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Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Rige od Fere #20/V, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

phone/fax: +381 11 30 32 408

e-mail: biserkos@eunet.yu; www.helsinki.org.yu

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Latinka Perovic

People's Radical Party: The Origins of the Ideology of Social, National and Political Unity of the Serb People (Abridged version)

“No one imports radicalism to the Serb people from some outside place. On the contrary, it emerges from the customary law, from Serbia's overall social reality. And, above all, it emerges from the Serb family commune...The origins of the Serb radicalism are in the people itself, in its *legal notions* and *customs*. For our people, behind the façade of a written constitution there is always an *unwritten constitution that is based on customs* and need not make the foundation of the other, official one. No one from outside imposes radicalism on our people, on the contrary – radicalism arises from the custom law, from Serbia's entire social reality.

‘Serb Radicalism,’
Odjek, May 7, 1889.”

The People's Radical Party is among the landmarks of Serbia's modern history. It emanates social and national collectivism of the Serb people. The former relies on patriarchal institutions that have survived the Ottoman rule – commune and municipality; the latter leans on the perception of the Serb people as a unique organism. Self-perceived and self-defined as popular, the People's Radical Party embodies the political unity of the Serb people and invests its collectivism with a totalitarian character.

In its unabridged version the study includes six chapters: “SERBIA'S FIRST POLITICAL PARTY: IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION;” “FOUNDING FATHERS: SVETOZAR MARKOVIC AND ADAM BOGOSAVLJEVIĆ;” “FOLLOWERS: DIFFERENT PATHS LEADING TO THE SAME GOAL;” “RESISTANCE IN

THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, POPULAR REBELLION: THE RADICALS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STATE'S MODERNIZATION: “FROM TWO DIRECTIONS TOWARDS THE RULE: RADICALS IN THE COUNTRY AND IN EMIGRATION” AND “IN POWER: THE RADICALS' PARTY-STATE.”

After 12 years in power (1868-1880) the liberal government headed by Jovan Ristic, one of the custodians empowered after the assassination of Prince Mihailo and a leading Liberal since 1968, resigned in October 1880. The government's major accomplishments were: adoption of the 1869 Constitution – the first national constitution ever – and proclamation of Serbia's independence after the Berlin Congress in 1878. As early as January 8, 1881, the first issue of *Samouprava* (Self-government), a mouthpiece of the People's Radical Party came out of print. This first issue carried the party program.



BERLIN CONGRESS, 1878

Before the newspaper appeared, actually in 1880, a group of elected representatives in the People's Assembly formed a parliamentary caucus and called renamed themselves from socialists to radicals. What prompted them to form the caucus was the Assembly's "address" to the ruler. The "address" usually contained a government's program. This time it was about the "address" the new "early-conservative," i.e. progressive cabinet of Milan Pirocanac submitted to Prince Milan. Oppositionists voted down the "address" due to the change in Serbia's foreign policy: distancing from Russia and moving towards Austro-Hungary.

Once published in the first issue of *Samouprava*, the program of the People's Radical Party remained the only written program ever. The Party itself was either in power or in opposition, it experienced a schism, constitutions and dynasties in Serbia changed, the state waged four wars – but the Party program remained untouched. None of those factors – individually or taken together – affected "the sum and substance of the social philosophy that brought about the Party in the first place." Moreover, the first criticism from the inside, in 1901, was concerned with the defense of basic tenets of the Party: economic equality and national unity. Both currents – "original Radicals" advocating populist socialism and "independents" promoting the ideas of the European left – and the two parties alike opposed capitalism and "relied on the same, anti-individualist mentality, which made a liberal political doctrine alien and unacceptable for them both." The Program itself "was not devised in some registry but developed by ordinary people, people's deputies...even a farmer in traditional apparel, a priest, a merchant, a professor had their say...The program is an outcome of general consent, it belongs to no one in particular, it belongs to us all, it's our shared 'credo.'"

In the study "Pera Todorovic" he publicized in 1908 Slobodan Jovanovic claimed that both Svetozar Markovic and Pera Todorovic "were the students of Russian socialists of 1860s,

who can be considered, in a way, forefathers of Bolshevism." Analyzing Markovic, he identified both differences from and similarities with Bolsheviks and took the later outstanding. According to Slobodan Jovanovic, Todorovic was "closer to Bolsheviks than Markovic."

Stojan Novakovic reviewed the said study and summarized the evolution of *radicalism*. The founders of the People's Radical Party, "those who remained," "proclaimed themselves leaders" and "the masses" followed them and their "time tested supporters," says Novakovic. "However, neither have those leaders stood any more for ideological supporters of Svetozar Markovic and Pera Todorovic nor have their supporters ever touched on the subject. But there were masses with their leaders at the helm. Their struggle was aimed against the regime and in that struggle the masses had different things in mind than their leaders – and the leaders were leaders by name only since it were the masses, rather than them, which dictated the aspirations," writes Novakovic in his review. And when after the murder of the last ruler from the Obrenovic dynasty on May 29, 1903 the "satiated and gorged crowd finally seized the power, all that remained of true forefathers were the people with memoiristic memories. The people of vision had disappeared from that crowd long ago," concludes Novakovic.

Slobodan Jovanovic wrote, "The Radical Party was planned as a complot – a brotherhood of life and death. Whoever joined the party was expected to seclude himself from the rest of the world and become an opponent to the entire world to prove his full dedication to the party...Radicalism manifested all the symptoms of religious fanaticism and was half-way to turning into 'a powerful religious sect' that would spread beyond the borders of our state and cover the entire Balkans." According to Jovanovic, the founding fathers were the ones to introduce that "religiousness" into the party. For him, the founding fathers were the followers of Russian nihilists while the later forebears of Bolsheviks. Jovanovic takes Pera Todorovic the most deserving for the spirit of sectarianism permeating the party. Social resonance of that "religiousness" is mirrored in the party's very organization. The Statutes of the People's Radical Party Pera Todorovic wrote in the summer of 1881 were publicized in *Samouprava* (Self-government) on January 1, 1882. The Statutes gave form to "religiousness." The party's organization was based on an individual member's unreserved commitment. One organ of the party derived from another – a county branch derived from a local branch, a district branch from a county branch and the main committee from a district branch. Such tight vertical ties made the party practically indestructible. Unlike the party program, the statutes were subject to changes but the purpose of those changes was always the same: strengthening of the organization and the party unity.



SVETOZAR MARKOVIĆ

The party's constitution began with the establishment of a local committee in Belgrade on December 3, 1881. "Networking" of the entire Serbia by local sub-committees ensued. Apart from Pera Todorovic, opposition MPs played major roles in the process. Gathered around Adam Bogosavljevic, educated farmer, since 1874 and strengthened by Nikola Pasic's election as a MP in 1878 the Radicals were a staunch opposition to Jovan Ristic's cabinet tasked with implementing the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin Serbia committed itself to after independence proclamation.

Protocols and receipts – serving as membership cards – were largely distributed to farmers, who made up nine-tenths of Serbia's population. The great majority of them became members of the People's Radical Party. "The Radicals," says Jovanovic, "made a breakthrough in politics. They were the first to politically organize the farmer masses in a political party."

In the autumn of 1883 there were 60 local sub-committees and thousands and thousands of members of the People's Radical Party in Serbia. Its partner was no longer a ruler, let alone another political party. Nikola Pasic was elected the president of the Main Committee and remained in the office for the next 45 years – from the party's establishment until his death (1881-1926).

So a political current calling itself *socialists, radicals and collectivists*, originating from a schism in the United Serb Youth in 1866, secured a firm organizational frame and became the first political party in Serbia. Its emergence, however, sped up crystallization of another two political currents in Serbia.

Conservatives, young-conservatives or progressists – the names they gave to themselves and the names used by others to refer to them – established the Serbian Progressive Party in the fall of 1881. Its founding fathers were educated people who placed their hopes on Prince Mihailo after his return from Europe. The independence declaration of 1878 particularly encouraged them to pursue his policy of the state's modernization. They started the *Videlo* magazine as "a mouthpiece of a new struggle for the improvement of domestic situation, and a mouthpiece of a party acting independently in the matters of foreign policy..." "The younger and generally more active currents of the earlier so-called conservative party united with the younger currents of the earlier so-called liberal party on the party program to be publicized in the *Videlo*. What united them in the first place was the struggle against pseudo-liberalism and for genuine endeavor for determination of modern, true, liberal and state principles" (underlined by L. P.)" In the *Videlo* magazine, in party program and in the program of their first cabinet, the progressists echoed their creed, "Law, freedom and progress are the three main colors of the banner we are spreading, and three indivisible segments of real constitutionality." The progressists opposed the country's isolation, i.e. its "solitude at the international arena," whereas advocating "brotherly relations in the big family of Slavic nations" and cooperation with "neighborly nations." They emphasized that their views on "the international life, respect for the rule of law, conscious work and firm dedication to general progress" commend them for "the civilization of European nations" they highly appreciated.

Critical of "pseudo-liberalism," i.e. critical of the liberals of 1868 and their twenty-year rule, the progressists made a tactical alliance with the socialists, i.e. the radicals, to fight the mutual opponent. The same refers to the radicals: through the *Videlo* magazine, Nikola Pasic prepared the terrain for the establishment of the People's Radical Party. The alliance broke up when Jovan Ristic's cabinet resigned. Division of power was that essential cause of the break as the historiography interpreted it. They actually split because their paths were two essentially different paths. Because of the role King Milan (Serbia was proclaimed a kingdom in 1882) played in the conflict between the radicals and the progressists historiography so much personalized the conflict that it neglected its true causes.

The third political current, the self-named *liberals* despite emphasizing that they were descendants of Serbia's oldest political tradition (1848, 1858, 1868), were the last to get organized into a political party. Lagging behind the radicals and the progressists they firstly set up the Society for the Development of Serb Literature. They started the magazine *Srpska nezavisnost* (*Serb Independence*) the first issue of which was brought to public eye on October 1, 1881. An untitled

editorial published in this issue was actually the party program. Another article informed the readership that the magazine would stand for “the policy and principles of the People’s Liberal Party.” The liberals, having been in power for long time, rejected *rashness* and refused to enter “the arena of demagogic agitation” while advocating *gradualism*. At the convention of the Society for the Development of Serb Literature on October 17, 1882, Jovan Ristic came out with the slogan “*Laboramus*” (we work). Referring to his cabinet’s attitude towards the trade agreement with Russia he considered disadvantageous for Serbia, he said, “Not only states and individuals but also parties and associations should not be indifferent when it comes to dignity.” The liberals’ policy was determined by two goals. First, “liberation and unification of the dismembered Serb provinces.” Second, “the search for larger and firmer foundations for rational and historically justified fostering of the people’s well-being and the country’s intellectual and natural resources, as well as for strengthening of the nation as a whole and securing its future.”



LAZA PAČU, PERA TODORVIĆ AND NIKOLA PAŠIĆ

Leaders, supporters and opponents of the People’s Radical Party, the same as many of its chroniclers, perceived it as a party “criticizing everything” and aimed at “undermining the foundations of the present-day (i.e. the then – L.P.) social system – all in all, a revolutionary party.” The great majority of them took that the history of the party began before its formal establishment: that it began with the schism within the United

Serb Youth into liberals (political freedoms) and socialists (social issues or “the issue of bread”) and with the criticism of the 1869 Constitution.

Svetozar Markovic and Adam Bogosavljevic were considered founding fathers of the People’s Radical Party. They acted simultaneously and cooperatively. However, their roles were different. Svetozar Markovic was a *forefather* – for Stojan Novakovic he was an *initiator*, while for Jovan Skerlic a *spreader of ideas*. Advocating for those ideas in the People’s Assembly, Adam Bogosavljevic, MP, simplified them and made them understandable to farmers. Actually, he reduced them to what Svetozar Markovic called initiation. The division of the roles between Markovic and Bogosavljevic was not a planned one – the two stood for two different levels the understanding of which preconditions understanding of the lasting trace Svetozar Markovic left in the Serb history. His work – preoccupying historians, philosopher, economics, sociologists, politicalologists and pedagogues for almost 150 years – is condensed in one decade only.

To be moved to action people need to be familiar with the form a new society will take, took Markovic. And this necessitates a *driving minority* “that enjoys people’s confidence and is strong and capable enough to lead the people, organize a revolution and secure stability of social transformation.” The said minority is made up of “highly educated people rather than of quasi-intellectuals,” those who have “grown up on simple fare” and are “incapable” of making distinction between their own interests and “the interests of the people.” No doubt that Markovic and his followers saw themselves as that driving minority.

Svetozar Markovic was at home with all major socialist teachings in the West Europe (Saint-Simon, Louis Blanc, Prudon, Lascas, Marx), or at least with their political and action-wise sum and substance. This is why for more than a century scholars have tried to determine by whom he was influenced the most and, consequently, the progenitor of whom he was: the radicals, the social revolutionaries, the social democrats or the communists. Scholars have also tried to determine his various evolutions: from a liberal into a socialist, from a socialist-Utopian and revolutionary democrat into a Marxist. However, Markovic underwent one evolution only: the one marked by his break with Serbian Liberals in 1869. His entire work after that was the struggle against liberalism that was only in embryo in Serbia at the time. In his polemic with Vladimir Jovanovic, progenitor of the ideas of liberalism in Serbia, and Dragisa Stojanovic, who though not a liberal himself knew enough about liberalism to claim that it was non-existent in Serbia, Markovic argued for the unity of social and national revolutions. To avoid any arbitrary interpretation of his argumentation one must place it in the historical context of the time.

By taking into account causes and consequences of the social and political struggle in the Western Europe, Markovic tried not only to gain deeper insight into Serbia's situation but also to direct its development towards a society resting on the principles of a *new science* – socialism. He was aware of Serbia's enormous delay. "Our economic system, our education system, our civil and political orders are among the most underdeveloped ones in Europe," he wrote. However, he derives not a conclusion that this delay can be compensated through a copy-paste of West European principles. On the contrary, by criticizing the West European societies that have implemented revolutionary teachings Markovic indicated that Serbia should not follow the road the West Europe had already traveled but only profit by Europe's achievements. For him the same as for his Russian teachers any other solution would lead to yet another delay.



ADAM BOGOSAVLJEVIĆ

"Our task is not to destroy capitalist economy, which is actually non-existent, but to transform small, patriarchal ownership into a common one and thus *skip over an entire historical epoch of economic development – the epoch of capitalist economy*," he wrote in 1973.

Markovic countered the principle of private ownership – as the basis for personal freedom – with association of labor and common ownership as preconditions for terminating exploitation and a basis of freedom. This resulted also resulted in an appropriate perception of state: he countered a modern state separated from a society and having political function only with a people's state that "equals a well-ordered society." A people's state rests on the principle of people's sovereignty, while organization of various institutions and state bodies rest on the principle of self-government (decentralization) and the principle of

free choice. The people as a whole should make sure that each member of the society is also a producer; they should, therefore, make sure to abolish all ideological classes of the society such as judges, lawmakers, lawyers, the police and soldiers. Each citizen should defend the country and safeguard its order. Through education, a manual worker should turn capacitated for the jobs presently performed by "experts from ideological classes." The ultimate goal of such a state is to erase the divides between those who rule and those who are their subjects. However, since such transformation cannot take place simultaneously in the whole world, the state remains as a whole in the context of foreign affairs. Only social transformations in several states, carried out by different means and taking different directions, create conditions for disappearance of borders.

"No doubt that a breakthrough in the people's intellectual development brought about by the first Serb revolution is the revolutionary thought of the subjugated masses: the *thought about creating a Serb national state that would unite the entire Serb people*. It was a revolution that gave birth to this thought for the first time after Serbs' defeat," wrote Markovic. Markovic has never abandoned that thought. However, it impels him to make a double choice. Contemporary socialist teachings are not preoccupied with the national but with the social issue. Markovic connects the two and conditions resolution of the one with that of another. In Serbia, he opposes the idea of a Greater Serbia: the renewal of the Serb medieval state. According to Slobodan Jovanovic, Markovic's criticism of the Greater Serbia ideology brought about the crisis of the Serb nationalism. Having denied a legitimist resolution of the Serb question, Markovic came up with a revolutionary idea – *federalism*, i.e. a federation of Balkan and South Slavic nations as the best solution for the Serbs history has dissipated and ethnically mixed with other peoples. Economic and political relations would make up the connecting tissue of such a federation.

The youth endorsed Markovic's ideas. However, their first serious echo was in the People's Assembly, in Adam Bogosavljevic's circle of opposition MPs. Was it not for Adam Bogosavljevic, said Slobodan Jovanovic, the influence of Svetozar Markovic would have rather modest. For, Svetozar Markovic did set foundations to a people's state the prototype of which was the traditional Serb commune, but Adam Bogosavljevic was the one to spread the idea in a reduced form through the People's Assembly. Markovic's teaching, the same as Russian socialism, emerged from revolutionary teachings in the West Europe and were imbued with altruism. Adam Bogosavljevic's work was opposed to anything coming from the West Europe: technology, education, arts, international law, diplomacy – and was imbued with repulse and demagogy. "Let's free ourselves from the elegant but dangerous shackles of

Western formality that have choked the spirit and the character of the Serb people,” said Bogosavljevic.



PEOPLE'S RADICAL PARTY GATHERING

Slobodan Jovanovic precisely defined the frame of Serbia's social drama in the 19th century. “Our economic development was primitively slow-paced; the needs of the state organization grew at the speed of modern states,” he wrote. Those needs could be met either from domestic resources or foreign capital. The ideology of the populist state ruled out both. New taxes imposed on the impoverished farmer population would have further impoverished Serbia itself. But Serbia was also anxious about opening the door to foreign capital: under its influence the Serb people would become some other people that would take Serbia away from its testamentary goals – liberation and unification of the Serb nation. This credo brought about the national-socialist, state-socialist formula: *Serbism = socialism*. Actually, it set foundations for the ideology of the entire Serb people's populist state as a large commune that organizes production and secures fair distribution. Its political expression was people's self-government.

Advocating the ideas of the populist state, Adam Bogosavljevic opposed any step towards the state's modernization. He voted against any law leading to class division and stood against any institution mirroring class differences.

In the People's Assembly, Nikola Pasic so sharpened the aforementioned differences until they were perceived as mutually exclusive. Profiting from his Zurich experience and always combining the means of legal and conspirational struggles, he imposed order among the parliamentary opposition and united it around his original program. “I haven't come here to kiss the hem of this or that owner's garment but to stand for *people's rights, people's interests and people's freedom*.”

In the People's Assembly, Pasic opposed the ruling liberals by all means. And that became

a constant of his activity – the socialists and the radicals were using any reform undertaken by the liberals to strengthen their political position and thus curb further reform movement. In order to set foundations for a modern state all liberal governments had to resort to force. So they were discredited as enemies of freedom, people's democracy and people's state. Thus the circle was being closed. Strengthening of the goals of social and national ideology was turning liberalism into something not only uncalled for but also hostile. When the main advocate of Markovic's ideas, Pera Todorovic, who returned from emigration once a general amnesty was granted, and Markovic's main organizer, Nikola Pasic, reunited in Belgrade in late 1880 it was only a matter of days before the People's Radical Party would emerge. If Todorovic and Pasic, two key players in Svetozar Markovic's movement, perceived the People's Radical Party in the same way at the beginning they certainly did not later on. Having already traveled the way from a founding father to a critic, Pera Todorovic perceived the People's Radical Party as a historical phenomenon. Or, as he put it, “Serbia /of the time/ was incapable of producing something better and more adequate.” Nikola Pasic who identified himself with the party and was identified with it (“Pasic belongs to us, and we belong to him”) and identified the party with the people, considered it eternal. After the change of dynasty and the party was in power for long already, Pasic said, “I am convinced that only the Radical Party is capable to safeguard and strengthen Serbia, and realize our ideals at the same time.” The ideals were “national liberation and unification.”

(...)

The differences between the radicals and the social revolutionaries on the one hand, and the liberals and the progressists on the other were of different character – they related to the goal itself. What links closely the radicals and social revolutionaries is the people's state – as an expression of collective interest, right and will; embodiment of the people as a social and national whole; an antithesis of an absolutistic and liberal state. In other words, they equally opposed the idea of a state focused on and individual and based on the postulate that “a man is free and has the right to use and advance his natural gifts.” The differences between the two currents of thought sharpened among the handful of Serb intelligentsia in the first decade after independence declaration. Having hardly changed their proportions, those differences have marked Serbia's development in ensuing decades thus testifying that they were historical tendencies rather than ephemeral phenomena in the development of social and political ideas and movements in Serbia.

The first progressist government undertook a comprehensive legislative reform with a view to establish institutions of an independent state as soon as possible and regulate its international relations. This legis-

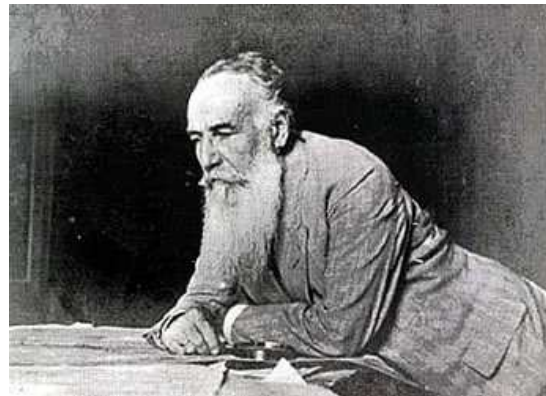
lative reform was labeled “a revolution from above” due to the speed at which it was undertaken. Its synchronous character was, however, by far more significant than the rhythm. Synchronicity was embedded in the very idea of modernization of a newly independent state. The promoters of the idea were obviously aware that any modernization (political, economic or cultural), if isolated, soon adjusts to patriarchal values and moves away from the sum and substance of European models.

The reforms undertaken by the progressist government fell on bed soil. The consequences of the wars in 1876 and 1877-78 were still in the air. The country was bankrupt: it was even unable to pay back credits. The trade stalled and money was not circulating. People were impoverished or, as some contemporaries put it, almost animalized.

The first laws passed by the cabinet of Milan Pirocanac – the law on the freedom of press and the law on the freedom of association – enabled establishment of political parties in Serbia. The first progressist government headed for modernization of the newly independent state got itself the biggest opponent in the People’s Radical Party. In the People’s Assembly, the opposition represented by some 50 MPs from the People’s Radical Party had at its disposal the parliamentary rostrum, and outside it – the *Samouprava* (*Self-government*) newspaper. The paper – the party mouthpiece – was distributed throughout Serbia. It advocated the opposition’s struggle in the People’s Assembly while discrediting, politically and personally, progressist ministers and progressists in general. The paper was neither providing proofs for defamation nor anyone required it to do so. Once it began targeting the king himself no one was spared from defamation.

Apart from the two above-mentioned laws, all other bills put forth by the first progressist government (a contract on the first railroad, laws on regular army, elementary schools, public health, etc.) met with strong opposition in the parliament. They were turned down in the name of protection of people’s material interests but also in the name of defense of its identity that was often – due to unawareness about other values, fear of change and for demagogical reasons – identified with various forms of backwardness. By interpreting them as products of alien, i.e. Western influence, the opposition was turning down legislative reforms of the first progressist government in the name of gradualism and safeguard of the people’s spirit. But when it came to perception of a state, the divides between the opposition and Milan Pirocanac’s cabinet were deep and insurmountable. Both sides clearly defined their stands,

particularly after independence declaration. The People’s Radical Party was after a populist, social state after the model of the Serb commune. The political reforms it as after – its strong parliamentary opposition in the first place – were nothing but means to attain this goal. For their part, the progressists were after modernization of the state – i.e. its distancing from the model of a state as a large commune. And that, according to the radicals, moved the state away from its primary goal – unification of the Serb people – and distanced it from the Slavic Russia as the main warrant for that goal. The opposition was gauging each of the aforementioned laws by its contribution to “the Russian people’s and its court’s sympathy for Serbia” that “preconditioned the Serbs’ peace of mind vis-à-vis the future.” The advantages of certain laws such as the law on public health or the law on stock branding – the stock making Serbia’s main export – were insignificant for the opposition. Moreover, it took them dangerous. In order to safeguard the patriarchal substrate the opposition was turning down European forms as well. It will accept the forms later on but just to safeguard the same substrate.



NIKOLA PAŠIĆ

Having posited that foreign policy orientation of the newly independent state was of vital importance for its development, the opposition mostly resisted the laws, which, as it saw them, took Serbia away from Russia and turn to Austria-Hungary. One of those laws was the one on construction of the first railroad in Serbia to which Serbia was bound under the Berlin Treaty. The People’s Assembly and the entire country for that matter were literally in a siege situation while the said law was under consideration. Apart from Montenegro, Serbia was the only country in Europe without railroad. The government’s arguments for economic and cultural benefits of the railroad and its civilizational effects for Serbia were of no avail. On the contrary, the opposition – its uneducated and educated representatives alike – saw those effects as the main reason why the law should be opposed.

The trade agreement with Austria-Hungary encountered even stronger opposition. The agreement provided Serbia the status of the most privileged nation without reciprocity and, as Slobodan Jovanovic put it, “met the needs of our farmers.” The opposition was quite aware of that. However, its resistance to the agreement was not mere demagoguery only. If the core of the opposition – composed of the founding fathers of the People’s Radical Party – used demagoguery at all at the time, that demagoguery was primarily the means for attaining a loftier goal – national and state unity.

According to Nikola Pasic, the Berlin Congress sharpened the conflict between two statehood ideas: the Serb and the Austro-Hungarian. “The idea of our people is the one of liberation, while the idea of the Austro-Hungarian state, notably since lately (i.e. since the Berlin Congress – L.P.), is the one of South-East enlargement. The two states have always been in conflict and will be in conflict in the future,” said Pasic.



KING MILAN OBRENOVIĆ

The first progressist government was trying to modernize the newly independent state against politically, socially and culturally hostile backdrop. Aggravated relations between the government and the opposition led each to extremism towards the other. The police registered public manifestations against the railroad contract. No opposition MP was elected to a single parliamentary committee during the regular session of the People’s Assembly in 1882. The session itself began in the sign of “either-or.” That was best mirrored in the issue of Address. The opposition submitted its draft of the Address that practically

questioned the government. And Milan Pirocanac understood it that way.

Due to its reforms, the first progressist government was suffering blows from all sides. The People’s Radical Party – operating at several fronts at the same time – maximally played on the challenges facing the government. Through its mouthpiece, the *Samouprava* paper, it launched a fierce propaganda campaign against the legislative reform. Whenever it failed to prevent passing of laws in the People’s Assembly, the opposition turned to blackmail and obstruction. When the General Union – the Belgian company contracted to construct the railroad – went bankrupt, the opposition seized the opportunity and withdrew from the People’s Assembly.

In the elections for vacant parliamentary seats on May 15, 1882, out of 50 previous MPs 45 were re-elected. The government tried to reach a compromise with the opposition but the latter would not accept it. It reasoned by the “the worse, the better” maxim. The re-elected MPs refused to present their authorizations and were, therefore, excluded. They were once again re-elected in a new round of elections for vacant seats. Having posited that the excluded MPs could not be re-elected, the People’s Assembly decided that new MPs would be those who came in after the excluded MPs in election vote. That was how the famous “double winners,” as *Samouprava* labeled them, entered the People’s Assembly.

The People’s Assembly unanimously adopted major laws: on elementary schools, standing army, national bank, currency, church authorities, etc. However, its reputation was marred and its legitimacy disputed. It was dismissed on January 11, 1883. New elections were called for September 7. What followed was a trial of strength that practically decided the course of Serbia’s political and social history. Participants in the trial were not only the Court and political parties but also the farming masses under the leadership of a strong political organization with long-term goals: the Serb radicalism was embedded.

The opposition walked out of the People’s Assembly intent to return as the parliamentary majority. That implied two preconditions on which leading radicals focused: organization of the People’s Radical Party the pyramidal structuring of which was finalized by the election of its Main Committee in the summer of 1882 and drafting of a new constitution.

The radicals entered the election campaign for the September vote with a strong and massive political organization, with fanatic and widespread propaganda and with a political capital the opposition had earned in the People’s Assembly.

The progressists had a by far weaker organization, active mostly in urban areas, and a rather closed propaganda that, faced with the radicals’ strong propaganda, went on the defensive. Bankruptcy of the Gen-

eral Union inflicted them a heavy blow. But that was not the end of the story.

The radicals set the pace of the electoral run. Aware that their strength lay in the farming masses they were self-assured. They intimidated their opponents and incited the masses to riots. As it turned out, King Milan had good reasons to say later on that “a series of small-scale rebellions” prepared the terrain for the Timok Rebellion of 1883.

Profiting on the developments some of which they – overtly or covertly – initiated themselves the radicals augmented their political power. At the same time reputation of the progressists government was on the downward path. It was exposed to a series of blows, one coming after another. It seemed as if all those blows were planned “in the dark by a mysterious hand of an angry, unknown and dark force,” as an author of the time put it. Once the General Union went bankrupt and the People’s Assembly was dissolved, the radicals got themselves new opportunities for discrediting the progressist government and its reforms. They firstly accused the President of the People’s Assembly – one of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party – of misconduct. Then Lena Knjicanin and Ilka Markovic were found dead, one after another, in the Pozarevac penitentiary where they serving their time for the assassination of King Milan. During implementation of the law on stock branding in the villages of Eastern Serbia conflicts between farmers and policemen broke out. The radicals’ propaganda managed to spread the word that stock branding was an excuse for a tax growth. Therefore, farmers opposed the implementation of the law, while law enforcement officers tried to implement it – the radicals’ press interpreted the later as an assault against the people. *Samouprava* was referring to law enforcement officers as *seymen*. The phrase associating Janissaries was meant to suggest the alien character of the regime that had passed the law on stock branding.

The atmosphere of civil war marking the election campaign and the election day (in eight counties voting was either accompanied by protests or remained unfinished) hardly indicated the end of political conflicts in the country. The election victory of the People’s Radical Party was not unexpected though its consequences were unpredictable. Out of 132 parliamentary seats, the radicals won 72, the liberals 30 and the progressists 24. The sovereign’s 44 MPs were insufficient to secure the progressists’ majority.

Soon after the September elections the first progressist government formally resigned. Formally, since resignations of its ministers had been

had been on the sovereign’s table since July 20, 1883. Having expressed their conviction that “the amendment of the constitution is a matter of highest priority” since “if Serbia losses this battle on this road to progress, its political future will be uncertain,” ministers faced the sovereign with a choice.

The true political nature and character of the People’s Radical Party – that, according to many “resembled army or church hierarchy” – was laid bare only after the Timok Rebellion. The party founding fathers and leadership had been either imprisoned or had emigrated. However, the network of local branches “that – like guerilla fighters – managed to maintain the party” – remained in place. But, without ideology, the organization was nothing but an empty shell: *radicalism* was its leavening agent. “Courts-martial and the state of emergency, as well as the ensuing, brutal persecution of the radicals forced the party to go underground for a while. It was in the state of silence and slumber. But this meant not the end of the organization. New members were not admitted, meetings were not convened, but spiritual ties among memberships remained alive, more alive than ever before, and radical fighters remained devoted to their principles and the party program in which they believed wholeheartedly and genuinely. Radical leaders in Belgrade and among the people, those who have not been thrown into prison, took upon themselves to revive and recuperate the party. And their efforts bore fruit. The party gradually revives and recuperates...”

In April 1886 the Belgrade radicals reached an agreement with the liberals – not an electoral agreement but a programmatic one. The two “are coming closer in a general, popular current that helps Serb patriotism to gain the upper hand over partisan stands.” And, “preparations for a new constitution will be among the priorities of the parties that have joined hands.”

Nikola Pasic remained indisposed to any compromise whatsoever. While in emigration, he kept a sharp eye on the developments in the country and in the party, made plans, maintained old ties and established new ones. At the same time he would not allow the party slip out of his hands – the party that was reviving at home and turning again into a major factor. Therefore, “though deeply dissatisfied with the party’s new policy he could only accept it when he realized that things would no longer be the same.” He wrote to Rasa Milosevic that the party conclusions had so infuriated him that he planned to come public “in the name of the people in emigration” and say that the radicals’ leaders at home “abandoned the party program, cheated the people and desecrated victims.” He calmed down when he realized that the radicals-liberals agreement had not “buried the radicals’ program.” What mattered to him was that the party stuck to the principle of “people’s sovereignty” rather than shared the liberals’ platform of “sharing the legislative power with the King.”

The radicals-liberals agreement brought about a “federal cabinet” (June 1, 1887). Its six-month rule (till December 17, 1887) was marked by the witch hunt against the progressists the radicals’ mouthpiece, *Odjek* (Echo), called “relieving the burden from the people’s chest.” The progressists were brutally murdered, humiliated and prosecuted throughout Serbia. Cleansing the country of the progressists continued in the years to come.

The agreement with the liberals and the majority electoral system made it possible for the People’s Radical Party to obtain the biggest number of parliamentary seats in the September 1887 elections. For the first time ever it had the opportunity to form a government by itself. (...) Only four months later, the first radical cabinet resigned as it failed to realize all of its program goals: normalization of the financial situation and adoption of the laws on municipalities and the standing army.



RANKO TAJSIĆ

A draft constitution was soon adopted by the parliamentary constitutional committee at its regular meeting. The radicals were not exactly pleased with it. They criticized it for ignoring socioeconomic problems of farmers, for failing to abolish bureaucracy, for maintaining the electoral threshold and for introducing the category of “qualified” MPs. When he put the final draft on a vote in the plenary session of the constitutional committee King Milan appealed to all members to vote for it and to “use all of their influence and power to have the document – in details and as a whole – adopted by the Big Assembly.” Despite his appeal, two radicals, Dimitrije Katic and Ranko Tajsic, voted against the draft constitution.

The elections for the Big (constitutional) Assembly were held on December 2, 1888 by the old calendar. Out of some 600 elected representatives, 500 were radicals and 100 liberals. Not a single progressist representative had been elected. King Milan was faced with the threatening and dangerous radicals’ majority for whom the crown

was the only obstacle. As for the radicals, they were faced with the choice between the new constitution and the one declared in 1869 – the very “protectoral constitution” their forefather called a fraud and they themselves had fought against for twenty years.

Nikola Pasic spent six years in emigration (1883-1889). From Rumania he moved to Bulgaria where he assembled the Serbs that have emigrated from the country after 1883. He spared no effort to attain the goal the Timok Rebellion had failed to. In other words, to oust King Milan as the promoter of Serbia’s Western orientation and, therefore, a “traitor of the mission of liberation and unification of the Serb people.”

While in emigration, the conspirational, self-controlled and ambiguous Nikola Pasic was straightforward, precise and unbending in the letters he used as main means of communication. He used letters to give vent to his thoughts and emotions. In some of them – such as the one he wrote to Russian Slavist P.A. Kulakowsky – Pasic summarized his political philosophy and spontaneously revealed its origins:

“It can be said that the Serbs are the most unfortunate nation in Europe. Apart from other bad luck and enemies, it has a ruler unprecedented in history. He is not a tyrant since tyrants are strict but fair, but a traitor of the people he reigns over. He allied himself with eternal foes of the Serb people and they are now, hand in hand, trying to destroy the Serb state and subjugate it to Austria-Hungary. The world history and historical developments have placed the Serb-Croatian tribe between Barbarian Turks and civilized Germans. For some five centuries the Serb people had fought the Turks so as to defend its golden liberty and honorable cross. And yet it hates civilized Germans more than Barbarian Turks...At the time when the Serb people needs to be defended and protected from German ‘offensive to the East’ our King betrayed his people the same as Vuk Brankovic had done at the Battle of Kosovo. The only difference between the two is that the later did it out of revenge while the former for personal gain. At the time when we need Russian help the most, at the time when Germans recruit allies against Slavs from all over Europe, the King’s government and the King himself raise hell about the Russians and kiss and hug the Germans, our and Slavic foes.

“...The Serb people understand its struggle against King Milan as the Serbs’ struggle for the defense of their homeland, they know they are fighting not only for their own good but that of all Slavs...Should the Serbs succumb, should the progressists’ stand that Serbhood could only be saved in alliance with the Germans and against the Russians, it would be hard to curb those floods midway, at the border with Bulgaria that, for some time now, has been following in the footsteps of Serb progressists!

“Everything needs to be done in due time. The time wasted in decisive moments and crucial periods

channels the people's cultural life to some other destination. We must do everything in due time...A disease has to be treated before it destroys and eats up an organism..."



BELGRADE, END OF XIX CENTURY

Fanatically focused on his goals Nikola Pasic – while in emigration and even after the failed Timok Rebellion – prepared the terrain for an uprising in Serbia. He turned down an assassination plan as he assumed it would result in a state of emergency that would only strengthen the position of the progressists. Assembling emigrants for an uprising as an ultimate goal was most significant for Pasic's own position. Alone he was helpless, despite his political plans. With emigrants by his side and close to the border with Serbia they threaten to cross by force, he was a factor not to be ignored – neither by King Milan and the progressist government nor by Austria-Hungary and Russia. And by the People's Radical Party as well. After the Timok Rebellion he had to assert himself as the party's indisputable leader. "Pasic lived in Bulgarian, Rumania and Russia but dictated what should be done in Serbia all the time." Any weakening of the front against King Milan and the progressist government would jeopardize his decisive influence on developments in Serbia.

An uprising – both as a literal and mobilizing goals – necessitated assistance. Pasic could knock on one door only: Russia's. But Russia's official circles considered him "a nihilist and rebel." Therefore, he needed a mediator whom Russia trusted. He found him in the person of Metropolitan Mihailo.

Preoccupied with its deals in Bulgaria and anxious that the uprising could trigger off Austria-Hungary's occupation of Serbia, the Russian government was reserved about preparations for it. Therefore, Metropolitan Mihailo had to turn to his many connections in the Russian society. So the emigrants obtained not only political support but also assistance in funds and arms from Slavophil organizations in Russia. More importantly, Metropolitan Mihailo recommended Nikola Pasic to Slavophil circles as "a fighter for a universal Slavic cause." When he firstly came to St. Petersburg in 1885 Nikola Pasic was welcomed as an ally by those circles. And he was an ally, indeed.

After independence declaration it was because of the course of its domestic development that Serbia urgently needed a country to rely on in its foreign policy. The People's Radical Party labeled King Milan's and the progressists' government Western orientation a betrayal of the national institutions that were "the soul of the Slavic world" and thus a betrayal of the Slavs. On the other hand, it considered its unreserved reliance on Russia defense of the state's Slavic substance challenged by the Western "substance" imposed on Serbia through modernization. It was not enough that one party alone in Serbia pursues the policy of good relations with Russia. Its political "credo" had to be a pan-Slavic unity, as the lasting interest of the Serb people. At the same time, the policy of good relations with Austria-Hungary was treason.

When the progressists begun to move towards Russia, Nikola Pasic wrote to Kulakowsky on October 12, 1896 that Russia had the right to interfere into domestic affairs of Balkan states in the event those domestic affairs were contrary to people's aspirations – i.e. "if domestic affairs are in the hands of the opponents of Slavic blood, in the hands of the people trying to destroy everything that is Slavic." "In today's Serbia the progressists claim they are the interpreters of the Russian public opinion and that Russia would not support them if it disagreed with their policy. And their domestic policy will choke the voice of people and persecute genuine supporters of Russia...That means the radicals who would readily accept Serbia's total dependence on Russia if that helps to safeguard Slavic self-expression and stop Germany's march to the East," says Pasic in the letter.

Pasic's public addresses upon his return from emigration are marked by "a high degree of ideological-political coherence and clear-cut strategic concept of the party." The People's Radical Party itself "closed a chapter of its history" with the 1888 Constitution. A strategy for "a new era" had to be defined. And that is what Nikola Pasic was doing without interfering into the party's foundations.

And those foundations were made, in the first place, of Slavic unity and the "pledge of Kosovo." The idea of a state that "has no nobility but only brotherhood and equality" derived from "the lofty idea of Slavic character" that "seems to be most prominent among the Serbs." For, the Serbs are those that would "never accept injustice and evils of this world regardless of the hardships they have to go through." It was Tsar Lazar who gave voice to this trait when he said on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo that he preferred the "celestial kingdom /to the mundane/ because it was just and eternal."

The People's Radical Party's struggle for its principle cannot be separated from its perception of "the organization appropriate" for that struggle. That is the organization that "wastes its energy on fighting op-

ponents only” and never “exhausts itself on internal skirmishes.” Time-tested in the struggle against “the old bureaucratic system” this totalitarian character of the party gains significance in the “new era. “Discipline and solidarity among our membership,” said Nikola Pasic addressing the party meetings, “helped the Radical Party to win, discipline and solidarity are what we need to safeguard all that was acquired and to confirm our attainments...Whatever the party decides obliges each and every member...This is a serious period for Serbia and as such calls for general accord.”

Party unity rests on two benchmarks: victims and a fixed goal. Those benchmarks are interrelated. Pasic recalls victims with a clear intent to “further inspire party membership and tighten its ranks in strong columns, to revive the old discipline and strength capable, when well-arranged, to overcome all obstacles in the way of its progress and realization of its program.”

Unity of the People’s Radical Party – even after it obtained absolute power in the People’s Assembly and formed a government of its own – was most significant in the context of attainment of its goal: unification of the Serb people. It messaged the neighboring states that Serbia had a government strong enough not to make more concessions that “the interests of its people allow.” Merged with the people, the unified party in power could get prepared for European developments and “profit on them” so as to contribute to *final solution* of the status of the provinces that are “closely connected with the history of the Serb people and are constituent parts of the Serb tribe.”

In the elections for the Extraordinary People’s Assembly held on September 14, 1889, the first elections called after the declaration of the 1888 Constitution, the People’s Radical Party triumphed: it won 102 parliamentary seats out of 117. The Liberal Party obtained the rest of 15 seats. The Progressive Party abstained: it was still recuperating after the 1887 lynch and was awaiting a new wave of persecution. Nikola Pasic was elected the President of the People’s Assembly. “The People’s Assembly carries out its task in the aftermath of a terrible rule that *undermined people’s strength*, disarrayed the financial system and *abandoned the traditional popular policy*,” said Pasic.

The very character of the Serb radicalism almost decisively determined developments in Serbia after declaration of the liberal Constitution of 1888 and its very fate. Having its roots in criticism of the 1888 Constitution, the Serb radicalism constituted itself in the ensuing two decades as the ideology of a revolutionary party. For the People’s Radical Party, any rule – except for direct rule of

the people via bottom-to-top self-government – was alien and hostile. In other words, it stood for the people’s, farmers’ state functioning as a big commune rather than for a modern state based on the rule of law. While in opposition, the People’s Radical Party invigorated the conflict between the two state concepts to mutual exclusivity with all traits of a civil war. Different foreign policy strategies of the two concepts – Russia as the heart of the Slavic world on the one hand, and Austria-Hungary as a paradigm of the West on the other – were perceived as a clash between the East and the West. “Ever since they settled in the countries they still live in the Serb people have always sided with the East in all clashes between the East and the West worlds,” wrote Nikola Pasic at the beginning of “a new era.”

The balance of powers between the two state concepts was firstly put to the test in the 1883 elections. King Milan denied to recognize the victory of the People’s Radical Party won by legal means, and deployed the army against its reserve variant – the armed uprising. Electoral victory of the People’s Radical Party was secured only after declaration of the 1888 Constitution and abdication of King Milan convinced that he had safeguarded the dynasty and Serbia’s orientation towards the West at least for some period of time.

Having finally won the elections, the People’s Radical Party practically occupied the People’s Assembly. And then – “Through the Assembly it appointed its cadres ministers, and through those ministers assigned the radicals to all other public offices. The spirit of the party permeated both the government and the Assembly...A minister and a MP, a county chairman and a secretary of a district committee, heads of ministerial departments and members of the State Council and the Treasury – shared the same political course.” Apart from undermining the balance of power, absolute domination by one party stood for a reign of terror in a way. Along with the crown’s denial to accept its diminished prerogatives, that was the main cause of political crises plaguing Serbia after declaration of the 1888 Constitution. The 1890s were marked by the struggle between the crown and the one-party state.

Each year of the last decade of the 19th century was a year of crisis: in 1892 the crown brought the liberal to power – terror of minority replaced the terror of majority; in 1893 King Aleksandar proclaimed himself of age; in 1894 King Milan returned to the country and the 1888 Constitution was annulled; in 1896 a convention of the radicals from all over the country was held in Belgrade with the aim of demonstrating the party power; in 1897 a neutral government was formed by King Aleksandar while King Milan became a commander of active duty military personnel; in 1899 there was an assassination attempt at King Milan and Nikola Pasic was on trial in which he named anti-dynastic elements in his party.

It seemed that the decade-long constitutional crisis was finally brought to the end at the very beginning of the 20th century. King Milan's sudden death in 1901 gave King Aleksandar a free hand to seek a solution. The agreement between the radicals and the progressists, and the pressure from Russia resulted in the authoritarian Constitution of 1901, which corresponded to the progressists' constitutional draft of 1882.

The People's Radical Party's acceptance of the authoritarian Constitution of 1901 caused the first schism in the party. However, Pasic took that Serbia "needs sympathy of European nations...for easier realization of the Serb testamentary thought." To secure those sympathies one needs to accept European institutions such as a *constitutional state*. For, the European nations "would not be on their guard about an enlarged and stronger state that follows their course and adopts their standards." For Pasic, the Constitution was primarily an instrument for attainment of a loftier goal: liberation and unification of the Serb people. Therefore, he would readily approve even a less progressive constitution under the condition that it "leaves people to rest in peace, collect its strength and compensate the losses of the past battles, and pays more attention to Serbia's capacity to cope with the developments abroad." In other words, "freedom of the entire Serb people" has always been and still was "an ideal higher and loftier than civil liberties in the Kingdom of Serbia." For, to be able to focus itself on the realization of national program Serbia should not afford social and political differentiations that dissolve its unique substrate. Such a stand equals a dogma: it is not affected by historical changes. Or, as Nikola Pasic put it on March 24, 1908, in the People's Assembly, "The entire history of the Radical Party testifies that we are a pure national party...by sticking to national tradition, it will always remain such."

The beginning of the 20th century witnesses the end of yet another chapter of the life of the People's Radical Party. In early April 1903, King Aleksandar performed a coup d'etat. The 1901 Constitution was abolished for a while and then restituted. In the shade of those developments a plot was being woven. Devised for long it culminated in the early morning hours of May 29, 1903, when officers assassinated King Aleksandar. Now after the murder of Prince Mihailo and several assassination attempts at King Milan, the Obrenovic dynasty was finally uprooted.

The army immediately enthroned Petar Karadjordjevic, whereas the People's Assembly, before voting him in, made a constitutional decision. The 1903 Constitution took over most of the provisions of the 1888 Constitution and estab-

lished parliamentarianism. Inseparable from liberalism, parliamentarianism in Serbia could have only been deeply controversial.

This mere form hardly evoked Europe's sympathy. The country's international position aggravated. Because of the murder of the royal couple England broke relations with Serbia and conditioned renewal of those relations by the punishment of the plotters. It was only in 1906 that the plotters were brought before justice. However, in 1911 they set up a clandestine organization under the name "Unification or Death," or, known as "The Black Arm."



"THE BLACK ARM" LEADERS

The army stepped at the political scene intent never to leave it. The plotters' role in the formation of the government and marginalization of legitimate authorities questioned constitutionality as the system of limited, public and controlled rule. The Court and the government treated the plotters' protection as a matter of state policy, since the plotters were the warrant of their power. "The act of May 29 is not a crime. For, was it a crime, all battles for liberation worldwide would have been crimes...That act is an act of patriotism," said Nikola Pasic in his address to the People's Assembly. Logically, the advocates of the anti-complot movement were "adversaries of the May 29 revolution." They were sent to jail and murdered there even in the presence of the Police Minister.

When it came to power after the coup, the People's Radical Party permeated the entire Serbian society. At the same time it realized its lasting goal: a strong majority in the People's Assembly, a weak ruler and a "cabinet" government. This made it possible for it to focus itself on the realization of a national task. A goal that was thus fixed boosted nationalism and made resistance to militarism senseless. Notwithstanding European forms such as parliamentarianism, the Serb society was unavoidable mobilized for war preparation and wars by the ideology of the People's Radical Party. What guaranteed its decades-long rule at the domestic scene was the partisan character of the state, and reliance on Russia its presence on international arena. This called for fine-tuning the party organization, rather than for a change in the party program.