

Sofija GRANDAKOVSKA

WHOSE CITIZENS WERE THE JEWS DEPORTED FROM MACEDONIA?

Genocide is not a fact.
Genocide is not a fact because it is the very destruction of the fact,
of the notion of fact, of the factuality of fact.

—Marc Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*

The Macedonian Holocaust is definitely a shortened version of European one. It is such because it presupposes the implementation of the Final Solution of the Jewish question in the most peripheral European geographical borders, in this particular case—in Macedonia.¹ Recalling one of the most important conclusions from the Wannsee Meeting in 1942, the main goal of the Final Solution was neither resettlement, nor evacuation, nor migration of the Jews, but their extermination, their total annihilation² in

¹ I presented an early version of this paper at the International Conference “Diplomacy and Deportation of the Jews from Macedonia in 1943” at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, organized by the Diplomatic Club, Skopje. I thank Mr. Viktor Gaber for the invitation and opportunity to participate at this event held on the International Holocaust Remembrance Day—27 January 2015. The title of my text here “Whose Citizens were the Jews Deported from Macedonia?,” primarily originates from my lecture on the deportation of Macedonian Jews and the implementation of the antisemitic citizenship Laws in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, which I delivered at the International Symposium “Curating Exchange 3: Curating a Society and Production of Power,” organized by Press to Exit Project Space, Skopje, May 2015. I decided to include some of the points I discussed in my lecture back then in this text. I also thank Stanimir Panayotov who took participation in the translation of the draft version of this paper.

² Trials of criminals, NMT Vol. XIII, 192-9; See: Sofija Grandakovska, “Homage on the Irony of Evil and on the Historical, Cultural and Theoretical Memory of the Holocaust,” in: *The Jews from Macedonia and the Holocaust: History, Theory, Culture*, ed. Sofija Grandakovska (Skopje, Euro-Balkan Press, 2011), ix-x. Hereafter abbreviated *JMHHC*.

order to build the new European image, that is—without Jews. Therefore, the fact remains that it did occur in Macedonia under the Bulgarian occupation and the German-Bulgarian alliance, and it definitely occurred as a successful implementation of *die Endlösung der Judenfrage* in Macedonia, brutally transforming the lives of around 7,148³ Macedonian Jews into ashes in the gas chambers of the Treblinka II death camp in March 1943.

When we speak about the deportation of Macedonian Jews we take into consideration the Jews from the Vardar part of Macedonia that was occupied and administered by Bulgaria, since that part of Macedonia belonged to the Kingdom of Bulgaria. The bureaucratic aspects of the deportation were set by the Bulgarian politic elite, administration and police, conducted by way of the Bulgarian Railways, with German assistance, from the temporary concentration camp Monopol in Skopje to the central railway line between Warsaw and Bialystok, to the Malkinia station, where the extermination camp Treblinka was situated. The deportation was conducted according to the previously signed Agreement for Deportation between Alexander Belev, the Head of the Commissariat for Jewish Questions and his German colleague, SS Hauptsturmführer Theodor Dannecker from 22 February 1943, which guaranteed “that Bulgaria in future shall not under any circumstances demand the deported Jews back, nor shall exhibit any interest in them.”⁴

Following these introductory notes which mainly refer to the shortened linear perspective of the events that led to the deportation itself, one could recognize more or less the same technical details regarding the way other deportations were conducted in other parts of Europe, as well as the experiences of the deportees during their deportation to the final extermination point. Yet the Holocaustal event in Macedonia presents a singular example. The question at hand is: What are the core characteristics that allow us, as well as equally oblige us, to speak about this event as a singular one? What constitutes the singularity of the Macedonian Holocaust

³ I follow the total number of deportees according the registers of German provenance. Please see the elaboration on the difference between Bulgarian and German documents about the deportation, in: J. Kolonomos, V. Veskovic-Vangeli, eds., *The Jews in Macedonia*, (Skopje, MASA, 1986), Vol. II, 1165-6. Hereafter abbreviated *TJM*.

⁴ *Agreement for deportation*, Archives of Yad Vashem, M.67/157.

through its particular phase of deportation? Is it the sum total of the operative actions that Bulgarian officials in the Government, in the Council of Ministries, the administration in the Commissariat for Jewish Questions, in the Bulgarian Army, as well as in the Police, had together undertaken to technically conduct the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia? Is it that the deportation of Macedonian Jews and the solution of the Jewish Question in Macedonia did occur as a result of “one of the compromises Bulgaria had to make with the aim to save itself from German occupation and not to enter a war with Germany”⁵—and as a reward for the firm loyalty—to regain the territories lost in the Second Balkan War and World War I (which in turn led to the realization of the imperial dream of King Boris III for a united and powerful Kingdom of Bulgaria),⁶ among them the Vardar part of Macedonia, over which the Bulgarian occupier celebrated victory of the so-called *newly liberated* territory of Macedonia to the Kingdom of Bulgaria as a national holiday?⁷ Is it because the Bulgarian administrative-political system was

⁵ Statement of the then Minister of Interior Affairs Peter Gabrovski from the Bulgarian government given on 28 January 1945, in the interest of his defense in the trial led against him for war crimes. See: *Defense by Peter Gabrovski*, former Minister of Interior Affairs and Public Health, People’s Court, 28 January 1945, Archives of Yad Vashem, M.67/7/1. Hereafter abbreviated *DPG*.

⁶ Bulgaria for the second time has a hold on to Dobrudzha (which previously belonged to Romania), Thrace (to Greece) and Macedonia (to Serbia).

⁷ According to the aforementioned in relation to Macedonia, we have to refer to the archival material of Bulgarian provenance that underlines two parallel lines: the Bulgarian alliance with Germany, named as victorious Germany and another line, which refers to the occupation of Macedonia and the organization of all aspects of life under Bulgarian rule. This material concerns the preparations in the organization of the sports games in Skopje, the so-called most beautiful city of Bulgaria, it captures the presence of Hitler’s Nazi symbolism in the flying flags with the swastika and it clearly shows how through such symbols the new fascistic ideology is introduced, i.e., that it has already entered in Macedonia, as well as the ceremony of the Bulgarian army preparing to welcome the arrival of Peter Gabrovski, the presence of the Major of the city of Skopje, Spiro Kitinchev who welcomed the Minister and became his closest collaborator particularly for the Jewish question, and finally the mass trance of the mobilized citizens and youth of Skopje who saluted: Hitler. In his formal address in front of Macedonian citizens (now Bulgarian ones), Gabrovski greeted them as “Brothers Bulgarians” and saluted: “Long live Bulgaria and King Boris!” Please see: *Complaint Lodged by the Macedonian Jewish Community*, No. 28, 25 March 1945 to the Investigative Commission for determination of the crimes committed by the occupier and their accomplices at the central People’s Liberation Committee in Skopje, Archive of the Jewish Community in Skopje, no signature; Sofija Grandakovska, “Homage on the Irony of Evil and on the Historical, Cultural and Theoretical Memory of the Holocaust,” in: *JMHHTC*, xxi-xlvi. The mentioned documentary material is courtesy of the

urgently established along with the occupation of Macedonia in April 1941, when the Bulgarian political elite simultaneously institutionalized the Final Solution by way of the Law for Protection of the Nation along with the numerous antisemitic laws? Were the Jews from Macedonia deported because there were no Macedonian army, police and administration—all of them brought from older Bulgarian frontiers? Was it because there was no institutional resistance in occupied Macedonia to take place in organized forms, as was the case in the older parts of the Kingdom⁸—where—led by the intellectuals, artists and writers, the Council of the Bulgarian Lawyers, the Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly Dimitar Peshev, the Lawyers' Association, the Central Consistory in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Physicians' Union, as well as the Holy Synod,⁹—48,000 Jews from old Bulgaria were not deported? Is it that the Macedonian Jews were deported because they were not accepted as Bulgarian subjects but as persons who temporarily reside in Bulgarian Kingdom? All of these issues are undoubtedly and profoundly important in the formation, as well as understanding of, the larger picture of the deportation and Holocaust in Macedonia itself.

What strikes the most in all these matters is definitely the question: Why the phase of deportation of Macedonian Jews would present a singular event? Finally, how did the Bulgarian officials legally prepare and juridically justify the deportation of Macedonian Jews, which in turn led to the *zone outside the Law*?¹⁰ Definitely, this issue presupposes dealing with the very complex question about the treatment of Macedonian Jews as non-Bulgarian subjects, which will reveal itself as the most crucial one for their deportation in March 1943. The then Minister of Interior Affairs from the Bulgarian

Bulgarian Film Archive, Sofia, and is placed as well in the Cinemetheque of Macedonia, Skopje in the Fund: Kino pregled, Bugarsko delo, No. 16/14.

⁸Петко Добчев, *Антиеврејското законодателство и неговото преодолјаване (1942-1945)*, Сборник нормативни актове с изследване от Проф. Д-р Димитър Добчев (София: Фења, 2010), 21-25.

⁹See the “Review of Events in Bulgaria Relating to the Jewish Question During 1943” in: *The Power of Civil Society in a Time of Genocide: Proceedings of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the Rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria 1940-1944*, eds. Albena Taneva and Ivanka Gezenko (Sofia: The Sofia University Center for Jewish Studies, 2005), 113-185.

¹⁰For this issue, please see: Michael Hardt and Antonio, Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

government, Peter Gabrovski, has formulated it in the following manner: “There had been no way to save the Macedonian [and the Thracian] Jews, because... they were not Bulgarian citizens.”¹¹ This statement raises up a very important question, that is: Whose citizens were the Jews deported from Macedonia from the Kingdom of Bulgaria? The answer itself inevitably demands that we are faced with a juxtaposition of the meaning attached to the documents and the pure historical truth attached to the deportation of Macedonian Jews.

Ever since the first days of the occupation of Macedonia in April 1941, the Bulgarian authorities implemented the Law for Protection of the Nation:¹²

“I approved the enforcement of the Law. The initiative came from the Chair of the Parliament, Bogdan Filov. He indicated to me several times the necessity of this Law, as well as the motive, because of Bulgaria’s position and Germany’s aggression, that in this sense we have to create such a Law as a measure against the Jews. In the meantime, Italy would define the restrictions against the Jews and will begin their implementation. After that we opened this project. This is the way the Law was created. This Law was prepared by the Council of Ministers, and not by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Therefore, by virtue of several Ministries, several Ordinances were created, as well as the Law for One-time Taxation of the Jews.”¹³

The second part of the 1941 Law is related to the defining, and with this the regulation of the general restrictions for the Jews in connection to their civic status, respectively their exclusion as Bulgarian citizens in the newly liberated territory of Macedonia from the Kingdom of Bulgaria, and

¹¹DPG.

¹² Created by the then Bulgarian fascist government under the rule of Bogdan Filov, adopted on 21 January 1941, through Decree No. 3 issued by King Boris III, and the same was voted by the Bulgarian Parliament, published in *State Gazette* on 23 January 1941.

¹³DPG.

then the restrictions related to their place of living, their property and professional, economic and cultural activity. Chapter II, Article 21 states: “Persons of Jewish descend cannot be accepted for Bulgarian Citizens.”¹⁴ The Jews from Macedonia, affected by this restriction pertaining to their ambiguous civic status, sent a Missive to the Central Consistory of the Jews in Bulgaria and from this institutional body they sought advocacy before the responsible authorities in order to solve their citizenship issue. This document represents a request that they be treated as Bulgarian citizens. In the Missive, the Jews from Macedonia refer to a special ordinance by the Council of Ministers with which the citizenship of the inhabitants in the newly liberated territories during 1941 is being regulated, and with which the citizenship of all the inhabitants is being confirmed, excluding the Jews. They anxiously ask whether this question will be dealt with in addition:

“This is why today I am turning to you with the request that this issue be dealt with once again on the first Consistory meeting, so that we know what should be done. I find it is absolutely necessary to take measures with the most competent authorities in the sense of legal norms so that the Jews from Macedonia be recognized as Bulgarian citizens, born in this region, or stuck there after the Liberation, since they have lived there ever since (...)”¹⁵

The question about the unrecognized legitimate civic status of the Jews from Macedonia as Bulgarian citizens in the newly liberated territory of Bulgaria, opposes the dazzling example of the Declarations for One-time Taxation by the Tax Administration Office from 1941, which *discloses their treatment as Bulgarian citizens in Macedonia* from the Kingdom of Bulgaria, at the very same time when the 1941 Law was already adopted and enforced in Macedonia. According to the communication sent by the Head of the District Tax Administration to the Head of Taxations in Skopje on 23

¹⁴ The Law for Protection of the Nation [*Законъ за защита на нацията*, Държавен вестникъ, бр. 16, отъ 23.01.1941, София], Archives of Yad Vashem, R.G.0.13, f.n. 28, p. 8.

¹⁵ *TJM.*, Vol. I, n. 30, 388.

September 1942, the number of enrolled declarations for one-time taxation is 1, 560.¹⁶ Let us clarify.

In accordance with the Law for One-time Taxation of the Property of Individuals from Jewish Descent from 13 July 1941,¹⁷ and according to Article 4 pertaining to the taxation,¹⁸ Macedonian Jews had to pay a one-time taxation. This concerns the taxation of objects from all kinds of immovable property in the Declaration Model Number 14 according to Paragraph 34. Article 1 underlines:

“All properties, no matter what their kind, belonging to individuals of Jewish descent are being taxed with one-time taxation amounting to 20% of their overall pure value for the means up to 3.000.000 Levs and 25% for the means over 3.000.000 Levs, excluding the properties whose general value does not surpass 200.000 Levs.”¹⁹

On the basis of the aforementioned and in relation with the treatment of the Macedonian Jews as Bulgarian citizens of Macedonia, we point out the document called Declaration for One-time Taxation from the Tax Administration Office, entered in the Bulgarian administration in Macedonia under serial number 1422, from 14 August 1941. The Declaration is about the person Samuel Solomon Beyakor,²⁰ from Skopje, born in Bitola on 15 September 1904, *citizen: Bulgarian*, with place of living in Skopje, Street 83, No. 4, married to Matilda, with four children at the age of 13, 11, 5 and 1 year-old, occupation: small-scale merchant.²¹

¹⁶*Ibid.*, n. 12, pp. 366.

¹⁷ Approved with the King's Decree No. 43, *State Gazette*, No. 151, from 14 July 1941.

¹⁸ In reality, it represents the implementation of Article 26 from the 1941 Law, Number 36 in *State Gazette* from 17 February 1941.

¹⁹V. Veskovic-Vangeli, “Treblinka,” in: *JMHHTC*, 54.

²⁰ This original document and the remainder of the preserved Declarations are stored in the Archive of the Memorial Center of Holocaust of the Jews from Macedonia; no signature.

²¹ Later on, in the deportation lists of German provenance, from March 1943, we read that the family Beyakor was deported to Treblinka in 1943, and this family is listed under the following numbers: Beyakor Samuel Solomon under no. 3751, Beyakor Matilda Samuel, no. 3752, and their four children: Lili, no. 3753, Salomon, no. 3754, Allegra, no. 3755 and Luca, no. 3756. *Register of the Jews Deported from Macedonia [Liste personen Jüdischer*

On 5 June 1942, the Ministry of Justice in Sofia, on the basis of the Council of Ministers' decision and on the basis of Article 1 of the Law on the Prompt Solving of the Urgent Matters in the Newly Liberated Lands, voted the New Ordinance on the Citizenship in the Newly Liberated Lands during 1941, in which Article 4 states that: "This Ordinance does not refer to persons of Jewish descent."²² In reality this 1942 Ordinance represents a specification of Article 21 from the 1941 Law, which stated: "Individuals of Jewish descent cannot be accepted as Bulgarian citizens." It is quite notable that in relation to this old-and-new 1942 Ordinance, it is once again neither defined nor clarified whose citizens are the Jews from Macedonia from the Kingdom of Bulgaria.

In the course of the linear perspective of the events that took place in 1942 within the ambiguous treatment of Macedonian Jews, I would suggest a set of euphemisms that appear in Bulgarian documents where the civic status of Macedonian Jews reveals a different administrative context. The Jews from Vardar Macedonia are registered and targeted as: non-Bulgarian citizens, persons residing on the territory of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, foreigners, subjects with former Yugoslav citizenship, Jews from new Bulgaria, as well as persons with Jewish nationality, or Israelites. It is in this context that we find the document from 16 August 1942 pertaining to the obligation of the Jews to pay a monthly fee on the basis of their sojourning in Bulgarian territories, i.e., in Macedonia.²³ The special emphasis in this document comes down to the treatment of the Jews as individuals that *sojourn*, and not individuals living in Macedonia. In the document from 19 August 1942 related to the correspondence between the Skopje Jewish Municipality and the Sofia Central Consistory,²⁴ it is stated that the Jews had

herkunft aus dem konzentrationslager Skopje, März, 1943], Archives of Yad Vashem, R.G. 37, 158.

²² DARM, F. KEP, n. 24, original in Bulgarian.

²³In reality this document represents an information that the Central Jewish Consistory in Sofia has sent to the Jewish Council in Skopje upon its request to the Chief of Police for releasing the Jews from the monthly fee on the basis of their sojourning on Bulgarian territories. JIM, no signature, original in Bulgarian.

²⁴In the document from 6 February 1943, Ivan Zahariev, the Delegate of the Department for Jewish Affairs in Skopje sends information to the Major of the City of Skopje about the new taxes for the Jews, JIM, no signature, original in Bulgarian.

to pay police taxes for their sojourning as *foreigners*, i.e. as *former citizens of Yugoslavia*, i.e. as *foreign citizens*.²⁵

In accordance with the Ordinance for the Citizenship published in *State Gazette* No. 124/1942, individuals of Jewish descent are excluded from the decisions under this Ordinance, due to which they are enlisted as foreign citizens in the Police District Office—former Yugoslav citizens. On the basis of the specific police statues and ordinances they had to pay each month a 250 Levs police tax for the continuation of the right to sojourn on the territory of the Kingdom, i.e., in the newly liberated territory of Macedonia from the Bulgarian Kingdom. In accordance with the Ordinance of the Police District Office, Macedonian Jews were obliged to go and register in the police precincts as: former Yugoslav citizens, since they cannot acquire Bulgarian citizenship. The following document clarifies that:

“This registration is one that is separate from the one passed after Model No. 1 according to Article 16 from the Law for Protection of the Nation. This is why all Jews in Skopje, as well as in other places, are already registered as former Yugoslav citizens.”²⁶

Yet, the treatment of Macedonian Jews as former Yugoslav citizens in 1942 remains indistinguishable for the representatives of the Bulgarian administration in Macedonia and therefore they are asking for a strict clarification about whose citizens are the Jews in the newly liberated territory of Macedonia from the Kingdom of Bulgaria. In this context, Georgi Djambazov, the delegate of the Jewish Commissariat, responsible for the Jewish community in Bitola, on 4 December 1942 sent an *Inquiry* to the

²⁵In the document from 8 February 1943, Ivan Zahariev requests a firm stand from the Commissariat for Jewish Questions in relation to the detailed instructions about the monthly police fee on the basis of their sojourning on Bulgarian territories. JIM, no signature.

²⁶In the remaining part of the document we read: “Registration is done in the following manner: for each person (male or female) over 14 y.o., one written Request is filled in (after a special model), obtained from the police office, and two Data models. To these models, each individual adds 6 pictures. Taxes are as follows: each registered individual over 14 y.o pays once and forever 50 Levs as registration tax according to Article 66 (this tax is paid through payment form via the Bulgarian National Bank and is attached to the Request). Overmore, each individual over 20 y.o.. pays every single month 227 Levs (as a tax for the temporary residence certificate in the country).“ Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, no signature.

director of the Police in Bitola.²⁷ In this document, he recalls the new 1942 Ordinance for Citizenship in the newly liberated countries in 1941, i.e., to the Article 4, with which it is underlined that the Ordinance does not refer to persons of Jewish descent. In reality it excludes the Macedonian Jews to acquire from Bulgarian citizenship, but on the other hand it does not clarify what their citizenship is. He firmly asks:

“Please make proceedings to the competent places, Jews encountered when the liberation happened and who want to become Bulgarian citizens either receive as such, or to determine their exact citizenship position.”²⁸

When pursuing the same line, but supplemented by a comparative focus on this issue, one could observe the same contradiction by way of the two significant examples: the special Identity Cards, issued by Skopje’s Local Administration of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, where under citizenship status it was written “former Yugoslav,”²⁹ and the Police register from 1942.³⁰ ID cards and police registers contain almost identical data: the first and second name of the person, color of eyes, characteristics of the nose and face, profession, birth date, place of birth, place of living, marital status, nation: Jewish, citizenship: former Yugoslav, and a visual portrait of the person (a picture). Let me illustrate it by following the concrete documented examples:

1. ID card, issued by Local Administration of Kingdom of Bulgaria, in Skopje; name Avram [second name is non-readable], height: medium, eyes: black, nose: normal, face: white; profession:

²⁷Депортирането на Евреите от Вардарска Македонија (...), Документи от българските архиви, съст.Надя Данова и Румен Аврамов (София: ОИ, 2013), док. п. 141, 347-8. Hereafter abbreviated ДЕВМ.

²⁸“Article 4: All Yugoslav and Greek citizens of non-Bulgarian descent, who as of the day of the introduction of this Ordinance have a place of living in the liberated countries during 1941 become Bulgarian citizen, excluding cases when they express their wish until 1 April 1943 to preserve their hitherto citizenship or to acquire foreign citizenship and by the same term leave the frontiers of the Kingdom.” DARM, Fund: KEP, no. 24, original in Bulgarian.

²⁹ Identity card, Archives of Yad Vashem, 0.13/26.

³⁰ Only three of these registers survived the war and are housed in the Archives of Yad Vashem. One of them is exposed within the permanent exhibition at the Museum of Yad Vashem. Please see copy in: Nancy Hartman, “The Holocaust in Macedonia”, in: *ЖМНТС*, 526.

student; birth date: 19.12.1926, born in Skopje, not married, citizenship: former Yugoslav, nationality: Jewish. Portrait of the person.

And:

2. Police register: issued on date: 01.02.1942; name, surname: Yakov Pardo, born on 02.04.1927, in Bitola; nationality: Jewish, religion: Israelite; not married; personal characteristics: height: medium, eyes: brown, hair: blond, address of living (Bitola). Portrait of the person.

The question at hand is: What would be the difference between the ID card and the Police Registry's document? Is there any difference between these documents? Taking into consideration they both present certain examples of various forms to stigmatize and target the Jews in Macedonia in order to implement the executive antisemitic politics, which finally led to their deportation—obviously there is no difference between these two documents in connection to their purpose. The special ID cards that were given to Macedonian Jews, where under citizenship status it was written: former Yugoslav, neither say nor explain anything about their legal citizenship status. These ID cards neither legitimize nor justify their citizenship status. Their status refers only to their theological recognition: Jews, and the place: from new Bulgaria, i.e., from Macedonia. We even do not read: they “sojourn”. It only refers to the registration of the Macedonian Jews. And the registration of the Macedonian Jews as former Yugoslav is just another euphemism for the deportation.³¹

In a comparative context, the same appears as a more obvious and clarified case through the example of the Report from 4 February 1943 that Alexander Belev, the Head of the Commissariat for Jewish Questions has sent to Petar Gabrovski, Minister of Interior in order to inform him about the meeting with his German colleague, **SS-Hauptscharführer Theodor Dannecker** about the details regarding the deportation—where nowhere one

³¹ As for the deportation, the **Commissariat for Jewish Questions took all measures for organizing and conducting the deportation in March 1943.**

could read that they are former Yugoslav citizens in the Bulgarian newly liberated Vardar Macedonia. Let me repeat once again, their status refers only to their theological recognition: Jews.

The historical facts pertaining to the German-Bulgarian alliance, the new territorial surroundings after Germany invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, when Yugoslavia ceased to exist as a whole, the entry of the Bulgarian Army—or the so-called Liberation Army—in Macedonia on 18 April 1941, the occupation of Macedonia by Bulgaria and the relegation of the Vardar portion of Macedonia to the Kingdom of Bulgaria—all of these have defined the new geostrategic, political and administrative position of Macedonia. More precisely, the new geostrategic, political and administrative position of Macedonia was defined by the accomplishment of the absolute Bulgarian sovereignty. Through the lens of the following statement, the Minister of Interior Affairs Peter Gabrovski will explain:

“To annex Macedonia and Thrace to Bulgaria or to leave them under German occupation? Throughout its history, Bulgaria always had tendencies for those countries and in that context Bulgaria was interested in their freedom. These territories are populated with Bulgarians. Therefore, taking in consideration the new position of Bulgaria, Bulgaria could not allow itself to leave them under foreign, German power. Annexation of those territories implies that Bulgaria fulfilled one great promise towards them and towards the Bulgarian nation.”³²

It is along with these lines that the first compromise Bulgaria had to make with the aim to save itself from German occupation and not enter a war with Germany becomes obvious. It is related to the geostrategic implications, regaining Macedonia to the Kingdom of Bulgaria. This is one thing. The second compromise that Bulgaria made with Germany is related to the implementation, and further equally so to the realization of the Final Solution in Macedonia, or as Gabrovski will explain in his defense: this compromise “was the smallest evil.”³³

³²*DPG.*

³³*Ibid.*

The aforementioned document brings into the forefront the fact that Bulgaria intended to present the occupation of Macedonia as annexation. Allow me to repeat once again, that for Bulgaria it presented a historical realization of its historical “rights” for historical liberation of its “national” territories lost in the Second Balkan War and World War I. Macedonia once again became a Bulgarian territory where the Bulgarian national sovereignty reigned as absolute one. “Macedonian regionalism was absolutely neglected by Bulgaria,” thoughtfully concludes Todor Chepreganov.³⁴ It is in this context that Rumén Avramov rightfully underscores that “the symbols and attributes of the Bulgarian state are persistently imposed (for example, stamps), within which the bureaucratic language is quickly and persistently accepted [...]”³⁵ Later, the Deportation Agreement from 22 February 1943 will prove itself as the most suitable example within that sovereignty. Therefore, whose citizens were the Jews deported from Macedonia from the Bulgarian Kingdom?

The Bulgarian Parliament on its Third regular session on 27 March 1942 voted the Law with which the Council of Ministers is being given the authority in order to take all needed measures to determine the Jewish question and related matters. Precisely, the Council of Ministers gained the authority to supplement the 1941 Law with new orders and decisions and be consequently voted, as well as legitimized by the National Assembly, according to Article 2 from the Law.³⁶ The New 1942 Ordinance on the Citizenship in the Newly Liberated Lands during 1941, voted by the Ministry of Justice in Sofia, on the basis of the Council of Ministers’ decision, presents an unprecedented example of how the parliamentary power is

³⁴Todor Chepreganov further explains: “Immediately after the occupation, Bulgaria introduced the Bulgarian legal, political, juridical, administrative, educational, as well as police system. Since Bulgaria did not believe in the commitment of Macedonian people towards the Bulgarian cause, it sent its confidants who have already proven their nationalistic and ideological profile.” See: Тодор Чепреганов, „Историја на македонскиот народ: 1941-2009“, in *Македонија, милениумски културно-историски факти*, ред. П. Кузман, Е. Димитрова, Ј. Донеv, том 4 (Скопје: Медиа Принт Македонија/Универзитет Евро-Балкан), 2456.

³⁵Румен Аврамов, „Четейки архивите на депортацијата“, in: *ДЕВМ*, 14.

³⁶Law on the Prompt Solving of the Urgent Matters in the Newly Liberated Countries during 1941 [Закон за бързо урждане на неотложни въпроси в новоприсъединените през 1941 г. земи], issued on 30 March 1942 in Sofia, published on 2 April, 1942. See: *ДЕВМ*, 469-70.

dislocated and run by the ministerial one. The stenographic record from the discussion held in the Bulgarian Parliament on 26 March 1943 (when the two train transports with Macedonian Jews were already on their way to Treblinka!) undoubtedly clarifies that the National Assembly neither discussed nor legitimized the 1942 new Ordinance about banishing Macedonian Jews from Bulgarian citizenship. Dr. Petko Staynov discusses that according to the Law for Bulgarian Citizenship and the international Law for annexed territories, to which Bulgaria was a signatory and was obliged to exercise it, and that according to the legal construction of the new 1942 Ordinance as such by no means Bulgaria is able to deprive Macedonian Jews from Bulgarian citizenship. He also recalls “de plein droit et sans aucune formalite” of Article 3 from the general type of minority contracts under which Bulgaria is obliged to recognize the Bulgarian citizenship legally and without any formalities to:

“Persons who belong to the category: “local citizens” with a place of living in the region that is detached from one country and is united with another, those citizens gain the citizenship rights of the country the region is united with. Accordingly, all citizens who were encountered there, by virtue of the Law, automatically become Bulgarian citizens. Due to this Law, Bulgaria is obliged to accept those citizens as Bulgarian.”³⁷

True to this, Macedonian Jews have obtained their Bulgarian citizenship status by virtue of the general Bulgarian Law, as citizens living on the territory of Macedonia, annexed by the Kingdom of Bulgaria in April 1941. More precisely, Macedonian Jews automatically received their Bulgarian citizenship. Furthermore, Dr. Staynov discusses the precise occasion when the Law for Bulgarian Citizenship strictly underlines the case under what circumstances a citizen could be deprived of Bulgarian citizenship:

³⁷ Stenographic record from XXV Session of the Parliament, Meeting No. 58, 26 March, 1943, in: *ДЕБМ*, 816. See also the Interrogatory submitted by Dr. Petko Staynov, on 22 March, 1943, to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Interior Affairs about the deportation of Thracian Jews, in: *ДЕБМ*, 806-8.

“To deprive someone of the citizenship status implies an individual category, it is always related to an individual error—that the person is unworthy and dangerous for the public security and social order of the country [the Interior must issue a decree that such a person endangers national security].”³⁸

Staynov thoughtfully underscores that the Jews are not deprived of Bulgarian citizenship, therefore, the Macedonian Jews do not lose their citizenship. Since the 1942 Ordinance does not clarify whose citizens are the Jews from Macedonia, consequently, under this Ordinance they are again Bulgarian citizens. His concluding words from the speech he delivered in front of the members of the National Assembly in relation to the deportation of Jews from the newly liberated territories as non-Bulgarian citizens, become a powerful rhetorical score for the event, as an unprecedented example of forcefully delivering domestic [Jews as Bulgarian] citizens to another country.³⁹

In view of these events, I find it compulsory to remind about Staynov’s Interrogatory sent to the Prime Minister Bogdan Filov, as well as to the Minister of Interior Affairs Peter Gabrovski, from 22 March 1943. Here we find again his criticisms against depriving the citizenship status of the Jews from the newly liberated territories and their deportation by force to a foreign power. Respectfully, he asks:

“Given that it is going to be decided that the territories of Thrace and Macedonia are an integral part of the Bulgarian state and that, on more than one occasion, the National Assembly has considered them to be such, there is reason to wonder whether certain paragraphs of the decree concerning citizenship in the new territories are in conformity with international law: the intent of these paragraphs seems to be to take away the right to choose either Bulgarian citizenship or foreign citizenship from individuals living in these territories and residing there permanently as local citizens, who in this case, for example, happen to be persons of Jewish origin living

³⁸*ДЕВМ*, 816-18.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 819-820.

in these territories. Would you please tell me of what country these people are citizens, according to this decree?”⁴⁰

In his defense in front of the People’s Court in 1945, Gabrovski explained why there had been no way to save the Macedonian [and the Thracian] Jews, because: “[...] they were not Bulgarian citizens.”⁴¹ At the same time, he who personally approved the enforcement of the Law and who most actively participated in enacting the order pertaining to the forceful “emigration” of the Macedonian Jews to the extent of their annihilation, despite of that it was him who did not respond whose citizens were the Jews deported from Macedonia as an integral part of the Bulgarian state. He—who remains one the very key persons within the implementation of the Final Solution in Macedonia, few days before his execution, in the interest of his defense, in the trial led against him for war crimes, in front of the Court, rhetorically asked: “Therefore, what is my guilt, my responsibility in relation to the Jews?”⁴² He “did not know” what his guilt was in relation to the Macedonian Jews, while sending them to a total burning in the gas chambers in Treblinka II, but has achieved a perfect insight in the “value of” the successful realization of the Final Solution of the Jews from Macedonia from the Kingdom of Bulgaria. At the core of the antisemitic policies of the then Bulgarian government in relation to Macedonian Jews and their deportation and annihilation, obviously presented neither the zone of the law, nor the so-called legal nature of the Ordinance for citizenship in the liberated countries from 1941, but the compromise—let me remind you once again—“that Bulgaria had to make with Germany—[which] was the solution of the Jewish question”—as “the smallest evil”.⁴³ I find it compulsory to add—the compromise about the Jews from Macedonia of the Kingdom of Bulgaria to Treblinka II. And, so it happened, with three railroad transports on 22, 25 and 29 March 1943.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness. Why Bulgaria’s Jews Survived the Holocaust*, A collection of texts with commentary by T. Todorov, trans. by Arthur Denner (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 83.

⁴¹ *DPG*.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Bogdan Filov, in his diary entries and in relation to the banishing of the Jews from the newly liberated lands, in this case—Macedonia, will note: “They are leaving in a

The fact is that the manipulation of the Macedonian Jews was not only connected with their citizenship, their lives, but was equally connected to their deaths as well.⁴⁵ Again, the question of Gabrovski: “Therefore, what is my guilt, my responsibility in relation to the Jews?”—compulsorily presents “the very destruction of the fact” and compulsorily resides in the zone of negationism. But I shall take the advantage to leave my last words, which in reality could be found as the very opening words of the astonishing book *The Historiographic Perversion* by Mark Nichanian on genocide as denial:

“Genocide is not a fact. Genocide is not a fact because it is the very destruction of the fact, of the notion of fact, of the factuality of fact.”⁴⁶

few days..., to Poland.” Богдан Филов, *Дневник* (София: Издателство на отчествения фронт, 1990), 560.

⁴⁵On this question, see in: Sofija Grandakovska, “On Holocaust Photography”, in: *JMHTC*, 646-671.

⁴⁶ Marc Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, translated and afterword by Gil Anidjar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1.

Sofija GRANDAKOVSKA

WHOSE CITIZENS WERE THE JEWS DEPORTED FROM
MACEDONIA?

-S U M M A R Y-

What constitutes the singularity of the Macedonian Holocaust through its particular phase of deportation? And what are the core characteristics that allow us, as well as equally oblige us, to speak about this event as a singular one? These are the founding questions that constitute the research linear perspective of this text. Following a set of archival documents concerning the deprivation of Macedonian Jews of their Bulgarian citizenship, which later proved to become crucial for their deportation to the Treblinka death camp in March 1943, I discuss the issue of how did the Bulgarian officials legally prepare and juridically justify the deportation of Macedonian Jews, which in turn led to the zone outside the Law.