

Jewish Socialism in Ottoman Salonica

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The Socialist Workers' Federation of Salonica was established, mostly by Salonican Jews, after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. The Federation was indeed unique in several respects and has attracted much attention from historians. However, in this article it is argued that this attention is disproportional to the Federation's actual influence on the corporate community structure of Salonican Jewry.

INTRODUCTION

In the temporary atmosphere of freedom after the 1908 Young Turk revolution, the Ottoman Empire witnessed an immediate establishment of associations across ethnicity, class and ideology. Salonica, the second largest industrial city of the Empire and centre of the Young Turk movement, harbored the largest socialist organization ever established in the Ottoman Empire, the Socialist Workers' Federation of Salonica (*Federasion Sosjalista Lavoradera de Saloniko* or *Selanik Sosyalist Amele Heyet-i Müttehidesi*, hereafter the Federation), which was established in July 1909, mostly by Jewish socialists gathered around Avraam Benaroya. Salonica's peculiar propensity for this 'unique Sephardic experience' (Ben Tzvi 1967, 132) has sporadically been studied by scholars. However, as will be discussed below, previous historiography has mostly reproduced the arguments of the Federationists. The discrepancies between the Federationist sources (memoirs of Benaroya and others, the Federation's correspondence with the Socialist International, etc.) and the non-Federationist sources (Ottoman documents, French, British and Greek consular reports, archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the newspaper *Journal de Salonique*) necessitate a vigilant approach towards the Federation's 'popularity'. Thus, this article will portray the Salonican Jewry of the Young Turk period through the window of the Federation, discussing the socio-economic and political developments that brought about a workers'

movement in the Ottoman Empire's most kosher city and the Federation's possible impact on Jewish community structure.

THE JERUSALEM OF THE BALKANS

At the turn of the century, more than half of Ottoman Salonica's population was composed of Jews. In the streets everybody spoke (or at least understood) Judeo-Spanish, the daily language of the city. The Jews were the masters of commercial activities, industry and finance. As the Jewish stores and firms were regularly closed on Saturdays, there was no commercial activity and the entire city was effectively forced to observe the Sabbath (AAIU VIII E 169, 19 April 1897; Dumont 1980, 353). Jews also constituted two thirds of the labour force of the city and thus, the overwhelming majority of the supporters of the Federation.¹

As observed by many contemporaries, Salonica was 'both the brain and the heart' (Molho 1997, 337) of the Ottoman Balkans. It was situated on the edge of the main trade route, the Vardar Valley, connecting the Aegean Sea to Eastern Europe, and thus controlled a vast hinterland consisting of Macedonia, Albania, old Serbia, Epirus and a part of Thrace (Tekeli and Ilkin 1980, 379). Salonica served as the main entrepôt for the export of the agricultural products of its hinterland and the distribution centre for various imported colonial and industrial products.² When Salonica was incapable of controlling its hinterland due to political problems, Dubrovnik in the earlier centuries (Tekeli and Ilkin 1980, 353), and Burgaz and Varna after the strike movement of 1908 (BOA/DH-ID 65-7/43, 30 March 1912), replaced Salonica.

As a result of the impact of the industrial revolution, Salonica was swiftly integrated into world markets during the century between the Napoleonic wars and the First World War. However, dramatic changes started in the 1870s with infrastructural investments, largely financed by European capital: The port was enlarged between 1897 and 1905 (Gounaris 1997, 157) and the electric tramway facilitated transportation in the city starting in 1907. The Salonica Gas Company was established in 1887 (SVS 1897, 247) and supplied the city with electricity in 1903 (Tekeli and Ilkin 1980, 365). Skopje (1874), Vienna (1881), Monastir (1894) and Istanbul (1896) railroads connected Salonica to the Anatolian and European markets (Moskof 1985, 260; Tekeli and Ilkin 1980, 361). After the construction of the Macedonian railroad network, southern Balkan ports (excluding Kavala) lost their importance and Salonica became the import-export centre of the Balkans. Although Skopje remained a distribution centre in northern Macedonia, most cities directed their business transactions to Salonica (Gounaris 1994, 108).

Thus, by 1905, the classic infrastructure of a colonial economy, consisting of a port and surrounding railway network, was complete.

The appearance of the city was altered by these infrastructural changes. In 1869, the southern walls of the citadel in the port area were demolished (Dumont 1980, 351). Prior to this date, the citizens lived in a three-kilometer-square area inside the citadel where houses were built in close proximity (SVS 1889, 90). After the Berlin Congress of 1878, Salonica received thousands of Muslim and Jewish immigrants from the Balkans and new quarters had to be built outside the citadel. In just fifteen years, the city expanded to twice its original area (SVS 1897, 244).

Of the 15,000 Salonican Jewish families, only 1,500 paid the communal tax – and thus had the right to vote on community affairs (Moskof 1985, 305) – while around 6,000 families were dependent on communal aid (Gelber 1955, 115). The ‘Alliance Israélite Universelle’ officials acknowledged that the Salonican Jews lived in poor conditions; however, when compared to the situation of their coreligionists in Hasköy and Balat (Istanbul), ‘one found consolation in Salonica’ (AAIU VIII E 169, 19 April 1897). The densely-populated poor Jewish quarters provided the worst living conditions in the city. These were the closest quarters to the sea and, thus, the most vulnerable sections of the city to imported diseases. Poor ventilation due to closely constructed buildings worsened health conditions. As four or five Jewish families (i.e., at least 15–20 people) lived in a single house (SVS 1889, 90; SVS 1904, 225), 45,000 Jews inhabited 17 quarters while 25,000 Muslims lived in 46 quarters (SVS 1904, 275). The Jews who lived in crowded houses – in ‘disgusting burrows, unsuitable even for dogs, with damp, rotting floors, and walls which are disintegrating and collapsing...’ (Yerolymou 1997, 641) – spent most of the day outside the house due to lack of space (Anastasiadou 1997, 59). Muslim houses generally possessed gardens, which were rare in Jewish quarters (SVS 1904, 275).

On the other hand, the European-style quarter of Salonica, the Hamidiye, rose swiftly in only four years after 1884 (Gounaris 1997, 157) with its prosperous neo-baroque and chalet houses, French style cafés, and well-dressed ladies and gentlemen. All consulates and important families moved to Hamidiye Boulevard (Kolonas 1994, 65). By 1904, the Jews had begun to spread into different quarters and were living with other ethnic groups (SVS 1904, 275). The demolition of the city walls, fires and construction of new neighbourhoods were not ordinary events, but they likely changed the social structure of Salonican Jewry as ‘Jewishness’ had been highly related to locality and thus to the *kehillah* (Jewish communal authority). In the classical Ottoman urban

structure, poor and rich members of a community lived in the same quarter. Each Jewish quarter was at the same time 'a religious union, a social entity, with its own aristocracy, middle class, and poor, with a dense network of economic and family relations, its own leaders and administration, its own records, property, and income' (Yerolymou 1997, 631). The new quarters, however, were not organized along ethno-religious lines, but according to their residents' economic class. It is likely that this new displacement made class contradiction more evident. It is no coincidence that socialism became a prevalent ideology in the Salonican Jewish community as the Jewish bourgeoisie became conspicuous with its European lifestyle while the traditional Jewish communal life, guilds and *kehilla* structure weakened.

It was the 'Alliance Israélite Universelle' (hereafter the AIU) that tried to fill this gap by gradually taking over more functions of community administration. The AIU was a French Jewish organization whose mission was to protect Jews from persecution and provide them with education to make them productive and self-sufficient. The most significant contribution of the AIU to Salonican Jewry was the creation of a secular-francophone middle class Jewish elite. Between 1873 and 1910, the AIU opened nine schools in Salonica and provided 8,500 children with an education.³ Many significant leaders and militants of both the Federation (like Alberto Arditti and David Rekanati) and the Zionist movement were AIU graduates.⁴ Also, thanks to the 'modern' education provided by the AIU and other foreign schools, Salonican Jews were not excluded from the ranks of the local bureaucracy.⁵

With the fire of 1890 in the Ayasofya quarter, where inhabitants were primarily Jewish, a surface of 20 hectares and 3,500 houses were burnt to the ground leaving 1,700 families without shelter and the financial means to secure housing in another district (Yerolymou 1994, 69). The Jewish community engaged itself with a planned construction and settlement project for those impoverished Jews and purchased land in two different districts, outside the Vardar Gate (Hirsch Mahallesi) and in the upper side of the Hamidiye quarter (Yerolymou 1994, 71). The AIU spearheaded this construction project. It was the AIU's decision to construct two different neighbourhoods in order not to amass the Jews in one large ghetto (Kolonas 1994, 63-4). Thus, we notice that the AIU was not only an educational institution; it had also started to take over the functions of the *kehilla* in terms of decision-making and community planning. Consequently, community administration began to be identified with the AIU.

JEWISH-DOMINANT ECONOMY

Despite the modest industrial boom which started in the late 1870s, as acknowledged in the yearbooks of the Vilayet, the economy of Salonica was mainly dependent on cereal agriculture (SVS 1889, 221). During lean years for agricultural output, the entire city economy was in crisis; trade and industry stagnated. Although the state had been supporting the developing industries by exempting woolen, cotton and similar goods from the customs tax (SVS 1889, 227), dearth of security during the Hamidian regime slowed down this boom. The Young Turk revolution encouraged the progress of capitalism. Immediately after the revolution, there were approximately 300 applications to the Ministry of Commerce to establish factories.⁶

Most commercial transactions and capital in Macedonia were either in Jewish hands or controlled by Jews.⁷ Italian Jews (Francos), who constituted Salonica's richest twenty families (Molho 1994, 28; Dumont 1980, 373), were particularly dominant. They acted as representatives of European companies throughout Macedonia (Toledano 1985, 28), and thus, through them, European capital gained control over the credit system in the hinterland (Adanir 1994, 30). The merchants of coastal Macedonia (mostly Greek) had to purchase commodities from Salonica through agents, who were mostly Jewish. No important business transaction could take place without the intervention of those agents. The Jewish agents also lent capital to the 'merchants of the interior' and usually acted as their guarantors in interactions with large foreign companies. Most of the time, the banks granted credit to merchants only after they had been recommended and guaranteed by these agents (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909).

The Allatini family constitutes a good example of such Jewish merchant-agents. In the words of a contemporary German observer, 'the Allatinis were the rulers of Salonica' (Enepekidis 1988, 263). The family members held Italian passports and, thus, were under the protection of the Italian consulate. Their fortune was built mainly on cereal and flour exports, and increased enormously when the company expanded its contracts to locations on the Salonica-Skopje and Monastir-Istanbul railroad routes (Levi 1985, 26). They had agencies throughout the Balkans, even in small towns (SVS 1897, 257). They monopolized tobacco exports from most of the Macedonian districts to Salonica (Quataert 1995, 68). 'The biggest factories of the Balkans' (tile and flour) belonged to the Allatini family and were set up in collaboration with Austrian-Jewish capital provided by Baron de Hirsch (Moskof 1974, 264). The Allatinis also established the city's first private bank,

Banque de Salonique, in 1888, which operated as a branch of the Austrian Lander Bank (Kolonas 1994, 59). With the outbreak of the Turco-Italian war and the Young Turks' *National Economy Policy*, the Ottoman authorities forcibly closed down Banque de Salonique, because of the Allatinis' Italian citizenship. This event provoked an acute financial crisis in the Salonica market. The bank held engagements valued at more than 250,000 lira. Subsequently, all other banks received instructions to restrict credits and much of the commerce was paralyzed (PSP 1911(5017), 5). A customs duty of 100 per cent was imposed on Italian goods (TBMM 1993, 274)⁸ and the Italian merchants were eventually expelled from the city (PSP 1912(5234), 5).

THE SITUATION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN OTTOMAN SALONICA

Labour history is an 'unfortunate' field in Ottoman studies. Scarcity of 'non-governmental' sources imposes a general constraint in Ottoman history and there is very limited information about the identity of the average Ottoman working man, even in the socialist newspapers of the time. The memoirs of labour leaders, contemporary newspapers and reports of Ottoman officials are primarily concerned with partisan politics. Consular reports, with some important exceptions, deal mostly with the trade between a given country and the Ottoman Empire. It seems that the invisible Ottoman working class will hardly be defined by similar rich empirical historiography that we see in its western counterparts.⁹

The Tanzimat reforms hurt the Ottoman craft guilds badly. The state relinquished its effort to control industrial production and struck down guild privileges (Quataert 1994, 103). As a result, many craft guilds disappeared in most Ottoman towns.¹⁰ Those that remained were transformed into a new form of production: the novelty was the introduction of wage relations, which brought together a primitive labour-intensive technology; proletarianized free labour force and free capital (Keyder 1994, 125). The vast majority of Ottoman workers laboured in these small-scale traditional enterprises (less than ten workers per establishment). Due to the vague criteria of being a worker, the number of Salonican workers given in statistics varies from 10,000 to 25,000 (Dumont 1994, 50; Moskof 1985, 271; Quataert 1995, 69). For example, statistics gathered in 1910 estimate 11 industrial sectors and 10,000 workers in the city (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 26). Also, the Federationists mentioned 20 factories and 10,000 workers in 11 sectors (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 90).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many brotherhoods, or workers' associations, were established in order to supplement the

guilds' protective regulations. However, many of them were directed by the wealthiest member of that branch and reduced their activities to supplying credit to their members with high interest rates. In Salonica, the bakers' association (1869) was the first in this series and was followed by the grocers' (1876), hotel-restaurant employees' (1900), shoemakers and tailors' (1904), and shop assistants' (1905) (Aktsoğlu 1997, 287).

The Federationists repeatedly stated that Ottoman labourers worked under the worst conditions in Europe (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 69). There was neither recognized scale of wages nor a factory act in force 'to protect the operatives from their hard taskmasters' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 69). Workers were treated poorly; even pregnant women were forced to work for 10 to 12 hours. The wages were low while purchasing power was constantly decreasing. In the Salonica of 1906, a skilled worker earned no more than 50 kurush a year, an experienced accountant 150 kurush, and a top bank executive 200 kurush, while building plots of 1000m² at the city-centre were worth 16,000 to 20,000 kurush (Hekimoglu 1997, 177).

During the nineteenth century, according to the demand of the world markets, patterns of labour were also modified in terms of gender. Women began working outside the home. Young Jewish girls formed an important proportion of all factory workers in the city, particularly in the textile and tobacco industries (Quataert 1996, 27). In the tobacco industry, a cheap female workforce drawn from the spinning industry was exclusively used (Quataert 1995, 70). According to the French consuls, out of 25,000 workers in the city, 12,000 were industrial workers and half of those (mostly women and children) worked six months a year as seasonal workers in various tobacco factories (Moskof 1985, 271). The tobacco factory of the Régie employed 15 foremen, clerks and employees; 330 manipulators, 270 of whom were Jews (70 men and 200 girls), 60 Greeks and Bulgarians (10 men and 50 girls); and 5 Turks as guards. Male operatives were paid 2 shillings 6 pennies to 3 shillings 3 pennies; while female operatives received 1 shilling to 1 shilling 4 pennies per day of nine working hours. Female operatives, the Jewesses in particular, were considered very skillful and quick in the manufacture of the cigarettes (PSP 1893(1310), 11).

The cotton mills of Salonica operated from sunrise to sunset year round for about 15 hours in summer and 10 hours in winter. About one third of the production was consumed in Macedonia and Albania, and the remainder was exported – exempt from all fiscal charges – to Bulgaria, Serbia, Asia Minor, and the Aegean islands. In 1893, a total of 640 workers were employed in these mills. They were all Jewish,

consisting of 160 men and boys, and 480 girls. Weekly wages were 9 to 12 shillings for men; 3 shillings 6 pennies to 5 shillings for boys of 14 to 18 years of age; and 1 shilling 9 pennies to 5 shillings 8 pennies for girls of 12 to 18 years of age (PSP 1893(1310), 11). The workers had a 35 minute break for lunch and no time for breakfast. As working after marriage was not considered appropriate among the Sephardim (Dumont 1980, 362-3), the skilful Jewish girls worked until they collected enough money for a small dowry of 181 to 251 shillings, besides the necessary clothing, or until they got married, which generally took place from the age of 15 and upwards (PSP 1893(1310), 22). Thus, we can deduce that their employment was not regarded as the main source of a household's income. Whatever they were offered by the employers was acceptable.

Workers involved in transportation (porters, boatmen, lightermen, stevedores and cart drivers) constituted one of the most important contingents of the total Salonican workforce. They were overwhelmingly Jewish and numbered around 5,000. One interesting peculiarity of these workers was their system of division of labour. They were organized under families; certain families worked in particular parts of the city and transported specific goods. For example, the Ahbarim family carried only heavy metal goods, while the Levy family worked at the train station and handled luggage cars (Brodo 1967, 243). Thus, during the 1908 strikes, transportation workers, already connected by family bonds, were the most easily organized and militant group. Porter leaders would demand exorbitant prices from the merchants and the porters would obey their leaders' decisions. Whenever a problem surfaced between a porter and a merchant, all the porters in the city would unite and boycott the merchant. As a result, merchants were obliged to pay whatever the porters asked (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13/9, 20 March 1912).

In 1910, the MP for Sivas, Dr Sevki Bey, prepared a bill ameliorating the conditions of child labour. The bill banned industrial employment of children under the age of 12, excluding the ones working in their own family business. In addition, the bill allowed only nine working hours for the children under 17 and introduced some improvements regarding health care issues.¹¹ The bill was sent to the related commission by the parliament, but was not debated or voted.

THE STRIKES AND THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS

As a result of the Hamidian regime's years of economic, social and physical oppression, a series of spontaneous strikes were encouraged by

the atmosphere of freedom generated by the first months of the Young Turk revolution. The workers were optimistic about the democratic discourse and the promises of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) for better conditions. After many vigorous orations for *liberté, égalité, justice* and *fraternité* in the 'Place de la *Liberté*' of Salonica, what could be more normal than raising their voice? This movement, however, did not have any ideological character. With the words of Benaroya, the strikes were staged 'to obtain higher wages, to taste freedom and to celebrate that important event, the Revolution' (Benaroya 1986, 42). Moreover, the rate of inflation rose to 20 per cent in the two months after the revolution and increased social unrest. As a result, in the five months following the revolution there were 111 strikes, 31 of which took place in Salonica (Karakisla 1992, 154).

In many cases, before going on strike the workers tried to negotiate with employers and sought reconciliatory support from the CUP. As defined by the Bulgarian narrow-socialists, the strikes were organized haphazardly: Each day before the strike, the workers would assemble and promise to go on a strike. The next day they would march with Ottoman flags, *zurnas* (a Turkish horn), lanterns and embellished horses and carts at the head (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 39), raising slogans in favor of the CUP (Benaroya 1986, 42). The strikers would form *ad hoc* committees to conduct talks with the employers and keep contact with the local branches of the CUP (Panayotopoulos 1980, 39). According to the British Consul in Salonica, there was scarcely a company of any importance not affected by the strikes (Panayotopoulos 1980, 39).

The employers considered the workers' demands (in most cases a 50 to 100 per cent increase in wages, fewer working hours and improved conditions) ridiculous and impossible (Karakisla 1992, 161). The government was not happy with the strikes either: Usakizade Halid Ziya, reflecting the general view of the regime, stated 'the Proclamation of Freedom was misunderstood by the workers' (Karakisla 1992, 176). In the beginning, the CUP easily exploited the situation by supporting the strikers, at least in some cases by remaining neutral, and helping them to organize mutual aid funds. With this policy, the CUP supported native capital against the foreigners and kept ready a well-organized pugnacious group to fight against the remnants of the Hamidian regime. However, despite the fact that the CUP was not officially in power at that time, it was in agreement with the regime: 'we acknowledge that during the old regime the workers could not express their problems and hoarded them deep in their hearts. Isn't it, however, an impetuous attitude to bring up all the issues together and ask for a single solution?' (Karakisla 1995,

45). Even before the events of 31 March the CUP made its position clear, being on the side of the bourgeoisie. The economist of the CUP, Cavid Bey, stated during the discussions on the anti-strike law that '...as everyone knows, in this country for any kind of investment, let it be boats, canals, ports or trains we are in need of foreign capital. Our capital accumulation is not sufficient for these investments ... and in order to bring that capital to our country, we must fulfill all necessary conditions' (MMZC 3:681).

When Bulgaria occupied the eastern Rumelian railways under the pretext of strikes, the government passed a by-law that prohibited any kind of organization or strike of public services (*müessesat-i umumiye*), such as railways, electricity and gas companies. During the parliamentary talks, two socialist Armenian MPs, Zohrap Efendi and Vartkes Efendi, vehemently defended the workers' rights. However, many MPs argued that industry was already very inadequate in the country and should not be hindered by pro-worker laws. According to the minister of internal affairs, Ferit Pasha, '...those [socialist] European theories were luxurious for the Ottoman Empire' (MMZC 3:690). Finally, after the events of 31 March and the consolidation of the CUP's power, the government had the opportunity to pass the anti-strike law, or with its popular name 'Ferit Pasha Laws'. The parliament adapted the French anti-strike law of 1892 (MMZC 5:106) and prohibited strikes and trade unions in public services. The centre of resistance to the law was Salonica, where 6,000 Salonicans demonstrated.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE FEDERATION

After the Young Turk revolution, professional revolutionaries such as Benaroya, Glavinof and Harlakof came to Salonica to take advantage of this convenient atmosphere. Avraam Eliezer Benaroya was a Bulgarian Jew from Vidin.¹² He was a member of the Bulgarian 'narrow' socialist wing until its split into the Liberals (Democrats) and the Conservatives (Centralists); he then became a Liberal (Benaroya 1949, 71). He came to Salonica via Edirne after the Revolution and started working in tobacco stores and propagandizing socialist ideas.¹³ According to Hüseyin Kazım, the governor of Salonica, Benaroya was 'the man who created socialism in Salonica from scratch' (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/43, 30 March 1912).

A few freemasons gathered around Joseph Nehama organized the first socialist Jewish group in the city (Moskof 1974, 137). As a result of short talks in the cafés, and a couple of articles published in *La Nación* (the journal of the *Nouveau Cercle des Intimes*), Benaroya was able to establish contact with some intellectuals (Benaroya 1985, 41).

Subsequently, in touch with Nehama's group Moskof 1974, 137), a circle of sympathizers for socialist studies was formed (Benaroya 1985, 41).

In August 1908, Bulgarian anarcho-liberals established a social-democratic group. Between 1,500 and 2,000 workers, mostly Jewish, attended its first public assembly (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 40). On 2 October 1908, anarcho-liberals including Harlakof, Delidaref, Tomof, and the 'narrow' Bulgarian socialists like Rusef, Lalof, Tosef and Yanef; and the Jewish 'Circle of Socialist Studies' agreed to establish the United Social Democrat Workers' Association (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 41). However, this coalition had already disintegrated by February 1909. Some members joined the Bulgarian Popular Federational Party or other Bulgarian organizations and the 'narrows' established the Bulgarian Social-Democratic Club. The Jewish Circle reached the peak of its power immediately before the counter-revolutionary movement of 31 March 1909, and disbanded when Benaroya joined in the revolutionary Hareket Ordusu (the Action Army) (Benaroya 1949, 72; Dumont 1994, 60) as a member of the Bulgarian Chernopeev band.¹⁴

The Jewish Circle gave rise to the *Asosiasion Ovradera de Saloniko* (Salonica Labour Association),¹⁵ which was established on Benaroya's return to Salonica (Benaroya 1985, 72). Five or six tobacco workers under Samuel Saadi Halevy, printers under Benaroya, shop assistants under Alberto Dassa, tailors under Avraam Hasson, a group totaling about thirty people formed the initial nucleus. The first executive committee of the *Asosiasion* was composed of Moise Modiano, Samuel Saadi Halevy, David Haguel, Yitzhak Halevy and others.¹⁶

With the initiation of the *Asosiasion*, representatives from all syndicates in the city formed a temporary commission in order to observe the parliamentary talks about the anti-strike bill. This commission assembled four times and decided to invite the Salonican workers to a demonstration to protest the government's 'hostile intentions' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 67). On 19 June 1909, the *Asosiasion* successfully mobilized 23 organizations and 6,000 people (Dumont 1994, 61). During the demonstration, they distributed a pamphlet in five languages (Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian and French), reflecting the multi-ethnic structure of the city and its proletariat.¹⁷

The *Asosiasion* declared its decision to celebrate the first anniversary of the Young Turk revolution separately from the CUP. The CUP sent a representative to negotiate but the *Asosiasion* did not compromise. The crowd the *Asosiasion* assembled was not less than the CUP's. At this meeting, the *Asosiasion* and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Club declared their union under the name Socialist Workers' Federation of

Salonica. Benaroya became the secretary-general of the new Federation. However, the alliance with the Bulgarian group did not last long because of the influence of the socialist group in Bulgaria ('narrow' under Blagoef) on the 'Federation's Bulgarians' (Benaroya 1986, 49). Following intense arguments, the 'narrow' left the Federation and established the Salonica Socialist Workers' Organization. The Jewish section's efforts towards reconciliation were in vain (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 83).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FEDERATION

The Federation was not intended to be a Jewish organization, but the composition of its membership made it such. Although the Bulgarian MP Vlahof was still affiliated, when the Bulgarians left in the autumn of 1909, the Federation remained a purely Jewish organization (Dumont 1994, 65). Benaroya was strictly committed to federative principles: 'recognition of ethnic groups as the basis of socialist activity' (Benaroya 1949, 71). In his memoirs, Benaroya acknowledges that 'conservatives' like Giannios and Papadopoulos never forgave his insistence on taking ethnic differences into consideration (Benaroya 1949, 71). However, according to him,

the Ottoman nation is composed of numerous nationalities living on the same territory and having each a different language, culture, literature, customs and characteristics. For the ethnic and philological reasons, (we) have considered that it is desirable to form an organization to which all the nationalities might adhere without abandoning their own language and culture. Better still: every one of them will be able to develop independently its culture and its individuality while working for the same ideal: the socialist ideal... (Dumont 1994, 62)

The relations and coordination of the Bulgarian and the Jewish groups are not clear issues. According to Apostolidis and Dangas (1989), these groups were autonomous in taking action, and decided every issue together. They both retained their own names: the Bulgarian group was called *La Organizasyon Sosial-Demokrat* (or *Seksion Bulgara de Saloniko*) and the Jewish group was called *Federasion Sosialista Lavoradera de Saloniko* (or *Seksion Izraelita*) (Cohen-Rak 1986, 269). Each had its own central and supervisory committees. However, there was only one seal (Apostolidas and Dangas 1989, 43), indicating that they came to agreement before initiating action.

The Federation drew support from several sources. The newly growing industrial proletariat constituted the bulk of the Federation's

labour power. In addition, the artisans affected by the breakup of the traditional guild system and the capitalization of crafts, were attracted to the Federation. On the very first day of its foundation, the Federation managed to incorporate most of the mutual aid funds and workers' corporations to itself and reorganize them as professional associations (Benaroya 1986, 49).¹⁸

According to the Federation's report to the Socialist International, most of the founders of the Federation were workers themselves (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 81). The radical Jewish intelligentsia (just like the Zionists)(Benbassa 1994, 468), who had no access to the central community authority, provided the militants of the Federation. The most significant Jewish militants were Alberto Arditti, David Rekanati, Yosef Hazan, Alberto Dassa, David Menache, Haim Haguel, Jak Amariglio, and Haim Benrubi (Benaroya 1949, 70–71). In the socialist youth organization and other branches of the Federation, Samuel Saadi Levy, Samuel Yona, Sabetay Levy, Samuel Amon, and Moiz Modiano played important roles (Benaroya 1949, 72). Benaroya considers Alberto Arditti's enrolment in the Federation among one of his most important achievements. Arditti was the link to a group of intellectuals including David Rekanati and Yosef Hazan (Benaroya 1949, 70). According to a native Salonican, these 'socialist leaders were anti-Zionists, anti-religious and fought against the community institutions. The members [workers], in general, were good Jews, religious and nationalist. They were on the side of the socialists to defend their rights' (Emmanuel 1985, 31). Socialism was also the most convenient way of participating in politics for the Jewish intelligentsia who wanted to maintain both their Jewish identity and peaceful relations with other ethnicities. Regarding the Federation's non-assimilationism, it is likely that the Federationists made use of religious affiliations for their populist concerns. Many of the AIU's correspondents depicted the weakening of religious sentiments and the break-up of many age-old religious groups. As early as 1874, the first director of the AIU school in Salonica stated that 'the temples were not frequented any more except by the poor classes' (Yerolympou 1997, 634). It is again quite possible that the lower classes resented the secularization of the Jewish bourgeoisie and identified class distinction with religious sentiment. Consequently, the Federationists even permitted Sabbath prayers in the Federation building (Starr 1945, 336).

The Federation hosted Zionist leaders Yitzhak Ben Tzvi (1909) and David Ben Gurion (1911) in Salonica where they delivered lectures to the Salonican audience (Benaroya 1985, 42). According to the information he received from Benaroya, Yitzhak Ben Tzvi cites 150 Federation members, which must correspond to the number of the

militants. There were also 350 youngsters (Ben Tzvi 1963, 132) organized under *La Juventud Socialista* (Benaroya 1985, 41). By 1911, from the 16 incorporated labour organizations, only five or six remained under the aegis of the Federation, including the tobacco workers, Régie workers, shoemakers, printers, cigarette workers and the porters. Ben Tzvi states that this decrease was due to the economic crisis and the state of political affairs (*ha-meoraot ha-mediniim*) (Ben Tzvi 1967, 132). According to Ben Tzvi's account, the relationship between the Zionists and the socialists was one of resistance and resentment shaped by mutual manipulations: 'The impression you get when you attend to their meetings reminds you of the Russian Jewry of fifteen years ago' (Ben Tzvi 1967, 133).

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN SALONICA AND THE INTER-COMMUNITY STRUGGLE

Sources shed meager light on the internal community relations of Salonican Jewry and are confusingly rife with misinformation. In any case, community affairs transpired around various philanthropic, educational and professional organizations of which 'every respected Salonican participated in two or three' (Risal 1918, 283). The *Club des Intimes*¹⁹ was the oldest Jewish organization in Salonica. It was established in 1873 by the middle-class Jewish intelligentsia under the leadership of the poet Yosef Ira, who was also the manager of the train station (Uziel 1967, 127). The Jewish aristocracy – made up, according to an account, of 12 families (Uziel 1967, 128) – was organized under this club and ruled community affairs. The club celebrated its 11th anniversary in 1884 but afterwards stopped its activities and merged with the *Grand Cercle* (Uziel 1967, 127). The *Grand Cercle* was founded in 1890 in order to protect the interests of the Jewish merchants. Due to the increasing Greek anti-Jewish propaganda (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909), in May 1909 it united with two other organizations and adopted the name *Cercle Commercial Israélite*.²⁰ The new *Cercle* united about 200 merchants (mostly retailers/wholesalers) under its umbrella. It was the only organization similar to the European organizations in terms of its professional manners. Its director was the important merchant Yakov Kazes, who was also the head of the Jewish community of the city (Uziel 1967, 127).

In 1907, due to the miscalculations of the architect, a building collapsed on top of another one and seven impoverished Jews died. In contrast with many Jews' expectations, the community leadership remained indifferent to the incident. A group of resentful Jews set up an

ad hoc committee and organized a funeral with 10,000 participants (Uziel 1967, 128). This was, of course, the ostensible part of the issue. The real reason was the community leadership's incompetence in facing the Greek challenge. Consequently, the *Nouveau Cercle* (or *Club*) *des Intimes* was founded in April 1908, mainly by the 'enlightened Jewish youth' for the 'moral and material recovery of Salonican Jewry' (AAIU X E 147, 15 July 1908).

The Club's first activity was the gathering of many of the Jewish labour and artisan unions under its corporate structure. (AAIU XX E bis 265, 29 March 1909). The Jews were not organized under a religious institution such as the Orthodox Church. This situation not only resulted in a lack of coordination in organizing against the Greeks but also facilitated the Jewish community's preoccupation with internal conflicts. On the other hand, the head of the Greek bakers' union was a cleric; a nationalist lawyer led the Greek tailors; and the head of the Greek shoemakers' union was the bishop himself (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 88). Thus, we notice that, like the Greek community structure, this 'bourgeois organization' (Benaroya 1986, 46), the club, composed of 'nationalist bosses' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 116) both functioned as a melting pot for class distinctions in the Jewish community and united the Jewish working classes against Greek competition. On the Ottoman Parliament's debut, the club mobilized 34 Jewish corporations under its shelter and enlisted about 12,000 Jews to demonstrate in favor of the new regime.²¹

Until the split that took place during the community elections of December 1909, the Alliancists accused the club of being nationalist and Zionist. 'The members of the club hesitated between Zionism and Jewish-Ottoman nationalism for a long time; however, they deviated from Zionism day by day and started to publish excellent articles on the work of the AIU' (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909). A group of 'young Jews' represented by the *Club des Intimes* and the Association of the AIU Graduates carried on a campaign against the community administration. J. Mizrahi, a prominent community leader, gathered the two parties in his office and convinced them to elect a 'compromise list'. Thus, at the first congress of the *Nouveau Club des Intimes* on 17 January 1909, M. Dario Nehama (president), M.J. Modiano and Avraam Sasson (secretaries), Moise J. Benveniste (accountant); Albert E. Nahmias, Albert H. Nahmias, Jak Asseo, M. Halfon and G. Safarana (collaborators) constituted the main body of the Club (*Journal de Salonique*, 17 January 1909).

Nevertheless, there was another resented group: Following the elections, the Zionists circulated a petition protesting the 'illegal

elections'. Among the signatories were previous community board members, like Yakov Modiano, Leon Modiano, J. Mizrahi, J. Bensussan and Moiz Asher (AAIU No.2978, 28 June 1911). These affluent Jewish notables declared their withdrawal from community activities and refusal to pay community taxes (AAIU V B 26, 16 December 1909). Subsequently, on 2 April 1910, the Zionist group separated from the *Cercle des Intimes* and under the leadership of David Matalon established the *Nouveau Club* (Anastassiadou 1997, 372). By December 1911, the *Club des Intimes* had already vanished. Most of its members were Italian Jews who were deported 24 hours after the outbreak of the Turco-Italian War 'without any hope for return' (AAIU XVI E, 3 December 1911). Its newspaper *La Nacion* was closed down. According to Uziel the *Nouveau Club* attracted more Jews than the *Club des Intimes*, with its 'pure nationalist spirit' (Uziel 1967, 128).

THE FEDERATION AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Jewish socialists took their place in the Salonican political life even before the Federation's foundation. During the strike movement of 1908, every nationality was establishing its own mutual aid fund. Jewish tobacco workers, carpenters, tailors and printers had their own organizations, although there were many workers from different ethnicities working in the same branch (Benaroya 1985, 43–4). Moreover, there was no connection between the various Jewish associations (Benaroya 1985, 44). The *Club des Intimes* intervened in the prolonged negotiations between the strikers and the employers; and subsequently, the first labour associations disbanded due to the 'mistakes of their leaders who could not conceive the economical necessities of the workers' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 79).

Following the 31 March events, a new series of strikes began. These were the first strikes organized by trans-national committees (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 274). The mutual aid funds were transformed from national charities into professional associations (Benaroya 1985, 46). Benaroya continuously preached the advantage and the necessity of trans-national trade unions, however, only the Jewish workers were interested in such projects. According to the Greek workers, the Greek national associations were already meeting their needs; so, 'what was the use of a workers' association?' (Benaroya 1985, 46). On the part of the Jews, the *Club des Intimes* was established with the same objective but was apparently far from being influential.

Most of the active trade unions in Salonica were established by the *Asosiasion* and the Federation. There was a 'friend' in each trade union,

who coordinated the relations with the Federation (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 89). Some of the trade unions, like the Union of Tobacco Workers, shared the same building with the Federation, 'The Workers' House'. However, many of these trade unions were not class based. The Jewish wood workers were led by the owners of the ateliers (Quataert 1995, 73). The tobacco factory workers' association was also led by a tobacco merchant. According to the Bulgarian socialists, almost all trade unions affiliated with the Federation – like those of Jewish tailors, Jewish and Bulgarian print-house workers, blacksmiths, carpenters, tinsmiths, shoemakers and coppersmiths – were based on guild principles and their members were ignorant of socialism (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 61).

The Tobacco-Workers' Mutual Assistance Association, organized under the *Club des Intimes*, was the largest and most militant association in Salonica. Its president was a tobacco merchant and a member of the club. The *Asosiasion* endeavoured to convince the worker leaders to separate from the club and organized many informative meetings about socialism and class struggle (Benaroya 1986, 47). After a successful propaganda period, the worker candidate of the *Asosiasion* for the presidency of the tobacco workers' association, Samuel Yona, defeated his 'bourgeois' rival. After this 'easy success,' the influence of the *Asosiasion* spread to other labour associations and accelerated the Federation's process of establishment (Benaroya 1986, 48). The Federation's propaganda on daily basis 'overcame the fatalism and the lethargy of the working classes' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 89). As early as the first anniversary of the Young Turk revolution, Jewish workers were demonstrating in Salonica streets with red flags:

Around four o'clock the parade of the corporations started in the main boulevards of the city. Led by a brass band and red banners in Turkish and French with quite primitive inscriptions for a country which hardly got its freedom: 'Trade Union of the Coalmen,' 'Long Live the Prospective Workers' Party!' 'Long Live the Socialist Party of Salonica!' 'Workers of All Countries, Unite!' and others of the same kind. However, these various demonstrations of felicitation, celebrating the fall of a loathed regime and the beginning of an era of freedom, were characterized by peace and gravity which is inherent to the Easterners (AMAEF, 63, 24 July 1909).

It is hard to determine to what extent socialist propaganda gained influence over the Jews and weakened the corporate community structure. Considering the number of members the Federation could recruit and the gender of the Salonican industrial labourers, we can say

that a large number of Salonican Jews maintained their communal ties. According to the sources, women between 12 and 18 constituted the bulk of the industrial proletariat of the city and we know that they took active part in the strikes and other various activities. However, at least until 1910, women were not represented in the Federation's executive committee (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 86). According to the narration of Ben Tzvi, 'the participation of the girls and the women in the socialist and Zionist meetings was a new vision in the city...the creation of a new life and new public values' (Ben Tzvi 1967, 133). At the 'night of entertainment and socialist propaganda held by the Federation, after a highly applauded lecture titled 'women and socialism,' an enchanted *tombala* game was played and couples danced till late night. The night ended on Rue de la Divinité, dancing and singing 'the socialist song' ['The Internationale?'] with musicians at the head' (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, Salonica, 17 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 299). This mixed social activity may not constitute an example of the novelties mentioned by Ben Tzvi; however, women taking political action against men's will was definitely novel. In 1911, the female workers of the Salonica Tobacco Régie disagreed with the male workers during the negotiations over a wage increase issue. The male workers agreed on a five per cent reduction in their demands without getting the consent of their female counterparts. The women, however, constituting the majority in the factory (there were 400 women against 90 men) went on strike by themselves. When the male workers went to work, the director of the Régie sent them back home, stating that he had no work for the men if the women would not come. The Federation played a conciliatory role between the women and the men (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, 31 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 339-40), but unfortunately, we have no further information about the issue.

Another point that attracts our attention is the limited working periods of the Jewish women. According to British consular accounts, female Jewish workers laboured only until they got married, which usually took place at the age of 15 or upward. Thus, it was a temporary occupation in which they worked for three to five years. Can their pugnacious attitude in a temporary job be explained by the atmosphere of freedom they found after the revolution? Most likely, they were trying to maintain the wage increase they received after the strike movement of 1908. Nevertheless, it seems that this combativeness gained a more political (and probably an ethnic) aspect under Greek rule, where female Jewish strikers in 1914 fought in the Salonica streets against the Muslim [Turkish] strikebreakers who were supported by the Greek police (Avdela 1993, 178).

Aside from economic issues and community affairs, the Federation

took part in different aspects of Salonican Jewry's social life. After the opening of the Olympus brewery, beer consumption in the Salonica region tripled just in one month. A glass of this local beer was sold for one and a half pennies, whereas the imported beer from Munich, Trieste or Marseilles was two pennies (PSP 1893(1310), 21). 'Pubs' were springing up everywhere. Café Splendid was the gathering place of socialist intellectuals and militants and was the site for many assemblies and discussions (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 41). Benaroya found his first followers in these pubs. Young Ottoman officials used to gather at Café Crystal, drink their raki and discuss politics (Anastassiadou 1997, 4). When the famous socialist intellectual and activist, Christian Rakovski, came to Salonica he delivered a speech at Café-Crystal (*Journal de Salonique* No.1607, 3 May 1910). The Federationists (Vlahof, Arditti and the lawyer Asher Salem) protested Benaroya's arrest with a meeting at Café-Splendid (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/8). The gathering places of a socio-political movement may help us to understand its character. In our case, the place is not the traditional Ottoman *kahvehane*, but European style cafés/pubs. The most important demonstrations of the Federation ended with speeches given at Café-Splendid, which most of its members probably could/would not frequent. We may say that these places reflected the western/non-traditional nature of their ideology.

On the other hand, it seems that during this time period alcoholism was a major problem among the working class. Considering alcoholism an obstacle against the class struggle, the Federationists published several articles mentioning the damage alcohol causes and how the bourgeoisie benefits from the situation. 'In the evening when they [the workers] get out of work, they run to the taverns and with various types of beverages fill their stomachs with alcohol. This terrible poison numbs the intelligence, demoralizes and weakens the person ... it is true that a glass of raki is soothing, but only on some occasions' (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, Salonica, 31 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 346, 355). It is interesting to note that the Jewish porters' guild paid for a bottle of raki per week to its members from the guild's chest (Brodo 1967, 243) and supported its brothers both at war and at peace.

DIVERGENCE OF THE SERBIAN TRANSIT TRADE AND AVRAAM BENAROYA: A BULGARIAN SPY?

After the reduction of the tariff of the Oriental Railway Company – which was given to the grain exports from Serbia via Salonica – and removal of some customhouse formalities in Salonica and on the

Ottoman–Serbian border, the Serbian transit trade increased considerably and constituted an important source of income for Salonica. Cereals and cattle were the chief exports of Serbia sent through Salonica (PSP 1912(5234), 6) and were mostly in transit for England, Belgium and other foreign markets (PSP 1893(1310), 18). After the Young Turk revolution, however, despite the persistent efforts of the Serbian government, the Serbian transit trade declined continuously and diverged from Salonica to the Bulgarian Black Sea ports of Varna and Burgaz. Aside from natural causes, such as the poor harvest in 1910, heavy and increasing charges at the port ‘enhanced by the exorbitant and often capricious demands of the syndicated lightermen, stevedores and porters’ (PSP 1912(5234), 6) caused this decrease. Scarcity of labour,²² prolonged strikes, increased influence of the socialist organizations and syndicates, and a ‘certain lack of energy on the part of the government and of agreement on that of employers (PSP 1910(4797), 7), gave unskilled labour the power to enforce their demands. The workers were the masters of the situation and ‘had no scruple in breaking agreements made with employers’ (PSP 1910(4797), 7). The tobacco industry was also deeply affected by the situation. Foreign monopolies preferred Macedonian tobacco due to its lower prices. However, ‘because of the syndicates’, tobacco prices increased three kurus per kilo and thus the monopolies shifted to the Caucasus, Romania and Bulgaria. The tobacco merchants of Salonica were going out of business one by one:

Today I learned that ten–twelve mid-ranged tobacco merchants are at the brink of bankruptcy ... these committees, corporations, syndicates, whatever you name it, were established by a couple of men and destroyed the Serbian transit trade entirely in three years. The commerce of Salonica is devastated (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13, 3 March 1912).

Bulgaria, on the other hand, offered every possible facility with a view to conveying this traffic to its Black Sea ports. The loss from the Serbian transit trade was 30,000–35,000 lira in 1908, 50,000 lira in 1909 and 100,000 lira in 1910 (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13, 3 March 1912). The general director of trade, Ali Bey was sent to Salonica in order to prescribe a remedy. According to his report, Eastern Railways charged 128.80 francs for the transportation of a wagon of ten tons of cereals from Nish to Salonica (461 km), which was 2.75 centimes per ton/kilometer. On the other hand, the Serbian railways charged 2 centimes per kilometer. The transportation from the train station to the port was 210 kurush. There was a loss of 3.5 per cent due to the change of hands (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13/3, 18 February 1912). However,

Hüseyin Kazım, the governor of Salonica, was consistent in presenting Benaroya as the principal cause of the local economy's destruction and the divergence of the Serbian transit trade from Salonica to the Bulgarian ports of Varna and Burgaz (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/43, 30 March 1912):

According to my research a foreign government is behind of all these. The Bulgarian government has already sent bands everywhere in Macedonia and increased instability in the Empire. Now they are using another tactic by sending Benaroya here. This will aggravate the problems and lead to a foreign intervention (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13, 3 March 1912).

The correspondence of the Ottoman offices about Benaroya starts before the general elections of 1912. It is interesting that he was subject to Ottoman authorities' attention as an individual, rather than as the leader of a socialist organization. There is no mention of the Federation in the Ottoman documents.²³ The governor's narration implies that Benaroya did everything by himself. Hüseyin Kazım was either convinced that Benaroya was a Bulgarian spy or he purposely presented Benaroya in this fashion, in order to put pressure on the government about his deportation.

[Benaroya] had been deported from Salonica twice. He went to Bulgaria via Serbia, and from Bulgaria, he came back to Salonica. Although he was a deserter from the Bulgarian army, he had never been arrested in Bulgaria. It is apparent that he was sent to Salonica to achieve very important political purposes. After his socialist activities, the Serbian transit trade passed to the Bulgarian ports. He was sent to Salonica for this particular purpose and because of the [Ottoman] government's hesitation he was able to succeed (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/8, 28 February 1912).

In any case, it is likely that the CUP forced Hüseyin Kazım²⁴ to deport Benaroya from Salonica as the Federation made an alliance with the *Entente Libérale* in the elections (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 154). The CUP's concern reached its peak when the Salonican *ulema* declared its decision to support the *Entente Libérale* in the elections (Kansu 2000, 343). The governor constantly criticized the government for its hesitation and on several occasions he 'openly implied' that the course of events was not his administration's fault.

There is no need to look for documents about such a man ... who is responsible for the deviation of the Serbian transit trade to Bulgaria ... who gave speeches against the military service [of non-

Muslims] during the Sultan's visit to Salonica ... and finally, although he had been deported from Salonica he found a way out and got a residence permit from the Mutasarriflik of Beyoglu and managed to come back to Salonica (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/43, 30 March 1912).

It seems that Benaroya was successful in making use of the conflict between the government and the CUP. On the other hand, after the Ententist coup d'état in July 1912, the Federation was awarded and was given back its archives, which had been confiscated by the CUP (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 166).

WHY IN SALONICA?

Why did socialism become popular among the Jews of Salonica, and not among other major Ottoman Jewish populations like those of Istanbul, Izmir or Edirne? In every sense, Istanbul was more cosmopolitan than Salonica with greater access to foreign ideas and more industry. Unlike Salonica, nationalist tendencies proved to be a less significant obstacle for class movement in Istanbul. The socialist organizations in Istanbul had members from every ethnicity. In the Ottoman capital, Greek socialists were very active along with Armenian and some Turkish socialists, while in Salonica the nationalist bias of Greeks was considered an obstacle to the class movement.

One possible explanation for Salonica's fertility for socialism lies in the 'Jewishness' of Salonica. With a sizable majority and an established Jewish tradition in the city, the Jews likely identified themselves as 'owners' in Salonica more than any other community, while in Istanbul or Izmir, Jews constituted only a small minority. Furthermore, the Jews of Salonica had never been subject to pogroms and 'unlike the more familiar contemporary socialist groups formed by East European Jewry, the Federationists had no need to carry on a struggle for the political emancipation of the Jewish population' (Starr 1945, 335). There was no 'Jewish question' in Salonica. Socialism was favoured not because it offered solutions to the Jewish question, but because it offered solutions to the nationality problem in the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. Thus, the Jews of Salonica, probably acting with a 'majority mentality' that did not focus on 'minority obsessions', supported an ideology which was supposed to change the entire society.

Another possible explanation for this question was the city's international position. Macedonia was then a very sensitive region. Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs were fighting to incorporate Macedonia

into their nation states. Due to the increasing Bulgarian influence in Macedonia, and Russia's possible intervention in favour of the former, the Greek state made an all-out effort to turn the situation to its favour. In order to increase their political power, the Greeks had to compete with Jewish economic power (GFMA 1909, 4) and re-establish themselves at the economic positions they lost after the Greek War of Independence (*Makedonikon Imerologion* 1908, 277). First, Greeks tried to supplant the aforementioned Jewish agents (see above); however, they did not have enough capital to succeed. Thus, they established 'national' financial institutions, like Banque de Mitylene, Banque d'Athènes and Banque d'Orient. The Greek 'merchants of the interior' each sent a son to Salonica to be installed as agents. Greek banks extended credit to these young people and tried to establish contact with Greek clients from their hometown and region. By 1908, Jewish agents became alarmed by the situation, and refused to provide the same convenience to these new agents that they had been offering to their coreligionists (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909).

After the Young Turk revolution, the turmoil ceased momentarily; but the atmosphere of hope turned to desperation when the national programs of different ethnicities started to be declared (AMAEF No.58, 94, 7 September 1908). The Greeks launched an anti-Jewish campaign that lasted until June 1909 with the slogan 'Freedom from the Jewish Yoke' (Uziel 1967, 128). As it was also noticed by the Jews, 'the most intelligent Greek propagandists settled in Salonica' to coordinate the operation (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909). The Greek press of the city called their nationals to cease any kind of business transaction with the Jews. Noticing its importance, the Greek press started attacking the *Club des Intimes*, accusing it of being a secret organization, spreading discord and working against the fatherland. On the other hand, the Jews were determined to protect their position and decided to fight. The club, taking the advantage of building up a monument for the victims of the 31 March events, started a counter-attack. However, the Ottoman authorities asked them to stop the campaign 'for the good of the homeland'. Also, some Salonican Greek notables who felt uneasy about the activities of the Greek '*megaloidetes*' showed their opposition to this anti-semitic campaign by participating in the festival of the AIU (AAIU XX E bis, 1 December 1909).

The Jews favored neither a Greek nor a Bulgarian takeover. The change of the status quo and drawing of national borders in the region meant the loss of the huge Balkan hinterland to which the Jews had enjoyed free access for centuries. Furthermore, a takeover of the city would mean losing commercial relations with Istanbul and the Asiatic

provinces of the Ottoman Empire and, thus, a dramatic reduction in the city's commercial activities (Molho 1997, 337). In the case of a Greek takeover, the Salonica port would lose all its importance for Albania, which would channel its trade through the port of Calona, while the Bulgarian hinterland would use the port of Serez (Gelber 1955, 111). In addition, the huge debts that the Turks owed Jewish merchants and bankers would most likely be left unsettled, resulting in the total bankruptcy of many Jewish businesses (Molho 1988, 391). All of this would also affect the lower classes, as 6,000 families were dependent on communal aid.

Thus the Federationists tried to decrease the tension between different nationalities, at least in their publications. According to them, 'under the influence of an aggravated nationalist feeling, different races populating the Ottoman Empire fought constantly and led the country to devastation' (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, Salonica, 24 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 324). This was mainly the outcome of the educational system, which accentuated differences between the Ottoman ethnicities:

In the lessons, the teachers always try to glorify their nation. They take advantage of the smallest occasion to present their nation as the best of all. This has a great influence on the students, because the idea of free discussion in the classroom still does not exist in our schools. In addition, these teachers are mostly incapable to discuss and argue in front of the children; the students take the words of their teachers as laws. Nationalism blinds these teachers to a point that does not let them think about the results of their dangerous stubbornness. For them, their race is above all. They even agree with bandits to realize their ambitions (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, Salonica, 24 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 324).

Greco-Jewish competition was not limited to Macedonia but had a longer tradition in the Balkans. The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed blood-libels almost every year in various cities of the Empire, which were generally followed by the Greek boycotts against Jews (Dumont 1982, 222-3). Anti-Jewish sentiments among the Greeks after the annexation of Salonica in 1912 convinced some Jews that socialism was the only non-nationalist alternative. Internationalist democratic solutions promoted by the Federation likely found a response among the Jewish labourers and middle classes:

In a constitutional country, when it is necessary to protest against the arbitrary actions of the government or to demand social laws, it should not be in the form of bands, throwing bombs, trying

to set obstacles in front of country's development and strengthening the war among the nations ... but [organizing] a mass movement through legal means (*La Solidaridad Ovradera*, Salonica, 10 March 1911, in Cohen-Rak 1986, 266).

Even though the Jews of Salonica belonged to different social strata and classes, they considered staying under the Ottoman rule the best option and identified their faith with that of the Turks. Although the Federation always addressed itself to the Salonican proletariat regardless of ethno-religious distinctions, we can say that from this point its Jewish character prevailed its socialist character. The Federationists might be against the CUP but they knew that Ottoman rule was a guarantee for any Jew in Salonica.

CONCLUSION

If one has to compare the Federation with another workers' movement, it is better to do so with pre-Bund Jewish organizations in Russia, rather than with another Ottoman movement. Whatever ideology they claimed to support, the activists and followers of the Federation were Jewish and in the Salonica of the early twentieth century, Judaism was the last component of their identity they would concede. In this respect, the Federation seemed to care for preserving traditional Jewish values against the modernizing effect of the Jewish elite and organized the 'conservative groups' against the 'liberal' community leadership.²⁵ The Federation's struggle was first of all against the Jewish community leadership. Even its four militants, including Benaroya, were arrested at the initiative of the *Club des Intimes*, not of the CUP (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 116).

In the Ottoman documents concerning Benaroya, there is no reference to the Federation, its activities or members. This author did not encounter any information about the Federation in the AIU archives or in the archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry. The only mention to be found in the *Journal de Salonique* (as far as the executives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France allowed this author to research) was the description of the Mayday demonstration of 1910. The Federation is mentioned because the famous socialist intellectual and activist Christian Rakovski participated in the demonstrations and delivered a speech at the Federation's headquarters (*Journal de Salonique*, 3 May 1910). Two eminent intellectuals of the Salonican Jewish community, Benghiat and Nehama, never mentioned the socialists or the Federation when they reported on the political struggle in the community, during a period

when the Federation was supposed to be at the peak of its power. The situation is the same regarding the French Foreign Ministry Archives. Even when depicting the Salonican socialists in his report about the Mayday demonstration, the French consul does not mention the Federation. 'The dangerous anarchist' who gave a lecture in Ladino on the night of Mayday in the French consul's report was most probably none other than Benaroya (AMAEF, No.60, 192-4, 24 July 1910). Perhaps, within this context, Hüseyin Kazım's explanation of this strange propensity for socialism needs more attention:

Nowhere on earth, even in Italy, could socialism have been established in such a short period of time.²⁶ Social and economic conditions for socialism do not exist in Salonica. It is an invention of five-ten individuals who pursue their own interests. Here, socialism started after Benaroya's arrival to Salonica and at this moment it is a serious threat (BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13, 3 March 1912).

Salonica was the second chief industrial city of the Ottoman Empire. It was not, however, an industrial city in the modern sense and was far from sheltering an effective industrial proletariat, which could pursue a class struggle (in the Marxist sense). Being a member of the Federation did not mean being a socialist. It meant simply struggling to protect their rights and, most likely, to protect the increase in wages obtained after the 1908 strikes.²⁷ Thus, the strikers had no ideological compunctions while shouting the slogan '*Yasasin Padisah!*' (Long Live the Sultan!) and waving Ottoman flags after triumphant meetings (Apostolidis and Dangas 1989, 48-9).

The impact of the Federation has been historically exaggerated for several reasons. First, Marxist Greek historians were committed to this issue as the Federation was one of the most important founding components of the SEKE (the Greek Communist Party, today's KKE) in 1918. Secondly, the official recognition given to the Federation by the Socialist International, and the documents found in the International's archives, made the former a much more interesting subject for historians. Lastly, the Young Turks over-emphasized the Federation's power, taking extra measures to suppress it rather than err in an underestimation and, in a sense, 'advertised' it. Saul Nahum, the representative of the Federation at the Socialist International, puts the issue very clearly: 'we will be wiped out if we disclose that we do not have the power [to maintain] the opposition. Because the Turks are only afraid of the ones they consider strong' (Haupt and Dumont 1978, 104). It is a fact that the Federation organized a number of successful strikes and demonstrations;

however, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the Federation became an important factor in the public life of the Salonican Jews.

The importance of the Federation lies in the fact that, for the first time, dissenters from the middle and working classes took action against the oligarchic line of the community leadership (Molho 1997, 336) and proved to be successful. Under the Federation, the age-old dispute between the wealthy and the indigent members of the Jewish community found a name and an ideology, and for the first time class policies became as important as *millet* policies.

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NOTES

1. Annual Report of the Federation to the Socialist International (July 1909–July 1910) in Haupt and Dumont 1978, 86.
2. David Florentin's memorandum to the Zionist Organization in Berlin (15 December 1912) in Gelber 1955, 115.
3. For a detailed account of Jewish students and schools in Salonica, see *Journal de Salonique* (9 June 1908).
4. The AIU students were also in charge of the Federation's various publications; see Kalyakis 1998, 390.
5. As far as I could identify by their names, in 1904, 35 Jews were employed by the state in Salonica, in positions that necessitated a certain education, such as the 'mektupçu' (Yanko Santil), the Director of Agriculture (Vitali Efendi), members of the Board of Managers (Liyaho Arditti and Yuda Levi), member of the Civil Court (Isak Efendi), secretary of the Commercial Court (Samuel Kemal Efendi), the Inspector General of Forests (Nesim Efendi), customs officers (David Efendi and Izak 'alom Efendi), the 3rd Commissar of the City Station (Moiz Efendi), etc.; see SVS 1904, 77–108.
6. *Rabotniceski Vestnik* (Sofia, August 26, 1908), cited in Apostolidis and Dantas 1989, 29.
7. In SVS 1897, there is a detailed account of the city merchants. Of the 66 leading merchants in the city, 38 were Jewish, 13 were Muslim, 11 were Greek and 3 were Dönmes; and out of 19 important bankers 12 were Jews, 2 were Muslims, 2 were Dönmes and 3 were Greeks. For the names of the Jewish merchants and bankers, see SVS 1897, 299–302. There were two commercial centres in Salonica: Istira and Sibi. The former was the most important one where importers and merchants of cereals, sesame, olives etc, were concentrated; see AAIU VIII E 169, 19 April 1897. In the Sibi district there were provision stores concentrating on sugar, coffee, dried fruit, salted fish etc.
8. Afterwards, sulfur importation was excluded from the list, as sulfur was indispensable for the grape growers. The customs duty for sulfur was reduced to 11 per cent; see TBMM n.d., a, 105.
9. The following excerpt from the journal of the Federation is the most detailed depiction of working conditions in Salonica that I have encountered: 'Lucky

- employees of the Herera Tobacco Company: According to the informant B., an ex-employee in the mentioned store, [the workers] are lucky enough to enjoy great freedom for everything. They can sit from time to time and rest; they can chat a little, drink some coffee, read newspapers, receive guests, and even from time to time pray God. There are only two things these employees cannot do. First, they cannot demand wage increases or any other amelioration. Second, they cannot enroll to a trade-union, even if it is recognized by the government ... In order to get a job, young people have to accept to serve an apprenticeship for three months without being payed.' *La Solidaridad Obradera* (Salonica, 10 March 1911) in Cohen-Rak 1986, 273.
10. In the 1860's, there were over 100 guilds in Salonica, many of which were in the transport sectors; see Quataert 1995, 69.
 11. For the full text of the bill, see TBMM n.d., b, 141-4.
 12. For a biography of Benaroya see Haupt 1978, 23-5.
 13. Benaroya's date of arrival in Salonica became a major issue for the Ottoman officials. The governor Hüseyin Kazım engaged himself in an obstinate effort to deport Benaroya. However, after Bulgaria's declaration of independence no treaty was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria regarding the citizenship problems and it was not clear if Benaroya was still an Ottoman citizen (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/5, 27 February 1912). If Benaroya had actually entered the Ottoman territories before the revolution, as he deceptively testified (see BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/3, 29 February 1912), than he would have been considered an Ottoman citizen and would not have been easily deported from Salonica. However, according to the governor of Salonica, before the Young Turk revolution it was impossible to come to Salonica from the Bulgarian principality without a passport. Benaroya would only be able to come to Salonica right after the revolution, in a period when the passengers were not recorded (BOA/DH-SYS 65-7/43, 30 March 1912). In a couple of sources Benaroya himself states that he came to Salonica after the Revolution; see Benaroya 1985, 41.
 14. A Turkish officer and a Bulgarian party (?) representative testified for Benaroya's participation in the Action Army; see BOA/DH-SYS 65-7. According to Benbassa there were 700 Jewish volunteers in the Action Army (Benbassa 1992, 316).
 15. In some sources this organization is cited as the Labour League or Club de los Lavoradores, however, it is the same organization with the symbol 'the hand holding a hammer'; see Benaroya 1985, 41.
 16. Benaroya 1949, 41. This article was written by Benaroya at an advanced age, and it seems that his memory was not very reliable that time.
 17. For the Greek text see Apostolidis and Dngas 1989, 45-6; for the Turkish text see Haupt and Dumont 1978, 69-70.
 18. Tobacco workers (1000 members Jewish-out of 2500-3000); Régie workers (500); clerks and civil servant's union (50 members out of 500); railroad workers (200); carpenters (Jewish, Greek, Turkish 120); ironworkers (40); Istira workers (250); yarn workers (500); jute workers (100); Bulgarian printers (35); Jewish printers (40); chair makers (40); cigarette paper workers (Societa Avenir 100 members, La Luz 500 members); Jewish tailors (40); metallurgy workers (40 members out of 300); tinsmiths (30 members out of 200); broadcloth workers (50); stone sculptors (40) associations were the first affiliates of the Federation; see Haupt and Dumont 1978, 87.
 19. The Judeo-Spanish name was *Sirkli de los Intimos*; in Turkish, *Intim Klübü* (AAIU X E 147).
 20. According to Uziel (1967), *Grand Cercle Commercial*.
 21. For a list of these corporations see *Journal de Salonique*, 18 December 1908.
 22. Starting from the 1880s, constant political instability, wars and the extension of military service to non-Muslims after the Young Turk revolution gave rise to mass flights from Macedonia to abroad (mostly to America). For this reason the Salonica strikers of 1908 had more bargaining power. Different remedies were proposed for salvation: the European consulates in Salonica considered bringing *yörüks* (Turkish nomads) to replace the Salonican workers. The CUP, however, resisted both the project and the note of the Austrian consulate (Moskof 1974, 134-5). The minister of internal affairs, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasa, proposed bringing in workers from Germany,

- Italy and other European countries (Elmaci 1997, 156). Big landowners could save the harvests only by importing agricultural machines (SVS 1909, cited in Tekeli and Ilkin 1980, 363).
23. There is an entire file of 45 documents and hundreds of pages including the correspondence among the Vilayet of Salonica and various ministries about Benaroya's citizenship and how he should be deported from the Empire; see BOA/DH-SYS 65-7.
 24. During his office in Drama and Salonica, the Turkish-Dönme administrator Tahsin (Uzer) had the chance to get acquainted with Hüseyin Kazim. According to him, Sakalli (whiskered) Hüseyin Kazim's appointment to this post was a great mistake. 'During his office, the Vilayet became wretched' (Uzer 1987, 232-3). He was one of those governors who could not pursue national politics in order to protect his career. He used to beat people in his office, give sermons for hours in the Kasimiye Mosque, etc. (Uzer 1987, 301). He became an ardent Ententist after the coup d'état of the Halaskar Zabitan, and when the CUP took the power back after another coup d'état, he immediately shifted back to the CUP and saved his office (Uzer 1987, 302).
 25. The classification of social groups in Salonica by Sam Levy (the editor of *Journal de Salonique*) describes the Jewish community very well. According to him there were two principal groups; the liberals and the conservatives. The conservatives composed three fourths of the Jewish population whereas the liberals were around 15,000 to 25,000. 25,000 of them represented the proletariat and were depended on community help. Another 10,000 formed the relatively coherent corporations; the most important ones were those of the boatmen, porters, fishermen, carters, shoemakers, etc. 'Although they were illiterate and deprived of any kind of culture, these were reliable people.' Another 20,000 conservative Jews were the artisans, shopkeepers, and other modest earners and finally 5,000 to 6,000 were in the service of synagogues (Levy 2000).
 26. Apparently what Hüseyin Kazim understood from socialism was labour organizations and strikes.
 27. In 1911, a dockworker received seven to eight shillings a day, 'which would have been regarded as fantastic before' (see PSP1911(5017), 7). According to the British consul in Salonica, a porter received higher wages than his English counterpart, while the standard of living in Salonica was lower (see PSP 1910(4797), 7.) The governor, Hüseyin Kazim, also mentions the same fact: 'In three years daily wages increased from 15 to 26 kurus and made life more expensive than most major European cities ... You may think that workers' conditions improved. On the contrary. They received many loans and are now deep in dept. And debauchery affected particularly the worker girls and made them lose their moral values' (see BOA/DH-ID 112-1/13, 3 March 3 1912).

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