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A stylized map of Southeast Europe is shown in the top left corner, with red outlines on a light blue background. The map highlights the region of Southeast Europe, including countries like Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania.

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The Second World War in Historiography and Public Debate

Sabine Rutar (Guest Editor)

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Spotlight

**Academic Freedom in Danger.
Fact Files on the 'CEU Affair'**

**DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG**

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NADÈGE RAGARU

Nationalization through Internationalization. Writing, Remembering, and Commemorating the Holocaust in Macedonia and Bulgaria after 1989

Abstract. The author analyses the scholarship, remembrance, and commemoration of the Holocaust in Macedonia and Bulgaria after 1989. She re-examines interpretive schisms between former communists and anticommunists, explores changes in one of the major *lieux de mémoire* in Bulgaria, the 'rescue' of its Jews, and juxtaposes it to the killing of those Jews who lived in Bulgarian-occupied territories. She contextualizes the Bulgarian-Macedonian controversies within European and global frameworks, looking at the process of the institutionalization of Holocaust remembrance in the two countries. She then considers the role of international Jewish communities and the effects of a European Union that since the enlargement of 2007 has been moulding a 'European' commemorative landscape from fear of yet another East-West divide. In her conclusion the author outlines an agenda for a transnational social history of anti-Jewish policies and persecutions, and looks at who might be its major actors in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

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In the historiography of the Holocaust Bulgaria's role in anti-Jewish persecution has long been primarily seen through the prism of the 'rescue of the Bulgarian Jews', those 48,000 Jewish Bulgarian citizens who were not deported to Poland during World War Two. Although not entirely absent from the literature, the rounding up and deportation of 11,343 Jews from Yugoslav and Greek territories under Bulgarian occupation was mostly glossed over, and in the few cases for which deportations were examined a clear dividing line was established between events which had taken place in the 'old kingdom' and those in occupied territories. Bulgaria's policies on the Jews were widely held to have been two-sided: protective in prewar Bulgaria, repressive in the so-called 'newly freed' territories. Scholarly discussion has revolved around pondering the contribution to Bulgaria's ultimate refusal to hand over the Bulgarian Jews to the Nazi regime made by various protagonists such as King Boris III, Dimităr Pešev, the Orthodox Church, and ordinary citizens.

In recent years, however, mainstream analysis of Bulgaria's actions during wartime has come under increasing criticism. Indeed, fierce controversies over both the understanding and commemoration of the past have set in opposition professional and amateur historians, descendants of Holocaust survivors and Jews of Balkan origin who settled in Israel or the United States, as well as politicians. Meanwhile, certain scholars, Bulgarian and foreign, have suggested that 'survival' might be a more apt term than 'rescue' to describe the fate of the Bulgarian Jews.¹ The perspective adopted in this article is slightly different. Instead of attempting to establish one more hierarchy of merits—for the non-deportation of the Bulgarian Jews, and of responsibilities for their deportation from Bulgarian-held Yugoslav and Greek territories—I am more interested in the social production of knowledge. My goal is to shed light on how the comprehension, commemoration, and remembrance of those events have been affected by the changing geopolitics of studies of the past, and by evolving trends in the presence of the Holocaust at a global level.

The territorial delimitation of the investigation to the Yugoslav successor state Macedonia and to Bulgaria reflects these concerns. Over the past two decades historians dealing with Southeastern Europe have often lamented those states' attempts to 'nationalize the past' by claiming ownership and by promoting a mainstream national reading of events. Many historians have purported to deconstruct national narratives and to offer a more nuanced view of social and identity-related processes. In their consideration of where and how historical studies are produced, however, most scholars tend to espouse those very national frames the limits of which they themselves have pinpointed. Undoubtedly it is usual for the role of foreign scholars in historiographical renewal to be emphasized, often along with a tendency to contrast local bias with the supposedly broader comparative and reflexive outlook of foreign observers. Nevertheless, centring analysis on that dichotomy serves only to confirm the salience of the national framework.

The history and historiography of both Bulgaria and Macedonia are intertwined in a number of ways. During World War Two most of the Vardar *banovina*—an administrative unit of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia—was occupied by Bulgaria, which was understood in Sofia to be a step towards territorial re-unification. It was built upon an imagining, formed in the nineteenth century, of a Bulgarian nation that claimed the Slavic majority of Vardar Macedonia as ethnically Bulgarian. Both that *longue durée* shaping of the 'Macedonian question' and the wartime regime of occupation suggest the need to move beyond

¹ Rumen Avramov, 'Spasenie' i padenie. Mikroekonomika na dăržavnija antisemitizăm v Bălgarija, 1940-1944 g., Sofia 2012. In 1995, David Koen, once a prominent representative of socialist historiography, already had preferred the notion of 'survival' to the conventional 'rescue', cf. David Koen, ed, Oceljavaneto. Sbornik ot dokumenti 1940-1944, Sofia 1995.

the national boundaries of the present and in parallel to study the retelling of the past as it is fabricated in both lands.² The adoption of a twinned approach is all the more warranted because Macedonian and Bulgarian historians have long engaged in veiled contention, every historical work being intended as a response to publications from the neighbours.

There is one more reason why the analytical framework must be extended beyond the confines of the nation state. At the risk of seeming obvious, we may say that nowhere has the development of Holocaust historiography been a purely domestic matter. Awareness of the Holocaust has evolved through changing combinations of local, regional, and international configurations. The assumption underpinning the present article is not that national lenses should be done away with. Rather, I shall argue that offering a detailed analysis of what purports to be 'national historiographies' requires examination of how national, European, and broader international entanglements have evolved, and how this evolution has affected the ways in which anti-Jewish persecution has been chronicled and remembered. Of particular significance are those moments when the divergent motion of these tectonic plates has created debate and transformed our knowledge of the past.

Against that backdrop this article shows that the plight of the Jews — a source of intermittent scholarly and public interest in socialist Macedonia and Bulgaria³ — gradually moved centre stage after 1989 as a result of a combination of domestic and international processes. Domestically, the renewed visibility of the Holocaust came about because competitive visions of both the past and the future crystallized around World War Two. In the insecure environment created by the ending of the Cold War, which brought with it border changes and drastic political reforms, the design of competitive memorial geographies was used to cement rival senses of community and to achieve political recognition. Thereby, Holocaust scholarship turned into an arena where battles over ethnocultural belonging and party allegiances were waged by proxy. Meanwhile, the event of the Holocaust itself was 'nationalized', in that it was annexed to competing

² Recent developments in the Greek historiography of the Holocaust have not been included in this 'state of the art' summary for two reasons. The first is my lack of the required language skill; the second is derived from my awareness that the burgeoning of Holocaust research in Greece has focused primarily on events in Athens and Thessaloniki. A more limited body of work — chiefly by Greek historian Vasilis Ritzaleos — has addressed the study of the Bulgarian-occupied Greek territories. Significantly, anti-Jewish persecutions have taken an ancillary place in Bulgarian-Greek disputes over history. Cf. Vasilis Ritzaleos, *Oi Evraikes koinotites stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai tin Thraki apo ta mesa tou dekatou enatou aiona mehri ton Deftero Pagkosmio Polemo*, PhD thesis in history, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki 2006.

³ The present article forms a dyad with a paper on Holocaust historiography in socialist Yugoslav Macedonia and Bulgaria titled *Bordering the Past. The Elusive Presences of the Holocaust in Socialist Macedonia and Socialist Bulgaria*, which is due to appear in *Südost-Forschungen* 76 (2017).

national narratives in which the predicament of the Jews served as an allegory of national suffering and heroism.

However, those competitive efforts to craft new historical narratives cannot be studied in isolation from the growing transnationalization of the writing and remembrance of the Holocaust. Nor can they be separated from the increasing role of the Holocaust as a 'foundational past'⁴ both in the West and in other parts of the world. They are equally bound up with the ever greater involvement of European institutions in the field of history and memory, and with the emergence of a mosaic of 'memory entrepreneurs' who wish to endow their reading of the past with official authority. Ultimately therefore, the 'nationalization' and 'internationalization' of the past should be seen not as opposite processes but rather as constantly running in parallel and functioning in tandem. After 1989, public actors in Macedonia and Bulgaria attempted to promote a national reading of Jewish wartime experiences precisely through the utilization of international arenas and sources of legitimacy. To grasp the specificity of each historiographical moment therefore, a patient reconstruction of circulation routes—and derailments—must be undertaken.

The Renewal of Holocaust Scholarship in Bulgaria and Macedonia. Shaping Identity and Party Cleavages by Proxy

It is a well known rule that every new present seeks an 'inspirational past'.⁵ In 1991 Macedonia, until then a republic of the Yugoslav federation, faced painful external and domestic challenges after it was propelled into statehood by Yugoslavia's collapse. The path to democracy of Bulgaria was not linear either, for the former communists won the first free elections in 1990 and the ultimate demise of the *ancien régime* demanded a new round of popular protests in early 1997. In both countries, scores were settled concerning both the present and the future, by making opposing claims about the past. Coincidentally, the Holocaust was drawn into disputes that centred on fascism, collaboration and resistance during wartime, as well as about the 'true nature' of socialism, although the timetables were slightly different. In post-Yugoslav Macedonia a highly insecure new state sought forms of continuity beyond political breaks. The de-Yugoslavization of the historical narrative and the reshuffling of key motives in the representation of the Holocaust began in Macedonia much later

⁴ Alon Confino, *Foundational Pasts. The Holocaust as Historical Understanding*, Cambridge 2011.

⁵ Anna Di Lellio / Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, *The Legendary Commander. The Construction of an Albanian Master-Narrative in Post-War Kosovo*, *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2006), 513-529, 518.

than in Bulgaria, where the Holocaust was drawn into political debate from the early 1990s onwards.

*Post-Socialist Identity Affirmation in Macedonia.
Jews, the De-Yugoslavization of the Past
and the Macedonization of Heroism and Victimhood*

With the end of Yugoslavia, Macedonia was confronted with an opportunity and a challenge, that of continuing the nation-building undertaken within the Yugoslav political, institutional, and social framework. From being a peripheral component in a Federation, Macedonia was becoming the focal point of a rescaled history. Yet neither its national narrative nor its writing of the Holocaust was significantly altered following the creation of an independent state of Macedonia in 1991. The building of socialism, of Yugoslavia and of a Macedonian nation had been such closely knit processes that questioning the first two risked undermining the very architecture of the latter.⁶ With a civil war raging next door and Macedonia itself struggling to achieve international recognition as an independent state, the progressive shrinking of the space devoted to socialist Yugoslavia in Macedonia's historical narrative, and the rehabilitation of certain communist figures repressed after 1944 for alleged 'autonomist' views, initially had little impact on the deciphering of anti-Jewish policies.⁷

A policy of 'continuation by default' prevailed.⁸ As earlier, the history of relations between Jews and non-Jews was portrayed as flawless, and praise was given to the contribution of the Jews to the struggles of the Macedonian people. Anti-Jewish persecution was attributed to the fascist Bulgarian occupiers and their German patrons. The specificity of the Jewish predicament was largely silenced, the stress falling on the shared suffering of all peoples at the hands of 'the fascists'. Jewish agency was circumscribed to Jewish participation in the partisan movement. Overall, interest in the Holocaust remained scant.⁹

⁶ These identity dilemmas are depicted in Keith Brown, *Seeing Stars. Character and Identity in the Landscapes of Modern Macedonia*, *Antiquity* 68, no. 261 (1994), 784-796.

⁷ On the treatment of the Yugoslav socialist past in Macedonian historiography and textbooks in these early years, cf. Anastas Vangeli, *Facing the Yugoslav Communist Past in Contemporary Macedonia. Tales of Continuity, Nostalgia and Victimization*, *History of Communism in Europe* 1 (2010), issue on 'Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Europe', 183-205; Irena Stefoska / Darko Stojanov, *Remembering and Forgetting the SFR Yugoslavia. Historiography and History Textbooks in the Republic of Macedonia*, *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 64, no. 2 (2016), 206-225, esp. 208-214.

⁸ Tchavdar Marinov, *Historiographical Revisionism and Re-Articulation of Memory in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, *Sociétés politiques comparées. Revue européenne d'analyse des sociétés politiques* 25 (2010), 1-19, 9.

⁹ Jovan Džulibrk, *Istoriografija Holokausta u Jugoslaviji*, Beograd 2011.

There were initiatives to create better documentation of the history of Macedonia's Jewish communities, however. They came from amateur historians and the leaders of the Union of Jewish communities in Macedonia (*Evrejska zaednica vo Makedonija*). Large commemorative events were organized, first in 1992 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, and again in 1993 on the 50th anniversary of the 1943 deportations of Macedonia's Jews. Edited volumes of conference proceedings followed.¹⁰ Additionally, a number of monographs were produced, illuminating aspects of the local history and culture of the Jewish communities of Štip,¹¹ Skopje¹² and Bitola,¹³ and the Union supported the translation into Macedonian of works authored in Hebrew, Serbo-Croatian, and English by descendants of Holocaust survivors settled abroad. Most of those studies drew on a combination of personal reminiscences and published archive material.¹⁴

Beyond the narrow circles who wove the stories of the Holocaust into the communal fabric, making the Holocaust visible in the public debate has been a product of the new millennium. The key motifs in the story include socialism, the Yugoslav heritage, and the ethnogenesis of the Macedonian people. During the communist era the left wing of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) had been credited with the creation of a Macedonian nation, the partisan movement under Tito with a patriotic (and communist) struggle against foreign occupiers, and the communists with institutionalizing a Macedonian republic, language and people. Sooner or later the regime change and the founding of a Macedonian state were bound to bring about a reshuffling of visible and invisible episodes and characters featuring in the narrative. Historians close to the right wing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), founded in 1990, were keen to break away from Yugoslav continuity and from the Serbian tutelage they tied it to. They proceeded to rehabilitate first some of the socialists who had been repressed by the pro-Belgrade centralizing wing after the war, then those partisans who had favoured joining a resistance movement placed under Bulgarian leadership, and finally members of the right wing of the VMRO.¹⁵ Figures who had earlier been stigmatized for their pro-Bulgarian

¹⁰ Moritz Romano et al., eds, *Sefardski odglasi: studii i sećavanja za evreite od Makedonija*, Skopje 1995.

¹¹ Liljana Šarović et al., eds, *Štipskite evrei. Zbornik na trudovi i sećavanja. Učreñički tvorbi od fondacijata '11 mart 1943 – Štip'*, Skopje 1999.

¹² Mišo Kitanoski / Biljana Loteska, eds, *Skopskite evrei*, Skopje 2002.

¹³ Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev, *Bitolskite evrei*, Skopje 1993.

¹⁴ Aaron Assa, *Makedonija i evrejskiot narod*, Skopje 1994. The book was originally published in Israel, as *Macedonia and the Jewish People*, Jerusalem 1972.

¹⁵ Marinov, *Historiographical Revisionism*, 9; Ulf Brunnbauer, 'Pro-Serbiens' vs. 'Pro-Bulgarians'. *Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography*, *History Compass* 3,

proclivities were now reclaimed as national patriots, which provoked a sharp response from postsocialist elites and former members of the communist partisan movement.

The satellization of the Holocaust around these issues occurred after a new generation of conservative VMRO-DPMNE leaders assumed power in 2006. The national epic they promoted reallocated the values of the Macedonian liberation movement from the pro-Yugoslav and Macedonian partisans to the Macedonian and non-Yugoslav Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. Incrementally the adjective 'social' disappeared from references to a revolutionary struggle previously seen as social and national. Meanwhile invocations of 'the Macedonian people and nationalities' inherited from Yugoslav times were dropped, and the stress was placed more emphatically on the sole titular nation of Macedonia.¹⁶ Concomitant with the removal of references to 'fascism' and the reassertion of the national component of the struggles was the editing of conventional formula used to depict war criminals. In the public discourse, the German and Bulgarian 'fascists' tended to be replaced with a more exclusive evocation of the 'Bulgarian national occupiers'.

The Macedonization of heroism followed a parallel Macedonization of the suffering. As Macedonian historical speech carved out figures of victimhood—victims of the Balkan Wars from 1912-1913, international geopolitics, and communism—analogies came to be drawn between Jewish and Macedonian victimhood. In 2013, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the event, the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) organized a conference on the deportation of Macedonia's Jews. In his opening remarks before the conference, then president of MANU Vlado Kambovski emphasized the affinity between two nations which—he claimed—had suffered similarly: 'The Macedonians are the people who best understand the plight of the Jews because they had a similar historical experience, having been subjected to biological and national destruction.'¹⁷

Meanwhile, the question of the national identity of those Jews from Macedonia who had been deported acquired new symbolic value. Prior to the war, as nationals of Yugoslavia the Jews residing in the Vardar *banovina* held Yugoslav citizenship. However in June 1942, based on a decree-law on citizenship in the 'newly freed' territories they were refused Bulgarian citizenship, so that as cit-

no. 1 (2005), 1-17; Ulf Brunnbauer, *Serving the Nation. Historiography in the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) after Socialism*, *Historiein* 4, no. 4 (2003), 161-182.

¹⁶ This point has been pinpointed in Holly Case, *The Combined Legacies of the 'Jewish Question' and the 'Macedonian Question'*, in: John-Paul Himka / Joanna Beata Michlic, eds, *Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, Lincoln 2013, 352-376.

¹⁷ Vlado Kambovski, welcome speech to the Scientific Forum '70th Anniversary of Jewish Deportation from Macedonia', 12 March 2013, personal archive of the author.

izens of a country no longer in existence they were practically stateless. Legal definitions, however, could not settle questions of identity and self-identification, and achieving posthumous recognition of the national belonging of the departed Jews became a prime concern for the Macedonian authorities. A first symbolic step was taken in 2008 when officials of the Holocaust Fund of the Jews from Macedonia secured agreement that a plaque bearing the word 'Macedonia' be placed at the Treblinka memorial park. Deputy foreign minister Zoran Petrov stated on that occasion that

'for sixty-five years the Jews of Macedonia did not have a monument of their own. They were treated as Yugoslav Jews, according to the qualification adopted by the Bulgarian occupiers during the Second World War, or as Bulgarian Jews, a name that was used in the precise documentation on the basis of which the Germans accepted the 7,200 Jews from Macedonia.'¹⁸

Relief was expressed at the fact that the Jewish victims had finally come home. That is not the only way the Macedonian and Jewish pasts intersected. Their encounter also followed a path of stone and bronze. After 2006, under the leadership of prime minister Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE), a new ethnogenesis of the Macedonian people was promoted. The origins of the Macedonian nation were no longer traced back to the anti-Ottoman struggle, nor even to medieval empires, but to antique times, before the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans. In 2010 the government announced the launch of a major urban project designed to inscribe this new national narrative on the cityscape of the state capital through a profusion of statues, monuments and buildings.¹⁹ A video simulation 'Skopje 2014' was circulated that offered a visual rendering of the future past. The project for a new Memorial Center for the Holocaust of the Jews of Macedonia was included in it. A year later the Memorial Center was inaugurated in what used to be the Jewish area of Skopje, fifty metres away from the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle. As I shall show, although the two museum initiatives stemmed from different roots, the inclusion of the Holocaust remembrance institution in the state-sponsored project did much to convince Bulgarian officials that the venture pertained to a campaign aimed at challenging Bulgaria's reading of history and ethnic identities.

¹⁸ Quoted after Dimitar Čulev, Vo Treblinka im se oddolži na svoite ubieni evrei, *Utrinski vestnik*, 24 September 2008.

¹⁹ Andrew Green, Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia, *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (2013), 161-179; Jasna Koteska, Trouble with History. Skopje 2014, *ARTMargins*, 29 December 2011, at <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/655-troubles-with-history-skopje-2014>. All internet references were accessed on 24 April 2017.

Bulgaria, the Changing Heroes of the 'Rescue'. The Holocaust Caught Up in Debates between Former Communists and Anticommunists

In Bulgaria too the political changes of 1989 prompted the reconsideration of history, turning the twentieth century into a subject of political contention. In a country where opposition to the official regime had been mostly muted and where the emergence of a dissident movement was only recent, the introduction of pluralism and the building of party identities were protracted processes. The weak social bases of the new party competition and the blurred character of the impending economic reforms may have added to the acrimony of the historical battles fought between the former communist 'reds' and the anticommunist 'blues'. As testimonies about repression during socialism began to be collected and to create a loud echo, political dispute turned to the origins, causes and responsibilities for a century marred by political violence.

Two questions in particular set the coordinates of the discussion of World War Two. First, what was the nature of the Bulgarian wartime regime? Was it fascist, authoritarian, or simply monarchic? Second, was the coming to power on 9 September 1944 of a coalition dominated by the communists a state coup supported by the Red Army, or was it a popular uprising? In the early 1990s the anticommunist media, intellectuals and politicians, while denouncing the crimes of communism, adorned the pre-1944 era with all the virtues, and former political émigrés who had felt excluded from the territories of the national narrative, had a major stake in the rehabilitation of this 'golden age'. Enjoying the sort of prestige conventionally attributed to outside observers, the émigrés aspired to embody that 'other Bulgaria' — the one which had survived communism in exile. Rehabilitating the figure of the king stood high among their priorities while, as was to have been expected, the former communists castigated the monarchy with merciless judgment.²⁰

It is little wonder that the treatment of the Holocaust exerted a magnetic attraction on the various political contenders. In the last resort, deciphering the role of King Boris both in the deportation of the Jews from Vardar Macedonia, Western Thrace and Pirot, and in the non-deportation of Bulgarian Jews was likely to weigh heavily in the overall assessment not only of his rule, but, more broadly, of the monarchy. Opportunely, as early as 1990-1991 left wing intellectuals had rediscovered the breadth of Bulgarian anti-Jewish wartime policies,²¹ while anticommunist historians hastened to reclaim the 'rescue' for their own ends. The 'kudos' for the saviour of the Bulgarian Jews no longer fell

²⁰ Stefan Gruev, *Korona ot Trăni. Caruvaneto na Boris III, 1918-1943*, Sofia 1991; Hristo Bojadžiev, *Spasjavaneto na bălgarskite evrei prez Vtorata svetovna vojna*, Sofia 1991.

²¹ Liljana Dejanova, *Les manuels après la bataille: les livres d'histoire nationale en Bulgarie après 1944 et après 1989*, *Histoire de l'Éducation* 86 (2000), 171-186.

to the Communist Party and 'progressive society'. Rather, the new heroes of the day were members of the 'bourgeois' elites, they who had been repressed by the communists, and first among them was Dimităr Pešev, former vice-president of the Assembly. He had initiated a petition against the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews. Along with him the leaders of the Orthodox Church and King Boris himself were being celebrated too. As noted by Rumen Avramov, the chessboard on which these pieces were being moved had remained intact. Virtue was still a national characteristic and the individuals whose pronouncements in favour of the Jews were being celebrated were therefore persistently treated as a synecdoche of the Bulgarian people.²²

The new millennium, however, brought a rather unexpected turn of events. With the approach of Bulgaria's integration into NATO and the European Union (EU), the 'red' vs. 'blue' opposition began to be eroded. In its stead a new generation of populist leaders and catch-all parties appeared that undertook to bolster national pride.²³ Incrementally a national—and nationalist—consensus emerged to 'rescue the trope of the rescue', which had long proved its worth as a diplomatic asset. Although the intellectuals, historians, and political actors associated with both right and left wings continued to disagree about the relative valorousness of the various war protagonists, they did agree on a lowest common denominator, essentially by fusing the 'red' and 'blue' lists of the virtuous.

A pivotal moment in that convergence was the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the events of March 1943. The ceremonies culminated in the unanimous adoption of a parliamentary resolution denying any Bulgarian state responsibility in the deportations. The official statement, which marked a regression from the declaration engraved on a commemorative plaque next to the Assembly in 1999 claimed that

'an objective evaluation of the historic events today could not ignore the fact of the 11,343 Jews deported from northern Greece and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which were at that time under German jurisdiction. We denounce this criminal act, undertaken by Hitler's commandment, and express our regrets for the fact that the local Bulgarian administration was not in a position to prevent this act.'²⁴

In the last resort, after 1989 in Bulgaria as in Macedonia, strategies of ethno-cultural and political affirmation coalesced around the retelling of World War

²² Avramov, *Spasenie i padenie*, 11-31.

²³ On this convergence, cf. Liljana Dejanova, *The Non-Saved Jews. Recent Controversies and Political Uses in the Bulgarian Public Space*, in: Nadège Ragaru, ed, *La Shoah en Europe du Sud-Est. Les Juifs en Bulgarie et dans les terres sous administration bulgare (1941-1944)*, Paris 2014, 162-172.

²⁴ The declaration is available on the website of the Bulgarian parliament, *Deklaracija na Četirideset i pǎrvoto sǎbranie na Republika Bǎlgarija po povod 70-godišninata ot spasjavaneto na bǎlgarskite evrei i počitane pametta na žertvite na Holokosta*, 8 March 2013, http://abbro-bg.org/docs/27_13.pdf.

II and policies on the Jews. In the story I have reiterated to this point, Jewish descendants of Holocaust victims or survivors have been left outside the picture. Consideration of wider trends, which have affected understanding, representation and commemoration of the Holocaust, will help outline the contribution of Jewish agency to recent developments, and will show that for better or worse all controversies pertaining to the Holocaust have now 'gone global'.

**Transnationalizing the Writing of the Holocaust.
The European and Global Stages
of the Bulgarian-Macedonian Historical Controversies**

The re-engagement of Macedonia and Bulgaria with the past coincided, first, with transformations in the presence of World War Two on a European and global scale. Second came renewed efforts to collect Holocaust testimonies, while third was the emergence of debate about the possibility that a 'memory wall' exists between Eastern and Western Europe. Finally, there was steadily growing engagement among European Union institutions with the tentative shaping of a common European way of remembering, and teaching, the history of the 20th century.

*The Institutionalization of Holocaust Remembrance
and Its Local Reverberations in the Balkans*

After 1989 the worldwide trend, which had seen the Holocaust acquire ever greater significance in individual and collective memory from the late 1970s onwards,²⁵ was translated into the blossoming of museums, research institutions and foundations dedicated to Holocaust studies and remembrance. Meanwhile, the European symbolic topography of the Holocaust began to venture eastwards, as previously inaccessible East European archival records and eyewitnesses became available to scholars. There came a new understanding of extermination techniques (the 'Shoah by bullets') and the chronology of the Holocaust, with greater emphasis being placed on the large scale massacres of Jews in the USSR after June 1941. This spatial relocation was accompanied by a new awareness that the East European victims of anti-Jewish persecutions had remained beyond

²⁵ On the role of trips by young people to former death sites in Poland in the shaping of attitudes to the Holocaust and Israeli identities, cf. Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag. Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity*, New York 2008. Cf. also Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective Memory and the Making of the Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, London 1995.

the reach of the compensation schemes previously negotiated with Germany, notably through the Jewish Claims Conference.²⁶

It was precisely at the intersection between the new international priorities and the decision by Macedonian postcommunist elites to restore the properties nationalized after World War Two that in 1998 a six-member commission was asked to estimate the property of the former Jewish communities in Macedonia. State bonds were issued for what could not be returned, and they served to finance the creation of a Fund for the Holocaust of the Jews of Macedonia. In 2005 the Fund decided to build a Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia in the former Jewish quarter of Skopje. The completion of the project required international partnerships with architects and engineers, and with such specialists in museography as Michael Berenbaum, former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), who designed the first permanent exhibition.²⁷

Since its inauguration in March 2011 the Memorial Center in Skopje has established itself as pivotal to public discussion of the Holocaust. The Center has supported the introduction of changes to school curricula and has organized training sessions for teachers in senior schools. Collaborations have also been sought with like-minded institutions, among them the USHMM, Yad Vashem, and the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris. More importantly perhaps, the Memorial Center has attempted to negotiate the return of archival records preserved in foreign institutions—or at least the supply of copies. Although far from unique, Macedonia's situation is particularly disheartening. A latecomer to the world of states, most of Macedonia's pre-1944 political, economic, social and cultural life has been written up by foreign bureaucrats, collected by the hands of archivists whose ways of classifying followed a different territorial and historical logic. The material was stored in archives lying mostly in the neighbouring states of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, or in Germany, Israel, and the United States. In March 2011 the Belgrade Jewish Historical Museum, where some Macedonian Jewish archives had been kept since the 1963 earthquake that shattered Skopje, returned the resources in its possession. However, by late 2016 the creation of an infrastructure allowing public consultation of the records had not been completed.

²⁶ In 1998, the Claims Conference and Germany signed an agreement establishing a Central and East European Fund through which 24,307 survivors were compensated. Steve Lipman, Bulgaria Wasn't 'Second Denmark', *The Jewish Week*, 16 July 2004, <http://theoptimists.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Bulgaria-was-no-denemark-The-Jewish-Week.pdf>.

²⁷ On Berenbaum's vision of the museum, see Michael Berenbaum, How Are We to Understand the Role of Bulgaria? A Talk Delivered at the International Conference 'Da opoznaem minaloto si', Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Sofia, 5-7 October 2013, 7. In 2016, the design of a new permanent exhibition was finally tendered. Informal communication from the executive director of the Memorial Center, Goran Sadikario, Skopje, October 2016.

Through the Holocaust Fund, the Center has also encouraged the publication of historical pieces on Macedonia's Jews.²⁸ Previously, the most influential protagonist in the field of history writing in Macedonia was the Institute for National History (*Institut za nacionalna istorija*) created in 1948 with the explicit goal of preparing the ground for the elaboration of a national narrative.²⁹ However, sponsored by the state the Institute devoted little attention to the predicament of Macedonia's Jews during World War Two.³⁰ If a new institutional actor were to emerge in the coming years, it might encourage young historians to conduct research on the Holocaust in Macedonia.

For the time being the Holocaust Memorial Center has become an obligatory destination for Israeli and American Jews, as well as other Jewish visitors wishing to reconnect with the collective Jewish past or perhaps their own families' history. Indeed, after 1989 the fall of the so-called iron curtain facilitated the rediscovery – or even the discovery – of their countries of origin by Jews whose parents or grandparents had settled abroad. The practice of 'roots tourism' has in turn activated feelings of emotional attachment, loss, and sometimes resentment towards the nationals involved in anti-Jewish persecutions. Thereupon, some descendants of survivors have engaged in a flurry of crisscrossing memory initiatives.

²⁸ This includes Lea Cohen, *You Believe. Eight Views on the Holocaust in the Balkans*, Skopje 2013; Michael Berenbaum, *The Jews in Macedonia during the Second World War*, Skopje 2012; Shlomo Alboher, *The Jews of Monastir. The Life and Times of the Departed Jewish Community of Bitola*, Jerusalem, n. d., http://www.holocaustfund.org/docs/The_Jews_of_Monastir_Macedonia.pdf. Cf. also proceedings of conferences, for example, *Jewish Community in the Republic of Macedonia*, ed. Jews in Macedonia. History, Tradition, Culture, Language and Religion. On the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Renewal of the Jewish Community in Macedonia after the Second World War (1944-2014), Skopje 2015. Scholarship on anti-Jewish persecutions outside Macedonia's key public institutions remains sparse. An exception to that rule is the NGO-funded project coordinated by Sofija Grandakovska, ed., *The Jews from Macedonia and the Holocaust. History, Theory, Culture*, Skopje 2011. Outside the country, new insights into the prewar history of the Macedonian Jews are available in Kristina Birri-Tomovska, *Jews of Yugoslavia, 1918-1941. A History of Macedonian Sephards*, Brussels 2012. A seminal contribution to the history of the Jews of Bitola has been provided by Mark Cohen, *Last Century of a Sephardic Community. The Jews of Monastir, 1839-1943*, New York 2003. The author has researched extensively the archives of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, and a wide array of sources, including in Yad Vashem, but did not access Bulgarian, Macedonian or Serbian state archives.

²⁹ Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien*, München 1983, 15-19.

³⁰ On socialist Holocaust historiography in Macedonia, cf. Stefan Troebst, *Macedonian Historiography on the Holocaust in Macedonia under Bulgarian Occupation*, *Südosteuropäische Hefte* 2, no. 1 (2013), 107-114; see also Ragaru, *Bordering the Past*. The most significant Macedonian contributions remain Aleksandar Matkovski, *The Destruction of the Macedonian Jewry in 1943*, *Yad Vashem Studies* 3 (1959), 203-258; Aleksandar Matkovski, *Tragedijata na Evreite od Makedonija*, Skopje 1962; Aleksandar Matkovski, *Istorija na Evreite vo Makedonija*, Skopje 1983.

*Testimonial Truth. Witnessing and the Divisive Engagement
of Jewish Communities with Memory*

To understand the new ways of engaging with the past amongst the Jewish communities we must consider how testimonies came to be endowed with a particular experiential and historical quality, and to see how history projects have spread that intended to preserve lived experience. In the 1980s, with the advent of what French historian Annette Wieviorka has called the 'era of the witness', large oral history programmes were started in the United States. Following the end of socialism they progressively embraced the former communist Eastern Europe. Three such initiatives stand out. The Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the USHMM Oral History Project created 'Yugoslav collections' of eyewitness accounts based on programmes conducted in Serbia between 1989 and 1997 of record reminiscences.³¹ The third remarkable initiative is the Shoah Visual History Foundation that can trace its roots to Steven Spielberg's prompting. The breadth of the three programmes is unprecedented. Within the framework of the Visual History Foundation, more than 52,000 testimonies by Holocaust survivors and witnesses were videotaped in the 1990s, and among its testimonies were those of 757 Jews in Bulgaria and nine Jews in Macedonia who relived their pasts for the cameras.³² Several scholarly initiatives of smaller magnitude evolved in their wake, including a survey developed in partnership with the Free University Berlin which looked at forced labour in 26 European countries.³³

For Holocaust survivors who had seldom shared their wartime experiences beyond a narrow circle of family and friends, taking part in these international projects of remembrance fostered a reenactment of the predicament of the war and reconfigured relations between past and present, as if the era between 1940 and the 1980s had been suddenly squeezed. This is not to argue that the voices of the victims had been entirely silenced during the socialist era. Year after year, in Macedonia on commemorative days a few chosen Jewish survivors — most of them former partisans and devoted communists — were invited

³¹ On these two testimony collections, cf. Jovan Byford, Remembering Jasenovac. Survivor Testimonies and the Cultural Dimension of Bearing Witness, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 28, no. 1 (2014), 58-84.

³² Interviews were also conducted in the other Yugoslav successor states: 349 in Serbia, 329 in Croatia, 58 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 11 in Slovenia. Quoted after Byford, Remembering Jasenovac, 78.

³³ Within the framework of the 'Forced Labor 1939-1945. Memory and History' online archive project, about 600 life stories were collected in 26 countries. The archive comprises several interviews with former Bulgarian Jewish forced labourers, cf. <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/en/>. On this topic see also Evgenija Troeva, Prinuditelnijat trud prez Vtorata svetovna vojna v spomenite na bälgarskite evrei, in: Ana Luleva / Evgenija Troeva / Petär Petrov, eds, Prinuditelnijat trud v Bälgarija (1941-1962). Spomeni na svideteli, Sofia 2012, 39-54.

to retell chosen episodes of the war and its anti-Jewish persecution. In Bulgaria too, reminiscences of the war were similarly solicited. In the second half of the 1980s a section of the Almanach of the Organization of the Bulgarian Jews was even devoted to the publication of wartime experiences. Yet such recollections, their framing of events and the terms they used were tailored to the ideological agenda of the regime. Evocations of Jewish suffering at the hands of the fascists were counterbalanced with stories of struggle and Bulgarian solidarity with their Jewish fellow citizens.

The 1990s altered that canvas in a number of ways. The Jews in both Macedonia and Bulgaria were invited to share their wartime reminiscences within testimonial collections whose scholarly, social and memorial purposes were extremely diverse and sharply at odds with the heroic narratives of the socialist era. In 2004 for instance, after the Claims Conference had determined that former Bulgarian Jewish forced labourers were eligible for compensation schemes, testimonies were once again solicited, this time to evaluate the damages the Jews had suffered. The object was no longer to preserve memories, give history a personal and more authentic content, nor was it to help document those aspects of the Holocaust about which archives were silent. The goal now was to produce forms of evidence that fitted established administrative categories.

Second, the witness collection programmes struck a deep chord for reasons to do with the specific time when they were taking place and the historical legacy of the communist regimes. All across Eastern Europe the end of socialism sparked a yearning for historical knowledge grounded in the belief that the communist regimes had either obfuscated or distorted key historical events.³⁴ In a situation where secondary literature was deemed unreliable and archival records were suspected of having been 'blue-pencilled', the spoken word was perceived as holding a unique truth about hidden pasts. Thereby the particular quality of memory, the fact that what and how one remembers is shaped by an individual's social interactions, the institutional context of bearing witness and the wider social audibility of the statement, were often forgotten by academics, observers – and witnesses themselves.³⁵

In the process, individual memories came to be reshaped.³⁶ Furthermore, the moral authority granted to witnesses and the renewed actuality of the past

³⁴ Vera Mutafčieva, ed, *Istorija naselena s hora*, Sofia 2006; Georgi Gospodinov, ed, *Az živjah socializma. 171 lični istorii*, Sofia 2006; Daniela Koleva, ed, *Vārhu hrastite ne padat mālñii. Komunizmāt – žitejski sādñbi*, Sofia 2007; Ivajlo Znepolski, ed, *Tova e moeto minalo. Spomeni, dnevnici, svidetelstva (1944-1989)*, 2 vols., Sofia 2010.

³⁵ The social production of individual memories and their 'collective' quality were first theorized by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago 1992 (1st ed. *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris 1925).

³⁶ Nadia Danova and Rumèn Avramov have for instance pinpointed the discrepancies between Angel Wagenstein's telling of the deportation of Greek Jews in 1945 and his later

prompted a number of first and second generation survivors to desire their understanding of events to receive official endorsement. And yet, the memories of the Jews of Bulgarian and Macedonian descent were painfully at odds. Bulgarian carriers of memory had transmitted images of both suffering and survival, of antisemitic attitudes and a sense of interethnic brotherhood. On the other hand, the few Macedonian Jews who escaped deportation had lived with memories of utter destruction and desolation. Henceforth the involvement of Macedonian and Bulgarian Jews in the telling of history bred internecine conflict and contributed to bitter postsocialist historical controversy.

The most visible episode crystallized around the project to dedicate a forest near Jerusalem to the memory of the major protagonists of the 'rescue'.³⁷ It is a well-documented case and is important for my purpose here because it brings into relief the porous boundaries between professional and amateur history, the spilling over of historical disputes into the field of popular culture, and the inflation in the number of individuals whose ambition it is for their experience of the past to be given its 'proper place' in the present. The controversy arose after some Jews of Bulgarian origin but living in Los Angeles resolved to have the 'rescue' commemorated in Israel, with King Boris III among the figures to be honoured. Dissenting voices were heard from a range of countries, namely Israel, Macedonia, the United States, Bulgaria, and Italy. The stakeholders included politicians, prominent artists and intellectuals, journalists, amateur historians, and private citizens. During the quarrel, which went on for eight years, cleavages came into play between Jews of Bulgarian and Macedonian descent, as well as between former communists and anticommunists in Bulgaria. Pivotaly, the ebb and flow of the controversy followed the rhythm of the publication of historical essays, with two pieces at centre stage in the disputes. One book was authored by Michael Bar-Zohar, the Israeli politician of Bulgarian extraction;³⁸ the other

recollection of these events in the 1990s and 2000s. Cf. Nadja Danova / Rumen Avramov, eds, *Deportiraneto na evreite ot Vardarska Makedonija, Belomorska Trakija i Pirot, mart 1943 g. Dokumenti ot bälgarskite arhivi*, vol. 2, Sofia 2013, 664-666; Angel Wagenstein, *Collective Memory. The Bulgarian Case*, in: Emmy Barouh, ed, *History and Memory. Bulgaria Facing the Holocaust*, Sofia 2003, 71-81.

³⁷ Dalia Ofer, *Tormented Memories*, *Israel Studies* 9, no. 3 (2004), 137-156; Stefan Troebst, *Salvation, Deportation or Holocaust? The Controversy over the Fate of Bulgaria's Jews in World War II – before and after 1989*, in: Muriel Blaive / Christian Gerbel / Thomas Linderberger, eds, *Clashes in European Memory. The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*, Innsbruck, 2011, 37-52; Nadège Ragaru, *Commémorer et diviser en Europe: le 70ème anniversaire du sauvetage et des déportations juives depuis les terres sous administration bulgare*, *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 65, no. 3/4 (2014), 237-274.

³⁸ Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp. The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews*, Holbrook/MA 1998.

by the Italian essayist Gabriele Nissim.³⁹ Finally, in 1996 a temporary compromise was reached which led to the inauguration of three monuments—including one dedicated to King Boris and his wife, Queen Giovanna. But it failed to quell public outcry,⁴⁰ and in the face of continuing protests an *ad hoc* commission was set up under the leadership of Supreme Court Justice, Judge Moshe Beiski. After lengthy deliberations the Commission decided in July 2000 to replace the three monuments with a single one erected to the memory of all the 11,343 deported Jews.⁴¹ Within a matter of years, the Bulgarian-Macedonian controversies had thus spilled over into Israel and the United States, as well as wider Europe.

*EU Enlargement, the Fear of an 'East-West' Wall of Memory
and the Writing of History*

Brussels is another arena where battles over the past have been carried on, bringing into collision an array of bureaucrats, intellectuals, politicians, and historians. Attempts by the Council of Europe and EU institutions to influence the writing of history and the practices of memory governance bear the imprint of several considerations. Following the demise of socialism, restoring 'historical truth' in the Eastern parts of Europe was seen as an urgent requirement. The building of democracy demanded departure from socialist 'uses and abuses' of the past. Furthermore, the violent collapse of Yugoslavia prompted fears that reemerging nationalisms might threaten peace in the rest of Europe. The offering of multi-voiced versions of divisive events was expected to facilitate national reconciliation through the coexistence of conflicted memories.⁴²

As national histories were becoming 'de-communized' across the region, some observers began to worry that the rehabilitation of anticommunist figures might obscure their roles as Nazi collaborators during World War Two.⁴³ Furthermore, voices were raised in concern about the possibility that critical reconsideration of the early years of communist rule might foster the resurgence of antisemitic attitudes. More broadly, the persistence of a cognitive dissonance between 'East' and 'West' was dreaded. When it came to listing the crimes of the twentieth century, the former Soviet satellites were suspected of having only communist crimes in mind. The past of the Holocaust was already more visible in Western European memory regimes, but certain EU candidate states deplored what

³⁹ Gabriele Nissim, *L'uomo che fermò Hitler. La storia di Dimităr Pešev che salvò gli ebrei di una nazione intera*, Milano 1999.

⁴⁰ Ofer, *Tormented Memories*, 140.

⁴¹ Ofer, *Tormented Memories*, 40.

⁴² Henri Rousso, *Les dilemmes d'une mémoire européenne*, in: François Dosse / Christian Delacroix / Patrick Garcia, eds, *Historicités*, Paris 2009, 203-221.

⁴³ For a comparative perspective, cf. Blaive / Gerbel / Linderberger, eds, *Clashes in European Memory*.

they viewed as the lesser sensitivity of EU members to communist repression. With the prospect of EU enlargement, the candidate countries were invited to rethink critically their national historiography and educational policies, so as to increase awareness of the Holocaust.⁴⁴

Paradoxically, in the accession talks with Bulgaria, neither the European Commission nor European deputies requested from Bulgarian authorities that they remember the Holocaust 'properly'. Until the late 2000s, unlike the Baltic States⁴⁵ and Romania⁴⁶ whose governments were encouraged to set up historical commissions, Bulgaria had not been seen as a site where the narratives of nazism and communism entertained competitive relations. Against that background, Bulgarian leaders built on previous socialist policies to intensify their drive to achieve recognition for 'the Bulgarian exception', using their argument to strengthen their 'Euro-Atlantic' credentials.⁴⁷ In 1999 for instance, at the Council of Europe a bust was erected of Dimităr Pešev, the former vice-president of the National Assembly whose name is associated with the March 1943 protests against anti-Jewish policies.⁴⁸

After Bulgarian accession to the EU in 2007, the country's officials were further provided with symbolic resources and diplomatic leverage in their struggle to 'Bulgarianize' the past. A telling example of that is the complaint addressed by three Bulgarian European MPs to the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Stefan Fühle. The Bulgarians wished to complain about Macedonia's alleged 'manipulation of history' on the ground that the Macedonian state had funded the production of a feature film, 'The Third Half' (*Treto poluvreme*, directed by Darko Mitrevski, 2012).⁴⁹ The Bulgarians accused the film of tarnishing the image

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Droit, *Le Goulag contre la Shoah. Mémoires officielles et cultures mémorielles dans l'Europe élargie, Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 94, no. 2 (2007), 101-120.

⁴⁵ Eva-Clarita Onken, *The Politics of Finding Historical Truth. Reviewing Baltic History Commissions and their Work, Journal of Baltic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007), 109-116.

⁴⁶ Elie Wiesel et al., eds, *Comisia internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România. Raport final*, Iași 2004.

⁴⁷ Rossen Vassilev, *The Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews in World War II, New Politics* 48, no. 4 (2010), <http://newpol.org/node/183>.

⁴⁸ Liliana Deyanova, *Des condamnations locales du communisme à la condamnation internationale de janvier 2006: les guerres des élites bulgares pour le monopole de la mémoire communiste*, in: Bogumil Jewsiewicki / Erika Nimis, eds, *Expérience et mémoire. Partager en français la diversité du monde*, Paris 2008, 193-213.

⁴⁹ Darko Mitrevski also devoted a documentary film to these events, which was completed shortly before the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Macedonia's Jews. See Darko Mitrevski, *Nikoj ne prizhivea (No one survived)*, Skopje 2013, https://wn.com/no_one_survived_|_%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%98_%D0%9D%D0%B5_%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%B0_documentary_by_darko_mitrevski.

of the Bulgarian occupation forces in Macedonia during the war.⁵⁰ Following in Greek footsteps, the Bulgarian authorities did not take long to understand that as an EU member state they could dispose of an informal ‘veto’ over the start of Macedonia’s EU membership negotiations. The argument they put forward was that Macedonia had failed to engage in good neighbourly relations. In effect, in the EU Council in December 2012 Bulgaria and Greece joined forces to oppose the opening of accession talks with Macedonia—an opposition much to the relief of various other EU members—including France, which dreaded the unchecked continuation of the EU enlargement process.⁵¹

A year later, on the 70th anniversary of the ‘rescue of the Bulgarian Jews’, the European Parliament was home to a short-lived Bulgarian exhibition sponsored by the Bulgarian State Archives (*Centralen Dăržaven Arhiv*, CDA). While providing a sober account of anti-Jewish persecutions, the exhibition offered a selective insight into Bulgarian visual and print document collections, and reiterated the Bulgarian master narrative. Accordingly the role of the Germans in the deportations was singled out, as were the expressions of gratitude by those Bulgarian Jews who were saved.⁵² Undeniably, it is too early for a thorough assessment of the impact of the EU’s involvement with history and memory in postcommunist Europe. As far as Bulgarian politicians are concerned, however, their participation in European institutions, trans-European party groupings and European advocacy networks has buttressed their claim to a say in the determination of the ‘historical truth’.

New Directions for Research. Towards a Transnational Social History of Anti-Jewish Policies

The Bulgarian and Macedonian attempts to nationalize the past should not blind us to two other, more hopeful developments. Although scholarly pieces establishing the facts and offering a comprehensive view of anti-Jewish policies in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ kingdom have been slow to appear, the past twenty years have witnessed major projects of document collection which have made significant archival records available to a wide audience. In parallel, the historiographical field has undergone considerable transformations, not all of them negative. Professional and non-professional historians have been led to rethink their coexistence; meanwhile some non-governmental networks have

⁵⁰ For a broader presentation of Bulgarian-Macedonian Holocaust-related controversies, cf. Troebst, *Salvation, Deportation or Holocaust?*

⁵¹ Bulgaria and Greece Block Macedonia’s EU Talks, *BalkanInsight*, 12 December 2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-joins-greece-in-blocking-macedonia-s-eu-bid>.

⁵² Dăržavna Agencija ‘Arhivi’, *Truden izbor s goljamo značenje. Sădbata na bălgarskite evrei, 1943, dokumentalna izložba*, Sofia 2013.

been advocating a re-consideration of the Bulgarian state's responsibilities in the Holocaust. These tangent lines suggest that a scholarly foray might be in the offing. The last section of this article will therefore review possible directions for future research.

*When Archives Go Public.
Document Collections as a Source on the Past*

One of the most significant changes consists in greater access to archival materials. Never since the end of the war have conditions for doing scholarly work been more favourable. The opening of Bulgaria's state archives to local and foreign scholars after 1989, the decision to open the archives of the communist state security (*dăržavna sigurnost*) in 2006, and the ambitious digitalization policy pursued since the late 2000s have facilitated the dissemination of documents relating to anti-Jewish measures. On the 70th anniversary, for instance, the Bulgarian state archives launched a vast project to digitalize their archive of the history of the Jews in Bulgaria, the anti-Jewish policies, the social mobilization against the passing of anti-Jewish legislation, and stories of the 'rescuers'.⁵³ The material made available is exceptionally rich. In addition, the chiefs of the archives have even decided to upload the protocols of the People's Court from 1944-1945. So far, the files of Chambers I, II, III, and IV have been made available, they being the courts in charge of prosecuting the ruling civilian and military elites accused of war crimes, but the project is continuing.⁵⁴ Moreover, for scholars outside Europe the conclusion of bilateral agreements between the Bulgarian state archives and institutions such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem has eased the conduct of scholarly investigation by allowing sources preserved in Bulgaria to be copied or digitalized.

In parallel, Bulgarian state institutions have sponsored the publication or release of CDs containing precious archived documents. In 2012, the committee in charge of disclosing the documents and announcing the affiliation of Bulgarian citizens to the state security services released a volume that, albeit dedicated to the post-1944 period, throws new light on certain wartime figures and the legacies of anti-Jewish policies.⁵⁵ There is no denying that the bringing together of archive records enjoys a long state tradition, that collections are by definition selective and that the assembly and presentation of documents shape the reader's

⁵³ Cf. Dăržavna Agencija 'Arhivi' (DAA), *Evrejskata obštност v Bălgarija*, <http://archives.bg/jews/>.

⁵⁴ Cf. Dăržavna Agencija 'Arhivi' (DAA), *Naroden săd*, <http://archives.bg/narodensud/>.

⁵⁵ Committee for disclosing the documents and announcing affiliation of Bulgarian citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian national army (COMDOS), *Dăržavna sigurnost i evrejskata obštност v Bălgarija*, Sofia 2012, <http://comdos.bg/media/cd-10.pdf>.

decoding of the data. Nor should we forget that over the last fifty years most historical disputes between Bulgaria and Macedonia have been carried on by utilizing archive collections to argue conflicting national viewpoints. However, the adoption by the Bulgarian state archives of very liberal copyright rules has permitted the spread of private document collections. While they share the same tendency to shape the deciphering of the records through specific techniques of collage and comment, the multiplicity of editorial projects allows scholars to chart their own course through the maze of stances on events.

A short overview of the latest publications suggests that both state-sponsored and private initiatives have significantly increased our knowledge of anti-Jewish legislation in Bulgaria and the territories it occupied,⁵⁶ especially with regard to the preparation of the deportations, and the liquidation of Jewish properties.⁵⁷ As early as 2002 a remarkable guide to the existing literature on Jews in Bulgaria was published under the auspices of a privately funded institute for intercultural dialogue, the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR).⁵⁸ Incrementally there has emerged a more nuanced picture of the alliance between Bulgaria and Nazi Germany, which brings into sharper relief the relative autonomy enjoyed by the Bulgarian government in the handling of 'the Jewish question'.⁵⁹ The publication of the protocols of the meetings of the Bulgarian Holy Synod has offered a more comprehensive view of the response of the Orthodox Church to the persecution of Jews and Jewish converts, and has confirmed the outstanding commitment of a number of high ranking officials to defending the Bulgarian Jews.⁶⁰ An examination of documents pertaining to the episcopacies and local communal institutions could fruitfully complement the data available on the church's leaders. Anthologies dedicated to xenophobic and antisemitic organizations in Bulgaria have permitted the opening of debate on

⁵⁶ Among others, cf. Koen, ed, *Oceljavaneto*; Vladimir Paunovski / Josif Iliel, eds, *Evreite v Bălgarija meždū uništōženieto i spasenieto*, Sofia 2000; Petko Dobčev, *Antievrejskoto zakonodatelstvo i negovoto preodoljavane (1942-1945)*, Sofia 2010.

⁵⁷ Danova / Avramov, eds, *Deportiraneto na evreite*. Earlier, a significant contribution was made by Ivan Hadžijski, *Sădbata na evrejskoto naselenie v Belomorska Trakija, Vardarska Makedonija i Jugozapadna Bălgarija prez 1941-1944*, Dupnica 2004.

⁵⁸ Jak Eskenazi / Alfred Krispin, eds, *Evreite po bălgarskite zemi*. Anotirana bibliografija, Sofia 2002.

⁵⁹ Vitka Toškova et al., *Bălgarija, svoenravnijāt săjuznik na Tretija rajh*, Sofia 1992. Vitka Toškova had earlier published selected documents in *Vitka Toškova, Bălgarija i Tretijat rajh (1941-1944)*. *Političeski otnošenija*, Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1975.

⁶⁰ Albena Taneva / Vanja Gezenko, eds, *Glasove v zaštita na graždansko obštество*. *Protokoli ot Svetija sinod na Bălgarskata Pravoslavna cărkva po evrejskija văpros (1940-1944)*, Sofia 2002. For the English translation cf. Albena Taneva / Vanja Gezenko, eds, *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)*, Sofia 2005, http://jews.archives.bg/jews/uploaded_files/The_Power_Of_Civil_Society_In_A_Time_Of_Genocide.pdf.

the roots and nature of antisemitism there,⁶¹ while renewed interest in the role of the Seventh Chamber of the People's Court might ensue from publication of the indictments and final judgments of that court.⁶²

However, to this day the most remarkable initiative remains the two-volume edition by Nadja Danova and Rumen Avramov of documents from the Bulgarian state archives.⁶³ The two Bulgarian historians have meticulously recorded the previous publications of archived material, thus allowing investigation into the temporal and physical travels of archives. Thanks to their work it is also possible to reflect on the chronological order in which several key documents have come to be known to a local and international audience. A thorough comparison of the extant sources has also informed the list of Jewish deportees they have drawn, and their analysis of discrepancies in numbers. From the documents published for the first time we may single out the archives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs relating to the issue or refusal of transit visas to foreign Jews passing through Bulgaria on their way to Palestine. Those records set the stage for reconsideration of Bulgaria's wartime citizenship policies and examination of its different treatment of Bulgarian citizens, foreign nationals and stateless Jews. Avramov and Danova's introductory chapters present the state of the art and the two volumes have made a considerable contribution to the discussion of the place of the deportation of Jews from Bulgarian-occupied territories in the overall architecture of Bulgaria's anti-Jewish policies.

Until now, however, Bulgarian scholars seem to have been reluctant to move past their edition of archives to propose a comprehensive narrative of Bulgaria's wartime decisions and practices. Nevertheless, in 2004 Ivan Hadžijski sketched a retelling of the deportations in his long foreword to a selection of archival records,⁶⁴ and inroads have been made into the task of unravelling the history of Bulgarian antisemitism.⁶⁵ The matter of legal and illegal migrations from and through Bulgaria during and immediately after the war has been addressed from different standpoints by Bulgarian⁶⁶ and Israeli historians,⁶⁷ while the proceedings of various conferences organized on the eve of the 70th anniversary

⁶¹ Nikolaj Poppetrov, ed, *Socialno naljavo, nacionalizmät – napred!*, Sofia 2009.

⁶² Vărban Todorov / Nikolaj Poppetrov, eds, *Sedmi sâstav na Narodnija säd. Edno zabraveno svidetelstvo za antisemitizma v Bälgarija prez 1941-1944*, Sofia 2013.

⁶³ Danova / Avramov, eds, *Deportiraneto na evreite*.

⁶⁴ Hadžijski, *Sädbata na evrejskoto naselenie*.

⁶⁵ Nikolaj Poppetrov, *Bulgaria, a Country Devoid of Antisemitism? Historical Perspectives*, in: Ragaru, ed, *La Shoah en Europe*, 52-63. On the same topic, cf. Olga Todorova, *Obrazät na 'nečestivija' evrein v bälgarskata knižnina ot XVIII-načaloto na XIX vek i väv folklor*, *Bälgarski folklor* 3 (1994), 10-22.

⁶⁶ Bojka Vasileva, *Evreite v Bälgarija 1944-1952*, Sofia 1992.

⁶⁷ Shlomo Shealtiel, *Ot rodina käm otečestvo. Emigracija i nelegalna imigracija ot i prez Bälgarija väv perioda 1939-1949*, Sofia 2009.

have brought together contributions by Bulgarian and foreign scholars.⁶⁸ All the same there is still no survey, based on the archival material unearthed since the end of socialism, of anti-Jewish policies in the 'old' and 'new' kingdoms.

One exception to that rule concerns the economic dispossession of the Jews,⁶⁹ for a well-crafted volume by Rumén Avramov examines the phases, instruments and agents of the expropriation of Jewish properties during the Second World War. Taking the Aryanization process as an angle on anti-Jewish policies the book departs from the dominant interpretation of the role of the Bulgarian state in the Holocaust. The author argues that in fact a form of state antisemitism did exist in Bulgaria, and that it was implemented by an extraordinary bureaucracy called the 'Commissariat for Jewish Affairs', (*Komisariatstvo po evrejski vāprosi*, KEV) as well as by ordinary officials in various ministries, the tax authorities, the central bank, the police, the armed forces and so on, all of whom enjoyed wide autonomy from the German authorities. Drawing on the archives of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, Avramov argues that from the summer of 1942 an antisemitic project was devised with the support of the minister of the interior, Petār Gabrovski, the conclusion of which would have had similar results in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Aegean Thrace and Pirot had it not been for the March 1943 Bulgarian protests and reversal of fortune of the German army. To explain the discordance between the sheer number of edited documents and the limited body of scholarly pieces, it may be helpful to consider recent transformations in ways of chronicling history.

*Who Will Write Our History? Advocacy Networks, the Project Society
and the Reshaping of the Historical Field*

That the Holocaust has resurfaced in public debate has paralleled dramatic changes in the historical discipline itself. In Bulgaria and Macedonia recent developments have not confirmed post-1989 hopes that the historical profession would be emancipated from state control.⁷⁰ Instead, dwindling public support for higher education and research institutes in the years following 1989 weakened the social fabric of the profession, although an initial boom in private universities— not all of them sustainable over the long run in any case— somewhat mitigated those effects. Nevertheless, today there is little likelihood that history

⁶⁸ Kostadin Grozev / Rumjana Marinova-Hristidi, eds, *Evreite v Iztočna Evropa i Sāvestki Sājuz v godinite na Vtorata svetovna vojna i studenta vojna (1939-1989)*, Sofia 2013.

⁶⁹ Avramov, 'Spasenie' i padenie.

⁷⁰ On the early changes in the institutional framework of historical research and teaching, see Daniela Koleva / Ivan Elenkov, *Did 'the Change' Happen? Post-Socialist Historiography in Bulgaria*, in: Ulf Brunnbauer, ed, *(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe After Socialism*, Münster 2004, 94-127, and Ulf Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia*, in: Brunnbauer, ed, *(Re)Writing History*, 165-200.

PhDs will successfully pursue an academic career, which raises questions about generational renewal. This unfavourable demographic effect has encouraged young historians to choose research topics deemed most likely to improve their chances in the profession. The development of a system of state-funded grants in the last fifteen years has favoured scholars with a large network of clientelistic relations and whose research programmes are in line with mainstream historiography. Henceforth, the renewed availability of public resources for historical studies has not met expectations of more diversified scholarly output.

It is noteworthy here that in Bulgaria the most significant contributions to the historiographical discourse on anti-Jewish persecutions have not come from established historians whose area of expertise is World War Two or Jewish topics.⁷¹ The scholars who have investigated memorial controversies⁷² tend to be sociologists or historians whose position as institutional outsiders allows them to cast a critical eye over the academic and political fields.⁷³ Indeed, most of the academics who have advanced our knowledge of Bulgaria's policies on the Jews have come from unrelated historical subfields. Nadja Danova for example has devoted the bulk of her research to the Bulgarian cultural renaissance in the 19th century; Rumen Avramov is an economic historian. A number of archivists too have taken an active part in the development of historical studies, including Vania Gezenko at the Bulgarian state archives.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, private institutions like NGOs, private research institutes, think tanks, and advocacy networks have become new players in the historical field. Sponsoring the production, dissemination and teaching of past events, they have provoked the redistribution of hierarchies within the historical profession

⁷¹ The contribution of associate professor Albena Taneva, a political scientist at Sofia University's 'Kliment Ohridski' and the head of a research centre specializing in Jewish matters, might be the exception that proves the rule. See, for instance, Albena Taneva, *Liderskijat obštestven model. Spasjavaneto na evreite v Bălgarija v političeskija diskurs*, PhD thesis, Universitet Sveti Kliment Ohridski, Sofia 2007.

⁷² On these debates, cf. Dejanova, *The Non-Saved Jews*; Aleksandăr Vezekov, *Spasjavaneto na bălgarskite evrei – unikalno li e naistina?*, *Kultura*, 18 October 2013 and 1 November 2013; Julina Dadova-Mihailova, *Spasjavaneto na bălgarskite evrei meždū mitovete i realnostta*, *Istoričesko bădešte* 1-2 (2011), 162-177.

⁷³ The names of Alexander Vezekov and Tchavdar Marinov, whose brilliant works have developed to a large extent outside the realm of the Bulgarian mainstream academic milieu, come to mind here. Cf. the remarkable four-volume project published by Brill, in which they have been engaged, Roumen Daskalov / Tchavdar Marinov, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 1: *National Ideologies and Language Policies*, Leiden 2013; Roumen Daskalov / Alexander Vezekov, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 3: *Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies*, Leiden 2015; Roumen Daskalov / Diana Mishkova / Tchavdar Marinov / Alexander Vezekov, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 4: *Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-)Representations*, Leiden 2017.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Ivanka Gezenko Železčeva, *Novi štrihi kăm săzdavaneto idejnostta na Komisarstvoto po evrejskite văprosi*, *Istoriija* 21, no. 1 (2015), no. 1, 20-37. In 2013, she co-edited the bilingual catalogue *Dăržavna agencija Arhivi*, *Truden izbor s goljamo značenje*.

and transformed ways of practising history. A sharp rift has emerged between a thin layer of internationalized historians who have acquired the linguistic and managerial skills needed to coordinate large scale partnerships, and the majority of increasingly insulated local scholars who must survive on modest incomes. In turn, the promotion of new forms of historical expertise has increased the porosity of the boundaries between research and advocacy — another change which challenges many a historian's definition of their craft and professional ethics.

That the moral authority enjoyed by academics before 1989 should have receded is not a product of changing financial and institutional constraints alone. The widening of the range of actors confident they hold the truth about the past — depicted above — has meant professional historians have been confronted with a conundrum. Ought they to acquiesce in the removal of borders between historical knowledge and experience, between history-writing as a striving for objectivity and the shaping of social memories — and thereby possibly preserve a social visibility other protagonists might claim in their stead — or should they fight for an autonomous historical professional field at the risk of being marginalized?

Since then too, many Bulgarian and Macedonian historians have found themselves caught between the pretence of politicians turned memory-entrepreneurs stating 'the truth' of the past, and lay experts. That there should be questions about the ability of historians to continue to be authoritative voices in society is a development not confined to Bulgaria and Macedonia; however the material impoverishment of many social scientists has given these dilemmas a more dramatic turn. Against this background professional historians have been tempted to reaffirm the uniqueness of their expertise, even as their confrontation with the Holocaust has been driven by a sense of moral commitment. But defining — and holding — Michel Foucault's 'third position' represents a challenge when every public statement made in Bulgaria and Macedonia is transformed into a diplomatic weapon by memory-entrepreneurs and state actors.

In these circumstances, is the balance sheet of twenty five years of reforms in higher education solely negative? Perhaps not, insofar as the 'privatization' and the 'externalization' to a new NGO sector of history-writing has also been conducive to the opening up of much-needed debate about Bulgaria's historical responsibilities.⁷⁵ A telling example of that contribution was provided on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the 1943 events, when segments of the academic community and the NGO sector called for recognition of the responsibility of the Bulgarian state for its part of the Holocaust.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, since members

⁷⁵ Barouh, ed, *History and Memory*.

⁷⁶ Krasimir Kănev (predsedatel na Bălgarski Helsinki Komitet), Deklaracija na BHK vāv vrāzka s deklaracijata na 41-to Narodno sābranie na Republika Bălgarija po povod 70-godišninata ot spasjavaneto na bălgarskite evrei i počitane pametta na žertvite na Holokosta, Sofia, 8 March 2013, [http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/press/single/deklaraciya-na-bhk-vv-vrzka-](http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/press/single/deklaraciya-na-bhk-vv-vrzka)

of non-governmental organizations are often stigmatized in the media and public discourse as betrayers of the national creeds, scholars who associate with them tend to lose the ability to convince the wider public of the robustness of their historical findings.⁷⁷

*Towards a Social History of the War and the Anti-Jewish Persecutions.
Venturing into the Past*

If we now try to take a step back and embrace the historiographical production of the socialist and postsocialist eras a number of features stand out, all of which point to possible directions for further research. Few in number, drawing on discontinuous sets of Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serb, and German archival records, the extant historical studies on the Holocaust in territories under Bulgarian wartime dominion have suffered from two main limitations. First, Macedonian and Bulgarian historiography share a common trope, that of the 'good' people who although filled with 'empathy' for the Jews were powerless to prevent their round-up and deportation. Whereas public historians in Bulgaria have maintained that citizens of the 'old' kingdom lacked the time to mobilize against the deportations, their Macedonian counterparts have built a narrative of shared suffering and powerlessness to confront Bulgaria's anti-Jewish measures in a context of ruthless occupation. Both those academic universes have also assumed, often but not always correctly, that antisemitism enjoyed limited support in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

These claims, however, leave us ill-equipped to understand the daily implementation of anti-Jewish measures by local bureaucrats—predominantly Bulgarians at the top of the hierarchy, Macedonian in the lower ranks within the state apparatus—, the anti-Jewish professional exclusions, the (il)legal acquisition of Jewish properties at the time of the resettlement of the Sofia Jews in the province, as well as the liquidation of Jewish properties following deportation from the occupied territories in March 1943. Undoubtedly, the exercise of power by the Bulgarian occupiers limited the room for manoeuvre of the local Macedonian, Turkish, Albanian, Vlach, Roma, Greek, and other inhabitants who might have wished to offer support to their Jewish fellow citizens. Nevertheless, sticking to the tale of interethnic solidarity will fall short of elucidating the whole range of responses to anti-Jewish measures. A patient reconstitution of the diversity of local configurations, an examination of the potentially variable patterns of relations between Jews and non-Jews before and during the war may help us

s-deklaracijata-na-41-narodno-sbranie-na-republika-blgariya-po-povod-70-godishninata-ot-spasyavaneto-na-blgarskite-evrei-i-pochitane-pametta-na-zhertvite-na-holokosta/.

⁷⁷ Personal testimony of the author.

understand the degree of autonomy local actors enjoyed and the choices they made.⁷⁸

In that respect, a shift away from considerations of individual ethics towards an exploration of the social conditions in which feelings of compassion were produced — or feeling of distance or even resentment — may be heuristic. Studies of local attitudes towards the disenfranchised Jews elsewhere in Europe have shown that expressions of solidarity often came from individuals whose social connections and professional networks granted them access to information and the means to undertake particular courses of action, such as the procurement of false documents, means of transport, hiding places and so forth.⁷⁹ There is little doubt that an investigation into the workings of specific professional organizations, for instance, would shed light on the interplay between work solidarities, interpersonal ties and individual rivalries, and their roles in the implementation of professional interdictions. Similarly, a micro-level study of neighbourly relations would significantly increase our understanding of how feelings of mutual knowledge, petty resentments and the exchange of favours affected the preservation or predation of Jewish private belongings.

Aside from the question of ‘national tolerance’ and ‘interethnic solidarity’, the bulk of Bulgarian and Macedonian scholarship on the Holocaust has centred on the identification of individual responsibilities. Highly competitive and politically informed attempts to establish a hierarchy of merits for the non-deportation of the Bulgarian Jews, and responsibility for the rounding up, imprisonment and deportation of the Jews of Macedonia, Thrace and Pirot has led to the prioritizing of the study of legal texts and public discourses over the actual implementation of anti-Jewish policies. Less consideration has been given to the dynamics at the centre over local or peripheral configurations, or of the later phases of the anti-Jewish programme over its early days. Correspondingly, the introduction of quotas in various branches of the economy, the requisition of Jewish forced labour and the relocation of expelled Jews in the Bulgarian province have remained largely outside the analytical scope.

⁷⁸ The critical reconsideration of the legacy of the national liberation struggle may have opened up new prospects for a rereading of the solidarity, long taken for granted, between Jews and non-Jews in the Macedonian resistance movement. In an English-language collection of articles published in 2008, Žamila Kolonomos, a former member of the national liberation movement (NOB) and a key figure in the communist telling of the fate of Macedonia’s Jews, recalled an anecdote about some Greek Jews being returned to Greece by a partisan unit commander, who was reluctant to accept them as fighters. Jamila Andjela Kolonomos, *Monastir without Jews. Recollections of a Jewish Partisan in Macedonia*, New York 2008; cf. Todor Čepreganov / Sonja Nikolova, *Učestvoto na evreite vo NOD vo Makedonija*, in: Berta Romano Nikolikj et al., ed, *Evreite vo Makedonija. Istorija, tradicija, kultura, jazik i religija*, Skopje 2015, 219-228.

⁷⁹ Jacques Semelin, *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée. Comment 75 % des Juifs de France ont échappé à la mort*, Paris 2013.

Moreover, a sociologically informed examination of the institutions and agents of the anti-Jewish persecutions remains wanting. Despite the availability of a huge body of archive records relating to the staff, funding, organization and decision-making processes within the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, no historian has yet endeavoured to write a history of that pivotal component of the anti-Jewish 'dispositif' (Michel Foucault). Similarly, few if any historical pieces have explored the 'street-level bureaucracy' of anti-Jewish policies, the processes by which average bureaucrats took ownership of the anti-Jewish agenda. What did individuals such as police officers, for example, and members of the intelligence services actually do? And what parts were played by legal professionals, fiscal officers, the land administration, and the local authorities?

More generally, two methodological dilemmas should perhaps be addressed. The prime question concerns the territorial scope to be adopted in research on the Holocaust in lands under Bulgarian rule. There are at least three options available. First, we might tell the story at the level of the prewar states. In the case of wartime Yugoslavia that would mean covering events which took place in five occupation zones. The assumption there would be that a consideration of institutional, social and ethnocultural legacies and continuities should prevail over wartime occupational logics. As an alternative first starting point, we might advocate the espousal of wartime boundaries. The Yugoslav and Greek zones under Bulgarian occupation would then be studied in isolation from the German occupation zone in, for instance, Greece or the Italian occupation zone in Vardar Macedonia. A choice of that kind, however, would fail to take into account the central role played by territorial ambitions in the region of Thessaloniki in shaping Bulgarian policies in northern Greece as well as in the southern part of Vardar Macedonia, in the region of Bitola for instance. Instead, research may be delineated so as to encompass all of Ottoman Macedonia, meaning Vardar, and Aegean and Pirin Macedonia, regardless of the different fates of the Jews there. We might argue for the retention of that territorial framework based on consideration of the role played on the one hand by the common Ottoman historical experience—including Jewish experiences in the Empire—, of the national imaginary shared by Bulgarians, Serbs, and Greeks, and the bearers of Macedonian national identity, on the other hand. Whatever the choice, there is little doubt that the spatial framework adopted will affect the identification of actors and factors in the unfolding of the Holocaust, as well as the assessment of links between anti-Jewish measures, competing national projects, and the overall conduct of the war.

The second issue concerns matters of periodization. Wartime creates by definition an extremely dynamic environment, where changes in social relations take place both quickly and seemingly unforeseeably. However, the sheer

rapidity with which social distance and cruelty were crafted during wartime in Bulgarian-held territories does not mean that the time horizon needed to appreciate them is short. On the contrary we may well argue that the production of a mobile present is made possible through the selective re-appropriation of multiple pasts by social agents. The fashioning of indifference to the plight of the Jews for example can be seen as resulting from a combination of long term identity and social processes, mid-term professional routines, and short term opportunities. At what moment, then, should the telling of the Holocaust start? When the Bulgarians invaded Vardar Macedonia in April 1941, or when the German offensive against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia began a few weeks earlier? Or did it begin in October 1940 with the adoption of the first anti-Jewish legislation in Yugoslavia, or much earlier than that, with the Balkan Wars and the division of Ottoman Macedonia in 1912-1913? Could it even have been with the formulation of rival national projects at the dawn of the Empire in the second half of the 19th century? Indeed, if we leave out those last decades of the Empire and the interwar era we might accidentally compromise the deciphering of individual and collective attitudes in the face of the constraints and opportunities created by the war. The ordering of temporal sequences entails a whole set of assumptions about what we should look at and how we should look at it in order fully to comprehend the persecution of the Jews.

Last but not least, to further reflect on salient variables and units of analysis, the reconnection among several bodies of literature may be warranted. I should like to make a case for the re-linking of the historical pieces dedicated to World War Two, to the occupational regimes in Yugoslavia and Greece, and to the Holocaust. Written from different perspectives, based on divergent topographic delimitations, inserted within contrasted historiographical disputes, much of that literature has failed to engage in a dialogue. Such a reconnection will help to ponder the respective roles of Germany and Bulgaria in the shaping of wartime policies, the management of ethnic differences, and implementation of anti-Jewish measures. Allowing better consideration of temporal shifts, it will enable us to overcome the schism between a Bulgarian narrative that tends to see German troops next to the Jewish transports, and a Macedonian mainstream discourse which of late has come to see only Bulgarian occupiers. Such an approach will also invite the reintroduction of a central but often overlooked protagonist in the story, namely Italy. Mussolini was indeed granted a segment of Vardar Macedonia west of the province, and until the Italian capitulation in September 1943 rivalries between Bulgaria and Italy played an axial part in the definition of Bulgaria's geopolitical, economic and ethnocultural priorities in southwestern Macedonia. Bilateral contentious matters influenced how the two countries handled German demands on 'the Jewish question', as well as responses to Jewish attempts to escape from Bulgarian-occupied into Italian-held territories.

Following in the footsteps of Holly Case, I believe too that the 'Jewish' and 'Macedonian' questions need to be investigated in parallel.⁸⁰ European Jewry was often entangled with complex interethnic relations.⁸¹ In Macedonia however, the interplay between the 'national question(s)' and the 'Jewish question' has remained on the periphery of scholarship on the Holocaust. An enormous body of work has explored the competing attempts on the part of the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks to shape the national identities of the Slavic majority. A more modest historical output has investigated the history and fate of the Jewish communities. Very few are the scholars who have tried to assess how local Jews responded to the overlay of national projects they were exposed to, and how the Slavs and other communities in Macedonia assessed the national loyalties of the Jews. In his remarkable study of the Jewish community of Bitola—the former Monastir—Mark Cohen has suggested that, faced with the challenge of competing national projects, the Jews turned even more wholeheartedly to Zionism.⁸² The point may be valid, but tells us little about how non-Jews understood the on-going identity dynamics within the Jewish community on the eve of the war. We do not learn from Cohen to what extent non-Jews' understanding of Jewish responses to the Slavic nation-building ideals might have shaped their representation of Jewish loyalty, favoured the development of othering practices or influenced the expression of gestures of support for the Jews during the war. Similarly, failure to take into account the position of the Jews in the multiethnic mosaic and competing state ambitions might well have limited our understanding of how the Bulgarian occupiers defined their national goals when they invaded Macedonia.⁸³ Briefly, what is needed is a social history of the Holocaust which takes into account national processes that predated Bulgarian occupation but which were accelerated during the course of the war. Anti-Jewish policies and the diversity of local responses must be set against the history of competing nation-building ambitions, and the effects on Jews and non-Jews, and the relationships between them, of rival endeavours to shape national self-definitions.

⁸⁰ Case, *The Combined Legacies of the 'Jewish Question' and the 'Macedonian Question'*.

⁸¹ Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder without Hatred. Estonians and the Holocaust*, New York 2009; Holly Case, *Between States. The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*, Stanford 2009.

⁸² Mark Cohen, *Last Century of a Sephardic Community. The Jews of Monastir, 1839-1943*, New York 2003.

⁸³ On these matters, see Nadège Ragaru, *Nationalizing the Holocaust. 'Foreign' Jews and the Making of Indifference in Macedonia under Bulgarian Occupation (1941-1944)*, in: Andrea Löw / Frank Bajohr, eds, *The Holocaust and European Societies. Social Processes and Social Dynamics*, London 2016, 105-126.

Conclusion

A number of tentative conclusions may be drawn from this survey of Holocaust studies in Macedonia and Bulgaria. Looking back over the past twenty five years, one might be tempted to paint a sombre portrait of recent trends in historiography and memory, pinpointing the ever more acrimonious quality of historical controversies and highlighting the proliferation of memory initiatives. Conversely, many an observer would propose a benevolent reading of the role of international actors, and praise their efforts to quell 'Balkan passions' through the export of reconciliation models and recommendations regarding the writing of school textbooks and the conduct of scholarly research.

However, the story this article has tried to relate departs from those assumptions. Establishing a binary contrast between 'national' and 'international' trends is misleading for various reasons. A leitmotif in the article has been the depiction of ever-changing and yet constant attempts by actors both public and private to promote national readings of the past by making use of international sources of legitimacy. Local, regional and international dynamics are enmeshed in a way that dooms to failure any attempt at grasping the dynamics underpinning both the chronicling and the remembrance of the Holocaust through a neat separation of those dimensions.

Moreover, the contribution of international actors to the shaping of historiography and memory has not been devoid of ambivalence. The invitation by the European Council to member states to 'raise or support initiatives aiming at informing and educating the public about Europe's totalitarian past, as well as to conduct research projects, including those with an international dimension', and the insistence that 'there could be no reconciliation without truth and remembrance'⁸⁴ have had the unintended effect of encouraging politicians and state actors back in Bulgaria and in Macedonia alike, to take control of a 'one and only true history' and the proper way to remember it. Most European and international recommendations also rest on the belief that conflicted memories can and should be reconciled. As American historian Karl Jacoby recently demonstrated in a masterful piece dedicated to another painful site of history and memory — the Camp Grant Massacre of 1871 in the United States — experiences, recollections and readings of conflicted pasts are not easily reconciled.⁸⁵ Nor perhaps should they be. The challenge might lie elsewhere, in the ability to recover all the voices that were once lost, to encourage a thorough exploration of

⁸⁴ Cf. Council of the European Union, Draft Council Conclusions on the Memory of the Crimes Committed by the Totalitarian Regimes in Europe, Brussels, 8 June 2011, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011268%202011%20INIT>.

⁸⁵ Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn. An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History*, New York, London 2008.

the diversity of sources available, and to open necessary conversation without postulating how that conversation should end.

This leads me to a final, hopeful remark. Today's historians tend to be nostalgic for a time when the writing of history was the preserve of scholars, and when memory initiatives did not prevent the holding of a detached view on past events. However, a consideration of Holocaust scholarship worldwide suggests that perhaps such a 'golden age' never existed. In the immediate aftermath of the war, state actors spearheaded the fashioning of national narratives through a diversity of judicial, commemorative and scholarly endeavours, and Macedonia and Bulgaria are no exceptions to that. Henceforth, rather than setting public actors, witnesses and historians against each other we might prefer to study the changing entanglements between history and memory, as well as the role of public disputes in the channelling of financial means towards specific research subjects and in writing historical studies. In the last resort the flourishing of public controversies might have been a necessary precondition for the strengthening of public interest in these divisive pasts and the emergence of a generation of scholars who will provide innovative pieces of research.

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