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TERRORISM IN THE AGE OF ROOSEVELT: THE MISS STONE AFFAIR, 1901-1902

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DURING THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES, AMERICAN diplomatic, religious and commercial representatives abroad lived and worked relatively free from the threat of revolutionary terrorism. This was true in part because there were few Americans living overseas and because the United States was a third-rate power, considered to have little influence in the councils of the world. By the turn of the century, however, various forces and events had converged to thrust the United States into the international limelight. Throughout the latter half of the 1880s evangelists and exporters vied with strategic expansionists such as Alfred Thayer Mahan in demanding that the United States play a larger role in world affairs and, specifically, that it enter the race for overseas colonies. To the delight of American imperialists, the McKinley administration declared war on Spain in 1898 and a year later forced that thoroughly defeated nation to hand over Guam and the Philippines in the Pacific and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean. Clearly, the Spanish-American War marked America's arrival as a world power, but not all agreed that the nation's new status would prove beneficial. During the opening weeks of 1899 anti-imperialists argued that empire would force the United States to assimilate subordinate peoples, create the need for a much larger defense establishment, and involve the nation in the colonial rivalries of the great powers.¹ They could have added, had they foreseen it, that Ameri-

¹ For varying descriptions and interpretations of American expansionism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century see Julius Pratt, *The Expansionists of 1898* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1936); Albert Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1935); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1963); and Milton Plesur, *America's Outward Thrust: Approaches to Foreign Affairs, 1865-1890* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1971).

ca's newly won prestige would attract the attention not only of the established members of the international community but of the militant, have-not groups as well. In short, notoriety brought the Republic influence and power, but it also transformed its citizens abroad into potential hostages for those groups wanting to enlist American money and might in their cause.

In September 1901 one of those groups, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, seized and held for ransom Ellen M. Stone, a Congregationalist missionary. During the six months of her captivity, the Roosevelt administration, the American public, and her superiors on the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions struggled with the now-familiar issues connected with acts of international terrorism. Was Stone to be regarded as an individual who had merely fallen prey to one of the hazards of her profession, or should she be viewed as a personification of the nation and defended to the last? What role should the federal government play in the matter? Should the ransom be paid? Would not accession to the demands of the terrorists invite further kidnappings? Could the administration afford politically to abandon the hostage, especially given the fact that she was a woman and a missionary? How were the missionary authorities to resolve the conflict between the practical need to protect their agents from further acts of terrorism and the moral need to do everything in their power to free Stone? If the money was to be used by the kidnappers for revolutionary purposes, would the government against whom the revolution was to be directed permit ransoming? To what extent should diplomatic factors be allowed to outweigh humanitarian considerations? If and when the hostages were freed, who should be held responsible and what measures should be taken to prevent a repetition? The "Miss Stone Affair," as the incident came to be called, introduced the United States to twentieth-century international terrorism and in so doing provided the Republic with one of its first lessons in the limitations of great power status.

The site of the Miss Stone Affair was Macedonia, one of the most volatile areas in the world at the turn of the century. Lying just south of the Rilo, or Balkan, Mountains, Macedonia in 1901 was the sole remaining European possession of the Ottoman Empire. Historically important because it commanded the mountain corridor route leading from Central Europe to the Mediterranean, Macedonia had been subjected to countless invasions.² As of 1900 the threat of war hung over the province once again as Bulgarian irredentists and Macedonian nationalists sought to overthrow Turkish rule.

² Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 517.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, Russia, hoping to acquire a warm water port on the Mediterranean, pressured Turkey to recognize the national aspirations of various Balkan peoples. St. Petersburg, of course, expected the resulting Slavic Christian states to be Russian satellites. Increasingly, Tsarist diplomacy focused on Bulgaria and in 1878 Nicholas II went to war with the Sultan in order to set the Bulgars free. The conflict consisted of a series of lopsided defeats for Turkey, and in late 1878 the Sultan signed the Treaty of San Stefano which created a huge independent Bulgaria stretching from the Danube to the Aegean to the Black Sea and including all of Macedonia. The great powers, feeling that San Stefano threatened the balance of power not only in the Balkans but in Europe as well, intervened and forced Russia and Bulgaria to accept the Treaty of Berlin, which returned Macedonia to Turkey, in its stead.³

Not surprisingly, after 1878 both Bulgars and Macedonians labored unceasingly to free Macedonia from Turkish rule. To this end Prince Ferdinand, Bulgaria's expansionist ruler, established in 1895 the External Organization—known also as the Supreme Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Committee. Dedicated to armed revolution, the External Organization actually advocated "either way" to Macedonian redemption—autonomy or incorporation into the Bulgarian state. In intermittent and uneasy alliance with the Sofia-based group was a collection of militant Macedonian autonomists who in 1893 had organized themselves into the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. Between 1893 and 1897 IMRO concentrated on gathering arms and perfecting its organization. Each Turkish *kaza*, or county, became a revolutionary district complete with IMRO *cheta*, or militia. IMRO agents, who were fond of comparing themselves to the *haidositi*, Macedonian Robin Hoods who had for years protected Christians from the "barbarous Turk," levied taxes on the Macedonian peasantry, compelled the natives to conceal members of the chetas, and generally sought to establish a shadow government able to assume immediate control once the forces of the Sultan were defeated. In 1897 the Turks discovered the existence of IMRO when they unearthed a cache of revolutionary arms hidden in the Macedonian village of Vinitza. The incident touched off a general war between IMRO and the Turkish military establishment which lasted from 1898 through 1903.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, 408–09.

⁴ Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, 425, 519; Theodore I. Geshkoff, *Balkan Union: A Road to Peace in Southeastern Europe* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1940), 34–35; Christ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula: A History of the Macedonian Movement for Independence Since 1878* (St. Louis: Blackwell Wielendy, 1938), 17–18, 41–45, 49–51, 56–57; and G. Buchanan to Foreign Office, Jan. 1, 1907, in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914* (London: Great Britain Foreign Office, 1928), 5:202.

By 1900 several of IMRO's leaders had come to the conclusion that expulsion of the Turks and attainment of Macedonian independence would require not only continued direct action but foreign intervention as well. Although the western Europeans were sympathetic to the cause of Macedonian independence, the chances in 1900 that one or more of the Powers would force the Turks to relinquish Macedonia appeared remote.⁵ Consequently the revolutionaries looked increasingly to the New World for sympathy and aid. In cities from Boston to Oakland literally hundreds of Macedonian immigrants-turned-propagandists worked to persuade the United States to intervene in the Balkans and oust Turkey from her last European stronghold.⁶ "Some of the powers are going so far as to openly encourage the Turk to go on in the extermination of the defenseless Christians while the rest of them are playing the part of lukewarm spectators," declared one IMRO circular which was widely distributed in the United States. "American interference . . . is the only effective measure against the present slaughter and the only means of producing peace, order, and good government."⁷ And, in fact, American public opinion was well aware of the situation in the Balkans and sympathetic to the victims of Turkish oppression. Nonetheless, the Republic's tradition of noninvolvement in European affairs proved stronger than its desire to crush the Turk, and the support given Macedonia by the United States continued to be largely verbal and moral.⁸

A deterioration in relations between IMRO and the External Organization in 1901, during which the latter attempted to exterminate the former, persuaded the IMRO leaders to seek American aid by a more direct means. The close working relationship that existed between IMRO and the External Organization between 1895 and 1901 had been maintained largely through the efforts of Boris Saraffof, head of the Organization as well as officer in the Bulgarian army. The alliance crumbled, however, when in 1901 Saraffof temporarily fell from grace and was imprisoned by Bulgarian authorities. With Saraffof languishing in the royal dungeon Ferdinand selected a successor to head the External Organization. With the Prince's blessing, the new president, a Bulgarian general named Tson-

⁵ Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, 522; and Anastoff, *The Tragic Peninsula*, 50.

⁶ Charles Dickinson to John Hay, Mar. 10, 1902, Dispatches of United States Consul to Sofia, RG 59, Department of State, National Archives (hereafter referred to as DUSCS); Anastoff, *The Tragic Peninsula*, 52; G. Rirtchevsky to Charles Dickinson, Jan. 16, 1902, Box 3, Papers of Charles Dickinson, Library of Congress; W. W. Peet to Judson Smith, Dec. 9, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, Papers of the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard Univ. and *Oakland Enquirer*, Nov. 7, 1901.

⁷ "To the Christian Churches in Great Britain and U.S.A.: An Appeal from the Protestant Churches in Bulgaria," Sept. 18, 1903, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 15, ABCFM Papers.

⁸ Sidney N. Fisher, "Two Centuries of American Interest in Turkey," *A Festschrift for Frederick B. Artz* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1964), 122.

cheff, proceeded to rid by force when necessary the revolutionary movement of its autonomist elements. Thus, by the fall of 1901, those within the External Organization and IMRO who refused to see annexation as the only solution to the Macedonian question were having to fight a two-front war, one against the Turks and the other against Tsoncheff.⁹

Two IMRO members who refused to abandon the cause of Macedonian independence were Yani Sandanski, a former school teacher, a socialist, and a veteran revolutionary, and Hristo Tchernopeef, a rugged *chetnik* chieftain. Both were charter members of IMRO, district committee representatives, and fanatical autonomists. By late September 1901 pressure on the two men and their followers in northern Macedonia had become intense. "Tsoncheff's rank impudence was backed by Ferdinand's gold," Tchernopeef later wrote, "and with the pretense of revolution he began sending big, armed bands across the frontier to oust us out of our rayons [fortified camps]."¹⁰ At this point Sandanski and Tchernopeef decided to capture an American living in Macedonia, collect a large ransom from the United States, and blame the whole affair on Turkey. Such a bold stroke, they believed, would provoke the United States into demanding an end to Turkish misrule in Macedonia while in the meantime providing them with the ready cash necessary to defeat the Bulgarian annexationists.¹¹

In searching for a victim, IMRO inevitably turned to the American missionary community in the Balkans. The Protestant evangelists living in Bulgaria and Macedonia constituted one of the largest and most active proselytizing bodies in the world, and although there was some United States commercial activity in that area, the missionaries comprised America's most important link to European Turkey. American missionary activity in the Balkans dated back to 1810, the year a group of Presbyterian and Congregationalist clerics founded the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions. By 1903 the Board had 140 workers in the field operating out of over 70 mission stations spread throughout Bulgaria and Macedonia.¹²

Between 1878 and 1903 the American missionaries living in the Balkans became increasingly anti-Turkish and openly sympathetic to the cause of

⁹ Anstasoff, *Tragic Peninsula*, 60-63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66; and Albert Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit* (New York: Duffield, 1909), 257.

¹¹ Anstasoff, *Tragic Peninsula*, 66; "Bulgaria, Past and Present," May 31, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers; and Will S. Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People, with an Account of the Balkan Wars, Macedonia, and the Macedonian Bulgars* (Boston: Page, 1914), 365.

¹² Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1977* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971), 40-42; and "Bulgaria, Past and Present," May 31, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers.

Macedonian liberation. The Turkish government, which viewed the ABCFM representatives as purveyors of such dangerous concepts as democracy and nationalism, and Moslem religious leaders, who perceived the missionaries as spiritual threats to the nation of Islam, vied with each other in harassing Protestant clergy and layworkers in Macedonia.¹³ Such persecution tended to create a desire within the American community to see Macedonia under a new political authority. In addition, the missionaries absorbed anti-establishment ideas from the people among whom they lived and worked.¹⁴ Literally dozens of high-ranking Macedonian-Bulgarian officials were graduates of Robert College in Constantinople.¹⁵ Both George Washburn, president of Robert College, and William W. Peet, American Board treasurer for Turkey, cultivated former students of the institution, and as a result they both influenced and were influenced by the irredentists in Sofia. In addition, as the Sublime Porte had repeatedly pointed out, the large Protestant congregations in Strumitza, Salonica, Razlog, Bansko, and other towns along the Macedonian-Bulgarian border were hotbeds of nationalism. Not a few members of the IMRO *chetas* were graduates of local missionary schools. In March 1902 J. F. Clarke, head of the American Collegiate and Theological Seminary in Bulgaria, reported to Boston that the Protestant pastor at Bansko had been a revolutionary leader until the previous spring and that twenty of the mission students in that community were part of a band planning an attack on the Turks.¹⁶ It was not difficult for the missionaries to view the members of the IMRO and the External Organization as Christian soldiers fighting against the forces of tyranny and heathenism. "I respected them," Clarke confessed in his report on the student revolutionaries in Bansko, "and my heart was with them."¹⁷ In December 1902 E. B. Haskell complained to his superiors in Boston: "The general situation of the country is the worst in the nine years of my residence in Macedonia. The Turkish government is the same old reactionary, tyrannical, heartless monstrosity it has always been . . . I suppose it is useless to dwell longer on the Unspeakable Turk."¹⁸ By the turn of the century a number of ABCFM representatives were even going so far as to urge United States intervention to oust the "unspeakable Turk" from Europe. "Macedonia ought to be free," proclaimed Clarke in 1904. "If it is possible for

¹³ Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 40-42.

¹⁴ See, for example, William Webster Hall, *Puritans in the Balkans* (Sofia: "Cultura" Printing House, 1938), 48-49.

¹⁵ "Bulgaria, Past and Present."

¹⁶ J. F. Clarke to J. L. Barton, Mar. 4, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ E. B. Haskell to J. L. Barton, Dec. 5, 1902; and J. L. Barton to John Hay, Feb. 28, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 15, ABCFM Papers.

America to do ought for their freedom, it will be like the act of freeing Cuba and the Philippine Islands."¹⁹

Whether Macedonia was to be a part of Bulgaria or an independent nation was far less important to the missionaries than expulsion of the Turks; they were convinced that law and order would return to the Balkans only after the Sultan's minions were driven from Europe. Peace and social order, in turn, were essential to the expansion of Christianity. In September 1902 Ellen M. Stone, ABCFM representative in charge of the "Bible women" of Macedonia and Bulgaria,²⁰ wrote United States Consul General in Bulgaria, Charles Dickinson, urging immediate action by the Roosevelt administration to dislodge the Turks. "The indispensable thing," she concluded, "is to have Turkey (Macedonia) a safe place for anyone to live in."²¹ E. B. Haskell concurred: "I don't see where this anarchy is to end. . . . You can imagine that under these circumstances people's minds are largely occupied and religious work makes little headway."²²

Ironically, one of the factors that persuaded Sandanski and Tchernopeef to seize a missionary for ransom was the sympathy of the American religious community for their cause. The revolutionaries anticipated that the Americans would direct their hostility toward Turkey rather than IMRO and that the missionaries might even prove to be cooperative during the course of the kidnapping.²³

On September 3, 1901 Sandanski, Tchernopeef, and 20 IMRO *chetniks* captured Ellen Stone as she and several native companions returned from conducting a training school at Bansko. With a view to public opinion, Stone's abductors, whom the missionaries thereafter referred to as "brigands," made the capture as dramatic as possible, swooping down on the party as it wound its way through a narrow defile in the rugged Perim Mountains in northern Macedonia. The brigands, whom Stone described in her ransom letters as "bearded, fierce of face, wild of dress . . . all athletic and heavily armed," spoke only Turkish and attempted to portray themselves as bandits with simple monetary motives. In order to terrorize the party more completely, the revolutionaries brained a Turkish soldier who inadvertently wandered on the scene. On September 4, Sandanski and Tchernopeef released all of the party except Stone and Mrs. Katerina

¹⁹ J. F. Clarke to Charles Dickinson, Apr. 2, 1904, Box 3, Dickinson Papers. See also J. F. Clarke, "Macedonia and the Capture of Miss Stone," Nov. 19, 1903, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 20, ABCFM Papers.

²⁰ *The Missionary Herald*, 48 (Apr. 1902), 143.

²¹ E. M. Stone to Charles Dickinson, Sept. 12, 1902, Box 3, Dickinson Papers.

²² *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1902; and E. B. Haskell to John G. A. Leishman, Feb. 25, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 18, ABCFM Papers.

²³ H. C. Haskell to J. L. Barton, Aug. 19, 1903, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 18, ABCFM Papers.

Tsilka, a native co-worker of Stone's whom the brigands decided to retain as "chaperon," and then fled with the two women northward into the mountains. On September 26, H. C. Haskell, station chief at Samokov (Bulgaria) received a note from Miss Stone indicating that she and Mrs. Tsilka, who was then seven months pregnant, would be shot unless a ransom of 25,000 Turkish pounds (\$110,000) was delivered to their captors within twenty days.²⁴

Stone and Tsilka's kidnapping threw the American missionary community and the State Department into momentary disarray. Despite a half-century of missionary activity in the Balkans, no ABCFM representative had ever been captured and held for ransom.²⁵ Officials involved in the case were hampered both by lack of precedent and the knowledge that every decision they made would constitute a precedent that would either plague or enlighten future generations.

The immediate reaction in both Boston and Washington was to follow the path of least resistance and seek release of the captives through application of direct pressure on the Turks. On September 6, Dr. Charles Daniels, one of the corresponding secretaries of the Board, notified Secretary of State John Hay of Stone's and Tsilka's plight and requested that United States representatives in Constantinople demand of the Porte that Turkish authorities secure Stone's release immediately.²⁶ Both Consul-General Charles Dickinson and Minister John G. A. Leishman complied, but the results were hardly what the Board expected or desired.²⁷ On September 20 a Macedonian messenger delivered another beseeching message from Miss Stone to Treasurer Peet in Constantinople. "The men who captured us first showed courtesy . . . towards us. . . . But now since Turkish soldiers and Bashi-Bazouks [Moslem irregulars] have begun to pursue us . . . our condition is altogether changed. . . . Therefore I beg you to hasten the sending of the sum and that you will insist before the Turkish government that it stop the pursuit of us by the soldiers . . . otherwise we will be killed."²⁸ At the same time the Turkish authorities in Bansko, Razlog, and other north Macedonian communities began to harass local Protestants, claiming that they and the missionaries, including Miss Stone, had engineered a fake kidnapping in order to raise funds for the Macedonian revolutionaries. Throughout late September and early Oc-

²⁴ Sonnichsen, *Confessions of Macedonian Bandit*, 261; and Ellen M. Stone, "Six Months Among Brigands," *McClure's Magazine* (May 1902), 3-16.

²⁵ "The Case of Miss Stone," *The Literary Digest*, 23 (Oct. 19, 1901), 458.

²⁶ Charles Daniels to John Hay, Sept. 6, 1901, Miscellaneous Letters, RG 59, Department of State, National Archives (hereafter ML, DOS).

²⁷ Judson Smith to J. W. Baird, Sept. 9, 1901, ABC: 2.1, Vol. 209, ABCFM Papers; and P. H. Lazzaro to Charles Dickinson, Sept. 5, 1901, Post Records, Salonica Consulate, RG 59, Department of State, National Archives.

²⁸ Ellen M. Stone to W. W. Peet, Sept. 20, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 19, ABCFM Papers.

tober, the various stations in Macedonia flooded the "Rooms," as the Board's headquarters in Boston were called, with reports of beatings and torture of local Protestant clerics and laymen. As a result Minister Leishman, at the Board's urgent request, reversed field and directed the Porte to call off his troops.²⁹

At this point the Board decided to go ahead and pay the ransom and on September 23 it so directed Treasurer Peet in Constantinople.³⁰ The ABCFM's decision was largely the product of pressure applied by the captive's relatives and friends. Especially vociferous in Stone's behalf was *The Christian Herald*, for which she had worked. "No sum of money, be it ever so large, can ever be named as a true standard of value for a human life," proclaimed the *Herald*. "There are gradations also of value, some lives ranking far higher than others in the service of their country and in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We hesitate not to say, *Miss Stone must be ransomed with gold, cost what it may!*"³¹ Hard-heartedness, the Board realized, was a label it could ill-afford. Too, Boston was certain that sooner or later Turkey could be made to pay.³²

The Board's decision to pay up, however, soon came under attack from field workers in Macedonia and Bulgaria. Whether or not they sympathized with the Macedonian cause, most of Stone's colleagues were reluctant to support any action that would encourage further acts of terrorism.³³ "What is paid will be a price on our heads," warned Reverend J. W. Baird. "If I should be so taken," declared the Reverend James Clarke, who like Baird, was situated at Samokov, "I do not think I should wish ransom to be paid for me whatsoever the result might be." Consequently, on September 28 Smith, enclosing a copy of Clarke's letter, notified Secretary of State Hay that the Board would, after all, not ransom Miss Stone; rejection of the brigands' demands was "indispensible to the security of the American missionaries now resident in European Turkey."³⁴

Although it had decided not to accede to the terrorists' demands, the Board was equally determined to avoid the blame for Miss Stone's death if that should be the result of its refusal to pay. Consequently, at its October 4 meeting the committee, after reaffirming its decision not to pay

²⁹ J. Henry House to Judson Smith, Oct. 1, 1901; "Incidents Connected with the Search for Miss Stone," Sept. 26, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 19, ABCFM Papers; and Judson Smith to John Hay, Sept. 20, 1901, ML, DOS.

³⁰ Judson Smith to J. H. House, Sept. 23, 1901, ABC: 2.1, Vol. 209, ABCFM Papers.

³¹ "Ransomed With Gold," *Christian Herald*, 24 (Oct. 16, 1901), 910.

³² Judson Smith to J. H. House, Sept. 20, 1901, ABC: 2.1, Vol. 209, ABCFM Papers; and *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1901.

³³ See for example William E. Curtis, *The Turk and His Lost Provinces* (Chicago: F. H. Revell, 1903), 228.

³⁴ Judson Smith to John Hay, Sept. 28, 1901, ML, DOS.

the ransom, resolved to place management of the affair squarely in the hands of the Roosevelt administration. To this end, the Board cabled Washington and arranged an audience with the new President to acquaint him with the position of the missionary community.³⁵ Shortly after the committee adjourned, Smith wrote Peet: "Tonight Mr. Capen [Dr. Samuel Capen, President of the ABCFM] and I go to Washington to urge the government to do whatever is necessary to secure Stone's release. . . . I tremble to think of the alternatives."³⁶

By the time the American Board met on October 4, the Roosevelt administration had had a chance to consider its options and work out a course of action. Initially the State Department had acquiesced in Boston's demands and attempted to secure the captives' release through pressure on Turkey. By the middle of the month, however, American officials realized that those who had kidnapped Stone and Tsilka were not simple mountain bandits. On September 20, Leishman wrote Hay that Miss Stone's captors were not Turks, but agents of the "Bulgarian Committee" who had seized the two women in hopes of making money for their cause, or provoking foreign intervention, or both. On September 24, the Department requested Consul-General Dickinson, then in Salonica interviewing missionaries in connection with the Stone affair, to go to Sofia and persuade the Bulgarian government to lend all possible aid in forcing the brigands to release Stone and Tsilka.³⁷

Actually, despite its instructions to Dickinson, the State Department had decided that a diplomatic approach to the Stone problem, whether through Turkey or Bulgaria, had little chance of success. If the United States allowed the Turks to force a confrontation with the brigands there was a good chance, as Miss Stone had warned, that the captives would be killed. Indeed, such had been the case in a number of previous incidents involving Europeans held for ransom when the Turks had been allowed a free hand. Nor could the Ottoman government reasonably be expected to pay the ransom for in so doing it would be contributing to a movement whose sole purpose was to overthrow Turkish rule in Europe.³⁸ Attempts to force the Bulgarian government to accept responsibility and secure Stone's release would be pointless as well. Washington assumed that the outrage had been perpetrated by Bulgarian irredentists controlled by

³⁵ Judson Smith to Alvey Adee, Oct. 4, 1901, Papers of Theodore Roosevelt, Library of Congress.

³⁶ Judson Smith to W. W. Peet, Oct. 4, 1901, ABC: 2.1, Vol. 209, ABCFM Papers.

³⁷ John G. A. Leishman to John Hay, Sept. 20 and Sept. 21, 1901, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, 1903), 999 (hereafter *PRFRUS*).

³⁸ Alvey Adee to Spencer Eddy, Oct. 11, 1901, *PRFRUS*, 1010; and Alvey Adee to W. L. Penfield, Sept. 23, 1901, ML, DOS.

Ferdinand, and thus the Bulgarian government could not logically be expected to bring them to justice.³⁹ Moreover, because the outrage had occurred on Turkish soil, the Bulgars could legitimately disclaim all responsibility. Finally, the Roosevelt administration could not afford to become too aggressive with Sofia lest it alienate Russia.⁴⁰

If government to government pressure was not likely to secure Miss Stone's release, what then? There was always the practical approach; Miss Stone could be left to her own devices. And at one point, Roosevelt favored just such a course. On October 2, the President wrote First Assistant Secretary of State Alvey Adee that the United States government should not be expected to rescue Miss Stone from her predicament: "Every missionary, every trader in wild lands should know and is inexcusable for not knowing that the American government had no power to pay the ransom of anyone who is captured by brigands or savages."⁴¹

Yet, there were a number of reasons why the administration could not abandon the beleaguered Bible worker to the wilds of Macedonia. The American Board, the State Department, and the White House were subjected to almost daily pleas and demands from Stone's family that the government effect her rescue. As time passed with no apparent progress in negotiations, her relatives sought to embarrass the administration by giving press interviews in which they pondered the possible dire circumstances of her imprisonment. In addition, if Miss Stone were to meet an untimely end, Roosevelt and Hay feared, the yellow press was sure to demand war with the responsible parties, whoever Hearst, Pulitzer, and other molders of popular opinion decided they might be.⁴² But in the end it was the Victorian morality of the age that prevented abandonment of Miss Stone. "Women have no earthly business to go out as missionaries in these wild countries," Roosevelt confided to Adee. "They do very little good but it is impossible not to feel differently about them than men. If a man goes out as a missionary he has no kind of business to venture to wild lands with the expectation that somehow the government will protect him as well as if he stayed at home. If he is fit for his work he has no more right to complain of what may befall him than a soldier has in getting shot. But it is impossible to adopt this standard about women."⁴³

³⁹ Charles Dickinson to M. Daneff, Oct. 8, 1901, and M. Daneff to Charles Dickinson, Oct. 11, 1901, DUSCS.

⁴⁰ John Hay to Charles Dickinson, Nov. 9, 1901, box 3, Dickinson Papers.

⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt to Alvey Adee, Oct. 2, 1901 in Elting E. Morrison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, 1951), 156.

⁴² Perley A. Stone to John Hay, Nov. 26, 1901, ML, DOS; and "The Abducted Missionary," *The Christian Herald*, 24 (Oct. 16, 1901), 868.

⁴³ Theodore Roosevelt to Alvey Adee, Oct. 2, 1901, in Morrison, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 157.

With the diplomatic and "practical" approaches discredited, the only alternative left to Roosevelt and Hay was payment of the ransom. The Rough Rider, however, was reluctant even to consider this option. Most obviously, if Washington even agreed to negotiate directly with the brigands, much less capitulate to their demands, it would be setting a dangerous precedent.⁴⁴ Moreover, after all of Roosevelt's rhetoric about stronger nations displaying firmness and the "right stuff" in their dealings with the "uncivilized," it would have been unseemly, to say the least, for the administration to have knuckled under to the terrorists.

After due deliberation, Washington decided that the only solution that could even begin to satisfy the multiple exigencies of the situation was for the missionaries themselves to raise and pay the ransom. Thus, when Capen and Smith called at the White House on October 5, Roosevelt declared that under no circumstances could the government finance Miss Stone's deliverance and then in the same breath insisted that it was "imperative" that the ransom be raised. When the Board members protested that the Prudential Committee had voted unanimously not to pay, the President suggested that the amount be collected through a popular subscription. Although Capen and Smith complained that the abduction was a national affair and that it ought to be the responsibility of the federal government, they agreed. As a sop to the disgruntled missionaries, Roosevelt promised finally that if after Stone's release the sum could not be extracted from Turkey, then he would go to Congress and request compensation.⁴⁵

In choosing ransom by popular subscription as a solution to the Stone affair, the Roosevelt administration and the American Board hoped simultaneously to deflect charges that they had appeased the forces of international political terrorism and to avoid responsibility for any harm that should come to Miss Stone. The private donation approach, however, contained an unforeseen pitfall. All concerned hoped to bargain with the brigands in order to hold the amount paid to an absolute minimum, their reasoning being the higher the ransom, the greater the inducement to future brigandage. Unfortunately, to be successful, a popular subscription required, above all else, publicity. Papers ranging from the *New York World* to the *Oakland Enquirer* not only urged their readers to contribute but printed almost daily the amounts raised. Sandanski and Tchernopeef learned through IMRO operatives in the United States that a fund-raising drive was underway and in the days that followed how much had been

⁴⁴ *Outlook*, 69 (Oct. 12, 1901), 344-45.

⁴⁵ Judson Smith to George F. Herrick, Nov. 25, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers; and Louise J. Peet, ed., *No Less Honor: The Biography of William Whillock Peet* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: Private Printing, 1939), 64.

collected on any given date. Thus, attempts by United States representatives to persuade the revolutionaries to accept less than had been collected were doomed to failure.⁴⁶

Efforts to secure Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka's early release were hampered by a prolonged misunderstanding between Washington and its representative in Sofia, Consul-General Charles Dickinson. From the first Dickinson assumed that the abduction was the work of the "Bulgarian revolutionary committee" and that the *komitate* was controlled directly by the Bulgarian government. He was, moreover, adamantly opposed to the payment of any ransom at all. Capitulation, he was convinced, would subject American business and religious interests in the Balkans to perpetual peril, and, in all likelihood, lead to the execution of the captives.⁴⁷ As a result, although Roosevelt, Capen, and Smith had decided on the 5th that the ransom should be paid, responsibility to be affixed and punishment extracted at a later date, the Consul-General, supported by a coterie of missionaries in Macedonia, continued well into November to seek to resolve the kidnapping through political pressure. Specifically, he attempted to compel the Bulgarian government and the Russian ambassador, whom Dickinson believed to be the driving force behind Bulgarian irredentism, to force their hirelings, the brigands, to release Stone and Tsilka.⁴⁸ He got nowhere.

By late November, Stone's family and friends were frantic. American and European papers were filled daily with reports of the captives' demise. "Miss Stone and Madame Tsilka cut to pieces by brigands and buried on the spot," ran a typical report in the *New York World*.⁴⁹ Led by Charles Stone, a brother and an influential Boston businessman, acquaintances and relatives had by November become openly critical of Dickinson and the hard-liners among the missionaries.⁵⁰ Particularly obnoxious to them was J. W. Baird who viewed the abductors as "Socialists" and "Anarchists," who believed the whole matter could be rectified by a "surprise armed attack" on the brigands, and who said as much to any

⁴⁶ See, for example, Judson Smith to W. W. Peet, Oct. 24, 1901, ABC: 2.1, Vol. 209, ABCFM Papers; *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1901; and H. C. Haskell to Judson Smith, Oct. 23, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 18, ABCFM Papers.

⁴⁷ Charles Dickinson to David J. Hill, Aug. 1, 1901, and Nov. 26, 1901, DUSCS; Charles Dickinson to David J. Hill, Sept. 4, 1901, and Charles Dickinson to John Hay, Nov. 20, 1901; and Charles Dickinson to F. Elliot, Dec. 5, 1901, Diary, Dickinson Papers.

⁴⁸ Charles Dickinson to W. W. Peet, Dec. 6, 1901, Diary, Dickinson papers; Charles Dickinson to John Hay, Nov. 20, 1901; and Charles Dickinson to David J. Hill, Oct. 2, 1901, DUSCS.

⁴⁹ Cable from Vienna Correspondent to *New York Evening World*, Nov. 29, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers.

⁵⁰ John Hay to C. A. Stone, Dec. 7, 1901, Reel 2, Papers of John Hay, Library of Congress; Charles Stone to David J. Hill, Dec. 3, 1901, ML, DOS.

reporter that would listen.⁵¹ On November 23 the Congregationalist published an article blasting Dickinson for violating his instructions and needlessly endangering the lives of the prisoners. Shortly thereafter Stone wrote both Hay and Judson Smith demanding that the Consul-General and his cohorts be brought to heel. "Coercing Bulgaria means inevitable conflict with Russia, Macedonian expectations realized, American mission imperiled, our hopes blasted," Stone warned the Secretary of State on December 2.⁵²

Thus, the State Department and American Board seemed to be back precisely where they had started. Hay, Adee, Smith, and Barton were sure of only two things: Stone and Tsilka must be ransomed as quickly as possible, and Dickinson must be excluded from the negotiating process.⁵³ The answers to the all-important questions of how and who were provided by Dr. George Washburn, head of Robert College in Constantinople and a man considered by many to be the most influential American in the Balkans. Washburn enjoyed particularly close ties with the Bulgarian government. Robert College had graduated a generation of Bulgarian leaders, including several current members of Ferdinand's cabinet, and Washburn, called by some "the father of Bulgaria," made it a practice to keep in touch with his former students.⁵⁴ Dickinson's handling of the Stone affair, especially his attempts to coerce the Bulgarian government, appalled the prominent Congregationalist. Convinced that both the Bulgarian government and the Russian representative in Sofia had done everything in their power to secure Stone's release, Washburn advised Hay and Roosevelt by cable on December 15 that there was no alternative except to come to terms with the brigands and pay the ransom. As the negotiations would be difficult and dangerous, they should be "confided to trusty men who know the people and language."⁵⁵

Well aware that the report would confirm existing assumptions in the State Department and tend to support a policy previously decided upon, Washburn in consultation with the United States Chargé d'Affaires in Constantinople, Spencer Eddy, took it upon himself to appoint and instruct the "trusty men." On December 13 the two persuaded W. W. Peet, Bible House Treasurer at Constantinople, and Alexander Garguilo, first dragoman (interpreter) at the American legation, to undertake the mis-

⁵¹ J. W. Baird to Judson Smith, Nov. 12, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers.

⁵² Charles Dickinson to W. W. Peet, Dec. 6, 1901; and J. W. Baird to J. L. Barton, Dec. 6, 1901, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 17, ABCFM Papers; Ellen Stone to John Hay, Dec. 2, 1901, ML, DOS.

⁵³ Alvey Adee to W. L. Penfield, Dec. 10, 1901, DUSCS; John Hay to Theodore Roosevelt, Dec. 13, 1901, Roosevelt Papers.

⁵⁴ Spencer Eddy to John Hay, Dec. 15, 1901, *PRFRUS*, 1015-16.

⁵⁵ George Washburn to Charles Dickinson and Spencer Eddy, Dec. 15, 1901, *PRFRUS*, 1017.

sion. Peet and Garguilo were to proceed to Salonica where, armed with letters from the Turkish minister of the interior, they would secure the full assistance of the Vali (governor). From Salonica they were to proceed to Djumabala near the Bulgarian border, there to make contact with the brigands and convince them to accept the \$66,000 that had so far been raised. The two men departed Constantinople the evening of December 16, 1901.

The Peet-Garguilo mission proved to be a dramatic, cloak-and-dagger affair. The Turkish authorities, while pretending to cooperate, were determined to prevent payment of the ransom and hoped to use the "committee" to locate and destroy the brigands. As a result, for nearly a month Peet and Garguilo traipsed around Macedonia followed by a large contingent of Turkish troops. Eventually the two men, using a third party intermediary, not only established contact with Stone's abductors but actually conducted negotiations. On February 2, in the Macedonian village of Bansko under the very noses of 200 Turkish troops, the committee turned over 230 pounds (\$66,000) of gold to the brigands in return for a promise to release Stone and Tsilka within ten days. Peet deceived the Turks by smuggling the ransom out of his closely watched cottage sixty pounds at a time, and then replacing it with an equal weight of lead shot.⁵⁶

Although the committee had no guarantee whatever that the brigands would fulfill their part of the bargain, they need not have worried, for Sandanski and Tchernopeef had been anxious to release their captives for months. Mrs. Tsilka had given birth to a baby girl in November and as a result the brigands were forced to deal not only with the unspeakable Turk, the treacherous General Tsoncheff, and a group of seemingly indecisive American negotiators, but to care for the needs of an infant as well. Moreover, Stone and Tsilka were hardly the helpless, breathless creatures depicted by the newspapers. Indeed, it is possible that the brigands suffered more from their act of terrorism than did the missionaries. As Tchernopeef put it several years later during an interview with an American reporter: "Have you ever found yourself in a position of strong opposition to a middle-aged woman with a determined will all her own? She assuming the attitude that you are a brute and you feeling it?"⁵⁷ The revolutionaries, moreover, had to endure almost daily attempts to convert them to Protestant Christianity. Nevertheless, because of the intensity of Turkish patrol activity, three weeks passed before the brigands felt it was

⁵⁶ Peet, *No Less Honor*, 67-103; John L. C. Booth, *Trouble in the Balkans* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905), 243.

⁵⁷ Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, 256; and *Harper's Weekly*, 45 (Dec. 28, 1901), 13531.

safe to part with their captives. Finally, to the relief of both captives and captors, Tchernopeef and Sandanski deposited Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka beneath a pear tree near the Macedonian town of Strumitza. It was 4 a.m. on February 23, 1902.⁵⁸

Aside from its obvious melodramatic qualities, the Stone affair is noteworthy for a number of reasons. The 66,000 *Miss-Stonki*, as the revolutionaries called the ransom money, were used to finance the Macedonian uprising of 1903. Shortly after Stone and Tsilka's release, a series of events and forces combined to heal the breach between the External Committee and IMRO. In the spring of 1902 the Turks released a group of IMRO leaders captured in Salonica in the summer of 1901. Simultaneously, Boris Saraffof returned from exile to resume direction of the External Committee and IMRO. During the last days of March a secret Congress of revolutionary leaders representing all factions convened in Sofia.⁵⁹ Hristo Tchernopeef attended and turned the Stone ransom money over to the general body for its disposition. The funds were subsequently spent to purchase arms and ammunition preparatory to a general uprising scheduled for the fall. The rebellion was temporarily delayed but then, in August 1903, some 50,000 Macedonians and Bulgars rose in revolt, not a few of whom were armed with Manlicher and Mauser rifles purchased with *Miss-Stonki*. Although the rebels succeeded in seizing most of the Monastir *vilayet*, where they organized a revolutionary council and attempted to liberate the rest of Macedonia, the revolution was quickly and brutally suppressed.⁶⁰

As far as the United States was concerned, the Miss Stone affair constituted a particularly thorny introduction to one of the burdens of major power status. Many Americans who during the Spanish-American War had gloried in anticipation of empire and enhanced prestige that victory over a European power would bring failed to perceive that once the United States took its place among the international elite that it would become a suitable object of political terrorism. The abduction was an intensely frustrating affair for the country. The honor of the nation demanded that Stone be released immediately, the guilty parties apprehended and punished, and the responsible government chastised.⁶¹

⁵⁸ J. Henry House to J. L. Barton, Feb. 28, 1902, ABC: 16.9, Vol. 18, ABCFM Papers.

⁵⁹ "Miss Stone and a Secret Congress," Translated from *Weekly Zornitza* (Philippopolis, Bulgaria) May 16, 1901, Box 3, Dickinson Papers; George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 277; and Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, 523.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ In December 1901 Eddy wrote Hay: "There is such a vast number of persons concerned in it and it had become so much an international question that its far-reaching results and the universal distrust engendered render it almost impossible to take any direct line of action and hold to it." Spencer Eddy to John Hay, Dec. 13, 1901, *PRFRUS*, 1913-14.

The fact that the victim was a missionary and a woman served to make the populace particularly sensitive to considerations of honor. The seizure was, in a way, a challenge to America's nationhood. Yet, as in all such situations there was the possibility that hasty action might bring about the death of the prisoners.⁶² Also serving to hold the Big Stick in check was the fact that the brigands were Macedonians struggling against the hated Turk, freedom fighters who had enjoyed widespread sympathy in the United States for a number of years.⁶³ Thus, it was particularly difficult in this case to differentiate between good and evil. Nearly everyone wanted to blame Turkey, and some did, despite the facts of the case, but in the end there was no clear consensus about what course the authorities should take.⁶⁴

For the Roosevelt administration, the Stone affair was an education in the diplomacy of terrorism. Although the stakes were relatively low, no incident more vividly demonstrated to the new President the importance of circumstance in policy formation. The United States could not officially pay the ransom. That would be cowardly, dishonorable, and a bad precedent. Yet, prevailing morality would not permit the sacrifice of Stone's life. Even if T.R. had not shared conventional attitudes toward the "weaker sex," there was the election of 1904 to consider. Despite Roosevelt's statement in 1898 that Turkey was one of the two countries in the world he would most like to smash, bludgeoning the Sultan would in this case serve no useful purpose.⁶⁵ Coercion of Constantinople would have endangered Miss Stone's life, produced further Turkish outrages against the native population, and thereby provoked not only the Turks but the Macedonians against United States interests in the Balkans.⁶⁶ Pressure on Bulgaria was out of the question. With Russia posing as Ferdinand's protector, Roosevelt, Hay, and Adee believed there was simply no chance that Washington could compel Sofia to bring the brigands to heel.⁶⁷ (The State Department never clearly understood the political situation in the Balkans; i.e., that from September 1901 through

⁶² See *New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1891; *Outlook*, 69 (Oct. 12, 1901), 344-45; "The Case of Miss Stone," *The Literary Digest*, 23 (Oct. 19, 1901), 457-58; and "Miss Stone," *The Independent*, 54 (Mar. 2, 1902), 591.

⁶³ The nation's dilemma was evident in an editorial entitled "Miss Stone's Release," *The Independent*, (Feb. 27, 1902), 533.

⁶⁴ See for example *Outlook*, 69 (Oct. 19, 1901), 394-96 and *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 24 (Dec. 1901), 661-62; see also "The Case of Miss Stone," *The Missionary Review of the World*, 34 (Dec. 1901), 938-39; *New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1901; and "Miss Stone and the American Board," *The Independent*, 53 (Oct. 17, 1901), 2488-89.

⁶⁵ Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 45.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1902.

⁶⁷ Charles Dickinson to David Hill, Nov. 3, 1902, Diary, Dickinson Papers; and Charles Dickinson to John G. A. Leishman, Feb. 25, 1902, DUSCS.

March 1902 the External Committee and IMRO were at war.⁶⁸) Moreover, alienation of the Russian government, as attempts to coerce Bulgaria would surely accomplish, would hardly serve America's long-range interests in Europe. Roosevelt labored throughout his administration to maintain the balance of power in Europe and prevent a clash over the Balkans, goals that necessitated cooperation rather than confrontation with St. Petersburg.

In short, the Stone affair served to introduce T.R. and twentieth-century America to international political terrorism. While all too familiar to contemporary governments, the complicated negotiations that inevitably follow such kidnappings were novel to Roosevelt and his advisors. Appropriately enough, Alvey Adee, the career diplomat who had been in the State Department for nearly a generation, summed up the administration's reaction to the Stone affair. "This has been a hard week for me," he wrote John Hay after a particularly harrowing round of negotiations, "and my mind is black and blue all over with the coming of the beloved Saturday afternoon. . . . I have been worse off than Stephen,—I have been Stoned all the time with a continuous but unfatal result."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Curtis, *Turk and His Lost Provinces*, 240; and Spencer Eddy to John Hay, Dec. 15, 1901, *PRFRUS*, 1015–16.

⁶⁹ Bemis, *American Secretaries of State*, 179.