



FRANO SUPILO AND THE CONQUEST OF THE DUBROVNIK MUNICIPALITY IN 1899

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This work portrays the political circumstances in Dubrovnik at the end of the 19th century. Firstly, the general political conditions in the city in the second half of the 19th century, that is to say the period when the People's Party was in power in the Dubrovnik Municipality, are presented. The work portrays both the Autonomist Party and the Serbian Party, which together won the elections in 1890. The next chapter explains the Serb-Catholic phenomenon, which contributed to the popularity and influence of the Serbian Party. The evolution of the Dubrovnik Serb-Catholic Movement is also described, from its roots until the conquest of the Dubrovnik Municipality. Furthermore, the paper deals with Frano Supilo and, through his childhood and youth, follows his ideological development, which takes place parallel to the rise of young Party of Right movement. The paper analyses how Supilo stood out as a leader of the Party of Rights and describes their political activity in the magazine Red Croatia. Finally, the paper concludes with an overview of the struggle for municipal power between the Serbian Party and the Autonomous Party on the one hand, and the Party of Rights and the People's Party on the other, which ends with the return of the municipality to Croatian rule.

Keywords: Frano Supilo, Dubrovnik, Party of Rights, People's Party, Serb-Catholics

Introduction

In the 1890s, Dubrovnik found itself in a politically quite intriguing situation. Namely, after the long-term rule of the People's Party¹, the municipal administration was no longer in Croatian hands. In power was in the hands of a coalition of the Serbian Party and the Autono-

1 Translator's note: Members of the People's Party are referred to as 'narodnjaci' in Croatian, meaning 'those of the people'. The term 'People's Party' and the phrase 'members of the People's Party' are often used in the translation to denote the Croatian term 'narodnjaci' in the original text, for the purpose of greater clarity.



mist Party². The purpose of this work is to present the local politics of the city of Dubrovnik, including the rise of the Serbo-autonomist coalition, with a special emphasis on the phenomenon of Serb-Catholics that took root among a part of the population. The work will also explain the decline of the People's Party, their years of passivity, as well as their resurgence. That rise, however, was fuelled by the rise of the followers of the Party of Rights³ and their champion, Frano Supilo. Supilo will be the main figure of this work, and through his early activities in Dubrovnik, the goal of this work is to show how the political life in the city evolved, through the activities, alliances and conflicts of the four main political options: the People's Party, the autonomists, the Serbian Party and the Party of Rights. Finally, the paper looks at Supilo's politics and attacks on the Serbo-autonomist rule, his work through the magazine *Red Croatia*, and explains his role and the role of Dubrovnik branch of the Party of Rights in conquering the municipality, after almost a decade of rule of the Serbo-autonomist coalition.

The general situation in Dubrovnik

In the 19th century, Dubrovnik found itself in an utterly new and completely unusual situation. Its centuries-old independence was suddenly interrupted in 1808, and since then it has been building its political path as part of the province of Dalmatia. As the old centre of the early medieval Kingdom of Croatia, it saw its main goal in the union with Civil Croatia-Slavonia⁴, that is to say in the restoration of territorial, political and all other aspects of integrity. However, the authorities in Vienna and Budapest would not be satisfied with such an

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- 2 TN: The 'Autonomist Party' and 'autonomists' stand for 'those Italians in Dalmatia, Dubrovnik and Istria who believed that these lands belong to Italy and should be united with Italy or at least have a degree of autonomy'. They are called 'talijanaši' in Croatian or 'pro-Italians' in English.
 - 3 TN: The Party of Rights was a party founded by Dr Ante Starčević in 1861, with the aim of fighting for Croatian unity, freedom and independence, which Starčević believed to be the historical and legal right of the Croats, as they have never given up their state independence, but rather elected their sovereigns as their heads of state. The party's name stems from the term 'hrvatsko državno pravo' or the 'Croatian state law'. (See: *TN: Croatian state law*.) The followers of the Party of Rights are called 'pravaši' in Croatian and the party's name was often used in the translation to denote this term.
 - 4 TN: 'Civil Croatia-Slavonia' stands for 'Banska Hrvatska' in Croatian and the original text of this work and denotes the area of northern Croatia around Zagreb and modern-day Slavonia to the east, where the Croatian ban could exercise civil authority. It is another name for the Kingdom of Croatia under Habsburg rule (1527-1868).



outcome, and thus the struggle for unification became the main aspect of Croatian politics. Dubrovnik joined the battle, vigorously fighting for unification, among other things because it would suit its economic interests. Moreover, among the champions of the People's Party in Dalmatia, the leaders of the unification option, were Miho Klaić and Juraj Pulić from Dubrovnik.⁵

This is how the ideas of the People's Party spread to Dubrovnik at the local level, where their main opponents, as in the whole of Dalmatia, were the autonomists. In the municipal elections of 1865, the Autonomist Party achieved an absolute victory in the midst of the withdrawal from the elections by the People's Party, due to violent pressure from the authorities. However, thanks to the reorganization and energy of the Dubrovnik members of the People's Party, under the leadership of Pero Čingrija and Rafo Pucić, in the next municipal elections in 1869, the autonomists suffered a complete defeat – out of 537 voters who went to the polls, as many as 526 gave their trust to the People's Party, and, as the first mayor from the People's Party, Rafo Pucić was elected to office.⁶

The electoral victory had an immediate effect. On the one hand, on a larger, symbolic level, it showed the other Dalmatian cities that the autonomists are not invincible, while on the other hand, the concrete naturalisation of the municipality and its offices began. A great success was the introduction of the Croatian language as the educational language in the first and second grades in the Dubrovnik gymnasium, which was achieved as early as 1869. That same year, the Dubrovnik Maritime Society was founded.⁷

1870 was a turning point on the Dalmatian political scene. Namely, elections were held for the Dalmatian Parliament, and the People's Party won the elections. After this success, the party turns to the political opportunism. The party's leadership hoped that a close relationship with Vienna, in which it tried to "indulge", so to say, to the regime's authorities, would ultimately lead to the realisation of its provincial

5 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 135 – 136

6 Ivo PERIĆ, *Political Portrait of Pero Čingrija*, University of Zagreb - Institute of Croatian History, Zagreb, 1979, p. 136 – 137

7 Ivo PERIĆ, *Political Portraits from the Dalmatian Past*, The Literary Circle, Split, 1990, p. 138 – 140



interests.⁸ In the parliamentary elections, Dubrovnik was no exception. Moreover, the People's Party won as many as four out of a possible five mandates, while the autonomists had to settle for one seat. This led to the polarisation of Dubrovnik society. Most of the nobility and the population gathered around the People's Party. On the other side were the autonomists, the conservatives, who, due to Vienna's fear of the increasing popularity of the populists, enjoyed the support of the central authorities and its powerful bureaucracy.⁹

In the 1870s, the struggle ended with a landslide victory of the People's Party. Their candidate Rafo Pucić was elected mayor for the third time and, in the parliamentary elections of 1876, all five mandates from Dubrovnik were occupied by members of the People's Party.¹⁰ In the rest of Dalmatia as well, the autonomists suffered defeats, and at one point it seemed that they would cease to represent any political factor, but they were saved from completely disappearing from the scene by their alliance with the Serbian Party.¹¹

Namely, the conflict, which, for a long time, had been simmering between Croats and Serbs, now escalated. The reason was the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was a discussion whether these lands belong to the Croatian or the Serbian national corpus. In 1879, there was an official split and the Serbs separated and founded their own Serbian Party. The difference in viewpoints is best seen in the work of their party newspapers. *The People's Newspaper*, as the voice of the People's Party, highlights the demand for the unification of the Croatian territory and the fulfilment of Croatia's historical right to statehood. On the other hand, on the pages of *The Serbian Newspaper*, the wish of the Serbs in the Monarchy is visible, the wish for all the Serbian people to gather within one Serbian state. Thus, the creation of two, mutually opposed, state-building thoughts took place. Hence the Serbian Party became a fierce opponent of the unification of Dalmatia with Croatia. Consequently, this led them towards an alliance with the autonomists.¹² This cooperation was based only on this one common element. If we take a

8 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", p. 136

9 Ivo PERIĆ, *Political Portraits from the Dalmatian Past*, The Literary Circle, Split, 1990, p. 140 – 141

10 *Ibid.*, p. 146

11 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", p. 137

12 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *The Political Thinking of Frano Supilo*, The Literary Circle, Split, 1988, p. 19



look at the ultimate goals of these parties, they have little in common. The Serbian Party views Dalmatia within as a part of the future Serbian state, while the Autonomist Party, on the other hand, sees it as an eastern Adriatic province of Italy. Nevertheless, despite such conflicting motives, their alliance became a fierce opponent of the People's Party and their program of uniting Dalmatia with the rest of the Croatian lands.¹³

Since 1878, the magazine *The Slovinian*¹⁴ had been active in Dubrovnik, whose leadership, contrary to *The People's Newspaper* and *The Serbian Newspaper*, worked on the reconciliation of Croats and Serbs. Moreover, it tried to completely erase the differences between the two peoples, by merging them into one, the „Slovinians“, by calling their language „Slovinian“ and their country „Slovinia“. Also, in order to bring the two peoples together in the field of literature, the contributions were printed in Latin, as well as in Cyrillic. Common political goals and idealistic harmony were propagated in the magazine, but these efforts still failed.¹⁵ The schism deepened more and more. In Dubrovnik, in the municipal elections of 1881, there were two election committees, the one headed by the People's Party and the other, led by Mato Natali, a dissatisfied member of the People's Party, who decided to switch to cooperation with the autonomists. After leaving the party, Natali and a few like-minded people turned to the politics of the Serbian Party. This is how a specific phenomenon was formed in Dubrovnik – a political grouping of the so called Serb-Catholics¹⁶. Namely, Natali declared himself as a Serb-Catholic. Part of the general population of Dubrovnik, despite their Catholic religion, considered themselves Serbs, mostly based on Vuk Karadžić's claim that all Shtokavians were Serbs. Natali's election committee did not achieve a significant result, but it was an indication of the severe rift in the years to come.¹⁷

13 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899”, p. 137

14 TN: The term ‘Slovinian’ is a translation of ‘Slovinac’ in Croatian. It is not to be confused with ‘Slovenian’, as it denoted a separate Slavic people in the area of Dubrovnik, which historically never existed but was instead used a neutral term for the sake of unification of Croats and Serbs into one people. It is similar to the term ‘Yugoslavian’, which also denoted to real nationality, but was a neutral term used for the same purpose, only later in history.

15 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo’s Political Activity”, *Annals of the Institute of Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Dubrovnik*, No. 17, 1979, p. 510

16 TN: ‘The Serb-Catholic Movement’ or the ‘Dubrovnik Serb-Catholic Movement’ is called ‘Dubrovački srbokatolički pokret’ in Croatian and ‘Serb-Catholics’ are referred to in Croatian as ‘Srbi-katolici’ or ‘srbokatolici’.

17 Ivo PERIĆ, *Political Portraits from the Dalmatian Past*, The Literary Circle, Split, 1990, p. 149 – 150



The increasingly harsh rhetoric of the Serb-Catholics began to cause discontent and resistance among those from Dubrovnik, who felt they were Croats, even among that part of the populists, who were convinced that Serbs and Croats were one people. This was also evident within the People's Reading Room, a joint literary society, in which Serbian political conceptions now began to dominate. The reason for the split was the decision of the administration of Reading Room to lay a wreath on the grave of Stefan Ljubiša, who was convicted for corrupt practices during his mandate as a parliament speaker in Zadar. Pero Čingrija raised his voice against such a decision, but an emergency meeting only confirmed the management's decision. At such an act, Čingrija and his supporters, the members of the People's Party, left this society. Only the members of the Serbian Party now remained in People's Reading Room, and the split between Serbs and Croats in Dubrovnik had thus become real.¹⁸

In the 1880s, a real hunt for the champions of the People's Party, Pero Čingrija and Rafo Pucić, began. The attacks came from two camps, the Serbian and the autonomist, which are increasingly joining forces in their political activities, mainly through constant pressure on the People's Party.¹⁹ Finally, before the parliamentary elections of 1889, the two parties united and stood behind a common candidate. Their candidate won, thus winning a seat in parliament as a representative for the city of Dubrovnik. Nevertheless, the victory came through various bribes of the voters, as well as with the help of Emilio Ragazani, head of the Dubrovnik District²⁰, a man of the regime, close to the provincial government, who expressed his support for the Serbs and autonomists.²¹

The first big political victory had given wings to both sides and they immediately threw themselves into preparations for the municipal elections that were supposed to be held next year. Bribery of the voters started again and such tactics were made possible by their donors and financiers, rich Serbian and Italian and pro-Italian merchants, as well as various funds from Serbia and Italy. The members of the Serbian Party managed to recruit new members with their already men-

18 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 533

19 Ivo PERIĆ, *Political Portraits from the Dalmatian Past*, The Literary Circle, Split, 1990, p. 151

20 TN: The term 'district' here denotes the Croatian term 'kotar', which is a Croatian administrative unit, smaller than a county and larger than a municipality.

21 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 - 1899", p. 137



tioned ideology of a “Serbian Dubrovnik”, and the rest were attracted by the financial and economic possibilities of joining the party. On the political front, criticisms of the rule of the People’s Party began, using the city’s economic difficulties, which really were substantial. The sailing industry, still dominant in Dubrovnik, was losing the battle with steamships and the hope that trade would experience a new boom after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not materialise. Trade routes did not go towards the sea and Dubrovnik, but towards the west and north, that is to say towards Vienna and Budapest. Craftsmanship was also going through a crisis and remained fragmented and scattered without the creation of a larger craft. Another major drawback was the absence of any monetary institution in the city, which forced citizens to take out loans in Trieste or Vienna. The members of the Serbian Party used all the mentioned problems to criticise the ruling People’s Party. As a solution to all problems, they requested a person in power who enjoyed the trust of Vienna, who was close to the regime, and who would successfully use his status. According to them, their candidate Frano Gondola-Ghetaldi seemed to be the ideal person for the office of mayor. He was an impoverished nobleman, a descendant of the old Gundulić and Getaldić families, who received the title of chamberlain from the Austrian court, for his faithful service. Behind Gondola-Ghetaldi stood a united coalition of the Serbian Party and the Autonomist Party. Using the acquaintance of the already mentioned Ragazani, they managed to arrange for the election committee to consist mostly of their members. This move further enraged the Dubrovnik People’s Party and, aware of the new bribery of voters and the influence of the head of the district Ragazani, they boycotted the elections in protest. To the shock of the Croatian public, especially in Dalmatia, the Dubrovnik municipality fell completely into the hands of the Serbo-autonomist coalition, without an election fight. Interestingly, as many as 32 of the 36 city councilmen were ethnically Croats. The rest were just two Jews, one Serb and one Italian.²²

In order to better understand this political success of the Serbian Party, the next chapter will deal with the phenomenon of Serb-Catholics in Dubrovnik in more detail.

22 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899”, p. 137 – 139



The phenomenon of Serb-Catholics

The phenomenon of Serb-Catholics in Dubrovnik and its causes were the result of complex processes not only in Dubrovnik but also in that part of Europe. The movement arose as a combined consequence of the fall of the Republic of Dubrovnik, different conceptions of pan-Slavism, and insufficiently defined national movements in the territories of the South Slavic peoples. The elements of Croatian and Serbian conception of statehood and the awakening of national consciousness, as well as the anti-Austrian sentiment, created fertile conditions for the creation of various national-cultural movements, among them the Serb-Catholic movement.²³

Among other things, the appearance of Serb-Catholics in Dubrovnik was also based on the teachings of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, according to which all Shtokavians²⁴ are actually Serbs, and he limited the Croats to the Chakavians. His thoughts spread among many of his colleagues and associates, and thus reached Dubrovnik, where they were accepted by professors Pero Budmani, Luko Zore and Stjepan Castrapelli. This would mean that there are only religious differences among members of the Serbian people. This led to the concept of Serbs-Catholics, as opposed to orthodox Serbs.²⁵ In Dubrovnik, an unwritten rule was abandoned, according to which the nationality of Croats and Serbs was identified with their religion. The main determinant of Serbia became Shtokavianism, replacing Orthodoxy.²⁶

Even before the appearance of Serb-Catholics, Dubrovnik, as a city of rich tradition and culture, was attractive to a part of the Serbs, and

23 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, "An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term 'Serb-Catholic' in Dubrovnik", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 209

24 TN: The Shtokavian dialect is one of three dialects that constitute the Croatian language, the other two being the Chakavian dialect and the Kajkavian dialect. The Shtokavian dialect has an eastern branch and a western branch, which split and developed separately, the western branch belonging to the Croatian Shtokavian dialect. Despite some similarities, the two branches of Shtokavian are not the same and do not mean that Serbian and Croatian are one language, as Serbian does not have a Kajkavian or a Chakavian dialect of its own and hence has only some similarities with Croatian. Despite numerous authors and scholars writing of a so-called 'Serbo-Croatian language', it should be noted that on September 1, 2008, Croatian and Serbian were formally declared separate languages by the international body for norms, the *ISO Registration Authority* in Washington D.C.

25 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 513 – 514

26 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, "An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term 'Serb-Catholic' in Dubrovnik", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 203



an attempt was made to present it as a Serbian city. One of the first in this regard was Đorđe Nikolajević, who was at the head of a small Orthodox group in Dubrovnik in the middle of the 19th century. Nikolajević issued Cyrillic documents from the archives presenting them exclusively as Serbian, although other southern Slavs also used this script. With the help of his collaborator Božidar Petranović and his *Serbo-Dalmatian Magazine*, he called Dubrovnik literature Serbian in several articles. Such attempts can be understood as predecessors of the later idea of Serbs-Shtokavians and Serbs-Catholics.²⁷

The phenomenon of Serb-Catholics in Dubrovnik managed to take root, thanks to local Catholics who accepted this idea. Among the first stood out Medo Pucić, originally from a noble family, who took up Karadžić's teachings. Right next to him was Matija Ban, an ambitious politician and opportunist, whose views came into conflict with the traditional orthodox Serbs. Namely, Ban saw Serbia as the leader of all southern Slavs, who should be united, and thus he criticized the narrow views of traditional Serbs who saw Catholics as rivals. It was Matija Ban who sang the anthem of a Serbian Dubrovnik in 1848 and thus openly started the politics of the Serbian affiliation of the city. Even for a short time, a secret society of Serb-Catholics was created in Dubrovnik that collaborated with Ilija Garašanin²⁸ and carried out his Greater Serbia propaganda.²⁹

Nevertheless, in that period, Dubrovnik Serb-Catholics were quite close to the Illyrian movement. Despite harbouring Serbian national ideas, the elements of assimilation and unification of all South Slavs was very present within the movement, so Serb-Catholics like Pucić and Ban did not see any differences between themselves and other Croats.³⁰

The aforementioned Luko Zore wrote in 1869 that the people of Dubrovnik are true Shtokavians and praises the Dubrovnik literature, which he says is written in the Serbian language. Also, a few years

27 *Ibid.*, p. 203 – 204

28 TN: Ilija Garašanin (1812-1874) was a Serbian politician, the instigator of the idea of Greater Serbia in his, up to 1906 secret document titled 'The Draft' or 'Načertanije' in Serbian, from 1844, in which he expressed his political goals and aspirations for expanding Serbia outside of historical Serbian territory.

29 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, "An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term 'Serb-Catholic' in Dubrovnik", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 204 – 205

30 *Ibid.*, p. 205 – 206



later, in his magazine *The Slovenian*, he praised a Serbian bookstore in Pančevo for publishing the poems of Medo Pucić, believing that with this act the borders that separate Serbs were finally being broken. In that period, the idea of Serbia as a „Balkan Piedmont“, which was supposed to be lead all South Slavs towards unification, also appeared. Such thoughts in Dubrovnik, a city with anti-Austrian sentiment, found fertile ground, and a part of the intellectuals gathered together and began, apart from highlighting the linguistic element, to highlight Serbian political thought as well.³¹

In the 1880s, the Serbian-Catholic movement had begun to turn away from the general idea of „Slovenianness“, propagated by the aforementioned magazine *The Slovenian*, and shifted towards an ever stronger and ever more radical Serbian national ideology and anti-Croatism. The reason for this was the conflict between Croatian and Serbian concepts of statehood, which led to discord on the Dalmatian political scene.³²

The Serbian Party in Dubrovnik could hardly have been able to maintain itself and become an important factor by relying exclusively on the city's Serbian orthodox population, so they started working on spreading the Serb-Catholic movement and an example of such activity is the magazine *The Lizard*, published in 1882. The introduction metaphorically shows the rise of the Serb-Catholics in Dubrovnik, comparing that movement to a lizard from the local legend of Miho Pracat, which managed to climb the wall on the third attempt. In her short life, *The Lizard* propagated the views of the Serbian Party, repeatedly emphasising the Serbian nationality and the Serbian language of the residents of Dubrovnik. In order to make Dubrovnik a “Serbian city”, it was crucial to convert its Catholics into Serb-Catholics.³³

In various Dubrovnik cultural, economic and other societies, the Serb-Catholics gradually gained more and more influence, thus minimising the members of the People's Party. In such circumstances, Nikša Gradi, a member of the People's Party, in fear of the growing strength of the Serbian movement, tried to replace the term „Slovenianness“ with South Slavism, thus trying to reconcile and unite the two

31 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity”, p. 515

32 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, “An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term ‘Serb-Catholic’ in Dubrovnik”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 206

33 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity”, p. 517 – 518



peoples. At that time, he pointed out that the majority of the Serbian Party is made up of Orthodox Christians and only a few Catholics. In general, he attacked their attempts to recruit Catholics, pointing out that they did it only for short-term gain, but that they will never accept them as true Serbs, because they associate their nationality with the Cyrillic alphabet and Orthodox Christianity. After such criticism, Gradi, disappointed with his party's policy, himself joined the Serbian Party and declared himself a Serb-Catholic.³⁴

Although the rift was evident, it officially took place only in 1889, when the Serb-Catholics left the People's Party and joined the ranks of the Serbian Party, just before the elections for the Dalmatian Parliament, in which they defeated Pero Čingrija from the People's Party. Such results may seem surprising when we look at the figures on the percentage of Serbs and Serb-Catholics in the population of Dubrovnik, where they constituted only 6% of the city's population. On the other hand, their political importance far outweighed their numbers. The reasons for this can be found in the fact that the Serbian Party was mostly supported by the Dubrovnik intelligentsia in the form of Serbs-Catholics and influential powerful people, such as Serbian merchants and autonomist officials, and they also enjoyed the support of the regime authorities. However, one must not forget to point out the excessive laxity and carelessness of the members of the People's Party in Dubrovnik, who did not perceive sharply enough the threat of their recent partners from the Serbian Party.³⁵

In 1890, the Serb-Catholics, in a coalition with the autonomists, conquered the Dubrovnik municipality, thus reaching their political peak and using their position to reshape Dubrovnik's identity. They interpreted its history through a Serbian prism, and began to encroach on many city traditions, and even the Festival of St. Blaise³⁶. The procession was changed, Croatian symbols such as the flag and coat of arms were removed, and Croatian music was replaced by Serbian music. The first significant event of this kind took place in 1892, when

34 *Ibid.*, p. 521

35 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, "An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term 'Serb-Catholic' in Dubrovnik", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 206

36 TN: Saint Blaise is called 'sveti Vlaho' in Croatian in the area of Dubrovnik and his festival is celebrated on February 3, in a large, public procession, as the saint was once a patron-saint of the former Republic of Dubrovnik, present of the state flag and state seal. He is said to have once saved Dubrovnik from an attack by the Venetians in 971 A.D.



the faithful from the town of Župa Dubrovačka were greeted by Serbian town music, accompanied by the sounds of a Serbian marches. In addition, an attempt was made to prevent the performance of Croatian brass music, which resulting in a part of the people rebelling, who then, only after being accompanied by Croatian music, started their flag procession. The following year, the Serbian authorities reacted even harsher, tearing down flags with Croatian symbols and completely preventing the performance of Croatian music. Nevertheless, such moves once again provoked the public's discontent, especially from the surrounding towns, which boycotted the celebration, so instead of the usual thirty flags, only five or six gathered together.³⁷

In Dubrovnik, more and more was Serbian nationality becoming emphasised, to such an extent that it had to cause reactions from the other side. Some Serb-Catholics, like Lujo Vojnović, did not recognize Croatian state law³⁸, emphasising the „Serbness“ of Dubrovnik and propagating a radical, expansionist policy in general. The passivity of the People's Party was no longer enough, and thus came the awakening of Croatianism³⁹ among the citizens and the spread of ideas of the Party of Rights. In Dubrovnik, the 1890s were marked by a conflict between the members of the Party of Rights, gathered around the magazine *Red Croatia*, and the Serbian Party and their paper *Dubrovnik*.⁴⁰

37 Barbara ĐURASOVIĆ, “Croatian-Serbian Relations at the Centre of the Celebration of the Festival of St. Blaise in Dubrovnik (1891-1914)”, *Annals of the Institute of Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Dubrovnik*, No. 58, 2020, p. 285 – 288

38 TN: The phrase ‘Croatian state law’ is a translation of the Croatian phrase ‘hrvatsko državno pravo’ and denotes ‘a set of written and customary legal rules that related to the organization and functions of public authority and institutions in Croatia and especially to the legal position of Croatian statehood in the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom and the Habsburg Monarchy’, that is to say it denotes also ‘the idea of such a set of rules as the basis of uninterrupted Croatian statehood from the early Medieval Age and with the binding totality of the Croatian lands as an undividable territorial unit’. The noun ‘pravo’ means in Croatian both ‘law’ and ‘right’, the second meaning being the basis for the name ‘Party of Rights’, as a party dedicated to fighting for the historical and, juridically speaking, legal right of the Croatian people to independence, unity and freedom. This is why Civil Croatia-Slavonia and later the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia (1868-1918) had a special legal status within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This historical and legal right to self-determination was emphasized throughout the entire Croatian history, up to the modern-day Republic of Croatia, mentioned in the Croatian constitution.

39 TN: ‘Croatianism’ or ‘hrvatstvo’ in Croatian is term denoting ‘a feeling of belonging to the Croatian people’, the ‘overall characteristics of Croats as a nation’ and the ‘the totality of Croats, all Croats’.

40 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, “An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term ‘Serb-Catholic’ in Dubrovnik”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb



The majority of the Serb-Catholic population in Dubrovnik consisted of the city's intellectuals and powerful people, who – either for ideological or economic reasons – began to consider themselves Serbs. They acted for Serbian national interests, primarily in the sense of appropriating Dubrovnik for the future Serbian state and defining the people of Dubrovnik as Serbs. As such, they were in opposition to the fundamental ideas of the Croatian people's movement and fierce opponents of the unification of Croatian lands. They emphasised the Serbian character of Dubrovnik and appropriated its rich culture and tradition, primarily the Dubrovnik literature.⁴¹ Such efforts of Serb-Catholics, as we mentioned, activated people from the other side of the political spectrum. The Party of Rights became prominent in the city and Frano Supilo became the leader of that overturn.

Frano Supilo and the Party of Rights movement

Frano Supilo was born on November 30, 1870 in Cavtat, the centre of Konavle Municipality, near Dubrovnik. He grew up in a modest, working-class family, and his father Ivo was a bricklayer. After ten years of living in Cavtat, the family moved to Dubrovnik in search of work and better educational conditions, where Supilo continued to attend elementary school. Despite his excellent grades, he did not enrol in a gymnasium, but in a civil school, with a trade-artisan course, because such a path enabled him to find a job quicker in order to relieve the family of financial burden.⁴²

In those years, when the young Supilo was getting his education and forming his worldviews and political ideas, the spread of the ideas of the Party of Rights took place in Dalmatia. The ideas of Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvaternik⁴³ penetrated the province primarily through the work of Ivo Prodan and his newspaper *Catholic Dalmacia*. As the movement expanded, it took on more and more liberal elements,

1992, p. 206 – 207

41 Franko MIROŠEVIĆ, "An Important Scientific Contribution to the Explanation of the Term 'Serb-Catholic' in Dubrovnik", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24 No. 1, Zagreb 1992, p. 209 – 210

42 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 17 – 18

43 TN: Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871) was a Croatian politician, one of the founders of the Party of Rights, known for being the leader of the 1871 Rakovica Revolt, an attempt at starting an uprising, with the aim of achieving Croatian independence, but which failed, he himself being killed.



mostly thanks to the fact that it gathered the young intelligentsia. The great success of the Party of Rights in the elections for the Croatian Parliament in 1884, when they won 24 mandates, gave the ideas of the Party of Rights a special uplift.⁴⁴ The anti-Austrian sentiment, the strengthening of Serbian political thought and dissatisfaction with the passivity of the People's Party created fertile ground for the spread of the Party of Rights in Dubrovnik. In this, the high school youth was leading the way, among whom songs by patriotic authors such as August Harambašić were becoming more and more popular. The mentioned success of the members of the Party of Rights in the parliamentary elections also influenced some leaders of the People's Party, among others Pero Čingrija. Seeing the growing influence of the Serbian Party in his city, Čingrija wanted to act more energetically and abandon extreme opportunism.⁴⁵

It was Pero Čingrija who became one of the main political personas who influenced the development of young Supilo. Namely, Frano Supilo had become friends with Čingrija's son, Melko. Through him, he came into contact with his father Pero, from whom, in a political sense, he could learn a lot. Their gatherings often took place in the house of the Čingrija family, where Supilo read various books, magazines and, most interesting to him, records from the sessions of the Dalmatian Parliament. There he could make out the views, not only of Čingrija, but also of other representatives.⁴⁶

Reflecting on the political reality, the young men had an extremely negative opinion of the central authorities in Vienna and in general towards everything Austrian and Habsburg, which resulted in the establishment of a secret society whose purpose was a political struggle against the Austrian state. Together with Nikola Heller, Dragomir Vučić and Stjepan Gjivić, they founded an organization under the motto: "Down with everything that reminds of the Germans". The society was soon given an opportunity to turn their words into deeds, and they did so during the stay of the heir to the throne Rudolf in Dubrovnik in March 1885. During the welcoming ceremony of Rudolf and his wife, the young rebels refused to greet the prince by taking off their hats and were subsequently reported to the authorities.⁴⁷

44 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 20

45 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 524 – 525

46 *Ibid.*, p. 526

47 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 20



A school investigation followed and Supilo was also summoned to the hearing. He admitted his guilt for not greeting the prince, as well as that the gang has secret meetings in the house of the Čingrija family. He said that it was a prearranged plan and that everyone present swore an oath on the Croatian tricolour. When asked what he knew about Ante Starčević, Supilo replied that he read about him in *The Serbian Newspaper* and that he considered him a just person, a fighter for Croatian rights and an opponent of the settlement with Hungary. Finally, when asked if the whole action and gang was just child's play, he replied that it was serious business and that he really considered himself a Croat, as every true Dubrovnik resident should. From the testimony of other participants, it was learned that Supilo owned a tricolour flag with the inscriptions "Long live Starčević!" and "God and the Croats!"⁴⁸ In the end, Supilo and his colleagues were temporarily expelled from the school due to inappropriate political activities.⁴⁹ Although he was only 15 years old, Supilo was already well-acquainted with Starčević's program and the political situation in the country, clearly defining his views and thoughts, proudly repeating his national affiliation.⁵⁰ Also, this kind of anti-Austrian speech shows the atmosphere that was emerging among Dubrovnik's youth, especially the penetration of the ideas of the Party of Rights. The other side also reacted to the event, so individuals from the Serbian Party accused the school system of propagating Greater Croatia thinking and Starčević.⁵¹

After graduating from civil school, Supilo continued his education at the Nautical School. He had the desire, like many young people from Dubrovnik, to become a sailor. However, the costs of education were substantial and, after his application for a scholarship had been rejected, he was forced to leave school. Too young to find a quality job, Supilo used that period of his life for independent education. He devoted himself to reading writers such as Goethe, Giusti and Dostoyevsky, as well as works of a professional and scientific nature. He was educated in politics and historiography and he turned to learning foreign languages, mastering Italian, English and German.⁵²

48 TN: The motto 'God and the Croats!', or 'Bog i Hrvati!' in Croatian, was the sublimation of the political thought of Ante Starčević, which expressed his notion that the Croatian people must govern itself in their own, free and independent state.

49 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 530

50 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 529– 531

51 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 23

52 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 533– 534



He continued to closely follow the events on the Dubrovnik political scene, where the conflict between the People's Party and supporters of the Serbian Party and autonomists was taking place. Then he was able to witness the victory of the People's Party in the municipal elections of 1886. The following year, the Dalmatian Agricultural Institute was founded in Dubrovnik, with the aim of training personnel who would then improve the agricultural activities of the peasants in the vicinity of the city. Frano Supilo also enrolled in the new school through his mentor Pero Čingrija. This time, he managed to get a scholarship from the Cavtat Municipality, so he was able to successfully continue his education. After two years, he graduated with honors and immediately got a job in the same school. He worked as a prefect, but also as a traveling teacher and field expert in the fight against downy mildew. This experience allowed him to get to know the surrounding people and gain insight into their thoughts and problems, which greatly helped him in his future political life. He stayed at his first job until 1890, when he entered into a conflict with his colleague and one of the founders of the school, Frano Gondola. Gondola, as a candidate of the Serbian Party in the parliamentary elections, represented an obvious political opponent of Supilo. There were tensions between the two, so Supilo asked to be relieved of duty under the excuse of illness.⁵³

There must have been disagreements between him and Gondola, partly due to Supilo's frequent visits to the Dubrovnik National Reading Room. Namely, the new reading room started operating in 1887 and became a gathering place for Dubrovnik Croats, as a response to the old Reading Room that was in the hands of Serbian supporters. As a student, he could not go there yet, but as soon as he finished his education, Supilo became a frequent guest of the reading room. As a member, Pero Čingrija also used to visit there, with whom Supilo had long conversations and learned from the older politician his tactfulness, calmness and various useful experiences from the world of politics. Although the duo did not agree on everything, at the political level, Supilo used to point out that Čingrija was his real mentor, even more than Ante Starčević. However, it should be emphasised that Supilo became a member of the Party of Rights, and not that of the People's Party for a reason, and it was because Starčević's ideas about a free, united Croatia and the realisation of full Croatian state law were the main

53 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 23 – 24



guiding thoughts of Supilo's politics. Čingrija's influence was reflected in the greater appreciation of the Serbian people and the cooperation of all political currents in the realisation of the Croatian political thought as a common goal.⁵⁴

Other influences on his political thinking came from the liberalism of some members of the People's Party, which softened the radicalism of the ideas of the Party of Rights in Civil Croatia-Slavonia. Liberal ideas actually came from Italy, from the champions of the *Risorgimento* movement, led by Giuseppe Mazzini and Camillo Cavour, just as the influence of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in the field of cultural development of the Croatian people, as well as the influence of Mihovil Pavlinović, an active fighter for Croatian state law.⁵⁵ However, the key event that led Supilo towards a more active involvement in politics and the ideas of the Party of Rights was the aforementioned victory of the Serbian-autonomist coalition in the municipal elections of 1890. The People's Party remained in the opposition, so it began to connect with the new political force in the city - the Party of Rights. Although few in number, they stood out with a few really influential members, such as Roko Mišetić, a doctor and director of the Dubrovnik Hospital, and of course, Frano Supilo. It was Supilo and his mentor Pero Čingrija, one from the side of the Party of Rights, the other from the side of the People's Party, who represented the key figures of cooperation and harmony between the two groups.⁵⁶

After the success of the Serbian-autonomist coalition, the old desire of the members of the People's Party to launch their own paper to spread their political views, countering their political rivals, revived. When looking for a person for the post of editor, most of the champions of the People's Party were written off, partly because of their age, partly because of their own obligations, and the members of both parties, who were priests, were not eligible for such a job. On the side of the Party of Rights, the aforementioned Mišetić was too busy with his medical profession, and Frano Supilo stood out from the rest of the young movement of the Party of Rights. He possessed the necessary artistic talent, work habits and ability to start such a paper, and he was additionally distinguished by his energy in approaching the project. As a fighter for Croatian rights, with liberal principles, he was

54 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 543– 544

55 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 25

56 *Ibid.*, p. 26



acceptable to both parties. The key in the whole process was the fact that Supilo was satisfied with a more modest salary, which was not a particular problem for him.⁵⁷

Although the idea to start the paper came from both sides, in the end the paper was published as the organ of the Dubrovnik branch of the Party of Rights. The name of the newspaper *Red Croatia* was taken from *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, in which chronicle southern Dalmatia is called by that name. This was meant to emphasise the fact that Dubrovnik belonged to Croatia. The new paper, according to Supilo's ideas, was a reflection of moderated ideas of the Party of Rights, as opposed to some unrealistic extremisms of the Party of Rights in Civil Croatia-Slavonia. The main idea that the magazine was supposed to support was the unification of Croatian countries and the realisation of Croatian state law. The paper was supposed to be financed through the payment of bonds, and Supilo assumed the guarantee, and thus the risk of financing the magazine. In helping the magazine, Josip Juraj Strossmayer stood out, whom Supilo informed in a letter about the new paper, which again shows a certain detachment from Starčević's ideas. Finally, the first issue of *Red Croatia* was published on February 7, 1891 and Frano Supilo was signed as editor-in-chief and publisher.⁵⁸

In the introductory program of the first number, Supilo began with the thought that the whole world is ruled by one law – that of the struggle for survival. He saw the reason why the Croatian people were forced to start this fight in the attack on the Croatian right to freedom and statehood by their, until recently, tribal brothers, the Serbs. He pointed out that the Croats, as a small nation, welcomed Serbian help, but that it turned out that attempts at harmony and cooperation with the Serbs yielded nothing. He then addressed Dubrovnik, to which he presents this magazine, in order to reawaken the old Croatian tradition and make it the “Crown of Croatian Cities”, accusing the ruling party at the time of tearing the city away from Croatia, from its famous Croatian tradition and culture. As the main task of the magazine⁵⁹, Supilo emphasised the defence of the Croatian national thought and the unification of Croatian countries on the basis of Croatian historical state law.⁶⁰

57 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity”, p. 551– 552

58 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 26 – 27

59 *Red Croatia*, Year 1, No. 1, (February 7, 1891)

60 TN: ‘Croatian historical state law’ is another term for ‘Croatian state law’, which emphasises the historical continuity of Croatian legal sovereignty and statehood.



Red Croatia published short news from the city and its surroundings, important news from the rest of Dalmatia and Civil Croatia-Slavonia, reviews of articles from other political newspapers, reviews of various books, biographies, as well as a regular humorous column. However, the most appreciated were the political articles, the author of which was often Supilo himself and which confirmed his journalistic skills and intelligence. His articles were also published by other newspapers, such as the magazine *Croatia*, the organ of the Party of Rights, *The Horizon*, the newspaper of the Independent People's Party and *The People's Newspaper* in Zadar.⁶¹ *Red Croatia* became the main means by which Supilo and his political associates attacked the Serbian-autonomist rule in the city, and its publication was the prelude to the conflict for supremacy in Dubrovnik that lasted almost a decade.

The struggle for control over the municipality and the final victory in 1899

In his further political activities, Supilo particularly advocated for the unity of the People's Party and the Party of Rights, as he saw in this the only way to overcome the Serbo – pro-Italian coalition. Supilo called this unification the “Croatian Party in Dubrovnik”. In March 1891, there were elections for the Imperial Council in Vienna, which saw official cooperation between the two parties. The Croatian candidate was Lovro Borčić, a member of the People's Party from Split. Nevertheless, despite the unity of the two parties, the Serbo-autonomist candidate Marin Bonda won in Dubrovnik. Supilo accused the authorities of not conducting the elections properly and of corrupt practices. Nevertheless, he emphasised the strength of the new unity of the People's Party and the Party of Rights, which raised the level of Croatian thought among the citizens of Dubrovnik.⁶²

In August 1891, the Economic and Forestry Exhibition was organized in Zagreb, on the occasion of the celebration of 50 years of the Croatian-Slavonic Economic Society. A group of guests also arrived from Dubrovnik, most of them members of the Party of Rights and

61 Ivo PERIĆ, “The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899”, *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 144

62 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 30



the People's Party, led by Supilo. Although of an economic nature, the exhibition had a political significance due to its Croatian character, there were many exhibits and visitors from all Croatian regions who thereby expressed their unity.⁶³ Of even greater importance was the organization of the grand opening ceremony of the monument to Ivan Gundulić⁶⁴ in Dubrovnik. The three-day festival was supposed to take place from the 25th to the 27th of June 1893. A great battle between the Croatian and Serbian sides began. Namely, the goal of both was to invite as many of their supporters as possible, so that the ceremony would have a Croatian political character, that is, a Serbian one on the other hand. In that fight, the Croatian parties, the Party of Rights and the People's Party, convincingly won, by using their numerous acquaintances and influences. Among the number of Croats who arrived, were numerous artists and scientists such as August Harambašić⁶⁵, Eugen Kumičić⁶⁶, Ante Tresić Pavičić⁶⁷, Franjo Rački⁶⁸, Tadija Smičiklas⁶⁹, Frane Bulić⁷⁰, Ivan Rendić⁷¹, Franjo Kuhač⁷², as well as numerous parliamentary representatives from all Croatian parliaments, Miho

63 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 144

64 TN: Ivan Gundulić (1589-1638) was the prominent Croatian poet of the Baroque literature in Dubrovnik, which is why he is at the centre of Serbian efforts to appropriate Dubrovnik's and thus Croatian cultural heritage.

65 TN: August Harambašić (1861-1911) was a Croatian poet and publisher, who was a follower of Ante Starčević, jailed several times for his support of the Party of Rights and known for his patriotic poetry.

66 TN: Eugen Kumičić (1850-1904) was a prominent Croatian novelist who introduced literary naturalism into Croatian literature and a political follower and one of the closest associates of Ante Starčević.

67 TN: Ante Tresić Pavičić (1867-1949) was a poet and politician who began as a follower of the Party of Rights but drifted to yugoslavism by 1914. He is today best known for his descriptions of his travels to the USA.

68 TN: Franjo Rački (1828-1894) was a Croatian historian, politician and writer, one of the founders of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, important for collecting numerous Croatian diplomatic and historical documents.

69 TN: Tadija Smičiklas (1843-1914) was a Croatian historian, the author of the first history book on Croatia and who laid the foundation of Croatian historiography.

70 TN: Frane Bulić (1846-1934) was a Croatian priest, archaeologist and historian who excavated numerous important archaeological sites in Dalmatia, providing important information about the genealogy of Croatian kings.

71 TN: Ivan Rendić (1849-1932) was a famous Croatian sculptor who created numerous sculptures of famous Croats and who supported the unification of Croatia and Dalmatia.

72 TN: Franjo Kuhač (1834-1911) was a famous Croatian conductor, composer and musicologist, who studied Croatian folk music, similarly to the work of Cecil Sharp.



Klaić⁷³, Juraj Biankini⁷⁴, Josip Frank⁷⁵, Gajo Filomen Bulat⁷⁶ and many others. The regiment from Konavle region, the town of Župa Dubrovačka, the Dubrovnik Littoral, the Pelješac peninsula and the islands around Dubrovnik also gathered in their folk costumes. Brass bands from several Dalmatian towns also arrived, playing Croatian patriotic songs that, along with Croatian flags, folk dances and traditional floats, created an atmosphere of celebration of Croatian national heritage. Dubrovnik showed how nationally it really felt. On the other hand, the Serbian party experienced a complete failure. Despite all the financial possibilities, they brought only a few respected guests and experienced a shameful defeat in the city which they theoretically ruled.⁷⁷

In May 1894, new municipal elections were held in which the coalition of the Party of Rights and the People's Party on one side and the Serbo-autonomist coalition on the other clashed. The election committee consisted only of members of the Serbo – pro-Italian coalition, which resulted in many supporters of the other party being prohibited from voting due to various formalities (e.g. someone was entered on the list as *Niko*⁷⁸ instead of *Nikola*). There was also bribery and pressure on the voters, as well as shady actions during the counting of votes. Because of all this, members of the Party of Rights and the People's Party filed a complaint with the Regency charged with supervising the elections, which found irregularities in the elections in the third electoral body. The elections were repeated only for that body, and the coalition of the Party of Rights won a convincing victory. However, for the first and second electoral bodies, the elections were not repeated,

73 TN: Miho Klaić (1829-1896) was a Croatian politician who fought for the introduction of the Croatian language into the education system and for the administrative unification of Croatian lands with Dalmatia.

74 TN: Juraj Biankini (1847-1928) was a Croatian politician, a member of the Dalmatian Parliament, who advocated the introduction of Croatian into public life and the unification of Dalmatia with the rest of Croatia. He later advocated the unification of Croats and Serbs, becoming a minister in the later Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

75 TN: Josip Frank (1844-1911) was a Croatian lawyer and politician, president of the Pure Party of Rights, a fraction of the Party of Rights, a fierce opponent of the unification of Croatia and Serbia.

76 TN: Gajo Filomen Bulat (1836-1900) was a Croatian lawyer, who served as the mayor of Split, also serving in the Dalmatian Parliament and the Imperial Council. He advocated the introduction of Croatian into schools and the unification of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. He built the Croatian National Theatre in Split.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 145 – 146

78 TN: A diminutive of the personal name 'Nikola', meaning 'Nicholas'.



and the victory of the Serbs and the autonomists, who still held the municipality in their hands, with a two-thirds majority, remained in force. Nevertheless, the Party of Rights and the People's Party imposed themselves in the council as a sharp and active opposition.⁷⁹ The narrow defeat, despite the election malpractices and the discord that broke out between the members of the Serbian Party and the Autonomist Party, gave wings to the members of the Party of Rights, who founded the Croatian Workers' Cooperative in 1895. One of the founders was Frano Supilo and the purpose was to create a workers' society, through which the Croatian political thought and ideas of the Party of Rights could be expressed, thereby winning over the wider strata of the people for their political goals.⁸⁰

At the same time, on the Dalmatian political scene, there was a growing tension between the Party of Rights and the People's Party. The conflict took place in January 1895 in the Dalmatian Parliament over the final sending of an address to the king with a request for the unification of Dalmatia and Croatia. The Party of Rights, of course, wholeheartedly supported the proposal, while opportunism and fear of such an aggressive demand and the consequences it could cause again appeared on the part of the People's Party. Such differences in attitudes were one of the reasons why the idea of unification into a single, independent party under the name Party of Rights in Dalmatia arose among Dalmatian members of the Party of Rights.⁸¹ It was officially founded in August 1894, with the union groups connected to the Party of Rights, from Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik, which were joined by the Croatian Club. A year later, on July 17, a large assembly of fractions of the Party of Rights was held in Zagreb, on the occasion of the ceremony of handing over Starčević's Hall⁸² to Ante Starčević. At the assembly, a decision was made to unite all activists from Croatian

79 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 146 – 147

80 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 34

81 *Ibid.*, p. 34 – 35

82 TN: Starčević's Hall or 'Starčevićev dom' in Croatian, lit. meaning 'Starčević's home', was constructed by donations from the followers and admirers of Ante Starčević and completed in 1895, as a home worthy of the Father of the Nation, who until then lived in a very small flat, and which now stands on the Ante Starčević Square in Zagreb, today being the Zagreb City Library. During the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995) it was the headquarters of the modern Croatian Party of Rights, founded in 1991.



territories into a single Party of Rights. Supilo was also elected to the Central Committee of the new, unified party. However, that unity, at least in Civil Croatia-Slavonia, did not last long.⁸³

The elections for the Dalmatian Parliament in 1895 ended with the victory of the People's Party, which won 22 mandates, while the Party of Rights had to settle for only three mandates. The Serbian Party entered the parliament with 10, and the autonomists with 6. In the elections, the Serbs and the members of the People's Party cooperated, which was also felt in Dubrovnik, where many Serbs voted for candidates of the People's Party, who won all five possible mandates. This caused temporary tensions between the Party of Rights and the People's Party, who, encouraged by the success, thought about returning the municipality to their hands on their own, without the help of the Party of Rights. Members of the Party of Rights even considered the idea of their own reading room, but still, passions subsided and they remained together with the People's Party in the People's Reading Room of Dubrovnik.⁸⁴

New problems were caused by the cooperation of the People's Party, now the Croatian People's Party, and the Serbian Party before the elections for the Imperial Council in 1897. In this context, in his magazine, Supilo looked at the tactics of the anti-Croatian currents, which were trying to ignore and erase the Croatian name by using regional determinants, instead of the common Croatian name. Supilo considers such constructs disastrous in the context of the creation of a homogeneous Croatian nation, thereby neglecting the natural right of every people to realise a national state. Accordingly, he did not show the slightest inclination to talk about Dubrovnik as a „Slovinian“ or „Serbian“ city, or even to call its inhabitants only „citizens of Dubrovnik“, but exclusively Croats, and he considered the city Croatian.⁸⁵

Despite some disagreements with the People's Party, Supilo was still convinced of the need for mutual cooperation, believing that only united Croatian political currents could realise the Croatian political thought, which for Supilo primarily represented the unification of

83 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 147

84 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Dubrovnik Period of Frano Supilo's Political Activity", p. 582 – 583

85 *Red Croatia*, Year 7, No. 3, (January 16, 1897)



Croatian lands and the realisation of a sovereign state within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. He noticed the history of disagreements and conflicts among the Croatian leadership that led to dangerous situations for Croatia, so he wants to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Although at the level of Dalmatia, his plan on the cooperation of the Party of Rights and the People's Party was more difficult to implement, it led to success in Dubrovnik. Namely, the leader of the People's Party in Dubrovnik was still Pero Čingrija, who saw the Party of Rights more as a separate wing of the People's Party, rather than as a separate political group. Bearing in mind the friendly relationship between Čingrija and Supilo, the alliance of the two parties, which no longer appear publicly as separate organizations, but jointly as Croatian Croats from Dubrovnik, is not surprising. In such a position, they readily welcomed the municipal elections of 1899, a new opportunity to win power from the hands of Serb-Catholics and pro-Italians.⁸⁶

The Serbo-autonomist coalition expected to re-appoint its own people in the election committee, thus ensuring another victory. However, the Dalmatian Regency decided against this course of action. Having learned from the experience of the past elections, which had to be repeated partially due to irregularities, they decided to send their representative as a neutral commissioner who will organise the elections and make sure that everything runs according to the law. The coalition of Serbs and autonomists did not react with approval to that act, convinced that without the necessary malfeasance, bribery and forgery, they would not be able to win the elections. The alliance was on shaky legs anyway, so they finally decided not to participate in the elections. The coalition soon fell apart. Elections were then held from the 24th to 28th of July, 1899. They were contested jointly by the Party of Rights and the People's Party, which thus won mandates in all three electoral bodies. Supilo and Čingrija, as leaders of their parties, were elected to the third electoral body. Thus, after nine years, the Dubrovnik municipality once again had Croatian forces at its head, a united coalition of the Party of Rights and the People's Party. Pero Čingrija was elected as the new mayor.⁸⁷

In *Red Croatia*, a few days before the elections, when it was already known that the Serbo – pro-Italian coalition was withdrawing, Supilo

86 Ivo PETRINOVIĆ, *Frano Supilo's Political Thinking*, p. 37

87 Ivo PERIĆ, "The Role of the Party of Rights in the Conquest of the Municipal Administration in Dubrovnik 1890 – 1899", *The Party of Rights in Croatian Political and Cultural Life at the Crossroad of Two Centuries* (edited by Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević), Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, 2013, p. 148 – 149



addressed the citizens of Dubrovnik. He cites the reasons for the withdrawal of his opponents, emphasising the impossibility of maintaining power even with the only way “with which they could still hold on – violence.” Furthermore, he harshly criticises them and accuses for deceiving the city’s residents and for fleeing from electoral defeat. He writes about himself and his political partners: “...here we are in front of the people, to look them in the eyes, with bright foreheads and unsullied flags, to tell them: People, we come to you as Croats (...) If you respond to our voice, you will confirm that you are what we are, that you are Croats and that this land of ours, on which we live, is Croatian land.” He is proud that Dubrovnik has come to its senses and that the Croatian thought reigns in it again. Dubrovnik had once more become, as he says, “the Crown of Croatian Cities”.⁸⁸

Appendix

1. Excerpt from the introductory program of the first issue of *Red Croatia*: (February 7, 1891)

I present to you, Croats, and to you most of all, our glorious Dubrovnik, your “Red Croatia”! The magazine’s name says what it is. In spirit, aspiration and feeling, it is Croatian, purely Croatian. Urgent necessity created it, through you, oh you Croatian Athens! Under its banner is the desire to gather, it is essentially the mouthpiece of your thoughts, the pure echo of your feelings. It will try to awaken anew in you, dear city, the dear memory of “Croatian antiquity”; that all this brings you closer to the wing of those Croats, who in the middle of “White Croatia”, are famous for their name, knowledge and heroism; those Croats who are proud of you, who expect a lot from you, who discovered the glory and learning of your old geniuses and poets, to whose honourable shadow all Croats bow. The Croatian name, of which “Red Croatia” is proud, should not be embarrassing to you, oh Dubrovnik! The Croatian name is a glorious name, the Croatian thought is a patriotic thought, worthy of you, oh Dubrovnik! You have fought for the Croatian thought since you entered the scene of the national struggle, until the latest era, until the moment when a handful of people first made you hate everything that is Croatian, describing Croats to you in the darkest of colours, and then seduced you into a Serbian-Italian circle, to play a unique role for you among

88 *Red Croatia*, Year 9, No. 27 (July 22, 1899)



*the Slavic cities. They were proud of the Croatian name, oh Dubrovnik, your glorious forebears; Croatian thought was advocated by wonderful and significant people, your great benefactors, whose death you recently mourned. What can drive you to forgo the Croatian name?*⁸⁹

2. Excerpt from *Red Croatia*, a few days before the victory of the Party of Rights and the People's Party in the municipal elections: (July 22, 1899)

*Because then it would be even better to emphasise the worthlessness of our opponents, who would give us a good opportunity to count them, now that the people have seen and come to their senses, and now to give a substantive and blatant answer to the famous question that we asked eight years ago in this paper: "Are the people of Dubrovnik Croats? However, we appreciate that they have already given us the answer to this question with their heroic flight" (...) As soon as they see their mistake and join the people's circle, they announce a further war. Well, good! We receive it indifferently. Because just as we knew that what was momentarily lost, with honesty and justice, we would regain again – through faith and God! – an to know how to defend. And our dear thousand-year-old Dubrovnik is now returning to its historical root, after a nine-year wandering, to be the pride of the Croatian kinship and home, a model of Croatian consciousness, and the picture and growth and nourishment of the Croatian language; to be the first among equals, to show itself worthy of the ancient and glorious title: the Crown of Croatian Cities.*⁹⁰

Conclusion

In 1890, the Dubrovnik Municipality fell into the hands of the united Serbo-autonomist coalition. The reasons for this decline should be sought in the increasing passivity and opportunism of the up to that moment unquestionably ruling People's Party. Also, the Serbian Party had been experiencing a kind of uplift due to the spread of the phenomenon of Serb-Catholics among the Dubrovnik intelligentsia. Convinced in the ideas of Vuk Karadžić, they accept the idea that the people of Dubrovnik were actually Serbs, only of the Catholic faith. The idea found fertile ground in the context of the anti-Austrian sentiment amongst the Dubrovnik population and the idea of Serbia as a „South Slavic Piedmont“ that will unify the lands of the South Slavs around

89 *Red Croatia*, Year 1, No. 1. (February 7, 1891)

90 *Red Croatia*, Year 9, No. 27 (22 July 1899)



itself. Also, the movement was joined by various entrepreneurs and businessmen, who saw in this group a chance for realising their own private interests. The idea of Serb-Catholics spread among a group of intellectuals and powerful people, which gave ideological support to the Serbian Party, and the coalition itself enjoyed great financial support from numerous Serbian and Italian merchants, as well as the support of the ruling regime, which enabled it to stay in power for almost a decade. Parallely with the strengthening of the Serbian ideology, Croatian national thinking was awoken in Dubrovnik, primarily through the activities of a group of young members of the Party of Rights, who were able to make a stance, amidst the passivity of the People's Party. Frano Supilo soon emerged as the leader of the Party of Rights in Dubrovnik. With his persistent work and political intelligence, Supilo manages to contribute to the rebirth of Croatian national consciousness and the overthrow of the Serbian-autonomist rule in the city. The Serb-Catholic movement soon dissolved, and the ruling coalition never had much support from ordinary citizens. With his activities through the magazine *Red Croatia* and his cooperation with the People's Party, Supilo managed to win the political battle and in 1899 a coalition of the Party of Rights and the People's Party returned the municipality back to Croatian hands.

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