

**THE OTTOMAN *BALKAN* GAZETTE AS AN AGENT OF EMPIRE  
WITHIN THE BULGARIAN NATION STATE, 1910-1911**

By

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the content and function of the Plovdiv (Bulgaria) based Ottoman language newspaper *Balkan* throughout the years 1910-1911 and conceptualizes it as a mouthpiece of the Revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) possessing the ultimate political power in the Ottoman Empire. It argues that *Balkan*, as a propaganda organ of the CUP power represents the continuation of imperial networks in the nation state of Bulgaria and acted to undermine its moral claims over Ottoman Macedonia. To this end, this newspaper tried to politically educate and mobilize the Muslims in Bulgaria against the Bulgarian state. It further laid a wide surveillance mechanism both in Bulgaria and Macedonia whereby readers' letters were dialogically used to report and censure the alleged atrocities of the Bulgarian state and civilians over the Muslims. This content addressed a vast Muslim readership in Bulgaria, Macedonia and other provinces of the Ottoman Empire to secure their solidarity and loyalty to the CUP governance. Nevertheless, the present thesis also contends that both the Albanian uprisings in the Ottoman Empire and deep cleavages among Muslims in Bulgaria, in terms of cooperation with Bulgarian political parties, conservative religious attitudes and support for the CUP regime, revealed major limits of *Balkan*'s ideological project.

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## Introduction

This thesis focuses on the Plovdiv based Ottoman language newspaper *Balkan* and analyzes its content and relationship with its audiences and interlocutors between 1910 and 1911, two crucial years that constitute a turning point in the Balkans and Ottoman Empire when the radicalization of politics in the region led to the Balkan Wars (1912-13). It conceptualizes *Balkan* as an ideological mount-piece and medium of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress government (henceforth CUP). *Balkan* was published between the years 1906-1920 by its CUP activist editor Ethem Ruhi. After the Ottoman constitutional revolution in 1908, the CUP expressly chose Ruhi to engineer a versatile ideological mission through his publishing and “investigative” activities of his newspaper. As this thesis will argue, in many ways Ruhi was charged with keeping close tabs on and even undermining the Bulgarian state’s authority and legitimacy on many occasions by closely monitoring and disclosing every instance of its infringement upon the rights and dignity of the Muslim community in Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> Ruhi was also charged with the equally daunting task of trying to mobilize politically and socially the diverse Muslim community of Bulgaria in order imbue it with the power and know-how to stand up to an oppressive government and its society. In this sense this ideological enterprise was a controversial, and certainly overlooked, continuation and extension of imperial networks into Bulgaria that still sought to manipulate the politics of a former province despite its formal declaration of independence a couple of years earlier in 1908.

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<sup>1</sup> An important point of this thesis is that one cannot talk about the Muslim community as a homogenous, unified entity. The Muslim community in Bulgaria was a very diverse one comprised of different ethnic groups such as Turks, Pomaks, Tatars, Törbeş, Roma, etc.

Yet, *Balkan*'s ideological mission was much more multifaceted and ambitious than these goals alone. Apart from reaching every Bulgarian province, it was also widely circulated in Ottoman Macedonian towns and other Ottoman provinces. It therefore played the important role of interacting with, reporting to, and connecting a diverse Muslim community from the Balkans to Anatolia in extreme times. Thus, *Balkan*'s intense criticisms of the Bulgarian governments' oppressive policies towards its Muslims functioned to undermine Bulgaria's parallel claims about "intolerable Ottoman atrocities" against Macedonian Christians whilst the paper's consistent portrayal of local Muslims' "victimization" and "plight" evoked much consternation and reflection upon their own fates in the larger Muslim community in other parts of the Balkans and Ottoman Empire. Counteracting Bulgarian as well as other Balkan nation-states' irredentist propaganda and claims on Macedonia was particularly important in the case of *Balkan*'s Albanian audience whose loyalty to the CUP government was suspect in 1910 and 1911 when a series of revolts broke out as a result of an increasing articulation of Albanian nationalism in response to disparate Balkan nations' claims to the Albanian homeland in the western provinces of the Empire. Regarding its Macedonian audience, *Balkan* also closely monitored any encroachment on local Muslims by Bulgarian civilians and guerrilla bands and used such incidents as part of its ideological arsenal to undermine the Bulgarian state's claims over Macedonia.

In terms of this double surveillance mechanism that kept an eye both on Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonian Muslims, the letters to the editor sent to *Balkan* by its readers proved indispensable since they acted as intelligence reports that (along with its official correspondents in towns) kept *Balkan* and its wider audiences alert to threats and attacks on the Muslim



community throughout the region. Moreover, readers' letters were crucial in the sense that they were used for further pieces of propaganda as they usually were written by Muslims affected by the events and thus provided an emotive first person voice. This voice was also substantiated by the additional commentaries of *Balkan*'s staff that portrayed these reports as irrefutable proof of Muslims' victimization at the hands of Bulgarian state and civilians both in Bulgaria and Macedonia. Regardless of the fact that Ruhi and his staff may have selectively printed or perhaps even authored some of these letters, the diverse concerns they raise in conjunction with other types of sources and imagery analyzed below underlines the dialogical nature of how news was collected and presented by outfits like *Balkan*: it was a forerunner of "investigative" journalism in the region that kept tabs on yet relied on its network of Muslim readers to fulfill this task and undermine the predominantly Christian Bulgarian government and its policies against its readership both in Bulgaria and Macedonia. Lastly, *Balkan*'s ideological mission was buttressed by Ruhi's fierce, outspoken editorials that attacked the Bulgarian government, undermined its cause in Macedonia to the benefit of the Ottoman Empire and CUP and vehemently advocated the CUP power in Ottoman politics as the ultimate agent able to secure the Ottoman nation from foreign encroachments, ensure its social progress and act as the defender of Muslims in general.

But given the ambitious, multi-tasking mission of *Balkan*, it should come as a surprise to the reader that some of Ruhi and his staff's largest obstacles came not from the Bulgarian government but various groups from within the very Muslim community that they were trying to unify. Letters to the editor in the third chapter reveal that although a significant concern towards political mobilization was apparent especially in terms of improving the modern

education (conceptualized along CUP lines as a means of political survival), Muslims in Bulgaria were widely divided regarding the degree of affiliation they believed that they should forge with the Bulgarian authorities, the advocacy or rejection of modernist education and ideals, as well as the loyalty they should invest into the “secularist” CUP regime that dethroned a pious sultan whom many Muslims in their community still revered. With regard to the organization of this thesis, the first chapter situates *Balkan*’s intriguing ideological mission within a theoretical model. It argues that nationalism studies generally disregard the political mobilization of minorities through a narrative of linear victimization. It further argues that in the case of studies presented from this vantage point, minority mobilization is something portrayed developing spontaneously due to the minority’s own efforts to confront a repressive, nationalizing host state. To elaborate this point, I find Brubaker’s relational theory a useful model in which the categories of the host state (Bulgaria), the national minority (Muslims in Bulgaria) and the kin state (Ottoman Empire) are suggested to demonstrate how within this triadic relation, the kin state closely monitors the national minority, tries to empower it and fashions itself its spiritual homeland.<sup>2</sup> Yet to expand Brubaker’s theory, this study suggests that the surveillance and political mobilization of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria was not only because of the Ottoman government’s concern for its well-being *per se* but was also intimately connected with the imperial government’s ideological needs in the heated environment of the Macedonian conundrum.

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<sup>2</sup>Rogers Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe,” *Daedalus* 124 (1995):111-118.

In the second chapter Ethem Ruhi's conflict-ridden career as an ideologue in Bulgaria is discussed along with his enterprise *Balkan*. It will be suggested that this information points to his role as an influential political actor commanding Muslim public opinion in Bulgaria and Macedonia as a result of which he was constantly targeted by Bulgarian authorities and imprisoned on a number of occasions. Subsequently, major elements of *Balkan*'s contentious content will be analyzed based on a discussion of Ruhi's articles that vociferously criticized the Bulgarian government whilst insisting on the political mobilization of the Muslim nation through modern education, maintaining vigilance against its host Bulgarian governments' oppression of Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia, and whole-heartedly embracing the positivist and rationalist platforms of the CUP government.

The third chapter analyzes letters from *Balkan*'s audiences to demonstrate how despite the newspaper's limited resources and status as a suspect "minority" mouthpiece, it relied precisely on its readership's intelligence to fulfill its "watchdog mission." I will argue that the selective printing of letters written by Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia about the Bulgarian government's encroachments on their communal organizations and infrastructure as well as Bulgarian civilians' atrocities against Muslims in their localities was aimed at undermining the Bulgarian government's own propaganda campaigns that portrayed the Ottoman rule of Macedonia as tyrannical and oppressive. Moreover, letters from other provinces of the Ottoman Empire that denounced the Bulgarian officials' treatment of Ottoman Muslims and Bulgarian soldiers' skirmishes with the Ottoman military units embodied a discourse of Ottoman patriotism that concomitantly applauded CUP government.

The chapter then shifts its focus to the Muslims' attempts to improve modern education in Bulgaria which was understood by the readers as the only means of guaranteeing the community's political survival. To this end, the readers' extensive fund-raising campaigns to improve educational facilities and material in numerous Bulgarian provinces are addressed. These events were organized around specific Young Turk lore (such as the staging of plays which were the cornerstones of the Young Turk ethos) which points out that the initiators of these campaigns were making sense of their patriotic acts by resorting to emotive themes borrowed from the kin state (to which they were spiritually bounded as a result of the ideological mission of *Balkan*).

Yet given these reports of widespread educational mobilization in line with *Balkan*'s ideological postulations, the next part of the chapter will argue that these by no means represented the response of a unified community reacting positively to *Balkan*'s call. Instead, this part draws attention to the deep fragmentations and antagonisms within the Muslim community. In addition to condemning the conservative reactions towards the modern education, readers' letters discussed in this part repeatedly demonized the so called "*partizans*" which were Muslim officials whom readers accused of treacherously cooperating with Bulgarian parties for their own self interests. In this regard various individuals such as Muslim officials in the endowment commissions (*vakıf komisyonları*) and educational commissions (*ma'ârif encümenleri*) as well as high-ranking Muslim officials such as the head *mufti* and the Muslim deputies were decried as corrupted by the wealth and power bestowed upon them by the Bulgarian government in return for their betraying the interests of their brethren, what the authors of the letters consistently referred to as the Muslim nation. *Partizans* were often

charged with national treason and posited to be “fake” religious conservatives. The deep political cleavages that the term *partisan* connoted moreover played themselves out during the process of the elections of Muslim deputies for the new Bulgarian parliament in 1911. The last part of the chapter is devoted to letters from the Ottoman Empire and particularly Albanian provinces that trumpeted a discourse of “Ottoman patriotism”.

Thus, in a nutshell, this thesis attempts to conceptualize an intriguing ideological device of the Ottoman Empire charged with monitoring and ideologically moulding both the Muslims in a foreign sovereign country and in Empire`s contested territories. The ensuing discussion will address in much more detail both the mechanisms and limits of this project.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Chapter

### 1.1. Theoretical Framework

Modernist theories of nationalism do not elaborate much on the question of minorities. Rather, they focus less on the dynamics of minority political mobilization and analyze in detail the political and economic transformations that gave rise to the phenomenon of the nation state which is above all characterized by its goal towards cultural and ethnic homogenization. The major distinction, in terms of minority policies conventionally distinguishes between civic and ethnic national forms each presupposing a fixed response towards minorities in the form of inclusion or exclusion, liberal incorporation or persecution and assimilation respectively. This distinction usually came to be associated with a West-East divide within Eastern European nationalisms thought to be marked by ethnic extremism and the pronounced exclusion of minorities.<sup>3</sup> In these studies, there is not much emphasis placed on how minorities respond to, or politically mobilize to situate themselves within the emerging nation states since as a rule they are conceived as directly subjected to and shaped by government policies and regarded as victimized, persecuted or assimilated respectively.

Many studies done on the Muslim and Turkish minority in the Bulgarian nation state similarly adopted this framework, as these groups are seen monolithic and thoroughly victimized by the Bulgarian state which is thought to be perennially inclined to assimilate and

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<sup>3</sup>Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 330.

liquidate its minorities on the path of ethnic and cultural homogenization.<sup>4</sup> As a response to such policies, the key minority response is often argued to be the option of immigration to Turkey, and any organization of the Muslim minority is discussed to be isolated communal organizations without much stress on any political dimension, ideological goal or the dynamic informing them.<sup>5</sup>

Yonca Köksal analyzes the minority policies of Bulgaria until the establishment of the communist regime in 1944 and proposes a path-dependent model. Accordingly, in the early years of the Bulgarian state after 1908, the definition of the Muslim minority was based on the Ottoman millet system which was pitted against Bulgarian national identity. Close scrutiny from the Ottoman Empire/Republic of Turkey, struggle between the liberal and conservative Bulgarian politicians and the disunity of the Muslim community prevented Bulgarian minority policies to become repressive or assimilationist, and consequently, the state response was either indifference or toleration. For Köksal, only when Bulgarian elite unity was achieved with the right wing governments of 1930's (under the authoritarian and elitist regime led by the *Zveno* group) and when the Turkish minority unified around an ethnic category, assimilation and repression became viable state policies.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Examples of such approaches are represented by the work of scholars such as: Kemal Karpat, "Introduction: Bulgaria's Methods of Nation Building and the Turkish Minority," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal. H. Karpat (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 1990), 2, 7- 8, 12.

Bilal Şimşir, "The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria: History and Culture," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal. H. Karpat (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 1990), 161.

<sup>5</sup>For instance, see Richard Crampton, "The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878-1944," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal. H. Karpat (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 1990), 45-55, 67-70.

<sup>6</sup>Yonca Köksal, "Minority Policies in Bulgaria and Turkey: The Struggle to Define a Nation," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6 (2006): 517-518.

Although, this model marks a departure from the previous generation of scholarship on the Muslim minority in Bulgaria in that it highlights Turkish political mobilization after the establishment of the Republic, the suggestion that any effective minority political mobilization in Bulgaria occurred only at that period with the crystallization of Turkish ethnic identity in Bulgaria deserves a more detailed study. It also sheds little light on the organization and ideological usages of minority mobilization by the kin state (i.e. Ottoman Empire/Turkey). Thus it disregards how encroachments upon the Muslims in Bulgaria under a rapidly nationalizing environment bred intensive conflict which was in turn ideologically used by political actors commissioned by the Ottoman Empire both for propaganda purposes and to mobilize this community within the Bulgarian nation state.

This thesis contends that the *Balkan* newspaper analyzed in this study constitutes a considerable attempt towards the political mobilization of the Muslim community in Bulgaria prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, this attempt was not only restricted to a moral concern to empower Muslims in the region *per se* but was also intimately linked to serve the ideological and legitimization concerns of the CUP power in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the newspaper as an ideological tool of the CUP set out to monitor closely any infringement of the Bulgarian state/civilians upon the Muslims of Bulgaria and Ottoman Macedonia. For this end, as a publication circulating throughout Bulgaria, Macedonia and other provinces of the Ottoman Empire, *Balkan* laid a comprehensive surveillance network upon the Muslims and used the letters of its audiences in Bulgaria and Macedonia as information-gathering mechanisms on such encroachments. These reports were, in turn, used to protest and undermine the Bulgarian state's authority and portrayed Muslims emotively as subject to



Bulgarian atrocities to promote the Ottoman cause in neighboring Macedonia for the consumption of the paper's different audiences outside of Bulgaria. Moreover, *Balkan* tried to empower Muslims in Bulgaria socially and politically against the Bulgarian state. Its bold and outspoken ideological articles and opinion pieces similarly criticized the Bulgarian government, stood for the Ottoman cause in Macedonia and vehemently tried to legitimize CUP political power in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the minority political mobilization studied in the pages and policies of *Balkan* is not constitutive of a spontaneous process that gradually develops through minorities' political determination but is rather predicated upon a conscious ideological project informed by the minority's kin state, the Ottoman Empire. In order to conceptualize this aspect, Brubaker's analytical insights offer useful departure points.

Brubaker, in his book *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* argues that rather than employing a dual framework to understand nation-state policies and minority responses, contemporary nationalisms should be analyzed by taking into account the triadic relationship between newly independent nationalizing host states, national minorities, and homeland kin states.<sup>7</sup> Although the argument by Brubaker is specifically devised to analyze the competing nationalisms during and after the break-up of Yugoslavia, his approach is also quite useful for coming to terms with the dynamics of the Muslim minority mobilization in Bulgaria before the Balkan Wars (1912-13). In a related article, Brubaker elaborates on his analytic concepts which offer useful theoretical grounds to analyze the material within this study.

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<sup>7</sup>Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5-8.

Namely, Brubaker proposes that nationalizing host states, national minorities and homeland states each should be understood not as substantial, fixed and reified entities but as political categories and fields of differentiated and competitive positions. Specifically, within the composition of a national minority, there are different organs, parties, movements, individuals and political entrepreneurs each seeking to represent the minority to its putative members or to the host state and thus trying to monopolize the legitimate representation of the minority group. Thus, for Brubaker, the term national minority does not refer to internally unified and sharply bounded groups but to a loose and imperfect designation for a field of competing stances. With regards to these differing positions available to actors operating within a national minority, while some may press for collective cultural and political rights or else for autonomy and separation (invoking the patronage and protection of the homeland state) based on the claim of membership to a different ethno-cultural nationality than the host state, others may prefer to cooperate with the host state and avoid overtly displaying any type of loyalty to the home land or kin state. According to Brubaker, competing stances within the field of a national minority may vary to such an extent that even the question whether the group should understand and represent itself as such may be challenged by some of the operating actors. Nationalizing states and homeland states themselves are predicated upon competing stances, as there may be degrees in terms of advocating nationalizing policies and patronizing, monitoring the national minority within the host state. In this triangular relation, actors in each three fields monitor the other fields to come up with policy decisions that best serve their particular interests.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Brubaker, "National Minorities," 111-114, 116-118.

This approach fits with the material of this study in several respects. First, Ethem Ruhi's career in Bulgaria and his enterprise in the form of *Balkan* newspaper after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was directly informed and induced by the Ottoman state under the Young Turk regime. In his memoirs, Ruhi notes that although his activities before the so-called constitutional revolution were part of the broader Young Turk opposition against the rule of Abdülhamit II (r. 1876-1909), after the regime changed hands he was specifically instructed by the Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa and the leading cadres of the Committee of the Union and Progress such as Talat and Cavit Beys to remain in Bulgaria and lay the groundwork for mobilizing the Turkish community. According to Ruhi, the grand vizier explicated his task by stating that he was hoping to see Ruhi as the “Delçev of Turks” in the Balkans, referring to the leader of Bulgarian and Macedonian Committees who organized revolts and terrorist activities against the Ottoman state. Ruhi, himself states his goal as “repudiating the lie of the victimized Christians and cruel Turks” and “to work for keeping alive the Turkish identity in the Balkans”.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, although his memoirs of that were written *ex post facto* in 1947 for Kemalist audiences in the Turkish Republic and Ruhi claims that his ideological task was to support and bolster the “Turks” of Bulgaria (i.e., in ethnic terms), the actual language used to describe the Muslim community in Bulgaria and the Balkans in general was much different. That is, the prevalent appellations *Balkan* used to refer to its audience concerning these groups were the “Muslims of Bulgaria” (*Bulgaristan Müslümanları*) or the broader notion of the “Muslim nation” (*millet-i İslâm*), thus betraying the diversity and complexity of the groups that *Balkan*

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<sup>9</sup>Ethem Ruhi Balkan, “Hâtırâları,” in *Canlı Târihler* (Ankara: TürkiyeYayınevi, 1947), 37- 38.

sought to address and bolster. In the case of Bulgaria, although it is true *Balkan* could only be regularly followed by the Turkish speakers, fashioning this newspaper as the “protector of the victimized Muslims of Bulgaria” offered greatest leverage both in terms of making effective propaganda against the Bulgarian state and gaining the sympathy of a diverse, Ottoman-Muslim audience. Indeed, even within the confines of Bulgaria, Muslim communities (including the Turkish community) did not operate upon fully crystallized identities. At the same time, by portraying a monolithic Muslim nation subject to Bulgarian atrocities, *Balkan*’s pages could serve as a discursive device for the Ottoman government which could fashion itself as a spiritual homeland state because of its status as the caliphate of all Muslims, monitor Balkan Muslims and even interfere and claim them as its own at critical moments, especially when a similar role of protectorate over Macedonian Christians was ardently articulated by the Bulgarian state. When addressing different Ottoman audiences, *Balkan* again emphasized common Muslim origin, particularly to secure the Albanian populations’ loyalty which was under siege by the 1910-1911 Albanian uprisings. Concerning *Balkan*’s Macedonian politics, the common suffering of Muslims under Bulgarian national activism was a major ideological trope used against Bulgarian claims of Ottoman atrocities inflicted on the Bulgarian population in the contested region. It may be useful to suggest that although the identities of both (especially provincial) Muslims and Christians were to some extent still fluid during the Macedonian crisis,<sup>10</sup> bitter contestation undertaken by national activists and paramilitaries to

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance Gingeras’s chapter which argues that by 1912 the fluidity in Macedonian peoples’ identities was still observable and were informed by such factors as multilingual common existence, provincial or urban background and confessional affiliation: Ryan Gingeras, “The Empire’s Forgotten Children: Understanding the Path from Ottomanism to Titoism in Muslim Macedonia, 1912-1953” in *Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary*

impose their respective ethnic national categories upon the Christian population marked the region achieving noteworthy appeal in some cases.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it seems that Ottoman Empire and CUP, along with *Balkan* as their mouthpiece, operated within the discursive field that informed the Macedonian nationalisms as they identified the category of Bulgarian as potentially violent and hostile and increasingly defined the Muslim population as their legitimate flock whose loyalties to the regime had to be secured.

Returning to *Balkan*'s ideological agendas that targeted Muslims in Bulgaria, spreading modern education and associational activities was conceptualized as the major means for political mobilization. A significant element in *Balkan*'s discourse included the call to raise the educational level and associational capacity of the Muslim community in line with the requirements of "civilization" and "social progress" (an understanding which was in line with the CUP outlook towards modern education in order to improve Ottoman society, to raise its national consciousness and to shield it from foreign encroachments) to enable its political survival and render it politically capable to stand for its political rights. To this end, the reigning discourse in *Balkan* portrayed the Muslim community as thoroughly victimized and

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*Mediterranean: The Balkans and the Middle East Compared* ed. Eyal Ginio and Karl Kaser (Jerusalem: The European Forum at the Hebrew University, 2013), 123, 125.

<sup>11</sup> İpek Yosmaoğlu demonstrates how the Ottoman census between 1905 and 1907 resulted in various national activists' massive attempts to demonstrate the preponderance of their respective ethnic identity in the region in order to back up the territorial claims of their nation states. To this end, intense manipulation was carried out to impose particular ethnic identities onto otherwise diverse and multilingual population: İpek, K. Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: The 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38 (2006): 61-62.

Anastasia Karakasidou investigates the Hellenization process of the Guezna/Assiros town's Slavic speaking population in the north of Thessaloniki spearheaded by the town's commercial elite: Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 467.

oppressed, but it was also critical of the community because it was not yet capable of defending its rights due to its “ignorance” and “backwardness.”

*Balkan*’s complex ideological mission to indoctrinate Muslims in Bulgaria in line with its versatile ideological arsenal and to empower them politically through modern education was not an uncontested project. The Muslim community was highly divided in terms of the degree of affiliation with the Bulgarian political parties as well as in terms of their outlook towards modernity and their loyalty to the CUP regime. In this sense, it seems also useful to apply Brubaker’s notion of national minority not as a substantial entity but as a “variably configured” and “continuously contested political field” whereby different actors within the field raise their competing stances (which may include the renunciation of the category altogether).<sup>12</sup> Based on the material of this study, it becomes apparent that the Muslim community was not a monolithic entity and various individuals’ diverse affiliations and convictions induced much conflict and censure.

With regard to endorsing the Young Turk ideology, it becomes apparent that some groups were in opposition to the regime and still opposed to the ideals it tried to infuse. Ömer Turan and Kyle Evered suggest that before the proclamation of the constitutional regime, the Turkish community of Bulgaria was divided between the followers of Abdulhamit II and supporters of the Young Turk opposition, and members of each attempted to dominate certain community institutions.<sup>13</sup> This trend seems to have continued during 1910 and 1911 as letters in the newspaper reveal instances where individuals both native to Bulgaria and coming from

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<sup>12</sup>Brubaker, “National Minorities,” 111-112.

<sup>13</sup> Ömer Turan and Kyle T. Evered, “Jadidism in South-Eastern Europe: The Influence of İsmail Bey Gaspıralı among Bulgarian Turks,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (2005): 484- 485.

the Ottoman Empire contested Young Turk ideals such as “liberty” and modern education. These types of individuals were thoroughly denounced and protested both by the readers’ letters and by the newspaper as “true infidels under the guise of Muslims” who wanted to divide the Muslim community by injecting disorder and sedition. Secondly, another major criticism was directed to individuals who were accused of belonging to Bulgarian political parties, people who were called by contributors to the newspaper as “*partizan*”, that is, as individuals who were willing to put their personal interests above the “Muslim nation”, thus preventing its political articulation as a single body. Thirdly, certain actors cooperating with the Bulgarian state (more specifically, with Malinov’s government and his Democratic Party) including the Muslim deputies in the Parliament, the head *mufti*, the *mufti* of Plovdiv, as well as the journalists and authors of *Sofya Muhâbiri* (The correspondent of Sofia) newspaper who were supportive of the head *mufti* were dismissed as “traitors”, “enemies of the community” and “puppets of the government”. In numerous instances the term *partizan* was used to refer to individuals who served the Bulgarian interests yet pretended to be religiously conservative to oppose to CUP. Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that as in Brubaker’s conceptualization, the Bulgarian Muslim minority was a political field wherein varying groups expressed their different affiliations, and Ethem Ruhi and his enterprise acted only as one venue via which the struggle to represent the Muslim body as a mobilized political entity (closely aligned with the Young Turk regime) was sustained.

In order to realize this end, *Balkan* did not operate alone but was part of a network of similar newspapers. *Tırpan* (Scythe), *Tuna* (The Danube), *Türk Sadâsı* (Turkish Voice), and *Vatan* (Fatherland) were newspapers operating after the second constitutional period in

Bulgaria and trumpeted similar ideological positions. It seems that newspapers and intellectuals opposing the Young Turk regime were also present in Bulgaria, most notably epitomized by *İttihâd-ı İslâm* (Islamic Union) published between 1908-09 by Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi, a former Young Turk figure who increasingly turned towards conservative Islamic thought and opposed to Young Turk's westernizing inclinations.<sup>14</sup> Yusuf Ziyaeddin Ezheri, Kivameddin Nur Mehmet, Hüseyin Hüsnü, Emrullah Feyzullah were other contemporary figures who represented either reformist Islamist thought or conservative Islam in Bulgaria. They were transnational figures educated either in Cairo under the tutelage of reformist Islamist scholar Muhammed Abduh or in Istanbul *madrasas*. Nonetheless, they seem to have become actively involved in the political life of Bulgarian Muslims after 1918, most notably through the establishment of Nuvvab School in Shumen (*Medresetü'l Nüvvâb*) in 1922 to raise the Muslim religious officials and *muftis* for Muslims in Bulgaria<sup>15</sup>, which was going to become a stronghold of the conservative block, along with the members of the political exiles purged from the Republic of Turkey against the intellectual and secular groups backing up the Kemalist reforms, secular education and the adoption of the Latin alphabet.<sup>16</sup>

It should be emphasized that Ethem Ruhi's efforts to mobilize the Muslim community date back before the proclamation of Ottoman constitutional regime when he first set foot in Bulgaria in 1904 to be able to pursue his oppositional activities at a spot closer to Istanbul. He was one among a handful of Young Turk intellectuals who gathered in Bulgaria for

<sup>14</sup>Mehmet T. Acaroğlu, *Bulgaristan'da 120 Yıllık Türk Gazeteciliği 1865-1985* (İstanbul: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti, GC Yayınları, 1990).

<sup>15</sup>İbrahim Hatipoğlu, "Religio-Intellectual Relations between Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian Muslims in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century," *Islamic Studies* 46 (2007): 76-79, 83.

<sup>16</sup>Yonca Köksal, "Transnational networks and kin states: the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, 1878–1940," *Nationalities Papers* 38 (2010): 206-207.



revolutionary activity against Abdulhamit II. Yonca Köksal counts Ruhi as one of the transnational political activists alongside similar figures such as Tahir Lütfü, Ali Fehmi and Doctor Neşet who brought their organizational capacities and political ideas to Bulgaria to inform first associational initiatives. Accordingly, one of the first political associations, the Muslim Teachers' Union (*Mu'allimîn-i İslâmiyye Cem'iyet-i İttihâdiyyesi*) was founded in 1906 by the initiatives of Ali Fehmi and Ethem Ruhi.<sup>17</sup> Numerous Young Turk journals published during this time in Bulgaria such as *Hamiyyet* (The Zeal), *Uhuvvet* (The Brotherhood), *Şark* (The Orient), *Muvâzene* (The Balance), *Gayret* (The Effort) and *Tuna* (The Danube) along with Ruhi's papers *Rumeli* (Rumelia) (1905), and *Balkan* (1907), were in close contact with the Russian Muslim intellectuals and political movements (epitomized by Jadidist movement led by İsmail Gasprinski which advocated worldwide Turkic and Muslim unity)<sup>18</sup>. These propagated the tenets of Young Turk ideology and called for Muslim political mobilization in much the same way as *Balkan* did after the establishment of the Young Turk government. Yet, after 1908, the transformation of the Bulgaria into a fully independent state, and the establishment of *Balkan* under official Ottoman tutelage imbued the mobilization of the Muslim community novel characteristics on a conflicting network binding the Bulgarian state, Muslim minorities and the Ottoman state (as discussed previously with regard to Brubaker's theories). After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the triadic relationship between the Bulgarian state, Turkish minority and the Turkish state continued while the Republic turned to backing solely the Turkish minority (rather than the Muslim community), provided financial

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 202-203.

<sup>18</sup>Turan and Evered, "Jadidism in South-Eastern Europe," 486-487, 491- 492.

assistance for activities of groups and associations advocating the Kemalist reforms and closely scrutinized both the conservative religious segments and the political exiles in Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2. Methodology

### 1.2.1. Readers' Letters and "Watchdog Journalism"

Focusing on readers' letters to the editor as a historical source raises above all the problem of fabrication, namely, the probability that some of these letters may have been written by the editor himself or by the authors of the newspaper for purposes of propaganda conveying a false sense of public opinion among the Muslim community in Bulgaria. Admittedly, this problem is not easy to solve, especially in the absence of subscription data; in some cases even the presence of such data cannot validate the identity of the letter writing readers who tended alternatively to use pennames, initials or hide their names altogether. Despite such methodological reservations, several scholars used readers' letters for their various studies by judging on the writing style to argue for their authenticity and at times arriving at the conclusion that they were indeed fabricated. Nonetheless, it seems plausible to suggest that fabricated or not, the issues and concerns raised in those letters provide important clues to the existing fault lines, debates and social and political cleavages within their contexts.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Köksal, "Transnational networks," 206-207.

<sup>20</sup> For instance Christil Catanzaro focuses on the letters written to the Iranian constitutional newspapers *Sur-e Esrafil* and *Ruh-ul Quods* which reflected the deep resentment of the provincial intellectuals with the constitutionalist regime although they had struggled for its establishment. Thus these letters manifest that there was not only a monolithic ideological split between the conservatives and the constitutionalists and the latter group was highly unsatisfied with the way the constitutional regime was applied in the provinces: Christil Catanzaro, "Leserbriefe in Sur-e Esrafil und Ruhul- Qodsals Forum des Informationsaustausches für die Intelligenzija der

Regarding, the letters present in *Balkan*, it may be plausible to make a case for their authenticity since in many instances the names and the provinces were mentioned and detailed references were made to many events, individuals, associations and their members, and details abounded involving charity events and fund raising campaigns. Moreover as discussed in the next two chapters, readers' letters proved substantial for Ethem Ruhi. Letters from Muslims of Bulgaria who had been subjected to Bulgarian state's/civilians atrocities constituted one of the main outlets through which he was able to monitor this community and use their predicament as a pillar of his propaganda. In late March 1910, he was prosecuted by the Bulgarian authorities for his harsh criticisms on the atrocities reported in such letters. During his trials he was able to summon the letter writers although many of them had already immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. He, moreover, let their photographs taken and published in *Balkan* as yet another propaganda reflecting both the Muslims' and his cause.

Some studies done on the readers' letters manifest certain similarities to *Balkan's* case in terms of the functions of newspapers and their relation to their audience and in terms of the

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Masrutiyat-Zeit," in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog et al. (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1995), 18- 19.

Evan Siegel mentions several letters written by a woman to the Azerbaijani newspaper *Molla Nasr od -Din* (which advocated western liberal thought and emancipation of Muslim women) in 1906 and 1907. Although this woman described herself as a backward old villager, Siegel argues that in reality she is Hamide Hanım, the editor's wife who blatantly challenged the newspaper deep seated oriental attitude towards Muslim women whom they described as detestable and backwards in relation to Russian and Armenian women: Evan Siegel, "A Woman's Letters to Molla Nasr od -Din (Tiflis)," in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog et al. (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1995), 144, 146, 149.

Ruth Haerkotter- Uzun's analysis focuses on the Ottoman women's magazine *Mahasin* that operated in the second constitutional period until 1909 and takes up a woman's letter allegedly sent from a poor woman in Üsküp (Skopje) which challenged the ways in which the incipient Ottoman women's movement remained restricted to the debates of a handful of elite men and women. Although, based on the learned style, Uzun argues that in fact the author should have stemmed from an upper class family, the protesting letter revealed the nascent Ottoman women's movement's limited access which was not available for working and low class women: Ruth Haerkotter- Uzun, "Öffentliche Diskussion in der Istanbuler Frauenpresse zu Beginn der Zweiten Konstitutionellen Periode am Beispiel Mahasin," in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog et al. (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1995), 90.

function of the letters themselves. In the former case, Tadeusz Swietochowski for example argues that, similar to *Balkan* the Azeri newspaper *Akinci* operating in 1875-1877 under Russian censorship tried to educate and socially improve its audience, that is, the Turkish speaking Azeri community in line with Enlightenment related ideas. Moreover, letters sent to this paper as in the case of *Balkan* attested to the deep cleavages within the Azeri society in terms of Sunni and Shiite communities. The editor of the paper tried to cut the ties of the latter group to Persia which they regarded as their spiritual homeland and attach their loyalties both to a unified Azeri national community and to the Ottoman Empire, an effort which proved to be fruitless due to Shiites' unwillingness for this project. Alarmed against a possibility of incipient Turkism and inclination towards the Ottoman Empire, in 1877, the Russian officialdom closed down the paper.<sup>21</sup>

Sabine Praetor analyzes letters to Istanbul newspapers sent by Arab deputies, provincial 'ulemâ, notables and merchants as both ways of propaganda devices and outlets through which provincial complaints were voiced. Within this platform, both pro Young Turk and oppositional Arab deputies took place for varied purposes of refuting allegations against them and boosting (via open letters to government and grand vizierate) their claims to the demands and needs of their various provinces mobilizing their voting base to write letters alongside them. Yet, letters from provincial notables complaining about official corruption and mismanagement were also

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<sup>21</sup>Tadeusz Swietochowski, "Akinci, 1875-1877. The Rise of the Azerbaijani Press and Public Debates in the Readers' Correspondance," in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog et al. (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1995), 176-182.

often encountered via which the correspondents raised their various claims in line with their social position and status.<sup>22</sup>

Another significant insight concerning the scholarly employment of readers' letters is provided by Matthew Lenoe's study on the use of Soviet readers' correspondences (including a period well into the 1970's yet laying more focus on 1920s and 1930s). This endeavor is quite ground breaking in that it treats this material as a state tool of governance whereby the Soviet state, including the highest ranked party officials used letters alternatively as ways of educating and shaping the public identity of its subjects, gathering surveillance and intelligence data on local officials and on satisfaction and complacency with state policies (the letters were conveyed to the intelligence networks).<sup>23</sup> Thus, similar to *Balkan*, in this case letters were used as information gathering devices. Through these, the Soviet state could learn about the degree of effectiveness of its ideological penetration and identify its "corrupt" and "disloyal" subjects or officials and do propaganda and increase state control by reporting their prosecution in newspapers. Propaganda and education about state ideology and tenets of the Bolshevism was enhanced via the mimicking discourse of the letter authors (who were instructed both by additional newspaper leaflets, conferences and individual instructors at the local level).<sup>24</sup>

A last stream of literature that may be useful to think about *Balkan*'s mission is based on the concept of "watchdog journalism" which indicates a newspaper's close scrutiny and

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<sup>22</sup> Sabine Praetor, "Arabische Stimmen in der Istanbul Presse der Jungturkenzeit," in *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten*, ed. Christoph Herzog et al. (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1995), 123-129.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Lenoe, "Letter Writing and the State: Reader correspondence with newspapers as a source for early Soviet history," *Cahiers du monde russe* 40 (1999):140, 142,168. James H. Krukones similarly discusses the use of letters in pre-revolutionary Russia as a tool of political education: James H. Krukones, *To the people: The Russian government and the newspaper Sel'ski vestnik 1881-1917* (New York: Garland, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 144-148, 159.

criticism of groups deemed to be hostile and damaging for the population's interests that the newspaper advocates and speaks for. A majority of works drawing on this concept focus on the contemporary period or the history of formation of this concept and emphasize such media's role as "watchdogs" over the government and business sectors to protect the interests of the public good as well as the limits of such ventures.<sup>25</sup> In closer association with *Balkan*, some contemporary and historical studies discuss how ethnic minority newspapers promote the interests of the respective ethnic groups they represent. Apart from challenging the broader society's encroachment on these groups, these papers also try to mobilize and politically and socially educate them which would in turn enable them to defend their rights. Such papers also aim at preserving the ethnic culture and strengthening the cohesion of the group and its identity. Lastly, with a trend similar to *Balkan*, such media welcome readers' letters as informants who announce the problems and conflicts they face within the broader society.<sup>26</sup> For instance,

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<sup>25</sup> For instance Ibelema Minabere discusses this function in the African press and she also adds that increasingly the press tends to become a "watchdog" over societal values that stand against democratization as well: Ibelema, Minabere: "The press as a "watchdog" of the people: Revisiting a theoretical triad," *African Journalism Studies* 33 (2012): 10-13.

For a volume discussing the limits of "watchdog journalism" in China under the Party State which decides what elements in state structure can be watched over: David Banduski and Martin Hala, edit., *Investigative Journalism in China: Eight cases in Chinese Watchdog Journalism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010). For the history of emergence of "watchdog journalism" in 19<sup>th</sup> century United States, whose pretention to represent the public good did not go uncontested by some sectors in the population: Timothy W, Gleason, "The Watchdog in Nineteenth Century Libel Law: A Common Law Concept of Freedom of the Press," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Norman, August 3-6, 1986), 1-14.

<sup>26</sup> The Black African Press in the United Kingdom analyzed by Olatunji Ogunyemi is a case in point: Olatunji Ogunyemi, "The News Agenda of the Black African Press in the United Kingdom," *Journal of Black Studies* 37 (2007): 638-645. Minority newspapers are also not only watchdogs for their ethnic group but for their political, gender and social groups as well (especially in cases of marginalized groups). For a historical study investigating how the newspaper *Producers' News* turned out to be a crucial "watchdog" for the Farmers' movement between 1918-1937 in Northern Montana, United States: Verlaine Stoner McDonald: "A Paper of, by, and for the People: The Producers News and the Farmers' Movement in Northeastern Montana, 1918-1937," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 48 (1998): 18-25.

Sharon, M. Murphy analyzes how native Indian newspapers in the United States starting with 1828 set out to fulfill all these outlined functions and tried to socially and politically educate the tribal Indian population for political survival, defied non-native encroachments over native peoples' rights and lands. The contemporary native Indian newspapers in the United States, apart from trying to unite the native Indians and keep the ethnic and cultural identity alive, also rely on readers' letters to communicate with its dispersed readers and to become critically informed about their conflicts and problems within the broader society acting thus as a "watchdog" over the broader American society to stand for their co-ethnics.<sup>27</sup> What differentiates *Balkan* from these studies is its "watchdog performance" over a foreign sovereign state in the name of the Empire. Its close monitoring of both Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia against Bulgarian infringements was rather an ideological mission geared towards legitimizing the Ottoman and CUP cause in Macedonia than a bounded and local attempt to mobilize the Muslims of Bulgaria. In this sense, in the post imperial context of the Bulgarian sovereign nation state, imperial networks were very much intact to curve spaces of influence and legitimization for the Ottoman Empire. The next two chapters will demonstrate how this influence was tried to be established through the mechanism of *Balkan* focusing on the political ventures of its editor Ethem Ruhi, *Balkan*'s discursive content and the corroboration of readers' letters respectively.

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<sup>27</sup> Sharon M. Murphy, "Native Print Journalism in the United States: Dreams and Realities," *Anthropologica, New Series, Journalistes amérindiens: études sur le travail d'une minorité professionnelle / Native North Americans and the Media: Studies in Minority Journalism* 25 (1983): 23-26.

## Chapter 2: *Balkan's* Unique Position as an Ottoman Ideological Mouthpiece in another Sovereign Nation

This chapter sets out to substantiate *Balkan's* mission as an ideological device addressing different audiences both outside as well as inside the Ottoman Empire. Based on biographical data on Ruhi and information regarding his enterprise *Balkan*, first I will argue that this ideological medium not only constituted an Ottoman propaganda organ in Bulgaria, i.e., a foreign sovereign nation where it was based, but was also a cross border medium for conveying CUP propaganda to the Ottoman audiences in adjacent Ottoman territories such as Macedonia and other parts of the Empire. Moreover, it kept the Ottoman Muslim subjects in Istanbul and other Anatolian provinces informed about the plight of their coreligionists under Bulgaria that had recently obtained its independence from the Ottoman Empire. This way while it forged their solidarity with their brethren in Bulgaria, concomitantly it fostered anti Christian sentiments towards Christians which would also have considerable implication for the future persecution of Ottoman Christians, most notably for Greeks and Armenians. In this sense, the leaders of the Committee of the Union and Progress charged Ruhi and his staff to create a newspaper with a specific ideological mission, but the paper also had other versatile functions. In terms of monitoring any state infringement on the communal rights of Muslims in Bulgaria and Bulgarians' attacks against them, *Balkan* both stood against the Bulgarian state authority and tried to politically unite and mobilize the Muslim community against it. *Balkan's* propaganda about Macedonia and the plight of Muslims in Bulgaria, in the same vein, addressed the Ottoman audience in İstanbul and Anatolia as well. The portrayal of Bulgarian



Muslims' plight moreover was used as an ideological counter argument against Bulgaria's similar claims that Ottoman Bulgarians/Christians in Macedonia were oppressed by Ottoman atrocities in the region. For this vast monitoring task, *Balkan* also relied on its readers' letters that emotively explicated their predicaments. These letters were dialogically employed because *Balkan* commented on them and thus crafted their representation in line with its agenda of promoting the Muslims' cause.

The first section of this chapter will introduce *Balkan*'s editor Ethem Ruhi and discuss his vision for founding the newspaper in order to demonstrate that letters from Muslims in Bulgaria as well as other parts of the Ottoman Empire to the paper's editors, betrayed that the ideological content of *Balkan* resonated with its readership as a medium that sought to shape Muslim public opinion in Bulgaria and Macedonia. The second section will focus on cornerstones of *Balkan*'s ideological content using various articles from the paper. The first group of these vociferously criticized the Bulgarian government's Muslim minority policies, monitored social assaults against Muslims, and called for Muslim political empowerment through unison and education. Other types of articles deal mostly with the Ottoman cause in Macedonia and legitimized CUP power in the Ottoman Empire. These articles as a whole provide a representative snapshot of *Balkan*'s ideological venture which ambitiously employed many agendas and addressed many different audiences in line with these.

## 2.1. Biography of Ethem Ruhi and His Enterprise *Balkan*

Edhem Ruhi was one of the prominent members of the revolutionary Committee of the Union and Progress which he joined during his studies at the Imperial Medical College in Istanbul and soon became an ardent member as a result of which he was exiled to Tripoli in 1897. He escaped from there to Geneva where he published the newspaper “*Osmanlı*” (The Ottoman), the prominent organ of the Committee’s Geneva branch, along with İshak Sukuti and Abdullah Cevdet. He continued to publish this newspaper in London, Folkestone and Cairo at different points receiving financial aid and patronage from Damad Mahmud Paşa and Sait Halim Paşa until 1904.<sup>28</sup>

^ In his memoirs written in 1947, Ruhi recalls that he settled in Sophia in 1904 charged with the specific task of supporting acts of sabotage (such as political assassinations) against Ottoman officials loyal to the Abdulhamid II, and engage in propagating publishing activities against the regime of the sultan. Ruhi claims that after feigning his willingness to be bought off by the sultan in return for giving up all his revolutionary activities, he accepted a post at the Ottoman Bulgarian Extraordinary Commissary. Intentionally using this post to validate the passports of the individuals who subsequently engaged in a failed assassination attempt against the sultan, he had to flee to Plovdiv (Filibe in Ottoman) where he started up his publishing house and published his dissident newspaper *Rumeli* (Rumelia) along with *Rumeli Telgrafları* (Telegrams from Rumelia) (which was a reporting medium publishing news obtained from

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<sup>28</sup>Halil Bal, “Ethem Ruhi Balkan ve Filibe’deYayınladığı Balkan Gazetesi,” (paper presented at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences’ International Symposium of Islamic Civilization in the Balkans, Sofia, April 20-23, 2000), 363-365.

different press agencies) from 1905 onwards. *Balkan* was initially established in Plovdiv as a supplement to these two papers in 1906. Ruhi recounts that when he initially started these dissident publications, he acted rather cautiously by composing his articles in a mild tone in an attempt to win over the Turkish and Muslim community in Bulgaria who were mostly sympathizers with the sultan's regime and regarded the Young Turks as faithless heretics. Gradually his articles' oppositional stance grew in harshness.<sup>29</sup> In his memoirs, Ruhi claims that he was sentenced to lifetime fortress imprisonment by Abdulhamid II's regime in 1906 due to his subversive activities.<sup>30</sup>

Ruhi soon shut down the production of *Rumeli* and *Rumeli Telgrafları* so that he could focus on *Balkan* (which was planned to be published daily except Mondays in contrast to the weekly *Rumeli* and to contain more assertive political articles in contrast to *Rumeli Telgrafları*). *Balkan* was circulated throughout Bulgarian cities, in Macedonia and in other Ottoman provinces and had a daily readership that reached thirty thousand.<sup>31</sup> The lifespan of the paper proved long-lasting given its controversial profile in Bulgaria until 1920. This study, however, will focus on issues printed between 1910-1911 when *Balkan*'s ideological mission assumed its utmost importance after Bulgaria's proclamation of independence and the events such as the Macedonian crisis and the Malinov government's oppressive policies against Bulgaria's

<sup>29</sup> *Balkan*, "Hâtîrâları," 30-31.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Balkan*'s circulation in Macedonia was evident not only by the readers' letters from the region (which will be discussed in the next chapter) but also by a series of announcements for its distributors, representatives and readers in Macedonian provinces such as Thessaloniki (Selanik) and Skopje (Üsküp), see for instance: "Selanik ve Üsküp Müşterilerimize" *Balkan* No: 1104, Temmuz 10, 1326, 4. It also appears that *Balkan* also organized excursions to recruit readers and subscribers in Anatolia at different points. See for instance the announcement of such an excursion in which the information was given that *Balkan* author M. Mahir will roam the region between Bursa and İstanbul to offer the opportunity for *Balkan*'s subscription: "İstirhâm-ı mahsûsamız," *Balkan* No: 1133, Ağustos 13, 1326, 4. The readership figure about *Balkan*'s circulation is provided by Halil Bal: Bal, "Ethem Ruhi," 367.

Muslims that led up to the Balkan Wars in 1912.<sup>32</sup> Prior to the Balkan Wars and during the First World War, Ruhi published two additional papers respectively called *Eyyâm* (The Days) and *Resimli Balkan* (Balkan Illustrated) and wrote in other Turkish papers in Bulgaria such as *Ahali* (People) and *Çiftçi Bilgisi* (Knowledge for Farmers).<sup>33</sup> According to Halil Bal, *Balkan* became the most important and prestigious newspaper of the Turkish community in Bulgaria and significantly contributed to the formation of a “national consciousness” among the Turks, simultaneously advocating the Young Turk movement and modernization in the Ottoman Empire, though while reading through the pages of *Balkan* it becomes very clear that the idea of a Turkish national consciousness was something that was far from a realistic agenda that the editors of *Balkan* could achieve.<sup>34</sup>

In his memoirs, Ruhi claims that after the proclamation of the constitutional regime in 1908, he was personally charged by the Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa and the leading cadres of the Committee such as Talat Paşa and Cavit Bey to remain in Bulgaria to mobilize the Turkish/Muslim community politically, to continue to promote their ties to the CUP government and to engage in a counter ideological struggle against Bulgarian claims about Ottoman atrocities in Macedonia by emphasizing the Bulgarian state’s oppression of the

<sup>32</sup>*Balkan*’s office was closed and torn down during the Balkan Wars. Although Halil Bal mentions that Mehmed Mahir, Halil Zeki and Hüsnü Mahmud assumed the administration of *Balkan* during this time to continue the publication (since Ruhi was imprisoned), it is unclear whether the paper indeed continued to appear since neither Istanbul nor Sofia archives contain issues from the Balkan Wars. Sofia archives additionally contain issues from 1919 and 1920: Bal, “Ethem Ruhi,” 372-373.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 366-367. No further information was found on *Eyyâm*. *Resimli Balkan* intended to promote the achievements of the Triple Alliance during World War I, and thus it is very probable that it was also commissioned by CUP. *Ahali* newspaper was a weekly newspaper published between 1919-1924 by Mehmed Behçet Perim in Sofia. It was defined as a Turkish scientific and cultural newspaper disseminating popular and scientific information. *Çiftçi Bilgisi* was the Turkish language version of the Agrarian Party’s official newspaper: Acaroğlu, *Bulgaristan’da 120 Yıllık Türk Gazeteciliği*, 4, 11, 17, 37.

<sup>34</sup>Bal, “Ethem Ruhi,” 368.

Muslim community.<sup>35</sup> This was a significant ideological mission given that the combined bids of neighboring Balkan states over Ottoman Macedonia were a burning issue of the times. Not only Bulgaria but also other Balkan states' presses were engaged in a similar ideological campaign regarding the Ottoman atrocities on their compatriots (and on Christians in general).

Given the CUP's commission of Ruhi during this watershed moment in the region, this study argues that the second phase of *Balkan*'s publication after 1908 was specifically geared towards monitoring and politically mobilizing the Muslim community, divulging and castigating Bulgarian government policies that threatened its Muslim readers, and providing a mouthpiece that counteracted the Bulgarian press' parallel claims that the Ottoman government was oppressing "Bulgarian" brothers in the neighboring province of Macedonia. This charged publication aimed to address many diverse audiences: the Bulgarian state and the press, the Muslims in Bulgaria and the readers in the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Macedonia. Thus, as the material in this and the next chapter will reveal, *Balkan* was a medium entrusted with disparate but entangled tasks.

In this respect, Ruhi served as a cross-border actor addressing and operating between the Bulgarian state, the Bulgarian Muslim minority and the Ottoman Empire. He sought to bind the Muslim minority of Bulgaria to Young Turk political power and mold it according to its ideological tenets, thus simultaneously gaining and preserving its loyalty for the Ottoman Empire and laying the ground for the proliferation of political mobilization against the Bulgarian state. For instance, *Balkan*'s close corroboration with the CUP government was evident in the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1909 counter-revolution in Istanbul. Ruhi was financed by the

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<sup>35</sup>Balkan, *Hatıraları*, 37-38.

commanders and military directors of the second and third armies such as Mahmud Şevket Paşa, İsmet İnönü and Kazım Karabekir to distribute *Balkan* to the soldiers stationed in Edirne and Thessaloniki who in their new roles as fighters against the Hamidian regime during the counter-revolution were prone to reactionary conservative ideas and therefore were prohibited from reading any other newspaper.<sup>36</sup>

In late 1910 Ruhi was imprisoned in Bulgaria due to articles that harshly criticized the reigning government of Aleksandar Pavlov Malinov's Democratic party. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, his trial followed a reactionary article he had written upon receiving several readers' letters reporting and protesting Bulgarian trouble-makers attacking Muslim villages in Karlova. Coupled with further charges based on other articles he wrote that criticized the Malinov's government's repressive policies against the Muslim community such as the demolition and confiscation of mosques, communal schools and religious endowments, as well as its appointment of meritless Muslim secular/religious officials (claimed by Ruhi to be traitors of the nation), Ruhi was sentenced with a two year prison sentence on 4 March 1910. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the editorial staff of *Balkan* claimed that the *mufti* of Plovdiv, Süleyman Faik Efendi along with a corrupt Muslim official of the endowments – in cahoots with the Bulgarian government–reported Ruhi to Bulgarian authorities, thus leading to

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 39-40.

*Ruhi*'s harsh attacks on the so called *mürteci*'s who were accused of instigating the 31<sup>st</sup> March incident can be observed throughout the heydays and aftermath of the incident. *Mürteci*'s were claimed to be fake *'ulemas* who under a conservative Islamic guise only strived to re-obtain their advantageous positions as spies during the Hamidian regime. As will be mentioned in the next chapter, two of such figures, Şeyh Nesîmî and Keşşâf who after the 31<sup>st</sup> March incident had escaped to Plovdiv were charged with having converted to Protestantism. In order to underscore their fake Islamic persuasion, Ruhi, in his memoirs notes that he let the photographs of these two figures taken during their conversion: Ibid., 40.

Indeed this photo can be observed in *Balkan*'s 743<sup>th</sup> issue along with Ruhi's blatant article: Ethem Ruhi, "İmânı Kisvede Değil Kalbte Arayın," *Balkan* No: 743, Mayıs 8, 1325, 1-2.

his arrest. After Ruhi's imprisonment in 1910, the other members of *Balkan*'s staff continued to publish the paper.<sup>37</sup> Ruhi's incarceration, however, became a major rallying point in the pages of *Balkan*, and he was depicted as the "great defender of the nation and religion sacrificing his life for their sake." *Balkan*'s staff claimed that letters arrived every day to *Balkan*'s office both from every corner of the Ottoman Empire as well as throughout the entire world as far away as India or New York,<sup>38</sup> and many letters that reached the editors from other parts of the Ottoman Empire condemned both Bulgarian government, called the treacherous Muslim authorities of Bulgaria as "traitors of the nation" and praised Ruhi as a Muslim savior, thus confirming *Balkan*'s ability to shape the public opinion of its broad readership. In his memoirs, Ruhi maintains that at several points the CUP even tried to help him escape from the prison, yet he refused to do so.<sup>39</sup> In any case, after serving six months of his sentence, Tsar Ferdinand released him at the request of the grand vizier. *Balkan* attributed the intervention of the grand vizier to the uproar and disturbance that Ruhi's imprisonment induced in the Ottoman Empire. His amnesty was met with harsh condemnation in Bulgarian newspapers that maintained Ruhi was a tremendously dangerous and influential provocateur, and each of his articles had the influence of mobilizing Muslim guerillas in Macedonia against the Christian population. These papers pointed to three massive rallies of the Muslims which were held respectively in Plovdiv, Sofia and Thessaloniki to demand Ruhi's release to attest to the threat he posed.<sup>40</sup> Considering these anecdotes and the fact that his bail was paid by fund-raising campaigns both in Bulgaria and the

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<sup>37</sup>*Balkan* No: 985, Şubat 19, 1325, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup>*Balkan* No: 1268, Kânûn-u sâni 28, 1326, 3.

<sup>39</sup>*Balkan*, *Hatıraları*, 43.

<sup>40</sup>*Balkan* No: 1302, Mart 9, 1327, 3.

Ottoman Empire, it seems reasonable to argue that Ruhi and his enterprise indeed enjoyed a considerable amount of influence to shape Muslim public opinion in the Balkans. Upon his release, Ruhi was instantly assigned by the CUP to give conferences throughout Macedonia in order to assist the CUP in its campaign for Ottoman parliamentary elections and to condemn the recent Albanian insurgency. According to his testimony, high-ranking CUP leaders such as Enver and Niyazi Bey – and even the young Mustafa Kemal – accompanied Ruhi to his conferences in Macedonia. Ruhi even claims that during these conferences, he survived three assassination attempts.<sup>41</sup>

On the eve of the first Balkan War, Ruhi was again imprisoned. After nine months he was released by the Radoslavov government which would lead Bulgaria to the First World War as an ally of the Ottoman Empire. In 1915, he served as the deputy of Western Thrace at the Bulgarian National Assembly and became the General Inspectorate for Muslim Schools in 1920, yet he had to flee from Bulgaria and end the publication of *Balkan* with the rise of the Stamboliski government. Although he planned to revive *Balkan* in Turkey and also started up in a newspaper called *Mecmu'a-i Rûhî* (Ruhi's Magazine) in 1921 which focused on Muslims in Bulgaria and emigrants from Rumelia in the Ottoman Empire, this paper had to close after publishing only two issues.<sup>42</sup> In 1946, with the establishment of the multiple party system, Ruhi

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<sup>41</sup> Although a certain degree of exaggeration may be present in Ruhi's memoirs such as when he claimed to have gone around with forty body guards, regarding the assassination attempts, he gives rather convincing details. For instance, regarding the first two attempts after his release, he provides the names of the leaders of the Bulgarian guerilla bands that allegedly plotted against him, the specific place names and individuals involved. Concerning the third attempt during his conferences, he asserts that the Bulgarians' commissioned a certain Albanian named Elmas, again providing comprehensive details. Thus, given his highly politicized career, these allegations about assassination attempts were probably true, although the perpetrators may have been different actors. For Ruhi's portrayal of the assassination attempts, see: Balkan, *Hatıraları*, 42-45.

<sup>42</sup> The reasons for this paper's closure is not mentioned by Bal. Yet, the lack of funding (which CUP previously provided for *Balkan*) may have played a major role in Armistice Istanbul.



founded Turkey's Workers and Farmers Party (*Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Partisi*) yet failed to enter into the parliament, after which Ruhi withdrew from politics until his death in 1949.

## **2.2. The Discursive Content of *Balkan***

### **2.2.1. Attacks against Malinov's Democratic Government and the Call for Muslim Political Mobilization**

One of the most significant discursive elements of *Balkan* was centered on its criticism of the Bulgarian Democratic government's alleged attempts to tear apart Muslim communal life and deprive Muslims of their rights as minorities in the new Bulgarian state. Ruhi and his editors consistently accused the government of employing every measure to destroy the Muslim presence in Bulgaria by closing down the Muslim schools, opening Bulgarian schools in Turkish areas, breaking down Muslim religious endowments and by preventing Muslim intellectuals from politically mobilizing their communities (either by imprisoning or dismissing them from their administrative positions). Authors writing in *Balkan* further argued that the government co-opted the head *mufti* (chief religious official of the Muslims in Bulgaria) Muhiddin Efendi, his representatives and other Muslim deputies in exchange for their remaining inert and passive in the face of any violation of Muslim communal rights. In this respect, *Balkan* and its readers closely monitored any state incursion against the community, such as the demolition of mosques or the dismissal of a Muslim high school principal and reported about them in its pages. For instance, on 23 March 1911, Ruhi strongly criticized the Bulgarian government's attempt to demolish the Sophia central mosque built by the famous Ottoman architect Sinan in the sixteenth century under the pretext of urban renovation and

modernization. Ruhi claimed that the mobilization to destroy Muslim mosques by the democratic municipalities had been going on for several years in violation of international treaties in virtually every Bulgarian town and village where there was a Muslim presence. He also argued that this policy was closely entangled with a perception of the Muslim/Turkish identity as inferior and worthless to the extent that instead of historical artifacts, mosques were regarded by the Bulgarians as tainting the modern urban landscape. In this respect, the head *mufti* was portrayed as the puppet of the government. Furthermore, the dismissal of Halil Zeki and Hüsameddin Giray, the directors of Muslim schools in Vidin, Dobrich and Ruse in January and February 1911 was similarly attributed to head *mufti*'s and Muslim deputies' corroboration with the government to suppress major intellectual figures of the Muslim community.<sup>43</sup>

It is indeed intriguing how a close network that monitored the rights of Muslims was established by *Balkan* and extended to the far flung towns and villages where repressive government policies were pursued. For instance on 19 January 1911, one of the writers of *Balkan*, using the penname Yomakov, argued that the Democratic government followed a cunning policy of cutting off the municipalities' aid to Muslim schools by prohibiting the election of non-Bulgarian speakers to provincial municipality commissions through which such aid was legally requested. According to the author, this policy was coupled by extirpating the existing Muslim schools through government confiscation or through the opening of Bulgarian schools in Muslim towns to apply a policy of Bulgarization. The specific instances cited in this

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<sup>43</sup> Ethem Ruhi, "Sofya Cami'-i Kebîri Mes'alesi 1," *Balkan* No: 1303, Mart 10, 1327, 1-2. Ethem Ruhi, "Sofya Cami'-i Kebîri Mes'alesi 2," *Balkan* No: 1304, Mart 11, 1327, 1-2. On a similar newspaper report on the demolition of the central mosque in Burgas and the inertness of the head *mufti*: *Balkan* No: 1238, Kânûn-u evvel 22, 1326, 3. On the dismissals of Zeki and Giray: Ethem Ruhi, "Şimdi nasıl söylemeyelim," *Balkan* No: 1286, Şubat 18, 1326, 3. "Halil Zeki Mes'alesi", *Balkan* No: 1251, Kânûn-u sâni 8, 1326, 3.

article concerned the confiscation of a Muslim endowment and school in the Takia village of Stara Zagora and the opening of Bulgarian schools in the Turkish villages of Silistra and in the Gagauz and Pomak villages of Varna, Dobrich, Hofca and Rodop regions. In this respect, the author argued that the recent increase in the Ministry of Education's budget materialized in order to undermine the relevance of the Turkish language and Islam, and the author was also critical of Muslim deputies who stood by passively.<sup>44</sup>

The intensity of *Balkan*'s "watch-dog" surveillance of the Bulgarian government's infringements upon the rights of its Muslim minority in every town and village of Bulgaria was also coupled with a close monitoring of inter-confessional conflicts in towns and villages. These reports were oftentimes based on the letters and the telegrams sent by the residents of these respective towns and villages in which the incidents occurred, attesting to the close connection of the Muslim community in Bulgaria with *Balkan* and its perception of this medium as organization to stand up for its cause. It seems that *Balkan*'s "watch-dog" performance was not only limited by informing and challenging the government for not preventing these incidents. Apart from calling the government to act on these clashes to redress the injustice that afflicted the Muslim community, it seems that Ethem Ruhi personally engaged in legally pursuing such incidents. For instance in 1909 he sent a telegram to Tsar Ferdinand to request his intervention to stop Bulgarians' increasing attacks against the Muslim villages since the Democratic government was unwilling to do so.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Yomakov, "İslâm meb'uslarının nazar-ı dikkatine," *Balkan* No: 1249, Kânûn-u sâni 6, 1326, 1-2.

<sup>45</sup>This information was obtained from a reader's letter from Varna on 5 March 1909: Raşid, "Millet Sedâsı: Varna'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 680, Şubat 20, 1324, 3. Although this study is based on the period between 1910-1911, an initial exploratory research was also undertaken on *Balkan*'s issues from 1909. In this year, readers' letters from many Bulgarian provinces reporting Bulgarians' assaults on Muslims' and criticisms of the

A typical example of this type of surveillance was raised for instance on 16 June 1911 regarding two instances of murder in Razgrad. In one case a young Muslim man and in another two Muslim woodcutters were reported to have been intentionally murdered by Bulgarians. In the latter case the perpetrator was alleged to said that he intended to “drink Muslim blood” before slaying his Muslim counterparts.<sup>46</sup> In cases of such claims of murder or repeated Bulgarian effacement of mosques and Muslims schools, *Balkan* as a rule questioned the justice of the government, the head *mufti* and the Muslim deputies and asserted that it will struggle to pursue and oversee these instances via applying to the law courts.<sup>47</sup>

*Balkan*’s pronounced portrayal of a Muslim community in peril throughout 1910 and 1911 was intimately linked with the aggressively nationalizing policies of the Democratic government of Malinov which in 1911 fell apart and gave way to Geshov’s Nationalist and Danev’s Progressive Parties. According to Crampton, this transformation was informed by an increasingly acute need to stake Bulgarian claims over Macedonia and to ensure definite alliances with Russia and other competing Balkan states.<sup>48</sup> Ruhi portrayed Malinov’s tenure as a period of great oppression for Muslims in Bulgaria. The nationalizing state was posited to have gone to every length to embark upon and destroy the communal structures and curtail the political mobilization by buying off communal leaders such as the head *mufti* and the Muslim deputies. It was also accused of infiltrating into the Muslim community by appointing its

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government for failing to provide justice and freedom appear frequently. For instance: İmza Mahfuz, “Mezâlim: Yürekler Karyesi`nden Yazılıyor,” İmza Mahfuz, “Yeni Pazar`dan Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 681, Şubat 21, 1324, 3-4.

<sup>46</sup>“Hazergrad Muhâbir-i Mahsûsamız yazıyor,” *Balkan* No: 1370, Haziran 3, 1327, 3.

<sup>47</sup>See for instance the comments on the reported murder of a Circassian servant by his masters in Sliven and the reports of repeated assaults on Muslim mosques and schools in Nikopol: “Cinâyet-i vahşîyâne,” *Balkan* No: 1259, 18 Kânûn-u sâni 1326, 3. “Hükûmetin nazar-ı dikkatine,” *Balkan* No: 1250, Kânûn-u sâni 7, 1326, 3.

<sup>48</sup>Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918 A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 323-324.

Muslim party members over key communal structures and charging these members to prevent the community from effectively uniting and mobilizing.<sup>49</sup> These co-opted figures (that is, the head *mufti*, the Muslim deputies, the newspaper *Sofya Muhâbiri* as their abettor and myriad Muslim Democratic Party followers in the provincial communal institutions) were argued to have composed a clique that was counterpoised to the Muslim nation and community and was grudgingly attacked as the traitors of their nation and religion.<sup>50</sup> One of Ruhi's harshest censure on such figures reads as follows:

"...The Democrats used every intrigue they could to destroy the Muslims in Bulgaria. They seduced the ones among us who were willing to exchange their conscience and faith for money. They were given all kinds of money to act as *muftis*, deputies, endowment cashiers and scribes. They put me in chains and oppressed the nation. They did not provide the head *mufti* with any other authority than sealing mere marriage contracts. Thus, without any political base they illegally imposed a *hoca efendi* who worked for the destruction of the nation on the Muslim community as the head *mufti*. And the Muslim deputies who, after all that agony, should have

<sup>49</sup>"Biz Bulgaristan müslümanları yaralıyız. Kalblerimiz yaralıdır. Malinof'un insaf ve mantık tanımama politikası bize aylarca, senelerce kan kusturdu. Bizi insan hakkına mazhar olmaktan, hayvan menzilesinde yaşamamak için didinmekten, mektebdan, hukûk-u dîniyye ve milliyyeden mahrûm bıraktı... Demokrat kabinesi müftülük makâmına Bulgaristan müslümanlarının gözünü açacak, onları medeniyet ve terakkîye doğru çekecek bütün vesâit-i maddiyye ve maneviyyenin mahvı için bir alet getirmiş olmaktan başka bir şey yapmadı... Mâdem ki Bulgaristan yeni bir hayât-ı siyâsiyyeye girmek istiyor, Bulgaristan müslümanları hakkında esaslı icra'at, esaslı te'mînât talebinde bulunmaklığımız çok görülmemelidir." Ethem Ruhi: "Geşof kabinesinden Ne Bekliyoruz," *Balkan* No: 1317, Mart 27, 1327, 1-2.

"Zîra bu hayat Bulgaristan müslümanlarınca müdhiş bir târîh-i ızdıraptır. Hangi fırka gelir de Bulgaristan müslümanlarının mukadderâtına bir Bulgaristan vatandaşı gibi mu'âmele-i kânûniyye ve uhuvvetkârânede kusur etmezse o fırkaya mensûbuz. Ne zaman yeni kabineye gelecek bir hükûmet sebâik-i mücâdelemizden ibret alır da bize hakikaten kardeş ve insanî mu'âmelesini teveccüh eder, işte o zaman o fırkanın yegâne muzâhiri Bulgaristan müslümanları olacaktır." Ethem Ruhi, "Bir sükût-u muntazır, yine mühim dakîkalar," *Balkan* No: 1305, Mart 12, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>50</sup>"Çıtlatma," *Balkan* No: 1244, Kânûn-u evvel 31, 1326, 3. "Çıtlatma," *Balkan* No: 1289, Şubat 22, 1326, 3. "Çıtlatma," *Balkan* No: 1291, Şubat 24, 1326, 3. "Çıtlatma," *Balkan* No: 1299, Mart 5, 1327, 3. "Çıtlatma," *Balkan* No: 1305, Mart 13, 1327, 3.

been responsible for the nation's fate, instead preferred fawning their master Malinov and his friends to wiping the tears of their coreligionists...<sup>51</sup>

Given the much criticized governance of the Malinov cabinet, the coming elections in the summer and autumn of 1911 was understood as a chance for the reinvigoration and political activation of the Muslim community provided that unison was achieved and the practice of becoming party members for the sake of personal interest ceased.<sup>52</sup> Both Ethem Ruhi and the participating authors of *Balkan* assumed an active role in commenting on the coming elections by tabulating which province according to its Muslim population had to produce how many Muslim deputies for the parliament and advocating men from these regions whom they argued were the best candidates. Thus, during the elections *Balkan* tried to seize the moment to purge the political elites of the Muslim community who had been willing to align themselves with the former Bulgarian government and the Democratic party and replace them with the nominees

<sup>51</sup>“Demokratlar Bulgaristan müslümanlarını mahvetmek içinellerinden ne entrika geldiyse yaptılar. İçimizden vicdânını ve imânını para ile değışebilecekleri ayarttılar. Onlara meb‘usluk, vakıf sandıkkârlığı, müftülük, kâtiplik, türlü paralar verildi. Beni zincire vurdular, milleti kahrettiler. Baş müftüye nikâh da‘vâlarının mühürlenmesinden başka bir yetki vermediler. Bu sûretle hattâ milletin mahvına çalışan bir hoca efendiye cebren ve gayr-ı kânûnî ve gayr-ı siyâsî bir şekilde baş müftü seçtiler. Bu kadar acıya rağmen milletin mukadderâtından mes‘ul olmaları lâzım gelen sâbık müslüman meb‘usları ise efendileri olan Malinov’la arkadaşlarına yaranmayı kendi din kardeşlerinin gözyaşlarını silmeye tercih ettiler.” Ethem Ruhi, “Bulgaristan Müslümanları Vazîfe Başına,” *Balkan* No: 1364, Mayıs 26, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>52</sup>“Lâkin aldanmayalım. Malinov demokrat kabinesinin sükûtuyla ziyâ‘a uğratılan hukûk-u milliyemizin hemen elimize geçtiğine kânî olmayalım. Çünkü hukuk dâimâ istihsal olunur. Hakkın, hukûkun istihsali çalışma ile kâbidir. Çünkü hukûk-u milliyeye, menafi‘-i İslâmiyye bizden hizmet bekliyor. Hakkımızla, hukûkumuzun muhâfazasına çalışalım. Azıcık te‘emmül ile bizim de bu memleket mukadderât-ı siyâsiyye ve içtimâiyyesinde pek büyük bir hakkımız olduğunu görürüz...Ders-i ibret almaz isek şu diyarda son deminde bulunan hukûk-u İslâmiyemiz artık mahvolmus demektir.15 sene evvel Sobranye meclisinde otuz altı meb‘usa mâlik bulunduğumuz halde bugün dokuz meb‘usa mâlikiyyetimiz hukûkumuzu muhâfaza etmediğimize bir delil-i alenîdir. En büyük bir noksanımız vardır ki o da adem-i ittihadımızdır. İttihatsız milletler kahr ve mahvolurlar. Biz bu devlet teb‘asından değil miyiz? Müttehidten azmetmeliyiz.” Ethem Ruhi, “Aklimızı Başımıza Almalıyız,” *Balkan* No 1311, Mart 19, 1327, 1-2.

who echoed *Balkan*'s views and tie the Muslim community in Bulgaria to the CUP the government in İstanbul.<sup>53</sup>

Within the framework of political empowerment and mobilization, calls for improving and popularizing modern education within the Muslim community also occupied a key position in *Balkan*'s discourse. In this respect, education was not only conceptualized as a means to achieve social progress and mobility but was also underlined as a way of fostering national identity and an indispensable tool for the insurance of national existence – and indeed survival – in Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup> *Balkan* closely cooperated with various associations founded for this agenda, such as *Ta'mîm-i Ma'ârif ve Te'âvün-ü İslâm Cem'iyeti* (Association for Islamic Assistance and the Generalization of Education) and *Bulgaristan Ma'ârif-i İslâm Encümenleri Cem'iyeti* (Association of Commissions for Islamic Education in Bulgaria) and published their declarations and promoted enrollment and active participation among its readers.

<sup>53</sup>Ethem Ruhi, "Bulgaristan Müslümanları Vazîfe Başına," *Balkan* No: 1364, Mayıs 26, 1327, 1-2.

M.M, "İntihablar için Çalışmalıyız," *Balkan* No: 1350, Mayıs 8, 1327, 1-2.

Ethem Ruhi, "Politika tahriblerinden sonra," *Balkan* No: 1369, Mayıs 31, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup>"Bu millet mahva mı mahkûmdur? Müslümanlık sa'y üzerine binâ edilmiştir. Mekteblerimiz vîrân, câmi'lerimiz harâb, ekseri yerlerde evkâfımız berbâd. Bir millet ma'ârifsiz terakki edemez. Ahlâk-ı milliyeye üzerine en büyük müesser ma'ârifdir. Bunun terakkisine say' edecek olan müslüman kardeşlerimizi teşvik edecek ise müftülerimizdir. Hayır bu millet mahva mahkûm değildir. Terakkî ve te'âlî ister. Bunun da ma'ârifle kâim olacağını bilir. Terakkî için çalışmak bir fâriza-i zimmettir. Müftülerimiz, encümenlerimiz, ekâbir-i ricâlimiz de millete pişvâ olmalıdır. Ahlâk-ı milliyeye fesad ârâz olacak olursa esâretten mahva dâçar olacağımızı hiç unutmamalıyız. Biz de Bulgaristan teb'asındanız. Bu vatanın mukadderâtı bize de râci'dir. Hamiyyetperver, münnever ül-fikir kardeşlerimizden bekliyoruz. Teşebbüs fa'âliyetle netice bulur. O halde terakkî ve te'âliye doğru hatvelerimizi atmalıyız." "Millet terakkî istiyor" *Balkan* No: 1295, Mart 1, 1327, 1-2.

### 2.2.2. The Conundrum of Macedonia

Another significant pillar of *Balkan*'s ideological platform was refuting Bulgaria's claims over Macedonia and blaming Bulgaria and other Balkan governments for dispatching and financing guerilla bands to terrorize innocent Muslims in that province. Ruhi's articles on this issue consistently attributed to the Bulgarian state and its political elite (many of whom were composed of influential politicians of Macedonian origin) the ultimate aim of reviving the articles of the Treaty of San Stefano of 1878.

Counterpoising the "true plight" of Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia to the Balkan and European states' claims about Ottoman excesses against Christians in Macedonia offered main rhetorical channel through which audiences both in Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire were emotively informed.<sup>55</sup> In its effort to seize upon the Macedonia crisis, Ruhi and his editors accused the Bulgarian state of resorting to subtle conspiracies to repress the Muslims whilst condemning the Ottoman Empire for having failed to apply the necessary reforms in the region in the eyes of the international public opinion. For instance on 26 April 1911, Ruhi criticized the Bulgarian Muslim deputy, Tahir Lütfü, who belonged to the Democratic Party, for having bribed Basri Bey, both a relative of the Bulgarian head *mufti* and an Ottoman deputy who had

<sup>55</sup>"Beni şu noktada te'emmüle sevkeden Bulgarlar ve sâir milletlere nisbeten biz zavallı Türklerin ve müslümanların mazlûmdan mazlûm olub da yine dâima zâlim sahnesinde tahkir ve tezyif edilişimizdir. Hukûk-u siyâsiyye ve ma'neviyemiz bir çingene aşireti çerkesinden fazla birşey değildir. Aynı hukûka riâyet hususunda biz Bulgar vatandaşlarımızın serine imtisâlen ufacık bir dâgide bulunacak olsak kıyametler kopuyor. Biz Bulgaristan müslümanlarının bugünkü hâli sefâlet-i istimâlini gözden geçiriniz. Kendi aralarında bile işitilmeyen enîn-i tezâlûmünü hemen hiddete gelen herhangi bir Bulgar vatandaş tarafından 'çingene Türkler' tabiriyle tahkîr edildiğimizi. Hem dayağı yiyip hem zulûm sahnesinde yüzümüze tükürüldüğünü...Makedonya'da hâneler, hânûmanlar söndüren canavar, kanlı kâtiler büyük adam, medeniyetperver adam. Biz mûti çingene aşiretleri gibi dâima muhakkir, zavallıTürkler, Müslümanlar fena, fena, çok fena adamlar." Ethem Ruhi, "Dünyanın en bedbaht milleti," *Balkan* No: 1424, Ağustos 1, 1327, 1-2.



abandoned CUP into joining the opposition. According to Ruhi, Basri Bey was entrusted with the mission of delivering a speech before the parliament to have the appointment of the head *mufti* ratified by the Ottoman *şeyhu'l-islâm* (chief religious official of the Ottoman Empire), and he even blamed CUP for the uproar in Macedonia because of its failure to implement the necessary administrative and social reforms there.<sup>56</sup>

Referring to the Balkan state's bids on the Macedonia also offered Ruhi a convenient strategy to stand up for the equity and administrative justice of the CUP. Ruhi and his editors printed that while it was spreading propaganda accusing the Ottoman state of committing atrocities against Christian subjects in Macedonia, the Bulgarian state continued to support guerilla bands just as it had prior to the second constitutional revolution in İstanbul. According to Ruhi, prior to this time guerilla activity was justified based on demands for equal political rights, liberties and equal citizenship. Yet, in his opinion, contemporary agitation for the

<sup>56</sup>The election of the Bulgarian head *mufti* had to be legislatively confirmed by the Ottoman *şeyhu'l-islâm*. Yet since the mufti was a CUP opponent and was elected via the intervention and manipulation of the Malinov government, the confirmation was refused by the Ottoman party. Nevertheless, he kept his position *de facto* and was constantly insulted by Ruhi, along with the Muslim deputies, as the main collaborator of the Bulgarian state's assaults on the Muslim communal rights. For this incident: Ethem Ruhi, "Hukûkundan emin olan hakkı için ölür," *Balkan* No: 1330, Nisan 13, 1327, 1-2. Ethem Ruhi, "Bizans manevraları önünde 1," *Balkan* No: 1331, Nisan 14, 1327, 1-2. Ethem Ruhi, "Bizans Manevraları önünde 3," *Balkan* No: 1335, Nisan 20, 1327, 1-2. Ethem Ruhi, "Bir cinâyet kalmasın âlemde Allahım nihân," *Balkan* No: 1336, Nisan 21, 1327, 1-2. Ethem Ruhi, "Ne söz bulunur," *Balkan* No: 1337, 22 Nisan, 1327, 1-2.

"Bulgaristan müslümanının mukkaderât-ı mazlûmesine en bî-amân darbeler indiriyor ve komşu bir milletin hazînesinden yüklendiği liralarla Osmanlı mahfiline zehirli yılan gibi sokulup nâmus-u milletini satmış bir alçak ile konuştuğundan sonra meclis-i meb'usan kürsüsüne çıkıyor. Basri Bey'in göklere çıkardığı medeniyet kisveli politikacıların Ayastefanos muâhedesinin ihyâsıyla Makedonya'nın nasıl Bulgaristan vilâyeti olması gâye-i hayâli, Bulgar etfâli için matbu' kitaplarında musarrah bulundukça ...Bulgaristan'a karşı barut kokusunu his ettiren Osmanlı ve İslam millet mi? Avam figane şeylerle baş ağrıtan biz Bulgaristan müslümanları mıyız? Makedonya'ya sevk olunan bombalar Osmâniyyet ve İslâmiyyet beyninde patlamamalı. Sofya matbuâtı Makedonya yaygarasını, Türk düşmanlığı hissiyatını yürekten atmalı... Makedonya Bulgaristan vatani şiirlerini Bulgaristan mekâtib kitaplarından kaldırmalı. ÇocuklarınaTürkü gulyabâni diye öğretmemeli. Balkanlarda barut kokusunu ihdâs eden Osmanlı ve İslam milleti değil onun medenî diye vassfettiği bombalar atan, köyler yakan, hânlar, hânûmanlar söndüren Makedonya politikacılarıdır. Makedonya âmâli Bulgarlar için ölmez bir emel, sönmez bir ateştir. Bulgaristan müslümanları paçavra gibi ezilsin o mahlukların kılı kıpırdamaz." Ethem Ruhi, "Bizans manevraları önünde 2," *Balkan* No: 1334, Nisan 17, 1327, 1-2

decentralization of Macedonia after the CUP granted liberty and justice to Macedonian Christians demonstrated<sup>57</sup> that the ultimate aim was the annexation of the region to the Bulgarian state and to enslave ignorant Muslims, a fate of Muslims similar to those of Eastern Rumelia (i.e., Muslims in his community) incorporated into Bulgaria in 1885.<sup>58</sup>

*Balkan* and its editors also portrayed contemporary uprisings in Albania and the intensifying cross border skirmishes with Montenegro that brought about Russia's diplomatic warnings to the Ottoman Empire as foreign conspiracies that had stemmed from the alliance of Britain and Russia with the Balkan states to eliminate the Ottoman presence in the Balkans and to partition the Albanian regions between the Balkan states and Austria.<sup>59</sup> To this end, Ruhi suggested that the decentralization of Albanian provinces was a novel strategy of conspiring

<sup>57</sup> Although Ruhi depicted the CUP as a moral force confronted with malicious Bulgarian guerilla activity, the CUP's own commissioning of Muslim guerilla bands to intimidate the Christian subjects is well documented, especially in the case of the birth of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* in the waning days of the first Balkan War. For more on this, see Ryan Gingeras: "Last Rites for a 'pure Bandit': Clandestine Service, Historiography and the Origins of the Turkish 'Deep State'," *Past & Present* 206 (2010): 159.

<sup>58</sup> "Sofya diplomatları bir iki seneden beri Osmanlı'da yaşayan milletlerin sa'âdet ve selâmetine ta'alluk eden ne olursa hepsine kara dediler. O gün bu gündür onların gözünde yalnız bir düşman var. O da İttihat ve Terakkî kuvveti. Zîrâ bu kuvvet Osmanlı toprağı olan Makedonya'da hükûmet içinde hükûmetler, gizli emeller yaşatmamak için siyâsî ve 'adlî ne gibi tedâbir varsa hepsine mürâca'ata başladı... Hiç şüphe yok ki Makedonya (gâye-i hayâline!) doğru atılacak siyasî adımların birincisi hürriyyet, 'adâlet, Kânûn-u esâsî yaygarası iken şimdi adem-i merkeziyyet emelini ikinci bir basamak yapmak. Ondan sonra Makedonya muhtâriyeti, daha sonra Rumeli-i Şarkî gibi istîlâ! Nihâyet zâten o diyarda terakkiyât-ı medeniyye ve iktisâdiye nokta-i nazarından za'îf ve nâtuva kalmış olan İslam 'anâsırını esir, zelîl edip onların tepesine binmek! Veyâhut tavsif edilmek istenirse Bulgaristan müslümanları gibi mes'ûd ve bahtiyâr etmek!" Ethem Ruhi, "Maske atılsın da açık konuşalım," *Balkan* No: 1371, Haziran 1, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> Arnavudluk mes'elesi Avrupa'nın Şark mes'elesindeki ihtirâsâtı, tamâmen Türkiye'nin yaşatılıp yaşatılmaması mes'elesidir. Üç sene evvel kadar Türkiye'nin mîrâsını paylaşmış birtakım devletler var ki üç seneden beri Türkiye'nin yeniden hayâta gelmesinden elbette büyük telaşlara düştüler. Rusya ve İngiltere mümkün olsa dünyâyı birbirine katmak için ahd ve yemîn ettiler. 'Akla ve hayâle gelmez fîtneler icad edildi." Ethem Ruhi, "Osmanlı ve İslâmiyyet Bunu mu Bekliyor," *Balkan* No:1393, Temmuz 2, 1327, 1-2.

"Bu mes'elenin şekli-i evveli zaten Makedonya mes'elesidir. Genç Türkiye'nin kâbiliyyet-i meşrûtiyetperverânesi, 'azm-i vatanîsi, tedâbir-i harbiyyesi önünde Makedonya mes'elesiyle evvelki eşkâliyle başa çıkamayacaklarını anlayanlar Osmanlılığın bekâ-yı şevketini temsil eden Arnavudluğun kâlbîghına hançer vurdular. Osmanlılığın Avrupa'dan tamâmen tard edilmesi ve Arnavudluğun Balkan hükûmetleri tarafından yutululması için Arnavud kavminin saf ahlâkından su-i istifâde ile orada kıtaller kıyımlar ihdas etmek, nihâyet Arnavudluğa muhtâriyyet süsüyle Yunanistan, Sırbîye, Karadağ, Bulgaristan ve Avusturya arasında taksim edilivermesi için en kestirme yol bu değil midir?" Ethem Ruhi, "Arnavudluğun, Türklüğün kabahati ne?" *Balkan* No: 1377, Haziran 11, 1327, 1-2.

powers which, intimidated by the rise of the constitutional regime and the Young Turk power, strove at extending the claim of decentralization for the whole Macedonia in an effort to ensure its ultimate annexation to neighboring Balkan states. Yet, Ruhi presciently predicted that these conflicting imperial policies that backed the irredentism of these Balkan nations would result in a large war among these young states. Thus, in a rather emotive tone, Ruhi declared that the extermination of the Ottoman governance in Macedonia was intimately bounded with the annihilation of the Balkan nations themselves.<sup>60</sup>

The Muslim Albanians, in this grand project were portrayed by Ruhi as ignorant and simple minded victims being tricked by the agitators of this coalition. During his venture in Macedonia, when he was charged by the CUP to deliver conferences in all Macedonian provinces, Ruhi was in fact apprehended in the Skopje prison where most of the Albanian insurgents active in the 1911 Kosovo uprisings were incarcerated, and he supposedly conducted interviews with them. They told him that they had been deceived and led to rebellion by the rumours of certain provocateurs telling them that their religious practices were going to be abolished and pressing taxes were going to be levied upon them.<sup>61</sup> These interviews and the commissioning of Ruhi by leading CUP cadres to deliver speeches (about the so called ploys and conspiracies of the foreign parties for the destruction of Ottoman Empire) in Macedonia in general and in insurgent Albanian provinces in particular reveal both the extent of his

<sup>60</sup>"Arnavudların 'isyânı o yerin muhtâriyet idâresi 'îlân edileceğine delili imiş. Tabi'î ondan sonar sıra 'umûm Makedonya'ya geliyormuş. Bugün Osmanlı bayrağı Arnavudluk'tan veya Makedonya'dan kalkarsa ne olacak? O diyârda bîtaraf birer mıntika hükûmeti mi teşkil edecek. Bunun harita-yı âlemde vücûd bulup pâydâr olacağına kim inanır? Altıyüz seneden beri hiçbir milletin ne kilisesine, ne hürriyyet-i mezhebiyyesine ne de lisânına ve 'adâletine ufacak bir tecâvüzde bulunmayan Osmanlıların Avrupa'dan atıldığı gündür ki Balkan milletleri baştan başa yanacak. İşte o zaman ne Bulgarlık, ne Sırbılık, ne Karadağlılık, ne de Arnavudluk, hiçbir yer, hiçbirisi kalmayacak." Ethem Ruhi, "Balkanlar kime mezar olacak." *Balkan* No: 1368, Haziran 1, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>61</sup>Ethem Ruhi, "Reddi'l Merdûd," *Balkan* No: 1369, Haziran 2, 1327, 1-2.

noteworthy influence as an ideologue operating throughout Macedonia, and the considerable impact of his newspaper as a propagating machine.

### **2.2.3. CUP Propaganda**

As a medium directly linked to the Committee of the Union and Progress, the last major ideological component of *Balkan* was to monitor closely developments in Ottoman politics and contest any challenge towards CUP's dominance in the Ottoman parliament and government. In this sense, by representing the CUP as the ultimate guardian of the Ottoman nation and the whole Muslim community, *Balkan* fulfilled its double mission to mold ideologically and attach its audiences in Bulgaria and Ottoman Macedonia to CUP cadres who were still the most powerful political foci in Ottoman politics albeit intensely contested by many oppositional fronts by 1911. The above mentioned rhetoric of portraying the CUP and the Ottoman army under its command as the sole defenders against the conspiracies of Great Powers and Balkan governments in Macedonia, in this respect, was a fundamental legitimizing element of *Balkan*'s CUP propaganda. The CUP rule's legitimating claim was its ambitious military reforms which were supposed to rejuvenate the Ottoman army and its ability to repel existing and future assaults, uprisings and intrigues from the Ottoman landscape. Responding to challenges that nothing had changed in the internal social and political life of the Empire, Ruhi argued that while military reform was indispensable and only feasible with CUP leadership, developments

such as the application of thorough social reforms and achievement of social progress were dependent on a more gradual evolutionary scheme.<sup>62</sup>

At different points in 1911, when the CUP's hold on major government ministries were severely challenged, *Balkan* tried to mobilize its readers through various articles to inculcate in them the myth of CUP as the ultimate defender of the Ottoman nation and the Islam.<sup>63</sup> This argument along the lines of grave threats stemming from foreign conspiracies to induce division and treason within the native political elites was again utilized as one of *Balkan*'s major tropes in its articles. For instance, in April 1911, a secessionist conservative movement within the Party branch of the Committee known as *Hizb-i Cedîd* brought the CUP on the threshold of destruction. The members of this movement detested the dominance of parliamentary power (legislatively brought about by the leading cadres of CUP) over the sultanic authority, the behind-the-scenes influence of the Committee's leading cadres over the parliament and the

<sup>62</sup>Ethem Ruhi, "Türkiye'de ne gördüm 1", *Balkan* No: 1319, Mart 30, 1327, 1-2. "Türkiye'de ne gördüm 3," *Balkan* No: 1322, Nisan 2, 1327, 1-2. "Türkiye neye hazırlanıyor?" *Balkan* No: 1329, Nisan 10, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>63</sup>For instance, see the head article on 5 March 1911, when the rumors about a major cabinet crisis challenging the hold of CUP on the government reached Plovdiv: "Bugün hâlâ mezarı kazılmak istenen Osmanlı ve İslâm mülk ve milletine bir refah hayâtı veren, o zavallı vücûd-u meflûcu ölüm döşeğinden kaldırıp diriltecek kadar mu'cizenâme bir inkılâb vücûda getiren İttihat ve Terakkî hayât-ı nâciyesi de târihin bu mazhariyyetini temsil eder. İttihat ve Terakkî âlem-i Osmâniyyet ve İslâmiyyet bir zulmet-i esâret içinde yaşarken milyonlarca mazlûmîn-i Osmâniyye ve İslâmiyyenin necât ve hürriyyetine ta'alluk eden bir gâye idi. Enzâr-ı müdhişemizin önünde nûrânî emeller, medenî ve insânî sa'âdetler, hürriyyet ve uhuvvet emeline ta'alluk eden bütün işâretler bir silsile-i hakâ'ik teşkîl ediyordu. Acabâ bugün fesad ve fitne ateşleri, ecnebî ihtirâsâtı altında ölüm tehlikeleri geçiren âlem-i Osmâniyyet ve İslâmiyyetin müdâfa'a-yı hukûkuna vukûf-u hayât ve ictihâd eylemiş olan o hey'et-i nâciye yaşamasa ne olacağız? Değil yalnız Osmanlılık ihtirâs-ı ebedîsiyle beraber âlem-i İslâmın her sınıf ve cemâ'ati bir engizisyon şenâ'atine ma'ruz kalmayacak mı? Târîh-i âlemden nâm ve nişânımız silinmeyecek mi? Bugün âlem-i Osmâniyyet ve İslâmiyyet mâzînin celâl-i şânından numûnenümâ, mu'azzam bir ordu yetiştiren meşrûtiyyet hangi saf ve samîmî vicdâna bir inbisât-ı hayr ve sürûr bahşetmiyor? Bugün hangimiz Türklüğümüzle, müslümanlığımızla iftihar duygularını benimsemeye başlamadık? Osmanlılığın ve İslâmiyyetin nâci-i hürriyyeti olan o kuvve-i ma'neviyye bugün ümmetin yegâne istinadgâhidir." M.M., "İttihat ve Terakkî yaşayacak ve yaşatacak," *Balkan* No: 1279, Şubat 10, 1326, 1-2.

military and their liberal stance which was tainted treacherous and linked with freemasonry.<sup>64</sup>

The columnists grudgingly attacked what they labeled as a reactionary group that brought forth this crisis before it was averted by intense negotiations and the outbreak of the Tripoli War in the subsequent months.<sup>65</sup>

The vehemence of *Balkan*'s ideological advocacy of the CUP dominated regime seems to have been conducive even to justify and instigate murders of the CUP opponents. In April 1911, when the heydays of *Hizb-i Cedîd* opposition to the Young Turk prominence in the Ottoman politics was at its height, a journalist who was a sympathizer with this movement had been murdered resulting in rumors that this figure was about to display a corruption of the Ministry of Finance's government tender. Ruhi set out to refute the allegations about the CUP's hand in the murder yet implied that the figures in this journalist's close circle were relics of the tyrant rule of Abdulhamid II and hence deserved to be "cleansed" from the Ottoman political landscape.<sup>66</sup>

Given these main lines of *Balkan*'s discursive framework, its role as an Ottoman propaganda organ in Bulgaria and as across border ideological machine becomes more

<sup>64</sup> Ahmet Ali Gazel, "İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası'nı Bölünme Noktasına Getiren Hizb-i Cedid Hareketi," *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 16 (2001): 260.

<sup>65</sup> İbnu'l Reşad Midhat Kemal, "Meclîs-i Millîde Abdulhamidler," *Balkan* No: 1322, Nisan 15, 1327, 1-2.

A.K. Hatif, "Ağlayalım mı Sevinelim mi," *Balkan* No: 1322, Nisan 15, 1327, 2-3.

Ethem Ruhi, "Türkiye Düşmanları Ne Bekliyor," *Balkan* No: 1339, Nisan 26, 1327, 1-2. "Bugünün Dersleri," *Balkan* No: 1341, Nisan 28, 1327, 1-2. "İleri miyiz geri miyiz," *Balkan* No: 1344, Mayıs 1, 1327, 1-2.

A. K. Hatif, "An'anât-ı Târîhiyyemizin Muhâfazası Tenbelliğimizin Muhâfazasıdır," *Balkan* No: 1342, Nisan 29, 1327, 1-2.

"İstanbul Muhâbir-i Mahsûsamızdan," *Balkan* No: 1342, Nisan 29, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>66</sup> "İstanbul henüz temizlenmemiştir. Orada öyle hâin eller, öyle yezid vicdanlar vardır ki bunların 14 Nisan'da Hareket Ordusu erkânı tarafından Allah rızası ve millet selâmeti için temizlenmeleri lâzım gelir iken 'adl ve ihsâna mürâca'at eyledikleri için vücûd-u millet derd ve elemden kurtulamadı... Zeki Bey merhûmun şahsını tanımam. Fakat o gece refâkatinde bulunan zevât arasında bir kişi tanıyorum ki bu adamın Abdulhamid enkâzından pek dehşetli bir mürtecî, pek yaman bir kurt olduğunu İstanbul'dayken öğrendim." Ethem Ruhi, "Dünyada Neler Olurmuş" *Balkan* No: 1395, Temmuz 5, 1327, 1-2.

discernible. This newspaper, as a mouthpiece of the CUP regime, closely monitored events in Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire and sought to buttress the legitimization of the CUP regime in both polities. Secondly, it strove to establish a comprehensive “watch-dog” umbrella over the Muslims in Bulgaria and strived to mobilize and empower this community against an increasingly nationalist Bulgarian government while binding the Muslim community ideologically and spiritually to the CUP regime. Likewise, the paper, an extension of its founder’s own political life, strove to monitor the Bulgarian government’s strategies in neighboring Ottoman Macedonia to publicize and challenge any abuse by the Bulgarian government and Macedonian Bulgarians over the rights and liberties of Macedonian Muslims. In terms of the agendas regarding the Muslims in Bulgaria, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the effort to appropriate them as a coherent community attached to the Ottoman nation and Young Turk ethos was a challenging task as existing divisions in terms of ethnicity and political affiliations constituted an enormous obstacle to the mobilization of Bulgarian Muslims as an imagined political community.

### Chapter 3: *Balkan* Readers' Letters to the Editors

Based on the previous chapter's discussion about *Balkan* and its role as an ideological instrument addressing various audiences, this chapter addresses the readers' letters sent to the editors of the paper. First, it demonstrates how readers' letters were vital for *Balkan* to fulfill its "watchdog" performance in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. *Balkan* was an Ottoman surveillance mechanism stationed in another sovereign government. On the one hand, it aimed to monitor closely and vehemently criticize official as well as civilian encroachments on the Muslim community in Bulgaria. In so doing, it both challenged the Bulgarian state's sovereignty and legitimacy broadcasting the Bulgarian Muslims' plight to disparate Ottoman audiences to consume. On the other hand, *Balkan* was also closely attentive to the Bulgarians' encroachments on Macedonian Muslims' well being. Any such attack was used to undermine the Bulgarian state's claim that Ottoman Bulgarians were victimized by the hands of Ottoman authorities, and in fact, it was the Macedonian Muslims who were persecuted by Macedonian Bulgarians supported by the Bulgarian government. Given *Balkan*'s wide circulation both in Bulgaria and Macedonia, in order to monitor attacks on the Muslims, *Balkan* heavily relied on its readers' letters and reports from this region. In this sense, it becomes evident how imperial networks still played crucial roles in sovereign nations that recently broke away from the Empire, for *Balkan*, was a mouthpiece of the CUP that also employed its readers throughout Bulgaria and Macedonia to undermine Bulgarian authority and legitimacy. Thus, the ideological mission of *Balkan* was also supported through a diological production of knowledge via readers' letters. Aware of the versatile ideological mission of *Balkan*, both the Bulgarian



government and the press closely kept an eye on the newspaper and Ruhi and frequently persecuted both. As discussed in the previous chapter, the significance of readers' letters in buttressing *Balkan*'s ideological mission to undermine the Bulgarian state's authority was dramatically evident in Ruhi's trials. The first section of this chapter argues that even during these trials, *Balkan*'s use of readers' letters as ideological instruments continued since the corresponding readers who had reported the atrocities perpetrated onto them were recruited by *Balkan* as eye witnesses who testified on behalf of Ruhi. Thus, the correspondence of Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia with *Balkan* reveals the reciprocity of this relationship; as readers proved important informants for *Balkan*'s ideological propaganda, the paper's portrayal of their agonies provided the Muslims with a certain leverage and a platform to articulate their discontent.

In this respect, it is important to emphasize that *Balkan* frequently referred to its readership both in the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria as members of the Muslim nation. This appellation had ideological significance for *Balkan*. Although, the caption under its logo declared that it was an impartial Turkish newspaper (*bî-taraf Türk gazetesidir*), and although it was primarily consumed by the Turkish speaking readers, it was important for *Balkan* to appeal to its audience in Bulgaria and Macedonia as the Muslims. In the Bulgarian case, *Balkan*'s self-proclaimed role as the defender of all Muslims in Bulgaria strengthened this community's position vis-à-vis the Bulgarian state. Furthermore, while it may not have been followed by Muslim communities in Bulgaria who were not Turkish speakers, such as Pomaks, as argued in the previous chapter, *Balkan* still monitored the state's/civilians' infringements on the Muslim population and challenged those as parts of larger attacks on the Muslim community in

Bulgaria. Thus, it portrayed the Muslim nation in Bulgaria as unfortunate victims of Bulgaria society to larger Ottoman audiences, whilst undermining the authority of the Bulgarian state in the eyes of the Muslim readership. Lastly, it should be taken into account that a clear cut ethnic sensibility was absent among Muslims in Bulgaria at the time, and thus, appealing to them as Muslims had greater probability to induce their support for *Balkan*. In the case of Macedonia and larger Ottoman audience, emphasizing a more generic Muslim identity both served to undermine Albanian nationalistic attitudes and to represent strategically the Macedonian Muslims as a coherent community victimized by (primarily Bulgarian) guerillas` and civilians` attacks.

The second section of this chapter shifts attention to the Muslim audience in Bulgaria, since as discussed in the previous chapter, the political empowerment of this group as a coherent unit constituted one of the major ideological concerns of *Balkan*. Following one of the key elements in CUP`s ideology, *Balkan`s* editors and writers promoted modern education as the key to mobilize and improve what the paper portrayed as a backward Muslim community in Bulgaria. This section demonstrates that numerous readers embraced this outlook and reported how they founded associations and organized fund-raising activities to promote modern education in their respective provinces. These fund-raising activities that Muslim readers organized in their provinces, moreover revolved around an ethos of Young Turk patriotism. Many theater plays organized to raise funds for education were centerpieces of Young Turk lore which reveals that the organizers were aware of *Balkan`s* pro CUP propaganda and supported their benevolent campaigns in its advocacy. It is also important to note that the correspondents in these letters invariably defined themselves as members of the Muslim nation

that they proudly served. Contrary to mainstream historiography on the CUP, the absence of clear-cut ethnic lines and identity seemed pervasive throughout the correspondence published in *Balkan*. If anything, the readers emphasized their membership among the poor and backward Muslims of Bulgaria and the need to improve the education of the nation for survival in Bulgaria. This may indicate that readers regarded “Muslimhood” in Bulgaria as a more bounded category that differentiated itself from the broader *ummah* (i.e., entire Muslim community) because it was encroached upon by Bulgarian politics and society. To improve their nation, the readers` frequently repeated *Balkan*`s social evolutionary ideas (drawing from the CUP`s broader ideological arsenal) about education`s role in terms of “nation`s” political survival.

The third section addresses the limits of such political mobilization and argues that *Balkan*`s call for Muslim national mobilization and benevolence notwithstanding, the Muslim communal presence in Bulgaria was a highly contested political space marked with multiple-loyalties that made it impossible to unify Muslims as a coherent political category. Indeed, numerous letters protested against such “treacherous” and “disloyal groups” within the Muslim community, and thus, assisted *Balkan*`s monitoring and publically condemning them. As groups which proved to be robust to *Balkan*`s ideological framework, the blatant attack directed at them in *Balkan*`s columns enabled their classification as the “nation`s traitors” and hence their exclusion from the exalted category of “the Muslim nation.” Among these, a particularly detested group was the so-called Muslim “*partizans*.” They were accused of being loyal to Bulgarian parties and corroborating with them for their self interests. *Partizans* were not only condemned due to their collaboration with the Bulgarians but were also censured due to their

fake religious conservatism and opposition to modern education. In most cases they were also labeled as former corroborators of the Hamidian regime and enemies of the CUP ideals. This versatile usage of the term to define the coexistence of these tendencies was most evident in the example of Muslim endowment commission officials (*evkâf komisyoncusu*) who were charged with selling the nation's endowments to the Bulgarian parties. Yet, readers' letters also complain about Bulgarian partisanship's prevalence in educational commissions (*ma'ârif encümenleri*) and among Muslim teachers themselves although they were supporters of modern education. These groups were censured as *partizans* due to their affiliation with Bulgarian parties for their self interests. Lastly, similar to *Balkan*'s protests against high-ranking Muslim officials such as the head *mufti* and Muslim deputies in the Bulgarian parliament, readers' letters condemned these individuals as servants of the Democratic Party. When this party dropped in late March 1911, the preparations for the elections for the new Muslim deputies turned out to be a painstaking process since readers' from many provinces reported that Muslim partisans tried to trick and intimidate them. Lastly, this section also points to the existence of conservative tendencies in Bulgaria which opposed modern education and the CUP's secular tendencies. One letter, in this regard shows how such ideologies were easily brought to Bulgarian from the Ottoman Empire by the so-called *mürteci*'s, that is, "conservative minded supporters of the Hamidian regime". Based on this discussion of the diversity and cleavages within the Muslim community in Bulgaria, this section finally departs from the main stream Turkish literature of the 1990's which in reaction to Zhivkov communist government's persecution of the Bulgarian Turks set out to produce histories of Muslim community as a monolithic and invariably victimized entity.

The last section turns again to the Ottoman audience in the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, it discusses patriotic letters sent from the Ottoman Empire in favor of the Ottoman Navy fund-raising campaign promoting Ottoman might and glory. Subsequently it mainly deals with letters sent by individuals who described themselves as Albanians and censured the insurrectionist tendencies among Albanians in Macedonia and the western provinces. Although being limited in scope in terms of the number of letters in comparison to those received from Bulgaria, this section intends to show that *Balkan`s* audience in the Ottoman Empire and Albanian provinces tended to promote Ottoman patriotism and loyalty.

### **3.1. Reports of Ethnic Conflict in Bulgaria and Macedonia and Challenges to the Bulgarian State**

As stated previously, *Balkan`s* surveillance over the Muslim community in Bulgaria and its alertness to report and publish charged news regarding any occurrence of threats or violence against the Muslim community was highly facilitated by readers` letters sent from various Bulgarian provinces. Just to give the reader an idea about how important and politicized these letters were, one of the charges directed against Ethem Ruhi during his trial in Sofia in September 1909 that led to his imprisonment in March 1910 was based on his publishing three readers` letters in 1908 that divulged separate occurrences of severe attacks against Muslim villages (Tatarlar, Rahmanlı, Ablalar, Teke villages in Karlovo and Ustina village in Plovdiv) by neighboring Bulgarian villages as well as Bulgarian soldiers` assaults on Muslims in the

Musatlı village in Haskovo.<sup>67</sup> In terms of these incidents, Ruhi and his staff were able to summon over fifty Muslims involved in these separate incidents as eye-witnesses during his trials even though many of them had already immigrated to Anatolia, which further attests to how the newspaper could rally its far-flung audiences to support their former Muslim community in Bulgaria. Ruhi even published photographs of these Muslim witnesses to advertise their solidarity against racism and oppression. The testimonies of these individuals were emotively portrayed by Ruhi as the cry and resistance of a victimized nation against its oppressors:

“When a nation starts realizing its civil rights, that is, its existence, when it enters into the struggle of life and appreciates its rights and confirms that it is also human, it certainly shall maintain its existence, live and prosper. These poor people who are nothing but the remnants of a great nation and who have perished for thirty years, certainly prove today that they are able to articulate that they, too, are a nation, and must pursue their rights, just like heroes who know the taste of the national honor and humanity. The fact that we as the Muslim community, who have for thirty years wept its blood into its heart and did not know how to claim its civil rights, have now appeared in court hand-in-hand and resolved to say that we have been victimized and subjected to atrocities, constitutes a novel history and an unseen event in independent Bulgaria’s political history...”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup>The Karlova incident, which was ardently protested by *Balkan* was evidently so severe that it invoked the Grand Vizier, Hilmi Paşa’s diplomatic note against the Bulgarian government: “Muharririmizin Mahkemesi,” *Balkan* No: 868, Teşrîn-i evvel 1, 1325.

<sup>68</sup>“...Bir millet ki hukûk-u tabî’iyyesini ya’ni varlığını idrâka başlar, mücâdele-i hayâta girer, hakkını hak bilir, ben de insanım der, o millet elbette mevcûdiyyetini idâme edecek, yaşayacak ve yaşatacaktır... Otuz bu kadar seneden beri mahv ve munkariz olmuş bir millet-i mu’azzamanın bekâ-yı mevcûdesinden başka bir şey olmayan şu amcacıklar da emîn olunuz ki ‘izzet-i nefsi-i millî nedir, hayât-ı millî nedir, insan hayâtı nedir bu lezzeti tatmış



Figure 1: Muslim villagers who had written to *Balkan* about inter-confessional clashes in their villages and were brought as witnesses during subsequent trials of Ethem Ruhi starting in October 1909.<sup>69</sup>

(This is the photograph of Muslim witnesses who came on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the last month to prove that Plovdiv's public prosecutor's court case against our publication called 'atrocities against Muslims' is unjust. It was taken in the morning of that day in front of our office. The young man with glasses who sits near the white bearded person who holds *Balkan* is our chief author [Ethem Ruhi]).

Throughout 1910 and 1911, readers' letters reporting either Bulgarian attacks on or oppressive state policies against Muslim communities continued to appear in *Balkan* buttressing its self-proclaimed "watch-dog" function on behalf of the Muslim community. For instance, on 1 January 1910, Halil Zeki, The Director of Muslim Schools in Vidin, vociferously criticized the Bulgarian government for withdrawing the small budget allocated to the office of *mufti*,

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civân-merdân misâli bugün biz de milletiz, biz de hakkımızı aramalıyız demeye kadar bulunduklarını isbât ediyorlar. Biz Bulgaristan'da otuz bu kadar senedir kanını kalbine akıtıp, hukûk-u tabî'yyesini aramayı bilememiş olan âhâlî-yi islâmiyyenin el ele verip huzûr-u mehâkime çıkmış biz mazlûmuz bize zulûm edilmiştir, zulûm ediliyor demeye 'azm ve cezm etmiş olmalarıdır ki Bulgaristan târîh-i istiklâl ve siyâsiyyesinde yeni bir târîh, yeni bir hâdise, nâ-mâmûl bir vak'adır..." Ethem Ruhi, *Balkan* No: 877, Teşrîn-i evvel 13, 1325, 1-2.

<sup>69</sup>"Geçen ayın yirmi dokuzuncu günü (İslâm'a Mezâlim) neşriyatımız 'aleyhinde Filibe müdde-i 'umûmîliği tarafından ikâme edilen da'vânın haksız olduğunu isbâta gelen şühûd-u islâmın o gün 'ale's-sabah idârehânemiz önünde çekilen fotoğrafasıdır. Orta yerde elinde *Balkan*'ı tutan beyaz sakallı zâtın yanındaki gözlüklü genç ser muharririmizdir." *Balkan* No: 877, Teşrîn-i evvel 13, 1325, 4.

which he argued was a policy conceived to diminish Muslim control over their own communities and allow Bulgarian to intervene more effectively into the affairs of the community. Curiously, in the following year, Halil Zeki was dismissed from his position by the government, and both male and female students of the Vidin High School heavily protested this in a letter published in *Balkan*. Mustafa Lütfü, a reader from the town of Lom, wrote a similar letter on 5 January 1911, to protest that the Democratic government was planning to seize upon the only remaining endowment of the town which barely financed the town's wretched school and communal institutions.<sup>70</sup>

Apart from disclosing and vilifying the violation of Muslims' rights in Bulgaria *per se*, the discourse both in the letters and in *Balkan*'s commentaries regarding them were entangled with other ideological postulations as well, most notably in terms of the Macedonian issue and the adulation of the Ottoman constitutional regime. In terms of the Macedonian affair, the letters acted as a means to assert that the actual injured party who was victimized by the Bulgarian state's aggressive irredentism in Macedonia and local attacks it sponsored were the Muslims of Bulgaria rather than the (Bulgarian) Christians in Macedonia. These readers of *Balkan* explicitly voiced their concerns over the "Macedonian conundrum" in their letters to the editors. For instance, one reader from Targovishte (Eski Cuma) on 1 January 1910 who concealed his name reported that in the Giran village Bulgarian youngsters customarily visited blatant oppressions upon the Muslim minority by destroying their village mosque's minaret,

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<sup>70</sup>Vidin Mekâtib-i İslâmiye Müdürü Halil Zeki, "Hayât-ı milliyyemiz ve semâ-i dîniyyemiz," *Balkan* No: 933, Kânûn-u evvel 19, 1325.

"Mâtem Günü. Vidin Rüşdiyesinden Mektub," *Balkan* No: 1247, Kânûn-u sâni 4, 1326, 3.

Mustafa Lütfü, "Tuna'dan Bir Nidâ Münâsebetiyle," *Balkan* No: 1239, Kânûn-u evvel 23, 1326, 2-3.



toppled down coffin rests (*musallâ taşı*), and ripped off the mosque's door. Although this particular letter reported an incident that took place in Bulgaria, *Balkan*'s stuff strategically commented on it in relation to the Macedonian conundrum. That is, the commentary argued that although every minor conflict against Macedonian Bulgarians was portrayed by the Bulgarian press and Bulgarian politicians as immense atrocities, the real perpetrators of violence were in fact the Bulgarian press and the politicians themselves who oppressed Bulgarian Muslims:

“Although we have been penalized with fines of thousands of franks for publishing news of such events based on evidence and witnesses, although we have become thorns in the eyes of (Bulgarian) Democrats in power for our just complaints to demand liberty and justice, still, we could not restrain ourselves from publishing the above letter after confirming its veracity. Our goal is to teach an objective lesson to Sofia's grudging and exaggerating press which raises the cry of an endless political atrocity every time when a bird flies over Macedonia. Needless to say, we are bound to pursue vigorously and tenaciously this matter and expect the government's serious action in the name of law and justice ...”<sup>71</sup>

Letters sent from the readers in the Macedonian provinces also corroborate such a stance because they protest Bulgarians' attacks against Muslims. Contrary to what they call the lies propagated by the Bulgarian press and diplomats along the lines that Bulgarian Christians

<sup>71</sup> “Bu gibi bâ'zı vukuâtı imza ve isbât tahtında neşrine delâlet ettiğimizden dolayı binlerce frank altında yaşadığımız, nazar-ı hürriyyet ve adâleti celb için vukû' bulan şikâyet-ı kânûniyyemiz yüzünden mevki'-i iktidarda bulunan gospodin demokratların gözüne diken olduğumuz halde bâlâdaki mektubu bi't-tahkîk yine neşr ve 'îlandan kendimizi alamadık. Maksadımız Makedonya'da kuş uçsa mezâlim-i siyâsiyyeyi lâyufna gibi ayyûka çıkaran bâ'zı mübâlağacı, garazkâr Sofya matbuâtına bir misâl-i ibret göstermektir. Herhalde bu vak'âyı biz kemâl-i şiddet ve ehemmiyetle tâkibe, hükûmetin kânun ve adâlet nâmına icraat-ı ciddiyyesine intizâra mecbûruz...” “Bir Vak'â-yı müessefe,” *Balkan* No: 933, Kânûn-u evvel 19, 1325.

were the victims of blatant Muslim abuse of Christians in Macedonia, the authors of these letters argue that the situation on the ground was, in fact, the reverse. For instance on 28 January 1910, a reader named Hasan Basri wrote from Kratovo (*Kratova*) to report two instances whereby the town's Bulgarian youngsters roamed through the Muslim neighborhoods while inebriated exclaiming and chanting that they were thirsty for Muslim blood. Basri interpreted this incident as the ultimate proof that the rhetoric about Bulgarians' agony in Macedonia was nothing but intrigue disseminated by Bulgaria while in fact Muslims constituted the wronged party:

“See, oh, esteemed reader. The poor Bulgarian nation! How it is being crushed down and tortured under numerous atrocities. All Bulgarian papers complain and cry out loud. They fabricate thousands of intrigues and baseless arguments. I reply to these diplomats who are unjust hatemongers and sow the seeds of malice. Our Bulgarian citizens are by no means subjected to atrocities. Some of them do not refrain from abusing the liberty in their hands and perpetrate certain regrettable deeds. See, oh, diplomats, see these and continue to insist that Bulgarians are groaning under cruelties... Who said a word to our Bulgarian citizens even when they misinterpreted the liberty and dared to engage in these unjust instances? That is because Muslims are not barbarians as they are known to some insolent individuals who would seek to conceal the truth. Our Ottoman Bulgarian citizens possess complete freedom to such an extent that their attacks against their co-citizens' rights go unnoticed.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>...Görünüz ey kârîn-i kirâm . Zavallı Bulgar milleti ne kadar mezâlim altında eziliyor. Nasıl işkenceler çekiyor. Bütün Bulgar gazeteleri şikâyetler, feryâd ve figân ediyorlar. Bin türlü entrikalar vâhî ve esassız mutâlaalar ortaya sürüyorlar. Bu haksekîn ve nifakcuyân ve tohum-u fesad saçan diplomatlara karşı diyebilirim ki Bulgar vatandaşlarımız asla mazlûm değildir. Ellerindeki hürriyeti sui-istimâl ederek bir takım ahvâl-i muessefe irtikâbından da çekinmeyenler yok değil. Görünüz ey diplomatlar, görünüz de Bulgarlar hâlâ mezâlim altında

A similar letter from Kumanova, written by a certain Süleyman Feyzi informed *Balkan*'s readers that the scribe of the city's Bulgarian Constitutional Club, Yordan, who had been recently active in organizing a successful rally that slandered the Muslim community and the Ottoman government and caused a large ruckus, was just identified as the culprit of a Greek merchant's murder. Feyzi portrayed this man's hypocrisy and lack of morality as the embodiment of the true depravity of those who threatened the Muslim community, and though the author indicates that Yordan was currently in hiding, it was certain that he was going to end up in the "scaffold of justice".<sup>73</sup>

Along with sentiments that postulated that Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia were the true victims of numerous atrocities and oppression by the hands of Bulgaria and Macedonian Bulgarians, another rhetorical thread that bound these *Balkan*'s letters consistently underscored the Ottoman Empire and nation's might and righteousness (under the constitutional regime) in any confrontation with Bulgarian authorities, thus reflecting the paper's position as a mouthpiece of the CUP government in Istanbul. In this respect, letters about the bellicosity of the Bulgarian military units in border conflicts with the Ottoman army turned up rather

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inliyor demekte devam ve ısrâr ediniz... Hürriyeti sui-tefsir edib de bu gibi ahvâl-i nâ-lâyıkaya kadar cür'et eyledikleri halde Bulgar vatandaşlarımıza kim ne dedi. Çünkü hakîkatı i'tiraf edemeyen bir takım mâlumatfuruşların tanıdığı gibi İslamlar barbar değildir. Osmanlı Bulgar vatandaşlarımız hürriyet-i kâmile sahiptirler. Hatta o derece hür ki vatandaşlarının hukûkuna taarruza bile ses çıkarılmıyor." Hasan Basri, "Türkiye'de Bulgarların Gördüğü Mezâlim: Kratova'dan yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 955, Kânûn-u sâni 15, 1325, 3-4.

<sup>73</sup> Apart from the fact that this letter was written from Kumanova, there is little clue that the author was in fact a reader since this piece does not refer to the city in question by phrases such as 'our town', as other letters do. Thus it is also probable that Süleyman Feyzi was a newspaper reporter, either, that of *Balkan* (although his name does not appear in other issues) or of any other Ottoman paper appearing in Kumanova or nearby provinces. This point notwithstanding, it is still notable that *Balkan* held such a close interaction with actors who reported various social conflicts in Macedonia in a way that catered to the interests of Muslims: Süleyman Feyzi, "Makedonya Cinâyet-i Siyasîyesinden," *Balkan* No: 955, Kânûn-u sâni 15, 1325, 3-4.

frequently in the pages of *Balkan*.<sup>74</sup> Another example of the high praise of the Ottoman Empire's ability to assert itself in terms of Bulgaria's wrongdoings was provided by a letter of a certain Hafız Edhem from Edirne, who protested that Bulgarian customs officials were demanding unfair rates of customs for foreign goods bought from the Empire, although this constituted a violation of international custom treaties. Moreover, Edhem announced that, as was verified by their own testimonies, Muslim emigrants from Bulgaria in Edirne who still had to travel to Bulgaria frequently in order to settle their business affairs were complaining that they were being undressed by the Bulgarian authorities who searched for smuggled goods. The author moreover warned that the Bulgarian neighbors should take into account that Ottomans, while formerly servile to the corrupt officials of the Hamidian regime, currently composed a sovereign nation. Thus, confronted with such misdeeds, they were fully capable of manipulating their government to strike back in much greater force.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup>See for instance a letter signed by a certain "E. H." from Edirne who recounts in detail that while a single Ottoman soldier or citizen mistakenly set a foot on the Bulgarian soil, the Bulgarian troops did not hesitate to open fire upon him. Likewise, the author notes that the Bulgarian soldiers along with certain paramilitary units (başibozuk) frequently crossed the border and visited the villages in Tırnova, Kırkkilise in order to brain-wash the villagers. He further argued that these soldiers and the guerillas after being caught in these villages by the Ottoman soldiers were brought back to the Ottoman battalion unit and were extremely well-treated. Yet soon, their fellow armed Bulgarian soldiers arrived from Bulgaria to bust the battalion and demanded that the caught soldiers be given back to them. It is not clear whether E. H. belonged to any Ottoman military unit involved in these clashes although many Ottoman soldiers oftentimes wrote to *Balkan*, especially to announce their financial contribution to the massive navy fund raising campaign (*Donanma İ'ânesi*) held in the Ottoman Empire: E.H, "Hudûd Vaka'larına Dâ'ir: Edirne'den Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 968, Kânûn-u sâni 30, 1325, 3.

<sup>75</sup> "...Bulgar komşularımız düşünmüyorlar mı ki Osmanlılar bugün hür bir millet-i hâkimedir. Öyle devr-i sâbık gibi Yıldız serâmedânının esiri değildir. Bugün hükûmetlerine adl ve kânûn dâiresinde her istediklerini teklif eder ve yaptırabilirler. İdâre-i meşrûta-i meşrûmuz mâzideki fenâlıkları ve yolsuz muâmeleleri kökünden söküp attı. Eğer komşularımız bizi hâlâ eski devir yâdigarları yerine sayıyorlarsa aldanıyorlar. Bugün Osmanlı milleti arzu ederse gerek gümrük ve gerek Bulgaristan'a gidip gelmek üzere bulunan İslamlar hakkında revâ görülen her bir muâmeleye Osmanlı hükûmetini dahi mukâbele-i bi'l-misle mecbur edebiliyor..." Hafız Edhem, "İmam bildiğini okur: Edirne'den yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 934, Kânûn-u evvel 20, 1325, 3. It is also noteworthy that, in terms of state policies that oppressed the Muslims, a similar letter was sent to *Balkan* from Crimea in April 1911 which reported incursions of the Russian police into Muslim households, schools and newspaper offices. This letter reported that over 250 Muslims had been taken into custody and some of those had been exiled to Siberia due to their involvement with the politics. This letter significantly attests to *Balkan*'s transnational links. The commentary

### 3.2. Attempts for the Political Mobilization of Muslims via Education

In addition to monitoring reports of clashes in Bulgaria and Macedonia via its readers' letters, another significant element of *Balkan*'s ideological agenda was to promote the 'Ottoman and Muslim' cause to mobilize the Muslim community in Bulgaria politically by creating a platform of social improvement. This goal was closely predicated upon providing the community with access to a modern education and increased associational activity. Education was represented not only as a national duty and a means to ensure the cohesiveness and unison of the national and religious community, but it was also portrayed as the ultimate tool for social progress and for the political empowerment and survival of the community. It appears reasonable to argue that this call considerably resonated with the Muslim readership of *Balkan* in Bulgaria. This emphasis on modern education, which was also a significant element of CUP's ideological arsenal, corroborated much of the content of letters from disparate provinces that addressed the Muslim community's establishment of charitable societies, associations, teachers' unions, reading clubs and their respective fund raising activities (such as theater plays, concerts, auctions, and the collection of the skins of slaughtered animals during the feast of sacrifice) all conceived to improve Muslim schools' conditions and assist poor students.<sup>76</sup>

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on this letter also employed a very similar discourse stating that although in reality the Turks/Muslims were persecuted everywhere, they were baselessly accused of perpetrating cruelties: "...İşte kârîler, medeniyet kisvesine bürünen zâlim bir hükûmetin zavallı kardeşlerimize işkenceleri. Buna cihân-ı âlem-i medeniyet de ağlasın, yirminci asır medeniyeti de böyle levha-i te'ellüm görsün de hak nedir, adâlet nedir öğrensün. Fakat o yalnız Avrupa-i Osmani'de aranır. Hiç bir şey olmadığı halde Türk'ün başına vurulmalıdır denilerek yalanlar, bilmem neler icad edilir. Fakat Rusya'da mezâlim canavarları bile ağlatacak dereceye gelir de yine gûş-u medeniyet iştmez. Enzâr-ı beşeriyet denilen Avrupa göremez..." *Balkan* No: 1317, 27 Mart 1327, 4

<sup>76</sup>See for instance: Cem'iyyet-i hayriyye-i İslâmiye reisi Hüseyin Avni, "Teşebbüsât-ı Hayriyye: Eski Cuma'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 935, Kânûn-u evvel 22, 1325, 2-3.

Mustafa Fahri, "Osman Pazardan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 936, Kânûn-u evvel 23, 1325, 2-3.

Indeed, the authors of these “letters of thanks” for the organizers and patrons of these events hailed from various Bulgarian towns with a significant Muslim presence such as Targovishte (Eski Cuma), Omurtag (Osmanpazar), Svishtov (Ziştovi), Novi Pazar (Yeni Pazar), Orehovo (Rahova), Pestera (Pestre), Lom and Balchăk (Balçık), which again attests to the wide circulation of *Balkan* throughout Bulgaria. As a rule, while the theater plays put on the stage either by the respective charitable organizations or the town youth were centerpieces of Young Turk lore such as *Vatan Yâhûd Silistre* (The Fatherland or Silistra), *Zavallı Çocuk* (The Poor Child), *Akif Bey, Besa* (Word of Honor), *Rüşvetle Mesned* (Ranks acquired through Bribe), *Jön Türk* (The Young Turk) and *Mesâ’ib-i İstibdâd* (The Calamities of Despotism)<sup>77</sup>, other fund raising activities such as concerts, lotteries and auctions were similarly organized around emotive themes.<sup>78</sup> For instance, *Balkan* and Ethem Ruhi’s persona served as part of an ethos through which the “national” and religious mobilization of the Muslims of Bulgaria was conceptualized. For example, on April 1911, M. Refet from Svishtov wrote to *Balkan* to inform the readers that an auction had been organized in the town to raise funds for Svishtov’s

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Educational commissions (ma‘ârif encümenleri) which were official bodies within the communal institutions also often held such fund raising campaigns. For instance, see the initiative of Tatar Pazarcık’s educational commission which recruited the Ottoman Benliyan theater company (which was on tour in Bulgaria) to stage the play *Jön Türk* which was referred as a national play: *Balkan* No: 949, Kânûn-u sâni 5, 1325.

During such initiatives, neighboring town associations often cooperated and exchanged experiences for the enactment of their respective performances. For the cooperation of Novi Pazar and Pravadi associations: Yeni Pazar Kırâ’athâne-i İttihat Reisi Hüseyin Hulûsi, *Balkan* No: 944, Kânûn-u sâni 1, 1325, 4.

<sup>77</sup>It appears that through such patriotic plays in praise of the CUP power and ideology, audiences became familiarized with the vocabulary and ideals of the constitutional regime and came to refer to their interaction with these elements in their letters: “Şanlı inkılâbın hudûsüne değin Bulgaristan’da...cem‘iyyet teşkil değil bu hususta mebâhise dahi cereyân edemezdi. Çünkü ahâlînin seviye-i idrâki buna müsâit degildi...Hele idâre-i hunhârânenin hallerini, keyfi icra‘atlerini, hayât-ı siyâsetlerini tiyatrolarda göreceğiniz, taklidlerini müşâhede ile bu hususâtı hakâik-i târihiyye ile mukâyese ederek terzil ve nâmlarını tel‘în edeceksiniz, nidâ-i hafîsi istima olunsa idi sem‘-i itla’larının mutehavvil olduğuna hüküm edileceği tabi‘i idi...” Eski Cuma Cem‘iyyet-i Hayriyyesi, “Terakkiye Doğru,” *Balkan* No: 1286, Şubat 18, 1326, 4.

<sup>78</sup>For example: Peştere Mekâtib-i İslâmiye Cem‘iyyeti Reisi Nevzad Remzi, *Balkan* No: 981, Şubat 14, 1325, 4. Tüccar-zâde Ahmet Refik, “Balçık’tan Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 987, Şubat 21, 1325, 4.

“Nazar-ı dikkate: Dobric Hacıoğlu Pazarcık, Paşabalı karyesi lotaryası,” *Balkan* No: 1111, Temmuz 18, 1326, 4.

benevolent society. In fact, the author even reported that a portrait of Ruhi, in which he was depicted as a *mücâhîd* (Islamic holy warrior) forsaking himself for the oppressed rights of the Muslims of Bulgaria, came under auction.<sup>79</sup>

It is noteworthy that such enterprises could be initiated not just for schools in the Muslim localities but may have addressed the needs of schools in many Bulgarian provinces, which indicates that, a sense of duty to empower the Bulgarian Muslims as a distinct social category was ingrained in the initiators' actions. For instance in August 1911, a high school student and Muslim teachers' association in Vidin founded an orchestra and went on a tour to Svishtov, Nikopol, Pleven, Sumen and Tarnavo to raise funds for the Muslim schools of these towns. This attempt was fashioned in one letter to *Balkan* as a source of national honor.<sup>80</sup>

The tone of such letters which reported on these fund raising activities, corresponded considerably with *Balkan*'s rhetoric portraying modern education as the ultimate device to alleviate the wide spread ignorance and poverty afflicting the Muslim community and informing its inferior status.<sup>81</sup> Yet more importantly, social progress which was thought to be

<sup>79</sup>The portrayal of Ethem Ruhi as a defender or *mücâhîd* of Bulgarian Muslim nation was noted in the previous chapter. This role was to a certain extent self assigned as Ruhi and *Balkan* acted as the "watchdog" of Bulgarian Muslims' oppressed rights. The readers' letters sent during his trials both from Bulgarian provinces and the Ottoman Empire also employ this term attesting to the resonance of this self portrayal with the readership: "...Bulgaristan müslümanlarının hukûk-u mağsûbelerinin vikâyesi uğrunda mücâhidâne bezl-i vücûd ve fedâ-i cân eden ser muharririniz...Edhem Ruhi Bey'in altı aydan beri mağdûren bulunduğu zindandan tahlis günü akşamı ki...Ruhi Bey'in resmi mevk'i-i müzâyedeye vaz' olundu..." M. Ref'et, "Balkan İdarehânesine: Zîştovî'den Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 1319, Mart 30, 1327.

<sup>80</sup>Vidin Gimnazya müdâvimlerinden Ali Efendi-zâde Osman, "Mefâhir-i millîyye," *Balkan* No: 1385, Haziran 22, 1327, 3.

Vidin Mu'allimîn-i İslâmiyye Cem'iyeti, *Balkan* No: 1395, Temmuz 5, 1327, 3

<sup>81</sup>"Ahali-i muhteremimizin piryân oldukları girdâb-ı sefâlet ve cehâletten tahlis-i girîban edebilmeleri ancak ma'ârif ve milel-i mütemeddine ve müterakkînin vâsıl oldukları tarîk-i müstakîmin tâkîbiyle kâbil olacağını teslim eden Bulgaristanlı ihvân-ı dînîmiz..." Mu'allim Ahmed Cevad, "Rahve'den Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 977, Şubat 10, 1325, 3.

contingent on the CUP's education platform was conceptualized by local readers themselves as the ultimate means to preserve their national and religious identity<sup>82</sup> and to secure 'their national existence'. For instance, a reader named Hafız Hakkı from Dobrich who in contrast to the previous letters protested against the pitiful condition of the high school in his town and requested that the Muslim community unify to improve the education of the Muslim youth and how this was tantamount to the Muslim community's political survival and national assertion:

"In this era of civilization, a nation cannot live without education. Knowledge and education are the devices and harbingers of progress and elevation and the nourishment of the soul of humanity... Is it not because of the education that a race which is advanced in the realm of evolution takes a great human mass that is unaware of the blessing of education in its hands of domination and causes it to groan under its destroying claw? Is it not all because of the education that half a million Netherlanders dominate over twenty five million Javanese?"<sup>83</sup>

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"Çünkü artık kat'ıyyen anlaşılmıştır ki bu millet-i mahkûme şimdiki hâl-i sefâletten ancak ittihat ve terakki-i ma'ârif ile rehâyâb olacaktır..." Eski Cum'a Cem'iyet-i Hayriyesi, "Terakkiye Doğru," *Balkan* No: 1286, Şubat 18, 1326, 4.

<sup>82</sup> "...Burada dahi mekâtib-i İslâmiyyemiz tahammülfersâ bir müzâyaka-i milliyyede idi. Artık ahali-i İslâmiyyemiz yaramıza merhem gine kendimizden olacağı, bir milletin mevcûdiyet-i milliyye ve ma'neviyesi ma'ârifin ihyâsıyla kâim oldugunu 'ale'l-ekser idrâk ile bir 'iâne-i ma'ârif cem'iyeti bi't-teşkil..." İmza: M.R., "Bulgaristan'da Hayât-ı İslam: Zıştovî'den yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 941, Kânûn-u evvel 29. 1325, 2-3.

"Lom İslamları arasında...millet ve dîn-i mübeccelemizin ancak sâye-i ma'ârifle pâyidar olabileceğini bilmeyecek âdî bir hammal parçasına bile tesâdüf edilemez..." M. Celal, "Lom'da Eser-i Hayat," *Balkan* No: 1272, Şubat 3, 1326, 4.

"...Kuvve-i İslâmiyyesi nâkıs bir milletin, ma'âriften tevahhuş eden bir kavmin tedennîsi tabî'î olmakla tarîk-i terakkîde atacağı adımlar sıfırdan başka bir şey olamaz. Onun içindir ki rub'u asırlık bir zaman zarfında Bulgaristan'ın ibtidâ-i teşkil ve te'sisinden beri her şey İslamlar için karanlık kalmış fıkdan-ı ma'âriften, ma'ârifte gösterilen adem-i rağbetten hiçbir parlak noktaya vusûl mümkün olamamış. ..." Mustafa Lütfü, "Lom İçin," *Balkan* No: 1239, Kânûn-u evvel 23, 1326, 2-3.

<sup>83</sup> This letter eloquently reveals many elements of the CUP ideology as it emphasizes the role of education to eradicate the widespread ignorance afflicting the Muslim society. It also deploys a social evolutionary view that emphasizes the struggle of survival between different nations and the role of education to win this battle. It is important to note that CUP promoted a similar discourse on this role of education for the 'Ottoman nation' against foreign encroachments. Similar to *Balkan*'s constant appellation to the Bulgarian Muslims as a nation, by 1911, the term 'Ottoman nation' in the Ottoman Empire also increasingly excluded Ottoman Christians and tried to win over the loyalties of Empire's ethnically different Muslim groups. Thus, *Balkan*'s appellation to the Muslims as



### 3.3. A Fragmented Community

#### 3.3.1. Muslim `Partisans` as Internal Traitors

Despite the eagerness of readers to intensify educational and associational enterprises (which were portrayed as a device of political empowerment) apparent in *Balkan*'s pages, actually achieving a partial vision and means of unifying the diverse Muslim community in Bulgaria as a single resolute and active political group proved much more difficult. Indeed, many calls in the letters for the mobilization and coherence of the Muslim community were accompanied by a cynical commentary regarding how Muslims had gone too astray and corrupt. In this respect, authors of numerous letters to *Balkan* slandered some of their co-religionists with the pejorative label *partizan* because of their participation in Bulgarian political parties. Likewise, they condemned their "traitorous" brethren as a major impediment to the unification and betterment of their besieged community.<sup>84</sup>

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recipients of modern education is parallel to the trend in the Ottoman Empire. Yet, while CUP emphasis on secular modern education was under fire from conservative circles in the Empire, in Bulgaria the so called *partizans* came to the picture as additional actors undermining the attempts for modern education: "Şu zamân-ı medeniyette bir millet ma'ârifsiz yaşayamaz. İlim ve ma'ârif terakki ve teâlînin sâik ve muhbiri ve rûh-u insaniyyetin gıdâsıdır... Hep ma'ârif sâyesinde değil midir ki saha-i tekâmülde hatveendâz -ı terakki olan bir kavim nîmet-i ma'âriften bîhaber bir kitle-i muazzama-i beşeriyeyi yed-i tahakkümüne alarak pençe-i kahr-ı esâreti altında inim inim inliyor. Hep ma'ârif sâyesinde değil midir ki yarım milyon Felemenk'li yirmi beş milyon Cavalı'ya tahakküm ediyor." Hafız Hakkı, "Ma'ârif ve Mekteplerimiz, Dobric'den yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 1291, Şubat 24, 1326, 3. It is also noteworthy that readers exchanged their opinions about the right policy to follow for the improvement of education with regards to the Bulgarian state. See for instance the exchange of open letters of two readers from Sevlievo and Omurtag respectively. While Ali Rıza Hüseyin from Sevlievo emphasized the need for the Bulgarian state to administer the primary schools, Müftü-zâde İbrahim Hakkı from Omurtag opposed this view and suggests that the state would resoundly agree to such a policy in order to apply a policy of Bulgarization in the schools: Servi'den Ali Rıza Hüseyin, "Açık Mektup," *Balkan* No: 1391, Haziran 29, 1327, 3. Osmanpazar'dan Müftü-zâde İbrahim Hakkı, "Açık Mektup," *Balkan* No: 1396, Temmuz 9, 1327, 3.

<sup>84</sup>In *Balkan*'s articles the so called partisans were attacked in harshest terms and identified due to their cooperation with Bulgarian authorities as the ultimate reason for Muslim's demise and immigration to the Ottoman Empire: "...Bulgaristan'da ehl-i İslâmın hicretine sebep teşkil eden arazlardan en muhimmi ve belki birincisi partizanlıktır. Bulgaristan'da hukûk-u İslâmın mahvına, nâmus ve haysiyyet-i dînin pâymâl-ı hakâret olmasına sebep olanlar ehl-i İslâm arasında zuhûr eden birkaç münâfık, birkaç kanı karışık partizandır... Bence bu partizanların filan gospodine mensûbuz biz şöyle böyle yaparız diyerek din kardeşlerinin en mukaddes, en mûtena

For instance, on 11 January 1910, a reader from Varna, named Mustafa Reşid wrote a letter to report the activities of his town's benevolent society (*Varna Cem'iyet-i Hayriyyesi*) which, according to the author, had been founded with great difficulties, amongst the vast political cleavages prevalent in Muslim community rendering any unitary political action impossible:

“Based on the freedom granted to them by the constitution, various peoples living in Bulgaria demonstrate their national existence. Whether establishing certain associations, reading houses and clubs, if a matter concerning their national affairs emerges or if their national rights are threatened, these people convene all of their compatriots in these places and strive to recover their usurped and plundered rights...However we, the Muslims of Bulgaria, showed no remorse when our national rights had been trampled, when our national affairs had been undermined and when, out of reason, the rights of our countless coreligionists had been lost. Even if we bothered to care, it was a dream for three Muslims even to come together. It

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hukûkunu mahva alet olan böyle köpeklerin emin olunuz mezar-ı İslam'da yatacak yeri yoktur...Partizan demek mevki'-i iktidâra gelen her hangi bir fırka-i siyâsetin ehl-i İslam arasından ciğeri beş para etmez bir mahluk ayırıp da ona bir pâye-i mahsus verdiği ve ondan sonra hukûk-u İslama teallûk eden her emir ve teşebbüste milletin arzusu ve emr-i vicdânı yerine o fırkanın işine gelen iyiliği ve fenâlığı icraya o alçağı alet ettiği bir münâfıktır... “Bulgaristan'da Hicrete Karşı ve Son Nasihatlar,” *Balkan* No: 943, Kânûn-u evvel 31, 1325, 3. See also *Balkan*'s bitter observation: “Kel ablasının saçıyla övünürmüş. Bu sözün mazmûnuna her gün, her saat masdûk oluruz da haberimiz yok. Kimimiz bir gospodine, kimimiz bilmem kime, hülâsâ herkes bir yere mensub. Yâhû, şu diyarda kendine güvenen kim var ki?” “Muhâvere: Kendine Güvenen Kim” *Balkan* No: 941, Kânûn-u evvel 29, 1325, 4. In some cases *Balkan* seems even to have spotted individuals who were categorized as partisans in particular provinces and set out to warn and implicitly threaten them. For instance, a certain ‘partizan’ in Pazardzhik (Tatar Pazarcık) who was denounced for having engaged in immoral acts during the era of Abdulhamid II (named as the era of despotism) was openly accused of provoking the Bulgarian partisans against the town's benevolent youth: “O Bulgar partizanlarının arkasında vicdânı, nâmusu hıyânetle, istibdadla lekelenmiş ak sakallı ma‘ruf bir müslüman var ki istemediğimiz halde bizi teşhîre kendisini mecbur etmesin.” “İhtar,” *Balkan* No: 1118, Temmuz 27, 1326, 4.

was impossible for those three Muslims to agree upon anything, because each of them was servants of different [Bulgarian] *partizans*...”<sup>85</sup>

Reşid proceeded to recount in two further letters that certain malicious individuals tried to prevent the foundation of the Varna society which above all intended to contribute to the education of qualified individuals for the nation which was on the verge of destruction. Repeating his call for the acute need for unison and hard work in the name of the nation, the author concluded his letter with a curious little stanza counterpoising the deeply despised Muslim partisans to the notion of a benevolent nation:

“...I conclude my article with the following couplet which addresses the Muslim hypocrites who try to divide the community by creating thousands of intrigues: even if you engage in partisanship for months and days; even if you broadcast the seeds of discord among the nation; this nation no longer cares if you even sunk below seven levels of the earth...”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>“...Bulgaristan’da yaşayan akvâm-ı muhtelif Bulgaristan kânûn-u esâsîsinin kendilerine bahş ettiği serbestiyyet dâiresinde mevcûdiyyet-i milliyyelerini isbât eder, bir takım cem’iyyetler, kırâ’athâneler, klüpler te’sis ederek umûr-u milliyyelerine müteallik bir mes’ele zuhûr ettiğinde veyâhut hukûk-u milliyyelerine tecâvüz edildi mi bütün milletdaşlarını oraya celb ile gasb ve tarâc edilen haklarını istirdâda çalışırlar...Halbuki biz Bulgaristan müslümanları hukûk-u milliyyemiz ayaklar altına alınır, umûr-u milliyyemize müdahale olunur, bilâ sebep bir nice dindaşlarımızın hakkı kaybolur...bizim umûrumuz bile olmaz. Olsa bile üç İslâmın biraraya gelmesi muhal kâbilinden idi. Çünkü üç müslümanın üçü de muhtelif partizanların bendegânı olduklarından birbirleriyle uyuşmak hâric-i imkan idi...” Mustafa Reşid, “İstikbâlimiz Düşünüyor mu? Cem’iyyet-i Hayriyyemizin içtima’-i senevîsi: Varna’dan yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 941, Kânûn-u evvel 29, 1325, 3.

<sup>86</sup>“Bidâyet-i teşkilde bir gurûh-u sâfilîn seb-u şitem ettiler. Lâkin bu müslümanlar [onu] canları gibi muhafaza ettiler... İşte milletimiz cehâletle geçen mâzîmizin ma’ârifle semizleneceğini mülâhaza ederek evvel emirde bu millete adam yetiştirme fikrinde bulundular. Her kasabada, her köyde böyle birer cem’iyyet teşkiline karar verilmiş olsa idi inkırâza doğru yuvarlanan Bulgaristan müslümanları az zaman zarfında büyük terakki izhâr edecekleri gibi, cüz’î çalışmakla izâle edilebilecek bu cehâlet gittikçe kesb-i tevsî etmeye meyyâl kalmazdı. Şâyed bu zararlar şimdi de def’edilmezse bir kaç sene sonra daha müdhîş netîceler tevli’ edeceği şüpheden âzâdedir. Cansiperâne bir cemîle ile millet ittihadı çalışan gençlerimize çalışmayı tavsiye eylediğim gibi ahaliyi tefrikaya düşürmek için binlerce desîseler ihdâsına çalışan münafıklara da: “Aylarca günlerce partizanlıkta kaçsanız. Milletın arasına nifak tohumu saçsanız. Bu millet gayri bakmaz yedi kat yere batsanız” beytini söyleterek hitâm-ı makâl eylerim...” Mustafa Reşid, “İstikbâlimiz Düşünüyor mu?” *Balkan* No: 954, Kânûn-u sâni 14, 1325, 2. It is also quite noteworthy that references to the dichotomy between the Ottoman constitutional regime and “the previous era of despotism” was often invoked as part of the patriotic ethos of such societies. For instance Reşid recounts that in Varna Society’s annual meeting, a high school student delivered a little speech to thank the initiators for making



Figure 2: “Partisanship” dividing a couple<sup>87</sup>

(From the partisanship panoramas: The standing tall guy holds a *rakı* bottle in a completely drunken state. He runs towards the sitting wearing a big *turban*. His wife chases him. The tall guy covered by mud asks the sitting protector of the *shar'iah*: “My dignified father! My wife turned out to be a partisan of the National Party. She does not allow me to enter my home. Where should I go? The dignified father steeps in shame like speechless devils revealing their conscience...?)

the access to education possible for poor students which in the era of despotism was only a privilege of the rich: “Babalarım, düşünmüşsünüz ki devr-i istibdadda olduğu gibi okumak, ‘âlim olmak, efendi olmak yalnız zenginlere mahsus olmasın. Bizim gibi fukarâ çocuklar da fuyuzât-ı ma‘âriften hissedâr olsunlar...” Mustafa Reşid, “İstikbalimiz Düşünüyor mu?” *Balkan* No: 944, Kânûn-u sâni 1, 1325, 2.

<sup>87</sup> It is not clear whether the sitting figure is condemned as a conservative since he is likened to speechless devils. In one of the hadiths of Prophet Muhammed, those who knew the truth but did not tell were likened to speechless devils: “Partizanlık manzaralarından: Ayakta duran sivri herif elinde rakı şişesi zil zurna sarhoş. Bağdaş kurmuş yerde oturan koca sarıklıya koşuyor. Arkasından da karısı sopa ile kovalıyor. Sivri herif üstü başı çamur, yerde oturan hâris-i şeri‘ate: “Efendi Baba! Bak benim hâlime. Bizim karı da millet partizanıymış. Beni eve komayacak, nereye gideyim!” diyor. Efendi baba ise zamir-i vicdanı yüzüne vuran şeytan ihraslar misali hicabından yere geçiyor.” *Balkan* No: 931, Kânûn-u evvel 17, 1325, 4.



Figure3: Muslim villager providing a wooden cane [his loyalty] to a “partisan” in return of money for wine<sup>88</sup>

(Wooden canes of Partisanship: The partisan with a hat on the right side who raises his fist and leans on his cane asks the villager on the left side who cuts a wooden partisan cane: “Uncle! Is the cane that you are making durable? The uncle on the ground says: “It never breaks in return for half a liter of wine!)

<sup>88</sup>The partisan trying to trick the villager may depict both a Bulgarian and a Muslim though his attire points to the former alternative. It is also important to note that *amca* meaning “uncle” in Turkish may be popularly used in the Balkans to refer to the poor Muslim villagers and this term was also frequently used by *Balkan* in this sense: “Partizanlık Köşkülleri: Sağ taraftaki yumruğunu kaldırmış, sopasına dayanmış olan şapkalı partizan sol tarafta oturmuş partizan köşküsü kesen köylüye soruyor: “Amca o biçtiğin köşkü sağlamca mı?” Yerdeki amca: “Bir okka şaraba zor kırılır!” *Balkan* No: 897, Teşrin-i sâni 5, 1325, 4.





Figure 4: “Bulgarian Partizans” and Muslims<sup>89</sup>

(Throwing Uncles [Muslim villagers] a bone: -Look carefully at this picture.

-Why? What is there?

-Do you see how a Bulgarian partisan approaches the uncles while they are smoking. He tries to throw them a bone. In our Bulgaria, the story of partisanship is always like this. Some Bulgarian partisans first choose among Muslims certain dogs who are not able to appreciate anything beyond their self interests and then throw a bone to the uncles. Things being so, both schools and endowments sink in the swamp. Everything happens at once!)

<sup>89</sup> “Amcaların ağzına bir parmak bal: -Şu yukarıdaki resme iyi bak.

-Ne bakayım. Ne var onda ki?

-Görüyor musun? Amcaların nasıl çubuğu tütüp dururken öte yandan partizan bir çorbacı onlara yanaşiyor.

Elindeki bal çanağından birer parmak ağızlarına sıvamaya çalışıyor! İşte bizim Bulgaristan`da partizanlık zamânı hep böyle geçer. Bir takım partizan çorbacılar müslümanlar arasında menâfi`-i şahsiyyesinden başka bir şey idrak etmeyen çomarları evvela kendilerine partizan ayırdıktan sonra, amcaların da ağızlarına bir parmak bal çalarlar. Ondan sonra vakıflar da terakki eder, mektepler de bataktan batağa girer. Her şey olur biter ve`s-selâm!” *Balkan* No: 892, Teşrîn-i evvel 30, 1325, 4.

It may be noteworthy to briefly suggest that these divisions may also be present in the Muslim community of Romania as one letter was sent from a reader from Constanta protesting Muslim partisans` opposition in the Dobruca region to the mufti appointed by the Ottoman Empire: Gümülcineli M.K, “Köstence`den Mektub,” *Balkan* No: 1313, Mart 22, 1327, 3.

### 3.3.2. `Partizans` in Educational Commissions and Limits of Modern Education

Regarding education, bitter denunciations of individuals who were categorized as *partizans* appeared frequently and were directed primarily toward Muslim officials who were in charge of the communal educational commissions (*Ma'ârif Encümenleri* and *Ma'ârif-i İslâmiye Komisyonları*). These Muslim officials were accused of corroborating with Bulgarian Democratic Party and were therefore labeled as necessarily “corrupt” or “treacherous” by *Balkan* and its readers. For instance, on 3 January 1911, an anonymous reader from Targovishte (Eski Cuma) charged that the corruption of the director of the town’s Muslim school commission, Ahmet Kartoğlu, was so blatant that he appointed his thirteen year old son as one of the primary school teachers. The author even adds that Kartoğlu went so far as to steal the money which had been collected from the sale of fruits in the school’s garden for the benefit of childrens’ needs.<sup>90</sup> A report about a Muslim deputy from Omurtag (Osman Pazar) on 12 April 1911 likewise informs *Balkan*’s readers that this official supposedly went to great lengths to overturn the results of the Muslim educational commission elections since the elected members did not belong to the Democratic Party. In fact, the author of this letter charges that Kartoğlu’s efforts to please his “master, the Democrat minister” were awarded with the appointment of his son and son in law as teachers.<sup>91</sup>

Criticism of the deep infiltration of Muslim officials affiliated with Bulgarian parties into Muslim communal institutions in general and into the educational commissions in particular appears frequently in letters sent to *Balkan*. This cleavage was acknowledged and

<sup>90</sup>İmza mahfuz, “Sûret-i mektub,” *Balkan* No: 1237, Kânûn-u evvel 21, 1326, 3.

<sup>91</sup>*Balkan* No: 1312, Mart 30, 1327, 3.

harshly criticized, for example, by the Society of Union of Muslim Educational Commissions (*Ma'ârif-i İslâmiye Encümenler İttihadı Cem'iyyeti*) which was founded as an umbrella association for all Muslim educational commissions in Bulgaria and set out to improve Muslim education and extirpate the trend of partisanship from the members of these commissions. In late March 1911, the society mobilized to organize a congress in Pleven to discuss the needs of Muslim schools and to present collective demands to the newly formed Bulgarian government.<sup>92</sup> In the announcements of participation by the directors of this society addressing Bulgaria's Muslim commissions, the rhetoric on the vitality of education for national and religious assertion was repeated while a certain self-critic was also leveled to the community regarding the partisanship of commission leaders:

“We [the Muslim nation] should not forget that the continuation of our nation and political life depends on education. We remained ignorant due to the lack of schooling. We are neither able to claim our rights nor our humanity. Those who preside over the nation try to obtain the nation's fate not for doing any useful service but to gain fame by brandishing their partisanship. We [the educational commissioners] are only interested in giving orders and proving our strength in partisanship. The fact that we were led to our current situation due to the partisanship does not even cross our minds. It is now imperative that we work for the benefit of our nation. Others have progressed far beyond us. We should wake up and act. We should save the nation from ignorance and teach them about their religion and their nationhood. We [the

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<sup>92</sup>As a result of this congress, the representatives indeed went to Sofia and resorted to various ministries to request that the financial aid to Muslim schools by the municipalities should be made obligatory and the financial assistance for Muslim schools in the Ministry of Education's budget should be increased. It was reported that they were welcomed by the ministers who gave their word to realize these demands: *Balkan* No: 1334, Nisan 17, 1327, 4.



educational commissioners] should prove our existence so that the [Muslim nation] would recognize their rights and defend them...”<sup>93</sup>

Other educational associations throughout Bulgaria such as the Bulgarian Muslim Teachers’ Union (*Bulgaristan Mu‘allimîn-i İslâm Cem‘iyyeti*) also ardently criticized partisanship as an obstacle to Muslims’ educational improvement. Announcements of the union’s congresses mentioned that partisanship should not intimidate the teacher’s resolution to mobilize their community, who were after all was left alone to fend on its own since the Bulgarian government only served the Bulgarians. It also added that this task above all rested upon the teachers since most of the *muftis* who should have acted as the nation’s primary leaders subordinated themselves to the Bulgarian authorities a long time ago.<sup>94</sup> It is important to

<sup>93</sup>“...Milletin bekâsı mekteble, hayât-ı siyâsiyyesi yine mekteble kâim olduğunu unutmayalım. Biz mektebsizlik yüzünden câhil kaldık. Ne hakkımıza hak, ne de kendimize insan diyebiliyoruz. Milletin işini deruhde edenler iş görmek için değil şöhret kazanmak ve partizanlığını göstermiş olmak için mukadderât-ı milleti eline almaya çalışıyor. Biz istiyoruz ki yalnız emir edelim, partizanlıktaki kuvvetimizi gösterelim. Düşünmüyoruz ki bizi bu hâle koyan partizanlıktır. Milletin fâ‘idesi nâmına ortaya atılmalı, cân-ı yürekten ise sarılmalıdır. Başkaları ilerledi bizi fersah fersah geride bıraktı. Uyanalım. Kalkışalım. Milleti cehâletten kurtaralım. Onlara din ve millet öğretilim. Mevcûdiyyetimizi isbât edelim ki onlar da haklarını bilip müdâfaa etsin...” Halil Zeki, “Bulgaristan Ma‘ârif-i İslâmiye Encümenleri Kongresi İçin,” *Balkan* No: 1306, Mart 13, 1327, 3. Consecutive announcements for the congress also employed the emotive patriotic discourse and self-critique: “...Cem‘iyyetimizin maksadı ahali-i İslâmiyyeyi uyandırmak için mektebelerimizi ıslah etmektir... Bu bizim için hem dînen hem de milletin bir borcudur. Bu milletin çocuklarına din ve diyânet ve hak-ı milliyeti öğretmek için encümenliği kabul etmişiz. Muhterem encümen ‘âzâları bilmelidirler ki milletin gözünün açılması veya cehâlet içinde çürüyüp kalması hep ma‘ârif encümenlerinin elindedir. Onlar bunları yapmaz partizanlığa kapılırsa millet de kurban olur gider...” Merkez-i İttihâdiyye ve Vidin Ma‘ârif-i İslâmiyye Reisi Ali Hâfız Bey, *Balkan* No: 1312, Mart 20, 1327, 3. “...İntihâbât zamânında hepimiz kazanmak, vakıf veyâhut ma‘ârif ‘âzâsı olmak, milletin mukadderâtını elimize almak için tehâluk gösteririz... İntihabdan evvel hepimiz hamiyetten, millete olan muhabbetimizden, milletin terakkîsi için yüreğimiz kan ağladığından bahs ederiz... Fakat arzumuz yerine geldi mi va‘adler, o hamiyetler o fedâkârlıklar görünmez olur, kuru laftan ibâret kalır. Bundan esbâb şöhret ve partizanlıktır...” Ali Hâfız Bey, *Balkan* No: 1323, Nisan 3, 1327, 2-3.

<sup>94</sup>“...Biz millet-i mahkûmeden başka bir şey olmadığımızı unutmayalım. Bulgar vatandaşlarımızın te‘mîn-i terakkîsi ile muvazzaf bir hükûmet var. Bizi ise düşünecek bizden başka kimse yoktur. Biz o sûretle çalışalım, mevcûdiyyet ve faaliyetimizi o sûretle isbat edelim ki görmek istemeyenler bile i‘tirâfa mecbur kalsın. Bu bâbda en büyük vazîfe müftülerimizle müftü vekillerimize tertib ediyorsa da... ekserîsi de sakalı mâ‘iyetindeki Bulgar kâtibinin eline vermiştir. Biz mu‘allimler paçaları sıvayalım, milletin önüne düşelim. Önümüzde tesâdüf edeceğimiz ba‘zı partizan mânilerine önem bile vermeyelim...” Halil Zeki, “Hep Beraber Çalışalım,” *Balkan* No: 1364, Mayıs 26, 1327, 3.

note how this author defines the secular teachers as the primary leaders of the community which resembles CUP's stance towards positivistic education. It is also significant how in this letter many Muslims *muftis* in Bulgaria were accused of being accomplices of the Bulgarian government. This tone very much resembles Ruhi's own positions towards modern education as the only tool to empower the Muslim society and his charges against the head *mufti* as a conspirator of the Bulgarian state. Yet, it is quite noteworthy to remember that in *Balkan's* discourse, positivistic modern education was in no way counterpoised to Islam. On the contrary, it was portrayed as the primary tool for the improvement and political empowerment of the Bulgaria's Muslims as a coherent community. Similarly, *Balkan* condemned the *muftis* of Bulgaria not for their Islamic conviction *per se* but for their cooperation with Bulgarian authorities and their unwillingness to grant their loyalties to the CUP regime. The struggle over the loyalties of *muftis* in Bulgaria was to be continued during the Turkish Republic as the head *mufti* and other *muftis* were challenged by the Kemalist regime for their cooperation with the Bulgarian state and their lack of support for the Kemalist reforms.<sup>95</sup> The Bulgarian state's efforts to create a state sponsored *'ulemâ*, in this respect, is highly reminiscent of Russian Empire's project, under Catherine the Great, to bound its Muslim flock to its regime via religious officials.<sup>96</sup>

As powerful as the determination of both the Muslim Teachers' Union and the Society of Union of Muslim Educational Commissions to fight partisanship may sound, it seems that political splits were quite deeply ingrained within the Muslim educational commissions. In

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<sup>95</sup>Köksal, "Transnational Networks," 206.

<sup>96</sup>Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

response to the announcements of these two educational associations` congresses mentioned above, a restless reader from Omurtag wrote to *Balkan* that these associations, although uttering bold assertions, would not do anything about the assignment of partisan teachers or the haphazard dismissal of the teachers (affiliated with opposition parties) by the partisan leaders of the educational commissions:

“Say a gentleman is appointed as a teacher to a certain location. He is instantly given a notice by the educational commission that he should only interact with the members of the political party to which commission officials belong. He is warned that he should avoid any contact with the opposition party. It is because that teacher is appointed on the basis of partisanship. If he is seen or heard affiliating with the opponent party, plans for his dismissal are instantly brought forth...”<sup>97</sup>

In addition to protests against partisanship apparent in *Balkan*`s readers` letters, another major division within the Muslim community in terms of education seems to have been between modernists and conservatives. The previously discussed stress on community organization through education and related fund-raising campaigns were most notably also geared at popularizing secular and modern education, or *usûl-u cedîd*, which laid emphasis on science related courses in school curricula. Although detailed information is not available on this point, some readers` letters in *Balkan* hint at the existence of conservative elements in Bulgaria who opposed such initiatives and were often referred as the “fake Islamic believers

<sup>97</sup>“...Bir efendi bir mahale mu`allim ta`yin edilir, edildiği gibi o mu`allimin encümenine muhalif olan fırka ile görüşmemesi encümenlik tarafından ihtâr olunur. Çünkü getirilen mu`allim partizanlık üzere getirilmiştir. Şayet mu`allimin fırka-ı muhâlîfe ile ülfet ve ünsiyet peydâ ettiği görülür iştilirse hemen azli çârelerine tevessül edilir...” Müftü-zâde İbrahim Hakkı, “Mekteblerimizin Islahı Neye Ma`ruf: Osmanpazar`dan Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 1394, Temmuz 3, 1327, 3.

who were seditionists” (*İslam kisveli münâfikîn*) whose real intention was to divide and destroy the community. For example, a letter from 7 January 1910 reported that in Razgrad, certain mischief makers and despots tried to prevent the collection of the skins of the slaughtered animals for the benefit of the town’s educational commissions, stirring a slander that the collected amount was going to be spent on alcohol.<sup>98</sup> Another letter sent by an individual with the penname *Hakikat* (The Truth) from Dobrich warned the Muslim community about the intrigues of hypocrites garbed with Islamic guises who were nothing but contemporary semblances of the *İttihâd-ı Muhammedî* (The Mohammedan Union) Party<sup>99</sup> and attempted to divert the Muslims from the benefits of a modern education, and hence, destroy their only means of survival in these new times in the Balkans. The *İttihâd-ı Muhammedî* Party was the reactionary Islamic organization led by Derviş Vahdeti, which was popularly perceived as the initiator of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1909 incident against the constitutional revolution. Thus, the

<sup>98</sup>The word, *müstebid*, meaning despots used in this letter to refer to the actors in question is popularly used in jargon of the second constitutional regime for the affiliates of sultan, Abdulhamid II’s regime. Thus, it is also probable that the mentioned individuals were opponents of CUP regime and sympathizers of the sultan:

“...Zihinleri Galata rıhtımından kalın ba‘zı müfsid ve müstebidler kahvelerde şurada burada tesâdüf ettikleri eşhâsa mezkur derilerin mekteb nâmına verilmemeleri için ifsâdâtta bulunup mel‘anete çalışmışlardır. Şâyet deriler mekteb menfa‘atine toplanacak olunursa paralarını müskirâta sarf edecekleri gibi desâis ile safdil ahalimizi izlâle çalışmışlarsa da hamiyetmendân ahalimiz menhus müstebidlerin sözünü sîm-i ‘itibâra almayıp evlâd-ı milletin terakki ve te‘âlisini nazar-ı dikkate aldılar...” Mehmed Hacı Hasan, “Hazergrad’dan Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 938, Kânûn-u evvel 25, 1325, 4.

<sup>99</sup>“...Ey saf kalbli İslamlar. Sizi iğfal ve zehirlemek için bin türlü desîseler, entrikalar icad eden başı fesli, ba‘zen sarıklı olan birçok İslam kisveli münâfikînden kaçın. İttihad ve ittifak edip mektebler, dârü’l-mu‘allimînler küşâdına var kuvvetimizle çalışalım. İstikbalimiz, saâdetimiz hep bu gibi teşebbüsât-ı ma‘ârifperverâneye münhasır kaldığını dûş-u tefekkürümüzden dûr tutmayalım. İslam kisvesine bürünerek biz bedbaht müslümanları târumâr etmek isteyen zamâne İttihad-ı Muhammedîlerinden de bir eser-i felâket gibi sakınelim...” Hakikat, “Dobric’den Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 1237, Kânûn-u evvel 21, 1326, 3.

In one instance the notables of the Northern Bulgaria was labeled by *Balkan* as remains of the old era of despotism who after traiting their own nation planned to go to the Ottoman Empire and create a conservative reactionary tumult: “Mensub oldukları milletin efradından Cenubî Bulgaristan müslümanlarının mahv ve berbâdına yegâne sebep olduktan sonra ...Onlar devr-i istibdad döküntüleridir. Hissiyâtı mâye-yi Hamîdî ile bozulmuş bu gibi eşraf ... milletin pâ-yı istihkârı altında ezilmek için yer edilmiş gayet değersiz bir nesneden başka bir şey değildir...” “Muhâvere,” *Balkan* No: 978, Şubat, 11, 1325, 4.

appellation about the conservatives' resemblance to the *İttihâd-i Muhammedî* Party followers may also indicate that apart from opposing to modern education, they may have been critical about the CUP power. Alternatively, such an appellation may have been a catchphrase used by the modernist readers to denote all conservative resistance to modern education.



Figure 5: “Conservatives”<sup>100</sup>

(-What is this picture again all about?

-What about it? Some bitter truths are accompanied by such ridiculous instances.

-What is ridiculous about it or what is striking in this?

-Listen to me and I will tell you. The one sitting with the poniard in his hands is a person among the ignorant populace. The guy standing beside him with a fake Islamic gear is a *mürteci*‘, meaning an enemy of liberty and justice. This vicious guy points to the robust Young Turk going on his way and says: “Go and kill this man, thus you will receive money for buying *raki*. Long Live the shariah!”)

<sup>100</sup>“-Yine bu resim ne?

-Ne olacak, ba‘zı acı hakikatler böyle gülünç manzaralara ma‘ruz olur.

-Canım bunda gülecek veya göze çaracak hakikat ne?

-Dinle söyleyeyim: Elinde kaması oturan câhil halk arasından bir ferddir. Bu zavallının başına dikilmiş, başına yalandan sarık geçirmiş bir mürteci‘ ya‘ni hürriyet, adâlet düşmanıdır. Bu kahpe herif öte yanda yoluna giden tostoparlak Genç Türk`ü gösteriyor. Git şu adamı öldür, sana da rakı parası çıkar. Yaşasın şeri‘at-ı muhammediyye diyor.” *Balkan* No: 885, Teşrin-i evvel 22, 1325, 4. While the figures in this caricature may depict the two native people of Bulgaria, it is also possible that both are Ottoman subjects or alternatively that the conservative figure has passed to Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire to propagate against the constitutional regime.

In terms of opposition to the modern education, cross-border actors from the Ottoman Empire also brought opposing conservative ideologies against the CUP regime to Bulgaria. Their presence reveals not only how easily conflicting ideologies moved back and forth between borders but also how susceptible the Bulgarian Muslim community was to these discursive confrontations. For instance, on 18 January 1910, Hüseyin Rahmi, the teacher of Okçular village in Stara Zagora, wrote a desperate letter against a certain (*'ulemâ*) Düzceli Hasan Efendi who during the religious holiday (when he was absent to spend the holiday in his home village) came from the Ottoman Empire to give sermons at the village mosque. According to Rahmi, the *hoca* poisoned and indoctrinated the village community by speaking about the religious inappropriateness of modern education and the dangers of “Ottoman liberty” which, he argued, tarnished any religious sensibility in the Ottoman Empire and made the Ottoman women roam on streets without their veils.

Continuing his protest, Rahmi mourned that this person and his kind were nothing but agitators under the guise of religious frocks, who, failing the exams which the constitutional regime made obligatory for religious students, escaped to Bulgaria in order not to be recruited into the army (as was required for such failing students). The author added that, this bogus *hoca* was incapable of appreciating the CUP’s platform of “liberty” and “justice”. Thus, according to him, this mischief maker did not understand how these notions not only benefitted the Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire but also contributed to the salvation of other Muslims suffering under foreigners’ yoke and provided endless benefits and pride to the Muslims in foreign countries. Hüseyin Rahmi also adds that this rascal’s preaching threatened to destroy over four years of the author’s efforts to popularize modern education in the village. According to his

testimony, the village community who previously cooperated with him now demanded that the secular classes such as geography and Turkish that he added be removed from the curricula.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Okçular karyesinde mu‘allim Hüseyin Rahmi, “Bulgaristan’da zuhûr-u irticâ’,” *Balkan* No: 946, Kânûn-u sânî, 5, 1325, 2-3.





Figure 6: “The *mürteci*’s: Şeyh Nesîmî and Keşşâf”<sup>102</sup>

(-Oh dear! What is this Karagöz play all about?

-This is not a Karagöz play but a placard of *reactionism*.

-What kind of placard of *reactionism*?

-The beggars, Nesîmî and Keşşâf who had fled Turkey and arrived at Plovdiv are worshipping the Messiah. Yet the Messiah does not accept their worship and says: “Get out of my presence. Those who had not become the flock of the one who is the beloved of the universe [Prophet Muhammed], cannot be my flock.” Thus their attires resemble the cursed devil.)

<sup>102</sup> This caricature although not directly related to the above example of the conservative *hoca* who propagated in Okçular village, nevertheless exemplifies *Balkan*’s discourse against the conservative opponents of the constitutional regime. The characters in this caricature are Şeyh Nesîmî and Keşşaf, two ‘*ulema*’ figures, who, according to *Balkan*’s claim, after instigating the 31<sup>st</sup> March incident in the Ottoman Empire escaped to Plovdiv and converted to Protestantism. In 1909, reports about their fake Islamic conservatism and harsh censures about their wicked and immoral nature abounded in *Balkan*. The letter sent by the Okçular village teacher thus employs the same discourse vilifying the fake *hoca* as a fraud, and an enemy of the nation. This particular caricature reads as follows: “-Yâhû bu Karagöz perdesi nedir?

-Bu perde Karagöz perdesi değil, bir levha-i irticâ’dır.

-Nasıl levha-i irticâ’?

-Türkiye’den kaçıp da Filibe’ye gelen keşkûlbedest Şeyh Nesîmî ile Keşşaf, Hazret-i Mesîhîden isti’man ediyorlar. Fakat Mesih de kabul etmiyor. “Huzûrundan çekilin, fahr-i kâinâta [Prophet Muhammed] yâr olmayan bana da yâr olmaz” diyor! O yüzden heriflerde kıyâfet iblis ‘aleyî l-la’neye alâmet.” *Balkan* No: 880, Teşrin-i evvel 16, 1325, 4.

### 3.3.3. `Endowment Brokers` as `Partisans`

The deep cleavages within the Muslim community in Bulgaria in terms of affiliation with Bulgarian parties and affinity towards modernity and CUP ideology as a whole were likewise reflected age-old struggle over Muslim religious endowments (*vakıf* singular; *evkâf* plural) that now included Bulgarians in this equation. Individuals who presided over endowment commissions (*evkâf komisyonları*) were the topic of much censure in *Balkan*'s columns. Usually labeling them with ubiquitous label "partisan" since these men corroborated with the Bulgarian political parties to pursue their own needs over their nation's, the editors and correspondents of *Balkan* referred to these men as "endowment brokers" or "endowment magpies" (*vakıf tellalları and vakıf saksağanları*) since they allowed themselves to be bribed to sell the endowment properties such as mosques and madrasas (Muslim colleges) to fellow Bulgarian partisans. Apart from partisanship these people were identified as "fake conservatives" who even used their guise of Islamic learnedness and opposition to the constitutional regime to engage without censure in immoral self-indulgence such as the consumption of alcohol.<sup>103</sup> Readers' letters from different Bulgarian provinces furthermore

<sup>103</sup>For instance such individuals in Plovdiv's endowment commission were charged with trying to prevent the performance of a national theater piece, *Besa*, staged to raise funds for the Plovdiv's Relief Society for the Poor (*Filibe Fukarâperver Cem'ıyyeti*). It was argued that although the poor resorted to the endowments for assistance, these institutions only provided funds for the beer consumption of the partisans in endowments and hence made the nation to beg other nations for their predicament: "... [Fukarâ-yı islam] millet-i âhire avuç açıyor. Vakıf dâiresine isti'man ediyorsa da partizanlara bira, rakı, parası bile te'min eden bu gibi müessesât-ı hayriyyeden fakirlerimiz için hiç de hayır ve hasenât olmuyor... Bu kışta kıyamette fukarâ-yı islâma odun, kömür tevzi' edilmek üzere cem'ıyyet menfa'atine bundan iki hafta evvel Osmanlı Benliyan kumpanyasına Besa nam piyes oynatılmış idi. Gazetemizi ve muharririmizi mahva çalışan millet hâinleri birkaç vakıf saksağanı bu emel-i hayra da mâni' olmaya çalışmışlarsa da milletin galeyân-ı hamıyyeti bu def'a da mel'unları sükûta mecbur etmiş..." *Balkan* No: 973, Şubat 5, 1325, 4.

raise similar cries against so-called endowment brokers, thus revealing the same pattern of conflict in the Muslim community throughout Bulgaria.

The *Balkan* report of Plovdiv's endowment commission elections held in early 1910, for example, indicates how diverse ideological cleavages played out with regard to the state of religious endowments. According to Ethem Ruhi, in these elections the former endowment cashier Haşim, who in the past had been bribed and sold many endowment properties (mosques and *medreses*) to Bulgarians, hired porters with wooden sticks from the nearby Roma community to intimidate Muslim electors in order to receive the majority of votes as the endowment director. Upon the orders they received from Haşim, these porters allegedly uttered slogans such as "down with the Ottoman liberty" and participated in the election on his behalf although they legally lacked voting rights. Moreover, the Bulgarian partisans closely monitored the elections and even personally disseminated the election ballots to the electors while trying to convince them to vote for Haşim.<sup>104</sup> Ruhi also argued that in this grand conspiracy Haşim, who won the elections by fraudulence, was not only backed up by Bulgarian partisans but also by the *mufti* of Plovdiv, Süleyman Faik Efendi and the preacher of Plovdiv's great mosque, Hafız Sami Efendi who due to their loyalty to the Democratic Party partisans received several promotions and benefits. As a result, the frustrated Muslim community of Plovdiv was reported to have protested the election results by convening a rally in the Plovdiv's great mosque.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Ethem Ruhi, "Cemâ'at-i İslâmiyye İntihabları ve Tahrîb-i Hukûk-u İslam," *Balkan* No: 925, Kânûn-u evvel 8, 1325, 2-3. Ethem Ruhi, "Müslümanların İntihâbı," *Balkan* No: 927, Kânûn-u evvel 10, 1325, 2-3.

<sup>105</sup> "Filibe Havâdisi: Teveccüh-ü Vecîbe," *Balkan* No: 926, Kânûn-u evvel 9, 1325, 3.

"Filibe'de Bayram Tebriği ve Müftü Efendi'yi Boykotaj," *Balkan* No: 929, Kânûn-u evvel 15, 1325, 4. The *mufti* of Plovdiv, Süleyman Faik was subsequently to be accused of complaining about Ethem Ruhi to the Bulgarian prosecution office as a result of which the persecution about his publishing activity and trials about his articles



Figure 7: The endowment cashier Haşim and the porters hired by him to protest against the constitutional regime<sup>106</sup>

(The bargain about 'Down with Liberty': This picture depicts the porters of Yeniköy around their master. They say: "Oh master! What happened to the 150 levs you had promised to us? One can not shout 'down with liberty' the whole day for one lev!")

were initiated. Haşim, at the same time sued Ruhi for libel: *Balkan* No: 939, Kânûn-u evvel 26, 1325. *Balkan* No: 987, Şubat 21, 1325, 3. *Balkan* No: 939, Kânûn-u evvel 26, 1325.

<sup>106</sup>“Dolu Hürriyet Pazarlığı: Cemâ’at-i İslâmiyye intihâbı günü ‘Dolu Hürriyet’ bağırان Yeniköy hammalları, efendileri etrafında (Hani Efendi sen bize yüz elli lef verecektin? Bir lefe de onca gün ‘Dolu Hürriyet’ bağırılır mı?) diye takaza ederken çekilen resimdir.” *Balkan* No: 933, Kânûn-u evvel 19, 1325, 4.



Figure 8: “The partisan endowment commission members” who were reelected through Bulgarian support<sup>107</sup>

(Long Live the endowments: Oh reader! Do you see what this picture depicts? It is a picture worth of consideration. It is a mark of endowment elections in which the nation of Islam was affronted and winners were elected through the sword of Bulgarian partisans. It shows the sad state of Muslims who had sold their faith and honor, and who, completely and cheerfully drunken, roam on streets in a cab and insult the believers. Ignorance makes a man do all kinds of things. How can these guys think that this joy will change tomorrow with the passing of this inebriation? They already obtained the money for buying *raki*, didn't they. Well then, long live the endowments!)

<sup>107</sup> This caricature has a certain threatening tone as the cheating commission members were warned that things will change once they wake up from their drunkenness: “Da jiveya Vakıflar: Kârî! Görüyor musun bu ne resimdir? Bu resim cidden şâyân-ı mutâla‘a bir manzaradır. Vakıf cemâ‘ati intihâbından sonra Bulgar partizanlarının kılıcıyla millet-i İslâmı tahkîr ettirerek kazanılan intihâbın neş‘esiyle bulut gibi sarhoş sokak sokak paytonla dolaşan ve ehl-i islâma seb-ü şetmeden dînini, ‘ırzını satmış müslümanların hâl-i pür melâidir. Cehâlet insana neler yaptırır. Herifler bu neş‘enin bir ferdâ-yı humârı olduğunu nereden düşünecek. Raki parası çıkıyor ya. Da jiveya Vakıflar!” *Balkan* No: 929, Kânûn-u evvel 15, 1325, 4.





Figure 9: Endowment commissioner Haşim, accused of selling out endowment properties, tries to obstruct the protesters who had gathered in the Plovdiv's Great Mosque<sup>108</sup>

(Oh dear! These people of Plovdiv have no conscience whatsoever! The guy had put the endowments on the auction and sold them with bargains one by one. The prices are written on the paper. Is there a point at this evening time to come up with a rally in the Great Mosque and question the sales, right when he enjoys himself at the tavern? How can the poor endowment broker not get mad and strom into the mosque in a drunken state? How can he not get mad to the demonstrating folk and exclaim that they are instigating a revolution against the government? But one can not always get what he wants. It all depends on your luck. One can not play around with the nation like this. Poor endowment broker! He loaded a cabfull of woods onto his back and rushed to the exterior stairs of the mosque [probably means that he intended to beat up the people]. We should also not get offended by this. People who intend to dominate over a nation's honour and become a rival to the Abdulhamid are always like this. What should we say? We will see!)

<sup>108</sup> Haşim appears to have tried to prevent the rally by stating that this meeting constituted an open revolt to the government: "Yâhû şu Filibe ahâlisinde de hiç insaf yok ve's-selâm. Herif tam vakıfları mezata çıkarmış, haraç, mezat, birli, ikili, beş aşağı, üç yukarı. Fiyatlar kağıtta. Pazarlıklar ? Akşam olmuş. Meyhaneye yanlayıp tam keyfini çatar dururken bir mitingdir koparıp câmi-i kebîre toplanmanın, vakıf satışlarından hesap sormanın ma'nâsı var mıydı? Zavallı vakıf tellalının nasıl Anzarofu [?] beynine vurup sarhoş sarhoş Filibe câmi-i kebîrine dalmasın? Miting yapan ahaliye hiddet edip "Siz burada hükûmete karşı ihtilal yapıyorsunuz" diye nasıl feryâd etmesin. Ama zurnada peşref olmaz. Ne çıkarsa bahtına. Milletle oyun olur mu? Zavallı vakıf tellalı. Bir araba odun düş-u tahmile yüklenmiş de cami kapısının dış merdivenleri alt başında soluğu zor almış. Buna da gücenmemeli. Bir milletin 'izzet-i nefesine tahakküm etmek isteyenler Abdulhamid'e misal olmak isteyenler dâima böyledir. Ne diyelim? Şimdilik haydi hayırlısı." *Balkan No: 900, Teşrin-i sâni 2, 1325, 4.*

This event triggered readers to send in letters of protest not only from Plovdiv<sup>109</sup> but from other provinces as well, cursing the “traitors of the nation disguised in Islamic garb” and the “enemies of Ottoman liberty”. “Ottoman liberty” was argued to have brought a certain amount of comfort to the Bulgarian Muslims surrounded by a hostile environment and thus the opposition of Haşim and his accomplices was evaluated as an attempt that also undermined the interests and liberty of Muslims in Bulgaria.<sup>110</sup> Apart from condemning this particular instance, the letters from the provinces also reported similar corruptions and partisanship activities as the main nuisance in their respective provincial endowment commissions.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup>For instance the residents of Plovdiv submitted to *Balkan* an open letter with forty signatures addressing the müfti of Plovdiv in which they both condemned his conduct and protested the election of a certain Lütfü (whom they argued had been a spy of the Edirne governor in the era of Abdü'l-Hamid's despotism) to the endowment commission via the leverage of Bulgarian partisans and his appointment as the *imâm* of the Karşıyaka mosque: “...Bir partizanı, bir sefilî, bir millet menfurunu yine câmimize imam nasb ederseniz bu milletin idbârına sebep olacak, mes'ûliyyet yine zât-ı 'âlinize râcî olacaktır...” *Balkan* No: 955, Kânûn-i sani 15, 1325, 3.

<sup>110</sup>See for instance three letters from Sumen and Dobrich respectively: “...Binâ'en'aleyh nifâk-ı islâma sebep olan vakıf tellalarını, o hürriyyet düşmanlarını la'netle yâd...” Elhac Mustafa Zihni, *Balkan* No: 937, Kânûn-u evvel, 24 1325, 3-4.

“...Ey, bir takım kisve-i 'ulemâya bürünüp de kendi menfa'at-i şahsiyyeleri uğrunda milleti tesmîm eylemekten ictinâb etmeyen münâfıklar. Ey, milletin canını etini kemirmekle teayus eden vakıfhorlar...” Bekir Sıdkı, “Şumnu'dan yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 938, Kânûn-u evvel 25, 3.

“...Hiss-i milletten mahrum, hamîyyet-i beşerîyye-i islâmiyyeden kat'îyyen tard ve ihrâca mahkum şu herifler kesinlikle bilmezler mi ki bugün ümmet-i muhammed ancak inâyet-i hakla malik oldukları hürriyyet sâyesinde mevcûdiyyetini idrâk etmiştir ve yine bilmezler mi ki Bulgaristan'da mütemekkin bulunan müslümanlar nûr-u hürriyyetle bir parça rahat olmuşlardır...” M. A, “Bulgaristan Evkâf-ı İslâmiyyesi Münâsebetiyle: Dobric'den Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 929, Kânûn-u evvel 15, 1325, 3.

<sup>111</sup>For instance, a certain Fahri from Dobrich, reported that, as a rule, Dobrich's endowments were ruined by partisanship. But Fahri also added that not only partisanship, but also, ethnic cleavages prevented the efficient administration of these institutions: “...Vakıf intihabları yapılır, 'umûr-u vakfiyyenin muktedir ellere tevdi' edilmesi hakkında nutuklar söylenir. Fakat o nâtıkaperdezân bil'âhare tarafgirlik gözetir... derhal kendini partizanlığın cereyân-ı müdhişine kaptırır... Acaba biz ne zaman muhâkememize hüsn-ü isti'mal ederek, bir canavarın pençe-i hırsına düşmüş bir av gibi o meş'um-u müstekreh partizanlığın feyz ve necat bulmayan saha-i felâketinden tahlîs-i keriban edeceğiz?...” Fahri notes the complication induced by ethnic clashes into endowment administration but does not elaborate much on the matter: “...Dobric'de bu yolsuzluklara, bu idâresizliklere, acınacak, ağlanacak olan şu hallerin zuhûruna meydan veren sebep-i yegâne teşkil eden kavmiyyet mes'elesidir...” Fahri, “Fi'il ile söz beyninde tezat,” *Balkan* No: 934, Kânûn-u evvel 20, 1325, 3. Interestingly, the only other readers' letter mentioning inter-ethnic clashes within the Muslim community (between Turks and Tatars in this case) also came from Dobrich: Kırımî Abdülmennân, “Yolsuz Hareketlerden: Dobric'den Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 1336, Nisan 21, 1327, 3.

Reports that announced the corrupt activities of endowment commissions' officials and criticism on the leverage they obtained either due to their Democratic Party membership or collaboration with Bulgarian politicians continued to occupy the pages of *Balkan* in subsequent months. In such letters, individuals against whom the charges were made were mentioned by full-names and directly accused of their obtaining funds or benefits either by stealing, embezzling and selling out the endowment property or by illegally appropriating the endowment properties' rents.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>See, for instance, a reader's attack from Stara Zagora to the endowment commission member, Sarraç Ethem, and the charge that he pinched the endowment properties' rents along with his Bulgarian accomplices: "Eski Zağra'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 979, Şubat 12, 1325, 3. Another letter from Vidin concerned the endowment cashier, who stole antique carpets from the town's mosque yet got away without receiving any sentence due to his Democratic Party affiliation: İmza Mahfuz, "Vidin'den Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 1309, Mart 17, 1327. Another correspondence in an open letter form disclosed the alleged embezzlement of the endowment property by the endowment cashier but does not mention any link in terms of the accused party's partisanship: Tahir Efendi-zâde Lütü, "Evkaf Komisyonu Sandık Emîni Mülâzim Halil Efendi-zâde Rıza Efendi'ye" *Balkan* No: 1377, Haziran 11, 1327, 2-3.





Figure 10: “The endowment brokers” and Ethem Ruhi challenging them<sup>113</sup>

(What an obstacle: Poor endowment broker. How can he not get mad at Ethem Ruhi’s sudden and cunning appearance besides the table right at the moment when he counts his money obtained from an illegal and arbitrary bargain and embezzles the mosques and the madrasas. Poor endowment broker! He complains to everyone and says that: “Oh my dears! I will not oversee these endowments after the confirmation of their sales. Let them be conceded to any volunteer for this job!” Yet no one listens to him except the deaf and the crippled. He is right. Whatever happened had already happened. Why obstruct him right at the moment he bargains about his share from the sales and prepares run away to Turkey with his load, as he had done fifteen years ago. Curse this Ethem Ruhi. What a wicked guy he is! Why does he care about our endowments? Why do these guys from Turkey meddle with our business? This, author of *Balkan* is a great obstacle after all!)

<sup>113</sup> This caricature portrays one of the so called endowment brokers and the challenge posed to him by Ethem Ruhi. The attacked figure may be Haşim. Although there are references in the paragraph attached to the caricature that the endowment broker plans to run away to Turkey along with the money obtained from the sale of endowments, no such reference about Haşim was found in the studied material. It is important to note Ruhi’s self assigned role as the defender of the nation: “Amma Engel Ha: Zavallı Vakıf Tellalı. Üçlü beşli, bütçesiz, kânunsuz, geliş güzel alışverişle tam paraları sayarken, câmi’leri ve medreseleri deve yaparken, şu Balkan muharririnin muzurluğuna, masa başına dikilmesine nasıl içerlemeyip bağırmasın. Zavallı vakıf tellalı! (Canım kuzum şu vakıf satışları tasdik olsun ondan sonra ben de bu vakıfları beklemeyeceğim, kim isterse ona teslim olsun) diye o kadar kişiye tezallumu hâl ediyor da bir sağır la bir de topaldan başka kimse hak bile vermiyor. Herifin hakkı var. Ne olmuşsa olmuş. Herifcağız tam satışların komisyonunu pazarlığa girişmiş, yükünü tutup bundan on beş sene evvel yaptığı gibi yine Türkiye’ye kaçmayı düşünürken ortalığın [?] engel olmasına ma’nâ var mı? Ah, hele şu Edhem Ruhi! Amma alçak herif! Onun ne üstüne elzem bizim vakıflarımız? Türkiyeliler ne karışıyor bizim işimize? Şu Balkan muharriri çok engel ve’s-selâm!” *Balkan* No: 913, Teşrin-i sâni 24, 1325, 4



Figure 11: “Endowment broker” [Probably Haşim] selling out mosques through the help of his accomplices from the Muslim community<sup>114</sup>

(Draw your donkey to Aleppo: As long as donkeys that are willing to wag their tails for half a liter of *rakı* and a hanful of bran exist among this nation, why would the endowment broker not pull their strings? The guy even loads the mosques on the back of a donkey and sells them out. And the nation still does not appreciate this service like blind people. Well then, draw your donkey to Aleppo!)

<sup>114</sup>This drawing probably illustrates Haşim and his associates who were accused of being bought off in return of money for alcohol: “Sür eşeği Haleb’e: Bir okka rakıya, bir avuç kepeğe kuyruğunu kaldıran eşekler bir millet arasında eksik olmadıkça vakıf tellalı onların yularından niçin çekmesin? Herif câmi’leri eşeğe yüklüyor da satıyor. Millet ise kör gibi bu hizmeti takdir edemiyor. Öyle ise sür eşeğini Haleb’e.” *Balkan* No: 922, Kânûn-u evvel 4, 1325, 4.



Figure 12: Muslim “endowment brokers”<sup>115</sup>

(Do you see this bandy-legged endowment broker who holds a poniard in his hand?

He is accompanied by a few vile and deaf donkey-foals. The chav holding a showbill announces: “We are selling these endowments for the sake of God. Oh, people, these endowments are on sale. You will see how nicely we will pinch them. He, standing in front of the door of one of the mosques that had been sold exclaims: “Do not move! I will strike anyone who approaches. We sold these endowments. The sold is sold. They say, the nation does not want this. Who does the nation think it is? This is Bulgaria. I will crack your heads!” The other endowment guys who stand on the side with a servile posture, listen to the endowment broker’s clatter and think: “Is this really so?)

<sup>115</sup> The drawing most probably depicts Haşim and his accomplices: “Görüyor musun şu paytak bacaklı, eli kamalı vakıf tellalını? Yanına almış birkaç sağır, sağır sıpa. Sağır elindeki ‘ilân kağıdıyla (Bu vakıfları Allah rızası için satıyoruz. Ey ahali bunları satılmada, bakınız size ne güzel deve yapacağız) diyor. Satılan câmi’lerin birinin kapısında elinde bıçak (Davranmayın ha! Kim gelirse yakarım, bu vakıfları madem ki biz sattık, satılmış satılmıştır. Ama millet istemiyormuş. Millet kim oluyor? Burası Bulgaryadır. Adamın kafasını kırarım ben!) diye bağırıyor. Yan taraftaki vakıfçılar da cebinâne bir vaz’iyetle vakıf tellalının pabuç gürültüsünü dinliyor. Acaba sâhi mi?` diyorlar.” *Balkan* No: 910, Teşrin-i sâni 20, 1325, 4.





Figure 13: “Endowment magpies”<sup>116</sup>

(Endowment magpies in negotiations: One of them says: “Look here! People say that we sell the endowments but we have no right to do this. Is this really true?”

The other one: “Hey, my comrade! We have all the right. Haven’t we? Who is the nation that meddles with our business?”

And, the one with the big *fez* and the big nose says: “I will show to that nation. Do not be afraid. Continue bargaining, oh comrades!”

Finally, the most shameless of them comments: “We are bargaining but I guess things will not turn out as we expect.”)

### 3.3.4. High-Ranking Muslim Officials as “Partizans” and “Partizan Traitors in Elections”

In terms of divisions within the Muslim community and the groups identified as collaborators of Bulgarian interests, certain letters directed their attacks against the high-ranking Muslim officials Tahir Lütfü, the Muslim deputy in Parliament, and Muhiddin Efendi,

<sup>116</sup>This caricature implies that although the ‘endowment brokers’ bargain to sell the mosques, they are afraid that their plans may be interrupted by the challenge posed by Ruhi: “Vakıf saksâğânları müzâkerede. Biri diyor ki: -Yâhû arkadaş. Bize ‘Vakıfları satıyorsunuz. Ne hakkınız var’ diyorlar. Acaba sâhi mi? Diğer: -Abe yoldaşım. Hakkımız var. Yok? Millet kim oluyor bize karışsın? Koca feslisi, koca burunlusu da diyor: -Ben o millete gösteririm. Siz korkmayın! Siz bakın pazarlığa be yoldaşım. En godoşları nihayet diyor: -Biz pazarlığa bakıyoruz ama evdeki pazar çarşıya uymayacak galiba! *Balkan* No:916, Teşrîn-i sâni 27, 1325, 4.

head *mufti* in Sofia. As discussed in the previous chapter, these two figures were censured by *Balkan* as main targets of criticism regarding their betrayal to the Muslim's national and communal interests. Employing the same pejorative discourse, a number of readers' letters followed this position and protested the so called intrigues of this duo in terms of tarnishing the nation's existence.

For instance on 13 January 1911, an author with the penname *Vicdanî* (i.e. conscience) from Vidin, penned an open letter to Tahir Lütü, protesting the latter's recent attempts to prevent the annual meeting of the *Ta'mîm-i Ma'ârif ve Te'âvün-ü İslâm Cem'iyyeti* in Sofia. The author accused Lütü, along with other Muslim deputies and their assistants of conspiring against the Bulgarian government in this meeting. *Vicdanî* concluded that Lütü's act of loyalty to the Bulgarian government was bound to be awarded by his Bulgarian masters an order of merit at the expense of benevolent Muslim youngsters (probably the members of the Assosiation).<sup>117</sup>

Tahir's so called accomplice, the head *mufti* Muhiddin Efendi, was not immune from the readers' assaults. On 27 April 1911, when the Democratic government lost its power in an election, an anonymous letter from Shumen reported that Muhiddin Efendi, now deprived of the support of his Bulgarian minister protectors, toured Bulgarian provinces to collect signatures from town notables and intended to send this list to the Ottoman *şeyhü'l-islâm* in order to

<sup>117</sup>“...Bu hususta gösterdiğiniz muvaffakiyyet üzerine sîne-i sadâkatinizin bir de [Bulgar] nişanıyla tezyîn edileceğine şübhe etmeyiniz. Tarîk-i kânûniyye dediğiniz efendileriniz biz müslüman gençlerinin ve zavallı Balkan'ın mahv olması için bir işaretinize bakıyor...” Vicdanî, Başka Ne Diyelim: Vidin'den Yazılıyor” *Balkan* No: 1244, Kânûn-u evvel 31, 1326, 3.

convince him to reconfirm his appointment.<sup>118</sup> The author charged that those who cooperated with the *mufti* (snidely referred to as nothing more than a statue in his post) in Shumen, for instance, were mere relatives or acquaintances of Muhiddin Efendi. But, the author warned that he nevertheless had the power to send his co-religionists to their graves, implying that though the high-ranking religious figure neglected his religious duties on behalf of the *ummah*, in pursuit of his own self-interests he could only help accelerate the demise of the Muslim community in Bulgaria.<sup>119</sup>

A last picture disclosing the intensely contested political space within the Muslim community fraught with political divisions can be gleaned from discussions about the parliamentary elections in June 1911. According to *Balkan*'s reports, during the election, numerous letters reporting on different seductions and intrigues of partisans from various provinces arrived to the newspaper's office. The charges were couched along the lines that Muslim partisans were only after their own self-interests and tried to trick the Muslim community to vote for themselves although they were not even able to speak Bulgarian

<sup>118</sup>The Ottoman *şeyhü'l-islâm*'s confirmation of the head *mufti* was a legal requirement according to the 1909 protocol between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Yet, although Muhiddin Efendi's election was not confirmed, he was kept in his position by the Democratic government. When this government dropped, Muhiddin Efendi may have been anxious that the new government would dismiss him without this confirmation.

<sup>119</sup> "... Lâkin gospodinlerinin sükûtuyla ne yapacağını bilemeyerek Bulgaristan sancaklarında olan avânelerine mürâca'ata kıyâm etti. Bu zât şehrimizde ba'zı eşrâfına mürâca'at ederek onun lehinde bir ictimâ edip birkaç imza derciyle mazbata yapıp şeyhü'l-islam efendi hazretlerine gönderilip bilâ te'hîr tasdik olunmasını tavsiye etmiş... O makâm-ı aliyye heykel değil, baş müftü olacak bir ehl-i iktidar lâzım yoksa bütün Bulgaristan müslümanlarını mezar-ı zillete koymayalım..." İmza Mahfûz: "Ne Roller Oynanıyor: Şumnu'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 1331, Nisan 14, 1327, 3. Tahir Lütfü's and Muhittin Efendi's collaboration in an alleged grand conspiracy which involved the Ottoman deputy Basri Bey to give a sermon in the Ottoman parliament in favor of the appointment of Muhiddin Efendi also constituted a strong magnet for harsh criticisms by the *Ta'mîm-i Ma'ârif ve Te'âvün-ü İslam Cem'iyeti*: "...Fakat akrabası, köylüsü Hoca-zâde Muhiddin Efendi Sofya'ya baş müftü olsun kırk elli lira alsın diye Bulgaristan müslümanlarının hukûkuyla oynamak cinayeti ise bizi harita-i mevcûdiyyetten büsbütün siler. La'net!" *Ta'mîm-i Ma'ârif ve Te'âvün-ü İslam Cem'iyeti* hey'et-i idâresi nâmına Ahmed Fâik, "Protesto," *Balkan* No: 1328, Nisan 9 1327, 3.

properly which was both a legal and moral requirement if they were to defend the rights of Muslims in the parliament properly.<sup>120</sup>

Mehmed Emin, a correspondant from Razgrad, similarly informed *Balkan*'s readers about the ploys of the so-called partisans in his district in one of his letters to the editor and called for his co-religionists to elect individuals who would serve their nation's interests and defend its rights.<sup>121</sup> In the same 31 May 1911 issue, another reader's letter from Razgrad promoted virtuous deputy candidates to *Balkan*'s audiences: the lawyer Hafız Sıtkı Efendi, Doctor Şefik Bey and Edip Efendi who during their elective campaign tour throughout the Deliorman region, also organized a big rally and gave speeches addressing over a thousand people.<sup>122</sup> Two months later, Hafız Sıtkı Efendi who was a close friend of Ethem Ruhi and also had served as his lawyer during his trials, consequently won the election as the Muslim deputy of Razgrad. In an announcement he published in *Balkan* on 7 July 1911, Hafız Sıtkı Efendi thanked his supporters who despite all intimidation as well as threats of death and imprisonment, did not stop backing him.<sup>123</sup> Although, it is not clear who was accused by Sıtkı

<sup>120</sup> "...Bulgaristanımızın Varna, Hazergrad, Dobric, Şumnu, Yenipazar, ve Osmanpazar, Rusçuk, Silistre, Tutrağan gibi islâmı ekseriyette kaza, livâ ve köylerinden aldığımız birçok mektuplarda bazı menfa'at düşünceli partizanların hukûk-u islâmiyye ve hakîkiyyemizin tahlîsi için islam kardeşlerimizi birçok hîlelerle iğfal etmek istedikleri bildiriliyor... Haber aldığımız göre bir çok yerde islam kardeşlerimizin sâfiyyetinden bi'l-istifâde ba'zı partizanlar ben şöyle, böyle yaparım buyuruyorlarmış. Bunların sözüne bakıp da lisan bilmeyen adamları intihâb edecek olur isek sonra kânûn böyledir diyerek intihâb olunan zevâtı kabul etmeyecekler. İşte biz de hukûkumuzu gasp ve mahv ettirmek istemezsek ...hukûkumuzu muhafaza edecek adamlar seçelim." M. M, "Hukûkumuzu gasp ettirmek istemezsek el birliği ile çalışmalıyız," *Balkan* No: 1339, Nisan 26, 1327, 3.

<sup>121</sup> "...Hazergrad kazasında mevcûdiyyetimizi isbat etmek için partizanlığı bertaraf edip elbirliği ile çalışalım. Şimdiye kadar partizanlık sebebinden perişân olduk... Milleti için çalışıp, usanmak bilmeyen ve hakkımızı müdâfa'a edecek olan muktedir zevâtı intihâb edelim. İşte din kardeşlerim. Bir takım kendi menfa'at-i şahsiyyesi uğruna çabalayan partizanların iğfâlâtına kapılmayıp müttehiden hareket edelim." Mehmed Emin, "Bir Sadâ: Hazergrad'dan Yazılıyor" *Balkan* No: 1366, Mayıs 28, 1327, 4.

<sup>122</sup> "İslâm Meb'usları: Hazergrad'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 1366, Mayıs 28, 1327, 4.

<sup>123</sup> "Hazergrad kasaba ve kazasında İslâm kardeş ve vatandaşlarıma Bulgaristan'ın Büyük Millet Meclisi'ne meb'us intihâbı münâsebetiyle çenelerini taşla vurmak, ve katl ile ihafa ve hapis ve tevkif ile tevhis etmek, hülâsâ hatır ve hayale gelmez her türlü ezâ ve cefâ ve zulüm ve i'tisâfa katlanarak beni meb'us intihâbı husûsunda

Efendi of these wrong-doings (since the references about imprisoning and taking into custody also seem to hint at Bulgarian officials' involvement), this letter – along with the others cited above – reveals that the Muslim deputy elections were intensely contested processes in which different political cleavages within the Muslim community brutally played themselves out.

### 3.4. Letters about the `Ottoman Patriotism` and Albania

Two final common themes apparent in the letters sent to *Balkan* are about announcements of `Ottoman patriotism` and criticisms of Albanian letter writers on the instigators of the Albanian uprisings. The former took the form of letters which announced contributions to the Empire wide fund-raising campaign for new battleships and destroyers for the Ottoman Navy. In this respect both soldiers and commoners announced their financial contributions in letters marked by a fervent patriotic tone.<sup>124</sup> In these letters, however, alongside emotive rhetoric, rather curious instances were also depicted. For instance on 23 February 1910, a certain Osman Nuri from Edirne reported that during the theater play *Menfîler yâhud Felâket-i İstibdâd* (The Expatriates or the Calamity of Despotism), staged by the local Young Turk club to raise funds for the Navy campaign, the drawing of a huge Ottoman cruiser heading to the Crete was also put on auction along with the oranges brought from the island.<sup>125</sup> In

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gösterdikleri metânet ve selâbet-i dindârânelerinden dolayı alenen teşekkürü vicdandan bilir...” Sofya’da Avukat Hafız Sıdkı, “Teşekkür,” *Balkan* No:1387, Haziran 24, 1327, 4

<sup>124</sup>See for instance the letter in the name of soldiers in the cavalry company of the second *Nizâmiyye* light cavalry regiment: Edirne Nizâmiyye İkinci Hafif Sûvârî Alayının İkinci Bölük Efrâdı Nâmına: “Osmanlı Askerinin Hamiyyet-i Vatanıyyesi,” *Balkan* No: 949, Kânûn-u sâni 8, 1325, 3.

<sup>125</sup>The predicament of Crete was contemporarily a burning issue in the Ottoman public embedded within a rhetoric of Greek atrocities against the island’s Muslims and the need for the Ottomans to come to the help of their coreligionists: Eski Zağra’lı Osman Nuri, “Hamiyyet Böyle Olur: Edirne’den Yazılıyor,” *Balkan* No: 977, Şubat 10, 1325.



another instance of fund raising in a small coffee shop in Haseki, Istanbul, even an enframed issue of *Balkan* was reported to have been put on auction, which points to the articulation of the paper within a discourse of Ottoman benevolence and patriotism.<sup>126</sup>

On this note of patriotism, groups of letters sent from western Albanian provinces were mostly penned by individuals who identified themselves as Albanians. These readers either set out to trumpet the Albanians' loyalty to the Ottoman Empire or else dismiss or condemn the alleged conspiracies revolving around the Albanian uprisings of 1911.<sup>127</sup> Interestingly, such letters often written in an overzealous patriotic tone even involved open threats against parties who challenged Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans. For instance on 7 February 1910, a certain Şefik Sabit, who referred to himself as an Albanian proud of his homeland, wrote a letter about a conversation he had with an Istanbulite whom he met on the train when traveling to Romania to investigate markets for homeland goods. According to his testimony, Şefik Sabit's fellow traveller informed him about an underground reactionary organization recently founded in Istanbul that planned to provoke an Islamic uprising in Albania against the constitutional

<sup>126</sup> Kârîlerinizden Çerkez Bekir Sıdkı, "İstanbul'dan Yazılıyor," *Balkan* No: 987, Subat 21, 1325, 3. It may also be important to note that among readers' letters employing a rhetoric of Ottoman patriotism, only a single letter was identified by a certain A. M. Abdulmennan dealing specifically with CUP, criticizing the recent faction formation within the party and the resignation of Young Turk ministers, Cavit and Hakkı Bey Beys from their positions. Since, similar letters were absent in the studied material, a discussion regarding this theme among the readers' letters was avoided: A. M. Abdulmennan, "Nereye Gidiyoruz," *Balkan* No: 1356, Mayıs 30, 1327, 1-2.

<sup>127</sup> Albanian uprisings initially started in 1910 among dispersed local Albanian tribes against the centralizing policies of the CUP. In 1911, full fledged rebellion broke out among the Northern Catholic Albanians supported by Montenegro, Austria and Britain. Catholic Albanians' demands for autonomy quickly spread among Muslim Albanians as well who under a better organized leadership of Muslim Albanian nationalists demanded the unification of Yanya (Ionnina), Manastır (Bitola), İşkodra (Shkodër) and Kosova (Kosovo) provinces under an autonomous Albania: Bilgin Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar, II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Milliyetçiliği ve Arnavutluk Sorunu* (İstanbul: Buke Yayınları, 2004), 345-370. Gingeras maintains that the Albanian rebellions between 1910-1912 were not related to any Albanian ethnic consciousness. He argues that identities of Muslims and Christians were mainly based on religion and were fluid in the sense that crossing boundaries between allegedly rigid ethnic categories occurred frequently. Thus he maintains that, the revolts reflected Albanian speaking provincial population's resentment over conscription, disarmament and large landowners' anxiety over losing their lands: Ryan Gingeras, "The Empire's Forgotten Children," 123, 125.

regime. Sabit, on his part, fervently denounced such individuals whom he named as the followers of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1909 rebels and stated that if they dared to look for accomplices in Albania, they would find nothing apart from bullets in their brains. Ending his letter, the author even demanded that harshest measures must be taken against such groups.<sup>128</sup>

A similarly violent rhetoric was used by a reader with the penname of Preşevali (meaning “from Preseva”, a town in Albania) who upon learning that the Ottoman government planned to send ten new teachers to Kosova wrote that if these teachers were even considering teaching in the Latin alphabet their blood would soon spill in their posts.<sup>129</sup> It is important to note that, at this point, the debate on what kind of letters should be used in education was a burning issue in Albania and preceeded similar debates that would emerge decades later in Republican Turkey. The proponents of the Latin alphabet were regarded with a certain suspicion in the Ottoman public as prone to the insurrectionist tendencies. This close correspondence between the latter debate and the conceptualizations of Ottoman loyalty was indeed evident in another exchange of two Albanian readers’ letters from Skopje, Abdülrezzak Cevdet and Gilanlı Ali Rıza who in a series of open letters to each other, opted for two opposite alternatives in the form of Arabic and Latin letters respectively. Abdülrezzak maintained that the Latin alphabet was a tool that the insurrectionists promoted to cut the Albanians’ ties to the

<sup>128</sup>“Dîvân-ı harb-i örfinin ref’inden idâre-i meşrutîyye ‘aleyhinde îkâ-i şüruş için kadr ve hârici ba’zı arpalıkçı münâfıklardan mürekkep bir cemâ’at te’sis etmişler. Bunların maksatları Arnavutluk’u din cihetinden iğfal ile idâre-i hâzıra ‘aleyhinde kıyâm ettirmek imiş. Bu cemâ’ati idâre eden rü’esâ-i mel’anet, 31 mart hâdisesi gibi muvaffak olamadıkları takdirde ...şimdiden terk-i tebayet teşebbüsünde bulunuyorlarmış... Fakat o denîler emin olmalıdır ki kendilerine Arnavutluk’tan uzatılacak dest-i imdad beyinlerine kurşun sıkmaktan başka bir işe yaramayacaktır. Fakat bu vatanın artık bu gibi tezellüzâta tahammülü yoktur.... Kalleri hallerine tetâbuk etmekte olan bu gibi denîlerin izâle –i vücudları için tedâbir-i zecriyye ve şedîde ittihaz edilmesini temenni ile merci’inin nazar-ı dikkatini celb eylerim.” Şefik Sabit, “Arnavutluk’tan Mektub, “ *Balkan* No: 966, Kânûn-u sâni 25, 1325, 4.

<sup>129</sup> “...Latin harfleriyle icrâ-yı tedris etmek için gelecek mu’allim varsa emin olsun ki kanına susamıştır...” Preşevali, *Balkan* No: 967, Kânûn-u sâni 26, 1325, 4.

Ottoman Empire. Such insurrectionists who opposed to the Turkish alphabet were, according to Abdülrezzak, not even ethnically Albanian but pretended as they were to provoke the public into rebellion.<sup>130</sup> In opposition to this view, Abdülrezzak's interlocutor, Ali Rıza argued that the adoption of the Latin alphabet was about improving the modern education and was not related to any insurrectionist tendency.<sup>131</sup>

A last curious letter from Albania came from an Ottoman soldier who called himself "an Ottoman soldier son of Osman" (Osmanoğlu Osmanlı bir zâbit). This letter specifically addressed Edhem Ruhi and warned him that the odious instigators of the massive 1910 and 1911 Albanian uprisings, Priştineli Hasan Bey and İsa Bolatin were planning to murder Ruhi. Although they had been poisoning the people and youth of Kosovo with their intrigues and insurrectionist ideas, in reality they were nothing more than mere murderers. The author declared that he wanted thus to inform the public about the real face of these individuals and warn the Albanian citizens to not get tricked by their lies and conspiracies.<sup>132</sup> Although there is no means of validating this particular allegation, considering Ruhi's fierce articles on the Albanian uprising, it is still reasonable to draw the conclusion that he may have drawn the resentment of secessionist segments of the Albanian society and political actors.

<sup>130</sup> "Arnavutluk'un makâm-ı hilâfet-i kübrâyâ habl-i metinle merbut bulunduklarına ve muhtâriyyet istemediklerine kimsenin diyeceği yok. Ama Arnavut olmayıp da o maske altında bürünen menfa'atperestlerin bu fikri perverde etmediklerini bana ne ile te'min edersiniz? Muharrir Bey! Azıcık insaf! Zira düşününüz. Türk hurûfâtı o kadar noksan mı ki Latin hurûfâtına arz-ı iftikâr olunsun?" Üsküp ahalisinden Abdülrezzak Cevdet, "Açık Mektup," *Balkan* No: 968, Kânûn-u sâni 30, 1325, 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Gilanlı Ali Rıza, "Açık Mektup: Üsküplü Abdülrezzak Cevdet Efendi'ye," *Balkan* No: 973, Subat 5, 1325, 3. In the letter it was also stated that Ali Rıza was a member of Skopje's Educational Club (*Üsküp Ma'ârif Cem'iyyeti*).

<sup>132</sup> "...Arnavudluk'un başına bir belâ-i mubir kesilen, Kosova'yı baştan çıkaran, bir çok gençleri zehirleyen, şeytânî ve desîsede yegâne olan Priştineli Hasan Bey hakkında yazdığınız makâlelerden dolayı sizi tebrik ederim. Kardeşim! Bu canavar yürekli herifler, ihtimal ki senin kıymetdâr hayâtına da bir suikast tertib ederler. Çünkü bunlar öyle cür'etkârdılar ki, orada bile sizi öldürtmeyi düşünmekten fâri' değildirler... Efkâr-ı 'umûmiyye her şeyi bilsin. Arnavud kardeşlerimiz bu sihirbaz kâtilere aldanmasın..." Osmanoğlu Osmanlı bir zâbit, "Arnavudluk'tan Mektup," *Balkan* No: 1378, Haziran 12, 1327, 4.

The letters that were sent about the Albanian predicament thus reveal that *Balkan*'s propaganda on this matter found a certain reception by the audience in the region. It appears that some segments of the population in Albanian provinces, along with the Ottoman soldiers stationed there, read *Balkan* and emphasized their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire on the face of increasing insurrectionist tendencies. They also provided their views on the debates existing within the Albanian society such as which type of alphabet was more suitable to the Albanian society. Thus, although, the precise impact of *Balkan* in terms of moulding Albanian public opinion is not possible to assess, based on these few pro Ottoman letters and the information that is available on its circulation in Albania, it may be suggested that *Balkan*, which aimed to address the Albanian population as was one of its major target interlocutors in terms of ideological penetration, seems to have succeeded in interacting with a certain segment of that populace in its ideological battle.

The letters that I discussed in this chapter thus both point to *Balkan*'s ambitious project to monitor and disclose "Muslims' plight" in Bulgaria and Macedonia which *Balkan*'s staff used in a dialogic way to comment upon them hence deciding how they should be crafted and projected to the diverse audiences. I further suggested another achievement of *Balkan*'s mission in the form of a tendency towards modern educational mobilization prevalent in many provinces as a means of political empowerment of the Muslims in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, another major attempt of this chapter was to show the limits of Muslims' mobilization in Bulgaria as a resolute "nation" by underscoring the dissenters of this project in the form of "partizans", "conservatives" and CUP opponents. Nevertheless, I argued that *Balkan*'s promotion of Ottoman patriotism and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire found resonance with

some readership writing from within the Ottoman Empire, especially from the Albanian provinces. All in all, this chapter tried to engage with the material coming the readership itself and indicate that there were both supporters and dissenters of *Balkan*'s wide and versatile ideological project. Next, I will draw conclusions, based on the material of this thesis to further conceptualize *Balkan*'s role and its implications.

## Conclusion

This study conceptualized the Ottoman newspaper *Balkan* as an ideological mouthpiece of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress that monitored and reported on the Bulgarian state and society's collective behavior towards the Muslim population of Bulgaria immediately following Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908. The *Balkan* enterprise reflected how imperial surveillance networks still figured strongly in the politics of its former territories to mobilize the Muslim population and to attach them to the Ottoman state's orbit of influence despite the fact that the paper functioned within the confines of what was, after all, another sovereign nation. Thus, it is indeed remarkable that in the post-imperial context emerging in the Balkans, the CUP installed a surveillance network that set out to unify diverse Muslims in Bulgaria and Macedonia around a common narrative of a shared "Muslim plight" and need to unify and remain vigilant against the aggressive policies of Balkan nation-states like Bulgaria that sought to undermine the Muslim communal infrastructure. These excesses were publicized as counter propaganda against the Bulgarian state which trumpeted similar claims about Ottoman oppression against Macedonian Bulgarians and Christians. The oppression of Balkan Muslims was an important part of the news that *Balkan* intended its audiences both in Bulgaria, Macedonia and the Ottoman Empire to consume in order to unify its readership and solidify their connections with the imperial state and the CUP. Through its vast surveillance, *Balkan* also kept the core Ottoman audience in Istanbul and Anatolia

informed about the plight of their coreligionists brethren in Bulgaria and Macedonia. At the same time, it contributed to the radicalization of anti-Bulgarian sentiments among Muslims in Macedonia. The implications of the ability of enterprises like *Balkan* to disseminate bitter news to Muslims throughout the Empire about their brethren in the Balkans cannot be underestimated, as it helped stir anti-Christian sentiments that in their extreme forms after the Balkan Wars would target the Empire's Greek and Armenian populations.

As this study demonstrated the “watchdog” performance and ideological function of *Balkan* was greatly facilitated by the letters that the readers themselves sent both from Bulgaria and Macedonia regarding their predicament. These letters provided the emotive first person voice of individuals who reported their deep resentment towards Bulgarian agents and citizens who consistently committed atrocities against Muslims and their cultural infrastructure in Bulgaria and Macedonia. Moreover, *Balkan* used these letters in a dialogic way because its staff corroborated the bitter content of these letters by providing data from different areas that other readers and staff reported on. *Balkan's* use of its reader's letters that reported on Christian violence against Muslims and their cultural foundations attests to the paper's readership's position as indispensable propaganda tools. This study was nevertheless critical of *Balkan's* frequent trope of Muslim victimhood. Indeed, it is this same trope that was only rekindled and boosted by scholars writing on plight of the “Turks” of Bulgaria at the end of the twentieth century after the Zhikov regime's renewed efforts to Bulgarianize its Muslim citizens and destroy their cultural foundations, thus crafting a simple continuum of Balkan Christian enmity against its Muslim population. Rather than uncritically accepting notions of a monolithic “Turkish” or even “Muslim” community that has consistently been oppressed by Balkan

Christian and Communist regimes since 1878, this study argued that the very obstacles to *Balkan*'s mission of creating a unified, enlightened Muslim community stemmed mostly from deep cleavages within the diverse Muslim population in Bulgaria and the Balkans in general. Amidst these grave divisions some Muslim communal leaders often cooperated with Bulgarian politicians, remained critical of the CUP's modernist agenda (such as the spread of modern education methods), and refused to submit their loyalties to the CUP government – all behavior that Ruhi and his editors at *Balkan* decried as treacherous acts that prevented their noble effort of unifying and enlightening a beleaguered “Muslim nation” in the Balkans. In this sense, *Balkan* not only aimed to monitor inter-confessional conflict to stand for Muslims rights and to trumpet their victimization. It also disclosed groups within the Muslim community who betrayed this project.

In terms of *Balkan*'s Macedonian audience, Albanian subjects' loyalty to the Empire was being increasingly undermined by the growing Albanian nationalism which materialized from 1910-1912. It should not be assumed that Albanians or other Muslims in Macedonia shared *Balkan*'s views and agendas. Identities in Macedonia and Albania still based on confessional affiliation were as fluid as they were in Bulgaria and the other remaining Ottoman provinces in the Balkans in the sense that Muslims and Christians could easily move between different ethnic identities. Yet both Christians and Muslims' fluid identities were in a process whereby national activists in both communities increasingly sought to impose their respective national categories on them. Albanian nationalism was a product of these trends. Hence it should not be assumed that although this study revealed certain Albanian readers' letters that



emphasized their loyalty to the Empire and CUP, *Balkan*'s circulation in Albanian towns was not met with resistance by Muslims in an increasingly nationalizing environment.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study point out that *Balkan* still must have enjoyed a considerable influence in shaping public opinion among Bulgaria and Macedonia's Muslim communities. As the second chapter argued the Bulgarian government identified *Balkan*'s editor Ethem Ruhi as an extremely dangerous provocateur, and *Balkan*, in turn, criticized Bulgarian newspapers which declared that each of his articles provoked numerous atrocities against Macedonian Bulgarians and Christians. The letters that arrived both from the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria during Ruhi's first imprisonment in 1910 attest to the fact that his ideological stances were shared by his readership across Bulgaria, Macedonia, as well as other parts of the Balkans and Anatolia. Ethem Ruhi was portrayed by these respective audiences as the defender of Balkan Muslims. The reports of the Bulgarian newspapers about massive rallies held in Sofia, Plovdiv and Thessaloniki for Ruhi's release demonstrate his influential role as an important Muslim figurehead throughout the Balkans. The content of letters sent to the editor from Muslims in Bulgaria and Albania confirm that *Balkan*'s ideological propagation found a certain degree of reception among its readers. Irrespective of the question to what degree *Balkan* succeeded in appealing to Muslims in Bulgaria, Macedonia and other Ottoman provinces, it is important to emphasize that this mission became an important medium that linked the plight and insecurities of Muslims throughout the Balkans with Muslims in other parts of the Ottoman world. By 1911, when it was clear that CUP's multiethnic and multi-confessional citizenship model was no longer viable given the different irredentist programs spearheaded by neighboring Balkan states, the CUP increasingly turned to Ottoman Muslims

(and even a strengthening Turkish nationalism) to mobilize them on behalf of the Empire. It is reasonable to suggest that other newspapers in the region and in the broader Ottoman Empire operated with the similar aim of speaking for the cause of Muslims in the Balkans. Yet, what makes, *Balkan* unique among them was the fact it was intentionally positioned within a hostile sovereign state whose bids over Macedonia was becoming increasingly threatening. In this sense, *Balkan* had the unique capacity to counteract and undermine Bulgaria's moral claims against the Ottomans' oppression of Macedonian Bulgarians by closely monitoring and disclosing Bulgaria's own atrocities over its own Muslims. Moreover by politically mobilizing and educating Muslims, *Balkan* set out to increase its capacity to oppose to the Bulgarian state and to embrace CUP's tutelage over them. In this respect, it would be interesting to ask whether there were other CUP-supported enterprises like *Balkan* stationed in other sovereign Balkan nation states, such as Greece and Serbia, whose bids over Macedonia had to be delegitimized and undermined.

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