

CHAPTER FIVE

  
SERBIA,  
THE BRITISH VALUE SYSTEM  
AND RE-ORIENTALISATION

The Balkans and Britain at the Beginning  
of the Twentieth Century

An article from the Tenth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gave a survey of Serbia at the beginning of the twentieth century, written by a former Serbian Minister at the Court of St. James.<sup>1</sup> According to the article Serbia had, in 1900, 2,493,770 inhabitants. Out of them 81,6% belonged to rural population. In 1895 there were 229,002 ‘foreigners or inhabitants belonging to other nationalities’. Most of them were, as Miyatovich called them, Rumanians or Wallachians (160,187). There were only 16 Englishmen at that time in Serbia. According to religion, in 1895, the overwhelming majority belonged to the Orthodox Church (2,281,018). There were also 14,414 Muslims, 10,410 Roman Catholics, 5,102 Jews and 1002 Protestants.

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<sup>1</sup> Chedomille Mijatovich, s. v. ‘Servia’, *The New Volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Tenth Edition, vol. 32 (London, 1902), pp. 518–522.

Mijatovich designated Serbia as ‘essentially an agricultural and cattle producing country’ with nearly 90 per cent of the whole population occupied in the agricultural sector. However, there was an ‘almost utter lack’ of large farms with the majority of holdings not exceeding, on average, 20 acres. In 1900, imports were mostly from Austria-Hungary (59%), Great Britain (12,25%) and Germany. Mainly cotton yarn and textile were imported from Britain but this trade did not exceed £ 110,000 per annum. Exports were predominantly directed to Austria-Hungary (c. 85%). There was no direct export from Serbia to Great Britain, but it was ‘generally believed’ that some of the Serbian wheat and maize exported down the Danube, and prunes exported to Germany, found their way to England.<sup>2</sup>

In commenting on Bulgarian exports, J. D. Bouchier concluded in 1910, that the prosperity of Bulgaria practically depended on the variations of the harvests. Both Bulgarian exports and imports from the United Kingdom were greater than Serbian trade. In 1900 exports to the United Kingdom were valued at £239,665 and in 1904 at £ 989,127. The principal imports from Britain were textiles, metal goods, colonial goods, implements, leather and petroleum, amounting £ 301,150, in 1900, and £ 793,972, in 1904.<sup>3</sup>

There was a very clear differentiation among the Balkan countries at the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of their economic development. For instance, in the year of 1905,

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2 Mijatovich, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

3 Wallace, Sir Donald Mackenzie, *et al.*, *A Short History of Russia and the Balkan States*, p. 98. This book was issued as a separate volume out of the articles in the Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1910–1911.

Romania had £ 2.67 per capita exports, Bulgaria had £ 1.68 (in 1904), Greece £ 1.26, Serbia £1.15 and according to the official Montenegrin sources Montenegro had only £ 0.26 in per capita exports.<sup>4</sup> The overall quantity of both imports and exports in all the Balkan countries together was insignificant compared to the imports and exports of the British Empire. If one takes into consideration the fact that more than half of both exports and imports of the Balkan Christian countries belonged to Romania alone, which being geographically isolated from the Ottoman Empire could not have had very active role in the Balkans, then the relative backwardness of the rest of the liberated Christian Balkans appears even more pronounced.

A recent study by Michael Palairet reveals some characteristic patterns in the development of the economies of the Balkan Christian countries as well as many local characteristics. In terms of urbanisation, the lands under direct Ottoman control were significantly more urbanised than the lands not controlled by Constantinople. For instance, Bosnian urban population accounted to 17.7% in 1864, while the urban population of northern Bulgaria was also between 15 and 18%. On the other hand the urban population of Serbia in 1834 was only 4%, and in Montenegro there was none. The relative prosperity of Serbian peasants until the 1830s started to deteriorate from that time. There was substantial decline in livestock numbers between 1834 and 1867, which 'struck at the very basis of Serbia's well-being'.<sup>5</sup>

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4 Pounds in this comparison, as well as in the chart below, have not been adjusted to their present value but are taken from contemporary sources. These data are given for comparative purposes only. For the data on Montenegro see p. 169, footnote, e.

5 Michael Palairet, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 359.

The same period was filled with intense deforestation and an export volume maintained by the lowering of subsistence consumption. Later periods were also characterised by similar trends. Per capita income in Serbia was subject to long-term decrease, falling by 15–20 per cent from 1863 to 1910, by Palairet's calculations. Bulgaria had similar trends as soon as it got autonomy in 1878, the feature that Palairet calls 'serbianisation' of economy. Palairet summarises: 'both the Bulgarian and Serbian economies were in severe aggregate per capita decline from the mid-1870s to the Balkan Wars (1912/13) and in Serbia's case, quite probably since 1830s'.<sup>6</sup> Palairet gives the GDP per capita for Serbia and Bulgaria in 1910, as amounting to 226.03 current francs for Serbia and 307,23 francs for Bulgaria.<sup>7</sup> These data correspond to export rates in the chart below.

The unproductiveness of Serbian farming was attributed to patriarchal culture and idleness. This may be perceived as a stereotype nowadays. However, even Miyatovich characterised the Serbs similarly. He described Serbia in 1910 as a land 'with prevailing social equality' pointing out that in 1900 'there was neither pauper nor workhouse in the country'. This is how Miyatovich characterised the Serbian people in Serbia:

*The people, less thrifty and industrious than the Bulgars, less martial than the Montenegrins, less versatile and intellectual than the Rumans, value comfort more highly than progress. A moderate amount of works enables them to live well-enough, and to pass their evenings at the village wine-shop...<sup>8</sup>*

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6 *Ibid.*, p. 323.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 323.

8 Wallace *et al.*, p. 166.

It is therefore not surprising that under such circumstances natives in Serbia did not really welcome foreign capital. Palairet described this resistance to foreign capital in both Serbia and Bulgaria as xenophobia. In my opinion it should rather be explained through egalitarianism. Namely, it is quite common to people accustomed to egalitarian principles to oppose anything that may change existing social simplicity. In this sense Serbian and Bulgarian grass-root level opposition to foreign investments was rather an expression of fear of wealthy foreigners, than hatred towards them, which the word xenophobia would necessarily imply. After all, the most popular person in Bulgaria was a foreign Prince, Alexander Battenberg, and in Serbia it was a foreign Princess and later Queen, Natalie Obrenovich.

For Britain, contrary to Serbia and Bulgaria, the nineteenth century was glorious not only in terms of expansionism, but also in economic terms. Lady Flora Lugard was able to proudly mention that the British Empire, in 1910, with its territory of some 12,000,000 sq. m. occupied nearly one quarter of the earth's surface. The Empire's population of some 400,000,000 inhabitants amounted to more than one-fourth of the population of the world.<sup>9</sup>

For the national economy of the United Kingdom, a very good indicator is the value of real wages. If one takes the year of 1850 as a starting point with an index figure of 100, then real wages increased to 105 in 1860, 125 in 1871, 132 in 1880, 166 in 1891, 184 in 1900, and 194 in 1906<sup>10</sup>. This means that in the

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9 Lugard, Lady Flora, s. v. 'British Empire', *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Eleventh Edition, vol. IV (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1910), pp. 606–615.

10 Chris Cook, *Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), p. 207.

course of something more than fifty years real wages in the United Kingdom almost doubled. The national income per capita grew as well, from £ 18 in 1800 to £ 76 in 1901 and overall national income (at factor cost) grew from £ 636 m in 1855 to £ 1,776 m in 1905.<sup>11</sup>

The Balkan countries, however, were not capable of taking advantage of British development. British capital had many obstacles to enter Serbian and Bulgarian markets. Palairet is certainly right when postulating that there was not a lack of interest of foreign capital to arrive to Serbia and Bulgaria but it was rather 'environment which deterred foreign participation'.<sup>12</sup> In Serbia, British capital faced grass root level resistance, in Bulgaria, although economically more developed, even less British capital arrived than to Serbia.

The Serbian Minister in London, Chedomille Miyatovich, delivered an address before the members of the London Chamber of Commerce, in December 1895. On that occasion he said:

*It is probably quite a natural, yet not less remarkable phenomenon, that the moment a nation in the Balkan Peninsula obtains full or even only half political independence, that nation becomes at once alive to its commercial and economic interests, and looks towards Western Europe, and more especially towards England, for help and co-operation in the laying down of foundations for its material progress and prosperity...*

*I wish to state that we all in the Balkan Peninsula – Servians and Bulgarians, Roumanians and Greeks – feel that one of the conditions, as well as one of the guarantees*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>12</sup> Palairet, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914*, 331.

*of our political future, is involved in the economic regeneration of our respective countries, and that no nation in the world will be a more acceptable co-worker with us in that arduous task than the British nation, and this, not only because of its great wealth and its experience, but because of its unselfish and generous sympathy with the political independence of all the Balkan nations.*<sup>13</sup>

These words certainly reflect the generally shared opinion of the members of pro-western enlightened Balkan Christian elites (no matter how small in number), committed to the modernisation of their countries. But they were often not capable of bringing about their intentions. Characteristically, Miyatovich's good wishes were not realised. Therefore he tried to open, in private capacity, a Serbian Trade Agency in 1902, in order to improve economic relations between Serbia and the United Kingdom. Although he got permission from the Serbian Government he failed to establish the Agency.<sup>14</sup> Obviously, there was no special interest in London for it. It is therefore not peculiar that the Serbian Government soon contemplated the closure of the Legation in London. Still, the Serbian Legation was kept and Miyatovich was again appointed to be the Serbian Minister in London in December, 1902. In a letter to the Serbian Foreign Minister, Miyatovich said:

*The position that Great Britain has among the Great Powers, the phase in which the historical development of the Balkan politics comes, according to all its signs and*

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13 *The Times*, December 3, 1895; The address was published as a special issue, entitled 'Some Suggestions for the Development of Trade Between Great Britain and Servia'.

14 AS, Legation in London, 1902, F I, Confidential No. 69, 73.

*hints, would be sufficient per se to justify the decision of the Government of His Highness that the Legation of Serbia in London should be kept. I hope, and moreover I believe, that the day will come when the voice of Great Britain in favour of Serbian national interests, will substantially compensate Serbia for all her material sacrifices that she has so gladly endured, in order to be the represented with this great nation and its glorious and illustrious Court.*<sup>15</sup>

This letter reveals that the Serbian Government had not clear vision of its interests in Britain, and therefore Miyatovich had to justify his position. It was probably only thanks to Miyatovich's influence that the Legation in London was kept. Obviously, for the poor economy of Serbia, expenses of the Legation in London were too high, although sometimes the Serbian Legation had only the Minister on staff. Very often a new government in Serbia would decide, during late 1880s or 1890s, to suspend the Legation in London and to put Serbian Minister in Paris in charge of Britain. For Serbian governments it seemed that there were no sufficient economic interests that could justify the existence of the Serbian Legation in London, and obviously some Serbian governments were not sure if there were political interests either.

In Britain, Bulgaria was in a much better position than Serbia in terms of the support she had from influential sections of the British public opinion. However, she was in a less favourable diplomatic position in London than Serbia since she was not diplomatically represented until St. Elijah Uprising, in 1903, and even then she was represented only by a Diplomatic Agency

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<sup>15</sup> AS, *loc. cit.*, No. 89.



and not by a legation since she was not fully independent until 1908. Naturally, Bouchier commented on this fact: 'M. Tzokoff, who has been appointed to the new Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in London, left to-day. The serious error of leaving the Principality so long unrepresented in London is thus tardily repaired'.<sup>16</sup>

Britain, on the other hand, had no territories under its sovereignty in the Balkans. The only territories she ever had in the Balkans were the Ionian Islands and the island of Lissa. The island of Lissa in the Adriatic Sea became, after the Treaty of Pressburg 'one of the principal stations of the cruisers of England – a depot of manufacturers...' The French captured the island in October 1810, but in the spring of 1811 the British fleet won the Franco-Venetian fleet and the island remained British until the end of the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>17</sup> At the same time when she lost the Island of Lissa, Britain gained the Ionian Islands from France which she ceded to Greece, in 1864, as a gesture marking the accession of a new Greek King, George I (the former Prince William George of Glücksburg).

The economic interests of the British Empire in an under-developed area, such as the Balkans of that time, were obviously not very great. This, of course, does not mean that some British opinion makers like A. Stead did not try to take advantage of economic rhetoric. The beginning of the nineteenth century was, in Britain, a period of fervent polemics between advocates of free trade, and advocates of economic protectionism. Therefore

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<sup>16</sup> *The Times*, September 28, 1903, p. 3 b ('Bulgaria and Great Britain').

<sup>17</sup> See A. A. Paton, *Highlands and Islands of the Adriatic including Dalmatia, Croatia, and the Southern Provinces of the Austrian Empire* (London, 1849), pp. 38–42.

economic rhetoric was a proper tool in influencing the British public opinion.

In the months, and even years, preceding the May Coup, Serbia did not seem to either British journalists or officials as crucial or potentially very destabilising to a solution of the Eastern Question. The British public was more focused on Bulgaria and the Macedonian Question. Moreover, in the course of the nineteenth century, many British travellers wrote positively of Serbia, even when the Foreign Office had a different opinion. Therefore the question arises as to what caused such a tremendous change in the perception of British travellers and journalists regarding Serbia after the May Coup. Since there were no territorial aspirations of Britain in the Balkans, no substantial economic interests in Serbia, and the situation had not changed geo-strategically after the accession of King Peter, there must have been some structure existing simultaneously and, to a certain extent, independently of political interests. This, in my opinion, was a moral structure consisting of values.

Just a few days after the May Coup, the Russian Minister in Belgrade, Charykov, commented on the British attitude, and American diplomatic envoy Jackson noted his remarks. In Charykov's opinion since England was not directly interested in the Balkans and in the preservation of peace in this part of the world, she was in a position to be led by 'pure moral reasons'.<sup>18</sup>

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18 Bogdan Popović, 'Majski prevrat i SAD', p. 86.

*Slobodan G. Markovich*

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- a The figure is for the United Bulgaria.
- b This was territory of the United Bulgaria. The territory of Northern Bulgaria covered 24,535 sq. m. and the territory of Eastern Rumelia covered 12,705 sq. m.
- c James D. Bourchier mentions that there are various data on the size of the Kingdom of Greece prior to the rectification of the frontier in 1898 when Greece lost 152 sq. m. He accepts the size of 24,552, but mentions that some authorities gave 25,164 and 25,136 sq. m. [James D. Bourchier, s. v. 'Greece', *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Eleventh Edition, vol. 12 (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1910), p. 428]. According to Bourchier's estimation some 1,500 residents of Greece (mostly Maltese) possessed British nationality (*Ibid*, p. 428).
- d Import and export figures for Greece were given in French Francs. For the year of 1905 imports were 141,756,053 FF and exports 83,691,166 FF. The rate of exchange at that time was 9,5 d. (pennies) for 1 FF. One pound had 240 pennies at that time.
- e This is estimation calculated by M. Palairet, *The Balkan Economies*, p. 20. The official figure given by Montenegrin authorities, and quoted by Bourchier in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for the year of 1900 was 311,564. This was rejected by foreign observers and by Serbian estimates. Montenegrin authorities falsified data in order to overestimate exiguous population and to overrate combat strength of the country (see Palairet, pp. 14–15).
- f In the same edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, there is also a chart representing imports and exports of the British Possessions and foreign countries. The chart offers data for Romania, Greece and Turkey as follows: Greece in 1900: 2,227,212 (imports), 1,104,196 (exports), in 1905: 1,328,234 (imports), 1,251,642 (exports); Romania in 1900: 1,396,639 (imports), 616,287 (exports), in 1905: 1,689,513 (imports), 1,305,658 (exports); Turkey in 1900: 5,657,627 (imports), 5,372,956 (exports), in 1905: 5,491,443 (imports), 6,979,147 (exports), the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 27, p. 602.
- g In the provinces directly under the Ottoman Government. If provinces under the nominal Turkish Government are included, then the total population was: 36,323,539 (s. v. 'Turkey', vol. 27, p. 426)
- h *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Sir Vincent Henry Penalver Caillard, s. v. 'Turkey', The Eleventh Edition, vol. 27, p. 430.

## The British Value System

*Victorian values... those were the values when our country became great, not only internationally but at home.*

Margaret Thatcher<sup>19</sup>

If today many would not agree with M. Thatcher's characterisation of Victorian values as having made Britain great, if some are able to demonstrate that in the Victorian age British society had 'bewildering diversity of beliefs and styles of life'<sup>20</sup> rather than one 'well-honed stereotype' called 'Victorian', still there are those who are able to describe Victorian mentality convincingly in several pages. Thatcher's characterisation reveals something more. It is the central position which debate on the values has had in British society since the Victorian age.

Victorian mentality was recently analysed by a British historian, Norman Davies. In an effort to identify key elements of late Victorian mentality he was able to identify the following five characteristics: loyalty to the Crown, patriotism, self-restraint, a sense of duty, and a God-fearing stance. First, *loyalty* was directed to the Crown, with its most clear expression in the words of the National Anthem (God save our gracious King, Long live our noble King, God save the King!). Second, *patriotism* gradually became 'the lowest common denominator of all other identities that had been submerged into the imperial mix'.<sup>21</sup> Third, *self-restraint* was 'a prime characteristic of the English culture' which seemed to the continentals, especially to the Latins

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19 Nigel Rees, *Cassel Companion Quotations* (London: Cassel, 1997).

20 Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 39.

21 Norman Davies, *The Isles, A History* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 815.

as quite strange. This characteristic resulted in the disciplined demeanour of the Britons. Fourth, *a sense of duty*, inspired by Christian virtues, and referring to family or society, but also to the nation, or the whole of humanity. This sense sometimes took a peculiar almost chauvinist form, as when John Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), a high British imperial dignitary, said: ‘we are the first race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for a human race’.<sup>22</sup> There was, as James (Jan) Morris put it, ‘a conviction, common among imperialists of diverse kinds, that a spiritual destiny had called a British to their pre-eminence—that they were a chosen people, divinely different, endowed with special gifts, but entrusted with special duties, too’.<sup>23</sup> Finally, *god-fearing behaviour* meant that the Britons believed in God, attended church regularly, and made links between their faith and patriotism. This was common to all Britons, regardless of whether they were Anglicans, Catholics or Nonconformists.<sup>24</sup> Of the five above characteristics, four were relevant in shaping British opinion on the May Coup. Only patriotism, as specifically directed to the British nation, was not directly related to the perception of the Belgrade regicide. In the following pages I shall analyse interaction between the four Victorian values, the May Coup and Serbian self-perception of the May Coup.

#### *Loyalty to the Crown*

If loyalty to the Crown was an important element of the British Victorian mentality, it was equally important in the

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22 Quoted from *Ibid*, p. 792.

23 James Morris, *Pax Britannica. The Climax of an Empire*, p. 502.

24 See Norman Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 812–820.

perception of other nations. The removal of a crowned head in some state was a challenge not only to that specific country but also to the existing monarchical order and therefore, all *coup d'états* aimed at overthrowing some king were the focus of special attention in Britain. The personality of a ruler was also important, for the British often viewed foreign subjects through their sovereign. If some people were disloyal to their crowned head, the image of those people would immediately sour. The visualisation of the Serbian throne, based on blood, quickly appeared in Britain following the May Coup. An image of King Peter's throne based on slaughter, as *Punch* portrayed it, was visualised in the British public opinion. The caricature was drawn by Bernard Partridge whom his colleagues many years later described as 'one of last of the Victorians'.<sup>25</sup> Certainly such an image provoked much resentment against Serbia. Still, some opinion makers had some understanding for the new King. J. Bouchier expressed some sympathies, but they were always faced with the dilemma of whether the May Coup had been necessary: 'King Peter, who displays himself freely in the town and the environs without escort, wins golden opinions for his affability of demeanour. Every one is delighted with the new state of affairs, though a certain revulsion of feeling is already noticeable, and some are beginning to ask whether the present happy change might not have been brought about by means less atrocious'.<sup>26</sup>

However, it was expected that the new King would do something with those who dared to kill the anointed royal couple.

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25 *Punch*, June 24, 1903 ('The King Maker'). Interestingly, Bernard Partridge (1861–1945, knighted in 1925) played the part of Sergius Sarnoff in the premiere of Bernard Shaw's Ruritanian play *Arms and the Man*. Later he became chief cartoonist of *Punch*. See: Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press*, p. 457.

26 *The Times*, June 29, 1903, p. 7 f.

After all, it was King Peter who, in his first interview given in Geneva after the May Coup, said: ‘As for my opinion upon the execution, it is this. I deeply regret that it has been thought necessary to shed blood in streams. I formally disapprove of violent measures. I especially deplore the fact that the army has had recourse to such measures – an army which has nobler tasks to accomplish than assassination’.<sup>27</sup> This original promise to punish the regicides and the refusal to fulfil it later, made De Windt notice: ‘upon his accession he proclaimed that the punishment of the regicides should be his first consideration, and yet on reaching Belgrade he was hypnotised into a subjection as abject as that shown by his subjects’.<sup>28</sup> As soon as his hesitation to punish the regicides became obvious his image deteriorated. In September 1903 a special correspondent of *The Times* in Belgrade commented on the relation between the King and the regicides: ‘The King himself is surrounded and ruled, and many are now losing hope that he will ever be able to shake himself free...’<sup>29</sup> At the end of 1903, Bouchier summarised King Peter’s position: ‘Had King Peter, immediately after his arrival at Belgrade, summoned courage to remove the guilty officers from every position of power and influence, such an act of decision would in all probability have consolidated his own position and that of his dynasty... He chose, however, the easier course, with the result that he is now practically a captive in the hands of the bloodstained *camarilla*. The conspirators have taken every conceivable step to secure their position, to remove the King from all outside influences, and to render him their docile instrument... He seems sensitive to the humiliations to which he is subjected,

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27 *The Times*, June 13, 1903, p. 7 b.

28 Harry De Windt, *Through Savage Europe*, p. 163.

29 *The Times*, September 22, 1903, p. 3 b.



but it is now too late to retrace his steps, and all he can do is to temporize with his gaolers'.<sup>30</sup> In their criticism many even went so far as to describe his private life, up to the time of the accession. As De Windt stated 'His favourite amusement was gambling, his literature the *Gil Blas* and yellow-backed novels; in short, the man differed in no respect from any other lazy, pleasure-loving "Boulevardier"'.<sup>31</sup>

Equally damaging were dispatches sent to the Foreign Office by British diplomats. With a dossier of the Foreign Office implicating King Peter in the murder of Prince Michael Obrenovich, in 1868, one dispatch from Kennedy must have made a bad impression even worse. British Minister at Cettigne, Kennedy, claimed that King Peter, at the time of his coronation, said to his brother-in-law Prince Danilo '... that he was fully aware, beforehand, of all the details of the plot, and knew the day, and almost the hour, when it would be put into execution'.<sup>32</sup> Thesiger at least admitted that the King behaved constitutionally. However, in time, Thesiger started to view the King's constitutional correctness as a pretext for avoiding the exercise of any influence over domestic affairs. He characterised Peter as being a person of '... intense obstinacy, combined with a want of moral energy, and personal courage united to a fear of responsibility...' He was even afraid that this attitude of King Peter could prove as

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30 *The Times*, December 23, 1903, p. 6 a ('The Situation in Serbia').

31 Harry De Windt, *Through Savage Europe*, p. 160.

32 Kennedy to Lansdowne, 8 October 1904, No. 37 Secret, PRO FO 105/158. As suggested in a subsequent dispatch from Kennedy the distemper of Prince Nicholas directed toward Serbia and King Peter was perhaps due to the exclusion of Montenegro from a possible Serbo-Bulgarian agreement. (Kennedy to Lansdowne, 31 October 1904, No. 41 Conf., PRO FO 103/54). But the design of the Petrovich-Nyegosh house upon the Serbian crown no doubt was the stronger motive.

dangerous for the Karageorgevich dynasty as the political excesses of King Alexander had been for the Obrenoviches.<sup>33</sup> The above cited articles and dispatches depicting King Peter as a coward, unable to get rid of his entourage consisting of the regicides, were characteristic and contributed to a rather negative image of him in Britain. Even when A. Stead, in 1906, published his character sketch of King Peter as an effort to exonerate him, W. T. Stead felt obliged to remark that the character sketch of King Peter, written by his son, follows the principle of character sketches in *The Review of Reviews* 'which endeavour always to represent a man as he appears to himself at his best, and not as he appears to his enemies at his worst'.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Self-restraint*

The May Coup had something disgusting in itself. The murder of a defenceless woman, the mutilation of corpses, the defenestration, the vainglorious pride of the regicides for participating in the heinous act, all this must have been terrifying to the British public. 'We can see no reason to expect good from the revolution in Servia. It was too violent, too bloodthirsty, too contemptuous of those laws, at once of morality and honour, which are acknowledged even by the semi civilised to be necessary restraints',<sup>35</sup> exclaimed *The Spectator*. The details of the May Coup were filling columns of the London dailies. These are two examples of how the very murder was described. The first one is from *The Westminster Gazette*:

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33 Thesiger to Lansdowne, 14 June 1904, No. 50, PRO FO 105/153.

34 *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 34 (July-December 1906), p. 229.

35 'The Revolution in Servia', *The Spectator*, June 20, 1903, p. 965 a.

*His Majesty is said to have lived two hours after he was shot; yet a post-mortem examination of the body showed that he had received 'thirty revolver wounds, of which fourteen were mortal'. Moreover, he had received several sabre gashes and his 'spinal column was broken'.*

*The Queen was thrown, 'like Jezebel' into the court below. The body had been hacked with sabres. The King is also stated to have been flung into the garden, and his head was smashed in the fall.<sup>36</sup>*

Bourchier's description in *The Times* was equally terrifying:

*The King and Queen sought refuge in a small dressing room... The bodies of both were pierced by innumerable thrusts of bayonets and sabres. It appears that between 30 and 50 officers entered the palace, and that each delivered at least one blow.<sup>37</sup>*

De Windt was even told by a correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* that the next morning after the murder, he saw the room where the royal couple had been murdered, and it was a shambles.<sup>38</sup>

Approval of the regicide equally conflicted with the British sense of self-restraint. *The Spectator* formulated it very clearly: 'The murderers, therefore, may be considered to have been pardoned by the King, applauded by the people, and blessed by the Church, "harmonious agreement of voices" which has

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<sup>36</sup> *The Westminster Gazette*, June 13, 1903, p. 2 b.

<sup>37</sup> *The Times*, June 15, 1903, p. 7 a.

<sup>38</sup> Harry De Windt, *Through Savage Europe*, p. 156.

hardly been seen in Europe since the massacre of St. Bartholomew'.<sup>39</sup>

### *Sense of Duty*

Sense of duty in the case of Serbia basically referred to two dilemmas. First, what was to be done with diplomatic relations, and second, what was to be done with Serbia, ruled by the assassins? The leading dailies had opposing attitudes on what was to be done with regard to diplomatic relations. *The Times* concluded that the best and the most effective measure of the Powers 'would appear to be to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Belgrade until Servia has a Government which is prepared to profess some regard for public morality and to give some guarantee that she will not outrage it in the future. As a country which is honourably respected by the Balkan peoples, and it is at the same time politically less interested than the others, Great Britain might well take the lead in this matter'. *The Westminster* had the opposite opinion: 'Belgrade is said to wear a "festive aspect"; but however horrible it may be for us that Queen Draga should be butchered to make a Servian holiday, we do not see that we can, or that we are called upon to, do anything'. Commenting the proposal of *The Times*, *The Westminster* in its 'Notes of the day' concluded: 'But it seems impossible to take a guarantee against a bloody revolution, and if we did we should have to punish the revolutionaries'.<sup>40</sup> *The Spectator* doubted that any measures to punish the assassins would be undertaken, although it would have approved them: 'A cry has gone up from all Europe that the murderers should be

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39 *The Spectator*, June 20, 1903, p. 961 b.

40 *The Westminster Gazette*, June 13, 1903, p. 3 b.

punished, if not the plotters; but who is to punish them? The Great Powers have refused to intervene effectually without suspending their mutual jealousies, and, besides, they are afraid of a precedent which might bind them to interfere if a revolution occurred in a State capable of self-defence'.<sup>41</sup>

The decision to break diplomatic relations with Serbia gave W. T. Stead another opportunity to moralise. In his opinion: 'The withdrawal of Sir G. Bonham from Belgrade will have no practical consequences. It is merely England's way of saying "Damn!" – in diplomatic accents. It is a relief to the feelings; but if Government take to swearing in this fashion where is the thing to stop?' He observed critically: 'No doubt the conspirators went too far, and spared neither man nor woman in their rage; but, after all, the butchery of Belgrade is not for a moment to be compared to the butchery of the Armenians in Constantinople. Yet Sir Nicholas O'Connor<sup>42</sup> was not withdrawn from the Bosphorus'.<sup>43</sup>

As regards direct intervention of Austria-Hungary, Bouchier, in a letter to the Managing Director of *The Times*, remarked that the Serbians were still 'vastly pleased with themselves' over the regicide, and suggested that 'an Austrian occupation would be the best cure for Serbia if it would not lead to a Russian occupation of Bulgaria'.<sup>44</sup> Herbert Vivian also hypothesised: 'If I were Foreign Minister, I would counsel an occupation of Serbia by the Powers, perhaps even partition'.<sup>45</sup>

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41 *The Spectator*, June 20, 1903, p. 965 b ('The revolution in Serbia').

42 Nicholas O'Connor, British Ambassador in Constantinople (1898–1908).

43 *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 28 (July, 1903), p. 5.

44 Quoted in Radovich, *Aftermath*, p. 32–33 (Bouchier Papers, Bouchier to Moberly Bell, 22 June 1903, Archives of *The Times*).

45 Herbert Vivian, 'A Glorious Revolution in Serbia', *The Fortnightly Review*, vol. 75 (July-December 1903), p. 75.

*God-fearing attitude*

This attitude basically meant that in the perception of other peoples it was very important what was their relation to God and how pious they were. Therefore the behaviour of Metropolitan Inocentius, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Kingdom of Serbia, was especially irritating to the British public. On 16 June, 1903, five days after the regicide, he served a *Te Deum* in Belgrade Cathedral. The ceremony was intended to mark the election of the new King. Instead, as H. Vivian phrased it: ‘the speech of the Metropolitan seemed almost to imply that the blessing of the Church was also being conferred upon the drunken criminals, who had slain a defenceless King and Queen, and were now gloating over their iniquity’.<sup>46</sup> For *The Spectator* the death of Queen Draga was a foul murder ‘and to sing a *Te Deum* over it a disgusting exhibition at once of callousness and superstition’.<sup>47</sup> For W. T. Stead the Metropolitan’s flexibility proclaimed him ‘a veritable Vicar of Bray of the Balkans’. However, Stead also noted: ‘It all seems very ghastly to us, almost as ghastly as our junketings and Cathedral services during the recent war seemed to all outsiders. But blood seems to drug the consciousness of the peoples, and to render them incapable of seeing their own conduct as others see it’.<sup>48</sup> The Archbishop of Belgrade was even dedicated a poem in *The Spectator*, by Edward Sydney Tyles:

*He raised his reverend hands to Heaven, and blessed  
The kneeling murderers with unfaltering tongue;*

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46 Herbert Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, p. 143.

47 *The Spectator*, vol. 19 (June 20, 1903), p. 965 (‘The Revolution in Servia’).

48 *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 28 (July 1903), p. 4.

*The robes of peace he wore, and on his breast  
The golden sign of redemption hung.*

*From those calm skies no sudden lightings broke;  
Justice while her righteous doom delayed;  
And underneath the cloud of incense smoke  
The assassins still knelt, smiling, unafraid.*

*Yet these were they whose coward arms had wrought  
The foulest act that stains our later time;  
And reeking from their work they came and sought  
Their Primate's benediction on that crime.*

*For though no flaming scourge their guilt chastine,  
And unavenged yon helpless victims bleed;  
Though Serbia's folk look on with alien eyes,  
And some approve, and all condone the deed...<sup>49</sup>*

With a cowardly King controlled by the regicides, and with 'the Vicar of Bray' as the head of the Church, Serbia seemed to be a country that could be civilised by a foreign, preferably Austrian, intervention. However, even those who were in favour of this solution were aware that, at that point of time, no such action could be realised. The Britons, it seems, were not unanimous in their sense of duty to Serbia, but they were completely unanimous in their rejection and condemnation of the terrible murder and the celebrations and praise which followed it in Belgrade. Therefore, the break-up of diplomatic relations seemed as sufficient demonstration of British condemnation of the regi-

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<sup>49</sup> 'The Archbishop of Belgrade', *The Spectator*, vol. 90 (June 20, 1903), p. 980; cf. Herbert Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, p. 144.

cide. Similar actions were expected from other European countries, but only the Netherlands followed the British example.<sup>50</sup> Serbia, in new circumstances seemed to be an immorally ruled country, perhaps also a country to be pitied, but certainly not a country that even a single Briton was supposed to have any sympathies for.

Every perception includes a set of associations that are activated whenever one perceives the same object. If these associations of Serbia, at the end of the nineteenth century, were ambiguous (the poor man's paradise, courageous people fighting the Turks, semi-European country and court scandals), then after the May Coup they were exclusively negative, and they included the following visions: the bloody throne, the country of *coup d'états*, an oriental country, the rule of *camarilla*, Belgrade – white city of Death.

Obviously apart of the sense of duty, which offered no clear message to the British public regarding Serbia, other three elements of the Victorian mentality were in direct collision with

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50 The image of Serbia in the Netherlands, after the May Coup, was similar to the one in Britain. In the nineteenth century, as in Britain, the Serbian image was not unfavourable in the Netherlands. 'This favourable course, that took place at the very beginning of the twentieth century was severely challenged by the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga. This act can be taken as a pretext for the first negative image of Serbia.' Jelica Novaković-Lopušina, *Srbi i jugoistočna Evropa u nizozemskim izvorima do 1918* (Beograd: ReVision, 1999), p. 208. There is at least one book dealing with the May Coup published by a Dutch. In 1909, under the title *Koningsliefde. Het Drama in Servie (Royal Love. A Drama in Servia)* a biography of King Alexander written by Catharina Alberdingk Thijm (1848–1908) was published. Dutch periodicals also covered the May Coup. The Municipal Library of Antwerp keeps a collection of bound articles that in the form of feuilleton filled the pages of some Dutch daily or periodical. The collection covers some 800 pages and is entitled *De bloednacht van Belgrado (Bloodshed in Belgrade)*. Jelica Novaković-Lopušina, *Srbi i jugoistočna Evropa*, pp. 188–192.



the Belgrade regicide and the political order that was established in Serbia. The regicides did not seem to care much about British and generally European reaction. For them the May Coup was a patriotic and glorious deed. Moreover, some of their actions seemed directed to irritate even more the public opinion of European countries.

### The Re-orientalisation of Serbia

Some authors have attempted to explain the negative image of Serbia and generally the negative image of the Balkans in Britain and in the West, by using inspiring, but essentially an anti-Western criticism, based on ‘orientalist discourse’, formulated by ‘an Arab Palestinian in the West’ as Edward Said once called himself.<sup>51</sup> However, Maria Todorova has been convincingly able to demonstrate her position formulated in the following way: ‘My aim is to position myself vis-à-vis the orientalist discourse and elaborate on a seemingly identical, but actually only similar phenomenon, which I call balkanism’.<sup>52</sup> She iden-

51 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 27; Said's theory was implemented to the Balkans in the following works: Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert Hayden, ‘Orientalist Variations on the Theme “Balkans”: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics’, *The Slavic Review*, vol. 51 (Spring 1992), pp. 1–15; Milica Bakic-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia’, *The Slavic Review*, vol. 54 (Winter 1995), pp. 917–931; Elli Scopetea, ‘Оријентализам и Балкан’, *Историјски часопис* [‘Orientalizam i Balkan’, *Istoriyski Chasopis*, Belgrade, vol. 38 (1991)]; John B. Allcock follows Said but with well-founded reservations, ‘Constructing “the Balkans”’, in: John B. Allcock and Antonia Young, *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Women Travellers in the Balkans* (Bradford University Press, 1991), pp. 170–191.

52 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 11.

tified basic differences of the two discourses. The most important differences are that there is a geographic and historic concreteness of the Balkans against an Orient without ‘stable reality’ as Said phrased it, and also that the Balkans ‘have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroad’, having thus a transitory status.<sup>53</sup> The period from 1903 to 1906 is peculiarly interesting for it offers some aspects of re-orientalisation, especially in the case of Serbia and Macedonia, although it generally fits into Todorova's categorisation. Therefore it is important to analyse how this re-orientalisation influenced the image of Serbia.

The western notion of the Orient was an idea, or a project. As M. Bakic-Hayden put it ‘while geographical boundaries of the “Orient” shifted throughout history, the concept of “Orient” as “other” has remained more or less unchanged’.<sup>54</sup> In geographical terms, this idea fluctuated. The Britons developed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, an East consisting of three parts: the Far East, the Middle East, and the Near East, corresponding basically to Asia east of India, India with some parts of Persia, and the Ottoman Empire. In its largest scope the East stretched from Japan up to the northern most citadels of the Ottoman Empire. From the Treaty of Carlowitz, in 1699, the northern most citadel was Belgrade, perpetuating the division of the Serbs into the Austrian Serbs and the Turkish Serbs, or in a way the Occidental and the Oriental Serbs. In the early nineteenth century as R. Davison pointed out, ‘most Europeans agreed with Kinglake who, reporting on his travels of 1834, found that the East began at Belgrade, where he crossed from Hapsburg into Ottoman domains’.<sup>55</sup> This divide signified more

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53 *Ibid.*, p. 11–20.

54 Milica Bakic-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia’, p. 918.

55 Roderic H. Davison, ‘Where is the Middle East?’, *The Foreign Affairs*, vol. 38, No. 4 (July 1960), p. 666.

than a pure border. In terms of the imaginative visualisation of the other it meant two different civilisations and two different concepts. Being cut by historical events into two parts, which in reality were northern and southern, but which in the imaginative western concept turned into Oriental and Occidental parts, the Serbs of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries represent very interesting case of the imaginative geography of the East. From this point of view the occidentalisation of the Serbs is peculiarly interesting.

The liberation of a specific Balkan country from the Ottoman yoke meant basically its gradual geographic transition from the East into Europe. Actually, after the term Near East (or the Nearer East) was coined it meant transition from the Near(er) East into Europe.<sup>56</sup> It is very important to see where Serbia and the Balkans were placed, around 1900, in terms of this imaginary divide. In October 1829 a Prussian captain, Otto Dubislav von Pirch, after crossing from the border town of Semlin, Austria, to Belgrade, was able to note: 'a frightening boundary separated me from the civilised world by just making a few steps'.<sup>57</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the border between the East and the West did not seem to be so sudden, frightening, or even clear. Here it is of enormous help for us to consult the book of David George Hogarth, *The Nearer East*, 'an epoch making geography',<sup>58</sup> as R. Davison called it. Hogarth was a fellow of Magdalene College, Oxford, and the former Director of the British School in Athens. He noticed: 'the Nearer East is a term of current fashion for a region which our grandfathers were

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56 The term 'the Near East' seemed to be coined by 1896, see Davison, 'Where is the Middle East?', p. 666.

57 Quoted in Dimitije Djordjevic, 'Ottoman Heritage Versus Modernization: Symbiosis in Serbia during the Nineteenth Century', *Serbian Studies*, vol. 13 (1999), p. 29.

58 Davison, 'Where is the Middle East?', p. 667.

content to call simply the East. Its area is generally understood to coincide with those classic lands, historically the most interesting on the surface of the globe, which lie about the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea; but few probably could say off-hand where should be the limits and why. The landmarks towards the West are somewhat doubtful and apt to be removed'.<sup>59</sup> Kinglake put the borders, half a century earlier at the walls of Belgrade, but they changed. Hogarth now placed the borders more southwards:

*To-day the western visitor, though conscious that the character of the life about him has undergone some subtle change since his train steamed over the Danube bridge, would not expect to find himself in the 'East' until he should sight the minarets of Adrianople, or, at earliest, the three mastoid hills of Philippopolis. For want of an effective natural division, the north-western limit of the East depends largely on political conditions. Where centres of the superior civilisation of the West lie so near at hand as to exercise an intrusive influence in any case, occupation by a Power, which does not derive its origin from the East, quickly decides in favour of the West...*

*At the end of this century, therefore, when the Austrian occupation of Herzegóvina, Bosnia, and the sanjak of Novi-Bazar, and the creation of independent Serbia and Rumania, and an all but independent Bulgaria, exposed to the predominant influence of the Central Europe, have won the basin of the Lower Danube for the West we must set the north-western limit of our 'Nearer East' at the Balkan water parting; but somewhat arbitrarily and without begging the question that there East and West are*

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59 Hogarth, *The Nearer East*, p. 1.

*divided in any very obvious manner, or will long continue to be divided even as obviously as now.*<sup>60</sup>

Hogarth's maps that are presented here demonstrate clearly which regions of the Balkans and which ethnic groups were considered to belong to the Nearer East, at around 1900. His Nearer East included the following Balkan lands: Albania, southern Serbia and southern Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece.<sup>61</sup> The Nearer East also included British administered Egypt, all the Ottoman lands of Asia with the entire Arabian Peninsula, and two thirds of Iran. In ethnic terms the Balkan part of the Nearer East included Slavonic populations of Macedonia and southern Bulgaria, the Hellenes and the Osmanlis. As Davison pointed out, speaking of this Hogarth's delineation: 'Not everyone agreed with those exact limits for the Near East, but with its approximate scope there was little quarrel'.<sup>62</sup>

Hogarth's categorisation placed the Kingdoms of Serbia and Romania, The Principality of Bulgaria (or, at least, its major part) and Austro-Hungarian administered Bosnia and Herzegovina into Europe. The Serbian case analysed in the first chapter, demonstrates clearly this steady occidentalisation of the northern Balkans, which is so manifest in Hogarth's book. Another prominent actor in the creation of the image of the Balkans, Noel Buxton, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Balkan Committee, also expressed cultural and geographic am-

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60 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

61 Davison thought that Hogarth also included Montenegro to his Nearer East (Davison, 'Where is the Middle East?', p. 667). From the enclosed map it does not seem so, but he nowhere explicitly mentions Montenegro in his book. Besides it seems that he considered the term Albania to include what today would be called Albania, as well as Kosovo, some parts of southern Serbia, western Macedonia, eastern Montenegro, and northern Greece (Hogarth, *The Nearer East*, see map on page 119).

62 R. Davison, 'Where is the Middle East?', p. 667.

biguity of the Balkans: ‘The maps of the school-room teach us to include the Balkan Peninsula in Europe, but, once across the Danubian plains, the traveller will not be long before he discovers himself to be in the East’.<sup>63</sup> Yet, he was more cautious in categorising the Balkan Christian States since: ‘the free states of the Balkans combine charms of East and West’.<sup>64</sup> Buxton was also very explicit in what this dichotomy between the East and the West meant for him. Speaking about the history of the Near East, he concluded: ‘We are on the field of the great battle between East and West – between barbarism and civilization’.<sup>65</sup>

The transitory character of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire was even more pronounced. Being Christians they belonged to Europe, but being Ottoman subjects they belonged to the East. This mostly affected the image of the Macedonian Christians, who were completely regarded as Orientals. If in the case of the Balkan Christian states oriental references appeared to be fewer and fewer with the span of time, in the case of the Christians of Macedonia, their oriental perception was not challenged. However, disturbing events in the Balkans, like assassinations in Bulgaria and Serbia, were able to reverse this process, even in the case of the Balkan Christian States. Consequently, occidentalisation of the perception of the Balkan Christians was sometimes disturbed and challenged by the Oriental reverses, which I call re-orientalisation.

Here I owe an explanation of the two notions I have introduced: occidentalisation and (re-)orientalisation. By occidentalisation I mean a shift in the Western perception of some specific area that was previously considered to be part of the Orient. This shift transforms the perception of something that

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63 Noel Buxton, *Europe and the Turks* (London: John Murray, 1907).

64 *Ibid*, p. 2.

65 *Ibid*, p. 19.

used to belong to 'otherness' into an ambiguous category which I call the 'inferior self'. Seldom it is even transformed into the clear category of the 'self'. On the other hand, re-orientalisation reverses this process, bringing back an already more or less occidentalised area back into the domain of the Orient. In Serbia's case this happened most clearly immediately after the May Coup. Here I would like to introduce another term – 'inferior self'. It seems to me that in terms of categorisation of a perceived object, the simple dichotomy between the self and the other does not appear to be sufficient enough in the case of the Balkans. M. Todorova pointed out in an interview this ambiguity in the Western perception of the Balkans: 'It is an externalization from within. They are part of the European world and of the Western world but somehow they are considered to be the "bad" side of oneself. This is the interesting nuance that I found of how the Balkans are being thought of in Europe and the US: that is not a complete "other" but an incomplete, dark side of the "self"'.<sup>66</sup> In case of the categorisation of emerging Balkan Christian states I find that the term 'inferior self' would be most appropriate. Although technically accepted into the family of European states, the Balkan Christian states are not considered full members. Paton's title 'Serbia, the youngest member of the European family' demonstrates this inferiority. Serbia was a part of the family, but its inferior part, or hierarchically speaking, it was in the same position as children are within family. James Bourchier, speaking about the Christian Balkan states possessing 'the young

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66 Interview taken from the Internet: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLASnotes/9610/Todorova.html>; Todorova commented on this categorisation in another of her texts: 'The in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitional character, could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed as an incomplete self. The reasons for this are two: religion and race'. Maria Todorova, 'Image de l'autre', *Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Européen Bulletin* (Bucarest), vol. 28–29 (1998–1999), p. 189.

turbulent democracies', concluded: 'They must still remain under the tutelage of Europe. Let us hope that Europe will awake to her responsibilities towards these wayward children; her part should be that of the kind parent, not of Saturn who devoured his own offspring'.<sup>67</sup> Noel Buxton phrased this similarly: 'These nations – Bulgaria, Servia, and Roumania – once in the front of civilisation, long enslaved and now set free, play with their new Constitutions like children with a toy, and with a similar result – the toy gets broken'.<sup>68</sup>

*The Times* Balkan Correspondent played a significant role in the re-orientation of Serbia after the May Coup, and his patterns were typical. James Bouchier had a peculiar idea of the Balkan 'orientalism'. In his many times off-repeated sentence he declares: 'nothing succeeds like success, especially in the East'. His poetics of the Orient depicted it as a place where many not quite logical things were possible. So, when speaking about a pro-Karageorgevich revolt from the previous year, he said he was assured at that time 'that the "pretender" had not a single partisan in the country except a few persons connected with his family. 'To-day the same statement is made with regard to the fallen dynasty, and is in all probability equally true...'<sup>69</sup> At the end of 1903, he concluded: 'In the East nothing succeeds like success, and there is seldom a discordant note in the universal chorus of *Vae victis*. But it needed no profound acquaintance with the Oriental character – for Servia, if the most westerly of the Balkan States, is also the most Oriental ...'<sup>70</sup> Bouchier, with

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67 James D. Bouchier, 'The Balkan States – Their Attitude Towards the Macedonian Question', pp. 88–89.

68 Noel Buxton, *Europe and the Turks* (London: John Murray, 1907), p. 2.

69 *The Times*, June 18, 1903, p. 5 c ('The New King of Servia').

70 *The Times*, December 23, 1903, p. 6 a ('The Situation in Servia').



his sympathies for the Christians in the Balkans, was naturally even keener to place the Turks into the Orient. In an article mentioning Turkish oriental character, Bouchier explained what he meant by Oriental peoples: 'A nomad Asiatic race, the Turks display the same incapacity for change and progress, the same indolence and conservatism, the same repugnance to the spirit of modern Europe, which characterises all Oriental peoples, with the brilliant exception of Japan'.<sup>71</sup> In this strong attachment of Serbia to the Orient, one motif that was persistently repeated in the British press can demonstrate the scope of orientalisation of Serbia. Immediately after the May Coup, it was the motif of defenestration.

### Motif of Defenestration

*And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezabel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window... And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, 'Who is on my side? who?' And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, 'Throw her down'. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did it and drink, and said, 'Go, see now this cursed women, and bury her: for she is a King's daughter'. (II Kings, 9)<sup>72</sup>*

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71 James D. Bouchier, 'The Balkan States – Their Attitude Towards the Macedonian Question', pp. 45–46.

72 *Authorised Version of the Holy Bible.*

The Defenestration of Belgrade produced quite a strong impression in Britain, and historical parallels were immediately drawn. *The Westminster Gazette* reported, following Bouchier's report, that the Queen 'was thrown, "like Jezebel" into the court below', and her body 'had been hacked with sabres'.<sup>73</sup> *The Spectator* immediately referred to the same historical event: 'As it was in Jezreel three thousand years ago, so it was at Belgrade on Thursday. Thus almost exactly does the history of palace coups d'état repeat itself among Eastern peoples'.<sup>74</sup> In the next issue, speaking about the royal bodies that were hurled from a window in Belgrade, *The Spectator* repeated that there had not been 'such a scene in history since Jehu ordered the decent burial of Jezebel, not in pity or shame, but because she whom his followers had just murdered was of Royal descent'.<sup>75</sup> Herbert Vivian perhaps referred to the same when he said that the news of a crime was so 'abominable' that 'we must go back almost two thousand years to find its parallel'.<sup>76</sup> Even W. T. Stead referred to it. After the regicides had found the royal lovers they 'riddled them with bullets, slashed them with sabres, and flung them out of the window into the park, in strict accordance with the precedence of Jezebel'. Stead believed that even after such mutilation 'they lived for two hours after they fell', but 'no

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73 *The Westminster Gazette*, June 13, 1903, p. 7 a ('Details on the Massacre'); cf. *The Times*, June 13, 1903, p. 7 a ('The Servian Tragedy. Burial of the King and Queen').

74 *The Spectator*, vol. 90 (June 13, 1903), p. 922.

75 *The Spectator*, vol. 90 (June 29, 1903), p. 965.

76 *The Westminster Gazette*, June 12, 1903, p. 1 c (Herbert Vivian, 'The Servian Massacre I.-In Praise of the King and Queen'). Actually the defenestration of Jezebel happened c. 843 B.C., almost three thousand years before the Belgrade defenestration. (see: *The Encyclopaedia Britannica CD*, Multimedia Disc, 1998, s.v. 'Jezebel').

scavenger dogs, as in the case of the queen of Ahab, came to remote the royal carrion'.<sup>77</sup>

However, it was not in the British press, but rather in *The New York Times* that the theme of the Defenestration of Belgrade reached its climax. An editorial, entitled 'Out of Window' described how different nations killed their victims, with the unavoidable historical parallel with the Defenestration of Prague, in 1618:

*As the bold Briton knocks his enemy down with his fists, as the Southern Frenchman lays his foe prostrate with a scientific kick of the savate, as the Italian uses his knife and the German the handy beer mug, so the Bohemian and Servian 'chucks' his enemy from the window.*

This was explained as part of Slavic nature. Namely, the Slavs were once 'forest-dwelling tribes living in square-built log houses' which usually had a door, a fireplace of some kind, and a chimney or smoke hole. Consequently:

*On the event of an unpleasantness in the log cabin the stronger party held the door while the weaker was being pounded. The only exit was the smokehole or, in finer habitations, a window. Ages of indulgence in vodki, brandy, and other fire waters with the concomitant excitement of thrusting an opponent through the window or up the smokehole have made the Slav a slave to the window habit.*

After this explanation it was natural to conclude that the Servian officers who killed the King and the Queen were turned 'into wild beasts' because 'the racial inherited instinct came into play, and though the wretched victims of their violence were

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<sup>77</sup> *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 28 (July 1903), p. 4.

dead, they were not satisfied until they had thrown the bodies from the window'.<sup>78</sup>

It is a historical fact that the leading conspirator, Colonel Mashin, was a Czech by origin. However, defenestration was in no way restricted to the Slavonic peoples. There is also one example of a defenestration committed in the Isles. The eighth Earl of Douglas, suspected of treachery, was defenestrated by James II in 1452, from a 'surprisingly small window'.<sup>79</sup> Yet the Defenestration of Belgrade kept producing quite a strong impression in Britain. Even a dozen years later Sir Thomas Sanderson, who was a Permanent Undersecretary in the Foreign Office when the May Coup took place, commented an appeal for a beneficence, in a postscript on a letter to Sir Edward Grey, in the following way:

*Kinnard sends me an appeal, backed by you, on behalf of the Bible Lands Mission for the relief of distress in Servia. I have sent a paltry contribution – but how on earth they make out that Servia is a bible land, except because the Servians threw their late Queen out of (a) window, I can't imagine.*<sup>80</sup>

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78 *The New York Times*, June 24, 1903, p. 8 c, d ('Out of Window'); This interesting article was firstly quoted in Z. A. B. Zeman, 'The Balkans and the Coming War', in R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The Coming of the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 21; cf. Milica Bakic-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter 1995), p. 918.

79 Rob Humphreys, Donald Reid and Paul Tarrant, *Scotland: The Rough Guide* (London: The Rough Guides, 2000), p. 248.

80 Quoted in Radovich, *Aftermath*, p. 30 (Grey Papers, Sanderson to Grey, 21 May 1915, PRO FO 800/111). Radovich believes that this Sanderson's postscript might indicate 'what the feelings were of the foreign secretary and of his staff at the Foreign Office in response to the Serbian slayings'. *Ibid*, p. 29.

It is very peculiar that Biblical references were used to designate Serbia negatively. Although Victorian morality was imbued with Christianity and inspired by the Holy Bible, it is obvious from the Serbian example that the Orient at the turn of the century was generally perceived so negatively that it even became a convenient metaphor for the stigmatisation of any form of 'other'. Even Biblical background could not improve this perception of the Near Orient in Britain.