

Vemund Aarbakke

**The Report of Petâr Chaulev to Prime Minister
Vasil Radoslavov about the Situation in Western Thrace
in February 1914**

Introduction

Bulgaria was faced with a lot of internal and external challenges in the volatile political situation after the Balkan Wars. In connection with the parliamentary elections 23 February 1914, Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov sent his entrusted man, Petar Chaulev, to report about the situation in the “new lands” of Western Thrace. This report provides us with a snapshot of the situation on the ground at this critical juncture on the eve of World War I. The report is very informative and I have translated it in its entirety with a few footnotes to clarify some points. The full text follows at the end of this article. Although the text is very interesting in itself, it is not so easily accessible for people without an intimate knowledge of the issues discussed. It is consequently necessary to contextualise and comment on the text in order to realise its full potential in throwing light on these little known events.

The overall context

Today, Western Thrace usually refers to the part of the larger Thrace region that is in Greece. There are, however, various concepts in use and for the present article we are referring to the Ottoman lands between the Evros and Nestos rivers that were awarded to Bulgaria by the Bucharest treaty (10 August 1913).¹ This area had a turbulent past before this date and would continue to be in the forefront of Balkan rivalries. In short, it has the following history:

1. The two rivers are known in Bulgarian and Turkish as respectively: Mari-tsa-Meriç and Mesta-Karasu.

After the Ottoman conquest in 14th century the area remained under Ottoman rule until the Balkan Wars. In the First Balkan War Bulgarian troops and irregulars took control after defeating the troops of Yaver Pasha at Merhamli (today: Peplos) on 14/27 November 1913. They commenced immediately with the task of putting a Bulgarian national stamp on the area. Some villages were burnt during the hostilities, and several mosques were converted to churches.² One specific problem was the weak demographic basis for the Bulgarian territorial claims and one device for “remediating” this was a conversion campaign of the so-called Pomaks to Christianity. In Bulgarian national parlance they are referred to as Bulgarian Muslims because they share the same language. The forced conversion campaign carried out by the Bulgarian Holy Synod with the assistance of paramilitary forces took place in winter 1912-1913, and caused strong reactions not only in Ottoman circles, but also by western observers.³ The Bulgarian attempts to incorporate the area into Bulgaria proper were interrupted by the Second Balkan War, when Bulgaria lost on all fronts after attacking her erstwhile allies. Small Greek naval forces took control of the coastal cities in Western Thrace,⁴ but the main thrust came from the Ottomans who had been badly defeated in the the first war. Ottoman forces under Enver Pasha exploited Bulgaria’s weak military position to progress beyond the Midye-Enos line stipulated by the Treaty of London (30

2. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, Washington D.C. 1914, pp. 124-126.

3. Carnegie, *Report, op.cit.*, p. 77. The campaign became widely known and outraged the Ottoman authorities. A large body of Bulgarian documents related to the conversion campaign has been published in: Величко Георгиев–Стайко Трифонов, *Покръстването на българите мохамедани 1912-1913, документи* [Conversion of Bulgarian Muslims 1912-1913, documents], Sofia 1995. For a critical assesment of the conversion campaign, see: Пламена Стоянова, “Покръстването на българите мюсюлмани” [The conversion of Bulgarian Muslims], *Анамнеза*, Год. I, кн. 3 (2006), pp. 128-144. (<http://www.anamnesis.info/node/33>)

4. Καλλιόπη Παπαθανάση–Μουσιποπούλου, *Ελληνικά προξενεία στη Θράκη. Τόμος Β. Δυτική Θράκη* [Greek Consulates in Thrace, Vol. 2. Western Thrace], Athens 1977, p. 75.

May 1913). After reconquering Edirne a detachment of irregular forces led by Eşref Kuşçubaşı pushed on into Western Thrace and reached the main administrative centre Gümüldjina (today: Komotini) 16/29 August 1913.⁵ The Bulgarian administration had left the area in panick, and a period of retribution against the Bulgarian local population followed. The forced conversion of the Pomaks was reversed, and the Ottoman irregular forces reinforced by local *bashibozuks* sacked and looted several of the Bulgarian villages in the area.⁶ In the meantime Bulgaria was awarded Western Thrace south of Dydimoteichos by the Bucharest Treaty (10 August 1913), but had no effective control on the ground. The irregular Ottoman forces set up a local government that became know as the autonomous Gümüldjina republic and lasted for some 60 days.⁷

Nominally local Muslims notables headed the government, but real power was in the hands of the Ottoman irregular forces. These forced were headed by Süleyman Askerî Bey, an Ottoman officer close to Enver Pasha who would later be the first leader of what can be loosely termed as the forerunner to the Turkish secret services, the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* (The Special Organisation). These initiatives have to be seen in their historical context. The irregular forces were sent clandestinely into Western Thrace, because the Ottoman Empire did not dare to openly defy the Great Powers. The idea of an autonomous Western Thrace was also a devise that can be seen as a second best alternative in lieu of outright annexation. At this time the question of an autonomous Macedonia and Epirus was also on

5. For a selection of Turkish accounts, see Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Millî Mücadele* [The National struggle in Thrace], Cilt I & II, Ankara, 1987 (first edition 1955); Cemal Kutay, *1913 de Garbî Trakya'da İlk Türk Cumhuriyeti* [The First Turkish Republic in Western Thrace 1913], İstanbul 1962; Ahmet Aydın, *Batı Trakya Faciasının İç Yüzü* [Inside the Western Thrace Tragedy], İstanbul 1971; Abdürrahim Dede, *Balkanlar'da Türk İstiklâl Hareketleri* [Turkish Independent Movements in the Balkans], İstanbul 1978; Nevzat Gündoğ, *Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Müstakilesi* [The Western Thrace Independent Government], Ankara 1987.

6. The best known Bulgarian account of these events is: Любомир Милетиз, *Разорението на тракийските българи през 1913 година* [The Destruction of the Thracian Bulgarians in 1913], Sofia 1918.

7. Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya*, *op.cit.*

the agenda and supported by various factions depending on the current political situation. The strong presence on the ground was used by the Ottoman Empire as a bargaining chip in the separate peace negotiations with Bulgaria that led to the Constantinople Treaty (16/29 September 1913). The Ottoman leadership in Istanbul that negotiated this treaty had the overall interests of the empire in mind and did not find it prudent to insist on Ottoman possession. The result was not well received in Western Thrace and the forces present in the area attempted at first to defy the order to hand over the area to Bulgaria, but would eventually have to give in to pressure from Istanbul.⁸

In the autumn of 1913 Bulgaria was faced with several dilemmas. She could no longer rely on her ability to take over Western Thrace by force because of her weakened military position. She was also actively seeking an alliance with the Ottoman Empire in order to jockey into position for pursuing a policy of revenge in Macedonia against Greece and Serbia. Eventually this would lead to the Secret Bulgarian-Ottoman treaty 6/19 August 1914 and the two countries later became allies during the Great War.⁹ Last but not least, the Bulgarian Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov had not been able to gain the necessary majority in the 24 November 1913 general election and was looking for a way to secure his grip on power. For the upcoming election on 23 February 1914 Radoslavov hatched a scheme of electoral engineering where the “new lands” of Western Thrace played a central role. The electoral constituency of Western Thrace would yield 24 mandates, half of them Muslims. Radoslavov exploited his control of the new Bulgarian administration to secure that the Christian votes were channeled to his party. For the Muslim vote, on the other hand, he struck a deal with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that was able to control the Muslim voters. All the 12 Muslim mandates from the “new lands” ran for his party and

8. Djemal Pasha, *Memoirs of a Turkish statesman 1913-1919*, London 1922, pp. 45-56.

9. Туше Влахов, “Турско-българските отношения през 1913–1915 г.” [Turkish-Bulgarian relations during 1913-1915], *Исторически преглед*, год. 11, кн. 1 (1955), pp. 28-30.

became elected. This tipped the scales and provided him with the necessary majority in parliament.¹⁰ The control of the Muslim vote and the Ottoman paramilitary presence in the area form the backdrop of Chaulev's report.

It can be useful to provide a brief summary of subsequent events. Bulgaria would try to integrate the "new lands" by putting pressure on the indigenous population and settling new colonists. This process was, however, hampered by the exigencies of the Great War. The eventual Bulgarian defeat led to the loss of Western Thrace by the Neuilly treaty (27 November 1919). The area was first put under allied administration led by the French General Charpy. Later it was ceded to Greece in the San Remo conference 19-26 April 1920, and Greek forces took control of Western Thrace towards the end of May. The Greek-Turkish war precluded a final settlement until the Greek defeat in Asia Minor led to the Lausanne treaty in 1923. After this date the territory became unequivocally Greek and has remained so, with the exception of a brief Bulgarian occupation during World War II.

The Protagonists

Faced with the volatile situation in Western Thrace, it is natural that Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov felt the need for first hand information about the situation on the ground. He did this in the usual fashion. Instead of relying on the bureaucracy, he simply sent one of his trusted men to inquire about the situation and report directly to him. His choice for carrying out the task is interesting for several reasons. Petar Chaulev (1882 Ohrid-1924 Milan), was a leading figure in the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) belonging to its left wing.¹¹ In spite of this he supported the

10. Стайко Трифонов, *Тракия. Административна уредба, политически и стопански живот, 1912-1915* [Thrace. Administrative organisation, politics and economy 1912-1915], Sofia 1992, pp. 91-93.

11. For brief biographical notes see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petar_Chaulev. Wikipedia should be used with proper caution. The inclusion of persons in Wikipedia is also an indication of their reputation. All internet sources were accessed 31 October 2014.

Bulgarian army during the Balkans Wars, and as we can see he was not averse to carrying out tasks for the Bulgarian political establishment. He had a long track record as revolutionary, but succumbed to the IMRO infighting in the aftermath of the negotiations with Comintern in 1924. The author of the report that follows was consequently a person with rich political and paramilitary experience. Chaulev arrived in Komotini 21 February (old style) on the eve of the 23 February elections

His interlocutor in Western Thrace was Süleyman Askerî bey (1884 Prizren-1915 Basra), a high-ranking Ottoman military officer, member of CUP and close to Enver pasha.¹² He was among the officers who participated in the guerilla activities against the Italian invasion of Tripoli in 1911. Later he became head of the paramilitary operations in Western Thrace in the wake of the Second Balkan War. Around this time he also became the first chief of the Ottoman Special Organisation (*Teşkilât-i Mahsusa*). This organisation was involved in various clandestine operations and is particularly notorious for its role in the deportation of Greek men of military age to labour battalions (*amele taburları*) from the Asia Minor coast beginning in 1914 and the subsequent death marches of Armenian civilians in the interior of Anatolia. Süleyman Askerî bey committed suicide in connection with complications related to paramilitary operations in the Basra Vilayet (Iraq) 14 April 1915.

An analytic presentation of some of the main points in the report

Chaulev stresses the strong organisation of the Muslims. In this connection we have to keep in mind that the Ottoman paramilitary forces had been in control of the area since they took Komotini 16/29 August 1913. They drafted local Muslims into their army. The bid for autonomy resulted in the organisation of basic state structures and national symbols, including postal stamps, passports, flag and

12. For brief biographical notes see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%Bcley-man_Asker%C3%AE_Bey.

national anthem.¹³ The paramilitary forces had apparently remained *in situ* after the nominal Bulgarian takeover, and the Bulgarians were far from masters of the situation. As we can see from the report, the paramilitary forces had a strong grip on the Muslim vote. Chaulev supplies a partial list of names and positions for the key figures. A quick glance on this list displays various points of interest. The bulk of the list consists of Ottoman military officers, but there are also various persons originating from the Caucasus, who usually joined in these kinds of operations as a cross between mercenaries and freebooters. Many of them were of Circassian origin. The officers Tayar bey and Mahsar effendi were scheduled to lead detachments that were going to Pravishta (today: Eleftheroupoli) and Drama respectively. This should be seen within the framework of Bulgarian-Ottoman cooperation in organising guerrilla activities in areas they aspired to under Greek and Serbian rule. This kind of cooperation lasted right up until the signing of the Lausanne treaty in 1923, and Bulgarian guerrilla bands were active until 1934. In spite of this cooperation we can see that Chaulev is not comfortable with the shipment of arms through Bulgarian territory and seeks to minimise the risk for potential abuse against Bulgarian interests. A person of particular interest is Djafer bey from the Kastoria region who tours the villages as agitator. Since he is originating from a Slav speaking region, he is evidently used for disseminating propaganda in the many Pomak villages of the area.

Chaulev mentions that he knows a thing or two about secret organisations. He is of course referring to his tenure in IMRO. The interesting thing is that the Ottomans in general, and Enver Pasha in particular, seem to have picked up a lesson or two from chasing revolutionaries in Macedonia. Some of the clandestine Ottoman operations bear witness to this. Just as we saw the links between Chaulev and the official Bulgarian administration, the links between the official Ottoman administration and the paramilitary forces in Western Thrace is even more obvious. We can observe the regular

13. See the brief presentation in: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional_Government_of_Western_Thrace. It should be noticed that the Wikipedia accounts in other languages differ markedly.

contact with the CUP leaders in Istanbul who are in control of general policies towards Bulgaria. On the other hand, the speech of Süleyman Askerî Bey to the local Muslim population in Western Thrace about the newfound Bulgarian-Ottoman friendship, testifies to the need of the central administration to impose its views on the local population. It is clear that the nominal Bulgarian rule after the Constantinople treaty was in fact a Bulgarian-Ottoman condominium. The Muslims are in a strong position and quite demanding. Chaulev, on the other hand, is very uneasy about the Bulgarian administration's lack of authority.

Chaulev goes into some detail about reasons for the Bulgarian administration's weak position. His allusions to the regional governor Nedyalko Svinarov's incompetence is clear but carefully worded. The main problems with his appointment can be summarised as follows: Nedyalko Svinarov was from the village Zlatitsa in the Sofia region, and a well-known partisan of Radoslavov's Liberal Party. The Bulgarian government had promised in the Constantinople treaty to appoint Murat bey, who was a deputy in the Bulgarian parliament from Aytos, to the position. Radoslavov not only went back on this promise, but he appointed Svinarov more because of his party affiliation, than for his competence to carry out the difficult task. The highest-ranking general, Mihail Savov, was critical to Radoslavov's abandonment of this promise, and stressed furthermore the necessity to have a regional governor with a good command of Turkish. The situation was made even worse by Svinarov's nepotism. Svinarov took with him a host of adherents from his native village Zlatista. His brother became mayor of Makri, and several other relatives were also appointed to various positions in the Bulgarian administration.¹⁴ It is natural that the local population would react to the favouritism of Svinarov.

Tano Nikolov (1873 Haskovo-1947 Asenovgrad) and Michael Chakov (1873 Goumenitsa-1938 Sofia) are both well-known revolutionaries associated with IMRO and various other factions of

14. Трифонов, *Тракия, op.cit.*, pp. 83, 86, 105-106.

the Bulgarian-Macedonian revolutionary movement.¹⁵ There are occasional references to Nikolov in the Greek bibliography since he for many years was the leader of the Thracian Revolutionary Organisation. Besides their revolutionary activities they were obviously not averse to taking advantage of the situation to enrich themselves. Tano Nikolov had also played a prominent role in the Pomak conversion campaign, which is a further indication of his opportunism. Other people, such as Orhaniev, used their position in the Bulgarian administration to exploit the newly arrived refugees from areas now under Greek, Serbian and Ottoman rule. The politician Paskalev is criticised for lack of principle and his appointment as mayor of Komotini may be an indication of the lack of suitable persons to take up positions in the Bulgarian administration. A recurring theme in the report is the criticism against the disdain displayed towards the local population and the need to approach them in order to solidify Bulgarian rule.

Chaulev devotes ample space to describe internal strategies and divisions in the Muslims population and Ottoman leadership. Special mention is made of the important publicist and politician Ethem Rûhi (1873 Istanbul-1949 Istanbul).¹⁶ He became a member of the Committee of Union and Progress already in 1895. After arrests and exile in Europe he settled in Plovdiv in late 1904 and published several newspapers. He was well connected to CUP and served as a link between the Bulgarian Muslims and the CUP government in Istanbul. Chaulev is clearly wary of Ethem Rûhi's role and his ability to organise the Muslims. He fears their political power as well as their clandestine activities. He mentions threats and intimidations against Muslims who are ready to sell their estates to Bulgarians, as

15. See http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Михаил_Чаков; http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Тане_Николов for biographical notes. The spelling in standard literary Bulgarian is Tanju Nikolov, but Chaulev is from Ohrid and uses the form Tano. He is also referred to as Tane Nikolov.

16. For brief biographical notes see: <http://www.bicumle.net/yazar/ethem-ruhi-balkan/510>. For a detailed account of Ethem Rûhi's activities in Bulgaria prior to the Balkan Wars, see: Ayçe Feride Yılmaz, *The Ottoman Balkan gazette as an agent of empire within the Bulgarian nation state, 1910-1911*, Master thesis, Central European University 2013 (www.etd.ceu.hu/2013/yilmaz_ayce.pdf).

well as political assassination of political opponents of CUP inside Bulgaria. Chaulev thinks that they should also counter the CUP proagenda by supporting political forces among the Muslims that are in opposition to it.

The Bulgarian attempts to fasten the grip on the “new lands” was first of all threatened by the Muslim presence, but Chaulev also considers the Greek factor. At first he mentions the tricky question of ownership to property and goes on with proposing the expulsion of the Greek population from the strategically important areas of Suflu and Ortaköy. The Dedeagach area, on the other hand, had quite a number of Bulgarian villages before the war and they remained largely intact. Another consideration is the administrative division of the “new lands.” After stating that the Ottoman administrative division was based on the principle of “divide and rule,” he goes on to state that Bulgaria should now adopt the same policy but based on Bulgarian national interests.

All in all, as mentioned in the introduction, the report provides us with a valuable insight into the political thinking of the Bulgarian leadership during this period and a valuable snapshot of the situation on the ground during this critical juncture.

THE REPORT¹⁷

To Mr. Vas. Radoslavov
Prime Minister and Minister
of Internal and Foreign Affairs

Mr. Minister,

As you are aware of, in accordance with your wish I toured the new lands together with Siuleyman Askeri Bey [Süleyman Askerî Bey]. After I toured the main towns and villages in the new lands with the previously mentioned bey, it is my duty to report to Your Excellency what I was able to see and learn about the behaviour and thoughts of the Turkish population.¹⁸

On the 21th of last month the Turkish population of Giumiurdjina [Komotini] gave us a splendid reception.¹⁹ In the morning Siuleyman Bey summoned his people (you can see below who they were) and gave them instructions for the elections. On the 23rd of last month I visited several times the polling stations together with Siuleyman Bey, where one of his men was giving separate instructions to the individual voters and guiding them to the voting booth. Orders were given for all the Turks to go and vote, even those who were very sick, and those who could not go on foot were brought by special carriages. The results are known to you.

On the 24th last month Siuleyman Bey summoned an assembly of the most prominent Turks, some 15-20 persons, and spoke to them for more than three hours. His subject was Turkish history. After he accused the Turkish Sultans who had gone all the way to Vienna, he told them that Edirne was indispensable as the doorway to Istanbul.

17. The report can be found in the Bulgarian Central State Archives: Fond 313, Opis 1, Archivna edinitsa 2144. I would like to thank Alexei Kalionski for paleographic assistance with original handwritten document and discussion of the various events.

18. Chaulev apparently uses the word "Turkish" in a traditional sense as synonymous with Muslim.

19. i.e. February 1914. Dates are old style. According to the Gregorian calendar it would be March 6, 1914.

He accused the Turkish governments, that never had good relations with any of its their neighbours' governments, something that up until now had only had adverse results, and at the end he concluded that from now on they had no outstanding issues with Bulgaria and they would enjoy a sincere friendship.

He introduced me to everybody and explained to me the role each of them had played and were playing.

On the 26th the two of us went to Skecha [Xanthi].

Concerning his visit to Skecha I will only mention to you the words of the mufti:

“Even the reception of Sultan Reshad was not as enthusiastic as this.”²⁰

We stayed for four days in Skecha and were well received and invited home to all the prominent Turks.

There was a meeting of a small circle of people and he [Siuleyman Bey] said the same as he had said in Giumiurdjina.

From there we went on a trip to some of the Turkish villages near the Greek border. We visited the village Okchilar [Toxotes] and returned.²¹

We then went back to Giumiurdjina, where we spent three more days, after that two days in Dedeagach [Alexandroupoli], from there we went to Edirne for three days and then we parted: I went to Sofia and he to Istanbul.

Mr. Minister, I consider myself sufficiently competent to know something about secret organisations, and I tell you: the Turkish population in the Giumiurdjina region are so well organized that in my eyes they appear as one man.²²

The reception by the whole Turkish town and village population together with their women and children took place without any official announcement, without beating on drums. In Skecha they

20. Sultan Mehmed V Reshad (1844-1918), was sultan from 27 April 1909 until his death. He made a few vistis to the Balkans, but I am not certain about the dates in this case.

21. The village Toxotes was at the railway station on the border with Greece.

22. Giumiurdjina region is here used in the Bulgarian administrative sense.

left their workshops without the knowledge of the official [Bulgarian] authorities and secondly, I think that only the voting of 80,000 – absolutely all of the civil Turkish population, and the beating of some Turks who had been deluded by the opposition, are sufficient facts to confirm what I said above.

Not only that, there is something even more terrifying: They are organised in battalions, even platoons, something they told me themselves, and even more striking, when they greeted us upon arrival and departure they were in parade order headed by their officers in civil clothes.

In Skecha the vice regional commander [Bulgarian] also came to the reception together with the police officers [*pristav*] and some mounted police [*strazhar*]. I do not know whether he had been summoned or not. If he had been summoned, in my eyes it did not give a good impression of the representatives of the government, who instead of having the place of honour, cleared the path so the carts could pass – the work of any policeman.

The Turkish population is armed from head to toe. They told me that they have some machine guns and in the villages I suppose they have some canons too. Every town has well-furnished official premises, called “komit hane” (committee house), where they can meet and read newspapers.

In every town there is a commander, all without exception military officers.

I was not able to learn the exact number of officers, since some of them were out in the villages. I only managed to become acquainted with those who are presented below. Some of them were commanders of the towns.

Here are their names and their positions:

1. Siuleyman Askeri bey – Commander in chief
2. Reshad Said bey – Senior military officer
3. Arif bey – Adjutant to Siuleyman Askeri bey
4. Djamil Said bey – Commander of Skecha
5. Sadik Emin bey – Commander of Giumiurdjina
6. Riza bey – Commander of Dedeagach
7. Djelal bey – Commander of Suflu [Soufli]

8. Hadji Komuz-Oğlu-Selim – Commander of Kirdjali
9. Riza bey – Military doctor
10. Senior military officer born in Caucasus – Has good command of Russian
11. Senior military officer born in Caucasus – Has good command of Russian
12. İbrahim efendi – Georgian
13. Raif efendi – Intendant and escort officer in Giumiurdjina
14. Haki bey – Intendant and escort officer in Giumiurdjina
15. Hadji Mustafa – Intendant and escort officer in Giumiurdjina
16. Tayar bey – Head of the detachment that will go to Pravishta [Eleftheroupoli]
17. Mahsar efendi – Head of the detachment that will go to Drama
18. Djafer bey from the Kostur [Kastoria] region – Agitator who tours the villages
19. A Circassian – Commander of Daridere [Zlatograd]

These officers seem to follow a programme where every other day one goes to Istanbul while another returns. The chief of police [*gradonachalnik*] in Giumiurdjina, Murat Bey is a man who is unusually close to the Clubs. The Turkish population considers him the representative of the government and address themselves to him. The administrative correspondence of the Turkish municipalities first arrives at the club; applications first arrive at the club where they are corrected; and every juridical issue between the Turks is also seen to at the club.

The goal of Murat Bey is to play some kind of central role, to become popular among the Turkish clubs and go to Istanbul to take up some prominent position. He was very close to Talat Bey and Djemal Pasha.²³ The dismissal of Murat Bey and disarmament of the Turkish population are very delicate issues that require careful deliberations. Our military is quite self-confident and they think this

23. Together with Enver Pasha they made up the triumvirate of the three pashas who effectively ran the affairs of the Ottoman Empire from the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 until the end of World War I.

will be an easy task, but the uprising in Macedonia during the autumn, the destruction of two Serbian regiments at Debar, the capture of 16 cannons by the rebels, are sufficient examples to the contrary.²⁴

The reason why the Turks can be so well organised, and to continue to act in this fashion – to reinforce the ranks of the organisation, is that the government give them more than complete freedom and because the Bulgarian administration is utterly compromised.

It is not my intention to lash out at people, but I consider it to be the patriotic duty of every Bulgarian, in particular in the new lands, to reveal everything that is dirty and criminal, that leads the state towards the abyss, so that tomorrow it will not be too late.

The regional governor Mr. Svinarov, whose businesses I have no interest to investigate, may rank among the best and most honest persons, but rely on my patriotism and believe me that in these lands this man has no longer any more authority than a [simple] policeman. The elections are sufficient evidence to make you believe me. You know how many Bulgarian votes there are in the Giumiurdjina region, these Bulgarians are not Democrats, their vote was a protest by the Bulgarian people against the government that continue to keep people in charge who are compromised to their bones such as: Mihail Chakov,²⁵ Orhaniev, Tano Nikolov,²⁶ Paskalev as mayor of Giumiurdjina, etc.

It is sufficient for the government to ask Mih. Chakov how he has enriched himself.

Until yesterday Orhaniev made the refugees pick olives for him in return for flour from the state; and after promising them 10 *stotinki* a kilo, in the end he gave them 5 etc. Tano Nikolov who until yesterday baptized the Pomaks is now standing by the Pomaks. Paskalev

24. i.e. the Ohrid-Debar uprising in Northwestern Vardar Macedonia, September 7-19, 1913. Petâr Chaulev was the leading Bulgarian figure and units of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation acted in collaboration with the local Albanians against the Serbian authorities.

25. For brief biographical notes see: http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Михаил_Чакoв

26. The spelling in standard literary Bulgarian is Tanju Nikolov, but Chaulev is from Ohrid and uses the form Tano. He is also sometimes referred to as Tane Nikolov.

was a Turkish deputy until 2 years ago and spitted on everything Bulgarian, last year he was a Tsankovist,²⁷ commissioned during the whole war, so when did he become a liberal²⁸ and mayor of Giumiurdjina? The wife of Svinarov and the wife of some judge –both teachers, but former teachers and unemployed already under Turkish rule– were indignant agitators against the government and deprived if of Bulgarian votes.²⁹

In addition the government lost the elections in the new lands as they pushed the Bulgarian population towards the opposition, by having 12 Turkish candidates, some of them from outside the area and not one local Bulgarian, nor were any local Bulgarian appointed for government service.

It is not necessary to continue with these petty matters, that are many, but it is good for you to know what the Turks are thinking.

As I mentioned previously, the Turkish population is extraordinarily well organised and they live in the belief that tomorrow these lands will become Turkish again etc. How things end up will depend on the measures by the Bulgarian government; but besides this I want to inform you about what Turkish deputies will propose to you so that you can take your measures and not be taken by surprise.

1. They will propose that you clean out the administration and dismiss those who have harassed the Turkish population.
2. They have made a list of all the wrongdoings of the administrative and military authorities and if they are not corrected they will list them up in the national assembly.
3. When they arrive from there [Giumiurdjina] they will assemble everybody from Plovdiv and discuss matters with Etem-Ruhi [Ethem Rûhi].

27. i.e. a member of the Progressive-Liberal party, founded by Dragan Tsankov in 1884 – a “Russophile” and later, pro-Entente party. Its leader, Stoyan Danev, was Prime-minister during the Second Balkan War.

28. i.e. he switched to Radoslavov’s party.

29. i.e. they agitated against Radoslavov’s party and in favour of the opposition.

4. There is a danger that Etem-Ruhi will lead the Turkish group in Parliament and there will be a split, something I have heard the Turks say themselves many times.
5. They are offended by the fact that secret police has been sent to Giumiurdjina, without being presented to the chief of police [*gradonachalnik*] Murat Bey, and who by their incompetence have been spotted even by children.
6. The Turks are looking forward to the municipality elections, in order to elect Turkish governors [*obshtinski upraviteli*]; something they will have not only in village municipalities but also in the towns such as Giumiurdjina and Skecha.
7. The visit of general Dikov and his companions to buy Turkish estates [*chiftliks*] has made the Turkish clubs issue orders to the Turks and threaten them if they sell their estates.
8. The murder of Zeki Bey in Plovdiv and the fact that the murderers have not been arrested, an act that was organized from Istanbul and executed by the Giumiurdjina committee, encouraged the Turkish population immensely, as it gives them the idea that they are masters of the situation in Bulgaria too and can even carry out assassinations. The Bulgarian authorities must use all means to discover the assassins: a) the most important matter is to neutralise their future actions, b) to demonstrate that in Bulgaria the judicial works indiscriminately, c) Zeki Bey as a prominent member of the party Itilaf [*İtilâf*] which from what I know will not come to power tomorrow; and this party is also more friendly disposed towards Bulgaria.³⁰

Mr. Minister, considering what I have written above, I think that the first concern of the government must be to attract the Bulgarian population to its side, which is not too late, and namely:

30. The Freedom and Accord Party (Turkish: Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası, was a liberal Ottoman political party active between 1911 and 1913, during the Second Constitutional Era. It acted as the main opposition party to the Committee of Union and Progress. The party was suppressed after the Raid on the Sublime Porte of January 1913, in which the Committee of Union and Progress's leadership grabbed de facto control of the Empire.

a) To appoint honest and experienced local persons as governors of the municipal administrations.

b) To appoint honest, experienced local people as secretaries, tax collectors, even with a high salary.

c) Instead of the present gendarmery, without local knowledge and loafing about the streets from drunkenness, appoint local boys who have served as volunteers in the wars.

d) It should be appealed to high-ranking persons here in Sofia, honest and sincere patriots, to take up the positions of mayors in the towns, district police chiefs [*Okoliyski nachalnitsi*] and regional governors [*okrâzhni upraviteli*].

Only with such people – true patriots – who place the interests of society far above their personal interests, will they save the land, although in my eyes everything takes on a dark colour, and although this is a strong expression I hope that the situation is not hopeless.

Demonstrate to the Bulgarians in these lands, that these places are now ours, and that the refugee is in possession of what he has, because he – the refugee is not yet able to believe this when the Turks on one side say that it will become theirs and on the other Greek families are returning and given back their property, etc. The regional governor summoned a Greek landlord from Thessaloniki, gave him the documents that verify he [the regional governor] is renting the house and sent him [the landlord] away, people know this and say that tomorrow they will be expelled once more; they live under this impression as if they are awaiting their death, and some of the military would even sell Bulgaria for a Greek woman. The commissions for settling the refugees stand by with their hands tied, they are the target of slander, but I reckon it is because people are very upset and search for culprits everywhere and for everything. What they see, and what I condemn is that there is absolutely no colonization policy, and that is why I decided that I too should voice my opinion:

Deportation by all means of the Greek population in Suflu [Soufli] and Ortaköy [Ivaylovgrad]

Suflu and Ortaköy are our weakest positions within the new borders. During the first war the Greeks of Suflu first revolted

against the Turks; and during the second war they attacked our sentry army in the back with weapons in hand.

Later the same Greeks together with Turkish irregulars [*bashi-bozuks*] participated in the wholesale massacre of the Bulgarian population and burning of Bulgarian villages.

Again in Ortaköy Turkish soldiers and irregulars attacked Kushukavak [Krumovgrad] and thus threatened the Giumiurdjina-Kirdjali road, which forced the Bulgarian army to leave hastily the Aegean region.³¹

In place of the Greek towns of Ortaköy and Suflu we have to create Bulgarian towns by all means. The Dedeagach area is Bulgarian, but that has been the situation from Turkish times. If we succeed to bulgarify Suflu and Ortaköy too, we will by this act erect a strong Bulgarian wall between Istanbul-Edirne on one side and the Turkish masses in Giumiurdjina-Kirdjali on the other.

As long as Edirne is not in our hands, we must have a strong grip on Ortaköy and Suflu if we want to keep the Aegean coast. This is a question that has to be particularly and carefully examined. Instead of spending money on the development of Mustafa Pasha [Svilengrad], which with its hinterland can be nothing more than a big village, this money should be spent on the development of Ortaköy, where people from Mustafa Pasha will cultivate silkworm breeding under better condition from every point of view.

New administrative division

This is imperative, and should be done by Parliament, as soon as possible. The established Turkish administrative division is based on divide and rule. This principle should now be used to serve our interests.

I would propose the following administrative division:

Giumiurdjina town is the intellectual centre of the Western Thrace Turks. All initiatives come from here. Giumiurdjina, Skecha, Daridere and Dedeagach and Suflu should be made a separate region

31. i.e. the special detachment sent by Enver Pasha and led by Eşref Kuşçubaşı that set up the Giumiurdjina republic.

with Giumiurdjina as centre. The rest should be joined to the Stara Zagora and Plovdiv regions.

Under such an administrative division the Giumiurdjina region with a bulgarified Suflu, with a Bulgarian Dedeagach, with refugees, etc., will take on a Bulgarian colour and immediately neutralise the great influence Giumiurdjina town exercises over the Turkish population in all of Western Thrace.

The compact Turkish mass must be divided into different regions in order not to constitute a danger. Then the Giumiurdjina region, the shore region and the border region cut through by the railway, will take on a mainly Bulgarian colour from a national point of view with a systematic settlement of refugees (unfortunately there is no such policy).

Mr. Minister, the Turkish population in the new lands are very influenced by the Istanbul press. It is necessary with censorship that prevents the dissemination of every kind of Turkish newspapers containing various articles, but to let them have mostly access to their opposition newspapers, and in order for them to have reading material the government should take care of issuing a Turkish newspaper in Giumiurdjina where soon the printing office of Samardjiev will arrive from Thessaloniki.

On the basis of our agreements, the Turks have the right to stockpile weapons at the Greek border for arming the Turkish population on Greek territory. They want the weapons to follow the route Edirne-Dimotika [Didymoteihos]-Kirdjali-Skecha area and then to the border.

I am apprehensive against letting the weapons move along this route:

a) So that the weapons are not left in Turkish villages on our territory; b) so that they [the Turks] do not create a network; c) and our government will not be able to be fully informed. I opposed this plan and we decided that the weapon should go from Istanbul on a Bulgarian boat, unload at Porto Lagos and then be stored at Kirechköy [Hrysa].³² Since there are no machines for unloading at Porto Lagos Siuleyman Bey promised to send such equipment.

32. The village Hrysa has today grown into a suburb of Xanthi.

In these places we must have some of our more experienced people, who can follow up closely, and if there are actually stored weapons at Kirechköy we must already from now on station our army there.

The town of Skecha is their best organized centre with the greatest activity so here we must have our most experienced people, as temporary representative of our organisation, without whom nothing will take place, I appointed Angel Popov.

I spent three days in Edirne together with Siuleyman bey, among the Turkish high society. Besides the club *İttihat ve Terraki* [CUP], in Edirne there is also another club called the Committee Club that directs the clubs in our lands.

The largest part of the Edirne army went to Erzerum. In Edirne there is a total of (18) eighteen *taburs*, with maximum 10,000 soldiers.

Typhus and cholera is mowing the army. In a hospital with four doctors, three of them died within two days, and the one who remained cried as a child out of fear.

Having in mind the death of the doctors you can only imagine the situation in the army.

It would be good to take measures at our borders.

With my best compliments:

Pet. Chaulev

12 March 1914

Sofia

The Pomak Question

I was informed by His Eminence Boris that there are Pomaks who want to remain Christians and other who want to be baptised.³³ So

33. For the sake of clarity. He is referring to the Metropolitan Boris, and not the crown prince. "His Eminence Boris" was the Exarchist metropolitan in Ohrid (Boris Ohridski, 1910-1913, 1915-1918). On October 22, 1913, the Holy Synod decided to establish a new eparchy in Maronia (*Maroniyska eparchiya*), encompassing the Giumiurdjina, Skecha and Dedeagach areas with Boris Ohridski as temporary metropolitan. His vicars were Yosif Dragovitiyski (also in exile from Vardar Macedonia) and Ilarion Nishavski, in Dedeagach and Skecha respectively.

that we will not have any misunderstandings with the Turkish government the Pomaks should be sent to old Bulgaria, be baptised and appointed temporarily to a job; and it should be sent a couple of hodjas to their villages, even if they do not know Bulgarian and it should be opened Bulgarian primary schools with experienced teachers.