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STOJAN PROTIĆ (1857-1923) - RADIKALNO DO POBEDE I NAZAD

Stojan Protić, jedan od velikana moćne Radikalne stranke Srbije na prelazu iz XIX u XX vek, iskreno je verovao u moć radikalne ideologije. Ona je za njega bila pokretač, motiv delovanja, generator velikog ličnog uspeha na političkoj i ekonomskoj sceni Srbije i sjajnih rezultata za državu Srbiju, ali i cena njegovog poniranja i pada.



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Stojan Protic, one of the leading figures of the Serbian Radical Party at the turn of the 20th century, sincerely believed in the power of radical ideology. For him, it was the catalyst, motive for action, generator of a huge personal success at the political and economic scene of Serbia, along with extraordinary results for Serbia as a country, but it was also the price of his decline and fall.

STOJAN PROTIC (1857-1923) - IN RADICAL STEPS TO VICTORY AND BACK



Priča o Stojanu Protiću slika ličnost jaku i energičnu, izrazitih radikalnih ubeđenja, pravog partijskog čoveka, oštrog i upornog političara. Ideju radikalizma u Srbiji razvija od samog osnivanja Narodne radikalne stranke i skoro opsesivno, do kraja života, čvrsto i nepomirljivo, brani radikalne političke ideje. Ovakva politička orijentacija, svrstala ga je među najznačajnije ličnosti u radikalnoj stranci toga vremena, uz Nikolu Pašića i dr Lazu Pačua.

Drugo veliko životno opredeljenje Stojana Protića bilo je političko novinarstvo. Kao veoma odlučan i energičan čovek, u političkom novinarstvu je bio veoma oštar polemičar. Nije štedeo svoje političke protivnike, bio je direktan i govorio im je ono što nisu želeli da čuju, ali njihovu porodičnu reputaciju nije nikada dovodio u pitanje ili koristio u političke svrhe.

Brzi uspon sina siromašnog pamuklijaša

Iako potiče iz relativno skromne zanatlijske porodice, Stojan Protić je završio Filozofski fakultet u Beogradu (historijsko-filološki odsek) i uz veliku upornost i radinost, kao samouk, naučio ruski, nemački i francuski, a kasnije i engleski jezik.

Brzi uspon u poslovnom životu Stojana Protića odveo ga je u finansijske sfere, gde je pokazao ne samo da dobro poznaje državne finansijske, već je zabeležio i vrlo dobre rezultate u obavljanju tih poslova, i to u ekonomski nestabilnim i vrlo teškim vremenima za državu Srbiju.

Državni poslenik postaje odmah nakon završetka studija, sudski praktikant u Šapcu, a potom suplent gimnazije u Svilajncu.



Stojan Protić

Na poziv Nikole Pašića, godine 1881. imenovan je za urednika partijskog lista Radikalne stranke, *Samouprava*. Istovremeno, velikom brzinom napreduje u Radikalnoj stranci, obzirom da je u naredne dve godine prvo bio zamenik člana Glavnog odbora stranke, a potom i član Glavnog odbora stranke. Na ovoj funkciji ostao je 40 godina, skoro do kraja života. Bio je veliki prijatelj i partijski saborac sa prvom ličnošću Radikalne stranke, Nikolom Pašićem, sve do 1919. godine, kada su se razili u političkim stavovima. Udaljavanje između ova dva vrsna političara eskaliralo je naročito povodom Pašićevog potpisivanja Ženevske deklaracije, koju je srpska vlada odbacila. Definitivan prekid svih kontakata između Stojana Protića i Nikole Pašića, usledio je posle ujedinjenja tri naroda u

Kraljevinu Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 01.12.1920. godine, kada je regent Aleksandar postavio Stojana Protića za predsednika vlade, što je Pašić doživeo kao izdaju.

Iako je bio pobornik političke i parlamentarne borbe za ustavni preobražaj Srbije, zbog stranačkog rada bio je hapšen i osuđivan. Nemilosrdan i direktan u političkim polemikama, uporan u borbi za političke ideale, posle samo 26 dana uredničkog staža u listu *Odjek*¹, sa političkom programskom orijentacijom, on je 1887. godine osuđen na četiri godine zatvora po Krivičnom zakoniku Srbije. Krivica je obrazložena delima „izlaganja mrzosti i prezrenju vlade i vlasti“ i delom „uvrede predsednika Narodne skupštine“.

Protić je izbegao uručivanje kazne koristeći mogućnost u zakonu i napustio Beograd na nekoliko meseci, dok nije istekao rok zastarelosti presude.

Nakon ovog događaja, počinje period

¹ Pokretač lista *Odjek*, S. Protić

The story about Stojan Protic depicts a strong and energetic personality, of distinct radical convictions, a true party-oriented man, a firm and persistent politician. He was developing the idea of radicalism in Serbia from the very establishment of the National Radical Party, and almost obsessively, till the end of his life, firmly and uncompromisingly, defending radical political ideas. Such a political orientation placed him among the most significant persons in the radical party of the time, alongside Nikola Pasic and Dr Laza Pachu.

The second important life-long inclination of Stojan Protic was political journalism. As an extremely decisive and energetic man, he was a very harsh polemicist in the sphere of political journalism. He never spared his political opponents, but was direct instead, telling them what they did not want to hear. Nevertheless, he never jeopardized their family reputation nor did he use it for political purposes.

Swift rise of a poor cotton-trader's son

Although he came from a relatively humble family of craftsmen, Stojan Protic graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade (Department of History and Philology), and due to his endless persistence and diligence, taught himself to speak Russian, German and French, and later on, English.

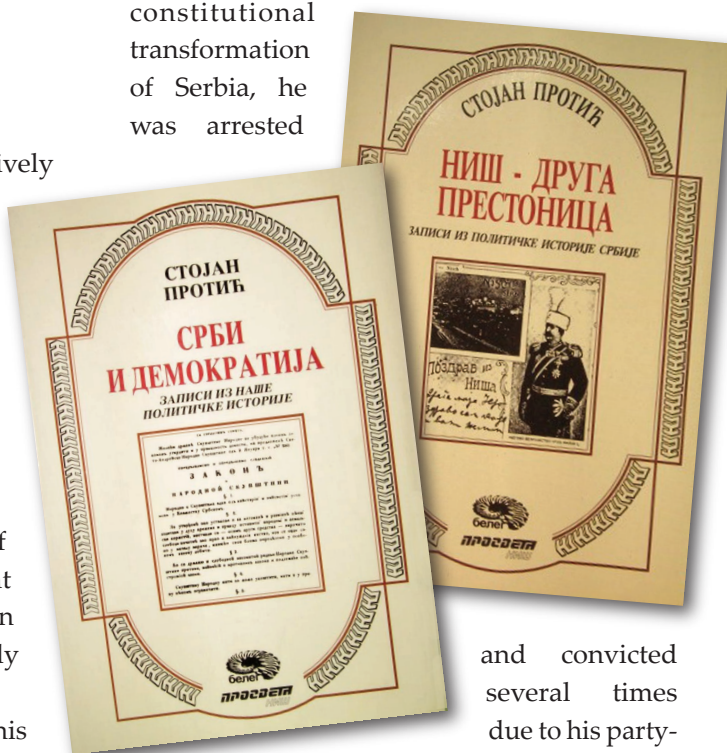
The swift rise in professional life led Stojan Protic into financial waters, where not only did he show a solid knowledge of state finances, but also recorded excellent results in conducting these operations, even in the economically unstable and terribly tough times for the country of Serbia.

He became a state officer straight after his graduation, as a court practitioner in the city of Šabac, after which he became a teaching assistant in Svilajnac High School.

At the invitation of Nikola Pasic, in 1881, he was appointed editor of the Radical Party's newspaper, *Samouprava* (Self-Governance). At

the same time, he makes a swift progress in the Radical Party, given that in the following two years, he first occupied the position of a deputy member of the Party's Executive Board, and then the member of the Party's Executive Board. He held this post for 40 years, almost till the end of his life. He was a great friend and party comrade of the Radical Party's leader, Nikola Pasic, until 1919 when their political views diverged. The divergence between these two top-notch politicians escalated on the occasion of Pasic's signing of the Geneva Declaration, which had been rejected by the Serbian Government. Definite termination of all contacts between Stojan Protic and Nikola Pasic ensued after the unification of the three nations into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 01.12.1920, when Regent Alexander appointed Stojan Protic the Prime Minister, which Pasic experienced as betrayal.

Despite the fact that he advocated a political and parliamentary campaign for constitutional transformation of Serbia, he was arrested



and convicted several times due to his party-related activities. Merciless and straightforward in political polemics, persistent in his fight for political ideals, in 1887, after only 26 days of being the editor of a politically engaged magazine *Odjek* (Echo)¹, he was sentenced to four years in prison

¹ Initiator of the magazine *Odjek* (Echo), S. Protic

uspešne karijere ovog upornog i oštrog političara. Iste, 1887. godine postaje narodni poslanik, a godine 1893. biva postavljen za upravitelja beogradske varoši. Na ovom poslu demonstrira svoju samovolju, jer je oterao sve kmetove liberalne, pod izgovorom da su nezakonito izabrani. Kažnjen je premeštajem u poresku službu, za koju je pokazao veliki dar, obzirom da je godinama uspešno obavljao ove poslove i upravljao državnim monopolima. (1901. postaje član Samostalne monopolske uprave.)

Na ministarskim pozicijama Stojan Protić nalazi se u vreme dinastije Karađorđevića. Član vlade postao je odmah nakon Majskog prevrata 1903. godine. Ministar unutrašnjih dela bio je tri puta², zastupnik ministra unutrašnjih dela jedan put³, a ministar finansija u dva mandata⁴. Godine 1918. postavljen je za zastupnika ministra inostranih dela, a u periodu od 1918-1919. godine bio je predsednik prve vlade Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, odnosno, 1920. godine ponovo je postavljen za predsednika vlade Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca.

Zenit političke afirmacije i poslovnog uspeha

Stojan Protić slovio je za najboljeg poznavaooca državnih finansija posle dr Laze Pačua u Radikalnoj stranci, što je i dokazao za vreme dva ministarska mandata u kojima je vodio resor finansija Srbije.

Prvi ministarski mandat trajao je od 1909-1912. godine. To je bio težak period za početak ministarskog mandata, obzirom da je usledio u vreme trgovinskog rata sa Austro-Ugarskom.

Trgovinski ili carinski rat između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske počeo je još 1906. godine i pretio je da ozbiljno ugrozi privredu Srbije.

Austro-Ugarska je zatvorila svoje granice za izvoz srpske stoke, navodno zbog zaraze, ali je istovremeno ovu meru zahtevala i izdejstvovala i na granici Srbije sa Bosnom i Hercegovinom, koja je, iako pod Turskom vlašću, bila pod protektoratom Austro-Ugarske imperije. Situacija je dodatno otežana 1909. godine finansijskom krizom u Srbiji, koju je uzrokovala finansijska blokada Beča, kao i narušenom opštom sigurnošću u državi, zbog očekivane invazije Austro-Ugarske. Posledice ove

krize manifestovale su se kao:

- oskudica novca na domaćem tržištu,
- naglo povlačenje štednje i obustave isplata banaka,
- finansijska nedisciplina, u svetlu prestanka izmirenja obaveza dužnika.

Interesantno je da su se za vreme Carinskog rata, od 1909-1911. godine dvojica najuglednijih radikala i najboljih poznavalaca finansija u stranci, dr Laza Paču, zapamćen kao finansijski genije, i Stojan Protić, smenjivali na funkciji ministra finansija. Dr Laza Paču je počeo drugi mandat ministra finansija u vreme početka Carinskog rata 1906. godine i na toj funkciji ostao do 1908. godine, kada je za ministra finansija postavljen Stojan Protić. Dr Laza Paču nije oklevao, već je odmah nakon trgovinske blokade Srbije od strane Austro-Ugarske, počeo da radi na ekonomskoj emancipaciji Srbije i otvaranju srpske privrede prema drugim tržištima (Belgije, Nemačke, Francuske, Egipta), što je rezultiralo privlačenjem stranog kapitala u Srbiju.

Odlučnost i energičnost Stojana Protića, koji



Nikola Pašić

² 1903-1905. godine, 1906-1907. godine i 1912-1914. godine

³ 1910-1911. godine

⁴ 1909-1912. godine i 1917-1918. godine

pursuant to the Criminal Code of Serbia. His guilt was explained by his acts of “exposing the Government and authorities to revulsion and detestation” and “causing offence to the President of the National Assembly”.

Protic managed to avoid serving the sentence by finding a loophole in the law, and left Belgrade for several months, until his charges expired.

This event was followed by a period of successful career of this unrelenting and harsh politician. In the same year, 1887, he became a member of the parliament, and in 1893 he was appointed the mayor of the city of Belgrade. Occupying this position, he demonstrated his self-will by dismissing all liberal serfs, under the excuse that they had been illegally elected. He was punished by being transferred into the tax administration, for which he showed great gift, given that he successfully conducted these operations and managed state monopolies for years. (In 1901 he became a member of the Independent Monopoly Administration.)

Stojan Protic occupied ministerial positions during the reign of the Dynasty of Karadjordjevic. He became a member of the Government immediately after the May Putsch in 1903. He was the Minister of Interior three times², representative of the Minister of Interior once³, and Minister of Finance twice⁴. In 1918 he was appointed representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in the period 1918-1919, he was the Prime Minister of the first Government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and in 1920 he was reappointed for the same position.



Zenith of political affirmation and business success

Stojan Protic was considered the best connoisseur of the state finances in the Radical Party, second only to Dr Laza Paču, which he proved in his two terms of office as a minister during which he managed the financial sector of Serbia.

His first ministerial term of office lasted from 1909 to 1912. It was a rough period to start a ministerial mandate, given that it fell at the time of the trade war with Austria-Hungary. The trade war, also known as the Customs War between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, started back in 1906, threatening to seriously jeopardize the economy of Serbia. Austria-Hungary closed its borders for Serbian export of cattle, allegedly due to a contagion, but at the same time, it demanded and secured this measure to be effected at the Serbian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was, though under the Turkish rule, under the

protectorate of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The situation was additionally exacerbated in 1909 due to the financial crisis in Serbia, caused by the financial blockade by Vienna, as well as the undermined general safety in the country, due to the expected invasion by Austria-Hungary. The repercussions of this crisis were manifested in the following forms:

- Shortage of money in the domestic market;
- Sudden withdrawal of savings and discontinuation of disbursements by banks;
- Lack of financial discipline, in light of the cessation of liabilities settlement by the debtors.

What is interesting is that, at the time of the Customs War, from 1909 to 1911, the two

² 1903-1905, 1906-1907, and 1912-1914

³ 1910-1911

⁴ 1909-1912 and 1917-1918

je preuzeo kormilo nad ministarstvom finansija 1909. godine, kada je situacija u Srbiji dobila i obeležja finansijske krize, rezultirali su takođe dobrim odlukama:

- Narodnoj banci Srbije odobreno je emitovanje vanrednog kontingenta srebrnih novčanica u visini od 10% opticaja (3,75 miliona dinara),
- Narodna banka je u okviru mera podrške privredi odobravala kredite iz fonda predviđenog za eskontovanje državnih bonova u ukupnom iznosu od 2,5 miliona dinara,
- Pušteno je 27.000 napoleon dinara u opticaj kako bi se suzbio sivi kurs zlata.

Ovaj set mera pratile su i druge odluke ministra Stojana Protića kojima je energično odbio određene nepovoljne poslovne ponude i aranžmane za Srbiju:

- nije prihvatio privremeno produženje teško sklopljenog trgovinskog ugovora sa Austro-Ugarskom iz 1908. godine, već je tražio da ga potvrde parlamenti u Beču i Pešti, kao što je to učinio parlament u Srbiji,
- odbio je određene ekonomske kompenzacije koje su nuđene Srbiji da bi prihvatila Aneks trgovinskog ugovora sa Austro-Ugarskom,

a koje je njegov premijer Novaković nazvao podrugljivim,

- otkazao sve koncesije koje je koristila Austro-Ugarska u Srbiji, uključujući i plovidbenu i
- poslao dr Lazu Pačua bez znanja ostalih članova vlade u Pariz da pregovara sa Otomanskom bankom Credit Mobilier o zajmu od 150 miliona dinara.

Čvrst stav Srbije u ekonomskom ratu sa Austro-Ugarskom uz briljantno vođenje resora finansija od strane ove dvojice ministara, kao i finansijska podrška Pariza, dali su dobre rezultate. Srpska privreda ne samo da je opstala, već je iz ove krize izašla osnažena:

- u periodu od 1906-1910. godine ukupan izvoz u Srbiji je povećan za 26,8 miliona dinara, a uvoz za 40,4 miliona dinara,
- Narodna banka ponovo je počela emitovati zajmove u zlatu koje je obustavila 1908. godine a snizila je i eskontnu stopu sa 8% za dva procentna poena selektivno, u zavisnosti od vrste korisnika,
- krajem 1909. godine Srbija je dobila zajam od Banque Rouvier iz Pariza u iznosu od 30 miliona dinara za kreditiranje trgovine i proizvodnje.

Austro-Ugarska je brzo reagovala na ovakav



most reputable radicals and best connoisseurs of finances in the party, Dr Laza Pachu, remembered as a financial genius, and Stojan Protic, took turns as Ministers of Finance. Dr Laza Pachu started his second mandate as a minister of finance at the time the Customs War began in 1906, and held this function till 1908, when Stojan Protic got appointed as the minister of finance. Dr Laza Pachu wasted no time, but immediately after the trade blockade of Serbia by Austria-Hungary, started working at the economic emancipation of Serbia and opening of the Serbian economy towards other markets (Belgium, Germany, France, Egypt), which resulted in attracting foreign capital to Serbia.

Decisiveness and vigor of Stojan Protic, who took the helm of the ministry of finance in 1909 when the situation in Serbia started having the characteristics of a financial crisis, also resulted in good decisions:

- The National Bank of Serbia was allowed to issue an extraordinary contingent of silver coins in the amount of 10% of circulation (3.75 million dinars);
- As a form of support to the economy, the National Bank extended loans from the fund intended for state bills discounting in the total amount of 2.5 million dinars;
- 27.000 Napoleon dinars were let into circulation in order to subdue the shadow exchange rate of gold.

This set of measures was accompanied by other decisions of Minister Stojan Protic, whereby he briskly rejected certain business offers and arrangements unfavourable for Serbia:

- He did not accept the temporary prolongation of a Trade Agreement with Austria-Hungary concluded with difficulties back in 1908, but instead he demanded it to be confirmed by parliaments in Vienna and Pest, just like it was by the parliament in Serbia;
- He refused certain economic compensations offered to Serbia in order for it to accept an Annex to the Trade Agreement, which his Prime Minister Novakovic referred to as "scornful";
- He cancelled all concessions used by Austria-Hungary in Serbia, including the

one in respect of sailing; and

- He sent Dr Laza Pachu to Paris, without the knowledge of other members of the Government, to negotiate with the Ottoman bank Credit Mobilier about a loan of 150 million dinars.

The firm position of Serbia in the economic war with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in combination with the brilliant management of the financial sector by these two ministers, along with the financial support from Paris, yielded sound results. Not only did the Serbian economy survive, but it also emerged from the crisis reinforced:

- In the period from 1906 to 1910, the total export of Serbia was increased by 26.8 million dinars, and import by 40.4 million dinars;
- The National Bank re-started extending loans in gold, which had been suspended back in 1908, and reduced the discount rate of 8% by two percentage points, selectively, depending on the type of borrower;
- Towards the end of 1909, Serbia was granted a loan by Banque Rouvier from Paris, in the amount of 30 million dinars, for the purpose of crediting trade and production.

Austria-Hungary quickly reacted to this line of developments, and, not wishing to jeopardize its economic interests in the Balkans, signed a new trade arrangement with Serbia in November 1910.

The Customs War was ended in 1911, after lengthy and difficult negotiations led by Dr Laza Pachu, and supervised by Stojan Protic in his capacity of a minister of finance. It was not until 1912 that the new Trade Agreement came into effect, when Dr Laza Pachu started his third mandate as the Minister of Finance.

Decline

Stojan Protic held his second mandate as the Minister of Finance in the final year of the First World War (1917-1918). Despite being a war year, it did not bring any expected economic aspects to Serbia, given that there were no budget-related problems, but it was instead marked by basic constitutional issues regarding the formation of the unified Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Stojan Protic supported

razvoj događaja, i ne želeći da ugrozi svoje ekonomske interese na Balkanu, potpisala je novi trgovinski ugovor sa Srbijom u novembru 1910. godine.

Carinski rat je okončan 1911. godine, nakon dugih i teških pregovora koje je vodio dr Laza Paču, a pratio Stojan Protić sa funkcije ministra finansija. Novi trgovinski ugovor stupio je na snagu tek 1912. godine, u vreme kada je dr Lazi Paču počeo treći mandat Ministra finansija.

Pad

Stojan Protić je drugi mandat ministra finansija obavljao u poslednjoj godini Prvog svetskog rata (1917-1918.). Iako ratna godina, ona u Srbiji nije imala očekivana ekonomska obeležja, obzirom da nije bilo budžetskih problema, ali je bila u znaku osnovnih ustavnih pitanja vezana za formiranje ujedinjene Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Stojan Protić nije bio pristalica ni federalizma, kao ni centralizma, već se zalagao za formu engleske (regionalne) samouprave (pokrajine koje imaju parlamente). Ideja decentralizovane države u kojoj je pokušao da, na što je moguće realniji

način, uredi odnose između Srbije i Hrvatske, nije dobila podršku mnogih, pa ni njegovih partijskih saboraca, pre svega Nikole Pašića. To je bio i formalni razlog za definitivni razlaz ove dvojice velikana Radikalne stranke nakon punih 40 godina zajedničkog partijskog rada. Istoričari se, međutim, slažu da je pravi uzrok razlaza ove dvojice političara postavljenje Stojana Protića od regenta Aleksandra Karađorđevića za predsednika prve vlade Kraljevine Srba Hrvata i Slovenaca. U stvari Pašić je bio uvređen što ta funkcija nije bila ponuđena njemu, kao prvom čoveku stranke, a Protićevo prihvatanje smatrao je izdajom.

Nakon ovakvog razvoja događaja, Stojan Protić je morao da napusti Radikalnu stranku, što je vodilo i kraju njegove političke karijere. Napušten i od ostalih partijskih kolega i saboraca u stranci jer je precenio svoje pozicije u odnosu na Nikolu Pašića, Stojan Protić čini poslednji pokušaj da opstane na političkoj sceni Srbije. Godine 1923. izlazi na izbore kao nezavisni kandidat i ostaje bez mandata. Ubrzo nakon ovih političkih turbulencija, iste godine, umire zbog narušenog zdravlja.

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Beograd, Opštinski dom, 1892. godine
Belgrade, City Hall, 1892

neither federalism nor centralism, but instead advocated a form of the English (regional) self-governance (provinces with separate parliaments). The idea of a decentralized state in which he tried, in as realistic manner as possible, to regulate the relations between Serbia and Croatia, was opposed by many people, including his party comrades, first and foremost Nikola Pasic. This was the formal reason for the definite split of these two leading figures of the Radical Party after 40 years of joint party activities. Historians, however, agree that the real cause of dispute of these two politicians was the appointment of Stojan Protic by Regent Alexander Karadjordjevic for the Prime Minister of the first Government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Pasic was, in fact, offended because this position was not offered to him, as the leader of the party, and considered Protic's acceptance of the position as an act of betrayal.

In the aftermath of these developments, Stojan Protic was forced to leave the Radical Party, which also led towards the end of his political career. Abandoned by other party colleagues and comrades as well, having overestimated his position against Nikola Pasic, Stojan Protic made his last effort to survive at the Serbian political scene. In 1923 he took part in the elections as an independent candidate and lost his mandate. Soon after these political turbulences, his health began to fail and he passed away in the same year.