

Régie Vardar: A Jewish 'Garden City' in Thessaloniki (1917-1943).

An administrative and commercial center for centuries, Thessaloniki (Θεσσαλονίκη)¹ was one of the main places of settlement for the Sephardic Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century (1492-7). From the end of the 19th century until 1924, the Jews were the largest and most dominant ethnic group in the city.² The overall significance of the town and its harbour shaped the character of the Jewish community, which was involved primarily in commercial activities, being itself highly stratified in different classes, professions and income groups. Culturally, however, the Jewish community developed its own distinct traditions in terms of family values, religion rituals, Language and literature (in Judeo-Spanish language called Ladino), and everyday life customs and habits.

With the incorporation of Thessaloniki into the Greek national state after the Balkan wars (1912-3), the Jewish community was placed in an ambivalent position. Under the pressure of economic hardship combined with the assimilationist policies of the Greek nation-state but also under the influence of modern ideological movements (especially Zionism and Socialism),³ the Jews of Thessaloniki began to

¹ Also Salonica, Saloniki, Salonique, Selanik.

² N.K. Moutsopoulos, *Thessaloniki 1900-1917* (Thessaloniki 1980), pp. 22-23. In the year 1886, there were 25,000 Greeks, 25,000 Muslims and 50,000 Jews. In 1910, there were 35,000 Greeks, 30,000 Muslims, 65,000 Jews and 2,200 foreign residents. In 1913, a year after the city was incorporated into Greece; there were 67,000 Greeks, 24,000 Muslims, 65,000 Jews and 26,000 foreign citizens (most of whom were Jews with Italian citizenship). In 1928 (after the agreement on population exchange), there were 179,600 Greeks and 65,000 Jews; For a general survey of Salonika during this period, see G. Veinstein, *Salonique, 1850-1918, La "ville des juifs" et le réveil des Balkans* (Paris, 1992); M. Anastasiadou, *Salonique, 1830-1912: une ville ottomane à l'âge des réformes* (Leiden, 1997); M. Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945*, Vol 1 (Tel Aviv, forthcoming).

³ For the nationalism in the Balkans, see, M. Blinkhorn and T. Veremis, eds., *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens, 1990); E. Benbassa, *Ha-Yahadut ha-'Otomani bein Hitma'aravut le-Zionut, 1908-1920* (The Ottoman Jewish community between Occidentalism and Zionism, 1908-1920) (Jerusalem, 1996); R. Molho, "Les juifs de Salonique, 1856-1919: une communauté hors de la norme", 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, l'Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, 1996); On the Jewish Socialist Federation see: D. Quataert, "The Workers of Salonika. 1850-1912". In *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-1950*. Edited by idem and E. J. Zürcher, (London and New York, 1995), pp. 59-74; Idem, "Ma'amad Po'alei ha-Ta'asiyah be-Saloniqi, 1850-1912" (The Industrial Working Class of Salonika, 1850-1912). In *Yemei ha-Sahar, Peraqim be-Toledot ha-Yehudim ba-Imperiyah ha-'Ot'manit* (The Days of the Crescent: Chapters in the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Edited by M. Rozen, (Tel Aviv, 1996), pp. 311-332; A. Ben-Aroyah, "Reshit ha-Tenu'ah ha-Socialistit bein Yehudei Saloniqi" (The beginning of the socialist movement among the

immigrate to Palestine, France and the “Americas”. The eventual place of settlement for the immigrants was inevitably influenced not only by political contingency and personal preference but also by class, income and ideology.⁴ What in more, the rate of immigration out of Greece assumed greater proportions after the Lausanne Treaty and the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, which resulted in a great influx of ethnic Greeks from Anatolia and eastern Thrace into Greek Macedonia.⁵

The goal of this lecture is to understand how a poor Jewish working-class neighbourhood became a microcosmos organized around a sub-culture which provided a measure of inner unity. In addition, we will attempt to understand the influence of the urban-geographic setting on the social relations and activities of a neighbourhood whose inhabitants were neglected both by the city and by the Jewish community.

Sources for this paper include the Sepharadic Jewish Press of the period (written in Ladino)⁶, the Jewish Community Archives,⁷ interviews, theatrical plays, and of course, all relevant secondary sources written in Hebrew, Ladino, French, Greek and English.

Jews of Salonika). In *Zikhron Saloniki* (A memoir of Salonika). Edited by D. A. Recanati (Tel-Aviv, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 311; For an overview of Ben Aroyah's role in the emergence of Greek socialism in the years 1909–1914, see A. Liakos, *Η σοσιαλιστική εργατική ομοσπονδία Θεσσαλονίκης (φεντερασιον) και η σοσιαλιστική νεολαία* (The socialist workers federation in Salonika and the socialist youth movement) (Θεσσαλονίκη Παρατηρητής, 1985); Aktsoglu, J. I. “The Emergence/ Development of Social and Working Class Movement in the City of Thessaloniki (Working Associations and Labor Unions),” *Balkan Studies* 38/2 (1997), pp. 285-306.

⁴ L. Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonika: Portrait of an Era* (London, 1946), p. 193; Sources written in Ladino: *Journal del Lavorador*, Sep. 1909; *La Tribuna Libre*, 14/10/1910; A. Ben Aroya, “La immigrasion”, *Avanti*, 12/9/1913; *El Avenir*, 14/4/1914; the *Archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika*, doc. No. 1435:1:11:972, 26/4/36.

⁵ C. B. Eddy, *Greece and the Greek Refugees* (London, 1931); S. Ladas, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York, 1932); E.G. Mears, *Greece Today – The Aftermath of the Refugee Impact* (Stanford, 1929).

⁶ Language is one of the major cornerstones in the creation of the identity of the group, the nation and the individual. The Jews of Salonika - and in particular the Jewish women of all classes, though most pointedly of the worker and proletariat classes - spoke only Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish language written in Hebrew characters. All of the quotes in Spanish are from the Ladino press and were therefore written in Hebrew characters.

⁷ *Archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika, Institute for Preservation of Historical Collections*, Moscow (TAU DP, Salonika Archives). The archives of the Jewish Community of Salonika were one of the tens of thousands of archives of Jewish communities that were confiscated by the Nazis during World War II. At the end of the war, they were transferred to Moscow. The archive was photographed in its entirety in Moscow and then assembled and codified in a project led by Professor Minna Rozen. The archives consist of 300,000 documents in Ladino, Greek, Hebrew, French and other languages.

After the fire of 1890, new Jewish neighbourhoods were built on the outskirts of the city in the ‘Chair’ area, near the Vardar swamps and the Régie tobacco factory. The names of the neighbourhoods bear witness to their poverty: *Kulivas*, *La Bara* (in Ladino, the swamp), *Kabristan*, *Mezarlık* (in Turkish, cemetery) and *Teneke Mahale* (in Turkish, tin neighbourhood).⁸

The great fire of 1917 left over 70,000 people homeless: 52,000 of whom were Jewish, 9,000 Muslim, and 10,334 Christian; (the total population of the city at that time was approximately 170,000.)⁹ The government, led by Venizelos, immediately understood the importance of developing a new urban plan for the reconstruction of city that would reflect national, social and economic policy. The blueprints were drawn for a new, modern city.¹⁰ The area of Régie, which included the streets of Irinis (Ειρήνης), Afroditis, (Αφροδίτης), Promiteus (Προμηθέως), Odisseos (Οδυσσέως), Tantalo (Ταντάλου), and Bakchu (Βάκχου), was designated as the industrial and adult entertainment section.¹¹ Within the Régie district, new working class neighborhoods were planned along the lines of the “garden city” model.¹² The

⁸ E. Hekimoglou, "Jewish Pauperism in Salonika, 1940-1941", in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945*, edited by M. Rozen (Tel Aviv, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 195-205; R. Molho, "Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods Established in Salonika Following the 1890 and 1917 Fires". Ibid, pp. 173-194; *La Tribuna Libre*, 15/7/1910, 2/9/1910; *El Pueblo*, 22/9/1910; *El Avenir*, 17/1/1912.

⁹ On the fire and its impact on the state of the Jewish community see: C. Diehl, *Salonique* (Paris, 1920); L. Villari, *The Macedonian Campaign* (London, 1922), pp. 179-181; D. Walshe, *With the Serbs in Macedonia* (London, 1920), pp. 35-46; J. Mann, *The Salonika Front* (London, 1920), pp. 13-17; C. Photini and T. Veremis, eds., *Documents on the History the Greek Jews, Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens, 1998), doc. No. 2, p. 73; A. Papagiannopoulos, *History of Thessaloniki* (Athens & Thessaloniki, 1982), pp. 228-232; R. Molho, pp. 186-188; V. Hastaoglou-Martinidis, "On the State of the Jewish Community of Salonica after the Fire of 1917: An Unpublished Memoir and Other Documents from the Papers of Henry Morgenthau. In *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe: From the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II*. Edited by I.K. Hassiotis (Thessaloniki, 1997), pp. 147-174.

¹⁰ A. Yerolympos, "La part du feu," in *Salonique, 1850-1918*, pp. 261-270; Idem, *Urban Transformations in the Balkans (1820-1920): Aspects of Balkan Town Planning and the Remaking of Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki, 1996), pp. 3-10.

¹¹ The tobacco factories of Praudos, Papastrato, Latur, Pomero and others were all situated on Tantalo Street; *El Kulevero*, 23/7/1920, (in translation) "We ask the Jewish representatives, 'Why do you allow the "good girls" to remain in the old quarter rather than send them away? Don't the authorities know that decent people live in the Bara? Is it fair to leave these "fine ladies" together with decent young women?'; "La zona industrial", *Aksion*, 8/1/1935.

¹² M. Aldrige, "Only Demi-Paradise? Women in Garden Cities," *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 11 no. 1 (1996), pp. 23-39; G.E. Cherry, H. Jordan and K. Kafkoulas, "Gardens, Civic Art

idea was to build neighborhoods that would be self-contained; within the neighborhood could be found small houses, each with a modest garden plot, parks, schools, various institutions and shops. The intention was to supply the factories with cheap and available labor.

The “garden city” neighborhood was never built, primarily as a result of the need to provide quick housing for the Greek refugees that poured into the city following the compulsory population exchange laid out in the Treaty of Lausanne.¹³ The Régie neighborhood was the “preferred option” for those Jewish families who were unable to afford an apartment in the city. Between the years 1928-1934, the synagogues of the Régie and Baron Hirsch neighborhoods acted as hostels for hundreds of families who had been left homeless as part of the city’s efforts to modernize. All the Jewish families that had been evicted from their homes in the Aya Sofiya (Αγία Σοφία) neighborhood or from the tin huts and shacks of Angelaki’ (Αγγελάκη), together with the evictees from Campbel, were resettled in the Régie area. Then in 1934, in order to construct the new central train station and to create the neighborhood of Ksirokrini (Ξηροκρήνη) for Greek refugees, 700 – 800 Jewish families, residents of Kabristan, Mustafa Arif, Tenke Mahale together with those who had lived on Aphroditis) Αφροδίτης), and Monastiriyo (Μοναστηρίου) Streets, were evicted and resettled in Régie. The Régie–Vardar area, apparently, was an ideal place to dump the poor and homeless Jews of the city.¹⁴

The wooden shacks of Régie were varied as most of them were essentially surplus barracks of the ‘Entente’ forces.¹⁵ Each family was allotted a room, a lavatory was

and Town Planning: The Work of Thomas H. Mawson, (1861-1933),” *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 8 (1993), pp. 307-332.

¹³ *League of Nations: Greek Refugee Settlements* (Geneva 1926), p. 164; D. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its impact upon Greece* (Paris, 1962), pp. 69-136; J. Cohen, *Salonique: son passe, son etat actuel, son avenir, memoir presente* (Paris, 1953), p. 358; “Kazas alos resfuidos: echandolos jidios de Teneke Mahale”, *El Popular*, 6/8/1930.

¹⁴ *La Verdad*, 28/11/1929; “Las Barakas de St. Dimitiou”, *Aksion*, 13/12/1929; “El problema de St. Photini”, *Ibid*, 16/1/1930; “La Politika delos expulsions kontinua: otras 80 famiyas judias kedaron arastando a yelan mermir”, *El Popular*, 11/6/1930; “Mas negro de Kambel”, *Ibid*, 17/9/1930; “La fragua dela stasion santrala”, *El Pueblo*, 11/1/1930; “En los foubourgos Jidios”, *El Pueblo*, 26/2/1932; “En el quarter Régie i el perikulo de expulsion”, *Avanti*, 30/6/1934; “Los moradores de Teneke Mahale minizados de kedar sin morada”, *Ibid*; “La destruksion de Kabristan i Mustafa Arif”, *Aksion*, 8/1/1935; *Jewish Community Archives*, 1428:1:145:1918, 10/7/1939.

¹⁵ “Las barakas”, *Aksion*, 3/12/1929; “El Segundo piano delas barakas dela Régie”, *El Popular*, 6/8/1930.

situated in the adjacent yard and was shared by a number of families, and each family would add a sort of porch to their unit which would function as the kitchen. Most of the buildings belonged to the Jewish community. In 1934, these rooms housed 1,400 families, 96 families of more than 9 persons each.¹⁶ Though the conditions were crowded in Régie, the rent was inexpensive – in the area of 78 drachma a year. In the ‘Baron Hirsch’ neighborhood, the rooms were in better condition and the rent was relatively higher, 150 drachma a year. In comparison to Régie, Baron Hirsch was considered “prestigious”.¹⁷ The needs of the neighborhood were seen to by a manager that received his salary from the Jewish community. Part of his responsibility was to determine what renovations were needed and to hire craftsmen to do the job.¹⁸ However, because of the high cost of such endeavors and the constant lack of funds, the Jewish community most often did not have sufficient funds to cover the repairs. Therefore, the manager’s main task became one of collecting rent from tenants who refused to pay. Occasionally, thugs were hired to evict tenants who had been delinquent in the payment of their rent.¹⁹

Attempts by the Jewish community to raise rent failed both because of the economic situation of the tenants who could barely put together enough money to pay even the lowest of rents and because these same tenants felt an acute sense of helplessness and abandonment by the Jewish community and the City. Conflicts which arose in the political arena led to the unwillingness of the Jewish community to invest in “Red” neighborhoods – the working class neighborhoods in the western outskirts of Thessaloniki, Baron Hirsch, Régie, Aya Praskevi (Αγία Παρασκευή) and Tenke Mahale were strongholds of the Jewish Communist Movement.²⁰

¹⁶ Expulsiones ala Régie, *Aksion*, 25/7/1934.

¹⁷ “La pujita delas kiras ala Régie”, *Aksion*, 15/3/1931.

¹⁸ “Las reparaciones en el kuarter Hirsch”, *Mesajero*, 9/12/1935.

¹⁹ “Mas negro de Kambel: las muevas barakas de Régie”, *El Popular*, 17/9/1930; “La suvidura delas kiras dela Régie”, *El Pueblo*, 11/1/1931; “Las kiras de Régie”, *Ibid*, 7/1931; “Las kiras del kuarter Régie”, *Mesajero*, 24/11/1935.

²⁰ “Lista delos kandidatos del ‘bloko popular’”, *El Popular*, 2/10/1930; “Muestra viktoría de ayer”, *Ibid*, 13/10/1930; “Las masas populares votan kon dishiplina”, *Ibid*, 22/10/1930; “El rizultado de las eleksiones komunales”, *Ibid*, 2/11/1930; “Los rizultados de las eleksiones”, *Ibid*, 15/12/1930.

The residents of these neighborhoods, on the whole, belonged to the working class. Many were unemployed for long periods of time or worked in less than permanent employment in occupations that were held in low esteem such as tobacco workers, porters, wagon drivers and port workers. Most of the women worked as seasonal laborers at the local tobacco factories and as maids and laundresses at the bourgeois houses in town.

In the past, Jewish life had been concentrated around the synagogue, which had served as a religious and spiritual center. In 'Régie', three small synagogues sufficed to provide the neighborhood's religious needs; this being the result of the fact that alongside the traditional spiritual center – the synagogue, other less traditional centers emerged.

The need for cultural expression separate from that of the Jewish, Greek and Turkish bourgeoisie can be seen by an inspection of the social meeting places of the working class. Through-out the period discussed, the promenade along the beach and the coffee houses near the White Tower were the locale of preference for the leisure time of the Jewish, Greek and Turkish middle-class. The Régie inhabitants preferred to sit at the coffee houses and taverns in the "La Bara" area near the *Yeni Kapı* (Turkish - New Gate), and in the small coffee houses situated in the old Mevlevi tekke adjacent to their neighborhoods and the tobacco factories.²¹ Despairing residents sat at one of the 30 *meyhane*²² and sipped *Raki* diluted with water, smoked hashish, and arranged their "affairs". In the grocery stores, where most of the purchases were done on credit and whose owners were in the same financial straits as their clientele, lively gambling operations took place. The participants were mainly poor destitute women who gambled with money for their children's next meal in hopes of profiting even a small amount.²³

New centers of another sort were the political centers. The Jewish school acted in the evening as a community center, particularly for the Zionist movement, where evening

²¹ "Ala Mevlane", *El Rayo de Fuego*, 30/3/1934; On the Mevlevehane see: N. Stavroulakis, *Salonika Jews and Dervishes* (Athens, 1993).

²² Turkish, meyhane, meyhanelar = bar, saloon, pub; "Expulsiones ala Régie", *Aksion*, 25/7/1934.

²³ On hashish and gambaling see: "Pretos hashishlis", *El Popular*, 16/8/1930; A. Revah, *Sujita Pudrida* (Saloniko, 1932), p. 25; *Aba Hushi Archives*, no. 16, letter 1/936, 18/9/1933; "Las kumarhanes del Baron Hircsh", *El Rayo de Fuego*, 22/2/1935.

classes were offered such as literacy in Greek and Hebrew, sewing, and cooking.²⁴ Soup kitchens, supported financially by the City Council and the Jewish community, were set up and provided approximately 1450 portions of bread every other day to needy families.²⁵

Another significant center was the Organization of the Popular Neighborhoods, or “Bloko Popular”, under the auspices of the Communist Party whose headquarter was in Régie.²⁶ The party’s club acted as both a political and cultural center. In these lower class neighborhoods, poverty, hunger, unemployment and despair were widespread. The physical boundaries of the neighborhoods also defined social barriers that both the individuals and groups within those walls found nigh insurmountable.

Though sharing the same religion and belief in the same God, though found within the same politically defined urban space, and though both a part of the larger Jewish community, we find two very distinct groups who were alien to one another. It was not walls of language, culture, religion or customs which separated them but the delineations of social class and, in particular, disparate political goals and aspirations. The Communist Party nurtured hope among the multitude of poor and unemployed yet it could not literally provide jobs or emigration opportunities. It was the Zionist Movement that, between the years 1933-1935, offered a real alternative particularly to the dock workers - emigration to the Land of Israel. The emigration option also had a political element; the workers were required to prove that they did not belong to the Communist Party. Therefore, though most of the Jewish port workers of Thessaloniki lived in ‘Régie’, preference of given to those dockhands that lived in the Zionist neighborhood of “151” in the east of the city.²⁷

As Professors Mavrogordatos and Leontido mentioned in their books the KKE (Κουμμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος) was found to be concentrated in one particular

²⁴ *Aksion*, 13/12/1929; *Ibid*, 1/7/1935.

²⁵ “Las supas populares”, *El Pueblo*, 7/6/1931; There were 30 centers that distributed food to 24,742 people; “Las supas populares i los elevos Jidios”, *Aksion*, 13/2/1933; E. Hekimoglou, “Jewish Pauperism”, p. 199.

²⁶ “El kongreso delos foburgos”, *La Verdad*, 10/9/1928; “Una aseamblea jenerala a teneke mahale”, *El Popular*, 11/7/1930; “La ajitasion en los kuarters por el bloko popular”, *Avanti*, 30/6/1934.

²⁷ Salonica Jewish Community Archives.

segment, the tobacco workers.²⁸ The leaders of the tobacco workers' union understood that they would not successfully reach their goals by addressing only the workers' issues of working conditions and wages but that they needed to appeal first and foremost to the family as a whole and to rally its support for the organization, its goals and the struggle. The demand for better working conditions and higher wages was part of a larger social demand for improved living conditions in the working-class neighborhoods. The family as a whole was considered within the framework of the long-range plans of the union;²⁹ the whole family participated in the First of May celebrations³⁰ and in the excursions,³¹ dances and picnics that were organized. Donations and food packages were collected and dispersed to the families of the striking workers. Sport teams were organized and competitions took place between the teams of different unions.³² Public libraries opened³³ and evening classes were

²⁸ L. Leontidou, *The Mediterranean City in Transition: Social Change and Urban Development* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 75,87. There were many areas of overlap between the Communist Party, the K.K.E. (Κουμμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος) and the tobacco workers. The Greek Communist Party, which was founded in 1918, found supporters amongst the intelligentsia, the refugees from Anatolia, and a large part of the industrial workers, the tobacco workers in particular. In 1924, many of the Jewish members of the Socialist Federation joined the Greek Communist Party. Ben-Aroyah later left the party and Ventura left as well in 1928.

²⁹“El konflikto del tutun: ala opinion publika, a las lavoraderas I lavoradoers del tutun”, *Avanti*, 14/5/1913, p. 2.

³⁰ “El primo mayo en Saloniko,” *El Avenir*, 2/5/1911. Approximately 4,000 workers participated in the march – men, women, and their entire families – and speeches were delivered in four languages. 95% of the participants were Jews, the rest being Bulgarians, Greeks, and Turks as, despite fraternal allegiance between the workers, ethnic conflicts existed within the workers' organizations.

³¹ “La ekskursion de miercoles”, *Avanti*, 13/6/1913; “Savuot: La delisioza ekskursion delas kulturalas”, *El Rizon*, 10/6/1927.

³² “Sosalismo i sport”, *Avanti*, 7/5/1913; “Seksion de sport”, *Ibid*, 9/5/1913; El sport en los kuarters”, *La Verdad*, 21/2/1928.

³³ “livros,” *La Solidaridad Ovradera*, 3/3/1911; “Livros en la bibelioteka sosyalista”, *Avanti*, 9/12/1912. One could find the following books in the library: In French: C. Racovski, *The Balkan Confederation and the Working Class*; In Ladino: *The Struggle for Life, The Belgian Workers' Struggle for their Liberty, The Social War, The Workers' Syndicate, Socialism in Turkey, Judaism and Socialism, The Victory of the Tobacco Workers, The Count of Monte Christo, Les Misérables, The Bread Distributor*, and the Russian dramas, *The Sailor on the Volga* and Gorky's *The Mother*. All were books with clear messages;

arranged where the young girls of the tobacco factories taught their tired mothers to read and write in Ladino and Greek.³⁴

The class-consciousness of the residents of 'Régie' was formulated on the floors of the tobacco production halls and then strengthened in the neighborhood. Cultural activities took place at the local branch of the Party. An important avenue through which an alternative popular culture developed was the local theatre which played a decisive role in the formation of the class and social consciousness of the residents of Régie.³⁵ Every play that was performed relayed a clear socialist message.³⁶ Along with popular Jewish dramas such as "The Dibbuk,"³⁷ original dramas were written and performed in which the realities of their own lives were depicted. For example, in the play, "Belagie", the audience could identify with the characters of Merkada the laundress, Sonhula the maid who was essentially an unemployed tobacco worker, and the messenger boy to whom Sonhula's heart belonged, all of whom lived under the shadow of their wealthy Zionist employer and his wife.³⁸ The tobacco women workers, experienced in conflict from the factories, were also struggling with the tension between their need to fulfill their roles as wife and mother, and their desire to emulate the female heroes of the working class who led their fellow workers, both

"biblioteka", *Avanti*, 10/12/1921, "The Library of the Communist Youth is open every evening from 6:00 until 9:00 and on Saturday through-out the day."

³⁴ The Socialist Federation organized courses for the young girls and women who belonged to the Federation. See: "Spanish Lessons", *Avanti*, 21/11/1913, p. 2, Two Spanish classes were offered, one for men and one for women; "Our Life," *Ibid*, 11/2/1914, Greek lessons and courses in history and in subjects of health are mentioned; An *Interview* with Flor Eskaloni Sapan, Ramat-Gan 2000.

³⁵ "Muestro grupo dramatiko de amatores: El teatro proletariano", *El Popular*, 31/7/1930; "El grupo dramatiko", *El Rayo de Fuego*, 6/3/1936.

³⁶ Elena, Romero, *Repertario de noticias sobre el mundo teatral de los sefaradies orientales* (Madrid, 1983), pp. 256-257, 283-286; Octave Mirbeau, *The Socialist Holiday*; "El grupo dramatiko ofre su konkurso a los tipografos en greve: La representasion de Tereza Raquin de Emilio Zula", *El Popular*, 22/8/1930.

³⁷ "Dibbuk", *El Pueblo*, 8/4/1933.

³⁸ "El teatro popular: Una ermoza inisiativa del grupo dramatiko (Belagie), *El Popular*, 19/8/1930.

male and female, in their hour of crisis. It was the women of the neighborhood who fought the representative of the city and of Jewish community when they came to evict those tenants who had not paid rent and it was the women who negotiated with the representatives of the railroad lines over the amount of indemnity due to those displaced by the new lines.³⁹ However the working women of Thessaloniki did not succeed in attaining the same political achievements as did their socialist sisters in Western Europe.⁴⁰

To the stranger, the working class neighborhoods appeared neglected, dirty, crowded, stifling and even threatening and its inhabitants, people still connected to antiquated traditions. Yet the neighborhoods were far from but a collection of streets, houses and people; they presented a lively and active social group with aspirations and dreams that only infrequently reached fruition principally for the lack of economic resources. The neighborhoods were indeed reclusive, but this was an outcome of the circumstances. The streetcars did not reach their neighborhoods and many of the residents rarely left their homes to participate in the various aspects of city or Jewish community life, as they needed to nurse infirm family members. More than 20% of these residents suffered from tuberculosis as a result of work in the tobacco factories. Families were usually large which made "outings" such as a trip to the movie theatre in the city, an economic impossibility. For these reasons, the cultural and social life of the residents of working class neighborhoods was concentrated within the neighborhoods themselves. One must also take into account the general disassociation with these residents by the city and by the Jewish community. The health, educational, and welfare services provided by the Jewish community and the

³⁹ "Pletos entre kierestajis i las mujeres del kuarter", *Ibid*, 19/8/1930.

⁴⁰ "La seksion de ombres ajita a dar las kashkas a las mujeres", *Ibid*, 6/9/1930.

City were few. In order to improve their housing and neighborhood conditions the residents themselves take initiatives and founded charitable organizations and committees in order to improve, to whatever extent possible, the lot of their quarter.⁴¹ The Jewish poor of Régie felt they shared a common fate with the Greek refugees and that they shared a common sense of rejection by the city and by their respective ethnic communities. Ad hoc committees were organized between Régie and the adjacent Greek refugee neighborhood of Ksirokrini to deal with such issues as health, water, sewage, and electricity.⁴² The committee endeavored to awaken the city council of Thessaloniki to the quarter's problems in order to share their efforts to make their 'slums of despair' to a 'slums of hope'.⁴³ In 1934, after a concerted effort on the part of Greek opposition representatives and the Jewish community Mayor Manos (Μάνος) visited the Régie neighborhood and promised repairs.⁴⁴ The Greek welfare department appropriated 800,000 drachmes to the Jewish community for the purpose of building 50 housing units in Régie.⁴⁵ The change in the city's attitude towards Régie did not only express itself in terms of expenditure and construction; the city decided to give the neighborhood a Greek name, the express goal of which was to strengthen the connection between the neighborhood and the city and to blur its Ottoman past. The city notables, cognizant of the ethnic make-up of the

⁴¹ "La vida en los foburgos", *Avanti*, 23/11/1926; *Aksion*, 8/12/1929; *Ibid*, 23/12/1929; *El Popular*, 10/7/1930.

⁴² "Por una farmasia municipal a Aya Paraskevi", *Aksion*, 10/1/1930. A new pharmacy was established in the Mevlane for the Jewish and Christian neighborhoods: "El yeriz de Aya Photini", *El Popular*, 3/9/1930; "El yeriz de Kalamaria", *El Pueblo*, 12/3/1931; "Las demandas delos kuarteres", *Aksion*, 15/11/1934 (The sewage problems of the Greek Refugee neighborhoods Ksirokrini and Ay Anadon); "Resfuidos i yerlis", *El Rayo de Fuego*, 7/2/1936.

⁴³ Leontidou, pp. 84-88.

⁴⁴ On the "Jewish Mayor" as he was called by the anti-Semitic circles, see: "Las suziedades de la Makedonia" (A newspaper), *El Telegrafo*, 17/10/1929; "El Mayor delos jidios i los kuarters populares", *El Popular*, 3/9/1930; "El mayor en los foburgos", *El Pueblo*, 8/6/1931; "El Mayor en el kuarter Hiersch", *Aksion*, 15/11/1934; "El Mayor de los jidios", *El Rayo*, 23/10/1936.

⁴⁵ "La Municipalite i las ovras judias", *Aksion*, 5/12/1934.

neighborhood which was almost entirely Jewish, chose the name Dionysus Latas (Διονύσιος Λατάς(after the Archbishop of Corfu (Κέρκυρα) who was known for his positive disposition towards the Jews. The new name, however, was never really accepted by the people themselves and even in city documents, the neighborhood continued to be referred to as Régie.⁴⁶ Plans for the rehabilitation of the neighborhood, the funding for these plans, and the general assimilation of the quarter into the urban space of Greek Thessaloniki remained on paper only.⁴⁷ It seems that the only real struggle of the Régie inhabitants was in May 1936 when all the quarter took part in the May 1936 events as a part of the workers revolution led by the working unions, especially the tobacco workers. (Most of the Jews that were arrested, dead or wounded were from Régie. The fact that the Jews comprised a demographic minority in the city and a minority amongst the demonstrators in the streets, did not prevent the newspaper, *Tahidromous* (Ταχυδρόμος) from accusing the Jewish strikers and demonstrators of being void of Greek national sentiment and of harming the public order).⁴⁸

In June 1936, while in Thessaloniki, King George agreed to receive a delegation from Régie, he shook the hands of the 2 representatives and asked them if they are twins.⁴⁹

In 1939, 2,360 families were living in 1,300 small rooms and another 400 families living in shacks designated to be torn down on the site where the Jewish community with the help of the government had intended to build new housing.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ “Onor a un arshivisko grego”, *Aksion*, 16/7/1935.

⁴⁷ “Veriopulos vijito anoche el kuarter Régie i Teneke Mahale”, *Aksion Prensa*, 6/9/1935;

“Los projetos de fragua se izieron todo agua”, *El Rizon*, 13/8/1937.

⁴⁸ “Los evenmientos dramatikos de estos dias”, *Mesajero*, 12/5/1936; “Despues delos evenmientos sangreintes de shabat”, *Ibid*; “Los enkuentros sangreientesde shabat kostaron 12 viktimas donde dos jidios”, *Ibid*; “Los jidios i los evenmientos de estos dias”, *Ibid*, 14/5/1936.

⁴⁹ “La seremonia de viernes al Beit Shaul”, *Mesajero*, 28/6/1936.

During WWII, expansive restructuring of the urban space of the Jews of Thessaloniki took place; the end of this process being the annihilation of 95% of Thessaloniki's Jewish population by the Germans. In 1943, the Germans asked the city council for an up-to-date list of the Jews living in the city their marital status and their place of residence. The city council replied that the lists had been destroyed in the bombings and that their recompilation would take at least 2 years. The Germans turned to the Chief Rabbi of the community, Rabbi Tzvi (Hirsch) Koretz, who himself was of German descent, and demanded the lists. The Rabbi sent out all high school students who were proficient in reading and writing to complete a census report. After the war, in the testimonies of their life stories, Moshe Aelyon,⁵¹ Ya'akov Handali⁵² and others confessed that their first encounter with people from "the neighborhoods" as well as their first time in "the neighborhoods" was for the purpose of the census. Thus wrote Ya'acov Handali: "...We split up in the neighborhood. During the course of the census, I witnessed abject poverty for the first time in my life, in neighborhoods that I never even knew existed, and if I had perhaps heard of one or two of these places, I had certainly never visited there." Frida Kovo: "There was a great disparity between us and those that lived in the "neighborhoods"...I never met poor Jews...I met the poor in the 'Lager'..."⁵³ For many of the young boys and girls this was the first and for many, the last, encounter of the wealthy with the poor, of east with west,

⁵⁰ "La suskription en favor delos proves", *Ibid*, 3/12/1938; "Dos nuevos blokos seran fraguados en el foubourgo Régie", *Ibid*, 8/9/1930. "Komision de avrigamento delos indijentes jidios", *Ibid*, 9/9/1940.

⁵¹ M. Ha'elion, *Meizarei Sheol: Korotav shel Yotze Saloniki Be-Mahanot Ha-Hashmada* (Straits of Hell : The Life of a Salonikian in the Concentration Camps) (Tel Aviv, 1978), p.10.

⁵² Y. Handali, *Me-Ha-Migdal Ha-Lavan Le-Sha'rei Auschwitz* (From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz) (Tel Aviv, 1992), p. 46-47.

⁵³ *Masu'ot Yitzhak, Holocaust Archives*, Video interview with Frida Kovo. See also S. Refael, *Be-Netivei Sheol* (Routs of Hell: Greek Jewry in the Holocaust, Testimonies: Ο Δρομος της Κολασεως). Tel-Aviv: 1988. (Hebrew).

of French and Greek with Ladino, of the modern with the traditional, of health with infirmity, of employment with unemployment, and of hope with despair.

From the 15th of March until the deportation of all Thessaloniki's Jewish population to the extermination camps was completed, the areas of the 'Baron Hirsch' Ghetto became the "home" of every Thessalonikan Jew on their way to the camps. According to German documents, nineteen transports left Thessaloniki carrying 48,533 Jews. By the end of 1943, the city was officially devoid of its Jewish population and their houses, left devoid of occupants, were filled anew with Greek refugees fleeing from Macedonia and Thrace.

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Ladino; Eds. Eli Francis, Yosef Anjel, Alberto Molho, Barouh Shibi, Daniel. Allalouf (A daily newspaper of light Zionist orientation)

On September 1935 was united with La Prensa Libre that reflected the “Moderates” orientation. 3/12/1929, 8/12/1929, 13/12/1929, 23/12/1929, 10/1/1930, 16/1/1930, 15/3/1931, 13/2/1933, 25/7/1934, 15/11/1934, 5/12/1934, 8/1/1935, 1/7/1935, 16/7/1935, 6/9/1935.

Avanti; Organ of the Socialist Federation and since 1921 of the Communist party.

Salonika, 1911-1934(?).

Ladino (3 times a week)

Eds. Avraham ben Aroyah, and Alberto Arditi, Jacque Ventura, Hayim Saporta, Leon Caraso, Melikoglu. 9/12/1912, 7/5/1913, 9/5/1913, 14/5/1913, 13/6/1913, 21/11/1913, 11/2/1914, 10/12/1921, 23/11/1926, 30/6/1934.

El Avenir

Salonika 1897-1917

Ladino (twice a week)

Ed. David Y. Florentin

Suplimento del Avenir, 2/5/1911, 17/1/1912, 14/4/1914

El Kulevro; humorous

Salonika 1909-1925

Ladino (weekly)

Ed. Albert Matarasso

23/7/1920,.

El Mensajero

Salonika 1935-1941

Ladino (daily)

Ed. Eliyahou Viasi

9/12/1935, 24/11/1935, 12/5/1936, 14/5/1936, 28/6/1936, 3/12/1938, 8/9/1939, 9/9/1940.

El Popular

Salonika 1928-1931

Ladino (once a week)

Ed. M. Arenos, Socialist orientation.

11/6/1930, 10/7/1930, 11/7/1930, 31/7/1930, 6/8/1930, 16/8/1930, 19/8/1930, 22/8/1930, 3/9/1930, 6/9/1930, 17/9/1930, 2/10/1930, 13/10/1930, 22/10/1930, 2/11/1930, 15/12/1930.

El Pueblo

Salonika 1917- 1932

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A daily newspaper. Jewish nationalist orientation.

22/9/1910, 11/1/1930, 11/1/1931; 12/3/1931, 7/6/1931, 8/6/1931, 26/2/1932, 8/4/1933,

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Salonika 1931- 1936

Ladino (once a week)

Eds. Anri Alfandari, Juda Mordoh, Shemuel Menahem.

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Salonika 1928- 1939

Ladino (once a week)

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