

Diana Mishkova

УДК 323.1.000.316(497)''18''

## The Use of Tradition and National Identity in the Development Debates in the Nineteenth-century Balkans

*Айспрактї: Рад прѣдсїавља компаратївну анализу развојних мо̀ућности на Балкану у девїнаесїтом веку. Корїшћени су прїмери Србије и Румуније, двеју земаља сїрукїурално различїїих, али и сличних, када су у иїїању прѣбли модернизације. Расїравља се о прїри полїїичке оїције – либералној, радикално/демократїској и конзерватївној и њиховим по̀зледима на однос националної идентїїїетїа и прїрадиције према мо̀ућим правцима развоја.*

The purpose of this paper is to present the major developmental options, as advanced by different groups among the national Balkan political elites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by stressing their (distinct) presentations of national traditions and identities. This choice of perspective seems pertinent for at least one important reason. The debates on national traditions and identity during that formative period of Balkan statehood rarely acquired independent eminence in the political discourse, nor did they form a domain of their own. Rather it was in the context of debates for and against agrarian reform, or industrialization, or political change that definitions of the fundamental elements of national character and affirmations of the true nature of national spirit were evoked<sup>1</sup>. It was via and within the debates over development/modernization – and the concomitant notions of „backwardness”, „survival”, „progress”, „catching-up”, „prosperity”, etc., and ultimately „power” – that all major contemporary formulations of collective identities and „national essences” were articulated and refracted, developmental options and social reforms were advocated and sustained. In this reading, talk about identity is talk about modern identity, not so much in the sense of approximation of „modern personalities”, but of self-conscious responses to the pressures toward modernization.

<sup>1</sup> As K. Verdery has contended, „The people who argued about national identity did so in a multidisciplinary field of discourse that overlapped with talk on other themes: on the nature of the state, the situation of politics, the role of religion..., the class composition..., the history of its economic backwardness, and, above all, the proper course of development [that] should be followed – a path toward industrialization and parliamentary democracy, or something else” (*National Ideology under Socialism*. Berkeley, pp. 28–29.

The reverse connection seems equally valid. For if there had been an invariable *moral* referent that would in the last instance guide „local” definitions of any major political current or system of social thought, and the functions pinned on it, that had been the preservation of the „essence” and „spirit” of the Nation: of national identity, whose own definition stood in crucial connection with that of the major „imports” of modernity. Thus, formulating a politics suited to the nation – of reform, economic development or social integration, and, more generally, opting for change or preservation of local traditional forms, was conditioned upon a „truthful” understanding of the ingenuity of the nation. There is a remarkable co-relation between developmental choices vis-à-vis „Europe” (or, interchangeably, westernization, industrialism, capitalism, the „city”, etc.), coupled with corresponding politico-ideological positions, and definitions of national essence(s) and of their social embodiments.

The analysis here will focus upon Serbia and Romania – the two structurally most distant Balkan cases that nonetheless shared basic similarities in developmental terms: comparable problems engendered by the integration of their largely traditional societies into the modern world, concerns over the far-reaching „national” effects of backwardness, accessible developmental options (as prefigured on the contemporary European „menu”) and the requisites for legitimization of these options (as part and parcel of the legitimization of the elites themselves). At the background of these similarities one can attempt to establish how different social contexts, and, more specifically, distinctive social backgrounds and status of the political elites, affected, firstly, the emergence of a special list of developmental strategies and, secondly, the way in which these strategies were justified in relation to the „national community” and the „national traditions”.

### The Social Contexts

The most outstanding – and common – feature of the Serbian and the Romanian societies was their overwhelmingly agrarian character. In Serbia in 1884 the rural population amounted to 87.5 per cent, in 1910 – to 86.9 per cent; only 2.6 per cent of the Serbs in 1900 lived in „towns” (i. e., in places of more than 20.000 inhabitants), while modern communications and industrialisation on the eve of the Great War were still in cradle.<sup>2</sup> Although Romania’s industrial output

<sup>2</sup> Railroads amounted to only 976 km in 1911 and well-kept roads remained very few – a situation which held little promise for fast commercialisation of the Serbian village. Industrial output in the last prewar decade, on the other hand, did not exceed one-tenth of that in the agricultural sector and amounted to the low 4.5 per cent of the GDP in 1910 – as compared to the 7.0 per cent for the artisan production. Among the numerous economic studies on the nineteenth-century Serbian agriculture and industry, see the most recent contributions in the collective volume *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima XX veka*, Beograd, 1994, and in different issues of the historical journal *Tokovi istorije* (Beograd) since 1993.

per capita was over twice as big as that of Serbia, and the volume of her foreign trade and modern transportation far exceeded the Serbian figures<sup>3</sup>, in 1859, 85 per cent and, in 1912, 82 per cent of the Romanians continued to live in the countryside, the agrarian sector still contributing two-third of the country's GDP and over 70 percent of her export. The Romanian rates of industrial growth and expansion, though the highest in the Balkans, remained well below the levels commonly associated with an industrial revolution, the value of industrial output on the eve of the war, as in Serbia, not reaching the low 15 per cent of the gross national income. The apparent challenge to any modernizing national elite in either country, therefore, would have been its ability to devise means to „energize” an immobile, largely traditional rural society that almost totally lacked in the ferments of modern capitalism and democracy. It seems predictable that this imposing social prevalence of the village should leave a powerful imprint on the entire range of sociopolitical projects as well as on the various interpretations of the national past and „essence” in both countries.

The shared economic baselines notwithstanding, there were major social divergences between the two states with roots in their divergent historical and state-building experiences. At the time when the hot development debates gathered momentum during the second half of the nineteenth century, rural Serbia represented relatively undifferentiated, socially egalitarian society of free – and enfranchised – peasant owners. In Romania, by contrast, the large landholders and the state held about 70 per cent of the agricultural land.<sup>4</sup> The relative size and social weight of the urban middle classes, although ethnically highly heterogeneous, was also considerably bigger in Romania. Comparatively modern indicators of economic growth at the background of harsh social contrasts, recurrently unleashed in social conflicts – in the Romanian case; far less impressive evidence of economic modernity at the background of low property differentiation and high social stability – in the Serbian case.

These major differences go long way in explaining the rather different profiles of the political elites in the two countries. If the common trait of the emer-

<sup>3</sup> In 1910 the industrial labour force in Romania numbered 45.000 as compared to 16.000 in Serbia. The profits from the Romanian industrial investment was also twice as high, while the urban market was the largest in the region. In 1913 the country ranked forth in the world in wheat export, boosted by its 3.532 km of railroads. From the economic-history literature on Romania, see in particular J. Lampe, M. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550–1950. From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations*, Bloomington, 1982; K. Hitchins, *Romania 1866–1947*. Oxford, 1994 (the chapters on the economy and society).

<sup>4</sup> In Serbia in 1889 the holdings of less than 5 ha amounted to 72.6% of the arable land, while those of more than 50 ha – to only 0.06%. This highly homogeneous basis of the Serbian society has accounted for what sociologists call „incomplete social structure”. In Romania at that time some 2.000 large landowners held a total of about 38% of all arable land, while the whole peasant property amounted to only about 30%. Moreover, Romanian peasantry as well was far less homogeneous than the Serbian.

gent modern Serbian elite was its peasant origin, that of the Romanian elite was its boiar, quasi-aristocratic (land-owning, traditionally-ruling) origin. Albeit in neither case did this specific social profile wholly determine the choice of political philosophies, it did account for some important differences in the relations, modes of legitimisation and ethos of the constitutive groups of the ruling elites in the two countries. Between liberals and conservatives – the two governing parties in nineteenth-century Romania – there had been much broader zone of shared principles, values and goals than was the case in Serbia. The Romanian political class as a whole, being an extension of the erstwhile social elite, did not feel compelled to legitimate itself by declaring ideological war to its political opponents – of the kind that Serbian progressivists and radicals were bitterly waging against each other – despite of the differing developmental options that they advocated. Due to the severely restricted number of actual participants in the political process in Romania, politicians there felt little need of mass-mobilising doctrines and popular support that were so crucial for a young elite in conditions of an open representative system as the one in Serbia.<sup>5</sup> These socially distinct contexts and political classes, therefore, should be kept in mind when we are discussing the differing 'lists' of developmental paths, with their peculiar visions of society and its prospects for advancement, in the two countries.

### Major Developmental Options and the Respective Visions of Tradition and Identity

As one could have expected, there had been a *grosso modo* consensus, in both Serbia and Romania, over the major constitutive elements of the „national idea” – the ingredients of the imaginary historical construction, such as (codification of) common origin, language and history, and the conventional 'founding' myths (of the golden age, of foreign conspiracies, of rebirth and salvation, of regeneration and progress, etc.). This consensus was not matched, however, by unanimity among governing groups or public opinion over the intensity and the social cost of the reforms which their societies had to confront. Generally speaking, three principal solutions to the problem of backwardness, and the inferior state of the nation, each with its 'restructured' vision of the national past, took shape during the second half of the century: liberal, democratic/radical, and conservative.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the higher degree of political consensus in the Romanian case was due to the apparent intertwining of economic interests as a result of the constant „flow” between the big landowning and the urban middle class; as in Serbia, on the hand, it precludes possible equation between political doctrine and „class ideology”.

<sup>6</sup> These options, as it will be shown below, did not necessarily coincide with the party labels.

### *The Liberal Solution*

In the constitutive normative core of Balkan modernity in the nineteenth century, liberalism and nationalism formed one indivisible whole. Liberal ideas and movements were primarily responsible for the emergence and the sociopolitical assignment of the first local concepts of modern rule and of the first modern institutions: in fact, it is to them that the credit for the creation of the Balkan nation-states should go. Theirs was the ideology of liberal nationalism, under whose banner the fights for national unification and independence were waged and a concept of legitimate government different from the traditional one was implanted: a representative government, the opposite of the autocratic or the bureaucratic one, enacted by the liberals themselves on behalf of the sovereign nation. Central to this reading of political liberalism was not the assault on social and political privilege and defense for the „natural” demands of rehabilitated individuals. Central to it was the projection of the individualistic notion of the „natural rights” onto the body of the national whole – the translation of personal freedom and civil rights into the right of each nationality to „its own” sovereign state and „free” development. The conviction of that handful of foreign-educated young intellectuals was that their states could progress only if they adopted the liberal political institutions of the „progressive” West. For them economic advancement was contingent upon the creation of favourable political environment whose main attributes would be representative government and civil rights.

It seems strange at first sight that the well-read liberal reformers deemed these norms suitable for the Balkan social reality. But, as a matter of fact, what they did was to raise the archaic view of the functions of these institutions to the modern principle of popular sovereignty, and to „extract” the norms of the modern-state from the institutional traditions of the old self-government system and the „ancient custom”. Discovering little foundation for the modern institutions and principles in their contemporary societies, the liberals turned to the national history in „search for the rudiments of the Western liberal institutions and [presentation of] our whole democratic movement as the return of our people to its historical character”.<sup>7</sup> Political liberalism everywhere in the Balkans was an imported creed and format, a hybrid of the western prototype and indigenous romantic populism drawing upon the glorification of the tradition of popular democracy. It sought the endorsement of a modern concept of the state by identifying its crucial elements in the „national” past and custom. In order to gain legitimacy and support, the liberal nation-state – the one that stood for the inextricable connection between the „internal” and the „external” freedom – had to develop naturally from the true but long-suppressed essence of the national past.

<sup>7</sup> Сл. Јовановић, *Влада Милана Обреновића*, т. II, Београд, 1934, с. 44.

The crucial proof of these societies’ capability to ‘go democratic’ were, of course, their representative, democratic, „freedom-loving” institutions – it was them, the liberal claim went, which embodied the genuine nature of the national past. The liberals’ mission was to bring these institutions back to life; their goal – to show that they were the bearers of a more authentic tradition than the one of the „supreme elder” or the class of privileged.

For the Serbian liberals, the moral virtues of the „public Serbian spirit” and the institutional traditions of the patriarchal life were the fundament for Serbia’s confident development in conformity with the values of modern liberalism and democracy. Most notable among them were the institutions of the old system of local self-government, principally the communal assemblies. „The Popular Assembly is one of the most ancient and sacred institutions in the Serbian Principality. It embodies the lawful will of the whole Serbian People”, reads the liberal draft of the National assembly law of 1858.<sup>8</sup> The common law of the Assembly, claimed its author J. Grujić, is the basis of all institutions of the country and a „requirement” for the life of the people. The liberals’ ultimate goal, as formulated by their leading ideologue Vladimir Jovanović, was the „free arrangement of our state institutions in a popular and democratic spirit, in accordance with the historical precepts... [which] have existed for centuries in the life of our people”.<sup>9</sup> Constitutionalism and representative government were thus directly distilled from the traditions of popular democracy, in a testimony for the maturity of the Serbian people to exercise their „internal freedom”. Individual freedom and freedom of the people, equality before the law and fraternal solidarity – all these were values not alien to the Serb; on the contrary, they were part of the Serbian past and were preserved as ideals by the „popular spirit” throughout the ages of foreign domination. „The old or the genuine organization of the Serbian state was democratic, i. e. it meant that the people governed themselves on the basis of equality before the law and the equal right of all its members”, Vl. Jovanović argued. Serbia’s defeat at Kosovo and the enslavement of the Serbs were the punishment for the boyars’ betrayal of the „democratic spirit”. The bureaucratic and autocratic regimes in contemporary Serbia continued to display the „corrupted nature of the Serb” since the country was not dominated by the „democratic spirit, the spirit of the public contract and of the people’s self-government”<sup>10</sup>.

The Serbian liberals’ insistence that the „popular Serbian spirit” had been incarnated in and empowered by the institutions of representative democratic

<sup>8</sup> Ј. Милићевић, „Прилог познавању порекла србијанског парламентаризма”, *Зборник Филозофског факултета*, XI-1, 1970, с. 614–615.

<sup>9</sup> Cit. in M. Subotić, *Srpsanje slobode*. Niš 1992, с. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Вл. Јовановић, *Основи снаге и величине србске*. Нови Сад, 1870, с. 50. The Liberal theory of Serbian history has been most fully developed by Vladimir Jovanovich (op. cit.; *Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question*, London, 1866).

rule sprang from its crucial connection to the idea of popular sovereignty – the pivotal emblem of Serbian liberal nationalism and of its understanding of internal freedom. Although they fully shared the normative liberal faith in a society based on freedom, equality and justice, they believed that for such society to become possible, „the common will should be the supreme law and the unlimited master, it should be the sovereign”. The major values and institutions intrinsic to the liberal doctrine – parliamentary government, „equality in freedom”, „rule of law”, responsible executive – for the Serbian liberals were derivative from the crucial notion of the popular sovereignty, the „common will” that meant „the will of all, expressed by universal vote, or the vote of all on the basis of freedom”.<sup>11</sup> It is on this point that the early Serbian liberalism – as yet self-legitimizing and oppositional – differed substantially from both the version of liberalism, which was dominant in Europe at the time and apparently sensitive to the dangers of the „tyranny of the majority”, and the later, far more elitist liberalism of the Serbian progressivists.

Other traditional institutions, such as the *zadruga*, rural community, local self-government, all kinds of collective work, and the collectivistic ethos which they nurtured, were politically instrumentalised with the same legitimating purpose in mind. Once suppressed by foreign invaders and local despots, they were now brought back to life by those, who possessed the genuine knowledge of the power and spirit of the nation, of its primordial democratic instinct. The repository of this spirit and its virtues was found in the epic folklore – the major building block of the „mythological poetics” of national identity. It testified to the permanence of an ethical code among the Serbs, which provided the „basis of civil virtues” and without which democratic society could not survive. As an embodiment on the collective memory and a preserve of the virtues of the „Serbian power and greatness”, epic folklore was re-deciphered into a *žreservoir* of nationally-psychological testimonies of the Serbs’ ability not just to fight for their freedom but to create a democratic state and abide to the prescriptions of the institutions of liberalism.<sup>12</sup>

The Serbian people, in brief, due to its traditional, patriarchal customs and institutions, to its noble epics and moral code, democratic spirit and conventions in self-government was proven to be „organically” suited for, if not actively creative of, a liberal political and economic order. Therefore, it is barely justifiable to speak, during the constitutive period of the Serbian modernity, of a „dichotomy” between the „liberal idea and tradition”<sup>13</sup>. It is, at the same time, equally

<sup>11</sup> Cit. in M. Subotic, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–92.

<sup>12</sup> The most informed treatment of the ideology of Serbian liberalism can be found in G. Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism. Vladimir Jovanović and the Transformation of Serbian Politics*. Seattle and London 1975, and Milan Subotić, *Srčanje slobode*. Niš 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Such a claim seems to be more appropriate for the short-lived „liberalism in power” of the Serbian progressivists who, together with king Milan, espoused a much more westernising, elitist version of liberalism, close to that professed by the Romanian liberals. See for example A. Шемякин, „Сербия

obvious that the liberals in Serbia did not seek to re-install the old patriarchal arrangement preserved by the „popular spirit”. Nor were they traditionalist in any accepted meaning of the term: tradition for them was not an alternative to modernity nor a *sui generis* alternative modernity. For them it was only the basis, the fundamental texture from which the viable institutions and guiding principles of the nation-states could evolve. Their attempt to attain a synthesis between tradition and modernity ensued from their effort to „condense” the historical time needed for the implantation of modern forms of social organisation, economic and political freedom in particular, and most of all the nation-state<sup>14</sup>. What they were ultimately aiming at was to attune their ambitious programme of „progressive reforms” to the local, largely communitarian structures of social organisation. This was how the liberals tried to legitimate their project as universal and rational, on the one hand, and local and „patrimonial”, on the other. The Serbian liberals’ lasting achievement, therefore, was not the mobilisation of mass support despite their ideological and programmatic appeals to it and defense of the peasant property. The lasting achievement of the liberals’ intervention in the Serbian political scene was the creation of a modern political system<sup>15</sup> and the installment of the notion-state as the only legitimate form of supreme political power. Their means – the enactment of gradual political and social reforms and the cultivation of national consciousness. Whereas before their ascendancy, political legitimacy rested fully upon traditional grounds (like ancient custom, monarchic rule, higher education, etc.), after them each politician deemed it necessary to assert his right to power in terms of how truly he represented the people.

This revolution in the conception of lawful rule is part and parcel of modern nationalism. It constitutes the fundamental principle of modern government. Central to it in the Serbian (and, largely, Balkan) context, however, were not the liberal precepts of enlightened rule, but the traditional notion of popular self-government. Intrinsic to that notion was the egalitarian rendition of democracy as derived from the monolithic popular designation of the community, that was endowed with the right of self-rule, and from the understanding of liberty as „popular freedom”, „freedom of the national whole”. The foundation of the modern Serbian state was thus made to rest on the congenital liberal nationalism and constitutional democratism of the Serbian peasant, on the sound pillars of his collectivist, self-ruling aptitude.<sup>16</sup> But, having been convinced in their mis-

на переломе. Обретение независимости и проблема модернизации”, *Tokovi istorije*, 1–2, Beograd, 2000, pp. 19–46.

<sup>14</sup> M. Subotić (*op. cit.*, p. 156) makes a similar point by calling this synthesis „modernity of backwardness”.

<sup>15</sup> G. Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> It is not nearly surprising then that while the liberals in opposition of the 1850s and 1860s gave the people’s understanding of democracy its due by „rediscovering” the Serbian tradition and spirit, the liberals in government of the 1870s gave the people’s expectations for state protection its due by shielding

sion to guard the true, properly-understood national interests, the liberals left little need to heed the opinions of this „peasant nation” or to explain to it the meaning of belonging to it. This need would be realised by others – their opponents from the „left” – and their shrewdness would be abundantly rewarded.

Unlike in Serbia, liberalism in Romania had the historical chance to get beyond what E. Lovinescu called the „phase of the ideological revolution” and step into that of the „economic revolution”<sup>17</sup>. While sharing the basic tenets of contemporary liberalism with their Serbian counterparts, Romanian liberals differed from them in both institutional achievement and modernizing zeal. Within a very short period of time, and most pronouncedly during the decade between 1860 and 1870, the nascent Rumanian state adopted almost the whole package of European institutions and legislation. Similarly, the (ex middle-nobility) Rumanian liberals espoused a more 'liberal' version of democracy than their (peasant-based) Serbian compeers in that their ideal was not the self-rule of a nation of backward peasantry, but representative government of the best educated and socially reliable. Their avowed goal was modernization of the urban, not the rural, sector of the economy through forced industrialization under state protection and encouragment for the urban middle class. Yet the Romanian liberals were no less prone to identify the fundamental liberal principles – as seen to fit these goals – not in the Western body of doctrine, from where they were actually taken, but in the traditions and values of the national past. For, as the leading Moldavian liberal, M. Kagalniceanu, pointed out, „the real civilization is the one that derives from our bosom, by way of reforming and improving the institutions of the past with the ideas and successes of the present”<sup>18</sup>.

The two referential epochs where Romanian liberals projected the untainted national „kernel” in search of the identity-building „heritage” of the Romanian nation, were the Daco-Roman antiquity and the Medieval ages between the fourteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. There was no clash between either of these eras (whose co-existence, in terms of modern identity politics, was commonly taken as problematic), as well as the identity-building traditions extracted from them, and the pre-requisites of modernity. On the contrary, even pragmatic politicians, such as the liberal leader I. C. Bratianu, saw themselves compelled to frequently and passionately refer to a certain primordial, discontinuous model shaped by the Romanian past and excavate therefrom the modern elements of the liberal doctrine.

The Romans who had settled in ancient Dacia, alleged I. C. Bratianu, had kept the republican spirit alive. That spirit came not from Rome, where the flame

the small peasant property from the forces of the market. See H. Вучо, *Распадање еснафа у Србији*, I, Београд, 1954, срп. 323–337; M. Palaret, *The Balkan economies c. 1800–1914. Evolution without Development*. Cambridge 1997, pp. 121, 309–310.

<sup>17</sup> E. Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*. București, 1972, p. 478.

<sup>18</sup> Cit. in E. Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

of Liberty had been extinguished by that time, but from the rural environment which had preserved the old faith and virtues. Roman settlers in those lands were a sort of political emigrants, refugees fleeing on account of their convictions – a fact that made the foundation of the Romanian nation comparable to that of the American nation, as both shared in the religion of liberty. Much like the emigrant English Puritans, „the democratic and freedom-loving population of Italy, in order to free itself from the fiscal yoke, from the abuses of the privileged, and from the threats that it would lose its land, took up a plough in one hand and a sword in the other and set on to raise the pillar of Liberty in a new land, young and strong, away from the stinking air of despotism”. It was in the midst of these new Roman colonies that „democratic traditions were kept up sacred and pure”. The Romanian nations, thus, „not only has its mind and spirit ready for democracy, it has continuously carried [democracy] in its heart and customs”<sup>19</sup>. As to the representative institutions, it should be remembered that „Romania has its own past, and whilst other states had been under the sway of despotism, here we had a regime ... [which was] all too liberal and, one may say, parliamentary”. The law on the local government, too, was advertised as a revival of an ancient Roman tradition – „one of our ancient institutions” – that had been „salvaging” Romanians for centuries until „foreign rulers came and destroyed it”<sup>20</sup>. Words that could have been taken from one of Vladimir Jovanović's treatises on the „organicist” democratic traditionalism of the Serbs.

The 'proto-liberal' attributes of the Romanian historical tradition, much like those which the Serbian liberals 'identified' in Serbia's past, were primarily meant to legitimate a modern concept of the state by way of tradition and ancient custom. But they also had to imbue the people, despite its miserable material condition, with a sense of belonging to the civilized world and thus foster its national self-esteem. Indeed, the very backwardness of the Romanians was the consequence of their centuries-long mission of „vanguard of Christianity and a barrier against Asian invasions”. To this mission was added, around the 1830's, a new one – that of a bulwark of democratic Europe. „For nearly eighteen centuries, wrote D. Bratianu in 1851, we have been suffering, labouring and fighting in silence, without forgetting for a moment that we are entitled to represent in Eastern Europe the idea of individual freedom and collective progress, which make us Europeans and real forebears of humanism, that we are the vanguard of the Greco-Latin race... Never, not even in our most inauspicious days, have we been shaken in our vocation to humanity”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, from disciples of the West

<sup>19</sup> Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, vol. I/1, București: Ed. Cartea Românească, 1938, pp. 21–22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. VIII, București, 1941, p. 178; vol. IV, București, 1932, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Cit. in V. Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești (1369–1878)*, München: Jon Dimitru Verlag, 1987, pp. 79–80. Cf. Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București pp. 30–32, 36–37. Critically-minded historians such as M. Kogălniceanu were no more immune from temptation to look for a privileged position of Romania in European history (see L. Boia, *loc. cit.*).

the Romanians converted into its defenders and, as repeatedly happened to be the case, even its forebears. Once the guardians of Christian Europe, now they stood as the guardians of Democratic Europe, progenitors of the European civilization in the East, an European model for the other Balkan nations that had launched on the road to their 'revival'.

Similar had been the assignment of the claim about the unitary, supra-class nation, about the „national unity” as a „popular feeling”. Its source – just like in the Serbian case – was the reality of an authentic democratic Romanian tradition. N. Balcescu, the famous radical-liberal, described the Romanian medieval society as built upon democratic and egalitarian principles, thence his induction that the Romanian nation rested upon the ancient triad of boyars (aristocrats), peasant and soldiers, each of these estates being endowed with the right to property and to carry arms.<sup>22</sup> The Romanian boyars, far from being oppressors of the peasantry, „are those who ... had built our kingdom on institutions so humane and egalitarian, that not even the laws of Licurgus or Solonus could favourably compare to them”. Romanian aristocracy, moreover, „is not hereditary but opet t all sons of our fatherland”. Indeed, it had anticipated, in a very judicious manner at that, the democratism of the French revolution.<sup>23</sup>

The liberal solution, therefore, the one that was closer than any other to the Western bourgeois model, in both Serbia and Romania was presented „almost point by point as re-actualization of a transformed past”<sup>24</sup> which 'ended' with the late Middle Age and the subjection of the 'nation' to a (corrupting) foreign rule. The mobilizing implications of this romantic exaltation seem obvious and, in the intellectual and political context of contemporary Europe, hardly original.<sup>25</sup> Paradoxically at first sight though, the liberals' inflated invention and re-definition of the 'national' traditions and collective moral kernel did not serve to celebrate and indigenist project. It was meant to bring their societies closer to the West and gain acceptance as equal members to the European family of states. Their aim was to show that the national history of the last few centuries had been an aberration, a historical accident, whose elimination would bring their countries to where they naturally belonged. The liberals, as a student of the Romanian political thought has pointed out, upheld a sort of 'kin' or genetic concept of the Romanian community, according to which it had preserved intact its original „instincts” forged at the time of its formation, when, due to the Romans, it had

<sup>22</sup> N. Bălcescu, *România sub Mihai Vodă Viteazul*. Iași, 1988, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> „The old boyars were not scared by the French republic ..., because they turned their domestic servants into new boyars to whom they gave their daughters and nieces as wives” (Ion Eliade Rădulescu, *Echilibrul între antiteze*, vol. I, București 1916, pp. 85, 133).

<sup>24</sup> L. Boia, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> „If we wanted to become part of the great national movement, which then pervaded Europe, we had to awaken our people – a dormant people had nothing to hope for”, admitted later Vladimir Jovanovich (Sl. Jovanović, *Moji savremenici – Vladimir Jovanović*. Windsor, 1961, p. 32).

been an integral part of the European civilization. It was those original features that constituted the community's traditional essence, on the basis of which the democratic institutions of medieval 'Rumania' could be built, and it was their enduring power that made the adoption of such institutions not just feasible but effective. For there was a case not of borrowing but of reunion of two similar structures which shared in the same origin. This tradition, located not in an unspecified pre-modern age (to which the conservatives abstractly referred), but in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, was not a victim of the modernization, but rather its starting point and conductive background. What the liberals meant by tradition had nothing to do with the experience bequeathed by the centuries of political decline; they meant the Rumanians' original ethnic essence and the pre-requisite for the democratic institutions of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>26</sup>

The difference in the elements 'identified' as inherently conductive to the liberal project in the two countries thus highlights their distinct social contexts. The Serbian liberals, with their emphatic adulation of the virtues of the patriarchal and communitarian norms of the village, offered an expressly *popular* rendition of the nature of Serbian history and the „public Serbian spirit”. The Romanian liberals, on the other hand, produced a sort of 'Whig' interpretation of the Romanian „*specificul national*” whose key elements, besides the invariable missionary predilection, were the respect of individual and national freedom, intact property rights and national unity, and commitment to the progressive principles of the civilized world. The (application of) notions of property, as embodiment of the fundamental public ethos, in the two contexts provide the most illuminating case. If the Romanians had been spared of subjugation and displacement by Asiatic invasions and had withstood intact the migrations, it was primarily by virtue of their attachment to and identification with their property. The Slavs, by contrast, having known only „collective property”, were doomed to be „in incessant movement” and easily subdued, a fact that explained their settlement among the Romanians.<sup>27</sup> Remarkably, it was precisely this property distinction between the Slavs and all the rest – but endowed with the opposite evaluative sign – by way of which the Serbian liberals, and especially the Serbian radicals, argued their (modern) developmental options. In this respect, the normative outlook of the Romanian liberals, and the corresponding adaptation of the „national essence” which it entailed, resembled much more that of the Serbian progressivists than the one of the nominal Serbian fellows.

In either case, however, the quasi-populism of the official liberal doctrines and praxis was evident. Liberals in both Serbia and Romania, while destroying traditional rural cultures through their modernity-constructing reforms, sought

<sup>26</sup> V. Georgescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>27</sup> I. C. Brătianu extensively developed this thesis in a speech during his 1883 election campaign. (See A. Stan, *op. cit.*, pp. 390–391.)

to carve out „normative national pasts” from the pre-modern symbiotic life-world of the „national” peasantry. Their attempt at devising a national ontology thus served their project of establishing non-problematic connection between pre-modern forms of life – the tradition – and the structures of social and political modernity.

### *The Radical Solution*

It is against this background that one should try to interpret the two, generally assumed to be strongly contrasting visions of the society and its prospects for advancement in Serbia, unlike those in Romania. Indeed, the extent to which the liberal discourse of the nation had set the tone of contending ideological solutions is manifest in both Serbia and Romania. But in two opposite directions – in Serbia towards crystallisation of a strongly populist radical view; in Romania towards ‘liberalisation’ of the conservative vision. Significantly, neither of these had a corresponding version in the other country.

Serbian radicalism was the one really mass political movement among all Balkan countries before the First World War. Given the meager state of political communication at the time, this fact itself certainly begs for explanation. Crucial to it would be to look into the ways by which the radicals pursued ideological appeal and effected their remarkable mobilisational and organisational success.

Contemporary scholars seem to agree in viewing Serbian radicalism as an off-spring of the populist socialism of Svetozar Marković – the Serbian adaptation of Russian populism of the late 1860s.<sup>28</sup> At the core of Marković’s social philosophy laid the belief in the ability of an egalitarian, pre-capitalist society, such as the Serbian, to by-pass the „stage” of capitalism via preservation and perfection of the traditional institutions of collective ownership and self-rule – the commune and the *zadruga*. Its rationale was the evasion of the bureaucratisation and capitalisation of society by moving directly into the socialist, self-governing society.<sup>29</sup> Similar to the erstwhile liberal doctrine, but also in reaction against it, Marković’s socialism sprang from the quest of a social formula that would offer a solution to the problems engendered by the clash of

<sup>28</sup> Over the last years a number of detailed, and revisionist, studies of Serbia radicalism appeared. Most prominent among these is Латинка Перовић, *Српски социјалистички 19. века. Прилог историји социјалистичке мисли*, књ. 1–3, Београд 1985, 1995; idem, *Српско-руске револуционарне везе*, Београд, 1993. See also Андрија Раденић, *Радикална сјџранка и Тимочка буна*, књ. 1–2, Зајечар 1988; Васа Казимировић, *Никола Пашић и његово доба 1845–1926*, књ. 1–2, Београд 1990; Андрей Л. Шемякин, *Радикальное движение в Сербии*, Москва 1993.

<sup>29</sup> „Our task is not to eliminate the capitalist economy, which indeed does not exist [in our country], said Marković, but to turn the small patriarchal property into collective one and thus to skip a whole historical period of economic development – the period of the capitalist economy” (cit. in Латинка Перовић, *Српски социјалистички 19. века. Прилог историји социјалистичке мисли*, књ. 2, Београд 1985, s. 300–301).

the traditional society with the anonymous disruptive forces of modernisation and modern civilisation. Its anti-capitalist quality, like that of a number of contemporary and later-day populist doctrines, was at once a product of a modern social thought and of the patriarchal environment where it had emerged – an ingenuous manifestation of an underdeveloped society that sought a way out of backwardness in its „own” paths of development in opposition to the social values and institutions, but also contradictions and „inhuman ruthlessness”, of the West. „The socially undifferentiated agrarian society, the collective ownership, safeguarded in the *zadruga* and the commune, the popular self-government – for the Serbian socialists these were the essential preconditions upon which a path different from the West European, i.e., the path of non-capitalist development, could be charted.”<sup>30</sup> The ultimate purpose of their project was the state of social justice, the „people’s state” – collective owner of the capital, organiser of the people’s production and regulator of equitable distribution.

It was not however these socialist tenets that inspired the tremendous enthusiasm of the Serbian peasant. Unlike doctrinaire socialists, Marković and his followers were quick to grasp the potential behind the traditional peasant protest against a bureaucratic system, taxes and state salaries. The radicals had no program of reforms in the countryside, but they succeeded to master the typical peasant grievances and to supply them with strategy and bright vision, thus procuring an increasingly wider social and political basis for their movement. More importantly, after Marković’s early death his *narodnik* socialism distinctly evolved into populism with considerably less socialism and much more nationalism. Underlying it was a concept of the nation and the popular sovereignty which considerably „radicalised” the one originally introduced and monopolised by the Serbian liberals. The bearer of the sovereignty became the communitarian and almost physical whole of the wretched peasantry. In the final analysis, the great feat of the radicals was that they succeeded to firmly establish the notion of complete congruity between radicalism, popular interests and national mission.

Triggering this stunning mobilisational and organisational success was a technique in whose inventory political instrumentalisation of tradition and collective identity figured prominently. Indeed, at the hands of the Serbian radicals, tradition itself became an alternative model of development and was made to stand out in vehement confrontation with (what the radicals perceived to be) the European one.

<sup>30</sup> Л. Перовић, *Српски социјалистички 19. века*, књ. 3, Београд 1995, p. 21. As the Radical leader N. Pašić put it already in 1876, „We want to preserve the nation of the mistakes of the western industrial society, which was produced a proletariat and infinite ostentatious wealth, and instead to raise up industry on the basis of associated labour. We do not agitate to prohibit private property, but to bring the peasants into association and to work the land by machinery, because without association (*zadruga*) steam engines cannot be used efficiently”. (Никола П. Пашић, *Писма, чланци и говори (1872–1891)*, Београд 1995, с. 51).

The material and moral elevation of Serbia was possible, the radicals asserted, if only it could proceed from the traditional economic and political institutions „in the purest popular spirit”. What apparently distinguished their programme of reforms, was its synchronism with the values of the Serbian patriarchal tradition: the opening up of politics, as the party leader Nikola Pašić put it, „to the people’s ideas and people’s expectations, [its reliance upon] popular traditions and popular aspirations”.<sup>31</sup> The assault on liberal capitalism was launched from the positions of patriarchal communitarianism, egalitariness and democracy. From Marković’s socialist agenda his successors kept only that portion which harmonised with the archaic communitarian attitudes and „popular” institutions – reduced bureaucracy, self-administration, equality, alleviation of peasant’s taxation, strong economic and distributive functions of the state – and carefully avoided any calls that could estrange the Serbian peasant. Understandably then, the radicals’ anti-capitalism was not equivalent to socialism in the contemporary sense – to the extent that they possessed an economic program, it favoured associated labour and co-operation – in other words, a third-way economy.

Whilst the liberals, and especially the Progressivists, the radical claim went, considered the patriarchal life of the Serbian village to be a „residual of barbarism” and strove to „transform Serbia into a small Western country, in total disregard of everything Serbian and Slavic”, the radicals „assume that the Serbian people possess so many good and sound institutions and traditions, that they only need to be cultivated and complemented by the good institutions that are to be found among the Russian and other Slavic peoples, while taking from the West only technical knowledge and science and use these in agreement with the Slavo-Serbian spirit”.<sup>32</sup>

The „good and sound” institutions and traditions – those which „conformed to the Serbian spirit” and were „sufficient to safeguard the Serbian people against the pressure of the west and to bring vitality and advancement to it” – were the Orthodox church, the peasant commune (*zadruga*) and the „people’s state”. „The Slav spirit, the Slav character, the Slav distinctions from the other peoples – these are all tied to the Orthodox faith”. The Eastern church, unlike the „absolutist Latin” one, was a „democratic and people’s church”, bringing „peace and love”, and as such was much more capable to „accommodate development, human improvement, innovation and scientific progress”. „The commune (*opština*) is the soul of the Slav world... It is the beginning of the Slav society

<sup>31</sup> Cit. in Л. Перовић, *Српски социјалистички 19. века*, књ. 3, р. 87.

<sup>32</sup> This was how the long-standing leader of the Radical party, Nikola P. Pasić, summarized the polar opposition between the two projects – the liberal and the radical (Никола П. Пашић, *Писма, чланци и зборови*) (1872–1891), Београд, 1995, с. 238–239). Pasić’s anti-Western social philosophy is contained in the following single statement of his: „The main objective of our political movement was to preserve the good institutions which would have disrupted the genuine life of our people and caused confusion in the national development and life” (*ibidem*, р. 241).

and the end of the West-European development. The Slav commune is capable of further improvement and re-arrangement as a basis of society and state, whilst the commune in the West-European world, on the contrary, signals and end-point and, indeed, will be the end of its culture, which is how the present state of things in the West will be inevitably terminated”. With its collectivist, egalitarian, „brotherly” ethos, the commune, more than any other traditional – „sacred” – institution, carried the germane elements of the superiority of the Slav civilisation over the ‘Western’ one. Finally, the people’s state, which „bears the imprint of its creator”, was an immanently democratic state: drawing on the social and moral virtues of the commune, it possesses „no superior strata..., and everyone feels a master”.<sup>33</sup> These were the „institutions and traditions” that formed the groundwork of the Orthodox Slav civilisation. Within its bosom alone, the radicals maintained, the preservation of the social and national-psychological ingenuity of the Serbs was conceivable. It was these institutions and traditions, again, that made the Orthodox Slav civilisation superior to the Western (essentially Catholic and Germanic) one. In fundamental antinomy with the former, stood the „unnatural, antisocial, egotistic” nature of the latter as sustained by the Catholic church, individualism and the Western state.

This slavophilic fundamentalism of the radicals, just as their „socialism”, was an important element of their definition of the „inner contents” and distinctiveness of the Serbian nation. It was, in other words, a function of their nationalism. Their conviction that „western” capitalism threatened to destroy the national identity of the Serbs by turning them into a „proleterian people” was projected onto, and rationalised in terms of, the deep civilisational division between the East and the West. „Western Europe and Eastern Europe – these are two utterly different worlds which have never been in agreement... These are two worlds in perpetual cultural, religious, national and economic fight with each other... In the incessant conflict between the East and the West, the Serbian people, ever since its settlement on the land that it occupies today, has been on the side of the ‘East’”.<sup>34</sup> Thus the radicals’ anti-Western pathos, an intrinsic element of their populist nationalism, elevated Serbia’s belonging to the Orthodox and East-European world to the status of a civilisational identity preordained by tradition.

The apparent paradox in all that was that the radicals’ „Eastern” option itself was an outcome of the adoption of modern „Western” models and institutional mega-forms (most notably, the nation-state), it was driven by a modern European social analysis (Marxism) and aspired to the most vanguard society (the „social state”). Even the „conserving” functions of the Orthodox church

<sup>33</sup> The most succinct statement of the Radicals’ social thought, and a detailed defense of the basic elements of the Orthodox Slav civilization, is to be found in Nikola Pašić’s *Сложа Србо-Хрватца* (Никола П. Пашић, *Писма, чланци и зборови...*, с. 285–318).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, р. 304.

were upheld in the name of „European” values: its „advantages” as a „democratic” and „popular” church stood out as such „not on the grounds of faith, but on those of progress and defense of nationality”.<sup>35</sup>

In ideological terms, then, the radicals sought to trace an alternative, „third” way between the East and the West – „third” in relation to the means, not the goals. Neither the impulse nor the purpose of their ’traditionalist’, or populist, discourse was in effect conservative and anti-modernist. As elsewhere, Serbian populism sprang from the (largely intellectual) awareness of backwardness and the fear that, by following the Western ’ways’, the Serbian society would lose its economic and political independence as well as its identity. It was not, to put it succinctly, a ’primitive’ indigenous ideology of the peasantry, it was an ideology of the intelligentsia. Similar to other populist movements, Serbian radicalism was based upon a belief in the possibility of controlling the modernisation process; it searched for a synthesis between the basic values of the society and the need for modernisation. The Serbian radicals were not hostile to progress – they actually championed it, but in its populist version, which, far from destroying traditional ways, presumably allowed for their preservation and perfection.<sup>36</sup>

Generally speaking, populist mobilisation presents an attempt at social integration on the basis of traditional values. In a broader perspective, it is a technique of national integration where the activation of the „national masses” (the social groups that supply the mass basis of the populist movements) is far more important than their direct participation in the political process.<sup>37</sup> The Serbian radicals implemented this kind of technique by carrying to the people the basic message that it was them, more than anyone else, that understood the true national mission and represented the true people’s interests. Significantly, the irredentist aspect of their nationalism was just as weighty: the establishment of the „most democratic people’s self-rule” was intended, among other things, to entice the unreemred brothers to hurriedly join the motherland. Indeed, the populists’ monopoly over the nationalistic discourse became complete once they subordinated internal reforms and egalitarian designs to the cause of national unification.

So, the radicals’ programmatic stock and its institutional coat should be understood as part and parcel of modern nationalism. But the methods, arguments and rhetoric style by way of which they pursued these ’modern’ objec-

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 311–312, 317.

<sup>36</sup> Both Marković and Pašić saw the need of industrialization, but without bureaucracy and proletariat, in other words, not by emulating the western model of development and reproducing of its contemporary social conditions, but by evading precisely that possibility. The fundamental question for them was: what should be done so that Serbia could benefit from the scientific and technological achievements of the western civilization and still not lose its distinctiveness?

<sup>37</sup> G. Ionescu and E. Gellner (eds.), *Populism. Its meanings and National Characteristics*, London, 1969, pp. 182–183.

tives shared in the populist practice of instrumentalising patriarchal values, institutions and concepts of power. This ’procedural’ aspect should not in the least be overlooked. By impressing traditional communal attitudes and values upon to notion of the self-governing people, in the language of strongly mobilizing rhetoric, the Serbian radicals established their domination on the idea of the nation and the legitimating norms of established their domination on the idea of the nation and the legitimating norms of political discourse. It was from them that in majority of the peasants learned their sense of what it meant to be a Serb – in and out of their state. There was no contention between mobilisation on behalf of radicalism and mobilisation on behalf of nationalism – the cause was one and the same. More than anything else this association of nationalism – in its civic and irredentist aspects – and populist radicalism accounted for the latter’s standing supremacy on the Serbian political scene. It helps us identify the basics of the populist technology of winning over the idea of the nation, when the latter consists of independent and enfranchised peasants, and of appropriating the fundamental legitimising principle, namely, the defense of the properly understood national interests. These certainly go long way in explaining how national integration and peasant activation became possible before Serbia, much like the other Balkan countries, had experienced major economic transformation.

#### *The Conservative Solution*

The conservative option in Romania – and Junimism, in particular, as its most coherent and complete manifestation – had no socio-political analogue in Serbia. Yet, precisely like the contemporaneous Serbian radicalism, it was a reaction against the social and political „disharmonies”, contrasts and distortions caused by the encounter with modernity, and against the liberal solutions magnifying these malformations. The feverish import of foreign „forms”, encouraged by liberally-minded enthusiasts, was seen to cause prolonged and painful incongruity with the traditional structures and values – with the local „substance”. Similar to Serbian radical ideology, again, Romanian conservatism sought for an intrinsic, organic „third way” of development, a specific „Romanian model” of combining the „European ideal” and traditional local structures, projected as much onto the past and present as onto the future.

Unlike liberalism, Romanian political conservatism had deep local roots, a proper „organic” tradition, tracing back to the local conservatism of the boyars’ reform projects ever since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It could have been anticipated, therefore, that beyond its concern do disclaim the anachronistic nature of the landed aristocracy, in the focus of the conservative reasoning about the nature of the „national body” would be the historical justification of property. The conservatives’ central thesis was that, as their leader Barbu Catargiu put it, „feudal-

ism in Rumania had never existed”, therefore large landed property there had been historically sanctioned. At any rate, having the actual situation and the actual right on their side, the conservatives felt less impelled to refer to ‘historical models’ than their revolutionary-minded opponents. Which, ironically, made them sound more modern than the liberals – just as when they counseled the self-proclaimed modernisers „to examine this issue [of landed property] from the vintage point of law and political economy.”<sup>38</sup>

Nowhere was the modernising potential of ‘enlightened’ conservatism more evident than in the Junimist approach to the path of development Romania had to follow. Although the view that modernisation could not entail merely a process of imitation, but a synthesis between European and traditional local structures, had originated with the generation of 1848<sup>39</sup>, the full-fledged doctrine of the „Romanian model” took shape after the late 1860’s through the writings of Titu Maiorescu, Theodor Rosetti and Petre P. Carp. Its key philosophical, political and economic concept was evolutionism, perceived not as veneration of tradition but as a gradual, organic advancement of the Romanian society. Although the laws of progress had ordained the inevitable triumph of ‘modernity’, the latter, the Junimists argued, should not be imposed through rash aping, abrupt changes and renunciation of the role of tradition; development could not be natural if there was a breach between the past and the present.

Until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Junimists asserted, the Romanian society had been submersed in a state of „Oriental barbarity”, which it began to relinquish only under the influence of the ideas of the French revolution. But as that took place too fast, and the Romanians had not had the time to become ready for the adoption but of the outer luster of Western societies, the result was the emergence of a society where outward forms had no foundation in a corresponding substance. All it engendered was superficiality, mediocrity and harm rather than benefit. A nation could live without culture, in the hope of developing one in a appropriate time, but it could not live in artificial culture without endangering its own existance.<sup>40</sup> The Junimist were equally critical of what Maiorescu called the „megaloprahia” of the liberals and the idea that the Rumanian nation had always been inspired by undying principles. „It is sheer blindness not to see that the building (*zidirea*) of the Romanian nationality cannot rest on a basis in the midst of which stands a lie”; „we must declare that our revival can only begin in the spirit of the modern culture”.<sup>41</sup> The Junimists were thus the first to attempt to separate the past and the present in Rumanian culture

<sup>38</sup> L. Boia, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>39</sup> See V. Georgescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>40</sup> T. Maiorescu, „În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română, in idem, *Critice*, București, 1998, pp. 101–113.

<sup>41</sup> T. Maiorescu, *Critice*, vol. I, București, 1908, p. 151; vol. II, p. 236.

and the modern political project from the (real or imaginary) medieval precedents.<sup>42</sup>

The conservatives’ critical formula of the „forms without substance”, therefore, was not inherently inspired by retrogressive nostalgia for the past. If the import of foreign „forms” created a „caricature of civilisation”, as Theodor Rosetti put it, the reason was not that these forms were defective by themselves, but that they were incompatible with the mentality and tradition – the „culture” – and the social conditions of Romania at the time. In the focus of the conservative attack on the ensuing social deformations, just like in the wrathful vocabulary of the Serbian radicals, was the „state class” with its liberal convictions and „aping servility”. Underlying this curious unanimity between these contrasting ideologies in the two countries was their shared belief in the corrupting and pernicious effect of the alien „European forms” on the sound tissue and morale of the nation. Just as in the Serbian radical vision the „capitalist economy” (that, similar to the „bourgeoisie” of P. P. Carp and Mihai Eminescu in Romania, „has never actually existed in Serbia” in the opinion of S. Marković) damaged the social and moral health of the Serbian society, so the capitalism, imposed by the Romanian liberals „from above”, was leading to „degradation and disintegration of the individuality of [the Romanian] people”<sup>43</sup>. In either case, therefore, „capitalist development” was seen as conspicuously inapt emulation of the West, lacking in whatever intrinsic roots or necessity in either society.

The supreme moral referent in all that, in a meaningful analogy with the Serbian-radical case again, was the preservation of *the* national identity, the „national being” and „spirit”. „The countries that had proved unable to heal themselves from the decease of rapid reforms, were healed by others, but along with their recovery they were losing their individuality, vanishing as independent nations”, warned the Junimists’ leading politician P. P. Carp. „Before seeking to introduce a just order in your house, – added another conservative, – you should take care to preserve your nation”, whilst „democracy in itself does not in the least ensure the existence of a nation vis-à-vis the other nations”<sup>44</sup>. The very identity of the Romanian civilisation, the guarantee of its real progress, was found to reside with its organic evolution, while „utopias, the vague and general ideas, implemented in the name of freedom, equality and fraternity, destroy any national development”. „The real, lasting progress ... can be effected solely by harmonic connection of the past with the present”, the fundamental condition for social betterment being the national one.<sup>45</sup> Remarkably, as an example of an

<sup>42</sup> L. Boia, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 46–48.

<sup>43</sup> C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română și politicianismul*. București, n.d., pp. 105, 240–242. Cp. Z. Ornea, *Junimea și Junimismul*. București, 1975, p. 195.

<sup>44</sup> P. P. Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. I. București, 1987, pp. 495–496.

<sup>45</sup> P. P. Carp, *op. cit.*, p. 99; A. Marghiloman, *Doctrina conservatoare*. București, 1923, pp. 5–6.

organically-evolving state „to be envied”, in opposition to the liberal ideal of the „contractual state”, the Romanian conservatives cited ... Serbia, which „has been developing naturally and, I say it with envy, more naturally than we have been, as it is deriving its institutions from the soul and attitudes of its people, and has not been improvising, as we do, with ideas and theoretical compromises”<sup>46</sup>. Inasmuch as the philosophy of the Serbian radical institutional project is concerned, the observation was quite accurate, indeed.

The basic premise which Romanian conservatives shared, therefore, was that Romanians, who had not as yet accomplished their political unification, had to be primarily concerned with the preservation of their „nationality” and „national identity”. If the liberals’ preoccupation was to „transform” that nationality in such a way, so as it could become capable to perform its „civilising mission” in accordance with their modern visions, that of the conservatives was with the maintenance and conservation of „Romanianness”. „We argue, Eminescu said, that the Romanian people will not be able to develop as Romanian people, if it does not preserve, as the basis of its development, its historical traditions”<sup>47</sup>. It is at this point that the Serbian radical populism and the Romanian evolutionist conservatism bore, what apparently looked like, a paradoxical similarity: the faith that the reliance on existing social and political conditions alone could ensure the preservation of national singularity. But this seeming paradox disappears once we project the two socially opposed doctrines onto the common area of modern nationalism and its legitimating supremacy. Because, much like the Serbian radicals, who had bound the internal prosperity and external mission of the Serbian nation to the radical programme, the Romanian conservatives had tied their evolutionist vision of development to the paramount national interest and, even, the national survival – a crucial element of any modern political legitimacy. Ironically, it was exactly this „national credo” of the majority of the Romanian elite that led to the bloody „national disaster” of 1907.

Unlike the liberals and, especially, the radicals in Serbia, however, neither the Romanian conservatives/Junimists nor the subsequent distinctly „traditionalist” trends (such as „*samanatorism*” or „*gindarism*”) did try to define the living, nationally-constructing ‘substance’ – that is, the tradition that had been sacrificed at the altar of the imported forms. Anti-liberal reforms in Romania could barely point to any existing „traditional” institution, similar to the Serbian *zadruga* or self-governing commune, which could normatively perform similar nationally-mobilising functions. „Tradition” in Romania, due to social and ethnic disensions in both village and town, could not refer to functionally adequate social embodiments „closer” than the abstract references to the „Romania spirit” and the „*specificul national*”. That was a major legitimating problem of all anti-

<sup>46</sup> T. Maiorescu, *Discursuri parlamentare*, vol. I. București, 1895, p. 145.

liberal movements in that country comparable, by virtue of a curious reverse logic, to that of the bourgeois-oriented socially-engineering Romanian liberals.

That may help explain, on the other hand, why the conservatives in Romania were far removed, even as rhetoric, from the reckless anti-capitalism and anti-westernism of the radical ideology and propaganda in Serbia. Before World War I, even those among the Romanian political elite, who spoke in favour of an ‘indigenous’ model of development, did not do so in opposition to the European „one”. At that time no „responsible” public figure would question the desirability of Europeanisation; the actual debate was rather on the means and the pace that would allow the fusion of substances and not just the junction of forms. Genuine, authoritative and forceful anti-European reactions to the liberal project would appear after the Great War – together with Romania Mare and the advent of mass politics.

#### Резиме

Д. Мишкова

#### *Мојџреба џтрадиције и националној иденџијџејџа у расџравама о развоју на Балкану девџйнаесџој века*

Чланак се бави расправама о главним опџијама друштвеног развоја, које су се водиле међу националним политичким елитама у деветнаестом веку на Балкану. Анализа је урађена на примерима Србије и Румуније, две балканске државе које су међу собом структурално најразличитије, а ипак у основи сличне, нарочито када је реч о проблемима у вези са интеграцијом њихових традиционалних друштава у модерни свет. Дата је упоредна анализа њихова два друштва, као подлоге за развој политичких елита, а такође и анализа утицаја тих елита у друштву. Представљена су три главна решења понуђена на питање о правцу развоја, која су уобличена током друге половине 19. века: либерално, радикалско/демократско и конзервативно. Уз свако од ова три решења дати су и погледи одговарајућих политичких струја на однос националног идентитета и традиције према могућим правцима развоја.