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THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE ILINDEN UPRISING IN OTTOMAN MACEDONIA

Abstract. – The Ilinden Uprising represents the most significant event in Ottoman Macedonia at the turn of the twentieth century. It marked a decisive moment whose repercussions were both profound and enduring. Despite its historical importance, the consequences of the uprising, particularly the socio-economic impact, the material devastation, and the human losses—have received relatively limited scholarly attention. In most studies, these effects are reduced to aggregate figures such as the number of destroyed houses or recorded casualties, without a more detailed examination of their wider implications for Macedonia in the years that followed. The brutal suppression of the revolt, carried out by the Ottoman army and irregular bashi-bazouks, inflicted severe socio-economic consequences on Ottoman Macedonia, consequences that continued to resonate throughout the subsequent years until the very end of Ottoman rule. This paper seeks to analyze the economic aftermath of the uprising, with particular focus on agriculture, trade, production, prices, and the overall standard of living..

Keywords. – agriculture, unrest, prices, standard, balance of trade.

On July 20 / August 2, 1903, the Ilinden Uprising commenced in the territory of the Bitola Revolutionary District. In other revolutionary districts of Ottoman Macedonia, insurgent activities had already begun during the summer of 1903 and gained momentum following the outbreak of the uprising in Bitola.¹ In the Serres Revolutionary District, however, the district congress officially designated the Feast of the Cross (Krstovden) as the start date

¹ Гоѓиев, Ванчо. „Илинденското востание (1903)“. *Востанијата во Македонија*, Филозофски факултет – Скопје, Скопје, 2015, 220.

of the uprising, although sporadic insurgent actions had occurred there even prior to this formal commencement.

The situation in Ottoman Macedonia had been unstable since the autumn of 1902, and uncertainty was widespread. Political instability continued through the first half of 1903, culminating in the outbreak of the uprising. Indeed, from spring 1903 onward, Ottoman Macedonia was effectively in a state of near-permanent uprising. The period was marked by searches, frequent clashes between Ottoman forces and revolutionary bands, looting, and widespread violence. This volatility intensified notably following the Thessaloniki assassinations. The revolutionary atmosphere, the uprising itself, and its subsequent suppression had profound repercussions on the economy of Ottoman Macedonia, which was already in a fragile state. Political uncertainty inevitably affects economic activity: people tend to adopt a wait and see approach, postponing business decisions, which leads to a general decline in commercial activity.

In June 1903, expectations regarding economic developments in the upcoming period were still positive. It was anticipated that, barring unforeseen events, the market situation would improve; a good harvest provided hope, and profitable business with winter goods was expected.² However, these economic projections did not materialize and proved to be entirely inaccurate. Less than a month after the projections, an Austrian report dated July 10, 1903, based on information received from consular representatives, noted that the political upheavals on the Balkan Peninsula were adversely affecting the overall business situation. The report recommended adopting a cautious approach when granting credit to companies in the region, emphasizing the need to first obtain detailed information on the companies' creditworthiness.³

The events of 1903 in Ottoman Macedonia affected all sectors of the economy without exception. Given the interaction and interconnectedness of economic sectors, the consequences in one sector often spilled over into others, even in cases where they were not directly impacted by the suppression of the uprising. This dynamic further amplified the overall effect that the events and upheavals of 1903 had on the economy.

² Андоновски Польански, Христо. „Неколку австриски документи за стопанската ситуација во Македонија непосредно пред Илинденското востание“, *Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет*, 10-11, 1959, 96.

³ Ibid 91.

AGRICULTURE

Almost 80% of the population in Ottoman Macedonia was engaged in agriculture and involved in agricultural production. Agriculture therefore represented the most important economic sector in Macedonia, carrying the greatest significance. For several consecutive years prior to the uprising, the population in many areas had suffered from poor harvests.⁴ In 1902, yields were low, leaving the rural population in 1903 still unable to recover and living in poverty.⁵ Just when hopes were rising for successful future harvests and improved conditions, all hope was extinguished by fires.⁶ From spring 1903 onward, due to looting and mistreatment by soldiers and bashi-bazouks, peasants were not able to carry out fieldwork.⁷ In the days immediately preceding and during the uprising, the danger increased further. Fieldwork became highly uncertain. Although even the insurgents, before and at the start of the uprising, urged peasants to quickly harvest their grain and store it in specially dug pits to protect it from looting, some peasants still suffered casualties. For example, two peasants from the village of Bolno, in the Resen area, were killed while harvesting their fields.⁸ The peaceful population, if they ventured into the fields to work, were immediately attacked. Many Christian villages reported that when someone dared to go to the fields, Muslims from neighboring villages treated them as komitadji, shooting at them on sight.⁹ Because of such atrocities, peasants were understandably reluctant to go out and tend their fields, which automatically led to decreased agricultural pro-

⁴ Битоски, Крсте. *Дипломатски одгласи за Илинденското востание*. Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1983, 54.

⁵ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 93.

⁶ *Македонија во делата на странските патописци 1903*. Редактор Александар Матковски, Ѓурѓа, Скопје, 2007, 156.

⁷ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 248.

⁸ *Въстаническото движение във югозападна Македония (до 1904 год.) по спомени на Славейко Арсовъ*. Съобщава Л. Милетичъ, Македонският научен институт, София, 1925, 107.

⁹ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 112; *Британски документи за историјата на Македонија т. VI, (1901-1904)*. Вовед и редакција Александар Трајановски, Државен архив на Република Македонија и Македоника литература, Скопје, 2012, 409

ductivity.¹⁰ Cultivation in some regions, such as the area between Gjavato and Resen, was completely halted.¹¹ Irrigation of fields was also obstructed; for example, in the village of Chucher, an Ilave unit in August prevented residents from diverting water from the Lepenec River into the fields, necessary for watering corn, while women were forbidden from going into the fields due to the risk of dishonor.¹²

The unharvested crops were burned by the army and the bashi-bazoiks.¹³ At the same time, portions of the harvest that had not been destroyed by fire were gathered by the Turkish population under the protection of the authorities. Much of this produce, along with stolen livestock, was then used to supply the soldiers brought in to suppress the uprising.¹⁴ In both cases, whether the harvest was burned or stolen, the damage inflicted upon the agricultural population was evident, and for them there was not any difference between a destroyed or a looted crop.

The prevailing insecurity delayed and, in many cases, made the autumn sowing impossible, which, had it not been carried out, could have resulted in widespread famine.¹⁵ Fortunately, in the regions of Bitola, Resen, Prespa, and Ohrid, peasants began in October to harvest what remained and prepare the land for sowing.¹⁶ However, fieldwork was extremely difficult. The population had been left without tools and draft animals, which had been burned or looted, making it impossible for peasants to sow the land as in previous years.¹⁷ Some villages had nothing sown at all and lacked oxen, while

¹⁰ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 108.

¹¹ *Македонија во делата на странските патописци 1903*. Редактор Александар Матковски, Ѓурѓа, Скопје, 2007, 181.

¹² *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 108.

¹³ Лапе, Љубен. „Неколку нови документи за 1903 година“. Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет, 6, Скопје, 1953, 271.

¹⁴ *Македонија. Собрник от документи и материали*. Отговорни редактори: Димитър Косев, Христо Христов, Николай Тодоров, Валентин Станков, Редактори: Вой Можинов, Любомир Панайотов, Българска академия на науките, София, 1978, 489.

¹⁵ *Turkey. No. 2. (1904). Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe*, London, 1904, 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid* 104.

¹⁷ Ѓорѓиев, Ванчо. *ВМРО 1893-1903 поглед низ документи*. Матица македонска, Скопје, 2013, 448.

others, instead of plowing with animals, had to till the fields manually, and still others had no seed for sowing.¹⁸ For instance, the village of Selce in the Bitola region had sown and plowed less than a quarter of its usual area in 1904.¹⁹ Even Hilmi Pasha acknowledged the reduced agricultural productivity, telling the British consul in Thessaloniki, Graves, that peasants were unable to plow and sow their land as usual, and that the harvest in 1904 would decline by 10% in the worst-affected areas.²⁰

Overall, the grain supply in Ottoman Macedonia in 1903 was reduced. Regions that normally produced a regular and abundant harvest failed to generate even a significant portion of their usual output and potential. Considering the unrest in the country, the year could be described as one of average prosperity; in fact, the harvest was somewhat better than in 1902, which had been a disastrous year. However, the 1903 harvest had initially promised much but ultimately resulted in only an average yield,²¹ largely as a consequence of the uprising. Moreover, there is a difference between the amount of harvest collected and the profit actually gained from it. For the population, a substantial portion of the harvest was stolen, so the profits did not reach the peasants' hands. In addition, in 1903, summer crops such as sesame, maize, and millet were severely damaged by drought.²²

By 1904, the harvest showed signs of improvement. Yields were above average, but only a small portion of the produce was exported. All the wheat was consumed for domestic use.²³ The reduced export of grain crops was a direct consequence of the suppression of the uprising, which had caused famine among the Macedonian population. According to some data,²⁴ the number of

¹⁸ *Британски документи за историјата на Македонија т. VI, (1901-1904)*. Вовед и редакција Александар Трајановски, Државен архив на Република Македонија и Македоника лтера, Скопје, 2012, 505.

¹⁹ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. трети том, Догер, Скопје, 1997, 340.

²⁰ *Британски документи за историјата на Македонија т. VI, (1901-1904)*. Вовед и редакција Александар Трајановски, Државен архив на Република Македонија и Македоника лтера, Скопје, 2012, 504.

²¹ *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1903 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1904, 3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 3.

²⁴ Лапе, Љубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903-1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 59.

people at risk of hunger and exposure to the cold in the winter 1903/1904 amounted to approximately 30,000.

The agricultural population also faced the threat of losing their land. Lacking the means to cultivate it or to purchase tools and draft animals, there was a real danger that the free population would be transformed into tenant farmers.²⁵ The General Staff of IMRO had already warned of this at the beginning of September 1903, stating that the population would be forced to cede their land to "Turks and Greek Orthodox fanatics", thereby being entirely converted into tenant farmers.²⁶ In addition to this process, the appropriation of land left by Christian refugees was also permitted.²⁷ This occurred even when refugees had close relatives remaining in the village. For example, the property of Jane I. Kucakov from Mehomia, who had fled to Bulgaria, was seized by the chiflik owner Mustafa Hadzhija Saliov, along with the produce from his fields for one year and his livestock, despite the fact that he had a sister in the village who could have looked after his property.²⁸

Another factor that affected agriculture, as well as the broader economy and flour production, was the systematic destruction of water mills during the uprising, aimed at preventing villages from supplying flour to the revolutionary bands.²⁹ As a result, nearly all mills in the Resen, Kastoria, and Ohrid regions were destroyed.³⁰ With the destruction of the mills, the remai-

²⁵ Македония. Собрник от документи и материали. Отговорни редактори: Димитър Косев, Христо Христов, Николай Тодоров, Валентин Станков, Редактори: Вой Можинов, Любомир Панайотов, Българска академия на науките, София, 1978, 490.

²⁶ Гоѓинев, Ванчо. ВМРО 1893-1903 поглед низ документи. Матица македонска, Скопје, 2013, 449.

²⁷ Китанов, Валентин. Принос към дипломатическата история на България, Григор Начович и Българо-турското споразумение от 1904 г., Документален сборник. Синева, София, 2004, 79.

²⁸ Ibid 299.

²⁹ Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 134.

³⁰ Лапе, Јубен. „Неколку нови документи за 1903 година“. Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет, 6, Скопје, 1953, 271; Дракул, Симон. Македонија меѓу автомоцијата и дележкот. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 355; Дневници и спомени за Илинденско-преображенското въстание. Съставители Здравка Нонева, Цочо Василев Билярски, Надежда Йорданова Недкова, Пейо Пеев, Мария Арнаудова, Стражил Точев, Александър Петров Маринов, Редактори Любомир Атанасов Панайотов, Дойно Христосков Дойнов, Димитър Христов Минцев, Главно управление на архивите на Министерския съвет, Издателство на Отечествения фронт, София, 1984, 121-122.

ning grain—which had not been stolen or destroyed—could not be ground into flour for local consumption or sale. The destruction of all village mills thus contributed significantly to increased poverty.³¹

In addition to the production of plant-based agricultural crops, livestock farming also declined as a consequence of the unrest. Almost all livestock was either killed or looted.³² As a result, in the years following the uprising, the number of animals was drastically reduced. For example, in the village of Belica, the population had approximately 200 pairs of draft animals and around 800–900 cows before the uprising, whereas by 1905 the village had only 50 pairs of draft animals and no significant number of other domestic animals.³³ A. Toshev noted in 1904 that livestock farming in the Kastoria and Florina districts had declined to its lowest level for several years, as the authorities, accusing shepherds of banditry, did not leave them in peace.³⁴ The reduction in livestock was further exacerbated by the systematic destruction of forests and fires caused by Ottoman forces during the uprising, as part of their efforts to tighten the encirclement of the insurgents. A vivid description of the condition of peasants and agriculture is provided by H. N. Brailsford, who recorded: "The mills, like the houses, had been burned; the dams were destroyed, machines ruined, and in some cases even the stones were shaken and smashed to pieces. Of the horses and oxen that the peasants had owned, even after the authorities publicly claimed that the stolen goods would be compensated, only one out of four remained. As for the sheep, other smaller animals, and poultry, I doubt that one out of ten survived. Even the plows were burned or stolen."³⁵

Such a desperate situation in agriculture offered little hope for a better future. To make matters worse, the winter of 1904 was extremely cold, with

³¹ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 134.

³² Ѓорѓиев, Ванчо. *ВМРО 1893-1903 поглед низ документи*. Матица македонска, Скопје, 2013, 448; *Македонија во делата на странските патописци 1903*. Редактор Александар Матковски, Гурѓа, Скопје, 2007, 156.

³³ *Македония и Тракия в борба за свобода (краят на XIX–началото на XX век). Нови документи*. Величко Георгиев и Стайко Трифонов, Македонски научен институт, София, 1995, 346.

³⁴ Добријанов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 128.

³⁵ Брејлсфорд, Ноел, Хенри. *Македонија. Нејзините народни и нејзината иднина*. (второ издание), Култура, Скопје, 2003, 229-230.

heavy snowfall, and the peasants remembered no harsher winter.³⁶ In the years following the uprising, emigration further contributed to the decline of agriculture. Two-thirds of the emigrants were farmers, while the remainder were artisans, resulting in a reduction of agricultural labor and, to some extent, other types of workers.³⁷ By 1905, the labor shortage for the fields had become extremely serious, and the area under cultivation began to shrink.³⁸

COMMERCE

The unstable political situation began to affect trade in Ottoman Macedonia as early as the spring of 1903. In one Austrian document dated 16 March is noted that the political events were casting a deep shadow over trade in the Macedonian hinterland.³⁹ The French vice-consul in Bitola, on 3 April, recorded that the violence and bandit attacks had particularly damaging consequences on the trade of Prilep, which was already seriously disrupted.⁴⁰ An even greater stagnation in trade and business activity was caused by the Salonika bombings. The entire economic "life of the country was struck into lifelessness".⁴¹ The stagnation was not limited to Thessaloniki and its vicinity, but spread throughout Macedonia.⁴² The repression and arrests in the Skopje vilayet led to the complete paralysis of trade and economic life there, particularly in Skopje itself. Under such conditions, the citizenry was ready to launch public demonstrations,⁴³ which the Bulgarian trade agent Nedkov

³⁶ *Грчки документи за историјата на Османлиска Македонија (крај на XIX и почеток на XX век)*. Избор, предговор, вовед и редакција Димитар Јоровски, Државен архив на Република Северна Македонија, Скопје, 2023, 202.

³⁷ *Австриски документи за историјата на македонскиот народ 1905-1906*. Т. I, Редакција, превод и коментар Данчо Зографски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1977, 196.

³⁸ Gounaris, C. Basil. „Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century“. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Volume 7, 1989, 144.

³⁹ Андоновски Пољански, Христо. „Неколку австриски документи за стопанската ситуација во Македонија непосредно пред Илинденското востание“, *Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет*, 10-11, 1959, 86.

⁴⁰ Илинден во француски дипломатски документи. Избор, редакција и коментар Глигор Тодоровски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 65.

⁴¹ Силяновъ, Христо. *Освободителният борб на Македония, томъ първи, Илинденско-то възстание*. Илинденската организација, София, 1933, 266.

⁴² Битоски, Крсте. *Дипломатски одгласи за Илинденското востание*. Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1983, п8.

⁴³ Михов, Василев, Милен. *С кръст и меч. Българската екзархия, ВМОРО и освободителните борби на българите в Македония и Одринско (1902 - 1912)*. Универзитетско издавателство „Св. Кирил и Методий“, Велико Търново, 2002, 45.

barely managed to avert. In the capital of Bitola vilayet, following the St. George's Day events, insecurity, frequent violence, and murders led to the closure of the marketplace, while the authorities' efforts to reopen it proved fruitless.⁴⁴ Thus, Bitola took on a "deserted appearance".⁴⁵ A food shortage began to be felt, and only bakeries continued to bake bread, under police protection. The vali requested the bishops to send priests to persuade the population to reopen the marketplace. On the other hand, however, guards patrolling the streets threatened that if any "giaour" dared appear outside his house, they would slaughter him, and thus no one dared leave their home.⁴⁶ The Bulgarian trade agent informed the inhabitants that if they obeyed the vali's order and reopened their shops, they would do so at their own risk.⁴⁷ Finally, on 4/17 May 1903, part of the marketplace reopened, but there was no trade whatsoever. Peasants did not come from the villages, as was customary, to sell their produce and purchase other necessary goods.⁴⁸ A similar situation prevailed in Thessaloniki and other towns. On 6 May, according to O'Connor, the peace in Thessaloniki was restored, but among the population there was great anxiety over impending unrest, and business remained paralyzed.⁴⁹

The commercial and economic stagnation continued during the summer months preceding the uprising. By the end of June, the situation had not significantly changed. Because of rumors of an impending war, all major trading flows had come to a halt.⁵⁰ The French consul in Thessaloniki, in his

⁴⁴ *Извештаи од 1903 година на српските конзули, митрополити и училишни инспектори во Македонија*. Редакција и коментар Љубен Лапе, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1954, 204; Димески, Димитар. „Гурговденскиот масакр во Битола, 1903 година“. *Историја/Journal of History* 7.2, 1971, 150-151.

⁴⁵ *Британските конзули во Македонија 1797-1915, документи*. Редакција Драги Ѓоргиев, Избор и превод Драги Ѓоргиев и Зорица Божиновска, Државен Архив на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2002, 304.

⁴⁶ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 124.

⁴⁷ *Британските конзули во Македонија 1797-1915, документи*. Редакција Драги Ѓоргиев, Избор и превод Драги Ѓоргиев и Зорица Божиновска, Државен Архив на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2002, 304.

⁴⁸ *Извештаи од 1903 година на српските конзули, митрополити и училишни инспектори во Македонија*. Редакција и коментар Љубен Лапе, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1954, 220.

⁴⁹ *Turkey. No. 1. (1904)*. Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe March-September, 1903, London, 1904, 95

⁵⁰ *Извештаи од 1903 година на српските конзули, митрополити и училишни инспектори во Македонија*. Редакција и коментар Љубен Лапе, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1954, 237, 246.

report of 27 May, wrote that the state of trade was becoming more serious by the day. Police measures that halted all traffic after 8 p.m. were sufficient to paralyze a large number of shops.⁵¹ Widespread distrust prevailed, as it was uncertain who might be implicated in the collapse of certain trading houses owned by the exarchists. The customary practice in Thessaloniki, that goods be paid for in cash on the first Friday following a transaction, was no longer observed, due to insecurity, immediate payment in gold or silver was demanded.⁵² The city tram company was losing 300 francs per day, while the gas company failed to generate sufficient income to pay its staff. Revenues at the port from imports during the first half of May had fallen by 50% compared with the same period in 1902.⁵³ Consequently, the income of the shipping companies also decreased by 50% compared with the same period of the previous year.⁵⁴ With the collapse and losses suffered by some merchants, not only did their standard of living decline, but so too did the standard of the entire working population, as companies and firms no longer had sufficient income to pay their employees.

In the Serres Sanjak the economy was no better. This situation was felt particularly in the town of Serres itself. Beginning in May and continuing into early June, the market was almost non-functional, and most shops remained closed. Macedonians were forbidden to travel by railway and the trains ran empty, carrying only 20–30 passengers, while peasants were permitted to go only to the district towns. Consequently, trade was in an almost complete standstill, and any real commerce was out of the question.⁵⁵

It was the Exarchist population that suffered the most from the shortages, though the Turks also complained. The economic stagnation was caused not only by the general insecurity and paralysis, but also by the economic boycott, which in some places arose spontaneously, elsewhere because of the tense situation, and in certain areas was even proclaimed by order of the IMRO, carried out by the village consumer masses.⁵⁶ The Jews of Thessaloniki

⁵¹ Битоски, Крсте. *Дипломатски одгласи за Илинденското востание*. Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1983, 117.

⁵² Ibid, 118.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Пандевски, Д. Манол. *Илинденското востание во Македонија 1903*. Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1978, 83.

⁵⁵ Гоѓиев, Ванчо. *Слобода или смрт. Македонското револуционерно националноослободително движење во Солунскиот вилает 1893–1903 година*. Табернакул и Институт за историја - Филозофски факултет Скопје, Скопје, 2003, 517.

⁵⁶ Силяновъ, Христо. *Освободителният борб на Македония, томъ първи, Илинденско-то възстание*. Илинденската организация, София, 1933, 266–267.

themselves complained, “for there were no Christian merchants left with whom they could conduct business. The towns were in a state of siege”.⁵⁷ Foreign merchants also lamented. Nearly a month after the Thessaloniki events, the correspondent of *Die Information* in Thessaloniki wrote: “Our city is still under the terrible impression of the recent events. Trade and movement have ceased. Foreigners avoid the city, where murders and bomb attacks are the order of the day. A foreigner who comes here risks being arrested without any reason”.⁵⁸ The Austrian General Consulate reported on June 13, 1903, that the commercial situation in the region had become extremely difficult due to the Macedonian unrest. Traffic with the interior was almost completely cut off, and firms that depended on the collection of debts were in great distress.⁵⁹

The decline of trade, as well as the standard of living of the Exarchist merchants, was further affected by the internment measures carried out by the authorities. On June 23, Exarch Joseph wrote that all Bulgarian merchants, whose turnover reached millions, were arrested and then interned in their native places, even though they had lived in Thessaloniki for years. Merchants were also forbidden from traveling abroad to the centers with which they had established trade relations, since permits were not being issued. “As long as a merchant, craftsman, or worker is Bulgarian, he belongs in the interior”.⁶⁰ No permits for departure were issued in the Kastoria or Bitola regions either. In order to bypass the ban, the population had to convert to the Patriarchate.⁶¹ The Russian consul in Skopje, Mendelstham noted that the provincial authorities had recently “discovered the measure of exile to one’s homeland”. Thus, for example, if a man was born in Veles but had been living in Kumanovo for 30 years, where he had established a family and work relations, one day he would suddenly receive a summons from the police and be interned immediately in his birthplace, sometimes even without his family, who were often left behind to starve, having no one to provide for them.⁶²

⁵⁷ Брејлсфорд, Ноел, Хенри. *Македонија. Нејзините народни и нејзината иднина.* (второ издание), Култура, Скопје, 2003, 202-203.

⁵⁸ Силяновъ, Христо. *Освободителният борб на Македония, томъ първи, Илинденско-то възстание.* Илинденската организация, София, 1933, 266-267.

⁵⁹ Андоновски Попълски, Христо. „Неколку австриски документи за стопанската ситуация во Македонија непосредно пред Илинденското востание“, *Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет*, 10-11, 1959, 92-93.

⁶⁰ *Освободителната борба на Българите в Македония и Одринско 1902/1904 дипломатически документи.* Наука и изкуство, София, 1978, 268-269.

⁶¹ Ibid 269.

⁶² Ibid 287.

With the great insecurity and political upheavals, the economy of Ottoman Macedonia, already in stagnation by the spring of 1903, entered an even worse phase with the outbreak of the uprising, and especially after its suppression. Destroyed roads, railway lines, and bridges caused a complete breakdown of trade. As early as July 23/August 5, 1903, all roads had become impassable.⁶³ In some parts of Ottoman Macedonia, communication, except for the railway, was almost impossible, since passengers were regularly searched by soldiers or bashibazouks, who confiscated anything of value.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the railway itself was not safe either, as daily interruptions occurred. Prolonged disruptions in transport continued into September in the kazas of Ohrid, Kastoria, Kičevo, and Prilep.⁶⁵ The main road from Ohrid to Bitola was completely closed, and "there was not a living soul along the entire road".⁶⁶ It was cut off on August 6, leaving muleteers unable to work, trade in complete suspension, and even the imperial army with only five days' supply of flour for bread.⁶⁷ The situation was not limited to the Bitola vilayet, but spread across all of Ottoman Macedonia. As a result of intensified bombing activity at the beginning of August, insurgent bands held up traffic for two weeks even around Thessaloniki, and to the north transport was cut off over a wide area.⁶⁸ Trade and movement in Thessaloniki, as well as in the Bitola, Skopje, and Serres regions, remained paralyzed throughout August.⁶⁹ Due to the blocked roads and general insecurity, peasants no longer went to the towns for market.⁷⁰ Mantegazza wrote that "in the interior, where there are no more connections, no roads, where to go from one place to another

⁶³ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 286.

⁶⁴ Лапе, Љубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903–1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 60.

⁶⁵ *Извештаи од 1903–1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 121.

⁶⁶ *Илинден во француски дипломатски документи*. Избор, редакција и коментар Глигор Тодоровски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 148.

⁶⁷ *Турски документи за Илинденското востание*. Избор, превод, редакција и коментар Александар Стојановски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 77.

⁶⁸ Митрев, Анастас. „Илинденското востание“. *Книга за Илинден зборник на трудови по повод 65-годишнината од Илинденското востание*. Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1969, 27.

⁶⁹ Новини изъ Турция, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, број 7, 16 август 1903, 2.

⁷⁰ *Илинден во француски дипломатски документи*. Избор, редакција и коментар Глигор Тодоровски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 97.

one must climb along ridges like a goat...”.⁷¹ During the uprising, customs posts were also destroyed, causing a complete halt to imports and exports. Thus, on July 27/August 9, 1903, the insurgents blew up and completely demolished the customs office in Zibevche.⁷²

The outbreak of panic, insecurity, and violence resulted in the closure of shops and a complete standstill in trade and crafts.⁷³ The bazaars and markets in the towns were shut down one after another. In Bitola, immediately after the proclamation of the uprising, the bazaar was closed and did not operate at all for ten days. Later, even when it reopened, the slightest panic would cause it to close again.⁷⁴ This situation in the town continued into September, and in a letter from Bitola published in the newspaper Autonomous Macedonia it was reported that trade in Bitola had long been suspended, life was stagnant, and everyone was asking where such a condition would ultimately lead.⁷⁵ The transport of goods by animal caravans was almost completely interrupted.⁷⁶ But that was only in the town, while the state of affairs in other towns and villages was such that “only God knew”.⁷⁷ A similar situation prevailed in Lerin, where, after two robberies carried out on August 7 and 14, under the pretext of searching suspicious houses, shopkeepers kept their stores closed for 14 days.⁷⁸ In Prilep, by contrast, an economic boycott was organized

⁷¹ Сидовски, Кочо. „Италијанските политички и општествени кругови за илинденското востание во 1903“. *Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет*, 46, Скопје, 1993, 131.

⁷² *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 69; Лапе, Љубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903–1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 23.

⁷³ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 111.

⁷⁴ Лапе, Љубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903–1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 24, 31; Документи о спољној политики Краљевине Србије 1901, 277, 303; Сидовски 1993, 136.

⁷⁵ Писмо от Мakedонија, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, брой 10, 6 септемвриј 1903, 3.

⁷⁶ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 111.

⁷⁷ Писмо от Мakedонија, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, брой 10, 6 септемвриј 1903, 3.

⁷⁸ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија*. Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 119-120; *Документи о спољној политики Краљевине Србије 1903–1912*. књига I, свеска 1, 29. мај/11. јуни 1903 – 14/27. февруар 1904, Прир. Андрија Раденић, Уредник Радован Самарџић, Српска академија наука и уметноста, Београд, 1991, 335-336.

by Christian merchants, for which six traders were sentenced to three years in prison each, among them the municipal commissioner Mihail Kone, charged with “provoking and inciting the closing of shops by the Christian guild population in Prilep”.⁷⁹

Similar situation of closing shops and bazaars due to violence and fear occurred also in the Skopje and Thessaloniki vilayets, in places where there had been no mass insurgent actions. In Veles, although there was no active uprising that might have given soldiers a pretext for attack, the situation was very dangerous for the Christian population. Turkish soldiers passed through the town on their way to all of southwestern Macedonia, and the irregulars committed great outrages. The townspeople, frightened, locked themselves inside their homes, and the bazaar closed as a result.⁸⁰ In the same or similar way, out of fear, shops and bazaars were also closed in the towns of Kriva Palanka, Kumanovo, Kochani, and Radovish.⁸¹ Even trade in Thessaloniki, the largest and most prosperous commercial city, was still completely paralyzed in October.⁸² In Skopje as well, there was practically no commerce. Artisans refrained from working or making business deals, waiting from day to day to see what would happen.⁸³ The situation was so insecure that murders occurred if a Muslim buyer was dissatisfied with the price demanded by a seller.⁸⁴ Panic would spread at the slightest rumor or incident. Thus in Bitola, false rumors circulated that an order had been issued requiring “all young Bulgarians” to join the insurgents. Because of such rumors, flour shops were instantly emptied.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Амнестираниите илинденци во 1904 година. Превод и коментар Драги Ѓоргиев, Државен архив на Република Македонија, ИНИ, Скопје, 2003, 105-106.

⁸⁰ Лапе, Јубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903–1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 87; Велешко, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, број 12, 21 септември 1903, 3.

⁸¹ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 385, 387; Лапе, Јубен. „Нови документи за илинденското востание“. *Илинденски зборник 1903–1953*, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1953, 49, 85

⁸² Солунско, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, број 16, 19 октомври 1903, 3.

⁸³ *Извештаи од 1903 година на српските конзули, митрополити и училишни инспектори во Македонија*. Редакција и коментар Јубен Лапе, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1954, 331.

⁸⁴ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот*. втор том, Просвета, Куманово, 1996, 357.

⁸⁵ *The Events of 1903 in Macedonia as Presented in European Diplomatic Correspondence*. Edited and annotated by Angelos A. Chotzidis, Basil C. Gounaris, Anna A. Panayotopoulou, Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki, 1993, doc. 41.

After the suppression of the uprising, stabilization of the economy and trade required time, as well as efforts and initiatives from the authorities to improve the situation, but these were absent. The market in Bitola in October was already better attended compared to the previous three months.⁸⁶ However, this did not mean that trade had fully revived, as the situation had merely improved compared to the months of the uprising. Otherwise, it had been in stagnation even before those three months, since the beginning of 1903. Gauthier notes that after the end of the uprising, it would have been desirable for trade in Bitola to recover and emerge from stagnation, but restoring peace after such widespread unrest among the population would take time.⁸⁷ However, it seems that tensions were far from calming. Shopkeepers in Skopje were preparing again in December to close their shops. They suffered significant losses from Turks, who would select and purchase goods but not pay, demanding to be recorded in the ledger, and anyone who attempted to collect payments immediately faced threats and violence.⁸⁸ Brailsford remarks on the economy: "In a society dominated by fear, there can be no entrepreneurship, no trade, nor any sustained economic life".⁸⁹

Already by the middle of 1904, according to reports and statistics from foreign diplomatic representatives, trade in Ottoman Macedonia was flourishing.⁹⁰ The Thessaloniki commissioners wrote on July 10, 1904, that in "some places it had increased with a momentum not seen for many years".⁹¹ However, this raises another question: How could trade suddenly experience a boom when the population had nothing, their standard of living had declined, and the economy had been so devastated?

⁸⁶ *Turkey. No. 2. (1904). Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe*, London, 1904, 104.

⁸⁷ *Илинден во француски дипломатски документи*. Избор, редакција и коментар Глигор Тодоровски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 172.

⁸⁸ Скопско, *Автономна Македонија*, година I, број 25, 21 декември 1903, 3.

⁸⁹ Брејлсфорд, Ноел, Хенри. *Македонија. Нејзините народни и нејзината иднина*. (второ издание), Култура, Скопје, 2003, 92.

⁹⁰ *Австриски документи за реформската акција на европските големи сили во Македонија 1903-1909*. Предговор и редакција Михајло Миноски, Избор на документи и превод Ѓорѓи Стојчевски, Државен архив на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2002, 225; *Turkey. No. 4. (1904). Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe*, London, 1904, 146, 212; Стоичковски, Благој. „Шведско-норвешки документ за Македонија од 1904 година“. *Историја*, год. XVI, број 2, 1980, 203.

⁹¹ *Австриски документи за реформската акција на европските големи сили во Македонија 1903-1909*. Предговор и редакција Михајло Миноски, Избор на документи и превод Ѓорѓи Стојчевски, Државен архив на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2002, 225.

The answer to this question is simple. The population had lost everything. They had no basic household items, clothing, bedding and similar like that. Houses had to be rebuilt from scratch. Humanitarian missions also played a major role, procuring essential goods from local merchants for the population. In circumstances where reconstruction is underway, even if it did not happen all at once, there is a high demand for various products, so it is natural for trade to flourish. However, this boom in trade was by no means due to an increase in the standard of living of the population. Additionally, the growth in trade was influenced by the fact that by mid-1904, some emigrants and seasonal workers who had left the previous year were already sending money to their families to rebuild houses or purchase furniture. In this way, capital from abroad flowed in, stimulating trade.

On the other hand, foreign trade, analyzed through the port of Thessaloniki, did not show much promise, nor did it flourish significantly. The number of ships entering and leaving the port of Thessaloniki in 1903 was slightly higher compared to 1902. However, the goods transported on these ships—which had been on an upward trend in 1901 and 1902—declined by 8.03% in 1903 compared to 1902.⁹² It should be noted that 1902 was a poor year for agriculture, and the harvest in 1903 was even better, yet the volume of goods transported from this port still fell. This decline was a direct consequence of the suppression of the uprising and the situation in Macedonia. By 1904, the total transported goods had increased by 9.17% compared to the previous year, and the number of ships entering and leaving the port of Thessaloniki also rose.⁹³ However, this comparison is relative to the uprising year, which had seen a drastic drop. Compared to 1902—which, as mentioned, was also not a very good year—the volume of goods transported in 1904 had increased by only 1.13%, which is insignificant.⁹⁴

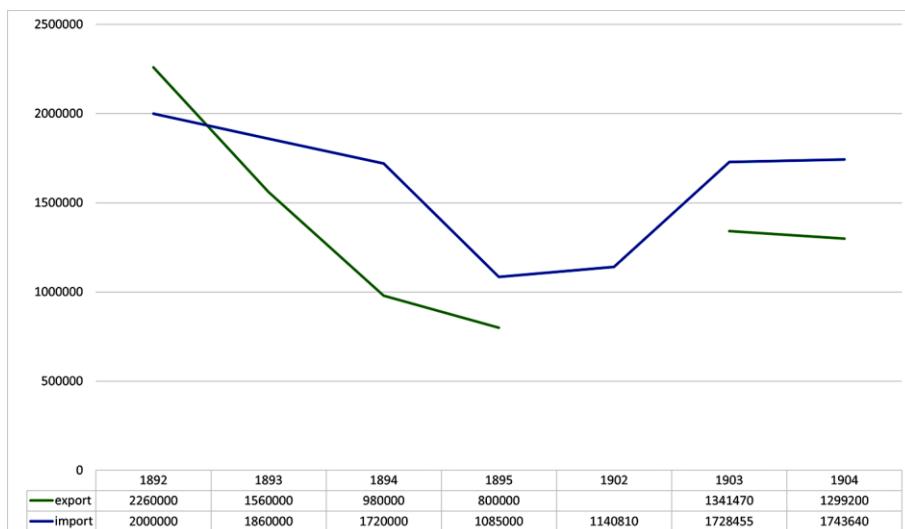
Viewed individually for 1903 and the following years, the total imports and exports through the port of Thessaloniki show a tendency toward stagnation. The quantity of exported goods in the year of the uprising, compared to 1902, decreased by 2.16%, while imported goods increased by

⁹² The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1903 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1904, 8.

⁹³ The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 6.

⁹⁴ The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 6.

51.51%.⁹⁵ This is a fairly significant increase in imports, likely partly due to goods imported as humanitarian aid. However, if we compare it with ten years earlier, exports in 1903 were down by 14% compared to 1893, and imports by 7.07%.⁹⁶ It should be noted that in the 1890s, the effects of the global economic crisis, known as the Long Depression, were still being felt, and in certain years there were more drastic declines; however, 1893 was not one of those years (see graph 1). On the other hand, Thessaloniki had grown significantly in every aspect after 1900.⁹⁷ Therefore, one would have expected much greater growth in foreign and domestic trade, and certainly not stagnation or decline. However, such stagnation and decline were to be expected given the political situation in the country.



Graph 1. Overview of imports and exports from the port of Thessaloniki in the last decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century⁹⁸

⁹⁵ The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1903 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1904, 9, 11-13.

⁹⁶ The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1903 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1904, 9, 11-13; *Diplomatic and Consular Reports of Trade and Finance. Turkey. Reports for the Years 1893-94 on the trade of the consular district of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1896, 2.

⁹⁷ *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 3.

⁹⁸ The chart is compiled based on data from *Diplomatic and Consular Reports of Trade and Finance. Turkey. Reports for the Years 1893-94 on the trade of the consular district of Salo-*

The following year, 1904, does not differ much from 1903. In exports, there is even a slight decrease compared to the previous year, while imports are almost identical.⁹⁹ This indicates a stagnation of the trade balance. When compared to 1900, 1904 shows a 20% decrease in imported goods through the port of Thessaloniki, while exports increased by only 8.33%.¹⁰⁰

PRICES AND STANDARD OF LIVING

After the Long Depression, which lasted until the 1890s,¹⁰¹ and the subsequent deflation, by around 1895 prices in Ottoman Macedonia had begun to stabilize. As noted in two reports on the Bitola market, prices were steady and unchanging at that time.¹⁰² Between 1895 and 1900, prices on the Bitola market remained largely stable. Prices for wool, oil, lard, Ohrid eel, and trout were almost constant, while grain prices fluctuated up and down depending on the harvest, which in turn was influenced by weather conditions.

The stabilization of prices in Ottoman Macedonia did not last long. The early 20th century was a period filled with uncertainty and political instability, compounded by frequent conflicts. Immediately before, during, and after the uprising, shortages of basic goods and insecurity, combined with reduced agricultural production, led to a dramatic increase in prices for essential food products. With more than half of the grain harvest destroyed, a general economic stagnation was felt from the autumn of 1903. Meat was sometimes unavailable, dairy products were rare and expensive, and prices for firewood and coal had risen by 150%, according to Graves.¹⁰³ Food products

nica. Foreign office, London, 1896; *Diplomatic and Consular Reports of Trade and Finance. Turkey. Reports for the Years 1895 on the trade of the consular district of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1897; *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1903 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1904; *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905.

⁹⁹ *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 7-9.

¹⁰⁰ The calculations were made based on the data from *Diplomatic and Consular reports. Turkey. Report for the year 1904 on the trade of Salonica*. Foreign office, London, 1905, 3.

¹⁰¹ See Pamuk, Şefket, The Ottoman Empire in the "Great Depression" of 1873-1896, The journal of Economic History, vol.44, No.1, 1984; Бужаровски, Дамјан. „Влијанието и последиците од Долгата депресија (1873-1890-тите) врз османлиска Македонија“. *Историја/Journal of History*, 58, 2, 2023.

¹⁰² *Цариградски гласник* година I, број 5, 11 февруар 1895, 8; *Цариградски гласник* година I, број 10, 16 март 1895, 8.

¹⁰³ *Turkey. No. 2. (1904). Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe*, London, 1904, 57.

that peasants typically brought to the cities for sale and especially wood and coal, became very scarce and costly. Peasants stopped coming to the towns altogether. On usual market days in Bitola, not a single peasant could be seen, whether Christian or Muslim.¹⁰⁴ The sharp rise in essential goods in September was further aggravated by the complete halt of transport with horse carts.¹⁰⁵ In the autumn of 1903, Plat noted that in Kastoria, food prices were high due to scarcity.¹⁰⁶ The shortage and high demand for blankets, coats, shoes, socks, and similar items in Bitola and surrounding towns had emptied the warehouses, while prices soared. Craftsmen worked day and night but could not keep up.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, prices of all goods rose, which was normal and expected under wartime conditions with limited supply. The Russian consul Kohmanski observed that, as a result of recent events, namely the uprising, the cost of living had risen significantly.¹⁰⁸ Even after the situation partially stabilized, the rise in prices did not normalize and continued in the following period. One of the main causes of rising prices was emigration from Macedonia, particularly to the New World, with the Ilinden Uprising acting as a turning point for this emigration.¹⁰⁹ Due to emigration, the shortage of labor, especially from 1905 onward, became extremely serious. The lack of workforce contributed to increased daily wages, which in turn led to rising product prices.¹¹⁰ Labor shortages were felt not only in agriculture but also in mines, and daily wages for other urban workers also increased.¹¹¹ The rise in the cost of human labor was partly due to the casualties of the uprising: those killed, imprisoned, or otherwise incapacitated were of working age, and their deaths, permanent disabilities, or incarceration reduced the available labor force.

¹⁰⁴ Романски дипломатски документи за Македонија (1901 – 1903), том II. Вовед, избор и редакција Благој Зашов, Државен архив на РСМ, Скопје, 2020, 387.

¹⁰⁵ Илинден во француски дипломатски документи. Избор, редакција и коментар Глигор Тодоровски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1993, 161.

¹⁰⁶ Македонија во делата на странските патописци 1903. Редактор Александар Матковски, Ѓурѓа, Скопје, 2007, 197

¹⁰⁷ Македонија и Тракија в борба за свобода (крајот на XIX – началото на XX век). Нови документи. Величко Георгиев и Стайко Трифонов, Македонски научен институт, София, 1995, 225.

¹⁰⁸ Одбрани текстови за историјата на македонскиот народ (1800 - 1919 година), II дел. Составил Јубен Лапе, Универзитет "Кирил и Методиј", Скопје, 1976, 512.

¹⁰⁹ Gounaris, C. Basil. „Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century“. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Volume 7, 1989, 137.

¹¹⁰ Ibid 144-145.

¹¹¹ Ibid 137.

Emigration to America was of a temporary nature, so the emigrants sent their savings back to Macedonia, which represented a positive economic effect of emigration, particularly for stimulating trade. However, the majority of them sent their earnings with the purpose of buying land. In 1905 alone, they sent 4 million dollars to the Bitola Vilayet. The increased demand for land from the families of emigrants, however, had a negative effect, leading to higher land prices. For example, a plot of land in the Lerin district that two years earlier had been sold for 1,800 lira and had no buyers, by 1906 was selling for 3,000 lira.¹¹² In just two years, the price of the land had increased by 66.66%, which is by no means a small rise.

In Ottoman Macedonia, food prices experienced a massive increase after 1904, and living costs rose sharply. Between 1904 and 1911 in Skopje, the price of meat increased by 400%, butter and eggs by 100%, bread by 150%, coal by 250%, fish by 165%, and milk by 200%.¹¹³ The trend of rising prices continued until the end of Ottoman rule. This situation is vividly described in a report from Kratovo sent to the newspaper "Pravo" in 1912: "As a result of the bomb attacks in Štip, Kočani, and other places, the rural population is extremely frightened, and from the Kočani pogrom onward, no peasant has come to town on market days, nor is there a source to supply citizens with food products such as flour, vegetables, etc. Trade has come to a complete halt. Due to the insecurity of life, no commercial activity can be undertaken".¹¹⁴

Prices and living costs increased, but the population's standard of living did not keep pace with this rise. On the contrary, for a time, the standard of living actually declined. Even before the Ilinden Uprising, in some areas the population had been impoverished due to successive poor harvests.¹¹⁵ Gustav Michel noted at the beginning of 1903 that the standard of living among the Christian population had drastically fallen. There was no bread, and people had no money to buy it, so they sold everything they had at home for a little flour.¹¹⁶ During the uprising, many villages were devastated,

¹¹² Британските конзули во Македонија 1797-1915, документи. Редакција Драги Ѓоргиев, Избор и превод Драги Ѓоргиев и Зорица Божиновска, Државен Архив на Република Македонија, Скопје, 2002, 375.

¹¹³ Gounaris 1989, 144-145.

¹¹⁴ Панdevски, Манол. Македонското ослободително дело во XIX и XX век. Политичките партии и организации во Македонија (1908-1912). Том IV, Мисла, Скопје, 1987, 21-22.

¹¹⁵ Битоски, Крсте. Дипломатски одгласи за Илинденското востание. Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1983, 54.

¹¹⁶ Ѓорѓиевска, Елица. „Ставот на римокатоличката пропаганда во Македонија кон Илинденското востание“. Прилози за Илинден 1978 материјали од научниот собир

leading to the impoverishment of thousands of residents.¹¹⁷ The inhabitants of the village of Bobišta complained that, in addition to losing everything, prices had risen. Every purchase had doubled or even tripled in cost, and the poor population, lacking any money, could not buy anything.¹¹⁸

The factors contributing to the decline in living standards compounded one another. Destroyed property and stolen or ruined movable goods (furniture, harvests, livestock) the inability to cultivate land, and many other hardships all contributed to the deterioration of living conditions. A. Toshev noted that in the Kastoria and Florina districts, residents had lived fairly comfortably before the uprising, but this changed afterward.¹¹⁹ Regarding the Resen area, he observed that by 1904 poverty was widespread, forcing villagers to seek seasonal or temporary work elsewhere.¹²⁰

In addition to the farmers, seasonal workers (pechalbari) who had lived and worked for years in Constantinople were especially affected. On April 23, 1903, an order was issued prohibiting Bulgarians, i.e., Exarchists, from traveling abroad, particularly to Constantinople.¹²¹ Those seasonal workers who, under this ban, were interned in their native places during 1903 were left without work and means of livelihood. Their hardships continued into 1904. That year, they appealed to the Bulgarian Prime Minister R. Petrov, asking him to try to secure an amnesty that would allow them to return to Constantinople for work.¹²² In the Resen area, from where most villagers went

„Местото на Илинденското востание и Крушевската Република во борбата на Македонскиот народ за национално и социјално ослободување“ одржан на 3, 4 и 5 август 1978 година во Крушево по повод 75-годишнината од Илинденското востание, II. Совет „Десет дена Крушевска република“ Научно-културни средби – Крушево, Крушево 1979, 186.

¹¹⁷ *Извештаи од 1903-1904 година на австриските претставници во Македонија.* Превод, редакција и коментар Данчо Зографски, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 1955, 100.

¹¹⁸ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот.* трети том, Догер, Скопје, 1997, 406.

¹¹⁹ Добријанов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 128.

¹²⁰ Ibid 139.

¹²¹ Освободителната борба на Българите в Македония и Одринско 1902/1904 дипломатически документи 1978, 269.

¹²² Китанов, Валентин. *Принос към дипломатическата история на България, Григор Начович и Българо-турското споразумение от 1904 г.* Документален сборник. Синева, София, 2004, 193-197.

to Constantinople for seasonal work, the ban made the economic situation of these individuals and their families extremely difficult and unbearable. They could not engage in agriculture because everything had been taken or destroyed during the uprising. They could not even go to America for work because they lacked the funds to pay for the necessary documents and travel expenses.¹²³ The problem was not only the cost of going abroad but also the total bans themselves. According to Brealsford, these bans on traveling for work contributed the most to the poor economic conditions, and he believed that the issue of issuing permits to go abroad needed to be addressed. Permits for emigration were given only for Greece, mostly in Kastoria, while in Resen there was no hope.¹²⁴ Of course, there were “workarounds” to go abroad, but these required money, which the population did not have, forcing them to borrow from usurers. A. Toshev, in a report dated April 24, 1904, to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, noted: “If one considers that a large part of the villages here (referring to the Resen area D.B.) suffered greatly during the uprising, anyone can imagine the sad state into which the inhabitants of this district have fallen. If conditions in the country improve, they can quickly recover, as they are enterprising and hardworking people”.¹²⁵

Not only did the standard of living of farmers and seasonal workers decline, for whom returning to work abroad had become impossible, but the standard of living of the entire population in Ottoman Macedonia also fell. Workers were no better off, as during the uprising they were daily attacked or dismissed from their jobs. For example, on August 17, 1903, five “Bulgarian” railway workers on the Veles–Skopje line were attacked by soldiers arriving by train from the north; two of them were killed, and the others were robbed.¹²⁶ A newspaper article from late August reported that the Orient railway company had dismissed all “Bulgarians” working for them due to suspicions of collaborating with the insurgents.¹²⁷ Later, due to the reduced labor force

¹²³ Добриянов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 139.

¹²⁴ Британски документи за историјата на Македонија т. VI, (1901-1904). Вовед и редакција Александар Трајановски, Државен архив на Република Македонија и Македонска книга лтера, Скопје, 2012, 506.

¹²⁵ Добриянов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 139.

¹²⁶ *Turkey. No. 1. (1904). Further correspondence respecting the affairs of South-eastern Europe March-September, 1903*, London, 1904, 298.

¹²⁷ Balkans Aflame; Turks Defeated; Powers uneasy, *The Washington Times*, August 28, 1903, 1.

caused by emigration, wages began to rise, which in turn further increased prices. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient inexpensive labor reduced agricultural output, and to a lesser extent, the output of other production sectors. This, in turn, led to higher costs of living, diminished commercial capacity for local consumption, and similar consequences.¹²⁸ In this way, the suppression of the uprising, both directly and indirectly, contributed to rising prices, meaning that the standard of living of the population not only stagnated but actually declined.

All economic indicators suggest that Ottoman Macedonia in 1903 was experiencing a state of economic stagflation—that is, a general rise in prices accompanied by a simultaneous decline in economic activity, particularly in agriculture, which was one of the main economic sectors. On April 24, 1904, Toshev divided the Bitola Vilayet economically into four groups: first group Lerin and Kostur kazas, which were in the best economic condition; second group Bitola and Prilep kazas; third group Prespa and Ohrid kazas, as well as the Demir Hisar and Krushevo nahiyyas; fourth group Kichevo kaza and the Poreče nahiya, where the population was in the most degraded existential condition.¹²⁹ A report from civil agents in November 1904 noted that the desired results had not been achieved in the economic conditions.¹³⁰

OTHER ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

During the period following the uprising, there was a significant increase in the indebtedness of the population. Lost yields, destroyed property, declining living standards, unemployment, and similar factors were the main forces driving people into the “clutches” of usurers. Residents left without means of subsistence, especially widows, were forced to take on debt. Then, lacking the money to repay the debt,¹³¹ they would lose all the property they

¹²⁸ *Авестиски документи за историјата на македонскиот народ 1905-1906.* Т. I, Редакција, превод и коментар Данчо Зографски, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1977, 198.

¹²⁹ Добријанов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 126.

¹³⁰ Тодоровски, Глигор. *Реформите на големите европски сили во Македонија (1829-1909). т. II, Реформите на големите сили по Илинденското востание.* Студентски збор, Скопје, 1984, 184.

¹³¹ Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот.* трети том, Догер, Скопје, 1997, 393.

owned. A. Toshev noted in 1904 that usury in Resen "is terrible. Many poor people are forced to pay 30 to 50%, turning into true slaves".¹³²

Usury also increased significantly in the kaza of Lerin in 1904, especially after many poor people began emigrating to America. The lowest interest, even with a mortgage, was 20%, and it reached up to 60%. Everyone who emigrated to America borrowed 20 lira with the condition to repay 28 lira within a year.¹³³ In some cases, even the moneylenders did not want to risk their capital and refused loans to villagers, who were willing to mortgage their land at excessive interest rates of up to 60% in order to buy oxen for plowing, tools, and building materials. The moneylender would grant a loan only to those who intended to leave the country and go abroad.¹³⁴

Another way the population went into debt was through the Agricultural (Ziraat) Bank. Families from villages in Razloško, Malesija, and other areas borrowed varying amounts from the Agricultural Bank with repayment terms ranging from a few years up to 10 years. The loans carried the usual interest rate provided by the bank.¹³⁵ The loan given for the victims by the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank in 1904 was not much better. It was interest-free,¹³⁶ but it still had to be repaid by a population that was not in a very good position to do so over the following years. The total amount of this given loan for Ottoman Macedonia amounted to 500,111 leva, with additional funds needing to be redistributed for the Kičevo and Ser kazas.¹³⁷

Another consequence that left a negative effect on the economy was the temporary halt in operations at the cotton factories, even in the city of Thessaloniki. This was caused by rising prices and weak sales of industrial

¹³² Добриянов, Тодор. „Документ за икономическото и политическото състояние на Битолския вилает след Илинденско-преображенското въстание“. *Македонски преглед*, бр. 1, 2002, 138.

¹³³ Ibid 127.

¹³⁴ Брејлсфорд, Ноел, Хенри. *Македонија. Нејзините народни и нејзината иднина*. (второ издание), Култура, Скопје, 2003, 92.

¹³⁵ *Македония и Тракия в борба за свобода (край на XIX–началото на XX век)*. Нови документи. Величко Георгиев и Стайко Трифонов, Македонски научен институт, София, 1995, 345-347; *Македонија. Собрник от документи и материали*. Отговорни редактори: Димитър Косев, Христо Христов, Николай Тодоров, Валентин Станков, Редактори: Вой Можинов, Любомир Панайотов, Българска академия на науките, София, 1978, 500; Дракул, Симон. *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележом*. трети том, Догер, Скопје, 1997, 283.

¹³⁶ Fund Бугарски конзулат – Битола microfilm 4300, оп. 1, ае. 66.

¹³⁷ Ibid 9.

products.¹³⁸ This again meant increased unemployment and a drop in living standards, even if only temporarily. Here it is also worth mentioning a positive economic effect of the uprising, which was the growth of the flour production industry. Specifically, the deployment and movement of Ottoman troops during and after the uprising increased the consumption of flour and boosted demand. The largest flour factory in Thessaloniki, with a daily capacity estimated at 120,000 kg, as a result of the concentrated Ottoman troops in Macedonia, produced 38,000 tons of flour in 1903, and in the following year, 1904, was able to produce 40,000 tons.¹³⁹ However, this increase in demand also had a negative effect on prices. The heightened demand, from both the army and, due to food scarcity, from the population after the uprising, contributed to a sharper and more pronounced rise in prices. On the other hand, this situation occurred only in certain cities. In rural areas and towns in the interior, this was not the case, especially considering that a large number of water mills had been destroyed by the army to prevent the insurgents from obtaining food.

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¹³⁸ Зографски, Данчо. *Економски текови и промени.* книга втора, Наша книга, Скопје, 1986, 603.

¹³⁹ Ibid 573.

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