

THE STORY OF THE BALKANS

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

NO one can understand what is happening in the Balkan Peninsula to-day without a little knowledge of what has happened there during the last fifteen hundred years.

At the beginning of the fifth century the great Roman Empire tottered on the brink of its fall. It had become Christian, but Christianity had not been able to stop the corruption that was eating into it. The emperors had long abandoned old Rome—the Rome on the Tiber—and had made their capital at the new Rome on the Bosphorus, the city founded by Constantine, where the old Greek city of Byzantium already stood. Soon after the opening of the fifth century the barbarians swarmed across the border,

and in the West the Roman Empire speedily came to an end until revived in wholly different form by Charlemagne. But in the East it persisted for a thousand years longer, gradually becoming a Greek rather than a Roman Empire, and often taking the name of Byzantine, from the Greek town which Constantine changed into the Rome on the Bosphorus. This new Rome became for many centuries the most wonderful city in the world. It has generally been called, after its founder, Constantinople. But the name of Rome still haunts these eastern European regions where the Romans once held sway. To this day the Moslems of Asia speak of the Turkish Sultan as the Lord of Roum, and his European possessions are



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often called Roumelia, while one of the nations which has emerged from beneath the retiring Turkish sea is called Roumania.

When, fifteen hundred years, ago the barbarians crossed the Imperial frontier, there were three peoples dwelling in the Balkan Peninsula. These were the Greeks, who spoke the Greek tongue; the old Illyrians, whom we now call Albanians, along the

Adriatic, north of Greece; and the Romanized colonists and natives, including the Roman settlers whom Trajan had established across the Danube in Dacia after its conquest. The barbarians who pressed into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Balkan Peninsula were not Teutons, like those who overran Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Italy, but Slavs. Both the Slavs and the Teutons were Aryan-

speaking peoples of the European type. But there also appeared in the Balkan Peninsula wilder peoples, horse nomads from Asia and from the steppes through which the Volga runs. These people were closely kin to the Magyars and Finns, and more remotely to the Turks and Tartars. There were several different tribes among them, but the most important were the Bulgarians.

These invaders overran the entire Balkan Peninsula, but were never able to take Constantinople itself. The Slavs, under the name of Serbs or Servians, founded a great empire, and so, at one time, did the Bulgarians. The Emperors of Constantinople waged constant war with both nations; one of their number was called the "Bulgarian Killer" because of what he did. The Serbs became Christians, but kept their native Slavonic language, and, until the advent of the Turks, their empire as well. The Bulgarians became Christians, too, but they disappeared as a separate empire; and, moreover, they became fused with the mass of the Slavs they had conquered, and the resulting mixed race, though Bulgarian by name, was much more Slavonic than Bulgarian by blood, and grew to speak a Slavonic language.

Then, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Turkish hordes entered Europe and finally conquered the entire Balkan Peninsula. All the separate subject peoples were merged in the common lot of slavery, save that some of the Slavs, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina, became Mohammedans and identified themselves with their conquerors, and most of the Albanians followed the same course. There was always more or less national feeling left among the Servians and Roumanians, though the representatives and heroes of this national feeling were able to make their protest against the Turks chiefly as bandits. But the Bulgarians at that time seemed to have had every particle of national feeling stamped out of them, and were of little more consequence than so many cattle.

After the subjugation of the Balkan Peninsula, the Turks continued their aggressive and conquering career in Europe for over two centuries, Hungary becoming a part of the Turkish Empire, as well as portions of what were then Southern Poland, some of which are now Austrian and some Russian. As a result of the Turks' final repulse from Vienna, however, the Turkish tide began to recede, although not without many returns.

In the nineteenth century the old nations of the Balkans began to reappear once more. Greece became independent. Servia and Roumania by successive stages gradually became independent also. One little end of Servia had always remained independent. This was Montenegro, whose inhabitants are simply mountain Serbs, who in their rugged fastnesses preserved their liberty when all the rest of their nation went under the yoke of the conqueror. By constant warfare the Montenegrins finally became what were probably the most formidable fighters in all the world; and no state has ever had a more heroic history. Albania has gradually become practically independent of the Turks. But the Albanians have had no kinship of feeling with the other Balkan peoples, and no such sense of unity among themselves as the other Balkan peoples have had. They are predominantly Moslem, but some of the tribes are orthodox, belonging to the Greek Church, and some are Catholics. They have fought a great deal among themselves. They have been willing and eager to furnish the Turks with formidable soldiers to keep down the other Balkan peoples, but they have not rendered much more than a nominal obedience themselves to the Turks, and at times and in certain places have oppressed the Turks of a given region as horribly as the Turks have oppressed any of the Christian races.

The last nation to emerge was the Bulgarians. This was after the close of the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. In that war the Montenegrins fought, and the Servians fought. The Roumanian army came to the help of the Russian, and by its strikingly gallant feat of arms in taking the Grivitzka redoubt struck the decisive blow at Plevna. But the Bulgarians did no fighting of any moment. The Turks committed the most horrible cruelties in Bulgaria, outrages so dreadful that all Europe rang with them. But the Bulgarians did not appear as among the formidable foes of the Turks. Their country was given its freedom only by the Russian army. Every one, friend and foe alike, regarded the Bulgarian peasant—and the peasant was the typical and almost the only Bulgarian—as a dull, patient ox of a man, an object of rather contemptuous pity, and never of respect or fear. Such was his condition when peace was made; the cause of civilization being set back because the Western Powers, in their jealousy of Russia, refused to allow some of the Russian conquests to be freed from

Turkish misgovernment. There was a good deal of speculation as to what the different new nationalities would do, but nobody dreamed that the Bulgarians would play a leading or important part. The Roumanians, the descendants of Trajan's colonists in Dacia, had won their spurs. The Servians had a history and a literature. The Greeks were in every way striving to connect their new kingdom with the glorious traditions of classical time. But the Bulgarians had disappeared as a nation long before the Turks came into Europe. For centuries they had been nothing but the patient, hard-working, tortured serfs of one master after another. Nobody thought that they could rise.

But it soon became evident to keen observers that the furnace of centuries had toughened the Bulgarian into a man of marked and forceful type. No other nation has traveled so far and so fast as Bulgaria has traveled in the last third of a century. Americans have just cause to feel proud that Robert College gave to many of the leading Bulgarian citizens their education, so that it has played a peculiar part in the making of the Bulgarian nation. The dreadful experiences through which the Bulgarians had passed for more than twenty generations seemed to have purged the dross from their natures, and to have left nothing but tempered steel behind. They possessed great sobriety and steadfastness of character, and in an unfortunate little war with Servia early showed that they were also of an unexpectedly good military type. They were very patriotic. Every Bulgarian, even the poorest, felt the keenest devotion to his country. Moreover, it must be remembered that patriotism with the Bulgarian did not mean a mere emotion to be appealed to by a Fourth of July oration, nor even the emotion of a higher type which makes good men and good women try to do their civic duty. To the Bulgarian patriotism meant a fierce intensity of conviction, a passionate clinging to independence and national success as the one alternative to the most frightful slavery. For many centuries the Bulgarian had crouched helplessly under the Turkish whips. Anything he earned beyond a bare living was usually taken from him by his oppressors. And when at long intervals a few of his number, like

maddened slaves, rose in aimless revolt, the vengeance wreaked on the whole nation was terrible, and that vengeance fell with appalling cruelty upon women and children quite as much as upon men. It is but thirty-five years since the Bulgarians submitted to atrocities such as in America have never been endured except by victims of Indian outbreaks. Every Bulgarian, rich or poor, became a soldier, carefully drilled, well trained, commanded by men who made military science a study of the most practical kind. Every Bulgarian was prepared at any moment to fight the Turks, and toward the Turks he felt a personal hatred such as the member of no civilized nation feels for that of another. He knew that war might come at any time, and he knew that, if beaten, it would probably mean that his home would be destroyed, his parents butchered before his eyes, his wife or sister or daughter dragged off to infamy and outrage, his younger brother or his son put to death with dreadful torture. If he were a man of middle age, he had as a child seen things like this done to his own family or to the families of his neighbors; if he were a young man, he had heard about them from the older men and women.

Under these circumstances the whole Bulgarian nation was an army, and an army of the most formidable kind. There was in the national character both a toughness and a sobriety that rendered the people willing to take a long look ahead, and carefully and laboriously prepare as their foresight demanded. Patient, self-reliant, possessing prudent caution in preparation, great speed and decision in action, and iron resolution—no wonder that the Bulgarian people has borne itself so wonderfully, that the Bulgarian army has shown such extraordinary qualities.

Not the rise of Japan itself has been more striking and unexpected than the rise of Bulgaria. Whatever may be the decision of the European Powers regarding the Balkan war—a decision which it is too much to be feared will probably be governed largely by selfish political considerations—the sympathy of the people of both Europe and America ought to be wholly with the people of the Balkans in their heroic struggle for liberty.

CONSTANTINOPLE

IF you want to see more kinds of people than anywhere else, go to Constantinople and watch its twelve hundred thousand inhabitants. One can hardly enumerate the different kinds—there are so many. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that the location of Constantinople would be enough to attract them.

The city lies where Asia comes closest to Europe. It is a splendid site. As you come to it by sea you have the long approach through the Ægean Sea and the Dardanelles Straits and then through the small Sea of Marmora. Then there, in front of you, lies a strait, the Bosphorus, connecting with the Black Sea, and out of that strait goes a great inlet, the Golden Horn, into Europe. And there, on its seven hills about that strait and inlet, lies the imperial city. That sight you can never forget—the myriad mosques and minarets and cupolas and cypresses and fountains. And another and later sight you can never forget—all these illuminated as you look down from the heights above the city on the occasion of the celebration of the Sultan's birthday.

You will doubtless take your baggage to the European quarter, Pera, high up and away from the quarters immediately about the port. Pera is the home of the foreign embassies and legations and modern hotels—places of attractive appearance if you want a change from the Oriental sights which you may have been seeing. But, if you do want more of a mixture than Pera affords, descend into Galata, the mercantile and shipping quarter. Like Pera, it is on the northern shore of the Golden Horn. Here you will find a combination of the Occident and the Orient, representing all the compact vice that one can imagine, and making you feel that you want either to return to Pera, or cross the bridge into Oriental Stambul, or cross the strait into Asiatic Scutari; for, with their narrow, poorly paved, winding alleys, their tiny shops and bigger bazaars, their unkempt, crafty-looking people, and their incredible number of dogs and donkeys, Stambul and Scutari are the genuine Constantinople—places without foreign admixture. There you get "the real thing."

Constantinople has not always been governed by the Turk. We do not realize that underneath all its Turkish veneer it is still the greatest of Greek cities. It was founded

in the sixth century B.C. by the Dorian Greeks. It was called Byzantium. It became a great trading-place and its trade reached all over the Hellenic world. Then, to turn names about, as Constantinople it was for a thousand years the capital of the Byzantine world.

In old Constantinople one will still find some walls which were standing when the town was known as Byzantium. It is strange that any of these walls should be standing, for think of the races that have contended for the city's possession!—the Persians, the Macedonians, the Athenians, the Thracians, the Gauls, the Romans, the Turks. Yet the most famous of all the walls are not those of the old Greek age, but of the Byzantine age—the walls of Santa Sophia. The church called Santa Sophia was founded by Constantine when he conquered Constantinople nearly sixteen hundred years ago. But his church was burned, as was that built by Theodosius. Then Justinian put a third church on the original site. That is the church we see to-day. When Constantinople became Turkish, in 1453, Santa Sophia became Mohammedan. From a certain point in one of the galleries, if you look sharply enough at the gold arabesques of the arch of the apse, there will gradually appear to your vision the faint outline of a great figure with outstretched arms. It is the mosaic Christ, worked, when the church was built, into the substance of the wall, and later overlaid with the gold-leaf of Mohammedan conquerors. The Bulgars have long hoped one day to erase that gold as conquerors in their turn. If they should enter Constantinople, the Turks, it is said, have vowed to blow up the mosque rather than to surrender it to the Christians. But whether Christian or Mohammedan, it is one of the noblest temples ever erected to religion.

If Constantinople is a mixture of races, it is also a mixture of religions. While its population is mostly Mohammedan, it includes several hundred thousand Christians. Of these most are Greeks, although the number of Armenians is very large. Then there are the Protestants of Europe and of America who may be engaged there in diplomatic or educational work. There are also many thousand Jews.

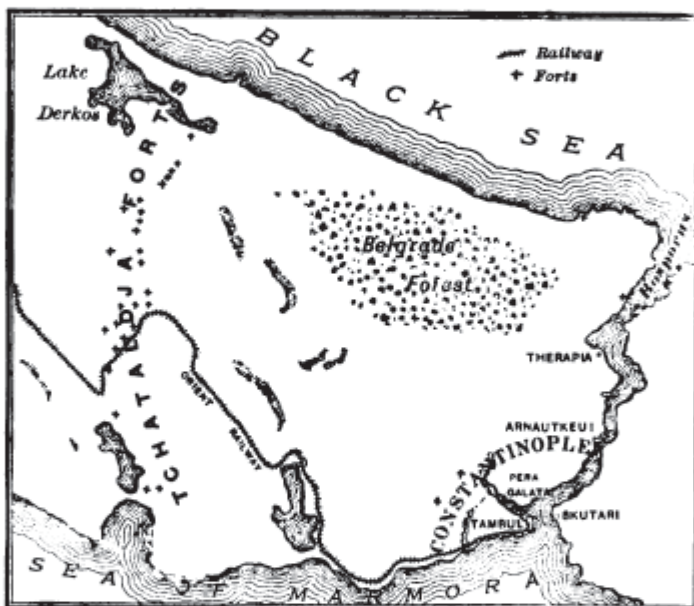
Because of this clash of religions our thoughts are more with our co-nationalists,

the American Protestant Christians, in the city than with the fate of the city itself. The Americans there are merchants, missionaries, diplomats and consular officers, and teachers; of the last named there are about fifty. The Turk has never introduced education to any great extent. Interesting as have been some of the mosque schools and extremely interesting as have been some of the Arab universities, the Turk as such has not been noted for his educational advance, and in Constantinople our institutions stand out the more strongly marked because of this. In Constantinople, as elsewhere, the Turk is a soldier and a tyrant. He signalized his entrance into the city by the murder of thousands of Christians, and he signalized his entrance into Europe by becoming the oppressor of subject races which under him were never more than bondmen. In country and city alike the Turk has not been a civil administrator. But there are plenty of instances of administration in Constantinople. Officialism is evident on every hand;

that Turkish officialism—picturesque, yes, but for the most part greedy and predatory. Greedy and predatory indeed! The Turkish Government has been well declared to be a device for wastefully squeezing money out of the poorest class, to be spent, most of it, on the Sultan's harem and palaces and the rest on ironclads and rifles, and for permitting everybody with arms in his hands to seize his neighbor's fields and carry off his neighbor's daughter whenever he takes the fancy. In its foreign relations, however, that officialism has been forced to pay some attention to the demand of foreign nations that there shall be institutions of learning protected and maintained by them in the Turkish Empire, and hence we see our own institutions

at Constantinople. Robert College, located on a noble headland north of the city, has as its President the Rev. Dr. Charles F. Gates, and the American College for Girls, now located at Arnautkeui, outside the city, has Miss Mary Mills Patrick at its head. The buildings of Robert College, which was incorporated under the laws of New York State in 1863, represent an outlay of about four hundred thousand dollars. There are approximately five hundred students in the institution at the present time. Many Bulgarian leaders and statesmen have been educated there. The College recently received a bequest of \$1,500,000 from the late John S. Kennedy, of New York City. What Robert College

does for young men the American College for Girls endeavors to do for young women, and, as every one knows, there is pathetic necessity in Turkey for an enlightened "woman's work for women." Other Protestant institutions in Constantinople are the Friends' Mission School, the Church of Scotland Mission, the Scotch Independent



CONSTANTINOPLE AND ITS VICINITY

Free Church Mission, and the Gedik Pasha School. The last-named institution is under the direction of the American Board. Its total enrollment is at present about two hundred and fifty pupils—Turks, Armenians, and Greeks. It has more Turkish children than any other foreign school in the Empire. The school is in Stambul, on the southern slope of one of the seven hills facing the Sea of Marmora. Finally, a peculiarly American institution is the handsome Bible House, where Bibles, religious literature, and school-books are printed.

The Roman Catholic schools in Constantinople for the training of both sexes are numerous, large, and efficient. Next in efficiency come the Greek schools, and after

them the Armenian schools. There are also Turkish schools, in which the moral training is clouded from the start by the views of the Turks as to concubinage and polygamy.

As the accounts of the Turkish reverses in the Balkan war have excited bitter feeling among the Mohammedans in Constantinople, there may be grave peril because of the clash of religions. But the British, French, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish war-ships now in the harbor can, in case of necessity, land a force of several thousand men. Perhaps this force will be able to meet any emergency.

A more immediate peril would seem to be the misery of the hordes of disorganized, beaten, and hungry Turkish troops driven back by the Bulgars into the capital. It will be difficult to keep these thousands from pillage. Indeed, Dr. Dillon, the correspondent of the London "Daily Telegraph," says: "The scenes now being enacted in Constantinople rival those of Dante's 'Inferno.' Hunger, typhus, and cholera will kill a number roughly computed at a quarter of a million, despite the promptest and most efficacious aid. It is a satisfaction to report that the authorities are endeavoring to take the best possible sanitary measures, flooding the streets twice daily and issuing the most urgent warnings against mixing with the refugees, against eating uncooked fruit or drinking unboiled water." A Constantinople despatch says: "Already there are twenty-five thousand refugees in the city, and they continually are being added to by fugitives from all the devastated places in Thrace. Their misery and want are appalling, and demand a charitable effort which cannot be on too large a scale. A great many are camping in the open spaces of the city, and even in the cemeteries. They are to be found in isolated corners on the shores of the Bosphorus and in the woods, absolutely without the necessities of life. They have no shelter and no fuel, and there is no milk for the innumerable babies. The hunger and privation they are suffering is indescribable. An epidemic of cholera, which threatens to spread to terrible proportions, renders speedy assistance all the more imperative." Our Ambassador, Mr. Rockhill, has cabled the State Department that there are fourteen thousand sick and wounded in the capital who are not prisoners of war. Seventeen cases of cholera he reports have been brought to the city by soldiers.

All this disaster has been mostly brought about by a nation which Turkey thought she had once conquered and by a people which Turkey has long ruled by rapine and massacre, that ancient Bulgarian people which came into the Bulgarian peninsula in the sixth century, seven centuries before the Turks came there (1358). As early as 976 the Bulgarian Czar, Shishman, was known as the "Emperor of the Slavs." Turkey may remember that this is not the first time that Bulgaria and Servia have been before the walls of Constantinople.

If the Bulgarian monarch enters Tsargrad—as the Bulgars call Constantinople—it should mark one of those turning-points in history like the Turkish capture of Constantinople; it should mark a new future for the city, just as Constantine's entry did and just as Mohammed's entry did.

What is to be the Constantinople of the future? Will it be occupied by the Bulgars? Will it remain Turkish? Or will the Powers step in and say to the Bulgars, "You may act as if you had taken Constantinople, but you must not actually come into the city because of the peril to the foreign residents"?

Whatever takes place, it is to be hoped, in the first place, that the control will be Christian and not Mohammedan. It is to be hoped that the Turk will have to step back into the Asia from which he came, and that his political and social system will return to the Orient from which it sprang. If the Turk is retiring to Asia, why should not Constantinople and the passage between the Ægean and the Black Seas be neutralized, just as Tangier opposite Gibraltar has been neutralized? Why should not Constantinople and the region immediately about it become a free city, just as Hamburg is a free city? Why should not its freedom be guaranteed by the Balkan confederacy or even by the Concert of Europe? A Balkan Constantinople might not be as pleasing to the Powers as would a European Constantinople, but it certainly would be more pleasing to them than would a purely Bulgarian Constantinople or a Greek Constantinople; while a Russian Constantinople or an Austrian Constantinople would seem to be out of the question. A late report indicates that Austria is ready to agree to the neutralization of Salonika. If so, how much readier ought she to be to agree to the neutralization of Constantinople?