

Révolutionnaires, nationalistes et diplomates

JAMES HENRY SKENE'S ACCOUNT OF THE REVOLT IN UPPER BULGARIA (1850)

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Ce travail signale, édite et commente le rapport d'un agent de l'ambassade britannique à Constantinople au sujet d'une révolte anti-ottomane de la population bulgare de la région de Vidin.

Keywords: Bulgaria, revolt of 1850, Vidin, Belgradchik, James Henry Skene.

Two major peasant revolts mark the history of the Bulgarian national movements during the first Tanzimat period (1839–1856): those in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850). The general causes of the uprisings, with increased dissatisfaction in the areas of administration, taxation and landholding, the progress of the insurrection or its socio-economic and national consequences have been too thoroughly analysed in the Bulgarian and international historiography to deserve additional scrutiny from a non specialist in the avatars of Balkan modern history¹. However, as Professor B.V. Toshev has very recently referred to the importance of James Henry Skene's travelogue for documenting the revolt of 1850², this paper aims to detail the circumstances of the Scotsman's mission to Upper Bulgaria and its tangible result – an unpublished report sent to Effingham Grant, the British Acting Consul General in Bucharest.

Born in Inverness (3 March 1812) and raised in Scotland, Skene embarked on a military career, which brought him to the British garrison in Malta. After marrying Ralu Rizo-Rangabe, the daughter of an influential Greek dignitary related to the Romanian Principalities, the Scotsman settled himself in the East, at Athens and Constantinople, where he entered the entourage of the influent British Ambassador, “the Great Elchi”, Stratford Canning³. In the summer of 1850, while in an “excursion in the provinces of Austria which are least known, and afterwards

¹ See Mark Pinson, *Ottoman Bulgaria in the First Tanzimat Period – The Revolts in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850)*, in “Middle Eastern Studies”, vol. 11, no. 2, May 1975, pp. 113–133.

² B.V. Toshev, *The First Literary Evidence about the Belogradchik Uprising: Skene (1854)*, in “Venets: The Belogradchik Journal for Local History, Cultural Heritage and Folk Studies”, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 78–93 (online version available at <http://www.venets.org/getfile.php?id=64>).

³ For a short presentation, see Adrian Silvan Ionescu, in *Călători străini despre Ţările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, new series, vol. V, 1847–1851, edited by Daniela Buşă, Bucureşti, 2009, pp. 593–595.

through the Danubian Principalities to other parts of the Turkish Empire”⁴, Skene reached Bucharest.

With little reliable information regarding the disturbances in Bulgaria available in the Wallachian capital and throughout the Principalities, Grant reported that “the details which reached us of events passing in that Province” were “contradictory and exaggerated”⁵. On the one hand, there were the alarming dispatches sent by the British Vice-Consul in Galați (Galatz), Charles Cunningham, accounts circulated by the passengers travelling down the Danube onboard Austrian steamers or communicated to him by the Austrian consul in Galați. On 29 June 1850, forwarding news coming from the Austrian vice-consul in Vidin (dated 19 June), Cunningham announced “that there was a rising of the Bulgarians in the neighbourhood of Widdin and that at that time the garrison of Widdin consisted of 800 regular troops only; that 1000 irregulars had gone out of Widdin and in one village had killed 140 Bulgarians and in other two villages that 100 more had been killed, nearly all of the Bulgarians were without arms and many of them had not taken part in the rising; also that the Turks had killed some Bulgarians in the town of Widdin”⁶. On 6 July, Cunningham added that “all was quiet in the neighbourhood of Widdin, that regular troops had arrived both infantry & cavalry and therefore that the Turkish inhabitants who had taken up arms could be withdrawn”. The irregular troops were guilty for the carnage, being accused of having massacred “at least two thousand unresisting Christians”⁷. On the other hand, there were the reassuring reports of Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, the Turkish Commissioner of the Danubian Provinces, residing in Bucharest during a period when the Principalities were occupied by Russo-Turkish troops. Thus, facing so inconsistent information, Acting Consul Grant was extremely interested “to procure some accurate account of the late proceedings on the right bank of the Danube”⁸, and Skene volunteered to travel to Upper Bulgaria and “ascertain the truth”⁹.

Entrusted with letters of recommendation from the Turkish Commissioner to the Pasha of Vidin, the Scotsman left Bucharest about mid-July, accompanied only by a Greek servant, Pietro, “engaged in favour of his knowledge of the Wallachian, Bulgarian, and Turkish languages”. In Vidin, Skene took quarters at the residence of Zia Pasha, governor of the province, “who has the rank of Vezir, or a Pasha of

⁴ James Henry Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk; comprising Travels in the region of the Lower Danube, in 1850 and 1851*, vol. I, London, 1853, p. 1.

⁵ The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, FO 195/354 (Foreign Office. Embassy and Consulates, Turkey, formerly Ottoman Empire: General Correspondence Turkey, Consulate General in Wallachia, 1850–1852), f. 84–85 (Bucharest, No. 18, 16 August 1850, Effingham Grant to Stratford Canning).

⁶ *Ibid.*, FO 195/349 (Vice-Consulate at Galatz and Sulina, 1850–1851), f. 248 (Galatz, No. 29, 29 June 1850, Charles Cunningham to Stratford Canning).

⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 252 (Galatz, No. 31, 6 July 1850, Charles Cunningham to Stratford Canning).

⁸ *Ibid.*, FO 195/354, f. 84–85 (Bucharest, No. 18, 16 August 1850, Effingham Grant to Stratford Canning).

⁹ J. H. Skene, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

three tails". Thus, he had access to the official version on the incidents, presented to him both by Zia Pasha and the local Turkish civil and military dignitaries, among whom Ferik Pasha ("who had been sent from Constantinople to take command of the troops in Upper Bulgaria, in consequence of the recent insurrections"), Mustapha Pasha and Ismael Pasha¹⁰.

A completely different description was made by three Christian informers. One of them, doctor Barbieri, Italian by origin, but enjoying British protection, gave him "much information on the state of the country, which, by his account, was as bad as can well be imagined, and too bad to be believed". A second source was the agent of the Danube Company, also acting as Austrian vice-consul, whose "hostility to the Turks was so evident in everything he said that I could not hear it without considerable distrust". Skene also examined the Metropolitan Bishop, suspected of being "a Russian agent, as most of the Greek clergy are", though displaying the most servile attitude towards the Turks. His version of the events was as intriguing: "The Bishop said much against the Turkish government, and I consequently supposed, he was all on the side of the Christians, but I was mistaken; for when I questioned him about the Bulgarian peasantry, he was as violent in his abuse of them as he had been lavish in his vituperation of the Turks".

Extremely analytical and judicious with all these witnesses, the British investigator seemed inclined to believe more the official version, more articulate and reasonable, than the exaggerated statements of his Christian sources. Thus, after hearing the hierarch's account of the events, "which he described altogether differently from my previous informants, the Pasha, the Austrian Vice-Consul, and the Italian Doctor, all of whom had represented them according to his especial views. I suspected that, of the four versions, that of the Turk was the most correct, but I still reserved my opinions for further elucidation".

Determined to also have the sentiments of Bulgarian peasants, Skene headed to Belogradchik, with the view of also visiting the villages where the most important disturbances took place. In Aktshar (probably modern day Akatsievo), he gathered information in Christian and Muslim coffee-houses. The Scotsman also stopped at Maladernoftz and Isvor, where the local Mudir or Mayor presented his own narrative on the insurrection. "But as I wished to form my opinion on the evidence of persons altogether unconnected with the government and belonging both to the Christian and the Mahometan classes of the population", he continued "his voyage of discovery, entering into conversation with almost every one we met in the streets". The investigation continued in Belgradchik, where he was received by Ismael Pasha, and throughout his return voyage to Vidin.

¹⁰ This account is entirely based on information from *Ibid.*, the second part of Chapter 10 (Widin – Zia Pasha – Hail Bey – Ali Riza Pasha – Mustapha Pasha and Ismael Pasha – Defences of Widin – Maltese Doctor – Bath – Dinner party – Fehim Effendi – Storm), pp. 226–241 and Chapter 11 (Turkish Officers – Hussein Pasha – Austrian Vice Consul – Russian Intrigues – Metropolitan Bishop – Divan Effendi – Polygamy – Greek Slave – Arabs – Gipsy Encampment – Aktshar – Late Disturbances – Belgradjik – The Mudir – Maruf Aga and the Arab – Ismael Pasha – The Sultan and the Czar), pp. 242–271.

On the basis of these witnesses and of the inquiries made, Skene drew up his report of the insurrection in Bulgaria, which he sent from Vidin on 7 August 1850¹¹. The paper completes the narrative from his published travelogue, the key elements of the revolt being considered the following: the peasantry was agitated by “foreign emissaries and Greek priests”; the villagers displayed a generally pacific attitude; the bloodshed was the result of the irregular forces’ gratuitous violence; the Turkish authorities reacted with tact and moderation and were not in any way guilty for the atrocities committed. The Scotsman’s account is definitely biased by his formation and prejudices, but it is nevertheless an extremely valuable record for documenting the revolt of 1850, its consequences and most of all its contemporary perceptions.

*

Widin, 7th August 1850

“Sir,

It appears that no precise account of the number of lives lost during the late disturbances in Upper Bulgaria has as yet been forwarded from this place, and the contradictory remarks, which vary in representing it sometimes to have been not more than thirty, and at others, as many thousands, are still unsupported by any direct evidence on either side. Indeed it is only now that a reasonable estimate can be formed on the subject, because the commission, appointed by the Turkish local authorities for the purpose of ascertaining how many Bulgarians were killed, had not concluded its operations until the end of last week; and, as the importance of the events and the interest attached to them must necessarily depend very much on the amount of harm done, I hope that a further elucidation of the circumstances attending the collision between the Turks and the Rayas will not prove inopportune.

Although much may be said with regard to the degree of reliance which can be placed on the result of the investigation ordered by the Pacha of Widin, still it is altogether impossible in the present state of the country to arrive at a conclusion, in the least satisfactory, through any other medium than that of an official enquiry, and, if due allowance be made for the possibility of collusion on the part of the commissioners, and ample latitude given to the probability of exaggeration in the assertions of the Christians at Widin, a conjecture may be formed, which cannot deviate much from the truth. I shall, therefore, state the number of deaths computed by the commission and the allegations of the Christians, together with the convictions which I have come to in the course of my own personal enquiries and observations at Widin, Belgradgik, and the neighbouring villages, and I trust that

¹¹ The report is enclosed in the dispatch which the British Acting Consul in Bucharest sent to Constantinople (Bucharest, No. 18, 16 August 1850, Effingham Grant to Stratford Canning) – FO 195/354, f. 86–97.

the matter will thus be placed in a clearer light than that in which it has hitherto been viewed.

With respect to the reports which have been circulating in the other provinces, there are only three possible sources of information, from which they can have been derived. First there is Dr. Barbieri, an Italian who arrived at Widin a few days after the disturbances were over, and who communicated all the intelligence he could collect here to different quarters, and, amongst others, he has addressed letters on the subject to the British Embassy at Constantinople and to the British Consulate at Belgrade; he has shown me copies of his correspondences, and, as we discussed most fully their contents, it soon became evident to me from his explanations of them that he has allowed himself to be carried away by his excitement and to lose sight of matter of fact in his desire to produce effect. Then there is the Agent for the Danube steamers, who also acts as Austrian Vice Consul; he has reported what he heard rumoured in the town to the Austrian Consul at Galatz, and his statements may have been repeated and credited there as containing accurate intelligence, but anyone, who could hear them *viva voce* as I did, would at once perceive how strongly they are biased by a hostile feeling towards the Turkish authorities, and would be convinced, as I was, that resentment for the hospitality afforded last year to the Hungarian refugees prompts his opinions, induces him to give credence to the most gross exaggeration, and deprives him even of the semblance of impartiality. Besides these two services of information, tidings may have been received through passengers reaching Constantinople, Galatz, or Belgrade, by the Austrian steamers; but such channels of communication can hardly be trusted to, as their purport must either have been dictated by the Agent and officers of the Danube Company, or have been coloured by the irritated feelings which Bulgarians leaving Widin would naturally carry with them. Instances of this are to be found in the facts that it was currently believed on the other side of the Danube that Zia Pacha had been superseded for his conduct in the late affairs, and that the Metropolitan Bishop had been given over by the Turks to the Bulgarian villagers as a hostage until their demands should be settled; whereas I found Zia Pacha in the full exercise of his functions as Governor of Upper Bulgaria, which he still is, and the Bishop living quietly in his own house in this town. The rumours, which have been circulating with regard to the late events in the Pachalik of Widin must, therefore, be considered as resting on very slender foundations, and they are the less entitled to credence inasmuch they have evidently been spread by persons serving the Russian interest of making as much as possible of such incidents in Turkey; while the statements which have been forwarded from here were altogether premature, for nothing had there been concluded, many individuals supposed to have been killed were daily returning from Servia whither they had fled, others who were said to be mortally wounded were recovering, and, in short, most of the consequences of the collision between the Turks and the Bulgarians were so doubtful that a positive case could not

possibly be made out on either side. But almost all that was uncertain and ambiguous has now been cleared up, as much as it probably ever can be, and I shall proceed to acquaint you with the facts, in so far as I have been able to ascertain them.

The commission, sent round the villages to make out a list of those who had been killed, was presided by the Metropolitan Bishop of the Greek Church at Widin, who communicated to me the result of their enquiry, and the Pacha gave me a copy of their report, which he said would be forwarded to Constantinople in a few days. The total amount of lives lost among the Bulgarians is therein fixed at 144; on the 11th of June, 25 of these are stated to have been killed near Lom Palanka, when Zia Pacha sent Marouf Aga to collect some of the zaptié, who are a kind of irregular gens d'armes, and to meet the insurgents for the purpose of asking them what they wanted; on the 25th of June, 64 are calculated as having been put to death at Belgradgik and the surrounding villages, when the same irregular troops were ordered to proceed there with the view of dispersing the Bulgarians, but without instructions to attack them, as no resistance could be expected from unarmed peasants, and none was offered except in self defence; and the remaining 55 are reckoned to have been killed on the hills during the passage of Marouf Aga's band from the one place to the other. Such is the report of the Bishop; but, instead of 25, 64 and 55, it is asserted at Widin by those who have spread the reports which have reached other places, that the number of Bulgarians killed on those three occasions amounted to 150, 1000 and 200, making a total of 1350, or, as the Austrian Vice Consul told me, that the whole extent of the loss of life reached 1246. It is also stated that 3 women and 4 children had been put to death at Belgradgik, that a great many women suffered violence and that the houses and shops of the Bulgarians resident there had been plundered to the value of upwards of 600,000 piastres. These statements were made to me by several persons of apparent respectability, but their manner so obviously betrayed the existence of the greatest degree of animosity against the Turks, that I could not receive them without considerable distrust, and I have not the least doubt that the numbers affirmed by them are very much exaggerated; while, on the other hand, I have not less doubt that the Bishop has underrated the loss of life, for, although his selection by the Pacha was expedient on account of his position as the local head of the Christian Church, which rendered him a suitable mediator between the Turks and the Bulgarians, I fear that he was not personally the most eligible individual to conduct the enquiry, because, from all that I have both heard and seen of him, I suspect that he would be disposed to show a result as favourable to the Turks as he possibly could.

I questioned a great many Bulgarians at Belgradgik and in the villages, where none of those who spread the exaggerated reports had been, and I could not obtain any evidence in support of these erroneous statements; but I discovered several cases which had not been included in the Bishop's list. For instance, 45 Bulgarians were said to have been killed in the town of Belgradgik, while I ascertained there

beyond the possibility of a doubt, as they were cut down in the open streets and everyone agreed about the number, that no more than 12 had been killed, notwithstanding that my informants were all most violent in their vituperation of the Turks, and I was fully convinced that no women or children were put to death, as was reported, although it is true that several were wounded; I saw one woman with two bad thrusts of a yataghan in her neck, and a little boy of seven years of age with a long sabre cut on his head, the cap which he wore when I saw him being divided in two by the blow, but these wounds were nearly healed; and it was stated that 955 had been killed in the villages of Belgradgik, whereas the villages themselves did not mention to me more than 70, and some of them said that only 50 had died. In the other hand, I found that deaths had occurred which the commission had not counted; at the fort of Belgradgik, for example, 7 Bulgarians were put to death, whose fate was not known when the Bishop was there; at the villages of Maladernoftz, Racovizza, Ghirza, Brecovizza, and Calla, 16 persons had been killed of whom no mention is made in his report and in the town of Belgradgik 4 Turks were killed, as well as 11 belonging to the villages near Widin and 9 who are missing without any thing certain being known of what has become of them; I think it probable, however, that these latter had escaped to Servia, as the insurgents only desired to take the arms of those whom they stopped on the roads, and many Turks have returned to Widin by the Danube steamers, saying that their lives had been spared on their giving up the guns, swords, or pistols, which they carried. After minutely calculating all these and many other details, too long to be inserted here, and after gathering as much information as I could obtain from both parties not only at Widin, as those who have written on the subject had done, but also at Belgradgik and a great many villages, I have, therefore, arrived at the conclusion that 200 is as near an approximation to the truth with regard to the loss of life as it is possible to reach in a country like Bulgaria, where more regular proceedings to ascertain the exact number are utterly impracticable; this result is certainly not above the mark, and probably not much under it.

I had no means of making any estimate of the amount of property plundered at Belgradgik, but that houses and shops were really rifled of almost everything they contained, is perfectly true; as also that violence was committed on women.

The worst feature in the whole affair, however, appeared to me to be the following, and I relate it because it seems to have escaped the notice of all others who have investigated the circumstances attending these disturbances. When I was about to leave Widin for Belgradgik, the Divan Effendi, or Chief Secretary, told me that the Pacha would be obliged to me if I could obtain any information with respect to seven inhabitants of the latter town who had disappeared. On arriving there, I went to their houses and saw their wives, who said that, when the Turks of Belgradgik perceived that the villagers were approaching in great numbers, they sent for these seven Bulgarians, who were the principal shop-keepers of the place and who knew nothing of the movement in the villages, and they enticed them into

the fort, where they were detained as hostages. During nine days their children were allowed to carry food to them, and they saw them confined with chains on their hands and feet; but on the tenth day, which was after the irregular troops had entered the town and had killed several of the inhabitants, the children were refused admittance into the fort, and nothing had since been heard of the seven shopkeepers. The son of one of them was at the door of his house on that day, when one of Marouf Aga's band was passing, and the Turk told him that he wished to be his guest; the Bulgarian said he was welcome and held his horse while he dismounted; when they were entering the house, the Turk drew a pistol from his girdle and shot the young man through the head; after which he carried off all the money and articles of value belonging to the family. The blood was still visible where the Bulgarian fell. This was all that I could learn at Belgradgik on the subject of these seven families, but, on leaving that town, I was followed by a Priest of most respectable appearance with four Bulgarians, three of whom told me that they had been afraid to come to me in the town, where the Turks might hear that they had given me information, and that another son of one of the seven shop-keepers had brought them to me for that purpose, in consequence of the Priest having hinted to him that he was aware of their being able to throw some light on the fate of his father. They then proceeded to narrate what they knew with regard to the seven hostages, which was significant, if true, and I saw no good reason to doubt it. They said that they had chanced to be among the trees on the hill near the fort, on the 25th of June, when they saw the seven prisoners led out of it with their arms pinioned, and that they were bound to some wild plum trees, which they pointed out to me from the road, and stabbed to death by the Turks. They added that the bodies were thrown among the bushes, after the heads had been cut off and carried away. One of the witnesses said that three of the heads had been taken to Widin, and that the Pacha had given a bakshish of 2000 piastres to those who brought them to him, but another of them interrupted him saying that he could not know that for certain, and they should relate only what they had seen. The latter also told me that he had gone to the spot with another of them a few days afterwards and had found a number of dogs devouring the bodies. I enquired if the bones could still be seen, with the intention of returning to Belgradgik to see them myself, but the Priest said that he had gone to the place lately, when he heard the story from my informants, and that no vestige of them there remained. The alleged bakshish is too inconsistent with the general character and conduct of Zia Pacha to be believed without better evidence, which could not easily be obtained even if it were a fact; but the remainder of the story bore every appearance of truth as far as can be judged by the manner in which it was told, and this was the most likely result that could arise from the detention of the hostages, as Marouf Aga and his followers were not men who would be disposed to spare them. Forty children were left totally destitute by the death of these seven Bulgarians, one of them having no less

than nine the eldest of whom is only 13 years of age, and, although they were the most wealthy tradesmen of the town, their widows are most utterly penniless, everything they possessed having been carried off, even to the most necessary household utensils. On my return to Widin, I stated their case the Zia Pacha, and he immediately gave orders that a regular supply of food should be given to them, until he should have it in his power to restore all that had been appropriated by the Turkish irregular troops to the rightful owners; and he assured me that it was his intention to bring the leaders of these bands to trial for their conduct.

The chief responsibility for the bloodshed which has taken place in Upper Bulgaria lies with Marouf Aga, but there is a proprietor of Lom Palanka, whose name is Sherif Effendi, although he is commonly called the Arab from his dark complexion, and who was also very much to blame. He accompanied Marouf Aga on his expedition, and he was the first to draw his sword on the Bulgarians and to incite others to do the same. Marouf Aga remonstrated against his violence and reminded him that they had no instructions which could authorise it; so far he behaved better than Sherif Effendi, but when he went to Belgradgik it seems that he was less to blame only inasmuch as the ones of having shown the example cannot fall on him, for he was as cruel and bloodthirsty there as Sheriff Effendi had been at the villages of Lom Palanka. The Austrian Vice Consul told me a few days ago and that the latter had absconded from Bulgaria and that the Pacha had facilitated his flight, but the Pacha assured me that he had kept him at Widin, as well as Marouf Aga and all the other chiefs of the irregular troops for the purpose of calling them to a severe account for their conduct, and I was informed today by a person who had seen Sherif Effendi this morning that he asserts they have the written orders of the Pacha to act as they did. This seems to me to be impossible, as it can hardly be credited that the instructions given to Marouf Aga and Sheriff Effendi should have been dictated by a totally different spirit from those imparted by the Pacha to many others, who were acting in the same affair, and with whom I spoke on the subject. All of those employed by the Pacha, with the exception of those two, behaved with prudence and moderation; the local authorities of Lom and Belgradgik were immediately replaced by others, who enjoyed his confidence, and their conduct has proved that they deserved it; the excitement of the Turkish population at Widin was kept in check by the most praiseworthy measures executed under his own personal direction and officers were sent by him to the villages to pacify the irritation and calm the fears of the Bulgarians. In all these cases, the Pacha's instructions were irreprehensible, and the results were most satisfactory; it can therefore hardly be fair that he should be held responsible, as he is by those who have written from here on the subject, for the murders of two of his many agents who were acting independently and at a distance from him.

The leaders of the irregular troops, as well as the zaptié themselves, are Turks of this province, and there is a wide distinction to be made, in my opinion, between them and the Turkish local government, although they seem to have been most

grossly confounded in the accounts of the recent events, which have been transmitted from here. The former proved themselves to be impetuous and cruel, while the latter acted throughout in a spirit of conciliation; the religious fanaticism, licentious brutality, and sanguinary fury, of Marouf Aga's band were characteristic of an intolerant lawless, and vindictive people, whom violence has not yet been sufficiently tempered by the laudable endeavours of their rulers to bring them within the pale of civilization, while the measures adopted by Zia Pacha and Riza Ferik Pacha, the Commander of the Forces, who arrived here about three weeks ago, were in every respect such as would have been resorted to under similar circumstances by Governors and Generals belonging to the most enlightened nations and, as far as I could judge, the only censure, that can be awarded is for a want of severity on the part of the local authorities, who appeared to me to have been deficient in vigour and energy of conduct, rather than in principles of humanity and benevolence, as has been stated by others. And instead of attributing this insurrectionary movement to the oppressive administration of the province, as some persons have done, I am only astonished that such collisions should not have occurred before now under the defective system of the collection of taxes, which is an intolerable burden on the Bulgarians, and which existed long before the present local government was in office, while it is altogether beyond the control of the Pacha. The villagers, moreover, never laid their grievances before him, and never begged him to intercede for them in a higher quarter; what just cause of complaint against him can they thus have? But it is not true that they complain of his conduct at all, and the statements that the differences were between the Bulgarians and their immediate rulers are altogether groundless. The Bulgarians complain of the malpractices of the Beylikgis; they believed that the Pacha had been informed of their dissatisfaction; and, seeing no prospect of relief from their sufferings through the steps, which they had already taken, they resolved on going to Widin in a body to state their grievances. That they were prompted to do so, I have no doubt; and I am quite convinced that the non-effect of their previous attempts to bring their case under consideration was also owing to intrigue.

Russia, ever ready to sow the seeds of discord among her Southern neighbours in the hope of reaping the harvest of intervention, has not been inactive on the present occasion in Bulgaria. I have been told by persons here that they had been spoken to by her agents; others said to me that they had recognized them when they had crossed the Danube by night in disguise. I also conversed at some length with one of them myself, during the recent disturbances when I passed Widin on my way down the Danube, although it was not until sometime afterwards that I learnt he was an officer in the Russian service, and another of them, with whom I spoke lately, and who seemed to be altogether inadequate to his mission, told me himself that he was employed in that way, although his official duties were ostensibly of a totally different nature. The effects of this course of systematic intrigue are visible in the veneration with which the name of the Emperor of Russia

in pronounced by the Bulgarian peasants; they call him their father; and the mere identity of their religious creed could never produce so decided a sympathy, unless other means were used. I had an opportunity of judging how loosely connected these machinations were with the late events, the villagers frequently asserted to me that they had complained repeatedly to the Pacha through their Priests and the Metropolitan Bishop, and the Pacha assured me that no such complaints had ever reached him, while he also told me, one day in the presence of the Bishop, that they had never even complained to their own Priests. The Bishop kept silence, and the Pacha asked him if he had ever received a complaint from the villagers; he replied in the negative, but his manner was such as to convince me of the falsehood of his declaration. He is evidently playing a double game; secretly intriguing for Russia, but struggling at the same time to gain the confidence of the Turkish authorities, towards whom he displays the greatest degree of servility, and whose interests he endeavours to further when they employ him openly. He does not have a good reputation in any respect.

Five or six Bulgarians leave by the steamer today for Constantinople with the intention of appealing to the Sultan for some change in the system of taxation. They asked the Pacha's permission to go, and he granted it immediately.

The country appears to be still in an unsettled state; so much so that I was advised by many not to undertake a journey in the interior without a guard and Riza Ferik Pacha spontaneously offered me an escort when I mentioned to him my project. In the villages, the Bulgarian peasants said that they did not venture to sleep in their houses, as they feared that they might again be attacked, and that they concealed what property they could and slept in the field; while, on the other hand, the Turkish population seemed also to entertain apprehensions, as a family going from Belgradgik to Widin begged leave to travel under the protection of the armed men, who accompanied me; but, although there is alarm on both sides, the grounds are not equal, for the Turks are allowed to carry arms, and that privilege is denied to the Bulgarians.

I found cultivation very much neglected in consequence of the state of the country; the crops of maize were neither hoed nor weeded in many places; and the villagers will thus be deprived of a great part of their subsistence for the winter.

The irregular troops have been dismissed by the Pacha, and the country is patrolled by regular dragoons, regiments of infantry being also stationed in the districts. It was unfortunate that he should have been obliged to employ the zaptié at all, but he could not send regular troops, as he had there only 800, and it would have been imprudent under such circumstances to weaken the garrison of Widin; indeed it was well that he did not detach any of them, because it was owing to their active exertions in guarding the streets that a general massacre of the Bulgarians by the Turkish populace did not take place here. There are at present 6000 men of the regular army in Widin and the neighbourhood, and if the troops on the line of march from Constantinople arrive, there will be between 13000 and 14000. Their

headquarters are at Widin, which is not so central a position as Akchar would be, as they would there be at equal distances from Belgradgik, Lom Palanka and Widin, and only half as far as the two former as the latter town is, while, from the nature of the ground around Akchar, it could easily be made defensible, if necessary. As long as such a force is kept in Upper Bulgaria tranquillity will be preserved; the villagers consider the regular troops to be their protectors and have a friendly feeling towards them; but it could not well be otherwise, considering how the Turkish army is now organized, disciplined and commanded, and it is much to be regretted that a corps of regular gens d'armeries should not also have been formed, as these deplorable events could not in that case have occurred; the discontented spirit, however, still exists, and if an opportunity should offer, a greater catastrophe is to be feared, unless the peasants are relieved from the burden of the Beylikgis, for a general insurrection will, otherwise, become ultimately inevitable.

What changes should be introduced and how they should be effected, are questions which would involve too full a statement of details to be entered upon now, as I have already been led into the discussion of more particulars than I had intended, and more than may perhaps seem to have been necessary”.