

Politics as Development: The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth Century Serbia Gale Stokes, Politics as Development, 1990, Duke University Press, xi-c + 400 pp.

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Gale Stokes' *Politics as Development* traces the emergence and development of Serbian political parties in the 1870's and 1880's. More than a historical study, it is also important in understanding how the seeds of nationalism are spread, with implications not only throughout Eastern Europe, but also throughout the underdeveloped world.

According to Stokes, nineteenth-century Serbia was by most standards economically and socially a backward country. Most of its two million inhabitants were smallholding peasants with fairly equal portions of land. Male literacy was only about 10 percent and female literacy less than 1 percent. The only export consisted of live pigs to Austria; Serbia had no meat packing plants. Despite this economic development in the political arena, Serbia created a functioning democracy with a constitution, independent courts, political parties and civil liberties. It goes against our grain of thought to believe that it is possible to establish a democracy and pluralistic society without economic development. Most political theorists believe that economic development is necessary for pluralistic transformation.

How was Serbia able to achieve this? Several overarching themes or mechanisms emerge that were the basis for political development in Serbia. The first chapter of Stokes' book concentrates on the beginnings of parliamentary life as the culmination of several factors-- an assassination, an underage prince and a strong political leader. The author then meticulously and brilliantly traces the emergence and development of political parties-- Liberals, Conservatives and Radicals. He devotes most of his time to the development of the Serbian Radical Party under the leadership of Nikola Pasic. The Radical Party was able to mobilize the Serbian peasantry that made up the bulk of the Serbian population. This mobilization was accomplished mainly by importing a foreign political class structure that enhanced the prestige status of the Serbian nation through adoption of models of constitution and political institutions. The organizers of all the political parties were educated in Western Europe. The organizers of all the political parties were educated in Western Europe. Although Stokes does not elaborate, Pasic was attuned to the

ethnic and regional stereotypes that were implicit in Serbia as well as the rest of Europe at the time. In Serbia only two classes existed-- the State bureaucrats who were led by the King, and the peasants. State officials were literate, while the peasants were viewed simply as country bumpkins who did not know what to do unless told by the State.

The strategy of the Radicals was the creation of a national myth through what Stokes aptly calls "emotional nationalism." The Radicals utilized a constitutional discourse of parliamentary politics. Political discourse was manipulated and the idea of rights was used to kindle and fuel the nationalistic sentiment. In a famous speech delivered by Pasic, eleven consecutive sentences start with a phrase *gunjac* and *opanak* ("*gunjac i opanak*"), both symbols of peasant life. *Gunjac* referring to the traditional jacket and *opanak*, a leather sandal worn by Serbian peasants. This type of rhetoric, of everyday language and symbolism was understood by the peasants and also served to create a "juicier, earthier and more emotional form of nationalism" (p. 251). The Serbian Radical Party avoided economic issues and stuck to political appeals that praised the natural rights and abilities of the peasants.

Another powerful Radical tool was the idea of the nation. Their style moved nationalism from the level of a legitimizing notion to the "more dangerous level of an emotional plea for expansion, based on the righteous principle that bloody and tear-washed Serbia deserved renown and glory" (p. 199-200). Thus, nationalism, through the manipulation of language and appropriation of tradition invented a new political culture and discourse. The cult of the past, the cult of the nation, was the unifying force behind the peasants. These themes can be viewed as expansions of 19th century romanticism. However, even in their own epic poetry and oral tradition, the Serbians were given to glorifying their cultural and ethnic unity despite having been five hundred years under Ottoman occupation. It should also be noted that nationalism was also fermenting in most Slavic ethnic groups under the Austro-Hungarian Empire (e.g., Croats, Slovenes, Czechs) who were all undergoing a phase of ethnic self-determination.

Although this book is a historical study based exclusively on archival sources, anthropologists would nevertheless find it fascinating and useful, especially the discussion of the mobilization of peasants through political discourse legitimizing political and nationalistic aspirations. The formation of national consciousness through the manipulation of traditional symbols and meanings were the main mechanisms for political consciousness and are particularly relevant.

This book is also relevant for understanding recent developments in the role Serbia is playing within Yugoslavia. Traditional ethnic symbols as described by the author, (e.g., gunjac, opanak, rights to the weapons that they could not possess under the Ottoman occupation) are again being called on in the 1990's, one hundred years later. However, there is a different social structure and the economic development is more complex today. Peasants no longer make up the bulk of the population. Rather, (Communist party) bureaucrats and the working class are the two major groups. Furthermore, the author states that the principle of democracy had not been a major focus/value of that particular period and by and large this is also true today.

This is a very worthwhile book on the developments of political pluralism in Eastern Europe, and one of the best written on the subject. This study is useful not only for historians, but for anyone working in Eastern Europe. The work surpasses the academic quality of the available sources published in Serbia. Finally, the author seems to have great understanding and sensitivity for the people concerned, especially his insights about Pasic's personality.