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**The policy of extermination in Macedonia
To the editor of the Times**

As one who has had exceptional opportunities for studying the Macedonian problem from the inside, I may perhaps be permitted to point out some of the most essential conditions of the present situation. I have traversed Macedonia at different

times in almost every direction — from the Aegean side, from Albania, from the Kossovo vilayet, from Serbia, and from the Bulgarian Principality. I have spent months there engaged in archaeological researches in the most out-of-the-way districts, and though my main objects were scientific and not political, I had perhaps all the better opportunity for forming an unbiased judgment on the condition of the country. Nor, perhaps, do these impressions lose in value from the fact that they were formed before the beginning of the actual insurrectionary movement.

Let me begin by correcting an almost universal fallacy. There are no "Macedonians". There are Bulgars. There are Roumans — the relic of the Latin-speaking provincials of Rome's Illyrian provinces, who still hold their own in the Pindus range and in the neighbouring towns. There are Greeks, including more or less superficially Hellenized Roumans. There are "Turks", including Mahomedan Bulgarians, and some true Turkish villages in the Vardar valley representing a settlement earlier than the Ottoman conquest. There is an infusion of Skipetars or Albanians on the western and northern fringe. Finally there is the large Spanish Jew population in Salonika. But there are no "Macedonians".

It is an unpleasant duty to have to tell one's friends home truths, but the Greek claim to Macedonia, at least as regards the greater part of the interior of the country, is a dream. In some of the towns there is a fair Greek population, but even in that case, as in Monastir, for example, the statistics rest on an artificial basis. The truth is that a large number of those described as Greeks are really Roumans. Till within recent years Hellenism found a fertile field for propaganda among the representatives of the gifted Romance speaking race of the Pindus region. To-day Janina has quite forgotten its Roman origin, and has become a centre of Hellenism. Athens, the nearest civilized centre, offered natural attractions to the quickwitted mercantile element in the towns. But, for good or evil, the tide has turned. A counter-propaganda, of which Bukarest is the centre, has made itself felt, and the Roman civil element east of Pindus is probably lost to Hellenism, notwithstanding the fact that much money is expended by Greek committees in the endeavour to gain recruits for Greek nationality. Parents are actually paid to send their children to the Greek schools.

One of the most comic results of this competitive ethnography was a map published some years ago under Athenian auspices and circulated in this country. According to this Macedonia was for practical purposes divided into two elements — the Greeks and the "Bulgarophone Greeks" — as if some Celtic enthusiast should divide Britain between the Welsh and the "Anglophone Welsh!" Macedonia, indeed, is full of artificial distinctions, the true lines of ethnic demarcation being continually crossed by classifications founded on religious adherence (for the time being) to the Greek Patriarch or to the Bulgarian Exarch. A Bulgar village may for political purposes be bribed or coerced into accepting allegiance to orthodox Greek ecclesiastical superiors. Its inhabitants are then complacently described by those who effected their spiritual transfer (which "spiritually" means nothing) as the Hope of Hellas. But these artificial annexations do not go very far. The language of the villagers remains Bulgar, and the deep underlying instincts of race are only held in temporary suspense. The friends of Greece can only regret that she should be misled by such artificial pretensions; that she should grasp the shadow and lose the substance which might have been found in an understanding, on a reason able basis of give and take, with her Slavonic neighbours. The late M. Tricoupi, to my personal knowledge, saw things much more clearly. He was well aware that, except a narrow fringe to the south and some sporadic centres of no great magnitudes in the interior of the province, the Greek element had no real hold on Macedonia. His chief anxiety, for which

he had solid grounds, came, indeed, from that direction, but not from the Bulgarian quarter. That cool political observer would certainly have refrained from qualifying, as did the present Greek Premier, an exceptionally industrious and peaceful population who for 15 centuries have been tillers of the Macedonian soil, and only now owing to indescribable oppression have been goaded into revolt, as "Bulgarian wolves", apparently recent intruders into a Greek fold! The brigands of Pindus and Olympus have been rarely recruited from the Bulgar element. I myself was once dogged for nearly ten days by a brigand band along the Pindus border, but they were not Bulgars.

The fact is that even in this country — largely owing to interested efforts to disguise the true situation — the great preponderance of the Bulgar element in Macedonia is only imperfectly realized. I can only say, as my personal experience after exploring almost the whole interior of the province, that outside the fringe already referred to, and some small urban centres, practically the whole mass of the population is Slavonic, speaking characteristically Bulgarian dialects. The Bulgarian shibboleths, such as the placing of the article after the word, extend even to the Uskub region, sometimes claimed by the Serbs, whose real speech only begins north of the Shar range. Where, as in certain small towns such as Kastoria, the Greek element was in a majority, it was far outweighed by the populous Bulgar villages around. This great preponderance of the Bulgar element is a fundamental factor in the present situation, which has been much observed by statistics drawn from Greek sources. It is liable to be very experience of Macedonia has been mainly confined to towns like Salonika or Monastir.

In the years immediately succeeding the Treaty of Berlin, at which period I first made acquaintance with the province, there was still some faint hope that the provisions of Article XXIII might be enforced by the Powers. Oppression there was, grinding and brutal, but it was still of the normal Turkish kind. But as the danger of European intervention grew more distant, fresh turns were given to the screw. In the country beyond the Shar range, the miserable vilayet of Kossovo, the policy of extermination had already begun. The plan of ousting the Slavonic population of this old Serbian region by Mahomedan Arnauts — the Kurds of the west — was deliberately formed, and has been as deliberately executed. The mot d'ordre there was "no massacres en masse"; but for murder and outrage in detail, for high-handed robbery and dispossession, the history of that Balkan region since the Treaty of Berlin must be almost without a parallel even within the limits of the Turkish Empire. Servia and Montenegro have been impotent spectators. The callousness of Austria-Hungary, to whom the interposition of a non-Slavonic wedge between the two free Principalities was a direct political advantage, formed part of the calculation. It is unnecessary for me to trouble your readers with the methods of Oriental barbarism of which I gained cognisance in that region. It is sufficient to say that the scheme has been largely successful. The Servian population has been thinned down, a large part has been actually hounded out of the country, and the Arnaut highlanders have seized on their deserted tenements. When the Albanians themselves became too restive, a mild show of force was occasionally resorted to, but the ringleaders were always well aware that they had friends at Court. Palace intrigue, indeed, on one occasion utilized Albanian insurgency to rid itself of an obnoxious Pasha, Mehemet Ali, a signatory of the Treaty of Berlin. He was left without his reserves at Djakovo, and met a fate akin to that of Ali of Janina. It must be said, to the credit of the Albanians, that they have since recognized his merits and canonized him in a popular lay.

South of the Shar range in Macedonia proper the problem, from the Sultan's point of view, was more difficult. From that much larger and more populous area, over which, by the Treaty of San Stefano, the limits of a "Great Bulgaria" had already

stretched, "like the skin of a mad sheep", there were no such handy means of displacing the Christian element. The "Kurds of the West" could only very imperfectly grapple with the task. But the root factor of the problem was thoroughly realized at Yildiz. It need hardly be said that the Greek aspirations were not taken seriously. But the potential danger arising from the teeming villages of Bulgar speech was a very different matter. The Mahomedan element in the country was far from affording a sufficient counterpoise, and it must be remembered that here, as generally in the European provinces of Turkey, the Mahomedan population is declining. Once great villages have shrunk, and the forest of turbaned tombstones that surround them is at times almost the only record of former habitation. How to redress the balance? Obviously this was a case for drastic measures.

Not that the great mass of Bulgar inhabitants of Macedonia have — unless it be of quite recent development — any idea of "high politics". Their only desire was to obtain security of life and property, immunity from outrage, and a moderate share in the results of their labour. For the cultivation of the soil the race has a real genius, and it may not be generally known that small associations of Bulgarian market-gardeners find a living not only in various East European countries, but as far afield as Alsace. On such a population the iniquitous agrarian conditions in which they are placed fall with especial hardship. Suffice it to say, that since the Treaty of Berlin the same agrarian evils that were the main factor in stirring up the original despairing outbreak in Bosnia and Herzegovina — the beginning of the end of so much in the Nearer East — have not only been allowed to persist in the Christian cillages of Macedonia, but, owing to the more restricted area from which the Sultan's Government has to draw its supplies, have been sensibly aggravated. It is not only the more or less regular demands that have to be complied with — the share of the Bey, according to the prevalent metayer tenure, in the produce of the land and the government taxes, but the extortion of the agents and middlemen, and the arbitrary and ruinous assessments against which there is no appeal. Hopelessly unable to satisfy these demands, whole villages are reduced to a lower kind of serfage, the badge of which is the exaction of forced labour on a wholesale scale. This perpetual liability to corye — the Angaria, as the Bulgar villagers themselves call it — seemed to drive them to despair. The brutality with which it is levied is inconceivable. I have myself seen a band of Turkish Zaptiehs descend on a large village at harvest time and carry off all the available carts, together with most of the able-bodies inhabitants, while the corn, for which the villagers would yet have to account at a fancy estimate, was left to rot in the fields. Soldiers, Zapties, and so-called village guards — who are little better than licensed brigands — live at free quarters in the village, and among the tolls that they levy the honour of the women is too often included. I once remonstrated with some Turkish regulars (Asker) who were carrying off, without any attempt at compensation, the stores of a poor little Bulgarian homestead. The reply was characteristic and honestly indignant, "Asker do not pay! Asker take." Indeed, how can they do otherwise when they themselves are left unpaid?

One characteristic in the population — not without its pathetic side — continually struck me. In spite of all the misery and oppression some attempt was made even in the smallest villages to give schooling to the children. In Macedonia, indeed, it needed something of a martyr's spirit to exercise the profession of a teacher. The Bulgar teachers were nearly all marked men. It is indeed natural — Turkish rule being what it is — that those who endeavour to enlighten the enslaved population should be regarded as natural enemies. It is true that the Turkish authorities have little to complain of in the matter actually taught in the schools. It was subject to an iron censorship. I have at various times had occasion to examine the school books

and even to assist at an examination of the children. In most cases history was entirely excluded, and in the rare instances where it was allowed, nothing might be taught later than the time of Julius Caesar! Maps of Europe were forbidden, and geography was rigorously confined to Asia, Africa, and the Antipodes. Notwithstanding these limitations, no teacher was at any moment free from the danger of arbitrary arrest. Whole batches of schoolmasters have been at various times deported. Many of them were tortured. Some have disappeared without a trace in Anatolian prisons. As to schoolmistresses, the risks attending their calling were found to be too terrible, and the girls' schools that had been attempted in the country districts have had to be closed.

Justice was a question of baksheesh, and nothing struck me more during my Macedonian experiences than the absolutely arbitrary character of the arrests — I am speaking, it must be remembered, of the period anterior to any revolutionary movement in the province. There was no semblance of trial, but any Bulgar villager or townsman, not under direct Consular protection, could be seized, beaten, and imprisoned often for mere purposes of extortion — torture being not infrequently applied. Appeal or redress was out of the question; the victim must be bought off or left to rot in gaol.

Such has been the organized brigandage to which the Christian population of Macedonia, but more especially its most submissive, but most numerous and potentially dangerous element, the Bulgar, has been handed back since the Treaty of Berlin. Year after the Turkish "policy of exasperation" continued. Its first result was the gradual escape of large number of peasants — including many of the more intractable spirits — across the Bulgarian frontier. The settlement of over 200,000 of these in the Free Principality could not fail to produce its political effect. Every able-bodied refugee looked forward to the time when the turn of the wheel might give him a chance of recovering his own. Turkish terrorism thus itself supplied a base for the central direction of an eventual insurrectionary movement.

To those indeed familiar with the stolid, hangdog look of the typical Bulgar peasant in Macedonia, to those who had seen the Bulgar labourers driven in gangs from their own work — like cattle, to the crack of the Turkish whip — to those who knew, moreover, how rigorously the use of arms was prohibited among the non-Mahomedan population — the uprising of such a race might well have seemed to be impossible. But the systematic tyranny to which it was subjected has at last produced the impossible. And who, with the evidence of the Armenian provinces before him, will venture to say that the desperate recourse to arms of peasant bands in the Bulgar districts of Macedonia did not itself enter into the astute calculation of Yildiz? There is every reason to believe that the search for arms, conducted in the Monastir vilayet with every attendant circumstance of brutality and outrage, was deliberately schemed to provoke an immediate outbreak of such a nature as to serve as a pretext for the application of the policy of extermination which had been so successfully executed in the case of the Armenians.

Civilized Europe, indeed, had for the last two years had fair warning of the inevitable trend of events. Unfortunately, however, it left the fulfilment of its collective responsibilities to the two Powers at present, for various reasons, most interested in prolonging an impossible status quo. Austria-Hungary, with her own reserves about Salonika, is paralysed by internal crises. It is an open secret that "official" Russia, dissatisfied with the too independent attitude of Bulgaria, and with its eyes fixed on the Far East, has largely gone back on the policy of San Stefano. The belated Austro-Russian reform scheme, when it appeared, whatever the excellence on paper of some of its provisions, was a hollow mockery. So far from giving secu-

riety for the application of the reforms indicated, it deliberately ensured their non-execution by placing them in charge of the Sultan's nominee. The authors of this paper reform scheme were not fools, and they were naturally under no illusion as to its fate. They must have known and discounted its consequences; an insurrection of despair; outrages by a small minority of desperadoes, such as long misgovernment cannot fail to breed; counter excesses; finally the organized application of the Armenian policy of extermination, partial slaughter of unarmed peasants and wholesale destruction of their villages, to be followed by a much heavier harvest of deaths from famine and exposure. Unfortunately, there is every indication that Abdul Hamid's solution is that which best suits the convenience of the Imperial Powers. Of course it cannot be avowed. The thinning down of the Slavonic population of Old Servia (the Kossovo vilayet) has already been watched for years by Austria-Hungary with cynical inaction. The wholesale disappearance of the Bulgar population from Macedonia would considerably facilitate the realization of certain ambitions. From the Russian point of view, also, the weakening of the Bulgarian element outside the Principality has obvious advantages, while insurrection, even against the Great Assassin, is a crime against Divine right deserving of exemplary chastisement.

Have we seriously joined this new Holy Alliance? Are we to acquiesce in this patent mockery and huge political crime? It must be said to the honour of the present Government, and especially of Lord Lansdowne, that they only adhered to the Austro-Russian reform scheme with important reservations. There are reasons for believing, in spite of diplomatic phraseology, that saves, faces, and some recent dialectics, that they are seriously acting on these reservations. It is all to the good that we refrained from the brutal remonstrances addressed to Bulgaria, and that we have urged additions to the Austro-Russian reform scheme that may make it effective. It is still more to the good, if rumour speaks truly, that, in the case of certain eventualities, practically identical instructions have been issued to French and English Mediterranean squadrons. Popular feelings both in France and Italy are strongly aroused, and co-operation with France has the special advantage that Russia is not in a position altogether to ignore representations coming from that side.

After an observation of the machinery of Turkish government going back now over a period of 30 years. I may be permitted to reiterate what is beyond doubt the central point of the situation. It is only by direct intimidation at Yildiz that anything can be really effected. It is only by the removal of the present Sultan, to whom the Turks themselves have given the name of "the Butcher", that any general amelioration of the state of the Christian population can be obtained. All the wires are pulled from the Palace. While the Ambassadors remonstrate and the Porte affects to listen the mischief is being done. But I will give an instance in point for which I can personally vouch. During the period immediately preceding the massacres in Crete I was in Candia, where a large number of Mahomedan were collected, for the control of whom, according to diplomatic formulae then agreed on by the "protecting Powers", the Turkish Governor and the European Commandant — in this case British, with troops camped on the western bastions of the city — were jointly responsible. The usual negotiations were going on between the Porte and the Powers. But viewing things a little from the inside, I was made aware that the real instructions to the local Turkish officials came direct from the Palace. Massacre was in the air. I ventured even to observe to the British Commandant that a policy of "cut wires" was the only one that offered any real security for the Christian population. But diplomatizing was the order to the day. The local leaders were left in direct telegraphic communications with Yildiz, and three months later the massacre which I had actually predicted, and to which many of our own people fell victims, actually

took place. During the two hours that immediately preceded the massacre the Governor, Ishmael Bey, was shut up in the telegraph office, where, as the employees were aware, he was in continual communication with the Palace.

The most successful of all experiments hitherto made by Abdul Hamid in the matter of massacres was undoubtedly the four days' slaughter in the Armenians under the eyes of the Embassies at Constantinople. On the extent to which this slaughter was carried out in conformity with superior orders, the following incident, which I had on the authority of a high French official, throw a lurid light. An attaché of the French Embassy at Constantinople was in one of the main streets, strewn at that time with the corpses of freshly-butchered Armenians, when an elegant carriage, with Turkish officers in gala costume on the way to a council at Yildiz came that way. The officers stopped the carriage, got out, and ran their swords into the bodies of the victims, so that they might appear with fresh blood-stains in the Master's presence!

Of reforms, of course, at the present moment there is no question. You cannot reform a charnel-house or secure the local autonomy of a heap of ashes. The huge plan of slaughter and devastation has been methodically carried out. "It appears", as the Sofia Correspondent of *The Times* has pertinently observed, "that the progress of systematic extermination is carefully recorder by the Turkish authorities and duly reported at Constantinople." According to documents purloined from Hilmi Pasha's archives, which had fallen into the hands of one of the Consuls, the total of villages destroyed in the Monastir district alone is 93. But this estimate itself can hardly include the populous Bulgarian districts of Ochrida, Prespa, and Dibra, west of the Pindus range, where the destruction seems to be equally complete. And to this, again, must be added the huge devastation in the vilayet of Adrianople.

The urgent and immediate need is not the regulation of a future system of government, but the arrest of massacre and the rescue of the destitute refugees. For, be it remembered, the actual butcheries are only a preliminary part of the calculation. They are of necessity limited. If the Sultan is left alone the number of unarmed peasants, women, and children actually slaughtered will be as nothing to that of those who must eventually perish from hunger or exposure. When, at the time of the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some quarter of a million refugees were driven into the mountainous borders of Dalmatia and Croatia, in spite of the neighbourhood of a friendly population, in spite of the small dole distributed by the Austro-Hungarian Government, in spite of the English relief fund raised and so heroically administered by Miss Irby, over a third perished during their four years' exile from exposure, famine, and attendant diseases. But the Macedonian devastation is on an even more terrible scale. The country is of difficult access. There is no friendly frontier. There is no Government succour. If 90,000 refugees perished in the one case — that is the official estimate — how many may be expected to fall victims under these more unfavourable conditions?

To hasten the process of extermination by hunger, direct orders have been given for the butchery of such of the famishing who endeavour to collect corn near their burnt villages. Those who try to seek shelter in the towns are driven back at the point of the bayonet. The few stores sent by friends at Monastir for the relief of the starving villagers have been intercepted and seized by Turkish troops. The sisters of mercy were prevented by Hilmi Pasha — the reformer — from tending the victims of Turkish outrage at Krushevo, and even from despatching medicaments.

Nothing but strong, direct, and immediate action at Constantinople can defeat these ulterior plans of extermination. A generous response will, no doubt, be given in England to the appeal for relief. But political action of the most energetic kind is

necessary to protect the distribution of relief and the camps of refuge where it will probably be advisable to collect the fugitives. Where it is possible to find shelter in villages not wholly ruined, officials, acting under consular authority, must also be stationed as a visible symbol of European protection. Those who, like myself, have had experience of villages, to which refugees had been encouraged to return under a Turkish safeguard, a second time destroyed with all attendant horrors, will know the value of this security. It is not suggested that the Consuls themselves should distribute relief. But what seems to be urgent is the organization of relief centres protected by a corps of Consular Cavasses specially organized for this purpose under the aegis of our own and perhaps other Governments. As a result of severe pressure at Constantinople, it might even be possible to secure for ambulances under the Red Cross the rights accorded to them by belligerents.

September 30.

I am yours very faithfully,
Arthur J. Evans

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