

The Metaxas Dictatorship and Greek Jewry, 1936-1941

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In November 1937, General Ioannes Metaxas was inducted into the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund by the Zionists of Greece. The Rabbi of Thessaloniki, Zvi Koretz, congratulated Metaxas on re-establishing an atmosphere of peace and calm for the Jews since he had taken power on 4 August 1936.¹ This tribute to a dictator, whose ideological leanings had been compared to that of General Franco of Spain,² seems puzzling in the context of European affairs. Very little has been written about the event, either by scholars of the Metaxist period or by Jewish Studies scholars. The dominant historiography concerning Greek Jews has focused on the Holocaust period and personal narratives of Jewish survivors. Both of these areas of study significantly contribute to the study of the Nazi occupation. However, Greek Christian treatment of Jews during the deportations cannot be fully understood without an understanding of Christian-Jewish relations during the previous decades.³

The Metaxas dictatorship, 1936-1941, reflected both similarities and differences from previous Greek interwar governments in its perception and treatment of Greek Jewry. The treatment of Greek Jews during the first decades of the twentieth century had centred on the new Hellenization (*Hellinopoieisi*) policies implemented by the Eleutherios Venizelos government and other interwar liberal governments. Besides implementing education curricula requirements, the early twentieth-century Greek governments be-

gan encroaching on Jewish daily life. Thessaloniki was rebuilt after the fire of 1917 in a manner that was meant to reflect "Hellenic" qualities. Portions of the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki were appropriated to build the new University of Thessaloniki and a Sunday rest-day law was implemented that negatively affected Jewish businesses that closed on the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). While Metaxas continued many of these interwar Hellenization policies, he differed from previous governments in his treatment of Jews in the face of persecution – both domestic and international. Ultimately, Metaxas perceived the Jews as an economically useful minority that had been generally sympathetic to the royalist and conservative factions during the interwar period⁴ (especially during the 1933 elections),⁵ and should be accorded the protection and treatment befitting all Greek citizens.

Perceptions of the Jews since the establishment of the modern Greek state reflected the generally ambiguous position of Jews. Jews were largely considered historic co-inhabitants of the Greek state, yet represented a separate *ethnos* from Greek Christians. As they were not homogenous in origin or culture, to speak of 'a' Jewish minority is rather misleading. More appropriately, the Jews of Greece can be seen as a mosaic of Jewish communities. Three main communities comprised the Jewish minority in Greece: the Karaite, Romaniote, and Sephardic Jews. Karaite and Romaniote Jews had lived in Greece for centuries, while the Sephardim emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula, primarily following the *reconquista* in the late fifteenth century. The Sephardim maintained their cultural identity throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule and continued to do so under Greek rule.⁶ Sephardic cultural individualism and resistance to Hellenization resulted in suspicion by the various interwar governments, beginning with Venizelos and continued through the Metaxas dictatorship. These underlying suspicions and concerns regarding Jewish behaviour and perceptions were not due to an inherent dis-

like of Jews, but rather an inherent defensiveness regarding Greece and Greek culture.⁷

There was a fundamental difference between Jews and other minorities in Greece; Jews had no independent homeland in the Balkans, nor could they be used as political pawns in Balkan territorial conflict. In contrast, Slavo-Macedonians and Vlachs could be exploited by neighbouring states in this manner, a circumstance that prompted the Metaxas dictatorship (and most Greek governments during the twentieth century) to pursue aggressive cultural assimilation policies.⁸ Thus, the locus of the tensions was the political role a given minority would play in irredentist or nationalist Balkan politics. For the Greek state, perceptions and treatment of the Jews can be understood through this wider prism of nationalist politics more conclusively than narrowly through the prism of anti-Semitism. Metaxas' political vision of establishing a Third Hellenic Civilization, *Tritos Ellinikos Politismos*, entailed the cultural assimilation of all Greek citizens, regardless of ethnicity. In this new civilization, Metaxas delineated a definition of Greekness that was predicated on the Greek language and Orthodox Christianity. As a result, those minorities who did not fit this definition of Greekness were excluded from membership in the new civilization, and ultimately, of the Greek *ethnos*.⁹ In short, the desire to homogenise the Jews culturally was therefore not a novel cultural policy of Metaxas, but a continuation of a previously established vision for a culturally homogenised Greece that fit into the wider policy towards minorities.¹⁰

Throughout the years of the dictatorship, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealt with many Jewish cases. While a good portion of the Ministry's archive was destroyed during World War II,¹¹ what remains is of great value in providing a glimpse of the types of issues relating to Jews that concerned Ministry officials during the Metaxist period.¹² The cases I have examined¹³ provide a credible insight into

the perception of Jews by Metaxist Ministry officials and of a possible pattern of treatment of Jews facing persecution or discrimination. Careful examination of all relevant dossiers produced no documents for the years 1936-1937; the first documents concerning Jews for the Metaxas period were written in January 1938. Of the many documents in the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period January 1938 – January 1941 concerning Jews (both Greek and foreign national), four cases will be explored. These four cases are: Greek Jewish participation at a Zionist conference in Antwerp in 1938; the re-implementation of travel restriction law 42424 that was directed at foreign Jews; the petition by the Dodecanese Islands Jews to be exempted from sequestration law 2636; and finally, Greek Jewish persecution in Romania by the Iron Guard regime.

While not all of the cases analysed here deal with Greek Jews living in Greece, *per se*, they reflect the generally sympathetic stance of Metaxas towards Jews, Greek or non-Greek. The case of Dodecanese Islands Jews reflects an especially unique situation. While these Jews considered themselves to be "Greek," they held foreign citizenship and during the early years of World War II, "enemy" citizenship. The manner in which the Dodecanese Jews expressed their Greekness reflects the cultural-political basis of Greek identity to a large degree. The Dodecanese Islands were the last territory to be incorporated into the Greek state and would have been considered part of the "unredeemed lands". In contrast, the issue of Jewish migration to and through Greece provides an interesting point of comparison to Metaxist treatment of Greek Jews. These four cases represent the intersection of Jewish persecution and Greek governmental reaction.

What can be surmised from the cases is both a break from and continuation of the previous Venizelos parliamentary government concerning the perception and treatment of Jews in Greece. Venizelist perceptions of Jews as non-Greeks

persisted to a large extent throughout the Metaxas dictatorship. The Ministry's misgivings were not targeted at all of the Jewish communities, but notably, towards the Sephardim who had reflected a reticence to integrate, let alone assimilate, into Greek society. In contrast, the treatment of Jews in cases of persecution¹⁴ or petitions for legal exemptions reflected a difference from the Venizelists. Greek Jews were considered and treated as full citizens of Greece and accorded all rights and privileges as such. Foreign Jews avoiding Nazi persecution were also given assistance by Metaxist officials either through extensions on their travel visas or in leaving Europe altogether. Overall, while Metaxas and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found themselves balancing relations with both Great Britain and Germany, the manner in which Metaxist officials dealt with Jewish affairs belies a determination to deflect German political pressure and a resistance to anti-Semitic persecution.

To Participate or Not? Greek Jewry and the Zionist Conference of 1938

In 1938, there were significant events that occurred in Europe concerning Jews, but in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the first set of existing documents pertaining to Jewish affairs centre on the annual international Zionist conference.¹⁵ This conference was scheduled for 2 September 1938, in Antwerp, Belgium.¹⁶ This set of documents reveals the Ministry's concerns both about how the regime would be depicted in political/ideological terms in the international press as well how it would be portrayed in its treatment of Greece's Jewish minority. These documents show that the regime was not particularly antagonistic towards Zionism: its main concern was establishing a favourable international image.

Two issues concerned Ministry officials for the Zionist

conference: first, whether there should be any Greek representation, and second, the manner in which the participants would describe the domestic conditions of Jews in Greece. Ministry officials inquired about the nature of the upcoming "Jewish conference" and requested background information regarding the two individuals who were to represent Greece: Adolphos Arditis and Samuel Mordoch. Christos Liotis of the Undersecretaryship of Public Safety recommended that the two individuals not participate in the conference since they had expressed "anti-Greek" behaviour and ideas. Foreign press agents would be present at the conference, and the opinions expressed by the representatives about Greece would have a direct impact on the public perception of Metaxas and the policies of the dictatorship. Liotis based his decision on a background check of the two individuals by Apostolos Skouras of the Administrative Department for Aliens, Thessaloniki.¹⁷ Skouras stated that both Adolphos Arditis and Samuel Mordoch were considered *mishellenes*,¹⁸ and were suspect from a national perspective. Skouras concluded that Arditis and Mordoch should not participate in the conference. Both Skouras and Liotis were concerned about how the conference would impact on Greece's international image, and especially towards Jews. Metaxas mandated that only positive comments be made about the regime, which is evident in the newspapers distributed throughout Greece. Since the press was prevented from writing articles critical of the regime and/or Metaxas, then neither Arditis nor Mordoch should be allowed to make critical comments with regards to the regime while in Antwerp.

Liotis' recommendation was not adopted. The Permanent Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Mavroudis, stated that it would not be prudent to bar the two representatives from attending the conference.¹⁹ Mavroudis considered that preventing Arditis and Mordoch from attending the conference would be interpreted in the foreign press as

an undue exercise of pressure and potentially anti-Semitic. He commented that if the two had anti-Greek opinions and were determined to slander Greece at the conference, then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Safety had enough time to take "the appropriate steps." Again, Mavroudis' main concern was not what either Arditis or Mordoch would say at the conference, but what type of public impression would be made if they did not go to the conference at all.

Ultimately, both Arditis and Mordoch were allowed to participate in the Zionist conference. Liotis obtained information concerning the events at the conference and sent a detailed report to Mavroudis. Liotis related that the conference lasted for four days and Zionist representatives from various countries described the condition of the Jews in their respective countries. The Greek representatives stated that the Jews of Greece were considered of equal status – *isotimoi* – to the Greek Christians. With this favourable depiction of Jewish conditions in Greece, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made no further comments concerning Arditis, Mordoch, or the conference.²⁰ The Ministry's main concerns were that Mordoch and Arditis not portray the Metaxist dictatorship as anti-Semitic in orientation and that the dictatorship be portrayed in a favourable manner. While these concerns may be self-serving, they do reflect the concerted efforts made by Ministry officials to avoid being considered anti-Semitic.

Travel Restrictions on Jews – Law 42424

The same year, another issue concerning Jewish affairs arose in the Ministry. While in the previous case, Metaxist officials were concerned about Greek Jews travelling abroad, here, Metaxist officials were concerned about foreign Jews travelling to Greece. The main issue of contention was what was perceived as an abnormally large number of Jews apply-

ing for transit visas to Greece, and how this increase in visa applications could be reconciled with the re-implementation of an order which restricted Jewish travellers. This issue reflects the manner in which Metaxist officials differed in their definition of "Jew" from that of German officials, and how they perceived the implementation of the travel restriction order as having a potentially negative impact on perceptions of the Metaxist regime. As in the case concerning the Zionist conference, international perceptions of Greece and, more specifically, the Metaxist regime as not being anti-Semitic were of vital concern to Ministry officials. They would circumvent or defy German directives in order to maintain this image.

Travel restriction order 42424 had been originally passed by the Tsaldaris government of 1934 as a result of German pressure.²¹ This order stipulated that "...because of the abnormal situation created this year by the massive/group influx into Greece of German and Polish Jews" the Greek government was to bar the entrance of all Jews without proper documentation. For those Jews having proper documentation, the Ministry was instructed to take down each name and confirmation number. All Jews were subject to this directive, but the main emphasis was to prevent German and Polish Jews from leaving German and Polish territories. The re-implementation of directive 42424²² in September 1938 cannot be viewed as an arbitrary date when considering that Kristallnacht occurred less than two months later.

The increasing aggressiveness of the Nazi regime was keenly felt by the Metaxist government. British officials noted that Greek police authorities "...hurried [German Jewish] refugees out of Greece as quickly as possible, a policy probably inspired rather by fear of Germany than by dislike of Jews."²³ Whether these Jews were "hurried" back to Germany or whether they left for other destinations was not mentioned. The United States Ambassador to Greece,

Lincoln MacVeagh, also commented on the possible reasons for the directive's re-implementation. In his dispatch to the United States Secretary of State, MacVeagh stated that the German government had exerted pressure on Metaxas "...in regard to the [Greek press'] handling of the persecution of Jews in Germany (referring to Kristallnacht)... [and was] continuing to exert pressure on the Greek government in the interests of this persecution."²⁴ Further on in the same despatch, MacVeagh expressed how "...anti-Semitism has never formed a part of the policy of the government of Mr. Metaxas, who is personally inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish Community of Salonika. What is going on at present... is clearly owing as little to the regime's initiative as it is contrary to the sentiments of the people at large."²⁵

The reaction of Greek Foreign Ministry officials to directive 42424, and how they implemented this directive, caused tensions and confusions within the Ministry. Almost immediately upon re-implementation, Metaxist officials complained about the obstacles being placed on "non-Aryans" trying to travel to or through Greece. Spyros Kosmetatos informed both the Undersecretaryship of Press and Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens concerning this issue. Kosmetatos referred to an article in the magazine *Europe Nouvelle* stating that from that date on, "non-Aryan race" individuals were not allowed to travel to Greece. The article inferred that the Metaxist regime had begun implementing anti-Semitic policies, thus following the path of other "fascist" dictatorships. Kosmetatos stated that "...it is obvious the bad intentions of the author of the article (sic)"; however, he was more concerned that "...Jewish travellers, [and] British subjects in France were [being] prevented from continuing [their travels] to Greece or through Greece."²⁶

At the end of his dispatch, Kosmetatos discreetly encouraged the Ministry to re-examine its position concerning travel restrictions. Kosmetatos presented a persuasive argument

against Jewish travel restrictions to Greece. He stressed that unfavourable or malevolent criticism has arisen in [France]²⁷ that linked Greece as an aggressor in the war against the Jews. Ultimately, these criticisms were "displeasing [to Greece] because of the negative impression being created in foreign countries, and especially in Britain, whose general opinion does not easily comprehend restrictions based on racial or religious grounds."²⁸ Therefore, balancing Nazi pressure with negative public perceptions of the Metaxas regime proved to be a thorny problem for Metaxist officials.

The Greek Ambassador to France, Tasos Triantaphyllakos, also sent a dispatch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens, concerning the wisdom of upholding directive 42424. Triantaphyllakos does not reiterate the same arguments as Kosmetatos, rather he presents financial and logistical reasons for rescinding the order. Triantaphyllakos argues that "...the implementation of this [directive] would result in difficulties which I am afraid would have negative repercussions"²⁹ on Greek tourism. Secondly, Triantaphyllakos stresses the practical difficulties in determining whether an individual was Jewish or not. This attempt led to uncomfortable questions being posed to the individual concerning his or her religious faith. He concludes by reiterating Kosmetatos' sentiment that the directive and its manner of implementation had led to "...the impression that the Greek government reflected an anti-Jewish spirit."³⁰

Mavroudis quickly responded to the two dispatches from France. Due to the number of complaints, Mavroudis was pressured into re-evaluating the directive and his five-page clarification was an attempt to assist the various Greek consular officials throughout Europe, while also complying with the Nazi directive. In his response, Mavroudis alluded to the difficult situation of Greece. The issues that he raised are enlightening about the constraints under which he found himself. Ultimately, he argued that the pressures placed on

Greece by the German government outweighed the concern of Triantaphyllakos and other Greek officials concerning the negative impact directive 42424 would have on Greek tourism and on international perceptions of Greece. One possible explanation for Mavroudis' firm stance on the matter could be that the Nazi regime had placed even more pressure on the Greek government concerning Jews. Kristallnacht had occurred only six days prior to Mavroudis' response, and it is quite likely that one of the repercussions of this pogrom was the elimination of legal means for Jews to leave either Germany or Poland. This would explain Mavroudis' decision to uphold directive 42424 and his demand that all Greek Consular offices receive a copy of his clarifications so that they could strictly implement the instructions therein.³¹

Within the clarifications, Mavroudis conceded that the re-implementation of directive 42424 was having negative ramifications on Greek tourism. He also acknowledged that "...the differentiation between Jews and non-Jews has become unfortunate not only because of the assimilation of the Jewish element... [but also makes] the job of the Consular officials especially unfortunate and despised because of the problematic results."³² He decided that the Greek Embassies were allowed to grant visas to Jews under two conditions: those who were coming to Greece as part of an organized, group tour of the country or Jews who were passing through Greece *en transit* to other destinations. While this would apply to the majority of Jews travelling to Greece, there were some added restrictions. For Jews of German, Austrian, Italian, or Spanish nationality, no visas would be granted unless the aforementioned Jews had already been granted visas to Greece prior to the date of the directive or had been granted permission by their respective governments. Thus the differentiation between European Jews was a direct result of pressure being placed on Metaxas by the German government and not due to internal Greek political considerations.

A further problem for the Ministry officials was the criteria by which an individual would be considered a "Jew" from Germany or other German controlled areas. Mavroudis pointed out that there was a fundamental difference in the Nazi definition of Jew as opposed to the Greek definition. According to Mavroudis, the Nazi definition of Jew included all individuals who believed in the Jewish faith, had any Jewish ancestry (regardless of religious conversion to Christianity), or were married to Jews. He emphasized that this was a broad definition that contrasted sharply with the criteria with which Greek officials determined Jewish identity. For the Metaxist regime (and previous Greek governments), a Jew was simply defined to be an individual who believed in the Jewish faith.³³ This contrast in definitions caused procedural problems for Greek officials since they would be hard pressed to identify who was or was not a Jew. Mavroudis openly acknowledged the procedural difficulty, and raised two hypothetical situations that exemplified the difficulties in discerning who was and was not a Jew. Mavroudis stated that many Jews identified themselves with names that were not "Jewish" in sound or appearance, and this made the identification process difficult. Another problem that the Greek Consular officials might encounter would be situations in which German and Austrian Jews' physical appearance was no different than that of "pure-blood" Aryans.

As a result of the various difficulties that Consular officials would face in upholding the German standard of determining Jewish identity, Mavroudis commented that following a "...careful scrutiny of [the] documents... (a burden of responsibility would be placed on) the interested parties to demonstrate their pure Germanic origin."³⁴ Mavroudis offered a possible means of expediting the process of determining an individual's racial lineage. Determining "pure German origin"³⁵ could be accomplished through a closer check of an individual's papers. If an individual had some National

Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) membership documentation, participation in NSDAP meetings, or other governmental identification, then that would be sufficient justification for Consular officials to consider that individual as having "racial purity".

Once Consular officials determined that an individual was of Jewish origin, they were required to follow separate and specific instructions for considering visa applications. In general, with the exception of those Jews who needed entry into Greece because of "imperative need"³⁶ to conclude merchant/trade deals, validations would not be issued to Jews of German, Austrian, Italian, or Spanish nationality without special validations by their respective governments. Mavroudis emphasized that each part of their travel plans required prior approval, no matter how insignificant. He concluded by stating that great care must be taken to follow his instructions meticulously, and in the event that there was any doubt about the instructions given and the manner in which they were to be executed, all officials were "...welcome to direct [these concerns] to us in a timely manner that will ensure foremost the avoidance of misinterpretations of the above orders..."³⁷ With this dispatch, the questions and concerns regarding directive 42424 were intended to be put to rest. However, despite Mavroudis' intentions of following 42424 in a strict manner, he also created a loophole for Jewish emigration through Greece. Ironically, it would be Mavroudis' *en transit* clause that would be used by Ministry officials in Athens to circumvent 42424 and provide Eastern European Jews a legal means to escape Nazi persecution.³⁸

Within a few months however, another situation arose concerning Jewish travellers to Greece that raised similar concerns among Ministry officials as those with directive 42424. In February 1939, a German directive was sent to the Greek regime stating that all German nationals³⁹ of non-Aryan racial background not be granted travel permits to Greece. The

German nationals "... (including ex-Austrians) were called into their Legation in Athens and given ten days to prove that they were Aryans."⁴⁰ Should these individuals not be able to prove their racial status, then they would be forced to return to Germany or remain in Greece without valid passports. When the Greek Aliens Police learned of this directive, they were concerned that "... most German Jews would prefer an illegal status in Greece to their legal status in Germany..."⁴¹ In order to avert a host of passport-less Jews, the Chief of Police decided to take steps of his own. German nationals were sent a notice by the Greek Aliens Police that they should present themselves to the Greek police stations and submit proof of their Aryan racial status within the time frame allotted by the German Legation. When the German Legation was informed of the swift action taken by the Greek Police Chief, the Legation Head rescinded the original order. What the Head of the German Legation did not realize was that none of the non-Aryan German nationals were forced to leave Greece and all of the non-Aryans had their residence permits restored.⁴²

These Jews may have been fortunate to remain in Greece, but they proved to be a growing exception. The German government continued to place pressure on the Greek government concerning German national Jews.⁴³ As a result of this pressure, the Greek government placed a ban on the entry of further German Jews into Greece.⁴⁴ This ban was strictly enforced, and was later expanded to include Jews residing in the Dodecanese Islands. When the Vice Governor of the Bank of Greece, Mr. Varvaressos, petitioned Metaxas, in December 1938, to permit the entry of a partly Jewish relative of his wife living in Germany, Metaxas "asked him to withdraw his request, because 'the German Government is putting a lot of pressure on us in that matter.'"⁴⁵ By January 1939, the American Vice Consul Andrew B. Foster commented that since December 1938 "there has been a noticeable decrease

in the number of applications and it is understood that the Greek authorities no longer permit German refugees to enter Greece."⁴⁶ Those Jews living in the Italian controlled Dodecanese islands were "informed by the Italian authorities that they must leave Italian territory."⁴⁷ These Jews tried to go to Athens in order to "... execute visa applications [at the American Consulate], but almost all of them have been refused permission to visit Greece... [c]onsequently, most of them will probably apply for their visas at the American Consulate at Naples."⁴⁸

Despite the fact that many of these Jews could claim affiliation and loyalty to the Greek state like Orthodox Christians living on the islands, it still "... proved to be impossible for them to secure visas of any kind permitting them to come to Athens..."⁴⁹ Thus, by the beginning of 1939, it had become extremely difficult for Jews to travel to Greece. This was especially the case for Jews of "Germanic origin" following the events of Kristallnacht. For Metaxist officials, their attempts to circumvent German directives reflect their resistance to Jewish persecution. However, this sentiment was tempered by the pressure being placed on Greece by the Nazi regime. As a result, Greece's interest in maintaining relatively stable relations with Germany came at a cost. For Jews attempting to escape Nazi persecution, legal means of doing so were becoming extremely difficult. Soon, the only option for many Jews was to seek emigration through illegal means.

Greek or Italian? Dodecanese Island Jews and Confiscation Law 2636

In 1940, a case surfaced in the Ministry concerning Greek citizenship and 'Greekness' that mirrored the situation concerning law 42424. This case concerned Jews living in the Dodecanese Islands who perceived themselves to be Greek, but held Italian citizenship. In contrast to foreign Jews seek-

ing travel visas to Greece, Dodecanesian Jews were adamant about their "Hellenic" orientation, and their requests to the Metaxas regime reflect the cultural and nationalist basis of their identity.

The Dodecanese Islands were held by Italy, and would not be given to Greece until 1947 as compensation for Greece's participation in World War II. Jews had inhabited Rhodes, the principal island of the Dodecanese, since ancient times. The majority of Jews on the island were of Romaniote background, primarily from Palestine, and formed a strong community on the island. These Jews were Greek-speaking and had Greek family names. However, tensions on the island had long existed between Greeks and Jews; Greeks criticized the Jews for resisting complete Hellenization.⁵⁰ With the Knights Templars' acquisition of the island (given to them by the Papacy) from Byzantine control in 1312, the Jews of Rhodes faced legally entrenched discrimination. Despite the various discriminatory policies, the Jews of Rhodes became a prosperous community engaged primarily in trade and commerce.

In the years immediately preceding the Ottoman conquest,⁵¹ religious intolerance towards the Jews reached new proportions in Rhodes. Jews now suffered forced conversion or expulsion from the island. In addition, children were baptized despite the wishes of the parents. The reason for this hostile treatment was that, as Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson stated, the Jews "...led scandalous lives and that their bad example had led others to sin."⁵² While a number of Jews were tortured or killed, many Jews were able to escape to Nice, France. As a result, while Jews had fought against previous Ottoman attempts to secure control of the island, they proved reluctant to support the Knights' struggle in 1522. A number of Jews assisted the Ottoman forces by conveying crucial information concerning the island's fortress.⁵³ After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453,⁵⁴ Ottoman

Sultans had begun focusing attention on Rhodes and the desirability of acquiring possession of the island. Several attempts were made by the Ottoman forces to conquer the island, but it would not be until 1522 that Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent finally acquired the island. Suleiman considered the Knights' control of the island to be a threat to Ottoman commerce and supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Jews of Rhodes "...rejoiced in the Turkish victory and the [Knights] expulsion from the island."⁵⁵ As a result of Ottoman conquest, a number of Sephardic Jews came to reside on the island, whilst treatment of the Jews under the Ottomans regime greatly improved.

Suleiman issued a firman detailing the privileges given to the Jews of Rhodes and special privileges to incoming Jewish settlers. The large influx of Sephardic Jews on the island created tensions between themselves and the Romaniote Jews. The Sephardim and Romaniote Jews differed with respect to language, liturgy, religious customs, and practices. Despite compromises made between the two Jewish communities, gradually the Sephardic traditions came to dominate the entire Jewish population. Like other non-Muslims, life under the Ottomans was organized along millets. This social structure provided the various minority groups with relative autonomy. For the Jews, the millet system offered definite and legally sanctioned opportunities (in comparison to Western Europe) to: organize themselves according to their own religious laws and customs; operate their own educational and judicial systems; and use Ladino and Hebrew instead of Turkish.⁵⁶ While the millet system fostered a sense of loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire, it nevertheless reinforced the perception that the Jews were a subject and alien element in Ottoman society.

In May 1912, Rhodes was occupied by Italian forces during the Turco-Italian War. This occupation lasted until July 1923, when Italy formally acquired Rhodes and the rest of

the Dodecanese Islands as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne. Italian control of the island did not result in a return to discrimination; Jews received the same rights and privileges as their co-religionists in Italy. Although the Jews suffered discrimination by non-Jews on Rhodes, they enjoyed basic autonomy and freedom.⁵⁷ The favourable treatment of the Jews on the Dodecanese in turn fostered Jewish loyalty towards Italy.⁵⁸ The peaceful co-existence of Jews and Christians on the island came to an abrupt halt due to the anti-Semitic measures implemented by Mussolini's fascist regime, beginning in 1936. Upon Mario de Vecchi di Val Cismon's arrival as the new governor to the Dodecanese islands in December of 1936, he enacted several anti-Semitic measures:

the Rabbinical College was closed. Jews were required to keep their stores open on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals. De Vecchi even demanded one hundred tombstones from the Jewish cemetery for use as building material for his new house.⁵⁹

By 1 September 1938, Italian newspapers published the new anti-Semitic measures that were to be implemented throughout the fascist empire. De Vecchi did not hesitate to implement these new measures strictly: ritual slaughter of animals was prohibited. Jews could not buy property, employ non-Jewish servants, send their children to government schools. Non-Jews were not allowed to patronize Jewish doctors or pharmacists.⁶⁰

Especially troublesome was a law requiring all Jews who had come to Rhodes after 1919 to quit the island. This law affected over 500 Jews who had come to Rhodes from Asiatic Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria after World War I.⁶¹ Although the law was suspended due to diplomatic pressure placed on the Italian regime, the majority of those potentially affected by the law left the island. Almost half of these Jews sought passage to Palestine through the illegal smuggling rings op-

erating in Greece.⁶²

With the outbreak of the Greco-Italian War on 28 October 1940, the Greek government enacted a law targeting all individuals of "enemy nationality". This law, number 2636, prohibited the trade of goods and services between Greek nationals and individuals of "enemy nationality" and the sequestering of enemy owned property in Greece.⁶³ The Greek government had made a special provision for individuals born what was then outside of the Greek state, but who considered themselves to be Greek. This provision affected Greeks in Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, the Ionian Islands, and the Dodecanese Islands. Technically, the Jews of Rhodes and the rest of the Dodecanese Islands were subject to Law 2636, yet Jewish community leaders quickly took measures to petition for inclusion in the provision allotted to other Greeks of foreign nationality.

On 16 November 1940, the President of the Jewish community of Athens formally appealed to the Ministry for the Economy and to Metaxas himself, to exempt the Dodecanese Jews from Law 2636.⁶⁴ The President stated that the Dodecanese Jews had "...the bad luck to find themselves with Italian nationality... and [they] unquestionably are enlightened citizens of the Greek fatherland..."⁶⁵ The President continued praising the Greek state for providing its citizens with "...freedom, justice, and complete equality, irrespective of different religions..."⁶⁶ and urged that the Greek government should extend these sentiments to the Jewish co-religionists of the Dodecanese. The second petition to Metaxas concerned the bestowing of Greek citizenship on the Dodecanese Jews, since they considered themselves to be Greek at heart and had no citizenship affiliation, since their Italian nationality documents/passports were taken from them. The President of the Athenian Jewish community concluded his petition to Metaxas by stating that they understood that he would need some time to consider the

issue, and that the Jewish community would never attempt to petition Metaxas for something that "...went against the general interests of the Fatherland, where we have always found ourselves free, equal, able to pursue our religion, and safe."⁶⁷

Attached to the petition was a note explaining the background and orientation of the Dodecanese Jews. This note begins by expressing the poor treatment these Jews faced by the Italian government, including "...harsh pressures and expulsions...employed..."⁶⁸ The note then turns to the nationality "history" of the Dodecanese Jews, and how they were originally Ottoman citizens until World War I. From this point on, the Islands were given to Italy, and at no point in time were the Jews allowed to petition for a different nationality. These Jews were unable to declare their allegiance to any country, and this was what prevented them from petitioning for Greek citizenship. The persecution of the Jews by the Italian government, together with the enforcement of law 2636, placed the Jews in a truly difficult position. This persecution, along with the Dodecanese Jews' inability to acquire Greek citizenship, compelled the President to petition the Greek government to reconsider the application of law 2636 to the Dodecanese Island Jews.

On 25 November 1940, another petition by the Athenian Jewish community was sent to the General Department of the Public Treasury that delineated similar arguments to those presented in the November 16th petition. Along with this petition came letters from Jewish individuals living in the Dodecanese, who expressed their loyalty to Greece and described their difficult living conditions as a result of law 2636. As in the previous petition, the President of the Athenian Jewish community reminded the Greek Public Administration Office how the Jews of the Dodecanese came to acquire Italian citizenship. The President attempted to use the traditional resentment towards Turkey in his explanation.

He argued that the reason that the Jews had Italian citizenship was the fact that they happened to reside in an area not under the control of Greece. Secondly, the Jews decided to acquire a foreign citizenship, instead of keeping an Ottoman one, so that they could "...ensure opposition towards Turkey..."⁶⁹ The President stressed that the acquisition of Italian citizenship did not mean that the Jews harboured sympathy for Italy. In fact, "...not only did we never affiliate ourselves with Italy, but on the contrary we were publicly ignored by Italy, as seen by the expulsions suffered by the Jews."⁷⁰ According to the President, the Jews detested the Italians, and wished to be exempted from Law 2636. He concluded by stating that an exemption to this law would not go unnoticed, and that the Jewish community would "...always be willing to assist Greece with all of our strength in this holy battle, of which Greece stirs the hearts of all Jews, because it is a struggle in favour of hearth and home."⁷¹

Richard Asher Israel, Alexander Joseph Menasse, and Daniel Moissis wrote personal petitions that were enclosed with the 25 November 1940 cover letter. Richard Asher Israel petitioned the Greek government to exclude him from Law 2636 because of his national affiliation to Greece and his dislike of Italy. Israel and his family lived in Rhodes for two generations and had acquired Italian citizenship upon Italian control of the island. Israel stressed that he "...never had national ties towards the Italians..."⁷² and that he never took advantage of the rights given to him as an Italian citizen. The remainder of the letter described Israel's ties to Greece, and his perception of "Greekness". His oldest son resided in Athens, and his two daughters resided with him on Rhodes. His two daughters received a "proper Greek education and upbringing, already my son... is studying at the University (of Athens)..."⁷³ Israel claimed that "...feelings of pride and love for Greece is well-known by Greek Jews living in the Dodecanese..."⁷⁴ He asserts that there was never an oppor-

tunity for him to acquire Greek citizenship while living in Rhodes, but that his conduct reflected "Greek" attributes and national affiliation. He concludes by emphasizing the patriotic feelings harboured by him and all other Dodecanese Jews, and how this patriotism was rewarded during World War I with an exemption to the 1917 sequestration and economic prohibition law.⁷⁵ Israel hoped that this exemption could be repeated for the present situation.

The final petition came, via telegram, from both Alexander Joseph Menasse and Daniel Moissis. In this four-page telegram, Menasse gives a brief description of himself and his family situation in Chios. He states that he was born in 1863 and served as a Greek *evzone* for five years and fought in military campaigns. For this reason, Menasse petitioned the Minister for the Economy that he be exempted from Law 2636 because of his service to the Greek state. The final three pages of the telegraph concerned Daniel Moissis. Moissis was born in 1891 and was a married father of two children living in Rhodes. He considered himself a respectable business partner and had petitioned the Greek government in 1938 for Greek citizenship. He asserted that his eleven-year-old son, Victor, was enrolled in an elementary school in Greece, and had been a member of the Greek youth movement, EON, for the past three years.⁷⁶ Since Moissis had been born in the Dodecanese, he had acquired Italian citizenship. However, because of his attempts to secure Greek citizenship, his pursuit of raising his family with Greek customs and education, and his "...fiery patriotic feelings..."⁷⁷ for Greece, Moissis felt that he and his family be exempted from Law 2636.

All of the personal petitions make reference to strong feelings towards Greece and descriptions of "Greekness". The maintenance of Greek culture and pursuit of Greek education were stressed by Alexander Joseph Israel, and others, as fundamental aspects of Greek identity. None of the petitioners considered place of birth as an issue of Greek identity,

but rather patriotic and cultural attributes. Issues of loyalty to the Greek state and willingness to fight for Greece were considered paramount attributes of "Greekness, and not other racial attributes. The stressing of national loyalty and patriotism played into the general perception of identity as reflected by the Metaxas regime and previous administrations. As a result of the numerous petitions by the Athenian Jewish community and by individual Jews from the Dodecanese, the Greek government responded favourably to their collective petitions. In an encyclical to both the Ministry for the Economy and to the General Department of the Public Treasury, the Ministry of Justice acknowledged the repeated petitions for Jewish exemption from Law 2636.⁷⁸ Attached to the cover letter was the decision reached by the Ministry of Justice on 28 November 1940, which concluded that Jews of enemy nationality were to be exempted from Law 2636, in accordance to article 24, section 2, of Law 1073.⁷⁹ With this short decision by the Ministry for Justice, the Jews living in the Dodecanese Islands would be exempt from laws affecting individuals of enemy nationality, due to their national sentiments towards Greece.

The discrimination that the Dodecanese Jews experienced after 1938 seemed to have colored their perceptions towards the two-decade occupation of the islands by Italy. Although testimony by Rhodian Jews concerning the early years of Italian occupation was favourable, by 1940, community leaders portrayed Italy as an "enemy". The various petitions made to Metaxas reflect the difficult position the Dodecanese Jews found themselves. Although the petitions could be interpreted as pandering to Greek officials during a period of war between the two countries, their persecution by the Italian government and lack of Greek citizenship placed the Jews in an especially vulnerable position. The assertions of Jewish enrollment in Greek schools, maintenance of the Greek culture, and service to the Greek military might

be construed as a deliberate means for the Jews to exploit their historical association to Greece merely to protect their assets. Yet, the petitions all seem to reflect genuine and tangible means by which the Jews expressed their "Hellenic" orientation and identity. The Greek government granted the Dodecanese Jews exemption from Law 2636, but it was not able to prevent the deportation and almost complete decimation of the Jews of the Dodecanese by the Nazi forces that occurred in 1944.

Romanian Persecution of Greek Jews

In addition to Metaxist officials giving covert assistance to Jews seeking to escape Nazi persecution, the regime also went to great lengths to assert, formally, the equality of Greek Jews and Christians when faced with foreign governments' attempts to discriminate against Greek Jews. In Romania, the perceived threat of "minority ethnicities" and Jews resulted in a growing number of anti-Semitic laws being enacted during the late 1930s.⁸⁰ By September 1939, King Carol's regime⁸¹ had taken steps to evict all non-Romanian Jews from the country. The law mandated that all non-Romanian Jews were to leave within a fortnight of the law's enactment. Two British Jews had notified the British Embassy of the law, and Sir Reginald Hoare, the British minister in Bucharest, immediately took action. He asserted that the law "...would be interpreted here, in Germany and everywhere else as a base attempt to truckle to the Germans. I therefore proceeded for the first time since I have been here to be extremely violent... the upshot was that the orders were rapidly countermanded and will not I hope be re-issued, though now that Calinescu⁸² is no longer with us I cannot feel certain."⁸³ One year later, the Romanian regime enacted another law that affected all foreign national workers, but targeted Jews.⁸⁴ Specifically, the law stipulated that "[r]egarding the Certificate of Religion,

it is necessary that you send it to the National Consulate of Certificates [sic] where it will be stamped that you are Christian Orthodox. In the case that the stamp is already applied, you need nothing else."⁸⁵

This documentation was considered of primary importance in determining whether or not a foreign national was to be granted a new worker's permit. The description of the Romanian law was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens for further instruction. Greek Embassy officials in Bucharest had received confidential information that "...this measure primarily interests foreign nationals of the Jewish religion, whose applications [for work permits] from the outset will be rejected."⁸⁶ The dispatch ends with a query as to what to tell Greek citizens when they come for official documentation detailing their ethnic origin and religious affiliation.

Mavroudis himself responded to the dispatch, and sent it directly to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Antonescu. In this response, dated 30 November 1939 and stamped "urgente", Mavroudis directly confronted Antonescu with the anti-Semitic nature of the new law by stating that the law was directed at "...foreign nationals of Jewish origin and religion."⁸⁷ He stated that processing certificates of religious affiliation "by the Greek Consular Authorities [was] impossible, in view of the fact that the Hellenic Constitution does not make a distinction between Hellenic citizens."⁸⁸ Mavroudis concludes his reply by requesting Antonescu to "intervene before the competent authorities that Hellenic citizens be exempt from the formality in question."⁸⁹

This was not the first time that the Ministry intervened on behalf of Greek Jews living in Romania. The Greek government's refusal to differentiate between Greek Christians and Greek Jews did not stop the Romanian government from persecuting Greek Jews living in Romania. Besides obstructing Jews from acquiring or renewing their work permits, the

Romanian government took steps to uproot Jews from their homes and businesses. This would be followed by relocating Jews to government-established military ghettos. An example of a Greek Jew suffering this discrimination was Haim Franzi. Franzi was a Greek citizen living in Bucharest since 1900, and had purchased his house on Udrigani Street in 1922. However, in November of 1940, Romanian military authorities ordered him to sell his house and relocate to another house within "...one of the military zones in the capital."⁹⁰ Franzi informed authorities in the Greek Embassy concerning his forced relocation, and the Greek Embassy quickly intervened on his behalf. The Embassy contacted Romanian officials and requested that they take steps in order to rescind the order and allow Haim Franzi and his wife to live in the house that they had purchased eighteen years previously.

Other Greek Jews were not as fortunate as Haim Franzi. Moisis Levy suffered physical and emotional abuse at the hands of the Romanian authorities because of his resistance to selling his business to the Romanian government. In his account to authorities at the Greek Embassy in Romania, Levy recounted how the Romanian authorities mistreated him, tried to take over his business, and also forced him to leave his residence at Kalarassy. Levy's ordeal began on 24 November 1940, at 9:00 am, when the local police apprehended him at his house and took him down to the police station. There, he was taken to the basement where he was tied hand and foot. He had a cloth placed in his mouth to prevent him from making any noises. For twenty-four hours thereafter, Levy was whipped "...creating infected and black and blue bruises to the lower and back areas of [his] body..."⁹¹ After the beatings stopped, Levy was forced to sign a document attesting that he was not mistreated at the police station, and that they treated him in the best possible manner. When Levy was released from the police station, he visited

a doctor to treat his wounds. The notes that the doctor took were used by the Greek Embassy to press their case against the Romanian authorities for Levy's mistreatment.

No sooner had Levy returned home than the police came back to his house and apprehended Levy's wife and eighty-two year old father. Levy's wife was "...mistreated in the worst possible manner..."⁹² and his father was coerced into selling the family business to the Romanian government for the sum of 40,000 lei, despite the fact that the business was worth over 400,000 lei. Levy attempted to protest to the sale of the business for one-tenth of its value to the local authorities. These same authorities responded by threatening to re-apprehend him and beat him until he died. They told Levy that he and his family had five days to gather their personal belongings and leave Kalarassy.

Levy concluded his letter to the Greek authorities by asking for protection as he and his family gathered their possessions from their house and business. In contrast to Haim Franzi's petition, Moisis Levy did not request to remain in his house and keep his business, and this reflected Levy's fear of future persecution and possibly death. The Greek Embassy in Romania with the explicit support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens took swift action to secure the safety of the Levy family and to protest the suffering the Levy family endured at the hands of local Romanian authorities. The Greek Minister included a copy of the Romanian doctor's notes as evidence that indeed Levy had been mistreated at the police station. The Minister personally requested that the Romanian government guarantee Levy and his family's personal safety, in addition to an extension of time for the Levys to liquidate their assets and leave the country. The most important aspect of this dispatch was not that the Minister intervened on Levy's behalf, rather the manner in which the Minister described Levy. To the Minister, Levy was not seen as a Jew or even a Greek Jew, he was a "Hellene."⁹³ The

Romanian response to the Greek dispatch came in the form of a brief *note-verbale*.⁹⁴ In this note, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that Moisi Levy would be granted a month's extension to his deadline. Levy also had the right to continue running his business until the last day of his extension, 31 December 1940. No mention was made concerning Levy's treatment or about the coerced sale of Levy's business.⁹⁵

In both these instances, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took an active role in assisting Greek Jews facing persecution. Ministry officials acted swiftly and directly to protect "Hellenes" regardless of religious orientation. Mavroudis and other Ministry officials resisted differentiating between Greek Christians and Greek Jews and justified this behaviour on the basis that the Greek constitution considered all citizens of Greece to be equal under the law. While Franzi and Levy may not be considered part of the Greek ethnos, their status as Greek citizens ensured that they be given equal treatment and, more importantly, equal protection.

In sum, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs exemplified some of the perceptions of Jews that had existed in prior Greek administrations, but differed in its treatment of Jews. The paradigm of inclusion and exclusion was not applied to foreign affairs issues concerning Jews; Ministry officials considered Jews to be citizens of Greece, and therefore equal to Christians. This consideration was most evident in the Ministry's dealings with Romania and its discrimination against, and persecution of, Greek national Jews living there. Jews living in the Dodecanese emphasized this non-differentiation when petitioning the Greek government for exclusion from Law 2636.

Both Greek Jews and foreign national Jews viewed Greece as a safe haven during the wartime period. The Ministry case involving the Dodecanese Jews and their exemption from Law 2636 exemplified the perception by the Jews that the

condition of the Jews in Greece was more favorable than in Italy and Turkey. Jews in the Dodecanese could participate in aspects of the Metaxist regime. Their children could become members of the youth movement EON, and all could claim safety from persecution. The flood of Jewish visa applications reflected the perception of Jews that Greece was a safe resting spot in their flight from persecution. This helps explain the exasperation felt by Ministry officials when claiming that Jews were exploiting tourist visas as a means to come to Greece and then not leaving. Whether illegally or legally, Jews throughout Central and Eastern Europe attempted to enter Greece because of their perception that the Metaxist government would not persecute them and might possibly assist them in their flight from the long arm of the Nazi regime.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not take it upon itself to seek and assist Jews; it was more concerned that Greece not be perceived as an anti-Semitic regime. This was reflected clearly in the Ministry's dealings concerning Greek Jewish participation in the Zionist conference of 1938. The Greek government did not implement any anti-Semitic measures, despite Nazi pressure, and was adamant that Ministry decisions and actions not be considered anti-Semitic. In this manner, Metaxas differentiated himself from other dictatorships. Metaxas would not espouse anti-Semitic policies, nor would he acquiesce to Nazi directives concerning German Jews. Instead, Metaxas sought to assist both Greek Jews and Jews of foreign origin so that they could avoid persecution. To the end, Metaxas remained firm to his beliefs regarding the legal rights of the Jews of Greece.

NOTES

¹ Metaxas Speech given in Thessaloniki, 10 November 1937, Metaxas Archive, GAS, File 28, p. 3.

² See newspapers such as *Μακεδονία*, 26 July 1936, "Will His Downfall Occur?" and 27 July 1936, "Do not be Concerned: the Greek Franco is not in a Position to do Anything – Already the People Have Pulled Out His Teeth."

³ The overwhelming majority of these memoirs or testimonies begin in 1941 with the Nazi invasion of Greece and do not mention the Metaxas period. See Ph. Ambatzopoulou, *Γióμτωβ Γιακοέλ: Απομνημονεύματα 1941-1943* (Athens, 1993), Ph. Ambatzopoulou, *Το Ολοκαύτωμα στις Μαρτυρίες των Ελλήνων Εβραίων* (Athens, 1993), S. Bowman and I. Benmayor (eds.), *The Holocaust in Salonika: Eyewitness Accounts* (New York, 2002), P. K. Enepekidi, *Οι Διωγμοί των Εβραίων εν Ελλάδι, 1941-1944* (Athens, 1969), A. Kitroeff, *War-Time Jews: The Case of Athens* (Athens, 1995), N. Nachmia, and Raina Zilberta, *Ένα Παιδί στο Γκέτο της Θεσσαλονίκης* (Athens, 1996), A. Nar, *Κειμένη επί Ακτής Θαλάσσης* (Thessaloniki, 1997). The works that do cover both pre- and post-Holocaust periods are those which focus on the history of a Jewish community; see E. Nachman, *Yannina: A Journey to the Past* (New York, 2004), and J. E. Plaut, *Greek Jewry in the 20th Century, 1913-1983* (Cranbury, 1996).

⁴ While not all members of the Jewish community voted conservative, nor did a majority of Jews vote conservative in every interwar election, a large majority of Jews did vote for the political faction to which Metaxas had belonged.

⁵ Using the example of the Sephardic Jewish community, their voting pattern was split according to internal divisions; the Moderates supported Venizelism, the Zionists supported the anti-Venizelists, and the "Internationalists" supported the KKE. The Zionist support of anti-Venizelism during the interwar period is also exemplified in the induction of Metaxas to the "Golden Book" for his support of the Zionist cause. The general perception of the Jewish majority vote favouring anti-Venizelism is highlighted in G. Mavrogordatos, p. 241, and his discussion of the "Jewish danger" to Venizelist electoral aspirations.

⁶ The Sephardim differed linguistically from the other Jewish communities in Greece because while the existing Jewish communities spoke and wrote Greek, the Sephardim maintained their Ladino dialect for both business and personal communication. Both the terms *Judaismo* and *Ladino* refer to the same language, *Judaismo* refers to language used in secular texts while *Ladino* is used to refer to the language used for religious texts. *Ladino* is a combination of medieval Spanish and Hebrew that is unique to the Sephardic Jews. For a history of the Sephardic language, see Dimitrios Filippis, "Introduction to the Sephardic Language and Literature," in I. Hassiotis, ed. *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern*

Europe (Thessaloniki, 1997), pp. 123-45.

⁷ While many different theoretical paradigms could be utilized to help explore Metaxist perceptions and treatment of the Jews, Eugene Weber's analysis of the French state's 'nationalization' of the French citizens seems most appropriate. Weber explores the factors of the economy, communications, military, and education to analyze the manner in which the state constructed its identity, and how this identity was taught to all of the French citizens. The focus on education is especially relevant to the Greek case, and one that is applicable both to the Jews and Greek citizens. The Weberian analysis of nationalization is compatible to the Greek case, and one that helps shed light on Metaxist perceptions and treatment of the Jews. Where this study differs from Weber is the notion that minority issues formed a political priority in Greece because of the role that minorities played in territorial conflicts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, 1988).

⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of governmental policies towards the Slavo-Macedonians, see T. Kostopoulos, *Η Απαγορευμένη Γλώσσα* (Athens, 2000).

⁹ *Ethnos* is the term used to describe individuals of Greek ethnicity. For Metaxas, members of the Greek *ethnos* were defined in cultural terms: those individuals who spoke Greek and believed in the Orthodox faith.

¹⁰ How and in what manner the Jews were to be assimilated depended on the specific Jewish community targeted. For example, the Romaniote and Karaite Jews were fairly integrated into Greek society and culture; these Jews spoke Greek, attended (the large majority) Greek state schools, etc. In contrast, the majority of Sephardic Jews spoke either Ladino or French, attended minority or foreign schools, maintained their own newspapers, etc. Thus, the Metaxas government took pains with the Sephardic Jews to address these "cultural" issues, and force compliance to policies such as use of Greek in foreign and minority Jewish schools, adhering to the Sunday rest-day laws, etc. While these immediate goals represent the Metaxist regime's attempts to integrate the Sephardic Jews, this does not mean that Metaxist officials, and Metaxas himself, did not wish to assimilate the Jews over the course of time. What assimilation meant to Metaxas was the use of the Greek language as the primary form of discourse, and the belief in Greek Orthodoxy. This Metaxist definition of assimilation correlated to his interpretation of Greek identity. The implementation of the language policy towards Jewish foreign and minority schools can be seen as a step in this direction. Secondly, the celebration of Jewish conversions to Greek Orthodoxy in the Greek press can be interpreted as a subtle means by which religious assimilation could

be encouraged. Lastly, the issue of assimilation was a *desire* of Metaxas' that did not necessarily entail a strict time-line for achievement.

¹¹ According to the Director of the Archive, Ms. Photini Tomai-Constantopoulou, Axis occupation forces and the lack of Ministry staff officials (they were dismissed) were to blame for the destruction of the Ministry documents. See P. Constantopoulou, T. Veremis, *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews* (Athens, 1998), p. 249.

¹² According to Ms. Constantopoulou, "There are two reasons why [so many] files concerning the history and activities of the Jewish communities in Greece are kept in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: first, because [for communities in Northern Greece such as] Thessaloniki... remained until 1912 under the Ottoman state... the second reason applies to the documents of the period after 1912 until the end of the War and has to do with the fact that many members of the Jewish communities held dual – Greek and foreign – citizenship." In Constantopoulou and Veremis, p. 15.

¹³ Although much of the Ministry's archive was destroyed, the cases pertaining to the Jews which remain are all the more important in deciphering Metaxist perceptions and treatment of Jews.

¹⁴ Both the response to the Campbell riots in 1931 by the Venizelos government, and the government's lack of action towards the EEE reflects a less urgent response to anti-Semitic attacks than that of the Metaxas regime.

¹⁵ Theodore Herzl, the Austrian journalist, is considered the founder and the godfather of the modern Zionist movement; he laid its ideology and dedicated the last 10 years of his life to realizing his ideals and thoughts. He united the Zionist sects to form an international organization and called all the Jews in the world to the first Zionist conference. The first Zionist conference was held in Basl, during the period 29-31 August 1897. It was attended by more than 197 representatives of the various Jewish and Zionist organizations, institutions and societies. It was presided by Herzl, and the presidential board and the board of trustees of the Labour Committee were also elected. The venue for the conference was Vienna, and the programme of the Zionist movement, known as the Basl programme, was adopted, thus the International Zionist Organization was founded. This programme determined that the ultimate purpose of Zionism was to "establish the Jewish State in Palestine by the force of the law." Thereafter, Zionist conferences were organized on a yearly basis to discuss Zionist aims and the condition of the Jews in the countries represented.

¹⁶ "Christos Liotis to Minister for Foreign Affairs" Jewish Archive, No. 55/8/4/4a, 20 August 1938, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(hereafter AMFA).

¹⁷ "Apostolos Skouras to Minister for Foreign Affairs," Jewish Archive, Jewish Archive, No. 55/8/4/4b, 8 August 1938, AMFA.

¹⁸ *Mishellenes* are individuals who dislike or even detest Greeks. *Mishellenes* are the opposite of *philhellenes*; individuals who admire or love Greeks. The term *philhellene* was coined during the period leading up to the Greek War of Independence of 1821 to encourage support for the Greek cause of political independence from the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁹ "Jewish Participation in Amversi," 3 September 1938, Jewish Archive, No. 18704 A/6, AMFA.

²⁰ No further communiqués were found in the dossier concerning this conference, and I have interpreted this lack of correspondence as the end of discussion concerning the issue.

²¹ "Encyclical to all Ministry and Diplomatic Authorities," 21 November 1934. Jewish Archive, No. 47800 I/9, AMFA.

²² According to the documents in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, order 42424, it is not clear whether the law had been suspended for some unspecified period of time, and was now being re-implemented, or whether the large influx of German Jews had caused procedural concerns by Greek diplomatic officials abroad. My interpretation is that the law was re-implemented.

²³ "Minorities in Greece," 29 September 1942, No. RB IV/27/ii., FO/371/3321, p. 7, PRO.

²⁴ "German Anti-Semitism in Greece," 9 January 1939. Greece: Foreign Affairs, No. 2842, p. 1, United States State Department Archives (hereafter USSDA).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶ "Despatch from Spyros Kosmetatos to the Subministry of Press and Tourism," 10 September 1938. Jewish Archive, AMFA, No. 3175

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ "Despatch from Tasos Triantaphyllakos to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," 19 September 1938. Jewish Archive, No. 1531, AMFA.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³¹ "Encyclical to all Diplomats and Embassies," 16 November 1938. Jewish Archive, Document 457/D/9, p. 1, AMFA.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ For Metaxist officials, and previous interwar governments, identity was based on cultural determinants and less so on racial determinants. This would explain Metaxas' definition of "Greekness" as being an individual who spoke the Greek language and believed in Greek Orthodoxy. Similarly, "Jewishness" was the belief in the Jewish faith and, for the

Sephardim, speaking Ladino. Thus, it was possible in the Greek context that a Jewish individual could become "Greek" through religious conversion and cultural assimilation. Evidence of these conversions were published as front-page newspaper stories; these stories were also a means of discretely encouraging *Hellenization*. For example, see *Ακρόπολις*, 14 November 1938, "Love Conquers... Jewish Young Lady - Headmistress of Athens Ballet Cabaret Became Christian">

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

³⁸ The illegal smuggling of East European Jews to Palestine via Greece had begun in 1938 and continued throughout the period of the Metaxas dictatorship. The "en transit" clause would allow Jews to remain in Greece temporarily until they had secured either legal or illegal means of leaving the country.

³⁹ The term German national Jews included Jews from Germany, Austria, a specific portion from Poland, and Czechoslovakia (primarily Czechs).

⁴⁰ "German Anti-Semitism in Greece," 9 January 1939. No. 2842, p. 1, USSDA.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³ "Situation of the German Jews in Greece," 3 February 1939. No. 2730. USSDA. While the exact number of German Jews in Greece was not given in this report, MacVeagh stated that between 1 September 1938 and 30 January 1939, fifty-four German Jews had applied for visas for admission to the United States.

⁴⁴ "German Anti-Semitism in Greece," 9 January 1939. No. 2842, p. 1, USSDA, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ "Memorandum on German Refugees," 30 January 1939. Document 2730, Enclosure no. 3, p. 2, USSDA.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "German Anti-Semitism in Greece," 9 January 1939. Document 2842, p. 3, USSDA.

⁵⁰ M.D. Angel, *The Jews of Rhodes* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1980), p. 7.

⁵¹ The Ottoman conquest of Rhodes occurred in 1522.

⁵² A. Galante, *Histoire des Juifs de Rhodes, Cos, etc.*, (Istanbul, 1935), p.20. Also, see Angel, p. 17.

⁵³ Angel, p. 19.

⁵⁴ This conquest marked the official demise of the Byzantine Empire, despite the fact that most of the Empire had been conquered before 1453.

⁵⁵ Angel, p. 19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁷ R. A. Levy, *I Remember Rhodes* (New York, 1987), p. 61.

⁵⁸ Angel, p. 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁶⁰ A. Galante, *Appendice a l'Histoire des Juifs de Rhodes.*, (Istanbul, 1948), pp. 29-31, quoted in Angel, p. 150.

⁶¹ Angel, p. 150.

⁶² This is part of a current work in progress for publication.

⁶³ "To the Ministry of the Economy," 28 November 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 121226, p. 2, AMFA.

⁶⁴ "To the H. M. Minister of the Economy," 16 October 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 2381, AMFA.

⁶⁵ "To the H. M. President of the Government," 16 October 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 2379, p. 1, AMFA.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ "To the H. M. President of the Government," 16 October 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 2379, p. 1, AMFA.

⁶⁹ "To the General Department of the Public Treasury," 25 November 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 2394, p. 1, AMFA.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ This law froze all of the assets in Greece of individuals who held "enemy citizenship." Trade restrictions were also applied which limited the ability of these nationals to engage in trade with Greeks.

⁷⁶ Victor Moïssis' membership in EON reflects the inconsistent manner in which membership was accorded to Jews throughout Greece. Please see chapter four for further discussion.

⁷⁷ "To the General Department of the Public Treasury," 25 November 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 2394, p. 3, AMFA.

⁷⁸ "To the Ministry of the Economy," 28 November 1940. Jewish Archive, No. 121226, p. 1, AMFA.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁰ M. Mann, *Fascists*, (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 288-9.

⁸¹ In 1937, King Carol had invited the far-rightist and anti-Semitic Na-

tional Christian Party (that had only received 9% of the popular vote) to lead the government. However, the National Christians' lack of authority and their alliance with the Legion of the Archangel Michael, prompted King Carol to dissolve parliament and assume control of the government himself. King Carol's control of government would last until 1940, when General Ion Antonescu forced his abdication over the issue of territorial cessation to Hungary and the Soviet Union. Antonescu established himself as dictator with support of the Iron Guard (founded in 1930). Antonescu had been known as an effective soldier who was fiercely anticommunist and espoused corporate authoritarianism. His cooperation with the Iron Guard would come to an end in 1941, as a result of an attempted coup against him by members of the Iron Guard and the Legion of the Archangel Michael in January. See Mann, pp. 288-92.

⁸² Armand Calinescu, King Carol's closest associate, was assassinated in April of 1939, by members of the Iron Guard, in retaliation to the shooting of thirteen members of the Iron Guard 'for attempting to escape from prison' in 1938. See Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 207.

⁸³ "From Sir R. Hoare, Bucharest, to Mr. Nichols," 22 September 1939, No. R 8180/214/67, Public Records Office, Britain (hereafter PRO).

⁸⁴ "To I. Dellas, C. Danas, G. Dellas, M. Anghelidis," 15 April 1940, Jewish Archive, No. 668, AMFA. The Romanian Consul stipulates that on the Greek Consular Certificate of Nationality stamp or a crest be placed if a person was not Orthodox.

⁸⁵ "Alexandros Koundouriotis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, B. Division," 28 November 1940, Jewish Archive, No. 2029, p. 3, AMFA.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ "Nikos Mavroudis to Michel Antonescu (sic)," 30 November 1939, Jewish Archive, No. 5158, AMFA. No further documents could be found concerning the religious affiliation law in the Romanian dossiers.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ "Alexandros Koundouriotis to Minister for Foreign Affairs," Jewish Archive, No. 5502, 16 November 1940, AMFA.

⁹¹ "Mosis Levy to Ambassador of Greece, Romani," 22 November 1940, Jewish Archive, No. 5156, p. 1, AMFA.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹³ "Mosis Levy to Ambassador of Greece to Romania" 22 November 1940, Jewish Archive, No. 5156, attachment 2, p. 2, AMFA.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ No further documents could be found for Levy's situation in the Romanian dossiers, and the fate of Levy cannot be ascertained.

Lessons from the Shoah in Greece: Judenrat and Resistance¹

STEVEN BOWMAN

The agony of Greek Jews during WWII is both similar and dissimilar to the fate of their brethren elsewhere in occupied Europe. It is similar in the sense that they were deported to Treblinka and Auschwitz and most met their horrid deaths in that foreign land of concentration camps. It is dissimilar in the sense that the process was relatively neat and efficient with none of the butchery so common to the process during the slaughter of the East European Jews. There are no mass graves in Greece save for the theft of honor that shames the military graveyard in the hinterland of Marathon containing some 10,000 Wehrmacht and SS troops.

The literature of the Greek Jews eschews the existence of Judenraete in Greece, but this claim is not accurate, nor could it have been given Nazi policy that demanded such an ethnic organization of the conquered Jewish communities preparatory to their deportation and destruction. The question then is how many Judenraete were there in Greece?

We are familiar with the Judenrat of Thessaloniki where the vast majority of Greek Jews lived, some 50,000 out of a national total ranging between 70- and 80,000.² There was also a Judenrat for a brief time in Athens. But little is known of the formal organizing of the communities in central Greece during the seven months of total German control, let alone the previous two- or two-and-a half years under the Italians. Something is known about Ioannina, but was the organization there a Judenrat? And were the islands of Corfu,