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French Influence in Serbia 1835–1914 Four Generations of “Parisians”

Abstract: The members of four generations of the national elite known as “Parisians” played a prominent role in the political development of modern Serbia. Liberals, Progressives, Radicals and Independent Radicals profoundly shaped the process of espousing and pursuing modern political principles and values in nineteenth-century Serbia. Implementing and creatively adapting French models and doctrines, the “Parisians” largely contributed to the democratization and Europeanization of Serbia and the eminent place the French influence had in her politics and culture before the First World War.

Keywords: 19th-century Serbia, political elite, Parisians, French political doctrines, liberalism, radicalism, democracy, parliamentary system

France as a political ideal

A prestigious synonym for civilization and culture, but also a desirable model for the processes of achieving political and civil liberties, France undoubtedly played a distinctive role in the development of Serbian society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Serbian Revolution of 1804 and the French Revolution of 1789 evolved along similar lines — dependent, of course, upon their respective local situations — from initial social and political demands to the eventual profound societal transformation, and had consequences that suggest a simultaneous unfolding of both social and national revolution. The doctrine of popular sovereignty — according to which sovereign power is vested in the people — had a strong appeal in Serbia, in accordance with her political traditions and social situation: the principle was to be built into the very foundations of her developing political life. Revolutionary France, with the 1830 and 1848 Revolutions, and the Second and Third Republic, was a constant inspiration for all political reformers in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Serbia.¹

¹ This article is a revised and updated version of a study previously published in Serbian: “Francuski uticaji u Srbiji 1835–1914: Četiri generacije Parizlija”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 56 (1997), 73–95. Cf. also my other studies on French influences in Serbia: “Srbija na Zapadu: o francuskim uticajima na politički razvoj moderne Srbije”, in *Susret ili sukob civilizacija na Balkanu* (Belgrade–Novi Sad: Istorijski institut SANU & Pravoslavna reč, 1998), 307–328; “L’influence française sur la formation de la démocra-

The nationality principle, derived from French doctrines of the Enlightenment, and tied with the principle of political liberty and civic equality, fitted perfectly into the egalitarian aspirations of an agrarian society such as Serbia was throughout the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century.² Therefore, the Serbian Revolution, especially during its initial phase under Karageorge (1804–1813), was for the other Balkan nations, from Greeks to other South Slavs, a Balkan-size French revolution suited to local conditions: the principle of the sovereignty of nations was opposed to the principle of legitimism; feudal obligations were abolished and a new society gradually formed.³ In the absence of the aristocracy and a full-fledged middle class, agrarian egalitarianism of Serbian free peasants, who became owners of the land they tilled, was combined with the emerging aspirations of a modern nation. For its long-term effects on both the political and the social landscape of the entire Balkans, the eminent German historian Leopold von Ranke described the 1804–1813 Serbian insurrection as *Die Serbische Revolution*, by analogy with the French paradigm.⁴

For the Serbian elites, the revolutionary culture of French democracy came to be the object of long-term devotion, as it symbolized a major European dimension of the Serbian political experience acquired in the state- and institution-building process. Within a political landscape considerably different from the one characterizing France as a rich, developed and struc-

tie parlementaire en Serbie”, *Revue d’Europe Centrale* VII/1 (1999), Strasbourg 2000, 17–44; “Le modèle français en Serbie avant 1914”, in *La Serbie et la France. Une alliance atypique*, ed. D. T. Bataković (Belgrade: Institut des Etudes balkaniques de l’Académie serbe des sciences et des arts, 2010), 13–99.

² Bois le Comte, a French traveller who visited Serbia in 1834, discussed with officials of Prince Miloš Obrenović (r. 1815–39; 1858–60), in particular with his secretary, Dimitrije Davidović, the advantages of the French constitutional system. Bois le Comte noted in 1834: “le principe qu’on a adopté ici [en Serbie] est sur lequel va s’établir la propriété est celui-ci : que chacun a le droit de posséder autant de terre qu’il en peut cultiver, mais que personne ne doit en retenir davantage.” (Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris [hereafter M.A.E.], Correspondance d’Orient, 1833–1834, vol. 22, n° 99, Kragujevac, le 14 juin 1834). Cf. also Georges Castellan, *La vie quotidienne en Serbie au seuil de l’indépendance 1815–1839* (Paris: Hachette, 1967).

³ D. T. Bataković, “A Balkan-Size French Revolution? The 1804 Serbian Uprising in European Perspective”, *Balcanica* XXXVI (2005), 113–128; cf. also, idem, “La France et la Serbie 1804–1813”, *Balcanica* XXIX (1998), 117–157.

⁴ Leopold von Ranke, *A History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*. Translated by Mrs. Alexander Kerr (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973). Cf. also, Gregoire Yakchitch, *L’Europe et la résurrection de la Serbie (1804–1834)* (Paris: Hachette, 1917), 7–35; Dimitrije Djordjević, *Les révolutions nationales des peuples balkaniques 1804–1914* (Belgrade: Institut d’histoire, 1965), 23–38; Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., *The First Serbian Uprising 1804–1813* (Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

tured society, undeveloped post-Ottoman Serbia travelled a comparatively similar, cyclic, road to independence, striving for a genuine democratic system: from a national and social revolution (1804–1835) involving a series of insurrections, wars and victories to defeats, occupation and restoration, to a series of internal revolts marked by an eruption of democratic aspirations and demands which Serbia's autocratic nineteenth-century rulers, from Prince Miloš Obrenović to King Alexander Obrenović, tended to suppress by all manner of non-democratic means.

In spite of the differences in historical experience, economic development and social structure, what the two countries, France and Serbia, shared in common was the continuous effort to make the political system conform to the fundamental provisions of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, the modern Magna Carta of civil and political liberties in nineteenth-century Europe. On Serbia's winding journey to democracy, France was perceived as a political or ideological model against which her own values and level of achieved political liberties should be measured. In that sense, Guizot's famous remark, that "there is almost no great idea, no great principle of civilization which has not passed through France before it spread everywhere",⁵ appears to be applicable to Serbia as well.

In Serbia, with her markedly egalitarian traditions, the state was understood primarily in Jacobin terms. In a country lacking strong religious and aristocratic classes, the tenets of the French Revolution were strongly present among the Serbian elite as a model, before being gradually disseminated among the literate portion of the population, rural as well as urban, especially after the introduction of a system of compulsory schooling. Even the earliest application of a French constitutional model in Serbia — the revised *Charte* of 1830 inspired the short-lived *Sretenjski Ustav* (Presentation Day Constitution) of 1835 — showed a considerable receptiveness of Serbian society to the ideas originating in the French constitutional and political experience. The particular appeal of the tenets of the French Revolution, as a set of values shaping the notion of governance among the Serbian elites, went hand in hand with the increasing importance of political and economic ties between France and Serbia.⁶

As the French doctrines were taking root among the Serbian political elite, they assumed, under the Radical governments (1889–92 and 1903–14), some elements of a small social revolution. Furthermore, the Franco-

⁵ François Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* (Paris: Hachette, 1985), 57.

⁶ Cf. Paul Coquelle, *Le Royaume de Serbie* (Paris: L. Vanier, 1897); Joseph Mallat, *La Serbie contemporaine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie orientale et américaine J. Maisonneuve, 1902); Edouard Daveley, *La Serbie. Notes historiques, statistiques et commerciales* (Brussels: Aug. Gilles, 1907).

Russian alliance highlighted the growing compatibility of political interests between France and Serbia. The geopolitical determinants shaping Serbia's position on the international scene in the nineteenth century led her political class to turn to France for diplomatic support in a bid to counter the political and economic pressure exerted by the neighbouring Habsburg Monarchy. After the failed attempts of Serbia under Karageorge and Prince Miloš Obrenović to obtain support from France, at first from Napoleon, and then from the Restoration regime, Serbia — apart from her special ties with imperial Russia — sought to avoid being directly and permanently tied to any major European power.

The famous *Načertanije* of Ilija Garašanin (1844) — a foreign policy programme of Serbia inspired by the cooperation with the French-supported Polish émigré Adam Czartoryski — articulated the policy of equidistance from the major powers as Serbia's long-term strategy for the times to come. In the context of constant political pressure by the Habsburg Empire and imperial Russia, political support for Serbia's long-term political goals of national unification had been sought, within the strategy defined by *Načertanije*, primarily from France and Great Britain:

A new Serbian state in the south could give Europe every guarantee that it would be distinguished and vital, capable of maintaining itself between Austria and Russia. The geographic position of the country, its topography, abundance of natural resources, the combative spirit of its inhabitants, their sublime and ardent national feeling, their common origin and language — all indicate its stability and promising future.⁷

After the Paris Treaty of 1856, under which Russia lost her role as the sole guarantor of Serbia's autonomy within the Ottoman Empire to the Concert of Europe, France was continually, and most of the time successfully, present in the central Balkans: at first as a cautious but precious diplomatic intermediary in the conflicts confronting Serbia with the suzerain Court at Constantinople and the Cabinet in Vienna, and subsequently as an active factor in resolving a number of crises arising from the Eastern Question.⁸

The complex interdependence of foreign and domestic policies is particularly relevant to understanding the spread of foreign influence in Serbia, French in particular. Throughout the nineteenth century, French influence was present in two different spheres. As far as the sphere of Serbia's domestic policy and national aspirations is concerned, France was particu-

⁷ D.T. Bataković, "Ilija Garašanin's *Načertanije*. A reassessment", *Balcanica XXV-1* (1994), 157–183. For a solid biography of Garašanin see David MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin: Balkan Bismarck* (Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁸ Čedomir Popov, *Francuska i Srbija 1871–1878* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1974).

larly sympathetic to Serbian interests during the reign of Prince Alexander Karadjordjević and the Defenders of the Constitution (1842–58), a period when foreign influences on Serbia's decision making process had already gone far beyond usual diplomatic mediation. In that period, France played an important role in containing Austria's growing ambition to establish full control over the autonomous Principality of Serbia. During the reign of Napoleon III, relations between Serbia and France fluctuated, but assumed a new dimension after the French emperor, in 1852, received in his Paris palace the most influential Serbian minister, Ilija Garašanin, a Francophile and protector of the Serbian "Parisians": the question of strategic cooperation between Belgrade and Paris was afterwards closely tied to the policy of active pursuit of the nationality principle (*le principe de nationalité*), the French emperor's important political creed, which in the wake of the wars of Italian unification tended to be applied as an ideological innovation in his foreign policy, with varying success and significant tactical modifications, especially in Southeast Europe.⁹

If, however, one takes a look beyond general ideological emulations and borrowings, and endeavours to identify the exact foothold of French influence in Serbia, what emerges most clearly is the espousal and creative adaptation of the doctrine of French radicalism in the early 1880s. In the sphere of foreign policy, French influence was consolidated through the creation of the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1891–93, which changed the balance of power within the Concert of Europe and announced its further polarization into two rival blocs. In Belgrade, the Franco-Russian Alliance was seen, somewhat idealistically, as directly buttressing Serbia's national aspirations.¹⁰ The ideological model was underpinned by a consistently associated cultural meaning, and rounded off with foreign policy cooperation. It ultimately led to the Serbian elites' increasing receptivity to French institutions and the French understanding of political liberties as a desirable model which, duly modified to suit the local situation, became the measure of their overall political and national aspirations.

The number of French political institutions cloned or, more frequently, modified to suit Serbia's specific political needs, was not insignificant. In addition to the presence of other foreign influences (e.g. Austrian in the bureaucratic system, and British in the type of parliamentarianism), the distinctive role that French models played in Serbian society owed much to

⁹ Vasilj Popović, *Politika Francuske i Austrije na Balkanu u vreme Napoleona III* (Belgrade: Serbian Royal Academy, 1925); Ljiljana Aleksić, "Francuski uticaj u spoljnoj i unutrašnjoj politici za vreme Krimskog rata 1853–1856", *Istorijski časopis XI* (1961), 55–88.

¹⁰ M.A.E., *Correspondance politique*, vol. 13, n°22, Belgrade, le 17 février 1892.

the fact that the social makeup of the Serbian political mentality, imbued with egalitarian ideals, was closest to French political culture. The affinity was recognizable in the Serbian elites' appreciation for the French political and government system, and most of all for the French notion of nation and democracy, that is, for the significant level of popular participation in political decision making.

A number of doctrinal influences coupled with the process of strengthening political ties bore some institutional fruit, as a result of the twofold affinity, ideological and political. Even though French influence was not always immediate, nor were French institutional models adopted literally, it was a consistent and recognizable presence precisely because of the closeness in the understanding of the state institutions and political principles that drew their origin from the French Revolution. The Serbian constitutional solutions of 1888 and 1903, which relied on the Belgian Constitution of 1831, came out as a mixture of the French parliamentary tradition (especially as regards the powers of the National Assembly) and that of the British parliamentary monarchy. At the same time, the constitution laws, the laws on the press and political association, as well as the election laws, bore a strong imprint of the solutions built into the legislative foundations of the French Third Republic.¹¹

The Third Republic exemplified a state whose political life, unlike that of other major European countries, was not dominated by the aristocracy. Its multiparty system, frequent coalition governments, directly elected Assembly, proportional electoral system, ideologies of radicalism and socialism, were appealing models to the leading ideologists of Serbian democracy even though not all of them shared the same political views. There was also a similarity in the manner of effecting change of the political system. Dynastic changes in Serbia (1842, 1858 and 1903), similarly to France, often had the magnitude of a revolution, the change of monarch (or dynasty, the Obrenović and the Karadjordjević) entailing the change of the whole political system. Despite considerable differences between the two countries in economic development, social structure and overall political landscape, Serbia's creative adjustments of French doctrines and constitutional and legislative projects were invaluable in the process of her transformation, within the span of a mere century, from a peripheral Ottoman province at the beginning of the nineteenth century into a modern European state in the

¹¹ Milan Vladissavliévitch, "Développement constitutionnel du Royaume de Serbie", *Revue d'histoire politique et constitutionnelle* (1938), 229–257; Georges Tassic, "L'histoire constitutionnelle de la Serbie", *Revue d'histoire politique et constitutionnelle* (1938), 541–550; D. T. Bataković, "Le chemin vers la démocratie. Le développement constitutionnel de la Serbie 1869–1903", *Balcanica XXXVIII*[2007] (2008), 133–172.

decade preceding the First World War. Compared with France, where the struggle for a parliamentary system and democracy lasted from the Revolution in 1789 until the establishment of the Third Republic in 1875, the same process in Serbia lasted from the outbreak of the Serbian Revolution in 1804 until the coup d'état in 1903.

Four generations of Serbian Parisians

The tendency towards embracing French political ideas became a tradition after 1839–40, with the first Serbian government scholarship holders (*blagodejanci*) being sent to study at foreign universities, Paris included. The obvious disproportion between the relatively small number of scholarship holders (five to fifteen a year)¹² and their subsequent tremendous influence on Serbia's political life, on the shaping of her political doctrines as well as her national aspirations, reveals how French influence was conveyed and where it made the deepest imprint: in Belgrade, the Law School of Paris was informally described as the main school for training ministers for the Serbian government.¹³ A relatively even distribution and participation level of the French-educated Serbs, popularly known as “Parisians”, and other Francophiles in all political parties in Serbia was a good indicator of the extent of French influence — in terms of both the presence of French ideas and their direct or indirect espousal by Serbian society at different periods marked by the predominance of different political parties.¹⁴

In Serbia, as elsewhere in Europe, ideas spread faster than they were, or could be, absorbed into the existing social fabric or projected political institutions. An important, if not major, role in the process was played by the Serbian “Parisians” in all four generations of political figures who led the nineteenth-century struggle for a constitutional system, later on for a parliamentary government, ministerial responsibility and, eventually, for a profound democratic transformation of Serbia. The term “Parisians” referred not only to persons

¹² Vojislav Pavlović, “Srpski studenti u Parizu 1839–1856”, *Istorijski časopis XXXIII* (1987), 188–199; Ljubinka Trgovčević, “Savant serbes – élèves français 1880–1914”, in *Les relations entre la France et les pays yougoslaves du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle* (Ljubljana: Centre culturel Charles Nodier, 1987), 81–84.

¹³ Emile Haumant, *La formation de la Yougoslavie (XVI^e–XX^e siècles)* (Paris: Bossard, 1930), 292; Vojislav Pavlović, “Influence culturelle de la France en Serbie à l'époque des 'ustavobranitelji' [constitutionnalistes]”, in *Rapports franco-yougoslaves. A l'occasion des 150 ans de l'ouverture du premier consulat français en Serbie* (Belgrade: Institut d'histoire, 1990), 103–111.

¹⁴ Jovan Žujović, *L'influence intellectuelle française sur la Serbie* (Vannes: Imprimerie Lafoly Frères, 1918), 3–17; Ćedomir Popov, “Influence française sur la pensée sociale et politique serbe au XIX^e siècle”, in *Rapports franco-yougoslaves*, 350–357.

educated in France but also to those who had spent a certain amount of time in Paris and were visibly influenced by political doctrines of French provenance (liberalism, socialism and radicalism) or by solutions stemming from French political practice, and included even the few conservative politicians more loyal to the Crown than to the idea of democracy.

Incipient even in the 1835 Serbian Constitution, French influence becomes readily traceable as of the Saint Andrew's Day Assembly in 1858 (the Serbian version of the Three Glorious Days of the July Revolution of 1830), if we take it that it was in 1858 that agrarian masses led by Parisian-educated Serbian Liberals — the first ideologists in the modern sense — firmly stepped onto Serbia's political stage. In contrast to "Germans" (*Nemačkari*), mostly autocratically minded Austrian-educated Serb bureaucrats from the Habsburg Empire that flooded Serbia after 1842 in response to the demand for trained civil servants in the modernized state apparatus,¹⁵ the "Parisians", at least their first generation, were considered a genuine domestic intelligentsia sensitive to the numerous problems of the agrarian population.

Prior to its independence in 1878, the Principality of Serbia had an area of no more than 37,841 sq. km, and a population of 1.2 million (1869). The urban population accounted for slightly more than ten percent distributed in forty-eight towns (*varoši*) and small towns (*varošice*), with Belgrade as the capital with roughly 26,000 inhabitants. Half of the nearly ninety percent of rural population were owners of medium-sized holdings (5–20 ha). At the time of the formation of political parties in 1880, Serbia had an enlarged area of 48,303 sq. km with 1.9 million inhabitants. Only three years later, in 1884, the population increased by 200 thousand, and the number of towns and small towns rose to over seventy. The modest middle class kept growing: to 15.89 percent after Serbia built her first railway line (Belgrade–Niš) and established her National (Central) Bank. According to the reliable data collected by Vladimir Karić, in 1884 Serbia had about 15,800 persons engaged in various businesses, from entrepreneurs to manufacturers. In 1885, 51,979 students enrolled in the Serbian primary and secondary schools were taught by 1,270 teachers. Within ten years, or by 1895, the urban population grew to 319,375 (13.8 percent). In 1910, 382,881 people (13.1 percent) lived in urban areas and 2,528,819 (86.9 percent) in the countryside. The population of Belgrade, the base of all main political parties, rose from 54,249 in 1890 to 89,876 in 1910.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. Petar Krestić, *Prečani i Šumadinci. Teodor Pavlović i "Serbske narodne novine o Kneževini Srbiji (1838–1848)* (Belgrade & Novi Sad: Istorijski institut SANU & Matrica srpska, 1996).

¹⁶ Data taken from D. T. Bataković, ed., *Histoire du peuple serbe* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2005); Milan Dj. Milićević, *Kneževina Srbija* (Belgrade: Državna štamparija,

Liberals: education, democracy, liberty

In each of the four generations of the Serbian political elite which were to crystallize into modern political parties, the “Parisians” played a preponderant role, if not in the final shaping and implementation of their party programmes, then certainly in defining the underlying political tenets. To the first modern Serbian generation of political activists, the young Liberals of 1858, France undoubtedly was the political ideal in the sense in which the Second Republic, conceived in the Revolution of 1848, impacted most Balkan elites. This political orientation was heralded by the reaction of the Serbian youth — from whom the first generation of liberal youth arose — to the news of the revolt in Paris in February 1848. It was condensed in the slogan: “France is fighting for all of us!”¹⁷

At the 1858 St Andrew’s Day Assembly (*Svetoandrejska skupština*), a bloodless revolution against the oligarchy embodied in the Defenders of the Constitution, a National Assembly, as the “oldest, most significant, and most sacred Serbian institution” exercised, at least for a little while, real legislative power. Therefore, the long-term goal of two young liberal “Parisians”, Jevrem Grujić and Milovan Janković, as secretaries of the St Andrew’s Day Assembly, was to combine two mutually remote political models: the French National Convention, as a basis of popular sovereignty, and a general model of Western-type democracy on the one hand, and on the other, the egalitarian tradition of “instinctive democratism”, thought of as being inherent in the patriarchal Serbian countryside with its *zadruga* (extended family household) as the core of that democratism, still undeveloped in the modern sense.¹⁸ By combining the two models, the Liberals became the first organized political force to bring the fundamental European principles of constitutionality and representative government into harmony with the demands of the Serbian peasantry, who still lacked mod-

1876); Vladimir Karić, *Srbija. Opis zemlje, naroda i države* (Belgrade: Kraljevsko-srpska državna štamparija, 1887). For more statistics on nineteenth-century Serbia see Holm Sundhausen, *Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834–1914. Mit europäischen Vergleichsdaten* (Munich: Oldenburg, 1989).

¹⁷ Yovan Skérlić [Jovan Skerlić], “Une société de la Jeunesse serbe en 1848”, *La Révolution de 1848* XIV (1906), 73–78. See also Milan Subotić, *Sricanje slobode* (Niš: Gradina, 1992). For an overview which includes the Serb Liberals in the Habsburg Empire as well see Branko Bešlin, “Srpski liberalizam u XIX veku”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 67/68 (2003), 59–104; idem, *Evropski uticaji na srpski liberalizam u XIX veku* (Sremski Karlovci–Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2005).

¹⁸ On the *zadruga* see Dragolioub Novakovitch, *La zadroura. Les communautés familiales chez les Serbes* (Paris: A. Pedone, 1905); Emile Sicard, *La zadroura sud-slave dans l’évolution du groupe domestique* (Paris: Ed. Orphys, 1943).

ern political culture, and to create a third model that was to have an appeal to the subsequent generations of political leaders, and not only Liberal.¹⁹ Although for the most part ardent patriots and Russophiles, the Serbian Liberals were able to set the struggle for national unification — fought with Russia's strategic support — apart from their unambiguous objective to introduce Western-type institutions into Serbian society, which made them the target of repeated and fierce Slavophile accusations that they had been indulging themselves in the “poison” of Western individualism.²⁰

In opposing the “enlightened despotism” during the second reign of Prince Michael Obrenović (1860–1868), the Liberals tied, for the first time in Serbia's political practice, the need for fundamental internal reform with the successful pursuit of an active national policy, thereby challenging the Prince's stance that the question of political reform should not be placed on the agenda until after national unification. Thus, the Liberals were the first political generation in Serbia who, following the recipe of the French historian and ideologist of liberalism, Jules Michelet, pointed to the capacity of the “national genius” to transform the country from within and lead it towards national emancipation. The liberal ideological legacy among the Serbs also includes a political motto, launched by a broad liberal movement, the United Serbian Youth (*Ujedinjena omladina srpska*), that only countries with a constitutional and democratic system have the capacity for bringing the mission of national unification to its successful end.²¹

Perhaps the deepest imprint left by the Liberals, however, was in the area of education, as the main vehicle for disseminating political ideas. By translating the key writings of liberal ideologists, both French, such as Benjamin Constant, Édouard de Laboulaye and Frédéric Bastiat, and British, such as John Stuart Mill, they made Western ideas accessible to the domestic public, and created and maintained a favourable public climate for critical reflection. Serbian liberals frequently referred to the views of French

¹⁹ D. T. Bataković, “Jevrem Grujić: Obzori slobode”, in Jovica Trkulja & Dragoljub M. Popović, eds., *Liberalna misao u Srbiji. Prilozi istoriji liberalizma od kraja 18. do sredine 20. veka* (Belgrade: Centar za unapređivanje pravnih studija 2001), 109–132. For an excellent biography of Jevrem Grujić see Jovan Miličević, *Jevrem Grujić. Istorijat sve-toandrejskog liberalizma* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1964).

²⁰ A French translation, “L'épître aux Serbes”, in Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1988), 167–194, quotation in p. 175. Cf. also Alex N. Dragnich, *The Development of Parliamentary Government in Serbia* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1978), 32–36 and 60–61.

²¹ D. T. Bataković, “Les premiers libéraux de Serbie: Le cercle des ‘Parisiens’,” *Balkan Studies* 41/1 (2000), 83–111. On the United Serbian Youth, see M. Jovanović, “Ujedinjena omladina srpska i francuska društvena misao”, in *Ujedinjena omladina srpska* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1968), 89–102.

liberals, most of all Constant and his disciple, Laboulaye. It was not by accident that a “Parisian” of a younger generation, Djordje S. Simić, dedicated his translation of Benjamin Constant to “Serbian statesmen and [National] Assembly members”. Dj. S. Simić expected that the work of the French ideologist would help clarify their occasionally blurred understanding of constitutional powers and rights. Spurred by discrepancies between Serbian constitutional theory and practice, debates over the representative system, parliamentarianism and constitutional liberties proved useful for the effort to combine Western doctrines with the distinctive features of rural democratism from which Serbian parliamentarianism arose.²²

In order to offer the Serbian public a “shop window for the tenets of democracy”, an encyclopaedia of contemporary political doctrines which most of the Serbian intelligentsia knew only generally and often understood superficially, Vladimir Jovanović, the main ideologist among Serbian Liberals, set out to put together a political dictionary²³ on the model of the French economist and statistician Maurice Block’s two-volume *Dictionnaire générale de la politique* published in 1863. Rather than being content to simply reproduce the entries from this widely accepted French handbook, Vladimir Jovanović complemented the French interpretative perspective with his own, which lent a tinge of originality to his work.²⁴ The most prominently featuring in the corpus of ideas taken over by Jovanović are the views of modern French thinkers such as Montesquieu, Condorcet, Auguste Comte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Girardin, as well as those of British liberal thinkers from John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham to Herbert Spenser.²⁵ Jovanović suggested to his readers that “mankind progresses towards the democratic ideal ... Even the still existing monarchies reflect an influence of democratic ideas as they begin to recognize the principles of civil equality, popular vote, universal suffrage and local self-government ... This whole dictionary is a shop window for the tenets of democracy.”²⁶

²² Cf. his biography by Ana Stolić, *Djordje S. Simić. Poslednji srpski diplomata XIX veka* (Belgrade: Istorijски institut, 2003).

²³ Vladimir Jovanović, *Politički rečnik*, vols. I–IV (Novi Sad–Belgrade: 1870–73). The published volumes of the *Political Dictionary* end with the letter “d”, while the rest survives in manuscript (Historical Archives of Belgrade).

²⁴ D. T. Bataković, “Vladimir Jovanović. Ideolog liberalizma u Srbiji”, *Nova srpska politička misao* 2–3 (1998), 235–247. The best biography of Jovanović is the one by Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism. Vladimir Jovanović and the Transformation of Serbian Politics* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1975).

²⁵ Andrija B. Stojković, *Filozofski pogledi Vladimira Jovanovića* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1968), 82–109; Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, 183–185.

²⁶ Jovanović, vol. IV of *Politički rečnik*, 722–723.

The Serbian liberals sought to monopolize educational and scholarly institutions, much like the French did (for instance, the Collège de France). In the 1860s, this should not have been too much of a problem for the professors of liberal persuasion, as there were only two institutions of the kind in Serbia: the Great School (*Velika škola*) and the Serbian Learned Society (*Srpsko učeno društvo*), a precursor to the Serbian Royal Academy. Obviously, the institutional activity of Serbian Liberals could not have the impact on a broader public comparable to France, given that Serbia's cultural level and the number of people educated enough to be receptive to such influences were several times lower. Lacking any significant support for the transmission of the political doctrines among the numerically weak Serbian elites in the 1860s, the Liberals came to be recognized as benevolent conveyors of the doctrines of French democracy only twenty years later, when the institutionalization of political parties led to further polarizations within the more complex political class. Credited for broadening the political horizons of the Serbian intelligentsia, without, however, extending their activities to reach deeper into the lower strata of society, the Liberals came to occupy a position which was not much different from what was termed the *juste milieu* in France, not without negative connotations.

The Liberals often claimed to represent the genuine will of the people, which, especially after their having been persecuted during the 1860s, strengthened their "belief that their devotion to the national cause had been so thoroughly demonstrated that they had little further obligation to consult the people. Their appeal to the people was rhetorical, not actual; a form of political discourse, not program."²⁷

This ambivalent position of the Liberals towards the peasantry, which they idealized but were unable to mobilize politically, eventually turned against them. Their often opportunistic attitude towards the last rulers of the House of Obrenović, autocratic King Milan (Prince 1868–1882, King 1882–1889) and just as autocratic King Alexander (1889–1903), as well as the absence of more profound ties with the peasantry left them on the periphery of political life, overshadowed by the Radicals. The great popularity of the French-inspired and populist-oriented People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*) among the rural population, hindered ambitions of the Liberals (especially Alimpije Vasiljević, Jovan Ristić and Jovan Avakumović) to impose themselves as the only equable intermediary between the conflicting interests of the Crown and the agrarian masses who, led by local priests and provincial teachers, were vigorously stepping into Serbia's political arena in the early 1880s.

²⁷ Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development. The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1990), 178.

The role of the Liberals seems to have been the strongest in the field of education and the developing education system: they exerted a formative, if not decisive, influence on the intellectual horizons of several generations of students of the Great School (*Velika Škola*) — which in 1905 grew into the University of Belgrade — by encouraging them to seek inspiration for their concrete political engagement in the French revolutionary experience. Furthermore, secondary school textbooks penned by liberal professors, especially after a law of 1881 abolished censorship and relaxed restrictions, had a far-reaching influence on subsequent generations. The general-history textbook written in 1880 by a liberal, Miloš Zečević, echoes the ideas of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Revolution of 1848 and interprets the course of history as an unavoidable conflict between the ruler and the people, a conflict in which the people inevitably prevail because, guided by the principles of liberal democracy, they slowly but surely seize back their usurped political rights one by one. Thus history emerges as a road paved by the French Revolution and inexorably leading to democracy, and the Revolution as an event whose historical significance overshadows even that of Christianity.²⁸ A materialist worldview, nationalism seen as guaranteeing collective rights, and republicanism as guaranteeing individual democratic rights, coalesce into a single picture of contemporary history.²⁹ The Liberals lost the political battle for the acceptance of their beliefs, but circuitously, through their intellectual influence on the intelligentsia, they succeeded in breeding the spirit of resistance to the usurpation of political liberties, which were understood in the same way as they were in France.

In spite of its attempted ideological renewals, which entailed the espousal of some tenets that had made Serbian Radicalism hugely popular among the agrarian masses, the Liberal Party began to crumble immediately after the multiparty system was established in Serbia in 1881. The Liberals considered themselves upholders of constitutional government, but the Liberal governments often tended to act contrary to their professed principles and resorted to arbitrary decisions which often amounted to mere political repression and did nothing more than help the Radicals win more followers among the frustrated agrarian population. Internal ideological dissent in the middle of the 1880s was a good indicator of the failure of the Liberal conservative wing under the leadership of Jovan Ristić, which tended to operate through personal influence rather than to base its activ-

²⁸ Miloš Zečević, *Istorija sveta: pregled udešavan za srednje škole*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1880).

²⁹ Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Beogradski izdavački-grafički zavod, 1991), 75–76.

ity on a productive combination of ideas and practical political work.³⁰ Its distrust of the electorate's maturity to make independent political decisions proved fatal in the long run. Eventually Ristić, although he himself was an outstanding statesman and diplomat, had to admit, if reluctantly, that his party had lost the entire youth group to the Radicals.³¹

Progressives: Enlightened reforms imposed from above

The conservative tradition in Serbia of the 1860s and 1870s was embodied in Jovan Marinović and Filip Hristić, two "Parisians" protected by Ilija Garašanin. The Conservative-Liberal cabinet of Jovan Marinović (1873–1874) introduced fundamental laws regarding the freedom of the press, protection of the minimum amount of land owned by a peasant against sequestration, as well as the metric system and a domestic silver currency. Having lost majority Liberal support in the National Assembly in 1874, the Marinović cabinet became the first Serbian government to be toppled in the National Assembly, to call new elections, and resign after the electoral defeat.³²

The political ideal of the second generation of Serbia's political class, members of the Progressive Party (*Napredna stranka*) founded in 1880, the urban intelligentsia with unambiguously pro-Western affinities — originated from Prince Michael's bureaucratic elite (the Young Conservatives) — was condensed into the belief that European-style modernization was the shortest way to a stable political system. As their organ *Videlo* (Daylight) shows, the Progressives were fervent supporters of "the law, freedom and progress". Compared with the Liberals who, upon their return from Western universities, brought back to Serbia "the cult of science and political freedom", while lacking enthusiasm "for Western customs, in particular for urban life [...] a younger generation with an already over-refined sensibility (the Progressives), accepted from the West not only its science and its free thinking, but its way of life. They felt the pleasure of the material culture of the West, and admired the dignity and comfortable life of its up-

³⁰ Jovan Ristić was a German-educated historian, a disciple of Leopold von Ranke, with modest Parisian experience. Twice acting as regent for Serbian rulers, Ristić was considered the best Serbian statesman and diplomat in the second half of the nineteenth century. For more see David MacKenzie, *Jovan Ristić. Outstanding Serbian Statesman* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 2006).

³¹ Luka Lazarević, *Mali pomenik* (Belgrade: Planeta, n.d.), 227.

³² Cf. his biography by David MacKenzie, *Jovan Marinović: Evropski gospodin i srpski diplomata (1821–1893)* (Belgrade: Centar za unapređivanje pravnih studija, 2006).

per classes. They happily travelled through Europe and many used French words in their speech.”³³

It was the first Progressive cabinet led by Milan Piroćanac (1880–1883) that formally ushered Serbia into the world of multiparty politics. The Law on the Freedom of Association and Organization passed on 13 April 1881 legalized political organization, while a whole set of other important laws by the same government, regarding free elections, local self-government, and taxation, paved the way for an accelerated modernization of political institutions.³⁴ The Liberals’ idealized patriarchal democracy of the Serbian countryside was not compatible with the Progressives’ vision of a process of gradual enlightened reforms leading to a modern, European-type political system. The reform process was supposed to be imposed on an unenlightened population frustrated with the ruler’s excessive powers by way of the electoral census system such as had existed under the July Monarchy in France. This censitary system would have excluded from political decision-making most of the rural population, swayed by what the Progressives described as the Radicals’ irresponsible populist demagoguery. In fact, intellectually close to the French Doctrinaires François Guizot and P. P. Royer-Collard, the Progressives were perhaps the most distinctly pro-Western and “Parisian” in Serbia (Milan Piroćanac, Milutin Garašanin, the Marinković brothers, Pavle and Vojislav). Perceived as arrogant elitists, however, they soon fell out of public favour in a still egalitarian society, a country described as “the Poor Man’s Paradise” by a British traveller,³⁵ and the “agrarian sea” by French diplomatic representatives. In order to provide a constitutional framework for their ideas, the Progressives harboured plans to change the 1869 Constitution and introduce an upper chamber of the Assembly. The upper chamber would consist of intellectuals appointed by the King and be able to control the poorly educated Radical deputies of the elected lower chamber, mostly peasants, whom they saw as politically irresponsible and easily manipulated by populist ideas.³⁶

The Progressives’ lack of awareness of the condition of the agrarian masses, which made up a vast majority of the population, and their

³³ Slobodan Jovanović also stressed that “in their way of life, the Liberals remained half patriarchal. They did not know either luxury or comfort.” (The quotation from Jovanović translated into English, after Stokes, *Politics as Development*, 180.)

³⁴ The programmes of the Serbian political parties are available in Vasilije Krestić & Radoš Ljušić, *Programi i statuti srpskih političkih stranaka do 1918* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1991).

³⁵ Herbert Vivian, *Serbia. The Poor Man’s Paradise* (London: Longmans, Green & Cie, 1897).

³⁶ Milan Piroćanac, *Beleške*, ed. Suzana Rajić (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2004).

inability to communicate with them in a simple and immediate manner, resulted from their reluctance to understand and accept the peasants' often simplistic political aspirations for immediate reform: lower taxes, less bureaucracy and state non-intervention in social life. On the whole, such an attitude estranged them from the rural world, traditionally disinclined to any innovation brought about by state intervention; by contrast, some Progressives in smaller towns managed to gain and maintain the trust of their constituencies by virtue of personal or family authority (Stojan Novaković and Vojislav Marinković, respectively). Those, however, were isolated cases, insufficient to ensure political support as widespread as the one elicited by the People's Radical Party.

The Progressive Party leadership, like the Liberal, was made up of influential intellectuals (Milan Piroćanac, Stojan Novaković, Milutin Garašanin, Čedomilj Mijatović, Milan Kujundžić Aberdar, Pavle Marinković). Their push for enlightened reform in the country's political and economic systems was soon met with resistance from the peasantry, still xenophobic, steeped in egalitarianism, and unwilling to accept their long-term economic projects. In the first phase of their activity, the Progressives, together with the Radicals, enthusiastically embarked upon an extensive reform of the political system, virtually at the same time republican laws were passed in France in 1881.

A great similarity between the Serbian Law on the Freedom of Association and Organization of 13 April 1881 and its French counterpart of 13 June 1881 suggests that the Serbian lawmakers kept a keen eye on the debate held in France and drew on the already accepted French draft law.³⁷ The Serbian Law on the Press of 12 March 1881 drew even more closely upon a French legislative solution, in this case not on the final version of the French law passed on 29 July 1881, but on its much more liberal draft submitted to the French National Assembly for debate. In addition to the Serbian Law on Judges of 21 February 1881, stipulating lifetime tenure for the highest judicial offices, the Compulsory Education Law passed in 1882 was also inspired by the practical solutions of the French laws of 16 June and 28 March 1882.

In his capacity as Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Stojan Novaković keenly followed the process of secularization of education in the Third Republic overseen by Jules Ferry.³⁸ Inspired by Ferry's effort

³⁷ See *Zbornik zakona i uredaba. Prečišćeno i sistematski uređeno izdanje*. Vol. I *Ustav, organski zakoni i opšti administrativni zakoni* (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1913), 395–410. For the French laws see Marcel Morabito & Daniel Bourmaud, *Histoire constitutionnelle et politique de la France 1789–1958* (Paris: Montchrestrien, 1991), 329–330.

³⁸ D. T. Bataković, "Nacija, država i demokratija. O političkim idejama Stojana Novakovića", in Andrej Mitrović, ed., *Stojanu Novakoviću u spomen* (Beograd: Srpska

to achieve a balance between order and progress by means of compulsory laicized education, Stojan Novaković expected compulsory education to provide a basis for an accelerated emancipation of the peasantry, “that huge, democratic, hardworking and peaceful mass of people”,³⁹ without whose support the pursuit of modernization would have been impossible. Moreover, it was amidst the fiercest Radical anti-Progressive campaign that the Compulsory Education Law was passed by an Assembly which, after the exclusion of the legitimately elected Radical representatives, was dominated by Progressives, the so-called “two-vote getters” (*dvoglasici*), as they often had received no more than two votes in Radical strongholds in the interior of the country.⁴⁰

Even though not all of these liberal laws were endorsed by the electorate, the Progressive governments in the 1880s opened Serbia to foreign capital and significant foreign investment, ushering the country into the circle of modern states with a structured administration, compulsory education and a standing army. Astonished by the effects of their own liberal legislation, however, the Progressives introduced restrictions, which disclosed their unwillingness to give up the limited, censitary, democracy. Lacking support from the electorate, like a “General Staff without an army”, as French diplomatic representatives put it, the Progressives became the pillar of dynastic autocracy of the last Obrenovićs, upholding the “master’s will”, that is, the ruler’s active role in a conservative vision of the system, order and legality.⁴¹

The Progressives saw the Radicals, their main rivals highly popular among the rural population, as simple “elements of disorder”, and not merely as populist demagogues but dangerous Russophiles in a system that had been perceived as pro-Austrian for decades. As a result, they were vigorously opposed to the “despotism of the masses” epitomized by the Radicals, and saw a bicameral system as the only way to counter their fast-spreading populist doctrine. Some Progressive leaders, such as Stojan Novaković, tended to invoke the view of a conservative liberal, Laboulaye, that the vicious political cycle of alternate revolutions and coups d’état, constitutional and absolutist regimes — common to the Serbian and French political traditions — could only be broken, indeed, ended once and for all, by introducing an upper chamber, the Senate.⁴² In that sense, for Laboulaye and the Serbian

književna zadruga, 1996), 147–176.

³⁹ André-Jean Tudesque, *La démocratie en France depuis 1815* (Paris: PUF, 1971), 73.

⁴⁰ Dragnich, *Parliamentary Government*, 70–71.

⁴¹ M.A.E., *Correspondance politique, Serbie*, vol. 17, n° 39, Belgrade, le 25 mai 1896.

⁴² Edouard de Laboulaye, *Questions constitutionnelles* (Paris: Charpentier, 1872), 333–366.

Progressive leaders alike, a bicameral system was not just a matter of political strategy, but fundamentally a matter of freedom.⁴³

The culminating point of this political conception was the imposed Constitution of 1901 — a brainchild of the Progressives, at the time formally inactive as a party — which for the first time in the history of Serbian parliamentarianism introduced a bicameral system, with the Senate as an upper house. Apart from borrowing from the Belgian and Romanian constitutional practices, it drew visibly upon French constitutionalism: joint sessions of the Senate and the Assembly. Royal powers as stipulated in the final version of the 1901 Constitution were quite similar to the French model of Orléanist parliamentarianism.

Radicals: popular sovereignty and local self-government

The third generation of the political class in Serbia, the Radicals, had undergone a profound ideological transformation in the course of the formative decade of their activity (1870–1880). As students at foreign, mostly Swiss, and only occasionally French universities, Radical leaders shifted from being ardent supporters of the Paris Commune and starry-eyed followers of Svetozar Marković's populist socialism and his Russian Populist models, to becoming a modern party cleverly combining the experience of local self-government — which had great symbolic and practical significance for the Serbian peasantry — with the ideological tenets of French radicalism. Bidding to limit the prerogatives of the Crown, it was as early as the time of the Timok Rebellion (1883) that they put forth their vision of the role of the monarch as that of a cautious intermediary, and considered it the first and foremost prerequisite for a true parliamentary system. According to the Radicals, the monarch was to offer advice, put forward proposals and spur on his ministers.⁴⁴ This was a Serbian version of Thiers's famous formula: the king rules but does not govern. According to the Radicals, a government can only result from the parliamentary majority because the people alone have the right to decide, through their freely elected representatives, in which political group to put their trust.⁴⁵ The Radicals' transformation from a broad populist movement into a disciplined party with a modern democratic outlook — accomplished in the aftermath of the Timok Rebellion — was marked by their

⁴³ Jivoïne Péritch [Živojin Perić], "La nouvelle constitution de Serbie (de 1901)" (Paris 1903/4), with an Appendix (1904) on the 1903 Constitution, Offprint from the *Bulletin mensuel de la Société de législation comparée*.

⁴⁴ In the Radical party daily *Samoupravva* [Self-Government], Belgrade, 13 (25) January 1883.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

resolve to gradually pursue their political goals, not by failed uprisings as in the Timok Rebellion, but in conformity with the parliamentary procedure of modern European democracies. Their most popular slogan, from the 1881 party programme was: “The people’s wellbeing and freedom internally [domestic policy], and externally [foreign policy], liberation and unification of the as yet unredeemed portions of Serbdom.”

The Radicals indeed put into practice the theoretical postulates of democracy which the Liberals put forth as an ideal in their writings and public lectures, and which the Progressives tended to confer only upon a narrow circle of the enlightened bureaucratic elite. Democracy, which Alexis de Tocqueville had found in America, and Jules Michelet in Parisian suburbia, the Radicals found in the Serbian countryside. Making it the locus of their political campaigning, they were able to hold sway over about eighty per cent of the electorate in the early 1880s.⁴⁶

At periods when there was no police or local bureaucratic interference into the parliamentary election process, the Radicals usually managed to win as many as five-sixths of the electorate (in 1883, 1886, 1889, 1890, and especially after 1903, when the Radical Party had already split into two factions), leaving the Liberals and Progressives to share the few remaining seats. It was only at periods marked by abuses and pressures of the bureaucratic and police apparatuses of the last Obrenovićs that the Liberal and Progressive parties could secure the necessary parliamentary majority. However, lacking the mandate entrusted by the people, from the late 1880s both the Liberals and the Progressives remained dependent solely on the “will of the master”.

The Radicals in Serbia belonged to the large family of nineteenth-century European radicalism which, like socialism and communism in the following century, functioned as a mutually supporting international. Even if there was no direct political contact among them, which was the case with the Serbian and French Radicals in the 1880s, radical doctrine spread as a corpus of universally accepted ideas of political liberty relevant to every European society. The original political programme of the Serbian Radicals, adopted in 1881, was a modified version of the *Programme de Belleville*, the 1869 election programme of Léon Gambetta, one of the earliest ideologists of French radicalism. Supplemented with some points taken from Georges Clemenceau’s election programme of 1881, it is considered the ideological basis on which the Serbian Radicals built their political doctrine, adding, of course, some experiences proper to the Serbian political landscape.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ M.A.E., Correspondance politique, Serbie, vol. 16, n°44, Belgrade, 9 juillet 1895.

⁴⁷ “Depuis l’impôt progressif, idéal obligé de l’école radical en Europe, jusqu’à la milice nationale en passant par l’élection des juges dans le procès civils, par la suppression de

There are no available documents which might elucidate how exactly these French programmes came to be incorporated into the platform of the People's Radical Party in Serbia, but it has been widely accepted that the credit for embracing the basic ideas of French radicalism should be attributed to the party's main ideologist in its formative years, Pera Todorović. A Swiss-educated journalist, Pera Todorović, during his short-term stay in Paris, had seen French Radicals in action.⁴⁸ According to Radical newspapers, the party members and its leaders in Belgrade were subscribed to the French press, including French Radical newspapers. It seems logical, therefore, that this was one of the transmission channels through which radical ideas, both in doctrinal and practical aspects, found their way to Serbia.⁴⁹

Apart from Léon Gambetta and Georges Clemenceau, recent research has pointed to analogies with the 1881 election programme of Camille Pelletan, which is yet another of many indicators of the espousal of the French radical doctrine. Pelletan argued for local self-government where the work of local authorities, police included, would be overseen by the municipality.⁵⁰ As noted above, Clemenceau's election programme of 1881 was quite close to the demands of the Serbian Radicals, except for the sections specific to the French environment: constitutional reform, a unicameral parliament, universal suffrage, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and association, local self-government, progressive taxation, separation of church and state (the laicized school above all). The Radicals in Serbia expanded Clemenceau's agenda with a project of local self-government, which had featured among the Serbian peasantry's political demands ever since the First Serbian Uprising in 1804.

What the Radicals in Serbia shared in common with the French ideologists of radicalism apart from the demands for universal suffrage, the freedom of assembly and association, and the freedom of the press, was a

l'Administration préfectorale, par l'organisation des grandes communes et l'instruction ... intégrale à la charge des pouvoirs publics, tout y est, hormis l'idée qu'une race qui portera longtemps encore les traces du joug Turc, puisse vivre et prospérer sous une tel regime." M.A.E. *Correspondance politique, Serbie*, vol. 10, n° 60, Belgrade, le 9 septembre 1889, with a French translation of the 1881 Programme of the People's Radical Party enclosed.

⁴⁸ Velizar Ninčić, *Pera Todorović* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1956), 68–75.

⁴⁹ Milan St. Protić "The French Radical Party Movement. The Radical Party in Serbia. A parallel Analysis of Ideologies", in Richard B. Spence & Linda L. Nelson, eds., *Scholar, Patriot, Mentor. Historical Essays in Honor of Dimitrije Djordjevic* (Boulder and New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 135–142; idem, *Radikali u Srbiji. Ideje i pokret* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1990), 70–74.

⁵⁰ Pierre Barral, *Les fondateurs de la Troisième République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1968), 66–70; Tony-Révillon, *Camille Pelletan 1840–1915* (Paris 1930), 44–47.

militant insistence on constitutional reform, full legislative power of the Assembly, and judicial independence; they harshly opposed bicameralism and called for generalized decentralization, free and compulsory education, and election by list.⁵¹ Rather than a fundamental political conviction, the concept of a citizen army instead of a standing one, taken over from the ideology of Swiss and French republicanism of the 1860s, was for the Serbian Radicals an act of protest against the military caste which had become the mainstay of Milan Obrenović's regime after 1883.

Suspected of being supporters of the Russian anarchists and populists, the Serbian Radicals, however, put much effort into providing theoretical instruction for their followers even in the first phase of their activity. It was in the early 1870s that Nastas Petrović set out to translate Alexis de Tocqueville's famous study *On Democracy in America* into the Serbian language.⁵² One of the leading Radicals in the 1880s, Kosta S. Taušanović, translated in 1879 C. Chever's book on the Swiss Constitution, government and local self-government, which, the same as Tocqueville's, was anything but anarchist and populist.⁵³ Another of the translated writings heralding the Radicals' adherence to the principles of parliamentary democracy was Johann Kaspar Bluntschli's theoretical essay, previously published in Switzerland, on the character and spirit of political parties.⁵⁴ Even though translated in 1883 by a Liberal, Djordje S. Simić, two seminal works of Benjamin Constant, on political principles and on ministerial responsibility, were (or could be), at least for better educated members of the People's Radical Party, usable as reference works in day-to-day parliamentary practice.⁵⁵ Interest in French political thought is also readable from translations published in serial form in Radical newspapers and magazines. The socialist origin of early radicalism in Serbia is recognizable from the translations of Louis Blanc and Karl Marx that appeared in the party daily *Samouprava* (Self-Government) in the first years of its publication.

⁵¹ *Samouprava* n° 1/8, Belgrade, 8 (20) January 1881.

⁵² Aleksis de Tokvilj, *O demokratiji u Americi*, 2 vols., transl. Nastas Petrović (Belgrade 1872–74).

⁵³ K. Hevera, *Švajcarska. Njen ustav, vlada i njena samouprava* (Belgrade: Zadruga štamparskih radenika, 1879).

⁵⁴ Jozef Blunčli, *Karakter i duh političkih partija*, transl. Nikola Kapetanović (Belgrade: Izdanje Čupićeve zadužbine, 1880).

⁵⁵ Benžaman Konstan, *Načela politike i o ministarskoj odgovornosti* (Belgrade: Kraljevsko-srpska državna štamparija, 1883). On B. Constant, see the major study by Paul Bastid, *Benjamin Constant et sa doctrine* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966), vol. II, 969–976.

However, the socialist discourse of some Radical leaders, such as Lazar Paču,⁵⁶ gradually gave way to debates over the Assembly, ministerial responsibility, royal powers in a parliamentary monarchy, constitutional revision projects, or subtleties of relevance to the consistent functioning of the representative system. In the late 1880s, when Milovan Dj. Milovanović, who had obtained his degree of Doctor of Law from Paris University, took charge of the party's doctrinal discourse and legal interpretation, a French approach in interpreting British parliamentarianism became clearly observable within the already defined Radical ideology.⁵⁷

The draft constitution drawn up by the Radicals in 1882 relied not only on the laws passed by the St Andrew's Day Assembly in 1858, but also on the French revolutionary constitutions, which in turn had drawn upon the powers of the eighteenth-century Paris Parliament. The draft was placed into a French constitutional frame, with a Grand National Assembly (*Velika narodna skupština*) convoked every seven years to revise the Constitution. The main goal was the same as the one articulated by the French Revolution: the Serbian people were to be sovereign in the Kingdom of Serbia, all power was to proceed from the people, and the people were to be the only source of government power.

In the 1880s, the French Radicals demanded the abolition of the office of the President of the Republic, while their Serbian counterparts, aware of the importance of monarchy in the Serbian tradition, sought to reduce the king to a neutral role. Even the overt republicans among the urban party leaders (Kosta S. Taušanović, Pera Todorović, Svetomir B. Nikolajević)⁵⁸ were aware that a state without a king was hardly imaginable for the Serbian peasantry, accustomed to the classical political triad, God–King–householder (*Bog–Kralj–domaćin*).

In the mid 1880s, the Radicals relaxed their hitherto adamant demand for a citizen army and, through skilful political manoeuvres, were pushing their way towards power, forcing the Crown into major concessions. A new constitution, whose draft was agreed upon by a committee

⁵⁶ Lazar Paču, *Gradjansko društvo i njegove društveno-političke partije* (Belgrade: Štamparija Radenika, 1881).

⁵⁷ M. Dj. Milovanović graduated from Paris Law School in 1884 and received doctoral degree from the same university in 1888, with the thesis *Les Traités de garantie au XIX^e siècle*, awarded a golden medal the same year. For a first-rate biography see Dimitrije Djordjević, *Milovan Milovanović* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1962).

⁵⁸ For Svetomir B. Nikolajević and Pera Todorović see also their own testimonies: Svetomir B. Nikolajević, *Iz minulih dana. Sećanja i dokumenti*, ed. Božidar S. Nikolajević (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986); Pera Todorović, *Dnevnik*, ed. Latinka Perović (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1990).

made up of members of all political parties, was the work of a constitutional law expert and a Radical, Milovan Dj. Milovanović.⁵⁹ In order to acquaint themselves with various constitutional solutions and assess their applicability to Serbia, a Serbian constitutional commission had visited not only European parliamentary monarchies such as Belgium, Denmark and Greece, but also France. The final version of the draft constitution creatively combined solutions taken over from British parliamentarianism and the Belgian Constitution of 1831.⁶⁰

Given that the 1831 Belgian Constitution was a slightly modified version of the French *Charte* of 1830, French influence remained recognizable in a number of constitutional solutions despite the general framework built on the British model of parliamentarianism. Protection of personal, civil rights against abuse of power by an authority was borrowed from the Belgian Constitution. Grouped into a separate section, twenty-six articles out of a total of 204 emphasized and precisely defined, on the French model, the individual rights of the citizen.⁶¹ The 1888 Constitution did not formally proclaim the sovereignty of the people, because King Milan Obrenović expressly opposed the principle, but it limited royal powers considerably and, by lowering the electoral census threshold, practically introduced universal suffrage. Endorsed by five-sixths of the Radical votes at the Great National Assembly (*Velika narodna skupština*), as was usual in France, the 1888 Constitution, despite reservations of some Radical representatives, was seen as providing for a transition to a parliamentary system, which had already been demanded by the St Andrew's Day Assembly in 1858.⁶²

Once in power (1889–1892), during the minority of King Alexander Obrenović, the Radicals proceeded along the lines established by the practical solutions of French radicalism. Apart from a number of laws marking the implementation of the party's key doctrines, the Radicals, on the model of Gambetta's platform, set out to nationalize the railways. While most Radical leaders were Swiss-educated (Nikola Pašić, Petar Velimirović,

⁵⁹ See also his theoretical analysis of Serbian constitutional reform, Milovan Dj. Milovanović, *Naša ustavna reforma* (Belgrade: Delo, 1888).

⁶⁰ Nikola R. Pašić, "The Serbian Radical Party and the Constitution of 1888", in Vasilije Krestić, ed., *Nikola Pašić — život i delo* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1997), 189–213 (Proceedings of the Conference held at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, and Nikola Pašić Foundation, Zaječar, in October 1995).

⁶¹ See also Milivoje Popović, *Poreklo i postanak Ustava od 1888. godine* (Belgrade 1939). A. L. Šemjakin, "Ustav osudjen na neuspeh: srpski ustav iz 1888", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 2/3 (2000), 164–189.

⁶² M.A.E., *Correspondance politique*, vol. 9, n° 2, Belgrade, le 15 janvier 1889; *Le Temps*, Paris, le 9 janvier 1889.

Pera Todorović, Lazar Paču) or trained only at Serbian schools (Stojan M. Protić, Aca Stanojević), their ideological core, very influential in matters such as the party structure and the model of the political system in the party programme, was made up of authentic “Parisians”. Aside from the most pronounced Francophile of the first generation of Radicals in Serbia, Pera Todorović, there were among them Jovan Djaja, responsible for foreign policy, Mihailo Vujić, for the economy, and Milovan Dj. Milovanović, for legal and constitutional matters. On the occasion of a markedly solemn celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the proclamation of the French Republic, the diplomatic representative of the Third Republic in Belgrade emphasized that “indeed, most of our friends are among the Radicals”.⁶³

Denounced, in the first phase of their political activity, as “Communards”, “internationalists” and “cosmopolitans” lacking national feelings and civic responsibility, the Radicals, however, came up, to a greater extent than their predecessors, with a creative combination of democracy and modern nationalism. Similarly to the first generation of Serbian Liberals, they believed that the process of liberation and unification of the Serbian people should begin by achieving political liberties within Serbia, which then would act as the Serbian “Piedmont” in the prospective national unification process. For the Radical leader, Nikola Pašić, democracy was not simply a fundamental political belief about political liberties coupled with ideally protected civil rights being a prerequisite for a social order tailored to human measure, but a powerful means of achieving the national ideals as well.⁶⁴

The pyramidal party structure, the continuous functioning of its network, smooth communication between the national and local party leaderships, as well as the ability to mobilize and control a large portion of the electorate, and to competently run the affairs of state, favour the assessment that the Radical Party in Serbia was the only European-style party in the Balkans.⁶⁵

Parliamentary democracy under King Peter I Karadjordjević (1903–1914)

The new king of Serbia, Peter I Karadjordjević, grandson of Karageorge and son of a deposed prince, Alexander Karadjordjević (1842–58), had been

⁶³ M.A.E., Correspondance politique, vol. 13, n° 80, Belgrade, le 23 septembre 1892.

⁶⁴ Nikola Pašić, *Moja politička ispovest*, ed. Mihailo Vojvodić (Belgrade: Zadužbina Miloš Crnjanski, 1989), 129–130.

⁶⁵ Karl Kaser, “Typologie der Politischen Parteien Südosteuropas im neunzehnte Jahrhundert”, *Osterreichische Osthefte* 27 (1985), 331–365; Stokes, *Politics as Development*, 370 and n. 6.

educated at Saint-Cyr military academy in Paris and spent a good part of his life in exile (1858–1903). He married Montenegrin princess Zorka Petrović-Njegoš at Cetinje, and eventually settled in Switzerland. Prince Peter was famous both for his bravery in battle⁶⁶ and for his firm democratic beliefs. While still a young exiled prince, Peter Karadjordjević translated John Stuart Mill's famous essay *On Liberty* into Serbian and published it at his own expense in 1867. After the reinstatement of the 1888 Constitution which, with some minor modifications, came to be known as the 1903 Constitution, the strict adherence to his role of constitutional monarch made King Peter I Karadjordjević the most popular ruler of Serbia. His reign (from June 1903 to June 1914, when he transferred his royal duties to his second son, Alexander, who served as prince-regent until his father's death in 1921), became known as the "Golden Age of Serbia".⁶⁷

Describing the position of the sovereign and the machinery of government, the British envoy in Belgrade noted that

...the spirit of the nation, once it had attained self-government was, and remains, distinctly democratic. When King Peter came to the throne, therefore, it was evidently considered the wisest course to appease the outraged sentiments of the great majority of the nation, who had no part in the [1903] conspiracy, by reverting to the most liberal constitution, that of 1889, which had been granted by the previous dynasty. Under the Constitution the monarchy is strictly limited, and the Skupshtina is carried on by Ministers who are responsible to the National Assembly (Skupshtina), which consists of a single Chamber ... Since the accession of King Peter Karageorgevitch [Petar I Karadjordjević] to the Servian Throne the two sections of the Radical party, distinguished as Moderate and Independent (also called Old and Young Radicals), have alternated in office, the Liberals (or Nationalists) and the Progressists [Progressives], who had generally been the governing parties in the two previous reigns, dropping into comparative insignificance.⁶⁸

A subsequent analysis of the level of parliamentary democracy in Serbia clearly showed that the post-1903 period, despite significant problems in foreign policy and internal strife involving ambitious military organiza-

⁶⁶ He served as a volunteer in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, and was a guerrilla leader under the *nom de guerre* Petar Mrkonjić in the Serb uprising against the Ottomans in Bosnia 1876–77.

⁶⁷ Dimitrije Djordjević, "Serbian Society 1903–1914", in Bela A. Kiraly & Dimitrije Djordjević, *East Central European Society in the Balkan Wars* (Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 227–239.

⁶⁸ Public Record Office, Foreign Office, London [hereafter PRO, FO], General Report on the Kingdom of Servia [Serbia] for the year 1906, No 2. Confidential, Belgrade, April 11, 1907.

tions that posed a threat to democracy, was functionally democratic in an exemplary way in comparison to France, Belgium or Great Britain:

The provisions of the [1903] Constitution in so far as they refer to the machinery of Government are briefly as follows: The legislative power is vested in the King and the national representation, each having the rights to initiate legislation, and the consent of both being necessary in Order that a Bill may become law. The executive power belongs to the King, who exercises it through his responsible Ministers. The person of a King is inviolable; he cannot be held responsible for any act of his own or of the Government, nor can any accusation be brought against him. The King sanctions and promulgates laws, appoints the State functionaries, is Commander-in-chief of all armed forces of the Kingdom, and possesses all the other usual prerogatives of a Constitutional Sovereign. ... The King convokes the Skupshtina, and has the right to prorogue it for not more than two months, and not more than once in each session. If he dissolves the Skupshtina, the act of dissolution must at the same time appoint a date for the new elections within two months, and the new Skupshtina must be convoked within three months. The decree dissolving the Skupshtina must be countersigned by all of the responsible Ministers. No Royal decree dealing with public affairs may be put into execution unless it is countersigned by the Ministers of the Department concerned, who thereby assumes the responsibility for it...

The National Skupshtina or Parliament consists of one Chamber only, and may be either a Grand or an Ordinary Skupshtina. The Grand Skupshtina consists of twice as many Deputies as the Ordinary one, and is convoked (1) if it is necessary to decide the succession to the throne, (2) to nominate a council of Regency, (3) to modify the Constitution, (4) to alienate or exchange national territory, (5) when the King thinks it expedient to consult the Grand Skupshtina. The Ordinary Skupshtina at present counting 160 members, is elected for four years, and must be convoked annually on the 1st (14th) November. The elections are direct and by secret ballot, and every Servian [Serbian] subject of a male sex, whether natural born or naturalized, is an elector, provided that he is over 21 years of age and pays direct taxes to the State amounting at least 15 fr[ancs]. per annum. Officers and the active list of army, soldiers serving with the colours, criminals, bankrupts, etc, are temporary disqualified. The vote is given not for individual candidates but for lists containing as many names as there are Deputies to be elected for the district of borough. The rules of procedure are so liberal as to give the possibility of obstruction to a comparatively small minority, and the present Government are contemplating their amendments. More than one-half of the members must be present to form a quorum. Every Bill must be read and voted upon twice in the same Session in order to become a law, an interval of at least five days intervening between the first and second readings. No law may be promulgated, abrogated, modified, or interpreted without the consent of the National Skupshtina.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ PRO, FO 371/328, Annual Report, 1907, No 20. Confidential, Belgrade, April 2, 1908.

It was also observed that:

The King's executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), composed of the Ministers at the head of the several Government Offices and the President of the Council, who may be without portfolio. They are nominated by the King, but, as a matter of fact, the system of party government prevails completely, and the King practically cannot appoint a Ministry which does not enjoy the support of the majority of the Skupshtina. The Ministers may attend the meeting of the Skupshtina and address the House, but they can only record their vote if they are themselves elected members of it.⁷⁰

After 1905, the Independent Radicals, moral puritans in practical politics like the French leftists, demonstrated inflexibility and excessive adherence to principles, which their main rivals, the Old Radicals, led by experienced Nikola Pašić, exploited to their own advantage. Except for one occasion when the Independent Radicals managed to obtain a thin majority, the Old Radicals held the majority in the National Assembly: in October 1906 the distribution of seats in the National Assembly, "as modified by the bye-elections in August is as follows: 91 Old Radicals, 47 Young Radicals, 16 Nationalists [Liberals], 2 Progressists, and 1 Socialist. Unless, therefore, there is a serious split in the Old Radical Party, the Government ought to command a fully sufficient majority. In the above list three seats are not accounted for, as the [*Narodna*] Skupshtina has 160 members."⁷¹

The flourishing of the free press under post-1903 constitutional democracy in Serbia was unprecedented in the Balkans. Out of ninety dailies in 1904, seventy-two were published in Belgrade. The leading widely-read dailies were often party organs: *Samouprava* (Self-Government) of the Old Radicals, semi-official when they were in power, and *Odjek* (Echo) of the Independent Radicals with a circulation of up to 4,000 copies and the party leader Ljubomir Stojanović frequently appearing as editorial writer. There were also *Pravda* (Justice) and *Videlo* (Daylight) of the Progressives, as well as *Srpska Zastava* (Serbian Flag) of the Liberals (renamed Populists).⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ PRO, Fo, London, 371/130, Opening of Skupshtina, No 58, Belgrade, October 16, 1906.

⁷² British reports from Belgrade underscored that "*Pravda* is remarkable for violent articles in opposition to the Government and the dynasty, and is under the control of M. Paul Marinkovitch [Pavle Marinković]. ... The '*Videlo*' also supports the same small party [Progressive] and is edited by M. Marinkovitch's brother. The '*Mali Žurnal*' (Petit Journal) was, until recently, understood to support the conspiracy party in the army (since the collapse of the *Pokret*) but, the editor having failed to obtain a Concession for a paper-mill, it now sides with the Independent Radicals in the Opposition. Two Socialist dailies, the '*Dnevni list*' (Daily News sheet) and the *Radničke Novine* (Labour

With limited restriction and no political censorship, the Serbian press was considered to be a visible sign of the high level of political liberties. As stressed by the British envoy: "one of best written and widely read daily papers is *Politika* (circulation 8,000), which is neutral in party politics and criticizes or supports the Government on the merits of each question."⁷³ *Politika*, as well as party dailies, abounded in articles on French and British parliamentary procedures. The party press was not reduced to fierce attacks on political opponents, but also frequently brought quotations from or free interpretations of parliamentary practice in the most advanced Western democracies.

There were other kinds of newspapers as well, expressing various political opinions: "...another supposed to be subsidized by the Austrian Government is the *Štampa*; it is more violent in tone, and condemns Government and Opposition alike (circulation 5,000). The *Beogradske Novine* (Belgrade News) is in general though guarded opposition to the present regime and frankly in favour of the Montenegrin dynasty, the owner M. Tchurtchitch [Čurčić], being a personal friend of Prince Nicholas [Petrović-Njegoš] (circulation 4,000). The *Včernje Novosti* (Evening News) represents Church interests and is said to be supported by the Metropolitan. [...] Among the periodical the only of worth mentioning is the *Bosansko-Hercegovački Glasnik*, a weekly paper devoted to the exposure of the alleged Austrian misrule in the occupied provinces. Daily papers are also published at Nish [Niš], Kragujevatz [Kragujevac], Valjevo etc, but the Belgrade papers circulate throughout the country towns and the provincial press is quite insignificant."⁷⁴ In 1912, out of 302 newspapers and journals published in the Serbian language, 199, with an annual circulation of 50 million copies, were published in Serbia, and 126 of these in Belgrade alone.⁷⁵

News), practically complete the list of the party papers." PRO, FO, 371/328, Serbia, Annual Report, 1907, No 20. Confidential, Belgrade, April 2, 1908.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jovan Skerlić, *Istorija nove srpske književnosti* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1964), 463. The Serbian press in Austria-Hungary included other respected dailies representing various political interests and ideological groups: "The most notable Servian papers published in Austria-Hungary are the 'Srbobran' (Servian Guardian) of Agram [Zagreb] and the 'Zastava' of Novi Sad. The latter is believed to be subsidized by Russia, but on the whole it may be said that the Servian papers in Croatia and Slavonia represent the interest of their nationality there without disloyalty to the Empire or any pronounced irredentist tendency. The same cannot be said of the Servian papers which from time to time have been published in Bosnia, and whose career is usually cut short by confiscation and the imprisonment of the editors." PRO, FO, London, 371/328, Serbia, Annual Report, 1907, No 20. Confidential, Belgrade, 2 April, 1908.

Independents: radical democracy as a model of accelerated Europeanization

Under the blows struck by the last Obrenovićs, the People's Radical Party split into two factions in 1901, and eventually, in 1905, a group of younger members created a new party, the Independent Radicals (*Samostalni radikalni*). Unlike the senior group, epitomized by Nikola Pašić and denounced for opportunism and for "fusionism" with the Progressives and the Crown (1901–1903), this new generation of politicians, educated mostly in France and Germany, gave precedence to ideological convictions and principles over political compromise. The Independents called for an uncompromising return to the authentic ideas of radicalism. Their leaders, Ljubomir Stojanović and Ljubomir Živković, educated in Germany, Jovan Žujović and Jovan Skerlić, educated in France, and Ljubomir Davidović and Jaša Prodanović, Francophiles educated in Belgrade, insisted on consistent adherence to the original Radical platform of 1881 instead of its main principles being modified to meet the changing political needs. Before the split in 1901, the Radicals had enjoyed support from as many as five-sixths of the Serbian electorate, which necessarily led to further dissent. Thus the People's Radical Party engendered a new opposition party which was to establish the political balance of power required by the democratic system established with the return of the House of Karadjordjević to the Serbian throne in 1903.⁷⁶

After 1903, the Independent Radicals added a recognizable social tinge to their pursuit of the Radical tenets. They took over all basic ideas from the original Radical programme of 1881 (universal suffrage; free and compulsory education; programme of state finance; control of appointments to the public service; foreign policy, with a new emphasis on forging South-Slav unity), underlining that they introduced the principles that "are in tune with the contemporary notion of democratism".⁷⁷ An important emphasis in their programme was laid on raising the cultural level of the general public. The Independent Radicals believed the area of education to be intolerably neglected, and the fostering of civic virtue, indispensable for a democratic society, utterly ignored.

According to one of the main ideologists of the Independents, Jovan Skerlić:

There can be no democracy without an elite, because democracy cannot do without genius, science and virtue [...] Nowadays the elite comes from all [social] classes, it gets renewed, it rejuvenates itself from that great res-

⁷⁶ For more see Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Kralj Petar I Karadjordjević*. Vol. II *U otadžbini 1903–1914* (Belgrade: Beogradski grafički izdavački zavod, 1990); cf. also Wayne S. Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West. The Events of 1903–1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1954), 46–59.

⁷⁷ *Odjek*, Belgrade, 10 (23) June 1905.

ervoir of energy called the people. [...] The populace is no more a crowd, it is a people, it is sovereign. The elite, closely tied to the large family of ignorant and common people by origin, should remain in constant communication with people. [...] Popular instruction is a logical consequence of universal suffrage. And there can be no true government by the people without the people being reasonable enough to govern themselves. Democracy would betray itself if it gave up on instructing people.⁷⁸

According to a somewhat schematic view of the French diplomatic representative in Belgrade, there was a clear ideological difference between the two radical parties, and it was reflected in their different attitudes towards Russia and the West:

The accession of the Karadjordjevićs [1903] finally brought the Radical Party to power. [...] It was a party of peasants which represented almost the entire Serbian people, predominantly Orthodox [Christian] and Slavophile, very little pro-Western; their leaders were educated in the German part of Switzerland, in touch with Russian nihilists. The unchallenged possession of power divided the Radical Party: it was left by a part of the young intellectual elite, often educated in France, more pro-Western, with a socialist inclination, and with an affinity for German neo-Slavism. Their progressive ideas notwithstanding... these gentlemen have flooded the University, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions. [...] As for foreign policy, the Young [Independent] Radicals got a clearer conception of the state in the West, attaching much greater importance to the Kingdom of Serbia than the Old Radicals, utterly steeped in ancient Slavophile ideas; today they are Francophiles.⁷⁹

Less Russophile than the Old Radicals, and more Francophile and pro-Western, the Independents considerably contributed to the spread of French influence in Serbia. At the University of Belgrade, with eighty professors and 1,600 students in 1905, Independent Radical party leaders, from Jovan Žujović and Jovan Skerlić to Jovan Cvijić, held prestigious professorships. Thus, the University of Belgrade was called, and with good reason, the “fortress of Independent Radicals”. The Independents saw themselves as champions of radical democracy, which brought them closer to the radical-socialist left in France. Drawing upon contemporary French solutions, they were halfway between the stance epitomized by Clemenceau among the Radicals, and that by Jean Jaurès among the Socialists. Their ideological closeness to Jean Jaurès’s Socialists is visible in their advocacy of social reform along the lines of maintaining the idealized notion of the common

⁷⁸ Jovan Skerlić, *Skice, feljtoni, govori* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1966), 124–125.

⁷⁹ M.A.E., *Nouvelle série, Serbie*, vol. 5, n° 8, Belgrade, 21 janvier 1909.

man's social equality,⁸⁰ while their closeness to Clemenceau and his Radicals is readable from their advocacy of election system reform, stronger local self-government, moral transformation of society, and “education as one of the state's noblest tasks”.⁸¹

An almost religious belief in democracy was the main feature of radical democracy as pursued by the Independent Radical Party. As an influential “Parisian”, Jovan Žujović, said in a programmatic speech on the future task of radical democracy in Serbia:

Since the great French Revolution democracy has been advancing everywhere. All occurrences in the life of a people are taking a turn to its advantage. Not only are those who cherish and wish it working for it, but even the efforts of its opponents go to its favour. It is as if God himself has intervened in the human struggle, helping the just cause of most peoples to prevail by pouring his anger on the enemies of the people. Everywhere, everywhere, my brothers, the spirit of democracy progresses and spreads, and so must it be here, too. [...] The strength of the Radical Party must henceforth be spent only on a radical transformation of state government.⁸²

In spite of occasional misunderstandings with the traditional Radical electorate, Jovan Skerlić was steadfast in supporting the Independents' adherence to the proclaimed political principles which he saw as their main asset, and boasted that they brought into Serbian politics “more open-mindedness, more of a European conception of politics”. By contrast, the Old Radicals were, in his view, a political body without a soul, “without a spinal cord, without ideas and principles, a giant standing on feet of clay.” “Unthinkingly open to upstarts and profiteers”, Nikola Pašić's Old Radical Party was ceasing to be “a resolutely democratic party of the common people”.⁸³

The Independents or Young Radicals differed from the Old Radicals — in whose ranks, similarly to those of the Liberals, there were a number of anti-Westerners — in that they resolutely rejected an almost religious faith in the patronage of Russia which after 1903, with a surge of Czech-inspired

⁸⁰ The leader of the French Socialists, Jean Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française* (Paris: Ed. Sociales, 1969–72), vol. III, 88, argued that “the evolution of democracy taken to its logical consequences will result in social equality”.

⁸¹ The French Radicals' *Programme de Nancy* of 1907, available in Jean-Thomas Nordmann, *La France radicale* (Paris: Gallimard-Juillard, 1977), 90–97, demanded: *la réforme électorale, accroissement des libertés communales et départementales; l'enseignement comme une des plus nobles prérogatives d'Etat, réformes morales; les réformes fiscales...*

⁸² Jovan Žujović, *Šta su zadaci srpske radikalne demokratije* (Belgrade: Štamparija Davidović, 1911), 3.

⁸³ Skerlić, *Skice, feljtoni, govori*, 95.

Neo-Slavism, made itself felt in Serbia as well. A Pan-Slavist event in Belgrade was an occasion for Skerlić to point to two possible roads — either to adopt Western civilization completely or to stand up against it and end up “overrun like the American redskins”. As a typical Parisian doctrinaire, Skerlić, and his party fellows, had no doubts that the West was “the source of light and the focus of life on earth”, in contrast to the less than appealing “prospect of Slav rivers being lost in the Russian sea”.⁸⁴

In 1903–1914, Serbia’s “Golden Age”, later on termed the “Age of Pericles for Serbia” by Milan Grol, the Independents, together with the Francophile members of the Old Radicals, Progressives and Liberals, held an exceptional place among the bearers of French influence. Through continuous exchange of ideas, political alliances, cultural radiance and economic ties, French influence was finally consolidated as the overriding foreign influence in Serbian society. On the eve of the Balkan Wars, a correspondent for a Parisian newspaper clearly outlined the extent of French influence in Serbia:

For a traveller arriving in Serbia, the signs of France’s intellectual influence are not readily observable... But if you stop an army officer and ask him to show you the way, you’ll hear him reply in excellent French... despite the affinity between the languages, Russian is little spoken here... But French dominates... All ‘folks’ speak French: students increasingly choose to learn French. ... our [French] ‘Literary Society’ has been a great success.⁸⁵

One of the reasons for this success was the fact that the *Société littéraire française* counted King Peter I Karadjordjević himself among hundreds of its very active members. The French journalist fully agreed with three distinguished experts on Serbia and the Balkans, André Chéradame, Henry Barby and Victor Bérard, that Serbia was the “most Francophile country in the world.”⁸⁶

* * *

French models, recognizable in all institutional solutions for the oft-changing political system in Serbia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with similarities in cultural affinities and political mentalities, powerfully influenced the “rural democracy” of Serbian society in the process of achieving political liberties. The protagonists of these aspirations and conveyors of French political doctrines belonged to several generations of

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Pierre de Lanux, *La Yougoslavie. La France et les Serbes* (Paris: Payot, 1916), 226.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 223.

“Parisians” in the Serbian political elite. The Liberals, in the 1860s, spanned the gap between the patriarchal tradition and the contemporary principles of democracy. The Progressives, in the early 1880s, laid the groundwork for building modern political institutions. The Radicals, in the late 1880s and turbulent 1890s, managed to build the edifice of democratic institutions heralded by the 1888 Constitution. The Independent Radicals, the last generation of “Parisians” in the Kingdom of Serbia, revived the original doctrines of radicalism after 1901, adding a moral and distinctly social dimension to the political struggle and giving a strong impetus to the propagation of the principles of freedom and democracy that originated from the corpus of French political doctrines.

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