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Milan St. Protić

**The Serbian Radical Movement 1881–1903
A Historical Aspect**

Following the Serbo-Turkish war (1876–78) an outburst of dynamic political events culminated in the early 1880s with the formation of modern political parties in Serbia. This phenomenon resulted from several important factors. Although the promulgation of the Constitution in 1869 had not yet established full parliamentary democracy, it had secured a political environment in which larger segments of society could take an active part in political decision making.¹ This political document expressed a compromise between the Crown and the National Assembly by dividing legislative authority, eliminating the previous oligarchic political tradition and almost unlimited power of the ruler. Secondly, after the assassination of Prince Mihailo Obrenović in 1868, Serbia was ruled by his minor nephew Prince Milan Obrenović who was represented by the Regency. The Regency was dominated by a strong political personality, later founder of the Liberal Party, European-educated Jovan Ristić.² The ruling circles felt a need to introduce certain reforms based on Western political experience. Thirdly, as a consequence of the Serbo-Turkish war and the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Serbia became an independent state with all the prerogatives of power and importance that such a position acquires. Fourthly, during this period a number of young Serbian students were sent to European universities to receive higher education. Exposure to European political developments, movements, and ideas accompanied them back to Serbia. Finally, Serbian society politically matured and entered the partisan struggle.

Serbian society, dominated by the peasantry, passed through several stages of national consciousness. They began by opposing the Ottoman rule and laying the foundations for a nation-state at the beginning of the nineteenth century, progressed through opposing the very same State's estab-

¹ Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. I (Belgrade, 1934), 230–31; see also *Ustavni razvitak Srbije u XIX veku*, ed. Miroslav Djordjević (Leskovac, 1970).

² *Ibid.*

lishment by beginning peasant revolts throughout the 1830s and 1840s, to finally waging war against the Ottomans in 1876 (joined by Russia in 1877) and winning independence in 1878. The Serbian peasantry matured during these years, publicly articulating its own opinions and interests. By the 1880s Serbian society developed a thin, but existing layer of urban bourgeoisie who generally originated from the village, with a peasant consciousness coupled with rudimentary capitalist commercial mentality. At the same time, a third social layer grew within the Serbian society consisting of local intelligentsia (teachers, physicians, priests, local state authorities) who shared the social destiny of peasantry, but had fairly developed political awareness. Headed by Belgrade intellectuals, this was basically the structure of the Serbian society in the 1880s.³

The Radical Party was officially organized in 1881 as the first organized political party in Serbia.⁴ In its initial stage (until 1903) Serbian Radicalism passed through several phases of political and ideological development. The first period (1869–80) could be named the period of rudimentary Radicalism. The movement was unorganized and stretched between the ideas of socialism, anarchism and peasant democracy. The second period, that of militant Radicalism (1881–86), was marked by the organized and uncompromising opposition to the existing system and the Crown, which culminated in the Timok armed rebellion in 1883. The aftermath was marked by the Radical wavering between armed resistance and legitimism. During the period of pragmatic Radicalism (1886–94) there was a recuperation and reorganization of the movement, an inclusion into the existing order as a legitimate political force, a new Constitution in 1888 which had been chiefly influenced by Radical political views, and by the first compromises with other political factors in Serbia. Finally, there was the period of overpowered Radicalism (1894–1903), wherein Radicals made serious compromises with rival parties and the Crown, moderated their political programme, and openly entered into competition for power although preserving their basic ideology.

As any periodization, this one could be subjected to various criticisms. Its major criteria, however, were stages in the ideological development of Radicalism in Serbia.

³ See Dimitrije Djordjević, "The Serbian Society in the 1880's: A Cross Section of the Origins of the Radical Party" (in manuscript).

⁴ Živan Živanović, *Politička istorija Srbije*, vol. II (Belgrade, 1923–25), 161. See also Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, II, 317; Živan Mitrović, *Srpske političke stranke* (Belgrade, 1939), 71; Michael Boro Petrovich, *History of Modern Serbia 1804–1918* (New York: Harcourt Braca Jovanovich, 1976), 411.

The period after 1903 could be justifiably named The Golden Age. After the assassination of the last Obrenović on 29 May 1903,⁵ Serbia entered a period of full parliamentary democracy based on the revised Constitution of 1888. From 1903 to 1914, the Radicals were in power most of the time, leading the Serbian State towards complete emancipation. The movement had matured through twenty years of political struggle, experienced numerous challenges and temptations, clarified and modified its ideological and structural foundations, and became capable of playing an instrumental role in the process of Serbia's development into a European state in the cultural sense.

After the First World War and the creation of Yugoslavia, the Radical Party continued to exist and act as a political movement until 1941. However, general political, social, and cultural circumstances became so different that it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to look at it as the same movement before and after 1918.

* * *

The group of Svetozar Marković appeared in Serbian politics in the late 1860s, and remained active until 1875.⁶ Svetozar Marković was a young political theoretician and activist who had studied in Serbia, Russia, and Switzerland in the late 1860s. He developed a political doctrine based on ideas of Russian socialism, experiences of *narodniki* movement and anarchism, and later West-European socialism.⁷ Once he had returned to Serbia in 1869, together with a group of his fellow Serbian students from Switzerland, he became politically active in Kragujevac, a town in central Serbia. Marković and his associates published a number of political newspapers and organized a dynamic political force. Through innumerable articles and writings, Marković developed his own sociopolitical teaching. Although incomplete and sometimes inconsistent, it was the first socialist doctrine not only in Serbia, but in the entire Balkans.⁸ His teaching was somewhat futuristic, romantic, and unrealistic, but nevertheless had strong impact on Serbian political events in his and future times.

⁵ For more details, see Dragiša Vasić, *1903* (Belgrade, 1925).

⁶ See Slobodan Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković* (Belgrade, 1920); Jovan Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković, njegov život, rad i ideje* (Belgrade, 1922); Woodford McClellan, *Svetozar Markovic and the Origins of Balkan Socialism* (Princeton, 1964).

⁷ Sofija Skoric, "The Populism of Nikola Pasic: the Zurich Period", *East European Quarterly* XIV/4 (Winter 1980).

⁸ McClellan, *Svetozar Markovic*, 68.

Marković's teaching could be divided in three major sections: his political concept, his socio-economic doctrine, and his national programme.⁹ In his political programme, Svetozar Marković stressed several points. His concepts included a very strong anti-bureaucratic sentiment. He argued in favour of the abolition of a professional administration, which he regarded as the main obstacle on the road to economic and cultural emancipation of the Serbian population: "I consider the destruction of the bureaucratic system as the first necessity in Serbia."¹⁰ Marković also stressed the introduction of communal and regional self-governmental organization in place of the professional administrative apparatus. He favoured elected collective bodies in communes and regions to be supreme authorities in those areas. Communal assemblies would be the ones to incorporate all elected officials in the commune – not only the administrators, the chief of police, and the judge, but also the doctor and the teacher.¹¹ The whole structure of the State establishment was to derive from the slogan that "the question of bread is the question of local self-government".¹²

The last of Marković's political objectives, the supreme authority of the National Assembly, logically followed the principle of local self-government. Marković argued that the National Assembly, completely elective on the regional basis, constituted the supreme legislative body. Consequently, this line of thought led him to the Convent system of government and further on, to republicanism.¹³ The socio-economic segment of Svetozar Marković's teaching suggested the abolition of private ownership and the introduction of communal property. His economic concept was based on the traditional patriarchal family cooperative, the so-called *zadruga*.¹⁴ Fascinated by its democratic organization and spirit, Marković put it in the centre of his socio-economic teaching: "The modern economic ideal is very close to the economic mechanism of the Serbian *zadruga*."¹⁵ In his opinion, it represented "the most advanced communism of ownership, work and pleasure".¹⁶ Marković was heavily influenced by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. This Russian socialist found the ideal pattern for his economic system in a

⁹ Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković*, 21-30.

¹⁰ Svetozar Marković, "Srpske obmane", *Zastava*, Novi Sad, 1869.

¹¹ Svetozar Marković, *Odabrani spisi* (Belgrade, 1969), 82.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković*, 112.

¹⁴ McClellan, *Svetozar Markovic*, 239.

¹⁵ Svetozar Marković, in *Javnost* 20 (Kragujevac, 1873).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

traditional Russian institution, the *mir*. Following his teacher, Marković did similarly founding his system on *zadruga*.¹⁷

The national concept of Svetozar Marković concentrated on the destruction of both empires in the Balkans, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, he pledged for the liberation of all Serbs and their free association with other Balkan nations in a federation achieved through armed revolution:¹⁸

The Serbian people have no other option but a revolution in the Balkan Peninsula, the revolution which would end with disappearance of all states which exist today on the road to the unification of free peoples and workers in the union of communes, regions – or states ...¹⁹

The political fermentation in Serbia in the early 1870s witnessed two parallel processes. On one side, the group of Svetozar Marković, which included a handful of young, European-educated men – politically very conscious and leaning towards socialist ideas – developed rather well-organized action especially through political newspapers *Radenik* (The Worker), *Javnost* (The Public), *Rad* (The Labour) and *Oslobodjenje* (The Liberation).²⁰ At about the same time, in 1874, a group of representatives in the National Assembly began to attract attention by their peasant looks, outspoken attitudes, and public speeches in which they defended the interests of the Serbian peasantry.²¹ They came from the countryside, from various regions of Serbia, but all gathered round the same political objective – to work towards the improvement of the socio-economic position of the Serbian peasant.²²

Thus in the politically undeveloped Serbian environment these two trends found common grounds for joint action – young intellectuals attracted by European socialism which they vigorously tried to implement in Serbia and the group of peasant deputies (among whom some were well educated),²³ who expressed the peasantry's simplified and essentially negativist attitude towards the government. But, much as it looked peculiar and confusing, this combination has a clear explanation. Without any trace of

¹⁷ McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 241.

¹⁸ Svetozar Marković, *Celokupna dela*, vol. II (Belgrade, 1892-1921), 35-36.

¹⁹ Svetozar Marković, *Srbija na istoku* (Belgrade, 1872), 167-168.

²⁰ Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković*, 98.

²¹ Rastislav Petrović, *Adam Bogosavljević* (Belgrade, 1972), 42. See also Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković*, 174.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Adam Bogosavljević attended Belgrade *Velika škola*, but decided to return to his native village and to agriculture. For more details, see Petrović, *Adam Bogosavljević*.

working class or capitalist economic relations taken as a dominant socio-economic factor, no idea of European socialism could find fertile soil in Serbia. Consequently, the promoters of socialist ideology were forced to look for supporters among the peasants as they were the most numerous social layer in Serbian society. As a result of this mutual influence, the young Serbian socialists mellowed in their ideological exclusiveness and the peasant element obtained solid theoretical guideline for future political action. The best illustration of the common origins of the two trends is the fact that both Svetozar Marković, the leader of the socialist group, and Adam Bogosavljević, the dominant figure among peasant Assemblymen, attended Velika škola (Belgrade School, predecessor of the University of Belgrade) in the early 1860s.²⁴

As early as 1875, the group of Adam Bogosavljević came out with a defined political programme which mainly concentrated on anti-bureaucratism and which included three major points: the reduction of state officials' salaries, the abolition of district offices (*okružna načelstva*) and the organization of regional self-government.²⁵ At the same time, they insisted on the constitutional reforms which would provide all legislative powers for the National Assembly as well as on absolute freedom of the press, association, and public gathering.²⁶

It is quite clear that the political programme of Bogosavljević's group had been heavily influenced by Marković's ideas. However, Bogosavljević accepted only the political, anti-bureaucratic aspect of Marković's teaching which obviously was most attractive to the Serbian peasantry.

Both of these political attempts, the socialist programme of Marković's group and the activity of Bogosavljević's group in the Assembly, were in essence rudimentary and short-lived movements. Their importance resides in their role as predecessors of later political developments. They served as early political experiences of individuals who later were to organize the Radical movement in Serbia. Some ideas which later became segments of Radical political ideology had been born in the course of these early attempts. However, they both suffered from inexperience, idealism and simplification of issues. The most important problem of the socialist tendency seemed to be the inability to cope with Serbian realities, with the real problems of Serbian society and the expectations of the peasantry. Imported from abroad, socialist ideas could not possibly correspond to the stage of socially undeveloped and basically peasant Serbian society. On the other hand, the group of Adam Bogosavljević pointed out certain vital discrepancies of the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-80.

²⁵ Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković*, 161.

²⁶ Jaša Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka i struja u Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1947), 373.

Serbian political system, but was incapable of developing its own positive political alternative. Its attitude was essentially negative, as had been lucidly noticed by the great Serbian historian Slobodan Jovanović.²⁷

The socialist venture of Svetozar Marković's group in Serbia did not last more than five years. After the death of its leader in 1875, the movement slowly started to fall apart and its sole substantial attempt at revival in 1876 later became known as the "Red Banner Affair".²⁸ The city of Kragujevac in central Serbia was the centre of socialist action of Marković's group. In February 1876, the conflict between government forces and the socialists over local elections ended in massive demonstrations and open confrontation. The demonstrators, led by socialist activists and followed by workers from Kragujevac armaments factory, raised the flag with the slogan "Self-government" on it, thus expressing their Markovićevist affiliation.²⁹ The event was ended by the energetic action of the police and the military forces that same evening. Among the conspirators of the demonstrations, later found guilty and sentenced to time in prison, were old-time collaborators of Svetozar Marković and future founders of the Radical Party Pera Todorović and Pera Velimirović. They, however, managed to flee from Serbia before the trial and were pardoned in 1880.³¹

From that point on, the activity and the existence of this political group in Serbia gradually diminished and eventually disappeared. Due to the war with the Ottomans (1876–1878), which engaged all the mental and physical forces of the Serbian people, as well as later diplomatic events, which decisively influenced the Serbian future (the opposition to the provisions of the San Stefano Treaty and the winning of independence at the Berlin Congress), the internal political questions were put aside. The socialist movement as it had existed in the previous period was never reborn. The action of certain individuals who had belonged to this group, however, continued through their activity in the Serbian National Assembly. This particular grouping consisted of some former members of Marković's movement (Nikola Pašić, Pavle Vuković and Kosta Taušanović) and some peasant Assemblymen (Adam Bogosavljević, Ranko Tajišić, Dimitrije Katić, and Milija Milovanović).³² In the late 1870s this grouping gradually gained

²⁷ Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković*, 83.

²⁸ See Živanović, *Politička istorija*, II, 137–140; Prodanović, *Istorija*, 402–406; Velizar Ninčić, *Pera Todorović* (Belgrade, 1956), 47–50.

²⁹ Prodanović, *Istorija*, 402.

³⁰ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, II, 137–140.

³¹ Prodanović, *Istorija*, 402.

³² Raša Milošević, *Timočka buna 1883 godine* (Belgrade, 1923), 13–18; Živanović, *Politička istorija*, II, 158; Prodanović, *Istorija*, 437–440.

in importance and became the outspoken voice of minority opposition in the Serbian National Assembly.

* * *

The end of the 1970s and the early 1880s witnessed a dynamic political polarization among members of the Serbian National Assembly. The National Assembly in Serbia became the focal political stage and the place from which all political movements and developments began. Serbia's rudimentary political structure led to a kind of parallelism of political powers: there were the ruler and the National Assembly, which, after the Constitution of 1869 became a legislative body.³³

In the early 1880s three major political camps in the Serbian Assembly were taking shape. Although not yet completely defined in terms of organization and ideology, these informal groupings of Assemblymen, who sometimes switched from one group to another were the nuclei of future political parties.

The Liberals were the oldest political group in Serbian politics. They emerged from the St. Andrew's Assembly of 1858 and dominated Serbian politics from 1868 to 1880.³⁴ Led by the strong personality of well-educated Jovan Ristić, they introduced some Western liberal ideas to Serbia. Influenced by foreign liberal-national ideologies, the Liberals sought internal progress through national liberation. Their rule was marked by two crucial successes: the Constitution of 1869, which opened the door for parliamentary democracy, and the achievement of Serbian independence in 1878.³⁵

The Young Conservatives, who later formed the Progressivist Party, were some of the most brilliant young scholars in Serbia (Stojan Novaković, Čedomilj Mijatović, Milan Milićević, etc.), who together produced a programme of modernization through moderate reforms. Oriented towards the elite of Serbian society, they sought progress in the collaboration of the intelligentsia with the Crown. Despite the group's name, its conservatism "combined with liberal ideas".³⁶

The third group was the Radicals who at first collaborated with the Young Conservatives (1879–80), thus forming an opposition group to the Liberal government. This collaboration, however, was temporary and not

³³ Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, III, 411; see also Milivoje Popović, *Borbe za parlamentarni režim u Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1939), 54.

³⁴ Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, III, 412; see also Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism: Vladimir Jovanovic and the Transformation of Serbian Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, II, 311.

based on similar ideological grounds, but rather on a common interest in opposing the government. As a result of their joint effort, the Radicals and the Young Conservatives were able to force the Liberal government to resign. The Young Conservatives formed their first cabinet under the presidency of Milan Piroćanac at the end of 1880.³⁷ In those days, the Radicals often promulgated their proclamations and political statements through the Young Conservative newspaper *Videlo* (The Mirror).³⁸

The beginning of 1881 was marked by the most decisive moment in the history of Serbian Radicalism. On 8 January 1881 the first issue of the official organ of the Radical Party *Samouprava* appeared, announcing the formal organization of the Radical Party.³⁹ This was the first officially organized political party in Serbia. It was followed by the formation of the Progressivist Party later that January, and the Liberal Party in October the same year.⁴⁰

The first issue of *Samouprava* presented the general proclamation of Party leadership, defining the organization's rationale, as well as its political stand. The Radical Party's political programme also appeared in this first issue of *Samouprava*, signed by thirty-eight Assemblymen, including Nikola Pašić, Aca Stanojević, Pavle Vuković, Raša Milošević, Kosta Taušanović, Dimitrije Katić, Ranko Tajsić, and Milija Milovanović,⁴¹ followed by another thirty-eight "fellow representatives in the National Assembly".⁴²

The Radical Party began a series of dynamic and flamboyant actions. Through everyday writings in political newspapers (besides *Samouprava*, the Radicals issued *Rad* and *Cosa*), they vigorously attacked the government, the Crown, and its policies. They focused primarily on practical, daily issues and political problems. The period from 1881 to 1883 was marked chiefly by this tremendously active work of the Radicals. At the same time, the movement was growing rapidly, mostly spreading among the provincial intelligentsia and peasantry.⁴³ A result of this growth was the first Congress of the Radical Party at Viline Vode near Kragujevac in the summer of 1882. With over one thousand people present, the convention elected the Party

³⁷ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, II, 155.

³⁸ "Prijateljima naroda", *Videlo* 138, 21 November 1880.

³⁹ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, II, 161; see also Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, II, 317; Živan Mitrović, *Srpske političke stranke* (Belgrade, 1939), 71; Petrovich, *History*, 410–411.

⁴⁰ Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, II, 318–320.

⁴¹ See Mitrović, *Političke stranke*, 71–75; Alex Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pasic, Yugoslavia* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 163; Petrovich, *History*, 411.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, I, 176.

leadership or rather its Main Committee as it was then named.⁴⁴ Nikola Pašić became the first President of the Radical Main Committee, and Pera Todorović was elected Vice President.⁴⁵ By 1883, the Radical movement had spread all over Serbia, becoming the most numerous political organization. The Radicals felt strong enough to assume power. If they could not use legal democratic means, they were ready to use other methods. By a machination of the Crown and the Progressivists, the Radicals were prevented from forming their cabinet, although they won a clear majority in the 1882 elections. By 1883, the conflict between the Radicals and the King became so sharp that a clash seemed unavoidable. On one side, there was a young and impatient movement, with a leadership eager to come to power and foster a series of fundamental political reforms, and on the other, there was the ruler and his supporters who wanted to preserve the status quo in which their predominance would not be jeopardized.

The revolutionary dreams of the Radicals finally came true in October 1883. After an article in *Samouprava* in which the Radicals advised the population not to surrender arms to the government,⁴⁶ although such a demand had been announced, the peasants in Eastern Serbia started an armed revolt which was soon named the Timok rebellion.⁴⁷ The rebellion was led by local Radical leaders, the most distinguished of them being Aca Stanojević, Žika Milenović, Ljuba Didić and the priest Marinko Ivković.⁴⁸ Once the army was called from the town of Paraćin, the revolt was crushed in a few days. The members of the Radical Main Committee, although not personally involved, were all taken into custody, except Nikola Pašić who managed to flee to Bulgaria.⁴⁹ The local rebellion leaders were either court-martialled and sentenced or managed to flee to Bulgaria.⁵⁰ The Radical leadership also stood trial. Three of them, Pera Todorović, Raša Milošević and Nikola Pašić, were sentenced to death, Kosta Taušanović to seven and Paja Milhailović to five years in prison, while Giga Geršić and Andra Nikolić were acquitted.

⁴⁴ Milošević, *Timočka buna*, 144-150.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ "Disarmament of the Popular Army", *Samouprava*, 30 July 1883; "How to Get Rid of Illegal Elections", *Samouprava*, 30 August 1883.

⁴⁷ For more details, see Milošević, *Timočka buna*; Dragutin Ilić, *Zaječarska buna* (Belgrade, 1909); Momčilo Veljković, *O Timočkoj buni 1883 godine* (Belgrade, 1936); Dimitrije Djordjević, "The 1883 Peasant Uprising in Serbia", *Balkan Studies* 20,2 (Thessaloniki, 1979).

⁴⁸ Ilić, *Zaječarska buna*, 48.

⁴⁹ See Milošević, *Timočka buna*, 109.

⁵⁰ Ilić, *Zaječarska buna*, 52.

The trials left the Radical movement crushed and disorganized. The King's victory was absolute.

This phase in the Radical movement's history could rightfully be named the period of militant Radicalism. Several important characteristics regarding the very nature of the movement emerged. First, the Radical movement was able to develop its political programme and organization. Secondly, it showed strength in both political attitude and manpower. Thirdly, it became aware of its strength, challenging the authority of the King and displaying an eagerness to take power and proceed with the political reforms previously announced.

The movement remained inexperienced in practical political affairs and overwhelmed by visionary ideas of a revolution. Beyond that, the Serbian Radical movement's impatience involved its members in a rebellion which had been ill-organized and doomed to failure. The power of the bureaucracy and, above all, of the King's standing army were simply too strong for a spontaneous uprising of the peasantry led by local Radical leaders.

The event revealed yet another characteristic of the movement: differences in attitude between the leadership and their followers. Although there were proposals among the Radical Main Committee to join the rebels at a clandestine meeting on the eve of their arrest,⁵¹ they all remained peacefully in Belgrade. By contrast, the local Radicals immediately took the leadership of the rebellion, confronting the existing order.

The final aspect of the Timok uprising seems to be that the rebellion did not spread throughout Serbia. It remained localized in the eastern part of the country. Even the major town in the area, Zaječar, was not caught up in the movement.⁵² This pointed to certain differences, or at least there was a certain disunity in the movement. Therefore, the period from the formation of the Radical Party in 1881 to the Timok rebellion in 1883 was a time of rapid rise of Serbian Radicalism and an even more rapid decline. Still, it served as a precious experience for the movement's future. The years that followed were marked by two parallel processes: first, by the attempts of several Radical leaders who remained in Belgrade to recuperate and reorganize the movement on the basis of legal political activity; and secondly, by the activities of the Radical emigrants in Bulgaria led by Nikola Pašić, whose actions were directed towards preparing another armed uprising in Serbia. These two tendencies represented two different faces, or more precisely, the double personality of the Radical movement. Throughout its early history Serbian Radicalism had been torn between these two, essentially opposite

⁵¹ See Milošević, *Timočka buna*, 110–111.

⁵² Ilić, *Zaječarska buna*, 67.

options: to become a legal, democratic political organization, or to accomplish political goals by means of force.

In his first manifesto after he had left Serbia, published in December 1883, Nikola Pašić openly called for an armed rebellion against the King:

Legal and constitutional means are not sufficient to curb the violence, abuse and betrayal of the King and his supporters. Laws prevail over lies, robberies and crimes only when committed by ordinary people, but when committed by those who were supposed to protect the people – in that case only weapons could help.⁵³

In a letter to Nikola Pašić sent from Belgrade in February 1884, one of the Radical leaders also emphasized the importance of an armed rebellion:

... but I know that our “struggle through parliament” has to be merely formal, or at least second in importance, our main goal has to be – the uprising.⁵⁴

The other opinion within the Radical movement during those crucial years in the wake of the Timok rebellion argued in favour of a gradual and silent recovery of the Party structure, and the movement’s concentration on political issues, avoiding sharp confrontations and attacks on the King personally. Some of the Radical leaders from Belgrade criticized their comrades in emigration for such statements. Stojan Protić wrote to Nikola Pašić:

I cannot understand that you, Aca [Stanojević] and Žika [Milenović], but you especially, can make such mistakes. Why and how come that you came out so openly against the King? I can, but only partially, explain the foolishness of your action by your desperate situation and by your psychological condition.⁵⁵

Instead of a new, forceful uprising, this Radical group suggested to Pašić the commencement of a new political newspaper intended to re-establish broken ties among the Radicals and to serve as the basis for future Radical work.⁵⁶

During 1884 these two streams confronted one another, and the conflict was particularly sharp within the leadership in Belgrade. In a letter to Nikola Pašić, one of Belgrade’s Radicals wrote:

I decided to approach our closest friends in Belgrade Djaja [Jovan], Stojan [Protić], Svetozar [Milosavljević] and others ... to decide

⁵³ Letter of Nikola Pašić, 18 December 1883, private collection.

⁵⁴ (Probably Andra Nikolić) to Nikola Pašić, Belgrade, 15 April 1884, private collection.

⁵⁵ (Probably Stojan Protić) to Nikola Pašić, Belgrade, 9 February 1884, private collection.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

once and for all: do they think that our Party could accomplish its programme under the rule of King Milan without an uprising. A lot would depend upon this. Accordingly, our future work should be organized with them or without them.⁵⁷

Finally, on 15 September 1885, Nikola Pašić called for an armed rebellion. This is what he said in his message to the Serbian nation:

Dear compatriots, the time has come to stop and to cast off the yoke of our patrons: they abolished freedom, they neglected the rights of the people, they separated Serbia from Serbdom and Slavophilism ... Stop any communication through mail, telegraph or messengers ... Form units, battalions and armies and go to Belgrade if the King is there or to Niš if that is where he is. We are about to cross the border and come to your aid ... The army should be with the people, it should not obey any command against the people, its freedom and fatherland...⁵⁸

According to Slobodan Jovanović, the highest authority on Serbian political history of the nineteenth century, the entire first period of Pašić's emigration in Bulgaria (until 1885) concentrated on preparations for an armed rebellion.⁵⁹ By the summer of 1885, Pašić managed to secure the money and arms for the uprising. According to Jovanović, this action was hampered by the Plovdiv coup in Bulgaria.⁶⁰ If Jovanović's assumption is correct, and it sounds convincing, then it would corroborate the inference that the Radical leadership in Belgrade had been divided.

By the beginning of 1886, however, the Radical movement completely abandoned its revolutionary ambitions. There were several reasons for this shift in political strategy. Firstly, on 1 January 1886, the Radical leaders, imprisoned for their alleged involvement in the Timok rebellion, had been pardoned and freed. The Serbian ruler was forced to step back largely because of his disastrous defeat in the war with Bulgaria in 1885.⁶¹ Secondly, Nikola Pašić and other Radical emigrants in Bulgaria ceased their rebellious activities. Thirdly, the movement had already been reorganized. The process of Radicals re-entering Serbian politics was underway, especially through its newly-launched newspaper *Odjek* (The Echo), which had been started in

⁵⁷ Letter to Nikola Pašić, Belgrade, 11 February 1884, private collection.

⁵⁸ Belgrade, Archives of Serbia (hereafter AS), Milutin Garašanin Fond, B6, no. 837.

⁵⁹ Slobodan Jovanović, "Pašić u emigraciji", *Srpski književni glasnik* XXI (Belgrade, 1927), 509-511.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Stojan Novaković, *Dvadeset godina ustavne borbe u Srbiji 1883-1903* (Belgrade, 1912), 202.

the fall of 1884, and by the beginning of 1885 had already 900 subscribers.⁶² Although moderate in political expressions compared to *Samouprava*, *Odjek* was instrumental in spreading Radical ideas and in legalizing the movement after the Timok rebellion.

The Radicals clearly expressed their tendency towards appeasement in two announcements to the membership published in 1886:

The attitude of our Party vis-à-vis present circumstances should not be emotional or inspired by great hopes or moral beliefs; rather it should be limited to cautious waiting and unanimous readiness for complex political work.⁶³

In another set of instructions concerning the upcoming elections in 1887, the Radical leadership advised its followers:

- to avoid everything that could give excuse or provoke severer counter-measures by the government.
- not to listen to anyone; to use decisively and collectively the voting rights; to act intelligently within legal limits.⁶⁴

The movement had obviously matured through the years of dynamic events and definitely accepted a legal path to political power as the only means of democratic struggle. From this point on, Serbian Radicalism finally became the movement of a purely democratic orientation.

* * *

The period of pragmatic Radicalism in Serbia roughly covered the years between 1886 and 1894. It was notable for the movement's definite acceptance into the existing political system, and for the actions aimed at achieving political reforms through that system. The Radicals' first success was the agreement they concluded with the Liberals in the spring of 1886.⁶⁵ This agreement was motivated by two important factors: the necessity of legalizing the Radical movement after the Timok rebellion affair and the chance of entering the government. This was possible only through an agreement with the opposition party of the Liberals.

The Radical-Liberal agreement did not signal any ideological rapprochement between the two political groups.⁶⁶ It rather was directed towards collaboration during the elections and, in case of electoral victory,

⁶² Stojan Protić, *Odlomci iz ustavne i narodne borbe* (Belgrade, 1911-12), 196.

⁶³ Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (hereafter ASANU), no. 13682.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Jovan Avakumović, "Memoirs", ASANU, no. 9287, p. 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* See also Živanović, *Politička istorija*, III, 405.

the possibility of forming a coalition government.⁶⁷ The major task of that coalition cabinet, which was actually organized on 1 June 1887, under the Presidency of the Liberal Jovan Ristić, was to foster constitutional reform. For the first time in their history, the Radicals entered the cabinet, receiving the following ministerial sectors: Sava Grujić became the Minister of the Military, Mihailo Vujić received the Ministry of Finances, Pera Velimirović became the Minister of Constructions and Svetozar Milosavljević was appointed the Minister of Education.⁶⁸ The coalition between the Liberals and the Radicals did not last long. After several months, on 19 December 1887, the Radicals formed the first purely Radical cabinet⁶⁹ under the presidency of General Sava Grujić. The conflict with the King escalated, forcing the Radical government to resign in April 1888.⁷⁰

If the failure of the Timok rebellion was the King's victory over the Radicals, than the promulgation of the new Constitution in December 1888 was the Radical victory over the ruler. Soon after this document's approval by the National Assembly, the King abdicated and left Serbia (22 February 1889). A Regency was formed in order to represent the sovereign rights of Milan's minor son Alexander.⁷¹

Although the Constitution of 1888 came as a result of the work of all three political parties, its spirit basically reflected the programme of the Radical Party. It was one the most liberal constitutions in Europe of that time, establishing the basis for full democracy and opening the door for the development of an advanced political system in Serbia. Briefly, the constitutional act of 1888 can be considered the realization of the Radical political programme.

Soon after the abdication of King Milan, the prominent Radical leader Nikola Pašić was finally pardoned and allowed to return to Serbia. He came back to his native country in 1889 and immediately took over leadership of the Radical movement.

The period from February 1889 to August 1892 was the longest period prior to 1903 in which the Radicals were in power. During those three and a half years they were able to implement and develop a political system based on the Constitution of 1888 and on intensive legislative activity. This period of Serbian history was rightfully named "the Radical regime".⁷²

⁶⁷ Liberal-Radical agreement in Avakumović, "Memoirs", 58-65.

⁶⁸ Avakumović, "Memoirs", 8.

⁶⁹ Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, III, 233-235.

⁷⁰ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, III, 240-244.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, I, 190-200.

According to the law on elections of representatives, passed in March 1890, the Radicals succeeded in introducing virtually general voting right without any census. It contained several important reforms which secured a democratic electoral procedure: it introduced the secret ballot, power during the elections was assigned to the president of the electoral committee, without any interference of State authorities, and a detailed penal code was introduced for cases of abuse during the elections.⁷³

Two other legal documents were passed during Radical rule and shed a greater understanding of the Radical interpretation of democracy. The law on ministerial responsibility dated January 1891, gave the right of questioning to both the National Assembly and to the King. The ministerial responsibility was both political and criminal.⁷⁴ The law on communes, enforced in November 1889, was designed to introduce the concept of local self-government as the most important political system in the country. The application of this system essentially meant the realization of the Radical programme.⁷⁵

Upon his return to Serbia, Nikola Pašić was elected president of the National Assembly in 1889 and promptly formed his first Radical cabinet.⁷⁶ The cabinet resigned in August 1892 and was succeeded by the Liberal government of Jovan Avakumović.⁷⁷ The Radicals were again an opposition party waiting for new elections that, so they hoped, would be their next chance. Changes in the electoral system, whereby all indebted citizens were denied voting rights, resulted in a close vote. The Liberals were able to keep their government by a tight margin.⁷⁸

Within a year, on 1 April 1893, the minor King Alexander Obrenović, while dining with members of the Regency, supported by the army and government members, proclaimed himself king and took the royal powers. The outcome of the coup d'état was the collapse of the Regency and the cabinet. The young ruler appointed Lazar Dokić, his former professor (member of the Radical Party but friendly with the Court), as President of the Government.⁷⁹ The Radicals accepted this change with vigour and acclamation. It

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁷ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, III, 253.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ See Raša Milošević, *Državni udar odozgo i Prvi april 1893; svrgnuće kraljevskog namesništva* (Belgrade, 1936).

was reported that “the Radicals accompanied the King all over Serbia cheering and calling him ‘the first Radical’ and ‘Alexander the Great’.”⁸⁰ With the exception of the Ministry of the Military, the cabinet of Lazar Dokić was purely Radical.⁸¹ Once again, the collaboration was short-lived. The Radical cabinet was forced to resign and, moreover, the Radicals and the King entered into an open confrontation. Radical public meetings were banned and the Radicals described as just “a mob gathered to disturb public peace and order.”⁸² The King’s final step was his decision to abolish the Constitution of 1888 in May 1894.⁸³ Once again, the Serbian State was pushed into a period dominated by the ruler and his camarilla. The Radical achievements in political affairs were suppressed and their collaboration with the King proved to be detrimental and misjudged. The period of pragmatic Radicalism seems to have been crucial in many ways. The Radical Party progressed in the aftermath of the Timok rebellion, passing through the painful process of political reorientation, finally succeeding in entering the government and becoming an important political factor. This period was characterized by several significant achievements of the Radical Party in the implementation of parliamentarism and modern democracy. Beginning with the Constitution of 1888, followed by a series of legal documents which had specified the principles established by the Constitution, the Radicals realized much of their political programme.⁸⁴ Finally, they collaborated with the Liberals and with the King. This meant that their partisan exclusiveness, which still existed among certain circles in the Party, had been generally eliminated. They entered the phase in which they understood and accepted the rules of the political game; they were not as innocent and clean as they had been in 1881. Instead, they became successful and powerful.

* * *

The phase of Serbian Radicalism from 1894 to 1903 was marked chiefly by peacefulness and unsuccessful attempts to return to power, becoming known as the period of overpowered Radicalism. The political work of the Radical leaders was mainly concentrated on journalistic activities. Through their leading political organ *Odjek*, the newly-started *Narod* (The People) and the literary-political magazine *Delo* (The Deed), the Radicals were able

⁸⁰ Avakumović, “Memoirs”, 12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Avakumović, “Memoirs”, no. 9287/III, 174.

⁸³ Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, II, 203–221.

⁸⁴ Milivoje Popović, *Poreklo i postanak ustava od 1888. godine* (Belgrade, 1939), 90–91.

to remain a presence in daily politics. Besides everyday issues, their attention turned to questions of European political theory. During this period, the Radicals accepted the theory of British parliamentarism, relying on the work of two of their political writers: Stojan Protić and Milovan Dj. Milovanović.⁸⁵

Once again, the major Radical objective was the demand for a *new* constitution. The government's attempts to form a constitutional committee of all three political parties definitely failed in 1896 as a result of the Radicals' vigorous opposition to collaboration with the Progressivist government of Stojan Novaković coupled with their pressure to reinforce the Constitution of 1888.⁸⁶

The summer of 1896 was marked by a massive Radical meeting held in Belgrade on 28 July. According to *Odjek*, between 35 and 40 thousand people were present.⁸⁷ Most of them were peasants who came from all over Serbia.⁸⁸ Živan Živanović, a prominent Liberal, claimed that this had been the most massive political meeting ever organized in Serbia.⁸⁹

At the end of 1896 the Radicals entered the cabinet again. After an arrangement with the King, Djordje Simić, one of the less important Radicals in the party hierarchy and a member of its least militant wing, formed a government consisting of neutrals and compromising Radicals. The Radical ministers were Mihailo Vujić, Pera Velimirović, Andra Nikolić and Milovan Milovanović.⁹⁰ Behind this group stood Nikola Pašić as a "secret advisor of the government".⁹¹ As a part of the deal with the King, the Radicals agreed to postpone constitutional reform for one whole year. Radical pragmatism became more than obvious. Intent to remain in power, they temporarily betrayed their most important political objective and principle: the demand for the reinstatement of the 1888 Constitution. This cabinet was forced to resign in the fall of 1897, largely because ex-King Milan Obrenović returned to Serbia. The next years marked the time of the personal regime of King Alexander supported and advised by his father Milan. The government was headed by Milan's intimate old friend Vladan Djordjević. Despite all their previous attempts to collaborate with the Crown, the Radicals were again out of power, and more importantly, out of the political mainstream.

⁸⁵ Slobodan Jovanović, *Moji savremenici* (Windsor, Canada, 1953), 128.

⁸⁶ See Novaković, *Ustavna borba*.

⁸⁷ *Odjek*, 30 July 1896.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Živanović, *Politička istorija*, III, 309-310.

⁹⁰ Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, III, 148-151.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

The majority of the laws passed under Radical rule were changed or suppressed.

The final attack on the Radical Party came in 1899. An abortive attempt on the ex-King Milan's life made by a youngster from Bosnia was used by the government as a pretext to arrest the Party's most outspoken leaders, accusing them of inspiring and organizing the attempted assassination. The Radicals imprisoned were Nikola Pašić, Kosta Taušnović, Stojan Protić, Ljuba Živković and the priest Milan Djurić.⁹² The prosecution papers stated that during the meeting of the Radical Main Committee Nikola Pašić openly threatened ex-King Milan; that Ljuba Živković was the author of "The Demon of Serbia", which alluded to ex-Milan, and praised Karadjordje, the leader of the First Serbian Insurrection; and that the entire public life of Stojan Protić was the life of a revolutionary.⁹³ The ex-King Milan took the advantage of the event to destroy the leadership of the Radical movement.⁹⁴ At first, he insisted on the death penalty for Pašić and Taušanović in retaliation for all past and present conflicts and clashes. But, when the Serbian and European, especially Russian public as well as governments reacted against the government accusations, finding that the arrested Radicals were innocent, the ex-King decided to make a bargain with Pašić. Pašić agreed to accuse some of his Party comrades (Protić and Živković) of anti-dynastic attitudes and possible inspiration for the attempted assassination and, in return, his and Taušanović's lives were spared. In the end, the accused Radicals were sentenced to twenty years of hard labour, Taušanović to 10 years and Pašić to only five years in prison.⁹⁵ These measures were accompanied by organized attacks on the Radicals. They were being fired, persecuted, and purged throughout Serbia.

In 1901, the Radical movement re-emerged in Serbian politics with the death of their arch-enemy, ex-King Milan Obrenović. And once again, as many times before, the Radicals insisted on constitutional reform.

Since 1894 the country had been virtually without a constitution. The document of 1888 had been voided in favour of the old Constitution of 1869 without an official proclamation. In February 1901, the Radical leaders Mihailo Vujić and Milovan Milovanović entered the government. At the end of March, Vujić formed a coalition cabinet with the Progressivists and immediately addressed the constitutional question. The king overthrew the new Constitution in April 1901. This event was preceded by a Radical-Progressivist agreement, known as the Fusion, which came as a

⁹² AS, Vladan Djordjević Fond, B9, no. 27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* See also Kosta Jezdić, *Ivandanski atentat i Nikola Pašić* (Belgrade, 1926).

⁹⁵ Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, III, 352–355.

result of King Alexander's demand.⁹⁶ The Constitution was a compromise solution between the two previous Serbian highest charters, of 1869 and 1888. The Constitution of 1901 established a bicameral Parliament with a Senate and National Assembly. The Senate as the Upper House was only partially elective – most of its members (30) were appointed by the King, whereas only 18 were chosen by the voters.⁹⁷ The legislative initiative was divided between the King and the Parliament. The Constitution enlarged the prerogatives of the State Council as the supreme administrative-judicial body. Election by secret ballot was re-established, while the Constitution guaranteed only limited civil liberties.⁹⁸

The Fusion with the Progressivists, a compromise on the constitutional question, became the major cause for the split in the Radical movement. A group of younger Radical intellectuals left the bulk of the Party and started the Independent Radical Party in 1901.⁹⁹ This was the rupture between the older generation and the younger members of the Radical movement rather than an ideological division between the two groups. The Independent Radicals insisted on returning to the original political programme of 1881 and on the restoration of the 1888 Constitution. From this point on, the Independent Radical Party played an outstandingly important role in Serbian politics. After 1903, the Old Radicals and the Independent Radicals became two leading political camps in Serbia. The old political groups, Progressivists and Liberals, gradually disappeared from the political scene. The Independent Radicals were led by three Ljubomirs: Ljubomir Živković, Ljubomir Stojanović and Ljubomir Davidović.¹⁰⁰

* * *

The turning point in modern Serbian history came in 1903. That year was marked by the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga by a group of young Serbian officers.¹⁰¹ This event marked the end of the Obrenović dynasty which had ruled Serbia with interruptions for more than seventy years (1815–42 and 1858–1903), but more importantly, it opened the door for a constitutional parliamentary democracy. In June 1903, only a month after the King's death, a new constitution, with essentially the same text as that of 1888, was passed by the Grand National Assembly. The Karadjordjević

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 381–385.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 391–394.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ For more details, see Vasić, 1903.

dynasty replaced the Obrenovići – Peter Karadjordjević, the grandson of Karadjordje, became King of Serbia. The Radical Party entered its Golden Age. After over twenty years of struggle, rebellion, crisis, compromise and success, it became powerful and mature enough to dominate Serbian politics and decisively contribute to Serbia's emergence as a democratic European state.

*Institute for Balkan Studies
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art
Belgrade*

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