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## **The Selanik Incident in the Foreign Press**

### **Abstract**

The bombings and armed attacks carried out by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization followers in April 1903 caused great terror among the people of Thessaloniki and were widely reported in both local and foreign press, bringing the Macedonian Question back to the forefront. According to information provided in the *Asır* newspaper, these attacks, referred to as the “Selanik Incident,” were condemned in European and Greek media. Some Bulgarian newspapers found it difficult to believe in the death of Gotse Delchev, who is one of the organization’s most important leaders. The measures taken by the Ottoman Empire in response to the events were praised. According to the reports, all European states supported the ongoing reforms in Ottoman territories and desired the preservation of the status quo in the region.

**Keywords:** *Asır Newspaper, Foreign Press, IMRO, Reform, Selanik Incident*

## **Selanik Hadisesinin Yabancı Basındaki Yansımaları**

### **Öz**

Nisan 1903’te İç Makedon Devrimci Örgütü (IMRO) mensupları tarafından gerçekleştirilen bombalı ve silahlı saldırılar, Selanik halkı arasında büyük bir korkuya yol açmış ve hem yerel hem de yabancı basında geniş biçimde yer alarak “Makedonya Meselesi”ni yeniden gündeme taşımıştır. *Asır* gazetesinde aktarılan bilgilere göre “Selanik Hadisesi” olarak anılan bu saldırılar, Avrupa ve Yunan



*basınında kınanmıştır. Örgütün en önemli liderlerinden biri olan Gotse Delçev'in ölümü ise bazı Bulgar gazeteleri tarafından inanılması güç bir gelişme olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti'nin olaylar karşısında aldığı tedbirler övgüyle karşılanmış; haberlerde bütün Avrupa devletlerinin Osmanlı topraklarında yürütülmekte olan reformları destekledikleri ve bölgedeki statükonun korunmasını istedikleri vurgulanmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Asır gazetesi, yabancı basın, IMRO, reform, Selanik Hadisesi*

### **Introduction**

The Macedonian problem, especially since the end of the 19th century, ravaged the remaining lands of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. In order to weaken the authority of the Ottoman Empire, increasing armed conflicts took place between the Ottoman army and the nationalists and anarchists, called committee member. There was also a bloody struggle between the Greeks and Bulgarians in the Selanik hinterland, both parties aimed to claim the region after the end of Ottoman rule (Anastassiadou, 2014). The tensions between Greeks and Bulgarians were not only based on national sentiments, with the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870, both the material and spiritual influence of the Patriarchate on the Slavic population in Macedonia diminished and religious tensions between these two Orthodox groups escalated. The complaint of the archbishop of Gümülcine (Komotini) in the 1890s that the entire community spoke Bulgarian and that the village no longer identified itself as Greek but as Bulgarian attests to the extent of this rivalry (Mazower, 2020). The perpetrators of the Selanik Incident were followers of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which was founded in 1893 and aimed to gain autonomy in Edirne and Macedonia by using violence. Most of their armed struggle took place in the hinterland of Selanik. The organization, which focused only on Macedonia over time, was extremely active and had thousands of active fighters (Anastassiadou, 2014). IMRO also carried out kidnappings to show that the Ottoman Empire was unable to provide security in its territory. For instance, one of IMRO's prominent members, Yane Sandanski, kidnapped the American missionary Miss Stone in 1901 and demanded ransom; this incident was widely covered in both the local and foreign press (Mazower, 2020).

The incident that will be the subject of this article started on Tuesday, April 28, 1903, and caused great fear among the people of Selanik with the bombing of different points in the city and the subsequent clashes (Akıncı, 2023). On this date and over the next few days, in addition to blowing up the Ottoman Bank (Mazower, 2020), they blew up the Guadalquivir ship belonging to the French company, threw a bomb at the Alhambra cafe on the waterfront, burst the gas pipes to cut off the city's electricity, and clashed with the soldiers and police in the city (Mazower, 2020). The perpetrators' aim was to attract Europe's attention to the Macedonian

issue (Gounaris, 1992). This incident was covered in detail in the newspaper Asır, where Fazlı Necip was the editor-in-chief. In addition to describing the incident in detail, the comments of foreign newspapers on the subject were also given in the columns of the newspaper. This article will present the news in the foreign press as reported in the Asır newspaper, and will attempt to reveal how the incident was perceived in Europe, as well as in Bulgaria and Greece, where it had the most repercussions. Since Fazlı Necip added his own comments to the beginning or end of some of the news, we can also see the reactions of an Ottoman journalist to the event. Some newspapers whose names could not be identified are indicated with question marks. Direct quotations from newspapers have been placed in quotation marks so as not to be confused with Fazlı Necip's own words. In this study, issues of the Asır newspaper will be presented chronologically, and although the original newspaper provides Hijri, Rumi, and Gregorian calendar dates together, only Gregorian dates will be provided within the article to avoid confusion.

### 1. Foreign Press on the Selanik Incident

*\*Asır no. 780, pp. 2-3, Thursday, May 7, 1903*

As an example of how the actions of the Bulgarian bandits resonated in Europe and how they were met with hatred, we present a summary of the article written by *Neue Freie Press*, one of the most important newspapers in Europe, published in Vienna:

*“The crimes of the Bulgarian mischief committee have now taken on a different form. So far, the Bulgarian bandits were committing banditry in the mountains and they were hindering the reform measures implemented by the Ottoman State, and they were being eliminated. Unable to succeed in this type of struggle, the bandits finally attempted the major murders in Selanik. This atrocity, supposedly organized to attract Europe's attention, took place entirely in areas inhabited by foreigners and on a foreign ship. These dynamite attacks organized by the Bulgarians did not change the reforms carried out by the Ottoman government in the slightest, on the contrary, they encouraged them to continue with fortitude. No diplomat can deny that the Ottoman government must be given complete freedom to prevent these murders. The great powers have officially declared that the status quo in the Balkan Peninsula must be maintained. Russia and Austria were already of the same opinion on this matter. Italy's new foreign minister, Mr. Moden, stated in his speech to parliament yesterday that all the great powers were in agreement on the preservation of peace and balance in the Balkan Peninsula.”*

*\*Asır no. 781, p. 2, Monday, May 11, 1903*

The sensible members of the European press have condemned this incident and spoken of it with disgust. But what is really striking is that some biased publications have changed their tone and are now speaking of this incident with horror.

The Bulgarian newspaper *Vecherna* wrote: “*We do not approve of the crimes committed by the committee members in Thessaloniki; on the contrary, we deplore them.*”

A telegram sent from Sofia to the *Tan* (?) newspaper published in France describes the impact of the incident as follows: “*The Thessaloniki incident had a significant impact here. Upon hearing the news, the Danev cabinet, which had been maintaining the peace, was unable to conceal its astonishment and regret. The Bulgarian cabinet is aware that it will be held responsible by the Ottoman government, the great powers, and European public opinion for its failure to disband this committee in Sofia, and is deeply saddened by the incident. For this reason, the cabinet has decided to take harsher measures against the members of the bandit committee. The public in Sofia is also filled with fear and sadness, because the committee’s reckless and cruel actions, threatening even many Bulgarians living in Bulgaria in order to collect money on behalf of the committee, have aroused feelings of hatred and horror in honest and sensible people. Those who consider this incident a success are a bunch of despicable individuals who are members of the committee.*”

The entire Greek press and public opinion unanimously condemn the murders of the Bulgarian committee. They express their hope that the Ottoman government will severely punish these bandits. Thanks to the Sultan, this punishment will be carried out with severity and rigor, but also with wisdom and justice. Our dear neighbors can rest assured of this.

In an article, the *Tan* newspaper describes its opinion as follows: “*It is necessary to believe that the members of the committee who organized this murder were completely crazy. If no tragedy had occurred, it could have been called a ridiculously stupid act. However, civilized scholars are doing nothing but expressing horror and hatred in response to this tragedy.*”

At a time when the Ottoman government had begun serious reforms in the provinces of Rumelia and everyone was expecting to see the fruits of these reforms, the committee’s savage and cruel actions caused outrage and horror in Europe. Did the committee members hope that these brutal murders would evoke a sense of mercy toward them in Europe? These murders prove the legitimacy of the severe measures taken by the Ottoman government against this band of outlaws.

One of the Bulgarian newspapers that encouraged this band of outlaws to engage in such brutal acts claimed that the bloody incident in Selanik was the success (!) of Delchev, one of

the most famous and skilled leaders of the committee, and declared him as the spirit of the committee. Delchev, whom this newspaper trusts implicitly, was executed along with twenty-one of his accomplices in the village of Banitsa in the district of Serres, thanks to the Sultan. There is no doubt that the other leaders and bandits will follow in their footsteps.

One of Germany's most important newspapers, the *North German* newspaper, wrote the following in an article about the Selanik incident and the Bulgarian bandits: *"The brutal audacity displayed by the committee members in Selanik proves that the Ottoman government must take decisive action against them. The committee's actions will certainly have no impact on European political circles. The preservation of peace and balance in the Balkans is in everyone's interest. Even in Russian political circles, there is confidence that the Ottoman government will complete the reforms it has begun. The bandits' initiative has aroused serious feelings of outrage."*

*Deba (?)* newspaper: *"All consuls in Thessaloniki express their appreciation for the speed and success with which the local government, and in particular His Excellency Hasan Fehmi Pasha, Governor of Thessaloniki, have dealt with the punishment of the bandits and the immediate restoration of order and security. The majority agree that severe measures must be taken against the bandits."*

*L'Indépendance Belge* newspaper: *"The crimes committed by these wretches, who did not hesitate to commit the most brutal murders, had long aroused disgust in sensible people. It is clear that the members of this committee are no different from the most despicable bandits who attack property, honor, and life in the mountains to gain profit. For, they are not pursuing a reasonable political objective but rather seeking to serve their own personal interests, plundering and harming the honorable Bulgarian population. Other Ottoman Christians, such as the Greeks and the Vlachs, curse these individuals, and the majority of Bulgarians also keep their distance from their evil."*

Some European newspapers have greatly exaggerated the number of bandits and committee members, who were killed because they attacked the police, during the Selanik incident and the search that followed. However, according to the official information we received, we can say that the number of bandits and committee members who died during the incident and the next day was only around thirty. The fact that some European newspapers put this number at hundreds is simply an exaggeration.

**\*Asir no. 782, pp. 1-2, Thursday, May 14, 1903**

The disgusting intentions behind the terrible publications released in Bulgaria, which don't deserve to be sold freely, have been understood by the whole civilized world thanks to

the light shed by the truth. The words of a few naive or malicious European publications that quoted the false news in these newspapers are also met with hatred. The content of a letter sent from Thessaloniki to the *Tan* newspaper and published there caused outrage and hatred not only among the Ottoman community but also among foreigners, even the French, who were aware of the events and the truth. The author of this letter, who has concealed his signature and is undoubtedly a despicable individual or a member of a committee, has made many exaggerated and false statements that are laughable, but he has failed to conceal the truth about the seriousness with which the Ottoman government has approached the issue of justice and the fortitude shown by our people. One must be as foolish and heartless as the vile who wrote the letter to the *Tan* newspaper, in order to implicitly condone the murders committed by these bandits. Justice always prevails; it can not be defeated. The publication by *Tan*, one of the newest French publications, of lies told by a group of unknown individuals and their ridiculous ideas based on these lies has caused hatred not only among patriotic Ottomans but also among sensible and serious French people. Serious and impartial European newspapers continue to provide information that fills in the gaps and express their opinions on the matter. The German, Austrian, and Russian newspapers are the ones that use the most accurate and truthful language.

*Asir, no. 783, p. 2, Monday, May 18, 1903*

We wrote about what a great achievement it was that the filthy corpse of Delchev, the leader of the bandits, was among the 21 bandits killed in Banitsa. Some Bulgarian newspapers do not believe in this extraordinary achievement and they deny the fact that Delchev was killed. A newspaper that is in love with the bandit committee writes the following: “*Delchev was such a talented leader that it is impossible that he could have been easily killed. If he really had been killed, it would mean that the committee had been destroyed, because Delchev was truly the most active and powerful member of the committee. The scattered gangs were under Delchev’s command and control, and all preparations were made by him. Only Delchev knew where the weapons and ammunition were buried in the mountains. In case Delchev is dead, the committee is in ruins.*”

It is certain that Delchev was killed, because during the clash, Delchev’s presence among the bandits was unknown to the pursuing detachments, but a bandit who was later captured alive stated that Delchev had also been killed, and his body was identified when the bandit found and showed it among the corpses. We mentioned that Delchev had several maps on him, as well as a plan detailing the destruction he had decided to carry out on the railway lines and the preparations he had made for this. It appears that Delchev’s defeat and rout at the hands of the

Ottoman Empire's overwhelming forces had a significant impact on the bandits' exhausted state.

About a week before the Battle of Banitsa, we reported that around fifty bandits had been killed in an armed conflict in Cumabala. Although it was known that some leaders were among those killed, their names and identities remained unknown. Based on information provided by bandits who managed to escape alive and seek refuge on the other side of the border line, certain newspapers affiliated with the bandit committee have reported that among those killed in the aforementioned clash were a lieutenant colonel, a major, and two captains who had defected from the Bulgarian army and joined the bandits, as well as other bandit leaders. These newspapers are announcing that the success in the Cumabala conflict was greater and more brilliant than we had anticipated! How wonderful.

According to information provided by Greek newspapers, one of the most important bandit leaders belonging to the committee, named Goratov, was also captured and arrested a short time ago. One of the members of the Bulgarian committee was also caught while leaving a package with bombs at the Piraeus post office. Five bandits who were about to depart from Piraeus for Galos were also apprehended on the ship and arrested. A bandit named Israilev, who was carrying some documents related to the bandits, was arrested in Yenişehir (Larissa).

A reporter from the Correspondence Prussian, one of the most important German newspapers, met with Greek Prime Minister Mr. Diligiannis while passing through Greece and asked his opinion on the attempts of Bulgarian bandits. Mr. Diligiannis expressed his views as follows: *"The fact that some European publications have given prominence to the actions of these bandits and treated them as if they were respectable individuals has encouraged the Bulgarian bandit committee to become so arrogant and daring. However, the brutal murders committed by the committee in Thessaloniki have exposed their true nature to the entire world, arousing widespread disgust and indignation against them. The measures taken by the Ottoman government are sufficient to subdue these bandits and prevent them from committing such brutal murders in the future. The attempts of these bandits cannot disrupt the general peace in the Balkans, because everyone desires to preserve the existing balance and borders. Greece trusts the fair efforts of the Ottoman government without doubt, because we see and know that the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire are loved and protected by the Sultan and enjoy perfect security and prosperity."*

Correspondence Prussian newspaper reporter also interviewed Mr. Konstan, the French ambassador to Istanbul, who was in Greece at the time, and asked for his opinion. Monsieur Konstan expressed his opinion as follows: *"Bulgarian bandits will see that the storm they have*

*been trying to stir up in Europe has, contrary to their hopes and expectations, aroused feelings of outrage in Europe. Did these bandits really hope that by blowing up a French steamship with bombs they would arouse feelings of mercy in us? Such cruel and savage acts can only arouse feelings of hatred and disgust. No, these enemies of peace and tranquility cannot expect mercy from any part of the civilized world. The intervention they hope and desire will definitely not happen. On the contrary, the Ottoman government, and only the Ottoman government, will use its overwhelming power to subdue and punish these bandits. Is it even necessary to say that the Ottoman Empire's power is sufficient to crush this handful of bandits? The entire civilized world is now awaiting the subjugation and punishment of these bandits. This is the full extent of the impact of the brutal acts these bandits sought to commit in Selanik."*

**\*Asır, no. 784, p. 2, Thursday, May 21, 1903**

Greek newspapers continue to express their views vehemently against the murders of Bulgarian bandits. The Greek government continues to arrest and expel from Greece individuals suspected of belonging to the bandit committee. Since there are many foreign Bulgarians in Greece, especially in Athens and Thessaly, investigations are being conducted into all of them. Some Bulgarians whose houses were searched in Greece were arrested and brought to court after bombs were found in their homes. Greek newspapers claim that these savage criminals, who have sold their honor and conscience in exchange for money from the committee, have declared their intention to commit murders in Greece as well. For this reason, Bulgarians like these in Greece are viewed with great hatred by the public.

Upon hearing about the Selanik Incident, major newspapers everywhere began sending reporters to Selanik, and as a result, many newspaper reporters have arrived in our city. We met with some of them. All of them praised the order, peace, and security they saw in Selanik. The *Tan* newspaper, which had made it a habit to obtain information from Bulgarian newspapers and did not hesitate to publish letters full of false reports from its unreliable correspondents in Selanik, sent its special correspondent, Mr. Moris, to Selanik a short time ago. Seeing the peace that reigned thanks to the Sultan, that everyone was busy with their work and enjoying themselves, Mr. Moris felt ashamed of his newspaper's publications stating that the vile who wrote the letter to *Tan* newspaper had chosen to lie and indicated that he would set the record straight.

The French newspaper *Le Matin* also published a letter full of baseless and truly laughable lies in its May 14 issue. If this letter is not something pieced together from Bulgarian newspapers, then whoever wrote it in Selanik should be ashamed of telling such lies. If there is anyone else besides the person who wrote the letter to *Tan* newspaper who is crazy enough to



do such a thing, or if the letter published in *Maten* newspaper was also sent by the same lunatic who wrote the letter to *Tan*, then there is no need to say anything more than what we said in our previous issue about *Tan* newspaper. Since *Le Matin* newspaper, like *Tan*, sent a serious and professional reporter here, that reporter will have no choice but to feel ashamed and bring shame upon *Le Matin* newspaper upon seeing the real situation.

During the Selanik incident, photographs of the Ottoman Bank building burned down by Bulgarian bandits and the steamship *Guadalquivir* of the Messageries Maritimes company taken after the incident were sent by reporters to Europe's most famous illustrated newspapers and published. *L'Illustration* newspaper, which published many photographs, expressed the following opinion when publishing the photograph of His Excellency the Governor: "His Excellency Hasan Fehmi Pasha, who demonstrated great strength by immediately putting an end to the brutal murders committed by members of the Bulgarian committee and restoring order and security within a day, has earned the admiration not only of the people of Selanik but of the entire civilized world. He is truly one of the most virtuous Ottomans." As we wrote, the captain and crew of the steamship *Guadalquivir* belonging to the Messageries Maritimes Company, which was set on fire by bandits, went to France after testifying before an extraordinary court martial.

**\**Asır* no. 784 [5], p. 2, Monday, May 25, 1903**

The crew of *Guadalquivir*, that arrived in France was surrounded by newspaper reporters, and newspapers began filling their columns with their statements. The ship's captain and crew condemned the Bulgarian bandits' brutal murders, and praised the fair and humane treatment shown by the provincial police officers during the rescue operation and the subsequent murders. The famous *Tan* newspaper, which sympathized with the bandits' committee, made the following ridiculous comments in the past: "*Minov did not intentionally set fire to the Guadalquivir ship. However, the ship was completely destroyed by the accidental explosion of a bomb that was with Minov.*" However, the newspaper has now begun to write about the actual situation based on the statements of the ship crew. Apparently, the *Tan* newspaper was embarrassed by the letters written by the French dignitaries in Selanik, which stated: "Your publications, which are contrary to justice and truth, cause disgust in us and embarrass us because you are part of the French press," as well as the true reports provided by Mr. Moris, a special correspondent who is indeed a serious writer, and have changed their tone.

Bulgarian newspapers claimed that the report of the death of Delchev, who was killed in the battle that took place in the village of Banitsa near Serres, was not true. Members of the committee in Sofia, who could not believe that this bandit, who had followed the committee's

ruthless path, had been killed, also claimed that the leader killed in Serres was not Delchev but another insignificant committee leader named Dalchev. A newspaper affiliated with this committee states: “*According to the committee leaders in Sofia, Delchev was not killed in the battle of Banitsa. If Delchev was indeed present in the battle, it is assured that he managed to escape.*”

*\*Asır, no. 786, p. 2, Thursday, May 28, 1903*

Russia’s official newspaper wrote an article mentioning the measures taken by the Ottoman Empire, indicating that there is vitality and dynamism regarding regulations in police, gendarmerie, courts and education. A telegram sent from Petersburg to the *Kületise Zeitung* newspaper states that the Ottoman government’s great and swift success in maintaining public order has been highly praised by Europe, and that the happiness and prosperity in the country will increase even further thanks to the diligence shown by the Ottoman Empire.

In an article referring to the Bulgarian delegation, *the Times* newspaper stated that the delegation consisted of individuals worthy of the trust of the Ottoman government, that they belonged to a political party that would serve to preserve the material and spiritual ties between the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian Emirate, and that they would always choose a course of action in line with the peaceful intentions of the state to which they were subject.

There is no doubt that the bandit leader who was killed in the battle of Banitsa was the notorious bandit Delchev, known as “the spirit of the committee.” Even newspapers affiliated with the committee have begun to admit this. The *Vecherna Poshta* newspaper published in Sofia states: “It has been proven that Delchev was killed. However, he was not killed in a clash as claimed, but was secretly murdered (!)” This news has caused extraordinary reactions in the committee’s headquarters, because Delchev was truly the soul of the committee. He alone was privy to all its secrets, and the entire organization was established by him. With Delchev’s elimination, a devastating blow has been dealt to the committee.

We reported that the crew of the steamship Guadalquivir, which was burned by the bandit Minov, had returned to France. The following document, sent by the captain, officers, and crew of the ship to all French publications, is being published in the newspapers: “It must be known throughout France that without the assistance and selfless efforts of the Thessaloniki security forces, none of us would have survived the incident. The soldiers’ assistance and sacrifice during the incident were truly remarkable. They charged at the bombs thrown by the Bulgarian bandits, showing courage to the extent of crushing and extinguishing them. As a result of the Ottoman government’s efforts, the bandits’ murder attempts were completely thwarted, and

order and security were restored in Thessaloniki within a single day.” Can any newspaper now dare to publish such malicious lies in the face of these factual announcements?

*\*Asır, no. 787, p. 2, Monday, June 1, 1903*

The Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Petrov, said the following in an interview with a newspaper reporter: *“While the cabinet is working hard to protect the border, it will also take strong measures to prevent the committee chiefs from taking action. The committee chiefs, who have seen that the committee’s initiatives have aroused feelings of hatred throughout the civilized world, must now realize that continuing banditry is futile. They must realize that they will achieve nothing but causing the shedding of much Bulgarian blood and exposing Bulgarians in the Rumelia provinces to hatred. For this reason, we believe that their initiatives can now be easily thwarted and that the reforms initiated by the Ottoman government will bear fruit.”*

*\*Asır, no. 788, p. 2, Thursday, June 4, 1903*

The bandit committee can no longer find refuge even among Bulgarian villagers and has nowhere left to hide. Thanks to the strength and efficiency shown in pursuing the bandits on the orders of the Sultan, the gangs have been brought to the brink of total destruction. In a letter written by committee members in Sofia and published in European newspapers, the bandits’ sorrow is described as follows:

*“The main occupation of the gangs belonging to the committee is to incite every Bulgarian and threaten those who do not agree with these words: “Either you help us, or you die.” However, these threats are now ineffective. Most of the villagers, having been crushed by the severity of the pursuit and the committee’s failure to fulfill its promises, are now not even willing to submit to the bandits, let alone protect or hide them. On the other hand, the destruction of Delchev, who was killed in the battle of Banitsa clash in Serres, has left the committee sad and devastated. Although Delchev’s death was initially kept secret from committee members and denied, the matter has now become too obvious to hide. For this reason, despite some committee chiefs’ claim, there is no longer any possibility for the gangs to grow in number and gain importance. Even if some gangs continue to engage in banditry in the mountains, it is certain that they lack the strength to resist the intense pursuit by Ottoman troops.”*

### **Conclusion**

Needless to say, one must approach these news carefully as a historical source, as there is a considerable amount of censorship in the Ottoman press at that time, as well as the fact that we do not know how Fazlı Necip chose the news he decided to publish. Since we know that he

was a member of Committee of Union and Progress and was friends with Talat Pasha (Şahin, 2004), in addition to the tone of the comments he made on these news, we might assume that he has Ottomanist and patriotic tendencies. It should also be taken into consideration that press was used to influence the masses and legitimize actions of the governments (Solmaz & Kayıran, 2022). Fazlı Necip emphasizes how violent and brutal the perpetrators are, and that even the peasants do not support these bandits anymore, which might be an effort to prove the legitimacy of the precautions taken by the Ottoman government against them.

The foreign press, as reported by *Asır*, generally condemned IMRO's actions with widespread disgust and horror. European powers, notably Russia, Austria, and Italy, affirmed their agreement on maintaining peace and balance in the Balkan Peninsula and asserted that such atrocities would not hinder the reform measures implemented by the Ottoman government. Instead, they advocated for the Ottoman government to be given complete freedom to prevent these murders.

It is possible to see that *Asır* editor-in-chief, Fazlı Necip, was outraged at the first news written by some French publications, such as *Le Matin*, which initially published exaggerated or false reports. He accused them of sympathizing with the "bandit committee." However, influenced by statements from the steamship *Guadalquivir* crew who praised the Ottoman security forces' rescue efforts, as well as true reports from their special correspondents witnessing the restored order in Thessaloniki, these newspapers later changed their stance to reflect the truth and express disgust for the cruel acts.

Reactions from neighboring states were also decisive, as both Bulgarian and Greek governments lay claim to Thessaloniki in their nationalist agenda at that time period (Anastassiadou, 2014). The entire Greek press and public opinion unanimously condemned the Bulgarian committee's actions, expressing hope for severe punishment and reaffirming their trust in the Ottoman government's fair efforts and the security of Greeks within the Empire. In Bulgaria, the Danev cabinet expressed astonishment and regret, deciding to take harsher measures against the committee, while public opinion in Sofia was filled with fear and sadness due to the committee's reckless actions.

The foreign consuls and various European newspapers, including German, Austrian, and Russian publications, expressed profound appreciation for the speed and success with which the local Ottoman government, particularly Governor Hasan Fehmi Pasha, dealt with the incident, restoring order and security within a single day. This demonstrated the power of the Ottoman Empire, which was deemed sufficient to crush the bandits, a sentiment affirmed by figures like the French ambassador, Mr. Konstan. The death of Delchev, a prominent IMRO

leader, in the Battle of Banitsa, despite initial denials, was ultimately acknowledged as a devastating blow to the organization, as he was considered its “spirit” and privy to all its secrets.

In conclusion, according to Asır, the Selanik Incident, while intended to draw sympathetic European attention to the Macedonian cause through violence, inadvertently served to expose the brutal and criminal nature of IMRO to the civilized world. Far from achieving their goal, the committee’s actions solidified international support for the Ottoman government’s reforms and efforts to maintain stability in the Balkans. The swift and effective response of the Ottoman authorities, coupled with the clear condemnation from European powers and neighboring states, resulted in the failure of IMRO’s strategy and significantly weakened the organization.

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