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Tangential representation of the Sephardim and Mizrahim in the Holocaust: multi-cultural diversity lost under the Ashkenazi hegemony

ABSTRACT. Since the 1980s, researchers working on Sephardic and Mizrahi (Eastern) Jewry during the Holocaust in the Balkans, North Africa and Iraq have published much on the inclusion of the non-Ashkenazi Jews in diverse aspects of annihilation, resistance, and hiding. Due to the lack of awareness, proximity to Israeli Holocaust museums, and large groups of survivors outside of Israel, very little research and interviewing was done on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry in WWII and the exposure of the Jews of the Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East and the Far East to the Holocaust. In this process, the Holocaust history of Morocco and Iraq was virtually known outside of Israel. Since for many decades after the Holocaust Ashkenazi hegemony emphasized heroism and resistance in its narrative, when Sephardic research addressed Jewish partisan resistance in the Balkans, and in Auschwitz and other labor and death camps, it was blocked from the general historiography and museum commemoration. In the last two decades, the Holocaust establishment has been including Sephardic Jewry and other non-Ashkenazi groups in Africa and Asia in its narrative at best as a token element. In ex-Yugoslavia, the Jasenovac death camp has reduced portrayal of its Jewish victims to a minimum in defense of Croatian nationalist cover-up; in Serbia Holocaust commemoration has not progressed beyond socialist realism representing Jewish annihilation in passing; in the new Skopje museum much of the new Sephardic and Holocaust content has been censored by the government; and Bulgaria continues to deny its role in the annihilation of Jews in Macedonia and Thrace. In recent years, the second generation has initiated local March of the Living commemorations in Salonika and Northern Macedonia, while Holocaust monuments continue to be desecrated throughout Greece. In Israel, the partial courts have rejected the status of Moroccan and Iraqi Jews as survivors of the Holocaust in class action suits, despite the archival evidence and Claims Conference recognition of the Moroccan Jewry under Vichy.

KEYWORDS:

Sephardic, Holocaust, Auschwitz, Mizrahim, Salonika, Morocco, Farhud, Warsaw

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Косвенное представление сефардов и мизрахов в дискурсе Холокоста: мультикультурное разнообразие, потерянное в условиях гегемонии ашкеназов

АННОТАЦИЯ. С 1980-х гг. исследователями, занимавшимися историей сефардского и мизрахского (восточного) еврейства во время Холокоста на Балканах, в Северной Африке и Ираке, было опубликовано много работ о вовлеченности евреев-неашкеназов в различные процессы уничтожения, сопротивления и укрывания. В силу недостаточной осведомленности, близости к израильским музеям Холокоста и существования больших групп выживших за пределами Израиля очень мало исследований и интервью было проведено для изучения сефардских и мизрахских еврейских общин во Второй мировой войне и включенности евреев Балкан, Северной Африки, Ближнего и Дальнего Востока в Холокост. В этом отношении история Холокоста в Марокко и Ираке была в сущности известна за пределами Израиля. На протяжении многих десятилетий после Холокоста гегемония ашкеназов предполагала акцент на героизм и сопротивление в своем нарративе, а когда и сефардские исследования обратились к еврейскому партизанскому движению на Балканах, а также сопротивлению в Освенциме и других трудовых и концентрационных лагерях, они были проигнорированы общей историографией и музейной коммеморацией. В последние два десятилетия официальные структуры Холокоста включали сефардские общины и неашкеназские группы в Азии и Африке в свой нарратив в лучшем случае формально. В бывшей Югославии лагерь смерти Ясеновац свел изображение своих еврейских жертв к минимуму в защиту хорватской националистической политики замалчивания; в Сербии коммеморация Холокоста не вышла за пределы соцреализма, мимоходом упоминающего уничтожение евреев; в новом музее в Скопье большая часть экспонатов, связанных с сефардами и Холокостом, подверглась цензуре со стороны правительства; Болгария же продолжает отрицать свою роль в уничтожении евреев в Македонии и Фракии. В последние годы второе поколение стало инициатором местных Маршей Живых в Салониках и Северной Македонии, в то время как памятники Холокосту продолжают осквернять по всей Греции. В Израиле предвзятые суды не признали статус марокканских и иракских евреев как выживших в Холокосте в делах по коллективному искам, несмотря на архивные свидетельства и признание Клеймс Конференс марокканского еврейства при режиме Виши.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:

сефарды, Холокост, Освенцим, мизрахи,
Салоники, Марокко, Фархунд, Варшава

ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ:

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Due to the dominance of Polish and Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust experience and narrative in Israel and the diaspora, the legacy of Holocaust experience of the non-Ashkenazi Jews, whether Sephardi or Eastern, affected by the Holocaust in Western Europe, the Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East in some 18 countries, becomes very peripheral and trivialized. Whether the focus is suffering, annihilation of Balkan Jewry, heroism in Auschwitz or Warsaw, forced labor, captivity, ghettoization, persecution by rioting, spoliation, rescue and resistance, hiding, or discrepancy in reparations, the Sephardic narrative becomes secondary at best, and even in local Jewish museums in the Mediterranean, the history of the Sephardim and other local and regional groups becomes back-staged or mostly watered down if not obliterated.

DISTORTIONS IN REPRESENTATION,
HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND RECOGNITION

In Salonika (Thessaloniki) immediately after the Holocaust Joseph Nehama and Michael Molho rushed to put the Holocaust story of Salonikan and Greek Jewry on paper (Molho, Nehama 1965). Yugoslavia and Bulgaria under state socialism and communism, emphasized the national effort against Nazism, but did not enable much literary and historical freedom for a Jewish Holocaust narrative. In Israel Bulgarian member of the Knesset Bubba Arditti wrote a general narrative with some documentation, but little field work and limited archival material from Bulgaria and Germany (Arditi 1962).

Yad Vashem published a national-like almanac for Yugoslavian Jewry in the Holocaust, community by community in the Pinkas Hakehillot community series (Loker 1988). In the 1980s, pioneering academic research was conducted by Jennie Lebl on the Holocaust in the eight diverse republics in Yugoslavia (Lebl 1990; 1995; 2001; 2002; 2003), and in Greece Yitzchak Kerem did extensive interviewing of Greek survivors in Greece, Israel, France, the United States, and elsewhere; as well as archival research in the above countries as well as in France and Germany (Kerem 2001). Yosef Ben introduced new research like heroism and Jewish Greek communities in the periphery in a published M.A. thesis (Ben 1985), but died shortly afterward, Shmuel Refael published a book of Greek Jewish Holocaust survivor interviews and then researched on

Judeo-Spanish Holocaust literary creation (Refael 1988; 2008), after fifteen years of labor Bracha Rivlin and Yitzchak Kerem compiled the Hebrew *Pinkas HaKehillot Yavan* depicting 2300 years of Greek Jewish history community by community and then the Holocaust and post-Holocaust period (Rivlin, Kerem, Bornstein-Matkovetski 1999), and Byzantinist Steven Bowman in English complemented Holocaust research on Greece (Bowman 1986). In the 1990^s and later published books on Greek Jewry in the Holocaust and in the partisan movement (Bowman 2006; 2009), several Bulgarian scholars, like Frederick Chary (Chary 1972) and Moshe Mosek (Mosek) began researching Bulgaria from a critical academic position and emphasized rescue in Bulgaria, as well as forced labor, and Bulgarian responsibility for the annihilation of Jews from Yugoslavian Macedonia and Greek Thrace in the new annexed territories.

Hanna Yablonka noted how the Holocaust in Israel was perceived as a European phenomenon and until the 1980^s, Yad Vashem did not mention North Africa in the Holocaust. In the Eichmann trial in 1961 there was only one session on Salonika by survivor Yitzhak Nehama and no inclusion of Bulgaria in the trial, despite 12,000 Jews being sent by Bulgaria to Treblinka for annihilation. Tunisia was omitted even though survivors offered to testify. Also, there was no mention of Libya despite Mussolini sending Jews for forced labor for 13 months in Libya, deporting Jews to Italy, and also to concentration camps in Europe in Austria and to Bergen Belsen (Yablonka 2016: 84–99). A man who was part of the technical team that made the glass cage for the Nazi criminal Eichmann for the trial was a Libyan Jew, Tzion Levi of Tripoli, who was prisoner in Bergen Belsen, and he wondered why he could not testify in the trial (Ibid.: 96).

The John Demanjuk trial in Israel in the second half of the 1980^s had no Sephardic witnesses of relatives of Salonikan, Yugoslavian Macedonian, and Greek Thracian Jews annihilated in Treblinka (Kerem 1997). The trial research was prepared by Hebrew University law students, who were interns at the Israel Justice Ministry, and had no historical background, and in the end in the appeal, it was determined that Demanjuk was not the accused Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka. Later, he was brought to trial in Germany for being a guard in the Sobibor death camp and was given a five year sentence. Here on the contrary, one of the witnesses was a Sephardic Portuguese Dutch Jew, Rudie S. Cortissos, whose mother and other relatives were annihilated in Sobibor (Ewing, Cowell 2011), but he had no knowledge about Sobibor or Demanjuk, and his testimony was more symbolic than that of a camp witness.

Irit Avramski-Bligh, edited *Pinkas HaKehillot Libya and Tunisia*, which was published in 1997 by Yad Vashem. Haim Saadoun, after noting that 1954 to 1884 was a period of silence and ignorance on North Africa in the Holocaust, depicted how *Pinkas HaKehillot Libya and Tunisia served as a catalyst for recognition of North Africa in the Holocaust*:

“This was the first attempt to describe the history of the Jewish communities in Libya and Tunisia; the Holocaust was not the main focus but was treated as just a part of the chronological history. The decision was not to include Vichy-controlled Algeria and Morocco in *Pinkas Hakehillot* was based on the academic perception that the events in those countries were different from those in Libya and Tunisia, where Germany and Italy ruled directly. The inclusion of North Africa in *Pinkas Hakehillot*, the first publication of the most important memorial institute of the Holocaust in Israel, meant that the Jews of these communities were understood to have been part of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem in effect determined the borders of the Holocaust. From that time on, Yad Vashem became deeply involved in various aspects of research, exhibitions, conferences, and the like concerning these North African communities” (Boum, Stein 2018: 229–238).

The Survivors of the Shoah refused to arrange interviews in France in 1993 when I proposed to interview Tunisian survivors; claiming that Tunisia was not part of the Holocaust. Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan of Haifa University has written about the absence of North African Jewry in the Holocaust in film (Kozlovsky Golan 2014).

Regarding North African Jewry in the Holocaust in the 1980^s Michel Abitbol wrote critically of Vichy in Morocco and North Africa, dispelled myths of the Moroccan King as the protector of Moroccan Jewry, but did not do meaningful interviewing in neither Israel, or France. By the late 1990^s, Haim Saadoun and Yaakov Hajaj-Liluf, researchers of Tunisia and Libya respectively, claimed that WWII in their countries of research was “almost Holocaust”; showing a lack of their theoretical understandings, and unfamiliarity with Holocaust studies and research.

In the early 2000^s, Hajaj-Liluf (Hajaj-Liluf 2000; see also: Barazani 2014) established the Libyan Museum for Jewish Heritage in Or Yehuda and established a meaningful Holocaust hall. By the 2010^s, Saadoun began to publish on Tunisian Jewry in the Holocaust (Saadoun 2008; 2012) and in 2014 he established the information center for North Africa in WWII at the Ben-Zvi Institute with Claims Conference funding. At first the center focused on the Jews under colonialism, but in recent years it deals with the Holocaust in online data bases and documents, public programming, and publications. Unfortunately Saadoun has been paid by the Finance Ministry of Israel to take the position as an historian of opposing inclusion of Moroccan Jewry in the Holocaust in the class action suits of Moroccan Jewry, representing 22,000 petitioners amongst Moroccan Jewish Holocaust survivors in Israel, against the State of Israel for Holocaust recognition and reparations (Beersheva 2018).

Daniel Schroeter and Aomar Boum haven’t seen documentation of local Moroccan Jews in forced labor or ongoing Vichy riots against the Jews from 1941 to 1944 so they don’t include such Holocaust themes in their

research publications (Boum, Stein 2018: 19–49, 113–131). In 1946 France destroyed the Vichy archives, so sources are limited but documentation can be viewed at the Centre Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris, the U.S. National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and fairly explicitly in microfilms at Yad Vashem.

Despite recognition previously by the Claims Conference and Germany, the Israeli court said Vichy in Morocco unlike other Nazis Axis partners, had free reign from Nazi Germany and the French Vichy regime, and did not implement Nuremberg Laws or Nationalist-Socialist Nazi ideology or Nazi German orders. This abhorrence ignored the authoritative research in the field specifically by Marrus and Paxton (Marrus, Paxton 1981: 104–108, 167–168, 196), Kerem (Kerem 2019; Azses, Kerem et al. 2006, chapter on Morocco in the Holocaust), Joseph Toledano (Toledano 2017; 2011: 77), and Yosef Chetrit (Chetrit 2018)¹. Vichy doctrine in Morocco was determined in France by Vichy deputy Vallet, Commissioner for Jews Affairs Laval, and relayed by Governor Nogues to the King to issue the orders for the Jews to move to the Jewish Ghettos, preparing them for deportation to Nazi death camps in Poland as part of the Final Solution, and they were only spared by the invasion of U.S. forces on 9 November 1942, but the United States kept the Fascist French Vichy regime in power which used its French Sol troops to initiate vicious anti-Jewish riots in January-February 1943, and rioting continued sporadically until the de Gaulle forces replaced Vichy only in 1944. Under the theoretical auspices of the Allies, the Vichy regime remained in place in Morocco until the end of 1944. At least 55,000 Jews lost their homes under Vichy, and local Jews sent to forced labor in some 37 camps in Morocco were only released once Vichy was replaced by the free French de Gaulle forces in 1944. Eisenhower kept in power Admiral François Darlan, commander of the Vichy French forces, who was later murdered in December 1943. When Adolf Hitler learned of Darlan's deal with the Allies, he immediately ordered the occupation of Vichy France and sent troops to Tunisia.

The Eisenhower/Darlan agreement meant that the officials appointed by the Vichy regime would remain in power in North Africa. No role was provided for Free France, which was supposed to be France's government-in-exile, and which had taken charge in other French colonies. This deeply offended Charles de Gaulle as head of Free France. It also offended much of the British and American public, who regarded all Vichy French as Nazi collaborators, and Darlan as one of the worst. Eisenhower insisted however that he had no real choice if his forces were to move on against the Axis in Tunisia, rather than fight the French in Algeria and Morocco.

¹ For another work on the adverse influence of Vichy on Moroccan Jewry see: (Bilu, Levy 2000).

NON-RECOGNITION OF SEPHARDIC AND EASTERN JEWISH
HEROISM IN THE HOLOCAUST

The Greek Romaniote and Sephardic Jews who revolted in Crematoriums 3 and 4 in Birkenau on October 6, 1944 are finally depicted in general and academic works (Greif 2014; Kerem 2016), but not in general commemoration, memorialization, or Holocaust education on the high school or university level. The Sephardic diaries of the events are not considered legitimate in the Holocaust canon, so they are not portrayed in museums, or Holocaust curriculum; or even in general Holocaust literature. Yad Vashem refused to publish 15 year old Auschwitz Sephardic work coordinator Jacko Maestro's memoirs or biography on false grounds and Auschwitz itself will not commemorate its Sephardic heroes or front-row prisoners (Greif in press; see also: Grief 2014; Kerem 2000: 339).

Some one thousand Salonika Sephardic inmates were sent to the destroyed Warsaw ghetto to create the Gensche camp and clean up the rubble of the camp (see: Kerem 2012; Kermish 1954). Main events like the unsuccessful escape and hanging of Shaul Senor, or Dario Levi destroying the Pawiak prison by shooting a shell at it two tank shells from a captured German tank at the outset of the first Polish resistance revolt on August 1, 1944 are not depicted in Pawiak, the Polin Museum, or Auschwitz; not out of ignorance, but by not being inspired to portray the events and change the narrative that has been dictated by Yad Vashem and the Polish Jewish movers and shakers; active in initiating commemoration and public monuments (Kerem 1995). One bright light is the agreement of the upcoming Museum of the Warsaw Ghetto to include these above events in its permanent exhibition. The Salonikan Jews remaining in Warsaw on 1 August 1944 participated in the two Polish resistance revolts against the Germans in August and October 1944, but they are left out of museum exhibits and most historical narratives (Kossov 2004).

Whether the Sephardim were heroes like 15 year-old Salonikan Auschwitz *arbeitsdienst* Jacko Maestro or champion boxer and coordinator Jacko Razon (Raphael 1988: 454–458; Kerem 2008) or fighters in Warsaw in the Polish resistance revolts (Kerem 1995), Algerian swimmer Charles Nakash, national Yugoslavian Partisan heroes Victor Meshulam, Stella Ovadia, or Moshe Piade, or hundreds of Jewish youth arrested in the Allied Embarkment in Algeria, they will not be represented in museums in Auschwitz, Warsaw, Yad Vashem, Los Angeles, Washington, or Paris. The Sephardic Holocaust literature, drama, music, and poetry is not part of the Holocaust cultural canon; whether in publishing, the arts, high school or university Holocaust education, or government funded initiatives. Even locally, whether in Salonika, Sarajevo, or Casablanca, the local story is only very generally and briefly told. Greece has had numerous desecrations of Holocaust monuments annually in the last twenty years,

and despite Holocaust education in Greek schools, the lessons are hardly felt in Greek society.

PROBLEMS IN COMMEMORATION OF DEATH SITES AND MUSEUMOLOGY

The Belgrade concentration camp Šabac (Koljanin 1992; 1998) was well known after the Holocaust, but remains an abandoned fairground. The second Belgrade concentration camp Topovske Šupe was only discovered in 1999 when the deceased Jenny Lebel found it in a German microfilm at the United States National Archive in College Park, Maryland as part of my research group at the Washington D.C. Memorial Holocaust Museum that summer (Lebel 2007). Unfortunately, it appears to be on its way to being part of a shopping center, and the local Jewish community of Belgrade has little inclination or clout to fight it. Only since 2010 has the camp been depicted in the Serbian press (Vuković 2017).

The Holocaust Museum in Skopje since 2008, despite efforts of Holocaust historians Michael Berenbaum and myself, Yitzchak Kerem, for four years of labor and planning, has been a shallow narrative and greatly censored since the Macedonian government does not want to irritate the Bulgarian government in its complicity for the deportation of the Jews of Yugoslavian Macedonia and Greek Thrace to their annihilation in the Nazi German Treblinka Death Camp in Poland (see: Kerem 2006). In the permanent exhibit, after government censorship, there is only one sentence stating that the Bulgarian fascist army organized the deportations.

The Jasenovac death camp remains a politicized memorial; whereby the Croatian government has whittled down the role of the annihilation of the Jews to the bare minimum (Goldstein, Goldstein 2016), and seeks to evade its main activity in annihilating 700,000 or more in number, and wants to turn the monument into a symbol of Croatian suffering as opposed to Holocaust perpetuation. Thus the Croatian government has alienated the Zagreb Jewish community from participating in the annual Jasenovac commemoration ceremonies.

Serbia, despite misleading public pronouncements, has not made a permanent Holocaust museum; only a traveling exhibit within the country. The old Jewish museum in Belgrade has not been changed since the period of Tito Socialist Realism.

ISRAEL DECLINES TO RECOGNIZE IRAQI AND MOROCCAN JEWRY AS PART OF THE HOLOCAUST

In the Israeli court system, after the Iraqi Holocaust survivors lost in class action suits on the local, district, and supreme court levels, the suffering

of Iraqi Jews in thirteen communities in the Nazi-inspired Farhud 1941 riots has been denied Holocaust reparation status in a very biased judicial process (Aderet 2018). The Israeli Knesset has also discredited the survivors, activists, historians, and lawyers in numerous committee hearings². Despite presentation of financing by Italy and Germany of pro-Nazi propaganda, two diplomatic agreements between Nazi Germany and the Gailani pro-German government, military armaments and Germany fighting on the side of Iraq in spring 1941 against the British army, financing of militias, the scout movement (Moreh, Yehuda 2010), German financing of cabinet ministers and several military heads, political indoctrination of much of the political and pedagogical elite of Iraq, as well as funding for Nazi indoctrination of Iraqi youth movements, who later participated in the Farhud, the Israeli courts did not recognize Iraqi Jews as victims of Nazi National Socialism³.

The Ashkenazi Holocaust and judicial establishment viewed the events in Iraq as part of the history of Zionist activism (Yablonka 2016: 228–238), but at times Yad Vashem in isolated incidents sponsored some activities of the Iraq Farhud, like Dr. Ashkenazi's report of 1962, or funding annual Farhud memorials. No Holocaust museum, whether abroad or in Israel, in actuality from Los Angeles to Washington to Jerusalem, has included the Farhud on its walls.

The suffering of Eastern and Iraqi Jews under the Japanese in the Far East has never been considered worthy of reparations by the Jewish world or local governments. Even when persecuted as Jews, they are portrayed as enemy British nationals which has been highly misleading. The focus in the Holocaust historiography is on Eastern and Central European Jews being rescued and not local Jews mostly of Iraqi origin of several generations in the Far East, and not on those throughout the Pacific being interned and tortured by the Japanese.

Moroccan Jews are not recognized for losing their property in Casablanca and beyond when they were ordered to live in the overcrowded mellahs in 1942 or being sent to labor camps (1941–1944), or suffering from Vichy inspired riots from 1941 and 1944 (Chetrit 2018); even after the American landing Operation Torch in November 1942, and the Jews in Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya are hardly viewed as victims of forced labor, persecution, and even deportation to Italy, Germany, Austria, and even Poland (Elias 2017). In the Israeli trials for recognition as Holocaust survivors, the Moroccan Jews lost the trials in the lower courts, and probably will lose the appeal in the High Court, as happened in the Farhud trials.

² Protocol 108, Constitution, Law, and Trials Committee, Israel Knesset, 26 January 2016, https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law103/20_ptv_321390.htm.

³ Rotter.net, 76 Years Since the Farhud, <https://rotter.net/forum/scoops1/405492.shtml>; <http://www.yadidlaw.com/%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A7-%D7%A0%D7%A4%D7%92%D7%A2%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%94%D7%95%D7%93-%D7%91%D7%A2%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%A7> (Hebrew).

DENIAL, EXCLUSION, AND SECOND
GENERATION COMMEMORATION EFFORTS

Bulgaria is viewed as saving its own Jews and not deporting those of Greek Thrace or ex-Yugoslavian Macedonia. Bulgaria continues to deny its role in deporting the Jews of its new territories in the Holocaust and sticks to its rescue narrative. One counter initiative has been the efforts of Israeli Ambassador to Macedonia, Dan Oryan, to refurbish the Bitola (Monastir) cemetery and bring many Jewish and Gentile school groups from Israel and Europe; as well as second generation Bar Ilan University Professor Shelly Levi Drumer organizing an annual March of the Living ceremony in Monastir and Skopje commemorating the dates of the arrest of the Jews of Monastir, Skopje, and Shtip by the Bulgarian pro-German occupation administration and army. In Israel, public activist Moshe Testa has instituted an annual Holocaust commemoration for Macedonian Jewry at Yad Vashem bringing community members together once a year for a ceremony. This ceremony has been held for numerous years at Yad Vashem, like similar ceremonies for the annihilation of the Jewish communities of Salonika (Thessaloniki) on March 15, or Rhodes (July 23). These ceremonies are meaningful for the families from these communities, but awareness does not go beyond this since the Education Ministry objected to the recommendations of the Biton Commission, which advocated teaching about Sephardi and Mizrahi heritage, and Yad Vashem since its inception in the early 1950^s has discriminated against the Jews of Sephardic and Mizrahi (Eastern) origin in education and permanent and temporary exhibitions.

Thessaloniki has instituted an annual March of the Living on March 15, the anniversary of the first deportation to Auschwitz from the city in 1943. This is problematic since the local Greek-Orthodox population is very resentful of the local Jews, many Holocaust monuments in the city, region, and nationally continue to be defaced with Neo-Nazi graffiti, and pro-Jewish and pro-commemoration Thessaloniki mayor Yiannis Bouteris has been attacked verbally and physically for his philo-Semitism⁴. The local Jewish museum has a very general exhibit on Salonikan Jewry in Holocaust, but Germany has hesitated to finance a large museum since it is uneasy about the integrity of the local Jewish community leadership and their lack of insight into planning content and a functional and elaborate plan for the offered expansive building and fifteen million euro financing.

In the Western European context, the Balkan Sephardim in France or the Portuguese Jewish communities in Holland and Germany are not part of general Jewish, Holocaust, or their national narratives. While the Portuguese Jewish community in the 16th century onward has received attention in Jewish studies in the last decades, the Holocaust period and its devastating effect on the

⁴ "Thessaloniki Mayor Yiannis Bouteris beaten up", BBC News, 20 May 2018.

community only receives faint reference at best. An early basic collection of articles on Sephardic, North Africa, and the Western Portuguese in the Holocaust was entitled *Del Fuego, Sephardim and the Holocaust* (Gaon, Serels 1995).

CONCLUSION

As Israel becomes a majority Sephardi/Mizrahi, the absence of their communal experience in the Holocaust alienates them from personal identification with the Holocaust, and thus, more of Israeli society views the Holocaust as not affecting them directly and as an Ashkenazi phenomenon. On the other hand, much research and commemoration, as well as publications and films, on Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewry in the Holocaust are overlooked and considered secondary to the Holocaust narrative. In the 2010^s, in-depth research on Sephardic and Eastern Jewry in the Holocaust has been conducted, but much remains to be done. Most of the survivors have died, but new documentation has become accessible. In terms of commemoration, many Holocaust memorials exist in countries like Greece, but the field is very underrepresented in Holocaust museums, academic courses and Jewish education, and the global media.

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