

THE RESETTLEMENT OF THE BULGARIAN JEWS IN ISRAEL

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This work is dedicated to the memory of my father
Nissim Nissim Farhi
who was active in the community.
For him Art was an integral part of Judaism.

A copy of the original thesis
is presented to my teacher
Dr. Ellis Rivkin
whose inspiration, guidance and assistance
permitted me to successfully complete
this scholarly research.

December 11, 1969.

Digest

Jews have been living in Bulgaria for over 2,000 years. Their life was fairly comfortable and they enjoyed much freedom. The period during the Second World War when persecutions were perpetrated against them was an exception. Even then the Bulgarian Jews fared better than most Jews in Europe and survived the Nazi holocaust.

Soon after the end of the war the state of Israel was inaugurated in 1948. A mass migration on the part of the Bulgarian Jews followed this event. They joined the several thousand compatriots who had emigrated previously.

Bulgarian Jews have been settling in the Holy Land since the latter part of the nineteenth century. They have been very active in the Zionist cause and have founded many settlements in Israel.

With the establishment of the state of Israel and the mass migration the new immigrants took their honorable share in the construction of the new home. With very little help and almost entirely on their own, these immigrants paved their way. Many of them were professionals, yet in Israel they started as laborers working on highways and the erection of buildings, while studying the new language at night. They made their way as true pioneers and earned the praise of their neighbors for their industriousness and eagerness to work.

Twenty years later the Bulgarian Jews represent one of the most assimilated and integrated segments of the Israeli nation. Many factors contributed to their success. Their Zionist rather than religious orientation in the last generations, the outcome of the Second World War and many other factors, including their temperament and acquired qualities of the Bulgarian people in whose midst they used to live, brought about the state in which they are found today.

After twenty years in the land of Israel the Bulgarian immigrants have achieved a high social status, many of them in professional fields. They live their lives as well integrated Israelis, having established deep roots in their present and only home.

This research was done during the Summer of 1969. The writer spent about three months in Israel, collecting data and material. He also visited Bulgaria for three weeks where he gathered complementary data about the lives of the Jews in that country. The research was done singlehandedly - no particular contributions were made by anyone - and the availability of sources on the life of the Bulgarian Jews in Israel during the last twenty years are very limited. In many ways this work represents a unique and original source of information.

17 of Kislev 5730
Thanksgiving, 1969

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CHAPTER I

THE SURVIVAL OF THE BULGARIAN JEWS

One of the greatest tragedies befell European Jewry during the Second World War. About six million Jews perished in the holocaust. There was hardly a country in Europe from which Jews were not brought to death. In all communities, even where Jews survived, they have been persecuted and caused to suffer much.

One of the few countries where the Jewish population remained intact after the Second World War was Bulgaria. Though a pro-Nazi regime had been established and a strict system of laws was organized and enforced against the Jewish community, the Jewish community survived.

Our hypothesis is that there may have been one predominant factor which brought about the salvation of the Bulgarian Jewish community. After having made an exhaustive research through documentary material and books dealing with the plight of the Bulgarian Jews, we have arrived at the conclusion that there was not one single factor which could be pointed out as the cause of the survival of the Jews. We are going to support this opinion by quoting a few authorities who dealt with this very problem in the near past.

In order to give a better picture of the particular setting in which the persecution of the Bulgarian Jews took place and their fortunate end in ultimately surviving, we should proceed in a short historical description of the Jews in Bulgaria.

Jews have lived in the Balkan peninsula and the territory which later became Bulgaria since biblical times. Jews must have taken an active part in commerce together with the Phoenician merchants.¹

During the Roman Empire a thriving Jewish community existed on the Balkans. Jews were mostly involved in business. We learn from the codes of Theodosius of the Fourth Century A.D. that some rules were imposed to prevent persecutions by local leaders against the Jews.²

During the Ninth Century the Bulgarian king Boris I accepted the Christian faith. Strong Jewish influence had been felt; ".... at the time (Christianity) was an odd mixture of Christian, Jewish and pagan practices and beliefs." They questioned which should be the day of rest, Saturday or Sunday.³

Christianity spread in Bulgaria with the work of Greco Bulgarian monks - Kyril and Methody. They established the Slavonic Alphabet and made the first biblical translation into that language. These two brothers, the saints Kyril and Methody, knew Hebrew. Kyril held debates with the Rabbis.⁴

During the Thirteenth Century one of the Bulgarian kings married a most beautiful Jewess. She accepted Christianity and accordingly took the name of Theodora.⁵ Her influence in the kingdom became very strong.

"One of the greatest Jewish scholars of all times, Joseph Karo, the compiler of Schulchan Aruk, resided in Bulgaria for thirteen years (1523-1536) while he was writing his Beth Joseph."⁶

Under the rule of the Turkish sultans the Jews in the Balkans fared well. They enjoyed autonomy and conducted their community affairs independently.

Bulgaria was liberated by the Russians in 1868. The new Bulgarian authorities did not bring any change in attitude or status of the Jews. According to Asa the Bulgarian government allowed Jewish communities to have their own judicial system. Each Jewish community had its elected committee which together sent delegates to form the national or central consistory.⁷

Thus the Bulgarian Jewish community had much freedom and rights. No laws had restricted them. They had their synagogues, schools and consistories. They were mostly involved in business as a means of living. Jews were called to arms as any other citizens, fought and died for their fatherland. Very little antisemitism was present until the late 1930's when antisemitic propaganda was imported into Bulgaria. "All evidence indicates that the Bulgarian people, who had been persecuted by the Turks were, on the whole, tolerant toward the Jewish minority....."⁸

During the late 1930's a few national socialistic organizations came into being. Among them the most virulently antisemitic was the Ratnik (Zealots). A small group of profiteers became supporters of the nationalistic spirit. In their press they copied the style of the European antisemites. Yet, the overwhelming majority of the Bulgarian people remained friendly to the Jews. This certainly helped to prevent the extermination of the Jewish community.

The actual persecutions against the Jews of Bulgaria started in 1941. A law "for the defense of the nation" was voted in the parliament. A special institution called the "commissariate of Jewish affairs" was established. Its head was Alexander Belev, a member of the Ratnik organization.

The first restrictions were of an economic nature. Jews were to pay double taxes, they could not run independent businesses - Jewish merchants and professionals had to transfer their enterprises to Bulgarian nationals. Jews were permitted to be laborers and employees. Eventually all males between the ages of 17 and 45 were drafted to labor camps, to build roads in distant areas within Bulgaria. Jews

were not permitted to be out in the streets after 9 p.m. A law was passed that they were to wear a yellow Star of David, which was to be sewn on the outer vest and made visible. Jews were not allowed in the universities and their number was restricted in the high schools.

Bulgaria being an ally to the axis forces supplemented the German armies with its farm products. As a result of the excessive export, rationing was established. Jews received the smallest amount of bread and other products.

In 1942, Jews living in well-to-do sectors of the capital Sofia were removed to another particular section with the intent of creating an artificial ghetto. Housing restrictions were brought about - one room had to be occupied by at least two, if not more members of a family.

The last action against the Jews was taken in May, 1943. All Jewish residents of Sofia were to leave their homes within three days and resettle in one of the smaller towns shown on each individual order. From there they were to be deported to the extermination camps of Poland in the near future - to their last solution. They were to carry as much cargo as each could bear. All their belongings were sold by the commissariat. In each town the local Jewish community helped the newcomers and found housing for them after first leading them to the local Hebrew school or synagogue. Soup kitchens were established, even jobs were found.⁹

By the summer of 1943 the tide of war was in the hands of the allies. The Russian armies advanced westward. The Bulgarian government hesitated to take any further measures as some of its German Nazi advisers were suggesting, namely, to resettle the Jews beyond the territory of Bulgaria, in the East. That meant to be deported to the concentration camps of Poland. At the beginning of September, 1944 the Red army entered Bulgaria. By that time the authorities reestablished the rights of all Bulgarian Jews.

According to Benjamin Ardity who has done extensive research on the subject of the survival of the Bulgarian Jews and the factors which brought about this survival, there were four different elements.¹⁰ "This survival came about as a logical and natural result of a series of factors, among them the decisive turning point in the war theater. Any attempt to build a table of classifications according to the value and the importance of the factors, the deeds and the historical objective facts which happened to be upon the events, is bound to be lacking truth. In the future, with new facts added, history will answer each matter accordingly. We shall satisfy ourselves only with the reporting of facts. The factors as a whole are not that important.

The Bulgarian Jews, then, were saved as a result of the following factors:

1. The turning point which occurred on the battle fields, in the

eastern as well as in the western fronts, and also political factors which arose, particularly in Italy. They created doubts in the government circles of Bulgaria, and forced the government to examine completely its politics and deeds.

2. The political and explanatory action which was developed by the Jewish offices and agencies and in its first place the Consistoria and also the activity of renowned Jewish individuals who acted in Bulgaria, Israel and the United States. They were able in their well planned actions to mobilize many factors which possessed the power to influence and bring about the saving of the Bulgarian Jews.

3. The democratic and patient quality which is characteristic of the Bulgarian people, created an environment that strengthened the moral, political and social status during the most critical period of their existence. The majority of the Bulgarian people regarded the persecutions against the Jews as illegal and anti-humanitarian. This was the opinion of most political leaders, rightist and leftist, the majority of the intelligencia of that country, and of the labor force as well, the clergy and the farmers, the city dweller - all of these were adhering to the Jewish cause. All these people did not satisfy themselves only with political adherence and did not keep quiet. At any given occasion these courageous Bulgarians fought and defended their Jewish neighbors.

4. The democratic tendency among the wide population, and also the courage of the Bulgarian leaders helped ease the pressure of harsh policy upon King Boris III. The Jews were not entrusted into the hands of the Germans. King Boris III. was able to freeze this policy which saved the lives of the Jews during the events of March and May, 1943. Thus, the king fulfilled his decisive task in the saving of the Bulgarian Jews. This is how the attempt to send the Bulgarian Jews to the death camps was eliminated."¹¹

After examining the work of Benjamin Ardity and having stated the factors which were instrumental in the saving of the Bulgarian Jews, we shall examine the research done by Haim Asa on the same subject.

Asa divides the problem into three different categories: the internal factors, external factors and the time factor. The internal factors are three; the complete integration of the Jews within the Bulgarian way of life is considered the most important one. The economic and political factors had significant roles. According to Asa the Jews in Bulgaria benefited from the factual situation that they did not exercise any significant economic or political power. They were not in the way of the fascists and were in this respect "harmless". But the author added also that none of these factors was decisive - they only "ameliorated the condition of the Jews to some degree, but certainly not more than that."

Among the external factors the most significant is considered to be the alliance with Germany. Asa is trying to say that because of this alliance the Germans did not have to take over the Bulgarian management and proceed with the Jews as they liked. Because of the alliance Bulgarians were in charge of their own affairs. Again there were many countries in Europe which were similarly in alliance with Germany -- Rumania, Italy, Hungary. In each of these countries different conditions prevailed and ultimately their Jewish communities did suffer partial destruction. About half of the Rumanian Jews were killed. In Italy all Jews apprehended after the overthrow of the Duce were deported to concentration camps. During 1944 most of the Hungarian Jews were exterminated. "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."

The last, and according to Asa most significant factor for the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews, was the failure of Germany to win the war. If Nazi Germany had won, there is little doubt that all European Jews would have been destroyed, including the Jewish community in Bulgaria. Asa concludes that there is no single factor for the salvation of the Jews. Even more, there is not a formula to learn from the survival of the Bulgarian Jews which we can apply to the future. "The Bulgarian Jewish community survived only as a chance of aimless fate." 12

Natan Grinberg had published his book Documents in 1945.¹³ In it he is inclined to stress that the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews came as a result of the attitude of the Bulgarian people. Asa compares Ardity's viewpoint to that of Grinberg.¹⁴ Ardity gives much credit to the tzar Boris III. The difference of opinion lies with the political orientation of each one of the writers. Grinberg uses the jargon of the popular democracies, where one must elevate the virtue of the people. He is completely silent on the deeds of the tzar. It was a standard matter for a writer to condemn the monarchy. Yet, Grinberg remains completely silent on this subject. Ardity, who is a right winger, and Herutnik, according to Asa, saw the ultimate cause of salvation in the tzar.

Our opinion is that the term people is too general in order to be pointed out as a specific factor. On the other hand, if we assume for the sake of argument that the tzar was anti-semitic, or at least indifferent toward his Jewish subjects, there is no doubt that the Jews would have been expelled to the concentration camps. If we try to point out one specific individual who had the power and control in his hands, no doubt this man must be the king. His rather positive inclination toward the Jews may be counted as the greatest single factor, if any, in the salvation of the Jews.

Among the Bulgarian community in Israel, counting about fifty-thousand souls, the debate of their salvation still continues to be discussed and disputed. More memoirs are appearing and articles pub-

lished in the local Israeli-Bulgarian press.

Many Bulgarian representatives during 1940 took the rostrum in the Bulgarian parliament, defending the Jews and opposing the new laws established against them. Todor Polyakov, Luben Dugmedgiev, Marin Tutungiev, just to mention a few who took the risk and jeopardized their political careers in defending the civil rights of their Jewish fellow citizens.¹⁵ Hundreds of influential citizens voiced their disapproval of the laws against the Jews.

There is not one single cause then which saved the Bulgarian Jews from destruction. Yet, if one asks what was the most decisive factor, or who was the most powerful individual controlling events with reasonable independence -- no doubt one would discover that it must have been King Boris III.

1. He was not an anti-Semite, nor was the queen who came from a noble Italian family. If King Boris had been antagonistic toward his Jewish subjects, there is no doubt that he would have taken the opportunity to get rid of them.

2. Prominent Bulgarians were actively denouncing the deportation of the Jewish Minority. The Archbishop, the head of the Bulgarian church, personally intervened in behalf of the Jews. The head of the Medical Association had sent a petition in the name of his organization, just to mention two, who approached the palace with their petitions. Also, in the parliament a strong minority opposed the laws against the Jews.

3. The deportation of the Greek Jews from Bulgarian territories had temporarily satisfied the demands coming from Nazi Germany.

4. Jewish forced labor eliminated the need for common labor. It was a good excuse put before the Nazis.

5. The definite change in the tide on the eastern front certainly made the Bulgarian government critical toward its ally -- Germany. In August, 1943, about three months after the migration of the Jews from Sofia to the hinterland, tzar Boris was summoned by Hitler, who demanded his joining the German army in the war effort against Russia. He refused -- and suddenly died. Since then no further measures have been taken against the Bulgarian Jews. In September, 1944 the Red army entered Bulgaria. At that time the Jews regained their civil rights.

CHAPTER II

THE JEWS IN BULGARIA AFTER SEPTEMBER 9, 1944.

An official pro-ally government came into power in Bulgaria on September 9, 1944, following the advancement of the Red army from East to West. It found the capital, Sofia, in a devastated state as a result of the air raids made by the B 17 flying fortresses. Most of the population found refuge in the provincial towns and villages, where in many occasions they had some relatives.

The Jews of Bulgaria wholeheartedly accepted the new regime which was leftist from the beginning and turned pro-communist by 1947.

The Jews of Sofia had been out of the capital since May, 1943. With the exception of 1500 souls, the rest of about 30,000 had been relatively safe from the bombardments. Now all Jews and gentiles were returning home. There followed a period of spontaneous rebuilding. For the Jewish community it was not only a physical but also a spiritual one. It was a period of rapid reorganization which led to a remarkable boom in Jewish cultural activities and involvement in all facets of the life of the country, political, industrial, commercial, etc. They became astute supporters of the new regime and were appointed to responsible positions in key organizations. Many had been underground agents, and the new regime, needing reliable personnel, opened the gates of its governmental administration to its Jewish subjects. Two Jews were elected to the house of representatives; Israel Maer and Jack Natan (both of them still living, though retired from their political careers.) The first Bulgarian representative in the U.N. was Baruch Grinberg, an oldtimer in the Communist party and the underground. The Jews had been active in the underground during the persecutions. 260 had taken part in the partisan movement and out of 6,000 78 had died in the process.¹⁶

In the fall of 1944 the Bulgarian army joined the allies in their common effort against the Nazis. Of 9,500 Bulgarian soldiers who lost their lives 52 were Jews.¹⁷

During the initial period after the coming of the Russian army and the establishment of a new government in Bulgaria on September 9, 1944, the Jews had their rights restored. They were permitted to recover their possessions and those who had been in great financial need were reestablished in their jobs as artisans and small businessmen. The individual Nazis in the former government who had been threatening the lives of the Jewish community were sued by the new authorities and many put to death, including Alexander Belev, the head of the Department of Jewish Affairs.

Some statistics on the Jewish population of Bulgaria are presented here, taken from documents at the Jewish Archives in Sofia.

Numbers of Jews in percentage compared to the entire population for three countings:

Counting Date	Population	Jewish Population	%
Dec. 31, 1934	6,077,993	48,398	0.3
Dec. 31, 1946	7,029,344	44,209	0.63
Dec. 1, 1965	8,227,868	5,108	0.063

The great difference in the third counting is due to the immigration to Israel after 1948. During the Second World War 3,220 Jews left the country.

Following is a table of emigration of Bulgarian Jews to Israel:

<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>				
13,681	19,100	1,038	1,088	463	346	199	147				
<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>
109	38	56	49	102	57	64	49	65	6	82	7

From 1946-1956 39,206 Jews, or 88.9% of the Jewish population, migrated from Bulgaria to Israel.¹⁸

Even though the Bulgarian Jews were not persecuted, their political rights completely restored, their pre-Nazi occupations practiced again and they felt friendly toward the new regime, there were causes which brought about their mass migration.

In December, 1947 all industrial enterprises in Bulgaria were nationalized. Banking and Commerce became a monopoly of the state. The owning of real estate became limited to a certain minimum. Many among the Jews were hurt by the changes and naturally found an opportunity to continue their professions in Israel.

Another reason was that many of the Bulgarian Jews were ardent Zionists. The numbers of Zionist youth after 1944 were as follows: Ehalutz Ahtzair during 1947 had 1,640 members organized on 20 branches. Hashomer Hatzair in 1947 had 1,600 youngsters in 17 branches. While the Jewish government organ "Evreisky Vesty" had 3,500 copies at each printing, the Zionist press came out with 3,000 copies. 3,000 Jewish families read the Zionist press, or about one quarter of the Jews.¹⁹

Another group which immigrated had as a reason family ties. They did not want to separate from children and other relatives, and so they followed the immigrants. Even when they represented independent families brothers wanted to join their sisters.

The new regime represented a rather shaky and untrustworthy government. The memories of the Nazi past were still fresh. The general policy at the time of the Soviet Union was pro-Israel and supporting emigration to Israel. Thus the Bulgarian government did cooperate with the Sochnut and facilitated the immigration of the Bulgarian Jews.

The birth rate among Jewish families is lower than for the rest of the population, deaths are about the same and child deaths reasonably lower.

About 30% of the Jewish population in 1937 were wealthy upper or middle class bankers, businessmen and professionals; 37.4% were workers with low income and a third group of poor door-to-door salesmen and craftsmen represented 32.6%. In 1937 the organization Bikur Cholim made a research and found that 1,100 families needed support with food and coal.

The Jewish community of Sofia collected taxes from its members proportionately to their income and from the records we can learn about the different income groups. The present number of the Jewish population in Bulgaria is 5,108. About 45% are actively employed.

Table of the Social Strata today

<u>Social Groups</u>	<u>Total</u>
Workers	1,286
Secretarial Positions	3,392
Farmers in Cooperatives	4
Cooperated Artisans	220
Independent Peasants	4
Non- Cooperative Artisans	60
Independent Professions	52
Independent Businessmen	87
Religious Servants - Clergy	3
	<u>5,108</u>

These figures include the persons who are maintained by the employed person or head. The retired are counted according to their former occupations.

Figures for the employed Jewish population in 1965 according to professions are as follows:

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
State Employees	226	10.0
Arts and Sciences	416	18.0
Accountants, Business	520	22.0
Engineers	302	13.0
Doctors	145	6.0
Metal Workers	134	6.0
Tailors	91	4.0
Jurists	36	2.0
25 Others	449	19.0
	<u>2,319</u>	<u>100.0</u>

During the past 31 years an outstanding growth in education has taken place among the Jews. The number of college graduates has in-

creased 10 times while at the same time there are 3.2 times more high school graduates. This can be attributed to the regime which facilitates education by giving scholarships. The high educational achievement comes as a result of the mastery of the Bulgarian language which became the only spoken language among the Jews and took the place of Ladino. The Jews do not assimilate - they integrate with the rest of the nation while keeping their Jewishness. Today Bulgarian is the native language of 97% of the population. ²⁰

Today out of 821 Bulgarian Jews with higher education 104 have titles as scientists or similar degrees (12%), while 57 are directors of cultural enterprises, 22 are writers, journalists and publishers, 82 are actors and producers, 33 composers, conductors and musicians and 13 are painters and sculptors.

On the eve of the Second World War the Jews in Bulgaria had a smoothly operated chain of communities throughout the country. Their functions were strictly limited during the Nazi period, but they continued their work. With the coming of the new regime after September 9, 1944, the Jewish consistories were right away brought to full life. During the fascist regime no Jewish organization was permitted to exist.

The past 25 years can be divided as follows: from September 9, 1944 to 1949, the period of restauration after the war; the establishment of the State of Israel in May, 1948, which started a mass immigration to Israel up to 1950. The second period from 1950 to 1961, when reorganization of the communities takes place, and the last period, after 1961, in which the Jews in Bulgaria do not have any functions besides some cultural activities of limited scope.

I. Period. As early as October, 1944, the newspaper Evreisky Vesty was published, the consistory began to operate and the Nazi Archives were preserved. On September 24, 1944, the Zionists had a meeting and immediately published their paper The Zionist Tribune. Their call was for one nation, one language, in one country - Israel. Soon thereafter Ben Gurion visited Sofia. Many "Chitalishta" or cultural centers were organized by the consistories. They had libraries, reading rooms, arranged dancing parties and performances of national dance groups. The Tzadicoff choir which was part of the synagogue of Sofia became a part of the Chitalishte Emil Shekerdjisky, named for a Jewish partisan who died in battle. There were performances by the Jewish Philharmonic Orchestra and Theatrical Groups staging Jewish plays. The Jewish banks Geula and Alia were reestablished and Ort opened from the United States. A school for technicians, Joint, was very active providing food and clothing for the Jewish population since the country was on ration. From May, 1948, the consistory assisted the people with their emigration.

II. Period. To propagate anti-fascist sentiments some organizations, like Ilia Erenburg, were disbanded. The Jewish elementary

schools were liquidated by the Bank Geula, though Ort continued to function until 1952, when it was closed, given to the government and renamed S. M. Kirov. Students' reading rooms were still operating for some time. With these functions and the emigration of 90% of the Jewish community, each town with less than 50 Jews closed its consistory.

All consistories were officially disbanded since they did not function any more. Cultural Centers with the main seat in Sofia were opened instead. The entire real estate of the consistories was transferred to local government, the city halls.

III. Period. Today there are active Jewish Centers only in Sofia and Plovdiv. The completion of closing business ended the second period.

The small Jewish community has a leadership strongly attached to the communist party ideology. The emphasis is on integration, not assimilation. The cultural activities, including those of a religious nature are entirely subsidized by the government. There are only remnants of the once fully functioning community. Besides the clubs in Sofia and Plovdiv there are 13 other cities in Bulgaria which have a nominal Jewish population with branches of the Jewish cultural organizations. The newspaper Evreiski Vesti appears bi-monthly; the magazine Godishnik, an annual, is soon to publish its fourth issue.

"Ban", the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Institute of Balkanistics is preparing a collective work, an historical description of the Jewish population in Bulgaria. Varna and Russe also have good "Chitalishta" (cultural centers), though smaller than Sofia.

Printed editions of newspapers and periodicals are:

Ha-Shofar. Official Zionist Organ. 1936 - 1941.

Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzayir. 1946 - 1947.

Evreiski Vesti. Organ of the Central Jewish Committee. Official pro-government line. 1944 to date.

Evreisky Glass. Publication of the Zionist Organization. 1944 only.

Poaley Tzion. Zionist organ. 1944. 9 issues.

Tzionisticheska Tribune. Organ of the United Zionists. 1944 - 1948. 144 issues.

Godishnik. Editor: Benvenisty. Pertaining to culture of the Jewish organization in the Bulgarian Popular Democracy. Vol. 1-4; 1966 to date.

Novy Dny. Editor: Mevorachis. 1946. 7 issues.

Many other publications, memorial pamphlets, bulletins of information, some as single issues have appeared.

According to the census taken in 1965, the Bulgarian Jews number 5,108. Of those 3,047 are living in the capital Sofia. However, the Jewish organization has kept a different file which shows the presence of almost 6,000 Jews. This count was made during the passover holi-

days when the people came to purchase mazzoth, or when there was a Purim carnival and people came with their children identifying themselves as Jews. Many may have been mixed marriages. The first count we mentioned was made by the government.

When a couple gets married its nationality is determined by the nationality of the husband. Thus, if the husband is Jewish the family is considered as such. Consequently, when Jewish women marry, their children are considered Bulgarian Nationals. However, many of them are still brought up by their mothers with some minimal knowledge of Judaism.

Several years ago the Bulgarian government ruled that any person belonging to a minority group could change his name if he wished to do so, and be officially considered of Bulgarian nationality. Minority groups (which are always nationalities) were free to profess their national or religious holidays and there would be no discrimination against them whatsoever. The persons of Jewish origin who changed their names can be counted on the fingers of both hands. Most of them have a very high Jewish consciousness regardless of the fact that they know very little about Judaism. They firmly keep their identity. Their Jewishness is seldom expressed, as previously mentioned, except during Purim, Passover and the High Holy Days; but the attachment to the land of Israel is very strong and most of them have many relatives there. They keep in contact with them which gives them the feeling of identity, pride and Jewishness. Presently the policy of the Bulgarian government is anti-Israel and pro-Arab, but fortunately relative freedom permits the citizens to listen to the radio which is frequently tuned to the Voice of Israel. They listen to the Russian language newscast and the older Jews who remember Ladino listen to the Spanish newscasts. Such information is most regular and the great majority of Jews are adequately informed of what is going on in Israel. The local press inadvertently quotes the news as given by Radio Kahir.

Many people spoke to me with a feeling of gratitude and nostalgia for the Russian broadcast commentator of Kol-Israel, the Voice of Israel. They showed great attachment and dependency upon these to them intelligible broadcasts.

The general population in Bulgaria is growing, mostly among the uneducated. College graduate couples have registered a slower growth rate. The Jewish population belongs almost entirely to the upper social stratum. During the past years 35 Jewish children have been born, at a time when mortality among infants is almost unknown. This natural increase is counterbalanced by the death rate and a very low migration to Israel. The life expectancy has reasonably increased, oldsters are living longer because of modern medical technology. It seems that the Jewish population is in a relatively static state. According to the head of the religious Jewish committee of Bulgaria, Mr. Moskona, about 30 to 40% of all marriages among Jews are mixed. Since half of them are Jewish women, about 20% of the marriages represent a drain on the

Jewish population As we tried to explain earlier, this drain is not yet felt as the couples still keep certain contacts and identification with the Jewish group.

These Jews who remained in Bulgaria were people who had secured their future, had well established careers and were in harmony with the ruling communist government. The names of these Jews are frequently heard on radio and TV. There are at present three Jews who are representatives in the parliament, with one representative elected to each 20,000 citizens. The representation has nothing to do with the nationality, but only with the merits of the person running for election. Therefore, the 5,000 Bulgarian Jews have a very solid representation compared to the Moslem population of Turks and Pomacs (mohamedanized Bulgarians) who number over 800,000 and have 7 representatives.

The Jewish population of Bulgaria is concentrated mainly in the capital of Sofia. Another city where a sizable Jewish population can be found - big enough to have religious services and to continue to operate a social Jewish club - is Plovdiv (Philipopol). Besides these two towns Jews can be found in Varna, Burgass, Russe, Stanke, Dimitrova, Chascoveo, Yambol, Kustendil, Pleven, Pasargik and Vidin.

Who are these Jews who remained in Bulgaria and did not emigrate to Israel? They are those who had too much to lose; the professionals, engineers, doctors and high public officials. Many are members of the ruling communist party. If these people were to go to Israel they would be compelled to start at the bottom without having assurance that they would ever reach the social positions which they now hold in Bulgaria.

The Jews preserved their Jewish names even though the government encouraged the bulgarizing of the names of people of minority groups. Thus, Jewish names are heard disproportionately to their numbers. When one listens to the radio or television the names of Jewish actors and government figures are heard almost daily.²¹

Following is a list of names of prominent Bulgarian Jews.

Authors: Dora Gabe, Arman Baruch, Haim Benado, Victor Baruch, Salis

Tager, David Ovadia, Dragomir Assenov (whose original name is

Jack Melamed), Valeri Petrov (whose name is Mevorach).

Literary Critics: Maxim Naimovich, Yako Molochov.

Playwrights: Angel Vagenshtain, Chaim Oliver, Niuma Belogorski.

Actors: Luna Davidova, Leo Konforty, Yosif Rosanov, Ytzko Fintzi,

Yako Konfino. They have received numerous special awards.

Opera Singers: Mati Pinchas and Sabin Markov.

Pianists: Emi Bechar and Ulika Bechar.

Theatrical Producers: Boian Danovsky, Moise Beniesh, Grisha Ostrovsky,

Leon Daniel, Edy Shwartz.

Composers: Jul Levy, Bentzion Eliezer, Petia Stupel.

Painters: Marko Bechar, Anna Cramer, Suzy Aronova, Yoan Levy.

Journalists: Isak Nimovich, Albert Cohen, Emil Alagemov, Isy Salomonove,

Yogy Baruch, Isak Moshev, Baruch Shamliiev, Viki Levy, Yeshua Decalo.

These names which are often heard in public testify to the active part Jews are taking in Bulgarian cultural life.

For Bulgarians the Jewish Diaspora did not cease to exist, for them Bulgarian Jews are very much alive, a point which is almost never made in Israel. For all technical purposes the Israelis consider that the Bulgarian Jews have been closed as land of Galut. The evidence thus far is quite different.

In the field of Jewish studies since 1950 there was a definite decline, but not institutional death. The late chief rabbi of Bulgaria, Rabbi Ashel Hananel, together with Eli Eshkenazi edited two volumes on Balkanistics and prepared two additional volumes which are awaiting publication. Since the death of Rabbi Hananel work in the research of Judaism is continued by Dr. Salvador Israel, Isak Moskona and the elderly Eli Eshkenazi still continues his work of translating old manuscripts from Ladino into Bulgarian. The Department of History of the University has opened a branch for Balkan studies, in which there are several people working on Jewish heritage. Thus, the entire library of Jewish books which was in the synagogue, over 60,000 volumes - some of them very rare - is under the management of the Department of Balkan Studies. There are two or three non-Jewish researchers who work on different translations and documents. The head of the library is Dr. Israel who is in charge of the rare books. There is a need of specialists in research who can work for many years in order to find and translate all the documents. During the past decades Rabbi Hananel, before passing away, managed to collect from all closed communities the old books at the synagogues and Jewish centers and to gather them in the library of the Central Synagogue in Sofia.

Here are some aspects of daily life in the Jewish community in Sofia as we observed them on our visit during the Summer of 1969. The older men gather regularly in the Chitalishte or Bet Ama - the Jewish club. The building erected in the early thirties has four stories. On one of the floors these fellows get together to play chess, cards or other table games. A kitchen serves them turkish coffee, cold drinks and pastry of the commonly accepted style of the country. People get together according to their preference of companions. They show some minor political differences according to which they band together. Some claim to be more pro-Israel than others, but none are anti-Israel. In the group are found a few non-Jews, friends of the others. The gatherings take place every day from 4 - 7 p.m. People obviously enjoy these get-togethers and feel at home in this club.

Friday evenings services are held in the Central Synagogue of Sofia situated in the heart of the capital city. Its dome is surmounted with a David star, seen from a distance and dominating most of the buildings in the vicinity. The Synagogue structure was built about 1906. It is characteristic of the Sephardic style. In one of its corners there is a small court which used to be the ritual slaughter

house now no longer in existence. In the yard are several benches and above them a vine offering partial shade.

By six o'clock on Friday about a dozen elderly men and women were present. Some were drinking coffee prepared by the caretaker, others were eating a kind of garbanso beans. Their conversation was partly Bulgarian partly Ladino. In their midst was Cantor Melamed, a man of about sixty, the only religious figure in town after the death of Rabbi Hananel in 1964. More people were coming and at six-thirty sharp about forty men and women entered the smaller hall where the services are conducted at present. The ark is in one of the walls while the pulpit is in the middle according to the traditional sephardic custom. People sit on the chairs surrounding the other three walls. The liturgy was conducted entirely in Hebrew even though the prayer book contained the Bulgarian translation. All the men had their heads covered and the women wore light scarves. Women preferably sat on one side of the hall. At the end of the service there were about fifty people present.

The president of the congregation occupied a seat in the corner near the entrance to the hall and gave a sign to the cantor to begin the service. I was invited to lead most of the service that night. There is no Torah reading and no sermon is delivered. There are no Saturday morning services, Saturday being a regular work day in Bulgaria.

As a rabbinical student born in Sofia whose family lives in Israel, my presence brought much excitement to the congregation. It was a unique experience to have a young man coming from their own midst reading Hebrew in the Israeli way and chanting the hymns in the manner of the reformists little known to them.

On a second Friday visit at the synagogue a similar number of about fifty people gathered. The main hall of the synagogue needs repairs which, it was claimed, were going to be made in the nearest future. The government as the only supporter of all institutions has allotted the budget for maintenance of the building. All churches and synagogues are considered state monuments which are kept up by the authorities.

The members of the community are poor people. Their life is extremely modest. Many families still live in one apartment, several of them sharing the same facilities, kitchen and bathrooms. Food is expensive, so it is an effort to invite a guest to one's dinner table. Thus, a guest would hardly be invited by congregants for shabbath lunch or dinner.

I visited the city of Shumen in northeastern Bulgaria where I have a cousin. A city of about 80,000 people today, it had in the past, over twenty years ago, a population of about 100 Jewish families. Most of them were engaged in business and commerce and lived in a nice section of town, having built their own homes surrounded by courtyards in which fruit trees and flowers were grown. Today there remain only three Jewish families. My relative is the chief pharmacist in town,

a well paid and respected position. His family has little contact with the rest of the Jews and they feel very lonesome, therefore a guest from Israel is more than welcome, bringing a new spirit to the otherwise routine life. Emigration to Israel has been planned, but starting a new life and struggling with the Hebrew language and a new career seems forbidding to them. Hundreds of families are living in a similar way throughout Bulgaria. The Jewish section with its Hebrew school, Jewish center and synagogue are today taken over by the government and used as public schools. A family lives in the apartment adjacent to the synagogue while the main hall is used with the consent of the Jewish community as a storage place for the stage sets of the local theater. On the other hand, the local government maintains the building and keeps it in repair. This arrangement seems most satisfactory under the circumstances.

In the eyes of the Bulgarian non-Jewish community the Jewish presence is very much alive. For them it is hard to believe the statistics that only 5,108 Jews live in the country. Jews are very active in all spheres of life, the arts, politics, industry and everywhere. They are among the TV producers and in the parliament. There is hardly a big industrial enterprise in which a Jew is not in a top position. Since they keep their Jewish names Jews become very visible.

While watching television I came across the name of David Davidov, a member of parliament, who was giving a governmental exposé on the economical events in the government. On another occasion on TV the name of Jule Levy appeared as one of the leading musicians in the country. In the minds of the average Bulgarians their Jews are very much alive and present in Bulgaria, as they have always been.

From all that has been said in this chapter we are of the opinion that Jewish life in Bulgaria is not dead and that it is not in the process of disappearing. We may anticipate almost no change in the coming twenty years in the present status of the Jewish population in Bulgaria. One who knows the peculiarities of history at all and the rare capacity of Jewish survival may speculate further that the Jewish community in Bulgaria will continue to exist, though in limited numbers. This is our stand on the subject and it is contrary to the general opinion that the Bulgarian Jews or Galut Bulgaria have stopped their existence. We have proved this by the evidence presented. As far as the assumption is concerned that they are going to be out of existence within twenty years or so, it is against our statistical evidence. The climat in Bulgaria is one which may permit Jews to live there for an indefinite period of time in the future.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST SETTLERS IN PALESTINE

In the Bulgarian Jewish community the love for the land of Israel had been very strong. Since the middle of the 19th century the communities were influenced by the writings of the Yugoslavian rabbi Alkalai from the city of Zamlin. He is considered one of the founding fathers of modern political Zionism. His basic teachings and his ideology was to have Jews settle in the Holy Land in order to cultivate it and make a living as farmers. His idea gained much ground in Russia among the masses of Jews, particularly the organization Hovevei Zion - the lovers of Zion. The newspaper of this organization and other publications were read in Bulgaria and so the news spread. Baron Hirsh who was a big financial supporter of Jewish enterprises also believed that the plight of the Jews would improve if they were involved in work on the land. For the Russian and Bulgarian Jews only one land counted as such -- Israel.

A leading Jewish figure in Bulgaria in the second part of the 19th century was the historian Solomon A. Rosanes from the city of Russe. Several organizations were created for the purpose of acquiring land in Israel. A newspaper representing the Jewish community called El Amigo del Pueblo - the Friend of the People - provided information and also communication between the communities situated in different towns throughout the country. In 1882 there were several groups whose goal was to save money through membership dues with which to purchase land in Israel. The members were planning to eventually settle in the country. In 1886 a group of members of the synagogue in Sofia banded together for the purpose of raising funds for purchase of land in Israel. Baron Rothchild provided assistance to the group and soon an attempt was made to found a settlement in the Horan which is in the Golan Heights east of the lake of Tiberias.

We have partial information that during 1881 a number of people from the Jewish community of Vidin organized similar groups which were to collect money, buy land in Israel and that eventually its members were to migrate to the Holy Land. One of the organizers of this group, whose name remains unknown, left for Israel and was never heard from again. There were many similar cases of groups forming during the period immediately preceding Hertzl's Zionism. Most of the Bulgarians had been influenced by the Russian Jewish organization called Hovevei Zion. A parallel group to Hovevei Zion in Bulgaria was called Agudat Ahim Lishuv Eretz Israel (Brothers organization for settling the land of Israel). They sent two messengers to Israel in order to buy land, but the attempt failed. Efforts continued to settle in the Horan and har Tuv, and were ultimately successful.

Habiluim were the first settlers from Russia who came to Israel full of idealism and the intent to cultivate the land and make a living from their efforts. They were young men from middle class Jewish families and members of Hovevei Zion. The Biluim are known to be the original pioneers in the land of Israel at a time when a new approach to settlement in Israel was taken, namely, to live there as farmers and not

only for prayers and study while depending on alms-giving from Jews abroad. The first few Bulgarians who came can be compared in their effort, idealism and achievement and also by their fate to those first Russian Jews, their work commands just as much respect. The first three Bulgarian settlers, or Biluim, were Chaim Dromy, Shabtai Heskiah and Azriel Levy. To them the name of Yehudah Bechar can be added as a friend and additional source of accounts besides the memoirs written by those first three men.

Following is the history of the settlement in the Horan.²² In the year 1894 the gabbi (caretaker) of the Sofia synagogue got the idea to found a settlement in Israel. He gathered several families who began to contribute money toward that goal. From one of the Jewish papers published in Russia, Hamelitz - the Adviser - he learned about a group of Rumanian Jews who were also planning to settle in Israel. The Rumanian group was in contact with baron Rothchild who bought land in the Golan Heights. Each individual settler was to make a down payment with the balance to be paid later according to contractual agreement. Those participating were middle class people, well established with families and their reasons for immigration were neither economical nor political, since they did not suffer in any way from persecutions, but purely idealistic.

On October 4th, 1895, four Rumanian and one Bulgarian family met in Istambul on their way to their new home in the Golan Heights. The office of the Baron was in the town of Dasin near the territory of Toshanbasha which these five original families received. The new settlers started by building their homes from stone and wood. Neighboring Arabs provided some of the labor when the material arrived from Damaskus. Berry trees were planted with the intent of raising silk worms.

In May, 1896, eight more families arrived from Romania and three from Bulgaria. From the memoirs of Azriel Levy we learn that one group after another came from those two countries. About twelve people stayed in the house built by his father, among them two women who did the cooking and baked the bread while the men were plowing the land. Work animals were purchased from Damascus. The first pair was from stolen stock, unknown to the settlers, which they had to return without redemption, and they had to buy another pair.

By 1897, all the anticipated ten families from Bulgaria were in the Horan. They lived in a form of commune, sharing many things, working together hauling wood for the bakery oven, grinding wheat and eating together - mostly chick peas and lentils. In 1897 also the first crops were harvested and with this thefts by the neighboring Arabs began to happen. They stole produce, tools and donkeys. The settlers hired Arab guards which did not help. Typhoid fever spread in the settlement and the sick were taken to the hospital in Rosh Pinah. In the meantime the thefts continued and the Turkish police could not help at all. On one occasion thieves attacked one of the daughters of a settler from Rumania injuring her critically.

The Baron's clerks were watching closely what was happening and provided some financial aid to offset the thefts, but their volume increased and instructions came from Paris for the settlers to leave temporarily. They were moved to Zfat and Rosh Pinah. The Bulgarians moved to Zfat.

In the middle of 1898 the settlers were advised by the Baron's office to go back to the Horan without their families. They found everything demolished. In the recent past the Bedouins had rebelled against Turkish authority and after causing much destruction in the area their rebellion was now under control. The Turks arrested two of the Bulgarian settlers by mistake and jailed them. A man by the name of Shabtai Chezkie who met the prisoners on their way to Damascus intervened in their behalf as did the clerks of the Baron. The two were freed after a document was signed that all the settlers would leave the Horan.

Thus, after three years of efforts the Horan had to be abandoned. These people had come with their families out of pure idealism because they were Jews and wanted to live their lives in the land of their ancestors. They had left in Europe comfortable homes and prosperous enterprises. They had purchased their own land and tools and built their own homes. At the end of three years they had lost all their possessions and were reduced to paupers. Very little research has been done and little is known about the details of their lives and labors, these pioneers who came to resettle the land of Israel. All the hardships they endured did not break their spirit, as we shall see from future events in the lives of the Bulgarian Chalutzim (pioneers).

Moshavat Yavniel.

In 1901 ten families of the former settlers in the Horan who became known as the people of the Sachm Jolan settled in Lower Galilee. ²³ The land had been acquired by the Baron. Two men led the ten families to their new home; Yitzhak Levy from Bulgaria and Yehiel Berkowitz from Rumania. The new settlement was called Yama -- today Yavniel.

The first three years were very hard. The Arabs tried to get their land back and bloody fights resulted in even greater attrition for the Jews. Thefts were continuous and cholera spread among the settlers. Yet their numbers grew and a relative prosperity was present. By 1903 thirty-nine families were living in Yama. According to one source ten were from Bulgaria, fourteen from Rumania, one from Kurdistan and fourteen from Metula, a town in northern Galilee.

Thefts usually occurred on Friday evenings when everyone was observing the Sabbath. The head of the settlement was the husky and aggressive Azriel Levy from Bulgaria. He was held in great respect by the Arab neighbors and considered the Muktar -- chieftain -- of the Yama settlement. In 1909 he was accused of murdering an Arab who was trying to

steal. Actually the Arab died under different circumstances, but since there was a threat of blood vengeance Azriel had to return to Bulgaria and wait for things to cool off. About a year later plans did not turn out as had been hoped for, and all ten of the Bulgarian families left Yavniel. Thus ended one chapter of the migration of the Bulgarian Jews to the land of their forefathers. However, during the same time another one of their settlements, even more authentic in its nature, was growing and developing. This was Har-Tuv.

Before proceeding to the story of Har-Tuv we are going to review the settlements which the Bulgarian Jews built in Israel.

Here is a short account according to Haim Krispin of the part the Bulgarian Jewish immigrants have taken in founding new Yshuvim (settlements). The first Bulgarians settled on the east bank of the river Jordan, the Horan, near a place called Bney Yehuda. When they were forced to leave it they founded Yama, later called Yavniel.

The second settlement was Har-Tuv, on the road to Jerusalem, where Shimshon was raised. The people there had a difficult time since their settlement was attacked and destroyed many times, but they came back and rebuilt it. It still exists today and with it many from the Bulgarian Alya. The story of Har-Tuv has been written by the Bulgarian teacher of Har-Tuv, Haim Drory in Hed Hamisrach of 1946. Har-Tuv has been and still is in a most strategic location for the security and further development of Israel. From this point many actions during the War of Independence began and the 35 men who went to fight in Gush Etzion and did not return started from here.

Beit Hanan was the third settlement founded by the Bulgarian Alya. It is a result of the Zionist movement which was very strong in Bulgaria. Those people who came to Beit Hanan were from the third wave of immigrants arriving in Palestine after World War I. Mostly young, they were adequately trained in Bulgaria for farming wherever the Zionists were running this kind of enterprise. Some of its members had been in Palestine for about ten years when they settled in Beit Hanan. It was founded during the period of pogroms that took place in 1929.

In December, 1936 Kvar Hittim was founded by the Bulgarian Alya. This was the first of a series of settlements called Homa Umigdal - "A Wall and a Tower". The land for Kvar Hittim was the first purchase by the KKL (Jewish National Fund) in the year of 1905. The group Hakotzer was the one who settled there, and also the first one to build Moshave Shitofy, a cooperative farm which served as an example for later similar communes.

Some time later Beit Halevi was built in the valley of Heifer, Mesilot by the Hashomer Hatzair, Ramat Hashofet and Chatzor, all with the participation of many Bulgarian immigrants. Kibbutz Ail first was built in Dardara and later transferred to the area of the triangle, Kvutzat Ginegar and Raanana were created in 1946.

During the War of Independence the following villages were built, mainly by Bulgarian immigrants: Ginaton, Kfar Hanagid, Galia, Kfar Uria and Talmey Yehiel. Then, after serving in the army, a group of Bulgarians built Hagor in the North. The part which the Bulgarian immigrants have had in resettling the Jewish state and farming the land is a very considerable one.

Following is a list of Bulgarian settlements. 24

<u>NAME</u>	<u>FOUNDED</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>
Har-Tuv	1895			
Beit Hana	1930	Moshav	1,748	567
Maabarot	1933	Kibbutz	6,665	603
Kfar Hitim	1936	Moshav Shitofy	6,177	319
Messilot	1938	Kibbutz	6,770	444
Ramat Hashofet	1941	Kibbutz	8,159	645
Kfar Uria	1944	Moshav	700	187
Beit Halevi	1945	Moshav	2,260	264
Chatzor	1946	Kibbutz	7,971	375
Urim	1948	Kvutzah	6,000	80
Kfar Hanagid	1949	Moshav	1,175	427
Chagor (Gdud 9)	1949	Moshav	1,000	78
Ayil	1949	Kibbutz	3,600	126
Ganaton	1949	Moshav	2,200	327
Galia	1949	Moshav	2,700	390
Talmey-Yehiel	1950	Moshav	-	-

The above information dates from the end of 1952 and includes all residents, not only those of Bulgarian origin.

The Story of Har-Tuv.

In the 1870's a Spanish tourist who happened to be a consul at the embassy in Palestine stopped in the Arab village of Artob.²⁵ He was amazed to see that the Turkish police had tied up the elders of the village and were beating them for failure to pay the government taxes. The consul ordered the men freed and paid their debt. The following morning the elders transferred the ownership of the village to the consul, because times were bad and there was much sickness among the peasants, so that it had become impossible for them to own anything.

The consul sold the property a few years later to the Scottish Mission of Jerusalem. At that time the mission was searching for a suitable place in order to let new converts from Judaism live in safety from the Rabbinate. The majority of Jews did not approve of these converts who had accepted Christianity for the sake of financial reward.

The Mission built a small church and a building to house about sixty families in Artob. The building was never completed and throughout the years the families came and went, until finally there remained only one

man by the name of Shimon Bornikoff, who transferred the place to the Bulgarian immigrants.

During that time there was in Bulgaria a very active pre-Zionist movement which called upon the Jews to settle in the Holy Land. This group had two newspapers, El Amigo del Pueblo and Hamagid. As a result of this call to a common cause the Jews of the cities of Sofia, Tatar-Pasargik, Filibe (Plovdiv) and Pleven united during the Summer of 1895. The name of the new organization was Agudat Achim, and its purpose was to acquire land in Palestine. The members were divided into two groups, active members who were ready to immigrate, and supporting members who were to provide the financial assistance for the first group in carrying out its project. A certain businessman from Jerusalem by the name of Arie informed the Bulgarians that the village of Artob would be for sale. There were two desirable conditions in connection with the sale; the village could be bought on installments, and for the next five years it would be under the protection of the British consul. Under these conditions the purchase of the village by the Bulgarians was completed.

At first ten families were sent to live in Artob, two from each town which were soon followed by three more, but four of the original ten left again. These families lived under the "kvutza" system, a small communal arrangement, with the guidance of the teacher Chaim Alagem, who was one of the founders and spiritual leaders of the kvutza. The members worked together in order to prepare the land for the anticipated settlers, and began their task by digging a well. Each family received a monthly pay of 18 francs for their maintenance, this arrangement being the first of its kind in Israel. The members also worked on the completion of the building which the Mission had begun.

The peasants of Artob did not like the new settlers and complained about them to the authorities. Before long the unsuspecting new villagers received an order to leave the country. Their protective arrangement did not work out and the poor immigrants had to turn to Eliezer Ben Yehudah a leading Jew, who wrote the first modern Hebrew dictionary, to ask for his help and intervention. With his assistance and that of Hovevei Zion and the Chacham Bashi from Constantinople the eviction order was halted. The new situation demanded that the village be transferred to the names of the settlers with a payment of about 200,000 francs to be made by them, an amount so large that it was unavailable to them. Ezrat Achim stopped functioning and an envoy from Bulgaria arrived. This envoy divided the land among the families according to the cities of their origin, and each family received about 300 dunam (acres). With this the debt was cleared.

The settlers of Artob had neither water nor tools. They were surrounded by a veritable sea of thousands of Arab families. Out of necessity they adopted a way of life similar to that of their neighbors. For fear of thefts they took their livestock into their homes at night, and once in a while they would go on foot to Jerusalem, the only close city, to bring back provisions for their families, usually some oil and spices.

Jehoshua Issenshtadt Barzeli, a member of Hovevei Zion from Odessa assisted Artob through his organization by giving 12,000 francs for the purchase of livestock and seeds. The money was given after a setback because of drought. Barzeli was the teacher of the young, ritual slaughterer and also guardsman of the village.

A businessman by the name of Albert Antabi was the official protector of the settlement, but later this responsibility was transferred to the family of the Husseins. (Hussein Antabi was the head of the municipality of Jerusalem and gave the key of the city to General Allenby after his conquest of Palestine during World War I.)

In the meantime the village continued to grow. Many settlers turned to the company Yka for assistance. The latter advised them to leave the Holy Land and settle in Argentina, but they refused and with the help of Albert Antabi the ownership of all property by the settlers was firmly established through acquisition of the stock held hitherto by members in Bulgaria. To complete this transaction one third of the land was sold to the Bank Geula in Bulgaria, which the Bank then resold to a certain Goldberg who organized the farm Goldberg. Eliezer Ben Yehudah translated the name of the village Artob into the Hebrew Har-Tuv, which is a translation of Goldberg.

Goldberg hired hands, erected buildings and planted a forest in the name of the writer Bialik. This little forest was planted by Rachel Yanayit, who later became the wife of president Ben Tzvi. The year 1911 is considered the year of the establishment of this place.

In the year 1929 Har-Tuv was destroyed by bandits who came from Hevron. The settlement was ordered evacuated in 1947 after Gush Etzion was lost to the Arabs following two months of siege. It had been of great importance during the War of Independence, from where the group of "35" had left, never to return.

Today Har-Tuv is the center of eight farm villages in the corridor of Jerusalem and the county seat of the council Even-Ezer. It was one of the very first settlements in the land of Israel, built during the period of the Russian Hovevei Zion movement and it was not philanthropy that created it, but the hard-working settlers who financed it through their own efforts. Har-Tuv was built before Theodor Hertzl published his book The Jewish State, and before the first Zionist congress. It was established before any organized Zionist movement was present in Bulgaria. Har-Tuv was not helped by Baron Rothchild financially, because of red tape and bureaucratic complications with regard to the land's ownership.

In the memoirs of Shabtai Chiskiah it is said that in the year 1894 he received information from Ytzhak Arie about the possibility of purchasing land.²⁶ Ytzhak Arie was a Bulgarian Jew who lived in Jerusalem. There immediately followed a meeting in Bulgaria by the group called Agudat Ahim Leityashvut Beeretz Ysrael, a society for settlement in Israel.

Since the conditions were acceptable it was decided to proceed with the purchase, and Shabtai Chiskiah and Haim Alagem were sent from Sofia to Jerusalem to complete the transaction. The 4,000 dunam were bought at a cost of 4,000 Turkish liras and there was great rejoicing in the Bulgarian Jewish communities.

During the first two years twenty families made their homes in the new country with thirty more to follow. They came from the Bulgarian towns of Pasargick, Sofia, Pleven and Plovdiv. Not all of the twenty families remained, and some left under the strain of a new life and difficult circumstances. Most of those went to Jerusalem. In the first year the immigrants received assistance from those Jews who remained in Bulgaria, but during the second year this help was entirely cut off as a result of the economic difficulties which hit Bulgaria, and the settlers were compelled to use some of their own investment funds.

In the meantime trouble with the neighboring village of Artob began. The former owners of the land complained that the new settlers were not citizens of the Turkish empire and could not, therefore, own the land they had already purchased. An order of eviction within two weeks was sent from Jerusalem to the settlers of Har-Tuv. The pressure was so great that none of the influential persons in Jerusalem were able to change the decree.

Shabtai Chiskiah happened to be in Constantinople looking for the possibility of buying land in Jordan near the city of Krach, which a government official had suggested to him as a bargain. Unfortunately, in the long run the deal did not materialize, however his presence in the capital brought much relief for the Har-Tuv community. Chiskiah was able to get an anulment of the decree of eviction by the Grand Vesir, and the message reached Jerusalem just on the eve of the two weeks grace period. It found the Jews in a state of prayer and supplication with the Arabs waiting for the hour to strike when they could descend upon Har-Tuv to raid it.

Soon thereafter the land was officially registered in the name of the residents. A problem developed temporarily, because some of the owners were still in Bulgaria, but it was solved by registering all property to those already living in Israel. The property was too large for the settlers to farm all of it, so part of it was leased to their Arab neighbors. The territory of Har-Tuv extended to about 37 kilometers from Jerusalem and 7 kilometers from the nearest railroad station and the settlement was very close to the ancient town of Beth-Shemesh where Samson the biblical hero and judge had lived, in the Judaeen hills just overlooking the coastal valley.

At first the settlers lived in the two buildings which they found already erected on the place. In the next couple of years second and third floors were added to the buildings. While working on their homes they found little time for farming, and the Arabs used this opportunity to plow the land. There was great joy when the settlers discovered an

abandoned well, but to their disappointment they soon found out that the well dried up and did not refill until the rainy season began and so the water shortage was constant.

In the Spring of 1896, the settlers began clearing the land, planted vegetables and prepared to sow wheat. The neighbors increased their thefts stealing vegetables from the fields and tools. Complaints to the Turkish authorities brought partial relief, but soon another trouble appeared - grasshoppers attacked the fields.

The life of the settlers was of a communal nature. While it was often rough and hard, they did not complain, because they had chosen this of their own free will, and somehow they even enjoyed the new situation. It gave them a feeling of freedom, of doing what they wanted to do, and they were looking toward their future in Har-Tuv with hope and a realistic expectancy.

When there was no water in the well they brought it from other places on the backs of donkeys. There was no doctor in the area and anyone who became seriously ill was taken to Jerusalem. The home remedies used were most primitive, usually various herbs. Most of the new babies died. During the first three years the settlers farmed the land together and divided the products equally among themselves. Of the first ten families who came, only seven remained after three years. During the second year twelve families lived in Har-Tuv, a total of 58 people. They had 16 bulls, 4 cows and 4 donkeys. The main crop was corn.

Throughout these first years most of the settlers suffered from inflammation of the eyes and from malaria. They learned to control the mosquitoes by treating them with kerosene, but since the Arabs for their part did nothing, malaria still spread.

The year 1897 brought more settlers, and during that same year a violent storm damaged all the buildings, making it impossible for them to repair the damage, but Antaby was able to get some help from Jerusalem. Hovevei Zion sent a teacher from Jaffa to begin schooling of the children, a guardsman was hired, and for the first time state taxes had to be paid.

Year after year the population slowly grew. In 1900 the first of the students who had been in agricultural training returned to Har-Tuv, increasing the man power and growing new products, among them sugar beets and flowers. The floral essence was prepared for export to the United States. Another product was cheese which was sold on the market in Jaffa. What the settlers needed was more help and more water. By 1909 all hope that the rest of the members would arrive from Bulgaria had been exhausted and part of the land was sold to the Jew from Vilna named Goldberg. It was then that Yehudah Halevy changed the name of Artob to Har-Tuv, meaning Golden Mountain.

In 1912 the Yka company devised a program to build a moshavah with a house for each family, since all of them still occupied the original

two, although now expanded, buildings. In 1914 the Turkish authorities designated the settlement as a pilot station to experiment with the growing of eucalytus trees, coffee and tobacco. When the war began all help from abroad was cut off and the government discontinued its project. The settlers went back to plowing. Economically their situation was very difficult, but otherwise they were considered citizens by the Turks and treated very kindly. The settlement had to provide supplies to the military bases nearby, and when the British advanced and the Turks left, they separated in warm friendliness, the Turks thanking the settlers for their services rendered to the army.

The army of general Allenby passed by close to Artob through the railroad station which was called Har-Tuv. Today this very place is called Beit Shemesh, where a new Israeli city is being built.

With the end of World War I, a new road was built to the moshavah Har-Tuv. Limestone and other rock was excavated from quarries and sold to Tel-Aviv, which was fast expanding. Water was still scarce, so products had to be chosen not depending on water, among them sheep, which were raised in the nearby hills. In 1923 Baron Rothchild built a new school in the moshavah. There was also a health center and a synagogue. The British representative, Sir Herbert Samuel, was present at the dedication of the new complex.

With the year 1929 disorder and violence spread across the country. Har-Tuv was attacked by Arabs, the sheep were stolen and heavy damage was done to the settlement. The British government payed for the damage, but the attacks upon the settlement continued until the settlers decided to move under police guard temporarily to Tel-Aviv.

When the settlers returned, the Sochnuth - the Jewish agency - built a new house with two rooms and all facilities for each family. There was also water in the homes. Some of the families moved to the moshavah Even-Yehudah which had been built by the Sochnuth. The rest went on rebuilding their settlement. This time they erected a factory called Shimshon for the production of cement. In 1935 the factory was operating in a limited capacity. The situation turned bad again in 1936 with clashes between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, but this time the settlers received some help. They had a few armored cars to permit them safe contact with Jerusalem and the Sochnuth also sent some defenders to the settlement. Nevertheless, more than half of the settlers left Har-Tuv and their number dropped from 154 people to 69. Most of the various occupations were discontinued, and the few hands that were left went to work in the fields plowing the land. In this desperate situation Har-Tuv entered the 1940's and the Second World War.

At that time the head of the settlement was Abraham Bechar, one of the veritable veterans, and according to him the police station of Har-Tuv was completed in 1940 by the British, who entrusted the people with a canteen frequented by British and Arab officers, the mukhtars - local Arab leaders - and the members of Har-Tuv. As a result of these circumstances relations were friendly, and on one occasion Arab officers

helped the settlers and defended them when they were found hiding wheat which was due the British army.

The situation of Har-Tuv improved only after 1945 when the war ended. Vegetables were planted and the rebuilding of the cement plant Shimshon continued.

Today it is difficult to recognize Har-Tuv. It has become a well built urban area with much grass and trees. Many of the old names have changed and many, actually thousands, of new settlers have come from every corner of the Diaspora. Yet, a few old-timers do remember the epic of one of the very first settlements in Israel which the Bulgarian pioneers created and carved out of the mountains of Judea. Their struggle for their country can remind us of a similar struggle that was fought singlehanded 3000 years earlier by a man called Samson.

One of the first settlers of Har-Tuv was the Bulgarian Shabtai Chiskiah. He left in his memoirs an account of another settlement that was attempted by the Bulgarian Jews and failed.

Shabtai Chiskiah was invited by the head of the county of the city of Krach, which is located in Jordan, east of the Dead Sea.²⁷ The name of his host was Hussein Hilami Pasha. Shabtai met with a Jewish doctor who mentioned to the Pasha that Chiskiah was in the real estate business. The Pasha was very interested in selling land to Chiskiah and to have Jewish settlers in his county. Shabtai Chiskiah visited the land which was about 4 kilometers from the city and had a good supply of water. He asked the Pasha to donate the land to a prospective 600 Bulgarian families, and negotiated for police protection with the authorities. Hilami Pasha arranged all the formalities concerning the land in his office, and then sent it to Damascus where the case received immediate attention and was forwarded to Constantinople with Shabtai Chiskiah following to speed up things. The local vesir gave his consent to 100 families and the case was transferred to the palace for final approval. Here some difficulties developed, some of the officials wanted bribes. Chiskiah did not have any money, but he located two Bulgarian Jews, one a man by the name of Romano. Both were ready to invest the necessary 500 Turkish pounds with the condition that their names be included in the contract. In the meantime the paper El Progreso intervened negatively by influencing the two to withdraw from the deal.

A short time thereafter another man from Sofia, David Salomon Arav, became interested in the purchase. His condition was that he wanted to visit the territory near Krach first, and this was going to take much time. At that time disorders involving the Armenian community in Constantinople began to spread and for that reason the officials suspended all negotiations concerning the acquisition of the territory. Soon afterwards the Pasha of Krach was transferred to Saloniki and the entire venture had to die.

Shabtai Chiskiah moved to the city of Krach where he opened a colonial store, but after some time went to live in Tel-Aviv until his death, and so ends the sad account of one unsuccessful attempt, almost entirely unknown, of the purchase of land for the colonization of Bulgarian Jews.

As the years went by the Jewish immigration to Palestine was taking new shape and progressing in different directions. One of the biggest achievements of the Bulgarian Alya was the moshav Ovdim Beth-Hanan located south of Tel-Aviv, and whose history had less ups and downs.

The Story of Moshav Ovdim Beth-Hanan.

During the years of 1920 to 1925, many halutzim from Bulgaria came to Israel. Some of them went to live in the kibbutzim and acquired experience and skill to farm the land. Some were trained in Bulgaria where the Zionists had set up farms for the development of agricultural expertise.

In the Summer of 1929 about forty people, the first members of the moshav arrived and began to prepare the land for the planting of orange groves.²⁸ A year later the groves were planted. At the same time most of the members were making a living by working as hired hands in the neighboring villages. They dug a well for their moshav which brought great joy to the members when, for the first time, they were able to fetch water which was their own.

Also in 1930 the construction of the settlement got under way. A school was built for the youngsters and fortified to provide protection in case of fighting and against attacks. By the end of that year the first members moved into their homes and within the next few years thirty more people joined the moshav. Vegetable gardens were planted and chicken coops built. The experience of the older members was very valuable in increasing the output, and soon the orange groves began to produce, representing a handsome income for the members of the moshav.

With the beginning of the Second World War the export of oranges stopped temporarily, but the members kept up the orange groves in hopes of better days. Their hope was not in vain, and soon the export of oranges was resumed.

Even before the founding of the state of Israel, the moshav Beth-Hanan was thriving, its buildings and facilities growing, and after 1948, as more people joined, another boost of prosperity came. During the days of resistance against the British the members of Beth-Hanan played a significant role, assisting in the illegal immigration and giving their share in the Haganah as well as in the economical life of the country. All its youth, boys and girls, joined the banners during the War of Independence, and many new immigrants found their way into new homes with Beth-Hanan as the first stop.

It is worth while to mention that Beth-Hanan was the first moshav which used a new system in the recruiting of its initial members. Each

one of the first settlers had to pay the amount of 3,000 pounds, to be matched with 500 pounds by the Sochnuth. Many of the halutzim who were willing to settle did not have the money and their parents were unable to raise the amount. To overcome this difficulty the Zionist Histadruth of Bulgaria provided the money for all those settlers who could not pay the fee. In this manner Beth-Hanan, the first settlement of its kind, was founded.

Moshav shitofy (cooperative farm) Kvar Hitim.²⁹

In December, 1937 a detachment of the organization called Hakotzer opened the first settlement in the series of Homa and Migdal, the "Wall and Tower" program. The Hakotzer group was formed by young Bulgarian men and women who had received their training on the specially organized farms for that purpose, back in Bulgaria near the city of Pasardgik, which was called Haatid (the future).

The small group which arrived received some assistance with machinery and supplies from the KKL Jewish national fund who provided the equipment.

This settlement had in the past been organized and then abandoned. The Hakotzer group turned out to be the one who remained. Soon they had their problems - a case of real estate friction with the neighboring Arabs, and one of the halutzim, Shelome Ben Nun, was kidnaped, tortured and killed. The body was dumped back into the settlement and a bloody feud began. His comrades swore by the graveside, the first one of the settlement, that whatever the circumstances they would never leave this land.

The major problem that caused the failure of earlier attempts to settle there was the lack of water, but now the Sochnuth helped and provided the water for the settlement. At first the detachment counted only ten men and one girl; within two years there were already sixty families on the farm. This was also the first moshav shitofy ever built in Israel. In order to secure a livelihood and the future development of the settlement the members decided to have an industry besides the agricultural activities. Thus, a factory for fabrics was built in the moshav.

The settlement has a charter which reflects its deep humanitarian and equitable principles. This village where there were only four eucalyptus trees, is today entirely surrounded with greenery and forests, and in 1957 already over 300 people lived there.

With the account of Kvar Hitim we complete the history of most of the major settlements which were founded by the Bulgarian Jewish immigrants in Israel. We have covered their major achievements and contributions to the new nation. Our investigation will continue with the events which took place when those Bulgarian immigrants arrived who came after the War of Independence.

CHAPTER IV

THE BULGARIAN JEWS IN ISRAEL AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE

There was great excitement throughout all of the Jewish communities in Bulgaria following the independence proclamation of Israel on May 15, 1948. All Jewish stores in the towns were decorated for several weeks with Israeli flags. Jews were warmly congratulated by their Christian neighbors on the establishment of the Jewish state as they gathered in public places discussing with joy the latest events in the Middle East, and much pride was written all over their faces.

The Jewish groups were discussing the coming of the "Shaliach" (messenger) who was supposed to be a young man from the Jewish agency in Israel sent to negotiate with the Bulgarian authorities the immigration of the Bulgarian Jews and the arrangement of all legal matters. The young people of Sofia were crowding in front of the Beit Ama, the Jewish consistory, so as to get a glimpse of the Shaliach. The word Shaliach has some mystic connotation by rining with Mashiah - messiah - known to the people as the anointed one, the deliverer.

The long years of Zionist inspiration, training and preparation to go to the promised land bore fruit at last. Jews went in masses to register at the consistory for immediate emigration to Israel. First were the youths, those in their late teens and early twenties, who left their hotly contested places at the university (where acceptance was only after a battery of tests) and their jobs in order to go and fight for the Jewish state. These youths, as they arrived in the port of Haifa were immediately recruited into the newly formed Israeli army.

The Bulgarian authorities were pro-Israel in their views. Soviet Russia also at that time wholeheartedly supported the founding of the Jewish state. The president of Bulgaria was Georgy Dimitrov, an intellectual, leader of the Bulgarian Communist party. His wife was Rosa Dimitrova, a Russian Jewess. The trend in the Bulgarian government was once again pro-Jewish and most helpful to the Jewish cause. The immigrants were allowed to ship most of their belongings, only valuables and special tools or sophisticated machines were not permitted to leave the country.

The Bulgarian Jews moved in great numbers, 4000 persons at a time, transported by the biggest Bulgarian freighter "Bulgaria", which was adapted for this task. It made six trips in a year's time from the port of Burgass on the Black Sea to Haifa. What brought about this mass emigration was the change in political structure which was not easy on the middle class oriented Jews, many of the business men. The shadow of the holocaust which had just ended, with its memories still alive, the Zionist spirit and education which had deep roots in the Bulgarian group, and finally the preceding immigration of some of the youth during the past few years, caused the decision of the elders to move and follow them. Above all it was a mass excitement mixed with the pride of being a Jew. After years of degradation going to Israel

was a healing balm for the still hurting human emotions.

The resettlement and absorption of the Bulgarian Jews was in the view of many leaders a miracle. Everything was lacking in the attempt to assimilate the new immigrants. From the boat they were brought to former British military camps in Pardess Chana near Hedera, housed in tents and given some food. Jobs were scarce and no homes had been made available to them. Instead they moved from the immigration camps into towns where old and half ruined houses had been left empty by the Arabs. Even for this kind of housing the immigrants had to fight the different offices of the Sochnuth, the military, the development department, and others. The approach of the government officials to these problems totally lacked understanding of the immigrants' needs for placement and jobs. Aside from that the newcomers did not bring any capital or equipment with them, since they were not permitted to do so by the Bulgarian authorities. They knew neither Hebrew nor Yiddish which would have made direct contact with the administration possible. All they had was will power and the training to work hard. Professionals got manual jobs without doubt or hesitation and were able to withstand the difficulties of the immigrant's life until their faculties and talents were recognized and each one made good in his own field and line of interest. These immigrants withstood the time of trial and succeeded.

How the Bulgarian Immigration was Absorbed.

The information we are giving here is according to Mrs. Shoshana Ben-Yoseph from the book published in memory of her husband.³⁰ Shoshana was one of the Bulgarian veterans who arrived in 1920. By 1948, when the great immigration began she was a secretary in the Histadruth with a commanding position and she assisted some of the immigrants in their orientation and in getting jobs.

Up to 1939, 8000 Bulgarian Jews migrated to Israel. Since then, until 1944, when Bulgaria was freed from the Nazis, 1200 came in legal and illegal ways, and from 1944 to 1947 the number was 1842.

The great immigration from Bulgaria began on July 31, 1948 and ended May 15, 1949. During that time 38,000 people arrived. Since that date up to the end of 1950 came about 1200 immigrants. Thus, according to Shoshana, more than 50,000 people have come to Israel from Bulgaria alone, while 7000 remained there. From the latter small groups continued to arrive.

Shoshana Ben-Yoseph also provides statistics concerning the professional people who came to Israel. These are valid for the year ending in 1949. During the past twenty years the numbers have tremendously increased.

Physicians	82	Attorneys-at-law	74
Dentists	34	Accountants	740
Nurses	112	Musicians	32
= Pharmacists	43	Actors and Performers	22
Chemists	24	Architects	18
Lab technicians	34	Engineers	24
Hebrew teachers	22	Agronomists	7
Elementary teachers	15	Students	114

In addition there were also a number of skilled workers as recorded by Shoshana.

Electricians	240
Sheetmetal workers	112
Textile workers	94

Many of the immigrants took specialized courses, girls became nurses, mechanics and lab technicians in medical and biological fields, and a considerable number of young men, after completing their military service, enrolled at the Technion to study engineering in its various forms. While most of the young people completed their studies in Israel, some of them found it necessary to go abroad, particularly those who wanted to study medicine, because of the high competition for the limited openings at the University of Jerusalem. Many graduated and returned to Israel to pursue their careers as physicians.

Shoshana mentions the difficulties which the professionals among the immigrants faced upon arrival in the new country. Most of the attorneys were bitterly disappointed in their efforts to practice their profession, and for years could not find placement in their field of work, both for lack of available positions and knowledge of Hebrew, obstacles to the passing of the local bar examinations. They had to take apprentice jobs for a pittance, and those who once had been in responsible positions now found themselves as servants. After about a decade this situation improved with the economic development and growth of the country, permitting those immigrants who cared to work in their special fields to do so. Ultimately, all things considered, they did very well for themselves.

As we have mentioned before, it was almost impossible for us to have access to statistics of a later period than the one covered by Shoshana Ben-Yosef. The government intentionally refuses to keep records of the origin of professional people, and though the reasons given for this attitude are noble motivations, we consider this approach bordering on the criminal. Today no civilized country, unless it be a dictatorship, would refuse to keep statistics. Their value is of outstanding importance not only for research, as in our case, but as a record of the sociological development of the country according to its various ethnic groups; the different factors which brought about certain adjustments, or the lack of such adjustments. This kind of research is severely curtailed, if not paralyzed, by the Israeli government which refuses to keep records of the place of birth of its citizens.

Yhud Oley Bulgaria -
The Organization of the Bulgarian Immigrants. 31

Yhud Oley Bulgaria is a unique organization which is still functioning, and it officially represents the Bulgarian Jews who emigrated to Israel. Its history of activities and actions reflects in a most significant way the development of the Bulgarian Alya. For this reason we are devoting most of this chapter to an account of its activity.

Until the beginning of 1948 about 5000 Jews from Bulgaria came to settle in Israel, dispersing among the rest of the population, not counting those who were living in Bulgarian settlements as described in Chapter III. Thus, when a Bulgarian immigrant arrived, there was nobody of his own background to accept him, direct him, or assist him with advice or words of comfort. Some informal means did exist in which contact between newcomers and oldtimers was made in a very casual way.

From September, 1944, the Alya increased steadily in Israel and some very active members of the Bulgarian community, with much experience in community affairs were idealists who wanted to help their Bulgarian brothers now arriving in Israel. These were the core of Yhud Oley Bulgaria. Their goal was to welcome the newcomers with words of comfort and encouragement. When the mass immigration began these individuals went on own initiative and at their own expense to the port of Haifa. They wanted to give the new immigrants first-hand information on the conditions in the country, advice and encouragement. The Sochnuth did not at that time provide service of this kind. Frequently these would-be hosts had to argue with the port authorities for permission to enter the port's premises. On one occasion the new immigrants were rushed from the boat to the open dock, while the winter's rain was pouring down upon them. Their self-appointed hosts rushed over to the warehouses and broke the locks on the gates in order to permit the immigrants to take shelter. The purpose of these actions was to give them a good impression of their new homeland during these initial hours, something that had been entirely lacking when those people who now wanted to be the hosts had arrived. They remembered their own experience when they came to the port of Haifa when there had been no one to greet them, to answer questions or ease their anxiety. The Sochnuth, however, and the rest of the governmental offices did not care to recognize their effort, and neither did they appreciate the constructive job which these men did.

When the immigrants were installed in the Batey Olim (immigration camps), these half-way veterans were trying to direct their brethren by arranging discussions and informal speeches. The immigrants, who were bitter, mistook these men for the real authorities responsible for everything, namely, housing, jobs, and so on. In their zeal these leaders threw themselves between the government on the one hand and the new immigrants on the other, defending the former, while being condemned by the latter. What they were trying to achieve through this kind of sacrifice was to make the immigrants kindly disposed towards their new country, while at the same time they were pressing the government for better conditions for the immigrants. (The writer personally remembers the agitated meetings which took place in the Beit Olim in Pardess Chana.)

The Case of Kvar Ana.

The leaders of the Yhud tried to settle many of the Bulgarian compatriots on mostly newly created farms. To their great disappointment some of these attempts failed. One such example is Kvar Ana, located about 15 miles southeast of Tel-Aviv.

In the territory of a former Arab village a group of new immigrants was to be settled. The adobe huts were destroyed as unsuitable dwellings and only the concrete homes built by the wealthier Arabs were left, although most of them lacked water and plumbing facilities. Into those concrete houses the new settlers were moved. There was a water pump in the village from which at first the water had to be fetched, but eventually each house had a fountain built on its premises, while the toilets remained outdoors. We do not consider it an unnecessary detail if we mention here that most of these people were of European middle class, many of them professionals, who came from homes with the most modern equipment, latest appliances and even maid service. In their new homes electricity was completely absent. No roads, only narrow paths led from one home to another, a distance of several hundred feet between them.

These settlers needed immediate employment. The men went to work building roads, some were placed by agencies, many of the women became servants. In the court yards the settlers were raising chickens, which after some time the Sochnuth had provided, and many grew vegetables. These people knew almost nothing about agriculture, perhaps in the past one or the other had grown flowers in a back yard, but they were not prepared for the life of a farming community.

On Saturday nights the youth of Kvar Ana got together for singing and dancing to the sounds of an accordeon in the all-purpose hall near the water pump. They were rejoicing in the faded light of a couple of carbide lamps.

Kvar Ana was not devoid of gory incidents. One night infiltrants penetrated into the village. They attacked one of the homes where a family of five was asleep. The attackers threw a hand grenade, entered the house and killed the adults. Two children remained alive by hiding under beds. Later the Sochnuth placed them in a kibbutz.

After this the village took some defense measures. There was a curfew and a regular guard organized by the settlers themselves who had obtained some weapons.

Several times a week after the day's work, the men took evening courses to learn Hebrew and to get additional training in their individual professions. Eventually, after a year or two in Kvar Ana many got jobs in the cities. They had to get up early each morning to catch the only bus going to Tel-Aviv, and in the dark of winter a crowd was waiting every day for the bus, since so many of them now worked in town. In the meantime more immigrants, this time from other countries, joined the settlement. Some were from Iraq, others from Romania, and the mixing

of nationalities was done with the best intent on the part of the government who had the ideal of integration in mind. Yet, the bus service did not improve, and people in the terminal fought each other to get on the bus. To those who missed it the day's wages were lost and it meant a lack of food. At that time none of them could even think of owning a car, the most anyone could afford was a bicycle, and some acquired those.

Instead of unification among the different nationalities sharp antagonism arose. Those who had higher moral standards than their neighbors were deteriorating. People hated their settlement, and their one goal, even obsession, was to get out of it and move to the city. Most of them slowly made their way out.

Today near the site of Kvar Ana is an entirely new settlement called Monoson, built through the initiative and with the funds of a South African Jew by that name. Several families moved to Monoson from Kvar Ana. In the same area also lies the town of Or Yehudah today.

Yhud Oley Bulgaria is the official representative of the immigrants from Bulgaria. It is recognized by the following institutions: The Jewish Agency; Yad Vashem authorities; Cultural Institutions Public; other immigrational organizations and the citizens of Israel. When the Bulgarian government severed its relations with the state of Israel the Yhud sent a letter of protest, one of the latest actions taken by the organization, which found full public support in Israel, and the letter was printed in Far Tribuna, a Bulgarian language paper published in Israel.

During the days of president Isaak Ben Tzvi a special evening was arranged by him for the Bulgarian immigrants. The memory of it was recorded in the "Book of the Tribes of Israel in the House of the President". Ben Tzvi recollected that 35 years ago he had visited Bulgaria and the city of Pasargik when he was a modest chalutz, and attended a meeting of the local Zionists there.

The Yhud held a big celebration to commemorate ten years of the Bulgarian immigration to Israel and at another event the memory of those who went down with the boat Salvador was honored. Most of those who drowned were from Bulgaria, but there were some Jews from other countries also. The remains were brought ashore and more than 15,000 Bulgarians gathered at Blumfield Stadium near Tel-Aviv where these events took place with much excitement, although in perfect order and with the president in attendance. The incident of the boat Salvador was just one case of the many illegal smugglings, "mafilim", of immigrants into the country.

In 1965 the Bulgarian Alya packed the theater Abima in Tel-Aviv in memory of the twentieth anniversary of the Nazi destruction. Although the financial situation of the Yhud was rather poor, trees were planted in the forest on mount Hertzl in memory of Pola Ben Gurion, the wife of the former prime minister.

Since the Six-Day-War the Yhud has been most active in assisting the committee for soldiers, Vaad Lemmaan ha-Haial. The Yhud has done much to show appreciation to all Bulgarian gentiles who contributed to the rescue of the Bulgarian Jewry. In 1963 the patriarch Kyril visited Israel and the spontaneous reaction of the Bulgarian Alya was great. Thousands went to the Mendelbaum gates in Jerusalem to greet him and his entourage. The patriarch had been defending the Jews during the Nazi regime, as had General Stoichev, a World War I hero and great friend of the Jews, regardless of the political direction of his country. The famous musician Sasha Popov also visited in Israel and the Yhud accepted him warmly.

Dimo Kasassov, minister during several governments, was invited by the Yhud. During the fascist days he had been a sharp critic of the Nazi head of the Bulgarian government and defended the Jews. He met with Ben Gurion and other leaders in Israel. The central synagogues in Bulgaria commemorated 25 years since the beginning of the persecutions against the Jews in 1940, and there was only a single voice defending Israel, that of Dimo Kasassov, the elderly gentleman who spoke from his own knowledge after having visited there.

The Yhud provides two former non-Jewish political leaders with pensions. These men were involved in saving 8000 Jewish lives in the annexed Bulgarian territories during World War II. They prevented the Jews from being deported to the concentration camps in Poland by their courage and daring to resist and halt those actions. For this the Nazis purged them from the government and later the communists for their part accused them of cooperation with the Nazis, so that pensions were denied them in the end. These men are Dimiter Peshev, assistant head of the committee for laws, and Peter Michailov, one of his assistants and supporter of the Jewish cause.

The Yhud also helped to bring to justice a certain Adolf Bekerly, Hitler's representative in Sofia. With the help of two of its members, Benjamin Arditi, a Haver Knesset (member of parliament) and Buko Levi, an attorney, the Yhud proved his guilt with the evidence of documents which were sent to the German federal republic.

One of the major accomplishments of the Yhud has been the ascertainment of reparations for the Bulgarian Jews from West Germany to alleviate the results of persecutions suffered by the Jews during the Nazi occupation. This turned out to be a lengthy and very controversial campaign. The Yhud began the drive by sending applications to all olim from Bulgaria, withholding a certain amount as service charge upon receipt of payments, to be used as capital for the founding of the Alya's Home for the Aged to be built in Rishon Lezion. Most of the Alya received some financial reward due to the efforts of the Yhud.

At present one of the most important tasks of the Yhud is to look after the interests of those Bulgarian Jews living in Israel who still have property in Bulgaria. Since there are frequent changes of laws in Bulgaria, the Yhud informs its members of these changes through the

Bulgarian daily Far Tribuna, and also by personal letter, suggesting defensive measures which might be taken. A recent Bulgarian law requires that every foreign real estate holder appoint a general governor of the property, or it would be nationalized by the government.

There were many suggestions during the past years that the Yhud publish a book of the history of the Bulgarian Alya up to the time of the great migration. Scholars became interested in such a work, but according to them the Yhud got very little help with it. Finally a volume appeared, but only after major struggles and even threats on the part of some individuals who wanted to dissolve the Yhud. Arguments still continue. The book is called Encyclopedia of the Diaspora, Vol. 10, on the Bulgarian Jewry. There is no doubt in the minds of all leaders of the Yhud that Bulgarian Jewry as such is disappearing in order to contribute its share to the Israeli nation.

During the past ten years the ranks of active participants have been thinned with the passing away of some of its most outstanding members, and the loss has been felt all around. Gone are the founders of the bank Alia, the Yhud and the Home for the Aged. Their names are already a memory -- Colonel Tager, Fisher Goldshtine, Dr. Shabtai Farhi, Jakob Nitzani, Chaim Krispin, Vitali Chaimov, Albert Kiosso, Rabbi Avraham Altares, Abraham Levi, Albert Romano, Chaim Asa, Buko Manoach, Eliahu Ben-Mayor, Yosef Geron, Albert Anavi, Menachem Muchonov. The Yhud is working on a complete list of leaders of Bulgarian Jews who have passed away, to be published in Yartzit. In some cases an effort has been made to name a street after one of these leaders.

At the University of Jerusalem are several professors of Bulgarian origin who came to be much respected among the faculty for their work. Among them are Baruch Mevorach, Department of History, visiting professor at the Sorbonne; Michael Confino, Slavic Studies, lecturing at Harvard in 1969, and Dr. Nissan Oren, Political Science, who lectured at the University of Maryland during 1969.

Tel Baruch is a residential section in the northern part of Tel-Aviv. It was built in 1950 by the Bulgarian immigrants and the name means Hill of Baruch. Yosef Marco Baruch was one of the young fanatics during the late 1890's who spread the Zionist movement in Bulgaria. Born in Turkey, Baruch lost his father at an early age.³² His mother sent him to study in Switzerland and later he continued his university education in France. A bright and restless youth, Baruch dedicated his life to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In Paris he was once insulted for being a Jew and fought a sword duel in which one of his legs was permanently injured. It is said of him that he usually carried a concealed weapon and a sword was hidden in his cane. Baruch took an active part in the early Zionist congress' held in Basel. He traveled incessantly in Europe and North Africa. Theodor Hertzl did not like Baruch, their views on how to create a Jewish state differed very much. Baruch was for armed intervention against the Turks and for

conquest of the land by force. Hertzl was for diplomatic negotiations with the authorities and peaceful settlement by the farmers. In his memoirs he confesses to an abiding fear of Baruch.

The Bulgarian Jewish groups, heretofore little oriented in their goal of creating the land of Israel, were organized by Baruch who brought them into the sphere of political Zionism. He also reorganized the Jewish press in Bulgaria. Although he stayed there for only two years his impact upon the Jews was tremendous. Stories were told about him and he came to be a living legend. Financially deprived, frequently suffering from hunger and cold, he refused to take positions offered him, because he feared they would interfere with his zealous work. Many people were antagonized by him and on a few occasions he even was jailed. On the other hand, many did like him, and in one instance the king of Bulgaria personally intervened on behalf of the young man, and it was said that the king and leading writers and other personalities were impressed by Baruch. Within two years after his initial appearance Baruch disappeared from the Bulgarian scene. But not before leaving indelible marks in the spirit of the Jews who were ready to seek an image of his dimension.

Baruch ended his life in Italy in his late twenties, after being heart-broken over the loss of his fiancée who left him.

And so, in Tel-Aviv a section is named after this little-known fighter for the Jewish state. The Jews of Bulgaria showed their gratitude to the memory of this inspiring leader. Many streets in Tel-Baruch are named after outstanding Bulgarian personalities who by their zealous work contributed to the creation of the new nation.

Following is a list of the various organizations which are considered part of the Bulgarian Alya:³³

The Circle of Albert Kiosso
 The Jack Asseov Home for the Aged
 Kupat Alyia Lmtd.
 The Choir Tzadicoff
 The Choir Moledet
 The Football Team Makabee Yaffo
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Monsky, Tel-Aviv
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Shaar Alyia, Haifa
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Achva, Holon
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Ezrat Achim, Yaffo
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Teshua, Yaffo
 B'nai B'rith Loge of Pensioner, Yaffo
 Women's Club Lina for Sephardic Women, Tel-Aviv
 The Daily Far Tribuna

This writer had an appointment with Leon Krispy, attorney-at-law and secretary of Yhud Oley Bulgaria since 1952. Most of the above

material was given to us by him. During his time in office there have been many accomplishments by the Yhud. Reparations from Germany, the founding of the Home for the Aged, and at present the maintenance of real estates in Bulgaria. The job of secretary of the Yhud is extremely difficult since its members are under the impression that the Yhud is obligated to them, and demands for the services of the staff are made with much arrogance.

The Home for the Aged.³⁴

Benjamin Arditi, former representative of the Knesset and the most authoritative living historian on the subject of the Bulgarian Jewry, initiated the Home for the Aged in his capacity as one of the leaders of the Bulgarian community in Israel.

As we have mentioned earlier the Home was financed by a charge the Yhud collected from reparations payments made by Germany. The small amount of 2% from each individual made it possible to acquire the property and start the building. A site was found in Rishon Letzion. One building already existed, a former rest home for women after childbirth. This original building was enlarged and a big dining hall added. The name given the Home was that of its most generous contributor, Jack Asseof, a former Bulgarian Jew now living in New York. There were also a number of other donors.

Many of the residents of the Home moved there in order not to have to live a lonesome life. They sold their previous facilities - Israelis have to acquire their living quarters by initial purchase - and with that money in hand plus some of their old age benefits they were accepted into the Home. In some cases people were totally without funds and such cases are also admitted.

The people who come to the Home are all bulgarian-born. They have a common language, Ladino and Bulgarian; they have common memories and many of them knew each other before coming to the Home. Their style of life and preference in food is similar and the meals served are according to their taste. Games and entertainment are compatible with their culture. Many a person in this Home has been transferred from another one, not predominantly Bulgarian, where adjustment was difficult. The spirit among the members is high, the atmosphere friendly and people are very happy there. Two persons share one room and bathroom in buildings that are contemporary, and although the furnishings are modest, the members lack nothing that is in style with present-day Israeli culture. They have a recreation room, movies, television in the main hall and a synagogue which is well attended. Orange groves and vinyards surrounding the area keep it clean and quiet.

Today the Home has about 90 members, most of them women, only about a dozen are men. They are given excellent medical care, and statistics show that the death rate is only 2% compared with 7.5% for

other homes, the factors besides superior medical care being a high hygienic standard and the healthy emotional atmosphere. Most of the members are contributing hand crafted objects to the annual bazaar held at the Home.

Management of the Home is by a counsel and a review committee under the ultimate guidance of Yhud Oley Bulgaria. The goal is to develop the Home to its fullest capacity and to be able to admit 120 more members. For this purpose the organization will have to raise another 1,000,000 pounds, mostly through donations.

The Bank Kupat Alia³⁵ Cooperative Society for Credit and Savings.

The Bulgarian Jews are known as great Zionists. The ideal to go to Israel and live and work there was in the hearts of many. One of these active Zionists in Bulgaria, Moses Ben Nun, in the year 1935 explained his plan to found a mutual or cooperative financial society to some of his colleagues. Within this group was Solomon Eshkenazi, who became the first president of the Kupat Alia. These men were among the first immigrants in the settlement Beth Hanan, and Kupat Alia the first bank in Israel to pioneer the way in worker's savings.

The company was founded in the year 1937, as an institution of mutual help and assistance for the new immigrants. Its cultural activities surpass those of a regular bank. To this day the bank extends its help to new immigrants, but it has expanded to include also cooperatives and small merchants and organizations. In the 35 years of its existence the bank has achieved considerable standing in Israel. While many other smaller banks and savings and loan associations have ceased to exist because of the acute competition in the banking field in Israel, Kupat Alia has managed not only to survive, but also to grow as a result of its wise management. We learned that some of its high officials contribute their work without remuneration. The expense of most other banks is accrued by their high officials in the form of salaries and business expenses. Kupat Alia founded by the Yhud Oley Bulgaria, is today completely independent from it, managed by a board of directors, advisory board and a reviewing committee.

Some of the bank's activities are presented herewith. Kupat Alia has assisted new settlements in their efforts to establish themselves as agricultural enterprises, including places like Kvar Hitim, Beth Hanan, Tzur Moshe Beth Halevi, and others. The bank even surpassed the quota allowed by the Israeli government for farming settlements and in 1964 made loans of 3,650,000 pounds. Its most helpful work, however, has been in giving small loans to the new immigrants. When the Bulgarian Alia arrived in 1948/49, Kupat Alia was already functioning. It was of immeasurable help to these immigrants, who, being artisans, needed a loan just to buy some simple tools to be able to proceed in their line of work. Kupat Alia showed justified trust in these people still unknown to the other banks and offered them assistance when it

was most urgently needed. After all, these Bulgarians were not complete strangers to the bank management and they had a common language.

In subsequent years the bank expanded by encompassing in its service more Ladino speaking clients. Though the core among the clients remained Bulgarian, the management tried to further serve those immigrants with whom they had common ties. Thus the annual report of the bank for 1964 was printed in Ladino, while the last report for the year 1968 was in Hebrew.³⁶ From this we conclude that today most of the Bulgarian Alya has been integrated with the Israeli culture, and also that the bank is trying to reach the general population besides its original core, which is reflected in the way the reports of the bank are printed.

Kupat Alia was most helpful in negotiating the transfer of the German reparations for the Bulgarian Alya. The bank decided that for the year 1964, instead of paying dividends to its members it would divert this money for cultural purposes, such as summer camps for the youngsters, the financing of public assemblies and festivals to bring to the population enlightening entertainment on current themes. There were sight-seeing tours around the country to familiarize the people with the land of Israel, and scholarships were given to capable students of poor families.

The balance sheet of Kupat Alia for the year 1964 is a total of 33,028,000 pounds. The figure for 1968 is 75,052,559 pounds. Even if we consider the devaluation of about 10% of Israeli money, the increase for that period is still about 100% in five years. Today the bank has twenty branches spread over the entire country. Recently it purchased a savings company in Haifa by the name of Ahvah, originally founded by the Bulgarian Alya. Kupat Alia paid its debts and took over the management. This event prevented the bank from opening new branches in other developing towns, yet, in the course of the year it still succeeded in opening two more. Dividends of over 40,000 pounds have been distributed and the balance sheet showed a net profit of about 10,000 pounds.

In the opinion of Mr. Yosef Or, a high official of the bank Hapoalim, not connected with Kupat Alia, the latter is here to stay as a symbol of considerable banking achievement and a contribution to Israel by the Bulgarian Alya.

CHAPTER V

THE BULGARIAN JEWS IN ISRAEL

In the past twenty years nothing has been published on the life and creativity of the Bulgarian Jews in Israel. Consequently, in gathering material we took recourse to interviewing individuals from the Bulgarian Alya whose background and social positions qualified them to be competent on the subject we are discussing.

Although the state of the Bulgarian Alya changes drastically from year to year, this change is not felt by the people within, that is by those who are in the midst of it and affected directly. It is the outside observer, the one who is taking a kind of account and balance of their social and economic progress, who can pinpoint the enormous changes taking place in the group as such.

We had to get a basic collection of opinions, accounts and statements from many people. Only a few of those interviewed, who represented views worth mentioning in our work - which is not of an exhaustive scope - are quoted here in this chapter.

Appointment with Attorney Albert Varsano.

He emigrated to Israel earlier than the rest of the Bulgarian Alya. From the very beginning he had been active among the Bulgarian settlers. Since 1920 some minimal activities existed among the Bulgarian immigrants. Near the central bus station in Tel-Aviv a small grocery store was run by them, which was their meeting place. It provided a kind of food familiar to the Bulgarian Alya, like white cheese, greek olives, etc. By the late thirties there were two fragments of the Bulgarians; one was Yiyahadut Oley Bulgaria, headed by Avraham Assa and Ben Mayor, the other one Yityahadut Yotzey Bulgaria, headed by Chaym Farhi. Soon after they merged Albert Varsano became the secretary of the new organization. One of its main duties was to greet the Bulgarian immigrants in 1948, when its real work and justified existence started. Varsano retired in 1952 from this position and continued working as an attorney. We met him in his office.

The official head of the Yhud since 1949 was Haim Kishaless, followed in 1952 by Haim Asher. Since 1954 David Yosef Or has been the head of the Yhud.

An outstanding figure in the Bulgarian Alya has been Aharon Ben Yosef. The Alya has published a memorial book in his honor which includes his biography, some of his writings, and other material related to the deceased and to the Alya. We are giving here a short synopsis of his biography. Aharon Ben Yosef was born in Bulgaria in 1900. In 1922 he emigrated to Palestine together with his wife Shoshana. They

lived in moshavim and kibbutzim, they worked on the construction of telephone lines, living in tents together with other chalutzim. Wherever he worked Aharon was one of the leaders among the workers. In 1929 he was sent to Bulgaria for one year to recruit chalutzim for the Alya. Later he went as a representative to Lucerne to the 18th Zionist Congress. After having helped the settlements in Tel Mond he moved to live in the city.

At the beginning of World War II he joined the Jewish Brigade, went to North Africa and later was trained as a paratrooper for diversified actions in Bulgaria, similarly to the Hungarian Jewess Hana Senesh. The Russian army advanced very fast into Bulgaria, so Ben Yosef did not receive orders to infiltrate. Together with a few fellows he entered Bulgaria in September, 1944, and helped to reorganize the Jewish community. He assembled a group of 150 young Jews for emigration to Palestine, made preparations for the visit of Ben Gurion in late December, 1944, and gave regular broadcasts for the Voice of Bulgaria in Hebrew, the only way to inform the Sochnuth in Israel of everything that was going on in the Balkans. In 1946 he was sent to Turkey to form an Alya from there. With his family he went to Constantinople and Ismir.

Ben Yosef was one of the most active organizers of the illegal immigration to Israel. Illegal immigrants were smuggled in by boats, and one of the first experiences of the Hagana was with the boat Agiaus Nikous. The boat was to land near the Bulgarian moshav of Beth Hanan, from where it was to be guided to safety and the newcomers were to be met. The British, however, captured the boat.

In 1948 Ben Yosef was very ill with high blood pressure. He witnessed the return of the Bulgarian Jews to Israel, but could not take part any more as a soldier in the Independence War. So his last occupation was to work for better conditions and recreation for the Israeli soldiers. He was the head of Vaad Lemaan Hahayal, and to the present day the Bulgarian Alya is one of the most active contributors to this organization.

His wife, Shoshana Ben Yosef, a mother of two, continued the work with much zeal. She became a secretary in the Vaad Hapoel, and retired only recently from her task of settling the immigrants. Shoshana became one of the most admired leading figures of the Bulgarian Alya. In former years when someone had a problem, he would get the advice to go and see Shoshana. This lady pioneer is an astute idealist. She would do anything to help an individual, but would not give special privilege or do favors for Bulgarians or for her relatives. During my appointment with her I learned that she is disappointed because too many Bulgarians settled on farms in Israel, only to leave them again under any pretext whatsoever. Shoshana is also bitter with regard to the present political struggle for power.

An appointment with Mr. Natan Almoslino, member of the Executive Committee of Histadruth - Central Branch called Vaad Hapoel.

Mr. Almoslino, about 60 years old, is one of the highest ranking officials in the Histadruth. He is from Bulgaria and immigrated before the great Alya. He does not identify with the Bulgarian group at all. In his way of speech, pronunciation and attitude, Mr. Almoslino reminds one more than anything of an Israeli Bureaucrat, usually of Polish origin (the model for leadership of Israel). His view of the Bulgarian Alya is internal and rather objective, as an outsider who, however, knows the facts. By virtue of honesty he did not extend any favoritism to the Alya, not even to his family.

The Bulgarian Alya has received less help than any other group of immigrants by the Israeli institutions, whether in acquiring jobs, homes, or in re-training. The Bulgarian Alya relied on its own strength for all these purposes. Regardless of their social status and professions, these immigrants accepted hard labor, building roads and houses until they had learned the language and were able to enter their original professions. They have given more than any other group to the country, contributing their share in all fields of professional skill and achieved economic and social success on their own and by their own efforts.

When he was asked why not too many Bulgarians rose to the top of the political structure, Almoslino stated the following reasons: 1.) They are a rather small group, less than 50,000. 2.) They came in a late period, 1948/49. 3.) The character and style of the leaders of the Bulgarian Alya was somewhat different from the established Israeli style and personality. The Bulgarian politician could rise only by virtue of his personal capacity. There was no big immigrant group to back him.

The Bulgarian settlers are a very closely knit unit. Their attachment is cultural, historico-emotional, and their organizations have proved efficient and helpful. Mr. Almoslino emphasized one important point, namely, that they have not transformed their organizations like Yhud Oley Bulgaria into a political arm. Instead, the Bulgarians became positively involved in the Israeli political structure.

In Bulgaria the Jews had an efficient political organization which they transferred to Israel and merged immediately. With other groups of immigrants many a leader representing one or the other hitherto not politically affiliated, would make demands in the name of his group and flirt with the different political factions, pledging his votes in return for demands met. While the Bulgarians felt close to each other for social reasons based on past memories and did not use their relationships for political purposes, the Moroccans, for example, used their religious organization for political aims.

Mr. Almoslino had been elected as Haver Knesset and turned it down, willing to keep his present position. The Bulgarians comprise approximately 1 1/2% of the population and have one Haver Knesset, Victor Shemtov. Counting the fact that Almoslino was actually elected too, both represent about 1 1/2% of the Knesset members. At any time there has been at least one Bulgarian Haver Knesset and sometimes two.

Besides, Almoslino claims that many Bulgarians have been elected to other leading official positions. For many years the mayor of Ramleh has been a Bulgarian. However, more than anything, their strength is in the professions and business enterprises.

Appointment with David Yosef Or, Director of the Investigations
Department of the Bank Hapoalim

Yosef Or had been a very active leader in the Jewish community of his native town in Bulgaria. He had much to say of his activities there during the Nazi regime. By his account the Bulgarian Alya did outstandingly well in its new home in Israel. The members came deprived of almost everything and immigrational regulations limited their taking from their former homes certain tools and equipment. Yosef Or, who was manager of a bank branch in Jaffa during that time, witnessed the growth of these Bulgarians. They would borrow money from the bank to buy the most elementary items like hammers and pliers, and started their ventures from scratch. The end of twenty years saw hundreds of small shops in Jaffa produce diverse articles from clothes and furniture to machine parts. Besides these little shops growing out of the common effort of a family, and today using hired labor of several employees, there are a few big companies. Assis in Ramat Gan produces foods made mostly of citrus fruit. Assis is owned by the bulgarian-born brothers Bejerano, who came before the immigration. Another large plant, producing electric appliances is A & G (Alagem and Givony). The owners of this plant came with the main group of immigrants. Many electrical tools used in Israeli homes are produced by this firm which also exports. A third company built by Bulgarians who came with the main group is Yuno, manufacturing laundermats and power producing electrical engines.

According to Yosef Or, the background of the Bulgarian Alya helped its members to establish themselves well in this country. Like the Bulgarian natives in whose midst they have lived for centuries, the Bulgarian Jews became hard working individuals, cooperative within their group, as well as their families, thrifty and eager to work hard with a good goal in mind. Their honesty had given them a very good reputation among the entire population of Israel. Respected in the free professions as well as in other walks of life, the Bulgarians have achieved popularity. Yosef Or maintains that the Bulgarian Jews were not as deeply affected as other galuyot by the Nazi discrimination. They have not become cynical in their attitude toward life. Even though they suffered much during the Second World War, their trust in others and in life stayed intact. Other groups are strongly cynical in their outlook and have an attitude of "I don't care", looking for their own advantage in shrewd ways.

The Bulgarians did well in all fields with the exception of political leadership, in which they have only a modest representation. This lack of success in the political sphere is due to the different mode or pattern of interaction, which is not the currently accepted style in Israel. The explanation remained somewhat vague as far as the true difference in personality is concerned, and how exactly the Bulgarians differ from the rest of the population. The impression received, however,

was that they may be acting overly honest compared to their environment, less pushy in looking after their own interests and concerned about presenting an image of dignity rather than to be expedient and, as an example, perhaps break a promise under given circumstances. Such personality traits inherited from their Bulgarian culture might cost them seats in extremely competitive fields like politics and power.

Many of the Bulgarian immigrants did settle in farming locations. The reason why very few remained farmers was that at the time the state was not ready to absorb them in their positions. The Jewish agency had difficulty in establishing even a pipe for carrying water to the new settlers. Conditions were extremely hard for unguided people who never were farmers. No wonder many left.

Interview with Lt. Colonel Nissim Rodrig, Chief Prosecutor of the Central Command of the Israeli Armed Forces.

Col. Rodrig emigrated from Bulgaria in 1949 with his wife and large family. He had been a law partner in a well established firm in the city of Shumen. Upon his arrival in Israel he began working as common laborer while learning Hebrew and soon became proficient enough to join the police force, continuing at the same time his studies for the bar examination. Col. Rodrig stated that among the military today there is one Lt. General of Bulgarian origin, and three or four Lt. Colonels. All of them occupy administrative posts. One retired General, Pruloff, also was born in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarians are known as very courageous , disciplined soldiers. As in all other walks of life, here too, people accept them with much friendliness, they are good comrades-in-arms. Many of them have fallen in battles with audacity, before and since the independence of the state of Israel. (The Bulgarian paper Far Tribuna carries frequent obituaries of young men killed in combat.) They gladly serve and perform their duty whenever called to the banners, and the reserves go willingly, although basically the Bulgarians do not like the military. Few have remained in permanent active duty, and those who did tried after a few years to leave the armed forces for civilian occupations. Since they do not stay in the service long enough, relatively few have attained high rank.

As far as personality is concerned the Bulgarians are known for their scrupulous honesty. Rarely would one of them compromise his good conscience with a shabby deed. They are rather straightforward and express their thoughts frankly, considering this directness a virtue. But a superior seldom appreciates being told off by someone below him in rank, even if he is right. A Bulgarian may lose his temper over the subject of justice in a trivial case. Such character patterns and behavior are found among the Bulgarian Alya, and many an individual may be held back from promotion because of it.

Col. Rodrig believes that there is a profound historical expla-

nation for the relatively minor achievements of the Bulgarian Alya in the realm of political leadership. In the past centuries Jews living in Bulgaria had been very active and prosperous in commerce and in the professions. There was a kind of unwritten agreement with the national authorities, however, that Jews would not participate in the political life of the country - except in a few instances and towards the end - and that at the same time their civil rights would be safeguarded. Except during the Second World War there has never been powerful anti-Semitism in Bulgaria, hence the Jews did not develop a traditional know-how in state politics, and as a rule do not excel in them. There were many worthy leaders who were involved in building well organized Jewish communities, firmly connected throughout the different cities. This pattern obviously was continued in their new home in Israel. In comparison with them the German Jews, also a small minority in their country of origin, yet disproportionately active economically, were also involved in the political life of that country, where they gained astuteness and tradition.

Ora Alkalay is an historian of the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem. She graduated from Hebrew University there and is the head of the Department of Research for Yad Vashem. The Institute is interested only in gathering material about the persecutions during World War II, and therefore Ora Alkalay could not be of help to us in providing any information from her files concerning the recent period of resettlement, after 1949, of the Bulgarian Jews. However, the Bulgarian Encyclopedia was published as vol. 10 under the auspices of Yad Vashem. Our interview had as basis Alkalay's personal view of the Bulgarian Alya, particularly her knowledge of the inhabitants of those three or four towns which settled in Jerusalem.

The Bulgarian Alya was the one that was absorbed by the country better than any other Alya. Its members integrated completely with the life of the country, and her colleagues, friends and relatives had advanced well in their professions. Because of this the Bulgarian Alya has lost its identification as a particular unit, and does not have any activity as a group in Jerusalem. All youngsters brought at an early age from Bulgaria do not speak Bulgarian, but for a few words or expressions mostly learned from their grandparents, and use them in order to communicate with them. Ora Alkalay mentions, however, that a distinct Bulgarian community is present in Jaffa, where the language, socializing and reading of Bulgarian papers is predominant. She states that the activities of this small minority of Bulgarians are prevalent in Jaffa, disproportionately to their numbers. There are Romanians and immigrants from the Middle East, yet Jaffa still has a strong Bulgarian color. The choir Tzadicoff is very popular, even though about one third of the members are no longer Bulgarians. The football team Maccabee Yaffo continues to be called the Bulgarian team, with the Bulgarian players now a minority. It seems that the existence of the Bulgarian Alya in Jaffa is very strongly felt. Although Jaffa is not a place of prestige and many families move to Tel-Aviv, Holon and Batyam, after twenty years

from the time they installed themselves in the empty homes of the Arabs who fled from the war, they are still numerous.

Another subject brought up by Ora Alkalay was the fact that many Bulgarians first settled in Kibbutzim, but left them after 1948/49 and moved to the cities. She suggests this as an interesting study. Her hypothesis is that these young men and women who came before the independence and lived in Kibbutzim left as soon as their parents arrived and the problem of maintaining their families appeared. It seems that in most cases the Kibbutzim could not absorb the parents, or that the conditions in them were unacceptable to the parents. With the open opportunities in the cities where life was more familiar and similar to the former conditions of the Bulgarian Alya, they chose to leave the Kibbutzim.

Appointment with Victor Shemtov, Member of the Parliament.

Victor Shemtov is from the Maarach (labor) party. He is 54 and came to Israel from Bulgaria in 1939. From the beginning he entered the labor movement and slowly rose to be a Knesset representative. His political rise has nothing to do with the country of his birth or being of sephardic background. Shemtov, by virtue of his coming to Israel before the great migration had little to do with his compatriots.

During the years 1948-49, about sixty or seventy medical students from Bulgaria came to Israel. At that time the Jerusalem University opened its medical faculty for the first year. There was no class for these young men to graduate from, and they were going to leave the country to graduate abroad, when Victor Shemtov was appointed to solve this problem. With much effort one last-year class was opened in the medical faculty which made it possible for these students to finish in Israel and to be placed there to practice medicine. Among these ex-students are now some of the most prominent physicians in Israel.

According to Shemtov, the Bulgarian Alya is eminently representative of what is happening in Israel. At the beginning the pioneers came in small groups, full of the spirit of Zionism and the fire of explorers, and founded settlements. Those who came later lived in towns, became workmen and some entered the professions. This was already a different period of time, in the late thirties and in the forties. After the state of Israel was created, the Bulgarians followed the fast ascent of the typical immigrant, working at hard labor until they had mastered the language and made a name and place for themselves.

Throughout the past seventy years there has been a constant shifting in the Zionist movement, and the Bulgarian Jews have reflected this growth in the closest way.

Shemtov states that the Bulgarian Jews are definitely considered Sephardim, but being of European origin their culture is much closer to the rest of the European Jews who are Ashkenazim. Hence, the Bulgarians cannot be taken as a bridge between the two. Moroccans would regard a Bulgarian as a kind of Ashkenazi and not as a genuine Sephardi.

As far as the political life is concerned, Shemtov verified the remark made by ex-Haver Knesset Benjamin Ardity that Bulgarians simply do not have the elbow to make their way in the tough political arena. They are too honest. Besides, they have not been that much interested in it. The same is true for the Greek Jews who, for example, were able to establish one of the three biggest Israeli banks, Discont Bank, comparable to the banks Leumi and Hapoalim. However, none of them tried to enter into politics and to offer himself to some political party as secretary of finances. Once their interest has been involved, they would rather pay for their representation than represent themselves. Of the large family controlling Bank Discont many members are educated and prominent, yet none chose politics.

This field has been molded, Shemtov states, parallel to the immigrational waves. The first were the Russians who left their insignia on the politics of the time. Second came the Polish influence and third the Germans. Up to now these schools of influence have been guiding the political life in Israel. A certain makeup of personality is necessary in order to fit into this structure. Sephardim are well out of character today, but there is no doubt that eventually in the future, perhaps in about twenty years from now, this picture will have significantly changed. On this subject Shemtov and Ardity were of the same opinion.

Victor Shemtov is a member of the Knesset committee on budget and finances. This committee is the second most important after the committee on security and foreign relations. Some consider it the most important since it meets daily, whereas the other committee has only weekly meetings. On the subject of Ardity, who demanded from his party boss Menahem Begin, head of the Israeli Revisionist Party, to be transferred to the Security and Foreign Relations Committee from the one on social relations, and had his demand refused, Shemtov is of the opinion that Benjamin Ardity is as competent as anyone, and should have been permitted to transfer. He agrees that some discrimination exists within the parties against the Sephardim in general and the Bulgarians in particular. The fact he mentioned was that Yosef Or, leading member of Mapai, has been put far down on the list for election, regardless of his ability.

Victor Shemtov gave us the impression of being a serious person who belongs to the new and young generation of leaders. Most certainly he should have a good future in the political life of Israel.

The Religious Life of the Bulgarian Jews in Israel.

The Bulgarian Jews are known to be among the least religious communities in Israel. They have brought with them a strong nationalistic and Zionist spirit, but nothing significantly religious like talmudic scholars, or even any special interest in that direction.

One outstanding rabbi from Bulgaria is Ha-Rabi Daniel Zion. He is very aged, about 80 years old, and being considered too liberal by

the religious authorities of Israel, he is not officially recognized as a rabbi. Daniel Zion runs his own little synagogue in the center of Jaffa, frequented mostly by middle aged Bulgarians.

When we visited him Rabbi Daniel Zion said that the Bulgarian Alya has done even better here than had been the case in Bulgaria. In our opinion the Rabbi used to work among the poorest social stratum which in Israel has progressed. Though they have the financial possibility, these Bulgarian Israelis are even less interested religiously than they once were in Bulgaria.

The same opinion was expressed by Cantor Melamed, a young man born in Bulgaria, who dedicated his life to the study of the Torah. He finds the Bulgarian group desperately irreligious, actually he is the only one among the Alya who is young and dedicated to religious work. Cantor Melamed comes from a family in which the religious spirit has been prominent. His uncle is the present cantor of the synagogue of Sofia, and he himself is legally recognized as a cantor by the orthodox Israeli authorities.

The synagogue in which Cantor Melamed serves as one of two cantors, is in Tel-Aviv on Markolit street. It was founded about forty years ago when a group of Bulgarian and Greek Jews merged together to establish a sephardic synagogue. Since then the number of Bulgarians has increased, and the synagogue came to be known as the Bulgarian synagogue of Tel-Aviv. Its major boost in membership came naturally during the great Alya. In the early fifties the synagogue was rebuilt and enlarged, and is today a very handsome place of worship.

The ritual is the traditional orthodox sephardic prayerbook and chant. Minian - ten adult men - is not a problem. Every day about 5 a.m. and also at 5:15 p.m. religious services are held. About twenty men are present during these prayers, most of them middle aged. There is a balcony as women's section for the services. Frequently marriages are performed around 7 p.m. on week days. A canopy is set up in the middle of the synagogue.

There are about a dozen Bulgarian or part Bulgarian synagogues in Israel. Most of them originated in the past twenty years. Their place of worship is extremely small, usually a former store has been converted for that purpose.

Some Cultural Events of the Bulgarian Alya.

After Bulgaria became independent from the Nazis in 1944, the Jews there developed a very intensive cultural life. The choir Tzadicoff began to function, though not as a part of the synagogue, the Jewish Philharmonic Orchestra sounded once again with the dynamic assistance of the late Nissim. Nissim Farhi, father of this writer, and the Jewish theater of Sofia came to life. Similar activities were also going on in

many provincial cities and their intensity depended on the size of the population. Even the small towns were having some theatrical groups. The capital with the biggest Jewish population and also well trained, professional actors showed the greatest activity. Many plays from the writings of Shalom Aleichem were performed, as well as those of local Jewish authors. A very prominent play was "Fuir Ermanim" (Let us run, Brothers), having a Ladino name, yet performed in Bulgarian language. It described in the manner of a comedy the panic to leave Bulgaria and settle in Israel. It reflected the events of the day and conformed with the government line of criticizing the bourgeoisie to which many Jews belonged. But it did also reflect with much honesty the Zionist spirit of the Jews and their craving for the promised land. Some of the literary and artistic talent remained in Bulgaria, as we noted in the first chapter of our survey, but the majority migrated to Israel. Their life was very difficult in the first few years, without using the Hebrew language little could be done in the theater, yet all of them, particularly the young, made a good start.

Names worthwhile mentioning are: the poet Shaoul Mesan, whose Hebrew name is Oram Ben-Ner, Simcho Yssakov, Yosef Abraham Papo, Leo Kohen. Literary critic Moshe Ben-Aroia, theater critics Isaak Daniel, Boyan Danovsky (Danon), artists David Peretz, Yssakov and Sultanta Surujon. The former conductor of the Jewish Philharmonic Orchestra in Bulgaria, Mario Menashe Brontza, Pianist Ben-Shushan, violist Rafael Sidi, Prof. Leon Surugeon, visiting violinist from Bulgaria, singer Arie Basso from the Scala in Milan.

Among actors representing the old school are Bitush Davidov, Nora Meshulam, Selina Alfandary, Shely Asher. Albert Cohen is one of the young generation who made his way on the Israeli stage. The Israeli movie industry absorbed many of the immigrants from all countries. Albert Cohen starred in the film "Sallah".

The late Shelomo Rosaness, who died around 1930, historian of the Jews from the Balkan peninsula called the Sephardic Graetz, wrote a six-volume work "The History of the Jews in Turkey and other Eastern Countries".

The Jewish Philharmonic Orchestra tried in an unprecedented effort to continue its existence in Israel. In the early fifties the orchestra's former organizers got together and began regular rehearsals, planning a concert. With great difficulty they succeeded in preparing a repertoire and made a few appearances in one of the theaters in Jaffa. After that brief resurrection the orchestra disbanded permanently, because all of its members were occupied with making a living in the new country. The additional, voluntary activity was beyond their capacity if continued indefinitely, and so this beautiful enterprise had to die. Its conductor became a public school music teacher.

During the early Summer of 1969, we had the opportunity to participate in one evening arranged by the Bulgarian Alya. The purpose was to raise funds for the committee for the assistance of soldiers, Vaad Lemaan Hahayal. The hall located in their own building was full. Close to a

thousand people were present and many of them had to stand. The program opened with a few songs by the choir Tzadicoff. Most of the rest was light entertainment, music played by the ensemble of the Jaffa Public Library, teenagers playing and dancing. The major part was the performance of several singers and pianists from the Alya.

The second part of the program was humorous, the famous narrator Jipp was present in a clown's costume and recited some of his poems in Bulgarian, very entertaining and gay. There followed more music and more humorous acts, one with the participation of Bitush Davidov and another with Albert Cohen. The program started at 8:30 and was supposed to end at 11:00, but the fascination of the audience was so great that it was continued until after midnight.

These evenings are arranged by the Yhud on occasion. I was told that they always turn out to be very successful. The programs fulfill a certain emotional and cultural need among the Bulgarian Alya. They are not a part of the daily life of these Israeli citizens, rather are they an expression of nostalgia about the past and the revival of its memories. Those gatherings, when they take place, are a source of emotional outlet. From time to time there are appearances by a Bulgarian theatrical group whose performances in its native language are well attended. But all this is not a part of the daily and realistic life of the already integrated Bulgarian Alya. For that, like all Israelis, they receive their cultural nourishment from the regular agencies in Israel.

How the Bulgarian Alya is regarded by the Rest of Israelis.

Based on an Article in the Daily Haaretz in May, 1969.³⁷

Recently an article appeared in Haaretz written by Roman Prister, one of the correspondents of this most respected independent daily paper. The author himself is not one of the Bulgarian Alya, therefore his view in the article reflects the side of the average Israeli, one who came to the country many years ago, if he is indeed not a Sabra.

The opening paragraph, discussing the event of the first heart transplant performed in Israel, stated that the surgeon was Bulgarian-born Morris Levy.

Shortly after the Six-Day-War the Israelis lost the submarine Dakkar, whose captain was also of Bulgarian origin, and the Air force during the same war counted among men lost another former Bulgarian, Shabtai Ben-Aharon. In each case the happy or sad event was reflected in the streets and cafés of Jaffa. A spirit of solidarity, a participation in fate of any Bulgarian is dominant among the people of Jaffa, and events are celebrated with the drinking of mastica, a native liquor.

The Bulgarians are a very proud people. It is easy to cause them to be angry, but difficult to get them to give up anything. They are

hardworking, exacting and disciplined, but they also know how to rejoice. In the professions they are successful, whatever their field may be. Some Israelis call them "Yekes" - the Germans of the Balkans. Having a good sense of humor they appreciate a joke, love good singing and are mostly happy with their lot.

In Jaffa and in Ramleh are over twenty volunteer organizations for charitable purposes. These two cities have the largest concentration of the Bulgarian Alya. A tradition which began in Sofia, Pleven or Nikopol, continues here, and mutual help is highly regarded. An elderly well-dressed gentleman is a well-known figure in Jaffa. His name is Dr. Alagem and he sometimes visits the homes of professionals and other affluent people to solicit donations for a good cause. This time he was collecting money for the soldiers stationed at the Suez Canal. He had heard that they have no radios and was getting contributions to buy fifty sets of transistor radios.

There is great interest in the soccer team Maccabee Yaffo, until recently most of its players were Bulgarian, though now only a minority still are. Maccabee Yaffo has financial problems. In the past it was assisted by the bank Kupat Alia. The team's informal club was in the coffeeshop of Yakof Efraty, on Boulevard Jerusalem, the central street in Jaffa. The owner of the café who came from Turkey learned to speak some Bulgarian. Eventually he was elected into the management of the team. It is still called the Bulgarian team. This case is not unique for Israel. In Ramat Gan there used to be a soccer team which was formed mostly by Viennese. Recently this team was invited on a tour to Vienna by Yekes who always heatedly support "their" team, even though there is now hardly a player who can understand German. The structure of Maccabee Yaffo has definitely changed, and the café which used to be its meeting place is now a dairy bar. Only the name still remains: Maccabee's Meeting Place.

Jaffa is considered the Israeli capital of the Bulgarians. (As Naharia is of the Germans.) Most of them came until the middle of 1949, and were put into the camps of Beniamina and Pardess Hana, former British army camps converted to transitory immigration compounds. The impression of the Bulgarians was that they were discriminated against and not properly taken care of. Yosef Or, who came a few years before the majority of them remembers the day he visited the camp Pardess Hana with some other public officials. The group was immediately surrounded by angry immigrants and showered with complaints, threats, and finally with rotten tomatoes. Soon thereafter the immigrant's patience ran out and they entered illegally into the abandoned houses of Jaffa and Ramleh.

In those twenty years that have passed since the Bulgarians first came to Jaffa, many other Jews arrived there, from Morocco, Iran, Rumania, Hungary and Poland. Even some veterans settled there. The Bulgarians are a small minority, but still a major factor in the life of the city. Signs on stores, restaurants, doctors and dentists offices and lawyers firms in Bulgarian language testify to this effect. In the movie theaters films are dubbed in Bulgarian. The political parties

in Jaffa are competing through the medium of the Bulgarian press and by presenting speakers in Bulgarian language. Mapam, Rakach and Maky are the three parties who compete most in this sector. Victor Shemtov is the Bulgarian Knesset member from Mapam (now Maarach). The old olim from Bulgaria did not master the Hebrew language.

Yhud Oley Bulgaria denies that the Bulgarians are discriminating between their own and the rest of the population. A furniture dealer in Jaffa, Isidor Kohen, claims that it is pure chance that all his friends are Bulgarians. Just "by chance" all the hired help in his store is also Bulgarian. One of the porters says that all that's important for the good life is to have a job in the daytime, after that to have something to pour down on's throat, go home and listen to opera records. They love music, particularly classical and song. The choir Tzadicoff was in Bulgaria for twenty years and has now been in Israel for the same length of time. The first conductor, Zico Gratziany, has been succeeded by the Hungarian Laszlo Roth. Everyone up and down the street can hear the singing when Bulgarians have a good time.

In 1944, a train carrying olim from Bulgaria via Turkey and Syria entered Israel through the Minhara tunnel. On this train was David Yosiefor. He had been in the Bulgarian resistance and the new regime offered him the position of county judge - a handsome offer for a young attorney. But he declined and left the country with his family for Israel. Today he is Yosef-Or, a man who made his way in the new country.

On the same train was a young fellow of about 17. He came to Israel and worked as laborer. For the past five years he has been running a restaurant in North Tel-Aviv. His name is Arnold Beniesh. The restaurant is Bulgarian in style of the kitchen as well as the table ware, and his clothes are those of a Bulgarian farmer. Yogurt, an authentic Bulgarian food is part of the menu. He claims that few Bulgarians come to eat here, because restaurant prices are high and the Bulgarians like to save, so they eat at home. They are known to be thrifty. In Beth Hanan there once arose the question whether or not to open a soda fountain. A committee decided against it for the reason that the children would waste too much money on it.

Of the five thousand Jews still living in Bulgaria, very few are going to Israel. They are all comfortably situated in leading positions. If occasionally a family does emigrate, it is for the sake of their children which they want to raise as Jews.

Although the present Bulgarian government is against Israel, and many members of the Bulgarian Alya condemn the political attitude of the regime, their regard for the people is more than warm. When the patriarch Kyril visited Israel his reception by the Bulgarian Jews was so enthusiastic that it came to be known as a memorable event. The procession that passed through the streets of Jaffa could have almost been one of a big Christian holiday. Sasha Popov, the well-known Bulgarian conductor, who during the Nazi occupation had courageously opposed the firing of Jewish musicians from his orchestra, was also

given a warm welcome by the Alya.

This good relationship with the Bulgarian people had a very positive influence upon the Jews in the opinion of Nissim Kahim, director of musical programs for the Voice of Israel. Because of the conditions in the Bulgarian Diaspora the Jews did not have to learn to cheat, lie, or trick in order to make a living. Perhaps this is why they did not learn all the "foile-shtick" (trickery) which is characteristic of other Diasporas.

Typical Bulgarian names are Kamchy, Ben-Bassat, Davidov, Alagem, Varsano, Romano, Ardity, Berto, Phiko, Pepo, Buko, Ytzko. To these can be added a few Ashkenazi names of Jews who came from Hungary, Russia, or Germany, like Rosenfeld or Bernstein.

Many doctors, dentists and pharmacists have come from the Bulgarian Alya. Prof. Rosenfeld is the personal physician of prime minister Golda Meir, and he is also the head of a department of the Belinson hospital.

Dr. Albert Kamhoram, one of the young Bulgarian doctors who came to Israel is today the chief of the neurophysical department of the Ythilov Hospital in Tel-Aviv, where he performs brain operations. Dr. Kamhoram - who changed his name from Bartel - was at first sent to a hospital near Petah Tikvah, which unknown to him was the newest and best hospital in the country. He is difficult to reach, and to open the door one has to first call him by phone. (In Israel manners are rather informal, so this western procedure is quite outstanding.) The medical class of Dr. Bartel-Kamhoram is keeping in touch as friends - Moris Levy, Dr. Rosenfeld, Prof. Marsel Eliakim, who is assistant to Dr. Rachilovitz of Jerusalem; Dr. Marsel Assael, Psychiatrist, and Dr. Helena Kasler, head of the Department of Pathology at Belinson, who is now in Philadelphia.

Besides these eminent physicians there is a long list of general practitioners and specialists known to the public. Dr. Shelomo Alagem, for instance, is extremely popular for his individual treatment of each patient in his office in an apartment house of Jaffa, and many patients prefer to go to him, although they could get free treatment from the Kupat Holim. His remedies are not prepared in the standard way, but have to be ordered and one has to wait to get them. Dr. Alagem and pharmacists like Yaakov Varsano are of a different breed than most. They do not prescribe or sell standard commercial drugs, but only remedies that are individually prepared, and the old-fashioned apothecary jars can be found there.

Gradually the Bulgarian community of Jaffa is dispersing, but its members still keep in touch, bringing to their new homes the good spirit and hard work which is so characteristic of them.

Today the Bulgarian liquor mastica is produced by Iraqi immigrants and the Bulgarian lukanka (salami) by someone who speaks only Yiddish and Romanian. Such is the reality of Israeli life.

Arie Tartacover,³⁸ who wrote a book of the social history of the Jews, devotes one chapter of his second volume to the Bulgarian Jews. The author, in his preliminary words of introduction to the second volume, admits the validity of his research is good to the end of the 1960's.

According to the author the Bulgarian Jews have contributed little to the economic development of Bulgaria, and great Jews among them have been a rarity and the exception.

The author claims that the Bulgarian Jews are genuinely Sephardic, similar only to the Yugoslavs. (We claim also the Greek and Turkish Jews.) The Bulgarians speak Ladino, but lately the use of the language diminished and Hebrew became strongly dominant in Jewish circles.

There is no other Jewish community in the world in which Zionism and Hebraic culture reached the heights they did in the Bulgarian Jewish community. The Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews were more capable in education, tradition and in their cultural initiative. But in the idea of the Zionist Renaissance the Bulgarians were unsurpassed, in the past before the First World War, and after it. The author states that because of the threat of communism to their Zionism the Bulgarian Jews emigrated en masse to Israel. This can be compared only to the case of the Yemenite Jews. Some other factors of economic nature also compelled the Jews to move to Israel, but the road to Zion was already built in their hearts for a very long time.

Identification was with the Zionist organizations versus centralization around the synagogue. They built the modern Hebrew schools with the assistance of the Alliance. The chain of Hebrew schools was widely spread. Even Lithuania could not claim as successful a Hebrew education as the one in Bulgaria. Batey-Am was built to serve the Zionist education of the adults.

The writer gives a short historical account of the Jewish survival of World War II, explaining briefly their redress after the war and the emigration to Israel. One of the reasons given why the authorities in Bulgaria were cooperative and let the Jews leave, is that they wanted to get rid of minority groups. They motivated also the Turks and Armenians to leave Bulgaria.

The history of the Bulgarian Jews was completed in a blessed way since they came to Israel, and only in Israel is their tradition continued. It is being absorbed into the Kibbutz Galuiot (Diaspora).

Conclusion

In the just completed thesis we have attempted to cover the history and the social progress of the Bulgarian Jews. Our primary concern was to see how they adjusted to the new life in Israel during the past twenty years. To this purpose we followed the life of the community in relative detail, since the events of the past century prepared the ground for the present state. Later years have been mostly unexplored, and almost nothing has been written in terms of sociological research on the Bulgarian Jews. We had to rely on observations, testimony given in a multitude of contacts and interviews, many of them informal. We were in contact with people in the street and on the bus; impressions were gathered in conversation with a Bulgarian waiter at a restaurant in Jaffa. The knowledge of both Hebrew and Bulgarian, including the nuances of expression, were a definite advantage.

In our work we tried to bring specific data in addition to impressions and opinions. The difficulties we encountered in this matter have already been mentioned. The only figures we were able to get from Israeli government statistics were the numbers of immigrants per country in total numbers only. These statistics mention a number close to 50,000 persons. We were fortunate in that this figure closely matched the one obtained from the archives in Bulgaria. (It is to be hoped that there was independent evaluation in each case, and one did not get these figures from the other.) We regret that it was impossible to get statistics on the number of professional people.

The history of the Bulgarian Jews in Israel follows the pattern of the development of the Yshuv. During the primary immigration the settlers were directed towards farming. Thus we see the first Bulgarian Jews as pioneers in that field. After World War I the Yshuv developed a strong interest in a labor force. The Bulgarians were again involved in work on the roads, buildings, and at the port of Haifa. During the most recent period one witnesses in Israel the rise of a white-collar bureaucracy. The Bulgarians have entered well into that field. These are three basic economic periods which characterize the development of the Yshuv and its major activity and direction. Matters overlap, and these three periods cannot by any means be taken too literally. The second period, that of the labor movement was also one of Homa Umigdal - Wall and Tower - in which we discussed the role of the Bulgarian Alya. The last period is one in which the liberal professions are flourishing, together with business enterprises, large and small.

In each field we found the Bulgarians deeply entrenched. We have several accounts of active Bulgarian poalim workers. Our goal was to give a general view of the Bulgarian Alya, representative in all its facets. Therefore we omitted many repetitions and unnecessary detail not relevant to the purpose of this thesis. We did not attempt to be exhaustive in our research and presentation of details. To do so would have been beyond the scope of our assignment.

The Bulgarian Alya was relatively well and quickly absorbed by the country. The reason for this was that at the beginning of the century the Alya substituted Zionist activities for religious expression. It

moved from tradition to modern pragmatism, while keeping a strong Jewish identity. European in their mentality, way of thinking and living, the Alya members facilitated their absorption by the new home land. They represented most closely the ideal individuals the country needed. Where they lacked language and connections their hard work helped compensate for it in the end.

We discussed the reasons which brought them to the land of Israel, and can only repeat them briefly. The recent persecutions during the Second World War; the limiting of private enterprise by the communist government; the strongly Zionist upbringing; and the close ties to those who had already left and settled in Israel; all of these factors caused the spontaneous mass immigration of the Bulgarian Jewry to Israel. That the authorities permitted their resettlement aided the cause.

The Bulgarian Alya takes its share in the defense of the country, as all Israelis do. To our knowledge 57 young men fell in battle during the War of Independence in 1948.³⁹

The Alya can be proud of its academic achievements as expressed by prime minister David Ben Gurion. He stated that of all groups it has the greatest number of academicians.⁴⁰

In the period of development since the Six Day War the members of the Alya have come to be regarded as veterans in the land. They feel strongly attached to it, their patriotic spirit is high. Israel is their country, their only home.

We venture to make some predictions for their future. There is little doubt that the Bulgarian Alya is in the process of assimilation. The old generation is dying. The youth does not care what country a future spouse might come from. In Jaffa, where the concentration and association of Bulgarians is highest, the most optimistic evaluation is that 50% marry within the Bulgarian group. When that occurs a couple might say that incidentally their country of origin is the same for both of them. This factor is not important in their lives. They seldom use their native language, even if they can still understand it and speak it with a broken accent. As Sabras the young generation does not mind to voice its opinions boldly and its statements are sincere. In the rest of the country mixed marriages are the rule. Few parents would complain today, while fifteen years ago "intermarriage" was a problem for the parents of the couple. The reasons in the past were the lack of a common language and cultural differences. These have been supplanted with Israeli customs, and Hebrew has penetrated the entire Alya in different degrees of mastery.

Because of the strong will of the new generation to identify only with Israel and to turn its back on the past, the Diaspora, old culture and customs, we predict that within another twenty years Bulgarian activities in Israel will hardly be extant. Those who came at age twenty will be sixty, completely integrated, mostly intermarried. How much interest might they have in any Bulgarian cultural activity?

What might their numbers be? Perhaps a few thousand, dispersed throughout the country. We do believe that minimal activities will be present twenty years from now. There may even be as much activity as in Sofia, where the Jews, although integrated, have shown no willingness to be assimilated. Twenty years from now we may still witness Jews living in Bulgaria, but almost no Bulgarians living in Israel. The fact that there is no pool from which the Bulgarian Alya can draw new members, closes its future completely. The daily Far Tribuna might become a weekly, or even monthly publication in perhaps less than ten years.

This cultural and identity death of the Bulgarian Alya is a blessing. After two thousand years of wandering, of being second-rate citizens, sometimes persecuted, the present generation has reached the goal of the past one. The dream has been fulfilled, their blood has been infused into the Israeli nation. To live in Zion, to build and to defend it; to create and to enjoy the fruits of life - this is indeed a beautiful destiny.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Dr. Levi Heitzfeld, Handelsgeschichte der Juden des Altertums, quoted in Benjamin Arditi, Yehudey Bulgaria B'Shnot HaMishtar HaNatzi 1940-1944, p. 1.
- 2 Benjamin Ardity, Yehudey Bulgaria B'Shnot HaMishtar HaNatzi 1940-1944, p. 2.
- 3 Siomon Marcus, "HaYehudim B'Bulgaria", Encyclopedia Hebraica, Vol. VII, p. 797, quoted in Haim Asa, The Bulgarian Jewish Community during the Second World War, p. 5.
- 4 Benjamin Ardity, op. cit., p. 3.
- 5 Ibid., p. 4
- 6 H. Asa, op. cit., p. 9
- 7 Ibid., p. 15.
- 8 Ibid., p. 19.
- 9 The Author's eye witness description of the persecutions.
- 10 B. Arditi, op. cit., pp. 317-318.
- 11 Ibid., completion of the translation.
- 12 H. Asa, op. cit. pp. 115-119.
- 13 Natan Grinberg, Dokumenti, Sofia, 1945; printed by the Central Jewish Consistory of the Bulgarian Jews.
- 14 H. Asa, op. cit., p. 81.
- 15 Buko Pyty, They the Saviors, printed in Bulgarian language by "Amal" Ltd., Tel-Aviv, Jaffa.
- 16 Memorial Album, Sofia, 1950's.
- 17 Jewish Consistory in Sofia, Statistics at Archives headed by Salvador Israel.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Isaak Moskana, Notes on the Jews in Bulgaria, pamphlet in Bulgarian language, 1968.
- 22 Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora, Vol. X, Bulgaria, pp. 100-104, by Chayim Kishaless.

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- 27 Ibid., p. 99.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Israel Shivtey, op. cit., p. 284; Encyclopedia, pp. 427-430.
- 30 Committee on A. Ben Yosef, op. cit.
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- 32 Encyclopedia, pp. 107-126.
- 33 Yhud Oley Bulgaria, op. cit.
- 34 Old Age and Parent Association, Rishon 6 Zion-Israel, pamphlet Tel-Aviv, 1968.
- 35 Kupat Alia, Balance Account, Tel-Aviv, 1968, Hebrew.
- 36 Kupat Alia, Sociedad Cooperativa de Crédito y Ahorro, Tel-Aviv, 1964.
- 37 Haaretz, May 30, 1969, No. 36 (287), Article on "The Bulgarians".
- 38 Arie Tartacover, The Tribes of Israel, Social History of the Jews, Vol. II, chapter on the Bulgarian Jews.
- 39 Encyclopedia, pp. 973-996.
- 40 Vacil Velianov, From the Golden Horn to God's Tomb, p. 167, in Bulgarian language, Sofia, 1969.

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