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The Institute of Humanities, Meiji University
1-1 Kanda-Surugadai Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 101-8301
TEL 03-3296-4135 FAX 03-3296-4283

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**The Macedonian origins of the “Black Hand”
and the Sarajevo incident**

SAHARA Tetsuya

The Macedonian origins of the “Black Hand” and the Sarajevo incident

SAHARA Tetsuya

Introduction

World War I (WWI) was triggered by the Sarajevo incident. The Habsburg heir apparent, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was killed with his wife by an Austro-Hungarian subject of Bosnian origin, Gavrilo Princip, on 28 June 1914. The relatively insignificant incident with a local character¹ gave the pretext for an ultimatum to Serbia, as Princip and his comrades were allegedly abetted by a secret organization formed inside the Serbian Army, *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* (Union or Death) or, as it was more popularly known, the Black Hand.² Contrary to Austrian allegations, involvement of the Black Hand in the Sarajevo incident was quite subtle and indirect.³ It is, accordingly, unreasonable to consider the Black Hand to be the main conspirator in the assassination. Nonetheless, the underground activities of international terrorist groups, including the Black Hand, were closely connected with the ongoing deterioration of the regional order that finally led to the European war, and in this sense one can say that the Black Hand was one of the causes of WWI.

This paper sheds light on the hitherto unknown aspects of the interaction between international terrorist organizations before WWI—their rivalries and collaborations, taking the Serbian and Bulgarian cases as examples, and tries to elucidate their effects on the outbreak of the Great War.

Background: the Macedonian question and Russo-Austrian confrontation

In his controversial work *The Sleepwalkers*, Christopher Clark tries to attribute responsibility for the Sarajevo incident to “the dangerous dynamic” of Serbian political culture after the 1903 May coup. His argument is based on the assumption that the outright amnesty and ensuing insti-

1 The assassinations of high dignitaries and royal family members were commonplace in those days; Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 11–13; Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 23–41.

2 It may be misleading to call the organization the “Black Hand” because its members never used this name. The author uses this name in this paper mainly for the convenience of non-specialized readers.

3 The Austro-Hungarian authorities failed to recognize the activities of the Black Hand members. They wrongly accused *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defense), a different organization, of responsibility for the assassination. The involvement of the Black Hand was later claimed by the Serbian authorities, especially at the controversial Salonika trial.

tutional tolerance shown to the regicide officers caused a malfunction of civilian control over the officer corps and the extreme nationalists who collaborated with them, eventually leading to the Sarajevo assassination.⁴ The assessment is rather narrowly focused on the domestic development of post-coup Serbian politics and relies on the old schema of the Black Hand that was formulated in interwar Yugoslav historiography. The assumption about the central role of Dragutin Dimitrijević-Apis and his friends, both in domestic politics and the nationalist movement, let alone the kind of view that they had created a state within a state, are obsolete. The remaining sources, especially those published in the huge collection of Serbian diplomatic documents, make it clear that the nationalist and officers' movements were well coordinated and funded by the ministry of foreign affairs.⁵ Moreover, Clark excludes the effect of Bulgarian politics in Macedonia that played a crucial role in shaping the Serbian nationalist movement between 1903 and 1913. A proper assessment of the development of Serbian nationalist tactics and strategy is impracticable if it does not take their influence into consideration.

The rivalry between Serbia and Bulgaria is one of the key background features of WWI. The joint victory over the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War put the Christian allies into an inextricable confrontation over the spoils of Macedonia. It led to the second round of wars and resulted in the total defeat of the Bulgarians. Although Bulgaria had to cede parts of its territory to all of its neighboring countries, its grudge against Serbia was the strongest because it considered the part of Macedonia seized by the Serbs to be the most precious portion of "historical Bulgaria."⁶ In turn, the Serbs asserted that Vardar Macedonia was a part of its "historical homeland," introducing the new denomination of "Southern Serbia." As a corollary, the two countries entered into a serious imbroglio.

The irreconcilable rivalry between the two states over northwestern Macedonia seriously endangered the tacit agreement on the division of the sphere of interests between Russia and Austria-Hungary. In the course of the nineteenth century, the Russians were pursuing their objective of controlling the Ottoman Straits. Vienna, in turn, aspired to secure its influence over the Adriatic coasts. As both wanted to avoid open confrontation, they agreed on the *status quo ante* in the central Balkans. In this way, the two states had reached at a consensus to divide the Southern Balkans into their spheres of interest and by 1900 jointly exercised exclusive influence over the Balkans.⁷

Several developments during the first decade of the twentieth century undermined

4 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to war in 1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2013) (First published by Allen Lane, 2012) 37.

5 *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Kraljevine Srbije*, vols. 1–6 (Beograd: SANU, 1981–2014).

6 The centrality of Macedonia in Bulgarian nationalism was consolidated after the Balkan Wars. It was claimed to be the birthplace of Bulgarian culture and religion, as well as its political center from the medieval period. See, for example, the declaration of the IMRO on 16 May 1913: Tsocho Bilyarski & Iva Burilkova, eds., *Bûtreshnata Makedono-odrinska revolyutsionna organizatsiya, 1893–1919g. Dokumenti na Tsentralnite rûkovodni organi*, vol. 1, part 2 (Sofia: Sv. Kl. Ohridski, 2007), 1053–1054.

7 Steven Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989), 7–10.

the grounds of this unwilling cohabitation. The rapid economic growth of Germany made Austria-Hungary vulnerable to its political and military preponderance. To maintain its position and dignity as a “European power,” Vienna sought to boost its presence in the Balkans. It eventually matched the German policy of expansion into the Orient. The Russians were alarmed by this development. Having endured humiliation in the war with Japan, they too felt it indispensable to buttress its “world power” status by fortifying their mastery over the Balkans. In this way, a trivial region—the Balkans—had by the 1910s turned out to be the focus of global contention.⁸

The Balkan Wars made the Russian and Austrian versions of Balkan diplomacy totally unworkable. The failure to fulfill the role of arbitrator in the territorial division of northern Macedonia drastically reduced Russian influence over the Bulgarians. It made the Russians rely almost exclusively on the Serbs. The Austrians, in turn, were put on alert by the Serb victory. As their early endeavor to subjugate the Serbs both economically and politically through the tariff war had failed, the Viennese hardliners began to think of more radical options. In the eyes of the Habsburg hawks, the disproportionate expansion of Serbia into the Southern Balkans would jeopardize its planned infiltration into the East. Moreover, the rise of Serbia might encourage their Southern Slav subjects and precipitate their aspirations for political autonomy. To forestall this double threat, the conservative circles of the Dual Monarchy inclined increasingly toward war.⁹ The murder of two members of the Habsburg royal family provided them with the desired pretext. The “Third Balkan War” that the Austrians had wanted turned out, however, to be a global war.¹⁰

In all of the phases of these developments, international terrorist organizations¹¹ played their part, sometimes quite significantly. Let us throw some light on the role by focusing on the interactions between Serbian and Bulgarian organizations.¹²

The background to the birth of the Black Hand

The Black Hand, as mentioned above, gave only indirect support to the Sarajevo assassins, but the political-military circle that existed in and around it had much larger involvement in the constant rising of tensions and gradual deterioration of relations among the Balkan nations. The traditional historiography asserts that the organization was founded on 22 May 1911,¹³ but its core

8 William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 49–52, 80–84.

9 Andrej Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija, 1908–1918* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011).

10 Strachan, *The First*, 22–31; Joachim Remak, “The Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 43/3 (Sep. 1971), 353–366.

11 By this term, the author means non-governmental bodies that operate beyond the confines of a state and intentionally make use of illegal or illicit violent measures as the principal tools to achieve their political objectives.

12 It is necessary, for a full understanding of the mechanism, to incorporate the Greek, Turkish, and Albanian nationalist terror tactics into this picture. It is, however, beyond the limit of this study, for the moment.

13 By the Julian calendar, the date was 9 May. In this paper, the author uses dates based on the Gregorian calendar.

body had taken shape by the time of the palace coup that took place on 10–11 June 1903, customarily referred to as “the May coup.”

At the turn of the twentieth century, a serious political crisis was well under way inside Serbia. The crisis focused on the collision between the young king, Aleksandar Obrenović, and his opponents. The king was basically censured for his growing inclination to despotic rule, but various discontents converged on his personal affairs, specifically his marriage to a woman of ill repute.¹⁴ In 1901, a circle of conspirators was founded with the aim of removing the queen from the palace. A dozen senior officers organized the main conspiratorial board and began to induce their colleagues to form local cells. The main figures were Colonel Aleksandar Mašin (brother of the queen’s first husband), General Jovan Atanacković, Colonel Leonidas Solarević, and Lieutenant Colonels Petar Mišić and Damnjan Popović. These senior officers were to play significant roles in Serbian politics after the coup. They found allies in a group of politicians led by Djordje Genčić, the former minister of the Liberal Party, who used to be an Obrenović supporter but lost the king’s favor for criticizing his marriage. By the day of coup, the conspirators had gathered as many as 200 supporters.¹⁵ The overwhelming majority came from the ranks of the lower officers, and it was they who carried out military operations during the coup. Among the young officers, the most active were Lieutenant Antonije Antić and Dragutin Dimitrijević-Apis.¹⁶

As this process shows, the plot was first conceived by the senior officers, and the young officers were recruited by them only after the master plan had been drawn up. David Mackenzie asserts, however, that Apis played the role of de facto commander of the rebel officers during the coup and continued to be seen as their leader after the coup.¹⁷ His assessment is an exaggeration, if not misleading, in light of fact that Apis was only one of the participants on the night of operation. Although he was the one of two officers wounded during the coup, his role was of secondary importance. He was not in any commanding position. It was Aleksandar Mašin who elaborated the plan of attack and took the role of general commander of the insurgents. After the coup, the new regime was controlled by the senior plotters, not by Apis and his young friends.¹⁸ It is true that Apis had become popular among the young plotters and was regarded as their leader by some outside observers, but this was due to his personal charm or charisma, not the fact that he was the main plotter.

The reason why Apis and his friends could exert a degree of influence over Serbian politics for more than ten years derives from the fact that most of the senior plotters were forced to retire in 1906 due to British pressure. After their removal, their positions and power were, to some degree, taken over by the young plotters, and this enabled Apis and his friends to form a special interest group both

14 Michael Boro Petrovič, *A History of Modern Serbia 1804–1918*, vol. 2 (NY & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 480.

15 Vasa Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka: ličnosti i događaji u Srbiji od prevrata 1903. do Solunskog procesa 1917. godine* (Belgrade: Prizma, 1997), 70–78.

16 Slobodan Bijelica, “Organizacija ‘Ujedinjenje ili smrt!’” *Kultura politika*, 2–3, 2005, 51.

17 David Mackenzie, *Apis, the Congenial Conspirator: The Life of Colonel Dragutin T. Dimitrijević Apis* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1989).

18 Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 106.

within the army and the palace. It is in this context that the young plotters could pursue their political goals, sometimes beyond the control of civilian authorities, but not always successfully.¹⁹

The main motive that led the group of young officers to the 1903 coup was anxiety about the damage the king’s attitudes concerning internal affairs might inflict on Serbian foreign policy. As Čedomir Popović, a leading Black Hand member later recollected, “The main reason why the young officers entered into a plot on 29 May in 1903 was that the wider layers of citizens, especially the circles of officers, had been anxious about the total lack of progress on national issues. It had been felt that the last king of the Obrenović family immersed himself too much in internal political struggles with the purpose of strengthening his dynasty, and entirely neglected the national interest.”²⁰ In the same vein, Apis testified at the Selanik court that the “Serbian idea and Serbian mission had been wholly abandoned [by the previous Obrenović rulers].”²¹ After the coup, the sentiment grew even larger, and the young officer-plotters considered themselves to be the main guardian of the country’s sovereignty and the proponents of the sacred mission of national unification of all Serbs.²² Therefore, it was natural that they kept close ties with other nationalist groups.

In early May 1903, a group of students from *Velika Škola*, the precursor of Belgrade university, founded a cultural educational club, Slovenski jug (Slavic south), in Belgrade. The club happened to be a major proponent of the unification of all South Slavs based on liberal, but ill-defined, principles of Yugoslav fraternity.²³ The founders had close contact with the members of a Belgrade-based freemasons’ lodge, “Rebirth,” and its prominent member, Milorad Gođevac, a sanitary doctor of the Belgrade city government. The charters of the society were drawn up by Ljubo Jovanović-Čupa, one of the founders of the Black Hand, and a participant in the May coup, Milan Vasić, was also enrolled. The society enjoyed close ties with many major figures in Serbian politics, especially Ljbomir Davidović (politician, Radical Party), Jaša Prodanović (politician, Independent Party), Ljubomir Stojanović (Philologist), and Živan Živanović (politician, Liberal Party, stepbrother of Apis). Several important May coup officers, such as General Jovan Atanacković, Major Peter Pešić, Lieutenant Živojin Rafailović, and D. Dimitrijević-Apis, had intimate ties with the society, too.²⁴

One of the main concerns of Serbian nationalists at that time was the expansion of Bulgarian influence over Ottoman Macedonia. In 1895, Bulgarian guerrillas organized by the Sofia-based *Vŭrhovna makedonska komitet* (Supreme Macedonian committee) entered Ottoman territory.

19 Ibid., 240–251.

20 Čedomir Popović, “Organizacija „Ujedinjenje ili smrt“ („Crna ruka“),” *Nova Evropa* (11 June 1927), 397.

21 MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand,” on Trial: Salonika, 1917* (East European monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1995), 322.

22 Dušan Bataković, “Storm over Serbia The Rivalry between Civilian and Military Authorities (1911–1914),” *Balkanica*, 44 (2013), 315.

23 Milorad Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1790–1918*, vol. 2 (*Beograd: Prosveta, 1989*), 535–536.

24 Jaroslav Valerijanovič Višnjakov, “Makdeonski pokret i prevrat u Srbiji 29. Maja 1903,” *Tokovi istorije: Česopis Instituta za Noviju istoriju Srbije*, 3 (2010), 19–20.

Albeit totally abortive, the incursion and ensuing alleged persecution of the Christian population succeeded in attracting Western sympathy to the Bulgarian national cause.²⁵ In 1901, a political murder plotted by a Macedonian Bulgarian nationalist group led to the mass arrest of its members and further enhanced Western concerns about the Macedonian Christians.²⁶ At the height of this international tension, another Supremist raid took place in Northeastern Macedonia in September 1902.²⁷ These events greatly alarmed the Serbian nationalists, who had envisaged territorial expansion at the cost of the Ottomans.²⁸

IMRO and its innovation in the nationalist propaganda

As a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, Macedonia was to be a part of “Greater Bulgaria” by the provisions of the San Stefano Treaty. The treaty was later modified in Berlin, and the territory of Bulgarian principality was reduced to a much smaller unit, more or less equivalent to the former Danube province. The Bulgarian nationalists, however, continued to view the “San Stefano Bulgaria” as the inherent territory of the nation. Their aspirations were partly fulfilled in 1885, when Bulgaria successfully annexed Eastern Rumelia.²⁹ The next step was to be Macedonia,³⁰ it was believed, but the newly formed realist government of Stefan Stambolov pursued a pro-Ottoman policy and cracked down on irredentist Bulgarian nationalists of Macedonian origin active inside the principality.³¹

Badly disappointed by the weak policy of Stambolov, the irredentists began to look for a radical solution—to organize its own nationalist movement within Macedonia. On 23 October 1893, six young intellectuals³² held a secret meeting in Salonika in which they agreed to set up a secret organization to pursue political autonomy in the part of Macedonia with a Bulgarian majority, as a first step toward merger with the principality. This was the origin of the Internal Macedonian

25 Vemund Aarbakke, *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia, 1870–1913* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2003), 104–106.

26 Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Revolutionary Movement, 1893–1903* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1988) 97–98.

27 Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu: Oluşumu ve 1908’e kadar Gelişimi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1996) (Original title: *Die makedonische Frage*, 1979), 144–149; *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakiyskite Bŭlgari, 1878–1944*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Makedonski nauchni institute, 1995), 220–225.

28 Vičnjekov, “Makedonski pokret,” 13.

29 Adanır, *Makedonya*, 113–118.

30 Needless to say, the IMRO saw the Macedonians as a part of the Bulgarian nation. At the same time, Bulgarian identity among the Slav Christians in Macedonia was not consolidated. Their identity wavered among Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian options, depending on religious (Patriarchate and Exarchate), linguistic, and political parameters that were constantly changing as well.

31 Konstantin Pandev, *Natsionalnoosvoboditelnoto dvizhenie v Makedoniya i Odrinsko, 1878–1903* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1979), 55.

32 They were Damyan Gruev, Hristo Tatarchev, Ivan Hadzhinikolov, Petŭr Poparsov Andon Dimitrov, and Hristo Vatandzhiev. Tatarchev was elected as the head of the committee.

Revolutionary Organization (IMRO).³³ The founding members were all devoted to the ideas of radical Bulgarian nationalists who had tried to achieve independence by way of massive peasant uprisings in the 1860s and 1870s.³⁴ Along with the heritage of the liberal nationalist thinking of the mid-nineteenth century, many founders were more or less sympathetic to the causes of socialism. It is more than likely that this political inclination, coupled with their disappointment with Bulgarian policy, led them to keep their distance from the principality.³⁵ As a result, the first charter stated that the Organization should be independent, without any links to the governments of the neighboring states.

Immediately after the first meeting, the founders of the IMRO took steps to build up an organizational network. As many of the first members were teachers, the first recruits were either fellow teachers or students; penetration into the peasant masses was slow and tardy. A change in the tide came in 1896, when the first general congress was held in Salonika. Five original and six new members came together.³⁶ The congress adopted a new charter and regulations that redefined the organizational structure. The organization’s main aim was modified as pursuit of political autonomy not only for Macedonia but also Adrianople province. The Salonika committee was officially approved as the central organ, and local committees were subdivided into district, country, and village committees. A special representative was to be located in Sofia to take charge of dealings with the Bulgarian authorities and political groups, as well as propagating the IMRO’s cause in the outside world.³⁷

The new charter gave a rigid centralized structure to the organization. With the approval of the central committee in Salonika, the district committees were to exercise absolute control over the branches within their jurisdictions. The members were required to take a special initiation oath and forced to swear to dedicate their life to the cause of the Organization. Betrayal and disobedience were to be punished with severe penalties, usually death. Each district committee had an

33 All available sources of the first meeting are either memoirs or interviews of founding members. Some claim the initial name of the organization was the “Macedonian revolutionary organization,” whereas others claim it was the “Committee for the achievement of political autonomy of Macedonia.” The organization changed its name several times. It was officially declared the “Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople revolutionary organization” in 1896, the “Secret Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization” in 1902, the “Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization” in 1905, and the “Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization” in 1913. To avoid unnecessary complexity, the author uses IMRO as the standard designation of the organization.

34 Todor Petrov and Tsocho Bilyarski, eds., *Vŭtreshnata makedono-odrinska revoljutsionna organizatsiya prez pogleda na naynite osnivateli* (Sofia: Voenna izdatelstvo, 2002), 7–8.

35 Anadir, *Makedonya sorunu*, 126–128; Gotse Delchev once said, “I am an anarchist in soul, a social democrat by conviction, and a revolutionary in practice.” Dimitar Dimevski, *Goce Delčev* (Skopje: Macedonian Review, 1997) 87.

36 They were Pere Toshev, Gyorche Petrov, Kiril Pŭrlichev, Hristo Popkotsev, Gotse Delchev, and Hristo Matov.

37 The Supreme Macedonian Committee was another terrorist organization established by Macedonian Bulgarians. In contrast to the IMRO, the Supremists had their center in Sofia and were supported by the Bulgarian refugees from Macedonia. On the eve of the Balkan Wars, the Supremists fully merged with the IMRO.

underground court for this purpose. It gave sentences not only to its members but also to outsiders whom it deemed guilty. As the body executing any judgment, the district committee had several *četas* (guerrilla bands) and appointed the *vojvodas* (commanders).³⁸

After the Salonika congress, the IMRO saw a drastic increase in its membership and supporters. Hitherto, the IMRO's efforts at recruitment, fund-raising and organization had yielded no tangible results. Its membership was no more than a few hundred. The organization was loosely structured, with no central control. From 1897 onward, however, its membership swelled rapidly, and the organization expanded to such an extent that it could deploy more than 4,000 *komitas* (fighters) in the field. What made this possible? That is the focus of much academic discussion.

Mainstream Bulgarian and Macedonian historians like to attribute this success to the awakening of a national consciousness among the peasant masses, but this type of explanation is a tautology, because it infers the rise of national sentiment from the increase in IMRO membership and its influence. Moreover, even if the IMRO could have mobilize some 26,408 supporters during the *Ilinden-Preobrazhenie* uprising, i.e., at its apogee, the numbers show that the organization could inspire only 1 percent of the total population of Macedonia. Even if we count only Slav Exarchists and Vlahs, the proportion reaches only slightly over 2.4 percent.³⁹ The number rather testifies to the immaturity of the national consciousness.

Duncan Perry proposes a different answer. He makes a point about the introduction of a centralized structure, strict discipline, and military formations. He attributes the IMRO's success to the effective use of violence against the Christian peasants. In other words, the organization grew because its *četas* effectively intimidated the population and forced them to obey their orders.⁴⁰ This view is more or less shared by authors such as Fikret Adanır and Gül Tokay.⁴¹

Keith Brown criticizes this hypothesis on the basis that the Macedonian Slav Christian peasants were not the static people confined to their villages and surroundings that Perry presupposes. Some of them traveled to astonishingly distant places as seasonal or immigrant workers, had a significant amount of knowledge of the outside world, and quite well understood the political situation both inside and outside of the Ottoman Empire. It is accepted and undeniable that some peasants voluntarily joined the organization and obtained special spiritual ties with its "sacred cause" through initiation rituals.⁴² İpek Yosmaoğlu elucidates the reaction of "ordinary peasants": "[T]he peasants could act in ways that accommodated multiple agendas ... made them into political entrepreneurs. In their capacity as political entrepreneurs, they were commonly involved in the planning and execution of mechanisms that served to create and activate social boundaries and

38 Bulgarian Academy of Science, *Macedonia: Documents and Material* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, 1979), 419–420.

39 The number is based on Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893–1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 204.

40 Ibid., 186–187.

41 Adanır, *Makedonya*; Gül Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu: Jön Türk İhtilalinin Kökenleri (1903–1908)* (İstanbul: AFA yayın, 1995).

42 Keith Brown, *Loyal Unto Death: Trust and Terror in Revolutionary Macedonia* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2013).

contribute to the increasing polarization of society.”⁴³ But even so, the catalyst of entrepreneurial reaction was not an endogenous mechanism but external intruders in the form of IMRO *četas*. The polarization occurred only when the *četa* intruders mobilized the “otherwise peaceful” peasants.⁴⁴

The major tool of violence at the disposal of IMRO was no doubt its *četas*. A Macedonian historian, Dimitar Dimevski, states it rather bluntly: “[I]MRO quickly consolidated itself after the Vinica shock, changing its strategy and tactics with the initiation and establishment of the Detachment Institute, which acted as *its integral agitational organizational* and fighting unit” (italics added).⁴⁵ In the same vein, a Bulgarian historian, Konstantin Pandev, confirms it: “The foundation and development of the Detachment Institute (*četnički institut*) brought about a crucial change. It affected not only the tactics, but also the membership, structure, and administration of the organization.”⁴⁶ Thus, both authors agree that the new tactic, in the form of the *četnički institut*, was crucial for the organizational expansion of IMRO. Let us dwell on this theme a little bit more.

After the Salonika congress, the duty to set up permanently functioning *četas* for agitation and organization was entrusted to Gotse Delchev. Delchev, a graduate of the Bulgarian military academy, was a specialist in military affairs. By the fall of 1899, the IMRO had organized more than 20 *četas*, but they were more often than not led by ex-bandits (known as *haramiyas*) and usually very small in size, between three and four members. Not only were the units unreliable as defense forces they were also unruly and disorganized.⁴⁷ Appreciating the detrimental character of the existing *četas*, Delchev tried to introduce strict discipline and well-arranged coordination among the *četas* as a field commander. After two years of personal experience as a *vojvoda*, Delchev wrote up regulations for the *četnički institut*. These regulations were first dispatched as a circular of the central committee of the IMRO to the district committees, and each district committee was obliged to form *četas* out of its “illegal” members. In order to supervise the works, Delchev sent three former Bulgarian officers (Mihail Popeto, Marko Lerinski, and Hristo Chernopeev) to the Macedonian interior. They were entrusted with the job of both discipline and recruitment. A strong centralized command system was now secured, and discipline and obedience to orders were strictly imposed.⁴⁸ At the same time, the *četas* were to function as a nursery for the future *vojvodas*. The newly recruits were to be trained as *komita* for some time and expected to lead their own *četa* after mastering the necessary qualifications. Another, and more important, duty of the *četas* was to engage in “agitational and organizational” works. The *četas* were the main tool for engendering popular loyalty to the “sacred causes” of the IMRO. With its shows of force, combined with the random execution of opponents, the *četa* exhorted the villagers to accept “baptism” (*krústi*, i.e., to

43 İpek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties, Religion, Violence and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 241.

44 Ibid.

45 Dimevski, *Goce Delčev*, 77.

46 Pandev, *Natsionalnoosvoboditelnoto*, 187.

47 Hristo Silyanov describes the *haramiyas* as follows: “The former *haramiyas* were unsuited to agitational work. They were corrupted, idle, unsusceptible to discipline, and always thinking of robbery and murder.” Hristo Silyanov, *Pisma i izpovedi na edin chetnik* (Sofia: Bŭlgarski pisateli, 1967) 73.

48 *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie*, vol. 2, 177–178.

take an oath to the IMRO).⁴⁹

The memoir of Hristo Silyanov describes his life as a *komita* in the Bitola district and gives us an example of the “agitational and organizational” works of the *četas*. Silyanov’s *četa* carefully avoided open confrontation with the Ottoman security forces, and most of its time was spent patrolling the villages of IMRO sympathizers. The major tasks were either the execution of opponents, traitors, and spies or racketeering of the population under the pretext of collecting “tax.”⁵⁰ The bands were ostensibly working for the protection of the Bulgarian population from the tyranny of the Ottoman authorities, but for all practical purposes, they committed more violence against the people than against the security forces. In this regard, the following incident merits attention.

A Bulgarian named Trayko and his girlfriend betrayed the whereabouts of an IMRO *četa* led by Gotse Delchev. To punish the traitors, Delchev ordered their executions. They first killed Trayko’s father, then the girl, and chopped her body into pieces. Trayko concealed himself in Kostur, a town located on a peninsula lying like a wedge in a lake and connected with the mainland by a very narrow sleeve. At the entrance of the peninsula was a watchmen’s post; almost no Bulgarian family lived there, so any executioner risked certain death. Delchev gathered his warriors, and said, “If the perpetrators remain unpunished, they will continue their nasty intrigues and will multiply like mushrooms after rain. Upon us falls the heavy responsibility that we have immediately to cut the mischievous and criminal hands that reached for the people’s sanctuary. Those who are disaffected or of flabby will, whether they are Bulgarians or not, working in service of the Turkish authorities must learn that the vengeful right hand of the national organization is long and reaches monsters no matter where they hide, and that no one can escape from its ruthless but righteous judgment.” Upon this call, all the fighters offered their service. A young man was then selected and sent to Kostur. He murdered the spy but was shot dead by the town guards.⁵¹ The episode eloquently testifies to the IMRO leadership’s conviction that the method of infusing fear—“no one can escape from its ruthless but righteous judgment”—was crucial to the sustenance and expansion of the organization. As Yosmaoğlu put it, the “selective” cohesive violence, i.e., the targeting of a specific person or anyone associated with him served “both as punishment for something that had already occurred and also as a deterrent to prevent further lapses.”⁵²

Delchev once tried to justify the systematic intimidation of the population with the following words: “If tyranny is violence, then revolution is violence against violence.”⁵³ The strategy, indeed,

49 Silyanov, *Pisma*, 69–75, 81.

50 According to Stevan Simić, the IMRO collected levies from the population: Stevan Simić, *Komitsko četovanje u Staroj Srbiji i Makedoniji 1903–1912* (Beograd: Hrišćanska misao, 2012) 92; The Serbian consul in Skopje reported a witness of a Serbian teacher in Kratovo on 19 March 1903: “The ordinary sum of the levy for the Committee is half a *kuruş* per head, but the wealthy people are required to make additional ‘voluntary contributions’ either by force or by will. The rule is enforced in every village and town. A Bulgarian *komita* once told our citizen that the Bulgarian committee would cut off, like cucumbers, the heads of those who sided with the Serbs.” *Dokumenti*, 2, Supplement 1, 116.

51 Silyanov, *Pisma*, 69–71.

52 Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties*, 260.

53 Dimevski, *Goce Delčev*, 87.

assured the rapid expansion of the IMRO, both in manpower and territory. Within a few years, the organization had firmly consolidated itself inside Macedonia. The more its military potential grew, the larger the territory the IMRO could control. As a result, the would-be Bulgarians or Exarchist Slavs had to endure endless extortion, requisition, and conscription by the IMRO commanders.⁵⁴ The IMRO commanders often sent intimidatory letters to the targeted villages. If the villagers showed reluctance, the *četas* were sent in. They rounded up the villagers and threatened them so that they would pledge allegiance. In cases of refusal, they would carry out the “punishment.”⁵⁵ Usually, the community leaders, such as the village heads, priests, teachers, and other notables, were singled out. They were intimidated, beaten, or assassinated, sometimes together with their family or relatives as “accomplices.”⁵⁶ The scale and ferocity of violence increased, and the coercion took the shape of indiscriminate massacres.⁵⁷ The corollary was an endless decay of social order and loss of security of life and property among the population.

The beginning of the Serbian *četa* activities

The ascendancy of the IMRO and its *četa* operations alarmed Serbian nationalists. Serbian teachers in the Skopje and Bitola districts tried to respond by organizing their own militias as early as 1900. They eventually created small bands, but they were no match for the Bulgarians, mainly due to limited resources and manpower. Official Serbian policy was not in favor of armed struggle at the time.⁵⁸ Another initiative came from Belgrade. Milord Gođevac hit upon the idea of organizing Serbian guerrillas to counteract the Bulgarians. Making use of his close ties with former Macedonian Bulgarian activists who had taken shelter in Belgrade, he set up a small band of five fighters in the summer of 1901. Provided with equipment and weapons, the band was sent into the Ottoman territory but was promptly neutralized by the IMRO.⁵⁹

The events following the May coup of 1903 drastically changed the course of Serbian *četa* activities. The outbreak of the *Ilinden-Preobrazhenie* uprising in the late summer of 1903 had precipitated Serbian nationalists' concerns as the abortive uprising turned out to be successful propaganda for Bulgarian presence in the region. The Western media started a self-described civilizing mission and requested the amelioration of “enslaved” Bulgarians in European Turkey.⁶⁰ As a result, the two

54 Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 95–101.

55 *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, Supplement, 1, 258–259.

56 Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 95–97; *Domumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 1, 176–177, 182; R. A. Reiss, *The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia* (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1924), 12–13; Jovan Hadživasilijević, *Četnička akcija u Stroj Srbiji i Mečedoniji* (Beograd: Sv. Sava, 1928), 14–15.

57 Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties*, 265.

58 They were Jovan Dovezenski, Jovan Babunski, Rade Radivojević, Dušan Vardarski, Lazar Kujundžić-Klempa, and Dokim Mihailović-Debarac. Jovan Babunski stood out. He was to become the most successful captain of the Serbian *četnik* actions. Biljana Vučetić, “Srpska revolucionarna organizacija u Osmanskom carstvu na početku XX veka,” *Istorijski časopis*, 53, 2006, 368.

59 Hristo Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedonija*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Dŭrzhavna pečatnitsa, 1948), 276–277.

60 *Ibid.*, 281.

Great Powers that had vested interests in the region, Russia and Austria-Hungary, were forced to formulate a new reform plan in favor of the Christian population. Since the Mürzsteg Reform Plan envisaged a certain form of political autonomy for the ethnic groups that constituted the regional majority in some parts of Ottoman Macedonia, the Serbs were required to display their presence.⁶¹

Some Belgrade political élites were apprehensive about the loss of “historical Serbia” and became inclined to lend substantial support to the Serbian *četas*.⁶² Jovan Atanacković, one of the main May plotters, showed sympathy to the endeavors of Gođevac. Gođevac, for his part, secured financial support from Luka Čelović, a wealthy merchant, making use of his freemasonry network. Another mason, Vasa Jovanović, an attorney of Macedonian origin, recruited several former *komitas*.⁶³ Atanacković (then the minister of war) approved their initiatives to create a Central Committee of “Serbian *četnik* action” and assumed its chair in the late summer of 1903.⁶⁴ The arming and smuggling of *četniks* was entrusted to Živojin Rafajlović, a border post officer, who set up the “executive committee” of “Serbian *četnik* action” in Vrajne.⁶⁵

There is some dispute as to whether Rafajlović was the initiator of the Serbian *četa*. Rafajlović claimed it was he who had sent the first *četa*, led by Arsom Gavrilović. Vasil Trbić rejects this, asserting that the first *četa* was formed by himself.⁶⁶ The following facts uphold Rafajlović’s claim. Mihailo Ristić, the Serbian consul of Skopje, had noticed by late August that a few Serbian *četas* had been active inside Ottoman territory. They were recruited, equipped, and salaried by Gođevac and sent across the border by Rafajlović. The commanders of the bands were Serbian officers. The stories were well known among the locals, and even the Turkish consul in Niš was aware of the details. Alarmed by the development, Ristić met Rafajlović in person in Vranje and warned him against “thoughtless actions.” Rafajlović confirmed that he had sent two bands so far and vindicated himself by saying that both Premier Avakumović and Foreign Minister Nikola Pašić had approved the action.⁶⁷ His vindication, however, cannot be accepted at face value. On 17

61 Sowards, *Austria’s Policy*, 27–30, 74–75.

62 Wayne S. Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West: The Events of 1903–1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Publications, 1954), 120.

63 *Četa* is originally a Turkish word (*çete*) meaning armed bandit band. A *četnik* is a member. In the contemporary sources (Turkish, Bulgarian, and Serbian), the terms *četnik* and *komita*, *komitadjia*, and *komitaci* were all synonyms. It was after WWI that *četnik* became a Serbian national symbol and *komita* Bulgarian. For convenience, the author calls Serbian fighters *četniks* and Bulgarian fighters *komitas*.

64 The date of foundation is not clear. Vladimir Ilić infers it as after 15 August 1903, the date of retirement of Atanacković; Ilić, *Srpska čenička akcija 1903–1912* (Beograd: Ecolobri, 2006), 21; It seems to be well judged. If so, the several intrusions of Serbian bands into Ottoman territory in July and August, asserted by Silyanov, were independent actions of the Vranja committee; Silyanov, *Osvoboditelinite borbi*, 279.

65 Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 55; Ljubomir Jovanović-Čupa and Ljubomir Nešić, as a delegation of *Slovenski Jug*, made a three-day visit to Sofia, 13–15 March 1905. They met Damjan Grujev there. The Serbians proposed cooperation for a free and autonomous Macedonia. Grujev declined on the grounds that the IMRO was the sole authority in Macedonia and warned that any action outside of its initiative would be regarded as hostile. *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 3/1, 519–520.

66 Vučetić, “Srpska revolucionarna,” 361–362; Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 90.

67 *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 1, 427–428.

September, Stojan Protić, the interior minister, informed the foreign minister of a report from the magistrate of Vranje denouncing Rafajlović’s *četniks*. The next day, the foreign minister ordered the magistrate to stop Rafajlović’s men and bring them back into Serbia.⁶⁸ As this story implies, Gođevac-Rafajlović’s *četa* operation was not overtly sanctioned as national policy at the time. On 25 May 1904, Ristić denounced the Rafajlović’s *četnas* for an “adventurous act that is nothing but a betrayal,” after a report of a skirmish between a *četa* and Turkish security forces that had claimed the lives of 24 *četniks*, 1 police officer, and 3 soldiers.⁶⁹

The discord between the diplomatic agencies and the *četniks* was resolved soon afterward. On 20 June 1904, the foreign minister sent a circular to the Serbian consulates in Ottoman territory and urged them to fiercely oppose the Bulgarian *komitas*.⁷⁰ Upon his request, the cabinet sanctioned a total of 200,000 dinars in an extraordinary budget, earmarked for the “defense of the national interest in Macedonia.”⁷¹ The defense ministry sent 265 rifles and ammunition from the army’s depot in Pirot to the magistrate of Vranje on 4 October. It sent an additional 1,000 rifles for the supply of “our people in the Salonika, Bitola, and Kosovo provinces” on 13 November and another 1,000 to Vranje upon the demand of Pašić on 20 January 1905.⁷² All these facts attest to the fact that the Serbian *četa* operation had now become a well-coordinated national policy. Under the direction of the head of the consulate section of the foreign ministry, the Serbian consulates of Priština, Skopje, and Bitola were turned into the *de facto* headquarters of guerrilla operations. They served as intelligence centers, military depots, and asylums for the fighters.

On 9 July 1905, however, Belgrade reached a customs union agreement with Sofia. The overt support of *četniks* became risky, so the Serbian diplomats discussed the policy on 23 July 1905. At the meeting, Svetislav Simić, the Serbian diplomatic representative in Sofia, remarked, “The Macedonian question has already gone beyond the clerical and educational phase. It is a purely political question now. We should face up to the fact. It is necessary, accordingly, to formulate a new strategy. There is no reason that we can’t do what the Bulgarians have hitherto done.” As the effective response to the Bulgarian revolutionaries, he insisted, Serbia had to continue financial and military aid for the Serbian population in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, however, he asserted that the work had to be carried out clandestinely. The best way was to “make use of the trustworthy civil agents through which the government could fully control activities.” The proposal was unanimously approved by the conference. In this way, the government continued to lend support to the *četniks*, albeit somewhat covertly.⁷³

68 Ibid., vol. 2 Supplement 1, 134–135.

69 Ibid., vol. 1, sec. 2, 364.

70 Ibid., vol. 1, Sec. 2, 444.

71 Ibid., vol. 2, Supplement 1, 167–168.

72 Ibid., 181–182, 201, 248–249.

73 Ibid., vol. 1, sec. 1, 41, 172.

Meanwhile, several May coup officers had taken part in *četnik* actions.⁷⁴ Their military expertise improved their operational efficiency. Especially important was the role played by Ilija Jovanović-Pčinski in the early stages of the organization of the *četnik* combat structure. Entering Macedonia, he noticed the unruly conduct of local *vojvodas*. “In all the villages we have organized near the border, the Serbian bands are imposing tribute, just like Bulgarians, on the population. Due to this practice, the people are suffering greatly and are resentful of their brethren.... I can say with confidence that the levy is imposed only for the sake of the extravagance of the fighters.... The *vojvodas* are using the money for their personal needs.”⁷⁵ As a measure to curb them, Jovanović proposed the establishment of a mountain staff and put the operations of the Serbian *četnas* under its control.⁷⁶ The proposal was approved and the mountain staff was established on 23 April.⁷⁷ As the chief of the mountain staff, Jovanović successfully coordinated the operations of the Serbian *četnas* during the summer and consolidated their strength in Kosovo and the upper stream of the Vardar. Shortly afterward, although Jovanović had retreated into the interior due to bad health, he supervised military operations as the head of the executive committee in Vranje until the end of the year. Subsequently, he was succeeded in the position by Ljubomir Vulović, another coup officer.⁷⁸

No less important was the role played by Vojislav Tankosić. He was one of the main recruiters of the young officers and a pioneer in the development of guerrilla activities.⁷⁹ He first went to the Skopje region in the fall of 1903. He disguised himself as a merchant and smuggled the weapons that he had purchased under the guise of the *Kolo srpskih sestara* (Circle of Serbian Sisters), a philanthropic society. During this operation, he made a reconnaissance of the people and geography and opened secret channels for smuggling arms and ammunition, following a Vranje–Skopje–Prilep–Bitola–Poreč route, by January 1904.⁸⁰ After a short interval, he again took part in *četnik* actions in the spring of 1905 and showed a natural flair for guerrilla warfare. Tankosić came back from the front in the late summer but kept ties with the executive committee in Vranje, playing the role of recruiter and trainer of volunteers.⁸¹ After finishing his courses in the higher military academy, Tankosić returned to the Macedonian battlefield as chief of the mountain staff.⁸²

During his period in the mountain staff, Tankosić caused a major scandal. In the night of 21

74 Vojin Popović (*Vojvoda Vuk*) entered Macedonia as a *četa* commander in 1905, then became a chief of the mountain staff in 1907–1908. Mijajlo Ristić-Uča was a chief of the mountain staff in 1905, a secretary of the central committee in 1906, and a *vojvoda* in 1907. Alimpije Marjanović-Ovčepolski was a chief of the mountain staff in 1907–1908. Aleksandar Blagojević-Kočanski was a chief of the mountain staff in 1907 and a member of executive committee in 1908. Velimir Vemić took part in the battle as a *vojvoda*. Ljubomir Vulović served as a member of the executive committee in 1906–1908. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, supplements 1–3, vol. 3, supplement.

75 Report dated 16–18 March 1905. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, supplement 1, 285–286.

76 *Ibid.*, 287.

77 *Ibid.*, 371–372.

78 *Ibid.*, 675, 677.

79 Ilić, *Srpska čenička*, 49.

80 Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 354; *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, supplement 1, 145.

81 *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, supplement 1, 345, 523, 580–581.

82 Mirolad Belić, *Komitski vojvoda Vojislav Tankosić* (Valjevo: Međuopštinski istorijski arhiv, 2005), 24–25.

May 1908, a Serbian mob led by Tankosić launched an assault on a Bulgarian village, Stracin. The attack claimed a toll of four dead and eight wounded. Ten houses were demolished and another ten were partly destroyed by fire. The Serbian consul in Skopje remarked, “He *again* took part in this kind of work” (italics added).⁸³ The Austro-Hungarian consul of Skopje felt seriously concerned,⁸⁴ and the Bulgarian government was also much alarmed, as the attack on the village was the third within a year.⁸⁵ The central committee in Belgrade strongly warned the executive committee in Vranje to never let it happen again, but Tankosić’s band then burned another Bulgarian village, Gradec. These two acts of freebooting perturbed not only the Austro-Hungarian consul but also the Russian consul. Both openly protested to the Serbian government. Nikola Pašić became much concerned about the development. He even personally instructed the Skopje consulate to bring Tankosić back to Belgrade, but Tankosić was neither disciplined nor brought back to Belgrade. He was just transferred to Kumanovo district’s mountain staff.⁸⁶

The Bulgarian factor in the Serb nationalist movement

As mentioned above, the Serbian *četnik* movement was initially born as a reaction to Bulgarian guerrilla activities.⁸⁷ The Serbs’ fear of the Bulgarian threat was mixed with admiration for their effective use of coercive measures perpetrated by a well-coordinated structure of stratified committees with iron discipline. Indeed, even at the beginning, the Serbian *četniks* regarded the Bulgarian *komitas* as their role model.⁸⁸

The first stage in their imitation of the *komitas* was the partial takeover of the IMRO combat structure. Toward the end of 1901, Milorad Gođevac had the opportunity to meet Stojan Donski, an IMRO *vojvoda*, and learned from him the methods of guerrilla warfare and the charters of the IMRO. He was so impressed that he decided to organize a similar organization inside Serbia. Although Donski’s *četa* could not fulfill the expected mission, the organizational know-how and documents generated left a strong trace in the subsequent Serbian structure. This is clearly ascertained by a comparison of the charters of the two organizations.⁸⁹ Apparently, the charters of the

83 *Dokumenti*, vol. 3, supplement, 169.

84 *Avstriski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2 (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1981) 122–124.

85 Erdülov, *Sürbskata vûorûzhana*, 122, 130.

86 *Dokumenti*, 3, Supplement, 182, 185, 189, 195.

87 According to Stevan Simić, Gođevac’s motivation was revenge against the Bulgarians. The Bulgarians “committed an unforgivable mistake when they started indiscriminate fighting against the Serbs. We can severely chasten them some day in the same way.” Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 33–34.

88 Stevan Simić insisted, “The only way we can save ourselves is to adopt the same tactics that the Bulgarians have been carrying out.” Simić, *Komitski četovanje*, 39.

89 The charters of the IMRO are well documented in the following works: Manol Pandevski, ed., *Programski ii staturni dokumenti na Vnatrečnata makedonska revolucionerna organizacija 1904–1908* (Skopje: MANU, 1998), Bilyarski & Burilkova eds., *Bütreshnata*. The original charters of Serbian *četnik* activity—“Regulations of the Secret Serbian-Macedonian organization”—are available in Ilić, *Srpska četnička*, 22–25.

Serbian organization copy the IMRO's charters of 1896. The latter's key concepts—the centralized structure, division of local branches, strict discipline, and fear-infusing institutions of secret courts with military formations—are almost wholly implanted into the former. It is true that the organizational structure of the Serbian *četnik* movement was not exactly the same as that of the IMRO, but it is also true that the Serbs did try to create an exact copy. According to the design inspired by the Bulgarians, the Serbs were zealous in constructing a four-story committee network. For instance, Božidar Ljubišić, the secretary of the Serbian consulate in Skopje, described the preparation of the local committee as follows: “Here we are making, with great zeal, the preparations for the organization of the local committee, if Mr. (Mihailo) Ristić (Serbian consul) has blessed it, then we will soon have own organization *just like the Bulgarians*” (italics added).⁹⁰ More often than not, however, the Serbs failed to establish sub-committee structures below the district level, but not always. As Stevan Simić testifies, in some villages, they succeeded in setting up their branches.⁹¹ It was their incompetence that thwarted the completion of the original design.⁹²

The Ottoman authorities, which had closely watched the activities of the Serbian bands, noticed that some Bulgarian elements were among them. According to the governor of Kosovo, Ševket Paša, some Serbian and Bulgarian bands active in Skopje and Kumanovo districts were operating in a unified way.⁹³ Serbian sources attest to this. The village head of Pobužje reported on 19 June 1903, that a total of 30–40 guerrillas had come to his village. Although they asserted that they were the Serbs sent from Serbia, they all had Bulgarian names.⁹⁴ In early August of the same year, a Serbian teacher met a well-equipped band of 6 or 7 guerrillas from Serbia. They said Živojin Rafajlović had sent them there, but some of the *četniks* were Bulgarians.⁹⁵

The enrolled IMRO veterans instructed the Serb *četniks* on battle proficiency and know-how regarding guerrilla warfare. In the fall of 1903, a Bulgarian *vojvoda*, Nikola Puškarev, visited Vranje. He instructed Rafajlović in how to make bombs.⁹⁶ Thanks to this technology, the Serbs produced bombs “much stronger than those of Macedonian *komitas*” in Vranje.⁹⁷

Along with the recruit of former IMRO fighters, the Serbs pursued the possibility of full cooperation with the latter in the first stages of their struggle. The first attempt was made in October 1903. At a meeting, Svetozar Tomić (the director of the Serbian high school of Skopje), Mihailo Mančić, and Vasilije Trbić represented the Serbian side. The Bulgarian delegation was composed of the following members of the IMRO's Skopje branch: Damyan Gruev, Hristo Matov, Milan Vojnitsajliev, and Petûr Poparsov. The Bulgarian side proposed joint propaganda, but the two parties could not agree on the language in which the pamphlet would be written. Moreover, the Serbian

90 *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, Supplement 1, 236–237.

91 *imić, Komitsko četovanje*, 105–106.

92 Svetlozar Erdûrov, *Srûbskata vûorûzhena propaganda v Makedoniya 1901–1912* (Sofia: Sv. Georgi Pebedonosec, 1993), 107–108.

93 Tokay, *Mekednonya*, 66.

94 *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, Supplement 1, 123.

95 *Ibid.*, 124.

96 Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 57–58.

97 *Dokumenti*, vol. 2, Supplement 1, 140.

proposal of the partition of Macedonia was instantly rejected by the Bulgarians.⁹⁸

The Serbian idea of cooperation with the IMRO on the condition of Macedonian partition had been consolidated within a certain circle of Belgrade elites by early 1902. They wanted to secure Skopje district and a part of Bitola as their sphere of activity.⁹⁹ The plan was unacceptable both to the Bulgarian government and the IMRO’s mainstream factions, but the dissident group led by Boris Sarafov was attracted by the idea.¹⁰⁰

Boris Sarafov had conceived his own version of Serbo-Bulgarian cooperation as early as 1900. As a first step, he met Živojin Balugdžić, a Serbian agent, in Sofia and proposed a deal based on the division of Macedonia in June 1901. At the second meeting in December, Sarafov proposed the establishment of a Macedonian committee in Belgrade financed by the Serbian government but with close ties to Sarafov’s circle.¹⁰¹ The next month, Sarafov met Svetoslav Simić in Budapest and received an affirmative answer to his proposal. The plan didn’t materialize, however, due to the hesitation of King Alexander.¹⁰²

In late March 1903, Sarafov made contact with the Serbian agency in Vienna once more and reiterated the plan of Serbo-Bulgarian cooperation.¹⁰³ Sarafov visited Belgrade again in winter 1903, when he met Svetoslav Simić and made the acquaintance of several May coup officers.¹⁰⁴ Though the details are unknown, it seems certain that some deals were struck. Sarafov received money from the Serbs somewhere in the middle of 1904. A total of 40,000 leva was delivered by way of two agencies.¹⁰⁵ According to a secret dispatch by Svetoslav Simić from Sofia on 24 November, Boris Sarafov had the following plan. He would organize a *četa* of 50 *komitas* and send it into the Skopje region, where it would get in touch with Serbian *četniks* and procure weapons that had been smuggled from Serbia. The two parties would cooperate in patrol operations. According to Simić, the action had already been sanctioned by the Bulgarian government in a strictly covert way.¹⁰⁶

The cooperation with the Sarafovists paved the way for the Serb offensive in the Macedonian struggle. Gligor Sokolov Lyamev, a former IMRO fighter, organized a huge band, mainly of refugees from Macedonia, including a former IMRO *vojvoda*, Ivan Dolgacha. With the Serbian financial aid, a band of more than 60 men crossed the Serbian border at the end of August 1904. Lyamev

98 Ilić, *Srpska četnička*, 37.

99 Silyanov, *Osvoboditelinite borbi*, vol. 2, 281.

100 There is room for speculation as to why Sarafov favored Serbo-Bulgarian cooperation. A pragmatist rather than an idealist, he initially might have expected financial support from Belgrade. After the Ilinden-Preobrazhenje uprising, the IMRO suffered from serious internal conflict. The split led Sarafov to incline further toward Belgrade. His Serbophilia was seen as treacherous by other factions of the IMRO and cost him his life.

101 Kaime Džambazovski, “Makedonski autonomistički pokret u Srbiji,” in *Jugoslovenski narodi pred Prvi svetski rat* (Beograd: SANU, 1967), 1027–1030.

102 Silyanov, *Osvoboditelinite borbi*, vol. 2, 284–285.

103 *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 2, 200.

104 Silyanov, *Osvoboditelinite borbi*, vol. 2, 283–284.

105 *Ibid.*, 288.

106 *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 2, 830–831.

had an official card with the IMRO seal issued by Sarafov and succeeded in penetrating deeply into the Ottoman territory.¹⁰⁷ During the summer of 1904, Serbian propaganda activities were mainly carried out in Kumanovo and Skopje districts. In the fall and winter, their sphere of activity was expanded into Kratovo and Palanec districts. The Serbian *četniks* posed a further threat to the mainstream IMRO activists. On 5 October 1904, Damyan Gruev was taken captivity at the hand of Serbian *vojvoda* Micko. Although Gruev was later handed over to Sofia under the direction of the Serbian authorities, his captivity lasted for a month. Gruev's captivity caused a temporary setback in morale among the IMRO supporters and raised the prestige of Serbian committee significantly. The committee began to send more bands into Ottoman territory in early 1905. They were rampant on both sides of the Vardar, engaging in bloody skirmishes with the Bulgarian bands.¹⁰⁸

The cooperation between the Sarafovists and the *četniks* continued into early 1906. Sarafov visited Svetoslav Simić in Sofia on 3 January 1906. At the meeting, he remarked that his frequent visits to the Serbian agency and a "rumor" that he had received money from the Serbs had raised suspicions that he was a "Serbophile." Notwithstanding this, he disclosed the details of the Rila congress of the IMRO.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, he even confirmed that "the IMRO could not easily fight off the Serbian bands, not least because there were many former IMRO guerrillas among the rank and file of the Serbian bands."¹¹⁰

The incorporation of former IMRO fighters and the collaboration of the Sarafov group resulted in the adoption of the same terror-inspiring methods for mass mobilization by the Serbs. Serbian bands responded to Bulgarian attacks in the same way as their enemy.¹¹¹ The Serbian guerrillas targeted the Bulgarian villages that had recently converted from Patriarchate affiliation. All of their tactics were typically those invented and employed by the IMRO.¹¹² According to a Bulgarian historian, Svetozar Erdûrov, there was an established pattern of intimidation by the Serbian *četas*. First, they sent blackmail letters to the villages, insisting that all the Christians in Macedonia were "pure Serbs" and that those who identified themselves as Bulgarians had been forced to change their name and nationality by the IMRO. At the end of mail, they would warn that, if the villagers refused support, the *četa* would make an assault. Within a few days, the *četa* appeared in the village and rounded up the villagers into the main square. In front of the villagers, the *vojvoda* required the village head to sign a sheet that had been prepared beforehand, pledging to side with the Patriarchate and Serbdom. If the villagers resisted, the *četas* would lynch the community leaders or kidnap

107 Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi*, 290.

108 Ibid., 293–296.

109 According to Sarafov, the congress adopted, among other things, the decision to "clear the territory of those hostile to Organization elements" by way of "crushing every attack on the spot and keeping a situation of unbearable anarchy. At the same time, in Europe, we will engage in a propaganda campaign describing the smallest incident in as grisly a way as possible. In this way, the Macedonian question will seem so serious that military intervention by Bulgaria unilaterally or jointly with Serbia and Montenegro becomes possible." *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 4/2, 713–714.

110 Ibid., 716.

111 Vučetić, "Srpska revolucionarna," 359–360.

112 Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi*, vol. 2, 306–307.

them.¹¹³ A Serb *četnik*, Stevan Simić, confirmed the same tactics in his memoir.¹¹⁴

As these developments show, apprehension about IMRO activities led the Serb nationalists to employ the same tactics to counteract them. They studied the organizational strategy of the IMRO and adopted it. Then, they recruited former *komitas*, and sought cooperation with IMRO dissidents. The transmitted know-how and accumulated battlefield knowledge resulted in the same pattern of behavior as their enemies. The experience and human connections they made in Macedonia prepared the ground on which the Black Hand was to be consolidated.

The Macedonian factor in the making of the Black Hand

After the Young Turk revolution of 1908, the Serbian *četnik* actions could not continue any longer. By that time, Tankosić’s career as a *četnik* commander had made him a first-rank expert in guerrilla tactics in the Serbian Army. Therefore, when the Bosnian crisis broke out on 6 October, Tankosić again went into the reserve and was appointed as the commander of volunteers coming from Austria-Hungary. For this purpose, he went to Čuprija in early December and opened a training camp for guerrilla fighters that was operational by the end of March 1909.¹¹⁵ According to the testimonies of Trifko Krastanović at the Sarajevo investigation, 140 volunteers were trained there. There were several Bosnian Serbs, including Milan Ciganović, the person who later served as the direct contact between the Sarajevo assassins and Tankosić.¹¹⁶

Roughly two years later, Tankosić joined a secret organization, known as the Black Hand. The founding process of the Black Hand is not entirely clear. First, the date of foundation is uncertain. Some researchers set it at 22 May 1911,¹¹⁷ whereas others believe the date was 22 March of the same year.¹¹⁸ The former view is based on the organization’s statute book presented to the Selanik court in 1917, but it was written when three new members had entered the central committee. The latter view relies on the memoir of Čedomir Popović, but it was written in 1927. The diary of Velimir Vemić reports that it was 23 September. As this confusion implies, the available sources are either highly biased or ambiguous.¹¹⁹

Owing to this uncertainty, the description of the founding process of the Black Hand varies, reflecting the objectives of the different authors. Those who are sympathetic to the cause of the

113 Erdürov, *Srûbskata vûorûzhana*, 108–110.

114 Simić, *Komitsko četovanje*, 104–105.

115 Ibid., 294.

116 Vojislav Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat, Stenogram Glavne rasprave protiv Gavrila Principa i drugova* (Sarajevo: Arhiva na BiH, [1965]) 258–260.

117 MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand,”* 35; Vijelica, “Organizacija,” 52; Bataković, “Storm,” 324.

118 Slavko Mičanović, *Sarajevski atentat* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1965), 74; Drago Ljubibratić, *Gavrilo Princip* (Beograd: Nolit, 1959), 170; Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 339.

119 As MacKenzie infers, the Salonika trial was a political frame-up of Prince Alexander; MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand”*; The authenticity of Vemić’s diary has not soundly established. The diary was not the original but rewritten by someone between 1915 and 1917. Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966), 500, fn. 15.

Sarajevo assassins tend to underscore the impact of the Annexation crisis.¹²⁰ The basis of their discussion is not entirely sound, however, because they rely exclusively on Vemić's diary. According to Vemić, he had conceived the initial idea of a new nationalist organization as early as September 1908, when he disclosed the plan to Jovan Cvijić. As Cvijić declined the offer, the initial plan was abandoned. After the international sanction of the Bosnian annexation, Vemić felt the strong need for an organization that would replace the *Narodna Odbrana* and proposed the plan to Ljubomir Jovanović-Čupa on 11 April 1909, but to no avail. There is no mention of this kind in his diary until he agreed with Tankosić and Bogdan Radenković to draft the charters for the new organization in 1910.¹²¹

If Vemić was the initiator of the Black Hand, his concern over Bosnia could have explained its motivation. However, it was Radenković who conceived the original plan, a point on which the researchers are unanimous.¹²² Thus, Vemić's earlier plans did not connect with the initial plan for the Black Hand.¹²³ The organization started as to revitalize the *četnik* movement, as Radenković hoped.¹²⁴

120 According to Dedijer, the Black Hand was "a direct product of the climate of despair provoked in Belgrade by the annexation of Bosnia and Hecegovina." Dedijer, *The Road*, 371; Ljubibratić and Bataković emphasize the frustration caused by the disarmament of *Narodna Odbrana*; Ljubibratić, *Gavrilo*, 170, Bataković, "Storm," 324–325.

121 Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 342–344.

122 Kazimirović concludes that "the initiative for the creation of the Black Hand came from Bogdan Radenković" (Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 341); Bataković confirms that "Radenković devised a plan for the creation of a new organization" (Bataković, "Storm," 324); Apis later testified, "After the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation of Serbs in Old Serbia and Macedonia became desperate." He reiterated the same story to Colonel Dunjić at his interrogation. "In 1911, I noticed that the fortunes of our former organization in Macedonia had begun to fade and collapse and that Serbdom in those regions had fallen into a desperate plight. We decided to form ... an organization to save Serbdom in Macedonia and Old Serbia and work for unification of Serbdom" (MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand,"* 263, 341–342).

123 Vemić wrote in his diary as follows: "I met with Šilja [Tankosić] and Bogdan [Radenković] at "Kasina" [a Belgrade café] and agreed to form a club with revolutionary aims. We will gather that part of the Macedonian group that favors active work.... It was agreed that Bogdan would work out the statutes" (quoted in MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand,"* 36); Popović's memoir describes Radenković's proposal as follows: After the Young Turk Revolution, the Serbian government abandoned the military activities in Macedonia, and so the "Bulgarian organization" was gaining ground at the cost of Serbs. It greatly alarmed the Serb "revolutionaries" and motivated them to take more radical measures. Those who worried the most were the participants in the Macedonian struggle. They eventually became resolute in looking for an alternative to government support. In the meantime, the Macedonian Serbs were divided into the moderates who supported the Young Turks and the radicals who insisted on the fight against the Turks. Bogdan Radenković was the head of the latter group. His group decided to renew *četnik* activity at a conference in Skopje toward the end of 1910. After the congress, Radenković came to Belgrade to look for support and disclosed the plan to his old friends (Tankosić, Jovanović, and Vemić); Popović, "Organizacija," 402–404.

124 According to Popović, "The new enterprise had to be done, principally, on the model of the Bulgarians." Popović, "Organizacija," 403; Vemić corroborates it: "Radenković proposed that these activities be organized as they were in Bulgaria because the results of their national activities far exceeded ours" (quoted in MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand,"* 133).

Bogdan Radenković was born in a village near Kosovska Mitrovica in 1875. After studying theology in Prizren, he went to Istanbul and received higher education as a priest. Returning to the Balkans, he worked as a teacher in the Serbian high school in Skopje before becoming a secretary of the bishop of Skopje. When Serbian *četnik* activity started in 1904, he became the chair of the Skopje district committee. After the Young Turk Revolution, he was elected president of the Serbian Democratic League (SDL), a Serb nationalist political party in the Ottoman Empire. The party structure was based on the committee network of the *četnik* actions.¹²⁵ Along with this official career, Radenković had long since worked as an agent of the Serbian consulate in Skopje. For instance, the Serbian government granted him an increase in his monthly bonus of 50 dinars from November 1905.¹²⁶

As for his plan of renewed *četnik* activity, Serbian diplomatic documents testify the following development. Toward the end of 1910, Radenković, together with Jovan Ćirković (the chair of the Bitola committee of the SDL) started secret talks with ambassadors Hilmi Paşa and İsmail Talat Bey in Istanbul and Belgrade. They talked about the possible conditions for Serb-Turkish cooperation.¹²⁷ For this purpose, the foreign ministry paid them a sum of 89.3 dinars for “the expenditure of greeting our Turkish friends” on 17 January 1911.¹²⁸

At the end of December 1910, Radenković sent the foreign ministry the plan to resume guerrilla actions in Macedonia, in which he wrote, “First of all, please realize the necessity of organizing pure Serbian bands composed of the local population under the control of the Serbian organization in Turkey. We are ready to conduct guerrilla actions if Bulgarians intimidate us anywhere else.” This came as a result of negotiations with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) delegate, İsmail Talat Bey. Radenković requested the following from the Turkish side: The CUP would address the religious and educational questions in favor of the Serbs, the condition of the places evacuated by the refugees would remain intact, the number of Serbian delegates would be increased in both the national and provincial assemblies, and the opening of a Kosovo branch of Serbian organization would be permitted. As for the guerrilla activities, Radenković requested the following: The CUP would assure immunity to those who fight in the *četas*, the return of the confiscated documents of the Serbian organization, a free hand in actions on the Serbian side, and support or tolerance for the Serbian guerrillas from the local government.¹²⁹

Radenković’s requests were subsequently accepted by the CUP. İsmail Talat Bey, at a meeting in Salonika on 20 February 1911, confirmed to Radenković that the Turkish side would not ask for anything but cooperation from the Serbs in fighting against the Bulgarian threat. In the meantime, Galip Bey, the chief inspector of public security, arrived in Salonika, and the three had a prolonged talk in which they exchanged ideas on the “general situation” of the Ottoman Empire on 25 February. As for the guerrilla actions, the Turks guaranteed immunity to the Serb *četniks*, as well as the opening of smuggling channels for arms and fighters. Five days later, Radenković

125 Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 344.

126 *Dokumenti*, vol. 1, sec. 3/2, 601.

127 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, sec. 3/1, 196, fn. 4.

128 *Ibid.*, 197.

129 *Ibid.*, 197–198.

and David Dimitrijević (the chair of the SDL's Kosovo branch) met the governor, Halil Bey, at his office in Skopje. Talat and Galip were also there. The Turkish side reiterated their willingness to accept the Serbian demands. The Serbs requested, among other things, evacuation of army units from the zone of operation of the Serbian guerrillas, the dismissal of officials who were hostile to the Serbs, an amnesty for the Serbs arrested at the time of disarmament, permission to carry arms for the Serbian notables, and "In cases of dispute between Serbs and Bulgarians, the authorities will always side with the Serbs." Furthermore, the Turkish side agreed to the dispatch of Serbian bands to Kosovo whenever the governor deemed it appropriate. On the basis of this agreement, Radenković recommended that the Serbian government start preparations for guerrilla warfare.¹³⁰

As can be seen from these facts, Radenković's motive in resuming *četnik* action was anxiety about the IMRO threat, not about Turkish tyranny. Since the summer of 1910, the IMRO had started a renewed offensive and it gained momentum in the following months.¹³¹ His anxiety was shared by the Serbian diplomatic agencies. The *gérant* of Bitola consulate, Marko Cemović, reported the serious situation in Prilep district on 20 January 1911: "Various sources indicate that the Bulgarians have begun to actively organize their guerrilla bands.... They are more than likely to start fighting against us."¹³² The Serbian consul in Bitola, Ljubomir Mihailović, even proposed to the ministry of foreign affairs that, facing the growing threat of the Bulgarians, it was urgent that steps be taken to organize the Serb villages "in the same way as we did in 1905 and 1906." He also disclosed the initial measures that had already been taken, stating that "all the works would be in accordance with the negotiations conducted shortly before by Ćirković and Radenković in Salonika."¹³³ The proposal was approved by the government, and Mihailović reported that "the arms are ready to be smuggled" on 17 April. According to this report, he had made detailed arrangements with his colleague in Skopje, Jovan Jovanović, on how to distribute weapons among the population.¹³⁴

As far as the diplomatic documents are concerned, Radenković's plan to resume *četnik* activity was fully approved and supported by the government. What merits more attention is the fact that the plan was not a unilateral enterprise of the Serbs but a bilateral one with the Turks. It is true that some fractions of the CUP were more than willing to embrace the idea. On 3 January, for instance, the CUP officers of Bitola branch asked local SDL members to organize "a very strong Turkish-Serbian band in Prilep district" and offered to donate 60 rifles.¹³⁵ They paid an official visit to the Serbian committee on 2 February, reiterated the proposal, and promised instant delivery of 40 rifles as sign of goodwill.¹³⁶

130 The date of issue of the document was 10 March 1911, *Ibid.*, 483–488.

131 *Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, vol. 3, 251–256.

132 *Dokumenti.*, vol. 4, sec. 3/1, 199.

133 *Ibid.*, 505.

134 *Ibid.*, 742–744.

135 *Ibid.*, 199–201.

136 *Ibid.*, 277.

The plan was not made on a whim by local CUP members but was approved by one of the highest members of the committee, İsmail Enver Bey. Enver set out on a journey in the Balkans on 27 March “pour étudier les mesures nécessaires contre les bandes bulgares qui se montrent maintenant.”¹³⁷ He arrived at Selanik on 14 April, and met Ćirković. At the meeting, Enver assured Ćirković that arms smuggling was possible even from Serbia.¹³⁸ According to Serbian sources, Enver subsequently due to meet Radenković in Skopje on 18 April 1911, but the meeting did not materialize. That day, Enver had a long discussion with the governor and military commander over “les différentes mesures à prendre contre l’invasion des bandes bulgares.”¹³⁹ The next day, he received a letter from the interior minister confirming that his former proposals had been accepted. In the evening, he took part in a hot debate at a CUP committee meeting that lasted until 3:00 in the morning.¹⁴⁰ Enver’s departure to Bitola was delayed until 25 April. There, he took part again in “une longue conférence avec les membres du comité de Monastir. La situation est satisfaisante contrairement à tous les bruits répandus, et le résultat de notre discussion a apporté un bon résultat.”¹⁴¹ What was discussed during these lengthy and heated meetings is unknown, but cooperation with the Serbs was more than likely one topic.

The CUP did not give unanimous support to the adventurous enterprise of Enver. Eyüp Sabri, then the major source of information for the Serbian consulate in Salonika, warned that the large-scale arms smuggling by the Serbs had caused deep concern among the local Ittiadists. The delay in response to the proposed rifle delivery was another source of suspicion.¹⁴² The Serbs, likewise, did not fully trust the CUP. By the middle of April, the Serbian diplomats had already become skeptical of the Turkish proposal and were about to come to the conclusion that the CUP would not cooperate with the Serbs in guerrilla actions.¹⁴³ During his stay in Skopje in early May, Enver met Serbian leaders and remarked that he would never tolerate any guerrilla activities under any conditions. The reason, he insisted, was that Europeans would see guerrilla actions as a sign of maladministration in Turkey.¹⁴⁴ After this announcement, the ambitious plan of joint Serbo-Turkish actions finally came to an end.

In light of this development, the widely accepted view on the foundation of the Black Hand seems to be seriously undermined. As Radenković was closely cooperating with the Serbian government during the spring of 1911, there was no need to set up a secret club independent of the government. Another leading founder, Vojslav Tankosić, was also working as an agent of the

137 Şükrü Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1989), 35–36.

138 *Dokumenti*, vol. 4, sec. 3/2, 744; In his letter of the same date, Enver wrote, “J’ai installé ici à Salonique une contre-propagande.... Et j’ai pris encore d’autres mesures. J’ai décidé prendre l’offensive contre nos ennemis qui viennent au delà de la frontière” (Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında*, 36).

139 Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında*, 39.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid., 43–44.

142 *Dokumenti*, vol. 4, sec. 3/1, 310.

143 Ibid., vol. 4, sec. 3/2, 757.

144 Ibid., 841–842

foreign ministry during these days.¹⁴⁵

In early May 1911, Vojislav Tankosić came to Ćuprija with about ten guerrillas. The magistrate was alarmed by their unruliness and expressed concern about eventual disorder.¹⁴⁶ The chief of the consulate section of the foreign ministry, Jovan Marković, appeased the magistrate, saying, “I have come to the conclusion that it was most convenient to have those whom we had used hitherto for guerrilla duties gathered in one place and put under my control inside our territory.” Tankosić confirmed this in his letter to the foreign minister. He asserted that the “our external organization” would resume guerrilla activities in the near future. For this purpose, he rallied about 30 fighters under his command. The defense minister had already sent him a total of 1,000 rifles and 200,000 bullets. “As far as my assessment on the situation in Turkey is concerned, it would be inevitable and necessary to resume and fortify our external organization as soon as possible, and in the same way as in 1908.” The foreign minister granted Tankosić a sum of 800 dinars for this purpose on 30 May 1911.¹⁴⁷ Tankosić received the same kind of money on 16 June (1800 dinars), 10 July (1000 dinars), 9 August (1400), and 26 August (750). On 22 July, Tankosić recruited an additional 16 volunteers in Belgrade. This was under the instructions of the foreign ministry, which had expected renewed guerrilla warfare to counteract the Bulgarians. The government financed them.¹⁴⁸ These records testify that Tankosić, the alleged cofounder of the Black Hand, was working as a government agent during the entire period of 1911, during which the secret organization was claimed to have been founded.¹⁴⁹

How can we interpret the facts recorded in the diplomatic documents? One of the possible answers is that the Black Hand was nonexistent, i.e., a fantasy dreamed up by Prince Alexander to remove his political rival—Dimitrijević-Apis—at the Salonika trial. There are, however, a number of records attesting to its existence. Therefore, an alternative explanation is that the Black Hand was either a product of the Serbian foreign ministry for the purpose of a false flag operation in Kosovo and Macedonia, or a voluntary club created by Radenković and Tankosić to resume *četnik* activities with the full support of the government. In any case, the established theory that treats the Black Hand as an independent political body with its own will and agenda is quite implausible.

Other existing records and testimonies corroborate our reasoning. At the Salonika court, Radenković explained his intention in creating the Black Hand: “I believed it necessary to form a society resembling the Macedonian organization in Bulgaria [IMRO] with ... at least 200,000

145 Radenković confirmed the central role of Tankosić at the Salonika trial. “Working on our national activities in Old Serbia and Macedonia, I became acquainted with Major Vojislav Tankosić. Feeling that work on national matters was insufficiently active in Old Serbia and Macedonia and wishing to organize this work better and gather more people to work on that and to interest our public opinion for those matters, Major Tankosić and I discussed how to organize a society that would work on that ... and involve more people in our national cause.” MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand,”* 155.

146 *Dokumenti*, vol. 4, sec. 3–2, 855.

147 *Ibid.*, 855–857.

148 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, sec. 3/2, 1055, 1235; vol. 4, sec. 4/1, 310–312, 497–498, 611.

149 A letter from the foreign minister to the defense minister testifies that Tankosić was employed by the former from 17 April to 17 December, and the term was subsequently prolonged; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, sec. 4/2, 1379.

members.”¹⁵⁰ The imitation of the IMRO was so close that they even adopted the same symbol: a death’s head with crossbones, knife, bomb, and poison. Radenković explained why: “[I]n Macedonia, the Bulgarian organization [IMRO] exerted great influence precisely because of its mystery.”¹⁵¹ There is no doubt that Radenković’s intention, and surely Tankosić’s too, was to create “our external organization” modeled after the IMRO in Kosovo and Macedonia.

As a matter of fact, however, the Black Hand hardly exceeded the bounds of the officer corps, and its membership was mainly restricted to the May coup conspirators and *četnik* fighters. Radenković explained why the Black Hand remained so small: “Upon entering the organization, I did not foresee that the Balkan wars would come so soon.”¹⁵² Therefore, after the Second Balkan War, it “ceased to operate as far as I was concerned... Once Macedonia was liberated, for me personally, the society ceased.”¹⁵³ Velimir Vemić corroborates this testimony. According to his account, he and five central committee members (Radenković, Apis, Tankosić, Colonel Milovanović, and Radoje Lazić) decided to halt the organization’s activities late in 1913.¹⁵⁴ Čedomir Popović offers the same story in his memoir.¹⁵⁵ Thus, it is more than likely that the Black Hand was created by Radenković and Tankosić under the mandate of the Serbian government with the aim of being a mass organization supporting the renewed Serbian *četnik* operations, but it failed to fulfill its initial aim due to the unexpectedly early outbreak of the Balkan Wars, and as a natural consequence of Serbian annexation of Kosovo and the Vardar Macedonia, it ceased to exist.

The Balkan Wars and international terrorist organizations

The Italian invasion of Tripolitania in 1911 precipitated the formation of the Balkan League. While the politicians were busy consolidating the military alliance of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro, the *četniks* and *komitas* played their part in creating a bellicose mood. The IMRO fighters were engaging in a lot of nasty tricks, known as “donkey operations.” They planted time bombs on cattle loads and let them explode amid Muslim crowds on market days. The infuriated populace would extract their vengeance on Christians, resulting in further human disasters. Revenge against Muslim terror, in turn, was denounced by the nationalist press of the IMRO and the Black Hand.¹⁵⁶

When the wars broke out, the terrorist organizations took up more direct military activities. The IMRO guerrillas were incorporated into the “Partisan headquarters” of the Bulgarian Army and engaged in reconnaissance and sabotage behind enemy lines. One of the IMRO leaders, Alexander Protogerov, took the lead in organizing the Macedonian Adrianople Volunteer Corps, the

150 MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand,”* 157.

151 *Ibid.*, 162,

152 *Ibid.*, 159.

153 *Ibid.*, 155.

154 *Ibid.*, 134.

155 Čedomir Popović, “Sarajevski atentat i organizacija Ujedinjenje ili Smrt,” *Nova Evropa*, 25, 1932, 399–400.

156 Bijelica, “Organizacija,” 66; *Natsionalno-osvoboditelno*, vol. 3, 248–257.

largest foreign legion that took part in the war. The legion was mainly composed of Bulgarian refugees from Ottoman territory and incorporated into the regular formation of the Bulgarian Army.¹⁵⁷

Their Serbian counterpart played no less important roles. Tankosić and other Black Hand members were active in creating unrest in Kosovo. They sought an agreement with Albanian rebel leaders in 1912.¹⁵⁸ When hostilities broke out, the Black Hand members bore the brunt of planning and carrying out military operations. On the battlefield, they fought conspicuously, particularly those who had fought in the *četnik* detachments,¹⁵⁹ with their knowledge of terrain and population, contributing significantly to the regular army's victory.¹⁶⁰

The Balkan Wars marked the clear end of the Ottoman presence in Europe. This meant the disappearance of the political margin in which the terrorist organizations and their sponsor states could cooperate. Hitherto, both of them had benefited from the terrorist actions: the terrorists could enjoy financial and armed support as well as diplomatic protection from the sponsor states, while the latter could expect the chance to intervene in Ottoman affairs, capitalizing on the disturbances created by the terror. Now that the Turks had gone, the terrorists had to be neutralized or, at least, put under the strict control of the governments. Otherwise, their activities would cause a serious diplomatic crisis with other European powers, given the rising tension created by the wars.

In the case of Bulgaria, the IMRO posed serious threats both within and without the country. After the second Balkan War, it refused to disarm and continued to engage in terrorist activities in Macedonia, this time allied with the CUP. It eventually created a diplomatic crisis with Serbia, during which Bulgaria sided with the central powers in 1915.¹⁶¹ The IMRO also undermined the democratic system. Not only had the IMRO created its own "state" within the Pirin regions, it had also played significant roles in toppling the Agrarian government and installing the royal dictatorship in the 1930s.

The same was true for Serbia. It is widely accepted that the period between 1903 and 1914 was the golden age of Serbian parliamentary democracy, but the system was destroyed by the action of Black Hand officers who had paid no heed to the civilian authorities.¹⁶²

The Balkan Wars seriously damaged the Black Hand officers. While the organization had

157 Tetsuya Sahara, "Paramilitaries in the Balkan wars: the case of Macedonian Adrianople volunteers," in *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2013), 399–419.

158 Kazimirović, *Crna ruka*, 346–345.

159 On the eve of the war, the Serbian General Staff organized the five guerrilla formations (*četnčki odred*) with more than 1,500 fighters. They were led by Black Hand officers: Milan Đokić, Vojin Popović, Vojislav Tankosić, D. Sekulić, Božin Simić, Pavlo Blažarić, Vukajlo Božović, Rašo Pantić, and Živko Gvodić: Aleksandar Stojićević, *Istorija naših ratova za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje od 1912–1918 god.* (Beograd: Saveza zamljorad. zadruga, 1932), 104–105.

160 Bijelica, "Организација," 66.

161 Tetsuya Sahara, "The Bulgaro-Ottoman anti-Serbian activities after the Balkan Wars, with documents recently found at the Turkish Military Archive," in S. Rudić & M. Milkić (eds), *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: New Views and Interpretations* (Beograd: The Institute of History, Strategic Research Institute, 2013).

162 Dedijer, *The Road*, 367.

once boasted several hundred members, it lost many prominent officers in the course of war, including Ilija Radivojević Čica (its president), Milan Vasić (secretary of National Defense), and Ljuba Jovanović-Čupa (main ideologue). It ceased to exist as a coherent and functional organization. A few dozen of its officers remained politically active, however. The loss of their influence was partly compensated for by Apis's appointment as the head of the General Staff Intelligence Department in 1913. This enabled a group of some twenty officers around him to maintain their privileged position in the army and made it possible for them to continue their covert operations in Austria-Hungary.¹⁶³ Apis, as the head of the Serbian counter-intelligence service, organized a network of agents in Austria-Hungary led by Rade Malobabić. For the convenience of their activities, Apis arranged for his men to be border post officers (Ljuba Vulović, Čedomir Popović, Kosta Todorović, et al.). Engaging in intelligence work, they smuggled arms and engaged in agitation among the Serbs in Austrian territory. It was by no means with the purpose of continuing the same kind of activities in which they had engaged in Ottoman territory, though. Their intention was rather moderate—to prepare the South Slav regions of Austria-Hungary for a future revolution.¹⁶⁴

Despite the fact that they had halted their terrorist activities, the former Black Hand members could hardly abandon the idea that they had a free hand in their pursuit of nationalist goals. This caused a serious political crisis soon after the war. The “Priority Dispute” of April–May 1914 showed how serious a threat the existence of independent officer groups posed to the civilian government. In April, the interior minister, Stojan Protić, issued a decree proclaiming the priority of civilian officers over military officers at official ceremonies in newly conquered territories. This was a humiliation for the army. General Damjan Popović, one of the May conspirators, challenged the decree but was summarily removed from his post. The entire officer corps was in the mood to rally in his support. Capitalizing on the situation, Apis intrigued to replace the Pašić cabinet with a united political opposition front. Through *Pijemonte*, his allies denounced the decree and requested that Protić resign.¹⁶⁵ Apis was bold enough to believe that he could organize a coup in Macedonia. On 7 June 1914, he sent oral orders to the commanders of the army units, but he could not persuade even his best friends. The coup was abortive.¹⁶⁶ Although the Priority Dispute turned out to be a decisive political defeat for the rump Black Hand, the episode shows that Apis and his fellows could not abandon the idea that they had the right to pursue national goals by all means.

The Black Hand officers and the Sarajevo Incident

In the course of the building-up of its agency network, the former Black Hand officers made use of their former contact with revolutionary students, collectively known as “Young Bosnia.” Young Bosnia is the name given retrospectively to the loose network of radical student groups established in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the early twentieth century. Starting as a Serb-led

163 Bataković, “Storm,” 332.

164 Bijelica, “Organizacija,” 68.

165 MacKenzie. *The “Black Hand,”* 43.

166 Dedijer, *The Road*, 388.

anti-Habsburg movement, it had taken on a Yugoslav character, opposed to religious divisions and in favor of cooperation among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. The list of members arrested by the Habsburg authorities in 1912–1915 shows that about 70 per cent were Serbs, 20 per cent Muslims, and 10 per cent Croats. The groups' multinational composition is ascertained by the fact that the Sarajevo assassins and their accomplices included a Croat, Ivo Kranjičević, and a Muslim, Muhamed Mehmedbašić.¹⁶⁷

Although they were initially inspired by the ideas of Mazzini's Young Italy and Garibaldi, the Young Bosnians were more sympathetic to anarchism and Russian socialism.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, they employed individual rather than organized terrorist tactics in their commitment to the struggle against the Dual Monarchy. On 15 June 1910, the day of the opening of the Bosnian Diet, one of the Young Bosnia leaders, Bogdan Žerajić, fired five shots at the governor, Marijan Varešanin, and committed suicide. It set an example of heroic self-sacrifice for the cause of national freedom. After his arrest, for instance, Gavrilo Princip asserted that as early as 1912 he had sworn an oath to Žerajić's grave that he would avenge him. It is also confirmed that, on the eve of 28 June 1914, Princip, together with Danilo Ilić and Nedeljko Čabrinović, visited the same grave.¹⁶⁹

Following Žerajić's example, several assassination attempts had been made by 1914. The first big conspiracy was the attempt made by Luka Jukić, a Bosnian Croat student, who tried to assassinate the Croatian Ban, Slavko Cuvaj, on 8 June 1912.¹⁷⁰ On 31 October, Ivan Planiščak shot at Cuvaj again, in his residence, and committed suicide. On 18 August the next year, Stjepan Dojčić, a Croat, shot and wounded the new Ban, Ivo Skerletz, in Zagreb.¹⁷¹ In Bosnia, Danilo Ilić decided to make an attempt against the governor, Potiorek, in 1912, but his friends thwarted the plan.¹⁷² Princip himself had first thought of assassinating a Habsburg dignity after the schoolboys' demonstrations in Sarajevo in February 1912.¹⁷³ Those records attest that attempts against Austro-Hungarian high dignitaries had been common tactics among the Young Bosnians since 1910.

Now, we elaborate on the Young Bosnians' interactions with the officer corps gathered in the Black Hand. Although they shared the common goal of national liberation, the two bodies had quite different ideologies. Apis and his friends were supporters of the chauvinistic ideas of a Greater Serbia and were monarchists. By contrast, Princip and his group were against chauvinism and favored a South Slav federation.

The contact between the two bodies can be traced back to 1908, when Božidar Zečević, one of the progenitors of Young Bosnia, went to Belgrade and met Milan Pribičević, one of the founders of *Slovenski Jug* and a close friend of Ljubo Jovanović-Čupa. Pribičević suggested that a secret society with village networks would be more effective in fighting against Habsburg rule. On his

167 Marko Attila Hoare, *The History of Bosnia from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London: Saqi, 2007), 87–89.

168 Radoslav Gaćinović, *Mlada Bosna* (Beograd: Odbrana, 2014), 215–224.

169 Dedijer, *The Road*, 249.

170 *Ibid.*, 262.

171 *Ibid.*, 272–273.

172 *Ibid.*, 277–279.

173 *Ibid.*, 283–284.

return to Vienna, Zečević and his colleagues took up the work of organizing links among secret societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then, Zečević asked Boža Janković, the chair of *Narodna Odbrana*, for help in military training but was declined, so he turned to Živojin Rafailović, then a leading member of *Narodna Odbrana*. Rafailović accepted the offer, and a number of students from Habsburg territories came to Serbia. Among them was Bogdan Žerajić. In 1908, he fled to Serbia and “joined the volunteer units of irregular troops called *komitas*, organized by *Narodna Odbrana* in preparation for the war against Austria-Hungary” (italics added).¹⁷⁴

The Serbian military aid, however, was toned down when the annexation crisis was over. *Narodna Odbrana* lost its militant nature and was transformed into a cultural society. The job to drill the Bosnian students was downsized and taken over by the officer-plotters. Tankosić and his guerrilla fighters accepted the Bosnians and gave them instructions.¹⁷⁵ For instance, Luka Jukić, an abortive assassin of the Croatian Ban, Slavko Cuvaj, came to Belgrade and received military training from Tankosić in February 1912.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the Sarajevo branch of Young Bosnia decided that an attempt should be made on the joint minister of finance, Leon von Bilinski. A member, Miloš Pjanić, came to Belgrade to procure weapons, but to no avail, as Luka Jukić had been there already. The group then changed its target to Franz Josef. Upon this decision, Đulaga Bukovac and Ibrahim Fazilović went to Belgrade. They subsequently went to southern Serbia and joined Tankosić’s guerrilla unit to learn how to use arms. However, the First Balkan War broke out and the plan of imperial assassination had to be postponed.¹⁷⁷

Closer contacts were established between the members of Young Bosnia and the Black Hand especially during the wars of 1912–1913, as many young Bosnians came to Serbia as volunteers. The nationalist youth from Bosnia and other South Slav lands of Austria-Hungary gathered around Vojislav Tankosić.¹⁷⁸ Already a renowned guerrilla leader, Tankosić took up the job of instructing them in guerrilla tactics.¹⁷⁹ Lujo Aljinović, who was arrested on charges of plotting the death of Franz Ferdinand in 1912, had been a volunteer during the Balkan Wars. One of the Sarajevo as-

174 Ibid., 180, 237.

175 Belić, *Komitski vojvoda*, 25–26; There is a mysterious letter (dated 23 March 1910), issued by the Skopje branch of *Narodna Odbrana* to the central committee in Belgrade, in which the branch requested that the following message be delivered to Tankosić: “It is not convenient to come with 15 people, because the Serbian king visits Istanbul. If possible, it’s good for four people! If not, let it be postponed until the king’s return to Serbia.” The next day, Jovan Marković (the chief secretary of the educational section of the foreign ministry) sent the answer: “What was necessary was done. The message was conveyed to Tankosić by way of B[ogdan] Radenković.” *Dokumenti*, vol. 4, sec. 1/1, 484. This suggests that Tankosić and Radenković were engaged in smuggling *četniks* as early as the spring of 1910.

176 Dedijer, *The Road*, 267.

177 Ibid., 276–279.

178 At the Sarajevo trial, Nedeljko Čabrinović testified. “It is not true that there were no Bosnians in the *četas* of *komita*. They were in all the *četas*. In the *četa* of Voja Tankosić, almost all were Bosnians. He boasted of it.” Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat*, 292.

179 MacKenzie. *The “Black Hand,”* 29.

sassins, Muhamed Mehmedbašić, together with his comrades, came directly from Bosnia.¹⁸⁰ The other Sarajevo assassin, Danilo Ilić, volunteered for the Serbian army until September 1913.¹⁸¹ Princip's close friends Đulaga Bukovac and Đuro Šarac were former guerrillas. The former joined the *četniks* and was on the battlefield until the end of the Second Balkan War. The latter also joined the *četniks* and became a personal bodyguard of Tankosić. Even Princip tried to join the *četniks*. He first tried the Bosnian headquarters of Tankosić's unit in early October 1912 but was rejected because of his small build.¹⁸² Another Sarajevo assassin, Trifko Grabež, also came to Belgrade and offered his services as a guerrilla.¹⁸³

In the light of these records, one can conclude that the link between Young Bosnia and the Black Hand officers was consolidated through Serbian efforts to recruit volunteers, first by way of *Narodna Odbrana* and then by means of guerrilla formations on the eve of the Balkan Wars. There is no indication that the Black Hand, as an organization, tried to control the activities of Young Bosnia.

After the Balkan Wars, the Black Hand ceased to exist as a cohesive organization, but the intimate relations between former volunteers and their commanders survived, especially between the former guerrillas of Bosnian origin and Vojislav Tankosić. It is this personal tie that explains the implication of the rump Black Hand in the preparation of the Sarajevo Incident.

The commonly accepted story of the Sarajevo Incident is as follows. In early April 1914, the Young Bosnians studying in Belgrade (Gavrilo Princip, Trifko Grabež, and Nedeljko Čabrinović) received the news that Archduke Franz Ferdinand would visit Sarajevo. They conceived a plot to assassinate the Austrian heir apparent. They first contacted their countryman, a former *četnik*, Milan Ciganović, for the necessary weapons. Ciganović then contacted Vojislav Tankosić, who approved the plan. He equipped the Young Bosnians with guns and bombs, helped them to get training in shooting, and assisted them with illegal crossing of the border. All these actions were directed by Tankosić. He was the only Black Hand leader whom the assassins directly contacted.

There are discussions about whether Tankosić asked Apis for permission beforehand. It is certain that Apis had known about the plot by the middle of June. According to Čedomir Popović, the remaining members of the Black Hand were informed by Apis and Tankosić of the Sarajevo plot on 15 June. It is also true, however, that Apis never met Princip and his friends. As the Sarajevo assassins left Belgrade on 28 May, there was enough time for a meeting. Apis would have

180 Others were Mehmed Zvonko, Nezir Hadžinalić, Bećko Kapidžić, Sefo Rizva, and Alija Kazazić. Radivoje Kašanin, ed., *Dobrovoljci u ratovima 1912–1918, Doživljaji i sećanja* (Beograd: Udruženje dobrovoljaca 1912–1918, 1971), 119–120.

181 Relying on the connection, Ilić visited Čedomir Popović in Užice in November. He insisted that something had to be done and demanded a meeting with Apis, expecting the latter's help in killing Potiorek, but to no avail. Dedijer, *The Road*, 283–284.

182 He then went as far as Prokuplje, but again Tankosić refused, saying, "You are too small and too weak." Princip felt strongly insulted. Later, when he was already involved in the Sarajevo conspiracy, Tankosić asked to see him. Princip refused to visit him. During the trial, Princip repeatedly called Tankosić "a native man." *Ibid.*, 196–197, 289.

183 Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat*, 292.

had to have met them personally if he was actually the main plotter, taking into consideration his personality.¹⁸⁴ Apis later confessed that he was once asked by Tankosić if he would let some young Bosnians cross into Austrian territory. Without thinking seriously, he said, “Yes.” After their departure, Tankosić explained the details of their intentions. Only then did Apis realize the seriousness of their actions.¹⁸⁵ Those records imply that the arming of the Sarajevo assassins was Tankosić’s personal idea, not a deliberate plot of the rump Black Hand.¹⁸⁶

According to those who knew him well, Vojislav Tankosić was an extremely short-tempered man, slow in words and fast on the trigger of his weapon.¹⁸⁷ It was commonly known that he would rather die than to give up doing something that he had already decided on.¹⁸⁸ Tankosić, at the same time, was a dedicated nationalist. In particular, he involved himself ardently in the *četnik* movement. Since he was born in a family of Bosanska Krajina origin, Tankosić’s unit attracted many volunteers from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is in this context that Tankosić connected with Princip and his friends.

At the Sarajevo trial, Nedeljko Čabrinović revealed that the plan of assassination had been drawn up by him and Princip. They then suggested the idea to the third man, Grabež. When it became necessary to obtain weapons, Princip asked Milan Ciganović to procure them.¹⁸⁹ Ciganović had been a student in the Merchant School of Sarajevo who subsequently fled to Serbia in 1909, joined the *četniks*, and made the acquaintance of Tankosić. Princip had known Ciganović since his first visit to Belgrade in 1912. Ciganović gave an evasive answer as far as the weapons were concerned, saying he would have to consult Tankosić first. A few days later, Ciganović told Čabrinović that they would get six bombs and four revolvers. The Sarajevo assassins subsequently received drilling in the use of weapons. Their instructors were Đuro Šarac, Ciganović and Milan Mojić. All of them were Tankosić’s men.¹⁹⁰ This story corroborates the view that the Bosnian volunteers of the Macedonian struggle provided the Sarajevo assassins with the link with Tankosić. Tankosić agreed to the request, regarding it as one of the many similar plots that had become banal for him.¹⁹¹ If we

184 Bijelica, “Organizacija,” 69–70.

185 Belić, *Komitski vojvoda*, 50

186 Čedomir Popović claims Tankosić’s deed was purely personal. Popović, “Sarajevski atentat,” 402; Princip likewise testified: “It’s a personal matter [of Tankosić].” Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat*, 88; Čebri-
nović deduced the same conclusion. *Ibid.*, 141.

187 There are many episodes describing his harsh character. Prince Djordje was for a time a pal of Tankosić, but they quarreled and Tankosić boxed the ears of the heir apparent. Dedijer, *The Road*, 382; During the Priority Dispute, Tankosić lay in wait with Vojin Popović and Milan Pavlović-Džila for Stojan Protić in front of his house and warned him: “Don’t play with fire! Otherwise, someday, you will fly into the air with your house and family.” Belić, *Komitski vojvoda*, 45.

188 Kazimirović, *Crna ruka*, 353.

189 Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat*, 35–39.

190 Dedijer, *The Road*, 289–290.

191 According to a biography of Đuro Šarac, written by his close friend Dušan Slavić in 1928, Tankosić said to Ciganović, “Up to now, for similar purposes, I have given many weapons, and not only has nothing being done but even the firing of the weapons has not been heard.” *Ibid.*, 293.

take into consideration that Tankosić had provided weapons to Luka Jukić and other assassins,¹⁹² the testimony sounds plausible. For Tankosić, helping the Sarajevo assassins was nothing special but one of those banal acts with which he had become familiar since the Macedonian days. The consequences were quite different on this occasion, however. It cost his country hundreds of thousands of lives, as well as years of foreign occupation.

Conclusions

The interaction between the Black Hand and the IMRO turned out to be one of the important background features of WWI in the following sense. The IMRO activities seriously devastated the existing order in Macedonia, which alarmed nationalist circles in Serbia. They staged a palace coup to install the more nationalist Karađorđević dynasty. The main force of the coup—young officers—succeeded in keeping their mutual bonds by participating in the Macedonian struggle. In the course of this struggle, they learned much from the IMRO about guerrilla tactics. They adopted the IMRO's organizational theories and know-how in fear-inducing propaganda. The officers became convinced that terrorist actions were effective tools for achieving political objectives. The rivalry and ever-increasing destructive activities of the two terrorist organizations further devastated the Southern Balkans. It resulted in the malfunctioning of the mechanisms of the regional balance of power devised by Russia and Austria-Hungary. The Balkan Wars subsequently pushed the two guardian powers onto collision course. At this critical point, another terrorist factor, Young Bosnia, made contact with the Serb plotters. The shared experience on the Macedonian battlefields made it possible for the two ideologically different groups to cooperate. The Young Bosnians procured weapons and logistical support from the rump Black Hand. The corollary was the Sarajevo incident.

Our discussion also reminds us of the destructive effects that international terrorist organizations can produce on international politics. Albeit small in size and limited in their resources, terrorist organizations can inflict disproportionate damage on the lives of people in politically sensitive regions such as the Balkans. They were the main actors that made the Macedonian Question complex. The quagmire of ethnic conflicts prepared the grounds for the subsequent dramatic changes, such as the Young Turk revolution, the Bosnian crisis, and the Balkan Wars. Those changes complicated the adjustment of the interests of the two guardian powers and eventually allowed the Sarajevo Incident to plunge international politics into a fateful deadlock.

192 Vemić wrote in his diary on 1 September 1911 that Tankosić sent a certain Živa Jovanović to Vienna to kill either the Emperor Franz Josef or the Archduke. *Ibid.*, 403.

Nietzsches literarisches Schaffen
— Eine stilistische und prosodische Studie im Spannungsfeld
zwischen Prosa und Lyrik —

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1882 verfasste Nietzsche die *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* für seine Freundin Lou Salomé. Tautenburg ist ein kleines Städtchen in der Nähe von Jena. Dort verbrachte er 1882 einige Wochen mit seiner Angebeteten. Er machte ihr einen Heiratsantrag, auf den sie jedoch nicht einging. Zu allem, was zwischen den beiden besprochen wurde, fertigte er Aufzeichnungen an, die uns heute als *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* vorliegen. In einem wichtigen Teil dieser Aufzeichnungen geht es um Stilfragen. Unter Nietzschekennern wird besonders die Passage „Zur Lehre vom Stil“ als bemerkenswert hervorgehoben. „Zur Lehre vom Stil“ setzt sich aus 10 Punkten zusammen, sozusagen als Vorschriften oder Gebote des guten Stils.

Unter Punkt 9 führt Nietzsche aus: „Der Takt des guten Prosaikers in der Wahl seiner Mittel besteht darin, dicht an die Poesie heranzutreten, aber niemals zu ihr überzutreten.“¹ Die Klärung des Verhältnisses von Prosa und Poesie hatte Nietzsche bereits als Professor in Basel beschäftigt. Er hielt dort Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der antiken Redekunst. Und aus seinem Studium der aristotelischen Rhetorik und der athenischen Redner kam er zu der Erkenntnis, dass die öffentlich vorgetragene „Kunstprosa“ oder „poetische Prosa“ im Grunde aus der Nachahmung, der Imitatio, der griechischen Lyriker und Tragödiendichter entstanden sein musste. Hinter dieser Entwicklung vermutete er den Wunsch, auch dem Redner eine Wirkung und den Ruhm zu verschaffen, wie es einem Schauspieler zukam. Im Prinzip ging es ihm um die Verfolgung dieser Entwicklung. Allerdings tastete er sich in seinen Basler Vorlesungen vorsichtig an den Stoff heran. Zunächst lässt sich feststellen, dass er den Wert der Annäherung von Prosa an die Poesie doch mit einer gewissen Zurückhaltung konstatierte.²

In dem fruchtbaren Jahr 1882, in dem er mit Lou Salomé zusammen war und seine *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* niederlegte, schrieb er ein weiteres wichtiges Werk, „Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft“. Hier finden sich mit einem Mal zahlreiche Aphorismen zur Prosa und Poesie, wie etwa der folgende: „Prosa und Poesie. – Man beachte doch, dass die grossen Meister der Prosa fast immer auch Dichter gewesen sind, sei es öffentlich, oder auch nur im Geheimen und für das »Kämmerlein«; und fürwahr, man schreibt nur im Angesichte der Poesie gute Prosa! Denn diese ist ein ununterbrochener artiger Krieg mit der Poesie: [...]“³ Was er als „artigen Krieg“ bezeichnet, mag einem heutigen Leser als recht militaristisch erscheinen. Im damaligen Kontext ist damit wohl eher eine Art „Dichter-Wettstreit“ gemeint, d.h. ein literarischer Wettstreit, ein liebenswerter Kleinkrieg zwischen Prosa und Poesie. Und das Schöne daran ist: „[...] so giebt es tausend Vergnügungen des Krieges, die Niederlagen mitgezählt, von denen die Unpoetischen, die sogenannten Prosa-Men-

schen, gar Nichts wissen: – diese schreiben und sprechen denn auch nur schlechte Prosa!⁴

Ein kurzer Blick auf die Etymologie der Prosa zeigt uns: Dahinter verbirgt sich das lateinische „prorsus“. Dieses bedeutet unter anderem „eine vorwärts schreitende Bewegung“. Beim Vers, von lateinisch „vertere“, handelt es sich genau um das Gegenteil, denn es bedeutet nicht nach vorn, sondern soviel wie „umkehren“, eine nach rückwärts gewandte oder schauende Bewegung. Nietzsche versucht nun, diese beiden Elemente, Prosa und Vers, also Poetik, miteinander zu verschmelzen. Das Abstrakte wird somit durch konkrete Empfindsamkeit aufgewertet und auf ein höheres Niveau gebracht. Ein bekannter Germanist, Heinz Schlaffer, zitierte in seinem Buch „Das entfesselte Wort – Nietzsches Stil und seine Folgen“ die folgende Passage aus Nietzsches Aufsatz mit dem Titel „Der Fall Wagner“:

— „Eine tiefe Entfremdung, Erkältung, Ernüchterung gegen alles Zeitliche, Zeitgemässe: und als höchsten Wunsch das Auge Zarathustra’s, ein Auge, das die ganze Thatsache Mensch aus ungeheurer Ferne übersieht, – unter sich sieht ... Einem solchen Ziele – welches Opfer wäre ihm nicht gemäss? welche „Selbst-Überwindung“! welche „Selbst-Verleugnung“!⁵

Zunächst einmal schreibt Schlaffer, die Häufung des unbestimmten Artikels „eine“, „ein“, „einem“ und die des Fragepronomens „welches“, „welche“, „welche“, falle doch stark ins Auge. Aus der Häufung dieser vielen kleinen Wörtchen ergebe sich ein dem Reim *ähnlicher* Gleichklang und eine dem Rhythmus *ähnliche* Bewegung. Man achte auf die Betonung von *ähnlich*, denn hier liegt wohl von Seiten Nietzsches eine Absicht vor.⁶

Weiterhin weist Schlaffer darauf hin, dass auch klanglich ähnliche Wörter in Gruppenverbänden auftreten. Zum Beispiel „Entfremdung, Erkältung, Ernüchterung“. Man hört gleich, dass bei allen der Anfangslaut „E“ erscheint und die Endsilben „ung“ identisch sind. Auch die metrische Struktur: unbetont – betont – unbetont wird hier unterstrichen. Man könnte noch allerlei weitere Studien zur Metrik und Rhythmik anführen. Hier soll nur festgestellt werden, dass Nietzsche bereits im Kleinen schon eine umfassende Vorarbeit geleistet hat, auf der heutige Germanisten aufbauen und aufwändigste Kommentare verfassen könnten. Schlaffer stellt desweiteren fest: „Manchmal täuscht das gleiche Wort bei Nietzsche über seine veränderte Bedeutung hinweg.“ Erläuterungen hierzu werden über das fragende Wörtchen »welches« gegeben. Um ein Beispiel zu nennen: »welches Opfer ... ?« Die gleiche Wendung „kehrt scheinbar unverändert wieder und hat dennoch, ihre grammatische Funktion wechselnd, sich zum bewundernden Ausruf gewandelt,“ nämlich „welche »Selbst-Überwindung«!“ „welche »Selbst-Verleugnung«!“ Schlaffer spricht hier von einem „Echo“: „Wie bei einem Echo hat die Frage ihre Antwort erhalten.“⁷

Bei Schlaffer läuft die gesamte Analyse schließlich auf den Punkt hinaus, dass Nietzsches Stil im Grunde die Entstehung eines Anti-Stils erst ermöglicht hätte. Dieser Standpunkt lässt sich zwar nachempfinden, der Verfasser kommt aber im Grunde zu einer ganz anderen Auffassung: Er möchte nicht wie Schlaffer behaupten, dass es erst Hesse und andere Schriftsteller der 20er Jahre wie z.B. Tucholsky oder Brecht waren, die wieder damit begannen, Nietzsches „hohe Tonlage der Sprache [...] herabzustimmen.“⁸ Nach Nietzsche kam freilich niemand an Nietzsche vorbei. Hesse nicht, Tucholsky nicht und auch nicht Brecht und selbstverständlich all die anderen, die nach

ihm kamen. Es sollte jedoch nicht übersehen werden, in welcher Zeit Nietzsche lebte, wie seine Lebensumstände waren, wie damals der Sprachgebrauch gehandhabt wurde, wer seine Freunde, wer seine Widersacher waren, wie gut seine Krankheit behandelbar oder auch nicht behandelbar war. Diese Liste könnte unendlich fortgesetzt werden. Es kommt jedoch zunächst einmal darauf an, die Welt Nietzsches nach Möglichkeit so zu rekonstruieren, dass man einigermaßen in die Lage versetzt wird, seine Schriften mit seinem eigenen Gefühlsspektrum nachzuempfinden. Aus diesem Grunde sollte man sich nicht im Studierkämmerlein verschanzen und eine Nietzscheologie aufbauen, die im Grunde wenig zielführend ist. Doch nur wenige Nietzscheforscher scheinen der Auffassung zu sein, dass es einfach nicht mehr zeitgemäß erscheine, sein Nietzschebild mit Veratzstücken aus „der Mottenkiste“ zu illustrieren. Dieser Haltung möchte sich der Verfasser gern anschließen.⁹

Wie bereits erwähnt: Es ist wichtig, sich in Nietzsches Zeit zu versetzen. Wie lebten die Leute, welche Art Fortbewegungsmittel kamen zum Einsatz, wer schrieb und über welche Themen wurde disputiert? Ohne ein solches Wissen ist es uns Heutigen unmöglich zu verstehen, was Nietzsche eigentlich im Sinn hatte, als er schrieb: David Strauss ist „ein nichtswürdiger Stilist“.¹⁰ Oder als Nietzsche Schopenhauer zitierte: „indem man keine andere Sprache mehr kennen wird, als den Lumpen-Jargon der noblen Jetztzeit – deren Grundcharakter Impotenz ist.“¹¹ Können wir heute noch auf Anhieb sagen, was mit einem Bildungsphilister gemeint sein könnte? Ein Banause, ein Schmalspur-Schriftsteller? Jemand, der keine zündenden Ideen hat und dem das grundlegende Handwerkszeug des Schriftstellertums fehlt? Im Falle David Strauss war Nietzsche der Meinung, bei diesem Herrn handle um einen Bildungsphilister, der sich in Gefilden der Pseudo-Kultur bewege, keine Ahnung von eigentlich künstlerisch strengem Kulturstil habe und seine Befriedigung lediglich im Abwehren desselben Stils seine Kraft zeige.¹²

Nietzsche fordert einen anderen und neuen Stildiskurs. In seinen *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* unter Punkt 8 erklärt er: „Je abstrakter die Wahrheit ist, die man lehren will, um so mehr muß man erst die Sinne zu ihr verführen.“¹³ Man beachte den Terminus „verführen“, der wieder typisch Nietzsches Duktus widerspiegelt. Natürlich denkt man an die gängige Bedeutung des Verbs „verführen“. Gleichzeitig aber verbirgt sich darin ein „Führen“ mit der Vorsilbe „ver“. Ob dieses „Ver“ nach vorne gerichtet ist oder nach hinten oder in welche Richtung auch immer, dies entscheidet sich wohl im Kontext. Auf alle Fälle liegt hier ein wichtiger Terminus im Spannungsfeld zwischen Prosa und Poesie vor. Allein das Wort „ver-führen“ zeigt schon auf: Man soll sich nicht von den allgemeinen Vorlieben, von der Mode der Zeit, von den etablierten Meinungsmachern „führen“ lassen, sondern einen anderen Weg einschlagen. Den Ver-Weg. Den Weg von allem, das einen zum Philister werden lässt, der, was ihm nicht in den Kram passt, mit Händen und Füßen abzuwehren versucht, wie zum Beispiel der Schriftsteller Strauss in Nietzsches Augen.

Nietzsche war sich natürlich bewusst, dass ein sich Abwenden von der literarischen Zeitströmung unweigerlich dazu führen musste, sich selbst ins Abseits zu manövrieren. Denn wer hört schon zu und wer liest die Werke eines Schriftstellers, der sich nicht am Geschmack der Zeit orientiert? Einsamkeit des Schaffenden, des poetischen Genies wäre die Folge. Als Genie hat er sich gesehen, wie uns viele seiner stolz daherkommenden Aphorismen verraten. Aber gleichzeitig können wir aus ebenso vielen Aphorismen und Gedichten herauslesen, dass er sich unglaublich

einsam fühlte, allein gelassen und verlassen von allen, die er mochte oder die er kritisierte. Man denke nur an seine häufigen Heimreisen zu seiner Mutter nach Naumburg. Seine Einsamkeit und diese Spontanheimreisen zur Mutter lassen vieles erahnen. Auch das sollte man zwischen den Zeilen lesen.

Um dieses Hin-und-her-gerissen-Sein seines literarischen Anspruches und seiner bodenlosen Einsamkeit zu demonstrieren, soll das folgende Gedicht als Anschauungsbeispiel dienen. Es ist der Sammlung der „Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei“ entnommen und trägt den Titel „Narr in Verzweiflung“¹⁴:

Ach! Was ich schrieb auf Tisch und Wand
Mit Narrenherz und Narrenhand,
Das sollte Tisch und Wand mir zieren?...

Doch ihr sagt: „Narrenhände schmieren, –
Und Tisch und Wand soll man purgieren,
Bis auch die letzte Spur verschwand!“

Erlaubt! Ich lege Hand mit an –,
Ich lernte Schwamm und Besen führen,
Als Kritiker, als Wassermann.

Doch, wenn die Arbeit abgethan,
Säh' gern ich euch, ihr Ueberweisen,
Mit Weisheit Tisch und Wand besch.....

„Der Narr“ zählt bei Nietzsche zu einem der wichtigsten Begriffe überhaupt. Kommt dem Narren doch in der europäischen Dichtung, zumindest seit Shakespeare eine prominente Bedeutung zu. Der Narr bei Nietzsche ist nicht einfach ein Dummkopf, ein Blödel, der es nicht besser weiß. Der Narr hier in diesem Poem ist vielmehr ein Zerissener, einer der zu viel weiß, der zu viel kennt, der sich zu viele Gedanken macht, einer der sich in der Welt der Empfindungen, in der Welt der Sinne bewegt, einer der es vermeidet, allein durch Logik in den tiefsten Kern der vermeintlichen Wahrheit eindringen zu wollen. Sein Stil ist der, der aus dem „Narrenherz“ heraus und mit „Narrenhand“ entsteht. Doch die etablierten akademischen Kreise, deren wichtigstes Anliegen nicht die schöne Spannung zwischen Prosa und Poesie ist, sondern denen es lediglich darum geht, das vermeintlich höhere Wissen darüber zu verwalten – diese Kreise verlangen, dass die Spuren der Schmierereien solcher Narrenhände vom Erdboden getilgt werden, bis nichts mehr existiere.

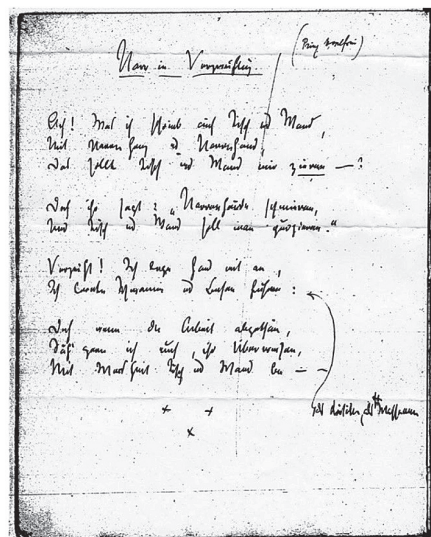
Nietzsche, dem dies nicht verborgen bleibt, gibt vor, mit Hand anzulegen. Allerdings tut er es mit dem hinterhältigen Gedanken, dabei gleich als Kritiker und unzerstörbarer Geist zu Werke zu gehen, wie ein Wassermann, der erst im Augenblick der Katastrophe zur Hochform gelangt, um einen neuen Menschen aus sich heraus zu erschaffen. Gleichzeitig ist ihm bewusst, das er einsam und allein auf verlorenem Posten steht, und nach seinem Zutun doch die anderen wieder zu ihrem

ursprünglichen Treiben zurückfinden. So schließt das Poem auf höchst intelligent-satirische Weise mit den Worten

Säh' gern ich euch, ihr Ueberweisen,
Mit Weisheit Tisch und Wand besch.....

Man kann sich denken, was da gesagt werden sollte. In seiner frühen akademischen Laufbahn machte sich Nietzsche Gedanken über den Stil. Vor allem auch über den akademischen Stil, der ihm als nicht dynamisch genug erschien, die Herzen seiner Studenten zu rühren. „Unsre Philologen zeigen nicht, daß sie irgend worin dem Alterthum nacheifern – deshalb ist ihr Alterthum ohne Wirkung auf die Schüler.“¹⁵ heißt es in seinem 1875 erschienenen Nachlass. Zur Ausbildung eines in Nietzsches Augen befriedigenden, unzeitgemäßen, jedoch auf höchstem Niveau sich entfaltenden Stiles bedürfe es eines „Studiums des Wetteifers“. Dieses Wetteifern will er sozusagen als eine Art athletische Disziplin verstanden wissen - eine geistig-athletische Disziplin, die sich am Gegenstand ihres Interesses misst und versucht, die hoch gesteckten Ziele nach Möglichkeit noch zu übertreffen. Ein Kräfteressen des Geistes. In Nietzsches Worten: „Man versuche alterthümlich zu leben – man kommt sofort hundert Meilen den Alten näher als mit aller Gelehrsamkeit“, und wie er an anderer Stelle noch stärker betont, ohne „Studium der Verzweiflung“.¹⁶

Der Entwurf für dieses Gedicht „Der Narr in Verzweiflung“ findet sich im Goethe-Schiller-Archiv in Weimar.¹⁷ Ursprünglich war es in folgender Zeilenform geplant: 3-2-2-3. Auf der rechten Seite der Vermerk: „als Kritiker, als Wassermann“. Dieser Vermerk sollte eigentlich den zweiten Zweizeiler auf eine dritte Zeile erweitern. In der Endversion landeten „Kritiker und Wassermann“ hinter dem ersten Zweizeiler: „Als Kritiker, als Wassermann“. In zahlreichen japanischen Übersetzungen werden diese beiden als gediegene Wörterbuchübersetzungen dargestellt, also ganz prosaisch als „Vertreter einschlägiger Berufsgruppen“. Als „Kritiker“ erscheint da jemand, der einfach nur rezensiert oder herumkritisiert. Und Nietzsches „Wassermann“ wird zum Wasserträger degradiert, einem Austräger, der Haushalte, die noch nicht an die Wasserleitung angeschlossen sind, mit Wasser versorgt. Bei dem „Wassermann“ in diesem Poem handelt es sich natürlich nicht um einen „Wasserträger“, sondern wir haben es hier mit einer Allegorie aus der griechischen Mythologie zu tun. Ein mythisches Wasserwesen, das ganze Sintfluten überleben kann, wenn auch die Welt rundherum in einem großen Harmageddon in Stücke geht. Ein Unsterblicher also, der die Kraft des Wassers in sich trägt und aus dem ein neuer Mensch hervorgehen kann. Und der „Kritiker“ ist beileibe kein Nörgler oder jemand, der alles besser weiß als jeder Meister. Ein Kritiker – das Wort ist abgeleitet vom Griechischen „krinein“ (scheiden, unterschei-



den, trennen) – tritt als jemand in Erscheinung, der gut zu unterscheiden weiß. Jemand, der über das Wissen verfügt, Unterschiede überhaupt feststellen und benennen zu können.

Der Narr in *Verzweiflung*, Nietzsche, sieht sich selbst als einsamer Schiffer auf einem Kahn. Schifffahrtmetaphern zählen ursprünglich zum Inventar der klassischen Poetik. Ernst Robert Curtius schreibt in seinem Werk *„Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter“* über diesen traditionsreichen, aus der römischen Antike kommenden Topos: „Der Dichter wird zum Schiffer, sein Geist oder sein Werk zum Kahn.“ Schon Plinius schrieb einem Dichter: „Löse denn die Taue, stelle die Segel und verstatte deinem Genius freie Fahrt. Denn warum soll ich mit einem Poeten nicht poetisch reden?“ Und Quintilian fühlt sich wie ein einsamer Schiffer auf hoher See (im Prooemium zu Buch XII). Wie man sieht, ist diese Art Schifffahrt-Metaphorik in der Antike wie im Mittelalter außerordentlich verbreitet und hält sich auch später noch lange Zeit. Bei Dante und in der Renaissance finden sich zahlreiche Stellen, die auf Schiffer und Boote verweisen.¹⁸

In den *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* findet sich ein Gedicht mit dem Titel „Columbus novus“¹⁹, „Der neue Kolumbus“. Wie unschwer vorzustellen ist, hat Nietzsche sich mit diesem Titel selbst bedacht. Seine Fahrt ins offene Meer, ins Blaue auf seinem Genueser Schiff orientiert sich am oben erwähnten Topos eines „poetischen Schreibens“, das in Form einer Ozeanreise beginnt, und in ungewisse Sphären führen wird und den Steuermann oder Kapitän in hoffnungslose Einsamkeit manövrieren kann. Das Gedicht ist in einem Trochäus mit Kreuzreimen verfasst. In der zweiten Strophe, die auf „Lieblichste Victoria“ endet, scheint sich ein Ende der Einsamkeit des Schiffers am Horizont aufzutun. Victoria ist seine „Siegesgöttin“. Selbstverständlich ist damit Lou Salomé gemeint, die Nietzsche in seiner Phantasie als seine Muse, als seine Begleiterin an Bord für ein gutes Gelingen seiner literarisch-philosophischen Kreuzfahrt in neue Gefilde an seiner Seite wähnt. Die Victoria ist allerdings eine Siegesgöttin, die den Sieg für sich allein in Anspruch nimmt, nämlich den Sieg, nicht in Nietzsches Wasser zu fahren, sondern ihm am Ende allein auf die Reise ins Ungewisse zu schicken.

Dorthin will ich, und ich traue
 Mir fortan und meinem Griff!
 Offen ist das Meer: in’s Blaue
 Treibt mein Genueser Schiff.

Alles wird mir neu und neuer
 Hinter mir liegt Genua.
 Muth! Stehst du doch selbst am Steuer,
 Lieblichste Victoria!

Im Vierten Buch, Kapitel 283, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, beschreibt Nietzsche „vorbereitende Menschen“.²⁰ Er „begrüßt alle Anzeichen dafür, dass vor allem die Tapferkeit wieder zu Ehren kommt.“ Mit Tapferkeit ist bei ihm eine Art „Risikobereitschaft“ gemeint. „Denn glaubt es mir!“ ruft er uns zu, das Geheimnis, um [...] den größten Genuss vom Dasein einzuernten, heisst: gefährlich leben.“ „Größter Genuss“, dieses Wort klingt eigentlich sehr modern. Denn in einem

Zeitalter, in dem immer weniger Spiritualität vorherrscht, das Leben unglaublich beschleunigt verläuft, und die Menschheit darauf aus ist, in immer kürzerer Zeit immer mehr Genuss zu verspüren, trifft diese Aufforderung doch einen modernen Nerv. „Gefährlich leben!“ sagt er. Und: „Baut eure Städte an den Vesuv!“ Oder: „Schickt eure Schiffe in unerforschte Meere!“ Hier erscheint erneut das Schifffahrtstopos und die Aufforderung an die Leser, das Abenteuer zu wagen, sich gemeinsam mit dem Autor auf die ungewisse Lektüre in eine potentiell gefährliche Welt zu begeben. „Seid Räuber und Eroberer, so lange ihr nicht Herrschern und Besitzer sein könnt, ihr Erkennenden!“ Lernen und strebend sich bemühen, das ist natürlich in einem Sinne ein unglaublicher Raubzug, bei dem man sich Gedanken und Philosophien anderer aneignet, bis man selbst so weit gekommen ist, ein Erkennender zu sein und das Rauben und Erobern nicht mehr nötig hat.

Im Vorspiel zu „Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft“, „Scherz, List und Rache“ finden sich 63 kleine Gedichte. Die Nummer 1 trägt den Titel „Einladung“²¹ mit direkten Parallelen zu dem zuvor erwähnten Aufruf, Mut und Tapferkeit zu zeigen oder Risikobereitschaft, den Willen, das Gefährliche zu wagen.

Wagt's mit meiner Kost, ihr Esser!
 Morgen schmeckt sie euch schon besser
 Und schon übermorgen gut!
 Wollt ihr dann noch mehr, — so machen
 Meine alten sieben Sachen
 Mir zu sieben neuen Muth.

„Wagt's mit meiner Kost, ihr Esser“, gleicht einem Echo, und es lässt sich hier im Hintergrund ein schwacher Klang vernehmen, der uns einflüstert: „Wagt's mit meinem Text, ihr Leser“, „Morgen schmeckt sie euch schon besser“. Wie bei ungewohnten Speisen kommt es darauf an, sich mit dem neuen Geschmack vertraut zu machen. Und dies geht wohl am besten in Gesellschaft mit denen, die das Essen zubereitet haben. Bei „Und übermorgen“ hat man sich bereits an die ungewohnte Speise gewöhnt und ist so weit, aus eigenem Erlebnisdrang heraus das Ungewohnte genießen zu können. Der Dichter Nietzsche zeigt sich fest davon überzeugt, dass seine mutigen Leser bereits nach „übermorgen“ seinen Texten verfallen sein werden, um am Ende nach mehr davon zu verlangen. Da lässt er uns wissen: Schön, dass man nicht in völliger Einsamkeit dasteht. Wer mag, darf noch länger in meiner Nähe bleiben, in der Nähe meiner Schriften, und er wird dann auch sicher mit neuen Kreationen bedient.

Strukturell liegt in diesem Gedicht ein sogenannter „Schweifreim“ vor, wobei die Kadenz der dritten Zeile „gut“ mit der Kadenz der sechsten Zeile „Muth“ einen Reim einght. Hierbei handelt es sich um eine Technik zur Hebung des Erwartungs- und Spannungshorizontes: Ohne gleich einen Reim auf „gut“ folgen zu lassen, erscheint durch diesen Vorhalt der „Muth“ am Ende umso stärker akzentuiert. So wird eine Art Nachhalleffekt erzielt, der sich optisch und akustisch wie ein Schweifstern durch das Poem zieht – ein Kunstgriff, der den japanischen Übersetzer vor eine überaus schwierige Herausforderung stellt. Nietzsche legte hier offensichtlich eine Struktur zugrunde, bei der mit dem letzten Wort „Muth“ und dem Er-

öffnungsimperativ „Wagt’s“ ein Spannungsbogen über das gesamte Gedicht gezogen wird. Er fordert den Leser auf, „es mit Muth essen“ und in einer dem Text angemessenen Weise zu genießen. Wer diese „Einladung“ akzeptiert, das heißt „mit Muth zu essen“, kann die Notwendigkeit „in Gefahr zu leben“ nachempfinden und sich dementsprechend darauf „vorbereiten“. Im Aphorismus Nr. 283 der „Fröhlichen Wissenschaft“, Viertes Buch, mit dem Titel „Siegreiche Person“, verkündet er: „Denn, glaubt es mir! - das Geheimniss, um die Grösste Fruchtbarkeit und den Grössten Genuss vom Dasein einzuernten, heisst: gefährlich leben!“

Hier findet sich ein Topos, der bereits seit aristotelischen Zeiten greift: Die Verdauung. Das Gelesene, das geistig Aufgenommene im Austausch mit dem Verfasser: Es muss verdaut werden. Vor der Verdauung kommt jedoch der Prozess einer „Vor-Verdauung“, was bedeutet, dass schwer Verdauliches einer gewissen Zerkleinerung, einer Analyse im Vorfeld des Verdauens bedarf, auf dass die Kost auch gut vertragen wird und somit zu einem Genussenerlebnis, zu einer positiven Resonanz mit dem Verfasser führen kann. Also schreibt Nietzsche in „Scherz, List und Rache“ unter Nr. 54 mit dem Titel „Meinem Leser“:²²

Ein gut Gebiss und einen guten Magen—
 Diess wünsch' ich dir!
 Und hast du erst mein Buch vertragen,
 Verträgst du dich gewiss mit mir!

In diesem kurzen Gedicht verwendet Nietzsche in der dritten und der vierten Zeile jeweils das identische Verb „vertragen“, dieses allerdings in der Absicht, um damit auf zwei völlig voneinander abweichende Bedeutungsebenen zu zielen. Zum einen geht es um den Bereich „innere Nahrungsverträglichkeit“, zum anderen um „äußere menschliche Beziehungen“. Durch eine Verteilung dieses Verbs „vertragen“ auf zwei aufeinanderfolgende Zeilen des Gedichtes gelingt es ihm, eine äußerst gelungene Kontrastwirkung zu erzielen. Vermittels der Struktur eines vollkommenen Kreuzreimes wird in der zweiten und vierten Zeile durch das „dir“ und das „mir“ am Ende weiterhin eine enge Beziehung zwischen dem Leser und dem Autor suggeriert. Auch die Reimworte im Versinneren - die adjektivischen Binnenreime „gut“ für „gut Gebiss“ und jenes für den „guten Magen“ - kommen sehr schön als Metaphern für bestimmte Körperorgane zur Geltung, die an Nahrungsaufnahme beziehungsweise Verdauung beteiligt sind. Hierdurch soll Nietzsches hohe Erwartung signalisiert werden, dass es für einen „starken Leser“ bei der Lektüre der Gedichte in der Tat darauf ankommt, diese schwer verdaulichen Zeilen mit einem „gut Gebiss“ und einem „guten Magen“ zu bewältigen.

Dieses Gedicht steht in einem Spannungsfeld mit zwei vorangegangenen: Das eine, die Nummer 24 ist „Pessimisten-Arznei“ betitelt und endet mit dem Ausruf: „Das hilft dir von der Dyspepsei“. Hier geht es darum, wie vermittels einer mittelalterlichen Kur aus einer Art Drecksapotheke geistige Verdauungsstörungen gelindert werden können. Das nächste Gedicht, die Nummer 35, ist mit dem kurzen Titel „Eis“²⁴ überschrieben.

Ja! Mitunter mach' ich Eis:

Nützlich ist Eis zum Verdauen!
 Hättet ihr viel zu verdauen,
 Oh wie liebte ihr mein Eis!

„Eis“ ist eine klassische Nietzsche-Metapher, eine die er bereits in seinen Pubertätsjahren benutzt. In seinem bekannten Werk „Ecce Homo“, in dem er uns gleichzeitig als ans Kreuz-Genagelter wie auch als Erlöser entgegentritt, teilt er uns in einem literarischen poetischen Prosa-Manifest mit, was es für ihn mit dem Einsam-Eisigen-Befreienden und Licht-Bringenden auf sich hat:

„Wer die Luft meiner Schriften zu athmen weiss, weiss, dass es eine Luft der Höhe ist, eine starke Luft. Man muss für sie geschaffen sein, sonst ist die Gefahr keine kleine, sich in ihr zu erkälten. Das Eis ist nahe, die Einsamkeit ist ungeheuer – aber wie ruhig alle Dinge im Lichte liegen! wie frei man athmet! wie Viel man unter sich fühlt! – Philosophie, wie ich sie bisher verstanden und gelebt habe, ist das freiwillige Leben in Eis und Hochgebirge.“²⁵

Diese wohldurchkomponierten Zeilen hinterlassen bei lautem Vorlesen einen Eindruck, der in der Tat ins Musikalische weist. Rhythmus und Metrik, die hier zum Zuge kommen, lassen erahnen, dass Nietzsche sich sprachlich wie ein in klassischer Komposition geschulter Musiker verhält, der es nicht duldet, dass eine überflüssige Note, ein überflüssiges Element die Vollkommenheit des Gesamtbildes trüben kann.

In seinen letzten Monaten, kurz vor seinem tragischen Ende, schrieb Nietzsche ein weiteres Gedicht, in dem er der Welt sozusagen sein Vermächtnis hinterließ. Auch wenn Körper und Geist vergehen, die Schrift, das Geschriebe bleibt, so wie das ewige Eis, über dem die Abendsonne scheint und das im Abendrot noch trotzig erglüht:²⁶

Stunde des Abends
 wo auch noch das Eis
 meiner Gipfel glüht!

Wird das Schreiben als ungeheure Einsamkeit aufgefasst – wenn auch als eine höchst produktive Einsamkeit – so bedarf es einer nahezu übermenschlichen Natur, diese Einsamkeit zu ertragen und das Produkt seiner Einsamkeit der Nachwelt mitzuteilen. Nicht alle Leser sind in der Lage, allein aus der Schrift herauszulesen, was der Dichter mitzuteilen hatte. Aus diesem kommt die Metapher ins Spiel, es wird durch Bilder gesprochen. Eines der wirkmächtigsten Bilder im christlichen Abendland ist der einsame, gottverlassene Christus am Kreuz: Ecce homo. Letzlich war es diese Metapher, die Nietzsche aufgriff, um seine eigene, tiefe, Einsamkeit sprachlich kundzutun.

Unter Punkt 2 in den *Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen* „Zur Lehre vom Stil“ fordert er: „Der Stil soll dir angemessen sein in Hinsicht auf eine ganz bestimmte Person, der du dich mitteilen willst.“²⁷ Vermutlich galt dies seiner Lou Salomé. Es ist jedoch allgemein bekannt, dass es selten einmal gelingt, einen für sein Gegenüber angemessenen Stil zu finden. Gern verliert man sich in banalen Floskeln, die vom anderen zwar verstanden werden, selten aber in die Tiefe gehen. „Der Stil an sich“ war es unter anderem, was Nietzsche zu überwinden trachtete. Seiner Auffassung nach konnte „Stil“ nur auf einem einsamen Weg mit einem „Du“ als Begleiter oder einer Beglei-

terin entstehen. In „Ecce homo“ legt er dar, dass „Guter Stil an sich – eine reine Thorheit, blosser »Idealismus«“ sei, „etwa, wie das »Schöne an sich«, wie das »Gute an sich«, wie das »Ding an sich“.²⁸ Und er geht noch weiter: Nicht nur, dass „guter Stil an sich“ nicht existiere, sondern er betont: „Man weiss vor mir nicht, was man mit der deutschen Sprache kann, – was man überhaupt mit der Sprache kann.“ Hiermit nimmt er für sich selbst in Anspruch, ganz allein der „Entdecker“ dessen zu sein, was man mit der deutschen Sprache überhaupt zu leisten imstande sei.²⁹

- 1 Friedrich Nietzsche: Zur Lehre vom Stil. Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen für Lou von Salomé. In: Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe, hg., von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (diese Ausgabe wird künftig als KSA zitiert), Bd. 10, München 1999, S. 39.
- 2 Friedrich Nietzsche: Geschichte der griechischen Literatur. In: Nietzsches Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Hrsg. von Fritz Bornmann, Walter de Gruyter (Berlin) 1995, Bd. II5, S. 27 ff.
- 3 Friedrich Nietzsche: Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. In: KSA, Bd. 3, S. 447.
- 4 Friedrich Nietzsche: a.a.O., S. 448
- 5 Friedrich Nietzsche: Der Fall Wagner. In: KSA, Bd.6, S. 12.
- 6 Heinz Schlaffer: Das entfesselte Wort – Nietzsches Stil und seine Folgen. Carl Hanser (München) 2007, S. 53.
- 7 Heinz Schlaffer: a.a.O., S. 57.
- 8 Heinz Schlaffer: a.a.O., S. 194.
- 9 vgl. Christian Bennes Rezension über „Das entfesselte Wort“ von Schlaffer. In: Zeitschrift für Germanistik. Heft 3/2008. Neue Folge. XVIII. Jg. S. 678 – 679.
- 10 Friedrich Nietzsche: Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. In: KSA, Bd. 1, S. 220.
- 11 Friedrich Nietzsche: a.a.O., S. 221.
- 12 ebd.
- 13 Friedrich Nietzsche: Zur Lehre vom Stil. Tautenburger Aufzeichnungen für Lou von Salomé. In: KSA, Bd. 10, S. 39.
- 14 Friedrich Nietzsche: Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. In: KSA, Bd. 3, S. 646.
- 15 Friedrich Nietzsche: Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875. In: KSA, Bd. 8, S. 89.
- 16 ebd.
- 17 Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Hg.): Archivdatenbank des Goethe- und Schiller-Archivs. GSA 71/144.
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