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DUŠAN BERIĆ, *HRVATSKO PRAVAŠTVO I SRBI* [THE CROATIAN RIGHTIST MOVEMENT AND THE SERBS], I-II. NOVI SAD: ORPHEUS, 2005, 720 + 698 p.

Reviewed by Dušan Fundić*

Dušan Berić, Professor of Modern European History at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština (temporarily seated in Kosovska Mitrovica), offers an extensive research into a Croatian movement of extreme right from its establishment as a political party (1861) under the name *Stranka prava*, or “Party of Rights” – hence its followers were known as *pravaši*, Rightists, from *pravo* meaning a “right” – led by Ante Starčević to some aspects of contemporary Croatian history in which the author detects the continuity of their politics. Berić’s bibliography includes: *Slavonska vojna granica u revoluciji 1848–1849* (Zagreb: Prosvjeta & Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 1984); *Ustanak u Hercegovini 1852–1862* (Belgrade: SANU, 1994; 2nd ed. 2007); *Srpsko pitanje i politika Austrougarske i Rusije 1848–1878* (Belgrade: Gutenbergova galaksija, 2000).

According to the author himself, his motive for writing this book has been his view that the question of the Rightist policy towards the Serbs has been central to Serbian-Croatian relations. The book is based on various published documentary sources, the contemporary press and the available literature. The main body of text is interspersed with frequent and extensive quotations from various sources and literature that Berić uses to illuminate all major topics, especially the ideology of the movement’s founding fathers. In this way, Berić seeks to clarify the essence of the right-wing party which generated the most aggressive form of Croatian nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Its origins lie in the historical context of the Dual Monarchy and the nationalist rivalries of its different communities.

The book is divided into four parts devoted to particular aspects which Berić considers key to understanding the phenomenon under study. The first part explores the history and social situation of the historic regions of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria and the Dubrovnik area which were the focus of the Rightist politics and ambitions. Berić explains their status and various local and regional identities that flourished there around the middle of the nineteenth century.

Berić describes the basis of the constitutional position of these areas in the Habsburg Monarchy, which largely shaped Rightist ideologies, arguing that a “feudal view of the world prevailed over a democratic and civic one” there. The first part of his study ends with a portrait of the founder of the movement, Ante Starčević, who is often described as “the father of Croatian nationalism”. The programme of the Party of Rights was shaped during the constitutional debate in 1860 and 1861. The appearance of Ante Starčević on the Croatian political scene also introduced racism into public discourse. As a part of his political programme, Starčević invented the term “Slavoserb” which he eventually used to emphasise the alleged non-existence of any other South Slav identities in South-Eastern Europe except Croatian and Bulgarian. In Starčević’s interpretation, for example, the Serbs of Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina had no separate identity. As can be seen from his writings, the same went for Bosnian Muslims and all other cultural and ethnic minorities in the imagined Croatian state. Berić concludes

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that Starčević drew inspiration from the Hungarian politician József Eötvös's concept of a "political nation".

The second part of the book is concerned with three major ideas of the Rightist movement. The idea of a "Greater Croatia", the appearance and elaboration of the ideology of "Croatian state and historical rights", and the theory of "Croatian political nation" are all analysed and their ideological content studied in the context of the Rightist attitude and policies towards the Serbs. They all, each in its own way, led to the radicalisation of the Rightist policy towards the Serbs, with the conclusion that the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878) led to the further radicalisation of the Croatian extreme national ideology. The idea of "historical and state rights", according to Berić, had its roots in some elements of feudal estate autonomy and eventually led to the denial of "natural nationality rights". The "political nation" thesis was mostly based on pseudo-scientific theories postulating that in Croatia actually lived only Orthodox Vlachs who subsequently assimilated into Serbs. To illustrate this point, Berić offers numerous quotations from the contemporary Rightist press.

The third and fourth parts of the book, devoted to the continuation of Rightist politics, are chronologically divided by the period of the First World War. The third part describes the further extremisation of the Party of Rights, notably under the leadership of Josip Frank in the newly-created atmosphere of Roman Catholic clericalism and German "Drang nach Osten", especially after 1878. Describing the period between 1918 and the disintegration of the Second Yugoslavia in the 1990s the author underlines the aspects of the Party of Rights' ideology and ideas of Ante Starčević and Josip Frank in various Croatian movements with its most

radical culmination in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH, 1941–1945) whose leader Ante Pavelić, a former Rightist and leader of the fascist Ustaša movement, considered himself as someone who was putting their ideas into practice. The last hundred pages are devoted to contemporary proponents of Rightist ideas in Croatian political life, which Berić finds to be less flammable than before but still present.

The most visible flaw of the book is the lack of a list of the sources and literature used, which is necessary for a work as extensive as this one. It would have helped the reader to follow the text and find out what research material the author used for writing his study. A book which spans a period of a century and a half would much gain in quality with such a list.

What the book also lacks is a more theoretically founded approach to the nature and ideology of nationalism which would put the Rightist movement in a wider European context, thereby making it easier to understand how far to the right were the ideas for which Starčević and Kvaternik had paved the way. The author insists on the dependence of the Rightist movement on the Vatican's foreign policy and Germany's "Drang nach Osten" without any archival research in Austria, Germany and the Vatican. In this way, this remains a hypothesis that is yet to be tested.

On the other hand, Berić's book is the first in Serbian historiography that provides a complete chronological overview of the ideology of the Party of Rights and its evolution throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and offers an insight into the ideological and political history of Croatian extreme nationalism.