

Habsburg H-Net Discussion Network
Carnegie Report, Macedonian Muslims during the Balkan Wars, 1912

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Macedonian Muslims During the Balkan Wars

The following eye-witness accounts from Macedonia are taken from: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington, DC: The Endowment, 1914).

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APPENDIX A(1)
Documents Relating to Chapter II

THE PLIGHT OF THE MACEDONIAN MOSLEMS DURING THE FIRST WAR

No. 1. EVIDENCE OF RAHNI EFFENDI, of Strumnitsa.

The Bulgarian army arrived on Monday, November 4, 1912. With the two Bishops and two other notables I went out to negotiate the surrender of our town with the commandant. On entering the town, the Bulgarians disarmed the Moslem inhabitants, but behaved well and did not loot. Next day, a Bulgarian civil authority was established, but Servians had the military control. The Bulgarian army marched on to Doiran; on its departure looting and slaughter began. I saw an old man of eighty lying in the street with his head split open, and the dead body of a boy of thirteen. About thirty Moslems were killed that day in the streets,--I believe by the Bulgarian bands. On Wednesday evening, an order was issued that no Moslem might leave his house day or night until further notice. A commission was then formed from the Bulgarian notables of the town; the Servian military commander presided, and the Bulgarian Civil Governor also sat upon it. A local gendarmerie was appointed and a gendarme and a soldier were told off to go round from house to house, summoning the Moslems, one by one, to attend the commission. I was summoned myself with the rest.

The procedure was as follows: The Servian commandant would inquire, "What kind of a man is this?" The answer was simply either "good" or "bad." No inquiry was made into our characters; there was no defense and no discussion; if one member of the commission said "bad," that sufficed to condemn the prisoner. Each member of the commission had his own enemies whom he wished to destroy, and therefore did not oppose the wishes of his fellow members. When sentence was pronounced the prisoner stripped of his outer clothes and bound, and his money was taken by the Servian commander. I was pronounced "good," and so perhaps were one-tenth of the prisoners. Those sentenced were bound together by threes, and taken to the slaughter house; their ears and noses

were often cut off before they were killed. This slaughter went on a month; I believe that from three to four thousand Moslems were killed in the town and the neighboring villages.

NOTE.--At this point the conversation became general and the four notables Strumnitsa each related how he had lost a son, a grandson, or a brother in this massacre.

No. 2. ABDUL KERIN AGA, of *Strumnitsa*, confirmed the statements of the previous witness. His own son was brought bound to the gate at his house; he then went to Toma, the chief of the Bulgarian bands, and tried to bargain with him for his son's life. Toma demanded a hundred pounds; he had previously paid on two different occasions 50 (pounds)

NOTE.--(1)The reader will note here and there in the appendices faulty phraseology, which has not been translated into good English. These documents reproduce testimony given by soldiers, peasants and uneducated people, and the Commission has endeavored to preserve the original wording in all such cases.

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and 70 (pounds) to save this same son. He told Toma that he had not the money ready, but would try to sell a shop if the Bulgarians would wait until evening. Toma refused to wait and his son was shot.

No. 3. HADJI SULEIMAN EFFENDI, of *Strumnitsa*, agreed with the account which Rahni Effendi had given of the doings of the commission. The Servian troops left the town and Bulgarians replaced them, and remained up to the outbreak of the second war. On the whole they behaved fairly well. There was, however, some looting when they evacuated the town after their defeats in the second war; and about thirty people were then killed, including the Greek priest. The Greek army then occupied the town. They subsequently gave the order that the Moslems must abandon the town; and added that they, the Greeks, would burn the houses if the Moslems would not. I myself offered 3 pounds to the Greek patrol which came to burn down my house. The sergeant refused to take it, and said that if he did not burn the house another patrol would. The buildings were all systematically burnt, and the same thing was done in about thirty-two neighboring villages. "We [pointing to the others who were present] were all large farmers, employing, each of us, nearly 300 laborers and tenants; now we have nothing." (See also No. 65.)

No. 4. The Carnegie Commission visited the camp of the Moslem refugees outside Salonica and talked with two groups of them who came from villages near Strumnitsa. The Greeks told them that the Bulgarians would certainly massacre them if they stayed in the town; they urged, and pressed and persuaded. Most left under pressure. A few remained, and these were forced to leave. They heard that other villages had been burnt after they left, and some of them actually saw their villages in flames. They had received

no rations from the Greeks for four days; they had no plans for the future, did not wish to go to Asia, nor yet to settle in Greek territory. They saw "no good in front of them at all."

A group of these refugees from the village Yedna-Kuk, near Strumnitsa, gave their experiences during the first war. The Bulgarian bands arrived before the regular army, and ordered the whole male population to assemble in the mosque. They were shut in and robbed of 300 pounds in all. Eighteen of the wealthier villagers were bound and taken to Bossilovo, where they were killed and buried. The villagers were able to remember nine of their names.

No. 5. The officials of the *Comite Islamique*, of Salonica, informed us on September 1 that there were 135,000 Mohammedan refugees in and around the town, most of whom had arrived since the second war. Of these, six or eight thousand had already gone to Asia Minor, chiefly to Mersina, Adalia, and Skenderoun. The Greek government had promised to supply five steamers, and in the last few days 3,000 had received tickets. The committee reminded the Greek government that it was responsible for the refugees now in Salonica, since it had obliged them to quit their homes. It has requested the government to supply these refugees with bread. The committee was then spending 50 pounds daily on bread. In reply to questions, the committee did not believe that any considerable number of the Moslem refugees would be given lands in Greek Macedonia. Some perhaps might be given at Kukush, but not more than one or two thousand people could be absorbed as farm laborers.

No. 6. EARLY EVENTS AT KUKUSH, *in the autumn of 1912.*

The Catholic priest Gustave Michel, superior of the mission at Kukush, gave the following information to the correspondent of *Le Temps* (July 10). He could testify to certain massacres perpetrated by the Bulgarian bands at Kurkut. A Bulgarian band led by Donchev shut all the men of the place in the mosque, and gathered the women round it,

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in order to oblige them to witness the spectacle. The *comitadjis* then threw three bombs at the mosque but it was not blown up; they then set fire to it, and all who were shut up in it, to the number of about 700 men, were burnt alive. Those who attempted to flee were shot down by *comitadjis* posted round the mosque, and Pere Michel found human heads, arms, and legs lying about half burned in the streets. At Planitsa, Donchev's band committed still worse atrocities. It first drove all the men to the mosque and burnt them alive; it then gathered the women and burnt them in their turn in the public square. At Rayonovo a number of men and women were massacred; the Bulgarians filled a well with their corpses. At Kukush the Moslems were massacred by the Bulgarian population of the town and their mosque destroyed. All the Turkish soldiers who fled without arms and arrived in groups from Salonica were massacred.

NOTE.--The Commission failed to meet Father Michel, and must leave to the correspondent of *Le Temps* the responsibility for his statement.

No. 7. ALI RIZA EFFFNDI, *of Kukush*, states that the Bulgarian bands entered Kukush on October 30, after the Turks had left. Toma of Istip, their leader, installed himself as governor, and told the people to have no fear. Both Servian and Bulgarian detachments passed through the town, but only a very few soldiers were left there while the main army went on to Salonica. After the occupation of Salonica, disarmed Turkish soldiers in groups of two to three hundred at a time marched through Kukush on their way to their homes. They were captured by the Bulgarian bands and slaughtered, to the number of perhaps 2,000. A commission of thirty to forty Christians was established, which drew up lists of all the Moslem inhabitants throughout the district. Everyone was summoned to the mosque and there informed that he had been rated to pay a certain sum. Whole villages, were made responsible for the total amount; most of the men were imprisoned and were obliged to sell everything they possessed, including their wives' ornaments, in order to pay the ransom. They were often killed in spite of the payment of the money in full; he, himself, actually saw a Bulgarian *comitadji* cut off two fingers of a man's hand and force him to drink his own blood mixed with raki. From the whole county (Caza) of Kukush 1,500 (Turkish pounds) were taken. The chief of bands, Donchev, arrived and matters were still worse. He burnt three Turkish villages in one day, Raianovo, Planitsa and Kukurtovo--345 houses in all. He shut up the men in the mosques and burnt them alive; the women were shut up in barns and ill used; children were actually flung against the walls and killed. This the witness did not see, but heard from his Christian neighbors. Only twenty-two Moslem families out of 300 remained in Kukush; the rest fled to Salonica. Twelve small Moslem villages were wiped out in the first war, the men killed and the women taken away. He was in Kukush when the Greeks entered it. The Bulgarians in leaving the town burnt nothing but the bakers' ovens. The Greeks systematically and deliberately plundered and burnt the town. He believes that many aged Bulgarian inhabitants were burnt alive in their houses. He himself found refuge in the Catholic orphanage.

No. 8. REPORT SIGNED BY YOUSSEUF EFFENDI, *President of the Moslem Community of Serres, and sealed with its seal.*

On November 6, 1912, the inhabitants of Serres, sent a deputation to meet the Bulgarian army and surrender the town. Next day Zancov, a Bulgarian Chief of bands, appeared in the town with sixteen men, and began to disarm the population. A day later the Bulgarian army entered Serres and received a warm welcome. That evening the Bulgarian soldiers, on the pretext that arms were still hidden in the houses of the Moslems, entered them and began to steal money and other valuables. Next day the Moslem refugees from the district north of Serres were invited to appear at the prefecture; they obeyed the Summons; but on their arrival a trumpet sounded and the Bulgarian soldiers seized

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their arms and began to massacre these inoffensive people; the massacre lasted three hours and resulted in the death of 600 Moslems. The number of the victims would have been incalculable had it not been for the energetic intervention of the Greek bishop, and of the director of the Orient bank.

The Moslems of the town were then arrested in the cafes, houses and streets, and imprisoned, some at the prefecture and others in the mosques; many of the former were slaughtered with bayonets. Bulgarian soldiers in the meantime entered Turkish houses, violated the women and girls and stole everything they could lay their hands on. The Moslems imprisoned in the overcrowded mosques were left without food for two days and nights and then released. For six days rifle shots were heard on all sides; the Moslems were afraid to leave their houses; and of this the Bulgarian soldiers took advantage to pillage their shops. Moslem corpses lay about in the streets and were buried only when they began to putrify. For several days the Bulgarian soldiers destroyed houses and mosques in order to obtain firewood. The corn and animals of the Moslems were seized by the Bulgarian authorities without any receipt or note of requisition. Complaints made on this subject were ignored. The furniture and antiquities belonging to the schools, mosques and hospitals were taken and sent to Sofia. The Bulgarians subjected several Moslem notables to all sorts of humiliations; they were driven with whips to sweep the streets and stables; and many a blow was given to those who dared to wear a fez. In a word, during the Bulgarian occupation the Moslems were robbed and maltreated both in the streets and at the prefecture, unless they had happened to give board and lodging to some Bulgarian officer. The Bulgarian officers and gendarmes before leaving Serres took everything that was left in the shops of Moslems, Jews and Greeks, and pitilessly burnt a large number of houses, shops, cafes, and mills.

September 5, 1913.

No. 9. LIEUTENANT R. WADHAM FISHER [an English Volunteer in with Fifth Battalion of the Macedonian Legion].

Lieutenant Fisher explained the circumstances of the massacre which occurred at Dede-Agatch. "A sharp fight took place outside the town between the legion and the army of Javer Pacha; wherever the Turkish villages showed the white flag, our troops were forbidden to march through them. Our men had been much inflamed by reports of outrages committed by Turks on Bulgarians near Gumurjina. We entered Dede-Agatch under fire towards 9 p.m. after marching and fighting all day. Javer Pacha insisted on withdrawing into the town and we were obliged to pursue him. Bullets were still whistling through the streets, but the local Greeks came out to show us where the Turkish soldiers were posted. The Greeks feared a massacre and regarded our coming as their salvation. I saw something of the search for arms; no one was harmed. At 11 p.m. we received an order to withdraw from the town, and to march to a village twenty-five kilometers away. Some 150 men were left in the town, either because the order did not reach them or because they were too exhausted to obey it. No officer was among them, and they were organized by a private soldier, Stefan Boichev, a contractor of Widin. The Greek bishop afterwards stated that Stefan Boichev had done good service in reestablishing order. On November 19 the lower class Greeks and the soldiers began to pillage the town together. A certain number of the local Turks were undoubtedly killed. These excesses must be explained by the absence of any officers.

No. 10. BORIS MONCHEV, Bulgarian Mayor of Dede-Agatch.

This witness confirmed Lieutenant Fisher's account, believed that not more than twenty Turks were killed in the massacre, and insisted that the local Armenian porters (*hamels*) had taken the chief part in the disturbances. There were in the town fully 8,000 Turkish

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refugees, of whom all the men were armed and had taken part in the fight outside the town from 7 to 9 p.m. After the first disastrous night, everything was done to maintain order by a commission which included the Greek bishop and himself. The 142 Macedonian volunteers obeyed their orders. The Bulgarian army returned to the town six days later, November 25, and order was fully restored.

The notorious incident of the killing of Riza-bey, the Imperial Turkish Commissioner of the Junction railway line, is to be explained by the fact that as he was being taken under arrest to the school he attempted to snatch a rifle from a Macedonian volunteer, and was killed by the volunteers on the spot.

In the course of a search on the eve of the second war twenty-seven Gras rifles and letters used for signalling were found in Greek houses; also a store of rifles at the bishop's palace. In consequence of this, fifty leading Greeks were arrested as hostages for the good behavior of the town, and sent to Bulgaria. It is probable that some of these were liberated after paying bribes. The town was without a regular government from July 22, and much robbery took place; but he had previously taken the precaution of sending the Armenian *hamals*, who were always a troublesome element, out of the town.

No. 11. VASIL SMILEV, a Bulgarian Teacher at Uskub.

He stated that on the entry of the Servian army into Uskub, efforts were made by the Servian authorities to persuade all the Bulgarian teachers to join the bands which they were forming in order to pursue the Turkish bands. He served for twenty or thirty days, but left the band because it was continually engaged in burning, torturing and killing. He witnessed the slaughter of eighteen Turks who had been collected in the Bulgarian school of the Tchair quarter of the town. They were killed in the open and their bodies thrown into a well near the brickworks. This happened about 9 p.m., four days after the festival of Saint Paraskeva. He named four of them. Later he witnessed the Servian chief of police, Lazar Ilyts, who had been responsible for this massacre, superintending the pillage of the village Butel. Near this village he met a number of Albanian villagers fleeing from their village. A Servian major unveiled and kissed a young girl among them. Her father killed him on the spot. Thereupon the Servian band massacred the whole body of fugitives, men and women, to the number of sixty. This he witnessed personally and reported it at the time to the Russian consulate. After this he refused to have anything further to do with the Servian bands. He was expelled afterwards from Uskub with the other Bulgarian teachers.

NO. 12. A MOSLEM NOTABLE of Yailadjik (name suppressed), a village one and a half hours' distant from Salonica, states--On Nov. 7, 1912, most of us fled to Salonica, leaving about twenty-five men in the village. On the 8th the Bulgarian soldiers came and did no harm, except to take the food and forage they required. They passed on after spending a day and a night, and two days later the Greek soldiers came, together with people from the neighboring Greek villages. They killed fifteen Moslems, and took all the furniture, 9,500 sheep and goats, 1,500 cattle, and all the grain which they could find, and then burned the 250 houses of the village.

No. 13. BULGARIAN COURTS-MARTIAL.

On January 10, 1913, the headquarters of the Bulgarian army issued the following telegraphic order (No. 2360) to the commanders and military governors of Thrace and Macedonia:

Following on the secret order of December 13, I order and hold you personally responsible for the execution of my order that inquiries be instituted into all excesses,

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robberies, and violations, which may have been committed against the inhabitants, of the enemy's country occupied by the troops under your orders. We came to liberate these countries in the name of freedom and order, and the commander-in-chief can not remain indifferent towards the criminal acts of individuals, since otherwise we should lead the world to suppose that our civilization is in no respect superior to that of our adversaries, and the honor of the Bulgarian army would thereby be compromised. This would result in causing unforeseen difficulties to our country. The Bulgarian army must prove to the eyes of the whole world that now, as always, justice and legality are supreme within its ranks and that criminals do not go unpunished. Report immediately on the subject of the crimes which you have ascertained to have taken place and the measures you have adopted.

On February 15, 1913, the Supreme Military Tribunal transmitted to the President of the courts-martial the following order:

(No. 989). Report immediately the number of persons condemned up to the present moment for various crimes, and especially murders, violations, and pillage committed against the local population, whatever its nationality, and particularly the Turkish population. * * * The essential interests of this State demand that cases of this kind should be dealt with with the utmost despatch and should be given preference over all others. The military courts must enable the government to show the civilized world that the crimes committed in the course of the war of liberation have not gone unpunished.

No. 13a. A report drawn up by the Moslem community of Pravishta, on the atrocities committed in that town and the neighboring villages since the withdrawal of the Turkish authorities on October 24, 1913.

[NOTE.--The names of all of the killed (195 in all) and of some of those robbed, and also those of the aggressors, are fully given in the original Turkish document, but are omitted in the following summarized translation].

Village of Giran.--Twenty-one Moslems killed by the Greeks of the village of Nikchan, and a sum of about 3,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen. Six hundred goats were also stolen for the benefit of the Greek church at Nikchan and 2,400 goats taken by the Greeks of Djerbelan.

Village of Palihor.--Six Moslems killed by the band commanded by Demosthenes, head-master of the Greek school of Palihor, pillage to the extent of about 3,000 (Turkish pounds). One woman (named) was violated by Demosthenes and another.

Village of Micheli.--Demosthenes and other Greeks pillaged the village, carried off many oxen and much corn and stole credit notes for a sum of 3,000 (Turkish pounds).

Village of Drama.--Two Moslems killed by Greeks of Pravishta.

Village of Osmanli.--Six Moslems killed by Greeks of Holo; about 1,500 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Samalcol.--Twenty-one Moslems of this village were taken by Miltiades Machopoulos of the band of Myriacos Mihail to the ravine of Casroub, where they were massacred by the Greek bandit Leonidas and others. Over 1,500 (Turkish pounds) were stolen from them; a shop looted of stock worth 1,500 (Turkish pounds), and about 7,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen in the village generally.

Village of Tchanahli.--Two Moslems killed by Greeks of Holo; 200 sheep and a mule stolen.

Village of Mouchtian.--Twenty-five Moslems killed by Myriacos Mihail, his band and some local Greeks in the ravine of Casroub. "In the twentieth century of progress the skeletons which may still be seen in this ravine, present to the eyes of justice a monument capable of enlightening her regarding Hellenic civilization." About 3,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Dranich.--2,000 (Turkish pounds) in money, seven goats and 1,000 sheep stolen by the Greeks of Palihor and Nikchan.

Village of Ahadler.--Nine Moslems killed by Greeks of Casroub, and sums amounting to 258 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Tchiflik.--Ten Moslems killed by the same Greeks of Casroub, and about 1,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Pethor.--Fourteen Moslems killed by the grocer Myriacos Mihail, member of the bishop's council, Panahi, priest of Boblan, and Miltiades Machopoulos. [The band led by these three men is frequently mentioned.] Local Greeks stole about 1,500 (Turkish pounds).

Village of Rehemli.--Three Moslems killed by Greeks of Holo.

Village of Sarili.--Five Moslems killed by Greeks of Pethor, and about 1,000 sheep and goats stolen.

Village of Dedeбал.--Eight Moslems killed by Myriacos Mihail and his band; about 1,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Deranli.--Three Moslems killed by Myriacos Mihail and his band; about 3,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Orphano.--Three Moslems killed by the Greeks. One of these was seized by the priest Panahi on a telephonic order from the Greek bishop of Pravishtа and killed at Essirli. The bishop had had the telephone removed from the Turkish governor's office to his own house, and by this means he gave orders to the whole district.

Village of Boblan.--Eight Moslems killed by Myriacos Mihail and his band, specially sent for the purpose by the bishop; about 800 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Carpan.--Four Moslems killed by the band of Myriacos Mihail sent by the bishop. The Greeks of Carpan stole all the goods and corn belonging to the local Moslems, and did not leave them even the grain which they had in their household jars. The Greek braves brutally robbed the women of their ear-rings. Later Greek soldiers joined the villagers and began to violate the young women, until they were obliged to take refuge in the towns and villages held by Bulgarian troops. About 500 (Turkish pounds) was stolen in this village. *Village of Leftera.*--Four Moslems killed by Greeks. The wife of Arnaut Agouchagha, who voluntarily embraced Islam fifty years ago, was taken to Pravishtа to be reconverted to Christianity. She told the Bulgarian chief, Baptchev, that she did not consent to this conversion. Baptchev had her released, but on her return to the village she was "odiously lynched by Greek savages." Baptchev took 500 (Turkish pounds) from a Turk at the instigation of the Greek priests of the monastery of Nozle, who also robbed the villagers of about 2,000 sheep.

Village of Kochkar.--Two Moslems killed by Greeks of Drazeni and about 1,000 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Kale Tchiflik.--Five Moslems killed, and all the cattle seized by the priests of Nozle.

Village of Devekeran.--Four Moslems killed by Greeks of Pravishta; about 500 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Essirli.--Nineteen Moslems killed in the ravine of Casroub by Greeks of that village. About 1,500 (Turkish pounds) stolen.

Village of Kotchan.--One Moslem killed to satisfy the vengeance of the bishop and of the priest Nicholas. "It is worthy of remark that many Imams figure among the list of victims in the district of Pravishta * * * further that the victims are almost always men known for their enlightenment. * * * The reason why the assassins killed Imams and the most enlightened notables for choice is obvious when one reflects that there are 13,000 Moslems in this district out of a total population of 20,000."

Town of Pravishta.--Ten Moslems were killed, including one woman, while the town was held by Bulgarian bands, under the command of a chief named Baptchev, who established himself in the governor's palace and acted as governor and commandant. They were killed by three Greeks (named) and the Bulgarians. On the evening when an assassination was to take place, the students of the Greek school assembled in the courtyard of the government house and sang the Greek national anthem.

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The Greek bishop formed a municipal council composed of the priest Nicholas, the grocer Myriacos Mihail, and others (named). The sentence of death was passed by this council, approved by the archbishop, and communicated to Baptchev to be carried out. Similar councils were formed in the villages which took their orders from that of Pravishta. The Bulgarian chief Baptchev served as the tool of the Greek bishop and notables. In this town the Moslem population has incurred a loss of about 3,000 (Turkish pounds), stolen by the Bulgarian bands, guided by the Greeks.

The daughter of the commander of the gendarmeries, Suleiman Effendi, who is now in Constantinople, was summoned one night to the bishopric to be converted to Christianity. The bishop threatened her, in order to convert her, but the Bulgarian chief Baptchev, when he heard of this, went to the bishopric, saved the girl, restored her to her family, and thus prevented her conversion. Some days later he gave her a passport to go to Constantinople.

Thanks to the orders issued by Baptchev the mosques of the town and the villages were preserved intact, and no one was molested on account of his religion.

Neither the Bulgarian officers, nor their soldiers nor even the members of the bands committed any violence against women, but Baptchev took money to the value of about 6,000 (Turkish pounds).

The priest Panahi of the village of Nikchan and the Greek antiquarian Apostol, of the village of Palihor, who disapproved of the unworthy conduct of the bishop, were killed by his orders. The Bulgarian authorities after a careful inquiry were convinced of the bishop's guilt. The bodies of the victims of the town of Pravishta are still in the ravine of Cainardja, at the place called Kavala Bachi.

We certify that this report is in complete agreement with the registers of the Moslem community of Pravishta and true in all its details.

[Seal.] Moslem Community of the Caza of Pravishta, 1331.

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