

Preparatory Document

Excerpt from the documentary book “The Power of Civil Society in a Time of Genocide. Proceedings of the Holy Synod of Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the Rescue of Jews in Bulgaria 1940-1944” Taneva, Albena and Vanya Gezenko, ed. Sofia University Publishing House, Sofia, 2005 in:

http://jews.archives.bg/jews/uploaded_files/The_Power_Of_Civil_Society_In_A_Time_Of_Genocide.pdf

Pages 57-58

October, 1940: Document# 2

Metropolitan Paisiy of Vratza:

"First of all, the Jewish Consistory sent the Holy Synod a letter, which contains a request for the protection of this minority, currently appealing to the Holy Synod for justice. There is also a second request on the part of the Christian Jews, those, who have abandoned the Jewish religion. ...

... In reality, there is no other question for us, except the following: "Do we have a duty, as pastors of the Church of Christ, at any given occasion to preach the Gospel? It is clear, that we do. And more - do we have to, at all times, act according to the commands of the Holy Gospel and, on every single occasion, to demand that the principles of the Christian Doctrine be the leading principles? It is obvious that no one amongst us can deny this. I mentioned serving the people through the Church. I am convinced that we would serve our people best by continually and persistently holding up the evangelical principles - to dedicate ourselves more to God, than to humans. This way we would protect not only the temporary, but also the eternal interests of the people. Because this holds true in this case, we have a commitment to make our voices heard and to forewarn the government not to uproot the people from the solid grounds of the godly principles of the Holy Christian Gospel. We have been asked to take a stand on the Bill for the Defense of the Nation entered in the National Assembly. Particularly, on the unusual measures, which exclude an ethnic and religious minority from certain earthly blessings, taken by other citizens for granted. The nation has a duty to pursue criminals and can always do that, but to pursue and persecute its own servants only because they are Jewish, I think, contradicts justice and the Christian Gospel. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church would commit an act of high

patriotism if it makes its voice heard and asks the government and the National Assembly to make changes in the provisions of the Bill, which concern the Jews as an ethnic minority. The aims this Bill to keep and protect the Bulgarian nation from foreign threats can be accomplished without resorting to extraordinary measures against separate ethnic groups, such as the Jewish minority."

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Document #5

EXCERPTS FROM MINUTES #14 OF THE SESSION ON 19 NOVEMBER 1940 OF THE ALL-MEMBER MEETING OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ON HEARING THE REPORT OF THE DELEGATION THAT HELD MEETINGS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING THE PROPOSED BILL FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE NATION

Today, on the nineteenth day of the month of November (6 November by the old Julian calendar), of the year nineteen hundred forty, the HOLY SYNOD commenced its ALL-MEMBER meeting presided over by the Chairman Pro Tern, His High Grace Neophit, Metropolitan of Vidin...

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Logofetov¹¹ invited us to his office. Firstly, we began with the Bill for the Defence of the Nation, on which the Holy Synod felt it necessary to prepare a statement, which was to be handed to the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly. We told him that we did not know whether the protocol allowed us to hand him a copy of the statement at the present time, before we had deposited the statement with the Prime Minister, to whom it is addressed, and that we found it better to verbally present its contents. The Speaker of the National Assembly said: "You can leave with me the statement even before it is handed to the Prime Minister." Afterwards, we told him in detail the things, of which we spoke here during the discussions, concerning the contents of the Bill. He said that his opinion is completely identical to that of the Holy Synod and that it would be a mistake if the Church did not declare its position on this issue. This law would be a short-lived fruit of the spirit of modern times; as the situation currently stands, there is no doubt that the Bill will pass in the Chamber; however, for how long this law will be in power no one knows. Also, no

one knows whether the circumstances will not change so that we would be asking for help those, whom we are persecuting now. Yet, we are a small country, a small nation, and sometimes it becomes necessary for us to comply with the wishes of others around us. ...

... We explained what we think: that it is in the Bulgarian people's long-term interest not to lose their identity, mainly their faith, which is based on their culture; as far as the question of Jews and the danger they pose, 1, 10 or 15 years ago nobody even thought that restricting them would be a long-term interest of any kind for the Bulgarian people. Not only now, but also in many other cases, the Church has felt a duty to carry out a policy, which has not been approved by the government in times when it has defended our short-term "real" interests. By long-term interests we mean those that rest upon the eternal principles presented by the Gospel. After that we brought to his attention the fact that we consider the defense of the nation promised by the current Bill to be inadequate...