

Summary

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The Image of the Serbs in US Feature Films from the Beginning of the Era of Sound Films to the Disintegration of Yugoslavia: 1927 – 1990

Since the first immigrants of Serb origin appeared at the US territory, in mid-19th century, the two world have been in clash – the first one, for Americans semi-mythical, semi-savage Balkans, and the other one, modern, highly industrialised, protestant West, cold and merciless to Serbs. Small community of several hundreds of thousands American Serbs, completely deprived of influence, belonged mainly to middle and lower middle classes. Stereotypes appeared from great cultural differences and the image of the Serbs as a mixture of Russians and Greeks, being the ethnical groups positioned near the bottom of the American system of values. Serbian “mixture” comes from Slovenian origin, Balkan heritage and the Orthodox faith, which were the sources of similarities with the mentality of Russians and Greeks. They were often identified as other South Slavs (Yugoslavs) or the subjects of Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Customs, mentality, tendencies, even the language of the Serbs were often falsely represented, due to intentions of Hollywood studios to make them more exotic than they really were. However, even when Serbs were shown in better light, it was often within the frame of so-called Hollywood matrix, which systematically presented national stereotypes.

Wrongly using films (a media, art and entertainment at the same time) as “basic educational means”, American have built up wrong image of the Serbs, basing it mainly on prejudices about Americans of Serb origin as poor ethnic group without elite. Serbs from Serbia, their elite and European heritage, rich history and contribution to the world culture and science, simply do not exist in the film and television, which create the reality and values for the most of Americans. Even geographic position, where Serbian people live, remains unknown, while distant and uneducated Serbia is considered a land where every evil is possible. Therefore, it is not unusual that in the past decade Hollywood production has represented extremely negative image of the Serbs, which would not be changed soon, according to inclinations of the latest films.

**ИЗ ИСТРАЖИВАЊА
RESEARCHES**

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94(497)“1912/1913”(093.3)**Semi-Barbarians, Courageous Patriots, and Orientals.
Swedish views of the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913.**

Abstract: This article deals with certain issues brought out by most of the Swedish travelers: the Balkan peoples' great patriotism, spirit of self-sacrifice, enthusiasm for the war, and the soldiers' perseverance. These are considered good qualities, and it is often mentioned that they should be seen as an example for Sweden, or even for “all nations”. Even though the Balkans were often described in a very positive way by the Swedish travellers, it is clear that many of these travellers thought they were visiting a less civilised part of the world. However, the visitors were quite impressed with the Balkan peoples, stressing their bellicose natures as something quite positive, and most of the Swedish travellers had a very positive attitude towards the war itself.

Introduction¹

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in the Balkans throughout Western Europe, no doubt due to the war and devastation that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Some authors have portrayed the Balkans as a particularly volatile region, where ancient ethnic hatreds that are endemic to a particular “Balkan culture” have fomented inter-ethnic grievances and violence. George Kennan's depiction of the Balkan peoples as “non-European”, and therefore less civilized, is by now a classic example of this view.² This image of the Balkan peoples has also been present in media, where Bosnia, for instance, has been portrayed as

a formidable, scary place of high mountains, brutish people, and tribal grievances rooted in history and myth born of boozy nights by the fire. It's the place

¹ This article is based on an essay written at the Department of History, Uppsala University, Sweden. I would like to thank PhD candidate in history, Tomislav Dulić, who guided both the essay as well as this article, and Professor Maria Egren at the History Department, Uppsala University, as well as the *The Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

² Todorova, Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York 1997, p. 6 (further: Todorova...).

where World War I began and where the wars of Europe persist, an ember of hate still glowing for reasons that defy reason itself.³

According to Maria Todorova, this and similar portrayals of the Balkans are a relatively modern phenomenon, one that was virtually non-existent prior to the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. Todorova shows that there is a discourse according to which the Balkan peoples have been and still are described as “the Others” of Europe who have not conformed to “the standards of behaviour devised normative by and for the civilized world.”⁴ To begin with, Todorova discusses some theoretical questions about the creation of images of “the other”, where Edward Said’s “Orientalism” plays an important role.⁵ However, Todorova criticizes Said’s work on several points, emphasizing that her concept of “balkanism” is not a mere “subspecies to orientalism.”⁶ One of the most important differences between Todorova and Said lies in her emphasis on the fact that “what practically all descriptions of the Balkans offered as a central characteristic was their transitory status.”⁷ Consequently, if Said’s Orient and Occident are two incompatible entities,⁸ the Balkans are a bridge between the two. Contrary to the Orient, the Balkans are not described as Europe’s “Other” but rather as its “incomplete self” or “other within.”⁹ Orientalism, argues Todorova, is a discourse about an imputed opposition, balkanism about imputed *ambiguity*. This is the case for mainly two reasons: religion and race. Most of the inhabitants of the Balkans are Christians, and they are Indo-Europeans, not Arabs or Black.¹⁰ Therefore, the otherness of the Balkan peoples has to be constructed differently from the otherness of Arabs or Blacks.

According to Todorova, the “frozen image” of the Balkans was fully developed around 1914.¹¹ Although there were common patterns in which the Balkans were viewed even during the 19th century, it is not correct to speak about *one* western image of the region during this time, because, Todorova says, it is not correct to speak about a *common West*.¹²

According to Todorova, the West first became seriously concerned with the Balkans during the Balkan Wars in 1912–13. It was during this period of time (or, to be more specific, during the second Balkan War, since the first war was generally considered as a righteous fight for freedom from the Ottoman Empire) that mass violence became the Western leitmotif of the Balkans.¹³

³ Cohen, Richard, Washington Post, November 28, 1995, cited in Brown, Michael E (editor): *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, Cambridge 1996, p. 12.

⁴ Todorova... p. 3.

⁵ Said, Edward W, *Orientalism*, Stockholm 1997. (further: Said...)

⁶ Todorova... p. 8.

⁷ Todorova... p. 15.

⁸ Said... p. 4; Todorova... p. 15.

⁹ Todorova... pp. 15–18, 188.

¹⁰ Todorova... pp. 15–18.

¹¹ Todorova... p. 185.

¹² Todorova... pp. 115–116.

¹³ Todorova... pp. 4, 122.

Slobodan G. Markovich essentially agrees with Todorova that the image of the violent Balkans is a twentieth century phenomenon. However, he claims that the image of the Balkans in Britain has to be understood against the background of the British value system.¹⁴ He shows that the year 1903 was very important for the image of Serbia in Britain. This was the year both of the bloody May coup in Belgrade, which resulted in violent deaths of the Serbian king and queen, and of the first Macedonian uprising. Markovich writes that the murder of the royal couple which resulted in the end of the Obrenović dynasty, turned the image of Serbia in Britain into one of an “oriental”, non-civilised state”. Markovich argues that this perception lasted until 1906, when Britain resumed diplomatic ties with Serbia that had been severed in 1903. Subsequently, the negative image of Serbia and the Balkans was revived shortly after the Sarajevo assassinations in 1914, and again in the 1990s.¹⁵

However, the images of the Balkans have not always been negative. For example, Markovich argues that there was a generally positive attitude among British travellers who visited Serbia in the 19th century, due to their sympathies with the Christian Balkan states. Moreover, this view stood in opposition to British foreign policy doctrines, who were generally pro-Ottoman during this period.¹⁶

Compared to the Orient, the Balkans during the 19th century gradually became transformed from the “East” into “Europe”.¹⁷ Markovich refers to this process as “occidentalisation”. By “occidentalisation” Markovich means a shift in the western perception of the Balkans from Said’s Oriental “other” into what he calls the West’s “inferior self”.¹⁸ Around 1900, Greece, Albania, southern Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia were generally considered to belong to the “Near East”, whereas the rest of Bulgaria and Serbia, as well as the Austrian-administered Bosnia-Herzegovina, were placed in Europe. But earlier, during the first part of the 19th century, the Austrian-Serbian border was generally seen as the border between the East and West.¹⁹ The occidentalization of Serbia, Markovich argues, was reversed and turned into a process of re-orientalization immediately after the May coup. Serbia was thus again placed in the Orient, in the category of “the other”.²⁰

In relation to Todorova, Markovich writes that if “balkanism” was “quite sufficient after the Balkan Wars to designate an area as being backward and bloodthirsty, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries it was rather re-orientalisation that played the same role.”²¹ Further, he argues that the events in 1903 paved the way for “balkanism” around World War I.

¹⁴ Markovich, Slobodan, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans 1903-1906*. Paris 2000, p. 4. (further: Markovich...)

¹⁵ Markovich... pp. 1–2.

¹⁶ Markovich... p. 35.

¹⁷ Markovich... p. 84.

¹⁸ Markovich... pp. 187–188.

¹⁹ Markovich... pp. 184–186.

²⁰ Markovich... p. 188.

²¹ Markovich... p. 195.

Once the Ottoman Empire had almost been expelled from Europe, it appeared no longer to be convenient to re-orientalise the Balkanites. Thus, a new phrase of “balkanisation” was coined.”²²

Markovich’s and Todorova’s critique of Said partially focused on the fact that he is not showing what the Orient *really* is, something Said is neither interested in nor able to do. But at the same time, he criticizes the orientalist discourse for not describing the Orient correctly, thereby giving it an ontological status. Markovich, on the other hand, argues that a historian has to accept that there is a knowable reality, which it is the historian’s task to try and reconstruct.²³

In this article, I shall show how some Swedish travellers, mainly military officers, described the Balkans during the Balkan Wars. The sources, which are located at the Military Archives of Sweden (Krigsarkivet, Kra) in Stockholm, consist of reports, diaries, newspaper articles, and private letters. I have been particularly interested in finding out whether or not Markovich’s and Todorova’s conclusions can be confirmed in the Swedish material. Thus, I have paid attention to the question of whether the travellers were placing the regions they visited in the “East” (or “Orient”) or in the “West” (or Europe), and how they described the Orient. I have also tried to answer the question of what the travellers thought about the war itself, and, finally, if there are any differences to be seen in the descriptions of different Balkan peoples.

August Stackelberg

August Stackelberg visited Bulgaria and Serbia during the first Balkan War. He worked as a newspaper-correspondent for the conservative *Stockholms Dagblad*. The collection contains a diary written during the journey, a later re-written version of this diary, and some of Stackelberg’s newspaper articles.²⁴

When Stackelberg first arrived in Serbia, he wrote that “savage physiognomies” met him. The very first impression of Serbia and the Balkans seems to have been one of a strange country inhabited by strange and savage people. But when he went to describe the inhabitants of Belgrade, Stackelberg wrote that “everyone was kind and obliging.”²⁵

From Belgrade Stackelberg continued to Sofia, a city which made a positive impression on him. He wrote that it was a “well-ordered European city”, where, in opposition to Belgrade, the streets were being swept regularly. The Bulgarians were described as “very honest and kind”.²⁶ In Sofia, Stackelberg watched columns of Macedonian volunteers dressed in sheepskin coats or in “any kind of rag”, yet every-

²² Markovich... p. 195.

²³ Markovich... p. 197; Todorova... pp. 8–11.

²⁴ Kra, Stackelbergs arkiv, vol. 2.

²⁵ Kra, Stackelbergs arkiv, vol. 2, black notebook.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

one wore flowers on their clothes and was singing. Stackelberg wrote that these volunteers were poor at shooting, since many of them were “former robbers”, whose main interest seemed to be using hand grenades and bombs. After staying a few days in Sofia, Stackelberg travelled towards Adrianople. He visited the small town of Stara Zagora, whose streets he described as “Oriental” in character, and whose houses were mainly “low hovels”.²⁷

In Mustafa Pasha, Stackelberg witnessed the hanging of some Turkish prisoners of war. He was surprised of the execution, since he had not seen anything like this before along the front. In a newspaper article, he wrote that the execution was undertaken under very “primitive conditions” and it is clear that Stackelberg thought it was unnecessarily cruel.²⁸ In the diary he wrote: “one begins to understand, that [...] Bulgaria is not a part of Europe.”²⁹

Stackelberg did not refer to the Serbian and Bulgarian soldiers as “brigands”. Instead, he wrote that a surplus of 70 000 soldiers had appeared at the mobilization in Serbia, which he attributed to an unusually high sense of self-sacrifice and duty. He also explained that the soldiers who did not get a seat on the trains were clinging under the wagons in order to reach the front. He described the soldiers as self-sacrificing and inured to hard life, which Stackelberg considered to be positive qualities.³⁰

Even if Stackelberg did not explicitly write whether he thought the Balkans were a part of Europe or of the Orient, his choice of words gives ample evidence of the positive values attached to everything European. He for instance described Sofia, which he quite liked, as a “European city”. The execution of Turkish prisoners, on the other hand, was seen as an example of uncivilized and therefore non-European behaviour. “Oriental” was used as quite the opposite of “European” when describing the small, dirty, and primitive villages. The main impression one gets when reading the diaries of Stackelberg is that he was visiting a strange country with strange people, some of whom resembled bandits or brigands, while others just made a picturesque impression. But far from everything was negative; the people were courageous and kind, and Stackelberg was treated politely wherever he went.

Finally, an interesting difference between the original diary and the later re-written version should be mentioned. In the revised version of the diary, written some time after 1925, Stackelberg refers to the Balkans as the “unruly corner of Europe”. This designation of the Balkans is not found in the original diary. A likely interpretation of this fact is that the image of the Balkans as the powderkeg of Europe was developed after the time when the original diary was written, i.e. after 1913.³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kra, Stackelbergs arkiv, vol. 2, newspaper article: “Interiör från bulgariska högkvarteret i Mustafa Pasha”.

²⁹ Kra, Stackelbergs arkiv, vol. 2, black notebook.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Kra, Stackelbergs arkiv, vol. 2, the re-written, typed “diary”, and the black notebook.

Fredrik Lindencrona

Lindencrona visited Bulgaria during the First Balkan War. The collection contains a travel report for the General Staff and letters written by Lindencrona to his mother.³² In the report, he emphasized that Bulgaria had succeeded in mobilizing a large part of the population, which Sweden should learn from, since “a small country, which really wants to protect its independence” has to make use of as many men as possible for military purposes.³³

Regarding military tactic and education, however, Lindencrona thought that Swedish officers were superior to their Bulgarian counterparts, and that their knowledge of “military science” was far beyond that of the Bulgarians. Accordingly, Lindencrona argued that the victories were won not because of superior command, but because of the good qualities of the Bulgarian people. For example, Lindencrona wrote that the mobilization order was received with great enthusiasm, which he found to be very praiseworthy.³⁴

Lindencrona frequently compared Sweden to Bulgaria, often to the advantage of the latter. In the letters to his mother, he wrote that Sofia was a “surprisingly civilized city”, while emphasizing the great patriotism of the Bulgarian people and their great interest in the war. He wrote that he admired the Bulgarians and would be happy if “our apathetic people [i.e. the Swedes] were just half as patriotic”. Lindencrona continued by claiming that the Bulgarians “look very intelligent” and everyone was very polite.³⁵ Like Stackelberg, Lindencrona met Macedonian volunteers in Sofia. However, instead of describing them as brigands only interested in throwing bombs and hand grenades, he only mentioned that they wore flowers.³⁶

Even if Lindencrona had many good things to say about Bulgaria, not everything was positive. Inter alia, he was surprised that so little was done for the injured soldiers, who were transported in ordinary goods wagons. But again, he mentioned this in comparison to Swedish soldiers, who presumably would not endure such conditions. Repeatedly, Lindencrona emphasized the good qualities of the Bulgarian people and soldiers: “They are a good people, self-sacrificing, contended, kind and helpful, an excellent example to us”. Nevertheless, he also thought that “we [...] are more civilized than they are”.³⁷

Lindencrona mentioned the Orient twice, both times when writing that people do not care about time in the Orient.³⁸ In a postcard from Belgrade, Lindencrona

³² Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, and Generalstaben, utrikesavd. 1908-1937, E I g, vol. 45.

³³ Kra, Generalstaben, utrikesavd. 1908-1937, E I g vol. 45 “Rapport fren Balkankriget 1912-1913”, p. 102.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p 6.

³⁵ Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, letter to his mother “Sofia d. 6 nov 1912”.

³⁶ Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, letter to his mother “Sofia d. 6 nov 1912”.

³⁷ Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, letter to his mother “Jambol d. 9/11 1912”.

³⁸ Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, letter to his mother “Kirk Kilisse d. 5 dec 1912” and “Kirk Kilisse den 14/11 1912”.

wrote that it was nice to approach “civilization” and to “see Europe on the other side of the Save [River]”.³⁹ Consequently, one can conclude that Lindencrona did not consider Serbia to be part of Europe and the civilized world. Moreover he thought that at least some parts of Bulgaria, namely its southern parts and territories newly conquered from the Turks, belonged to the Orient. Still, he was pleasantly surprised by the “civilized” Bulgarian capital.

Erland Mossberg

During the first Balkan War, Mossberg visited Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro. His collection contains the manuscripts from two lectures. One was held at an infantry regiment in Sweden, and the other at the Swedish *Defence Working Committee* (Försvarsberedningen). There are also two diaries in the collection, as well as several notebooks on military matters and an essay on the Balkan War.⁴⁰

During the lecture at the infantry regiment, Mossberg emphasized that the First Balkan War was a “liberation war”. According to Mossberg, the Balkan peoples went to war in order to free themselves from the suffering that the Turks had inflicted upon them. He told the audience that he had heard the Turks were massacring women and children and burning villages, although he had not witnessed such atrocities himself.⁴¹ Mossberg continued by saying that the Balkan peoples had to make great sacrifices to remain free. He compared them to the Swedes, who “have never been conquered”, and therefore do not understand the importance of a well-trained and equipped military force. According to Mossberg, Sweden was far behind Bulgaria in this respect.⁴²

Mossberg also mentioned the popular enthusiasm during the mobilization. Like Lindencrona, he saw this as an example to be followed by his audience, which consisted of Swedish soldiers. According to Mossberg, the Bulgarian army was well-disciplined and the soldiers were loyal, with a “good spirit”, which he stressed was very important for achieving victory.⁴³ Mossberg often compared Bulgaria to Sweden – to the advantage of Bulgaria, since it had succeeded better in building up a military defence, and because the Bulgarians were more patriotic.⁴⁴

The second lecture, which was held at the Defence Working Committee, was very similar to the first. Inter alia, Mossberg said that the Bulgarian and Serbian

³⁹ Kra, Lindencronas arkiv, vol. 1, letter to his mother “Belgrad d. 11/2 1913”.

⁴⁰ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31.

⁴¹ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31, lecture hold at the regiment I 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For example, Mossberg also mentioned that recruits had to sit on the roofs of the railway cars, since there was no place for them inside. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

armies had shown “what a small and poor nation can accomplish” if only the right spirit of self-sacrifice is present. Again, Mossberg praised the soldiers’ perseverance, mentioning that they never complained, even if they went through great hardships.⁴⁵

Mossberg’s lectures appear to have had a clear political goal, and must be seen as a contribution to the Swedish debate on defence issues. More than anything else, Mossberg wanted to appeal to the audiences’ sense of duty while at the same time emphasizing the need for a stronger Swedish military force. Consequently, he seems to have been more interested in using the Balkans as an argument than in giving an account of the Balkans and the Balkan Wars.

After visiting Bulgaria, Mossberg travelled to Greece. He described Athens as a beautiful city, but he did not have much good to say about the discipline of the Greek soldiers.⁴⁶ Mossberg did not remain very long in Montenegro, but wrote in his diaries that “the Montenegrins seem to be extraordinarily polite”.⁴⁷ Mossberg in fact often appears to have been received well, at least by officials. He did not write much about people from the lower classes. When he did, however, he sometimes wrote positively, like in the case of the Montenegrins. On other occasions, his views were more negative. “The natives” of Corfu, for instance, he described as “dirty crooks and frauds”.⁴⁸

A couple of interesting facts can be found in Mossberg’s diaries, which show that he was not entirely objective in his views about the various Balkan peoples. For instance, he mentioned that he had seen atrocities committed by Bulgarians, who “seem to wage a war of extermination”.⁴⁹ This, however, is nothing he mentioned in his lectures. Instead, he described the Balkan peoples and their armies in a very positive manner. When discussing war crimes, he instead chose to say that “it has been said” that the Turks were murdering women and children, although this was nothing he had witnessed himself.

There is not much material in Mossberg’s collection that discusses the Balkans from the perspective of an “East-West” dichotomy. Mossberg only mentioned the Orient when he was visiting newly conquered territories close to the front line. On the other hand, he often wrote that Bulgaria wanted to “throw the Turks out of Europe”.⁵⁰ In his “essay”, which was written during World War II, he referred to the Balkans as the “unquiet corner of Europe”, similar to Stackelberg. Consequently, the sources seem to confirm that this image of the Balkans developed after 1913.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31, lecture for the military working committee (försvarsberedningen).

⁴⁶ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31, diary “D II” p. 35, 58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 105.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 93.

⁴⁹ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31, diary “D I” p. 49.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 60, 23.

⁵¹ Kra, Mossbergs arkiv, vol. 31, “uppsats” p. 1.

af Edholm

af Edholm first visited Greece, and then journeyed to Montenegro. His collection consists of two reports, one from Greece and another from Montenegro.⁵² The report from Greece almost exclusively deals with military questions, and is therefore not very interesting for our purposes. af Edholm mentioned that personnel which were placed at the disposal of the foreign military attachés “left a great deal to be desired” when it came to “order and alertness”. But he was also impressed with the great “trial of strength” Greece and the other Balkan states had passed through by mobilizing such large armies in relation to their small populations. Again, the population’s sense of duty and patriotism is emphasized in a positive manner. The victory, however, was not due to the good training of the Greek soldiers but to the fact that the Turks were taken by surprise by a bigger army.⁵³

In contrast to the report from Greece, the Montenegrin report is filled with descriptions of the population. af Edholm also appears to have admired the Montenegrins, who are juxtaposed to the Albanians: “In contrast to the very low-standing and amongst themselves divided Albanian people, the Montenegrins are a honest, brave, and exceptionally educated people, who overall are characterized by great patriotism.”⁵⁴ According to af Edholm, the Montenegrins, who had made great sacrifices to reach a “national goal”, should serve as an example for “every other people”.⁵⁵ According to af Edholm, one could hardly find a Montenegrin who did not place “his country and its honour above everything.” Almost like the ancient Spartan, the Montenegrin was “a warrior” from youth. When a Montenegrin was injured in battle, he wanted to return to the front long before he was fit to fight.⁵⁶

af Edholm did not mention the “Orient”, and there are no statements which could give us a hint of where he placed Montenegro in the imagined geography of Europe and the Orient. The negative and stereotypical image of the Albanians is also very interesting. Similar to some of the other Swedish visitors to the Balkans, af Edholm also attributed the military victories to courage and a spirit of self-sacrifice rather than to the military skills of the officers corps.⁵⁷

Axel Hultkrantz and Th. Rudenschöld

Hultkrantz and Rudenschöld visited Greece and Macedonia during the first Balkan War to study military medical care. Their collection contains a report, Hultkrantz’

⁵² Kra, Generalstaben, utrikesavd. 1912–1913 E I b vol. 44 and 1908–1937, E I g vol 45.

⁵³ Kra, Generalstaben, utrikesavd. 1912–1913, E I b vol. 44.

⁵⁴ Kra, Generalstaben, utrikesavd. 1908–1937, E I g vol 45, report from Montenegro, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p 8–9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p 37.

diary, some articles from *Svensk Intendenturtidskrift*, an article in *Svensk Tidskrift*, and several articles by Rudenschöld for the liberal newspaper *Aftonbladet-Dagen*.⁵⁸

In the diary, Hultkrantz wrote about the “variegated street life” in Saloniki, where people wore “strange national costumes” or even “rags” and where “incomprehensibly strange figures” mixed with rather “elegant Bulgarians”.⁵⁹ In *Svensk Intendenturtidskrift*, Hultkrantz also mentioned that the soldiers had to live a hard life, but nevertheless were content. The overall impression from Hultkrantz’ articles is that many things seemed to function satisfactory in Greece, and that he studied Greece in order to learn what could be useful for Sweden.⁶⁰

In *Svensk tidskrift*, Rudenschöld emphasised the persistence, contendedness, and self-sacrifice of the Greek soldiers. At the same time, he wrote about poor discipline among the Greek soldiers, who unlike the Bulgarians made a careless and untidy impression.⁶¹

Rudenschöld wrote about atrocities committed by enemies to the Balkan league, but he blamed irregular paramilitaries rather than the Ottoman army. He finished the article by writing:

It is not difficult to understand that the people of Hellas have enjoyed their freedom for not even a century. The balance [...] is not yet reached. Therefore, there are exaggerations which can be seen here and there. On the one hand, the characteristics of the Orient – lack of order and organizational ability. Time is of little importance, and one can seldom trust information. On the other hand, freedom is misused, and this is naturally the case particularly in political life, which influences not least the army, where endless ... discussions prevail. [...]

But despite all shortcomings, the visit to Hellas and its army left a lasting and exhorting impression on the Swede: The sight of a people, who *wanted to be, could be, and were a people in arms*.⁶²

Rudenschöld’s attitude is interesting, since it contains the dualistic view that is present among the other visitors. The Greeks in this case are seen as the unfortunate bearers of negative “Oriental” characteristics, which he believed they would shed in due course and thus become European. His positive attitude towards the war is also interesting.

Not all Balkan nations enjoyed the support of the Swedish travellers. In fact, it seems support was limited to the fellow Christians, who represented Todorova’s “others within”. While looking at the Albanian mountains from Corfu, Rudenschöld made the following comment in *Aftonbladet-Dagen*:

⁵⁸ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3.

⁵⁹ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, diary.

⁶⁰ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, “Svensk intendenturtidskrift” no 810, 1913.

⁶¹ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, *Svensk tidskrift*, särtryck 1913”.

⁶² Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, *Svensk tidskrift*, särtryck 1913”.

I don’t know if it was the projected shadows from the sun just rising over the mountain tops, or the knowledge of all the savagery and misery which prevailed behind these mountains that has made my first impression of Albania become so lastingly gloomy.⁶³

Interestingly, Rudenschöld never visited Albania, but made his judgment from a safe distance. Corfu, on the other hand, was like a “paradise”, or “the indeed most western place” in Greece, even if one could find “characteristics of the Orient” there as well. The reason why Corfu was considered “western” was the fact that it had been under British rule until 1863: “As yet, the inertia and laziness of the Orient has not been able to eradicate the marks of the English sense of order”, Rudenschöld wrote.⁶⁴

In *Aftonbladet-Dagen*, Rudenschöld placed both Macedonia and Greece entirely in the Orient, perhaps with the exception of Corfu. When reading his article in *Svensk tidskrift*, the impression is that Greece was going through some kind of transition, although the (bad) heritage of the Orient was still present. “Oriental” traits included laziness, no sense of time etc., and were always negative. Rudenschöld also compared the Balkans to Sweden, and he wrote that the Swedish soldiers were comparatively less disciplined.⁶⁵

It is noteworthy that Rudenschöld did not blame the regular Ottoman troops for the atrocities he witnessed. He also described Turkish prisoners of war in a positive way, despite his negative view of the Orient and of everything “oriental”.⁶⁶

Edward Wasell

Edward Wasell worked as a correspondent for the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* in Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia during the first Balkan War. His collection contains articles written for *Svenska Dagbladet*.⁶⁷

In one of the articles, the Bulgarian soldiers were described as some of the best in Europe. The extraordinary hard discipline in the Bulgarian army was particularly stressed, and he also mentioned the huge popularity of the war.⁶⁸ Wasell also wrote about the soldiers’ extreme endurance, something he attributed to their having lived a “hardy life since childhood.” According to him, the Serbs were a “nation of warriors” (krigarfolk), whose goal was “The liberation of their brothers from the Turkish

⁶³ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, newspaper article “I Korfu”.

⁶⁴ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol 3, newspaper article “I Korfu” .

⁶⁵ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, newspaper article “En utflykt på krigsskådeplatsen”.

⁶⁶ Kra, Hultkrantz arkiv, vol. 3, newspaper article “I Korfu”.

⁶⁷ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1.

⁶⁸ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article “Bulgariens soldater –bland Europas bästa”.

yoke, the future greatness of their own country and 'the penetration of culture into the Balkan peninsula', as they love to express it themselves."⁶⁹

According to Wasell, the Balkan Wars showed that one cannot trust the great powers, those who before the war assured that *status quo* would be preserved in the Balkans. Wasell concluded that small countries, like Sweden, must be strong enough to defend themselves.⁷⁰

Wasell also wrote about the strong hatred against the Turks, and he mentioned atrocities committed during the war by Serbs and Bulgarians. Even though Wasell denied that he wanted to justify these atrocities, he wrote they were understandable, since the Serbs and Bulgarians in the Turkish provinces had been pursued and even killed by the "cruel Turks and particularly by the Arnauts [Albanians]." "War is war", Wasell concluded, and when "the bullets and bayonets speak their powerful language, all noble feelings disappear."⁷¹

According to Wasell, the "backward and semi-barbarian" Balkan peoples would advance culturally as soon as Turkish oppression was removed and European influence grew stronger.⁷² In line with this idea of the rebirth of the Balkans, Wasell wrote that inter-Balkan rivalries were only natural in the beginning, since "it is with states as with men – we are all children in the beginning". Wasell expected these rivalries to disappear as soon as the liberated territories became more "civilized".⁷³

Not surprising, the image of Turkey and the Turks given by Wasell is not very positive. Visiting Turkish prisoners of war, he wrote that they wore rags, had no shoes, and were starved. Thanks to the good food they received in prison, however, they seemed to be quite satisfied. Even though they lived in small cells under primitive conditions, they seemed to be better off than "down there in Turkey."⁷⁴

The "Orient" or the "East", etc. is only rarely mentioned by Wasell. In connection with the Serb capture of Skopje (Yskyb), however, he wrote that the "the old [part of] the city is entirely oriental in character" whereas the newer parts were "European". In Skopje, the East and West met.⁷⁵ Europe is mentioned as something positive, and Wasell saw a development in the Balkans towards the (higher) standards of European culture. Even though he rarely used words like "the Orient", it is clear that Wasell saw an opposition between the civilized Europe and the barbarian Turks. The fact that he described the Bulgarian army as "one of the best of Europe" indicates that he considered Bulgaria to be a European country.

⁶⁹ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Från Belgrad till Nish".

⁷⁰ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Balkankriget" and "Lärdomar av Balkankriget".

⁷¹ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Krigskorrespondenterna".

⁷² Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Genom erövrade landsändar".

⁷³ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper articles "Genom erövrade landsändar" and "Saloniki 9 mars 1912".

⁷⁴ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Bland fångna turkar och arnauter".

⁷⁵ Kra, Wasells arkiv, vol. 1, newspaper article "Yskyb i mars".

Fritz Bauer

Fritz Bauer was a doctor and the leader of the Swedish ambulance to Belgrade during the Second Balkan War. He is the only one of the travellers in this article who was in the Balkans during the second war. The collection consists of a letter sent from Belgrade to Bauer's wife, an article in *Svensk Läkartidning*, and assorted letters and notes.⁷⁶

In the letter to his wife, Bauer gave an account of his first impression of Belgrade. He seems not to have been very impressed with the town's appearance, where "only one street, in the upper parts of the town, is decent."⁷⁷ Similarly, Bauer wrote in *Svensk läkartidning* that "[t]he impression from the railway station of mud, dirtiness, small miserable living-houses, barely passable streets, [...] grew a little milder when we reached the higher parts [of the city], where the main streets were broad and beautiful."⁷⁸ Although Bauer was not very impressed with the Serbian capital, he had many positive things to say about the Serbs. Apparently, the military medical care was good in Serbia. In the Serbian hospitals, everyone, friend and foe alike, received the same care. Bauer wrote that a people which had such excellent preparations for everything that has to do with the hospitals, could not be as bad as they were often described. According to Bauer's notes, the Serbs "loved their country" and were "ready to sacrifice everything for it".⁷⁹

Bauer was considerably less enthusiastic in regards to the war than the other Swedish visitors. In *Svensk Läkartidning* he wrote that he and his colleagues, upon meeting the injured soldiers, only wished that the war would soon end.⁸⁰ In a letter to Bauer, a Swedish representative in Vienna, Mr. Beck-Friis, also expressed his hope that the war would soon come to an end.⁸¹ This could indicate that the Second Balkan War generally was interpreted with less enthusiasm than the first, but we should indeed be very cautious in drawing conclusions from only these two cases. The negative attitude towards the war may well be explained by the fact that Bauer was a doctor and not an officer. Consequently, he had seen the horrible first-hand consequences of the war rather than the "heroic" struggles of the "Balkan peoples".

Conclusion

Certain issues are brought out by most of the Swedish travellers dealt with in this article: the Balkan peoples' great patriotism, spirit of self-sacrifice, enthusiasm

⁷⁶ Kra, Baures arkiv, vol. 4.

⁷⁷ Kra, Bauers arkiv, vol. 4, letter to his wife.

⁷⁸ Kra, Bauers arkiv, vol. 4, "svensk läkartidning".

⁷⁹ Kra, Bauers arkiv, vol. 4, "svensk läkartidning" and notes.

⁸⁰ Kra, Bauers arkiv, vol. 4, "svensk läkartidning".

⁸¹ Kra, Bauers arkiv, vol. 4, letter from Beck-Friis.

for the war, and the soldiers' perseverance. These are considered good qualities, and it is often mentioned that they should be seen as an example for Sweden, or even for "all nations". Most of the travellers had a positive attitude towards the war. Only Bauer seems to have had a different opinion, which probably is due to his profession, or the fact that he spent time in Serbia during the second Balkan war.

The travellers mentioned the "Orient" or "oriental" quite often when describing things they encountered during their journeys. The Orient is never mentioned in a positive light. The term frequently appears in depictions of shortcomings or negative attitudes. Sometimes, the travellers used phrases like "here in the Orient", thus indicating that they were locating at least some parts of the Balkans in the Orient. This, however, was usually the case when the authors described newly conquered territories close to the front. It is quite possible that these territories were seen as part of the Orient, whereas the independent Balkan states were considered a part of Europe. It is interesting that Rudenschuld in his articles for *Aftonbladet-Dagen* seems to have placed Greece almost entirely in the Orient. This could, of course, be explained by his personal worldview. However, one should also keep in mind the imagined borders between Europe and the East described by Markovich, according to which Greece was placed in the East. "Europe" or "European" was frequently mentioned by the travellers, although never with negative connotations. Consequently, some parts of the Balkans were considered European, while references to the Orient were also common. This ambiguous attitude towards the Balkans is well in accordance with the transitory status of the Balkans mentioned by Todorova.

Even though the Balkans often were described in a very positive way by the Swedish travellers, it is clear that many of these travellers thought they were visiting a less civilized part of the world. But the image of the Balkans as particularly cruel or violent seems not to have been present among the Swedes. Of course a war was going on, but this is mostly seen as something positive, and when referring to atrocities committed by the armies, these are not seen as an expression of something particularly Balkan. On the other hand, the atrocities committed by Serbs and Bulgarians, for example, are not mentioned in Mossberg's lectures, although he writes about them in his diaries. The "frozen image" of the Balkans seems not to be present in our sources. This is indeed also in accordance with Todorova's results. It was by reference to the Orient or the oriental rather than to specifically Balkan traits that our Swedish travellers indicated negative aspects, just as Markovich writes was the case in Britain before the Balkan Wars. One important point of this investigation, which is not referred to by Todorova and Markovich, is the clear evidence of an open and great admiration for many things in the Balkans. Most importantly, the visitors were quite impressed with the Balkan peoples, stressing their bellicose natures as something quite positive, and most of the Swedish travellers had a very positive attitude towards the war itself.

In the sources examined here, we can find similarities with the image of the Balkans described by Todorova and Markovich. Presumably, similar images could

be found in many western European countries of the time. One should not forget that Sweden shared a Eurocentric and imperialistic worldview with other westerners, despite the fact that Sweden had virtually no colonies. According to this view, Europe, European peoples (above all, Germanic peoples) and European culture was seen as superior to all other peoples and cultures.⁸² Therefore, it should not be very surprising that the Swedish travellers dealt with in this article described European culture as something positive. Other peculiarities, however, can probably best be explained by specific Swedish circumstances. One of the most striking examples is how the authors stressed the fact that the Balkan states were small but still managed to defend their freedom or to aggrandise themselves against an empire. In using the Balkans as an example, the authors no doubt wished to support the political forces in Sweden that around 1913 were advocating an increase in military spending. Most of their compatriots could be found in the conservative and bourgeois circles who supported the king. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, belonged to the pacifist circles of the European workers' movement.⁸³ Keeping this in mind, one can see how the Balkans were seen through the prism of Swedish political discourse, much as Markovich's writes that British perceptions of the Balkans need to be understood in the light of British political traditions and societal values. Of course, much more needs to be done before one can say anything more general about the Swedish view of the Balkans. Nevertheless, this investigation has hopefully added some new pieces to the puzzle.

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⁸² Holmberg, Åke, *Den svenska omvärldsbilden under tre hundra år. Europa kontra världen*. Found in: *I andra länder: historiska perspektiv på svensk förmedling av det främmande*, Lund 1999.

⁸³ See, for example, Norborg, Lars-Arne, *Sveriges historia under 1800- och 1900-talen*, Stockholm 1999⁴, p. 175 ff.

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Резиме

Јоханес Тенгеберг

Полуварвари, храбре патриоте и Оријенталци: шведско виђење Балканских ратова 1912–1913

Већина шведских путника истиче велики патриотизам балканских народа, дух самопожртвовања, ентузијазам према ратовању и војничку истрајност. То се сматрало добрим особинама, а често се истицало као пример за Шведску, или чак за "све народе". Путници су често помињали "Оријент" и "Оријенталце" и то никад у позитивном светлу. То је најчешће био случај са новоосвојеним територијама, за разлику од независних балканских држава, које су сматране делом Европе. Овај двоструки став према Балкану у сагласности је са његовим прелазним статусом који спомиње Тодорова.

Иако су шведски путници Балкан начешће описивали у позитивном светлу, јасно је да су га сматрали мање цивилизованим делом света. Важно је истаћи и отворено и велико дивљење за много тога на Балкану – путници су били импресионирани балканским народима, њиховом ратоборном природом, коју су истицали као позитивну особину, јер су и сами имали позитиван став према рату. Имајући на уму политичке околности у Шведској, дата је слика Балкана кроз призму шведског политичког дискурса.