CHAPTER 1

THE PERCEPTION OF SERBIA IN BRITAIN DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The First Anglo-Serbian contacts

The emergence of the modern Serbian state during the First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) failed to attract special attention in Britain. The detailed English bibliography on the Eastern Question, collected by the Serbian scholar Voyislav Yovanovich, mentions no special contemporary books or travellers' accounts on Serbia in this period.[1] Nor did the Second Serbian Uprising (1815) and oral recognition of Serbian autonomy by the Porte cause any comments. It was believed in Serbia that British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh replied to Serbian delegates during the Congress of Vienna that Serbia was too far away from Great Britain.[2]

It was only in the 1820s that Serbia, actually Servia,[3] started to be mentioned in the titles of British books and articles.

1 Voyislav M. Yovanovitch, *An English Bibliography on the Near Eastern Question, 1481-1906* (Belgrade: Servian Academy of Sciences 1909).

2 Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Serbia, 1837-1839: The Mission of Colonel Hodges* (Paris, The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1961), p. 22.

3 The term Servia was used in Britain until the First World War. As soon as the Great War started the 'v' was finally changed into a 'b'. Since

This interest was mostly cultural. It was the age of romanticism and in Britain, as in Germany and France, substantial interest existed in the poetry of emerging nationalities on the outskirts of Europe. Serbian national poems or 'minstrelsy', as they were called in obvious reference to Scotland, appeared in several translations, the most prominent being those of John Bowring.[4]

The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

What British knowledge of Serbia at the time was like can be seen from such surprising assessments as a dispatch in 1837 from British Foreign Minister, Viscount Palmerston mentioning the 'existing constitution in Serbia', while Lord Ponsonby, British Ambassador in Constantinople, in December of the same year, spoke about the 'Boyards of Serbia'. This, as S. Pavlowitch points out, gives us a picture 'of a country with established laws and institutions and a land-owning nobility'[5] which was far from being the case.

August, 1914 'Serbia' started to be mentioned in the British press as an expression of British appreciation for its ally. Herbert Vivian was among the first to mention this question: 'I believe we are alone among the nations in speaking of "Servia" and "Servians", words which are resented as implying servitude, though they do not do so any more than "Slav" implies slavery'. Herbert Vivian, *Servia, the Poor Man's Paradise*, p. xiv, cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question. A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972), p. 188, footnote 2.

4 See Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, p. 23; John Bowring, *Servian Popular Poetry*, translated by John Bowring (London: printed for the author, 1827).

5 Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Serbia, 1837-1839*, p. 171.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the Principality of Serbia was realised as a consequence of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Balkans. When on 21 July, 1774 Russia and Turkey signed the famous treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, Russia gained strategically important territories. Even more important, Russia was granted the right to build an Orthodox church in Constantinople, and to make representations on behalf of it 'and those who serve it'.[6] This meant that Russia had the right to protect the Turkish Orthodox Christians, which effectively enabled Russia to intervene in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the autonomous Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldova. With the emergence of the Serbian autonomous principality in 1815, Russia gained the possibility to exercise its influence in another, nominally Turkish, territory. Russian influence reached its peak in 1833 when, following Russian help to the Sultan against the rebellious Mohammed Ali, the Porte was forced to consent to the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi. Now Turkey seemed 'to be becoming a Russian protectorate or vassal-state'.[7] In these circumstances the small Principality of Serbia became more important.

The British diplomat David Urquhart (1805-1877) was the first to draw the attention of the Foreign Office to the importance of Serbia. He visited Serbia in April 1832, and November 1833 when he realised the importance that Serbia might have in the Eastern Question. He had influence on Viscount Palmerston (British Foreign Secretary 1830-41 and 1846-51) and Lord Ponsonby, but especially on Sir Herbert Taylor, Private Secretary of King William IV. The Serbian diplomat and historian Chedomille Miyatovich thought that Urquhart was the first to rec-

6 M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. ix.

7 *Ibid*, p. 85.

ommend the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Principality of Serbia to the Foreign Office. It is quite possible that Urquhart was instrumental in establishing the diplomatic relations.[8]

Viscount Palmerston decided to send Colonel George Lloyd Hodges to Serbia as a British diplomatic representative. Passports were delivered for Serbia, at the beginning of 1837, for Hodges, his family and his secretary. These were the first passports ever issued by the United Kingdom for Serbia.[9] In his letter to the British Ambassador in Vienna Palmerston described the objectives of the British Government in Serbia. The objectives well characterise long-term British goals in Serbia, in the middle of the nineteenth century:

> *Now the British Government has two objects in view with respect to Servia; first, that Servia should form a barrier against the further encroachments of Russia; secondly that Servia should afford an opening for the extension of the commerce of Great Britain... The first object, therefore will perhaps be best attained, by keeping Servia as she is, with respect to political dependence; but by endeavouring to give the Servians an interest in maintaining their present political position, and by opening to them for that purpose such a prospect of internal prosperity, as may render them unwilling to be incorporated with the Russian Empire.*[10]

The new British Consul, Hodges (1789-1863), had served in the army since 1806. He took part in the Peninsular War, and

8 Cf. Pavlowitch, *Anglo-Serbian Rivalry,* p. 23.
9 *Ibid*, p. 18.
10 *Ibid*, p. 195.

later he commanded the foreign brigade fighting for the Portuguese constitutionalists. In Portugal he attained the rank of colonel and was authorised to retain his Portuguese rank when he was appointed to be Consul in Serbia. He was able to gain the confidence of the Serbian Prince Milosh Obrenovich (reign 1815-1839), the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising, who proved to be an able but ruthless despot. He convinced him to rely on Britain. Ruling in an autocratic manner, Milosh could not tolerate Russian tutelage, and alliance with Britain seemed to him a good opportunity to continue to rule in the manner of Turkish pashas, which was not really what Palmerston and Hodges had had in mind. However, Milosh's reliance on Britain proved to be fatal. His adversaries, the most distinguished Serbian notables, rallied around the Russian Consul and soon took control of Serbia. Subsequently, Milosh abdicated in 1839.

Paradoxically, relations between Serbia and Britain started in such a way that Viscount Palmerston supported a despotic Serbian Prince, and in return autocratic Russia supported more liberal oligarchs who have been ironically remembered as the party of 'constitutionalists', ruling Serbia from 1842-1858, with Prince Alexander of the house of Karageorgevich. In the end Viscount Palmerston was only able to say to the disappointed Hodges, referring to the Eastern Question, that the Serbian question was only part of a greater matter: 'And if greater matter shall be settled, as it must be in a manner consistent with the maintenance of the Balance of Power, and with the preservation of the peace in Europe, these collateral questions will fall into the same train...'[11] Hodges soon had to leave Serbia and go to Vienna in September 1839.

11 *Ibid*, p. 177.

Two years passed before a successor was appointed. He was another soldier from the Napoleonic wars, Thomas de Grenier Fonblanque. Characteristically, he was given the choice between Serbia and Panama and he chose the former. However, to come to Belgrade, the capital of autonomous Serbia, and the seat of a Turkish pasha, was not really an expression of merit for a British diplomatist. The new British Consul (from 1841 till 1860) took the longest possible route through the civilised world to Serbia, staying three seasons in Novi Sad, in southern Hungary, before he finally arrived in Belgrade at the beginning of 1843. The fact that though he stayed the next nineteen years in Serbia, the British Consul never learned Serbian, gives an impression of the dislike he must have felt about the place of his mission.[12] As Edith Durham rightly pointed out, describing the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, a Balkan Legation was to an Englishman a spot which he hoped 'soon to quit for a more congenial atmosphere in another part of Europe. As for a Consul, he often found it wiser not to learn the local language, lest a knowledge of it should cause him to be kept for a lengthy period in some intolerable hole'.[13] During De Fonblanque's tenure this contrast must have been even more pronounced. Still, it was during his consulship that the first English books about Serbia were published.

12 Phyllis Auty, 'Slobodan Jovanovic as a Historian', *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, vol. 38 (1959-60), p. 522; cf. Ljubodrag P. Ristic, 'Serbo-Russian Relations from 1856 to 1862 according to Reports by British Consuls in Belgrade', *Balcanica* (Belgrade), vol. 27 (1994), p. 103.

13 M. Edith Durham, *The Serajevo Crime* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925), p. 10. Perhaps less rightly Durham noted that to a Russian, 'a Balkan post was one of high importance; the atmosphere of semi-Oriental intrigue, distasteful to an Englishman, was the breath of his nostrils; nor did any Slavonic dialect present difficulty to him'. *Ibid*, p. 11.

‘The End of This Wheel-going Europe’ - The First British Works on Serbia

David Urquhart wrote a book about Serbia, but it seems to have had such a small print run that no complete samples of it are known to have been preserved.[14] The preserved part of Urquhart's work entitled *A Fragment of the History of Serbia*, was published in English in 1843, and was recently issued by the Archives of Serbia. In his introduction Urquhart was the first British author to clearly place Serbian state within Europe and to see her as a potential British ally against Russian expansionism:

> *While Serbia, unlike Circassia or Greece, does really dwell in Europe, Europe comprehends it still less than those names so much misused and so little understood... She (Serbia) now stands pre-eminent among the Sarmatian race unincorporated with the Russian Empire. She is the centre within that great family of Slaav resistance to Muscovite despotism, and presents to Europe its chief security against Russian ambition.*[15]

Some modern Serbian historians feel that Urquhart did have some influence in the process of the creation of the first programme of foreign policy of Serbia known as Nachertaniye

14 David Urquhart, *Serbia, the Circassia of the West; to which is added an Outline of the Character and Position of the Slavonic Populations of Europe* (London, 1843). The book was announced in Urquhart's magazine *The Portfolio* and *The British and Foreign Review* (No. 24, p. 294) in 1844 quotes this book. Cf. Pavlowitch, *op. cit.,* p. 186. Voyislav Yovanovich found in the British Museum an unfinished book by Urquhart, entitled ‘A Fragment of the History of Serbia’ which I believe is the part of the above-mentioned book.

15 David Urquhart, *A Fragment of the History of Serbia 1843* (Belgrade: The Archives of Serbia, 1989), p. 14; The book has been published bilingually.

(the Draft).[16] The Draft was written in 1844, according to the designs of Polish Paris émigrés gathered around Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770-1861) with whom Urquhart maintained contacts. The Draft served as a basis for Serbian foreign policy in the period between 1844 and 1867, and was in its essence an effort to create a Serbian nation-state. Some anti-Russian designs of the document are certainly of foreign origin, and could have been inspired by Urquhart.

Some idea of the British view and knowledge of Serbia can be gleaned from several successive editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Not surprisingly, a supplementary edition from 1824 does not include an entry on Serbia.[17] But, in a volume of the Seventh Edition there is a small entry on 'Servia' describing her as follows:

> *Servia, a province of Turkey in Europe, borders on the north by the rivers Danube and Save, which separate it from Hungary; on the east it is bounded by Bulgaria; on the west by Bosnia; and on the south by Albania and Macedonia. It is about 190 miles in length from east to west, ninety five in breadth from north to south, and it is divided into four sagiacates...*

This was all that an interested British reader was able to find out about Serbia in 1842.[18]

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16 Милорад Екмечић, *Сшварање Југославије 1790-1918,* Просвета, Београд 1989 [Milorad Ekmechich, *Stvaranye Yugoslaviye 1790-1918* (Belgrade: Prosveta 1989), pp. 473-475].

17 *Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica with Preliminary Dissertations on the History of the Sciences*, vol. 6 (Edinburgh, 1824).

18 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature,* s. v. 'Servia', The Seventh Edition (Edinburgh, 1842), p. 158.

In 1844, a very interesting book was published by Alexander William Kinglake, under the title *Eothen*.[19] Kinglake studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and later was called to the bar. In 1835 he went on the Eastern tour, and later he wrote a book about it, which Sir Leslie Stephen described as 'a delightful record of personal impressions rather than outward facts'.[20] The book went through numerous editions and it served for a long time as a source of information to British public on the matter of the Near East. How popular the book was in Britain can be seen from a quotation of a distinguished British archaeologist D. G. Hogarth. Speaking about the borders of the Nearer East in 1902, Hogarth mentioned that 'fifty years ago the author of *Eothen* saw the portal of the East in the walls of Belgrade'.[21] Obviously, the book was so well known in Britain that only a reference to its title, without mentioning the name of the author, was enough. Although the book mentions Serbia only in the first two chapters, one should take it into account due to the influence it had on British public.

Kinglake entered Turkey at Belgrade, feeling that he had come 'to the end of this wheel-going Europe, and now my eyes would see the splendour and havoc of the East'.[22] He describes Belgrade only now and then, but on his tour through Serbia his group stayed for a while in a Serbian village, which gave

19 A. W. Kinglake, *Eothen, or, Traces of Travel brought Home from the East* (London: John Ollivier, 1844).

20 Sir Leslie Stephen, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s. v. 'Kinglake Alexander William' (London, 1909), p. 172.

21 D. G. Hogarth, *The Nearer East* (London: William Heinemann, 1902), p. 1.

22 A. W. Kinglake, *Eothen* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), p. 1.

Kinglake occasion to note that 'Servian villagers lived in happy abundance', but 'they were careful to conceal their riches, as well as their wives'.[23] On the Serbian and Bulgarian cultural heritages he commented:

> *There are a few countries less infested by 'lions' than the provinces on this part of your rout: you are not called upon to 'drop a tear' over the tomb of 'the once brilliant' anybody, or to pay your 'tribute of respect' to anything dead or alive; there are no Servian or Bulgarian litterateurs with whom it would be positively disgraceful not to form an acquaintance...*[24]

Since Urquhart's book is not available, the oldest extant original and serious British work on Serbia that has been preserved is by Andrew Archibald Paton (1811-1874), and it was published in 1845. He was a real globe-trotter, visiting Serbia on three occasions. The very title of his book in which he calls Serbia 'the youngest member of the European family'[25] is significant. His was an obvious effort to introduce British readers to a little-known part of Europe.

Firstly, he visited Belgrade, which left him with the impression of a half-oriental town.[26] He preferred the Serbian province to Belgrade 'where political intrigue and want of the

23 *Ibid*, p. 23.

24 *Ibid*, pp. 27-8.

25 Andrew Archibald Paton, *Servia, the Youngest Member of the European Family: or, a Residence in Belgrade, and Travels in the Highlands and Woodlands of the Interior, during the Years 1843 and 1844* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans 1845).

26 He generally noted about Serbia that it contains within itself 'the forms of the East and the West, as separately and distinctly as possible', *Ibid*, p. 273.

confidence which sincerity inspires, paralyze social intercourse'.[27]

He witnessed some efforts at the modernisation of Serbia. The Serbian Bishop of Shabats told him proudly that when he was young 'a great proportion of the youth could neither read nor write: thanks to our system of national education, in a few years the peasantry will all read'.[28] On the other hand, Serbian peasants 'of the back-woods, neither poor nor barbarous, delighted me by the patriarchal simplicity of their manners, and the poetic originality of their language'.[29] Another thing he liked was the lack of poverty among peasants. Paton saw 'a large assembly of peasants, and not a trace of poverty, vice or misery, the best proof that both civil and ecclesiastical authorities do their duty'.[30] Commenting on the fact that the wife of a deputy prefect sat at dinner, but at the foot of the table, he noticed that it was 'a position characteristic of that of women in Servia - midway between the graceful precedence of Europe and the contemptuous exclusion of the East'.[31]

In his later work he did not fail to comment on the very significant question for Britain: the Russophilic inclinations of Balkan Slavs. Although, he had no sympathies for potential Russian expansionism towards the Balkans, his description of the Serbian relation to Russia is full of insight:

> *In Servia itself, the people are quite content with their present position, and certainly have not the slightest desire to become Russian; but, considering the power and*

27 *Ibid*, p. 141.
28 *Ibid*, p. 114.
29 *Ibid*, p. 141.
30 *Ibid*, pp. 138-139.
31 *Ibid*, p. 105.

> *influence of Russia at the Porte, the Prince and Government of Servia exercise a sound discretion in avoiding any bickering with Russia*'.[32]

The entry on Serbia in the Eight Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, covering two pages with double columns, published in 1860, and written two or three years earlier, is informative and provides a good survey of Serbia of that time. First, the legal position of Serbia is given, denoting her as 'one of the Danubian principalities, nominally included in the Ottoman Empire, but in reality only tributary to that power'. The unsigned article describes Serbia's richness in minerals such as gold, silver, copper, iron, loadstone, and coal, but warns that Serbia 'is little cultivated, and scantily peopled; and its great resources want the hand of industry to develop them'. It further asserts that manufacturing industry is 'still in infancy, and is somehow discouraged by the little demand that there is for manufactured goods... The trade with foreign countries is very active, and daily increasing in importance'. The author warns that there were no good communications in Serbia of that age. Although public education was 'one of chief objects of attention to the government' it was 'still in a very backward condition'. Finally the article mentions that 'there is no distinction of ranks, except what is derived from occupation'.[33] The article testifies

32 A. A. Paton, *Highlands and Islands of the Adriatic including Dalmatia, Croatia, and the Southern Provinces of the Austrian Empire* (2 vols., London: Chapman and Hall 1849) I, p. 124. On the other hand, Paton noted that 'In Montenegro Russia possesses complete influence; and this is the only part of the lands of Illyria where this influence is quite undivided'. *Ibid*, p. 124.

33 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, s. v. 'Servia', vol. 20, The Eight Edition (1860), pp. 61-63.

to the growing British interest in Serbia. On the whole, it could have served as a discreet commercial for Serbia. It was an invitation for British capital to come and British travellers to visit her.

British Perceptions of Serbia During the Reign of Michael Obrenovich IV (1860-1868)

The downfall of the regime of 'constitutionalists' in 1858 brought the house of Obrenovich back to the throne of Serbia. First Prince Milosh Obrenovich reigned for a short time until his death in 1860. He was succeeded by his son Michael (reigned 1860-68) whose efforts to expel the remaining Turkish garrisons in six Serbian towns, and to lead more active foreign policy, again turned British attention to Serbia. When, in June 1862, the town of Belgrade was shelled from the Turkish citadel, animosities between Serbia and Turkey grew high, and a conference of the Great Powers on the Serbian question was commenced in July 1862, in Kanlyja, the suburb of Constantinople. British Ambassador Henry Bulwer advocated Turkish interests at the conference sometimes 'more vehemently' than the Turkish Ambassador himself.[34] As a consequence of this crisis Princess Julia, the wife of Prince Michael, visited London, accompanied by several Serbian diplomats in an effort to arouse British sympathies. This was the first such high-ranking visit from the Principality of Serbia to the United Kingdom. It was also the first occasion on which the Serbs tried to influence British public

34 Ljubodrag P. Ristić, 'Serbo-Russian Relations from 1856 to 1862 according to Reports by British Consuls in Belgrade', *Balcanica*, Belgrade, vol. 27 (1994), p. 112.

opinion with their own writings.[35] It was believed that Prince Michael told Mr. Filip Hristich, a Serbian Senator, the following: 'If we can win public opinion in England to our side, then surely the English Government will change its stance towards us somewhat'.[36] This produced some results. It was now, for the first time, that 'eloquent and earnest speakers stood up in the English Houses of Parliament to plead the rights of Serbia'.[37] Finally, Prince Michael achieved his goals and the last Turkish soldiers left Serbia in April 1867. This time Michael had the support of Britain which feared that his war with Turkey would be rather dangerous for her integrity and therefore supported Turkish abandonment of fortresses.

At the time of the Turkish bombardment (1862) Rev. William Denton (1815-1888),[38] who studied at the University of Oxford, and who was Vicar of the Church of St. Bartholomew

35 See *The Case of Servia. By a Serb* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1863); Philip Christitch, Servian Senator, *A few Remarks on the Speech of Mr. Layard, Delivered in the House of Commons, Concerning Servia, on Friday, May 29th, 1863* (London: printed by C. W. Reynell, 1863); *The Debate on Turkey in the House of Commons, on Friday, May the 29th, 1863. With Remarks by Ph. Christitch, Servian Senator* (London: printed by C. W. Reynell, 1863); *The Serbo-Turkish Question; or, the Reciprocal Relations between Servian and Turkish Government, By a Servian* (London: printed by C. W. Reynell, 1863); Vladimir Yovanovitch, *The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question* (London, 1863).

36 Quoted in Wendy C. Bracewell, 'Opinion-Makers: the Balkans in British Popular Literature, 1856-1876', p. 112. See Милан Ф. Христић, Србија и Енглеска пре пола века. Мисија Филипа Христића у Лондону 1863. године, Геца Кон, Београд 1910 [Milan F. Hristich, Srbiya i Engleska pre pola veka. Misiya Filipa Hristicha u Londonu 1863. godine (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1910)].

37 Elodie Lawton Mijatovics, *The History of Modern Serbia* (London: William Tweedie, 1872), p. 226.

38 About Denton see: E. Irving Carlyle, *Dictionary of National Biography*, s. v. 'Denton, William', vol. 22, supplement (London, 1911), pp. 555-556.

in the City of London, visited Serbia. He says that 'in a strange country' he was especially interested in the Christian Orthodox Church and in Serbia's independence, which was 'daily threatened and sometimes actually endangered'. He obviously criticises British foreign policy when he says that he cannot agree 'with those who rejoice at the overthrow of despotism in Naples, and yet assist in the bolstering-up of the far more terrible despotism in Turkey'.[39]

Although he noticed the lack of an aristocracy in Serbia, he was so impressed by Serbian peasants who told him that 'every Serbian is a noble', that he concluded: 'I am recording the result of my own experience, when I say that every Servian is a gentleman'. He also observed that there was perfect freedom in Serbia 'which is enjoyed in a country where the constitution is as free as the franchise more extended than that in England'.[40]

A rather different view was offered in the same year by another British traveller, Lieutenant G. Arbuthnot. His chief interest was Herzegovina and the Christian rebels there, but he also described Bosnia and Montenegro, and added a brief account of Serbia at the end of his book.[41] He argued that the Turkish provinces 'in which the Mussulman element predominates' were more advanced than Serbia as a consequence of 'the lamentable indolence of masses, who are contented to live in the most abject poverty, neglecting even to take advantage of a naturally fertile soil'.[42] The 'sum of civilisation' in Serbia, in Arbuthnot's opinion, was Belgrade. Speaking about Prince Michael he mentions

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39 Rev. W. Denton, *Servia and the Servians* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862), p. vii.

40 *Ibid*, p. 104.

41 Lieutenant George Arbuthnot, *Herzegovina; or Omer Pacha and the Christian Rebels. With a Brief Account of Servia, its Social, Political, and Financial Condition* (London: Longman and Co., 1862).

42 *Ibid*, p. 263.

his 'semi-civilised subjects', and throughout the book he uses the adjective 'Slavish' when referring to the Slavs, implying their slave origins. At the end he advises Prince Michael to promote 'education and civilisation among the people' with no delay.[43]

The book that most influenced British public opinion was written by two ladies. In 1867 Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Adelina Paulina Irby published their book *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*.[44] The last two chapters deal with Serbia, giving Serbian history from the early Middle Ages up to the time when the book was written. Their book became very relevant when the Eastern Crisis began.

The Eastern Crisis and British Perceptions of Serbia

After the assassination of Prince Michael in 1868, his uncle's grandson came to power. Paris educated young Prince Milan (ruled 1868-1889) became better known to the British public during the Eastern Crisis. William T. Stead noticed, at the end of century, that it was in 1876 that Western democracies learned more about Serbia. Before that even basic facts were known 'only to a few statesmen and diplomatists, travellers and students'.[45]

43 *Ibid*, p. 284.

44 G. Muir Mackenzie and A. Paulina Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1867). On Adelina Irby see Ivo Andrić, 'Miss Adelina Irby', *The Anglo-Yugoslav Review*, No. 3–4 (July-October 1936), pp. 85–90.

45 William T. Stead, 'Character Sketch. Ex-King Milan of Servia', *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 20 (1899), p. 134.

Still, in the 1870s, the first *History of Serbia*, written by a Briton was published. The author was Elodie Lawton Miyatovich (*c*. 1835-1908), wife of Chedomille Miyatovich, who was at that time an expert of the Serbian Ministry of Finance. The book probably influenced British public opinion much less than the translation of Ranke's *History of Servia*,[46] but it is interesting to consult this book in order to see where Serbia was placed in terms of the imaginative geography of the Balkans. Mrs. Miyatovich, in the preface to the book, states that Serbia is 'the only Eastern state whose finances are always prosperous'.[47] Serbia is also described as 'the single European State that has not yet the blessing, or burden, of national debt', and 'the only State in the East of Europe that has a large, well armed... army'.[48] Commenting on Serbian parliamentarianism she notes: 'In the East (even in Serbia, who sometimes indulges in a fond fancy that she is an Eastern England), all intrigues are considered good if they only lead to the desired end...'[49] Even to Elodie Miyatovich who lived in Serbia and who married a Serb, it was not clear where Serbia belonged. She was in the East, in the East of Europe, but at the same time the 'European State'. Obviously, the occidentalisation in British perception of Serbia that had started in the

46 Leopold Ranke, *A History of Servia and the Servian Revolution, from Original MSS, and Documents. Translated from the German by Mrs. Alexander Kerr* (London: John Murray, 1847).

47 Elodie Lawton Mijatovics, *The History of Modern Serbia* (London: William Tweedie, 1872), pp. v-vi. She also published in English: Madame Csedomille Mijatovics, *Serbian Folk-Lore. Popular Tales, Selected and Translated by Madam Csedomille Mijatovics. Edited, and with an Introduction by the Rev. William Denton, M. A.* (London: W. Isbister and Co., 1874).

48 *Ibid*, p. vi.

49 *Ibid*, p. 260.

1840s with Paton's and Urquhart's works, was still, in 1870s, undergoing development.

The Eastern Crisis started with the insurrection of the Christians in Herzegovina in July 1875. The British Conservative Government of Disraeli (in power from 1874 till 1880) was initially not too concerned about it. However, on 6 September 1876, Gladstone published his illustrious pamphlet the *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, which provoked a sensation in Britain reaching a circulation of 200,000 copies by the end of the month.

In contrast to Gladstone, Disraeli had quite a favourable opinion of Turkey which he visited in 1830, being impressed with turbans, smoking a pipe six feet long, and stretching on divan.[50] While in Turkey he dined with pashas, and as his biographer Maurois puts it, he 'could not see these amiable gentlemen butchering little children'.[51] Gladstone's determination to stop further massacres polarised the British public, and for the first time party policies were constructed according to this question. Both Liberal Turcophobia and Conservative Russophobia were crystallised during this dispute, although party allegiance was not always a determining factor.

Few Englishmen took part in wars that Serbia fought against Turkey in 1876 and 1877. One of them, Philip Salisbury, a lieutenant in the Cheshire Light Infantry, wrote a book describing his experiences in Serbia.[52] The book illustrates the prevailing ignorance of the Balkans in Britain of that time. Salisbury went out to Belgrade with an introduction to 'Prince Karageor-

50 André Maurois, *Disraeli. A Picture of the Victorian Age* (London: Penguin, 1939), p. 48.

51 *Ibid*, p. 130.

52 Philip Salisbury, *Two Months with Tchernaieff in Servia, by Philip H. B. Salisbury, Lieutenant First Royal Cheshire Light Infantry* (London, 1877).

gevitch', believing that he and the ruling Prince of Serbia, Milan Obrenovich were identical. One could not have made graver mistake since Peter Karageorgevich was the pretender to the throne of Serbia at that time. Salisbury sent his introduction to the palace, but nonetheless was later decorated by Price Milan for his gallantry.[53]

During the Eastern Crisis British Balkan travellers became very active. Many philanthropic organisations were founded to help insurgents and refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Humphry Sandwith,[54] William Denton and Paulina Irby were very active in promoting these societies. Especially active were Denton and Sandwith, who primed speakers in Parliament with material.[55] But another British traveller, Stanislas St. Clair, was the spearhead of the Russophobic party, accusing Gladstone of wanting to promote the interests of 'Russian finance and Bulgarian banditti'.[56] In 1877 Gladstone wrote a preface to the second edition of the *Slavonic Provinces*. He argued that now,

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53 Cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question*, p. 116, footnote 2.

54 Sandwith wrote several articles about South Slaves in British magazines during seventies and in 1877 he published a pamphlet *Shall we fight Russia? An Address to the Working Men of Great Britain* (London: Cassel, Petter and Galpin, 1877).

55 Wendy Bracewell, 'Opinion-Makers: the Balkans in British Popular Literature, 1856-1876', p. 113; for more details on Sandwith's activities in Serbia see: R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question*, pp. 118-119.

56 Quoted in Wendy Bracewell, *op. cit.,* p. 114. St. Clair was well acquainted with Bulgaria which he entirely disliked. He wrote two books on Bulgaria: Stanislas St. Clair, G. B., and Charles A. Brophy, *Residence in Bulgaria; or, Notes on the Resources and Administration of Turkey: The Condition and Character, Manners, Customs, and Language of the Christian and Mussulman Populations, with Reference to the Eastern Question* (London: John Murray, 1869); *Idem*, *Twelve Year's Study of the Eastern Question in Bulgaria* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877).

at a time when, thanks to the press, the telegraph, the railway and diplomatic establishments, it had become possible for the first time to 'obtain trustworthy information respecting the contemporary condition of the people of another', there is 'a new and very grave responsibility', alluding to the position of Christians in Turkey. In November 1879 and March 1880, Gladstone's efforts reached their peak during the famous Midlothian Campaign which denounced Tory policy not only towards the Ottoman Empire but also regarding its Imperial designs.[57]

In 1878, after the San Stefano Treaty, Disraeli was ready to start a war against Russia. Gladstone, by contrast, coming to power in 1880, was now ready to demonstrate British naval supremacy in order to force Turkey to give the town of Dulcigno, populated by the Albanians, to his beloved Montenegrins, and the Porte had to yield. This signalled a tremendous shift in British foreign policy regarding the Balkans. The Whig-liberal government of Palmerston was ready, in 1850, to blockade the Greek coast just to prove British omnipotence. Thirty years later the Liberal Government of Gladstone was ready to send a British fleet to force the Porte to give an insignificant town to the Montenegrins.

This made Gladstone extremely popular in all south-Slavic lands. He was perhaps the most popular foreign politician of that time among the Serbs. His pictures appeared in Serbian national calendars, and as Slobodan Yovanovich puts it, 'even the Austrian occupation of Bosnia seemed, after Gladstone's speeches, less permanent than earlier'.[58] How popular Gladstone was in

57 See: Fred Singleton, 'Mr. Gladstone and the Eastern Question' in *Yugoslav British Relations. Reports...* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriyu, 1988), p. 39.

58 Слободан Јовановић, *Гледстон*, Југо-исток, Београд, p. 86 [Slobodan Yovanovich, *Gledston* (Belgrade: Yugo-Istok, 1938), p. 86].

Serbia can be seen from the account which James Bourchier gave after visiting Serbia in 1889. He was able to see in a small provincial town of Krushevats a café which bore the name 'Gospodin Gledston' (Mr. Gladstone) and 'a picture of the eminent statesman with a most amiable expression hung over the door'.[59]

Servia, the Poor Man's Paradise

After the Eastern Crisis, interest in Serbia began to decline. Only the coronation of Prince Milan as the first King of modern Serbia (1882) attracted some interest. But it was Milan's attack against Bulgaria in 1885, designed to prevent the Bulgarians from uniting their two provinces, separated by the Berlin Treaty, that aroused some antipathies towards Serbia in Britain.

In the meantime, after Serbia became a Kingdom (1882), the Serbian Minister at Vienna, Filip Hristich was sent (in 1883) to notify Queen Victoria of the Proclamation of Kingdom, and he was soon appointed the first Serbian Minister to the Court of St. James, forty-six years after Britain had sent its first diplomatic representative to Serbia.

British knowledge of Serbia after the Eastern Crisis was considerably more substantial that it had been earlier. One obvious proof of this is the entry on Serbia in the Ninth Edition of

59 James Bourchier, 'The Great Servian Festival', *The Fortnightly Review,* vol. 46 (1889), p. 222; on Gladstone's policy to the Eastern Question see also: R. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963); Richard Shannon, 'Gladstone and British Balkan Policy', *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878*, eds. R Melville and R. J. Schroeder (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1982), pp. 163-178, and 'Midlothian: 100 Years Later', *Gladstone, Politics and Religion*, ed. Peter J. Jagger (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 88-101.

the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* It covers some six pages with double columns. The entry includes subsections on orography, geology, minerals, climate, products, exports and imports, population, government and army; a sketch of Serbian history; even literature was not neglected. There are subsections on early chronicles, Serbian ballads, the Ragusan era, Raich, Obradovich, Vuk Stefanovich Karadjich, minor writers, Croatian literature, Serbo-Croatian poetry and Slavonic literature in general. At the end a section is devoted to Montenegro.[60] What a considerable improvement in the British knowledge on Serbia in fifty years! In 1835, Kinglake was not able to mention a single Serbian writer, while in 1886 subsections appeared on some of them in the leading British encyclopaedia.

In a rare British report from Serbia, James David Bourchier, associate of *the Fortnightly Review*, and a correspondent of *The Times* for South-Eastern Europe, informed his readers about the five-hundredth anniversary of the Kosovo battle. He noticed that there was something touching in 'celebrating the memory of a great national disaster'.[61] His first impressions were that the Serbs resembled the Irish 'in their power of imagination, in their attachment to song and legend, and in a peculiar tendency to melancholy which pervades their national literature and music' concluding that the Serbians were 'like our fellow-subjects, enthusiastic political dreamers'.[62]

Belgrade left quite an unfavourable impression on him. For him it was a relief to depart from Belgrade, 'the most backward, the most *triste*, the most malodorous, the most dusty,

60 W. R. M., s. v. 'Servia', *The Encyclopaedia Britannica; A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, The Ninth Edition, vol. 21 (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 686-692.

61 Bourchier, 'The Great Servian Festival', p. 214.

62 *Ibid*, pp. 218-219.

the most unwholesome of Balkan capitals, where fever from within and malaria from without contend for the mastery over each successive visitor'.[63]

Speaking of Serbian peasants, he noticed that they did not expend any great amount of labour and that they had enough time for a holiday in the middle of harvest. For Bourchier they were 'the last survivors of a patriarchal age'.[64] He noticed that Russophilic inclinations were not so common among peasants, but rather among other classes. Also, 'the Servian idea' was for them 'an idea and nothing more'.[65]

The lack of substantial information on Serbia in the eighties and nineties was filled with stories on the Serbian royal family. Various scandals concerning King Milan, his divorce with his wife Queen Natalie, his kidnapping of his son Alexander in Wiesbaden from his mother's arms, and finally the sudden decision of King Milan to abdicate in favour of his son (in 1889), all contributed to making the image of Serbia one of 'a Balkan operetta'. Typical in this sense was an article by Queen Natalie (wife of King Milan) published in a holiday edition of *Gentleman*, and abridged in *The Review of Reviews.* She sketched recent Serbian history in the form of a fairy tale to the amusement of British readers. This is how she described what, in a subtitle, was called 'the kidnapping of Wiesbaden':

> *Evil and Intrigue succeeded in inducing Mother to leave the place where she had lived so long, and to seek refuge in another country with her child.*

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63 *Ibid*, p. 218.

64 *Ibid*, p. 227.

65 *Ibid*, p. 232.

> *Soon the evil spirits had matured their plan. While the Mother slept, strange hands carried away her son. On awakening she was desperate; like a wounded lioness she ran from chamber to chamber, calling, 'My son, my son!' but only echo answered through the deserted rooms...*[66]

The British public generally had knowledge of only a few figures in Balkan countries. Usually, the list was reduced to the members of ruling families who served as a mirror of emerging Balkan states. When they behaved in a way that could fill up articles in the yellow press, then not only were they themselves affected, but the image of their countries was as well. How negative the image of King Milan was can be seen from W. T. Stead's article on him. He starts by saying that 'of all the potentates of Europe ex-King Milan was the one with whom I felt least sympathy'. Stead admitted to being in a dilemma as to how to write a character sketch of a man 'who in the opinion of the world, has no character at all'.[67] The same volume of *The Review of Reviews* communicated to the British public an article of M. Malet from *Revue de Paris*, under the title 'A Worthless King', which ends with Malet's comment that the very existence of King Milan is 'at this present moment a danger for the whole of Europe'.[68]

It was fortunate for the dynasty of Obrenovich when an Englishman appeared who was ready to defend their virtues. In 1897, Herbert Vivian (1865-1939) published a book, entitled *Servia, the Poor Man's Paradise*. Vivian had finished Harrow,

66 'A Mother and her Son', *The Review of Reviews*, vol. IV (1891), p. 42.

67 William T. Stead, 'Character Sketch. Ex-King Milan of Servia', *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 20 (1899), p. 129.

68 'A Worthless King', *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 20 (1899), p. 599.

and then Trinity College, Cambridge. He was a passionate student of European royalty, which later led him to found the Royalist International. The first persons of royal blood whom he studied were those of the dynasty of Obrenovich.

He was delighted by what he saw in Serbia, and says that if he were to relate only half of all the wonderful things he had seen, 'not a soul in England would believe me'.[69] He gave a rather sympathetic account of Serbian King Alexander and the Serbian army. He finds that one of the blessings that Serbia enjoys is 'that she is not pestered by dissenters'.[70] It is 'the National Church in the fullest sense of the words'. Although biased, the book has an abundance of facts and confirms the extent to which British knowledge on Serbia had accumulated during previous decades.

Vivian thought, like Bourchier, that the Serbs resembled the Irish. In his interpretation they were similar in 'a certain child-like simplicity: they are so easily amused and excited, they hate and love with so much emphasis, their character is so delightfully free from complexity'.[71]

Belgrade, which had left such unfavourable impression to Bourchier eight years earlier, was a revelation for Vivian. He said he had gone to Belgrade expecting nothing 'and now I am so completely the victim of her seductive charms that I cannot tear myself away without the sharpest pang. It is a new sensation to lose the heart to a town'.[72]

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69 Herbert Vivian, *Servia, the Poor Man's Paradise*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), p. viii.

70 *Ibid*, p. 65.

71 *Ibid*, p. 290.

72 *Ibid*, p. 195.

Vivian's book includes a valuable chapter on industry, commerce and communication in which Vivian gives an elaborate analysis of potential British investments in Serbia and the possibilities for the advancement of Serbian trade. He analysed the chances of individual products that could be exported to Serbia, proposing the establishment of an English line of steamers to link Belgrade and Black Sea, as a solution that could overcome communication problems. He finishes in a lyrical vain ''What to do with our sons' is a favourite problem with us. I solve it by replying: Send them out to the Balkan States, where they shall be happy and wealthy and wise'.[73]

In June 1901, *The Humanitarian* published an interview with the Serbian Minister to the Court of St. James, Sima Lozanich, on its front pages. The interview was entitled typically 'Servia - the Peasant Kingdom'. The editor admitted that 'the average Englishman, is to be feared, knows very little of Servia beyond one or two stories of its late King's eccentricities, as unduly related by the muckrakers of the "Yellow Press"'. The Serbian Minister described Serbia as a constitutional monarchy and this is how he described the social situation in Serbia:

> *Cela va sans dire. We are a nation of peasants. We have scarcely any aristocracy. On the other hand, we have no proletariat, the plague of your great cities, no paupers, no 'submerged tenths'. We have, therefore, no need of work houses and asylums, thanks to certain features of our social life...*

At the end he designated Serbia as 'the paradise of wives'.[74]

73 *Ibid*, p. 147.

74 *The Humanitarian*, vol. XVIII (June 1901), pp. 381-387.

This interview reveals a striking congruence between the image of Serbia in Britain and the Serbia's self-image as a small Kingdom of happy peasants. This congruence existed more or less throughout the nineteenth century.

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When writing on the British perception of Serbia one has to be restrictive regarding the scope of such an endeavour. Victorian travellers were either of noble origin or, at least, belonged to the upper-middle class and the public they wanted to address was composed of their own social strata. It was only during the Eastern Crisis that stories on the Balkan Christians reached a wider public.

When Leslie Stephen characterised William Kinglake as a person with ‘a singularly gentle and attractive manner (that) covered without concealing the generosity of sentiment and chivalrous sense of honour which prompted his eloquent denunciations of wrong-doing’,[75] he, in a way, described the typical British Victorian traveller. Bored by London, inspired by sense of duty, curious to discover new things, courageous enough to face the unknown, British travellers departed to the ‘strange countries’ of the Near East. Many of them were the first Britons to come to specific area, or to visit remote sights. Thus, they had steadily been accumulating knowledge on the Balkans and Serbia. Their perceptions were imbued with Victorian sensibilities which included feelings of Christian compassion and patriotic enthusiasm. Emphasis on just one of either of these characteristics inevitably led to the extremes of Turcophobia or Russophobia followed by Slavophobia as its specific form.

75 Sir Leslie Stephen, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-3.

The general impression of the perception formed of Serbia by British travellers, during the nineteenth century is that Christian sympathies prevail over political doctrines of British foreign policy, which was viewed by many of them as being essentially immoral regarding the Ottoman Empire. Only the further scandals of the last Obrenovich, and the bloody and brutal events of the May Coup in Serbia would change this image.