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**Serbian Radicalism 1881–1903  
Political Thought and Practice**

Two major aspects of Serbian Radicalism were its political thought and its practice. Major tenets of Radical ideology were constitutional reform, introduction of parliamentarianism, state organization according to the principle of self-government, establishment of democracy (including the freedom of the press, association and public assembly), and a national programme. Major features of Serbian Radicalism as a movement could be summed up as follows: flexibility, pragmatism, cohesion, and the use of demagoguery and simplification. Ideological tenets are inferable from their political programmes, constitutional proposals, and numerous writings and articles. The features of the movement were shaped by the political reality in which it functioned and struggled to survive. One aspect, ideological, provided firmness, consistency and rationale; the other, practical, ensured popularity, success and power. Taken together, they formed the essence of Serbian Radicalism.<sup>1</sup>

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Although every political ideology is subject to transformation and change, it is possible to look for some more or less permanent ideas or concepts describable as fundamental objectives of a given movement. Following this line of thinking, and having in mind the historical development of the Radical Party's programmes and ideas, four basic elements of the Radical notion of the political system may be highlighted: constitutionalism as the supreme

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Radenić, *Radikalna stranka i Timočka buna. Istorija radikalne stranke. Doba narodnjaštva* (Zaječar 1988); cf. also M. St. Protić, *Radikali u Srbiji: Ideje i pokret 1881–1903* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1990); G. Stokes, *Politics as Development. The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Durham–London: Duke University Press, 1990); D. Janković, *Radjanje parlamentarne demokratije. Političke stranke u Srbiji XIX veka* (Belgrade: Law School, 1997).

principle of state organization, parliamentary democracy as its method, civil liberties as its safeguard, and local self-government as its expression. Each of these elements of their political programme took shape gradually over a period of ideological fermentation. Once they became fully clarified and accepted, the Radical movement had its firm theoretical ground. At this point, it can be classified as a movement of radical-democratic orientation. The national programme, another basic aspect of their political ideology, belongs to its external ingredients. Namely, the Radicals viewed the national emancipation, liberation and unification of the Serbs as originating from internal freedom. In other words, the national programme was the result of democratic changes, and not the reverse.

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A liberal constitution had been the Radicals' major objective from their earliest years.<sup>2</sup> Svetozar Marković had sharply criticized the Constitution of 1869 and raised the question of constitutional reform.<sup>3</sup> In the first written programme of a Radical group (1871), constitutional change is at the top of the agenda.<sup>4</sup> In a number of statements, the group of Adam Bogosavljević insisted on a constitutional reform "according to the principles of modern democracy".<sup>5</sup> A good part of the Radical Party's first programme (1881) was devoted to the prospects of a new constitution and its substance.<sup>6</sup> In 1883, the Radicals made their own constitutional proposal.<sup>7</sup> The Constitution of 1888 was largely an expression of their constitutional ideas.<sup>8</sup> They also contributed to the work on the 1901 Constitution, but the spirit of this document did not fully conform to their notion of constitutionalism. Rather, it resulted from a compromise between the Radicals and the king and reflected the struggle between the Radical and Progressivist parties.<sup>9</sup> The Radicals played an instrumental role in reinstating the Constitution of

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<sup>2</sup> The Radicals worked towards a constitutional reform from 1871.

<sup>3</sup> See S. Marković, "Srpske obmane", *Zastava*, Novi Sad, 1869.

<sup>4</sup> Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade (hereafter ASANU), no. 9783/44.

<sup>5</sup> R. Petrović, *Adam Bogosavljević* (Belgrade 1972), 77.

<sup>6</sup> ASANU, no. 10634; see also "Naš program" [Our Programme], *Samouprava* 1, 8 January 1881.

<sup>7</sup> ASANU, no. 9729.

<sup>8</sup> ASANU, no. 10593.

<sup>9</sup> See S. Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, 3 vols. (Belgrade 1934-35), vol. III, 112-114.

1888 in June 1903.<sup>10</sup> Briefly, the principle of constitutionalism was the focal point of Radical political ideology.

Radical understanding of the constitutional question can best be grasped from two documents: the constitutional proposal of 1883, and the Constitution of 1888. The guiding principle of the proposal drawn up in July 1883 was the sovereignty of the people.<sup>11</sup> The people should be the sole source of power, expressing their sovereign will through a national representative body – the National Assembly.<sup>12</sup> The Assembly should be elective, and by direct and secret ballot. Universal male suffrage is required. The National Assembly as the supreme legislative authority is at the top of the state pyramid. According to the proposal, the Assembly could be bipartite: Regular and Grand. The jurisdiction of the Grand National Assembly is defined by the Constitution itself, making a constitutional change its primary responsibility. All legislative prerogatives are assigned to the Assembly. The ruler is entitled to approve a proposed law, but the Assembly has the capacity to pass the law in its next session even in case of his disapproval. The proposal favoured a council of ministers at the top of administration, assigning to the cabinet the role of a mere instrument of the Assembly. In that way, the Radical project envisaged a system that strictly subordinated the executive branch to the legislature. The territory of the state was to be divided into districts and municipalities, and all subdivisions were to be organized on the principle of local self-government.<sup>13</sup> The proposal envisaged the so-called Convent system, an almighty National Assembly.<sup>14</sup> The role of the ruler was largely neglected. Basically, the project inaugurated a republic with the monarch at its head.

In light of their ideological evolution, this Radical proposal was half-way between their socialist past and their parliamentary future. On the one hand, it was expressive of their covert republicanism, a concept derived from the teaching of Svetozar Marković. On the other, it insisted on all elements of a democratic system, which included civil liberties, ministerial responsibility, direct and secret elections, universal male suffrage and judicial au-

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<sup>10</sup> J. Prodanović, *Ustavni razvitak i ustavne borbe u Srbiji* (Belgrade 1938), 203–205; see also K. St. Pavlowitch, “The Constitutional Development of Serbia in the 19th Century”, *East European Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 4, 456–467.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Djordjević, ed., *Ustavni razvitak*; see also R. Milošević, *Timočka buna 1883. godine* (Belgrade 1923), 108–128; M. Popović, *Borbe za parlamentarni režim u Srbiji* (Belgrade 1939), 54.

<sup>12</sup> Djordjević, *Ustavni razvitak*, 84.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 83–90.

<sup>14</sup> S. Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave*, 2. vols. (Belgrade 1939), vol. I, 43.

tonomy.<sup>15</sup> This was a sign of their getting closer to the ideology of radical democracy. At that point, the process of their political maturation was still underway, and yet they were able to come up with a complete constitutional proposal after only three years of organized political activity.

The proposal was the result of the work of the entire Radical membership. The text was read, analyzed and commented upon by all party committees and the final version was adopted by common consent.<sup>16</sup> Illustrative of the multiple sources of Serbian Radicalism, it came as a result of their socialist origins and European democratic influences and, at the same time, of their opposition to the uncontrolled authority of the king. The Radical ideas were imported from Europe, but they were used to accomplish an internal goal.

The Constitution of 1888, a cornerstone of Serbian democracy, was a great triumph of the Radical Party.<sup>17</sup> Legal work on the Constitution had largely been done by Radical intellectuals, and therefore it expressed Radical ideas,<sup>18</sup> but formally it was agreed upon by all three political parties.<sup>19</sup> Its most significant feature was that it established a system of parliamentary democracy.<sup>20</sup> Its major characteristics may be summed up as follows:

1. Guarantee of political and civil rights expressed through a multi-party system.
2. Free elections of all representatives (universal male suffrage) and the unicameral Parliament (National Assembly).
3. Dual right of legislative initiative shared between the Assembly and the king.
4. Power of the National Assembly to control the government (interpellations, interrogations, hearings).
5. Ministerial responsibility, both political and criminal.
6. Right of the National Assembly to pass the budget.
7. Administrative organization of the country according to the principle of local self-government.

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<sup>15</sup> Djordjević, ed., *Ustavni razvitak*, 91.

<sup>16</sup> ASANU, no. 9783/1-22.

<sup>17</sup> D. Janković, *Političke stranke u Srbiji XIX veka* (Belgrade 1951), 257; M. Popović, *Poreklo i postanak ustava od 1888* (Belgrade 1939), 165.

<sup>18</sup> *Zaključci i rezolucija radikalnih zemaljskih konferencija u 1920 i 1921* (Belgrade 1923), 2-4.

<sup>19</sup> ASANU, no. 10593.

<sup>20</sup> Popović, *Poreklo i postanak*, 170.

The Charter also guaranteed the freedom of the press, association and public assembly,<sup>21</sup> introduced compulsory primary education,<sup>22</sup> and abolished capital punishment for political crimes.<sup>23</sup> The Constitution of 1888 showed that the Radical concept had fully matured; the Radicals were capable of defining their ideas, finally accepting the principle of division of power expressed through parliamentary democracy. Thereafter, rather than developing their constitutional ideas further, they insisted upon full implementation of the 1888 Constitution, which became not only the expression of their understanding of the political system but their ultimate constitutional objective.

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The other three elements of the Radical ideology derived from the first. Parliamentarianism, self-government and civil liberties were in fact specific points of the Radical understanding of constitutionalism. The idea of parliamentary democracy found its way into the ideology of Serbian Radicalism only gradually, and for two main reasons: first, the concept of multipartyism required a well-developed political environment supported by an organized general public; this had not occurred in Serbia until the 1880s; second, the concept of parliamentarianism originated from western-European, more precisely British, political practice. Radical thought had to evolve through several phases before accepting this particular concept. Here is what Andra Nikolić wrote about parliamentarianism in the 1880s:

Parties and politics—it is a reality, a necessity . . . because not all people think the same, and people want freedom . . . hence different opinions on the public scene.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Radicals, who followed the British example, a party system was simply the organized way of expressing multiple interests of the people. They argued for a system where the party that wins the majority in the Parliament forms the government: “A government is born, lives and dies with the Assembly majority.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the “essence of parliamen-

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<sup>21</sup> *Ustav Kraljevine Srbije* [The Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia] (Belgrade 1888).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 125–132.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Archives of Serbia (hereafter AS), Belgrade, Andra Nikolić Fund, no. 10.

<sup>25</sup> M. Dj. Milovanović, “O parlamentarnoj vladi”, *Otadžbina* XIX (May–June 1888), 166.

tarianism resides in the cabinet's dependence upon and responsibility to the Assembly."<sup>26</sup>

The principle of local self-government was the earliest element of the Radical ideology. It drew its origin from the teaching of Svetozar Marković, and was insisted upon by the group of Adam Bogosavljević in particular. Unavoidable in all Radical programmes, it was the most permanent element of their political theory and, as such, requires to be looked at in more detail. As an alternative to the centralized system of government, the Radicals proposed direct elections of local officials by local populations. In that way, they believed, the principle of popular sovereignty would be fulfilled and the paternalistic pressure of central authority relieved. The Radicals did not restrict this principle to the sphere of administration, but argued that the physician, the teacher, the priest, even the local military commander, should be elected by the people.<sup>27</sup>

The system of local self-government as conceived by the Radicals was based on the division of the country into municipalities and districts,<sup>28</sup> and the municipality was seen as the basic political and economic unit.<sup>29</sup> Each municipality had the right to have two elected representatives in the District Assembly.<sup>30</sup> The envisaged districts were quite large, with about 10,000 taxpayers each, and governed by three bodies: the District Assembly (the fully elective supreme decision-making body in a district), the District Control Committee (the executive organ of the Assembly), and the District Administrative Organ (with administrative and judicial responsibilities).<sup>31</sup> All executive and administration offices were elective and their holders responsible to the District Assembly. The activity of the District Assembly included all educational, judicial, administrative, financial, statistical, technical, economic, and religious matters in the district.<sup>32</sup> In 1883, Raša Milošević, a distinguished leader of the Radical Party and member of its Main Committee, wrote a booklet – *District Organization according to the Principle of Self-Government and Election Right* – thoroughly explaining

<sup>26</sup> St. Protić, "Ustavna vlade i njena odgovornost", *Samouprava*, January 1882.

<sup>27</sup> R. Milošević, *Organizacija sreza na načelu samouprave i izbornog prava* (Belgrade 1883), 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; see also Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka*, 472.

<sup>29</sup> Milošević, *Organizacija sreza*, 22–24; cf. note 27 above.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 26; see also F. Nikić, *Lokalna uprava Srbije u XIX i XX veku* (Belgrade 1927), 242.

<sup>32</sup> Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, vol. I, 26–27; see also Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka*, 473.

the concept and system of local autonomy. This text was also published in *Samouprava* and distributed to all local party committees.<sup>33</sup>

The demand for civil rights and liberties was among those upon which the Radicals insisted from the very beginning of the movement. As early as 1875, Adam Bogosavljević stressed the importance of the freedom of the press and public speech:

Tell a simple peasant he is forbidden to write and speak the only way he knows, and he would not believe a thing like that possible... I think today Serbia needs the freedom of expression more than ever...<sup>34</sup>

And again there were two aspects to a tenet of the Radical political programme: theoretical and practical. Civil rights and liberties were inherent in their concept of democracy, although they were used also as an instrument of their demagoguery appealing to a vast portion of the population. The 1888 Constitution marked a turning point in this respect too. By abolishing censorship, it enabled a proliferation of the political press.<sup>35</sup>

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The Radical Party's national programme was an external element of its ideology. In the formative period of the movement, major national issues and foreign policy played a secondary role: domestic issues prevailed over the question of Serbia's international position. It was only after the Radicals entered the cabinet (1887) and king Milan abdicated (1889) that they began to be more concerned about foreign policy, fully developing a national programme during the 1890s.<sup>36</sup> This aspect of the Radical political ideology revolved around four main points: the national idea; the tsarist Russia as the main ally among great powers; work towards a Balkan alliance; and South-Slavic union. The Radical Party thought of itself as being a nationalist movement from the outset.<sup>37</sup> The first party programme (1881) defined "an independent state and the liberation and unification of all parts of Serbdom" as its foremost goal.<sup>38</sup> In a proclamation to the Radical member-

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<sup>33</sup> Milošević, *Organizacija sreza*.

<sup>34</sup> ASANU, no. 10438/22.

<sup>35</sup> Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (AMAE), Paris, Correspondance politique (CP), Serbie, 1889, 7 January 1889.

<sup>36</sup> *Zaključci i rezolucija*, 1; AMAE, CP, Serbie, 1887–88, 6 January 1888.

<sup>37</sup> ASANU, no. 13681/1.

<sup>38</sup> *Zaključci i rezolucija*, 1.



ship dated 1886, the leadership reaffirmed its view of Serbia as the “Serbian Piedmont”.<sup>39</sup>

In 1894, the national programme was clearly articulated:

Serbia simply cannot abandon the interests of Serbdom. From the Serbian standpoint, there is no difference between the interests of the Serbian state and the interests of other Serbs. The question of Serbdom is the “to-be-or-not-to-be” question of the Serbian state... Cut off from other Serbian lands, Serbia alone is nothing and has no *raison d'être*.<sup>40</sup>

This statement reflects clearly the nationalist orientation of the Radical movement following in the footsteps of earlier Serbian national programmes. There is a striking similarity between the Serbian national programme of 1844 or the so-called *Načertanije* (Draft) and the Radical concept of 1894.

The national policy of the Radical movement stemmed to a large extent from its views on domestic policy. The Radicals espoused the concept of modern democracy and, consequently, the principle of popular sovereignty, which in turn required an independent state and a high level of national consciousness. It was at an early point in their evolution that they abandoned the concept of a social revolution leading to national emancipation,<sup>41</sup> but they retained something of their socialist past nevertheless: the precedence of internal reforms over foreign policy.

The Radical movement followed the tide of history carrying Serbia towards the nineteenth-century European ideal: one nation, one state. In the Serbian case, this ideal meant to strive for liberation and unification of the Serbs living in the neighbouring multinational empires, the Habsburg and the Ottoman. Internationalists in the early days of enthusiasm about socialist ideas, the Radicals soon turned nationalists and that aspect became *conditio sine qua non* of their ideology.

Historians who have dealt with nineteenth-century Serbia as a rule claim that Russophilia was the major feature of the Radical national programme. Yet, Russophilia is a complex notion, and therefore this claim requires some clarifications. The question may be posed: What reasons motivated the Radicals to establish close relations with Russia? or vice versa: What reasons did Russia have to support the Radicals? Tsarist Russia was a conservative, autocratic and unconstitutional state. The Radical movement, on the other hand, championed constitutionalism and democracy. Part of the answer may be that almost all Radical leaders were influenced by Russian populism and anarchism, and felt close to the Russian liberal intel-

<sup>39</sup> ASANU, no. 13681/1.

<sup>40</sup> M. Dj. Milovanović, “Naša spoljna politika”, *Delo* IV (1894), 246.

<sup>41</sup> V. Čubrilović, *Istorija političke misli u Srbiji XIX veka* (Belgrade 1958), 368.



ligentsia.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, and more importantly, imperial Russia was viewed as the leader of the Orthodox and Slavic world. In her turn, Russia supported all national movements in the Balkans, her fundamental interest being to gain access to the Mediterranean (the Straits).<sup>43</sup> Thus national interests of the Balkan peoples coincided with Russian interests. For that reason the Radicals believed that of all great powers Russia could be Serbia's best ally and the best supporter of her national policy:

As for our attitude towards Russia, I think that we should really incline towards her, but, personally, I would prefer to see Russian influence on our affairs only to the extent needed to act as a counterweight to Austria-Hungary.<sup>44</sup>

Nikola Pašić himself supposedly said: "It is difficult with Russia, but it is even more difficult without her."<sup>45</sup> And a Radical leader wrote to Pašić in 1884: "I think that so far our attitude towards Russia has been good. But, maybe we should come out as Russia's open exponents."<sup>46</sup>

From 1881, the Radical leadership established a close relationship with Russian representatives in Belgrade.<sup>47</sup> Lamansky and especially Persiani were seen as their "intimate friends".<sup>48</sup> Archival sources suggest that the two extended more than just moral support; Russian financial support was substantial, but highly secretive.<sup>49</sup> A number of documents indicate that Russia was the major financial supporter of the Radical emigrants' activities in Bulgaria. In a series of reports, the Serbian representative in Sofia accused Pašić and other Radicals of having contacts with and taking money from Russian emissaries.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, both were opposed to king Milan: Russia because of his Austrophile foreign policy and the Radicals because of both his foreign and domestic policies.

But relations between the Radicals and Russia were not always cordial. The Radicals looked with caution at Russia's policy in Serbia and her involvement in Balkan affairs. In Serbia, Russia strongly supported the Liberal Party rather than the Radicals. Due to their pan-Slavism and strong influence on the Orthodox clergy, the Liberals were warmly received in St.

<sup>42</sup> AMAE, CP, Serbie, 1885, 10 July 1885.

<sup>43</sup> For more, see Ch. Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism* (Berkeley 1958).

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Nikola Pašić, Belgrade, 1884, private collection.

<sup>45</sup> M. Gavrilović, *Nikola P. Pašić* (Windsor, Canada 1963), 8.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Nikola Pašić, Belgrade, 1884, private collection.

<sup>47</sup> J. Avakumović, "Memoirs", ASANU, no. 9287/III, 131–132.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>50</sup> AS, Dobra Ružić Fund, PO-27/183, 19 September 1883; ASANU, no. 11548.

Petersburg. What the Radicals thought on the subject may be seen from a letter dated 1884:

Giga [Geršić] talked to Lamansky. He complained about [Russian] neglect and the insult inflicted upon our party fellows. Lamansky told him he had come to see all faults of the Liberal government and would now give it more attention. But, he also said that we had to keep collaborating with Ristić.<sup>51</sup>

Even more cautious was the suggestion that the Belgrade Radicals gave to their party fellows exiled in Bulgaria concerning their relations with Russia:

Be careful not to become a mere tool of others who will abandon you as soon as your role as a tool has been fulfilled.<sup>52</sup>

Roughly speaking, Russia's Balkan policy followed two different courses: pro-Serbian and pro-Bulgarian. The Radicals saw the pro-Bulgarian Russia as a serious threat in case of a Serbo-Bulgarian conflict, but believed that Serbia, in the absence of a better ally, had to accept Russia as "the foremost defender of Serbian national interests".<sup>53</sup>

Therefore the claim that the Radical movement was essentially Rusophile seems to be accurate, but not entirely precise. Namely, this pro-Russian attitude passed through several phases. In the early years of the Radical movement, it stemmed from the influence of Russian socialist thinkers and an idealistic sense of being bonded with the great Slavic state. With time, this idealistic view gave way to a rational justification. Russia came to be viewed as the best possible support for the Serbian national cause, galvanized by the feeling of common ethnic and religious origins. This orientation toward the East was confirmed by Nikola Pašić himself on his visit to St. Petersburg, sometime in the 1890s: "Serbia will always and in all circumstances be on the side of Russia."<sup>54</sup>

The idea of a Balkan alliance was among the earliest ideas in Radical political ideology. It originated in the teaching of Svetozar Marković advocating social revolution leading to a Balkan federation of freely associated nations. The Radicals modified the original doctrine into the concept of a Balkan alliance of sovereign states, having in mind primarily Bulgaria.<sup>55</sup> They considered the Serbs and the Bulgarians as being two different peoples with their own separate states and histories, but with similar ethnic and

<sup>51</sup> Stojan Protić to Nikola Pašić, 31 August 1884, private collection.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> M. Dj. Milovanović, "Srbi i Bugari", *Delo* XVII (1898), 291.

<sup>54</sup> AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 1904.

<sup>55</sup> D. Ilić, *Zaječarska buna*, 122.

historical backgrounds and languages.<sup>56</sup> As two “brotherly” peoples having a common interest to oppose the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia, Serbs and Bulgarians would be much stronger if united.<sup>57</sup> The Radicals’ position towards Macedonia was less national romantic than those of the other political parties in Serbia. The Radicals saw Macedonia as neither Serbian nor Bulgarian, but rather as a combination of both. In order to resolve the problem of conflicting claims, they proposed an agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria, and in 1897 their efforts materialized: the agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria was the result of their compromise policy, a concept they persistently advocated.<sup>58</sup>

Besides this official aspect of their policy towards Bulgaria, there was a much more personal one. Firstly, the Radical movement was particularly popular in eastern Serbia, a region bordering Bulgaria, with the population on both sides of the border ethnically and culturally quite similar. Secondly, some of the most prominent Radical leaders, such as Adam Bogosavljević, Nikola Pašić and Aca Stanojević, came from eastern Serbia. Thirdly, the Radical leadership maintained close contacts with the leaders of the Liberal Party in Bulgaria, and the two movements displayed significant ideological similarities. Exiled after the Timok Rebellion, the Radicals were welcomed and financially supported by the Bulgarian Liberals.<sup>59</sup> The Radical leaders’ relationship with Suknarov, Slaveykov and Karavelov was deeper than just political collaboration; they shared a sense of ideological and national closeness.<sup>60</sup>

If the Balkan alliance project reflected Radical national policy towards the Ottoman Empire, the South-Slavic union project elaborated their policy towards the Habsburg Monarchy. National romanticism of the nineteenth century gave rise to the idea of South-Slavic unification, a concept coming from different parts of the Balkans, from different peoples with different visions of the problem. Disappointed with the dualist conception of Austria-Hungary, the Croatian nationalists looked for a way out in South-Slavic or Yugoslav unification.<sup>61</sup> Similar projects came into being among the Serbs in Vojvodina, and only later among the Serbs in Serbia proper.<sup>62</sup> A common ethnic background and the same language offered the

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<sup>56</sup> Milovanović, “Srbi i Bugari”, 290.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>58</sup> See Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, vol. II, 381–398.

<sup>59</sup> ASANU, nos. 11548 and 11551; AMAE, CP, Serbia, 1884, 11 July 1884.

<sup>60</sup> AMAE, CP, Serbia, 1889, 20 October 1889.

<sup>61</sup> M. Dj. Milovanović, *Srbi i Hrvati* (offprint from *Delo*, Belgrade 1895), 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

basis for Yugoslavism. Two largest South-Slavic peoples, Serbs and Croats, were most concerned with the possibility of unification. Therefore, the Yugoslav idea was essentially a matter of Serbo-Croatian relations.

The Radical approach to the Yugoslav question was pragmatic. The Radicals were well aware of the differences between the two nations: different confessions (Croats being Roman Catholic and Serbs Orthodox), different historical experiences, and the fact that the Croats lived under the Habsburgs, and the Serbs under the Ottomans:

The gap that exists today between Serbs and Croats is much deeper than we tend to think. The questions of religion, history and politics are so intermingled that one can rightfully ask whether we are one people or not...<sup>63</sup>

The Radicals reflected on the possible development of the South-Slavic nations in the future and the prospects for their unification, and saw two possibilities:

To become members of the same state, to further language kinship and to pursue the same goal. In that case, we shall be separated only by religion. On the other hand, a completely different thing might happen. Our hostile divisions might stay. The language might take divergent paths, and then Serbs and Croats will be left with nothing in common.<sup>64</sup>

What the Radicals saw as the major obstacle lying between Serbs and Croats was that the latter tended to envisage their union within the Habsburg Monarchy. The Serbs, on the other hand, envisaged an independent common state. This is what the Radicals wrote on the subject in 1882:

We seek happiness for our people outside Turkey but, by God, outside Austria-Hungary as well. This "outside Austria-Hungary" leads to a conflict with our Croatian brothers.<sup>65</sup>

The Radical idea of Yugoslav unification was a natural continuation of their idea of Serbian unification. Serbian unity was the basis. The Yugoslav solution was simply a broader framework for pursuing that idea. The Radical Party was a national movement expressing and defending Serbian national interests. The Yugoslav alternative could only be the next stage of the Serbian national idea, by no means its substitute.

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<sup>63</sup> St. Protić, "Srpsko-hrvatsko pitanje", *Samouprava*, 2 December 1882.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 December 1882.

If the bases of Radical ideology belonged to the ideal world of theory, the characteristics of the movement belonged to the imperfect world of reality. These characteristics in fact defined the movement's existence in its historical context. The adaptability of the Radical Party, that is its ability to respond to the existing situation and to change with the changing political realities, was significant. On the other hand, it was its adaptable nature that made it possible for the movement to impact upon the political reality. This flexibility of the Radical movement had two major aspects: ideological and strategic. The first was characterized by successive transformations which have already been discussed.<sup>66</sup> The second one, however, requires a deeper analysis. In their early days, the Radicals focused on influencing political events directly, using instruments such as propaganda, criticism and the press. Milutin Garašanin observed mordantly, but correctly: "As a child, the Radical movement was annoying, obnoxious and insolent..."<sup>67</sup> Prevented, in legal and illegal ways, from coming to power, the Radical Party inspired an armed rebellion in order to achieve its goal. Another of Garašanin's mordant observations: "In its teens, the Radical movement was a delinquent, as a young man, a rebel, and as an adult it has become a criminal."<sup>68</sup> Eventually, the Party changed its political strategy once again. Adopting legal means of political struggle and entering into agreements with other political factors, it fulfilled its major ambition:

It [the Radical Party] still has a chance to save itself, not to indulge in sin, not to deny itself, not to spit in its own face... The Radical Party is in power today on the basis of concluded agreements and faits accomplis, fully at the service of abdicated king Milan and retired Jovan Ristić...<sup>69</sup>

Milutin Garašanin's sarcastic tone (understandable for a bitter opponent of the Radicals) put aside, it becomes crystal clear what the flexibility of the Radical movement meant.

Another distinctive feature of the Radical Party was its pragmatism. The Radicals were resourceful in finding practical ways and means to put their ideological tenets in practice, or more precisely, they were able to modify their theoretical model so as to suit the political reality. Whichever

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<sup>66</sup> M. St. Protić, "The Serbian Radical Movement 1881–1903: A Historical Aspect", *Balkanica* XXXVI/2005 (2006), 129–149, and "Sources of the Ideology of the Serbian Radical Movement 1881–1903", *Balkanica* XXXVII/2006 (2007), 125–142.

<sup>67</sup> AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 1925.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1922.

concept proved inapplicable or unpractical was remodelled or abandoned. Whatever seemed too complicated was simplified and modified. Ideology served the movement, not the other way round. If the years of Svetozar Marković's group were marked by ideological consistency verging on rigidity, by the early 1880s the Radical movement had become pragmatic. The very introduction to the Radical programme of 1881 insisted on political realism and demanded urgent and practical reforms.<sup>70</sup>

The Radicals were often accused of using demagoguery as an instrument of political propaganda,<sup>71</sup> even of deliberately simplifying and distorting things in order to gain popular support. Local Radicals in various parts of Serbia were reported for "holding secret meetings every evening, stirring up discontent among the population and promising them sweet dreams if they vote for them in the coming elections".<sup>72</sup> In 1881, Nikola Pašić's brother Lazar was reported to be depicting "the work and attitude of Nikola Pašić as remarkably beneficial to the people; but his depictions do not have much effect because he likes to deceive people and that is why many do not believe him. Lazar Pašić will not be happy until he sees his brother in the ministerial chair. His current story is that things as they are now are all wrong."<sup>73</sup> Similar reports were sent from Carina,<sup>74</sup> Pirot<sup>75</sup> and Kruševac.<sup>76</sup> A proclamation to the membership dated 1886 is a good illustration of the Radical use of demagoguery:

What makes the Radical Party different from other parties is the fact that it is not led by authorities or famous names... but by the desires and interests of its entire membership.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, according to a proclamation of the local Radicals of Jagodina dated 1883:

The Radical Party is numerically stronger than any other party in Serbia: it is the deepest-rooted in the people – it is only the Radical Party, then, that is hundred percent pure people.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See "Our programme".

<sup>71</sup> See S. Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, 3. vols. (Belgrade 1934), vol. III, 261; Janković, *Političke stranke*, 132.

<sup>72</sup> AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 470, Požarevac, 21 July 1882.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 62, Zaječar, 16 November 1881.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 472.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 442.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 525.

<sup>77</sup> ASANU, no. 13781/2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 9783/27.

Reflecting on political honesty and integrity, Andra Nikolić insisted upon moral standards for any public activity. Aware that the deliberate and frequent use of demagoguery might be harmful to the Radical movement, he wrote:

The politician assumes the obligation, publicly promises, to act upon certain principles and to work on the realization of the proclaimed programme. If he acts out of his own self-interest instead, it is a deceit.<sup>79</sup>

The last distinctive characteristic of the Radical movement was its unity. The movement succeeded in maintaining its ideological and organizational cohesion throughout the years in opposition, from 1881 to 1901. It kept growing in numeric strength, mostly unshaken by internal strife and dissension. All attempts to undermine the unity of the movement ended in failure. Over the years, individuals left the Party, even some of its leaders, but the membership remained compact.

Two major factors kept the movement together. One was the Party's well-organized structure enabling unimpeded contacts between the leadership and members. The other was unconditional commitment to Radicalism shown not only by the leaders but also by the entire rank and file of the movement. The movement relied on partisanship for its cohesion. Hence the oft-heard accusation that the Radicals give precedence to party interests over national ones:

The Radicals are plain partisans and nothing more. Their only concern is their Party's success, with no consideration whatsoever for justice and the needs of the state.<sup>80</sup>

Or:

The Radicals are still at full strength... happy with their partisanship.<sup>81</sup>

Jovan Avakumović, a prominent Liberal leader, was even more specific:

Radicals demonstrated their separatist aspirations from the very beginning of the coalition government [1887]. They never missed an opportunity to pursue their partisan interests.<sup>82</sup>

Their partisanship became particularly visible when they entered the government. Once in power, they did their best to install party members in as many public offices as possible. According to Avakumović, "courts, administration and the State Council were flooded with Radicals". The Radi-

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<sup>79</sup> AS, Andra Nikolić Fund, no. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Avakumović, "Memoirs", 45.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



cal leadership promoted partisanship for obvious reasons. To be a Radical meant to be the member of a strong political movement. Commitment to Radicalism was a matter of political conviction, but it also enhanced the individual's sense of self-importance and offered the possibility for climbing up the social ladder.

All these features were the source of both the strength and the weakness of the Radical movement. They ensured its existence, survival and success. But they were also responsible for its imperfection, inconsistency and self-interestedness. Which brings to mind an analogy between a political movement and human life.

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Instead of a conclusion, let us offer a recapitulation of this series of articles devoted to Serbian Radicalism.

- The formative period of the Serbian Radical movement, from 1881 to 1903, was a period of its ideological fermentation resulting in a shift from vaguely defined socialism to the concept of parliamentary democracy.

The emergence and evolution of Radicalism was interlocked with the shift taking place in Serbia from an agrarian society to a modern European one. The Radical movement was both the cause and the effect of this process: it arose from the underlying social and political trend but it also encouraged the process of modernization. Thus, the Radical movement was the force of progress in Serbian politics.

- The formative period was also marked by a certain parallelism between theory and practice or between ideology and the movement, a process in which the movement eventually prevailed over ideology, theory was overpowered by reality, the success of the movement was favoured over the consistency of ideas. The Radicals were only concerned with accomplishing the possible. It was a movement of action rather than of doctrine.

- The Radical movement may be defined as an ideological association. It included individuals and groups of various political colours, such as socialists, parliamentary democrats, opportunists, peasant democrats. What made such a combination possible and enduring was the flexibility of practice. In that sense, Radicalism represented the opinion of the average man.

- The achievements of Serbian Radicalism were twofold: firstly, it was instrumental in introducing the peasantry into politics and in promoting it to a relevant political factor; secondly, it was the driving force in the process of political democratization.

The faults of the Radical movement included its conformism, leading to inconsistency, its partisanship, leading to exclusiveness, and its demagoguery, leading to dishonesty.

- In terms of ideology, the nature of the Radical Party was dual. Its commitment to constitutionalism, the middle-class background of its leadership and a class alliance affirmed in its programme made it a party of the centre. Its emphasis on democracy, its struggle for social justice and its socialist roots made it a party of the left.

- Its major objective was a political and social system based on justice in all human relations. Its method was constant work aimed at achieving the ideal state organization. Its political doctrine was the democratic monarchy, which would make it possible to search for best government through legal means, assigned to all citizens without any discrimination. Its social doctrine was founded on the premise of association of all social classes.

- Serbian Radicalism was an open ideology in the sense that it was more influenced by events than by logical deduction. The process of its development was based on political practice rather than on ideological suppositions. In that sense, Radicalism involved a permanent transformation of views.

- The Radical movement functioned as a bridge between European ideas and Serbian realities. In this sense, its ideology was eclectic: it drew from foreign sources, but was implemented in a specific environment. The Radicals were not original thinkers, but the concepts they espoused bore a distinctly Radical seal; they were modified so as to respond to the Serbian social and political situation.

An observation of the French historian Jacques Kayser seems perfect to conclude with:

Il n'y a pas de doute, les radicaux furent des opposants, les hommes qui criaient: Non! Ils étaient *contre*: leur force d'attraction vient de là, leur prestige aussi et leur vulnérabilité.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> J. Kayser, *Les Grandes Batailles du Radicalisme* (Paris 1962), 7.