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## The Jewish Issue in Bulgaria between the Two World Wars

The position of Bulgaria's Jewish minority in the interwar period has not been comprehensively researched either in Bulgarian or in foreign historiography. The bulk of the literature dealing with the issue is focused on the period of the Second World War when anti-Semitism in Bulgarian history reached its peak with the introduction of anti-Jewish legislation in 1940 and the subsequent partial deportations in 1943<sup>1</sup>. With very few exceptions, scholars have given little attention to the problem of anti-Semitism in Bulgaria before 1941<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the purpose of this working paper, and the fuller version that will be published as an article<sup>3</sup>, is to fill that gap. Part of the research was made possible by the Mladena and Dianko Sotirov LSE IDEAS Balkan Programme Visiting Fellowship (summer 2011). This provided access to the most recent international secondary sources on the spread of anti-Semitism during the era of the rise and rule of Fascism and Nazism, with a purpose of placing my research in a broader regional and European framework.

The persecution and annihilation of millions of Jews during the Second World War is one of the darkest episodes in the history of Europe. But there were many cases of helping and saving the lives of the persecuted: in that sense the Bulgarian experience was not unique<sup>4</sup>. Yet the most remarkable examples of rescue occurred in Bulgaria where a series of petitions, letters of protest and public demonstrations against anti-Semitic measures prevented the deportation of the Jewish population (around 50,000) to foreign extermination camps<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a huge literature on the topic which is impossible to be listed here.

<sup>2</sup> There are just several articles on this in Bulgarian historiography; most of them are published in the periodical **Yearbook. Almanac of the History of Jews in Bulgaria** /Годишник. Алманах за история на евреите в България/.

<sup>3</sup> **Ognyanova, Irina.** Jewry Related Discourse in Bulgaria Between the First and the Second World Wars – *under publication*, in: *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, br.44, 2012

<sup>4</sup> In Frederick Chary's comparison "Denmark was more dramatic and courageous, Italy more persistent, Finland more thorough". See **Chary, F.** *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940-1944.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972, p.194.

<sup>5</sup> For many years the saving of Bulgarian Jews was a well-known fact only among professional historians, because of the country's isolation behind the Iron Curtain. Only the Danish and the Finish case (the rescue of 6,000 and 2,000 Jews

But was it because Bulgaria was free of anti-Semitism that it could save its own Jews during the war? The decision of the government to resist Nazi Germany's demands for the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews in the spring of 1943 did not take place in a vacuum. Indeed, there was a long history of tolerance towards Jews in Bulgarian lands. This was confirmed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the country was not affected by the anti-Semitic wave sweeping through Europe. What happened in Poland, Ukraine, and Romania, where the local population intensely persecuted the Jews, never occurred in Bulgaria. Slovakia, Croatia and Hungary replicated the German Holocaust on their territories<sup>6</sup>. The lack of deep-rooted anti-Semitism in Bulgarian mentality played a crucial role in the saving of the Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War.

Persecuted elsewhere, many Jews migrated to Bulgaria as early as the Middle Ages. During the Ottoman rule Jews from all over Europe continued to settle down in the region<sup>7</sup>. There were many reasons why they were well accepted by the Bulgarians: as “*raja*” both nations were subjects of the Sultan. There were no powerful religious centers or elites that could create antagonism between the two communities (there was high level of tolerance towards the Jews on the part of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the traditional low piousness of the Bulgarian population also played a role). Later, Bulgarian national ideology which grew and flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century targeted mainly Turks and Greeks, not Jews or other national minorities<sup>8</sup>.

After the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 the Jews went through a drastic political change: from subjects of a multiethnic and multicultural empire they found themselves a minority in a national state. The basic law of the country, the Turnovo Constitution, guaranteed legal equality to all citizens regardless of their religion and nationality, and granted state protection to minorities. Perfectly tolerant, the official policy of Bulgarian governments was directed towards the minorities' integration into the Bulgarian nation and national state.

As a result, after 1878 the Jewish community gradually became an integral part of the Bulgarian nation. It did not live in linguistic isolation, or in ghettos; it soon acquired an active role in the

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respectively) were praised and celebrated. See **Ataov, T.** Did Bulgaria Refuse to Surrender the Jews? – In: A.U. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakultesi Dergisi. 49/3-4 (Haziran-Aralık 1994) pp.51-56.

<sup>6</sup> **Bartov, O.** Eastern Europe as the Site of Genocide. – In: The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 80, No. 3 (September 2008), pp. 557-593.

<sup>7</sup> Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, after being expelled from the Iberian Peninsula many Sephardic Jews fled to the Balkan territories of the Ottoman state. A new wave of Jewish settlers occurred when Ashkenazi from the Austro-Hungarian Empire moved to Bulgarian lands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See **Benbassa, E., A. Rodrigue.** The Jews of the Balkans. The Judeo-Spanish Community, 15<sup>th</sup> to 20th Centuries. Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, 1995, p.159.

<sup>8</sup> **Moutafchieva, V.** The Turk, the Jew and the Gypsy – In: Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims, Sofia, 1995, pp.44-47.

country's political, public, economic and cultural life. In the newly independent Bulgaria Jews took up handicrafts, trade and "free professions" and enjoyed great opportunities for business. Many of them occupied important positions in the administration and in the army. They also participated actively in the wars waged by Bulgaria for national unification, namely the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the First World War (1915-1918)<sup>9</sup>.

After the First World War and the collapse of the multinational empires, nationalism became the dominant ideology in the new nation-states of Central and Eastern Europe, assuming exclusive and extreme forms and seeking to impose a uniform identity on the minority groups. But none of the many aspects of anti-Semitism - religious, racial, economic or political, were typical for Bulgaria. As a defeated country after the First World War, it was deprived of territories with compact Bulgarian population. Popular attention became sensitive to the status of fellow Bulgarians who found themselves on the other side of the border. That is why the country undertook to adopt and strictly fulfill the international acts for the protection of minorities. Bulgaria did not sign separate treaties in this sense, but in accordance with Section IV, entitled "Protection of Minorities" (Articles 49-57) of the Treaty of Neuilly, it assumed the obligation to protect national, religious, linguistic and cultural minority rights. These articles repeated the basic principles of the Turnovo Constitution which contained the protection of minorities as religious groups; two further components – ethnos and language – were introduced by the new treaty<sup>10</sup>.

Due to the unresolved national question nationalism remained the dominant ideology and the main guiding principle of both the internal and foreign policy of interwar Bulgaria. After the unification of the Bulgarian kingdom with Eastern Roumelia in 1885, the national question was reduced mostly to the Macedonian Question. The Jews were a group without any irredentist or separatist aspiration that could threaten the nation state in which they lived. After the First World War the political elite feared and resented the Turkish Muslim population, and was obsessed with the "Macedonian" issue, not the Jews.

The devotion of the Bulgarian Jewish community to the Bulgarian cause during and after the First World War can be explained with their identification with Bulgarian national interests. Bulgarians and Jews struggled together against the occupation of Macedonia and Thrace from Serbia and Greece and for their liberation and annexation to the Bulgarian state. The Jewish community strove for the

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<sup>9</sup> Илел, Й. Участието на българските евреи във войните от 1885 до 1918 година. - Във: Военноисторически сборник, 46, 1988, с.117-138.

<sup>10</sup> Коен, Д. Политическата Голгота: нация не се дели, Българи и евреи, Част втора, 2000, с. 10.

inclusion of Jews from the “old” Bulgarian territories in one state and for their political and national emancipation. At all international forums they raised their voice for the protection of the Bulgarian minorities left outside the country’s boundaries. They declared that the rights of the Jews in Bulgaria were respected and expressed concern for the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. This concurrence of the national interests of Bulgarians and Jews vis-à-vis Macedonia was one of the main factors for the absence of anti-Semitism in the Bulgarian lands. Jews were perceived not as a foreign element in the country, but as a factor contributing to the struggle for national unification<sup>11</sup>.

That is how the Jews of Bulgaria found themselves in an uneasy situation: as loyal citizens they accepted Bulgaria’s national propaganda, but at the same time they had to protect their own minority rights. Yet conflicts were rare and the explanation can be sought in liberal and tolerant minority policy, in the Jews’ acceptance of the values of the Bulgarian national doctrine and their close integration into the Bulgarian nation.

Another reason for the lack of serious “Jewish issue” in Bulgaria in the interwar period was the fact that the Jews constituted a relatively small proportion of the overall population<sup>12</sup> and were not greatly visible in socio-economic terms. Unlike the majority of the Bulgarian population which in the period between the two world wars was rural, the Jews were mainly an urban group. However, they represented only 3,6-4,3% of the cities’ population and around half of them were concentrated in the capital<sup>13</sup>.

Unlike much of Europe, economic anti-Semitism did not gain a popular support in the country. Elsewhere on the old Continent, anti-Semites aroused resentment toward Jews because of latter wealth. In Bulgaria this was rare and they did not dominate key sectors of the economy. Bulgaria was an agrarian country and the peasants were more preoccupied with the issue of the “traditional” enemies - Turks and Greeks, not Jews. The role of the latter in the country’s banking system was also limited. Their economic activity was concentrated in trade, industry, crafts, credit and insurance, services, and free professions. The bulk of the Bulgarian Jews – around 84% of them – belonged to the poor and middle classes<sup>14</sup>. In general, Jews in Bulgaria were part of the lower social strata in contrast to the rest of Europe. Competition between Jews and Bulgarians in business, the professions, and for jobs was rare.

<sup>11</sup> Барух, Е. Из историята на българското еврейство, Тел Авив, 1960, с. 92.

<sup>12</sup> The number the Jews was around 50,000, i.e. they amounted to only 0,8% of the whole population. See Проучвания за историята на еврейското население по българските земи 15-20 век, София, 1980, с.159-160.

<sup>13</sup> Тончев, Т. Основателен ли е у нас антисемитизмът, София, 1938, с. 33.

<sup>14</sup> 35% were ordinary workers; the lower middle class comprised 15%; the middle-class made up 32%; and 17% were intellectuals. The upper bourgeoisie (bankers, businessmen, etc.) represented only 1-2%. See Коен, Д. Българските евреи – социален живот (1978-1947)- In: Yearbook, XXXI, 2004, с. 179.

There were no economic, ideological or racial preconditions to put the Jewish question on the political agenda.

All minorities were well treated in Bulgaria in the interwar period. Jews had the possibility to observe freely their religious rituals, to develop their culture, to form organizations, etc. Some of them had made military career during the wars of 1912-1913 and 1914-1918, others published books, built synagogues, schools, cooperatives, etc. They were also well represented in arts, science, and free professions. Prominent representatives of the Jewish community occupied high positions in the state apparatus, others played important role in the political and cultural life of the country<sup>15</sup>.

Jews were greatly affected by the social changes and modernization of the interwar period. While keeping the family traditions and stereotypes within the community, they moved out of their isolation. Well integrated in the Bulgarian society, they were working and living together with Bulgarians, and their emancipation reached high level. Jewish families were not isolated either territorially or linguistically. They accepted Bulgarian culture and language as their own. They considered themselves as a part of the Bulgarian nation (of Jewish faith), and the Bulgarians also perceived them in that way. All of this can explain the close relations between the two ethnic groups<sup>16</sup>.

Urbanised Jews were among the best educated in the country. Many of them went to Bulgarian schools, but some preferred Jewish ones. The children of the rich Jewish families were sent also to the prestigious American, French, German and Italian schools in Bulgaria. The state gave some subsidies to the Jewish schools, recognized their educational programs and hardly interfered in their management<sup>17</sup>. Jews also enjoyed religious freedoms. In the 1920s and 1930s there were three big synagogues in Sofia – two Sephardic and one Ashkenazi, plus five smaller ones in the suburbs. In the mid-1930s 44 synagogues existed across the country providing national and social services besides their clerical functions.

Jews were also elected to Parliament; their representatives were members of different state delegations to international events, etc. They participated not only in Jewish nationalistic organizations, but in almost all Bulgarian political parties. Some upper-class Jews joined the rightist political forces in the country. However, as a rule these political parties were not friendly to the Jews in ideological terms. After the coup d'état of 9 June 1923 a rightwing dictatorship was established in the country, which

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<sup>15</sup> Проучвания..., с.161-162.

<sup>16</sup> Todorov, Tz. Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust, Weidenfeld&Nicolson, 1999, p.31.

<sup>17</sup> **Jews in the Bulgarian Hinterland.** An Annotated Bibliography. (compiled by Jacques Eskenazi and Alfred Krispin), International Center for Minority Studies and International Relations, Sofia, 2002, pp.369-370, 382.

continued with short interruptions (1931-1934) until 1944. During this time many fascist groups and organizations appeared which were anti-Semitic in ideological terms. Some Jews assumed that social revolution will solve their national problem, so they joined the Bulgarian Communist Party or other leftwing forces in the country which pressed for more democratic reform including better guarantees for the rights of Jews. The internationalism of the Socialist movement was a reason for the establishment of a Jewish Socialist Union with sections all over the country. Still, as a whole, Jews were not overrepresented in the Bulgarian Marxist movement and did not play any important role in it which can also add to the explanation of the lower level of anti-Semitism in Bulgaria<sup>18</sup>.

In the 1920s and 1930s anti-Semitism in Bulgaria was as weak, as it had been during the proceeding centuries. In contrast to Europe, antagonism did not mark the relationship between Jews and Bulgarians. There were no organized anti-Jewish outrages in the country such as those in Central and Eastern Europe. Open anti-Semitism, if it existed at all, was limited to the extreme right political parties and organizations and even so, did not play an essential role and never became a central element in their ideological system. In the 1920s Italian influence dominated rightist circles in Bulgaria; borrowings from the Nazi appeared in the programs of these organizations only in the 1930s, in an attempt to attract the attention of the German ruling circles to the solution of the Bulgarian national question<sup>19</sup>. If there were some expressions of anti-Semitism, they were sporadic and exceptional. Here Anti-Semitism was on a low theoretical level and the racial issue was not on the daily agenda. As a rule, the displays of anti-Semitism throughout Bulgarian history have not been state-inspired; they were more a manifestation of hostility towards people of another religion or ethnos. This applies to all regimes from 1878 onwards.

The fact that there was no state (official) anti-Semitism in Bulgaria until the beginning of the Second World War, does not mean that there was no popular anti-Semitism, even though it was not as wide-spread as in the most countries of the world. The prevailing tolerance and sympathy for the Jewish population in Bulgaria should not be idealized or exaggerated. Beginning from the Middle Ages, there were cases of discrimination, displays of hostility, fear, etc. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-Semitism on the level of “feelings” became a fact in some cities of Bulgaria and developed on a propaganda level in various journals. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century anti-Semitic actions took the shape of smashing of shop-windows, hooliganism, etc. The appearance of some urban anti-Semitic groups was a “fashion”

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<sup>18</sup> Коев, Д. Политическата Голгота..., с.34; **Brustein, W. and R. King**. Anti-Semitism as a Response to Perceived Jewish Power: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust. –In: *Social Forces*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Dec., 2004), p.691, 696-697.

<sup>19</sup> **Тошкова, В.** Фрагменти от историята на евреите в България, София, 1997, с. 22; **Поппетров, Н.** Фашизмът в България. Кама, 2008, с. 112-113.

imported from European capitals, an imitation. It reflected an alien middle-class attitude rather than native peasant anti-Semitism. The main instigators of these “pro-fascist” groups were some extreme nationalists and military organizations and their members – predominantly young people, frequently participated in different student nationalistic groups. They copied their literature from foreign sources, mainly German<sup>20</sup>.

In the 1920s the dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda was growing. The Jews were accused of participating in Masonic lodges and of striving for universal domination through international revolution and Communism. After the coup d'état of 1923 anti-Semitism settled permanently in the ideology of the fascist organizations in Bulgaria. In 1922 Krum Mitakov founded “The Fascist Union”, which was launched in 1923 under the new name of “Kubrat” organization. Its offspring was the “Rodna zashtita” (National Protection) organization (1924-1936), which soon merged with the “National Social Movement”<sup>21</sup>. In the 1920s some other nationalist organizations with anti-Semitic character appeared too<sup>22</sup>, but more emerged in the 1930s under the direct impact of similar tendencies then prevailing in Europe, mainly Germany. The two main nationalistic organizations with anti-Semitic ideology in Bulgaria were the Union of Bulgarian National Legions (1930-1944) and the Guardians of the Advancement of the Bulgarian National Character (1936-1944). After the Nazis came to power in Germany, these adopted National-socialist ideas further and established close relations with the Nazi leaders. The basic slogan of these organizations was the “struggle against freemasonry”, Jews and all other minorities (Greeks, Armenians, etc.) in the country<sup>23</sup>.

Significantly, these organizations never managed to unite or to achieve much because of struggles for predominance and political power among them. They neither survived long nor acquired significant influence in the country. On 19 May 1934, when a military coup took place and monarchic dictatorship was established, all parties and political organizations were disbanded. That allowed the King to concentrate all executive power in his hands. Some right-wing nationalistic organizations continued to exist, being convenient to the governments and the King, but their activity was put under police surveillance.

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<sup>20</sup> **Groth, A.** The Politics of Xenophobia and the Saliency of Anti-Semitism. - In: Comparative Politics, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Oct., 1971), pp.92-100.

<sup>21</sup> **Jews** in the Bulgarian Hinterland....., pp.49-50; 134, 154-162.

<sup>22</sup> Like: “Otetz Paisii” (1927-1944), “Brothers of Omurtag”, the “Bulgarian National Students’ Union”, the “Federation of the Reserve Army”, the “Union of Champions of the Bulgarian National Spirit”, the youth organization “Brannik”, etc. See **Cohen, D.** The Monarcho-Fascist Establishment..., p. 64-65; **Поппетров, Н.** Op.cit., c. 24

<sup>23</sup> **Пешев, Д.** Спомени, София, 2004, с. 205; **Проучвания...**, с. 146, 158-159.

Expressions of anti-Semitism in this period were found in individual or group attacks, murders, hooliganism, etc. Bombing and some other terrorist acts took place in different cities of the country along with dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda. In 1930, anti-Jewish signs appeared on the walls of the synagogues and the central Jewish school in Sofia. In 1932, there were anti-Jewish demonstrations in the streets of Sofia. Some windows-shops were broken; there were also attacks on Jewish houses. In August 1939, the “Union of the Bulgarian National Legions” destroyed several Jewish shops in the centre of the capital<sup>24</sup>.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the pressure for Bulgaria to join the Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy, and Japan) became very strong. Bulgarian irredentism was focused on Macedonia and Thrace. Economic dependency on Germany and the national issue led to an inevitable commitment of the country to the Axis Powers and this had serious consequences for the fate of the Bulgarian Jews. As a result, after the beginning of the Second World War anti-Semitism became a state policy and was closely connected to the international orientation of the country. Its legal basis was laid in October 1940 when the Bulgarian parliament voted the Defense of the Nation Act which could be recognized as the beginning of political anti-Semitism in Bulgaria. As a part of the deal with Berlin, this stripped Jews of all their legal – civil, political and economic - rights<sup>25</sup>.

On 1 March 1941, the Bulgarian Prime Minister signed a treaty of adherence to the Axis Powers. After the successful campaigns against Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941, Thrace, Aegean Macedonia and the so-called Western Bulgarian regions were occupied by the Nazis and turned over to Bulgaria for administration, with the perspective that the country would annex them upon a Nazi victory. The longstanding nationalist dream of a ‘unified Bulgaria’ was finally realized.

The official attitude to local Jews changed abruptly in accordance with the pro-German policy. After April 1941 the government applied the Defense of the Nation Act not only to Bulgaria proper, but also to the annexed territories in Greece and Yugoslavia. Accordingly, in March 1943 12,000 Jews from the “newly-liberated lands” (firstly from Thrace, and then from Macedonia) were arrested by the police and sent through Bulgarian territory to be exterminated in German death camps in Poland, where they were all killed<sup>26</sup>. But the Jews from “old Bulgaria” could count on support from Bulgarian population. According to the secret agreement with Germany, the deportation from Bulgaria proper was scheduled

<sup>24</sup> Барух, Н. *Op.cit.*, с. 51; Тончев, Т. *Op.cit.*, с. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Fraser, D. National Constitutions, Liberal State, Fascist State and the Holocaust in Belgium and Bulgaria. – In: *German Law Journal*, vol. 6, No.2, p.295; Todorov, Tz. *Op.cit.*, pp.4-5

<sup>26</sup> Хаджийски, И. Съдбата на еврейското население от Беломорска Тракия, Вардарска Македония и Югозападна България през 1941–1944 г. Дупница, 2004.

to take place on 10 March 1943. However, a parliamentary deputy, the lawyer Dimitar Peshev learned of the plan and initiated a sharp-worded protest open letter to the Prime-Minister Bogdan Philov. Peshev secured the signature of 42 of his colleagues. So, on 9 March the Minister of Interior revoked the deportation order. Under pressure from some representatives of the Orthodox Church, politicians, intellectuals, public figures, etc. the King refused any further deportations from Bulgaria. The anti-Jewish policy had failed in Bulgaria proper<sup>27</sup>.

Prominent representatives of the Bulgarian economic, political, cultural and intellectual elite protested publicly against anti-Semitism and insisted that the Jews had to be treated as Bulgarian citizens of equal and full rights. Yet in the 1930s the newspapers *Narod* (People), *Pladne* (Mid-day), *Vreme* (Time), *Zname* (Banner), *Nezavisimost* (Independence), etc. declared themselves against what they termed “anti-Jewish provocations” in the country. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church was among the very few official institutions that could raise its voice against imported racism and anti-Semitism in inter-war Bulgaria. In the 1930s it protested in an indirect way by rejecting all racial, national, and social differences between people who had the same “divine essence”. The Consistory was the other official institutions that could oppose the anti-Semitic acts in the country. In 1933 it created a Commission whose purpose was to follow these actions and to take the necessary measures against their initiators. This Commission frequently made protests to the government outraged by the increasing anti-Jewish actions, as well as the inertness of the police<sup>28</sup>.

There was no anti-Semitism in the villages since there were no Jews there, and peasants were around 80% of Bulgarian population in the interwar period. If they had any inter-ethnic conflicts, they were with the Turks and the Gypsies, not the Jews. The relative lack of anti-Semitism among the Bulgarian peasants and the active objection from large segments of Bulgarian society led to the prevention of the deportations. The public debate in old Bulgarian territories, and the lack of German troops in the country created a context in which the Final Solution did not take place<sup>29</sup>.

In conclusion we may assert that in the 1920s and 1930s there was little radical, racist anti-Semitism in Bulgaria, and it did not strike deep roots in Bulgarian public mind. In fact, some individuals and insignificant groups did hold anti-Semitic views and try to preach anti-Semitism in the country. But they remained on the fringe and did not acquire a mass base. During the entire pre-war and war period

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<sup>27</sup> Todorov, Tz. Op.cit., p.7, 24; Benbassa, E., A. Rodrigue. Op.cit., p.175

<sup>28</sup> Тошкова, Б. Op.cit., c.19-20; Mossek, M. The Bulgarian Church and the Jews during the Second World War. -In: Shvut, 2001, Vol. 10, pp.280-298.

<sup>29</sup> Benbassa, E., A. Rodrigue. Op.cit., pp.177-178.

there was no major fascist movement in Bulgaria, or a unified fascist political party. There were many separate fascist organizations with little popular support, struggling for power and influence. Their ideas were not original, but a compilations of Italian fascism and German National-Socialism. Their excesses were not tolerated by the government and most of society rejected them<sup>30</sup>.

The Bulgarians remained largely indifferent to the efforts of spreading anti-Jewish propaganda. Anti-Semitism was not tolerated by the majority of the political elite of the country, so it did not have deep roots as in some neighboring and European countries. In contrast, these ideas never became part of Bulgaria's everyday public culture and were rejected by the society as a whole. Even if some social strata did not sympathize with, they were not against the Jewish community. Although there were some anti-Jewish feelings at the University in the late 1930s, no Jews were expelled and even physical assaults were rare. While there was some anti-Jewish sentiment it did not find an organized mass base or reach an intensity that could threaten Jewish life.

The saving of the Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War is an indisputable fact. Seen in a historical perspective, it was not a "miracle". The Jewish problem had been introduced in the country quite artificially and it was later, during the war, promoted to the rank of an official policy under Nazi pressure. The Bulgarian regime copied the Nazi ideology, its racial theory and its anti-Semitism and thus, for the first time in Bulgarian history, introduced them to the Bulgarian political scene after 1940. That is why anti-Semitism can be viewed only within the framework of the Bulgarian alliance with Nazis, and therefore be interpreted as a response to German demands.

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<sup>30</sup> Chary, F. Op.cit., pp.7-8; Понпетров, Н. Op.cit., c. 8, 117.