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Honorable Dr. Phil Mendelson
Chairman
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Hon. Dr. Phil Mendelson,

I heard that the City of Washington DC has been discussing the proposal to dedicate a square to Dimitar Peshev and that it has given rise to a fierce debate.

I am writing to you in my capacity as the historian who popularized the figure of Dimitar Peshev through my book “L'uomo che fermò Hitler” (The Man Who Stopped Hitler).

My book has been presented, and honours have been bestowed on Dimitar Peshev in the European, Bulgarian, Italian and German Parliaments.

I also presented my book at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC as early as in 1998.

As I was able to write in my book, among all the tales of the Righteous who have rescued Jews during World War Two the figure of Dimitar Peshev is probably one of the most significant ones because he, as the Vice President of the Bulgarian Parliament, has been the only politician in Europe belonging to a pro-German government who had the courage to stop the deportation of Jews countering a decision made by the King of Bulgaria Boris and the Bulgarian Prime Minister Filov.

In March 1943 Peshev broke into the office of the Minister of Interiors of his country Mr. Gabrovki and forced him to stop the deportations and send the Jews who had been rounded up from various Bulgarian cities back home. After his irruption into Gabrovski's office Peshev also presented in the Parliament a petition demanding the King and the Prime Minister not to deport the Jews as that would have sullied Bulgaria with shame in the future.

In no other country of Europe it had occurred that a representative of a Nazi Ally who had embraced the political creed of Germany had written a denunciation of the anti-Jewish genocide, therefore Peshev should be remembered as the only politician on the German side to have the courage to go against Hitler and demand the end of the anti-Jewish persecutions.

The tale of Peshev has therefore been essential for the memory of the Holocaust as it shows that also Nazi allies had the opportunity to prevent genocide.

Peshev did not succeed in rescuing the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia but that was not his fault. The blame has to be put on the behaviour of King Boris, who cancelled the deportation of the Jews from the inner regions of Bulgaria but handed over the one of the occupied territories. The same King after Peshev's great protest did everything in his power to silence the voice of the Vice President of the Parliament. He stripped Peshev off his charge of Vice President and he held a session of the Parliament in which he and Prime Minister Filov put Peshev to the pillory and tried to present him as a nation's enemy.

Then history was even more ungenerous to Peshev: after the rise of Communism he was sentenced to death and then forced into jail for many years, after which he lived in misery in his home without anyone to acknowledge his deeds.

Through my book I have honoured this forgotten figure and I would be very happy if also the City of Washington DC raised this extraordinary man to the highest honours.

Kind regards,

Gabriele Nissim

