaults and in anti-Axis and pro-Communist activities. It was possible to predict that further underground activities performed by Jews will cause the Jewish problem here to become acute again; and so it happened.

The technical difficulties that will ensue following the deportation of the Jews from Sofia to the hinterland will probably contribute to their faster deportation to the Eastern territories.

Anyway, I regard it as tactically improper on our part to apply immediate pressure concerning the solution of the Jewish question here since this will imply that the deportation was our responsibility....

In conclusion, I may say that the Prime Minister and the government will endeavor to solve the Jewish problem according to our approach, and if we will behave tactfully and skillfully we will soon achieve our desired target.

Since the whole issue is very vital to our security and interwoven with our aims, I will keep the Jewish problem always before me and will do my best to hasten its solution.

Signed: Beckerle<sup>17</sup>

The following is the report from Police Attache of the German Embassy in Sofia to the Gestapo in Berlin:

Subject: The Deportation of the Jews

1. In my report from April 5, 1943, I summarized that in the deportation of the Jews will soon be resumed. During April, the situation has changed unfavorably [deteriorated] because the Bulgarian Government, under the influence of the Czar, ceased considering the

possibility of deportation, but instead began mobilizing the Jews to labor groups. Now, this Jewish labor action has encountered two major obstacles:

- A. The productivity of the Jews is in no relationship to the input [all the money and materials spent on the transportation, administration, and etc. for these Jews was much more than the benefits from the road construction].
  - B. It is impossible to build the necessary barracks for the Jewish labor groups.
2. Following the assassination committed on May 5, 1943, of the radio engineer, Yanakieff, by the Jew, Papo, the Jewish problem came again into focus. At the same time a communist band of seven men was apprehended in Rusjuk, among them six Jews. The Minister, Gabrovski, after these incidents, issued a statement which was also quoted in the German press in which he emphasized the role of the Jews in these terroristic activities. This statement was made by him without doubt as a psychological preparation for further anti-Jewish actions. Belev, too, submitted to Minister Gabrovski new plans for deportation utilizing these latest developments.

Dannecker informed me that Belev proposed two plans:

- A. Deportation of all Jews from Bulgaria to the East territories for reasons of internal security
- B. Resettlement of the 25,000 Jews from Sofia to the hinterland if Plan A is not possible to carry out

Plan A would have been very difficult to execute because of the insufficient number of police forces available to carry out a round up of the Jews. Despite the projected difficulties, Belev was ready to carry out Plan A [pending the government's approval of it].

- 3. Gabrovski personally accepted Belev's suggestion [for deportation]. Before his audience with King Boris on May 20, 1943, Gabrovski advocated the approval of Plan A; the King, however, decided to start immediately with the deportation of the Jews to the provinces. Thus, Plan A was rejected and B was adopted.
- 4. The deportation to the provinces is taking place at present in the following way. Up to now, about four to six thousand Jews a day are receiving their notice for evacuation in which the train and the city of evacuation are indicated....

Belev's office established control and check points at railroad stations to register the departing Jews. The Jews who did not leave the cities within the prescribed time received an extension period of 36 hours. After this deadline, they were arrested by the police and were brought by force to their destined towns and villages. As far as we can judge now, approximately 90 per cent of the summoned Jews voluntarily obeyed the order. Originally, it was planned that these evacuated Jews should be resettled in towns where Jews already lived, but the Minister of Defense insisted that in no case would Jews be resettled in border towns. With this restriction, there were only eighteen to twenty towns to which Jews could be evacuated. They are taken in, generally, by other Jewish families, and if this is not possible they are lodged in vacant schools.

5. The furniture of the evacuated Jews from Sofia is sold on public auction after their departure. Their apartments were made available to other people. The lodging in the provincial towns of the 5,000 Jews already evacuated could be regarded only as a temporary measure because the school buildings are vacant only during the summer vacation.

Since all the Jews have at their disposal great quantities of money, without doubt, the food prices will soar highly in these towns. We can, therefore, expect that in the provinces all the growing anti-Jewish attitude will become more pronounced. Also from the point of view of internal security, the concentration of a large number of Jews in towns, which were not prepared to accept them, will create a certain danger in itself.

We may, therefore, expect that even the King and also the Bulgarian Government will recognize that this evacuation is only a temporary solution which must lead to the deportation to the Eastern territories.

6. The evacuation of the Jews of Sofia to the provinces was announced on May 23, 1943. On the next day, a large crowd assembled for the purpose of demonstrating before the King's Palace. The police prevented them from reaching the Palace and took 400 demonstrators into custody, 120 of them being Jews who were brought to the concentration camp, Samovit. The same day, the Rabbi of Sofia tried to persuade the Papal representative, as well as the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Stephan, to intervene. Because of the attempt on the part of the rabbis of Sofia to seek help, Gabrovski ordered their arrest until further

notice. The Chief Rabbi, of Sofia could not be arrested because he stayed in the home of the Metropolitan Stephan.

Propagandists spread the news that the deportation is postponed for two weeks. Also they spread the rumor that Sofia will suffer aerial bombardment immediately after their departure. They did not succeed in getting the expected reaction from the population of Sofia.

7. Belev has already declared to the S.S. Dannecker several times that the general deportation will be carried out in the near future. Belev urgently requested that the vacant ships which are at present docked on the Danube be kept in readiness for the transportation of the Jews which will take place the first half of the month of June. At the moment, there are five big ships and one small one at our disposal. They can transport about 25,000 Jews during a month by making three round trips. Belev is even ready to pay the expenses for the idleness of the ships [20,00 leva per diem] ....
8. According to the schedule planned by Belev, the deportation of the Jews from Sofia to the provinces will end on June 7, 1943. After that time there will probably remain two to three thousand Jews in Sofia....
9. As I have already reported to you in my last report from April 5, 1943, it is improper to assume that the Bulgarian Government, especially Filov and Gabrovski, has seriously attempted to sabotage the Jewish deportation. Especially, I must point out the impeccable attitude of Filov before the German Ambassador here concerning the Jewish question. The German Ambassador tried several times to influence Filov to speed up the solution of the Jewish question in Bulgaria. Filov always assured him that he is determined to deport all Jews to the East. If, despite all, the deportation of the Jews is meeting with more obstacles than has been the case in the other countries under the Reich's sphere of influence, then it is so because you have to consider that the Bulgarian Government has problems in the solution of the Jewish problem because it has to consider the internal political consequences, as well as the foreign implications this solution will have. If we compare, for example, the behavior of the Bulgarian Government with the behavior of the Hungarian Government concerning the Jewish problem, then the Bulgarian Government will definitely be judged as the one having a more positive attitude to the solution [proposed by us] than the Hungarian Government. And here we have to take into account that the attitude of the Hungarian Government causes the Bulgarian Government many political difficulties [The Hungarians, by

their passivity toward the Jews make it difficult for the Bulgarian Government to implement the Jewish solution]. Also it is the desire of the Bulgarian Government to avoid excessive preoccupation by the world press of the Jewish question in Bulgaria. The government, therefore, wants to execute the deportation in a way as not to give the world press reasons to assail Bulgarian politics. This consideration on the part of the Bulgarian Government is only a tactical maneuver and will not deter the government from implementing the solution.

In my April report, I mentioned the attitude of Filov toward the Swiss Ambassador here who represents Britain's interest in Bulgaria. At present, I can cite another example for the anti-Jewish attitude of Filov. The deputy of the Sobranje, Dimiter Andreov, well-known anti-Semite, reported to Belev that Filov spoke to the Sobranje members after the assassination of the member of the Sobranje, Sotir Yanev. Filov replied to a question asked by one of the deputies concerning the deportation of the Jews outside of Bulgaria by saying that deportation will be pursued by all means. This he said in an unequivocal manner.

10. After the deportation of the Jews from Sofia, and until the final deportation materialized, there will arise, without doubt, new complications. In any event, we have made considerable progress toward the ultimate solution. The lot has been cast, and we are beyond the point of return. In conclusion, I may say that the promise of the Bulgarian Government, especially of Filov given to the German Ambassador that the Jews of Bulgaria will be deported to the east, will be kept.

Signed: Hoffman<sup>18</sup>

The June 7th, 1943 reports of Beckerle and Hoffman contradict each other in one respect. This contradiction may be attributed to the fact that Beckerle drew his information from Gabrovski and the other members of the government, while Hoffman, in his position, dealt primarily with Belev. The contradiction is with respect to the productivity of the Jewish labor groups. Beckerle states, in the name of the Czar and Filov, these labor groups to be very

important to the state economy, while Hoffman states the opposite.

An interesting point is made in Hoffman's report when he states that 400 people were arrested by the police during the May 24th demonstration in Sofia, and that 120 of the arrested were Jews who were sent to the concentration camp, Samovit. If Hoffman's information was correct, it means that 280 of the arrested demonstrators were Bulgarians (non-Jews). This would imply that the opinion expressed by the writers, who declared that many Bulgarians joined the Jewish demonstration, is correct.

The expulsion of the Jews from Sofia in the hinterland was followed by a similar expulsion of the Jews from the cities of Stara-Zagora and Varna. Stara-Zagora was an important railroad center, while Varna, located on the Black Sea, was a naval base used by both the Bulgarian, as well as the German Navy. The resettlement of the Jews of these two cities in the hinterland was completed on June 10, 1943.<sup>19</sup>

These resettlements brought to an end the measures against the Jews initiated during the months of May and June of 1943. As far as the Bulgarian Government and the Czar were concerned, the solution of the Jewish question in Bulgaria was brought to an end.

Both Beckerle and Hoffman had realized the failure on their part to bring the Jewish solution in Bulgaria to its desired conclusion. With a zeal typical to the Nazi mentality, however, neither one of them allowed the present situation to stop them from further attempts. Belev, the Commissar, persisted to ignite hope in Beckerle and Hoffman that the resettlement in the hinterland

was only the first stage of the total deportation scheme. To this effect, we learn from telegram #792 from the 25th of May sent by Beckerle to Berlin: "...According to Belev, the resettlement from Sofia is only a preparatory stage for expulsion to the eastern territories..."<sup>20</sup>

A week later on June 1st, 1943, Von Tadden from the Foreign Ministry in Berlin sent the following letter to Eichmann:

According to telegraphic report from the German Embassy in Sofia, Belev, the Commissar for Jewish Affairs, has stated that the resettlement of the Jews from Sofia is only a preparatory stage for expulsion to the east...<sup>21</sup>

Additional proof that Belev did not abandon his original intention for the deportation of the Jews eastward is cited in the previously-quoted Hoffman report from June 7th, whereby, Hoffman declared that Belev had arranged for six ships to be standing by idle on the Danube awaiting to transport their Jewish passengers down the Danube to a harbor in Austria. Considering the shortage of transportation vehicles for the German war effort that prevailed in mid-1943, the idling of six ships on the Danube may well indicate that Belev was still very optimistic about the final solution. The cost of keeping the ships idle, which amounted to 20,000 leva per day, was paid out of the "Jewish fund" of the Commissariat. This fund consisted of monies that were confiscated from the Jews. In Bulgaria, as in other European countries, the Jews were to pay for their transportation with the money and possessions confiscated from

them by the government.

On June 24th, Hoffman and Beckerle sent the following report to the (Gestapo) attache group IV B4 in Berlin:

From: Beckerle  
 To: Eichmann's office Attache Group IV B4  
 Berlin S.W. 68  
 Prinz Albrech Street 8  
 Subject: Report on the progress of the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews

1. Deportation of Sofia's Jews in the hinterland has been completed. 20,000 Jews were displaced.
2. Their situation in the province developed to their detriment as I predicted in my letter of June 7, 1943. Scarcity of food and the steep increase in housing rentals has taken place in the towns where Jews were sent.
- 3a. The attitude of the Bulgarian Government is strongly influenced by the speech Kallay [the Prime Minister of Hungary] given at the end of May, 1943.
- 3b. A few days ago, Boris received a delegation of the Red Cross led by the Swiss Captain Shapuissa. It is highly probable that they discussed the Jewish question during this meeting. [Beckerle is hinting to Eichmann that at present it is difficult or unwise to put additional pressure upon Boris and the Bulgarian Government to expel the Jews. The reason for this is Kallay's speech and the Red Cross visit]
4. In our opinion for the moment there should not be further German pressure applied upon the Bulgarian Government about the Jewish question because of the new situation that has developed here following Kallay's speech and Shapuissa's visit with the King.

General political considerations and the Bulgarian mentality at present dictate that the deportation should stem [originate] with the Bulgarian Government itself as a voluntary act, rather than appear as if the solution has been suggested by us.

5. At least for the time being, therefore, we have to take into account a temporary halt in the process toward the final solution. The unbearable situation, nevertheless, which was caused in the provinces by the Jews' deportation

from Sofia, may be an excellent starting point for further development in accordance with our program.

Signed: Hoffman and Beckerle<sup>22</sup>

This report by Beckerle and Hoffman mentions Kallay's speech to have had considerable influence upon the present Bulgarian policy toward the Jews. Kallay, the Prime Minister of Hungary, delivered the following speech during the last day of May, 1943:

In Hungary live more Jews than in all of western Europe.... It is self-explanatory that we must attempt to solve this problem; hence the necessity for temporary measures and an appropriate regulation. The final solution, however, can be none other than the complete resettlement of Jewry. But I cannot bring myself to keep this problem on the agenda so long as the basic prerequisite of the solution, namely, the answer to the question where the Jews are to be resettled, is not given. Hungary will never deviate from those precepts of humanity which, in the course of its history, it has always maintained in racial and religious questions.<sup>23</sup>

In reality, the Hoffman and Beckerle report of June 24, 1943 brings to an end the epic of the "second attempt" of the Bulgarian Commissariat and the German Gestapo to expel the Jews of Bulgaria to the eastern territories. Both, the first and the second, attempts had failed to achieve their ultimate objective; and yet, neither of them was a complete failure. The result of the first attempt was death for the 11,000 Jews of Thrace and Macedonia, while the second attempt brought about the resettlement in the interior of the Jews of Sofia, Varna, and Stara-Zagora.

The war realities had failed to lend support to Germany's desire for the final solution in Bulgaria. In view of the general situation Bulgaria was reluctant to collaborate; and yet, as we

shall see in the next chapter, the Gestapo and the German Foreign Office in Berlin felt that despite the course that the war had taken, their first and foremost task was the creation of a "judenfrei" Europe.

#### G. The Beginning of the End

During the month of August a difference of opinion developed between the SS IV B4 in Berlin and the German Embassy in Sofia. The crux of the problem was whether the evacuation of the Jews from Sofia in the hinterland was progression or regression in the implementation of the final solution. The Gestapo felt that the dispersion of the Jews in the provinces was an obstacle to the final solution. Beckerle claimed the opposite to be true.

On August 15, 1943, Wagner (Wagner was Luther's successor as head of inland section number 2 in the Foreign Office in Berlin) sent the following telegram to Beckerle in Sofia.

The Gestapo has a number of times requested that a firm attitude be adopted before the Bulgarian Government for the Jewish solution in Bulgaria. This must result in deportation to the East for the following reasons: The resettlement of the Jews in the hinterland has not brought about the desired anti-Semitic eruption [among the Bulgarian population of the provinces]. The resettlement of the Jews afforded them an opportunity to increase their propaganda in Bulgaria. The espionage activities of the enemy are assisted by the Jewish network spread in Bulgaria.

The Jewish influence upon senior government and clerical circles is constantly on the increase; the final solution, therefore, of the Jewish problem is becoming more difficult. In the event of an enemy landing in the Balkans, the Jews will constitute a serious danger in the rear of the fighting [German] armies. Security reasons make the rapid solution of

the problem imperative. The Gestapo is of the opinion that the Bulgarian Government will comply with the German pressure [for deportation] because they [the Bulgarians] are prepared for a solution through deportation [to the East], but in order to be "covered up" [for their crime] before the allied forces, they desire German pressure [i.e., the Bulgarian Government would expel its Jews if they could claim that the Germans gave them no choice].

Before further discussion about the matter please let me know your opinion.<sup>1</sup>

Beckerle, three days later, on August 18, 1943, sent the following lengthy reply to Berlin:

Concerning telegram #1243 of August 15th, judging from evidence collected by me, the resettlement of the Sofian Jews in the hinterland has undoubtedly brought about an increase in anti-Semitism in the towns concerned. With respect to the intensification of Jewish influence upon senior government officials and clerical circles, this cannot even be discussed [Beckerle completely discounts the S.S. claim that the Jewish influence over the ruling circles is increasing].

Concerning [your claim] that further deportation of the Jews is made imperative for security reasons, the military attaché of the legation [In Sofia] has under my orders negotiated with the [Bulgarian] Department of Defense. The Department of Defense has fully agreed to act upon all German proposals concerning the matter; the department stated, however, that the matter of the deportation of the Jews to the East is not within their jurisdiction. The Bulgarian Government for the present sharply rejects any proposal in this direction [deportation eastward], and even a strong pressure on our part at present will not [force the government to] change its decision since this [the retention of the Jews in the country] is part of the policy pursued by the government presently.

The King, during his April visit with Ribbentrop, did express, even though subtly, his negative attitude concerning the German plan for deportation of the Jews. From my conversations with the ministers who are concerned with the matter and from my yesterday's discussion with Filov, I know that for the present it is useless to ask for the implementation of deportation. The policy of the Bulgarian

Government at present is decided by the following twofold criteria. First, the government desires to avoid all international political complications. Second, it wants to steer clear of creating any sensation outside the Bulgarian borders [the deportation of the Jews would cause a sensation in the world press], especially after its refusal to accept the British proposal to allow Jewish children to immigrate to Palestine, a refusal rationalized by the Bulgarians to the British on the basis of different pretexts.

Just as the Bulgarian Government has kept the secret that Bulgarian Air Force fighter planes participated in the downing of the American bombardiers over Ploesti [During the summer of 1943, the American Air Force experienced what may be called its worst aerial defeat when hundreds of American bombers stationed in North Africa attempted a bombardment of the oil fields of Ploest, Roumania], and just as the Bulgarian Government has forbidden all anti-Bolshevik propaganda in the country, especially when the person of Stalin is concerned, so it [the government] does not want any further actions concerning the Jewish question. The Bulgarians experience instant fear from aerial bombardments, and the government hopes that [with their refusal to deport the Jews] temporarily a false impression about the internal political situation in Bulgaria would develop in the enemy mind [the Allied Forces temporarily would be under the impression that Bulgaria was really not an enemy, but rather compelled by the German armies stationed on its land to cooperate]. And when the new offensive by the German armies begins, the danger for terrorists [aerial] bombardments over Bulgaria will be prevented.

It is without question that the Bulgarian Government is surprised that the Jewish question in Hungary and Roumania has not been brought to a conclusion, since they [the Bulgarians] were notified about it in the beginning [During January, 1943 when the final solution in Bulgaria was first contemplated, the Bulgarian Government was told that in Roumania and Hungary the solution was already on its way]. The opposite is true about these countries. In many instances immigration to Palestine has been allowed, and only by the Bulgarian's refusal to grant [these refugees] a transit visa, upon our intervention, has their immigration to Palestine been prevented. The attitude of these countries [Roumania and Hungary] obviously has an effect upon Bulgaria, since Bulgaria does not want to take upon itself the luxury of being the champion of anti-Jewish measures.

Despite all [The above], my attitude remains unchanged, that we will solve the Jewish question completely as soon as the German offensive begins and the enemy's war successes are

stopped. Then when the Germans again become the victors the time for our intervention [by Beckerle before the Bulgarian Government] would have come. We, here, do point out constantly the danger constituted by the Jews, every one of whom is a sworn enemy of our war purpose. For the time, considering the general political situation, I maintain that any intervention on our part to be hopeless or even dangerous. I recommend that you approach the Bulgarian Ambassador in Berlin about the problem, and I am certain that for the above mentioned reasons, it will be ascertained [during the meeting with the Bulgarian Ambassador in Berlin] that no results can be expected for the time being.<sup>2</sup>

Beckerle's answer to Berlin speaks for itself and needs no commentaries. The only factor that could bring about the deportation of the Jews of Bulgaria would be Germany's victory in the battlefield.

King Boris died on August 28, 1943. (The reasons for his death were unconvincing, and informed sources have attributed his death to the Germans). Wagner, in his August 31, 1943 report to S.S. Obergruppenfuhrer und General der Polizei Dr. Kaltenbrunner, mentions among other things the death of King Boris. The Wagner report is almost a verbatim copy of the Beckerle report to Wagner of August 18, 1943; thus, there is no point quoting it here except for a number of points added by Wagner to the original document. These additions are:

...Further it is necessary that we wait [about the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews] and see the developments in Bulgaria following the recent death of King Boris.

Therefore, it is not only hopeless, but even politically dangerous to undertake any steps concerning the Jewish question in Bulgaria at present. Nevertheless, I will be very grateful if the Ministry for Foreign Affairs [Wagner's Ministry] would receive all the materials available [to the S.S.]

about the dangerous activities of the Jews in Bulgaria in order that our Embassy in Sofia will not miss any opportunity to alert the Bulgarian Government about the dangers of the Jews.

Heil Hitler

Signed: Wagner<sup>3</sup>

The above correspondence brings to conclusion the official documents available concerning the Jewish question in Bulgaria. In the following August of 1943, even the most optimistic German officials had realized that their plans for the expulsion of the Jews of Bulgaria had failed. After the death of King Boris and the military defeats suffered by the Germans during the summer and fall of 1943, a change in regime took place in Bulgaria. A new cabinet was formed under Prime Minister Dobri Bozilov. Judge Stomonjakov was appointed by the new Secretary of Interior to become the Commissar of Jewish Affairs. The removal of Belev and the appointment of Stomonjakov were welcomed by the Bulgarian Jewish Community.<sup>4</sup> At the same time S.S. Dannecker quietly departed from Bulgaria without completing his mission.<sup>5</sup>

The Jews of Sofia, Varna, and Stara-Zagora, who were expelled to the provinces, remained in their towns throughout 1943 and until September 1, 1944. Their political condition, however, for the most part improved. The new Secretary of Interior during the final weeks of 1943 issued an order allowing the expelled Sofian Jews to return to Sofia for a number of days for the purpose of selling or making arrangements concerning their possession (which

for the most part had already been sold by the Commissariat).<sup>6</sup>

On August 30, 1944, nine days prior to Bulgaria's surrender to the Russian armies, it was announced that the Bulgarian Cabinet had decided to revoke all the anti-Jewish laws.<sup>7</sup>

The Bulgarian Jewish Community despite prolonged suffering had weathered the perils of the Nazi holocaust.

### III. CONCLUSION

I have traced the general history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War. It was not my intention to describe the personal histories of individual Jews who suffered under the Nazi regime, despite my emotional involvement in this area of history.

There are two significant results of my research: one, the mechanical aspect of compiling, translating, and analyzing the available materials concerned with this period of Bulgarian-Jewish history; and two, general insights into the history of the Bulgarian Jewish Community, which gives us understanding of other Jewish communities caught in the maelstrom of German occupation. How did the Bulgarian Jewish Community survive, when almost every other Jewish community met tragic decimation?

#### A. Internal Factors

The most important internal factor was the complete integration of the Jews into the Bulgarian way of life. But the Bulgarian Jewish Community was not the only European Jewish community integrated in the life of its country. As a matter of fact the first Jewish community to be destroyed by the Nazis, the German Jewish Community, was undoubtedly one of the most integrated Jewish communities of Europe.

The difference between the Bulgarian and German communities, however, is very significant. The Jews of Bulgaria exercised minimum political and economic power in the life of the country,

and being "harmless" in this respect, their removal outside of Bulgaria was unnecessary. Yet, one can easily counteract this claim by pointing to the extermination of the entire Jewish communities of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, communities that on the whole were much poorer and less influential than the Bulgarian Jewish Community. At any rate, the relatively non-influential position of Bulgarian Jews may have lessened Bulgarian interest in their destruction.

The data collected in this thesis explicitly proves that the Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church of Bulgaria intervened on behalf of the Jews during the March and May, 1943 attempted deportations. Again, however, one cannot give any considerable weight to the intervention by the Church, since Bulgaria was not the only European country where the Church intervened on behalf of the Jews.

Generally speaking, therefore, I conclude that none of the factors discussed above are, in themselves, responsible for the salvation of the Jews of Bulgaria. At their best, they may have ameliorated the condition of the Jews by some degree but certainly not more than that.

#### B. External Factors

The most important external factor was Bulgaria's alliance with Germany. Again, however, Bulgaria was not the only German ally with a Jewish problem. Roumania, Italy and Hungary were in a similar position

Roumania destroyed the Jews from northern Bukovina and

Bessarabia just as Bulgaria collaborated in the destruction of the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia. But there was a difference between Bulgaria and Roumania in this respect. Bukovina and Bessarabia were Roumanian territories (even though Roumania lost them to Russia on June 28, 1940 and which it recovered, with Germany's help, a year later in 1941). The second difference is that Roumania was the only country except Germany that set up its own killing centers. These were located in Transnistria, and they were operated by Roumanians without German help.

Like Bulgaria, Roumania did procrastinate the deportation of the 350,000 Jews of "Roumania proper." Their deportation never materialized; as mentioned above, however, the 270,000 Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia and Transylvania met the tragic fate of total annihilation.

In order to stress once again the uniqueness of the Bulgarian Jewish situation, I would like to emphasize the fact that the great majority of the half million Roumanian Jews who were exterminated were Roumanian citizens, unlike the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia who did not possess Bulgarian citizenship either before or after 1941.

Italy, under the Duce, did not sacrifice its Jews to German demands. Following the overthrow of the Duce on July 25, 1943, and the occupation of Italy by its former ally, Germany, the fate of the Jews changed for the worse. During the spring and summer of 1944, all Italian Jews who were apprehended were deported to Auschwitz.

During spring, 1944, Hungary contained 750,000 Jews, the largest concentration of Jews in Europe at the time. All attempts on the part of the RSHA to bring about the deportation of these Jews eastward had failed. On March, 15, 1944, the Hungarian Regent, Horthy, was summoned by Hitler, who gave him the choice between a military occupation by Germany or a government approved by Germany. On March 22, 1944, a German approved cabinet took office in Hungary. During the following eleven months the majority of the Hungarian Jews met death in the German concentration camps.

Bulgaria's status as an ally rather than a satellite allowed Bulgaria to retain its internal independence throughout the war. The Czar, until his death, was the undisputed leader of Bulgaria, and in this capacity he was often reluctant to cooperate with Hitler. There is no question that the autonomy and independence of Bulgaria were indirectly responsible for the failure by the Germans to destroy the Jews of Bulgaria. This, however, was only an indirect factor.

#### C. The Time Factor

The most important cause responsible for the salvation of the Bulgarian Jewish Community was the failure of Germany to win the war.

As early as 1941, Hitler had decided that Europe must be judenfrei. During the following four years the Nazi machine faithfully executed the Fuhrer's decision.

The Bulgarian Jewish Community survived the Nazi holocaust

only because Hitler failed in his design -- the conquest of Europe and the world.

Despite its uniqueness, the history of the Jews of Bulgaria during the Second World War has no positive lessons to teach. The fact that this Jewish community was the only one to survive in its entirety from among the Jewish communities of Nazi Europe should prompt one to learn a formula for community survival for the sake of future generations facing a similar fate. The conclusion of this thesis, however, proves the opposite than this desired objective; it proves that in reality there is no such formula. The Bulgarian Jewish Community was doomed to extinction, despite the spirit of brotherhood that existed between the Jews and the non-Jews, and in the face of the spirit of identification and nationalism experienced by the Bulgarian Jews for their beloved mother country.

The Bulgarian Jewish Community survived only as a chance of aimless fate. Cultural integration, a lack of prominent position, and the defeat of Germany -- these were the historical circumstances which slowed down the eventual timebomb of the Nazi holocaust. It was a freak of history, an instance where a set of coincidences changed the expected course of history. History, though blind, does have its whims and it was a historical whim, an odd combination of factors, that saved the Jews of Bulgaria from the Nazi holocaust.

## FOOTNOTES

## I. Foundations

## A. The History of the Community from its Beginning till the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Levi Herzfeld, Handelsgeschichte der Juden des Altertums quoted in Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar HaNazi, 1940-1944, p. 1.

I have tried to authenticate Benjamin Arditti's reference to Dr. Hertzfeld's work for the primary purpose of defining the term "different European nations" and its relationship to Bulgaria. Unfortunately, Dr. Hertzfeld's work is at present missing from our library.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar HaNazi, 1940-1944, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Dr. Shimon Marcus, HaYehudim B'Bulgaria, " Encyclopaedia Hebraica, Volume VII, p. 797.

<sup>6</sup>Solomon Rozanes, Divrei Yamei Israel B'Tograma, quoted in Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Shimon Marcus, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup>Eli Baruch, Iz Istoriata Na Bulgarskoto Evreistvo, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume XII, pp. 125-126.

<sup>13</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>Dr. Schulim Ochser, "Ventura," Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume XII, p. 416.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Eli Baruch, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> N. M. Gelber, "Jewish Life In Bulgaria," Jewish Social Studies, Volume VIII, April, 1946, p. 104.

B. The Beginning of the Modern Period -- from 1878 till the end of the First World War

<sup>1</sup> N. M. Gelber, "Jewish Life in Bulgaria," Jewish Social Studies, Volume VIII, April, 1946, pp. 104-105.

<sup>2</sup> Marchel Kalev, "Yahadut Bulgaria V'Tnuata HaTzionit," in HaAaron Ben Yoseph, Joseph Shapiro, ed., p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Gelber, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 108-109.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Marchel Kalev, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> N. M. Gelber, op. cit., p. 105.

C. From the End of the First World War till the Rise of Hitler in 1933

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>N. M. Gelber, "Jewish Life in Bulgaria," Jewish Social Studies, Volume VIII, April, 1946, p. 125.

Arditti contradicts Gelber and notes that the National Society for Political Renaissance was not established until after 1931 when part of the membership of the Homeland Defense split away to establish the Renaissance Society (See Arditti's "Yehudei Bulgaria," p. 28).

I am inclined to accept Arditti's dating as the more authentic, since he was an active Jewish leader in Bulgaria during these years, while Gelber wrote his article on the basis of a single visit to Bulgaria.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-28.

<sup>7</sup>Dr. Marchel Kalev, "Yahadut Bulgaria V'Tnuata HaTzionit," in HaAaron Ben Yoseph, Joseph Shapiro, ed., pp. 189-190.

<sup>8</sup>N. M. Gelber, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>9</sup>Eli Baruch, Iz Istoriata Na Bulgarskoto Evreistvo, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>N. M. Gelber, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>12</sup>Eli Baruch, Cooperatziata e Bulgarskoto Evreistvo, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup>N. M. Gelber, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>15</sup>Dr. Marchel Kalev, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>16</sup>N. M. Gelber, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

D. The Period of Uncertainty -- From the Rise of Hitler till the outbreak of the War

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Marchel Kalev, "Yahadut Bulgaria V'Tnuata HaTzionit,"

in HaAaron Ben Yoseph, Joseph Shapiro, ed., p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Eli Baruch, Iz Istoriata Na Bulgarskoto Evreistvo, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Marchel Kalev, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Eli Baruch, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Marchel Kalev, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>11</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 31, 202, 391.

<sup>13</sup>Joseph Schechtmann, "Bulgaria," in Hitler's Ten Year War On the Jews, Boris Shub, ed., p. 114.

According to Joseph Schechtmann, after 1937, when through manipulated trade pacts, the Reich achieved economic domination over Bulgaria, Nazi political influence grew rapidly.

<sup>14</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

## II. THE HISTORY OF THE BULGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

### A. Bulgaria's Role in the Second World War

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>W. L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 1079.

B. The Anti-Jewish Laws of Bulgaria

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

C. The Implementation of the Anti-Jewish Laws

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, C XII-II, V e 15.

I have in my possession on microfilm a number of documents of similar content. These documents testify to the fact that despite the persecutions of the Jews in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Legation in Paris (it may well be that other Bulgarian Legations elsewhere acted similarly; I have no evidence, however, to the effect) offered protection to the Bulgarian Jews in France, as late as the fall of 1942.

The Bulgarian documents' collection of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Library, Cincinnati, Ohio, possesses on microfilm all the documents and references pertaining to Bulgarian Jewry during the Second World War found in the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris. It is unfortunate that these documents on microfilm have not uniform system of identification, but rather, carry markings given to them by different authorities. To make reference to these documents possible, I shall include in my notation on sources appendix a table describing and identifying the documents as found in their order on the microfilm.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., XXVa-255.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., XXXVI-23, March 22, 1941; Number 17, CIV 13-215;

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., XXXVI-172, September 21, 1941.

D. Further Anti-Jewish Decrees in Bulgaria and the Desire for a Continental Solution to the Jewish Problem

<sup>1</sup>Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority, 486183/184.

The Bulgarian documents' collection possesses the photostats of all the documents and references pertaining to Bulgarian Jewry during the Second World War found in Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel. These documents have been systematically identified by the Yad Vashem Archives. In this thesis I shall use the Yad Vashem identification system.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 372043/044.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 372039.

<sup>4</sup>William Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp. 1256-1257.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>6</sup>Yad Vashem, 372033.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 372041/042.

<sup>8</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, pp. 60-61.

<sup>9</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 493.

<sup>10</sup>Yad Vashem, 486203/204/205.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 486218.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 486234/235.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 371973.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 486208/209.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 486223.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 486234/235.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 486237.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 486262/263.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 486261.

<sup>20</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., pp. 90-91. Also see R. Hilberg, op. cit., p. 481.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 91. R. Hilberg, Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.,

Both Arditti and Hilberg fail to give the source for Gabrovski's comment to Belev.

<sup>23</sup>Raul Hilberg, op. cit., p. 481.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 475.

<sup>25</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>27</sup>Raul Hilberg, op. cit., p. 481.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 482.

On the basis of Schellenberg's letter Ng-5351 of November 9, 1942 to Luther.

#### E. The Final Solution

<sup>1</sup>Abraham Asa, personal interview, July, 1961.

<sup>2</sup>Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority, 486272.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar Ha-Nazi, 1940-1944, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup>Yad Vashem 486278/279.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 486284.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 486285/286/287.

<sup>7</sup>Nathan Greenberg, Documenty, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup>Yad Vashem, 486293/294.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 486292.

<sup>10</sup>A photostat of this agreement is available in the Bulgarian documents' collection in the Hebrew Union College Library,

Cincinnati, Ohio.

- <sup>11</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 117. Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavaneto na Evreite om Bulgaria, p. 66.
- <sup>12</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 125.
- <sup>13</sup>Nathan Greenberg, Documenty, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>15</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 127.
- <sup>16</sup>Yad Vashem, K207595.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., 486316/317/318/319/320/321.
- <sup>18</sup>Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavaneto na Evreite om Bulgaria, p. 86.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 87.
- <sup>20</sup>Yad Vashem, E420913/914.
- <sup>21</sup>Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 173890/891.
- <sup>22</sup>During the course of my research I wrote to the Archives of the United States Department of State, Washington, D.C. to inquire concerning whether they possess any information about certain secret negotiations between Bulgaria and the United States during the Second World War. As yet, I have not received an answer to my letter which leads me to believe that if such information does exist, it is still considered as "classified information."

#### F. The Second Attempt

- <sup>1</sup>Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavaneto na Evreite om Bulgaria, p. 86.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- <sup>3</sup>I do not possess a documented copy of this plan; its full text is found in Mr. Greenberg's Documenty, pp. 185-186. I have no reason to suspect its authenticity despite the fact that there was no mention of this plan in the archives of the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs in Sofia on September 9, 1944. The only copy of this plan was found in the briefcase of Belev's secretary, Liliana Panitsa, a number of days after September 9th. Liliana Panitsa played a

very important role in the Commissariat and deserves a number of words at this time. She was the daughter of a well-known and democratic family from Sofia. Belev, who was a bachelor, fell under her influence, and she began helping him with his duties at the commissariat and eventually became his private secretary. A number of months after Belev's appointment as commissar, however, she began secretly helping the Jews by passing them information pertaining to the commissariat's plans about the Jews. In exchange for this information no price or reward was asked, and the information was invariably correct. For this footnote about Liliana Panitsa and the role she played, I am indebted to Mr. Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar HaNazi, 1940-1944, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> Nathan Greenberg, Documenty, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> Yad Vashem, 486341/342/343.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., K208523/524.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>8</sup> Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, NG-2357.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavanet na Evreite om Bulgaria, pp. 94-95.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> J. Tenenbaum, Race and Reich, p. 311.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Schechtmann, "Bulgaria," in Hitler's Ten Year War On the Jews, Boris Shub, ed., p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Zion, Pet Godini Pot Facistki Gnet, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavanet na Evreite om Bulgaria, p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Zion, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, NG-2357.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> Yad Vashem, 486346.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 486347.

<sup>22</sup>Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Ng 0-96 CXX 13a.

<sup>23</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, pp. 525-526.

G. The Beginning of the End

<sup>1</sup>United Restitution Organization Collection of Yad Vashem, Document 11, as quoted by Nathan Greenberg, Hitlerskiyat Natisk za Unishtojavaneto na Evreite om Bulgaria, pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Document 190, ibid., pp. 118-119, 126.

<sup>3</sup>Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, NG-3302.

<sup>4</sup>Benjamin Arditti, Yehudei Bulgaria B'Shuot HaMishtar HaNazi, 1940-1944, p. 270.

<sup>5</sup>Nathan Greenberg, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>Benjamin Arditti, op. cit., p. 270.

<sup>7</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 484.

APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

Law of January 21, 1941

Note:

There is no special Anti-Jewish Law in Bulgaria, but in the Bulgarian Official Gazette No. 16 of 1941, (January 23, 1941) we find a law named the "Law for the protection of the Nation." The first section of this law deals with secret and international organizations; the second section, with persons of Jewish descent; the third section, with anti-national and subversive activities. The final section, four, contains mostly penal provisions.

The following is a true translation of Section 2 and of Article 47 of Section 4.

## Section 2

PERSONS OF JEWISH DESCENTChapter I  
Descent

## Article 15

Persons having at least one Jewish parent are considered of Jewish descent.

Persons born (or to be born) of mixed marriages between persons of Jewish descent and Christian faith, and persons of Bulgarian descent, who have adopted or will adopt Christian faith as their first religion, are not to be considered of Jewish descent.

## Article 16

All persons of Jewish descent (or their legal representatives or guardians) are obliged to declare their descent to the County Administration or Police Station within one month of the date this law goes into effect.

This descent is to be noted in the register of the community of residence, on the identification card, and on the police card-system for persons of Jewish descent.

Persons who do not fulfill this provision will be punished by imprisonment and by a fine of 1,000 to 100,000 Levas.

## Article 17

When a birth certificate is to be made out for a person of Jewish descent, the first name of the new-born must be declared in the respective Bulgarian County. On the basis of the birth certificate, the County issues a baptismal certificate. The Board of Synagogue (of the Jewish community) can give to the new-born the name which was indicated in the baptismal certificate issued by the respective Bulgarian County. This first name must be inserted in the birth certificate.

Each person of Jewish descent must bear the first name which is indicated on his birth certificate. This name must appear on all his books and documents as, for instance, indentification cards, school diplomas, draftee and certificates, draftee release certificates, taxation certificates, business firms, etc.

## Article 18

Persons of Jewish descent who, on the date of the publication of this Law, have first names other than those indicated on their birth certificates, must within three months change them to accord with the birth certificates, and these changed first names must be inserted in all books and documents as listed in the previous article.

Persons born before 1893 must submit birth certificates from their respective Jewish Communities.

Persons of Jewish descent born in Bulgaria and naturalized there, must submit their birth certificates in their respective Counties. Those born outside Bulgaria must submit an authenticated copy of their birth certificate drawn up by the respective County of the State where they were born.

## Article 19

Persons of Jewish descent, if baptized, should have their birth certificates corrected in their home counties immediately after accordance with the decision of a competent court. The new first name is to be registered in the population register but the old Jewish name is also to be retained.

Persons of Jewish descent and of female sex, baptized and married to Bulgarians, keep the second name, (their maiden name) which is the name of the Jewish father.

Persons of Jewish descent are not to use the ending ov, ev, etch and so forth in their names. Jewish second names as

they are now and as they are registered in the birth certificate should remain unchanged.

#### Article 20

Persons of Jewish descent are not allowed to adopt or legitimize children of Bulgarian descent.

### CHAPTER II

#### GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

#### Article 21

Persons of Jewish descent are not allowed:

- a) To be naturalized in Bulgaria. Women of Jewish descent follow the nationality of their husbands.
- b) To elect or to be elected either in assemblies of public law or in assemblies of other societies and organizations having ideal purposes, unless the assembly is of an organization composed exclusively of members of Jewish descent.

All persons of Jewish descent occupying, at the date of the publication of this law, offices by election and who, by virtue of this law, cannot keep these offices, must leave said offices within one month of the date this Law goes into effect.

- c) To be employed in state, self-government, or other services of a public character as well as services in organizations of private law except purely Jewish organizations having some privileges of private law or being subsidized by the government. Jews cannot be agents or representatives of state, self-government or autonomous directorships, institutions, etc.

All persons of Jewish descent holding such offices are to quit them within one month of the date this Law goes into effect.

- d) To be released from military service.

Jews are drafted in accordance with the general law, but they perform their military service as laborers in segregated labor camps. Those who are not fit for labor service are to be assessed a military tax.

- e) To be members of organizations which are under the supervision of the War Office.

- f) To marry persons of Bulgarian descent or to live out of wedlock with such persons; marriages between persons of Jewish descent and Bulgarians, contracted after the date on which this law goes into effect are null and void.
- g) To employ persons of Bulgarian descent in domestic service in whatsoever quality or form. Domestic servants employed still employed on the date this law goes into effect are to be released within 15 days from that date.

Persons not fulfilling the requirements of this paragraph are subject to punishment of prison and a fine of from 1,000 to 30,000 Levas.

#### Article 22

In a Bulgarian or foreign school not especially designed for Jews, where admission of pupils is limited, Jews may be accepted only in the percentage to be established by the Minister of Education, provided that there are no Bulgarian candidates.

#### Chapter III

#### The Domicile of Persons of Jewish Descent

#### Article 23

After this law goes into effect, no person of Jewish descent is allowed to establish a new domicile without the authority of the Directorate of Police.

Persons violating this provision will be punished by the Minister<sup>1</sup> of the Interior and National Health by a fine of from 3,000 to 25,000 Levas; in addition, the old domicile will be re-established.

From this date on Jews will not be allowed to establish any new domiciles in Sofia.

On the report of the Minister of the Interior and National Health, the Cabinet of Ministers may establish villages and cities, or parts of them, in which persons of Jewish descent are barred from residing, and to indicate new domiciles for persons living in these places.

#### Chapter IV

#### Property of Persons of Jewish Descent

#### Article 24

Persons of Jewish descent are not allowed to be proprietors,

possessors or renters of land (city lots), directly or indirectly; not of houses or land in the country, except in summer resorts.

Within three months of the date this Law goes into effect, Jewish land owners must offer their land for sale to the State Land Fund of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property. The Fund buys this property (in succession as they are offered) applying the Law of Labor-Land Property.

Buildings in villages except summer resorts are to be sold by persons of Jewish descent, within one year after this Law goes into effect, to Bulgarians or corporations with Bulgarian capital exclusively.

Land not offered to the State Land Fund and buildings not liquidated by persons of Jewish descent within the above time limits will pass to the Fund for Social Relief, at the disposal of the Minister of the Interior and National Health.

Persons of Jewish descent renting land in the country must leave such land before October 1, 1941. From that date all rent contracts lose their validity unless the contract itself stipulates a previous date.

#### Chapter V Professional and Business Activities of Persons of Jewish Descent

##### Article 25

Jewish professionals and businessmen engaged in trade (except peddling) or industry are admitted into each profession, trade (except peddling) and industry in the same proportion as there are Jews in the general population of Bulgaria. This proportion is to be determined separately for each locality and city in the country. The Cabinet of Ministers is to determine, within six months from the date this law goes into effect, the delays to be granted for the execution of the provisions of this paragraph.

##### Article 26

On the report of the Minister of Trade, Industry and Labor, the Cabinet of Ministers may limit, fully or partially the number of persons of Jewish descent and the extent of Jewish capital to be employed in certain business, industry, crafts and other forms of economic activities, and on the reports of the Ministers of Finance and of Trade Industry and Labor, take measures for the establishment and supervision of the economic conditions of persons of Jewish descent.

There can be no appeal against the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers taken on the basis of this Article.

Within one month of the date this Law goes into effect, all persons of Jewish descent having property in the Kingdom must declare their property movable or immovable to the Bulgarian National Bank, using the forms provided for the purpose by this Bank.

Persons of Jewish descent must submit to the Bulgarian National Bank, upon its request, a report on the position of their property including also reports on expenses made. The same reports must be submitted to the Bulgarian National Bank by all persons of Jewish descent emigrating from the Kingdom, regarding the money received from liquidation of their property in the country and also regarding expenses incurred in connection with this liquidation. The assets remaining from the liquidation of property, the savings and other assets are to be kept on a current account in the local Bulgarian Bank. Withdrawals from these accounts are under control of the Bulgarian National Bank. Jewish emigrants from Bulgaria who will not comply with these requirements will not obtain their passports or visas.

Reports to the Bulgarian National Bank are also to be submitted by persons charged with the administration of non-liquidated property of persons of Jewish descent who have emigrated or are about to emigrate.

The violation of the provisions of this Article will be punished in accordance with the Law on Foreign Exchange, the violation of which is to be treated in accordance with this Law.

Property (movable or immovable, money, shares, etc.) intentionally concealed by persons mentioned in this paragraph, will be confiscated in favor of the Fund for Social Relief on the order of the Minister of the Interior and National Health and on the report of the Bulgarian National Bank.

#### Article 27

Persons of Jewish descent cannot:

- a) Be proprietors, share holders or participants in capital in whatsoever form in schools, all kinds of theaters, movies, publishing houses, production and trade of films and gramophone records, amusement, hotels, production and trade of arms; in credit corporations they are not allowed to participate more than 49% in the capital or vote of the concern. Within six months of the date this Law goes into effect, all persons of Jewish descent must liquidate or transfer their

rights to persons of Bulgarian descent and nationality or to corporations with Bulgarian capital. Rights not liquidated or transferred in accordance with this provision will be confiscated in favor of the Fund for Social Relief on the order of the Minister of the Interior and Public Health.

- b) Be in whatsoever leading position, managers, directorates, editors and other leading services in the enterprises mentioned under paragraph a) of this Article. These persons must leave such services within one month of the date this Law goes into effect.
- c) Be sworn expert accountants, custom brokers or commissioners.
- d) To trade with state, self-government and guaranteed by state value and precious metals.
- e) To be members of the Administrative Board, Supervisory Board, Directorates, vice-directorates, managers, and trade appointees, wheresoever, even in purely Jewish cooperatives, or in private credit institutions or Banks. Such persons must within one month of the date this Law goes into effect, leave their positions and the Minister of the Interior, basing his action on the opinion of the governor of the Bulgarian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank if the matter concerns credit concerns or cooperative banks, or on the opinion of the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank if the matter concerns credit institutions as a private or limited one, must nominate provisional professional members for the Administrative and Supervisory Boards, but Bulgarians only. Vacant non-elective positions, (directorates, vice-directorates, etc.) are to be filled by nomination of a temporary administrative purely Bulgarian Board. However, General Assemblies to elect regular members of the Administrative and Supervisory Board are to be called within three months of the date this Law goes into effect.
- f) Be proprietors and administrators of pharmacies, drug stores and sanitary stores. The existing stores are to be liquidated within one year from the date this Law goes into effect.

The general directorate of National Health is to announce the pharmacies to be liquidated in accordance with Article 269 of the Law of National Health.

The provisions of this Article do not concern schools and publishing houses destined for Jews only.

Persons of Jewish descent who do not comply with the provisions of this Article are subject to punishment of imprisonment and a fine of from 4,000 to 50,000 Levass; in addition the capital of such participants will be confiscated in favor of the Fund

for Social Relief by the order of the Minister of the Interior and National Health.

#### Article 28

In every kind of office service, Jews are not allowed to occupy more places than Bulgarians, in cooperatives or enterprises from which Jews are not entirely excluded.

In the cooperatives and enterprises in which the capital is not predominantly Jewish, Persons of Jewish descent cannot participate in leading services as members of the Administrative and Supervisory Board, Directorates, Managers, etc.

NOTE: Cooperatives in which the capital is owned by members who are not predominantly Jewish are in the same category, for all purposes of this Law, as cooperatives with personal shares in which the majority of the members are Jewish.

Kinds of services, which, on the basis of this Law, persons of Jewish descent cannot render, must be released within one month from the date on which this law goes into effect and the substitutes are to be nominated in accordance with Article 27 e).

For non-fulfillment of the provisions of this Article, persons occupying these services or leading in cooperatives or enterprises, will be punished by imprisonment and a fine of from 1,000 to 3,000 Levas.

#### Article 29

It is forbidden to transfer enterprises, shares and businesses and generally participation in capital in whatsoever form as well as in immovable property and the mortgaging of such property belonging to persons of Jewish descent, persons of foreign descent, foreign nationality or companies with predominantly foreign capital.

#### Article 30

All business with persons of Jewish descent carried out against the provisions of this Law are, by virtue of the Law itself, null and void; the invalid transfer of rights will be confiscated in favor of the Fund for Social Relief on the order of the Minister of the Interior and National Health, in accordance with Chapter III, Section 1 of this Law.

#### Article 31

The provisions of Article 30 will be applied to business concluded by persons of Jewish descent mentioned in Article 29 and completed after September 1, 1940 and to business done with

shares, from the date of the last General Assembly of the limited Company which took place before September 1, 1940. For this business, a delay of six months from the date this Law goes into effect is granted in which persons who acquired rights in this business have to transfer them, to persons of Bulgarian descent and nationality or to companies with predominantly Bulgarian capital. After the expiration of this delay, rights not transferred will be confiscated in accordance with Article 30.

#### Article 32

Persons of Jewish descent are not to take part as contractors in communal enterprises (in the sense of the law regarding budget, accountants and enterprises and other laws) concessions, and contracts, personally or through an intermediary. Communal enterprises with Jewish contractors not yet completed on the date this Law goes into effect, as much as it does not concern concessions, are to be continued in accordance with the conditions mentioned in the contract, but the concession is to be non-valid and is to be liquidated. If the contract of concession did not foresee the order of liquidation, a special liquidating committee will be nominated by the Cabinet of Ministers. The decision of this Committee is to be approved by Parliament.

#### Article 33

The provisions of Section 2 of this Law are not to be applied to the following persons of Jewish descent:

- a) Persons born in Bulgaria having had an uninterrupted domicile in Bulgaria up until the date this Law goes into effect, being Bulgarian citizens and having been baptized before September 1, 1940.
- b) Persons who, before September 1, 1940, married persons of Bulgarian descent and were baptized before the date this Law goes into effect.

The provisions in Section 2, except a), b), f) and g) of Article 21, and Articles 26 and 27 are not to be applied to persons of Jewish descent who volunteered in the war or who are war invalids or rewarded with decorations for bravery.

Persons of Jewish descent, war orphans, should in all cases competing with other persons of Jewish descent, have preference when application is made of Article 25 and 26 of this Law.

The right for exemption from the provision of this Paragraph will be given upon request of the interested person made to the competent district court which should be accompanied with documentary evidence. The court will take its decision in secret

session after having heard the opinion of the Attorney General.

Section 3

Chapter IV

Article 47

Persons who, directly or indirectly conceal or assist to conceal or to transfer to foreign nationals, foreigners and companies with predominantly foreign capital, property belonging to persons of Jewish descent or to be taken away from them on the basis of this Law, are responsible to the Fund for Social Relief, each one fully for the highest evaluation which the concealed or transferred property can be assessed.

## APPENDIX B

Source: Durzhaven Vestnik/State  
Gazette/92 Published in Sofia  
Bulgaria, August 29, 1942

AN EDICT

On the basis of the law authorizing the Cabinet to take necessary measures for regulating the Jewish question and the problem in connection with it.

/Confirmed by decree 70 of the Cabinet in its session of August 26, 1942, Protocol .111, published in Durzhaven Vestnik/State Gazette/ .192, for the 29th of August, 1942/

## CHAPTER 1

Concerning the Administration of Jewish Affairs/Literally Questions/

Article 1. The Ministry of the Interior and Public Health has created a department for Jewish Affairs. All measures for solving the Jewish problem will be discussed in this department except those dealing with the law against speculation on real estate property and the law on the fixed tax levied on properties belonging to the people of Jewish descent. The Commissioner for Jewish questions has the right to demand that all departments carry out the measures taken against the Jews. His approval is required for everything dealing with the regulation of Jewish Affairs. Before deciding any matter which also concerns another department, the Commissioner will ascertain the opinion of the department in question.

Article 2. With the Commissioner there shall be a council consisting of a member of the supreme administrative court, appointed by the Minister of Justice; one representative of the Ministry of the Interior; one of the Ministry of Commerce; one of the Ministry of Labor; and representatives of the Ministry of Finance, of the Bulgarian National Bank and of the staff of the civil mobilization.

Article 3. In accordance with articles 23 and 25 of the Law for National Defense and Article 10 of the Law on Global Tax upon the properties of people of Jewish extraction, the powers of the Cabinet, Committees of Ministers, or single ministers, in accordance with the decrees and decisions for the application of Part II of the Law of National Defense and Article 10 of the

Global Tax upon the properties of persons of Jewish descent. Those powers as well as other decisions in connection with the Jewish question will be exercised by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs who is obliged in these cases to consult with the council of his department.

Article 4. There is no right of appeal from the decrees and decisions of the commissioner.

Article 5. The Commissioner for Jewish Affairs is appointed by the Council of Ministers on nomination of the Minister of the Interior. The staff of the department is appointed by the commissioner himself. When absent, he appoints a deputy pro tem. The already existing departments concerned with the Jewish questions are transferred to the main department for Jewish questions, with their staff and complete inventory. People working in this department are government employees. They are members of the Fund of Mutual Help for Employees of the Ministry of the Interior, besides being members of any other fund. Employees working for the department will get back their former jobs in the respective ministries they came from, provided they have good references from the department. The required funds for the departments' expenses will be taken over from the budget of the fund: "Jewish Communities."

Article 6. From the funds derived from payment according to the law of national defense and from frozen Jewish funds in local Bulgarian banks and in the National Bank, certain amounts of money go to the account of the fund "Jewish Communities."

A/ 5%	from frozen accounts under	100,000 Leva
B/ 8%	" " " "	100,000-300,000 Leva
C/ 10%	" " " "	300,000-1,000,000 Leva
D/ 12%	" " " "	1,000,000 Leva

All the cash from the Jewish synagogues and schools as well as the income from taxes collected by the Jewish community are passed on to the fund "Jewish Communities."

The cash from the fund "Jewish Communities" is used for the upkeep of the Jewish communities, to help poor Jews and provide for their installation in camps and villages.

Salaries for the staff of the department and salaries for the members of the council attached to the department are to be drawn from the same fund.

The budget of the fund is made up by the commission for Jewish questions and must have the Cabinet's approval.

Article 7. The Jewish communities are under the supervision

of the department. Each Jewish community is under the administration of a commission composed of a president and 4-6 Jewish members, all of them appointed by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs. Each commission has a special delegate appointed by the Commissioner. In Sofia there is a Central Commission composed of a president, 6 Jewish members and a delegate appointed in the manner indicated above. The commission is obliged to follow the delegates instructions. The commission is allowed to appeal against the delegates decision to the delegate of the Central Commission or to the Commissioner. The Jewish communities are under regulations worked out by the council attached to the department for Jewish Affairs. The Jewish communities' task is to prepare for the deportation of Jewish inhabitants. All Jewish synagogues, school, and charity organizations are under the supervision and control of the various Jewish communities.

## CHAPTER II

### Definition of the Term "Jewish Descent"

Article 8. Individuals are of Jewish descent/Jews/, whatever their citizenship or religion are, if:

- a/ Their parents or grandparents were of the Jewish faith;
- b/ One of the parents on 2 or 3 of the grandparents were of the Jewish religion;
- c/ One of the grandparents had formerly the Jewish religion and another of the grandparents had been converted to the Jewish religion.

Remark: The Jewish religion is considered to be the first acquired in the following cases: individuals

- a/ Born from parents with the Jewish religion;
- b/ Born from marriages of people of one Jewish and one of another religion if the marriage was performed according to the Jewish ritual;
- c/ When the baptism or the formal adoption of any other religion in marriages similar to /b/ but not celebrated with the Jewish ritual, was not performed in the first year after they were born;
- d/ Infants registered in the list of the Jewish communities before being baptised or given a new religion.

Article 9. Persons not having made an application in accordance with Article 16 of the Law for National Defense, but having declared in official papers before or after the 23rd of January, 1941 that they are Jews, are treated as such till they can prove that they are not of Jewish descent. Whatever his citizenship or

origin every person is considered Jewish who was of Jewish religion or converted to it on or about the 1st of September, 1942.

Article 10. Not considered of Jewish descent are persons born or who may be born from marriages of persons of Jewish descent, Bulgarian citizens with persons of Bulgarian descent under the following condition:

- a/ If the marriage took place before September 1, 1940;
- b/ If the marriage was celebrated according to the Christian ritual;
- c/ If the parent of Jewish descent had become a Christian before the 23rd of January, 1941;

Remark: Point c/ is not taken into consideration if the parent of Jewish descent died before September the 1st, 1940

- d/ If the parents have been baptized or are baptized later;
- e/ If the parents were converted to the Christian religion and did not return to the Jewish faith.

Article 11. Persons not considered as Jews by the former laws but considered as such by the new decrees are obliged to declare their Jewish descent one month after the publication of the new decrees in accordance with Article 16 of the Law of National Defense. They will be punished by same article if they do not comply with the order. If it is doubtful whether someone is a Jew or a Bulgarian, the Commissioner will settle the question after having consulted with the department's council. The way to decide what peoples' origins are will be fixed by the Commissioner after consultations with the department's council, and being approved by the Minister of Interior.

### CHAPTER III

#### Restrictions Enforced on Jews

Article 12. Declaration of origin in accordance with article 16 of the Law for National Defense is obligatory for all Jews privileged by Article 23 of the Law for National Defense. The declaration of origin is obligatory for Jews who have become Bulgarian citizens by naturalization or who may become with foreign citizenship who have come to Bulgaria. The declaration will be required when registering at the police.

Article 13. Jews are not allowed to have Bulgarian given names or family names or a name with a Bulgarian suffix such as ov, ev, ich, sky, et, cet. Non-converted Jews are not allowed to have Christian first names. The prohibited names are to be

erased from all registers. Forbidden family names are to be exchanged with the grandfather's name. If, up to the 1st of November, 1942 Jews with forbidden names have not declared their Jewish names, they will be given the name of their grandfather or some other name. The new names will be registered. The names will be chosen from a list made up by the Department for Jewish Affairs.

Article 14. All Jews must wear a special badge. Exception are:

- a/ Children under 10 years of age.
- b/ Jews privileged by article 33 paragraph 1 of the Law for National Defense.
- c/ Jews who are foreign citizens, passing through Bulgaria with transit visas.

Article 15. Jews privileged by Article 33 paragraph 1 of the Law for National Defense, as well as Jews who are foreign citizens staying in the country for one month are to wear on the left side of their chest a special round badge 2 centimeters of a bright yellow color, with the approval of the Department for Jewish Affairs. The badge must be worn on the coat and the overcoat. People walking in the streets in shirts, pullover, et cetera, have to wear their badges on the shirts and pullovers.

Article 16. All other Jews not mentioned in Articles 14-15 must wear on the left side of their chest a six cornered star at 3 centimeters in diameter of yellow color, approved by the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs.

Article 17. The wearing of badges is obligatory one month after the publication of this order.

Article 18. All Jews, Bulgarian citizens, wearing badges, will be given special identity cards/pink color/.

Article 19. Owners of establishments, /that is, restaurants, hotels, cafes, et cetera/, who are of Bulgarian or related origin, as well as the members of the department for Jewish Affairs and the police, may forbid to Jews wearing badges entrance to the above mentioned places.

Article 20. Jews not enjoying privileges of Article 33, paragraph 1 of the Law for National Defense are not allowed to live in a flat or share with Bulgarian or related origin unless they are relatives.

Article 21. Jews are not allowed to live in hotels except in those approved by the department and only for a period of 10 days within six months.

Article 22. Jews must from September 15, 1942 have over the

entrance door of their flat a special plate approved by the Department for Jewish Affairs, "Jewish House."

From the same date all the Jewish shops and offices should have on their entrances special plates "Jewish business" written on all their letter heads, products, et cetera. The same is required of every business in which capital is employed in whatever amount.

Article 23. Jews are not allowed to own cars, radios, and telephones. The Department for Jewish Affairs may allow some Jews to have a telephone.

Article 24. Article 21, paragraph 1, points /f/ and /a/ of the Law for National Defense are changed in the following cases:

/f/ To have sexual relations with or to marry persons of Bulgarian or related origin; marriages of this kind will be considered as non-existent after the publication of the law.

Remarks: The same applies to Gypsies marrying Bulgarians.

/g/ Jews are forbidden to have any servants of Bulgarian or related origin. They should be discharged in 15 days.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### Concerning the Place of Residence and Deportation of Jews

Article 25. Jewish families consisting of two persons are allowed to live in one room only. Families of 3-4 persons are allowed to live in two rooms. 5-6 persons in three rooms, more than 6 persons in 4 rooms. Kitchens, halls, et cetera are not counted as rooms. One month after this law enters into force Jews living in more rooms than they are allowed to live in must either change them or let the extra rooms to other Jews. If these changes do not take place, a commission consisting of a Jewish official, a police representative, a representative of the Mayor and the representative of the Jewish community will settle the question.

Article 26. The Commissioner for Jewish Affairs decided when and under what conditions Jews can be let or can let rooms. Contracts for rents, et cetera, for Jews are valid. If they do not contravene any of the decrees published by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs.

Article 27. After having taken due advice of the council, the Commissioner can decide what streets are prohibited for the Jews to live in as well as the dates and conditions in which the

Jews must leave the above mentioned streets.

Article 28. Jews cannot leave the town they live in without permission of the police.

Remark: Villages considered to be on the outskirts of any town are not regarded as a part of the town. The police has detailed registers on these subjects and every month a copy is sent to the Department for Jewish Questions. Permission to live in other towns is delivered by the department.

Article 29. Jews living in Sofia are subjected to deportation to the provinces or outside the country. In any case, by November 1, 1942, all Jews living in Sofia who are unemployed in accordance with the Law for National Defense or in accordance with the present decree, and who have no other occupation, must be deported.

#### CHAPTER V

##### Economic Activities of People of Jewish Descent:

Article 30. Jews who are not allowed to engage in commerce or industry cannot under any circumstances invest their capital in commercial or industrial enterprises.

Article 31. All Jews without any exception are not allowed to start any new businesses.

Article 32. Jews who have retained their occupational rights are not allowed:

- a/ To have more than a job.
- b/ To enlarge their business by trading in new articles or by increasing their capital.
- c/ To contract business outside their regular branch.
- d/ To invest more than 300,000 Leva from their capital, in their work, and to use credits higher than their capital. If they hold shares in several enterprises, they must retain shares only in one enterprise not above 500,000 Leva, and liquidate all the others.

Article 33. In Article 27 of the Law for National Defense, Paragraph /f/ has undergone a change and the paragraph /g/ and /h/ have been added as follows:

- /f/ Jews are debarred for production of or trade in medicines, sanitary materials, surgical instruments, optical instruments, and chemicals. They cannot own pharmacies, drug-

stores, clinics, et cetera.

/g/ Jews are disbarred from industries, mines trade in agricultural products, import and export, shipping transport, commissioner agent's business.

/h/ Jews holding shares in the above-mentioned enterprises must liquidate their shares in two months time if the cabinets does not issue an order for quicker liquidation.

Article 34. Restrictions of the Law for National Defense Article 27 are applied to all Jews.

Article 35. Jewish craftsmen are allowed to continue working in their branch provided they work themselves, and their capital does not exceed 200,000 Leva. They must credit exceeding 200,000 Leva. Jewish craftsmen are not allowed to have their work done outside of their workshops. Peddlars may retain their business, but the Commissioner for Jewish Questions may restrict or stop peddlars work, depending upon the local conditions.

Article 36. Jews with professions who are not allowed to practice because of this law are compelled according to the law to liquidate their business or to transfer it to someone else by September, 1942, in case this restriction is due to already existing laws. If it is due to the new Jewish law they must liquidate their business in two months time.

Jews barred from commerce and industry must deposit all their shares in the National Bank two weeks after the publication of the decree. The department sells out these shares and the money goes to the fund for "Jewish Communities," exception being made of the percentage due to the department. All Jews from liberated territories without exceptions are barred from commerce, industry, and free professions. If they have not already liquidated their business they must do so in two weeks time.

Article 37. Liquidation of Jewish business is to take place under the supervision of a commission from the department consisting of a judge appointed by the President of the District Court and two members appointed by the Commission for Jewish Questions. For the liquidation of Jewish business with capital exceeding 600,000 Leva two more members to the commission will be appointed, that is, a representative of finance minister and a representative of the Minister of Commerce. The decisions agreed upon by the commission must have the Commissioner's approval. The liquidation of Jewish business after the 1st of September, 1942 will be carried out by the department in the above mentioned manner. The department will appoint persons for the temporary administration of the business, or for its liquidation. The former Jewish owner

may liquidate his own business in the best way possible, but if he fails to do so he is liable to 10 years in imprisonment and 2,000,000 Leva maximum fine; money owed to the business or from the business will be paid as usual after September 1st.

Jewish industrial enterprises will only change proprietors; they will rarely be wold out.

Article 38. Jews who fail to carry out the terms stated in Article 36 and people helping them to break the law will be punished by a maximum of 5 years imprisonment and fined twice as great as the capital or shares in question. The business, capital or the shares will be confiscated for the benefit of the fund for "Social Help" in accordance with orders issued by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs.

Article 39. Jews without a job are not allowed to start working again without having first the consent of the respective labor organization and of the Department for Jewish Affairs.

Article 40. The staff in Jewish enterprises, working only with the Jews have to be entirely Jewish. In all the other enterprises where the Jews are allowed to work in accordance with Article 27 of the Law for National Defense their number must not exceed one-fourth of the total of the personnel, and must not exceed the number of Bulgarian employees. In enterprises not entirely working on Jewish capital Jews are not allowed to be managers, directors, legal counsels, commercial agents, bookkeepers, cashiers, technical advisers, specialists, et cetera. This order should be carried out in two months; it does not concern manuel workers.

Article 41. Decrees of the Law for National Defense and these decrees concerning Jews are applied to enterprises working almost entirely with Jewish capital as long as there is no essential change in existing conditions.

## CHAPTER VI

### Jewish Properties and Capital

Article 42. Article 26 of the Law for National Defense has been altered as follows: within one month following the publication of the Law for National Defense all Jews owning immovable property in Bulgaria have to declare it to the National Bank. They are required, if asked by the Bank, to declare in what state the property is and the amount of their personal expenditures.

Jews leaving the country must give a detailed account to the National Bank of the amount of money they derived from the sale of their property and how they spent the money. Persons administering

Jewish property not yet liquidated belonging to Jews who have left or are about to leave the country must give a detailed report to the National Bank. People transgressing this article as well as article 38 and 47 of the Law for National Defense will be persecuted for trading with money coming from outside and will be punished by the law. Concealed or undeclared property, money, jewels are confiscated for the benefit of the fund for "Social Help" by order of the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs. The confiscated money is returned only if the tribunal finds that it had been previously declared or that a special declaration was not needed. Confiscated things can be bought back, if their value does not exceed 10,000 Leva.

Article 43. In all cases of confiscation of shares and securities, after the publication of this decree in Durzhaven Vestnik, the government assumes the owners rights without all the procedure formerly used in similar cases.

Article 44. Jews cannot dispose of their movable properties without permission of the department with the following exceptions:

- a/ Money received for living expenses
- b/ Salaries, wages and bonuses
- c/ Articles for personal and household use not exceeding in value of 10,000 Leva, otherwise a special permission from the department is required.
- d/ Goods, capital, et cetera connected with the business of Jews who have the right to keep their business or to engage in the practice of free occupations, that is occupation to Jews.

Article 45. Jews must deposit all their money, savings, et cetera in the local Bulgarian bank or in the National Bank in a blocked account including all available cash, shares held for them by others and invested in business by other persons, savings accounts, sums received from insurance gifts, inheritances, money collected from non-business sources, sums received from the sale of properties, indemnities for seized property, except as mentioned in Article 44.

Also there must be deposited in the National Bank all shares and stocks which persons of Jewish descent own, corporations, companies of limited responsibilities, and likewise all stocks, bonds, et cetera and valuables, that is, jewels, gold, and silver ornaments, et cetera, with the exception of those mentioned in Article 44. The Commissioner will sell all such shares, stocks, bonds, valuables, et cetera and deposit the amounts received in the blocked account of the owners.

From the sums paid under this article in blocked accounts from

5% to 12% will be turned over to the "Fund for Jewish Communities" in accordance with point 6.

Article 46. Drawing money from blocked accounts is only possible with the permission of the Department for Jewish Affairs. Permission is given in order to pay off debts contracted by Jews of the blocked accounts and to provide for their expenses.

The department permits the drawing of money to pay:

- a/ Debts contracted to the government, municipality or other government institutions.
- b/ Commercial debts, provided they are confirmed by official documents or a court judgement.
- c/ Debts contracted toward private persons, before July 21, 1941 and if they are confirmed by official documents.
- d/ Monthly expenses incurred to pay rents and salaries to the personnel of the business in liquidation. The expenses should not exceed the monthly expenses incurred till February 23rd, 1942.  
If increases in salaries have occurred after the 23rd of February, 1942 as per law concerning such increases, expenses can be increased.
- e/ Private debts approved by a special commission dealing with the settlement of Jewish debts.
- f/ To provide for the private needs of the Jewish owner and his family if he has no other income. The amount of money given will depend upon the number of persons in the family and the place they live in. The amount must not exceed 5,000 Leva per month.

Article 47. In accordance to Article 37 the sales of Jewish properties by the Department for Jewish Affairs is carried out by action.

When business enterprises and shares change owners, the change must be approved by the Cabinet. The Commissioner for Jewish Questions sends in a report to the Cabinet after having heard the reports of the Minister of Justice, Finance, and Commerce. The Cabinet decides after having taken into consideration the interests of the business to appoint a certain person to take over the administration of the business. Preference is given to previous owners of Bulgarian origin. If the money raised from the auction sales exceeds the sum declared by the Jewish owner, the difference is considered to be the government's benefit.

Article 48. Jews having failed to fulfill their obligation in accordance to Article 45 in two weeks time after the publication of the decree, will be punishable by imprisonment and a maximum fine of 1,000,000 Leva. If the amount of money not deposited in the bank does not exceed 5,000 Leva the fine will be 3,000 Leva.

and the confiscation of the amount not deposited will go to the fund "Social Help" by order of the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs.

Article 49. The Jews' creditors must acknowledge their claim to the Department for Jewish Affairs within two months following the publication of this decree.

Article 50. When Jews do not make proper effort to collect sums due them, the Department for Jewish Affairs will make collection in accordance with paragraph 11 of the regulations for the application of the Law for National Defense. The money collected will be deposited in the National Bank as mentioned in Article 45. This does not apply to money owed to Jews for professional services.

Article 51. Jews may have insurance if the premium does not exceed 700 Léva a month. The premium is paid in accordance with Article 46. All other insurance should be liquidated in two months time.

The amount derived from the liquidation is deposited in the blocked account in accordance to Article 45.

## CHAPTER VII

### Alteration of the Law for National Defense

Article 52. Article 33 of the Law for National Defense has been changed in the following manner:

Persons of Jewish descent who are Bulgarian citizens wedded in a church before the 1st of September, 1940 to Bulgarians, and who were baptized before January 23, 1941, are exempted from all the restrictions regarding Jews if above-mentioned decree is not contradicted by other laws. In divorce cases without living children, the privilege ceased. In cases of competition between Jews, the following categories of Jews are preferred:

- a/ Owners of medals for military valor if the owners have shown appreciation of their medals up to March 17, 1942.
- b/ War invalid having right to pension.
- c/ War orphans.
- d/ War widows who have not married again.
- e/ Widows and children of veterans of the War of Liberation 1877-1878.

All privileges are cancelled in cases of criminal charges, speculation charges, communist or anti-government tendencies. The same applies to Jews leaving the country. Jews who want to enjoy privileges must send an application to the Department for Jewish Affairs by October 1, 1942 together with all necessary documents.

A special commission will decide on the application and must be approved from the Commissioner.

Article 53. Privileges enjoyed in accordance with Article 33 paragraph 1 point /a/ of the Law for National Defense cease to exist. ~~Persons~~ who enjoyed these privileges will lose them two months after the publication of this decree.

Article 54. Privileges accorded by Article 33, paragraph 1, point /b/ and paragraph 11 and 111 of the Law of National Defense cease altogether a month following the publication of this decree if the application in accordance with Article 52 is not sent in time, or if the Commissioner decides otherwise.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Special Decrees

Article 56. Article 36, paragraph 111 of the Law for National Defense has been altered thus: "For failure to comply with these decrees, offenders will be punished in accordance with Article 26 paragraph 11 of the Law for National Defense. By order of the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs, property not declared will be confiscated for the benefit of the Fund "Social Help" "

Article 57. For failure to comply with the terms of the Law for National Defense and of this decree, offenders will be punished with imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 Leva if there are no other penalties required by other law.

Article 58. This decree cancels all other contradicting laws.

Article 59. This decree will be published by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs after consulting with the department council and after the Minister of Interior has approved them.

## APPENDIX C ,

Notation on Sources

All of the original documents used for the writing of this thesis can be found in the form of microfilms or photostats in the Bulgarian Documents' Collection of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Library, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Yad Vashem documents in this collection have a uniform identification system given to them by Yad Vashem and can be easily located within the collection.

The documents received from the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine of Paris, France have no uniform system of identification. Many of them can be identified by their original markings given to them by the German office that issued them, be it the Foreign Ministry or the Gestapo. To make reference to these documents possible without a substantial loss of time to the reader, I have inclosed to this particular microfilm a table of contents identifying the documents as found in their order of appearance in the film.

The photostats of the documents served by the Attorney General of Israel at the Adolph Eichmann Trial were received from the Israeli Police at a time when the greater part of this thesis was completed, and for that reason no reference to these documents was possible. They are, however, also a part of the collection at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Library and are available for reference.

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