



Stjepan Radić and Nikola Pašić as Heralds of Liberal Democracy in Croatia and Serbia: Historiographical Myths and Reality

Alexander Silkin

Russian Academy of Sciences

alexander.silkin.as@gmail.com

Historians from the former Yugoslav republics traditionally participate in ongoing political discussions about the ways in which their homelands should progress. Referring to their knowledge of the past, scholars indicate certain historic phenomena and time periods that should serve as ideal models that should be “reproduced” by modern societies in the near future. With regard to the Serbian historiography, the late Belgrade professor Miroslav Jovanović detected several “restoration ideas,” the implementation of which, according to their adherents, would allow modern society to “revise the mistakes of history.” In today’s Serbia and Croatia, certain historical figures, with real and imaginary virtues, are presented as role models and heralds of everything progressive in the field of politics and state building. In particular, in the works of many authors, Nikola Pašić, the head of the Serbian People’s Radical Party (PRP), and Stjepan Radić, the chairman of the Croatian (Republican) Peasant Party (C(R)PP), appear as the “founding fathers” of liberal democratic traditions in the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth. The “golden era of Serbian parliamentarism” (1903–1914), which was characterized by the dominance of the PRP and the virtual “Croatian Neutral Peasant Republic,” a program that allowed the C(R)PP to consolidate the Croatian people in the 1920s, are worthy candidates of “restoration.” In this article, I consider whether there is any substantial historical truth to these images. I conclude that neither the PRP nor the C(R)PP (and neither Pašić nor Radić) espoused liberalist tendencies, which would have favored individualist ethics and respect for the rights of minorities. Both leaders and their parties adhered to the principle of majority dominance and were intolerant of anyone who did not belong to this majority, whether for ethnic, social, or other reasons. The PRP and C(R)PP could be described as the patterns of the same socio-political phenomenon, separated by several decades. They shared and made use of common ideological roots, social bases, organizational structures, self-perceptions among the leadership, slogans, and other strategies and tools of mass manipulation. These factors and also the influence of the nineteenth-century Russian narodnik movement on both parties during their formative periods make them typologically more related to the Russian Bolsheviks than they ever were to Western liberal trends.

Keywords: Serbia, Croatia, Yugoslavia, republic, parliamentarism, liberal democracy, Nikola Pašić, Stjepan Radić, politics of memory, historical myths

“Restoration Ideas”: Present-day Serbian/Croatian Historiography and Myth-construction

Twelve years ago, Miroslav Jovanović, a university professor in Belgrade, wrote in his book *Križa istorije* (Crisis of History) about the “transformation of the historical consciousness”¹ of the Serbs resulting from the upheavals of the 1990s and the early 2000s. What happened at the time prompted historians to think about the changes in the social roles they had to play in the countries that emerged from the ruins of Yugoslavia. Both the book cited above and the works by Dubravka Stojanović published at about the same time can be considered attempts at such rethinking. In their reasoning, both researchers relied on the postulate of Lucien Febvre, who insisted that the sciences are not created in ivory towers. Therefore, the task of overcoming “the gap between science and society that feels the need both for history and for understanding historical subjects”² was considered relevant by Jovanović. Agreeing with Jovanović, Stojanović argued that the mission of a scholar was “to look in the past for answers to the questions asked by the present, help society arrive at rational interpretations of contemporary events, and provide knowledge about the causes of phenomena and their origins.”³

However, involvement in the vicissitudes of public life inevitably brings Clio’s servants into collision with “epic and mythological as well as ideological abuse of history, which, as a rule, is carried out in order to legitimize some political idea.”⁴ This compels the historian to confront the following dilemma: should she “agree with the actualization of the past events that are imposed by non-scientific centers of power or fight for the emancipation of knowledge, rational understanding, and interpretation of this past.” What choice did Serbian historiography tend to make in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century? Not the one that Jovanović considered right, judging by the title of his book, which offers several examples of how, “instead of performing its main function—the formation of rational historical consciousness—historical science spoon-feeds public memory, which is already traumatized and drugged by myths, with mythological constructions.”

1 Jovanović and Radić, *Križa*, 139.

2 Jovanović and Radić, *Križa*, 9.

3 Stojanović, *Ulje*, 25.

4 Jovanović and Radić, *Križa*, 141, 9, 106.

The search for conditionally positive episodes of history that could serve as “support” for the Serbian people who had gone astray was one of the trends of such retrospective “constructing.” It was supposed to “draw readymade solutions from the ‘past,’ to find in it preferred models of social behavior and value systems that would make it possible to lay the foundations for the present-day collective self-identification of the Serbs.”⁵ In other words, looking back, it was necessary to determine “the point to which the modern Serbian society could ‘return’ in order to ‘correct the mistakes’ of history.” Jovanović points out several “restoration ideas” of this kind, from “Saint Sava” (svetosavska), which suggests “a direct connection to and continuity with ‘glorious’ medieval Serbian history and the self-perception of modern Serbs,” to “četnik,” “Ravna Gora” (ravnagorska), which implies breaking with the socialist past and returning to bourgeois monarchist values.

Those who are convinced that Serbia’s belonging to the European political and cultural tradition needs “historical” confirmation profess the “Pašić–Karadjordjević” restoration. It is based on the myth of the “golden era of Serbian democracy (1903–1914),” according to which “from the moment of its inception, the Serbian state was open to Western concepts of liberalism, parliamentarism, and democracy, and the political elite, educated at western universities, fully accepted the Western model of development and modernization.”⁶ According to this interpretation, after gaining independence in 1878, the Principality of Serbia was transformed into a “modern European state” in two decades despite the absence of the social prerequisites for such a transformation. In a few years, the environment in the country became favorable to the formation of political parties and the introduction of parliamentarism, and by the beginning of the century “the British two-party model of democracy had almost been put into place.”⁷ The process of Europeanization allegedly reached its climax during the reign of King Petar Karadjordjević (1903–1914), when Serbia could be considered “an advanced democracy, one of the most developed in Europe.”

Stojanović, Andrei Shemjakin, and Olga Popović-Obradović⁸ devoted several works to a demonstration of the inconsistency between this speculative representation and the real state of affairs in Serbia in 1878–1914. However, the complimentary view of the political development of Serbia is not limited to the

5 Jovanović and Radić, *Križa*, 160.

6 Stojanović, *Ulje*, 26.

7 Shemjakin, “Osobnosti,” 172.

8 Popović-Obradović, *Parlamentarizam*.

specified chronological framework. When it comes to the interwar period (1918–1941), some historians tend to interpret the aggravation of interethnic relations in the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia as a consequence of the confrontation between the advanced Serbian intellectual/political elite and the inert and retrograde representatives of the Yugoslavs from the former Austria–Hungary. According to Ljubodrag Dimić, “the Serbian dynasty of Karadjordjević adopted Western European liberal civil ideology,” and “the political forces of the former Kingdom of Serbia advocated liberal civil solutions in the new state.”⁹ It was seen as a “parliamentary democracy based on European standards and Serbian experience.”¹⁰ His colleague Djordje Stanković was of the same opinion. Stanković attributed such a “vision” to Nikola Pašić, head of the PRP, who allegedly “envisaged the Yugoslav state as built on the liberal principles of the civil state.”¹¹

The espousal by the majority of Serbian politicians to their “modern political integrating Yugoslav idea” was a manifestation of their progressive views. As Dimić continues, “cherishing the Yugoslavs’ awareness of ethnic proximity, common language and territory of residence, its followers sought to overcome the fragmentation and barriers that had been left behind by the previous centuries.”¹²

The failure of the implementation of the “modern idea” is explained by the fact that it “was counteracted by the particularistic consciousness of agrarian society, which had deep-rooted national ideologies and was clerical, conservative, and authoritarian by nature.”¹³ Catholic Yugoslavs, whose centrifugal aspirations became the main cause of the crisis of the first Yugoslavia, are proclaimed the bearers of those ideologies. As Stanković wrote, “The energy directed at the ‘political exhaustion of the opponent’ led to a waste of the time and creativity that were necessary for the modernization of society. Even more regrettable is the fact that it was organized according to modern European liberal principles.”¹⁴

How does contemporary Croatian historiography assess the 1920s? There is a dominant view which is the opposite of the one cited above but is no less “convincing.” In particular, it was expressed in the edited volume *Hrvatska*

9 Dimić, Žutić, *Rimokatolički*, 15.

10 Dimić, *Istorija*, 50.

11 Stanković, *Sto govora*, 314.

12 Dimić, *Srbi*, 108.

13 Dimić, “Srbija,” 68.

14 Stanković, *Istorjski*, 63.

politika u XX stoljeću (Croatian Politics in the Twentieth Century, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2006), which crowned the project “Twentieth Century” of Matica Hrvatska. Ljubomir Antić, the editor of the publication, also interprets the events that happened in the first Yugoslavia as a confrontation between backwardness and progress. He explains the defeat of the latter by the fact that “the hopes of the Croatian and Slovenian ‘Yugoslavs’ that Croatia and Slovenia, with their developed societies, economies, and cultures, would Europeanize the remaining part of the new state did not come true. On the contrary, [the remaining] part Balkanized them.”¹⁵

The assertion of forced “Balkanization” is one of the elements of the “mythological construction” that has been present in socio-political discourse for more than a century. According to this notion, Croatia was originally destined for the role of “the last detachment of the European front against the Balkans.” In 1918, the “front” was forced to retreat, and “the vanguard” became “the rearguard”:

For Croatia, the interwar time passed under the sign of breaking the age-old alliance with Austria and Hungary and the subsequent entry into the first Yugoslav state. Although geographically Croatia remained in the same place, it turned from a Central European outpost in relation to the Balkans into the last frontier separating the Balkans from Central Europe. The consequences of this change were fatal.¹⁶

Nikša Stančić agrees with this assessment. However, he does not write about the “Balkanization” of Croatia. He contends, rather, that as a result of the dissolution of Austria–Hungary, Croatia had to vegetate on the “periphery of European modernization.” To denote the inappropriate geographic object within which Croatia ended up, the euphemism “Yugoslav state with its center in Southeastern Europe” is used instead of the term “Balkans,” which has so many negative connotations.¹⁷ To show the extent to which being part of this Yugoslav state was “fatal,” Stančić mentions that Croatia joined “Southeastern Europe” for the first time in the sixteenth century as a result of the Ottoman conquest.

Only “five centuries later, Croatia again joined the development of the part of Europe that we refer to as the European West, of which it was left out in the

15 Antić, “Nacionalna ideologija,” 53.

16 Ibid.

17 Stančić, “Hrvatska nacionalna integracija,” 13.

modern era.”¹⁸ Namely, it joined the European Union in 2013, having preliminarily carried out “advanced democratization” in order to become “acceptable” to the European Union. Naturally, democratism in Croatia today did not appear out of nowhere. Its roots go back to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which, according to Stančić, were marked by “the formation of Croatian civil society and national integration.”

Stjepan Radić as the Founder of Today's Liberalism in Croatia: Between Myth and Historical Accuracy

To whom does Croatia owe these achievements? Many historians and publicists credit Radić first and foremost. The prevailing attitude towards Radić fully fits Jovanović's formula of “restoration ideas.” In the modern socio-political arena, Radić's apologists occupy a place between two extreme camps: nostalgia for the communist Yugoslav past on the one hand and the legacy of the Nazi-like Ustaša on the other. An article by journalist Zvonimir Despot (whose name bears an unfortunate but purely coincidental resemblance to the English word “despot”) offers an example of the conventional democratic “restoration” of Radić's type:

Today, Radić should have been one of the main role models in the process of building a democratic society. Instead, being divided into those who are for Tito and those who are for Pavelić, the Croats have been engaged in daily internecine slaughter for many years. Radić's legacy is above routine politics and any political orientation. What he said a century ago matters to this day.¹⁹

Hrvoje Petrić is in full agreement with Despot: “Stjepan Radić and his brother Antun outlined what Croatia should be like and the values on which it should be based.”²⁰ Branka Boban sums up her text in Antić's aforementioned collection in the following words: “He made a substantial contribution to the development of modern Croatian national consciousness, which is inextricably linked with democratic principles.”²¹

In order to fill in the gaps in the political education of his compatriots, Marijan Lipovac started a page on Facebook under the title “Daily Dose of

18 Ibid., 11, 31.

19 Despot, “Ono što je Radić govorio.”

20 Petrić, “O braći Radić,” 542.

21 Boban, B., “Stjepan Radić,” 158.

Stjepan Radić.”²² Lipovac gives the leader of the Croatian People’s Peasant Party (C(R)PP) the flattering title of “the greatest Croatian politician and educator of the first half of the twentieth century,” as he was “the first to raise the topic of human rights, the first to talk about women’s rights... the first among Croatian politicians to advocate European integration, the first to touch on environmental issues.”²³

According to Despot, today, the main obstacle to the realization of the “ideals” is the adherence of many Croats to far-left and far-right views. Explaining what counted as such in the 1920s, the authors bring us back to the myth of “Balkanism” that Radić faced in Serbian politicians: “intoxicated with victory in the war, they [the Serbian politicians] were not even ready to talk about his demands.” Boban laments that, as leader of the C(R)PP, Radić “had to defend his democratic and liberal principles in a state that had nothing in common with either a rule-of-law state or a democratic state.”²⁴ Antić, coauthor of the collection, echoes these views. According to Antić, the atmosphere in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes “was poisoned by political primitivism, alien to the part of the state that was located in Austria–Hungary. We are talking about violence, vulgarity, manipulations during elections, nepotism, corruption.”²⁵ As an expert on the nineteenth century, Stančić does not go into such gloomy details and simply states that the Serbian political elite “lacked established democratic traditions.”²⁶

Since “democratism” is presented as the main attribute of Radić’s theory and practice, it is reasonable to ask what kind of “democracy” is meant. I repeat the question posed by Stojanović with respect to the so-called “golden era of Serbian democracy”: “What exactly is the meaning of this concept, which is accepted all over the world, to which everyone swears allegiance, and which, after everything that happened in the twentieth century, has so many mutually contradictory meanings that one can speak of the victory of the word over its meaning?”²⁷ However, before trying to arrive at an answer to this question, let us evaluate the reliability of some of the assessments quoted above of the context in which the C(R)PP had to operate.

22 <https://www.facebook.com/StjepanRadićDnevnaDoza/>

23 Petrić, “O braći Radić,” 540–41.

24 Boban, B., “Stjepan Radić,” 152, 158.

25 Antić, “Nacionalna ideologija,” 53.

26 Stančić, “Hrvatska nacionalna integracija,” 28.

27 Stojanović, *Srbija*, 19.

As for the lack of democratic traditions among the Serbs, it is possible to talk about this alleged lack only if we are guided by the Western European standard. By Balkan standards and in comparison with what the Yugoslav subjects of the Habsburgs had been able to venture, pre-war Serbia experienced a triumph of democracy in 1903–1914. The country had a constitution, the parliament, upon which the throne could not impose its will, was formed on the basis of universal suffrage (for men), and rival parties succeeded each other at the head of the government.

One can hardly object to Antič's enumeration of the unattractive aspects of Serbian "Balkanism." But was Croatia itself free of nepotism and corruption, vulgarity and "primitivism"? Not quite, as follows from the pre-war texts written by Radić himself. Addressing the Sabor in May 1910, he names social ailments which his party promised to address with its "peasant policy": "We want to free our people from the horror of the bureaucrats, the horror of the priests, and the horror of the Jews.²⁸ We resolutely oppose bureaucratic arbitrariness, priestly brainwashing, and Jewish exploitation."²⁹ The atmosphere was even more poisoned by the fact that the Jews allegedly did not limit themselves to economic exploitation only. "Their slyness merged with boldness and meanness into a single property of their soul,"³⁰ which enabled the "foreigners" to bend ministers of the Church and some local politicians to their will, in particular Ante Starčević, the founder of Croatian nationalism, who purportedly "obeyed a Jew,"³¹ namely, Josip Frank. As far as the clergy was concerned, "it has succumbed to the Jews today, and together they go to dinner with those in power in order to get themselves red cardinal belts."³²

Obviously, Radić's anti-Semitism is not something his panegyrists would like to bring to light. For example, Lipovac and Petrić, in order to confirm that, for Radić, democratism was above nationalism, cite the following phrase: "If the peasant continues to be beaten in free Croatia [...] this is not the Croatia we want."³³ In the article by Boban, we find what the authors hid behind the ellipsis: "If the peasant continues to be beaten up in free Croatia, *if counts and priests with*

28 Radić uses the word *šifut*, which has an insulting connotation. The word *žid* is translated from Croatian as "Jew."

29 Radić, *Hrvatska seljačka politika*, 10.

30 Radić, *Frankova politička smrt*.

31 Radić, *Hrvatska seljačka politika*, 9.

32 *Ibid.*, 30.

33 Petrić, "O braći Radić," 541.

Jews continue to play the master [italics added, A.S.], this is not the Croatia we want.”³⁴ While acknowledging that Radić hated Jews, Boban nevertheless insists that he was “an outspoken supporter of a tolerant attitude towards other nations.” She does not explain how the one could be combined with the other, but we should read the following between the lines: even the sun has the occasional dark spot, and the peasant tribune always denounced the aristocracy and the clergy together with the “Jews,” which allegedly indicates Radić’s commitment to social equality and democracy.

Returning to the question of the nature of the latter, national tolerance is not the only virtue that can be found under the guise of xenophobia if desired. Radić is described as a politician with a “European outlook,”³⁵ a man “of European format, our first educated modern political scientist.”³⁶ As a graduate of the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques* in Paris, he was “especially inspired by democracy in Britain.”³⁷ “Having organized a modern political party” (with a program that was “modern in every respect”),³⁸ according to Boban, Radić “believed that all goals should be fought for by democratic means within the framework of the system of parliamentarism.”³⁹

According to Boban, the “cornerstone liberal democratic principles” were embodied in the Constitution of the Neutral Peasant Republic of Croatia (1921), which provided for “the highest (even for today) standards for the observance of rights and freedoms.”⁴⁰ Hodimir Sirotković concurs. According to Sirotković, the constitution contained “solely liberal positions.” Ivo Goldstein writes about the “liberal-democratic positions” of the C(R)PP’s program documents and cites “social justice, broad public education, the rule of law, and control of the executive and legislative power through referenda” as examples of these alleged positions.⁴¹

Is the above interpretation of the constitution credible, and did Radić really take a stance resembling the intransigence and commitment of Martin Luther when he purportedly said, “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise”? It is possible to answer in the affirmative only if we ignore the general context of the activities

34 Boban, B., “Stjepan Radić,” 147.

35 Petrić, “O braći Radić,” 586.

36 Sirotković, “Radićev ustav,” 306–7.

37 Leček, “Priča,” 30.

38 Ibid.

39 Boban, B., “Stjepan Radić,” 148.

40 Ibid., 158, 152.

41 Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 74, 45, 46.

and propaganda of the C(R)PP before and after the adoption of the document. However, before considering the image of the state and power that emerged from Radić's speeches and texts from various years, let us pay attention to a circumstance that in itself demonstrates the implausibility of the position cited above. In the 1920s and 1930s, the “heyday of peasant policy,” the C(R)PP did not display interest in the work of the parliament, nor did it seek to exert much influence on its decisions, as one would have expected from a “modern party” with a “modern” program.

Members of Radić's party appeared in the Belgrade Skupština only in the spring of 1924, i.e. five years after the foundation of the state and a year before they recognized the monarchy and abandoned republicanism. The party returned to the policy of boycotting the parliament after the assassination attempt on Radić, which took place in the parliament on June 20, 1928. As a result of the establishment of the regime of King Alexander Karadjordjević on January 6, 1929, the C(R)PP was banned, like all other “tribal” Yugoslav parties. After the death of Karadjordjević in 1934, the party took part in the elections twice (in 1935 and 1938) but abstained from going to Belgrade. Following the signing of the Cvetković–Maček Agreement in August 1939 and the formation of Banovina Hrvatska, the new government, with the participation of the C(R)PP, dissolved the parliament without calling new elections. The Croatian Sabor was not convened either, although the agreement specifically provided for this.⁴²

Radić's party ignored the Skupština for years while still participating in six elections (in 1920, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1935, and 1938). This can hardly be interpreted as convincing evidence of a commitment to liberal democracy, a fact which prompts some of his apologists to resort to sophistical argumentation. For example, S. Leček justifies the tactics of the C(R)PP by the fact that the Yugoslav parliamentarism of the 1920s (“imaginary” or “pseudo-parliamentarism”) and of the second half of the 1930s (“tolerated parliamentarism”) was far from the original Western model. Therefore, Radić's choice in favor of “extra-institutional ways” and “alternative methods” is presented as justified.⁴³ At the same time,

42 Ljubo Boban, an influential Croatian historian, argued that the Serbian parties (both governmental and oppositional) that were unsure of their electoral prospects opposed the elections to the Skupština. As a hegemon in the Croatian political arena, the C(R)PP, in contrast, insisted on holding the elections (Boban, *Kontroverzje*, 240–45). As for the elections to the Sabor, according to Marijan Matićka, Radić's successor Vladko Maček “did not consider them a priority.” (Matićka, “Hrvatska,” 182).

43 Leček, “Priča,” 30. In his work (Leček, “Priča,” 29), Leček erroneously points out that the “boycott” of the parliament by the C(R)PP lasted from 1920 to 1925. In 1925, Radić recognized Yugoslav unification and the monarchical system, after which the C(R)PP made a government coalition with the PRP. However,

the fact that these “ways” and “methods” largely determined both the shape of the representative bodies and the state structure of the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia as a whole goes unmentioned. In particular, Radić’s party’s failure to participate in the work of the Constituent Assembly in 1921 facilitated the adoption of the Vidovdan Constitution, which infringed upon the interests of the Yugoslavs of the former Austria–Hungary.⁴⁴

In 1923, the C(R)PP made a secret deal with the Serbian Radical Party (the so-called Markov Protocol), according to which Radić’s followers promised to continue the boycott of the parliament so as not to prevent the radicals from forming the government majority. In return, the radicals promised to suspend administrative centralization in Croatia. In 1928, a year before the establishment of the dictatorship, Radić was the first Yugoslav politician to propose that the king appoint an “extra-parliamentary person” at the head of the government, namely, a general who would be “against large Serbian parties that had placed themselves outside the parliament, the state, and the will of the people.”⁴⁵ Finally, in 1939, Radić’s successors neglected their obligations to the Serbian opposition, with which they were united by the demands for democratization, a return to genuine parliamentarism, etc., and concluded a separate deal with the “bearer of military force,” that is, with the authoritarian regency regime.

To return to Radić’s constitution, it is worth noting that indeed, *démocratie libérale* cannot be built without many of the things it stipulated. At the same time, some of its provisions poorly correlate with liberalism and any “modern” vision of the legal structure of the state in general. Therefore, the text in question could equally reflect Radić’s eclectic but progressive views and the

as early as March 1924, the C(R)PP decided to participate in the work of the Skupština and sent it the demand to “verify” the mandates received in the elections. On May 27, 1924, the Skupština unanimously confirmed the powers of the C(R)PP’s deputies who took the oath. After that, the parliamentary session was adjourned. In addition, Leček incorrectly (1925–1926) indicates the chronological framework for the existence of the government coalition of the Radić’s party and the Serbian PRP (Leček, “Priča,” 30). In fact, in April 1926, Radić ceased to be a minister, but members of his party participated in the formation of cabinets until February 1927.

44 If the deputies of the C(R)PP had been present at the Constituent Assembly, the government parties—radicals and democrats—would not have been able to win approval for their draft rules of the Skupština in December 1920–January 1921. According to this draft, to adopt the constitution, a simple majority of the votes cast by the total number of deputies (419) would suffice, not the 2/3 majority desired by Croats and Slovenes. Finally, 223 deputies voted for the Vidovdan Charter (Gligorijević, *Parliament*, 91). I dare say that by the time the final vote was cast in June 1921, the government would not have been able to secure even this much support for its draft constitution if the opposition had been stronger by 50 votes cast by Radić’s followers.

45 Gligorijević, *Parliament*, 251.

desire to meet the expectations of the widest possible target audience at home and abroad. It is indicative that the description of the national flag of Croatia is immediately followed by a list of the “world factors that made small nations subjects of international law.” Gratitude is expressed “first of all to the great republican Union of North America, [...] equally to the Russian Revolution, which overthrew Russian militarism forever,” and then to “the two largest Western European constitutional democracies.”⁴⁶ The leadership of the C(R) PP did not abandon all hope for some form of external intervention in internal Yugoslav affairs until 1925, when it dropped the letter “R” from its name and recognized the monarchy and the existing constitution. Before that, Radić went to Moscow and joined the Peasant International (1924). Earlier (1919–1924), the C(R)PP counted mainly on the help of the West, and therefore the articles on the separation of powers, the rule of law, etc. could not but be included in the constitution.

Furthermore, earlier texts and speeches show that Radić did not consider himself a liberal:

It is known that the first democracy arose in France, its economic name was liberalism or [...] free competition. Jews were very fond of it. The second democracy is workers’ or socialist democracy. Its economic name is confiscation [...] And the Jews supported it, hoping that confiscation would not be from them but from someone else. The third democratism is peasant democratism, which is called production or economy. While we are on this soil, we do not need liberalism and competition. How can you compete when you have nothing?⁴⁷

As a summary of this lecture on political economy, which Radić delivered to his fellow deputies in 1910, let us quote what he had written five years earlier under the pseudonym Baćuška: “Liberalism does not recognize the soul of the people and at the forefront it puts itself rather than ‘body of the people.’ Therefore, it is far from Slavic democracy and from the Croatian People’s Peasant Party.”⁴⁸

According to Mark Biondich, behind such claims there was a view that

the most salient characteristic of liberal ideology was the state’s dissociation from society. According to Radić, “the state had no obligation to help its citizens, and Jewish liberals also teach that it is not

46 Radić, *Politički spisi*, 367–68.

47 Radić, *Hrvatska seljačka politika*, 2.

48 Petrić, “O braći Radić,” 581.

in the state's interest to help the poor people, the peasant or pauper, but that everyone must be left to his fate."⁴⁹

Biondich contends that the C(R)PP's program "differed from liberalism in its emphasis on the whole peasant community as opposed to the individual and in its opposition to the economic principle of *laissez-faire*."

Choosing between the rights and freedoms of an individual on the one hand and the collective interests of the "agricultural estate" on the other, Radić was guided by the idea of "five-fold superiority" of peasants over other social groups:

1. Superiority in numbers, because the peasantry constitutes the overwhelming majority of the people (more than 80 percent);
2. In labor and acquired property, since the peasant works from dawn to dusk, and the peasantry owns a large part of the total national property;
3. In honesty and morality;
4. In political stability and ability to sacrifice, loyalty to the national language and folk customs, that is, to everything that constitutes the Croatian nationality and the Croatian fatherland;
5. In humanity.⁵⁰

It is not surprising that Radić considered the peasantry the only "political factor" capable of "putting in order our *domovina*—the state that we all want."⁵¹ The latter appears as an enlarged model of a peasant home (homestead) and at the same time as the totality of such homesteads: "Our first task is to protect and develop these homes, and the second task is to turn the large *domovina* consisting of small homes, maybe, not into Belgium or Switzerland, but into Denmark."

The high mission of the villagers was dissonant with their political position, in which they suffered discrimination. It was the responsibility of the educated urban strata to correct this. Radić appealed to the deputies in the Sabor: "Knowing what the people are, what their physical and moral strength is, we are obliged to embody it properly. Because if the people do not have that strength, the intelligentsia will remain without a cause."⁵² The explanation of what this "cause" consisted of demonstrates that *La science politique* is not the only root of Radić's ideology: "This is most clearly written in Russian literature, which,

49 Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 76.

50 Radić, "Seljački socijalni pokret," ix–x.

51 Radić, *Hrvatska seljačka politika*, 17–18.

52 *Ibid.*, 32.

in fact, is peasant literature. Russian writers profess that they are in debt to the people, but not the people to them.”⁵³

“The value of Russian literature lies not only in its artistic merits,” wrote Antun Radić (1868–1919), Stjepan’s brother and cofounder of the party. “For us,” Antun insisted,

it is even more important because it offers a solution to two problems [...] folk culture and the attitude of the intelligentsia towards the people. Having rapidly adopted Western European education and alien customs, the intelligentsia became a stranger to its people. Thus, a chasm started to yawn between the educated people and the common folk. The best Russian people struggled to overcome it, and Russian fiction acted as an assistant in that.⁵⁴

This explains why, according to historian Stipe Kljaić, the profile of the political and ideological world of the Radić brothers was shaped by the Russian narodniks and Russian literary realism. “Following the example of the Russian narodniks,” Kljaić writes,

the Radić brothers were going to liberate the intelligentsia that was “alienated from the people” from servility to the West and offered the cult of the people, the village, and the peasantry instead [...]. Copying the contemporary Russian experience, the Radić brothers also embraced the anti-Western Slavic myth. Western culture is presented as the destroyer of the autochthonous Croatian peasant culture [...] Rejecting western civil *modus vivendi*, the Radić brothers chose peasant existence as the source of their ideology.⁵⁵

Bridging the “chasm” in Radić’s way meant the implementation of the “concept of peasant right,”⁵⁶ which was supposed to protect against “atheism and clericalism, revolution and bureaucracy, as well as today’s socialism and capitalism—the apostle of state omnipotence and the tyranny of money over labor.”⁵⁷ Industrialization posed a particular threat to peasant homesteads, for “large-scale industry turns broad strata of the people into real slaves, and the agricultural system makes the man a giant.”⁵⁸ Taking this as a point of departure,

53 Ibid.

54 Kljaić, *Nikada*, 85.

55 Ibid.

56 Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 67.

57 Petrić, “O braći Radić,” 580.

58 Radić, *Hrvatska seljačka politika*, 28, 24, 19,

the C(R)PP insisted on “expanding the electoral legislation,” guarantees of “protections for the peasant’s plot of land,” the organization of self-governing economic and administrative communities, etc.

The post-war period raised new harsh demands formulated in the constitution. The “government of the peasant majority” was to become an obligatory attribute of the “republic,” and the “peasant homestead” was to be its lower administrative unit.⁵⁹ Apparently, the abolition of universal conscription and the regular army, the abolition of customs duties, and the “establishment of cooperatives instead of capitalist banks”⁶⁰ were provided for in the interests of the “majority.” In addition, it was supposed that the university and gymnasiums with lyceums and non-classical secondary schools should be closed down. Large land holdings should be expropriated.⁶¹ In general, the document described the state as if to make it seem as little burdensome as possible for its citizens.

Such an evolution of views was caused by the radicalization of the sentiments of the Croatian peasant, who, according to Radić, “during the four war years [...] was not only a real slave of the state but was also exploited by all masters in a manner worse than any draft animals were.”⁶² That is why after the war this Croatian peasant “demands the same freedom and rights for which his peasant brothers are fighting in Russia.”⁶³

In 1924, Vitomir Korać, the leader of the Yugoslav Social Democrats, shared the following recollection of the pre-revolutionary situation in the Croatian lands in 1918–1920:

The psychological condition of the masses was dangerous. Exhausted by the difficult war, they hoped for immediate changes for the better as soon as the war ended. But the hardships of the war continued. Captive soldiers of the former Austro-Hungarian armada were returning from Russia and preaching ‘the dawn from the East.’ Psychosis spread through the masses. And then ‘saviors’ of all kinds appeared; they promised deliverance in 24 hours. Thus, demagoguery of any kind fell on fertile soil.”⁶⁴

59 Sirotković, “Radićev ustav,” 301, 304.

60 It is written in the official interpretation of the constitution by one of the C(R)PP Rudolf Herceg (Herceg, *Seljački pokret*, 36).

61 Radić, *Politički spisi*, 370.

62 Banac, *Nacionalno pitanje*, 194.

63 Radić, *Gospodstva politika*, 27.

64 AJ. 305. Fasc. 40.

However, of all the “saviors,” the peasant masses chose Radić, which Korać explained as a consequence of his “virtuosity in demagogy,” i.e. his ability to articulate the entire wide range of ethnic, social, and political phobias of a potential voter:

If there are supporters of Charles I of Austria nearby, he appears to be a real Caesarist; if someone supports the *pravuši*, he is for the Croatian state right; if someone hates the Serbs, he starts to disparage them [...] if someone doesn't like priests, neither does he; if someone is a republican, so is he; if someone is against the war, he is a pacifist [...] if someone is against military service, he is against the army; if someone does not want to pay taxes, here he is. In short, he did not disdain any propaganda slogans and managed to catch every bluster of discontent in his sails. No one could compete with him in demagoguery—neither the communists, nor the Catholic clerics, nor Frank's followers.

Dragoljub Jovanović, a Serbian left-wing politician expressed a similar opinion:

Stipica knew that the peasant soul is not a monochord, that it has more than one string. And it would not be enticed by agricultural communes (*zadruga*), politics, Croatian identity, or the republic taken separately. [...] There were always several strings on his harp, and many arrows in his quiver. With them, he captured the hearts of his supporters and hit his opponents.⁶⁵

Radić himself confirmed the validity of those characterizations in 1925:

The masses were seized by the spirit of the losers. On the one hand, the supporters of the Habsburgs. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks. We had to act quickly, and it took a strong “schlager.” We seized on the republic because of Wilson, America, Germany, Austria, and Hungary. If it hadn't worked, we would have to look for something else. However, now we can be satisfied. We finished off the Habsburgs and stopped the spread of Bolshevism. Another cause is the danger of clericalism.⁶⁶

To achieve such results, it was necessary not only to present oneself to the public in a favorable light but also to discredit competitors. The party's awareness of the masses' hostility to their newfound “brothers,” the Serbs, was

65 Jovanović, *Političke uspomene*, 47.

66 AJ. 335. Fasc. 6; Krizman, “Dva pisma,” 136.

an *a priori* advantage over many of its competitors. As Ante Trumbić recalled in 1932, “Radić comprehended the soul of the Croatian peasant, who returned home after four years of suffering [...] and was filled with rage, having found the country under Serbian occupation.”⁶⁷

In the early 1920s, anti-Serbian rhetoric allowed Radić’s followers to outrun the communists (who preached ideas of international solidarity that were strange to the average peasant) in the struggle for the sympathies of the villagers. As for the urban parties that were represented in the Croatian Sabor and later in the People’s Assembly of SCS, they became an even easier target for defamation. For the most part, they recognized Yugoslavia and the theory of national unity among the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes underlying it, which made it possible to accuse them of betraying Croatian national interests. Of significance in this respect is Rudolf Herceg’s description of the electoral victory of the C(R)PP in the election to the Constitutional Assembly in Croatia in November 1920: “It was being decided whether the Croatian people wanted to vest rights in Radić or in those of their gentlemen who [...] had decided to hand power over Croatia to Belgrade.”⁶⁸

Against those who could not be accused of loyalty to the “occupiers,” the thesis of the exploitation of the Croatian peasant by all sorts of *kaputaš*⁶⁹ and *cilindraši* was effective, regardless of their political orientation and the position they held during and after the war. Therefore, as Radić said in the autumn of 1918, “having become a full-fledged person as a result of the war,” in the upcoming elections to the Sabor or the Constituent Assembly, the peasant “will no longer vote for gentlemen who have broken all their promises, [...] but will vote only for people from the plow and hoe.”⁷⁰ In order to “finish off” those who were nostalgic for the Habsburgs or were associated in the public mind with the nobility, the higher clergy, and the Austro–Hungarian bureaucracy in one way or another, the C(R)PP ideologists explained that the “rulers and their first assistants—bishops and noblemen” are to blame for all troubles and misfortunes.

Eliminating “the danger of clericalism,” the C(R)PP took advantage of the popular perception of the priesthood as an accomplice of the violent state on the

67 Boban Lj., *Kontroverzge*, 29.

68 Herceg, *Seljački pokret*, 33.

69 From Serbo-Croatian *kaput*, a coat. *Kaputaš* was a derogatory nickname used by the rural population of Yugoslav countries to denote a city dweller. It can be translated perhaps most simply as “a man wearing a coat.”

70 Radić, *Gospodska politika*, 26, 29, 19.

one hand and the stable patriarchal piety of the villagers on the other. Appealing to this, Radić emphasized that “for us, the peasantry is not a class, but [...] the people of martyrs.”⁷¹ Party propaganda promised them brilliant prospects: “The peasant procession goes forward and, without turning off the path, to the paradise of the peasant republic.”⁷² The procession was headed by the C(R)PP, “the bearer of the peasant movement, which is outgrowing the narrow class frame and transforming not just into a popular (Croatian) movement but also into a universal one.”⁷³

What were these ideals of universal significance? We find the answer in Herceg’s work cited above: “And among the Croatian people there appeared a revived Christian religion, faith in rights and truth, goodness and the man—the person who is righteous, courageous and wise.” This did not mean abstract *Homo sapiens*, but a concrete man of flesh and blood: “This person is not a thief, not a coward, not overly smart, like those who believe that they are smarter than all the people and are therefore insane. In 1918, all the leaders could be reproached for this, but not Radić.”⁷⁴ Who this “righteous man” considered himself to be can be seen from his letter to Tomasz Dąbal, an activist of the Peasant International, sent in May 1924: “Agitation in the ordinary sense of the word does not exist in our country. We do not have any agents at all. Everything is done in the most ideal way—by means of apostolate, that is preaching the liberation of the peasant people.”⁷⁵

The way in which Radić’s associates conducted themselves after his death in 1928 offered clear proof of the quasi-religious nature of the C(R)PP ideology. The heart and the brain of the deceased “high priest” were removed from his body by his orphaned “apostles.” They were supposed to be put on display in a special mausoleum, where they would offer exaltation of “Radić’s epistle to the people and maintain his cult.”⁷⁶ Stipica Grgić contended that this plan (which remained unfulfilled) bore the strongest affinities with “the concept of Lenin’s mausoleum, where the mortal remains of the leader were kept.”

Of course, even during his lifetime, fellow party members and supporters did not treat Stjepan Radić as

71 RGASPI 535 Krestjanskij Internacional

72 Herceg, *Seljački pokret*, 47.

73 *Ibid.*, 34, 35.

74 *Ibid.*, 31, 32.

75 RGASPI 535 Krestjanskij Internacional

76 Grgić, “Radić,” 737, 746.

the chief of some Western European party. He is the leader whose decisions are carried out unquestioningly [...] even when he expels someone from the party, from the ranks of the Croatian people. Like a patriarch, he exercises his power, which was vested in him by the people by plebiscite. He instructs, threatens, punishes, praises, but at the same time he always remains a good father at heart.⁷⁷

This passage from the party's press organ not only confirms Radić's high status but also makes one wonder who deserves "expulsion from the people." Apparently, the answer to this question was anyone who did not support the C(R)PP or, as Radić wrote, "that gentleman or worker who is outside the peasant circle, and therefore outside and against the [Croatian – *A.S.*] people."⁷⁸

Thus, Radić's adherence to the principle of the majority dictatorship and his intolerance of those who didn't fit into this majority for ethnic, social, or other reasons (in the spirit of "whoever is not with us is against us") give reason to assume that he was very far from liberalism, which inherently has an ethics of individualism, pluralism, and reverence for the rights of the minority. However, those who consider the patriarchal traditionalist elements of the theory and practice of the C(R)PP to be a manifestation of their "modern" essence would hardly agree with this statement. For instance, reproducing Radić's thesis about "the identity of the republican system with the organization of the traditional Croatian *zadruga*," Ivo Banac argued that the "republican model proposed by him had much in common with western parliamentary systems."⁷⁹ Sirotković, whose reasoning went along the same lines, believed that the definition of the republic as "the association of the homes and the people" was an "exclusively liberal provision" of the constitution.⁸⁰

Nikola Pašić as the Historical Predecessor of Stjepan Radić: Similar Ideas, Similar Policies, and Contemporary Perceptions

As noted at the beginning of this article, Radić is not the only figure in the modern and contemporary history of the southern Slavs who tends to be portrayed as a forerunner of modern "European modernization," as Stančić put it. The results that historiography has produced in connection with historical

77 Horvat, *Politička povijest*, 249.

78 Radić, "Čim je hrvatsko seljačtvo," 49

79 Banac, *Nacionalno pitanje*, 194.

80 Sirotković, "Radićev ustav," 306.

problems similar to Radić's controversy are important for our polemic. This involves the contradictory assessments of Nikola Pašić and the Radical Party headed by him. According to Holm Sundhausen, "its demands were similar to those stated in the Radić brothers' program."⁸¹ Similarities between the programs were due to the identical base of Radić's and the radicals' supporters. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, peasants of approximately equal income comprised nearly 90 percent of the population of Serbia, and the lion's share of them followed the PRP shortly after its formation in 1881.

The social homogeneity of the Serbian people is seen by some researchers as a factor in the formation of a "politically progressive system."⁸² Almost echoing Radić, Banac felt that the *zadruga* and Western parliamentarism shared common features. Slobodan Antonić, a Belgrade political scientist, refers to the illiterate peasant majority as "the middle class" in the collective monograph *Srbi 1903–1914. Istorija ideja* (Serbs, 1903–1914: The History of Ideas, Belgrade: Clio, 2015). Therefore, a society in which it dominates "is ideal for the introduction of democracy in terms of classical concepts." Apparently, he was thinking of liberal democracy, judging by the fact that Miloš Ković, coauthor and editor-in-chief of the publication, titled his chapter "The Time of King Petar: The Victory of Liberal Democracy."⁸³

During the reign of Petar Karadjordjević and earlier, under the last rulers of the Obrenović dynasty, the Radical Party played first fiddle on the Serbian political stage. In Academician Milorad Ekmečić's view, it was established "on the model of modern European parties,"⁸⁴ and according to Milan Protić, it "had a decisive influence on the transformation of Serbia into a democratic European state."⁸⁵ As the late Dušan Bataković wrote, the radicals "advocated democratic ideals and strictly parliamentary procedure in political struggle," "defended the principles of modern parliamentarism, universal suffrage, and individual freedom." The authors cited above retrace the ideological roots of the party exclusively in the western direction, or in other words, they find these roots in British parliamentary theory and French radicalism, which had a decisive influence on "the political program and organization of the movement."⁸⁶

81 Zundhausen, *Istorija*, 276.

82 Antonić, "Demokratija," 69, 75.

83 Ković, "Liberalizam," 185.

84 Ekmečić, *Duga*, 323.

85 Shemjakin, "Partija," 322.

86 *Ibid.*, 322, 328.

It is difficult to agree with this point of view. Pašić's growing popularity in the 1880s reflected the refusal by the masses to accept the very intentions that the above-cited authors attribute to him. Namely, these are the attempts "to make a European people [...] out of the Serbian people, and to turn Serbia into a European state."⁸⁷ According to Stojan Novaković, the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka*), which formed the government in the 1880–1887s at the behest of Prince/King Milan Obrenović, was faced with this task. To address it, the ruling circles had to adopt the basic principle of European liberalism: the state exists for the man but not for itself. According to Milan Piroćanac, another prominent *naprednjak*, the man "is free and has the right to use and improve all his abilities with which he is endowed by nature."⁸⁸ However, there is no rose without a thorn, so "the man," i.e., the Serbian peasant, was required to learn "the state's discipline." This meant, as Shemjakin wrote, transforming himself "from a former insurrectionist against the Turks into a disenfranchised subject of his state, from a guerrilla rebel into a regular soldier, from a self-sufficient producer into a taxpayer with an ever-growing tax burden."⁸⁹

Such a "metamorphosis" imposed from above could provoke only one response from the closed agrarian society. This response was described by an astute contemporary: "The instincts of the masses increasingly rebelled against the modernization of the state." The opposition radicals managed to "catch, articulate, and transform them into the form of a powerful people's movement."⁹⁰ Pašić opposed Europeanization of the *naprednjak* type with reference to the importance of protecting Serbian identity:

The main aspiration was to preserve good institutions, consistent with the Serbian spirit and hinder the introduction of new Western institutions that could bring confusion to the people's development. The Serbian people have so many good and healthy institutions and customs that the only thing to do would be to protect them and supplement them with the wonderful establishments that the Russian and other Slavic tribes have.⁹¹

87 Shemjakin, *Politicheskie*, 202.

88 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 151.

89 *Ibid.*, 23–24.

90 Shemjakin, "Osobennosti," 2014, 563.

91 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 291.

In the parliament and outside of it, the party sabotaged government-proposed reforms by rejecting the laws concerning the railroads, banks, and the regular army, by opposing the attraction of foreign capital into the country, etc.

What the radicals termed “native Serbian institutions” were the *zadruga* and the community consisting of several *zadrugas*.⁹² For Pašić, the latter was “the soul of the Slavic world. It is its origin, and modern social science considers it the crowning achievement in the development of the existing Western European social order.”⁹³ Therefore, the community served both as a micro-model and as the primary self-governing unit of the virtual entity that Pašić proposed as an alternative to the *naprednjak* project of a “European” Serbia. It was called the “people’s state” or the “people’s homestead,” the inhabitants of which were not divided into those who govern (bureaucracy) and those who were governed. “It is built and developed on the basis of a fraternal agreement,” and the master in it is the people, who “have created [...] everything that we now have” and therefore have the right to “dispose of everything as of their own property.”⁹⁴

Shemjakin describes the ideological background of the conflict between the radicals and the *naprednjaks* as follows: “Favoring of the individual and the apology of the community came to grips: personal freedom was opposed to the sovereignty of the people; the whole society was opposed to the individual; individualistic values were opposed to collectivism and solidarity.”⁹⁵ Being embodied in the “people’s state,” those principles provided protection against capitalism, with its militant individualism and stratification of society into hostile classes, against industrialization, against alien non-Serbian “culture,” and, in general, against the “infection” coming from the West. According to Pašić, the West “had exalted money above everything else on earth,” above peasant “virtues and dignity-honor, labor, and morality.”⁹⁶ Spreaders of the “infection” in Serbia are listed in a song sung by the radical crowd:⁹⁷

92 The Serbian *zadruga* corresponded to the Russian community and the Serbian community corresponded to the Russian rural *volost* (Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 309).

93 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 358.

94 *Ibid.*, 206.

95 *Ibid.*, 155.

96 *Ibid.*, 283.

97 Pavlović, *Vojislav*, 56.

Против бога и владара, Против попа и олтара, Против круне и скиптара, ... За радника, за ратара Боримо се ми! Устај сељо, устај роде, Да се спасеш од госпoде... Чиновнике, бирократе, Тифтарију, зеленаше, Цилиндраше и сабљаше, Који газе право наше, Гонићемо сви.	Against god and rulers Against the priest and the altars, Against crown and scepter, ... For the worker, for the plowman, We fight! Rise, peasant, rise, people, To escape from the masters... Officials, bureaucrats, Merchants, moneylenders, Cilindraši and sabljaši, trampling on our rights, Let's drive them out together.
---	--

Those listed above who managed to seize power and pursue state policy in their own interests instead of the interests of the peasant majority dwelt in Belgrade and other cities. According to the memoirs of the radical mouthpiece *Samoupravna* (1941), in the 1880s, the cities were “swept over by foreignism,” which resulted in the “alienation of urban residents from the peasants, from the people.”⁹⁸ Who expresses the people’s will? The People’s Party, of course. It appears as both an instrument of struggle for the “people’s state” and its supporting pillar. At the same time, the PRP was viewed by its members as a “movement.” As Miloš Trifunović, a member of the PRP’s Central Committee wrote many years later, its essence “is not expressed in the party structure and charter because it [the movement – *A.S.*] lives in the soul of many people. It is more than just a party, more than a doctrine or an idea. The movement exists as a deep feeling which has acquired the power of a religion, a deep political faith.”⁹⁹

The radicals owed the acquisition of this faith to the same “prophets” as the Radić followers did twenty years later. As Pera Todorović recalled, “the living example of Russian nihilists has influenced us most of all. Faith is contagious, and when we saw how our Russian comrades unreservedly believe in socialism, we also believed in it.”¹⁰⁰ Shemjakin continues:

In their project of the ‘people’s state,’ they did not go beyond the system of narodnik socialism. Among their main guidelines, which return to the ideological stock of this system, were the denial of capitalism and

98 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 38.

99 *AJ*. 80. Fasc. 31–151.

100 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 339–40.

bourgeois civilization, the perception of the people as a single and integral organism, the construction of a cult around the properties of the communal (collectivist) mentality, the concept of a ‘people’s party’, etc.¹⁰¹

The “faith” certainly had a universal character, which is why the radicals viewed their fight against Milan and the *naprednjaki* as a struggle to protect the entire Slavic tribe, “Slavic culture,” and the coming “Slavic era” against the Western *Drang nach Osten*. The adepts were tied by bonds that were stronger than those of ordinary political associates. According to the memoirs of a younger contemporary of the PRP’s founders, its structure “very much resembled the army and the church at the same time.” Shemjakin agrees: “It is exactly so, in fact, the party was a symbiosis of this kind. Hierarchy and discipline lent it the features of a military unit; ideology and its exalted perception added the character of a religious order.”¹⁰² Naturally, Pašić was its *grand maître* and commander in chief. He had no less authority among party members and sympathizers than Radić did thirty years later. Shemjakin offers an example of reliable testimony given by a European observer: “Pašić created an aura of legend around himself, having become a personification of some terrible force among the people. If something is wrong, you can hear from everywhere, ‘Ah! If only Pašić were here. When will he be here? Fortunately, Pašić remains!’”¹⁰³

The PRP’s interpretation of its own role as a sacred mission resulted in its claim for political hegemony, a claim and aspiration which it continued to cherish for decades. Its validity was confirmed by the fact that, for the radicals, the meaning of democracy was reduced to the right of the majority to monopolistic power. “Considering themselves the exclusive spokesmen for the interests of the whole people,” they viewed parliamentarism not as a mechanism for alleviating social contradictions but as “the institutionalization of such a right.” Accordingly, those who thought differently “were perceived not as political opponents but as irreconcilable adversaries and therefore enemies of the people.”¹⁰⁴ As they were averse to pluralism, the radicals rejected “the very essence of the liberal ideology and hence the doctrine of parliamentarism that ‘was growing’ directly from it.”¹⁰⁵

101 Ibid., 36.

102 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 342.

103 Shemjakin, “Partija,” 325.

104 Ibid., 331, 328.

105 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 329.

Indeed, not much in the appearance of the radicals corresponded to the “model of modern European parties.” In what capacity did the PRP achieve total superiority over its opponents and mobilize the majority of Serbia’s population? Popović-Obradović offers an answer to this question. According to her, “in parallel with the first steps towards modernization, a mass populist socialist party was founded in Serbia with the type of organization that would come into practice only with the emergence of totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century.”¹⁰⁶ Shemjakin gives more details concerning the type of organization that was meant: “Principles of organization, strict hierarchy, an outright cult of the leader, a political culture based on the rejection of political pluralism and on the principle ‘whoever is not with us is against us!’ obvious messianism and one-dimensional thinking—all these ‘generic’ features make them related to ‘the party of a new type’—the Russian Bolsheviks. And this similarity does not appear accidental at all if we bear in mind the common narodnik basis on which (obviously, at different times and under different conditions) both parties grew.”¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

Are the above findings of any importance for an assessment of the C(R)PP? Before we answer this question, it is worth reminding ourselves of the tasks this article tackles. The evident commitment of Serbian and Croatian historiographies to similar mythological constructions which reduce the course of interwar history to the struggle of “our” liberalism/progress against “their” tyranny/regression prompted us to compare and verify the authenticity of the politically colored historiographic images of two key Serbian and Croatian figures (and the parties they formed) and to establish the nature of their ideological similarity. We have shown that, despite the 23-year age difference, both parties shared common ideological roots, a common social base, similar organizational structures, similar self-perceptions among the leadership, common slogans, and other means of mass manipulation.

There is no reason to believe that Radić and his followers succeeded by imitating the radicals or deliberately copying their experience. Much as had happened in Serbia, which gained independence after two wars with the Turks

106 Popović-Obradović, *Kakva*, 331.

107 Shemjakin, “Partija,” 332–33.

(1876, 1877–1878), small rural proprietors and producers constituted the lion's share of the electorate in Croatia in 1918–1920. As the members of the population who were least inclined to bear the burden of state building, they were prepared to accept populist recipes to get rid of it. In this situation, the PRP and the C(R)PP, armed with the arsenal of narodnik socialist propaganda, were “doomed” to succeed. Branko Bešlin, a historian from Novi Sad, describes the formula of this success as follows: “The illiterate and backward peasantry could only be led by a firmly organized party, whose members devoted themselves to political work entirely and were ready for any sacrifice.”¹⁰⁸

The PRP and the C(R)PP were arguably examples of the same socio-political phenomenon, separated by two and a half decades. The study of the former furthers an accurate, more subtle “diagnosis” of the latter. Even a cursory glance at Radić's activities reveals that he was not a forerunner of liberal democracy. However, it is easier to substantiate this by relying on the precedent that is already known to history. Thus, the overwhelming evidence of anti-liberalism and anti-Westernism among the radicals and their typological kinship with the Bolsheviks “works” in relation to the Radić-followers. And we have the right to address the contemporary apologists for the latter with a critical remark that Shemjakin made in his polemical exchange of ideas with the adherents of the “Pašić–Karadjordjević restoration”: “The radicals' ideas of ‘freedom,’ ‘democracy,’ etc. could not be identical to the modern meaning of these concepts (in a liberal spirit), which is used by some Serbian historians writing about Pašić and the radicals. Thus, they [Pašić and the radicals] are far more ‘Europeanized’ than they deserve.”¹⁰⁹

Archival Sources

Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade [Archives of Yugoslavia] (AJ)

80 Jovan Jovanović-Pižon, Fasc. 31-151.

305 Djura Popović. Fasc. 4.

335 Vojislav Jovanović-Marambo, Fasc. 6.

Hrvatski Državni Arhiv, Zagreb [Croatian State Archives] (HDA)

Ante Starčević. Kutija 1. Pismo Stjepana Radića Marku Došenu. 27. I. 1919.

108 Bešlin, *Evropski*, 864.

109 Shemjakin, *Ideologija*, 155–56.

Rossijskij gosudarstvennyi arhiv social'no-politicheskoj istorii, Moscow [State Archives of Social-Political History of Russia] (RGASPI)
535 Krestjanskij Internacional [Peasant International] 2-190-19.

Bibliography

Primary sources

- Avramovski, Živko. *Nemci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: Izveštaji nemačkih diplomatskih predstavnika 1920–1941* [Germans in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: Reports by German diplomatic envoys 1920–1941]. Vol 1, 1920–1929. Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije 2020.
- Herceg, Rudolf. *Seljački pokret u Hrvatskoj* [Peasant movement in Croatia]. Zagreb: Naklada Piščeva, 1923.
- Radić, Stjepan. *Frankova politička smrt* [Frank's death as a politician]. Zagreb, 1908. https://archive.org/details/frankova_politicka_smrt_1908-stjepan_radic/page/n7/mode/2up.
- Radić, Stjepan. *Hrvatska seljačka politika prvi put u Hrvatskom državnom saboru (govor predsjednika Seljačke stranke Stjepana Radića, izrečen u Hrvatskom državnom saboru dne 12. svibnja 1910., točno po brzopisnom zapisniku, ponješto skraćeno)* [The Croatian peasant politics' first appearance in the Croatian parliament (Speech by Stjepan Radić, president of the Croatian Peasant Party, given in the Croatian parliament on May 12, 1910, scripted in shorthand, slightly abridged)]. Zagreb: Hrvatska Pučka, Seljačka Tiskara, 1910.
- Radić, Stjepan. *Gospodska politika bez naroda i proti narodu (govor predsjednika Hrvatske seljačke stranke nar. zast. Stjepana Radića na noćnoj sudbonosnoj sjednici Narodnog vijeća dne 24. studena 1918)* [Economic politics without the Nation and against the Nation (Speech by Stjepan Radić, president of the Croatian Peasant Party, given at the nightly session of the National Council on November 24, 1918)]. Zagreb: Radićeva Slavesnka Knjižara, 1920.
- Radić, Stjepan. "Seljački socijalni pokret jedina prava demokracija" [The peasant social movement is the only true democracy]. In *Seljački pokret u Hrvatskoj*, edited by Rudolf Herceg, iii–x. Zagreb: Naklada Piščeva, 1923.
- Radić, Stjepan. "Čim je hrvatsko seljačstvo preraslo školanu gospodu, radništvo i građanstvo" [When the Croatian peasantry outgrew the educated gentlemen, the working class and the urban bourgeois]. In *Seljački pokret u Hrvatskoj*, edited by Rudolf Herceg, 49–54. Zagreb: Naklada Piščeva, 1923.

Radić, Stjepan. *Politički spisi* [Political writings]. Zagreb: Znanje, 1971.

Secondary literature

- Antić, Ljubomir. “Nacionalna ideologija Jugoslavenstva kod Hrvata u Dvadesetom stoljeću” [National ideology of Yugoslavness among Croats in the twentieth century]. In *Hrvatska politika u XX stoljeću*, edited by Ljubomir Antić, 35–67. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2006.
- Antonić, Slobodan. “Demokratija” [Democracy]. In *Srbi 1903–1914: Istorija ideja*, edited by Miloš Ković, 27–142. Belgrade: Clio, 2015.
- Banac, Ivo. *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji: porijeklo, povijest, politika* [The national question in Yugoslavia: Origins, history, politics]. Zagreb: Durieux, 1995.
- Bešlin, Branko. *Evropski uticaji na srpski liberalizam u XIX veku* [European influences on Serbian liberalism in the nineteenth century]. Sremski Karlovci-Novı Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2005.
- Biondich, Mark. *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904–1928*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Boban, Branka. “Stjepan Radić u Hrvatskoj politici XX stoljeća” [Stjepan Radić in the twentieth-century Croatian politics]. In *Hrvatska politika u XX stoljeću*, edited by Ljubomir Antić, 145–59. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2006.
- Boban, Ljubo. *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije: dokumentima i polemikom o temama iz novije povijesti Jugoslavije* [Controversies from the history of Yugoslavia: Documents and polemics on topics from the recent history of Yugoslavia]. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1987.
- Despot, Zvonimir. “Ono što je Radić govorio prije više od sto godina, to vrijedi i za nas danas” [What Radić said more than a century ago is still valid today]. *Večernji list*. 7 rujna 2015. <https://www.vecernji.hr/premium/ono-sto-je-radic-govorilo-prije-vise-od-sto-godina-to-vrijedi-i-za-nas-danas-1023241>
- Dimić, Ljubodrag. *Istorija Srpske državnosti. Knjiga III. Srbija u Jugoslaviji* [History of the Serbian state. Book III. Serbia in Yugoslavia]. Novi Sad: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti Beograd, 2001.
- Dimić, Ljubodrag. *Srbi i Jugoslavija: Prostor, društvo, politika (Pogled s kraja veka)* [The Serbs and Yugoslavia: Territory, society, politics (A view from the end of the century)]. Belgrade: Centar za multikulturalnost, 2000.
- Dimić, Ljubodrag. “Srbija 1804–2004 (suočavanje sa prošlošću)” [Serbia 1804–2004 (Facing the past)]. In *Srbija 1804–2004: tri viđenja ili poziv na dijalog*

- edited by Dubravka Stojanović, Miroslav Jovanović, and Ljubodrag Dimić, 13–114. Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2005.
- Dimić, Ljubodrag, and Nikola Žutić. *Rimokatolički klerikalizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* [Roman Catholic clericalism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918–1941]. Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992.
- Ekmečić, Milorad. *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja. Istorija Srba u Novom veku (1492–1992): Drugo, dopunjeno izdanje* [Long movement between slaughter and plowing: History of the Serbs in the modern era (1492–1992)]. Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2008.
- Gligorijević, Branislav. *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji 1919–1929* [The parliament and the political parties in Yugoslavia 1919–1929]. Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istorju, 1979.
- Goldstein, Ivo. *Hrvatska 1918–2008* [Croatia 1918–2008]. Zagreb: Novi liber, 2008.
- Grgić, Stipica. “Radić nakon Radića: Stvaranje kulta heroja Stjepana Radića (1928.–1934.)” [Radić after Radić: Creating the heroic cult of Stjepan Radić (1928–1934)]. *Časopis za savremenu povijest* 42, no. 3 (2010): 723–47.
- Horvat, Josip. *Politička povijest Hrvatske. 1918–1929* [Political history of Croatia 1918–1929]. Zagreb: Tipografija, 1938.
- Horvat, Josip. *Politička povijest Hrvatske* [Political history of Croatia 1918–1929]. Vol. 2. Zagreb: August Cesarec, 1990.
- Jovanović, Dragoljub, *Političke uspomene: Saznanja* [Political memories: Knowledge]. Vol. 2. Belgrade: Kultura, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1997.
- Jovanović, Miroslav, and Radivoj Radić. *Križa istorije: srpska historiografija i društveni izazovi kraja 20. i početka 21. veka* [The crisis of history: The Serbian historiography and the social challenges in the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21th centuries]. Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2009.
- Kljaić, Stipe. *Nikada više Jugoslavija. Intelektualci i hrvatsko nacionalno pitanje (1929.–1945.)* [Yugoslavia never again: Intellectuals and the Croatian national question (1929–1945)]. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017.
- Ković, Miloš. “Liberalizam” [Liberalism]. In *Srbi 1903–1914: Istorija ideja*, edited by Miloš Ković, 153–201. Belgrade: Clio, 2015.
- Krizman, Bogdan. “Dva pisma T. Schlegela o razgovorima sa Stjepanom Radićem u zatvoru 1925. godine” [Two letters by T. Schlegel about the conversations with Stjepan Radić in the prison in 1925]. *Časopis za savremenu povijest* 6, no. 2 (1974): 125–38.

- Leček, Suzana. “Priča o uspjehu – strategija i metode političke borbe Hrvatske seljačke stranke (1918–1941)” [A success story – Strategy and methods of political struggles of the Croatian Peasant Party]. In *110 godina Hrvatske seljačke stranke: Zbornik radova*, edited by Romana Horvat, 27–48. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2015.
- Maticka, Marijan. “Hrvatska iskustva s parlamentarizmom u 20. stoljeću” [The Croatian experience with parliamentarism in the 20th century]. In *110 godina Hrvatske seljačke stranke: Zbornik radova*, edited by Romana Horvat, 177–89. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2015.
- Pavlović, Kosta. St. *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)* [Vojislav Marinković and his era (1876–1935)]. Vol. 1. London: M. Caplan & Co., 1955.
- Petrić, Hrvoje. “O braći Radić i počecima Hrvatske pučke seljačke stranke” [About the Radić-brothers and the beginnings of the Croatian Peasant Party]. In *110 godina Hrvatske seljačke stranke: Zbornik radova*, edited by Romana Horvat, 539–606. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2015.
- Popović-Obradović, Olga. *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji od 1903. do 1914. godine: Drugo izdanje* [Parliamentarism in Serbia from 1903 to 1914]. Belgrade: Logistika Novi Beograd, 2008.
- Popović-Obradović, Olga. *Kakva ili kolika država. Ogledi o političkoj i društvenoj istoriji Srbije XIX–XXI veka* [What kind of or how many countries? Essays on the political and social history of Serbia in the 19th–21st centuries]. Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.
- Shemjakin, Andrei L. “‘Partija novogo tipa’: Osobennosti serbskogo radikalizma” (konec XIX–nachalo XX veka) [A new kind of party: Features of the Serbian radicalism (end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century)]. *Glas CDXX Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka* 16 no. 1 (2012): 319–34.
- Shemjakin, Andrei L. *Ideologija Nikola Pašića: Formirovanie i evolucija (1868–1891)* [Ideology of Nikola Pašić: Formation and evolution]. Moscow: Indrik, 1998.
- Shemjakin, Andrei L. “Osobennosti politicheskogo processa v nezavisimoi Srbii (1878–1918) glazami russkih” [Features of political process in independent Serbia, 1878–1918 through the eyes of Russians]. In *Russkie o Srbii i serbah*, vol. 2, *Arhivnye svidel'stva*, edited by Andrei Shemjakin, 551–627. Moscow: Indrik, 2014.

- Shemjakin, Andrei L. “Osobnosti političeskogo processa v nezavisimoj Serbii (1878–1903): mezhdru ‘nacional’nym idealom’ i ‘grazhdanskim obshhestvom” [Features of political process in independent Serbia, 1878–1903: between “national ideal” and “civil society”]. In *Chelovek na Balkanah: Osobnosti ‘novoj’ juzhnoslavjanskoj gosudarstvennosti: Bolgarija, Serbija, Chernogorija, Korolevstvo SHS v 1878–1921 gg.*, edited by A. L. Shemjakin, 169–260. Moscow: Institute Slavjanovedenija RAN, 2016.
- Shemjakin, Andrei L. “Političeskie partii v nezavisimoj Serbii (1881–1914)” [Political parties in independent Serbia, 1881–1914]. In *Chelovek na Balkanah: Gosudarstvo i ego instituty: grimasy političeskoj modernizacii (poslednjaja tret’ XIX–nachalo XX vv.)*, edited by P. R. Grishina, 199–214. Saint Petersburg: Aleteja, 2006.
- Sirotković, Hodimir. “Radićev ustav neutralne seljačke Republike Hrvatske iz 1921. godine” [Radić’s constitution of the neutral peasant Republic of Croatia from 1921]. *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 32□33, no. 1 (2000): 299–307.
- Stančić, Nikša. “Hrvatska nacionalna integracija u 19. i 20. stoljeću: ritmovi, ideologija, politika” [Croatian national integration in the 19th and 20th centuries: Rhythms, ideology, politics]. In *Hrvatska politika u XX stoljeću*, edited by Ljubomir Antić, 9–34. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2006.
- Stanković, Djordje. *Istorijski stereotipi i naučno znanje* [Historical stereotypes and the scientific knowledge]. Belgrade: Plato, 2004.
- Stanković, Djordje. *Sto govora Nikole Pašića. Veština govorništva državnika* [One hundred speeches of Nikola Pašić: The oratorical skills of a statesman]. Vol. 2. Belgrade: RAD, 2007.
- Stojanović, Dubravka. *Srbija i demokratija 1903–1914: istorijska studija o “latnom dobu srpske demokratije”* [Serbia and the democracy 1903–1914: Historical study about the “golden era of Serbian democracy”]. Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2003.
- Stojanović, Dubravka. *Ulje na vodi: ogledi iz istorije sadašnjosti Srbije* [Oil on water: Essays on the contemporary history of Serbia]. Belgrade: Pešćanik, 2010.
- Zundhausen, Holm. *Istorija Srbije: od 19. do 21. veka* [History of Serbia from the 19th to the 21th century]. Belgrade: Clio, 2008.