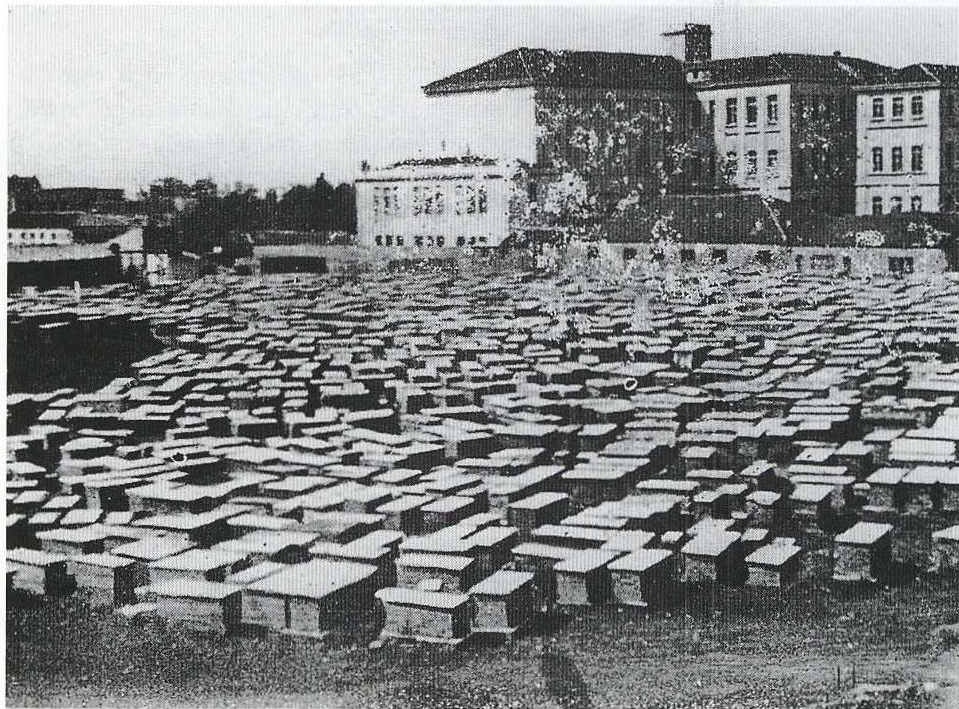


**A Report on Preventing any Further Desecration of
the Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki, Greece**
Findings, Concerns and Recommendations



Prepared for

**Asra Kadisha, Conference of Academicians for the Protection of Jewish Cemeteries and the Central
Rabbinical Congress
July 2008**

By David Rubel

BACKGROUND

- 1. The old Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki is being desecrated by construction under the authority of the City of Thessaloniki and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.** The cemetery was once the largest Jewish cemetery in the world and is located in a city that was home to one of longest continuous Jewish communities only to be destroyed during the Nazi occupation in World War II. The Asra Kadisha (Committee for the Preservation of Gravesites), the leadership of the Jewish community of Greece, as well as other Jewish organizations dedicated to the preservation of cemeteries abroad, have all strongly protested the desecration of the Jewish cemetery as violation of their religious beliefs. All of these organizations have stated that construction is taking place inside the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery. *All construction work of a new Metro station and a campus building should be halted immediately.*

CURRENT DESECRATION

- 2. Until an authoritative and unbiased map is finally produced of the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki, all construction in contested areas should stop immediately.** An area of land with such great religious and historical significance deserves a full and exhaustive research undertaking. A professional land survey and thorough historical investigation are essential. *Just from the research that we have conducted on the cemetery, it is abundantly clear that there is compelling evidence that significantly differs from the United States Consulate General Office in Thessaloniki (which is based on mapping from the Survey Office of Thessaloniki in 1936 and cannot be judged an objective party). Presently, there is no objective basis to disprove that the digging is taking place inside the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery.* There is a much larger body of primary source research material available that will conclusively prove the actual borders of the Jewish cemetery. Until then action has to be taken to stop all work on the cemetery until a professional and independent survey is conducted with the participation of Asra Kadisha.
- 3. Current digging is exposing Jewish skeletons.** Rabbi David Niederman of the Central Rabbinical Congress, Richard Altabe, principal of Magen David Yeshivah and Rabbi Chizkiyahu Kalmanovitz of Asra Kadisha flew to Thessaloniki on November 22, 2007. During their visit, they were able to take photos that clearly show construction taking place at the Jewish cemetery. The construction has unearthed skeletons and is taking place inside the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery. The digging is in clear view of anyone walking by. Photographs of the digging with skeletons clearly in view were made available during the trip to the Greek authorities and the Office of the Consulate General of the State Department.

DOCUMENTING THE ACTUAL BORDERS OF THE JEWISH CEMETERY AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- 4. At the heart of the matter, how is it possible that a cemetery with such unique and overwhelming religious and cultural significance has never had an independent professional historical study conducted of its boundaries and contents along with a**

preservation plan. The city of Thessaloniki has undergone vast physical changes since the end of the Second World War. Many of the streets have been changed including ones that border the area of the old Jewish cemetery. A university campus serving 95,000 students has been built on top of the cemetery grounds. As can be seen in the discussion below, there is no consensus regarding authoritative maps of the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery. If this endeavor had ever been properly undertaken, much of the dispute over the boundaries of the cemetery and the resultant desecration would not be occurring.

5. **The map used by the United States Department of State Consulate General's Office in Thessaloniki significantly underestimates the size of the Jewish cemetery --** Due to the requests from organizations including several of the sponsor's of this Report, the United States Department of State Consulate General's Office in Thessaloniki has been conducting an investigation of the charge that recent construction at Aristotle University is also causing desecration to the Jewish cemetery. In July of 2007, the Consulate General's Office in Thessaloniki sent a letter to his colleagues in the State Department that contained a map of the Jewish cemetery and the surrounding area as well as photographs. The map was produced by a Thessaloniki court appointed surveyor in 2005. In the letter, the Consulate General stated that there is no evidence that there is construction taking place inside the boundaries of the old Jewish cemetery and that the issue did not warrant any further attention of the Department of State Office of the Consulate General. We have carefully reviewed the map and the photographs supplied by Mr. Hoyt Brian Yee, Consul General. We respectfully but firmly disagree with both the interpretation of the map and the conclusion offered by the Consul General. We are in possession of maps that predate First World War and the Second World War. These maps show very different boundaries for the Jewish cemetery. Despite the vigorous assertion of Consulate General's Office, it is certainly not clear that Egnatia Odos is outside the boundary of the Jewish cemetery. In fact, even on the map he provided, parts of the cemetery reach all the way to Egnatia Odos. We have come into possession of several pre World War I and World War II recorded maps of the cemetery and scholarly sources that show the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery to much larger than the ones offered by the Thessaloniki Office of the Consulate General

6. **The map showing the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery used by the United States Consulate General's Office in Thessaloniki is based on a map that was created in the summer of 1936 by the Survey Office of Thessaloniki.** Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AU) providing the funding and sponsorship of an in depth 213 page book on the historical and physical development of the University covering the period of 1925 to 1990. The book was published in 1999. The sole purpose of this endeavor was to create a professionally researched and fully documented history of how the University was developed beginning in 1925. The book devotes several chapters to describing how the AU (then known as the University of Thessaloniki) was trying to legally acquire the land through legislation passed by the regional Greek government in 1930. The legislation gave permission to the local government to allow for the expropriation of the land of the Jewish cemetery to Aristotle University. There are two very powerful findings that can be reached from reading the book:

- The boundaries of the Jewish cemetery that are shown in the map from the US Consulate General are very nearly the same boundaries that were first identified in a map commissioned by the regional government in 1936 as part of the expropriation of the land to Aristotle University. In order for the expropriation to take place, the owners (Jewish community) had to be compensated for the value of the land. For compensation to take place, the actual boundaries of the cemetery had to be established. The Survey Office of Thessaloniki was asked to hire a team to survey the cemetery. The Survey Office produced a map that show the 350,000 square meters and shows the exact same boundaries that are used today to show the boundaries of the Jewish Cemetery. The Survey Office was part of the local government. It was a government agency and part of the same government apparatus that had already agreed to using the Jewish cemetery for expansion of the University. It's objectivity is highly questionable. (for full chronology of events, see pages 10-12)
- According to the AU's own research, when the map was officially presented to the Jewish community, formally known as the 767 Certificate of Expropriation and Compensation, as part of the negotiations, it was met with vigorous protest. The question that must be asked is who would better know about the actual boundaries of the cemetery? In any event, what is indisputable, is that from the very beginning of the mapping issue, there was a complete absence of agreement on the actual boundaries of the Jewish cemetery,

7. Upon publication of the map by the Survey Office in October 1936, the official Jewish community of Thessaloniki, strongly disputed the figures for the size of the cemetery. In the fall of 1936, the Jewish community of Thessaloniki published an official protest of the planned expropriation of the Jewish cemetery including an assertion that the actual boundaries of the cemetery are 550,000 square meters.

Doc 5.7. The first page of the protest made by the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki against certificate 767/193, concerning expropriation and compensation

- a) That the certificate of expropriation goes against the letter of the government constitution, which anticipates that the act of worship of recognized religion in Greece can be conducted without problems and under the protection of the law. The area of the cemeteries was a place of worship recognized by the holy orders of the Jewish religion which forbade the removal of the bones of the deceased. As a consecrated place therefore, it was not possible to make the land available for another purpose.
- b) That the area of the cemeteries has 'holy privileges', which can not be overridden by any act of law.
- c) That the Survey office ignored the General Building Guidelines (doc 3/22-4-1929) which anticipate the planting of trees in old cemeteries which cannot be relocated for whatever reason.
- d) That there are historical reasons concerning the Jews, who have thousands of ancestors buried in the cemeteries in Thessaloniki.
- e) That in other countries any plans to carry out expropriation were aborted.

f) That the University of Thessaloniki could have sought a means of expansion on other pieces of land in the city.

g) That the size of the land covered by Jewish cemeteries is 500,000 sq. m. and not the approximate 350,000 which were estimated from the topographical certificate.

(The above notice was translated from Greek)

Note: The authoritative version of the Aristotle University commissioned book fails to discuss that there were no attempts at restitution or protection of the bones of the buried after 1945 when the university buildings were constructed. Also the blame for the decision to destroy the cemetery in December 1942 is placed fully on the German Nazis. There is no mention that local Greek leaders strongly pushed the Nazis to allow them to destroy the cemetery.

8. **In addition to the research study of the history of Aristotle University, three other professional sources give estimates of the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery to be somewhere between 324,000 to 550,000 square meters.** Below are three sources of professional research regarding the boundaries of the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki.

The first source is from a highly regarded Jewish community leader who died in the Holocaust:

Yomtov Yacoel *The Holocaust in Salonika Eyewitnesses Accounts* Edited by Steven Bowman Ph. D. Translated by Isaac Benmeyer, Ph. D. pages 71 to 76. "The Jewish cemetery took up an area of 550,000 square meters".. Yomtov Yacoel was a lawyer who represented the Jewish community during its negotiations with the Nazis during World War II. He died at Auschwitz in 1944. Before he died, while in hiding, he wrote a lengthy series of memoirs about the Holocaust period which were published in this book. His memoirs are cited as an important primary source by many scholars.

The second source is from the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki:

<http://www.jmth.gr/web/thejews/pages/pages/necrop/necrop.htm>

"By 1912 it covered some 324,000 square meters and provided repose for over 300,000 dead....The vast proportions of this necropolis can still be traced. The western limit extended along the flank of the PAOK soccer stadium and the eastern limit followed approximately Pavlos Melas Street. The northern limit lay within the entire campus of the present day University of Thessaloniki, including an orphanage and a number of adjacent buildings and military barracks. The southern limit ended in the neighborhood known as Saranda Ekklesies (Forty Churches) and a collection of private dwellings. Along its entire length it was divided by a fairly wide path that had been created by Ottoman soldiers in the 19th century who moved back and forth from their barracks and the city by this shortcut through the cemetery. Burials were arranged in no particular order. Graves in certain areas were packed so tightly together that it was necessary to stand on one to find another or even to walk across them in order to reach a specific tomb."

The third source is from Mark Mazower, author of *Salonika City of Ghosts*(2004) and considered the leading English language scholar on the history of Thessaloniki. He is a professor in the history department at Columbia University.

“The cemetery covered a vast area of nearly 35 hectares” . (One square hectare is 10,000 meters. 35 hectares is 350,000 meters.

PROTECTION OF THE JEWISH CEMETERY FALLS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

9. The International Religious Freedom Report 2007 on Greece released by the United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor September 14, 2007 contains the following description of the Jewish cemetery in Thessaloniki.

“There was no progress on negotiations between the Jewish community of Thessaloniki and the Government to find acceptable restitution for the community's cemetery, expropriated in 1944 after its destruction by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Aristotle University, a public institution, was later built on top of the cemetery. American Jewish NGOs have expressed concern that the municipality's construction of a subway and other facilities in the area might disturb the Jewish cemetery. The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki accepts assurances from local authorities that current construction will not cross the boundaries of the cemetery. The Jewish Community is working with the University to appropriately memorialize the site's Jewish heritage, and ensure that future University construction does not disrupt the cemetery. Current construction practices maintain that excavations and construction of public works take place under the close supervision of archaeologists and other experts, to ensure the protection of the site. The Jewish community reported that virtually none of the publicly-owned Jewish cemeteries throughout the country were being properly maintained (e.g., the grass was not cut, the fences were not repaired, and plants were not watered), though maintenance is required under Greek law. “

We would also like to point out that the 2002 State Department Report for Greece failed to even mention any issues involving the Jewish cemetery. This is surprising since the both issues raised in the 2007 report were alive in the years prior to 2002 (and every year since 1950).

10. Preservation of the Cemetery advances the goals of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad -- We also believe that the issue of preserving the cemetery is one that clearly falls under the mandate of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. Below is the authorizing language for the creation of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

Duties The Commission shall--

(1) identify and publish a list of those cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings located abroad which are associated with the foreign heritage of United States citizens from eastern and central

Europe, particularly those cemeteries, monuments, and buildings which are in danger of deterioration or destruction;

(2) encourage the preservation and protection of such cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings by obtaining, in cooperation with the Department of State, assurances from foreign governments that the cemeteries, monuments, and buildings will be preserved and protected; and

(3) prepare and disseminate reports on the condition of and the progress toward preserving and protecting such cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings.

UNITED STATES CODE TITLE 16 Section 469j (U.S. Public Law 99-83, Section 1303 – August 8, 1985)

The Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki strongly meets all three of the criteria. In fact, given the history of the cemetery over the past seventy years, one could easily make the argument that the cemetery actually deserves to be a top priority for the Commission (if not the number one priority).

11. **It is time for Greece to sign the treaty --** We are mindful of the history of the Greek Orthodox Church and other Greek Leaders in Athens who made strong appeals to stop the transports to Poland and persecution of the Greek Jews. The Greek government has always rightfully been very proud of this light in the darkness. Consequently, it should be only be expected that the Greek government will gladly cooperate on the issues involving heritage abroad. As you know, the Greek Government has not signed a treaty with the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. We urge the State Department to work closely with the Greek government on signing the treaty. It is interesting to note the list of countries that have signed an agreement. While these countries are generally perceived to have significant anti-Semitic forces in the legislative bodies, they have all managed to sign the agreement. Greece which is very proud of its history of Jewish-Greek relations has not.

12. **A better model is available to guide U.S. policy --** The sensitivity, respect and honesty that a government shows to its own history reveals much about its citizens and its government. We can only keep thinking about African Burial Ground Memorial in lower Manhattan on Duane Street (which is maintained by the National Park Service). The national memorial honors the estimated 15,000 Africans (both free persons and slaves) that were buried at the approximately seven-acre site in the 17th and 18th centuries. Also, the history of the burial ground is one more powerful example of the pervasive racism that existed in colonial New York. However, when construction in 1991 necessitated excavation and the remains were first identified, construction was immediately halted. It is now a national park with a large memorial soon to be constructed. The respect that our government has shown is an inspiration and should guide us in our dealings with other governments.

UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF THESSALONIKI HAVE NOT PROTECTED THE CEMETERY

13. **The past bias of Greek Authorities has been thoroughly demonstrated --** The Consulate General Office relies heavily on the local and national Greek government for its evidence. Given the history of cemetery beginning in the 1930's to the present, there is a significant body of research that shows that the certain segments of the local Greek leadership did everything within their power, including collaborating with the Nazis, to take control of the cemetery land. If the local municipality and the University are such ardent protectors of the cemetery, how is it possible that an entire University could be built on top of it? Over the past 56 years, how many times did the University halt construction because the construction was desecrating the dead buried there? According to Mark Mazower, author of *Salonika City of Ghosts(2004)*:

“In December 1942 came the strongest indication to date that even the municipal authorities themselves might find the plight of the Jews impossible to resist. The Jewish cemetery, which occupied a large area outside the eastern walls, had been the object of controversy between the community and the municipality for decades. It had obstructed the implementation of the interwar town plant from inception, for it lay squarely where Hebrard had envisaged green recreational spaces a the hear of the new modern city, and where others, more practically, wanted to build a new university campus. The university, which had started out in the old Villa Allatini, had been penned for most of the interwar period into the old Ottoman Idadie building on the cemetery's edge. Negotiations between the Greek authorities and the Jewish community had progressed slowly. But in 1937 they had agreed that in return for ceding the western part. The rest would be planted with trees, while new Jewish grave would be constructed else. In 1940 further burials were forbidden in the old cemetery, though in fact they continued to take place because no action was taken to build new ones. Now, however, the municipal authorities saw the chance to resolve the cemetery issue for good, and they raised it with the Germans.“

Mazower also writes that post World War II Greek scholars have been very biased with this subject. The fact that Jews were the largest ethnic group in Salonika during the Ottoman period, and the subject of the Jewish cemetery (as well as other communities that had a large presence during the Ottoman Empire period), especially before and during World War II rarely shows up in any recent post War study by Greek scholars of Thessaloniki. For the State Department to be relying on Greek authorities for their evidence is quite appalling to the say the least (really scandalous). (*Salonika, City of Ghosts. 2004. pages 429 to 440*)

14. **Preservation of the cemetery is all the more important, in light of the presence of Aristotle University --** A painful irony to this very painful story is that a university was built on the destroyed Jewish cemetery. The highest ideal of the university is the pursuit of truth and love of learning. The university was founded in Greece, a country with an ancient history that has been the source of many of our most cherished ideals. Yet, no where on the campus of Aristotle University is there even the smallest memorial that would tell the story of how the University was created. How can a university hide its own past? How can a university get built on crimes against humanity and not even have

the decency to acknowledge it. They should be offering classes in the history of the building of the university. The students don't have to look very far for a powerful history lesson about evil and how human behavior can be so destructive. After the destruction of the cemetery by the Nazis, I think we have the highest moral obligation to do all in our power to preserve what remains and prevent any further desecration of the dead. We owe a debt not only to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust but to present and future generations of Jews and non-Jews alike. This is a story with universal human rights significance.

15. **Thessaloniki was designated the 1997 European Capital of Culture by the European Union.** Also, UNESCO established a Chair at Aristotle University on Education in Human Rights and Peace in 1997. Aristotle University is the largest in southeast Europe with 80,000 students and 2,200 faculty members. While there is chair in Education in Human Rights and Peace, there is no memorial to the Jewish cemetery or an official policy of protection of the bodies buried there. We are saddened to know that not only the Greek government in Athens and the Municipality of Thessaloniki, but also the European Union and UNESCO would allow excavation on land that is in dispute without a professional and independent investigation and report (that will be available to the public). This is the minimum standard that is accepted in comparable situations.

DESECRATION OF THE JEWISH CEMETERY IS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

16. **Greece is in violation of the 1972 UNESCO Convention -- 1972 UNESCO CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE .** We would also like to point out that the Government of Greece is bound by Articles of the UNESCO 1972 Convention. These were agreed to in 1972. In the 37 years since the Convention, we cannot see how the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki has received any protection according to Articles of the Convention, especially the following Articles 1, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12. We believe a formal complaint to UNESCO should be considered. See attachment with relevant UNESCO 1972 Convention Articles.
17. **Greece is in violation of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2005/40.** The UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly have encouraged "the continuing efforts in all parts of the world of the Special Rapporteur to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and to recommend remedial measures, as appropriate" (Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/40 and General Assembly resolution 61/161). The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has a formal complaint process for any situation that may offer evidence of a violation of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/40 4 (b): The Commission on Human Rights urges States, "To exert the utmost efforts, in accordance with their national legislation and in

conformity with international human rights law, to ensure that religious places, sites, shrines and religious expressions are fully respected and protected and to take additional measures in cases where they are vulnerable to desecration or destruction;"

18. The European Union and the Council of Europe have both taken action against situations very similar to the desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki.

Both the European Union and Council of Europe have intervened to stop the desecration of cemeteries by their member countries (Spain) and countries seeking admission to the European Union (Turkey).

CEMETERY HAS GREAT IMPORTANCE TO SEPHARDIC JEWISH COMMUNITY

19. The historic Salonika Jewish cemetery is uniquely important to the worldwide community of Sephardic Jews -- It must also be mentioned that an estimated 40,000 Sephardic Jews had to flee what was then known as the great fire of 1917 in Salonika. The fire destroyed much of the Jewish neighborhoods as well as other parts of the City. The diaspora of these Sephardic Jews included the United States, Palestine, and Western Europe. The cemetery is of great importance for the international Sephardic communities. There already exists a growing body of university based historical research as well as from the organizations devoted to preserving the rich 1,000 year history European Sephardic communities. From our review of existing literature, no one disputes the following: the Jewish cemetery had at least 350,000 to 500,000 graves (according to the Jewish Museum of Thessalonika, by 1940 there were more than 500,000 tombs), it was destroyed during the Nazi occupation in December of 1942; and finally, unlike in Athens, there was significant collaboration between segments of the local Greek community and the Nazi government in Salonika. The collaboration led to the physical destruction and looting of the grave markers of the Jewish cemetery.

20. The Jewish Community of Salonika is one of the oldest continuously functioning diaspora communities in the world. The first Jews arrived from Alexandria, Egypt as early as 140 BCE. Before the Nazi destruction in 1942, the oldest synagogue, Eytz Hahaim dated back to Byzantine times. Following the exile of Spanish Jewry in 1492, Jews from Spain, Portugal and North Africa came to settle in Salonika until they became the majority population in the city. By the late 19th century over 100,000 Jews resided in Salonika making it one of the largest Jewish cities in the diaspora. Salonika was a center of Jewish scholarship in the 17th century as well as a commercial port where Jews participated and facilitated international trade.

Due to political upheaval during and following World War I, the Ottoman Turks returned Salonika to the Greek government and in 1920 a population exchange between Greece and Turkey resulted in an exodus of many Jews and an influx of Christian Orthodox Greeks. Further reduction in the Jewish population followed the great fire of 1917 that destroyed much of the Jewish quarter of the city. However even upon the eve of World War II there was a population of well over 50,000 Jews.

Following the Nazi occupation, the Jews of Salonika were exterminated at Auschwitz. Only 2000 of the over 50,000 Jews survived the war and returned to the city. Today only 1000 Jews remain in the city.

21. **Jewish communities around the world, and all who care about human rights, have a stake in the outcome of this dispute** -- The cemetery is an issue that involves the United States Department of State, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Government of Greece, the Jewish community of Thessaloniki and the Commission for the Preservation of our Heritage Abroad. While these are official entities, the cemetery is also of great interest to Jewish communities around the world Sephardic and Ashkenazi. We believe that there would be a groundswell of interest in the cemetery if the public was made aware of the story.

BACKGROUND CHRONOLOGY ON THE ORIGINS OF THE EXPROPRIATION OF THE CEMETERY LAND.

22. **Chronology of the 1936 Jewish Cemetery Map Survey Undertaken in Summer and Fall by the regional government of Greece and the University of Thessaloniki.**

The following information was excerpted from a 213 page book published by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Research Committee *City University City* 1999. Also known as “the history of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki”.

The expropriation of the Jewish cemetery had been proclaimed in 1930 in an act concerning the matter issued by the Ministerial Committee as an amendment to the existing town plan. Even so, the release of the land could not be completed without the necessary exchange of administrative documents. In the case of the Jewish cemetery a certification of expropriation and compensation for the land had to be compiled which would transfer most of the land to the University and would specify compensation to the owners of the land to be expropriated.

On the 29th July, 1936, the University of Thessaloniki sent a document to the General Administration of Macedonia in which it requested the opening of the legal process for the immediate release of the land and for the expansion of its building installation (doc 5.1.), The General Administration Minister, N. Tsipouras, on that same day passed the document on to the Thessaloniki Survey Office (doc 5.2). The Survey Office immediately set in motion the process of compilation of the expropriation and compensatory certification.

On 31st July, 1936, the survey office of Thessaloniki called together the landowners of the expropriation area to provide proof of the boundaries of their land and the exact measurements. This invitation was sent of the University of Thessaloniki, to the Thessaloniki Israeli Community, to the National bank of Greece, to the Thessaloniki Council and to the Public Land Administration.

In fact, certification 767 was publicized on 12th October 1936 (doc 5.6.). In short, the certificate grants to the University, 298.541sq.m of the land from the Jewish cemeteries, 45,887sq.m. belonging to the National Bank of Greece and other smaller amounts from stream beds and roads making a total area of about 18,000 sq meters. The certificate appointed the University of Thessaloniki as responsible for the legal compensation payments to the owners.

After the notification of the certificate to all interested bodies the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki used increased pressure (doc 5.7). They called on the following reasons in order to have the certificate withdrawn:



Doc 5.7. The first made by of against

expropriation and compensation.

page of the protest the Israeli Community Thessaloniki certificate 767/193, concerning

- a) That the certificate of expropriation goes against the letter of the government constitution, which anticipates that the act of worship of recognized religion in Greece can be conducted without problems and under the protection of the law. The area of the cemeteries was a place of worship recognized by the holy orders of the Jewish religion which forbade the removal of the bones of the deceased. As a consecrated place therefore, it was not possible to make the land available for another purpose.
- b) That the area of the cemeteries has ‘holy privileges’, which can not be overridden by any act of law.
- c) That the Survey office ignored the General Building Guidelines (doc 3/22-4-1929) which anticipate the planting of trees in old cemeteries, which cannot be relocated for whatever reason.
- d) That there are historical reasons concerning the Jews, who have thousands of ancestors buried in the cemeteries in Thessaloniki.
- e) That in other countries any plans to carry out expropriation were aborted.
- f) That the University of Thessaloniki could have sought a means of expansion on other pieces of land in the city.

g) That the size of the land covered by Jewish cemeteries is 500,000 sq. m. and not the approximate 350,000 which were estimated from the topographical certificate.

(this was posted after October 12, 1936 in response to the publication of the certificate. The date on the document appears to be Nov. 11, 1936 .The above notice was translated from Greek)

The Survey office of Thessaloniki rejected as unfounded the reasons put forward by the Israeli Community for the cancellation of the certificate. Additionally, they confirmed that the size of the Jewish cemeteries when measured accurately came to approximately 358,000 sq m and not 500,000 and stressed that the certificate related to only 298,541 sq. m. of the land. It proposed that some of the land should remain in the possession of the Israeli Community to be used to house all the tombstones and finally, it proposed the assignment of land for a new Jewish cemetery entailing some modification to the street plan of the area between the Toumbas and Triandrias districts. The above mentioned efforts and proposals were sent to the Minister of Communications for General Organization of Public Works, together with a number of documents.

Note: The Aristotle University study shows that there was vigorous opposition to the map boundaries that were in the map commissioned by the government. The map boundaries are the same ones used by the Consulate General's office. It is also important to mention that the AU book places full blame for the destruction of the Jewish cemetery in 1942 on the German Nazi occupation forces. However, other studies and books have shown that there was collaboration with local Greek leaders and they pushed the Nazis to allow them to destroy the cemetery. . Also, there is absolutely no mentioning of the digging up of skeletons after the War. In the University building years of 1950 to 1980, an entire campus of buildings was constructed on top of the cemetery. With each land excavation needed to build, caskets and skeletons had to be disturbed.

Section 21 was written by Richard Altabe, principal of Magen David High School in Brooklyn New York.

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