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Sources of the Ideology of the Serbian Radical Movement 1881–1903

From a historical perspective, every political movement has two essential aspects: its theory and its practice. The theoretical aspect includes ideology, understood as a set of ideas which define the movement's political and philosophical stand on various issues. Practical aspects refer to its existence and actions in the actual historical context, a specific time and place. It is this dual nature of political movements that give them their complex historical character. The two aspects are often so intertwined that it is impossible to divide and analyze them separately. In other instances, they seem so contradictory to each other that it is virtually impossible to determine their common denominator and establish relations between the theory and practice of a single political movement.

The sources of the ideology of Serbian Radicalism[1] were twofold: imported and original. The imported (or foreign) influences on the Radical movement came in three major waves. The first wave came from European (especially Russian) socialist, anarchist, and populist traditions, mainly influencing the group round Svetozar Marković, and covering the period of Radicalism in Serbia known as rudimentary Radicalism. The second wave resulted from the influence of the French Radical movement, which had strong impact on Serbian Radicals regarding both their political programme and their organization.[2] The third wave of influence came from the British parliamentary and constitutional theory which, by the late 1880s, had been fully accepted by the Radicals in Serbia. The ideas that the Radicals drew

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[1] For more detail, see Milan St. Protić, *Radikali u Srbiji 1881–1903* (Radicals in Serbia 1881–1903) (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1990).

[2] Cf. also D. T. Batakoviċ, "Francuski uticaji u Srbiji 1935–1914. Četiri generacije Parizlija", *Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske* 56 (1997), 73-95, and his "L'influence française sur la formation de la démocratie parlementaire en Serbie", *Revue d'Europe centrale* VII/no. 1 (1999; Strasbourg 2000), 17-44.

from European political experience needed to be transformed, changed, and adapted to suit the specific Serbian political environment. The internal (or domestic) sources of Radicalism were the specific political circumstances of Serbian society. Within a general historical framework, political expressions emerging from the ruler on the one hand and from political parties on the other fundamentally influenced and modified the Radical ideology. Finally, it is necessary to draw some general conclusions regarding the sources of Serbian Radical ideology, which includes a classification of particular influences and the degree of their impact on Serbian Radicalism.

Chronologically, the earliest was the influence of European socialist ideas and therefore it will be discussed first.

I

The influence of European socialism reached the Radical movement in its earliest phase of development, during a period when future Radical founders and leaders were associated with the group of Svetozar Marković.[3] During the late 1860s the Swiss city of Zurich attracted many young, politically conscious students from all over Europe. Undoubtedly the most significant of them was Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian émigré and the leading figure of the anarchist movement.[4] He played a central role among the student youth in Zurich, and organized many clandestine and semi-clandestine political groups and meetings. His reputation of the leader of the most radical wing of the Socialist International secured him the position of the central figure in the leftist movement not only in Switzerland, but in all of Europe. Bakunin's teaching included a social revolution carried out by violent means, the destruction of the state organization, and the establishment of free associations of individuals based on their free will. His personal commitment was based on his long years in Tsarist Russian prisons, which had a powerful impact on the young intellectuals in Zurich.[5]

In the late 1860s a small group of Serbian students arrived in Zurich as Serbian government grant holders sent abroad to obtain higher education. In 1868, Svetozar Marković came to Zurich from St. Petersburg, where he had already begun his political career as a follower of Russian socialists,

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[3] For more detail, see Jovan Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković, njegov život, rad i ideje* (Belgrade, 1922); Sofija Škorić, "The Populism of Nikola Pašić: The Zurich Period", *East European Quarterly* XIV, no. 4 (Winter 1980), 469-485.

[4] Velizar Ninčić, *Pera Todorović* (Belgrade, 1956), 31-32.

[5] Drag. Cilić, "Pera Todorović", Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (hereafter ASANU) no. 10634, p. 3; see also Ninčić, *Pera Todorović*, 32-35.

such as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Lavrov.[6] Together with the other Serbian students he organized an informal, distinctly socialist-anarchist political group known as the "Zurich group". All of its members were future Radicals: Nikola Pašić, Pera Velimirović, Raša Milošević, Pera Todorović and Jovan Žujović.[7] By the early 1869, they had decided to organize a political movement, and to name it the Radical Party.[8] In February the same year Svetozar Marković, Nikola Pašić, Pera Velimirović and Djura Ljočić agreed to elaborate the political programme of their political organization in the making, but the attempt failed due to the fact that Svetozar Marković had to return to Serbia. He had been denied government grant on account of his subversive political activities.[9]

Although their first attempt to organize a political party failed, the young Serbian students returned to Serbia full of enthusiasm for socialist ideas. The works of Russian populists and Western socialists, which they brought to their native country, became major expressions of their political beliefs.

Upon their return to Serbia (1870–71), the members of Svetozar Marković's group started a number of socialist newspapers – *Radenik* (Worker), *Javnost* (The Public), *Oslobodjenje* (Liberation), *Rad* (Work) – and continued political activities along socialist lines. Until the death of its leader Svetozar Marković in 1875, the movement gradually moved from pure socialism to Radical democracy,[10] because of the peculiarities of Serbian society. With the vast majority of peasant population and virtually no working class, the ideas of socialism simply could not be applied in their original form. Thus, faced with Serbian socio-political realities, the socialist group of Svetozar Marković focused on democratic political reforms instead of social change.

Even so, some purely socialist elements can be found in the Radical movement even in its much later years. In a personal letter to a friend, a member of the Radical Party wrote in 1883: "I'd break the neck of anyone

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[6] See Slobodan Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković* (Belgrade, 1920), 8-12; also, Woodford McClellan, *Svetozar Markovic and the Origins of Balkan Socialism* (Princeton, 1964), 241-242.

[7] S. Marković to Belimarković, 11 May 1869, in *Odabrani spisi* [Selected Writings] (Belgrade–Novi Sad, 1969).

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Svetozar Marković, "Srpske obmane", *Zastava*, Novi Sad, 1869.

[10] Cilić, "Pera Todorović", 3; see also Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1932), vol. I, 223; and Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković*, 95.

who says I'm not a socialist. I am as proud of that name as I am proud of the name of an active Radical."[11]

A report from Smederevo dated the same year mentions a group of workers among local Radicals "which has socialist colours and numbers some 70 members".[12] A secret report to King Milan Obrenović, also of 1883, mentions a Toma Milošević, a member of the Radical Party from eastern Serbia (Vražogrnjci), who pursued his studies in Zurich and now overtly "declares himself a nihilist".[13]

From 8 July 1883, Pera Todorović, a founding member of the Radical Party and its major ideologue in its formative period, subscribed to the French revolutionary newspapers of socialist-radical orientation *La Bataille*, *Le Proletaire* and *L'Intrensigeant*.[14]

Following the formation of the Radical Party in 1881 and the publication of its political programme, a group of Svetozar Marković's orthodox followers who maintained a pure socialist position formed a small political group led by Mita Cenić. They confronted the Radicals, accusing them of betraying Marković's original ideas and abandoning the socialist cause in general.[15]

In defining the position of the Radical Party in relation to socialism, Lazar Paču published in 1881 in *Samouprava* a series of articles under the title "The Middle Class Society and Its Political Parties",[16] in which he made a threefold classification of political movements:

> A group that wants to take society back to feudalism [reactionary or aristocratic parties]. A group called "money aristocracy", which teaches that human society reached its apex at a certain moment in the past and cannot develop any further without destroying its own fruits of culture and civilization. A third group argues for a new economic programme: the programme of social and economic reform.[17]

Continuing this line of thinking, Paču suggests that the socialist teaching may take two possible directions: towards theoretical socialism and towards applied socialism. By applied socialism Paču meant the practical political organization of the working classes. He simply concludes that the

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[11] Archives of Serbia, Belgrade (hereafter AS), Milutin Garašanin Fund, B6, no. 750.

[12] AS, no. 667, 30 August 1883, Smederevo.

[13] AS, Dobra Ružić Fund, PO-27/183, 6 June 1883, Požarevac.

[14] *Ibid.*, 8 July 1883.

[15] For more detail, see Latinka Perović, *Srpski socijalisti XIX veka* (Belgrade, 1985).

[16] Lazar Paču, "Gradjansko društvo i njegove političke stranke", *Samouprava*, 5 May to 16 June 1881.

[17] *Ibid.*

Radical Party has adopted the concept of applied socialism.[18] The Radicals obviously moved away from the original socialist ideology, but remained sympathetic to the ideas which had inspired them in their early days.

Elements of socialist influences on the Serbian Radical movement are observable throughout the period until the Timok Rebellion. Articles dealing with contemporary developments in European socialist circles regularly appeared in the official Radical newspaper. In 1881, *Samouprava* publishes a series of articles on Chernyshevsky.[19] In 1882, the Radical paper devotes a long column to Louis Blanc, stating that Blanc was among the most prominent leaders of the 1848 Revolution in France, and describing his idea to establish a ministry of progress as a masterpiece of his political career. *Samouprava* concludes that "he will be remembered by the generations to come".[20] In 1883, the newspaper notes the death of Karl Marx, and dedicates a praising article to the founder of scientific socialism:

> The importance of his work is as relevant today as ever. But the future alone will be able to show the enormous impact of this talented and energetic man… Let the memory of this diligent man, who for more than forty years worked tirelessly for the development of social duties and the liberation of entire mankind, remain deep in every human heart.[21]

Probably the most illustrative example of socialist influences on the Radical movement is the fact that while searching homes of local Radicals (leaders of the Timok Rebellion), the police found the Communist Manifesto of 1848 by Marx and Engels, the Programme of German Social Democracy (1869), works of Baboeuf (1789), and writings of the domestic revolutionary Vasa Pelagić.[22] Elements of socialist ideologies in the Radical movement were, however, more theoretical than practical. From the very beginning, the Radicals abandoned the economic teaching of Svetozar Marković, basically the most socialist part of his doctrine. They entered fullheartedly into the political battle, concentrating all their forces on political reforms along the lines of constitutionalism and democracy. The elements of socialism shown here suggest that the attitude of Serbian Radicalism towards socialist ideas was merely academic. The sole element of socialism that the Radicals retained was their militancy.

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[18] *Ibid*.

[19] *Samouprava*, 12 February 1881.

[20] *Samouprava*, 1 Decemeber 1882.

[21] *Samouprava*, 15 and 22 March 1883.

[22] *Timočka buna*, ed. Milen Nikolić (Belgrade, 1954–55), 372-385.

The Radicals often insisted on their faithfulness to their socialist roots. They liked to be regarded as an offspring of the great European socialist family. They expressed strong feelings about all movements and ideas coming from the left. But, the realities of the Serbian rudimentary, mostly peasant, society, with other social classes only emerging, forced them to direct their actions and their ideas towards practical problems – and towards attacking real obstacles on Serbia's road to political emancipation.

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The influence of the French Radical movement was much more significant than the impact of European socialism. Two different views have developed in recent Yugoslav historiography regarding the issue of the major foreign influence on the Serbian Radical movement. One argues that the major impact came from the Russian populist tradition.[23] This argument is based on two assumptions. First, Russian society as it was in the second half of the nineteenth century resembled to a large extent the Serbian society of the same period. The vast majority of the population were uneducated peasants. Consequently, the idea of "going to the people", the ultimate slogan of the Russian populist movement, held much appeal to the Serbian Radicals. Second, the political methods used by the Radicals were very similar to those used by Russian populists: the educational mission among the peasantry, accompanied by the use of simplicity and demagoguery.[24]

The view that the French Radical tradition had the most crucial impact on the formation of Radicalism in Serbia deserves greater attention.[25] It is virtually impossible to establish the exact ways in which French ideas came to Serbia. The only fact that seems unquestionable is that most Radical leaders could read and speak French, and that most of them visited France in the 1870s.[26] Some, but not many, made their studies in Paris and later came to be known as "Parisian doctors".[27] According to the Radical newspapers, it appears that by the 1880s they received French political press on a regular basis, including Clemenceau's *La Justice*.[28]

If the notion of a predominant populist influence has some merit as an instrument of social development and general political inspiration, the hypothesis about French Radicalism as the major source of Serbian

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[23] See Latinka Perović, *Pera Todorović* (Belgrade, 1983).

[24] *Ibid*., 162-167.

[25] Slobodan Jovanović, Jovan Skerlić, Živan Živanović.

[26] See Ninčić, *Pera Todorović*, 58-62.

[27] Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, 3. vols (Belgrade, 1934), III, 282-283.

[28] Cf. *Samouprava*, June and July 1883.

Radical ideology is more convincing – particularly regarding their political programmes and organization.

The relationship between Serbian and French Radicalisms is central to the analysis of both movements. The first written programme of the Radical Party in Serbia dates from January 1881. The programme was originally published in the first issue of *Samouprava*, immediately following the formation of the Radical Party.[29] In the introduction, the Radicals stressed two crucial political objectives:

> … in domestic affairs – national prosperity and freedom, and in foreign affairs – State independence, liberation and unification of all parts of Serbdom.[30]

The programme was divided in eight sections, each defining the Party's position on a major issue. Much like the French Radicals, they suggested constitutional reform in the following directions: the National Assembly as the supreme legislative body was to be completely elective; the elections were to be directly accompanied by universal male suffrage. The Grand National Assembly was designed to convene periodically, and to be solely responsible for constitutional change, and the State Council was to be abolished. Serbian Radicals also proposed the administrative division of the country into regions and communes which were to be organized on the basis of local self-government. In the judicial system, the Radicals established elective judges for all civil cases and juries for all criminal cases. Absolutely the same terminology was used in discussing the question of State finances; "the establishment of a direct, progressive tax system based on property and income". The Serbian Radicals also suggested a reorganization of the National Bank along the lines of a central credit institution for agriculture, trade, and industry. Exactly like the French, the Radicals in Serbia insisted on free and compulsory primary education, and the replacement of the standing army with a popular one. They demanded the absolute freedom of the press, association and public assembly, the application of the principle of local self-government, and the guarantee of personal and material security.[31]

The Radical group in Serbia developed a political programme with essentially identical political demands ten years earlier, in 1871.[32] This earliest Radical political platform contained eighteen important points: the

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[29] "Naš program" [Our Programme], *Samouprava* 1, 8 January 1881.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] "Programme of the Radical group", 2 August 1871, AS, Dobra Ružić Fund, V1, PO-27/209.

communal and regional autonomy and self-government, absolute freedom of the press, association, public assembly and political action, judicial independence, reforms of the State administration based on the principle of local self-government, the establishment of regional banks for peasant and craftsmen loans and town banks for merchants and industrialists, the abolition of guilds, the cancellation of railroad construction, the founding of agricultural and craft schools, reform of the educational system, the abolition of gendarmerie as unnecessary due to the introduction of self-government, the abolition of dispository funds, complete control of the budget by the National Assembly, and the demand for constitutional change.[33]

Similarities between the Serbian Radical programme of 1881 and the electoral programmes of Georges Clemenceau and Camille Pelletan of that same year are quite obvious. The fundamental issues pointed out in all three documents appear identical, not only in ideas they expressed, but in terminology as well. Serbian Radicalism, like French, insisted on constitutional reform, which in both cases included a single-chamber National Assembly elected by universal male suffrage. Following their French comrades, the Serbian Radicals singled out the principle of self-government as the central mode of territorial organization and instrument of democratic process. They both insisted on tax reform and on the introduction of direct tax system on capital and income. The idea of the formation of a popular army instead of professional military corps characterized both ideologies. Finally, Serbian Radicals, like the French, stubbornly repeated their demand for civil liberties. Their ideas of the educational system were identical: both argued in favour of free and compulsory primary education.

Differences between the ideologies of the two Radical movements came mainly from their different political and socio-economic contexts. French Radicals were strongly anticlerical due to the leading role of the Catholic Church in French politics, social life, culture and education. By contrast, the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church was neither powerful nor enjoyed a particularly advantageous position in the social hierarchy. This was particularly true of the lower clergy, which largely shared the social status of the peasantry, but acted as parish intelligentsia, and became affiliated with the Radical movement.[34] The higher-ranking clergy in Serbia, however, situated in the capital and several larger towns, never really accepted Radicalism. Part of the State establishment, the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church opted for the Liberal Party.[35]

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[33] *Ibid*.

[34] AS, Andra Nikolić Fund, B18, no. 10.

[35] Jovan Avakumović, "Memoirs", no. 9287/III, ASANU.

As had been stated earlier, the French Radical movement grew out of the Republican bloc, and always remained the champion of the Republican cause. This came as a result of specific historical circumstances in France, where the conflict between the Monarchy and the Republic marked the entire nineteenth century. In Serbia, the Republican issue was never seriously considered. Although the group around Svetozar Marković had developed a theoretical concept of republicanism, the idea was soon abandoned by the Radicals although there were several staunch republicans in their ranks.[36] Serbia's socio-political realities, with the ruler assuming the pivotal role not only in politics but, more importantly, in the minds of the population, the Republic could never be acceptable. So instead, the Serbian Radicals became strongly anti-dynastic, endlessly fighting to undercut the ruler's power. It means that the Radical anti-dynastic orientation became a substitute for Republicanism. The French representative in Belgrade noticed their anti-dynastic attitude and underlined it in several reports: "L'opposition radicale en Serbie est loin d'être une opposition dynastique."[37] And again in 1888:

> Sans doute, parmi les cinq cents radicaux, que les electeurs ont envoyé sieges à la Grande Skoupchtina, plus d'un est parti de son village avec des dispositions franchement anti-dynastiques.[38]

The French Radical movement favoured an anti-colonial foreign policy and the policy of peacemaking. Following a devastating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war (1870–71), and the unstable political situation in their country, the French Radicals argued for internal political reforms and opposed colonialism. The Serbian Radical movement was of purely national motivation, advocating the liberation and unification of all Serbdom. It was the result of historical processes of national emancipation and state building. As a centripetal force, the Serbian state attracted all as yet unliberated parts of the nation. The Radicals were compelled to join in the great national cause.

Serbian Radicals were only influenced by the political aspect of programmes of French Radicalism. They found Serbia a fertile soil for the implementation of French Radical ideas. The socio-economic aspect of the French Radical programmes, however, was incompatible with the Serbian socio-economic specifics and hence unacceptable to Serbian Radicalism. In a developed industrial country such as France, with a developed working class, the demands for a working-hours limit, workers' insurance, and

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[36] Jovan Žujović and Dragiša Stanojević, later also Jaša Prodanović.

[37] Archives du Ministère des affaires etrangères, Paris, Correspondance politique-Serbie (AMAE, CP), 1882–83, 8 May 1883.

[38] *Ibid*., 1887–88, 25 December 1888.

the prohibition of child labour were logical steps in the process of improving working conditions. France was no exception in Europe in this respect. Almost all industrial European countries introduced social legislation in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. In a predominantly rural Serbian society, with little industry and no organized working class, the socio-economic segment of the French Radical programmes was inapplicable. Thus, it is quite clear that the ideological impact of the French Radical movement on Serbian Radicalism acquired the central place among the external (or foreign) sources of the Serbian Radical doctrine.

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The influence of British constitutional and parliamentary theory and practice was a third major external source of Serbian Radicalism. This particular influence was the last to reach the Radical movement in Serbia, after 1883. The Radical constitutional proposal of 1883 was still heavily influenced by "Markovićism". It espoused the system of Convent, which meant the supreme authority of the National Assembly, and essentially established a republic with a monarch as its head.[39] British constitutional patterns were finding their way into the ideas of the Radical Party throughout the 1880. It was not until after the final text of the 1888 Constitution had been completed that the Radicals definitely accepted the concept of democratic, parliamentary monarchy.[40]

A general notion of the British understanding of governmental organization reached Serbia in the late 1850s. Young members of the Liberal movement, who had for the most part received higher education in Europe, were the first to point out the importance of the English constitutional tradition: "We need to learn from England – mother of freedom and of the world's constitutional tradition," wrote Stojan Bošković.[41] In 1876 John Stuart Mill's classical book *On Representative Government* was translated by Vladimir Jovanović, a Liberal. The Radical intellectuals, however, came in contact with the British concept in a roundabout way. The works which had been published on the Continent but followed in the footsteps of the British political doctrine became their first sources. In 1880, Kosta Taušanović translated Hover's book *Switzerland, Her Constitution, Government and Self-Government*.[42] At about the same time, Djordje Simić, a more mod-

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[39] Jovanović, *Rasprave*, vol. I, 43.

[40] Milivoje Popović, *Poreklo i postanak ustava od 1888.* (Belgrade, 1939), 109.

[41] *Serbia* 1870.

[42] Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, 332-340; see also Raša Milošević, *Timočka buna 1883. godine* (Belgrade, 1923), 252-256.

erate Radical, translated Benjamin Constant's *The Political Principles and On Ministrial Responsibility*.[43] In 1884, Stojan Protić, the leading Radical political writer at the time, translated the most liberal constitutions of the period: Swiss, Belgian and American.[44] They were all published in *Odjek*. In his personal papers dealing with questions of parliamentary theory, Andra Nikolić, a long-time member of the Radical Main Committee, frequently referred to the British political example.[45]

A more coherent political concept was developed by a younger Radical intellectual Milovan Dj. Milovanović. He was educated at the University of Paris where he obtained the doctorate in law. By the age of twenty-six he had become a professor at the School of Law in Belgrade.[46]

His acceptance speech at the University entitled *On the Parliamentary Government*[47] was the most advanced treatment of the British parliamentary concept in Serbia at the time. Milovanović also acted as a preparatory secretary to the Constitutional Committee in 1888.[48] The final version of this document largely reflected his constitutional ideas.

British theoretical influences came from the writings of the leading political writers as well: Maine, Freeman, Boutmy, Guiest, and especially Bagehot.[49] Following their teachers, the Serbian Radicals espoused the concept of an ideal political system where the people would rule by themselves directly. The complexities of modern societies, however, made such a simple political system impossible to implement. Therefore, they suggested the people should rule through a collective representative body by transferring their sovereign rights to their elected representatives in the Parliament. They conclude that as a result of the fact that the people's interests are varied and often opposing, the Parliament consists of various political groups. The largest group represents the majority of the people, and therefore receives the mandate to form the government. The cabinet, which stands on the top of the State administration, is entirely dependent on the Assembly majority:[50] "The government is born, lives and dies together with the Assembly

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[43] *Ibid*.

[44] *Ibid*.

[45] AS, Andra Nikolić Fund, no. 10.

[46] Fore more detail, see Dimitrije Djordjević, *Milovan Dj. Milovanović* (Belgrade, 1962).

[47] Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, 381.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] Milovan Dj. Milovanović, "O parlamentarnoj vladi", *Otadžbina* XIX (May-June, 1888), 166.

[50] *Ibid*., 165.

Majority."[51] According to the British concept, the Radicals in Serbia accepted the system of political parties and of party government: the party which wins the majority in the Parliament forms the cabinet:[52]

> The essence of a parliamentary system lies in the cabinet's dependence on and responsibility to the Assembly.[53]

Foreign sources of the Radical political ideology were indeed threefold. They originated from three different European political doctrines, but each left its mark on the formation of the Serbian Radical ideology. Their impacts differ both in intensity and in scope, thus making the Radical ideology essentially an eclectic political doctrine.

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From an internal perspective, the ideology of the Serbian Radical movement was influenced by the specifics of the Serbian political circumstances. As had been noted earlier, by the early 1880s the Serbian political scene had witnessed a polarization. On one side was the Prince (King from 1882), and on the other three major political parties. Their competition for power influenced their ideologies, and their understanding of politics influenced their political attitudes.

The position of Serbian rulers became dominant under Karadjordje Petrović, the leader of the First Serbian Insurrection against the Ottomans in 1804. His successor, Miloš Obrenović, led the Second Serbian Insurrection (1815) and became the hereditary prince of Serbia (1830). Milan Obrenović, proclaimed king in 1882,[54] was a strong and authoritarian ruler opposed to any attempt of democratic change in Serbia. On the occasion of the promulgation of the liberal 1888 Constitution, he said to an intimate friend:

> Everybody cried and shouted for a new constitution. So I accepted it. I wanted to make nonsense of the issue and thus prove that this constitution is not for Serbia.[55]

Before his arrival in Serbia in 1868, Milan Obrenović lived abroad, where he received a sophisticated education in most prominent centres of

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[51] *Ibid*.

[52] Stojan Protić, "Ustavna vlada i njena odgovornost", *Samouprava*, January 1888.

[53] AS, Andra Nikolić Fund, no. 10.

[54] See Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. I; see also Živan Živanović, *Politička istorija Srbije*, vols. II and III (Belgrade, 1923–25).

[55] Stojan Novaković, *Dvadeset godina ustavne borbe u Srbiji 1883–1903* (Belgrade, 1912), 30.

Europe.[56] He spoke French and German better than his mother tongue.[57] Young and restless, with all virtues and vices of a royalty, he conducted a lifestyle according to European bon vivant standards. He was as alien to Serbian society as Serbian society was alien to him. King Milan Obrenović's policy was marked by two major features: he ran domestic affairs by himself, using political parties and politicians only as his own aids on the basis of their loyalty to him personally; his foreign policy was hostile to Russia, due to her betrayal of the Serbian national cause when in 1878 she signed the pro-Bulgarian San Stefano Treaty with the Ottomans.[58] Therefore Milan Obrenović turned to Austria-Hungary for protection and alliance, signing a secret convention of mutual friendship in 1881.[59] His statesmanship was often dominated by his personal interests, and his political moves influenced by his emotional motives. A report from the Čačak area, central Serbia, dated 1888, best illustrates to what extent King Milan was alien to the Serbian population. A certain Toma Vilotijević claimed publicly that "the King is German, he is going to Germanize all of us and we'll have to eat cats".[60] By the same token, King Milan did not think highly of his people in general. Shortly before his abdication in 1889, he confided in a close friend:

> After twenty years of my rule in Serbia I have come to believe that our people is unable to grasp the meaning of the national idea and favours partisan interests over the interests of the country.[61]

Two mainstays of the ruler's power in Serbia were the Army and the Capital.[62] King Milan Obrenović instituted a standing army and a professional core of officers.[63] Insomuch as this innovation fostered the state-building process, the entire military structure was completely loyal to him personally, and ready to protect the Crown and the existing regime. The other stronghold of the King's authority was the Capital. At the time, Belgrade was virtually the only town in Serbia that bore a resemblance to European cities.[64] The State administration, the military headquarters, and the Court

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[56] Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. I, 24-27.

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. II, 67.

[59] Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. III, 79.

[60] AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 1214, Belgrade, 6 December 1888.

[61] AS, Vladan Djordjević Fund, no. 40; Vladan Djordjević, "Uspomene Vladana Djordjevića", *Vreme*, 5 December 1925.

[62] Dragutin Ilić, *Zaječarska buna* (Belgrade, 1909), 25.

[63] See Živanović, *Politička istorija*, vol. III, 171-173.

[64] See Dimitrije Djordjević, "Srbija i srpsko društvo 1880-ih godina", *Istorijski časopis* XXIX-XXX (1982–83), 413-426.

were all in Belgrade, not to mention the bulk of the Serbian intelligentsia and a growing middle class. The King threw parties, organized receptions and balls, and on the whole played the role of the Capital's central figure.[65] It was a social environment in which he felt both comfortable and powerful.

From the very beginnings of the Radical movement, there developed an animosity between the Radicals and the Crown. Reasons for this confrontation were logical: the King was an authoritarian person who understood his royal powers as unlimited and would not accept any challenges to his authority. The Radical movement, eager to come to power, propagated constitutionalism, democracy, and self-government – demands aimed at limiting the King's authority. Andra Nikolić wrote on the subject:

> The almighty power of a ruler always ends in disaster; Nicholas I, Austria 1859 and 1866, France 1870–71, King Milan in Serbia. It is not good for affairs of State when the ruler is too influential. Even if not an irresponsible one, he is unable to control everything by himself and therefore the outcome is always bad…[66]

Escalating between 1881 and 1883, this conflict culminated in the 1883 Timok Rebellion. Although the rebels never admitted overtly that the revolt had been directed against the ruler personally, the rebellion essentially was an anti-dynastic revolution. The driving force behind the revolt, a prominent Radical leader from Knjaževac, Aca Stanojević, was described as "the Commander of the Knjaževac Army in Action against the Abuser of the Constitution and of the People's Rights",[67] which is a clear reference to the King. On the eve of the revolt, in September 1883, a Radical representative in the National Assembly, Ljubinko Milinković, reportedly said: "It is easier for me to overthrow the King than to remove a village *kmet* [local official]."[68] Another report of the same year stated that the Radical Party organized a coup against King Milan.[69] Pera Todorović, a co-founder of the Radical Party who had abandoned the movement in 1886 and became the port-parole of the King, addressed this letter to the Serbian monarch:

> In the hands of Djaja, Kosta [Taušanović] and Stojan [Protić], the Radical Party is a permanent threat to the country, and if there is no other way, the patriotic duty would dictate to the ruler and the government to fight that Party to the bitter end, to the final annihila-

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[65] See Živanović, *Politička istorija*, vol. III, 201-205.

[66] AS, Andra Nikolić Fund, no. 10.

[67] Ilić, *Zaječarska buna*, 39.

[68] AS, Dobra Ružić Fund, PO-27/183, 10 September 1883.

[69] *Ibid*., 27 August 1883.

> tion of one side. At this point there can be no truce, there can be no excuse – it is a life-and-death fight.[70]

The King himself never fully trusted the Radicals, nor did he ever see them as a genuine ideological movement. In his view, they were a horde of anti-dynastic elements ready to overthrow him. He fought them once in 1883, but his struggle with them continued until his death in 1901:

> The Radicals in Serbia are not a political party ready to fight for certain principles applicable in state institutions, but rather an anti-dynastic party working systematically from its inception towards overthrowing our dynasty.[71]

There were two attempts on King Milan's life during his thirty-year presence in Serbian politics. The first occurred in 1882 and the second in 1889. He utilized both attempts as a pretext to crush down the leadership of the Radical Party. The first attempted assassination was perpetrated by Jelena-Ilka Marković, the sister-in-law of Svetozar Marković, whose husband, a Radical sympathizer, had been executed for alleged high treason.[72] She died in prison under unclarified circumstances. She was very close to most of the Radical leaders in Belgrade, especially to Rasa Milošević,[73] and it seems likely that at least a few of them had been aware of her intention. The King, however, was convinced that the assassination had been fully organized by the Radicals.[74] The second attempt on ex-King Milan's life was made in 1899. This event had a twofold importance as regards the relations between the Radicals and King Milan: first, it proved the profound animosity between the two; second, it indicated the intention of the ex-King to destroy the leadership of the Radical Party, even after nearly twenty years of their presence in Serbian politics. This assertion is supported by a letter of ex-King Milan to his son Alexander dated 1898 in which he advised his son that the Radicals had been the chief enemies of the Obrenović dynasty and that they should be "destroyed and annihilated".[75] According to the same source, the ex-King ordered that a secret agency be formed, headed by Court Marshal Mihailo Rašić, in order to follow closely the actions and moves of the prominent Radicals.[76] Open confrontation between the King and the Radicals fundamentally marked the policy of the Radicals. Their

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[70] AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 1064.

[71] AS, Vladan Djordjević Fund, no. 27, 1899.

[72] See Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. I, 210-215.

[73] Milošević, *Timočka buna*, 51-58.

[74] AS, Vladan Djordjević Fund, no. 27.

[75] ASANU, no. 11657/1.

[76] *Ibid*.

opposition to the King inspired their demands for constitutional and democratic reforms – their understanding of democracy compelled them to oppose the King.

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Relations among three political parties constitute the second internal factor in the formation of the Radical political ideology. At this point it should be noted that neither the Progressivist nor the Liberal parties had directed their political actions towards the masses. The Progressivist Party, which came up with a programme of moderate reform in the 1870s, sought to effect the change through the collaboration with the King. Their understanding of statehood was based on the premise that it was the intellectuals headed by the Crown that should lead the State and shape its policies. This aspect of the Progressivist ideology had been noticed by the French representative in Belgrade and described in several reports:

> A Belgrade, les progressistes sont détestés par la population qui est liberale ou radicale. On ne leurs pardonne pas de s'être faits les instruments de la politique Autrichienne du Roi Milan.[77]

In another of his reports to Paris, the French representative was even more outspoken:

> Le parti progressiste qui n'a jamais eu de racines profondes dans le pays, que le Roi a crée en quelques fortes pour appliquer sa politique personnelle, est en pleine décomposition.[78]

In his report dated March 1888, the Frenchman gave his final assessment of the Progressivist Party in Serbia:

> C'est toute une génération politique qui disparait de la scène: génération de petits bourgeois hônnets, mais étroits et entêtés, qu'on pourrait appeler les doctrinaires de la Serbie. ayant emprunté à l'Europe quelques idées constitutionelles, conservant de l'Orient l'esprit stationaire…[79]

The Liberal Party, which grew out of the romantic national ferment of the 1850s, and which saw internal progress in terms of national liberation, was also essentially an elitist organization. The leaders of this group were in power throughout the 1870s and already had significant political experience, tradition and self-confidence. The Liberals did not deem it necessary to gain massive support from the population. In their view, largely shared by

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[77] AMAE, CP-Serbie, 1889, 28 May 1889.

[78] *Ibid.*, 27 Jan. 1889.

[79] *Ibid.*, 1887–88, 10 March 1888.

the Progressivists, the Serbian peasant was uneducated and primitive, and was not to be allowed to act as a politically relevant factor.

Both political organizations, therefore, resembled political clubs rather than true political movements with mass followings. Their strength derived either from the King's authority or from their intellectual prominence and political experience. Both were small in numbers and were never able to win the majority of the electorate, partly because they never took elections as a decisive criterion in competition for power, and partly because they were not deeply rooted in the Serbian population.

In contrast, the Radicals concentrated all their power and ability on winning over the peasantry. Their political strategy was entirely based on introducing the people to politics and making them a significant political factor. From the very beginning, the Radicals sought to ensure the broadest possible support from the countryside. The power of their movement came from two sources: the village and the numbers. Some figures may serve to support this assertion. In November 1887, the Radicals won 81 seats in the Assembly, the Liberals 61, and the Progressivists none.[80] In March 1888, of 156 members of the National Assembly 133 were Radicals.[81] In the elections held in 1889, the Radicals received 158,856 votes and the Liberals only 21,829.[82] In the 1890 elections, the Radicals won 152,935 votes, the Liberals 23,548, and the Progressivists only 8,895 votes,[83] which means that the Radicals won over 80 percent of the electorate. The Radical official newspapers were distributed all over the country. A number of reports from the interior of the country stated that no other political journals were available there.[84] The Progressivist official organ ironically commented on the Radical vast membership:

> Radical Party is still powerful, and the power may not be that of intelligence but at least it is the power of numbers…[85]

This "power of numbers" obviously was not convincing enough in the Serbian political circumstances for the Radicals to come to power. As a result, they resorted to making agreements with rival political camps. Their competition with Progressivists and Liberals worked in both directions: it oriented the Radical movement towards the electorate, towards peasantry, and towards the countryside; the drive to come to power motivated their

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[80] *Ibid.*, 11 November 1887.

[81] *Ibid.*, 10 March 1888.

[82] Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića* (Belgrade, 1934–35), vol. I, 191.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] AS, Milutin Garašanin Fund, no. 199, Vranje, 3 November 1881.

[85] *Ibid.*, no. 1058.

collaboration and coalition tactics. Both processes marked the Radical ideology. One coloured it with simplicity and demagoguery, but also with a straightforwardness and clarity of ideas. The other led to its flexibility and pragmatism.

To sum up, the ideology of Serbian Radicalism was essentially a combination of various influences. Its sources were manifold and came both from without and from within. In a purely political sense, French Radicalism was the most significant single impact. A comparison of the French and Serbian political programmes convincingly supports this assessment. Inspiration for the movement came from socialists. The British constitutional concept also played a significant role. From the viewpoint of internal political relations, the Radical doctrine was shaped under the impact of confrontation and collaboration with other actors on the Serbian political scene.

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