CHAPTER SIX

Logic and Legitimacy in Violence

Even in turbulent Macedonia peace and quiet are a normal condition and violence the exception, though the exception is frequent enough there to render the nerves susceptible to an atmosphere overcharged with the electricity of human emotions.

—Albert Sonnichsen, Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit, 1909

The photographs of Leonidas Papazoglou, saved from oblivion thanks to a selection published in 2004 by the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, provide a rare panorama of life in Ottoman Macedonia, more specifically in the province of Monastir, during the time of the struggle for Macedonia. Through Papazoglou’s lens, we catch glimpses of newlyweds, street vendors, actors, and entertainers, the well-heeled and the modest, urban dandies and pastoral tradition, all, of course, mediated through Leonidas Papazoglou’s own sense of mise en scène. The album also is a sobering reminder of the extent to which violence was a part of the daily experience of the same people who were posing for the camera—the playful images of young lovers and dapper-looking youths are interspersed with those of guerrillas, real or aspiring, victims of the former, and more macabre compositions involving naked bodies in rigor mortis.

That violence was tenaciously present in the lives of ordinary people of Ottoman Macedonia at the turn of the twentieth century is not a surprising statement at all. The images captured by Papazoglou are starkly indicative of what we have already seen in the preceding chapters and relay through the camera lens what the Albert Sonnichsen, journalist, relayed through the words that open this chapter, taken from his account of travels with the “Macedonian Bandits.” Life as usual went on through the violence; people married, had children, and found ways to make a living and even have a little fun as the struggle for the territory that encompassed their homes was closing in and claiming lives by the hundreds, because that is what human beings are hardwired to do.

1. Leōnidas Papazoglou, Φωτογραφικά Πορτραίτα απο την Καστοριά και την περιοχή της τεν περίοδο του Μακεδονικού Αγώνα (Thessaloniki, 2004).
In this chapter, I sharpen the focus on instances of violence for two reasons: first, to separate violence from the struggle taking place and analyze it in its own right rather than write it off as a self-explanatory occurrence under the circumstances, and, second, to look beyond the seemingly ubiquitous incidents of violence to understand what, if any, alternative modes of interaction were available to the warring factions. The relation between conflict and violence should not be considered a robust and self-evident mechanism but a context-specific process, the logic of which remains to be explored.

In an article that sets forth the desiderata for a new approach to ethnic and nationalist violence, Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin urge caution in making precisely this type of association between preexisting conflict and violence, arguing that violence “should not be treated as a self-explanatory outgrowth of such conflict, something that occurs automatically when the conflict reaches a certain intensity, a certain ‘temperature.’” The important distinction, according to Brubaker and Laitin is that “[v]iolence is not a quantitative degree of conflict but a qualitative form of conflict, with its own dynamics.”

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7. Couple from Kastoria.
8. Peasant couple.
9. Imam and daughter.
10. Dancers.

12. Funeral.
Following this approach, I show that violence was a necessary condition for, and not a natural by-product of, a strong ethnonational consciousness among the rural population. In other words, violence played a role in engendering that very same feeling of difference and boundaries that purportedly were its cause. The systemic, targeted, and (tragically) efficient violence, examples of which I describe in this chapter, was not simply an epiphenomenon but a prerequisite to the politicization of communal difference. Just the simple fact that both the perpetrators and the victims were Slavic-speaking in a majority of the cases discussed in this chapter should throw notions of ethnic warfare fought among clearly defined groups in doubt. The violence inflicted by the Ottoman military and paramilitary groups, on the one hand, and several factions of militias, on the other, worked in tandem to create the conditions under which the notion of national belonging penetrated the consciousness of a large segment of the peasant population. This process functioned through two principal channels of boundary-creation and -activation mechanisms: first, it rendered impossible the option for individuals to remain bystanders by creating an atmosphere of inescapable terror, and second, it made people aware of their ties to a larger community outside their immediate vicinity—they were now tied by blood to an imagined community.

This should not, however, lead us to conclude that violence was an indisputably effective tool in disseminating an ideology and creating committed converts to one movement or the other. Although the utility of violence as both a tactical and strategic instrument was clear to those who wielded it, the results achieved were mixed at best in terms of winning the hearts and minds of the people on whose behalf the insurgents were fighting. Without discounting the dedication or the faith of the insurgents, we should not lose sight of the fact that as many people picked up arms out of an instinct to survive as did out of ideological commitment. This is not to suggest that most of the guerrillas were hapless tools without any agency of their own; nor should we attribute an idealized innocence to those who denounced their comrades, turned in their neighbors, or hid weapons in their barns. We need to exercise caution, however, in attributing purely ideological motives to individuals’ participation in episodes of violence carried out against the putative enemies of the nation.

The question of agency is implicitly linked to a problem with narration; more specifically, the problem of naming the members of different armed groups without setting off ideological alarm bells. Although I am not entirely persuaded by the analytical utility (or even the possibility) of devising a normative terminology, I think it is necessary to clarify, or at least underline, a few keywords that appear repeatedly in the primary sources as well as secondary accounts, scholarly and popular, of some of the events in question. The arbitrariness of ascribing meaning to the difference between a brigand and a guerrilla is well encapsulated in the clichéd expression “one man’s
terrorist is another’s freedom fighter.” We have already seen the refusal of the Ottoman bureaucracy to assign any name other than “brigand” to those who joined insurgent bands; doing so would have been an acknowledgement of a substantive difference between highway robbers and members of the revolutionary organizations. Nevertheless, the Ottoman government did apply a similar distinction by trying the captured insurgents in different courts; according to official reasoning, which court tried the case depended on whether the crimes committed fell under the purview of criminal law or extraordinary regulations regarding state security. In practice, this usually translated into Greek insurgents being transferred to the criminal courts for trial and sentencing but their Bulgarian counterparts being tried in the “extraordinary courts.”

It is worth noting that the term brigand was also used by foreign representatives of the international reform initiative in Macedonia in reference to the members of revolutionary organizations, despite the fact that they were often tacitly sympathetic to one side rather than the other.

Although I could avoid, if not entirely resolve, this issue by resorting to the relatively neutral term militia, this semantic strategy would not address the more problematic distinction from the point of view of a historian, the one between the categories “peasant” and “militia.” The struggle for Macedonia was fought not between sovereign states but as an insurgency. As in any other conflict of this nature, and as the Ottoman administrators readily acknowledged, the majority of the fighters were not foreign agitators but locals, ordinary people, who had a frustrating ability to resume their daily work and blend into the peasantry as soon as there was news that the Ottoman military was getting ready to make a move. As in Mao Zedong’s famous metaphor, they moved among the peasantry as “a fish swims in the sea.” An Ottoman official put it more bluntly, they were simply “indistinguishable” from the general population.

The source of frustration for the Ottoman administrator is the same thing that makes the task of the historian much more complex, namely, that the peasants were indistinguishable from the militia members simply because they sometimes were one and the same. This statement does not imply that every single peasant led a parallel life as an active combatant. Rather, it underscores the ambiguity of agency when it comes to the involvement of the peasants themselves in the fight to capture their bodies and minds. We should not forget that participation in the insurgency did not necessarily require an individual to pick up a rifle and join the roaming bands of men.

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3. MAE Constantinople, Serie E 147, Macédoine, February 28, 1905.
4. The definition of insurgency adopted here is from James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin: “a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas.” “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” American Political Science Review 97, no. 1 (2003), 79.
5. BOA, TFR.I.AS 62/6160, June 24, 1908.
in the mountains. The bulk of the planning, coordinating, and enabling was carried out by noncombatant locals, who were more vulnerable to violent retaliation by the state or rival groups than their protectors at large. Even though the perils of an ex post facto attribution of political motives to the actions of the peasants are obvious, we cannot discount their involvement as a reflex response to propaganda or simply chalk it up to coercion. In other words, although the categories “peasant” and “militia” should not be conflated, the overlap between the two makes it imperative that we discount approaches that assume clear boundaries dividing them.

We need not distinguish between guerrillas and security forces based on the respective sources of legitimacy for their actions; this is immaterial in accounting for the mechanisms through which violence created, activated, and reinforced social boundaries. How, then, do we start to make sense of such a complex sociological picture where we cannot assign the actors into neat and self-contained drawers with labels such as “peasant,” “soldier,” “guerrilla”? I propose, as a starting point, to borrow a few conceptual tools from Charles Tilly’s work. Tilly argues that “no simple distinction between ‘insurgents’ and ‘forces of order’ can possibly capture the complex social interactions that generate collective violence.” His emphasis is, instead, on intermediate political actors with a significant amount of overlap and collaboration (as well as contention) between them. Two such groups, whose interactions are especially significant in shaping collective violence, are the “political entrepreneurs” and “specialists in violence.”

In the first group are those who “specialize in activation, connection, coordination, and representation.” In our case, the prime example for political actors in this group were the teachers employed at the village schools and gymnasiums across the region, who not only molded young minds and instilled “national pride” in their hearts but agitated the locals for the political committees or the nation-states they served. Politically active priests were also in this category. They were in a unique position to wield religious authority, a particularly mighty force in this context, to activate and reinforce communal boundaries. They also acted as power brokers and negotiators between the people, the guerrillas, and state actors such as Ottoman officials and the representatives of foreign powers. In addition to these “usual suspects,” the category “political entrepreneur” is flexible enough to include, for instance, the shepherds who transmitted information on behalf of the guerrillas, the village grocer who coordinated the “contributions” for provisioning of the same, and the sharecropper who got rid of an adversary by ratting him out as a government informer. Representation is another purpose that political entrepreneurs serve, as in the example of the village headmen who supposedly spoke for the interests and wishes of all individuals

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7. Ibid., 34.
in their community and who interfaced between them and agents of the
government.

In the category “violent specialist” we have not only the coercive agents
of the state, such as the troops, gendarmes, police, security guards of the
Régie, and village guards, but also the guerrillas, thugs, and sundry bandits.
It would be counterproductive to try to classify these agents according to
their proclaimed source of legitimacy, political agenda, or lack thereof. It is,
however, important to note that these two categories—“political entrepre-
neur” and “violent specialist”—sometimes overlap, creating great potential
for the emergence of particularly effective warlords such as Sandansky and
Enver Bey (later, Enver Pasha).

What follows is an account of the work of these actors, the political en-
trepreneurs and violence specialists, and my analysis. In the first part of the
chapter, I take stock of their actions and formulate a taxonomy of violence
as witnessed, experienced, and exercised by the people of Macedonia. This
allows us to gauge the level of penetration of violence into daily life, its per-
formative aspect, its intimacy, its politicization, and the channels through
which it rendered nonparticipation a defunct option. In the second part, I
shift the emphasis to the logic of this violence: what distinguished it qualita-
tively from what preceded and what followed, what its escalation patterns
and tipping points were, and how selective violence was gradually overtaken
by violence of a more indiscriminate nature. My reading of these events has
been strongly influenced by Stathis Kalyvas’s theory of violence in civil war,
although my analysis is not strictly an application of his model. I have taken
heed of his warning against seeing violence as an outcome rather than a
process. Although there are many instances of violence presented here, and
I do argue that violence should be treated as a category in its own right, my
purpose is not to hone in on instances of violence in isolation and present a
picture of a world “populated only by victims and perpetrators, combined
with the flawed perception that victimhood and guilt are mutually exclu-
sive categories.”

Victims can indeed also be guilty, and denying that would
be denying the individuals who participated in this conflict their historical
agency. Nevertheless, this is not a cynical take on the experience of violence;
conceding that the line separating victims from perpetrators may be more
porous than we tend to assume is not, of course, tantamount to suggesting
that the priest had it coming or the informer deserved to be executed. It does
require, however, that we engage with the inherent ambivalence of ascriptive
categories and accept the uncomfortable truth that it was impossible to sus-
tain the kind of communal warfare we see in this region without significant
participation on the part of the “civilians” in acts of aggression against their
“friends and neighbors.”

Violence: A Post-Mortem Analysis

A man from the village of Eğridere (Kallithea) alerted the authorities about a multiple homicide outside his village in January 1906. The investigators sent to the scene of the crime described it as “savage.” The victims were three Greek Orthodox men from Eğridere: Taşo and Koço, the sons of Mihal, the village headman; and Nikola Todor, another Greek Orthodox man from the same village. A fourteen-year-old who ran errands for an Exarchist man had been sent off to deliver animals to the three men for their return journey from the district center. The boy had disappeared without a trace, and the corpses of the party he was supposed to meet were found in a riverbed along the road between Graçen/Gratsiani (Agiochori) and Eğridere.

According to the investigators’ report, the shape and size of the entry and exit wounds on the twenty-four-year-old Taşo Mihal’s body suggested that the bullets had been fired from a Mannlicher rifle and from some distance above the victims—probably from an ambush position facing the direction of Skirçova/Skrijovo (Skopia). These wounds were not the cause of death, however. All three victims also had wounds consistent with a distinctly large knife commonly used by the “brigands,” and they had been “slaughtered” after they were blindfolded with their hands tied in their backs. Nikola Todor’s detached head had been placed next to the feet of his corpse. The personal effects of the victims were found nearby, abandoned to give the impression that the attackers had taken off in the direction of Iskirçova, but the report noted that the “tidiness of the pile” and the “discovery of the three men’s animals tethered in Eğridere” suggested this was a diversionary trick. Heavy rains following the incident had cleared whatever tracks might have been left behind. Subsequent interviews with two shepherds who had been in the vicinity a few days earlier and the questioning of the village guard as well as the victims’ parents yielded no results. Ultimately, the report revealed a motive that might link the murders to the Bulgarian committees more strongly than the (rather impressive) forensic evidence collected from the crime scene: the men had been returning from Serres after having testified at the criminal court against a Bulgarian man from their village.

The extraordinarily detailed crime scene investigation report distinguishes it from more common incident sheets, but the incident itself carries features shared by similar violent crimes registered by the authorities. The first is its performative aspect: the spectacular, almost ritualistic grisliness of the act, or its gratuitous “savagery,” to cite the inquiry report, that put a memorable mark on the murders. The second is the possible involvement of

9. Mannlicher rifles, state-of-the-art weaponry of the time, were used almost exclusively by Bulgarian bands.
neighbors, people who had been living within close proximity to each other regardless of their differences and who would continue to do so after the investigators left, in the planning of the attack and thus the blurring of personal and political motives. The third is the difficulty of gathering information about the incident, the refusal of the victims’ relatives to collaborate and provide information, which was a problem faced not only by the state actors but by the guerrillas as well. And finally, there was the location of the incident as well as the origin of the victims: as it will become clear from the examples below, certain areas were more prone to violence than others. Eğridere was among the cluster of villages that also included Graçen/Gratsiani, Alistrat (Alistrati), and Iskirçova/Skrijovo, which were all within an approximately 15-mile radius and which witnessed a disproportionately large number of violent incidents.

Violence as Spectacle

The human body provides a perfect medium for the display of power through humiliation. While alive, its integrity can be offended by relatively inane tactile methods such as the removal of garments covering it, or by more invasive ones such as shaving off facial hair, or through the infliction of physical pain and permanent damage such as the severing of a digit or an ear. The very act of draining life out of a body can be placed on public display for effect, as in public executions (killings carried out in view of bystanders). Even after it no longer has a pulse, the body can be dismembered or desecrated in myriad ways to deliver a message. The message of the examples presented in this section is one of territorial hegemony delivered through the human body. We have seen how the fight over territory in Macedonia was carried out on paper through cartography, in census figures through a body count, and in the spiritual realm through attempts to capture souls by rival sects. The ultimate terrain through which this struggle was dragged, it seems, was made up of mangled bodies.

The articulation of power through the medium of the (tortured) human body was practiced by “specialists in inflicting physical damage.” This group included state agents such as soldiers, gendarmes, and the police as well as executers of a certain ideology and the motley crew of brigands and simple thugs.11 Among the tools used by this group, public executions, which were essentially murders committed in plain sight and in defiance of accepted moral norms, carried a significance that was far weightier than their immediate function as demonstrations of deterrence. They were shows of control and power meant to inspire fear among enemies and awe among supporters, deriving legitimacy through the sheer audacity of their commission.

In September 1904, Apostol, the notorious band leader, personally carried out such an execution. His victim was a man from Baraviçė/Barovitsa (Kastaneri) who had allegedly been hired by the government to spy on Apostol. His punishment was to have his head cut off in his house, in front of his wife and children. Lest the rumor mill mistake the author and motives of this grisly act, Apostol dispatched a letter to the governor of the province claiming full responsibility and daring the officials to enlist more informers to catch him: “Those who denounce will not be spared our knives and guns. Whether they are Muslim or Christian, we do not touch those who do not denounce, we give no harm to nice people, we kill the bad. [He] would supposedly deliver my head to you in return for the gold he received. Instead of him handing over my head, here I am cutting his head off in front of his family, those who see this, if it pleases them they can also continue to snitch.” The conclusion of the letter was even more defiant, warning the authorities not to crowd the village with soldiers to gather information because there was nothing to inquire about; he was confirming that the murder was his doing. “If the soldiers swarm in and abuse the villagers, it won’t be good, if you want to see us, we are always here, if you want to meet us, we are always in the vicinity,” were the last words of Apostol’s letter.12

A flurry of correspondence between military and civilian authorities followed the receipt of Apostol’s message. The region of Mayadag had been under this guerrilla leader’s sway for a while, and he had not only committed a crime and seemingly gotten away with it but was also challenging the government to seize him on what he was clearly claiming as his own turf, with the intended consequence of frustrating the local administrators to no end. Here was a man who had made numerous enemies while building his reputation as a ruthless warlord and yet seemed to evade arrest thanks to that very same reputation. The apparent shortcomings of the troops on the ground did not help the situation either. Interestingly enough, the victim, at least according to the authorities, was not even an informer.13

It is impossible to ascertain whether the man really was a government spy or not. When informants were killed, they were usually acknowledged in official records as such, and authorities demanded extra care in the pursuit and capture of those who had assaulted people working for the government.14 In other words, there was no reason for the authorities to deny that this person indeed had been serving as an informer. It is more likely, however, that he was suspected of helping rival Greek bands because he had violated the ban against interacting with members of the Greek Orthodox

12. BOA, TFR.I.SL 52/5169, September 1904.
13. Ibid., esp. Yenice prefect’s telegram to the General Inspectorate, September 19, 1904.
community. Whether or not the man was indeed an informer, his execution clearly had the desired effect by demoralizing the local authorities, communicating to the locals who wielded real power in the region, and ultimately warning them to stay within the limits set by Apostol. Even the Ottoman officials who, we assume, would have been jaded by the damage and pain they witnessed (and inflicted) daily, repeatedly emphasized the heinousness of the crime, revealing the potency of the medium in which Apostol had chosen to deliver his message to bolster and assert his authority.

Having presented this sequence of revolting scenes, I add here a few words of caution about their interpretation: it is indeed possible to read too much into these deliberately staged acts of ghoulish murder, which can easily be viewed as instances of “expressive” or “ritualistic” violence. The first problem with this conclusion is that “ritualization of violence often serves instrumental purposes.” In other words, there is a larger purpose that the seemingly gratuitous cruelty serves—in this case, a claim to territory—which implies that the very “gratuity” of the act is suspect. And although it is tempting to question whether any of this ritualistic violence could be the work of individuals with extreme personality disorders—especially after viewing Apostol’s studio photograph in which he is posing gloriously with a pal, rifle in hand and a human skull between his feet—that turns out to be an unlikely scenario. The literature on comparative cases suggests that people such as Apostol do carry certain traits that enable them to rise to positions of prominence under extraordinary societal conditions but that they are hardly “abnormal in a clinical sense.”

We also need to keep in mind that decapitations were part and parcel of the collective memory of punishment in this region, the apparent shock and horror of the Ottoman bureaucrats recording these incidents notwithstanding. We can see this as an extension of Charles Tilly’s notion that societies have a “limited repertoire of social action,” and “people tend to act within known limits, to innovate at the margins of existing forms.” Execution by decapitation and the exhibition of the severed heads of the “enemies of the state” had a long tradition in the Ottoman Empire, providing emphatic material for the histories of a cruel and arbitrary Ottoman yoke in the Balkans; however, we should note that the practice was not exclusively an Ottoman form of punishment and that its use did not necessarily distinguish among

15. BOA, TFR.I.SL 52/5169, Prefect of Yenice to the General Inspectorate, September 20, 1904. The Prefect reconfirmed that the victim had not been in the employ of the government, but there were rumors that he had been “in contact with the Rums.”
regions or the ethnicity of the victims. What is important to note is that the act of decapitation itself, as offensive as it was even then, did not transgress an established norm. The transgression was, rather, in the appropriation of the authority to perform that act, by the “bandit” in this instance.

During the sixteenth-century French religious riots, Natalie Davis observes, “official acts torture and official acts of desecration of the corpses of certain criminals anticipate some of the acts performed by riotous crowds.” We can argue that the examples presented here follow a similar pattern, but that should not give us an excuse to overlook the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) shifts in the deployment of this macabre display of force. These shifts reflect a change in not only the medium but also the substance of the message it aimed to impart. To start with, we need to draw a distinction between public executions by decapitation (or other methods) and the display of post-mortem severed heads, a morbidly fascinating practice with apparently more uses than we might expect.

In the post-Tanzimat Ottoman Empire, public executions, including decapitations, were an all but extinct practice. What was more common, even as late as the turn of the twentieth century, was the display of the corpses or the severed heads of “bandits” killed in clashes with security forces (who were sometimes ex-bandits themselves), especially those of some renown, in a public place, ideally to those who were familiar with the deeds of the deceased. An obvious interpretation of this grim pageantry of post-mortem humiliation is that it was meant to strip the “bandits” completely of the power—moral as well as physical—they once wielded in challenging the authority of the state, ensuring that they were not only dead but were also denied the right to preserve somatic integrity as a minimal degree of dignity for the dead. It also confirmed the identity of the deceased to a large audience, who witnessed his inglorious end with their own eyes, lest the legend of the dead “bandit” outlast his biological life.

This state-centric interpretation is complicated by photographic evidence showing guerrillas posing with the cut-off head of one of their comrades, resting on a podium covered with a cloth and framed by a funerary laurel wreath. Here, the intended humiliation was completely displaced and the deceased was honored as a hero through the photograph of his desecrated remains. In either case, the image of a head without a body was an extremely potent one, capable of creating what seem to be contradictory paths of commemoration.

The Ottoman government was adamant in refusing any formal acknowledgement of a distinction between militias fighting for political independence.

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21. It is tempting to read this image as a neo-icon channeling the image of St. John the Baptist, with the guerrilla replacing the saint as a martyr to the just cause.
and highway robbers or simple “brigands.” Despite the occasional overlap between these two categories and the Ottoman authorities’ hypocrisy in trying Bulgarian and Greek guerrillas in separate courts, however, they were indisputably distinct from one another by the turn of the twentieth century. The highway robbers might be harking back to the romantic tradition of “noble thieves” living in the mountains unencumbered by the norms of settled society and peasant submissiveness, but they did not carry the same moral clout accorded to independence fighters in liberal European public opinion. Moreover, the guerrillas themselves were committed, at least in principle, to maintaining that distinction.

It is not surprising, then, that the Ottomans found themselves in a publicity nightmare that could not be undone, despite the deployment of the Hamidian “image management” machinery, following the publication on February 28, 1903, on the front page of L’Illustration of Paris, of an image of Ottoman gendarmes posing around what was captioned as the decapitated heads of “Macedonian rebels.” Even though the officials in Monastir eventually identified the heads in the image as those of “Greek brigands” killed in Gorice (Goritsa) in 1891, and assured the palace that no such acts were carried out anymore, there were enough similar compositions in

circulation to suggest that it was fairly common to have such photographs taken as “trophies.”

That is, although the state was certainly willing to receive full credit for the capture and annihilation of its enemies, and was complicit in the desecration of their bodies, the resulting photographic compositions were not intended as a tool in its display of hegemony through human bodies. The moment the corpses or severed heads of guerrillas killed elsewhere were placed on public display in a town center the state mission was complete. When these images were captured by a photographic lens, however, they acquired an independent meaning. As fascinating as it is, the pursuit of this meaning would be a digression from the main thread we have been following so far—the use of state-induced or state-endorsed violence to communicate territoriality. Suffice it to say that the state was concerned with these images only to prevent their dissemination from infringing on its already shaky legitimacy.

The Ottoman government under Abdülhamid II went after those who opposed its authority with a vengeance, but for all its show of absolutism, its punishments were always juxtaposed with the paternalistic leniency of a regime that jailed entire villages following an uprising and yet pardoned “ex-bandits” who expressed their regrets, often honoring their requests to be enlisted in the gendarmerie. “His august majesty’s clemency” was extended not only to remorseful “brigands” who surrendered but to those already arrested and sentenced to death for involvement in the revolutionary committees. Consider the case of Konstantin Goroyif, for instance. Previously arrested and sentenced to death for leading a group of “bandits,” he was not only pardoned but also appointed as a teacher in the district of Yenice Vardar (Giannitsa), despite the general policy banning individuals associated with revolutionary committees (let alone leading one) from employment at schools, which were (fairly) viewed as staging centers for propaganda activities.

A perusal of records on the death penalty suggests that it was mostly reserved for nonpolitical crimes and often commuted to life or long-term imprisonment. One convicted criminal, a certain Hüseyin Ali, apparently took notice of this asymmetry in the application of criminal law when he sent a petition asking to be pardoned, just like “Bulgarian and Rum evil-doers

22. BOA, TFR.I.A 4/380, March 1903. The same folder of correspondence reveals that 350 copies of a similar photograph was found in Salonika in the photography studio of a German national by the name of Bader. The photographs were clearly intended as “souvenirs” from the region. I borrow the term Ottoman “image management” from Deringil, The Well-Protected Domains.

23. See, for instance, BOA, Y.A.RES 151/55, December 10, 1907; TFR.I. SL 15/1300, June 28, 1903.

24. BOA, TFR.I.MN 52/5103, May 5, 1904.
who have been set free despite being sentenced to death.”

Two public executions that took place in the market square of Serres in 1907 indicate a clean break from this established practice. The first of these must have been a shocking sight. Dimitri Trandafil and Yovan Gilo Mihal were brought before the gallows at 6:30 a.m. on October 31, 1907. Their incarceration had taken place only months before, thanks to the confessions of Giorgi Kiatibof, a “notorious comitadji” on the loose for many years, who had turned himself in to the authorities in Rondi/Vrondi (Vrondou) in June. Kiatibof’s confessions had inculpated a large number of Vrondi locals, among them Dimitri Trandafil, the village teacher, and Yovan Gilo Mihal, grocer and former muhtar (headman). Kiatibof had identified the two as the section chiefs of the revolutionary committee (presumably IMRO) in Vrondi, which was confirmed by another guerrilla who had surrendered to the authorities, as well as by witnesses from the village. They had coordinated the storage of arms and munitions, coordinated the provision of shelter to the guerrillas, and, more important, delivered judgments on executions to be carried out by the bands. That their comrades attempted to assassinate Giorgi Kiatibof and his associate after these arrests must have been a contributing factor in the harshness of their punishment. Whereas Kiatibof survived the plot and went up the social ladder, having been appointed a police officer, his friend was killed.

After a trial at the extraordinary court of Salonika, Trandafil and Mihal were sentenced to death, and their execution took place soon after the sentencing.

The following excerpt from the report of Major Foulon conveys in detail the theatrics involved:

Two gallows had been erected by gypsies who would proceed with the executions themselves. The two Bulgarians were made to climb on a stool on a table and after passing around their neck a rope coated with soap and oil they toppled the table and the stool, as a result of this fall from about a meter, death should be almost instantaneous, in any case, no convulsions were observed on either of the corpses. After a display of three hours, during which a large group of people—where the Christian element was scarcely represented—went around the gallows, the corpses were placed in caskets. The mutasarrif himself came to the place and lectured the crowd, essentially telling them that from that moment on, the imperial government which until then had shown much leniency toward the trouble makers was firmly resolved to let the people who had been convicted of crimes such as [these] be executed, and consequently in the future

26. This assassination attempt is described in detail later in the chapter. Katibof initially requested a position at the tax office in Vrundi, but the position of police officer was deemed more suitable by the authorities. Katibof reportedly accepted the position with enthusiasm; BOA, TFR.I.AS 48/4798, July 13–15, 1907.
27. BOA, TFR.I.SL 161/16035, October 14, 1907.
people would take care to refrain from such acts. Before the execution, the death sentence was read publicly, an excerpt from this sentencing, written in large letters was attached to the chests of the condemned. After the public display, the corpses were transported to the Bulgarian church where a service was held.  

Shocking as it was, this public execution was not the real clincher; that took place less than two months later, again in a public square in Serres. This time, it was two Greek andartes who stood before the gallows. Nico Dimitri Panayiot, a Greek national, and Vano Orde Athanas, from the village of Homondos/Houmandos (Mitrousi), were hanged at 6 a.m. on December 16, 1907, amid the shocked horror of the Rum community of the town, the Metropolitan, and staff of the Greek consulate. This was not only a break with the custom of pardoning political prisoners but also an open reversal of the policy of tacit collaboration with the Greek bands and turning a blind eye on their increasingly audacious activities. Despite the repeated pleas of the Greek consul in Serres to the subgovernor and, subsequently, the governor of the province, the executions were carried out as planned. The two men had been arrested during the course of an attack after they had killed the main commissioner of the locality, a police agent, and two soldiers, which may explain why the local authorities were less inclined to take the necessary steps to arrange a clemency hearing for the two. Nevertheless, this public execution, coupled with the growing tension between the subgovernor and the consul, denotes a significant shift in the attitudes of the Ottoman authorities toward Greek militia activities in the region.

Following these two incidents, there were other executions of death sentences elsewhere in Macedonia during the first half of 1908. Although they were still quite few in number, this apparent shift in policy toward political prisoners, and especially the manner in which the executions were carried out—in full view of the public and with the bodies deliberately left on display for hours—raises the question “why?” The answer lies in the broader international context and the direction the Macedonian reforms were taking at that particular time. The speech of the subgovernor to the crowd (most of whom were Muslims, reportedly) watching the hangings, warning them that the imperial government would no longer tolerate the misdeeds of the committees, is a clear indication that these executions were staged more for political effect than for carrying out the rulings of the extraordinary court. The intended audience was not only the present crowd but the representatives of

28. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 144, October 31, 1907.
29. BOA, TFR.I.A 36/3381, December 17, 1907; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 144, December 16, 1907.
30. I was able to track a total of five, all but one of them carried out in Monastir: BOA, TFR.I.MN 152/15168, January 8, 1908; TFR.I.KV 187/18606, January 1, 1908; TFR.I.MN 162/16153, April 4, 1908; TFR.I.MN 169/16855, June 6, 1908; TFR.I.MN 173/17248, June 6, 1908.
the European Powers responsible for supervising the reforms. The mandate allowing their presence was up for renewal at the end of 1907, but reciprocal foot dragging by Britain, the other powers, and the Ottomans had created a crisis. Britain was seemingly determined to take over leadership of the reforms from Russia and Austria-Hungary, and to impose more stringent measures on the Ottomans. Among the British demands from the Sublime Porte was an end to the complicity between the Ottomans and the Greek bands. The civil agents lent support to this demand, and by the end of the year, the Ottoman military had started a more energetic pursuit of the Greek bands. The executions of Bulgarian and Greek fighters within a two-month period should therefore be seen as proof by the Ottoman administration of its commitment to stamping out guerrilla activity, regardless of the side a particular band was fighting for.

**Intimacy of Violence and the “Dark Face of Social Capital”**

May 29, 1908. Early in the evening, a Greek Orthodox youth, approximately twelve years of age, walked into Nikola Trayko’s shop to buy some yogurt. Having made his purchase, he started toward his house. He was about 30 feet from the store when pandemonium erupted over the bowl of yogurt. Nikola Petre, identified by the report as fifteen years old, a sawyer by occupation, and a resident of the Hamidiye quarter in the vicinity of the Armenian church, had apparently been observing the transaction from his store. He walked out and stopped the child: “Why do you buy yogurt from a Bulgarian when there are Greek shops here?” he demanded. As Nikola Petre was attempting to spill the contents of the hapless child’s yogurt bowl, kalayci (tinner) Hasan ran up to them: “Why are you doing this?” he asked of Nikola. In response, Nikola claimed he had been declared the “despot” and that he would prevent the Greek Orthodox from buying yogurt or other things from Bulgarians. He was wielding a knife and about to charge at Hasan when Çerkes (Circassian) Said Efendi, a market inspector, interfered and seized him and had him removed to the police station for questioning.

This episode took place in Salonika, Macedonia’s largest port city and the “window into the world.” The narrative of this document partially reflects the ethnic and religious mixture that was the defining characteristic of the city—with the exception of the Jewish element, which was the dominant ethnic group in the city, we hear about all the major groups in the city and their intermingling. It also reveals that the practice of boycotting the

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31. At the same time, the European Powers started exerting more pressure on the Greek government to prevent Greek officers from crossing the border to organize and engage in the activities of armed Greek bands; Dakin, *Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, 314–20.
32. The term *despot* in this context means “person in charge.”
businesses of rival ethnic groups, long in effect in some provincial centers, had also spread to Salonika, whose cosmopolitanism was apparently eroding under the new rules aimed at keeping different ethnic groups separate from each other.

Small-business boycotts relied on voluntary enforcers such as Nikola Petre, and their zealous participation should itself serve as a reminder that these boycotts were not always very effective—especially in a large port city such as Salonika where social pressures were considerably lighter. Their impact, however, should not be measured by the economic damage they were meant to impose on the other community but seen as part of a larger strategy that aimed to minimize intercommunal contact. This strategy involved several methods to keep communities separate, such as orders against house visits, attending baptisms and marriages, and sharing sacred space, examples that we have seen in the previous chapters. Limiting the exchange of greetings and small talk in what should have been the “safe zone” around the marketplace was a far more destructive result of these boycotts than any material damage they might have caused because it served to make strangers out of one’s neighbors and to make a threat out of the mundane and the familiar. This alienation was a significant (and necessary) element in the normalization of acts of violence against the separated “other” because it served the very human need to put a distance between an individual and his or her deeds that might result in harm to another person, by making that distance much greater than it used to be.34

The alienation or “dehumanization of the other” has been identified as a necessary step on the road to mass killings in a wide range of history, from sixteenth-century religious riots in France to the Holocaust.35 In his work on Hindu-Muslim riots in India, Sudhir Kakar follows this well-established notion that dehumanization of the victim is integral to the (social, ethical, and psychological) legitimation of violence.36 Even though Kakar’s focus is on a particular kind of violence, namely urban riots, which does not readily present a parallel to the rural violence in Macedonia at the turn of the twentieth century, his ethnographic conclusions have broader applicability. Sarkar’s case studies reveal a process that runs parallel to the construction

34. For a detailed analysis of the psychological processes that shape people’s behavior during ethnic conflicts, see Vamik Volkan, “Psychoanalytic Aspects of Ethnic Conflicts,” in Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies, edited by Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, 1991), 81–92.
35. Natalie Z. Davis, in articulating this notion, argues that the ceremonial accompanying acts of violence performs the function of hiding from sixteenth-century religious rioters “a full knowledge of what they are doing.” “Rites of Violence,” 83. Several studies following the culturalist approaches to ethnic and nationalist violence place the process of dehumanization at the center of their analyses, and they consider the “cultural construction of fear” to be a necessary part of it. For a discussion and an introductory bibliography, see Brubaker and Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence.”
of a dehumanized “other” from one’s neighbors, namely, the strategies devised to deal with the guilt that accompanies participation in riots despite the early socialization vilifying members of the other community that each person goes through: “It is easier to kill men who are strangers, to obliterate faces which have not smiled on one in recognition. It is easier to burn down houses which have never welcomed one as a guest,” Kakar remarks, capturing the essence of the dilemma any human being must face before causing harm and pain to another.37 This is why, he explains, it was more common for mobs to go foraging in distant corners of their town rather than attacking their immediate neighbors: that task was left for a mob from another corner of the city.

It is not far-fetched to suggest, then, that for many who wound up “denouncing” their neighbors by guiding a band to their house there must have been a great psychic distance between what they were doing and, say, participating in a massacre; the guerrillas can be seen as the counterpart to the “mob from another part of town” in this version, assigned the task of “cleaning up” without compromising the larger public’s sense of decency. As Stathis Kalyvas puts it, “[C]ivil wars are bloody not so much because people are inherently violent, but because they are not: most are repelled by the prospect of acting violently, and so they will not, unless someone else handles the gory details while shielding them.” The ease with which violence can be outsourced, or the abundance of “opportunities for indirect violence,” is precisely what makes civil wars so unusually violent.38 On the other hand, we should also note that the guerrillas, whose job it was to “handle the gory details,” occupied a moral space separate from the rest of the members of society, just like the soldiers whose use of coercion was sanctioned and legitimized by the higher interests of the state. They knew their moral purity was compromised, but they had volunteered for this position out of their commitment to a legitimate political cause (and no doubt, at least for some, out of less “noble” motives such as the lure of pursuing a romantic ideal of manhood).

Apostol, one of these self-declared “avengers” of the people, and his band were in action again in November 1904.39 They stopped by Garçiste (Grchiste) to look for a Greek band that had reportedly taken shelter there. Their search did not yield any results, but they did not leave without telling the villagers to convert to the Exarchate and expel their schoolmistress, Catherina Hadgi-Yorgi. Miss Hadgi-Yorgi, in her twenties and originally from Gevgeli (Gevgelija), had resided there for the past five years. Shaken

37. Ibid., 29. The exceptions being, I assume, sociopaths or those suffering from similar psychosocial anomalies—admittedly, unlike Kakar, I am entirely out of my area of expertise here.
38. Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 14.
39. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Macédoine, Vice Consul in Salonika to the Chargé d’Affairs in Istanbul, November 2, 1904.
up by this event, she packed and left the village for her hometown. She came back several days later, however, apparently after being encouraged by the Greek notables in Geygelı and given assurances by the elders of the village. Only two days after her return, on a Saturday evening, a band of fifty men appeared in the village and went directly to Angos Kiros’s residence, where Catherina had been renting a room, and demanded to see the teacher. Clearly, their intention was not to have a casual conversation with her, so the landlord refused to open the door. The guerrillas then poured kerosene on the periphery of the house and on three adjacent ones and started a fire. The charred remains of Catherina were later found in the rubble of the house. Six others had also been killed in the conflagration, including two children.

The French consul who reported this incident noted that the village consisted of some eighty households, which had been members of the Bulgarian Catholic Church until a few years earlier, when the Patriarchate managed to enlist them among its followers even though the village was entirely Slavic-speaking. The Exarchists in neighboring villages were disturbed by this turn of events and did not approve of the presence of a Greek schoolteacher. The consul added that sources more sympathetic to the Bulgarian side claimed that there was a Greek band taking shelter in the house and differed in their accounts in insisting that the band had given the residents a chance to evacuate the premises before starting the fire. This version of events did not really hold up against the evidence because there had been no retaliatory shots from the house, and all the victims were unarmed residents. This type of justification was a common enough excuse presented to attenuate and possibly depersonalize the crime committed, but the truth remains that the guerrillas were rarely concerned about minimizing the collateral damage from their actions, often planned on the basis of information they gathered from the friends and neighbors of the targets.\footnote{40. See, for instance, Captain Campocasso’s report: MAE, Constantinople, Serie E 144, Macédoine, Captain Campocasso to Colonel Vérand December 31, 1906.}

This brings us to one of the thorniest issues related to intercommunal violence, namely the involvement of neighbors and acquaintances in acts of aggression. Countless examples from archival sources suggest that this was a chillingly common occurrence.

Such was the fate, for instance, of Mr. Stephanos, the muhtar of Leška (Leshko) in the district of Cuma-i Bâlâ (Blagoevgrad) near the Bulgarian frontier. The investigation after the man’s disappearance from his village in summer 1903 revealed that he had been kidnapped and killed by a band of eighty men acting on the orders of Donchev, a well-known guerrilla leader. Fifteen fellow villagers of Stephanos had guided the band to his home, from which he was taken to Lakadaš (Logodazh) and executed on a hill above the village church. The band reportedly stayed in Leška for another two days after carrying out the order and then returned to Bulgaria. According to the mutasarrıf (subgovernor) of Serres, it was understood that Stephanos
was killed because he had assisted the Ottoman troops as a “guide” for an ambush that had resulted in the “annihilation of 51 brigands.”

The neighbors of Mr. Stephanos, as far as we can tell, retired to their houses after pointing out his residence to the band members, who carried out the execution of the “denouncer” at a distance from the village. There were also cases, albeit not as common, in which neighbors actively participated in the punishment of the offending party. We read about one such incident thanks to the dutiful record-keeping of Captain Campocasso, one of the French gendarmerie officers assigned to the reform mission in the Serres district. The captain’s report vividly relates what transpired on the evening of December 25, 1906, in Klepousna/Klepouchna (Agriani), in the district of Zihna, but none of the details he includes addresses the problem of identifying the motive, other than self-evident animosity, of the behavior of the parties involved.

Klepousna was a mixed village, consisting of approximately fifty Exarchist and one hundred Patriarchist households, both sides Bulgarian-speaking. The Patriarchist community had been under pressure to switch its allegiance for some time. Bougdan Vangel and Jovan Nicolas, two Exarchist men from the same village, took it upon themselves to warn Vangel Papa Philippe, the Greek Orthodox priest, that he might soon meet the fate of his colleague in Kornitza, who had been killed in July, unless his congregation joined the Exarchate.

The two men’s warnings materialized on December 25, 1906. A large band of Bulgarians entered the village as darkness fell, took their positions, and then doused the Papa Philippe family home with kerosene and set it on fire. In addition to the residence of the priest and his three brothers, eight other houses were completely burned down. The death toll was seven people: Anton Angel’s parents, son, and wife; the priest’s wife; and the parents of Caranfil Boujic. Caranfil Boujic was a teacher married to one of the brothers of the priest. The guerrillas had opened fire on the burning houses, and Caranfil caught a bullet in the knee as she was trying to flee the flames, yet she was luckier than the others in that she lived.

Vangel Papa Philippe, who had miraculously survived the attack with slight injuries, was familiar enough with his attackers to identify five of them by name; two of these were Constantin Sotir, the Exarchist village teacher, and Dimitri Tchirka, the priest of Iškirçova/Skrijovo, another village in the vicinity. Another man claimed that there were other people from Skrijovo

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41. Kilavuz (“scout” of “guide”) was the term the Ottoman administrators used for “informers”; BOA, TFR.I.SL 13/1268, Telegram from the Sub-governor of Serres, June 23, 1903. This incident bears resemblances to another execution of an alleged Ottoman-troop scout in the same district; BOA, TFR.IAS 8/751, June 25, 1903.
42. MAE, Constantinople, Serie E 144, Macédoine, Captain Campocasso to Colonel Vérand, December 31, 1906.
43. Brancoff [Mishev], Macédoine et sa Population Chrétienne, 203.
in the band because he had heard their peculiar way of speaking. The captain also remarked that “surely some Bulgarian inhabitants of Klepouchina [sic] were accomplices and must have guided the band.” Indeed Athanas, one of the Papa Philippe brothers, had recognized four villagers among the attackers, one of whom was the Bulgarian kocabası [leader]. Dimitri Papa Philippe named five others: the Bulgarian schoolteacher; a tailor from Razlog; Bougdan Vanguel, who had conveyed the threat to the priest; a certain Guiorgui Cotcho; and a painter by the name of Jovan Todor.

The testimony of the survivors, abbreviated, translated, and recorded by the French gendarmerie officers, leaves the reader grasping for the dénouement that will mark the end of the story. Instead, we are left in suspense; we can only guess what it must have been like to see a familiar face hurling a torch into one’s house and speculate that the tailor from Razlog was easily recognized because the village folk sought his services when they needed a new pair of trousers for a wedding or had the old ones repaired before going to church on Easter. There is no moral to this story other than the ease with which former neighbors can turn into enemies and inflict pain on each other.

How then, do we make sense of the arson in Klepousna and countless similar others? Is it even worth dwelling on the details of incident reports trying to reconstruct what really happened from the imperfect information rendered even more problematic because it was conveyed through the idiosyncratic verbiage of various military and civilian bureaucracies? My answer is yes, even knowing full well that perfect reconstructions may elude us, because those very details are germane to the questions of how and why violence becomes salient in the first place. Imperfect as they may be, these reconstructions are worth the effort because they occupy center stage in any endeavor to qualify the link between preconflict cleavages and post-conflict identities. Recent scholarship on ethnic and civil war violence has brought this presumed clear, linear connection under question. Studies covering a wide geographical and methodological range point to a major fallacy in the assumption that ethnic plurality, even in the presence of “ethnic rivalry,” is an indicator or a predictor of violent conflict. Moreover, understanding violence at the grassroots level, with all its disturbing intimate details, rather than treating it in the stylized and sterilized form that commonly

44. MAE, Constantinople, Serie E 144, Macédoine, Captain Campocasso to Colonel Vérand, December 31, 1906.
46. For a comparative analysis, see Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” See also Gagnon, Myth of Ethnic War; Georgi Derlugian, Bourdieau’s Secret Admirer in the Caucasus (Chicago, 2005). Present-day Macedonia, which, contrary to widespread expectations that it would “explode,” remained relatively calm and peaceful, constitutes another telling example refuting the notion that there is only a brief stage of separation between ethnic tension and violent conflict.
accompanies national “awakening” or “liberation” narratives, moves us one step closer to understanding its dynamics, which also means accepting the notion that much of this violence may be “endogenous” to war. That violence is endogenous to war is not a tautology, as it may initially sound, but, “a strong qualification of the view that violence arises exclusively from prewar cleavages,” to paraphrase Stathis Kalyvas.47

Another element that makes the task of revisiting the details of these incidents extremely difficult is the fact that participation in acts of violence is, by definition, a subjective process. No amount of archival documentation and triangulation of that evidence can change this fact; this means that we can grapple with the questions surrounding people’s motives for killing and harming only to the extent that we are willing to tap into that subjectivity.

Consider, for instance, the fate of Anton Panteli, who was killed by his erstwhile friends and neighbors at the dinner table, and in front of his wife and five-year-old daughter, who was injured by a stray bullet. The story perfectly showcases the intimacy of communal violence and the indelible mark it imparts as it ravages established networks of kin, friendship, and neighborliness. The murder investigation report from July 1907 provides a rare, if incomplete, picture of that intimacy in relaying the preparation, the calculated gestures, and what looks like the final trepidations of an assassin before he participates in the execution of a former friend.

Anton Panteli, the victim, was a “Bulgarian” from the town of Rondi/Vrundi in the district of Serres. He and a former associate named Georgi Katiboff had surrendered to the authorities after participating in the activities of the local revolutionary committee for some time.48 We do not know what prompted their surrender, but we can be certain that they must have provided useful information to the authorities because reportedly Katiboff’s testimony ultimately led to the arrest of Dimitri Trandafil and Yovan Gilo Mihal, revolutionary committee members, who, as we have seen, were executed in the Serres town square later that year. After giving their depositions in Serres at the provincial center, Panteli and Katiboff were released, and they asked to return to their hometown.

They were accompanied by a sizable detachment of soldiers for protection on the way home and reached their destination after an uneventful journey. A day later, on the evening of July 5, Anton Panteli was having dinner with his family when several men, initially unidentified, entered his house and opened fire, killing him. During the attack, a bullet scraped his daughter Katerina’s cheek, who, luckily, survived her wound. A neighbor,

47. Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 83.
48. BOA, TFR.I.AS 48/4798, correspondence, June–July 1907. The incident was also reported in MAE, Constantinople, E 144, Crime report for the month of July, August 1, 1907.
hallac (cotton-dresser) Dimitri, who was there for dinner, was also injured in his left arm.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.AS 48/4798, Subgovernor Reşid’s telegram to the Inspectorate, July 5, 1907.}

The investigation proceeded promptly after the incident, and the perpetrators were seized within a matter of days. On July 7, Taško, the miller, who was identified as the person who had pulled the trigger, was arrested, and three days later his accomplices Yovan Savati and Vasil, a shopkeeper and shepherd from the same village, were also captured, and all three were en route to the Serres prison. The speedy arrests were largely the result of prodding by the Inspector General, who had recently come under attack from General Degiorgis for the authorities’ repeated failures to protect former guerrillas from revenge killings after they gave up their arms.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.AS 48/4798, Degiorgis to Hilmi Pasha, and Inspectorate to the Subgovernorate of Serres, July 5, 1907.}

The investigation report, dispatched by the district director of Rondi (Vrundi) on July 8 deflected some of the blame onto the victim, claiming that Anton had acted in a cavalier manner and not secured the door to his house properly—although further details clearly reveal that he would have opened up the door for his assailants, regardless, because they were acquaintances. The inquiry commission determined that Yovan Savati, the leader of the local revolutionary committee, had given the assassination orders. Yovan Savati was the recently elected successor to another Yovan, who had been arrested; the murder was retaliation for this Yovan’s arrest. The new leader had commissioned two men named Taško and Vasil to execute the committee sentence.

According to several witnesses, Taško was seen acting suspiciously on the day that Anton and Georgi arrived in the village. Even though he should have been at work, either at the mill or in his field, he idled around the village all day, briefly went into Anton’s house, and came out. He then searched for Georgi and ran into him walking back home from the marketplace. He said, “I am coming too,” and joined Georgi on his walk. When they reached his home, Georgi said goodbye, but instead of leaving, Taško stood by and waited in a bizarre manner, “twisting his moustache,” until Georgi finally went inside and closed the door. As he was going in, Taško said “oh well, we’ll see each other tomorrow, right?”

Taško reportedly went over to Yovan Savati’s store right after this incident. Savati then closed down his shop early and disappeared. Taško was later spotted in the village walking about aimlessly. After sunset, he walked to Anton’s house, pushed open the unlocked door, and went up and joined the family at the table and had some \textit{raki}. As they were still eating, he got up and “against established customs,” noted the report, left the family at the table. As he was departing he said something incomprehensible in Turkish to Anton. He went downstairs, but nobody heard the door open and close. The
attack took place while the family was still at the dinner table. The sequence of events suggests that Taşko had either let the other assailants in or left the door open for them to sneak, and that, while he was having raki with Anton and his family, the others were hiding, waiting for his signal to attack.

There is something cruel and unusual about this kind of violence that cannot be mitigated by widely acknowledged processes of distancing, dehumanization, and finally rationalization. There is an inherent intimacy in these acts, an intimacy that clings to the victim and perpetrator no matter how salient their hatred of each other and that makes the shedding of blood all the more incomprehensible, distinguishing this sort of conflict from any other kind. “Intimacy is essential rather than incidental to civil war,” affirms Stathis Kalyvas, but this intimacy is “puzzling only because we tend to assume the inherent goodness of intimate relations.”

Tension is as likely to arise out of closeness as affection, however. As Kakar points out, “there is a special quality to the enmity I feel for a person who resembles me most but is not me. Next to my brother, it is my neighbor the Ten Commandments enjoin me to love as I do myself, precisely because my neighbor is the one I am most likely to consider as a rival.” It is this uncanny resemblance between neighbor and enemy that makes communal violence so disturbing. Stathis Kalyvas convincingly argues that violence is a “reflection rather than a transgression of neighborliness—though a perverse one.” The ultimate betrayal of trust, namely denunciation, in his words, amounts to “the dark face of social capital.”

Polarization and the “Privatization of Politics”

Even some homicides that were demonstrably of a political nature, such as the quadruple murder and subsequent beheading cited earlier, might have been precipitated by personal vendettas. Remember that the victims had just given a deposition in court against their fellow villager, Pasko; although the report did mention that there long had been a mutual enmity between the defendants and the victims, the nature of this enmity was nowhere made clear, raising the possibility that either the victims’ testimony or the calling in of the guerrillas to punish their behavior was motivated by nothing other than sheer spite. This opinion was also voiced by Consul Steeg, the representative of the French Republic in Salonika, when he wrote to the chargé d’affaires after a tour of the sancak of Serres that “personal vengeance” must have been the motive of at least some of the crimes committed by the bands.

52. Kakar, The Colors of Violence, 43.
53. Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 332.
54. MAE, Constantinople, 143 E, Macédoine, Consul Steeg to the Chargé d’Affairs, October 5, 1904.
Disputes that otherwise would have dragged on in court, perpetuate mutual irritation, or perhaps cause a scuffle were now more likely to escalate into violent confrontation; old grudges harmlessly festering under the seal of social norms could now break free in cathartic bloodshed. It is very important to recognize the distinction between personal and political motives because this distinction ultimately calls into question common assumptions about the nature of preconflict differences in determining the course and intensity of communal violence. The fact that most of the attacks on life and property occurred within a particular physical and human geography of extremely close-knit yet distinct communities, often accompanied by the indifference (if not active involvement) of fellow villagers, requires a better analysis than one of mere condemnation on our part. The relationship between the personal and the political was all the more relevant in such communities, where kinship networks and social interaction between neighbors played an important role in shaping all aspects of life.

We have already introduced the idea that the peasants, far from being passive pawns, could act in ways that accommodated multiple agendas, maximized their chances of survival, and, moreover, made them into political entrepreneurs. In their capacity as political entrepreneurs, they were commonly involved in the planning and execution of mechanisms that served to create and activate social boundaries and contribute to the increasing polarization of society. Polarization, in Tilly’s definition, is the “widening of political and social space between claimants in a contentious episode and the gravitation of previously uncommitted or moderate actors toward one or both extremes.” For our present purposes, the words previously uncommitted should be emphasized. In other words, polarization should be understood as being conflict-dependent rather than as the cause and definition of the conflict itself. That polarization occurred not only through the work of guerrillas, or specialists in violence, but through the actions of otherwise peaceful people who continued to participate in the functioning of the society that they were tearing apart is something that should give us pause; however, it becomes easier to understand when we consider the mix of motives that determined their actions.

Here, rather than concentrating exclusively on the politicization of private life through polarization, it may be more useful to consider another, parallel process precipitated by intimate violence—namely the “privatization of politics,” to borrow another explanatory concept from Kalyvas. This process entails the transformation of otherwise isolated, interpersonal,

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55. Tilly, Politics of Collective Violence, 76.
56. This is one of the common explanations for the brutality of civil-war violence, especially found in macro-level accounts of conflict. Kalyvas points out that this approach, in effect, “reasons back from violence to the factors that are believed to have produced it” and that “polarization explains simultaneously the onset of a conflict, its content, and its violence.” Logic of Violence in Civil War, 65.
57. Ibid., 332.
and even inane disputes and tensions into a basis of political mobilization that can subsequently serve as the basis of new collective identities. And it is quite common, as Kalyvas rightly points out, “for the trivial origins of these new identities to be lost in the fog of memory,”\(^{58}\) as the following example illustrates.

A massacre took place in Eğridere in summer 1905, a day before one of the most important holidays on the Orthodox Calendar, the Dormition of the Mother of God. The set of events that culminated in the massacre were initially set off by a dispute concerning the small chapel of Aghia Paraskevi.\(^ {59}\) The name Eğridere was a familiar one in the government records; this small “mixed” village had an unusual intensity of conflict. The Exarchist and Patriarchist communities both claimed stewardship of the chapel and demanded intervention by the authorities.\(^ {60}\) The Inspectorate followed common procedure in response to the petitions of the two communities and demanded an inquiry to establish whether any “official” conversions had occurred in the village (i.e., a record of adherence to the Exarchate by all or part of the community, presented before summer 1903, that would entitle the Exarchists to a separate church and school). The initial response of the local authorities, which stated that the two communities shared the church and the school and that it was not clear whether any attempt at conversion had taken place, was not particularly helpful in resolving the dispute.\(^ {61}\) Sent back for another round of inquiries, the local officials finally determined that the entire village had adhered to the Patriarchate before 1903. There was, however, a petition requesting official approval to join the Exarchate on June 5, 1904.\(^ {62}\) The final decision was in favor of the Patriarchists, who were granted the right to appoint the headman for the village because the petition had been sent after the official cut-off date of August 1903.\(^ {63}\)

Nevertheless, the fiduciary rights over the chapel were still a contested issue not directly addressed by this decision. The construction of the chapel had started eighteen years earlier under the supervision of Marko Yorgi, who had incurred an expense of 4 liras, partially collected as donations.

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58. Ibid., 331.
59. BOA, TFR.I.SL 73/7284, Metropolitan of Drama to the Inspectorate, May 18, 1905. See also TFR.I.SL 75/7409, Metropolitan of Drama to the Inspectorate, May 29, 1905.
60. BOA, TFR.I.SL 75/7409, Petition from the Exarchists of Eğridere to the Inspectorate, March 21, 1905; Inspectorate to the Subgovernorate of Serres, March 23, 1905; Subgovernorate of Serres to the Inspectorate, April 17, 1905; Metropolitan of Drama to M. Muller, April 14, 1905.
61. BOA, TFR.I.SL 75/7409, Inspectorate to the Subgovernorate of Serres, April 20, 1905; Subgovernorate of Serres to the Inspectorate, April 25, 1905.
62. BOA, TFR.I.SL 75/7409, Subgovernorate of Serres to the Inspectorate, May 2, 1905; Subgovernorate of Serres to the Inspectorate, May 8, 1905.
63. BOA, TFR.I.SL 75/7409, Inspectorate to the Subgovernorate of Serres, May 10, 1905; Subgovernorate of Serres to the Inspectorate, May 18, 1905; Petition of the Metropolitan of Drama to the Inspectorate, May 29, 1905; Inspectorate to the Subgovernorate of Serres, May 30, 1905.
from neighboring villages but not obtained a permit for the construction.64 The Patriarchists claimed that the chapel was a much older vakıf, (or pious endowment) and that the current edifice had been built by repairing (tâmi-ren) an extant one in 1888. They asserted that there were “no Bulgarians” in their village back then (“Bulgar namıyla kimse olmayub”). Moreover, the supervisor had been a man who had passed away six years earlier and not Yorgi, as he claimed. They also pointed out that there was an official record showing that the chapel belonged to the Greek Orthodox community. They did, however, concede that Yorgi had been a trustee of the chapel. He had, however, joined the group that had decided to adhere to the Exarchate and to make the chapel available to them for Easter service the previous year. The Greek Orthodox Metropolitan had dispatched a priest to dismiss Marko Yorgi from his trusteeship following this incident.

Even though Yorgi had indeed continued to pay taxes as the trustee of the chapel, the authorities restored the chapel to the Orthodox community—not an unusual outcome, as we have seen, given the blatant partiality of Ottoman officials for the Greek Orthodox side in intercommunal disputes.65 The disgruntled Exarchists, it seems, sought revenge. On the evening of August 13, a Bulgarian band attacked the village and targeted the homes of Greek Orthodox notables. The attack followed the familiar script of gunfire and arson. Vasil Konboti, one of the notables, perished in the fire along with his wife and daughter. Their neighbor’s son, a fifteen-year-old boy who happened to be looking out the window as the guerrillas started the fire, was also killed.66 By the time the troops arrived on the scene, the band had had ample warning to escape. The report mentioned that the guerrillas had stood by watching the fire while the cries of the two women trying to climb out of the windows could be heard.67

The same band continued its mission in Melnikitch (Melenikitsi) a day later, where they killed two çiftlik guards, both Greek Orthodox and one of them a Vlach. Their mutilated corpses were found later by farm laborers.68 While the band itself apparently did not consist of locals, according to some residents and relatives who were interviewed afterward, it was aided by a

65. Ibid. The Subgovernor recommended, in an addendum to the report, that the petitions for changing sects should not be taken seriously.
66. BOA, TFR.I.SL 83/8221, To the Prefecture of Zihne, August 13, 1905; PRO, FO 195/2207, Theodorides, the vice consul at Serres to the British Consul in Salonika, August 14, 1905; MAE, vol. 46, Note by the Légation de Grèce en France, August 17, 1905.
67. BOA, TFR.I.SL 83/82221, Subgovernor of Serres to the Inspectorate, August 14, 1905; PRO, FO 195/2207, Vice Consul Theodorides to the British Consul in Salonika, August 16, 1905.
68. PRO, FO 195/2207, Vice Consul Theodorides to the British Consul in Salonika, August 16, 1905.
group of forty to fifty men from Eğridere. One of the village guards was subsequently found to be responsible for bringing in the guerrillas.69

Often attacks that clearly had political overtones in planning and execution started out as much smaller disputes over property, access to resources, or the payment of dues or taxes. Even disputes over churches, chapels, and parish schools sometimes fell under this category, despite their apparent association with the much larger political conflict. Episodes of violence originating as such disputes over ecclesiastical property should be distinguished from other episodes on at least three distinct levels: (1) regardless of the final act of aggression, they usually originated in local disputes and not in two opposing camps clustered around universal and abstract political principles, (2) belonging in one particular sect or the other was not necessarily a condition of having access to spaces of worship, and (3) the fiduciary responsibility was as significant a concern for the parishioners as the ecclesiastical authority presiding over their church.

What happened in Eğridere is representative of other small communities caught up in the spiral of violence. At the initial stage, when sectarian difference was an identifiable yet new and narrowly defined notion, the probability of a violent outbreak was slim. Despite the presence of two competing paths to spiritual salvation, potential disputes were contained through strategies such as the rotation of the churches for religious services between the two communities or the simultaneous use of the ecclesiastical space. When other considerations such as regulating the use of tangible resources or sharing financial responsibility became pressing concerns, however, the dispute took another turn.

Yet, even in the presence of these preconditions of sectarian difference and communal tension we cannot argue that violent conflict is the necessary outcome. We have already seen that mixed communities continued to function without major outbreaks of violence when left to their own devices. Even in cases where disputes did break out, such as fights over who would have the church building on which Sunday, the details suggest that these were as much an indication of the possibility of accommodation as of irreversible conflict.

An example from 1907, a year quite advanced in the “polarization” of the communities, illustrates this point further. The village of Karlikovo (Mikropoli) (another familiar name from the archival records of conflict) was in the course of holiday celebrations on December 6, and the Greek Orthodox and Bulgarian Exarchist communities, apparently having buried their hatchets in honor of St. Nicholas, or under the appeasing influence of tsi-pouro, were dancing the horo together in the village square. Unfortunately, the festive occasion did not end well; the document that relates the incident

69. BOA, TFR.I.SL 82/8221, Subgovernor of Serres to the Inspectorate, August 17, 1905.
is unclear as to the nature of the argument that set off the chain of events, but there was a scuffle and Dimitri, the son of the Greek Orthodox village headman, assaulted Gorgi Hristo, an Exarchist, with a knife and injured him in the shoulder. In the melee that followed, Dimitri escaped. Bojik Hristo, Gorgi Bojik, and two small children named Hristo and Angel from the Exarchist side, and Angel Petre and Yovan Angel from the Greek Orthodox side, were slightly injured. It is interesting to note that the names of those who were involved suggest the possibility that this intercommunal fight had a tint of family feud, which is not surprising in that kin networks usually supplement, and even act like, ideological bonds in many cases.

The lesson here is that violent communal conflict should not be seen as a foregone conclusion in the presence of sectarian differences. There were, however, several other factors, the combination of which made violence very likely. To start with, the institutional arbiters that might have helped to dissipate the tension across the region that was home to numerous such villages, namely the Ottoman government and the representatives of European Powers, were quite far from being up to this task. The legal/institutional framework was compromised not only by the divergent interests and agendas of the Ottomans and the Europeans but also by the lack of a robust security force that could have been deployed to enforce the law rather than ignore, violate, or flout it. Second, the proliferation of guerrilla strongholds in certain areas made their peripheries more violence prone, not only by simple logic of proximity but because it provided easy access to violence specialists who enforced an alternative order and could be brought in by political entrepreneurs to settle local disputes with lethal effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) considering the pretext for revenge that such attacks prompted.

Brutalization and the Impossibility of Fence-Sitting

In August 1905, Komaina, a fifty-year-old widow of a certain Costadine, disappeared in Marikostina (Marikostonovo). A few weeks later, on September 8, “the Bulgarian Guerman Nicolas” of Livonovo (Levunovo) left for the market of Melnik and never returned. In Serres, Helen Giorgieva contacted the authorities in December 1905 and reported her husband had been missing for some time. Georghi Ferzi, the husband, was later found.

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70. BOA, TFR.I.SL 129/12858, Zihne Prefect Halil Rifat to the Inspectorate, December 20, 1906.
71. There is a significant body of literature supporting this point; see Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 95n. 11.
72. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Captain Bouvet to Colonel Vérand, September 23, 1905. It is interesting to note that, according to Mishev, both Livonovo and Marikostina were inhabited exclusively by Exarchists, and Zlatko, where another person had disappeared (he cites “Zlatkof-Tchiflik,” which is very likely the same place) had a population of 224 Slavic-speaking Patriarchists. Brancoff [Mishev], La Macédoine et sa Population Chrétienne, 192.
by fishermen, his corpse had been stuffed into a bag found floating in the Karasu River. An investigation into the murder did not produce any immediate results.\textsuperscript{73} Pavlo Velo, a milkman originally from Kosovo, left his house in Serres at dawn on May 28, 1907, to go to the creamery where he purchased the milk he distributed daily to his clients. His daily routine was interrupted before he reached his destination, and he died after suffering multiple knife wounds at the hands of an unknown assailant(s). Even though the French gendarmerie officer hastened to remark that the attackers were probably “of Greek nationality,” they had left no clue as to the motive for their crime.\textsuperscript{74}

As a matter of fact, countless telegrams and incident sheets in the archives attest to a large number of violent crimes that were presumed to be of a political nature simply because there was no other apparent reason for them. It is interesting to note that many of these victims were stabbed, rather than shot, suggesting a more personal motive for the crimes committed. Comparative evidence suggests it is more than likely that at least some of these were not of a political nature at all but were, rather, crimes of opportunity, committed with the knowledge that the mechanisms that would have attached and exacted a high price for taking another person’s life no longer functioned normally, thus discounting the “opportunity cost” of murder.\textsuperscript{75}

Consider another quadruple murder, for instance, that reportedly took place in sight of at least a dozen people early on the morning of October 31, 1907. Four Catholic Bulgarians from the village of Todorak (Theodoritsi) were on their way to the village of Boursouk (Limnochori) in the district of Barakli Cuma (Irakleia).\textsuperscript{76} They were intercepted by a group of three “Turkish brigands,” who robbed the four men, tied them up, and then shot them. While this robbery-homicide was progressing, three Muslim couples were working in a field approximately 50 meters from the scene. Moreover, several people had seen the bandits shortly before the incident, including a group of armed Albanian men and another party of gypsies. None of them, however, was willing to offer official testimony, according to Major Foulon, who drafted a report to his superior, Colonel Vérand, about the incident in a style evoking a clumsy and bureaucratic harbinger to the “Chronicle of a Death Foretold.” Finally, a young shepherd stepped forward and stated that he had seen the bandits flee toward Lovichta (Kallikarpo) on the victims’ horses. He also identified one of them as a young Turkish man from Külahli.

\textsuperscript{73} MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Excerpts of minutes drafted by Subgovernor Resijd Bey and Colonel Ali Riza Bey, January 1905.

\textsuperscript{74} MAE. Constantinople, Série E 144, Macédoine, May 29, 1907. I was not able to locate any other record of this crime that might have allowed me to cross-check this information.

\textsuperscript{75} A superb fictional example for the possible consequences of a discounted price for murder and predation are the characters Snoop and Chris (played by Felicia Pearson and Gbenga Akinnagbe, respectively) in the HBO television series \textit{The Wire}. See Lorrie Moore’s review, “In the Life of ‘The Wire,’” \textit{New York Review of Books} 57, no. 15 (October 14, 2010): 23–31.

\textsuperscript{76} MAE, Constantinople, Série E 144, Macédoine, Major Foulon to Colonel Vérand, November 5, 1907.
Logic and Legitimacy in Violence

The shepherd was apparently a brave citizen not cowed by the grim statistics of abducted, killed, and maimed fellow shepherds, or perhaps he had a personal axe to grind against this violent man—this is not to say that these were two mutually exclusive possibilities.

Thanks to the testimony of the shepherd, the gendarmes had no trouble locating the man that day at home with his wife and mother. When questioned, he denied having left the house all day, but his wife failed to back up his alibi. Even though it is tempting to speculate about a fed-up wife finally seizing her moment to get rid of this wretched man, the holes in his alibi were not the only things that gave away the part-time bandit. The gendarmes also found cases of Gras bullets, identical to the ones used in the homicide, in the house, and further investigation revealed that his accomplices were two Albanian men who had already taken off toward Poroy (Ano Poroia).

Major Foulon was appalled by the witnesses’ callous disregard of a multiple homicide taking place within their sight. Their negligence was compounded by their lack of civic responsibility in refusing to testify. The moral outrage of the French officer, although quite justified, did not take into account what, in my opinion, was the more striking moral conundrum posed by the incident: How did a local “family man” with a known address become a part-time bandit who could kill and rob several people in the morning and then come back home to take a nap?

We could make an argument here that there had been a possible desensitization of the public to violence through repeated exposure, although I would caution against taking this reading to its logical conclusion of a complete societal breakdown. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the failures of law enforcement coupled with the presence of competing groups with access to the means of coercion engendered the conditions under which criminal activity became more common, but this is not to say that such activity became normalized or ubiquitous. In other words, the desensitization should be seen as a context-specific deterioration of social norms rather than their general dissolution into a Hobbesian catastrophe.

Especially after the Ilinden Uprising, the inhabitants of the countryside were subject to a low level of daily violence, which was a constant reminder that their lives could change or end abruptly in a moment, that all-out war was just around the corner. These daily hardships were of a different order than the murder and mayhem we have discussed so far in that they did not always end in grave bodily harm; nevertheless, the cumulative effects of navigating this dangerous obstacle course to keep body and soul together, day after day, amounted to a trauma that was comparable to witnessing or being subjected to physical violence.

Much of this daily trauma could be attributed to the presence of a large number of troops, regular and reserve, mobilized in the region to counter the insurgency. The problem was not their numbers, which were clearly insufficient to patrol the countryside effectively, but the dearth of resources
to keep them fed and equipped. Further complicating the matter was the mutual hostility that characterized the interactions between the military and the Slav inhabitants of the region. A majority of the latter understandably viewed the troops as a threat to, rather than a protector of, their security. The soldiers, for their part, viewed the Slavs with suspicion as actual or potential collaborators with the guerrillas.

Thefts of food and livestock were common complaints made against the troops, and these were a direct result of the Ottoman Third Army command’s ongoing failure to make timely payments to the contractors and purveyors who supplied the military with foodstuffs. Frustrated with the arrears in payments, the contractors occasionally stopped delivering the food for the soldiers’ mess, which usually consisted of bread and beans with the occasional mutton. That the soldiers preyed on the local population, stole food and other goods, and got involved in the contraband tobacco trade should not come as a surprise given the conditions under which these men were deployed, often for years with no certain date of discharge, among a population they overwhelmingly despised. What is more surprising is that there were not even more incidents of abuse, looting, and general breaches of discipline—which we can attribute to the harsh punishments such breaches could result in, such as being dispatched to Yemen, which was seen as tantamount to a death sentence.

Searches for weapons and guerrillas hiding in villages constituted the most frequent pretexts for the abuse of villagers by the troops. To address this problem, the authorities required searches to be carried out only in the presence of the village headmen and the members of the village council—a rule that must have been violated as many times as it was observed, considering the frequency of the registered complaints and the assurances from local officials that it was indeed being followed. The nature and intensity of these abuses ran a wide spectrum from inconvenience and verbal and physical harassment to plundering, beatings, and unjustified arrests. Looting, rape, and torture were also not unheard of; they usually accompanied reprisals after uprisings or armed confrontations.

The investigations of allegations of abuse by the military seldom produced any substantive results that might assuage the fears of the locals or restore a degree of trust in official due process. In cases where there was an easily identifiable culprit acting without open endorsement from his superiors, the man, usually a low-ranking soldier, was court-martialed and punished.

77. The situation was indeed dire, and the threat of malnutrition-related diseases such as scurvy was constant. The soldiers not only lacked adequate food but also basic equipment and clothing such as socks and shoes. For more details on the effects of this problem on morale and relations within the security forces, see I.K. Yosmaoğlu, “Marching on an Empty Stomach: Practical Aspects of Gendarmerie Reform in Ottoman Macedonia,” in Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean, edited by Lorans Tanatar Baruh and Vangelis Kechriotis (Athens, 2010), 277–96.

78. Many thanks to Sükri Hanoğlu for alerting me to weight of the “Yemen threat” (personal communication, March 2008).
swiftly. When an entire detachment was implicated, and there were hints of acquiescence or participation at the officer level, however, abuses were more difficult to investigate and prosecute. It seems that the burden of proof was placed on the abused rather than the accused soldiers or officers. This applied even in cases where the allegations were made not by civilian locals but by the gendarmes, who also occasionally drew the ire of the troops. This often resulted in the cases being dropped or in punitive measures that barely amounted to a slap on the wrist.

A number of events that took place in Cuma-i Bâlà in late 1904 are illustrative of the common type of brutalization of the locals by the troops. Cuma-i Bâlà was in the northern part of the sancak of Serres, along the Bulgarian border, and a significant number of its Bulgarian population had fled to the principality during the reprisals carried out by the Ottoman regular army units and militias in the aftermath of the Ilinden Uprising. A year after the uprising, many of the refugees had come back, but the situation was still very tense. The district had been a thoroughfare for insurgents going to and from the Bulgarian principality, and the Ottomans attempted to, and for a while managed to, control this traffic by intensifying the number of troops. Detachments from the Third Army were stationed in karakols across the district, some of them commandeered from the locals, such as the Bulgarian community school building in Selichte (Selishte) and the Bulgarian priest’s residence in Pokrovnik. The army could not, however, prevent the infiltration of two large bands of about 140 men from the Bulgarian principality in December.

The committees had forbidden the keradjis (muleteers) carrying goods on caravans between Cuma-i Bâlà and Demirhisar (Sidirokastro) to serve “Turks or Greeks of the region.” This ban was then expanded to include doing any kind of business with Muslims. The Muslim community retaliated by blacklisting the Christian merchants: the mufti proclaimed the order, police surveillance in the marketplace ensured its observation, and the troops apparently lent assistance to its enforcement through punitive measures. Muslims who purchased anything from Christian vendors were forced to

79. Civilian authorities, more sensitive to the locals’ grievances, tried to make sure that offenses did not go unpunished. For instance, during a search in a village of Ayrethisar on January 20, 1905, the soldiers broke icons in the Bulgarian church. When the villagers complained about what had happened, their officer was arrested; MAE, Constantinople E 147, Consul General to the Ambassador, January 28, 1905. Offenders at the bottom of the pecking order, such as the Régie guards were also quickly transferred to a criminal court; BOA, TFR.I.SL 50/4970, August 8, 1904.

80. BOA, TFR.IAS 54/5387, July 1907.
81. BOA, TFR.I.SL 48/4762, Inspectorate to the Prefecture of Cuma, August 6, 1904.
82. Dakin, Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 167.
83. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Colonel Vérand to the Chargé d’affairs, November 1904.
84. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Consul General to the Ambassador, December 9, 1904.
return it. The ban was revised soon afterward when the Muslim notables
decided to exempt the Greek Orthodox vendors from the boycott, limit-
ing it to the Exarchists. There were reports of Muslims walking around at
night, talking loudly about “killing the giaours [infidels].” The tension
was sustained as a result of local agitation, and the state of the relations
between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire did not help either. The anticipa-
tion of a war breaking out stirred up already heightened emotions. The
kaymakam (prefect), who seems to have had an appeasing presence and who
was regarded as a “perfectly fair man” by the Christian population, asked
for leave in October, reportedly exasperated with the influence of Mirliva
Salih Pasha, the commander of the forces in Cuma and his cronies. The
prefect’s departure was unfortunate under the circumstances because he was
the only government official who could be relied on to diffuse the tension
and to monitor and report on the conduct of the troops to the Inspectorate.

The abuses took place at the end of November and beginning of Decem-
ber during searches for weapons and guerrillas in certain villages after the
shootings and deaths of three soldiers in the vicinity. The complaints that
followed were grave enough to prompt the authorities to reluctantly carry
out an investigation—a task the officials sloppily completed in great haste,
according to Colonel Vérand, the French gendarmerie commander. The
following excerpt from the subsequent report lends credence to Colonel Vé-
rand’s claim that it was botched by design:

A majority of the inhabitants indicated that they were very happy with the
conduct of the soldiers in Pokrovnik. It is just that there were quite a few com-
plaints about officers in the karakols. As already mentioned, measures will be
taken about these. We also asked the notables of the village of Pokrovnik if they
had any other complaints. They responded that they did not, they only requested
that the searches, while legitimate, do not take place during the night, in an
arbitrary manner, and that officers and soldiers be always accompanied by the
muhtar or an aza. This was all related to the commander and the kaymakam.

It would not be going on a limb to suggest that the villagers probably
viewed the inquiry as an interrogation rather than an investigation. They
wanted to give the “right answers” to the officials’ questions rather than talk
about what actually had transpired, and they accomplished this with gusto,

85. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Colonel Vérand to the Ambassador, December 11,
1904.
86. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Colonel Vérand to the Ambassador, December 20,
1904.
87. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Consul Steeg to the Chargé d’affaires, October 5,
1904.
88. BOA, TFR.I.SL 61/6046, January 8, 1905.
89. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Colonel Vérand to the Ambassador, March 4, 1905.
providing a perfect quotation for the reporting official about the terms under which “legitimate” searches would be carried out, as if they had memorized the latest government memo on the subject.

The final remarks in the minutes acknowledged that the soldiers had gone into the village on their own, following tips that there were “among the inhabitants brigands and guns” and had carried out searches without the muhtar and the azas, and also “engaged in some excesses.” This was as far as the investigation could proceed, however. According to the official’s deposition, the obstacle blocking the inquiry was clearly insurmountable: “since the villagers do not know their [the abusive officers’] names, and many detachments passed through the village during that period, and these villagers cannot specify which detachment these officers belong to … it is impossible to inquire further.” 90 This feeble excuse justified the decision to end the inquiry. Colonel Vérand’s remark that “the commission was not so much interested in finding out the truth as proving the allegations wrong . . .” was probably not far off the mark, but it neglected an even more pressing concern for the Ottoman officials handling the investigation, which was to keep the involvement of the European officers to a minimum. 91

It is also worth noting that the same investigation commission dismissed as “completely unfounded” the allegations of rape, which they referred to as “attacks on women,” because, as their reasoning went, the women had not mentioned anything to their parents or anyone else from the village and their “husbands and elders of the village denied any knowledge of such assaults.” 92 Therefore, the commission found the allegations unworthy of their time and consideration.

Note that rape, although certainly represented in the “repertoire of contention” of the “violence specialists” in the region at the time, was not used as a systematic tool of suppression in the form of mass rapes. 93 This was probably due to the fact that none of the groups—including the Ottoman government—competing for territorial supremacy included in their short-term plans a vision for the forcible removal or annihilation of a certain segment of the population. 94 In other words, the stake they had in a stable government in the long term made mass rape a counterproductive

91. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Colonel Vérand’s report, March 4, 1905. Captain Enchéry, who filed the complaints, was the frequent target of allegations that he was not only partial to the Bulgarian side but also actively involved in subversive activities such as presiding over alternative “revolutionary” tribunals; see, for instance, BOA, TFR.I.SL 60/398, December 30, 1904. The French consul dismissed these allegations as “absurd” in his report to the ambassador; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, February 28, 1905.
92. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, ca. January 15, 1905.
93. Both terms are borrowed from Tilly, Politics of Collective Violence.
94. It was, however, clearly on the agenda during and in the immediate aftermath of the Balkan Wars.
Anecdotal evidence suggests that this was an explicitly defined rule for members of IMRO, who did not dare stray from this injunction, and “[e]ven the old time brigands, who knew no laws but their own, were not only careful observers of women’s chastity themselves, but were ever ready to avenge such wrongs.” This observation was recorded by a journalist whose impartial observer status was compromised by his willing participation in several IMRO activities while “embedded” with the revolutionaries in 1906; nevertheless, the lack of substantial evidence from Ottoman and other archival sources attesting to the rape of local women by revolutionaries corroborates his statement. The assignment of Catherine Tsilka as “chap- eron” to Ellen Stone during the latter’s kidnapping by Sandansky’s band is another indicator of the lengths some IMRO men would go to prove their commitment to the protection of a woman’s honor. Mrs. Tsilka, a Bulgarian Protestant missionary and a minister’s wife, was kidnapped along with Miss Stone, the real target, apparently because it would have been inappropriate for an unmarried woman to be alone in the mountains with a bunch of young men. Given the aspiration of IMRO to become a legitimate protector of the people, this principle and its strict observance made perfect sense.

Rape was more often used as a sporadic tool of oppression against the local population by Ottoman troops and irregulars, especially in the immediate aftermath of uprisings or armed encounters, when male inhabitants tended to flee into the mountains, or during overzealous searches for weapons in rural dwellings, when opportunities for abuse were abundant and were only perfunctorily curbed by the intervention of disciplined officers. Incidents of rape were also reported after attacks by Greek bands whose use.

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95. This was unlike, for instance, the case of Ottoman Armenian women during World War I. Mass rape tends to accompany ethnic-cleansing operations, such as in Bosnia in the 1990s, rather than the selective violence of civil war, which more closely characterizes what was happening in Ottoman Macedonia at this time. This is not to say that all ethnic-cleansing operations are accompanied by mass rape or sexual violence (a much broader category). On the rarity or complete absence of sexual violence in conflicts, see Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?” Politics & Society 37 (March 2009): 131–62.

96. Albert Sonnichsen, Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit (New York, 1909), 152.

97. Tsilka was not the intended person for this role, but the more matronly and hence suitable candidate had fainted during the actual kidnapping, forcing the guerrillas to make a spontaneous decision to take another married woman from the group. Unbeknownst to them, Tsilka was pregnant and would become a great liability during the hard marches across the mountains in the dead of winter as negotiations for the release of the hostages dragged on interminably. She delivered her baby girl while still in captivity, and the two women were not released until the baby was a month old; Sherman, Fires on the Mountain.

98. This is not to suggest that rape was a natural course of action whenever the opportunity presented itself. I strongly disagree with the “substitution” arguments, which hold that there is a link between armed groups’ access to prostitutes or other forms of sexual gratification (or lack thereof) and their propensity to rape. For a discussion of such approaches, see Elisabeth J. Wood, “Variation in Sexual Violence during War,” Politics & Society 34 (September 2006): 307–41.
members came from outside the region. In any case, it is reasonable to assume that the reports of rape that did find their way to various authorities (and hence to us, through the archival records) represent only a portion of the actual cases that occurred given the reluctance of victims to speak out for various reasons, including social stigma and the difficulty (if not futility) of seeking justice, as this case adequately illustrates.

The troubles in Cuma-i Bâlâ and the brutalization of the inhabitants of Pokrovnik, Selichte, Leshko, and Karasu Çiftlik present another important element in the polarization of the population as a result of violence that was determined from the top down, embodied in this instance by the District Commander Salih Pasha, who was a perfect example of the violent specialist with a significant resume in political entrepreneurship. Fluent in French, personable and approachable, Salih Pasha was known as a “military man of energy and action.” Obviously, this military man knew how to channel his reputed “energies” to more lucrative pursuits than commanding the Third Army regiments stationed in Cuma-i-Bâlâ, having amassed considerable wealth through the lavish use of his influence and not a small degree of opportunistic and predatory behavior. His first initiative was reportedly the purchase of a large çiftlik that was languishing by the barracks. Soon, he had set up a smooth-running operation, where “the manure from the cavalry fertilized the soil, the soldiers harvested the tobacco, maintained the roads, dug irrigation canals and lower level officers supervised the laborers and the harvesters.”

When the proprietor of the land adjoining his property fled to Bulgaria during the Ilinden Uprising, Salih Pasha acquired his land as well as the mill on the property through a tenuous legal transaction. The sale of the property required an auction, but given Salih Pasha’s reputation no one else dared to bid on it. After this acquisition, he blocked access to the fields between the two farms, which was lifted only after the intervention of the Inspector General. It was through the same channel that the land and the mill were subsequently restored to its original owner—for the price of the sale.

The hardships that the proprietor experienced to have restored what had essentially been illegally confiscated from him underscore

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99. See, for instance, MAE, Constantinople, E 147, Salonika, French Consul General to the Embassy, January 28, 1905.

100. As discussed later in regards to the Kuklish affair, there is a simple explanation for why many women would refrain from adding to their agony by filing an official complaint—they were simply convinced that their allegations would not be investigated thoroughly and objectively.

101. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Consul General Steeg to the Chargé d’affaires, October 5, 1904.

102. The activities of Salih Pasha left a long paper trail; for details in addition to Consuls Steeg’s report, see BOA, TFR.I.SL 43/4266, May 23, 1904; TFR.I.SL 47/4662, July 30, 1907; TFR.I.SL 48/4744, August 6, 1904; TFR.I.SL 48/4762-4763, August 8, 1904. A resident composed an anonymous letter, which seems to have made an impression on the authorities; TFR.İ.ŞKT 50/4920, August 28, 1904. The order restoring the mill to its previous owner was issued in January 1905; TFR.I.A 22/2112. And Salih Pasha was finally replaced by Osman
a different kind of violence that the survivors of the uprising endured even when they were not being beaten up by troops or assassinated by guerrillas. It was a violence of the mundane, such as a Sisyphean battle with the Ottoman bureaucracy. Fortunately for the proprietor, who probably had more access to authority than the typical dispossessed peasant (although this is not to suggest that the typical peasant did not know to speak the language of the bureaucracy), the matter was resolved, but only after intervention at the level of the Inspectorate. To be fair to Salih Pasha, I must note that he was obviously an equal-opportunity oppressor in the sense that the victims of his chicanery and strong-arming included several Muslims as well as Christians. This we find out from a report by an Ottoman officer and from an anonymous letter sent to the Inspectorate.\textsuperscript{103} In many cases, people whose property had been usurped or confiscated were forced to pay for the privilege of accessing their own land or its yield, adding insult to injury. Naim Ağa, for instance, had to buy the produce grown on the land seized from him. Salih Pasha’s animals were pastured on land belonging to a certain Ahmed Ağa, the other half of which was leased to the army at an exorbitant rate for pasturing its animals. The proceeds from this operation, needless to say, went not to Ahmed Ağa but to Salih Pasha. Again at the expense of the army, using the soldiers as free labor, the resourceful Pasha had had irrigation canals dug to water his property. These canals diverted water to the detriment of Karaca Mahalle, whose inhabitants now had to pay 1\textit{mecidiye} to Salih Pasha per dönum they watered, essentially paying for the water he was stealing from them. The laborers of the neighboring fields, who were not able to pay this amount had lost their tobacco crop. In the Varouch Mahalle, he installed sentries to block the villagers’ access to free water. Even the\textit{mufti} had his share of the Pasha’s exactions when his stock of 1,500\textit{okkas} of hay was pilfered one night by the soldiers.\textsuperscript{104} The muscle Salih Pasha employed in these operations included a sergeant named Boşnak Süleyman and a cavalry gendarme Boşnak Mustafa, hinting at some form of ethnic solidarity network in Salih Pasha’s dealings as a violent specialist turned political entrepreneur.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{103} BOA, TFR.I.SKT 50/4920, August 28, 1904; MAE, Constantinople, E 147, appendix to Colonel Vérand’s report: “Faits reprochés au Général Salih Pasha,” March 4, 1905.

\textsuperscript{104} These examples are among the more odious drawn from a long list that also includes items such as the removal of furniture from the office of the commander to be placed in Salih Pasha’s çiftlik. MAE, Constantinople, E 147, appendix to Colonel Vérand’s report: “Faits reprochés au Général Salih Pasha,” March 4, 1905.

\textsuperscript{105} Ethnic-regional solidarity in professional networks, including networks of crime and coercion, was common in the Ottoman Empire from the early modern era into the twentieth century. Ryan Gingeras’s work on the role of these networks in the South Marmara region in the aftermath of World War I argues that shared ethnicity, although important, was only one among many elements that shaped them; Ryan Gingeras,\textit{Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923} (New York, 2009), 56–65.
The abuse of villagers in Cuma-i Bâlâ was clearly part of Salih Pasha’s local reign of terror in the territory he had carved out as a personal fiefdom. Under the pretext of a search for weapons and “bandits,” the inhabitants were beaten, tortured, arrested and raped. The extensive search apparently produced only three guns, one of them belonging to a village headman, who in all likelihood was authorized to carry it, suggesting that cowing the peasantry was the motivation, not uncovering a cache of weapons. The institutional and political climate provided Salih Pasha an opportune situation for expanding his own sphere of influence by terrorizing people with impunity.

“When it comes to government-led deployment of coercion against challengers,” Charles Tilly notes, “collective violence increases further to the extent that violent specialists’ organization offers opportunities for private vengeance and incentives to predation. Where participation in organized violence opens paths to political and economic power, collective violence multiplies.” Indeed, one of the immediate consequences of Salih Pasha’s exactions was a large number of people leaving their homes and families to join the bands. The mechanism at work here was one with a built-in momentum, gaining traction from the multiple incentives present for opting into the armed struggle and the barriers making it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to remain a fence-sitter.

Even so, we should still keep in mind that picking up arms and joining a band was not an irreversible decision. As the story of Hristo, a young man from the village of Karacaköy (Monokklisia) in Serres shows us, life as a guerrilla, although not without its rewards, was tough and not always as adventurous as the aspiring warriors may have hoped. Furthermore, there was no guarantee that the chance for vengeance would ever materialize. Hristo, along with eleven other men from his village and thirteen others from the neighboring Kalendra (Kala Dentra) had joined a revolutionary band in winter 1903–1904. After five months of wandering in the mountains, crossing the border into Bulgaria, meetings in Sofia and the Monastery of Rila, and even a brief stint as a farmhand under the supervision of a band leader named Koço in Tatarpazaric (Pazardzhik), Hristo, apparently stricken with buyer’s remorse, decided to end his tenure as a guerrilla. After the band had crossed the border back into Ottoman territory, he managed to ditch his handlers and turned himself in to the authorities in Barakova.

**Notes:**

106. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Colonel Vérand to the Ambassador, March 4, 1905.
108. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Consul General Steeg to the Embassy, December 21, 1904.
when revealing the names and describing the movements of the leadership cadres he had traveled with, but he was careful to add that he had never engaged in armed confrontations with Ottoman forces. Hristo was also smart enough to claim that it was the senior guerrillas’ responsibility to arrange for provisions, dodging questions about specific villages, which might then be held responsible for aiding and abetting the guerrillas. As for why he and his friends had decided to join the guerrillas in the first place, Hristo was clear: “out of fear that the soldiers who had arrived in the village would beat [us] up,” invoking one of the main pitfalls of counterinsurgency, on the one hand, and reminding us about the inherent problems in assuming motives based on observed action, on the other.  

**The Logic of Violence**

If the residents of Ottoman Macedonia started to question the benevolence or the existence of the god they worshipped in their (now segregated) churches, mosques, and synagogues and to invoke his name with despair (if not irony) in the winter that connected 1904 to 1905, no one could have blamed them. The worst was yet to come in terms of political turmoil, but that year human-made disasters were compounded by what looked like the ire of higher forces. Not only was the winter exceptionally harsh, with snow blanketing the villages into isolation and frost hanging over the fields, orchards, and vineyards with extraordinary persistence, but a flu epidemic was also running rampant.  

The one-two punch of winter and the flu was followed by a spring when the activities of the Greek committees started to intensify, with the apparent complicity and even support of Ottoman authorities, adding momentum to the spiral of attacks and reprisals. After the Ottoman security forces dealt a large blow to Apostol’s band in the spring, rumors spread that the leader himself had been killed. The jubilations of the authorities on the occasion turned out to be premature—Apostol was alive and well and getting ready for revenge. Despite the unrelenting pressure of

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110. Kalyvas points out the need to “distinguish between reasons for joining an organization and reasons for remaining in it” and proposes that we “bracket the question of individual motivations and ... adopt minimal, yet sensible, assumptions about support.” _Logic of Violence in Civil War, 100–101_. The minimal and (I think) sensible assumption I make throughout this chapter about individual reasons for peasant participation in insurgency is that, although these reasons ran the whole gamut from complete ideological commitment to coercion, minimizing damage to oneself and one’s loved ones was the principle factor in shaping this behavior. Cf. James C. Scott, _Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance_ (New Haven, 1985).

111. We could add to the list of natural catastrophes the earthquake in April 1904, which did not claim a significant number of lives but caused enough damage to leave many homeless. Luckily, the snow had just melted, but the weather was still not very clement in the high altitudes; BOA, TFR.I.SL 35/3452, April 4, 1904; TFR.I.AS 13/1289, April 6, 1904.
the guerrillas, constant abuse of Ottoman security forces and other militias, and endless vagaries of life caused by a seemingly angry god, the people of Macedonia moved on with the business of living and even having some fun. Archival records, by their very nature, rarely hold clues to the diversions that people enjoyed, and when they do, they more often than not describe a festive occasion gone sour, such as a wedding or dance ending in bloodshed, or a less tragic run in with the law, such as complaints about a tax collector trying to get a cut of the proceeds from a traveling magician’s show, or the raunchy content of a popular play by a theater troupe that continues to be performed despite “repeated warnings” by the authorities. However incomplete, these snippets of information hint at the way life was experienced under “normal” conditions and should remind us that not all was murder and mayhem, even during these depressing times, and make us reconsider the conditions under which people inflicted harm on each other. In Captain Sarrou’s words, “These murders or score settling did not prevent the local population from living, working, and having fun. They did not do without holidays celebrated with enthusiasm. My childish eyes keeps the sight of costumes for carnival, the continuous farandole [dance?] of the red devils, of the evzones, of Karagöz (Punch), of clowns, of porters, of harlequins, of Colombines, and the shower of confetti and streamers falling from balconies or windows of houses with one floor. The cries of joy did not bother the people eating grilled corn from the cob.” So far, we have looked at several cases that exposed the dynamics of communal conflict at the micro level and demonstrated that we cannot speak of an unqualified, straight path that links sectarian difference and tension with outbreaks of violence. In this section, I ask broader questions of similar case studies, this time turning our attention to the logic of communal violence and its limits.

Violence as a Universal Tool of Communication

In June 1904, Chief Jane Sandansky, the legendary leader of the left wing of the IMRO dispatched an “open letter” to the population of the subprovince of Serres and the representatives of the European Powers stationed there. The letter was about several murders in the district of Melnik, approximately halfway between the center of Serres subprovince and the Bulgarian border. The region was claimed by Sandansky and his men as the base for their operations. The issue in the letter was not that Sandansky’s band was accused of murders they had not committed—they were indeed responsible, and the letter proudly owned up to this fact. The targets of Sandansky’s

112. See, for instance, MAE, Constantinople, E 143, October 5, 1904; BOA, TFR.I.SL 5/429, Subgovernor Rükneddin to the Inspectorate, Serres, February 19, 1903.
It may seem specious, or even ironic, that an outlaw living in the mountains off the spoils of robbery and exactions would protest “illegalities” and “arbitrary acts,” but there was nothing ironic here as far as Sandansky and his comrades were concerned because their authority stemmed from the will of the “people.” The money and resources they “collected” from the people were not exactions but “taxes.” Likewise, there was nothing arbitrary about the summary executions they performed because they were the result of due deliberations and the just punishment for crimes committed by the perpetrators—not victims. In this regard, their moral logic was irreproachable. What prompted Sandansky to write the letter, however, suggests a problem in the dissemination of the guerrilla leader’s broader message; the target audience—the representatives of European Powers and the inhabitants of the region they aimed to liberate—were obviously not entirely convinced that Sandansky and his mates were carrying out the requirements of the law, or that the revolutionary “penal code” that Sandansky insisted he was enforcing had any more legitimacy than the laws of the state they were rising against, for that matter.

Sandansky’s apparent concern with the perceived legitimacy of the punishments meted out by his organization should not, however, be read as the leader’s ambivalence about the destructive consequences of the methods pursued by the guerrillas as the only road to success; like any movement that embraces the principle of “freedom or death,” the Macedonian revolutionaries rationalized the killing of civilians as a necessary sacrifice and could not see beyond the false dichotomy of dying as a victim versus dying as a hero. The misgivings Sandansky had about the publicity that their actions generated did not stem from remorse over the glib cruelty with which they were executed but from a determination to ensure that the message was delivered to the right address. This kind of publicity was precisely what they were after, and Sandansky was sanguine about the lengths they would reach for to achieve it: “Finally they accuse us of being cruel, of being ferocious, without pity. Yes! We are cruel and ferocious; without pity against informants and our enemies. Often we punish not only the latter, but also their wives, their children and their sons to give an example to others, in case they want to follow the way of the condemned. Mercy! Forgiveness! These words are strange and unknown to us. We are without mercy. We

114. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Macédoine, July 16, and August 22, 1904.
have but one punishment, only one suffering for the guilty. Death! Death to the snitch! Death to the traitor! Death to all who give us trouble.”

Before writing off Sandansky’s public relations strategy as one of a mad man’s misguided attempt, we should remember that this self-declared cruelty was quite calculated and instrumental in that it aimed to exert coercive power for a specific goal: to prevent denunciations and collaboration to establish complete control over the targeted region. The same rhetoric formula was repeated endlessly in letters to communities, emphasizing that noncompliance with directives would spell destruction not only for the “men” the letters were addressed to but also for women and children.

One such letter, drafted by Captain Zakas, who considered it his “duty” to tell the residents of Bomboki (Stavropotamos) to forget “the stupid idea that Greek Macedonia can possibly become a Bulgarian country” and to warn the entire village (including its canine population) of what might happen if they did not reconsider their decision to attach themselves to the Exarchate, put it this way: “Come to your senses, and convert and become Greek Christians like before, because if you do not revert back until April 20, I will come into your village outraged, and I will not spare anything, not women, not children, not dogs. There is still time to think and act.”

Such threats were not merely empty rhetoric. The same message was delivered loud and clear, most commonly through mutilated corpses, sometimes accompanied, in a gesture of overkill, by a note identifying the purpose the victim’s death was supposed to serve. Village raids targeting total destruction were relatively rare occurrences, but the annihilation of an entire family for a “crime” committed by one of its members was not uncommon, as the French Consul General Steeg observed in a report to his superior in Istanbul: “Very often the band’s revenge [is not limited] to the person accused of having laid an obstacle to their plans. They also aim the extermination of his family. . . . A few days before my transit through Nevrekop . . . three brothers had been attacked the same day. One was killed, the other gravely injured. . . . The third one having managed to escape, his wife had been killed. A few months earlier the father of the three brothers had been killed. A letter sent in the name of the committee had previously informed his [the father’s] and all his relatives’ condemnation.”

115. There are two translations of this letter, originally drafted in Bulgarian, and they differ slightly.

116. From the letter of Captain Zakas to the Bomboki community: “Valete mialo eis to kefali sas kai gyrisate palin eös kai prin Ellènes Christianè[o]i, dioti ean mechri esis tas 20 Apriliou den gyrisète tha emvò orismenos [sic] mea eis sto chorgio [sic] sas kai den tha aphèsò tipote, oute gynaika, oute paidia kai oute skylia. Einai kairòς akomè skephtète kai kamète.” The peculiar spelling and barely legible handwriting suggest that Zakas was not among the better-educated fighters; MAE, Constantinople, E 144, enclosure, ca. March 1907.

117. MAE, Constantinople, E 143, Consul Steeg to the Chargé d’Affairs, Salonika, October 5, 1904.
This and other examples we have seen in the previous section follow an easily distinguishable pattern of attacks and assassinations carried out to punish a deed, such as defection or collaboration with the enemy, denouncing, or simple failure to comply with orders. Although the collateral damage might include completely innocent children or the adult relatives of the condemned, these acts were largely “selective”; that is, they targeted a specific person or anyone associated with him for a reason. They served both as punishment for something that had already occurred and also as a deterrent to prevent further lapses.\footnote{Stathis Kalyvas notes that the former is the tactical use of coercive violence, whereas the latter has a strategic goal; \textit{Logic of Violence in Civil War}, 27.}

We also need to consider a separate set of cases here that seemed to be less “selective” and more “indiscriminate” to have a better appreciation of the full range of violent acts experienced during the struggle and of the tipping points in the escalation of communal violence. A striking set of cases illustrating such indiscriminate violence were attacks targeting migrant workers, who did not have any ethnic or kinship ties to their places of work, where they were killed; they were apparently murdered simply because of who they were.

A large number of migrant workers were employed in Ottoman Macedonia, mostly in public projects such as road and railroad building and maintenance but also as seasonal agricultural workers. Bulgarian-speaking communities scattered throughout the region supplied a significant portion of this workforce, but employing members of a community that was increasingly associated with disobedience if not outright insurgency against the government caused concern for some officials, who argued that projects of strategic importance, such as railroad maintenance, should replace Bulgarian workers with Muslims and Greeks. This point of view did have its opponents among the Ottoman administrators such as the governor of Salonika, Hasan Fehmi Pasha, who was dubious about its feasibility and advised against its adoption.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.SL 9/858, April 25, 1903.} After the Ilinden Uprising, however, the commissioner for the Salonika-Monastir railroad recommended that the workers employed by the railroad company should consist of at least 70 percent Greeks and Muslims and that the current force of Bulgarian workers should be culled to reach the desired ratio.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.SL 17/1682-2, August 29, 1903.} This recommendation was evidently adopted in principle by the railroad company.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.M 2/163, January 1, 1904.} Implementation, however, turned out to be problematic simply because of the difficulty of recruiting workers from among the Muslim population, the majority of whom had
been drafted into the army.\textsuperscript{122} As a result, projects requiring large amounts of migrant labor continued to rely on the Bulgarian population.\textsuperscript{123}

These groups made an easy target for the Greek bands, especially in the southern part of the province of Salonika.\textsuperscript{124} In one instance, three workers (two Bulgarians and a Vlach) were kidnapped by a Greek band from the road construction site about 10 kilometers outside Salonika. The two Bulgarian workers were later found dead, but the Vlach worker remained missing, presumably having been spared thanks to his less offensive ethnic affiliation.\textsuperscript{125} In 1907, there were at least three such incidents, and this time the death toll was much higher; again, all three of these took place in the vicinity of Salonika.\textsuperscript{126}

One of these attacks occurred in December 1907, when a group of 125 workers, originally from Razlog and Nevrekop (Gotse Delchev) in the northeast part of the province, were on their way back home from Salonika.\textsuperscript{127} The group, accompanied by two gendarmes, was ambushed by a Greek band outside the village of Limpasa (Olimpiada) in the district of Cassandra. The band was led by two men known by the \textit{noms de guerre} of Yorghaki and Korici and was reinforced by Greek youths from villages in the vicinity, specifically Stano. The two gendarmes were overwhelmed by the attackers, and even though they started to retaliate, after someone shouted “\textit{sauve qui peut},” they dispersed. Twenty-five of the workers were killed, three were gravely injured, and three others were unaccounted for after the attack.

\textsuperscript{122} BOA, TFR.I.AS 45/4409, April 4, 1907.
\textsuperscript{123} These projects required a considerable workforce, which was difficult to source locally. Sometimes entire populations of certain villages were employed in the construction of roads in their districts; BOA, TFR.I.SL 192/19112, July 17, 1907. Nevertheless, their numbers were not enough to meet the demand. The construction of the road between Drama and Nevrekop, for instance, required the employment of eight hundred workers in June 1906; TFR.I.SL 211/21007. Some of the migrant workers came from Istanbul or as far as the eastern provinces of the empire; TFR.I.SL 28/2766, March 13, 1909; TFR.I.SL 214/21380, July 29, 1909. They were not entirely content with their working conditions, however, and it seems that authorities had a difficult time "persuading" them to remain at their site of employment; TFR.I.SL 208/20792, May 10, 1909.
\textsuperscript{124} According to the records of the General Inspectorate of Rumeli, there were two such incidents, in 1905 and in 1906, and both took place in the district of Langaza; BOA, TFR.I.SL 91/9003, December 13, 1905; TFR.I.SL 112/11180, July 11, 1906. Salonika was the province where Greek activity was most intense. For 1905, French records indicate another attack that occurred on January 13, 1905; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Salonika, Report of the Consul General to the Embassy, January 28, 1905.
\textsuperscript{125} MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Salonika, January 28, 1905.
\textsuperscript{126} BOA, TFR.I.SL 135/13499, March 4, 1907; TFR.I.SL 36/3520, October 10, 1907; TFR.I.SL 54/5389, December 12, 1907. The other year for which such incidents are mentioned is 1908, when one man was killed en route from Poroiy to Todoric, two neighboring villages in the district of Demirhisar (TFR.I.SL 175/17483, March 8, 1908) and eight others were killed in a field in Gaskar, one and a half hours from Salonika (TFR.I.SL 62/6101, June 13, 1908). Both of these incidents involved agricultural workers, however.
\textsuperscript{127} MAE, Constantinople, Série E 144, Macédoine, December 3, 1904.
What distinguishes this and other attacks against migrant laborers, is that they were carried out in areas where the Greek Orthodox were the uncontested majority among the Christian population against nonlocals who were targeted for no reason, it seems, other than their ethno-religious affiliation. Nevrekop, where most of the workers came from, and Cassandra, where they were killed, were located at two opposite sides of the province, and under normal circumstances, people from these two regions would not even come in contact or give much thought to one another’s existence. But they were now connected through an act of violence. When the residents of Nevrekop and Razlog found out where, how, and why their kin were killed, it would not take a complicated thought process, but only instinct, to form a mental map that located Cassandra on the other side of the fence, a place one ventured to at the risk of death, rather than an extension of the home base where a person could temporarily locate to make a living. This was an effective method of boundary building, and exactly what the Greek andartes aimed to achieve. They were not interested in expanding their base of operations to the northernmost part of the province, to regions where the Slavic-speaking population was the majority among the Christians (and we should not lose sight of the fact that these areas were also heavily populated by Muslims); the fight was carried out in areas where the allegiance of the population could still be contested.¹²⁸ As for places where Greek speakers were the majority among the Christians, such as Langaza (Langadas), they were now out of bounds for members of the rival ethno-religious group.

Both categories of attacks introduced in this section—those selectively targeting a person and his loved ones, and the seemingly more random acts simply based on ethno-religious affiliation—raise the question of why the insurgents would follow such ruthless tactics if they aimed to replace Ottoman authority with a more legitimate one based on the loyalty and the consent of the ruled. In other words, was it not counterproductive to exert violent force on a population when the ultimate purpose was to win their “hearts and minds”? The short and cynical answer is that this was not a fight for “hearts and minds” but for territory, above and before all. Although not necessarily untrue, this is an incomplete answer that discounts one of the most complicated puzzles in civil war violence—the issue of popular support. Furthermore, it overlooks the conditions under which the insurgency broke out in the first place and the overriding need of all parties involved in the fight to ensure control over the population through whatever means necessary.

We have seen in the first part of this chapter the extremely complex matrix of motivations that determined how the locals acted in response to the

¹²⁸. The boundary was the Monastir-Gevgeli-Demirhisar line.
demands of the guerrillas and the Ottoman authorities, and the unpredictability of their behavior from any given attribute. Likewise, it would be naive to assume that the support they did or did not lend to the guerrillas was dependent on a particular ideological agenda they subscribed to, either because one group made a better case for it through appeasement or because they did not agree with the unfair and brutish methods used by the other. More important, however, coercive violence was the most effective tool at the disposal of warring factions given the institutional parameters within which they were operating. This is not to condone their methods, of course, or even make a case for their effectiveness; this merely emphasizes my point that the participants in the insurgency had taken up weapons not only to fight against the Ottoman forces for abstract principles but also to establish their own territorial hegemony, which implied controlling the population that inhabited that territory, through force when necessary. Targeting a group of workers based on their ethnic affiliation was certainly a different (and arguably more odious) kind of violence than targeting an alleged informer, but both were instrumental in much the same way—they aimed to establish boundaries, declare turf, and deter opposition.

Retaliations and Escalation of Violence

A sizable Greek band appeared in Garçiște on January 13, 1905. After the Greeks destroyed the Slavonic prayer books of the community and demanded that the village adhere to the Patriarchate, they left. This was the same village where the Greek schoolteacher, Catherina Hadgi-Yorgi, and six others had been killed by Apostol’s band in November 1904. The same band had moved on to Mravintza (Moravintzi) on January 17, and this time they did not leave simply after making threats: they rounded up the men of the village, twenty-six in total, marched them out of the village, and shot them all. Ten died instantly, one died of his wounds later, and five were gravely injured. The remaining ten managed to escape. One of the survivors, Risto Constandi, said in his testimony that the band consisted of about thirty men, some of them “dressed like Turkish soldiers.” When they told the kocabası to round up the villagers in front of the church, the people were first resistant, but they ultimately complied, assuming that these individuals were “with the government.” The men asked for the key to the church, which the villagers could not (or would not) locate. They then said Mehmed Bey, the owner of the çiftlik, wanted to have a word with

129. Or, as Charles Colson, Nixon’s adviser, put it, “When you have them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.” Jung Chang, Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China (New York, 1992), quoted in Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 115.
130. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Macédoine, Consul General to Ambassador, Salonika, January 28, 1905.
them, which was apparently a pretext for marching the men out of the village. After the shooting, the band went in the direction of Kazim Daouli, a Turkish village. Risto did not recognize any of the assailants except for “Anton Dintze who was among the seven Greeks arrested in Bogdantzi [Bogdanci] and later released.” Constandi added that his wife had been raped by the “Greek comitas” while the villagers “were gathering in front of the church.”

The timing and the proximity of the village to Garçişte immediately brings to mind the possibility that the attack was retaliation for Apostol’s earlier assault. In fact, according to the Greek consul’s version of events, this was precisely the motive because there were suspicions that the Mravintzans had not only provided shelter to Apostol and his men before the attack but that some of them had actually participated in it. Although Greek Consul Cornomilas was probably being fanciful in adding that the guerrillas intended to “arrest” the men so that witnesses in Garçişte could confront and identify them, there is no doubt that this was a retaliatory assault.

This act of retaliation stands out from other acts of selective violence we have seen because of two peculiar details: the involvement of men “dressed like Turkish soldiers” and the time of the day that the attack occurred. Although it is not entirely inconceivable that these men were Greek guerrillas in Ottoman military disguise, the more likely explanation is that they were Ottoman deserters who had joined the roaming bands in Macedonia, some of which were organizing for a rebellion against the Hamidian regime. Even though the Ottoman authorities repeatedly denied the existence of Muslim bands operating in the region and averred that the government pursued Greek “brigands” with the same vehemence applied to Bulgarian “evil doers,” there was a mounting body of evidence contradicting both of these assurances. The audacity of such a large-scale attack in broad daylight reveals that the complacency of Ottoman officials was coupled with the

132. The consul also alleged that the deaths were the result of an ambush by a Bulgarian band as the “detainees” were being led to the neighboring village, but the Ottoman authorities had no record of this incident; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Consul’s report, January 28, 1905.
133. The Committee of Union and Progress tapped into this potential by organizing the already existing Muslim bands into their network and modeling their activities after tactics used by IMRO; Hanioğlu, Preparation for a Revolution, 222–27. This particular incident is also cited by Douglas Dakin in his encyclopedic account of armed Greek activity in Macedonia. Dakin mentions that the band consisted of some forty men and included Albanian village guards from Vodena; Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 232.
134. See, for instance, BOA, TFR.I.AS 49/4846, Third Army Command to the Inspectorate, July 27, 1907. The earliest reports of Turkish bands in the Struma Valley date to autumn 1904; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Colonel Vérand’s report, October 27, 1904. In November 1906, a band attacked Karadjovo (Kirdjovo), a small Exarchist village in the Cuma-i Bâlâ district, and killed twenty-five people. During the investigation, the survivors reported that the çetecis were speaking Turkish and Greek; BOA, TFR.I.AS 40/3954, November 8, 1906.
complicity of local Muslims in attacks against Exarchist Christians. The testimony of Bulgarian Uniate villagers from the neighboring Pirava underscore this point:

In our kaza there are only Bulgarian and Turkish villages, Greek bands can wander in broad daylight with impunity into Bulgarian villages where Bulgarian bands cannot attack them without being chased by the troops. They pass the nights in Turkish villages, the one that killed the peasants of Mravintza came from the Turkish village of Kazim-Daouli, they departed from there at dawn and returned after finishing their job. We were told that there were Turks with them, but we’re not sure, not having seen them ourselves. What is obvious to us is that the Turks are in agreement with the Greek bands and watch them with pleasure fight the Bulgarians.

What becomes clear from this and other examples is that, starting in winter 1905, the violence was not limited to targeted attacks against informers and their associates but had spilled into a more indiscriminate form simply based on ethnoreligious distinctions. In June 1905, two shepherds were killed outside Petriç (Petrich); a note left by the bodies said that all Bulgarians working for Turks would meet the same fate. Another incident, which took place in the fall of the same year, illustrates the double bind faced by locals caught between the conflicting agendas of the multiple groups of violent specialists, which tested the limits of their considerable skills in fence-sitting or hedging their bets for survival. On September 11, 1905, two shepherds were minding the Belevis community flock. Accompanying the shepherds was Nicolas Zlatkov, a twelve-year-old boy who was the only survivor of the attack. They were attacked and killed by four Muslims, at least one of whom was from the nearby village of Slave. Nicolas told the investigators that the assailants had “accused them [the shepherds] of refusing to guard herds belonging to Turks.” When the shepherds heard this, they responded they had been banned from tending the Turks’ animals by the Bulgarian komitadjis under pain of death and that “they would surely be killed if they did not obey this order.” The assailants, obviously not satisfied with this explanation, dragged the hapless men to a riverbed and shot them.

135. This should not be taken to imply that the mistrust between Muslims and Slavic-speaking Christians characterized their relations exclusively and throughout the region. The French consul noted in October 1904 that in the extreme northern parts of the subprovince of Serres the Muslim and Christian population lived on good terms; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 143, Consul Steeg to the Chargé d’affairs, October 5, 1904.
136. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Macédoine, Consul’s report, January 28, 1905.
137. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Macédoine, Colonel Vérand’s report, Serres, June 26, 1905.
138. MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Macédoine, Captain Bouvet to Colonel Vérand, September 23, 1905.
As the snow melted in the Struma valley, it also removed the natural barrier against armed activity, giving way to a particularly violent spring and summer in 1905. The escalation was directly related with the increased involvement of Greek bands in the region, which were now on the offensive and collaborating with local Turks and Albanians. The presence of mixed Turkish-Greek bands in the region had firmly been established by spring 1905. More surprising than the participation of local Muslims in these guerrilla groups was the degree of their proximity to the Ottoman military authorities, who apparently lent assistance to the Greeks routinely as a measure of counterinsurgency. A “reliable local source” alleged that an emissary of the Greek consulate had given the bands in the Yenice area a “password” to be shared with the Ottoman troops in pursuit of Bulgarian bands.

The increasing involvement of armed groups supported and organized by Greek officers and consular staff served to accelerate the violence, not only through the common route of retaliations but also because the activities of these groups consolidated the notion that one could become a target simply for crossing into the wrong side of the (until then) invisible boundary of ethnic turf. Moreover, as the French consul pointed out, the unabashed tolerance of these bands by Ottoman authorities provoked the ire of the Bulgarians, who in turn redoubled their efforts against the Greek Orthodox civilians. The increased involvement of state actors at the local level and the diminished hopes for a diplomatic way out of the impasse were two principal factors that caused the violence to escalate into unprecedented forms and levels after winter 1904–1905. In 1906, the violence spread into Bulgaria, where Greek communities were targeted in retaliation for the actions of the Greek committees in Macedonia. The first reactions in Bulgaria had come in the form of protest demonstrations after a particularly brutal attack that killed seventy-eight Bulgarians in Macedonia, but in summer 1906 there was a full-blown, violent, “anti-Greek movement” in Bulgaria, largely instigated by a group called Bâlgarski Rodoliubets (Bulgarian Patriot).

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139. The Greek guerrilla organizations were following the plan of Konstantinos Mazarakis (aka Kapetan Akritas), which limited the areas where armed activity would be pursued to preserve the limited military sources that the Greek side could devote to the cause. This meant that centers with significant Greek Orthodox populations in the north, such as Krusevo, would initially be left to their own devices while mobilization concentrated in the south. For further details see Dakin, *Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, 214–15.

140. When one such band, consisting of eight Greeks and two Turks, was captured—by mistake, according to the Russian gendarmerie major in the area—in March 1905 in Doyran, the local Ottoman administrator was so embarrassed by the situation that he would have released them all had it not been for the intervention of the same Russian officer; MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Consul’s Report, Salonika, April 3, 1905.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. The anti-Greek movement of 1906 caused a quarter of the Greek population of Bulgaria to flee the country; Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, esp. 35–75.
The reforms had already proven to be only a temporary fix, and the chance of an all-out war between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire constantly occupied the rumor mills while the Ottoman security forces were adopting a new counterinsurgency plan based on deployments in smaller zones and units.\textsuperscript{144} Bands organized, equipped, and often led by Greek officers were on the offensive in a campaign to save Macedonia and its Greek Orthodox population from absorption into a large Bulgarian state.\textsuperscript{145} The left-wing of IMRO, led by Sandansky, meanwhile, was fending off the attacks of Vrhovists, who were more in line with the agenda of the Bulgarian state than local revolutionary committees. The convergence of these trends spelled catastrophe for the region. The lull in armed activity following the Ottoman constitutional revolution of 1908 proved to be only a brief respite from the violence that would finally be expressed in totally destructive force during the Balkan Wars.

Clusters of Violence: Cyclical and Geographical Patterns of Attacks

On May 10, 1908, the village head of Taşırince/Tristenitz (Kriopigi) sent a petition directly to Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, complaining that the villagers were living in fear, not even able to go to the fields around their village because of the crimes and murders committed by the komitadjis harbored by their Bulgarian neighbors in Skrijova.\textsuperscript{146} This was not the first time the name Skrijova was mentioned in relation to band-related activity and violence. In fact, one of the most striking features of the body of evidence from 1904–1908 documenting disputes and violence in the Struma Valley is the constant repetition of certain village names. In addition to İskirçova/Skrijova, the names Klepousna, Graçen, Alistrat, Eğridere, and Karlikovo surface so many times (and in a dizzying array of alternative spellings) in these documents that those who are not familiar with the region may assume they form nodes along “a corridor of violence” or represent centers of intense armed activity in the region. Both guesses are only partially true, however; these villages actually form a tiny cluster in the northeast of the district of Zihna and cover an area no larger than a large suburb of a North American city.

These specific villages did not, of course, constitute the only locations for violent attacks in the region, but this peculiar clustering pattern alone should make us reconsider any assumption that violence was endemic across

\textsuperscript{144} MAE, Constantinople, Série E 147, Consul's Report to the Ambassador, Salonika, January 28, 1905.

\textsuperscript{145} Volunteers from Crete made up a significant portion of the fighting force, and because they were Ottoman subjects, they could deny charges that they had been sent by Greece. There were also numerous local bands, some composed of klephts (bandits).

\textsuperscript{146} The original petition was drafted in Greek, apparently by an educated person; BOA, TFR.I.SKT 153/15236, May 22, 1908. Mishev lists Tristenita as a village of 240 Greek Orthodox “Bulgarians.” Brancoff [Mishev], Macédoine et sa Population Chrétienne, 203.
Macedonia during the decades before the Balkan Wars. This general observation is based on anecdotal evidence derived from a wide array of sources over a five-year period; nevertheless, a more targeted approach based on a complete data set covering violent crimes committed in the province of Serres during 1907 reveals a similar conclusion.\footnote{I used the French gendarmerie command monthly incident reports from December 1906 to January 1908, the period for which all monthly reports were extant, to form the data set.}

Consider these examples from just the first six months of the year:

- On January 25, five Patriarchists were killed by a Bulgarian band in Graçen.
- About a month later, on February 23, two Exarchists from Skrijovo were killed outside Graçen by unknown assailants.
- On March 8, an Exarchist from Karlikovo was killed in Alistrat by the cavas of the Greek Metropolit.
- On April 28, an Exarchist from Skrijove was assassinated outside Graçen.
- On May 9, four Greek Orthodox shepherds from Karlikovo were killed by “Bulgarian comitadjs.”
- On June 2, a Greek Orthodox from Alistrat was killed in his village by a Bulgarian band.

The cycle of attacks follows a predictable pattern. When marked on a map, the locations of violent crimes, in the entire Serres district, also tend to cluster around specific areas rather than being scattered around in an ad hoc manner. Nor do they encompass the entire map. The resulting picture is even more striking than the repetition of certain village names because it is a visual representation of the absence, rather than the presence, of violence in large areas where we might expect to see it. It goes without saying that what is missing from the picture is at least as important as what is represented by the dots indicating locations of violent crime.

What the villages Iskirçova/Skrijovo, Alistrat, Graçen, Klepousna, Eğridere, and Karlikovo had in common was, first, their proximity to mountainous terrain and marshlands, facilitating access and mobility by roaming bands. Such topographic features are closely related to how prone a location is to civil war violence.\footnote{Fearon and Laitin find that rough terrain is one of the conditions strongly related to the onset of civil war violence, whereas ethnic and religious composition (and even prewar grievances) was not; “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”}

Second, the inhabitants of these villages were Bulgarian speakers whose allegiance was contested by the Patriarchate and the Exarchate. Even according to the pro-Bulgarian work of D. M. Brancoff (Dimitar Mishev), these villages were divided in terms of their affiliation.\footnote{Mishev’s figures do not mention groups of households in these villages, such as in Eğridere, whose attachment to the Exarchate was far from final. Even so, he did not manipulate figures where the entire village was still loyal to the Patriarchate, although his assertions...}
Such locations were open to propaganda from both sides in the conflict and were more prone to violence, especially in regions within reach of the Greek andartes, such as the district of Zihna; easily accessible from the Gulf of Orfano; and considered to be part of Greek Macedonia by the Greek side.

Areas under the control of certain warlords such as Apostol or Sandansky were also more prone to attacks, not because these leaders had complete sway over their territories but because they had to contend with other, alternative sources of political power and legitimacy in the same areas. For Sandansky, this challenge came as much, and sometimes more, from the Bulgarian side as from the Ottoman. In 1907, most of the violence in the

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about linguistic uniformity should be viewed with caution. The number of households he cited are 480 “Patriarchist Bulgarian” in Gratchen; 2,488 “Exarchist Bulgarian” in Skrijova; 880 “Exarchist Bulgarian” and 320 “Patriarchist Bulgarian” in Klepouchna; 5,200 “Patriarchist Bulgarian” in Alistrat; 1264 “Exarchist Bulgarian” in Egridere; and 1,440 “Patriarchist Bulgarian” in Kirlikovo. Brancoff [Mishev], *Macédoine et sa Population Chrétienne*, 203.
Melnik area could be attributed to the rivalry between IMRO left wing and the Vrhovists (or centralists), who tried to eliminate Sandansky’s influence. Similarly, violence was rampant in places where the Ottoman officers felt they were losing their grip and where the locals did not recognize state authority. Sightings of large armed bands on the move and reports of villagers sheltering bands were followed by searches by the military, which used a disproportionate force against the civilians, especially if the troops suspected that they had information about the killings of soldiers. Even when the searches did not turn up any incriminating evidence, the Slavic-speaking peasants were treated as if they were guilty until proven otherwise. The logic behind these exactions, which made the peasants resent Ottoman authority even more than they already did, was summarized by a high-level Ottoman officer, Mareşal İbrahim Pasha, the commander of the troops in Serres, who reportedly told Colonel Vérand, “There is but one method to control the population, and that is to inspire even greater terror among them than that exercised by the bands.”

“Inspiring terror” would be an understatement when used to describe the conduct of the Ottoman soldiers and gendarmes in February 1905, a few months after the commander uttered these words, during a nightmarish series of events in the village of Kuklîş/Kuklish after the local military authorities received word that a band associated with Chernopeyef had been taking shelter in the village. This event was arguably one of the worst atrocities committed against Slavic-speaking peasants in Ottoman Macedonia since the suppression of the Ilinden Uprising and is worth relating in some detail here. The accounts found in French and Ottoman sources converge regarding the onset of the events. The accounts of what followed later, however, and the attribution of responsibility and blame after the village was left a smoldering ruin, has widely divergent versions, as we might expect, in the various sources.

During their interrogation by the General Inspectorate officials, army Second Lieutenant Mahmud Efendi and gendarmerie First Lieutenant Hasan Efendi concurred that the district commander’s office in Usturumca/Strumitsa ([Strumica] had dispatched them to Kuklish on the morning of February

150. MAE, Constantinople, Série E, Macédoine, Colonel Vérand’s report, no. 16A, October 1904. Almost four decades later, his statement was echoed in a German army order: “the population must be more frightened of our reprisals than of the partisans.” Otto Heilbrunn, Partisan Warfare (New York, 1967), 150, cited in Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 150.

151. Records in the French archives concerning the “Kouklish affair” include detailed reports by the Russian gendarmerie captain who happened to be in the area when the incident occurred; MAE, Constantinople, E 147, February 28, 1905; Constantinople, E 147, March 10, 1905. This officer’s reports can also be found in BOA, TFR.IA 19/1828, which includes complaints about the conduct of troops in the Serres region from December 1904 to February 1905. The largest dossier about the incident in the Ottoman archives is in BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9540, February, 1905, which includes inquiry questions posed by the Austrian General Schostak, Ottoman military investigation reports, autopsy records, and testimony by survivors.
16, 1905, after the commander had been alerted about the possible presence of a band in the village. The forces they commanded consisted of soldiers from the First Company of the Second Battalion of the 36th Troops and of the gendarmes from the post in Usturumca, and totaled about 120 men. They were also accompanied by a policeman named Kostaki.\footnote{Interviews with Lieutenants Mahmud and Hasan were conducted and transcribed on February 19, 1905; TFR.I.SL 96/9340.} After the soldiers and gendarmes surrounded the village, the lieutenants Mahmud and Hasan, and Kostaki, the policeman, proceeded into the village with twenty men. Hasan Efendi told one of the gendarmes to talk to the villagers and summon the village head and members of the council of elders. When the village head and two council members came by, Hasan Efendi asked them whether there were “brigands” in their village, to which they replied no, and agreed to sign a statement to that effect, also agreeing to the consequences if there were indeed “brigands” hiding there. The gendarmes and soldiers were then divided into four groups led by lieutenants Mahmud and Hasan, Kostaki, and Corporal Seyfeddin and started to search the village. Shortly after the groups had separated from each other, Hasan Efendi heard one of the soldiers at a distance shouting, “they are firing,” at which instant bullets started whizzing about him; gunfire was coming from the school building as well as several houses. After he managed to meet up with Mahmud Efendi’s group, they decided they had to evacuate and sent word to the major. They started slowly withdrawing behind walls surrounding the village and tried to prevent the “brigands from escaping until the Major arrived.”

At approximately 5 p.m., Captain Cimetierre, the Russian gendarmerie officer, whose presence and testimony to the events would be of importance in the aftermath of the incident, arrived at the scene.\footnote{Lieutenant Hasan Efendi mentions the arrival of a certain “French officer”; he was probably confused by the language spoken by Captain Cimetierre, who was of French origin.} He had arrived in Usturumca earlier that day and had heard about the battle and spoken with one of the injured, Second Lieutenant İsmail Efendi, who gave him an account of the day’s events; this coincided with the later testimony of lieutenants Mahmud and Hasan. İsmail Efendi also stated that they had made an announcement to the villagers to separate themselves and come forward if they were not armed, so that the troops could pursue the “bad ones.”\footnote{MAE, Constantinople, E 147, March 10, 1905.} When Captain Cimetierre reached the village with his translator, an intense gun battle was going on and smoke was coming out of the village from several locations, suggesting, according to Captain Cimetierre, that the fires had broken out simultaneously in several places.

What Captain Cimetierre saw that evening and described in his report to General Schostak was a somber scene, but things would get even worse after his departure late in the evening, as was revealed the next day when
the soldiers withdrew and a final tally of the damage was taken. About a quarter of an hour after Cimetierre’s arrival, the first of the reinforcement troops arrived from Usturumca under the command of Major Arif Bey. The prefect told Captain Cimetierre that night would be falling soon and that he was afraid the komitadjis might escape; he wanted to know what Cimetierre’s opinion was on launching an attack on the house. Cimetierre, obviously hesitant to assume responsibility, first refused to state his opinion, but then he conceded that launching an attack on a “barricaded and well-defended house might cost many lives.” His answer, which can be deemed ill-advised by the benefit of hindsight, seems to have given the prefect all the pretext he needed to not continue with this risky mission on a frigid night.

Captain Cimetierre, worried about those still trapped in their houses, insisted on making another announcement to the “honest” villagers to surrender. Apparently in agreement, the prefect, Ahmed Faik Bey, made an attempt to send two of the villagers who had been arrested earlier into the village on the mission. When Captain Cimetierre suggested having them escorted by soldiers, the prefect refused, explaining that they had already lost three soldiers who had tried to pick up the corpse of one their own but that the “brigands” had stopped firing when they sent in some of the villagers to retrieve the body. Cimetierre reluctantly agreed to sending the villagers unescorted. The two villagers returned from their foray into the village a little later unaccompanied. He then noticed some soldiers had detained seven more villagers and were in the process of pushing and hitting them with rifle butts.

It was getting dark at this point, and fires continued to burn at several locations in the village. The shooting was concentrated in the upper part of the village, but its intensity was tapering off. Some of the women and children who had left for the plains started coming back toward the village; their lamenting cries mixed with the dogs’ howling and an intense smoke rising from the now raging fire would have unnerved even a seasoned soldier. The young Captain Cimetierre, who described the scene as “grim,” was obviously shaken. He twice attempted to leave their shelter behind a wall to take a look at the other side of the village, but he was stopped by the prefect and Hasan Efendi. The prefect concluded that there was not much they could do and suggested that they call it a day: “you can send your report from town,” he told Cimetierre; “why stay here?” Because we know that at least a couple of the soldiers suffered frostbite that night, it is not hard to understand why the prefect, who obviously was not the most dedicated official on the (unreliable) payroll of the Ottoman state, was so eager to leave the scene of a battle in which two hundred soldiers were engaged and three had already died.\footnote{BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9540, February 19, 1905.}

More surprising, and rather appalling, is the company he had during his trek.
back to a warm dinner and bed: Major Arif Bey, the highest-ranking military commander in place, and Mehmed Efendi, the captain of the gendarmes. They all took off for the night, leaving behind a horde of hungry, scared, and freezing soldiers and gendarmes, with only a lieutenant, a second lieutenant, and several ill-disciplined sergeants in charge. Quite conveniently for the authorities, this made it easier to pin the blame for what ensued on several low-ranking soldiers and gendarmes.\footnote{It is worth noting that, during the investigation after the incident, the soldiers and gendarmes of sergeant and lower ranks were addressed in the second person singular and were often confronted with their contradicting accounts, whereas the lieutenants were addressed with the more respectful second person plural. The major, on the other hand, was not even directly addressed but given a set of general questions; ibid.}

Captain Cimetierre stayed on long enough to overhear Lieutenant Hasan Efendi ask one of the gendarmerie sergeants what had happened to the house of Petre; his response was “we burned it.” He also witnessed the arrival of reinforcements from Yenice, about fifty soldiers and two gendarmes under the command of a lieutenant.\footnote{According to one of the corporals interviewed, this number was forty, not fifty; ibid.} He and Hasan Efendi then left their shelter to join Lieutenant Mahmud Efendi as he was patrolling the village, and they saw two corpses on the ground. One of the gendarmes indicated there was another one not far from these two, but before they could proceed, Mahmud Efendi escorted them back. Around 9 p.m., because it was pitch dark and the sound of gunfire had diminished to an intermittent shot or two, Captain Cimetierre also left for the town.

The next morning, Captain Cimetierre left town accompanied by two cavalrymen named Nicolas and Arif. On their way, they ran into several groups of soldiers wrapped in blankets and rugs and carrying sacks that appeared to be filled with stolen effects. On arriving in the village, they found Lieutenant Mahmud Efendi writing (presumably a report) in the shelter of a house while his subordinates were busy roasting two chickens in the courtyard. There was also a group of soldiers gathered around a pile of looted property, sharing the spoils. Cimetierre and the two cavalrymen left the scene, following a patrol going along the periphery of the village to find the other lieutenant, Hasan Efendi. The scenes they saw did not produce optimism about what had happened during the night. All along the way, houses were still burning, and there were several groups of soldiers gathered around piles of linens and other goods looted from the houses. They did not seem to mind the presence of a lieutenant and the two gendarmes. In fact, one of the gendarmes was also sporting a strange cap fashioned out of a towel. When Cimetierre inquired about it, he claimed he had found the towel on the ground and wrapped it around his head because it was cold. It was certainly cold, but Cimetierre noticed that this gendarme also had an overcoat with a hood. They next turned a bend on the road and saw two soldiers wringing the neck of a chicken; they took off after the lieutenant yelled at them. Cimetierre and
his companions followed these soldiers into a house where they discovered
the destination of the chicken; a group of soldiers was fixing up a cauldron
over a brazier, obviously getting ready for a feast. Among them was a gen-
darme, Mehmed Çavuş, who had been spotted the day before beating one
of the villagers.¹⁵⁸ As they continued looking for Hasan Efendi, they ran
into the partially burned body of a man who was later identified as Gligor
Nicola, a shepherd from Popchevo, who had come with his flock to stay
with his sister and brother-in-law. Gligor Nicola’s pants had been torn where
a bullet had penetrated his left thigh, and his hands were tied behind him
with a rope. He appeared to have been thrown into the burning house while
he was still alive.

Cimetierre’s party eventually found Hasan Efendi, who indicated that the
bugler had already sounded assembly and they were all getting ready to leave.
Cimetierre asked to be shown the scene of the battle and the house where
the komitadjis had been barricaded. As Hasan Efendi led them through the
village, they saw a couple of corpses lying about, not far from one another;
one of them had burns on the soles of his feet, possibly from a brazier they
noticed nearby. When they reached the stone house that had been turned
into a makeshift fortress the night before, Cimetierre wanted to observe the
scene for himself. As they were inspecting the house, they heard cries “aman
aman” (mercy) followed by gun shots. The translator asked whether there
were still komitadjis in the areas who could be shooting, but Hasan Efendi
assured him that the only armed people in the village by that time were the
soldiers. He was concerned that the soldiers might actually shoot at them.
He started shouting, “soldiers, soldiers here, don’t shoot,” as they came out
of the house. They soon found the target of the shots: a few steps away lay
the still warm and quivering corpse of Pande Traiko. Nearby was the corpse
of Velko Poiras, also still warm, and an open purse with just a seal in it that
had been left on the ground. When Cimetierre’s party had taken this same
path only a few minutes earlier there had been no sign of a disturbance. The
two men had clearly been killed recently, which also explained the cries fol-
lowed by gunshots. The open and empty purse suggested that the motive for
the crime was robbery.

As Cimetierre and his companions were inspecting the crime scene, they
heard more shots nearby. When they looked in the direction that the shots
had been fired, they saw “soldiers fleeing through the trees and houses.”
Cimetierre urged Hasan Efendi to send a couple of gendarmes in pursuit to
stop further attacks. Then, he noted:

The shots went on for some more minutes, and in the direction of the shots new
fires set by criminal hands spread rapidly. Rushing and trying not to lose time

¹⁵⁸. He denied all these charges during his questioning; ibid.
needlessly so that we could immediately see everything for ourselves, we made our way, from one corpse to another pointed out by women who looked wild with terror. We were accompanied by Lieutenant Hassan Effendi, Nicolas, our souvani, and the villager called Nicoli, who our souvani had arrested shortly before. Few steps away from the body of Velko Païras, was lying the body of Risto Bekiar, near which Nicolas, our souvani, picked an empty mauser cartridge belonging to the army; an exhibit that we took the liberty of putting in the pocket, while showing it to Hassan Effendi. As we were walking at a brisk pace, we didn’t have the time to look for more empty cartridges; as we kept walking we heard heartbreaking cries of women; we entered the yard of a house where we found the body of Helen, daughter of Jone Parode who—according to the mourning women—had been killed the day before when she tried to flee her home. A house was burning nearby; it is the school and the fire has just been set; in front of the school a villager called Tonce Pande, born in Strumnitza but living in Kuklitch since he was a child, had just been killed by the soldiers by four shots, according to the women sitting not far from there; we noted that the corpse was still warm. Some steps away from there, curled in a haystack, an old peasant Ilo Pehlivan, was lying down groaning; he had been beaten by the soldiers with rifle butts a few minutes earlier. As we followed our way, on the left, near a house that had started to burn, [was] the corpse, still warm, of Georghi Dulgher killed by a bullet, further in the middle of the road a very young man was lying dead; he was killed by a bullet and his corpse was cold; he was probably killed during the night, his identity has not yet been established. 159

Even though it had been hours since assembly had been called, there were still soldiers walking about the village, apparently not quite done with their looting. Cimetierre learned from a group of lamenting women that several of them had been raped and robbed by the soldiers. Civilian marauders from neighboring Svidovica, Hamzali, and Bansko followed the soldiers, picking over any of the villagers’ worldly belongings that had miraculously survived the battle, the fires, and the previous round of looting. Cimetierre had five of these arrested and their weapons seized. They noticed some of them were herding cattle and oxen from Kuklitch to Svidovica. A lieutenant of the military happened to be passing by the scene with twenty soldiers on the way to their barracks in nearby Kolesh (Koulechino), and told Captain Cimetierre that he would have the stolen animals returned. Observing that all the soldiers under his command had also been carrying what appeared to be sacks of booty, Cimetierre did not find the lieutenant’s words quite reassuring.

159. The villager, Nicoli, had specifically asked to be arrested by the gendarmes accompanying Cimetierre because one of them was a Christian and Nicoli apparently estimated that he was better off arrested by a Christian gendarme and a foreign officer than left at the mercy of the soldiers terrorizing the village; MAE, Constantinople, Serie E 147, March 10, 1905.
Captain Cimetierre’s testimony and the reports he filed surely contributed to the detailed investigation that followed (which, alas, did not result in anything other than a denial of responsibility on the part of the military authorities). Among the most damning details of his testimony concerned a man named Eftim Poiras, whom Cimetierre had seen alive and well on the morning of February 4/17. Later on the same day, this man was discovered by Cimetierre and the prefect, dying of gun wounds, leaving no doubt that he had been shot well after the guerrillas had already left the scene. Some of the questions posed to the accused gendarmes and soldiers, such as the origin of the fires, were inspired entirely by Cimetierre’s findings, but questions about other breaches of discipline, not to mention the use of excessive force and cruelty, were also based on events that Cimetierre was not even aware of, such as the killing of a three-month-old by a soldier who, the mother alleged, had tossed the infant on the floor as they were ostensibly searching for weapons. The damage would have been difficult to contain even if the Russian officer had not been there. As convinced and smug as Cimetierre was about his role in preventing an even worse degree of abuse, there was not much in the interview transcripts of the soldiers and the gendarmes to suggest that they had paid any degree of attention to Cimetierre’s presence or attenuated their actions accordingly, assuming that they even knew about it.

One of the rather unexpected conclusions to be drawn from comparing Cimetierre’s notes with the interview transcripts and post-mortem reports compiled by the Inspectorate is that the transcripts and post-mortem reports actually contained more inculpatory evidence against the military than the Russian officer’s testimony because they contained eye-witness accounts and first-hand testimony obtained from the gendarmes and the soldiers, some of whom were questioned several times because of the inconsistencies in their accounts; from the villagers who survived the ordeal; and from the bodies of those who did not. Given the weight of this evidence produced by no other authority than the Ottoman state, it is hard not to be flabbergasted by the speed with which the same evidence was spun into a cynical narrative exonerating the military from any wrongdoing in the matter.

In contrast to Captain Cimetierre’s report, the evidence compiled by the Inspectorate does not constitute a coherent narrative related by one person: it is choppy, it does not provide a linear chronology, and the events are described by people who have good reasons to leave out some of the details. Second Lieutenant Mahmud Efendi, who, according to Captain Cimetierre, had displayed an extraordinary neglect of his duty, and carried most of the blame for what had happened, was one such person. His interview was

160. Ibid.
161. See, for instance, the statements of Corporal Mustafa of Ankara; BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9540, February 19, 1905.
relatively brief considering the role he played (or rather did not play) in the encounter between the troops and the guerrillas and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{162} He gave an account of how the troops went to the village, received the village council’s assurances, and then engaged in a battle after they were fired on as they were searching the village. The time he gave for the start of the fire approximately coincided with Captain Cimetierre’s account, but he claimed that they also heard some bombs go off at this time. When asked if they made any attempt to control the fire, he explained that they could not because it was impossible for the soldiers to get into the village because guerrillas were shooting “from all the houses in the village.” He was not questioned at all about the most glaring blunder (from a military, rather than a humanitarian, perspective) about the operation—namely, how the guerrillas had managed to slip out of a village that had been cordoned off by hundreds of troops. Mahmud Efendi’s insistence that there were no troops left inside the village once the shooting started must have been true because they figured out that the “bandits” had already fled only when the shooting stopped and some of the soldiers started going about, yelling “they are fleeing.” The question, of course, is what the soldiers positioned outside the village had been doing at this moment, which was not directly posed to any of the three officers questioned after the incident.

Gendarmerie Lieutenant Hasan Efendi, questioned after Mahmud Efendi, volunteered the only statement that might explain why nobody detected the guerrillas’ exit; he claimed that the descending fog had given the bandits an opportunity to get out to the hills. Both affirmed that they saw armed people from neighboring villagers come onto the scene of the battle; Mahmud Efendi mentioned that the majority were Muslims but that there were also some Jews among them. He vehemently denied that any of the soldiers or the gendarmes had taken part in the looting, but neither he nor Hasan Efendi provided a sound statement as to what precautions they had taken to keep these armed and dangerous individuals outside the perimeter of the village. One rather disturbing detail provided by Hasan Efendi was that these villagers were milling about because it was \textit{Kurban Bayrami} (the Feast of Sacrifice), one of the most important religious holidays of Islam. It appears that these people had no qualms about stealing their neighbors’ property, including their sheep, which they conceivably intended to “sacrifice” for the occasion.

It is also interesting to note that neither Mahmud nor Hasan Efendi were asked detailed questions about the time that had elapsed between the conclusion of the battle and the sounding of the assembly the next day, which would have been critical in understanding why and how the operation had veered so widely off course, assuming there had been a planned course of

\textsuperscript{162} BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9540, Mahmud Efendi’s statement, February 19, 1905.
action to begin with. The scattered details in the accounts provided by the interrogated soldiers and gendarmes suggest that this was not the case and that, once the soldiers realized that the enemy had escaped, they turned their ire on the villagers who had apparently given the guerrillas shelter. Hasan Efendi, when questioned about the people found dead after the conclusion of the battle, claimed that he did not have any information about these because it had been impossible to enter the houses at the time of the encounter, and he added, “In any case, these [the villagers] are allied with the bandits. It could be that there were those who were killed in order to have some losses for putting blame [on the government]. Just as they first said there are no bandits, and then it turned out this way.”

The notion that all the villagers were allied with the guerrillas and deserved what had happened was shared across the ranks of the military present during the incident in Kuklish. Major Arif, during his “interview,” revealed without a doubt that the engagement was viewed as an “uprising” when he was talking about how the church and school buildings were set on fire; he was adamant that the soldiers had had no part in this: “I cannot say whether the church was burned down because of a bomb or not. However, it is said that it was burned by the rebelling locals and the bandits who came from outside and were under their protection.” Nor, according to the major, were the soldiers involved in any act of looting or abuse of the villagers. The soldiers had made every effort to protect the village from pilage by their neighbors. Those who had somehow managed to steal property despite these measures had been apprehended and handed over to justice. As for the presence (or not) of weapons in the houses where there were dead bodies, the major was rather vague in stating that they had found several guns, including some Mannlichers (typically used by the guerrillas), but he was not sure how many had been found. The guns had already been handed over to the district commander’s office, conveniently making it impossible to match them with the houses where they had been found and thus refute or support the theory that all the dead villagers had been killed in combat. The number and position of the bodies, and, more important, their time of death, were in fact sufficient to dismiss this theory. When the issue was raised that some of the corpses found the day after the encounter were still warm, the major stated that he had not personally seen these corpses but that it was quite possible that they had been injured the night before and had only passed away recently.


164. The first page of this transcript does not mention the name of the person being interviewed, and the last page does not contain a seal and oath, which are present on all the other statements. But, judging from his narrative of events, it is safe to conclude that the person was Major Arif Efendi; BOA, TFR.I.SL, 96/9540 (undated).
Playing the three wise monkeys was the dominant theme in the interrogation transcripts of lower-ranking soldiers and gendarmes: they saw nothing, heard nothing, and said nothing. Mito Kostadi, one of the gendarmes who had accompanied the detachment that first arrived on the scene with Hasan Efendi, however, volunteered more information than the formulaic denial, probably because he felt he did not have anything to hide. The first part of his testimony was in agreement with Hasan Efendi’s and Mahmud Efendi’s accounts telling of the ambush they found themselves in after entering the village. Concerning the fires and the presence of marauders from neighboring villages, on the other hand, Mito Kostadi had other things to say. Hordes of these marauders had already appeared and had been going in and out of the village in the evening soon after the shooting was over and a bugler came by to tell the soldiers and gendarmes to stay where they were for the night. It was the marauders, Mito said, who had set the kocabaşı’s house on fire. Most of these people were from Svidovica and Mito recognized the ex-convict Hüseyin among them.\textsuperscript{165} Mito also testified that the soldiers had burned the other houses, on the side of the village where they were positioned. He was not sure who had set the church on fire. When the investigator demanded to know whether Mito and his fellow gendarmes had informed the officers about these arsons by the soldiers and the marauders, Mito Kostadi’s response was utterly convincing in its naïveté: “No sir, I did not inform. We were already stupefied by the terror of the situation. What information should I present while the soldiers themselves were burning the houses?”\textsuperscript{166}

The majority of the soldiers and gendarmes vehemently denied so much as stepping into the village all night, when it was freezing outside.\textsuperscript{167} Many of their narratives had large blocks of time when they could not reasonably explain what they were doing, and some verged on the absurd. One of them creatively argued that it took him six to seven hours to go from the town to the village because he proceeded “lying in ambush, very slowly, observing and resting.”\textsuperscript{168} Another one claimed that he had been singled out by the village women (presumably as one who had abused them) because he had chased one woman into her house to retrieve a cartridge she was hiding and that, after successfully seizing it, he informed the soldiers of what he had done but did not show them the cartridge. The mysterious cartridge

\textsuperscript{165.} Significantly, some of the pillagers came from muhacir mahallesı (the neighborhood of refugees), probably from Bulgaria.

\textsuperscript{166.} BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9340, Mito Kostadi’s statement, February 23, 1905.

\textsuperscript{167.} One of them admitted that they had entered a house to warm up around the fire but denied that they had kicked the family’s children outside.

\textsuperscript{168.} “Ben köye gittikten sonra pusu ala ala, yavaş yavaş, seyir tutarak, dinlene dinlene gezdim….” BOA, TFR.I.SL 96/9340, Statement of Borizan Halil of Karahisar, February 23, 1905.
was never found. One of the most salient features that emerges out of these disparate narratives is that the soldiers and gendarmes had been let loose entirely without command, without directive, and without any kind of restraint or structure with regard to their conduct, in and around a village, the residents of which they held responsible for killing three of their own, not to mention supporting an “uprising” against the government, which was the sole reason for their deployment in the dead of winter.

As soon as the botched military operation was over, another one conducted by the civilian authorities was underway to minimize the consequences. The post-mortem reports, interviews with survivors, medical examinations of the injured and the raped women carried out by the district attorney’s assistant and municipality’s physician illustrate that the motive was to deflect blame onto the guerrillas rather than identify those responsible for the carnage that took place after the guerrillas left. It is telling that the gun wounds were almost invariably identified as the work of “either a Mauser or a Mannlicher rifle,” the two weapons of choice favored by the Ottoman military and the revolutionary bands, respectively, with the implication that the deceased could have been killed by either side. It is curious how the bullets all seemed to penetrate and then exit the different body parts they ripped apart; not one of them was left behind to be extracted and identified by the medical examiner.

The medical examination reports of the raped women are not for the faint-hearted to read, and their details present a compelling case for the locals’ mistrust of any initiative from the Ottoman government that was ostensibly meant to improve their lot. Not one of the cases was officially declared “rape” by the physician, who would only go so far as to say that the findings were “inconclusive.” His conclusion about one case that “the presence of blood could also be attributed to the said woman’s menses” gives new meaning to the term “expert opinion,” leaving us cold in astonishment. The survivors, most of whom displayed signs of their testimony to the events, either on their persons in the form of bruises, burns, and wounds or in their missing possessions and smoldering dwellings, could describe clearly and in detail what had transpired and were almost unanimous in their statements that most of the damage had been done after the battle by pillaging soldiers and marauders. They were equally unanimous, however, in their insistence that they would not be able to identify these soldiers if they were confronted. Given that these were the same soldiers who would still be stationed in their region, and that they had little hope of assistance from the

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government in case the same soldiers sought revenge, now that their village had been branded as “rebellious,” it is not hard to understand why they were reluctant to identify the soldiers and gendarmes, some of whom they probably even knew by name.\textsuperscript{171}

The final tally of the “Kuklish incident” is sobering, to say the least. The Ottoman forces lost three members as the encounter started. In the village thirty-six corpses were found, and two others died later of wounds sustained. It was not clearly determined how many of those dead had actually been killed in combat, but only three of them had been taken out of the house where the guerrillas were barricaded. At least twelve of the victims had been killed on Friday, and seven had been killed on Thursday evening, after the battle was over. One woman who had been raped suffered a miscarriage—the medical examiner, needless to say, determined that the miscarriage could have been due to other factors. Sixty-seven houses, including the church building, had been entirely burned. The survivors were without shelter and food in the middle of winter. The resulting scene, extraordinarily chilling even by the standards of the time and place, should not have come as a shock to the military authorities, who had unleashed the reprisal through their criminal neglect of duty and willful blindness to the “rowdiness” of their subordinates. Informed about his soldiers’ acts of looting, Lieutenant Mahmud Bey’s comment was that they were terbiyesiz (ill-behaved), as if he was speaking about a bunch of anti-social teenagers.\textsuperscript{172} These events were not simply about lack of discipline or training (although they certainly had to with this lack) but about counterinsurgency. The Ottoman military authorities were draining the sea to get to the fish swimming in it. Their efforts to contain the insurgency thwarted, the activities of the bands on the rise, and the (justifiable) fear that Rumeli was indeed slipping away with no real rescue plan in sight becoming real, the Ottoman authorities were trying to improvise as they went along. Punishing the population that harbored and supported the guerrillas, and giving the Greek committees free reign to intimidate the Bulgarian element were the two cornerstones of this ad hoc strategy of counterinsurgency. Although this strategy was certainly counterproductive, it was by no means unique, repeated as it had been countless times in similar experiments of counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{173} It even seemed to work, at least in the short run, as the examples of Smardesi and Mogila, villages in western Macedonia illustrate. In April 1903, these villages had been the target of troops and başbozuk\textsuperscript{s} after the troops failed to capture the large bands of guerrillas taking shelter there. Seeing the ruins and the dead after these attacks, locals were less willing to harbor the guerrillas, which

\textsuperscript{171} It is clear from the interviews that some of the gendarmes had been sent into the village before.

\textsuperscript{172} MAE, Constantinople, E 147, Captain Cimetierre’s second report, March 10, 1905.

\textsuperscript{173} Kalyvas, Logic of Violence in Civil War, 146–61.
made it very difficult for the bands to move.\textsuperscript{174} This was a short-lived victory for the Ottoman troops, however, because the bands moved back in as soon as the threats were over and the peasants, tired of the exactions of the guerrillas, on the one hand, and of the reprisals they suffered, on the other, naturally split their ire between the two. Their frustration and despair are captured in the words of the inhabitants of Leshko, a village in the district of Cuma-i Bâlâ. A group of IMRO guerrillas had entered the village on July 20, 1907, set four houses on fire, and shot two women escaping from the conflagration, leaving one dead and the other seriously injured. The act was apparently carried out to punish this Exarchist village for failing to comply with the demands of the Organization and not paying their “taxes.” The French officer reporting on the incident heard the following plea over and over: “We pay high taxes to the government, even higher taxes to the co-mitadjis, we are beaten by soldiers, and pillaged by the başbozuk, we don’t know any more what [will] happen.”\textsuperscript{175}

In August 1907, an encounter between Ottoman forces and IMRO guerrillas took place in Dere Müslim, a village located not far from Melnik.\textsuperscript{176} The series of events leading up to and following the encounter formed a familiar pattern and almost duplicated the Kuklish incident. According to the report drafted by Captain Sarrou, the French gendarmerie officer in charge of the Melnik district, on August 12, a gendarme and twelve soldiers who were on patrol duty paid a routine visit to Dere Müslim. While the soldiers waited outside the village by a stream at the bottom of a ravine, the gendarme spoke with the village elders and the muhtar (headman). The gendarme noticed an uneasiness as they affirmed that all was calm in the village and, his suspicions raised, asked the muhtar whether he would be willing to provide a written and sealed statement attesting that there were no “brigands” in the village. The muhtar could not turn down this demand and produced the document, as had his counterpart in Kuklish. This time, however, the gendarme took the muhtar’s word, and the patrol left without further inquiry. Only a few hours later, local officials alerted military authorities that three bands might be hiding in Dere Müslim. A detachment of 150 soldiers and 9 gendarmes was immediately dispatched to the area. Gendarmerie Lieutenant Salih Ağâ, who was in charge of the operation, went into the village accompanied by a policeman, a gendarme, a few soldiers, and a civil official. They called on the elders to reassemble and asked them to tell the truth. When they reaffirmed that there were indeed no “bandits” hiding in the village, Lieutenant Salih Ağâ said they knew this was not the case and that the village had already been put under siege so as not to allow the bandits to escape. He wanted to negotiate their surrender, he said, because there would be much bloodshed.

\textsuperscript{174} Dakin, \textit{Greek Struggle in Macedonia}, 97–98.
\textsuperscript{175} MAE, Constantinople, E 144, List of crimes committed in July 1907, August 1907.
\textsuperscript{176} MAE, Constantinople, E 144, August 1907.
on both sides otherwise. When they repeated that they knew nothing, Salih Ağa had his subordinates ask the villagers to leave their dwellings. As they were gathering, Salih Ağa noticed that an old man seemed willing to help. With this man as the guide, they started knocking on doors, and when they reached the second house, shots were fired from inside.

The battle and the ensuing explosions and fire consumed the village almost entirely. Six peasants were killed, two of them by the guerrillas, including the old man who had been guiding the troops. There were three casualties on the Ottoman side, two soldiers and a gendarme. The injured included a certain Mehmet Sadık, ex-Stoianoff, a former bandleader, who apparently had changed his religion to go along with his political transformation. In his report, Captain Sarrou noted that Mehmet Sadık not only had managed to shoot Mitza Vranali, one of the guerrilla leaders, but also had saved Salih Ağa’s life as he caught a bullet from the guerrillas himself. Sarrou was able to see some of the documents seized from the dead guerrillas. These included orders issued by Mitza Marikostinali, carrying the seal of the Interior Committee for the killings of five individuals. Two of the orders had already been executed; among the luckier three was the Bulgarian priest of Ploska, a “village that was hostile to the Committee.” According to the lieutenant, the three bands had assembled in preparation for a major attack that involved the burning of several villages while they blocked the narrow passes of Demirhisar region. Another source, whom Captain Sarrou esteemed as “very well informed” said that Sandansky himself had been waiting with eighty men under his command to meet with the three bands that had been ambushed for some “flashy act.”

The Dere Müslim incident was in many ways a smaller-scale version of the events in Kuklish, but there were also significant differences between the two. The most important distinction was in the way the authorities dealt with the situation after the event. Captain Sarrou’s assertion that the conduct of the police, gendarmes, and soldiers was stellar should be considered

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177. BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, August 16, 1907.
178. Although it was not uncommon for former bandits to enlist with the Ottoman gendarmerie, Stoianoff seems to have gone one step further by converting to Islam. I was not able to locate more specific information about Stoianoff, but Draganoff mentions a certain Petre Stoianoff who was the member of a Bulgarian band in the province of Üsküb. This person reportedly declared himself Serbian after disagreements with his comrades and then turned himself in to the Ottoman authorities, denouncing and causing the arrest of a large number of Bulgarians; Draganoff, Macédoine et les Réformes, 176.
179. Marikostina and Vrana were both located in Menlik district, not far from Dere Müslim; BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, Serres Prefecture to Menlik Subprefecture, August 14, 1907; MAE, Constantinople, E 144, Captain Sarrou to Colonel Vérand, August 19, 1907.
180. This is probably one of the two villages named Ploski in Menlik. Mishev mentions that both villages, made up of 456 and 448 households, were entirely Exarchist; Brancoff [Mishev] La Macédoine et sa Population Chrétienne, 192.
181. MAE Constantinople, E 144, Captain Sarrou to Colonel Vérand, August 19, 1907.
along with the fact that he arrived at the scene after the battle was over.\textsuperscript{182} We do know, however, that the authorities reacted to his investigation immediately after the incident took place with unusual \textit{sangfroid}, in sharp contrast to the defensive spin campaign that followed the attack on Kuklsh. In fact, when the Prefecture of Serres asked the local authorities in Menlik to prevent Sarrou from taking photographs of the burned houses “in a suitable manner” and copied the Inspectorate on the correspondence, the response they received did not follow the routine procedure of damage control. Instead, the memo recommended that the French captain be allowed to proceed as he pleased because there was nothing of “harm or significance” in taking photographs.\textsuperscript{183}

More significantly, the investigation report prepared immediately after the incident by gendarmerie Lieutenant Tayyar Bey and the Demirhisar District Commander Colonel Hamdi Bey recommended that “aid” should be provided to the owners of twenty-six houses that had been burned down in the form of government grants based on the value of their houses. The pair did not officially acknowledge that the fire had been started by the military, instead choosing deliberately vague language as to the source of the first fire and emphasizing a fatal combination of high winds, tightly built structures, large amounts of \textit{raki} and grain alcohol kept in the houses, and finally the countless explosions set off by the brigands. Nevertheless, they did note that of the twenty-nine houses that had been incinerated, three had been deliberately set on fire by the “brigands,” and because their owners were “unworthy of mercy” having been in cahoots with the brigands, they should not benefit from financial aid, implicitly conceding that compensating for the damage done to the other houses was the responsibility of the government.\textsuperscript{184} They added that hay depots had been converted to temporary dwellings for the victims, where they were distributed food, and that “thanks to the beneficence of his Excellency the Sultan” they were ensuring the rest and recovery of the wounded through all means necessary. The beneficence of his excellency could only go so far, apparently, considering Sarrou’s observation that the provisions sent for the victims were inadequate. Be that as it may, the list detailing the names of homeowners and the value of the property they lost in the fire was prepared with great expedition and

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid. In his report, Sarrou relates several acts of courage by the police and the gendarmes, which he could not have witnessed personally. Although it does not mean that these were entirely made up by the Ottoman officials he interviewed, the record about similar incidents calls for a note of caution.

\textsuperscript{183} BOA, TFR.IA 37/3649, Copy of Inspectorate’s letter to the Serres Prefecture, August 14, 1907. The mentioned photos indeed reached their destination. They can today be found in the same folder that contains Captain Sarrou’s report to Colonel Vérand; MAE, Constantinople, E 144, Captain Sarrou to Colonel Vérand, August 19, 1907.

\textsuperscript{184} It is interesting to note that the word they used for the financial assistance to be offered to the victims was \textit{iane} (“aid”) rather than \textit{tazminat} (“compensation”).
presented to the Inspectorate by August 1907.\(^{185}\) The list itself obviously did not mean much in the absence of funds to allocate for the purpose, estimated at 84,700 gurus. It is a testament to the importance placed on carrying through with the aid plan that on September 11, 1907, the Grand Vezir notified the Inspectorate that the Council of Ministers had authorized the release of the necessary funds from the aid earmarked for flood victims and that an imperial decree had been issued to that effect.\(^{186}\) Furthermore, in March 1908, the Sublime Porte extended the three-year tax exemption to victims of attacks by Greek bands in Melnik, Zihna, and Serres, including the residents of Dere Müslim who had lost their houses.\(^{187}\)

What had happened in the course of two years that inspired the Ottoman administration to adopt a different policy in dealing with the aftermath of an attack on a village harboring guerrillas? First of all, following the bad publicity following previous similar encounters, the Ottomans were strongly motivated to preempt critical reports before they surfaced. This point was explicitly stressed several times in the correspondence of the Inspectorate with the Sublime Porte. “If there are measures the government would need to take,” one such letter noted, “initiative should be taken before the claims and complaints of outsiders and malicious [people].”\(^{188}\)

“Damage control” was obviously the primary motive behind the changed and relatively more benevolent state attitude. And, we might expect, this change in attitude was in no small degree enabled by the declining strength of the revolutionary bands in the region as the Ottoman forces increased their efforts to eradicate them. Thanks to a new strategy relying on smaller flying columns, adopted in 1907, the Ottoman military had achieved considerable success in curbing insurgent activity in summer 1907.\(^{189}\) The region of the Struma Valley was still host to numerous bands, but, as the Dere Müslim incident revealed, these were small groups under the control of local men that were limited in their capacity to enforce committee orders or stage impressive attacks unless they joined forces under the guidance of leaders such as Sandansky, which was getting progressively harder as a result of

\(^{185}\) BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, Serres Prefecture to the Inspectorate, August 17, 1907.  
\(^{186}\) BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, Grand Vezir to the Inspectorate, September 11, 1907.  
\(^{187}\) BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, Grand Vezirate to the Inspectorate, March 6, 1908.  
\(^{188}\) “hükümetce ittihâzı lazım gelecek tedâbir var ise agyâr ile bedhahâtın mûracaat ve şikayâtından evvel mukteziyâtına teşebbüs edilmek üzere. . . . ” BOA, TFR.I.A 37/3649, Inspectorate to the Grand Vezirate, August 21, 1907.  
\(^{189}\) MAE, Constantinople, E 144, Colonel Vérand’s Report, August 26, 1907; Dakin, *Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, 340–41. Among the leaders captured and killed that summer was the notorious Mitros Vlach, who had long been fighting against the Greeks in the region of Kastoria and was rumored to be responsible for the death of Pavlos Melas, the legendary young martyr of the Greek struggle in Macedonia. Melas had been killed in an ambush by Ottoman forces that was intended for Mitros Vlach, who had set up the trap for Melas; Dakin, *Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, 190. In the end, it was the information and guides provided by Bishop Karavangelis, another champion and hero of the Greek cause in Macedonia, that led to the capture and killing of Mitros Vlach by the Ottoman forces.
increased surveillance in the countryside, on the one hand, and the presence of Greek bands, on the other. It might well be that their progress in counterinsurgency made the Ottoman authorities adopt a more positive outlook about the future of the region, which was manifested in their dealings with the inhabitants of Dere Müslim. The band in Kuklish had escaped but not their comrades in Dere Müslim.

Violence and Political Power

In this chapter, I have analyzed violence as a historical force in its own right and established its role in the creation of something that was presumably its cause—national identity. The conflict in Ottoman Macedonia at the turn of the twentieth century is an important chapter in the histories of national liberation in Bulgaria, Greece, and Macedonia. It created national heroes for all parties involved—including the Ottomans, who ended up losing not just any territory, but Rumeli, the lands that had transformed the small principality established by the followers of a warlord named Osman into an empire and once a world power. It was indeed a formative event for all the nation-states mentioned, not only as a struggle to redeem what rightfully belonged to the nation, as official histories would have it, but for placing the inhabitants of Macedonia into national molds in the first place. In other words, it was not the people who fought for the nation, but the nation-states that fought for the people.

Analyzing violence at the local or micro level allows the disaggregation of events collectively defined as ethnonationalist violence from the broader narrative of national liberation. The range of circumstances that motivated people to take up arms, as we have seen, was not limited to ideological commitment or animosity against members of the other group. There was no single explanation for collaboration or resistance, nor was the distinction between victim and perpetrator as clear as we might assume. The way people were subsumed by this fight did not follow a linear script of rebellion against the government and reclaiming territory for the nation. The contingencies in the way the events unfolded, people's ambiguities about what course of action to take, and the ease with which they went from being noncommittal to participatory and back, become visible elements of this episode in history only after we take a closer look at the presumably ubiquitous acts of violence. References to tyranny, murderous campaigns of destruction, and calamities that people suffered just as a result of the group they belonged to constitute center stage in “heroes and traitors” style of histories of the struggle for Macedonia. Political histories, on the other hand, follow the interaction of states and assume that people’s actions to mimic those of the political actors that made the decisions for insurgency or war. The mundane details of the experiences of the masses that were claimed by the fighting parties do not figure prominently in these accounts, and when
they do, they are stylized to fit the master narrative. There is no place for the uncertainty, the messiness, and the contradictions of actual human experience in macro narratives of national emergence, and that is exactly why it is important that we bring them to light. The examples we have seen here demonstrate that violence contributed to the process of nation-building as a marker of boundaries and a means of consolidating disparate groups of people into members of a community that they knew extended well beyond their immediate environment. What compounded that effect was its simultaneous action as a mechanism for mass mobilization, without which there would not be a nation. This is not to argue that violence was the uniquely generative force in nation-making. Nation-making relies on other forces, forces that derive, above all, from the social and political changes that are mutually constitutive with the emergence of the modern state, forces such as new technologies of government, industrialization, and new mechanisms of legitimation that made mass political participation (which should not be confused with pluralist democracy) not only possible but also necessary.

Violence, however, should not be explained away as a by-product of this process; it functioned more as a cause than a result of the hardening of national boundaries.

Was Hanna Arendt right, then, in suggesting that violence is utterly incapable of creating power? Or should we conclude with a nod to Mao Zedong, who asserted that political power comes from the barrel of a gun? What we have seen about the capacity of violence to change people’s worldviews and actions might make it seem that Mao was right on this subject, but I would argue differently. Nor do I completely agree with Arendt’s dictum. It is true that violence is not real power; it is just an instrument of coercion. Nevertheless, it is in fact capable of helping create something that has actual power—in this case, the nation.

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190. “Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it.” Hannah Arendt, On Violence (New York, 1969), 56.