

The 1883 Timok Rebellion in Serbia: Peasant National Anarchism against Finance Capital

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The late 19th century in Serbia is typified by one overarching social phenomenon: the rise of the Radical Party and its appealing brand of nationalism and agrarian communitarianism. The Radicals combined two important elements that went on to define Serbian political thought up until the present day. First, the *zadruga*, the primary institution of Serbia's agrarian, communal and familial socialism. This is similar to the Russian peasant commune except that the Balkan variety is based on family ties rather than the village. Second, the emergent nationalism of the newly freed Balkan Orthodox people which served as a ethical cement to the emerging new order. They stood firmly for the decentralized agrarian commune over all other forms of rule. Radicalism, prior to the Timok rebellion, stood for a premodern, medievalist model of libertarian socialism rarely understood by western academics.

The Radicals rose (at least in part) as a direct result of increasing peasant indebtedness due the “modernization” of society forced by the elite financed by bankers in France and Austria. As always, the intrusion of capital in the form of the Belgrade state took a formerly free and self-sufficient peasantry and created a dependent class of indebted and demoralized subjects.

The Rise of the Radicals

The Radical program became immensely popular. The message was a simple one: the mainstay of a free and Orthodox Serbia is the peasant family commune and its self-sufficiency. The earlier secularism of Serbian socialism deriving from Svetozar Markovic became more and more Orthodox, though without ever losing its decentralizing, anarchist edge, an edge which determined Radical party policy right until the present day. It was, in brief, a strongly agrarian national anarchism and thus, totally outside of the linguistic boundaries of western elites, academics and media hacks.

Debt, forced modernization, urbanization and bureaucratization are all the same phenomenon. These all saw the corrupting of a Serbian national life that, largely due to its isolation and decentralized structure, was likely the most pristine in Europe. There was no corruption because there was nothing to corrupt: most Serbian villages were inaccessible to government agents from Belgrade, a situation well respected by villagers and foreign travelers alike. Nothing destroys liberty like roads, as the Roman empire quite well knew. Roads were the means by which a foreign elite, though nominally Serbian, tried to wrest the property of the peasant for their own speculative enrichment. The peasant, in the eyes of the westernized, Gallophile Belgrade regime, was an alien life-form, both hated and feared at the same time.

Political distinctions among the Belgrade elite are useless and arbitrary. These were a single faction of elites, educated abroad and having no real ties to Serbia as a nation, differing only on how the state was to extract resources to this alien peasant. The only “theory” that bothered Serbian intellectuals in the middle of the 19th century is the extent to which the peasants (over 98% of the population in 1850) were to be coerced into supporting modernization.

Svetozar Markovic wrote in 1869:

According to national statistics, from 1843 to 1863, ie for 20 years, from 20, now 100 Serbian communes are left without substance. Although these statistics are not reliable, this denigration of the people and its suddenness, regardless of statistical error, remains significant. Poverty has led to moral decline. The energy of the Serbian people in the beginning of this century during the revolution today is apathetic, a “body without a soul.” If it does not concern daily earnings, no action is forthcoming. With all the recent uprisings in the Balkans, Serbs alone remained motionless. This bureaucratic system has destroyed all personal initiative (Markovic, “Deception” 1869).¹

“Progress” was measured as the extent to which agricultural life was destroyed, mechanized and urbanized. The number of peasants forced into the cities looking for work was considered both a positive and an inevitable progression. Mid-19th century Serbian elites claimed that Serbia could not become “European” unless “industrialization” was imposed on this “backward” people. Whether or not this was desirable was not an issue. It was brought about, in fits and starts, all financed by foreigners, specifically Austrian, but also by French speculators. In effect, this meant high taxes, conscription and debt. The Serbian peasant had not known these attributes of “progress” in the past and the new “Serbian” state turned out to be far harsher than the Turkish colonial regime.

Peasants were considered to have no “interests” per se, and that the state alone, as the coercive agent of capital, had rights that can be enforced. Since all foreign money went through state channels, and the state itself was administered by Austrian Serbs dependent on foreign money, the distinction between international finance and “Serbian” politics was increasingly difficult to discern. The state-capital combine was the bearer of “civilization” and “progress.” It was this mythology that justified any and all violence, coercion and oppression of the Serbian peasant.

Serbian life in the 19th century has been arbitrarily divided into “factions” seen more or less as parties. By the 1870s, three basic approaches were informally mapped out: The first was the “Conservatives” sometimes called “Constitutionalists” largely to be found around the pro-Austrian monarchy of Milan Obrenovic.² It was generally an anti-national faction, believing that its mission was to bring “backward Serbia” into the European “family of monarchies.” It was an oligarchic party which identified the crown with the state, and the state with Serbia’s membership in Europe. It was ecumenist in religion, holding generally that religious differences should not interfere with Serbia’s attachment to Central Europe. Of all the factions, this was the most anti-peasant and the most dedicated to “progress.” This faction was also quite pro-Austrian, close to the Belgrade crown and therefore, at the heart of Milan's forced modernization program. Eventually, this faction began to call itself “Progressive.”

Secondly, there were the “Liberals.” This was a more national group, one seeking an expansionist Serbian state based around a modern economy. This economy was largely tied to France (and occasionally to Russia, though increasingly, in the realm of finance, they were one

1 Translation my own.

2 These labels are of little significance. These factions were nearly identical in goals and purpose, differing occasionally in terms of means. They are most efficiently all called foreign oligarchs, since their claim to being “Serbian” is about as solid as Michael Collins. They had far more in common with each other than the almost totally unknown, feared and despised peasantry, considered almost an alien race in Belgrade.

and the same) rather than Austria. It was basically irreligious. It, unlike the “Conservatives,” believed in a free press and the slow removal of the royal house. It believed the Obrenovic line of Serbian royalism was too strong, and that the parliament (the *skupitsina*) should have more power, specifically in that royal ministers should be approved by the legislature. Needless to say, the peasantry had no idea what the *skupitsina* was, and therefore, this “parliament” was no more representative than the typical country club in the west. These political distinctions are not to be taken seriously. If profits from Austrian capital required the destruction of the monarchy, then the “Conservatives” would willingly oblige. If the “Liberals” needed to restore the crown to ensure French profits, that would occur. It was an oligarchical regime only vaguely and tangentially related to Serbian as an ethnic entity.

Dusan Batakovic writes on this era:

The Belgrade elite in the 1870s and 1880s was leaving behind the Oriental way of life, imitating the latest fashion from Paris, Vienna and Budapest: As stressed by MB Petrovich, “the interiors of home took on a pronounced European bourgeois look as the more affluent society in Belgrade, and even of the provincial towns, copied the furniture styles of central and western Europe often in helter-skelter melange. There was a notable increase in the importation of luxury items such as porcelain, small furniture, glassware and silver. To live in 'the European manner' became such a compulsion that Belgrade society in the 1870s quickly lost its since Ottoman and Serbian patriarchal way of life.” The Belgrade elite was sending their children to acquire higher education in France – where already in the 1880's the Paris Law School was seen “as a school for Serbian ministers” – but also in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and Russia. Around 200 Paris-educated Serbs, the so-called “Parisians” at the end of the nineteenth century were performing a predominant influence on the political and cultural scene of Serbia (Batakovic, 2002: 337)

The question presents itself: what good is a national revolution if the “Serbian” leaders are essentially foreigners? This is the broadest cause of the Timok revolt. The bureaucratic regime in Belgrade had no connection to Serbian history or its people. Serbian elites were anything but Serbian and a clear dislike of “Oriental” customs pervades all elite discourse of the era. Political thought is hard to come by from elites, since there was no ideological differences. It was merely a matter of administration. They imitated the fashions of the west. Importing “luxury items” came on the backs of peasants, since these imports did not pay for themselves. The peasant alone created value. The “political” debate in Belgrade was about how to extract it and then, if necessary, justify it. There is a tendency in the citation above to use “Oriental” and “patriarchal” as both equivalent and pejorative. The truth however, is clear: there was nothing Serbian about 19th century Serbian politics.

Now the Radical party was the contagion in this banker's paradise. The elite loathed, feared, respected and generally envisaged the Radicals irrationally before the Timok rebellion. The Radicals were specifically formed so as to challenge the urban, intellectual world of the oligarchs and to actually represent the Serbian point of view. The Radicals were anti-state, which occasionally sounded like anti-national. The two of course, are very different. They were openly populist, making the common sense case that the Serbian intellectuals in Belgrade and Nis were

isolated from the overwhelming majority of the population in the hinterlands. This oligarchy not only did not understand their needs, but were openly contemptuous of the actual existence of any specifically peasant “interest.” For the Belgrade regime, peasants were the raw material for “national development” rather than people in their own right. In this, the oligarchs follow without deviation, albeit belatedly, the mentality of the scientific revolution and Enlightenment. As the Radicals grew in power, the “factions” in Belgrade became even closer.

*The Radicalization of the Serbian Peasantry
and the Failures of the Oligarchy*

Several variables helped radicalize the Serbian peasantry, and in the process, created the famed regionalist and decentralist party system of the Radicals that allowed them to take over the state later in the century. Conservatives and Liberals merely thought that the peasants should do them homage, and did not bother to campaign in the hinterlands. Republican government was the means by which the urban elite connected political power to economic resources. The Radicals, however, sought the creation of regional and local cells in order to accurately gauge the interests of the peasantry and organize against Belgrade with a popular agenda actually based on the population. Three events destroyed the little bit of legitimacy the oligarchy had, and proved to the Radicals that Serbia was not independent, but in fact, far more dependent and unfree than ever before. The first was the Requisitions Scandal, then the Bontoux Loan, and finally, the assassination attempt on King Milan.

These events radicalized the Serbian population, particularly in the far east of the country, near the Timok river, traditionally the most anti-Turkish and rebellious part of the Serbian agrarian population. The Requisitions Scandal concerned the repayment of war debts. The Serbian army requisitioned supplies from the peasantry in order to supply the army during its 1876 war with Turkey. Peasants were given receipts and promised repayment. Few peasants took the state seriously and, as Stokes writes that since most peasants “despaired of any payment for them, a lively speculative market had developed in which some operators had accumulated a very large number of them.”

Eventually, the state took a major loan from abroad in order to repay these receipts (since now, elite speculators were demanding payment), and, as a result, fraud was rife. Many oligarchs faked receipts, made outlandish claims, and ultimately a well-publicized trial of several outraged the peasantry, since they had paid for all of this. It became emblematic of modernity in general and the result of the slowly developing mercantile economy. While this was going on, Milan lost a small fortune in the casino's of the Austrian empire (Gnjatović, 1990: 2-3).

This scandal shows the true nature of liberal “modernization.” It sounds vaguely like the privatization scam in early 1990s Russia and Ukraine. Promising the peasantry repayment would be like trying to lecture goldfish on Nominalist metaphysics. They did not have a common language or frame of reference. The peasantry did not think in those terms and thus, had no idea how to make good on this contract. It was obvious that the two elite parties would merely take advantage of the labor and nationalism of the people for their own benefits. After all, they were a foreign people in a foreign land. No ties whatsoever bound Belgrade to the countryside. Batakovic writes with no sense of irony:

In order to modernize Serbia, the Constitutionalists [another term for
Conservative] employed hundreds of educated Austrian Serbs, adepts of cameralist

methods of government, to serve in a previously very modest state apparatus. They wanted to remove the Ottoman-style rule established by Prince Miloš and impose a Central-European model of centralized administration. In 1844, the Civil Code of Serbia, a combination of Austrian law and Code Napoleon, elaborated by Austrian Serbs was promulgated. The Civil Code made all citizens equal before the law, while private property was guaranteed (Batakovic, 2002: 338).

Equality before the law meant that bureaucrats from Belgrade had the identical rights over the land as the peasants who had been tilling the land for centuries. It meant that whoever was already the more powerful now could compete “equally” with their inferiors who did not know the game even existed. Obviously, for this to make sense, “property” had to be guaranteed. What Batakovic neglects to mention was that Milos had insisted that “property rights” include the guarantee of a minimum of land per peasant family. In other words, the above verbiage is meaningless outside of context. The new law code was merely to justify the takeover of Serbia by foreign intellectuals and the dispossession of millions of peasants from the land.

Secondly, the Bontoux Loan was yet another fruit of this modernization and “progress.” The Serbian state under Liberal and Conservative domination equated modernity with railroads. The Liberal legislature had taken a loan from the General Union Bank of Paris, though a very sleazy intermediary named Eugene Bontoux. The latter, once the Ottomans were defeated in 1878, quickly became a banker so as to take advantage of the increasing demand from Serbs on French capital. Soon, in 1881, a major speculative boom broke out in Paris (partially due to the floating of large amounts of paper from Eastern Europe), leaving the bank completely without funds as the French Bourse collapsed in 1882 (Gnjatović, 1990: 3).

Now, these western educated elites in Belgrade were not all that concerned, since they were under the impression that loan repayment was not required if no construction had been started. Yet, as it turns out, the Liberal Finance Minister Čedomilj Mijatovic had secretly made an agreement that, in exchange for a huge bribe, the bonds would be repaid regardless of construction, hence putting Serbia on the hook no matter what, all for his own enrichment.

Stokes writes, “Mijatovic was contemplating fleeing to America.” It might be noted that this same Minister was also part of the movement to “reform” the Orthodox church, bringing it into line with Protestant trends in Great Britain. Needless to say, this meant making it more amenable to oligarchy and freeing up all those monastic lands for speculation. The oligarchy was at least consistent.

Eventually, other financial institutions sought to bail out the hapless Belgrade elite, and agreed to take on the loan and begin construction. It should be noted that banks in both Vienna and Paris had no difficulty spending these funds so long as Milan and either the Conservatives or Liberals were in power, since they were guaranteed these modernization projects. These banks made it clear later that any Radical association with politics would lead to a cutting off of credit. With this, corruption and foreign control were institutionalized.

However, through endless corruption, railroad construction was slow, sloppy, dominated by foreign workers and widely seen as based on corruption and government isolation. Serbian debt was absurdly high and the government seen as disjunctive and dissociated. Even worse, Milan himself was dabbling in General Union stock (and took a bath), providing the Radicals with more impetus to go into revolutionary opposition. Since only the Radical party had rural centers, they were able to get the word out on all the secret deals and corruption that the Liberals

and the crown were engaged in during the Bontoux scandal. In reality, there was a tiny oligarchy in Belgrade who sought to use these scandals to feather their own nest, detached from the people, and dependent on a bureaucracy controlled either by Conservatives or Liberals. All the while, the Radicals were methodically building their rural constituency and engaging in hands-on assistance to farmers in need. These are the results of “progress.”

Now, the assassination attempt on Milan, was, like all these things, conveniently blamed on Radical agitation. This was the government's way of eliminating complaints about the other two scandals and removing all Radicals from Serbian life. In 1881, Milan sought to win over peasant opinion by touring the countryside, with, to put it nicely, mixed success. Milan was often jeered, as the Radical movement had done its work. Milan was not a monarch in the traditional sense, but a sort of Peter the Great, a revolutionary and Jacobin in a crown. Milan did not speak the language of the peasantry, and would lecture at them rather than seek out their views.

Milan was seen as a buffoon. Jovan Djaja, a Radical leader, said in a popular speech, “This is the modern way of conquest: Draw some nation into your sphere of influence, entangle in with debts, economically ruin it, and then defend your conquest with guns” (quoted in Stokes, 253). Milan, soon after, left for a European tour, where he was clearly more comfortable with others than with Serbs. He spent a fortune of state money living lavishly, and losing quite a bit in Paris casinos. The Radicals continued their agitation. Djaja was absolutely correct.

In October of 1882, on his return, a woman sought to shoot him in the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Mark's in Belgrade. The woman was the wife of a major Radical leader, Jevrem Markovic, and the Radicals were conveniently blamed for the attempt. The police response was hideous, and Milan's reaction was extreme. Police and army caravans lashed out at villages considered sympathetic to Radical populists and armed peasants normally fought back (showing that Markovic's diagnosis was premature). A low level civil war spread through rural Serbia throughout 1883. Peasants proved themselves quite capable of fighting against Serbian regulars (albeit poorly trained) and is part of the reason the rebellion became so pronounced.

Now that the Radicals had been driven from power and all opposition to liberal enlightenment were in prison or in exile, Milan and his financial backers could get to work. He demanded conscription. He created a “national” bank entirely under the control of foreign bankers. He demanded compulsory public education that would a) destroy the network of church schools only recently permitted to function, b) propagandize and homogenize the population and c) remove the church from education and public life. Finally, voting rights were based only on taxes paid, meaning that anyone outside of the money economy could not vote, and those that could were stratified based on income. It was the full and open institutionalization of oligarchy (Stokes, 1990: 262-267).

For the average peasant, given the well organized data of the Radical party's local organizations, the ideological supposition, one not entirely false, was that to be pro-Austrian was to be anti-peasant. For the peasantry, Orthodoxy was the central element of personal identity, and that Orthodoxy was Serbian, that beautiful and non-repeatable synthesis of Slavic and Greek aesthetics capped by the unique institution of the Slava. Čedomilj Mijatovic's arrogant attempt to “reform” this church to bring it into line with capitalist ideology and usury most certainly proved that the foreign clique in Belgrade saw the church as a threat. Mijatovic's project was financed by the wealthy Freemason Francis Mackenzie under the rubric of the British Bible Society (cf Markovic, 2000). Mackenzie, as well as Mijatovic's wife, were “Nazarenes” or a branch of the

Wesleyan heresy. Hence, the connection between religious and economic demands of the elite, mediated by Masonry, are clear and must be seen as indistinguishable from “modernization” in general.

Therefore, if Serbia needed allies, they needed to be Orthodox as well. Hence, the Radicals supported alliances with Russia, and the peasants did so as well. Therefore, to be pro-Austria was to be anti-Russia (which was certainly the political reality of the time), and to be anti-Russia was to be anti-peasant. The Serbian intelligentsia in Belgrade had largely abandoned Orthodoxy except in the most vulgar and perfunctory form, and hence religion had no political significance. But the last straw in terms of peasant patience concerned the banning of peasant retail institutions in urban Serbia. For the isolated Belgrade bureaucrat, the state was to form the peasant, not the other way around. The banning of peasant retail had been an issue in Serbian politics for some time, but it proved the clear isolation and anti-agrarian bias of the urban intelligentsia. The peasantry bled for Serbian independence only to find that it was being controlled by a far nastier occupational government than the Turks.

Radical Victory and the True Face of the Belgrade Oligarchy

In September of 1883, the Radical Party, without any surprise, swept the legislative elections in the face of universally recognized attempts by the oligarchy and their financial backers to destroy the Party. Police were used to keep peasants from voting, and scattered rioting was reported through the countryside. Then as now, the Radical victory was nullified. Then, it was by Milan, who demanded the legislature shut down and the Radicals not take their seats. Today, after major Radical victories in the Serbian parliament, it was NATO and the EU that demanded the manipulation of the government to keep the Radicals out. The System, operating from Washington D.C., even brokered an unthinkable deal between the Serbian Socialists and the former Serbian liberals solely in order to keep Radicals out of politics. The national-populism and agrarianism of the Radicals was not permitted in “civilized” politics, then or now. The fact that the identical set of policies aimed at the identical ideological movement for the identical reason shows in vivid relief that political systems mean nothing. It is financial interest and international capital alone that matters.

For 19th century Serbia as today, the banks in Austria demanded a Serbia dependent upon them and as always, a firm rejection of Russia. The international recognition of Milan as “King of Serbia” (a major issue for him) derived from Viennese banks believing that the debt into which Milan will plunge Serbia will ultimately benefit them, meaning that Austria would then control Serbia. This explains the eventual closing of the Austrian border to Serbian cattle right after the Radical victory. From the bankers’ point of view, the Radical demand for a Serbian national bank that was actually national and hence, independent of both France and Austria was the real reason Milan and his Austrian sponsors wanted the Radicals banned from politics. The Radicals had demanded as part of their official platform that all funds for any project of any kind must be raised locally, thereby keeping foreigners out of Serbian politics. In an emergency, Russia would be the only alternative source of funds.

The Uprising

The rebellion was, if the literature be believed, based on two things: the refusal of Milan to recognize the outcome of the September elections (Misha Glenny’s thesis), or the disarming of the Serbian population under Milan’s order’s (Gale Stokes’ thesis). Of course, Stokes’ idea is far

more complex than the introduction of the new German Mausers into the Serbian army, though Glenny, always rather simple in his historical approach, claims it was solely a matter of Milan's lack of recognition of the elections, though he, true to form, will never speak of the financial element to this decision. As this paper has shown thus far, it was a very complex set of causes, though, in a very general way, they can be reduced to the age old fight between a traditionalist peasant and a "progressive" government. Uses of terms such as "patriarchal," "Oriental" or "backwards" were means of dehumanizing the peasantry. Batakovic writes in a style of understatement that is remarkable:

Constitutionalists, comprising both reformists and conservatives, made an important contribution to the gradual transformation of Serbia from an egalitarian to a modern society. However, the bureaucratization that they imposed turned into a burden that additionally separated peasant masses from civil servants who became a highly privileged social group. Constitutionalists considered the Serbian peasantry immature to interfere into the governing system, and imposed harsh method of punishment for any kind of public disobedience (Batakovic, 2002: 338).

The peasants were not "masses." The "mass" is the result of standardization and bureaucratization. The peasants had not become that debased at this time. He is correct to say that the "Constitutionalist" or conservative group saw Serbs as politically "immature," though the mockery of the Bontoux scandal put an end to that rhetoric. What Batakovic fails to stress was that the "civil service" was entirely foreign, at least as foreign as Turks to Serbs 100 years earlier. This total lack of a common language between the internationalists in Belgrade, tightly connected to foreign finance capital, and actual Serbs is a very general, but accurate, cause of the violence of 1883.

Peasant political ideology in the Slavic world, prior to their being dragooned into the army or into the industrial economy, was pure national anarchism. It stressed the religious and ethnic elements of identity, the two facets of life the progressive regime wanted to destroy. This included the more amorphous ideas of family liberty through the *zadruga*, regional autonomy and the concept of a national militia rather than a professional army. The peasant idea under the Radicals was also anti-state, since it was almost entirely dependent on Viennese and Parisian banks. In fact, there is good reason to hold that Liberals and Conservatives in Serbian politics in the 1880s were merely factions based on connections to French and Austrian finance capital respectively.

The efficient cause of the fighting was indeed the attempt to disarm the peasantry. After the army's previous battles with the peasants the state now was at war with the peasants. The Serbian peasantry that rose that year were the descendants of the *haiduks*—decentralized bands of rebels against the Ottoman occupation—descendants of a people who spent the last 300 years living a life below the radar of the arrogant Islamic occupiers, local strongmen and Jewish tax farmers. Their entire life was one of resistance and the constant readiness for battle. They, to put it mildly, were an extremely difficult group to control. The Radical idea was very simple: does it make any sense to have fought this long and hard for independence only to hand over Serbia to Parisian or Viennese bankers and their puppets? There was no peasant that did not understand such a simple yet profound question.

The excuse for disarming the peasants was that the new Mauser rifles were too advanced

for the peasantry to store and maintain. For the good of the peasants, the army was to confiscate the old rifles, then keep the new Mauser's at state magazines. No one took that seriously, because the lack of technical expertise to maintain a Mauser had nothing to do with confiscating the older weapons. The peasantry realized quickly what this truly was: Milan's attempt to keep the Radicals out of power forever by disarming the peasantry in the Timok valley, always the stronghold of rebellion, Orthodoxy and Radicalism. Stokes writes:

Under the Ottomans the Serbs could not bear arms as a rule, so when the First and Second Uprisings expelled the Ottomans the ordinary Serbian male overcompensated, coming to feel by 1850 that a man was undressed in public if he did not appear with a weapon. The widespread distribution of arms during the Ottoman wars did nothing to lessen the sense that the rifle was man's true support (Stokes, 1990: 281-2)

This writer chafes at Stokes' condescending "overcompensating" remark, since she skillfully explains precisely why this was not an overcompensation, but an integral aspect of Serbian life, dictated by the humiliation of Ottoman control; being called "*raya*," or "cattle" by the Ottoman authorities. As in Montenegro, the rifle was a symbol of independence against imperialism, and more than a symbol, its very reality. Independence only comes with bloodshed: this is a fact that, then as now, frightens the Regime to distraction. Indeed, this is almost exclusively the domain of the male, and justifies the "male only" approach to politics that dominated the world until the 1970s. Only men bled for Serbia, hence, only men will have political authority. The household, the center of the economy, was another matter, and the wife of the patriarch was of immense significance. Strangely enough, "modernization" was to totally destroy the role of the matriarch in traditional economic life by bringing all production to the factory and out of the local network.

Refusing to listen to the bourgeois pleas for "calm," the eastern Serbs quickly and effectively organized. Shooting the men sent to confiscate what they considered, though 200 years of fighting, to be their birthright, Milan dedicated his reign to destroying these peasants at any cost. Under the older concept of the popular militia (as opposed to a standing army), the peasant kept his rifle at home.³ He was to bring it to the proper muster in time of war, with food and ammunition. It was this that drove the Turks out of Europe. The "popular militia" was a threat both because it was popular and in that it was a trained, competent militia. It cannot be used against the interests of the ethnos since it was the ethnos while at war. The new professional army fought its own people. One might even say that this rebellion was in fact an all out civil war, one between the old popular militia with out of date weapons, and the new standing army, financed directly by Viennese bankers. It is worth noting that local priests were some of the most militant of the leaders of the popular militia (Stokes, 1990: 285). She also mentions how jittery Milan was, calling the newly minted officer corps to his chambers, telling them how terrible their position would be under the Radical "rabble."

Conclusion:

The Defeat of the Rebels and the Oligarchical Rule of "Progress"

Unfortunately, the rebellion was suppressed, largely because the troops stood firm, and,

3 This is similar to the system in Switzerland today.

importantly, because it was geographically isolated in eastern Serbia. Like the defeat of Pugachev in Russia, the Jacobites in England, Shay's Rebellion in America, and even the American War Between the States, the victory of the central state meant many things. Chief among them were:

First, the continued and unabated indebtedness of the agricultural classes, which became particularly acute in Serbia. There is an exact correlation between the penetration of the state into the Serbian hinterland (a long and slow process) and peasant indebtedness. In this case, "state" and "capital" are the same. The active ingredient here is capital. The state was just the delivery system given the nature of Serbian life at the time. Penetration of capital also meant the creation of centralized agricultural units, and that meant the destruction of the stable, self-reliant and free *zadruga* system. The *zadruga* had few supporters in Belgrade, and none in Vienna. Only in Russia did this system receive at least token support.

Second, political power continued its march to increasing centralization. However one slices it historically or morally, centralization must mean, by its very constitution, the rule of elites and their own cohesiveness. Labels like "Constitutionalist" or "Progressive" have little meaning. These are only the factions created by French or Austrian capital. Politically, their policies were very similar, and their "ideological" differences are from inference only.

Third, the demoralization of the truly patriotic forces of the nation. This is another way of saying the peasantry, the sole class that produced value. The Radicals, widely seen to have "led" the rebellion, soon fell to pieces. After the reign of Milan had come to an end, under the charismatic Nikola Pascic, the Radicals were to be reborn, but as a party of the city. Once the rebellion failed, the Radicals thought that only through institutional reform (rather than direct peasant agitation) can Serbia be saved. It is the Radical position to this day. After Timok, Serbia became an increasingly centralized political entity, eventually becoming part of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, speaking broadly, is a result of the failure of the Timok rebellion. Without the defeat of the rebellious peasant *zadruga*, the increasing centralization and isolation of the ruling classes would have been impossible.

Finally, the destruction of the peasant economy and the introduction of centralized agricultural units was a direct result of the Timok rebellion. As all the literature shows, the penetration of capital into the countryside through state power meant the destruction of the *zadruga*, the Serbian family and the local, self-sufficient local economy. The comment by Markovic above was erroneously aimed at the bureaucracy. His idea is true only if it is clear that the bureaucracy was also the agent of foreign capital. This in turn leads to the dislocation of peasant populations and the disruption of peasant traditional life and the centrality of Orthodoxy. Without Timok, Tito could never have been successful since Yugoslavia could never have come into being. It took the destruction of the traditional peasant way of life in order to permit these forces to emerge and to become dominant.

It might be said, with some trepidation, that world history in the modern era is based upon the battle between peasant tradition, marked by the primacy of religion, family, decentralization, agriculture and self-sufficiency, and that of modernity, marked by centralization, industry, schedules, oligarchy, democracy and ideology. This basic pattern is replicated in Shay's rebellion in the US, Pugachev and Razin in Russia, the Pilgrimage of Grace in England, the Gaelic rebellions in Ireland, Cossack resistance in Ukraine, and nearly all peasant religious, ethnic and anarchist rebellions around the world. It is one and the same battle. The victory of the forces of modernization comes about through better weaponry and scientific leadership methods over the

primal rage of the exploited peasants. Furthermore, in the 20th century, legitimate peasant movements, such as in Latin America and south Asia, have been hijacked by Marxist revolutionaries in the name of the Enlightenment. It is the unholy alliance of modern science, ideology, economic theory, secularism and modern global capitalism that has destroyed the peasantry, and dragooned what's left into the factory. The result is the inhuman, zombie mass called the "American."

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