THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONARY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

IT IS often stated that the Bulgarian revolutionists had no plan whereby to carry out their aims in liberating the Bulgarian people from the Turkish yoke. In the national library at Sofia, however, is to be found a copy of the constitution of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee in the Archives of the Renaissance (Arkhiva na Vuzradjdanieto) division, folder (papka) no. 69-I.A., no. 9169. The document bears the statement that it was printed at Geneva, 1870, but this is misleading. The constitution was printed in Bucharest, Rumania, in 1872, but for the purpose of diverting the attention of the Turkish authorities from the revolutionists in Rumania, and of protecting the Rumanian government from unpleasant consequences, the place of printing and the year of publication was misrepresented. There were twenty-one delegates who worked out this constitution, seven of whom were from Bulgaria proper, and fourteen from various parts of Rumania. The seven from Bulgaria represented thirty-two secret local revolutionary organizations; the fourteen from Rumania represented thirteen organizations in Rumanian territory. The seven delegates had thirty-two votes; the fourteen had thirteen votes. The first meeting of the delegates took place on April 29, 1872, and the constitution was unanimously adopted on May 4 of the same year.¹ A translation of this constitution from the Bulgarian follows.

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¹ H. Stanev, Vasil Levski, his life and revolutionary activities (Sofia, 1923), pp. 131–39.
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONARY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

(Printed at Geneva, 1870)

Motto: WITHOUT LIBERTY THERE IS NO LIFE—
DEATH TO THE ENEMIES

PROGRAM OF THE BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONARY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

1. The Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee seeks to liberate Bulgaria through revolution, pacific and armed. The form of the future Bulgarian government will not be decided until Bulgarian liberty is attained.

2. To attain that end, every means is legitimate—propaganda, press, arms, fire, death, etc.

3. We, the Bulgarians, desire to live with all our neighbors in peace, especially with the Serbs and the Montenegrins, who have the same aspirations, and with the Rumanians, with whom our fate is closely interwoven; and we wish to establish with them a federation within our free countries.

4. We desire that the land inhabited by the Bulgarians be governed in accordance with the customs and character of the Bulgarian people, and that the lands inhabited by Serbs, Montenegrins, Greeks, and Rumanians, be governed accordingly.

5. Let every nation, like every individual, guard its liberty and govern itself according to its own free will. We wish nothing from others; neither do we desire to give to others what belongs to us.

6. We make no pretenses to historical rights, that is why we leave it to the nation to unite with any nation of the federation—Serbs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, or the Greeks—consequently there is no question, so far as we are concerned, about national boundaries.²

7. We desire for ourselves a national, individual, and religious liberty—in other words, human rights; and we desire the same kind of liberty for our friends and neighbors. We do not seek to rule others; neither shall we permit others to rule us.

8. We put among our enemies those Bulgarians, Chorbadjis,³ who in any way menace our national ideal; and we shall persecute them at all times and all places.

² A marginal note in an unknown hand states that this section is not clear.
³ Well-to-do Bulgarians.
9. We shall accept the Greeks as our friends and allies if they will renounce their old Panhellenic ideas and historical pretensions.4

10. We do not revolt against the Turkish nation, but against the Turkish government and against those Turks who support and defend it. We consider all nations and nationalities who sympathize with our holy and honorable cause as friends, regardless of faith or nationality.

ARTICLE I

AIM

Section 1. The Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee has such powers as are given to any temporary government. The committee shall prepare and carry out the revolution with all possible means. In short, it has the following problems: (a) to spread among our people, through propaganda, ideas of revolt, this propaganda to be carried out through the local secret committees, the press, manifestations, proclamations, pamphlets, etc.;5 (b) to supply everything needed to carry out the revolution, and to prepare the revolution materially, i.e., to plan the military part of it, to appoint the leaders (voivodas), to aid with every possible means the arming of the people, and to instruct the people in warfare, etc.

Sec. 2. The Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee will have the power to negotiate agreements with other nations, neighbors, or others who sympathize with us.

ARTICLE II

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNING COMMITTEE

Sec. 1. Every local Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee, as well as the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee, shall be made up of men of good character, i.e., patriotic, courageous, and capable of keeping secrets.

Sec. 2. The Central Committee has no regular headquarters—it is everywhere and nowhere. That is why every member, wherever he may be, can represent the whole Central Committee if he has a letter of introduction.

Sec. 3. For the carrying-out of the aim, the Central Committee shall have the right to organize local committees, which shall be governed by the same rules as the Central Committee.

4 Marginal note: "Impossible—leave this section out."

5 Marginal note: "It is necessary to have a newspaper, organ of the Committee."
Sec. 4. For the carrying-out of punishment for neglect of duty and violations by the local committees, the Central Committee shall have a secret police of faithful, daring, constant men.

Sec. 5. To facilitate the work of the Central and local committees, there shall be created a secret postal service, which shall be responsible to the committee that creates it. The number of men in the postal service shall be determined by the needs.

ARTICLE III

THE GOVERNMENT

Sec. 1. The local committees, as well as the Central Committee, are made up of the following members: (a) president, (b) secretary, (c) treasurer, (d) and an unlimited number of members who shall divide their duties according to the ability of each member.

Sec. 2. The president of the Central Committee will be chosen by the majority votes of the regular delegates from the local committees. He shall have the power to appoint the other members of the Central Committee.

Sec. 3. The local committees shall appoint a commission which shall supervise the work of the Central Committee. If it becomes necessary, the commission or other accredited men from the local committees shall elect a new president, who shall take up the duties of the preceding president.

Sec. 4. The members of the secret police shall be chosen by the Central Committee. The number of the secret police is not fixed.

Sec. 5. Every local committee shall have the necessary number of secret police according to Article II, Section 4.

ARTICLE IV

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OF EVERY REVOLUTIONARY WORKER IN GENERAL

Sec. 1. The Central Committee shall negotiate with the leaders of other nations regarding our national aims. It will borrow money in the name of the Bulgarian nation; it shall have the power to negotiate for alliances—in short, it shall do everything for the success of our national liberation.

6 The word “vice-president” has been scratched out and the word “secretary” written in its place in pencil.
Sec. 2. The Central Committee, after the revolution, shall give an account of all the donations received. Every member of this committee is responsible, not only individually, but for the other members also. The president is more responsible because he has the power to choose the other members according to Art. III, Sec. 2.

Sec. 3. The presidents of the Central and local committees shall have the power to call a special meeting when it is necessary.

Sec. 4. The president shall see that the vice-president, treasurer, and other members perform their duties.

Sec. 5. The vice-presidents are to help the presidents.7

Sec. 6. The treasurer of the Central Committee shall receive the funds from the local committees and from other sources, and shall give receipts under number. He shall keep record of them in the treasury book and inform the Committee about them so that a record may be kept of them in the main Committee book.

Sec. 7. The treasurer of the Central Committee shall pay all the bills, but only with the Committee’s consent. Every decision to spend money must be in writing.

Sec. 8. The treasurer of every local committee shall collect money from the members and other interested people, for which he shall give them a receipt for the amount given. That money shall be given to the head treasurer only on the order of the Central Committee.

Sec. 9. Every local committee shall endeavor to prepare the people for a revolt, according to Art. I, Sec. 1, making special efforts to collect the money necessary for the support of the Committee’s needs before and after the revolution.

Sec. 10. The local committees are required to inform the Central Committee (a) how many villages there are in their districts; (b) how many people in each village, their nationality, and how many of each nationality; (c) how many available men are able to bear arms, and how many are ready to answer the first call; (d) how much ammunition there is, and of what kind; (e) of the identity of persons in the district capable of leadership; (f) of the quantities available of grain, barley, hay, straw, and other necessities for men and beasts; (g) the number of available stables, cows, horses, sheep, goats, etc.; (h) the number of available stables and their capacities.

Sec. 11. No local committee is to negotiate with leaders of other nations in regard to our national aim, unless authorized by the Central Committee which has the power according to Art. IV, Sec. 1.

7 This section is scratched out.
SEC. 12. Every member, in the event of changing residence from the village or the town in which he lives, must notify the committee of which he is a member.

SEC. 13. Every member of the Revolutionary Committee must keep absolutely secret the faith entrusted to him. He must not tell, nor joke about, matters secret, to his sweetheart, wife, children, or anybody else who might betray the secret. Only to those who can keep the secret may he tell anything, and that only when he finds out that they too wish to share happiness and sorrow in the field of battle with him by becoming a member of the revolutionary movement with the permission of the committee having jurisdiction.

SEC. 14. If any one of the revolutionists is in danger, all members are obligated to help him when he shows the sign.

SEC. 15. If some unknown person comes and demands, in the name of the Central Committee, that there be a revolt, or anything to that effect, even if he has the sign (which might have been stolen or taken by force of arms), any member, whoever he may be, is required immediately to notify the Central Committee; and the guilty person will be traced and executed by the secret police.

SEC. 16. Should the secret sign fall into the enemies' hands, any member, learning the fact, is required to notify the members of his committee at once.

SEC. 17. If any one of the members finds out that our enemies are planning anything against us, he must at once tell the Central Committee about it, and if he can, the local committee also.

SEC. 18. The secret police are empowered to (a) watch the doings of the revolutionary workers in the cities and report to the Central Committee; (b) find out and assure themselves of the accuracy and the faithfulness of the secret postal service; (c) spy upon the Turkish spies; follow, step by step, the doings of the Turkish police; and report everything to the Central Committee; (d) see that the orders of the Central Committee are carried out, i.e., punish the culprits.

The decisions of the Central Committee shall be communicated to the secret police through one person whom the Central Committee shall appoint. This person shall be called the “chief of police.”

SEC. 19. The members of the secret postal service should be men who can keep quiet and are courageous. They are required to carry letters, or verbal orders and decisions, the latter accurately and literally, without any addition of their own. They must not forget any of the orders given to them.
SEC. 20. The leaders (voivodas) are obligated to (a) study the military positions in Bulgaria; (b) select and designate points for defense and make the necessary plans for their fortification; (c) designate the lines of operation and communication; (d) make a plan for the revolution; (e) prepare the necessary military law; and (f) finally raise the national flag and proclaim national liberty.

SEC. 21. Every member who takes part in the liberation of Bulgaria is required to think and study well the contents of this constitution.

ARTICLE V

MEANS FOR THE REVOLUTION

SEC. 1. The Central Committee shall procure money (a) by securing loans, wherever it can find them, in the name of Bulgaria, (b) by receiving the collected donations from the local committees, and (c) by any other means which receive the consent of the local committees.

ARTICLE VI

PEOPLE

SEC. 1. The Central Committee will be directly in charge of the regular revolutionists, the leaders, members of the secret police, and the new recruits. It will make arrangements with the local committees about the people in general.

ARTICLE VII

AMMUNITION AND OTHER MILITARY NEEDS

SEC. 1. The Central Committee takes the responsibility of arming those members of the local committees who are capable of bearing arms.

SEC. 2. The amunition which the Central Committee shall supply should be inspected by persons informed about arms.

ARTICLE VIII

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION

SEC. 1. Every member of the Central or the local committee must take an oath.

SEC. 2. New members must be recommended by some of the known revolutionists.

SEC. 3. The prospective member must furnish the following information: his indentity, the location and nature of his business, and his opinions of the organization; description of his features, and other
physical characteristics. The applicant must wait until the Central Committee replies.

Sec. 4. If an outsider, having credentials, desires to communicate with the Central Committee, the secret police must interview him first. In the meantime the Committee must learn by correspondence or by word of mouth from the man himself the purpose of his mission. If the Committee is satisfied that he is an honorable man, it shall enter into negotiation with him through one man whom the Committee shall appoint.

Sec. 5. The leaders (voivodas) are accepted according to the requirements of Art. VIII, Secs. 2, 3, and 4, with the following additions: when an independent voivoda8 wants to be received into the organization, he must take an examination on military matters before a commission appointed by the Central Committee. If he passes the examination, he will be appointed. Without examination, no voivoda is accepted.

ARTICLE IX
PUNISHMENTS

Sec. 1. Capital punishment shall be performed secretly; if necessary, such punishment may be inflicted in broad daylight.

Sec. 2. Punishments shall be carried out by those members who have been chosen by lot.

Sec. 3. The convictions and executions shall be carried out only by orders from the Central Committee.

Sec. 4. Treachery on the part of any member of the revolutionary workers shall be punishable by death.

Sec. 5. If any influential Bulgarian, voivada, or ordinary individual, bribed by a foreign government, tries to interfere with our work by any means whatsoever, he shall be considered an enemy of our fatherland and shall be punished by death.

Sec. 6. If anyone dishonors our nation, i.e., becomes a traitor to another nation struggling like ourselves, such will be considered an enemy to our fatherland and shall be punished by death.

Sec. 7. If anyone disobeys the Central Committee and tries to start a revolt, he shall be warned once; and if he still persists in carrying out his plans, he shall be punished by death.

8 There were many independent voivodas who were not members of the organization. They, too, worked for the liberation of Bulgaria, but were not organized. Some of them were supported by the neighboring states for the purpose of agitating against the Turkish government.
SEC. 8. If anyone of the secret police refuses to carry out the orders of the Central Committee, he shall be punished by death.

SEC. 9. If anyone of the workers, such as president or others, misuses the power of his office, he shall be deprived of his position; on second offense, he shall be forced to resign [as a member] and acknowledge his guilt in a written form to the Committee. If he becomes revengeful afterward, he shall be punished by death.

SEC. 10. If any member of the secret postal service, or anyone else, opens or destroys a letter of the Committee, he shall be punished by death.

SEC. 11. If any treasurer gives any money without order from the Committee, or if he takes the smallest sum of the money entrusted to him, he shall be punished by death.

NECESSARY PROCLAMATION

The Central Revolutionary Bulgarian Committee, in the name of all those who chose it, accredited it, empowered it, confident in the secret police and its arms, proclaims:

I. Only the Central Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee has the right to give the signal for a general national revolt. No one else is so authorized.

II. No one of the voivodas or the notables has right to represent [us] before other nations, or negotiate treaties, without the knowledge of the Central Committee.

III. No one has the right to represent any revolutionary committee without the knowledge of the Central Committee.

REMARKS

This constitution was drawn up and ratified, by the unanimous vote of the accredited delegates of the local Bulgarian revolutionary committees, and will last until the beginning of the revolution, when, with the unanimous consent of the Central Committee and the local committees, it shall be changed as needed. When the revolution begins, the Bulgarian Central Committee shall call deputies from all the local committees to arrange another government. Then, finally, the power of this constitution ends, and for it, is substituted another military law, which the voivodas, with the consent of the Central Committee, shall work out according to the circumstances.

MAY GOD HELP US . . . . AND GIVE US STRENGTH . . . . FORWARD
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