**Texts. Journey 5**

1. 
2. **Salonica / Thessaloniki**

**Venizelos Demands Jews Surrender Greek Suffrage**

 **[Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1934]**

SALONICA ,January 25, 1934

Elutherios Venizelos, many times Premier of Greece, war-time dictator of the country and leader of the Liberal party, which recently suffered defeat at the polls, today openly demanded that Greek Jews voluntarily surrender their hard-won franchise in return for the cessation of the violent anti-Semitic campaign carried on by the Liberal party and its press.

Venizelos, who blames the Jews of Greece for his political defeats and the creation of bitter feeling between the various political groups, demands the return of the electoral college for the Jews, a measure which the Greek Jewish community is strenuously opposing.

Up to May 1933, Greek Jews voted in a sort of political ghetto, called an electoral college. They chose their own representatives from a separate Jewish list. Last year this “electoral college” was abolished and the Jews of Greece voted with the rest of the population.

In a letter to the Jewish senator, Aaron Sciaky, Venizelos delivered his ultimatum to the Jews. At the same time the Liberal party press, including the notorious Jew-baiting daily Makedonia, suspended all attacks on the Jews pending a decision on the Venizelos ultimatum.

**VIRULENT ANTI-SEMITES**

The Venizelos campaign against the Jews began in June 1933 and has been raging ever since. The campaign centered in Salonica, where there are 60,000 Jews, and where

The Venizelist papers in Salonica and elsewhere have carried daily attacks on the Jews, accusing them of being strangers in Greece and of the having opposed ”all Greek national efforts.” Jews were attacked on the streets of Salonica and the Liberal press openly urged the populace to” beat the Jews.”

You are out for ware. are you Jews?” a front-page article in Makedonia asked.” You shall have it. There are 60,000 Jews in Salonica which means that there are 60,000 conspirators in the city. The Jews of Salonica are a dangerous and treacherous element. They have always been working against Greek authority.

” We have been too indulgent toward the Jews”, Makedona declared. ” The Jews are the enemies of Greece. They have declared ware upon us, and we shall accept their insolent challenge. We shall adopt the necessary attitude toward these odious foreigners, these accursed Jews who of conspiracy and shame. We have already beaten them once. This time we shall exterminate them completely,” Makedonia said.

In addition to this anti-Semitic agitation of the Liberal press, a Greek Nazi party, the EEE, was formed. Leading Greek Journals openly accused the German Nazis of having spent ten million drachmas in Greece in recent months.

**Text 3. Greek Jews in Auschwitz**

1. "Next to us is a group of Greeks, those admirable and terrible Jews of Salonika ... Those Greeks who have conquered in the kitchens and the yards, and whom even the Germans respect and the Poles fear. They are in their third year of camp, and no one knows better than them what the camp means .... And they continue to sing and beat their feet in time and grow drunk on songs", Primo Levi, ‘If this is a man’, Abacus Press, 1991
2. "In the concentration camp ... the Ashkenazim didn't believe that we were Jews ... because we were strong, suntanned from the sun of Saloniki ... 'Tfu, the Grecos, those Greeks,' the Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews said about us, and we were scared, thinking it was German they spoke ... We didn't understand a single word the SS shouted, and just for that we were beaten"

Lea Aini, "Rose of Lebanon," (2009)

1. “First among them [the merchants in the camp’s black market] come the Greeks, as immobile and silent as sphinxes, squatting on the ground behind their bowls of thick soup, the fruits of their labour, of their cooperation and of their national solidarity. The Greeks have been reduced to very few by now, but they have made a contribution of the first importance to the physiognomy of the camp and to its international slang in circulation. Everyone knows that “caravana” is the bowl, and that “la comedera es buena” means the soup is good; the word that expresses the generic idea of theft is “klepsi-klepsi”, of obvious Greek origin. These few survivors from the Jewish colony of Salonika, with their two languages, Spanish and Greek, and their numerous activities, are the repositories of a concrete, mundane, conscious wisdom, in which the traditions of all the Mediterranean civilizations blend together. That this wisdom was transformed in the camp into the systematic and scientific practice of theft and seizure of positions and the monopoly of the bargaining Market, should not let one forget that their aversion to gratuitous brutality, their amazing consciousness of the survival of at least a potential human dignity, made of the Greeks the most coherent national nucleus in Lager, and in this respect, the most civilized»

Primo Levi, ‘If This is a Man’

1. We, Italian Jews, didn’t speak Yiddish, we were foreigners to the Germans and foreigners to the eastern Jews, since they had no idea that an Hebraism like ours did exist… We felt particularly helpless. We and the Greeks were the last among the last. Let me say we were in a worse condition than the Greeks, because the Greeks were, to a great extent, people used to discrimination. Antisemitism did exist in Salonika and many Salonikan Jews had learnt the ropes living among non-Jewish Greeks. But the Italians, the Italian Jews, so accustomed to being equal with all the others, were actually unarmoured, naked like an egg without its eggshell”

Primo Levi, in A.Bravo; F.Jalla, eds. La vita offesa. Storia e memoria dei Lager nazisti nei racconti di duecento sopravvisuti, Milano 1986, pp.190-191

1. (song sung by a Greek Jew from Birkenau)

"Greek girls who can hear me, tra la la ... in these chimneys here that you see above, a death factory of the worst kind is operating ... thousands of Jews ... falling into flames ... and I know that I too will be burned ... Greek girls, please ... if you come out of here alive ... tell the world."

Recounted by Beri Nehemia, from the ‘Canada’ camp, in Birkenau, in Greek Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau’, Photini Tomai-Constantopoulou

iv. “I am not sad that I will die, but I am sad that I won’t be able to take revenge like I would like to.”  Marcel Nadjary, b. Salonica 1917,

[Nadjary ws a member of Sonderkommando, responsible for disposing of bodies taken from gas chambers in Birkenau. These words were written and buried in a flask in the ground near the gas chambers. Nadjary survived, moved to the United States where he married and hd children.]

1. **From poems of Hizkia M. Francco**

[Franco was among the leaders of the Jewish community of Rhodes, and served as its president before the community was deported to Auschwitz. He managed to escape and took refuge in Turkey, then mandate Palestine before returning to Rhodes in 1946. This poem is part of a collection written in dedication to the devastation of Jewish Rhodes and his dead brothers and sisters.

The transportation of the Jews of Rhodes was the longest deportation journey of all communities during the Holocaust. The poem is translated here from the original Ladino.

**The Deportation**

It is painful, pitiful,

This sad deportation,

Horrifying tragedy

That fills me with emotion

How many people, masses?

Uprooted from their homes.

Thinking of it chills me

To know they are in the camps.

Fathers, mothers and children,

They crushed with no pity.

Hard were the tortures

For all sexes and ages.

They smothered tender children

With no emotion or heart.

From the wax of these lilies

They produced, alas! Their good soap.

-What o you think, O Saint paul,

Of this monstrous crime?

* Whim of the Devil,
* Sombre and pitiable.

Have they no mothers or children

These spirits of evil?

Have they even no stepchildren

Oh! This infernal spirit?

In the ovens o the crematoria:

Great massacres of Jews

Who died as martyrs

In Your Name, O Holy God!

O Auschwitz! Sad and gloomy,

You are an eradicable blemish

That blots out your face.

You are a monster, unforgettable!

It is a crime without equal

In human history.

In your vault, wonderful temple

Will be sung your sad glory.

May it be plain what was the end

Of this great misfortune

That they may see what the end was

Of this evil venture.

1. **From the poems of Yehuda Haim Aaron HaCohen Perahia**

[Yehuda Haim Perahia was the representative f tobacco company with headquarters in Xanthi. With the assistance of his maid, he escaped to Athens, and settled back in Salonica after the war. His poems were inspired by religious identity. His family roots stretch back to Second Temple times, and then to Spain. Fleeing the Inquistion, the family moved to Italy and then to Ottoman Salonica.]

The poem is translated here from the original Ladino.

**The Third Cry of Anguish in Salonika**

My feet walk the streets of this blesse city,

Only yesterday full of faithful adgerents of Sinai

My eyes do not have the courage to look up

The bitterness of my soul is great, O Holy God

I tremble all over. In my memory a troubling image

Presents itself, making me see the enticing prosperity

Of the Jewish multitude of this blessed city

That was called *Ir Va’em b’yisrael* for its fidelity.

The contrast with today is sad and sorrowful indeed.

Not one Jewish soul exists any longer. It is lamentable.

The cemetery, synagogues, houses of study all profaned,

All that is Jewish – houses, stores – all were robbed.

Tears run from my eyes and my feet do not stop.

My faithful Anastasia who has served me for twenty years

Holds me up to prevent me from falling unconscious

And letting the evil enemies take me in this mental state

‘Courage’, she repeated, ‘the God of your sainted forefathers,

Who watched over you until today, we save you in not distant future?

And you will reach a more hospitable land,

Fleeing those wretched enemies in their pursuit.

O Holy God! Who will now read the abandoned Torah?

Here there were many groups who read it and lived by it.

Who will keep the Shabbat, the great day of rest?

How can you be present as a spectator o this tragedy?

When criminal hands burned the Beth Hamikdash

The High Priests threw the keys to Heaven to deliver them.

Here, it is the strangers who tore in mockery Your Holy Law,

Taking away to death all the followers of your faith!

And nevertheless, You had promised our ancestors

Even in the land of their enemies under Heaven:

‘I will be merciful unto them, my children, and I shall not destroy them;

In their hours of oppression, I shall come to them and redeem them’

Lord of the universe, Lord of the universe! If You were a man

I would have brought You to judgement even in Your Holy name!

But You are not a man and I blaspheme. And what can I do

But cry endlessly, since I cannot conceive

That You should have us obliterated by our oppressors.

Keep Your promise and send us saviours quickly.

Athens, 11th Adar 5703, 16th May 1943