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### **“Trajectories of Return: Jewish Repatriation to Greece”**

The manuscript is about the experience of the Holocaust from the survivors’ perspective. Through an extended and wide-ranging material – oral testimonies, written documents, secondary sources—the author presents clearly and in a lively way the complex process of the Jewish repatriation after the end of WWII in Greece. Since the beginning of the book, the author declares her methodological decision to follow the Holocaust survivors’ returns to Greece starting from the German withdrawal in October 1944 until the end of February 1946, when the Central Jewish Board proclaimed the number of 10,026 survivors as definite.

Kralova’s analysis of the Jewish repatriation uses as points of reference four distinctive survivor groups: the deportees, the refugees, the fighters and the persons in hiding places or those living under a false identity. Each group possesses certain characteristics which permit the author to delve deeper and unveil important distinctions about the fate of the Jewish community in Greece during and after the German occupation. At the same time, this typology provides a basic chronology of return and a narrative structure to the book itself.

In the introductory chapter, the author focused on certain aspects of the multifaceted social, political and legal reality of the Jewish community in

Greece before the war and the triple occupation (German, Italian and Bulgarian). This short presentation of the Jewish community and its relationship with the Greek state allows the reader to understand how the conditions for Jews in Thessaloniki and Athens differed, and the subsequent diverse trajectories that Jews in Greece followed during the occupation. In the same chapter, Kralova briefly presents the general evolution of the Holocaust studies in Greece.

In the first chapter (“return from hiding”) the manuscript sets forth the first category of survivors: those who left their hiding places in Greece to return to their homes. Even though Greek Jews chose various locations to hide, the majority of the cases in the chapter, and in general, concern those who found refuge in the capital of the country, Athens. According to a report, half of the 8,000 Jews who stayed in Athens during the occupation came from Northern Greece and Thessaloniki especially. Some of them later became leading figures of the post-war Greek Jewish community. That was the case of Kanaris Konstantinis, who spent the occupation years hiding in Athens with his wife and two sons. Konstantinis, originally from Zakynthos, soon after the war became the head of the Central Jewish Board.

In the second chapter (“Return of Armed Forces”) the author focused on persons who decided to participate in the armed resistance against the Axis forces. It is no accident that some of those who participated actively in the Resistance Organizations (mainly EAM-ELAS) had ideological bonds with the communist party long before the German invasion. Apart from the leftist supporters who joined the Resistance Movement, there were other cases as well: first, those who served in the Greek Army during the Greco-Italian War 1940-1941; second, those who were smuggled into partisan-controlled territories and effectively recruited by the Resistance organizations, in most of the cases by the pro-communist EAM. The Liberation did not bring instant peace and rehabilitation to the surviving Jews. On the contrary, in some cases, it provided them with new concerns and agonies. Initially, the ‘battle of Athens’ (Dekemvriana), which took place on December 1944 between communists and the joint forces of the National Government and the British army, and, subsequently, the civil war (lasted until 1949) had grave consequences on Jewish life. Many Jews felt threatened by the looming situation and feared of being accused by the Greek post-war authorities as communists or as fellow travelers. It

was no accident that many Jews who participated in the EAM organization stayed in silence for years. Of course, Kralova presents the case of some prominent courageous Jews who paid tribute to EAM by refusing to be silenced about its assistance to the Jewish population.

The third chapter (“Return from the Camps”) describes the return of about 2,000 Jewish camp survivors in Greece. Kralova clearly depicts the endless tragedy of those people, who after having experienced the terror of concentrations camps, saw new calamities falling upon them immediately after their arrival in their home country. It was not only the material difficulties they faced in the destroyed country but, much worse, the general disbelief and bitterness they encountered by some of their Jewish compatriots whose relatives did not return from the camps. Kralova pays special attention to certain demographical categories: parents, minors, and siblings.

In the fourth chapter (“Return from emigration”) the manuscript examines the case of those Jews who decided to leave the country before or during the occupation years in order to find refuge in foreign lands. Many of them decided to flee to neighboring countries and mostly in the neutral during WWII Turkey. Yet, despite its close proximity, Turkey did not become a prominent destination for the persecuted Greek Jews. In fact, only a small number of Jews was admitted and that was due to Turkish reservations to accept Jewish populations from belligerent countries. The majority of the refugees were pushed out to neighboring lands, mostly in British-controlled areas in Middle East. Thus, Palestine became the destination for an important number of Jewish refugees. According to the different sources cited by Kralova, until liberation about 1,500 to 3,000 Jews crossed the Eastern Mediterranean from occupied Greece.

In the last chapter (“After the return”) Kralova presents the countless difficulties the 10,027 Jewish survivors faced in post-war Greece in their effort to rebuild their lives. The psychological trauma of the returnees was exacerbated by the harsh economic, social and political conditions the country experienced during the civil war (1944-1949) and the increasing anti-Semitism that prevailed in the country. The latter was very often a reaction to the survivors’ attempts to reclaim confiscated or stolen assets from the occupation period. As the author notes, caretakers and tenants

who moved into and appropriated Jewish houses were reluctant to vacate them when the original owners returned. In many cases former friends, colleagues and neighbors denied that Jewish property was ever entrusted to them for safekeeping. Thus, the problem of the confiscated Jewish property became the most important issue of the Jewish community in post-war Greece as far as its relations with the Greek authorities and the local society of Thessaloniki were concerned.

Overall, Kralova's book is a deep-sighted and original analysis of an important aspect of the history of the Holocaust in Greece. The author, using a variety of published and un-published documents and a great number of survivor testimonies, unveils an extremely powerful and partially unknown image of the day after the Holocaust drama. The special merit of the manuscript lies in its capacity to combine a micro-level look within the broader context. It is absolutely clear that the book will be a point of reference in the micro-history of the Holocaust in Greece but also in the international literature on Jewish studies.

In conclusion, the submission meets without any doubt the standards for an award of the Docent title.

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