

ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE COMMISSARIAT FOR JEWISH AFFAIRS

The Institution, which had to Implement the Holocaust in Bulgaria

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Abstract

An old Jewish piece of wisdom runs: Not a single sheet of a book or document should remain unread and lost for the generations. This article presents the role of the institution of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in Bulgaria in its role of executing the policy of persecution of Jews. It tries to take a look and reconsider the past. To this day, however, there are unknown (or less familiar) documents patiently waiting their time to throw light on the facts revealing what happened. Once again, we have to face the 'platitude of evil', which was set as a whole and separately long before. The analysis is done in the context of more general picture of anti-Semitic laws in the Balkans and more generally in the European countries².

Key words: Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, anti-Jewish Legislation, Bulgaria.

I. ANTI-JEWISH LEGISLATION IN EUROPE 1938-1940

After the mid 30-ies of XX century European international relations were entering a new phase, which led to the beginning of World War II. Persecution of Jews began in Germany and gradually drew near the Balkans with the conquering of Czechoslovakia and Poland. The 'Nuremberg Laws'³, which deprived German Jews of their civil rights became a legislative model for the satellites of Germany. In each of the European countries anti-Jewish restrictions acquired various forms in accordance with the number and status of the Jewish population therein, however, their common feature at that time was to 'exclude' Jews from economic life of the country, to abrogate their civil and political rights, non-admission of Jewish immigrants from other countries and legal definition of 'Jew'. Reports in the Bulgarian press about the situation of Jews in various European countries gave the following picture:

1938

In September 1938, **Spain** performed purge of the fleet and the army of Jews⁴.

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² Translation of the entire text from Bulgarian by Iren Boykikeva

³ Law on the Protection of German Blood and Honour of September 15, 1935; Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935.

⁴ ASA, Ф.370к, inv.6, a.u.934, sheets33

On November 17, 1938 **Italy** adopted the Manifesto of Race aiming at exclusion of Jews from the labor market, abrogation of civil and political rights⁵.

In the same year in **Finland** was issued an order restricting the admission of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Austria without special permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki⁶.

By special decision of December 1938, the **Supreme Soviet of the USSR** created the Jewish Autonomous Oblast of Birobidzhan in Siberia. It settled Jews from the rest of the USSR with no particular state jobs and with the future prospect Jews to be allowed to live only in that Autonomous Oblast⁷.

On March 15, 1939 Bohemia and Moravia were declared a protectorate of Germany. On March 21, 1939 Konstantin von Neurath was appointed First Reichsprotektor. The staff of the departments similar to the ministries was manned by officials from Germany. Formally existed the position of president of protectorate which for the whole period of existence was held by Emil Hácha.

After the proclamation of the independent **Slovak Republic** and the treaty signed with Germany in 1939, in Slovakia began a large-scale persecution of Jews. Regulations against the Jews were published in November the same year. Jewish property was confiscated and handed to the Germans and Slovaks. 'Hlinka Guard' initiated boycott and pogrom against the Jewish population. 50 000 Jews left Bratislava. Two years later - on September 9, 1941 the 'Jewish Code' was approved on the analogy of the Nuremberg Laws⁸.

On May 13, 1939 the newspaper 'National Policy' in the **Czech Republic** published the Act against Jews. A Jew was considered any person professing Israelite religion before October 30, 1918, or a person whose parent or grandparent was Jewish before that date. Jews were excluded completely from public life. Their number was 357 000. On July 27, 1939, Adolf Eichmann established a branch of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration. The Jews were forced to pay a very high emigration tax and were practically divested of their property. The total value of the requisitioned Jewish property in Bohemia and Moravia was about CZK 12 billion⁹.

In **Hungary**: Act No. 15 of 1938 restricted the number of Jews to 20% in each commercial/financial enterprise with ten or more employees, in the press, among physicians, engineers and lawyers. This law did not apply to Jews honored with military prizes from the First World War, as well as to participants in the fight against the Hungarian communist government of 1919. Exception was made also for widows and children of fallen military heroes, and for Jews who had abandoned the Jewish religion until 1919. The law defined a 'Jew' on the basis of religious background, notwithstanding the sneaking idea of a racial element: under this Act all who had abandoned the Jewish religion after 1919 were considered Jews.

⁵ ASA, ф.176к, inv.7, а.у.950, sheets 1,2, - by law is prohibited Jewish foreign nationals to settle in Italy. Sept. 8. 1938; Jews, Italian nationals are not allowed to teach or to study in Italian educational institutions.

⁶ Ф.370к, inv.6, а.у.933 sheets 41

⁷ Ф.370к, inv.6, а.у.933 sheets 70

⁸ Ф.370к, inv.6, а.у.933 sheets 20

⁹ Ф.370к, inv.6, а.у.933 sheets 7 There is evidence for anti-Jewish pogroms and for declaration of assets before July 31, 1939.

Act No. 4 of 1939 defined Jews racially: a Jew was considered anyone regardless of their religious affiliation with at least one parent or at least two grandparents of Israelite denomination. The law provided for restriction to 6% participation of Jews in liberal professions and in business, financial and industrial enterprises with ten or more employees. Their employment in state administration, the judiciary and in state owned secondary schools was forbidden, as well as their involvement in theaters and media¹⁰.

On November 20, 1940 Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact. The governments of Pal Teleki and Laszlo Bardossy adopted the Labour Service Act and Foreign Jews Act.

After the attempt at 'limited anti-Semitism' (1937-1940), established by King Carol, the rights of Jews in **Romania** were restricted in June 1940. Romanian-Jewish intermarriage was forbidden and during the mutiny in Bucharest and other cities the legionaries carried out the first major anti-Jewish pogroms¹¹.

On October 5, 1940, the Council of Ministers to the Kingdom of **Yugoslavia** issued two ordinances: one on the terms and procedures of enrollment of persons of Jewish origin in the university, and in higher and secondary educational institutions, and the other - on the measures that apply to Jews in terms of companies engaged in trade with food supplies for the population of Belgrade¹²

After the occupation of **France** on September 27, 1940, the occupation authorities issued a decree for census of the Jewish population. 287 962 Jews were registered, 60% living in the occupied zone, and 40% - under the jurisdiction of the collaborationist regime of Marshal Pétain.

On October 2, 1940, Pétain's regime adopted the first 'Statute on Jews' (*Statut de Juifs*), which restricted their right to free movement, access to public places and employment.

In October 1940 the Jews in **Norway** were barred from liberal vocations. In July 1941 they were dismissed from public office, and lawyers were deprived of the right to practice their profession. A law banning mixed marriages was adopted. The Reichskommissar Josef Terboven imposed restrictions on Jewish property.

II. ANTI-JEWISH LEGISLATION IN BULGARIA FROM 1940 UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSARIAT FOR JEWISH AFFAIRS IN 1942

Anti-Jewish legislation did not bypass Bulgaria. The signing of the Craiova Treaty between Bulgaria and Romania (September 7, 1940), under the terms of which southern Dobruja was returned back to Bulgaria, seemed to be the first sign of the further political orientation of the country. The Treaty restored the border of 1913 and regulated the relations between the two countries regarding the exchange of population as well as all issues of legal and financial nature. Germany was among the countries that approved this legal instrument. A month later, the Law on protection of the nation was billed in to the XXV Ordinary National Assembly. On November 17, 1940 in Berchtesgaden, Bulgarian Tsar Boris III met with Adolf Hitler and his Foreign Minister

¹⁰ Ф.176к, inv.7, а.у.748, sheets 154

¹¹ ASA, ф.176к, inv.7, а.у.748, sheets 6, 48, 49;

¹² ASA, ф.366-Б, inv.1, а.у.976, sheets1-5

Ivan Popov¹³ - with Joachim von Ribbentrop¹⁴. Subject of the meeting was the accession of the Kingdom of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact. The position of the Bulgarian side confirmed by letter of October 20 the same year was that *'it is dangerous for Bulgaria and even for Germany the accession in question to happen right now'¹⁵*. During the meeting was decided Bulgaria's accession to the pact to be postponed *'for the situation to settle and to make clearer the position of Turkey from where von Papen has already returned'¹⁶*. Meanwhile, at the 13th meeting of the second regular session of the XXV Ordinary National Assembly, the Law on Protection of the Nation was considered at first reading. On December 24 of that year the bill was passed and became a regulatory act of state power. Thus, the foundations of the 'Jewish question' were legally laid in Bulgaria. The following 1941 was marked by other legislative and regulatory restrictions on Jews in Bulgaria: in addition to LPN, depriving them of their civil and political rights on the grounds of their nationality, the National Assembly considered and adopted another two laws that imposed economic constraints – Law on single payment tax on property of persons of Jewish origin and Law on payment for uncovered property of persons of Jewish origin, offered to the state land fund for redemption in accordance with LPN. By a number of decrees from the same year, the Council of Ministers further regulated rules of economic restrictions on Jews in various areas - trade, economy, production. Concurrently on March 1, 1941 in Vienna, Prime Minister Bogdan Filov¹⁷ signed the Treaty of Accession of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact. German troops entered the country, and on April 19 and 20 Germany allowed the entry of Bulgarian troops in Vardar Macedonia and Aegean Thrace. According to the special telegram No. 244 that Ribbentrop transmitted to Sofia on April 18, 1941, the Bulgarian Army was authorized to seize:

- “1. Greek Thrace, bordered to the east by demarcation line Mustafa Pasha – Dedeagach (Alexandroupoli) and to the west - by the Struma River.
2. From Macedonia, but not further from the line Pirot-Vranje-Skopje and from there - along the course of Vardar River to the Greek border.

The German military services had already received instructions from the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (Wehrmacht). Nevertheless, the Bulgarian government was informed that the said

¹³ Ivan Vladimirov Popov (1890-1944), politician and diplomat. Bulgarian Minister Plenipotentiary to Bucharest, Prague and Belgrade. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations in 1940-1942. From January to September 1944 was Minister Plenipotentiary to Bucharest, where he committed suicide.

¹⁴ Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1945), head of the Diplomatic Office of the Third Reich. Member of the National Socialist German Workers Party since 1930. After Hitler came to power, he headed special bureau to conduct foreign policy campaigns of the Nazi leadership. From 1936 to early 1938 he was ambassador to London, and in February the same year was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich. He was executed as a war criminal in Nuremberg.

¹⁵ ASA, ф. 176K, inv. 1 “III”, a.u.149, sheets 11-14.

¹⁶ Franz von Papen (1879-1969) - German politician, Prime Minister (1932). In 1933 introduced Hitler in the government as Vice Chancellor. ф. 176K, inv. 1 “III”, a.u.149

¹⁷ Bogdan Dimitrov Filov (1883-1945), scientist and politician. Studied classical philology, history and archeology in Germany. Specialized in Bonn, Paris and Rome. Minister of Education in the government of G. Kyoseivanov. From February 15, 1940 to September 9, 1943 was Prime Minister and then regent. He was sentenced to death and executed on February 1, 1945.

line of Macedonia was temporary. At some close by moment were envisaged negotiations with the Bulgarian government for the temporary regulation of the territories which will be a consequence of the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, and the date of these negotiations would be further decided”¹⁸.

The next agreement between the Bulgarian and the German government signed between Foreign Minister Ivan Popov and German representative Dr. Karl Klodius and approved by the Council of Ministers on April 24 and 27 1941 did not resolve the status of these territories. It was not legally regulated until the fall of 1944¹⁹ and Bulgaria governed them only administratively.

The beginning of 1942 placed the ‘Jewish question’ in a new light. On January 20, 1942 in Berlin, (56-58, "Am Grossen Wannsee" Str.) was called a conference to discuss a single issue - the Final solution of the Jewish question in Europe. Two key points in the development of the Jewish question until 1942 were analyzed: 1) driving out the Jews from various areas of life of the German people, and 2) expulsion of the Jews from the territory of the German people. Certain disadvantages were also considered - emigration had become a problem not only for the Germans but also for countries where Jews passed through or settled, and furthermore - in wartime, emigration had become a danger, which required a new way of resolving the problem of evacuation of the Jews to the East.

The plan for the final solution of the Jewish question envisaged extensive campaign in Europe which had to include about 11 million Jews distributed by countries. 48 000 people were Bulgarian Jews. Among the main issues discussed was the question of the beginning of the individual major campaigns for expulsion of the Jews and their implementation in the territories controlled by Germany. This required the Pact allies - Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and Bulgaria to introduce new measures against the Jews coordinated with Gestapo (in the occupied countries, the Germans were making these decisions themselves). In the first half of 1942, the Bulgarian government continued to expand the range of economic sanctions – regulations issued by the Council of Ministers, on one hand, increased the number of activities prohibited for the Jews and on the other - increased those in which Jewish free labor was included as compulsory. On July 9, 1942, the government obtained legislative powers contrary to Art. 9 of the Tarnovo Constitution²⁰. A law was passed, which devolved on the Council of Ministers to take all measures to settle the Jewish question. Thus, the Council of Ministers was authorized to issue general regulations or separate orders for more expedient and effective restrictions and measures both for the Jews and for their concealers. Until the approval of these ordinances by the National Assembly, they have the force of law. A month later, on August 29, 1942, by virtue of an ordinance issued on the grounds of this same law, at the Ministry of Interior and Public Health was established the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (CJA/KEB). The implementation of all measures to resolve the Jewish question was concentrated in this Commissariat.

¹⁸ Cable № 244 from Ribbentrop transmitted to Sofia on April 17, 1941 by special train and submitted on April 18, 1941 with No. 547; V. Toshkova

¹⁹ ASA, ф.176K, inv.1 “III”, a.u.149.

²⁰ Legislative power belongs to the King and the national representatives.

The Commissioner was nominated by the Minister of Interior and Public Health and appointed by the Council of Ministers. His orders were not subject to appeal. *Moreover – even before the Law devolving on the Council of Ministers the implementation of all measures to solve the Jewish question in Bulgaria, on June 26, 1942 was voted the Law on the rights, which the Minister of Interior and Public Health may entrust with officials from the same ministry*²¹. In the statement of reasons to the bill before voting, Peter Gabrovski pointed out that besides law on the budget, accountability and enterprises in rural and urban municipalities, state police, public health and other special laws, the Minister was given a number of rights that he should exercise personally which was detrimental to the swiftness of governance. In order to create greater efficiency in the work and to relieve the Minister, he had to be given a legitimate opportunity to entrust some of his rights under the various laws with other officials in the Office of the Ministry. At the end of August 1942, the lawyer Alexander Belev was appointed Commissioner for Jewish Affairs. Prior to this appointment, his name was known to the public as the leader of *Ratniks*²², who carried out the attempted pogrom against Jewish shops in downtown streets of Sofia in 1938.

His political beliefs were clearly stated on the pages of the newspaper "Prolom" - a biweekly dedicated to the progress of the Bulgarian national spirit, published in 12 issues from 1938 to 1939. Alexander Belev participated in the newspaper editing with Assen Kantardzhiev, Victor Ichkov, Kliment Dalkalachev and Ivan Gyoshev.

He is author of the following articles:

Issue 1 – “Statics and Dynamics of Political Forms”

“The task of the political form of today should be the organization of political, economic and spiritual forces of the nation to implement the basic aspirations of the nation for social justice and national power. The implementation of this task implies physical and spiritual raising of our race, involves clearing the spiritual and political weed by drawing a clear line between honor and dishonor, implies creating conditions for the existence of all Bulgarians in Bulgaria, knowing that Bulgaria is for the Bulgarians, implies at last intensification of economic and cultural activity and creativity in the style and pace of the age. Power creates a whole from the parts - it directs and aligns the scattered, it gets the nation ready for any sacrifice. Real power flows from the center to the periphery”.

Issue 3 – “Nationalism, Religion, Church”

“The main goal of the Bulgarian nation to social justice can be religiously meaningful only in Christianity”.

Issue 4 – “Law and Morality”

“The law is a deliberate and pre-established coherent freedom in human society. The law is a form. Its content in a legal rule, is derived from manners, technique, from economic social and cultural

²¹ Adopted on June 26, 1942 at the Fifth Meeting, IV Extraordinary Session, XXV ONA, approved by Decree № 43/01.07.1942 of King Boris III

²² Warriors for the Advancement of the Bulgarian National Spirit (Ratnitci za napreduka na bulgarshtinata) Bulgarian non-governmental organization founded in 1936.

life, from morality. What will be given as a content of the law shall be decided based on the necessities of life, relevance, power and ultimately – Morality”.

Issue 5- “Axes and Global Influence”

“In solving European issues should be borne in mind that the history of Europe is the history of the establishment of nations as states. In solving global issues should finally be noted that Europe is an organic whole”.

Issue 6 – “Under the Sign of Faith in the Nation”

“The nation should be organized. Only then the faith in the nation achieves the goal. The faith of the organized nation is power. What the leader and the rank-and-file will be capable of will no longer correspond to their power as individuals but to the power of the nation. Therefore, today the cause of Hitler and Mussolini seems so inhumanely great.”

Issue 7- “The Leaders”

“The history of a nation can be a history of a rise or a history of decline. If within the nation is developing a process of separation of the individual from the nation, if the person puts their interests above all, if they serve the individual rather than national progress, national consciousness will begin to darken and the nation will start to decline.”

Issue 8-“The Meaning of ‘Nation’”

“Correctly used, the word ‘racism’ equals to racial hygiene”

Issue 9- “Race, Science and Metodi Popov”

Issue 10- “The end of Czechoslovakia”. The articles are signed by Alexander Belev. Several articles are signed with the initials A. B.

Compared to the information about his views based on the publications, there is much less information about his career as a lawyer based on archival sources. To the occupation of the position of Commissioner, Alexander Belev was 42 years old, i.e. his age suggests a career that would be documented. Among the preserved documents of the Ministry of Justice are the registers of the State examinations of candidates for judicial office and lawyers, exams for bailiffs and scribes, personnel files of the employees in the Ministry of Justice and its subsidiaries in Bulgaria, and files related to years of legal service of employees of the Ministry of Interior and Public Health. A total of 21,847 files are preserved. Among them is the file of Alexander Belev for sitting the State examination as a candidate for judicial office. It was filed on the name of Alexander Belev from Lom. It lacks biographical details, but it is apparent that he graduated in law at Sofia University in 1926 and held a degree № NG 235/1926. From November 10, 1926 to November 20, 1928 inclusive, he worked as judicial candidate (trainee) at Sofia District Court. According to the case law for the acquisition of specialty, in 1929 Alexander Belev was entitled to sit the State examination for judicial office and lawyer. To the application is enclosed a certificate by the Sofia District Court, stating that *"during his internship in the court, Alexander Belev had good behavior and good relations with the judicial panel and in society and can be admitted to the state examination."*

The theoretical and practical State examination of candidates for judicial office and lawyers was held on November 19, 1929 at the Ministry of Justice. In the oral examination the candidate Alexander Belev from Lom got the following grades²³:

Civil Law – 4 (C)

Commercial Law – 3 (D)

Criminal Law - 2 (F)

Civil proceedings – 2 (F)

Criminal proceedings – 3 (D)

Administrative Law – 3 (D)

Private International Law – 3 (D)

By official decision of the same date, the Commission allowed Alexander Belev to reset the exam in criminal law and civil proceedings at latest in the second of the subsequent sessions. In the resit held on May 16, 1930, the candidate Alexander Belev got the following grades:

In Criminal Law – 3 (D)

In Civil Proceedings – 3 (D)

The members of the Commission noted in the report of the exam: "*Since the same candidate in the last session (in November) had received in all other subjects not less than average grade (in Report № 15 dated November 19, 1929), in accordance with Art. 31 of the Rules, he is recognized that he has passed the state examination*".

The examination topics developed in writing by Al. Belev at the resit were:

- Abstract legal transactions. Their nature and importance for legal certainty.
- Transfer of commercial enterprise. Form and effect between the parties and third parties.
- Causality in commission transactions and types of crimes.
- Experience concept and types criminality²⁴.

After this date no documents of his activities as a lawyer had been filed with the Ministry of Justice. Among the few personal papers of Alexander Belev are two official forms - Personal tax return²⁵ and service card²⁶, where he had completed autographically date of birth – July 8th 1900, place of birth - Lom, education - Law, religion - Eastern Orthodox, marital status -single, address in Sofia – 11, “Rositsa” Street. Both in the tax return and in the service card of Alexander Belev there is a column for data on positions held before joining the Commissariat. In his tax Belev had completed autographically that from January 1, 1942 to September 3, 1942 he had occupied the position legal

²³ The Bulgarian evaluation system is six-point, where their correspondence to the American one is the following: Excellent (6) is equal to A; Very Good (5) is B; Good (4) is C; Satisfactory (3) is D; and Unsatisfactory or Weak (2) is E (F) means that the exam is not taken.

²⁴ ASA, ф.242к, inv.9, a.u.18 223, sheets1-15

²⁵ ASA, 190к, inv.1, a.u.1, sheets8

²⁶ ASA, ф.190к, inv.1, a.u.346, sheets104

counsel at the Ministry of Interior and Public Health (total remuneration of 58 477 lev). In his service card, completed on February 9, 1943 as a previous position held Alexander Belev had stated - Ministry of Interior and Public Health - "Department of Administration, Administrative Division". In the service card there is space for portrait photograph of the person - Alexander Belev had not attached any. I think that every outline of the personality of Alexander Belev is of particular importance. He was directly involved in the establishment of an institution that had to work for 'the final solution' of the Jewish question in Bulgaria

III. ROLE AND PLACE OF THE COMMISSARIATS IN THE HISTORY OF BULGARIAN INSTITUTIONS

In the history of the Bulgarian state institutions from 1879 to 1942 were established the following Commissariats:

1. *Commissariat in South Bulgaria* - (1885-1886) - a temporary institution established by Decree № 1/09.09.1885, after the Unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia on 09.06.1885, with the task to arrange the institutional amalgamation, since both areas lead an autonomous life. To this point in the principality were operating National Assembly, Council of Ministers and Ministries, while in Eastern Rumelia - District Assembly and directorates of the various fields of economy and life. Georgi Stranski was appointed Commissioner with assistants P.R. Slaveykov and Yoakim Gruev. The Commissariat governed on behalf of the Bulgarian monarch. Gradually the institutional amalgamation began. Many of the regional governors from North Bulgaria were transferred in southern Bulgaria and vice versa. All of them were subordinated to the Ministry of Interior in Sofia. The Commissariat removed customs between the two areas. From 01.01.1886, in South Bulgaria were introduced the judicial laws established and active in the Principality of Bulgaria until 06.09.1885.

By signing the Act of Tophane of 1886, with which the Great Powers recognize the Unification and the convocation of the Ordinary National Assembly, the work of the Commissariat came to an end.

2. *Bulgarian Commissariat for Reparations*²⁷

Established under Art. VII of the Peace Treaty of Neuilly (1919) stipulating that the Kingdom of Bulgaria had the obligation to recover the damages caused to the Allies by reparations in the amount of 2 billion and 250 million francs. It was governed by Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Prepared comprehensive reports on the economic and financial situation of Bulgaria, controlled observance of Bulgarian obligations under the provisions of the Treaty of Neuilly, justified requests for rebates, deferrals and remissions of loan interest on overdue reparations, etc. Operated until 1954.

²⁷ ASA, ф.378к

3. *Commissariat of the League of Nations in Sofia*²⁸

Established by Protocol of the League of Nations of Sept. 8. 1926 on the occasion of the financial loan granted to Bulgaria under the auspices of the LN for accommodation and settlement of refugees. Control over the spending of the loan was exercised by Commissioner- LN Delegate who appointed the employees in the commissariat. Closed in 1933.

4. *Chief Commissariat for Supplies*²⁹

Established as part of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour with the task of combating the black market and wartime profiteering, control and distribution of food and industrial products through distribution cards and household books and distribution of imported and local raw materials for industrial enterprises. Operated until 1944³⁰.

5. *Commissariat for Jewish Affairs*³¹

Established in 1942 at the Ministry of Interior and Public Health to implement the policy of removing Jews from the social and economic life and deportation from Bulgaria. Liquidated at the beginning of September 1944.

On August 29, 1942, in issue No. 192 of the State Gazette was promulgated a Regulation issued on the grounds of the Law on devolution on the Council of Ministers. The same was approved by Decree № 70 passed at the sitting of the Council of Ministers on August 26, 1942 (Protocol № 111). Art. 1 of Chapter I "For the administration of the Jewish affairs" reads: "*At the Ministry of Interior and Public Health shall be established Commissariat for Jewish Affairs.*

Implementation of any measures to address the Jewish question shall concentrate in this Commissariat, except those under the Law on single payment tax on property of persons of Jewish origin and the Law against profiteering from real estate.

The Commissioner for Jewish Affairs may request from the institutions to take all necessary measures to enforce the laws and regulations concerning the Jews. For all measures relating to the implementation of laws and regulations governing the Jews, the consent of the Commissioner shall be required. Before deciding on matters affecting other institutions, the Commissioner shall consider in advance the view of the respective institution."

The procedure for appointment of the staff of the Commissariat is regulated by Art. 5 of the Regulation: " Art. 5 of the Regulation: "*The Commissioner for Jewish Affairs shall be appointed by Council of Ministers upon the proposal of the Minister of Interior and Public Health. Other staff of the commissariat, unless the regulation provides otherwise, shall be appointed by the Commissioner [...].The currently existing offices in various institutions working on the solution of*

²⁸ ASA, ф.467к

²⁹ ASA, ф.231к, inv.12

³⁰ See also Agreement between BNB and the Head Office of Credit Funds of the Reich in Berlin - part Guidelines, signed on March 4, 1941., 176к, inv.11, a.u.401, sheets1-6, 2506, inv.1, a.u. 48, sheets 1-4, 10,11, ИДА, кн.3/1959

³¹ ASA, ф.190к

the Jewish question, shall be transferred to the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs with all their personnel and equipment.

All employees on the staff of the Commissariat shall be considered civil servants [...].Amounts necessary for personal and material costs in the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs shall be allocated to the budget of the fund "Jewish Communities".

The overall activity of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, arising from Articles 1-7, Chapter I of the Regulation, is covered in the following structure:

I. Commissioner

1. Staff

II. Administrative Division

1. Inspectorate
2. Jewish communities
3. Camps

III. Economic Division

1. Office of Jewish Property
2. Liquidation Office
 - a/ sole proprietorships
 - b/ joint stock companies
 - c/ limited partnerships and limited liability companies
 - d/ general partnerships
 - e/ sale of movable property
 - f/ sale of movable property in the New Lands
 - g/ settlement of liabilities to banks, institutions
3. Intelligence group

IV. Accounting division for Jewish Communities Fund

1. Upkeep of kitchens and camps

The structure, operation and the place of an institution can be studied and analyzed by the surviving documents. The collection of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs contains 15,348 archive units. **In general, they have the following characteristics:**

Inventory 1, 9062 archive units, 1940-1945.

Bills addressing the Protection of the Nation, ordinances, regulations, circulars, orders of Commissariat and personal records of its employees, lists of persons of Jewish origin, their movable and immovable property; reports, statements, files, etc. on the activity, budget approvals for the Jewish communities, reports, records, reports, statements, correspondence, etc. on the expropriation and sale of property of Jewish families, the displacement and interning in camps, prohibition of visiting public places and other restrictions imposed; records on the movement and sale of their

properties , memoranda, reports, testimony, case files, records, etc. on the participation of authorities and officials in the Commissariat in the persecution and deportation of Jews.

Inventory 2, 5910 archive units, 1942-1944

Files for liquidation of sole proprietorships, joint stock and other companies with participation of Jewish capital and liquidation of liabilities of Jews to banks, companies, institutions and individuals; orders, correspondence, records, etc. on confiscation of assets of persons of Jewish origin and Jewish companies, and single tax on their property; budgets and budget estimates of Jewish communities, supporting documents, inventories, records, files on their revenues and expenditures; books of accounts of the Commissariat.

Inventory 3, 376 archive units, 1896-1945

Law on the protection of the nation (LPN), notes, memoranda, reports, etc. on its interpretation and implementation, as well as proposals for amendment and supplement. Regulations, structure and reports of the Commissariat, minute book of the Council under the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs, ordinances, regulations, circulars and orders regarding the LPN implementation, hiring and dismissing employees of the Commissariat and its delegates in Jewish communities, the structure and management of the Jewish communities, etc.

Orders, files, statements, reports, records, etc. on the liquidation of Jewish companies and enterprises, displacement of Jews, the organization of camps, seizure and sale of property, dismissal from work, prohibition of visiting public places, establishing a curfew, wearing badges and other restrictive measures; on opening, operation and closure of Jewish communities, accommodation and arranging housing for displaced Jewish families, opening Jewish schools and recruitment of teachers, arranging homes for senior citizens, free kitchens, allocating aid for poor Jews, issuing permits for trade and craft services, etc.

Lists and information about Jews; property declarations. Financial statements, budgets, revenue and expenditure accounts, payrolls and supporting documents, orders, files, records, etc. on approving budgets for Jewish communities, approval of the financial statements, transfer of funds, funds raising for the "Jewish community" Fund, performed audits, etc.

Investigation files on trials of persons involved in the persecution of Jews in the application of LPN.

IV. ROTATION, CONFIDENTIALITY, LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE COMMISSARIAT FOR JEWISH AFFAIRS

Among all these documents it seems that the clearest idea of the Commissariat is provided by the Order Registers. For the period 09.04.1942 until the end of 1944, a total number of 12,954 outgoing orders were registered. They can be grouped as follows:

(1) Orders for appointment of personnel. For the period September 5 to 28 1942, Alexander Belev signed orders appointing 45 employees at CJA. Among them is the core of the Commissariat

- Zahari Velkov Ivanov, Head of Department in CJA - 5.9.42, Ivan Dimitrov Popov, accountant - 10.9.42, Maria Borisova Pavlova, Deputy Head - 22.9.42, Jaroslav Kalitsin, Chief Inspector - 22.9.42; Iliya Dobrevski, Inspector - 22. 9.42, Kiril Stoymenov, Inspector - 22. 9.42, Atanas Ovcharov, Deputy Head -22.9.42. The next mass appointment is on October 22, 1942. By the beginning of 1943 the number of the employees appointed in the Commissariat reached 115 people.

(2) Orders for ranking the personnel. Usually issued three months after the appointment of the person.

(3) Orders for manufacturing insignia for Jews, Jewish businesses, Jewish homes and industries with Jewish participation.

(4) Appointment of day laborers. By the end of 1942 their cash remuneration was between 70 and 80 lev per day, and in 1943 reached 120 lev per day worked.

(5) Appointment of Delegates to Jewish communities. The appointment began in October 1942. Initially in almost more than 90% were appointed mayors, district governors or administrators who combined the office of Delegate. In early February 1943 they were dismissed and new delegates were appointed in their place.

(6) Appointment of Jews as members of the Consistory in Jewish communities - after February 17, 1943.

(7) Appointment of liquidators of Jewish businesses. In 1943 most of them were also replaced.

(8) Order for seizure in favor of the treasury for public support of amounts, inventory and cash balances.

(9) Administrative orders for displacement of Jews - throughout the whole 1943.

(10) Orders for missions predominantly to Jaroslav Kalitsin, Atanas Ovcharov, Iliya Dobrevski, Ivan Gyoshev, Ivan Popov, Borislav Tasev, Zahari Velkov Slavcho Jonchev, Alexander Belev. The orders are from the beginning of February 1943.

(11) Orders for reappointment of all full-time staff of the Commissariat. They were issued in the period 1 - 16 February 1943.

(12) Orders for payment of additional remuneration for overtime - February - July 1943. They concern mainly the members of the Council under the Commissioner and heads of departments in the Commissariat. From technical staff were rewarded typists, the driver of Al. Belev, his private secretary, messenger, telephone operators /2/ intelligence police officers, guard of the warehouse of the organization *Brannik*, members of the Commission under Article 37 of Decree - liquidation of Jewish property.

(13) Orders for sanctions and dismissal of employees in the interest of the service and delays - between February and May 1943. Dismissal of day laborers - the end of February 1943. Dismissal of Jewish members of the Consistories and appointment of new ones – after February 17, 1943.

(14) Orders establishing a committee for counting the Jews from Sofia - the beginning of May 1943.

(15) Orders imposing financial penalties on Bulgarians in debt to Jews - after June 1943.

From the orders concerning the staff of the Commissariat is apparent that the constant reappointments aimed to limit the information on the actual activity of the Commissariat. In the Commissariat was designated a 'core' of 5-10 people. The biography of each of them contained pronounced nationalist orientation.

In the period September 1942 to February 1943 the full-time staff passes probationary period until permanent reappointment performed from 9 to 18 February 1943. The Commissariat employed for its operations two main types of part-time staff -- non-qualified day laborers and skilled-liquidators of property of persons of Jewish origin. For the period October 1942 - February 1943 a triple replacement of delegates to Jewish communities took place. In February - March 1943 was carried out replacement of members of the Jewish Consistory in each city. The number of posted employees in February and March 1943 was reduced to the core staff in the Commissariat.

In March 1943, was issued an order prohibiting the staff to talk to each other in the hallways, and in May 1943 - to talk to outsiders and visitors to the Commissariat. Moreover, two reports have been prepared of visits of outsiders to the Commissariat. The first was for the period February 12 to 26, with specified number of visitors to the Commissioner and individually named employees of the Administrative Division (Kalitsin , Nikolov, Pavlova, Yonchev , Stoimenov, Roussev); Occupation Division (Velkov Ivanov, Ovcharov, Popov, Dochev and Tsonev); Business Division (Lukov, Gavrilov, Bahchevandzhiev, Paraliev, Ikonov, Raynov, Kolev); Jewish Communities Fund (Gyoshev, Draganov Paitashev). A total of 510 visitors, of which 259 with invitations, 169 with permission and 82 officials. The hours for visitors were from 7:45 to 14:00 hours. In this period Alexander Belev was visited by 12 persons, including 6 with permission and 6 officials. The second report was for the period February 27 to March 13 1943. The total number of visitors was 458, of which 218 with invitations, 200 with permission and 40 officials. Visits to the Commissioner were 30 (1 of them with invitation and 29 with permissions). Both reports were prepared and signed by Zachary Velkov and were addressed to the Minister of Interior and Public Health³².

Another interesting document that reflects the administration of the Commissariat is the regulations for the registry and archives. The main objective set out in the general provisions was to simplify and accelerate the registry. To achieve this goal, the regulations have the following main sections: 1. Office for distribution of documents; 2. Incoming documents out of the procedure; 3. Movement of files; 4. Signs; 5. Resolution of files; 6. Registry; 7. Letters and signature; 8. Information; 9. Office; 10. Expedition; 11. Working time; 12. Supervision. The regulations trace out the operational movement of each document. According to it, every head of department writes in a certain color – the Commissioner uses a green pencil, heads of departments and inspectors use blue pencils. There is an additional code – КД – enclose to file/to case, ПП. - enclose the file; Б - short note on the matter; Д – report on the matter; С - information on the matter; И – to write a letter, to communicate; КА – enclose outside the file; Да –request is upheld/positive resolution of the

³² ASA, ф.190к, inv.3, a.u.101

request; He - without consequence to the request/negative resolution of the request;; CC- quick inquiry on the matter; T - telephone inquiry; A- inspection, survey, Han.- reminder, Ч- wait: 3- to be reported to particular person.

According to Article 104 of the Regulations only the Commissioner, the Chief Inspector, the Head of the Administrative Division and the Head of Staff have general oversight of the procedures and operation of the Commissariat. The level of confidentiality of the document is designated by four types of symbols³³. If the resolution, report, letter, etc. are not signed by the rapporteur but by another person, that is indicated by the following characters:

For signature by the Commissioner: #

For signature by the heads of divisions: = (with one crossing line)

For signature by the Chief Inspector:-II-

For signature by the Head of Office +

The regulations and the classifier consist of 40 mimeograph sheets without signature. The filing has accurately described indices for each activity and includes 962 key items. They cover the activities of the Commissariat as follows: A-1 General Affairs and Administration, B 4 - Division of Personal Status and Occupational Activities; 5 Business Division - organization, liquidation pursuant to art. 37 of the Regulation, seizure, sale of movable property seized by the Jews, verification of Jewish liabilities, management of Jewish real estate; 9 Accounting department of the Jewish Communities Fund. In the first section apart from the Commissariat of the Jewish Affairs Head Office relations with the Ministry of Interior and Public Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Denominations, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and State Property, Ministry of Labour Service, Ministry of Public Buildings, Roads and Public Works, Ministry of War, Council of Ministers, the National Assembly and the Palace Chancellery, there is a subsection covering the direct activity of the Commissioner and levels of communication with the other institutions. Besides letters, dispatches, general surveys, surveys on the Jewish issue, his activities include strictly confidential files and documents. His personal record keeping covers issues relating to visits and protocol, reports to the Minister of Interior, reports to the Council of Ministers, Kardex and tasks, regular information to the press and communications and relations with regard to press reports.

It is important to mention one more fact - all orders and regulations of the Commissariat subject to publication until August 1943, were promulgated in the State Gazette. A reference to list of periodicals in Bulgaria shows that for the period 1941 -1944 its circulation was to 13 000 copies.

Alexander Belev holds the office of Commissioner from September 3rd 1942 to the beginning of October 1943. In the middle of the same month the then deputy prosecutor at the Sofia Military Court, Hristo Stomanyakov, was appointed Commissioner for Jewish Affairs. On August 31, 1944 by Decree № 4 of the Council of Ministers (proceedings № 167), the Council of Ministers approved the liquidation of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (SG, No.193 /September 5, 1944).

³³ ASA, ф.190к, inv.3, a.u. 61

In 1945, during the sessions of the VII panel "Anti-Semites" of the Peoples Court as an accused was called Liliana V. Panitsa. In her written reply she stated as follows: "... *I held the position of private secretary of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs and in this capacity I did not head any sphere therein; no files were reported to me nor did I report or resolve any such files ...*

The position of private secretary was not foreseen in the budget of the Commissariat and I did not receive a salary as the other officials; I was affiliated in Commissariat as a day laborer ..."³⁴

Again in her testimony before the Peoples Court, Liliana Panitsa tells in detail about the visit of Dannecker³⁵ and the signing of the agreement itself in February 1943. Here, however, we will consider the characterization she gave, which highlights the staff that worked in the Commissariat. According to L. Panitsa in CJA worked ten *Ratniks* members, almost all of them were close to Alexander Belev and had influence on him. Liliana Panitsa gave the following description:

"... Ivan Gyoshev, Jaroslav Kalitsin and Dr. Popov, all three were outright Ratniks and very close with the Commissioner and had a very great influence on the latter [...]. Most frequently the Commissioner was visited by his friends Ratniks - Luben Valkov (who was allowed visits without regard to the reception or working hours) Boris Naumov and Ivan Badev (the latter came less frequently than the other two). All three of them were Ratniks and liquidators of large enterprises.

I have not seen Assen Kantardzhiev to be coming to the Commissariat. But he often called under assumed names (I know that because once he called under the name of General Nikolov and another time - as General Petrov). [...]. When I asked why he gave another name, Belev said "probably he did not want you to know it was him." Victor Ichkov Boychev, lawyer also had free access to Belev - the latter explained that Ichkov came to him not only as a lawyer and friend but also as editor of the journal "Ideas and Deeds" where the Commissioner was member of the management board.

I've heard that besides Alexander Belev, on the LPN, the Rules and the Regulation of August 26, 1942 had worked also Docho Hristov³⁶ and Boncho Bonchev, Director in the Ministry of Interior.

There was a Council at the Commissariat with representatives of the Minister of Trade, Ministry of Finance, Civil Mobilization Directorate, Police Directorate, the Supreme Administrative Court, the Bulgarian National Bank, of the Ministry of Finance [...]. The Commissioner did not take part in this Council. The issues under consideration were reported by the heads of the divisions and in their absence – by the chief inspectors.

³⁴ ASA, ф. 1568K, inv. 1, a.u. 74, sheets 38, 39.

³⁵ Theodor Dannecker - hauptsturmbanführer of SS, adviser on Jewish affairs in France, and from January 21, 1943 - in Bulgaria. Entrusted with preparing the deportation of Bulgarian Jews in Poland. Their deportation was part of the "final solution of the Jewish question". Not only in Bulgaria but also in Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, German diplomatic and special representatives faced resistance, which hindered or even failed some of the planned operations. Supposedly, he committed suicide on December 11, 1945 in the official judicial prison Bad Tölz.

³⁶ Keynote rapporteur at consideration of the bill on protection of the nation at the National Assembly in 1940, and later - Minister of Interior and Public Health (September 14, 1943 - July 1, 1944).

At the beginning, with the establishment of the Commissariat, the Council convened almost weekly, and later on - very rarely. Besides the issues that were approved by the Council (reviewed in advance by the Commissioner), there were issues where only the Council's decision was authoritative and determinant: transfer of property to relatives, sale of property, recognition of origin, etc.

There were cases where the Council was unanimously dissatisfied, namely that certain matters were not referred to it (e.g. the deportation of Jews).

[...] The same committee convened always after office hours; the members and the Commissariat officials who participated were getting delegates' money.

There was a council that was called every Saturday (later, I think, that the day changed). It included all heads of divisions and chief inspectors – the convened in the office of the Commissioner [...]. There each head reported issues that were discussed by all members. Besides personal and current issues were reported also weekly results of the individual divisions and agencies and draft regulations, such as restriction of students of Jewish origin, compression and the results thereof (Jews of Sofia), Sofia Jewry census, collected Arah (Jewish religious tax), accounting issues, travel of Jews in the country, the work of the agents, etc.”³⁷.

The years of the Holocaust in Bulgaria would hardly be fully understood if contemporary researchers and the general reading audience were not thoroughly familiar with CJA, which actually focuses on both the German pressure to solve the Jewish question and the ‘evolution’ of the Bulgarian fascist organizations. Their action provoked opposition from the Bulgarian civil society and as a result led to the rescue of Bulgarian Jews. This was a protest in the society against the designed machine for annihilation, in the case of Bulgaria – the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs. In the conditions of World War II (and as an ally of the Third Reich) Bulgaria is saving its Jews, although through the government's actions in its foreign policy relations it has been complicit in the deportation of Jews from the "newly liberated lands", although they do not enter its borders. Throughout the existence of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, thousands of Bulgarians, led not only by a sense of tolerance but also by duty and morality, have provided assistance to their fellow Jews to survive. During the period 1940-1944, thousands of Jews crossed the borders of Bulgaria, whose transit visas are not only a way to the Promised Land - they were first and foremost an act of rescue.

³⁷ ASA, ф. 1568K, inv. 1, a.u. 74, sheets 42, ф. 190K, inv. 3, a.u. 42. For more details on the work and personality of Liliana Panitsa, please see Chary Frederick. *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution 1940-1944*, Pittsburgh University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972.

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