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“Sympathy and Prejudice. Decivilization and the Limits of Smithian Moral Sentiments: Jews and Gentiles in Axis-occupied Greece”

The sympathy paradigm in civilized society

In A. Smith’s project, sympathy has a twofold function. Firstly, sympathy plays the part of imaginatively putting oneself in the place of another person, and so inferring his/her motives and entering their feelings and thoughts. This is what our days’ psychologists call *empathy*. But this is not all. What is new in Smith’s understanding of sympathy, is the idea that the spectator enters not just in the feelings of the agent, but in the *circumstances* wherein those feelings take shape. So we sympathize with the situation and judge moral agents by the standards an impartial spectator would approve of.

This formula pertains rather to descriptive than to prescriptive ethics. Nevertheless, we can infer from this some insights about our incentives to act.

Through sympathy we get grasp of the way our own motives, feelings, emotions, thoughts are received and estimated by others. In this case we anticipate other persons’ probable or potential reactions. How can we soundly expect that such reactions are probable? We can rationally predict other people’s reactions on the basis of three premises: a) the homogeneity of human nature, the sense of belonging to the broader community of human species, b) the sharing of the same set of values and standards in the commonality we belong together, c) the lively interest everyone has in how he/she appears to others, and how he/she is estimated, and valued by the others. By anticipating others’ sympathetic sentiments, we tend to respond by mitigating our unsocial, too much self-focused attitudes and we eventually tend to a not preconceived, not authoritatively imposed, but a pace by pace build conformity to the rules and manners the moral community is susceptible to consent to. Thus, for the acculturation and socialization to take place, there is no need of a great degree of “the awful and respectable

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virtues, the virtues of self-denial". Instead, the "soft, the gentle and amiable virtues, the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity"¹ seem sufficient to do the job.

This is what is supposed to take place in a *civilized* society.

But what is such a thing as a *civilized society*? Trying to reconstruct this crucial Smithian concept we can enumerate four indispensable conditions for the civilizing operation of sympathy:

a) a society of independent *commerçants*, bonded together through exchange, in a context of a social division of labor and under the rule of law,

b) economic inequalities are great but the benefits of wealth are disseminated – although unintentionally – to the lower ranks of society, so that no sharp social dichotomy is produced, so that the concomitant violent passions of discord, resentment and hatred, be spared and avoided,

c) a moral community of peers; persons of equal moral value, interdependent upon each other's free recognition, without being subjected to a hierarchical moral order of personal dependency,

d) all agents should be mentally and morally capable to enter each other's thoughts and feelings, so that the above mentioned sympathy procedure works properly.

Under such preconditions, a *virtuous* circle of conformity is put on work, exemplifying and disseminating the standards of tolerable self-love and proper manners in a civilized commercial society.

Two main objections have been raised by his contemporary compatriots against this model.

Thomas Reid argues that we could not judge what an impartial spectator would approve of without disposing of a moral faculty prior to the sympathy process, by which to judge right and wrong². As a consequence, the only kind of sympathy worthy of being called virtuous, is the sympathy that is attended by the "determination of the will to yield that comfort and relief to the distressed which we ourselves would think due to us in such circumstances. Now this kind of sympathy supposes a moral faculty. We immediately perceive sympathy to be due to the distressed"³.

A second objection comes from Adam Ferguson⁴, who insisted on the indispensability of the classic martial virtues of fortitude and magnanim-

¹ A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiment: The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, (a cura di) D.D. Raphael, A.L. Macfie, R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1976, Part I, section II, chapter IV.

² T. Reid, *A Sketch of Dr Smith's Theory of Morals*, in J. Reeder (ed.) *On Moral Sentiments. Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith*, Thoemmes Press, London 1997, pp. 75-76.

³ Ivi, pp. 72-73.

⁴ A. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996.

ity, without which a civilized society run the risk of being corrupted and degenerated and eventually decline.

We shall return on these objections below.

A case of decivilization: foreign occupation, hunger and terror

Now let us leave the well-mannered universe of the 18th century enlightened Scotland and move to the darkest years of the 20th century. Greece was invaded and occupied by the forces of Axis from April 1941 to mid-October 1944 (with the exception of Crete that was under German rule till May 1945). Those were the horrible years of starvation, oppression, destitution and destruction for the greatest part of the population and most of all the Jewish community which faced a systematic persecution, culminating in the deportation and extermination of more than 85% of Greek Jewry.

Our interest in this paper is restricted to the working of moral sentiments in such a context. In the perspective of the “total history” approach introduced by Saul Friedländer⁵, along with the “big events”, sentiments, feelings, hopes, illusions of the protagonists are of great importance as well. In this context, special emphasis should be given to the personal testimonies of the time. Medical reports and studies are particularly important material. We are fortunate to have such valuable research.

In 1946, two years after the end of the German Nazi occupation, a survey was published on the psychopathological consequences of the war and occupation on the population. It was a collective work carried out by four brilliant psychiatrists, published in a book entitled: *The Psychopathology of Hunger, Fear and Anxiety. Neuroses and Psychoneuroses*. This is by far the most reliable scientific source on the topic. The four authors using an up-to-date bibliography and a field research with questionnaires provided us with invaluable knowledge on the impacts of warfare and occupation on the psychology of the population. The conclusions leave no room for doubt:

a) Hunger, caused by the confiscation of the greater part of the production for the needs of the forces of occupation plus the English blockade, resulted into a psychic regression of the sufferers, seriously damaging the cognitive operations of conscience and leading to a recrudescence of

⁵ S. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution 1933–1939*, Polis, Athens 2014, especially the introduction by R. Benveniste.

primitive ethical attitudes⁶. In fact, the German army upon arriving in the country, appropriated food and other goods from the warehouses as well as the foreign exchange reserves of the banks, thus accelerating inflation⁷. The lack of goods in cities, located far from primary production areas, such as Athens or the islands, was exacerbated by serious problems in land and sea transport, as they did not allow the small percentages of fruit that farmers delivered to public organizations to be transported there. The pre-war circulation network was already poor. The railway was paralyzed due to the war, and the same happened with the road network. Regarding the railways, it is worth mentioning that out of the total network of Greece, which at that time covered 2,679 kilometers, only 680 could be used until the end of the war. The ports were blocked by the allies, 7,000 trucks, the best of the 17,500 cars in the country were seized and destroyed. The rest were stuck with the lack of fuel⁸. As a result, the losses from starvation are estimated at the level of 300,000 people during the 4 years of occupation across the country (7.344.860 total population of the country in 1940). From all approaches emerge the large number of deaths in the winter of 1941-1942 for Athens, Piraeus and the islands, where the monthly number of deaths was six times larger than the pre-war period⁹.

b) Fear, incurred by the brutality of the conquerors, easily degenerated into anxiety, caused by the terror of imminent death, the prolonged uncertainty and unpredictability of the next day; this resulted into a fixation of imagination to the fear of punishment and a sentimental state submerged into a persistent catatonia¹⁰.

Under such circumstances persons tend to be more self-focused, less concerned about the others, less interested about how they appear in the eyes of others. This is a process of decivilization and dehumanization.

In such circumstances all four above mentioned prerequisites for a civilized society are seriously jeopardized if not annulated. In such circumstances we have the phenomenon Simon Baron-Cohen calls “devastation

⁶ F. Skouras, A. Chatzidemos, A. Kaloutsis, G. Papademetriou, *The Psychopathology of Hunger and Anxiety. Neuroses and Psychoneuroses*, Ulisses Editions, Athens 1991, pp. 372-374.

⁷ C. Loukos, *Hunger during the Occupation. Demographic and social dimensions*, in *History of Greece of the 20th century, World War II, 1940-1945 Occupation-Resistance*, Vivliorama, Athens 2007, p. 226. Also M. Kavala, *Thessaloniki during the German Occupation (1941-1944): Society, economy, persecution of Jews*, PhD Thesis, Department of History and Archeology-University of Crete, Rethymnon 2009, pp. 193-200.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Ivi, pp. 182-183.

¹⁰ F. Skouras, A. Chatzidemos, A. Kaloutsis, G. Papademetriou, *op. cit.*, pp. 116- 159, p. 163.

of the empathy circuit”¹¹. Sympathy dysfunctions in both its operations: a) to sympathize with others becomes a hard and rare, if not heroic, accomplishment, and b) the interest in how we appear to our peers and how our image is appreciated by them is replaced by our single-minded focus on sheer survival.

This means that sympathetic sentiments cease to be the vehicle of a spontaneous social conforming process through alleviation of selfishness. Empathy, understood as the ability to understand the feelings of the other and respond with the appropriate emotion¹², now is possible not as a “spontaneous” human reaction, but only as a deliberate act of *resistance* against the distorted conformity and ‘normality’ of the new established order. This understanding of empathy seems closer to Reid’s conception of sympathy rather than to Smith’s. But even in Smith’s sense, sympathy is paralyzed as long as people are so depressed as to be indifferent to each other’s vantage point. Under a regime of ‘abnormal normality’, conformity is gained against individual independence and via a *vicious* circle of imitation in the place of the virtuous circle of imitation through sympathy, as supposed in Smith’s idea of normality. Instead of the mutual recognition of the peers we have an oppressive hierarchy of masters and subjects and a subsequent subordination of the latter to the volition of the first. And on the top of it, a whole sub-community of the population is considered and declared to be excluded from the human species itself (Untermensch). In this case even the sense of belonging to the broader community of mankind was banned and severely punished.

Sympathy against all odds: moral sentiments in a devastated society

It is true that Smith anticipates cases where individual conscience of a ‘wise and virtuous’ person is at variance with common opinion and widely held prejudices. The notorious case Jean Calas was a notorious example¹³. But even then, individual conscience needs to be *communi-*

¹¹ S. Baron-Cohen, *The Science of Evil. On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty*, Basic Books, Philadelphia 2011, pp. 25-26. This could lead to a permanent “erosion of empathy”, which is the basis of evil action.

¹² “Empathy is our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion” (Ivi, p. 18).

¹³ A. Smith, *op. cit.*, III. I., p. 18. In 1761 the Protestant Jean Calas was sentenced to death on the wheel by the parliament of Toulouse, charged with having murdered his son to prevent his conversion to Catholicism. Jean Calas was proven innocent too late, in 1765 after a campaign led by Voltaire, who published in 1763 his *Traité sur la tolérance*. He became a symbol of religious intolerance. Smith mentions this case as an example of misguided public opinion.

cated in order to stay alive; she is in an uneasy search for finding an audience, a new commonality, otherwise she fades away. Conscience cannot stay monological and self-sufficient for long¹⁴.

Human beings in extreme situations of terror and reduction of their whole existence to their simple organic functions cannot form any idea of propriety, impartial spectator, moral conscience and even self-awareness¹⁵. Even simple communication of sentiments becomes hard, almost impossible¹⁶.

Jean Améry recalls a day in Auschwitz Monowitz, where, while returning from work, he noticed a flag rattling in the wind, which made him spelling the verses of Hölderlin:

The walls stand
speechless and cold,
the weathervanes
rattle in the wind
(Hölderlin, *At The Middle of Life*).

But the poem didn't work; it could not offer even a small consolation against the triumph of the absurd and unbelievable reality of the camp. And Améry comments that it could be otherwise if there were even one single person who could share this poem with. Which means in our Smithian language, that no sentiment or thought can be valid and meaningful without an audience, without a minimal commonality.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between what has been called 'l'univers concentrationnaire'¹⁷ and an occupied country, regardless how much devastated, dismantled, and terrorized this country

¹⁴ Even if the only interlocutor is what Smith (together with St Paul) calls 'the man within the breast'. (A. Smith, *op. cit.*) The very notion of thinking is this understood since Socrates and Plato, as this "disposition to live explicitly together with oneself, that is, to be engaged in that silent dialogue between me and myself..." (H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, Schocken Books, N. York 2003, p. 45). As Arendt put it, commenting Socrates, while thinking, "I am not only for others but for myself, and in this latter case I clearly am not just one. A difference is inserted into my Oneness". (H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. The Groundbreaking Investigation of How We Think*, Harcourt, Orlando Florida 1971, p. 183).

¹⁵ "Imagining yourself from another person's vantage point is what we mean by self-awareness" (S. Baron-Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 24).

¹⁶ So, the more you lose this ability the less aware of yourself become. This is the case of the so-called 'Muselmänner' of the concentration camps. Cfr. P. Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, Einaudi, Torino, 2014.

¹⁷ *L'univers concentrationnaire* is the title of a fundamental book on the Nazi camps, published by David Rousset (Editions de Pavois 1946). By using this expression, we mean the original, unparalleled character of the world of the Nazi concentration camps.

could be. Despite all the material and moral disaster, there still persists some room for building new commonalities, new alternative networks of solidarity, sociability, mutual recognition and common meaning. This is what we call *Resistance*. What survives from humanity in such circumstances, is kept alive via Resistance, both spontaneous and organized. Resistance is not supported by ‘civilized amiable manners’ and aims not at a universal homogenization of attitudes and a peaceful mitigation of selfishness. Resistance causes discord and conflict. Discord and conflict become in these extreme circumstances, the indispensable vehicle of humanity, by restoring the broken circuit of empathy. And resistance, besides bridge blowing, executing a traitor, sabotaging or engaging the enemy in a guerilla war, organizing in traditional and new ways to face hunger problems (soup-kitchens, creation of supply and consumer cooperatives) might also mean undertaking less spectacular actions, such like hiding and taking care of the children of your next door deported Jewish family.

In fact, in Thessaloniki although 96% of the Jewish population of the city was perished in the death camps. There have been cases of Christian Greeks who helped Jewish families to hide or flee to the Italian occupation zone where there weren’t any racist measures until September 1943 and the Italian capitulation. The case of Pericles Kallidopoulos is well known. He hid the neighboring six-member Jewish family and led them safely to the guerrillas (Resistance of National Liberation Front-EAM) in Giannitsa, a small town close to Thessaloniki. Moreover, there is the case of two Jewish women who were saved by the men who loved them and later married them. This is the case of Medi Florentin and Andelé Mano¹⁸. In the 78 cases that have become known today we would add that of the Zinozi family who saved the daughter of the Massano family. Zinozi family issued false papers for the girl with the help of local policemen. In fact, the girl was saved and she maintained for years literally fraternal relations with the family¹⁹.

Some people were hiding in Thessaloniki waiting for the right moment to escape. The Besansson family, for example, rented a boat, which transported them to the village of Damouchari in Pelion. There have been several escapes from the ghettos in Thessaloniki before the deportation. In many cases, the persecuted people paid about 35-40

¹⁸ B. Spengler-Axiopoulou, *Solidarity and aid to the Jews of Greece during the Occupation: 1941-1944*, in R. Benveniste (ed.), *Society for the Study of Greek Judaism. The Jews of Greece during the Occupation*, Vaniass, Thessaloniki 1998, p. 20.

¹⁹ C. Kavvadas, *An anecdotal plan to save the Jews of Thessaloniki*, in “Sychrona Themata”, vol. 53-54, July-December 1994, p. 91.

gold pounds per person, often to collaborators that eventually betrayed them²⁰. However, professional acquaintances and family social relations also played the role of a social solidarity network, as in the case of Mois and Bert Benveniste family, which fled to Athens before the implementation of the racial measures with the help of a social relations network²¹.

In general, the rescue stories of the persecuted Jews in Greece highlight how their history is part of the national history of the period. Moreover, they expose the weaknesses of Greek society but also debunk the myth of the Jew's passivity, not only by pointing out not only personal initiatives when facing danger, cooperation, conciliation, solidarity, discipline to protection rules, etc., but also active resistance to deportation and extermination²².

The rescue efforts for the Jews by the Gentile co-citizens in Thessaloniki and in other areas in Greece took the following forms: offering shelter, issuing false certificates, transfer to safe havens through contacts with the Resistance. The motives were acquaintance, friendship, neighborhood, empathy and human kindness, while the financial capacity of the persecuted could be helpful only in combination with the above. However, it was not this behavior that prevailed in the city of Thessaloniki and in other areas of Greece²³.

In a context where the 'natural' working of mutual recognition through sympathy does not work anymore spontaneously, it seems that only strong systems of belief (either religious or secular) can offer the required motivation for overcoming the single-minded focus of attention, and lest people sink into the abyss of a dehumanized hungry, terrorized and indifferent existence. The above mentioned psychiatrists insisted that the only way out of the regression and the passive catatonia produced by the occupation circumstances was the reaction of an aggressive running towards the future. As J. P. Sartre said, "above everything else, the occupation has stolen from people their future"²⁴.

²⁰ F. Abatzopoulou, Y. Yakoel. *Apomnimonevmata (memoirs) 1941-1943*, Paratiritis, Thessaloniki 1993, p. 33.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² M. Kavala, *The destruction of the Jews of Greece (1941-194)*, Hellenic Academic Books, Athens 2015, p. 78.

²³ Ivi, pp. 108-143.

²⁴ J. P. Sartre, *Paris sous l'occupation*, in "La France Libre", Paris 1945, p. 62.

Armed Resistance

Resistance worked as a catalyzer of overcoming all the violent barriers to empathy. The first priority was to fight hunger and secure a minimum of supplies for great parts of the population. Fear was fought by sharing the risks and partaking in a common endeavor and anxiety was vanquished by the common belief to a common cause and the hope for a better future.

How did the organized Resistance help the persecuted Jews in Thessaloniki and in the other areas of Greece? What was the involvement of the Jewish population in the Resistance? These two questions intersect in several aspects and meet the broader historiographical debates about the importance of the resistance to Nazism and its political implications and context, the passivity or not of the Jewish population, the role of the Jewish councils.

As Aser Moisis points out in his letter, -a lawyer from Thessaloniki originating from Trikala-²⁵, when EAM (the Left-wing National Liberation Front) was founded, in September 1941, two members of the central committee, Dimitris Marangos (later national counselor in Liberated Greece) and the lawyer Elias Kefalidis (he will help in the escape of the rabbi of Athens) visited Rabbi Koretz and offered him cooperation, which he refused²⁶. This is understandable. He was a conservative man who believed until the last moment that obedience was the only option of salvation for the members of his community, while in 1941 the magnitude of the impending calamity was not apparent, so within this framework we must also see its denial. After all, also in the rest of Europe there was not and could not be massive help from the resistance organizations to the Jews as well as the armed resistance of the Jews. First of all, because of the Nazi repression and the difficult conditions of survival the majority of Europeans didn't clash with the authorities; also because Nazi planning could not be known to the Jewish population in order to rush to escape; additionally, armed resistance was not easy to be organized and moreover it was not easy for the Jews to participate²⁷. Poland on the one hand, with the nationalist resistance groups that did not accept Jews into their ranks,

²⁵ Asher Moisis was a friend and classmate of Yomtov Yakoel. They were originally from Trikala, they had studied law in Athens and from 1923 and they had opened a law office together in Thessaloniki. Moses was a lawyer and author of many historical studies and after his release he was the first diplomatic representative of Israel in Greece and president of the Central Israeli Council of Greece from 1945-1949. He died in 1975. (Abatzopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 11.)

²⁶ A. Moisis, *Letter to I. Nehama*, Athens 6.12.1962, Yad Vashem archives, Jerusalem, E 11.47.

²⁷ R. Benveniste, *Those who survived. Resistance, Deportation, Return. Jews of Thessaloniki in the 1940's*. Polis, Athens 2014, p. 37.

and on the other hand, France with the large participation of Jews in the resistance movement, are the two extremes of the many and varied cases of participation or not in the resistance movements of every European country. We find similar differences both within European countries and in Greece respectively. Local peculiarities and war developments do not allow for a “triumphant or derogatory view of Jewish participation in the armed resistance”²⁸.

In addition to the above “official proposal” of cooperation, similar proposals for assistance were made in individual cases²⁹.

It is estimated that, from April 1941 onwards, about 10,000 Jews escaped from Thessaloniki towards various directions. Many of them were arrested in other cities or returned to the city when the racist measures were implemented in February 1943. It is characteristic that even the Jews who were lefts and had bonds with the Resistance, eventually followed their families³⁰. It was very difficult for the young Jews to leave their families, having the anxiety of possible retaliation against those who would be left behind³¹.

In 1943, the persecution of the Thessalonian Jews provoked the intervention of left resistance organizations to prevent arrests and to help the escape of those who could, with special actions in this phase by Maurice Arditti, a Jew from Thessaloniki, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Lyon, who had returned to city³². However, their salvation did not become the subject of a more comprehensive and intense reaction or protest from their fellow citizens. It was a matter of either individual or communist party initiative.

Markos Vafiadis (the future Major-General of the Democratic Army, during the civil-war), who since 1942 has held a position in the communist party in Thessaloniki, and Panos Dimitriou, a historical figure of the Left, in a critical review of the past, consider that there was no public

²⁸ Ivi. p. 40.

²⁹ I. Handali, *From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz*, Paratiritis, Thessaloniki 1996, p. 63.

³⁰ G. Kaftantzis, *The University of Thessaloniki during the Occupation*, Paratiritis, Thessaloniki 1998, pp. 113-115.

³¹ As F. Abatzopoulou explains, this was explained to her by Iakovos Stroumsa. When his friends suggested him to participate to E.A.M. he had to leave behind his pregnant wife and elderly parents. L. Perachia, Mazal, *Anamniseis apo ta stratopeda tou thanatou* [*Memories from the death camps*] (1943-1945), Thessaloniki 1990, says something similar. See F. Abatzopoulou, Y. Yomtov, *op. cit.*, Interview of AA, July 9 2002, p. 31, footnote 71, that narrates the relationship of a Jewish girl with a Greek neighbor, who offered to hide her with his family but she refused, as not to harm them. Also an interview with K. R., who wanted to help her Jewish friend, Paloma, but she refused as not to harm her.

³² T. Fotiadis, *The intellectual resistance in Thessaloniki*, in “*Epitheorisi Technis* (Review of Arts)”, March-April 1962, p. 437.

denunciation of persecution and racial measures against the Jews by EAM with the exception of a proclamation of January 1943, probably because EAM did not want to take responsibility for actions that the Jews themselves may not have wanted, both emphasizing Koretz's responsibility in this regard³³. Vafiadis pointed out that the effort of the party organization of Thessaloniki (and of the party organization of the Jews) to react against the racial measures with mobilizations and protests did not find echoes³⁴. However, we have to take into account that this happened in the winter of 1943 after the public torture and humiliation in Eleftherias (Freedom) Square, the desperate attempt of the community to collect the ransom for the forced labor, after the dismantling of the cemetery and finally the dismantling of their own lives at all levels with the implementation of racial measures in February. In this context, we can understand the pressure, the dilemmas, the practical difficulties that these people faced. In addition, recent research shows that many people tried to leave³⁵.

Earlier, at the end of 1941, in the context of the reorganization of the Greek Communist Party and the reorganization of the Jewish communist group (in 1943, reached 150 members), the Jewish communists, according to Vafiadis' testimony, were offered to help members of the Community to escape to the mountains, a proposal accepted by 75-80 people, most of whom returned when they were informed that their friends and relatives were being transported to the Baron Hirs ghetto, nearby the railway station³⁶. Joseph Matsas estimates that there were more than 650 Jewish rebels, of whom 250 were from Thessaloniki³⁷. However, Steven Bowman considers that a number close to 1,000 Jews is more representative, a little more than 3% of a total of 30,000 guerrillas, as estimated by Matsas³⁸.

Many of them served in the supply, both as recruits and as interpreters. Many appear in the payroll of Christopher Woodhouse (colonel of the British army who fought in the Battle of Crete and then in mainland Greece). Others offered technical skills, such as Joseph Cohen in Crete who worked as a printer for a few weeks. Many in Athens were in contact with the city organization of National Liberation Front and acted in intelligence. Others acted as lawyers or teachers and they were negotiating with Greek politi-

³³ R. Benveniste, *Those who survived. Resistance, Deportation, Return. Jews of Thessaloniki in the 1940's*, pp. 49-56.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ M. Kavala, *The destruction of the Jews of Greece (1941-194)*, p. 81.

³⁶ R. Benveniste, *Those who survived. Resistance, Deportation, Return. Jews of Thessaloniki in the 1940's*. Polis, Athens 2014, p. 54.

³⁷ J. Matsas, *The participation of the Greek Jews in the National Resistance*, in "Journal of the Hellenic diaspora", n. 12, 1991, pp. 55-68.

³⁸ S. Bowman, *The Jewish Resistance in Occupied Greece*, Central Israeli Council of Greece, Athens 2012, pp. 26-27.

cians during the Occupation. The offer of those who served in Greek units with the British in North Africa was also important. The Palestinian Jews collaborated with the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) to organize an escape route in the Aegean, while the Palestinian Jewish Agency provided the Greek Resistance with money and supplies. In addition, many of the thousands of Jews who escaped to the mountains had secondary and university education as well as commercial and professional knowledge. Some of them played an important role in shaping Liberated Greece, a large area of the mountainous Greek mainland that EAM-ELAS liberated from the Axis Powers during the occupation. Many of the thousands of women who escaped to the mountains served as nurses³⁹.

In the spring of 1944, two agreements were made with the Greek Resistance which facilitated the escape of the Jews from Evia. The first was between the British services and the EAM. The British would supply EAM with weapons, clothing, etc. and EAM would help the escape of British, Greeks and Jews from Evia and would provide information on the movements of the enemy mainly at sea. The second was between the Jewish Agency and EAM with which they developed mutual benefit. The cooperation of the Jewish Agency with both the Cairo government and the Greek resistance had begun in the summer of 1943 and after the deportation of the Jews from Thessaloniki, in order to contribute to the rescue of the rest of the Jews of Greece⁴⁰.

Both the communists or left Jews and the rest of the persecuted Jews that escaped up to the mountains did not face integration problems. Main factors in the choice of escaping were the age (youth), the strength, the determination and not so much the social background or the political directions of the interwar period. Most of the Jews who joined EAM, ELAS, or United Panhellenic Organization of Youth (EPON) may have been young socialists but also volunteers or soldiers who joined the organization because of the circumstances or often because of the man who recruited them. Family obligations prevented others from leaving and it was important to be financially able to save an entire family. Most of the Jewish guerrillas who escaped from Thessaloniki gathered in mountains Vermio and Paiko⁴¹.

Regarding the appearance of the first Jewish guerrillas, we would say that they appeared where the Nazi flame first struck. From the end of 1942 to May 1943, 250 Jews from Thessaloniki fled to the mountains of Macedonia following ELAS. The second phase began with the Italian ca-

³⁹ Ivi, p. 27.

⁴⁰ K. Lampsas, I. Simbi, *The rescue*, Kapon publications, Athens 2012, pp. 309-320.

⁴¹ Benveniste, *Those who survived. Resistance, Deportation, Return. Jews of Thessaloniki in the 1940's*, p. 80, p. 103.

pitulation (September 8, 1943) and the takeover of the whole country by the Germans. At the beginning of October 1943, hundreds of Jews from the communities of Chalkida, Trikala, Karditsa, Volos, Larissa, Agrinio and Patras settled with the protection of the EAM in the nearby mountains, while from Athens, about 1,000 people fled to the mountainous Sterea. In Epirus, few young people fled Ioannina to join the guerrillas, while some Artinians joined the National Democratic Hellenic Association (EDES) of Napoleon Zervas. A total of 91 Jews were killed or executed as members of the Resistance⁴².

What is more interesting is that this spirit of resistance had in many cases overthrown old prejudices. Judeophobia was not imported by the Nazis. It was there and it was old and well embedded. Resistance inflicted a blow against Judeophobia, in this country, by actively assisting the Jewish community; and this in five ways:

a) by directly enrolling Greek Jews in the resistance armed forces without any discrimination (differently than in other countries, for instance in Poland): out of 30,000 partisans, 1000 were Jews⁴³.

b) by harboring persecuted individuals and whole families in areas controlled by the Resistance.

c) by helping them to escape to Egypt or to Palestine in collaboration with the Jewish Agency.

d) by encouraging other people, not directly affiliated to the Resistance organizations, to assist and give shelter to persecuted people.

Nevertheless, the big image is very dark and if we take a look at the geography and the timing of deportation we can partly understand why. The earlier the deportations began, the greater the losses. The lesser the strength of the Resistance (until Spring 1943) the greater the success of the deportations.

⁴² Cfr. I. Handrinos, *Synagonistes. Comrades in Arms. EAM and the Jews of Greece*, Psifides, Thessaloniki 2020.

⁴³ Cfr. S. Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece*, p. 26. The participation of Greek-Jews to the Resistance, mainly to the left wing EAM (National Liberation Front) is a topic that only recently began to draw the attention of historians. Among the pioneers, see the excellent works of: R. Benveniste (ed), *The Jews of Greece during Occupation*, Vaniias 1998; K.E. Fleming, *Greece. A Jewish History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2008; S. Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece*, Vallentine Mitchell & Co, Middlesex, 2006; R. Benveniste, *Those who survived. Resistance, Deportation, Return. Jews of Thessaloniki in the 1940's*. Polis, Athens 2014. This renewed interest in Jewish active reactions to the shoah has received an official promotion by the exhibition of the Jewish Museum of Greece (from April 2013 to April 2014), under the title *Synagonistis (Comrades in arms). Greek Jews in the National Resistance*. See the respective visual and pressed material, edited by Jason Chandrinos, to whom I am indebted for his precious assistance and consultation.

An unprecedented reversal traditional Judeophobia: the special case of Zakynthos

We would insist a little on the traditional judeophobic prejudices in Greece. Although, Greek Jews had never “encountered anything remotely as sinister as north European anti-Semitism...”, as Misha Glenny⁴⁴ argues, prejudices and superstitions of religious origin were very widespread among the Gentiles and inculcated since childhood. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was translated and published since 1925 and many times re-edited and even published in the newspapers⁴⁵. A notoriously fake conspiracy theory offering inspiration to both old fashioned religious anti-judaism and modern racial anti-semitism. Along with the myth of the Jewish financial omnipotence, fueled by the Christian-Jewish conflict of economic interests, the myth of “Judeobolshevism” gained success, particularly in the context of the Macedonian question. Besides, *Federation*, the first socialist, internationalist workers’ organization, was founded in Thessaloniki in 1909 under Jewish leadership and with great Jewish majority in its membership. This organization became later, in 1918 one of the founding organizations of the Socialist Workers Party, the later Communist Party.

Besides, prewar Greece has known at least one serious incident of ‘blood libel’: the idiotic legend that Jews drain the blood of Christian children and use for the preparation the matzot of Peshah, or even drink it.

It is very interesting and not widely known, that this incident is related to the island of Zakynthos. In 1891 a pogrom against the Jews had taken place there, as a reaction to a completely fabricated blood libel story, which took place a few days ago in the island of Corfu⁴⁶. On the Good Friday –traditionally the most difficult day of the year for Jewish communities in Christian societies- a crowd of religious fanatics moved against the Ghetto. The army protected the Israelites and eventually killed 5 Christian rioters. Just 53 years later, this very island saved the honor of this country, protecting and rescuing from deportation the totality of the Jewish population, 275 souls. This place is known in Israel as the “Isle

⁴⁴ “The twentieth century had witnessed small areas of anti-Jewish sentiment among Greeks... but it attracted an insignificant minority” (M. Glenny, *The Balkans: nationalism, war and the great powers 1804-1999*, Viking Penguin, New York 1999, p. 512)

⁴⁵ D. Psarras, *The Best-Seller of Hatred. “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in Greece, 1920-2013*, Polis, Athens 2013.

⁴⁶ S. Mordos, *The Jews of Zakynthos. A Five-Centuries Long Chronicle*, Gramma, Athens 2010, p. 139. His source is the essay of F. Carrer, *Judaism and Christianity and the events in Zakynthos, on the Good Friday*, Zakynthos, 1892. Cited also by E. Liatta, *Corfu and Zakynthos under the storm of Antisemitism. The blood libel of 1891*, Institute of Neohelanic Researches/ National Institution of Researches, Athens 2006.

of the Righteous”. What is important, is that in Zakynthos the brave attitude of the Mayor and the Archbishop was supported by all the population; the catalyzer was the political decision of both left wing and right wing organizations of resistance to act in union on this issue⁴⁷.

Thus in some cases, courageous and brave support at really high risk was provided by people who were not distinguished by their philo-semitism before. It seems that in the conscience of some Gentiles, not free from prejudices themselves, a point was reached beyond which any drastically anti-semitic action was judged intolerable to the point that even their own prejudices were revised. It seems that under specific conditions, the destabilization of moral standards affects received ideas and prejudices as well. Many people acted from humanitarian motives totally regardless of religious differences. In such cases the sentiments of sympathy were fully active, in a person to person relationship. Fortitude, boldness, bravery were again the prerequisites for showing sympathy and practicing even the soft and amiable virtues.

As J. Améry said, those who have not moved their hand to help are those who have expelled the Jews from their home. To move your hand means to take initiative, not just to spontaneously reproduce the prevailing moral standards. In the case of occupation, the very notion of moral standards is challenged, as the main trait of the period was instability and insecurity and the anxiety of imminent death, as in a hobbesian state of nature. But in the place of prevailing morality we have the forcefully imposed moral code and the new order of the conqueror. To move your hand in such a context means to go against this order and against the established moral code; it means to resist. Resistance and not conformity seems to be the necessary moral basis providing motivation to act against all odds. So even the elementary capacity to empathize cannot be activated without the support of the martial virtues, and the virtues of self-sacrifice and self-denial, considered so outmoded and redundant in a civilized, commercial society.

Concluding hypothesis

The Smithian sympathy hypothesis sounds feasible only under very restricted conditions though. Mutual recognition, mitigation of selfishness, and self-command via the workings of sympathy is described as an unplanned, unintended mechanism of cohesion, equilibration and harmonization in a “civilized” society. The question is whether this cir-

⁴⁷ D. Stravolemos, *Heroism and vindication: The Rescue of the Jews of Zakynthos during the Occupation*, Athens 1988.

cuit of sympathy is meant to be a *civilizing* process in itself, i.e., a strong moral principled force that is capable of alleviating anti-social passions, and reducing excessive self-preference? Or is it conceived as just a moral byproduct conditioned by a projected social state already fulfilling the prerequisites of civility, as described above. To the same effect, competition should not be impeded by monopolies, not to speak of ‘anomalies’ like authoritarian appropriations, forced labour, black markets etc. At last, the communication of moral sentiments is predicated by sharing of a common cultural, religious, and racial background.

Only under such ideal conditions, one can imagine a smooth communication of moral sentiments, as a factor of civilised conviviality.

In this later case, the notion of normalization through sympathy is just conjectural; no less than the notion of the ‘state of nature’ is, in the theories of social contract.

In other words, “civilized”, “commercial” moral sentiments could not work anymore as social bonds and even elementary empathy could not stay alive, unless strongly supported by what Smith calls the “great, the respectable, the awful virtues”, the virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice. As we move away from Smith’s ideal civilized universe, the set of moderate virtues proposed by him seem to lack the auto-corrective mechanisms which would get us back to the desired state of a civilized society. In such a case, civilization is at stake and it could not be restored without the civic vigilance and the martial spirit, on the importance of which Adam Ferguson has so much insisted, in his deviant variant of Scottish Enlightenment.

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